

CALLED TO THE COLOURS!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



The Magnet 1st Library

No. 436. Vol. 18.

JUNE 17th, 1918.



TROUBLE FOR THE SCHOOL TRIBUNAL!

(A Thrilling Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," id., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, id., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d., COMPLETE LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," id., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 3d., Every Saturday.

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:

"RUN TO EARTH!"

By Frank Richards.

The grand, long, complete story due to appear next week ought to supply a long-felt want, as the advertisers say, for we have had no end of requests for another yarn in which the Famous Five shall distinguish themselves by tracking down another German spy. In the hands of a novice so well-worn a theme would scarcely result in anything but a story in reading which one would feel all along that the incidents were familiar, and that one could guess what was coming. But there is all the difference in the world between a novice and such a master of his craft as Frank Richards. The theme may be old; but the story is fresh, clear, and full of drama. You will all revel in the mystery of the disappearance of Hans Pfalz, the Hun spy, when his capture by the soldiers seemed inevitable, in the efforts of Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth Form, to track him down, efforts which are quite void of any useful result, and in the narrative of how, through the brains and pluck of Harry Wharton, ably backed by the rest of the Famous Five and Squiff, he is finally

"RUN TO EARTH!"

A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

"Three Loyal Readers" have written me a letter which is based entirely on a mistake. They say: "We have been reading the Companion Papers for the last few years, and we have never found fault with them before. But in last week's 'Magnet,' in a story entitled 'The Boy from South Africa,' we saw a hint dropped that Irishmen are half traitors. Why should that be said? The greater part of the Irish people had nothing to do with the revolution in Dublin, I hope you will not overlook this. Give us a definite answer on the 'Chat' page, please."

My answer is that nothing of the sort was intended. The story was written and actually in print before the trouble in Dublin began. But apart from that there is really no such suggestion made. Tom Brown says: "A chap with Boer blood in him must be a bit like an Irishman, I fancy. He'd admit he's on our side. But he clings to his own nationality. Like an Irishman, and he doesn't exactly cotton to being thought just the same as an Englishman, any more than an Irishman does."

Is there a word in this which insinuates that an Irishman is a traitor? A traitor would not be on our side. Every man clings to his own nationality, and quite rightly so, as Tom Brown was trying to point out. I have known a good many Irishmen, too, splendid fellows, than whom no one would want better friends.

TO MY CORRESPONDENTS.

Don't forget to give your name and full postal addresses when writing to me; or if you do forget, don't blame me if you are not answered. A reply in the next number of the paper—quite frequently asked for still—is never possible; but just now there is exceedingly small chance of a reply in the paper at all, because I have not room.

A SCHOOLBOY'S EPIGRAM.

In the thousands of letters which pour into my office I often find much to amuse and interest me; but I have seldom seen anything smarter than a passage in a letter from a reader who must remain nameless here—for obvious reasons—upon which I lighted a day or two ago. As a rule, I don't care to see schoolmasters run down. Most of them are very much better fellows than the schoolboy suffering under lies or canings—mostly well deserved—realises. But I think even the master concerned here could scarcely restrain just the

ghost of a smile. "It was said of a certain famous headmaster," writes my correspondent, "that he was a beast, but a just beast. If I had to sun up my head, I should say that he was a beast, just a beast!"



PRISONERS OF WAR!

There can be but few among us whose thoughts do not turn now and then to the men of our own race prisoners of war in Germany. It is impossible to think of them without feeling a desire to help them in some way. But there are so few things one can do! As it chanced, I can give my readers an opportunity of doing something at this moment. From Ruhlleben, Reginald Walter Clarke, an old reader of the Companion Papers, writes me on behalf of himself and his two chums, Roland Stinwick and James Green. Time passes heavily with them, and they ask for back numbers of the good old papers, and especially of the "Magnet" and "Gem." It would be better, by the way, not to send the "Boys' Friend," for reasons which need not be mentioned. They would also like to hear from readers. Remember that only postcards are allowed, and that you must be careful what you say in them. No reference to the war, and, of course, not a word of abuse of our enemies. In fact, you cannot really say much; but the few friendly words will count. From another prison writes Private L. Bramham, asking for back numbers. He does not say anything about correspondence; but I do not doubt that you send the papers along. Don't put anything written with the papers, though. The addresses are, for the Ruhlleben three, whose names you will find above: Baracke 22, Kriegsgefangenen-lager, Engländer-lager, Ruhlleben, Germany; and for Private Bramham, No. 21498, 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, Baracke, 32b, Kriegsgefangenen-lager, Friedrichsfeld bei Wees, Rheinland, Germany.

NOTICES.

David Smith, 684, Govan Road, Govan, Glasgow, wants members for a "Gem" and "Magnet" Social League, open to anyone in the United Kingdom. Soldiers welcomed without payment of subscription. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please.

W. L. Duncan, 4, King's Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, is willing to pay double price for the issues of the "Magnet" containing "Special Constable Coker" and "The Sunday Crusaders."

Private E. Connell, on service in France, begs to thank all those who so kindly replied to his request for back numbers.

Harold Darby, 22, Grassmere Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, wants to join a junior footer club for next season. Can keep goal.

B. Knight, 6, Providence Street, Masbro', Rotherham, wants the 1d. issues of the "Magnet." Will give double price.

Sergt. A. Graham, 4879, and Private J. Stevenson, 3141, 6th Army Service Headquarters, North Camp, Ripon, would both be glad to correspond with readers of from 17 to 20.

P. Mudd, Drumpark, Dumfries, wants members for a first-class "Gem" and "Magnet" Club.

Trooper V. Gray, and Trooper D. Coomber, No. 1 Depot, R.G.A., Fort Burgoyne, Dover, would be glad to correspond with readers of 16-17.

E. Fisher, 53, Costa Street, Middlebro', and W. J. Sagar, 29, Surrey Street, Middlebro', joint hon. secs. of the Allies Correspondence Club, invite readers to join. Speciality, correspondence in foreign languages. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please.

Yours Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.

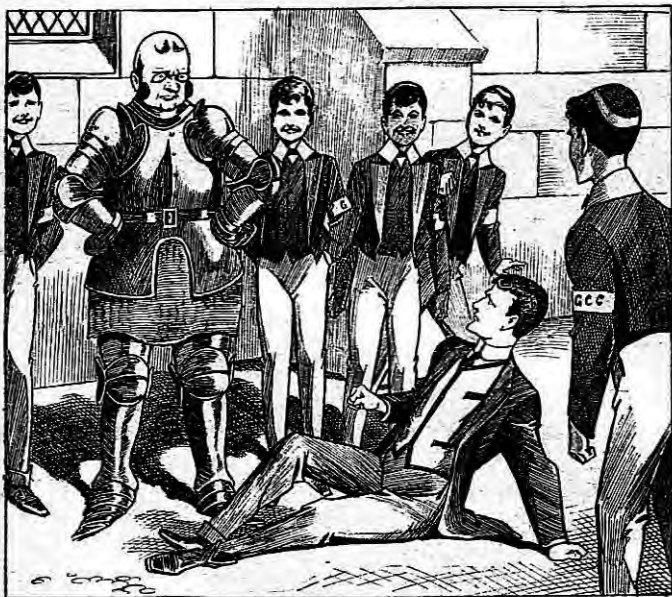


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

CALLED TO THE COLOURS!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Mr. Prout was wearing a weird and wonderful rig-out. It was, in fact, a suit of armour, minus the visor, and was probably identical with the pieces which for some time past has been stacked in the hall. (See Chapter 5.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Master v. Prefect!

"WELL hit, sir! Oh, well hit!" Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove Form at famous Greyfriars School, made the air ring again and again with cheering, as George Wingate, the sturdy skipper, sent the ball soaring on to the roof of the pavilion for 6.

No. 436.

It was only a practice-match that was being played on Big Side, the Sixth-Formers having split up for the purpose. Still, it served to demonstrate the chances of the Greyfriars First in their forthcoming encounter with the mighty men of St. Jim's.

The "Probables" were playing against the "Possibles," the former consisting of Wingate, Courtney, and all the recognised members of the eleven, and the latter being captained by Gerald Loder, the black sheep of the Sixth. Loder was

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bowling now, as a matter of fact, which accounted for Wingate's mighty swipe to the pavilion.

The score was most prodigious. The hundred had been registered on the board, and Wingate and Courtney, who had opened the innings together over an hour before, were still going strong.

"Loder's in a frightful wax!" said Bob Cherry, the sunny, good-humoured member of the Famous Five. "Just look at him! He's tearing his hair and gnashing his teeth like a madman!"

"Serves him jolly well right!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's only got himself to blame for not keeping fit. He smokes like a blessed chimney, and stays up half the night, with the result that he can't bowl for toffee!"

"I rejoice to see the esteemed and ludicrous Loder get it neckally," purred Herree Singh, in his quaint English. "The shipwrecked Wingate is knocking his balls all over the field spitefully."

"Look! There he goes again!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. The captain of Greyfriars was enjoying himself immensely. He was every inch a cricketer, and Loder's bowling was child's play to him. He squared his great shoulders again and again, always with the same result.

"Let me tackle the brute, Loder, for goodness' sake!" snarled Walker. "At the rate you're going you won't shift him in a thousand blessed years!"

"Won't I?"

There was a nasty gleam of vindictiveness in Loder's eyes as he spoke.

"I'll jolly soon see if I can't shift him!" he muttered, under his breath.

And then, taking a short, swift run, he banged the ball down the pitch with all his force, straight for Wingate's legs.

"Shame!"

An angry cry arose from the onlookers, who saw at a glance that it was Loder's intention, if possible, to injure the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate, however, was both keen-eyed and alert. He saw the danger in a twinkling, and stepped to one side, giving the bat a sudden quick turn as he did so.

The leather went flying. It sped straight past square-leg to the boundary.

"Hurrah!"

"Well played, Wingate!"

The batsman strode up to Loder before resuming his guard. "That was a downright dirty trick on your part," he said decisively. "You wilfully tried to crook me. Don't you dare do it again, or you'll feel the weight of my fist. That's straight from the shoulder!"

Loder, ever an arrant coward at heart, quailed before the captain's ringing words.

"It—it was an accident," he said limply.

"Then you'll oblige me by seeing that no further accidents of that sort occur!"

And Wingate walked back to his crease.

The spectators were then treated to a hurricane display of batting. Wingate was simply expert—a Jack Hobbs and W. G. Grace rolled into one. His cuts and drives were a sight to see and wonder at; and occasionally, when he leapt out of his crease and sent the ball soaring over the railings, he literally brought the house down.

"This is topping!" chuckled Nugent. "Knocks any sort of pantomime into a cocked hat! What's the score?"

"A hundred and sixty," grinned Bob Cherry, "fer no wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Loder!"

"Look here!" roared the distracted prefect. "Aren't you going to declare?"

Wingate shook his head. Visions of a century floated before his eyes. He had already made 90, and was not likely to relinquish the innings under those circumstances.

"Hang you!" snarled Loder. "Here you are, Carne. Have a go at the boundary, and settle his hash, for goodness' sake!"

Carne was very glad to get an opportunity of bowling. He was tired of eternally chasing the ball in the slips, and welcomed the relief with open arms.

Carne's first delivery pitched woefully short, for he had not found his length. Wingate fairly jumped at it. Away and away sailed the sphere, beyond everybody's reach, and alighted at the feet of the Famous Five.

"Six!" grinned Nugent, as he returned the leather to the bowler. "Four more, and old Wingate's got his century!"

"Old Wingate" wore a radiant smile. He was now thoroughly set, and had got the hang of Carne's bowling at once.

The next ball was a good one. It pitched in exactly the

right place, and would have troubled many an efficient batsman. But it didn't trouble Wingate. He snicked it swiftly through the slips.

"Come on!" called Courtney, and he pelted down the pitch.

The batsmen ran 2. They could have managed another, but Wingate wanted the bowling.

Carne gripped the ball hard, and took his run. He was determined, by hook or by crook, to prevent the captain of Greyfriars from scoring the coveted century.

The leather whizzed along the turf, and Wingate smiled as his bat swept forward. Then he hesitated, the smile faded from his face, and there was an ominous crashing sound behind him. His middle and leg stumps were whipped clean out of the ground.

"Oh!"

There was a deep groan of disappointment from the spectators, and Courtney stepped forward in surprise.

"Wingate, old man! Why on earth did you allow it to beat you?"

Wingate almost choked with suppressed fury.

"It was Prout!" he said savagely. "The cranky old lunatic! He walked right across the bowling-screen just as I was going to hit!"

"My hat!"

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, blissfully unconscious of the catastrophe he had caused, came striding on to the pitch. His celebrated Winchester repeater, which repeated a lot too often for the comfort of the fellows, was slung over his shoulder.

Wingate glared at the intruder almost murderously. He was beside himself with passion, and completely forgot where he was and what he was saying.

"You dolt!" he roared. "You insane imbecile!"

"What! What!"

Mr. Prout almost collapsed. The sudden tide of abuse, coming as it did so unexpectedly, fairly took his breath away.

"I was ninety-eight!" thundered Wingate. "A couple more and I should have completed my century! And then you go and expose your fat carcass in front of the bowling-screen and put me off! Oh, you frabjous dunny!"

Mr. Prout, his face livid with anger, choked and spluttered incoherently, as if he were on the verge of a particularly violent apoplectic fit.

"Wingate!" muttered Courtney, springing to his chum's side. "What are you saying? You can't check a master like that, you know!"

"Can't I?" roared Wingate. "If it was the Head himself, I'd jolly like to kick him off for putting me off my stroke like that. It's monstrous!"

Mr. Prout found his voice at last.

"Boy!" he rumbled. "Malicious libeller! How dare you! How dare you make use of such opprobrious epithets to my face! But for your hulking size, I should knock you down!"

"Here, I'm not going to stand that!" shouted Wingate.

"Knock me down, indeed! I'd jolly well like to see you do it!"

Mr. Prout pranced about like a cat on hot bricks.

"I will do it, you impertinent rascal!" he stormed.

The next instant there was a startled gasp from all the cricketers. Wingate had hurled down his bat, and actually squared up to Mr. Prout. Such a scene was almost without parallel in the varied and extensive history of Greyfriars.

Courtney gripped his chum by the arm and swung him back.

"Don't!" he said. "It's mad—mad! You can't fight a master!"

Wingate remembered himself in time, and dropped his hands to his sides.

"Now," said Mr. Prout, in measured tones, "after that disgraceful exhibition of temper, you will kindly accompany me to Dr. Locke!"

A spark of rebellion arose in the captain's breast, but it was quenched immediately when he caught sight of the reproachful look in Courtney's eyes.

