

Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co. in another exciting School Adventure!

The Magnet 2^D





Come Into the Office, Boys—and Girls!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

A READER living in Southend, looking out to sea the other day, spotted a ship carrying a curious signal. She had two black balls hoisted on her foremast, and, as my chum has never seen this particular signal before, he asks me what it means. The reason the ship was showing that signal was that she was not under command—in other words, something had gone wrong, and it was not possible to manoeuvre her properly. The two black balls were hoisted as a warning to any other vessels to keep well clear of her, and thus avoid a possible collision.

The same reader asks me to explain the expression:

"BOXING THE COMPASS."

It simply means reciting the names of the points of the compass in their proper order. That doesn't mean just saying "North, South, East and West." There are actually thirty-two points in the compass. The four main ones are called cardinal points. Then there are four half-cardinal or quadrantal points, eight intermediate or three-letter points, and sixteen "by" points. Each point is divided into half points and quarter points, but these are seldom used nowadays. Modern steamships have their compasses divided into 360 degrees, and steer by the degrees. Thus, instead of steering say North-East-by-North, they will steer North thirty-four degrees East, which is practically the same thing.

A modern ship's compass is really a most remarkable "gadget." Underneath it are lockers which contain vertical and horizontal magnets. On either side there are hollow soft iron spheres, and in front is a brass tube which contains a soft iron bar which is known as a "Flinders Bar." All these magnets and soft iron are placed there to correct the deviation of the compass caused by the steel of which the ship is built. Do you know that a steel ship is really a floating magnet? She becomes magnetised when she is built, and this, of course, affects the compass. Hence the necessity for adjusting the compass so as to allow for the magnetism of the ship itself.

Have you ever heard the expression

KNIGHT BACHELOR?

Tom Harvey, of Bridlington, asks me what it means. It is the name conferred upon a man who is made a knight without being a member of any particular order. There are nine different British orders of knighthood. They are as follows:

The Garter, the Thistle, St. Patrick, the Bath, the Star of India, St. Michael and St. George, the Indian Empire, the Royal Victorian Order, and the British Empire. Each has an appropriate insignia which include a badge or jewel, a collar, a ribbon of certain colour, and a star. A Knight Bachelor, although he has the privilege of

calling himself "Sir," wears only a badge, which shows spurs and a sword on a vermillion background.

I DARE say most of my readers have heard about

THE GOLD RUSH.

so they may be interested in the reply to this query from J. H., of Blackpool. What was the Gold Rush, and when did it take place? It happened in 1896 when placer gold was discovered in the Klondike, a district of the Yukon in North-Western Canada. The first find was made in Bonanza Creek, and adventurers flocked there from all quarters. Fortunes were made in a night, although the people who made the most money were not the actual miners themselves, but the store-keepers. Food and supplies were so scarce that enormous sums were paid for them. Dawson City became—and still is—the centre of the gold-mining industry in the Yukon, and nowadays there are good communications by rail and road with Dawson City, which has a population of one thousand people.

From "Magnetite," of Sunbury, comes a curious question. He has heard the expression

"SNAKE'S HIPS"

and he wants to know if snakes really do have hips. Well, it seems surprising—but they have! Pythons have traces of hinder limbs, which terminate externally in a kind of hooked claw, so it is perfectly correct to say that these snakes, at least, have hips. The bite of a python is not venomous, and they kill their prey by squeezing it to death, subsequently swallowing it. Most of the pythons in the world are found in Africa or Australia, although one species is found in Southern Mexico. They lay eggs and hatch them with the heat of their bodies.

WHY ARE PREFECTS SO CALLED?

is the question which John Evans, of Cardiff, asks me. The name comes from Prefect, which was the title of a functionary of Ancient Rome. They had the right to exercise all the powers of the king or consuls in their absence. Later, the title was bestowed on the chief magistrate of the city, the man who had charge of the water supply, the man who managed the public treasury, the general of the imperial life-guards, and other such notables.

My Cardiff chum also wants to know where Monitors got their name. This name came from a ship, which, in the American Civil War, proved its superiority to all other existing vessels. So the name Monitor came to mean someone who assists or looks after anything.

WHAT IS METEOROLOGY?

is the question which Harry Clave, of Brixton, asks me to answer. Literally, the word means the study of meteors, but actually it is used to denote the science of investigation of the atmosphere, climate and weather. The weather phenomena of this country depends upon studying the moving pressure systems which are known as cyclones or anti-cyclones. The word cyclone merely means that the wind is moving round in a clock-wise circular direction. Anti-cyclone means that the wind is travelling in the opposite direction. Meteorology is an exceedingly difficult subject, and, although it has not been studied greatly in the past, it is now becoming an exact science.

DID COLUMBUS DISCOVER AMERICA?

One of my Wolverhampton readers has been having an argument with a chum, who says that Columbus did not discover America. He has asked me to settle the matter. Well, according to some historical experts, Columbus did not discover America. It is claimed that the first discoverers of America were the Norsemen, the inhabitants of ancient Scandinavia. The old Norsemen certainly got around a bit, for in addition to making piratical voyages to all parts of the northern seas, they also ravaged the coasts of Spain, Italy, Greece and Asia Minor. They settled in Iceland, and their ancient sagas claim that they discovered America. Others of them settled in France and founded Normandy—from which place they came back again to England under William the Conqueror.

A WORTHY CAUSE!

In this year of Jubilee every British boy and girl has a splendid two-fold opportunity. By sending postal orders or unused British stamps to

King George's Jubilee Trust,
St. James's Palace,
London, S.W.1,

they can join in the great National Tribute to our beloved King for his reign over us during the last 25 years, and at the same time help in providing opportunities for healthy recreation and pastime for the youth of Great Britain. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who inspired this two-fold opportunity, said on the wireless:

"I believe there are over 1,000,000 boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 18 with no opportunity of enjoying the games and chances of self-development to which they are entitled—with no outlet for their natural high spirits and ambitions."

True sportsmanship includes the privilege of sharing our pleasures with those who are denied them.

Now let us have a look at what is in store for next week. Just to start the ball rolling, Frank Richards kicks off with:

"HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!"

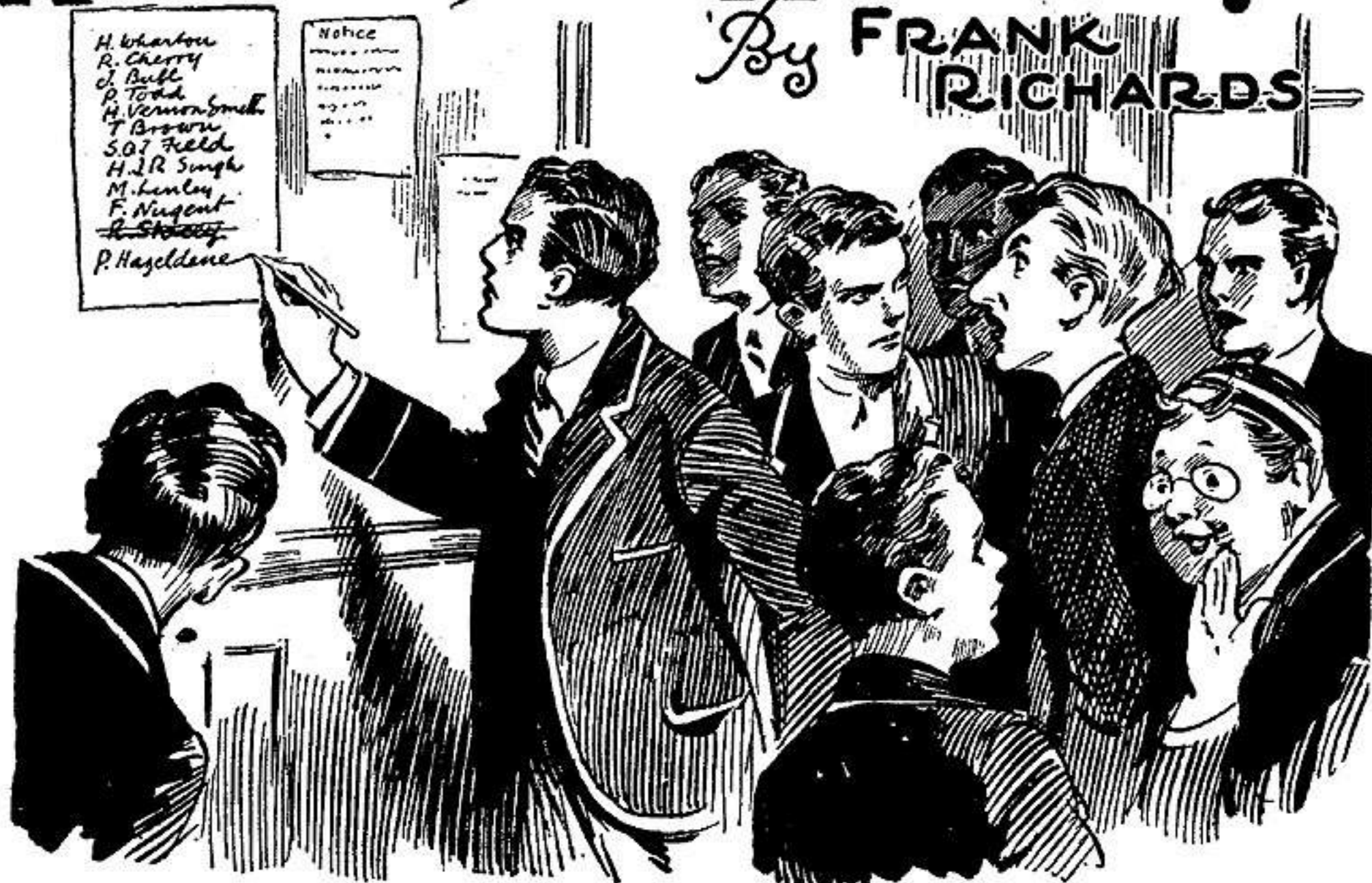
one of the finest yarns of the chums of Greyfriars I have ever read. Of course, you know that you can rely on Frank Richards to give you just that proper balance of fun and dramatic situations which makes a real, rattling good school story.

There will be further startling developments in our gripping adventure yarn, "Moose Call!" and plenty of chuckles in the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement. In addition, there will be another Greyfriars "Interview" in verse by our clever rhymester. Don't miss this issue, chums, whatever you do.

YOUR EDITOR.

RIVALS of the REMOVE!

By FRANK RICHARDS



A Magnificent New Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., featuring Ralph Stacey, a New Arrival at Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Feud in the Remove!

"STACEY?" asked Bob Cherry.
"No!"
Harry Wharton's answer was short and sharp.

"But—" said Frank Nugent, rather uncomfortably.

"A new kid!" said Wharton. "He only came to Greyfriars this term, and the term's hardly more than a week old. A fellow doesn't barge into the eleven so easily as all that!"

There was silence in Study No. 1 in the Remove at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton, sitting at the table, knitted his brows over the cricket list. His friends looked at him and looked at one another.

"The newfulness of the kid is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But his cricketfulness is also great."

Johnny Bull nodded.

"You see, Wharton—" he said.

"I don't!" contradicted the captain of the Remove.

"I'm going to speak plainly," said Johnny, undeterred by that interruption. "You don't like that new man Stacey, though he's a relation of yours, and you're as like as two peas. I admit he's rather a tick in some ways. But there's nothing the matter with his cricket. And personal feelings have nothing to do with games. You can't leave a man out of the cricket because you don't like him."

Wharton's face flushed.

The other members of the Co. were silent. Johnny Bull was the plainest

speaker in the ranks of the Famous Five of Greyfriars. Sometimes his plainness of speech ruffled the serenity of the famous Co. But on this occasion Johnny was only uttering what was in the minds of the other fellows.

All the Remove knew that the captain of the Form barred his relative, Ralph Stacey, the new fellow that term. But they knew, also, that Stacey was as good a cricketer as many in the Greyfriars Remove—better than most.

Although he "bars" Ralph Stacey, the fellow with whom his uncle, Colonel Wharton, desires him to make friends, Harry Wharton has made up his mind to avoid any open "row" with the new boy. But his good resolution is doomed to fall to pieces!

At games practice he had astonished the natives. He was as good a bat as Wharton or Smithy. He was as good a bowler as Hurree Singh. He was as good in the field as any man in the Form. Little as Wharton liked him, and little reason as he had for liking him, it was obvious that such a fellow could not be left out of the cricket.

Neither was it like Harry Wharton to allow personal feelings to influence him

in such matters. He had played Smithy in the footer at a time when he was on the worst of terms with the Bounder, and had been glad to play him. If there was a genuine sportsman in the Greyfriars Remove it was Harry Wharton, captain of the Form. But it seemed to his friends that he was rather forgetting sportsmanship now.

"After all, it's only a Form match!" said Bob Cherry. "Any man's good enough to play Temple's lot!"

"Then we don't need that wonderful man!" said the captain of the Remove, sarcastically.

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Wharton," he said. "The Form match with the Fourth is simply a trial run to pick out the men to play Courtfield next week. You're bound to try out a man like Stacey. If you don't—"

"Well, if I don't?" asked Wharton quietly, but with a gleam in his eyes.

"If you don't," said Johnny, "it will look as if you're carrying your feud with him into the cricket. You'll be letting yourself down, old chap! Be reasonable!"

This was unusually mild from Johnny. For that reason it had far more effect on Wharton than more emphasis would have had. He realised that his friends, including the plain-spoken Johnny, were concerned for him, not for Stacey—they did not want him to let himself down.

He hesitated.

"Johnny's right, old bean," said Bob gently. "That tick, Stacey, seems to

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,423.

have set himself to get your rag out in every possible way since he came here. I don't see why he should—but he has. I admit I'd rather like to punch his head. But—

Wharton smiled.

"You'd like him in the eleven?" he asked.

"No!" said Bob. "I shouldn't! I don't want to touch him with a barge-pole! I bar the fellow, the same as you do! But—that's not cricket."

"You'd play him if you were skipper?"

"Yes," said Bob, unhesitatingly. "I should feel bound to."

"The boundfulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Wharton!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton took up his pencil.

There were ten names on the paper already. He added an eleventh—R. Stacey—and his chum breathed more freely.

"You won't be sorry, old chap," said Nugent.

"Look here," said Wharton quietly, "I don't like the fellow—you know that. I admit he's a good cricketer—first-class. He's also a swanking cad and an unpleasant rotter! He can bat, he can bowl, and he can field—a good all-round man, as good as any in the Remove, or all the Lower School. I'm not blind to all that. But—"

He paused.

"Well, after all that, there isn't any but, old chap!" said Bob Cherry.

"There is!" said Harry. "The fellow's no sportsman, and not to be trusted. This will make him swank—very likely to such an extent that he will have to be turfed out again after being put in. I don't know what the fellow's motive is—but he's out to give me all the trouble he can, and inside the eleven he can give a lot. And I believe he's never heard of such a thing as playing the game. I'm doing this on your advice, and not on my own judgment. We'll see how it turns out."

He tossed the paper across the table to Nugent.

"Stick that up in the Rag, Franky, when you go down. I'll get through my lines for Quelch now."

The Co. left Study No. 1, Frank Nugent taking the paper to be pinned up on the door of the Rag.

They went in silence. The deep dislike between Wharton and the new fellow made it unpalatable, no doubt, to give him a place in the Form eleven. But they did not see what else was to be done. Only too well they knew what all the fellows would think, and say, if a cricketer of Stacey's quality was left out.

Wharton left alone in the study, sat down to lines.

He had a heavy impot on hand from his Form-master, and he had not forgotten that it was through Stacey that he had received it. His uncle, Colonel Wharton, was very anxious that he should be friends with that relation of his; and Wharton could have said, with a clear conscience, that he had tried to steer clear of trouble with him. Yet there had been a fight in the Remove dormitory on the first night of term—interrupted by Mr. Quelch, who had given those jarring relatives five hundred lines each as a reward.

After the lapse of over a week, Wharton had not turned in his lines yet; and twice his Form-master had spoken to him on the subject, with increasing severity.

A Form captain had plenty of things on hand, especially at the beginning of term, and five hundred lines was a hefty task to perform. Now, however, he had only fifty more to write, and

he was making an effort to get through.

Tea-time, that day, was the limit of grace, after which the impot, heavy as it was, would be doubled if not handed in.

Wharton tried to dismiss other matters from his mind and devote his whole attention to grinding out the remainder of that weary impot.

There was a step in the Remove passage, and a handsome, sturdy junior, very like Wharton in appearance, lounged into the study, with his hands in the pockets of his flannel bags. Stacey, apparently, had been at cricket—and he looked very fit and handsome in flannels.

He glanced at the back of Wharton's bent head and smiled sarcastically. He shared that study with Wharton and Nugent—not to the general comfort. Wharton did not look up.

Stacey lounged across the study and sat down in the window-seat. He fixed his eyes on Wharton, who was conscious of his gaze and irritated by it, but did not look up from his lines.

"Busy?" asked Stacey at last.

"Yes."

"Can't spare a minute?"

"No!"

"Well, I'm afraid you will have to," drawled Stacey. "I've been lookin' for a chance to speak to you ever since class. I want to know whether I'm playing cricket for the Remove to-morrow—and I want to know now!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hand to Hand!

HARRY WHARTON did not answer.

He did not look up.

With a steady hand he continued to write Latin lines, taking no notice of Stacey's presence, or of his remark.

Only a hard compression of his lips showed that he had heard the fellow at all.

But, though he wrote steadily, he was hardly thinking of what he wrote. He was wondering bitterly what the Co. would have said had they been present to hear Stacey. A new fellow, hardly more than a week in the school, might have hoped to get a chance in a match, but certainly had no right to count on it. It was for him to wait till he was told that he would be wanted, and to feel immensely bucked when he was told. He might have been expected to watch for the list to be posted up, hoping to find his name in it. Instead of which, Stacey threw the inquiry at his Form captain like a challenge, coolly and calmly taking the upper hand.

Stretching out his legs, with his hands in his pockets, Stacey waited for his answer. It did not come. Only the steady scratch of the pen broke the silence in Study No. 1.

"I asked you a question, Wharton!" said Stacey at last.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"Do you hear me?"

Scratch, scratch.

"Lines?" drawled Stacey. "Same old lot? You're a bit of a slacker, my dear relative. I had mine done in a couple of days."

Wharton looked up at last.

"Will you shut up?" he asked. "I've got to get this impot handed in before tea, or get it doubled!"

"Your own fault, if you slack about all the week and put things off!" said Stacey. "Anyhow, I shan't take up a lot of your time. If I'm not playing

for the Remove to-morrow I've other arrangements to make. Yes or no?"

Wharton looked at him.

"You think that's the way for a new kid to talk to his Form captain?" he asked quietly.

"Quite," said Stacey coolly.

"Well, I don't. I've no time to talk to you and no inclination. Look at the list in the Rag when it's put up. Now chuck it!"

Wharton resumed lines.

"That won't do," said Stacey.

Scratch, scratch!

"I know you'd hate to play me," went on Stacey. "I showed you at Wharton Lodge that I could play your head off at the game, and you don't want me to show the Remove the same thing. But I don't see how you can get out of it. I've just been fagging at bowling for the Sixth, and it may interest you to hear that I've taken Wingate's wicket."

"It doesn't!" snapped Wharton—which was not, perhaps, quite exact. He could not help being surprised, at least, to hear that a junior bowler had bowled the captain of Greyfriars.

"Whether it interests you or not, it's the fact," drawled Stacey. "And after that, I suppose you know what the fellows will think if you leave me out. The fact is, Wharton, you can't afford to do it. You've got to put your pride in your pocket and play me, whether you like it or not."

Wharton's pen trembled on his lines.

"Whether I like it or not?" he repeated.

"Exactly!"

"You cheeky cad—"

"Speech may be taken as read," said Stacey with perfect coolness. "I know all that. You can't get out of playing me, much as you'd like to; you've got to see me run up double your own score at batting, and you can't even get out of putting me on to bowl, though every wicket I take will make you squirm. And when I've made hay of those fumbling duffers in the Fourth to-morrow you'll have to put me down to play Courtfield next week; the fellows will make you if you kick."

Harry Wharton drew a deep, deep breath.

"You want my answer?" he rapped.

"I'm waitin' for it."

"You're not playing to-morrow."

Stacey raised his eyebrows.

