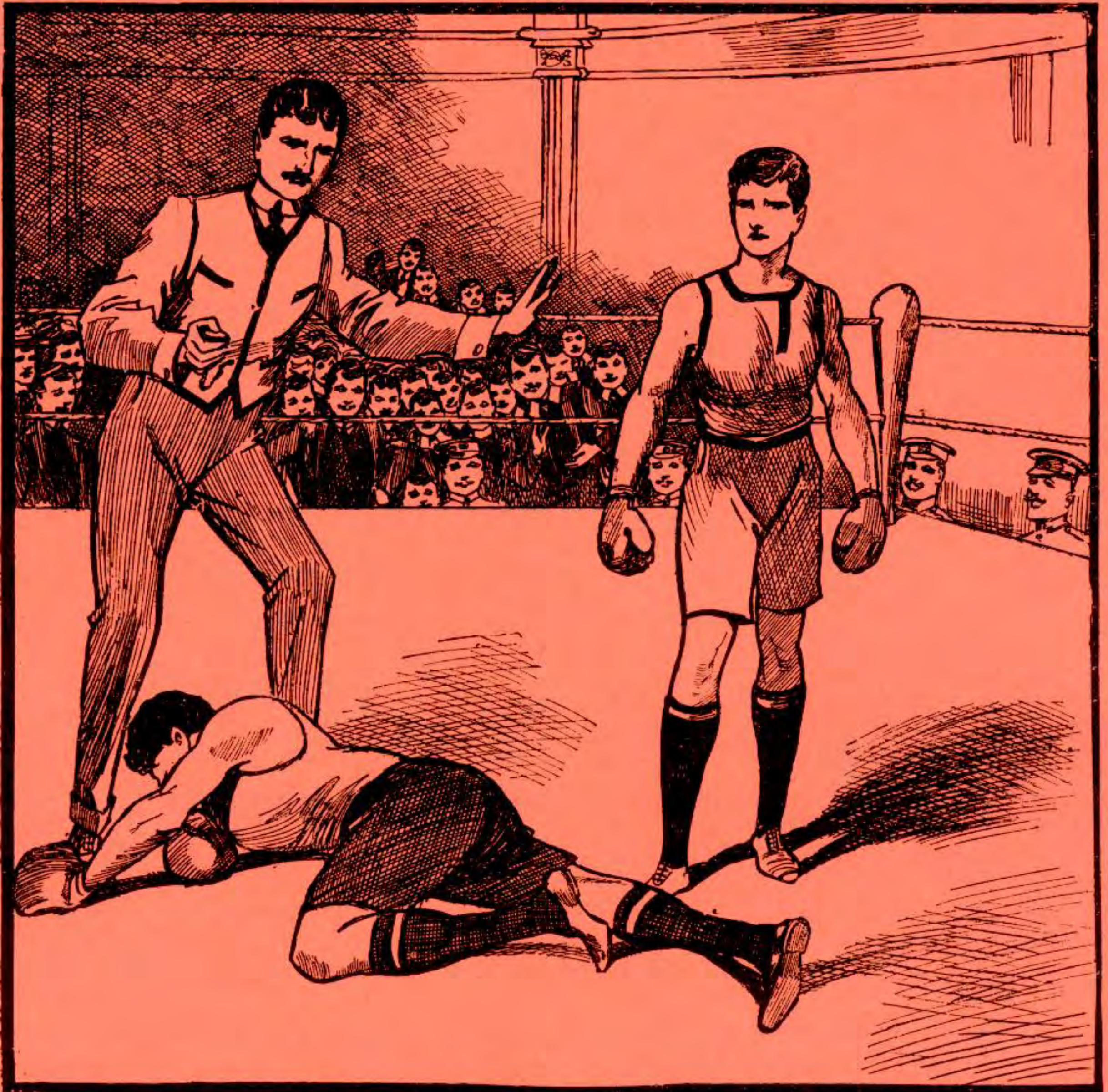


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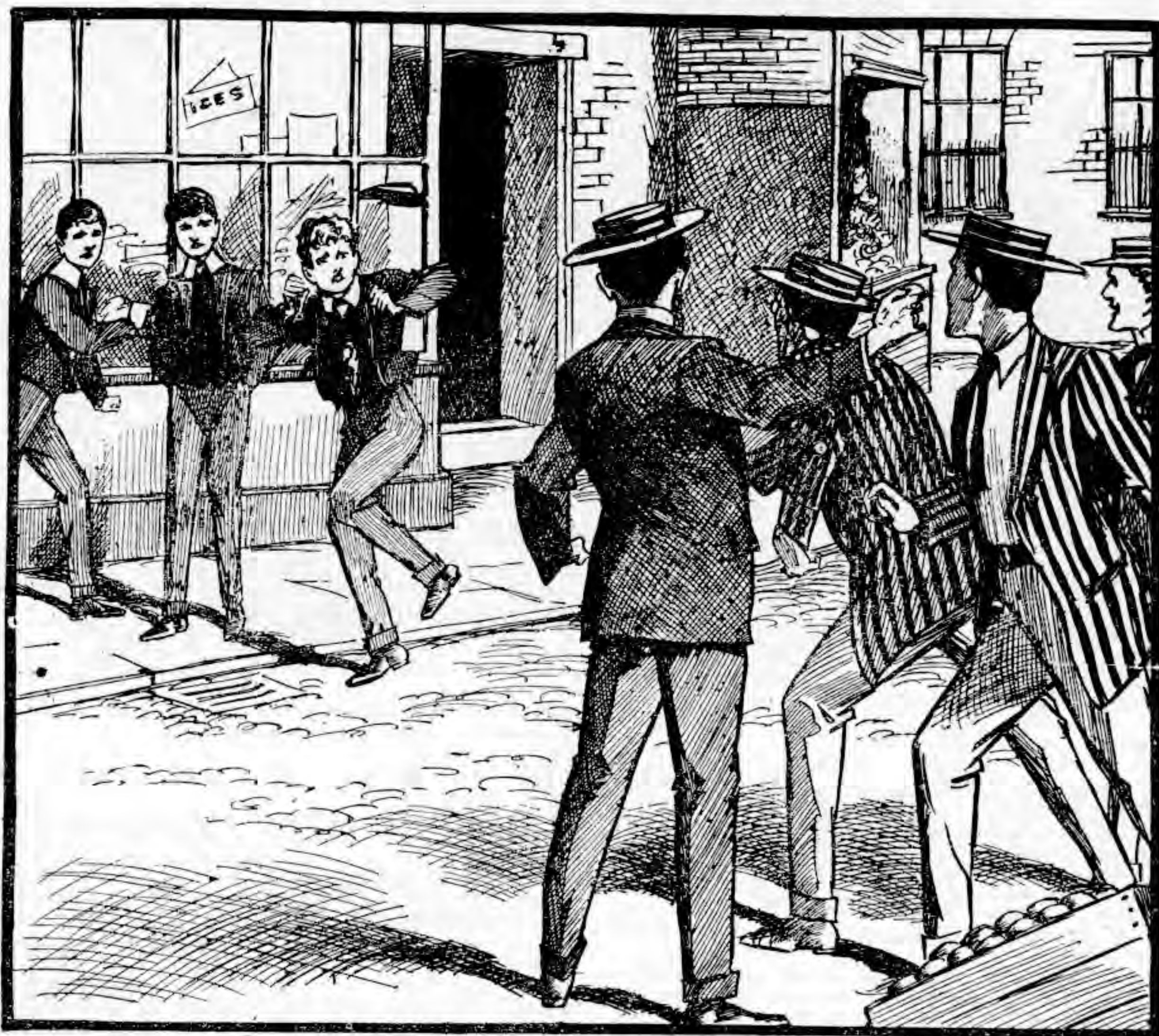


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THE FELLOW WHO WON!

A New, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



There was an ominous smash, and a roar from Bob Cherry. The missile struck his waistcoat, where it burst, and the yolk streamed down his trousers. "Yaroooh!" spluttered Bob. "Look at my trucks!" (See Chapter 1.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The White Feather

"HIGHCLIFFE cads!"

Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, rapped out that remark as he entered the old High Street of Friardale with his bosom chums, Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent.

Major Cherry, although on active service in Flanders, had found time to have a substantial "tip" sent to his hopeful son; and Bob had decided to "blue" the cash on a new cricket-bat. His chums had accompanied him into the village to proffer advice, and to see that Bob made a good selection. As they swung into the sleepy old High Street, the familiar yellow-and-white caps of the Highcliffians came in sight.

The juniors paused irresolute. As usual, they were at daggers drawn with Cecil Ponsonby & Co., the "nuts" of Highcliffe. The feud between the rival schools was fierce and deadly, and of long standing. The presence of Ponsonby and his fellow "blooms" spelt danger to the little band of Removites.

"We're in for it now!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath.

"Looks like it!" murmured Nugent. "My hat! There's over a dozen of 'em!"

"We must see it through, if it comes to a fight," said Wharton, between his teeth.

"Rather!"

Ponsonby & Co., sighting the Greyfriars juniors, advanced towards them. This was an unusual proceeding on their part. As a rule, they retreated. It was only in a situation of this sort, when they were overwhelmingly superior in numbers, that they dreamt of being the attacking force.

"Greyfriars rotters!" said Gadsby. "Sock it into 'em!"

Ponsonby grinned.

"This is where we smile," he observed. "Hand over me of those eggs!"

They were passing the grocer's shop, and Vavasour promptly complied with his chief's amiable request. He handed him an egg from one of the boxes which stood on the pavement outside the shop, and Ponsonby hurled it in the direction of the Greyfriars fellows.

There was an ominous smash, and a roar from Bob Cherry. The missile struck his waistcoat, where it burst, and the yolk streamed down his trousers.

"Yaroo!" spluttered Bob. "Look at my trucks!"

The next moment Nugent gave a fiendish yell. One of the eggs, hurled with unerring aim by Gadsby, squelched on his forehead, and ran down his face. Probably that egg was by no means a recent acquisition to the grocer's stores. Anyway, its odour suggested that it was anything but new-laid.

"The cads!" howled Nugent, clenching his hands hard. "I'll jolly well— Yarooop!"

This wasn't exactly what Nugent meant to say; but he said it, all the same. Another egg, more antique, perhaps, than the first, smashed in his ear, and the yolk, streaming down, spoilt the beautiful whiteness of his collar.

A perfect bombardment of bad eggs followed. The three juniors, loth to retreat, were soon smothered; and the nuts of Highcliffe roared with laughter. The shop-keeper rushed out to expostulate with the humorous Highcliffians, but he might as well have raved at a brick wall, for all the notice Ponsonby & Co. took of him. Vavasour and Merton stood over the box, and plied their comrades with eggs. Harry Wharton & Co. were total wrecks after the fusillade had been in progress a few moments. They were "up against it," with a vengeance!

"Rush the cads!" roared Bob Cherry.

And the Greyfriars fellows, regardless of the storm of eggs which raged on every side, dashed recklessly into the Highcliffe throng.

Ponsonby & Co. desisted now. They realised that the affair would develop into a hand-to-hand encounter, and lined up to receive their rivals' attack. Ponsonby went reeling from a smashing left-hander of Bob Cherry's, and Vavasour shrieked as Harry Wharton, pushing his way to the egg-box, tilted the unfortunate dandy head-foremost into it.

But the odds were against the plucky trio. Ponsonby & Co., by sheer strength of numbers, overcame. They hit out wildly, and the chums of Greyfriars wavered before such a terrific onslaught.

It was at this crucial moment that two Remove fellows entered the High Street, and, like the prophet of old, stood viewing the proceedings afar off. They were Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad, and Dick Russell. The two juniors had come down to the village with the same object as prompted Harry Wharton & Co.—to buy a cricket-bat, Linley having recently won an examination which added ten pounds to his scanty exchequer.

"They're our chaps!" exclaimed Mark excitedly. "Looks as if they're getting pulverised, too! Come on!"

Russell hesitated. He was a fairly reliable fighting-

man, as a rule, but the sight of a dozen Highcliffians unnerved him. He changed colour, and caught Linley by the arm.

"I—I say!" he muttered. "They're all over our chaps! We shall get it in the neck if we interfere. Hadn't we better clear off?"

Mark Linley flashed a quick look of scorn at his companion; then, without another word, he dashed into the fray, hitting out right and left.

Russell stood looking for a moment at the uneven contest. Frank Nugent was pinioned to the ground by Gadsby and Monson, and there was a suspicion of red on Harry Wharton's forehead. Mark Linley's fists wrought great havoc for an instant; but he in turn was grasped by many hands and bumped on to the pavement.

Frank Courtney, a pleasant-faced, good-natured fellow from Highcliffe, came into the street with De Courcy, his bosom chum. It was an awkward situation for them, and for a moment they felt that they ought to go to the rescue of Harry Wharton & Co.

But the knowledge that they were of Highcliffe held them back. They could not be traitors to their school. Apart from the fact that the Greyfriars fellows were outnumbered, the actual fighting was fair enough.

So Courtney and his chum, feeling very uncomfortable, stood and looked on. They were ready to take a hand immediately Ponsonby & Co. showed any inclination to foul play.

Thud! Thud!

A sound of stamping feet and of hard blows reaching their mark proclaimed that the fight was not over yet. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were still putting up a gallant resistance, but it was obvious that they would soon share the fate of their fallen comrades.

"Who's that chap standing over there?" asked Courtney suddenly.

"He's a Greyfriars fellow, begad!" murmured De Courcy, known to his associates as the Caterpillar.

"I know that, fathead! Why doesn't he join in?"

"Too much fag, perhaps," drawled De Courcy.

"Rats! He's a funk, whoever he is! I don't know the chap's name."

As Frank Courtney spoke, Ponsonby threw himself upon Harry Wharton and succeeded in bringing him to earth. At the same moment Dick Russell, with a parting glance at the scene of the struggle, turned abruptly on his heel and vanished from sight.

"Franky, dear boy," said the Caterpillar, shaking his head solemnly, "you're right! I've never seen such an amazin' piece of funk in all my born days!"

"Nor I," added Courtney grimly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

By Order of the Form.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Thus Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

When the great Coker laughed in this manner, Potter and Greene, his bosom chums, felt that it was "up to" them to laugh also. So they added their merriment to that of the mighty Horace.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Potter.

"He, he, he!" cackled Greene.

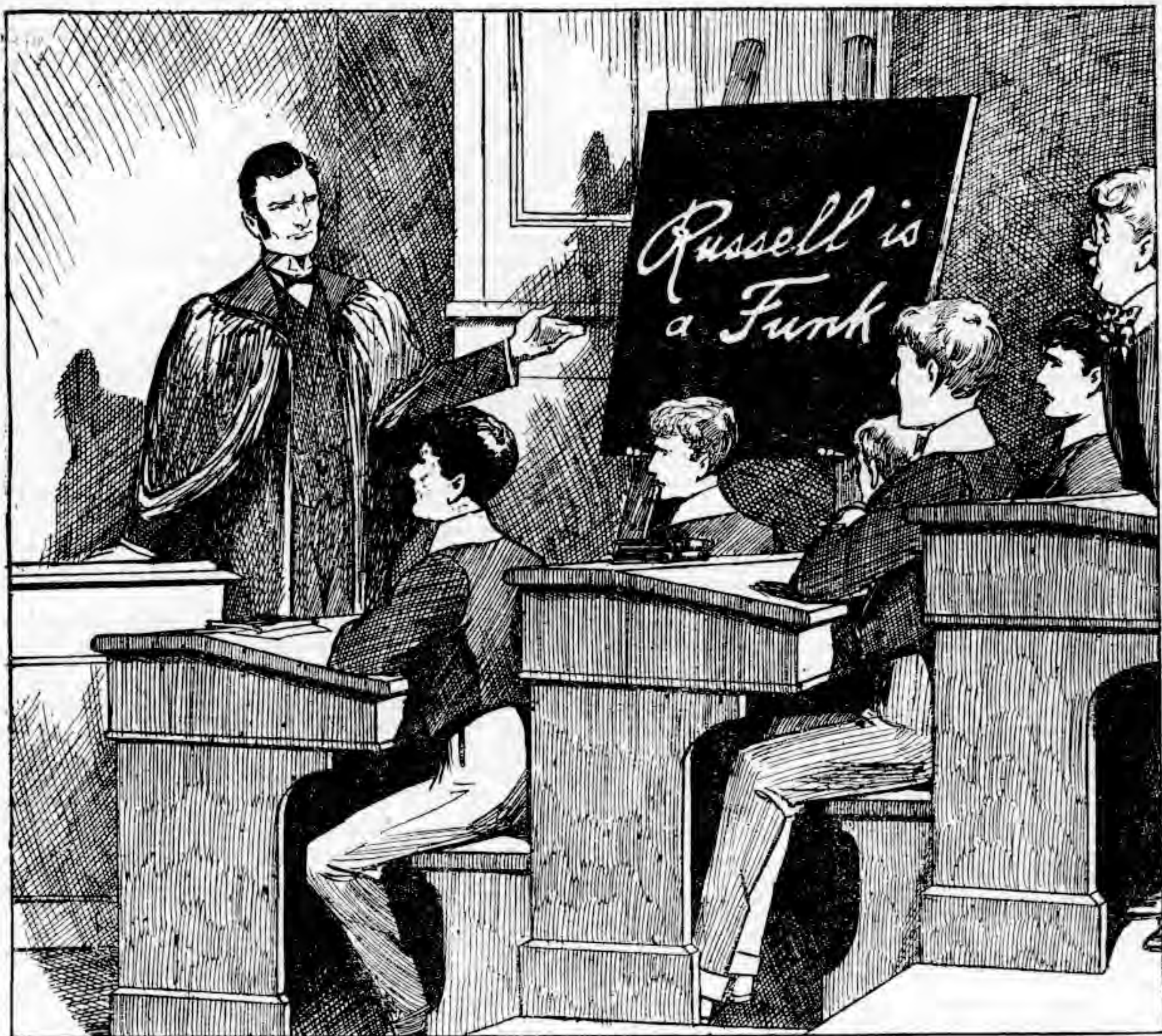
"It's too funny for words!" sobbed Coker. "Look at 'em!"

Potter and Greene followed their leader's glance, and beheld a mournful quartette of Removites approaching the school gates. Coker's chums had laughed before because they were compelled to. Now they yelled with mirth of their own accord.

For Harry Wharton & Co. presented a woeful spectacle. Their collars were torn loose, their faces showed signs of wear and tear, and their clothes would have disgraced a ragshop. Verily, the heroes of the Remove had been put through it!

The battered warriors shambled into the Close, and Coker shook a reproving finger at them.

"Go away!" he said sharply. "Vagabonds ain't allowed inside the gates!"



The Remove-master halted abruptly, and surveyed the blackboard with a brow like thunder. "Who has done this?" he demanded. "Who is responsible for this insult to Russell?" (See Chapter 5.)

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Potter and Greene, as in duty bound.

"You can get a free night's lodging in the union," pursued Coker, warming to his subject. "They take all manner of tramps and— Oh, yaroooooh! Hands off!"

The Removites were "fed-up." They advanced upon the humorous Horace as one man, and smote him hip and thigh. Coker sat down heavily on the flagstones and roared.

"Now for the other cads!" said Nugent warmly.

Potter and Greene backed away in alarm. They had not reckoned on this startling turn of the tables.

"Bump them!" roared Bob Cherry.

The two Fifth-Formers put up a desperate resistance, but it was unavailing. They shared their leader's fate, and the juniors, slightly mollified, passed on into the building.

Their wrecked appearance created a host of inquiries from the crowd in the Remove passage.

"In the wars again!" snorted Bolsover major. "Been scrapping with the Highcliffe chaps, I suppose, and come off second best—as usual!"

"Rats!" growled Nugent.

"Faith, an' ye look as if ye'd been through a mangle!" grinned Micky Desmond.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

"Br-r-r!"

"It was very remiss of you to go out looking for trouble," remarked Squiff, in his best pulpit manner. "'Dear children, you should never let your angry passions rise; Your little hands were never made to tear each other's eyes,' as the poet says."

"Blow the poet," roared Bob Cherry, "and let me pass!"

And the dispirited Removites went up to their dormitory, aching and groaning.

"Groo!" mumbled Frank Nugent. "I'll guarantee I get even with Ponsonby & Co. before I'm many days older."

Wharton nodded as he poured out water into a basin. "The odds were about four to one," he said. "We were fools to fight them, really. They lammed us pretty badly, but it might have been worse if Mark Linley hadn't turned up."

"Good old Marky!" said Bob Cherry. "We'd have wiped the ground with the cads if there'd been a few more like him."

Mark Linley smiled ruefully as he bathed his injured forehead.

"By the way, Linley," said Wharton suddenly, "who was that other chap with you when the scrap was on?"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.

Mark was silent. He could not help feeling contempt for Russell's conduct, but it did not come within his code of honour to split.

"The chap was a blessed funk, anyhow," said Nugent. "He turned tail when he saw we were getting it in the neck."

"Come on, Marky, tell us who it was!" urged Bob Cherry. "I'd like to have five minutes with the rotter."

"Oh, rats, Bob!" said Linley uncomfortably. "You're as warlike as a giddy Prussian!"

Frank Nugent gave a sudden start.

"I know!" he exclaimed. "It was Russell!"

"What!"

"Russell told me this morning that he was going down to the village with Marky to buy a bat," continued Frank. "You can bet your life he was the chap."

Mark Linley's flushed face told its own tale. That it was Russell who had shown the white feather was now beyond question, or the Lancashire lad would have denied it.

