

RAKE'S RIVAL!

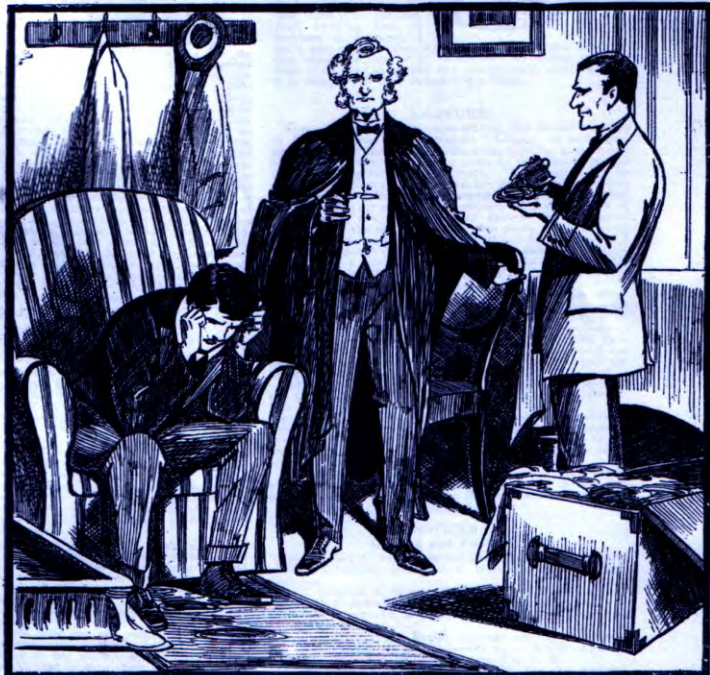
A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale of the Boys of Greyfriars.



The Magnet¹ Library

No. 445. Vol. 19.

AUGUST 19th, 1918.



HIS FATHER'S CRIME!

(An Extraordinary Scene in the Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life in this Issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday, "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday, "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d., COMPLETE LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday, "CHUCKLES," 1 Price 1d., 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:

"A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"

By Frank Richards.

Old readers of the Greyfriars stories will remember that when Harry Wharton came to the school as a new boy he was the unlucky possessor of a very hasty and somewhat sulky temper. By sheer force of will he overcame this weakness. But, even when thus partially mastered, a difficult temper is bound to give trouble to its owner at times; and when he cannot keep it to himself it will also cause trouble to other people. The fine story which appears next week—one of the best that Mr. Richards has ever given us—is in graphic fashion of one of Wharton's infrequent outbreaks. Skinner is the cause of it, and Skinner suffers for it, but another fellow who is quite guileless in the matter suffers more still. This is Frank Nugent, who is too open to reveal the fact that he thinks Wharton has put himself in the wrong by his outbreak. The leader of the Famous Five, and study-mate, and things go so far that he is almost out of No. 1, leaving Nugent in solitary and unhappy possession of it. But in the end everything comes right, just through the good counsel of Marjorie Hazeldene, and just through the nuts of Highcliffe—though, as perhaps best not to say, their interference was not designed for the benefit of Wharton and Nugent. So the two staunch chums come together again, and there is no longer

"A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"

OUR NOTICES.

Up to a few months ago only a small number of notices appeared in these columns, mixed with the Replies in Brief. Then it occurred to me that it would be in the interest of my readers to separate them, so that they were somewhat more prominent. I scarcely anticipated the result which followed. We had been getting a few notices every week, and had been able to print most of them. Occasionally one came along which had to be thrown out because it was not of the type that I cared to insert. But this was rare.

Now more notices come each day than used to turn up each week; and, with our space cut down, it is quite impossible to cope with my further increase. Indeed, the present number is so great that it means a great deal of trouble in finding room for them, and sometimes a good deal of delay before they can appear.

It has been suggested to me that the charging a small fee for each notice would have the effect of reducing the number, and I know that many of my readers would not mind paying a few pence. But there are others of my readers who could not afford to do so, and I am just as anxious to be of help to them as to those who are better off. So—for the present, at least—I have determined to go on making no charge.

But in future I must limit any one notice to one paper, and, unless the circumstances are quite exceptional, to a single insertion. Some of my readers are inclined to ask too much. They forget that to give them more than their share is to deprive others.

I am very pleased to become as familiar with the names and the handwriting of some of my readers as I have become within the last few months, largely by reason of those notices; but I feel that I must put a curb upon their appetite for getting notices inserted. If you want back numbers, make up your minds what you want, and send on the complete list, giving numbers rather than titles whenever possible, as by this means the notice can be made shorter. Don't ask for three or four, and then remember a week or two later that there are others who want. Don't ask for three insertions, or for insertion in papers like the "Penny Popular," in which there are never any notices, or the "Boys' Friend," in which they rarely appear.

Just a word on a minor matter. Many fellows asking for notices begin thus: "Kindly insert —": I know that it is not meant to be rude; they think it businesslike. And, knowing that no rudeness is intended, I don't take offence. But it is the wrong way, and it as well they should be told of it. When you are asking a favour there is no need to grovel; but you certainly should not ask it as though you were demanding a right.



LEAGUES.

Every week there are notices stating that So-and-so wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League; in fact, there are so many of these that I have been thinking a good deal about them lately, and I have come to the conclusion that they are altogether too numerous. You cannot all be officers, you know! It would be far better if some of you joined leagues already in existence instead of trying to start new ones of your own. My impression is that the bulk of these leagues are very short-lived indeed; and I imagine that some of the more ambitious ones prove sad disappointments to their originators. Most of you hardly realise, I think, the amount of hard work that will follow your establishment of a correspondence league open to the whole British Empire. You get fed up with it, and then it falls through.

Some continue, I know; but I believe these are the exceptions to the rule. Hitherto, I have never tried to exercise any control in the matter of these leagues; some day, after the war, we may be able to have a really big central league, with which the smaller ones could join up, and until then I am content to let them go on their own way, for I am sure that their founders are keen on my papers, and are doing all they can to help us.

But I should be glad how if every president or secretary of one of these leagues would oblige me with a little information about it. I should like to know: (a) when it was started; (b) its objects; (c) number of members; (d) whether local or of wider scope; and (e) anything else the founder or representative thinks of real importance and likely to aid me to form judgment as to whether a big league is really wanted.

I am referring to this matter in the "Gem" also, and if any of those interested are not regular readers of that fine paper, I would ask them to get this week's issue.

NOTICES.

Cricket and Football.

Lowerplace C.C. want home and away matches within 2 mile radius of Rochdale.—Hon. Sec., J. Wood, 353, Oldham Road, Rochdale.

H. G. Catterall, 5, Brewery Street, Preston, Lancs., is Hon. Sec. of the Frenchwood Villa F.C., and would be glad to hear from other secretaries in his neighbourhood with a view to arranging matches.

Bromley United F.C., Poplar (average age 15), want home and away matches for coming season within 3 mile radius.—Hon. Sec., W. Clans, 64, Wyvia Street, Poplar, E.

Grove Hill F.C., Middlesbrough, would like to arrange matches for the coming season within a 4 mile radius.—Hon. Sec., W. H. Simpson, c/o, the Tyne & Wear S.S. Co., Ltd., North Street, Middlesbrough.

E. Tinsman, 84, Adelaide Street, South Shields, would be glad to hear from any readers (age 15-16) in his neighbourhood who would like to join a Wednesday's football club.

Your Editor

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

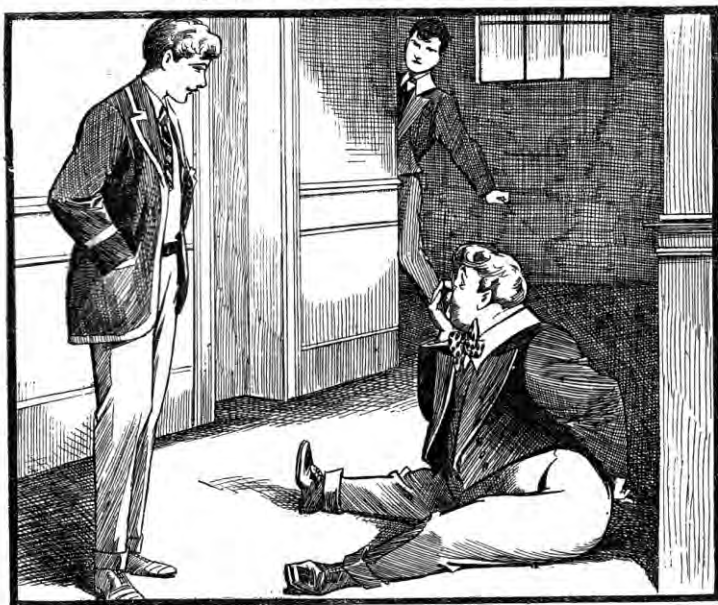


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend.

RAKE'S RIVAL!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Bunter collapsed on the floor with a yelp. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, coming along the passage. (See Chapter 13.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Many Offers!

"COME in!" called out Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove was in his study alone, with a glum expression on his handsome face, when the tap came at the door. The door opened, and Wharton glanced up, expecting to see one of his chums.

But it was not a member of the famous Co. that entered.

"Hallo, Carthew!" said Wharton.

It was Carthew, a new boy in the Remove. He had not been more than a fortnight at Greyfriars, and Wharton was rather surprised by the visit. He had not seen very much of Carthew, and what little he had seen he had not liked. Carthew was very keen on cricket, but otherwise he did not seem to possess many qualities to recommend him to his Form-fellows.

Carthew nodded genially.

"I hope I'm not interrupting you, Wharton?"

"Well, yes, you are," said Harry. "But it doesn't matter. I'm going over the cricket list. I dare say you know I'm in rather a fix, with four of the fellows going away before the Redclyffe match comes off. I've got to fill the places in the eleven. But go ahead—what is it?"

Carthew glanced at the paper Wharton had been poring over.

"As a matter of fact, it was the cricket I came to speak to you about," he said. "You'll be short of players for the Redclyffe match."

Wharton nodded.

"I hear that Bull and Peter Todd and Hurree Singh will be away at the time of the match."

"That's so. Toddy's uncle Benjamin is ill, and he's gone home with Alonzo to stay with him. We shouldn't miss Alonzo much, so far as cricket's concerned," added Wharton, with a smile; "but Peter's another matter. And Hurree Singh has gone on a visit to a giddy rajah who's over here in connection with the Indian contingents, and he's taken Johnny Bull with him. It's rather bad luck, just before the Redclyffe match."

"So I heard. I was wondering if you'd give me a chance?" Wharton stared at him.

"You—a new kid!"

"Well, I've been here a couple of weeks," said Carthew. "I've stuck to the cricket-practice pretty hard, you'll admit."

"Yes, that's so; and you've shown good form," said Wharton. "I might put you down as a reserve."

"I'd rather play in the eleven."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I dare say you would! So would a good many other fellows in the Remove. But a cricket captain has to put in the best material he can dig up. I'm putting in Rake, I think. Rake's good stuff."

Carthew frowned.

"I really think you might give me a chance," he said. "I'm a better cricketer than Dick Rake, any day!"

"I don't think so," said Harry curtly. "Anyway, I'll give you a chance. There's going to be a scratch match on Wednesday afternoon—to-morrow—and you can play in that, if you like. If you show better form than Rake, you will have a chance. It depends on who's the best man."

"Well, that's good enough," said Carthew, with a look of satisfaction. "I feel pretty certain that I'm the better man—in fact, miles ahead of anything that Rake can do."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" said a voice at the door, as Bob Cherry looked in. "Still worrying about that cricket list, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing. "If I took Carthew at his own valuation, though, there wouldn't be any more trouble." Carthew's eyes gleamed for a moment, but he did not speak, and he stepped out of the study, leaving the chums of the Remove to themselves.

"Of course, you'll play Rake!" said Bob. "He's far away better than that new chap, I should say."

"I think so," said Harry. "But I'll give Carthew a chance to show what he can do in the practice match to-morrow. I must say it's rather a cheek of a new kid to think of getting into the Form eleven right away."

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter blinked into the study through his big spectacles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Got your postal-order?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No; it's been delayed owing to this conscription business, I think," said Bunter. "Never mind that. I hear you're short of players for the Redclyffe match, Wharton?"

"Quite so."

"I suppose you'll put in the best men you can find?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You'd like a really good, all-round player—a chap who's equally good at batting, bowling, and fielding?"

"That's what!"

"Then you can put my name down," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm quite willing to play in the Redclyffe match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at the chums of the Remove. He never could understand why his claims to be a cricketer evoked nothing but laughter.

"Hallo! What's the joke?" asked Dick Rake, putting his head into the study.

"Bunter's offered his services for the Redclyffe match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rake.

"Oh, really, Rake—"

The Removites roared. Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at them.

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"Look here, do you want me to play against Redclyffe, or do you not?" he demanded.

"Not!" chuckled Wharton.

"Not!" Inky would remark, the notfulness is terrific!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, if you choose to leave out your best man through sheer jealousy, I wash my hands of the result!" said Bunter loftily.

"Do!" said Bob. "They need a wash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and rolled out of the study. He rolled into Fisher T. Fish, who was just entering, and there was a yell from the Yankee junior.

"Yoop! You clumsy jay!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you Yankee bouncer!" granted Bunter.

"I guess I'd mop up the passage with you if—if I had time!" growled Fisher T. Fish; and he went into the study.

Wharton pointed to the door.

"Cut off! Bury!" he said briefly.

"I guess I've got to talk to you, Wharton. I hear you're hard up for players for the Redclyffe match."

"Not exactly hard up," said Wharton. "We've got lots to choose from."

"I guess you can't leave out a first-class player, all the same. I'm ready to play, if you like."

"You're too good, Fishy," said Bob Cherry. "Are you really, truly, sincerely ready to place your invaluable services at our disposal?"

"Yep."

"You're too generous!" said Rake.

"I guess I'm the galoot you want, and I'm ready!" said Fish. "I hear that Carthew is talking of squeezing into the eleven. A new jay, by gum! But I'm your man, I calculate. You know how I play cricket."

"We do!" said Wharton gravely.

"We do!" said Bob Cherry, with owl-like seriousness.

"Then you'd better rope me in while you've got a chance," said Fish. "With all his Yankee cuteness, Fisher T. Fish did not perceive that the Removites were pulling his transatlantic leg."

"I'm your antelope, with the wool on. And as one good turn deserves another, I guess the Form club ought to stand my expenses."

"Wha-a-at!"

"The labourer is worthy of his hire, I guess," said Fish. "I'm not playing cricket for my health. A really first-class player is entitled to five bob for his trouble—what?"

"Make it ten!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"A quid!" said Rake.

"A fiver!" said Wharton. "You'd be just as likely to get it, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It dawned upon Fisher T. Fish then that his Yankee leg was being pulled.

"Look hyer, you jays—" he began warmly. "Hallo! Leggo my year, Bob Cherry! Why, I'll make potato-scrappings of you, you galoot! Yarrah!"

Bob Cherry did not let go Fishy's ear. He led him into the passage by his auricular appendage and left him there, rubbing his ear and looking surprised. Bob went back into the study.

"You—your galoot!" roared Fish indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to mop you up, you jay! You slab-sided mugwump!"

"Come in, and I'll give you a chance!" said Bob, from the study.

But Fisher T. Fish went down the passage instead.

"I'm getting fed-up with the offers to play," said Wharton, laughing. "I've made up the eleven, really, and it's only a question of the last place—whether Rake has it—"

"No question about that, surely!" said Rake.

"Well, we shall see in the trial match."

"Oh, all serene!"

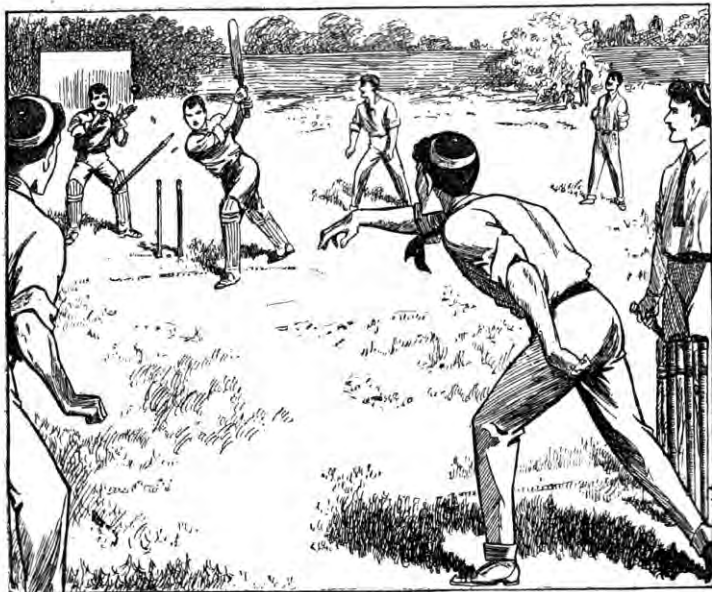
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth looked in, with a condescending smile upon his face. The Removites grinned; they could guess what was coming. Coker's services as a cricketer were not wanted in his own Form, and wherever the great Coker offered them they were declined with thanks.