"Not?" he repeated.

"Not!" snapped Wharton. "Now shut up before I pitch you neck and crop out of the study!"

Stacey laughed.

"You're welcome to try," he remarked. "We never finished that scrap in the dorm. Dear old Quelch barged in in time to save you from a lickin'! Like to try again?"

Wharton half-rose, and sat down again.

"I've got these lines to finish, or—" he muttered.

"Any excuse is better than none, isn't it?" yawned Stacey.

That did it! Wharton dropped his pen and jumped up from the table. Ralph Stacey had barely time to jerk his hands from his pockets before the captain of the Remove grasped him.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Wharton. "You'll go out—on your neck!"

"I fancy not," grinned Stacey, cool as ice, as he returned grasp for grasp.

The two juniors struggled fiercely.

Stacey was, perhaps, a match for Wharton, but Harry's fierce anger carried all before it. He whirled Stacey across the study to the door.

The new fellow had left the door half-open. Wharton crashed him against it,

knocking it wide open. Then he bore him into the doorway.

In the doorway, however, Stacey rallied and forced his adversary back into the room. The cool, mocking expression had left his face, and it was hard and grim, his eyes glinting like steel.

Triamp, tramp, tramp! went the struggling juniors across the study, bumping into a chair and knocking it over.

From the Remove passage came a startled squeak.

"I say, you fellows! They're scrapping in Wharton's study—Wharton and that new man Stacey!"

Billy Bunter's fat face and big spectacles blinked in at the door. Harry Wharton's chums had gone down to the nets for some cricket practice before tea, but there were some Remove fellows in

behind him Stacey certainly would have flown headlong into the passage.

As it was he crashed on Bunter, sending that fat youth spinning backwards, yelling wildly.

The other fellows jumped clear to give Bunter room. The Owl of the Remove sat down with a bump and a roar.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows— Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

Stacey staggered in the doorway. Bunter had—unintentionally—saved him from a fall. In a moment Stacey was springing to the attack again, and he closed with the captain of the Remove and bore him backwards.

Crash! Bump!

Wharton went backwards against the table, and it rocked and almost overturned. Books and papers and inkpot

that impot in to Quelch, or it would be doubled—a thousand lines! And he could not take it in at all!

Stacey had clenched his hands; now he unclenched them. He, too, stared at the spoiled impot.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Sorry!"

Wharton gave him a black, bitter look.

"Sorry, are you?" he said, between his teeth. "I believe you did this on purpose to get me into a row with Quelch, you cur!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" Stacey's flushed face reddened more deeply. "You can't fancy that for a moment! I never dreamed—"

"That your impot, Wharton?" asked the Bounder, looking in.

"Yes. And it's going to be doubled. That rotten cur—"



With a tremendous effort, Wharton spun Stacey doorward, and sent him spinning. Crash! But for Bunter, and the other fellows behind him, Stacey certainly would have flown headlong into the passage. As it was, he crashed on Bunter, sending that youth spinning backwards. "Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter.

the studies, and they came out at Bunter's squeak and the sound of trampling and scuffling and crashing. Peter Todd and Hazeldene and Brown, Vernon-Smith and Redwing, and two or three other fellows ran along to stare into Study No. 1.

"What's the row?" exclaimed Smithy.

"Wharton, old man—" exclaimed Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I say, you fellows, I heard Wharton say he'd chuck him out! He doesn't look like doing it! He, he, he!"

Wharton did not at the moment look like doing it. Stacey had borne him back right across the room. But perhaps the fat Owl's words added to Wharton's fierce determination. With a tremendous effort he spun Stacey doorward and sent him spinning.

Crash!

But for Bunter and the other fellows

slid to the floor mixed in a heap; the next moment the struggling juniors were trampling on them.

Then Wharton, realising what had happened, flung Stacey from him, sending him to the floor. Turning his back on him, heedless whether he attacked again or not, the captain of the Remove jumped to the fallen papers.

But it was useless; that tremendous impot, almost completed, lay soaked and splashed with ink, utterly ruined. Wharton picked up the written sheets in dismay. Those five hundred lines had taken up much of his leisure for a week. Now the whole thing was wasted; it was impossible to take lines in to Quelch in that state.

Stacey scrambled to his feet.

Forgetful of him in his dismay at the disaster, Wharton stood staring at his ruined impot.

He had twenty minutes more to take

Wharton choked.

Stacey glanced at the half-dozen fellows in the doorway. Judging by his look, at least, he was sorry for the disaster to the lines.

"You fellows know I never meant to—" he began.

Wharton turned on him, his eyes gleaming.

"Will you get out of this study?"

"It's his own study, isn't it?" came Skinner's voice from the passage.

Wharton did not heed the cad of the Remove. His eyes, gleaming, were fixed on Stacey, his hands clenched almost convulsively.

Stacey, with perfect coolness, nodded.

"I'll get out, and give you a chance with your lines," he said. "Goodness knows, I'm sorry! It was not my fault, as you'd see if you were cool. Look

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,423.

here, I'll help you with the lines, if you like."

"Get out!" breathed Wharton.

Stacey shrugged his shoulders, and went. Wharton kicked the door shut, and sat down to the imposition again—to blot and erase and save a page or two, and to write, at express speed, as many lines as he could to replace those that were hopelessly done for. But there was no chance whatever now of getting the impot done in time; and when the clock struck, the captain of the Remove had no choice but to take an unfinished and smudgy impot to his Form-master.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Dropped!

"GOOD!" said several voices. "Rotten!" said Hazeldene. It was just before tea, and a number of Remove fellows were gathered in the Rag. The cricketing members of the Form were curious to see whether Stacey's name would be in the list posted up in the Rag, and it was known that the paper would be up before tea. Most of the fellows were glad to see it there. There had been much debate whether Wharton would give a place to the fellow he barred, and Wharton's friends had been rather uneasy about it, and his enemies rather anxious to see him make a fool of himself.

But there it was—"R. Stacey"—at the end of the list. And even fellows who were keen to play, and who would have had a chance had R. Stacey not been there, were glad to see it. Hazel was one of the few dissentients. Hazel had expected to play, and he guessed that R. Stacey's name had taken the place

of his own. So Hazel pronounced it rotten!

"The rottenfulness is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who had come in with Bob and Nugent and Johnny Bull. "It is a preposterously good team, my esteemed Hazel!" "Hazel's name ought to have been there!" remarked Skinner.

"Rot!" said Squiff.

"Hazel's got a good claim!" persisted Skinner. "Isn't he Marjorio Hazeldene's brother?"

Some of the juniors laughed, and Hazel scowled.

"I don't see playing that new man Stacey!" he said. "A new kid—hardly here a week—"

"He took Wingate's wicket on Big Side this afternoon!" said Tom Brown.

"Fluke!" said Hazel.

"Rats, old bean! That kid is simply mustard!" said the New Zealand junior. "I can bowl a bit, but I pass it up to Stacey!"

Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, strolled into the Rag and stopped to look at the paper.

The Removites exchanged grinning glances as he did so. Temple of the Fourth was no end of a knut, but he was not a tremendous man at games, and his only chance of pulling off a win against the Remove was when the big guns in that Form stood down to give the smaller fry a show. On this occasion, however, Wharton was playing a strong team, with a view to the coming fixture with Courtfield; and it was a team against which the Fourth had no earthly chance—in the opinion of the Removites, at all events.

But Cecil Reginald, if he was not good at the game of cricket, was a whale at the game of swank. He read

down the list with an air of lofty patronage, as Wingate of the Sixth, or Blundell of the Fifth, might have done.

"H. Wharton, R. Cherry, J. Bull, P. Todd, H. Vernon-Smith, T. Brown, S. Q. I. Field, H. J. R. Singh, M. Linley, F. Nugent, R. Stacey."

That was the list, and, with the possible exception of Nugent, it was the strongest team that the Remove could have put into the field.

Frank, however, had displayed good form in games practice, and Wharton was naturally keen to give him a chance if he could. He would have been very glad to play his best chum in school matches. The Form match with Temple & Co. was simply practice to the Remove. Other fellows, like Newland and Russell and Ogilvy and Penfold, were as good as Nugent, but no better, so Frank had his chance. If he made good in the Form match, he was going down for the Courtfield match, and Wharton was even keener on his success than Frank himself. The game, of course, had to come before friendship, but Wharton naturally did not relish leaving the fellow he liked best in all Greyfriars out of all important fixtures.

Whether Nugent was a weak spot, as some of the fellows thought, or not, there was no doubt that that eleven could walk all over the Fourth Form eleven—or a Fourth Form twenty-two, for that matter.

Cecil Reginald did not seem to think so, however. Cecil Reginald never did think he was going to be beaten till it happened—as it generally did!

"Who's this man Stacey?" yawned Temple. "Never heard of him."

"You'll hear of him to-morrow!" grinned Bob Cherry. "New kid, old bean; and he's kept up his wicket against all the bowling that Inky could give him in practice."

"Very likely!" said Temple. "Remove bowlin' doesn't amount to much, does it?"

"My esteemed idiotic Temple—" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, let him swank!" grinned Bob. "He will wake up to-morrow!"

"He can bowl, too, Temple, old bean!" said Squiff. "What do you think of a Remove man taking Wingate's wicket?"

"Gammon!" said Temple.

"Honest Injun!"

"Some lad, then!" said Temple, reluctantly impressed. "Must be a bit of a prize-packet! Still, I fancy we shall mop you kids up to-morrow!"

"What a fertile fancy!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple strolled away, looking rather thoughtful. His confidence in himself was great; but at the bottom of his heart he had hoped to find rather a less imposing list of names up for the Remove.

Cecil Reginald would have given a great deal to begin the season by beating the Remove. But, with all the big men of that Form playing, and a new recruit who was capable of taking a First Eleven man's wicket, prospects did not look rosy. Cecil Reginald rather wished that that new man Stacey had come into the Upper instead of the Lower Fourth.

"It's pretty decent of Wharton to put that man Stacey in!" remarked the Bounder.

Smithy was surprised to see the name there after what he had seen in Study No. 1.

"Well, he could hardly leave him out!" said Squiff. "Dash it all, the



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man's simply a born cricketer! Wharton's not the man to let personal dislikes make a fool of him."

"Only it's not half an hour since they were scrapping in their study," said the Bouncer. "The game's the game, of course; but—"

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"Scrapping!" exclaimed Nugent. "Wharton and Stacey—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "But what—"

"I say, you fellows, they were scrapping like—like tigers!" said Billy Bunter. "Wharton makes out that Stacey mucked up his impot on purpose; but that's all rot, you know. He didn't ask to be chucked out of the study! He, he, he!"

The Co. looked rather disturbed. This was the first they had heard of the shindy in Study No. 1. Evidently it had taken place since Wharton had given Nugent the list to post up in the Rag.

"Bother that fellow Stacey!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Why can't he keep clear of Wharton?"

"Isn't a man entitled to use his own study?" asked Skinner. "Fellows don't generally take it quietly when they're turned out of their own studies!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

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

All eyes were turned on the captain of the Remove as he came into the Rag. Skinner winked at Snoop, who grinned. Billy Bunter gave a fat cackle. The look on Wharton's face showed that he was in no pleasant mood.

That was not surprising, in the circumstances. He had taken that impot to his Form-master, and Mr. Quelch had given him the reception he more than half-expected. The imposition had not been finished, after two warnings during the week it had been on hand; and of what had been done, some was in a smudgy and blotty state. Mr. Quelch had given it one glance, and then curtly informed his head boy that the impot was doubled. Wharton left Quelch's study without a word, but with deep feelings.

That, however, was not the reason why he stopped before the cricket list, pinned on the door, and took a pencil from his pocket.

Before the "row" in the study he had told Stacey that he would not be playing for the Remove—the only answer that any cricket captain could have made to the fellow's insolence.

As the name had been put up, it had to be taken down again—and that was that! But the Remove fellows stared, and some of them looked grim as the captain of the Form drew the pencil in a steady line through the name of R. Stacey, crossing it out.

"Harry!" exclaimed Nugent involuntarily.

"Wharton, old man—" said Bob, in dismay.

Without looking round Harry Wharton wrote the name "P. Hazeldene" under the crossed-out name. Hazel smiled, though almost every other fellow present frowned.

Wharton turned from the door.

"You're dropping Stacey?" asked Peter Todd, very quietly.

"Yes."

"May a fellow ask why?"

Wharton paused a moment. Angry as he was, and intensely bitter, he did not want to seem high-handed in the eyes of his fellow cricketers.

"If you'd heard the fellow speaking to me, you'd understand," he said, at last. "We can't play in the same team."

"That man Stacey," said Peter, in the same quiet tone, "is the best junior cricketer that's ever been at Greyfriars—bar none!"

"Possibly!"

"And you're chucking him, because you can't pull with him?"

"Yes."

"Well," broke out Peter, "I think I—"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"Thanks! I'm not interested in what you think, Toddy," he said; and he walked out of the Rag, leaving Peter breathing very hard.

The Remove fellows were left in a buzz. The Co. had little to say, and the rest of the cricketers made no secret of the fact that they regarded their skipper as a high-handed ass. While a rather excited discussion went on, Temple of the Fourth strolled along to the notice again, and stood looking at it with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes. Then he sauntered out of the Rag, and as he went he grinned happily, evidently greatly pleased with the idea that had been hatched in his powerful brain.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Cecil Reginald in Luck!

"WAIT a few minutes!"

"Eh—why?" asked Fry of the Fourth.

"I've asked a man to tea with us."

Cecil Reginald Temple at the moment was adorning the armchair in his study in the Fourth. Fry and Dabney were at the table which was set for tea. Both of them were quite ready for tea, having been at cricket practice, which had given them an appetite. However, they waited.

"Who's the man?" asked Fry.

"Man named Stacey."

"Never heard of him," said Dabney.

"New kid?"

"New kid in the Remove."

"You're asking a new kid in the Remove to tea?" exclaimed Dabney, in great astonishment.

Cecil Reginald smiled. He had surprised his study-mates; but he condescended to explain.

"This man Stacey," he said, "is a corker at cricket. Of course, I don't, as a rule, take much notice of the Lower Fourth. But, dash it all, you have to take notice of a kid who can bowl the captain of the school—"

"Oh, I heard of that!" said Dabney, with some interest. "Was that Stacey?"

"It was. And I hear that he's as good at battin' as at bowlin'," said Temple. "Every man in the Remove thinks him a sort of Don Bradman, except Wharton, it seems. I suppose Wharton's nose is rather put out of joint. I hear they have fearful rows."

"I've heard of the chap, and seen him, too," said Fry, looking curiously at his Form captain. "There's no mistake about it. He's one of those men who play cricket same as they breathe—born to it. If Wharton has sense enough to play him to-morrow, we may as well make them a present of the match."

"Oh, I fancy we can beat the Remove," said Temple negligently.

Edward Fry shrugged his shoulders. With or without Stacey in the Remove ranks he did not expect to beat the Remove. But with Stacey in their ranks the thing was hopeless. And he knew that Temple knew it as well as he did. In view of the crushing defeat that loomed ahead, Cecil Reginald's calm swank was a little irritating.

"But as it happens," pursued Temple, "Wharton hasn't sense enough to play him, Fry, old bean."

"Oh, good!" said Fry. "Must be an ass!"

"Well, they row a lot," said Temple. "Anyhow, Stacey was down to play, and Wharton's scratched him. I've seen his name scratched out of their list."

"Wharton must be an ass! I tell you, that fellow's a prize-packet!"

"Exactly! That's why I've asked him to tea," said Temple. "From what I hear, he's a bit of a swanking and annoying rotter; but his cricket's all right. Why shouldn't he play for us?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Fry.

"I've said a lot of times that it's all rot—the Remove running a separate team, and callin' it an eleven, an' all that," said Temple. "Properly speakin', as the Lower Fourth, they ought to be jolly glad to get a few men into the Fourth Form team. They're cheeky."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

"As captain of the Fourth, I can pick a man from the Lower Fourth, if I like," went on Temple. "Not a man they want in the Form match, naturally, but any man left over."

"Right as rain," grinned Fry. "If they're idiots enough to leave out the best junior cricketer at Greyfriars—"

"Not the best," chided Temple. "This man Stacey is good, but hardly up to our form, really."

Fry made no reply to that. Temple, while planning to bag that wonderful man, was not going to depart from his accustomed swank. Cecil Reginald's self-importance came first.

"But will he play?" asked Dabney.

"I fancy he'll be glad to. He's frightfully keen on the game, I believe, though not keen enough to keep civil to his skipper. I've heard that they're relations; but they bar one another. I've got an idea that Stacey will be jolly glad to get back on Wharton for dropping him out."

Cecil Reginald smiled.

"As soon as I found that Wharton had scratched him, I got the idea," he said. "I hunted up Stacey at once, and asked him to tea. I'm goin' to put it to him, and I fancy he will jump at it."

"Wharton won't like it," said Dabney.

"He can hardly grouse after turning the man out of his own team."

"That's so," agreed Fry. "My hat! If we bag him, we've got a chance—a jolly good chance!"

"We had a jolly good chance, anyway," said Temple calmly. "Still I shall be glad to get Stacey, if he'll play."

"Well, when is he coming?" asked Fry, with a rather hungry look at the tea-table. "I don't see waiting for him."

There was a tap at the door of the study. Ralph Stacey came in, and Temple greeted him with great politeness. Dabney and Fry gave him cordial nods. Tea started at last.

Temple did not come immediately to the subject of cricket. He did not want to appear eager; neither did he want to give a mere Remove junior too high an idea of his own value. Somewhat to his surprise, and rather to his satisfaction, it was Stacey who introduced the topic.

Stacey brought the talk round to the morrow's Form match. Having seen the Fourth Form men at practice, Stacey had his own idea of the quality of Temple's team. But he did not express it. His game at the present time was to be agreeable to Temple; and he could be very agreeable when he liked.

"I've heard in the Remove that you've sometimes played a Lower Fourth man, Temple," he remarked.

Temple & Co. exchanged a quick look.

"Yes, I've done so," agreed Temple. "That chap Vernon-Smith played for us once. I had to chuck him, though."

Fry coughed, and Dabney grinned. They remembered the occasion when the Bounder, on fighting terms with his Form, had joined up with the Fourth, hoping to beat Wharton's team with their help. On which occasion Temple had been so excessively careful not to admit that a Remove man was of much use, that he had failed to get the benefit of the Bounder's good play, and had scored his usual defeat. Temple's chums hoped that he had learned a lesson from that episode, and would do better with Stacey—if he got him!

"Well, if you wanted a man for tomorrow, I'd offer my services, if you thought them of any use," said Stacey, in a very frank way. "I'm considered not bad at the game."

Temple smiled sweetly. He was saved from descending from his lofty perch, and asking this Remove kid to play.

And Stacey's manner of offering his services was very different from the Bounder's. He was properly civil about it—treating Cecil Reginald with the respect that was his due.

"Well, I don't know," said Temple thoughtfully. "The fact is, I haven't put the list up yet—I'm a bit undecided about the eleventh man. We rather want a bowler. How do you shape in that line?"

"Not bad, I think," said Stacey modestly. "I've been picked to fag at bowling for First Eleven men."

"You the man that bagged Wingate's wicket?" asked Temple, as if he had never heard of it before.

"Well, that was rather luck—but I was the man," admitted Stacey.

Temple took a paper from his pocket and regarded it very thoughtfully. His chums watched him curiously. Temple had asked Stacey to tea specially to bag him for the Form match. But now that the proposition had come from Stacey, the captain of the Fourth calmly washed that out. He appeared to be in doubt. That was Cecil Reginald all over!

Having coned over his cricket list in a very thoughtful way, Cecil Reginald looked at Fry.

"What do you think, Fry?" he asked.

"Oh, give the kid a chance!" said Fry, playing up to Temple. "I fancy he can play cricket."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Blessed if I don't!" said Temple. He took out his gold pencil, and wrote a name on the list. "There you are, Stacey—you're in the team for tomorrow! Don't let us down, kid."

Stacey was well aware that he could play Temple's head off, at cricket or any other game. But he only nodded pleasantly.

"I'll do my best," he said gravely. "Of course, I'm only Remove, and you men are Upper Fourth—but I'll keep my end up all I can, and do you credit."

When Stacey left Temple's study after tea, he smiled as he went down the passage. Cecil Reginald Temple smiled when he was gone. Dabney grinned, and Fry chuckled.

