

THE REMOVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN!
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

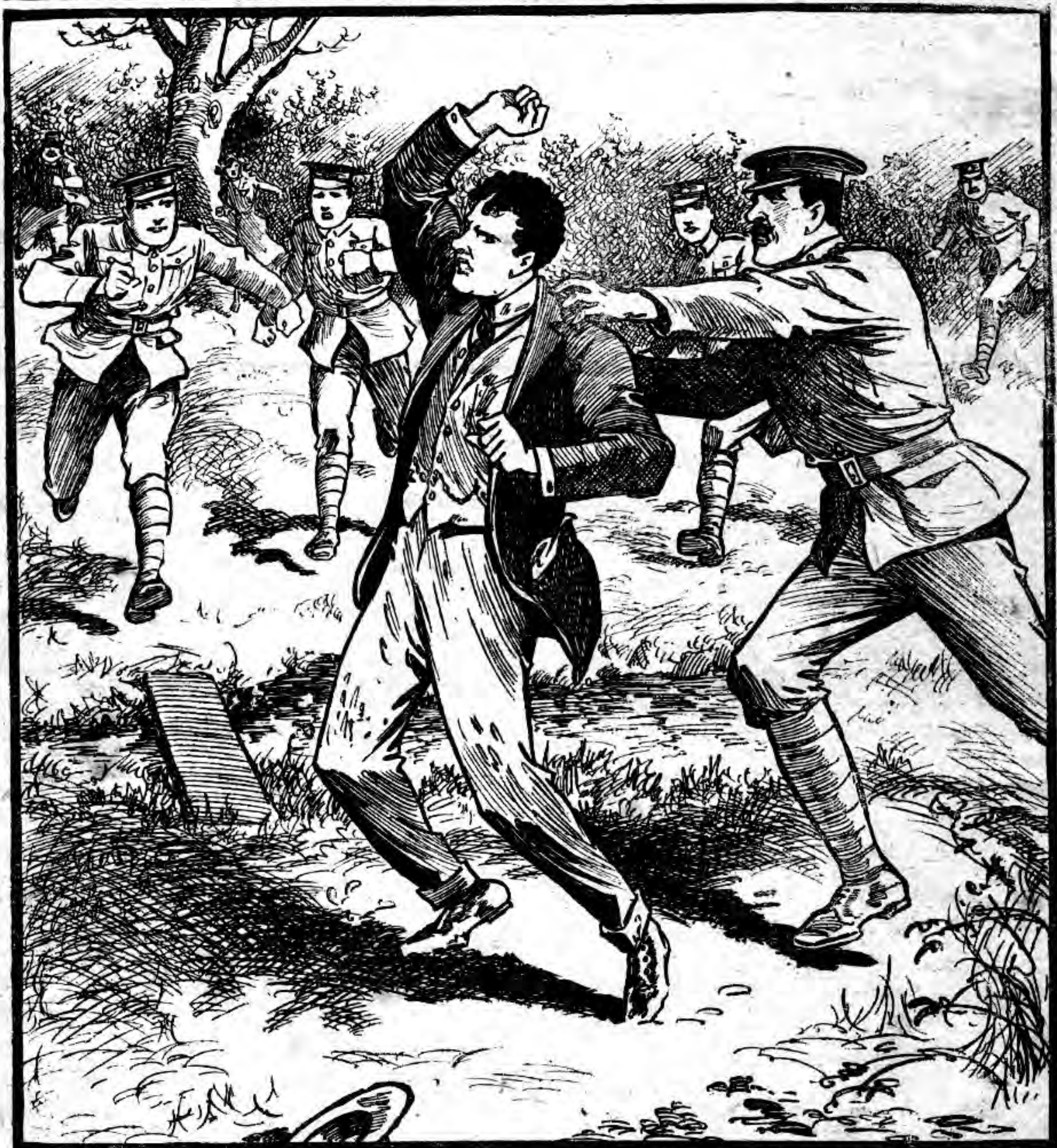


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COKER CAUGHT!

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THE REMOVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Fisher T. Fish—Election Agent!

"IF it's bizney, Skinner, I'm on. If it ain't—vamoose the ranch! Even you slab-sided Britons have a proverb that says: 'Time's money!' And I guess I ain't wasting the durocks. Nope, sir, nary a red cent!"

So spoke Fisher T. Fish of the Remove Form at Greyfriars to Harold Skinner, also of that Form.

"It's business, all serene, Fishy," replied Skinner.

The Yankee schoolboy eyed him narrowly. Fisher Tarleton Fish did not trust Skinner. In point of fact, Fishy trusted nobody. Some of the fellows said that he did not even trust himself—which, if true, was a striking testimony to his business acumen.

For most certainly Fishy did not deserve to be trusted!

He was alone in No. 14 when Skinner came in. Johnny Bull and Sampson Quiney Ifley Field—called Squiff, because life is short—shared that apartment with him. But they were outdoor fellows, which Fish certainly wasn't; and just now, being for the first time on rather bad terms with one another, they both had some tendency to stay away from the study more than usual. So Fish, who had turned No. 14 to several uses which had not been appreciated by its other inmates—an insurance office had been located there once, and a pawnbroker's establishment at another time—was having things somewhat his own way there at this period.

"It's this bizney of Wharton's resignation," said Skinner.

"Wharton ain't resigned yet—nary a resign!" replied Fish.

"He's going to, though."

"How do you know that, Skinner? I calculate you don't know, not for dead sure."

"But I do! It doesn't matter how—I do."

Skinner's information had been obtained from Billy Bunter, who had in turn obtained his information through the accident of his bootlace coming undone outside the closed door of Study No. 1, the headquarters of the Famous Five.

It was a somewhat strange accident, too, for Bunter was wearing button boots at the time. But then strange things did happen to William George Bunter.

Now, Harold Skinner was far too wide to take all that Bunter vouched for as truth. But in this case he had gained in other ways information that tended to show the Owl's story correct, and he thought it good enough to act upon.

The eyes of Fisher T. Fish gleamed, and his lean, cadaverous face took on an eager look. Skinner seemed to mean something, and if there really was anything doing that promised profit, Fish was on it—no mistake about that!

He turned to the papers on the table—papers covered with scrawled pencilled figures. Those figures had to do with the anticipated profits to be made out

of one of his innumerable schemes to exploit Greyfriars for his own benefit.

"If it's bizney, Skinner, I'm your man! If it ain't—git!"

"I've told you already it's bizney. See here, Fishy. Old Bolsover is no end keen on getting elected skipper in Wharton's place. It will suit us better, too—all of us who don't care about knuckling under to Wharton and his set of prigs."

Fish did not begin to perceive the business proposition as yet. He fingered his long chin thoughtfully, and considered matters.

"I don't figure that Bolsover stands much chance," he said. "Nope, sir! Bolsy don't cut much ice with the Form. I guess I ain't fond of the galoot myself. He might be a heap more civil to me, without bustin' a biler about it."

"Bolsy's all serene. See here, Fishy."

"Nope, Skinner! If you want to put a business proposition to me, I've no objection to conversing some with you. But there ain't any spondulicks to be gotten out of chin-wagging about Bolsover, I opine."

"Then you opine wrong, and you're a fat-headed chump!" said Skinner wrathfully.

"Cool off, you jay, or I'll make potato-scrappings of you, I guess! I don't want any of your rough talk handed out to me."

"Ass! Bolsover had a whacking big remittance this morning."

At that item of intelligence the face of Fisher T. Fish underwent a sudden and most remarkable change. He beamed upon Skinner affectionately. He seemed half inclined to hug him.

"Say! Now you're talking!" he said.

"You're no friend of Wharton's, are you?"

"Waal, I calculate that depends upon things. I do allow that he's a tarnation sight too strait-laced to suit me."

"You'd help to get him out, and get old Bolsover in?"

"I guess that if Wharton resigns he's got himself out, Skinner. He ain't needing the friendly push from behind. It's Bolsover against the next galoot that rolls along then."

"No, it's not. Because Wharton will stand again!"

"Who's been giving you hot air? That ain't sense."

"Sense or not, it's the Bounder's dodge. And Smithy is about as wide as they make them—we all know that."

"He's got Wharton on a string. I calculate Smithy means to cut in himself."

"Rot!"

Skinner was absolutely certain that this suspicion was unjustified.

Whatever he might pretend, Harold Skinner knew that Vernon-Smith was not the fellow to be deceived by ambition into playing a low trick in these days. And even if it had been possible that he should do so, it was out of the question that he should play it against Harry Wharton.

Skinner knew—though how he knew he might not have been able to explain—that not Frank Nugent nor Bob Cherry

was more wholly loyal to Wharton than the Bounder.

"He's not doing this for his health, I guess, anyway," said Fish.

"He's doing it for Wharton. It's a crafty dodge, too. But we can make it suit our book, I fancy. Todd won't back out. That means a three-cornered fight. All the better for us! The Wharton gang would vote for long-nosed Peter before they'd vote for Bolsy. But with Wharton standing again all their votes go to him. They'll come off Todd's little lot—see? But they won't put Wharton ahead, not if we manage things right."

"I ain't seen the tail or the eye of your business proposition yet, Skinner, and I calculate I can't afford to waste any more of my valuable time on jaw-bone exercise!"

"Oh, hang you, what a Shylock you are! How would the job of election agent for old Bolsover suit you?"

"Any sorter business that means durocks suits me, sir! I'm from New York, I am. Give me a business proposition, and I'm on it—that's me. I'm right thar. But I want my little schedule made straight and plain before I wade in—see?"

"Oh, that will be all right. You can take my word for it."

"Nope!" snorted Fisher T. Fish.

"That's just what I can't do, Skinner!"

More in anger than in sorrow, Skinner looked at Fish. He was well aware that Fish would have been a fool to accept his word as equal to a bond. He knew that he would not have accepted Fish's. But, for all that, the Yankee junior's distrustfulness displeased him.

"What do you want, then?" he snapped.

"A proper, slick business agreement, Skinner—that's mine! Let's have the parti-culars down in black and white."

"Well, this is the game. We want someone to go round and canvass for Bolsy."

"What's to hinder you rounding up the voters yourself?" asked Fish, with acuteness. For indeed it was not like Harold Skinner to hand over to another a job out of which he might have made his own profit.

"It isn't quite my line," explained Skinner. "You see, you're more popular with the chaps than I am, Fishy."

There might well be two opinions about that. But, as a matter of fact, Fishy and Skinner were about equally unpopular. The difference lay in the fact that, while Fish was mainly on the make, there was spite at the back of most of Skinner's wheezes. But Skinner was not above being on the make, and Fish was quite capable of being spiteful.

"Waal, I guess if there's durocks in it—"

"There is. Don't I tell you Bolsover's fairly rolling in it just now?"

"Jerusalem crickets! Where do I come in in that? He ain't going to ladle the stuff out to me—he doesn't cotton to me all that, I calculate."

"But he'd pay you cash down for every vote you roped in."

"Now, that's talking! What's the figure? And does the graft come out of it, or do I take a lump sum and keep all I can make out of buying the voters cheap?"

"Rats! You can't do that, Fishy! It would be bound to come out."

"Goldurn me if I understand you, Skinner! What is it you want me to do if it ain't graft?"

"I don't know what you mean by graft, fathead! All we want you to do is to canvass the chaps, talk round them, get them to promise their votes to Bolsover. You can't touch some of them—they'll stick to Wharton—or to Toddy—whatever you say. And you needn't bother about Stott and Snoop, and two or three others we can count on, anyway."

"Gee-whiz! You're cutting out the likeliest customers, Skinner!"

And it was true beyond all doubt that if the methods to be used were those of bribery and corruption—briefly denominated "graft" in the great Amurrican language—Bolsover's reliable supporters were Fish's most likely customers. There were few indeed of them who might not have been bribed to support someone else instead of Bolsover!

"My hat! You don't expect to have your dollars without earning them, I suppose?"

"Waal, I ain't going round hunting for thick cars," said Fishy. "I guess I don't mind tackling certain galoots—for a consideration. But there are some of the reptiles I ain't going near with any such little story as 'Vote for Bolsover, just to please me'—nope!"

Skinner grinned. He thought of Fishy going to such stalwarts as Bob Cherry or Johnny Bull on such an errand—which was precisely what Fisher T. Fish had quite made up his mind not to do.

"That ain't the game," Skinner said. "It's the doubtful ones we want you to tackle. Chaps like Russell and Newland and Mauly, and that new chap Vivian. And Bolsy will shell out half-a-dollar for every fellow on this list whose vote you get promised to him."

Fishy scanned the list, pursing his thin lips.

"Waal, I swow! It's a steep proposition you're setting me, Skinner! I ain't saying I can't talk these galoots over; but I reckon it's no half-dollar job. Nope! I'm a slick Yankee—a business man right down to the tips of my toes—that's what I am! And I calculate I've got to have a fair contract before I start in to make things hum!"

Skinner remembered that it was Bolsover's money he was arranging to spend, so that there was no need for him to practise his usual skinflint tactics. Moreover, to secure Bolsover's election would be of great benefit to him in several ways. So he said:

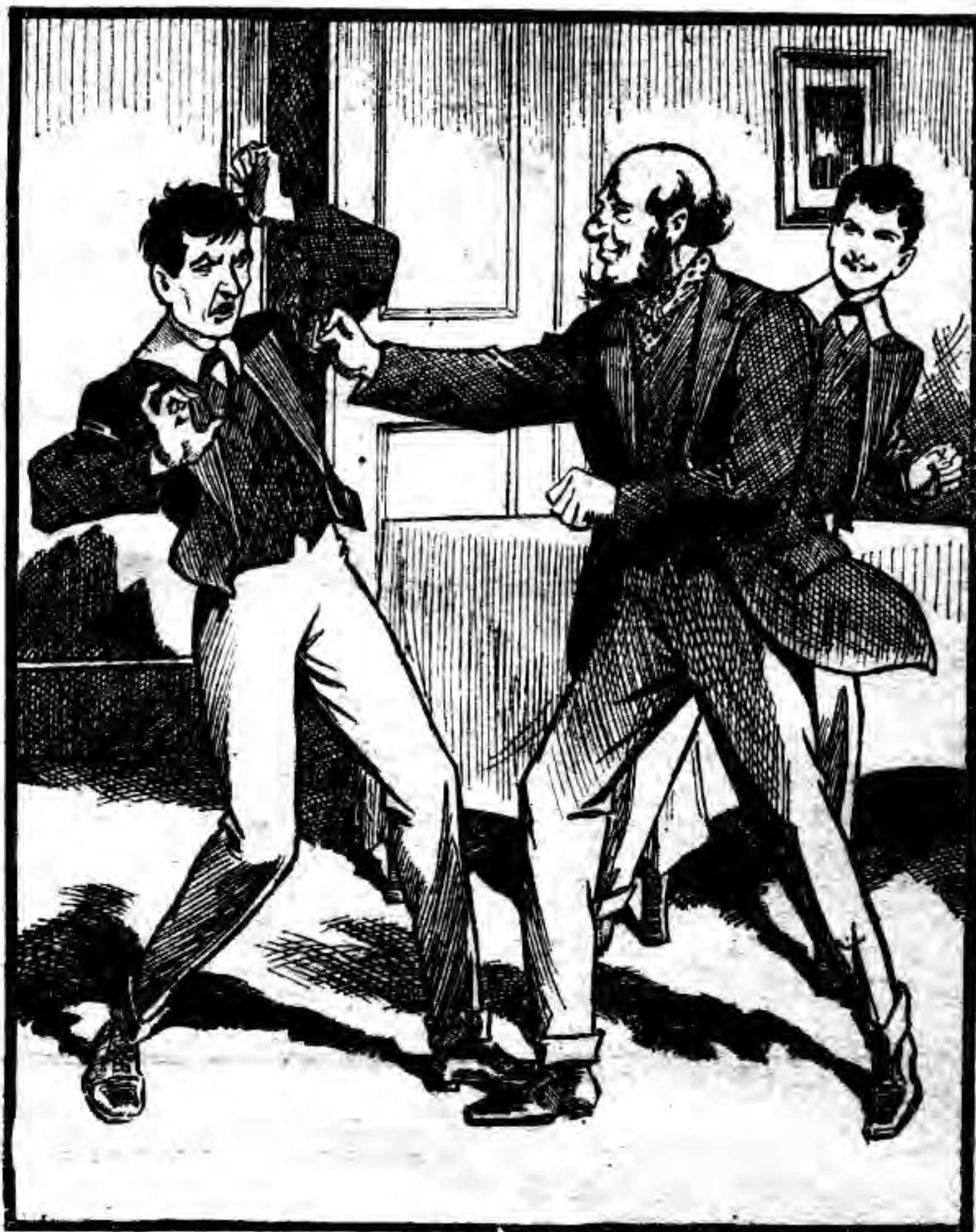
"Well, if you're going into the thing heart and soul, Fishy, it might be worth a trifle more."

"Look hyar! I'm on this, and I won't haggle. But it can't be done at any such fool price. I'll take half-a-dollar for every vote I get promised to Bolsover—I guess it will be good enough if I hand over written promises from the voters! 'Tain't my fault if they go back on that, is it? But I calculate I've got to have the whole Form to work, and it's to be another ten dollars to me if Bolsy gets in."

"Why, you might draw a couple of quid without ever doing a blessed stroke!"

Skinner's economical instincts revolted against the notion of quite such easy money as that for Fisher T. Fish.

"Nope, sir! As I figure this thing



Rake's Mysterious Visitor! (See Chapter 2.)

out, your candidate's needing votes real bad, and he ain't going to have a dog's chance to squeeze in without my help! I'll wire in right hard, but I calculate that ten dollars will be necessary to get me up to real concert-pitch!"

Right or wrong, Skinner had made up his mind that Fishy was the one possible election agent for Bolsover. He was plausible and cunning—not popular, it is true, but in spite of that he had again and again managed to rope into his schemes fellows who might have known better.

"It's all right, if Bolsy agrees—and I can talk him over," said Skinner.

"I've got to have a contract, Skinner, you know. I ain't starting till I've got it down in black and white."