"I hear you want players for your little match," said Coker generally. "I'm willing to do you a good turn. Rather a come-down to play with fags, but I'm a good-natured chap. I'm your man. Why, what—hallo! Great Scott!"

Bump!

Coker sat down in the passage, deposited there by three pairs of hands, and wondering whether there had been an earthquake. The door of No. 1 Study slammed on him.



The ball came down with a twist on it that completely baffled the unfortunate batsman; and while the glancing willow swept the air, the middle stump gracefully reeled on the ground. Out! (See Chapter 14.)

Horace Coker picked himself up, and went his way, making remarks about the Remove in general, and Harry Wharton & Co. in particular, that were quite Hunnish. A few minutes later a notice appeared, pinned on the study door, in Harry Wharton's handwriting:

"No cricketers wanted! Go and eat coke!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Rivals of the Remove!

"WELL caught, Rake!" There was a crowd of Removites on Little Side the following afternoon.

Harry Wharton was looking on at the trial match with a keen eye, not playing himself.

Wharton was very keen about making up a first-class team for the Redclyffe match, and his task was unusually difficult, as three of his best players were away. It was understood that the vacant places were to go to the fellows who shaped best in the trial match, and all of them were on their mettle.

Carthew, the new Removite, was in the scratch team, which was playing the Remove eleven.

He was batting now for the scratch side, and Dick Rake was bowling against him.

Most of the Remove who were not in one eleven or the other were looking on.

Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish looked on with decidedly disparaging expressions. They felt that the Remove team would never be quite up to the mark with their invaluable THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 445.

selves left out. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were also there, wearing superior smiles. But, as a matter of fact, the cricket in the trial match was miles ahead of anything the heroes of the Fourth could have shown. The Remove were a cricketing Form, and under Harry Wharton's captaincy they had become splendid exponents of the grand old game.

Arthur Carthew had gone to the wicket with something of a swagger. The new fellow evidently had a good opinion of himself as a cricketer. Harry Wharton frowned a little as he watched him. He knew that Carthew could play cricket, but he disliked swank in a player; and he knew, too, that pride goes before a fall. The ball came down from Dick Rake, and Carthew sent it flying; and then there was a jump by the bowler, a click, and the ball rested in his palm. Carthew was caught and bowled! And the juniors round the cricket-field shouted their approval.

"Well caught!"

"Well done, Rake!"

"I guess that was slick," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Not so slick as I should have done it, I calculate, but it was some slick."

"Good man, Rake!" said Harry Wharton approvingly. "Jolly good man!"

Rake was popular in the Remove, and indeed among the juniors of Grayfriars generally. Temple, Dabney & Co. joined in the shout that greeted the catch.

"Well caught, sir!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Good man!"

The shout went up from every part of the field, and Dick Rake's handsome face flushed with pleasure. He tossed the ball skyward, and caught it again as it came down straight in a die.

And Arthur Carthew's grasp tightened upon the cane handle of his bat, and for a moment he looked as though he would dearly like to use it to fell to the earth the bowler who had so neatly caught him. He gritted his teeth as the shout which Rake's exploit had called forth rolled over the Greifryns ground.

So much depended upon how he shaped in this match.

The Remove captain was there, his eagle eye here, there, and everywhere, keenly noting the form of every player. And Carthew had come out with the full intention of showing Wharton and all Greifryns that what he didn't know about cricket wasn't worth knowing, and the very first ball of the over Dick Rake had caught him, and he had to go without breaking his duck. And he went back to the pavilion the voices of some of the fags were heard audibly inquiring the price of ducks' eggs.

He realised very clearly that his chances of getting into the Remove eleven had gone down to zero. And, as if to fill the cup of his humiliation to overflowing, it had been Rake, his especial rival, who had spoiled his chance by that unlucky catch.

And Arthur Carthew stood watching the white figures dotting the green, and especially the well-set-up form of Dick Rake, with anger and malice in his heart.

Another roar went up.

Rake was still bowling. He was pitted against Bob Cherry. But Bob's skill was not proof against the cunning of the bowler. A ball came down that looked like being a wide, and curled in just where Bob least expected it, and before he knew where he was, his off-stump was leaning back, with an intoxicated look, and the balls were down.

"Oh, well bowled!"

Carthew gritted his teeth as the shout rang in his ears. Bob went back with a rueful look.

Wharton gave a joyous chuckle.

"How that kid shapes, Bob! If his batting's anything like up to his fielding and bowling, I shan't think twice about giving him Johnny Bull's place."

"You'll soon see, old chap. That's last man in."

"Right, be!"

Carthew heard every word, and his eyes burned as he listened. He had always disliked Dick Rake, but at this moment he hated him.

The innings was over. The side was out for 60, of which Carthew had contributed a single run.

Carthew moved away with a black scowl on his face.

But he had one chance left of lowering Rake's colours. He was a good bowler, and he was determined that Rake should not cut so good a figure at the wicket if he could possibly prevent it. He forgot that in a mood of jealous bitterness he was at all likely to do his best work.

The crowd of Removites looked on with great interest when Rake opened the innings with Frank Nugent. It was known that Rake had been working hard to fit himself for the Remove eleven, and had put in nearly every spare hour at the nets, but he was showing unexpected form. Everybody was curious to see how he would shape at the wicket. And with the single exception of Carthew, the good wishes of the crowd were with him.

Carthew went on to bowl against Rake. He took a little run and sent down a ball with lightning velocity. But Rake was ready for it. The bat flashed, and there was a crack like a pistol-shot, and the leather went on a journey, past point and cover-point, and clear over the boundary.

A boundary from the first ball of the over! No wonder the onlookers shouted.

Carthew gritted his teeth. Wharton was looking at him, and as he caught the expression upon the bowler's face the captain's brow contracted a little. There was nothing the captain of the Remove detected so much as an unportsmanlike spirit, and Carthew's very visible temper was eminently unportsmanlike.

Carthew sent down the next ball with more caution. It screwed in from the off with a cunning twist which had baffled many a batsman ere now. But Rake was all eyes. There was a click, and the ball dropped dead on the crease.

The rest of the over brought Rake five runs. Carthew, striving to conceal his chagrin, but not succeeding very well, chuckled the leather to Tom Brown as they crossed over.

Soon, however, he was again bowling against his rival. He tried him with every kind of ball, but whatever he sent down, Rake dealt with, piling up the runs. Carthew's inward fury was not conducive to good bowling, and he was not showing his best form, and the knowledge that he was contributing in this way to Rake's triumph made him angrier still.

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And when Rake's wicket finally went down, for nearly forty runs, it was not due to Carthew, the batsman being run out by Morgan in a gallant attempt at scoring a five.

Rake was loudly cheered as he went off, and he deserved it. There were no two opinions now as to whether he would play against Redclyffe. There could not be the slightest doubt that Wharton would be glad to have such a recruit.

And when the game was over, Harry Wharton interviewed Rake upon that subject.

"Keep up your present form, Rake, and you will have your cap for the Remove eleven," he said; "I promise you that much."

Rake flushed with pleasure.

"I'll do my best, Wharton," he said earnestly.

"He'll do my best," the captain of the Remove remarked, as he walked away with his chum. "I had thought of Carthew, too, but—Ah, there he is. I want to speak a word or two to that young bunder. Carthew!"

Carthew turned round.

"Yes!"

"I've got a bone to pick with you, kid. You lost your temper when Rake caught you out, and that spoiled your play through the game. That's unportsmanlike. It would be bad enough in a kid in the Third Form! Don't be an ass!"

Carthew got this down as best he could. The look he cast after the captain of the Remove was by no means amiable, and it is safe to say that Wharton's remarks did not improve his feelings towards Dick Rake.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter in Trouble!

"DON'T! 'Ow-yow!"

"You little rat, I'll teach you to pry into my letters!"

"I didn't mean—"

"Take that, and that—"

"Oh, don't—don't!"

Dick Rake heard it all as he passed the door of Arthur Carthew's study, and a dark look came over his face. For a moment he paused and hesitated, and then he opened the door and stepped into the study.

Carthew looked up with a glare of anger. He was holding Billy Bunter by the collar, and thrashing him savagely with a long strap, and at every blow Bunter roared like a bull.

"What do you want here, Rake? You've no business in my study."

Rake's eyes glinted.

"Yes, I have, when you are acting like a brute."

"If you take it upon yourself to interfere between me and this little beast—"

"You have no right to treat him like that. I don't know what he has done—"

"I caught the little hound reading a letter of mine!"

"Well, he ought to be licked for doing that. Still, you might draw it mild," said Rake.

"I think I'm the best judge of that," replied Carthew tartly. "And you'll obliged me, Rake, by clearing out of my study and minding your own business."

"You've licked him quite enough."

"That's not my opinion."

And up went the strap again. Bunter gave an anguished howl of anticipation.

Dick Rake took a step forward.

"Carthew, I tell you I won't stand it! You have no right to treat the chap like that!"

Carthew sneered, and the strap came down. Billy Bunter roared and wriggled. Rake's eyes blazed. In a moment his grasp was on Carthew's wrist, and the strap was wrenched away and flung out into the corridor. It required all Rake's self-control to keep from planting his fist full in the bully's face.

Carthew was pale with rage.

"You—you hound! How dare you interfere! For two pines I'd—"

"You'd what? If you want to put up your fists to a fellow your own size, you've only got to say the word!" exclaimed Rake.

For a moment Carthew seemed about to hurl himself at Rake. But he thought better of it.

"I want no quarrel with you, Rake. You have no right to interfere between me and that fat rotter!"

"I tell you one thing, Carthew, and that is, that, if I find you ill-using Bunter again, I'll give you a licking! So look out! You'd better come with me Billy!"

And Rake strode from the study, with the Owl gladly following him.

"I'll be even with you for this, Rake!" said Carthew, with his teeth.

"Rats!" was Rake's cheerful reply.

"Thanks, Rake! That's awfully good of you!" stammered Bunter, in the corridor. "Oh, I say, the beast did lay it on!"

"Serve you right!" replied Rake severely. "What do you mean by looking into another fellow's letters? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Well, I only took a little peep," said Bunter. "It wasn't worth making a fuss about—only a letter from his father asking Carthew to meet him at the—"

"Don't tell me what was in it, you fat rascal! And look here, you fat boulder, you'd better stop these rotten tricks!" growled Rake. "Blest if I know what I chipped in for, come to think of it!"

"Oh, really, Rake—"

"Today's looked you often enough for it, and I've a jolly good mind to take on Toddy's job while he's away."

Billy Bunter backed away promptly.

"I say, you know, don't be a beast, Rake! That new chap Carthew wants a licking—putting on all these blessed airs when he's only been at Greyfriars a week or two! Why don't you lick him?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Rake, you could lick him," said Billy Bunter persuasively. "I'll hold your jacket if you like!"

Rake laughed.

"I believe he's a rotten lunk, really, you know," said Bunter, rubbing his fat shoulders where Arthur Carthew's strap had fallen. "You could simply mop him up, Rake!"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Rake. "What were you doing in his study at all, you fat boulder?"

"I—I only went in to ask him to cash a postal order for me," said Bunter. "He wasn't there, and the letter was on his table. I didn't really look at it, but I happened to stoop down to tie my shoelace at the same moment, and so—so I happened to see that it was a letter from his father—by sheer chance, of course. I say, Rake!"

"Well, you fat worm!"

"I say, what do you think Carthew's father is asking him to meet him outside Greyfriars for? Why can't he come to the school?" said Billy Bunter inquisitively. "I think that's rather queer myself."

The next moment William George Bunter gave a loud howl as Rake's finger and thumb closed on his ear.

"Yarchoo! Leggo! Wharrer you at?"

"You inquisitive little beast!" said Rake, in measured tones. "What business is it of yours what Carthew's father writes to him, or where he meets him?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"I'm jolly sorry now that I chipped in!" growled Rake. "If Carthew hadn't been giving it to you too hard, you fat, spying boulder, it was just what you wanted!"

"Oh, really, Rake, I hope you don't think I would read a fellow's letter!" gasped Bunter, wringing. "Leggo my ear! I'd scorn such a thing, really! Still, it's jolly queer about Carthew's father meeting him in the wood—"

"Yarchoo!"

Billy Bunter howled as Rake shoved him against the wall and left him there.

The fat junior set his spectacles straight upon his fat little nose and blinked after Dick Rake.

"Beast! Grooh! Yow-ow! It's jolly queer that Carthew flew into such a temper because I happened to see his father's letter by chance. Yow-ow! Rotter! And—the beast won't cash my postal-order!"

Billy Bunter rolled back to Carthew's door, and hesitated. Fellows who knew Bunter knew all about his postal-order; but new boys were Bunter's game. Carthew was a new boy, and Bunter felt it as a sense of personal injury that Carthew declined to cash—in advance—his celebrated postal-order, which was always coming, but never arrived.

He blinked into the study at last. Carthew looked at him with a frown.

"You fat worm! Get out!"

"I say, Carthew, don't be waxy, you know," said Bunter, keeping at a cautious distance. "I—I say, I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"What?"

"It's bound to arrive to-night, or to-morrow morning at the latest. If you'd care to lend me five bob—"

"Yarchoo!"

Carthew caught up a cricket-stump and made a lunge at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove vanished down the passage at record speed.

The new junior slammed the door, tossed the stamp into a corner, and stared moodily out of the window. He scowled as he caught sight of Dick Rake crossing the Close to the gates. Rake paused to speak to Harry Wharmoe and Bob Cherry in the Close, and then went out of the gates. At his study window Arthur Carthew shook his fist after the unconscious junior.

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NEXT

MONDAY—

"A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Startling News!

DICK RAKE, quite unconscious of the savage glance bent upon him, swung out of the Greyfriars gateway, and sauntered away towards Friardale. Rake's face was very sunny and cheery. He crossed the stile in the lane, and took the short cut through the wood to the village.

A narrow footpath ran through the heart of the wood under the shade of ancient elms and beeches. Rake followed it with his quick, springy stride, and he had reached a point about half-way to Friardale, when a sudden rustle in the thicket startled him.

He looked round, slackening his pace, and uttered an exclamation as he saw a white, haggard face peering at him from the bushes.

It disappeared the next moment, but in that fleeting glance Rake had recognised it.

"Tom!"

He sprang into the thicket, and in a moment stood face to face with the one who was lurking there.

"Tom, how came you here?"

It was a lad about three years older than himself who stood before him, clad in blazer and flannels. He was trembling with mingled fear and excitement.

"Dick, is it really you? I hardly dared hope it was."

"What's the matter, Tom?" Rake seized the shaking hand of his cousin in his own strong palm. "What on earth brings you here in such a state? Is anything wrong?"

"Come into the wood, and I'll tell you," said Tom Rake, with a wild, nervous glance towards the path. "Someone may pass and see us."

"Well, why shouldn't they?"

"Oh, Dick, I'm in fearful trouble!"

With a dull, leaden weight at his heart Rake followed his cousin deeper into the wood.

Tom's look and words were sufficient to show him that something was wrong—terribly wrong. What it was he could not guess. But his mind was possessed by dark forebodings.

Tom stopped at last, in the depths of the wood. He stood facing Rake, who looked at him with uneasy questioning in his glance.

"I'm innocent, Dick!"

Rake started.

"Innocent, Tom?"

"Yes, yes. Say you believe me, Dick!" cried the other, almost hysterically. "If you don't believe me, I shall go mad!"

Rake gripped his hand.

"Of course I believe you, Tom, old fellow! What are you accused of? Who has dared to accuse you?"

"They say—oh, Dick—someone has robbed the bank, and they say that I—"

"He broke off, and burst into passionate sobbing. "Oh, Dick, I'm as innocent as a baby!"

"I know you are, Tom!" said Dick loyally. "But—but what could have led them to make such a ghastly mistake?"

"I—I— It seems like a horrible dream! The bank was entered in the night, and the safe opened with a key, and Mr. Carthew's key was found in the pocket of my overcoat. Heaven knows how it got there! I swear I never saw it till it was found there. And—an old envelope was picked up near the safe—addressed to me. It was one you had sent me, and I had thrown it away. But yesterday morning I was called into the manager's room, and he said—"

"Oh, Dick!"

And Tom Rake broke off again.

Rake was almost stunned. The worst of his anticipations had not been anything like this.

Tom gasped.

"I am innocent, Dick!"

