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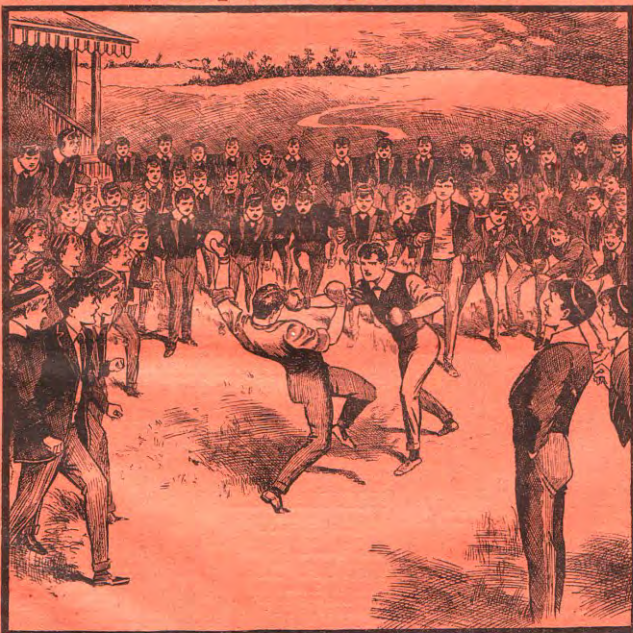
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Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Unwelcome Visitors.

"CHEEK!" said Nugent.
Nugent, of the Remove, had just opened and read a letter, as he sat at the tea-table in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

And a wrathful frown gathered upon Frank Nugent's brow as he crumpled the letter in his hand.

Harry Wharton looked up from his poached egg, and Bob Cherry paused in the difficult operation of extracting the last trace of marmalade from a thoroughly-emptied jar.

Both of them looked inquiringly at Nugent.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry cheerfully.
"What has disturbed your royal serenity, Franky?"

Nugent frowned.
"Cheek!" he repeated.

"But what is it?"

"Nerve!"

"But what's the matter?" asked Bob, setting down the jar hopelessly. "Next time you chaps ask me to tea, don't forget the marmalade. Lucky Inky didn't come. Is that a letter from home, Nugent?"

"No, ash!"

"Thanks, fathead!" said Bob Cherry, grinning.

"Good freemen want his bill?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"No, no!"

"Then what on earth is it?" demanded Wharton and Bob Cherry, together.

"Pure cheek!"

"But whom is it from?"

"Highcliffe!" growled Nugent.

"Oh!"

The chums of the Remove understood.

Nugent glanced over the letter again, and his frown deepened. It was written in the small, neat calligraphy of Ponsoby, the junior captain of Highcliffe School. The paper was thick and scented. The Highcliffe fellows always did things in style—not in the best taste, perhaps, but always in style. They seemed to exist chiefly for the purpose of putting on varieties of side.

"Read it out," said Harry Wharton. "I don't see that any reply was needed to our letter. We refused their challenge plainly enough, and I think we spoke sufficiently plain English on the subject."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I think we did," he agreed. "Ponsoby & Co. couldn't very well mistake our meaning, when we said we couldn't play footer with them again, because of their foul play at the last match. It certainly was plain."

Nugent grinned.

"I don't think it was too plain," he said. "As secretary of the Remove club, I had to answer their challenge, and give them some reason. Last match they kidnapped some of our men, and tried to keep them away from the match; and after that it's simply pure, unadulterated cheek on their part to expect us to play them."

"I should say so," said Wharton emphatically; "but what have they got to say in answer to our letter?"

"Let's hear it," said Bob.

Frank Nugent read the letter:

"Dear Nugent.—We're sorry to hear that you can't fix up a match with us. Will you allow me to express a doubt as to the excuse you offer? When fellows decline a fair and square challenge to a fair and square match, there's generally only one reason to be given—funk! If you do not play us, we shall take the liberty of assuming that it is from motives of funk, and we shall proceed to make the same as public as possible. In order that there may be no misapprehension in the matter, I will call this evening with a few friends, and see you about it. I shall be at Greyfriars about the same time as this letter, I think.—Yours always,

"G. PONSOBY."

"Cheek!" said Wharton.

"Nerve!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"His feelings aren't hurt by our letter," grinned Nugent. "He's got a hide as thick as a rhinoceros. He doesn't mind being called a cheat, as far as that goes, so long as he gains his point. Did you ever hear of such a worm?"

Wharton wrinkled his brows a little.

"But what does he want to play us for?" he demanded.

"We've played Highcliffe often enough, till our last row with them, and they never had a chance. They took to all sorts of swindling because they couldn't lick us by fair means, and we had to break with them. But unless they've got some new rogues on, they know jolly well that we should beat them hollow in a match. And after our experience, they can't think that we shall be taken in by a new trick."

"Don't make it out, myself," said Bob Cherry. "Perhaps they've been training, and got into better form; or they may have some new boys in Highcliffe who are more up to the mark."

"Yes, that's possible."

"And the odds have the cheek to come over here, after my letter," said Nugent, in disgust. "Shall we let them come in?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, we can't very well kick them out," he said.

"I suppose not."

"I don't know that I've got anything to say to them, though," said Harry thoughtfully. "I'm not captain of the Remove now, and Bulstrode has resigned. You'd better attend to the business as secretary."

"Right ho!"

"Here they come, I fancy!" said Bob Cherry.

There was a tramp of footsteps in the Remove passage.

Knock!

"Come in!" called out Wharton, rising from his chair.

The study door opened, and three juniors came in. They were Ponsoby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. They were three very well-dressed,

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and supercilious-looking youths, and seemed to have a kind of impression that the earth was barely good enough for them to walk on.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "So you've come."

"Yes, we've come," said Ponsoby.

"Come to talk bizny," said Gadsby.

"Absolutely," drawled Vavasour.

"No business to talk," said Harry Wharton crisply. "You had our reply in our letter. You tried foul play at our last match, and we scratched you off the list. We don't want any more matches with you. That's plain enough, isn't it?"

Ponsoby sneered.

"Yes; it's about the politeness I might have expected from a Greyfriars cad," he replied.

"Absolutely," chimed in Vavasour.

Wharton flashed.

"You can't expect politeness from us, after the way you've acted," he said. "Foul play in a cricket or footer match puts a fellow out of the pale of politeness. You Highcliffe fellows are cads and rotters, and we don't want to have anything to do with you. We said so in our letter, and if you've come over to hear it by word of mouth, it's your own lookout."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Ponsoby smiled unpleasantly.

"We don't want to enter into all that ancient history," he said softly. "The question is, will you play us?"

"No, we won't!"

"Then you know what we shall call you?"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"There's the door," he said. "You will find it safer to call us names by post. I warn you that we shall not stand being cheeked in our own study. Better get out before any harm's done."

Ponsoby gritted his teeth.

"If you don't play us, you're a rotten funk," he said.

"Well, we shan't play you," said Wharton.

"Then you're a coward!"

"That's the second fancy name," said Harry. "It's the last! If you say another, I'll chuck you out of the study, neck and crop!"

"Bah, you Greyfriars cad— Oh!"

Ponsoby, of Highcliffe, did not have time to finish.

Wharton's grasp fell upon him the moment he had uttered the offensive word, and he was whirled round towards the door.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Outside!

"HURRAY!" roared Bob Cherry, jumping up in great excitement. "Go it, ye cripples!"

Crash!

Bump!

Ponsoby was resisting manfully.

The Highcliffe fellows, as a rule, were not much given to fighting, unless the odds were upon their side; but Ponsoby was an exception to the rule. He had some pluck, which was perhaps the reason why he was junior captain of Highcliffe.

He had closed with Harry Wharton, and they went whirling wildly round the study.

They smote against a chair, and sent it flying, and they crashed into the door, and banged it shut with a terrific concussion.

Then they executed a kind of waltz round the table.

Bob Gadsby and Vavasour made a movement as if to rush to the aid of their chief, but Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent clenched their fists at once, and Gadsby and Vavasour thought better of it.

Round to the door again Ponsoby went whirling, but he wrenched himself back, and brought Wharton across the study at a run.

Bob Cherry clapped his hands.

"Good man! Go it!"

"Huray! Pile in, Harry!"

Bump! Crash!

The two excited wrestlers crashed into the wall of the study, and a picture came down off its hook and was shattered at their feet.

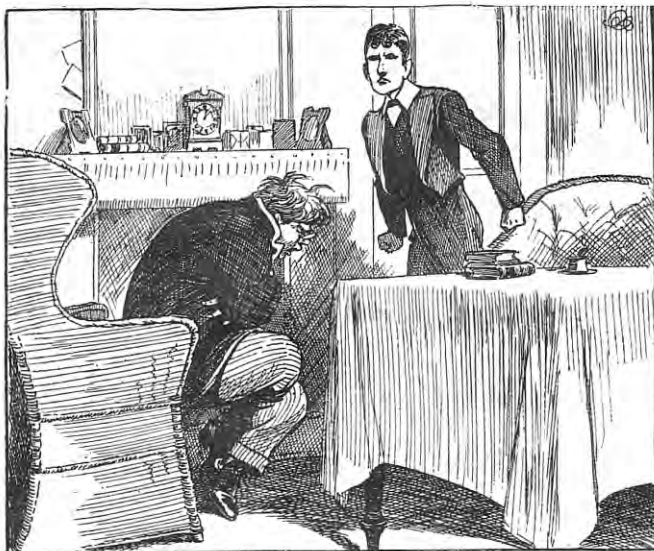
Bob Cherry roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it!"

The door of the study was flung open, and excited and amazed juniors stared in. Bulstrode, the ex-captain of the Remove, was the first; his study was next door. Tom Brown and Hazeldene were behind him, and behind them appeared John Bull, and Mark Linley, and Vernon-Smith, and Lord Mauleverer, and a crowd more.

"What's the matter?"

"What on earth—?"



"Why didn't you give Wharton that dose, as I told you, you young bound?" demanded the Bounder, between his set teeth. "He knew all about it," groaned Bunter, "and—and they made me swallow the dose instead! It was a jolly strong dose, and I'm ill! Ow!" (See Chap. 14.)

"What the dickens—!"

"It's all right," said Bob Cherry serenely, "Wharton and Ponsonby are having a little argument on the subject of fancy names."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think Wharton will win! I advise you chaps to get away from the door. Ponsonby is coming out that way."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bulstrode.

"Clear the way for the noble and esteemed Ponsonby!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Crash!

"Here, look out!" roared Nugent, in alarm.

But it was too late!

The wrestling juniors had crashed into the tea-table, and sent it flying.

Crockery and the remains of the meal shot off into a cascade on the floor, and there was a terrific crashing as they were reduced to fragments.

The juniors in the passage roared.

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Wharton was successful at last.

He tore Ponsonby's hold loose, and hurled the junior captain of Highcliffe fairly through the doorway.

It would have been well for the juniors there if they had taken Bob Cherry's warning in time.

But they hadn't.

Ponsonby came flying through the doorway, and he crashed into the crowd of juniors there with a crash that could only be described as terrific.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVAL CO'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"Oh!"

"Yah!"

"Eeerooh!"

"Great Scott!"

"Bogad!"

"My only aunt! Oh!"

Right and left the juniors reeled and staggered, as Ponsonby descended upon them, his flying arms knocking them to and fro. His arms closed round the neck of Bulstrode, and bore him to the floor, in the midst of the staggering juniors.

Bulstrode fell with a bump that shook all the breath out of him, and Ponsonby sprawled over him.

"Ow!" moaned Bulstrode painfully. "Draginoff! Ow!"

Wharton panted in the study.

It had been a terrific tussle, and Wharton was panting for breath, and crimson with exertion.

"Bravo!" shouted Bob Cherry gleefully. "Shall I chuck out the other cads, Harry?"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Gadsby, in alarm. "We came here for a peaceful talk, you know. It's—it's pax!"

"Absolutely!" gasped Vavasour.

"Oh, chuck 'em out!" said Nugent.

"Drag off this silly clump!" gasped Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull and Mark Linley dragged Ponsonby up. Bulstrode sat on the floor trying to get his breath back.

"I'll smash him!" he gasped.

"Hold on!" said Johnny Bull, laughing. "He looks pretty well smashed already. What on earth did you come here and look for trouble for, Ponsonby?"

"Ow!" groaned Ponsonby.
 "What do you want here?"
 Ponsonby scowled. He was gasping for breath, and at the same time keeping a wary eye upon Harry Wharton. He did not want a renewal of the struggle.

"I came to challenge you!" he said savagely.
 "Oh, we've had your challenge, and refused it!" said Vernon-Smith, the Boulder of Greyfriars. "Besides, you can't play footer for toffee."

"We're willing to play you at footer, or anything else," said Ponsonby—"any game you like, any variety of sport, running, swimming, rowing, leaping, cycling, anything you like; we're willing to meet you and beat you."

"Check!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "All gas!" said Bob Cherry sententially. "We know you, Ponsonby. You can't do the thing for nuts, and you mean to cheat."

"Honour bright!"
 "Oh, we know your brand of honour!" said Bob Cherry scornfully. "Kidnapping fellows and keeping them out of footer matches!"

Ponsonby flushed crimson.
 "You'll meet us, and take any precautions you please," he said. "We're willing to arrange everything on the whole holiday next week, and have the thing got up by a master, to prove that it's all square and above board."

"If it's all fair and square, you can't touch us, you know that," said Harry Wharton. "There's a little game on somewhere."

"It's all fair and square. You can ask a master to see to it, and we'll do the same, and the whole business can be arranged by the two of them," said Ponsonby.

"That sounds square, I guess," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.
 Harry Wharton shook his head.
 "I don't want to meet them, for one," he said. "I don't believe they mean fair play. We've refused their challenge, and we'll stick to that."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.
 "Then you're a set of funks!" said Ponsonby defiantly.

"Oh, get out!"
 "Funks!" yelled Vavasour. "Absolutely funks!"
 "Cowards!" said Gadsby.

"I think we're fed up with Highcliffe politeness," said Bob Cherry. "As they won't get out, we'll see them to the gates. Lay hold!"

"Hands off!"
 "Rats!"

The three Highcliffians were collared by many hands. They were promptly twisted over to a horizontal position, and with juniors at their heads and their feet, they were carried down the Remove passage.

A crowd of fellows, laughing and jeering, followed them.
 "Leggo!" roared Ponsonby, wriggling. "Leggo, I say! Ow!"

"Better keep still," advised Bob Cherry. "You see, if we let go now, you'll fall downstairs, and that may spoil your beauty—what there is of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Apparently Ponsonby thought so, too, for he ceased to struggle; and Gadsby and Vavasour followed his example.

In the midst of a chuckling crowd of juniors, they were borne down the stairs into the lower passage. Then there was a sudden shout from Bulstrode.

"Cave!"
 But the warning was hardly useful; Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was upon them. He strode up to the procession with a frowning brow, and stopped, staring in amazement, as he saw the Highcliffians.

"What on earth does this mean?" he ejaculated.
 "Visitors!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We're the guard of honour seeing them out, that's all."

"That's all!" said Bulstrode.
 Wingate burst into a laugh.

"Put them on their feet at once!"
 "Oh, I say, Wingate!"
 "Do you hear me?"
 "Oh, all right!"

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour were set upon their feet. They looked decidedly torn and dishevelled and untidy, and they were crimson with rage.

"You had better get out," said Wingate, "and you Remove kids had better behave yourselves, or there will be kickings handed round."

Ponsonby & Co. tramped out of the School House. They did not speak a word; they were in too great a fury to speak.

"Oh, all right, Wingate!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "But those chaps are such loads, you know."

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Wingate made a gesture, and the Removeites scampered back to their own passage. Three dishevelled youths were tramping away from Greyfriars in the spring cloak. But Ponsonby & Co. were not done, as the Greyfriars fellows were to discover.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Highcliffe Means Business.

"I SAY, you fellows—"
 It was about an hour later, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were busy at their preparation in No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter had opened the door, and he

blinked in through his big spectacles. Wharton frowned at him.

"We've had tea, and we've no money to lend," he said bluntly. "So you can travel. We're working, so don't jaw!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly.
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Burs off!" rapped out Nugent.

"But I say, Wharton, you know, are you expecting any money this evening—?"
 "Money?"

"Yes. 'Fellows' people often telegraph them money, you know, when they're hard up and want it bad," said Billy Bunter confidentially. "I was wondering whether your uncle or somebody might be wiring you money."

"Not that I know of."

"You see, I'm expecting a postal-order-to-morrow morning, and if somebody was wiring you money, you might be able to advance me something on my order, to give a chap a chance of getting a snack before going to bed—"

"Do you mean that there is a telegram for me?" asked Wharton, rising from the table.

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact—"
 "You fat duffer! Why couldn't you say so?"

"Well, if it isn't with money—"
 "Of course it isn't, you clump!"

Billy Bunter snorted.
 "Then I'm jolly well wasting my time! Blow your rotten telegram!"

And the Owl of the Remove rolled on down the passage. Trotter, the Greyfriars page, put his head into the study the next moment. Trotter had the telegram in his hand; Billy Bunter had only been a minute absent of him. Bunter

was tortoise-like in his slowness as a rule, but when there was a chance of making any money, he would outstrip Maseppa. But his quickness in the present case had not served him.

Harry Wharton took the telegram from the page, and looked at it in rather a puzzled way. It was not usual for a junior at Greyfriars to receive telegrams, especially in the evening, and the hero of the Remove was a little uneasy. A telegram was generally a bearer of bad news at the school. For all communications of an ordinary nature, the ordinary post sufficed.

"Blessed if I know whom this can be from!" Wharton remarked.

"Look inside," suggested Nugent. "That's a good dodge for finding out."

Wharton smiled, and slit the buff envelope of the telegram. He drew out the folded paper inside and opened it. As he glanced at the message, he gave a shout.

"The rotter!"
 Frank Nugent stared at him.

"What on earth—" he began.
 "The bound!"
 "Eh!"

"The insulting cad!"

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"What the—"
"Look there!" shouted Wharton.
He held the telegram before Nugent's eyes. Frank read it
—it did not take long—there was but a single word beside
the address:
"COWARD!"
"Why, my hat! Who could have sent that?"
"Highcliffe, of course. It was handed in at Courtfield,"
said Harry. "Look at it! They called in at the Courtfield
Post Office as they went back to Highcliffe from here, of
course."

"My word!"
"The rotters! The post-office oughtn't to have taken in
such a message—but the cads may have pretended it was a code
word."

"I say, that's jolly thick!" said Nugent, staring at the
telegram. "We can't stand that sort of thing, you know.
We're jolly well not going to have Highcliffe calling us
cowards. We shall have to go over there and lick them!"

"We can't!" said Harry, biting his lips. "The Head was
awfully ratty about the last big row we had with them—he's
forbidden us to go to Highcliffe again, unless it's on the
occasion of a match."

"I forgot. But we can't stand this!"
Wharton frowned darkly.

"You mean Ponsoby's little game?" he exclaimed.
"They're going to insult us like this until we agree to com-
pete with them in the sports. I suppose they've really got
some new boys in the Fourth at Highcliffe, who are holy
terrors."

"If they mean fair play, it wouldn't be a bad idea to play
them," Nugent suggested thoughtfully.

"I don't like the idea of being ragged into it, though."

Wharton tossed the telegram into the fire, and sat down
at the table again. But it was some little time before he
could settle down to his work. The insult from the High-
cliffians had cut him deeply.

Preparation was finished at last, and the juniors went down
into the common-room. Most of the Removite were there, as
well as the Upper Fourth and the Shell. A general grin
greeted Wharton from the Fourth-Formers and the Shell
fellows, and he knew at once that the telegram from High-
cliffe was public property. Billy Bunter had doubtless been
lingering in the passage, and had heard the chums speaking
of it.

"Had any more wires?" asked Temple, of the Upper
Fourth, with a chuckle.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's jolly rotten!" exclaimed Johnny Bull indignantly.

"We shall have to stop the Highcliffe cads, somehow."

"We want a captain for the Removite, to put them in their
place!" remarked the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Johnny Bull sniffed.

"Well, Wharton would be skipper now, if you hadn't
played a rotten game about it!" he retorted.

Vernon-Smith scowled.

The question whether Harry Wharton or Vernon-Smith, the
Bounder of Greyfriars, should be captain of the Removite, was
not settled yet. The fight for the captaincy was not yet over.

There was no doubt that the Removite were badly in need of
an acknowledged leader. Even Bulstrode, although he had
not been quite satisfactory as a skipper, had been better than
nothing, as some of the Removites told him with youthful
frankness.

Trotter, the page, came into the common-room with a
letter in his hand.

"Master Bulstrode here?" he asked.

Bulstrode stepped forward.

"Is that for me, Trotter?"