Skinner opened his mouth to answer, when Johnny Bull appeared.

The mouth of Harold Skinner shut up like a rat-trap, and he shot Fishy a warning glance.

Skinner did not want Johnny Bull to know anything.

"See you again, Skinner," said Fish.

"Yes—and see him somewhere else next time!" growled Johnny. "I ain't keen on rats in my study!"

From the door Skinner drew a Parthian bow.

"I suppose that's why you've got rid of Field?" he said.

Johnny Bull flung a dictionary at his head. But the door stopped the missile, and the only consolation Johnny had was scowling at Fishy, who, immersed in calculations of the profits of playing election agent for Bolsover, heeded him not at all.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Fishy Starts His Campaign!

"I SAY, Rake, I kinder guess and calculate—"

"Do you, Fishy? I don't particularly mind that; but I kinder guess and calculate that you'd better go and do your guessing and calculating somewhere else! We don't want any of it here!"

Fisher T. Fish looked inquiringly towards the second inmate of Rake's study.

The Yankee was rather puzzled, and even when on business bent he had an inquiring mind.

Then he made up his mind. It didn't look like Wibley, it was true; but Fishy knew how very unlike himself Wibley could look when made-up for one of his famous impersonations.

"Waal, I swow! I didn't recognise you, Wib—nary a recog!" he said.

"What's your friend with the cheese-cutter nose and the hatchet face getting at, Richard?" asked the curious-looking person whom Fishy had taken for Wibley. And the voice did not sound in the least like that of the histrionic junior.

But Fishy was not to be so easily persuaded.

"Oh, come off it, Wib!" he said. "I guess I'm too slick to be taken in like that!"

"Is this the American loonatic as I've been told 'angs out 'ere?" answered Rake's visitor.

And he advanced a pace or two in rather a threatening way.

"Here, I say, keep off! Oh, Jerusalem crickets! None of your—Keep off, I say, or else I'll be making potato-scrappings of—of somebody in about half a tick!"

Fishy did not believe that the curious-looking person was Wibley now. Wibley was not taller than the average fellow in the Remove; and this fellow looked at least six feet as soon as he began to move upon Fish.

It had happened to Fisher T. Fish before to find people growing in stature when they adopted threatening tactics. Perhaps his fears magnified them, for Fishy was a born funk. But that explanation would not have convinced him.

"You had better buzz off, Fishy!" snapped Dick Rake.

"Here, don't be in a hurry! Lemme say what I came to say before I evacuate the shebang."

"Say it, then, and do a bunk!"

"I guess I want to know whether you mean to vote for Bolsover?"

Fishy had not much hope of Dick Rake. But, though Fishy meant to leave the true-blue Whartonites severely alone, he had made up his mind to try the Toddites, or most of them.

If he could only pick up for Bolsover two or three votes that Peter Todd would otherwise have had, it might turn the whole course of the election, get Bolsover in, and line his agent's pockets. For Bolsover's triumph Fish would care little, but the other object was very near his heart.

"For Bolsover?" said Dick Rake. "My hat! What's Bolsover want my vote for?"

"Christopher Columbus! What's anyone want votes for?"

"Dunno, I'm sure. I've often wondered. Or what anybody wants to vote for 'em for, come to that. Ever been in the House of Commons, Fishy?"

"Nope, sir! I'm a live Amurrican!"

"Rather a pity! You'd look so much better dead—and stuffed! We could put a label on you—"

"I ain't interested in the decayed institutions of this hyar effete little island, Rake, and I guess I ain't got the time to spare to let you play on your jaw-bone too long!"

"Right-ho! Out when you feel like it—or sooner, if you ain't in a hurry, because I am, and you'll be getting it where the chicken got the chopper pretty soon! But what I was going to say when you butted in, like your President does, was that I've seen the House of Commons and the specimens in it; and I'm licked to the wide to know why anybody alive should want to vote for most of them!"

"I calculate you make me tired, Rake! When are you going to get through with your chin-music and come down to bed-rock?"

"Meaning Bolsover? It's a new name for him, but—"

"Are you going to vote for him? That's the question, I guess!"

"You haven't told me what he's standing for yet. Is it the bootboy's job he's after?"

"Nope! Don't be a chump, Rake! You know a tarnation—"

"Glad to hear that, because I couldn't conscientiously vote for Bolsy as bootboy. He ain't careful enough. I've got a new pair of patent leathers, and it's war-time, so I may not get another pair just yet. Is it the Head that's retiring?"

"You frabjous ass! It's Wharton that's resigning, you galoot!"

"Haden't heard he'd resigned yet."

"I kinder calculate he's got to toe the line, if he ain't made up his thinker to it at the present identical moment."

"My hat! You astonish me, Fishy!"

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"Oh, you mugwump! Wasn't it you?"

"Now I come to think of it I did have something to do with a petition—if that's what you'd call it—to him, asking him to get out. But that was in the days of my youth—quite a long while ago."

"I guess it ain't more than a fortnight!"

"Really? It seemed like an age to me! And you say Bolsover thinks he'd like to be captain?"

"Yep! Why shouldn't he, you jay?"

"Why shouldn't he, if it comes to that?" murmured Dick Rake thoughtfully.

Fishy felt quite encouraged.

"Are you going to vote for him, Rake? Get down to bizney, you slacker! I haven't got all the time there is!"

"No? Who do you fancy has got the rest of it, Fishy? Never mind; some unkind judge, with a down on business methods, will be giving you all the time you want, one of these fine days, I should say!"

"Are you going to vote for Bolsover?" howled Fishy, in desperation.

"He thinks you are a deaf 'un, Richard," said the curious-looking person whom Fish had taken for Wibley.

"I'll think about it, Fishy. Call again in a year or two, if you're not doing time then. But you will be, if you don't stop doing other people! What's that paper in your hand?"

The Yankee junior displayed the paper. He had written at the top of it in his neatest hand—which was nothing to brag about—"I promise to vote for Bolsover." Under this appeared his own signature. He had thought of keeping this back, and holding out for a higher price for it than a mere half-dollar. But he had come to the conclusion that some distinguished name was needed to give the thing a send-off; and what could be better than his own?

Dick Rake's eyes twinkled, for he saw the chance of a jape, and he loved japing. Unobserved by Fishy, he gave the other occupant of his study a sign, and the curious-looking-person immediately turned upon the Yankee, and asked:

"What's this yer President of yours mean by all his antics—eh, young sharp conk?"

Fishy at once proceeded to explain at considerable length what a truly great man President Woodrow Wilson was.

Dick Rake sat down to the table, dipped a pen in the red ink, and proceeded to amend Fishy's heading.

When Rake had finished it read thus:

"I PROMISE TO VOTE FOR BOLSOVER'S HAVING A FIRST-CLASS BUMPING, AND HEREBY UNDERTAKE TO HELP GIVE IT TO HIM!"

Under Fishy's name he wrote "R. Rake"

He had received the paper folded, and he was polite enough to hand it back in the same state.

"Have you signed?" asked Fisher T. Fish, with a glimmering of suspicion.

"Yes—honour bright!" answered Rake.

"I guess that's all right, then," said Fishy.

And he went off, happy to feel that he was half-a-dollar nearer his exalted ambition—which was, of course, to be a millionaire.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wibley's Part!

"O H, you idiot, Dicky! Why didn't you fasten the door?" snapped the curious-looking person, in William Wibley's natural voice.

Rake was just about to tell him that

he might have done that for himself, when Billy Bunter rolled in.

"I say, Rake, old chap—Why, what's Wib dressed up like that for?"

"Rats! Who says that's Wib?"

"I do. Oh, you can't spoof me, Rake! I heard him speak. And if it ain't Wib, what's he doing in this study? Strangers ain't allowed up here. Not that I'd split, of course, Dicky, old scout. You know you can rely on me, don't you? The worst of it is that I have such a strong sense of duty. It takes me sometimes like—like a pain in the inside; and I never know what I may let out. But that's only when I'm empty; I feel quite different after a good meal."

"So does a boa-constrictor," remarked Wibley, in a distinctly hostile tone.

"Of course, I'll try to keep it dark, for your sake, Dicky, old pal! But I'm famishing, and my sense of duty gets frightfully strong when I'm in that state."

Dick Rake groaned. Billy Bunter's strong sense of duty, as he well knew, was only another name for blackmail.

"It is, Wib; there's no use denying it, as you heard him speak. Now, I suppose you've got to be bribed to keep it dark, you rotten Porpoise!"

"Oh, you are an ass, Dick!" said Wibley.

It was all very well for Wibley to say that; but the fact remained that the only way of keeping Bunter's mouth shut was to provide him with the wherewithal to fill it—though even that was not an absolutely safe way.

"Oh, really, Rake, I am not accustomed to being insulted like that, and I scorn the very notion of a bribe! My high principles wouldn't even allow me to discuss the matter. But, as a matter of fact, a postal-order I am expecting has got delayed somehow—"

"Owing to the price of butter?" scoffed Wibley. "Why not try margarine instead, Tubby?"

"Oh, really, Wib, I can't imagine how you think of such absurd things! The truth is—"

"Say the shocking whopper is, Porpoise!"

"The truth is, I really don't know what the delay is due to. My opinion is that the postal-service is going from bad to worse!"

"What's the figure?" snapped Rake.

"If you could lend me seven-and-six, or, say, half-a-sov, between you—"

"Better say half-a-million," suggested Wibley. "It would buy lots more grub—if you got it. And you are just about as likely to get it!"

"But—"

"I'm not parting with a giddy sou; and Rake won't, either, unless he's gone potty!"

It appeared that Dick Rake had gone potty—to that extent, at least. Not half-a-million, it is true; but then Bunter had not really expected quite so much as that. His piggish little eyes blinked behind his big spectacles as he saw Rake produce two half-crowns.

"Now, Bunter, not a blessed word about this disguise of Wib's to anyone. Twig? If you breathe a giddy syllable, you're as good as a dead porpoise! If you keep it dark, I'll consider the question of lending you another five bob—some day!"

"Oh, really, Rake, you ought to be satisfied with my word of honour, I should think!"

"I'd be better satisfied if I could see you safely muzzled!" said Dick Rake.

Bunter did not like that at all; and in his resentment he told more than he had meant to tell.

"If you knew all that I know, Rake," he said mysteriously. "But mum's the word! I don't mind you playing a trick

on Wharton. I am not at all pally with Wharton just now; he isn't obliging. So you can do what you like; I sha'n't worry."

And the Owl departed, cackling, to roll downstairs and out of doors to the domain presided over by Mrs. Mimble. There he would be safe for a time; but that time would be short. Billy Bunter made very brief work of five-shillings-worth of grub. And when once the cash had gone he was not to be trusted a yard.

Rake and Wibley looked at one another.

"Of all the silly chumps——"

"Oh, dry up, Wib! He'd spotted you. The only way was to buy him off. But blessed if I thought he knew as much as that!"

"He'll go and tell everybody. It's all giddy well up! What's the rotten use of planning a surprise for Wharton if that fat toad goes and tells everybody about it?"

Wibley spoke quite morosely. He had taken a lot of trouble with his make-up, and was counting upon a heavy score. Like Rake, he had no malice against Harry Wharton; but there had been a rift in the lute in connection with the Dramatic Society, and Wibley felt that it was up to him to prove to Wharton how very far ahead of anyone else in the said society he—William Wibley—was when it came to a matter of impersonation.

"Oh, I guess he'll forget all about it when he begins to gorge!" said Rake hopefully.

"Till he's finished, and has got what he calls hungry again," replied Wibley, by no means hopefully. "Then he'll take his news off to another market. And he won't need more than an hour or two to get his sort of hungry again—the disgusting gorgery!"

"I'm going to fetch Toddy, to see what he thinks of the disguise. I reckon it's first-chop, myself," said Rake, anxious to appease Wibley, who had a good deal of the artist's usual readiness to take offence and let his wounded vanity have full play.

Wibley merely grunted in response. But when Rake had gone he locked the door with care, and then proceeded to take a good view of himself in the glass.

What he saw there seemed to smooth his ruffled temper, for he smiled and smirked at the figure which the glass revealed.

That figure did not look at all like Wibley of the Remove.

It looked old enough to be Wibley's father or uncle. Or Rake's uncle, for that matter, or Wharton's.

But it did not look at all the sort of uncle a fellow would be keen on introducing his chums to.

The nose was purple. One would feel sure at a glance that the owner of that nose had very little use for water as a beverage.

Nor did the rest of "uncle" indicate any special fondness for water in another way. "Uncle" looked frowsy, to say the least of it. One could easily imagine him considering the removal of his boots as quite sufficient preparation for bed, and the passing of a damp—but not too damp—sponge over his face as an adequate toilet.

"My hat! If Wharton doesn't twig me so—and I'll bet he won't unless that fat rotter Bunter gives the game away—he'll feel above a bit silly; silly enough to turn him green, I fancy! And he won't have any doubt afterwards that I'm the man for an impersonation!"

A rap at the door sounded just then.

"Who's there?" asked Wibley.

"Me—and Toddy," replied Rake's voice.

Wibley opened the door. When Dick Rake and Peter Todd were inside he shut and locked it again with great care.

Toddy stared.

"Blessed if I should have known that it was you, Wib!" he said.

"Of course not! There would be nothing in it if any ass could spot me directly."

Peter Todd eyed him up and down. There was something in Toddy's face that suggested reluctance. And presently Toddy voiced that reluctance.

"It's jolly good, Wib! It does you no end of credit. But I say, old chap, don't you think we could ring it in on Bolsover instead of Wharton?"

"Whaffor?" snapped Wibley.

"Well, Bolsy's a candidate, too. And he's the sort of bounder it seems fair to play a jape like this on."

"And why not on Wharton?" snorted Wibley.

"It ain't easy to explain. You chaps know that I'm feeling a bit fed-up with Wharton just now. But, even at his worst, he is such an uncommonly decent fellow. He wouldn't do a mean thing. And that makes it a bit off for any decent chap to do a mean thing against him, you know."

"Rats! Do you call a jape like this a mean thing?"

"Well, it's going to hurt his feelings horribly, Wib. Wharton's proud——"

"We all know that. Too beastly swanky for anything! Why, the chap actually has the nerve to set himself up against me in theatrical matters."

Dick Rake grinned, and even the serious face of Peter Todd relaxed.

"I mean, Wharton's sensitive. I'm not dead sure that the wheeze would influence the result of the election at all. But if I was sure I'd hate to get in on it, as far as Wharton is concerned. It's another matter with Bolsover. I hear already that he's preparing to bribe chaps to vote for him, and——"

"Hold hard, Toddy!" said Rake. "Do you think there's any real danger of Bolsy's getting in?"

"Well, no, I don't. I can't see the Form standing that."

"Then what's the giddy use of dodges against Bolsover? It's the other man we've to look out for."

"I don't care a scrap about that!" broke in Wibley. "All I've got to say is that I simply won't be bothered to play this jape on Bolsover. It ain't worth the trouble. Why, if Bolsy's got any uncles, it's likely enough they're worse specimens than anything I can pretend to be!"

"My hat! Draw it mild, old chap! I'll bet Bolsover hasn't a relative of any sort who looks so giddy well off-side as you do in that rig-out!" said Peter Todd.

Wibley smiled a smile of gratified vanity. But he stood firm.

"It's Wharton I'm up against," he said. "I'm not denying that he's a decent sort, Toddy. But I want to score off him. And so do you. So there it is in a nutshell!"

"Besides, you agreed to the scheme, Toddy," said Rake.

"And you're going to give Bolsover a licking in the gym this afternoon. That will about settle his hash," Wibley added.

"He may lick me, though I don't think

so. Yes, I agreed to it, and I'm not going back on you fellows," answered Peter. "It will have to be did, I suppose. But I don't more than half like it!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Continues His Campaign!

MONTY NEWLAND, the Jewish junior, was the next fellow Fishy tackled after leaving Rake.

If Fisher T. Fish had looked at that paper he would not have felt by any means so elated as he did feel. It was by the merest chance he did not look at it. But he was in a hurry, and Wibley had kept him from seeing that Rake had tampered with the heading; and when a chap like Dick Rake said that he had signed—"honour bright"—it seemed good enough even to the suspicious mind of Fisher T. Fish.

Newland looked up from a book as Fishy entered. Newland was not exactly a swot, but he did more reading, alike for pleasure and in the way of study, than the average member of the Remove.

"Well?" Newland asked coolly. The Jewish junior barred Fishy. He had more patience even with Bunter.

"I reckon I want you to promise your vote to Bolsover," said the Yankee, in his most carneying accents.

"What's Bolsover want with my vote?"

"Christopher Columbus! Air you asleep, Newland? He's going to stand for the captaincy, of course!"

"Tell your friend Bolsover that sitting for anything else would suit him better. He'll never get in," replied Newland, and went back to his book. It was "Monte Cristo," and he was at the most exciting part.

"Hyar, I say, Newland! I calculate I ain't done talking to you yet!"

"Did you speak, Fish?"

"Nope! I fairly howled!"

"Better go and howl somewhere else. I'm not keen on it."

"Newland! Come out of that tarnation book, you slab-sided jay! Look hyar, you're a Jew, ain't you?"

"I have that honour," replied Newland, without looking up.

Fishy snorted. He did not think it an honour. But Newland was quite indifferent to Fish's opinion.

"Look hyar, Newland! I'll give you a bob——"

"Say no more!" snapped Monty Newland.

"You're on? I kinder calculated you'd see reason inside two shakes of a dog's tail when it came to real bizney. Money talks—eh, old pard?"

Fishy thought he had bought Newland's vote at the very cheap price of one shilling—payment deferred, unless Newland insisted upon a cash deal.

"If you aren't out of that door before I count three, you'll go out on your neck, you beastly Yank!"

"Gee-whiz, Newland! What are you giving me? Here, let's talk——"

Monty Newland arose in wrath. Fisher T. Fish fled in fear, but he did not flee quite soon enough.

Newland's foot caught him in the rear as he fled, and he made exit howling.

