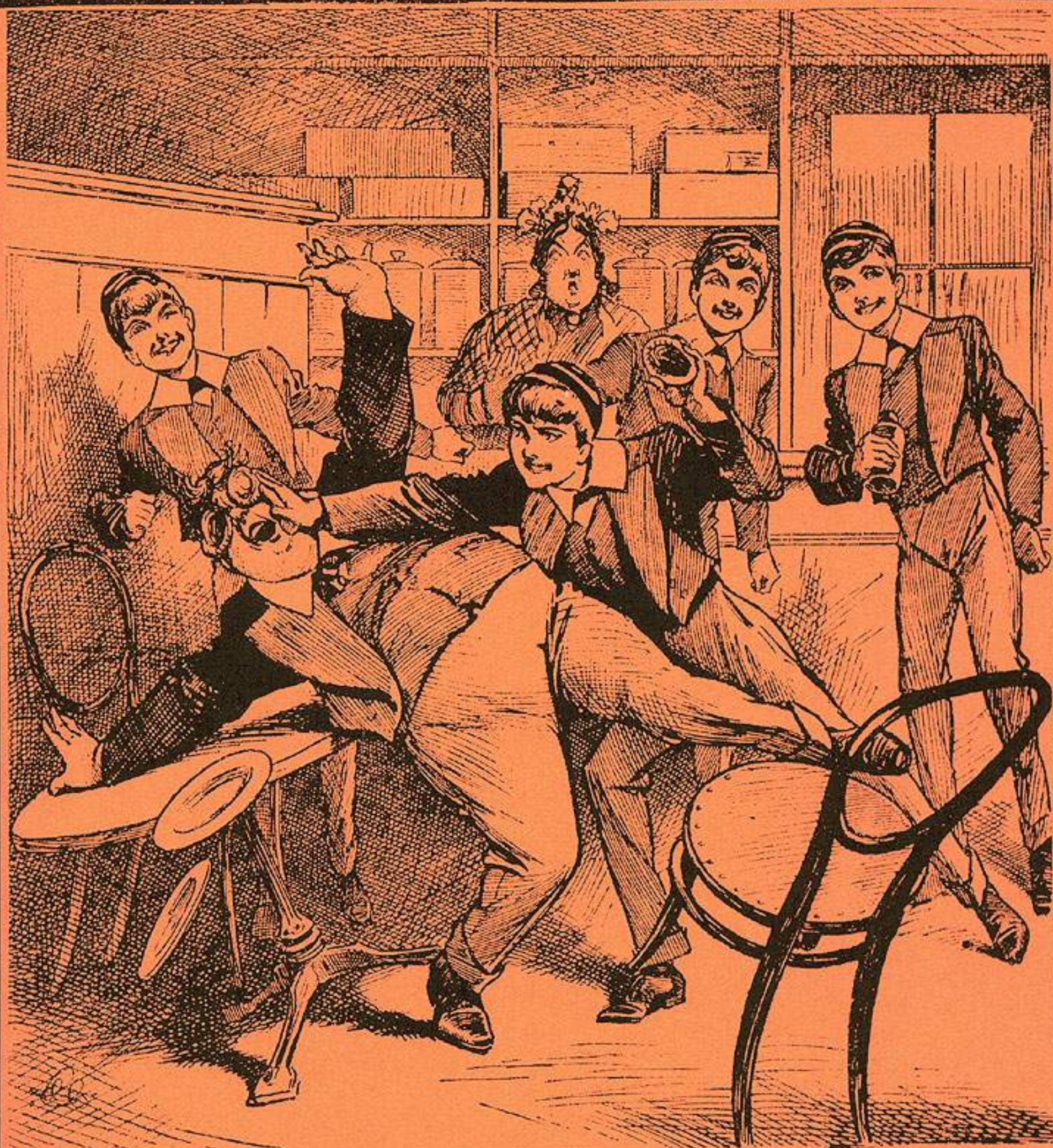


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NO. 109
VOL. 4.

Grand Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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NEXT
TUESDAY.

"LINLEY'S LUCK"

A Splendid, Long School Tale of the Boys
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The Remove to the Rescue.

A Splendid, Long, Complete

School Tale of

Harry Wharton & Co.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Telegram for Hazeldene!

"HAZELDENE!"

"Where's Hazeldene?"

"Where has that silly ass got to?"

"Hazeldene!"

"Anybody seen Hazeldene?"

Up and down the Remove passage at Greyfriars the inquiry was heard. Harry Wharton was the first to ask after Hazeldene, and then Bob Cherry, and then Tom Brown. Hazeldene was not to be found.

"The ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Fancy his buzzing off just at this moment!"

"The duffer!" ejaculated Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "Just at this particular moment—it's like him to go and bury himself just now!"

"The frabjous ass!" said Harry Wharton.

Frank Nugent came upstairs from the hall.

"Seen Hazeldene?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering about?" demanded Nugent, staring at the three juniors of the Remove.

"Why, we're inquiring for him ourselves, that's all," said Wharton, laughing. "The silly chump's disappeared!"

"There's a telegram for him in the hall," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling ass!"

"That's why we're looking for him," said Harry. "We want to tell him about that telegram, you see."

"And to know what's in it?" said Bob Cherry.

"Which is really the more important of the two," Tom Brown remarked.

Nugent grinned.

"Oh, I see!"

Mark Linley came upstairs, and stopped as he saw the chums of the Remove.

"Any of you fellows seen Hazeldene?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?"

"Have you seen the telegram for him in the hall?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, yes, and——"

"And it occurred to you that it was from his sister Marjorie at Cliff House?"

Mark coloured.

"Well, I—I thought——"

"So you came to look for Hazeldene," grinned Wharton.

"Well, we're all looking for him. That wire is from Cliff House, for a certainty. It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and it may mean that Marjorie is coming over. And now that frabjous ass has hidden himself somewhere!"

"It's too bad!"

"Seen Hazeldene?" asked Nugent, as Bulstrode of the Remove came by.

"I think he's in the gym."

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

And the Removites hurried away towards the gym. As they left the School House, a fat junior, in a big pair of spectacles, joined them.

"I say, you fellows——" he began.

"Oh, don't bother now, Bunter; we're in a hurry," said Wharton brusquely.

"Yes. But I say——"

"Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Have you seen Hazeldene?"

"Eh?"

"Have you seen Hazeldene?" demanded Billy Bunter.

"There's a telegram for him in the hall, and I was going to take it to him if——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at" said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove in great surprise. "I thought it would be good-natured to take him his telegram. I wish you wouldn't walk so fast, you fellows. I can hardly keep up with you."

"Don't do it, then."

"Oh, really, Nugent! I say, you fellows, I was thinking that perhaps Hazeldene's uncle, or somebody, has been wiring money to him, or something of that sort, and it would be only decent to let him know at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say——"

But Billy Bunter did not say more. He was out of breath, and he was left hopelessly behind as the sturdy juniors strode on towards the gym.

He blinked after them indignantly.

"Well, of all the rotters!" he murmured. "Fancy walking away from a fellow like that. I shouldn't wonder if the wire was to say that there's money waiting for Hazeldene at the post-office. I believe I've heard him speak about a rich uncle. It would be only decent to let him know; and he might lend me a little off the postal-order I shall have to-night. I'll get the telegram and go and look for him."

And Billy Bunter hurried back into the School House.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at the gym. Their deep interest in Hazeldene and his telegram was really quite touching.

But, as a matter of fact, any other fellow at Greyfriars might have received telegrams galore without Harry Wharton & Co. bothering their heads about it.

