

Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co., the "The Hero of the Hour!"
Chums of Greyfriars, in . .

The Magnet

2^D



Bunter the General!



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.

HAVE you ever wondered what life will be like on this earth in a hundred years time? I've just been reading the amazing predictions of an American professor. According to him,

TRIPS TO OTHER PLANETS

will be an everyday occurrence, for he reckons that a new chemical fuel will be discovered before that time, which will provide enough energy to lift a machine out of the earth's gravitational field. That isn't the only thing he foresees. He says that, by means of new scientific developments, chickens will grow to the size of pigs; pigs will grow to the size of cows, and cows will be as big as mastodons. Laundries, however, are going to have a thin time of it, if this professor is right. He says that cellulose goods will be so cheap that it won't be worth while having them washed, and people will simply throw their clothes away when they become dirty. Also, no one will work more than two hours a day, they will live for a most lengthy period, and there will be no more colds, influenza, or suchlike complaints. Sounds interesting, eh, chums?

Here's another idea from Fisher T. Fish's country. Have you ever heard of

HOUSES THAT "BUTTON-UP"?

Seems curious, doesn't it, but it's the latest idea in housing in the United States. All you've got to do is to buy a plot of land, and then order your house by post. Along it comes in a plain van, made in sections of steel, aluminium, asbestos and concrete. It can be erected in a few hours, and, although there are no foundations to it, the manufacturers claim that it will resist a wind pressure of 176 miles per hour. If you want a few more rooms, you simply "unbutton" the walls, and add the additional rooms. The main thing about the house is that it is all-electric. Light, radio, electric cookers and washing machines are provided with it. It is said that 8,000 of these houses have been ordered already.

A CROYDON reader writes to ask who is

THE STRONGEST MAN IN BRITAIN.

That distinction belongs to a twenty-four year old Yorkshireman, who recently gained the title in the first "strong man contest" which has been held in Britain for twenty years. His name is Ronald Walker. His trade is that of a carter, and one day his horse collapsed, and could not get up. The man dragged it half a mile to the nearest village! The contest at which Ronald Walker won his title was certainly a gruelling one. It lasted

for five hours, and during that time he lifted a total of 1,525 lb. While doing so, he twice broke his own record for the right hand push. Do you know how many weight-lifters there are in this country? There are twenty thousand of them—and some of them are women.

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to several interesting queries which have been put up to me by various readers:

What is the Isle of Serpents? ("Curious," of Doncaster): This is a Rumanian island in the Black Sea. It is uninhabited, except for a Rumanian patrol, but there is a lighthouse on it.

How Many Sails does a Full-rigged Ship Carry? ("Nauticus," of Bristol): A three-masted, full-rigged ship carries no less than twenty-six different sails. I am afraid I haven't space to give the full list.

What is a Polacca? (J. B., of Cardiff): A three-masted vessel, used in the Mediterranean. The fore and main masts are usually of one piece, and therefore do not carry top-caps or cross-trees. It carries a fore-and-aft sail on the mizzen mast.

When Was Scotland Yard Founded? ("Inquirer," of Chelmsford): In the nineteenth century. It was built on the site of a palace which belonged to the kings of Scotland. The present building was modelled on the style of the famous French prison, the Bastille.

HERE is a question which will interest most of my readers:

WHAT IS BUNTER?

No, not "Who is Bunter"—we all know him! The word "Bunter," in geology, means a brightly coloured variegated sandstone. Sandstones and pebblebeds of what is called the "New Red Sandstone" system in the British Isles are commonly known as "Bunter Beds."

So, if I were asked to tell you the meaning of William George's surname, I should probably reply that it meant a thick-headed youngster who had about as much brains as a block of sandstone!

A nautically inclined reader, signing himself "Interested," of Dartford, asks me to tell him something about

BUOYS AND THEIR MEANINGS.

Buoys, as you know, are of various shapes, and according to their shapes they convey a great deal of information to sailors. Take, for instance, a conical-shaped buoy. You will always find these painted all one colour. They mark the starboard hand of a channel when entering

a channel from seaward. The buoys which mark the port—or left hand—of a channel are can-shaped. They are either painted a different colour from the starboard hand buoys, or are parti-coloured.

A spherical-shaped buoy marks a shoal in the middle of a channel. If you should see a green-coloured, conical-shaped buoy, this means that there is a wreck underneath it, and ships are advised to give it a wide berth.

Important shoals are marked by Light Ships, which, in Britain, are painted red, and in Ireland, black. They carry their names in large white letters on their sides.

Have you ever wondered what

AN AIR PILOT'S EARNINGS

amount to per annum? George Jackson, who cherishes an ambition to become one, asks me if I can tell him. Actually, it depends upon the amount of flying the pilot does. He is paid a retainer of £400 per year, and, in addition to this, he gets 10s. per hour flying pay.

You might be interested in what other people earn. Here are some figures:

A skating professional makes between £15 and £40 per week; a lion-tamer gets £15 per week; a Mexican bullfighter gets £1,400 per afternoon; a London hotel cloak-room attendant gets no wages—and pays £1,000 per year for the privilege of holding his job. This is because of the large tips he receives.

NOW, just to finish up my chat, here are a few

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

The Biggest Tip Ever Paid in London. An American once gave a head waiter a tip of £250! He did it because he had just "pulled off" a £45,000 deal during the lunch he had had.

A Live Dray-horse Is Shot Every Day at the London Zoo! This is only one item of food for the animals there.

Wimbledon Tennis Balls are "Refrigerated"! Before being used in a tournament, the balls are put into a refrigerator at a temperature of 68 degrees.

There are 35,000 Film Actors in England! All these are registered—yet only ten per cent of them make a living out of it!

A Fortune for a Few Shillings! A picture bought at a second-hand shop in Clapham for a few shillings has been examined by the British Museum experts. It is estimated to be worth thousands of pounds!

Space is running short, chums, so here goes for next week's programme. Frank Richards is at the top of his form, as usual, in:

"WHO SHALL BE CAPTAIN?"

which is certainly one of the best Greyfriars yarns I have had the pleasure of reading. You'll find all your popular characters playing prominent parts, and there is just the right proportion of dramatic situations and humour. So don't miss it—and tell your chums not to miss it, either.

There will be more gripping chapters of our great adventure yarn: "Moose Call!" and you'll find plenty to make you smile in the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement. In addition, there will be another Greyfriars Interview in verse by our clever rhymester.

Cheerio, chums,

YOUR EDITOR.

The HERO of the HOUR!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Describing the bitter feud between **HARRY WHARTON** and **RALPH STACEY**,
the new boy in the Greyfriars Remove.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Left Out!

"LEAVE me out, then!"
"Don't be an ass, Smithy!"
Harry Wharton's voice was quiet, conciliatory. The Bounder's was loud and angry.

Smithy was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove. Fellows in the Remove passage could see him—and most of them could hear him. Perhaps Smithy wanted them to hear him.

A member of the Remove cricket eleven who came along to rag his skipper was not likely, as a rule, to get much sympathy from other fellows in the Form. But on this occasion the Bounder knew that he would get general support. Herbert Vernon-Smith did not always bother about being in the right when he started a "row," but this time he was in the right, and all the Greyfriars Remove agreed with him.

Harry Wharton, sitting at the study table, had a paper before him—the cricket list for the fixture at Highcliffe. The captain of the Remove had his list ready for posting up in the Rag, and he had completed it to his own satisfaction, if to nobody else's.

"I mean it!" said the Bounder, his voice still loud and heard along the passage. "If you fancy you've got Remove cricket in your pocket, Wharton, you're making a mistake, and the sooner you find it out, the better!"

"My dear chap—" Wharton, not always patient, seemed unusually

patient now. But the Bounder interrupted him.

"Are you playing Stacey at Highcliffe to-morrow?"

"No!"

The answer was short and sharp. Patient and conciliatory on other points, the captain of the Remove was evidently quite decided and determined about that.

"Then leave me out, too!"

Fellows came along the passage to look on at the altercation. Harry Wharton coloured under the stare of a

For sheer cunning, Ralph Stacey, Harry Wharton's poor relation, has no equal. But he's not lacking in pluck, as you will learn when you read this tip-top story of schoolboy adventure.

crowd of faces behind the Bounder. Peter Todd, Tom Brown, Squiff, members of the Form eleven, gave him rather grim looks. Redwing, the Bounder's chum, touched him on the arm.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" he murmured. "No good making matters worse."

Smithy shook off his hand. He was excited and angry, and he knew that all the Form was with him. Smithy was always rather given to insubordination. Now he was letting himself go.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry

came along from the stairs, fresh and ruddy, with a bat under his arm. "What's the jolly old row?"

Bob looked into the study over Smithy's shoulder. At the sight of the cricket list he did not need telling what the row was, and his cheery face fell.

"That for Highcliffe?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"I hope Stacey's in it."

"No!"

"Oh!" said Bob.

Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Frank Nugent had followed Bob up the passage. All three of them looked glum, and Johnny gave a grunt. Even the Co., Wharton's inseparable comrades, were against him in this matter. His position in the Greyfriars Remove seemed rather like that of Ishmael of old—his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

The Bounder looked round over the gathering crowd. He read encouragement, or, at least, disapproval of Wharton, in every face.

For a week or more the matter had been hotly argued in the Remove. It was well known that the captain of the Form had definitely made up his mind not to play Stacey, his relative, in Remove matches. He barred Stacey—and Stacey barred him—but that, in the opinion of the Form, was no reason for leaving out the best junior cricketer in the school. Neither was it, as Wharton himself would have acknowledged, but he had other reasons of which the Removites knew nothing.

Anyhow, his mind was made up, with

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the firmness of a rock—which rather unfortunately appeared to the other fellows more like the obstinacy of a mule.

"I say, Harry—" began Nugent.

"Look here—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed and idiotic chum—" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with a distressed dusky face.

"Chuck it, Wharton!" said Squiff.

"Don't play the goat!" said Peter Todd.

Well known as Wharton's determination was, the Remove cricketers could not quite believe that he would stick to it against the opinion of every other man in the Form! But it seemed that he was sticking to it.

His face was clouded and worried, but it was inflexible.

"This won't do, Wharton!" said Tom Brown.

"It will have to do!" said Harry quietly. "I can't and won't play Stacey—"

"What's the matter with his cricket?"

"Nothing!"

"Oh, lots!" said Skinner, from behind the crowd. "He can play Wharton's head off—that's what's the matter with it!"

Some of the fellows laughed. Wharton's lip curled. Skinner's opinion, at any rate, did not worry him very much.

"That man Stacey," said the Bounder, "plays like a First Eleven man! He's bowled Wingate at the nets—Wingate of the Sixth! Caught him, too, in the field! He's kept his wicket up against Potter, the best bowler in the Fifth. And Wharton thinks he's not good enough for our game."

"He's good enough so far as cricket goes!" said Harry. "We all know that."

"Well, it's cricket we're going to play at Highcliffe to-morrow, not hop-sotch or marbles!" said Peter Todd.

"For goodness' sake shove the man in, Wharton!" said Bob Cherry.

"Can't be done!"

"Look here—" roared the Bounder.

"You fellows have the thing in your own hands," said Harry Wharton quietly. "So long as I'm skipper I'm going to do what I think best! But you can turn me out as soon as you like."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grunted Bob. "Nobody wants to turn you out! But I—"

"It would make room for a better man!" remarked Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner!"

"It would make room for Stacey!" said Wharton contemptuously. "That's what the fellow is aiming at, and you can give him his head as soon as you like!"

"The sooner the better, I think!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Well, if the rest agree, let it go at that!" said the captain of the Remove. "I'll step down, willingly enough, to make room for a better man."

"Oh, chuck that!" growled Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed absurd Wharton—"

"A cricket captain isn't a little tin god!" said Squiff. "You know that every man here is against you, Wharton. You ought to give in."

"We can beat Highcliffe without Stacey," said the captain of the Remove. "We've beaten them before, and can do it again."

"The man's entitled to a show! Where's the sense in leaving out a man who can play all our heads off?" demanded Peter Todd.

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"Well, he's left out."

"You mean that, Wharton?" demanded Smithy, in his most aggressive tone.

"I generally mean what I say!"

"Same here, then! Leave Stacey out and you leave me out! Take my name off that list!" snapped the Bounder.

Wharton picked up his pencil. His lips were set. He had been patient with that valuable member of his team, but his patience was exhausted now. Under a crowd of staring eyes, he drew the pencil through a name on the list—the name of H. Vernon-Smith.

"That's that!" he said.

The Bounder breathed hard and deep. He had meant what he said, yet it was a hard knock to him, to see his name crossed off the list. Smithy was one of the best cricketers in the Remove, and he was very keen on the game; very keen, indeed, to display his powers on the Highcliffe ground. But it was done now! That, as Wharton had said, was that!

He turned and walked away, with set lips.

Peter Todd opened his lips, obviously with the intention of telling Wharton to take his name off also. But he closed them again—hard—and turned away.

Wharton rose from the study table. The crowd made way for him to come out of the study, and he went down the stairs—leaving the Remove passage in a buzz, like an angry hive of bees. A few minutes later the list was posted on the door of the Rag, for all Greyfriars to see if they wanted to. The name of P. Hazeldene had taken the place of H. Vernon-Smith—a change that no man in the Remove, even Hazel himself, could think was for the better. But that was that!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wharton, or His Double?

WINGATE of the Sixth Form, captain of Greyfriars, came to a sudden stop and stared as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

He hardly could!

The Greyfriars captain had been to Courtfield, and he saved time on the walk back to the school by taking a short cut across the common.

In one spot the path lay through a clump of beeches and willows amid the green grass of Courtfield common. Wingate, as he came swinging along, was thinking chiefly of first eleven cricket, but he ceased to think of even that important subject as he spotted a group sitting on a grassy bank under a spreading beech. There were four of them, and he recognised three as juniors belonging to Highcliffe School—Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson of the Fourth Form there. The fourth was sitting with his back partly turned to Wingate as he came, but his aspect was quite familiar, and he certainly was not a Highcliffe junior. He was a Remove of Greyfriars—and either Harry Wharton, or Ralph Stacey, of Mr. Quelch's Form.

Wingate stopped dead and stared. There was a fallen log in the midst of the group, which they were using as a card table. In that shady spot, screened from all eyes unless somebody came along the footpath, the knuts of Highcliffe were playing banker—and a Greyfriars junior was taking part in the game. And they were evidently not playing for fun, for half-crowns and shillings lay before them on the log, and Gadsby was taking a currency note out of a notecase, with a rather glum expression on his face—that of a loser.

The manners and customs of the knuts of Highcliffe had nothing to do with a Greyfriars prefect. Wingate would have passed on unheeding but for the sight of a Greyfriars man present. The manners and customs of Greyfriars juniors had very much to do with him. His brow darkened and his eyes gleamed. As yet the young rascals had not seen him, but he had no doubt that they would spot him if he moved nearer, and then there would be instant flight on the part of the fellow who was booked for a flogging if caught. And if he escaped, as was very likely, who was the prefect to report at Greyfriars—Wharton, or Stacey? Honestly, he did not know.

The likeness between Harry Wharton and his relation who had come into his Form at Greyfriars had caused a lot of confusion at various times.

It was undoubtedly very awkward for a fellow to have a "double" at school.

Seen together there was no difficulty in distinguishing one from the other; seen separately a second glance was needed—and at a distance even a fellow who knew them well could not be sure.

Wingate, with a grim brow, stared hard. If the young rascal would turn full face to him it would be easier. At the moment he could only say with certainty that it was either Wharton or Stacey.

The doubt was, perhaps, in favour of Harry Wharton. He was friendly with the cricketers at Highcliffe, but on fighting terms with Pon & Co. of that school. If this was Wharton, he had made up his long-standing quarrel with Ponsonby. Only a couple of weeks ago Wingate had heard that Pon & Co. had ragged Stacey in mistake for Wharton. That was at the beginning of the term, when Stacey had first come. If this was Stacey, he had made friends with the raggers since.

Wharton gambling with the Highcliffe crew! It did not seem possible. But Wingate was not ignorant of the fact that Mr. Quelch had been "down" on Wharton all this term—and had, indeed, given the prefects a hint to keep their eyes open in his direction. That looked as if Wharton had had a change for the worse—possibly with this result.

"The young sweep!" muttered Wingate angrily.

In the case of any other delinquent he had only to take his name, but in this case it was a more difficult matter.

As head prefect of Greyfriars he could not possibly let it pass. But he could hardly report to Mr. Quelch that either Stacey or Wharton had been "blagging" with the Highcliffe crew—he didn't know which.

He had to know which.

As he stood at a distance, staring at the group, Ponsonby's glance fell on him. The dandy of Highcliffe started.

But, except for a slight start, he gave no sign that he had seen the tall figure of the captain of Greyfriars.

"Keep quiet, you men," murmured Pon in a low voice. "Don't jump. There's a prefect from your school up the path, Stacey, old bean, and he's got an optic on us."

Had Wingate heard that, his doubt would have been resolved on the spot, but he was too far off to hear a syllable.

The junior who was so strangely like Harry Wharton started in his turn. He did not look round, but he moved slightly to turn the back of his head to the senior up the path.

Gadsby and Monson grinned at one another. They were thankful that it was not a Highcliffe prefect who had blown along; they had nothing to fear from a prefect of Greyfriars.

Stacey breathed hard. He was very careful—very careful indeed—at Greyfriars. His relative, Wharton, knew of the blackguardly strain in him, but he was very careful to keep it from general knowledge.

"Is he coming this way?" he breathed.

"No; he's stopped—just starin'."

"Who is it?"

"Wingate."

"Oh, what rotten luck!" muttered Stacey.

Of all the senior men at Greyfriars, Wingate was the one upon whom he most desired to make and keep, a good impression. Wingate, as captain of the school, was head of the games, and already he had talked very plainly to Wharton about leaving the new fellow

when we first met you, Stacey, old thing."

Stacey had already guessed what was in Wingate's mind, though he had not looked at him.

A hard look came over his face.

His likeness to Wharton had served his turn before, and if he could manage it, it was going to serve his turn again.

"Look here, you men," he muttered, "he's not coming yet?"

"No."

"Look here, I'll cut. If he asks you questions, of course you won't tell him anything. And if he cuts after me, stop him if you can."

"Um!" said Gadsby and Monson. They were not keen on trying to stop so stalwart and hefty a man as George Wingate of the Greyfriars Sixth.

"What about to-morrow?" asked Pon. "You were comin' out with us while Wharton and his crew play cricket at Highcliffe. You're left out, aren't you?"

"Yes—but find a safer place," said Stacey. "I tell you—I can't run risks. Is he starting this way?" He dared not look round.

"No; still star-gazin'. Look here, come along to Popper's Island on the river to-morrow afternoon," said Pon. "You can get a boat, and it will be as safe as houses. We'll make a picnic of it. No prefects bargin' in there. Now you'd better cut. I fancy that man's gettin' tired of gazin' at the back of your head."

Stacey nodded.

He had not moved, so far, except



"Keep quiet, Stacey!" murmured Ponsonby, in a low voice. "There's a prefect from your school up the path, and he's got an optic on us!" "Is he coming this way?" asked Stacey, anxiously. "No—he's just starin'. It's Wingate!"

"Oh, what rotten luck!" muttered Stacey.

out of Remove cricket. Wingate would be very much less keen on backing him if he found out the kind of fellow he was.

"He's seen me, I suppose?" muttered Stacey.

"Judgin' by the jolly old expression on his face, yes," said Pon. As Pon was sitting with his face towards the Greyfriars captain up the path he had a clear view of Wingate, though he took care not to appear to be looking at him.

"Cut and run," suggested Gadsby. "You can cut through the trees; he'll never get you."

"Not much good if the chap's been seen," said Monson.

"Lots of good," said Ponsonby. "I fancy I can guess why the old bean yonder is watchin' us like a hawk, instead of bargin' in. He wants to spot who it is; he doesn't know whether it's Stacey or Wharton."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Gadsby. "I suppose he wouldn't. We didn't

"We'll do our best," said Pon. "I fancy he's waitin' for you to turn your head to get a squint at your chivvy. He's only seen you sideways so far. Make him think it's Wharton he's seen. Jolly useful havin' a double in your school if you work it for what it's worth!"

Stacey made no answer to that. With all his faults, he was far from being so unscrupulous as the cad of Highcliffe. He was willing to take advantage of the likeness, and leave Wharton to take his chance of getting trouble that was not his due. But that was his limit. He would never have planned deliberately to land his misdeeds on another fellow—even one whom he disliked so much.

"Keep your back to him an' cut," said Pon. "Once through the trees, you'll have a good start, and we'll delay him all we can."

"Right-ho! Can't risk this again," muttered Stacey. "There's too much at stake for me to land in trouble at my school."

to turn his face a little more away from the prefect up the path. When he did move, it was swiftly.

Springing to his feet, he made a sudden dive into the trees by the path, and disappeared from sight in a split second.

Wingate instantly woke to action.

Evidently, though he had not realised it so far, he had been spotted, and the junior was in flight. Wingate came on with a rapid sprint.

"Hook it, Wharton!" shouted Ponsonby.

Gadsby and Monson stared at him, amazed for a moment. Then they chuckled. That shout was intended for Wingate's benefit.

To help his pal get clear, and at the same time get in a knock at his old enemy, seemed to Pon a splendid opportunity of killing two birds with one stone.

Wingate heard. He came racing on, and reached the spot in less than a

minute. He was passing the Highcliffe trio, to dash into the trees after the escaping junior, when Ponsonby put a foot out. The Greyfriars captain tripped over it and came to the ground with a crash.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Stacey!