Trailing his reviving passion down, the captain of Greyfriars left the field with Mr. Prout.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he glanced after them. "By my halibum, but there's going to be the biggest row of modern times!"

And the rest of the Famous Five were forced to agree that a terrific bombshell was about to explode, jarring the school to its foundations.

ANSWERS

DELICIOUS TUCK-HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 10.



The St. Jim's fellow continued his stonewall tactics, and the ball simply fell from his bat. Then did the captain of Greyfriars dart forward, and before the wondering crowd could realise, the leather landed in Wingate's open palm.

(See Chapter 11.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Loyal to His Chum!

DR. LOCKE was hard at work in his study when Mr. Prout rustled in, with Wingate at his heels.

"Pray do not disturb me now, my dear Prout," he said, somewhat testily. "I am most busy!"

"But my object in coming here, sir, is of the utmost importance. I have been grossly and wantonly insulted by this—this reprehensible rascal."

The Head gave a start.

"Surely you cannot mean Wingate?" he said. "He is one of the best-mannered of boys."

"Best-mannered!" hooted Mr. Prout. "He has actually threatened to strike me—me, his superior!"

"Is that so, Wingate?"

The senior nodded.

"I was most annoyed and exasperated, sir," he said. "I had scored 98 runs in a practice-match, and was about to complete the hundred, when Mr. Prout walked across the bowling-green and obstructed my vision."

"And then," barked Mr. Prout, "he referred to me, in the presence of all the others, as a dolt and an imbecile!"

The Head looked grave.

"You addressed Mr. Prout in those unseemly terms, Wingate?"

"I considered he deserved it, sir."

"Ahem!"

"But that is by no means the whole of the story," said THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 436.

Mr. Prout, in rasping tones. "Wingate actually squared up to me like a common pugilist and threatened to knock me down!"

"Good heavens! You must have taken leave of your senses, Wingate!" gasped the Head. "After such a glaring demonstration of impudence, I fear I must ask you to resign the captaincy of this school!"

Half-stunned by this sudden blow, Wingate was opening his mouth to reply, when the door of the Head's study burst open, and Courtney of the Sixth dashed into the room, without waiting for the Head's summons.

"Courtney!" rapped out Dr. Locke. "How dare you intrude in this unwarranted fashion?"

"I've come to appeal on behalf of Wingate, in case you're thinking of coming down heavy on him. He wasn't quite himself when he checked Mr. Prout just now, and I'm sure you'll make allowances for him."

"Fellow!" roared Mr. Prout. "Take yourself off! How dare you force your way in here like this?"

"Pray leave the cross-examination to me, Prout!" said the Head curtly. "I admire you for your loyalty to a friend, Courtney, and if Wingate chooses to apologise, I will let this matter drop."

Wingate promptly stepped forward. All his anger had abated now, and he felt ashamed of his hot words. He turned to Mr. Prout.

"I was a cad to speak to you as I did, sir," he said simply. "I felt mad at not being able to make a century, and my temper ran away with me. Will you accept my apology?"

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

NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUN TO EARTH!"

Mr. Prout wavered for a moment. But he was a kindly enough man at heart, and was moved by Wingate's frankness. "Very well," he said. "I realise that you spoke impetuously, and you are pardoned for your disrespect to me."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wingate, with a breath of relief. He was devoutly thankful that he still retained the captaincy.

"There is one other thing I should like to speak about, sir," said Mr. Prout, turning to the Head. "Cricket being an utterly stupid and senseless game—"

Wingate was about to make a hot retort, but he checked himself in time.

"I have considered the advisability of its abandonment," went on Mr. Prout. "In its place, I suggest that a Cadet Corps be formed, in which each boy shall be compelled to serve. In this manner they will fit themselves to defend their country."

"But the country does not need schoolboys for its defence!" gasped the Head.

"We do not know what need might arise later on," remarked Mr. Prout. "Forewarned is forearmed. I think it is a splendid idea!"

Mr. Prout was quite saturated with his new scheme. He held, with Kipling, that cricket was a mere farce, fit only for smelted fools.

Wingate and Courtney resented the suggestion a good deal, but had sufficient sense not to interfere. They sincerely hoped, however, that if the projected Cadet Corps were really formed, it would have a very short innings.

"Have I your sanction for the scheme, sir?" inquired Mr. Prout.

The Head reflected.

"What will the boys be required to do?" he asked.

"I shall instruct them in the use of the rifle," said Mr. Prout, handling his own gun as he spoke in a manner which made Wingate and Courtney instinctively leap back. "Then I should drill them daily."

"I see no reason why I should not assent to such a proposal," said the Head. "It will keep the boys out of mischief, even if it does no material good."

Mr. Prout glared.

"It will do a vast amount of good, sir," he said. "The boys are now a set of degenerate slackers. Under my able tuition they will develop the instinct and prowess of the full-blown soldier. As a marksman, my record is unique. I have laid low some hundreds of buffalo in the Rocky Mountains, and my extraordinary feats performed there in the eighties have made history."

So they had, but not of the sort Mr. Prout meant. The master of the Fifth turned to Wingate.

"May I make you my leading man in this enterprise?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate. "Anything you like."

Mr. Prout, his eyes alight with enthusiasm, swept out of the study. Wingate and Courtney followed.

The captain of Greyfriars gripped his chum's hand hard.

"I say, old man, it was awfully good of you to come in and appeal for me like that!" he said. "You stood the risk of getting it in the neck yourself."

"Rats!" said Courtney, his face flushing. "It was a pal's duty, that's all. I say, what do you think of old Prout?"

Wingate tapped his forehead significantly.

"Mad!" he said. "Mad as a hatter! Mad as a March hare!"

"I suppose we must humour him!"

"Yes; it'll save any bother. No doubt the blessed corps will crack up after a week. I hope so, anyway. And now he's got back to the cricket. You haven't finished your inquiries."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bedlam Let Loose!

"MY only Aunt Sempronia!"

Bob Cherry of the Remove halted before the school notice-board in a state of profound astonishment. A sheet of foolscap had been pinned to the board, and the bold headlines almost leapt at the junior who perused them.

"THE GREYFRIARS CADET CORPS.

DON'T DELAY! JOIN TO-DAY!

EVERY SINGLE BOY WANTED!"

Bob Cherry gave a jump. His first impression was that the notice had been put there for a joke, but Mr. Prout's signature at the foot of the sheet dispensed with this theory.

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bob, in his dulcet tones.

"Where are you?" Wharton! Franky! Inky!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 436.

The fellows addressed bounded up at the call.

"What's up?" asked Wharton.

Bob Cherry ran his fingers perplexedly through his thick mop of curly hair.

"Please tell me if I'm dreaming," he said. "Am I right in saying that there's one of Prout's notices on the board, summoning the entire school to join his giddy Cadet Corps?"

"That's so," said Wharton, scanning the notice with great interest. "Oh, my hat! Just listen to this, you fellows!"

"In view of the present crisis, and of the urgency of beating Germany at the earliest possible moment, it has been deemed desirable to form a Cadet Corps at Greyfriars."

"Every boy who is between the ages of eight and eighteen is requested to report himself at once in my study, where he must enrol for immediate service."

"Drilling and musketry practice will occupy the time which has hitherto been devoted to foolish and unmanly sports."

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Nugent. "This is awful!"

"I've not finished yet," said Wharton.

"All right! Pile on the agony!"

And Harry continued to read:

"TO BOYS DESIRING EXEMPTION.

"Any boy who wishes to lodge an appeal on conscientious or other grounds will be permitted to appear before a tribunal consisting of myself as chairman and the head boy in each Form."

"Those who do not come voluntarily to my study to enrol will be regarded as conscripts and dealt with accordingly."

"(Signed) PAUL PROUT.

Commanding Officer,

Greyfriars Cadet Corps."

To say that the juniors were astonished was to put it mildly. Their unaided ejaculations brought a big horde of Removists to the notice-board. Skinner and Snoop and Stott, Bolover and Bunter and Fisher T. Fish, with many more at their heels, surged forward to read the announcement.

"Waal, I swear!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. "This beats the band—some! I guess I'm not going to link up with Prout's tin-soldier militia!"

"I kinder sorter guess and calculate that you're too proud to fight—just a few!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, this is awful!" groaned Billy Bunter dimly. "It's only a few weeks ago that we had to put up with that beast Sergeant Barrell. And now Prout's on the war-path. It's too thick! I shall appeal on conscientious grounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you going to do about it, Wharton?" asked Bolover major. "The Form looks to you to take the lead, you know."

"Yes, rather!"

"I shall join up, I think," said Wharton. "After all, it'll be fine fun, and Prout will soon get fed up with it."

Bolover snorted.

"That's another way of saying you funk kicking up a commotion, I suppose?" he said.

"Nothing of the sort!" retorted Harry Wharton hotly. "If there was any great point to be gained by making a rebellion, I'd be on it like a shot!"

"Prout's off his onion!" exclaimed Bunter, in a shrill treble. "Of all the crack-brained, muddle-headed lunatics that ever breathed, old Prout takes the biscuit!"

A sudden rush followed Bunter's remark. Unseen by the last junior, who was blinking before the notice-board, a figure in gown and mortar-board had rushed up. It was Mr. Prout, who stood stooped to the floor on hearing Bunter's disparaging reference to himself.

"Prout ought to be taken by the scruff of the neck and kicked!" went on Bunter, blissfully unconscious of the master's presence. "I wouldn't touch his rotten Cadet Corps with a barge-pole! It can go to Jeicho, and Prout with it!"

"Oh!" gasped the juniors, their faces frozen with horror.

"You needn't wag your finger at me, Wharton," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'm fed-up with Prout and all his works. What are you making those idiotic faces at me for, Bob Cherry?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob.

Even Bunter understood at last that there was something seriously amiss. He swung round, and almost toppled over on seeing Mr. Prout.

That gentleman had recovered the power to move at last, and when he spoke his voice resembled a reverberating rumble of thunder.

"Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"What have you been saying about me, Bunter?"

"Nun—un—nothing, sir! To be quite honest, sir, I haven't opened my mouth all the time I've been standing here."

"You precocious fabricator! You infamous purveyor of untruths! I distinctly heard you make malicious and unwarranted allusions to me, a master appointed by the Board of Governors!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bunter, lying gladly. "You must be mistaken, sir. I assure you. I was remarking what—ahem!—what a splendid disciplinarian you were, sir, and how much we all liked and admired you—worshipped you, in fact. I was even going to suggest that we got up a—a testimonial of some sort, sir, to—to show how high a place you hold in our esteem, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. fairly gasped. Accustomed though they were to Bunter's perversions of the truth, they had seldom known him to go as far as on this occasion.

Mr. Prout wasted no more time in words. He seized the fat, ungainly Owl of the Remove by the collar, and literally dragged him forth to the laughter, so to speak.

A few moments later an ominous wishing sound proceeded from Mr. Prout's study, and Billy Bunter's voice was heard raised in wildest anguish.

And the burden of his plaint was:

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Called to the Colours!

"SKINNER, you fathead!"

"Skinner, you dummy!"

"Skinner, you champion idiot!"

Bolover and Snoop and Stott hurled the most offensive epithets they could possibly think of at their chief's head.

"You seriously mean to say you're going to enlist?" roared Bolover.

The end of the Remove nodded.

"I want to be the first recruit," he said. "It ought to be rather amusing!"

"Blessed if I can see where the amusement comes in!" said Stott. "You must be off your rocker, Skinner!"

But Skinner was not to be dissuaded from his purpose. He calculated that by becoming the first recruit he would curry favour with Mr. Prout, and be able to slack and shirk as much as he liked afterwards.

He tapped respectfully at the door of Mr. Prout's study, and a deep voice bade him enter.

"Ah, it is you, Skinner! You wish to join our miniature army?"

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. I've always been a very patriotic chap, sir," said Skinner modestly.

"I am glad to hear you say so, Skinner. Now, will you kindly fill up this form!"

Mr. Prout pushed over a sheet of paper containing a dozen questions. He had typed several sheets out on Mr. Quelch's machine, and was very proud of his handiwork.

Skinner took out his fountain-pen, and filled in his full name, age, and other particulars relating to himself. When he came to the question, "Are you prepared to take up combatant service against the common foe?" Skinner gave a start.

"We—we're not going out to France, sir!" he faltered.

"No, my boy. Unfortunately, Dr. Locke will not permit us to stand shoulder to shoulder in the trenches. But in the very likely event of an invasion, our small but efficient force will march to the coast and share in the general slaughter."

"Oh, no!" gasped Skinner.

"Hurry up, my boy!" said Mr. Prout. "I expect to be inundated with recruits very shortly, and I want them to be enrolled with all speed. Have you filled in the form? Very good! Now, hold up your right hand, and take the oath!"

Skinner did as requested. He repeated after Mr. Prout the words:

"I, Harold Skinner, do hereby solemnly and faithfully declare that I will do my utmost to crush the Hun by rendering loyal service to the Greysfriars Cadet Corps, of which I have this day become a member."

Mr. Prout beamed. He had secured his first recruit, and regarded Skinner as the acorn from which an oak-tree would presently spring.

"Is that all, sir?" asked Skinner politely.

"Just a moment, Skinner. You will receive your fourpence-halfpenny."

"Mum—mum—my what?" stammered Skinner.

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Mr. Prout hastened to explain.

"I have taken over the control of all the games funds," he said, "and am allotting the sum of fourpence-halfpenny to each recruit. You will oblige me by signing a receipt for this sum."

And the Fifth-Form master chinked out a number of coppers on to the table.

Skinner promptly slipped them into his pocket, and signed the receipt with a flourish. Then he tripped gaily out of the study.

Mr. Prout called after him.

"You have forgotten your armband," he said.

"M-m-my armband, sir!"

"Yes. It will be advisable for every voluntary member of the corps to wear one, though it is not compulsory to do so. Let me adjust it for you."

Mr. Prout affixed the khaki band, bearing the letters "G.C.C." to Skinner's coat-sleeve, and the cad of the Remove strutted out into the passage, where he cannoned into Bolover and several other Removites.

"Hello, hello, hello!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's the first recruit, you fellows!"

"What the merry dickens does G.C.C. stand for?" asked Squid.

"The Greysfriars Cranly Crooks, I suppose," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Private Skinner," grinned Nugent. "Shuck your chest out, there!"

"You can laugh!" said Skinner. "I'm the richer by fourpence-halfpenny, and chance it!"

"What's he babbling about?" asked Wharton.

Skinner produced the coins from his pocket.

"Here's what you get for joining up," he explained.

"Not bad—what! I'm off to the tuckshop to get some toffins!"

And Skinner passed on, having his schoolfellows in a state of great excitement.