With Hazeldene it was different.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on the best of terms with Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends at Cliff House School. The chums of the Remove had intended spending that afternoon in an excursion along the sea-coast. The wire might mean that Marjorie wanted them—it might be an invitation of some sort—it might mean that there was something "on" in which their services or company might be needed.

Hence their obliging readiness in hunting up Hazeldene to acquaint him with the fact that there was a telegram waiting for him in the hall.

Harry Wharton was the first to look into the gym.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, was there. He nodded kindly to the juniors. There was no sign of Hazeldene.

"Have you seen Hazeldene?" asked Wharton.

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"I've just sent him to take a message to Courtney."

"Oh! Is he coming back?"

"I think not."

"Where's Courtney?"

"In his study, I believe."

"Thanks."

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And the juniors left the gym, again, and retraced their steps towards the School House. They grinned at one another rather sheepishly.

They entered the house, and went into the Sixth Form passage. Courtney of the Sixth had just come out of his study.

"Courtney, have you seen Hazeldene?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes. He's just brought me a message."

"Where is he now?"

"I think he went up the passage."

"Oh, my only Aunt Kate! Disappeared again!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"We'll find him. Come on!"

They went up the passage. A sharp and angry voice was heard from the study belonging to Loder of the Sixth.

"You young sweep! You won't go!"

"No, I jolly well won't!" said Hazeldene's voice, and Wharton quickened his steps.

"He's in Loder's study," he exclaimed.

The juniors reached the open door. Hazeldene of the Remove was standing in the study, facing Loder of the Sixth, with a slightly pale face but a determined look. Loder's face was red with anger.

Neither of them noticed the new arrivals for the moment.

Loder had picked up a cricket-stump.

"You won't go!" he repeated.

"No," said Hazeldene, "I won't! You've no right to send me to fetch smokes, and you know it. Carberry was expelled from Greyfriars for doing no worse than that. And I know jolly well that if I were caught bringing them in, you would turn your back on me—I know how you and Carberry served Nugent minor, when he was fool enough to take part in your rotten games."

Loder did not reply. He took a tighter grip on the cricket-stump, and stepped towards Hazeldene.

The junior made a spring for the door.

But the bully of the Sixth was too quick for him.

He caught the Removite by the shoulder, and swung him back into the study, and then the cricket-stump whizzed in the air.

Another second, and a savage blow would have fallen across Hazeldene's shoulders.

But that blow did not fall.

As the stump whirled upward, Harry Wharton rushed in, and his swinging fist caught the senior on the elbow, and his arm went up higher, and the cricket-stump flew out of his hand.

It crashed upon the clock on the mantelpiece, and there was a crash of breaking glass.

Loder uttered a cry of rage.

The sharp rap on his elbow had hurt him, and he clasped it with the other hand, as he staggered back.

"Quick, Hazel!" muttered Wharton.

The junior needed no second bidding.

He whipped out of the study, and Wharton followed him and slammed the door; and the juniors scudded down the Sixth-Form passage.

They were gone before Loder could get the door open.

In the lower hall they stopped, a little breathless, and laughing. They had got the better of the bully of the Sixth, and they did not imagine that Loder would care to carry the matter any further.

"Lucky for me you fellows came!" said Hazeldene.

"Yes, rather! We were looking for you. There's a telegram for you here," said Wharton. "Mr. Quelch took it in, and he stuck it in the rack."

"A telegram?"

"Yes. From Marjorie, very likely."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Hazeldene. "I don't see who else could be telegraphing; though, I don't know why Marjorie should, either, for that matter. But where is it?"

"Here—why—my hat!"

Wharton had put his hand up to the rack to reach the telegram down, but it was not there. It had been removed.

"It's gone!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes Terms.

HARRY WHARTON looked over the rack: the telegram was certainly gone. What had become of it?

"Sure there was one?" asked Hazeldene, with a grin.

"Yes, ass!"

"Then where is it?"

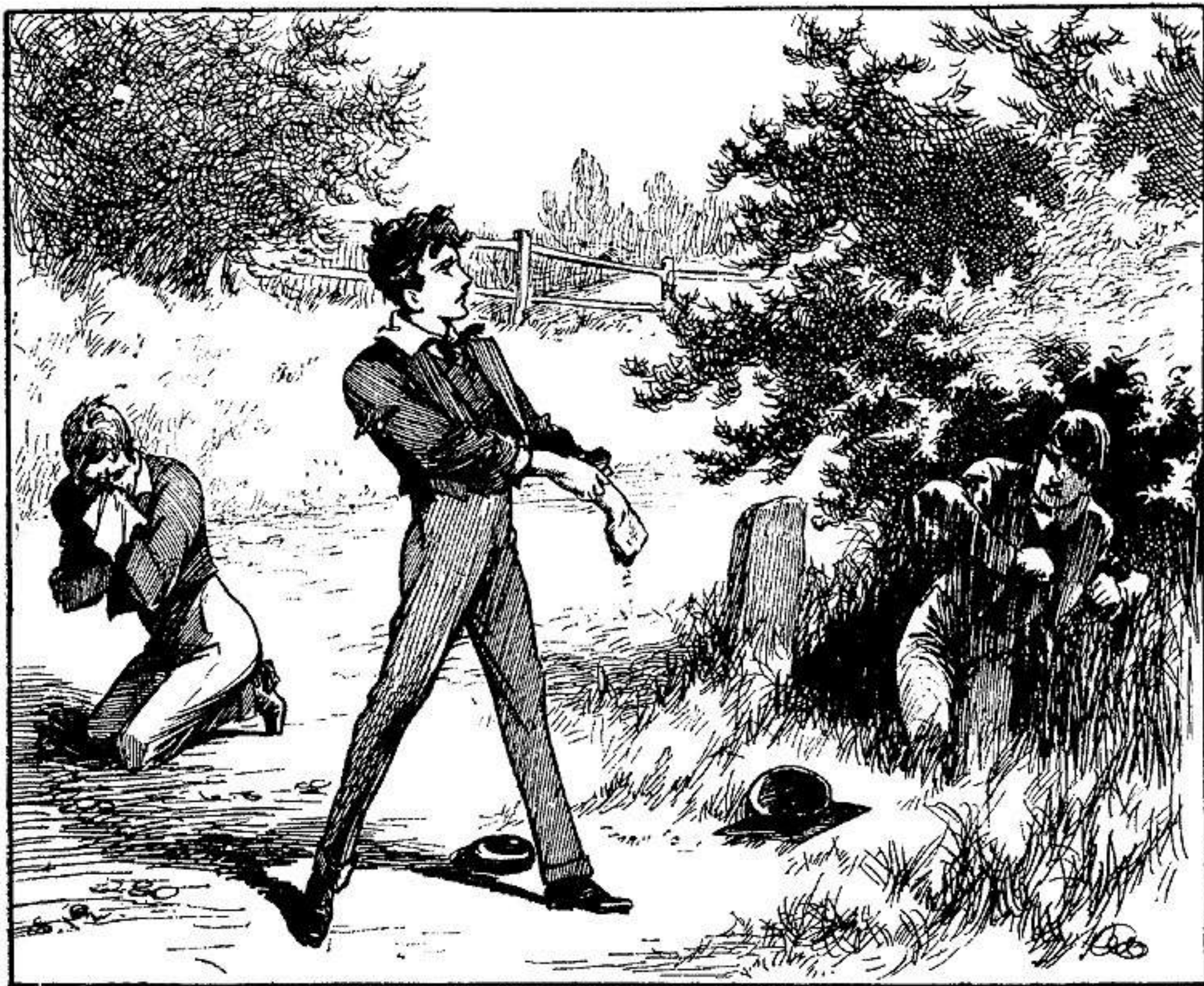
"I say, Ogilvy," called out Bob Cherry, to a Removite who was standing near, reading the notice-board. "Have you seen Hazeldene's telegram?"