"We've got him!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!"

Temple raised his eyebrows.

"We're givin' him a chance, you mean," he said. "Bit of a risk, playin' a Remove kid—but we'll see—we'll see! Anyhow, I've given him my word now, and he's goin' to play. I hope he will knock up a few runs for us."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,423.

Temple was not going to admit his glee. Swank came first! But that evening Cecil Reginald was very merry and bright. For once, he looked forward to a match with the Remove with a confidence that was not tempered by so many misgivings as usual.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Remove!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Coming down?"

Cherry roared in at the door of Study No. 1 after prep. That study had been very silent during prep. Wharton's face was clouded; Frank was not so cheery as usual; and Stacey had nothing to say to his study-mates. Stacey, however, did not look glum, like the other two juniors in the study. He seemed in very cheerful spirits.

"Just finished," said Nugent. "We're coming."

Wharton did not rise from the table. "I've got lines!" he said bitterly. "Quelch has made it a thousand! I'd better get some done—goodness knows when an impot of that size will be finished!"

"Hard cheese!" said Bob.

"The hardness of the ridiculous cheese is terrific!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, looking in over Bob's shoulder.

"Can't be helped!" said Harry, shrugging his shoulders. "You fellows get down to the Rag—I'll come down after I've turned out a hundred, to go on with."

"Stacey ought to do half the lines!" growled Johnny Bull, from the passage. Stacey looked up.

"Ready and willing!" he answered at once. "It wasn't my fault that the impot was mucked up. Wharton will admit that he started the row in the study—"

"I admit nothing of the kind!" snapped Wharton.

"Well, let it pass—it doesn't matter much, anyhow. Perhaps we both lost our tempers," said Stacey amicably. "I'll whack out the impot—I can make my fist like yours easily enough to satisfy Quelch—"

"I don't want your help!"

"Well, look here! It's only fair, Wharton," said Bob. "And if Stacey is willing—"

"I've said I'm willing," said Stacey.

"Well, then, Harry—"

Wharton set his lips.

"I want no help from Stacey, or anything to do with him!" he said icily. "If he's so keen on obliging me, he can get out of the study while I do my lines."

Stacey laughed.

"I'm going down," he said. "Your company isn't exactly pleasant, you know. I'm sorry your lines were spoiled—"

"You're not!" said Wharton grimly.

"Oh, all right—let it go at that!" said Stacey carelessly, and with a nod to the other fellows, he left the study.

The Co. looked rather uncomfortable. They could not help noting the contrast between Stacey's good humour, and the reverse from the captain of the Remove. Wharton smiled sarcastically as he read their expressions.

"You think I'm a disgruntled ass, what?" he asked. "Go it!"

"Well, it was decent of him to offer to help you out with the lines," said Bob. "And it's a whacking impot, there's no mistake about that. Quelch

must have been fearfully ratty to land any fellow with a thousand lines."

"After dropping him from cricket, too!" said Johnny Bull. "Some fellows would be savage about that. Stacey doesn't seem to be."

Wharton laughed scornfully.

"He gave me no choice about that," he answered, "and I've thought since that he never wanted to play, and deliberately ragged me into chucking him. He's here to make trouble, not to play the game."

"Well, that's rot, old chap," said Johnny Bull. "We all know he's keen on cricket, and he must want to play for the Form."

"Possibly. But I fancy he'd rather get the Remove down on me for leaving him out," said Harry. "He came here and talked to me in a way he knew that no skipper could stand."

"He seems civil enough."

"Yes; when there are other fellows about to hear," said Wharton contemptuously. "Not at other times! But it's no good jawing—I've got to get a chunk done off my lines."

The captain of the Remove set up his Virgil against the inkstand, and started lines. The Co. in silence left him to it. With a thousand lines on hand, likely to occupy his leisure for a long time to come, Wharton could hardly be expected to be in a very good temper. He had a strong suspicion, too, that the accident to the lines was not wholly an accident, though he could not feel sure of that.

Temple of the Fourth was coming out of the Rag as the Co. arrived at the door of that apartment. They noted the cheery smile on Cecil Reginald's face. The Rag was in a buzz when they entered. Most of the Remove were down, after prep, and all attention was fixed on a cricket list pinned up by the captain of the Fourth.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Temple's list of fozzlers?" asked Bob Cherry, glancing at it. "Why—what—I didn't know there was a man named Stacey in the Fourth!"

"There isn't!" hooted Peter Todd. "That's Stacey of the Remove!"

"Oh, my hat! Stacey playing for the Fourth!" exclaimed Bob. "Temple must be hard up for cricketers if he's bagging Remove men!"

"Is that tick playing against his own Form?" asked Johnny Bull, staring at the name "R. Stacey" in Temple's list.

"Tick be blowed!" said Toddy. "Wharton's chucked him out of the game. I suppose the fellow's entitled to get a game where he can, if he's keen on cricket! Does Wharton expect him to suck his thumb while we're playing cricket?"

"Well, it will put some life into the game, with a good man on Temple's side!" said Bob. "All the better for us, if we have something to do."

"That's all very well!" grunted Squiff. "But a man like Stacey ought to be in our eleven. What about the Courtfield match next week?"

"Well, the skipper can judge a man's form, whichever side he plays on," said Bob. "That's all right."

"I say, you fellows, Wharton will be waxy!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "I say, Stacey's done this to make Wharton wild! He likes pulling Wharton's leg. He, he, he!"

"Rot!" growled Peter. "Any fellow would rather play for his own Form." He looked round and spotted Stacey in an armchair, and called to him. "Do you want to play for your Form or not, Stacey?"

"Well, I'd rather play for the Remove, of course," said Stacey. "That



"It's partly my fault about Wharton's lines, sir," said Stacey. "He had almost finished them yesterday, when there was an accident in the study, and they were spoiled. To tell the truth, sir, we had a quarrel and the lines were knocked down and trampled on, and the ink upset over them." "Thank you, Stacey!" said Mr. Quelch.

goes without saying. But I want a game, and if the Remove doesn't want me—

"The Remove does!" growled Squiff. Stacey laughed.

"Well, the Remove skipper doesn't, and it rests with him. I don't want to hang about doing nothing while you men are playing cricket. Besides, I want to give our skipper a chance of seeing whether I'm good enough for the match with Courtfield. He will be able to see that."

Frank Nugent gave the new junior a very keen look. The fellow was in the right, if it came to that. But if his game was to make Harry Wharton unpopular in the Form, he was undoubtedly getting away with it. Nobody grudged Temple a good man in his ranks; it would, as Bob had said, put some life into the game. But no Removeite was going to feel pleased when a Remove man made hay of his wicket—and Stacey was not merely a good bowler, he was a wonderful bowler. It was very likely that the loss on one side and the gain on the other would make all the difference between victory and defeat. And if Stacey proved his quality, beyond question, by performing the hat-trick against his own Form, and perhaps knocking up a century for the Fourth in addition, Wharton could not possibly refuse him a place in the Courtfield match. If he did—

Leaving the Remove fellows excitedly discussing that unexpected new development, Frank returned to the Remove passage.

He found Wharton wearily grinding lines in Study No. 1.

Harry glanced at his serious face.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"That fellow Stacey—"

"Oh, what's the latest?" asked Wharton, with a bitter smile.

"Temple's got him to play to-morrow."

Wharton sat silent, pen in hand, for a full minute. Then he spoke quietly.

"The cur! He had that in mind when he came here and cheeked me this afternoon, and made it impossible for me to play him for the Remove."

"He can't be stopped!" said Frank. Wharton shook his head.

"No! He'd like me to go off at the deep end and try to stop him! What would it look like?"

Nugent looked worried.

"He will play a good game for the Fourth, Harry! Whatever he is, he's a cricketer—a wonderful man at the game."

"I know that! I play cricket well enough to know a good man when I see one. He's better than I am," grunted Wharton. "I loathe the idea, but I can see it plainly enough."

"Well, look here, old chap, if he shows up well to-morrow—and he's sure to—he will simply have to go down for the Courtfield game," said Frank.

Wharton's face set grimly.

"If he's good enough for the eleven he will go down—if he keeps a civil tongue in his head and doesn't rag his skipper!" he answered. "Not otherwise!"

"It would look——"

"I don't care how it looks! So long as I'm skipper no man in the team is going to bully-rag me! I'll resign as soon as the fellows want me to——"

"That's rot!"

"It may come to that! I can see that is what the plotting our has got in his mind. I'll give him a tussle, all the same."

Wharton dipped his pen in the ink again. Frank, with a worried and troubled face, left him to his lines.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rivalry I

THE following day was bright and sunny—contrasting, in that, with the looks of a good many fellows in the Greyfriars Remove! It was splendid weather for the Form match that day, but among the Remove cricketers there were indications of "stormy weather."

For once the fellows were dissatisfied with their skipper, and a good many confided to one another that Wharton was not beginning the term well. Even Wharton's own chums were not pleased by the way he had dealt with Stacey. They had talked him over in the study and made him do what they considered the right and sensible thing—and after that, he had taken the new fellow's name out of the list again. That he had had provocation was doubtless true, but they did not think, as Wharton did, that Stacey had deliberately provoked him to that measure.

No doubt the new fellow was a bit of a "tick," and no doubt he disliked Wharton, but the Co. could not see that all the fault was on his side. And in class that morning the new junior gave a proof—or a seeming one—that he was by no means the tick the captain of the Remove believed him to be.

When the Remove went to their places Stacey stopped to speak to Mr. Quelch at his desk. A good many fellows looked at him, wondering what he had to say specially to Quelch.

Quelch gave him quite a benignant look.

The Remove master had been favourably impressed by Stacey. He had found him a worker in Form, which naturally rather pleased a Form-master who had plenty to do. He had handed

in his five hundred lines at the beginning of term in a couple of days, and they had been well written. Since then he had had no punishment; he had never been late for class, his "con" was always good, and showed that he worked in prep. In fact, he was as good a pupil as any man in the Remove—perhaps, indeed, a little too good to be true!

On the other hand, he was no mere swot, neglecting health and exercise for mugging up book knowledge. He was as sturdy and fit as any junior at Greyfriars; he was keen on games, and Quelch had heard that he was already regarded in the Form as a remarkable cricketer.

Really, Stacey seemed to be rather realising the ideal of "mens sana in corpore sano"—the healthy mind in the healthy body. So Quelch's look was benevolent.

"May I speak to you, sir?" asked Stacey quietly, but letting all the Form hear what he said.

"Certainly, Stacey."

"It's about Wharton's imposition, sir."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows. The Remove stared. What Stacey could have to say to the Form-master about another fellow's lines was a mystery to both Form and Form-master.

"I hope you'll excuse me, sir," went on Stacey. "I'm told that Wharton's lines have been doubled—"

"Really, Stacey, that scarcely concerns you!" said the astonished Mr. Quelch. "I fail to see—"

"It was partly my fault, sir," said Stacey. "Wharton had finished his lines yesterday, or nearly finished them, and there was an accident in the study, and they were spoiled. To tell the truth, sir, we had a quarrel and the lines were knocked down and trampled on, and the ink upset over them."

"Stacey!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I thought I ought to tell you, sir," said Stacey calmly. "But for that accident, Wharton would have brought his lines to you in time, and they would not have been doubled. I pushed Wharton against the table and caused the lines to be knocked on the floor, of course, without intending to do so. I thought, sir, that if you knew what had happened, you might not have doubled the lines. I hope you'll excuse me for having spoken, sir."

"I am glad you have spoken on the subject, Stacey," answered Mr. Quelch. "You may go to your place."

Stacey went to his place, amid stares from the Remove.

"Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"In view of what Stacey has told me, the doubling of your imposition is cancelled. I shall expect five hundred lines from you."

"Very well, sir."

That was the end of the incident. But it raised Stacey a good deal in the esteem of many of the Removites. Wharton had scratched his name out of the Remove cricket list, and handled him in his study—and Stacey had done him a good turn. There was no doubt about the good turn. Wharton had his five hundred lines still to write, but that was very different from a thousand.

"That chap's a sportsman," the Bounder remarked to Redwing. "He can bar a fellow and give him fair play at the same time."

And Redwing nodded.

Bob Cherry gave Stacey a cheery grin as he sat down. Bob almost liked him at that moment. Indeed, he hoped that this was the olive-branch and might lead

to the establishment of a more peaceful footing between the foes of the Remove. If Stacey was willing to be decent, there was no reason why Wharton should not play up.

Wharton himself was puzzled.

He began to wonder whether he had misjudged the fellow a little. When the Remove came out in break Stacey walked out into the quad, and the captain of the Remove, after a short hesitation, followed him and spoke to him. He was glad, at least, to be let off those additional lines, and some acknowledgment seemed called for.

"It was decent of you to speak to Quelch as you did, Stacey," said Harry, with rather an effort.

Stacey laughed.

"And you never expected me to do anything decent?" he asked. "What a surprise for you!"

"Well, I'm glad you did, at all events," said Harry. He paused. "Look here, Stacey, you've rubbed me the wrong way a good deal, both at Wharton Lodge and since I've been back at school. I admit I thought yesterday that you took advantage of that scrap in the study to muck up my lines and land me in a row with Quelch. I'm sorry I thought so now."

"Is that all?"

Wharton breathed hard.

"Well, look here," he said, "we're not friends. But what's the good of this endless ragging? You're a good cricketer—a man I'd be glad to play in the eleven. My uncle wants us to be friends. I see no reason why we should be enemies. Are you willing to wash out the rows we've had and make a fresh start? And I'll promise, on my side, to keep my temper—"

"No!"

"You're not willing?"

"Not in the least," answered Stacey coolly. His lip curled. "As you've spoken out to me, I'll speak out to you. I never meant to damage your impot yesterday. I dare say I might do worse things, but I wouldn't do a mean thing like that. I set it right with Quelch because I thought it was up to me—much as it surprises you to see me do anything decent."

"I believe you," said Harry quietly. "But why not—"

"We can't be friends if I wanted to—and I don't want to. All very well for you!" said Stacey, with a sneer. "A rich man's heir, the favourite of fortune, everything coming your way. I'm in a rather different position; a poor relation in your uncle's house. How can we be friends when we're rivals?"

"Rivals?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, rivals! You're not much nearer a relation of the old colonel's than I am; but you've got everything, and I've got nothing. Even if you meant it, your friendship could only be patronage to me—and I'm not exactly the fellow to be patronised. Keep your distance."

Wharton looked at him steadily and quietly.

A vague suspicion of Stacey's envy and jealousy had come into his mind at Wharton Lodge. The poor relation, who had been taken up by Colonel Wharton out of kindness of heart, compared his position, with bitterness of spirit, with that of the colonel's nephew, brought up from childhood as the heir of Wharton Lodge. It was wrong-headed and unreasonable—but it was evidently very real.

"So that's how you feel?" said Harry at last.

"Precisely! I've put my cards on the table," sneered Stacey. "You can't say that I'm double-dealing. I'm as proud as you are, Harry Wharton."

We're relations; we're alike to look at and we're alike in other ways—too much alike ever to be friends. I'm against you all the time and all along the line; and every time I can give you a fall I'll give you one. And if I ever have the luck to give you the knock-out, either at school or at home, look out for it; I won't spare you!"

"I'll take my chance of that!" said Wharton scornfully. "As for being alike, I shouldn't act as you're doing in your place: I know that! You've got a rotten streak in you, Stacey, or you wouldn't think and act like that! You won't get any offer of friendship from me again."

The captain of the Remove turned on his heel and walked away to rejoin the Co.

"Not a bad lad—what?" said Bob Cherry. "Jolly decent of him to beard old Quelch in his den—what? I say, Wharton, it would be jolly all round if you can manage to pull with the chap a bit better."

Harry Wharton laughed. This was rather amusing after what Stacey had just said.

"Well, I don't see why not!" said Bob rather gruffly.

"Lots of things you don't see, old chap! Don't talk about Stacey any more, anyhow. The fellow makes me sick!"

Evidently it was not going to be "jolly all round."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Form Match!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE wore a cheery smile on Little Side that afternoon.

Cecil Reginald looked very handsome and elegant in flannels; his sisters and his cousins and his aunts would have considered him the ideal cricketer. How long Cecil Reginald could keep a wicket up against bowling from Hurree Singh, or Squiff, or Smithy was another matter, however.

But Cecil Reginald wore a cheery and confident smile—and, for once, his confidence was not without foundation. He had at least one man in his team who was whole streets ahead of most of the Remove players—and Temple was not, this time, making the error he had made when he played the Bounder. This time he was going to make the very most of his recruit.

That certainly was easier with Stacey than with Smithy. On the occasion when the Bounder had played for the Fourth he had scarcely concealed his contempt for the fumlbers and fozzlers, as he regarded them, in Temple's team. Stacey had made it a point to treat Cecil Reginald like a little tin god—which was how Temple liked to be treated.

It did not even occur to Temple that his leg was being pulled. He would have had rather a rude awakening had he known how Stacey really regarded him and his cricket. In outward respects, at all events, Stacey did not fail—and that was all Cecil Reginald needed to keep him soothed.

Any assumption of superior airs by Stacey would have been put down at once ruthlessly. In such a case Temple would have put him on at the tail of the innings, and declined to trust him with the bowling. That was how he had treated Smithy on that historic occasion. But Stacey's manner to Temple was that of a fellow who was honoured and pleased by the lofty notice of the captain of the Fourth. Fry, who was a good deal keener than Temple, saw a little further into things

than Cecil Reginald, but Fry—who wanted to beat the Remove—said nothing.

The Remove took first knock, and Wharton opened the innings, with the Bouncer at the other end. Fry bowled the first over, off which the captain of the Remove knocked up three 4's and a 2. This was the usual sort of start for a Remove game with the Fourth, but everybody knew that it was not going to continue.

"Is Temple idiot enough to let his duds bowl when he's got Stacey?" Peter Todd asked the other waiting batsmen.

"The esteemed Temple is idiot enough for anything," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hopefully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's jolly old Bunter come to watch!" said Bob. "Doesn't it make you tired to see fellows playing cricket, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Temple will put Stacey on next—surely!" said Peter. "If he's ass enough to waste that man we shall make short work of his rabbits."

"You never know with an ass like Temple," remarked Hazel. "Not that I think that new kid's such a dashed miracle-worker as you fellows do."

"Oh, rot!" said Squiff. "Wharton's left out the best man in the Remove."

"I say, you fellows, Field's right," said Bunter. "He's left out the best man at cricket, same as he left him out of the football—"

"Stacey wasn't here last term, fathead!"

"I'm not speaking of Stacey," said Bunter with dignity. "That chap's not bad; but I don't think an awful lot of him. Wharton left me out of the footer—and now he's left me out of the cricket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "I can tell you this much—you're going to start the season with a licking. I had a jolly good mind to offer my services to Temple. Still, a fellow doesn't want to mop up his own Form. I'm a bit more particular about that than Stacey."

At which the Remove men chortled. They had no doubt that Temple of the Fourth had been glad to bag Stacey, but a similar offer from Billy Bunter would probably have evoked great merriment in the Fourth.

"Smithy gets the bowling," said Squiff. "I wonder if that swanking ass Temple will have sense enough to put Stacey on? After all, we want to see what the fellow can do, even if our sticks go down."

Doubts were soon set at rest. Temple had started the bowling with a Fourth Form man just to show the world in general that he was not dependent on a Remove recruit. But that over made even Temple realise that that sort of thing could be carried too far, and Stacey was given the ball for the second over.

There was a deep breath among the Removites when Stacey went on to bowl to the Bouncer's wicket.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was visibly on his guard. Fourth Form bowling he treated with contempt, but there was no tincture of contempt in his manner when Stacey came on. Smithy was a good man with the willow, but he knew what to look for from the fellow who had succeeded in clean bowling Wingate of the Sixth—the best senior batsman at Greyfriars School. Smithy was going to keep his sticks up as long as he could, but he doubted whether he would keep them up very long.

In point of fact, Smithy kept them up for precisely the length of time required by a fast ball to traverse the pitch!

He was all eyes: and yet that ball beat him. The expression on Smithy's face was, as Fry remarked to Scott of the Fourth, worth a guinea a box, as he stared down at a wrecked wicket.