The juniors were surprised, as well as annoyed. Dick Russell had always figured in their eyes as a good sportsman and a fairly reliable fighting-man; withal, a decent chap.

But, apparently, they had been deceived. Russell's decency could only be skin-deep, or he would not have left his Form-fellows in the lurch.

"The best thing we can do," said Wharton, as he finished his ablutions, "is to hold a sort of court-martial at once. We've made ourselves the laughing-stock of the Form, and of asses like Coker; and I, for one, don't feel like letting the matter drop."

"Nor I," said Nugent. "Let's get to bizney."

The Removites, having rendered themselves fairly presentable, left the dormitory, and went, first of all, in search of Russell.

That junior was in his study, morbid and miserable. He was quite aware of the enormity of his offence. He had faked! And a Greyfriars fellow who steered to windward of a fight knew what to expect.

It was no good arguing against himself, Russell felt. No amount of argument could wipe away the truth. He had been afraid, and had shown it; and he had shown it at the crucial moment—when Greyfriars looked to him to help it keep its end up against the cads of Highcliffe.

The more Russell reflected, the more he saw how far-reaching were the consequences of that failure in the hour of need. He had disgraced himself, he had disgraced the Remove, and he had disgraced the school. He was an outcast.

The howls in the passage without were the first official intimation Russell received that the affair was public property. The word "Funk!" shouted derisively through the keyhole, showed him what he had to expect.

"Linley must have split," he thought bitterly, "or one of the others must have seen me in Friardale. Anyway, it's all up."

The door was thrown open, and Harry Wharton & Co., with several other Removites, all greatly incensed, strode into the study.

"Now," roared Bolsover major, in his stentorian tones, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Shut up, Bolsover!" said Harry Wharton sharply. "You're dead in this act!"

Bolsover scowled.

"If you're going to encourage funks——" he began.

"I'm going to do nothing of the sort, and you know it," said Harry. "Have you any explanation to give, Russell?"

"Of what?" asked Russell, though he knew only too well to what Wharton referred.

"Your conduct this afternoon. You saw three of our chaps being attacked by a mob of Highcliffe rotters, and, instead of coming to the rescue, as Linley did, you scooted."

Russell was silent.

"We could have understood it better if it had been Bunter or Snoop or Stott," Wharton went on. "They're born funks. But with you it's different. If you'd chipped in, we could have put up a pretty decent show. As it was we were nearly pulverised."

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"It was your own fault!" muttered Russell defiantly. "You shouldn't have started scrapping, like a—set of hooligans!"

"Why, you—you——" began Bob Cherry wrathfully. "You think we went into it for the love of the thing?"

"Not exactly. But you could have let Ponsonby & Co. alone, and there wouldn't have been any trouble."

"Wouldn't there, though? A fat lot you know about it! You might just as well say that if Britain had refused to declare war, Germany wouldn't have pressed matters."

"All right, Bob," said Harry Wharton grimly. "You needn't argue with the cad. He faked, and that's all about it. And now we'll have a Form meeting, and get the other fellows' opinions. Come along to the gym, Russell!"

"I jolly well won't——"

"Oh, yes, you will! Yank him along, you chaps!"

Willing hands laid hold upon Russell, and he was whirled off to the gymnasium, where most of the Removites, who knew what was afoot, had foregathered.

Bolsover immediately jumped on to the box-horse, from which he had a commanding view of the huge audience. Efforts were made to drag him down from his perch, but a bodyguard of the biggest blackguards in the Remove surrounded the horse, so that all was confusion for a few moments.

"Gentlemen——" roared Bolsover.

"Dry up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Rats!" yelled Skinner. "Go it, Bolsover! On the ball, old man!"

"Gentlemen, this meeting has been called to discuss a burning question," said Bolsover, who had evidently prepared a little speech in advance. "The name of Greyfriars has always stood high—very high! It is in danger of being dragged into the mire. What on earth will happen when it becomes common knowledge that we harbour funks in the Remove?"

"Shame!"

"Ponsonby and his set have laid some of our chaps flat at their feet," continued Bolsover, warming to his subject. "They have smitten them in the high places, and the blood of the Remove cries out for vengeance!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Of course, there is no blame attaching to Wharton and the others——"

"I should think not!" said Bob Cherry warmly.

"But when a chap comes on the scene and refuses to lift a finger to help 'em, it's the absolute giddy limit!"

"Rather!"

"And when he actually runs away, as Russell did——"

"Funk!"

"Cad!"

"Rotten renegade!"

"When a chap runs away," Bolsover went on, "it's time we took things in hand!"

"Hear, hear!" shrilled Snoop.

"I suppose you never feel like running away yourself, Snoopey?" asked Vernon-Smith. "You always plunge into the fray with both hands, of course!"

Snoop flushed, and the other fellows laughed.

"Every chap in the Remove," said Bolsover, "ought to play the game."

"Why not have a try, then?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover scowled.

"A chap who is known to be a coward and a rank outsider ought to do the decent thing and get out!"

"When are you going, then?" asked Peter Todd.

"You shut up, Todd!" growled Bolsover. "What Russell wants is a jolly good ragging!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Finished?" asked Harry Wharton. "Because, as the originator of this meeting, I wish to address it."

"Rats!" bellowed Bolsover, who fancied himself in his unaccustomed position. "It's time you took a back seat, Wharton! You haven't shown up very well over this business!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Harry, white with wrath.

"Oh, down him, somebody!" said Bob Cherry, sweep-

ing Snoop and Skinner aside, and grasping one end of the box-horse.

Vernon-Smith and Penfold took hold of the other end, and Bolsover yelled as the horse began to sway dangerously. His position was most precarious.

"One, two, three—heave!" roared Bob Cherry.

The next moment the horse was tilted over on to one side, and the orator shot headlong into the crowd of juniors, after the manner of a high-diver entering the water.

"Yaroo!" yelled Bolsover. "You rotten cads! I'm hurt! Yow!"

But the bully of the Remove was trampled underfoot and ignored. Bob Cherry and a few others righted the box-horse, and Harry Wharton took Bolsover's place.

"Gentlemen of the Remove, before you pass a resolution for ragging Russell, kindly remember that any chap who starts ragging him will have to rag me, too."

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"Go home!"

"Shut up!"

It was a strangely mixed audience. Most of the fellows seemed to consider that the only adequate punishment for the unfortunate Russell was that suggested by the gentleman in the Mikado—"something lingering, with boiling oil in it."

"Russell's acted rottenly," pursued Harry Wharton. "He showed the white feather, and he's going to be punished; but I draw the line at ragging. I'm not going to excuse his conduct a bit, but I won't stand by and see any rotten bullying of a fellow when he's down. And I've friends to stand by me in seeing fair play, too!"

"Yes, rather!" shouted Johnny Bull. "Here's one!"

"And here's another!" roared Nugent and Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley together; and Penfold and Bulstrode joined in.

"We will see the fairful play!" added Hurree Singh.

"Yaas, begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Faith, an' I'm wid ye, Wharton darlint!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"I agree with Bolsover," continued Wharton, "when he says that Russell's action is a stain on the fair name of the Remove, and suggest that he shall be sent to Coventry for a week, starting to-day."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the ticket!"

"The punishment fits the crime in every way," said Harry. "But raggings are off. If any chap lays a hand on Russell, he shall hear from me."

"What business is it of yours?" snapped Skinner.

"It's my business as captain of the Remove to put down bullying, and I'm going to do it with a firm hand."

"And a boot, if necessary," supplemented Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"Then you can consider yourself sentenced, Russell, to a week in Coventry," said Wharton. "You've brought it upon yourself by funk. If you think you're hard done by, it's up to you to prove that you're not such a coward as you seem at present."

"And I will prove it!" said Russell passionately. "Every blessed bit! I'll show you I'm not the cad you think I am!"

For a moment Harry Wharton softened. He liked Russell, really, and was at a loss to understand the junior's sudden display of funk. But the sentence had been passed now, and he could not very well retract.

The meeting dispersed, Bolsover and his cronies leaving the gym together. They were not at all dismayed by Wharton's statement that "rags" were barred, and meant to punish Russell heavily, if only to assert their independence of the Famous Five.

Of a surety, Dick Russell's horizon was anything but rosy!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Russell Finds a Friend!

THAT the sentence passed upon Russell in the gym was richly deserved went without saying. Nevertheless, being sent to Coventry for a week was sheer torture, especially to a fellow of Russell's high spirits and sociability.

He felt the position acutely. Each time he attempted

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to start a conversation with one of his Form-fellows he was ignored. Juniors who were talking to one another stopped when he appeared and waited until he had passed on before beginning again. Altogether, he was made to feel that so far as the life and routine of Greyfriars were concerned he did not exist. All the fellows in the Remove cut him dead. Like the hero in Byron's poem—he was among them, but not of them.

To be snubbed by fellows like Snoop and Bunter made Russell squirm. But he knew that to start scrapping with them would only involve him in deeper difficulties. He felt that he must speedily do something to retrieve himself in the eyes of the Form, and the following afternoon he took a stroll along the towing-path of the Sark to think things out.

Only one fellow had spoken to him that day. This was Wingate of the Sixth. The captain of Greyfriars was blissfully unconscious of Russell's unpopularity, and had invited the junior to bowl to him at the nets after lessons. Russell was a splendid bowler, and Wingate had given him a kindly word of encouragement.

So far, Bolsover had not put his threat into effect. Like Brer Rabbit, he lay low and did nothing. But he was only awaiting a favourable opportunity.

Russell had an hour to spare before starting on his solitary tea. In normal circumstances, he could have filled in the time very pleasantly, either by enjoying a game of cricket with the members of his own Form, or by helping his bosom chum, Dick Penfold, to prepare a royal repast in his study. But even Penfold, good-natured and genial though he was, had refused to recognise Russell's existence.

A prey to bitter thoughts, Russell sauntered along to the boathouse, and launched a small Rob Roy canoe which was the general property of the juniors. Then he paddled leisurely downstream, intending to go as far as the island.

He soon reached his objective, and, making the canoe fast to the bank, threw himself down in the long grass which flourished on the island.

From only fifty yards away came the clash of crockery, and merry voices signified that a picnic was in progress.

Russell wondered idly whether the picnickers were Greyfriars chaps or fellows from a rival school. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, anyway.

A sense of desolation—a feeling of utter loneliness—came over him, and, burying his face in his hands, the junior gave vent to a burst of passionate sobbing.

There was a quiet step behind him, and a hand was laid upon his shoulder. Looking up with a startled and tear-stained face, Dick Russell's eyes met those of De Courcy, the aristocratic slacker of Highcliffe.

"Feelin' down—what?" asked the Caterpillar kindly.

Russell nodded. He could not trust himself to speak.

"What's it all about, kid?" said De Courcy. "I don't like to see a chap blubbing like this. Tell out your troubles to your sympathisin' uncle."

Russell pulled himself together.

"I wonder you care to talk to a rotten funk and an outsider!" he said bitterly.

"Oh, rats! You don't look a cad, you know. I can soon discriminate between a howlin' rotter an' a decent chap. There's Pon, f'rinstance. You can tell at a glance that he's a roarin' blade an' a giddy goer. He carries it in his chivvy. You don't."

Russell gave a faint smile.

"P'raps I'm not quite on a par with Ponsonby," he said. "But I'm a funk, all the same."

"When an' where did you funk?" asked the Caterpillar.

"In the village yesterday. There was a row on with some of your chaps."

"Oh!" exclaimed De Courcy, recollecting. "I thought I'd seen you before. So you were the chap who barked when Wharton & Co. were gettin' it in the neck—what?"

"Don't rub it in," said Russell miserably. "I couldn't think what I was doing. That sort of thing's not habitual with me, I can assure you."

"I s'pose not!" drawled the Caterpillar. "Still, you were a silly ass, begad! I reckon the fellows pulverised you!"

"I wish they had," said Russell. "Nothing could be so rotten as being sent to Coventry."

"Is that what they've done?"

"Yes; I'm exiled from 'em for a week."

"Well, look here, dear boy," said De Courcy thoughtfully, "it's nothin' to shed tears over. Fellows have funk'd before to-day, an' I don't suppose you'll be such a maniac as to do it again. I tell you what. I'll explain the posish to Franky. He's a decent chap, an' will quite understand. An' whenever you want a little chat or a cup of tea, just hop along to our study at Highcliffe—er—Penfold."

"My name's Russell," explained the Greyfriars junior. "And, I say, De Courcy, I'm awfully obliged to you for your invitation. It's bucked me up no end."

"That's all right, old son," was the Caterpillar's cheerful reply. "Keep a stiff upper-lip, an' you'll win through hands down."

He held Russell's canoe fast to the bank while the Greyfriars junior got in, and then said good-bye. Russell paddled back to the boathouse with a lighter heart. He had found one fellow to befriend him when he was down—and a Highcliffe chap, too. Truly, things were looking up!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Takes a Hand.

WHEN Dick Russell reached the gates of Greyfriars, however, his face fell. Percy Bolsover, in company with Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and a few of the rougher spirits of the Remove, were lying in wait for him.

"Behold, the coward cometh!" said Skinner, parodying an old saying of Joseph's brethren.

"We'll show him how we deal with funks!" said Bolsover grimly.

Russell's heart beat fast as he entered the gateway. He was prepared for squalls.

"Collar the bounder!" roared Bolsover.

The cads of the Remove swarmed round Russell, and bore him to the ground.

Russell made a desperate resistance. His right caught Sidney Snoop full in the chest, completely doubling him up, and Stott received a smashing blow between the eyes which made him see whole solar systems. But Skinner and Bolsover and one or two others hung on like leeches, and Russell's head bumped back upon the flagstones.

"Get him along to the Rag!" commanded Bolsover tersely.

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Snoop.

"Stop that yowling, Snoopey, and lend a hand!"

It was as much as the juniors could do to drag their victim along to the Rag. Russell's blood was up, and he fought and plunged and ducked like a madman. But it was of no avail. He had fallen into the hands of the Amalekites.

"Wharton and his noble society of prigs are having tea in their study," said Skinner, as Russell was bundled into the Rag. "So we shan't be interfered with."

"No fear!" grinned Bolsover. "Lock the door, Skinney, there's a good chap!"

"Hands off!" panted Russell angrily. "I've done nothing to you! Leave me to go my own way, and you go yours!"

"Done nothing!" exclaimed the bully of the Remove, lifting up his hands, and with a horrified expression on his coarse face. "Why, you've shamed and disgraced the entire Form!"

"That's all rot! I know I funk'd, and I was a beastly cad to do so; but that's no reason why you should go out of your way to make a fellow's life not worth living."

Russell's voice trembled a little, and a more humane fellow than Bolsover major might have been moved to pity. But the quality of mercy, so far as Bolsover was concerned, did not exist.

"I speak on behalf of all the decent chaps in the Form," he said. "We consider that being sent to Coventry for a week is a silly, feeble, and inadequate punishment, and we're going to act as justice demands. You're going to run the gauntlet! Line up, you chaps!"

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The other fellows responded willingly. From the interior of their jackets they produced towels, and proceeded to knot them. There were eight juniors in all—four to each line—and Russell was likely to find their united blows extremely painful.

"Get a move on!" growled Bolsover, giving Russell a stinging blow across the shoulders with his knotted towel. "This is something you've got to face, whether you funk it or not!"

Blows rained upon all parts of Russell's body as he rushed through the lines. The avengers were standing several yards apart, so that it took the victim almost half a minute to get through them, and in that half minute he received some knocks which might have stunned a less sturdy fellow.

"Make him turn back!" panted Stott.

Bolsover nodded, and gripped his towel hard.

"You cads!" muttered Russell, his eyes flashing. "Is this your idea of fair play? You're eight to one!"

"Shut up!" roared Bolsover. "You're in Coventry, and if the other fellows knew we had spoken to you we'd probably get it in the neck."

"You certainly would if the chaps could see what you're doing now, you—you rotten bully!"

Biff!

Snoop landed out with his towel, and Russell gave a gasp of pain, and started back through the lines. It was more than probable that Sidney Snoop's towel contained something hard, for Russell's right arm tingled with the shock. He ducked his head and plunged wildly through the ranks of his cruel antagonists, and reached the other end in a dazed and almost stupefied state.

"Once more!" sang out Bolsover.

"Here, hold on!" muttered Skinner anxiously. "We must draw the line somewhere, you know. He's had enough."

"Rats! He's going to get all the funk knocked out of him!"

Russell looked wildly round the Rag. He had suffered severely, and even the callous Bolsover would have relented a little had he known the full extent of his victim's torture. Russell felt that he simply could not endure any more. The ordeal was too much for him.

There was a sound of merry voices from Little Side, where Harry Wharton & Co., having finished tea in their study, were indulging in cricket practice. Probably if Russell shouted they would hear him, and come to his rescue. But Dick Russell, like every schoolboy worthy of the name, loathed sneaking, and dismissed the idea from his mind at once. Whatever happened, he must fight his own battles.

But he felt that a few more blows, especially those from Snoop's towel, would be more than he could bear. He decided on an appeal to Bolsover.

"I'm done!" he exclaimed. "Don't be too hard on a chap!"

For answer, Bolsover swung his towel over his shoulder and gave Russell a terrific swipe, which caused him to lurch, head foremost, to the floor. At the same instant there was a violent banging on the door of the Rag.

"Who's that?" muttered Bolsover uneasily. "Go and see, Stott!"

"I—I say," said Skinner, turning pale. "Supposing it's a—a prefect, or Quelchy?"

"Blow Quelchy, and blow the prefects! We must keep the door locked, that's all."

Bob Cherry's stentorian tones could be heard without.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the little game in there?"

"Mind your own bizney!" retorted Stott, through the keyhole.

"Oh! So it's friend Stott, is it? Then there must be something fishy going on. Open this door!"

"Rats!"

"Hear, hear! Go and eat coke!" roared Bolsover, relieved to find that the intruder was only a junior.

There was a sound of retreating footsteps, and the fellows in the Rag looked alarmed.

"He'll try and get in through the window," said Snoop.

"Then we won't let him!" snapped Bolsover. "Shut 'em all up! Quick!"

The juniors left Russell, who was leaning against the wall, pale and hurt, and dashed to the windows. They shut them on the inside, and had just completed the action when Bob Cherry, with Mark Linley at his heels, rushed up from outside.

Bob Cherry raised himself up on his chum's shoulder, and looked through one of the windows into the Rag.

A single glance was sufficient. He saw Bolsover's leering grin, and the half-frightened, half-defiant expressions of Skinner and the others.

But what stirred Bob more than anything else was the sight of Russell.

The wretched junior could scarcely stand. His face was white, his clothes awry, and he certainly looked as if he had been through the mill. Even as Bob Cherry looked upon the scene, Bolsover stepped up to his victim and raised his knotted towel ready to strike.

"Come on!" roared Bob Cherry, his eyes dancing with rage. "Buck up, Marky!"

Then Bob did an unprecedented thing. Doubling his big fist, he crashed it through a pane of glass, regardless of possible injury, and made an opening sufficiently large to enable him to get through. In another instant he was inside the room, and sprang at Bolsover major like a tiger. Swinging him round by the collar, he dealt him a smashing blow in the face.

Bolsover dropped the weapon with which he had been about to belabour Russell, and gave a roar of rage and pain. Then he turned on Bob Cherry, and the next moment the two were going it hammer and tongs.

The other fellows who had persecuted Russell were not fighting-men; but they were not averse to joining in a scrap, so long as unlimited odds were on their side. So they lined up to assist their leader in warding off Bob Cherry's furious attack.

Mark Linley was through the window by this time, and he soon joined in the fray.

It was an extraordinary spectacle, and one which Milton would have described as "confusion worse confounded."

Biff! Bang! Thud!

Outnumbered though they were, Bob Cherry and Mark Linley made their presence felt. The thought of what they had seen maddened them, and lent zest to their blows.

Russell joined in, but he was too much of a wreck already to do any material damage. His head seemed to reel, and, after a brief bout of fighting, he lurched back again to the wall.

"You—utter—cad!" panted Bob Cherry, emphasising each word by fiercely pummelling Bolsover's head. "Take that—and that!"

Bolsover took them. He had no choice in the matter. The first was a smashing blow between the eyes, the second an upper-cut, which, catching him on the point of the jaw, sent him to the floor with a thud which shook the room.

Meanwhile, Mark Linley was having a rough time of it. With five juniors clinging to him, tooth and nail, it seemed inevitable that he would be overcome. But Bob Cherry, having accounted for Percy Bolsover, sailed in, and pounded away merrily with his big fists. In less than a minute Mark Linley was free again.

Biff!

Skinner staggered back from the Lancashire lad's smashing right-hander, and Snoop and the others, who were being mercilessly trounced by Bob Cherry, howled for quarter.

Bob and his comrade desisted at last. They had won the day—two fellows against eight. It was a singular triumph, but it was doubtful if they would have conquered, had not the sight of Bolsover's bullying lent them the energy of giants. Both of them were in a shocking state; but not more so than Bolsover's gang, whose features were about as swollen and distorted as features could be.

"There!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a look of contempt at the hulking bully on the floor. "That's a lesson for you, you worm! I knew you were a prize bully, and all the rest of it, but I didn't think even you would go so far as this! It's just your style, to hit a fellow when he's down, but I'm blowed if I thought you'd get seven fellows to help you!"

"Russell's a funk!" snarled Bolsover, caressing his injured jaw.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"That's neither here nor there. The Form decided to send him to Coventry, and that there was to be no ragging. And this is how you carry out your captain's commands! My hat! You'd better hold me back, or something, Marky! I feel I want to dribble that cad along the room like a footer!"