Ogilvy looked round.

"That telegram. Yes, Bunter's taken it."

"Bunter?"

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Harry Wharton sniffed contemptuously, and turned towards the junior captain of Highcliffe, who had just dragged himself from the ditch.

"Yes. He said he thought Hazeldene's uncle was wiring some money to him, or something, and he would take it to him at once."

"The young ass! Which way did he go?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

Hazeldene chuckled.

"Just like Bunter. I suppose he's gone looking for me, and now we'd better go looking for him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"There might be something important in the telegram, too," said Bob Cherry.

"Especially if it's from Marjorie."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you're cackling at, Hazeldene," exclaimed Wharton, rather warmly. "If Marjorie were my sister, I should jolly well want to know at once what was in the telegram."

Hazeldene grinned.

"Well, let's go and look for Bunter," he said.

"Come on!"

They hurried out into the Close again, looking for Billy Bunter. But Billy Bunter seemed to have vanished.

"Better look in the tuck-shop," said Nugent. "If he has any money, he'll be there."

And the juniors turned their steps towards the little shop kept by Mrs. Mimble, the head gardener's wife, in the corner of the Close behind the elm-trees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Bunter was standing in the doorway of the tuck-shop, with a discontented expression upon his fat face, apparently holding an argument with Mrs. Mimble.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"LINLEY'S LUCK."

"It's all right, Mrs. Mimble; I can assure you, it's all right."

"You can have what you pay for, Master Bunter, and you can have nothing else," said Mrs. Mimble tartly.

"But I assure you—"

"Nonsense, Master Bunter!"

"You see, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening—"

"Nonsense!"

"If it doesn't come this evening, it's bound to come to-morrow morning at the latest."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble! You see, Hazeldene is going to lend me something off it in advance. He's just had a lot of money wired to him by his uncle."

"Nonsense!"

Billy Bunter was about to speak again, but he squeaked instead, as a strong grasp was laid upon his plump shoulder, and he was whisked out of the tuckshop.

He blinked at the juniors and gasped.

"Ow! Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"You young ass!"

"Oh, is it you, Wharton? I really wish you wouldn't be so rough. You might make my glasses fall off, and if they got broken you would have to pay for them."

"Where's Hazeldene's telegram?"

"What?"

"Hazeldene's telegram," said Harry, shaking him. "You took it out of the hall. Where is it? Hand it over."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, that telegram!"

A Splendid Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Yes. Where is it?"
 "Hand it over," said Hazeldene.
 "I'm sincerely sorry, Hazeldene."
 "Hand it over, will you?"
 "I didn't mean to lose it," said Bunter, blinking. "I'm sorry if it causes you any inconvenience, but—"
 "You've lost it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.
 "Well, you see—"
 "Lost it!" said Hazeldene. "Well, you cheeky young bouncer!"
 "Where did you lose it?" exclaimed Nugent. "Tell us, quick, and we'll find it. It's got to be found."
 "What-ho!" said Tom Brown.
 "I—I—I'm sincerely sorry—"
 "Where did you drop it?" exclaimed Mark Linley.
 "You must surely know where you lost it, Bunter."
 "I—I feel so faint from hunger that I can't think clearly," said Bunter pathetically. "If you like to stand me a few tarts—"
 "Where's the telegram?"
 "I feel so faint—"
 Harry shook the fat junior wrathfully.
 "Where did you drop that telegram?" he shouted. "If it's lost, we'll duck you in the fountain."
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Where was it?"
 "I—I feel so faint—"
 Hazeldene burst into a laugh.
 "It's no good!" he exclaimed. "I don't suppose he's lost it at all, but he won't tell where it is till he's had a feed. That's his little game."
 "I want to stand a feed myself," said Bunter. "You see, Hazeldene, I'm getting a postal-order to-night—"
 "Oh, ring off!"
 "Or to-morrow morning at the latest. As your uncle is wiring you some money, you might cash the order in advance for me; or, at least, let me have something off it."
 "But my uncle isn't wiring me any money that I know of," grinned Hazeldene. "I expect the telegram is from my sister."
 Bunter's face fell.
 "Oh!" he ejaculated.
 "So I can't lend you any money, and I wouldn't if I could," said Hazeldene cheerfully. "Now, where is the telegram?"
 "I—I feel so faint—"
 "You young porpoise, it isn't half an hour since dinner!"
 "I never get enough to eat here. I've got a delicate constitution, too, that can only be kept up by constant nourishment. I say, you fellows—"
 "Oh, stand him sixpennyworth of tarts, and make him talk!" said Frank Nugent impatiently. "It will be quicker than ducking him."
 "Oh, really, Nugent—"
 "Come on, then!"
 The Removites whirled the fat junior into the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour again, all smiles at the sight of some of her best customers.
 "Six tarts for Bunter, please," said Harry Wharton.
 "Certainly, Master Wharton."
 "Twopenny ones, please," added Bunter.
 "Rats!" said Wharton.
 "Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to be mean! I'm in a really sinking condition, owing to want of proper nourishment."
 "You'll be in a sinking condition, owing to being shoved in the fountain, if you don't look out," said Bob Cherry.
 "Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "Six penny tarts, please, Mrs. Mimble."
 "Certainly, Master Wharton."
 "Seven for sixpence, of course," said Billy Bunter, blinking at Mrs. Mimble. "Of course, seven for sixpence to an old customer, you know."
 "Nonsense," said Mrs. Mimble.
 "But really, you know—"
 "There are your tarts," said Wharton, as Mrs. Mimble placed a plate of six before the fat junior. "Now then, where is the telegram?"
 Bunter grunted, and groped in his pocket, and drew out a crumpled telegram. The juniors stared at him blankly.
 "Here you are."
 "Then—then you hadn't lost it!" exclaimed Nugent.
 "I didn't say I'd lost it."
 "Why, you did; you—"
 "I said I didn't mean to lose it," said Bunter. "If you drew a wrong conclusion from my words, of course that wasn't my fault. Here's the telegram."
 Hazeldene took the telegram. The other fellows stood looking at Billy Bunter, who ate his tarts one after another. Each tart made two mouthfuls for the fat junior, and a mouthful occupied him only a second or two.

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The tarts were gone by the time Hazeldene had opened his telegram and read it.
 Bunter blinked round at the juniors.
 "I say, you fellows, six penny tarts don't go very far. I suppose you're really going to stand a few more."
 "Six more tarts, Mrs. Mimble," said Bob Cherry, laying a sixpence on the counter.
 "Certainly, Master Cherry."
 Bunter blinked with satisfaction.
 "That's decent of you, Cherry. I—"
 "It's all right, Bunter. You deserve some more tarts, and you're going to get them," said Bob, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.
 "Thanks! I never get really enough to eat. A chap with a delicate constitution like mine has to be careful. I—oh—ow—ooch!"
 Bob Cherry picked up the tarts as Mrs. Mimble placed them before him. He slammed one on each of Billy Bunter's eyes, and another on his nose, and the others on his ears and his hair.
 Bunter staggered back, gasping and spluttering.
 "Oh! Ow! Yow! Groo!"
 "Have some more?" asked Bob sweetly.
 "Yaroo!"
 "You can have a few more if you really want 'em."
 "Gerroo!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
 "Yow! Wow!"
 Billy Bunter staggered blindly out of the tuckshop. He had bargained for tarts, and he had received them, but not quite in the way he had wanted them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Help Wanted.

