THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Is Persuasive,

“LINLEY!”
“I say, you fellows-”
“Linley!”
“I say—”
“Linley! ” bawled Bob Cherry. “Where are you, ass? Tumble up, duffer! Linley! Mark Linley ! “
Bob Cherry’s tremendous voice rolled along the Remove passage. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent added their voices, but the combined shouts brought no reply. Billy Bunter blinked it them peevishly through his big glasses.
“I say, you fellows—”
“Shut up, Bunter !”
“But I say——”
“Where’s that chap Linley ? “ exclaimed Bob Cherry. “I jolly well told him we were going on the picnic this afternoon and told him to be ready.”
“He said he’d come ?“ asked Nugent.
Bob shook his head.
“Oh, no; he said he wouldn’t.”
“Well, then,” exclaimed Wharton, staring, “ perhaps that accounts for his not. turning up, you fathead. Lot’s be off.”
“ Rats!”
“I say, you fellows——”
“Shut up, Bunter! Linley! Marky! Tumble up, you lubber! ”
 “Look here, Bob—“
 “Bosh! Linley’s coming.”
But if he doesn’t want to come? ”
“He does. ”
‘‘ But if he said——”
“Never mind what he said,” replied Bob Cherry obstinately. “He’s coming. 1’m not going to have a chap in my study left out.”
“You ass! But he’s not in your study now— he’s back in his old quarters while No. 13 is being repaired.”
“That makes no difference.”
“And while you’re with us in No. 1—”
“Makes no difference. I tell you. Linley’s coming.” And Bob Cherry bawled along the Remove passage again—” Linley! Mark Linley “
Billy Bunter eyed the big baskets the juniors were carrying. There was to be a picnic up the Sark that afternoon, a very big affair, to which Marjorie and Clara were coming from Cliff House, and Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, of St. Jim’s, was bringing his cousin, Ethel,
Billy Bunter was anxious to get to the ground, and start operations on the lunch—baskets, and this delay for Mark Linley seemed to him mere “rot,” as he would have called it,
More especially, as Mark Linley was in very bad odour in the Remove just then.
A black shadow of suspicion hung over him—the suspicion of dishonesty. His staunch friends—Harry Wharton & Co., and Ton Brown the New Zealander, and a few more—stuck to the Lancashire lad through thick and thin. But the great majority of the Lower Fourth were against him.
Perhaps that was why Bob Cherry was so obstinately determined to include hin in the picnic party.
If he remained behind, it might look as if his own friends were beginning to have doubts of his honour.
Harry Wharton had not thought of that, but, as soon as he understood it, he became as determined as Bob Cherry was that Mark should join the picnic party if it could possibly be managed.
“Linley! Lin—Lin—Linley! ”
“Marky!”
Still there was no reply.
Bob Cherry snorted.
Here, amble up and down the passage, and look in the studies,” he exclaimed. “Marky’s going to this blessed picnic if I have to take him by the scruff of his neck.”
“I say, you fellows—“
“Shut up, Bunter!”
“I sha’n’t shut up! We’re wasting time. We’ve got to meet D’Arcy and the girls by the river, too, and—”
“We’ll be in time, Anyway, we’re not going without Linley.”
“Blessed if I can see why you should make so much fuss of a factory kid, a bounder who came here on a scholarship,” grunted Bunter.
Bob Cherry turned on him suddenly.
“What’s that ? “
“Besides, you jolly well know he’s a thief.” went on Bunter. 1 wouldn’t say it before Linley, because——”
“Because he’d lick you, you rotten little worm.”
“Oh, really, Cherry! Certainly not. Because I wouldn’t like to hurt his feelings.’’
“You wouldn’t like him to hurt you, you mean.”
“Well, you knew jolly well somebody took thos8 things that have been stolen in the dormitory.”
“I shouldn’t wonder if it turns out to be a silly jape even now.” said Harry Wharton.
“Oh, really, Wharton—”
“Anyway, you shut up! Mark Linley’s not a thief, and if you say it again, Bunty, I’ll roll you over and—and jump on you and burst you. ’
 Billy Bunter retreated a step or two. He was about to speak again, but the Famous Four did not stay to listen. They separated and went up and down the Remove passage, looking for the Lancashire lad.
Bob Cherry looked into No. 13, the study he usually shared with Linley. but which was now in the hands of the workmen. owing to an accident following a Remove row. Mark was not there, but a call from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the genial Nabob of Bhanipur, called the juniors to the right truck,
“I have discoverfully found him, my worthy chums,”
“Where is he?”
“In the esteemed box-room.”
Bob Cherry rushed into the box-room.
There was Mark Linley, seated on a small box, with his books in a large trunk, and hard at work.
He looked up with a smile as the juniors came in.
His face was somewhat troubled and lined, and it showed very plain traces of his late encounter with Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove. But it was a very prepossessing face, all the same—the face of a strong, hearty, wholesome, hardworking lad.
“Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Here you are, then.”
“Yes, here I am.”
“Didn’t you hear me calling you “
Mark smiled.
“Well, yes.”
“Why didn’t you answer, you image!”
“Well, I had told you 1 wasn’t coming. Bob, and I thought I wouldn’t have any more argument.”
That’s just where you make your mistake, my pippin,” said Bob Cherry, taking hold of the Lancashire lad by the collar and jerking him off his seat. “You’re coming.”
“I’m not! I——”
“I insist, my boy.”
“ The insistfulness is terrific.”
“Come on, Linley,” said Harry Wharton. “Better come. You’ll enjoy it, too. It’s going to be a ripping afternoon, for so late in the season.”
“But—”
“Where’s your cap? ” asked Bob.
“I— I— Look here, you chaps,” exclaimed Mark abruptly,
“You know jolly well the Form has sent me to Coventry, on suspicion of having committed the thefts in the dorm—’
“More fools they! ” said Nugent.
“Yes, but it won’t do you fellows any good to chum up with mc like this. I don’t want to drag you all into my troubles,”
“Bosh! ” said Wharton.
“But——”
 “Where’s your cap, Linley t’
“But, I was saying—”
“Never mind what you were saying,” said Bob Cherry.
“Take his other arm, Nugent, and we’ll give him a run down stairs, Wharton and Inky can bring the baskets,”
“But—but look here!” exclaimed Mark desperately. “How can I go to a picnic with the girls with a face like this? ”
“Well, you can’t help your face.’
“You ass! I mean the bruises on it.”
“Oh, they’re nothing. It doesn’t matter.” “But—”
“The girls will probably be looking at me, not at you, and they mayn’t notice,” said Bob cheerfully. “Come on.”
“But—”
“Blessed if he doesn’t run on like a giddy gramophone. Here, take hold of him, and give him a run.”
“ It’s all right,” exclaimed Mark, laughing “I’ll come.”
“Why couldn’t you say that at first, and save all this bother? Come on.’
And so Mark Linley joined the picnic party.

THE SECOND CHAPTER,

Mr. Chesham Hears Voices,

THE half-dozen Removites looked very merry as they carried their well-laden bags out of the schoolhouse. They were to go up the Sark in a boat, and pick up to the party from Cliff House on the bank of the river. The afternoon, for so late in the season, was very warm and fine, and everybody anticipated a jolly afternoon—especially Billy Bunter, who could not keep his eyes off the bags.
“I say, you fellows,” Bunter remarked, as they went out, “ it’s struck me——”
“Buck, up. Billy!”
“It’s struck me that it will be rather exhausting work pulling up to where we arc going to take the girls aboard.”
“You won’t do much pulling,” grinned Bob Cherry.
“Well, I shall steer, you know, and—and steering’s exhausting work. It isn’t much on the muscle, I know, but it’s a tax on the brain,”
“Hurry up!”
“All right, I’m hurrying. But as we’ve got to face such a lot of work, wouldn’t it be a good idea to have just a snack under the trees here, before we start? ”
“Go and eat coke ! “
“Oh, really, Cherry—”
“Come on, then, or we’ll leave you behind.”
“But about the snack—”
“The esteemed Bunter is anxious about his worthy snackfulness.” murmured Hurree Jamset Ran Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.
“If the fat bounder says the word ‘snack’ again, I’ll squash him! “ roared Bob Cherry.
“Oh, really, you know, I was really concerned about you fellows,”
“Shut up!”
“Yes but—”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Chesham! Buck up! “
The chums of the Remove quickened their pace. Mr. Chesham, the new master of the Remove, was coming up the steps of the house, and he would have passed close to them if they had not swerved off. They were anxious not to catch his eye just then. For Mr. Chesham was a terror.
He was taking the place of the regular Form-master, Mr.
Quelch, who was away on pressing business. He had done so
Before in the history of Greyfriars, and there had been ructions.
Now there were ructions again.
Mr. Chesham’s concern for their health, and his wonderful remedies for imaginary complaints on their part, drove the juniors almost wild; and there had been a general revolt against the “Chesham-ass,” as they disrespectfully called him,
By means of Billy Bunter’s ventriloquism. Mr. Chesham had been signally discomfited, but he never knew when he was beaten.
Wharton knew by the expression upon the Form-master’s face that he was quite ready for further trouble now.
Mr. Chesham proved it by signing to the Removites to stop. They could not pretend not to see him when he was within halt a dozen paces, and they came to a reluctant halt
“Ah” said Mr. Chesham, looking them over. “Your is not much better, Linley.”
“I hoped it was better, sir”
Perhaps some slight improvement, due no doubt to the use of the ointment I gave you,” said Mr. Chesham, “ also the Purple Powder for Bruised Bodies. You remember exactly how I told you to rub it on, to get it well in the pores of the skin ?”
“ Yes, sir,” said Mark “ I remember perfectly.”
Hp certainly did remember perfectly, and it was not worth while adding that that was all, and that he had not rubbed the purple powder into his skin.
“You are going out ?“ said Mr. Chesham.
“Yes, sir. ” said Wharton.
The Form-master glanced at the bags.
“Ah! A picnic, I presume?”
“ Yes, sir, We’re going up the river for the afternoon”
“ Very good.” said Mr. Chesharn “A very good way of
spending the afternoon, Wharton.”
“I am glad you approve, sir.”
“ Quite, quite ! “ said Mr. Chesham heartily. You are taking a collation with you, I see?”
“Yes, sir. We shall have a feed up the river, as we should be back late for tea.”
“ Wholesome food, I hope? ”
Harry Wharton groaned inwardly. The faddist was on the scent again.
“Oh, yes, sir, certainly! ”
“It’s ripping, sir,” said Billy Bunter, “ Pork pies, ham patties, jelly—”
“H’m ! Perhaps I had better see it.,” said Mr. Chesham, with a shake of the head. “I take a deep interest, as you know, in the health of my pupils. Some of the juniors have a habit of eating all kinds of sweetmeats at all hours of the day. I think I had better examine the food before you go. It will be better for your health, and health is too priceless a gift to be lightly thrown away.”
Wharton breathed hard through his nose.