But for the unexpected luck of having got Dick Rake's signature, Fish might have turned up the game at this stage.

"Makes me tired, this does!" murmured Fishy. "This dog-gone little old island doesn't seem to cotton nohow to the beautiful principles of graft. Where's a chap stand when even the Sheenies can't be bought? Now, in the great Yewnited States, I opine——"

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ANSWERS

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PENSION

Fishy broke off to consult a list of the Remove studies.

Then he smiled, and tapped his long nose.

"Mauly!" he said to himself. "And Vivian! I ain't dead sure of the baronet, but the earl's easy money for me. A jolly good thing that boulder the Rebel's in the punishment-room! I ain't keen on tackling him."

Fisher T. Fish proceeded to Study No. 12. This apartment was shared by Lord Mauleverer—who at one time had it to himself—Piet Delarey, the South African junior, and Sir James Vivian, the schoolboy baronet from the slums.

But just now Delarey was shut up in the punishment-room, under a qualified sentence of expulsion. He had fallen out badly with Mr. Quetch, who was in charge of Greyfriars during the Head's absence. The Remove Form-master had told him plainly that he could see nothing for him but expulsion, but that final sentence must await the Head's return.

Delarey himself had little hope. But the majority of the Remove believed—and hoped—that the Head would be found on the side of mercy. For, after all, flagrant as the Rebel's offence had been, it was not so black in character as other offences which had been pardoned. On the other hand, it was an offence against discipline—the junior had practically defied his Form-master—and for that sort of thing the Head was known to entertain a very strong dislike.

So no one felt sure. But while there was life there was hope, as Bob Cherry said.

Delarey was not in Study No. 12. But in spite of that three fellows were there. Mauleverer and Vivian, as Fish had expected, and Squiff—otherwise Sampson Quincy Illey Field.

Fish did not in the least want to see the Australian junior—an inmate of his own study, but camping out just now, so to speak, on account of a decided difference of opinion with Johnny Bull.

"I say, Mauly, old hoss, I want a word with you," said the Yankee, with a glance at Squiff which was intended to imply that the word was not for his ear.

"Oh, begad! Won't some other time do, Fish? I'm horribly busy just now."

Mauly did not look at all busy. It is difficult for anyone to look that when reclining on a couch with an ample allowance of cushions. But Mauly did look depressed. So did Vivian. And Squiff was just as dispirited as they were, which was perhaps why he found a dismal kind of satisfaction in their company.

They were all worried about the Rebel. And in another study was a fourth fellow every bit as much worried as they were—Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior.

"Nope! Time's money!" yapped Fish.

Mauly brightened up a little. If time was money, then money was time, and Herbert Lord Mauleverer was quite prepared to shell out for the benefit of getting rid of Fishy at once.

"Chuck me my pocket-book, Vivian, will you?" he yawned. "It's in the drawer of the table, or my desk, or in the pocket of the jacket up there—anyway, I know it's somewhere, begad!"

"See hyar, Mauly, I ain't after your durecks," said Fish.

The Yankee had little use for loans, unless he needed capital for one of his schemes. Capital thus subscribed had a way of taking to itself wings and fleeing; but in that respect it differed not at all from capital subscribed to a very large

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proportion of the enterprises floated in the City in the good old days before the war—days which it is to be hoped will never return.

"That's just as well!" growled Squiff. "For I'd have taken jolly good care the old ass didn't let you have them!"

"I calculate it's no affair of yours, Field. I ain't hyar to see you. Mauly, old son, I want you to promise to give your vote to Bolsover. You, too, Vivian, I guess."

"You can go on wantin'," said Sir Jimmy promptly. "I ain't goin' to do nothin' of the sort. I'd as soon vote for you or Skinner, or any other rotten, swindlin' cad!"

This was straight to the mark, and Fishy looked positively pained. It did not promise well for the success of his canvass when a mere new kid like Vivian, without education or manners, took such a decided stand.

But if Sir Jimmy astonished Fish, Mauly fairly electrified him.

And Fish must have electrified Mauly. Nothing much short of that could have made the slacker of the Remove sit up suddenly with that look of stern determination on his handsome, good-tempered face.

"Oh, begad! Better get out of here, Fish, before I go for you!"

"Jerusalem crickets, Mauly! What are you getting on your ear about like that?" gasped Fish.

"Time enough to get on my ear when you have the amazin' impudence to ask me to back up that hulkin' brute of a Bolsover against Wharton, begad!"

"Wharton's a back number. We want a real, live, hefty skipper, with some git-up-an'-git-thar about him, I guess. A galoot that will make the fur fly, and—"

Fishy stopped short, and began to back towards the door.

For something like a miracle had happened.

Mauleverer had arisen in his wrath, and was coming for the Yank.

But Squiff was before him.

"I'll save you the fatigue, Mauly!" Squiff said.

He seized Fish by the collar. Sir Jimmy opened the door. Sir Jimmy was smiling broadly.

With one hard push the Australian junior sent the American rolling into the passage. And as he went the foot of Sir James Vivian smote him with force and accuracy.

"Yoooop! You— Oh, you rotters! I'll—"

"You'll vamoose the ranch without any more row, or you'll jolly well wish you had!" said Squiff grimly.

Fisher T. Fish vamoosed the ranch.

"Tha-anks, Squiff—tha-anks, awfully!" drawled Mauleverer.

"Oh, don't mench, old chap! A pleasure, I assure you! And I really couldn't bear the idea of your having the fatigue of wiping that specimen up yourself."

"Yaas, it would have been a beastly fag," said Mauly innocently, while Sir Jimmy grinned.

"So you're going to stick to Wharton, Mauly?"

"Yaas, dear boy."

"We're for Toddy, you know."

"Yaas, Squiff. I know that. Not goin' to argue with you. Too tirin'. But I think you're wrong, you know, begad!"

There were times when Squiff himself thought so. A row between Harry Wharton and Piet Delarey had thrown Squiff and Tom Brown into Peter Todd's arms, so to speak.

But neither felt quite easy about it, and Squiff, whose closest chum until

Delarey came had been Johnny Bull, one of the Famous Five, would not have been in his usual high spirits now even had the Rebel not been in the punishment-room.

Mauly would not argue. But Mauly's faith in Wharton was founded on a rock. It did not interfere with his friendship for Delarey, of whom he had become very fond. It did not make him hostile to Peter Todd, whom he liked and respected.

But in Mauly's eyes there was but one possible skipper for the Remove, and that one was Harry Wharton.

Fishy limped off, moaning. He had regarded this wet noon as the very time for a canvassing expedition.

But he felt now that he had had quite enough canvassing for one day. The violent methods of Newland and Squiff were more than a set-off for the supposed adherence of Dick Rake to the Bolsover cause.

Fishy did not even look at Rake's signature, though it was worth half-a-dollar to him—as he believed.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover v. Peter Todd!

"MY hat! It's a case of mastiff v. greyhound!" said Bob Cherry.

It really did look something like that.

Peter Todd and Percy Bolsover were almost ready for the fray. Their seconds—Tom Dutton and Harold Skinner—were just fastening the gloves on their hands.

Bolsover, big and heavy for his years, was of the bargee or the coalheaver type. His biceps, his broad chest, his solid figure, were like a man's. He was a trifle taller than Peter, ever so much heavier, and undoubtedly stronger—though Toddy had far more strength than anyone would have credited him with, judging by his appearance.

But Toddy was long in the arms, and that was one thing in which he came nearer Bolsover than any other fellow in the Form. It was no small asset, either.

A far bigger asset, however, was what the Bounder called "Todd's superior mobility." In that quality the greyhound is far ahead of the mastiff. Bolsover, though never an easy victim for anyone, had many a time gone down because he was so clumsy and lumbering.

There was much hanging on that fight. These two were Harry Wharton's rivals for the captaincy of the Remove.

It was known now that before long Wharton meant to resign, thus allowing of a fresh election. But it was known, too, that he would stand again, and if he came out at the top of the poll would continue as skipper.

And that was quite reasonable, though some of them refused to see it. With the lists open for anyone who cared to enter, Wharton's coming out top would mean a fresh mandate from the electorate.

This fight was held likely to have a considerable bearing on the election—so much so that it had come to be looked upon as part of the campaign.

It would have taken place a fortnight or so earlier but that Peter Todd had succumbed to influenza on the very eve of it.

Some had accused him of funk. Harry Wharton, himself sickening for the flu at the time, had taken up the gage for him, had fought Bolsover, and had been licked.

His generous action might have healed the quarrel between him and Peter Todd; it would have healed it had Peter had his way.

But Harry, smarting under defeat, made ill-tempered by influenza, had rejected Toddy's advances—rejected them with a rudeness foreign to his real nature, and the natural consequence was that Toddy's opposition had become stiffened instead of disappearing.

No benefit could come to Wharton from the fight. If the beaten combatant retired from the captaincy lists, he would gain some votes, no doubt. So the best thing for his chance would be that Peter Todd should be beaten. For Peter did not go in for half measures.

"If Bolsover can lick me, I chuck up the sponge," he told his supporters. "I'm not fit to be skipper of the Form if that bullying lout is my master!"

Bolsover had come to no such heroic determination. Licked, he would still carry on his campaign.

But his prestige would be lessened by defeat. Whereas, if he could only win, he could point to a victory over each of the other candidates; and, though he was not really proud of his fluky triumph over Wharton, he might be trusted to make the most of it.

"Go in and win, Bolsy!" said Skinner. "After that, you'll only need to take down Cherry's number to be the cock of the Form beyond all dispute!"

"Oh, hang that for a tale!" said Bolsover irritably. "I've got a big enough handful here, without talking about going for Cherry when I've finished!"

"Feel all right, Toddy?" asked Tom Dutton anxiously. It was a joy to Tom that Toddy had selected him as second. Rake had wanted to act; and Bulstrode, Ogilvy, Desmond, and Squiff had all offered their services. But Peter would not go outside his own study.

"Topping, Dutton!"

"Here, don't talk about a whopping! You aren't going to let Bolsover lick you, I'm jolly sure!"

"I said 'topping!'" howled Peter.

"Oh, all serene! That's much more like the style. But I wish you wouldn't mumble so. 'Tain't necessary to shout, either. I ain't deaf; only a little hard of hearing."

"Wish old Piet could see this," said Squiff to Tom Brown.

"So do I. Have you heard that the Head won't be back for another couple of days at least, Squiff? Rough on Piet. Anything's better than suspense."

"Wrong, Browney! The sack isn't better. And Piet can keep a stiff upper lip while he waits—he's that sort."

"Beside, Quelch's bound to cool down a bit. I fancy he's cooled down already," said the New Zealand junior thoughtfully. "My notion is he'd be glad of a good excuse to beg the old chap off."

"I'm going to barrack for Bolsover," remarked Johnny Bull to Bob Cherry.

"Rats! You can't do that, Johnny!"

"Oh, can't I? You'll see! Wharton will, too, if he's got a ha'porth of sense. If Toddy's knocked out, he kicks out. Bolsover won't kick out. But by knocking Toddy out he'll spoil his own chances, for he's bound to go down in a straight tussle with Harry."

"Hang the election!" said Bob, frowning. "This is a fight, and I'm backing the man I'd like to see win—and that's Toddy. What do you say, Franky?"

"Ditto to you, Bob! I'm not down on Toddy enough to want Bolsy to beat him, though he is a renegade!"

"The esteemed Toddy is heapfully superior to the venerable and ludicrous Bolsover, in spite of all his sundryful slidebackings," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his weird and wonderful English.

"Who are you shouting for, Harry old scout?" asked Bob bluntly.

"I didn't come to shout, Bob," replied Wharton. "But I fancy it will take a jolly lot to make me shout for Bolsover! Not that I've any grudge against him, either."

In another group were Bolsover's supporters—a very scratch lot, these. Fish was there, and so were Snoop and Stott and Treluce and Elliott and Trevor, with a few others. Billy Bunter was not of them. He hung on the skirts of the Toddyite band, where were Rake and Bulstrode and Squiff and Tom Brown and Wibley and Kipps and Desmond and Morgan and Ogilvy and Hazeldene.

Only three members of the Remove were missing—the Rebel, Mauly, and Alonso Todd. It was not indifference in any of the three cases. Delarcy could not come, Mauly would not, and Lonzy dared not. Lonzy was afraid of breaking down. He hated fighting, but no one wanted Peter to win more than his gentle cousin did.

Other Forms were well represented. Here was a group of the Upper Fourth—Temple, Dalney, Fry, and others. There showed Blundell and Bland of the Fifth, with more members of that grave and dignified Form.

Hobson of the Shell was referee. The Form to which he belonged had mustered to a man. Most of the Sixth had put in an appearance. Wingate and Courtney and Gwynne and North, Loder and Walker and Carne, were all there.

And, majestic among them all, moving to and fro in excitement—though he would have been indignant with anyone who had accused him of getting excited about a mere fag scrap, and having rude things said to him by those against whom he barged—was the illustrious Coker, with his faithful aides, Potter and Greene.

The combatants were ready now, and they advanced into the middle of the ring, and touched hands at Hobson's word of command.

Bolsover looked deadly grim. Toddy smiled once; then upon his face also came a grimly resolute look. There was no mistaking the fact that both meant to fight to a finish.

Now they were hard at it.

Bolsover's tactics were bull-like. He did not shut his eyes as bulls are said to do when they charge; but he came at Toddy as if he meant to toss and gore and crumple him up at the very outset.

But Peter Todd was far too wide awake to give him any chance of success in the first rush.

Toddy was quite fit now. He knew himself infinitely Bolsover's superior in nimbleness, and he meant to use that superiority to the utmost extent.

So he ducked and dodged, and eluded the bully's heavy punches, and did not even try to hit back except when he saw an easy opening.

"The bounder thinks he's waltzing," said Johnny Bull, in tones meant to indicate disgust. But Johnny was not really disgusted. At heart he was on Peter's side, whatever he might say.

"He's playing the right game," said Bob Cherry critically. "And he can keep it up, too. Toddy's not going to let himself get rattled."

"Didn't know Todd was so clever," remarked George Wingate to his chum, Arthur Courtney. "There's brains in his fighting."

"Yah! Why don't you stand up to him and fight?" howled Stott.

The first round ended with Todd unmarked and breathing easily, in spite of all the exercise he had taken.

Bolsover was also unmarked, except for a slight reddening of one cheek where Peter had got nicely home on him.

But Bolsover had also taken plenty of exercise; and, in spite of the fact that he was no slacker, he felt the effect of it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Both Game to the Finish!

THE second round was a good deal like the first, and the Bolsover faction waxed very impatient indeed.

"Clinch him, Bolsy!" howled Treluce. Bolsover tried his hardest. But Peter was so desperately elusive. Just when he seemed well cornered he would slip out somehow, leaving Bolsover, like Lord Ullin, lamenting.

But escaping punishment does not mean winning against an opponent so determined as the bully of the Remove, and Peter Todd realised that as fully as did any of those who watched. He had to wear Bolsover down; but he had also to hit him, and, moreover, to hit him hard. Nothing far short of a knock-down blow meant much to Percy Bolsover. Punches that would have made Skinner or Fish throw up the sponge only caused him to toss his great head, as if getting rid of a troublesome fly.

So in the third round Toddy risked more, let the bully come to closer quarters, and took his part like a man in some hot exchanges.

He had not the better of them. He hit Bolsover oftener than Bolsover hit him, and he hit hard, too; but Bolsover hit harder, and, for all his toughness, Peter Todd was not fitted by Nature to endure quite so much battering as his heavy opponent.

But whereas Peter was still perfectly cool, Bolsover's red face had grown furious.

It was not that Bolsover had counted on an easy victory at best. He knew Toddy too well for that. But he never had fought, and he never would fight long without getting savage.

"It was the nature of the beast," as Bob Cherry told Johnny Bull.

"Why didn't you sing out 'Glory, hallelujah!' when Bolsy got home on Toddy's jaw, Johnny?" Bob asked.

"Mind your own bizney!" snapped Johnny.

Toddy returned to his mobile tactics in the fourth round, and fairly made Bolsover chase him. It was all in the game. It was the right game for Peter. But it angered Bolsover's partisans, and it made Bolsover himself frantic with rage.

"Hang you, stand up to me, Todd! Don't make a sprint race of it!" he snarled, as the end of the round came just as Toddy had slipped him again.

"Presently, old chap," replied Peter coolly.

"Get him on the ropes, and smash him to pieces!" advised Skinner.

"Come and do it yourself, you idiot!" retorted his principal.

"You ain't hitting him quite as often as I should like to see you," said Tom Dutton.

"Perhaps not, Tom," Peter said.

"It isn't rot, Toddy! You can't lick him without hurting him, and you can't hurt him unless you hit him!"

"All in good time, old scout!"

"It ain't rhyme; it's reason. Don't talk through your hat, Toddy!"

Billy Bunter was disappointed, and said so.

"Toddy will get licked," he said.

"And it will all be through not taking my advice. I told him what he ought to do. There's only one game to play with a chap like Bolsover. Knock him down straight away, and keep on knocking him down till he's had enough!"

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"Not half bad advice—if it was only you or Snoop, or some hero of your kidney, Buntz," said Tom Brown. "But Bolsover ain't quite so easy to set tottering, and he might possibly need sending over more than once, you know!"

"He's down! Bravo, Toddy! Oh, go it! There, you see, you fellows, he's taking my advice at last! It ought to be all right now!" howled Bunter.

But it was not so simple as all that. Bolsover was up again before Hobson had counted five, and before another five could have been counted Peter Todd was on his back.

Peter was also up in time, but he was worse rattled than his antagonist. A knockdown blow from Bolsover was no joke. Peter realised that he must not risk too many of them.

"Break away, there! Break away, there!" called Hobson early in the next round. "This is a glove-fight, not a wrestling-match!"

Bolsover was intent on getting Toddy cornered, and in trying to do it came very near fouling more than once. He did not really mean to foul; he wanted to use his weight and strength, just as Peter was using his agility—that was all.

But his tactics were more questionable than Toddy's, and Hobson was not the fellow to stand any nonsense.