"It would be no more than he deserves!" said Linley.

"Yow! You beasts! I'm hurt!" wailed Skinner.

Skinner was sitting on the floor, and for the last few moments the walls and pictures had seemed to be waiting round and round. Harold Skinner had received a thump on the nose, which had dazed him, and his nasal organ presented a decidedly bulbous appearance. And he had many other casualties.

"Serves you jolly well right!" said Bob Cherry unsympathetically. "You'd be hurt a jolly sight more if Quelch knew what you'd been up to!"

"He will know!" said Snoop, in tremulous tones. "There's the broken window!"

"You needn't be afraid I shall split!" said Bob, with a curl of the lip. I did the damage, and it's my funeral. I shall have to say it was a cricket-ball, or something, though I'm blessed if I like having to tell a series of whoppers all through a set of rank outsiders like you!"

"Let's clear," said Mark Linley suddenly. "The chaps are coming in from the cricket. We don't want Bunter, or somebody, to be thirsting for information."

"I—I say," began Russell, as the two chums were about to quit the room. "Thanks awfully, you fellows!"

Bob Cherry looked at him rather grimly.

"Cut it short!" he said. "It was our duty to chip in. I'm sorry it ever happened, but you brought it upon yourself. I ought not to be speaking to you, really. Funks are barred in the Remove."

Dick Russell's lip quivered.

"Still harping on the old chord, then," he said. "I wish you'd stop treating me like a giddy leper."

"When you've done something to show that you're no longer a funk, I might," said Bob coldly. "Not before."

And, unlocking the door of the Rag, he strode out into the passage, followed by Mark Linley.

Russell, with neither a look nor a word for the humiliated Bolsover and his cronies, slowly followed.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Skinner.

"RUSSELL is a funk!"

Such was the inscription chalked upon the blackboard in large letters when the Remove went into their Form-room for lessons next morning.

The blackboard had been placed upon the easel, facing the class, and there was a good deal of giggling all over the room when some of the fellows saw the insulting inscription.

Dick Russell looked at it with burning cheeks and gleaming eyes. He could have made a very shrewd guess at the author of the outrage, and he sat down at his desk with clenched hands. His was not the temper to turn the other cheek; but, brave and spirited as he was—in spite of the incident in the streets of Friardale—he felt how utterly hopeless would be any attempt on his part to repel force by force. He would have tried some slight conciliation, but it was really impossible, bearing in mind the sort of cads he was up against. Bolsover, since the gauntlet episode, had never given him even so much as an indifferent look, much less a civil word. Russell loathed him, and his only desire was to rid himself of the bully's attentions, and be left alone; while he never cherished a particle of revenge.

Harry Wharton was about to dash for the duster, and rub the chalked letters from the board, when the Form-room door opened, and Mr. Quelch swept in with rustling gown.

The class sat silent and expectant. It was as the calm before the storm.

The Remove-master halted abruptly, and surveyed the blackboard with a brow like thunder. Then he wheeled round on the class.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Who has done this?" he demanded.

Silence.

"Come, answer me!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Who is responsible for this insult to Russell?"

Still silence.

"I warn you I will not be trifled with!" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "The culprit shall be dealt with in no light-handed manner. I repeat, who was it?"

"No takers!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Anybody eager for a whopping?" whispered Squiff. "Don't all speak at once!"

"Silence, Field! You will take fifty lines for talking in class!"

Mr. Quelch paused.

"I will give the delinquent one minute in which to own up!" he said, taking out his watch.

The seconds slipped by, and still no one stirred. It was evident that the culprit, whoever he was, valued his skin.

"The time is up!" snapped Mr. Quelch at length. "I will now proceed to question each boy in turn. Bunter!"

"No, sir!"

"What?"

"It wasn't me, sir!" said Billy Bunter, hastily and ungrammatically. "I'll swear to it, sir!"

"I have not yet implied that you were guilty, you stupid boy!" said Mr. Quelch. "I was merely about to ask you a question. Your hasty manner of replying, however, coupled with your furtive and uneasy glances round the room, lead me to the belief that you know something of this affair."

"Ow!"

"If that is the case, you had better speak up at once," said Mr. Quelch. And his voice sounded like the rumble of thunder in Billy Bunter's terrified ears. "Now, tell me, what do you know about this?"

"Nothing, sir! How could I, sir, when I wasn't looking in at the door at the time?"

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"Bearing in mind your reputation as a prevaricator, I surmise from your statement that you looked into the Form-room while this—er—insulting message was being written on the blackboard."

"No, sir. I assure you, sir, I was playing cricket since brekker, sir. Honest Injun, sir!"

"Ahem! Where were you playing?"

"At the nets, sir."

"Then you are a wicked and untruthful boy, Bunter! The nets have not been pitched at all this morning, by my orders!"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter. "I mean, I was playing in the Close, sir. I'm sure I didn't see Skinner coming down the passage towards the Form-room——"

"Shurrup, you fathead!" hissed Skinner, in Bunter's ear.

"So it was Skinner?" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! Yaroooh!"

"Bunter, how dare you make that ridiculous noise in class?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir, but somebody—ow-ow!—kicked me!"

"Was it you, Skinner?"

"Perhaps my foot may have knocked against Bunter's legs, sir," said Skinner demurely.

"Stand out!"

In great trepidation Harold Skinner stepped out before the class.

"You also, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, producing a cane.

"Oh, sir! I tell you I had nothing to do with this, sir! I washed my hands of the whole affair. It wasn't my fault I happened to be looking into the room——"

"So you do not deny that you saw this inscription being written upon the blackboard?"

"Yes, sir. I deny it most emphatically! I was playing cricket in—in the Close, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an irrepressible ripple of laughter from the Remove. Billy Bunter, in his own line—that of

fabricating—could have beaten Ananias, Baron Munchausen, and all the Berlin journalists hollow. He could roll out "whoppers" in astonishing number and variety, but he lacked the art of making his untruths agree with one another.

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch. "This is not a matter for unseemly mirth, Bunter; you have been guilty of grave prevarication."

"Oh, sir!"

"To resume this inquiry," said the Remove-master, fixing his gimlet eyes upon Bunter. "You were in the passage here when someone wrote 'Russell is a'—ahem!—'funk' on the blackboard?"

Billy Bunter blinked at Mr. Quelch in astonishment.

"It's marvellous how you find these things out, sir," he said. "You must have been watching me."

"I was not watching you, you absurd boy! So you were in the passage at the time?"

"No, sir," said Bunter promptly. "I was playing cricket—that is to say, finishing my brekker, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites simply rocked with laughter. Even the austere and commanding presence of Mr. Quelch could not assuage their merriment.

"Boy," fumed Mr. Quelch, "tell me, without further falsehoods and delay, the part you played in this disgraceful affair!"

Mr. Quelch took a firm grip on his cane, and Billy Bunter groaned.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Why don't you own up, Skinny?"

Skinner clenched his hands hard. He would dearly have loved to flay the Owl of the Remove alive at that moment.

"Then I was right in presuming you to be the culprit, Skinner?"

Skinner was silent.

"It's no good, Skinny," said Bunter, in an audible whisper. "You can see he knows all about it. I didn't mean to sneak, and if you hit me for it afterwards I'll go to Dr. Locke!"

"Oh," exclaimed Mr. Quelch grimly, "we appear to be making discoveries now! Skinner, I am convinced that you are guilty of this insult to Russell, and that you have kept silent about it, and threatened Bunter if he exposed you. Bunter, you are an utterly foolish and idiotic boy! I have a good mind to thrash you severely for your fabrications. But I will be lenient on this occasion. Take a hundred lines, and go to your place!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Billy Bunter could hardly believe his good fortune. He resumed his seat with a mind greatly relieved.

"As for you, Skinner, no words of mine can adequately express the contempt and loathing which I feel for your shameful conduct. I will teach you that the Form-room is not a fit place for practical jokes of this description. You will apologise to Russell, in my presence, after which I shall flog you most soundly! Rub those words from the blackboard at once!"

Skinner did so, with a trembling hand. Then he moved to where Dick Russell was sitting, in the front row, and mumbled out an apology.

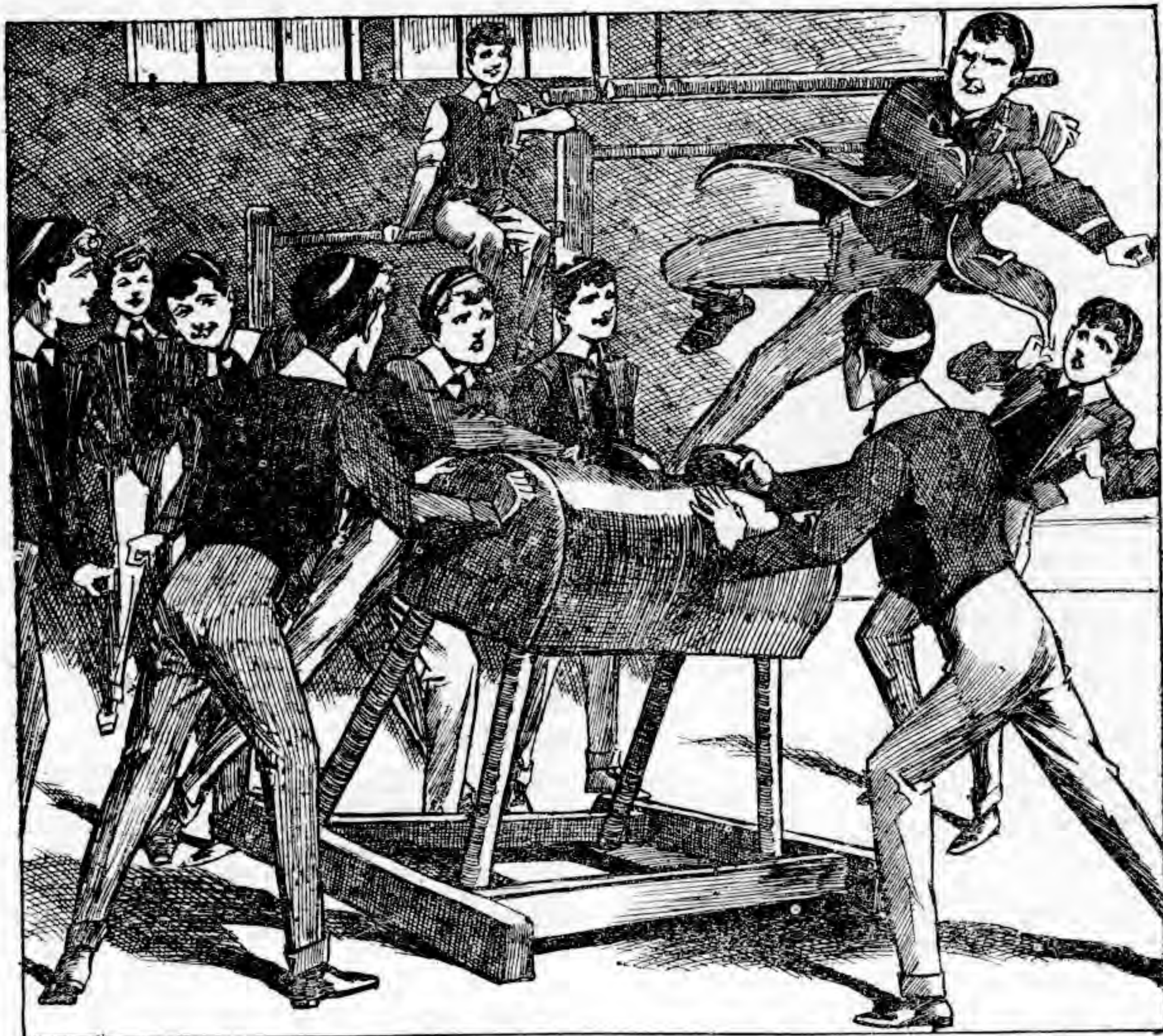
Russell nodded his head by way of acceptance. He had guessed all along that Skinner was responsible for the chalked statement on the blackboard. Skinner was clever in many respects, and had effectively disguised his handwriting, but he had not counted on the spying instincts of William George Bunter, and justice—in the person of Mr. Quelch—now had him by the heels.

The Remove-master seized the delinquent by the collar, and proceeded to lay the cane vigorously across his back. Skinner roared and howled, but Mr. Quelch seemed strangely lacking in the quality of mercy. He flogged the wretched junior till his arm ached.

"In future, Skinner," he panted at length, hurling the cad of the Remove from him, "you will kindly refrain from slandering your schoolfellows in such a dastardly manner! Let the thrashing I have just administered be a lesson to you!"

Mr. Quelch paused, and laid down the cane.

"We will now commence lessons," he said.



"Oh, down him, somebody!" said Bob Cherry, sweeping Snoop and Skinner aside, and grasping one end of the box-horse. Vernon-Smith and Penfold took hold of the other end, and Bolsover major yelled as the horse began to sway dangerously. (See Chapter 2.)

And morning school began; but Harold Skinner had little interest for Virgil. Most of his time was spent in grunting and groaning, and abusing Billy Bunter under his breath. The truth of the old proverb was never borne so fully to his mind as at that moment—that he who heats a furnace for his foe may sometimes singe himself.

Harold Skinner had singed himself—with a vengeance!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Russell Reciprocates.

"HELP!"

The cry rose clear and distinct on the evening air. "Help! Help!"

Dick Russell, who was taking his accustomed stroll along the towing-path of the river, quickened his pace, and tried to distinguish the locality of the shouts.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

There was a sound of stamping feet, and presently the junior was able to make out a couple of dark forms. One was that of a schoolboy; the other a more formidable person, armed with a cudgel.

Russell's heart thumped wildly. He had evidently come upon a scene of ruffianism. Some junior or other—

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perhaps a Greyfriars fellow—was being molested by a modern "gentleman of the road."

The man was armed, too, and, judging by the imprecations he was uttering, was a rough customer. The schoolboy was standing up to him gallantly, but that the odds were heavily against him was only too apparent.

For a brief instant Russell hesitated. He was not exactly pining for a blow on the head from that upraised cudgel. But his hesitation was only momentary. He recalled the scrap with Ponsonby & Co., and the poor way in which he had conducted himself upon that occasion; and determined to redeem himself now that the opportunity had come.

Dashing along the towing-path, he got behind the hefty ruffian, and wrenched the cudgel from his grasp.

The man gave vent to a violent ejaculation, and turned about to see who the new-comer was. Quick as lightning, Russell landed out with his left, straight from the shoulder, and experienced a curious thrill as the blow went home. It struck the rascal fairly between the eyes, and he staggered back with a gasp of pain.

"Good, begad!" drawled a familiar voice. "Amazing! Come on! Let's sock it into the brute!"

Dick Russell recognised the Caterpillar, and rejoiced.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

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There was an opportunity of reciprocating the kindness De Courcy had shown to him some days previously. He pounced upon the big man with alacrity, following up his previous good work by a heavy blow in the chest which made the ruffian reel. Then Russell stepped back, determined to use the cudgel if the hooligan showed signs of further violence.

"Well played!" chuckled the Caterpillar softly. "I fancy we've got the upper hand of him now—what? Oh, by gum!"

Even as De Courcy spoke, the ruffian was upon him with a snarl of rage. He shot out his hand, and his dirty, brown fingers clutched convulsively at the Caterpillar's throat.

The Highcliffe junior struggled frantically to free himself from that vice-like grip. But the power of his antagonist prevailed. Russell saw that he must act, and act quickly. De Courcy's face had changed colour in an alarming manner, and he seemed to be on the point of suffocation.

It would be useless for Russell to attempt to wrench the man's hand away. The fellow was hanging on with a grip of iron, and the only thing for it was to deal him a pretty severe blow with the cudgel.

Loathsome though such a task was, Russell did not scruple to carry it out. He raised the weapon, and brought it down heavily on the ruffian's head.

The effect was instantaneous. The grip on De Courcy's throat was promptly relaxed, and the man swayed for an instant, then fell with a crash to the towing-path. The blow had stunned him.

Dick Russell trembled a little as he stood over the prostrate form.

"It was the only thing for it!" he exclaimed. "The brute would have strangled you, De Courcy, if I hadn't chipped in!"

"Quite so, dear boy!" gasped the Caterpillar, pumping in breath. "It was jolly rippin' of you, begad! I shan't forget this in a hurry."

"Lucky I had the cudgel," said Russell. "Why on earth did the fellow attack you?"

"He's only a common or garden tramp," said De Courcy, "and wanted money. I gave him five bob, and I suppose he caught sight of the currency notes I've got in my pocket-book. Anyway, he went for me, and luckily enough you stepped in, or I should have been a goner!"

"You were a burbling idiot to lend him anything!" said Russell.

"Thanks, dear boy! Nothin' like givin' full vent to one's feelin's. Always speak your mind, begad!"

Russell laughed.

"What are we going to do with this fellow?" he asked.

"Police-station's the best place for him," observed the Caterpillar. "Let's get him along to that enterprisin' official, P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale."

"Spare us!" whined the wretch, opening his eyes at that moment. "I never meant no 'arm, young gents; I'll swear I didn't!"

"There's no harm in waylaying a schoolboy, and trying to rifle his pockets, as well as murder him with a cudgel if he shows fight," said Russell sarcastically. "No harm whatever!"

"I'm 'ard up!" groaned the tramp. "Ain't 'ad a morsel of food for two days, and when a man's like that he gets desprit. If the young gent had shelled out willin', I wouldn't 'ave 'urt a 'air of 'is 'ead."

"Can't you earn your living by the sweat of your brow, as other men have to?" asked Russell.

The man laughed harshly.

"You don't understand," he said. "I used to be employed at 'Arding's jam factory, an' the men all went on strike. Of course, I 'ad to join in. An' now they've got new 'ands entirely, an' 'ain't goin' to take back the old 'uns. Them that's of military age 'ave got to enlist, and the others—like me—are stranded. If I was a few years younger—"

He sighed expressively.

"Why couldn't you ask a chap for a loan, like a Christian?" asked De Courcy, "instead of tryin' to brain him?"

"I never thort you'd shell out more'n the five bob," said the other, rising to his feet with difficulty. Russell's blow had been a pretty stiff one, and its recipient was likely to possess a prominent bump on his cranium for some time to come.

"I suppose he's really in need?" said the Caterpillar. "He ain't shammin', I hope?"

"Shouldn't think so," replied Russell. "He seems sincere enough. I vote we let him go."

The Highcliffe junior groped for his pocket-book, and brought to light a currency note for one pound. This he held out to the man, who snatched at it greedily with his grimy paw.

"Somethin' to go on with," drawled the Caterpillar. "It'll keep your head above water for a few days, anyway. Why don't you try an' get work at the armament factory at Abbotsford? A chap named Redding is head cook and bottle-washer there, an' if you mention my name—De Courcy—he'll probably give you a job."

"Which I'm werry much obliged to you, sir!" said the tramp fervently. "I 'opes, as 'ow you'll be richly rewarded for this night's work. 'Elped a pore old cove what's down on 'is luck, you 'ave, an' Heaven bless yer for it!"

And, with a grateful nod to the two juniors, he hobbled away along the towing-path.

"My hat!" muttered Russell. "That affair was warm while it lasted. I didn't like the idea of downing him with the cudgel; but it was the only way out, under the cires. I must buzz off to Greyfriars in quick time. It'll be calling-over soon."

The Caterpillar grasped his companion by the arm.

"Not so fast, my son!" he said. "You're not goin' to do the heroic bizney—save a chap's life, an' all that—an' then slink away as though it were an every-day performance."

Russell grinned.

"It's all in the day's work," he said cheerfully. "There was nothing particularly heroic about it. I simply warded the fellow off, and stopped him from strangling you. Considering I had a thick cudgel to help me, it wasn't exactly a difficult task."

"I'm doocid grateful to you, anyway," said the Caterpillar warmly. "You don't seem the same chap who funk'd in Friardale that time."

"For goodness' sake, don't refer to that! It's a sore point with me."

"Well, it beats me altogether!" said the Caterpillar slowly. "That you should funk on one occasion, an' act like a full-blown, gilt-edged hero the next, is amazin'—simply amazin'!"

"After the way the chaps have treated me, I don't think I shall funk a row again in a hurry."

"What did they do to you?"

"Made me run the gauntlet till I was black and blue."

"The cads!" exclaimed the Caterpillar hotly.

"Oh, it was only Bolsover and his pals," said Russell hastily. "I wish I'd said nothing about it. It's telling tales out of school."

"I'll take jolly good care the fellows know about what you've done to-night," said De Courcy. "They'll change their opinions then."

Russell gave a start.

"Caterpillar," he said, "you're not to tell them! Please don't, for my sake!"

"Why?" asked the Caterpillar, in amazement.

"I'd rather they didn't know, that's all. They can remain under the impression that I'm a first-class funk as long as they like. One of these days I shall disillusion them."

"How?"

"By coming up to the scratch, and giving somebody or other a jolly good licking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Caterpillar. "That's rather amusin', dear boy. I quite see your point. You'll pose as a sort of prime coward for a time, an' then suddenly astonish the natives by wipin' up the floor with somebody."

"That's the idea."

"Good luck to you!" said the Caterpillar cordially.

"It'll be somethin' worth livin' for, after the thin time you've been havin'."

"But the thing's not going to end there," said Russell. "Between you and me and the gatepost, I'm going to take up boxing seriously, and compete in the Public Schools Championship at Aldershot."

"My hat!"

"Of course, I'm a rough diamond so far; and so long as I'm in Coventry there's no one I can have the gloves on with. But I shall get to bizney soon."