If Mr. Chesham insisted upon the bags being unfastened, and on going through all the contents, it would take a considerable time: and meanwhile, what of the party from Cliff House waiting on the river-bank for the Greyfriars fellows ? The thought of keeping Marjorie and her friends waiting while the faddist went through the bags made Wharton very angry.
“If you please. sir—” he began.
“Come ! Put down the bags.”
“If you please, sir, we have friends waiting for us up the river, and—”
“Come, do as I tell you !“ said Mr. Chesham sharply.
Bob Cherry nudged Billy Bunter. He meant it as a hint that it was time for the ventriloquism to commence; but Bunter was not particularly sharp, and he did not understand.
Besides, Bob had a heavy hand, and his nudge was as good as anybody else’s shove.
Bunter was taken by surprise, and he staggered against Mr. Chesham.
“Oh!” he gasped.
“You frabjous ass!” murmured Bob Cherry.
“ Oh, really, Cherry—”
“Bunter. how dare you fail against me?”
“1—I—1 was pushed, sir.”
“ Cherry. did you push Bunter ?
“ I—I—I was only nudging him, sir,” said the unfortunate Bob, as red as fire. “It—it was nothing. sir.”
“Ahem! Bunter must he very weak to stagger like that from a mere nudge,” said Mr. Chesham, looking at the fat junior. “Perhaps it would be better for him to go in and lie down instead of going to the picnic.”
Billy Bunter nearly fell upon the ground.
“O-oh, sir!”
“You are over-fat for your size, Bunter, and very flabby about the face. I think this is due to over-feeding.”
“Oh, no, sir! It’s due to under-feeding, sir. I never get enough to eat. I’m a fellow of a very delicate constitution, sir, and I only keep myself going, really, by taking a little snack front time to time-———”
“Ahem! I think—”
It was then that Billy Bunter thought of the ventriloquism for himself. The terrible danger of being kept in on the afternoon of the picnic was quite enough to sharpen his wits.
“Mr. Chesham! ”
It was a sharp voice calling from inside the house, and the Form-master swung round in blank amazement
For the voice was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the absent master of the Remove! Bunter, in his hurry, had not stopped to think, and he had imitated the voice of the man who was a hundred miles from Greyfriars.
“Bless my soul “ exclaimed Mr. Chesham. “ Mr. Quelch
lists he returned, then? I am very much surprised! Are you there, Mr. Quelch? ”
There was no reply. Mr. Chesham went nearer to the door and looked in. But there was no one in sight, not even a fag. The house was deserted on a fine half-holiday. Mr. Chesham looked very much puzzled. Mr. Quelch’s voice had certainly called his name, but there was no sign of Mr. Quelch.
“Dear me,” murmured the Form-master, “ this is most surprising, most alarming! Can it be that something is amiss with my nerves ? Is it really due to the fact that I did not take the full number of terra-cotta tabloids ?”
He turned round to the juniors again. Harry Wharton & Co. were walking off towards the gates, carrying the bags. Mr. Chesham called quickly after them.
“Boys! Wharton! Stop!”
“Pretend not to hear,” murmured Billy Bunter.
But Harry stopped, and the rest followed suit, and they looked round. Mr. Chesham came down the steps towards them.
“ Really, boys——”
“Mr. Chesham! ”
It was the voice of Dr. Locke this time, from the doorway, and the Form-master swung round at once.
“ Yes, sir.”
“Pray come to my study.”
“With pleasure, sir,”
The Form-master hastily stepped into the house. Bob Cherry burst into a chuckle.
“Cut, for goodness’ sake, before he comes out again,” he muttered. And the juniors promptly cut.
Mr. Chesham was a little surprised to find that Dr. Locke was not visible in the house, but he concluded that the Head had gone directly to his study after speaking. He hurried thither, and tapped on the door. When he looked in, the Head looked up, and their eyes met. The head was at work before Ins open window, and seemed very busy, and certainly did not appear to have been out of his study for some time. There was a slightly irritated expression upon his face as he looked at Mr. Chesharn.
 The Form-master, thinking he had been called there, looked inquiringly at the head, and the Head looked inquiringly at the Form-master.
“Well ? “ he said interrogatively,
“Well?” said Mr. Chesham,
“You wish to speak to me? ”
“ No, sir.”
“ Really, Mr. Chesham——”
“You wished to speak to me, sir?”
“ I? Certainly not !”
“Eh! You did not wish to speak to me? ”
“ No, I did not.”
“Then why, sir, did you call me to your study?”
“ What!”
“ You called me to your study just now, sir,” said Mr. Chesham, a little nettled, “ I came at once, thinking from your tone that at was something important.”
The Head looked at him attentively.
“Are you quite well, Mr. Chesham?” he asked in a quiet tone.
“Quite well! I hope so.”
“You have told me already to-day of a supposed voice you heard in the chimney of the Remove common-room. Now you tell me I called you to my study.”
“You certainly did, sir.”
“Where was I at the time?”
“ In the hall.”
“And when was it?”
“Not two minutes ago.”
“ I have not been out of this study since lunch, Mr. Chesham.”
‘The Form-master almost staggered.
“What!” he ejaculated.
“I have not been outside this room since lunch,” repeated the Head, with emphasis. “You see that you were mistaken.”
“ I—I suppose so.”
“I can only conclude that you are ill, sir. If I did not know your character so well I might suspect you of drinking.”
“Oh!” gasped Mr. Chesham.
“I should recommend you to see a medical man at once.” The Head dropped his eyes to his desk again, as a hint that it was time for Mr. Chesharn to depart. Mr. Chesham accordingly departed, closing the door behind him with a jerk. He was in a stunned state, he imagined he heard voices, certainly his nerves must be out of order. Was it due to his omission in the case of the terra-cotta tabloids, or was it something more serious?
Mr. Chesham went straight to his room and swallowed a tabloid hastily. Then he remembered the juniors he had stopped in the Quad, and went to look for them. But he was too late. Harry Wharton & Co. were gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bulstrode is Sorry

“BUCK up!”
“ Righto ! “
“The buckupfulness is terrific! ”
At a run, swinging the heavy bags between them, the Removites went down towards the Sack. The river gleamed through the trees ahead,
The boat was already swinging to a rope from the wooden landing-stage. Wharton had taken it out ready. But just as the chums of the Remove arrived, four other juniors were stepping into the boat.
Bulstrode, Snoop, Skinner, and Stott had evidently taken a fancy to Wharton’s craft, and they were going to calmly of taken possession of it without going through the formality of asking permission. Harry Wharton stopped, with an exclamation, as he saw the four entering the boat. The coolness of it took his breath away.
“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” exclaimed Bob Cherry. “Let that boat alone!”
Bulstrode caught the words, and looked round with a disagreeable grin. He picked up an oar to shove it off hastily.
Harry Wharton dropped the bag he was carrying, and bounded forward like a stag. The boat was leaving the plank stage, and in a few seconds more it would have been out of reach. Then it would not be much use to call upon the bully of the Remove to return it. Bulstrode would laugh at the idea, And there was a run upon the boats that fine afternoon, and it might have been very difficult to obtain another.
Harry did not stop to think.
He ran directly to the edge of the planking, and made a flying leap into the boat.
The boat was gliding out fast under the propulsion of the violent shove Bulstrode had given with the oar against the planks. But Wharton’s leap was well calculated, though so rapid, and he landed fairly in the boat.
Large as the boat was, the hump of the junior into it made it rock violently — with disastrous results to some of the occupants.
Wharton, unable to keep his footing, sprawled over, and bumped heavily against Snoop, who rolled over the gunwale helplessly into the water.
A wash of the river came over the side, and Skinner yelled as he was soaked to the skin. Bulstrode lost his footing in the shock, and sat down violently in the boat, and gasped.
Bravo!” roared Bob Cherry from the bank.
“Help, help! ” yelled Snoop.
‘‘ Ha, ha, ha !
The cad of the Remove was struggling in the water. He got a grasp upon the edge of the boat, and clung there. Skinner was shaking himself like a dog, in the stern. Wharton was upon his feet in a moment.
“You rotter!” howled Bulstrode.
“You cad!” exclaimed Wharton fiercely. “This is our boat.”
“Rats!”
“I had got it out ready.”
“Bah! ”
“Give me that oar!”
‘‘ I won’t!
“ Then I’ll jolly well take it.”
And Wharton started towards the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode’s eyes were blazing with rage as he sprang up, grasping the oar. He swung it back over his head, and his eyes seemed to flame at Wharton.
“Stand back, or I’ll brain you! ”
Wharton did not stand back, though Bulstrode looked quite capable in his rage, of carrying out his threat
But before the Remove bully could do so, if he had intended it, a bag whirled from the bank and caught him in the side, left exposed by his arms being in the air.
He gave a gasp and staggered over.
“Well hit, Bob!” roared Nugent. “ Well bowled! Hurrah!”
“Ha, ha, ha !”
Bulstrode plunged headlong over the gunwale. The bag dropped into the boat, the oar into the water. Wharton picked it up in a moment, and swung the boat back to the landing stage. Neither Stott nor Skinner offered any resistance. Bulstrode was swimming, and Snoop clinging to the boat. The bows bumped against the timber, and Mark Linley caught the painter.
“All right!” he said.
“Good ! Get in, and kick those rotters out.”
Snoop and Skinner did not wait to be kicked out. They scrambled ruefully ashore.
“It was only a j-j-joke, Wharton,” ventured Skinner.
“Oh, cut off.”
“Help!” gasped Snoop.
Certainly,” said Nugent, leaning over and grasping the cad of the Lower Fourth by the collar, and dragging him out of the water, depositing him in a gasping heap on the planks
“That all right?”
“Ow! Ow! Ow!’’
“Shall I lend you a hand, Bulstrode?”
The Remove bully did not reply. He swam to the timbers
and dragged himself ashore. Harry Wharton and his were all in the boat now, and the bags with them. Billy Bunter settled down in the stern to steer. Bulstrode shook the water from his clothes, and knuckled it out of his eyes. He stood regarding the boat and its crew with a savage look.
“Sorry we haven’t room for you, Bulstrode.” said Nugent politely. And the Nabob, of Bhanipur murmured that the sorrowfullness was terrific.
Bulstrode gritted his teeth.
“I wouldn’t come.’ He said. “ Blessed if I want a picnic with a thief- I should be afraid of getting my pockets picked.’’
Mark Linley turned deadly pale, and his lips tightened convulsively. He made a movement as if to spring towards Bulstrode.
“Hold on, kid,” muttered Bob Cherry. “He’s only trying to draw you. Remember we’re going to meet the girls. You don’t want a. fight now.”
Mark nodded silently.
Bulstrode’s lip curled as he saw that the Lancashire lad turned quietly to his place and picked up his oar.
“1 wish you a pleasant voyage, he said, “There’s one comfort for you—if you miss your watches, you’ll know who to ask for them.”
“Hold our tongue, you cur!” broke out Wharton savagely.