"Yes, sir. A boy just left it at the gates, and he said
there was no answer. Gooding gave it to me to bring to
you."

And Trotter departed. Bulstrode looked curiously at the
letter. It had a scent to it, and the scent was familiar.

"It's from Highcliffe!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Wharton's brows contracted.

"Some more insults from those cads!" he exclaimed.

"Don't open it, Bulstrode, old man! Send it back to the
rotters as it is."

"Well, I don't know for certain it's from Highcliffe," said
Bulstrode.

"Open it and see!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders. He was assured
that the letter was from Highcliffe, and, for his own part,
he would have returned it unopened. But it was Bulstrode's,
to be done with as Bulstrode chose, and Wharton had no
more to say. Bulstrode opened the letter.

"Read it out!" shouted the juniors.

Bulstrode's brow darkened.

"It's from Highcliffe!" he said.

"Well, let's hear it!"

"Yes, go ahead!" grinned Hoskins of the Shell. "Some-
thing nice, like the giddy telegram, I dare say. Go ahead!"

"Go ahead, Bulstrode!" said Vernon-Smith. "Let's know
what they've got to say!"
Bulstrode hesitated.
"Read it out!" yelled the juniors.
"Oh, all right!"
Bulstrode read out the letter.
"To Bulstrode, and the Greyfriars Removite,—
"We, the juniors of Highcliffe, challenge you to a sporting
competition—anything you like—running, jumping, rowing,
boxing, football—and if you don't meet us we shall rag you
until you do. You can arrange the meeting how you like, on
your own terms; but you've got to meet us. If you don't
you are a set of cunts, and we shall tell everybody know it.
Look out for acalls!"
Signed:

"Ponsoby, Gadshy, Monson, Vavasour, Merton."

"Cheeky cads!" said Bob Cherry angrily.

"Why don't you meet them, then?" grinned Temple.

"They're blackguards," said Wharton. "They wouldn't
give us fair play."

"They say you can make your own arrangements for the
contest."

"That's all gas!"

"Tuts! You're afraid to meet them!" grinned Fry of the
Fourth. "Nice thing for Greyfriars. I wonder what the
acalls' coming to! Yah!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

"If they like to challenge the Fourth we'll meet them," said
Temple. "Somebody must stand up for the credit of the
coll."

"Rats!"

Bulstrode threw the letter into the fire. But the Removite
looked very excited and angry as they went up to their
dormitory that night. It really looked as if Ponsoby & Co.
would succeed in ragging them into accepting the challenge.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark.

HARRY WHARTON was the first down of the Removite
the following morning. He was thinking of the High-
cliffe challenge as he strolled out into the Close, in the
brightness of the bright morning sun of spring.

An early housemaid was engaged upon the steps of the
School House with pail and mop. She glanced at Wharton,
and smiled. She was busily engaged in removing, or, rather,
trying to remove, a series of letters in black that were daubed
upon the lowest step. But the inscription had been daubed
there in black paint, and it was not easy to scrub off. It
stared at Wharton through the suds, and the Removite started,
and compressed his lips, as he read it.

The Highcliffians had been there.

In bold, black letters was traced the message from Ponsoby
& Co.

"THE REMOVITE ARE ALL FUNKS!"

Wharton stared at it.

He realised that Ponsoby and his friends must have
broken bounds at Highcliffe the previous night, and entered
the precincts of Greyfriars, to daub that insolent message
upon the stone steps of the School House.

The Highcliffians evidently meant business.

"The rotters!" muttered Wharton.

"My hat! What's that?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, follow-
ing Harry Wharton out of the house.

Wharton smiled bitterly.

"A message from Highcliffe!" he said.

The Bounder stared at it, and whistled.

"My hat! They must have come back here last night—
after lights out, too!"

"Looks like it!"

"Pleasant!" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "The maid
won't be able to get that out. It's there for all Greyfriars to
read."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"We'll make the cads sit up for their insults!" he said.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"There's only one way of making them sit up," he replied.

"And what's that?"

"By accepting their challenge, and licking them!"

Wharton was silent.

"That's what we ought to do," said Vernon-Smith. "If I
were captain of the Removite I would do it."

"You know why we've refused," said Wharton abruptly.

"They don't play fair. Almost every match we've had with
them there's been foul play. They mobbed us once when we
played a match on their ground, and in the last match they
kidnapped one man, and kept them away from the field."

"I know that."

"Well, they're not fit for decent fellows to play with."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"That's as it may be," he said. "I know we shall become the laughing-stock of Greyfriars if we don't play them, all the same. They've offered to let us name our own conditions—to arrange the meeting as we please. They couldn't offer fairer than that."

"They don't mean it!"

"We can take them at their word."

Wharton's brows contracted in thought.

"If they mean business," he said slowly, "it's because they've got some new fellows at Highcliffe, and they think they can beat us. The old gang are not up to our mark, and Pensonby knows that very well."

"Quite so. In fact, I knew there were several new chaps in the Fourth at Highcliffe this term, and I've heard that they are hot stuff!" said Vernon-Smith. "I have friends over at Highcliffe, as you know. I believe they will give us a tussle. But I'm not afraid, for one."

Harry Wharton flashed angrily.

"I'm not afraid, either!" he exclaimed sharply. "If it is to be a fair contest I don't mind. But I can't believe they mean honest Injun."

"We can make sure of that by arranging the thing to take place here, and getting a master to make the arrangements. Mr. Quelch would do it, or Mr. Capper."

"I don't like the idea of playing them, after the way they've acted."

"That's all very well; but we don't want to be set down as a funky crew, because you've got such a jolly stiff neck," said the Bouncer rudely. "I shall put it to the fellows at a Form meeting whether we play them or not."

"You can do as you like."

Wharton turned away with a clouded brow. The insults of the Highcliffians cut him deeply, and he was somewhat inclined to the Bouncer's way of thinking. A licking on the playing-fields would silence the rads of Highcliffe, and probably nothing else would. Once the Removites had raided Highcliffe School itself, and licked the Highcliffians on their own ground. But that was impossible to repeat. The Head had given very strict injunctions upon that point. And, as Vernon-Smith said, it was impossible for this to go on.

When the rest of the Remove came out, there were furious exclamations over the inscription on the school steps.

The housemaid had retired baffled from the obstinate point. After all her scrubbing, the black letters showed up as clearly as ever, more clearly, in fact, against the whiteness of the stone around them.

Crowds of fellows gathered to look at them, the Removites with angry faces, and the fellows of other Forms with broad grins.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, took it as a huge joke, and they were not likely to let the Removite forget it in a hurry. Coker of the Fifth stopped to stare at the inscription when he came out, and burst into a terrific roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! You kids are found out now! Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, shut up, Coker!" growled Bob Cherry. "We've licked your lot at footer, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

And the Fifth roared over it, and so did the Sixth, for that matter. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, looked angry and annoyed when he saw it. He looked at it, and then called to Harry Wharton.

"What does that mean?" he demanded.

"Check!" said Harry.

"I mean, who put it there? Surely you didn't have the cheek to disgrace the school steps in that way, Coker?"

Coker chuckled.

"No, fear! I didn't do it."

"Was it you, Temple?"

"Not me!" grinned Temple.

"Then who was it?" Wingate exclaimed angrily.

"It wasn't a Greyfriar chap at all," said Nugent.

Wingate looked astonished.

"Who was it, then?"

"Well, we suppose it was the Highcliffe chaps!"

"Highcliffe! Do you mean to say that the Highcliffe fellows got in here last night, and had the nerve to daub up the steps with paint in this way?" the Greyfriars captain exclaimed sharply.

"We didn't see them," said Frank. "But I suppose it was Highcliffe."

"And what does it mean?" demanded Wingate.

"Check!" repeated Wharton.

"But they must have some motive for doing this," said Wingate, looking at Wharton very keenly. "Have they challenged you, or something of that sort, and been refused?"

"Yes, they have," said Vernon-Smith, before Harry Wharton could speak. "They've challenged us, and Nugent

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wrote a refusal. They came last evening to repeat their challenge, and they were kicked out."

"Why?"

The Bouncer gave an expressive shrug.

"The reason's written, there!" he said, pointing to the inscription on the step. "I don't know any other reason."

There was a buzz of indignation from the Removites.

"Shut up, Smitty!"

"Rot!"

"Hold your tongue!"

Wingate frowned.

"Let's get to the bottom of this," he said. "What have they challenged you to—a footer match?"

"That, and other things," said Vernon-Smith. "Both schools have a whole holiday next week, and they have challenged us to a general sports competition—jumps and sprinting and boxing, and so forth."

"And you have refused?"

"The Remove committee have refused. I wanted to accept," said the Bouncer, with another expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"Why have you refused, Wharton?"

"Because they've said!" said Wharton. "They tried foot play in the most rotten way at our last match, and we told them we should cross them on our list. We've done so; and we've stuck to it—that's all."

"I guess that's the lay out," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"But they've offered to meet us on any terms we like, and to have the whole business arranged under the chore of a master," said Vernon-Smith quickly. "Whatever they've done before, they mean fair play this time."

Wingate looked thoughtful.

"I quite understand your position, Wharton," he said. "At the same time, if the competition can be arranged with fairness, I think you ought to meet them."

"If you think so, Wingate—"

"Well, I do."

"In that case, we'll meet them," said Harry.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "We only want fair play; and we should be glad of a chance of licking the cheeky ends, if they couldn't foul us any way."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"I think you ought to meet them," said Wingate. "I will look into the matter myself if you like, and see that the thing is arranged fairly for both sides. If they've offered you your own conditions you can have the matches arranged here, under our own eyes, with a master looking on. That will make everything fair and square."

"Good!"

"Then I'll see to it," said Wingate; "and I think some of you had better set to work scraping that paint off—we don't look well."

And the Remove agreed with Wingate there.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Third Test.

IN spite of the industry of the Remove, there were still very plain traces of the Highcliffe inscription on the school steps when the bell rang for morning lessons and the Remove went into the Form-room.

Harry Wharton was frowning. He felt the insult very deeply; and he felt, too, being over-ruled upon the subject of meeting the Highcliffe fellows. But he admitted that it was the best thing to be done, if the arrangements could be made satisfactorily—as they undoubtedly would be under Wingate's supervision. Vernon-Smith, too, was looking very thoughtful; and more than once during morning lessons Mr. Quelch came down upon the Bouncer of Greyfriars for inattention in class. The Bouncer seemed to be thinking of something else, and he was the richer by a hundred lines when the Removite were dismissed that morning.

But the Bouncer was not thinking of lines. He tapped Harry Wharton on the arm as they came out into the passage.

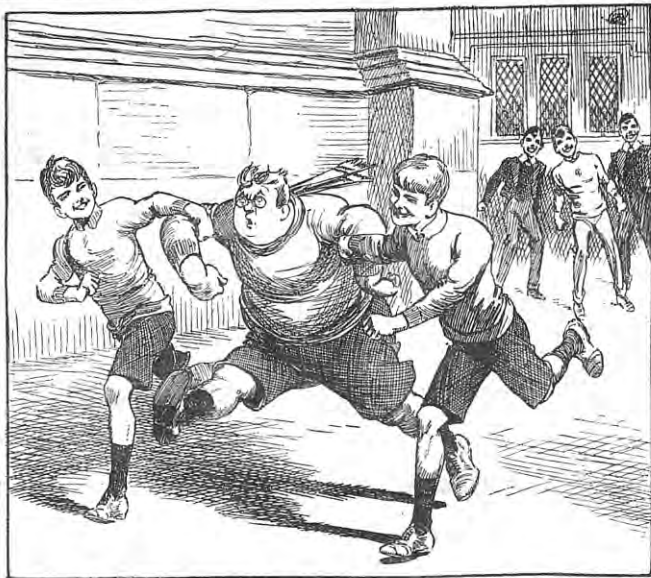
Wharton looked at him without speaking. He was not on good terms with his rival for the captaincy of the Remove.

"I want a few words with you," said the Bouncer. "It's important."

"Go ahead!" said Harry shortly.

"The question of the captaincy isn't settled yet. Wingate imposed three tests; and the winner of the rubber—you or I—was to become captain of the Remove. As the voting was so close, it was the fairest way; it would be not for you to be elected to the captaincy because you polled just one more vote—and that the vote of a fellow who hurried back to school at the last moment to vote for you. If Hurree Singh hadn't returned to Greyfriars at that particular moment the votes would have tied."

"I know all that!" said Harry impatiently. "A majority of one ought to be enough to decide an election; but I agreed to have the matter go by tests, and I haven't complained."



Holding his fat arms in a grip like a vice, the two juniors rushed Bunter across the Close, and he gasped and snorted and yelled to them to slacken down in vain. "Go it, Billy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You're getting on with your training splendidly! Put your beef into it!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites,"

(See Chapter 7.)

"We've had two of the tests," went on the Bounder, unheeding. "The first was finding out Marjorie Hazeldene when she was kidnapped by that gipsy scoundrel—and you did it. The second was beating the Fifth—and I did it. So far it's a dead heat; we've equal chances for the captaincy, and the third test isn't fixed yet."

"Well," said Vernon-Smith, "this seems to me a good chance of settling the matter. We're going to meet the Highcliffe fellows in all kinds of sports, and give a whole day to the biznez. I think we might let this contest decide the fight for the captaincy. You and I can take on the Highcliffe champions, and the one that makes the best show for Greyfriars can be considered the winner of the third test—and of the rubber. What do you say?"

Wharton reflected. "It's a good idea," he said—"if Wingate agrees." "Wingate's sure to agree—he's bound to. There couldn't be a better way of settling the matter," said Vernon-Smith. "If Wingate says 'Yes,' I say 'Yes,'" said Harry. "Then I'll speak to Wingate."

"Very well."

And Vernon-Smith walked away in search of the captain of Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton's brow was wrinkled in thought as he strolled out into the Close. The contest for the captaincy of the Remove had been undecided long enough, he knew that—and the sooner it was settled the better. The usual

system of settling the matter by election was impossible in his case, as the votes practically tied.

The three tests imposed by Wingate had been accepted with keenness by the whole Remove. They were proud of being a sporting form. So far, the rival candidates had scored equally—the first win to Harry Wharton, and the second to the Bounder. Vernon-Smith's idea for the third test was certainly a good one; and, as he said, Wingate was sure to approve of it. The fellow who did his best for Greyfriars against the common enemy was certainly the best fellow to captain the Remove.

"Jolly good idea!" said Bob Cherry, when Harry Wharton told him what Vernon-Smith had suggested. "Wingate's sure to agree."

"Ripping!" said Frank Nugent. "I wonder where the Bounder dug up such a jolly good sporting idea?"

"The sportfulness of the honourable idea is terrific," remarked Hurree Jarnet Ram Singh, in the wonderful English he had imbibed in India. "And, as our worthy friend Wharton will inflict the complete lickfulness upon the Highcliffe cads, he will win the esteemed captaincy."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't know," he said. "Vernon-Smith isn't an easy customer for anybody to tackle. He will have as much chance as I have, I think. And neither of us may beat the Highcliffe champions. It's pretty clear that they've got something specially good, or they wouldn't be challenging us in this way."

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVAL CO'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS,
Order Early.

"Yes, that's certain," John Ball remarked.
"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Here's the postman!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "And he seems to have a collection for us."

The postman was coming the path to the House, and he stopped as he saw the *many of juniors and took a number of postcards from his bag. There was a peculiar grin upon the face of the postman. Perhaps he had looked at the cards.*

"Anything for us?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, Master Wharton—one for you, and one for Master Cherry, and one for Master Nugent; and I've some more for the other young gentlemen."

"Somebody sending us comic cards, I suppose?" said Nugent, noting the grin upon the village postman's weather-beaten countenance. "Hand them over."

"Here they are, sir."

The juniors took the postcards, and the postman, still grinning, shouldered his bag and went on to the House.

Harry Wharton looked at his card, and his brows contracted. It was a picture-postcard, but the picture on it was drawn in pen and ink, and was evidently the work of an amateur. *The picture was a very good one, and the drawing was very clear. The picture was a very good one, and the drawing was very clear. The picture was a very good one, and the drawing was very clear.*

Wharton grunted his teeth.
"More of their beastly cheek!" he growled. "I suppose you've got the same?"

"Look at this!" howled Nugent.

Nugent's picture-card represented a Greyfriars fellow on his knees, with his hands clasped, and his head streaming down his face, begging for mercy. A Highcliffe fellow was standing in an attitude of lofty contempt. A scroll was depicted as issuing from the mouth of the suppliant, bearing the words:

"Please don't lick me! I can't help being a funk!"

"Look at this!" roared Bob Cherry.

Upon Bob Cherry's card the amateur artist had depicted Bob himself—quite a good likeness—lying on the ground, with a Highcliffe foot on his neck.

The juniors gazed at one another in wrath.

"The rotten cads!" said Nugent at last. "They're going it strong."

"We couldn't stand this," said Harry; "we shall have to meet them, I suppose, whether we like it or not."

"We'll lick 'em out of their pants!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"The wickedness shall be terrific."

The juniors strolled into the House. They found the Remove in a state of high excitement. Twenty or more picture-postcards, all of the same kind, had been delivered to various members of the Remove. The Highcliffians were doing the thing thoroughly. All the pictures represented the Greyfriars fellows in various suppliant or defeated attitudes; and all of them galled the Removites extremely.

"By Jove!" said Bulstrode. "We'll go over to Highcliffe and lick them! Let's raid the blessed school! We did once before, and they didn't put up anything like a fight."

"Hear, hear!"

"Can't be done!" said Wharton quietly. "The Head's down on it; he's specially forbidden anything of the sort. We can't put up with this sort of thing!" howled Mick Desmond.

"Fuh, and I wish the thafe of the worlud was here now!"

Vernon-Smith joined the group.

"I've seen Wingate," he said. "He agrees to my suggestion, Wharton. He thinks it a jolly good idea. I told you he would. And he says he'll go over to Highcliffe and fix it up for us."

"Good old Wingate!"

"Harrah!"

And the Removites were somewhat comforted. There was solace in the thought of meeting the Highcliffians upon the playing-fields and inflicting upon them a licking in every variety of youthful sport. The picture-postcards were consigned to the fire, and the Removites waited eagerly to learn the result of Wingate's visit to Highcliffe.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The New Recruits.

PERSONSBY sat in his study at Highcliffe, with a pen in his hand, and a card before him upon the table, and a grin upon his face. Vavasour and Gadsby were with him, and they were grinning, too. Personsbey, the amateur artist, was busily executing another pictorial effort for the delectation of the Greyfriars Remove.

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There were two other fellows in the study—two very powerfully-built juniors, who looked big enough to be in the Fifth Form. They were new boys at Highcliffe, and they had started on somewhat bad terms with Personsbey & Co. The latter youths did not care much for the fellows who could do things, and when the two Wilkinsons—major and minor—arrived, and showed that they could do things, Personsbey & Co. had been very much up against them.

But it had occurred to the astute Personsbey what a rod in pickle the new fellows might be for Greyfriars; and then he had changed, and he had taken the two, so to speak, to his heart. Hence the challenge to the Greyfriars Remove, which the Highcliffians were so determined that the Remove should accept.

"Oh, ripping!" said Gadsby, looking over Personsbey's shoulder, as the picture of a dejected Removite of Greyfriars grew under his pen. "That will touch them on the raw, I should think."

"Absolutely!" yawned Vavasour.

Wilkinson major looked at the card.

"Queer that they want so much gloomier before they understand it. What have they got their backs up about? You used to have regular fixtures with them, I understand."

Personsbey coughed.

"There were rows," he explained.

"But what about?" asked Tom Wilkinson.

"Well, they accused us of foul play."

"That was rotten."

"Anything in it?" asked Wilkinson minor.

Personsbey glared.

"Are you looking for a thick ear?" he demanded.

Bob Wilkinson, the younger of the two brothers, grinned.

"Yes; I'm willing to take all the thick ears you can give me," he said.

Personsbey turned to his picture again.

"No good rowing among ourselves," he remarked. "We shall need all of it for the Greyfriars Remove, when they accept our challenge."

"Do you think they will accept it?"

"They'll have to!"

"And then you two fellows will help us to walk over them," Gadsby remarked. "You ought to feel jolly proud, too, of being selected by old hands like us as champions of Highcliffe."

"Well, you chaps need a champion, if chaps ever did," said Wilkinson unjolly bluntly. "You can't play leader for toffee!"

"Look here—"

"And you can't run or jump for nuts!" said Bob Wilkinson.

"You cheeky young ass—"

"Well, facts are facts; but if we can give Highcliffe a leg up by licking the Greyfriars kids, we're willing to do it," said the major.

Monson came into the study.

"Visitor from Greyfriars?" he announced, with a grin.

Personsbey jumped up.

"Wharton?" he asked.