"I know you are, old chap. But they believe—"

"They believe me guilty. I broke down when the manager spoke to me. It—it all seemed so horrible. He advised me to confess, and to tell him where the money was, and then he would deal with me as gently as he possibly could. Mr. Carthew—that's our cashier—spoke to me in the same way. They both believed me guilty, and I could hardly stammer out that I was innocent, and then they both became very impatient. But Mr. Carthew was very kind—it was really through him that I had an opportunity of slipping away before the police came—and—and so I escaped, Dick."

"That wasn't a wise thing to do, Tom. It will make the case look blacker against you, I am afraid."

"But to go to prison, Dick!" cried Tom, with a shudder.

"It would kill me. I thought of the court, and the crowd of faces, and I couldn't bear it. Besides, they would have found

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me guilty. Mr. Carthew said that the proofs were complete, and—

"But the police! They will be looking for you, then?" cried Rake, unable to repress a shudder at the thought.

Tom nodded.

"I came here, Dick. I hoped to be able to get to see you. I knew you would help me if you could."

"And I will, Tom, old fellow. I'll do anything for you! You must keep away from the police until this horrible thing is cleared up. When did you get here?"

"Last night."

"You were in the wood all night!" exclaimed Rake.

"Better than in prison!" muttered Tom.

Rake put his hand to his forehead. He tried to think. What was to be done?

The police were hunting for his cousin. Whether Tom had done wisely or not in running away, he must be saved from arrest now. And Rake must save him.

That he might be infringing the law by helping the hapless fugitive did not then occur to Rake. But if it had it would not have made any difference to him.

"Mr. Carthew said that I had no mercy to expect unless I restored the notes," Tom went on brokenly. "How could I restore them, when I had never seen them? They wouldn't listen to me."

"How much was stolen, Tom?"

"Ten thousand pounds, all in notes."

"Of course, they have the numbers!" exclaimed Rake hopefully. "That may lead to the detection of the real thief, when he tries to pass them. I suppose he's sure to do so, sooner or later."

"Oh, Dick, you don't know how grateful I am!" cried Tom. "I was half afraid that—that— But if you had believed me guilty I think I should have gone out of my senses."

"No fear of that, old fellow," said Rake cheerily. "You can rely upon me to stand by you. But now the question is, where can you lie low for a time, till the scent grows cold?"

"There's the old gipsy's hut, Dick. It's in the middle of the wood. Suppose I were to stay there."

"But it's so horribly lonely, Tom."

"All the better."

"Yes, but at night."

"I shan't mind the loneliness. I'm not afraid of the dark. I'm not afraid of anything but the police," said Tom, with a shudder. "You can bring me some tummy, Dick, and some things to make me a bed."

"I'll go to the village now and get the grub, Tom. Poor old chap, you must be famished. I won't lose a second. Go back to the old hut, and wait for me there."

And Rake wrung his cousin's hand, and hurried away.

In a few minutes he burst from the thicket into the footpath, and as he did so he came face to face with Arthur Carthew. He started back with a cry, and then, in his alarm and excitement, sprang forward and grasped the other by the shoulder.

"What are you doing here?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Strange Meeting!

"WHAT are you doing here, Carthew?"

Rake's eyes blazed as he put the question.

What with the distress Tom's story had caused him, and his fears for his cousin's safety, his nerves were in a highly-strung state, and he did not reason with his usual clear judgment.

The sudden encounter with Carthew, so close to the spot where he had parted from Tom, had startled him and thrown him off his guard, and the terrible thought had rushed into his mind that Carthew had been spying upon him, and perhaps knew of Tom's presence in the wood. And if that had been the case, Rake knew what little consideration he had to expect from the new Removite.

But Carthew's look of absolute amazement as he tore himself away from the Rake's grasp and started back at once warned Rake that he had committed a blunder.

"What the dickens do you mean, Rake, jumping on a fellow like that?" exclaimed Carthew. "Have you gone dotty?"

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered Rake. "I'm sorry. You startled me."

"Not so much as you startled me, confound you!" growled Carthew. "What have you been up to in the wood?"

At this question Rake turned pale, and Carthew, who was watching him involuntarily, noted it, and wondered.

"Nothing," said Rake uneasily. "What should I be up to?"

"You startled me. I must be going. Ta-ta!"

He felt that he had betrayed himself already. He had not THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 443.

wholly recovered his self-control, and he was anxious to get away from Carthew's keen, searching eyes. Carthew looked after him as he hurried down the footpath towards the village. The expression of wonder deepened in his face.

"What does it mean? He was frightened out of his wits when he saw me. What's his little game? There's a mystery here."

He looked into the shadowy wood whence Rake had emerged, and then glanced at his watch.

"No time to see about it now, or I shall be late for the pater. But I'll keep my eye on Rake, by gum!"

And he followed, at a less hurried pace, the direction taken by Rake. He did not, however, go to the village. At a place where a second footpath crossed the one he was following he turned off to the right, and as he advanced the sound of flowing water fell upon his ears.

Where a little stream flowed through a gully in the depths of Friardale Wood a rustic bridge spanned the rippling water. It was a secluded and picturesque spot, shadowed by huge trees, through the foliage of which the slanting sun-rays fell.

A man was standing upon the bridge smoking a cigar. He was a tall man, in a black frock-coat, with a trim beard, and a hard, cold face. There was sufficient resemblance between his hard features and those of the boy coming towards him to show that they were related.

"I've been waiting for you, Arthur."

"Couldn't help it, dad. You told me in your letter to be particular not to let anyone know where I was coming, or whom I was to meet, and I had to do some dodging."

"But you have succeeded in keeping the matter secret?"

"Oh, yes! But what's the trouble?" asked Carthew curiously. "Why couldn't you come to the school, if you wanted to see me?"

"For excellent reasons, my son. It is of the first importance that this meeting of ours should be kept a secret."

"I can't see why."

"It isn't necessary for you to see it," replied Mr. Carthew. "But I will tell you something, in case you should be tempted to chatter too freely. Your whole prospects may depend upon your discretion in this matter."

"My whole prospects!" repeated Carthew wonderingly.

"Yes, and mine."

"But why did you want to see me?"

"To give this packet into your charge."

And Mr. Carthew drew a bulky package from within his coat and placed it in his son's hand.

Carthew received it with deepening wonder.

"What does it contain?"

"Valuable documents, relating to a law case in which the bank is concerned," replied his father. "It will be necessary for me to swear, at the proper time, that these documents are not in my possession. It is possible that a search may be made for them, and so it is not safe for me to have them where they might be found. But in your locker at Greyfriars College they will be safe—eh?"

"Oh, yes, I can shove them into a secret place easily enough! But what are they?"

"Don't ask me any questions, Arthur, and I'll tell you no lies," replied Carthew senior blandly. "Keep the papers hidden, and keep the secret, and you'll do. But don't be curious. It will serve no purpose to tell you the particulars, and you will be better off, really, to know nothing!"

Carthew nodded.

"All right, dad; but it looks to me like a risky business!"

"No risk for you, my boy. I'll tell you this much—if the affair I'm engaged in turns out satisfactory, I expect to be a good deal richer than I am now, and when the time comes for you to go up to Oxford, you shall cut a dash with the best of them. But if you should be fool enough to let out this secret, you'll never go to Oxford at all—you'll have to leave Greyfriars, and begin life at a desk at a pound a week. I suppose I needn't say more!"

"You may depend upon me," replied Carthew, wondering and uneasy. "But one good turn deserves another, dad. I've run through my pocket-money!"

Carthew laughed, and, taking out a pound note, he placed it in his son's hand.

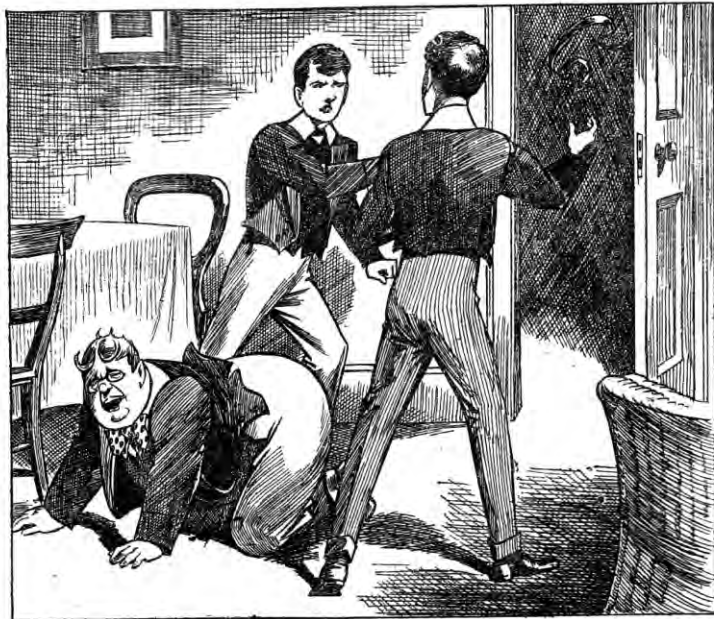
"Take that, my boy; and I will double your pocket-money so long as you have that packet under your charge. Now you'd better go straight back to school, and put it in a safe place, and remember to keep it always under lock and key. Luck it somewhere out of sight to carry it!"

"All right!"

"And now you'd better be off. Good-bye!"

And, shaking hands with his son, Mr. Carthew turned and walked rapidly away. Carthew, with the packet concealed under his jacket, went slowly back towards the school.

He was in a puzzled mood. He did not wholly believe his



Billy Bunter roared and wriggled as the strap came down again. Rake's eyes blazed, and in a moment his grasp was on Carthew's wrist, and the strap was wrenched away and flung out into the corridor. (See Chapter 3.)

father's explanation as to what was in the packet. That some risky game was being played he felt sure; and he knew that more than once Mr. Carthew, the sedate and respectable cashier of the City and County Bank, had been engaged in speculations of a doubtful character, and had sailed very near to the wind.

But he reflected that it was no business of his. The pater knew how to take care of himself, and that was all that mattered—from Carthew's point of view. And if he could make a big coup, in the benefits of which his son was to share, Carthew had no objection in the world to doing a little to help him.

As for keeping the packet hidden, that would be easy enough. In his study there was a locker, with a lock and key. Nobody ever went to it but himself.

As Mr. Carthew disappeared in one direction and the junior in the other, the little bridge was left solitary in the shadow of the woods.

But not for long.

A figure came clambering up the steep bank of the stream, emerging from underneath the bridge.

It was the figure of Billy Bunter.

In spite of the thrashing Carthew had given him, Bunter's insatiable curiosity was as strong upon him as ever.

In fact, it is probable that Carthew's excessive anger on the occasion of his reading the letter had made the inquisitive Owl attach more importance to it than he would otherwise have done.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"

Although he had told Rake that he had had only a peep at the letter, he had, as a matter of fact, read almost the whole of it, and the rendezvous arranged by Mr. Carthew had a mysterious look which had interested him greatly.

And the result of it was that he had determined to be beforehand at the rendezvous, and when Mr. Carthew had reached the bridge in Friarale Wood that evening, Billy Bunter had been hidden underneath it, crouching on the steep bank just above the water.

Being so close to the talkers, he had naturally overheard every word they uttered, and his amazement was great. When at length he ventured out of his hiding-place and started off towards the college, his face was ablaze with excitement.

He had come there in the hope of satisfying his curiosity; but now it was more strongly excited than ever. What was in the mysterious packet which Mr. Carthew had passed to his son? Bunter would have given a lot to know.

And he had already resolved that by hook or by crook he would find out.

But Bunter, who was generally as loquacious as he was inquisitive, realised that he must deny himself the pleasure of taking the whole Remove into his confidence about what he had heard. It was not only that Carthew would thrash him without mercy if he should learn how the inquisitive Owl had spied upon him. That alone would not have deterred Bunter. But he reflected that strict secrecy would be

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necessary in order to obtain an opportunity of viewing the contents of the packet. And so Bunter, for once in his life, was as secret as the grave, and Carthew had not the slightest suspicion that the Owl of the Remove was on the track.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Discovery!

"RAKE!"

No reply.
"Rake!"
Mr. Quelch's voice was a little louder. The boys looked at each other. Rake was never late for calling-out. Rake was not there.

"Has anyone seen Rake?" asked Mr. Quelch.
"I have sir," replied Carthew. "I saw him in Friarale Wood about two hours ago."
"Has anyone seen him since?"

No reply.
Mr. Quelch frowned and, looking a little puzzled, he went on with the roll-call. He had just finished when Rake, looking hot and tired, came in.
Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows a little.
"You are late, Rake."

"I am very sorry, sir," said Rake, a little breathlessly. It was plain that he had been running, and running hard. "I couldn't help it, sir."

The master of the Remove smiled slightly.
"I quite believe that, Rake," he said. "Never mind, you are not usually unpunctual; we will let it pass."
"Thank you, sir!" said Rake gratefully, deeply relieved that Mr. Quelch did not ask him for an explanation.

Carthew was watching him keenly. Rake caught his look, and the colour flushed deeply over his face. Carthew gave a smug smile. He guessed that Rake's being late for calling-out had some connection with the mystery of Friarale Wood, and he was more than ever determined to find out what the secret was.

Even without the clue he already possessed, Rake's altered looks would have told him that something was amiss. He was by no means the only one that noted the change.

Rake, ordinarily cheerful and chatty, had suddenly become silent and almost morose. At supper he sat silent, speaking to nobody, and when he was spoken to he attempted to answer in his usual tone, but the attempt was a dismal failure.

"Anything wrong, Rake?"
Nugent asked the question as they went up to the dormitory. Rake gave a start.

"Of course not! No!"
"You are looking so thunderingly queer."

A look of vexation crossed Rake's face. He realised that he would have to keep a better command of his features if he did not wish to give Tom's secret away. But how was he to suppress the cheery, light-hearted Dick Rake of old with a secret weighing on his heart and brain—with the remembrance haunting him of Tom's white face looking out from the thickets of the lad's lonely couch in the cabin in the gloomy wood, of the hue-and-cry that was doubtless already raised after him?

He gave a forced laugh.
"I didn't know I was looking queer. There's nothing the matter with me."

"Why did you cut cricket practice?"
Again Rake started. Cricket as he was, heart and soul, he had until that moment forgotten completely that he had missed his usual practice. He was to have appeared on the cricket-ground when he returned from the village, but, instead of that, he had hardly reached Greyfriars in time for calling-out.

"I forgot."
At this reply Nugent stared, as well he might.
"You forgot!" he ejaculated. "You forgot! Are you off your dot, my son?"

Rake made no reply. He felt all the misery, especially keen to a boy of a frank, candid nature, of having a secret to keep.

Nugent looked at him queerly, but asked no more questions. He saw that there was something behind Rake's reticence, but he saw also that Rake did not wish to explain, so he was discreetly silent. But he could not help wondering.

The next day Rake, mindful of the warning he had received, strove to appear his ordinary self; but he could not quite hide the weight upon his mind, and he was not so attentive as usual during lessons. He saw Carthew look at him more than once, too, with the same sneering smile, and he was disquieted by the thought that Carthew suspected something.

And when school was over he found his position full of difficulties which he had not thought of the previous day.

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Micky Desmond joined him, expecting him to come into the fields as a matter of course. And Tom was expecting him in Friarale Wood. He had done all he could the previous evening to make the old cabin habitable for his cousin, but much more remained to be done, and he had told Tom he would come.

"Not going to practice!" exclaimed Wharton, when Rake began to make an excuse. "Look here, this won't do!"

"I can't help it, Wharton. I've got to go to the village."

"Rats! You've got to come with me!"

And Wharton, without much more ado, put his arm through Rake's, and walked him off towards the cricket-ground. But Rake jerked himself free.

"I can't come, old chap. You know I would if I could. But I must go to Friarale."

Harry Wharton looked at him seriously.
"Look here, Rake, what are you acting the giddy goat like this for? There's something on your mind, or on your chest. What is it?"

"I can't tell you. But I'm in a horrible bother!" Rake groaned. "Don't ask me any questions, Wharton, for I can't answer them, and for goodness' sake keep dark what I've told you."

"You can rely on me," said Wharton, mystified. "Can I help you?"

Rake shook his head.
"No, you couldn't. Yes, though—there's one thing you can do for me—some money till next term. I'm stony."

And Rake, with a willing loan from Wharton in his pocket, went down the lane towards the village. Harry looked after him doubtfully, and, with a shake of the head, walked into the cricket-field. As he did so he noticed Carthew walking down the lane in the direction taken by Rake.

Dick Rake, after leaving Harry, hurried to the village, where he made his purchases, and, with a pretty large bundle under his arm, took the footpath back through Friarale Wood. Near the spot where he had first met Tom he struck off into the wood, and pushed his way through trees and thickets and great ferns to a considerable distance. At length he stopped, in one of the thickest and gloomiest recesses of the wood.