Six rounds had passed, and yet there was nothing to indicate the result.

Peter Todd was fresher than Bolsover, and far cooler. On the other hand, Bolsover, though panting heavily, was scarcely damaged at all, and at any time he might get in a piledriver that would prove too much for Peter. All a fellow's pluck and resolution are of no avail when once the referee has counted "nine—out!"

And that very thing nearly happened to Peter in the seventh round!

A couple of inches to the left, and the blow would have been right on the point of the jaw. Even as it was, staunch Toddy went crashing down, and lay there gasping, and heard Hobson count, and seemed held by a spell against which it was vain to struggle.

"Why don't you cheer?" growled Bob Cherry in the ear of Johnny Bull.

"Oh, hang it, shut up! Can't he get up? Oh, buck up, Toddy, old man!"

"Try again, Toddy!" shouted the Bouncer, who had come, like Johnny, meaning to yell for the other man.

But neither could put aside the friendship of the past. At the critical moment it tugged at their heartstrings.

Harry Wharton did not shout, but he watched with dilated eyes and a tense, drawn face, feeling that if Peter Todd was beaten it would be hardly less bitter for him than going down to defeat himself before the burly Bolsover.

"Hooray! Good old Toddy!" roared Squiff.

"But he's done," said Wingate behind him. "The other chap could push him over!"

As Hobson counted "nine," Peter had scrambled to his feet. He stood swaying, his guard fatally low.

Bolsover drew back his arm for the blow that should end the fight. He knew he could deliver it; he took his time. And he looked a brute as he gloated over his anticipated victory.

"Time!" snapped Hobson.

Bolsover's arm fell to his side. He might be a brute, but he was not mad enough to strike after that call. He ground his teeth as he stepped back.

"Oh, shut up, or I'll smash you!" those near him heard him snarl at Skinner.

Peter Todd, resting on Tom Dutton's knee, said nothing. He knew what a

narrow squeak that had been for him. Tom Dutton said nothing, either; but with loving care he sponged Toddy's lips, and the squeeze he gave his chum's shoulder as Peter got up again was like a blessing.

How Peter lived through that next round he never knew. Somehow—anyhow! In his brains buzzed some lines of Kipling's he had often read:

"If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew

To serve your turn long after they are gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the will which says to them 'Hold on!'"

That was what he was doing. There was nothing in him but the indomitable will. But, with some luck, it served his turn.

Bolsover's hitting was wild. That was luck. And Peter averted what must have been another knockdown blow by a quite accidental—or, rather, automatic—movement of his head, which caused it to waste itself on thin air. That was luck, too—great luck!

And the next brief respite did him far more good than it did Bolsover, who knew that it must help his opponent, and was made savage by the knowledge.

Peter came up to the scratch again coolly, almost jauntily. And he was smiling, too. Everybody noticed that. But when a fellow has pluck like Peter Todd's he can smile even in defeat.

Was it to be defeat for Toddy? If he could carry on through this round his chances would be quite good, thought those who knew best, for they saw that Bolsover was going to pieces. It was not nerve or courage that failed him; but he could not keep cool, and his punches were getting wilder and wilder, less and less straight from the shoulder.

He had always had a tendency to the round-arm style, which is all very well if one's opponent will give one time to get home with it.

But Peter Todd was giving nothing away. He lived through that round—came out of it fitter than he went in, smiled still, and still was as cool as a cucumber. "Heart and nerve and sinew" were doing their work again now.

So again they faced one another. And Peter went down, but was up again with a quickness that surprised even himself. Bolsover made in at him, panting, bull-like. Peter side-stepped, and hit out.

Behind the ear his gloved fist took Bolsover. It did not look like a knock-out blow. But Bolsover fell heavily, clumsily, fell over himself, as it were, lay there gasping, and struggled too late to rise.

"Eight!" counted Hobson crisply, neither fast nor slow. "Nine!" he counted. Then:

"Out!"

Bolsover was beaten! Came to the last, he was yet beaten—beaten almost before his supporters had done exulting over what looked to them like his certain victory.

He did not take it badly. There was the stuff of manhood in Percy Bolsover under all his faults. He growled, it is true; but then, it was his nature to growl.

"I thought I'd got you set, and so I should have had if you hadn't had pluck enough for a score, Toddy!" he said.

"And I thought you'd got me set, Bolsover," admitted Peter frankly. "It was just luck!"

"Mind you, I'm not chucking it!" growled Bolsover.

"Why should you?" returned Peter cheerfully.

He knew what his opponent meant. Bolsover still had hopes of the captaincy.

And perhaps his licking had not spoiled his chance so much as it might have done. There was no disgrace in it.

Congratulations were showered upon Peter Todd. But the Whartonites were not among those who crowded round him. They had cheered his victory, but, having done so, they marched off. Peter understood. He had heard Bob Cherry yelling him on, and Johnny Bull, too, and Mark Linley. And well he knew that Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Inky could never bring themselves to want him beaten.

Sir Jimmy, risking an impot, rushed off to shout the news through the key-hole of the punishment-room to the Rebel.

"Thanks, Jimmy boy!" said Delarey heartily. "Congrats to good old Toddy!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Dick Russell Takes a Hand!

THE excitement of the fight had cooled down next day. Both combatants went about with honourable bruises, upon which Mr. Quelch, who detested fighting, cast his eagle eye, with the result that each had three hundred lines awarded him.

Fisher T. Fish gathered that Bolsover's cake was no more dough than it had been before the fray. Perhaps his chances had undergone a slight change for the better among the Remove generally, though Stott and Snoop might sneer at him in private.

There are many worse things than a licking in fair fight after one has come near to winning. It may be galling, but it does not entail disgrace. And fellows remembered that Bolsover had insisted on waiting till Toddy was quite fit. That counted.

So Fishy thought it time to resume his electioneering campaign.

He tackled Dick Russell.

Russell was numbered among the Whartonites. His greatest chum—Ogilvy—had said so, and after that Fish might have had sense enough to leave Russell alone.

For if Russell would not turn his coat to be on the same side as Donald Ogilvy, by whom he had stood when all the Form was against him, it was scarcely likely he would rat to please Fisher T. Fish.

But outside the Famous Five themselves Mark Linley was the only fellow whom Fishy would regard as hopeless from the outset. Those not in the inner circle he would at least try, spurred to the attempt by hopes of what he called "the duocks."

"I kinder calculate you might be in-dooced to sign this yer doc-u-ment, Russell," he said ingratiatingly.

"What is it?" asked Russell, picking it up. Fishy had not unfolded it.

But Dick Russell did; and he lowered his face quickly in order that the cunning Yank might not see the gleam that danced in his eyes.

There was nothing slow about Dick Russell. He tumbled at once to what had happened. He did not know who had been adding to what Fishy had written, but he felt sure that the American junior knew nothing of the addition.

And a colossal jape leaped into his mind at once. He wondered that the fellow who had made that addition had not thought of it. He wondered the more when he realised that it must have been Rake who had played that trick. Dick Rake was a renowned japer. It

would be a big score over him for Russell to beat him at his own game.

"I'll sign with pleasure, Fishy," he said, taking care to hold the paper so that Fishy could not see what was on it.

"Good egg!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I rather opined, though, that you were a hard-shell Whartonite, Russell."

"Shows what mistakes it's possible to make," answered Russell.

"Yep! Hurry up, old boss! I'm in a hurry."

"Busy, Fishy?"

"I am so!"

"Tell you what—I believe I could get quite a lot of chaps to sign this for you, if you like to leave it with me for a day or so. I can't be sure, of course. But there's Hazel and Bulstrode and Ogilvy and Desmond—oh, and lots more. Let me have a shot!"

Russell did not speak too eagerly. That might have aroused Fishy's suspicions. His tone gave the Yankee the impression that he was a recent convert to the Bolsover cause, and rather wanted to bring over some of the fellows he was most friendly with in order that his own change of coat might seem less marked.

The proposal suited Fish. It would give him time to look after some of the more likely half-dollars. All the fellows Russell had mentioned had query marks against them on the list.

"That's some notion," he said. "I don't mind. But, look hyar, old pard. Gimme that sheet with your name on it and Rake's, and let me make out a fresh one for you."

"Oh, no! I'd rather have this one. There's a start made on it, you see."

"Waal, I calculate it don't matter a heap," replied Fishy, as Russell thrust the sheet into his pocket. Treluce and the rest were not likely to need the moral support of Rake and Russell, Fishy opined.

"You'll hand over the schedule to me when you've done your bit, Russell?" he added, still unsuspecting—a remarkable state of mind for Fisher T. Fish.

"I will, Fishy; and I fancy you'll be above a bit surprised to see what it looks like!" said Dick Russell, keeping his face straight by a mighty effort.

Fish went off, to get "No savvy!" from Wun Lun, who never "savvied" when it did not suit him, and signatures from Treluce and Elliott and Snoop and Stott, and a promise to think it over from Trevor, and sheer cheek from Billy Bunter, and the kick-out from Tom Brown.

And Russell went off, chortling gleefully, to get signatures in plenty from fellows who thought a good bumping would do Bolsover no harm, anyway, and to crow over Dick Rake, who had started the great jape, but had failed to see its tremendous possibilities!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter and the Secret!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Here's Tabby! Here's Peter Todd's right-hand man! Here's the second in command of the Toddite army!"

The weather remained persistently bad. It mattered the less since footer was over for the season, and cricket had hardly yet begun.

But it did matter, and more to the Famous Five than to fellows like Bunter and Skinner and Fish, who had no special relish for outdoor exercise.

A fat face, wearing a big pair of spectacles and a large smirk, had just appeared at the door of Study No. 1, where the five were talking over the one great question of the day in the Remove

—who would come out at the top of the poll?

"Oh, really, Cherry. I'm nothing of the sort," replied Bunter peevishly. "I'm not sure that I sha'n't drop Todd altogether, and come back to this study!"

"We are, though," said Frank Nugent firmly.

"You don't really mean it, Franky, old pal. We three got along no end well together in the old days, didn't we, Harry, old scout?"

"Can't remember anything of the sort," said Harry Wharton. "Have you anything to say to us, Bunter? Because if you have, say it, and go! If you haven't, go, and don't mind about anything else."

"Oh, really! Look here. I'm quite fed up with Toddy, anyway."

"That ain't our affair," growled Johnny Bull. "And we ain't so down on Todd that we grudge him that much comfort."

"You don't understand, Bull. I really didn't expect you to; you never were very quick," said Bunter loftily. "But if I take Harry's side, it may make all the difference, you know."

"Fourteen stone, more or less," murmured Frank Nugent.

"But this ain't a weighing competition," said Bob.

"It's a matter of votes. And this worm has most likely sold his vote to Bolsover already. I give Toddy credit for being too decent to buy 'em, so that was his only market," Johnny Bull said, with the candour that was his wont.

"It's a matter of popularity, too," said Bunter, turning up his fat little nose. "I'm much more popular than you are, Bull!"

"My hat! Go to Germany, you bladder of lard! You'd get a welcome there, if it's true what is said about pigs running short."

"And what has the honoured and ludicrous Toddy inflicted done to the absurd and disgusting Bunter?" asked Inky.

"The beast! He made me get up early this morning, and run three times round the Close," answered Bunter, with deep resentment in his tones. "It was raining, too."

"Ah! I thought you were looking rather thin, Billy," said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

The Owl looked down at his protuberant waistcoat. It fitted without a crease. Still, Bob might be right.

"Yes," he said dolefully. "That's exactly how I feel, Bob, old pal! But it isn't so much the running. I can run as well as anybody, when I choose. It's sheer starvation! I haven't had a bite since breakfast!"

"Awful!" said Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"Do you suppose we have?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, well, it's very different with you fellows! You don't need so much as I do to keep you in good condition. I'm famishing!"

"This ain't the postal-order department," said Bob.

"Nothing doing, Porpoise!" growled Johnny.

"Who said anything about a postal-order? I didn't. I may be peckish—starving, indeed! But I suppose I've got my pride!"

"Never noticed it. Where do you keep it?" returned Frank Nugent.

"I'm not a Bunter de Bunter for nothing!"

"Then we've been mistaken all along. We always thought you were," said the humorous Bob. "As there's something hanging to it, I wonder you don't gorge the proceeds instead of sponging—"

"Really, Cherry! I did not think you were quite so dense. It's no good wasting sensible conversation on fellows like you and Bull!"

"The less of your conversation we get the better we like it," growled Johnny Bull. "Though as for its being sensible—"

"I came here to tell you fellows something."

"You have told us. You say you are hungry," Harry said. "Well, it doesn't interest us, so you may as well bunk!"

"But it's important, Harry, old man—really it is! On second thoughts I don't care to tell the whole crowd. Cherry and Bull are persons with whom I have nothing in common."

"Biggest compliment I've ever had yet, Porpoise," said Bob cheerily.

"Oh, bump the fat worm!" snapped Johnny.

Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley came in together just then.

"What's the row?" asked the Bounder.

"It's only a gas-escape," replied Bob.

"Look here, Harry, old pal, I'll tell you; but I'm jolly well not going to talk before these chaps," said Bunter.

"Oh, go to Bath! I don't want to hear!" snapped Wharton.

"I think I should listen to the fat fraud's yarn, if I were you, Wharton," said Vernon-Smith gravely. "What do you say, Linley?"

"I agree with you, Smithy," answered Mark, also very seriously.

Harry looked hard at them both. Evidently they knew something which he did not. Why couldn't they tell him?

But they did not know it all. Vernon-Smith had got a hint that might have passed unnoticed by a fellow less keen. All that Mark knew was what the Bounder had told him as they came along the passage together.

"Oh, I'll hear him, if you fellows can see any sort of use in it," Harry said, rather wearily. "Come along, Bunter; we can go outside. There isn't any rain worth mentioning now."

Bunter tolled downstairs after him. Not a word did Harry say on the way. He did not look his usual cheery self—and he wasn't!

Out in the Close Bunter came to the point—the point that seemed of most importance to him.

"I say, Wharton, you'll be a decent sort and lend me half-a-crown till my postal-order comes, won't you? I ought to have had it this morning, but—"

"Here you are, you fat sponger!" said Harry crossly.

But for the Bounder's hint he would have refused either to shell out or to listen to another word.

"I suppose you couldn't make it five—"

"Do you think I'm made of money, you idiot?"

"Oh, really, you needn't be so bad-tempered, Harry! I'm your friend. It's only because of that I am letting this out. I won't haggle. But I fancy you'll think it worth another half-crown when I've told you. He, he, he!"

"If you don't look sharp—"

"I've always liked you, Harry. And Toddy's simply beastly to me just now. He says he wants to make a man of me. But if he goes on as he's doing he's much more likely to make a corpse!"

"I don't care to hear anything about Toddy. If you have been spying, you might know better than to come to me with your tales!"

"I—I haven't been spying. Don't talk to me like that, Wharton! I think you forget sometimes what a proud chap I am, and one belonging to a high family, too!"

"All the time," said Harry bluntly. "Your crammers don't go down with me."

"Bub-bub-but this is true! They've cooked up a dodge to make you look an ass, Harry!"

"Hanged if I care much! I am an ass, or else I shouldn't be listening to your rot!"

"But it isn't rot, and you'd better know—really, you had."

"Who are they?"

"Rake and Wibley. At least, Toddy's in it, too, of course. But it's mostly those two. Wibley is a rotten outsider, and Rake isn't a fat lot better!"

From which it may be inferred that Bunter had made a further demand for hush-money, and had been refused; which was exactly the case.

"That's enough, Bunter! Let Rake and Wibley—yes, and Toddy, too—do what they like!"

"Bub-bub-but, Harry, old chap—"

"Oh, ring off! I don't want to hear any more!"

"Bub-but Wib's going to dress up and pretend to be some relation of yours—an awful outsider! If you'd seen him—"

"I haven't any relatives who are awful outsiders!" snapped Harry.

"That doesn't make any difference. If they can get the fellows to believe it, it's just the same as if it were true. It's been done before—"

Yes, it had certainly been done before. There had been Coker's Canadian cousin, and Skinner's "Uncle Joseph," and Frank Nugent had worked off a very big spoof as Mirza Khan, the Indian man of mystery. And there were other instances.

And it could be done again, no doubt. Harry would not think it much of a joke this time. With the election pending, it seemed to him a spiteful attempt to discredit him. And to think that Wibley and Dick Rake had planned it! The thought hurt him. As for Toddy, though his might be a minor part in the affair, it was bitter even to think of his consenting to it.

"I suppose you think I ought to be obliged to you, Bunter," said Harry slowly. "I'm not! I can't believe you told me out of friendship!"

"Oh, really! Still, I suppose you'll cash up that other half-crown you promised me!"

"Take that, you tattling rotter!" snapped Wharton, losing all patience.

The kick he gave Bunter set that individual moving. As he had made a start, he rolled on—in the direction of the tuckshop.

"Ungrateful beast!" he muttered as he went.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Fishy's Aide!

TAP, tap, tap!

The door of No. 7 Study was locked. But Dick Russell had no notion of being denied admittance. He went on tapping.

"Who's there?" called a voice at length.

"Me—Russell!"

"Right-ho! Then me, Russell, can do n bunk! No admittance here except on business," said Rake.

"You chaps will be sorry if you miss this," said Russell. "It's the biggest jape we've had for no end of a time!"

The temptation was too strong for Dick Rake.

"Shall we let him in, Toddy?" he asked.

"As you like, Rake."

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So Russell was let in.

He saw at once that a meeting of the leading spirits of the Toddy faction had been in progress.

That did not trouble him. Dick Russell had made up his mind to stand by Wharton. If it had come to a contest between Peter Todd and Bolsover, however, he would have voted for Peter without hesitation; and though he had no wish to see Wharton deposed, he would not worry much if in a three-cornered contest Peter headed the poll.

He was far keener at that moment on his own special jape than on the result of the election.

"What's the row, Russell?" asked Peter Todd, in crisp and businesslike tones.

Russell did not answer Toddy.

"Seen this thing before, Rake?" he asked.

Dick Rake gave a grin that stretched nearly round to the back of his neck.