The Caterpillar looked thoughtful.

"I was wonderin'——" he began at length.

"Then I must leave you to wonder," laughed Russell, looking at his watch. "I shall be late for locking-up if I don't put the pace on."

"Half a minute!" said De Courcy excitedly. "I think I can see my way to doing you a good turn, Russell. Let me toddle along by your side—I've got a pass-out from the head prefect at Highcliffe—an' I'll expound the deep, dark plot."

"Fire away!" said Russell, as they set off at a sharp pace in the direction of Greyfriars.

"It's like this," said the Caterpillar. "In the bad old days, when I was a giddy blade, a dog, an' a goer, all rolled into one, I was acquainted with the landlord of an inn known as the Blackbird. Heard of it?"

Russell nodded.

"It's further down the river, isn't it?"

"Yaas, dear boy. Well, as I was sayin', I knew mine host, and I also knew a very amiable gentleman, named Jimmy Wyatt, who has his quarters at the inn. He's a professional trainer."

"Of what? Horses?"

"No. Of boxin', you burblin' duffer!"

"Oh!"

"Jimmy Wyatt loves me as a brother," continued the Caterpillar. "He'll do anythin' for your humble servant. If I say to him, 'A young gentleman, named Russell, wishes to be put through his paces in the noble art of self-defence,' he'll undertake to give you lessons on the spot. Twig?"

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Russell, with enthusiasm. "What a ripping wheeze!"

"Of course there's a big risk attached to it," said De Courcy seriously. "You know what it'd mean if you were spotted goin' into the pub?"

"The sack!" said Russell. "Or a pretty hefty flogging, at least."

"Quite so. But, under the cires, I think the risk is worth while. Wyatt will make a Carpentier of you after a few lessons, and no man in the country could coach a chap better than he. You'll simply walk round all opposition, even at Aldershot."

Russell's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, Caterpillar, this is great! I'm quite prepared to take my chance of getting collared. When can I see this johnny."

"I'll fix up an appointment for to-morrow night at, say, seven o'clock. You'll find Wyatt in the room next to the billiard-saloon. He's converted it into a sort of gymnasium. You can take it from me that he's a first-rate trainer."

Russell took the Caterpillar's hand and shook it warmly. He was already greatly attached to the immaculate, easy-going dandy of Highcliffe, and felt a twinge of regret at the thought that De Courcy wasn't in the Greyfriars Remove. He would, at least, have one chum then.

"So long!" said the Caterpillar cheerily. "Keep smilin', there's a good fellow. All's for the best, you know!"

With which piece of philosophy De Courcy turned away, and started on his mile walk to Highcliffe.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds!

THE Blackbird was a fairly secluded inn, standing on the bank of the Sark. It was much frequented in summer by the fishermen of Pegg, who spent their evenings in the old oak parlour, where a picture, in boxing costume, of Mr. Jimmy Wyatt gazed down upon them. Jimmy was the landlord's brother-in-law.

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In one of the rooms, which had been made into quite a good gymnasium, boxers of no ordinary skill had passed through their training. Jimmy Wyatt himself had been a boxer in his time—the fishermen always referred to him as Jack Johason—and no man was better fitted to teach the noble art of self-defence. Fate—in the form of the Caterpillar—had brought Dick Russell into contact with an excellent tutor.

Russell rowed steadily down-stream at the appointed time next evening, and reached the inn in safety.

The landlord greeted the junior cordially, and led the way to the improvised gymnasium.

"Here, Jimmy!" he exclaimed, pushing open the door. "Here's the young gent from Greyfriars."

"Come to begin your education—what?" said Jimmy Wyatt. "Master De Courcy told me all about you. You want to be moulded into a first-class boxer, ready for Aldershot, I understand?"

"That's so," replied Russell. "I'm not much good at present, but I expect you'll soon lick me into shape."

Jimmy Wyatt nodded. His brother-in-law, with an approving glance at Russell's well-knit figure, closed the door and went back to the bar-parlour.

"Well," said the professional, "this'll have to be a lightning affair, as Aldershot's in three weeks. You must turn up three nights a week, for at least an hour each night. Think you can do that?"

Russell nodded.

"I'm on," he said, after a pause.

But he realised that, by visiting the Blackbird so frequently, he would be incurring grave risk. To be caught on the premises meant something approaching expulsion; whilst if any of his schoolfellows followed him on one of his nocturnal outings, he would probably get the reputation of a "pub-haunter," in addition to that of being a funk.

But, on the other hand, the chance of being trained by a professional pugilist was too good to throw away. In three weeks, under Jimmy Wyatt's able tuition, Russell would be no longer a novice, but a clever boxer, fit to take his stand with the best of them at Aldershot. Moreover, he would demonstrate to Bolsover and his cronies the fact that he wasn't such a hopeless funk after all!

"Good for you!" said Jimmy Wyatt heartily. "Take off your coat, get your hands into these gloves, and let's see how you shape."

Russell obeyed, and a moment later he was engaged in his first friendly bout with the boxing instructor.

The art of teaching boxing really well is a gift, and it is given to but few. It is largely a question of personal magnetism, and, above all, sympathy. A man may be a fine boxer himself, up to every move of the game and a champion of champions, but for all that he may not be a good teacher. If he has not the sympathy to appreciate the difficulties of the beginner, he cannot produce good results. A boxing instructor needs three qualities—skill, sympathy, and enthusiasm. Jimmy Wyatt had all three, particularly enthusiasm. His heart was in his work, and he carried Russell with him. "Beautiful, sir—beautiful!" he kept saying, as Russell made several attempts to break through his guard; and the Greyfriars fellow, though too clever to be wholly deceived by the praise, for he knew perfectly well that his efforts up to the present had been anything but beautiful, was nevertheless encouraged, and put all he knew into his hits.

"The straight left does it, sir," Jimmy Wyatt kept saying. "Don't be afraid of hurting me. Pile in!"

Russell "piled in" with alacrity. By the time the bout was finished, Jimmy Wyatt's face beamed like a full moon. He had found in Dick Russell a very promising pupil.

The junior sat down and pumped in breath.

"That was hot work, Mr. Wyatt!" he gasped.

"Ay, ay, sir! You've got to make plenty of progress yet, though, before you're what I call fit. It's a long, long way to Aldershot, as the saying goes."

"Look here," said Russell frankly, "d'you think I really stand a chance in the light-weights? Honest Injun, now!"

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Jimmy Wyatt considered.

"At present, no," he said. "But in three weeks' time, when you've got into your stride, yes—decidedly yes!"

Russell brightened up.

"If only I can get down here without any Peeping Toms watching me, everything in the garden will be lovely," he said. "It's jolly good of you to put me through my paces, Mr. Wyatt."

"Not at all. Master De Courcy asked me as a favour, and any friend of that young gentleman is a friend of mine."

"It's jolly decent of old Caterpillar," murmured Russell. "When shall I come again, Mr. Wyatt?"

"To-morrow night, if you like."

"Very well, then. I must scoot now, because of locking-up. If I was late they'd probably make inquiries."

"Just so, sir. Better have a good rub-down before you go to bed. You'll need it. And be careful of your diet, sir, these days. Keep off pastry."

"Right-oh!" said Russell cheerfully. "Good-night, Mr. Wyatt!"

"Good-night to you, sir!"

They shook hands, and a minute later Russell crossed the garden at the back of the inn, released his boat, which had been moored to the bank, and pulled contentedly up-stream in the direction of Greyfriars.

He was dreaming dreams as he went—building castles in the air—but in the present case he was not sighing for something that could never be. He looked forward with no small degree of hope to the day when he would cause a thunderbolt to drop on Greyfriars by winning the light-weight championship at Aldershot.

He would show them all, he reflected, with infinite satisfaction, that, so far as Dick Russell was concerned, the epithet of "funk" was not wholly deserved.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

DICK RUSSELL had been in that cold and uncomfortable place called Coventry for exactly three days, though it seemed more like three months to the unhappy junior. Hitherto he had figured fairly prominently in the ranks of the Remove. A keen sportsman and a good scholar, he had held his own pretty comfortably even with fellows of Bob Cherry's weight. And a boy who is anything of an athletic star is sure of being popular.

But since the regrettable incident when Russell had shown the white feather, all this was changed. Fellows avoided him at every turn as if he had the plague. His study-mates made things so uncomfortable for him that he was compelled to have tea in Hall. Everywhere—in the Remove dormitory, in the Close, in the gym—he was shunned and ignored.

The Remove was in no hurry to fall on Russell's neck and forgive him. He had acted rottenly, in their opinion; and what made matters worse was the fact that the Fourth and Fifth Formers made a lot of capital out of the affair. Temple & Co. never tired of deriding their rivals as funks, and had even gone so far as to place a large white feather over the mantelpiece in No. 1 Study; while it was rumoured that Horace Coker was already engaged upon a satirical poem at the expense of Harry Wharton & Co.

So the Remove treated Russell as coldly as ever, if that were possible. Had not Bolsover and his fellow-bullies been kept under subjection, another rebellion would probably have taken place. But the Famous Five, though quick to tell Bolsover major what he would get if he broke out once more, were none the less bitter against Dick Russell.

The outcast often felt a great longing, when one of the fellows passed him without speaking, to put into

practice the half-jolt or the straight left which he had learned from Jimmy Wyatt. But it wouldn't do. He must humour Greyfriars, and let them suppose him to be a funk of the first water as long as they liked. One day he would enlighten them.

There was one great advantage in his being sent to Coventry. The other fellows were not likely to trouble their heads over the way in which he occupied his time. If he disappeared occasionally from the school precincts, it would naturally be imagined that he wanted to break away from the loneliness of the place. His going-out and his coming-in would not interest his schoolfellows.

So Russell went to keep his appointment with Jimmy Wyatt after tea that evening, serenely confident that he was not being followed. He struck off through the woods in the direction of the river, and encountered no one till he reached the boathouse.

Arrived there, he gave a sudden start, for standing just outside the place were three fellows, smoking cigarettes. They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour of Highcliffe.

"Good-evenin'!" drawled Ponsonby, as Russell stood irresolute. "Nice weather for the time of year, isn't it?"

"Let me pass," said Russell, clenching his fists.

Ponsonby puffed languidly at his cigarette.

"Shall we humour the little darlin'?" he asked. "Too much fog to wipe up the ground with such a poor specimen of Greyfriars scum—what?"

"Absolutely!" chuckled Vavasour.

"Look here——" began Russell, his wrath rising.

"Well, I'm lookin'," said Pon, "an' wonderin'."

"Wondering what?"

"Where you picked up that face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better go easy," warned Russell. "It won't take much to get my back up, I can tell you!"

"Poor little pet!" said Ponsonby soothingly. "An' what will the little cherub do if it gets its ickle back up?"

"You'll see," said Russell grimly.

"Hold me up, someone!" gasped Gadsby. "It's too rich! Fancy a rotten funk talking like this—ow! Yarooooh!"

Gadsby finished his remark on the ground. Russell, "fed-up" beyond endurance, had let drive with his left, and lifted the Highcliffian fairly off his feet.

There was a roar from Ponsonby. He had never imagined that Russell would show fight, and the scene he had just witnessed enraged him. Hurling his cigarette away, he threw himself upon Gadsby's antagonist.

But Dick Russell was ready for him. He met Pon's bull-like rush with a defence like a barn-door; then, seizing his opportunity, he knocked his opponent's guard aside, and got in a delightful upper-cut which caused Ponsonby to measure his length on the ground beside his companion. Vavasour discreetly backed away.

"Want any more?" asked Russell pleasantly.

"Ow! You rotter!"

"Even a worm will turn, you know," said Russell. "Better control your manners next time."

He ran his boat down the bank to the water, and took his seat, before Ponsonby had fully recovered from the shock. But Pon was nothing if not enterprising. He sprang to his feet, and dashed down to the landing-stage.

"Come back!" he raved furiously.

"Not this evening," was the polite reply. "Some other evening!"

Ponsonby was desperate. He was in a fuming rage, too, or he would never have acted as he did. Taking a sharp run, he leapt from the landing-stage towards Russell's boat.

But Dick Russell was prepared for such an emergency. As Ponsonby sprang, he plied his oars vigorously, and the gap between the boat and the shore widened. The Highcliffe "nut" missed his objective completely, and splashed into four feet of muddy water.

"Serves you right!" said Russell cheerfully. "That's one for Greyfriars!"

"Hang you!" spluttered Pon savagely, gouging muddy water from his eyes and hair. "Why don't you help me out, you grinning mugwumps?"

ANSWERS

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The last remark was addressed to Gadsby and Vavasour, who could not refrain from laughing at their leader's sorry plight.

"You were a fool to jump!" said Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" chimed in Vavasour.

"Why, you—you——" gurgled Ponsonby. "Help me out of it, quick!"

Gadsby and Vavasour lent a hand, and the dripping Pon was hauled on to the bank. By the time this process was completed, Dick Russell was almost out of sight.

Jimmy Wyatt was waiting for him when he reached the Blackbird. With the trainer was a slim, fair-haired youth clad in knickers and a sweater.

"I've got an opponent for you to-night, Master Russell," explained the pugilist. "His name's George Peters, and what he doesn't know about boxing ain't worth knowing. But I've told him to go easy with you, as you're not an expert yet. You're not averse to having a few rounds with him, I suppose?"

"Of course not," answered Russell.

He took the hand which Peters extended to him, and then put the gloves on.

"Time!" called Jimmy Wyatt.

Russell could tell from the build of the fair-haired youth what he had to expect. George Peters was no ordinary "scrapper." As a fighting-man he was superior to Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour rolled into one. Time and again he broke through Russell's guard, and the Greyfriars fellow had had decidedly the worst of it when the round ended.

"My hat! That was hot!" he murmured, as he pumped in breath.

"You stood up to him well, sir!" said Jimmy Wyatt, with enthusiasm. "Mr. Peters is one of the best boxers for his weight in the county. A good many young gents would have been outed by this time, but you've stuck to him splendidly. Go in again, sir, and don't be afraid to hit!"

Russell went into the fray once more, and when it was finished he felt like a pair of very old bellows. Peters had given him severe punishment, and he had taken it without flinching.

Jimmy Wyatt was delighted.

"If you don't do great things at Aldershot, Master Russell," he said. "I'll eat that punch-ball!"

"I sha'n't do much at this rate!" gasped Russell, with a wry smile.

"Oh yes, you will! Not many young fellows would have gone through what you've just had, and take it smiling. Would they, George?"

"I guess not," answered Peters. "So long as the young gent keeps his guard up when he ducks, and uses his left a bit more, he'll make the other chaps sing small."

Russell's eyes sparkled. Praise from a champion like George Peters was praise indeed.

"Have a go with me now," said Jimmy Wyatt. "When you've rested a little, I mean."

And thus Russell's knowledge of boxing grew, till he felt capable of beating the burly Bolsover himself. He was a quick pupil, and Jimmy Wyatt rarely had to tell him twice about a thing. At the end of the bout, the trainer gave him a good rub-down, and remarked, in emphatic tones, that he would do.

"What you should do now, sir," said Jimmy Wyatt, "is to have a go with someone of about your own form. Isn't there a young friend of yours at the school who could come here with you?"

Dick Russell coloured.

"The fact is," he said, "I'm in Coventry!"

"Oh!"

"It was through funking a row with some Highcliffe chaps. No one'll speak to me now, and that's why I'm so anxious to make good. It would be a big feather in my cap, you see."

"Ay, that it would," agreed Jimmy Wyatt. "But surely, sir, they must be a lot of outsiders to cut you dead like this? It wasn't such a great crime, that I can see."

"You don't understand, Mr. Wyatt. Highcliffe are our biggest enemies, and we're always at loggerheads. It's unheard-of for a fellow to funk. I really don't know what came over me that day."

"Cheer up, sir!" said Jimmy Wyatt encouragingly. "We all lose our heads sometimes. I quite see how it

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was. But you must make amends. Show 'em, when you go up to Aldershot, that you're a foeman worthy of your steel, as the saying is. They'll come round then."

"You're an awfully good sort, Mr. Wyatt!" said Russell gratefully.

"Not at all. I don't like to see a chap down, though. When will you come again?"

"Saturday afternoon?"

"That'll do nicely."

"Right you are, then. My hat! I shall have to be going. It's half an hour to locking-up!"

Russell bade Jimmy Wyatt good-night, and walked briskly through the back garden to the river.

Suddenly he gave a start.

His boat, which he had left moored to the bank, as usual, had disappeared!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Race Against Time.

GONE! There could be no doubt about it. Whilst Russell had been in the gymnasium with his instructor, some person or persons unknown had, with malice aforethought, taken the boat. And it was now twenty-five minutes to locking up.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Russell, stopping short. "What rotten luck!"

"Anything the matter, sir?" came Jimmy Wyatt's voice from the garden.

Russell called his trainer up, and explained what had happened. Jimmy Wyatt listened with a grave face.

"It's hard cheese, sir!" he said. "For I can't call to mind any other way you can get back to the school quick enough. We've got a pony-and-trap, but my brother-in-law's taken it to run over to Courtfield. You'll have to walk, I'm afraid!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You won't be more than twenty minutes late, and they ought not to raise Cain about it. You can run, if it comes to that, and it'll be practically as quick as the boat."

Russell laughed cheerlessly.

"I've sprained my ankle," he explained. "Only a little—when I had that last bout with you—but it would prevent me making much of a pace. I'm afraid it's all up."

"Look here," said Jimmy Wyatt. "I know Mr. Gosling, up at the lodge, and if you like, I'll send him a note asking him not to report you."

"Won't wash!" said Russell lugubriously. "You may know Gossy, but you don't know him as well as I do. He simply revels in reporting juniors."

Jimmy Wyatt did not reply for a moment. He was moving along the bank and scanning the water closely. Presently he uttered a sharp exclamation of astonishment.

"What is it?" asked Russell, coming up.

"Someone's sunk your boat!"

"What?"

"It's a fact, sir! That boat's never been taken! They've sunk it!"

Bending down in the dim light, Jimmy Wyatt caught hold of the rope by which the boat had been fastened to a stake in the bank. He gave a sharp pull, and his worst fears were confirmed. Slowly the sunken craft rose to the surface.

"It's as I thought, sir," said Jimmy Wyatt. "One of the planks has been smashed clean out."

Russell flushed with anger.

"What cad has done this?" he exclaimed.

Then he remembered. Ponsonby & Co. must have followed him down the river, with the fixed intention of sinking his boat and leaving him stranded. It was a shabby trick, and one such as might have been expected from the cads of Highcliffe.

"It's a hopeless case, Mr. Wyatt," said Russell. "There's nothing for it but to walk. I shall have to stand the racket when I get to Greyfriars, that's all."

"Rough luck, sir!" said the trainer sympathetically.

Russell nodded gloomily.

"The worst of it is," he said, "I haven't an excuse of any kind to offer for being late. I shall catch it like the very deuce! But there's no way out. Good-night!"

Russell did not return by way of the towing-path. He took a cut through the woods and came out on to the main road, hoping that a cart or some other vehicle would come along and give him a lift as far as Greyfriars.

But he was almost in despair. Only ten minutes remained to locking-up-time, and Gosling would be pretty sure to report him—in fact, he was bound to do so.

"It'll mean a flogging—very likely a gating," Russell reflected. "Confound that cad Ponsonby! I'll— Why, my hat! A motor!"

He broke off suddenly as the hoot of a horn came distinctly to his ears. The junior almost shouted with joy.

But the car, to judge by the rapidly-increasing sound of its approach, was coming along at a good pace. Would Russell succeed in gaining the motorist's attention?

He waited till the vehicle was almost level with him, then his eyes fairly danced with delight.

"D'Arcy!" he exclaimed.

The car slowed down at once, and came to a standstill. The enterprising driver was none other than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—the one and only Gussy—as he was known at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Is that a Gweyfwiahs fellah?"

"Yes; I'm Russell. I say, D'Arcy, old man, can you give me a lift as far as the school?"

"With pleasuah!" beamed the motorist. "Hop in, deah boy!"

Russell hopped in. He could have hugged the elegant D'Arcy out of sheer gratitude. The fate's had indeed been kind to him.

"I'm in clover," he explained, as the car was set in motion once more, with Russell seated next to the driver. "Goodness knows what would have happened if you hadn't come along, D'Arcy!"

"Jollay glad to be of service," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I've been ovah to Courtfield to see a wounded Tammy. Lord Eastwood—that's my palah, you know—vewy kindly lent me his cah, an' the Head gave me special permish to stay out till nine."

"Talk about luck!" said Russell. "Some chaps have it showered on 'em in large chunks!"

"Yaas; I agwee with you—er—Wussell, that my luck is in. It will be a delightful wide back to St. Jim's."

The two juniors chatted on, and in a few minutes the gates of Greyfriars came in sight. Even now Russell was only just in time, for Gosling was slouching towards the gates, with the keys in his hand, when the car came to a halt.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, D'Arcy!" said Russell cordially. "You've saved my bacon, and that's a fact!"

"Don't mench, deah boy! I say, that bwute Gosling is shuttin' the gate! Wun! Wan like anythin'!"

Russell was out of the car in an instant, and dashing for the gate, despite the injury to his ankle.

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Gosling, the grumpy old porter of Greyfriars, had all but closed the gate, and the junior flung himself through into the Close only just in time. A second later, and it would have been all up.

"Young rip!" snorted Gosling angrily. "Young warmint! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

But Russell left Gosling to finish his remarks on the desert air, so to speak. He waved his cap to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was still in the roadway, and strode off through the dusky Close, congratulating himself that he was well out of a perilously tight corner.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Comes a Cropper!