There, half-hidden by the thick growths, stood a ruined cabin, the roof long since fallen in, the tottering walls partly upheld by the young trees which had sprung up round them. It was said that a gipsy poacher had once lived there, but the existence of the hut was known to few, and the location of it still fewer.

As Rake paused the figure of his cousin came through the tottering doorway. Tom looked a good deal better than when Rake had met him the previous evening. Food, and the relief which Rake's loyal friendship had given him, had made a wonderful difference. His face was still pale and worn, but the haggard fear was gone from his looks.

"I'm so glad to see you, Dick. It's good of you to come!"

Rake entered the cabin. On the grass-grown floor was spread a bed of ferns and leaves. Rake set down the bundle he carried.

"I've brought you enough tummy for a week, Tom, and some books to pass the time. It must be horribly lonely here for you all day by yourself! I wish I could come often!"

"I wish you could, Dick. But I don't care much for the loneliness. I am only too glad the place is solitary. But the books will be a blessing. It was thoughtful of you. How long can you stay?"

"Not more than an hour, I'm afraid. I was late for calling-out last night, and that can't happen again without questions being asked."

"You are sure no one guesses that you've come here?" Tom said nervously.

Rake was silent for a minute.
"I don't see how anyone could, Tom. But I mustn't come too often. I can't help feeling that Carthew smells a rat. I ran across him on the footpath yesterday, after I left you as I told you last night. To-day it has seemed to me as if he watched me with a peculiar interest. I shall have to be careful of him."

Tom started a little at the mention of the name.
"Carthew? That's Mr. Carthew's son! For goodness' sake, be careful of him, for if he suspected how matters stand he might write to his father and betray me!"

"I think I had better not come to-morrow Tom. I've had to miss cricket practice to-day and yesterday, and it's making the fellows talk. We play Redclyffe in a fortnight, and Wharton has promised me a place in the team if I am fit. I'd give it up for your sake, old fellow—"

"You mustn't do that, Dick. Besides, it would only excite talk, which would add to my risks. No. Come as often as you can, but don't give Wharton cause to complain."

A sudden thought struck Rake.

"Tom, would you mind if I confided the secret to one other chap—Micky Desmond, my chum?"

Tom hesitated.

"He's as true as steel."

"Do as you think best, Dick."

"He will be as silent as the grave. And he could come here to bring you things, and to communicate between us, so that I should not be seen as often coming into the wood."

And when Dick left his cousin it was agreed that Micky Desmond should be admitted to the secret.

The dusk was deepening in the wood when Dick strode through the trees towards the footpath to return to Greyfriars. As he emerged into it a voice broke upon his ears.

"Hallo, Rake!"

He started violently.

Arthur Carthew had just come out into the path a short distance away. He had come from the same direction as Rake; and as Rake looked at him he saw upon his face the sneering smile he knew so well.

His very heart turned sick within him.

For Carthew's look told him everything, and he knew that his rival and enemy had followed him, had watched him, and knew that Tom was hidden in the gipsy's hut in the wood.

Rake recoiled back against a tree, his face white, his expression one of utter misery and despair.

Arthur Carthew came towards him, his eyes gleaming with triumph, the malicious, sneering smile still upon his face.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Under His Thumb!

"CARTEW! You cur!"

Dick Rake panted out the words.

Well he knew what that sneering smile meant upon the lips of the new junior in the Greyfriars Remove.

His eyes blazed, while his heart was almost sick with apprehension within him. Carthew knew!

It needed only a glance at the sneering face of the new Remove to tell him that.

He knew!

Carthew bit his lip slightly.

The misery in Dick Rake's white face had not moved him, but the bitter scorn in the junior's voice brought a flush to his cheeks.

"You cur!" repeated Rake. "You were licking Bunter for spying the other day—now you are spying yourself! You rotten cur!"

Carthew shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose I have as much right in Friarale Wood as anybody else has," he sneered. "Have you bought the wood, by any chance?"

Rake did not reply. He drew a quick, panting breath. It was all he could do to keep himself from springing upon the new boy who had constituted himself his enemy, and sending him reeling with a right-hander full in his mocking face. But he felt that it would not do. He had Tom Rake to think of—the wretched fugitive in the poacher's hut, whose fate was at the mercy of Arthur Carthew.

"Don't tell lies!" muttered Rake thickly. "You weren't here for a walk. You have been watching me!"

"Confound your cheek! You might find it better to be civil!" growled Carthew. "I don't like fancy names applied to me."

"You've been watching me—spying on me, like Bunter himself!" said Rake bitterly. "You're worse than Bunter—that fat idiot knows no better!"

Carthew laughed.

"It might pay you to speak civilly," he remarked.

"Why should I, you cad? I know what I've got to expect now," said Rake bitterly. "I've never done anything to hurt you, except to stop your rotten bullying, but you won't lose a chance like this to score over me. You are cad enough to tell all the Remove what you've found out."

"I might keep your secret for you."

Rake started.

For a moment there was a gleam of hope in his troubled face. But it died away almost at once.

"I know you don't mean that," he said quietly. "It wouldn't be your way!"

"Why not?" said Carthew. "It doesn't matter a rap to me whether you're hiding your cousin in the poacher's hut. It doesn't matter twopenny whether he's arrested or not, so far as I'm concerned. I don't see why I should go out of my way to help the police nail him. It's not my business, so far as I can see!"

Rake looked at him in amazement.

"That's true enough," he stammered. "But—but—"

"I'm quite prepared to keep your secret," said Carthew coolly. "As I've said, it's no business of mine, and I'm ready to chuck the whole matter out of my mind, and forget that you've got a cousin at all."

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Rake made a step towards him impulsively.

"You'll keep it dark? Thanks, old chap! I—I'm sorry I said what I did—I misjudged you. I'm sorry."

The junior had held out his hand, but Carthew did not seem to see it. He put both hands into his pockets.

Rake, chilled, let his hand drop to his side.

"I'm sorry, Carthew," he repeated. "I had no right to speak as I did, and I take it back. And—and my cousin, Tom Rake, is innocent, Carthew. It's clear enough to me. Some awful scoundrel has robbed the bank, and managed to put it on poor old Tom—that's how it is. The truth must come out some time, and Tom will be cleared—I'm certain of that! I only want to keep old Tom safe until the real criminal is discovered. You don't know how grateful I am, Carthew, for your keeping this dark, until—"

He broke off, as he saw the sneering, sardonic expression on Carthew's face.

"Stop a bit," said Carthew coolly. "You didn't let me finish. I am willing to keep your cousin's secret—on certain conditions."

The glow of gratitude and relief faded from Rake's face. A sort of chill ran through him.

"I don't quite understand, Carthew."

"My idea is that one good turn deserves another. Don't you think so?"

"Of course; and if there's anything I can do—"

"You know how matters stand about the eleven. You can help me there."

Rake started.

"I don't see how."

"You know very well that I've set my heart on getting into the team that plays Redclyffe?"

"Well, how can I help you? You don't suppose that Wharton will take my advice, do you?"

"On Monday the two Remove sides play each other again. You will play on Monday, Desmond takes my place, and Wharton has said that I am not to play in the team at all."

And Carthew's brows contracted as he spoke, and his eyes glittered with suppressed rage. He knew that it was to Dick Rake he owed it that Wharton had dropped all idea of playing him against Redclyffe—though it would have been more correct to say that it was to his own envy and bad feeling that he owed it. For it was his display of bad temper which had made Wharton decide not to give him another chance of showing what he could do, but to put Desmond in his place for the trial match on Monday.

"Well, I can't help that," replied Rake, in a conciliatory way. "It isn't by my wish that you are chucked."

"It is all your fault, anyway!" exclaimed Carthew savagely.

"My fault? I don't see how you make that out. You lost your temper the other day. I don't see that it was my fault. I was bound to play as well as I could!"

"Well, anyway, I'm going to play, by hook or by crook, on Monday, so as to have another chance at the cap for the first eleven."

"That depends upon Wharton."

"You must try to influence him. You can do it. He has shown lately that he thinks a lot of you—an absurd lot, in my opinion. If any of my friends pressed my claims upon him, he wouldn't listen. But it's known that there's no love lost between us two. If you took it up, I believe he would give me another chance."

Rake looked deeply troubled.

"I can't honestly ask him that, Carthew, when—"

"And I can't honestly help you to shield a criminal from justice!" sneered Carthew. "Yet you don't mind asking me to do it."

"How dare you call him a criminal!" flashed out Rake.

"Tom is as innocent as you or I."

"Possibly; but it doesn't matter to me whether he's innocent or guilty," said Carthew coolly. "He's a fugitive from justice, and if I help you to keep him out of the clutches of the police, you ought to be willing to do something for me in return."

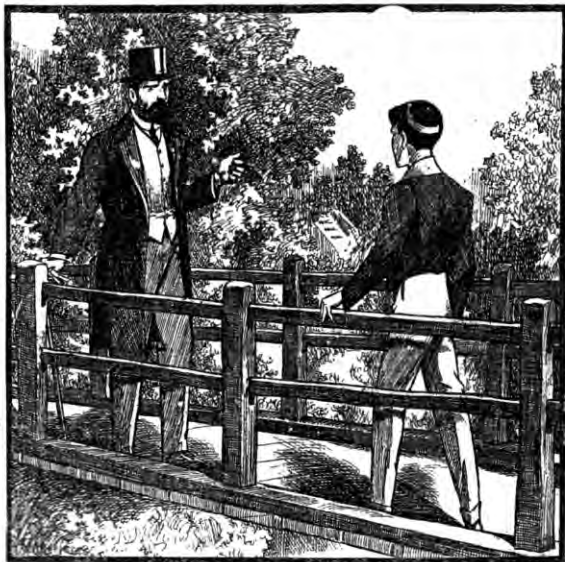
"But suppose I get Wharton to put you in the eleven on Monday, that won't help you. You know very well that your play isn't up to first eleven form."

A bitter look came upon Carthew's face.

"That's your opinion," he sneered, "and I don't think you are likely to form an unbiased opinion of my merits as a cricketer. At all events, I differ from you. I am really conceited enough to think that on Monday I may show form quite as good as yours. But I'm willing to take my chance of that."

"I'll speak to Wharton," said Rake shortly. "But mind, I don't answer for the result."

"Don't you? Let us be plain with each other, Rake. I



A tall man, in a black frock-coat, with a trim beard, and a hard, cold face, was standing upon the bridge smoking a cigar. "I've been waiting for you, Arthur," he said, as Carthew appeared. (See Chapter 5.)

know how much good will you bear me. If I don't play on Monday I won't keep your secret!"

"That isn't fair! I'll do my best, but if Wharton won't listen to me—"

"You must make him!"

"I'll do my best!" repeated Rake wearily.

And he returned to Greyfriars with a heavy heart.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Forcing Rake's Hand!

RAKE was in time for calling-over to-night. As he went in he noticed Wharton give him a peculiar look, but the captain of the Remove did not speak.

Rake knew what Wharton was thinking of. He had missed him from the cricket-ground again. Rake knew how strange his conduct must appear to the captain of the Remove, but he could give no explanation. He was in dread lest Wharton should speak to him about it again.

"I say, Wharton was wild when he saw that you were not there," Micky Desmond remarked. "I don't want to alarm you, old fellow, but if you don't mind your p's and q's your chance of getting your cap for the Remove will be a goner, bedad!"

"I'm going to wire in to-morrow, Micky. And—and you must that if I'd tell you what was worrying me you'd help me!"

"So I will," said Micky Desmond at once.

"I can trust you to keep a secret!"

"You ought to know that, ye spalpeen!"

"Yes, yes, old fellow. I do know it, but this is so horribly serious," said Rake, in a low voice. "You must be careful not to let a word of it escape you to anyone."

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Micky looked amazed, but he gave the required promise.

Then Rake, in a low, agitated voice, told him the strange happenings, with which the reader is already acquainted.

Micky listened in wonder, and when Rake had finished, he said:

"Poor old chap! No wonder you look worried! But, sure, I believe your cousin is innocent just as firmly as you do, and the truth will come out some day. I'll do my best to help you. I wish you'd told me before, and then I could have saved you going to-night. But sure, I can always go instead of you when you ought to be at cricket."

"I don't know how to thank you, Micky. You couldn't speak to me without asking Tom first, but I knew you'd stand by me, like a pal."

"Of course I will. As for that mongrel Carthew, sure, I don't see what you can do. You'll have to knuckle under at present. Still, it's pretty certain that if he plays in the trial match on Monday he'll make a guy of himself as usual, and so there won't be any harm done. Bedad!" added Micky. "Shouldn't I like to wring his measly neck, the spalpeen, that's all!"

He broke off abruptly. "Hallo! Here comes old Wharton! Come to give you a lecture, old chap, I suppose."

beating down upon the

The captain of the Remove was two juniors as they stood talking by themselves.

"I want to speak to you, Rake," said Harry. "You were to play on Monday—"

"Were!" exclaimed Rake. "You don't want me to stand out, Wharton, do you?"

The distress in his face touched Harry a little. "Well," he said, "why have you chucked the game for the past two days? Do you think you're up to form without any more practice, you silly ass!"

"No, I don't," replied Rake. "I mean to slog in as hard as I can go, Wharton. I—I haven't felt fit a day." And this was true enough, for the trouble on Rake's mind had made him feel far from fit. "But give me a chance, and I'll show you how I can work. It wants four days to Monday, and if you'll give me a chance, you shan't have anything to complain of."

"Very well," assented Wharton. "I'll give you another chance. Let me see you put in some hard work between this and Monday, and you shall play in the trial match, and then we'll see about the cap for the eleven."

"Thanks!" said Rake. "I'll do my best."

And during the next few days he kept his word, and Wharton had to admit that he buckled to it with hearty good will; and, good as his form already was, every day it showed a visible improvement. Wharton's brief annoyance had evaporated. He was delighted with Dick Rake's performance.

And every word of commendation was gall and wormwood to Carthew. In these days he also was assiduous at the cricket-ground, but his form was only mediocre. He was not up to Rake's form, but he did not acknowledge it, even to himself.

He did not speak again to Rake on the matter they had

discussed in the wood until Saturday. Then he came up to Rake in the gymnasium, and plunged into the subject abruptly.

"Have you spoken to Wharton?"

"I haven't had a chance yet."

"I thought not! I only want to remind you that if I don't play on Monday, Tom Rake will be arrested on Tuesday—that's all!"

And he walked off, leaving Rake with a heavy heart. There was no way of getting out of it. He had to try the effect of his persuasion on the Remove captain. He was by no means certain of success, but the thought of failure was terrible. He knew that Carthew would keep his word, and in his distressed imagination he already saw Tom in the grip of the police.

He had put off doing as Carthew demanded, waiting for a favourable opportunity. But it was clear that it would not do to put it off any longer. He trembled at the thought of what would happen if Wharton did not allow Carthew to play on Monday.

Wharton was in good humour, and Rake was relieved by the friendly way in which he listened to his suggestion.

"That's very decent of you, Rake!" he said cordially. "I can't help knowing that you are not on good terms with Carthew. I've noticed the past few days that Carthew is doing his best, and I'll give him another chance. Perhaps he's had lesson enough. Anyway, we shall see on Monday. You can tell him from me that he can play."

Rake went away feeling like a hypocrite. Yet, what could he do? He longed to make a clean breast of it to Wharton, but the thought of Tom's peril restrained him. He had gained his point, upon which so much depended, but his success made him feel very miserable.

He met Carthew in the corridor, after leaving Wharton's study. Carthew looked at him eagerly.

"You have seen Wharton?"

"Yes."

"What is the result?"

"You are to play on Monday."

Carthew's eyes gleamed.

"I thought you could fix it," he said. "And I thought you would, if I pinned you down."

"I hope you are satisfied now," said Rake bitterly. "You have made me act like a cad!"

"I don't see it. You can't expect me to keep your secret for nothing, I suppose!"

And Carthew walked away, quite satisfied with himself and with the point he had gained.

He had been going towards his study when he met Rake. He passed on, said, as he came to his study, he heard the sound of a movement within.

He opened the door suddenly. Billy Bunter was there.

Carthew looked at him suspiciously.

"What are you doing here, you fat rat?" he asked, in his usual polite way.



"Sit down, old fellow, and tell me what's the matter," said Rake's cousin. Rake sat down upon a mossy log, and Tom stood leaning against the wall waiting for him to speak. (See Chapter 13.)

"I—I came to see if you could—could cash a postal-order," stammered Bunter.

"More likely prying, you rat!"

"Oh, really, Carthew—"

"Clear out! And lock here, don't come into my study again! Do you hear?"

"Oh, really, you ain't—"

"Oh, get out!"

And Bunter got out. He grinned to himself as he went down the passage.