“Bah! You know Linley is a thief— Oh, oh! ”
Bulstrode broke off as an arm was thrown round his neck from behind, and he was forced over till he was bent down to the timber stage. Tom Brown of Now Zealand—the new boy at Greyfriars— was the fellow who had seized him, and the strength he had displayed in thus quelling the burly Removite astonished the juniors in the boat.
Tom Brown looked down calmly into the face of the furious bully of the Remove, who glared up at him savagely.
“Quite enough on that topic,’ he said, “You’ve jawed more than enough about it, Bulstrode. And you are a liar! I don’t believe you really think Linley is guilty of the thefts in the dormitory.”
“Liar!”
“And now you are going to apologise to Linley for what you said,” said the New Zealander quietly, taking no notice of the epithet applied to himself.
“1 won’t!
“You will !“
“Hang you! Lemme get up!”
“You can get up when you’ve apologised.” said Tom Brown cheerily—” not before.” He gave Bulstrode a twist that brought him right to the edge of the planking, hanging half over the water, which mirrored his furious face below, “Now, then—apologise, or in you go! ”

“Never! ”
“If you go in, you won’t get out till you’ve apologised.”
“Bravo! ‘ grinned Bob Cherry. “First lesson in decency to Bulstrode! Gentlemen are admitted to the show without charge.”
A great many of the Greyfriars fellows were crowding up to see what was going on, but no one offered to help Bulstrode. And he was quite powerless in the iron grip of the New Zealander.
“Let me go!” he gasped. “I’ll—I’ll fight you—”
“You shall fight me as soon as you like—after you’ve apologised to Linley! ”
“I—I won’t!”
“Oh, let him go.” said Mark. “It doesn’t matter.”
The New Zealander looked at him.
“Rats to you!” he said cheerfully. “I’m running this show. You go and eat coke!”
Mark laughed. He liked the breezy lad from New Zealand.
“Now, Bulstrode, your last chance.”
“ No! ”
“Then you’re going—”
“ Hold on. I—I—”
“ Get it out!”
“ I—I—apologise” gasped Bulstrode. “I—I’m sorry, Linley.”
Mark nodded contemptuously.
“Good! ” said Tom Brown, dragging the Remove bully back and rolling him over on the timber. “That will do.”
Bulstrode scrambled up. The New Zealander watched him with cool, quiet eyes, and the Remove bully did not “ come on.”
“I’ll make you answer for this Brown!” he said between his teeth.
“Any time you like,” said Tom carelessly.
And Bulstrode, who was dripping with water, hurried away In his squelching boots towards the school. Torn Brown waved his hand to the juniors in the boat.
“The show’s over, gents,” he remarked. “You can buzz off!”
“Hold on,” said Harry Wharton, “We’re going to a picnic. I was looking for you to ask if you’d care to come, but I couldn’t see you. Will you come?”
“It will be ripping,” said Nugent. “Plenty of tuck, and Miss Hazeldene and Miss Trevelyan are coming, to say nothing of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy and his cousin Ethel.”
“Right you are! ” said Tom cheerily.
And he jumped lightly into the boat, and the juniors pushed again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy Is Concerned for Bunter.

“BAI Jove!”
“What is it, Arthur?”
“Nearly three o clock, deah boy—I mean deah girl.”
“They won’t be long,” said Marjorie Hazeldene.
Hazeldene of the Greyfriars Remove was looking down the river, shading his eyes with his hand. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim’s, was looking at his gold watch with his eyeglass jammed tightly into his eye, as if to assist his vision in seeing the time.
The party from Cliff House had arrived at the rendezvous. Hazeldene of the Remove had gone over to fetch his sister and her friends, and they had taken a short cut to this point on the Sark, where they were to meet the boaters. A quarter to three had been fixed as the time of the meeting; but Harry Wharton & Co. for once, were late.
Marjorie and Clara were surprised. Harry Wharton never was late, so they couldn’t understand it. D’Arcy’s cousin, Ethel Cleveland, sat on the greasy bank, with an untroubled brow. Ethel was a sweet-tempered girl, and she did not mind waiting.
The three girls and the two boys had been waiting nearly two minutes. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy had looked at his watch about ten or twelve times. Not that D’Arcy minded waiting himself. But he felt responsible in the matter. It was such dooced bad form, as he would have expressed it, to keep a lady waiting. What the dickens were Harry Wharton & Co. thinking of?
 “Pewwaps there has been an accident” suggested D’Arcy after a pause.
“My goodness!” said Miss Clara.
“Why, what accident could happen? ” asked Marjorie, with a smiling glance at the swell of St. Jim’s.
Girls always liked Arthur Augustus. He was so attentive in a quiet way, and so wanting in that unpleasant kind of conceit which makes some boys so disagreeable to the gentle sex. D’Arcy had an excellent opinion of himself, and he looked upon the whole world in a rather fatherly sort of way. But he did not imagine himself to be a lady-killer, and a girl could chat with him freely and merrily without any danger of being misunderstood.
D’Arcy was looking his best now. He was in spotless white, with a Panama hat to match, and beautifully-fitting tan shoes. From crown to sole he looked a picture, and it anything was wanting to give a finishing touch to his appearance, the gold- rimmed monocle supplied it.
“Oh, there might be lots of accidents,” he remarked. “I knew a chap once who was goin’ to keep an important appointment, and had his toppah blown off, and lost it, and had to go in a bowlah, you know.”
“How dreadful !“ said Marjorie.
“Yaas, wathah! It was a bit wuff on the chap, and I know how he must have felt.” said D’Arcy with feeling.
“Horrid” remarked Hazeldene. “ But these chaps are all right.”
“How do you know, deah boy? ” said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. “They may have been detained.”
“They haven’t.”
“They may not have been able to get a boat.”
“That’s all right.”
“They may have run aground”
“They haven’t run aground.”
“But how do you know, deah boy?”
Hazeldene grinned.
“Because I can see then coming up the river.”
“ Bai Jove !”
Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the gleaming Sark; Sure enough, there was the boat, coming steadily up the gleaming water, propelled by four oars, and at a spanking rate.
“Jolly good ! “ said D’Arcy, in the tone of a connoisseur.
“They can wow. We do some wowin’, and we’d like to meet a Gweyfwiahs cwew some day. Hallo, there!”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” sang back Bob Cherry’s powerful voice.
“We’ve been waiting for you.”
The boat glided up and bumped on the grassy bank, and Hazeldene caught the painter.
The Greyfriars juniors jumped up and raised their straw hats.
“Sorry,” said Harry Wharton. “ It’s too rotten to be late, but we’ve had a chapter of accidents.”
“I say, you fellows—”
“Pway don’t mention it, as far as I’m concerned,” said D’Arcy.
“ If the ladies will ovahlook the occuwwence—”
“Of course. We know you couldn’t help it,” said Cousin Ethel, smiling. “ I hope nothing serious has happened.”
“Oh, no! In the first place, we couldn’t find Linley, and we had to dig him up in a box—room. Then Mr. Chesham found us, and we had to dodge. Then there was a a-an-an argument with some chaps who wanted to borrow our boat. It was really too bad, you know.”
“Nevah mind, deah boys, it’s all ovah now,” said D’Arcy. “I was wathah anxious about you, as a mattah of fact, and I wished 1 had come stwaight to Gweyfwiahs to look aftah you.”
“Thank you very much,” said Wharton, while Bob Cherry grinned. “it was awfully kind of you, but we pulled through.”
“Yaas, I am glad to see that you pulled through.”
“I say, you fellows—”
“Shut up, Bunter! Get out of that seat, and put the cushions in place.”
“But I say——”
“Oh, ring off!”
“I think you might allow me to make a suggestion for the comfort of the ladies, Bob Cherry.”
“Oh, go on! It’s the first time you’ve ever made a suggestion for anybody’s comfort but your own.”
“Oh, really, Cherry—”
“Put those cushions there.”
“Yes, but I was going to suggest that the ladies are probably hungry after their walk from Cliff House, and it would be a good idea to take a snack here before going on up the river—”
“Shut up, you young pig!”
“ But really—”
Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a prod in the ribs, and Bunter collapsed on a seat gasping. Before he could recover his breath the party of picnickers were all in the boar, and Harry Wharton was pushing off again,
The craft was a roomy one, but its capacity was well taxed by the picnickers. There were three girls and eight boys, so the party was numerous enough.
Tom Brown, who was now introduced to the Cliff House girls for the first time made a very good impression upon them. The only disagreeable element in the party was Billy Bunter, and several times as they pulled up the river Bob Cherry was on the point of hoisting him overboard, and was only restrained by the presence of Marjorie.
Billy Bunter regarded himself as fascinating where girls were concerned, and he gave both Marjorie and Clara some killing looks from behind his big spectacles.
Marjorie and Clara seemed quite unconscious of them, and Harry stamped on the fat junior’s toe without having any effect upon him, except to make him yelp.
Billy Bunter decided that Marjorie and Clara were being coy for the sake of disguising their real feelings, and he turned his fascinating glances upon Cousin Ethel.
Ethel was talking to D’, who, as a guest, was not asked to take an oar. She did not even notice what the fat junior was doing; but Arthur Augustus D’Arcy noticed it, and it puzzled him very much.
The swell of St. Jim’s carefully adjusted his glass, and examined the countenance of the Greyfriars Falstaff.
Bunter was casting what he believed to be a killing look in the direction of Ethel ; but to D’Arcy it seemed as if the fat junior must be ill, to draw so curious an expression to his face.
“Bai Jove ! “ murmured D’Arcy.
Harry Wharton, who had taken the rudder-lines for a change, looked over at him.
“Anything amiss?”
“Yaas wathah! It’s extwaordinary.’
“ What is ? “
“ Buntah.”
“What’s the matter with Bunter? Anything wrong, Billy ?”
“No,” said Billy. “ I’m a bit hungry, that’s all. I’ll have a snack from one of the bags, if you like.”
“I don’t like,’’
“Oh, really, Wharton——”
“It’s extwaordinary,’’ repeated Arthur Augustus, still with his monocle turned upon the fat face of William George Bunter.
“Oh. you’re thinking of his face,” said Nugent. Yes, it is a bit out of the common, Make a jolly good Guy Fawkes mask, wouldn’t it?
“Oh, really, Nugent——.”
“ Extwaordinawy !”
“But what is it ? “ asked Hazeldene.
The cuwious expwession upon Buntah’s face. Did you feel any stwange pain, Buntah ?”
“Certainly not.”
“You do not suffah fwom St. Vitus’ dance?”
“Of course I don’t,” said Bunter indignantly.
“You have no feahful disease ?”
“I—I haven’t. Of course not. I took to sleep-walking once, but that’s not a disease, and it was caused by shortage of grub, I believe. What are you driving at ? There’s nothing wrong with me.”
“It is gone now.”
“What is gone ? “ asked Bob Cherry.
“The extwaordinawy expwession on Buntah’s face, an expwession as if he were about to expiah in feahful agony.”