"My hat, I have!" he said. "But what are you doing with it? Has Fishy—Oh, but he must have smelt a rat before this, surely?"

"Fishy hasn't. He hasn't the ghost of an idea what's really on the paper, and he's let me have it to get more signatures to."

Russell's grin rivalled Rake's for extent.

Peter Todd had collared the paper, and he and Bulstrode and Tom Dutton and Wibley were chuckling over it. Wibley was the only one of the four who had known anything about it till then.

Neither he nor Rake had thought of mentioning it to the rest. Rake had felt sure that Fishy must find out in a very little time how he had been spoofed.

Now it was evident that Fishy had done nothing of the kind. He, the cute Yankee, had been taken in by Dick Russell!

Rake could not help feeling a little envious. He had missed the chance that Russell had seized, it seemed. But the jape was so much after his own heart that there was no rancour in his envy.

"We'll all sign this!" said Toddy, grinning.

"Oh, rather!" said Bulstrode.

And they all appended their names.

"You can't keep it up long, you know, Russell," remarked Wibley.

"Oh, can't I, Wib?"

"Fishy will be wanting his precious paper back," said Bulstrode.

"Then Fishy will have to want till it suits me to hand over," replied Russell. "I can feed him up with excuses till then."

"I don't see how this is going to help Wharton particularly," said Peter, who knew well with whom Russell's sympathies lay.

"Neither do I. But it won't help you against Wharton: if I thought that I should drop it," answered Russell. "It isn't going to affect the election. Bolsy hasn't a dog's chance, anyway. But it's a joke."

Russell went. Those left behind resumed the discussion he had interrupted.

"Of course, the dodge is as old as the hills," said Bulstrode. "I'm not sure that that's against it, though."

"It doesn't matter how often chaps' legs have been pulled before, as long as they've got 'em left to be pulled," said Rake.

"I don't mind its being old. I don't mind chaps' legs being pulled," rejoined Toddy. "What I'm bothered about is whether it's quite the clean potato. We don't want a score over Wharton that means not playing the game. He wouldn't try to score over us that way."

"This is playing the game all right," said Rake. "You ought to see that,

Toddy! Precious asses you fellows made us look when you came along toggged up as a lot of schoolgirls, and jolly well mopped us up at footer! Wharton didn't see any harm in that."

"Something in that," said Peter thoughtfully. "What's your precise role, Wib?"

"Long-lost uncle, with a nose that doesn't look like pump-water, and clothes that might have come off a scarecrow."

"Shabby his clothes,
Purple his nose.
That's how it goes,
I should suppose!"

gurgled Rake. "That's poetry, you bounders!"

"I thought it must be; it made me feel so ill," replied Bulstrode. "Wib can do that all serene, though, if the clobber's right."

"That's all right; I've seen it," Toddy said.

Russell had gone on to find Hazeldene. He had now a dozen or more signatures; but he had not yet got Hazel's.

Hazel was alone in his study, for Bulstrode was in No. 7, and Tom Brown had gone off somewhere with Squiff.

"Hallo, Hazel! Will you sign this?"

Peter Hazeldene turned from the window. His hands were deep in his trousers-pockets his shoulders were slouched, and his weak, good-looking face was clouded.

"What is it?" he asked, without much interest.

"Fishy thinks it's a promise to vote for Bolsover. But if you'll cast your optics over it, I fancy you'll perceive that Fishy is a bit out of his reckoning there."

"I wish this captaincy business was dead and buried!" groaned Hazel. "I was thinking about it when you blew in."

"So I thought. Well, this ought to buck you up a bit!"

It did, momentarily. Hazel's sullen face relaxed, and he grinned. But the grin left his face as soon as he had signed, and the sullen, weary look came back.

"I say, Russell—"

"Well, Hazel?"

"Oh, never mind! It's no odds, really."

"If there's anything—"

"You don't want to be bothered with my silly worries, Russell."

"I don't mind, old fellow, if it will do you any good to tell them."

"In confidence, you know!"

"Honour bright, Hazel!"

"Who's going to get your vote?"

"Silly question, old son! Wharton, of course."

"Ah, you're a decent sort, Russell! You know how to stand by a chum."

"I don't know. Wharton isn't specially a chum of mine. But he's the best man for the job, though he isn't perfect."

"He's a chum of mine. He has done things for me that not another fellow at Greyfriars would have done. But I've promised to vote for Toddy."

"More ass you! Still, it's no great odds. Toddy's a good man, and, if Wharton doesn't stand again, I'll bet he and the rest of them will vote for Toddy against Bolsover."

"Then—then—look here, Russell. You don't think I'm an out-and-out cad for turning my coat?"

"Great Scott, no, Hazel! What a chap you are to exaggerate things! I'd forgive you easily enough if I was in Wharton's shoes, I know that."

Hazeldene was left somewhat comforted, and Dick Russell went off to get the signatures of Mauleverer, Vivian,

Squiff, and Tom Brown to the paper which he was so kindly taking round for Fishy.

He found all four of them in No. 12, and all four in rather gloomy spirits.

But his visit served the good purpose of cheering them up a bit.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Sunday Afternoon!

"I DON'T want your company, George Potter!"

It was Horace Coker who spoke—the magnificent Coker of the Fifth.

Coker was not always as careful about his dress as he might have been. But he was positively resplendent on this particular Sunday afternoon.

A beautiful day had succeeded a wretched week of rain. Coker sported the first straw hat of the season at Greyfriars. It was early yet for straws, of course; but who should lead the fashion but Coker—when Coker chose to concern himself with such things?

His brown boots were new. His waistcoat was a thing of beauty. His tie had taken him half an hour to select, and longer than that to get properly tied.

"Right-ho, old scout!" responded Potter. "We ain't forcing ourselves on you, you know."

Coker snorted, plainly implying that he would like to see them try to do it.

"I suppose you'll be in to tea, Coker, old scout?" said Greene.

"I am not at all sure. I may—er—be detained."

"Why, where are you going that that's likely?"

"What in thunder is that to do with you, William Greene?"

"Don't be ratty! I say, old fellow, if you don't happen to be in by tea-time, I suppose we can—I mean, what about that hamper?"

Coker paused in the doorway to cast at his chums a glance of ineffable contempt.

"What beggars you are for grub!" he said. "You'd sell your souls for it, I believe! Oh, yes, you can open the hamper! I don't care if I never see it again. I hope I've got a soul above such things as that!"

He stamped out.

"And I hope I haven't!" said Greene.

"Not much to do with the soul, I should say," replied Potter. "In fact, quite another department. But it's all right, Greene, and I don't mind a scrap whether the old aes comes back to tea or not!"

"Old Horry must be in love again," remarked Greene.

"My hat, you've hit it! Dressed to kill, and don't care about his grub—it can't be anything else."

From the window of their study the two saw Coker cross the Close to the bicycle-shed.

"Where's he going?" said Potter.

"Dunno. Can't be Cliff House, I should reckon."

"Great Scott, no! The nice little Howell girl made him understand at last that she didn't absolutely worship the ground he walked on."

"Terrible shock for poor old Horry!" grinned Greene. "What a gorgeous old aes it is!"

"It wouldn't be half a bad wheeze to unpack that hamper now, and see what's in it," said Potter. "There doesn't seem much else to do."

"Let's wait till he's off the premises, anyway."

They had not long to wait. Coker's stink-trap, as the Remove most irreverently called his motor-bike, seemed in better starting order than usual.

He had gone, sailing triumphantly along the road.

Greene lugged out the hamper.

"Good old Aunt Judy!" said Potter, as they unpacked. "Here's one of those home-cured hams; makes your blessed mouth water to look at it!"

"Jolly lucky for Horry to have an aunt like her!" said Greene.

"And luckier still for us to share the benefit of it without having such an aunt!" replied Potter. "She's a holy terror, but—"

"I say, you fellows!"

A fat form appeared in the doorway, and Billy Bunter blinked behind his spectacles at Potter and Greene and the hamper—more especially the hamper.

"Buzz off, you bloated young reprobate!" snapped Greene.

"You won't even get the chance of being a small eater here!" added Potter.

"I—I— Oh, look here! You don't want me to tell Coker you two started in to wolf his grub directly his back was turned, I suppose? He'd cut up jolly rusty, I'm sure!"

"You thumping young perverter! You said he told you to come along and have some. Doesn't that show that he meant us to help ourselves?"

"So he did. At least—well, I believe he intended to, only he was in such a hurry. Oh, really, you fellows, I ain't a big eater! I do like a snack now and again, but I ain't a big eater; that's only a lie the cads have invented to take my character away. They're always doing it!"

"That explains why you haven't any



Skinner is Startled! (See Chapter 13.)

"Oh, really, Greene! I—I— Coker told me to come along, you know!"

Greene and Potter looked at the egregious William George with eyes of open incredulity.

"You rotten young Ananias!" howled Potter.

"Scoot, or I'll skin you alive!" threatened Greene.

But Billy Bunter stood his ground. Nothing seemed going in the way of a feed on the Remove passage that afternoon, and he was like unto the vulture which scented prey.

"I say, you know, there's heaps for three," he said persuasively. "I—I'm quite a small eater, too; and to-day I'm badly off my feed!"

"You're off our feed, anyhow!" said Greene.

left, you fat lout!" said Greene, disclosing to view a number of sausage-rolls of the most superb type—crisp pastry, nicely browned, and evidently well-filled with the savoury sausage that is all too often a mere delusion in the bought sausage-roll.

"They don't care a bit about the truth," went on Bunter. "I'm shocked at them, often."

"Go and be shocked somewhere else!" said Potter. "This room's engaged!"

Bunter tried another tack. He looked very knowing as he said:

"I suppose you fellows don't know where old Coker's gone?"

"If we don't, it ain't likely you do!" growled Greene.

But it was—more than likely. Bunter

had an inquiring mind, and practised several methods of satisfying it, which were not at all in the line of the two Fifth-Formers.

"But I do!" said the Owl.

"Out with it, then!" snapped Potter.

"Are you going to ask me to the spread if I tell you?"

"We certainly ain't if you don't!" said Greene decidedly.

That was a step, at least. And if Bunter once got a footing he might be trusted to make the most of it.

But it was not a promise, and Bunter felt reluctant to trust to anything short of a promise from Potter and Greene.

He was not full of faith in them. But then, he was not full of anything. In fact, though he had eaten a large dinner within the last two hours, he felt pathetically empty. He sighed as he looked at the home-cured ham.

"I—I'll trust to your honour, you fellows!" he said generously.

"You're a confiding soul, ain't you, Bunter?" said Potter, winking at Greene.

"Coker's gone to see a girl!"

"Oh, has he? How do you know that?"

"Never mind, Greene! I know what I know—that's all!"

"Who is she?"

"Look here, Potter, are we going to start on that grub? There ain't anything that wants cooking, or I'd offer to cook it for you. I never mind taking a bit of trouble for chaps I really like. Am I going to have some of that ham?"

"You ham not, unless you tell us all you jolly well know in the shake of a dog's tail!"

"Oh, really, Greene! I'm willing enough to tell, and, of course, I shouldn't think of doubting the honour of you chaps, bub—bub—but—"

"We'd better let him, Potter," said Greene.

"May as well, old chap, though, of course, it's all rot!"

Bunter breathed a sigh of relief so deep that it was almost like a groan.

"It's a red-headed girl, a Miss Harris—Betty, her name is!"

"Harris! I seem to remember that name," said Greene.

"Crusty old beggar, at the Warren Farm. But there's no girl there—I know that," returned Potter.

"Yes, there is. But she's been away at school," spoke Bunter, with some difficulty, his mouth being full of ham.

"How do you know that, you fat young sweep?"

"Oh, really, Greene, I'm not accustomed to be called such names!" replied the Owl, adding, with dignified reserve: "I have my private sources of information!"

"We know!" grinned Potter, catching him by one fat ear. "This is one of 'em! Ever get the earache, Porpoise?"

"Ow—yow! Yooop! Stop it, you rotter!"

"Let the fat young pig alone, old chap," said Greene politely. "Let's hear the whole dreadful circumstances, Bunter!"

Thus encouraged, and still more encouraged by the freedom of the table, which was evidently to be his, William George told all that he knew—and a great deal of what he only imagined—about the love-affair.

Something he had learned from Squiff and Tom Brown, though they had not told him. Those two and Mauly had heard Coker spouting his own wretched love-verses to the moon, and thereafter had seen him fight and thrash Loder, though the combat was in no way connected with the love-affair.

Something more Bunter had learned in Courtfield. He had seen Miss Harris there. He had even seen Coker walk past her, and raise his hat and look as if he wanted to say things unutterable.

"And I don't believe he's ever been properly introduced!" said Bunter, with severity.

But there he was wrong.

Bunter talked for two and ate for six. Potter and Greene, interested in his disclosures, hardly noticed how large were his inroads upon Aunt Judy's noble hamper.

But there came a time when they them-

selves could eat no more, and Bunter had no more to tell, save for vain repetitions without spice or substance.

Then did Potter and Greene, finding hints but empty breath, at last seize Bunter, and hurl him forth.

"Beasts!" he murmured, as he rolled away. "Never mind, though, I haven't had a better blow-out this term! And there won't be much left for old Coker, I bet!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Sunday Afternoon!

MEANWHILE, the great Coker had made his way to the paternal abode of the fair and auburn-tressed Miss Betty

Harris.

He had no invitation there. Matters had not progressed as far as that. The most that could be said was that he hoped for one.

The fair Betty had smiled upon him. She smiled upon every young man she met—unless he chanced to be a conscientious objector—but Coker was not to know that.

She had smiled upon him, and turned the head of Coker of the Fifth most completely. He had dreams of an invitation to tea—preferably in the absence of Papa and Mamma Harris.

Coker was not quite sure what he should say to Miss Harris; but he was very sure indeed that he would not know what to say to her father and mother!

The ardent lover risked the loss of his treasured motor-bike by hiding it in a spinney near the road, not far from the Warren Farm.

Having disposed of it thus, he took from a satchel upon it a clothes-brush, a boot-brush, and a pocket mirror.

He made diligent use of the first two articles. Then he contemplated himself, with no small satisfaction, in the third.

A more critical person might have wished for a better-shaped nose; but Coker was not critical—about Coker.

The sun shone brilliantly from a blue

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sky. The weather was really gorgeous—so was Coker.

He made his way across the fields, through mud which did not improve the appearance of his new boots. He drew nigh the Warren Farm, skirted the orchard, lingered around the outbuildings, and wondered what he had better do next.

A harsh voice struck upon his ears.

Coker knew it. It was the voice of Mr. Jacob Harris, father of the sweet Betty.

And Coker had a sudden impulse of prudence to shun Jacob Harris while his voice sounded like that.

"Come out of it!" roared Mr. Harris.

The bold Coker shuddered. It seemed impossible that the farmer should have seen him; but he—Coker—had seen no one else.

"Now, then, you, come out of it, I say!"

Coker promptly went into it—the "it" being a pig-sty. It was empty for the time being, but it might have been of sweeter savour.

The aroma of it caused Coker to turn up his nose—which was unnecessary. Nature having already done all that was needed in that way for Coker's nasal organ.

"D'ye hear me? Come out of it, I say! I s'pose you're slinkin' round after that gel of mine—eh? You ain't the first—an' you won't be the first as has tasted my whip, neither! Come out of it!"

Coker's heart sank. It appeared that he had rivals.

But, like Brer Rabbit, Coker lay low.

And he was glad next moment that he had done so, for another voice answered Mr. Harris' genial invitation.

"Leave me alone, you silly old schelm!" said the voice. "I don't know anything about your daughter, and don't want! I'm——"

"If you ain't a sweetheart, you're a thief, an' I'd as lief whip one sort of rogue as another!" snorted Mr. Harris.

"You use that whip on me, and I'll——"

The speaker stopped short. A sound had fallen upon his ears.

Horace Coker had heard the same sound.

It was the regular tramp of men accustomed to step in unison—the sound of marching soldiers!

Jacob Harris, who was a trifle deaf, did not yet hear.

"Father! There are soldiers here, and the officer wants you!"

It was a girl's voice that spoke now; but Mr. Harris did not hear that either.

"What are you after?" he yelled, as the fellow whom he had been threatening with the whip made a wild dash for cover.

Inwardly Coker bewailed his hard luck. Fervently he hoped that Miss Harris would not come and find him in a pig-sty.

Then into his refuge dashed a stranger—a most intrusive stranger; for he was not content with entering—he cannoned right into the great Coker, and fairly bowled him over.

"Yarooooogh! Oh, you utter idiot!" hooted Coker, as he took an involuntary seat on a very malodorous floor.

But worse was to follow, for the newcomer also fell, and in his fall dragged down Coker at full length.

"Groooh! Ow-yow! You silly ass! What d'ye mean by it? I——"

"Shut up! I'm desperate! I'm a deserter, and there's a file come to arrest me!" hissed the other fellow.

This was Jim Sorrell, the South African friend of Piet Delarey. Because of his loyalty to this fellow, the Rebel was now in the punishment-room, with

sentence of expulsion hanging over his head.

Meanwhile, Sorrell had been lurking in the Friardale and Courtfield neighbourhood, living on the country, so to speak. During the last twenty-four hours he had sheltered among the outbuildings of Warren Farm, which was well adapted by its loneliness for a hiding-place.

Coker's loyalty and patriotism were aroused at once. His pugnacity needed no rousing.

It was not Coker's fault that he was not in the trenches. If he had received War Office instructions to take command of an army corps he would not have hesitated a moment; and, what is more, he would willingly have gone even as a private.

And Coker was pugnacious—also punctilious on the point of personal pride. Coker's objection to conscientious objectors, funk-holders, deserters, and other such weird fowl, could hardly have been stronger than his dislike to anyone who had tumbled him—the great Horace Coker—over on the floor of a pig-sty!

"Here you are! I've got him!" he yelled, flinging his arms round Sorrell.

"You're a liar!" snapped the deserter.

He wrenched himself free, and gave Coker an exceedingly hefty punch on the nose.

Then he scrambled up and bolted.