"What a suspicious beast!" murmured Bunter. "The packet is in the locker; there's no doubt about that. But how am I to get hold of the key?"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Cricket-Ground!

A FINE summer's day; the sky bright and blue, dotted with fleecy clouds; the fields green, and fresh and fair.

The ground was pretty well crowded with fellows to see the match between the two sides.

Both elevens were in deadly earnest, determined to do or die. From the players who made the best figure that day Harry Wharton was to make his final selection for the Remove eleven which was to meet Redclyffe. And every one of the twenty-two meant to do his level best.

It was to be a single innings match. It was a perfect afternoon for cricket. Dick Rake's face was more cheerful than it had been for some time as he looked over the emerald level.

Carthew was not looking so cheerful. In fact, he had a weight upon his mind.

He had watched Rake doing some bowling that morning before school, and envy itself could not ignore the fact that Rake's bowling was really hot stuff.

Carthew had pictured himself at the wicket with Rake put on to bowl, and in his mind's eye he had seen his wicket a wreck, and himself, as before, going out without breaking his duck.

"I want to speak a word to you, Rake!" he said abruptly.

Rake looked at him coldly.

"Well, what is it?"

"You intend to bowl against me, don't you?"

Rake stared.

"That depends upon Bob Cherry. He's captaining my side. If he puts me on to bowl against you, of course I shall bowl."

"That's all very well, but you know as well as I do that if you hint to Cherry a wish to bowl, he'll let you."

"Likely enough; but what about it?"

"You haven't thought of doing it, I suppose?" sneered Carthew. "You haven't been practising bowling so hard lately for the purpose of getting even with me by bowling me in this match?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, if you haven't, all right," said Carthew, with a sneer. "But, in case you should be tempted to revenge yourself that way, I warn you that you had better not bowl against me."

"I won't ask Bob to put me on, if that's what you mean."

"Look here, Rake, I mean this—that if you bowl me out, you had better look out for squalls—and your cousin, too!" Rake turned pale.

"Do you know what you are asking me to do?" he said, in a low voice. "You are asking me to give away my side."

"Rats! It's only a practice match, anyway. You are not compelled to go on against me. There's no need for it, except your spite against me."

"Don't be an ass! I must bowl if Bob puts me on."

"Well, if he does, you had better not knock my wicket down, that's all," said Carthew savagely. "I am going to get into the Remove Eleven. I believe I can do it, unless you prevent me. And if you prevent me, I will make you suffer for it."

"If you make a long score through my sparing you, you will be getting a reputation on false pretences."

"Choose between that and seeing Tom Rake in the hands of the police!" replied Carthew coolly.

Rake bit his lip. His eyes were gleaming with scorn. He longed to dash his fist into the sneering face before him.

"I can't do it, Carthew. Ask me anything else—"

"I have nothing else to ask you."

"It would be rotten—"

"Rats!"

"I can't do it. I'll avoid going on against you if I possibly can, but if I am put on I must do my best."

"Very well!" said Carthew between his teeth. "That settles it. You know the consequences. I leave it to you. Do as you like, but if you spoil my chance for the Remove Eleven, Tom Rake goes to prison!"

And he walked away.

Bob Cherry's team went in first. Bob opened himself, with Nugent. Nugent was caught at mid-wicket by Squiff, and went out, and Dick Rake donned pad and gloves, and took his place.

And then the gloom vanished from Rake's face. He was a born cricketer, and as he gripped the cane handle of the willow everything but cricket disappeared from his mind. With calm, cool face and alert eyes he took his stand, prepared for anything the enemy might send him.

The best of the bowlers tackled him in vain. Carthew did his very best, but the over he bowled ended by adding fifteen to Rake's score—a result which made the bowler snap his teeth.

And still the score bounded up.

Vernon-Smith sent down a ball which left Bob's wicket a wreck, and another batsman took his place, who in turn was caught in the slips, and gave place to another. But Rake was still batting.

But everything has an end in this world, and so had Rake's innings at last.

The innings closed for 100. Rake had scored 57.

Vernon-Smith opened his innings with Squiff and Tom Brown.

When the latter got out, Carthew took his place.

It was soon seen that Carthew's batting had improved. His innings opened auspiciously. He took 9 for the over, and was still batting when Squiff went out and Vernon-Smith himself came on. And then Carthew and the Bounder knocked up runs fast, and showed no signs of shifting.

"Here, young Rake, take the leather!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You can bowl the next over against Carthew."

Rake hesitated.

But the ball was pitched to him, and he had to catch it and go on, whether he liked it or not.

Carthew's eyes glinted as he saw Rake preparing to bowl. He felt that he was at Rake's mercy if the latter chose to bowl him out. He swore inwardly that Rake should rue it if he did.

Rake was in a predicament.

He had told Carthew that he could not do as he demanded; but now that the hour had come he did not know what to do.

If he did his best, he had little doubt that he could send Carthew out, and then he knew that Carthew would keep his word; and he thought of Tom betrayed, of the visit of the police to the poacher's hut in the wood, of poor Tom dragged away to prison, to suffer for a crime he had never committed. He knew that he ought to do his best; but he knew that Tom would suffer if he did, and it was not till the ball was leaving his hand that the conviction rushed upon him that he could not sacrifice Tom.

Carthew played to one of the easiest balls he had ever met. He sent it whizzing to the boundary, and his eyes glinted with triumph. He knew that Rake had surrendered.

It was the same with every ball of the over. Rake's face was white and set. He dared not risk taking Carthew's wicket, and the result was that his bowling gave his rival 20 runs.

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The over-sized Rake glanced abandoned the leather. He had saved Tom, but in a way that made his heart sick. Carthew lived through two more overs, and went out with a total of 30 to his credit, which was at least twice as many as anybody had expected of him.

Wharton looked surprised.
"Carthew's shaped better than I expected, Bob," he remarked. "It was Rake advised me to give him another trial, and he was right."

"But you don't think Carthew's good enough to play against Redclyffe, do you?" asked Bob Cherry.
"Oh, no! I would put him in at a pinch, but there's no need. We have better men."

The innings ended—all out for 80. They had been beaten by 20 runs.

Dick Rake was not looking cheerful, and even to Micky Desmond he said no word.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard!

TAP!
"Come in!" called out Rake.
His study door opened.
He looked with some curiosity at the man who entered.

A man of medium size, plainly but respectably dressed, with a red face and little, black, penetrating eyes.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he said, in reply to Rake's mute look of inquiry. "The headmaster has been kind enough to give me permission to speak to you. You are Master Rake?"

"I am Dick Rake."
"Exactly. I am Frederick Glad, of Scotland Yard." Rake started up.

Every vestige of colour fled from his face at this announcement. At once he knew that it was the quest of Tom that had brought the man from Scotland Yard to Greyfriars.

But he felt the little, penetrating eyes upon him, and realised that he was betraying himself, and he sank down again into his chair, breathing hard.

A slight smile crossed the detective's face. He had made his announcement thus suddenly in order to see whether Rake had anything to conceal, and the way in which it had been received showed him pretty plainly that he was on the right track.

"You appear surprised, Master Rake," he remarked suavely.

"I am surprised," replied Rake. "I can't imagine what your business can be with me. Will you please state it?"

But while he spoke thus boldly his heart was sinking. The thought of Carthew had instantly rushed into his mind. During the three days that had elapsed since the match it had become known for certain that Carthew would not play against Redclyffe. The runs he had got by threatening Rake had not saved him. There were better players than he in the Remove, and the eleven, which included Rake, was made up without Arthur Carthew.

Carthew had been unable to hide his chagrin and disappointment, and Dick had been in constant fear lest he should tell the secret of Tom's retreat out of sheer malice.

But he did not. Whether he preferred to keep Dick in uneasiness, or whether he still hoped to turn his power to some account, he kept the secret. And Dick had begun to take comfort, when, in the midst of his growing security, came the visit of Mr. Fix from Scotland Yard.

And the thought that Carthew had betrayed him had naturally risen at once. Had his rival been base enough to write to his father, or to Scotland Yard? But if so, he would have told Tom's hiding-place. Then Tom was already found! Rake's brain swam at the thought. But he controlled his dismay with a great effort. It was possible that all was not yet lost.

He spoke with forced calmness.

Mr. Fix was looking at him with a keenness that was most disconcerting. The slight smile was still hovering about his mouth, and it made Rake vaguely uneasy.

"You cannot imagine what my business may be?" the detective remarked slowly. "You have not heard of the bank robbery, then?"

Rake made an impatient gesture.

"Please come to the point, and tell me what it is you want with me, Mr. Fix."

"I want to find your cousin, Thomas Rake," said the detective abruptly.

Rake's heart gave a great throb of relief.

His most terrible fear had vanished. Carthew had not betrayed him: The man from Scotland Yard did not know where Tom was!

The detective, watching him, saw the relief that involuntarily flashed into the boy's face, and wondered.

"Really," said Rake, speaking with his usual composure, now that he was relieved of his most terrible dread, "if you

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had asked the doctor, Mr. Fix, he would have told you that my cousin, Tom Rake, left Greyfriars a long time ago—before I came here, in fact."

The detective smiled.
"I am aware of that," he said quietly.

"And he is now employed at a bank," added Rake, in a casual way.

"He was," said Mr. Fix; "but he robbed that bank of ten thousand pounds in banknotes, and fled. From information given by people who saw him that day, he appears to have taken a train for a point near Friaralea. I am here to ask you if you have seen anything of him."

Rake did not reply.
He could not tell a deliberate lie, and he knew that after the emotion he had shown it would be useless if he did.

But he had no intention of admitting anything, or of satisfying the detective on a single point.

Mr. Fix watched him in silence for a few minutes, waiting for him to speak. He had a pretty shrewd idea that Rake could tell him where the fugitive was if he liked.

"Have you seen him?" he said at length, as Rake did not speak.

Rake looked him full in the eyes.
"Do you expect me to answer that question?" he asked.

"Do you really think I might help you to arrest my own cousin?"

"It is your duty to aid the law."
"Well, as far as that goes, it is the law's duty to punish the guilty, not to hunt down the innocent," retorted Rake.

"And Tom Rake is as innocent of this crime as I am."
"That is not a question for you or me to settle," the detective said drily. "I am here to find him. I have every reason to believe that you have met him—that you know where he is to be found."

Rake made no reply to that.

"I ask you, therefore, to give me what information is in your power," the detective said persuasively. "If Thomas Rake is innocent, it will be best for him to stand his trial and have his name cleared. You must see that."

"I don't see it."
"You have admitted that you know where he is."

"On the contrary, I have admitted nothing."
The detective's face wore a baffled look. He had not expected to be repulsed like this by a mere schoolboy.

"Tell me plainly, have you met Tom Rake during the past week or not?" he exclaimed.

Rake was silent.

"Will you answer me?"

"No."
The detective rose. There was a gleam of anger in his eyes.

"Your refusal to answer can have only one meaning, Master Rake. You have met him, and you have aided him to evade the law."

"Of course, you may think so if you like," said Rake composedly.

"And it is pretty clear to me that he is in hiding somewhere near Greyfriars," added the detective. "I shall certainly find him. Now, don't you think, Master Rake, both for your cousin's sake and your own, that you had better make a clean breast of it?"

"I have nothing to tell you."

"Good-day!"
At that moment the door of the study flew open with a crash, and the form of Billy Bunter came flying headlong in, propelled by the boot of Micky Desmond.

"Look at that little spalpeen! I found him with his ear glued to the keyhole!" exclaimed Micky wrathfully. Then he saw the detective for the first time. "Sorry if I've interrupted you; but I simply had to let fly at that little spying beast!"

"It's all right," said Rake. "Mr. Fix was just going."

And the detective left the study.

Micky seized the luckless Bunter by the throat, and backed him against the wall.

"Now, you spying porpoise, what do you mean by it?"

"I didn't hear anything," roared Bunter; "and I won't tell anybody that Rake's cousin has robbed a bank—"

Rake gave a groan.

It was clear that the inquisitive Owl had heard all the talk with the detective, and it was equally certain that in an hour it would be all over Greyfriars.

Micky shook the eavesdropper till his teeth rattled.

ANSWERS

"You little beast! What shall we do to him, Rake?"
 "Let him go. It's no good licking him."
 "That's just it!" cried Bunter eagerly. "Licking only makes me worse—it does, really. Here, I say, hold on!"
 "I'll risk it," said Micky. "It can't make you much worse, anyway, you spalpeen!"

And he cuffed the unlucky Owl right and left. Bunter yelled and roared.

"I say, Rake, stop him! I won't say a word—I won't, really! Wild horses shan't drag it from me! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Let him alone, Micky, old chap."

And Micky unwillingly desisted. He glowered fiercely at the Owl of the Remove.

"Now, you mongrel, you must promise to—"

Rake interrupted him.

"It's no good, Micky. He wouldn't keep a promise if he made it."

"H'm! No; I suppose he wouldn't," admitted Micky. "It's a pity we can't throttle the little rotter!"

"I won't say a word!" gasped Bunter.

"Get out!" said Rake.

But the fat junior made for the door gladly enough.

But there, struck by a sudden thought, he turned to ask a question.

"I say, Rake, did you really meet your cousin? Did he give you any of the banknotes?"

Micky made a rush at him. Bunter turned to flee, and Micky's foot fairly lifted him behind and sent him sprawling up into the corridor. In a twinkling he picked himself up and fled.

Micky turned back to his chum. Rake sank into his chair, leaning his elbows on his desk, his face buried in his hands.

"Cheer up, old boy," said Micky. "After all, the fellows won't think any the worse of you."

After a minute or two Rake raised his face. He was very pale, but his look was resolute.

"Even if Tom were guilty, you have nothing to be ashamed of," continued Micky. "But he is innocent, and the truth will come out some day."

"Well, I must face it, anyway," said Rake quietly. "It's no use giving way."

Micky looked at him curiously.

"But how do you come to be talking it over with this chap—Fix, I think you called him?" he asked.

"He is a detective from Scotland Yard," said Rake.

Micky started.

"After Tom?"

"Yes."

"And he wanted to get out of you whether you had seen him?"

"Yes. I refused to say anything."

"Quite right. Like his cheek to ask you, bedad!"

"But he knows very well that I have met Tom," continued Rake. "And he suspects that my cousin is hidden somewhere near Friarsdale."

Micky whistled.

"Now, old fellow, you will be able to help me," Rake went on. "Fix is pretty certain to hang about Greyfriars, and to watch my going out as much as he can, in the hope that I shall lead him to Tom's hiding-place. Don't you think so?"

"It is pretty certain," agreed Micky. "It won't be safe for you to go near Friarsdale Wood again."

"That's what I was thinking. I shall want you to go instead of me, when it is necessary for someone to go."

"I'll do it, like a bird," answered Micky Desmond. "You had better give the wood a wide berth, and never go near it. I shall be able to do all that is required. And, sure, I had better run over and pay Tom a visit, and warn him that a beastly detective is nosing around. What do you think?"

"Yes, it's a good idea."

"I'll go as soon as we've finished prep, then. Hallo, Trotter, what do you want?"

This query was addressed to the page, who had put his head in at the door.

"Master Rake is wanted in the Head's study."

Micky Desmond gave a whistle.

"Is anybody with the Head?"

"Yes. The gentleman who came a little while ago."

Rake changed colour. He knew what the summons meant. "Keep a stiff upper lip, old fellow," said Micky. "After all, they can't force you to say anything."

Rake nodded, and left the study. His face was deeply troubled as he made his way towards the doctor's study, but his mind was fully made up. His resolution was taken, and nothing could shake it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Mr. Fix!

THE doctor's face as almost as troubled as Rake's when the boy entered. Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard, sat gnawing a pencil, and his little, black, penetrating eyes at once fixed upon Rake.

The doctor coughed uncomfortably.

He looked over his gold pince-nez at Rake, who waited respectfully for him to speak. It was not difficult to read from the Head's expression that he secretly wished the gentleman from Scotland Yard at the ends of the earth.

"Ahem, Rake! You are aware that Mr. Fix has come to Greyfriars to seek information respecting—ahem—your cousin Thomas, who is—ahem—accused of—"

"Of robbing the City and County Bank of banknotes to the value of ten thousand pounds," said Mr. Fix, removing the end of his pencil from his mouth for a moment to make that remark.

The Head coughed.

"Ahem—exactly. Now, Rake, Mr. Fix has an idea that you might know something of your cousin's whereabouts, and, thinking that this notion was certainly erroneous, I gave him leave to question you. But he has astonished me by telling me that the result of this interview is that he is convinced that you know where Tom Rake is hidden."

Rake remained silent.

"Now, Rake," continued the Head gently, "if this is the case, your duty is to give Mr. Fix any information in your power to give. You must not take upon yourself to obstruct the law."

"Mr. Fix has no right to assume that I know anything," replied Rake. "I certainly have not told him so."