“By Jove! ”
“Turn your face to the left again Buntah, please. That’s how it was when I caught that extwaordinawy expwession. You were lookin’ towards my Cousin Ethel.”
Bunter spluttered. Whether D’Arcy was really puzzled, or whether he was solemnly pulling his leg the fat junior could not guess; but he knew now what was the “extwaordinawy expwession” Arthur Augustus was alluding to.
He turned his face as D’Arcy requested, but the swell of St. Jim’s only shook his head.
“No, it is gone now.”
The boat pulled on. D’Arcy turned his eyeglass every now and then upon Billy Bunter. As soon as he thought he was unobserved—and Bunter was a great deal like an ostrich in that respect—-the fat junior started again.
There was a sudden exclamation from D’Arcy.
“There it is again !”
“What?” demanded three or four voices.
“That extwaordinawy expwession upon Buntah’s face. It comes on him when he turns his head towards my Cousin Ethel.”
Bunter turned crimson. The Greyfriars fellows were looking at him with accusing eyes.
Cousin Ethel’s cheeks were pink. Only Arthur Augustus D’Arcy looked frankly perplexed..
“Oh, Bunter’s all right.” said Bob Cherry blandly. “It’s a sort of—a sort of facial contraction he has, and he gets over it if he’s smacked on the back. I smack him on the back, you know, because I have a light hand—sometimes.”
And Bob Cherry promptly put the cure into practice.
Billy Bunter, who guessed that punishment was coming, tried to squirm out of the way, but that was not easy in the crowded boat.
Bob’s left-hand fastened on his collar with a grip of iron, and his right hand rose and fell as if he were beating carpet.
Smack! Smack! Smack!
“Ow! Ow! Ow! ”
Smack! Smack!
“Ow! Ow!”
Smack!
“Ow !
“You see how much good it’s doing him? ” said Bob, looking round. What a healthy yell he gives.”
“ Ha, ha, ha !”
“Oh, really, Cherry—”
Smack! Smack! Smack!
“I say, you fellows——”
Smack! Smack!
“Ow! Ow! Wharton, stop him! I—ow—yow—oh! ”
“Are you feeling better?” demanded Bob Cherry.
“ No—yes—ow! ”
“Do you think you are quite cured?”
“ Yes, yes, yes!”
“I don’t mind giving you a few more smacks. It’s practically no trouble to me.”
“I’m all right “ shrieked Bunter. “ Lemme alone.”
“Very good!” said Bob Cherry, sitting down. “Notice if he has any more of these expressions, you chaps, and we’ll pat his back for him again. We have to look after Bunter. He may go off into a decline any time if we’re not careful with him.’’
Billy Bunter collapsed, gasping for breath. He was still gasping and silent and sulky when the boat pulled up to the place chosen for the picnic. But Billy Bunter had been cured. There were no more killing looks during that picnic.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Sugar for Bunter.

“WHAT a lovely spot!” exclaimed Cousin Ethel in delight.
“Lovely! “said Miss Marjorie and Clara together.
“Ripping !“ agreed the boys.
“Bai Jove ! I weally wegard it as wippin’, and no mistake,” observed Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. “ This is quite as nice as some of the scenewy about St. Jim’s.’’
“Go hon! “ murmured Hazeldene.
It was indeed a beautiful spot. The greensward sloped gently down to the river, on the margin of which the bulrushes grew thickly. Big old trees, still in thick green foliage, shaded the spot.
The sun was blazing with summer heat, and the foliage intercepted the rays, and cast a pleasant shade upon the scene.
Round about the stretch of river were big, thick bushes, which screened the spot. from view except in the direction of the river.
A better spot- could not have been chosen for the picnic.
It did not take the juniors long to secure the boat, and to land their cargo.
Bob Cherry, who was a handy man in camping, selected the spot for a fire, and found three or four big stones to make a natural grate, and piled up fuel from the thickets and lighted it.
Billy Bunter turned cooking utensils out of one of the bags, and his fat face wore a cheerful smile as he did so. To the fat. junior cooking was the second greatest enjoyment to eating.
While most of the juniors were engaged in preparations for tea the girls were equally busy. Marjorie and Ethel laid the cloth on the grass for tea while Miss Clara helped to unpack the provisions.
The quality and quantity of the latter caused some widening of eyes among the guests of the picnic.
Arthur Augustus D’Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them, and noted the jam and the marmalade, the cake, and the tarts, the jellies and the preserves, as well as more solid items like pork pies, ham patties, beef puddings, and so on, and his eye glimmered behind his monocle.
“Bai Jove! ” he remarked. “How Fatty Wynn would like and to be here, wouldn’t he Ethel? ”
Cousin Ethel laughed.
“I think he would, Arthur.”
“I like that chap Wynn” said Billy Bunter, looking up from greasing the frying-pan.
Bunter had declared that no picnic was complete without fried sausages, and, as Billy’s fried sausages were a dream his chums had allowed him to have his way.
“I like that chap, you know. I am going to visit him at St. Jim’s one of these times. He’s a chap I can chum with.”
“Yaas wathah!”
“He can cook, and he knows a good thing when he sees it. I jolly well wish he were here! ” Then Billy Bunter glanced at the provisions, and remembered that Fatty Wynn’s appetite resembled his own. “Ahem! I—I mean, and I should always be glad to see him at Greyfriars.”
Sizzle, sizzle, sizzle!
Bob Cherry sniffed appreciatively.
“Nice “ he said.
“Bai Jove, it’s wippin’! Do you know, deah boys, I am gettin’ wathah hungwy, you know. I do not eat a gweat deal as a wule, but on the present occasion I weally think I shall distinguish myself ”
“Good!” said Billy Bunter. “I think you’ll like these sausages, D’Arcy. Remember the time we were cooking in your study at St. Jim’s, and a rotten prefect walked off the tuck. We made him sit up for it, hey?’
“Yaas, wathah—thwough your ventwiloquism, deah boy. I wegard that as a wathah clevah twick of yours. I couldn’t do it myself, you know.”
“Bet you couldn’t! And ” said Bunter. “It’s a wonderful gift.
I have marvellous abilities as a ventriloquist—even more than I have as an amateur photographer and a boxer. There’d be a great deal more heard about me at Greyfriars if I hadn’t to contend with jealousy in my own study.”
“Bai Jove!”
“Measly old study too.” said Bob Cherry. “No. 1 used to be top study in the Remove, you know, D’Arcy, till No. 13 was started. Now—”
“Now don’t tell D’Arcy any fairy-tales, Bob.” said Nugent. “I shall be bound to undeceive him, you know.”
“Now don’t be an ass, Nugent.”
“Then don’t you be a duffer, Bob.”
“Look here---”
“Order!” exclaimed Wharton, laughing. “This is a picnic, not a study row. It’s all right, Miss Cleveland; don’t be alarmed. This is a way they have when I don’t keep them in order.”
And Cousin Ethel laughed.
The sosses are getting browned,” said Bunter. “Who’s going to make the tea?”
‘I am,” said Marjorie.
“Good! Then it won’t want any sugar,” said Bunter, with a simper.
“Won’t it, really? ” said Marjorie, with perfect gravity.
 “Mine won’t, anyway. He, he, he! ”
Marjorie made the tea.
The cloth was spread, and really the array of good things was very imposing. It was quite enough to make any junior’s mouth water, and it did make mouths water—other mouths beside those of the picnickers.
From the thickets four pairs of eyes wore watching the camp now. Bulstrode & Co. had arrived on the scene!
Snoop sniffed appreciatively.
“Smell all right, eh?”
“Yes, rather! ” said Bulstrode. “We want some of that.”
“Not much good asking to join.”
“I wasn’t thinking of asking to join.”
“I suppose you’re not thinking of a row” said Skinner.
“What chance have we got, four of us, against that crowd ?”
“I’ve got a wheeze.”
“Go ahead,” said Stott, tersely. “If there’s any wheeze for getting hold of that tuck, I’m ready to hear it. I’m jolly hungry.”
“Look here, if they saw the boat adrift,—”
“How can the boat get adrift?”
“Suppose one of us took his shoes and stockings off and waded down the edge of the water? The rushes are high enough to hide him if he crouched low.
“ Yes, that’s so.”
“They would make a run for the bank as soon as they saw the boat going. Then the three here could make a rush for the camp and clear out the grub--or a lot of it.”
“Jolly good! But what about the girls?”
“Oh, never mind the girls.”
“Well, a chap doesn’t want to look a pig, you know.’
 “Well, above something over your face—daub it with some of that thick black mud from the river, and then you won’t be recognised.”
“Good egg! ”
And the four young rascals stole away through the thickets towards the water’s edge. Quite unconscious of their proximity, the campers began their tea. Marjorie poured out the tea, and Cousin Ethel and Miss Clara passed round the teacups. Billy Bunter disposed of a couple of sausages, and stirred his cup at intervals, and finally tackled the tea. He put the cup to his mouth and took a deep, deep draught.
Then the fat face twisted up as if he had taken a dose of quinine, and he choked.
“Ow! Wow! Ow! ”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! What’s the matter?”
“Ow! Yow! ”
“My hat, what’s the matter with him? ”
There was a lurking smile on Marjorie’s face; but the others were perplexed.
“Anything wrong with the tea ?” demanded Wharton.
“Ow! Yes’
“Bai Jove! What is it? ”
“N-n-n-no sugar in it! ”
“These wasn’t any sugar in my tea I” gasped Bunter. “I’ve got a sweet tooth, as you know. I distinctly said three lumps. There wasn’t any sugar in it! ”
And he blinked at Marjorie.
“Dear me! ” said Marjorie. “You said you didn’t take sugar.”
“What?”
“I am sure you said, when 1 said I would make the tea, that you wouldn’t want any sugar in yours.”
Bunter blinked; and the juniors grinned. Marjorie’s face was quite serious, and the Owl of the Remove was too short- sighted to see the humorous twinkle in her eyes.
“Ow!” grunted Bunter. “I—I didn’t mean that,”
“But you said so.”
“I meant it would be sweet enough if you made it—see? ”
 Marjorie looked perplexed.
“But now you say it is not sweet enough! I made it.”
 “Yes: but— Ow!”
“Who trod on my foot?”
“Nuff jaw, Bunter. Ring off.”
“Oh, I say, you fellows—”
“Dry up, for goodness sake! I— Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look at the boat! ”
Bob Cherry sprang to his feet.
The boat, which was just in sight over the rushes, had suddenly, and without apparent cause, started drifting away on the river.
“It’s going!” exclaimed Nugent.
“Here, buck up, or we shall have to walk home 1”
The prospect. of that was enough to make the Removites ‘ buck up.” They leaped up and rushed down to the bank. Only Arthur Augustus D’Arcy was left sitting on a campstool beside the spread cloth; even Marjorie end Ethel and Clara had run down to the bank in the excitement.