"CERTAINLY, my dear boy!" said Mr. Quelch benevolently. "You are very kind, sir," said Stacey.

"Not at all—not at all!"

Quelch was not always benevolent. In his Form he was somewhat likened to a gargoyle and sometimes to a gorgon. Still, he could unbend—and nothing was more calculated to make Quelch unbend than to display a thirst for knowledge.

There were fellows in Quelch's Form who were keen on acquiring knowledge. But, as in most Forms, they were few. Mark Linley and Penfold swotted a good deal; fellows like Wharton and Nugent and Field and Peter Todd did their work conscientiously. But most of the Remove regarded the end of a lesson as a happier event than the beginning of one. And some of them, like Lord Mauleverer and Billy Bunter, made Quelch wonder whether a Form-master's life was really worth living.

Stacey, the new fellow, seemed to be quite a fellow after Quelch's own heart. He was no "swot" or "sap"—for he played games better than any other fellow in the Remove; good as he was in class, he was better on the cricket field. But he took the Form work seriously; he was good at it, and evidently wanted to get on. Quelch told his Form, not once, but many times, that he was always willing to give them assistance when required out of Form; they had only to bring their little difficulties to his study. Kind as this offer was, few Removites took advantage of it.

Stacey was one of the few. Now he had arrived in his Form-master's study with a volume of Livy under his arm.

They did not "do" Livy in the Remove. Livy was supposed in that Form to be able to make a man's head ache at forty rods! If a fellow chose to have a shot at Titus Livius, of course, it made Virgil come easier. Perhaps that was why Stacey was having a shot! Or perhaps he considered it the easiest way of pulling Quelch's benevolent leg!

Anyhow, there he was—with a meek request that Quelch would give him a little aid with Livy, if he had time. Which, of course, pleased Quelch.

"Sit down, Stacey!" he said.

Stacey sat down.

He was cool and fresh-looking as usual; there was absolutely nothing about him to indicate that he had only reached the school five minutes ago, after a rapid run that would have left most fellows with bellows to mend! Stacey had ways that he would not have cared for Mr. Quelch to hear of, but there was no doubt that he kept himself as fit as a fiddle.

The entrancing volume was opened, and master and pupil bent their heads over it. A slacker in class could not have deluded Quelch for a moment, but Stacey was well enough up in Latin to give colour to his desire to "have a shot" at Livy!

It was quite a happy half-hour to Quelch, whatever it was like to Stacey. Even if the new junior felt the interest

that he affected to feel in the Carthaginian War, he could not help thinking about Wingate. The Greyfriars captain certainly had not caught him, and, so far as Stacey had observed, had not even pursued him from the clump of trees on the common. That was so much to the good, but Wingate had had ample time to get in, even if he walked slowly, and he had not got in yet. Stacey could not help wondering what was going to happen when he got in. From the open window of Mr. Quelch's study he had a view of the distant gates, and every now and then his glance wandered in that direction.

He had been a good half-hour in Quelch's study when the figure of the Greyfriars captain appeared in the distant gateway.

He came in slowly, limping.

Apparently his leg was damaged.

Stacey could see now the cause of his late arrival. He wondered whether Pon & Co. were responsible for that limp.

"I hope Wingate has had no accident, sir," said Stacey, interrupting Latin.

"Wingate—what—"

"He has just come in, sir, and he seems hurt," said Stacey.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. He rose and stepped to the open window and looked out. Quelch, like all at Greyfriars School, had a high opinion of Wingate, and he was quite concerned if the popular captain of Greyfriars had met with any accident.

His eyes fixed on the limping Sixth Former. A good many fellows in the quad looked at him also. Gwynne of the Sixth ran towards him.

Stacey, behind Mr. Quelch, watched quietly. His idea was to let Wingate see him in his Form-master's study if he could wangle it. He hoped that Quelch would speak to Wingate.

Naturally, Quelch did! Evidently there had been an accident of some sort. As Wingate came nearer to the House, the Remove-master called to him.

Wingate glanced round, and came towards the window.

"An accident, Wingate?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Wingate made a grimace.

"Nothing to speak of, sir, but I've twisted my ankle a bit. A young rascal tripped me on Courtfield Common, and I came a purler."

Then Wingate gave a start at the sight of Stacey in the study, looking out past his Form-master.

Face to face at close quarters he knew Stacey, and knew that it was not his double, the captain of the Remove.

"That's Stacey with you, sir?" he said.

"Eh? Yes—Stacey of my Form," answered Mr. Quelch, surprised by the question.

"Has he been with you long, sir?"

"About half an hour, I think. Why do you ask, Wingate?"

"I saw either Stacey or Wharton out of bounds, sir, coming back from Courtfield—at a distance. I can't say which."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"How long ago was this, Wingate?"

"More than half an hour—nearer three-quarters! I've been a long time getting back with this game leg."

"Stacey has been with me for at least half an hour, Wingate—I think more." Quelch turned to the junior. "Where were you before you came to my study, Stacey?"

"In my own study, sir. I started on Livy, and then I thought I'd bring it to you, to see if you had time—"

"Quite so—quite so! It can hardly have been Stacey that you saw out of

bounds, Wingate. You had better question Wharton."

"Very good, sir."

Wingate limped away to the door, and Mr. Quelch sat down at his table again, with a frowning brow.

Stacey's face was expressionless, but he felt a twinge. A fellow could not be expected to give himself away to a beak, he told himself, and the likeness between him and his relative was no fault of his. As he had told Pon, there was too much at stake for him to risk trouble with the school authorities at Greyfriars.

He was dependent on Wharton's uncle. Colonel Wharton had in the kindness of his heart admitted the claim of a very distant relationship, and taken him up when his father's affairs became hopelessly involved.

But the colonel, kind as he was, expected the boy to play up on his side. It was no light matter to take charge of him and send him to a school like Greyfriars on the same terms as his nephew. If the boy threw away his chances there it was his own look-out.

That knowledge might have helped to keep Stacey straight—but it did not. It did not keep him straight, but it made him ruthlessly ready to take advantage of any trickery or shuffling to escape the consequences of wrongdoing. He told himself cynically that Wharton could afford rows—he couldn't.

Still, he felt a twinge when he sat down to Livy again with Mr. Quelch. He was glad when the time at the Remove-master's disposal was exhausted and he went.

Glad to have done with Livy, he went along to the Rag. He found a crowd of the Remove there. Some of them were discussing what had happened to Wingate. Billy Bunter had rolled in with the news that Wingate had hopped home on a bandy leg. But most of them were discussing the cricket list pinned on the door. It had been there some time—Wharton had put it up before tea, and it was long after tea-time now. But the interest of that topic was inexhaustible in the Remove.

Stacey glanced quickly round the Rag. Bob Cherry and Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull were there; but Wharton was not to be seen. In his present unpopular state, the captain of the Remove was, perhaps, keeping to himself. Stacey wondered whether he had gone out gates, for a sulky tramp on his own. It would be like him, to play into his hands to that extent. If it proved that he had been out of gates at the time of the affair with Pon & Co., Wingate could hardly be left with any doubt about the identity of the junior he had seen in the card-party under the trees!

Russell and Ogilvy, his study-mates in Study No. 3, joined Stacey as he came into the Rag. They glanced at the book under his arm.

"Swotting?" asked Russell, with a grimace.

Stacey laughed lightly.

"Quelch has been helping me with this," he answered.

"Livy—my hat!" said Ogilvy. "Swot!" He jerked Titus Livius away, and punted that entrancing volume across the Rag. "How long have you been grinding that rot with Quelch?"

"About an hour," answered Stacey carelessly.

Loder of the Sixth, looking in at the doorway of the Rag, glanced at him, as he made that remark.

"You, Wharton? Oh, no, I see you're Stacey! Wharton here?"

"No, Loder!" called back Bob Cherry.

"Know where he is?" grunted Loder.

"Haven't seen him since tea."

Loder grunted and walked away. The Bouncer gave a sarcastic laugh.

"Your jolly old relative in another row, Stacey?" he asked.

"Can't say. He doesn't confide his affairs to me, you know," answered Stacey, with a smile.

"Well, if Loder wants him, it looks like a row!" muttered Bob Cherry. "What the thump has he been doing now?"

But the Co. could only shake their heads. Harry Wharton seemed marked out for trouble that term; and they were not surprised, only dismayed, to see that some fresh trouble was in the offing.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Rather a Problem!

"HARRY!" Marjorie Hazeldene smiled a little as she spoke. Harry Wharton, tramping along the path over the cliffs, did not see her as she came along. Wharton had his hands driven deep in his pockets, a wrinkle in his brow, and his eyes were fixed on the ground.

As Stacey had surmised, the captain of the Remove had gone for a tramp on his own. After the posting of the cricket list in the Rag, he was not keen on hearing what the Remove thought of it—and the comments of his own friends were more likely to lead to argument and recrimination than anything else. His own temper was ruffled; but a row in the Co. could do no good. When a fellow feels irritable or despondent, there is nothing like a good long walk to pull him round.

Wharton was feeling the benefit of the fresh air and exercise when he turned to walk back to Greyfriars, from Pegg,

over the cliffs. But he was still deep in troubled thought, and he did not see the girlish figure that came along from the direction of Friardale.

But as Marjorie spoke his name, he stopped, looked up, coloured a little, and raised his cap.

"Marjorie!" he said.

"Thinking of a problem in mathematics for Mr. Lascelles?" asked Marjorie, with a smile.

"No—a problem, but not for the maths master," said Harry, smiling, too. "We have our little problems out of class, you know."

"I think I can guess."

"Try!" said Harry.

"You are playing Highcliffe School to-morrow! And you have not got the team quite to your satisfaction," said Marjorie.

"Something like that!" said Harry. "If you're going back to Cliff House now, Marjorie, may I walk as far as your school? I—I'd like to speak to you."

"Please do!" said Marjorie.

Wharton turned and walked with her along the path towards Cliff House School. He was glad of the meeting with Hazel's sister. For one thing, she would be glad to hear that her brother was in the team going over to Highcliffe on Wednesday. For another, it was in his mind to tell her what the trouble was, and get an opinion from someone outside the Greyfriars Remove. They walked in silence for a few minutes, and then Wharton spoke abruptly.

"We've got rather a row on, Marjorie! Every man in the Remove is down on me—even my own pals! Looks as if I must be in the wrong, what?"

"That depends," answered Marjorie.

"If you care to tell me—"

"I want to, if you'll listen. I don't think I'm in the wrong—the other

fellows don't know all the facts. And I don't think I can tell them. Blessed if I know what to do!" said Harry moodily. "Look here, I dare say you've heard about a new chap in the Remove named Stacey—"

"The boy who is so like you?"

Wharton made a slightly irritable movement. He was always annoyed to hear of that resemblance.

"Everybody says so," he muttered. "I can't see that we're so fearfully alike, but I suppose we must be, as people have mistaken us for one another."

"I heard something from my brother the other day," said Marjorie. "I don't think he likes Stacey much. A Greyfriars master was attacked by a footpad in the wood, and you helped him—and it was supposed to be Stacey, because you are so much alike."

"I was in detention," explained Wharton. "I cut, and Stacey took my place, and pulled Quelch's leg. So when Prout got into a row with the footpad, it was supposed to be Stacey who helped him out. It wasn't his fault, of course—he wasn't willing to let Quelch know about the trick in the Form-room, so it had to go on, till Bunter got hold of it, and told all the fellows. Stacey looked rather a fool when it came out. Everybody thought he would get a flogging for playing such a trick on Quelch; but he got off somehow."

Wharton's lips set as he spoke.

"I got it hard for cutting detention," he said. "But Stacey got off. I thought it favouritism. Of course, he did me a good turn—if he meant it for one. But—I never asked him to, and I didn't want him to—"

He paused and flushed. "I dare say you think I'm a disgruntled ass."

"No," said Marjorie quietly.

"The fact is, we bar one another."

(Continued on next page.)

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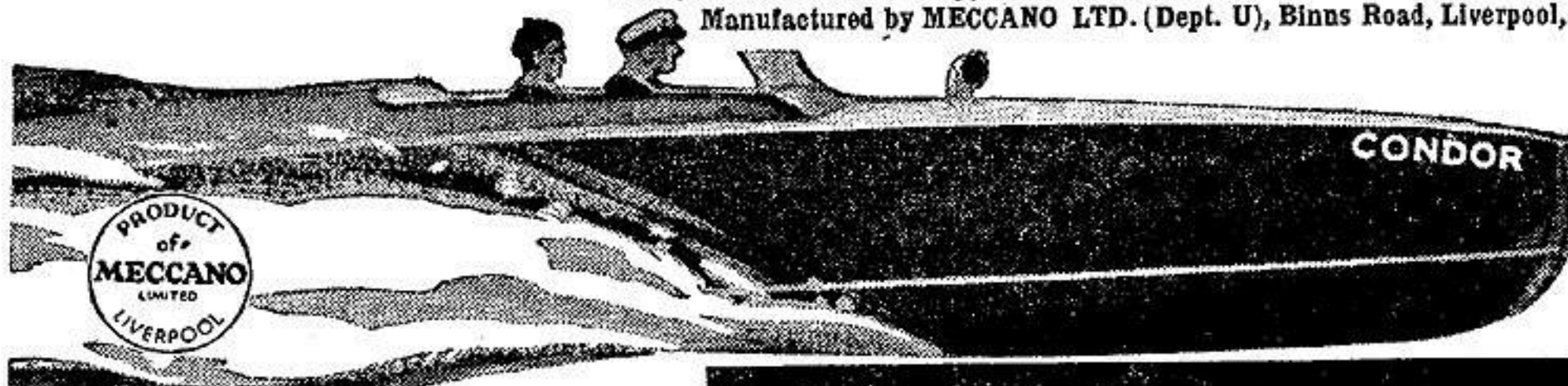
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said Harry. "I can't believe that he really wanted to do me a good turn; I think he wanted to make me look an ungracious and ungrateful ass to my own friends. Anyhow, he got clear. Quelch let him off. Rotten favouritism, I thought it."

"I don't think that!" said Marjorie. "Mr. Quelch is not a man to make favourites. He may have had good reasons."

"Stacey may have pulled his leg somehow—I shouldn't wonder. Everybody thought he would be fearfully wild with Stacey; but he wasn't. It's led to no end of trouble—Stacey being so like me."

"He is a relation?"

"Only a distant one," said Harry hastily. "People say we're almost like twins, but it's really a distant relationship. I never saw him before last hols, when he turned up at Wharton Lodge. My uncle likes him, but—"

"But you do not?"

"I think I have reason," said Harry. "You know that I have been brought up by my uncle, more like a son than a nephew. His home has always been my home, ever since I can remember. Stacey took the line that he had as much right in the house as I had—being a relation. Of course, he never let out a word of that sort before my uncle, but he gave me plenty of it. How could I be friendly with him?"

"It would have been hard," said Marjorie.

"And it seems that his father, Captain Stacey, was an old Greyfriars man, and naturally he was sent to Greyfriars. My uncle hoped that we should be friends at school. But—well, we bar one another. I can't tell my uncle the rotten things he's said, and, of course, nunky thinks it's my fault we're not friends. And then—there's the cricket."

Wharton's face clouded darkly again.

"I think I can do him justice there—he's a simply marvellous cricketer. A better man than I am at the game, and I'm not bad, really."

"I can't think that," said Marjorie.

"Oh, it's true! Any man in the Remove could tell you so. We're about equal at batting, but he's a bowler as well, and a wonderful man in the field—as good in all branches of the game as I am in one branch. He has caught and bowled old Wingate at the nets."

Marjorie smiled.

"You are doing him justice, at any rate," she said.

She did not mention that her brother, Hazel, had told her that Stacey was a swanking ass, and much over-rated in the Remove.

"Well, a chap can't help admiring his cricket," said Harry. "Honestly, it's just a wonder. If he'd play the game in other ways—" He paused. "I've left him out of the cricket. That's why we're all rowing."

"But why—"

"A lot of the fellows think I'm jealous of his game. You wouldn't think that, Marjorie?"

"Of course not! But why—"

"Mind, this is rather a secret," said Harry. "It's a thing I can't speak of at Greyfriars. Stacey kicks over the traces sometimes—he's fearfully careful, and nobody at the school has spotted him—but he plays the goat sometimes, like Smithy; and instead of swanking about it, like the Bounder, he keeps it fearfully dark. I never knew till—well, a week or two ago, Quelch spotted a Remove man out of bounds, hanging about that den—the Three Fishers, up the river. He thought it was I."

"Oh!" ejaculated Marjorie.

"Stacey got back to the school in time, somehow, and stuffed him. So, as

it was either Stacey or I, he thought—"

"Harry!"

"He gave me the benefit of the doubt," said Wharton bitterly. "He didn't really think there was any doubt but he left it at that. Of course, he thinks I've been taking him in, and he's been down on me all this term in consequence. The fellows know he's down on me, and they don't know why."

"Stacey ought to have owned up—"

"So I told him! Lot of good it was, too! Nobody knows about it," went on Wharton. "I've not told even my friends. What's the good? There's no proof either way, and Quelch is against me—that would be good enough for most of the Form. If I said anything, I should simply start a story against myself, and never hear the end of it."

"I think you should tell your friends," said Marjorie.

"What's the good? They'd try to believe me, I suppose—but I should be asking them to believe that Quelch is an old ass who has let a cunning rascal pull his leg. Stacey said that the least said was the soonest mended, and I think he was right. But—I made up my mind when that happened to have nothing further to do with the fellow in any way whatever—including the cricket! I've kept to that! And—all the fat's in the fire!"

They walked on in silence. Cliff House School was in sight now. Marjorie spoke at last:

"Would you like me to advise you?"

"That's exactly what I want," said Harry. "It's such a rotten tangle, a fellow doesn't know what to do. Even if I told my own pals about it, I can't tell all the Remove; and that leaves the thing where it is. I've offered to resign the captaincy, but the fellows don't want that—yet, at any rate, though, I suppose it's coming."

"It's not an easy matter," said Marjorie softly. "But—I think, if I were you, I should play Stacey in the cricket matches, and keep clear of him in everything else."

"I can't stand the fellow."

"But mustn't a cricket captain overcome that sort of feeling where games are concerned?" asked Marjorie quietly. Wharton coloured.

"Yes—I know! I've played fellows that I was on fighting terms with. But—Stacey's different. He's aiming at ousting me—getting in my place. It's quite plain—in fact, he has as good as told me so. Inside the team he will only think of giving me trouble. Why, if we bat together, he will think more of running me out than of getting runs."

"That makes it harder. But—"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"You think I'd better give him a chance?"

"Well, yes!" said Marjorie.

"Perhaps you're right!" said Harry, with an effort. "I've been wondering—I can't stand the fellow, and perhaps that makes me think him more treacherous than he is. And—and I suppose that business of the Three Fishers isn't likely to happen again. If it did—" He broke off. "You're a good sort, Marjorie—I think I'll take your tip!"

They parted at the gate of Cliff House School.

Harry Wharton walked back to Greyfriars—not with a light heart. He had great faith in Marjorie's judgment; and she was able to take a disinterested view of the matter. It was not pleasant to think of climbing down—of doing what he had declared that he never would do. It was not pleasant to think of Stacey's sarcastic smile when he was told that he would be wanted for the

Highcliffe match after all. But if it was the right thing to do, he was going to do it.

His mind was made up when he reached the school—in happy ignorance of what had been happening during his walk on the cliffs.

Loder of the Sixth met him as he came into the House.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Loder unamiably.

"Yes, here I am, Loder!" answered Harry. "Am I wanted?"

"Go to Wingate's study."

"Right!"

Wharton proceeded to the Greyfriars captain's study, little guessing what awaited him there, and what a difference it would make to his new resolves.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"Six!"

WINGATE sat in his study arm-chair with a leg resting across another chair. His face was not cheerful or good-tempered, as Wharton presented himself. There was a pain in his ankle, and another in his temper! That twist in his ankle meant that he would be knocked out of cricket for some days at least, which was more than enough to make Wingate very grim.

"Oh, you've come in!" he grunted.

"Loder says you want me, Wingate."

"I do!"

Wharton glanced at the extended leg. "Not an accident, I hope, Wingate?" he said.

"You didn't know about it?" asked Wingate sarcastically.

"Eh! How should I know?" asked Harry, in astonishment.

"Well, you were off the scene pretty quick, but I dare say you knew your friends were going to delay me if they could!" growled the captain of Greyfriars. "That young scoundrel, Ponsonby, tripped me, and I got a twist in my ankle when I went down."

"Ponsonby!" repeated Harry. "The Highcliffe chap?"

"You don't know, of course?" Wingate was still sarcastic.

"I don't know anything about Ponsonby, naturally! He's no friend of mine," said Wharton.

"You seem to have made friends with him."

"Nothing of the kind! I'm friends with his cousin, Courtenay, at Highcliffe—but I haven't even seen Pon since we had a scrap a couple of weeks ago."

Wingate sat up and stared at him.

"What's the good of that, Wharton?" he snapped. "You know as well as I do that I spotted you on Courtfield Common this afternoon."

"I know that I've been nowhere near Courtfield Common to-day."

"You've been out of gates?"

"Yes."

"Where have you been?"

"On the cliffs!"

"Any Greyfriars fellow with you?"

"No!"

"I thought not."