The Head looked relieved.

"If he is mistaken, Rake, tell him so, and that will end the matter," he said. "I rely absolutely upon your word."

Rake was silent.

"Come, Rake! If you have not seen anything of this unfortunate youth, pray say so at once."

Still Rake did not speak.

Mr. Fix smiled a little, as much as to say, "I told you so." But he said nothing.

The Head's brow grew troubled.

"I can only infer from your silence, Rake, that Mr. Fix's suspicion is well founded."

"May I speak to you alone, sir?" said Rake.

The Head hesitated. The detective's face assumed a somewhat hostile expression. He evidently did not want to be left out of the matter.

"Why do you ask that, Rake?" said the Head at length.

"I want to explain to you, sir, but I do not want to speak before Mr. Fix," replied Rake bluntly.

The Head looked at the man from Scotland Yard. Mr. Fix rose.

"I will retire if you wish it," he said.

And he walked out of the study.

The Head waited until the door had closed.

"Now, Rake, what have you to say?"

"I wish to tell you the whole truth, sir," said Rake. "I have met my cousin. I met him last week. He told me all that had happened at the bank, and I know that he is innocent."

"I sincerely hope so, Rake; but you must be aware that that is a question for a judge and jury to decide."

"There is a conspiracy against him, sir," Rake went on hurriedly. "Things have been cunningly arranged, so as to throw it all on poor old Tom. I am certain of it. He never robbed the bank of a penny. He asked me for help, sir, and surely I could not refuse to help my own cousin in distress. I helped him, and promised to keep his secret. You would not advise me to break that promise!"

"Hem!" said the Head.

"I could not do it, sir. Even if you were to expel me from Greyfriars, I could not betray Tom," said Rake earnestly.

The Head passed his hand over his brow. He was in a position of great difficulty. The boy's sturdy loyalty to his cousin touched him, and he could not very well advise or command him to break a promise. He did not know what to do.

"I hope you are not angry with me, sir. But I couldn't betray Tom. Even if he were not my cousin, it wouldn't be honourable. It wouldn't be cricket—would it, sir?"



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The Head smiled slightly. "Perhaps you are right, Rake. At all events, I shall not command you to do what you consider dishonourable. Open the door."

When Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard, returned to the study, he was not looking on the best of humours.

"I am sorry, Mr. Fix, but Rake can tell you nothing," said the Head. "It will be useless to question him further."

Mr. Fix's brow wrinkled a little.

"Very well, sir," he said. "You know best. I shall continue my investigations without help from this quarter, and I trust that nothing will come to light which will bring discredit upon Greyfriars School. I am afraid, however, that that may be the case."

And, with this parting shot, the detective bowed himself out.

The Head, with a somewhat clouded brow, dismissed Rake, who went back to his study, where he found Micky Desmond awaiting him.

"Well, old son?"

"It's all right, Mick."

And Rake gave his chum an account of what had passed in the Head's study.

"The doctor's a brick," said Micky. "We shall have to keep our weather eye on Fix, though. He means business. Tom will have to lie awfully low while he stays here. As soon as you go to the cricket, Dick, I'll be off to the gipsy's hut to put Tom on his guard."

And a little later, when Rake was at cricket, he had the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard, looking on at the game, while Micky was speeding on his way to the fugitive's hiding-place in Friarale Wood.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had not been idle. Rake was not mistaken in thinking that he would not be able to keep the secret he had discovered.

Bunter confided it—in strict confidence, of course—to every boy in the Remove, and it rapidly spread. Before long the story was all over the school.

That Tom Rake, who used to belong to Greyfriars, had robbed a bank of ten thousand pounds, and that a detective had come from Scotland Yard to look for him, was naturally a topic of exciting interest to the boys, and it was discussed breathlessly.

While most of the fellows agreed in condemning Bunter for the way he had surprised the secret, few of them were above asking him for particulars, and even some of the seniors listened to his tale.

In the general thirst for information, Arthur Cartnew found himself of great account, for it was known at Friarale that his father was cashier of the bank which Tom had robbed—or was accused of having robbed. Cartnew's opinion was listened to with great respect, and he did not conceal his belief that Tom was guilty.

The discussion was in full swing when Dick Rake came in.

As soon as he appeared there was an awkward pause, and a hush which told him as plainly as words could have done what the boys had been talking about.

Rake stopped dead, flushing scarlet, and then turning white. There was silence in the Common-room for a moment, during which a pin might have been heard to drop.

It was broken by Wharton, who happened to be there, and who had heard the discussion with a frowning brow.

The captain of the Remove strode towards Dick and clapped him on the shoulder.

"There seems to be bad news about your cousin, who used to be here, Dick," he said. "I am very sorry to hear it, but I'm certain that it will all come right in the end. Buck up, kid!"

The tears started to Rake's eyes. He was too much moved for words. He could only press Harry's hand in silence, and turn away.

It was soon known that Mr. Fix had taken up his quarters at Friarale, evidently with the intention of staying some time in the neighbourhood.

He was an object of considerable interest to the juniors, who not infrequently encountered him in his walks abroad, which very often brought him near the school, or into the playing-fields.

Dick Rake knew very well what his object was. He believed that Tom was hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood, and he was on the watch for any communication between the cousins. But every visit that it was necessary to make to the hidden hut in Friarale Wood was made by Micky Desmond, and Dick gave the wood a wide berth, taking care never to go near it.

This baffled the detective; but he knew that he was on the track, and he could afford to be patient.

It was Arthur Cartnew who caused Rake more anxiety than Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard. Cartnew had promised to keep the secret if Rake yielded to the demands he made. Rake yielded; but he knew that he could not depend upon Cartnew. That fellow's previous conduct showed how little he was bound by considerations of honour, and Dick felt that if it ever suited him to break his promise he would do so.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 445.

NEXT MONDAY—

"A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"

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He had not done so yet. It appeared to be his object to keep Dick in anxiety. On more than one occasion Rake saw him in conversation with the detective, and a pang of apprehension went to his heart. But each time his terror proved to be unfounded.

He gradually came to the conviction that Cartnew had some card up his sleeve—that he intended to make some fresh use of his power; but what his plan was Rake could not guess. That Cartnew bitterly resented being excluded from the Remove eleven was no secret. He had not been able to hide his chagrin, and when the names were known, he had muttered something about favouritism which brought Wharton's wrath down upon him.

They were anxious days for Dick Rake. But he had one consolation. Every leisure hour was spent in the cricket-field. When he had the leather or the willow in his hand he forgot all his troubles, and remembered only the grand old game.

A couple of days after the interview in the Head's study, Rake met Mr. Fix in Friarale Lane, and the detective stopped to speak.

"A word with you, Master Rake."

Rake stopped, not very willingly. He never felt quite comfortable under the detective's sharp gaze.

"You will not tell me whether you have met Tom Rake, but, of course, I have drawn my own conclusions upon that point. What I want to say to you is this. When Tom Rake absconded, he carried off a packet containing bank-notes to the value of ten thousand pounds. Patience, please! Whether this packet remains in his possession, or whether, as is more likely, he has placed it in the care of someone else, of course I do not know. But one thing I do know, and that is, that he might consider a schoolboy's locker a safe hiding-place for—"

Rake's eyes blazed.

Mr. Fix went on imperturbably:

"He might consider a schoolboy's locker a safe hiding-place for anything he wished to conceal, and he might take advantage of the friendship of an unsuspecting cousin. Now, Master Rake, I want to ask you a simple question. I do not mean to hint that you would be guilty of concealing stolen property. That is not my meaning at all. But give your cousin entrust to your charge anything—anything at all!"

The penetrating eyes were fastened upon the boy's face.

Rake had turned red with anger. But he answered calmly:

"My cousin did not entrust anything to my charge."

"Nothing at all!"

"Nothing."

The detective looked a little disappointed. He was a sufficiently keen reader of character to know that Rake was telling the truth.

"I believe you, Master Rake. But let me tell you something which you may tell to someone else when you see him again. You understand me? The bank is more anxious to recover the notes than to punish the thief. If the plunder were given up, it is probable that a certain party who is now being searched for, and who will certainly be found before long, would find a free path left to him to escape. That is all."

"Wait a moment!" said Rake. "Let me tell you something, too. You would be much better employed in looking for the real thief than in tracking down an innocent lad who knows no more about the crime than I do. That is all!"

And he walked away. The detective looked after him with a smile. Rake had given him a good deal of trouble, and yet he could not help liking the frank, fearless lad.

But the smile vanished from his face the next moment, and a sharp, alert look took its place. He swung round, made a sudden dive through a gap in the hedge, and the next moment there was a roar, and he reappeared in the lane dragging a wriggling form by the collar.

"Hold on! I mean, let go! You're ch-ch-choking me!"

The detective relaxed his grip, but still held the boy so that he could not run away.

"So you were deeply interested, were you?" he drawled. "What do you mean by listening behind the hedge, you little rascal? Who are you?"

"I'm Bunter!" gasped the Owl of the Remove.

"Do you belong to the school yonder?"

"Of course I do!"

"And what were you listening for?"

"I wanted to hear what you said to Rake," said Bunter ingenuously. "I saw you stop and speak to him, and so I cut behind the hedge."

"And don't you think you deserve a hiding?"

"No," said Bunter apprehensively.

Billy Bunter blinked at the detective through his big spectacles, his round eyes gleaming strangely.

"I—I say, Mr. Fix!" he gasped.

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

"Well?" snapped Mr. Fix.

"I—I say, suppose that bundle of banknotes was hidden in one of the chap's lockers, in a study at Greyfriars?"

"Mind your own business, you young rascal!" growled Mr. Fix.

And he turned his back upon William George Bunter with a grim frown, and strode away.

Billy Bunter blinked after him, his eyes glittering behind his spectacles.

A new and amazing idea had evidently come into the brain of the Owl of the Remove.

"In a chap's locker!" muttered Bunter breathlessly. "Oh, my nat! In a chap's locker—in a study at Greyfriars! Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter started for the school at a run. He dashed into the gateway so quickly that he ran into Bob Cherry without seeing him.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior by the collar, and shook him.

"You fat duffer! Where are you running to?" growled Bob. "You've jolly nearly winded me, you porpoise!"

"Gooogah! Leggo! I'm in a hurry!" gasped Bunter.

"Postal-order come?" grinned Bob, releasing the Owl of the Remove, with a grin.

"Oh, really, Cherry? I may know where to find a lot of banknotes!" said Billy Bunter mysteriously.

Bob Cherry jumped.

"Banknotes!" he ejaculated.

"I'm not going to tell you anything," said Bunter. "I may know where to get as many banknotes as I like, and I may not!"

"You fat duffer, what on earth are you burling about?" exclaimed Bob, in utter amazement.

"That's telling," said Bunter mysteriously. "Perhaps a chap has got a bundle of banknotes in his locker, and perhaps he hasn't. Perhaps I can see how the land lies, and perhaps I can't. Perhaps I'm going to pay Carthew out for being a bullying beast, and perhaps I ain't!"

And with those weirdly mysterious words Billy Bunter rolled away across the Close towards the School House, leaving Bob Cherry staring after him dumbfounded.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Putting His Foot Down!

DICK RAKE was in his study, with Micky Desmond, Wibley, and Morgan, his study-mates. The other juniors were talking cricket, but Rake was rather silent.

Billy Bunter's discovery had, of course, been spread far and wide long ago, and all Greyfriars had discussed the strange affair of Rake's cousin.

It made no difference so far as his study-mates were concerned, for with most of the other fellows. Whatever his cousin Tom had done was evidently not Dick Rake's fault. And most of the fellows, owing to their liking for Rake himself, were inclined to the belief that Tom Rake was innocent, and that there had been some mistake.

One Spooey and Skinner and a few such fellows had made malicious remarks on the subject—not in Rake's hearing. Even Court-great Horace of the Fifth—had clapped Rake on the shoulder, and told him to buck up, and that it would all come right somehow.

There was a tap at the door, and Arthur Carthew came in. Rake glanced at him, his heart sinking.

"Did like to speak to you, Rake," said Carthew.

Rake glanced at Micky Desmond, and his chin under- went.

"Faith and we'd better go and have a look at the cricket!" said Micky. "Wingate's batting, me boys, and it's worth seeing! Come on!"

"Right-ho!" said Morgan and Wibley.

They followed Micky Desmond from the study. Micky closed the door, and Dick Rake was left alone with the new boy in the Remove.

"What is it, Carthew?" Rake asked hoarsely.

His heart was heavy.

The expression on Carthew's hard face was a warning to look for trouble.

Rake felt that the blow he had been expecting so long was at last at hand. Carthew was tired of playing with him like a cat with a mouse, and the hour of betrayal was at hand. Rake's heart was like lead as that thought passed through his mind.

A sardonic smile crossed Carthew's face. It was easy for him to see the thoughts that were passing in the mind of the troubled junior.

It was a puzzle to Rake that Carthew had kept silent so long. Unless the fellow found a cruel pleasure in tormenting him, he could not guess the reason; but he was soon to know.

Carthew sat on the edge of the table, his hands in his pockets, the old, sneering smile upon his face that Rake knew so well.

"The Redclyffe match is coming off the day after to-morrow," he remarked.

Rake nodded.

"You have been looking forward to it as a day of triumph, of course," said Carthew, with an ugly sneer, "though you know as well as I do that you ought not to be in the team at all, and that Wharton has given you the place I ought to have had!"

"I know nothing of the kind!" said Rake warmly.

"Wharton chose the one he considered the best player!"

"Of course, you don't find fault with his favouritism when you are the one to benefit by it!"

"It's not much use discussing it, Carthew. Whether I ought to be in the team or not, Wharton has put me in, and there's an end of it!"

"Yes, he has put you in, and I'll make you sorry for it!" said Carthew, between his teeth.

Rake stared at him.

"I really don't see how you'll manage that," he remarked.

"Wharton's not likely to attach much importance to your opinion!"

"He'll attach some importance to losing the match, I suppose!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are not going to triumph over me as you anticipate!" said Carthew savagely. "You are going to lose the match!"

"I am going to lose the match?"

"Yes, you are, or you'll be sorry for yourself!"

Rake started.

"Speak plainly, Carthew! Do you mean to say that you want Greyfriars to be beaten by Redclyffe?"

Carthew nodded coolly.

"Yes; that's exactly what I do mean."

"You cur!"

"Better language, please!" said Carthew threateningly.

"You cur! You mongrel!" cried Rake, unheeding. "And you think I could be rotter enough to do as you wish—to lose the match for the Remove?"

"I know you could if you liked, and I think you will, too, if you don't want your cousin to go to penal servitude!"

Rake made a step towards him with blazing eyes. Arthur Carthew slid from the table, and threw up his hands to defend himself. For a moment it looked as if Rake would spring at him like a tiger. And if he had given rein to his temper, Carthew's defence would not have availed him much. But the thought of the unhappy fugitive of Friarsdale Wood flashed across Dick Rake's mind in time. His clenched hands fell to his sides.

"You bound!"

Carthew gave a yawn.

"Now you know what to expect, Rake. You've been thinking during the past week that I meant to knuckle under, haven't you? You were mistaken, you see. When I saw the names of the eleven, I made up my mind to make you all smart for it, and you especially. It is all through you that I was left out. Your triumph will be a frost, after all. You can do as you like, of course; but I shall watch the match the day after to-morrow. And if Greyfriars wins, I shall go straight to Mr. Fix and show him, where to find your cousin. So you know what to expect!"

And he moved to the door.

"Stop!" called out Rake.

Carthew turned round.

"Well?"

"Have you fully considered what you are doing?" said Dick. "Do you understand what you are asking me to do? Can you be rotter enough to wish your own school to lose a match for the sake of a petty spite?"

"Is that all you want to say?"

Rake set his teeth.

"You have made up your mind, then?"

"Certainly I have!"

"And you will betray Tom unless I lose the match?"

"I have said so."

"Then you must do it," said Rake, with a deep breath, "I can't do what you ask, even to save Tom!"

Carthew sneered.

"Very well. I wonder what Tom Rake would think of your scruples? But please yourself. You have another day to think over it!"

And he went out of the study.

He left Rake a prey to a terrible disquietude.

"What could he do? He threw himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands. What could he do? He groaned aloud as he thought how helpless he was.

The door opened.
"Why, Rake old chap!"
It was Micky. Rake raised his face. Micky looked at him in amazement and alarm.
"What's the matter, old chap?"
"I can't tell you," groaned Rake. "Oh, if I only knew what to do!"

"What has that spalpeen asked of you this time?" demanded Micky wrathfully.

Rake was silent.
"Tell me what it is, old chap?"
"Don't ask me, Micky!" Rake started up. "I must go and see Tom. I'll see what he says, at any rate."
"And you can't go and see him to-night, you know?"
"No, I forgot that."