HARRY WHARTON looked inquiringly at Hazeldene. The latter had read his telegram, and was reading it again, with a somewhat puzzled expression upon his face.
 "Well, is it from Marjorie?" demanded Nugent.
 "Yes."
 "Any news for us?"
 "Yes."
 "Read it out, then!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "What on earth do you mean by keeping it to yourself? What's the news?"
 "Blessed if I understand!"
 "Read it out, then, and let a superior brain have a chance," suggested Bob Cherry.
 Hazeldene grinned, and read out the telegram.
 "We are in a fix, and want you to help us. Marjorie."
 "In a fix," said Harry. "What does that mean? What kind of a fix can they be in that we can help them out of?"
 Hazeldene shook his head.
 "Oh, girls are always getting into some bother or other!" he remarked. "They always need a chap to fish them out, you know. I shall buzz over on my bike."
 "What about us?" said Nugent. "I think we'd better all buzz over on our bikes."
 "Good egg!" said Bob Cherry.
 "You might as well come over, if you're doing nothing this afternoon," said Hazeldene. "The telegram is as much to you as to me, I know. And if the girls are in any fix, I dare say you chaps will be as useful as I should be."
 "Or more so!" suggested Nugent.
 "Rats! Well, I'm going to get my machine."
 "I haven't one," said Mark Linley, colouring a little.
 "I can't come."
 "Oh, yes, you can," said Bob. "I'll lend you Inky's. He's staying in to write letters to India, and he won't come."

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"Well, if he won't mind."

"I'll ask him afterwards, to make sure. Come on!"

Mark laughed, and followed the rest of the juniors to the bike-shed. In a few minutes the six juniors were wheeling the machines down to the gates. They mounted in the road, Mark Linley mounting the handsome "jigger" belonging to Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur—more familiarly known as "Inky."

The chums of the Remove were glad enough of a little excursion over to Cliff House. It was a fine, clear, spring afternoon, just the weather for riding. What the kind of help could be that Marjorie & Co. wanted they had no idea; but they were ready to give it, whatever it was.

The bunch of cyclists swept along the country road at a good speed.

Suddenly Mark Linley, who was a little in advance, rang his bell furiously, and stopped his machine dead with a jam of the brake.

"Stop!" he shouted.

The bicycles rattled to a halt. But Bob Cherry, who was going too fast to stop immediately, ran right on. His front wheel ran upon a rope stretched across the road, and his bicycle curled round and fell over, and he went sprawling in the dust.

He jumped up with bruised hands and dusty clothes and an enraged face.

The other juniors had dismounted in time.

"What does that mean?" roared Bob Cherry. "What howling idiot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a laugh from the thick hedge that bordered the road.

Across the road a rope was stretched, about a foot above the ground, and if the cyclists had ridden on, they would have been brought to the ground in a heap.

It was evidently a practical joke, and the perpetrators of it were hidden by the thick hedge at the side of the road. On the other side the end of the rope was tied to a stump in the opposite hedge.

Harry Wharton's face flushed with anger.

It was a terribly dangerous trick to play, and might have resulted in broken limbs, though the practical jokers had been too thoughtless to consider that.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A head rose above the hedge—a head wearing a mortar-board cap, which the juniors recognised at once.

The cap belonged to a fellow from Highcliffe School, a college some distance up the coast, beyond Cliff House. Highcliffe was too far from Greyfriars for the boys to come much in contact; but when they did happen to meet, it was not in a friendly fashion.

Greyfriars had challenged Highcliffe to a football match on one occasion, and the challenge had been declined, not in the politest way.

The real reason of the refusal probably was that the Highcliffe fellows knew they would be licked; but they had couched the refusal in a way that hinted that they didn't consider Greyfriars quite good enough to meet them.

And Greyfriars had chafed, and yearned to get a Highcliffe team on the footer-field, to give them a lesson in football and manners.

Once or twice since then the fellows had met, and there had been exchanging of compliments, followed by the punching of noses.

Wharton looked over the hedge at the Highcliffe cap and the face under it, and his brows darkened. He recognised Vavasour, the junior captain of Highcliffe. On a previous occasion Vavasour and Harry Wharton had occupied a lively ten minutes at the tuck-shop in the village, pommelling one another, and the combat had only been terminated by the inopportune arrival of a Highcliffe master.

Vavasour grinned at the Greyfriars junior.

"You utter ass!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully. "You ought to have more sense than to play a trick like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly chump!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! He looks dusty, doesn't he?" exclaimed Vavasour. "Look at him!"

Five or six faces rose behind the hedge. The Highcliffe fellows were evidently out in force. There were more, too, peering through the foliage, and joining in the laughter at the discomfiture of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Well, it's a dusty road, and it's kind of him to dust it," remarked Hilton. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars lads exchanged angry glances.

The laugh was on the side of the Highcliffe fellows, but Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel in the least inclined to leave it at that.

"The cads!" muttered Wharton. "They might have smashed our bikes, and perhaps us, too, with a mad trick like that."

"I'm jolly well going for them!" said Bob Cherry.

"Come on, then!"

"Right-ho! Down with Highcliffe!"

And the Removites rushed to the attack.

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NEXT WEEK: "LINLEY'S LUCK."

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ONE
PENNY.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

VAVASOUR did not seem to be alarmed by the attack. As a rule, the Highcliffe fellows preferred to avoid close quarters. They regarded themselves as being extremely select, and they were averse to having their clothes rumpled, or their faces marred, by fighting. But when every advantage was on their side, they were not so unwilling. They were in a strong position now behind the hedge, at the top of a high bank that ran along the lane, and the Greyfriars lads would not find it easy to get at them. Added to that, there were nine or ten of them against half-a-dozen.

But Harry Wharton & Co. meant business.

Harry dashed up the steep bank, with his comrades close behind, and they plunged through the snapping twigs of the hedge.

"Go for 'em!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah for Greyfriars!"

"Go it!"

Crash into the hedge went the charging juniors.

But the Highcliffe fellows met the attack well.

As the attacking juniors crashed and tangled in the hedge, the defenders hit out at them, and the assailants had a bad time of it.

Tangled in the hedge, and on lower ground, they were at a terrible disadvantage, and they were sent whirling back one after another.

Bob Cherry and Tom Brown rolled in the dusty road, and Mark Linley came rolling down upon them, gasping.

As they scrambled up again, Frank Nugent whirled down, and after him Harry Wharton. Hazeldene was grasping Vavasour, whom he had seized through the hedge, and trying to drag him through. Hilton rushed to his leader's aid, and Hazeldene found that he had caught a Tartar. He was dragged through the hedge himself, and was a prisoner in the hands of the Highcliffians.

Two or three of them squashed him down on the ground, and sat on him.

"Got one of them!" grinned Hilton. "The others seem to have had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the lane below the bank the Greyfriars juniors gathered, panting.

There was a shout from Hazeldene.

"Rescue, Remove!"

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

They dashed up the bank again.

"Look out!" yelled Hilton.

The attack was desperate, and it was not to be repulsed this time. The Greyfriars juniors burst through the hedge, and came fairly among the Highcliffians. Then there was a change.

The odds were against them, but at close quarters the champion athletes of the Lower School at Greyfriars were more than a match for the dandies of Highcliffe.

The enemy were knocked right and left. Vavasour went whirling down the bank, to bump heavily in the lane, and Hilton was sent flying after him.

They staggered up, but did not return to the fight, taking to their heels instead across the lane and the opposite field.

The other Highcliffe fellows were already scattering.

Breathless and bruised, but victorious, the Greyfriars chums remained masters of the field of battle.