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

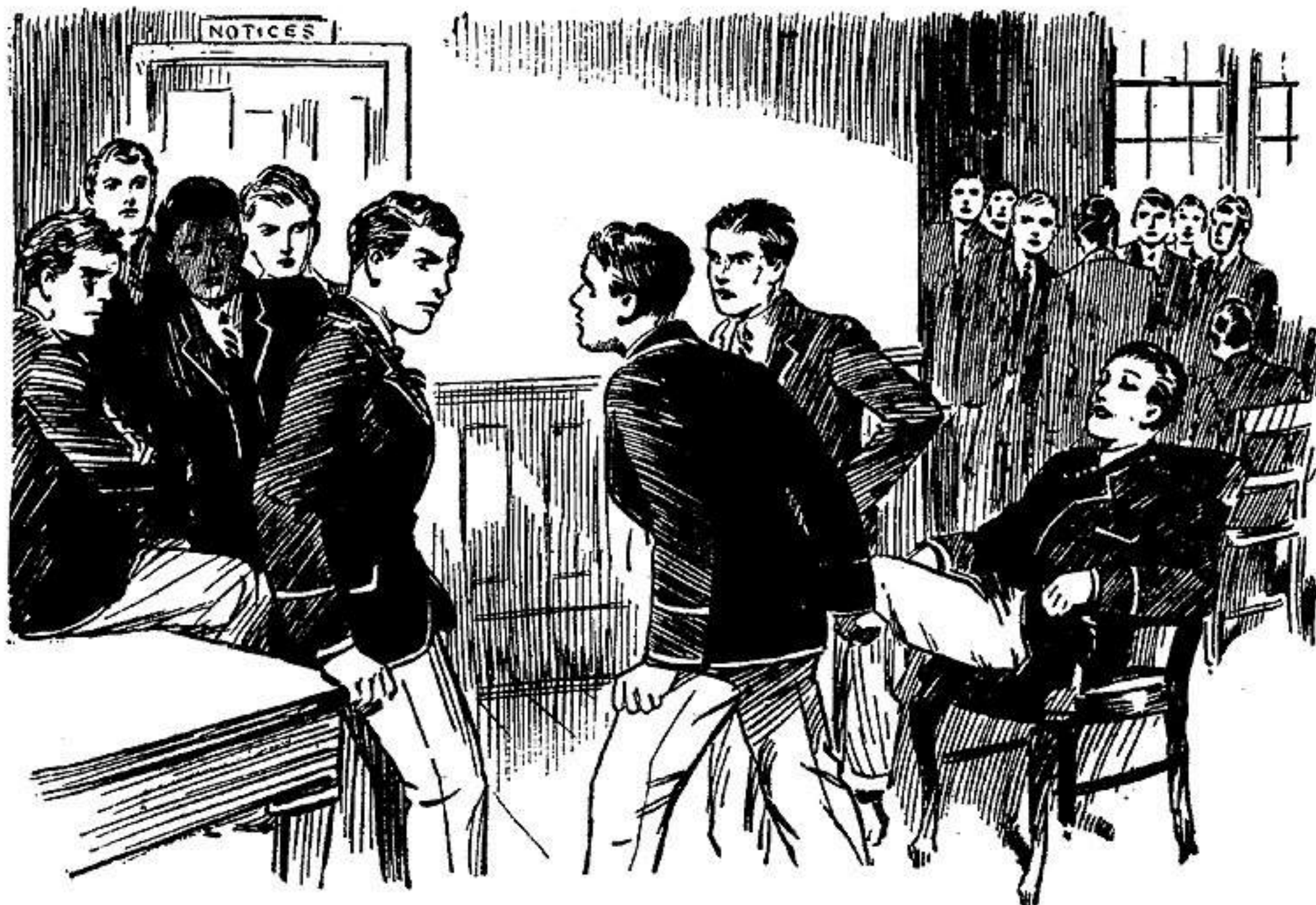
"If that means that you think I'm telling lies, Wingate, you can jolly well think so," he said. "Please yourself."

Wingate's grim face grew grimmer.

"Is that how you talk to a prefect?" he demanded.

"It's how I'd talk to any man who called me a liar—even the Head himself," retorted Wharton. "I've told you where I've been. You've a right to ask me as a prefect. You've no right to doubt my word."

"I think I'd rather doubt your word than my own eyes!" said the Greyfriars captain. "I happen to have seen you



"We want Stacey at Highcliffe to-morrow," said Squiff. "Will you give it another think, old chap?" "Next time we go over to Highcliffe to play them at nap or banker, I'll play Stacey!" said Wharton. "But not at cricket!" "That's a rotten thing to say about the fellow!" said Brown. "Not so rotten as the fellow himself!" said Wharton coolly.

on Courtfield Common with that Highcliffe crew."

"You happen to have seen nothing of the sort. Certainly you weren't likely to see me with Pon—unless you saw me punching his nose."

"I saw you card-playing with him."

"Rubbish!"

"What?" roared Wingate.

"Rubbish!" repeated the captain of the Remove fearlessly. "Silly rubbish!"

"By gad!" said Wingate, staring at him. This was rather a new kind of talk for a Sixth Form prefect to hear from a Lower Fourth junior. "You're asking for it, Wharton, no mistake about that."

"Ask any man in the Remove whether I'm friendly with that blackguard or not," snapped Wharton. "You ought to know better, Wingate."

"I suppose you're going to make out that it was Stacey I saw!"

"If you saw a fellow you took for me it was Stacey, of course, as it can't have been anybody else."

"Well, it turns out that Stacey was not out of gates, and I found him in Quelch's study when I came in," said Wingate. "And one of the Highcliffe fellows called out: 'Hook it, Wharton!'—I heard him."

Harry Wharton laughed. He realised that it was the Three Fishers episode over again. He had said to Marjorie that that was not likely to happen again, and now it had happened—in slightly different circumstances. He laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh.

"So you think this funny?" said Wingate, glaring at him. "Do you know that you might be sacked from the school for what you've done?"

"Not for what I've done," corrected Wharton. "There's no rule at Greyfriars against a fellow taking a walk on the cliffs. If there is, it's a new rule, and I've not heard of it yet."

"It was either you or Stacey, and it seems clear that it was not Stacey," said the Greyfriars captain. "I know you've not been friends with Ponsonby, but neither has Stacey. I've heard those young cads ragged him his first week here. One of you has made friends with Ponsonby since."

"I haven't!" said Wharton curtly.

"Well, it looks as if you have!" Wingate's face grew grimmer and grimmer. "It looks to me, Wharton, as if you're kicking over the traces this term, and taking advantage of your likeness to Stacey to get out of the consequences. You've worked that once with your Form-master, and now you're trying to work it with me."

Wharton laughed again.

"It's a bit different this time," he said. "Last time I was alone on the river in my skiff, and Stacey had a clear run. This time I wasn't alone."

"You've said that no Greyfriars man was with you."

"Quite! But I met somebody who would be perfectly willing to give evidence, if asked."

"Who?"

"I'm not going to tell you," answered Wharton coolly. "It was somebody who isn't going to be dragged into Greyfriars rags and rows, that's all."

"That's hardly good enough."

"It will have to be. You can report me to the Head, if you like," said Harry. "If I've been gambling with a crew of Highcliffe blackguards, I'm not a fit chap to be at a decent school like Greyfriars, and the sooner the Head turns me out, the better. Well, get on with it! If it comes to the sack, I've got my uncle to think of, and then I'll call my witness and prove that you're making a fool of yourself. Short of that I'll say nothing, and if you want to put

another fellow's rotten games down to me, get on with it!"

Wingate glanced at his watch.

"It's just over an hour since I saw you on the common with Ponsonby and his crew," he said. "Where do you say you were an hour ago?"

"On the cliff path, between Pegg and Friardale."

"That's five miles from where I saw you."

"From where you didn't see me."

"Were you alone at that time?"

"No."

"Then give me the name of the person you were with."

Wharton did not answer.

"Will you give me the name?"

"No."

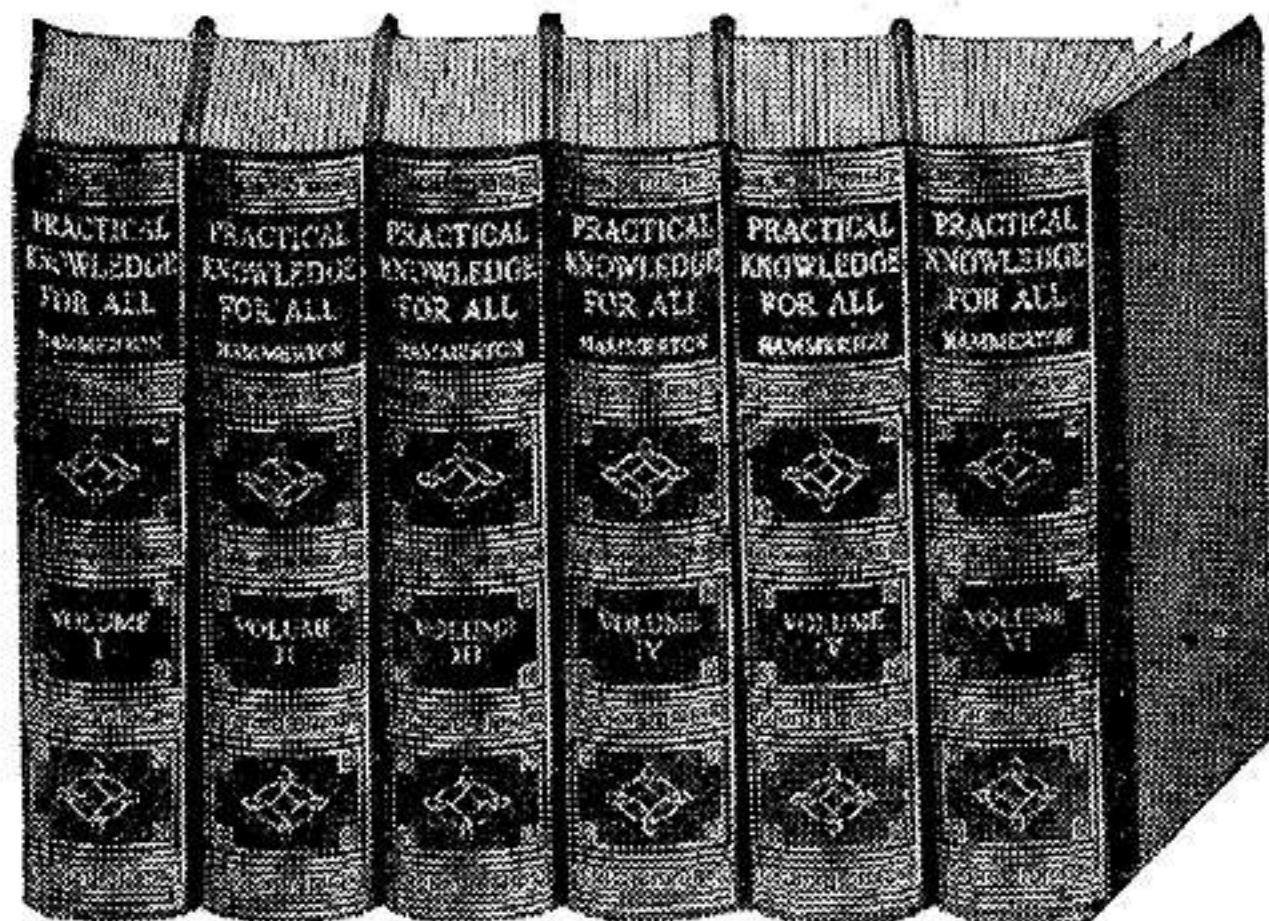
Wingate looked at him. Obstinacy like this from a junior naturally roused his ire. But he knew that there was at least a doubt in the matter. He believed that it was Wharton he had seen on the common, but, like Mr. Quelch in the previous case, he had to admit that a doubt existed. Dogged defiance from a fellow wrongfully suspected was understandable, if not excusable. And if Wharton was telling the truth—

But was he? Certainly his reputation was good. Up to this term his word would have been taken as a matter of course. But Stacey's reputation was equally good. His Form-master had a high opinion of the new junior. One of them was deceiving Quelch. But which? There was a silence.

"I believe," said Wingate, at last, "that you're a young rascal, Wharton. I fancy you've got into bad company in the holidays, and it has had a bad effect on you. What your people let you do in the hols doesn't concern us here; but it won't do for Greyfriars. I suppose

(Continued on page 11.)

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there's a remote chance in your favour, and I don't want to risk making a serious mistake. You know that, and you're taking advantage of it."

"Think so if you like."

Wingate's eyes glinted.

He was strongly inclined at that moment to march the rebellious Removite off to the Head and report him, and leave the matter in the hands of Dr. Locke.

But there was, as he had said, a chance that he might be doing injustice. Also, if it was true that Wharton had a witness whom he could produce at the last moment, the prefect's position would be rather awkward. He did not want to pose as a prefect who was deceived by a resemblance, and reported the wrong fellow in an extremely serious matter.

He breathed rather hard.

"I shall have to let this drop," he said. "But you'd better take care, Wharton! Next time there mayn't be one of your shady friends at hand to trip me up, and, by gad, if I get a clear case I'll see you booted out of Greyfriars so quick it will make your head swim."

"How am I to take care?" asked Wharton mockingly. "Do you want me to watch Stacey, and see what he does and stop him?"

"It was not Stacey I saw—it was you!"

"Nonsense!"

Wingate jumped.

"Did you say nonsense?" he gasped.

"Yes; silly nonsense!"

Wingate rose and stood rather unsteadily on his sound leg. He reached for the cane on his table.

"I'm letting you off because there's a shadow of doubt," he said. "But there's no shadow of doubt that you're cheeking the captain of the school. I'm going to give you six for that. Bend over that chair!"

Wharton stood facing him with gleaming eyes. It was in his mind to refuse to obey.

Fortunately prudence prevailed. The power of the cane was vested in a Sixth Form prefect, precisely the same as in a master. He might as well have disobeyed his own Form-master, or the Head. Wharton was in a bitter and rebellious and reckless mood, but luckily not to that extent. He hesitated, but he bent over the chair.

It was a hard six. Wingate did not generally lay it on hard, but he laid it on very hard now. Wharton was a little pale when he rose after the caning, though he had uttered no sound.

"Now cut!" grunted Wingate.

Wharton left the study quietly. He went to his own study in the Remove. He was glad to find nobody there.

He had come back to the school, after his talk with Marjorie, in a more reasonable and placable frame of mind. He had decided to take her advice and give Stacey a place in the cricket and hope for the best.

And he had come back to suspicion and punishment, because Stacey could not act decently, and was willing to let another fellow take the punishment for his rascalities!

That washed out all his new resolves. Not to save his captaincy, not to save his life, would he have anything to do with the fellow, either in games or anything else.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Daunted!

THE Co. came up early for prep, and found Wharton in Study No. 1.

Having talked the matter over among themselves, they had decided to remonstrate with him in as friendly a

way as possible on the subject of Stacey. At the same time they knew he had had some trouble with Wingate, and hardly expected to find him in a propitious mood. Still, if anything was to be done there was no time to lose, as the match was to be played at Highcliffe on the morrow.

Stacey went up with them, seemingly in a cheery and pleasant mood. He had made no complaint about seeing his name missing from the cricket list. He seemed to accept his exclusion from Form cricket with cheerful resignation, and that made the fellows think better of him. Good cricketer as he was, he gave no sign of pushing his claims, but that had the natural result of making other fellows keener on pushing them for him.

Wharton was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1, his face very calm and quiet. But his eyes gleamed at Stacey as he came.

He made a movement, but checked it. Stacey gave him a careless glance, and walked on to his own study—No. 3. The Co. came into Wharton's study.

"Row with Wingate?" asked Bob, by way of a beginning. "Loder came asking for you in the Rag, and I heard it was Wingate who wanted you."

"Yes," said Harry briefly.

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MAGNET

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Friday,
June 7th.

"Not a whopping?" asked Frank Nugent, with an uneasy look at his chum.

"Yes."

"What on earth for?" asked Bob.

"Cheeking Wingate."

"Well, what the thump did you want to cheek Wingate for?" asked Johnny Bull. "What's Wingate done, I'd like to know?"

"Made a fool of himself."

"My esteemed Wharton!" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, while the other members of the Co. looked at one another in a sort of helpless way. What were they to say to a fellow who talked like that of the captain of the school—the most popular senior at Greyfriars?

There was a brief silence. Then, dropping that subject, Bob began again.

"About Stacey—"

"Cut that out!" said Harry.

"My dear chap," said Bob patiently. "Do listen to reason! We're standing by you, even if you make an ass of yourself—"

"Thanks."

"But for goodness' sake, don't do it! Stacey simply must play for the Remove at Highcliffe to-morrow."

"Not if I do!"

"Smithy's standing out, as a protest, if Stacey's left out. He did the same in the Courtfield match, and we got licked."

"I'm not responsible for Smithy's cheek."

"We want to win matches," said Bob tartly.

"I know. We can win without Stacey—and without Smithy, if he's cad enough to let us down."

"Other fellows are talking about keeping him company."

"Let them!"

Bob breathed hard.

Again there was a silence. Harry Wharton, leaning on the mantelpiece, looked at his friends thoughtfully. He was thinking of what Marjorie had said—that it was wiser to tell his comrades what he had against Stacey, of which they knew nothing.

Perhaps she was right. They had never heard of the Three Fishers affair, and if they knew—Surely they would believe his version! But if they did not it meant a break in the Co., he knew that. And he was unwilling to bring such an event within the range of possibility. He decided, at least, to tell them of what happened that afternoon and see the result.

"I'll tell you why I cheeked Wingate," he said suddenly. "He accused me of card-playing with Ponsonby of Highcliffe."

The four juniors fairly jumped.

"Has he gone mad?" exclaimed Nugent.

"You're dreaming!" said Bob blankly. "You can't have understood him right, Wharton!"

"I've had a narrow shave of being taken to the Head, and perhaps sacked," answered Harry. "He saw me, as he thinks, on Courtfield Common this afternoon with that crew. As I was not there, you can guess who it was that he must have seen."

The Co. jumped again.

"Stacey!" exclaimed Bob.

"Who else?"

"But—but Stacey's not that sort of fellow."

"Am I?" demanded Wharton fiercely.

"No, you ass, of course not! But Stacey's not, either, so far as I've seen, at any rate."

"Is there anybody but Stacey who could be mistaken for me?"

"I—I suppose not."

"No supposing about it. There isn't! It was Stacey! Wingate believed he saw me—the fellow stuffed him somehow. I don't know, and don't care, how. I got the benefit of it!"

The Co. stood silent and dismayed. This was news to them, and an utter surprise. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, remembering something that he had noticed at Wharton Lodge, was not so surprised as the other fellows. But Bob and Frank and Johnny seemed unable to get it down.

"But Stacey hardly knows Pon—and he was rowing with him a week or two ago, the only time he's ever seen him, that I know of," said Bob. "I—I can't understand it."

"He's the kind of fellow to make friends with a cur like Pon!" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "Anyhow, he's done it! Wingate's a fool, but he's not fool enough to take a fellow for me if he didn't look like me."

"Where did you go out of gates?"

"Up the cliffs."

"If you told Wingate—"

"I did."

"Didn't he believe you?"

"If he had I shouldn't have told him he was talking silly nonsense."

"You—you—you told the captain of the school that he was talking silly nonsense!" said Bob, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Why not, when he was doing it?"

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Bob did not answer that. "It's rotten unlucky you were out alone, Harry," said Frank Nugent. "If you were able to prove where you were—"

"I shan't take the trouble," answered Wharton coolly. "If you fellows don't believe me without proof you're no friends of mine, and the sooner we chuck up the humbug of being friends, the better."

"No need to talk like a goat!" said Johnny Bull. "We believe what you tell us, but, at the same time, I can't quite get it down about Stacey! Wingate may have made some mistake, and it wasn't either of you."

"It was one of us, and you can believe it was whichever you like! As for Wingate, he can do the same! I only wish he would report me to the Head! I'd make him look the biggest fool at Greyfriars!" said Wharton savagely.

"And how would you do that?" demanded Bob.

"By proving where I was this afternoon."

"You could prove it?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Easily."

"Then why don't you?"

"Two good reasons. I won't take the trouble to disprove a rotten accusation that ought never to have been made—and I won't have a girl dragged into a Greyfriars row!"

"A girl!" repeated Nugent.

"I met Marjorie Hazeldene on the cliff. She was coming back from the village, and I walked to Cliff House with her. At the very time, so far as I can make out, that Wingate was spotting me, five miles off!" said Wharton sarcastically. "But I'm not going to ask her to come to Greyfriars and give evidence for me. I'm not even going to mention the matter to her."

There was another silence.

"Well, that lets you out," said Bob at last. "There's some beastly mistake somewhere. I can't quite believe that Stacey—" He paused. "No getting any truth out of Ponsonby, I suppose, if a fellow asked him."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Hardly! Wingate told me that one of the rotters called out 'Hook it, Wharton!' They knew that he took Stacey for me, and helped it on."

The Co. looked at him.

Wharton's face grew harder and more bitter.

He was putting their faith in him to a severe strain. It stood the test; but they were troubled, and dismayed, and dubious.

What was the use of telling them the Three Fishers episode? They found it hard enough to believe that Wingate of the Sixth had been mistaken and unjust. It would be harder still to swallow that Mr. Quelch also had been mistaken and unjust. Wharton did not speak again, and the silence was long.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage. The rest of the Remove were coming up to prep now.

"Well," said Bob, "it's rotten all round, and a fellow hardly knows what to make of it, but, after all, it's got nothing to do with cricket. If that man Stacey is the worm you think him, bar him all you like. But that's no reason why he shouldn't play cricket for Greyfriars."