“Bai Jove!” murmured Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, rising in a leisurely way and adjusting his eyeglass. “How excited they seem! I—”
He broke off suddenly.
There was a rush of footsteps upon the grass behind him, and the swell of St. Jim’s received a shove that sent him rolling on the sward. As he gasped in startled amazement there his eyes nearly started out of his head as he saw three individuals with blackened faces engaged in hurriedly “lifting” the greater part of the picnic.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

D’Arcy Distinguishes Himself.

“Bai Jove! ”
Arthur Augustus D’Arcy sat up, and groped for his eyeglass. Ho could see perfectly well without it, but he never felt quite himself unless it was jammed into his eye. And this was evidently a case in which he needed all his wits about him.
“Bai Jove! My only hat!”
They took no notice of him. They were too busy. Three youths they looked like, but with complexions never grown in England. D’Arcy blinked at them in absolute amazement, and it was not till the raiders were rushing off with the greater part of the picnic in their possession that it dawned upon him that they were boys with their faces blackened for purposes of disguise.
It. sprang to hi feet.
Bulstrode, Skinner, and Snoop—for they were the three— wore loaded. They had things crammed in their pockets and gathered under their arms and in their hands. They only wanted a few seconds to get clear.
But the swell of St. Jim’s was on the warpath now.
Staying only a second to jam his monocle more firmly into his eye, Arthur Augustus D’Arcy dashed straight at the retreating raiders as they made for the thicket. At the same time he let out a yell of warning to the chums of Greyfriars.
“Wescue, deah boys! They’re waidin’ the gwub! ”
There was a shout in reply from the bank, where the Juniors were looking after the drifting boat. Stott was drifting in it and at a safe distance from the bank he was making a series of grimaces at the exasperated juniors.
“Look out! ” muttered Bulstrode. “Knock that silly ass over! ”
“Bai Jove! ”
D’Arcy simply hurled himself upon the raiders.
Snoop went headlong to the ground, shedding cakes and apples and bottles of ginger-beer on all sides. Arthur Augustus rolled over him, but he was on his feet again in a moment.
“Stop, you rascals! “
“Get out of the way!”
“Watts! ”
“Hands off, you ass, or—”
“More watts! ”
The odds were nothing to Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. He clutched hold of Bulstrode and Skinner, and hung on like grim death. Without letting go their plunder, they could not hit out, and they tried to rush on, dragging the elegant junior with them.
But D’Arcy proved that elegance was not incompatible with physical strength and activity in his case.
His grasp did not relax, and he hung on to both the raiders at once, with a grip on each, and shouted to Harry Wharton & Co.
“Wescue, deah boys! Pway howdy up! ”
His shouts had given the alarm, and some of the juniors were running back from the bank to see what was the matter.
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! “ shouted Bob Cherry. “ It’s a raid! That’s why the boat went adrift! Collar the cads ! “
“The collarfulness is terrific.”
Bulstrode, muttering something between his teeth, let the loot fall to the ground. and turned savagely upon D’Arcy.
“ Let go, you fool ! “
Bulstrode was thinking only of escape now. But he had caught a tartar in the person of the swell of St. Jim’s.
“I wefuse to let go! I—”
“ You utter idiot!”
“ I decline to be chawactewised as a—— Ow!”
D’Arcy staggered over as Bulstrode’s heavy fist clumped on his chest. But he retained his hold upon Bulstrode, and dragged the bully of the Remove to the ground with him.
“You fool “ shouted Bulstrode. “ I—”
“You wottah! ”
“ You silly ass!”
“Wats, I wegard you as a wuff cad!”
Bulstrode wrenched desperately to get away, but Arthur Augustus D’Arcy hung on, and, with a skilful twist, he got Bulstrode underneath, and sat upon him.
Bulstrode struggled desperately, but D’Arcy remained firm in his seat, pinning the Remove bully to the ground.
“Get up, you idiot.”
D’Arcy recovered his breath a little.
“I wegard you as a wotten cad,” he remarked, “and I absolutely wefuse to get up. You have stwuck me violently upon the chest and wumpled my waistcoat. I considah you a beast.”
“You dummy—”
“That is an oppwobwious expwession, and if I had not alweady handled you vewy wuffly. I should immediately pwoceed to administah a feahful thwashing.”
There was no chance for Bulstrode and Co. now. The Remove chums were on the spot, and they were all in the grasp of many hands.
Arthur Augustus D’Arcy rose to his feet, as Bob Cherry and Mark Linley seized Bulstrode, and secured him.
D’Arcy proceeded to dust and smooth down his rumpled attire.
“Bai Jove,” he remarked, “ that was quite a stwuggle, and it has thwown me into a fluttah. I am glad, howevah, that I captured the boundahs.”
“Good.” said Harry Wharton. ‘ Who are they? Blessed if I can make out their chivvies with the mud smeared on them.”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! here’s Bulstrode.”
And this is the esteemed Snoop.”
And this is that rotter, Skinner.”
“It—it was only a j-j-joke!” gasped Skinner. “Of course, we never meant to take away the grub.”
“Of course not,” said Snoop, “We—we meant to—to bring it back in the boat, as—as a surprise to you. Ha, he, he!”
“Well, it would have been a surprise to us if you had brought it back,” remarked Ton Brown. “ What do you say, Bulstrode ?
Bulstrode snarled.
“We were going to raid the grub, and scoff it,” he said. “‘They’re telling lies.”
“ Ha, ha, ha!”
“The truthfulness of the esteemed rotter is terrific.”
Billy Bunter, who was gathering up the scattered provisions blinked up at the juniors.
“I say, you fellows,” he remarked “ it stands to reason they meant to keep it. Fancy, a chap giving up a feed when he had once started on it ! It’s inconceivable.”
“Of course, it is,” agreed Bob. “To you, anyway.”
“Oh, really, Cherry—”
“Shut up, Bunter. Look here, you chaps, Bulstrode and Co. have daubed themselves with mud for the pleasure of the thing. Let’s give them a little more pleasure of the same sort.. There’s a nice deep strip of mud close to the water,”
“Good wheeze!” he
“Yank them along.”
“Lend a hand, Brownie. ‘Where’s that Brown chap got to ? Here, hang on, Nugent.”
“right you are.”
Tom Brown had disappeared, but his absence was hardly noticed. The three captured the raiders were run down to the water’s edge. They wriggled in horrid anticipation. In this spot there was a belt of thick mud close to the rushes, and the prospect of being clucked in it was horrible. Bulstrode would not utter a word, but Skinner and Snoop were loud in their entreaties to be let off.
Marjorie, Clara, and Ethel had said nothing so far ; but now Cousin Ethel touched Harry Wharton lightly on the arm.
“Please let them go! “ she said.
Harry Wharton hesitated.
“They ought to be punished, you know.” he said. It isn’t only the raid, but trying to muck up a picnic where there are lady guests. They really ought to be put through it a little.”
“ Yes, but——”
But it’s just as you like, Miss Cleveland,” said Harry gallantly. “ Chaps, let the rotters go.”
“Here, I say——’
“It’s all right—Miss Cleveland wishes it. .’
“Oh, good!”
“ Yaas, wathah.”
“I say, you fellows –“
“Shut. up, Bunter. Let the bounders bound.”
Bulstrode, Skinner, and Snoop were released. They lost no time in cutting off through the thickets, not being quite sure that the juniors would not change their minds.
“I say, you fellows——”
“Oh, you get the grub ready, Bunter.”
“Yes. but I say—”
“My hat, how that chap does go on talking! Make some more tea. Billy.”
“Yes, but. I say—”
“The jawfulness of the esteemed Bunter is truly terrific.”
‘ I say, you fellows,” persisted Bunter; “ Can’t you listen a minute? What about the boat ? We don’t want to walk back To Greyfriars.”
“Oh, I’d forgotten that !“
“Of course you had ! I say—”
“Oh, ring off ! What about the boat, you chaps?”
The juniors turned their attention To The boat again. They had forgotten it for the moment. Under the big, over—hanging trees the boat floated at a distance from the bank, with Stott. Sitting in it. Stott had watched the capture of his friends, but being out of reach himself, he did not feel at all until uneasy. As the juniors looked towards him once more, he grinned at them.
Bob Cherry waved his hand.
“Bring that boat back, Stott. ”
“Rats!”
“ We’ll scalp you I
To which threat Stott only replied by placing the thumb of his right hand to his nose, and slowly extending all the fingers in the direction of the Greyfriars picnickers.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Merry Picnic After All.

I4ARRY WHARTON breathed hard through his nose. He was deeply exasperated: but there was no getting at the exasperating Stott. The boat was captured,
and if it were not recovered there was no way of getting home after the picnic except. by walking. The walk would have been a long one for the juniors; but for the girls it would have been quite fatiguing. But there seemed to be no way of getting at Stott.
Billy Bunter was making fresh tea, and relaying the cloth. The others fastened their eyes upon the boat. What was to be done?
“Stott, Stott, you rotter! ”
“ Hallo “said Stott.
“Bring that boat here.”
“Rats!”
“We’ll snatch you bald-headed, if you don’t.”
“More rats ! I suppose you want me to join the picnic, eh’’
“Not much.”
“Well, if you do, I’m willing. I’ll make It pax and join the party, if you like.”
“Go and eat coke!”
“I’ll give you a few minutes to decide. I’d just as soon drift down on this boat to Greyfriars, as join your old picnic. I hope you’ll enjoy the walk home.”
Bai Jove! ”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! ” murmured Bob Cherry “Look there! Mind, don’t let Stott see you looking; but shove your peepers on that branch.”
“Phew!”
“Bai Jove!”
From one of the big trees close to the water a giant branch extended nearly halfway across the stream. The end of it, dropped down towards the water, and the foliage at the tip was not more than six feet from its image mirrored below. Upon the branch a form could be seen, working its way along from the trunk towards the end of the branch ; but so cautiously that it had not been noticeable till this moment, when Bob Cherry happened to catch sight of it.
It was Tom Brown, of Taranaki.
Wharton’s eyes glimmered as he saw the New Zealander. If Tom Brown reached the end of the branch unseen by Stott, it would be the simplest thing in the world to drop into the boat, which was just below.
“My hat! ” murmured Wharton. “That’s where he was gone, then! I wonder if he’ll do it. “
“Go it, Mutton!” murmured Nugent under his breath.
The long, thick branch drooped more and more as the New Zealander drew nearer to the end of it.; but Stott, who never thought of looking overhead, did not observe it. And the juniors, to keep his attention occupied, immediately began calling out to him again, and telling him the various treats that were in store for him if he did not bring back the boat.
Suddenly there was a sharp creak from the branch. Tom Brown was very near the end, and it was drooping so much that the foliage was within three or four feet of Stott. Stott glanced up quickly.
He was petrified for a moment as he saw the form of the New Zealander within a few feet of him.
He oars to shove the boat out of the way. He had been keeping her gravel level with the bank, and it needed only to drift. a few yards on the current to save him from the threatened attack. But it was too late
Tom Brown swung below this branch—and dropped!