"We've done 'em!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah for Greyfriars!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The juniors had certainly won the victory. The Highcliffe fellows were scattered far and wide. But the chums looked at one another grimly, as the thought occurred to them of the kind of appearance they would present at Cliff House.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. "We look a pretty family, I must say. We can't go to Cliff House in this state."

"By Jove, no!"

"What shall we do, then?" said Nugent. "We'd better have left the Highcliffe rotters alone, though there was a lot of satisfaction in punching their heads."

Wharton thought for a moment.

"There's old Dame Pelly's cottage on the road," he said. "She would let us clean up there, I know. It would save the time. It would take a jolly long time to go back to Greyfriars. Let's get to Mrs. Pelly's cottage."

"Good egg!"

The juniors descended into the road again. Bob Cherry cut away the rope the Highcliffe jokers had fastened across the road, and threw it into a ditch. Wheeling their bicycles,

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the juniors turned from the lane into the footpath that led to Mrs. Pelly's cottage.

Mrs. Pelly was a well-known character in the district. She was an infirm old lady, and often received charitable visits from the girls of Cliff House, who came to bring her broth and medicine, and articles of clothing they had made for her, and to read to her sometimes. She did a sort of trade in ginger-beer, and had a dozen bottles or so in the window of her little cottage. The Greyfriars fellows, when they were near Mrs. Pelly's cottage, frequently stopped for a bottle of pop, whether they wanted it or not. It did not take the juniors long to reach the cottage.

It lay back from the footpath, at the end of a long garden. Harry Wharton opened the garden gate, and the juniors wheeled their machines in, and leaned them against the fence inside.

Then they went up the long garden path to the cottage. "There's someone looking out of the window," remarked Nugent, catching a movement at the little curtained panes.

"Dame Pelly, I suppose."

"She may have some visitors," grinned Bob Cherry.

"H'm! I shouldn't care to run into the rector's wife in this state," said Harry. "But it can't be helped. We've got to get a wash."

"Yes, rather!"

And the juniors tramped up to the cottage door. Harry Wharton tapped at the door.

There was no reply for a moment, but the juniors fancied that they could detect a faint sound of suppressed laughter within.

They looked at one another curiously.

Dame Pelly might have seen them from the window, but she would rather have been shocked than amused by the state they were in. As for the rector's wife, certainly prim and stately Mrs. Buxton would not have laughed.

"I heard a snigger, I'm certain," muttered Nugent.

"So did I."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Shall we go in?"

"Oh, yes. After all, chaps have had noses running with gore, and dusty chivvies, before now," said Bob Cherry. "I feel as if I'd been wrestling with a lawn-mower. We can't show our faces at Cliff House in this state, that's certain. I'd rather anybody but Marjorie see me like this."

"Same here."

"Then we'll chance it," said Harry.

He knocked at the door again.

There was a sound of slow feet.

The cottage door was opened, and Dame Pelly, with her red shawl round her head, and grey locks escaping under it, looked out at the juniors.

"Master Wharton," she said, a smile lighting up her old face at once, "pray come in! Do come in at once, my dear boys."

"Thank you, Mrs. Pelly! We want you to let us——"

Harry Wharton broke off.

He was stepping into the cottage as he spoke, and in the light of the window he caught sight of Mrs. Pelly's visitors.

There were two of them.

They were both girls of nearly fifteen, and both of them were trying their hardest not to laugh.

Harry stopped dead.

"What's the trouble?" muttered Nugent, from behind.

"My hat!"

"What is it—who is it?"

"Marjorie!"

"Oh!"

The juniors of Greyfriars, dusty, dishevelled, and stained with the stains of desperate battle, stood in the doorway, looking and feeling as rough and ruffianly a crowd as possible, and looking sheepishly at the laughing face of Marjorie Hazeldene.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Difficult Situation.

MARJORIE tried not to laugh, and Clara tried not to laugh; but it was in vain. They simply could not help it. The dusty and dishevelled appearance of the Greyfriars juniors was not so comical as their sheepish looks at being discovered in such a state. The juniors stared at the girls in silence, glumly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of all the rotten luck!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed Marjorie Hazeldene, coming forward. "I could not help it—you looked so surprised."

"We—we didn't expect to see you here," said Harry.

"No, I suppose not."

"My hat!" said Miss Clara, who had picked up many boyish expressions from the juniors of Greyfriars. "You seem to have had a rough time."

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"We have. It was only a row, you know."

"And you have so many of them," assented Miss Clara sympathetically.

Harry coloured.

"Well, you see——"

"You see, we couldn't help it," said Nugent.

"Impossible!" said Tom Brown. "We'd have kept out of it if we could."

"I suppose the Upper Fourth were in-the wrong, as usual?" suggested Clara.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It wasn't the Upper Fourth at all," he said. "It was the Highcliffe fellows."

Marjorie and Clara exchanged quick glances.

"The Highcliffe fellows!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Yes. Vavasour and his set," said Harry. "We really would have avoided a row if we could, this time, as we were coming over to Cliff House. Of course, as a rule, we're just as ready as they are."

"Or a little more so," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I see!" said Marjorie. "So you have met those horrid boys!"

"Yes, they're horrid, and no mistake," said Nugent. "But it's a satisfaction to have licked them, isn't it? And we did!"

"Hollow!" said Bob Cherry.

"Good!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "I wish we could lick them, too!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"So I do, Marjorie. I suppose you have had the telegram Marjorie sent?" went on Miss Clara.

"Yes," said Hazeldene. "That's why we were coming over to Cliff House."

"It's on account of the Highcliffe boys," said Marjorie. "We want you to advise us, and to help us if you can. We were just going back to Cliff House. Will you walk with us?"

"In this state?"

Marjorie laughed.

"Oh, we will wait!"

And the two girls went out of the cottage.

"Deary me, what a state you are in!" said Dame Pelly, as she led the juniors to a room where they had a liberal allowance of hot water and soap, and by dint of washing and scrubbing and brushing down, they restored themselves to something of their usual tidy appearance.

Then they joined Marjorie and Clara, and the party walked down the footpath to Cliff House, the bicycles being left at Dame Pelly's cottage to be called for later.

Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling very curious to hear the news from Cliff House.

What connection Marjorie and her friends could have with the Highcliffe fellows was a mystery to them; but they were quite ready to lend their aid against Highcliffe if required; in fact, more than ready.

There was a slight wrinkle on Marjorie's smooth brow as she walked beside Harry Wharton down the footpath.

It was clear that the difficulty, whatever it was, was causing the girl a considerable amount of anxious thought.

"I really don't know what to do," she exclaimed at last. "I wonder if you can help us. It's really a ridiculous situation."

"But what is it?" said Harry.

"It's through the Highcliffe boys," said Marjorie. "Of course, it was silly of us. But then we felt so angry."

"You did!" exclaimed Harry, in astonishment.

Marjorie coloured.

"Yes, I did."

"Then they must have been awfully caddish!" said Harry.

"Well, I will tell you how it was," said Marjorie. "Some of us went to tea at the vicarage yesterday, and the vicar had invited a few of the Highcliffe boys. We played tennis after tea; and you know the unpleasant way they have, those boys. They thought tennis was a soft game, and only fit for girls, and talked about football, and I——"

She paused.

"And you?" said Wharton.

Marjorie Hazeldene laughed ruefully.

"Well, I told them we played football at Cliff House—we do, you know, in a way, though it is not exactly the kind of football you boys play. We have an association ball, and we often practice with it, and we can play the game. But, of course, we couldn't stand up to a boys' team."

"I suppose not."