"Must be something in it," said Bolover. "I'm jolly well going to offer my services!"

"More fool you!" said Snoop. "I'm not going to join Prout's potty army. No giddy fare!"

But Bolover major was broke, and the prospect of fourpence-halfpenny, nominal sum though it was, was as corn in Egypt to him at that moment, and he went in to Mr. Prout's study and joined up.

Bolover's action was followed by scores of fellows. The First had the Second and Third enlisted in a body, and Mr. Prout had the busiest time of his life.

Dicky Nugent & Co. were afraid that the fourpence-halfpennies might run dry, and they enrolled themselves at the first opportunity.

Tea-time came as a break to the proceedings, but afterwards recruiting was as flourishing as ever. Half the fellows in Hall were sporting armbands, and most of the others felt envious.

"It's a mug's game!" said Loder of the Sixth derisively.

"Those chaps are making champion asses of themselves! Surely you're not going to be a party to this kindergarten nonsense, Wingate?"

The captain of Greysfriars laughed.

"Unfortunately, I have already agreed to act as Prout's right-hand man," he said.

"Then you're a bigger booby than I took you for!"

"Thanks!" said Wingate drily.

"I'm going to enlist," said Valence. "We shall have those cheeky fags saying rotten eggs and things at us because we're not wearing armbands!"

"Bah! You're a beastly funk!" said Loder scornfully.

But most of the seniors took the same view as Valence. It would have been most humiliating to the dignity of the high-and-mighty members of the Sixth to be chaffed and pelted because they weren't armbanded.

Mr. Prout did such a roaring trade after tea that he was obliged to get Wingate to help him out. A never-ceasing stream of fellows passed in and out of the study, all smiling broadly when they were the richer by fourpence-halfpenny.

The first fellow to come out looking dismal was Alonso Todd. Not only did he look dismal, but he wore a different kind of armband to all the rest—a red one with white spots.

"What's the little game?" inquired Wharton.

"Alas, my dear Wharton, I am rejected at medically unfit!" sighed the innocent Alonso, clapping his skinny hands together.

"My Uncle Benjamin will, I feel sure, take it deeply to heart, for he was very keen on my going forward to do my portion for King and country!"

"Does that armband mean that you've got spotted fever, Loner?" said Bob Cherry, backing away in alarm. "If so, this is where I do the vanishing trick."

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"Pray do not be so frivolous, my dear Cherry! My chest measurement falls short of the requisite standard by about fourteen inches, and Mr. Prout has reluctantly had to exempt me from service."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonso Todd turned growlingly on his heel and limped away. He felt his disappointment most acutely.

"Been turned down!" asked Coker of the Fifth, coming along the passage.

Alonso nodded.

"Never mind," said Coker loftily. "I shall be commanding officer soon, and then I'll wangle it for you all right."

"Will you, really?" asked the gentle Alonso, his face beaming. "I shall be extremely obliged to you, my dear Coker!"

The Fifth-Former strode on, and, pushing himself through the throng of would-be recruits, he fought his way by sheer force into Mr. Prout's study.

"Ah!" said Mr. Prout. "Come in and sit down, Coker! I'm glad to see this demonstration of patriotism on the part of a member of my Form."

"Don't mench, sir," said Coker genially. "It's a perfect pleasure to belong to such a brilliant organisation. May I be your right-hand man, sir?"

Mr. Prout coughed.

"Ahem! I have entrusted that highly important position to Wingate," he said.

"That's all right, sir," said Wingate. "I'm quite willing to give Coker the job if you agree."

"That's what a generous-minded lad you are, Wingate!" said Mr. Prout approvingly. "Very well, Coker, you shall be my first-lieutenant, and will conduct all drills in my absence through illness or anything unforeseen."

"Good!"

Coker filled up his form, took his armlet and his fourpence-halfpenny, and went back to his study, to urge Potter and Gorse his bottom pals, to go and do likewise.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Something Like a Scrap!

"**W**HERE'S your armlet?"

Bob Cherry rapped out that question in the close next morning, as Sidney James Snoop, came sauntering in his direction.

"Mind your own bizney!" growled Snoop.

"What's it got to do with you, anyway?"

"I'm a recruiting-sergeant," said Bob; "and it's up to me to nab every fellow I possibly can. Are you meddlesly sniffe?"

"No!"

"Have you any dependents?"

"No!"

"Or business ties?"

"No, hang you!"

"Then you're a conscientious objector, I take it!" said Bob Cherry, with a warlike gleam in his eyes.

Snoop made no reply.

"Ah, I thought as much! You're one of those craven worms who'd sit tight and do nothing if the Huns came over here and bayoneted our women and children! Take that, you white-livered funk!"

Snoop took it.

It was a baff on the head.

Temple of the Fourth, with Dabney and Fry and Scott at his heels, came rushing to the spot.

"Hit someone your own size, you confounded bully!" said Temple.

"Right you are!" replied Bob Cherry cheerfully. "I'll start on you! Where's your armlet?"

"Oh!"

"Why aren't you in the army?"

Temple fairly bubbled over with rage.

"You hear that, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "Rush the cheaky cub!"

And a moment later the Fourth-Formers were closing in upon Bob Cherry.

Snoop sat up and sniggered.

"Go for the beast!" he chortled. "Wipe up the ground with him, Temple, old man!"

The situation was desperate, but Bob Cherry confronted it with a stout heart. His sledge-hammer fist shot out, and Temple rolled over on top of Sidney James Snoop, uttering dire groans of anguish.

But the rest of the Fourth-Formers edged towards Bob Cherry like a wave, and the plucky Removite would have experienced a decidedly rough handling had not help been at hand.

Uttering a loud war-cry, the rest of the Famous Five, with Mark Ianley and Vernon-Smith in close attendance, came

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swooping down upon the Fourth-Formers. The next moment a wild and whirling battle was in progress.

Hi! Bang! Thud!

Hammer-and-tonga the two sets of time-honoured rivals plunged into the fray.

Other fellows flocked into the Close to see what was going on. They did not remain spectators for long, but joined in on the particular side they favoured.

The whole affair resolved itself, after a time, into a pitched battle between those with armlets and those without.

Temple of the Fourth had risen to his feet again, and Harry Wharton singled him out for instant execution.

"Yaroooooh!" roared the captain of the Fourth, as Wharton's strenuous fist came smashing in between his eyes.

"Want some more?" inquired Harry generously. "Plenty more where that came from, you know."

"Yow—ow—ow!"

Meanwhile, the armleteers were doing tremendous havoc, fairly scattering their opponents to the winds before their fierce rush.

Then, whilst the battle raged at its hottest, Loder of the Sixth strode out into the Close.

"How dare you!" he roared above the turmoil. "Stop it at once, you young hooligans! Do you hear me?"

"There's another of 'em!" roared Johnny Bull. "Another lout showing the white feather! Up, guards, and at 'em!"

Loder stood almost paralysed with anger and amazement. Was it possible that the unruly mob of juniors belonging to Mr. Prout's army intended to attack him, a prefect?

The next moment his worst fears were realised. A shouting, stampeding mass of juniors, aware towards him, and he was swept off his feet in a twinkling.

"Oh, you young villains! I'll have you all flogged for this assault! I'll have you expelled from Greyfriars! Yooop!"

Loder concluded his remarks on the ground, thrashing the air with his long, thin legs. He was badly hurt, and made no secret of the fact.

The attackers wiped their boots on the prostrate prefect, and whilst they were looking round for fresh worlds to conquer, Mr. Prout appeared on the scene.

His appearance caused a ripple of laughter to go up from the juniors. Mr. Prout was wearing a weird and wonderful rig-out, which was obviously of great antiquity, and might have seen service in the Wars of the Roses. It was, in fact, a suit of armour, minus the visor, and was probably identical with the pieces which for some time past had been stacked in the hall.

"Clank, clankety-clank!"

A metallic, clanging noise was heard as Mr. Prout walked. Some of the juniors who watched him seemed to be going into violent convulsions.

"Cease this unseemly disturbance at once!" roared the Fifth Form master. "Loder, how dare you grovel on the ground like a common guttersnipe!"

"How can I help it?" hoated Loder. "Those infernal cubs—those hooligans—"

"Silence, sir! I will not tolerate such abusive expressions!"

"But I have been awarded!" hoated Loder. "They have presumed to lay hands on a prefect!"

"Silence, I repeat!" barked Mr. Prout. "I have no sympathy for you whatever! If you do not enlist and obtain an armlet you must expect to be badgered. Join the army to-day!"

"What, and clump about in a ratty old suit of mail?" snapped Loder. "It's not good enough!"

Mr. Prout gasped.

"How dare you subject me to this studied impertinence?" he began.

But Gerald Loder had fled. He had had quite enough, and would only have been tempted to waste in and slaughter Mr. Prout had he remained. Growling and grunting under his breath, the wretched senior betook himself to the nearest bath-room, where he entered upon a much-needed wash and brush-up.

And Loder's determination to have nothing whatever to do with the Greyfriars Cadet Corps was still as strong as ever.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER The Tribunal!

THE first sitting of the Tribunal which Mr. Prout had formed took place in the Rag after dinner. A couple of platforms had been raised at one end of the big room, and a row of chairs were placed on the top. The centre chair was occupied by Mr. Prout—still in his ancient armour—and the captains of the various

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Unseen by the fat junior, who was blinking before the notice-board, a figure in gown and mortar-board had rustled up. It was Mr. Prout. "Prout ought to be taken by the scruff of the neck and kicked!" went on Bunter. (See Chapter 3.)

Forms were present, from Wingate of the Sixth to Dicky Nugent.

The fellows who intended to appeal were seated on forms in the body of the room. Some were looking solemn and sheepish, others seemed to regard the whole thing as a tremendous joke. Mr. Prout pulled out a fat cigar and lit up. The pungent fumes caused the other members of the Tribunal to choke and splutter incessantly.

"The proceedings will now open," said Mr. Prout majestically. "William George Bunter, stand forward!"

The Owl of the Remove waddled to the fore.

"I understand that you, William George Bunter, aged fifteen, and a member of the Remove Form, desire exemption from military service?"

"Not half, sir!" said Bunter promptly.

"On what grounds?"

"The state of my health is so feeble, sir," said Bunter.

"I am always terribly weak and ill."

"Then how do you account for your vast quantity of overweight?" questioned Wingate.

"Ahem! It—it isn't fat, you know, really," explained Bunter. "I'm very big boned, that's why I never look delicate."

"Of what nature is your illness?" asked Blundell, who represented the Fifth Form at the tribunal.

"Lack of nourishment," replied Bunter. "I never get sufficient good food to keep body and soul together."

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"Then how do you account for the fact that when you were in Hall just now you demolished eight sausages and half a dozen apple-turnovers?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know? That was merely a—a little snack!"

Mr. Prout frowned.

"The Tribunal will now retire to consider the case," he said.

And he and his fellow-members vanished behind the scenes, where they held a deep discussion.

Billy Bunter stood quaking in the centre of the room. He would have sacrificed a good square meal to know his fate. Had he secured total exemption, or merely a postponement?

He soon found that it was neither. Amid a stony silence the Tribunal resumed their seats, and then Mr. Prout referred to a sheet of paper in his hand.

"William George Bunter," he announced, "this Tribunal has decided that your claim for exemption from military service is neither valid nor reasonable. Your application has, therefore, been refused."

Bunter started back as if he had been stung.

"R-r-refused!" he stuttered.

"Certainly! You will be called to the colours to-morrow, by which time we hope to have all the uniforms in hand."

"It ain't fair!" hooted Bunter. "I shall crack up under the strain of a route-march and expire in the roadway!"

"Thus obstructing all the traffic!" chuckled Bob Cherry, who was among the audience.

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"You have heard our verdict, Bunter," said Mr. Prout. "Now go, or I will have you ejected by force of arms."

"Have me rejected, sir?" said the fat junior, his face flushing up. "That's awfully good of you, sir! I'll remember your kindness to my dying day!"

"You utterly stupid and ignorant boy! I said 'ejected,' not 'rejected.' You have deliberately distorted the meaning of my words! Go!"

The last word was uttered with such a fierce finality that Billy Bunter skipped to the doorway. Bob Cherry's boot kindly assisting him into the passage without.

The first claim having been disposed of, Mr. Prout bellowed for the next applicant.

"Fisher Tarkenton Fish!"

"I guess I'm byer—just a few!" said the Yankee junior, smiling forward.

"I understand that you wish to be excused from your military obligations?"

"That about hits it off, I reckon!"

"On what grounds do you claim exemption?"

"I guess I'm a neutral citizen—some!" said Fisher T. Fish boldly. "Your sleepy old country got into this war, and I calculate it can get out without my help."

"You're too proud to fight—that's the long and short of it," suggested Blundell.

"Yep! I'm sticking to the Stars and Stripes!"

"Have you any objection to non-combatant service?" asked Wingate.

Fishy's eyes gleamed.

"None! I don't mind being paymaster to the forces."

"But none of my soldiers will receive pay, except the fourpence-halfpenny due to them on enlisting," said Mr. Prout.

"Oh, crumbs! I guess that's not good enough, then," said Fish. "If I can't handle the duros, I reckon I'll take a back seat."

"That is for the Tribunal to decide," said Mr. Prout testily. "We will adjourn for a few moments to discuss the matter."

When the Tribunal had retired Fisher T. Fish turned to the audience with a grin.

"I guess they can't fasten on to a free American subject!" he said.

"I'll bet you ten to one in doughnuts that your appeal's refused, Fishy," said Bob Cherry.

Before the Yankee junior could open his mouth to reply the members of the Tribunal reappeared.

"Fisher Tarkenton Fish," said Mr. Prout, in solemn tones, "the Tribunal is satisfied that you are merely a shirker and a scoundrel. You will be compelled to enlist to-morrow, with Bunter."

"I guess—"

"This is neither the time nor place for guesswork," said Mr. Prout acidly. "Begone!"

With his heart somewhere in the vicinity of his boots, Fisher T. Fish tottered away. The Tribunal had opened its innings in strict style, and very few of the applicants would be allowed to play last and loose with it.

"The third case on the list," announced Mr. Prout, "is that of Lord Herbert Manleverer."

A couple of juniors sprang to the door and opened it. The next moment there was a curious, rumbling sound, and a grey velvet couch was drawn into the Rag. On it reclined the schoolboy earl, blinking drowsily at the room and its occupants.

"What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Prout. "How dare you present yourself before the Tribunal in such a slothful fashion, Manleverer?"

"I'm tired, begad!" drawled Mafly. "Please make your questions as brief as possible. I want to get to sleep!"

"Boy! Tell me at once why you wish to be exempted from service with the Greyfriars Cadet Corps, of which I am the commanding officer!"