"No; Wingate—a giddy senior."

"My hat!"

Wingate came into the study. The Highcliffe juniors all rose to their feet, very much impressed by the visit of the head of the Sixth from the rival school. Wingate glanced over them keenly as he nodded a greeting. He noted the two new boys, too, and as he knew most of the Highcliffians juniors by sight, he guessed something of what was in the minds of Personsbey & Co. They had "hot stuff" in the new fellows!

"You kids have sent a challenge to the Greyfriars Remove," said Wingate abruptly.

Personsbey nodded.

"Just so!" he asserted.

"They accept it."

"Good!" said Personsbey, with a grin. "We thought we should be able to persuade them to accept it, in the long run."

"I dare say you'll be sorry they've accepted, in the long run," replied Wingate drily. "They are willing to meet you on the whole holiday next week at any game or sport you like to name. The competition will be drawn up under a joint committee, and I shall look after it, and the whole

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business will be held at Greyfriars, under the supervision of a master. Does that suit you?"

"Certainly!"

"I may as well put it plainly," said the Greyfriars captain. "Wharton cut the fixtures with Highlife because there was foul play. If there is any suspicion of anything of the sort this time, the thing will be cut again. The Greyfriars Remove will accept you, if the business is arranged so as to be above suspicion."

Ponsonby flushed.

"That's understood," he said, "and we're willing to have it at Greyfriars, and to have it under the charge of a master. We can't say fairer (than that)."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"I don't see why it can't be held over here, for that matter!" said Wilkinson major, rather belligerently.

Wingate looked at him.

"You are new here?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"Then you probably don't know the manners and customs yet. But as Ponsonby agrees to my suggestion, there is only a question of seeing the conditions arranged. You can draw up a list of events, Ponsonby, and send them over to Greyfriars, and they will be discussed and agreed upon. Does that suit you?"

"Yes; down to the ground."

"As many events as you like," said Wingate. "The Greyfriars Remove will meet you at anything, from football to skipping. So it's settled!"

"Oh, quite."

"Very well. I'll be off."

And Wingate nodded, and descended the stairs, and in another minute was on his bicycle again. Wingate was a businesslike fellow, and did not believe in wasting time.

Tom Wilkinson whistled.

"Like the chap!" he remarked.

Ponsonby sniffed.

"Well, I don't!" he said. "I think he's a pig! I wouldn't have let him talk to me like that, only I'm so keen on getting those cads to meet us."

"Looks to me as though there's something in what he says," replied Wilkinson major, drily. "Look here, if we're in this thing, these jolly well got to be fair play all round. If I see anybody up to rotten tricks, there will be some punching!"

"What ho!" said his minor, emphatically.

"It's going to be quite fair and square," said Ponsonby.

"Absolutely!" chimed in the incessant Vavasour.

"Good! It will have to be!"

And the Wilkinsons strolled out of the study.

Ponsonby tore his picture-card across, and tossed the pieces into the fire.

"That won't be wanted now," he remarked. "We've brought the Greyfriars bouncers up to the scratch at last! I thought that inscription on their House steps would do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As for those Yorkshire chaps," said Ponsonby, with a nod after the two Wilkinsons, "they can have their heads till we've used them for licking the Greyfriars rotters. When this contest is over, we'll jolly well rag some of the cheek out of them! We must stand them for the present, though."

"That's understood!" said Gadsby, with a spiteful look.

"But as soon as this is over we'll give them a dormitory licking, to take some of the cheek out of them!"

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

The two new boys in the Fourth Form at Highlife strolled out into the quad. They were both looking very thoughtful, and the elder was frowning a little.

"Looks to me as if the Greyfriars fellows were about right," said the minor, abruptly. "Ponsonby and his lot are simply bouncers, Tom!"

The major nodded.

"Looks like it to me," he said. "They've tried to foul the other fellows, and they've got done in the eye. We've got into a set of cads here, Bob."

"And they don't like us. They're only making use of us because we can keep their end up for them against Greyfriars."

"Exactly!"

"Blessed if I half like doing it!" growled Bob.

The elder grinned.

"We'll do it for the school—not for that set!" he said.

"And while we're here, Bob, my nippin, we'll hammer some sense of decency into that lot! They're simply putty—all gas and swank—and I think I can foresee the time when I shall be captain of this Form, and Ponsonby will be singing snail! But we must lick the Greyfriars fellows first. That's a good beginning."

"Good egg!" said his minor.

But the task of licking the Greyfriars fellows was destined to prove an exceedingly difficult and uncertain one for the Highlife champions.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Training.

THERE was a considerable amount of excitement in the Greyfriars Remove.

Whole holidays were not common at Greyfriars, and the juniors were looking forward to the one due in the following week, and the challenge from Highlife afforded the best possible way of filling up that holiday. A day devoted to sports just "jumped" with the ideas of the Greyfriars Remove. The details of the scheme were not settled yet, but it was arranged that there should be a list of events, open to all the juniors who cared to enter for them; and a great many of the Removees were burning with the desire to distinguish themselves. Even Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, caught the general enthusiasm. Bunter, according to himself, was kept from shining in Form footie-matches by the personal jealousy of the footer committee. And in a competition open to all, it was no longer possible for jealous rivals to stand in the way. Billy Bunter intended to make a regular study of it. Other fellows, more fitted for athletic sports than Billy Bunter, had the same intention. And there was a great deal of excitement in the Remove over the discussion of the arrangements.

The fear of foul play on the part of the Highlifeians—very well-grounded fear—was removed by the care taken by Wingate. The competition was arranged to take place at Greyfriars, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had kindly consented to take charge of the affair; and it was even expected that the Head would give the proceedings a look in. But the Removeies understood that the Highlifeians, for once in a while, meant to play the game—not because they had any leaning that way, but because it would suit them better. The Remove knew by now all about Ponsonby's two new recruits, and the great things that Ponsonby & Co. expected of them.

"Two blessed Yorkshire chaps!" said Vernon-Smith. "I saw them at footer practice at Highlife, and I can tell you they made the fur fly! They've got a pace that beats anything that Highlife ever saw! And I've seen them boxing, too, and they can box like light-weight champions!"

"That accounts for the milk in the cocoanut!" Bob Cherry remarked, with a whistle. "They've got two giddy champions, and they think they will be able to lick us in all the events. It accounts for Ponsonby being so keen on the competition."

"All the same, we'll beat them," said Nugent, confidently.

"We've got a jolly good set of fellows to put up against them. Both you and Smithy can beat anything of your own age in the footer line, Harry; and as for running and jumping, you can hold your own. And if you are beaten, there are other fellows in the Remove who can stand up for the honour of Greyfriars."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nearly everybody in the Form seems to be bent on putting his name down for one or other of the events," he remarked.

"The more the merrier!" Nugent remarked.

"Oh, certainly!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, looking into the junior common-room, where the Removeies were discussing the matter, "I suppose you know that I'm going in for this affair?"

"You?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Certainly! I suppose there's no objection?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I hear that there are some new fellows at Highlife who are particularly hot stuff, and so the Remove will need its best man in the field."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, I'm going in for some training!" said Bunter, with a self-satisfied smirk. "I think I'd better be careful to get into form. How would you like to pace me round the Close, Cherry?"

"I'll roll you round if you like," said Bob.

"Oh, really—"

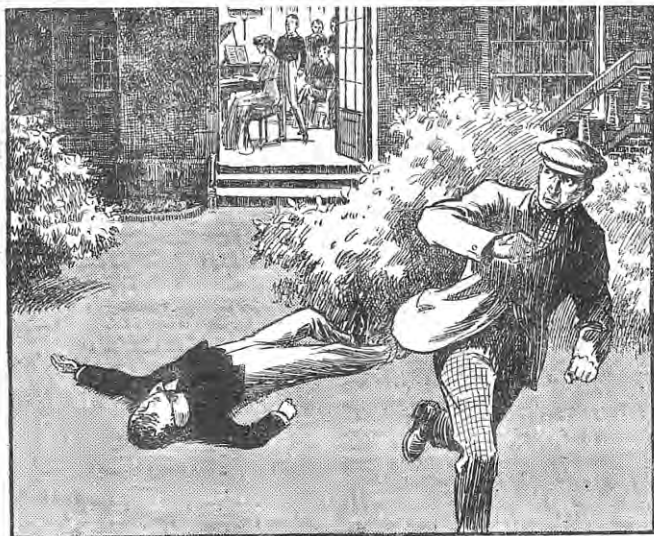
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"I really think you fellows might take this a bit more seriously," said Bunter, glowering at the Removeies. "It's a pretty serious matter. We shall all feel pretty rotten if the Remove are beaten by those Highlife cads! I'm going to enter for every event that I'm fitted for!"

"There isn't a jam-art devouring competition!" said Nugent. "I'm afraid there's nothing in your line at all, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.



There was a hoarse, startled cry as a figure leaped from the shrubbery. Then, in a flash, a savage blow was struck, and Tom Merry lay stretched upon the ground, the moonlight glimmering upon his white, up-turned face. (A stirring incident from the long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "The Hero of St. Jim's," by Martin Clifford, contained in this week's issue of our popular Companion Paper, the "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

Bob Cherry and Nugent strolled back to the house, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the ground, and trying to recover his breath. It was full five minutes before he was able to crawl away, and when he did so, his ambition of distinguishing himself on the cinder-path had quite died out. It had dawned even upon the limited intelligence of Billy Bunter that he was not built for running.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Not Quite a Business Matter.

WILKINSON MAJOR rose from the tea-table in his study at Highcliffe, and jerked a couple of pairs of boxing-gloves out of a locker. There were four fellows in the study—one of them his minor, and the other three Ponsoby, Vaynsour, and Gadsby. They had just had tea together. Ponsoby & Co. were keeping on the best of terms just now with the two new fellows in the Highcliffe Fourth. There was no love lost between them, but the two Wilkinsons were too useful, at present, to be quarrelled with. When the contest with Greyfriars was over, Ponsoby & Co. had their plans formed, but they did not let the new fellows know what their intentions were. Nothing could exceed the politeness which Ponsoby could assume towards fellows he intended to make use of.

"Which of you is going to put the gloves on with me?" asked Wilkinson major.

"Ahem!" said Gadsby.

"I don't feel quite up to boxing just now," Vaynsour remarked.

"I was just going to say the same," said Ponsoby thoughtfully.

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**NEXT
TUESDAY: "THE RIVAL CO'S AT GREYFRIARS!"**

Tom Wilkinson laughed.

"Oh, shove the gloves on, and don't be such blessed slackers!" he said. "We've got boxing matches on the list of events with Greyfriars, and we want to keep in practice."

"You two chaps are going to do the boxing," Ponsoby remarked.

"Look to me as if we're going to do the whole thing," growled Wilkinson major. "But do put the gloves on, and give me a chance to hit at something more lively than a punching-ball!"

"Well, no hard hitting, you know," said Gadsby, taking up the gloves.

"Oh, all serene, if you want to be wrapped in cotton-wool. Why the dickens don't you get a glass case to live in?"

Gadsby made no reply, but he put on the gloves. The other fellows pushed the table to one side, and made room for the boxing. Bob Wilkinson stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on with a grin upon his rugged, good-natured face. He did not think that Gadsby would stand up long against his major.

He was right. Gadsby rather fancied himself as a boxer, but he was far too effeminate, like most of the Highcliffe fellows, to take it up seriously. The prospect of a bruised nose or a discoloured eye discouraged him. He faced the big Yorkshire junior in a very doubtful sort of way.

There was no doubt that Wilkinson major could box. He had plenty of science, and plenty of physical strength, and he simply made rings round Gadsby. He did not hit hard, as he regarded it—but it seemed very hard to Gadsby, when he was laid on the floor with a gentle lap on the chest.

"Ow!" he groaned.

"Gee up!" said Wilkinson major.

**By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.**

Gadsby peeled off the gloves.

"I've had enough," he said sulkily, "I'm tired."

"My hat! Put on the gloves, Vavasour, do!"

Vavasour obeyed. He stood up to the new boy a much shorter time than Gadsby had done. He retired from the contest as soon as he was touched. Wilkinson major stared at him as he tossed the gloves upon the table.

"Done!" he asked.

"Absolutely!" growled Vavasour.

"Well, I must say you are a set of weak slackers at Highcliffe. See, Wilkinson major. No wonder the Greyfriars chaps have taken you off their list. If you play footer the same as you box, I wonder you've got the cheek to show up on the chess-field at all."

"Oh, cheer it!" growled Ponsomby. "You've got a jolly lot too much to say for a new kid."

"Put the gloves on, my son."

Ponsomby hesitated; but he had more pluck than the others, and his hesitation was only for a moment. He donned the gloves, and faced the new junior. Wilkinson major found him a harder nut to crack, and Ponsomby lasted five minutes. Then he was laid on his back, alighting on the carpet with a loud bump and a gasp.

"Time!" grinned Bob Wilkinson.

"Having any more?" asked the major.

Ponsomby staggered to his feet.

"No," he said. "It's all right, you can box, and you're a rod in pickle for the Greyfriars' bouncers. I think you could lick either Wharton or Vernon-Smith or Bob Cherry, and they're the best fighting-men they can put up, I think."

"But I want some practice," said Wilkinson major. "You are jolly soft stuff here, I must say. Bob, put the gloves on!"

"Right-ho!" said his younger brother cheerfully.

Ponsomby, Vavasour, and Gadsby retired from the study, Ponsomby slamming the door rather hard as he left. They paused at the end of the passage to look at one another, with dark and lowering faces.

"Those two cuds are taking matters with a pretty high hand," Vavasour growled. "I'm getting fed up with their cack."

Ponsomby nodded.

"It's only for a time," he said, in a low voice. "They give us a chance we've wanted for a long time of beating Greyfriars, but when that's over—"

"We'll jolly well put them in their place," said Gadsby.

"What-ho!" Ponsomby greeted his teeth. "We'll take some of the rotten cheek out of them, when we've done with them."

"Absolutely!" muttered Vavasour.

There was a step on the stairs, and the Highcliffe juniors looked round. It was not a Highcliffe fellow who came into the Fourth Form passage, but Vernon-Smith of the Greyfriars Remove. The Bouncer of Greyfriars nodded genially to the trio. He was an old acquaintance of Ponsomby & Co.

"Hallo! What do you want?" asked Ponsomby, not very politely.

"I've come over to see you about the matches," said Vernon-Smith.

"That's all settled; we've sent a written list of the events to Wharton."

"I want to see your champions."

"What do you mean?"

The Bouncer laughed.

"Oh, I know all about it!" he said. "You've got two new chaps here—two Yorkshire tykes—very hot stuff, and that's what's put it into your heads to challenge me. You know you couldn't touch us by yourselves."

"We've a right to put forward anybody we like, so long as he belongs to the lower school here," said Ponsomby.

"I know that; but I want to see them."

"Number Seven study," said Ponsomby, jerking his thumb along the passage. "You can see them if you like, I suppose."

"Thanks!"

Vernon-Smith walked easily along the passage, and the Highcliffe trio, still scowling, went downstairs. Vernon-Smith halted outside the Wilkinsons' study. There was a sound of sharp breathing and the tramping of feet within, and there came no answer to Vernon-Smith's knock. The two new fellows were evidently too deeply engaged to hear. Vernon-Smith pushed the door partly open, and looked into the study.

Wilkinson major and Wilkinson minor had the gloves on, and were engaged in a hot contest. The elder was the more powerful of the two, but the younger was lighter upon his feet, and more lithe and active. They seemed to be pretty well matched, and certainly their boxing was very good. The Bouncer of Greyfriars stood looking at them with a very keen interest. He was an excellent boxer himself, and he had a keen eye to a fellow's form, and what he saw counted.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 214.

Read the grand new story of "THE HERO OF ST. JIM'S!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Tom Merry & Co. entitled:

formed his opinion that the two "Tykes" were very hot stuff indeed.

The boxers did not notice him for some time, and he stood there watching them unseen. Tom Wilkinson caught sight of him at last, and lowered his hands.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "where did you spring from?"

Vernon-Smith entered the study.

"I belong to Greyfriars," he said. "I've walked over to see you fellows."

"Oh, come in!" said Bob Wilkinson. "I don't remember seeing you before, but you're very welcome. Here's a chair."

"I've seen you before, though," said Vernon-Smith, as he sat down. "I've seen both of you at footer practice, and I've seen you sprinting."

The Highcliffe fellows peeled off the gloves, and put their jackets on. They were a little puzzled by Vernon-Smith's visit, but they were courteous enough about it.

"Oh, we're glad to see you," said Tom Wilkinson. "Are you down for any of the events in the competition next week?"

"For all of them," said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh! That's a big order, isn't it?"

"Yes; but I hope to pull off enough for my purpose. My name's Vernon-Smith," the Bouncer explained. "I'm going to be captain of the Remove at Greyfriars, if I make a better show at the sports next week than the rival candidate. It's between Harry Wharton and me, you see, and the chap who does the best for Greyfriars becomes Form-captain in the Remove."

"Well, that's a jolly good sporting way of settling the question."

"Yes. I want to win."

"I dare say you do," said Wilkinson major, laughing.

"But you won't, if we can stop you—eh, Bob?"

"No," said Bob, laughing. "But, of course, Vernon-Smith knows that."

"I don't know," said the Bouncer quietly.

"What do you mean?" asked Wilkinson major, in his direct way.

"I want to win!"

"Well?"

"You see, if this were merely an ordinary contest between two schools, I shouldn't bother my head about it," said the Bouncer. "I don't care twopence whether Greyfriars beats Highcliffe, or Highcliffe beats Greyfriars."

"Oh, you don't, don't you?"

"Not at all."

"Well, what are you getting at, anyway?" asked Wilkinson minor.

Vernon-Smith paused. He had come over to Highcliffe with a definite object in view, and he meant to carry out his purpose. But he felt that he needed to be cautious.

"I want to be captain of the Remove," he said. "I can only win by getting the best of the contests next week. You fellows are the only dangerous ones. I could lick anybody else in Highcliffe at anything."

"Well, they are rather a soft crowd."

"Exactly! But you are not soft; you look as hard as nails. I want you fellows to let me get the best of it."

The two juniors stared blankly at the Bouncer of Greyfriars. They could hardly believe their ears for the moment.

"You want us to let you get the best of it?" repeated Tom Wilkinson slowly.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I suppose you are joking?"

"Not in the least."

"Then you must be dotty. Why on earth should we let you get the best of it?" demanded Wilkinson major. "We are going to beat you if we can."

"Because so much depends on it. I've sworn to beat Wharton in the fight for the captaincy, and I'm going to do it. Look here, I won't beat about the bush. I can make it worth you fellows' while to let me come out ahead."

"What?"

"My father is Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire," the Bouncer explained quietly. "He lets me have as much money as I like."

The brothers looked at one another curiously, and then fixed their eyes upon Vernon-Smith. Tom Wilkinson's jaw set very squarely.

"Oh!" he said.

"You see," Vernon-Smith went on, a little more confidently now, "it doesn't matter to you how a rotten sporting competition goes. Suppose you let me pull out ahead in all the events where I am opposed to either of you. It won't hurt you."

"Won't it?"

"I don't see that it will. But I don't expect you to do it for nothing, of course. As I said, I can make it worth your while."

Bob Wilkinson made a movement, but his major restrained

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 214. Read the grand new story of "THE HERO OF ST. JIM'S!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Tom Merry & Co. entitled:

him with a gesture. He was curious to hear the Bounder of Greyfriars to the end.

"Worth our while?" he repeated.

"Certainly!"

"In what way?"

"I have plenty of money. You can name your own figure—within reason, of course." Wilkinson major's face was crimson now. He looked hard at Vernon-Smith, and his hands clenched very tightly. The Bounder of Greyfriars seemed to be quite unconscious that he had said anything insulting. To him the whole business was one to be arranged. A fellow would naturally do what was most worth his while, and no other consideration need enter into the matter. Vernon-Smith had inherited the business instincts and the utter unscrupulousness of his father, millionaire and moneylender. That every man and boy had his price was a maxim with Vernon-Smith, only he thought that some fellows would put their price very high, and call it by some fine name. That was Vernon-Smith's flattering view of human nature.

"Your own figure," he said. "I suppose you fellows aren't loaded up with tin. Juniors at school generally are not. I could easily spring a ten-pound note apiece."

"Could you, really?"

"Quite easily."

Bob Wilkinson made a step towards the Bounder of Greyfriars. There was no mistaking his expression, and Vernon-Smith rose to his feet in some alarm.

"Don't play the giddy goat!" he exclaimed hastily. "This is a business matter—quite a business matter."

"Hold on, Bob!"

"Rats! I'm going to slog him!" shouted Bob furiously. "Do you think I'm going to let a rotten cad offer to buy me up in a sporting match?"