"I FEEL that it's up to me!"

Horace Coker, the leading light of the Fifth, made that terrific pronouncement as he sat at tea with Potter and Greene, his bosom chums. Whenever Coker was smitten that way, Potter and Greene always lent him their ears. Coker was a very useful fellow to "suck up" to. Big and burly, he could generally be relied upon to hold his own in a scrap; and—what was more important still, in his chums' eyes—he was in constant receipt of substantial tips from his devoted Aunt Judith. Bearing these things in mind, it behoved Potter and Greene to treat the great Coker at all times with becoming civility, and to take him seriously in everything he spake or did.

"It's up to me!" repeated Coker. "It's time we had some sort of a demonstration against those Remove-fags. They've disgraced the school by nursing a funk in their midst!"

"Quite so," agreed Potter, with a grave nod of the head. "You're right there, Horace, old man."

"Absolutely!" said Greene.

"It's really beneath our dignity," continued Coker, "to wade in and slaughter the lot of 'em. We shall have to do something on a more quiet scale, but just as effective."

"But how will you go about it?" asked Potter.

"You leave that to me," said Coker loftily. "I'm the brains of this party. Now, you chaps know who's actually responsible for lowering the prestige of Greyfriars?"

"Yes; young Russell," said Greene.

"That's so. Well, what would you say if I wrote a sarcastic poem about the Remove being funks in general, and Russell in particular?"

"Mercy!" said Potter promptly.

"What!"

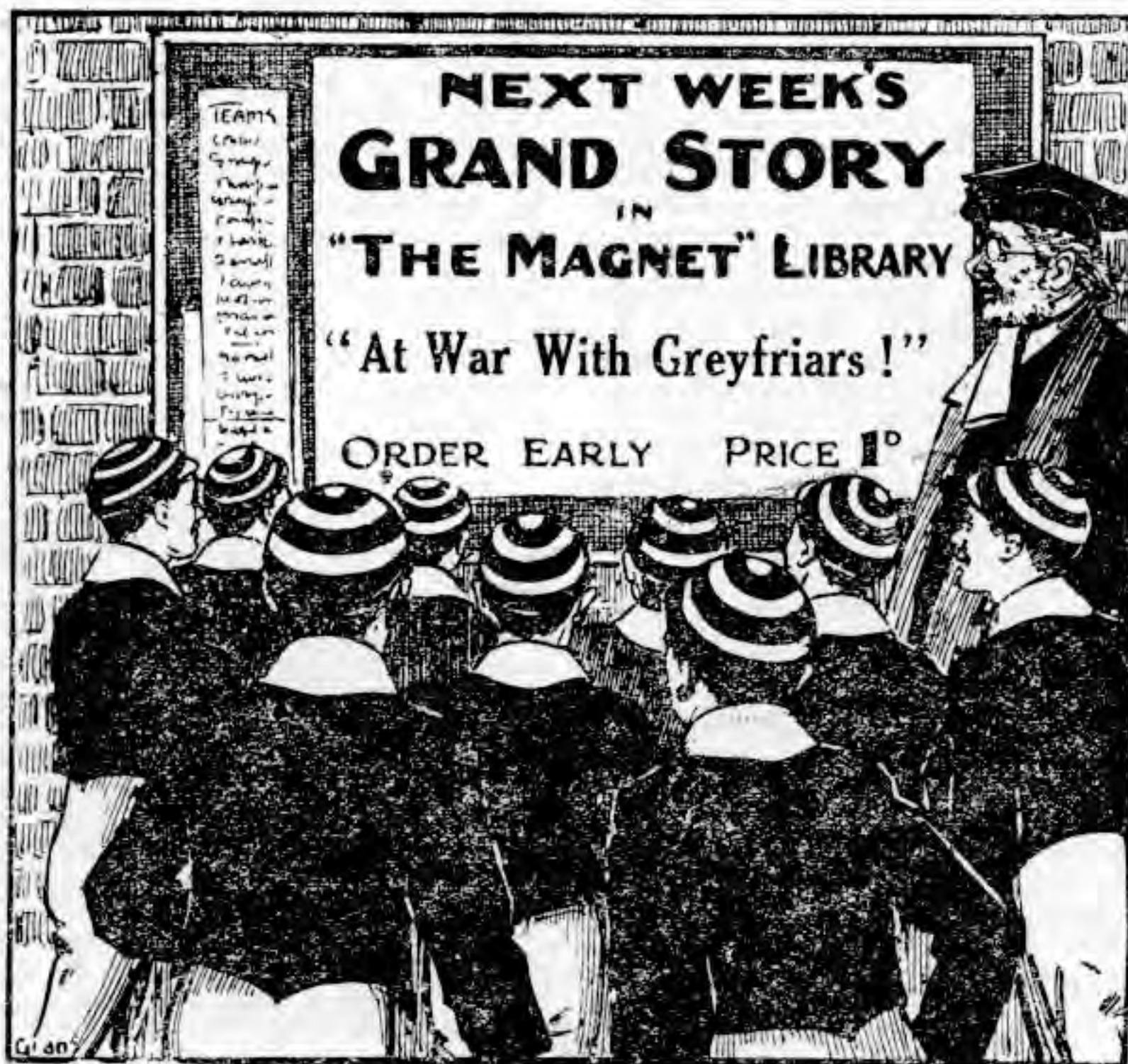
"I—I mean, it's a ripping idea!"

"It wouldn't take long to write," said Coker. "You see, it's a sort of genius with me. I can turn out stuff by the yard!"

"I believe you," said Potter.

He was only too willing to bear out his chief's statement as to the quantity of poetry he produced. Of the quality, however, Potter held his own opinion.

"What will you do with the piff—I mean, the poem, when you've written it?" asked Greene.





Taking a sharp run, Ponsonby leapt from the landing-stage towards Russell's boat. But Dick Russell plied his oars vigorously. The gap between the shore and the boat widened, and the Highcliffe "nut" missed his objective completely, and splashed into four feet of muddy water! (See Chapter 8.)

"Stick it up on the notice-board, of course, for everyone to see!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gee whizz!"

"What are you my-hatting and gee-whizzing about?" demanded Coker suspiciously.

"N-nothing," stammered Potter. "I was only thinking how really funny it will be."

"Yes, it will, won't it?" said Horace innocently. "I think I'll get to work on it at once. Shift those sardines out of the way, Greene!"

Greene did so, and Coker took from the cupboard a sheet of foolscap paper, a pen, and some ink, and proceeded to write.

Potter and Greene went on with their tea, pausing now and again to wink at each other. It was evident that they were highly amused.

Coker scribbled away industriously, nibbling from time to time at his penholder.

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"More tea, old man?" asked Potter graciously.

"Another round of toast?" murmured Greene.

"Blow tea! Likewise toast! How can a chap think of things like that when he's writing poetry? Some fellows haven't a soul that rises above eating and drinking!"

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene together.

"You leave me alone! I'm inspired!"

"Don't need much inspiration to write doggerel!" murmured Potter.

"Eh—what did you say?"

"I—ahem!—I was remarking what a giddy-genius you were," said Potter blandly.

"Well, you needn't keep repeating what everybody knows, George Potter. Dry up!"

Potter subsided, repressing a burning desire to bump his conceited chief on the study carpet.

"There," said Coker, at length, "that's finished!"

He blotted the sheet of paper, and passed it over to

his chums. Potter and Greene read it, and frowned. As they drew nearer the last verse their frowns became greater in proportion.

"Well?" asked Coker.

Potter looked daggers at the amateur poet.

"You—you chump!" he roared, with a sudden change of manner. "You're going to stick to this—this piffle up on the notice-board?"

"It ain't piffle!" yelled Coker. "It's a rattling good poem! Of course I'm going to stick it up!"

"Then I wash my hands of it!" declared Potter.

"Same here," said Greene.

"What's wrong with it?" asked Coker, with a ferocious look on his rugged face.

"What isn't wrong with it!" said Potter. "It's an excellent poem in every way, barring the metre, and the spelling, and the sense!"

"Why, you—you——"

Coker was at a loss for words. He glared at Potter and Greene as though he would eat them.

"I know what it is," he said at length. "You're jealous, both of you! 'Tain't every chap in a public school who can turn out poetry like that!"

"I should hope not!" said Greene fervently.

"It's one in the eye for the Remove," continued Coker. "They want taking down a few pegs. That poem'll do the trick."

"You prize ass!" roared Potter. "If you stick that idiotic trash on the notice-board, you'll be the laughing-stock of Greyfriars!"

"A fat lot you know about it, George Potter! You chaps have got no sense of humour. Go and eat coke! I'm going to shove this on the board right now!"

Potter and Greene looked at each other in dismay. There was no reasoning with the obstinate Coker. They knew that of old. When he resolved upon a thing he did it, and there were none to say him nay.

Before either of them had time to intervene Coker had stalked out of the study, with the offending manuscript in his hand. He proceeded straight to the notice-board in the hall and pinned the perpetration up. Then he beat a hasty retreat, for several Removites were standing in the vicinity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Coker's on the warpath again! What's in the wind this time?"

"Another cricket challenge, I expect," sniffed Nugent.

The little group of Removites strolled up to the notice-board, and broad grins overspread their faces as they began to read. The grins expanded as they proceeded from verse to verse, until, finally, the whole party burst into a guffaw, which could be heard over half Greyfriars.

"Faith, an' don't let a chap miss all the fun, Wharton darlint!" said Micky Desmond, who had been unable to get a glimpse of Coker's effusion. "Read it out to us, bedad!"

And Harry Wharton commenced to read:

"To Friardale village, situate in kent,
A group of inky-fingered schoolboys went
To buy, to buy, to buy a cricket-bat,
Though the Remove jolly well can't play cricket,
that's flat."

"I should think a few yards hacked off the last line would be an improvement," said Bob Cherry critically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Highcliffe juniors came along with eggs,
To take the cheeky rotters down some pegs;
They pelted Wharton's silly frecks with ease,
And brought them howling, howling to their knees!"

"Sure, an' it's Coker who'll be brought howlin' to his knees, I'm thinking!" said Micky Desmond. "Go on, Wharton darlint!"

"Then—short and sweet—began a little tussell,
And up came funky, funky, funky Russell.
And when he saw that Pon had won the day,
He turned and shunk, and turned and shunk away!"

"That's true enough," said Nugent grimly.

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"To scragg the rotter is our one desire,
Who drags the name of Greyfriars in the mire!
O tremble, tremble, tremble! Shake, shake, shake!
All pewtrid funks shall perish at the stake!"

"Arise, my gallent lads, and stand together,
'Gainst those who show the white, the white, white feather!
O smite them, smite them, smite them, hip and thigh:
Such turncoats, trayters, Tartars, sure shall die!"

The last verse proved too much for the already hysterical band of juniors. Coker the Poet was never an inspiring object at the best of times; but on the present occasion he seemed to out-Herod Herod, as Peter Todd remarked.

"What I admire about the blessed thing, next to the spelling, is the repetition!" chuckled Bob Cherry, mopping his almost tear-stained face. "Ditto repeato, as they say on the Continent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker's the funniest ass outside the walls of a lunatic asylum!" said Wharton. "We can't very well wade in and slaughter him, because all he says about Russell is true."

"I knew what would happen after the chap disgraced the Form like he did," growled Squiff. "It was quite enough to make Coker break out again."

"Here's Russell himself," said Vernon-Smith suddenly. "Let's get out of it. I feel like pitching into the cad. But I suppose being sent to Coventry's punishment enough."

The juniors moved away from the notice-board, and Dick Russell, flashing a little at the open manner in which he had been "cut," strolled up to read Coker's effusion.

He grinned at first, but presently his brows contracted and his hands clenched convulsively. To be called a turncoat, a "trayter," and a Tartar was too thick, even from such an asinine person as Coker.

Russell wrenched the precious document from the board, and crumpled it up in his hand. Then, with a curious expression on his face, he went straight to Coker's study.

The mighty Horace was reclining in the armchair, and was looking somewhat wrathful. Potter and Greene, no longer restraining themselves, had told him, in plain, unvarnished terms, what they thought of him. Greene had averred that the only fit and proper place for Coker was the Private Prison for Potty Poets; whereat his leader had retorted that some fellows were too much under the thumb of that green-eyed monster, Jealousy, to appreciate good poetry when they saw it.

The discussion—which had been carried on with unusual warmth—had ceased when Russell came in; and Potter, having finished tea, had produced his "Boys' Friend," and started to read, Greene looking over his shoulder. Coker was regarding them both with the glare of a basilisk.

Russell's entry was dramatic, to say the least of it. He kicked open the door, and strode straight up to the great Horace, upsetting the table as he did so, and sending a pile of crockery clattering to the floor.

"What the merry deuce——" began Coker, leaping to his feet.

"I suppose," said Russell, coming to the point with unpleasant directness, "you are the burbling, hare-brained duffer who stuck that apology for a poem on the notice-board?"

Coker's frown died away, and he grinned.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed. "It touched you on the raw, did it?"

"I think you're a rotten cad!" said Russell hotly. "I don't deny that I funk, but that's no reason why you should pile on a chap when he's down. Put up your fists, you rotter!"

"What!"

Coker could scarcely believe his ears. Potter and Greene, the adventures of Tom Belcher forgotten, gazed at Russell open-mouthed.

"Getting deaf?" asked the Removite. "Put up your fists—sharp!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Coker, recovering himself. "I'll jolly well wipe up the floor with you!"

And he advanced on Russell like an angry bull.

The junior stood his ground with calm confidence. A week ago, and he would as soon have tackled the celebrated Jack Johnson as Horace Coker. But Jimmy Wyatt had wrought wonders with his pupil, and Russell felt fit to tackle anything on two legs.

He swept Coker's clumsy blow aside, and sprang forward. Then he remembered the piece of advice which Jimmy Wyatt had given him in the little room at the Blackbird. He had said, "When you go into attack against one opponent, there is no need to land out with the utmost force. A half-arm's jolt is all you want."

It was certainly all that Coker wanted. He received the blow just beneath the left eye, and the surprise and pain of it sent him sprawling to the floor. Potter and Greene were too amazed to intervene.

"Want some more?" asked Russell, standing over the prostrate senior.

"Ow!" gasped Coker. "Get out of it, hang you!"

"You admit you're whacked?"

"No—ye-e-es!"

"That's all right then. Better mind your P's and Q's in future. I've torn your precious poem up, and if I ever find you writing any more piffle I'll make you eat it!"

"Groo!"

"Mind, I mean what I say! I've got enough to put up with from my own Form, without being chipped by Fifth-Form bounders. Because a chap doesn't care about joining in a scrap with outsiders, it doesn't follow that he's an out-and-out funk. It'll pay you not to be so funny after this, Coker."

And, without another word, Dick Russell turned on his heel and quitted the study.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Potter. "This beats the band!"

"Who said the age of miracles was past?" murmured Greene.

Coker struggled to his feet, caressing his injured eye. That orbit threatened to become an art-shade in black before many hours were over, and the thought made Coker squirm. He would naturally be called upon to explain how he had come into possession of a black eye; and to say that Russell—the biggest funk in the Lower Fourth—had caused the catastrophe would destroy Coker's prestige for ever.

"We—we must keep this dark!" he exclaimed.

"Awfully, fearfully dark!" agreed Potter. "It'll disgrace the entire Form if this affair leaks out. You'll have to tell the fellows you had a friendly bout with me, and I hit you with unintentional force."

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Coker gratefully.

"But suppose Russell makes a song about it?" said Greene anxiously.

"He won't," replied Potter. "He ain't on speaking terms with the rest of the Form, so they wouldn't be likely to listen to him if he said anything."

"My hat! Who'd have thought a funky little fag would have landed out at our beloved Horace like that?" declared Greene. "You must keep your eye-teeth cut next time, old man."

"Rats!" growled Coker. "The thing beats me fair and square. The kid got tons of force behind that hit, and he'd have made shavings of Ponsonby. Is it possible that he wasn't the chap who funk'd after all?"

"Young Linley was with him," said Potter. "And Linley never lies. Horace, old son, you were a champion ass to write that poem. That chap Russell's a dark horse, and I can't for the life of me understand why he turned tail the other day."

"Anyway, we'll keep this quiet," said Greene, "and Horace can whack the cheeky little kid some other time."

"That's it," said Coker. "You're good pals, you two, in spite of the fact that you can't appreciate a first-class lyric."

"Go hon!" grinned Potter. "I say, Horace, you'd better go and bathe your eye—what? Get the house-keeper to give you some raw steak, or something, and then it might not look so bad."

And Coker took his chum's advice. He made tracks for the nearest bath-room, still wondering if the circumstances that he—the great Coker—had been floored by a funk were not part of some strange dream.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Ready for the Fray!

"ALDERSHOT!" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Aldershot!"

The Famous Five were having tea next day in No. 1 Study when Harry Wharton gave vent to that sudden exclamation.

"Is that one of the answers to a 'Hidden Towns' competition?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Rats!"

"Perhaps he's thinking of the Tommies," suggested Nugent. "They're at Aldershot, you know."

"Really!" exclaimed Bob, in surprise. "You don't mean to say so! Now I come to think of it, Franky, you're right."

"Don't be funny, ass!" growled Nugent.

"Aldershot!" repeated Wharton again.

"My hat!" said Johnny Bull. "He's got it on the brain. I believe it's the sun, you fellows. He's been playing cricket all the afternoon, and I expect the heat was too much for him. He's wandering in his mind."

"The esteemed madhouse is the fit place for him," murmured Hurree Singh.

"You burbling chumps!" roared Wharton. "Do you want me to dole out thick ears all round? I'm as right as rain!"

"Well, don't keep mumbling like a demented Dutchman!" said Bob Cherry. "What d'ye mean by spouting out 'Aldershot!' at regular intervals?"

"That's where the Public Schools Boxing Championships take place," said Harry.

"What of it?"

"Greyfriars is going to take part this year."

"What?"

"It's a fact. I had it from old Wingate. After all, why shouldn't we compete? Eton and Harrow and St. Paul's go up every year, and Greyfriars is every bit as good as any of those, isn't it?"

"Of course," said Nugent solemnly.

"So this year we're going to take a hand. Larry Lascelles was to have coached the fellows, but he's gone out to Flanders, and Wingate's taking the job on. We shall send up a heavy, middle, and light weight boxer. Bob, old son, you'll have to represent Greyfriars in the light-weights."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, drawing a deep breath.

"You see, you're the best boxer in the Remove, as we've proved before now. I'm not bad, I know, and Peter Todd's pretty hot stuff; but neither of us is up to your weight. So you must go in and win, old scout."

Bob Cherry's eyes sparkled. He was delighted to have an opportunity of showing what he could do outside the sphere of Greyfriars. He saw himself, in imagination, standing up to a stalwart from Eton, or bowling over a hero of Harrow.

Greyfriars was essentially a boxing school. A fellow who could not keep his end up with the gloves was regarded as a poor specimen, and had a sorry time of it as a rule. Barring Bunter and Snoop and Stott, and a few others, the Removites were all very valiant fighting-men; and the wonder was that the school had never been represented at Aldershot before.

But the authorities had moved in the matter at last. Courtney had been unanimously elected by the Sixth Form to compete in the heavy-weights; Blundell of the Fifth was to have a shot for the middle-weight honours; and the inclusion of Bob Cherry in the light-weights was likely to meet with universal approval. Despite the fact that the fellows from the other public schools were foemen worthy of their steel, the three Greyfriars candidates seemed likely to render a good account of themselves.

Courtney of the Sixth had skill and science in plenty. He was not such a hard hitter as Wingate, but he made up on the roundabouts what he lost on the swings, so to speak. Blundell of the Fifth was not an ideal boxer, but that he was the best middle-weight Greyfriars possessed went without question.

Bob Cherry's fistic prowess was a household word in the Remove. Bob had a supply of inexhaustible energy, and possessed the British characteristic of never knowing when he was beaten. There was a time—and not many months back, either—when he had knocked out Tom Merry of St. Jim's, and a fellow who could triumph over Tom Merry was a masterpiece.

"I shall do my best," said Bob modestly. "Meanwhile, pass the sardines."

After tea the juniors proceeded to the Rag, where a formal election was to be held as to whom the Remove should send to Aldershot. That the lot would fall to Bob Cherry was assured in advance; but Harry Wharton meant to have things done in a business-like way.

Bolsover major, who, in spite of sundry defeats, still held to the opinion that he was the best boxer in the Remove, bar none, determined to enter the lists against Bob Cherry. Bolsover was in funds, and he stood a tremendous feed to Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and several other fellows immediately the facts concerning Aldershot came to light. That he was guilty of bribery and corruption didn't trouble Bolsover's conscience a bit. He was not thin-skinned.

Filled with tuck, and a determination to back up Bolsover through thick and thin, Skinner & Co. marched off to the Rag, where most of the Removites were by this time assembled.

Cherry and Bolsover were the only candidates for election. Other fellows, such as Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith, would have jumped at the chance of representing Greyfriars in the light-weights, but both were sportsmen enough to realise that Bob Cherry had a better chance of bagging the honours, so they kept off the grass.

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton, after something approaching order had been obtained, "you all know why this meeting has been called. Robert Cherry, Esquire, is to be duly elected to go up to Aldershot and compete in the light-weights."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Skinner. "You're a bit premature, ain't you? You seem to take it for granted that Cherry's the best man. Some of the chaps think differently."

Wharton frowned.