The branch swung upward has the weight was taken from it, and the boat rocked as his feet came crashing down into it. He reeled over and caught at the gunwale, sitting down violently upon a thwart; while Stott, by surprise, was rolled over by the rocking of the boat, and went helplessly over the side.
Splash!
There was a yell from the bank.
“Bravo, Maori”
‘‘ Ha, ha, ha!”
Tom Brown sprang up. He was a little breathless, that was all. Stott had come up, and was clutching at. the boat and gasping.
“Help, help! I can’t swim! Yow! Help!”
“Ha, ha. ha!”
“Help ! Ow! Help! ”
The New Zealander grasped the Removite, and dragged him into the boat. Stott collapsed then, with all the desire to resist taken out of him. Tom Brown seized the oars, and with a few strokes brought the boat to shore.
Stott, in the grasp of many hands, was rolled out on the greensward. He presented a far from prepossessing picture. drenched with water, and with his hair plastered down his face with the wet
“Better take a run, or you’ll catch a cold,” remarked Wharton. “ Start now!”
“Look here—”
“Oh. cut off I We’d give you a jolly good ducking, only you’ve had one. Cut off, before you get the frog’s march, too.”
“Oh, buzz off! ” said Hazeldene, giving Stott a prod with the boat-hook,
“Ow!”
Stott wasted no more time. He “buzzed off” and disappeared in the wood, Nugent made the boat fast again.
“Bai Jove, it was a stwoke of luck gettin’ the boat back again.” Arthur Augustus D’Arcy remarked, polishing his eyeglass. “I wegard the action of Bwown as showin’ gweat pwesence of mind.”
‘ Hear, hear.”
“1 could not have done it bettah myself, you know”
“Go hon! ”
“Yaas, wathah.”
“Tea’s made,” said Billy Bunter. “If you fellows want to jaw. you’ll excuse me if I begin.”
They settled down to the picnic again.
It had been an exciting interlude, but no harm had been done— except to the raiders. In a few minutes the scene was forgotten amid the clatter of tea-cups and knives and forks, and the still more incessant clatter of active tongues.
If there was a face shaded by care during the merry picnic. it was that of the Lancashire lad; but even Linley seemed to have thrown off the weight from his mind, and to be determined to be happy.
It was not possible for him to forget wholly, of course, that he was marked in the Form ; that the greater part of the Greyfriars Remove believed him to be a thief.
But if only for the sake of his friends he was resolved to cast no cloud upon the festive scene around him. And indeed, in such cheery company, it would have been difficult for anyone to be sad.
After the repast—or rather, after all but Bunter had finished, Banter being” not out,” a song was called for, and Bob Cherry gave the Territorial song, “ What’s the Matter with England !“ The tune was a little patchy in places, and the voice was not quite reliable, but Bob finished to great applause, the juniors all joining in the chorus and making it ring through the trees.
Then Arthur Augustus D’Arcy gave a recitation, remarking that he ‘ wathah fancied himself wecitin’ at an al fwesco concert.”
D’Arcy gave the “Burial of Sir John Moore,” a piece he was rather fond of giving, and, as Bob Cherry murmured to Tom Brown, it was a nice cheerful subject for a picnic. But when D’Arcy recited it, the piece lost all it tragic character, and his hearers always persisted in regarding it as a comic recitation.
‘Not a sound was heard, not a funewal note,
“‘ As his corpse to the ‘wamparts we huwwied.
“‘Not a soldiah discharged his ‘—bai Jove. I quite forget ‘what it was that the soldiah did not discharge, deah boys.’
“His gun?” suggested Bob Cherry.
“Yaas, wathah, but it ought to whyme, you know’.”
“Never mind, make it gun.”
“Vewy well, for the sake of gettin’ on with the washin’, I will, said D’Arcy. gracefully.
“ Not a soldiah discharged his farewell gun,
O’er the gave of the hew we huwwied.”
“Good!’.
“We buwwied him darkly at dead of night.
“‘ The sods with our bayonets diggin’ ‘—I weally cannot quite wemembah what they did, I think it was diggin’—.”
“That’s all right; cut. ahead.”
‘“By the stwugglin’ moonbeam’s misty light.
“‘And the lantern, dimly—dimly—dimly—.”
“Jigging suggested Nugent.
“Swigging.” said Bob Cherry.
“No, that would not make sense, deah boy-”
“My dear fellow, there never is any sense in a recitation.”
“Yaas, but—.”
“Third lap,” said Hazeldene, Get on!”
“Yaas, but—.”
“Go on!
“Buck up! ”
‘Get on with the washing!’
“Yaas—.”
“The yaasfulness of the esteemed D’Arcy is terrific.”
“ Yaas, wathah, but—.”
“Go ahead.”
“Oh, vewy well.”
And Arthur Augustus went ahead, and finished the recitation —in the same style--amid loud laughter and applause. Bob Cherry remarked that it was the funniest thing he had heard for a dog’s age, and D’Arcy explained to him that it was serious business—and was still explaining it when the time came for the picnic to break up, and for the picnickers to embark.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry s Clumsy

IT was a pleasant drift down the stream to Greyfriars. The juniors were all in good tempers, pleased with themselves and with their excursion, and the girls were equally happy and contented. They disembarked near the school, and the whole party walked to Cliff House to see Marjorie & Co. home.
“Bai Jove “ said Arthur Augustus, as they drew near to Cliff House, “I must say that I have spent a vewy comfy aftahnoon, and I shall wemembah it. You fellows must come and see me when I am on my holiday, you know.”
“Oh, you’re going to have a holiday, are you ?” said Bob Cherry.
“Oh, yaas, you know—I am goin’ to Pawis.”
“Pawis! Where is that? ”
“Bai Jove! You know where Pawis is.”
Bob Cherry scratched his nose.
“Blessed if I do. I’ve never heard of it before. Is it in India?”
“ Weally, deah boy——!”
“My cousin means Paris,” said Ethel, laughing.
“Oh, I see—my mistake.”
“I am goin’ to Pawis shortly on a holiday,” remarked Arthur Augustus. “ My governah is awwangin’ it. I should be awfly glad if you fellows could make it convenient to wun ovah for a week end, you know.”
Harry Wharton laughed.
“We’d be jolly glad to,” he remarked, “I don’t see how it could be worked, though. “Many of you going? ”
“Yaas, I shall take some of the fellows. Bal Jove, here we are at Cliff House.”
Good-byes were said, and they parted. The juniors marched home to Greyfriars in a merry mood, and burst into a chorus a. soon as they were out of sight of Cliff House. Only Mark Linley was silent.
Harry touched him on the arm.
“No good thinking about it,” he said: “I know what’s in your mind. It will all come right soon, depend upon it.”
Mark coloured a little.
“Yes, I suppose 1 am an ass to mope.” he said,” Moping can never do any good. anyway.”
“That’s right”
“But—how can the truth come out. Most of the fellows believe I’m a thief. If 1 did not take the things, someone else did. But who?”
Harry shook his head.
“It’s a mystery.”
“I can’t think of any chap who might have Done It. Snoop is the worst cad in the Remove—and somehow I can’t think that Snoop did it.”
“I agree with you there.”
“Then what can be the explanation? ”
“It’s a mystery, as I said. But it will soon come out – it must come out. For one thing, the rotter, whoever he is, will try +it again, and get caught.”
“I can’t understand it,” said Mark shaking his head. “If a thief in the Form, one -would expect him to take the money, but—the other things, you know. Who could want to take trousers and socks.”
“It’s amazing enough.”
“I suppose there’s nobody off his rocker in the Remove ? suggested mark, “That’s what it. looks like more then anything else to me.”
“Not that I know of—excepting Bunter. He’s off his rocker, whenever he gets a new hobby—but not in this way. I simply can’t get on to it.”
They entered the school gate. Gosling, the porter, looked at them as they come in, and he shook his head portentously.
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! “ said Bob Cherry, affably. “The dear man was feeling worried about us, you know. We’ve come back, Gossy.”
“The esteemed Gosling may lighten the load of anxiety upon his honourable and respectable breast,” said the Nabob of Bhanipur.
Gosling grunted.
“Wot I says is this ‘ere,” he remarked. “If you was all drownded, it would be a good riddance to bad rubbish. That’s wot I says.”
“Go hon!”
“Which Mr. Chesham has been looking for you, and he says to me, says he, when them young rips come in, he says.—.”
“Ha, ha, ha! ”
“Oh, my only hat! ” gasped Nugent,” I think I can hear the respected Chesham using those words. My word! ”
“He says to me. he says, when them young rips come in, he says, send them to my study direct, he says, I’ve got a bone to pick with them, he says.”
“Ha, ha, ha.”
“Which you can go or not as you like.” said Gosling. “That’s what he says to me, and wot I says is this ‘ere—.”
“Ha, ha. ha! Thanks for delivering the message, Gosling, if and especially for translating it into Gossy-lingo.”
And the juniors walked on, leaving the school porter grunting. “It’s genuine enough, though Gossy has improved upon Mr. Chesham’s language,” Harry Wharton remarked. “We’d better go in and talk to Chesham.”
“Yes, rather.”
The ratherfulness is terrific, my worthy chums. Doubtless the respected Chesham is feeling the alarmfulness for our august health.’
Bob Cherry gave a groan.
We dodged him before the picnic,” he remarked. “We can’t dodge him now. But if he works off his pills and potions on me, there will be trouble.”
“The troublefulness will be terrific.”
The juniors presented themselves at Mr. Chesham’s door. Harry Wharton tapped. and the Remove master’s voice bade him enter.
The juniors entered, feeling a great deal like lambs going to the slaughter. The gas was alight in Mr. Chesham’s study, for the evening had closed in now. Mr. Chesham was standing at his table, with a glass in his hand, containing a red liquid. He was adding water to it from a carafe, with a careful hand, thinning it down to an exact consistency. He glanced over the carafe at the juniors.
“Wait a few moments,” he said.
“ Certainly, sir.”
They waited, and watched the Form-master curiously. His brows were wrinkled, and his eyes were fastened upon the glass in his hand.
Bob Cherry made a grimace.
That’s something for us,” he murmured under his breath, in Wharton’s ear, ‘ Bet you it’s a dead certain cure for picnicking.”
“Shouldn’t wonder.”
“Are we going to take it?” murmured Bob Cherry. “You watch your uncle.”
Bob Cherry shifted his position, as if to give the others more room, stumbled against a chair, and fell headlong on the table.
“ Oh! “ he roared.
Mr. Chesham gave a jump, and the glass fell from his hand, and was smashed into a hundred pieces on the table. The carafe in his left hand jerked forward, and sent a flood of water up his right sleeve,”
“Oh! ” he gasped. “Oh! Really! Ah!”
He put the carafe down with a force that nearly cracked it, and shook his arm for the water to stream out of the sleeve.
“Oh!” gasped Bob Cherry. “ I—I was clumsy, sir.”