"Snore!"

There was no mistaking the sound. His lordship had calmly rested his head on the soft cushions and sunk into slumber!

Whilst Mr. Prout sat spellbound, Dicky Nugent whipped out his pen-shooter, and took calm and deliberate aim.

The effect was instantaneous.

"Yarcooh!" yelled Mauly, sitting bolt upright, and caressing his ear.

"The confounded wasps have come early this year!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Manleverer!" roared Mr. Prout. "Attend to my questions, or I will deal with you most severely! Am I right in saying that you do not wish to serve in the Cadet Corps I have formed?"

"Yas, begad!"

"Why not, pray?"

His lordship's reply was brief and to the point.

"Too much, begad!"

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"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

Mr. Prout almost foamed at the mouth.

"Is that—that feeble utterance your sole excuse for not wishing to serve?" he shouted.

"I suppose so, my dear sir. Blawse don't blare at me like a confounded foghorn! It's most distractin'!"

Mr. Prout rose majestically to his feet, with an expression of battle, murder, and sudden death on his face.

"There is no need to hold a consultation on this case," he said. "You are a lazy rascal, Manleverer, and will join the army to-morrow. I will see that you are drilled into submission!"

"Oh, really, you know! Don't be hard on a fellow! I've got a peculiar constitution, don't you know, and require a good deal of rest. An hour's drillin' would kill me outright!"

"We shall see," said Mr. Prout grimly. "Take that—that sloppily contrived away, and yourself also!"

Lord Manleverer was at once whisked out of the Rag, and had fallen asleep before he reached the doorway. The audience was almost in hysterics.

"The Tribunal will now adjourn," said Mr. Prout, "until after tea, when we shall hear the rest of the cases."

"Hang it all!" muttered Loder, who was one of the applicants. "If I'd known this was going to happen, I'm blessed if I'd have wasted three-quarters of an hour messing about here!"

The rest of the candidates for exemption felt greatly annoyed also; but Mr. Prout was quite indifferent to any inconvenience he had caused them. He clanked out of the room in his ridiculous suit of armour, and the other members of the Tribunal, chuckling confidentially to themselves, stepped from the platform and went their several ways.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The School for Slackers!

GREYFRIARS was stirred that afternoon to an excitement beyond the ordinary. News of the Tribunal's decision awakened tremendous interest, with the natural result that when Mr. Prout and the heads of the Forms reassembled after tea the Rag was crowded.

Mr. Prout had discarded his heavy armour for a swallow-tail coat and a pair of somewhat baggy trousers. In his calmer moments he would never have dreamed of garbing himself in heavy pieces of metal. It was only the prompting of his martial spirit that had caused him to strut about in armour. In the course of the afternoon he had encountered Mr. Quech, the master of the Remove, who had told him, without mincing his words, that he was an unarmoured guy.

Wherefore Mr. Prout had laid the rusty mail of the Middle Ages aside, and got into more modest garb. On the morrow he was expecting a gorgeous uniform from a firm of military tailors in London.

"I hope to goodness he's not going to smoke!" muttered Harry Wharton. "The stench of those cigars is something awful!"

As if in mockery of Wharton's words, Mr. Prout took out his cigar-case, and stuck a torpedo-shaped horror in his mouth. The other members of the Tribunal were standing round him on the platform, and they promptly backed away to a safe distance.

Mr. Prout went through his pockets and made a gesture of impatience.

"Has any boy a match?" he asked.

Nobody responded. The fellows, in fact, felt extremely relieved.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Prout. "That is most unfortunate. I must forgo my usual smoke. The Tribunal will now sit."

And it did, though not quite in the manner Mr. Prout intended. The chairman, with Wingate, Blundell, Temple, and Wharton, was about to seat himself, when Dicky Nugent, who stood at the end of the row, deftly kicked the form away with disastrous results.

Bump!

The members of the Tribunal missed fire, so to speak, and crashed upon the platform.

"Yarcooh!"

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

"The Tribunal sits!" grinned Bob Cherry.

There were many casualties. Mr. Prout faced the worst, for Blundell's sweeping fist crashed into his eye during the descent.

"Ow-ow-ow!" gasped the unhappy master. "Bless my soul, I am severely hurt!"

"Let me assist you to your feet, sir," said Dicky Nugent innocently. "This sort of thing gives one's liver a nasty shaking-up, doesn't it, sir?"

Mr. Prout granted, and allowed the Rag to help him up. The form was righted, and the proceedings began. The chairman was in such a bad temper that the prospects of the applicants for exemption were anything but rosy.

"Wun Lung, stand forward!" thundered Mr. Prout. The pig-tailed Oriental obeyed. He made the chairman a mock curtsy, which Mr. Prout did not deign to notice.

"You wish to be exempted from service?" he asked.

"Me velly likee not to fightee!" answered Wun Lung.

"Why do you not wish to take up arms and go into battle?" said Mr. Prout, impatiently.

"Me no likee shodeen human blooder."

"But supposing everybody took that view? The vile Bosches would swarm into this country and loot and kill at their hearts' desire!" said Mr. Prout.

"Me no savvy."

"Are you afraid to join up?" interrogated Blundell.

"Me belong to neutral countee."

"Something in that," said Wingate thoughtfully. "I'm in favour of total exemption."

"Mr. Prout frowned.

"You are requested not to expound your views in public, Wingate," he said sternly. "The Tribunal will retire to consider the matter."

Wun Lung waited anxiously for the verdict.

"You think they let me off, handsome Bob Chelly?" he inquired.

"They ought to," said Bob. "But what they ought to do, and what they will do, are two very different things. Prout's total exemptions won't be as plentiful as blackberries."

The members of the Tribunal resumed their seats, and Wharton kept his eye on Dicky Nugent this time. That cheerful youth got up to no more of his monkey-tricks.

"Wun Lung," said Mr. Prout, "your appeal has received the careful consideration of this Tribunal, and you are granted a temporary exemption for three days."

"Me no savvy!"

"What! Do you not understand what a postponement of three days means?"

"Poor Chinese don't likee fightee! Nasty Hun cuttee off pigtail, and then poor Wun Lung blubber!"

"It's up to you to see that the blessed Huns are bottled up when they do come over," said Wingate. "You'd better accept the Tribunal's decision, young 'un, before we go back on it."

Looking deeply dejected, Wun Lung passed out of the Rag.

"Gerald Loder neff!" said Mr. Prout. "Stand out, Loder, and tell us clearly and concisely your grounds for exemption."

"I am the sole support of my rag, Richard Nugent," pleaded the prefect.

"Rats!" said Dicky Nugent promptly. "You've never been known to treat me to a stale sardine! Don't tell the Tribunal whoppers! We won't stand it!"

"Decidedly not!" said Mr. Prout, with asperity. "Have you no other reasons for desiring exemption, Loder?"

"I'm over the age limit!" he stammered.

"Nonsense! The age at which boys are indelible is between eight and eighteen, and you are surely not more than eighteen!"

"I am!" said Loder, lying desperately.

"Then why are you not in the Army proper?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The end of the Sixth was fairly cornered. The members of the Tribunal regarded him with cold contempt.

"Your appeal is rejected!" said Mr. Prout. "You are leaving falsehoods with the object of shirking your responsibilities to the State!"

"I won't serve!" roared Loder. "The whole thing's a sheer farce. No other public school makes it compulsory to join any sort of army!"

"Because other schools happen to be fast asleep," said Mr. Prout. "Is no reason why Greyfriars should follow suit. You will attend the first drill to-morrow, or I will have you conscripted by force!"

Loder retired from the Rag breathing threatnings and slaughter. Then Mr. Prout summoned the next applicant.

"Thomas Dutton!"

There was no reply.

"Dutton!" bellowed Mr. Prout, in bull-like tones.

The deaf junior shuffled to the fore.

"You desire exemption from the Greyfriars army?" asked Mr. Prout.

"Eh? Wun says I'm balmy?" said Dutton indignantly. "I'll jolly well wrap up the floor with him!"

"You silly idiot!" said Wingate. "Mr. Prout said army, not balmy. It's your place to do your bit."

Dutton clenched his fists, and executed a war-dance on the floor of the Rag.

"My face gives you a fit, eh?" he roared. "Thank goodness, I haven't a chivvy like yours, anyhow! If I had, I'd take it to the nearest pawnshop!"

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NEXT MONDAY—

"RUN TO EARTH!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wingate. "Lend me a megaphone, somebody!"

"Why do you want to stay out?" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Dutton.

"What?"

"There's certainly no need to shout!"

The chairman of the Tribunal turned livid with rage.

"I care, not why you are appealing!" he shouted. "Your claim is dismissed!"

"Whenever anybody checks me—" said Dutton.

"W-w-what!"

"I generally have a game with my fist when a fellow makes himself objectionable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout grew desperate. He seized a slate and a piece of chalk, and indited the words in bold capitals:

"YOUR CLAIM IS REFUSED!"

Dutton's jaw dropped as he read the relentless announcement. He would have remained to remonstrate with Mr. Prout, but there was an ugly look on the master's face which promptly caused the junior to think better of it.

"Claude Hoskins," commanded Mr. Prout, "come forward quickly! We have no wish to remain here all night!"

Hoskins of the Shell approached the platform at once.

"I wish to be given total exemption," he said, with ill-lighted frankness. "Service in any sort of army would interfere with my studies. I'm sweating at music just now, and consider I've a good claim to be let off!"

"Oh! That is a most honourable motive, my dear Hoskins!" said Mr. Prout, becoming unusually affable.

"Music bath charms it, soothe the savage breast. The Tribunal will retire to consider your case."

"Yawning languidly—for they were tired of the inactivity of their position—the other members of the Tribunal rose to their feet, and accompanied the chairman behind the scenes."

Apparently they had some difficulty in coming to a decision, for Dicky Nugent was heard to exclaim in shrill tones:

"Rats! Music ain't essential to the welfare of the country!"

Then Mr. Prout's stentorian tones could be heard telling Dicky Nugent to shut up.

The Tribunal reappeared in ten minutes, and the face of Claude Hoskins beamed like unto a full moon; for he had visions of total exemption.

And his hopes were well-founded, for the chairman, addressing him, said:

"Claude Hoskins, we have pleasure in granting you exemption from military service, conditional upon your continuing to study music."

"And set our teeth on edge!" growled Johnny Bull, from the audience. "Hoskins is a favourite of Prout's, and that's why he's got off. I always thought a Tribunal meant a court of justice!"

"Hear, hear!"

Hoskins strutted out of the Rag looking as if he had found the world a very pleasant place to live in just then. Mr. Prout consulted his list, and called for the next applicant.

"Peter Hazeldene!"

Hazeldene of the Remove, encouraged by the happy fate which had befallen Hoskins, stopped briskly forward.

"I hate your case," said Mr. Prout tersely.

"I consider I'm in a starved trade, sir," was Hazeldene's startling asseveration.

"What!"

"I'm engaged on highly important work, sir."

"Of what nature?"

"I am a servant in the employ of Quelch—ahem!—I mean Mr. Quelch. I lag for him morning, noon, and night—clean his boots and his golf-clubs, and slave like a giddy nigger. On these grounds I reckon I'm entitled to complete exemption from joining your fifth-rate army."

"My what!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"Ahem! I mean your great and glorious legions!" corrected Hazeldene.

Mr. Prout frowned.

"Does Mr. Quelch especially desire that you should be released from service?" he asked.

"Yes, rather, sir! He begged me, almost with tears in his eyes, not to desert him!" said Hazeldene, waxing eloquent.

"Then why is he not here to appeal on your behalf?"

"I really couldn't tell you, sir," answered Hazeldene, a trifle uneasily.

Mr. Prout stood up, and stared hard at the applicant for exemption. The thunderclouds were gathering on the Forme master's brow.

"Cherry!" he exclaimed. "Pray go to Mr. Quelch's study."

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"Good man!" said Wingate, blotting the paper. "How much am I supposed to give you? I forget whether Prout said two-and-nine or fourpence-a-penny." "It's two-and-nine!" said Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming behind his glasses. (See Chapter 9.)

and ask him if he will be good enough to favour us with his presence for a moment."

"Certainly, sir!" said Bob.

Hazeldene fairly shook in his shoes. His face went crimson and pallid by turns, and he had a hunted look in his eyes. The members of the Tribunal were smiling grimly.

The junior pulled out his handkerchief, and mopped up the beads of perspiration which had burst out on his forehead.

"I've just remembered that—that I've got an appointment with somebody, sir!" he stammered. "Will you excuse me?"

"No, I will not!" retorted Mr. Prout. "You will oblige me by remaining where you are until Mr. Quetch comes."

The Remove-master appeared at that moment, looking rather annoyed. He had been at his typewriter when Mr. Prout's summons came, and had been deeply immersed in his "History of Greyfriars," a most exhaustive work, which seemed farther off completion than ever.

"What manner of tomfoolery is this?" exclaimed Mr. Quetch, his gimlet eyes scrutinising the members of the Tribunal.

"It is not tomfoolery!" said Mr. Prout indignantly. "It is a Tribunal."

The Remove-master gasped.

"Ahem! Are you sure you are feeling quite well, my dear Prout?"

"Of course!"

"You have not been out in the sun?"

"No, sir, I have not!" roared Mr. Prout, very red in the face. "I sent for you that the Tribunal might derive some information concerning Hazeldene. He claims exemption from service with my Cadet Corps, saying that it is your wish that he should not join."

"Then he must be romancing! I certainly expressed no such wish."

Mr. Prout looked daggers at the quaking Hazeldene.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 436.

"The wretched boy further tells me," he went on, "that you engage him for all sorts and conditions of duties, from morn to day, even, as Milton puts it."

"Then Hazeldene is guilty of gross falsehoods!" said Mr. Quetch angrily. "Susan, the maid, performs all such duties for me."

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Base deceiver! What have you to say for yourself?"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Hazeldene.

"Have you no excuse to offer for your heinous conduct?"

The junior was silent.

"Very well! Perhaps you would be so kind, Mr. Quetch, as to visit Hazeldene's offence with the rod? Pray do not spare him!"

Mr. Quetch compressed his thin lips.

"Come with me, Hazeldene!" he said. "I will endeavour to point out to you as forcibly as possible the error of your ways!"

The wretched Hazeldene tottered rather than walked from the room, and Mr. Quetch swept behind him with rustling gown. They proceeded straight to the Remove-master's study, and Mr. Quetch selected a supple cane from his cupboard.

"Hold out your hand!" he commanded sternly.

Quivering like an aspen-leaf, Hazeldene obeyed.

"Swish!"

"Swish! Swish!"

"Wow!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now the other!" said Mr. Quetch grimly. "I'm determined to lead you into the path of righteousness!"