"Everyone ought to know that Bob's got no superior in the Form, so far as boxing goes," he said. "And it's a cad's trick to try and cause a split in the school. However, if any other chap thinks he ought to be preferred to Bob, we'll give him a fair show."

"Very kind of you!" sneered Bolsover. "The fact is, you've got no choice in the matter. If the majority are in favour of me, Cherry will have to take a back seat."

"Hear, hear! I beg to propose Bolsover!" roared Skinner.

"I second that!" shrilled Snoop.

And several others, lured by the prospect of further feeds at Bolsover's expense, chimed in.

"Gentlemen," said Bolsover, quick to seize the opportunity, "you all know how high-handed Wharton is in these affairs. He plumps for one of his bosom pals, and thinks the Remove's going to take it lying down."

"Shame!" cried several voices.

"I'm a chap of few words," continued Bolsover, "and what I say is this: Down with favouritism, and vote for the best man!"

"Bravo!"

"Well spoken!"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," chimed in Harry Wharton, "the best man's Bob Cherry. You've only got to look at his past record to see that. It isn't favouritism—it's a plain fact. Now then! Those in favour of Bob show their hands."

In spite of Bolsover's strenuous opposition quite a forest of hands shot up. Wharton's was raised as he spoke, and simultaneously Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Squiff, Linley, Brown, Bulstrode, Penfold, and several more flourished theirs.

Wharton commenced to count, and Skinner & Co. looked anxious. It seemed as if their champion was out of the reckoning.

And he was. Twenty-seven fellows voted for Cherry; and when the command "Hands up for Bolsover!" arose, only twelve responded.

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"That clinches it," said Wharton. "Bob, old son, you are duly elected to go up to Aldershot and conquer. Three cheers for Bob Cherry!"

And the cheers were given with right good will, Bolsover and his backers remaining scowling and silent. Their bolt was shot. Bolsover's feed had been stood in vain, and Bob Cherry the Remove's best boxer, had won the day!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Last Hope!

DICK RUSSELL was despondent. He felt—as most fellows feel at some time or other of their existence—that life was scarcely worth living.

It was not because he was in Coventry that Russell felt so utterly dejected. The sentence passed upon him by the Remove had expired over a week since. It was something far worse than this—something he had left entirely out of his calculations.

He could not go to Aldershot!

The junior had been so keen and so eager to become brilliant in the boxing world that he had never given himself time to think that he might stand no chance of getting to his desired goal. Had he considered the matter at all he must have known that he would be the last person his Form-fellows would select for an important championship. The occasion on which he had funk'd was still fresh in the memory of Greyfriars, and the very thought of such a fellow as Russell taking part in the light-weights at Aldershot would have sent the Remove into hysterics.

Therefore, since Bob Cherry had been elected to represent his school, Russell had grown restless and morbid. Like Rachel of old, he mourned, and would not be comforted.

But he still kept up his lessons with Jimmy Wyatt, out of a desperate hope that even yet something might turn up, as it did in the case of the celebrated Micawber. He had mastered the art of boxing as well as a boy of his age could be expected to do so, and Jimmy Wyatt simply purred with pleasure as he watched the meteor-like progress of his pupil.

"I tell you what, Dick," said the professional—the two were so familiar now that they always addressed each other by their Christian names—"you're a young marvel, that's what you are, and I don't flatter, either. It's a crying shame that you can't go up to Aldershot to-morrow instead of young Berry—"

"Cherry," corrected Russell, with a faint smile.

"Well, Cherry, then. I'm sure you could lick him into a cocked hat!"

"I don't know. He's hot stuff," said Russell. "And, anyway, he's been selected to represent our Form; so all your coaching, Jimmy, all your encouragement, all your time, has been wasted on the desert air. It's rotten!"

"Oh, come, Dick! It's not so bad as that. I'm what people call an optimist, I am, and even yet I think you'll be given a chance of showing your worth."

Russell shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"You don't understand, Jimmy," he said. "Now that they've definitely decided on Cherry, I don't stand a dog's chance. And it isn't as though more than one chap can go. The best man takes the job on, and everyone else has a back seat."

"Never you mind," persisted Jimmy Wyatt. "A hundred and one things might happen by to-morrow. You might save a chap's life, or something, by using your fists, and be sent up to Aldershot by universal request of the beaming multitude. Or a fleet of Zeppelins might come over, and—"

"For goodness' sake draw it mild, Jimmy! I've got to stand down, and that's all there is about it. Oh, if only I could see a way out!"

Jimmy Wyatt was silent.

He, too, realised the hopelessness of the position, but he had been trying to cheer his pupil up, for he knew that Russell felt the blow keenly. But, after all, surely his knowledge of ringcraft had not been imparted to Russell in vain? It wasn't as though Aldershot day came only once in a lifetime. There was next year, and—

Russell broke in upon the trainer's reflections by bidding him good-night. Jimmy Wyatt gave the junior's hand a tighter grip than usual, and watched him off the premises with something like a sigh.

Dick Russell walked back to Greyfriars. He was in good time for locking-up, and he wanted to do some hard thinking as he went. But the cold fact stared him bitterly in the face. Although trained to perfection—fitted to face the best men any public school could put in the ring—he could not go!

There was just one plan that occurred to him. He could challenge Bob Cherry to a contest when he reached the school, and prove to his Form-fellows that he was as good as, if not better than Bob. But he dismissed the idea for two reasons. In the first place, it would not be playing the game to rob Cherry of his prospects on the eve of the great day; and secondly, Harry Wharton would not allow his chum to risk a possible injury by indulging in a preliminary scrap.

Russell laughed bitterly as he tramped along the hard, white road to Greyfriars. He was down on his luck, with a vengeance, and the fates seemed to have conspired against him.

As he moodily turned into the old gateway of Greyfriars, his attention was arrested by a cluster of juniors who were surrounding Bob Cherry of the Remove with looks of grave concern.

"Anything the matter?" he asked of Penfold, with whom he was on speaking terms again.

"I should jolly well think so! Bob Cherry's sprained his wrist!"

"Badly?"

"Badly enough to prevent his going to Aldershot to-morrow."

"My hat!"

"The worst of it is, there isn't another chap fit enough to go," said Pen gloomily. "Bob's been specially coached and trained, and now he's been and messed up his wrist. It was at cricket practice that it happened. The silly ass ought never to have played."

The fellows who were standing round Bob Cherry wore decidedly troubled looks. Here was their champion, whom they fondly hoped would go to Aldershot and beat all comers, completely crocked. And there was no substitute sufficiently brilliant to take Bob's place. Wharton and Peter Todd and the Bounder were good boxers, but they were out of training, and one of the stalwarts from the great public schools could have made hay of them.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Wharton miserably, "though it goes against the grain to do it. We must cry off."

Russell heard this remark, and his eyes lit up with eager excitement. There was a chance for him yet.

"I'd better go off and report to Wingate," said Harry. "It's a sorry business altogether."

For the next hour Dick Russell paced feverishly up and down his study, which was deserted but for himself. Jimmy Wyatt's prophecy had been fulfilled. Something dramatic had happened, after all.

As bedtime approached, the junior's mind seemed to be made up.

"I'll go and tackle old Wingate," he muttered. And with a resolute look in his eyes he left his study.

George Wingate of the Sixth was alone, and he looked considerably distressed. The news that Cherry was hors de combat was, to say the least of it, depressing, for the captain of Greyfriars had cherished a fond hope that Bob would do something great.

"Well?" he asked, a trifle huffily, as Russell knocked and entered.

"Can I have a few words with you, Wingate? It's frightfully important."

"Go ahead, then!"

"I want to know if I can take Cherry's place at Aldershot."

"What!"

"I mean it, Wingate. I'm sure I could put up a pretty good show."

Wingate looked at the junior curiously.

"If this is a joke," he said, "I warn you I'm not in the humour for things of that sort."

"I'm in earnest, Wingate," said Russell eagerly. And there was something in his expression which convinced the captain of Greyfriars of the junior's sincerity.

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"But—but what do you know about boxing?"

"Lots. I believe I could beat Bob Cherry."

"My dear kid, you must be mad!"

"I'm as sane as you are, Wingate. I'm sure I should put up a good show. Jimmy Wyatt says so."

Russell had let the name slip out unintentionally, and Wingate looked at him sharply.

"Jimmy Wyatt!" he repeated. "The ex-middle-weight champion of England? What do you know about him?"

Russell saw that he was in for it now, but his mind was quickly made up. He would make a clean breast of things to George Wingate.

"A few weeks ago," he explained, "some of our chaps came to grips with the Highcliffe cads. Instead of lending a hand, I—I——"

"Well? You what?"

"I funk'd, Wingate!"

"This is news to me," said the Sixth-Former. "Is that why you were sent to Coventry a short time ago?"

"That's it. And I was desperately anxious to prove that I wasn't really a funk, you know—that it was only the cowardice of a moment. So I got acquainted with Jimmy Wyatt, and he's been giving me secret lessons."

Wingate saw it all now. He realised that the junior had transgressed in going out of bounds, but Russell's frank confession had made a good impression on him, and he refrained from asking awkward questions.

"So Wyatt thinks you're pretty good—eh?" he said at length.

"Yes, Wingate. And I'd give my right hand to go up to Aldershot. If I won I shouldn't be miserable any more. And Jimmy Wyatt says I've struck winning form. Do let me go!"

Wingate wavered, and to Russell this was a good sign. His heart beat high with hope.

"Before I say yes, I want to see how you shape," said the captain of Greyfriars. "Come along to the gym with me. There's no one there, as it's nearly bedtime."

A few minutes later the two fellows, senior and junior, faced each other with the gloves. Russell, realising that Wingate's decision hung on the encounter, was at his best. He boxed with a skill and celerity which amazed his companion, and when, after two minutes of hard sparring, he got in a delightful upper-cut, the Sixth-Former signed to him to stop.

"That's good enough for me," he panted. "My hat! You're a young marvel. Don't forget to be at the station at half-past nine in the morning."

"Thanks, awfully, Wingate! You're a brick! And—Look here, is it asking too much of you not to let the other chaps know?"

"I shall be only too pleased to keep my own counsel," replied Wingate, with a twinkle in his eye. "This'll be an eye-opener to Greyfriars, if I'm anything of a prophet. Good-night, kid!"

"Good-night, Wingate!"

And Dick Russell, delirious with joy, made his way to the Remove dormitory, to secure the long and refreshing sleep which was to steel his hand and nerve for the fray on the morrow.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Aldershot.

QUEEN'S AVENUE Gymnasium, where for dozens of years public-school boys have battled for victory in the ring, was packed next day—packed with all sorts and conditions of men. The greater part of the audience consisted, of course, of Tommies who were billeted in the town, but a large number of "old boys" had assembled also.

It was with no small surprise that Courtney and Blundell had noted the sudden appearance of Russell. Wingate, however, had explained matters in the train, much to the astonishment of his listeners.

There were no other Greyfriars fellows present, barring Wingate and the three competitors. Dr. Locke had granted the school a whole day's holiday, but he considered the journey into Hampshire too

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.

distant to be undertaken by the boys. Harry Wharton & Co., therefore, had arranged a cricket fixture with Courtfield County Council School.

No one—not even the prying and inquisitive Bunter—knew that Russell had gone to Aldershot. It was naturally concluded that Bob Cherry's injury had been a death-blow to the Remove's chances, and that Wingate had tabooed the idea of taking a substitute with him. Those who missed Russell—and they were very few in number—imagined that he had gone forth to spend the day in solitude.

They would have been greatly surprised if they could have seen Dick Russell at that moment. He was in the dressing-room of the gymnasium, speedily changing into his boxing attire, for in the drawing for numbers he had picked number one, and had to meet a youth from Uppingham in five minutes.

Presently—it seemed an interminable period to the waiting junior—he heard his name called by the referee, and amid a great burst of handclapping, stepped into the ring.

The referee then announced the names.

"R. E. Russell, Greyfriars, versus G. F. Stewart, Uppingham."

"Seconds out of the ring! Time!"

Russell walked out of his corner and shook hands with his opponent, and then the bout began.

It was a short and sweet tussle, delightfully short and sweet to the Greyfriars fellow. The boy from Uppingham was by no manner of means a cool fighter. He seemed flurried at the outset, and a telling blow in the chest from Russell's right only added to his loss of control. He rallied but feebly, and Russell swung out his left with considerable force. His opponent fell with a thud.

The contest was over. The Uppingham fellow endeavoured to rise, only to sink back again with his head reeling. He was beaten. For brevity the bout had almost equalled the celebrated occasion on which Georges Carpentier had disposed of Wells in the first round.

Russell returned to the dressing-room, his face radiant. He knew that his future opponents would be made of sterner stuff than Stewart, but the thought in no wise daunted him. He was there to win, and win he would, at all hazards!

The bouts which followed were of a different order to that in which Russell had participated. Usually, the boxers went the full number of rounds, and a decision on points followed. There was only one case of an early knock-out, and that was gained by a strapping fellow from Tonbridge, who overwhelmed his opponent and seemed likely to win his way into the final.

It was not until after lunch that Russell's second encounter took place. In the meantime, Blundell had been hopelessly beaten in the middle-weights by a clever Carthusian, and Courtney, in the heavies, had won his first fight on points.

Russell's opponent, on the resumption of the light-weights, was a Clifton boy who had drawn a bye in the first round. This proved to be a much keener struggle than its predecessor, and Russell had to go all the way, though the ultimate verdict was in his favour.

There were now three light-weights in the running—the Tonbridge boy, whose name was Rawson, an Etonian named Burne-Jones, and Russell. The Greyfriars fellow drew the bye, to his immense satisfaction, and twenty minutes later knew that he had to meet Burne-Jones, who, after a fierce struggle, had ousted the Tonbridge giant.

Russell was the one hope of Greyfriars now, for Courtney had succumbed in the semi-final of the heavy-weights. There was a terrific round of applause as the referee announced:

"Final, light-weights: R. E. Russell, Greyfriars School!"

"Hurrah!"

"H. P. Burne-Jones, Eton College."

"Bravo!"

"Eton for ever!"

The referee frowned, and the din subsided.

"Time!"

"Now, then, kid," murmured Wingate, "go in and win!"

The Eton boy looked every inch a boxer. His handshake was brief, and almost immediately he drove his opponent into a corner.

Rallying swiftly, Russell, by a couple of well-placed blows, extricated himself, and then the fight began in earnest. Round and round the ring the combatants surged; each of them getting in some severe punches, and the referee's call of "Time!" was like balm to Russell's throbbing brain.

"Keep it up!" said Wingate. "Cool and steady does it!"

Russell's second swung his towel vigorously through the air, and on the call of "Time!" the Greyfriars junior was fit as ever.

The Etonian had gained the better of round one, but Russell made up the lee-way now. He punished his man without mercy, and only the toughness and stamina of his opponent prevented an early climax.

The third round was one of the finest the Aldershot partisans had ever seen. There was no slogging—no wild rush to get at an opponent's weak spot—but cool, clever boxing, with the pair wonderfully well-matched.

Russell was almost smiling as the bout continued. It was all so beautifully simple. George Peters, in the gymnasium at the Blackbird, had given him far more to do than this Etonian, whose blows gradually seemed to weaken.

In the fourth round Russell changed his tactics. He went all out for victory, and although he took more risks than Jimmy Wyatt would have approved, he was superior at every turn.

The end was in sight. Russell felt it instinctively, and almost uttered an exclamation of joy. He was winning—winning hands down!

Burne-Jones, plucky and determined, stood his ground, but not for long. A heavy blow perilously near the mark took all the fight out of him; and then Russell, bringing his left into action in a way that caused the crowd to rise in admiration, knocked his plucky antagonist fairly into the ropes.

The Etonian groped wildly in the air with his gloved hand. But he was beaten. The referee began to count, and Russell, filled with a great calm, stood waiting for Burne-Jones to rise.

"Seven, eight, nine——"

The boxer never moved. His belt was shot, and he knew it.

"Ten!"

The referee waved his hand amid thunderous applause.

"Russell wins!" he said.

And that was the greatest moment of Dick Russell's life!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Honour of a Funk.

BILLY BUNTER rushed excitedly into the common-room at Greyfriars late that evening, flourishing an evening paper in his hand. Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing the afternoon's match with Trumper & Co., which had ended in favour of the Remove by two wickets.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter jerked the words out breathlessly. He had been running, and the unaccustomed exercise had left him with scarcely a morsel of wind in his body.

"Go ahead!" said Wharton curiously. "Get it off your chest! Any staggering war news in the paper?"

Skinner stepped forward, and snatched the newspaper from Bunter's grasp. He glanced at it for one moment, and then a dazed expression came over his face, and he lurched back against the big desk, overcome.

"What is it?" asked Wharton impatiently. "What's all the blessed mystery about?"

Skinner handed him the paper like a fellow in a dream, and Wharton, with a crowd looking over his shoulder, looked at the prominent headlines.

"Honours for Charterhouse, Harrow, and Greyfriars!" he read.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Who's the giddy hero—Blundell or Courtney?"

Wharton scanned the column, and a look of utter incredulity came into his eyes.

"Russell!" he gasped out. "Russell's won the light-weight championship!"

There was a blank silence in the common-room. It took some moments for the astounding fact to sink in. Then Vernon-Smith exclaimed, in slow, impressive tones:

"Russell—Russell, the funk!"

There was no disputing the statement in the papers. The name "R. E. Russell" was displayed half a dozen times in the column.

"The Greyfriars boy," said the paper, "was a perfect marvel of pluck and ingenuity. He stood up to Burne-Jones, the Etonian, who won this feature last year, in a manner which stamps him as a coming expert. Russell's victory was, in fact, the most popular on the day's programme."

Wharton laughed harshly.

"What fools we've been!" he said, with bitter emphasis. "We cut Russell dead as the funkiest of the funky, and yet here he is knocking out Etonians and bagging silver medals!"

"What a score for Greyfriars!" said Squiff, drawing a deep breath. "It's great—simply stunning! Won't we give those chaps a reception when they come?"

At that moment the door of the common-room opened, and Russell entered. He had not expected to find a crowd there, for it was past the juniors' bedtime, and he coloured a little as every eye was turned upon him.

Mark Linley was the first to find his voice.

"I think we ought to give three cheers for Russell!" he said quietly.

And the cheers which burst forth at that moment might have been heard all over Greyfriars.

"Oh, you gilt-edged cherub!" said Harry Wharton delightedly. "What d'you mean by it, you giddy dark horse?"

"I simply wanted to show you I wasn't quite the coward you thought me," answered Dick Russell.

"My hat! And you've succeeded, too, old son!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I don't think any chap here will say you're not true blue after this."

"It must have been a howling fluke!" growled Bolsover major.

Russell stepped up to the bully of the Remove.

"Excuse me, Bolsover," he said, with deadly directness, "but some time ago, you will remember, you got about eight fellows to pile in on me when I was practically helpless. There won't be any one-sidedness about it this time! I'm going to tackle you on my own!"

A murmur of admiration ran round the common-room. "Let him have it!" exclaimed several voices.

And Bolsover had it. He had no choice in the matter. Russell, although fagged by the excitement of a long and trying day, fairly made rings round the burly Removite. Right and left, left and right, his fists shot out, and every blow got home.

A few minutes later Bolsover major, humbled and severely hurt, was grovelling on the floor of the common-room, howling for quarter. Russell, the so-called funk, had given him a thrashing such as he had never experienced before.

"Dick, you prize hero!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when it was over. "Come to my bosom and weep! And if ever I call you a funk again, may the Kaiser win!"

"Bring him along!" said Harry Wharton.

And Dick Russell was borne off shoulder high to the Remove dormitory, bearing his blushing honours thick upon him. The past was amply redeemed now: he was a funk no more, but a happy, light-hearted schoolboy once again. And when all the handshakes and congratulations were over, he joyfully turned in, with the feeling that he had deserved well of his country.

There was a glorious repast in No. 1 Study next day in Dick Russell's honour. Among the guests were Jimmy Wyatt—whose genial face was wreathed in smiles on account of his pupil's success—and De Courcy of Highcliffe. And when the feast was over, and the final toast had been drunk by the merry party, the cheering rose loud and long on behalf of the Fellow Who Won!

THE END.

(YOU MUST NOT MISS "At War With Greyfriars!"
By Frank Richards. Out next Monday!)

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

FAVOURITE FRIENDS IN FICTION.

No. 3.



The cheery chums of Rookwood School
Compel our admiration;
Their deeds are relished to the full
By boys of every station.
Superb in every branch of sport,
Brave youths of fifteen summers,
They stand supreme, and hold the fort
Intact against all-comers.

When Classics and Moderns meet
In warfare keen and bitter,
Young Jimmy Silver's hard to beat—
He is a mighty biter!
The firm of Dodd, and Doyle, and Cook—
Three staunch and sturdy yeomen—
Is dished and done, and brought to book
By Silver's fearless foemen.

A dandy of the first degree,
Who fumes and makes no small fuss
At Jimmy's popularity
Is Smythe, the great Adolphus.
Who vainly tries to sit in state,
But finds no glut of backers,
For Rookwood will not tolerate
Such chicken-hearted slackers.

Adolphus once rose up in pride
And signed a mental treaty,
To raise a champion cricket side
As good as Incogniti.
He strutted like a pompous hen,
Or one of Bond Street's bankers;
But Wharton and his merry men
Made shavings of the swankers!

Then Jimmy Silver took a hand,
And summoned every warrior
To face the famous Greyfriars band
And make them feel the sorrier.
Upon the cricket-field they came,
A mass of youthful muscle;
And though the 'Friars won the game,
It was a sterling tussle!