"Hold on, I tell you!" Wilkinson major pushed his brother back. "He's come here as a visitor; don't forget Yorkshire hospitality. We're not going to let a chap in our own study."

But look here—

"Shut up, Bob!" Wilkinson major threw the study door open. "I've only got a word to say to you, Vernon-Smith," he said quietly. "Get out!"

"Then you—"

"Get out! I won't touch you here," said Wilkinson major, "but the first time I meet you out of doors I'll give you a hiding for your rotten insults!"

"I didn't mean to insult you."

"No, I suppose you didn't," said Wilkinson major, looking at the Bounder with a kind of wonder. "You're such a rotten worm you don't know what an insult is, I believe! But get out—you make me sick!"

"Look here—"

"Outside!" roared Wilkinson. "I shan't be able to keep my hands off you if you stay here!"

"I tell you—"

Wilkinson major made a step towards him, his hands clenched and his eyes gleaming. The Bounder of Greyfriars stepped hurriedly into the passage. Wilkinson major slammed the door after him and drew a deep breath.

"My hat!" he said. "To think of that reptile coming to us with an offer like that!"

"Why didn't you let me lam him?" growled his brother.

"He's not worth it, the cad! But"—Wilkinson major's face set grimly—"we'll give him a high old time when we go over to Greyfriars for the sports next week, Bobby. I don't know that we owe the Greyfriars Remove anything, but we'll save them from having such a howling cad as that for a Form-captain if we can."

And Bob Wilkinson chuckled assent.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bad Luck for the Bounder.

BOB CHERRY looked curiously at the Bounder of Greyfriars as the latter came in. The Bounder's face was pale and strangely set, and there was a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Anything wrong, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith did not reply.

He brushed rudely past the Removee, and tramped upstairs to his own study. Bob Cherry looked after him in astonishment.

"Something's up with the Bounder," he remarked to Harry Wharton, as he saw the latter gazing towards him, also surprised.

Wharton nodded, with a puzzled look.

"I understand that he's been over to Highcliffe," he remarked. "He may have fallen foul of the Highcliffe chaps in some way."

"But they're friends of his."

"Rogues fall out sometimes," remarked Frank Nugent, with a laugh.

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder," said Bob.

Vernon-Smith, careless of what the clowns of the Remove The Magnet Library—No. 214.

NEXT

TUESDAY:

"THE RIVAL CO.'S AT

EVERY TUESDAY. The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

might be thinking, went into his study and slammed the door behind him. The slam rang along the Remove passage, telling all who heard it that Vernon-Smith was in a bad temper—one of his "tantrums," as the juniors called them. But Vernon-Smith's tantrums were not terrifying to the Remove fellows; the juniors who heard the slam only grinned.

Vernon-Smith lighted the gas, but he did not sit down. He paced up and down the study savagely, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers-pockets.

Would he ever be captain of the Remove?

It was looking more than doubtful now.

He had miscalculated!

The cunning schemer, the plotter who was seldom mistaken, had to admit that he had made a blunder, and a blunder that could not be retrieved. His opinion of human nature, or boy nature, at all events, was evidently wrong somewhere.

Yet he had had a lesson before. He had, before the election for the new captain of the Remove, tried to buy Wharton off. His confidence in the power of money was boundless, and he had offered to make it worth Wharton's while, as he expressed it, to let the election be a walk-over for him. Wharton, less polite than the "Tykes" of Highcliffe, had knocked him down on the spot, and there had been a fight afterwards, and Vernon-Smith felt as if he ached still when he thought of it.

And yet, with this lesson in his mind, he had tried the same game with the two Yorkshire lads at Highcliffe, with the result he might have expected if he had not been in the habit of judging other fellows by his own nature.

And now who was left but fair play? And fair play was something that the Bounder of Greyfriars never turned to excepting as a last resource.

What was he to do? He knew that in some of the events, at least, Wharton stood a better chance than he did. And Wharton was in training. Wharton would be as fit as a fiddle when the contests came off in a few days' time. At that thought Vernon-Smith started a little, and his eyes glittered. There might be some way of making Wharton less fit for the contests, and almost with the thought of it the means came into his mind. He made a step towards the door, and then paused, grinding his teeth.

"Bolsover!" he muttered. And then: "Hang it—hang it! Just my luck to have quarrelled with the brute—when I need him!"

But his pause was only momentary. He quitted his study and went down the passage to Bolsover's door. He knocked, and the bully of the Remove growled to him to come in. Vernon-Smith opened the door.

There were two fellows in the study. One was the big, burly Bolsover, the bully of the Remove. The other was his younger brother, Bolsover minor of the Third Form. Hubert Bolsover was a good-looking lad, with a much finer face than the heavy, somewhat alien, countenance of Bolsover major. Bolsover major was too much of a bully to be liked in his own Form, but it was easy to see what an affection and admiration his minor had for him. Bolsover major was going over Latin exercises with the fog, correcting them, and giving young Hubert "tips," as he called it. He looked round none too amiably as the Bounder of Greyfriars came in.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"I want to speak to you if you're able to spare a few minutes from teaching the young idea how to shoot," said the Bounder sarcastically. "The sight of the Remove bully helping the fog with his work would have surprised many of the juniors, and perhaps touched them, but it roused only scorn and contempt in Vernon-Smith's breast."

Bolsover flushed angrily.

"Oh, go and eat cake!" he growled.

"It's all right," said Bolsover minor hastily. "I've got to get the Latin die, Percy, and I'll cut off for a few minutes."

"Oh, all right, kid!"

Bolsover minor left the study.

The Remove bully rose to his feet, and stood looking at Vernon-Smith, his hands in his pockets and a sneering smile upon his face.

"Well, you want something out of me?" he asked, rudely enough.

"I want you to help me."

"In what?"

"In getting in as captain of the Remove. Don't cut up rusty, Bolsover. I had to leave you out of the team in the match with the Fifth, and you ought to have more sense than to bear malice about it."

Bolsover laughed scornfully.

"You left me out of the eleven," he said. "It may have been for the good of the eleven, and it may not. But even so, you had promised me all along that if I backed you up

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Order Early

GREYFRIARS!"

as candidate I should play in the Remove eleven when you were captain. If you didn't think me fit to play, what did you promise for?"

"You see—"
"Yes, I see now! You were fooling me because you wanted my support in the election," said Bolsover contemptuously. "I was fool enough to be taken in. But you won't find it so easy to pull the wool over my eyes a second time. I promise you."

"Do you want Harry Wharton to become captain of the Remove?" said the Bounder savagely. "That is what you are working for now. He will be down on you as much as he is on me. I should have played you sometimes; he wouldn't play you at all."

"But he never promised to."
"Look here, you can help me if you like, and I'll make it worth your while in any way you choose," said Vernon-Smith eagerly.

Bolsover eyed him curiously.
"How can I help you? It's not a question of voting now."
"No, it's a question of athletic contests. I've been over to Highcliffe and seen their two new champions, and they're hot stuff!"

Bolsover's lip curled.
"Why didn't you try to buy them off?" he enquired. "You ought to be able to do it with your money, and you often say that money will do anything."

"I suppose they were afraid of being bowled out," said the Bounder. "I tried it, and they refused. There's only one thing left—"

"What's that?"

"You are the only chap in the Remove who can lick Harry Wharton excepting Bob Cherry, who is his best champion—it's no good thinking of him. Look here, you can save the situation if you like," said the Bounder, in a low, eager tone. "Pick a quarrel with Wharton a day before the contests—in a quiet place, where his friends are not bound to interfere—and hammer him. Make him unfit to win, and I shall walk off with the captaincy. It's as simple as A B C, but you're the only chap in the Remove who could do it. Give the lad a good hammering the day before the contest, and he will be off colour, and I shall get ahead of him. What do you say?"

Bolsover laughed.
"Jolly good idea!" he said. "If you hadn't gone back on me I might have agreed—I might have gone on playing cat to your monkey, pulling your chestnuts out of the fire. But just now I don't think I shall do it."

"It would be rot to let Wharton get in as captain just because you bear malice against me over a trifle," said Vernon-Smith savagely.

Bolsover did not reply. The door opened, and his minor came in. The bully of the Remove turned to him.

"Hubert, kid, cut off and tell Wharton and the rest to come here. Tell them I want to speak to them about something very important that concerns them."

"Right you are, Percy!" said the fag.

He quitted the study without asking questions. Vernon-Smith's face turned a shade paler, and he made a movement to follow the Third-Former. Bolsover swung himself in between the Bounder and the doorway.

"No, you don't!" he said grimly.

The Bounder panted.

"What are you going to do?" he muttered.

"You'll see when the fellows come."

"Look here—"

"You don't leave this study till they're here."

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands hard, his eyes blazing with fury. He guessed what Bolsover's intention was, and his very heart was quaking. He dared not remain in the study till a crowd of Removites arrived.

"Let me pass!" he said.

"Bast!"

"I won't stay here, I tell you!"

"You will!"

Vernon-Smith said no more, but he sprang like a tiger at the burly Removite. But Bolsover was watching him, and he was ready. His heavy fist struck out, and the Bounder of Greyfriars reeled back, and back, till he reeled against the wall, and leaned there, gasping. There, half fallen, supported by the wall with his hands spread out against the wainscot behind him, he remained, his eyes flaming rage and hatred as he looked at Bolsover. Bolsover stood grimly by the door, waiting for Harry Wharton & Co. to come.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In His True Colours.

Vernon-Smith panted for breath.
He could not pass Bolsover—he was no match for the burly Removite. There was no fellow in the Remove save Bob Cherry, and perhaps Harry Wharton, who could have forced the doorway with the bully of the Form on guard there. Vernon-Smith could not do it, and he was aware of it, but he crouched back against the wall, his eyes gleaming, his lips drawn back in a snarl, looking like a wild animal about to spring.

There was rage in his face, rage in his heart. Once again it was borne in upon the cunning schemer that he had miscalculated. He had been in error with the "Tykes" at Highcliffe—he had been in error with Bolsover. He had fancied that he could bribe the Wilkinsons, and he had found that that was an egregious blunder. He had fancied that he could fool Bolsover to the end, as he had fooled him at first, and in that he was still more terribly mistaken. Where Bolsover had been deceived once, he was too keen to trust again. He did not like the idea of Harry Wharton becoming captain of the Remove, but he was determined that Vernon-Smith should not become captain if he could possibly prevent it. There was a depth of obstinacy and spite in Bolsover's sluggish nature upon which the Bounder of Greyfriars had not reckoned.

"Hang you!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "Let me go!"

"Not yet!"

The Bounder's eyes wandered round the study as if in search of a weapon. Bolsover watched him. The Bounder made a sudden movement, and caught a chair up by the back. He swung it into the air, his eyes blazing.

"Let me pass, or I'll brain you!"

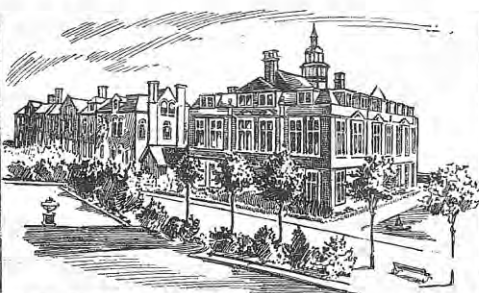
The words came hard through his clenched teeth.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Well-known -
Schools -
in - - -
The United
Kingdom.

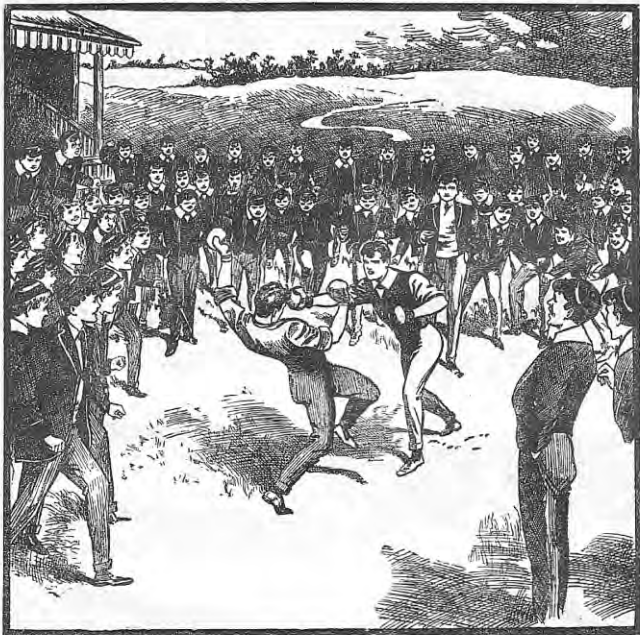
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It was the tenth round of that terrific fight, when Wharton got in a crashing drive that seemed to lift the big Highcliffian fairly off his feet. The ground itself seemed to shake as he crashed down upon his back, where he lay motionless while he was counted out. "Hnrrah!" roared the juniors. "Wharton wins! Wharton's Captain of the Remove!" (See Chapter 16.)

Bob Cherry was at the door. He looked into the study in amazement. Vernon-Smith ground his teeth, and let the chair slide to the carpet again. It was too late to escape now, and he summoned all his dogged courage to his aid.

"Come in, you fellows!" said Bolsover grimly.

Bob Cherry came in, and Harry Wharton, and Nugent, and John Bull, and Mark Linley, and two or three more fellows. Bolsover minor had found them together in No. 1 Study, discussing the Highcliff contest, and he had brought them all along. And a crowd of other fellows, hearing that something was "on" in Bolsover's study, had followed, and were crowding round the open doorway.

"Your minor says you want us, Bolsover?" said Harry Wharton, not very cordially. He was far from being on good terms with the bully of the Remove.

"Yes, I do," said Bolsover. "I've got something to tell you."

"It's lies!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.
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"The fellows can hear it, and judge for themselves whether it's lies or not," said the Remove bully. "They saw you with that chair. They know you were pretty anxious to get away before they came. Vernon-Smith has just proposed to me a pretty scheme for making sure of his getting in as captain of the Remove. He wants me to pick a quarrel with Wharton, and hammer him the day before the contest, so that he won't be fit to keep his end up against the Highcliff fellows."

There was a buzz.

"My hat!"

"The rotten cad!"

"Just like the Bounder!" said Nugent.

"Yes, rather."

"It's false!" shouted Vernon-Smith, white with rage and fear. "I tell you it's not true! I never proposed anything of the sort!"

Bolsover laughed mockingly.

"The fellows can believe you or me, just as they choose," he said. "I don't care twopenny. But I don't think there's much doubt which of us they will believe."

Bolsover was right there. Vernon-Smith's face alone was sufficient to show that his accusation was true. There was scorn and contempt in every face as the Removites looked at the Bouncer. Even fellows who had backed him up through thick and thin hitherto, looked on contemptuously as the cook. Some of them were not specially particular, but this was, as Trevor said, the limit. Nobody really expected the Bouncer to play the game, but a certain amount of decency was expected even of him.

The Bouncer cast a haggard glance at the scornful faces.

"I repeat that it's a lie!" he said.

Harry Wharton's lip curled.

"You can repeat that as often as you like, but I shan't believe you, for one," he said. "It is too like you."

"The likelihood to the esteemed cad is terrible," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and it is the honourable Bouncer who is telling venerable whoppers!"

"It's plain enough who the liar is, in this case," said Johnny Bull, "and that's the cad that half the Form were sworn to stick against. Zah!"

"He won't have my votes now," said Trevor.

"Nor mine!" added Smith minor.

The Bouncer sneered.

"It doesn't depend on votes now," he said, "and I tell you I'm going to be captain of the Remore, in spite of you all!"

And he strode from the study, the juniors making room for him to pass, as if they did not care to touch him.

Vernon-Smith returned to his study and shut himself in. His face was pale with rage and disappointment; and in spite of his bravado before the juniors, he was troubled in his mind.

He had made two successive blunders; and his failures had brought into his mind a distrust of his cunning and of his abilities. He had judged wrongly, and he knew it; and he did not see how his blunders were to be repaired. Bolsover had given him away to the whole Form, and many of his steadfast backers had turned against him now. If he came out first in the contest with Highcliffe, and became captain of the Remore, he would be captain of a Form almost wholly against him.

If Wharton won, nearly all the Remore would be glad to welcome him as captain. Vernon-Smith realized that he had played his cards badly. He had been too clever, too cunning; he had been unable to refrain from trickery, where honesty and plain dealing would have served him better. He had damaged his cause, and he was thrown back upon his last resource now—fair play! That was all that was left—to enter into the contest fairly, and do his best.

There was not a trick, not a stratagem left to him now; there was nothing for it but to "play the game."

He burst into a bitter laugh as he realised that.

He might as well have done that before he had descended to the tricks which had disgraced him in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

It was a long time before Vernon-Smith left his study. Iron-nerved as he was, he shrank from facing the eyes of the Removites in the common-room. But he knew that if he avoided the Form, it would be taken as tantamount to a confession that Bolsover's accusation was true; and at last he nerved himself to go down.

There was a murmur in the common-room as he entered it. Harry Wharton & Co. were standing near the door, talking together, and they did not even glance at Vernon-Smith. He looked at Hazledene, and Hazledene coloured uncomfortably, and turned his head away. He spoke to Russell, and Russell turned his back.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth. Trevor was standing by the fireplace, and Vernon-Smith came over to him.

"Look here, Trevor," he said, "you don't believe this?"

Trevor looked him in the face.

"I jolly well do," he said.

"It's not true,"

"Rats!"

The Bouncer clenched his hands. But he unclenched them again. It was useless to quarrel with Trevor.

"I look here," he said, "you've been backing me from the first, and it's rotten of you to turn against me now."

"I'm not backing up a chap who takes to find play like a duck to water," said Trevor. "I don't specially like the idea of Wharton as captain—he's rather too high-handed to suit my taste—but I'd rather have Snoot or Bunter for skipper than you! And I'd be obliged if you wouldn't speak to me. I don't like it."

"Confound you!" burst out the Bouncer.

"That's enough."

Trevor walked away, leaving the Bouncer standing alone, his face pale with anger, and his eyes gleaming. Some of the THE MAJOR LIBRARY—No. 214.

juniors glanced towards him, and there were sneering smiles. The Bouncer walked slowly out of the common-room. There was hardly a friendly look cast towards him in all the crowd there. Even Snoot, who certainly had no moral objection to foul play of any sort, avoided the Bouncer, following the current that was setting in against the cad of the Remore.

If the captaincy of the Remore had depended upon the voting of the Removites, it was not likely that Vernon-Smith would have secured six or seven votes more out of more than two scores. But it did not depend upon that—the contest with Highcliffe was to decide it—and the Bouncer had a chance yet! Low as he had fallen in the eyes of the Form, he was grimly determined to continue to the bitter end the fight for the captaincy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bouncer's Last Card.

"BAYO!" exclaimed Wingate.

It was the day before the great sports' contest with Highcliffe. Wingate paused in the gym, to look on, where Wharton was at practice with the gloves, with Bob Cherry for his opponent. Harry Wharton had been training steadily for a week or more, and he was in splendid condition, and his boxing was really splendid. Wingate and Courtney, of the Sixth, stopped to look on, and Bob Cherry dropped his hands with a laugh.

"It's all serene, Harry," he said. "You'll beat anything that Highcliffe can put up."

"I think so," said Wingate, with a smile. "You are in splendid form, Wharton. I hear that the Highcliffe fellows have two good boxers, though."

"Yes, two Yorkshire chaps," said Wharton. "I'm going to tackle one of them, and Vernon-Smith the other, when they come over to-morrow. I feel pretty fit."

"Give me the gloves, Cherry," said Wingate.

"Good. Let Wharton see if he can punch you," said Bob. Wingate slipped off his jacket, and put the gloves on. The big Sixth Former towered over Harry Wharton as he faced him, but the junior stood up to him well.

Wingate was a good boxer, but he had to admit that Wharton was quite his equal in that line. It was only by height and length of reach that Wingate kept the advantage. And after a few minutes of sparring, Harry Wharton came through his guard, and Wingate staggered back from a heavy uppercut.

"Good!" he ejaculated.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Good," he said. "That will be a surprise for the Tykes."

"Bayo, Wharton!"

Wingate laughed, and threw off the gloves.

"You'll do, Wharton!" he exclaimed. "The Wilkinsen fellows are both bigger than you are, but I think you'll hold your own."

"I'll try," said Harry cheerfully.

Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling in particularly good spirits over the prospects of the morrow. They knew that they had only two dangerous antagonists among the Highcliffe crowd, and they hoped to get the better of them. Vernon-Smith was looking on with a sullen brow as Wharton had the gloves on with the captain of Greyfriars. He knew that he could not have stood up for a moment against Wingate.