Hazeldene's howls rang out right along the passage. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and the chastisement left him as limp as a rag. He crawled out of Mr. Quetch's study and slunk along the corridor, apparently trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Blow the rotten Tribunal!" he growled savagely. "Blow Quetch! Blow Prout! Blow everything! Blow everybody!"

And, having thus let off steam, the unfortunate victim sought the friendly solace of his study.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Consentious Objections!

"MAY I convert myself into an applicant, sir?"

Thus Temple of the Fourth, rising from his seat on the raised platform in the Rag.

"By all means, Temple!" said Mr. Prout graciously.

Temple's was the final application that day. A score of fellows had appeared before the Tribunal, and very few of them were satisfied with the official verdict respecting their claims. The twenty were split up as follows: Total exemptions, 2; postponement to a later date, 3; direct refusal, 15. Quite a number of fellows who had not enlisted made no claim at all. They had been present at the Tribunal meetings, and saw that they would get no change, or precious little, out of Mr. Prout, who was a stickler for compulsory service.

But Cecil Reginald Temple had high hopes of getting off.



There was a curious rumbling sound, and a cosy velvet couch was drawn into the Rag. On it reclined the schoolboy earl, blinking drowsily at the room and its occupants. "What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Prout.
(See Chapter 6.)

Had he not given his services to the Tribunal free, gratis, and for nothing? The Fourth-Former's face was flushed with anticipation as he addressed himself to Mr. Prout.

"I desire complete exemption, sir," he began, "for myself, and my two chums, Arthur Dabney and William Fry. If that's asking for too much, you can cut out the other two, and give exemption to me only."

"He's not greedy," murmured Bob Cherry, "but he likes a lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, there!" snapped Mr. Prout. "If this incessant chatter and ribald laughter continues I shall have to compel the audience to retire. Now, Temple, why are not Dabney and Fry here to speak for themselves?"

"They're having a spread, sir, in the study. It's Dabney's birthday."

"Dabney should arrange to have his birthdays at a less inconvenient time," said Mr. Prout.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, I repeat!" roared the incensed chairman. "This

perpetual worry will bring down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave! Proceed with your appeal, Temple!"

"What about Dabney and Fry, sir?"

"They must answer for themselves," said Mr. Prout. "If they choose to absent themselves from the Tribunal, it is entirely their own fault."

"I'll go and rout 'em out, sir, if you don't mind."

"Very well, Temple. Be as quick as you can. We have wasted quite enough time on this Tribunal as it is."

"P'raps you'd like to exempt the three of us straight away, sir?" suggested Temple.

"And perhaps I would not!" retorted the chairman. "I wonder you have the audacity to suggest such an unfair procedure, Temple!"

The captain of the Fourth muttered something under his breath, and quitted the Rag. He returned a moment later with Dabney and Fry.

"Now we can proceed," said Mr. Prout.

There was a sudden giggle from the spectators, for every

member of the Tribunal, barring Mr. Prout, had fallen flat asleep.

Mr. Prout heard the giggle, and glared round to ascertain its cause. He almost had a fit when he saw the condition of his colleagues.

"How dare you?" he stormed. "How dare you presume to slumber when you are supposed to be co-operating for the good of the community?"

Wingate raised his head, which had fallen upon his arm, and yawned portentously.

"We're obliged to go to sleep for the want of something better to do, sir," he said. "If we could take an active part in the proceedings it wouldn't be so bad; but we're not allowed to get in a word edgewise. You're doing all the talking."

"Hear, hear!" said Blundell languidly.

Mr. Prout stormed and raved, and carried on generally like a madman. But he knew it was of no use arguing with his drowsy supporters. At the worst, he could only sack them from the Tribunal—a proceeding they would have greatly relished.

"I shall take measures to stir this school up to-morrow!" said Mr. Prout, as if he were alluding to a sweet-pudding. "There is too much laziness and lethargy, and I am resolved to put an effective stop to it. Now, Temple, why do you wish to be released from doing your share?"

The captain of the Fourth consulted a sheet of paper in his hand, and announced, in parrot-like fashion:

"I have strong objections to warfare. The man who kills another is a murderer, no matter what his motive, or how great his provocation. Nothing in the world can justify war, and being a chap of high principles, I am determined to wash my hands of it. The Tribunal may punish me, but I'm ready to face the music."

"Same here!" said Dabney promptly.

"They're my sentiments, too!" added Fry.

Mr. Prout scowled.

"In other words, you are a trio of craven cowards!" he snapped out.

"No, sir!"

"Nothing of the kind, sir!"

"We refuse to fight, and there's an end to it!" said Temple. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite. We're civilised chaps, who've got something better to do than trot round on a Hun-killing campaign!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Prout angrily. "Tell me, what would you do if a German came along to your study with a bayonet and appropriated a—a cherry cake?"

"I should remonstrate with him," said Temple, referring to

his sheet of paper, "and beg him to be good and nice, and to keep his hands from picking and stealing!"

Mr. Prout snorted.

"Are any of you prepared to take up non-combatant service?" he asked.

"Of what nature, sir?" inquired Temple cautiously.

"Well, for one thing, you would be required to clean out my Winchester repeatedly daily."

"And be blown sky-high!" said Dabney. "It's not good enough!"

"No fear!" said Fry.

The chairman eyed the Fourth-Formers ferociously.

"The Tribunal will retire and consider your application," he said.

But the Tribunal had sunk into the arms of Morpheus once more, and Mr. Prout was obliged to retire by himself. Its returned almost immediately.

"Cecil Reginald Temple, Arthur Dabney, and William Fry," he said, in solemn tones, "your appeal is dismissed! You will take part in the opening manoeuvres of the Greyfriars Cadet Corps to-morrow!"

"And supposing we don't choose to turn up?" said Temple.

"A squad of military police will be sent to fetch you!"

"Oh, jinning!"

Mr. Prout waved the rejected applicants away, and addressed the audience.

"The first lesson in musketry," he said, "will be given by me, your commanding officer, after dinner to-morrow. My study will be regarded, till that time, as a recruiting office, and all boys who have not enlisted by midday will be conscripted! I shall be present in the office between the hours of eight and nine; Coker, my first lieutenant, will be there until ten; Wingate until eleven; and Courtney until twelve."

"Hang him!" muttered Courtney.

"I had hoped," continued the chairman, "to provide a suitable uniform for every member of the ranks, but I find that the money in the various games funds will not run to it. The officers only will be supplied with uniforms. The rank and file will wear armlets. Would anybody like to ask any questions?"

Wingate rubbed his eyes at this, and sat bolt upright.

"I presume the First Eleven can fulfil its fixtures with St. Jim's on Saturday, sir?"

"You presume wrongly, then! I will not allow any of my officers and men to indulge in such a time-wasting pastime as cricket!"

"But—"

"Enough, Wingate! My word is law in this matter. The Tribunal will now dismiss. No further sittings will be held!"

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The audience broke up in a very rebellious mood. The cancellation of the most important match of the season was no joke. It meant much to Greyfriars, and Wingate and the rest of the seniors were burning with indignation.

"What shall I do about it?" asked Wingate irritably. "Proust's a beastly nuisance, and wants boiling in oil!" "I certainly shouldn't advise you to cry off, old man," said Courtney. "Some nasty things might be said—that we'd faked, and all the rest of it, you know!"

"We must play the match at all costs," he said. "And if we can shut Proust in a padded cell while it's in progress, it'll be the finest day's work we ever did in our lives!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Wheeze That Wouldn't Work!

"H ALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry gave vent to that ejaculation as the rising-bell clanged out next morning. Bob Cherry was astonished, and with very good reason. He had groped towards the wash-stand for a wet sponge wherewith to rouse Billy Bunter from his slumbers, and lo! the Owl of the Remove was already up and doing.

"My only aunt!" gasped Bob. "What fathead was it that the age of miracles was past? Here's Bunter half-way through his giddy toilet!" Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I'm not the slackest some fellows take me for," he said. "Matter of fact, there's a lot to be said for getting up early. The morning hour has gold in its mouth, as the prophet says."

"Blow the prophet!" growled Johnny Bull. "What the merry dickens do you mean by giving a severe shock to our nervous systems like this?"

"Ha, ha, he!" giggled Bunter. "I reckon I'm on a good thing."

"Going to burgle somebody's grub?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know! I'm going to exist!"

"You've changed your tune since yesterday, then."

Bunter made no reply. He was bending over a basin of water, and gingerly applying a sponge to his fat face. He seldom dreamed of going so far afield as his neck, which could well have done with a thorough cleansing. Bob Cherry had, as a matter of fact, suggested providing a vacuum cleaner for the purpose.

His ablutions finished, Billy Bunter waddled out of the dormitory and down the stairs. Then he proceeded to Mr. Proust's study. The commanding officer of the Greyfriars Cadet Corps was already in harness.

"Ah! Good-morning, Bunter!" he exclaimed. "You wish to present yourself for enlistment?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is not yet eight o'clock."

"No, sir; but I—I was carried away by my enthusiasm, sir, and came early," said Bunter.

"Your motives are most commendable!" beamed Mr. Proust. "Kindly fill up this form."

Bunter did as requested, and put out his fat palm for the fourpence-halfpenny.

"I—I suppose you couldn't double it, sir?" he added.

"I'm twice the size of any other recruit, you know."

"I am afraid I cannot depart from the existing precedent."

"said Mr. Proust. "Here are four pennies and a halfpenny. I trust you will not expend the money on indigestible confections. Here, also, is your armband."

Billy Bunter grinned all over his face, and quitted the study. Mr. Proust—who had become engaged in extracting a gorgeous uniform from a bundle—did not notice the Owl of the Remove pick up the form he had filled up, and cram it into his pocket.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bunter.

"Good-morning—er—Bunter!" said Mr. Proust absently.

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Billy Bunter jingled the coppers in his pocket as he rolled out of the study. Accustomed as he was to being broke to the wide, fourpence-halfpenny was untold wealth to him for the moment.

But Bunter did not mean to let the matter rest there. He marched about in the Clore for an hour or more, and then, proceeding once again to Mr. Proust's study, he made a thorough examination through the keyhole.

"Good!" he murmured. "It's Coker's turn this time!"

For reasons of his own the fat junior took off his armband, and then, rapping softly on the door, entered.

Coker of the Fifth looked a very imposing personage as he sat at Mr. Proust's desk. He rejoiced greatly in the new honour and glory which had descended upon him.

"Hallo, Fatty!" he exclaimed, looking up. "Come to join up, like a true son of Britain?"

"Rather!" said Bunter, with an oily grin, which would have put anybody but Coker on his guard at once. "Fourpence-halfpenny, please!"

"Half a jiffy! Fill up this form first!" said Coker.

Bunter scribbled out the required information, and Coker handed him his enlistment bonus, together with an armband.

"Is old Wingate relieving you in an hour's time?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"He'll see that form I've just filled in, won't he?"

"No fear," said Coker. "I shall lock it up in Proust's drawer out of sight, so as to keep the recruits I've got separate from the rest."

Chuckling softly under his breath, Billy Bunter departed. The best part of the next hour was spent at breakfast in the dining-hall. Bunter had a boundless appetite, and could have devoured still more than he did, had not Mr. Quelch intervened, fearing lest the fat junior should suddenly become the victim of a violent bilious attack.

When the full hour had expired, Bunter betook himself once more to the improvised recruiting-office, Wingate, who had taken Coker's place, greeted the Owl of the Remove cordially. How he would have envied Bunter had he known that the fat junior had enlisted twice already was uncertain.

"You wish to take the plunge, Bunter?" he asked.

"Not half!"

"Fill up the necessary particulars on this form, then."

Bunter promptly obeyed.

"Good man!" said Wingate, blotting the paper. "How much am I supposed to give you? I forgot whether Proust said two-and-nine or four-halfpenny."

"It's two-and-nine!" said Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming behind his glasses. "That's what all the Derby recruits got, I remember."

Wingate looked rather doubtful. However, he unlocked one of the games fund boxes and took out half-a-crown and three coppers. These he handed to Billy Bunter.

"Thanks, awfully, Wingate!" said the grasping Owl of the Remove, making a mental calculation as to the amount of tuck he would be able to purchase at Mrs. Mumble's after-morning school. "I hope you get shoals of recruits, old sport!"

Wingate granted, and Bunter, with the princely sum of three-and-sixpence jingling in his pocket, joined up with the 1st Battalion of the Remove as they trooped into the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch found his class very reticent, and inaudible during first lesson, and lines and lickings fell as thick and fast as leaves in Vallombrosa.

At the end of an hour Billy Bunter stood up in his place, and blinked at the Form-master.

"Well!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"May I go now, please, sir?"

"What?"

"May I chuck this mouldy Latin—ahem!—and have the rest of the morning off?"

Mr. Quelch could hardly believe his ears. Bunter had been responsible for some cool requests, but never for anything quite so cool as this!

The Remove-master's next words thundered through the Form-room like the booming of breakers on the beach.

"Bunter! Are you mad, boy? How dare you give voice to such an impudent request! Are you ill?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then why are you burning with anxiety to quit the sacred delights of the Latin tongue?"

"I want to collect, sir."

Mr. Quelch almost fell down. He was obliged to clutch at his desk for support.

"You—you—What did you say, Bunter?"

"I want to join Mr. Proust's army."

The Form-master understood at last.

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"Indeed! Then I fear you must offer your services at a more convenient moment."

"But the recruiting office closes at twelve, sir."

"Then why did you not join before?"

"I only heard the decision of the Tribunal yesterday, sir. They wouldn't let me off, and I had a better claim than anybody."

"On what grounds?"

"Serious physical defects, sir," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Is it absolutely essential that you should enlist, as you call it, at once?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dear me! Mr. Prout ought to know better than to allow his Cadet Corps to interfere with classes. Wharton! Pray go to the Fifth Form room, and request Mr. Prout to be good enough to step in here a moment."

"Certainly, sir."

Billy Bunter's face turned an art shade in green.

"I—I shouldn't trouble, sir, if I were you," he said.

"Hold your tongue, Bunter! I strongly suspect that you have been prevaricating to me; and if such is the case, things will go hard with you."

"Oh!" groaned the unhappy Bunter.

The door of the Form-room opened, and Mr. Prout came in.

"You wish to speak to me, Quelch?" he asked.

"Yes, Bunter, here, has expressed a desire to go at once to your study and enlist in the Cadet Corps you have formed."

Mr. Prout, who was not best pleased at being called out of his Form-room, gave vent to a moat of wrath.

"Bunter has already been registered," he said. "He offered himself for service before eight o'clock this morning, and was accepted."

"I—I— That was only a— a sort of preliminary enlistment, sir," stammered Bunter feebly.