Coker struggled to his feet and dashed after him.

"There's two of 'em!" howled the farmer.

Coker caught a glimpse of a mop of auburn hair and a laughing girl's face. He also saw a stout sergeant and several men in khaki.

He did not stop to see more. For the life of him he could not have told whether he wanted most to catch the deserter or to get away from Miss Betty Harris.

Coker did not look nice, or smell nice, and Coker knew it!

The deserter ran well. Arms well tucked down, stride long and easy, he made a bee-line across the fields for the spinney in which Coker had hidden his machine.

A horrid dread assailed Coker, and he put on all the speed he could muster.

His hat went. He regarded it not. He ran on.

But the deserter was faster than Coker!

Behind them, already stringing out into line, came the men in khaki. The fat sergeant puffed in the rear, passed even by Miss Harris, whose father was yelling in vain to her to come back.

Coker looked over his shoulder.

Alas for Coker! That was a bad blunder. Like the dun horse in the "Ballad of East and West":

"He fell at a watercourse—in a woeful heap fell he."

But in Coker's case the watercourse was chiefly mud.

Before he could get up a khaki-clad form had leaped over him. Another quickly followed. And as Coker got to his feet a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"I arrest you for helping that shyster to escape!" panted a heated lance-corporal.

"You ass! Oh, you raving lunatic!" hooted Coker. "He—I—oh, hang you! He's got my motor-bike now!"

"Ho, yes! And you didn't put it there ready for him, did you? Ho, no!"

"Of course I didn't, you—you absurd maniac! Do you know who I am? I'm Horace Coker—Coker of the Fifth at Greyfriars!"

Sorrell had run well. He was wheel-

ing the machine out into the road while his nearest pursuer was still twenty yards away.

It was touch-and-go! If he had not known all about motor-bikes, if Coker's machine had given half as much trouble as usual, if the foremost Tommy had not been so badly winded, he would never have got off.

But he was off, speeding guiltily down the road.

"So-long!" he yelled.

"You'll have something to answer for, young man!" said the lance-corporal, feeling for the first time something more than "half of nothing."

"Oh, you silly ass! You utter lunatic!" hooted Coker.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover's Sunday Afternoon!

DICK RUSSELL had carried out his plot. That paper of Fishy's now bore the names of more than two-thirds of the fellows in the Remove.

Everyone approached had signed quite willingly, and Russell had only left untouched the few who were sure to give the game away if they were told of it.

Among these was William George Bunter. Bunter was distinctly not to be trusted. He was not a partisan of Bolsover's, it was true; but he was altogether too leaky a vessel.

But Bunter knew!

He had heard—from outside the door of No. 7—Peter Todd and Tom Dutton discussing the matter. Nothing could be discussed with Tom in whispers, and the Owl had heard every word.

Now, fresh from gorging himself at the expense of Coker, Bunter felt rather at a loss what to do. He remembered that conversation, and he rolled off to the study which Russell shared with his chum, Donald Ogilvy.

Russell and Ogilvy had gone off together for a long walk. Most of the Remove had passed out in twos and threes to enjoy the bright afternoon. That suited Bunter all the better.

He walked into the study, which he intended to search, as if it belonged to him, and coolly turned the key in the lock.

The paper he had come to look for did not take much finding.

Within five minutes Bunter had it spread out before him on the table, and was grinning over it.

Bunter's sense of humour was not keen, but this really did seem to him funny.

Bunter's perceptions were not keen, either. But Bunter tumbled somehow to the truth—which was that Russell hoped to keep back this paper till close upon the election, when its disclosure might be expected to "help Harry Wharton's chances by the ridicule with which it would overwhelm Bolsover."

As far as Bolsover was concerned, Bunter had not the slightest objection to this. He would not have minded even if he had thought it unfair. Billy Bunter did not precisely love Percy Bolsover.

On the other hand, he did not love Dick Russell. Nor was he an enthusiastic adorer of Fisher T. Fish.

There was but one person at Greyfriars for whom he had a truly high regard. That person was William George Bunter.

So the question to be answered resolved itself into this. Where did the profit of W.G.B. lie in this matter?

"It's jolly funny! He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Bolsover will be tearing mad when he sees it, and Fishy will

get it in the neck. He, he, he! Serve the Yankee beast right! Bolsy will be down on Russell, too. But I don't mind that. He's quite welcome to give Russell a hiding—if he can. Shouldn't wonder if Russell can lick him, though; he's jolly clever with his fists, though he doesn't often fight. Well, that wouldn't matter, either.

Bunter looked at the paper again, and chuckled his fat chuckle, and turned over in his mind the ways of making mischief with it.

"Bolsover ain't a very grateful chap, as a rule!" he muttered. "He's in funds now, but he hasn't stood me as much as a twopenny jam-tart. He doesn't deserve that I should help him. But I think I will. After all, he can't refuse to shell out something for a lift like this!"

So Bunter thrust the paper into his pocket, unlocked the door, rolled out, and went in search of Bolsover major.

Bolsover major and Skinner were among the few who had not gone for a walk. With Snoop and Stott they were engaged in a game of banker in Bolsover's study.

Bunter sniffed smoke even outside the door, and knew that some of the gay dogs were within.

He did not gain admittance readily.

"Who's there?" growled Bolsover, when he knocked.

"Me—Bunter!"

"Buzz off, you fat idiot!"

"You ought to be at Sunday-school," sneered Snoop.

"I've something to say to you, Bolsover—something important, really!"

"Say it through the keyhole, then. You're used to keyholes."

"I can't. Besides, I've something to show you."

"A face like a bladder of lard, and a pair of bags a couple of yards wide round where the waist would be if you wasted enough. Porpoise?" suggested the humorous Skinner.

"I'm going after that! I didn't come here to be insulted! But Bolsover will be sorry afterwards that he didn't listen to me."

"Oh, let the fat idiot in, Snoop!" said Bolsover.

Snoop ungraciously flung open the door, and the Owl marched in.

With a flourish, he laid down the paper on the table in front of Bolsover.

Now, Percy Bolsover was a person who was distinctly not too quick in the uptake, as Ogilvy put it.

But it did not take Bolsover ten seconds to understand what that paper meant.

His heavy face went a dull red with rage, and he uttered a roar like that of an angry bull.

He sprang to his feet, and smote the astonished Bunter a blow that made him rock and all but fall.

"You fat, spoofing beast! Dare to play off your cheeky japes on me, do you!"

The Owl had never counted on anything at all like that. He had not thought it necessary to safeguard himself by explaining things before he showed the paper.

Bolsover was not an easy person to explain things to. On the other hand, he was not at all the right sort of individual to be shown such a thing as this without some preliminary explanation, as Bunter now realised.

"Ow-yow! Who're you hitting, Bolsover, you beast? I didn't—I never—it wasn't me!"

"Let's look!" said Skinner. "Oh, hang it all, somebody must have bought Fishy!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 480.

"Fish! Did Fish fix this thing up? I'll slay him! I'll skin him alive! I'll make him wish he'd never been born!" hooted Bolsover.

"It doesn't sound like Fishy, if you ask me," said Stott. "He doesn't care for japes. He's all on the make. And I know he jolly well wants you to get in, Bolsy!"

"Bump me, will they! I'd like to see them try it on, that's all! What did you say, Snoop, you rotter?"

What Snoop had really said was, "So should I!" But Snoop was not going to admit that.

"I said they'd better think twice about it," he replied.

"See here, old chap, it's no good getting your wool off," argued Skinner. "Someone's done Fishy down—"

"Yes, Russell did," put in Bunter. "Rake started the wheeze, really, but it was Russell who got all the chaps to sign. He, he, he!"

"You're all in this!" roared Bolsover, glaring round at the grinning faces. "I believe you all knew about it, you sweeps! You can suck up to me, and sponge on me, but there isn't one among you who is friendly enough to put me up to a thing like this being hawked about for all the Form to chortle at!"

Stott and Snoop and Bunter all protested volubly that they had been completely in the dark. As far as the first two were concerned, it was quite true. But Stott and Snoop were not exactly famous for undeviating veracity, and Bolsover no more believed them than he did Bunter.

He turned in fury upon Skinner, who was saying little.

Skinner was considerably taken aback. The employment of Fish as election agent had been his notion. He had not anticipated such results as this.

If the Yankee had tried to do them down he would not have been in the least surprised. But it was evident that Fish had been taken in as effectively as an innocent Second Form fag might have been.

"You—you— Oh, I suppose this is some of your rotten work!" hooted Bolsover.

"Mine? Oh, don't be an absolute idiot! I am just as keen on your getting in as—"

"Take that, Skinner! You always were a beastly liar, and you will never be anything else!"

Skinner staggered before the heavy blow dealt him. But he did not fall, and, to the amazement of all who saw, he returned it with all his strength.

His blood was up. He, who had so often whispered unjust accusations against others, could not bear to be thus unjustly accused by the only fellow at Greyfriars for whom he had ever shown any of that friendship which finds expression in the sacrifice of self.

Bolsover could have thrashed Skinner with one hand behind him, and Snoop and Stott and Bunter would have stood by and seen Skinner smashed to a pulp before they were moved to aid him.

But Bolsover was too utterly furious to think of prudence. He warded off Skinner's blow, dashed his big fist into Skinner's face, struck out again, and took Snoop on the nose, hurled Stott into the grate, and gave Bunter a kick that made him sing out in pain.

Then did it seem that Bolsover had wrought a miracle. It was much to have put spirit into Skinner and Stott; it was something akin to accomplishing the impossible to arouse the fighting-blood of Snoop and Bunter.

"Oh, pile in on him, all of you!" howled Stott.

The four closed in on Bolsover. He

hit out recklessly. He despised them so whole-heartedly that he believed himself able to thrash the four.

And he might have done it in a fair fight. But in a rough-and-tumble contest such as this weight and numbers are bound to tell.

Bunter and Snoop were yelling with pain. Stott's face was streaked with blood, and Skinner had a badly-swollen nose. But Bolsover was down, with the whole four on top of him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the merry game?"

It was Bob Cherry who looked in at the door, and behind Bob were his comrades.

"Four to one!" said Bob. "It doesn't look nice, you know. Come off it, tubby! Wriggle up, Bolsover! Half the weight's off you now."

Bob had yanked Bunter to his feet. The Owl struggled, and his face was unwontedly warlike.

It did not mean quite half the weight, of course; but it made a difference. Bolsover writhed up, and Snoop went floundering under the table, where he lay snivelling, all the fight gone out of him.

Skinner and Stott arose. They were not done with. They were ready to start again at once. But it was fairly certain that within three minutes they would have cooled down.

"What's it all about?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Look at that beastly paper!" hooted Bolsover.

Bob glanced at it. It was not new to him. The Famous Five had been asked to sign it, and only Wharton had refused.

"Well, that doesn't explain it," said Bob judicially. "I don't see these chaps' names here."

"You ass!" howled Bolsover. "They—"

"Did you get mad with them because they hadn't signed?" inquired Frank Nugent.

Bolsover looked like making a fresh attack—upon the Famous Five this time. But he thought better of it. He shouldered them rudely aside.

"I'm going to look for Fish and Russell and Rake!" he muttered between his clenched teeth.

"Shouldn't advise you to find 'em all at once!" said Johnny Bull.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley's Sunday Afternoon!

"THEY'VE come in!" said Dick Rake. "Now's your time, Wib!"

William Wibley was quite ready. He had spent the greater part of the afternoon on making-up, and he looked the middle-aged ne'er-do-weel all over.

He had smiled with pleasure as he contemplated himself in the glass. It was a case of "art for art's sake" with Wibley. There had never been in him any real malice against Harry Wharton, and now even the slight resentment he had felt was a thing of the past.

There remained a rooted determination to play his part as well as he knew how for art's sake, and to convince Wharton that no one else in the Remove could touch him—Wibley—in an impersonation.

It had been decided that further delay in working off the jape was inadvisable.

Wharton had not yet resigned. But his resignation was expected any day.

Peter Todd had not grown keener on the wheeze. It did not seem to him so much objectionable in itself as because it might tell against Wharton in the

election. Peter wanted to be at the top of the poll. But he wanted to get there on a straight fight.

Therefore he was all for getting the jape over, even though it might stiffen his rival's back and cause him to postpone resigning still longer. Rake and Wibley were loath to give it up, so Peter Todd voted for getting it done and forgotten.

Dick Rake and Wibley were chiefly moved to hurry by fear of Bunter's treachery. They did not know that Bunter had already given the game away, or that Wharton was quite prepared.

So, at Rake's call, Wibley trotted along to No. 1.

Ten minutes or so had passed since Bolsover had ramped off seeking revenge. Bunter and Snoop and Stott were repairing damages in the bath-room. But Skinner, seething with indignant bitterness, had wandered out into the Close, hardly realizing where he was going, with no definite object in his mind.

He found himself at the gates. Gosling's snore came from the lodge. Looking down the road, Skinner saw a motor-cyclist approaching at a furious pace.

The fellow rode like a man pursued by the avengers of blood. But Skinner could see no sign of pursuit. The thing puzzled him. But it was no affair of his, and as he watched the approach of the motor-cyclist nothing was farther from his mind than the notion of getting mixed up with it.

And then, on a sudden, he found himself in the very thick of it!

Almost in full career, as it seemed, the fellow jumped off at the gates, flung Coker's machine recklessly down, and rushed at Skinner with such impetuosity that Skinner shrank back, half afraid of being assaulted.

"This is Greyfriars, ain't it?" the man demanded.

"Ye-e-e-s," faltered Skinner.

"Do you know Delarey — Piet Delarey? Get him here, quick! It's a matter of life and death, or near it! Tell him it's Sorrell—he'll know—Jim Sorrell!"

Skinner did not stop to think. He was rushing off before he remembered that the Rebel, shut up in the punishment-room, was not in a position to give the fugitive any help, however much he might want to do so.

But Skinner rushed on. He remembered something else—that Fish had got in a new lot of keys, and that among them was one that had been tested and found to fit the lock of the punishment-room door!

It would be easy enough to get that key—to let Delarey out.

Whether it would be to Delarey's advantage to be let out in order that he might attempt to help this fellow Skinner did not really stop to think. But, in fairness to him, it may be said that in what he did there was at least no enmity to the Afrikaner. There was, indeed, something of that curious, reluctant liking that he had shown at least once before.

Sorrell stood at the gates, panting, watching the road along which he had come with anxious eyes.

He was in a tight corner, and he knew it. There was little enough chance that Piet could give him any help. But at that small chance he clutched as a drowning man will clutch at a straw, and in his selfishness and his fear never thought of the consequences to the boy.

Now, down the road, he saw a khaki-clad figure. Within the lodge, close to him, he heard a grumbling voice, as Gosling awoke from his slumbers.

Sorrell looked wildly around, and then bolted across the empty Close towards the School House.

He reached the side door, rushed up the broad staircase, and was in the Remove passage at the moment when the disguised Wibley arrived in No. 1.

"I have called to see my nephew, Harry Wharton," announced Wibley.

He did not look a bit like himself. His voice was not a bit like Wibley's either. But the Famous Five were not taken by surprise, though the Bounder and Mark Linley, who were also present, might be.

"Hallo, Uncle Wib!" said Bob cheerily.

Then through the open doorway burst Sorrell. He howled Wibley clean off his feet, and fell on top of him.

And behind Sorrell came Piet Delarey, with Harold Skinner at his heels.

Everybody gasped. For Wibley some of them had been prepared; but they did not know what this new intrusion meant, and Delarey, who alone knew Sorrell, and Skinner, who recognised him again, were completely puzzled by Wibley.

"I say, Delarey, this means——"

"Ow! Yow! Wharrer you doing? Stop it!" howled Wibley, struggling in the stranger's frantic clutch.

Sorrell struggled up, and he saw Delarey.

"Piet!" he gasped.

"Jim! Oh, look here, you fellows! I know you don't owe me anything, and I hate asking you to help. You ought not to help, either. This chap is a deserter! But he saved my life once, and I can't go back on him!"

At this moment came fresh arrivals. Squiff and Tom Brown, Rake and Peter Todd appeared on the scene.

"Just you get back to prison, Piet!" said Squiff. "It's a mad thing to break out like this! Hallo! Who's this merchant?"

The new-comers were staring at Sorrell. So was everyone, for that matter. And more particularly William Wibley.

"I don't care who he is! I'm not jolly well going to have him barging into me like that!" howled Wibley.

"Oh, dry up!" said the Bounder sharply.

Wibley's damages did not matter much, anyway. They mattered not at all at such a time as this.

"They're after me, Piet! It was as near a cop as makes no odds! But I collared a motor-bike, and rode for my life. An' I couldn't think of anyone but you. I'm a low bound, an' I know it, but—— These blokes are friends of yours, ain't they? They won't give me away?"

The juniors looked at one another. In every mind was the same thought. Delarey, in the gravest danger of expulsion already, he was done for if the school authorities came to know of this!

And not one of them all, not the Famous Five, or Mark or the Bounder, not even Peter Todd or Dick Rake or Wibley, but was willing to risk something—to risk much—if he might be saved thereby! As for Squiff and Tom Brown, no risk would have been too big for them to run.

It was Harry Wharton who spoke first.

"We'll help you, Delarey, though I'm afraid there isn't much hope."

"There isn't any at all, Wharton! I can't accept your help, thanks all the same."

"Don't be an idiot! You must."

Delarey turned to Jim Sorrell.

"What do you mean to do if you get out of this hole, Jim?" he asked coolly.

"I'll go back to the regiment an' face the music! I swear I will, old son!"

At last the wastrel had seen his right course, and meant to face it. He hardly knew what had made him take that sudden resolution. Afterwards he thought it must have been the pluck shown by these mere boys in their readiness to stand by Piet.

"He'll get it in the neck for over-staying his leave if he does that," said Delarey. "But if he's caught here he'll be tried as a deserter. That's the difference. But I don't think there's much chance of his not being caught. They'll be hot on his track."

"There's a chance yet, if Wib will play up!" cried Harry Wharton, a wild idea flashing into his brain.