"Not much chance for you to-morrow, Smithy," Hazledene chuckled at his elbow.

The Bouncer scowled.

"Will you put the gloves on with me for a few minutes, Wharton?" he asked.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Certainly, if you like," he said.

The Bouncer donned the gloves, and faced the hero of the Remore. The Bouncer was a good boxer, and very strong and wiry, but he did not look a match for Harry Wharton. Bob Cherry watched the Bouncer closely.

"Keep an eye on him, Franky," he murmured to Nugent.

"I don't quite like the look in his eye. He's up to something."

"Just what struck me," said Frank.

Wharton, without a suspicion in his mind, sparred with the Bouncer. Vernon-Smith made a sharp attack, and Wharton fell back a little. The Bouncer feinted at his face with his right, and as Wharton guarded, the Bouncer drove in his left at a level below the belt.

"Look out—frad!" yelled Nugent.

But the warning did not come in time.

Wharton brought his arm down instinctively, but he only partially stopped the blow. Then he staggered back, with a choking gasp, as he was struck below the belt.

"Oh!"

(Continued on page 18.)

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MONTHLY.

THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY.

(Continued from page 18.)

Bob Cherry rushed forward, his hands up. Without speaking a word, he hit out, and the Bounder went tumbling along the floor of the gymnasium.

Bob dropped on his knee beside Harry.

"Badly hurt, old man?"

Wharton gasped.

"N-n-no!" The hound! He meant to—to hurt me, Wharton!

Wharton sat up. The Bounder's foul blow had by no means had the full effect that was intended, and Harry Wharton was not much hurt. He was able to rise to his feet in a few moments. He threw off the gloves.

"Loom on me," said Bob.

"It's all right."

The Bounder had scrambled up, and he stood looking at them with his face dark with passion. Bob Cherry gave him a savage glance.

"You rotten cad!" he said. "You meant to hurt Wharton—to lay him up if you could, and spoil his form for to-morrow!"

"It's a lie!" muttered the Bounder thickly. "That was an accident—"

"Rot!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, shut up! If you say another word, I'll begin on you!" shouted Bob Cherry angrily. "And a good judging to-day wouldn't improve your chances for to-morrow."

The Bounder thought so, too. He scowled and walked away. Bob Cherry turned back to his chum.

"You'd better give that rotten a wide berth, Harry, old man," he said. "I believe he's capable of anything to win to-morrow."

Wharton nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "But he won't have another chance."

Wharton put on his jacket and left the gym with his chums. He was feeling a little sick from the cowardly blow, but he knew that it would pass off. Billy Bunter had watched the scene with a peculiar expression upon his fat face, and he followed the chums of the Remove from the gym with a very thoughtful look. He blinked round in search of Vernon-Smith, and found him in the Close. The Bounder was leaning against an elm, with his hands in his pockets, and a sullen scowl on his face. Vernon-Smith had never been exactly popular in the Remove, and he found himself with few friends. But he did not welcome Bunter as the fat junior rolled up. He scowled at him angrily.

"Don't come bothering me, you fat cad!" he said.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Oh, get out!"

"I say, Smithy, I've got something important to say," Bunter said, sinking his voice mysteriously. "I was watching you in the gym, you know, and I saw you trying to foul Wharton—"

The Bounder made an angry movement, and Bunter backed away.

"Leave me alone, you fat idiot!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Can't you see I'm not in a humour for your rot now! Get away!"

"But it's important. You see, I can show you a way to get in as captain to-morrow, and knock Wharton's chances right on the head."

The Bounder started.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"I'm going to have breakfast with them to-morrow morning," said Bunter, in the same mysterious whisper.

"What's that got to do with it, you fat fool?"

"Oh, really, Smithy, you shouldn't call me names, you know, when I'm trying to help you. Suppose I were to—to—"

He hesitated and cast a cautious glance round. "I say, Smithy, suppose I gave Wharton a dose of medicine in his tea?"

"What?"

"Nothing dangerous, you know—just a dose of medicine," said Bunter. "It would just make him queer all day—a strong dose, you know—the medicine the doctor gives me when they pretend that I've been over-eating myself. I could do it as easily as anything, you know, and—and Wharton would never know, and—and—"

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed.

"Could you do it?"

"Certainly. You see, I don't want Wharton to be captain, and I should do this from a sense of duty," Bunter explained.

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plained. "A chap ought to be willing to run some risks from a sense of duty, don't you think so?"

"I'll make it worth five pounds to you," said the Bounder eagerly.

"Cash down!" said Bunter.

"No fear! Afterwards, of course; but you can depend on me."

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"Oh, really, Smithy, you know. I—"

"Look here," said the Bounder, in a low voice. "I'll give you a quid now, and five to-morrow, if Wharton is off colour. That's all right!"

"Done!" said Bunter.

A sovereign changed hands, and the fat junior rolled away—in the direction of the tuckshop. Vernon-Smith's eyes were gleaming. Through the treachery of the Owl of the Remove, he had a chance yet.

He walked slowly from the spot. As his footsteps died away under the old elms, there was another sound, and a diminutive figure came into view from behind one of the old trees—the figure of Nugent, minor of the Second Form. Dicky Nugent's face was quite pale.

"My only Uncle Septimus!" he murmured. "Of all the dirty, rotten cads, I think those two take the glibby biscuit! Jolly lucky for Wharton. I think that I happened to be taking a stroll under the trees here. My word!"

And Nugent minor walked away to the School House by a circuitous route. He did not want the Bounder of Greyfriars to see him, and guess that he knew.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in No. 1 Study at tea when the fat of the Second Form came in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's the trouble?"

"Anything wrong, Dicky?" asked Frank Nugent, as he saw the pale, scared look upon his minor's face.

"Yes, rather," said Nugent minor.

"What's the matter?" asked Harry Wharton.

Nugent minor explained.

There was a grim silence in No. 1 Study for some moments. "My word!" said Bob Cherry at last. "This is rather thick, even for the Bounder! What are you going to do about it, Harry?"

Wharton's brows contracted.

"Nothing," he said.

"What! But—"

"Better not have any talk about it," said Harry Wharton quietly. "The Bounder is an unspeakable cad; but we don't want to disgrace the Remove in the eyes of the whole school. Besides, he would deny it, and Bunter would deny it—and it would be their word against Dicky's. No good having a rotten scandal—there's been enough talk of foul play already over the election."

"But what—"

"We'll take care that it comes to nothing—and that Bunter gets what he deserves," said Harry. "That's enough! Not a word outside this study. You'll keep it dark, Dicky?"

"Right-ho!" said Nugent minor.

And not a whisper was uttered outside No. 1 Study to hint to the Bounder that his latest device was discovered.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

His Own Medicine.

MORNING dawned bright and sunny upon Greyfriars. Whole holidays were not frequent at the old school, and the juniors had been looking forward keenly to this one. Glad enough were the Removes to see the sun rising brightly over the old elms. It was going to be a fine, clear spring day, and they rejoiced.

On whole holidays at Greyfriars the fellows had the privilege of breakfasting in their studies, if they chose; and when they were in funds they generally chose. Harry Wharton and his chums were going to have their breakfast in No. 1 Study, and there were a dozen more of them crowding into the room at the time. The shopping had been done the previous day, and Billy Bunter had offered his services as cook, and his offer had been declined. There was a cheerful smell of frying bacon in the study as the juniors came in, one by one; and there was a fresh breeze blowing in at the open window from the playing-fields.

Ripping day for the sports," said Bob Cherry, as he came in.

"Yes, rather!"

"How do you feel, Harry—quite fit?"

Wharton smiled.

"Fit as a fiddle," he said.

"Nothing wrong—eh, from that punch in the wind?"

"No; right as rain."

"Oh, good!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter's fat face looked in at the doorway. The chums of the Remove looked round at him grimly.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, really, you remember you told me yesterday that I might have breakfast with you," said the Owl of the Remove in an injured tone. "You haven't forgotten that, Wharton?"

"No, I haven't forgotten," said Wharton quietly. "Come in!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled into the study. Most of the juniors had begun their breakfast. There was not room for half of them at the table, but they sat about on chairs, or boxes, or the window-sill or the locker, quite cheerfully, and took their plates on their knees.

"I say, you fellows, I'll pour out the tea!" said Bunter, after fortifying himself for his efforts with a couple of rashers of bacon.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Oh, no, don't take the trouble, Bunter!" he said.

"You're a guest, you know, and we can't make you work!" Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'd rather make myself useful, really, you know!" he said. "Is your cup empty, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Let me fill it."

Wharton handed him the cup with a look of wonder. It seemed impossible that the fat, dull junior was really meditating such treachery—and yet—it was certain. Billy Bunter was, as a matter of fact, too stupid to have a clear idea of the difference between right and wrong. He knew that he was doing a rascally thing, but it was only charitable to suppose that he did not know how rascally it was.

He bent down at the fender to the lamp. Bob Cherry watched him out of the corner of his eye. He saw the glimmer of glass in the firelight as the fat junior slipped a bottle from his waistcoat-pocket.

Bob Cherry turned his head away. He had seen enough.

"Here you are, Wharton!"

Bunter placed the cup and saucer upon the table before Harry. Wharton gave him a look, and rose to his feet.

"Shut the door, Frank, will you, and turn the key," he said.

"Right—ho!" said Nugent.

Some of the fellows looked surprised.

"What's up?" asked Mark Linley.

"I want Bunter to drink this tea he's given me."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Oh, ripping!"

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped. He stared blankly at Harry Wharton through his big spectacles.

"I—I—I say, you know—" he stammered. "I—I've got my own tea here, you know! I—I don't want yours, Wharton!"

"You can have mine instead," said Harry.

"I—I don't want it, you know!"

"You've got no choice in the matter," said Wharton coldly.

"You've got to drink this tea, or you take the biggest hiding of your life. You can choose!"

"Oh, oh! Oh, really—"

"But what's the game?" asked Bulstrode, in amazement.

"Why should you make Bunter drink your tea, Wharton?"

"Because he's been so kind as to pour it out for me," said Harry, "and because he's put something in it, I believe."

"He has!" said Bob Cherry.

There was a general exclamation of astonishment. Billy Bunter felt his knees give way under him, and he sank into a chair.

"Oh, oh, really—" he gasped.

"Do you deny it?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. Ye-es! Of course! It's—it's a rotten slander—stammered Bunter. "I'm not going to stay in this study to be insulted!"

He made a movement towards the door. Frank Nugent was standing with his back to it, with a grim expression upon his face, and he did not move.

"You're not going out just yet," he remarked.

"Oh, really—"

"Look here! You don't mean to say that Bunter has been trying to drug you, Wharton?" exclaimed Russell.

Wharton laughed.

"No; not so bad as that. He has been putting something in my tea—medicine, I think—not dangerous, but it will make whoever drinks it feel seedy, you see, when it begins to work on him. Not the kind of thing to begin athletic sports on."

"But—why—"

"Vernon-Smith put him up to it."

"By Jove!"

"Begad!" said Mauleverer. "What an awful cad that fellow is!"

"And Bunter—"

"Bunter's going to take the dose himself," said Wharton grimly.

"It's—it's a slander," said Bunter. "I—I never did any—"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVAL CO'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

thing of the sort. I—I shouldn't think of such a thing. I—I'm surprised at you, Wharton."

"Do you mean to say that there's nothing wrong with this tea?" demanded Wharton.

"Certainly not; nothing at all."

"It wouldn't hurt me to drink it?"

"Of course not."

"Then it wouldn't hurt you?"

"Well, you say—"

"If you're telling the truth, Bunter, why shouldn't you drink it?"

"I—I—I—"

"Will you drink it?"

"No, I won't!" yelled Bunter desperately.

"Make him!" said Russell.

"I'm going to," said Wharton quietly. "Now, Bunter, you'll either drink this tea, or we'll hold you by the back of the neck, and pour it down your throat. You've got to take it down, anyway."

"I—I—I—"

"Bring him here, Bob."

"Ow! Yow!"

Bob Cherry's iron grip on the back of his neck drove Bunter forward. His face was pale now, and his fat hands were trembling. He blinked in terror at the tea-cup. The dose was not dangerous; but he had put in enough medicine to give the drinker severe internal pains. But there was no help for him. Nugent grasped one of his fat wrists, and Johnny Bull the other. Bob Cherry's grip remained fastened upon the back of his collar. Harry Wharton raised the cup to his lips.

"Now," he said grimly, "you can drink—or you can have it poured down your throat by force. I mean business."

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Groo!"

"Drink!"

There was no help for it. Bunter drank slowly, and with a wry face. Not till the last drop of the tea was swallowed was the fat junior released.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Ow! Beasts! I shall have awful pains—ow!—I shall have to stay out of the sports—yow!—I shan't win the mile now—groo! Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kiek him out, Bob!"

"Yarwood!"

Billy Bunter was kicked out of the study, and the juniors finished their breakfast, chuckling. A quarter of an hour later, when they descended to the Close, they found Billy Bunter sitting on a seat in the passage, in a peculiar doubled-up attitude, and there was no colour in his fat, pasty face. He gave them a reproachful glance through his big spectacles, and the juniors grinned and passed on. Bunter's punishment was beginning.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Sports.

"HERE they come!"

The Highcliffe contingent had arrived. Quite a crowd came over from Highcliffe. Ponsworthy, Gadsby, Vavasour, Monson, Merton, and the rest of the "smart set" of Highcliffe were there in all their glory, looking as supercilious as ever. Two or three dozen fellows came over with them, mostly to watch the sports, without any intention of taking part in them. It was an open secret that the two "Tykes," as the Wilkinsons were called, were to have the brunt of the day. The two big, well-set-up juniors looked very fit, and quite able to keep their end up in the day's contests.

The Greyfriars fellows greeted the Highcliffians politely enough, having apparently forgotten the picture postcards and the inscription on the steps of the School House. It was a time to let bygones be bygones.

They were especially cordial to the Tykes. They recognised the two Yorkshire lads as something very different from the average run of the Highcliffians, and they felt for them the respect which, the poet tells us, warriors feel for foemen worthy of their steel.

The two Wilkinsons were certainly worthy of the Greyfriars steel, as Harry Wharton acknowledged at once when he saw them.

"They will give us a tussle, Bob," he remarked.

"And Bob Cherry nodded assent."

"Yes, they are the real thing," he agreed.

"The real thing is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh, looking over the two sturdy Yorkshire lads. "They are better stuff than Ponsworthy and his esteemed cads."

"Yes, rather!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"Jolly glad to see you over here," Harry Wharton said, as he shook hands with Wilkinson major. "Ripping day for the girls!"

"Yes, ripping!" assented Tom Wilkinson. "You're Wharton, eh?"

"Yes. You know Vernon-Smith, I think?" said Harry, with a nod towards the Bounder.

Tom Wilkinson's face set grimly. "We met him at Highcliffe," he said briefly.

But he did not offer to shake hands with the Bounder, or indeed to take notice of him in any way at all.

Wharton glanced at him curiously for a moment. He could see that the Bounder had not made a favourable impression upon the two Tykes in his visit to Highcliffe, and he wondered for a moment what had gone wrong.

But there was no time to think about that. There was a long list of events for the day, and it was already eleven o'clock, and there was no time to cut to waste.

All Greyfriars had turned out, and a great deal of Highcliffe was coming over, dropping in in twos and threes after the first crowd. The weather was fine and clear, and a hot day could not have been desired.

Mr. Quibb was presiding over the contests, and Wingate was his right-hand man. The arrangements had already been made. The boxing contests between Wharton and the Bounder, on one side, and the two Wilkinsons on the other, had been left for the last event on the list. After the boxing, the champions were not likely to feel fit enough for other events.

The two candidates for the captaincy of the Greyfriars Remove had not entered for all the events, of course; but every event that one had entered for the other had also put his name down to. Thus it would be easy to decide which had made the better show against the visitors.

Harry Wharton was in high spirits. The knowledge that he had the good wishes of almost all the Remove had the effect of bucking him up.

The face of the Bounder, on the other hand, was clouded. He knew that there were few, if any, of the juniors who wanted him to get the better of the contest; and he was feeling something of the sensations of a footballing team when they know the crowd is against them.

But he was grimly determined to do his best.

The terms of the fight for the captaincy had been fixed, and could not be altered now, and if he won, he would be Form-captain, whether the Remove liked it or not. And the fact that they would not like it, only made him all the more obstinately determined to win.

And he had a secret hope that he kept very carefully to himself. He had not seen Bunter since breakfast, and not a word had transpired outside No. 1 Study of what had happened there. The Bounder had no reason to suppose that his scheme had failed. He looked every few minutes for some sign in Wharton's face that he was being disturbed inwardly by the dose administered by Bunter. An attack of sickness during the contests would be fatal to all Wharton's chances.

The competition was opened with several small events, which did not attract much attention. The first event of any weight was the half-mile, and there were half a dozen fellows entered for that from both schools.

They looked a very fit and handsome set as they came up to the starting-place in their running clothes. Wingate was starter. Vernon-Smith, as he lined up with the rest, cast a glance at Wharton out of the corner of his eye. Wharton caught it, and smiled grimly. He knew that the Bounder was looking for some sign of unfitness. But the Bounder was not gratified by observing any.

"Crack!"

"They're off!" roared Johnny Bull. "Go it, Greyfriars!"

Away they went!

Wharton and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent led for Greyfriars, with Russell and Hurree Singh and Vernon-Smith close behind. The two Wilkinsons, and Ponsonby and three other Highcliffians, started well. But three of them dropped behind in the first twenty yards, and limbed back amid laughter. They were Monson, Gadsby, and Merton. They did not believe in exertion, evidently. The pace was too hot for them.

The crowd round the track roared encouragement.

"Back up, Greyfriars!"

"Go it, Highcliffe!"

Patter! Patter! Patter!

Ponsonby dropped out.

The two "Tykes" stayed in for Highcliffe, and as yet all the Greyfriars fellows were sticking to it. But Russell tailed off, and then Bulstrode, and then Frank Nugent. Then came Bob Cherry's turn, and then Hurree Singh dropped out. The

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pace was hot, and only four stayed in—running as if for their lives.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Buck up, Tykes!"

"Hurrah!"

Bob Wilkinson gave a gasp, and dropped out. But his major was still going strong. With his teeth bared out, and his eyes gleaming, he ran on with every ounce of strength put into his pace.

"Smith's done!" yelled Johnny Bull.

It was true!

The Bounder had suddenly cracked.

The race was between Harry Wharton and Wilkinson major, and there was a roar of voices as they drew nearer the tape.

"Go it, Harry!"

"Play up, Tykes!"

Cheer and cheer!

They were running abreast now—running hard—almost breathless as they came to it with wonderful pluck.

The roar of excitement grew louder.

Johnny Bull tossed his cap into the air as Wharton was seen to make a sudden spurt, and shoot ahead of his adversary.

Wilkinson major spurted in his turn, but he did not win level.

It was beyond his powers. Wharton crashed upon the tape, and his rival was three paces in his rear.

There was a roar that rang across Greyfriars, and down to the river and the road.

"Wharton wins!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Greyfriars!"

Harry Wharton had won!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Cycle Race.

"JOLLY good!" said Bob Cherry gleefully, as he travelled Wharton down after the race. "Jolly good, my son! One up against Highcliffe, and one up against the Smith-bird! Hurrah!"

"The hurrafulness is terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But it was an esteemed close shave, my worthy chum."

"Jolly close," gasped Wharton. "That chap Wilkinson is a good man. I had to put all I knew into it."

"But you did it," grinned Bob Cherry. "That's the point. You did it. Now get this coat on, and hang about and have a rest until your next turn—that's the cycle race."

"Good!" Thanks, old man!"

Harry Wharton strolled out of the dressing-tent. Another event was on, but neither he nor the Bounder was concerned in it. It was an obstacle race, and there was quite a crowd of juniors entered. The honours were with Greyfriars when it was over. The Highcliffians were far too soft for anything of the sort.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith had put their names down for the cycle race, and there were a good many other entries. Quite a number of juniors fancied themselves on the cycle-track, and apart from the contest between Wharton and the Bounder, the Removites wanted to distinguish themselves.

The Greyfriars cycle-track was in splendid condition. The crowd gathered round it, and there was a loud cheer as Harry Wharton wheeled his machine down. And the shouts Harry Wharton distinguished as "Bravo!" in feminine tones, and he looked round quickly. Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara had come over from Cliff House School, and they had just arrived. Wharton waved his hand to them. Bob Cherry had wheeled in his machine, but he paused.

"I don't think I shall go in, after all," he remarked. "I shouldn't have any chance against you and Johnny, anyway."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No. Go and look after Marjorie, by all means," he said.

Bob Cherry coloured.

"Well, it would be only—only civil, wouldn't it?" he remarked.

"Ha! Of course."