"But Vavasour annoyed me so much by his superior manner, that I told him we played football, and that we would be willing to meet his team in a match, and show them that girls could play as well as boys."

Harry Wharton gave an expressive whistle.

"My hat!"

"Of course, it was silly of me," said Marjorie. "If

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The juniors of Greyfriars, dusty, dishevelled and stained, stood in the doorway, and looked sheepishly at the laughing face of Marjorie Hazeldene.

Vavasour had been a nice boy, like—like some boys, he would have taken it as a joke, and turned it off somehow; but he is as keen as anything to make us look ridiculous. So he accepted at once, and made me fix the date, and—and we're to meet the Highcliffe team on Saturday afternoon."

Wharton looked very serious.

He had not expected anything of this sort, and he could see at once that the Cliff House girls had got themselves into a very serious difficulty.

Vavasour was very much of a cad, and Wharton could quite understand that he was looking forward very keenly to the prospect of humiliating and annoying the girls, that being his idea of fun.

It was just like Vavasour to jump at the chance Marjorie's unguarded words had given him, and to nail the girl down to her challenge.

If the Cliff House girls withdrew from the match they had themselves proposed, the laugh would be against them, and it would be a standing joke among the Highcliffe fellows, and Marjorie & Co. would certainly never hear the end of it.

On the other hand, if they met the Highcliffe junior eleven, a certain defeat, by a ridiculous number of goals, would be the result.

It was probable, too, that some of the girls would get hurt; for Vavasour and his team had a reputation for playing roughly when they were dealing with a weaker eleven; and, of course, the Cliff House team would be much weaker.

Wharton wrinkled his brows in thought. Marjorie looked anxiously into his face. She had a great faith in Harry's judgment.

"Of course; we don't want to meet them," said Marjorie. "We know we should have no chance. But we'd rather be licked than withdraw the challenge. That would make them laugh at us. They are so horrid and mean!"

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"Then you're determined not to scratch, in any case?" he asked.

"Oh, quite determined!"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Miss Clara emphatically. "We'd rather be beaten to the wide—we simply won't withdraw!"

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"But if you don't withdraw you'll have to meet them," said Nugent.

"Oh, yes!"

"Then you'll get an awful licking. I know jolly well that the Highcliffe lot will play roughly, for what they would call the fun of the thing."

"I suppose so."

"Well, that would be worse than withdrawing," remarked Bob Cherry.

"I suppose it would."

"Then—"

"But we can't withdraw, and we don't want to be licked by those horrid boys," said Marjorie pathetically. "Can't you advise us?"

"We thought you fellows might be able to suggest some way out of the difficulty," said Miss Clara, with a slight sniff.

"Exactly," said Marjorie. "We want you to advise us."

The Greyfriars juniors looked at one another rather helplessly.

There seemed to be only the one alternative—to play or not to play; and how they were to advise, when the girls refused to take one of the only two possible courses—and there was no possible third course to take—was a mystery to them.

But it was clear that Miss Clara, at least, expected them to find some way out of the difficulty, and that Marjorie at least hoped they could.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, I've got a sort of idea," he remarked.

"Go it!" said Harry, not very hopefully.

"Suppose we go and look for the Highcliffe chaps, and give them such an awful licking that they won't be able to play on Saturday?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's not a bad idea," said Bob, "and it would serve them jolly well right for being so beastly caddish!"

"Well, it's a little drastic!" said Harry, laughing.

"All the better."

"And it would have to be an awful licking to lay them up

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By FRANK RICHARDS.**

for half a week. I'm afraid we shall have to think of something a little less heroic."

"But you will think of something?" said Marjorie.

"We'll try."

"We rely on you," said Miss Clara. "You see, you're all we have to rely upon. It was really my idea to get you to help us. Marjorie thought you wouldn't be able to do anything."

"I thought they couldn't help us out of an impossible position, dear," said Marjorie gently.

"Yes, that's what I meant; but I thought they could," said Miss Clara triumphantly. "I'm sure they will think of something."

"We'll try."

"And you'll succeed, won't you?"

"You see—"

"We simply can't meet the Highcliffe team on Saturday, and we can't withdraw and scratch the match," said Miss Clara. "Now, you'll think of a way out, won't you?"

Harry smiled ruefully. What was he to say?

"Yes," he said. "I'll do my best."

"Then we can rely upon you?"

Harry gave his chums a helpless look.

"Yes!" he said at last.

Miss Clara clapped her hands.

"Good! It's all right, Marjorie!"

And having shifted the burden of the trouble off upon the shoulders of Harry Wharton & Co., Miss Clara seemed quite satisfied, and assured that everything would turn out well.

Harry Wharton was not quite so sure about it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes a Snack.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. spent a very pleasant afternoon by the sea with the Cliff House girls, roaming on the shore and sailing on the bay; and the difficulty of the football challenge was not mentioned till they parted. The girls seemed quite satisfied now that Harry had declared that he would find a way; it was a very flattering reliance to place upon his judgment, but something of a responsibility, and he could not help thinking about it all the afternoon. It rather weighed on the other fellows' minds too.

They were committed to it now; but what on earth were they to do—unless they adopted the drastic method suggested by Bob Cherry. That would certainly only do as a last and desperate resource.

"You won't forget?" said Miss Clara, when they parted at last at the gates of Cliff House.

"That's not likely," said Harry.

"No, I am sure not," said Marjorie. "I do hope you will be able to think of a plan, Harry."

"Oh, he's promised," said Clara cheerfully. "It's all right."

Harry looked a little troubled.

"I'll think it over all the time," he said.

"Good!"

"The match is on Saturday afternoon?" said Nugent thoughtfully.

"Yes. The Highcliffe fellows are coming over here, in a brake, to get here at half-past two," said Marjorie. "If they arrive here, I really don't know what we shall do. As a matter of fact, we haven't a proper football ground, and if we really play the match, we shall have to borrow the ground belonging to the Pegg Football Club. I know they will lend it to us, for that matter, and it's only up the road. But—but I do hope the Highcliffe team won't come."

Harry laughed.

"Well, rely on us to think of something or other," he said.

"We do," said Miss Clara.

And they parted.

The chums of the Greyfriars Remove were very silent and thoughtful as they walked back to Dame Pelly's cottage for the bicycles.

They mounted their machines, and pedalled home to Greyfriars in the growing dusk, still in the same thoughtful mood.

They had plenty to think of.

They were committed to an apparently impossible task, and how they were to carry it through was a great mystery.

They reached Greyfriars, and wheeled the cycles away to the bike shed, and as they walked to the schoolhouse a fat junior blinked at them in the dusk, and joined them.

"Do you know what the time is, you fellows?" he demanded.

"No," said Harry. "What does it matter?"

"It's an hour past tea-time."

"It's all right; we've had tea."

Billy Bunter glared through his spectacles.

"You've had tea! It's all right! What do you mean?"

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"What I say."

"It may be all right for you!" howled Billy Bunter. "But what price me?"

"Twopence, and dear!" said Bob Cherry, with an extremely disparaging look.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, it's been a nice afternoon," said Mark Linley, as they went in. "And we're in good time to get our prep. done."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Do buzz off, Bunter!"

"But I haven't had my tea!"

"Do you want some more tarts?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"We've had tea out," said Harry. "There was plenty of grub in the study for any two chaps. Why didn't you have that?"

"Oh, I've had that."

"Well, then, you've had your tea, so shut up!"

"I haven't!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I took that as a snack while I was waiting for you chaps to come back. I'm hungry."

"Well, go and eat coke!"