"I wouldn't be found dead in the same team with him," said Wharton. "The fellow makes me sick! If you want to know, I'd made up my mind to give him a show—and then this happens! The fellow can't be decent, and I will have nothing to do with him. If the fellows want him, let them have

him, and I'll stand out of the cricket. I won't play in the same team!"

"Better get along to prep, I think!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Three members of the Co. left the study.

Nugent sorted out his books in silence and sat down at the table.

Wharton, sitting opposite, looked across at him.

"Am I to take it that you believe what I've said, Frank?" he asked, very quietly.

"You know that!" answered Nugent curtly.

"Then it follows that you believe that Stacey is a rotten blackguard, taking advantage of his likeness to me to shove it off on me."

Nugent was silent.

"I want an answer to that, Frank."

Nugent looked at him steadily.

"I can't quite believe that of Stacey, Harry," he answered. "He seems to me a decent chap, in most ways. I believe every word you've said, and you know I do, but as for the rest, I can't get it down. It beats me."

"Lot of good telling the rest of the Form, then, if you take it like that!" said Wharton bitterly.

"Better tell them nothing," said Nugent quickly. "Plenty of fellows would take Stacey's side, now you've put everybody's back up. It's a queer business, and the less said about it the better."

Peter Todd, coming up to prep, put his head in at Study No. 1.

"Just a word, Wharton," he said.

"Two, if you like."

"Are you playing at Highcliffe without either Smithy or Stacey?"

"Yes."

"You won't think it over again?"

"No!"

Peter breathed hard.

"Then you can leave me out, too!" he said. "I'm fed-up with this Great Panjandrum business, Wharton!"

"Right!"

Wharton shot that monosyllable over his shoulder as he propped up a volume against the inkstand. Toddy, rather taken aback, glared at the back of his head, snorted, and tramped on to Study No. 7.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Pressed!

THE Bounder scowled at the list on the door of the Rag after prep that evening.

Certainly, he had asked to have his name taken out—or, rather, demanded it. Nevertheless, it felt rather like having a tooth out!

Smithy was a scapegrace; but he was no slacker, and he was keen on the Highcliffe match. He did not want to "rot" about while less able hands upheld the Greyfriars colours at Highcliffe on the morrow. He sneered savagely at Hazel's name in the list. He remarked to Redwing that Hazel's claim to a place in the eleven was based on the fact that he was Marjorie Hazeldene's brother; it couldn't be on his cricket! Which was hardly fair, as the Bounder had left his skipper no choice about having a place to fill.

"Look here, old man, call it off!" advised Redwing. "Wharton will be glad to play you—he will jump at the chance!"

"And eat my own words!" snarled the Bounder.

"Oh, that's rot! I wish I had a chance to play for the school—I wouldn't chuck it away like that!"

The Bounder gave his chum a dark look.

"If Wharton asks you—" he began.

"That's not likely! Anyhow, he's shoved Hazel into your place."

"There'll be more places to fill if he doesn't climb down! Some of the fellows are going to follow my example."

"I hope not."

"It may bring the cheeky fool to his senses!" said Vernon-Smith savagely. "He can't be fool enough to take a team of hopeless duds over to Highcliffe to play an eleven like Courtenay's."

"The men ought to stand by him so long as he's captain," said Redwing. "They can drop him if they like—he's offered—"

"Oh, rot!"

Wharton came into the Rag—greeted by a black scowl from the Bounder. He stopped at the cricket notice, drew a pencil through the name of P. Todd, and wrote F. Nugent under it.

"Chance for you to play your pal et last!" sneered the Bounder.

Wharton glanced at him.

"Yes; Toddy wants to stand out," he answered.

"He doesn't want to."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you think you'll get away with this high-handed bizney, Wharton?" asked Smithy, between his teeth.

"Yes!" answered Wharton coolly. And he walked across the room, picked up a book, and sat down.

The Bounder breathed hard and deep.

"We'll make the cheeky rotter toe the line!" he muttered. And when the other fellows came into the Rag after prep, the Bounder's bitter tongue was not silent.

The Co. gathered by their leader, not in a happy mood.

What Wharton had told them in the study had puzzled them rather than convinced them. They had to believe him; yet, looking at Stacey, it was hard to believe that he was the "rotter" his relative took him to be.

Stacey, handsome and cheerful, had quite a crowd of fellows round him. His cricket, at least, had won him golden opinions in the Form; and he contrived to make himself generally agreeable to everyone but his "double."

Skinner & Co. backed him, as a matter of course, simply because he was opposed to the captain of the Remove—but better fellows than Skinner & Co. were taking the same line. Anyone looking into the Rag would have seen at a glance which of the "doubles" was the popular one in the Form.

Billy Bunter rolled over to the Co. with a fat grin on his face.

"I say, you fellows, they're holding a jolly old council of war," said the fat Owl of the Remove. "I fancy you'll have to climb down, Wharton."

"Mind shutting up?" asked Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"If you're asking to be kicked—"

"Beast!"

Ogilvy and Russell detached themselves from the other group, and came over to the Famous Five. They were Stacey's study-mates, and very friendly with the new fellow. Both looked red and angry.

"Look here, Wharton—" began Ogilvy. The Scottish junior was in the team for Highcliffe.

"Looking!" answered Harry.

"We all want Stacey in the eleven, and—"

"Sorry!"

"Smithy and Toddy are standing out, if you leave him out. I'm going to do the same!"

"Just as you like."



Ponsonby took careful aim, and the biscuit-tin whizzed. Crash! It hit Bunter on the side of his plump face. "Ooooooogh!" gasped the fat junior. He staggered and fell over the edge of the steep bank. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Highcliffians, peering from the island opposite.

"And you needn't offer the place to me!" said Russell.

"Right—I won't!"

"Is that all you've got to say?" demanded Ogilvy.

Wharton raised his eyebrows.

"Is there anything more to say?" he inquired. "If you enjoy my conversation, I'll run on! What do you want me to say?"

"Well, I think you're a cheeky rotter!" roared Ogilvy.

"Thanks!"

"And a swanking ass!"

"Speech may be taken as read. Hook it!"

Ogilvy and Russell walked back to the opposing group. Wharton called out as they went:

"Scratch your name out of the list, Oggy, if you don't want it there. Save me getting up."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, Wharton, if you want a good man to-morrow, I shouldn't mind playing," said Bunter. "They stand you a rather decent tea at Highcliffe——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You can put my name down, if you like, Wharton."

"Much obliged," said Harry laughing. "But we're going to play cricket, old fat bean—we're not going over simply for tea!"

"Yah!"

The Rag now was occupied by two different and opposing groups—the Famous Five at one end, the rest of the Form at the other, in an excited crowd. Lord Mauleverer, when he came in, glanced round and joined the five. He gave the captain of the Form a cheery nod and grin as he sat down in the easiest chair he could find.

"Row on?" he asked.

"Something like it," said Harry.

"You're at the unpopular end of the room, Mauly."

"Yaas; I noticed that!" agreed his lordship, and he settled down.

From the excited group at the other end two fellows detached themselves and shot across to Wharton. They were Tom Brown and Squiff. It was evident that these two members of the eleven had been prevailed upon to back up the Bounder in the line he had taken.

Smithy, in fact, had only one chance of figuring in the cricket, if he was not going to eat his words. Wharton had to be forced to yield the point. A heap of resignations from the team might work the oracle.

"Now, don't go off at the deep end, Wharton," said Squiff pacifically.

"We're your friends, as you know——"

"I don't bite! Go ahead!"

"We want Stacey at Highcliffe to-morrow," said the Australian junior. "Will you give it another think, old chap?"

"Next time we go over to Highcliffe to play them at nap, or banker, or pitch-and-toss, I'll play Stacey! Not at cricket!"

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Tom Brown. "That's a rather rotten thing to say about Stacey!"

"Not so rotten as the fellow himself!" said Wharton coolly.

"Well, nobody but you seems to think that he's rotten!" said Squiff hotly.

"Will you play him to-morrow?"

"No!"

"Take my name off the list, then!"

"And mine!" said Tom Brown.

"Look here——" began Bob Cherry.

But Squiff and Tom Brown walked away without listening.

"That's five men out of the team," said Bob dismally. "What sort of a game are we going to put up at Highcliffe?"

"We shall fill the places," said Harry. If he was dismayed at the prospect, he gave no sign of it. "Mauly's a good man if he wakes up! Will you stay awake to-morrow afternoon, Mauly, and play cricket?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Yaas!" he answered.

The Co. did not look enthusiastic. They liked old Mauly no end; but they did not admire his cricket fearfully.

"That leaves two places!" said Bob. He glanced along the room at the opposite party. "Looks as if there won't be a lot of fellows keen on filling them, either."

Wharton did not reply. Five men were out of the team; two of them being replaced by Hazel and Nugent, another by Mauleverer; but two places remained to be filled—even if there were no more resignations.

The Bounder was pushing his campaign hard; no doubt counting on the captain of the Remove giving in, rather than going over to Highcliffe with a team made up of odds and ends, as it were. It was hard pressure.

But there was no thought of surrender in Harry Wharton's mind. His determination was rather intensified than otherwise.

When the Remove went up to their dormitory, he spoke to Wibley on the stairs. William Wibley was rather keen on cricket, but no great exponent of the game. Still, keenness was something.

"Room for you to-morrow, Wib!" said Harry.

Wibley coloured.

"Thanks!" he answered. "But——"

"Don't you want it?"

"Not in the circumstances!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders and went into the dormitory. When the Remove turned in that night two places

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The HERO of the HOUR!



(Continued from page 13.)

still remained vacant in the eleven, and the captain of the Form had rather a problem to think out before he went to sleep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Thing of Shreds and Patches!

HAZELDENE came up to Wharton in break the following morning. The captain of the Remove gave him a cheery nod. Hazel had been put into the eleven in place of the first member to resign—Herbert Vernon-Smith. Even Hazel did not believe that he was a patch on Smithy at cricket; still, he was a good man on his day.

Lately he had been rather keen at the nets, and in the depleted state of his team Wharton was relying a good deal on him. It was true that he was glad to give Marjorie's brother a chance in the matches, though that was by no means Hazel's only claim, as some of the fellows declared. Hazel had certainly been very bucked at finding his name in the list—having sulked a good deal at the idea of being left out of it.

Now, however, as he came up to his Form captain, there was a certain hang-dog air about Hazel which was not reassuring.

Wharton affected not to see it.

"Looks like a ripping day for the match!" he remarked. "There will be a good wicket at Highcliffe."

"Oh, yes!" said Hazel slowly.

"I hope you're at the top of your form, Hazel!"

"All right, I suppose," muttered Hazel. "But it was rather a surprise seeing my name in the list yesterday. You said I shouldn't be wanted."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"That was before Smithy chucked it," he said.

"Well, that's all very well," mumbled Hazel. "But I don't see hanging about on another fellow! I suppose if Smithy changed his mind, after all, you'd turf me out again, and then where should I be?"

"No!" answered Harry.

"Oh!" mumbled Hazel.

It was clear that he had expected an answer in the affirmative, which would have supplied him with a grievance.

"We can't chop and change like that!" said Harry. "Smithy's standing out of his own accord, and that's that! Nothing would make me take him back for this match."

"Well, you won't have the chance, anyhow, from what Smithy says," said Hazel, with a half-sneer.

"Then that's all right, and nothing to worry about!" said Wharton, determined not to take offence if he could help it. Hazel was not a very valuable man, but as matters stood he had his value; likewise, he was Marjorie's brother, for which reason Wharton was often very patient with him. Marjorie

was always glad to know that her brother was in the games, instead of hanging about idly getting into mischief.

"Well, look here," said Hazel, colouring. "Everybody thinks that Stacey ought to be playing—"

"That's all settled!"

"The fellows think—"

"I've heard what they think—and what you think, too!" said Wharton, with a touch of scorn. "You said a good many times that Stacey had a lot of luck, and that you're as good a man as he is any day!"

Hazel flushed. It was rather awkward for him at the moment to be reminded of his boastful words.

"That's all very well," he mumbled. "But look here, Smithy says—"

"I've heard all I want to hear from Smithy, thanks!"

"If you won't let a fellow speak—" exclaimed Hazel.

He was going to do a mean thing, and it was easier to do it in a temper. So he was glad of a chance to be offended.

Wharton breathed hard. He could see what was coming—the Bounder had got at Hazeldene. But he controlled his rising anger.

"You're wanted in the game, Hazel," he said quietly. "It's a chance for you to play for School. Don't let Smithy pull your leg."

"I'm not a fellow to have his leg pulled, I hope," said Hazel sullenly. "But Smithy says we're going over to Highcliffe to be licked, and it looks like it to me. What's the good of making out that a dud like Mauleverer can stand up to Highcliffe bowling, for instance?"

Wharton had to suppress his feelings. Mauly was no great cricketer, but he was at least as good as Hazel if he chose to exert himself. And he was loyal and true, which Hazel was not. Knowing that his skipper was in difficulties, it was certain that Mauleverer would put his beef into the game, go all out to do his very best, and forget that he was a constitutional slacker. Mauly was a pal that any man might have liked to have in a tight corner. It would have been difficult to say the same of Marjorie's brother.

"And Nugent, too!" went on Hazel. "I dare say you're glad to play your best pal, but what's the good of him at Highcliffe?"

"Twice as good as you, at all events!" snapped Wharton.

There was a limit to forbearance.

Hazel's eyes flashed. He was hunting for offence, to give colour to what he had already resolved to do. Now he had what he wanted.

"Well, if I'm such a dud, you don't want me!" he said hotly. "You may as well take my name out of the list, along with the others."

"I'd rather keep it in, Hazel!" said Wharton quietly. "Whether we win or lose, we shall get a good game."

Hazel shifted uncomfortably.

"Well, a fellow can't stand out against all the Form!" he said. "Everybody's down on you, Wharton, for handling the cricket as you're doing. You'll have to chuck the captaincy if you keep it up!"

"Never mind that now."

"I don't see going over to Highcliffe to make fools of ourselves!" said Hazel sulkily. "Smithy says—"

"Never mind Smithy!" said Harry. "Stick to the game!"

"I've promised Smithy!" Hazel blurted out at last. "He's making up a party for this afternoon to go in a car, and I'm going with him."

"You're letting me down—for that?"

"Well, you've let a lot of fellows

down! I don't see going over to Highcliffe to get mopped up. We can't win—"

"If you've made up your mind, Hazel, there's nothing more to be said!" interrupted Wharton. "This means that you don't get another chance; I suppose you know that."

Hazel did not answer. He was red and uncomfortable; but he had made up his mind. He was as wax in the Bounder's hands.

"You weak-kneed fool!" Wharton restrained his anger and scorn no longer. "Smithy's game is to drive me to give in. If I did he would come back into the team and let you down fast enough. But don't say any more—you're out of the game, and you can go and eat coke!"

Hazel walked away.

Wharton went into the House. The cricket list had been completed that morning. Kipps and Micky Desmond had been put down to fill the two vacant places. Now there was another place to fill. Wharton looked for Monty Newland, and found him in the Rag.

"Play this afternoon?" he asked tersely.

Newland grinned.

"Want a man?"

"Yes."

"Glad to!"

"Right!"

"M. Newland" was written down in the place of "P. Hazeldene." Once more the eleven was made up. But the tribulations of the cricket captain were not yet over. As he turned away from that alteration in the list, Dick Penfold tapped him on the arm.

"I've been thinking it over, Wharton—" began Pen.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Has Smithy pulled your leg, too?" he asked sarcastically.

"I haven't spoken to Smithy."

"What's the row, then?"

"As I said, I've been thinking it over," said Pen quietly. "I don't know, and don't want to know, what your trouble is with your relation, Stacey, but it's led to your scrapping half the team! It's no good taking a team of shreds and patches over to Highcliffe against bats like Courtenay and bowlers like the Caterpillar. I wish you'd think it over again."

"No use!"

"Well, what's good enough for fellows like Toddy and Squiff and Brown and Ogilvy is good enough for me! I'm standing in with them!"

"Nuff said!"

Wharton crossed Penfold's name out of the list. Pen looked worried, but he was firm. His motives were quite different from Hazel's, but it came to the same thing for the captain of the Remove.

Again he was a man short. He had to look for another recruit. Morgan refused; Bolsover major and Dutton followed his example. Wharton was rather loath to ask Redwing, as, if he accepted, it meant a row for him with his chum, Smithy. But it was a case of any port in a storm, and he asked Redwing, who assented at once. Reddy did not want a row with the Bounder, and he did not approve of Wharton's methods, but he considered it his duty to stand by his skipper, and he did. So when the bell went for third school, the Remove cricket list again contained eleven names.

But after so many changes, that list had rather a dilapidated look, and the most hopeful members of it could not help wondering what was going to happen when it got going at Highcliffe. There was no doubt that it was a thing of shreds and patches.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Nothing for Bunter!

RALPH STACEY smiled when he looked at the cricket list in the Rag after morning school.

A number of other fellows looked at it, but they did not smile; they scowled.

Blackest of all was the brow of the Bounder.

He had not, as he had hoped, driven his skipper to surrender. Wharton was carrying on. All that Smithy had succeeded in doing was in weakening the team to such an extent that a Highcliffe victory was practically a foregone conclusion.

That was not in the least what Smithy had wanted. But it was what he had done, and there it was.

Stacey read down the names, and smiled. In his campaign against the captain of the Remove he had hardly needed to make a move himself. The headstrong Bounder had played his game for him.

The list now ran:

H. Wharton, R. Cherry, J. Bull, Hurreo Singh, F. Nugent, Mauleverer, M. Desmond, O. Kipps, M. Newland, M. Linley, T. Redwing.

There were five good men in it—Wharton, Bob, Johnny, the nabob, and Mark Linley. Nugent was fairly good, and so was Redwing. The rest Smithy scornfully described as "rabbits." They were not rabbits by any means, but their best friends would not have maintained that they were up to Highcliffe form.

"Five of these men can play cricket," said the Bounder. "Highcliffe will be two to one, and one over."

"Might as well make them a present of the match!" remarked Ogilvy.

"Just as well!"

The Bounder's blackest look was directed at his chum's name in the list. He chose to regard Redwing as letting him down by backing up Wharton. He had argued long and angrily with Tom on the subject. But Redwing, who generally gave in to him, was hard as nails in this case. Smithy's only solace, such as it was, was the probability that his chum would bag a duck in each innings.

"They say Highcliffe are in great form, too," remarked Russell. "Taking a team like that over there is simply asking for it!"

"Oh, what do the matches matter, so long as the Great Panjandrum has his way?" asked Skinner.

"I wonder he hasn't put Bunter in!" remarked Stacey.

And there was a scoffing laugh from the Removites.

"Every man ought to stand down!" growled Vernon-Smith. "That would bring the cheeky fool to his senses! Look here, Linley, why don't you stand out?"

Mark shook his head.

"Can't let my skipper down," he answered.

"I'm standing out!"

"You can please yourself, Smithy, but I can't do the same," said the Lancashire junior mildly.

"Well, you're a rotter!"

"I think that compliment is rather due to a man who lets the team down, if you ask me!" answered Mark cheerfully.

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Peter Todd hotly. "We've stood out to bring Wharton to his senses!"

"Blessed if I know whether it was a

good idea, though!" said Squiff. "We want to beat Highcliffe."

"Not much good wanting that now!" said Skinner.

"Anybody going over to Highcliffe to see the massacre?" jeered the Bounder.

"No fear!"

"Well, one thing's jolly certain," said Tom Brown. "Wharton may pull it off with that patchy crew. But if he doesn't, we shall turn him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

Stacey strolled away, smiling. He was keen to play for the Remove, but not so keen on that as on giving Wharton a fall. His time was coming. Wharton was straining the patience of the Remove to breaking point.

If there was an overwhelming defeat

at Highcliffe that day, it looked as if Wharton's game was up. And who was going to succeed him as captain of the Form? Stacey had his own ideas about that.

Wingate of the Sixth came to look at the list in the Rag. The juniors eyed him curiously as he did so. The Greyfriars captain made no remark, but he was frowning as he went out.

He looked for Harry Wharton, and found him in the quad.

"I spoke to you the other day, Wharton, about Stacey!" he said gruffly.

"I remember," assented Wharton.

"It seems that you're not playing him?"

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

(1)

And now, in my list alphabetio.
I find I must interview one
Who's not in the slightest athletic,
Who never becomes energetic,
Except where there's tuck to be won!
That's Bunter, the podgiest Friar!
The fellow who makes us all howl!
That's W. Bunter, Esquire,
The famous (or infamous) Owl!



"Of all the gluttons I've ever met,
There's none like—"

The next "man" to come under the facile pen of the Greyfriars Rhymester is:

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER,
the fatuous fat boy of the Remove Form.

(2)

All Greyfriars, and every boarder
From the Head to the inkliest lag,
Has heard of the great "postal-order,"
Which somehow the podgy defrauder
Has never yet managed to bag!
It's always arriving "to-morrow!"
That's "never," the proverbs declare,
And Bunter has found to his sorrow
The proverbs are right enough there!



(3)

The newspaper writers, with humour,
Say Britain's position is sound,
Supply is first-class, says the
rumour,
"But where is the willing consumer?"
I'll tell 'em where one can be
found:
The ground which the Bunter-bird
stands on!
This champion chump of the
school
Consumes everything he lays hands
on,
And bellows for more, as a rule!