Hats off to Silver, readers all!
You'd have to make a long quest
To hunt out heroes who enthrall
Like those of Owen Conquest.
Cheer loud and long the Classic side,
Ne'er may their pluck diminish!
Long may they reign as Rookwood's pride,
Victorious to the finish!

Next Monday:
FRANK COURTNEY & CO.
No. 4 of this grand new series.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.



Driven to Sea!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New
Serial Adventure Story.

By T. C. BRIDGES.

treatment of him, is in abject terror, and forced to do the work of an ordinary seaman.

Having recovered the pearls and triumphed over their enemies, the comrades set sail for Sydney.

Barry Freeland then begins to tell Dick his life-story.
(Now read the conclusion of the story.)

The Cruiser.

"I'm Devonshire," said Barry, staring out to sea. "Dartmouth. Gosh, what good times I used to have there as a kid, fishing and boating up the river, and climbing those ripping red cliffs! We hadn't anything special to do with the sea. My dad had a bit of a farm, and some house property in the town. That was rising in value, and we were well off."

"When I was about twelve I came home from school one day, and found a stranger talking to dad. Dad told me he was my Uncle Stephen just home from sea."

"He was dad's half-brother, a big, handsome chap, but with a pair of queer, shifty eyes. I never liked him."

"He stayed with us some time, and he and dad were always talking. It was only afterwards that I knew that he was persuading father to put up the money for buying a ship to go into a big trading scheme along the New Guinea coast."

"Mother hated the notion, but in the end Uncle Stephen persuaded father. He sold out everything, left mother and me with enough to carry on for a year, and sailed with uncle in their new ship."

Barry paused, and his face went very grim. Dick did not speak.

"We never saw either of them again," said Barry curtly. "Mother wrote and wrote. There was no answer. The money began to run out; it was awful to see her get thinner and more worried every day."

"I was fourteen then, and big for my age. I reckoned it was time I did something to help her, so I got a job aboard a craft called the Ping Ho, which was bound for Brisbane. Mother hated my going, but I said I'd got to find dad, and if I couldn't do that I must make some money for her."

"And did you find your father?"

"No," Barry answered gruffly. "I've been sailing these seas ever since—five years now—but I've never heard a word of him or of my uncle or of their ship. And as for money—well, it's dashed little I've made so far—until now, I mean."

"Still," he added, "I've managed to send mother a few pounds off and on, and I've written to her every time I got to port."

"You've never seen her since?"

"Never set eyes on her," Barry answered sadly. "Never been within ten thousand miles of her."

"But you'll go to her now," said Dick quickly.

Barry's face lit up.

"As fast as steam can take me. And then I'm going to bring her back with me, to live with us on our place. You won't mind, Dick?"

"Mind, old man? It will be ripping! You know," he added quietly. "I can hardly remember my own people at all."

The breeze held for three days, then dropped, and there followed two days of light and baffling head winds. Barry's spirits fell; he paced the deck like a caged tiger, watching every flaw, and keeping the crew on the run, sweating up sails to catch every puff. Wesley Crane did more work in those few days than in the whole of his previous life.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Damer, an orphan, is invited by his uncle out to Australia. On arriving he hears of his uncle's death, from a man named Wesley Crane.

Wesley Crane, for some sinister purpose, has Dick drugged and smuggled aboard the Rainbow, a small schooner commanded by Captain Cripps.

The Rainbow sights a derelict. Captain Cripps and Dick, going aboard the vessel, find a youth, who is overpowered by gas fumes, has been left aboard her.

Dick and the youth, Barry Freeland, reach the Rainbow safely; but Captain Cripps, staying longer on the derelict, is apparently drowned, owing to a storm rising, which causes the vessel to founder.

Barry Freeland takes charge of the Rainbow, and, finding some papers relating to pearls on a mysterious island, decides to go in search of the treasure, which rightfully belongs to Dick.

On reaching the island, however, they are informed by Captain Kempster, whom they find stranded there, that he is the sole survivor of the Stella, which was originally commissioned by Dick's uncle to recover the pearls. The Stella was attacked by the Brant—a vessel captained by a pirate named Burke, who steals the pearls.

While on the way to the Solomon Islands in search of Burke, the comrades on the Rainbow pick up three of his colleagues, and one of them, Barstow, helps in the recovery of the pearls, which were hidden on the island of San Cristobal.

They encounter the pirate, and he is made prisoner and taken aboard the Rainbow.

Finding that a tidal wave which struck the Rainbow and drove it aground has also broken one of the masts, Dick and Barry, with two other members of the crew, go ashore in order to find a tree suitable to make a new one.

They complete their task, and on returning to the water's edge, are startled by the sound of shots on the Rainbow. At the same time they notice a strange craft coming towards the island.

Dick scans the new vessel with his glasses, and is surprised to see, standing on the bridge, Captain Cripps and Wesley Crane.

Cripps and his colleagues succeed in boarding the Rainbow, from which vessel Burke and his friends have in the meantime escaped.

Dick and Barry board the Brant—Burke's vessel—and, with the aid of an old cannon they find aboard her, first sink the boat containing Burke and his colleagues, Burke being again made captive; and then, after a struggle, during which Captain Cripps is drowned, succeed in boarding the Rainbow.

Wesley Crane, fearing retribution by Dick for his early treatment of him, is in abject terror, and forced to do the work of an ordinary seaman.

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On the sixth day they sighted an island.

"It's Arima," said Barry, after consulting the chart.

Dick studied the chart for a few moments.

"What do you say to running in for water, Barry? We ought to fill our tanks again. And if we could get some green stuff, yams and coconuts, it would be useful. We should all be better for it."

Barry hesitated.

"It may save time later on," said Dick. "We haven't enough in the tanks to carry us home."

"All right," said Barry.

And, going on deck, he gave the necessary orders.

It was slow work, and it was getting late in the afternoon by the time that the Brant made the entrance of a small harbour on the east side of the island. Barry took her in cautiously, but found plenty of water, so anchored about half a mile from shore, and ordered out a boat.

The sun was low as they pulled across the smooth blue surface of the bay. Ashore, dark-fronded palms waved lazily in the light evening breeze, and birds of brilliant plumage flew in and out among the scrub. Among the trees were a few native huts, but there was no sign of human life.

Barry and Dick landed, and walked up towards the huts. A drove of small black pigs sprang up before them, and ran squealing through the undergrowth. The two went right up to the huts, and Barry shouted, but there was no reply.

His face darkened.

"Some black-birding scoundrel!" he said harshly. "Probably they have kidnapped all the men, and the women and children have cleared. Well, we may as well have what we can get. Here are bananas spoiling, and yams running to waste. Call Chang and Sam, Dick. Tell 'em to bring the sacks."

There was not much daylight left, and the party from the Brant had to make the most of their time. It was dusk when, with loaded sacks, they went slowly down to the boat again.

The breeze was freshening a little, and Barry's spirits rose with it.

"We'll get off at once," he said briskly. "Once we run out of this belt of calms, we'll soon be on the road home. Hallo!" He broke off sharply as a heavy boom crashed through the warm air. "What the mischief is that?"

"Sounds like a gun," said Dick, in a puzzled tone. And then: "Look! Look!"

He pointed. Round the spit of high land to the north came steaming a long, grey vessel. Smoke poured from two funnels, overhead the web of her wireless installation showed in a fine tracery against the evening sky, and along her side grey guns grinned through her gun-shields.

Dick stared.

"She's a warship, isn't she?"

"A British cruiser," Barry answered shortly. "Most likely she's after these black-birding gentry."

"She's coming into the bay," said Dick eagerly.

Barry grunted.

"We'd best get back to the Brant," he said.

They pulled rapidly back, and were met at the rail by Kempster. Dick noticed, with some surprise, that he was looking grave and rather worried.

"The Dione," he said briefly to Barry, jerking his thumb in the direction of the cruiser.

"I see," Barry answered, with equal brevity, as he sprang aboard. "Get those things stowed!" he said to Chang. "We'll be off as soon as we can."

Dick looked from one to the other, but while both Barry and Kempster were plainly ill at ease, neither gave him any reason.

By this time the Dione had dropped anchor about a quarter of a mile away. Dick stared at her. Although only a third-class cruiser, she looked very big and imposing compared with the schooner. Scores of Bluejackets were moving on her deck.

"She's getting a boat out," he said to Barry.

Barry gave an impatient exclamation:

"More delay! Hang it all, I wish we'd got away before she came on us!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"You'll see if you live long enough," Barry answered gruffly. And then, with sharp impatience: "Don't you know we've got no papers? This is going to be infernally awkward!"

But neither he nor Dick realised at that moment how awkward.

Barke's Last Card.

Down the bay, straight for the schooner, the boat shot. Its crew, in white jumpers and straw hats, pulled with that beautiful clockwork precision known only in the British Navy.

In the stern sat an officer, holding the tiller-strings; in the bow was a small but businesslike-looking swivel-gun.

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Within a very few minutes she was alongside. One word from the officer, and her oars were shipped. She came to rest with mathematical precision by the schooner's side, and the officer, springing to his feet, stepped briskly aboard.

He was quite a young man, little older than Barry. His clean-shaven face was brown with tropic suns. He had white teeth and very blue eyes.

With one quick glance he took in Barry's towering figure in his blue jean trousers and thin shirt, Dick with his bright interested face, and Kempster, his mahogany skin in curious contrast to his snow-white hair. Barstow at the moment was not on deck.

"You surrender?" he said curtly, speaking to Kempster, whom he evidently considered to be the captain.

"What do you mean, sir?" returned Kempster.

"Come, now! That's no use," said the officer, still more shortly. "It's no use pretending you don't understand."

Barry cut in:

"I'm skipper here, and I don't propose that anyone, even an officer of his Majesty's Navy, should talk like that to me on my own deck. There is no pretence about it. None of us understand what you mean."

The young officer's eyes widened.

"This is the Brant, isn't it?"

"It is, sir."

"Then it's hardly news to you that we've been looking for you for the past twelve months," said the officer drily.

"You may have been looking for the Brant, sir," Barry answered, with a dignity which Dick did not know he possessed, "but not for us. I have the honour to inform you that we took her from the pirates who previously owned her at San Cristobal a week ago."

The officer stared hard at Barry, but Barry returned his look with equal keenness.

"This is a queer story," said the former. "I don't want to seem to doubt your word, but I shall have to ask you to prove it."

"You can ask any of us any questions you please," said Barry. "I can't say more than that."

"May I ask your name?"

"Freeland—Barry Freeland. This is Captain Kempster, whom we found marooned on Nameless Island, and this is Dick Damer, who was aboard the Rainbow, which picked me up out of the Kauri, which was damaged in a storm and left derelict."

"Thank you!" replied the officer, speaking less curtly.

"I am Lieutenant Selby. Now, if you please, Captain Freeland, we will go below, and I will hear how you came into possession of the Brant."

Dick cut in:

"In case there should be any doubt, Lieutenant Selby, would it not be as well to question each of us separately? You could then see whether our stories agree. I think that if you found they did, that would go some way towards convincing you that they were genuine."

Selby looked at the boy with some surprise. Clearly Dick's tone and manner amazed him. They were certainly not what he would expect to find aboard a piratical schooner.

"It seems quite a good idea," he answered. "If you are all agreeable to such a test, I certainly sha'n't object to it."

"We are very willing," said Captain Kempster. "I suggest, sir, that you should put us under guard, in order to make sure there shall be no collusion."

"If you are pirates, you are certainly very queer ones," muttered Selby under his breath. He ordered four of his men to come aboard, and, leaving Dick and Captain Kempster under their charge, went below with Barry.

The questioning took some time, for the stories each had to tell were pretty long ones. It was nearly an hour before Dick, who came last, had finished his evidence.

Then Selby asked all four to come in at once.

"Gentlemen," he said courteously, "your stories tally absolutely, and they have gone far to convince me that they are all true. At the same time, you will admit that this in itself is not proof of your innocence. We find you in possession of a vessel whose reputation is of the blackest, you have a gun aboard which has recently been used, you have no papers of any description. As for the stories, it is, of course, possible that they were concocted beforehand."

Barry moved impatiently.

"Don't be angry, Mr. Freeland," said Selby. "You will understand that I am speaking from a purely official standpoint."

"Now, you tell me," he continued, "that you have aboard the ex-captain of this ship, the pirate Burke. Before I return to my ship I should wish to see him."

"You can, if you like," said Barry, "but I tell you straight that you won't get one word of truth out of the fellow."

"Still, I must see him," said Selby firmly.

"Very well, Mr. Selby. I will take you to his bunk," Barry replied. "This way, please!"

He led the young lieutenant to the door of the cabin, and then came back and joined the others. His face bore the scowl that Dick knew so well.

"That's upset the apple-cart," he said, between set teeth. "That swine will fill Selby up with lies. There'll be trouble now. I know it."

"Surely he will be able to see through Burke?" said Dick. "The man is such an obvious blackguard."

"You don't know Burke yet," Barry answered grimly. "He'd humbug a judge if he turned on the soft stop."

Kempster nodded. His face was as grim as Barry's. Between the two of them, Dick began to feel decidedly unhappy.

It was another quarter of an hour before Selby returned, and the moment Dick saw his face his worst forebodings were realised.

"Gentlemen," he said curtly, "you must consider yourselves under arrest, and accompany me back to the Dione."

"So you're going to take the word of that blackguard Burke against ours?" said Barry bitterly.

"It is not in my province to discuss the matter further," replied Selby drily. "The rest must lie with Captain Burnham. Have I your promise that you will make no resistance?"

"You can take that for granted," answered Captain Kempster, in a tone as dry as Selby's own.

"I told you I ought to have finished Burke while I was about it," said Barry aside to Dick, as they went on deck again. "Now, the deuce only knows what's going to happen."

"You can't kill a man in cold blood," Dick answered doggedly.

Half a dozen bluejackets were left in charge of the Brant. Only the Chinamen and Burke were left aboard her. Wesley Crane and Barstow, as well as Barry, Dick, and Captain Kempster, were ferried across to the cruiser.

They were placed in separate cabins and all under guard. Apart from that, they had no reason to complain of their treatment. An excellent supper was served to each, and their sleeping accommodation was equally good. Word was brought them that Captain Burnham would hold a court of inquiry on the following morning.

Dick, from his porthole, saw a boat cross again to the Brant. Aboard was an officer he had not seen before. He took it that he was the ship's doctor, going to see what he could do for Burke.

In spite of his troubles, Dick slept soundly enough. He woke to a singing of wind in the wireless high overhead and the lap of ripples against the steel sides of the ship. A glorious breeze was blowing, and he thought of Barry's bitter disappointment at not being able to take advantage of it.

But there was no use grouching. He got up, tubbed, and dressed, and presently a big marine brought him such a breakfast as he had not tasted for many weeks. The man did not speak, but by the way he eyed Dick, Dick felt sure that he was storing up a mental picture of the "boy pirate" for the edification of his fellows forward.

Presently the captain's galley went off, in the stern sheets Captain Burnham himself, a square-shouldered man with a hawk's nose and a trim yellow beard. Selby was with him.

"So he's going to talk to Burke," muttered Dick. "Let's hope he has sense enough to see through the fellow."

Captain Burnham was away for about half an hour, and soon after he returned to his ship the door of Dick's cabin slid back, and another marine appeared and told him politely that Captain Burnham wished to see him in his cabin.

Dick had never before seen captain's quarters in a warship. The size and spaciousness of the day cabin struck him with wonder. The interior was painted white and gold, there was a real fireplace, there were pictures, books, dainty hangings, and the whole was flooded with light and air from the large, square ports.

Captain Burnham sat at a table, his clerk beside him, and Selby on the other side. There was no one else in the cabin. Dick was led up to the table facing the captain.

The captain fixed his keen eyes upon him.

"You are Richard Damer?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. That is my name."

"Take a seat, please."

The marine placed a chair and withdrew.

"I will ask you, Mr. Damer, to repeat the story you told to Lieutenant Selby last night," said Captain Burnham.

Dick did so readily. He told of his arrival in Australia, his encounter with Wesley Crane, his kidnapping aboard the Rainbow; then, saying as little as possible of his sufferings

at the hands of Cripps, went on to speak of the rescue of Barry from the Kauri, the visit to Nameless Island, and the discovery of Captain Kempster.

From this he went on to the arrival at San Cristobal, the finding of the pearls, the fighting with Burke on the island, and eventually the arrival of Cripps and Crane in the steamer.

It was only when he told how he and Barry had got the Brant out and sunk the steamer that Captain Burnham interfered.

"Do you mean to say that you and Freeland and one Chinaman handled the schooner and the gun alone?"

"We had two Chinamen, sir. The Brant is very handy, and the breeze was light and fair. We had no great difficulty."

"That dodge of the dummy figures to draw fire does you credit," said the captain, with a slight smile. "Continue, please."

Dick finished his story, and was then asked to retire to his cabin again. As before, he was under guard.

There was a long wait. It was more than an hour before he was called again.

Then he found that Barry, as well as Kempster, Barstow, and Wesley Crane, were all in the cabin. All five were provided with seats, then Captain Burnham addressed them.

"Gentlemen, I have adopted the same plan as that of Lieutenant Selby. I have heard from each of you separately the stories of how you come to be in possession of the notorious Brant. The stories of Captain Kempster, of Captain Freeland, of Barstow, and of Damer, I find, tally in every respect. That of Mr. Crane, however, differs in some important particulars—"

"It would!" broke in Barry contemptuously.

"I must ask you not to interrupt me," said the captain sharply. "I was going to say," he continued, "that Mr. Crane's part in the whole curious business is so comparatively unimportant that his evidence is of less value in this inquiry than that of the rest of you."

Crane scowled, but said nothing.

"I have, however," went on the captain, "myself interviewed the injured man Burke, and, as he is seriously ill, have taken his depositions. This evidence, it is my duty to tell you, entirely contradicts that of the rest of you. Burke declares on oath that you were all part of his crew aboard the Brant. He swears that you assisted him in the raiding of the lagoon at Nameless Island, and sailed with him to San Cristobal. There, according to his evidence, you, Freeland, together with Barstow, led a mutiny, and stole the pearls. In the fighting that followed he accuses you of having caused the death of the four men—Redstall, Pyke, Wigram, and Dent."

"Burke's evidence, which has been given very fully and freely, and in which he does not spare himself, naturally weighs heavily. It has decided me that this case is beyond my jurisdiction. Under the circumstances I have decided to place a prize crew aboard the Brant, and send her to Sydney. You yourselves will remain in this ship until I can hand you over to the civil authorities."

For a moment there was dead silence. Four at least of the prisoners exchanged glances of intense dismay.

Dick was the first to recover himself.

"May I say something, sir?" he asked of the captain.

"Certainly, if it bears on the matter in hand."

"It is this. You say that Burke's evidence is valuable because he does not spare himself. But does that count? Burke is dying. His one idea is revenge. Neither the pearls nor the ship is of any use to him any longer. All he wants is to get even with us. Surely that goes far to reduce the value of his evidence."

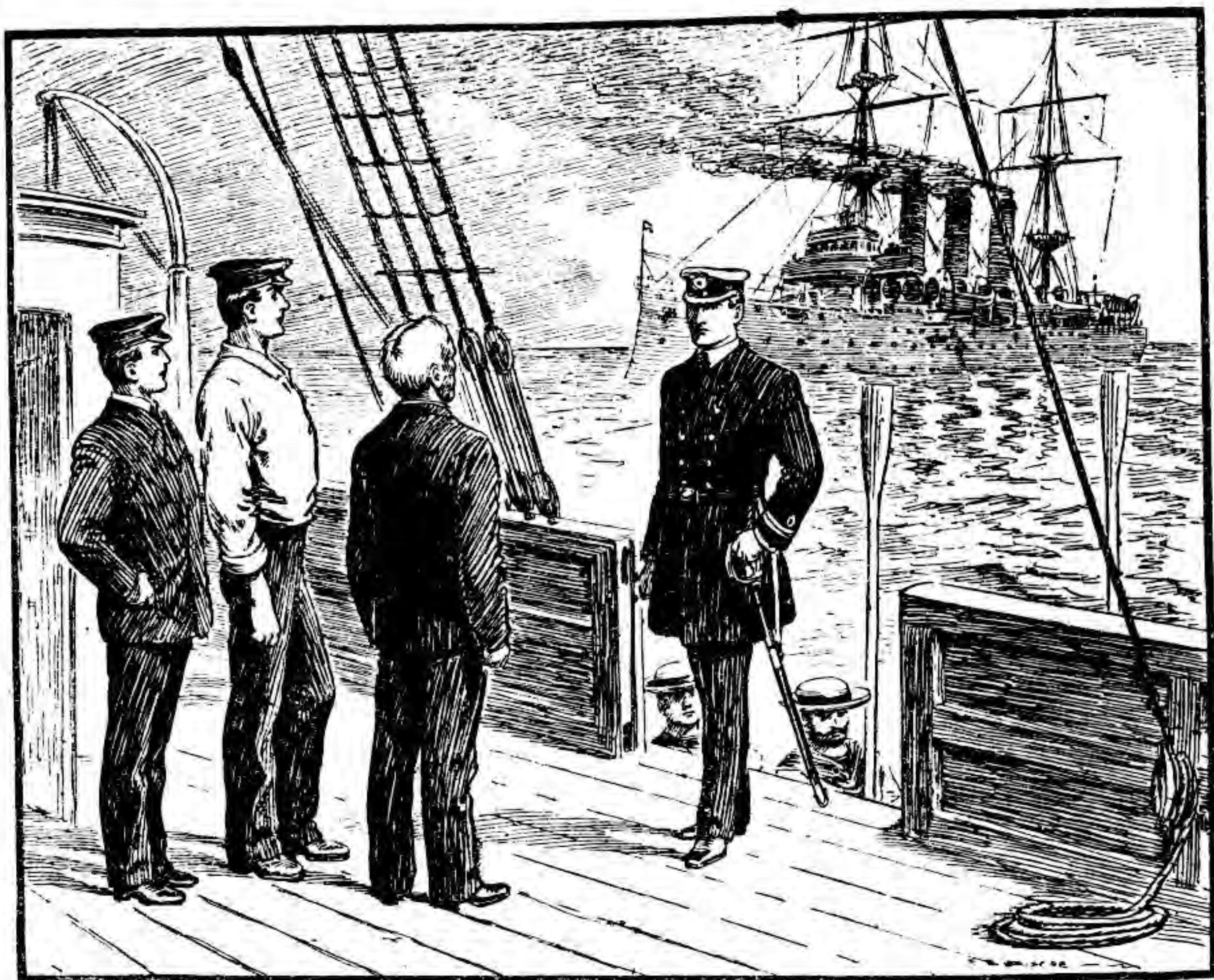
Captain Burnham gave the boy a long and searching glance.