Vernon-Smith drew a deep, deep breath. He had been bowled first ball of the over: and any amount of staring at the wicket could not alter that unpleasant fact. And it was no fluke: it was good bowling, the Bouncer knew that. His only comfort was, that it was a Remove man who had done it; no man in the Fourth could have done it. But that was cold comfort to a fellow who was rather given to showing off on the playing-fields, and Smithy was not looking happy or agreeable as he walked off.

Peter Todd took his place, and stayed for one ball! Then Peter came back to the pavilion. He spoke to Tom Brown, who was going in.

"That man can bowl! Look out!"

The New Zealand junior made a grimace. He was a bowler himself, and he knew bowling when he saw it.

He did not see much of this, however, from the standpoint of the wicket, for the next ball sent him bootless home.

"The hat-trick!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"By gum, that man can bowl!" said Frank Nugent. He spoke in admiring tones, but he did not look happy. He knew what would happen to his own wicket if Stacey bowled to him, and already in his mind's eye he saw his chances of playing in the Courtfield fixture vanishing.

"The bowlfulness is terrific," admitted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "My esteemed Bob, stand up to the fellow, for the love of the esteemed Mike."

"Humph!" said Bob.

He went out to take Tom Brown's place. He did not occupy it long. One ball sent him back again.

"This," remarked Squiff, "is a one-man game, and Stacey's the one man! Luckily we shall have him on our side in School matches."

"If Wharton will let us!" granted Peter.

"Wharton will have to let us," said the Australian junior. "No skipper in his senses could think of leaving that man out."

Squiff was the next man in. He succeeded in living through the rest of the over, but he took no runs.

Stacey, at the bowling end, gave Harry Wharton a vaunting look. Wharton's face was expressionless.

Next came an over from Scott of the Fourth. Scott was a good bowler, but Wharton knocked the leather far and wide. He was careful to give Stacey no chance in the field; he knew what his relative's fielding was like. Squiff backed him up manfully at the other end. The score proceeded to jump. And in the following over it jumped again, for Temple, still loth to acknowledge dependence on a Remove recruit, put Fry on to bowl again. Wharton and Squiff, between them, knocked the Fourth Form bowling all over the field—Temple found his swank rather expensive. But he smiled again as Stacey, in the slips, made a jump for a ball hot from Squiff's bat—and held up the leather!

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field walked home!

"Man in!"

Frank Nugent was buckling his pads. Squiff had been caught out last ball of the over, and now the bowling came to Harry Wharton. Temple, dismissing considerations of swank, gave the bowling to Stacey.

Every fellow on Little Side, Fourth Form or Remove, watched with breathless interest as the foes of the Form measured strength.

Wharton's face was calm, and a little set. Good man as he was with the willow, he knew that he would have to go all out to save his sticks from Stacey. He was passionately determined that Stacey should not take his wicket if he could help it.

He stopped the first ball, and the second, and the third, dead. Each of them, he knew only too well, was a narrow escape, but he escaped. At the fourth ball, he ventured to hit, and Temple of the Fourth missed a catch, and the batsmen ran. Once, twice, thrice they crossed before the leather came in, and there was a cheer from the Remove for their skipper. He was the first man to take runs off Stacey's bowling.

But the 3 had brought Frank Nugent to the batting end.

Wharton watched, with a knit brow, while Stacey bowled to his chum.

He had hoped that Frank's form in this game would justify his selection to play against Courtfield. Now that hope sank to vanishing point.

Without looking at Stacey, he caught the malicious gleam in his eyes. The bitter thought was in his mind that the fellow was not playing cricket, but using his amazing skill at the game to gratify personal grudges.

No man in the Remove expected Frank Nugent to keep his sticks up against Stacey. So no man was greatly disappointed when they went down, except Frank's best chum, who had hoped against hope. Go down they did, and Frank carried out his bat for a duck.

He was kept in countenance, however, by Hazeldene who came next, and took the last ball of the over. Hazel had expressed the opinion, more than once, that he was as good a man as Stacey, and indeed he regarded himself as rather an improvement on Stacey in the team! But he never even saw the ball that knocked his sticks down, and he went back scowling to the pavilion.

Johnny Bull came next. Wharton had the bowling from Fry, and made hay of it, putting on runs. Self-satisfaction and swank could not save Temple from the knowledge that, when a Fourth Form man bowled, the runs went up in jumps. He put Stacey on to deal with Johnny Bull. But Johnny put in some of his solid, steady stone-walling, and though he took no runs, even Stacey's deadly shots failed to turn him out.

Wharton's eyes gleamed as the over finished. With Johnny like a rock at the other end, he would yet put in a good innings and show the Remove that Stacey could not carry all before him. Wharton had Scott's bowling next and made nine off it. The odd run left him

(Continued on next page.)



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WEEKLY.

at the batting end to face Stacey's bowling again.

Again there was breathless excitement as the best batsman in the Remove faced the best bowler that Form had ever seen. Even Billy Bunter blinked with some interest through his big-spectacles.

Wharton knocked away the ball for 2, and 2, and 2! His friends at the pavilion exchanged grins of satisfaction. Then—

Clatter!

The fourth ball of the over did it! Quietly, but with a set face, the captain of the Remove walked off with his bat.

He was out to Stacey!

The rest of the Remove innings was a short procession. The total score for the innings was 70, of which Wharton had contributed more than half. Every man on the field knew that, minus Stacey, that score would have been more than doubled, probably trebled. Nevertheless, the Fourth were greatly bucked, and Cecil Reginald Temple smiled and closed one eye at Fry as the field went off.

"Did I mention that we were goin' to beat the Remove?" asked Temple.

"You did, old man!" grinned Fry.

"And are we?" further inquired Temple.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

It looked as if Stacey was, at all events!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Getting the Runs!

IT was like Cecil Reginald Temple to open the Fourth Form innings with his noble self and Edward Fry.

He knew, as every fellow knew, that Stacey's batting was as good as his bowling, and that once at the wickets, he was unlikely to be shifted by anything that the Remove could do. Still, swank was swank, and Temple was not going to open with a Remove recruit! However, he had put Stacey next on the list, and that youth had his pads on ready, not doubting that he would be wanted soon—very soon!

He was right, for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put paid to the captain of the Fourth with promptness and dispatch.

Having been bowled for a duck, Cecil Reginald lost some of his self-satisfaction, and the certainty that Stacey would do better in his place was not wholly gratifying. As captain of the team, of course, it was agreeable to him—as Cecil Reginald it was less agreeable. A long experience of ducks had not made Temple like them! As he went off and met Stacey coming in, Temple looked at him sharply. The merest trace of irony, of amusement or swank in Stacey's face would have caused Cecil Reginald to come down hard on that recruit, regardless of considerations of cricket. He was capable of putting him back to the tail of the innings if he asked for it—and the slightest sign of swank would have been asking for it.

But Stacey knew how to handle Temple.

"Rotten fluke!" he said. "That man can't bowl!"

Temple nodded and smiled.

Stacey smiled, too, when his back was to Temple.

The Remove men in the field watched keenly as the Nabob of Bhanipur bowled to the new recruit.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was the champion bowler of the Remove; if there was a man in the Form who could put paid to Stacey, he was the man. The dusky nabob did his best.

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But it was in vain. Good as the bowling was, the batting seemed to be a little better. Every man in the field was watchful for the barest chance of a catch; but Stacey gave no chances. He made 7 on the over; and all the field knew that he could have made another, but he did not want to—he wanted to keep the batting.

"Get that man out if you can, Browney!" said Harry Wharton, when the field crossed.

The New Zealand junior made a grimace.

"Not so jolly easy!" he said.

Neither was it.

Tom Brown was very nearly as good as Inky! But he was not good enough for the new man! The over added 6 to Stacey's score.

Fry went out in the next, and Dabney followed him out; but that was no great satisfaction to Wharton. The Remove knew that their bowlers could take Fourth Form wickets almost as easily as knocking down skittles.

The captain of the Remove was keen to see Stacey's sticks go down, and he deeply regretted the fact that he was himself only a good change bowler. He would have given much to make Stacey's bails fly. He watched like a lynx for catches, but Stacey gave him not the remotest chance of one.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Tom Brown tried in turn, and the Bounder tried, and Squiff tried, and Mark Linley and Nugent were both given the ball for an over or two.

But changing the bowling had no effect so far as Stacey was concerned. When he had the bowling he knocked it everywhere—except where the fieldsmen wanted it. It looked as if that remarkable new man was going to see the whole side out.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry when 70 went up for Stacey—a score of his own that equalled that of the Remove innings. To Stacey's 70, half a dozen of the Fourth had added 15!

And he was still going strong.

Indeed, it was clear to all that Stacey's limit was only the number of men to keep the innings alive at the other end!

With one man as good as himself for a partnership, he might have gone on batting for ever and ever!

But Fourth Form wickets went down fairly fast. It was not till Scott came in that a stand was made. Scott was a steady bat—the best in Temple's team—and if he did not put on a brilliant score, at least he could save his sticks. And that was all that was wanted with a man like Stacey to do the scoring.

Up and up and up went the score now. By the time Scott had added 5 Stacey had made his century.

Centuries in junior matches were not as common as blackberries. Cecil Reginald Temple almost forgot the big nought that stood to his own credit. He grinned at Fry.

"Are we beatin' the Remove?" he murmured.

"We are—we is!" said Fry, forbearing to add that Stacey, anyhow, was beating the Remove!

"I say, you fellows, here comes Wingate!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton, in the field, spotted the captain of Greyfriars coming along with Gwynne of the Sixth. Evidently the news of Stacey's innings had spread, and great men of the First Eleven thought it worth while to give him a look in.

Wingate of the Sixth, towering over the crowd of juniors, watched Stacey, and joined in the cheer for a boundary.

"Hot stuff, that kid!" the Greyfriars captain said to Gwynne.

"Good man!" agreed Gwynne. "The bowling's good—quite good! It can't touch that kid!"

"He's a Remove man," said Wingate. "I suppose they've lent the Fourth a man for the match—he's playing for Temple. They seem to have lent Temple a good one!"

"The best they had, I fancy!"

"That's another boundary! By gum, the kid can hit!"

Leather-hunting was the order of the day for the Removites. It was a relief to them when the Nabob of Bhanipur caught Scott out at last. It was more than clear by this time that the only way to wind up Stacey was to leave him "not out" at the end of the innings.

There was quite a crowd of seniors on the ground to see the end of that innings. Coker of the Fifth came along with Potter and Greene of that Form, and told his chums that he really doubted whether he—Horace James Coker—could have taken that kid Stacey's wicket! Potter and Greene more than doubted it!

The tail of the Fourth was quickly disposed of. Cecil Reginald Temple cocked his eye at the score.

"I fancy we shan't have to bat a second time!" he remarked. "What?"

It looked like it—with a score of 150, of which 120 belonged to Stacey!

If the Remove did no better in their second innings than in their first, obviously the Fourth would not have to bat again, and there would be no need for Cecil Reginald to add another duck's egg!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Trouble Ahead!

HARRY WHARTON sat in his study after the game with a clouded brow.

He was tired. He had played hard in both innings for the Remove; and leather-hunting in Stacey's innings had been hefty work. And he was troubled in mind.

Temple, as he had so sagely foreseen, had not had to bat a second time. The Remove had not done better in their second knock—they had done less well. The Fourth had won that match by an innings and a big handful of runs—and great was the rejoicing in the ranks of the Fourth.

There was only one fly in the ointment, so far as Temple & Co. were concerned; it was their Remove recruit who had won the match for them! Still, they had won it, and a win was a win! A victory undoubtedly was a victory—nobody could get away from that.

That fly in the ointment was a consolation to the Remove! They had been beaten; but it was by one of their own men, who, after all, was going to be a rod in pickle for other teams in other matches. With a man like Stacey in the ranks they could look forward to a victorious season—the fellow was simply a prize-packet!

That he had to play at Courtfield was now a certainty; and, after that, in the St. Jim's, the Highcliffe, and the Rookwood matches. The mere idea that Wharton might think of leaving out such a man made the Remove fellows angry.

He could not—and would not—and should not! Bolsover major, in the Rag, pointed out that he was a better man than Wharton himself. They were more or less equal with the willow, perhaps; but Stacey was a bowler, too—a better bowler than even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Skinner & Co. welcomed



Stacey struggled furiously, as the Higheliffians seized him. "Drag the brute along!" panted Ponsonby. "By gad, we'll make him slit up! Get him to the pond!" "Oh, crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter. The struggling crowd passed within six or seven feet of the hidden, quaking Owl of the Remove. It was a relief to Bunter to hear them pass on.

the prospect of Wharton's nose being put of joint, as Skinner elegantly expressed it—Skinner pointing out to his friends, with great satisfaction, that, as cricket captain and bound to play Stacey, "His Magnificence" Wharton would have to take a hand in putting his own nose out of joint!

Wharton's own friends, who knew that he had good cause for barring Stacey, were worried. He had to play the man, that was certain, whether he barred him personally or not. All the Remove cricketers considered it high-handed to drop him from the Form match—and the result had been a thorough beating for the Remove. If he dropped him out of School matches there was certain to be trouble.

The captain of the Remove was only too well aware of that, and he was thinking it over as he sat in his study. The game had been over unexpectedly early, and the May sunshine was still streaming down on Greyfriars.

In the Fourth, Temple & Co. were celebrating their victory—and Stacey would have been an honoured guest at that celebration if he had chosen. But he did not choose; he did not want to make himself unpopular in his own Form. He had, in fact, made use of Temple, and now he was done with him.

Harry Wharton started out of a rather glum reverie as the door opened, and Stacey came into the study.

Hard as the fellow had played that day he looked fresh as paint. There was no doubt that he was fit as a fiddle. At Wharton Lodge, Harry had seen him smoking cigarettes; but he had seen nothing of the kind since his relative had come to Greyfriars. If he had vicious tastes, he knew how to throw them aside when it suited him to do so.

Stacey, lounging easily into the study,

glanced at Wharton's clouded face with a faint smile.

Wharton rose at once.

He did not care to remain in the study while Stacey was there.

"Going?" asked Stacey.

"Yes!" said Harry briefly.

"Good game to-day—what?" smiled Stacey. "Have I convinced you that I'm entitled to a place in the Remove Eleven?"

Wharton paused a moment.

"Yes!" he answered.

"Oh, good!" said Stacey sarcastically. "May I even take it that I shall be wanted at Courtfield next week?"

Wharton paused again.

To almost any other fellow in the Remove he would have answered heartily, and cordially, "What-ho!" if that fellow had put up such a game as Stacey's. But to Stacey he could not make such a reply.

The sarcastic tone in the fellow's voice, the half-sneer on his well-cut lips, prevented anything like cordiality. Stacey looked as if, having triumphed, he had come there to "rub it in."

"You'll see when the list is posted up," Wharton answered at last. "You can wait till then like other fellows."

"You can hardly leave me out," said Stacey, laughing. "I fancy the fellows would lynch you if you did."

Wharton looked at him steadily.

"Can't you cut that out, Stacey?" he asked quietly. "I had you down to play for the Remove to-day, and you forced me to drop you. You know that."

"Oh, quite!"

"You had this trickery in your mind, then—to join up with the Fourth, and make things as rotten for me as you could," said Harry. "You can play a trick like that inside the school, but not outside. If you rag me into dropping you out of the Courtfield match, you're

out of it, and left. I suppose you know that."

Stacey chuckled.

"Yes. I suppose I couldn't walk down to Courtfield, and offer that fellow Trumper my services, to dish you again in the same way," he remarked. "But you've got to play me, and that's that!"

Wharton did not answer.

A hasty reply leaped to his lips; but he did not utter it. He turned to the door, and walked out of the study.

He was not to be caught twice in the same kind of trap.

He breathed hard as he went down the passage. The fellow was a born cricketer, and seemed keen on the game. Any such fellow might have been expected to be eager to play for School—especially within a couple of weeks of coming to Greyfriars. Yet it seemed to Wharton that Stacey cared little for the Courtfield match or any other in comparison with getting on with his feud.

He had deliberately provoked his skipper into dropping him out of the Form match. Now it looked as if he was playing the same game again, careless if he had to cut cricket, so long as he scored over the fellow of whom he chose to make an enemy.

Only too well Wharton knew what a storm there would be in the Remove if he left Stacey out of the team. He was prepared to face it, if it could not be helped; but he wanted to steer clear of it if he could. The only way was by steering clear of Stacey.

He did not enter Study No. 1 again till prep that evening. Then he came in with Nugent, and sat down to work in silence, taking no notice of Stacey's presence.

Stacey spoke several times. Nugent
(Continued on page 16.)

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RIVALS of the REMOVE!



(Continued from page 13.)

answered in monosyllables; Wharton not at all. He shrugged his shoulders at last, and gave it up.

Wharton rose the moment work was done.

"Coming down, Frank?"

Nugent nodded, and rose, also.

At the door Wharton paused and looked back at Stacey.

"Look here, Stacey—" he began abruptly.

"Found your voice?" drawled Stacey.

"This can't be any pleasanter for you than for me," said Harry. "You're a new fellow here, and you've only been in the study a week. Quelch would put you in another study if you asked him."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Nugent.

"I can't very well ask him," said Stacey. "Why, you asked him to put me in here first day of term, Wharton."

"My uncle wanted me to, and I said I would."

"And you're the slave of your word—what?" grinned Stacey. "Well, you can tell Quelch you've changed your mind if you like, and ask him to change me out."

"You know I can't do that."

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to put up with me here," drawled Stacey. "After all, if I can put up with you, you can put up with me. You get the best of it in the way of company."

Wharton made no reply to that. He left the study with Nugent. The Co. joined them on the Remove staircase, and they went down to the Rag together.

Some of the Remove were already there, and Vernon-Smith was speaking as the Famous Five came in.

"By gum! That man Stacey will be a rod in pickle for Courtfield, and for Highcliffe afterwards. Jevver see such a bowler?"

"I thought you looked fearfully pleased when he got your wicket this afternoon," remarked Skinner; and there was a laugh.

"It was silly rot—that man playin' for the Fourth at all," went on the Bounder, unheeding Skinner. "Temple and his mob are putting up a regular song and dance about beating the Remove. A fat lot they did towards it. By gum, though, the Highcliffe men will open their eyes when he gets to work on their wickets; and St. Jim's and Rookwood, too."

"What-ho!" said several fellows.

An involuntary shadow crossed Wharton's face. The Co. noted it, and felt uncomfortable. It was evidently already settled in the Remove that Stacey was going to be a big gun in the team. The Bounder glanced round at Wharton. He proceeded to ask the question that was in a good many minds, but which the expression on Wharton's face discouraged other fellows from asking.

"You've got Stacey down for the Courtfield game next Wednesday, Wharton?"

"I've not started on the list yet," answered Harry curtly.

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"But there's no doubt about Stacey, I suppose?"

"You can suppose anything you like, Smithy."

Which answer caused the Bounder to knit his brows, and some other fellows to frown as Wharton crossed to an arm-chair and sat down. There was no doubt—not a shadow of doubt—that if Ralph Stacey was dropped from the team in the next match, there would be "stormy weather" for the captain of the Remove.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pon's Little Mistake!

"GREYFRIARS cad!" said Ponsonby.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh lor'!" he breathed.

For the moment the fat Owl of the Remove supposed that the remark was addressed to him, and he blinked round in alarm through his big spectacles.

Billy Bunter did not want to meet Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe when there were no other Greyfriars fellows at hand. Very much indeed he did not want to meet him.

It was Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday at both schools. Billy Bunter was happily occupied. Sitting in a thicket by the towpath on the Sark, Bunter was travelling swiftly and surely through a large tin of toffees.

Close as he was to the towpath, the Owl of the Remove was out of sight of anyone coming along the river. Bunter had excellent reasons for being out of sight.

That tin of toffees belonged to Bunter now. Possession was nine points of the law, and Bunter did not bother about the tenth. But only a short time ago it had belonged to someone else.

Bunter was not sure of the identity of its previous owner. He had found it in Study No. 1, and it might have belonged to Wharton, Nugent, or Stacey. Bunter really did not mind which, so long as none of the three spotted him with the toffees.