"Fag!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Loder's sweet voice," said Bob Cherry. "I've got pressing bizna in another direction."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors hurried up to the Remove passage. None of them was Loder's fag, but Loder paid very little regard to the unwritten laws of Greyfriars. He would claim anybody's fag, or even a junior who was not a fag at all. When his voice was heard calling for a fag, there was generally a rapid exodus of all the fags within hearing.

But Billy Bunter did not follow the Removites.

It occurred to Bunter that Loder might want some refreshment fetched from the tuck-shop, and in that case, Bunter, though otherwise the laziest and slackest junior at Greyfriars, was not unwilling to tender his services, in the hope of profiting by the crumbs that might fall from the rich man's table.

"Fag!"

Loder's voice was growing louder and angrier.

Billy Bunter scuttled towards the Sixth-Form passage, and ran down it to Loder's study. Loder was standing in the doorway, with a frown upon his face.

"I say, Loder, do you want a fag?"

"Yes, I do!" snapped Loder. "Why didn't you come before?"

"I only just heard you. I came at once," said Bunter, keeping a wary eye upon the senior. "Can I do anything?"

"Yes!" growled Loder. "I've got Ionides and Carne coming to tea, and I want some things from the tuck-shop. Here's a list."

He handed a paper to Bunter. The fat junior glanced at it, and his eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he read it down.

"This will come to about five bob," he remarked.

"It comes to four and threepence," said Loder snappishly.

"Better give me the five bob, in case—"

"Here's the four and three. Now buzz off, and if you're more than five minutes gone, I shall come to look for you," said Loder significantly.

"I'll be less than five minutes. I suppose you'll give me a snack, won't you?" said Bunter. "I'm awfully hungry!"

"Get out!"

"I'll do any cooking you want, too. I'm an awfully good cook, and—"

"Buzz off!"

"Yes, but of course, you are going to give me—"

"I'll give you a hiding if you don't buzz off!" shouted Loder, reaching out towards the fat junior's ear.

Billy Bunter skipped away down the passage.

His fat face was very resentful as he took his way to Mrs. Mimble's little shop. It was rather too rough that he should be called upon to fag, without being admitted to any share of the feed. And Bunter was hungry—his usual state. He reached the tuck-shop, and was greeted with a frown by Mrs. Mimble.

"I have told you, Master Bunter, that I will not allow you any credit," said the good dame, with great asperity. "Why do you come here, wasting my time?"

Bunter blinked at her with an air of great dignity.

"I've not come here to ask for credit, Mrs. Mimble."

He laid the four and threepence on the counter.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Mimble.

"I—I had a list," said Bunter. "I suppose I've dropped it. I think I put it in this pocket, but it isn't there now. How beastly! Never mind! I'll order the things from memory. These ham patties look very good. I think I'd better begin with them. Perhaps it would be safer to taste 'em to make sure they're all right. Loder is an awfully particular beast."

And Bunter tasted the ham patties. He tasted the jam-tarts, too, and tasted the cream-puffs. He tasted some more things, and finally he had tasted to such an extent that Mrs. Mimble grimly refused to pass over anything more to be tasted.

"Four shillings and threepence, Master Bunter," she said. Bunter started. The four shillings and the three pennies clinked into Mrs. Mimble's till, with a terrifying clink to the ears of the fat junior.

"I—I say, Mrs. Mimble——"
"Thank you, Master Bunter. Good-evening!"
"But—but I say, you know!" stammered Bunter. "That—that money isn't mine. Do you mean to say that I've had four and threepence worth of stuff?"

"Exactly four and threepence, Master Bunter."
"But—but Loder gave me that money to take some things to him," said Bunter, in great distress. "You'd better give me the things for Loder now, Mrs. Mimble, and put what I've had down to my account."

Mrs. Mimble did not even deign to reply. She walked into her little parlour, and shut the door with a slam, and then let it open a few inches, so that she could keep an eye on her stock, which might have been in danger with Billy Bunter in the shop.

Billy Bunter stood utterly dismayed. When he began to eat, he lost all account of time and space, so to speak, and it had come upon him as a sudden shock that he had eaten the supplies he was supposed to take to Loder's study, for the delectation of Carne and Ionides.

He knew Mrs. Mimble too well to hope that she would listen to or believe any explanation. What was to be done?

Billy Bunter suddenly remembered that Loder had promised to look for him if he did not return in five minutes. He had been in the tuck-shop at least ten.

He scuttled out of the shop. The situation required thinking out, and it was safer to think it out in some spot where Loder would not find him easily.

A form loomed up in the gloom as Bunter scuttled out. The fat junior skulked into the shadow of a tree, and allowed the angry Loder to pass him, and enter the tuck-shop. Then he scuttled off to No. 1 Study as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. There was only one place now where he could hope to find safety, and that was under the wing of Harry Wharton.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Punishment.

THE chums of the Remove were busy with their prep. when Billy Bunter entered the study hastily. Wharton glanced up.

"Going to work, Billy?"
"Ye-e-es."
"Had your tea?" asked Nugent, with a grin.
"I—I—I've had a snack."
"Blessed if I know where you put it! Look here, be quiet, if you're going to stay in here," said Nugent.
"Oh, really, you know——"
"Shut up!"
"The shut-upfulness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his beautiful English. "The honourable Bunter is an esteemed troublesome animal at any time."
"Oh, really, Inky——"
"The ring-off-fulness is the proper caper."
Bunter "rang off." He sat silent, but his attention was not upon his books. He kept a nervous eye upon the door. He looked up so often that Nugent glanced at him irritably.
"Can't you keep still, Bunter?" he exclaimed.
"Ye-e-es!"
"Then do so, ass!"
"I—I was thinking we might as well have the door locked!" stammered Bunter.
Nugent stared at him.
"What on earth for?"
"Well, s-s-somebody might come in, you know."
"Well, suppose somebody does?"
"I—I thought——"
"Oh, don't start thinking, at this time of day!" snapped Nugent. "Dry up!"

Bunter relapsed into silence. But at every sound from without he glanced up nervously, thinking that it portended the arrival of Loder, perhaps with Ionides and Carne with him.

The thunderbolt fell at last. There was a heavy step in the passage, and the door of the study was flung violently open. Loder looked in savagely. Billy Bunter jumped up, and skipped round the table. He blinked across the table at Loder, his eyes growing wide and round behind his spectacles. Loder glared at him.

"So I've found you!"
"Ye-e-e-es!" stammered Bunter.
The chums of the Remove rose to their feet. Loder was a senior of the Sixth Form, but the juniors did not care to have their study invaded in this unceremonious way.

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NEXT WEEK: "LINLEY'S LUCK."

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ONE
PENNY.

"What do you want here, Loder?" demanded Harry Wharton, with a frowning brow.

"I want that fat young thief!"
"Oh, really, Loder——"
"What do you mean?" demanded Wharton.
"Don't ask me questions, you cheeky young cub!" snarled Loder. "I'm going to lick him till he hasn't a bone left without an ache in it!"
"Ow!"

"You're jolly well not," said Wharton, facing the bully of the Sixth with flashing eyes. "Stand back!"

"Don't you dare to get in my way, you cub!"
"Line up, chaps!"

Wharton, Nugent, and Harree Jamset Ram Singh stood in a row before the senior. Behind them Billy Bunter stood quaking and blinking.

Loder hesitated. He was a senior, and a match, probably, for any two juniors; but the three of them would have been rather too much for him, without counting Billy Bunter.

"Stand aside!" he said, between his teeth.
"Rats!"

That expressive monosyllable was the only reply of the Removites. They stood their ground without flinching.

"That young thief has taken my money," said Loder, his voice trembling with rage. "I've been looking for him everywhere. I gave him money to go to the tuckshop and get some things, for me, and he spent it on himself."