"There is something in what you say, Damer," he answered thoughtfully. "The man may be actuated by revenge. At the same time, the depositions of a dying man—and Dr. Parslow says that he cannot live much longer—are always of value in a court of law. I am most unwilling to do any injustice to you or your companions, but it is my candid opinion that the matter is beyond me, and can only be decided by a civil court on land."

"And then, even if we do win our case, we shall have wasted half the value of the pearls in law costs," said Barry bitterly—"to say nothing of months of time."

"I am sorry," said the captain. "But you will see that I have no choice. It is not as though any one of you were able to prove his identity. One of you, indeed"—looking at Barstow—"openly acknowledges that he has been a partner of Burke in his misdeeds."

"That's true, sir," said Barstow. "But, say, I haven't no objection to coming along with you, if you'll let these other folk free, captain. I guess I know 'em well enough to be right sure they'll keep my share o' the pearls against the day I've served my time."



An officer stepped aboard. "You surrender?" he said curtly, speaking to Kempster, whom he evidently considered to be the captain.

For the first time Captain Burnham smiled.

"This is the best testimonial I have heard yet to the character of the rest of you. Indeed, I am sorry for the step which I feel compelled to take. But, as I said before, I have no choice in the matter."

He began to gather his papers together, as though the interview was at an end. Dick, however, was not beaten yet.

"One moment, sir!" he said sharply. "One moment! Suppose that I was able to prove that Burke was a liar, would that alter your opinion of his evidence?"

Captain Burnham hesitated.

"Upon my word, you are a very pertinacious person!" he said. "But, yes. If you could actually prove that fact, it would, of course, go far to destroy the value of the man's evidence."

"Then listen, sir! I think I know a way to do it."

Wits Win.

"It's a queer plan, sir," said Dick, "but the only one I can think of. Will you tell me, please, did Burke say anything about the Chinamen who were, as I and Freeland have told you, part of the original crew of the Rainbow?"

"Yes; he told me that he picked them up out of a vessel which he sunk at Nameless Island."

Dick's eyes glowed.

"Oh, that was his story! Well, in that case, sir, of course, he would know their names, would he not?"

"Why—why, I suppose so," answered Captain Burnham, in evident surprise. "Yes, of course, he would, if he worked them as part of his crew during the passage to the Solomons."

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"But, according to our story, he has never seen them, except Chang, the cook, who has helped to wait on him during the time he has been a prisoner aboard the Brant."

"That is so," replied Captain Burnham.

"Well, see here, sir," said Dick eagerly. "There are five of the Chinamen in all—four besides Chang—at present aboard the Brant. Now, if you would take the trouble to visit the ship again and see those Chinamen, then ask them their names, and write them down. When you have their names, let them be brought one by one into Burke's cabin, and see whether he knows them—see, I mean, what he calls them. If he is wrong, surely that would go far to prove him a liar."

Captain Burnham paused a moment. Then, for the second time that morning, a smile parted his lips.

"Upon my word, it is the very oddest proof I ever heard of! And yet—yet it is a good one. Very well, Damer, I agree. It shall be tried, and, under the circumstances, I think that you yourself shall be a witness of the trial."

He rose as he spoke.

"Order my galley, please, Mr. Selby," he said. "There will be plenty of time to try this experiment before lunch."

It was wonderful to see the relief pictured on the faces of Barry and the rest. But Dick had no opportunity to speak to any of his companions as he followed Captain Burnham out of the cabin and up the companion to the deck.

Two minutes later he was being ferried swiftly across to the Brant.

Captain Burnham set about carrying out the test with great thoroughness. First, he called up Chang, and got from him a list of his companions. Chang, being head man, had this list written in Chinese characters on a sheet of rice-paper, which

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"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS

he carried with him. As luck would have it, Burnham, who had been years in the East, was able to read these.

Next he sent Chang away, and had the other four up before him. One by one they approached, and each was made to write his name separately. He then put numbers, from one to four, opposite the names, and marked corresponding numbers in ink on the palms of the left hand of each man.

The Chinamen took the whole proceedings with their accustomed stolidity.

"Now we will go to Burke's cabin," said the captain.

He and Dick led the way. The Chinamen, under escort of two bluejackets, followed.

"I will see the man first," whispered Captain Burnham to Dick. "You will wait outside, and out of sight."

He opened the door and went in. Dick, standing silent outside, listened keenly.

"Burke," said Captain Burnham abruptly. "there is a matter on which I omitted to speak to you earlier this morning."

"Yes, sir. And what may that be?" Burke asked suavely.

"That of the Chinese portion of your crew. Their names did not appear in the deposition you signed this morning. For the purposes of justice it will be necessary to identify them."

"Just so, sir—just so. Well, I am sorry for them, but I suppose that they will have to appear in the dock with the rest? Of course, sir, you will understand that they are not so guilty as the rest. They only did what they were told by Barstow and Freeland and Damer."

Dick outside ground his teeth.

The captain answered coldly:

"They will have to stand their trial with the rest. I propose to bring them in one by one for you to identify them."

"your treachery has failed. I took the precaution of getting these men's real names before I brought them here. I had grave doubts of your story when I first heard it. Now I am thoroughly convinced that it was one pack of lies from beginning to end. You have done just the reverse of what you had hoped to do. So far from incriminating the others, you have removed from them all trace of suspicion."

For once Burke had no answer. The captain, without another look at him, left the cabin, went straight on deck, and motioned Dick into the boat.

Five minutes later they were on the deck of the Dione. The captain gave a brief order to his coxswain, and a few moments later Barry, Captain Kempster, and Barstow appeared. They were looking very anxious and puzzled, but the sight of Dick's cheerful face did something to improve their spirits.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Burnham, and he spoke in a clear, ringing voice easily audible all over the decks, "the test which this young man"—laying a kindly hand on Dick's arm—"has suggested has proved successful. The man Burke was utterly unable to identify a single one of the four Chinamen. I am satisfied with the truth of your story. You are free."

As he spoke he raised his hand to his cap in graceful salute.

"And now," he said, "as the wind is fair, and I know you are all in a hurry to be off, I will not detain you. The boat is at your orders."

Barry looked round.

"We might as well take Crane with us, sir. Damer here hopes to make a sailor of him before we get home."

The captain laughed outright.

"I wish you joy of the job, Damer. I'm afraid you won't find it an easy one. Well, I trust you will deal faithfully with him."

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There was a momentary pause.

"Very good, sir. I'll help you all I can, seeing it's all I can do now that I'm so near my own end."

The man's hypocrisy made Dick feel positively sick.

"Surely," he thought, "the captain must see through that sort of thing."

"Very well," Captain Burnham replied, and turned to his coxswain. "Jackson, bring in the first man."

Ah Lung was the first to be led into the little cabin.

"So it's you, Sam," said Burke. "Sam's what we call him, sir," he explained to the captain. "I don't know what his real name is."

"We will put him down as 'Sam,' then," said the captain blandly.

Outside, Dick's face lighted up. Burke had no doubt heard someone calling for Sam, but he had hit on the wrong man. This was mistake number one.

Ah Lung went out. The next to enter was the real Sam, whose Chinese name was San Hoang.

"This is Ping Lee, sir," said Burke, without hesitation.

"Thank you!" said the captain dryly, as he made a note on the pad in his hand. "Next, please."

The third was Wing Lo. Burke at once addressed him as Chang Si, while the fourth, whose real name was Yuan, he called Lo Si Kai.

The captain turned to the door.

"Come in, Damer!" he said sharply.

Burke's great face, now waxen with illness, changed curiously as he saw Dick enter. His eyes, for the first time since Dick had seen him, seemed to shrink and turn cloudy.

"My man," said Burnham, in a voice that bit like steel.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: THE BOYS' FRIEND, Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, Every Wednesday. THE BOYS' FRIEND 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. THE PENNY POPULAR, Every Friday. CHUCKLES, 1d. Every Saturday, 2.

He saw them to the side, and after they were in the boat Wesley Crane, with a very scared face, was tumbled in after them, and they were pulled rapidly back to the Brant.

As Barry set foot once more on the schooner's deck he gave a long sigh of relief.

He turned to Dick.

"This is your doing, Dick," he said with more feeling than Dick had believed he possessed. "It's your doing, and I'll never forget it the longest day I live."

Then, before Dick could recover from his astonishment, Barry was once more the smart skipper, shouting orders in a voice which rang far over the bay.

Everyone sprang to help except Barstow, who was still too lame to do much. He took the wheel.

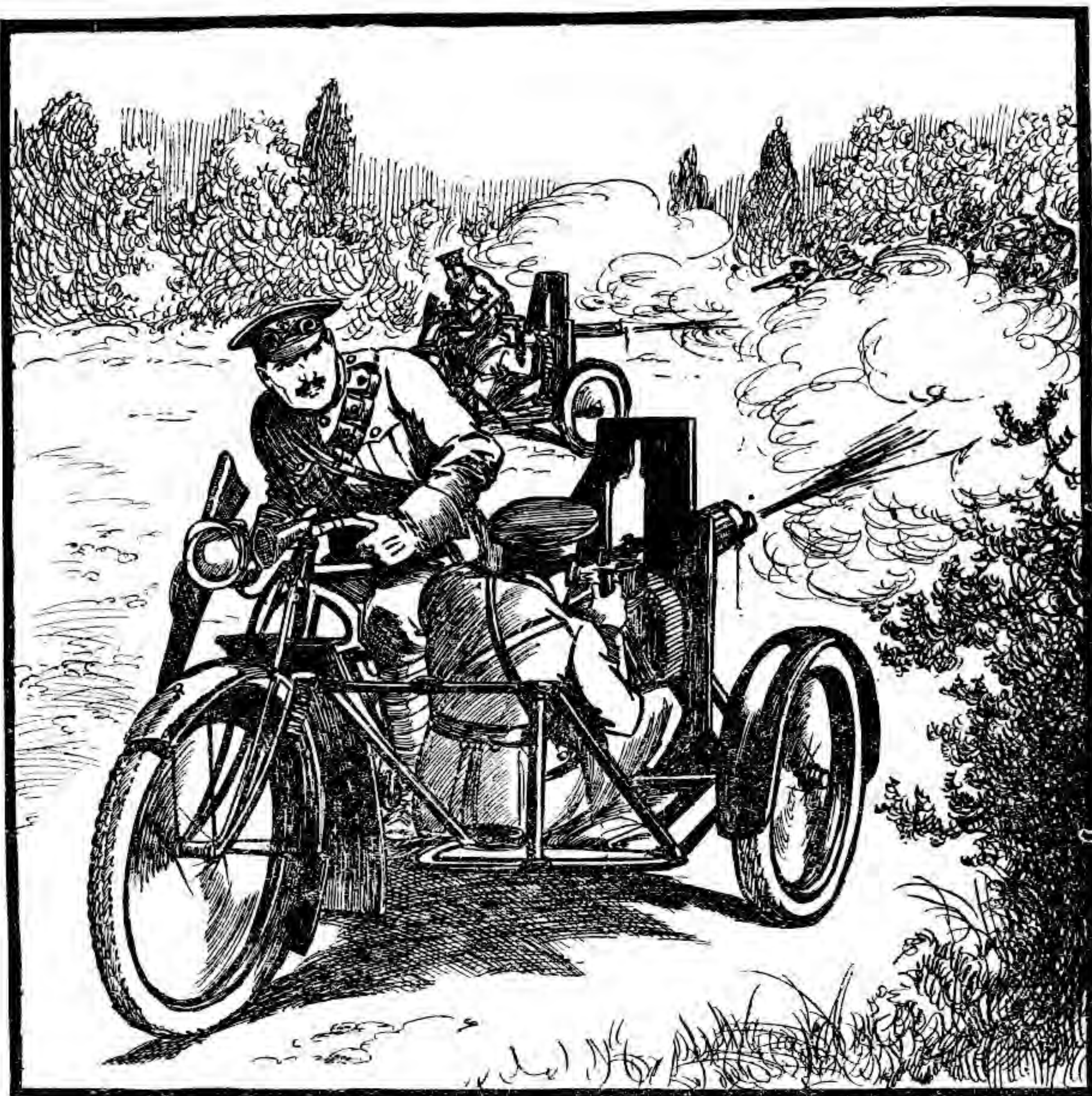
With extraordinary speed the anchor was hove up and sails were set. Within less than half an hour the Brant, with every sail set and drawing, heeled to the breeze and ran swiftly for the harbour mouth.

As she passed the cruiser the whole watch lined the rails and gave her a rousing cheer, to which the Brant's people responded with hearty goodwill.

Outside the bay the wind blew strong and free, and the Brant, lying down till her lee rail was level with the sparkling brine, tore through it.

Barry glanced back over his shoulder at the cruiser, and once more drew a deep sigh of relief.

"They were decent to us, Dick," he said, "but, by Jove, I'm glad to see the last of her. That was a closer call than I liked. It's mighty little of our pearls would have been left if we'd had to fight the case out with those land sharks in the courts."



The motor machine-gun is a decided asset to modern warfare, and our artist here depicts a thrilling skirmish between daring British Tommies of the motor machine-gun section and a horde of hostile cavalymen. The picture gives a good impression of the deadly havoc which these guns can cause when in action.

Dick nodded gravely.

"Burke very nearly did us down," he answered. "By the by, Captain Burnham said that if he survived we should have to hand him over to the authorities at Sydney."

"What! And waste days, perhaps weeks, giving evidence?" exclaimed Barry, horrified.

"I don't think you need worry, Barry," Dick answered. "By what the doctor said, he isn't likely to live very long."

At this moment Chang came up.

"Dinner, him ready, boss."

"And so am I," said Barry, recovering his spirits. "I'm as hungry as a horse."

Leaving Captain Kempster in charge, they went below. A savoury stew with a pile of baked yams awaited them.

Dick hesitated a moment before sitting down.

"I think I'll just go and have a look at Burke," he said, and stepped hastily aft to Burke's cabin.

A moment later Barry heard him call, and hurried after.

"He's dead," said Dick, in a low voice.

The breeze held, and twelve days' steady sailing brought
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NEXT
MONDAY—

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

the Brant safe into Sydney Harbour. Those twelve days did something else. They made something approaching a man out of Wesley Crane. For Dick had taken no advantage of his position to bully the man. He had merely insisted upon his doing his fair share of work, and Crane himself was not quite so low that he did not realise this fact and feel a certain gratitude towards Dick.

He confessed that he had been merely a clerk in the employ of Dick's uncle, Nicholas Damer, but that, when the latter died, he had, by means of a forged will, pretended that he was his heir.

So Dick, who was not in the humour to be hard, shook hands with him and forgave him, and promised to start him in some sort of business.

It fell to Dick and Captain Kempster to divide the pearl money. Everyone had his fair share, including Barstow and the Chinese crew. The latter, with one exception, packed off at once to their own country. The exception was Chang, who refused to leave Barry and Dick, and who is at present cooking for them and for Mrs. Barry at their place-up country.

THE END.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.

MY READERS' PAGE

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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday.

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the title of next week's story, and I expect it will set a good many of my readers thinking. Who is at war with Greyfriars? Sir Hilton Popper, or Sergeant Sam Sharp, or the ever-zealous P.-e Tozer? Neither, for once. It is our old friend Ponsonby of Highcliffe. Gosling the porter is called away from Greyfriars for a time, and the services of a temporary porter are required. Pon seizes upon this knowledge as a gilt-edged opportunity of putting into effect a gigantic jape. How he fares and the dire fate which befalls him while he is

"AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS"

is vividly described in the style which stamps Frank Richards as the best boys' author living.

WANTED—BRITISH BOYS ONLY!

Germans and Cads Barred!

It is with a feeling of eagerness that I sit down to address my readers this week—eagerness because I am burning to thank my many loyal chums for the splendid and whole-hearted manner in which they backed up my "straight reply" to the critical cads who, while taking jolly good care to slink into corners and hide from the recruiting-sergeants themselves, yet had the audacity to persecute the controller of the companion papers for not joining the Colours. I wonder they didn't vent their spleen on the other editors—those of the daily newspapers, for instance, or of "Punch" and kindred journals, the controllers of all these papers being comparatively young men. But perhaps they realised beforehand that any offensive letters written would speedily be consigned to the waste-paper basket.

And now, loyal ones, I would express to you my heartfelt gratitude for your staunch support. With your continued aid the "Magnet" Library will weather the storm against all the petty cads in the world. The following are among those I especially desire to thank:

Miss Florrie Mouks (Sussex). "A Reader" (Stepney). Herbert Myatt (Birmingham). "The Crescents." G. Day (Devonport). Rifleman R. W. Siggins. (Queenborough). W. H. Batten (Feltham). "Beaver" (Bradford). Lance-Corporal C. M. Christie (Colchester). George Dyer (Chelsea). G. Stephenson (Ireland). "Maurice." R. Boucher (Guernsey). Private H. Mark (Royal Infirmary, Dundee). "Myrtle" (Nantwich). Sergeant Jim Kennedy (Royal Irish Rifles), and Hedley P. Malone (Tipperary).

I have also received the following expression of apology, which the writer asks me to publish on this page:

"Dear Editor,—I write this letter ashamed of myself. I was one of those daft people who always make mischief and never do anyone any good. I must frankly confess that I tried to stop others from reading your books, but am glad to say no one would listen to me. At last one of your loyal readers showed me the silly mistake I had made, and gave me a good lecture, till I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself. He also told me that you were a forgiving Editor, and that if I apologised for the action you would forgive me. Since this great war began many of my soldier friends have told me of your books and the happy hours they spend with them. One soldier expressed the happy faces when a pile of good old 'Magnets' arrived in the trenches.

"I hope soon to learn that you have accepted this apology, and that I am forgiven. Please publish this letter to show others the utter folly of acting like cads and Germans.

"Need I say that I hope to become one of your loyal readers after this?—Yours truly,

A. P. H."

A. P. H. has my frank forgiveness. He has acted in a very foolish and un-British way, but there is no need for me to "pile on the agony," after the manly way in which he has asked my pardon. We are none of us fit to

cast a stone, and I consider that if there were a little less slander and a little more loyalty, the world would be a much more comfortable place to live in.

Once again, my loyal chums, I thank you from my heart for the good work which you are doing for my journals during this grave crisis. May you be amply rewarded!



OUR RECORD WEEK!

The circulation of the "Magnet" Library was higher last week than at any other time in its career, and this in spite of the fact that the country is at war.

This statement will, I expect, be a bitter blow to the cavilling critics, but to the loyal readers it will prove a tremendous stimulus, and I feel sure that their efforts to keep the good old "Magnet" Library at the top of the tree will not for one moment flag.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. Newton (Leeds).—I am afraid your previous letter was overlooked. To attain what you desire, eat well, and obtain plenty of open-air exercise. I am not acquainted with any "Magnet" League in your town.

"A Loyal Reader" (Crosley).—I enjoyed your letter very much, and am glad Harry Wharton ranks as first favourite in your opinion.

Jack Longman (Mile End).—A competition on the lines you suggest would hardly commend itself to the majority of my chums, I am afraid. But I will see what I can do for you later on, Jack.

A. Rockley (Yorks).—You are not the only boy who feels he simply must take his "Magnet" to bed with him. It's a bad habit, though, for lack of rest overnight makes one feel stale and tired next morning.

"A Girl Reader" (Ayrshire).—Bob Cherry has no brothers at Greyfriars.

"Bubbles" (Everton).—I will try to do as you suggest at some future date.

R. B. (Leeds).—I note your remarks, and will bear them in mind.

Norman Duncan (Dundee).—Sorry I cannot supply you with a photograph of Mr. Frank Richards. Send your old "Magnets" to some hospital. Bunter's age is fifteen.

"An Irish Girl."—I should like to have published your nice letter, but space forbids. Thank you most sincerely for your loyal remarks.

Harry Dicks (Bow).—I am sorry I do not know the exact age of Dr. Locke. Probably fifty-five would be near the mark. With regard to the photographs, I will see what can be done.

A. E. Denson (Chester).—I really fail to understand why your former letters to me have been unanswered. Perhaps you have not been watching this page? Your suggestion is a good one, and I will try to act upon it shortly.

"A Girl Reader" (Sheffield).—If you read "The Slackers' Eleven," you will have seen that Wun Lung, the Chinese, has not left Greyfriars.

R. Clare (Kingston-on-Thames).—There are no such places as those mentioned in your letter.

The Editor

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