(4)

To Greyfriars, then, I proceeded,
The tuckshop I visited first!
That visit was all that was needed,
For Bunter was there, and he pleaded
For tuck till I thought he would
burst!
Dame Mimble remained stony-hearted,
I coughed and asked Bunter to talk!
"I'm expecting a—" That's how he
started!
I thought I would go for a walk!



(5)

Said I, "'Nuff of that! Nothing
doing!
I'm stony myself, worse the luck!
Let's start on this 'ere interviewing,
I warn you I'm hopeless for screwing
Up money to spend upon tuck!"
I saw the fat bounder devising
Some scheme to induce me to part,
And then (which was rather sur-
prising)
He started upon a jam-tart!



(6)

And then I obtained information
To put in this special report;
I heard of each titled relation,
Great men of magnificent station,
Who stayed at his house, Bunter
Court!
I gathered that Bunter was clever,
His standard of work was so high
That Quelchy exclaimed: "Well,
I never!
This boy knows more Latin than
I!"

(7)

At footer no player was grander,
He knew the inside of the game,
At cricket, a brilliant right-bander,
He told me (with excellent candour)
He put all the others to shame!
But what I considered the oddest
Of all his remarks was, to wit,
That he was so bashful and modest
He couldn't bear boasting a
bit!

(8)

At this I thought, "Bunter needs
muzzling
If that's how he talks all the day!"
Meanwhile, he'd been steadily guzzling,
And as he went out (which was puzzling)
He made no endeavour to pay!
I soon understood what a kettle
Of fish I was in through his tricks,
For he told Mrs. Mimble I'd settle—
And she asked me for thirteen-and-
six!

"No."

"I gather that most of the fellows in your Form have got their backs up about it."

"I shouldn't wonder."

Wingate drew a deep breath. Wharton's reply was not exactly "cheeky," but it verged very nearly on it. Neither of them had forgotten the "six" in Wingate's study the previous day.

"Well," said Wingate, "this kind of thing won't do, Wharton!"

"No?" said Wharton politely.

"I shan't at the moment give you an order," said the Greyfriars captain, his eyes glowing, "but I advise you to play Stacey!"

"I'm sorry I can't take your advice."

Advice from the head of the games was tantamount to a command. Still, it was not exactly a command.

"Very well!" said Wingate, compressing his lips. "We'll let it go at that—for the moment! Carry on!"

And he walked away. A cheeky young sweep and a disreputable black-guard—that was Wingate's present opinion of the captain of the Remove. Wharton at the moment was indifferent to it.

Had Wharton given in to the advice of Wingate and the general feeling in the Form, Stacey would have found it a little awkward. He wanted Wharton to "dish" himself; likewise, he had already fixed up his arrangements for that afternoon, and did not want to alter them. While the cricketers were at Highcliffe, Stacey was booked for Popper's Island with Pon & Co.—and a very different game. But he counted correctly on the obstinacy of the captain of the Remove.

After dinner Billy Bunter sought out the captain of the Form. He gave him a serious blink through his big spectacles.

"I offered you my services at Highcliffe, Wharton," he said. "I'm still willing. 'Yes,' or 'No'?"

"No!" said Harry.

"Better think it over," said Bunter.

"You've got a lot of duds—"

"One more wouldn't help!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Well, look here, I'm not so jolly keen on tea-ing at Highcliffe, if you come to that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I shall go with Stacey!" said Bunter. "I'd rather come to Highcliffe; but, after all, a picnic is all right. So you can go and eat coke, and be blowed to you!"

And Bunter, with a scornful blink, rolled away, and looked into Study No. 3 for Stacey. Bunter's eyes—and spectacles—had been on that youth. He found the new fellow in his study, packing a small picnic basket.

"I say, Stacey, old chap!" said the fat Owl. "I've turned Wharton down! Like me to come with you this afternoon?"

"No," said Stacey.

Bunter coughed.

"I say, old chap, you're going on a picnic! I know Russell and Ogilvy ain't going with you. They're going out on their bikes with Toddy. You don't want a picnic on your own."

"I do."

"Well, you're rather a pig," said Bunter, in disgust.

"Shut the door after you."

Bunter blinked at him. He had had an eye on Stacey making certain purchases at the school shop, and noted that he had borrowed that lunch-basket. Few things of that kind escaped Bunter's attention. He would have preferred to

join the cricket team, for Highcliffe—where tea was certain. Stacey's picnic was uncertain—for Bunter. But his valuable services having been rejected by the cricket captain, there was only Stacey left. The Bunder had refused emphatically to include Bunter in the party that was going out in the car.

"Stacey, old chap—"

"Cut!"

"Where are you going, old fellow?"

"Find out!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled away, and left Stacey to finish packing his basket. A good many fellows gathered to see the cricketers start for Highcliffe—some of them making uncomplimentary remarks. But Bunter was not interested in the cricket team. He was interested in Stacey. He loafed at the gates, waiting for Wharton's double to go out.

The idea of a fellow packing a basket to picnic on his own filled Billy Bunter with disgust. It did not occur to his fat mind that Stacey was meeting some other fellows from another school. Greedy pig was Bunter's opinion. And it was in the fat Owl's fat mind to track Stacey to his lair, so to speak, and roll in when the basket was opened.

So when Stacey came out of gates, and walked away with the basket in his hand, a fat figure rolled after him.

Stacey walked down to the boathouse.

After him rolled Bunter.

Stacey pushed a skiff into the water, dropped the basket into it, and stepped in. Bunter watched him in dismay.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He rushed across the raft.

"Hold on, Stacey, old chap!" he yelled.

Stacey stared at him, laughed, and pulled away. Billy Bunter was left standing on the school raft, glaring after him with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beast!" he roared. "Think I want to come to your rotten picnic? Yah! Beast!"

Stacey, laughing, disappeared up the river.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Outclassed!

"O UR knock," said Harry Wharton.

Wharton had won the toss, and elected to go in first. Courtenay, the junior captain of Highcliffe, led his men into the field.

His chum De Courcy, the Caterpillar, glanced over the Greyfriars men with a rather curious eye. A less keen eye than the Caterpillar's would have noted that there was something a little amiss with the visiting team.

It was by no means as strong a team as the Highcliffe men had expected to see. And it did not look very cheery. Every man there was going to do his best, but the knowledge that they were not up to Highcliffe form had its natural effect. The Highcliffe match required the best men that could be put in the field against them, and even then the result was on the knees of the gods. Nothing is so likely to take the grit out of a team as the knowledge that it has an uphill fight with an almost certain defeat at the end. A man who goes in expecting to lose his wicket is very likely indeed to lose it. And one failure makes many.

Some of the fellows thought Wharton would have done more wisely to send Highcliffe in first. But in the depleted team there was only one good bowler—Hurree Singh. And there were half a dozen good bats. With himself at one end, Bob Cherry at the other, Wharton

hoped to make a good beginning, and a good start gives heart to any team.

Half a dozen good bats might knock up a useful score before the "tail" came on to be massacred, and a good score might inspire the tail to unusual prowess. No doubt Wharton was right, but the luck of the game was not with him.

For the Caterpillar was at the top of his bowling form. Wharton took three 2's off his bowling; and then came a ball which looked like a wide, but wasn't. Wharton breathed a long, long breath when his bails went down. It was cruel luck—the exact reverse of what was wanted. He went back to the pavilion with 6 to his credit. He had hoped for about 60.

Glum looks greeted him there.

If the captain of the team, and its best bat, had started like this, what were the others to expect? Wharton realised that he was not in his best form—the worries and tribulations of the past few days did not conduce to that. He had been anxious—perhaps a little too anxious—to set the game going in good style. This was the result. The Caterpillar was a tricky bowler. But he read the thought of every man there—that Stacey would not have gone out to that ball. Neither would Wharton, at the top of his form.

Next man in was Johnny Bull, and Johnny went on, knowing that he had to face a bowler who had knocked out a better bat than himself.

Johnny played cautiously—perhaps too cautiously. He stopped one, and snicked the next away into Courtenay's hands at point.

The Highcliffe skipper held up the ball.

"Out!"

Johnny came marching home.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent involuntarily.

Mark Linley went on, and Bob took the bowling from Yates, Highcliffe's second best. Now the runs began to come; but it booted not, for at the last ball of the over Bob was caught out by the Caterpillar—10 to his credit.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Man in!" he said quietly.

Frank Nugent went on. Mark Linley ran a 3, and brought Frank to the batting end. Nobody was surprised to see him capture a duck.

Grim depression had settled now on the Greyfriars men. They had known at the start that they were outclassed. Now they knew that they were overwhelmingly outclassed. Highcliffe were at top notch; they were on the lowest rung.

"Sorry, old man!" said Nugent, flushing as he came back to the pavilion.

Wharton nodded.

"Man in, Mauly!" he said.

"Yaas."

Lord Mauleverer's movements were leisurely. But he got to the pitch at last. To the surprise of the Greyfriars men, and the relief of Wharton, Mauly survived the over, though he took no runs.

Runs came slowly, Mark Linley adding a few. But Mark, steady man as he was, was affected by the general feeling of the team, and he was not at his best. He was out for 10.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took his place.

The Nabob of Bhanipur was a wonderful bowler, and a reliable bat. But his reliability was rather wanting on this occasion when it was needed most. He was out for 6.

"Redwing!" muttered Wharton.

In spite of himself, the captain of the Remove could not keep the gloom out of his face. He could take a beating



"My hat!" panted Wingate. "Quick!" The boat shot through the water, and Wingate reached over and grasped the new junior by the collar. Stacey, still holding Bunter, was dragged into the boat, and the fat Owl after him.

with any man, but this was too utterly rotten. His captaincy, in all probability, depended on the result of that match; and only by uncommon luck could he have hoped to pull the game out of the fire. And the luck was on the other side. "Rot" seemed to have set in in his team. A big innings to begin with might have worked the oracle, but that big innings had not materialised.

Every fellow was thinking how the game might have been going had the good men been there—especially Stacey. If only Stacey had been there! Wharton's own friends were thinking so. Indeed, he was thinking so himself. Confidence was at zero.

Surprisingly, Lord Mauleverer did not go out for a duck. Every Greyfriars man expected to see his wicket turned into skittles when the Caterpillar bowled to him. Instead of which Mauly stood up to it, easy and graceful, and stopped the deadliest shots, and even stole a run. Redwing, at the other end, was playing a steady game. The "rot" seemed to have stopped for a time.

But a catch in the field disposed of Redwing for 8. Three wickets remained to fall, the three weakest of the lot.

Then came a flash in the pan. Micky Desmond joined Mauly at the wickets, and displayed uncommon form. A lucky boundary put Micky in good heart, and gave him a feeling that he was master of the bowling. He proceeded to hit out at everything.

He had some phenomenal escapes, and hit a couple of 2's. His cheery, ruddy face was gleeful.

Then the bowling came to Lord Mauleverer again.

Again the Greyfriars men looked for a tumble. Instead of which his lazy

lordship—not looking at all lazy now—kept his end up in great style.

He drove the leather for a 2, a 2, and a 3. Harry Wharton's face brightened. "Good old Mauly!" he exclaimed.

Mauly smiled cheerfully.

His personal taste at a cricket match ran rather to a bag of cherries than a bat. But he was playing up in great style now. It was Mauly all over—a friend in a tight corner was the only earthly thing that could make Mauly exert himself.

But Mauly, unexpectedly good as he was, could not work wonders. His three brought Micky to the batting end, and Micky, still manfully hitting out at everything, hit out, not wisely, but too well.

He slashed the ball so handsomely into the hands of the Caterpillar that Rupert de Courcy, taking it easily with his left, placed his right on his heart and bowed to the batsman as if in grateful acknowledgment—an absurd action which caused a ripple of laughter to run round the field, and set Micky grinning as he walked back to the pavilion.

Two balls remained to the over, and they materialised in a duck each for Newland and Kipps.

Total: 56 for the innings, Mauly not out for 8. It was not so bad as might have been expected; but it was no use at Highcliffe. All the fellows knew that it was as good as over—a depressing knowledge. But when the Highcliffe men went on and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh started by taking Courtenay's wicket for 6, there was a glimpse of hope.

It was only a glimpse. Hurree Singh was first-class, and dangerous all the time; but the change bowlers were

nowhere, and there was little luck in the field, and the score jumped and jumped. At 112—precisely double the visitors' score for five wickets, Courtenay declared, and they adjourned for tea. All the Greyfriars men felt that it was futile to bat again, and that the Highcliffians were finished batting. And that feeling alone was enough to make it so!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for It!

"**H**I!" "What the deuce——" said Ponsonby.

"Hi!" "Is that a keeper?" asked Gadsby uneasily.

"Hi!" "Somebody knows we're here!" said Monson.

"Absolutely!" murmured Vavasour. "Hi!" came the yell again. "Hi!" Stacey set his lips.

Four Highcliffians had come down the Sark in a boat, while Stacey had pulled up from Greyfriars. They had all landed on Popper's Island, in the river, and concealed their craft in the willows; out of observation from the bank. Sir Hilton Popper was away from Popper Court, but his keepers had instructions to keep trespassers off his island, though in the absence of the lord of Popper Court they were perhaps a little slack in regarding his lordly instructions. With the boats hidden, and themselves thickly screened by the trees and bushes on the island, the picnickers felt safe enough.

But that loud howl from the bank seemed to hint that somebody knew they were there.

Pon & Co. did not want trouble with keepers. Stacey was still more concerned, for the island was out of school bounds; a matter upon which they were more particular at Greyfriars than at Highcliffe.

The picnic was over, and it was followed by cigarettes and nap. Stacey was the only one of the party who was not smoking. He could play nap without spoiling his wind for games; but cigarettes were another matter. He was as keen on the card-playing as any of the young rascals of Highcliffe. The howl from the bank came as a very annoying interruption.

"Hi, hi, hi!"

"If we're spotted here it means a row at the school!" muttered Stacey. "Who the dickens—"

"I say, Stacey! Hi! I know you're there! Hi!"

"Bunter!" ejaculated Stacey.

"That fat Greyfriars porker!" said Ponsonby. "Thank goodness it's not a keeper!"

"There will jolly soon be a keeper on the scene, if that howling ass goes on howling!" said Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Hi, hi, hi!"

"Sheer him off, Stacey!" said Ponsonby. "Look here, I'll cut across and handle him—"

"Hold on!" said Stacey. "Don't let him see you fellows. I don't want this tattled up and down Greyfriars."

Ponsonby chuckled.

"No, I suppose not. Well, get him clear, somehow, before he brings all Popper Court on the scene."

Stacey nodded, and went through the trees towards the edge of the little island. The channel was narrow on the side towards the Popper Court bank, where the towpath ran.

Pon & Co. followed him, but they kept in cover.

Stacey did not want the fat Owl to inform all Greyfriars that he had seen them together. If it had reached Wingate's ears, it would have put new thoughts into his mind about what had happened on Courtfield common the day before.

As Stacey emerged from the thickets he spotted a fat figure on the towpath opposite, and scowled at it.

Billy Bunter waved a fat hand at him and grinned.

"I jolly well knew you were there!" he bawled.

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Stacey—"

"What do you want?" snarled Stacey.

He hardly needed to ask the question. Evidently Bunter, seeing him depart in a boat, had guessed his destination, and had followed along the towpath, to be in at the death, as it were.

It was a long walk, especially for the fat and lazy Owl of the Remove; but he had arrived at last, and there he was.

Obviously, he did not know that anybody was on the island with Stacey. Stacey was very keen to keep him from discovering.

"I say, old chap, pull across, and give me a lift!" called out Bunter. "I say, you don't want a picnic all on your own. Don't be a pig!"

"If I pull across, I'll bang your silly head on a tree, and duck you in the water!" snapped Stacey.

"Beast!"

"Now shut up and clear off!"

Stacey stopped back into the thickets. He was keen to resume the interrupted game, and he hoped that he was done with Bunter.

That hope was unfounded.

"Hi!" roared Bunter. "Hi!"

Stacey stepped out again, almost pale with rage.

"Will you shut up?" he shouted. He was in fear every moment of seeing a man in velveteens emerge from the woods along the river-bank.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. He was red with the exertion of the walk; he was tired; the June sunshine made him thirsty, and he was, of course, hungry. He was prepared to be friendly, indeed pally, if he was invited to share the picnic. Otherwise, not.

"No!" retorted the Owl of the Remove. "I won't! You're out of bounds on old Popper's island, Stacey."

"No bizney of yours, you fat freak!"

"There'll be a row if the keepers spot you! I believe there's one in the wood now."

"Then clear off and shut up!"

"Shan't!" said Bunter independently.

"I don't want any of your picnic—keep your rotten picnic! But I can jolly well stay here if I like! Yah!"

If looks could have slain, the fat Owl of the Remove would have been in deadly peril at the moment. It was clear that Bunter, tired and hungry and irritable, was going to make himself as unpleasant as he could.

If he persisted in remaining on the bank and yelling, it was certain that attention would be drawn to the spot sooner or later. Being well aware of that, Bunter felt that he was rather master of the situation.

Stacey, indeed, might have settled the matter, by ferrying him across, and giving him the run of what remained in the picnic basket. But that was impossible if Bunter was not to see him with Pon & Co.

"I wonder what Quelch would say if he knew you were out of bounds!" jeered Bunter. "Like him to know?"

"Will you get out?" hissed Stacey.

"No," answered Bunter, "I won't!"

Stacey stepped back again. Immediately the exasperating Owl of the Remove recommenced.

"Hi! On the island, there! I say, Stacey! Hi!"

Stacey looked at the Highcliffians among the trees. It looked as if the merry party would have to break up.

"Leave him to me!" muttered Ponsonby, with a vicious gleam in his eyes.

"Don't let him see you!" said Stacey hastily.

"That's all right."

Keeping carefully in cover, Pon crept towards the edge of the island, with an empty biscuit-tin in his hand.

Peering through screening willows, he marked Bunter, and took aim with that rather dangerous missile.

The other fellows grinned. Pon's idea was that if Bunter got that biscuit-tin hard, it would make him tired of hanging about on the towpath opposite the island.

"I say, Stacey!" Bunter was yelling. He came to the very edge of the bank, where it dropped steeply to the water, and yelled: "I say! Hi!"

"Let him have it!" murmured Monson.

Bunter was an excellent target on the edge of the bank. Pon took careful aim, and the biscuit-tin whizzed.

Crash!

It hit Bunter on the side of his plump face.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter.

He staggered and then fell off the edge of the steep bank. There was a sudden splash.

"Urrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Highcliffians, peering from the trees on the island.



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That was an unexpected outcome of Pon's shot.

Stacey grinned. After that ducking there was little doubt that the fat Owl of the Remove would be glad to clear off.

He watched to see Bunter clamber out of the water.

The grin faded from his face.

A fat face came glimmering up from the water—a podgy hand was thrown up. Then both disappeared again.

"Can't that fat fool swim?" exclaimed Ponsonby, in alarm.

"Oh gad!" gasped Monson.

"Good heavens!" Stacey rushed to the water's edge. "Bunter—"

The fat hand came up again, clawing the air wildly, a dozen feet out from the bank. There was a fast current in the channel between the island and the towpath, and it was sweeping the helpless Owl out into the wide river. The four Highcliffians stood transfixed with horror and dismay. Comedy had changed suddenly to tragedy.

Stacey threw down his cap and jacket.

There was another splash in the Sark as he dived. With strokes of almost incredible swiftness, he cleaved the shining water, and his grasp closed on Billy Bunter and dragged him up. Pon & Co., staring with white faces, saw Bunter's spectacles glimmer in the sun, and knew that Stacey had him—then both were swept out of sight on the rapid current.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Whopped to the Wide!

"**H**ARD luck!" said Courtenay.

Harry Wharton nodded.

He felt as if he could not speak.

It was not only hard luck—it was absolutely putrid! The tale of disaster was told—and seldom or never had the Greyfriars fellows had such a whopping.

At the best they had hardly hoped to win. But such a defeat as this was the limit.

It could not be helped. A weak and discontented team were up against an eleven at the top of their form, well led. The knowledge that they were beaten made a beating inevitable. The Greyfriars second innings was simply a tale of woe.

The "rot" had set in with a vengeance. Even batsmen like Bob Cherry and Mark Linley yielded to the general gloom and depression, and played like rabbits. Even Wharton himself failed dismally. The only man in the Remove eleven who kept perfectly cool and nonchalant was Lord Mauleverer.

His lordship seemed impervious to the influence of the "rot." In the second innings Mauly took twelve—and it was the biggest total! Ducks—eggs were cheap! Batsmen who went to the wickets as if they were going to execution, had only one fate to expect—execution!

And the Highcliffe bowlers executed them at a rapid rate.

Generally, in a Highcliffe match, the result had either to be decided by the first innings, or else play went on to the stroke of time.

On this occasion the game was over very early; there was no need to worry about the time fixed for drawing stumps, or whether the light would last! Harry Wharton could hardly believe that Greyfriars were all down in twenty-five minutes for a total of twenty. But they were! It was not a defeat—it was a massacre. And every man in the team did not doubt that he

could put his finger on the cause—Wharton!

This was the outcome of Great Pandrum methods!

Certainly, Smithy and the others ought not to have let the team down. But why had they done so? Because the captain refused to play the best junior cricketer at Greyfriars!

With Smithy and the rest in the team, forces would have been balanced—with Stacey in it, victory would have been as certain as anything in cricket could be. Instead of which, Highcliffe had won easily by an innings, with thirty-six runs to spare. The cricketers expected to get hooted when they got home. They felt that they deserved it—at least, that their captain did!