And Bob Cherry put his machine away, and went. He stood with the two girls, and Hazeldene of the Remove, and explained to them the contest, and what depended upon it. He did not miss the cycle race.

"It depends on to-day who's captain of the Remove," Bob Cherry remarked. "So keep your eyes on Wharton."

"Yes. Hazel told us," said Marjorie. "I hope Harry will win."

"Oh, he's sure to!" said Bob confidently. "Anyway, he's one up already. Every win counts as a point, you know. It's one point to Wharton so far in the fight for the captaincy. He won the half-mile."

"Jolly good!" said Miss Clara, who had picked up many slangy expressions in her intercourse with the Greyfriars boys. "I hope he'll pull it off."

"Oh, Clara!"

"So I do, honest Injun!" said Miss Clara.

And Marjorie laughed.

"They're starting," said Hazeldene.

"Hurrah!"

"They're off!"

"What a crowd of them!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "Vernon-Smith rides well."

"Yes; the bogan does stick to his jigger all right," said Bob Cherry, rather grudgingly. "He can cycle. He can do lots of things when he makes up his mind about it. But Harry's leading all the same."

There were a dozen fellows in the cycle race, but at the end of the first lap the number was reduced to nine. The second lap scoured out two more, and the third lap reduced the total to five. Harry Wharton and the Bouncer, the elder Wilkinson and Ponsoby, and Gadsby were the quartette that went pedalling on at an increasing speed.

The pace was now, as Hurrece Jamies Ramsingh remarked, terrific. The cyclists seemed to fly round the track.

The shouts of the juniors rose into a roar. The excitement was growing, and it redoubled as Gadsby tailed off, and fell from his machine, utterly pumped. He was picked up, and taken off, and a minute later Ponsoby had to be led away, quite spent.

Another lap! Wilkinson major rode off the track, and jumped over his machine, gasping. He was done!

There was a roar of cheering.

"Greyfriars wins!"

It was between Wharton and the Bouncer now, and the victory was with Greyfriars in any case. But the race had to be finished. In the last lap Harry Wharton was leading by a full length. The Bouncer made a terrific effort, and reduced the lead by half. But that was all that he could do, as it seemed. Round they went, round, and the yell grew in volume as the excitement rose to fever heat.

"They're level!"

"The Bouncer wins!"

"Great Scott!"

"Smith's ahead!"

Bob Cherry's jaw dropped.

"My hat! The Bouncer's ahead!"

Half a length! But it was enough! By just half a length the Bouncer came home, and the spectators cheered, but not very heartily. Sympathy was not with the Bouncer. But he had ridden a splendid race, and they felt that he deserved a cheer. It had been a close thing, but the Bouncer had won.

The rivals of the Remove were level on points so far.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Honours Divided!

LUNCH was the next item on the programme, and a very important item, from the point of view of most of the juniors. The Highcliffe fellows lunched, or, rather, dined with the Greyfriars boys in the big dining-hall, on more or less amicable terms. Defeat was not pleasant to Ponsoby & Co. And though they had won in several minor events, in the two big events they had been beaten, once by Harry Wharton and once by Vernon-Smith, in spite of the efforts of their two best champions. The fellows who took the defeats in the best temper were Wilkinson major and minor. They were thorough sportsmen, like most fellows from the great county of the North, and they were content to have done their best, and to have put up a good fight. And they intended to do better for their school in the afternoon.

Billy Bunter, for once, was absent from the festive board. The fat junior was in the throes of the inward sufferings he had intended for Harry Wharton, and for once in his life William George Bunter had no appetite. And Vernon-Smith, by this time, had given up hope that Bunter had been successful. Once more his treacherous planning had come to nothing, and he was left to depend upon what he regarded as a final desperate resource—playing the game!

The Greyfriars fellows were in high spirits. Ponsoby & Co. had forced them to accept their challenge, and now they were being made properly sorry for it; and that was just as it should be—from a Greyfriars point of view.

During lunch the Wilkinson boys were with Harry Wharton & Co., on the best terms with them, and they had little to say to Ponsoby and his set. They felt much more friendly towards Greyfriars than towards their own side, as a matter of fact. And Wilkinson major confided to Harry Wharton his regret that he had not been sent to Greyfriars instead of to Highcliffe.

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PENNY.

"I jolly well wish you had been," said Wharton, cordially enough. "We should be jolly glad to have you two chaps in the Remove here."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

"The rippingness would have been terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhampur.

After lunch, there was a brief interval before the sports recommenced. Vernon-Smith looked for Billy Bunter, and found him in his study, looking pale and woe-begone. The Bouncer grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Why didn't you give Wharton that dose, you young bound?" the Bouncer demanded, between his set teeth.

Bunter blinked at him miserably.

"I—I tried to," he mumbled.

"Did he find you out?"

"He knew all about it," groaned Bunter, "and—and they made me swallow the dose instead. I've been sick! It was a jolly strong dose! If you shake me I shall be sick again! Leggo!"

The Bouncer started.

"How could they know about it?" he exclaimed.

"Ow! I s'pose somebody must have heard us talking. Ow!"

"Then—then they know I was in it!"

"Ow! Yes, they do. Ow!"

"You clumsy young ass! You must have given it away, somehow."

"Ow! D-d-don't sh-shake me like that. Ow! You'll make my glasses fall off. Ow! And I'm ill. Ow!"

Vernon-Smith strode angrily from the study, leaving Billy Bunter groaning over his internal pains.

Bob Wilkinson met him as he emerged into the Close. Wilkinson minor looked at him with a grin.

"I'm down to meet you in the boxing-match," he remarked. "My brother's meeting Wharton."

The Bouncer nodded.

"That's right!" he said. Then an eager look came over his face, and he sunk his voice. "Are you going to agree to what I proposed the other day? Have you thought over it?"

"I've thought over it," assented the Yorkshire junior.

"What do you say, then?"

"I say that you're the meanest cad I ever came across!" said Wilkinson minor. "And it will be a real treat to give you a licking."

Vernon-Smith scowled.

"I'd go to a ten-pound note," he said. "Look here! Fifteen pounds if you like. Cash down!"

"You worm!"

And Wilkinson minor turned on his heel.

Vernon-Smith walked away scowling. He was ready for business, however, when the contests recommenced. The first event of the afternoon was the long jump, and there were a great many entries on both sides.

Mr. Quelch and Wimpate had the matter in hand, and a goodly crowd was gathered round to look on. The Greyfriars fellows were expecting more victories, but this time the honours were destined to go to the "Tykes."

The winner was Wilkinson major.

The Highcliffers cheered, and the Greyfriars fellows joined in the shouting, for the jump was really a good one, and the Greyfriars candidates were fairly beaten.

There were a goodly number of entries for the high jump, too, but as the tape was gradually raised the crowd was winnowed down, till only Wharton and Vernon-Smith, the Wilkinsons, Ponsoby, and Bob Cherry remained.

The six of them seemed very equally matched. But at the raising of the tape afresh, Bob Cherry's long legs failed him, and he dropped out.

"Hard cheese!" said Nugent sympathetically, as Bob joined the group of juniors standing with Marjorie and Clara.

"Oh, it's all serene!" said Bob. "I don't care, so long as Wharton pulls it off."

"There goes Ponsoby!" shouted Gadsby. "Go it, Pon!"

Ponsoby ran with a flourish, and slackened, and stopped! His nerve had failed him at the last moment, and he retired amid a general laugh.

But the other four cleared it, and it was raised again, and then Vernon-Smith failed, and then Wilkinson minor.

The excitement was intense, as it was seen that the contest remained between Harry Wharton and Tom Wilkinson.

"Back up, Harry!" shouted Frank Nugent.

And Miss Clara shouted, too, as she clapped her hands:

"Go it!"

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NEXT
TUESDAY.

"THE RIVAL CO.'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early

Vernon-Smith stood looking on with his teeth set. There was little of the sportsman about him, and he longed to see his school defeated, rather than see the palm of victory fall to the rival he hated.

And he had his wish!

It was Wilkinson major who cleared the tape, and Wharton who was beaten, and the Higheliffians cheered their victorious champion loudly.

"Jolly new thing!" said Miss Clara, as Wharton joined the group, red with his exertions, but otherwise quite unharmed.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, it was near; but a miss is as bad as a mile," he said. "It goes to Highlife this time. That chap Wilkinson is a dangerous customer."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"You haven't any doubts about the big event?" he asked.

"The boxing-match? I don't know," said Wharton frankly. "I shall do my level best, but it will be a tussle."

"You've got the tougher chap of the two to meet, too," said Nugent, rather anxiously.

"Well, that's only fair, as I box better than Vernon-Smith. But between ourselves, I don't think the Bounder has much chance against Bob Wilkinson."

"I don't know that I'm sorry for that."

"Well, I want Greyfriars to come out ahead," said Harry. "The Bounder and I are level on points so far, and it looks as if the boxing-match will settle the matter. We're not likely both to beat the enemy."

"No; that's not likely."

"We're not entered for the other events—no good over-doing it," Harry Wharton remarked. "We're spectators till after tea, now."

The boxing champions had wisely decided to enter for nothing more after the jumping. They would need a rest before they entered upon the contest with the gloves, which was to take place in the gym. after tea.

When tea-time came, Billy Bunter showed himself in public. He was looking very pale and worn, but he seemed to be recovering his appetite, and he did the tea plenty of justice. He cast reproachful looks at Harry Wharton & Co., apparently quite oblivious of the fact that he had fully deserved all the punishment he had received, and a great deal more than he had not received.

After tea it was time for Marjorie and Clara to return to Cliff House, and as there was plenty of time before the boxing-match was booked to begin, Harry Wharton and his chums walked home with them. The Bounder was not asked to go, and he watched them leave the gates of Greyfriars with a scowling face.

Remove champions won, he would not win easily, that was certain. Wharton, at least, had to tackle an opponent bigger than himself, and both the "Tykes" were tough as nails. But for what was at stake, Vernon-Smith would not have cared to encounter Wilkinson minor; but the Bounder had plenty of dogged pluck, and he did not falter.

They tossed for the first match, and Vernon-Smith rightly named the coin, and elected to begin. He was anxious to get the match over, and to know that he was successful—or otherwise. A thick ring of fellows gathered round as Vernon-Smith and Wilkinson minor stepped into the arena. Seniors as well as juniors were there, keen to see the match. There was a cool confidence in Bob Wilkinson's manner, and in Vernon-Smith's savage determination.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on with keen interest. Vernon-Smith had plenty of science, and he had plenty of pluck. But it was pretty clear from the first round that he was not up to the weight of his opponent.

The hardy Yorkshire lad had twice the Bounder's strength, and he had more endurance, and he had weight in his favour.

The Bounder fought well.

Even fellows who disliked him personally had to admit that he put up a splendid fight, and that his courage never wavered.

If the Yorkshire junior won, it was simply because he was the better man of the two.

And the faces of the Greyfriars fellows grew longer, and the Higheliffians' more gleeful, as the rounds progressed.

In the sixth round, Vernon-Smith was reeling as he took the line, and Wingate looked at him anxiously.

The Bounder gave him an answering look of defiance.

"Are you fit to go on, Smith?"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Yes," he muttered. "I'm as fit as he is, anyway! I'm going on!"

Very well. Time!"

Bob Cherry's face was grimly set as he looked on.

"It's one down for Greyfriars!" he said to his comrades, in a low tone. "The Bounder can't last out two more rounds! That 'Tyke' seems made of iron!"

"I think you're right, Bob," said Harry quietly.

He was thinking of his own turn that was coming. Wilkinson minor was tough, but there was no doubt that Wilkinson major was tougher. Harry Wharton had the fight of his life in front of him!

But, meanwhile, all interest was centred upon the Bounder's struggle. There was no doubt that Vernon-Smith was fighting splendidly. But it was in vain. In the eighth round he could not stand steadily as he faced his adversary, and

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"Good-bye, and good-luck!" said Marjorie at the gates of Cliff House, as she shook hands with Harry Wharton.

"Thanks!" said Harry. "I hope when you see me again you'll see me captain of the Remove. And we'll have a picnic on the Black Pike to celebrate the event, if it comes off."

"Good egg!" said Miss Clara.

The juniors were back at Greyfriars in good time. The whole school seemed to be gathering round a roped-in enclosure by the pavilion. Wingate was referee the boxing-matches, and Mr. Quelch had left it to him to stop them if he considered it judicious. A shout greeted Harry Wharton as he came up.

"Here he is!"

"Here comes the giddy conquering hero!"

And Harry Wharton stripped for the combat.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Fight.

IT was the last and the biggest event of the day. The honours had been won by Greyfriars most of the time; but so far as Wharton and Vernon-Smith were concerned, points were evenly divided. It was pretty clear that the fight for the captaincy of the Greyfriars Remove would be settled by the boxing-match. And if either of the

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a terrific right-hander, which he could not stop, drove him back, and he fell.

Bump!

Oh!"

"It was a deep breath from the onlookers. Wingate had his watch in hand, and he was counting out the rapid seconds.

"One—two—three—four—five—"

Vernon-Smith made an effort to rise, and the Higheliff fellow stood back, chivalrously, to give him every chance.

"Six—seven—eight—"

The effort was vain.

"Nine—Ten!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Ponsonby. "Highlife wins!"

Wingate put his watch in his pocket.

"Highlife wins!" he said. "It was a good fight! You stood up splendidly, Smith! Help him away, you fellows!"

Vernon-Smith did not heed the words of praise from the captain of Greyfriars—though there were few fellows who would have given much for such praise from Wingate. The Bounder's senses were reeling, and his heart was black with rage and disappointment. He had been beaten! He had failed! For the defeat, for the bruises, and the hard knocks, he cared nothing—less than nothing. But he had been beaten in the struggle for the captaincy of the Remove! His only hope now lay in the possibility that Wharton might be beaten, too!

He refused to leave the scene. He donned his coat, and

stood leaning against the pavilion railings, with aching head and aching limbs, and burning eyes, watching while the second contest proceeded.

Harry Wharton stepped lightly forward as Wingate signed to him. Wilkinson major came out from the group of encouraging Highcliffe fellows, with a cool grin on his face. His minor had beaten the Bounder, and Tom Wilkinson had not the slightest doubt that he would beat the Bounder's Form-fellow.

There was a buzz of eager interest round the crowded ring.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Pile in, Wilkinson!"

The adversaries faced one another, and shook hands cordially enough.

"Time!"

And the first round commenced.

It led to little. Both the boxers were very careful, taking each other's measure, as it were, before they came to close quarters.

It was easy to see that Wilkinson major was heavier and stronger, as well as longer in the reach, than the champion of the Remove. He was a year older, and he had all the advantage that that year implied.

But Wharton was quick, very, and a splendid boxer. And the two foes were, in fact, well matched, and as Coker, of the Fifth, remarked, it was even betting on both of them.

The second round favoured the Highcliffian a little. Wharton went down heavily under a right-hander he failed to guard, but he was up again in a moment. In the third round Wilkinson dropped before an upper-cut, and was slower in regaining his feet.

They were warning to the work now, and the interest was intense.

The Bounder stood looking on, with a bitter smile upon his lips. If savage wishes could have effected any victory, Wharton's hands would have dropped, paralysed, to his sides.

Wharton did not even look at his rival, standing there defeated and scowling. He required all his attention to hold his own in the contest.

Five rounds—six! Both of the combatants had had a good deal of punishment now, but both of them looked firm enough to take more.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "This is a better show than the other, my sons! But the dickens only knows which will win! Go it, Harry!"

"Pile on, Highcliffe!"

Seven rounds! Breathing hard, with gleaming eyes and steady feet, the combatants toed the line for the eighth.

And now the advantage came to Wilkinson. He tried heavy rushing tactics, and Wharton was driven round the ring, and, with a final fierce attack, the Yorkshire junior drove through his guard, and let out—right, left, left, right—and the champion of the Remove crashed down like a log.

"Hurrah!" roared Highcliffe.

Wharton lay, with whirling senses.

Wingate counted.

The chums of the Remove stood with tense faces. Wilkinson, breathing hard, was waiting. Harry Wharton did not rise.

"... Seven—eight—nine—"

Wharton was on his elbow, resting now, and at nine he leaped up like a jack-in-the-box. He had taken full advantage of the count, and that was all. He was again, contenting himself with defence, barely holding his own, till the call of "Time!" gave him the much-needed minute of rest.

He sank, gasping, upon Bob Cherry's knee, in the corner.

Nugent fanned him, Bob sponged his burning face. The looks of the Greyfriars juniors were anxious, though they tried to conceal their anxiety.

"How do you feel, Harry?" muttered Nugent.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Rotten!" he said.

"You're going on?"

"Going on?" Wharton's jaw set grimly. "I'm going on till I drop!"

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE RIVAL CO.'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

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"Good man!"

"Time!"

It was the ninth round. Wharton was not yet recovered from that knock-out, and he sparred cautiously, giving ground, and defending himself with care. Wilkinson rushed him again, but he rushed in vain, achieving nothing but an expenditure of breath, which he needed. Wharton stalled him off for a whole round, all the time fast recovering, and he returned to Bob Cherry's knees at the call of time, looking much better. Wilkinson was breathing very hard now—he had "bellows to mend"—while the Remove champion seemed as sound as a bell.

"Stick it out for two more rounds, and you've got him!" said Bob Cherry, with the air of an oracle of the N.S.C.

Wharton grunted—a little sideways—for his features were showing very plain signs of hammering, in spite of the gloves.

"I'm going to try!" he said.

"Time!"

Tenth round! Wilkinson did not press the fighting so much now. He was husbanding his wind. Wharton still gave ground, but it seemed to the keen-eyed Bob Cherry that he was leading his adversary on. And so it proved, for almost at the finish of the round Wharton seemed to wake into sudden life, and he was at his opponent, right and left, with lightning swiftness. Then came the upper-cut, which Wharton's comrades knew so well, but which Wilkinson major was making the acquaintance of for the first time. It was a crashing drive, and it seemed to lift the big Highcliffian fairly off his feet. The ground itself seemed to shake as he crashed down upon his back.

"Oh!"

The ejaculation came breathlessly from the juniors. Surely the fellow could not fight after that terrific fall, unless he was made of iron. Wilkinson lay with his gloves clawing the floor, and Wingate was counting.

Ten to count, but he might have counted fifty! Wilkinson major lay where he had fallen, and a mighty roar rose in the playing-fields of Greyfriars.

"Out!"

"Licked!"

"Greyfriars wins!"

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry. "Wharton wins! Wharton's captain of the Remove!"

Wilkinson staggered up, with Wingate's assistance, at last. He was looking pale and shaken, but he tried to grin as he held out his hand to Harry Wharton.

"Good man," he said—"good man! It was a fair fight, and you've won! Give us your fist!"

And Wharton gave him his "fist" heartily enough.

Amid the roar of cheering, there was a rush of the Greyfriars Remove to surround the victor in the hard-won fight.

Wharton had won! Wharton had upheld the honour of Greyfriars, and he had won the long-contested captaincy of the Remove!

Vernon Smith, with a black look upon his brow, tramped furiously from the ring-side.

He was beaten! He would never be captain of his Form!

But in the wild excitement of the moment nobody noticed his scowls, nobody noticed him go. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was forgotten amid the wild cheers that rang out, hailing Harry Wharton the captain of the Remove.

THE END.

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THE OPENING INSTALMENTS.

THROUGH
TRACKLESS
TIBET!BY
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(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferrers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the *Lord of the Deep*, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwait-Hai, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into The Forbidden Land, when they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. These are beaten off, and the party, after a period of hard travelling, reach the first Tibetan village. Here they are surprised to find that the head man is an Irishman, Barry O'Rourke by name. They stay at his house for a time, and while at dinner they are startled by the arrival of Argal-Dinjat, who bears the news that Storland Sahib and his followers are riding towards the village. Storland and his brigades attack them fiercely, and the party takes refuge in a couple of sheds, where they are hotly besieged.

They are rescued by Ferrers Lord's wonderful aeroplane, *The Lord of the Skies*, and after having successfully driven the attackers away, the party go on board the strange vessel for a trial spin. They are flying over the crater of an extinct volcano, when the engines suddenly stop working, and they are sent hurtling down through the crater into an underground lake. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeroplane out of the cavern. Hal Honour, the engineer, however, makes a strange promise, and says that within two months he will rescue the whole crew. The millionaire then makes the discovery that their water tanks have been badly strained, and that their water has all drained away! With Ching-Lung, Joe the carpenter, and Maddock, he sets out to explore the cavern in the hope of finding a spring, and hears for the moment the splashing sound of falling water; then the sound ceases.

(Now read on from here.)

In Search of Water—A Startling Discovery.

Ferrers Lord switched on the light.

"Hooray! There she is!" shouted Joe. "I'll sample you, my beauty!"