Mr. Quelch glared at the fat junior as if he would eat him. Then he suddenly darted forward and wrenched at something which was protruding from the pocket of Bunter's coat.

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "How did you come to have these two armlets in your possession?"

"What is that?" asked Mr. Prout sharply.

"This boy has three armlets, Mr. Prout. One he is wearing, and these two were in his pocket. Are you sorting out your armlets in triplicate?"

"Certainly not! There has been some trickery here," said Mr. Prout angrily. "Some dastardly deception! Will you kindly send a boy for Wingate and Coker, my dear Quelch?"

Harry Wharton was immediately despatched for the fellows in question, and Billy Bunter's face was a study. The game was up now, and he knew it. All the fabrications in the world would not get him out of this scrape.

Wingate and Coker entered the Form-room a moment later. They were looking very surprised.

"I sent for you," said Mr. Prout, "to ascertain if Bunter has presented himself to you this morning for enlistment."

"Yes, he has, sir!" said Wingate and Coker together.

"Good heavens! And he received the sum of fourpence-halfpenny from each of you?"

"I gave him two-and-ninapence, sir," said Wingate. "I understood that to be the figure."

"What!" roared Mr. Prout. "You have been scattering sums of two shillings and ninapence broadcast throughout the school?"

"Not so bad as that, sir," said Wingate. "Bunter was the only applicant received."

"Boy!" roared Mr. Prout, turning to the terrified Owl of the Remove, "what have you to say in explanation of your criminal conduct? You thought, evidently, that you had hit upon a good way of getting rich quickly. Hand over to me at once the money you have amassed under false pretences!"

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"Do not bandy words with me, boy! Do as I tell you!"

With great reluctance and a burning desire for the floor of the Form-room to open and swallow him up, Billy Bunter did as requested, retaining, of course, his legitimate fourpence-halfpenny, which he had originally received at the hands of Mr. Prout.

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the St. Jim's total tallied with that of Greyfriars. The ultimate issue, therefore, hinged upon the second innings.

"Play up, you fellows!" roared the crowd, as Wingate and Courtney, in all the glory of flannels, pads, and batting gloves, strode down the pavilion steps.

The second venture proved to be as unlike the first as it is possible to imagine. Wingate leapt out of his crease and smote like an inspired Jesop. Courtney backed him up loyally, and thirty runs were registered on the board before the partnership was dissolved. Courtney being run out in attempting the impossible.

The fellows who followed on performed fairly well, and the innings closed for 99, leaving St. Jim's to make 100 for victory.

It was by no means a herculean task, for Kildare had been known to make a hundred off his own bat; but the hearts of the Friars were strong and resolute, and their bowlers set to work with deadly vim.

Kildare stayed a long time, but not long enough to do much material good. His contribution to the score was 15, and while he had been compiling them, Darrel, Rushden, and Bess had been dismissed in swift succession.

With Monteith and Langton together, however, a change came over the game. The batsmen smote strongly, and the score went up by leaps and bounds.

"Buck up, Friars!" shouted Harry Wharton & Co. "Put it across 'em, you fellows!"

Courtney and Ionides had the bowling. The Greek senior had fallen away somewhat, doubtless owing to the many cigarettes he had recently consumed in the privacy of his study. Courtney, however, kept a good length, and after a time he cleverly caught and bowled Langton, amid the loud-voiced plaudits of the crowd.

But the Friars were not out of the wood yet, by a very long way. The St. Jim's score was ninety for eight wickets, and Monteith was still going strong.

The next man in came a cropper, and retired to the pavilion with a big round ought to his name.

"Burr!" chorused Bob Cherry, hugging Harry Wharton as his manly friend. "We shall do the trick yet, my boys!"

After a tense, strained silence the last man walked out to the wicket with slow, deliberate steps, determined to leave the hitting to Monteith, who was now thoroughly set.

Courtney, however, with the same powerful effort as before, but this St. Jim's batsman "got there" every time. He didn't go in for big hits, but so long as he kept his wicket well guarded he appeared to be perfectly satisfied.

Now it so happened that George Wingate was holding at point, and it occurred to him to creep a little closer to the wicket as each ball was delivered. The St. Jim's fellow continued his stonewall tactics, and the ball simply fell from his bat.

Then did the captain of Greyfriars dart forward, and before the wondering crowd could realize the vital importance of the situation, the leather landed in Wingate's open palm.

For a full moment there was silence. Then, like a rushing torrent of descending water, two hundred voices blended in a wild inharmonious burst of cheering. The Friars had defeated their time-honoured rivals by nine runs!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

MR. PROUT IS VERY MUCH ANNOYED.

N OBODY thought much about the unhappy Mr. Prout, for everybody was too full of excitement about the match.

As a matter of fact, however, Mr. Prout could scarcely be said to be unhappy, as some considerable time passed before he became aware of his plight. He had picked up a volume of Wordsworth and a cigar. The cigar made him feel comfortable, and the Wordsworth made him feel sleepy. The cigar dropped to the floor, and burned a hole in the carpet; the volume dropped to the floor without any such disastrous result; and Mr. Prout slept the sleep of the just.

He slept long and well. But the ringing sales of cheers which followed upon Wingate's winning catch awoke him from his slumber.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Prout, rubbing his eyes. "That shooting certainly seems to come from the cricket-field. It would really appear impossible though it seems, that my candles have disobeyed my express orders, and have been playing cricket!"

A glance from the window confirmed his fears. It did not occur to him that he had slept so long that the game was all over. If he thought of anything in that way at all, he imagined that the players were leaving the field because the first innings had ended.

THE MANAGER LIBRARY.—No. 35.

DELICIOUS TUCK-HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 14.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "Caught! Caught red-handed! I will put a stop to this at once!"

But Mr. Prout found that this was more easily said than done. The door was locked.

It was only natural that Mr. Prout should grow very angry indeed.

"They have locked me in!" he roared. "The young scoundrels! The audacity is unheard-of! But I will thwart them yet. They have forgotten that in dealing with me they have no ordinary man to cope with!"

But the fact remained that the door was locked, and that there was no exit that way. True, Mr. Prout might have called for help. But he declined a measure so tame.

The chimney was narrow, and Mr. Prout was wide. Obviously the chimney would not do.

There remained only the window. But Mr. Prout's study was on an upper floor. To most men of Mr. Prout's age the idea of escape by the window would have occurred only to be rejected at once.

The Fifth Form master did not reject it. He did not give himself time to think about it. His boiling indignation took him astride the ledge before he began to think at all. It was not until he was dangling by his hands that he remembered that descent by the ivy, a feat quite possible for an active junior, was altogether beyond his athletic capacity.

Then his indignation went off the boil a little, for he began to entertain fears for his own safety.

To pull himself up should have been a fairly simple operation. Mr. Prout did not find it so. Those muscles of his, the admired of all beholders in the Rocky Mountains, did not seem, somehow, quite the right sort of muscles for this particular job.

He looked down. The ground seemed a terribly long way beneath him.

Cold drops of sweat burst out upon his manly brow. Again he assayed to pull himself up, and again without success.

It was at this moment that Wingate, from the cricket-field, perceived him.

"My hat!" gasped the skipper of Greyfriars. "Courtney, old chap, we've done it now! There's Prout trying to escape by the window, and it's fifty to one he'll come a cropper!"

The two seniors rushed off at top speed, followed by a crowd.

Mr. Prout was yelling aloud now. His cries came to their ears.

"Help!" he roared. "Help! I shall fall! I cannot hang on a moment longer! Oh, help!"

If ever he felt uncomfortable and afraid in his life, George Wingate felt so then. His apparently harmless, if somewhat audacious, joke, looked like having the most serious consequences.

The Head accosted him as he entered the door.

"What is the matter, Wingate? What are those cries I hear?" asked Dr. Locke sharply.

"Can't stop, sir!" gasped Wingate, and rushed on.

"Courtney—"

"Can't stop, sir!" echoed Courtney, and fairly brushed the Head aside.

The two seniors rushed up the stairs at a tremendous pace. Up after them came the Head, dropping farther behind at every yard, and passed on the way by a score of fellows, seniors and juniors, none of whom had time to explain anything to him.

Below, in the close, two or three prefects had got a tactical cricket-pitch corner, and were holding it to catch Mr. Prout should he fall. But Mr. Prout clung on like grim death, feeling sick and giddy, but resolute to the last.

The key turned in the lock. Wingate darted in, with Courtney close behind him.

Just in time!

The two strong seniors seized Mr. Prout's wrists and dragged him up. It was no easy task, for the Fifth Form master was not exactly a light-weight. He groaned as they dragged; but he was too exhausted to get out artistic words as yet.

Dr. Locke arrived just as he was laid upon the floor.

"What does this mean?" demanded the Head sternly. Mr. Prout struggled somehow to his feet.

"Sir," he said boldly, "I—I have been treated with the grossest disrespect—I have been locked in my study—actually locked in!"

"But, really, Mr. Prout, you do not mean to say that you, a man of mature age and—er—of your physique—"

"Sir, it is not a question of my age or my physique! I have been—"

"You said that before, Mr. Prout; and I agree that if you have actually been locked in your study, someone has taken a most indefensible and unpardonable liberty with you."

And the Head looked keenly at Wingate, whose frank face showed signs of guilt.

"It was my fault, sir," said Wingate. "Nobody else is really to blame. I locked Mr. Prout in!"

A murmur of dissent came from Courtney and others of the seniors.

"We all agreed to it, sir," said Courtney boldly. "Wingate is no more guilty than the rest of us."

"But what on earth can have possessed you to do so mad a thing? I am more surprised than I can say. You especially, Wingate, in your position—"

"It looks pretty black against me, I know, sir. But really I think there was some excuse. Mr. Prout—"

Mr. Prout, as red as a turkeycock's comb with sheer rage, burst in:

"There was no excuse, Dr. Locke—no excuse whatever! With your full sanction, I stopped entirely the foolish and perverse game of cricket in order that—"

"One moment, Mr. Prout!" broke in the Head, his brow black as thunder. "When did I sanction anything of the sort?"

"When you allowed me to form a cadet corps, sir."

"I cannot recall anything of the kind. Your proposition I can remember, but most certainly I never entertained the idea of stopping cricket."

"But, sir, you are wrong! You are wholly and entirely wrong! Your memory cannot be what it once was, sir."

Mr. Prout, said the Head coldly, "we will discuss this matter further in private. I am afraid you are losing your temper."

There the Head was wrong, for Mr. Prout was not losing his temper; he had lost it most completely.

Which was perhaps just as well for George Wingate, though neither he nor the other conspirators got off scot-free for their imprisonment of their commander-in-chief!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Head Carries the Day!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
Bob Cherry stopped short before the school notice-board when the Famous Five had finished too. An announcement was posted up in a prominent place, in the familiar handwriting of the Head:

"NOTICE.

"A special tribunal, composed solely of masters, will meet in the senior Common-room this evening at seven, with a view to deciding finally the Greyfriars Cadet Corps, and to discuss the advisability of the continuation of cricket and similar healthy sports."

"All Greyfriars boys are requested to be present."

"(Signed) HERBERT H. LOCKE.
"Headmaster."

"Oh, good!" said Wharton. "Looks as though Prout'll get the kybosh—also giddy-lutely!"

"The astounded and foolish Prout will get left stranded," murmured Hurree Singh.

"Rather!" grinned Nugent. "Are we going to roll up, you fellows?"

"We is—we are!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It ought to be as good as a pantomime to see Prout dancing about like a cat on hot bricks, and howled down on every side!"

Accordingly, at the appointed time, the Famous Five stroled off to the senior Common-room.

Crowds of fellows were already pouring in. They were curious to see what would transpire, though they had little doubt that Mr. Prout, who was already on the scene, would get it in the neck most emphatically.

A hush fell upon the assembly as the members of the tribunal took their places. The Head looked very grim as he rustled to his seat in the centre of the row. Mr. Queech also wore a determined frown. As for Mr. Twigg and Mr. Capper, they were usually up against Mr. Prout, and jumped at the opportunity of thwarting him in his latest design.

Mr. Prout rose to his feet, his red face redder than ever, and his eyes glaring like a basilisk.

"Boys," he thundered, "I demand—"

"Silence," Mr. Prout commanded the Head sternly.

"It was I who called this meeting together, and I am its authorised chairman. Kindly allow me to open the proceedings!"

"But I demand justice—"

"You shall have it. That is the primary consideration of every tribunal. Wingate, would you mind stepping forward?"

The captain of Greyfriars obeyed.

"I have formally disbanded the Greyfriars Cadet Corps," said the Head; "but I am not sure that some sort of patriotic

THE HEADMASTER.—No. 436.

NEXT MONDAY—

"RUN TO EARTH!"

EVERY MONDAY, The "Raguel" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

training ought not to be indulged in. What are your views on the subject, Wingate?"

"Nearly every boy in the school puts in some practice on the rifle-range, sir," said the senior. "I think Greyfriars would render a rattling account of itself if the Huns came."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Wingate!"

"Cricket is a grand game and a manly game," Wingate went on. "It keeps a fellow fit, and rouses enthusiasm throughout the whole school. The miserable apology for a cadet corps which Mr. Prout has seen fit to form is a shoddy farce, if I may say so."

Up rose Mr. Prout again, like a jack-in-the-box. Then he waved his arms wildly in the air, so that he resembled a sort of human windmill.

"This is monstrous!" he bellowed. "It is most infamous! Cricket is a childish game of the lowest and most degrading type! Drilling, on the other hand—"

"Will you be silent, sir!" thundered Dr. Locke. "You will be given an opportunity of making yourself heard directly."

"I refuse to be silent!" Mr. Prout was almost foaming at the mouth. "I regard this as a conspiracy—a pernicious and prearranged conspiracy—against me!"

Then Mr. Queech rose to his feet to give his views on the subject—views that, needless to state, were not in harmony with those enshrined by Mr. Prout.

Simultaneously Mr. Twigg and Mr. Capper and Mr. Blaine started to speak.

A perfect pandemonium prevailed in the great room. Somebody in the audience started to whistle. Everybody whistled. Somebody stamped his feet. Everybody followed suit. The senior Common-room was transformed into a veritable Tower of Babel.

The Head was angry at first. Then the thunderclouds gradually dispersed from his brow, and he raised his hand for silence.

The terrific hubbub continued for a few more moments, and then gradually wore itself out.

"I have heard enough to justify me in my views on this matter," said the Head shortly, "and have much pleasure in granting total exemption to everybody!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well played, sir!"

"Three cheers for the Head!" came in stentorian tones from Bob Cherry.