He had seen Wharton go down to the boathouse, and had seen Nugent join some fellows at cricket practice, and had seen Stacey go out of gates on his own. That made it quite easy for Bunter to annex the toffees; but, he had a natural shyness about being spotted in possession of the same—hence his lair in the thicket while he disposed of them. And when he heard the voice of Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe, Bunter was deeply thankful that he was in deep cover. Pon was the man to rag any Greyfriars fellow who could not take care of himself. Bunter had, so to speak, been there before. He was more anxious to steer clear of Pon than of Wharton or Nugent or Stacey, or all three together.

But he was reassured as he blinked round him. Thick hawthorns screened him from view from the towpath. Pon was not six feet away; but he was out of Bunter's sight, and still more important, Bunter was out of Pon's sight. And he sagely resolved to remain very carefully out of it.

"That tick Wharton!" said another voice, which Bunter recognised as Gadsby's.

"On his own," said a third voice—Monson's.

"Look here! Don't let's rag!" came Vavasour's voice. "We're goin' to the Three Fishers—not raggin' Greyfriars cads."

"You shut up, Vav!" said Ponsonby. "My hat! The cad's comin' on just as if we weren't here! He doesn't seem to care a straw! We'll make him!"

"He's seen us!" said Gadsby.

"Wait for him to come up!" said Ponsonby. "We'll dip his head in the river, what?"

"Good egg!"

And the four Highcliffians chuckled. Billy Bunter—still sucking toffee—wondered. Wharton, he knew, had gone out in his skiff; yet according to Pon's words, he was walking up the towpath.

The fat Owl of the Remove rose silently and peered through the hawthorns. He had a glimpse of the fellow coming up the bank of the river.

He grinned.

In his first day or two at Greyfriars Stacey had several times been taken for Wharton, owing to the likeness. But the Remove fellows had got used to him now, and even the short-sighted Owl knew them apart. But Pon & Co., naturally, had never seen him, and they had no doubt that it was their old enemy, Harry Wharton, who was walking into their hands. Any little difference in looks did not, naturally, strike fellows who knew Wharton by sight but did not see him very often.

Pon & Co. were grinning gleefully. They were not cast in heroic mould, but four to one they had no fear even of a hefty fighting-man like Harry Wharton. And considerations of fair play did not trouble them in the least.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter. "Stacey's for it!"

Bunter could have called out a warning, but that would have drawn the attention of Pon & Co. to his worthy self. Bunter remained silent.

Stacey came swinging on.

He noticed the four well-dressed fellows who had stopped in a group on the towpath, but did not take any special note of them. He had heard, from talk in the Remove, of Pon & Co., but he had never seen them before.

So he was taken quite by surprise when he came abreast of the group, and they suddenly rushed at him.

It rather surprised Pon & Co. to take Wharton—as they supposed—so easily off his guard, but they were glad of the chance. Stacey was down on his back in the grass in a twinkling, gasping and amazed.

"What the thump—" he stuttered.

"Who the dickens—who—"

"Pin him!" grinned Pon.

"What-ho!" chuckled Gadsby.

"Stick his head in the river! Hold on, though," added Pon. "Any of that crew may be along any minute—they generally go about in a gang! Yank him into the wood—there's a pond—"

"Good egg!"

Stacey struggled furiously as the four Highcliffians proceeded to yank him into the wood.

"Let me go!" he roared. "What the dickens are you up to?"

"Guess!" chuckled Pon.

"You rotters!" panted Stacey, resisting desperately, but in vain. "You worms! Who the dooce are you, and what are you pitching into me for?"

"He's forgotten who we are!" grinned Gadsby. "Lost your memory in the holidays, Wharton?"

"You silly idiot, I'm not Wharton!" panted Stacey. "Let me go!"

"Not—not Wharton!" ejaculated Ponsonby.

"No, you silly fathead! Let me go!"

"Does the silly ass think we've forgotten him, or what?" said Pon, in sheer wonder. "Here, get him out of sight before some of his pals come along."

Stacey, struggling fiercely, went bumping among the trees, arms and legs flying. Four to one as they were, the

Highcliffians had plenty to do. Gadsby gave a fearful yell as a set of knuckles that felt like iron crashed on his jaw, and Pon roared as the same set landed in his eye.

"Drag the brute along!" panted Ponsonby. "By gad, we'll make him sit up for this. Get him to the pond."

"Oh crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter. The struggling crowd passed within six or seven feet of the hidden, quaking Owl of the Remove. The trampling and scuffling and panting passed on, in the direction of the woodland pond.

It was a relief to Billy Bunter to hear it pass on, leaving him undiscovered. Had the Highcliffians spotted him he

Pon was at Highcliff! But he was fearfully funky of him at close quarters, and his fat little legs were set into rapid motion along the towpath. Bunter hoped to meet some Greyfriars fellows and tell of what was on. But if he did not, there was no help for Stacey of the Remove.

After traversing some little distance along the towpath, Bunter sighted Harry Wharton stepping out of his skiff into a canoe.

The fat junior blinked.

Then he yelled:

"Hi! I say, Wharton! I say, stop! Hi!"

him on the muddy bank. The next moment he was crashing feet-first into the canoe.

Fourteen stone and over was a little too much weight for the canoe, and the floorboards gave way under the strain, leaving Bunter's legs dangling in the water.

He extricated himself with an effort, and reached the bank safely.

"Come on!" he gasped. "I tell you they've got him!"

"Who's got whom?" asked Wharton blankly.

"Those Highcliffe cads!" gasped Bunter. "They're going to duck him

(1)

Maxwelton's braes are bonny,
For all our singers yell it out,
The same applies to Johnny.
So let my verses tell it out.
Of him let it be written
That no one could more steadily
Be typical of Britain,
Or guard her name more readily.

(2)

I journeyed to the college
With something like timidity,
For Bull, as all acknowledge,
Hits hard and with avidity.
They say in the Remove it
Is sudden death to merriment,
I'd no desire to prove it
By personal experiment.

(3)

When in the gym I found him
I saw he was on pleasure bent
With dumb-bells all around him,
And clubs of fearsome measurement.
And when my face perceiving
He eyed me with severity,
I thought I'd best be leaving,
And that with some celerity!



GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Our Greyfriars Rhymester bet ten to one in doughnuts that something was shortly coming to him. He won his bet when he set out to interview

JOHNNY BULL,

the blunt, outspoken member of the Famous Five of the Remove.



(4)

But still I showed persistence,
And nodded with civility
While watching (from a distance)
His fistical ability.
"Good morning, John!" I chanted.
"No longer I a chat must fear!"
He raised his fist and planted
A right hook in the atmosphere!

(5)

"You exercise with vigour,
But may I say informally
I don't much like your figure—
It's bulkier than normally.
I know you grow your muscles,
Those biceps hard as platinum,
In sport and drill and tussles,
But fat—you don't grow that in 'em!"

(6)

He glared without replying,
I smiled with gentle suavity
And watched the chump defying,
On bars, the law of gravity.
"Look out!" I cried in horror,
"You want a net beneath for you!
Be careful, or to-morrow
I'll have to buy a wreath for you!"

(7)

"Now try to keep that balance
With muscular dexterity,
While I admire your talents
For bluntness and sincerity.
But, John, your looks embolden
In me a kind of candidness,
For silence, John, is golden,
Not always underhandedness!"

(8)

"Sometimes it's rather wiser
To scout the moral platitude;
A silent sympathiser
Has many claims to gratitude——"
At these words, he descended,
My speech, he soon diminished it!
The interview was ended,
For Johnny's boot had finished it!



had no doubt that they would have ducked him in the pond along with Stacey.

Bunter blinked at the tin of toffees. It was only half-empty. He was not finished yet, by any means.

But Bunter, to do him justice, was more concerned for a Greyfriars fellow struggling in the hands of the enemy, that even for toffees, delicious and sticky as they were.

He put the tin under a fat arm—he really could not bear to part with it—and rolled out on the towpath.

He did not follow the way the Highcliffians had gone. Bunter rather fancied himself as a fighting-man—when there was no scrapping on hand! But in the presence of the enemy the fat Owl was wont to depend rather on his legs than his hands.

Bunter sometimes told thrilling stories in the Remove of hefty tramps he had knocked down—in the holidays! He had never knocked any down within the range of vision of any Greyfriars fellow. Neither was Bunter afraid of Pon, when he was at Greyfriars and

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON glanced at the fat junior on the towpath. Billy Bunter, with a tin of toffees under one fat arm, waved the other wildly.

Wharton had pulled up the Sark as far as Courtfield, and he was on his way back to Greyfriars, to tea, when he spotted a canoe, unattended, tied to the bank.

A close inspection of the canoe revealed the fact that it belonged to a Highcliffe junior, for there was a Highcliffe blazer on the seat.

Wharton had boarded the canoe with the intention of "putting one over" the rival school by taking the blazer.

It was while he was about to do this that Billy Bunter happened.

"I say, they've got him!" gasped Bunter. "Quick!"

He waved his arms wildly in the air. Then—

"Whooooop!"

He broke off suddenly, and gave a wild yell as his feet slipped from under

in the pond in the wood! I say, I—I'll help you rescue him."

Wharton grasped it. "Highcliffe cads—and a Greyfriars chap?"

"Yes, that fellow Stacey—Pon took him for you, and——"

"Stacey!"

"They're four to one—they're getting him to the pond—I'd have pitched into them, you know!" gasped Bunter. "But there's four of them, and I couldn't handle more than three at once——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. The mention of Stacey had brought a shadow to his face, but Billy Bunter's further words quite chased it away.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I say, ain't you going to help me rescue him?" demanded Bunter.

"Fathead!"

Wharton swiftly made fast his skiff and jumped up the bank. He knew where the pond was in the wood, so he did not need Bunter's guidance—which was fortunate. The fact that it was his enemy who had fallen into the

clutches of the Highcliffe raggers made no difference to the captain of the Remove. Stacey was a Greyfriars fellow, and that was enough. He raced up the towpath and turned into the wood.

Billy Bunter, perhaps, intended to help in the good work. He followed in the same direction. But as he followed at the pace of a very old and very tired snail, it did not seem probable that Bunter would be in at the death! Wharton was out of his sight in less than half a minute.

The captain of the Remove scudded swiftly in the direction of the woodland pond, winding among the trees and bushes of Popper Court Woods. A sound of panting, scuffling, and trampling caught his ears, as the gleam of water through the trees caught his eyes.

On the muddy margin of the pond five fellows were mixed up in a fierce struggle. There was more mud than water in the shallow pond, and any fellow pitched into it would have been reduced to a parlous state. The sight of it caused Stacey to put up a resistance that kept the Highcliffians hard at work for some minutes, four to one as they were. Grasped by four pairs of hands, on the very verge of the pond, Stacey was still resisting gamely when Harry Wharton burst breathlessly on the scene.

"Rescue, Greyfriars!" shouted Wharton, as he rushed into the fray. "Oh gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

He stared round in alarm—and almost fell down in his amazement at the sight of Harry Wharton! As he believed that the fellow he was grasping was Wharton, he could hardly believe his eyes for a moment.

"What—who—who—who—" stuttered Ponsonby.

He had no time for more!

Wharton's clenched fist jarred on his jaw, and the Highcliffe fellow went over with a crash.

Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour released Stacey at once, to turn on that unexpected assailant. Stacey sprawled on the earth, breathless and spent. He was at the very end of his tether when the captain of the Remove arrived.

He gasped and panted on the ground, while Harry Wharton, with his fists up and his eyes flashing, faced the three Highcliffians.

Three to one was heavy odds; but pluck will tell! Vavasour backed behind the other two, and hardly counted at all. Gadsby and Monson attended rather to defence than attack, and backed along the edge of the pond, Wharton following them up.

It was probable that Wharton would have driven the three into flight had not Ponsonby scrambled up and joined in.

Pon rushed in from behind, as his comrades kept Wharton busy in front, and got an arm round the neck of the captain of the Remove. Wharton was dragged over backwards.

Immediately Gadsby and Monson rushed in, grasping him to keep him down. Vavasour followed them and lent a hand.

Wharton struggled desperately in the grasp of the four. Bunter was nowhere near at hand—not that he would have been of much use. Stacey had lifted himself on his elbow, still gasping painfully for breath.

"Pile on him!" hissed Ponsonby. Pon's jaw ached horribly, and his temper was savage. "It's Wharton—goodness knows who the other cad is—I thought he was this cad—but this is

Wharton—pitch him into the pond and the other cad after him."

And the four, with combined efforts, dragged the captain of the Remove towards the pond. Wharton resisting fiercely every inch of the way.

Stacey staggered to his feet.

A couple of minutes, during which Wharton kept the Highcliffians busy, had given him a chance to pull round.

Still panting for breath, but eager for the fray, he rushed to the aid of the captain of the Remove.

"Back up!" he panted. "Go it, Wharton!"

It was a timely relief. Two of the Highcliffians turned on Stacey, and left Wharton with Pon and Vavasour. And a jarring upper-cut landed Vavasour on his back—and he stayed there.

"Now, Pon, you rotter!" panted Wharton.

Pon made an effort to break away. At this point the dandy of Highcliffe would have been glad to sound the retreat.

But there was no retreat for Pon.

Wharton's grasp was on him, and he could not break loose. They struggled fiercely till the captain of the Remove swept him off his feet and bumped him down on Vavasour.

That hapless youth gurgled as Pon crashed on him. He was flattened out on the muddy bank of the pond.

Pon sprawled across him, dizzy and breathless.

Wharton turned to Stacey. He was holding his own against Gadsby and Monson. But Wharton rushed in at once, grabbed Gadsby by the collar, and swung him round.

With a powerful swing of his arm, he sent Gadsby spinning into the pond—and there was a crash and a splash. Gadsby almost vanished in mud.

Stacey gave a breathless chuckle.

"Oh, good egg!" he exclaimed.

Monson jumped back to run. Stacey jumped after him. There was a brief tussle, and Monson went after Gadsby, splashing into the mud beside him.

The two Greyfriars juniors grinned at one another breathlessly. At that moment both of them had quite forgotten that they were foes at school.

"Chuck the other rotters in!" panted Stacey.

"What-ho!"

Ponsonby and Vavasour were struggling up. Flight was their intention; but they had no chance of carrying it out.

Wharton collared Pon, and Stacey collared Vavasour. Both of them went hurtling into the pond.

Splash! Splash!

Wharton and Stacey stood on the bank, panting for breath, but victorious. A fat chuckle announced the arrival of Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter—having spotted, from a safe distance the fact that the Highcliffe four were beaten, rolled up, full of beans and beef. Bunter was ready for the fray—now it was over!

"I say, you fellows, they look muddy, don't they?" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, we've licked the rotters, what?"

Pon & Co. did look muddy! There was no doubt about that! They scrambled up in the pond, knee-deep in water and mud, streaming with slime, and looking deplorable objects.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, don't let 'em get out yet! Give 'em a jolly good ducking!"

"Good idea!" agreed Stacey, and as Ponsonby came squelching to the bank he reached out and sent him backwards into the pond again.

Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour, squelching shoreward, stopped. Pon struggled to his feet again, dripping mud and water.

"I say, let us get out of this!" wailed Vavasour. "I say, we give you best! I say, chuck it, you know! We give in! Ow!"

"Chuck it!" groaned Gadsby. "We give in!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Monson. "Look at the state we're in! Oh dear!"

Pon did not speak. He dabbed mud from his face, white with rage. Harry Wharton and Stacey laughed, and Billy Bunter chortled.

"You come out if you dare!" roared Bunter valiantly. "I'll jolly soon shove you in again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was bursting with pluck.

Stacey winked at Wharton.

"Come on," he said. "Let's leave Bunter to see that they don't get out of the pond, what?"

"Good!" said Harry, laughing.

"I say, you fellows—" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm.

"Stick to them, Bunter! Knock 'em in again if they get out," said the captain of the Remove, and he walked back to the river-bank with Stacey.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He followed the two juniors in a great hurry. Not for whole warehouses full of toffee would Bunter have remained with the Highcliffians on his own. His valour disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared. He trotted after Wharton and Stacey, and Ponsonby & Co. were left to crawl and squelch out of the pond—in a state of mud and slime, and rage and fury, that was simply indescribable. Not for the first time Pon had come out at the wrong end of the rag!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A New Start!

HARRY WHARTON stopped where his skiff was tied up at the bank. The damaged canoe was still there, but he heeded it not. He would put matters right later on.

Stacey stopped, too, with a curious expression on his face.

Both the juniors were rather untidy and dishevelled, and both of them had had some hard knocks in that unequal struggle. Pon & Co. had been vanquished; but the victors had by no means escaped without damage.

Billy Bunter did not stop. Neither Wharton nor Stacey noticed the tin of toffees under his fat arm. Bunter was rather anxious that they should not notice it! Bunter rolled on, and disappeared with his plunder in the direction of the school.

"Rather a scrap, what?" remarked Stacey taking out his handkerchief to dab his nose, which oozed crimson. "I think those fellows took me for you—one of them called me by your name. I can't see that there's such a likeness between us."

"Neither can I," answered Harry, rather dryly. "But other fellows seem to think so."

"It's a bit rotten for a chap to be taken for you, and set on by a mob you've had trouble with."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"That Highcliffe crew would have ragged you, anyhow, most likely," he answered. "Ponsonby and his gang are always looking for trouble—they'd rag any Greyfriars man they found on his own. There's always been trouble between Greyfriars and Highcliffe."



"Chuck the rotters in!" panted Stacey. "What ho!" exclaimed Wharton. One after the other, the four Highcliffians were sent hurtling into the pond. Splash, splash, splash, splash! Wharton and Stacey stood on the bank, panting for breath, but victorious.

"You have fixtures with Highcliffe." "With Courtenay's team! That crew aren't in the cricket!" said Wharton contemptuously. "They can't play for nuts, and don't care for the game. Ragging a fellow, four to one, is their sort of game."

Stacey was silent for a moment. Wharton reached to the painter of the skiff.

"It was decent of you to come and help me!" said Stacey at last. "How did you know?"

"Bunter called me," answered Wharton briefly. "Don't you worry about that!" he added, with a touch of sarcasm. "Any Greyfriars man would have piled in, same as I did!"

"Bunter told you they'd got hold of a Greyfriars man."

"Yes!" "I understand! You didn't know it was I!"

Wharton looked at him, with a curling lip. It was only too plain that Stacey did not want to be under an obligation to his enemy, and he was glad to believe that Wharton had not known who it was that Ponsonby & Co. had collared. Wharton disdained to answer, but the expression on his face was enough for Stacey.

"You did know?" he exclaimed. "Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Wharton gruffly. "Do you think I should leave a Greyfriars man to be ragged by those cads because I've had rows with him? Would you?"

"I'm not sure," answered Stacey coolly. "I can't quite see myself butting into a scrap on your account. And I should never have expected you to lend me a hand. I wish Bunter had minded his own business!"

Wharton laughed sarcastically. "If you're keen on going into the pond, you've only got to walk back! Pon & Co. are still there, and they'd be glad to see you—alone!"

Stacey laughed. "Hardly! But I wish Bunter had

minded his own business, all the same. I never wanted your help!"

"Oh rats!" Wharton stepped into the skiff. Stacey gave him a dark look. But his better nature seemed to come uppermost again, and his face cleared.

"Look here, it was jolly decent of you!" he said. "I suppose I ought to be grateful. I certainly shouldn't like to be in the state those cads are in. Look here—"

"Well?" "We're half a mile from the school. Will you give me a lift back?"

"Jump in!" said Harry.

Stacey stepped into the skiff. Wharton picked up the sculls and pushed off. On the towpath four dismal figures trailed out of the wood. Stacey glanced at them and chuckled, and Pon shook a muddy fist.

"They look a pretty crew!" grinned Stacey. "My hat, I shouldn't like to be crawling home in that happy state! Much obliged, Wharton!"

"Don't mench!"

Wharton sculled away down the river. Stacey sat silent, dabbing his damaged nose, and rubbing various bumps and bruises.

The captain of the Remove did not look at him, but he was conscious of the varying expressions on his face. He smiled rather grimly.

He could read Stacey's mind quite easily. The fellow hated to be under an obligation to him; he would have preferred the ducking in the muddy pond. The episode made it awkward for him to carry on with his insidious campaign against the captain of his Form. At the same time, he was ashamed of such ungenerous thoughts and feelings, and there was a struggle between his better nature and his worse.

Not a word more was said till they reached the Greyfriars raft and landed, and Wharton carried his skiff into the

boathouse. Stacey lent him a hand with it without speaking. Then, as Harry started up the path to the school, Stacey walked with him.