“Cherry! How can you be so clumsy—so—so utterly like a rhinoceros, sir!” shouted Mr. Chesharn. “You--you ought to be led on a chain, Cherry.”
“Yes, sir.”
“That was the very last dose I possessed of the Pink Pick-me-up for Full Feeders.” said Mr. Chesham. “I was going to give you a dose each, to take off the effects of the reckless gorging you have undoubtedly indulged in during this afternoon.’
“Oh, no, sir.”
“Do not contradict me, Wharton.”
“But, sir—.”
“Have you consumed a greater part of the huge supply of provisions you carried from the school in your bags this afternoon? ”
“Yea, sir, but—.”
“In that case you have over-eaten yourselves.”
“Oh, no, sir. We—.”
“Silence! I presume I am a better judge of these matters than you are.”
“I don’t know that, sir,” said Harry, somewhat nettled. “I suppose a fellow of fifteen is old enough to know when he’s eaten enough.”
“I will not argue the point with you, Wharton. I was going to administer a dose of this invaluable medicine; but now Cherry, through his clumsiness, has destroyed it. and I have no more left.”
The juniors tried to conceal their satisfaction at the news, but not very successfully. Mr. Chesham eyed them with a grim smile.
“As the medicine is destroyed, I cannot administer it—”
“Hurray!”
“‘I—I didn’t. speak, sir !” stammered Bob Cherry, remembering himself. “That is to say, I—I didn’t mean to speak!”
“You were expressing satisfaction, Cherry at the idea of not having to take the medicine,” said Mr. Chesham sternly.
“Oh, sir”
“I think that was the meaning of your disrespectful exclamation, Cherry.”
“O-oh, sir !”
“However, this effect of your clumsiness will make no difference”
The juniors’ faces fell.
“I shall be able to obtain a fresh supply at the chemist’s in the village,” said Mr. Chesham. “I will walk down there this evening for the purpose, and if necessary I will go over to the market town to obtain it.”
“Oh, sir, we don’t want you to take. all that trouble on our account!” ventured Nugent.. “We—we’d rather run the risk, sir move!”
“I dare say you would; but I have my duty to do.”
“But, sir, if you please——”
“I shall not be back before your bedtime,” said Mr. Chesham.
“However, I will come to your dormitory at the earliest possible moment, and administer the dose. You will take it in bed; and, in fact, at is more beneficial if taken a short lime after retiring”
The juniors looked blank.
“That is all.” said Mr. Chesham. You may go.”
“Th-th-thank you, sir.”
They left. the study. In the passage they looked at one another with long faces.
“Well, you are an ass, Cherry!” Hazeldene remarked. “We might as well have taken the dose now and got it over, instead of being woke up in the middle of the night to take it.”
“The mightfulness as well is terrific.”
“Oh, rats” said Bob Cherry. “There may be another accident to-night—who knows ?”
“Ha, ha, ha!”
“Blessed it I’m going to swallow any of his pink poison for miserable mugs!” growled Tom Brown. “Better mistake him for a burglar when he comes into the dorm, and shy pillows at him.”
“Jolly good egg! “ ,
“If we smash his bottle of muck he can’t administer it then, that’s a cert,” said the New Zealand junior. “One thing’s jolly certain, if I’m awake when he comes in, he will get a bill”
“Hear, hear !”
“I say, you fellows—.”
“Oh, cheese it., Bunter!”
“But I say, you fellows, I tell you what—if you like to strand a bit of grub for me to—to be occupied with, I’ll stay awake to night and watch for Chesharn.”
“Ha, ha! How long would you stay awake after you had finished the grub? ”
“Oh, really, Wharton—---- .“
“Mind, whoever’s awake buffs the duffer with a pillow,” said Tom Brown. “That’s settled.”
And the others agreed unanimously.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Something Nice for Bulstrode.

BULSTRODE was in the common-room when the juniors came there a little later. The bully of the Remove was looking sulky. His adventure on the picnic ground had led to hot words between him and his friends, and his failure had been exasperating. Most of the fellows knew about the raid, and how it had ended, and had chipped him about it. Bulstrode looked at Harry Wharton & Co. with a sullen glare as they came in, Mark Linley with them. He would have said or done anything at that moment to annoy them, and unfortunately there was a weapon all ready to his hand.
Mind your pockets!” he called out.
Some of the juniors laughed. Mark Linley turned fiery red, and then pale. He knew, of course, what Bulstrode’s meaning was.
Wharton caught his sleeve.
“Don’t take any notice,” he whispered.
And the Lancashire lad nodded, though his teeth came together hard, and his eyes were glinting like steel.
But taking no notice was not exactly the best way of dealing with Bulstrode. He noted the change of colour in the Lancashire lad’s face, and when he saw how one shot told, h was not slow to follow it up with another.
“Anybody lost anything lately!” he asked, addressing the whole room;
“Yes,” said Snoop: “Linley’s lost his temper. He, he, he!
“New thing for Linley to lose anything,” remarked Bulstrode. “it’s Linley’s neighbours who lose things, as a rule.”
“ Ha, ha, ha! “
“Linley believes that ’ findings are keepings.’ of course, where-ever he finds anything—even if it’s in another fellow’s pocket!.”
“Ha, ha, ha!”
Mark Linley gritted his teeth.
“I can’t stand that,” he said.
“Give him a hiding” said Bob Cherry. “He won’t be happy till he gets it.”
The Lancashire lad strode straight up to Bulstrode, who put his hands in his pockets, and greeted him with an insolent stare.
“No good,” he said. ‘ I’m looking after my money, sad I’ve locked my watch up in my box. Better try somebody else !”
“Ha, ha, ha!”
“You coward “said Mark Linley. “Put up your hands !”
“Rats!”
“Then take that ! “
Smack!
Bulstrode reeled under the smack of the open palm, which sounded like the crack of a whip on his face. He caught his breath.
“Chaps. I’m not going to fight a convicted thief. If he can’t take it calmly, he’s got to be ragged. Collar him! ”
“Good! Let’s rag him!”
“Give him the frog’s march!”
“Kick him out! We don’t want any thieves in the Remove!”
“Kick him out! Hurray!”
A dozen hands reached out for Mark Linley.
The Lancashire lad faced his enemies, his chest heaving, his eyes blazing.
“ I am no thief !“ he said, his voice almost choked with passion. “And you know it, too, most of you. The thief is among you. I defy you all, you cads!”
“Kick him out!”
“Roll him over !”
“Down with him!”
Mark Linley struck out right and left as the excited Removites closed in upon him, like waves upon a rock.
But he had no chance against so many.
Bulstrode and Stott rolled on the floor under his heavy blows, but then he was dragged over and hurled down.
It would have gone hard with the lad from Lancashire if he had had no friends at hand at that moment.
But he had friends—staunch churns who were ready to stand by him through thick and thin.
“Come on! ” roared Bob Cherry. “Come on! Sock it to the rotters!”
“Hurray! ”
“This way” shouted Harry Wharton, and he dashed among the adherents of Bulstrode, hitting out right and left.
The rush of half a dozen stalwart juniors broke up the crowd round the Lancashire lad, and enabled Linley to get upon his feet.
Mark was red and gasping, his collar was torn out, his nose streaming red; but he was as full of pluck as ever.
The Removites closed in upon him again, and at last it was seen that Harry Wharton’s influence was broken, His backing up of the Lancashire lad had had the inevitable effect, which he had more than half expected. The Remove had turned against its Captain.
The fellows crowded up from all sides, and Bulstrode was the Form leader now—Wharton was the outcast, and his friends were few.
But that made no difference to the chums of No. 1 Study.
They stood round Mark Linley, and met the rush of a score or more of foes with heavy blows, that made some of the assailants sorry they had not been a little slower.
Still, the odds wore too great for the conflict to last.
“Sock it to ‘em!” roared Bulstrode. “Well give them all a lesson now—it’s time they had their combs cut. Wharton’s bossed the Remove too long! ”
“Hurray ! ‘
“ Roll ‘em over! ”
“Down with the thieves! ”
“We must get out of this,” muttered Wharton. “They’re too many. Make for the door!”
“Right you are!”
The too-manyfulness is terrific!”
The chums, in a compact body, fought their way to the door, the excited juniors howling round them, rushing on every few moments, only to be hurled back again.
The chums gained the doorway, and the passage beyond; and then the Remove made a final rush en them.
There was a wild and scrambling conflict in the passage.
In the midst of it, Mr. Chesham appeared in his hat and coat, dressed to go out. He stared at the fighting juniors in blank amazement and horror.
“ Boys ! Boys !”
The Removites were too excited even to hear him,
“ Boys!”
“Sock it to then “ roared Bob Cherry. “Down with the rotters!”
“Down with the thieves! ”
“ Cads!”
“ Yah!”
“Boys! Cease this instantly! I—oh! Oh !‘
A rush of the juniors swept the Form-master off his feet.
Harry Wharton & Co. went rushing past and gained the staircase. Mr. Chesham staggered to his feet in the midst of a swarm of pursuing juniors.
He caught the nearest one by the ear. It happened to be Bulstrode; and Bulstrode squirmed and wriggled.
“Boys! ”
“Cave!” gasped Skinner.
There was a rush to escape, as soon as the juniors saw that it was a Form- master whom they had upset.
They disappeared in various directions, with amazing speed; only Bulstrode, who could not escape, remained in the grasp of the Form-master,
Mr. Chesham gasped and blinked, and blinked and gasped.
“Bulstrode! It is you! ”
“Yes,” growled Bulstrode
“ What is all this riot about ? You are the oldest boy in the Form, and you should know better. Bulstrode, surely you are aware that it is extremely bad for the health to indulge in this excited horseplay. You are flushed, and in a feverish state.”
“I’m all right, sir,” growled Bulstrode, nervously apprehensive of a remedy for his supposed feverishness, He knew Mr. Chesharn.
“You are not all right, Bulstrode. Come with me.”
“W-w-where, sir?”
“To my study.’’
“But—but—I—it’s not fair, sir, I wasn’t any worse than the others, anyway
“I am, not going to punish you, Bulstrode. I have been upset and roughly treated, but I am a patient man, I am not going to punish you. I am going to give you something for your feverishness.”
“But I’m not feverish, sir.”
“I suppose I know better about that than you do, Bulstrode.”
“But, sir, I —I feel all right.”
“The feelings are a very deceptive guide in a case of illness. Sometimes a man feels all right, as you express it, on the very verge of death.”
“Oh!”
 “Your state is not as serious as that—at least I hope not— but the fact that you feel all right is a sure sign that you are in a more feverish state than I believed at first. I shall gave you a double quantity of the Electric Elixir.”
“If you please, sir—”
“That will do, Bulstrode.”