And the cheers were given with hearty good-will. Then the turbulent, surging throng moved towards the door, and the members of the special tribunal followed, leaving Mr. Prout gasping and spluttering like a newly-landed fish.

The master of the Fifth had, in the language of Fisher T. Fish, got hopelessly "left." All his schemes for introducing a system of militarism at Greyfriars had come crashing to the ground. He was defeated and decided at every turn. And the knowledge that he was the under dog was anything but pleasant.

Mr. Prout's first impulse, on being left alone in the Common-room, was to rush to the Head's study and dramatically hand in his resignation. But by degrees he became calmer, and brought himself to swallow his humiliation.

But Coker & Co. of the Fifth experienced a sorry time of it in class during the next few days. Mr. Prout poured out the vials of his wrath for quite a long time on the devoted heads of his pupils; and Greyfriars—with the exception of those pupils—continued to laugh loud and long over the exciting events which had transpired at that memorable occasion when they were called to the Colours.

THE END.

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

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story. **START TO-DAY!****THE FIRST INSTALMENT BRIEFLY TOLD.**

Jim Holdsworth, Hal Mackenzie, Bob Sigbee, and Pat O'Hara, four chums, meet at Mackenzie's riverside bungalow. During an evening of merriment they are startled by a cry from the river. Hastening to the bank, they find a man struggling in the water. Two of the quartette immediately dive in to his rescue. Later he hands over to Hal Mackenzie an oblong piece of very hard wood, which he had taken from the hand of dead native in Valparaiso, and, finding Hal's address roughly carved upon the side, had, despite many attempts to rob him of it, now succeeded in delivering. It was found to contain a message from a friend of Hal's, urging him to come out to the Southern Andes and learn the secret of the Tower of the Golden Star. Eager for adventure, the four chums immediately set out upon the voyage. Towards the end of the voyage the captain invites the four chums to look over a derelict which has been sighted. They gladly accept, upon which he mutters to himself: "I'll get them nicely trapped, and it'll look like an accident."

(Now go on with the story.)

On the Derelict.

Ten minutes sufficed for the quartette to snatch a hasty breakfast, and when they returned on deck they found that the Heron had been stopped about half a mile from the derelict, and that a boat had been lowered ready.

As it was quite calm, Hal was surprised that the captain hadn't gone a little closer; but he made no remark. Sigbee swept his gaze round the horizon, and pointed out a bank of white vapour away to the north-west.

"A fog-bank," he said. "If it—"
"We're nothing to fear from that," interrupted the skipper hastily. "In this calm, jump into the boat, and we'll be off. I'm coming with you."

There were only two sailors in the boat, so Jim and O'Hara got out a couple of oars, and helped to row. A pull of a few minutes brought them alongside the derelict, and they clambered on board, the two sailors, however, remaining in the boat by the captain's orders.

"A sailing-ship," said Captain Scarth—"about five hundred tons. Got dismantled in a gale. I s'pose, and her crew got scared and abandoned her. Or there may have been a mutiny. You can't tell. Just another mystery of the sea, that's all."

They spent about half an hour looking about her deck and into the men's quarters, after which they went down into the cabin. Here they found a scene of indescribable confusion. Articles of wearing-apparel were lying about, books, a broken sextant, and all sorts of odds-and-ends. It looked as if the contents of the sleeping-berths had been tossed out anyhow.

"'Tis just as if the cabin had been looted," said Pat O'Hara.

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DELICIOUS TUCK-HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 18.

O'Hara, "an' thim as done it had to git away in a hurry wid thir plunder."

Still, there was a good deal to interest them, searching around in the sleeping-berths, and time passed quickly. The derelict had begun to roll a little, as though the wind was rising, and had caused a swell. Hal looked up suddenly.

"Where's the captain?" he exclaimed.
Sigbee ran up on deck. A moment later they heard his voice shouting:

"Keep alongside, you galoot! What's your game? Keep the boat alongside! By ginger, if—"
Then there was a loud splash, as of a body falling into the water.

Adrift!

"Howly Moses! What's happened!" cried O'Hara.
The answer to his question was found when they reached the deck, after a scramble in double-quick time up the companion-stairs.

The boat, with the two seamen and Captain Scarth in it, was a cable's length away from the derelict, and being rowed hard towards the Heron. For a few moments Hal, Jim, and O'Hara stared after them in speechless astonishment. Then the startling change in the weather attracted their attention.

The white bank of fog had sped half across the sea, and was bearing down on them at railway speed; a long, heavy swell was rolling out of it, while afar off could be heard the moan of the wind. All the sky that was visible was of a sickly, ashen-grey colour.

"The treacherous hounds are deserting us!" exclaimed Jim. "Leaving us on this hulk—adrift!" He put his hands to his mouth, and shouted: "Come back at once, and fetch us!"

Then Hal shouted:
"Row back, meen, and you shall be well rewarded. Never mind what the captain says. We'll settle with him afterwards!"

The two seamen hesitated, as though they were half inclined to turn the boat round, but Captain Scarth-leaned forward, and appeared to be threatening them.

At that instant the wind, with a long, fierce howl, came sweeping over the sea, and a moment later the fog was swirling all round the derelict. It was like a mighty burst of steam, and in a breath the boat and its occupants, and the steamer beyond them, had vanished from sight. There was nothing to see but the wool-white vapour, and a space of twenty or thirty feet of water beyond the wreck.

They had been so occupied at shouting after the boat, until it was swallowed up in the fog, that they had failed to notice the fact that Sigbee wasn't on deck with them. He was nowhere to be seen. Yet he had gone on deck no more than a minute ahead of them.

"He must have fallen overboard!" exclaimed Hal, his face

white with horror at the thought. "You remember he stopped shouting suddenly, and we heard a splash alongside. Perhaps he jumped for the boat, meaning to prevent them rowing away, and missed it."

"What! And those cowards left him to drown!" cried Jim. "Oh, they couldn't! Why, it would be as bad as murder!"

"But he can swim," said O'Hara. "Maybe he'll be after swimming around now—"

"We should have seen him," interrupted Hal. "Besides, he would swim to the ship if he swam anywhere."

"Well, let's give a howl all together," suggested the Irishman. "An' if so be he's on top o' the water anywhere he'll hear it, an' answer."

It seemed a sort of forlorn hope, but the shout for their comrade proved a relief to their feelings, though none of them really expected to hear an answer.

"Sigbee!" they shouted, with all their lung power. "Where are you? Sigbee!"

There was a pause. And then a calm voice from the companion-way said:

"I guess I'm here!"

They turned with exclamations of delight as the American stepped out on deck, with water draining from his clothes.

"Where've you been, old top?" cried Jim.

"In the briny ocean," replied Sigbee. "Made a jump for that blame boat as they were pulling off, and missed it. That skunk of a cap'n jest grinned—at least, kind of contorted his face into a sort of grin—and as it wasn't any use swimming after the boat, I swam back to this hulk, climbed up a rope that's hanging over her stern, and then in through one of the square stern-ports."

"This was a put-up job, leaving us here," said Hal severely. "But as Scarth would hardly have taken the risk just for the sake of stealing our outfits, he must have been told for it."

"Seems like it," admitted Sigbee. "But he couldn't have reckoned on meeting this derelict."

"No; that was a chance that played into his hands. My belief is that he was bribed to get rid of us during the voyage, but unless he had all his crew with him, it was too large an order. He must have very soon realized that we were the sort to put up a good fight if we were interfered with openly. Sighting this derelict gave him an opportunity that he was smart enough to seize."

"And we walked blindly into the booby-trap!" exclaimed Jim, with great disgust. "Pou my word, we deserve to be kicked all round!"

"Kick me, if it will relieve your feelings," said Hal, with a half-laugh. "It was a great deal my fault for not being wiser on my guard, as I was suspicious of Captain Scarth from the first. Yet, somehow, I never connected this clandestine derelict with a trap."

"Who'd have paid the spalpeen to try an' get rid av us?" demanded O'Hara.

"Who else but the Chitinan," replied Hal, "who was evidently the representative in England of our mysterious enemies. Pity we didn't get a clearer view of that rascal's face. I doubt very much if I should recognise him again."

"That won't greatly matter if there's no food nor water on this old hulk," said Jim. "We must be about four hundred miles from the nearest land, and even if there is a current setting in our favour it would take many days of drifting to cover that distance. We've all suffered from hunger and thirst on occasions, but it's an experience we're not anxious to repeat."

When Jim, usually so lighthearted and careless, talked seriously, it came almost as a shock. A dead silence followed his words. As a matter of fact, until that moment they had not had time to seriously consider the plight they were in.

And, to make matters worse, the wind and sea were rising, and the battered derelict was rolling, pitching, and plunging to such an extent that it was with difficulty they kept their feet.

"Before we rustle around in search of grub," Sigbee observed, breaking the silence, "there's something else we must do."

"What's that?"

"We must get hold of a sail—there'll sure be some left on board—and hoist it up on the stump of the foremast to steady this old packet a bit. This gale's goin' to be a shorter, and we must run her before it, or a heavy beam-sea might roll her clean over. Grub wouldn't be any manner of use to us then."

"Fair, thin, we'll make a start after that sail at waist!" exclaimed O'Hara. "Tis myself has no longing to visit Davy Jones—him bin' at the bottom av the sea. An' the way this old bathin'-machine is rowing, I'll have to crawl on me stumstick, me feet bin' mighty little use!"

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NEXT MONDAY—

EVERY MONDAY.

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

A Fresh Peril.

It was a great business getting down to the sail-looker, which was in the fore 'tween-decks, for, apart from the fact that it meant hanging on "tooth and nail" to get from one part to another of the wildly-plunging hull, it was necessary to take off the fore hatches, which was risky work, with green sea breaking over the vessel.

However, the quartette had a habit of carrying through anything which they set their hands to, if it was humanly possible to do so, and the sail was eventually hauled on deck. It was a main-top-sail, quite big enough for their purpose, and also as much as they could manage in that howling gale of wind.

For the wind had risen from a light air to a violent storm with amazing rapidity, and they all devoutly hoped it would subside as quickly as it had sprung up.

With considerable difficulty they hoisted the sail up to the stump of the foremast, and lashed the sheets aft. Hal ran to the wheel, for it was now necessary that the derelict should be steered. Small though the sail was, it was all she could have carried, even had she been fully rigged, so great was the force of the wind. She raced through the foaming area at considerable speed, flinging the spray over the bows in drenching showers.

"Well, that's all right so far," said Hal cheerily. "And we're heading towards the land, which will be a decided advantage if the gale blows itself out before we get too close. If not— However, we won't bother about that side of the question now. Time enough when the land's sighted, and that won't be for another three days at least."

"We'll give that rotter, Captain Scarth, an unpleasant surprise yet," declared Jim. "Now, we'd better set about the grub hunt for that's important. Are you going to stick at the wheel, Hal?"

"Yes," replied Hal. "And while you're down below, try and find out if the old tub is leaking at all. I don't think she can be, or she'd have been waterlogged long before we sighted her."

"Right—ho!" Jim, Sigbee, and O'Hara thereupon descended into the cabin, as being the most likely place to find provisions, and Hal remained alone on the deck. Two hours passed, and during that time the searobbers had examined every likely and unlikely part of the ship. Down in the holds they couldn't go, as those spaces were filled with cargo, principally bales of cotton. They returned on deck with grave faces.

"What luck?" asked Hal.

"Not as much grub in the ship as would feed a vick rat," answered Jim. "We've been into every nook and corner. She's cleaned out."

"It's my notion," observed Sigbee, "they must have run short of provisions before the crew abandoned her. If there'd been a reasonable amount on board, they couldn't have carried it all away in the boats."

"Any water—drinking water? We've more than enough of the salt variety."

"A few gallons," replied Jim. "Enough to last us three or four days. It's a bit of colour, but drinkable."

"That's a relief," said Hal. "Thirst is a jolly sight worse to suffer than hunger. We can manage a couple of days without food, and all we'll need to do is to tighten up our belts every few hours."

"That'll be easy," put in O'Hara. "But 'tis sorrow I feel that I didn't ate a bigger breakfast before we quitted the Ileron. Just a hasty snack, I had, an' me hungry at the time, but thinkin' av course, we'd be back, when I'd make up wid a good lunch."

They all laughed at Pat's "grievance," and for a time at least their immediate troubles were forgotten. It is no manner of use meeting trouble half-way, and they had not begun to feel the pangs of hunger yet.

"I guess we've been left in a worse pickle than this mornin' mice," said Bob Sigbee, "and come out top dog at the end. What we've got to do in this partic'lar gamble is to live on water, an' trust to luck."

"What sort av luck?" demanded the Irishman.

"That's what you git me," replied Sigbee. "It's a kind o' lottery, where there's more blanks than prizes. We've just got to keep our eyes skinned, because one of the prizes would be sighting a vessel that would come to our rescue."

"By the way," said Hal, "none of us have troubled about the name of this old clipper, and as she's likely to be our home for a few days, we may as well find out. It'll be painted on her stern."

"Oh, we came across some of the ship's papers down in the captain's cabin," said Jim. "They didn't give much

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

"RUN TO EARTH!"

information, but the name was stamped on them. She is the San Christobel, and appears to hail from a Mexican port. "Mexican?" Hal shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "As a rule, the Mexicans are no great shakes. As likely as not the crew became panic-stricken when the masts went over the side, and quitted before there was any need to."

There was nothing now to do but keep a good look-out and steer. They took it in turns at the wheel, a two hours' spell each. The wind had shifted round until it was almost east, and the San Christobel, driving dead before it, was heading almost due west.

The day passed without any change, and night fell cold and cheerless, the foam-capped seas gleaming weirdly with phosphorescent light. About eight o'clock Jim came on deck with a penkin of fresh water.

"Supper!" he called out, grinning. "Water, served plain, or with trimmings of rum?"

"I'll wait till the thirst gets a bigger grip ay me," said O'Hara. "The water is so cold to the stomachic wid nothing to ate wid it. Now, if there was ovinly a throp of the dratur—"

"Well, there isn't!" interrupted Jim. "If there was any spiritus on board, you may bet the doctors took good care to cart it all away with them."

"I guess I'll manage without any more water for a bit," said Sigbee. "This'll be my supper."

And he tightened in his belt a hole. "Fair. I can see you getting thinner before my eyes!" declared O'Hara. "Yis ghosts we'll all be if this goes on many days."

"That's a dead certainty!" replied Sigbee. And there was no howl of protest raised at this appalling joke.

They had divided themselves into watches when it became dark, Hal Mackenzie and Sigbee taking one watch, Jim Holdsworth and Pat O'Hara taking the other. The two last-named had from eight o'clock until midnight, while Hal and the American went down into the cabin to try and snatch a little sleep.