"Look here——" He broke the silence at last.

"Well?"

"It was decent of you——"

"Rot!"

"I shouldn't have done it for you——"

"I think you would!"

Stacey started a little.

"Well, perhaps you're right," he said. "Anyhow, you did it. And—and—look here, Wharton——" He paused, and coloured. "We bar one another, but—but—look here——" He paused again. "Look here, we might try to pull a bit better—in the study and in the Form! I'm willing, if you are!"

"I'm quite willing!"

"Then let's see how it turns out," said Stacey. "We don't like one another, but there's no need to play cat-and-dog! If we can't be friends, we can be civil—what?"

"Done!" said Harry, with a faint smile.

They parted as soon as they reached the school. Peace had been established, and Wharton, rather sarcastically, wondered for how long. Envy was at the bottom of Stacey's feud, and that was not a feeling easily eradicated. But the captain of the Remove resolved that, at least, if the trouble broke out again, it should not be his fault. If Stacey was sincere, he was going to give him every chance.

Stacey was sincere enough—for the time, at least. For the time he was ashamed of the bitter hostility, for which he had to admit that there was little cause.

But it was said of old that a leopard cannot change his spots, nor an Ethiopian his skin!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,423.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Bold!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag. A number of fellows were there before tea, and an argument was going on, on the subject of the Form match of a few days ago. Some of the Remove were explaining to some of the Fourth that they—the Fourth—couldn't play cricket for toffee; and that if they fancied they could beat the Remove, it only showed what silly asses they were! To which Cecil Reginald Temple calmly rejoined that he had actually beaten the Remove on Wednesday, and invited the Removites to put that in their pipes and smoke it! The argument waxed warm, and nobody heeded the Owl of the Remove when he rolled in and squeaked.

"I say, you fellows——" roared Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You couldn't beat the Remove," said Bob, "if we played blindfolded and with our hands tied!"—which was rather an exaggeration.

"But we did, dear man!" cooed Temple. "By an innings—and how many runs was it, Fry?"

"Dozens!" said Fry carelessly.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I say, you fellows——"

"We shall never hear the end of this!" growled the Bounder. "I've a jolly good mind to kick that man Stacey!"

"It was all Wharton's fault!" grunted Peter Todd. "Did he expect the man to sit down and twiddle his thumbs while we were playing cricket?"

"Anyhow, it was Remove beat Remove!" said Johnny Bull.

"My dear man," said Temple sweetly, "you hadn't an earthly! Let me see! I believe I did play a Remove man—chap named Tracey, or Stacey, or something! But, of course, that made no difference."

"Hardly!" said Fry.

"Rather not!" grinned Dabney.

"The fact is, you fags can't play

cricket!" said Temple blandly. "I don't say you're bad for a fag Form; but when it comes to cricket——"

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter barged into the group. "I say, has poor old Stacey come in?"

Attention was transferred to Bunter as he asked that question.

"Poor old Stacey?" repeated Vernon-Smith. "What do you mean, you fat ass? Has anything happened to Stacey?"

Temple & Co., feeling that they had had the best of the argument, strolled away, smiling. They had beaten the Remove at cricket—and Temple, at least, preferred to forget exactly how he had got away with it—which had a very exasperating effect on the Removites.

"I say, you fellows, I've been in a fearful scrap!" said Bunter. "Poor old Stacey was rather damaged. Those Highcliffe cads took him for Wharton, you know, and pitched into him! Luckily, I was there!"

"And you whopped them, of course?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Exactly, old chap!"

"The whopfulness must have been terrific!" grinned Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, they had enough!" said Bunter airily. "When they crawled out of the pond in Popper Court woods, they didn't ask for any more! He, he, he!"

Bunter chuckled complacently.

"Wharton helped, though," he added.

"I'm not sure that I could have handled the four of them on my own! There were Pon and Gaddy and Monson and Vavasour, you know—rather a big order for one chap! They got Stacey to the pond, when Wharton—I mean, when I—I came up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Poor old Stacey was at the last gasp, when Wharton—I mean, when I got to work. You should have seen me!" said Bunter. "You've hinted more than once that I'm a funk, Toddy——"

"Not hinted, old fat man," said Peter. "Said so out plain!"

"Beast! You should have seen me

handling those Highcliffe cads!" said Bunter. "Knocking them right and left! They had enough, I can tell you! Stacey did what he could, and Wharton helped me a bit—but——"

"Has there really been a scrap?" asked Bob.

"Haven't I just told you so?" hooted Bunter.

"That's evidence that there hasn't!" said Peter.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Wharton went up the river in his skiff when I went down to the cricket," said Nugent. "Anybody know where Stacey was?"

"I saw him go out of gates," said Bob. "But he's not likely to have been with Wharton."

"Hardly!" said Johnny Bull.

"You see, I spotted him on the Sark and called him!" explained Bunter. "I told him the Highcliffe cads had got hold of Stacey, and——"

"And he went to help!" asked the Bounder. "Blessed if I should have expected him to bother about Stacey!"

"Rot!" said Bob. "Of course he would back up a Greyfriars man! They could mop up Pon & Co. between them. Did you see them at it, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've told you I mopped up Pon & Co!" remonstrated Bunter. "I admit that Wharton and Stacey helped—but the whole thing fell practically on me! If Wharton makes out that he did it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter scornfully. "Cackle! You wouldn't have cackled if you'd been in my place, with half a dozen Highcliffe cads piling on you! I'm not saying that Wharton and Stacey left me to it—they did all they could! But they weren't really much use! You'd have stared if you'd seen Ponsonby rolling over when I landed him one——"

"The starefulness would have been terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They were going to duck Stacey, taking him for Wharton, you know," said Bunter. "Of course, I wasn't likely to allow that! I turned——"

"Tail?" asked Bob.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I turned on them like—like a tiger! I can tell you it was some scrap! I said 'Back up, you men!' Just like that! And they backed me up—as well as they could, you know—but they ain't much in the scrapping line! They lent a hand pitching those Highcliffe cads into the pond! I can tell you, they looked a muddy crew! He, he, he! They'll have a lot of mud to scrape off before they go back to Highcliffe! I wish you fellows could have seen me handling them!"

"I guess it would have been a sight for sore eyes!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle!" sneered Bunter. "I fancy some of you fellows would have thought twice before tackling six or seven Highcliffe cads——"

"And you'd have thought three times!" grinned the Bounder.

"Or four!" said Bob.

"The thinkfulness would have been terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here is Wharton!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the captain of the Remove came into the Rag. "I hear you've been backing up Bunter in a scrap with Highcliffe, old bean?"

"Backing up Bunter!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes! You did all you could—that's right, isn't it, Bunter?—while jolly old



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Bunter was knocking them right and left."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I didn't see Bunter doing any scrap-ping," he said. "Stacey put up a jolly good scrap."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But what really happened?" asked Nugent.

"Bunter called to me from the bank that some Highcliffe cads were ragging a Greyfriars man, and I went to help!" answered Harry. "That's all. You fellows ready for tea?"

"Oh, really, you know! Mean to say you didn't see me pitching into them?" demanded Bunter.

"Not a lot!" answered Harry. "I saw you come rolling up after the scrap was over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I told you Wharton would make out that he did it all!" said the fat Owl. "I'd like to know what would have happened to him if I hadn't been there, that's all! Talk about ingratitude being the thankless child of a serpent's tooth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the Rag to go up to the study to tea. Billy Bunter was left explaining to the other fellows that he, William George Bunter, really was the hero of the hour, and such a terrific fighting-man as had seldom been heard of in the annals of Greyfriars. But the more Bunter explained, the more the other fellows chortled. If anybody believed that W. G. Bunter was a terrific fighting-man, it was only W. G. B. himself—and in all the Greyfriars Remove there was no one to share his belief.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Which?

MR. QUELCH jumped.

"Wharton!" he gasped.

The Remove master, for a moment, could not believe his eyes. He stared blankly at the face looking over the gate into the towpath.

It was after class on Monday, and Mr. Quelch was taking a walk up the bank of the Sark. That walk took him past the gate of the Three Fishers—a somewhat rowdy and disreputable establishment strictly out of bounds for all Greyfriars fellows. So the Remove master was naturally surprised as he came in sight of the gate to see a familiar face over it.

He stopped dead.

The Remove—on the forbidden side of the gate—was scanning the towpath, evidently to ascertain that the coast was clear before he came out of those forbidden precincts. The next moment he spotted the astonished Form-master, and realised that the coast was far from clear. He gave Mr. Quelch one startled stare, and turned and bolted back from the gate into the extensive grounds of the inn. He was gone from sight in a split second.

At the sight of him Mr. Quelch had jumped. Then he stood rooted to the towpath, staring. But as the junior vanished, the Remove master recovered his powers of locomotion.

"Wharton!" he almost shouted.

And he ran on to the gate.

Stopping there, he stared over it.

The junior had disappeared among trees and shrubberies, perhaps hoping that his Form-master had not recognised him.

Mr. Quelch did not care to enter personally such questionable precincts; neither had he any hope of catching the elusive young rascal, who was certainly hurrying as fast as he could for some

other and safer exit. He stood at the gate, with a brow of thunder.

"Wharton!" breathed Mr. Quelch, "I could never have believed—" He broke off suddenly. "Upon my word! Wharton—or—or Stacey!"

Quelch compressed his lips hard.

In the quad, or the Form-room, he knew the two relatives apart easily enough. But on the present occasion he had seen the junior from a distance, and only for a moment.

That it was Wharton, if it was not Stacey, was certain; but Mr. Quelch realised that, on the other hand, if it was not Wharton it was Stacey!

One hasty glimpse was not enough for certainty—it was certain that it was one of the two—but which?

Wharton—his head boy—a boy he had always trusted—slinking in at that disreputable place—"pub-haunting." It was impossible! Yet he had had, so far, an equally good opinion of Stacey. The new boy was a model in class—indeed, more of a model than Wharton! Mr. Quelch had a very favourable impression of Ralph Stacey during the short time that he had been at Greyfriars. But it was one of the two—which?

It was useless to pursue the junior through the grounds of the Three Fishers—as well as undignified. As for making inquiries there, that was even more useless—he would have met only with a denial that any Greyfriars boy had been there at all! There was only one thing to be done—and it had to be done quickly—to give up his walk, hurry back to the school, and ascertain which of the two juniors was out of gates. That would settle the doubtful point—which it was very important to settle. Either Harry Wharton or Ralph Stacey was due for a Head's flogging—and it was rather disconcerting not to know which.

Greyfriars fellows who saw Mr. Quelch come in stared a little! It was unusual to see Quelch covering the ground at such speed. His long legs fairly whisked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row with Quelch?" murmured Bob Cherry, as he spotted his Form-master whisking across the quad.

"Looks excited!" grinned Nugent.

"The excitement is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch stopped, a little breathlessly, as he sighted the three juniors.

"Cherry!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is Wharton?"

"Wharton! Gone out in his skiff," answered Bob.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. If Wharton was out in his skiff, he was on the river. If it was Wharton he had seen at the Three Fishers, as likely as not the skiff had been tied up under the bank, screened by the bushes. Quelch wished that he had thought of looking while he was on the spot. But it was too late to think of that now.

"Did Wharton go alone?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. He's putting in some practice for the sculls!"

"Do you know where Stacey is?"

"Stacey?" repeated Bob, astonished by the sudden change of topic. "No, sir. I haven't seen him since class."

"Can any of you tell me whether Stacey is out of gates?"

"Haven't seen him, sir."

Mr. Quelch whisked into the House. Wharton was out of gates, and might—or might not—have made sculling the pretext for going up the river to the Three Fishers. If Stacey was in the House, that settled the point.

"What the dickens!" ejaculated Bob

Cherry, staring after his Form-master's vanishing figure.

"Something's up!" said Nugent.

"The upfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up, Bunter?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Eh? How should I know?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

"Don't you know everything?" demanded Bob. "What's the good of being the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars if you don't know a thing, when we're all burning with curiosity?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Johnny Bull came out of the House and joined his friends.

"What's up with Quelch?" he asked.

"He's just passed me on the Remove staircase—scudding up two at a time."

"Goodness knows!" said Frank.

"He wants Wharton, or Stacey, or both! Looks like a row!"

"Perhapsfully the esteemed Stacey has been kicking over the absurd traces," murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "I rememberfully recollect that at Wharton Lodge, the smokefulness of the execrable Stacey was preposterous."

"Haven't seen anything of that sort here," said Bob. "Some silly asses smoke in the hols."

"Stacey's out of gates, I believe," said Johnny Bull. "I saw him going down to the bikeshed after class; though I never noticed whether he went out. I suppose he did."

The news that a "row" was on was not long in spreading, and more and more fellows gathered to discuss it, and wonder what was "up."

Meanwhile, Mr. Quelch, moving with unaccustomed speed, reached the Remove passage. He had ascertained that Harry Wharton undoubtedly was out of gates, and if Stacey was out of gates also, it seemed unlikely that his problem would find a satisfactory solution. He was losing no time in ascertaining the facts, at all events.

He arrived rather breathlessly at the door of Study No. 1.

That door was half-open, and he glanced in before entering.

A junior who, at a hasty glance, might have been either Wharton or Stacey, was seated at the table. The second glance, however, showed that it was Stacey.

He was sitting with bent head over a paper, on which Mr. Quelch could see the Latin exercise. His brow was wrinkled, as if in an effort of thought.

"Blow it!" he ejaculated suddenly.

"Bother it! Too tough for me!"

If Stacey had noted the footsteps in the passage, and was aware that his Form-master was at the door, he was a good actor. He gave no sign whatever of being aware that he was not alone.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him long and hard.

He had hurried back to the school, yet here was Stacey before him! If the junior had had a bicycle, and had lost no time, he could have managed it certainly. But there was no sign of haste about him—and he was apparently working in his study, at an exercise Quelch had given him. Mr. Quelch stepped into the study, and Stacey gave a start and looked round.

He jumped up and stood respectfully at attention as he saw his Form-master. If there was guilt within, there was certainly no trace of it in his looks.

"Stacey, how long have you been in this study?" asked the Remove master.

"I don't know, sir—about half an hour, I think," answered Stacey, with a look of surprise.

"Have you been out of gates since class?"

"Yes, sir. I went out on my bike, but I had a puncture, so I came in."

"Is your bicycle punctured now, Stacey?"

"Yes, sir. I've got to get some solution to mend it," answered Stacey, looking more and more surprised.

"What have you been doing while in this study for the last half-hour, Stacey?"

"This exercise, sir. I've got rather bottled, though," said Stacey ruefully. "I thought of bringing it to you, sir, only I didn't like to bother you."

"I should always be very pleased to help you, Stacey!"

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at the exercise. It was half-finished, and Stacey had stopped at a knotty point. The Remove master was satisfied. It was Wharton he had seen, at the Three Fishers. There could be no doubt of that now.

"I will help you with this another time, Stacey," he said. "I am glad to see you so studious."

He left the study.

Stacey waited till his footsteps died away down the passage to the stairs. Then he softly closed the door of the study.

The cool unconcern that had marked him disappeared now that he was alone. He breathed hard, and wiped a spot of perspiration from his forehead.

"By gum!" whispered Stacey. "By gum! What a jolly escape! He can't have recognised the fellow he saw at the gate. But if I hadn't had the bike—by gum! I wonder if it would have been the sack? I've heard that a fellow was sacked once for being caught there—by gum! What would the jolly old colonel say if they turfed me out in disgrace? You ass! You've got to be more careful! You can't afford to run these risks."

Stacey sat down to the Latin exercise again. He was no keener on Latin than any other fellow in the Remove; but it was evidently judicious, in the present circumstances, to let Mr. Quelch understand thoroughly what a very studious fellow he was! Hard at work in his study, he remained unaware of the excitement that was going on downstairs, and certainly had not the slightest suspicion that Mr. Quelch was waiting for Harry Wharton to come in—a good deal like a lion in his den!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, Wingate?"

"You're wanted—Quelch's study."

"Right-ho!"

It was close on lock-up, and Greyfriars fellows of all Forms were coming in. Wharton had put up his skiff, and came in a little tired after a long pull on the river. He was rather surprised by the general interest his appearance caused. Fellows looked at him on all sides, and the Co. came up to him with anxious faces.

"I say, you fellows, here he is!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What have you been up to, Wharton?" asked Skinner, as Wingate walked away.

"Up to Courtfield Bridge!" answered Harry.

"Nothing but sculling?" grinned Skinner.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,423.

"No. Why?" asked Harry.

"Quelch seems to think—"

"Did he spot you out of bounds?" asked Snoop.

"Have you seen Quelch out of gates?" asked Frank Nugent.

"No! Is anything up?"

"Quelch looks as if there is," said Bob. "He came in in a fearful bait, and asked after you and Stacey. And now he wants you in his study."

"You don't know why?" asked Frank.

"Haven't the foggiest!" answered Wharton, puzzled. "I'd better go to see him, I suppose."

And the captain of the Remove made his way to his Form-master's study. He tapped on the door and entered.

He gave a start at the sight of the grim face that was turned towards him. He had seen Henry Samuel Quelch look grim before, but never quite so grim as this. He looked at him in sheer wonder. So far as Wharton was aware, he had done nothing to evoke his Form-master's wrath.

"You sent for me, sir!" said Harry.

"Wingate says—"

"I did!" said Mr. Quelch. "I have to question you, Wharton, before I can decide whether to ask Dr. Locke to administer a flogging, or whether to recommend him to expel you from the school!"

Wharton almost staggered.

He wondered for a moment whether he was dreaming this. He gazed, open-eyed, at the gorgon-like countenance of his Form-master.

"You are aware that I saw you, I presume?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"You—you saw me?" stammered Wharton.

"You must have been aware of it, Wharton, as you turned and ran instantly at the sight of me!"

"I—I—I did!" gasped Wharton.

"You did!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I hardly understand you, Wharton! You are not, I presume, thinking of denying what I have seen with my own eyes?"

"I don't understand you, sir!" stammered Wharton. "Have I done anything—"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose.

"You know—you cannot fail to know—that I saw you!" he said. "But possibly you have entertained a hope that I did not recognise you. Certainly you disappeared very promptly before I could approach."

Wharton simply gazed at him. All this was Greek to the captain of the Remove.

"However, I certainly did recognise you, Wharton, and denials are useless," said Mr. Quelch. "Have you anything to say?"

"Only that I don't know what you are talking about, sir!" gasped the bewildered junior. "What have I done?"

"What have you done?" repeated the master of the Remove. "Where have you been since classes to-day, Wharton?"

"On the river, sir!"

"And where else?"

"Nowhere else, sir! I pulled up as far as Courtfield bridge in my skiff, and came back. That's all."

"Do you mean to tell me, Wharton, that you did not land from your boat?"

"Not till I got back to the school raft, sir."

"Upon my word! I have been greatly deceived in you, Wharton! Evidently you are unaware that I recognised you at the gate of the Three Fishers."

"The—the—the Three Fishers!" stammered Wharton.

"Do you now deny, Wharton, that you have broken school bounds and entered a disreputable place—"

Wharton flushed crimson.

"Certainly I do!" he exclaimed, or rather, shouted. "You've no right to think anything of the kind."

"Wha-a-at?" The Remove master jumped. "Wharton! Are you in your senses? How dare you raise your voice to me?"

"How dare you say that I have been in that low den?" exclaimed Wharton passionately. "A den of rotten wasters and sharpers and racing men—a place that's been raided by the police! You've no right to ask me such a question. It's an insult to any decent fellow!"

He stood panting.

Mr. Quelch eyed him. That outburst of angry and disrespectful indignation roused his wrath, but, on the other hand, it brought a doubt into his mind.

If Wharton was guilty, there was no ground for indignation, and this outburst could only be acting!

It did not look like it! Mr. Quelch, although his mind was made up on the subject, had to admit that it did not look like it!

"Calm yourself, Wharton!" he said quietly. "If you are speaking the truth I can understand your feelings and sympathise with them. But it appears to me impossible that you are speaking the truth. When I saw you at the gate of that disreputable inn—"

"You did not see me there!"