A stream of glistening water, thicker than a man's wrist, gushed out of the darkness. Joe ran forward; but checked himself, with a shudder. The water fell into a black abyss of unknown depth. Another step would have hurled him over.

"Steady, yer 'lghness!" he said. "There's a thunderin' hole here, and I nearly dived into it. Never mind, I'll taste the stuff, after all!"

The chasm was barely a yard wide, and it was a simple matter to reach over. Joe leaned with one hand against the rocky wall, and, hollowing his palm, held his other hand out to catch the gleaming water.

And then Joe fired off a yell of agony, and, tucking his hand under his arm, howled and danced.

"What the dickens is the matter with the man?" gasped Ching-Lung.

"Matter?" shrieked Joe. "Why, it's red-hot, b'ilin', scaldin', liquid fire! Ow, drat it! It's cooked me!"

White curls of steam crept out of the black fissure. The water was boiling—and so was Joe. And, keen as the disappointment was, when they looked at the unhappy carpenter dancing and sucking his fingers, instead of showing their sorrow and sympathy, Ching-Lung and Maddock winked at each other and grinned.

Ferrers Lord filled his drinking-cup and examined the water. There was no smell of sulphur about it. Ching-Lung bowed up Joe's injured hand in a handkerchief saturated with petroleum, which, though one of the most inflammable of liquids, has a most soothing effect on burns and scalds. The water cooled, and the millionaire tasted it.

It was as bitter as gall.

"We cannot drink this!" said Ferrers Lord, with a look of disgust upon his handsome face. "It may be fine medicine, but it has the most abominable taste! Puh! I wonder if I shall ever get it out of my mouth!"

"Oh, it will wear off in time!" laughed Ching-Lung. "Talking about medicine makes me think of dear old Van Witter, who went to the North Pole with us. Wouldn't he have jumped at this! Why, in less than ten minutes he would, in imagination, have built a railway up the mountain, lighted this place with electricity, made marble baths, underground gardens, dancing-halls, theatres, and restaurants, and had the place crowded with pleasure-seekers, bathing and drinking the waters, while he sat at the top drawing the dollars."

Ferrers Lord smiled.

"Whatever the healing virtues of this place may be, I don't think it will ever become a Carlsbad or a Bath. We must be getting on, lads. Does your hand hurt you much, Joe?"

"It do tingle a bit, sir," growled the carpenter; "but nothing to mention. The 'lie's took some of the sting out."

"Let it be a lesson to you, Joe," said Ching-Lung.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 214.

Read the grand new story of "THE HERO OF ST. JIM'S!" In this week's "GEM" Library.

Tom Merry & Co., entitled: Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

solemnly. "The burnt child gathers no moss, and the washed child dreads the moss. Take my advice, and when you want to know if a thing's hot get someone else to try it. And now, in the words of the great Napoleon, git along."

Once more they resumed their slow advance in an easterly direction. The jutting rocks grew less frequent, and gave place to a smooth incline. The millionaire's aneroid barometer could not be relied upon to give thoroughly the exact variation of level, but it was probably fairly accurate. It registered an ascent of eight hundred feet above the level of the lake.

"Are we still climbing?" asked Ching-Lung. "It's so profoundly dark that I can't tell whether we are going up hill or down hill."

"We are ascending. Ching—and I am sorry for it."

"Why, old chap?"

"Because it takes away nine chances out of ten of ever finding water—unless in the shape of pools, and the water in these is almost certain to be undrinkable. If there was a running stream, its course must have been in this direction."

"Hold on!" answered the prince. "Your remarks are logic, but we won't give it up yet. We may suddenly begin to go down again. Look at the machine!"

Ferrers Lord glanced at the little aneroid again.

"The ground is perfectly level," he said. "No; there is a slight downward incline."

"Then why shouldn't we find water? This is evidently the top of a watershed, and streams may run that way."

No longer, for splashing reached their ears. Two hours had passed since they left their camping-ground.

Ching-Lung suggested a meal. Gathering a few pieces of coal, Maddock quickly had a fire going. He made tea, which, though milkless, tasted excellent. In order to economise the oil, only one torch was kept alight during the meal.

"I suppose we can find our way back, sir?" said Maddock.

"I hope so, Maddock. But a compass is not a reliable guide underneath ground. A mass of magnetic rock, or even rock rich in iron-ore, might throw the needle many points out. But I am prepared for that. Give me that leather box."

The box, which Maddock had carried swung over his shoulder, was opened. It contained a number of jointed rods, which the millionaire began to fit together. The bottom joints opened out into a tripod. Ferrers Lord placed it erect, took out a couple of small electric machines, and set up a second pole with a receiver.

"What's it all about, old chap?"

"I am going to speak to Honour, Ching," replied Ferrers Lord.

"Wireless telegraphy—eh?"

"Exactly! It is a science I have not been able to study as much as I would have liked; but I intend to give it a good deal of attention later on."

He began to work the instrument. A few seconds later the needle of the receiver began to tick off the answer.

"Sorry you haven't found water. Amazed cavern is a large. Don't despair. All well here."

He read the reply aloud, and both Maddock and Joe gasped in silent wonder.

"Please, sir," said Joe, scratching his head, "is it a game, or was you really speakin' to Mr. Honour?"

"It's no game, my lad."

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Joe. "And you don't want no wires for the words to run along?"

"No, wires are not needed. The electric waves go through the air and act on the instrument at the other end."

Joe scratched his head again. He had a very small knowledge of electricity indeed. He was something like the sailor who, when he wanted to send his father a pair of boots for a present, wrote the address on them, and, climbing a telegraph-post, tied them to the wires. Joe had a dim idea that telegrams were sent complete in their envelopes in a similar way.

Other messages were dispatched to Rupert, Proust, and Gan-Waga, and cheery answers received. Then the millionaire packed away the apparatus.

"It is certainly an amazing invention," said Ching-Lung, lighting his pipe.

"Hardly an invention, Ching," drawled Ferrers Lord. "I prefer to call it a discovery, just as an apple falling from a tree set a man of genius thinking, and revealed the force of gravity. One cannot invent a natural force; but one can investigate its properties, and, by directing them, make it work for us."

As they resumed their journey Ferrers Lord chatted over

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

The cavern seemed vaster than one of the wonders of the world—the mammoth cave of Kentucky.

Suddenly the millionaire halted, with an exclamation of surprise, on the very edge of a chasm. He sent the light shooting downwards.

"Hurrah!" cried Ching-Lung. "Water at last!"

The ray from the electric lamp threw a white patch on the surface of a silent lake.

The next moment the still surface of the water was broken into ripples, and a faint splash came up.

"A fish, sir, by hokey!" said Maddock excitedly. "I see! his back!"

"So did I!" said Joe. "There's another!"

Again some living creature set the sullen water rippling. They stared down eagerly.

"If the water contains fish," said the millionaire, "it must be less charged with mineral matter than the lake, for I'm confident nothing could live in that."

"There's nothing like tasting before you buy, old chap. I'll be taster-in-chief."

"Get down first," said Ferrers Lord.

The depth of the ravine was not great, and Joe and Maddock extended their torches. Ching-Lung made the

RESULT OF OUR GRAND MINIATURE "MAGNET" COMPETITION.

This Competition proved an even greater success than your Editor anticipated, and among the thousands of Miniature "Magnets" sent in by readers were a large number that were little short of being works of art. Under these circumstances it was an exceptionally difficult task to adjudicate the winners of the Fifty Cash Prizes, but after the most careful consideration your Editor has awarded the Fifty Money to the readers named in the list below. It will be noticed that an extra One-Shilling prize has been awarded.

FIRST PRIZE OF 10s.—JOHN COWAN, 6, LESLIE PLACE, EDINBURGH.

One Shilling in cash has been sent to each one of the following fifty readers:—

George Gillings, 187, Galsdon Road, Coventry; Arthur A. Tailton, 58, William Street, Regent's Park, London, N.W.; Walter Malivoire, 228, Romford Road, Forest Gate, E.; Miss G. S. Hawes, 502, Old Kent Road, London, S.E.; Robert Stevens, 72, Denmark Street, Heston, West-eston, Tyne; G. H. Evans, 174, Anson Street, Merton, Eccles, Lancs.; Arthur R. Hale, 22, Holmedale Road, Victoria Park, Bristol; A. D. Tillyer, 105, Drew Road, Silvertown, E.; Robert A. Cunningham, Aichfield, Talslagh, co. Dublin, Ireland; George Thomas White, 2, Darlan Road, Fulham, London, S.W.; George Holland, 36, Queen's Road, Erdington, Birmingham; Henry Holson, 3, Lister Road, Halifax, Yorks.; Sydney John House, 64, Church Road, Portsmouth; Mrs. A. F. Goodman, 7, Highfield, Ithburgh Road, Finedon, Northants; L. Barnes, 56, Chester Street, Cirencester, Glos.; Cyril Hurford, 17, Faircross Avenue, Barking, Essex; Francis Thomas Gring, 37, Fulham Palace Road, Fulham, S.W.; Percy Thompson, 43, Lewtas Street, Blackpool; Charles F. Greenfield, 21, Edmund Road, Peckham, S.E.; Harry Pown, 260, Clew View, Holly Hall, Dudley; William Hughes, 1, Boxall Cottages, Star Road, Ashford, Kent; Fred Holloway, 55, Glovers Road, Small Heath, Birmingham; H. G. Mallett, 1, Winters Bridge Cottages, Thornhill Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey; W. Abbott, 67, Peckwater Street, Kenilworth Town, N.W.; Jack Bilton, 26, Beer Street, Yeovil, Somerset; John Jones, 21, Desmond

Street, Everton, Liverpool; G. F. Martin, 9, Myrtle Road, Highfields, Leicester; George Eaton, 43, Brimington Road, Banbury, Oxon.; Harold G. Stuart, 38, Lopen Road, Silver Street, Edmonstone, N.; Richard Wythe, 157, Arundel Street, London; Portsmouth; J. Ward, 17, Carlton Terrace, Meadow Lane, Nottingham; Harry Banks, 40, Field Street, Willenhall, Staffs.; Cyril T. Rossiter, 16, Gladstone Road, Leekes; Eric Kavanagh, Main Street, Nowbridge, co. Kildare, Ireland; Frederick Buckland, 4, Chasworth Road, Gorton, Manchester; Emile Henri, 37, John Street, Birkenshead; Harry Ingham, 48, Printing Office Street, Doncaster; Francis W. Fry, 222, Stoney Lane, Sparkhill, Birmingham; Frank W. Warren, 143, Ferndale Road, Brighton, London; Alfred Hudson, 30, Albert Street, Coventry; Ernest Utley, 72, Sturley Road, Sheffield; Harold Codner, 35, Golden Square, Regent Street, W.; Cecil N. Bedmal, 70, Gilman Street, Hanley, Staffs.; Harold James, 26, Rosebery Avenue, Beaumont Road, Plymouth; F. E. Tomkins, 4, Oak Cottages, Taylors Lane, Sydenham, S.E.; Miss Lyle Evelyn Baker, 85, Ernest Road, Buckland, Portsmouth, Hants; Miss Nella Tomkins, Salisbury House, 492, Lea Bridge Road, Leyton, N.E.; Wallace Anderson, 8, Duke Street, Southampton; Thomas Allee, 3, Byron Street (off Corporation Street), Poole, Wigan.

the new discovery, and Ching-Lung was greatly interested. But when the millionaire began to speak of wireless telephony—a newer discovery still—Ching-Lung pricked up his ears. An instrument that would convey the human voice without the aid of wires set him thinking.

"Jehoshaphat!" he muttered, winking slyly in the darkness. "I must know more about that. Fancy ghostly voices in the forecote at midnight, and spectral yells in the air. I'll go in for that giddy science as soon as I get the chance."

Ching-Lung was bitten by the idea. It opened the field for a thousand pranks to play upon the men. He made up his mind to get Hal Honour to manufacture an instrument for him, for the engineer could do anything.

However far they wandered there was no danger. Even though they lost their way, and their lights failed, they could communicate with their comrades, and call them to the rescue. The instrument the millionaire had brought with him filled them with confidence, and robbed the gloomy pit of all its fears.

According to the pedometer, they were almost six miles from the camp. The roof was still hidden in the unfathomable darkness.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY, No. 214.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVAL CO.'S AT GREYFRIARS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

that small nail into a hook. I don't suppose those beggars are very shy—at least, not as shy as the fish in the Thames. Sling it down!"

Joe hammered the nail into the required shape, and Ching-Lung fished a rough barb on it, and sharpened the point.

The bait was a piece of tinned tongue, and a stone tied a few feet above the hook sank the tackle. "Cheero!" rang Ching-Lung's voice. "I've found something!"

There was a tug at the line almost before the bait reached the bottom. A sharp pull drove the hook home.

Whatever kind of fish it was, it was no small one, but Ching-Lung was not afraid of breakages, and pulled lustily. He dragged out his squirming, splashing prey, while Maddock and Joe cheered, and flung it up to them.

"A pike," said Ferrers Lord, "or a species of a pike."

"They gathered round to examine it. Its scales were of colourless grey, and it had none of the metallic hues of the ordinary pike. Still, the shape was the same, and its long jaws were furnished with double rows of ugly teeth.

"Look at the brute's eyes!" said Ching-Lung. "Did you ever see anything more ghastly?"

The goggle-eyes were quite two inches across. "The eyes are interesting," said Ferrers Lord, "for the fish found in the lake of the mammoth cave of Kentucky are quite blind. This is not the natural eyes of these fish."

"What makes you think so?"

"The very fact that they have eyes at all. Eyes could be of no use to them, and unless that organ is used it soon comes to be lost. Either these fish have been washed in from some open-air stream or the light reaches them in some part of that channel. The light may be very faint, and that would account for the enormous development of the creature's organs of vision."

"Very likely; but is he good to eat?"

"I should say so."

"Then we'll see if his pa's at home, and get him to come out for a walk," said Ching-Lung. "Joe, give me another chunk of that tongue."

Once more the hook was baited and tossed into the water.

"Tip!" cried Ching-Lung. "I've got his big brother! Come on, Charlie, and don't be bashful! I want to introduce you to three nice gentlemen. Jupiter, this boy can pull! It's like hauling a sack of coals upstairs. Come along, do, Mr. Fish, and none of your games!"

It was a fight for some minutes, but the angler won, and a panting monster, nearly thirty pounds in weight, was dragged to the side.

Maddock went to the rescue, and stunned the fish by striking its skull with the butt of his revolver.

As they had no more bait, they could catch no more fish, but they were well satisfied.

"I tell you what, old chap," said Ching-Lung. "I'll have a proper fishing match when we come here to-morrow for water, and I'll give a diamond ring to the lad who catches the biggest. Ugh, the horrid brutes!"

He shivered with disgust. Attracted by the torches, quite a dozen great pike had gathered close to the surface, and their eerie eyes stared up horribly.

"It's a bit like a bad nightmare, sir," said Maddock. "I feel as if I want to run."

The millionaire laughed, and looked at his watch.

"As we have time to spare," he said, "I think we will follow the water for a mile or so. I am quite convinced that these creatures are in the habit of being in the light. There is a light somewhere, but it may be miles away. Which course shall we take—right or left? You decide, Maddock."

"Right is my choice, sir."

"Then right it shall be. We'll go a mile, and no more. Leave the fish here; we can pick them up on our return."

For several hundred yards the ravine ran straight, and then it suddenly curved round to the east. The fish swam after the light, and kept pace with the explorers.

They increased in numbers until quite a shoal was following. Ching-Lung turned, and saw the water thick with ghastly eyes. The sight was indescribably horrible.

"The uncanny brutes!" he said, hurling a stone among them. "They make me sick!"

The splash scattered them, but they gathered again. Their eyes began to get on Joe's nerves.

"It's as bad as sharks following a ship wif' fever on board," he said. "Drat the beasts! I shall dream about them to-night, Ben!"

"I reckon you will if you eat too much of those we caught," laughed the water-of-fact Maddock. "If a cat can look at a king, why can't a fish look at a blessed carpenter? What's that vile dacey you're smoking?"

"If it's vile you gave it to me. It came out of your pouch."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 214.
Read the grand new story of
Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"THE HERO OF ST. JIM'S!" in this week's "GEM" Library.
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"Not in this world, sonny! I don't smoke stuff like that. Let's sniff."

Joe handed the pipe to his comrade.

"That's odd!" said Joe. "It seems all right. Can't you smell something burning?"

They all detected a curious odour in the air.

"It's the smoke of a coal-fire for a thousand pounds," said Ching-Lung; "and mighty poor coal at that. Perhaps the volcano isn't as dead as we think. Joe found it a trifle hotter than he expected, didn't you, Joseph?"

The smell of smoke grew more pronounced. The discovery of the boiling spring bore witness that the volcano had not wholly burnt itself out. Ferrers Lord expected to come upon some small crater or craters, which act as safety-valves in many regions.

"A light ahead, sir!" said Maddock.

Through the gloom shone a dim, red speck. It neither winked nor quivered. A moment later they stopped dead, and stared at each other in silent wonder.

At their feet lay a smouldering fire of coal—a fire lighted by human hands.

The amazing discovery stunned them. The fire had not been replenished for some time, for the centre alone was burning, and it was surrounded by a ring of grey ashes. But whose hand had made it? Who was the being who lived in this great solitude of silence and utter gloom?

They heard the millionaire's revolver click. The unknown might be a foe.

The light flashed round, revealing nothing except the weird staring eyes in the water.

"This is getting a bit creepy, old chap," muttered Ching-Lung.

"Very creepy!"

Ferrers Lord began to examine the ground near the fire. It revealed no trace or clue that would help to unravel the mystery. He moved forward a few paces, throwing the light before him.

"Ah! he said.

"What is it?"

"A Mauser cartridge," answered the millionaire, as he picked something up.

It had not been discharged. The mystery deepened.

"The fellow must be a white man," said Ching-Lung.

"Not necessarily. Don't forget that many of Stotland Sahib's pirates were armed with Mausers. There is another way into the cavern, Ching, and who ever is the real owner of this cartridge knows it."

"And if he's a foe and somewhere about," said Ching-Lung, "it's a mighty cheerful idea that he might start potting at us. I'm beginning to feel sorry that I ever left my little back room."

Joe and Maddock began to experience a creepy sensation in the region of the spine. If the unknown man were lurking close at hand, he would certainly see them.

"Perhaps the wolves of Stotland Sahib used the cavern as a hiding-place, and had fled to it for safety, terrified by the sudden coming of the Lord of the Skies." This was Ching-Lung's first thought, and he whispered it to Ferrers Lord.

"If that's the case," answered the millionaire quietly, "our wisest plan will be to beat a hasty retreat. But there is no sign of encampment here, not a crumb of food. I hate to go back until I have solved the mystery. You must wait here for me."

"Not I, even if you call it mutiny! If you mean to go on, we'll all go together. Even if we get collared, Hal Honour will look after the boys. You bet, we won't leave you!"

"Then spread out a little. Walk about ten yards apart." Maddock was on the extreme left.

"I've found a rifle, sir!" he called.

The rifle was a Mauser, clean, and quite free from dust. A little further on they stumbled across a bandolier, almost filled with cartridges. Then came a horn laden of native make; but it contained no oil.

"Why on earth has the chap thrown these things away?" asked Ching-Lung in perplexity.

"I fancy I can guess, Ching, and I think we are in no danger."

"Then tell me why?"

"Because he was trying to escape, and found them heavy. Quicker, lads—quicker!"

He broke into what was almost a run. Hampered by the weight they carried, Joe and Maddock were unable to keep up with him.

"Great Scott!" gasped Ching-Lung, holding his torch so that the light fell on the ground. "What have we found?"

Both men halted instinctively. A human body lay face downwards on the ground.

"It's the Argal-Dinjat!" said Ferrers Lord. "I almost knew it. Have we come too late?"

A Call to the Rescue—Ben Maddock and Joe, the Carpenter, see an Astonishing Monster, which turns out not to be There—Safe in Camp Again.

Ching-Lung had his brandy-bask out in a moment. The Afghan's face was thin and shrunken, and the cheek-bones and the muscles of the jaw seemed to burst out through the skin. Kneeling, the millionaire lifted the man's head. The eyes were closed, and his hand, pressed over Argal-Dinjat's breast, could not detect any throbbing there to tell that the heart still beat. The Afghan was dead.

"Not too late!" asked Ching-Lung anxiously. "Don't say that!"

"If he is dead, he has not been dead long," answered the millionaire. "Pour a little brandy down his throat—not more than a few drops. Chaie his hands, Maddock, but do it gently."