Rake began to pace the room, his chin watching him in uneasy silence, but not questioning him further, as he saw that his questions only added to Rake's trouble.

Truly, Carthew had planned well. The day which Rake had looked forward to with joyous anticipation was to be the blackest of any he had spent at Greyfriars. He must either lose the match for his side or he must play with the knowledge that as soon as the game was over the police would visit Tom's hiding-place and seize the unhappy lad, and drag him away to answer for another's crime.

He must commit an act of treachery, or send his cousin to a living death. The one thing that could save him would be to defeat for Greyfriars by fair play at the hands of Redclyffe, and he had too much confidence in the Remove Eleven to expect that to happen. And what misery to be compelled to hope for such a defeat!

What could he do? In his despair he wished he had never been selected to play in the Remove Eleven—and at that thought, a way out of the difficulty flashed into his mind, a possible escape from his dilemma. What if he did not play, after all?

He could resign. There were plenty of eager cricketers there who would jump at the chance of filling his place. If he stood out the team would suffer, but—

What would Wharton say? What would the whole Form say? It would be impossible to give any explanation. Wharton would naturally resent having such a thing sprung upon him at the last moment, and if Greyfriars lost the match, Rake was pretty certain to be regarded as the cause of the defeat. Wharton would despise him, and he could never explain. But even that was better than playing for the Form and giving away the game to the rival team.

He turned towards the door.
"What are you going to do, Dick?" asked Micky Desmond.
"I must speak to Wharton," said Rake, in a strained voice. And he hurried to Wharton's study.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Play the Game!

"CAN I speak to you for a minute, Wharton?"
The captain of the Remove nodded. He looked a little surprised at the expression of Rake's face.
"Go ahead, Rake!"

And he pushed his book away.
"I want to resign my place in the eleven."

Wharton stared at Rake.
"Do you know what you are saying?" he asked.

"Yes," said Rake miserably. "I mean it, Wharton."

"And why?"
Rake was silent.

"You have a reason, I suppose?" said Wharton impatiently.

"Yes, I have a reason,"
"And what is it?"

"I—I'd rather not play."

Rake's white face grew scarlet under Wharton's searching gaze. The captain of the Remove was puzzled and angry.

"I don't understand you, Rake. Do you mean that you don't feel up to playing against Redclyffe? Are you afraid that your form isn't good enough?"

"I—I couldn't do Greyfriars justice," said Rake, in a low voice.

Harry Wharton's expression cleared.

"I see; you're feeling a bit nervous about it; a sort of attack of stage-fright—eh?" he said, with a laugh. "But you've no reason, Rake. And in any case it's too late now to think of altering the team. You could not possibly be permitted to fail us at the last moment like this!"

"But—"

Wharton waved his hand.

"No more, old chap! I refuse to accept your resignation. Now be off, and think better of it."

And he turned to his book again.

It was impossible to pursue the subject. Rake left the study with a heavy heart.

He would have to play. The question remained whether

he would play his best for Greyfriars, or whether he would allow himself to be used as the tool of Arthur Carthew's revenge.

He remembered Carthew's words: "I wonder what Tom would think of your scruples!" He felt that he must consult Tom. He could not make up his mind until he had seen his cousin.

He slept little that night. He had resolved to visit Tom the next day, at the risk of being seen by Mr. Fix. But he took every precaution against being followed. After morning school he cycled to Courtfield, and, leaving his bike at an inn there, entered the wood on the side farthest from Friardale.

He walked through the wood, crossing the little rustic bridge, where Carthew had kept the mysterious rendezvous with his father, and made his way to the poncher's hut in the shady recess.

"You here, Tom?"

Tom looked at his cousin in astonishment.

"Yes, Tom. I had to come to see you. I must speak to you. It's important," said Rake.

Tom's look became anxious.

"Has the detective discovered anything?"

"No. It isn't that."

"Sit down, old fellow, and tell me what's the matter."

Rake sat down upon a mossy log. Tom stood leaning against the wall, waiting for him to speak.

"I'm in trouble, Tom."

And Rake told of Arthur Carthew's demand, and the threat which had accompanied it. Tom Rake listened in silence, his brow clouded, and his gaze bent upon the ground.

"You can't do what he asks, Dick."

Rake's heart gave a great sob of relief.

"What do you advise, then, Tom?"

"Play to win! Do your level best for the school. You're bound to do so."

"But—the consequences!" faltered Rake.

Tom was pale, but his face was resolute.

"Whatever the consequences, you can't allow yourself to be bullied into acting dishonourably, he said. "I couldn't consent to it. You must play to win for the Remove. And if that hound betrays me—"

"He is sure to do so, Tom. He will be furious."

"Well, let him. I will leave here to-night."

"But where will you go?" said Rake miserably. There is no other hiding-place near Greyfriars."

"It's the only thing to be done, Dick. After all, I am not safe here, with the secret known to Carthew. Even if you gave in to him this time, he might make some fresh demand you could not meet. He might betray me out of sheer malice. He is not to be trusted."

"You're right there!"

"I will make a run for freedom, and take my chance. With the workman's clothes you have brought me, I think I may be able to dodge away. And the search can't now be so hot as it was at first. I think I shall very likely get clear."

The cousins had a long talk, and Dick, though with many misgivings, agreed to Tom's plan. It was evidently the only thing to be done.

They parted at last, Rake hastening back to Courtfield, and mounting his bike for a scorch back to Greyfriars. He had left himself none too much time.

Arthur Carthew smiled as he saw Rake come in. He guessed where he had been; but he was far from guessing the decision Dick and Tom had come to.

The great topic now in the Remove was the morrow's match. Harry Wharton and his merry men were in fine form, and eager for the fray. All the eleven and all the Form looked forward to the contest with confidence. Redclyffe was known to be a strong team, and it was certain that they would put up a good fight, but Wharton's eleven was one of the finest the Remove had ever sent out, and there was good reason to hope that they would win another victory for the Form.

"Well, what do you say about resigning now?" exclaimed Rake, as he met Dick that evening.

Rake shook his head.

"I'm going to do my best, Wharton."

The captain of the Form patted him on the shoulder.

"That's right; stick to that!"

Rake's mind was made up. Tom's counsel had strengthened him to follow the path of duty; and, although fears for Tom still haunted him, a definite decision brought him something like peace of mind.

But while the whole school was talking and thinking of the coming match, there was one whose attention was engrossed by another matter. It was Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was in an unusually thoughtful mood, and if

anybody had taken the trouble to observe him, it might have been noted that Bunter's eyes glared behind his big spectacles with the light of deep and exciting thoughts.

When Rake came in to do his preparation he found Bunter in the study.

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

"I—say, Rake, lend me a tanner, will you? I want it very particularly, and—and I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Oh, ring off the postal-order, for goodness' sake!" said Rake. "Here you are!" He tossed the Owl of the Remove a sixpence, and Billy Bunter scuttled out of the study with it.

The fat junior rolled along to No. 14, the study belonging to Squiff and Johnny Bull and Fisher T. Fish. Johnny Bull was away—as the cricket team knew only too well—and Squiff was downstairs. The Yankee junior was alone in the study. He pointed a bony forefinger at the door at Bunter came in.

"Nothing doing, I guess!" he remarked tersely.

"You silly ass! I want to borrow your bunch of keys—the same lot you lent me before to open my desk—"

"You know the terms, I guess," said the merchant of the Remove. "A tanner a time for borrowing my keys."

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Hand over the tanner, and it's a trade," he said.

"Right-ho!"

Rake's sixpence changed hands, and Fisher T. Fish handed over an enormous bunch, containing a variety of all sorts and conditions of keys. Billy Bunter shoved it into an inner pocket, and rolled out of the study, grinning with satisfaction. As usual, the short-sighted Owl rolled into somebody, and the somebody happened to be Arthur Carthew, the new boy in the Remove.

Carthew uttered an angry exclamation, and gave the Owl a rough shove which sent him spinning, and walked on. Bunter collapsed on the floor with a yelp.

"Yow-ow! You rotter!" The fat junior picked himself up, his eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. "You wait, you beast!" he murmured vengefully. "To-morrow afternoon—while the Redclyffe match is on—you wait, you beast, that's all!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, coming along the passage. "What's that about the match to-morrow, my fat tulip? Has Wharton accepted your services, after all?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob laughed, and went into his study, and Bunter rolled away, looking forward to the morrow with as keen an anticipation as the cricketers of the Remove themselves.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Redclyffe Match!

THE next day—the day of the Redclyffe match—came, and the Removeites joyously hailed a fine morning, with a bright sun and a cloudless sky.

Harry Wharton looked over the visiting team, and he could guess that Redclyffe juniors were in great form.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and elected to bat, and Jones, the Redclyffe skipper, led his men into the field. Nearly all the Remove were round the ground to watch and cheer.

The Remove innings opened respectably, if not brilliantly. Bob Cherry knocked up 25 before he was bowled. Nugent went in in his place, and added 10 to the score before Jones caught him at mid-wicket. Then the Remove wickets fell pretty fast, till Wharton himself went in, and the captain made things hum a little. He had knocked up 40 before his middle stump was shot out of the ground.

Harry Wharton was heartily cheered as he came out. "Look out for Peters' bowling, Rake," said Wharton, a little ruefully.

Rake smiled and nodded, and went on.

There was a buzz among the Remove fellows as he took his place at the wicket.

The first ball Rake swiped for a boundary; the second he sent past point and cover-point, and took 4 while the Redclyffe fieldsmen were leather-hunting; the third and fourth gave him 2 each; and the fifth and sixth he played back.

Rake batted cleverly, and finally carried off his bat for 40 runs, amid cheers from the Remove crowd.

The Remove innings ended for 100. It was a bigger figure than Redclyffe had expected to see, and they realised that they were in for a hard fight.

Rake sent them the first over. It cost the visitors a wicket or two. The innings had not opened auspiciously. Four

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wickets were down when the score stood at 25, and the faces of the Redclyffians began to grow long. They brightened, though, when the mighty Jones grasped the willow and went in.

And then their prospects looked up. Jones simply defied the Remove bowlers.

But what was that? The bat sent the ball a journey, and Jones started to run. But a roar went up from the whole field. Jones glanced round, and he saw the ball go up skyward from the hand of Dick Rake, at cover-point, and come down again straight as a die.

"Oh, well caught!"

After that the Redclyffe wickets fell faster, till all were down for a total of 90.

During the play the excitement had kept Dick Rake from thinking of anything but cricket. But now he caught Arthur Carthew's eyes upon him, and a chill ran over him.

His thoughts ran to Tom. Where was he? He had left the hut in Friardale Wood, but had he gone to safety, or from one peril to another? That was a question Rake could not answer.

But he had one comfort. He had observed Mr. Fix amongst the spectators. The gentleman from Scotland Yard was looking on at the match with a great deal of interest. And Rake was glad to see him there. It showed that he, at least, was not on the track of Tom.

And Rake, naturally, glanced more than once towards the spot where he had seen Mr. Fix standing, to assure himself that he was still there. And just before the second innings he observed a peculiar incident which made him wonder a good deal.

Billy Bunter sidled up to Mr. Fix, and twitched his sleeve. The detective looked down a little impatiently, but Bunter apparently said something that mollified him, for his expression changed, and, after a brief exchange of words, he walked away with Billy towards the School House.

Rake wondered what the incident meant, but he had little time to think about it. The second innings of the Remove commenced, and all his thoughts were given to the game.

The Redclyffe bowlers were in deadly earnest.

The faces of the Removeites gradually lengthened as unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster.

The Redclyffians correspondingly brightened. Five down for 12! A sort of groan went through the Remove ranks.

"You see how it is, Rake," said Wharton. "Go in and do your best, old chap!"

"Right you are, Wharton! Trust me!"

The Remove crowd breathlessly watched Rake open his innings.

And when Rake began to hit their spirits revived, and Redclyffe found that a change came over the spirit of their dream.

For Rake was in perfect form. It did not matter in the slightest degree what kind of ball they sent down to him.

Wharton made 20 in his first over. Then Rake gave the visitors some more leather-hunting. His score was at 40 now.

"Haag it!" said Jones. "Something will have to be done. Tomkins, old man, go on, and get that young villain out."

"I'll try," said Tomkins, not very hopefully.

He had tried before. Rake was ready for him. He sent those balls to all points of the compass.

But suddenly there was a shout from the Redclyffians in which delight and relief were mingled.

The ball had glanced from Wharton's bat, and Jones, at point, had got it.

"Well caught!" roared Redclyffe.

The innings closed for 110.

And when Redclyffe went in again, they went in with the look of men determined to do or die.

Five wickets were down when the board showed 50. Then 105 for seven wickets.

Fifteen to tie, sixteen to win, and three more wickets to fall! The faces of Redclyffe were brightening wonderfully, and Wharton's look was just a little anxious as he tossed the ball to Dick Rake.

The Remove watched eagerly as Rake went on to bowl. Most of them expected that he would save the game, but they hardly looked for the treat he gave them.

The man at the wicket gripped his bat, and prepared for squalls. But, in spite of his preparedness, the ball broke in sharply, and whipped his off stump clean out of the ground.

The next man came in, and played helplessly at a ball which curled in between his bat and his legs in the most astonishing way, and before he knew what was happening his bats were on the ground.

Jones gave a heavy sigh as his last man went in. That sigh was justified, for the ball came down with a twist on it that completely baffled the unfortunate batsman; and while

the glancing willow swept the air, the middle stump gracefully reclined on the ground. Out!

There was a roar of enthusiasm. Rake had done the hat-trick, and won the game for his Form.

The great match was over. Greyfriars had won! While the whole Remove was cheering itself hoarse, Arthur Carthew hastened away, with set teeth and gleaming eyes. He went to seek the man from Scotland Yard.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Truth at Last!

"Do you want to know where to find Tom Rake?"

Mr. Fix looked curiously at Carthew. Arthur had met him rather unexpectedly in the quadrangle, and had at once addressed to him the above query. He was determined not to lose a moment. His heart was on fire with malice.

"What do you know about Tom Rake?" asked Mr. Fix.

"I know where he is hidden."

"Really?"

"He is hidden in a hut in Friar-dale Wood. I followed Dick Rake last week when he visited him there."

"Last week! Then how is it you didn't mention all that to me when we were talking the other day?" asked Mr. Fix suspiciously.

"Rake asked me not to. But, upon reflection, I have decided that you ought to be told."

"That's very right and proper of you, Master Carthew," said Mr. Fix with a satirical smile, which Arthur could not quite understand. "As it happens, I have been waiting here to speak to you. Please come with me to the Head."

Carthew, a little uneasy, and greatly wondering, accompanied the detective. Immediately after the cricket-match, Mr. Fix had sent a message to the doctor, asking for an interview.

The Head of Greyfriars was waiting for the detective in his study in a rather unquiet frame of mind. As Mr. Fix entered with Arthur Carthew the Head adjusted his gold pince-nez, and looked questioningly at the detective.

"I have received certain information, sir," said Mr. Fix, "which makes me desirous of questioning Master Carthew in your presence."

"Certainly!" said the Head wonderingly.

Carthew stared at the detective in amazement. He imagined that Mr. Fix was about to refer to the information he had just given, but this was surely a strange way of leading up to it.

"As for you, Master Carthew, you are not compelled to answer my questions; but I warn you that it will be for your own good to reply with perfect good faith and frankness," said Mr. Fix.

"I don't understand you."

"Did you meet your father one day last week at the little bridge in Friar-dale Wood?"

Carthew stared.

"How do you know that?"

"Did you receive from him a packet, which he asked you to keep concealed with the greatest secrecy?"

Carthew did not reply. A hunted look was creeping into his eyes.

"Did you place this packet in the locker in your study? And is it there now?"

"You are talking nonsense!" exclaimed Carthew desperately. "My father gave me nothing, and—"

"Very good. Doctor, I wish to make an examination of this young gentleman's locker in your presence."

Carthew was as white as a sheet. The Head looked at Mr. Fix in amazement.

"Why do you wish to do so, Mr. Fix? If Mr. Carthew gave his son a packet, I fail to see how it concerns you."

"It concerns me very deeply. Mr. Carthew is cashier of the City and County Bank, and I have reason to believe that the packet he entrusted to his son contains the banknotes which were stolen from the bank, and which Thomas Rake was accused of stealing."

"Good heavens!"

"It is false!" panted Carthew. "I will fetch you the key of my locker, sir, and—"

Mr. Fix's grip fastened upon his collar as he made a dart to the door.

"You don't!" said the detective grimly. "You don't go to that locker alone, young'un. Not for Joseph!"

"This is—this is terrible!" gasped the Head.

"Will you come with me to the young gentleman's study, sir?"

"Yes, yes; certainly!"

And then Carthew's courage completely gave way.