"Will you allow me to speak? When I saw you there I remembered your likeness to Stacey, your relationship, and realised that, seen at a distance, either of you might have been mistaken for the other—"

"Stacey!" panted Wharton. He understood now, in a flash! He remembered Stacey's ways at Wharton Lodge—carefully concealed from Colonel Wharton! He had seen nothing of the sort at school. The fellow had had sense enough to chuck smoking; he wanted to shine at games. But other things—

"I therefore returned in all haste to Greyfriars," Mr. Quelch was going on, "and I found Stacey here! He was in his study, at work on a Latin exercise, and had been there some time—"

Wharton gave a savage laugh.

"You mean that he said so!" he snapped.

"Certainly he said so, and all the circumstances bore out his statement," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "At all events, he was in the House—and I had not lost a moment in returning. Stacey, therefore, is exonerated, and I am driven to the conclusion that it was you who—"

"The cur!"

"Wharton!"

"The rotten cur!" panted Wharton.

"If you mean, Wharton, that it was Stacey, and not you, that I saw—"

"What else do you think I mean?" exclaimed Harry. "What the rotter does is no business of mine, and I don't want to accuse him, but if you saw a fellow who looked like me, you know as well as I do that it could have been nobody but Stacey."

"You are not speaking respectfully, Wharton!"

"I'm not used to being accused of being a pub-haunting blackguard!" answered the captain of the Remove.

"You deny—"

Wharton calmed himself with an effort. He knew that Mr. Quelch must have spotted Stacey, and that the scapegrace must have got back in time to the school to delude him. He was



"You should have seen me handling those Highcliffe cads!" said Bunter. "Knocking them right and left! They had enough, I can tell you! Stacey did what he could, and Wharton helped me a bit—but—" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "Oh, cackle!" said Bunter scornfully. "You wouldn't have cackled if you'd been in my place!"

quivering with anger and indignation, but he contrived to calm himself.

"I've told you where I've been, sir!" he said quietly. "I had a pull up the river in my skiff, as I've done three or four times this term. I did not land at all. If you saw any Greyfriars fellow at the Three Fishers, it was not I!"

"You mean that it was Stacey?"

"It's not for me to say who it was! It was not I!"

"If it was not you, Wharton, it can only have been Stacey. No other boy in the school resembles you."

"That's for you to settle, sir! All I know is, that I never went near the place, though I passed it, of course, twice, going up the river and coming back."

"If you did not land—"

"I did not!"

There was a long silence in the Remove master's study. He was convinced that the junior he had seen was not Stacey. Yet he doubted now whether it was Wharton. At the same time it was absolutely certain that it was one or the other of them!

Mr. Quelch had had plenty of problems to solve in his long career as a schoolmaster, but he had never been up against a problem like this.

He was, in fact, in a helpless dilemma.

"I am placed in a very difficult position, Wharton," he said, at last. "A possibility exists—a remote possibility—that the boy I saw may have been Stacey; that he succeeded, somehow, in forestalling my return to the school—that he has deceived me! It is scarcely possible, but—but the bare possibility exists! If you persist in your denial—"

"Do you want me to confess to what I haven't done?" asked Harry bitterly.

"I warn you not to be impertinent, Wharton! I am compelled, in the circumstances, to give you the benefit of the doubt—such slight doubt as exists!"

said the Remove master sternly. "I shall not at present report this to the Head, I shall take time to consider, and elucidate the matter further, if possible. You may go!"

Without a word, Wharton went.

He left a worried and troubled Form-master behind him.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up to Stacey!

"YOU cur!"

Ralph Stacey started to his feet.

He was giving the finishing touches to that Latin exercise, when the door of Study No. 1 flew open and the captain of the Remove strode in.

He came in with white face and flashing eyes, and Stacey stared at him in sheer astonishment.

In the days that had elapsed since the row with the Highcliffe fellows, there had been a truce, if not peace, in that study. Harry Wharton had been too careful to give the new fellow a pretext for withdrawing the olive-branch. It was very likely that Stacey, on reflection, had wished his impulsive words unuttered, but if he was looking for a cause of offence as a pretext for a renewal of the feud, Wharton gave him none. It was settled that he was to play in the Courtfield match, due on Wednesday, and though the two juniors had spoken little, they had, at all events, had no further trouble. Now, however, all these considerations were thrown to the winds! It was not Stacey now who was hunting trouble—it was Wharton, and he seemed to be hunting it hard!

"You cur! You cur!" he panted, as Stacey stared at him blankly. "Oh, you rotten cur!"

"Thanks!" Stacey was cool again at once. "Might a fellow ask what's bitin' you?"

"You don't know?" shouted Wharton. "You shady, rotten, blackguardly pub-haunter, you don't know what you've done?"

Stacey shut his lips hard for a moment. Of Mr. Quelch's suspicion regarding Wharton he knew nothing. But he knew that Wharton had been on the river, and he wondered whether his Form-captain had seen him getting out of bounds.

"So you've been spyin'?" he asked contemptuously.

Wharton clenched his hands.

"Spying!" he repeated.

"If you've been watchin' me, much good may it do you!" said Stacey, with a sneer. "Are you goin' to tell Quelch, or let your uncle know? If you try the tell-tale game, you won't find it easy to pin me down."

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"You fool!" he said. "I've not seen you at your rotten games, and I shouldn't take any notice if I did."

"Then what do you mean—if you mean anythin'?"

"You know that Quelch saw you—"

"No bizney of yours, if he did," answered Stacey coolly. "And Quelch is happily convinced by this time that he didn't."

"Do you mean to say that you don't know what Quelch thinks?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Goodness knows what the old bird thinks!" drawled Stacey. "I don't know, and I can't say I care!"

"He thinks he saw me at that den."

"Great pip!"

Stacey gave a jump.

Some of Wharton's fierce anger died away as he saw that the fellow was genuinely astonished and startled. The black and bitter suspicion had been in his mind that Stacey had taken advantage of the likeness between them to land his guilt on innocent shoulders.

But he could see now that that was not the case. Stacey had gone pub-haunting, and had lied to save himself. But it had never occurred to him that his relative would be brought to book in his place.

He stepped to the door, and shut it. Then he faced the captain of the Remove again.

"Let's have this clear," he said quietly. "Do you mean to say that Quelch fancies it was you that he spotted?"

"You didn't know that?"

Stacey sneered.

"You can believe I knew it, if you like. I suppose it's the sort of thing you would believe."

"I did think so," said Harry. "You might have known it, anyhow, if you'd thought for a minute. He saw one of us, and you made him believe that it was not you."

"I wasn't thinking of you at all. I knew he'd seen me, but it was at a distance, and I hoped he hadn't recognised me. I got back to the school in time, and spoofed him when he came up here, and thought it was all right. I'd forgotten all about your dashed likeness to me. Do you fancy I'm thinking about it every minute."

"I suppose not; but—"

"Then he's nailed you?"

"Yes."

Stacey whistled.

"Flogging, or the sack?" he asked.

"Neither!" said Wharton bitterly. "I'm given the benefit of the doubt. I'm going to be under suspicion, distrusted by my beak, watched by the prefects; looked on as a doubtful character."

"Thank goodness it's no worse!" said Stacey, with a breath of relief. "If you were up for the sack, I don't know what I should do. Thank goodness it's not so bad as that!"

"It's bad enough!"

"I know."

"Do you think I can stand it?" exclaimed Wharton, his passionate anger breaking out again. "I've always been a decent chap. Do you think I can stand this?"

"I don't see how it can be helped," answered Stacey coolly. "What's done can't be undone. If I'd known that Quelch was going to make such a silly mistake, I'd have acted differently. It's too late now."

"You can go to Quelch and tell him the truth."

"Don't be a fool! I might have done that earlier. I might have got off cheap as a new boy, and inexperienced, and all that. I should have got off with a flogging at the worst. But after pulling Quelch's leg, and making a fool of him—You know what it means if Quelch finds me out."

"It means the sack; and you deserve it!"

Stacey laughed.

"Give every man his deserts—and who shall escape whipping, as jolly old Shakespeare remarks!" he said flippantly. "I cannot afford to be sacked, my dear relative. You know I'm dependent on your uncle—as stiff an old ramrod as I ever saw. What sort of an impression would it make on Colonel Wharton, if I was turfed out for bad conduct, before I'd been a couple of weeks in his old school?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The dear old colonel would get shut of me on the spot," he said. "You know it as well as I do."

"You should have thought of all that before. Nobody asked you to play the goat. You're bound to take what's coming to you—not leave it to another fellow."

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"That would be sporting, wouldn't it?" sneered Stacey. "I can't afford to be sporting to that extent. Poor relations can't."

"It would be only decent."

"Nothing doing."

Wharton clenched his hands again, and his eyes blazed.

"Do you mean to say that you're going to leave it at this?" he asked, in a choking voice. "Leave me suspected, distrusted; looked on as a rotter who's barely dodged the sack—"

"Not my fault, if you're so jolly like me to look at," said Stacey. "I got it in the neck from those Highcliffe cads, for the very same reason. It's inconvenient to both of us, but we've both got to put up with it. I can assure you that I hate having a double in the school as much as you do."

"You couldn't have fobbed Quelch, but for that."

"I suppose not—now I come to think of it. The old bean has sharper eyes than I fancied."

"You're bound in common decency to own up—"

"Cut it out!"

"Then you're leaving it at this?"

"What else can I do?" exclaimed

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When you have finished this number of the MAGNET you will want another grand school yarn to read. Here's a great story of cricket and school adventure that will fit your need to a "T"! Starring Tom Merry & Co., the popular chums of St. Jim's, it appears in our grand companion paper,

The GEM

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Stacey savagely. "I'm sorry it's happened, if that's any use; but I wouldn't be turfed out of Greyfriars to save your neck, or a dozen such necks! Don't be a fool!"

Wharton unclenched his hands. He believed that the fellow was sorry, so far as that went—not so far as undoing the harm he had done.

"And you're the fellow my uncle wanted me to be friends with!" he said, with bitter scorn. "And if we're not friends, you'll make my uncle believe that it's my fault—as you did at home. And you're going to disgrace me, and sneak behind lies and rotten humbug, and leave me to stand for what you've done. You toad! You worm! If this gets talked of in the Remove, you'll let the fellows believe what Quelch believes—"

"Better not talk of it! Quelch won't."

"You make me sick!" breathed Wharton. "Let it go at that. I can't help myself, and you won't do the decent thing. But you'll get out of this study! I can't breathe the same air as you."

"I owe you that much," said Stacey coolly. "I'll ask Quelch to change me out. Your fault if he thinks I'm getting away from the bad influence of a bad character."

Wharton choked.

With a look of loathing, he turned and left the study.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The High Hand!

"NOT Stacey?"

"No!"

"Well, I think—"

"You needn't tell me what you think, Smithy!"

"And I think—" roared Peter Todd.

"Same applies to you, Toddy!"

"Wharton, old man—" murmured Bob Cherry.

It was Tuesday evening, and Harry Wharton had pinned up on the door of the Rag the list of men for the Court-field match on the morrow.

As he stepped back fellows gathered round, and there was a general buzz as it was seen that the name of "R. Stacey" was absent from the list.

Harry Wharton looked coolly and quietly at a crowd of angry faces.

His mind was made up.

Of the new trouble that had arisen between the rivals of the Remove the juniors knew nothing; Wharton had not even told the Co.

All that the Remove knew was that Stacey had changed out of Study No. 1, with his Form-master's permission, and was now a member of Study No. 3, with Ogilvy and Russell. But they had all noticed, too, that Wharton seemed to have lost his Form-master's favour. He was still head boy of the Form, but there was an unmistakable coldness in Mr. Quelch's manner towards him.

Stacey had said that it was better to say nothing, and Wharton realised that he was right. Bandyng accusations and recriminations up and down the Form would have served no useful purpose, and even the faith of Wharton's own friends would have been put to a very severe strain if they had known that his Form-master had decided against him. But if Wharton said nothing, his feelings were deep and bitter.

With Stacey he was determined to have nothing to do, either in cricket or in anything else. If the fellows did not like it they had their remedy; they could turn him out of the captaincy.

The angry buzz in the crowd of Removites did not move him.

"My esteemed chum—" murmured Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh in dismay.

"Harry—" muttered Nugent.

"Cheeky ass!" roared Bolsover major. "What I want to know is whether we're going to stand this!"

"We're not!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"Will you let me speak?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"If you've got anything to say!" scoffed the Bounder.

"Only a few words. I'm captain of the Remove—"

"You won't stay captain long at this rate!"

"Let me speak all the same," said Harry quietly. "Stacey's a good man at cricket, and on his form he's more than worth his place in the eleven. You all know that. But he's not the sort of man we want in the Form team. You men may not agree—and I can't make it clearer. But that's my fixed opinion, and I stand by it. I'm willing to stand or fall by it. So long as I'm skipper Stacey doesn't play for the Remove. If you want me to resign, I'm ready and willing. Take Stacey in my place if you like. In that case I shall cut cricket entirely—"

"Wharton!"

"I mean every word!" said Harry. "You can choose between Stacey and me, and whatever you decide I shan't complain. My opinion of the fellow is

(Continued on page 23.)

ISAAC SNUGGER

MOUNTAIN LION



SELWYN and COLIN

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Selwyn Gore and his younger brother, Colin, learn from Isaac Snugger, a Tomahawk solicitor, that their uncle Amyas, a gold prospector, has been murdered in Canada. Snugger also informs them that Amyas Gore had, in the presence of his trusty friend, Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian, made out a will, leaving his shack at Moose Call together with his claim up in the Sunrise Mountains to the two brothers. Determined to settle accounts with the murderers, Selwyn and Colin leave for Canada in company with Snugger. Following a thrilling adventure in Tomahawk, they load up a ramshackle car with supplies and set out for Moose Call. En route, they are held up by a snowstorm and forced to camp for the night. The trio are roused from their slumbers by a pack of wolves at which they fire in quick succession.

(Now read on.)

A Startling Discovery!

"WEATHER must be bad," muttered Snugger, as the wolves scattered and fled, leaving red stains in the snow and a litter of bones, "else them wolves wouldn't hev bin driven right down here."

The trio waited awhile in the open, hoping that the shots might have been heard, but no one came.

"The trouble is," said Isaac Snugger, after they had returned to the tent, tied up the flap, and sought the warmth of their beds, "that from here on to Moose Call the way's so lonely we're hardly likely to meet a soul. But take the north-western road to Bever Creek, Little Fork, and Fort Raymond, you not only find farms and ranches a-plenty, but Russians and such like, who work the farms in the short summer. They'd help. Reckon we'll wait for daylight and then see if we

can dig the flivver out and get her back on the road."

"And find the carburettor frozen solid, the oil coagulated, and never a hope of a spark, Isaac!" grunted Selwyn doubtfully. "It looks as if we'll have to stay here a long time."

The wolves came back again later, but this time their howling had not the power to scare the tired travellers. They slept until a burst of sunshine upon the tent caused them to spring into wakefulness.

Selwyn and Colin hurried out to find a snow-clad fairyland spread before them. The glade was pit-marked with countless impressions of wolf-pads, but the wild beasts had gone. The slopes, covered with giant Christmas-trees, whose sagging boughs, almost broke under the weight of snow, nearly touched the ground.

Selwyn strode to the snowed-up car. Only one-third of it showed above the snowdrift. Snow a foot deep covered its canvas hood. Shovelling the snow clear of the wheels, he opened the bonnet, hoping that the warmth of the sun might thaw out the engine.

Meanwhile, Isaac Snugger filled up a kettle with snow, lit the primus stove under it, and began to prepare breakfast.

"Where's the road, Sel?" asked Colin.

"Over there," Selwyn answered, pointing.

"Oh, I know the direction! But you can't see the road. Apart from the pine-clad slopes everything looks alike."

"Let's go and find it," said Selwyn.

The two brothers began their search. They had not gone far when Selwyn suddenly vanished up to the chin in a snowdrift, the soft, treacherous mantle giving way under him.

Colin assisted him to scramble out, after which they took the line of the pine-clad hill as a guide, eventually managing to ascend to the road. Kicking the snow clear, they revealed the metal surface.

The two boys glanced to right and left. One way led to Tomahawk, the other to Moose Call. But there were no telegraph-poles now to lead them.

Beyond the region of the pines they saw nothing but a white, snow-clad waste which stretched as far as the eye could see.

"We're stranded here all right, Isaac," said Selwyn, when they returned to the tent. "Sergeant Threfall was right—we ought to have stayed in Tomahawk a little while longer. In any case, it seems to me that your old flivver wasn't exactly the best kind of vehicle for us to have travelled in."

"As it happens," answered Snugger cheerfully, "you can't always act right. But we'd hev made Moose Call in one more long hop if the snow hadn't kem."

The trio sat down to a breakfast of hot fried bacon and eggs, bread soaked and fried in the bacon fat, hot coffee, and canned milk with sugar. Never had the two brothers ate so hearty.

"At all events," said Selwyn, "we've got plenty of food. And we can get wolf-meat to eat if we run short."

Breakfast over, they washed up. Then Isaac put on his snowshoes.

"I'm going to climb the hills," he said. "Mebbe I'll be able to spy a ranch or a farm from the top. If I do, p'raps we'll be able to hire a sledge and a dog team and get to Moose Call."

"And leave the car?" asked Colin anxiously.

"We'll pack up all the stores, and then kem back for the car when the snow melts," said Isaac. "Nobody'll interfere with the old flivver."

"You've said it, Isaac!" laughed Selwyn. "Nobody would. We'll make a start, anyway."

Isaac slid his feet under the straps and secured the snowshoes firmly. Then he led the way with great, sweeping strokes, moving with surprising ease and speed, Selwyn and Colin toiling in the rear and keeping to the track he made.

The pines completely screened the view, and the two were soon lost in the snow-clad wilds. The trail would show them the way back to the camp.

They had revolvers with them in case of danger. After a long, hard, upward climb they came to a crest that commanded a view that swept for miles on every side.

In the far, far distance they made out the line of telegraph-poles which marked the road. They found no trace of traveller or vehicle. The whole world was white, the sky above blue, the sun a blinding disc that hurt the eyes.

Suddenly Isaac, who was spying round, uttered an ejaculation and pointed.

"Look!" he cried. "There's a house or ranch over thar!"

It certainly was some sort of building to which Isaac's finger pointed, but so far away they could make out no details. Even when Snugger swung his field glasses on to it he was in doubt.

"Looks a big place," he muttered. "But thar's no sign of life thar. Reckon it must be five or six miles away, mebber more. You boys get back to camp. I'll soon be over thar in my snowshoes, and p'raps I'll find help."

"You'll find your way back all right?" asked Selwyn, frowning.

"I'll be back pronto," answered Snugger. "No fear of my missin' the camp. If I should get lost I'll fire my gun. Looks like the weather's set fair. No more snow, boys!"

"I suppose you know best, Isaac," said Colin. "All the same, I wish we could go with you."

"I'll make quicker goin' in the snowshoes alone, boys," answered Snugger. "But you ought ter kick me for being sech a fool only to bring one pair of shoes! Don't worry about me. I'll be back for lunch."

Selwyn and Colin watched him go swinging away at a surprising speed, and then made their way back to the camp. They climbed into the car and waited.

Isaac had been gone about an hour when the sky suddenly clouded over and a flurry of fine snow blotted out the trees of the glade.

Colin began to feel worried.

If Snugger's tracks should all fill he might soon be lost, for every place looked alike. When the fall lightened, and they looked out, they found most of the trail obliterated. The anxious minutes dragged on, but there was no sign of Snugger.

Sheltering over at that farm or ranch, the brothers supposed. There was no need to be alarmed. People must be living there. And they, at all events, would know the glade in which the car was stranded.

Snow a foot deep piled itself on the fall of the night before, after which the flurry almost ceased. But the clouds hung overhead, and still Isaac did not return.

Selwyn whipped out his gun and fired it into the air.

"That'll let Isaac know where we are!" he muttered. "If he doesn't soon come, one of us must go in search of him. The drifts are deep. He may have fallen and hurt himself."

He fired a second shot, listening eagerly to the dying echoes.

But no answering signal came.

Selwyn was about to start out and look for Snugger, when the solitary figure of the solicitor came speeding down the pine-clad slope. His fur cap and skins were peppered with white, and he waved his hand eagerly as he came, hot and flushed, from the exercise down to the camp.

"Glad you're back, Isaac!" said Selwyn excitedly. "Did you have any luck?"