"I'm game for anything," said Wibley at once. "But I'm hanged if I twig, Wharton!"

"I do. You're to play the deserter!" said Vernon-Smith, grinning.

Wibley's face fell. But he would not back out. And in a moment he was seized by the desire to play the part as well as it could be played.

"Give me that cap!" he said to Sorrell.

The cap was thrust upon his head; his collar was dragged off; from his face he removed the "middle-aged" whiskers, and wiped some of the make-up, rendering it at once years younger, but still looking the face of a man, not a boy. He flung off his tail-coat; he dragged off Sorrell the shabby jacket he wore.

In spite of the Bounder's plain hint, some of them were still a little in doubt as to what Wibley meant to do.

But they understood better when Harry said:

"See here, you fellows, there's nobody about! If we can get this chap over to the old tower among a crowd of us, he ought to be safe enough there till the hue and cry is over!"

"While Wib's arrested in his place?" said Rake. "My hat, it's a scheme all right. But I don't believe old Wib's got the nerve for it!"

"Rats!" said Wibley.

"They'll arrest you, Wib," Peter Todd said.

"Who cares? They can't keep me."

There was a distinct likelihood that they might—as an accomplice of the deserter. Certainly they could. But Wibley did not care.

"I can do it on my head!" he said.

"But, mind you, I'm not going to own up that I'm a deserter. I shall deny it from the first."

He dashed downstairs. Meanwhile, a school-cap was stuck upon the head of Sorrell. And in the middle of the crowd he walked across to the old tower.

There sounded howls from the Close. Bolsover major had run down Fishy, and was attending to him. Fishy was the more vociferous as he really did not grasp the charge made against him.

The crowd, with Sorrell in its centre, went on its way. Wibley went on his way, towards the gates. Neither the crowd nor Wibley paid any attention to the proceedings of Bolsover or the consequent sufferings of Fisher T. Fish.

And, fortunately for them all, except Fishy, no one in authority appeared upon the scene.

Now, the crowd which had passed over towards the tower came away, and with one exception moved towards the gates to see how Wibley played his part. Piet Delarey went back to the punishment-room. He would not have gone, but Wharton asked him to, and he could not refuse.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The sound of marching men came along the road. The foremost of Sorrell's pursuers must have waited for the rest to come up.

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Wibley dodged behind a buttress, just too late, as it seemed, for he had let the fat sergeant have a glimpse of him first. "Stop me when I bolt!" he hissed, to the rest.

The sergeant appeared at the gates. Gosling barred his way.

"What I says is this 'ere—"

Thus far Gosling. But he was cut short.

"In the King's name!" said the sergeant authoritatively. "I have reason to suppose that a deserter is being harboured here!"

Gosling fell back. Wibley made his bolt.

"Stop me!" he hissed. "Oh, you silly asses!"

For they had made no move at first. And when they did move, it must be confessed that their acting was not quite up to the Wibley standard.

But it served. The sergeant was sure at a glance that Wibley was the fellow they had chased. No one there knew Sorrell; the detachment was not from his battalion.

"Hold on to him!" yelled the sergeant, in a voice of thunder. "He's a deserter!"

"I'm nothing of the sort!" panted Wibley, as if in terror.

"Who are you, then?" snapped the sergeant.

"His—his uncle!" replied Wibley, pointing to Harry Wharton.

Serious as the matter was, the crowd fairly roared at that.

The sergeant did not ask Wharton for a denial.

"Likely tale!" he snorted. "March him off!"

Wibley winked at Dick Rake. If Wibley was nervous he did not show it. But he continued to protest against being taken for the deserter, and the more he protested the more sure the sergeant felt of his identity.

"My only chapeau! If there isn't old Coker—and under arrest, too!" gasped Bob Cherry.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Better Luck in the End!

COKER had not tried to draw attention upon himself. Left in the charge of one man, he had retreated into a corner by the lodge.

Furious still, hatless, dishevelled, muddy, smelly, Horace Coker was not exactly at the top of his form, and for once he knew it.

"A nice chase you've led us, Private Sorrell!" said the sergeant.

"That ain't my name!" yelled Wibley.

"Ho, ain't it? We'll settle that point later. There's something else wants settling first. This here object, young gentlemen, says he belongs here."

The sergeant pointed a fat, accusing finger at Coker of the Fifth.

"Oh, Coker, Coker, how could you?" said Bob Cherry mournfully. "In such a disgraceful state too! Phew! Didn't you think of the disgrace you were bringing upon Greyfriars?"

"Shut up, Bob, you ass!" said Harry. "It's true, sergeant. I don't know what he's been up to, but he isn't a criminal—only a bit of an ass!"

"Then you can go, young man, and let this be a warning to you!" said the fat sergeant solemnly.

Coker said something very lurid indeed, and bolted for cover.

The fat sergeant marched off his men, with Wibley a prisoner in the midst.

"We ought to go after them and tell them it's all a jape," said Harry, frowning.

"But it ain't," said Johnny Bull flatly. "With that chap hidden in the

tower it's a jolly long way off being a jape."

And indeed it was plain that until Sorrell had made good his escape they could take no steps to rescue Wibley.

"There's only one thing for it," said the Bounder. "Quelehy's got to hear the whole yarn!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob. "Who'll tell him?"

"I will, if none of you fellows are on. We can't put this through on our own. We can with his help, if we can work him round."

"Not much chance of that. It will mean an awful row," said Nugent.

"It means that anyhow," Johnny Bull said. "I think the Bounder's right."

"So do I, and I'll go with him," Harry said.

"I'll go, too, if you want me," volunteered Peter Todd.

"Three's enough, and I don't mind owning I'd rather not," said Bob. "So I'll wheel poor old Coker's bike in as my share of the job. It ain't so heroic as yours or Wib's, but it's useful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of them laughed; but none of them laughed very heartily. There was going to be a very big row, everyone felt sure. And one fellow at least was in deadly fear. Harold Skinner wished now that he had resisted the impulse to let Delarey out of the punishment-room.

The deputation numbered five after all, for Squiff and Tom Brown refused to be left out of it. And before they had been shut up with Mr. Quelch more than five minutes the door of the Form-master's study opened, and Frank Nugent was given the key of the punishment-room and told to fetch Delarey.

A long time passed. Those waiting in the corridor could hear the murmur of voices inside. Evidently Mr. Quelch had insisted on having the full story.

That looked hopeful for Piet Delarey. When the whole story was known, Mr. Quelch was not the man to take too black a view of his share in it, they were sure. No one thought the Rebel badly in the wrong. How could he have refused to help a deserter when that deserter was a man who had saved his life?

"Hallo, here's Wib!" cried Bob Cherry.

They pressed round Wibley, who had appeared among them garbed as usual, and quite cool—almost provokingly cool.

"How did you work it, old scout?" asked Dick Rake.

"When I thought I'd had enough I just opened my coat and waistcoat and showed them my Etons underneath," replied Wibley. "The sergeant was tearing mad, but I told him it was his own fault; I'd said all along I wasn't the deserter."

Mr. Quelch looked out.

"Did I hear Wibley's voice?" he asked.

Wibley had to pass in. The rest waited.

No one thought of tea—except Billy Bunter, who took advantage of the chance to prow round the studies, examine cupboards, and sample to an extent that left him for a brief space satiated.

Mr. Quelch was never an easy man to size up; but one thing was always to be counted upon—he could recognise real generosity and unselfishness. Moreover, when his interest was aroused and his sympathy was secured, he would do more than most men.

Not many men in his responsible position would have done what he did in this case.

When Wharton and Vernon-Smith and Squiff and Wibley and Peter Todd and Tom Brown left the master's study,

Delarey did not come out with them. A little later he and Mr. Quelch went over to the old tower together. When darkness came three people left Greyfriars in a closed carriage for Courtfield Station. Two came back next morning—Mr. Quelch and Piet Delarey.

"We took him back to his battalion," said the Rebel. "Oh, he'll get it fairly stiff, of course, but that's no more than he deserves. I guess he'll wipe the black mark off when they get over there. That's Jim Sorrell all over."

"How did Quelch behave?" asked Dick Rake.

"Mr. Quelch is the whitest man I know," said the Rebel. And none who heard doubted that he meant it. "I shall say the same if I get the sack after all. But he doesn't think it will come to that; and I'm hopeful."

It did not come to that. And no one was sorry that it did not—even Skinner was glad.

They heard later how a wild tale had drawn suspicion from Greyfriars, and sent the sergeant and his men hunting the shore by Pegg. But for that Sorrell's escape might not have been so easy.

Like Pharaoh of old, Bolsover major hardened his heart, and he refused to give up his designs on the captaincy.

But Bolsover's chance—poor enough at best—had been completely ruined by the greedy laziness of Fishy and the wiles of Dick Russell.

The choice lay between Harry Wharton and Peter Todd.

Which would the Form choose?

(Don't miss "HEAD OF THE POLL!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

NOTICES.

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THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 16.—DICK PENFOLD.

"IT'S impossible!" said Bulstrode. "Don't talk to me about open scholarships! Why, the chap's father keeps a bootshop in Friardale here!"

"Dick Penfold, the kid who brings our boots back when we have them soled!" said Hazeldene. "Oh, it's too thick!"

And Bolsover major said it was "Rot," and Snoop, the disgraceful Snoop, thought it "Disgraceful." And Skinner and Vernon-Smith—the Bounder then, remember—were not about it, of course. And altogether things did not promise well for Dick Penfold when he came to Greyfriars as a scholarship boy.

In some ways it was worse for him even than for Mark Linley. And plucky Mark had enough opposition to live down, in all conscience!

But Mark came from far-away Lancashire. Penfold was a Friardale lad, well known to the school. Why, they knew his old father—a mere village cobbler, as the cads said. "And a jolly good cobbler, too!" said Bob Cherry, who, like Wharton, backed up the new boy from the first.

The others did not think that mattered, or that the fact that Dick's father was a good, straightforward, honorable man mattered either. Their precious dignity was galled by the idea of a cobbler's son being brought among them. Some of their fathers had never done as much useful work in their lives as Dick's father did every week, very likely. But that was a thing of no consequence. The snob does not judge of value in this way.

The Head was a little bit against it, not because he is a snob, but because he foresaw trouble probably. He offered something in the way of a compromise—the value of a year's tuition. Dick stood firm, and so did Dick's father, who held, quite rightly, that his son had qualities to do himself credit at any school. So Dick came into the unaccustomed life, and met with stony glances when the Head himself brought him to the Remove class-room, and fought and thrashed Skinner, to start with. That fight was forced upon him. And Skinner wished, after it, that he had not been so pressing.

He was put into the same study as the Bounder, who made matters exceedingly uncomfortable for him, of course. Then he saved the Bounder's life in the Pool of the Sark; but Vernon-Smith did not know till after Penfold had been taken into the study of the good-natured Mauly, who could not be a snob if he tried, who his rescuer was. It made a difference. Even in those days Vernon-Smith knew what gratitude meant, and though he might be hard enough, was not such as Skinner.

Penfold has changed studies since then. He now has Monty Newland and Trevor as companions. Newland is one of the right sort, a good fellow in every way. Trevor—well, Trevor might be worse. He is not a Skinner or a Snoop, anyway.

One of the things which often tell against a scholarship boy at a public school is shortness of pocket-money. His people cannot afford to give him as much as most fellows have. And out of that fact arise some unpleasantnesses. He is apt to be stranded in an emergency that presents few difficulties to another boy with a pound or two, or even a few shillings, in his pocket. Dick has suffered in this way now and again. But, on the



Richard Penfold

whole, his frugal rearing, like Mark Linley's, and his level-headedness, have saved him from feeling the pinch, as vainer fellows with less ballast would. But there have been times when the want of cash gave him heavy trouble—the times when disaster threatened the little home at Friardale, and he was powerless to help. He is too proud to borrow what he cannot reasonably hope to return; and because of that his friends—Mauly and the Famous Five, and plenty of others now—cannot always help him as they would do if they could. Once he fell into the grip of a great temptation; but he resisted it, and won free.

And once Peter Todd gave him real help in Peter's own queer, original way. A five-pound note meant much to the Friardale home; and Sir Hilton Popper had offered a reward of just that sum for information leading to the discovery of a certain miscreant. Now, Peter was the miscreant wanted, and he contrived that Dick, quite innocently, should play the informer and scoop the reward. Peter was birched. But, as Peter said: "There's nothing like leather," and leather in the right place kept Peter from any great suffering!

And, again, Toddy and Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry helped Dick, while Mauly played his part, and got his uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke, who happened to be Mr. Penfold's landlord, and who did not know of the hard practices of his agent, to put things right.

There was a cricket match on that day, and Wharton was talked to for not

being on the field throughout, as a captain should be, in ordinary circumstances. But it was Harry and Dick Penfold together who won the game for their side. They put on 76 for the last wicket after nine had gone down for the beggarly score of 24, and later Pen did the hat trick, and the Shell were defeated. So were the broker's men!

Not even from Mark Linley would Dick accept a loan, though he admitted the force of Mark's argument, that one fellow who was poor might surely be allowed to help another in the same position.

Pride, truly, but the right sort of pride—the pride that helps a fellow through life. A pride that is as far from foolish snobbery as anything can be—that does not keep this fine, clear-eyed youngster from going down on half-holidays when needed to help mend boots. All honour to such pride as that!

It was Dick's skill as a photographer that got Hazeldene out of an awkward scrape, when Snoop plotted to deprive him of his place in the footer team by a faked photo showing him at his old games. Dick won Marjorie's gratitude by that—and Marjorie Hazeldene's gratitude is well worth winning!

NEXT WEEK :

FISHER T. FISH.

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Masters arrives in Cape Town to meet his cousin, Jasper Orme. Jasper sends him up country with a scoundrel named Faik, and it is made apparent that Faik and Jasper are in league to put Bob out of the way. Disgusted with Faik's bad treatment, Bob escapes, in company with Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, and they take with them the map which shows the spot where a treasure is located, and which it was Faik's aim to seize. The two lads push on into the wilds, and are captured by savages. They are imprisoned in a kraal, and food is brought to them by a slave of their captors. Mendi, the slave, helps Bob and Ted to escape. He tells them of a mysterious ancient city under a lake. Mendi takes his companions up country into the remote wilds, where they meet with MacGregor, an old Scot, long resident with the natives. Bob is acclaimed by the savages as their chief, but Mopo, a warrior, challenges him as a rival. Ted knocks Mopo senseless.

A Battle of Wits.

As Mopo fell before Ted's fist, MacGregor gripped Bob by the arm. The lad, his fists still clenched, was stepping forward, and the savages had ceased shouting in sheer horror.

"Dinna stir!" MacGregor urged. "A' may yet come richt, but ye maun keep oot o' this!"

The lad's impulse was to shake himself free; but the gravity of the old Scotchman's tone made him pause.

Mopo was on his feet in an instant, and Ted stood ready for the rush. But MacGregor intervened.

"Stand back!" he cried. "Thou hast spoken of the prophecy, Mopo, and it maun be fulfilled to the letter! By it you claim to do battle, but naught in the prophecy gives you the right to choose with whom. Isna' this truth, O Kampa, wisest of medicine-men? Is it not by the portents you judge, an' hao we not one here?"

Mopo turned to Kampa. The latter spread out his hands.

"There is naught in the prophecy that gives Mopo, son of Zinda, right of choice," he said. "Yet can he claim battle. Of the portents of which you speak I do not comprehend."

"And maun I unravel a' the riddles for ye?" MacGregor scoffed. "Then so let it be! Harken, all! Upon the portents hang the prophecy. For was it not proved when I came amongst ye, and when the wolves of the Kandalzi scourged ye? And is it not thus proved now that the great chief Kanza is nigh unto death, an' in the verra nick o' time the young whiteface comes to take his throne? And now the victim is claimed, and the claim is answered. And by whom? By him whom the prophecy has ordained to be the victim! There he stands!"

And he pointed to Ted.

The blood flushed to Bob's face. He gazed in disgust at MacGregor, thinking that the Scot intended to sacrifice Ted.

"No, no!" he shouted.

But Kampa's voice rang out loud and triumphant.

"Thou hast truly read the portents, O Barelegs, wisest of men!" he cried. "And as thou sayest, so shall it be! Mopo, there stands thy victim! Thus shall thy vengeance glut itself; and yet the young ruler who comes from afar shall rule over us, as the prophecy saith. Sharpen thy axe—smite hard! We watch thy prowess!"

Ted did not wince. His face was pale, but his lips were firmly compressed, and his eyes shone steadily.

Bob sprang forward.

"Am I thy chief?" he cried.

"Thou hast spoken!" all shouted.

"Then harken unto me!" the lad continued, his voice ringing firm and clear. "As thy chief I order; for ye it is to obey! Do I speak sooth?"

"Ay! Ay!"

"Then I forbid this battle! With none but me shall Mopo, son of Zinda, fight! Hear ye, and tremble!"

The great crowd stood silent. But the old medicine-man came a step nearer.

"Thou dost rule by the laws that come from the unknown, O master, but by these same laws art thou also ruled!" he said. "Thou canst not gainsay the winds and the thunder, nor stop the water that comes forth from the earth, nor the clouds that darken the sun. Therefore is it that thou canst not have thy will in this. What sayest thou, O Barelegs?"

"I canna deny it," MacGregor replied. Bob turned.

"Are you a coward?" he cried. "Do you mean to let my chum be killed? You can stop this, and you've got to stop it! If you don't, we three go down together, for I have my rifle, and I'll put a bullet into you as soon as into that black villain—"

But MacGregor was chuckling.

"Eh, man, an' wad ye spoil sport?" he asked. "Ne'er hae I been so tickled sin' the old student days in Edinburgh. Gosh, but this brings them back to me! And yon lad has tidy muscels for one so young, and an eye like a hawk. 'Twill be a rare fecht, an' no mistake!"

"A fight!" Bob said, in contempt.

"An' all power to it! But lie low, or ye'll spoil everything! There's that fellow Mopo starting to sharpen his axe already, and he'll nip in with it once he likes the edge he's got on it! Noo lift your arm, and call on them to stop that jabbering, and tell them I have much to say."