The Co. shared the general feeling. Even Frank Nugent was silent and depressed. He had taken a duck in each innings—that was the result of giving him Toddy's place. But for the rotten state of the team, however, he knew that he could have done better than that. But where the best men were mowed down, what were the second-best to expect? The general "rot" affected them all—the weaker players more than the stronger. Frank was feeling as if he dared not show his face in the Rag after that performance.

The Greyfriars men were glad to get away from Highcliffe. Some of the home team were smiling. Courtenay & Co. had been looking forward to a tough struggle, and it had been a walk-over. The second innings had been merely comic.

The bus rolled away with a disgruntled crowd, angry with themselves, angry with their skipper, uneasy about what would be said to them when they got back to Greyfriars. Only Mauly preserved his placid calm—and did not add his voice to the general grumbling and grouching.

Wharton sat silent and gloomy.

Marjorie's advice came back into his mind. Perhaps she had been right, after all. And yet—

He knew that if it was to happen over again he would do that same thing. Right or wrong he could not and would not stand Stacey in the team! Neither was there any occasion for this crushing defeat, if the other fellows had not let him down. He had had a team quite capable of beating Highcliffe, or at least of holding their own. His feelings towards the deserters were grim enough. But all his bitterness concentrated on Stacey. The whole thing was Stacey's doing from beginning to end.

Had the fellow been decent—commonly decent—he would have been glad to play him. He would have welcomed such a cricketer into the eleven with open arms. He could say that with a clear conscience. But the fellow was his enemy—his insidious enemy. Through that fellow's misdeeds he was in disgrace at his school—distrusted by his Form-master, suspected by the prefects.

"I'm fed-up with this for one!" said Bob Cherry at last. "No good playing another match like that!"

"The goodness is not terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh ruefully.

"Bedad, I wonder what they'll say to us when we get in!" said Micky Desmond.

"Oh, they'll expect to hear something of the sort!" said Johnny Bull. "We've asked for it, and got it! Are you satisfied now, Wharton?"

Harry looked at him.

"No good ragging!" said Nugent hastily. "Shut up, Johnny, old man!"

Johnny Bull grunted.

"One swallow doesn't make a summer," said Mark Linley, as cheerfully as he could. "We've got all the season before us."

"That's neither here nor there!" said Johnny. "We've got a pretty prospect ahead of us—with a team of rabbits!"

"Thanks!" said Nugent dryly.

"You haven't done so frightfully well, Bull!" said Kipps. "You bagged a duck in the first innings, and two in the second! Is that a fearful lot to write home about?"

"I want to know this!" said Johnny Bull. "Are we going on like this? Because, if we are, I'm standing out of the cricket, same as Smithy."

"Please yourself!" said Harry curtly.

"Well, look here, Wharton," said Bob quietly, "you can see for yourself that it won't do! Stacey will have to play in the next fixture."

Wharton's eyes flashed. In his present mood that remark had the effect of a red rag on a bull.

"Don't talk to me about Stacey!" he said, between his teeth. "Stand in with the rest, if you like, and chuck me out! You're welcome to do that! But so long as I'm captain of the Remove, that cur won't play in the matches! I'll cut cricket for the whole summer, rather than play in the same team with that blackguard."

He rose to his feet.

"Shove my bag in when you get back, Nugent," he said. "I'll drop off and walk. You can talk this over better without me. If you want a new skipper, there's Stacey ready to jump at the chance—it's what he's plotting for, and you can let him have it as soon as you like!"

"Harry—"

"Look here, Wharton—"

Without answering, Harry Wharton dropped from the bus. It rolled on without him to Greyfriars, and the captain of the Remove, with a black brow, tramped away across Courtfield Common. And the other fellows, as they rolled on their homeward way, looked as if they were very strongly inclined to take him at his word.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

BILLY BUNTER gurgled wildly. He hardly knew what was happening.

A few seconds ago he had been standing on the grassy bank of the Sark, thinking chiefly of getting a "whack" in Stacey's picnic basket, or otherwise of making himself as obnoxious as possible to the junior on the island. Now he was whirling in the middle of the river, utterly unable to help himself, with the Sark washing over his fat face, blinding and deafening him. He did not even know what was dragging him up from the depths, though he dimly realised that something was.

He gurgled, spluttered, and choked.

His fat hand clawed Stacey and held. The new junior in the Remove was swimming strongly. But Bunter was a heavy and helpless burden, and good and strong swimmer as he was, he had plenty of work on his hands.

As he cast a glance round in the blazing June sunshine, the bank seemed terribly far away. The current was strong, and there were eddies and swirls in it. Stacey had plunged in for Bunter without realising how hefty a task he had set himself. But he realised it now.

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But he did not think of letting go the fat junior.

"Ooooooh!" came faintly from Bunter.

Stacey swam! Twice he neared the bank, and twice a whirl of the current swept him out again.

He set his teeth. It was not easy for an unburdened swimmer to swim the Sark. And he was heavily burdened.

A backward flash of his eyes showed that Popper's Island was out of sight behind him. Only tree-tops along the river, against a sky of blue, met his eyes.

Again he fought his way to the bank; again he was eddied out. Strong as he was, the struggle told on him hard.

On a half-holiday he might have hoped to see Greyfriars boats on the river. But he saw none. Cricket was on—the Remove men at Highcliffe, and the Fourth had a Form match with the Shell. Pon & Co., surely, would get after him in their boat from the island and help. But he remembered that the Highcliffe boat had been carefully hidden and tied up in the willows—it would take time to get it out and get it round the island—and the Highcliffe knuts were not quick or handy men with boats. There was little hope from Pon & Co.

After some minutes it flashed into Stacey's mind that he was in danger. At first it had seemed only an uncomfortable swim in his clothes—now, as his wet clothes cumbered him and dragged him, he realised that he would be a lucky man if he got out of the river alive. Yet it did not come into his mind to let go Bunter.

It was strange enough, for he was, and he knew he was, a selfish and unscrupulous fellow. Cool, calculating selfishness was a part of his nature; that was at the bottom of his feud with Wharton—and he cynically admitted it to himself in his own private thoughts. He disliked his relative, and considered that he had reason to dislike him, but the real cause of the feud was that he coveted what belonged to Wharton, both at school and at home. Yet, in danger of his life, he clung to the fat and irritating Owl, and faced death rather than leave him to his fate.

Bunter, half-senseless, blinked at him. He understood now that it was Stacey who was holding him up.

"Get me out!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you beast, get me out! Do you hear? Urrgh! I'm drowning! It's all your fault! Urrgh!"

Stacey did not heed him.

He lifted his head for a despairing glance at the bank. It seemed fading away from him. The opposite bank was farther still. There was no help!

Suddenly he spotted a figure on the towpath. It was a tall, angular figure—that of Mr. Quelch, his Form-master.

Quelch was taking a walk by the Sark. It was in taking such a walk by the river, a few weeks ago, that he had seen Stacey at the gate of the Three Fishers, and supposed that he saw Wharton. Now he saw him again—in very different circumstances.

He fairly jumped to the edge of the bank, his eyes almost popping from his head as he saw the junior far out on the shining river, struggling for his life—and Bunter's life.

He shouted, but Stacey did not distinguish the words.

The current swept him on, still with his own head, and Bunter's head, above water. Quelch's long legs raced along the bank, his white face turned towards the river as he kept pace.

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He was shouting, or rather screeching, in his alarm and excitement. Stacey did not know that the Form-master on the bank had spotted a boat on the river, lower down, near the Greyfriars boathouse. Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth were in it, and Mr. Quelch yelled and roared and waved to them, to draw their attention. They sighted him, and stared.

"What the thump's the matter with Quelch?" exclaimed Wingate, in astonishment.

"Something wrong," said Gwynne. "Oh, look!" He saw the object in the water at which Mr. Quelch was wildly pointing.

"My hat!" panted Wingate. "Quick!"

The boat shot through the water. It surged past Stacey and Bunter, and Wingate reached over and grasped the new junior by the collar.

Stacey, still holding Bunter, was dragged in, and the fat Owl after him.

"Urrgh!" gurgled Bunter, as he collapsed in the bottom of the boat in a pool of water. "Wurrgh! I'm wet! Urrgh!"

Stacey sank down, panting. He was almost at the end of his tether. He breathed almost in sobs.

The two seniors pulled for the bank. Mr. Quelch was awaiting them there, with a pale and anxious face. The boat rocked in, and Gwynne held on to the bank.

"Are they safe?" panted the Remove master.

"Both all right, sir!" answered Wingate. "Bunter must have tumbled in, and this kid—"

"Wharton—"

"Wharton's at Highcliffe playing cricket, sir! This is Stacey!"

"Oh! Yes! It is you, Stacey! Let me help you ashore, my dear boy! Did you go in for Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" panted Stacey, as he stepped, dripping, on the towpath. "Bunter fell in—"

"Urrgh! I was knocked over—gurrgh—"

"Help Bunter ashore, Wingate! Please help him to the school."

"Certainly, sir."

"Where's my specs? I say, I want my specs! Look here—"

"Here they are," said Wingate, grinning. "Now, out you go! You're safe now, kid."

Bunter rolled ashore. He staggered on the towpath and collapsed. Gwynne tied up the boat and joined Wingate, to help the fat junior to the school. They took a fat arm each and half-led, half-carried Bunter away. Mr. Quelch followed with Stacey.

Ten minutes later Billy Bunter was tucked in bed in the Remove dormitory.

Stacey dried and changed, and though he was tired out, weary to the very bone, he came down, and got away as soon as he could from the crowd of fellows who wanted to know all about it.

His skiff was still at Popper's Island, and he had left a jacket and cap there. He was anxious to retrieve his property, and to keep it dark, if he could, that he had been on Popper's Island at all. Weary as he was, there was a smile on his face as he slipped out of the school and tramped away to the river.

Stacey had looked rather an ass in the Remove when it came out that it was Wharton, and not he, who had rescued Mr. Prout from the footpad, after he had been given the credit of it. What had happened now would have the effect of washing out the memory of that rather unfortunate affair. Once

more Stacey was figuring in the public eye in an heroic light; and this time there was no mistake about it!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of the Hour!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What's up?"
The cricketers, returning from Highcliffe, saw at once that something was "up," when they arrived at Greyfriars. They had returned unexpectedly early. The Form match, Fourth and Shell, was still going on in Little Side at Greyfriars. But a crowd of fellows were discussing the latest topic.

Billy Bunter was still in bed in the Remove dormitory. Perhaps he needed a rest; but the fat Owl of the Remove was the fellow to take one whether he needed it or not.

But everyone knew what had happened. Stacey's name was on every tongue. The Bounder, who had come back from his motor trip, was full of it. He regarded it as "one up" against Wharton, towards whom, for the present, Smithy was feeling very bitter.

"Anything happened?" asked Nugent.

A dozen voices supplied information. "Stacey—"

"That fat ass, Bunter, fell in the Sark—"

"Stacey went in for him—"

"Might have been drowned if Wingate hadn't turned up in a boat—"

"Jolly well would have been—"

"Stacey—plucky chap!"

"No end plucky—"

"Quelch saw it, and brought him in—"

"Where's Wharton?" demanded the Bounder. "Hasn't Wharton come back with you? Wharton would like to hear about this—I don't think!"

"It wasn't Wharton this time, as it was with old Prout!" grinned Skinner. "This was Stacey—"

"Genuine this time, what?" asked Johnny Bull, with a grunt.

"Where's Wharton?"

"He's walking," answered Bob.

"You're back early!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "I needn't ask you how the game went! You don't look like winners."

"We've been beaten."

"The beatfulness was terrific!"

"What did you expect?" jeered the Bounder.

"Well, you needn't jaw, after letting us down!" growled Johnny Bull. "If you'd played up, like a decent chap, we—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Doesn't Wharton want to face the music?" asked Hazeldene, with a laugh. "What did they mop you up by? An innings?"

"Yes; and some over."

"Ye gods!"

"Let's hope that Wharton is satisfied now!" sneered Smithy. "But perhaps he would like the same thing to happen at Rookwood. It will, unless we get a new skipper!"

"Where's Stacey?" asked Bob.

"Blessed if I know! Cleared off somewhere!"

"And Bunter?"

"In the dorm!"

Some of the cricketers went up to see Bunter. They found the fat Owl propped up on pillows. He was devouring fruit and toffees, doubtless presented by some sympathiser.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You never lost your appetite in the river, what?" grinned Bob Cherry.



The mere thought of being defeated by his rival was enraging, almost maddening to Stacey. He would not, he could not, be beaten—that was too bitter to think of. Desperately he stood up to Wharton, taking punishment that few fellows could have taken quietly.

"I say, you fellows, I'm feeling fearfully bad," said Bunter. "I shall be too ill for class to-morrow. I'm going to tell Quelch so."

Bunter, evidently, had been thinking out how to make the most of his adventure.

Bob chuckled.

"If you're too ill for class, old fat bean, they'll stick you in sanny," he said. "They put you on diet in sanny! No jam—"

"I'm not so ill as all that," said Bunter hastily. "Not ill enough for sanny, but too ill for class! See?"

"I see!" assented Bob. "Let's hope that Quelch will see, too! You never know your luck. What did you fall into the Sark for? Trying to get that wash you've needed all the term?"

"Beast! I never fell in!" yapped Bunter. "I was knocked over by a biscuit tin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! That beast Stacey—"

"What?" roared Bob.

"That rotter Stacey chucked a biscuit tin at me from Popper's Island, simply because he fancied I wanted some of his rotten picnic! As if I did, you know! You fellows know whether I'm the chap to butt into a fellow's picnic!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And the rotten beast—"

"Is that how you talk about a fellow who pulled you out of the river?" asked Bob, staring at the fat Owl.

"He didn't—Wingate did! Besides, he ought to have come in for me, after making me fall in! The silly idiot nearly lost my specs—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I thought they were gone; but it was all right; they were in the boat. If they'd been gone, I'd jolly well have made Stacey pay for them!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Frank Nugent.

"Bunter, you fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Is that how you thanked Stacey for pulling you out?" asked Redwing.

"Bunter's brand of gratitude!" chuckled Micky Desmond.

"Well, I got all wet, and I'm fearfully ill," said Bunter. "Much too ill for class to-morrow—anyhow, for prep to-night! Even that beast Quelch will let me off prep, I suppose! I say, you fellows, got any chocs? I feel as if some chocs would do me good."

"Feel too ill to get up?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, rather! Can't move a limb!"

"Then it's no good tellin' you I've got a cake in my study—"

"Eh?"

"And a bag of jam tarts—"

"The fact is, I'm feeling better, Mauly, old chap! Much better! Where's my trousers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my bags! I never was a fellow to slack, as you know! I say, you fellows, where's my trousers?"

Billy Bunter found that he could get up—and he did! The prospect of a cake and a bag of jam tarts in Mauly's study had a wonderfully reviving effect. And it was always possible to have a relapse in time for prep; to touch Quelch's stony heart!

The rescued Owl did not seem to be suffering from any overpowering feelings of gratitude towards his rescuer. Indeed, he did not seem to consider that Stacey had done anything much! But the rest of the Remove took quite another view of the matter.

Stacey, in point of fact, had risked his life to get Bunter out of the river, and everybody but Bunter realised it.

He stood higher than ever in the esteem of his Form-master, Quelch. And Wingate and Gwynne had been

heard to describe him as a splendidly plucky kid! And the Remove were full of his praises. He had been regarded as having been treated badly by the captain of the Remove in the matter of the cricket matches.

Now, while Wharton was losing a match at Higheliffe, Stacey was risking his life to save a fellow from drowning. Hardly anything could have put Stacey in a better light, and Wharton in a worse one. The Remove men could admire pluck; and there was no doubt that Stacey had displayed plenty of pluck.

"And that's the fellow that Wharton wouldn't be found dead in the same team with!" said the Bounder, in the Rag. "That's the fellow who would win matches for the Remove, if the Great Panjandrum would let him."

"We're going to put it plain to Wharton when he comes in!" growled Peter Todd. "I'm fed-up with his rot, right up to the chin!"

"He's not in a hurry to come in," remarked Hazel. "I fancy we shan't see him before call-over."

"Rotten funk, afraid to face the music!" said Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Well, why doesn't he come in?" sneered Skinner.

The Co. were wondering about that, too. That Wharton was afraid to face the music, his friends did not believe for a moment. It would have been more like him to face an angry and resentful crowd with a disdainful smile on his face. Still he did not come. And the Co. went down to the gates to wait for him, leaving the Rag in a buzz of voices, discussing the rivals of the Remove.

Wharton's popularity in the Form was at its very lowest ebb—and even his

loyal chums were dubious how much further they could stand by him. And bad as matters already were, there was worse to come!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hand to Hand!

"YOU!" muttered Harry Wharton. He had been thinking of Stacey. That face, so disliked, though so like his own, had been before his mind's eye, and now, looking up suddenly, he saw it before him.

After leaving the returning party of cricketers, the captain of the Remove had tramped across the green, sunny common, caring little whither his footsteps led him. But he had headed for the river, in which direction he could reach the school by following the towpath.

He wanted to be alone—away from friends as well as foes. His mood was black and bitter.

Everything had gone wrong this term—in school, in games, even with his uncle at home, all was at sixes and sevens. And there was one cause—his relative and rival, Ralph Stacey.

He had done nothing to the fellow—nothing till he was driven into enmity. Envy was at the bottom of it. He knew it, and he believed that Stacey knew it himself, and did not care.

Now things were coming to a head. Trouble awaited him at the school as a result of that disastrous defeat at Highcliffe. He did not shrink from it, but he did not know what to do.

Pride urged him to throw in his resignation of the captaincy; to cut cricket and leave it at that. If the fellows did not want him, he was not the man to hang on unwanted.

But that meant giving in to an unscrupulous rival, making Stacey a present of that for which he was scheming and plotting. If he stood out it was only too likely that Stacey would step in. It would be putting power into hands that would use it ruthlessly against him.

He tried to banish the thought of himself from his mind, and think of the Remove. But would Stacey make a good captain of the Form? A fellow who gambled for money with cards, and threw his disgrace on another fellow's shoulders to evade punishment! He could play cricket, there was no doubt about that; but cricket was not everything, though some of the fellows seemed to think that it was.

But the way he was going on, Stacey risked getting sacked. How would the Remove like their precious captain sacked? If, indeed, Wharton did not get sacked in his place, a victim to the likeness and to Stacey's unscrupulous trading on it! Already he was in disgrace with Wingate, and with his Form-master, on that account and that account alone.

He tramped miles on the common, and went down the towpath at last to get back to Greyfriars. He had left himself none too much time to get in for roll-call, and he did not want more trouble with Quelch. But he reflected bitterly that whether he wanted it or not, he was likely to get it if Stacey remained at Greyfriars.

As he came in sight of the Greyfriars boat-house, a skiff came shooting down the river, but with his eyes gloomily on the ground, he did not see it.

Stacey, in the skiff, glanced at him and smiled maliciously.

He was surprised to see Wharton alone there, but it was easy for him to guess

what had happened. A crushing defeat, high words with the other cricketers, and a parting.

Stacey had found Pon & Co. on Popper's Island, greatly relieved to hear how the matter had ended. They had passed a very uncomfortable hour. Pon had brought his skiff across to the bank, and Stacey pulled down with the current to the school—tired out, but very satisfied with the events of the afternoon. The sight of Wharton's clouded face, and the unusual droop in his shoulders as he walked, gave an added zest to that satisfaction. It was a defeated enemy at whom he glanced from the skiff.

He landed at the school raft and put up his craft. Wharton was still at a little distance up the towpath, and Stacey could easily have avoided a meeting by going direct to the school. But he did not choose to do so.

As Wharton turned from the river to walk up to the school, he became aware of him, and looked up to see the face of which he had been thinking—to see it with a mocking smile on it. And he ejaculated "You!" and stopped, a blaze leaping into his eyes.

"You!" he repeated. "You rotter! Get out of my way!"

Stacey did not move.

He had a catlike way of tormenting the fellow he disliked, and he could always keep cool, which Wharton could not always do.

"Mustn't a fellow ask you how the game went?" he drawled. "Even a man who's not allowed to play may be allowed to inquire the result, surely."

"You cur! You can guess how it went!" said Wharton bitterly. "You fooled half my team into letting me down, and you knew what the result would be! Well, Greyfriars has had a record licking, if that's any satisfaction to you."

Stacey laughed.

"You'd better let me win the next match for you!" he remarked. "I fancy even your friends are getting fed up with you, old bean. You'd better—"

Wharton clenched his hands.

"You rotter!" he repeated. "You'll be safer to keep your distance from me, Stacey."

"I'm not fearfully alarmed!" said Stacey, laughing again. "I've no doubt I could beat you as easily with the gloves as at cricket!"

"We had a scrap the day you came. Quelch stopped us. You've more than once talked of finishing it," muttered Wharton, his eyes smouldering. "I've tried to keep clear of that, but"—he set his teeth—"you're asking for it, Stacey. It's not easy to keep my hands off you."

"Don't try," said Stacey. "Quelch saved you from a licking that time; he's not here to barge in now. Get on with it as soon as you like. What's stopping you—cold feet?"

Smack!

Wharton's open hand came across his face with all the pent-up bitterness of weeks in that sounding smack.

Stacey staggered back.

"Now put up your hands, you cur!" exclaimed Wharton, his eyes flashing. "Whether you can beat me at cricket or not, you can beat me at lying and shuffling and trickery. Let's see if you can beat me with your hands, too."

Stacey did not need asking twice.