The Remove bully, inwardly chafing, was dragged to the Form-master’s study, and Mr. Chesham carefully mixed a doubly strong dose of the elixir. He stood over Bulstrode while he drank it, and Bulstrode had no chance of wasting a drop. What it was made of the junior did not know; but it tasted as if it were made of a mixture of the sourest possible lemons with bitter almonds and quinine. It nearly doubled
Bulstrode up.
He groaned and gasped when the dose was fairly down.
“How do you like it, Bulstrode?”
“ Ow! Rotten!”
“Do you feel bettor?”
“No.” groaned the Remove bully. “Worse! A thousand times worse!”
“Dear me, that is quite alarming! The only thing is to repeat the dose—”
Bulstrode made one bound for the door.
“Bulstrode! Boy! Come here! ”
But Bulstrode was gone.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Light At Last.

“I SAY, you fellows—”
“Oh shut up, Bunter!” . —
“I was going to say that my offer’s still open “
 “So is your mouth. Shut it! ”
“Oh, really, Cherry! If you fellows like to stand something in the way of supper, I’ll stay awake and look for the Chesham ass to-night———”
“Rats!”
That was all the gratitude Billy Bunter received for his generous offer. The Remove went up to bed; most of them in a bad temper.
Bulstrode was still suffering inwardly from the effects of the medicine administered by the faddist Form-master. Most of the others were suffering from hard knocks received in the combat in the common-room.
Harry Wharton & Co. did not speak to the others.
It was definite now that they were to be sent to Coventry along with the Lancashire lad. They took it quietly enough. With so many in ‘ Coventry,” Coventry lost half its terrors; and there were, too, a good many juniors in the Remove who would never carry out the sentence completely against the chums of No. 1 Study. Harry Wharton went to bed without showing a sign that he cared a rap for the latest move of Bulstrode & Co. Billy Bunter had been warned by Bulstrode not to speak to his study mates, or he would have to share their exclusion: but Bunter was wise in his generation, and he knew that the feeds in No. 1 Study were worth more to him than anything he was likely to get from Bulstrode & Co. Therefore he remained loyal; and he plumed himself a great deal upon sticking to his friends in the hour of distress—but he did not receive so much gratitude as he expected.
The fat junior turned in in a discontented mood. If his offer had been accepted he would probably have remained awake as long as the previsions lasted, and fallen asleep a few seconds after the last mouthful. The juniors were quite aware of that. As it was, Bunter dropped off to sleep shout a minute after getting between the sheets, and he was asleep when Wingate looked in to turn out the lights and say good-night
Tom Brown sat up in bed.
“Going to wait for the medicine man, chaps?” he asked.
Snore!
“Oh, I think I’ll sit up a bit, anyway!”
And the New Zealander sat up a bit—for exactly three minutes. Then he put his head upon the pillow and went to sleep.
Slumber reigned in the Remove dormitory.
The hours tolled from the clock tower, unheard by the tired and soundly sleeping juniors.
They did not hear the chimes, and they did not hear a quiet footstep in the Remove passage—they did not hear a door open in the dormitory. They did not see a lamp glimmer from the gloom of the passage.
Mr. Chesham looked into the room,
“Ah, all asleep!” ho murmured. “It is a pity to have to wake them up, but if the medicine is not taken, they will be in an unenviable state by tomorrow morning. I must do my duty, however unpleasant it may be to myself and to—er—others.”
He glanced at the beds occupied by the picnickers of the afternoon, and gave a slight start.
One of them was empty.
“Dear me!” murmured Mr. Chesham.
It was Billy Bunter’s bed.
As it was past eleven o’clock, Mr. Chesham’s surprise was natural. He immediately concluded that the fat junior was out of bed for the purpose of obtaining a surreptitious feed; not an uncommon happening in the Remove dormitory.
“Dear me! How fortunate I came here! I shall be able to save the unfortunate youth from the effects of his foolish gluttony !” murmured Mr. Chesham.
The next moment he gave a jump, and the lamp almost fell from his hand.
A figure in white loomed up in the gloom, advancing straight upon him.
Mr. Chesham backed away in alarm.
“Dear me! Bunter!” he gasped.
It was Bunter, in his night-shirt, looking very much like a ghost in the dimness of the Remove dormitory. Mr. Chesham turned the light pf the lamp full upon him.
“Bunter! ”
The fat junior did not reply.
He came straight on, as if he did not see Mr. Chesham, and was unaware of the presence of the Form-master in the dormitory.
Mr. Chesham felt a creepy sensation.
He did not quite know what it was, but there was something very uncanny about Bunter at that moment.
“Bunter!” His voice quavered in spite of himself. “Bunter! Get back into bed immediately!”
The junior did not reply. He strode straight on, and Mr. Chesham had to step out of the way, or Bunter would have crashed right into him.
Then, as the fat junior passed close, the mystery was explained. His eyes were closed; he was walking in his sleep.
Mr. Chesham shivered a little.
He remembered now that Bunter had mentioned in his presence that he was addicted to somnambulism. His visit to the dormitory had caused him to discover the fat junior in a somnambulistic fit and the kind-hearted Form-master was very glad that he had come. It was quite possible that he would save Bunter from breaking a limb on the stairs.
Hardly knowing what to do for the moment, Mr. Chesham stood holding the lamp up, and looking at Bunter. There was a subdued exclamation from Balustrade’s bed.
“Hallo? Who’s there?”
“It is I,” said Mr. Chesham. “ Do not make a noise, Bulstrode. Bunter is walking in his sleep, and it may be dangerous to awaken him suddenly.”
“My hat! He’s done that before, the young ass! ”
Several other juniors had awakened now. Mr. Chesham set down the lamp, and lighted the gas. Every waking eye was fixed upon Bunter.
“My only hat.!” murmured Harry Wharton “Look at him!”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! ”
“Look! “
“Phew! ”
Bunter had stopped do delete. beside Nugent’s bed, where the junior’s clothes were placed on a chair, and was methodically going through the pockets.
He turned out the loose cash and several small articles, and tucked them under his arm, and then visited Wharton’s clothes, and repeated the same actions.
Half the Form were awake now, and they all watched Bunter breathlessly.
Mark Linley met Harry Wharton’s eyes.
“The thief! ” he muttered.
“ The truth’s out now, Linley!”
“Yes—thank Heaven! ”
“It was Bunter—in his sleep “
“My only hat!” muttered Balustrade.
“The only-hatfulness is terrific ”
Mr. Chesham seemed petrified. Bunter was finished at last, and he concluded by gathering up several pairs of trousers, socks, and some jackets and boots, and thus laden he made for the door of the dormitory.
Harry Wharton whipped out of bed.
“Let’s follow and see what, he does with them. This may show us where the last lot were put—Bunter won’t remember when he awakes.”
“Good egg!”
“Dear me “said Mr. Chesham.
“Please come with us, sir, as a witness,” said Wharton. “Linley has been accused of stealing things in the dormitory, and you can see what really happened now.”
“It is amazing!”
The Form-master and a crowd of excited juniors followed the sleep-walker. Billy Bunter, walking with the curious precision of the somnambulist, went along the passage, and into the box-room. There he opened a long disused cupboard in the wall, and Mr. Chesham flashed the lamplight into it. There, in the damp, disused opening, lay a pile of clothes, and a little heap of glittering articles—money, gold and silver watches, and tie-pins.
This was the store where the mysterious raider had deposited his plunder. The money had not been spent—it was here, to the last shilling.
Bunter deposited his fresh loot in the cupboard, carefully closed the door, and then left the box-room. He brushed against Mark Linley in passing, but did not look round. He walked straight back to the dormitory, followed by the juniors.
“My only hat?” said Bob Cherry. “This simply beats everything! Fancy it’s being Bunter, walking in his sleep, all the time!”
“He’s getting into bed now,” muttered Wharton.
“The young ass? We’ll chain him down to-morrow night.”
 There was a suppressed chuckle. Billy Bunter tumbled into bed, drew the clothes about him, and was soon quiet, sleeping peacefully.
‘ Dear me! “said Mr. Chesham. “This is a most remarkable case, and I will make notes of it. I think I shall be able so prepare a medicine to cure Bunter of this. Good-night, boys!”
“Good-night, sir !”
The door closed behind Mr. Chesham, and Bob Cherry gave a chuckle.
“Jolly good!”
“What’s good ? “
“The Chesham ass has forgotten what he came here for, that’s all !“ chuckled Bob. “He’s gone away without dosing us with medicine.”
“My hat! So he has!”
“Ha, ha, ha!”
“Jolly lucky for us Bunter’s a sleep-walker’” grinned Nugent. “But I say, you rotten sweeps, what do you say about the thief now ?”
There was a general silence.
“All you mongrels who have been barking round Mark Linley—what have you got to say for yourselves?”
“Oh, rats!” said Skinner, ‘ How were to know that Bunter was playing these giddy tricks?”
“What have you got to say, Balustrade? ”
“Rats!”
“Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”
“Bah! ”
“Well, you ought to be—and if you don’t apologise to Linley, I hope the Remove will have the decency to send you to Coventry.”
Balustrade grunted, and wont to sleep.
There was no more surprised person than Billy Bunter when the story was told in the morning.
The fat junior knew that he was subject. to somnambulism, and he had been a victim of it, at Greyfriars, before, But he had never dreamed of connecting it with the mysterious thefts in the dormitory. He was somewhat incredulous at first, but. he had to believe it, and he had an explanation forthcoming at once.
“Well, I’m sorry,” hp said. “It was rough on Linley, I know. But it’s all the fault of you fellows,”
They stared at him.
“How on earth do you make that out?” demanded Harry Wharton. “Blessed if I know how we could possibly have had anything to do with it,”
“It comes of being underfed,” explained Bunter. “I’m a delicate chap, as you know, and I only keep myself going at all by taking constant nourishment. When I go short of grub, it has a bad effect upon my system. You chaps are always keeping me short of grub, and this is the result. I think you ought to apologise to Linley.”
Mark Linley laughed. The Lancashire lad seemed to have grown years younger since the previous day.
“I’m liable to have these attacks again, unless I’m well fed,” went on Bunter. “The best thing you fellows can do is to raise a subscription in the Form, to stand me some decent suppers. Then it will be all right.”
“I don’t think!” remarked Nugent. “It’s more likely the effect of overeating, and the best thing you can do is to cut down your meals.’
“Oh, really, Nugent—”
‘As a friend, I’ll help you. In future, I’ll scoff your tea as well as my own.”
“That you jolly well won’t? I——”
“Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here’s Bulstrode!”
Bulstrode came up, looking very shamefaced.
“I to speak to you, Linley,” he said. “I was an ass! It’s all right—I know now you weren’t the thief. It looked suspicious, but—oh, hang! I’m sorry, I can’t say more than that.”
Mark nodded.
“It’s all right, Bulstrode. I’m glad to hear you say so.”
There was no more talk of Coventry in the Remove. Mark Linley’s face was very cheerful that day. The Removite almost all did what they could to atone for their injustice, and it was admitted on all hands that Mark Linley had come out of the time of trouble with flying colours, And with that he was content.
THE END.