"And you're going to save Ted?"

"Why, man, he was never in danger whiles I was here!" MacGregor answered, his aged eyes twinkling. "Is it a coward and a rascal ye take me for? But don't waste time. I know the simple minds of these poor, benighted fellows, an' I can twist this fool prophecy round my fingers like a piece of twine."

Bob stepped forward.

"Peace!" he commanded. "For the great Barelegs would speak once more!"

The hubbub died away. Mopo ceased from sharpening his axe, and scowled apprehensively.

"Harken, and weigh well what I say! Thou, Kampa, shalt answer my questions before thy tribe, and by thy answers shall the prophecy be made plain," MacGregor said. "Is it not true that a victim can be claimed by Mopo?"

"That is indeed true!" the old medicine-man replied.

"Tis well! And also is it not in thy mind that yonder young whiteface, who hath already brought Mopo to the dust, shall be the victim?"

"Thou speakest truth. But wherefore go back to talk of what is already known?"

"For that we may do rightly what hath been ordained. Said the prophecy that blood must be spilt?"

"Houf! Blood must be spilt!" cried Mopo, his face lit up with savage joy.

"Hold thy peace, fool!" MacGregor said sharply. "Kampa, what sayest thou?"

"Thy words are the words of wisdom," the medicine-man replied.

MacGregor softly stroked his beard. He looked shrewdly into the crowd of rapt faces.

"Then blood must indeed be spilt!" he said. "But who is Mopo that he should decide the manner thereof?"

There was a pause. All turned to see how Kampa took this question. He stared open-mouthed back at MacGregor.

"Was it ordained that Mopo, the great brave, should use his axe through fear?" MacGregor asked, with a sneer. "Is Mopo a coward, and doth he seek to slay his victim without hurt to himself? Will Mopo tremble and his great limbs be as a babe's when the young whiteface rubs his nose in the dust?"

With a yell, Mopo sprang forward, swinging his axe round his head.

"Thou art an old man, Barelegs, but I will not brook such talk from thee!" he cried.

"Tis thy folly I would quench—thy madness in daring to interpret the prophecy which the great Kampa alone can solve!" MacGregor retorted. "Blind and arrogant fool! Who art thou to venture on such a quest? Go, ask the forgiveness of Kampa, and perhaps, because of thy youth, he may forgive! 'Tis for the wise Kampa to say how the fight shall go. Speak, Kampa! What sayest the prophecy of this?"

"There is naught of this!" Kampa replied.

"Then let Mopo put down his axe!" MacGregor insisted. "For as the fight began, so should it finish! As the young whiteface smote Mopo, so let Mopo smite the whiteface, if he can!"

The savages clapped their hands.

"I will not give up my axe!" Mopo yelled. "None shall make me! For am I not a warrior—I, Mopo, son of Zinda—and is not my axe—"

"Darest thou to defy Kampa?" shouted MacGregor. "Wilt thou cast dust on the head of the great medicine-man? What sayest Kampa to this?"

The old medicine-man's eyes blazed. This shrewd thrust had stung his pride.

"Mopo, son of Zinda, fool, and son of

(Continued from page 19.)

a fool," he stormed, "drop thy axe, or I will cast my spells over thee! Face the young whiteface as he faced thee!"

"Then it's settled!" MacGregor said. "Now, Bob, you see my meaning! We're going to have half a dozen good rounds, I guess, and I back Ted every time! Ted, lad, punch him hard, and dinna bother about Queensberry rules! These chaps dinna, so why need ye?"

Ted looked round.

"If only I could get a blackthorn in my fist I'd feel as happy as a bird!" he remarked. "Boxing isn't just in my line, as it is in Bob's. Still, it's something to see the last of that axe, and I won't grumble at a pair of black eyes. Now, Mopo, fool, and son of a fool, come on, and I'll give you a taste of Donnybrook!"

He pulled off his coat.

"You're my second, Bob," he went on. "Clear the course, Mr. MacGregor! The sooner it's over the quicker it will be finished."

Mopo stood silent and sulky.

"Time!" Bob cried.

Mopo did not stir. Ted advanced towards him.

"Put up your dukes!" he cried.

"I fight not as babes fight!" Mopo grunted. "Nor can blood thus be spilt, as hath been ordained!"

"Punch him on the nose! That will even him up!" MacGregor chuckled.

And he quick on your feet, lad, for he has twice your strength! And if he grips ye, 'twill go hard with ye!"

Ted walked right up to Mopo, who stood with arms folded and scorn on his face.

"Come on!" the lad said.

Mopo did not stir.

"Then take that—and that!"

As Ted spoke he struck twice, landing each blow on the savage's face. Stung with pain, Mopo uttered an ear-piercing yell, and sprang forward to clutch him. But Ted was too quick. Side-stepping, he let out, and caught his adversary on the side of the head, sending him staggering, with arms outstretched, to save himself from a fall.

Full of fury now, Mopo swung round, and made in again at Ted. The lad struck hard, but could not stop him. They both went down together, and just when it seemed that Mopo would grip him Ted rolled away.

Now they were on their feet together, and again Mopo rushed. Ted changed his tactics. He dropped to his hands and knees, dived between the savage's legs, hunched his back, and sent him flying, two yards away, flat on his face.

A wild cheer rang forth. All the tribe was delighted. The men and women clapped their hands, the children danced in their excitement.

Mopo slowly arose. His lips were twitching, blood was slowly trickling from his forehead. He glared at Ted, then he faced MacGregor.

"I fight no more," he said, "for this is no warrior fight. Yet do I not yield to thee or to Kampa! The prophecy shall be fulfilled, and by axe, and not only one whiteface shall fall. Harken unto that, O Barelegs, cunning trickster that thou art! Tremble, old man! I go, but anon we shall meet again, and then shall be a day of reckoning!"

He walked to the spot where his axe lay, picked it up, and turning to smile mockingly at Bob.

Then, without another word, he strode through the crowd.

The New Chief.

Away over the plain strode Mopo, and a great hush followed. It was broken by MacGregor.

"Kampa," he said, "I and my friends will follow speedily! Let the great tribe return to the kraals!"

The savages obeyed. MacGregor cast himself down, and Ted and Bob sat on either side. The old Scotsman seemed very thoughtful.

"We're up against trouble!" he remarked. "That fellow Mopo has friends, ye ken; and it was intended for him to rule here when the old chief pegged out!"

"Then I'll clear out of this!" Bob replied. "You'll come along, Ted, won't you? And I dare say Mendi will go with us!"

"I've no great relish to stay on," Ted replied. "Nice job I was let in for to start with! I guess I would sooner be on my lonesome than meeting that blood-thirsty chap Mopo every few minutes, prowling around with his axe! Ugh! Besides, who wants his rotten job? Who wants to be chief of a crowd like that? We ought to scoot, and not rob him of what is his due, and no catch for Bob, anyway!"

"That's clean impossible! Ye dinna ken these savages as I do," MacGregor said. "For sixteen years I've lived among them, an' I've learned the ways o' them!"

"What do they really want?" Bob asked.

"It's a lang story, and I winna go into it the noo!" the Scot answered. "But once they were saved from destruction by a Britisher."

"Who was the man?"

"Well, it was I who managed the business, if you're sae keen to hear. And sin' then they have always felt that they will not be safe without a white man amongst them. Now that they've got you, they won't let you go. You'll have to fall in with their wishes."

"But you don't mean that I'm to spend all my life here?" Bob asked, aghast.

"Of course I dinna! It is but a matter of getting their trust, and then you can do as you like. They're waiting for Kazna to die. You'll e'en hae to be chief when he does. But before long you'll be able to put anyone you like in your place. That is, if you knock out that ruffian Kaasohiki and his crowd first!"

"And, meantime, Mopo—"

"Mopo is your enemy, mak' no mistake! He'll hae your life if he can! But there are three of us together now, and we ought to be more than a match for him!"

"And the treasure?" Ted said. "Has it come to this—that we've come fifteen hundred miles without a chance of getting it?"

MacGregor tugged at his beard. His melancholy eyes seemed to be gazing into the past.

"I can't near to lay my hands on that treasure once," he said. "It's a queer thing, but ever sin' then I've had a feeling that it would be mine yet."

Both lads stared at him in some excitement.

"Tell us about it!" Bob urged. "We've told you our tale—how we trekked up here with Faik; the row we had with him, and how we got the map, and all the rest!"

"I chanced to read about that treasure over thirty years ago, when first I landed in South Africa as a young man," MacGregor began. "I didna think much about the tale at the time, but I cam' up country. I was a great hunter in those days, and made gude profit oot of elephant tusks. I've had as much as two thousand pounds' worth in a waggon at a time. And, living amongst the natives, I heard tales of the treasure, off and on, for nigh ten years."

"Oh, go on!" said Job, as he paused.

"The thocht o' it grew on me. I couldna help thinkin' the tales were true. Then, in Cape Town, I looked into auld books again. I wrote homa and a clever chief, who had made a study of African history from the earliest days, told me there might weel be truth in the story. There were cities here thousands of years ago—ay, long before the time of the Romans, and that's going back onco' far!"

"I've read that, too," Bob said.

"Most folks ken it the noo," MacGregor continued. "I was always moving about, and wherever I went I picked up all the knowledge I could from all the races I came across. At last I located the treasure in yonder lake. But what a lake it is!"

He drew a sharp breath as he stopped.

"Is it so very large?" Ted asked.

"Some hundreds of miles in length; but that's naething compared to other things about it, of which ye'll hear later," MacGregor replied. "I had made money, as I tauld ye, and I chucked huntin', and spent a fortune in locating this lake. Then I looked round for some folk to finance the enterprise. Jasper Orme and Faik backed me up. But they were treacherous. They bribed the men I took with me to leave me in the lurch when I had discovered everything, and to return and tell them."

"The curs!" Bob said.

"Ay! They knew I could never get the treasure single-handed, and they reckoned on my death alone," MacGregor went on. "After great privation, I got as far as here, and here I've lived ever since. That's the tale in brief!"

"And you are game to have another try?" Bob urged.

"I'm an old man, and I'm ready to take the risk. I haven't long to live, onyway," MacGregor replied. "But ye're two lads, wi' long lives before ye. To tell ye the truth, I think you ought to give up the quest!"

"But what have we to lose?" Ted urged. "We're penniless. Does a chap ever make a fortune without a fight for it?"

"And see what we have to gain," Bob said. "And it's not as if we're starting on a wild-goose chase, if you come with us. You said that once you nearly got it. You know where it is. Why, with that knowledge and your experience half the battle is won before we start!"

"Ye dinna ken what ye're in for," MacGregor said, in solemn tones. "The chances are a' against your ever getting back. It's not because I had the luck once that we'll have it again!"

"If you're ready to face the risk, we are," Bob replied.

MacGregor pondered for a few moments.

"Then we'll tak' it together," he said.

"And how soon can we start?" Bob asked.

"That depends on the men here," MacGregor explained. "They won't like to lose sight of ye. Auld Kampa said as much, and he, as first medicine-man, is the most powerful, next to Kazna, the chief. Ye'll have to promise to come back, and to rule when Kazna dies, and to pay oot Kaasohiki and his crowd. Then perhaps they may consent."

Bob hesitated.

"I can't promise to go in for a lot of useless slaughter," he said. "I don't mind the rest they want, though it does seem awful rot!"

"There are more ways than one of dealing with Kaasohiki; but maybe ye'll only be too glad to fight him before the finish," MacGregor said. "If he attacked the crowd, wouldn't ye fight to save them?"

(Continued on page 20.)

IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 18.)

"Of course I would!"

"It's a promise you can easily make," MacGregor asserted. "'Tis like ene' he will attack them again; he has vowed to do so. And as I've said, you can knock him out without bloodshed. We'll find a way!"

"All right!"

MacGregor slowly rose. By this time the savages had disappeared over the brow of the hill.

"We'd better follow them," the old Scotchman remarked. "Kazna will want to see ye, and there'll be a lot of jubilation to-night, and ye'll have to play your part as the future chief. Anyhow, they'll give us a good feed, and—"

"And that will make up for a lot!" Ted laughed. "For I'm awfully hungry! Let us get a move on. I'm just longing for a good square meal!"

The sun was sinking, and as they drew near to the village the light faded rapidly. The village was large, and laid out more carefully than most. MacGregor explained that an old one had been destroyed by Kaasohiki, and that this new one had been built according to his own suggestions.

It certainly was clean, and the kraals—

of which there were several hundred—had been carefully put together. As the three approached, the reed pipes played again, and they walked between two rows of natives down the main path, which led to a massive kraal in the centre. Here Kampa stood awaiting them.

Much to Ted's amusement, he prostrated himself before Bob, who flushed with annoyance, and, addressing him with awe, he told the lad that Kazna was waiting to receive him.

"And what of Mopo?" MacGregor asked.

"Mopo, with bitterness in his heart, hath gone forth," Kampa replied. "But what care we now? Mopo can do no harm!"

MacGregor shrugged his shoulders. He was of a very different opinion.

"And where are the young white chief and his friend to live?" he asked.

"That is for the great Kazna to decide."

"All right; we'll go in and see him," MacGregor answered. "And you, Kampa, can wait outside!"

They passed into the kraal. A rush-light was burning, and by its feeble rays they saw a very old man lying on a rough pallet. His face had fallen in; his eyes were lustreless; his figure was very shrunken. But, despite his age and weakness, he raised himself, and stared long at Bob.

"Kazna, this is the great white chief that was foretold," MacGregor said.

"And his name?" the old man asked.

"My name is Bob Musters," the lad said.

The old man bent forward and gazed harder.

"More light!" he said.

There were other torches in the kraal, and MacGregor lit them all. Not for a second did Kazna take his gaze from Bob's face. After some minutes he sank back.

"Thou art not the first of thy race to come to this land," he said. "This is an omen."

Bob started.

"As a young man my father lived some years in Africa," he said.

"And I am old, and I forget much,"

Kazna answered. "And I would I could remember. But whether I should then be friend or enemy to thee I know not. Thy face! I have seen it before, and there was great fighting, and I swore I would be revenged, but against whom I do not now know. For if I had enemies, I also had friends. There is one, though, who can tell. Let Mopo come here. By his memory I will judge, for often have I told him the tale."

MacGregor grasped Bob by the shoulder.

"I must get out of this, an' waste no time!" he whispered. "Ted, ye'll have to gang wi' me. Stay here, Bob, until we return. Don't stir, as you value your life!"

(Another splendid instalment next week.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"HEAD OF THE POLL!"

By Frank Richards.

In this story we come to the end of the Remove Election Campaign, and after reading it my readers will know whether Harry Wharton, Peter Tedd, or Percival Bolsover is in future to act as the Form's leader. It is not giving away much to say that Bolsover's chance is a very small one; but more than that I decline to tell. The first cricket-match of the season comes into the story; and you will learn, too, how Peter Tedd fell among the nuts of Highcliffe and came in for some very rough and unfair treatment, and how the Caterpillar and Frank Courtenay, like the Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, passed by on the other side, and who it was that played the Samaritan's part. The yarn is packed with incident, and, as in recent stories, almost all the members of the Remove are brought upon the stage at one time or another in it. I do not believe many readers are tired of the Famous Five, but I can quite understand the wish to hear more of Rake, Squiff, Tom Brown, and others, which has been frequently expressed in letters of late.

CIVILITY!

The telephone bell in the editorial room rang the other afternoon, and one of my colleagues answered it. "Are you the editor of the MAGNET?" came the question. "I am not," was the reply. "Then put me on to him!" barked the reader who had called up.

I did not go to the telephone. I don't really want telephone calls even from readers who are polite. I have said that before. These calls waste too much time, and are a terrible interruption to work. But I simply decline to talk to anyone who has no more manners than this particular reader seems to have!

It is not a little thing, this. No one wants servility at least, no one whose opinion is worth anything does. But "please" and "thank you" are lessons most of us learn as mere kiddies, and it is a pity to forget them entirely. Rudeness is not independence. It may be a sign of it, but it is a bad sign. If you want anything, ask civilly. Don't be afraid of being polite. That is what seems to be the matter with some boys. You are never lowered by politeness, remember.

I don't advocate soft words to the tyrant or the bully. I don't bar hitting back when you are hit. But that is altogether another matter. Politeness and true humility have some connection with one another, because the true and real humility consists rather in an absence of swank about yourself than in a low opinion of yourself. It is no good going about thinking yourself a miserable

worm. That may be humble, but in quite the wrong way. A miserable worm ought to be polite to everyone on the ground that everyone is naturally his superior! I want you to be polite without thinking at all about superiors or inferiors, or just where you come in, or just where the person you are talking to comes in. To be polite, in short, out of self-respect, which is a thing far apart from swank. Swank means self-conceit, and that tends to rudeness through exaltation of yourself and depreciation of others. A proper self-respect helps you to be polite to other people. As you have your rights, so they have theirs, I think you will see my point.

A SAILOR LAD'S TESTIMONY.

A week or two ago I printed a letter from a soldier lad who had something to say about two correspondents who had made the queer statement that soldiers and sailors really care nothing about the companion papers. Since then a letter has reached me from one of the boys in blue, who says:

"Let me just give you my own case as a proof whether I care about your papers. I have read them since the MAGNET was in halfpenny form, and 'The Lord of the Deep' ran as a serial in the 'Boys' Friend' and gone on reading them. At present my ship is stationed at Alexandria, and if I fail to get my papers from home I buy them ashore at 2s. each. That looks as if I care a bit—eh? I wish I had the address of Fisher and Boyd. I should like to give them my personal opinion of them!"

We can guess it, old fellow. Master Fisher and Master Boyd will kindly consider themselves as being regarded with the utmost despatch—as Gussy says—as my esteemed correspondent. Good luck to him!"

Your Editor

NOTICE.

In future we shall only print the actual number of copies of the MAGNET ordered through Newsagents. Unless you order your copy in advance, disappointment is certain.

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To Mr. Newsagent.

Please keep for me each week until further notice a copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY.

(Signed)