He stood for a moment or two panting; then, with his hands up and clenched, he came at the captain of the Remove.

Wharton met him half-way.

He had honestly tried to keep clear of an actual scrap with Stacey. It was bad enough to "bar" a relative at school, without fighting with him. And

he thought of his uncle, too, who wanted them to be friends, and who need not know, at least, that they were bitter foes. But he had reached the limit of endurance, and now that it had come to a fight he was glad of it.

With knitted brow and set teeth, he pressed his opponent hard, hitting fiercely, and giving little attention to guarding.

Stacey stood up to him courageously enough. Whether he was a match for Wharton was a moot point, but rather too late he realised that he was no match for him at the present moment. That almost farcical game at Highcliffe had not tired the captain of the Remove; but the struggle in the river, and the walk to Popper's Island following it, had tired Stacey to the very bone. He had forgotten it, in the amusement of taunting his rival, but he had to remember it now that he was facing his rival's lashing fists.

He gave ground—savagely, reluctantly—but he had to do it. But he contested every inch, fighting hard.

Wharton, of course, knew nothing of what had happened on the Sark that afternoon. Had he been aware of it, certainly he would not have been drawn into a fight with Stacey, hard as it would have been to bear his taunts. So far as he knew, the fellow had been loafing about idly that afternoon, and nothing else. It did not occur to him for one moment that he was beating a fellow who was in no state to put up a fight.

And Stacey, unfit as he was for a fierce scrap, put into it every ounce he had left.

Many times he had thought of this, knowing that it must come, sooner or later, and envisaging the sight of Wharton going down defeated under his hands. The mere thought of being defeated himself, beaten by his rival, was enraging, almost maddening, to him. He would not, he could not, be beaten. That was too bitter to think of.

Desperately he stood up to the captain of the Remove, taking punishment that few fellows could have taken quietly. Wharton did not come off unscathed, either. But his damages were as nothing to Stacey's. Twice the fellow went down, hard and heavy; but each time he leaped up again and renewed the fight with savage determination.

It was a fierce fight, without gloves, without rests; hammer and tongs from beginning to end. It lasted long minutes, and it ended with Stacey on his back in the grass, so thoroughly beaten that he could not scramble to his feet. He made an effort to rise, and sank back again, panting.

Wharton looked down at him, panting, too. The fight had told on him, though he could have gone on easily enough.

Stacey's eyes burned at him.

"You rotter!" he said faintly. "We'll try this again—some day when I'm more fit!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders, and, without replying, walked on to the school. It was ten minutes later that Stacey dragged wearily to his feet and almost tottered after him.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Finish!

"O H! Here you are!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!
Been scrapping!"

The Co. were at the gates when Harry Wharton arrived there. It was only too plain, at a glance, that he had been scrapping. One of his eyes had a dark shade under it; he was

dabbing red from his nose. His comrades eyed him very uneasily.

"Yes," said Harry briefly. They guessed, knowing that Stacey was out of gates! But Bob Cherry asked hopefully:

"Happened on Pon?"

"No."

"Not Stacey?" asked Frank Nugent, in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Frank.

In silence they walked towards the House. Wharton gave his nose another dab and put a red-spotted handkerchief away.

He had won the fight. He had beaten the fellow who had caused him so much injury and distress, but there was little satisfaction in it. He was tired and depressed. And he could not understand the looks of his friends. They knew—they must have known—that it would come to blows between the rivals of the Remove, sooner or later. Did they blame him?

"Well, what's the row?" asked Wharton, at length. "Am I expected to let that cad insult me to my face without teaching him manners?"

"I suppose you licked him?" muttered Bob.

"He had enough, certainly."

"It's rather rotten."

"I don't see it. He's given me more than one hint that he was ready to carry on with the row that Quelch stopped, and that he fancied I funk'd him, too!" said Wharton savagely.

"I wish you hadn't met him," said Nugent. "After what he's done—"

"I'm waiting to hear what he's done. Has old Prout been finding trouble with another footpad, and is Stacey pretending to have rescued him, as he did before?"

"He got Bunter out of the river," said Frank quietly. "The fat duffer seems to have fallen in, somewhere up the Sark, and Stacey went in for him and got him out. They might both have been drowned if Wingate hadn't come along in a boat."

"Gammon, as before, very likely," said Wharton coolly. "After the affair of Prout, I should want to see it with my own eyes before I believed in Stacey's heroic stunts. Perhaps some other fellow did it, and he's bagging the credit. That's rather in his line."

"Look here—" began Johnny Bull, in a deep, growling voice.

"There's no doubt about it this time," said Frank. "Wingate and Gwynne were there, in a boat, and Quelch was on the bank, too. Stacey did a jolly plucky thing. You went into the Sark yourself for a man last summer, you know what it's like."

Wharton was silent.

"They were both pretty far gone when Wingate fished them out, from what I hear," said Nugent. "And Stacey—"

He broke off.

"If he wasn't fit, why did he stop me and pick a row?" asked Wharton. "I tell you I'd have kept clear of him if I could. I don't want my uncle to know that we scrap. I tell you he gave me no choice!"

His chums did not answer that. They had a pretty clear idea of the mood Wharton had been in, and did not think that he had needed much provocation.

They went into the House in silence. Wharton went in to bathe his face, which needed it badly.

He was not seen again, till the bell rang for calling-over. Then he joined the crowd of Greyfriars fellows going into Hall.

Stacey was among them.

He also had bathed his face, but he had not been able to remove the signs of damage. He looked as if he had been very severely through it—as indeed he had. Russell and Ogilvy walked on either side of him, and both of them looked at Wharton grimly as he joined the Removes. Evidently, they had heard of what had happened. And the looks of the other fellows showed that many of them had heard, too.

"I think that puts the lid on, you fellows!" Wharton caught Skinner's sneering voice. "Stacey can't have had a dog's chance, after what he'd been through. Dear old Wharton knows how to choose his time for a scrap."

"Awful rotter!" said Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, Wharton's just behind you!" grinned Billy Bunter.

Skinner and Snoop spun round in alarm.

They had a glimpse of a flaming face; then their collars were grabbed and their heads banged together.

Bang!

There was a simultaneous yell from Skinner and Snoop.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"The dear man's come home on the warpath!" jeered the Bounder. "Hadn't you better tackle a man that can stand up to you, Wharton?"

Wharton turned on him with flashing eyes.

"You're one, Smithy!" he said. "And you can take that for a beginning!"

He struck at the Bounder's face.

Bob Cherry grasped his arm and dragged him back.

"That's enough of that!" said Bob curtly. "You can shut up, Smithy! Wharton never knew anything about Stacey having been in the river when he scrapped with him."

"He's kept clear of him pretty carefully until to-day!" sneered the Bounder.

"A coincidence, I suppose."

"Let go my arm, Bob!" said Wharton thickly.

"Rot! Get into Hall."

Bob fairly dragged him into Hall.

Wharton's face, which had been flaming, was pale now. He could see the impression that was getting abroad in the Remove—that he had tackled his rival at a time when Stacey was in no state to do himself justice. Such an impression showed to how low an ebb his popularity in the Remove had sunk. Skinner was the fellow to believe such a thing; but he would not have expected it from Smithy. But the fact probably was that the Remove men were so fed up with him that any stick was considered good enough to beat him with.

Quelch was calling roll; and his eye lingered on two faces in the Remove. Few things escaped Quelch's gimlet eye. Wharton was told to go to his study after roll.

He had to wait there a few minutes for the Remove master. When he came in, his face was hard and grim.

"I need not ask you if you have been fighting," he said curtly. "Neither, I think, need I ask who was to blame. You have been fighting with your relative, Stacey."

Wharton did not speak. Two of them had been fighting; one of them was called over the coals.

"Have you nothing to say, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir!"

"I think that you might have avoided such conduct, Wharton, on the very day that your relative has risked his life to save a Form-fellow from the river," said Mr. Quelch, in his most cutting tone. "You seem this term to have no sense of

right conduct whatever. You will take two hundred lines."

Wharton's lip curled.

"Shall I tell Stacey he is to take two hundred lines, too, sir?" he asked.

"What! How dare you, Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I don't see why you should take it for granted that I was to blame," said Harry bitterly.

"On that point, Wharton, I have not the slightest doubt. Your continual quarrelling with Stacey has kept the Remove in a ferment this term; and I am not blind to the fact that the whole Form lays the blame on you. I have the highest opinion of Stacey, especially after his gallant act this afternoon, and I am sorry to say that I have lost the good opinion I once had of you. Leave my study."

Wharton left the study.

His feelings were too bitter for words. Mr. Quelch certainly did not intend to be unjust, but that was little consolation to a fellow conscious of injustice.

Outside the door of the Rag his friends met him. They were waiting for him there, and from within the room came the buzz of loud and excited voices.

"Come up to the study!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Do you think I am afraid to face them?" he asked contemptuously.

"Well, look here, you'd better keep out of the Rag!" said Johnny Bull. "All the fellows are wild."

"What do I care?"

"There'll be a row," said Bob Cherry uneasily.

"I may survive it!" said Wharton sarcastically. "I'll try."

"My esteemed and idiotic Wharton—" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Let me pass!"

The captain of the Remove pushed through the dismayed Co., and strode into the crowded Rag. There was an excited squeak from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, here's Wharton!"

There was a roar.

Wharton stood coolly, his hands in his pockets, facing the angry crowd of Removes. Even Skinner had to admit that the captain of the Remove showed no sign of fearing to face the music. There was a contemptuous smile on his face which irritated his friends as well as his enemies.

"Here he is!" shouted the Bounder.

"Yes, here I am!" said Harry Wharton. "I've got a few words to say, if you'll shut up a minute and let me speak. First of all, I resign the captaincy of the Form; and you can get on to electing a new captain as soon as you like."

There was a hush.

"That's that!" said Harry. "So long as I'm captain, that rotten cur, Stacey, won't play cricket for the Remove! You want him—and you don't want me! Now's your chance. Get on with electing him—and keep him till he's sacked from Greyfriars, as he ought to have been before he had been in the school a week! If he squeezes into my shoes, I won't give him the trouble he's given me. I'm going to cut cricket! That's the lot."

And, leaving the crowd in the Rag silent, Harry Wharton walked out. An excited buzz broke out again as soon as he was gone. The die was cast now. Harry Wharton was no longer captain of the Greyfriars Remove!

THE END.

(Don't fail to read the next exciting yarn in this splendid series: "WHO SHALL BE CAPTAIN?" To miss this is to miss a treat, so order your copy early!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,425.

"MOOSE CALL!"

By
HARRISON GLYN

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Selwyn Gore and his younger brother, Colin, learn from Isaac Snugger, a Tomahawk solicitor, that their Uncle Amyas, a gold prospector, has been murdered. Determined to settle accounts with the murderers, the two brothers leave for Canada in company with Snugger. Following two unsuccessful attempts upon their lives in Tomahawk, the trio set out for Moose Call, where Amyas Gore had built his shack, found his gold, and then died. En route, they meet Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian and friend of Amyas Gore, who informs them that he has buried a message from the prospector where none can find it. The party arrive at Moose Call to find everything in disorder. "We must find the message," says Selwyn, addressing Mountain Lion, "and see what my uncle says."

(Now read on.)

Suspicious Characters!

THE Sioux eyed Selwyn gravely. "Mountain Lion can find," he said. "Amyas Gore wrote the message before Indian go into Tomahawk to fetch Snugger. He told me it was to be given to you after you came here; but if you did not come it was to be destroyed."

"You can't read and you did not show it to Mr. Snugger," said Selwyn reproachfully.

The Sioux Indian regarded him stolidly.

"The snow had fallen. Mountain Lion bury the message in a canister before he go to fetch white man Snugger. Besides, Amyas say: 'Give it to my two nephews when they come.' He did not say: 'Show it to Mr. Snugger.'"

Selwyn felt properly rebuked.

"Well, supposing you dig it up now and we see what it says?" he asked.

Mountain Lion rose without a word and left the shack. He crossed to the shed in which the tools had all been replaced and selected a pick and a shovel. Armed with these, he crossed to the vegetable garden, where he walked up and down, as if taking his bearings.

Selwyn, Snugger, and Colin joined him.

"My Uncle Amyas is buried here," said Selwyn, speaking softly.

The Sioux pointed to a belt of firs a distance away.

"Not here—there," he corrected. "He lies in a coffin we found in the shed. Amyas, the white man, brought it here. Perhaps he guessed he was about to die."

The two brothers shivered and exchanged glances. Again they were conscious of a nervous thrill. In spite of the golden sunlight of the early spring day, Moose Call was the loneliest place they had ever seen. The pine woods looked black. The mountains black. Dark shadows lay everywhere.

"But you buried the canister here?" said Selwyn, with an effort.

"In this patch—yes. I think it was—here."

Mountain Lion swung the pick and brought the point down heavily on the caked soil. But the long frost had



The two villainous-looking rascals stalked towards the shack, their rifles raised above their heads. "Come right into the open," commanded Snugger, "and let's have a look at you, whoever you are!"

turned the earth into iron and it scarcely made impression. As he repeated the strokes, chunks of soil began to fly. He loosened the sides of the hole he made and then got to work with the shovel, heaping up the loose earth.

When he had made a big hole, he stopped with a grunt of disappointment. "It is not the place," he said.

Leaning upon the handle of the pick, he surveyed the patch, counting the rows of cabbage stumps and the dead stalks. Then he dug another hole, but only to meet with further disappointment.

Mountain Lion's third attempt, however, was more successful, for after digging for several minutes the pick struck a stone slab. He dug round this slab and lifted it out. Then, with pick and shovel, he set to work again until he brought to light a tin canister which seemingly had once contained coffee.

He held it up with a grunt of satisfaction.

"The message is here," he said.

Selwyn took the canister and tried to open the lid. But it was rusted tight, and he could not move it.

The trio waited while Mountain Lion filled in the holes he had made, and then they returned to the shack together.

There Selwyn found a tool with which he was able to prise off the lid of the canister. Inside the canister he found a folded paper. Selwyn drew the paper out, and, as the light was fading, they

went outside and sat down on the doorstep.

Selwyn opened out the paper and the others looked over his shoulders. The message had been scrawled with a shaking hand, but the letters were clear, as was the signature. It ran as follows:

"To my nephews, Selwyn and Colin Gore, should they come out to Moose Call.

"As I am about to die, I hereby confirm the other will and testament which I confided to the care of my friend, Isaac Snugger, lawyer, of Tomahawk. I leave this shack, the moneys I have in the banks at Tomahawk and Edmonton, together with my gold claim and all my other worldly possessions, horses, dogs, and the like, to my said nephews, Selwyn and Colin Gore. If they should not come out to Moose Call, I beg that this paper be destroyed. My friend, Isaac Snugger, can then deal with my will just as it may please him. I add one last request; that when the short summer comes my body shall be taken from the place wherein it lies and be borne by my nephews up the Sunrise Mountains to a place well known to the Sioux Indian, Mountain Lion, for many years my friend and brother. It is known as the Great Chief's Head. I wish to be interned in the place behind the great rock.

"AMYAS GORE."

The signature straggled just as if the writer had tired knowing that his task

was at an end. The "Y" of Amyas ended in a blot.

Selwyn read the message aloud so that all should hear. Then he glanced at the Indian. The Sioux's face was expressionless. But his black eyes had turned towards the Sunrise Mountains.

"There!" he murmured simply.

Isaac Snugger broke in upon him.

"Injun, do you know this place Amyas calls the Great Chief's Head?"

"Yes. I knew it when I was a boy. I ran away and hid there for many days. I showed it to Amyas, the white man. It lies over there."

He pointed, but nothing like a head showed upon the smooth outline of the mountain at which his finger aimed.

"The Great Chief's Head is behind. The trail is difficult. Only those who know could ever find it."

"And Uncle Amyas wants us to bear his coffin up there and bury him in a lonely place?" said Selwyn.

"He will be nearer the sun. He loved the mountains and solitude," said the Sioux Indian. "Amyas Gore, the white man, was a great man. Let his wish be fulfilled."

Selwyn read the paper through again.

"Oh, I would not thwart his wishes for anything," he said. "But it is a long way. How can we get the coffin there?"

"Ponies. Mountain Lion will get them," said the Red Indian. "Soon the earth will be soft, and we can dig. The warm sun will shine the day long. It is well."

At that moment the nine sledge dogs began a furious barking, and came hurtling into view with bristling backs and bared fangs. They shot round the end of the house and vanished from view in a flash. Their strangled yappings told that something unusual had happened.

Selwyn thrust the paper into his pocket, and, leaping inside, seized the Winchester. Isaac Snugger followed him and grabbed his long rifle. Colin bared his revolver. The Red Indian seized his gun, and, examining it to make sure that it was loaded, followed the trio out into the open.

Twilight was shutting down, and the sky was streaked with red and gold above the Sunrise Mountains. In the glade sombre shadows lurked.

As they moved, the shrieking, yelping, barking dogs came racing back, turning their heads uncertainly. Someone was coming.

Selwyn led the way round the shack.

At first he could see nothing. Then, as he turned his eyes towards the line of forest trees, he saw two shadows moving there. They came furtively. Guns were dangling from their drooping arms.

Mountain Lion brought his gun up to his shoulder, while Selwyn looked along the sights of his.

"Holdurn it! See me drive a bullet clean through 'em!" yelled Isaac Snugger, as he pressed the clumsy butt of his long rifle to his shoulder.

Colin stood ready with his revolver.

Seeing that they were discovered, the men came stalking towards the shack, their hands held up above their heads, their rifles raised.

"Come right into the open!" commanded Isaac Snugger. "Stand right thar and let's have a look at you, whoever you are!"

The two men came on. They wore fur caps, heavy fur jackets, and thick corded breeches tucked into long heavy boots. Beneath their open coats showed belts, with holsters attached, and gun-butts ready to hand, the flaps of the holsters being free.

They stopped within ten paces, and

as he looked at them, Selwyn thought they were the most villainous-looking pair of rascals he had ever seen.

Their tanned faces were lined and seamed with wrinkles and dirt; their eyes showed white, and glittered wickedly. One man had a thick black beard and long hair; his companion was fair to carrot and had a straggly beard. The latter's ears stuck out like sails, and he had scarcely any eyebrows, and no eyelashes; his eyes were rimmed with red, and they looked like pig's eyes.

"Now, who are you? How kem you in these parts? And what have you kem to see us for?" demanded Isaac Snugger.

"We own that now shack over thar," answered the black-bearded rascal. "We feel kind of lonely, and we kem over, seeing strangers were hyar. We thought you'd like to be kinder neighbourly."

Isaac covered him with his gun.

"Not with the likes of you and your pal," he answered. "I'll give you ten seconds to clear off. Now, scram!"

Nothing Doing!

THE burly, black-bearded rascal leered at Isaac Snugger, then grinned as he looked at the long-barrelled rifle which Snugger levelled at him.

Selwyn caught his breath as he noted the quick, evil gleam of the fellow's eyes.

"One, two, three, four——" Isaac began to count with measured emphasis; and the black-bearded rascal rapped out an oath.

"Kinder neighbourly, ain't yer?" he said. "What hev we done that you sh'd cut up rough? I want yer to meet my pal Sam Wilnot; but if you wanta be really pally, call him Musty. That's his nickname. My name's Majoe—John Majoe—but you can call me Jack if you like—or, better still, Black."

The cool, studied insolence of the man made Selwyn's blood boil. The rascal was laughing at Isaac Snugger, and the fair-haired scoundrel's shifty face spread in a mocking grin.

Mountain Lion had called the dogs away, and they sat in a half-circle, jaws gaping, eyes fixed on the two strangers.

Isaac Snugger was so taken aback by the cheek of the two men that he stopped counting and began to argue, at once weakening his position.

"I told you to scram!" he said. "And out in the wilds I never tell a man twice. We don't care who you are. You beat it—an' quick!"

"Why?" asked the fair-haired, piggy-eyed man. "We've only just kem to live hyar. Built the shack over thar because there's gold in these parts. This is Amyas Gore's shack, ain't it?"

"Amyas Gore is dead," said Isaac. "So we heerd. But he found gold in these parts, didn't he? That's what we've kem to find—gold."

Isaac Snugger's finger itched to pull the trigger of his gun. Mountain Lion stood rigid, his dark eyes set upon the two men, his face as expressionless as a mask.

"Built the shack yourselves, didn't you?" said Isaac, fishing.

"Sure! Laid the foundation and druv in the main posts before the bad weather kem. The snows and the severe frosts druv us out, but we kem back and finished her a while ago."

"Yeah?" said Snugger sceptically. "Where did you go to from hyar when the weather broke?"

"Beaver Creek."

"I s'pose you've never bin into Tomahawk?"

"Never. Hate the sound of the place," said the black-bearded rascal, lowering his Winchester.

"Didn't happen to be in Tomahawk the other night?" said Snugger. "You didn't fire at these two boys, I suppose?"

The black-bearded ruffian appeared to be hurt by the question.

"Me fire on a man!" he said reproachfully. "I'm a man of peace; I am. Say, let's be pals. I like the looks of yore Injun friend and yore two white boys hyar. We're all out gold-huntin', I take it. Then why not all work together in 'armony?"

Isaac ignored the suggestion.

"You warn't here yesterday," he said. "How did you get here?"

"A pal was going to Tomahawk from Beaver Creek by car," said the black-bearded rascal, "and he guv us a lift as fur as the Moose Call road. The snow was meltin' and the going good. We kem in on foot, draggin' a sledge with our pervisions on it; can't afford a dog team."