About an hour before midnight the gale seemed to have reached its utmost pitch of fury. O'Hara was at the wheel. Jim was on the look-out on the forecastle, lying flat down, that being the only safe position in such an exposed place. Suddenly the vessel, struck by a heavy sea, gave a most frightful lurch, which very nearly shot Jim overboard.

At the same instant, with a loud report, the sail blew clean out of the bolt-ropes, and rained in the darkness. Hal and Sigbee came rushing up from the cabin.

"Great Scott, I thought she was going to turn turtle!" exclaimed Hal.

"She's a bit too acrobatic for me," replied Jim. "Now, if I'd had pork sausages for supper instead of plain cold water, that buck-jumping would have finished me. As it is, I haven't collected my scattered wits yet."

"Shut up, and be serious for a few minutes," returned Hal. "What's become of the sail? Blown away?"

"Nothing more sure," said Jim. "A report like a gun, a flicker of white, and then nothing but a blank space where it had been."

"There was something fetched away in the fore-hold," declared Sigbee. "You never heard such a blame clatter. I don't know what it was, and we can't get down to see."

But from that hour the storm abated. It seemed as though it had made a final effort to destroy the sturdy old craft, and having failed, had given up.

"Say, this is where we can shake hands with our lives," continued Sigbee, "coming out of that terrible night-side up. In a few hours I reckon the wind'll have fined down to a calm."

The danger of foundering in the gale had passed, but they were threatened with another peril which they had not counted on—which had never even entered their thoughts.

The discovery was made by Hal, when he was going round the deck just at the break of day. By the fore-hatch he came to a sudden stop, and, cool hand though he was, that which he saw roused his pulses to leap into a furious beating. His mouth went dry.

The hatchmen were on, but from the crevices between them there were coming more of those apocalyptic grey vapours. Smoke! A smell of burning reached his nostrils. He rubbed aft, and shouted down the companion-way:

"Jim! O'Hara! Come on deck at once!"

Sigbee, who was at the wheel, stared at him in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

The other two, roused from their fitful slumbers, came scrambling up the companion-ways. Hal glanced from one to the other.

"I've got a facer for you," he said. "The ship is on fire!"

The Burning of the San Christobel.

It was a facer, and no mistake—the more so as it was not absolutely unexpected. Of all the dangers which they had braced themselves up to meet, this was one which they had never reckoned upon for an instant.

Jim, Sigbee, and O'Hara gazed at each other in blank dismay. But they were not of the breed to waste time in inactivity or useless talk when they were driven into a tight corner.

"Where's the after?" asked Sigbee.

"In the fore hold."

"Gee! That's where I heard that big smash-up. Some kerosene, or inflammable stuff of some sort, must have broken adrift and soaked into the bales of raw cotton. Guess it wouldn't take much to start a bonfire then." But it isn't no use speculating; we've got to get busy and put it out."

"What'll ye be putting it out with?" asked O'Hara.

"Water, of course, you benighted Irishman," replied Sigbee.

"Tis a great idea, the water," retorted O'Hara; "but we'll need something to ladle it up wid. An' there isn't anything on board,avin' a couple of ould tin penkins. They'd hold a lot to put out a fire wid!"

The Irishman was right. There was not a hose, not a bucket on board the derelict—nothing at all that would carry enough water to put out the fire, which most shockingly had got a good grip of the bales of cotton; and there are few things more formidable than such stuff.

Moreover, with the dying down of the wind the sea was calving rapidly, and the waves no longer broke over the decks. So they could not adopt the expedient—a peculiarly risky one in any case—of opening the hatches and letting the sea pour down the hold.

"What's to be done?" asked Jim.

The want of food and all other inconveniences and dangers were forgotten in face of this new peril; but they faced it with the courage which had taken them out of tight places before.

"As we have no means of fighting the fire," replied Hal, "the only thing to be done is to knock up a raft, and stand by to abandon the ship when it gets too hot to hold us."

"Sure," exclaimed Sigbee, "an' we must bustle!"

No more was said, except for the necessary exchange of words when fellows are working, together, as the need for "leading" required no driving home to their comprehension.

The hatches were kept battened down so as to keep the holds as airtight as possible, for if a current of wind got down to the fire the flames would spread with lightning rapidity. As it was, the cargo was undoubtedly well slight for ard, for the smoke was thickening every minute, and a single tongue of flame had leaped up through the fore hatch.

As the decks had been swept clean by the heavy seas of all loose spars and planks, the quartette made their way into the cabin, where they set to work to collect every bit of stuff that would be serviceable in the making of a raft.

Decks were reached off their hinges, bulkheads torn down, and the cabin table unscathed from its fastenings. Then all this material was carried up on deck, where it was strongly fastened together with ropes.

"I've a notion," observed Sigbee, "that that cotton must have been smouldering for days. Then that big lurch set something adrift in the fore peak—a cask of oil, likely enough—which smashed through the partition bulkhead and emptied itself on to the smouldering stuff. Then it'd start into blaze good and proper. Still, that's only guesswork, and I allow we ain't goin' down to investigate so's to learn the truth."

In less than an hour the raft was finished, and launched overboard, with a rope fast to it, so that it could haul astern until it was wanted. It was a queer-looking affair, and not too much room on it if the weather became stormy again; but it would hold together until the ropes rotted, and that would be long after they had any need for it, rescue or no rescue.

The difficulty about carrying their small supply of fresh water was overcome by fastening up a tarpaulin into the form of a bag. It was a clumsy and leaky contrivance, but the best they could manage, for there was neither cask nor bucket, kettle nor pan, left on board the San Christobel.

By this time the flames were roaring high out of the fore hold, and smoke was forcing its way out through every crack of the main hatch, through the pumps, up from the foot of the masts, and apparently from the whole range of the main deck, as though the hull was the mouth of a marine volcano.

The heat was becoming unbearable, and the four castaways got as far aft as they possibly could, where the flames had not yet reached.

(Continued on page 16 of cover.)



MISS MAGGIE RILEY,
Deal.



MISS DORIS SMITH,
Birmingham.



MISS EMMIE BROWN,
Basingstoke.



MISS NELLIE M. BLOUNT,
Leicester.



A LOYAL READER,
Leytonstone.



A KEEN READER,
Liverpool.



MISS L. G. CREIGHTON,
Belfast.



MISS AGNES M. MARTIN,
Montreal, Canada.



MISS M. BELL,
Gateshead.



MISS MINNIE DOLBIN.



A FAITHFUL READER IN
FANCY COSTUME.



MISS IVY NORRIS,
Clapton Park.



MISS KITTY RILEY,
Deal.



MISS ESME PRESTON,
Aberdare.



MISS NELLIE DORRELL.



A LOVER OF THE
"MAGNET," Leytonstone.



MISS WINIFRED WATTON,
Birmingham.



MISS ELSIE VAUGHAN,
Birmingham.



"A LOVER OF THE
GREYFRIARS BOYS."



MISS M. C. CREIGHTON,
Belfast.



MISS A. J. CREIGHTON,
Belfast.



MISS M. E. BELL,
Belfast.



MISS G. HARDING,
East Ham.



MISS LILY THOMPSON,
Liverpool.

ADVENTURERS FOUR.

(Continued from page 30)

"Bloey," exclaimed O'Hara suddenly, "d'ye know what I'm thinkin'?"

"Oh, don't ask conundrums now, Pat!" said Jim. "We give it up. Tell us the answer!"

"I'm thinkin' that if there's any gaspolder on board this cold packet," continued the Irishman, "we'll be on a sight too close to it when it explodes!"

"Too close!" echoed Sigbee. "Snakes alive! Say, hadn't we better get down on ter that raft, in case—"

"It's not likely there'll be any powder on board," cut in Hal; "but we'll get on to the raft, all the same. We've stuck to the old craft long enough. The docks might blow up any minute with the intense heat under them."

The raft was hauled alongside, and one by one they dropped on to it. There was not a vessel in sight in all the wide expanse of ocean. Then they pushed off from the doomed ship, and the raft drifted away to a safe distance.

The foremast was alight, and was flaming like a torch held up by a giant hand. They had not pushed off any too soon, for presently there was a dull report, followed by a tearing and rending sound. An immense fountain of sparks was hurled up, out of the main hatchway, and there came a dazzling gush of fire, which roared up to a height of fifty feet at least.

Masses of solid planking, all of them burning, were flung into the air, shooting through the smoke like rockets. Then, in a breath, flames leaped from every part of the deck, from the bows to the stern.

It was a grand yet terrible spectacle, and the watchers gazed on it in silence. Each was perhaps thinking they had been lucky in getting the raft made and launched in time.

The sky was still dull and overcast, and the low clouds were saddened by the lurid glare. The San Christobel was a seething mass of fire. Then, all at once, without any warning, she broke in halves, and, as though a magician had waved his wand over the scene, she vanished to a furious hissing, as if a hundred locomotives were blowing off their steam at once.

A few blackened fragments of the wreck tossed upon the sea, and the cloud of smoke and vapour drifted slowly away to leeward.

"She's gone!" exclaimed Jim. "Faith! 'Tis something to be alive, for we can go on hoping we'll be picked up! He looked all round him. "Boat! I never before had any idea the ocean was such a lonely place!" he added.

Squaring Accounts.

Twenty hours had passed since the destruction of the San Christobel, and another day was breaking. It was a dead calm, and that was fortunate, for had it been stormy weather it is doubtful whether the castaways could have clung on to the frail raft.

But they had suffered. The heat of the sun, when the sky had cleared on the previous afternoon, had been little short of torture, exposed as they were to the pitiless rays. They were parched with thirst, yet they dared not take more than a few mouthfuls of their scanty supply of tainted water. Night brought them some relief, but they were weak from want of food. Nothing solid had passed their lips for forty-eight hours.

They were huddled together now on the raft, with scarcely the strength or energy to move, but as the grey light of dawn brightened in the sky Pat O'Hara, who was perhaps the toughest of the four, made an effort, and struggled to his feet.

"Bloey," he croaked, for his voice was nothing more than a harsh croak, "get up, an' look yonder. Meself, I'm not sure but what me eyes are deceavin' me. Maybe I'm seeing a thing what isn't there at all, at all."

Hal rose painfully to his feet. Jim and Sigbee got up into a kneeling position.

"What do you see? Or, what do you fancy— Hurrah! It is—yes, it's a steamer!"

The announcement put new life into them. Jim and Sigbee got on to their feet now, and stared in the direction that Hal was pointing. They rubbed their eyes. There was no mistake. It wasn't a vision.

Not more than a mile away a large steamer was in sight, and she was heading almost straight for the raft. It was impossible she could pass without seeing them, and the castaways gave a cheer. It was, to be sure, a very feeble cheer, and would hardly have been heard a hundred yards off.

Then Jim and O'Hara tore off their coats, and frantically waved them. The steamer's siren gave a shrill blast.

"They've seen us!" gasped Jim. "We're saved! My aunt! I'd like to dance—but I can't!"

"Kegs an' bacon," murmured O'Hara, as though talking to himself. "Coffee. A drop at the cratir. Ho! ho! 'Tis almost worth goin' hungry just to think at it. We'll be in time for breakfast!"

The steamer, which proved to be a British cargo-boat named the Resolute, came to a stop, and a boat was lowered. Four sailors manned the cars, and an officer steered. They pulled alongside the raft.

"My word, you look in a bad way!" exclaimed the officer. "What's happened? Ship foundered, or—? But I won't bother you with questions now. After you've had a decent feed, and a long sleep, you can pitch your yarn to our skipper."

They were helped into the boat, and taken to the Resolute, where they were treated with the utmost kindness. Food was given them, but not too much at first, as that would have done them more harm than good after their long fast.

Then they slept, tucked up comfortably in warm blankets. It was seven o'clock in the evening before Hal awoke, and he was the first to rouse up. The others turned out between that hour and eight, quite ready for the "square meal" which the steward provided for them.

When they had finished, and were feeling quite fit once more, the captain came down into the cabin to hear their story. Hal, after consultation with his comrades, decided to let Captain Brankome know all the main facts of the case, keeping back only the object of their journey. It was just as well that should remain a secret. So he merely explained that they were going on an exploring expedition into the Southern Andes, which statement was the truth—so far as it went.

Captain Brankome listened attentively, making no comment until Hal had finished. Then he let himself go, venting his indignation on the captain of the Heron.

"It's one of the most cowardly things ever I heard of," he exclaimed, "abandoning you as you did, when, by keeping the boat alongside another five minutes, he could have got you all aboard! It goes over me. And what was his object in having only two men in the boat, instead of four?"

Hal, of course, knew with tolerable certainty what Captain Scarth's object was, but he was unable to enlighten Captain Brankome on that point. The two seamen in the boat were fellows he could trust to do and say exactly what he told them, and not wag their tongues too freely when they got on shore. Scarth may not have been certain about other members of the crew.

"I imagine that Captain Scarth was rather too fond of the whisky bottle," said Hal, "and that his nerves were in a rocky state."

"I've met Scarth once or twice," replied Captain Brankome, "as our ships both trade to Buenos Ayres, and I don't cotton to him. He's been mixin' up in some queer things out there, which won't bear investigation. He'd be afraid if his owners knew about them. Well, you'll be able to give him an unpleasant surprise when we get into port to-morrow!"

There was a gleam in Hal's eyes which his chum liked to see. It meant business.

"I mean to!" he said. "We shall have to board the Heron to recover our outfit; and I shall be glad, captain, if you'll say nothing in Buenos Ayres about having picked us up until we've squared up accounts with Scarth. We all feel that we owe him something."

"I'd like to be present," chuckled Captain Brankome, "when you're paying that debt."

About two o'clock on the following afternoon the Resolute hauled into dock in the maritime suburb of the famous South American city. The Heron—which must have arrived two days previously—was in the same dock, but moored on the opposite side.

The four conspirators had made their plans, and kept out of sight in the Resolute's cabin until midnight. Then they stole on shore, and made their way round to the side of the dock where the Heron was lying. They had already assured themselves that Captain Scarth was on board.

On a ship where the discipline was so slack, they were not at all surprised that no sort of watch was kept in harbour. Unperceived, they walked up the gangway planks and reached the deck. There was a light in the cabin, and Jim crept up to the skylight, and looked down.

"All serene!" he whispered. "He's sitting at the table with a pile of dollars in front of him. Counting 'em before he stows 'em away, I suppose."

"I allow he'll get a fit when he sees us," grinned Sigbee. "He'll sure think we're spirits, come to haunt him."

"He'll know I'm rale dead, an' a blood when I get a heath at him," said O'Hara grimly. "Tis arranged I have the Bala-hing av him off!"

"H-a-h! No more talking. Come on!"

(Another grand instalment next week.)