"He's not dead!" cried Ching-Lung. "You never saw a dead man yet with clenched teeth. I'll have to prise his mouth open. Lend me a knife, Joe. Good old Argal! Those Afghans are like cats—all sinew and lives. Got his head on your knee, Joe, while I get the blade in. That's the ticket! How many drops, Lord?"

"About twenty."

Ching-Lung half-filled the cup of his flask with spirit, and poured the liquor down the man's throat. They waited silently and expectantly. Ferrers Lord's ear was pressed to the Afghan's chest.

"Alive," he said, "but only just alive. The poor fellow is only a skeleton."

"What had we better do, sir?" said Maddock. "Joe's winged, but I think I can manage to carry him, though he is a tidy weight. Is it far, sir?"

"Only five miles," answered the millionaire. "No, Maddock, you could not manage it."

"I'll try, sir," protested the boy's eager. "I'm mighty tough when I get started. If I get a bit fagged, I know his 'ighness would give a hand. Poor Argal ain't much of a pal w' any o' us, and I reckon he wanted to knife ere that day when I stopped him shooting Storlad Sahib; but then he's only a savage, and don't know no better."

"Did he threaten to stab you?"

Honest Ben suddenly discovered that his tongue was running away with him. He would have cut off his right hand rather than get anyone in trouble.

"In course, he was only jarking," he asked hastily. "I knowed that; he was grinning all the time."

"Oh!" said Ferrers Lord enigmatically.

Maddock did not tell his chief of the fierce struggle he had had with the infuriated Afghan for the possession of a knife with a six-inch blade, with an edge like a newly-stropped razor. But malice and Maddock were as far as the Poleas asunder.

"I could carry him on my back, sir."

"If you did he would die, my brave lad," said Ferrers Lord, who guessed the truth. "He must have been wandering about in the dark for several days without any food."

"Then what can we do, old chap?"

"Send for help, Ching. You forget that we have our wireless apparatus. We can tell them how to follow us, and talk to them every inch of the way almost, for they will bring another instrument with them. When they get within a mile or so, our revolvers will call them up, and the lamp can be seen for a long distance. How can we keep him alive until they come?"

"Won't the brandy do?" asked Ching-Lung.

"It would be fatal. The coating of his stomach must be quite raw. What food have we left?"

"What food, sir? Only biscuits."

"And pepper, salt, and mustard, sir," put in Joe, "and lots of tea, sir, and a lump of butter."

"Then make a fire. Soup is the only thing for him. Take the carpenter with you, Ching, and bring back a good slice out from one of those fish."

Joe and Ching-Lung lighted fresh torches and set off together, while Ben went in search of coal. Pillowing the Afghan's head on his coat, Ferrers Lord began to put the instrument together. Long before the fire was well ablaze the marvellous electric waves were flying through the cavern at a speed that only the speed of light can excel. And this is the message the quivering needle wrote:

Are between five and six miles east by north-east of camp. Have found our Afghan guide, Argal-Dinjat, almost dead. Send stretchers, bearers, blankets, and strong beef-tea. Thorston in command. Will fire revolver every five minutes two hours after you start. Keep due east until you reach water; then due north."

And the silent Hal Honour flashed back the laconic answer: "At once."

Ferrers Lord left the instrument, and peered into the guide's dusky face. The eyelids were quivering slightly.

Maddock blew lustily at the fire, and placed the kettle on to boil. After a time two red lights glowed through the blackness, and a noise of footsteps heralded the return of Joe and Ching-Lung.

EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"All right still?" asked the prince.

"Yes. His heart is not quite so feeble, but he is very close to death. Is the water almost boiling?"

"It is, sir," answered Maddock.

Maddock was a good cook himself, and he watched the cooking of the millionaire with professional interest. He cut the fish into small pieces, and dropped them into the kettle with a sprinkling of pepper and salt. He took the time by his watch, and then searched until he found a smooth stone.

"Give me a biscuit, Maddock."

He pounded the biscuit into a fine powder, and, after waiting for a time, he tried how far the cooking of the fish was progressing using a lead-pencil as a substitute for a fork. Apparently satisfied, the millionaire emptied his water-bottle, and refilled it from the kettle. Then he threw away the fish, poured the water back into the kettle, placed the latter on the fire, and stirred the powdered biscuit into it.

"By Jupiter, old fellow," said Ching-Lung, as he sniffed the delicious odour, "if that tastes as good as it smells, you're a king of cooks!"

"You shall try it," replied Ferrers Lord, smiling. "I want the butter now, please."

Joe and Maddock began to feel amazingly hungry. When the rich, white soup was done to a turn, Ferrers Lord took the front glass out of his watch to use as a spoon with which to feed Argal-Dinjat.

"That's a neat idea," said Ching-Lung admiringly.

"One can put a watch to a great many uses," said Ferrers Lord. "If you are only sure of the time, and the sun is shining, it makes an accurate compass. I spent a good many hours of study before I had mine manufactured. It may look rather large and clumsy, but it is a splendid instrument for a traveller. Besides being perfectly watertight, it contains a magnifying-glass which is also a powerful burning-glass, and several other useful trifles. Raise his head a little."

They managed, by dint of great patience, to force about a quarter of a pint of soup down the Afghan's throat. His breathing became less feeble. Then they covered him with their coats and placed him close to the fire.

"So there is another entrance," said the millionaire thoughtfully. "Argal-Dinjat's presence here makes a certainty of that."

"A pity we didn't look for it before and save our labour."

"That's merely a matter of opinion," drawled Ferrers Lord. "There is certainly a way out into the light, and it is possible for a human being to reach it from below."

"But, remember, we are not all Argal-Dinjats. He is a mountaineer born and bred. He can go where the wild goats go, and scale dizzy heights that would make most of us shudder to look at."

"He has had a terrible time. His shoes are worn thin, and his hands and feet bruised and cut."

"If we reached this mountain-side, it would take us at least two days to make the descent, battling with cold and fog. How many of us would gain the village alive?"

"Still, the opening may be lower down than you think," persisted Ching-Lung.

"That may be, and it is our duty to find it. Poor Argal will not be able to help us for a long time. And, after all, I am depending on the new aeroplane. Besides saving our lives, it will be useful in a thousand ways."

"Honour is a wonder!" said Ching-Lung.

They spatulated round the fire, mulling at their pipes. Ferrers Lord felt proud of the Afghan's devotion.

Though Argal-Dinjat's lips were sealed, it was clear that he had made a heroic effort to reach his master. He had either seen the airship enter the crater, or else some native had given him the information.

Alarmed, doubtless, by her protracted stay in the jaws of the pit, he had set off boldly to climb the mountain—a task that not one man in ten thousand would have attempted. It was a gallant act.

"Rupert ought to get along much faster than we did," said Ching-Lung, after a long pause.

"I suppose he will. He has been nearly an hour on the way."

"Two miles an hour won't break many records, and that's all we managed. Can't you feel the breeze now? Look at the smoke, too. Which way is it blowing?"

"Almost due west," answered the millionaire. "Argal-Dinjat came in on the eastern slope. I am convinced. I'm going to have forty winds now. Talk away as much as you like, you won't disturb me."

He stretched himself, yawned, and closed his eyes. Through the darkness rang a long, melancholy howl.

Joe and Maddock shivered, and glanced apprehensively over their shoulders, and Ching-Lung whipped out his revolver. The millionaire's eyes opened quickly, and closed again.

"That was a wolf, or I'll eat my boots!" growled Maddock. "It had got a powerful ugly voice, that's a dead certainty," put in Joe. "A little cough mixture wouldn't hurt it."

"Seh! What's that?"

Ching-Lung pointed over the heads of the two men.

"What's that, sir?"

"Something black," answered Ching-Lung hoarsely.

"Look there again! Didn't you see two eyes?"

"Eh? Eyes? Where, sir?"

"Yes, eyes. Right behind you. There they are! I'm going to shoot!"

The revolver thundered, and above its deafening echoes they heard a succession of awful blood-curdling shrieks. Ferrers Lord raised himself upon his elbow.

"I've hit the thing!" gasped Ching-Lung, snatching up the lamp. "You saw it, Joe?"

"I did," muttered the carpenter, who was very white.

"So did I," said Maddock.

The shrieks grew fainter and fainter. They were horribly human. Ferrers Lord yawned.

"What was it—a fox?"

"I didn't see it clearly," said Ching-Lung. "I just saw something black, and let drive. I must have winged the thing. Joe was nearest. What was it like, Joe?"

"It—it was like a man," said Joe, "only different, wasn't it, Ben?"

"I need look 'air on it, just when the barker went off," replied Maddock. "It was the 'orriddest-lookin' hobblet I ever clapped eyes on. Did you twig its claws?"

"Four hitches long, Ben."

"Ay, and five!" said Maddock.

They went on to describe the monster, while Ferrers Lord composed himself to sleep. On the whole it was an extraordinary brute that Ching-Lung had fired at. Maddock declared that it had eyes as big as cricket-balls, and, he fancied, a tail similar to a squirrel's, but at least nine feet long. Joe, not to be outdone, was certain that it was armed with a small tree, just about to brain him, when the prince put a bullet into it.

"Joe," said Ching-Lung, "chuck it! Draw it mild!"

"But I seed it w' my own eyes, and so did Ben."

"Ben," said Ching-Lung, "you're telling fairy tales. You saw nothing at all."

They stared at him. The same screaming sound rang through the darkness once more, came nearer and nearer, shrieked over their heads and round them, and culminated in a wild burst of laughter.

Joe and Maddock blushed to the roots of their hair, and longed to kick themselves. Ching-Lung chuckled with fiendish joy.

"You two chaps have glorious imaginations," he tittered— "glorious. Eyes, tails, and clubs! Oh, squeeze me tight, and let me giggle! And it wagged its ziddy tail, did it? What a tale! And it was like a man, only different, and it had long hair! Oh, the 'orriddest-lookin' hobblet! Chase me, Mary Ann! Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!"

His Highness gorged, giggled, and choked for several minutes, while the victims of the jest glowered speechlessly.

There was a smile on the millionaire's lips.

"Gently, Ching!" he drawled. "Isn't that the instrument clicking?"

"It is, old chap."

It was a message from Thurston. He was less than two miles away, and going strongly. He promised to be up with them in forty minutes. Never had a more magnificent proof of the advantage of wireless telegraphy been given than this.

At intervals the millionaire fired his revolver. At length a short came rumbling and rolling down the cavern in answer. Lights flashed through the darkness, cheer followed cheer, and Thurston and Tom Proot, followed by four of the crew, ran forward to greet their comrades.

"Well done, Rupert," said the millionaire; "you're made magnificent time."

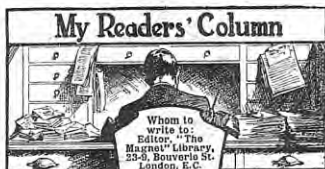
"We came as hard as we could, old fellow. How is the Afghan now?"

"Still about the same. We must warm up some beef-tea for him before we move him."

Maddock undertook the duty. The rescue-party had brought a spring-mattress, well furnished with pillows and swung on poles, to serve as a litter, a large kettle, and two indiarubber hot-water bottles. Rupert had not forgotten a little medicine-chest either. The Afghan was speedily made comfortable.

The bearers raised the litter, and the return journey began. Three hours later they entered the camp.

(Another splendid instalment of this grand new serial will appear next week in "The Magnet" Library. Order your copy in advance.)



Next Tuesday's Complete Story.

For next week, Frank Richards has something really good for my readers, in the shape of a grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled

"The Rival Co.'s at Greyfriars."

The newly-elected captain of the Remove and his friends, fresh from their triumph over Vernon Smith & Co., find their supremacy threatened from a fresh quarter altogether, and, as may be supposed, some exciting times ensue. Altogether,

"The Rival Co.'s at Greyfriars"

is a story that you should not miss on any account, therefore, to repeat my weekly advice,

PLEASE ORDER IN ADVANCE!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Reginald H. (Calgary, Canada).—Thank you for your nice letter and promise to assist in popularising your favourite papers in Canada. I shall rely on your help.

C. Rayner.—Thanks for your letter and the sketch of Billy Hunter, which is quite a creditable copy of the original.

Thomas R. (Pondicherry).—Thanks for your letter and suggestions, which I am always glad to get from my readers. It is unnecessary to have two Correspondence Exchanges, as any Magnetite can make use of the existing one by buying a copy of our companion paper. Your second suggestion is one which I have already considered, but am not proposing to adopt just at present, anyway; perhaps a bit later on.

Lawrence F. (Melbourne, Australia).—Curiously enough, the suggestion you make in your welcome letter is exactly the same as the second one made by Thomas R. (Pondicherry), referred to above, and, of course, the same answer applies.

What are the "Ashes"?

A number of readers have written to ask me the meaning of the word "ashes" in connection with the Test matches between England and Australia. As the matter is one that must be of interest to many Magnetites, in view of the recent success of the English team in Australia, in "recovering the ashes," I have pleasure in giving here the explanation of the term. It was a London paper—"The Sporting Times"—which created the ashes. After a sensational defeat of England at the Oval in 1882, this paper published the following:

"In affectionate remembrance of English Cricket, which died at the Oval on August 29th, 1882. Deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing friends and acquaintances. R.I.P. The body will be cremated, and the ashes taken to Australia."

The writer could not have imagined that his obituary notice would have had the effect it has. It is thus the ashes of English cricket that the countries are continually fighting for.

"The Gem" Library Free Correspondence Exchange.

Interest in this popular feature, which is FREE to all readers of our wonderful companion paper, "The Gem" Library, continues to grow by leaps and bounds, and I have decided once again to give space on one of our cover pages to this splendid scheme, by means of which fellow-readers of "The Gem" Library, living in all parts of the world, are brought into touch with one another to their mutual advantage and pleasure.

THE EDITOR.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

A Popular Feature of the Famous Companion Paper of "The Magnet" Library, by which fellow readers in England and all parts of the British Empire are brought into touch with one another. If you wish to have your name included in this Popular Free Correspondence Exchange, join the ranks of "Gemites," and obtain a chum to write to. Start to-day by giving your newsagent an order for this week's issue of "The Gem" Library. Price One Penny.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

J. H. Oakes, of 41, Grove Lane, Smethwick, Birmingham, would like to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* or "The Magnet" Libraries.

Miss L. and Miss N. Eastwood, of 66, Partington Street, Castleton, Manchester, England, wish to correspond with some readers in New Zealand.

H. Bolton, of 37, Lancaster Road, Hitchin, Herts, England, would like to correspond with a girl reader about 16 years old, living in Canada.

R. Hagger, and his friend, W. A. Lindsay, of 20, Manby Street, Stratford, London, E., would like to correspond with two girl readers, age 18.

Miss E. Ball, of 15, Chaddel Street, Old Radford, Nottingham, would very much like to correspond with Frank C., of Douglas, Isle of Man.

T. H. Stokes, of 24, Danby Street, New Clee, Grimsby, wishes to correspond with a London girl reader.

F. A. Parker, 17, would very much like to correspond with a boy or girl reader. Address, F. A. Parker, Boy 1st Class, H.M.S. Collingwood, care of G.E.O., London.

N. E., England, would like to correspond with a reader living on a farm in New South Wales and New Zealand.

F. Hardy, 71, Chalk Farm Road, London, N.W., would like to correspond with a girl reader, age 16-18, living in or near Hampshire.

A. R. Ellis, of High Street, Sidmouth, Devon, England, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* living in the Colonies.

A. Richards, care of Mr. Ellis, The Studio, Sidmouth, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* belonging to a theatrical touring company.

W. P. McCabe, of 60, Spencer Street, Everton, Liverpool, would like to correspond with a Gemite age about 15.

Miss M. Blackhall, of 8, Kenning Terrace, Whitechapel Road, Haggerston, London, N., wishes to correspond with a boy reader of *THE GEM* or "The Magnet," age about 15.

L. Tomlinson, 31, Erdington Road, Blackpool, Lancs., would very much like a girl chum to write to him.

Sidney Harris, of 25, Manston Road, Exeter, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* or "The Magnet."

W. Forrest, of 8, Dundee Street, Edinburgh, would like to correspond with a Scotch girl reader.

E. C. Inwood, of 57, Leigham Vale, Streatham, S.W., would like to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM*, age about 17-19.

H. R. Kirkbank, age 17, of 70, Goldolphin Road, Shepherd's Bush, London, W., would like to correspond with a girl reader about the same age.

R. Mason, of 124, Station Road, Bexhill, very much wants a girl chum to correspond with him. Age about 14-15.

A. Crooker, of 3, Median Road, London, would like to correspond with a girl chum whose age is about 16.

Maurice Nathan, of 143, North Street, Charing Cross, Glasgow, wishes to correspond with two girl readers of *THE GEM* or "The Magnet" Libraries whose ages are between 15 and 16.

G. T. Cherry, of 5, Oxford Street, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, would like to correspond with some reader of *THE GEM* living in Canada.

George E. Roberts, of 6, Hampden Street, Abbey Park Road, Leicester, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age about 16.

Miss E. Maude, of 35, Alice Street, Sale, Manchester, would like to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in or near London.

J. Merry, of 11, Victoria Road, Alexandra Park, London, N., would like to correspond with a girl chum living in North London.

Miss P. O'Connor, aged seventeen, Miss I. Trevannion, aged sixteen, and Miss Hetty Kennedy, aged sixteen, c/o Mrs. Field, 145, Brighton Road, Moseley, Birmingham, would like to correspond with three boys of about sixteen to eighteen years, preferably three who have attended a Grammar School.

Miss M. Ward, of 7, Onslow Street, Leicester, would like to correspond with a girl reader living abroad.

A. Whorwood, of 57, Euclid Avenue, London South, Canada, would like to exchange picture postcards with a girl reader.

Jack Murray, of 35, Park Road, Blyth, Northumberland, would like to correspond with a girl reader whose age is between sixteen and twenty.

A. Scorza, No. 9495, H.M.S. Ganges, Shotley, Harwich, wishes to correspond with a tall girl reader of *THE GEM* whose age is between sixteen and seventeen.

Miss M. Maher and Miss E. Fitzmaurice, of 11, Heathfield Road, Terenure, Co. Dublin, Ireland, would like to correspond with some boy readers, age about seventeen or eighteen, living in London, America, or Edinburgh.

F. George, jun., of 191a, Verdon Avenue, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with some readers of *THE GEM* and "The Magnet" Libraries.

Would any two girl readers interested in cycling, and residing in the West End of Glasgow, care to correspond with R. Carron and H. Emerson? Letters to be addressed: 45, Camperdown Road, Scotland, Glasgow.

W. Bennett, 24, Frances Street, Eccles New Road, Salford, Manchester, England, would like to correspond with any foreign or colonial chum who is interested in stamp collecting.

A. Porter, aged 14, of 169, Havelock Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, would like some fellow-Gemite to correspond with him.

R. Taylor, of "Lothair," Vansittart Road, Torquay, aged sixteen, would like to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* about the same age.

A. Keen, of Grosvenor House, 1, Cavendish Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, would like to correspond with a girl reader aged about eighteen.

L. Trevor Williams, Globe Cottage, Albert Road, Paignton, would like to correspond with any other readers—Colonial, or living in the British Isles.

C. Sheriff, of 72, Embankment Road, Plymouth, Devon, would like to correspond with a girl reader of *THE GEM* or "The Magnet" whose age is about fifteen.

R. Riding, of 38, York Road, Waltham Cross, Herts, England, wishes to exchange picture postcards (views) with "Magnet" readers in all parts of the world; abroad preferred.

Miss E. T. Whitehead, of 31, Redvers Street, Adwick, Manchester, would like some boy or girl readers, aged about 17, to correspond with her. She would especially like Miss D. R. Drew, of Surbiton, to write to her.

Will Dawson, of 51, Ernest Road, Grange Road, Bermuda, and Will Wood, of 15, Ernest Street, Grange Road, Bermuda, would like to correspond with some girl readers.

A FEW POINTS ABOUT THE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

(1.) This Exchange is FREE to all readers of "The Gem" Library. It is only necessary to send to the Editor of "The Gem" Library, 23-9, Boulevard Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C., your full name and address (this is important) together with particulars of correspondent required, and your request will be published in due course.

(2.) Readers wishing to correspond with advertisers in "The Gem" are requested to write to them direct, as no correspondence on behalf of readers can be undertaken by this office.

(3.) Readers writing to would-be correspondents and receiving no answer are requested to bear in mind the world-wide popularity of the Exchange, which is such that in some cases Advertisers have received so many (often from 100 to 600) replies that they were utterly unable to reply to all.

(4.) Owing to the fact that we go to press some time in advance, and to the large number of readers who take advantage of the Exchange, no undertaking can be given that any requests will be published in any particular number, each advertisement being dealt with in its proper turn.

(5.) No requests for correspondents can be published in the Exchange that do not bear the actual signature of the applicant. Every reader must apply for himself and sign his own request.