"Nary a trace of it," Snugger barked, and his manner was grave. "I made the ranch before the flurry came,

but nobody was thar. Ain't bin since winter came, I reckon. And here's the odd thing, for it hadn't bin reported in Tomahawk nor in Edmonton, the place wuz all burnt out. It's jest a shell. Only the walls an' part of the roof standin', all smoke-grimed an' seared with flame. The barns are all empty, and there's no sign of life, and no message scrawled for anyone to read."

"What can we do about getting help?" asked Colin.

"Dunno," said Snugger, shaking his head and sticking up his chin. "Got to stay hyar to-night, anyways. But we can't stay on indefinite. I reckon the road to Moose Call won't thaw out for some time. I'll hev to plan something."

Snugger's customary cheerfulness had gone. It was plain that his visit to the burnt-out ranch had depressed him. And the mood was catching.

"Wonder what burned that place?" he would say at intervals. "Wonder whar the folks lit out to? They never kem into Tomahawk, or they'd have talked about it. It's queer."

"See any wolves?" asked Colin, anxious to change the topic.

"Plenty of tracks in the woods," answered Isaac. "Guess they'll be back again to-night."

Sure enough, night had scarcely come when the baying of the hungry beasts echoed in the distance. And before lights were put out for the night they were circling round the tent and the car, making the night hideous with their howls.

"Durn 'em an' drat 'em!" muttered Isaac. "But we won't shoot any more unless we're obliged."

Soon the sound of loud, deep snoring told that Snugger was fast asleep. But it was a long while before Selwyn and Colin dozed off. It was not the howling of the wolves which kept them awake, for they had got used to it. But there seemed to be something in the air that was ominous, threatening. Selwyn mentioned it to Colin.

"I wish the day would come," he said. "I feel queer inside, and it's not indigestion."

"That's odd. I feel that way, too," answered Colin. "It's the loneliness and Isaac moaning on about the fire."

Although the baying of the wolves continued, Selwyn and Colin eventually dozed off.

Prowlers of the Night!

A SUDDEN cessation of sound after a prolonged period of noise will awaken a sleeper as effectively as a deafening report imposed upon a deathly silence.

In the small hours of the morning, when Selwyn awoke, all was quiet. No patter of wolf pads on the snow; no baying and howling. It was the silence which wakened him, he thought.

Colin, who lay next to him, stirred under his blankets.

"Sel," he said, "the wolves have gone. I heard them scuttle away a while ago. Got tired of waiting, I suppose."

Snugger was snoring louder than ever, talking in his sleep, too.

"Bust an' durn them dratted wolves!" the brothers heard him complain to the canvas walls.

The truth thudded home on Selwyn's brain like a hammer stroke.

"Something must have scared 'em," he said.

"But what?" asked Colin.

The haunting fear of something ominous and threatening was back again. They sat gripping at their blankets, straining their ears to catch the slightest sound, and it was then that they heard soft, stealthy movements in the snow outside.

The canvas sides of the tent were lit by the flooding moonlight, and as they looked around, a shadow came between it and the moon. It was the shadow of a man.

"Look!" whispered Colin hoarsely, groping for his gun.

Selwyn held his breath. His fingers closed about the butt of the revolver Threfall had given him. But the shadow had vanished.

"Sel, we didn't dream it, did we?" asked Colin, in a low voice.

"No. There was a man outside. Listen! Hear him moving? The sound's the same as Isaac made with his snowshoes."

Selwyn edged himself out of his bed, untied the strings of the tent flap, and threw it open. Colin joined him, and both peered out.

At first glance they failed to trace the shadow. Everything looked as usual. The car was still there, its front wheels and engine clear, the back wheels buried right up to the axles. Beyond the car the snowclad pines hung like white giants on the slopes.

It was the clank of a petrol can striking the door frame of the car that told them where to find their man.

He was standing beyond the car, screened by it. He moved into view carrying a petrol can to a dull accompaniment of crunching snowshoes.

Was he a thief?

Selwyn was so petrified with surprise that he remained motionless whilst the man set the can down in the snow and unscrewed the cap. It was not until the man hurled the can into the car that Colin remembered he had a gun.

The next moment he fired.

Braang!

The report of the shot rang deafeningly, the man catapulted over backwards, then landed on his feet again, and, with a yell, started streaking for the shelter of the pines.

Braang, braang, braang!

Selwyn fired three more shots after the fleeing figure. Then Colin's gun began to bark.

The man did not turn. Ducking, dodging, and side-stepping with surprising alacrity, considering the heavy snowshoes he wore, he soon faded away among the pines.

Then Snugger's voice rang out in alarm.

"Jumpin' rattlesnakes!" he bellowed. "What game are ye two boys playin' at?"

Colin turned his head and saw Snugger rise up from his bed, a pin-fire revolver in his right hand.

Colin had no sooner noticed this than he saw something more—a n o t h e r shadow thrown upon the canvas wall from the outside.

"Look, Snugger!" he called out.

As Isaac glanced round, he saw the shadow of a man emptying a can of spirit over the canvas tent.

"Sweet-scented mackerel!" yelled Snugger, levelling his gun at the shadow.

He pulled the trigger, and the hammer thudded on the pin.

Tap!

There was a dull clicking sound, but no explosion.

Snugger pulled the trigger twice more, but the hammer drove the pins into the shells without discharging them. It was left for Colin to remedy the failure by firing across Isaac's body.

Braang!

The bullet almost grazed Snugger's jutting chin as it flew by and drove a hole through the canvas.

Braang!

Snugger reeled away from Colin's second shot, and they saw the shadow drop.

"Got him!" said Colin grimly. And indeed he had very good reason to believe that he had shot his man, for the range was point blank, and Colin could handle a gun.

Isaac tossed his pin-fire revolver down and groped for his Winchester.

"Watch me blaze daylight through the rat!" he cried, as he sprang to the door.

But the man who had dropped was not dead, nor even wounded, for Colin heard him snap on an automatic lighter as he crouched in the snow, and saw the wavering flame touch the canvas.

Boof!

The spirit exploded with a dull report and a spreading flame. In a moment the saturated canvas was alight.

As Selwyn tore the tent flap open, the dull thud, thud, thud, and swish of retreating snowshoes told that the night-prowling rascal was on his way.

Selwyn leaped out into the snow. The running man showed a black, moving shadow against the moon-drenched snow. Selwyn emptied his gun on him, but the figure did not halt or falter.

Up among the pines the other figure flitted into view, and then vanished again.

"Lemme hev a smack at 'im!" howled Snugger savagely, as he swung the butt of the Winchester to his shoulder.

The gun cracked.

Again and again Snugger fired, but the figure was dodging and ducking like a scared rabbit. It turned up the slope, where a jutting hump screened it from view. The straight boles of the pines helped further to conceal it.

Isaac raced after the fleeing figure, but, without his snowshoes, he could not move with the same speed, and soon he came trailing back, the Winchester under his arm.

"Cleaned out the magazine snipin' them raiders," he said bitterly, "and never hit once!"

The tent was now flaming like a torch. Colin had thrown everything he could lay his hands on out into the snow the moment the fire started. Now he came into view, hurling out a lamp, Isaac's gun in the green baize cover, a box of ammunition, and some food-stuffs.

Selwyn leaped forward, and grasped Colin by the arm.

"Stay where you are!" he ordered. "Want to be burned alive?"

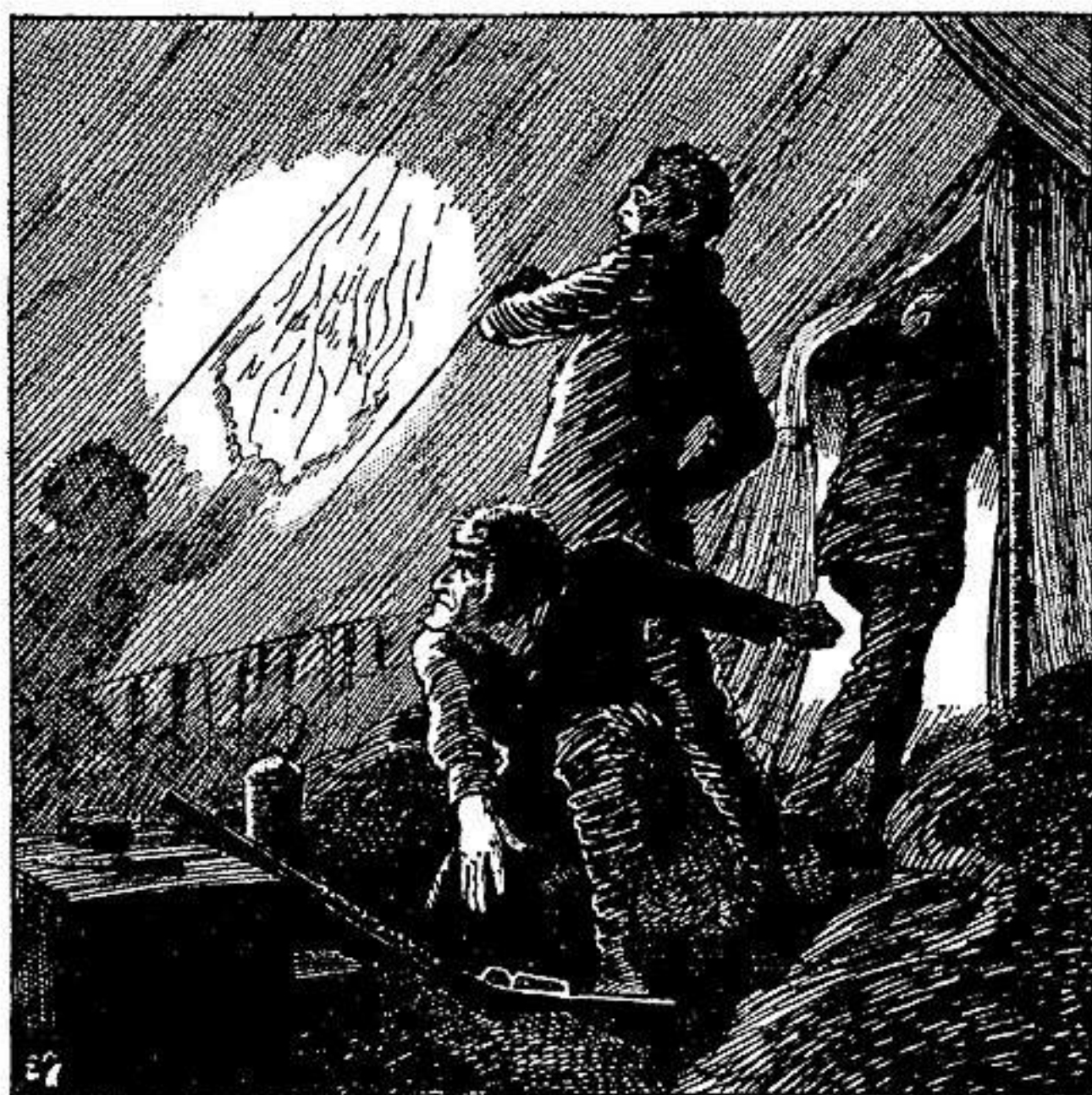
"We must save the things in the tent," said Colin, trying to wrench himself free of Selwyn's grip.

"You can't. Look! The tent's doomed!"

The flames had run rapidly and fiercely upward. The roof of the tent was blazing. Bits of burnt canvas dropped inwards.

The light breeze carried fleecy, burning particles to the old flivver, and as some of these whirled beneath its hood there was another loud explosion and the car was alight.

Selwyn had seen petrol blaze before. Though he hurled snow upon the flames as fast as he could pick it up in double handfuls, he knew that the effort was



Colin heard the snap of an automatic lighter and saw the wavering flame touch the canvas. Boof! The petrol exploded with a dull report and a spreading flame!

wasted. Isaac Snugger's old flivver had reached its journey's end. Only scrap-iron would be left when the snow melted.

Finding there was no hope, Selwyn gave up his attempt to save it, and, whipping out of his pocket a jack-knife, he opened its big blade.

With this he slashed the tent cords as he ran round the blazing shelter, but he could not free the poles and supports, and the gallant effort failed. Within fifteen minutes of the start of the blaze the tent collapsed into a heap of charred debris.

The car blazed for much longer than that, the wind sweeping the flames to the near-by pines and lighting them up into flaming torches. But the melting snow helped to put the fire out, and when at last the grey dawn broke, after a brief interval of blackest night, it revealed three disconsolate figures draped around the ruins of the camp in the very heart of the snow-clad wilderness.

Mountain Lion!

IT was a hopeless sort of dawn for the stranded travellers. The primus stove had been destroyed, together with other things. Most of the canned foodstuffs had burst and perished in the flames.

They had saved two rugs, one blanket, their guns and the rifles, together with one box of mixed ammunition. The car was just a twisted heap of scrap-iron. The petrol supplies had gone with it.

The trio had just the things they stood up in, their skin coats having been burnt with the tent. Selwyn had his fur cap, having worn it while asleep. Isaac, too, had his. Colin was bare-headed.

As they made a list of the salvage Selwyn gave a yelp of dismay.

"What's the matter now, boy?" Snugger asked, with a grim smile.

"Only one snowshoe," said Selwyn, holding up to view the article in question.

"An' you can't beat world's records on one shoe," commented Isaac grimly. "But at that I reckon you can hop along."

When the sun rose they found the tracks left by the incendiaries trailing plainly across the snow, and followed them for quite a way, until a long and searching glance across the snow-clad waste told them that it would be worse than useless to try to overtake the enemy.

The men had moved fast when they fled. Doubtless they had travelled all night. The trail indicated that they had gone back in the direction of Tomahawk, but that might have been merely to act as a blind.

"I wonder who they were, and why they did it, Isaac?" mused Selwyn, as he scowled across the landscape where nothing moved and only inanimate objects showed up against the white bed.

"It seems pretty plain," growled Snugger savagely. "You can bet all you hev they're pals of the man who shot at you boys back in Tomahawk. Shouldn't be surprised if that killer wasn't one of 'em. And as to why—have you forgot your Uncle Amyas' will hid in the vaults below my place in Tomahawk? If you and me and Colin were wiped out, boy, that will wouldn't operate. Boys, the men who murdered your uncle set our camp alight, last night. As to why—with us dead who'd there be to stop 'em stealin' that gold claim up in the mountains beyond Moose Call?"

"I think you've hit it, Isaac," Selwyn answered solemnly. "But, in that case, why didn't they shoot?"

Snugger's chin moved up to meet his long nose, and he munched with it.

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grotesquely He addressed himself to Colin.

"Their aim was to fire the tent and the fiver and get us stranded. After that, if we'd run out, they'd have lead-plugged us shore. They aimed at havin' the drop on us, see? Selwyn spoilt their little game by wakin' up, and the shots he aimed at them scared the life out of 'em. So they lit up the blaze and flit."

"Wish I'd plugged one of 'em!" said Selwyn savagely. "Did you get a good look at 'em, Snugger?"

"Good enough. But you couldn't see their faces, they wuz that muffled up. Big men, though. Yet I'd never be able to identify 'em."

Selwyn scanned the whitened scenery, hoping that he might be able to pick up some distant moving object. But it was a futile hope.

"What are we going to do now, Snugger?" he asked. "Trudge back or go on to Moose Call?"

"Guess we'll go on," answered Snugger gravely. "But we're in a tight corner, boy. Only enough grub left to last a few days. Not enough clothes to keep us from freezin' at night. When the sun goes down, it'll be many degrees below zero on the ground. No sledge, no snowshoes, and the snow layin' thick in drifts off the road."

Selwyn nodded.

"Of course, those brutes who burnt us out calculated on that!" he muttered.

"Calculated to strand us out in the wilds if they couldn't shoot us up," Snugger ventured to suggest. "They know we can't live long out hyar. An', mebbe, if we wuz to try to trek back to Tomahawk we'd find 'em lurkin' in ambush, aimin' to shoot us soon's we showed up."

"What about making for a farm?" suggested Colin.

"Boy, there ain't any farm near. Nighest I reckon is that one we saw about thirty mile back as we druv hyar. Don't think we could make it."

"Can we make Moose Call?" asked Selwyn.

"We ken try. Better shoulder our goods and start walkin', an' we may find a snug shelter before night."

"What about the 'wolves'?" Selwyn reminded Snugger.

"Yes. There are the wolves. They'll stalk us. If the worst kems to the worst, we could eat wolf carcass for food. The brutes won't attack us ef we keep on movin'."

"You're right about those murderers, Isaac," said Selwyn. "They believe we'll perish in the snow. Well, it is up to us to disappoint them. Let's get back to camp and pack our things, then push on. We are going to get to Moose Call."

They hurried back to the camp, sometimes trudging almost knee-deep in snow. On the way, Selwyn blamed themselves for not having moved north-westward at daybreak instead of wasting time following the trail of the incendiaries.

They apportioned out their belongings into three separate packs, and these they tied to their shoulders, using the odd lengths of the tent ropes they found lying about.

"Let's get out of this place," said Selwyn, as he cast one last long lingering glance about the glade. "I hate it. We did a bit of work when we got snowbound here. It beats me how our enemies managed to find us."

"It's not so mysterious, really," grunted Snugger, as he sloped the long rifle in its green-baize cover over his fur-clad shoulder. "Everybody in Tomahawk knew where we were bound for. It's my opinion they followed in a car and brought snowshoes with them in case."

"They'd be able to learn we'd gone on from askin' neighbours right up to the limit of the telephone area. After that the road runs straight out to Moose Call, the lakes, an' the Sunrise Mountains. I expect they kept well behind. Mebbe they spied us travellin' along the road by looking from the hills."

"The rascals worked cleverly, boys. Never let us hear the sound of their car. Crept down on us in their snowshoes. Do you remember the night before last how them wolves scattered after we'd killed some? I thought it strange they bolted like that. Those men must have heard our shots and kem down to the camp. That's why the wolves scampered away."

"And they're the men who killed Uncle Amyas," said Selwyn, as they passed out of the glade, and, making the road, began to trudge along it, their feet sinking deep into the loose snow. "We came within point-blank range of them shot at them, and they got away. What asses we are!"

"We'll have better luck next time," Snugger assured the two boys encouragingly. "It wuzn't so easy snipin' them dodgin' figures in the moonlight. Next time we'll be more careful. We wuz part sleepy, and a bit rattled."

"I wonder if they will follow us?" said Colin, swinging onward with lusty strides, his blood racing hotly through the strenuous exercise.

"Mebbe. Hope so. I c'd pick 'em off with my long rifle at half a mile," said Snugger.

(There are more big surprises for the three adventurers, and for you, in next week's chapters of this gripping yarn. Be sure you read them, chums.)

RIVALS OF THE REMOVE!

(Continued from page 24.)

this—that he ought not to be in a team with decent fellows, or in a decent school at all. But if you want him, I stand down—and I've got nothing more to say!"

With that Harry Wharton walked out of the Rag, leaving the Remove in a roar.

Harry Wharton captained the Remove in the match at Courtfield the following day. The best junior cricketer at Greyfriars was left to do as he liked, and deep and savage was the grousing in the cricketing fraternity.

Bob Cherry took a hopeful view.

"After all, we've won matches before without Stacey," Bob declared, "and we can win matches again. It's a pity—but Stacey isn't the only jolly old pebble on the beach."

Which was perfectly true. It was a pity to lose such a man, but the Remove were no worse off than if Stacey had never come to Greyfriars. But that view, though reasonable enough, did not meet the case. First of all, the Bounder angrily declared that if Stacey was scratched he would resign from the team as a protest; and, though he afterwards regretted those hasty words, Smithy was not the fellow to eat them—and he stood out. That meant the loss of a good man. Added to that, the whole team was in a state of discontent and resentment at what they regarded as their skipper's high-handed and headstrong proceedings—and that mood was not a winning mood.

Greyfriars had often beaten Courtfield, but on this occasion they did not beat them; they barely forced Trumper & Co. to bat a second time, and were handsomely defeated by very nearly an innings. And they returned to Greyfriars angry and disappointed and savage.

That evening, when Harry Wharton went up to prep, he found a chalked inscription on his study door. It was brief, but to the point:

GET OUT!

It was a strong hint of what was coming!

THE END.

(Now that Ralph Stacey is getting more popular, Harry Wharton is booked for a very lively time at Greyfriars, so don't miss next week's rousing long complete school yarn, entitled: "HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!" It's the real goods!)

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