"I—I didn't know what was in the packet, sir!" he cried, bursting into tears. "I'll swear I didn't, sir!"

"I don't doubt you, my boy," said the good old Head.

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EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"If what Mr. Fix says is correct, you have been used shamefully, and by one in whom you had a right to place every confidence. I am deeply, deeply sorry for you, my poor boy. I am quite assured that you had no suspicion of the real contents of the packet."

Whereat Mr. Fix winked solemnly at the ceiling, but he held his peace. And the three of them proceeded at once to Carthew's study, where Arthur produced his key and opened the locker. The disarrangement of the contents made it pretty clear that some investigator had been there before him, but in his dismay and agitation he hardly noticed it. He was too disturbed to even wonder how the detective had obtained his information, and certainly no thought of Billy Bunter crossed his mind.

He drew out the packet with a trembling hand, and passed it to the detective.

The string had already been broken.

Mr. Fix opened the packet, and a great roll of rustling banknotes was disclosed.

Arthur Carthew stood white and trembling.

The sight of the stolen banknotes was a stunning blow.

He knew it all now!

It was not Tom Rake who had robbed the bank. It was his own father—and he had been made the receiver of the stolen property!

Carthew gave a deep groan.

He covered his face with his hands and sank into a chair, his knees giving way beneath him. The Head stood pale and distressed, while Mr. Fix made a methodical examination of the banknotes.

"Quite correct," said Mr. Fix, with a smile. "The numbers are correct, Dr. Locke—these are the notes which were stolen from the City and County Bank. Will you let your man drive me to Courtfield, sir? I want to send a wire!"

Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Fix, of Scotland Yard, was driving rapidly to Courtfield, and the telegram went its way. The same evening Mr. Carthew was arrested.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I did it!" announced Bunter proudly.

"You did what, Patsy?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I did it, from beginning to end!" said Bunter. "Talk about Scotland Yard! Why, the detective chap could have done nothing without me! After Rake's cousin all the time, when it was old Carthew who robbed the bank—"

"What!" shouted Rake.

"Old Carthew!" repeated Bunter. "And the awful rascal brought the notes here for Carthew of the Remove to hide."

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry.

"You can ask the Head!" said Bunter loftily. "Old Fix has gone off to arrest Carthew's pater, and Carthew's left the school!"

"By gum!"

Rake drew a deep, deep breath. Wingate of the Sixth came up and tapped him on the shoulder.

"There's good news, Rake," he said. "Your cousin's cleared. The thief was Carthew's father. It's rough on Carthew. It seems that he hid the stolen notes here without knowing what was in the packet."

"Congratulations, old chap!" said Harry Wharton; and Bob Cherry clapped Rake on the back.

To an interested crowd Bunter explained how he had done it; but, to his surprise and indignation, he did not receive an ovation. Harry Wharton & Co. agreed that it was very lucky it had been done; but they agreed also that Bunter was a mean Prussian for the way he had done it, and to Bunter's great wrath he was rewarded with a bumping on the hard, unsympathetic floor.

Carthew had gone. He had been little more than three weeks at Greyfriars, and in that time he had made no one care enough for him to miss him when he went. True, the fellows would not have blamed him for his father's crime, but none were sorry that he had gone from Greyfriars.

The next morning Dick Rake had news of his cousin. Tom Rake had fled, but he had not succeeded in getting clear. He had been stopped a dozen miles from Friar-dale. But the truth was known, and his arrest was only a matter of form.

Tom Rake's name was completely cleared, and he returned to the bank; but he did not stay there long. The next time Dick saw his cousin, he was in khaki; and ere long his name was added to the list of Greyfriars "Old Boys" at the front.

THE END.

(Do not miss "A SPLIT IN THE STUDY!"—next Monday's Grand Story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

NEXT
MONDAY—

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

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A Story of Strange and Thrilling Adventures in an Amazing Quest
by ALEC G. PEARSON.

PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS BRIEFLY TOLD.

Hal Mackenzie receives a mysterious Message, urging him to come out to the Southern Andes and learn the secret of the Tower of the Golden Star. He sets out upon the voyage accompanied by his chums, Jim Holdsworth, Bob Sigabee, and Pat O'Hara.

After exciting experiences in the hands of a treacherous captain, they arrive at Buenos Ayres.

They proceed upon their journey into the mountains, and eventually arrive at the Black Sentinel—a rock cut in the figure of a huge man.

Later they discover the skeleton of a man, Guzman Cavallo, a Spaniard, together with an old parchment telling how he had set out one hundred and fifty years previously in quest of the Golden Star.

After a further three days' journeying they arrive at the Valley of the Shadows, of which Aymara, the daughter of a native chief, had told them. Here, in the night, the darkness being made intense by a thick fog, a fight takes place between the adventurers and a number of half-breeds. Pat O'Hara becomes separated from his chums, and accidentally gets into the hut of the leader of their enemies, who calls himself Captain Garotte.

The other three are overpowered by the half-breeds, who tie them on their own mules and lead them away.

(Now read on.)

A Bold Irishman.

Sigabee had taken no part in the conversation. The fact of having his limbs bound, and being trussed up so ignominiously on a mule, had roused some latent fierceness in his disposition for which his captors would have to pay dearly if ever he contrived to get free. He was savagely silent; but when he was in that mood it was a sure sign his brain was working busily on some plan for the discomfiture of his foes.

"I wonder what's become of O'Hara?" said Jim, breaking a lengthy silence. "If he hasn't been captured, there's a chance he may be able to help us."

His comrades had also been wondering what had become of the Irishman. They little guessed that Pat O'Hara was at that moment seated on the floor of a stone hut, with his back against the wall, keeping the leader of the half-breeds covered with his rifle. But, all the same, Pat was more than a prisoner himself, for he couldn't move from his position without exposing himself to be shot by one of the watching half-breeds outside. And it was to this stone hut that the three captives were being taken.

When at length the party came to a halt at the foot of the low hill, two of the half-breeds ascended to the stone hut to acquaint their captain of their arrival. One of them knocked at the door with his club.

Pat O'Hara, who was getting heartily tired of his vigil,

welcomed this as a relief. But he instantly brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"If anyone comes in at that door," he warned Captain Garotte, "tis yourself will be the first man to die. You'll remember what I told ye before. And the man that opens the door'll be the second!"

Captain Garotte shouted out something in the patois which his followers spoke—a mixture of Spanish and Indian tongues. The knocking ceased. There was a surprised murmuring on the outside. Then Captain Garotte shouted out some more instructions, and there was silence.

"The situation has changed somewhat, Sonor O'Hara," said the half-breed leader. "There are fifty of my men now outside."

"The whole world's outside, barrin' us two," retorted Pat O'Hara drily. "But the situation hasn't changed inside at all, at all!"

"Yet perhaps it will do so," replied Captain Garotte, "when you hear what I have to say. To begin with, your three companions are prisoners in the hands of my men."

"Are ye asking me to believe that?" said O'Hara.

"You shall have proof!" returned the other.

Again he called out some instructions to the men outside, and after a short pause, O'Hara heard the trampling of men's feet, voices, and the stamping of hoofs.

"Now you can call out to your comrades," pursued Captain Garotte. "They can hear you."

Pat's heart sank, for he could hardly doubt the truth of the statement now.

"Hal," he shouted, "is it yourself, and the others that's beyond the door?"

Then Hal's voice came in surprised reply.

"Is it you, Pat? What are you doing in there? Are you a prisoner, too? We've been captured, worse luck!"

A sardonic smile showed itself on Captain Garotte's evil features. But he remained silent.

"Are you tied up?" asked O'Hara.

"Yes," replied Hal. "Trussed up on the backs of our own mules!"

"I'm not able to come out to ye just yet," continued O'Hara, "seeing that I'm being entertained by the leader as these snuff-and-butter coloured ginty. But I'm nigh toired av his company. So I'll just shoot him, seeing he's the cause of all the trouble, and thin—"

"You are a fool!" rasped Captain Garotte, his baleful eyes glittering. He was afraid the Irishman was going to keep his word.

"Do you know what would happen if you shot me?"

"Ye'd be dead!" replied O'Hara promptly. "Tis an aisy question to answer, that same."

"And so also would your comrades be!" retorted the leader. "I have already given instructions. Directly my men hear a rifle-shot in this hut, they will put your companions to death. And it will be an unpleasant death. Slow, but very sure."

(Continued on page iv of cover.)



THOMAS OWEN,
Bristol.



"FILM-STRUCK,"
Birmingham.



JAMES JOHNSON,
A Keen Reader.



A HOLLAND PARK
READER.



A. NISBET,
Glasgow.



EDWIN G. JONES,
Chester.



THE TERRIBLE THREE,
5th Queen's Regt.



JOHN SECKER,
Accrington.



HARRY SHEPHARD,
S. Tottenham.



C. J. THOMAS,
Taunton.



FRED O'DONOGHUE,
Liverpool.



THREE CHUMS,
Sudbury, Suffolk.



ROBERT CRAIG,
Paisley.



HARRY MULLAR,
Belfast.



BERT COOPER,
Stoke-on-Trent.



J. C. HEALY,
Wigan.



THREE LOYAL SUPPORTERS.



JOHN G. ARNCLIFFE
An Australian Reader.

ADVENTURERS FOUR.

(Continued from page 20.)

"That wouldn't bring you to life again," said Pat O'Hara. "I am telling you this so that you shall not act rashly," replied Garotte.

"Unless forgetting," returned O'Hara, "that I'm a free man. When I've shot you, I can go out to my comrades, and be dead. I'll cut their bonds while your men are blinking their eyes at me. Then there will be a pretty fight."

"With life against you, if you go out?"

Pat O'Hara snapped his fingers.

"I don't count the odds against me!" he replied. "The waste of time!"

Captain Garotte pointed to the loopholes.

"Three men are still waiting there," he said. "You might reach the door; you would be dead before you could open it. You will perceive now, senior, that the odds against you are even greater than you imagined."

"Thine for you," agreed O'Hara, with a fin' assumption of carelessness; "but I've another card up my sleeve."

"He hadn't; but he thought it would be no harm to try a bit of bluff."

"So dare I!" replied Captain Garotte. And he spoke more more to his men. There was a shouted answer. "Do you know what I have told them?" he added.

Pat O'Hara shook his head.

"That if I do not leave this hut, unharmed, within the next three minutes," said the half-breed, "they are to commence putting your comrades to death!"

"Then that gives them three minutes' grace!" exclaimed O'Hara.

His rifle was pointed straight at Captain Garotte. He pressed the trigger.

"At that instant the light was extinguished, and the hut plunged into profound darkness."

Death and Destruction.

There were shouts from the half-breeds outside at the sound of the shot, but Captain Garotte had uttered no cry.

"Be dead! Is it that I've missed him?" muttered O'Hara. "If so, it was a sudden darkness put me aim all wrong."

He stood, listening intently, his rifle ready, in case he should hear Garotte moving. He heard nothing. Then suddenly the door swung open, and O'Hara saw a shadowy figure pass out swiftly. It must have been Captain Garotte, but he dared not fire at him for fear of hitting one of his comrades, who were somewhere close up against the hut. However, he leaped out after the shadowy figure before the door could be closed.

"Pat, is that you?" shouted Jim. "We're all here, tied up on our mules. What's happened inside?"

"The worst devil av' the lot, bad scan to him, has given me the slip!" replied O'Hara.

He had snatched his hunting-knife from its sheath, and breaking through the crowd of half-breeds, hurling them to right and left, he made for the nearest mule. It was the one on which Sigabee was bound. A few slashes with the keen-edged blade and the American was free.

"He had a score to settle. The indignity of being roped on the back of a mule like a bundle of old clothes had affected him more than the pain he had endured and the peril he was in. It had roused him to a pitch of fury such as his comrades had never seen in him before."

"He uttered no word, but, felling two of the nearest breeds with terrific blows of his fists, he rushed at the one who was carrying the three rifles. Upon he struck down senseless with a single blow, and then snatched up one of the rifles. It was still loaded."

"See yonder!" Pat O'Hara yelled. He was cutting through the ropes with which Jim was bound. "The man standing forth that wooden shed. 'Tis Captain Garotte!"

The wooden shed was a few yards beyond the end of the stone hut, and it had a wide, open doorway. Garotte was standing in front of the doorway, about a dozen paces from it, shouting some orders to his men. Sigabee levelled his rifle, and pressed the trigger, but the leader of the half-breeds saw the action, and, quick as thought, flung himself down on the ground.

Then an amazing and unexpected thing happened. The sharp report of the rifle was followed by a vivid flash of light from the shed and the sound of a dull explosion. It is hard to describe the effect of that explosion.

The shed was blown to atoms. Men and mules were flung in all directions, some singly, others piled upon each other in heaps.

Jim found himself underneath his kicking mule, and as his hands were off he managed to drag himself free. Rising to his feet, he stared about him dazedly. Between him and

the wrecked shed there was at least a dozen bodies of maimed or dead half-breeds. Those who were unhurt, or slightly injured, were running away, uttering cries of terror. Presently they disappeared from his sight in the mist.

"Jim, lend me a hand!" It was Hal calling to him. "I'm helpless, tied on to this animal, and he may bolt with me."

Jim saw the terrified mule, with his chain still bound hand and foot on its back, scrambling to its feet. He raced over and caught hold of its bridle just in time. Another moment and it would certainly have bolted, for it was half-mad with fear.

When he had soothed and quieted the mule, Jim set to work to free Hal from the ropes which bound him. Hal slipped to the ground. His limbs were so stiff and swollen that he could scarcely stand. He began to chafe them to restore the circulation.

"Where are Sigabee and O'Hara?" he asked anxiously.

"He may be badly hurt, Jim; they may be—"

They did not finish, for he could not bring himself to say what he dreaded—that they might be dead.

But, presently, he was relieved on that score, so far as Pat O'Hara was concerned, at all events, for Jim had caught sight of the Irishman sitting on the ground, gingerly feeling his limbs and body with his hands, as though trying to find out whether any bones were broken.

"Are you all right, Pat?" called out Jim.

"It's meself that's trying to find out if I'm all well piece," replied O'Hara. "What was it that threw us all about like a box av' toys kicked by a mule? Was it an earthquake?"

"It was an explosion," said Jim. "Though what exploded is more than I can tell you."

He now looked around for Sigabee, and found him lying motionless, face downwards on the earth. At first he feared the American was killed, for there was blood upon his head; but, on kneeling down by his side, and turning him gently over, he found to his relief that he was still alive.

"Sigabee is badly hurt," he called out, "and unconscious."

He was carried into the stone hut, one end of which was completely shattered. They had no fear of any fresh attack from the half-breeds, for the survivors had bolted as hard as they could go. Pat O'Hara procured a light, and made a search for the body of Captain Garotte, whom he made certain had been killed by the explosion. But he could not find the half-breed leader, either dead or alive.

"There's no killing him," muttered O'Hara, with profound disgust; "unless, indeed, he's been blown clean across the valley. But if he's alive we haven't seen the last av' him."

"Is he hurt?"

He joined the others in the hut, and smiled grimly when he saw that the bed and everything at that end of the structure was nothing more than a heap of rubbish.

"'Tis a pity it didn't happen when he was sitting on the bed!" he exclaimed.

Hal and Jim had bathed and bound up Sigabee's wound, and he was slowly recovering consciousness. Being a man of tremendous vitality, his brain cleared as soon as he had regained his senses. He remembered all that had happened up to the moment when some flying fragment had struck him down.

"It was my bullet that caused all the racket," he explained. "I fired at Garotte, but the yellor skunk flung himself flat as I pressed the trigger. Then the bullet must have struck some explosive that was stored in the shed, unless—what?—that mused up things alone! I reckon Garotte saved himself both ways by chucking himself on the ground." And we owe our lives to the fact that there were twenty or thirty half-breeds between us and the shed," said Hal. "They acted as a sort of shield. More than half of them were killed."

"How about the mules?"

"Two of them are cut about the body," replied Jim, "and one of them isn't hurt at all. I think the damaged ones will be all right in a day or two. I've picketed them all."

"I'd like to find out what it was exploded," said O'Hara. "How's aints, 'twas a mix-up! Meself was blown head over heels, wud half a dozen av' the breeds fallin' on top av' me. I tould meself I was dead intirely!"

They all laughed. Their spirits were rising again now that night of terror was over. It was close on daybreak now, and the mist was clearing. By the time that the first rays of the rising sun were tinging the mountain-tops with red and gold the fog had all gone.

Then Hal and Jim went and examined the interior of the wrecked shed, but they obtained no clue as to what the explosive had been. All that remained was a heap of fine, grey powder.

"I give it up," said Hal. "It's something of which I have no knowledge."

"Suppose—" began Jim, and then he stopped.

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY. Order your copy in advance.)