The man was lying, Selwyn knew, and while he was speaking, his eyes went roaming over the repaired shack and the outbuildings.

"Didn't happen to be along the Moose Call road when the snow fell?" asked Snugger. "You didn't burn up our tent and our car, did you?"

"Us?" cried Musty in horror. "Have a heart, stranger! Do we look them kind of guys?"

"You look to me like a couple of murderers!" snapped Isaac. "I've never met you before, but I hate the sight of you. Are you the two blood-thirsty villains who killed and robbed Amyas Gore last fall?"

John Majoe looked hurt.

"Do we look like that?" he whined. "Pal, we've bin prospectin' along the Rockies from Kootenay to Hunter's Peak; we spent one summer workin' the washed-up Klondyke, an' we only kem this way in the fall. We thought of wintering around Beaver Creek, and makin' for the Tanana River this spring; only we heerd of Amyas Gore cashin' in—murdered after he'd made a big strike somewhere in the Sunrise Hills—and so we stayed and built that shack. Thought we might strike gold, too."

The black-bearded rascal's face expressed malevolent cunning all the time he was speaking.

Selwyn fancied he was making signals through his slits of eyes to his companion; and the fair-haired tough, who had long ago lowered his gun, swung it round so that the barrel covered the Sioux Indian.

Mountain Lion seemed not to notice it.

Selwyn could not rid himself of the notion that these two men were planning something. Did they intend to shoot Mountain Lion and Isaac Snugger without warning, and then take a chance with him and his brother Colin? If so, Selwyn vowed that he would fire at the first alarm, and he meant to get the black-bearded villain.

He took a pace backward and found himself next to Colin.

"Take that pig-faced ruffian, Colin, if there's any trouble," he whispered. "The other one's my meat."

Isaac Snugger interrupted with a burst of abuse, his voice shaking with anger.

"So you thought you'd try and strike gold in the Sunrise Mountains, did you?" he roared. "Well, I don't believe one word of your lyin' tale. You

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two never built your shack without help. Mebbe, you're the two murderin', thieving rascals who killed Amyas Gore. Mebbe it wuz you two who sneaked down on our camp the other night and lit up our tent and our car. And who wrecked Gore's shack and turned the place upside down if you two didn't? We make pals with you. Not likely. I told you to scram. Now beat it, or—"

Snugger's tone maddened the two men. But before they could use their guns, Isaac had the long rifle pressed hard to his shoulder again, and they thought better of it.

"I give you ten seconds to get out," said Isaac. "And if you and your pal ever cross the boundary line of this property again, you'll be shot on sight."

Selwyn saw the fair-haired villain edge away and bring his Winchester round as if he were about to shoot. Before he could pull the trigger, Mountain Lion's gun barked and Musty swayed back on his heels dropping his gun, the top of his left ear shot away.

Hearing the report, Isaac, too, pulled trigger. But as he did so, Selwyn struck his left arm, and the missile whistled over Majoe's head.

Selwyn then covered the man with his revolver.

"Put up your hands!" he said sternly. "Drop that rifle! Drop it, I say!"

Grating his teeth, Majoe obeyed, his Winchester thudding into the thawing soil.

"Isaac," said Selwyn indignantly, "I believe Wilmot would have shot you if Mountain Lion had not beaten him to it. But I couldn't let you kill in cold blood. What are we going to do with these two villains?"

"Shoot them," said Mountain Lion, as he stooped and picked up Majoe's gun. "That bad white man would have killed you, white man from Tomahawk, but I was watching."

Sam Wilmot was holding his wounded ear, a trickle of crimson running from it down his cheek and neck.

"I'll have the law agin you for this, you dirty, yaller-skinned Injun," he howled at the Sioux. "You can't go around shootin' honest white men this way."

"Honest! Bah!" said Mountain Lion. He picked up Wilmot's gun, opened the magazine and unloaded it. "You keep away from here. My dogs keep a good guard. The next time you come we shoot without warning. Now, vamoose!"

"Give me my gun," yelled John Majoe, glaring round at the four friends, but holding his hands up high. "You can't rob us of our rifles."

"You can have it—unloaded," said Mountain Lion, stepping up to him and handing back the Winchester. As Majoe took it, the Sioux whipped the two revolvers the rascal carried in his holsters, emptied the cartridges of both into his hand, and gave them back again with a deep grunt of satisfaction, Selwyn keeping the ruffian covered the while.

Colin stepped up to Musty and treated him the same.

Isaac Snugger then gave the two rascals the order to march.

"Get!" he cried. "And if you're wise you'll run!"

"O.K.!" jeered John Majoe. "From now on, then, it's war to the knife between us. You can't say we didn't try and make pals. We don't want to kem nigh yore dirty property; and you mind you don't kem nigh ours. We'll drive a post in where our land begins, and anyone of you as passes it will die in his boots, 'ceptin' that dirty polecat Injun, and he'll cash in in his moccasins."

The taunt did not anger the Sioux, for he was smiling as he whipped out his throwing knife from its case and threatened Majoe with it.

"Scram!" roared Isaac again.

With a shrug of his broad shoulders, the black-bearded giant pulled his partner along the trail that led them home.

"Amyas Gore's dead," jeered Majoe, swinging round and looking back after he'd gone a hundred yards. "And nobody knows whar his claim is. But thar's plenty gold up in the Sunrise Mountains, and you see what happens if you try and prevent me and Musty findin' it."

The four companions trudged on until they came to the spot where Mountain Lion had dug up the canister.

Selwyn saw Majoe point at the broken ground, and then swing round with an insulting gesture and laugh.

"Boys," said Isaac Snugger, "did I do right?"

Before either Selwyn or Colin could answer, the Sioux Indian broke in with a grunt.

"White man, you did indeed do right. Under pretence of friendship, bad white men come to kill. Mountain Lion will leave the dogs out to-night and keep watch."

"We'll all take turn and turn about," said Snugger, as they made their way back to the shack. "The thaw still holds; it ought to be warm to-morrow. Think we might venture up the Sunrise Mountains and try to find the Great Chief's Head?"

The Indian felt the ground beneath his feet, peered up at the twinkling stars, and then glanced at the deepening shadows of the woods, now ebony black.

"It should be safe," he said. "To-morrow we go."

The morning was ushered in with a burst of glorious sunshine.

Selwyn peeped out of doors and saw the mountain-tops standing out sharp and clear against the bluest sky he had ever seen.

The party began at once their preparations for the trip, each carrying a pack upon his back. The Sioux Indian took with him quite a store of things, as did Isaac Snugger. They packed a plentiful supply of ammunition. Snugger also packed some sticks of dynamite with fuses attached.

"What do you reckon you're going to blow up?" asked Selwyn.

"We may hev to blast a way through the rocks," answered Snugger. "Any-way, it don't take up much room; and it goes."

Mountain Lion made the dogs carry their own rations of dried meat and hard biscuit, which was stored in packs.

Before leaving, they ate a hearty meal washed down with coffee served with canned milk, then shut up the shack and the outer buildings.

The way led through the clearing to the foothills, the dogs taking the lead, bounding on, then halting, looking back and waiting for the men to overtake them, and racing on once more.

After journeying a mile, the party began to climb, and soon the foothills rose steeply up. They followed winding paths worn by the rain and melting snows of many years. Snugger with enthusiasm pointed out the different varieties of trees as they passed.

The sun was up, and the climb made them so hot that perspiration poured down their faces. The dogs ran with tongues lolling, yet liking it. Up and up they rose, the tracks winding and turning about so that, although they had been climbing for hours, when they paused at a gap which overlooked the valley they saw the shack they had left, looking like a toy shelter, nestling in the clearing among the pines.

Although the cabin recently built by Musty Wilmot and Black Majoe was near to it, they could not see it for the screen of pines.

Mountain Lion, who acted as guide, now turned off the main trail and kept along a ledge which wound round and about the face of the hills.

Suddenly, without warning, they skirted a bush-clad spot and emerged on to a ledge from which the cliff dropped sheer down to some rocks nearly one hundred feet below.

Mountain Lion pointed and grunted.

"Is this the place, Sioux?" asked Isaac Snugger eagerly.

"Yah!" replied the Indian. "This is the place. I found Amyas Gore lying crushed and broken down there on the rocks. The bad white men hurled him down. First they shot him—here," and he stamped the heel of his moccasin into the soil that covered the ledge, leaving an imprint, for the thaw had taken all the bone out of the frozen ground by now.

Looking down at the imprint of the heel, Selwyn was surprised to find the ground besprinkled with yellow particles and flecks of metal varying from mere dust to the size of a pea, but irregular in shape.

He bent to look closer, and picked up some of the little pieces, turning them over and over in his palm.

"Look, Colin!" he said excitedly, "it looks like gold dust!"

(There will be further gripping chapters of this great adventure yarn in next week's issue of the MAGNET, boys!)

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One smear of Blanco turns your face deadly pale and gets you excused lessons for the day. Deceives the most suspicious beaks!—Sample, 6d., from Prof. Kipps, Study No. 5, Remove.

WARNING

In readiness for his forthcoming fishing expedition, Mr. Prout is looking for worms.

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott are advised to make themselves scarce.



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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

June 8th, 1935.

BARGAINS FOR BUILDERS

Doorsteps for sale, all guaranteed taken from the bread-plates at tea in Hall. Solid as rock and completely unbreakable!—Apply, "COLLECTOR," Box No. 33, "Greyfriars Herald."

ARE YOU A TWISTER?

If you are, trot round and examine Snoop. He's anxious to have his head screwed on the right way!

BUCKING UP BIRCHEMALL!

By DICKY NUGENT

"Crule's a booby—"
"Hear—hear!"
"A creeping, crawling viper—"
"What-ho!"
"A treacherous tyrant who should never have been made Head of this grate skool! Gentlemen, why don't we put our foot down and say we won't put up with it?"

"Hooray!"
Dr. Crule, the new headmaster of St. Sam's, pawed on the threshold of the Junior Common-room as these words fell on his ears. A feendish expression came into his face.

"Jolly!" he roared.
But Jack Jolly, the kaplin of the Fourth, who was addressing the meeting, didn't hear him and went on: "Gentlemen, it's time we raised the standard of revolt if we want to raise the standard of our headmasters! Up the rebells! The hour has struck! Why shouldn't we strike, too?"

"Hooray!"
"While we've been taking tyranny and injustice lying down, there is one who has stood by his rights and made the tyrant sit up!" cried Jack Jolly in ringing tones. "Gentlemen, there's no need for me to tell you who I'm talking about; but I'll tell you all the same. It's our dismissed headmaster—Doctor Alfred Birchermall!"

"Hear—hear!"
"Good old Birchy!"
"Birchemall has been an egg-sample to us," said Jack Jolly. "When this beastly booby was put in his place, he refused to go—he barred himself out! Gentlemen, why shouldn't we back him up and join the barring-out ourselves?"

"Jolly good idea!"
"Just what I think myself! Up the rebells and down with—"

"STOP!"
It was a bellowing voice from the doorway—a voice the juniors reckoned instantly.

"The Head!" they whispered.
At the sight of the dreaded tyrant, some of the Fourth felt as weak as water and several fellows turned pale. But Jack Jolly faced him with eyes that flashed defiance.

"Eve's droppers never hear good of themselves, sir!" he cried. "You herd what I said?"

"Yes, I did—and I'm going to make you sorry you said it!" roared Dr. Crule. "Fearless! Go

to my study and fetch the catter-nine-tails out of the cupboard!"

"Shan't!" shouted Frank Fearless.

"What?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Dr. Crule, eyeing Fearless almost dazedly. "You refuse to carry out your headmaster's orders? Why, I'll slawter you! I'll—"

Words failed him. He made a rush at the offending Fearless.

Fearless dodged despitely.

Dr. Crule, grasping only the empty air, lost his



balance. The next instant his feet flew up in the air and his prominent nose hit the floor—hard!

Bang!

"Yarooooo!" howled the new Head. "Ow, by dose!"

"Serves you right!" said Frank Fearless breathlessly. "Now let's start that barring-out, you chaps! We may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!"

"Hear—hear! We'll go along and offer our services to Doctor Birchermall!" cried Jack Jolly. "This way, you fellows! Let's got out quick and we'll lock him in!"

With ringing cheers the Fourth marched out of the Common-room. There were no faint hearts now in the ranks of the rebells. Fearless had given them inspiration by his reckless defiance of the boobying Head, and they were all eager for the fray! White with anger and flushed with eggitement, they trooped off to interview the rebel Head—and Dr. Crule was too bizzily engaged in counting stars to say them neigh!

When the last of the rebells had quitted the Common-room, Jack Jolly turned the key in the lock and put it in his pocket. Then he led the way to Dr. Birchermall's study. Reaching that sellybrated apartment, he rapped sharply on the door.

"It's me—Jack Jolly!" he yelled through the keyhole. "We want to join your barring-out, sir. Can we come in?"

The juniors herd an eggscclamation of serprize from their old Head. Then the door opened and

Dr. Birchermall appeared—majestick still in gown and mortar-board, despite his long barring-out!

"Now then, what's all this hoo?" he asked. Jack Jolly eggspalined. But when he had finished, to the juniors' disappointment, the Head only shook his head.

"No, Jolly; I cannot accept your help," he said firmly. "This barring-out is my own private bizziness."

"Oh, crums!"

"But on second thoughts," asked Dr. Birchermall, with a slyte coif, "as you all, first, I'll stretch a point on this occasion and let you join my barring-out!"

The juniors gasped; then they smiled again.

"Now for plans of campaign!" said Dr. Birchermall briskly. "To begin with, the scene of the barring-out must be shifted. There's hardly room to swing a cat in my study, let alone house a rebel army! Has anybody a suggestion to make?"

"The tuckshop!" cried Tubby Barrell eagerly. Dr. Birchermall nodded approvingly.

"That is an eggcellent suggestion, Barrell!" he said. "An army, as Julius Sesar or somebody remarked, marches on its stomach, and there's food enuff in the tuckshop to last us for weeks. To the tuckshop, then!"

"Eggscuse a bloke!" broke in a coarse, vulgar voice at that moment. "Can anyone tell us where to find a gent wot Doctor Crule ars us to sling out?"

Turning round, the serprized bbls saw before them a gang of ferce-looking tuffs. They realised at once who they were—despritt gangsters hired by the tyrant Head to smash up Dr. Birchermall's barring-out and throw him out of his neck.

Jack Jolly had a sudden branewave.

"You'll find the man you want in a room downstairs marked 'Junior Common-room!'" he said. "Here's the key. Go straight in and collar him and throw him out!"

"I, I, sir! You leave 'im to us!" leered the tuff. And he and his followers tramped off—ignorant of the fact that they were going to assault the very man who had hired them!

Five minnits later the rebells saw the result of Jack Jolly's strategy. Looking out from the upper winders of the tuckshop, they saw the tuffs rushing down to the gates, carrying a struggling figger which they reckoned as Dr. Crule. Reaching the gates, Dr. Crule's captors swung him backwards and forwards three times, then herled him across the road into a fearfully muddy ditch. Then they walked away.

"First blud to the rebells!" chortled Dr. Birchermall. "And now, boys, let's sericade the tuckshop and prepare for the biggest barring-out in history!"

And the rebells gladly did so! (Don't miss next week's "eggsciting" yarn, "The Battle of St. Sam's!"—ED.)

FISH LANDS WHALE —THEN WAILS

By "SQUIFF."

Fish in this one-horse country are nothing like the fish they get in the great Yownited States. This was the opinion of Fisher T. Fish when he went fishing in the Sark the other day.

"Over there I got catches worth yawping about—yes, sree!" he said, as he flung in his line. "But hyer it's different. Anything bigger than a sardine is looked on as a phenomenon, I guess."

But Fish was in for a big surprise.

He had hardly finished speaking before he felt a tug at his hook. When he tried to wind in, he found he had got a bite that was going to give him a rare old tussle. Whatever it

was at the other end of the line, it seemed to weigh a ton!

Fish exerted all his strength to keep his rod above water. His hat fell off his head and his glasses slipped off his prominent nose.

Without those glasses he couldn't see very clearly. But he could see clearly enough to recognise that a very large object was emerging from the water. And the size and shape of that



object made him utter a yell of excitement.

"C'm on along, you guys, an' see what I've caught!" he howled. "I'll tell the world I've hooked a whale!"

And it did look like it for a moment. But it wasn't a whale, after all.

As a matter of fact, it was Mr. Prout taking his first dip of the season! And he wasn't a bit happy about being caught by Fish, either!

From what we saw of it afterwards, Fishy's expedition brought him more WAILS than WHALES!

Let Me Be Your Uncle

Turn your goods into cash and have them back any time you like on payment of the amount loaned plus a small amount for interest.—UNCLE FISH, Study No. 14, Remove.

(N.B.—THE "SMALL" AMOUNT FOR INTEREST IS USUALLY ABOUT 100 PER CENT.—ED.)

Guard Against Night Starvation

Join Bulstrode's Midnight Grub Club and be sure of a feed at any time at "bedrock" prices! For parties, apply (after lights out) to G. BULSTRODE, Remove Dormitory.

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

BUNTER'S LITTLE BLUNDER

By TOM BROWN

Bunter was waxy—and not without reason. It's bad enough for a chap to be locked out of his own study, but it's a dashed sight worse when he knows it's because his study-mate has shut himself up inside for the purpose of having a solo feed!

Bunter hadn't the slightest doubt that that was the reason for Peter Todd's looking himself up in Study No. 7, anyway. The noises that were proceeding from within the study were conclusive, so far as Bunter was concerned.

"Hark at the beast!" he moaned to the interested crowd of idlers that gathered to watch. "Cracking nuts by the score to wolf himself—and he knows jolly well how I like nuts!"

"How do you know he's cracking nuts?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Because I can jolly well hear him! Listen for yourself, if you doubt it!" snorted Bunter.

We had to admit that it sounded very much as if nuts were being cracked in Study No. 7—hundreds of them, by the sound of it. We were rather surprised. It was unlike Peter Todd to indulge in an orgy of nut-eating.

Bunter, infuriated by the continued noises of nut-cracking, attacked the door more energetically than ever, yelling: "Lemme in, you rotter!"

At last, Peter Todd deigned to notice his existence. The door was unlocked, and Peter looked out, glaring.

"What is it?" he snapped. "An earthquake?"

Bunter, red with indignation, explained. He didn't mince matters. He told Peter in plain language just what he thought of a fellow who locked his old pal out of the study while he had ate.

Peter seemed surprised at first.

"Nuts?" he repeated blankly. "Cracking nuts? What the merry thump!"

Then he laughed.

"Oh, my hat! Of course! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing funny in it that I see!" said Bunter crossly. "Chap who gorges himself on his own is a greedy rotter and no mistake about it!"

"Just where you're wrong!" chuckled Peter. "There is a mistake about it! I wasn't cracking nuts!"

"Eh? Well, what were you doing, then?"

"Studying Russian!" grinned Peter. "I've got hold of some gramophone record lessons in Russian, and I've just been putting them on. Ha, ha, ha! That was what you heard—gramophone records of the Russian language, not nuts being cracked!"

And it was so!

Amply Confirmed!

Whilst disporting himself in the water at Pegg Bay during the recent Rogatta, Mr. Prout was taken for one of the winning-posts.

This confirms an oft-repeated statement—that Mr. Prout is one of the "buoys"!

Quite a Mistake!

Mauleverer tells us that on one occasion Bunter inflicted himself on Mauleverer Towers for a whole month.

It beats us how Greyfriars games critics after that can still say that Bunter has no "staying" powers!

We Can't Allow This!

There's a proposal mooted to keep the school gates open till 9 p.m. As pals of the school porter, we'd like to say right away that we're going to oppose it strenuously.

Why, if old Gosling is denied the pleasure of looking up early enough to make chaps late for calling-over, the shock will probably be fatal to him.

Answer to Correspondent

"UNDECIDED" (Third): "Can I break the agreement I signed with Fish to tie up 100 parcels for him?"

"Fraid you can't; our Legal Expert tells us it's a 'binding' contract!"



Harry Wharton is an accomplished horseman, having learned to ride during vacations. He can take his mount over a tricky jump, too. When Bunter, visiting Wharton Lodge, insisted on riding, he very soon came a cropper! The Famous Five were "hoarse" with laughter!

Tom Redwing won first prize at a Courtfield exhibition with a scale model of an old tea clipper, its rigging accurate in every detail. Redwing's early life by the sea at Pegg Bay has not relinquished its hold on his imagination, evidently! Once a sea dog, always a sea dog!

Smarting after a licking from Loder of the Sixth, Dicky Nugent crept into the prefect's room during the night and sprinkled tin-tacks on the floor. When Loder found them "barefoot" to leg, Mr. Prout went over to the bookwards to avoid it. He lost "barefaced" prank. But he kept his head, just had to grin and "bear" it!—Yes, it was a boundary!

Kindly acting as umpire in a Remove v. Upper Fourth match, Mr. Prout was lucky to escape demolition when Bob Cherry swung a ball round unexpectedly. Mr. Prout went over to the exclusion of his "prep," his school books have remained definitely "on the shelf."

A "dab" at fretwork, in addition to his poetic penchant, Dick Penfold has completed an attractive book-shelf. As Penfold has devoted most of his spare time to its manufacture, to the exclusion of his "prep," his school books have remained definitely "on the shelf."

Enjoying a trip in Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht last vac., "Smithy" and his chum, Tom Redwing, were overtaken by a squall. Redwing took the helm like a true seaman, and with Smithy's helping with the ropes, the yacht rode to safety. Neither juniors had the "wind up"!