"Oh, really——"
"Is that true, Bunter?"
"True!" howled Loder. "Do you dare to question my word, you young hound?"

"I certainly wouldn't take your word," said Wharton coolly. "I know how you helped Carberry to lie about Nugent minor the other day. Is it true, Bunter?"

"Well, you see——"
"Yes or no?"

"I—I was getting the things for Loder," said Bunter haltingly. "I—I tasted some of them, as I was anxious that Loder should have the best, you know. I've a great regard for him. And—and Mrs. Mimble took the money for what I had just tasted. I thought it was awfully dishonest of Mrs. Mimble; but women never have any sense of business, you know. I was going to explain to Loder, but I thought he might be waxy, and—and——"

"You young thief!"
"Oh, really, Loder, I'm sincerely sorry, and I shall make it a point to settle up out of my postal order to-morrow morning."

Wharton's brow grew very stern.
"I suppose you don't realise what this is really, Bunter," he said. "But it jolly well amounts to stealing."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"
"Give Loder back his money."
"I—I haven't it. I'm going to settle up out of my postal-order to-morrow. Of course, I intended to do that all along."

"How much was it?"
"Four and threepence."

"We'll find it!" said Harry grimly. "The money's got to be paid, for the honour of the study. I'll see to that, Loder. Got any money, you chaps?"

Funds were, to a great extent, in common in No. 1 Study. The juniors felt in their pockets. Harree Singh laid a half-crown on the table, and Harry Wharton added a shilling to it, and Frank Nugent ninepence.

"There's your money, Loder."

Loder picked up the money. He did not mean to lose that. But his brow was still black. His little tea-party had been spoiled. Ionides and Carne had gone away in a bad temper, and he had been given a great deal of trouble. He meant to compensate himself by giving William George Bunter the licking of his life.

"And now——" said Harry.
"It's all right," said Bunter, not quite liking the look on Wharton's face. "I'm going to settle up out of my postal-order the first thing in the morning."

"Very well," said Harry. "If the postal-order comes, you shall settle up. If it doesn't——"

"It's barely possible there might be some delay——"

"If it doesn't," went on Wharton, unheeding, "you won't have any tea in this study till we've saved enough on your grub to make up the four and threepence."

"Oh!"
"That's the only way, I think, of teaching you the elements of honesty," said Harry. "We're going to do this for your own good."

"Oh, really——"
"Good-bye, Loder!"

"I'm going to lick that fat young thief," said Loder savagely.

"Your mistake," said Harry coolly. "You're not."

"Who's going to stop me?" demanded Loder fiercely.

"Us!"

"You insolent young cub——"

"You see, Bunter's not your fag, so that places you out of court," explained Harry. "You shouldn't fag a junior who isn't your fag. That's school law. You're in the wrong. We're going to punish Bunter for disgracing his study. But you're off-side, you see. You can get out, and the sooner the better."

"I'm going——"

"Exactly! Get a move on."

Loder made a sudden spring towards the fat junior. Bunter dodged away with a gasp of affright. Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh laid hands on the senior, and he was dragged back.

He struggled fiercely.

"Hands off, you young cubs——"

"Oh, rats! Get out!"

"I won't! I——"

"Yes, you jolly well will."

"All together!" exclaimed Nugent.

Loder made a fierce effort to wrench himself loose, but it was in vain. He was dragged violently to the door, and hurled forth into the passage. He came rushing back, but the three juniors stood grimly in the doorway, and he slackened, hesitated, and stopped. He gave them a fierce scowl, and walked down the Remove passage.

Wharton and his chums turned back into the study and closed the door. They had got the better of the tussle with Loder, but they were very angry with Billy Bunter. The fat junior blinked at them nervously.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton irritably.

"Yes; but I—I say, you were only joking about stopping my tea, weren't you," said Billy Bunter unquietly.

"No; we meant it."

"But—but——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Yes; but—but——"

"Shut up!" exclaimed three voices in unison, so fiercely that the fat junior gave a startled jump, and shut up forthwith.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

One Against Two.

"IT'S Wharton!"

Harry Wharton looked up quickly as he heard the words. It was a couple of days after the visit to Cliff House, and Harry had just been down to the village after afternoon school. He was walking back to Greyfriars, his hands in his pockets, and a frown of deep thought upon his face, when he heard his name spoken.

He was thinking of Marjorie's difficulty, and wondering how he was to find a way out of it, when the voice fell upon his ears. Vavasour and Hilton of Highcliffe were coming along the lane towards him.

They stopped, and Harry stopped too. The Highcliffe fellows looked a little hostile. They had been licked by the Greyfriars juniors on Wednesday, although the odds had been on their side. But they had a chance now of reversing the state of affairs, two to one as they were. They stopped directly in Harry's path.

"Hallo!" said Wharton. "I was just thinking about you chaps. I hear that you are meeting a girls' team on Saturday—to-morrow afternoon."

Vavasour grinned.

"Yes; we're going to play Cliff House."

"You're really going?"

"Rather!"

"What-ho!" said Hilton. "It will be ripping good fun, too!"

Wharton looked at them steadily.

"You know jolly well that the Cliff House girls are nothing like your form at footer," he said. "It will be mere rot."

"They shouldn't have challenged us, then."

"You shouldn't have taken up the challenge, you mean."

Vavasour shrugged his shoulders.

"They can cry off if they like," he said. "Of course, I knew they couldn't play footer, but I wasn't going to let them down lightly."

"It's like you to take a mean advantage of a girl," said Harry scornfully. "If you had any decency, you would scratch the match yourself, and let them out of a fix as lightly as possible."

Vavasour chuckled.

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"Not much."

"You won't do that?"

"Hardly!"

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Play the match," grinned Vavasour. "If they don't want to play, they can scratch. If they don't scratch, they've got to play."

"Yes, rather!" said Hilton.

"If they play they've no chance," said Harry.

"That makes it all the funnier."

"They might get hurt, too, some of them, playing with a boys' team."

"Very likely," said Vavasour coolly. "It will serve them right for their blessed cheek in challenging us."

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"You cad!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You seem to take a great interest in the matter," grinned Vavasour. "You'd better come and see the match. As a matter of fact, we shall play rather rough——"

"You can wager on that," said Hilton.

"You see, it will be ripping fun!"

Wharton surveyed the two Highcliffe fellows in keen disgust.

There were some mean fellows at Greyfriars, certainly; but he did not think he had ever come across two such finished specimens of the species cad before.

"I don't know what to say to you," he remarked. "If you had any decency, you would let the girls out of it easily."

"No fear!"

"If you haven't any, it's no good talking to you," said Harry contemptuously. "Get out of my way. I don't fancy your company!"

"Not in such a hurry," grinned Vavasour. "You were mighty cocky the other day——"

"We licked you, if you mean that."

Vavasour turned red.

"Well, there were a gang of you," he said.

"Not so many as there were of you, but we had pluck," said Harry scornfully, "and that's a thing you never will have except when you're dealing with girls."

"Well, we'll jolly well give you a lesson now," said Vavasour spitefully. "Collar him, Hilton!"

"Right-ho!"

And the two Highcliffe fellows rushed at Harry Wharton.

Wharton's eyes flashed.

As a matter of fact, he wished for nothing better. The champion athlete of the lower Forms at Greyfriars was not afraid of the two dandified, flabby Highcliffe fellows.

He met them without yielding an inch.

He knocked up Vavasour's guard, and planted a stunning blow on his jaw, which sent him reeling and staggering away across the lane.

There was a ditch flowing with water at the side, and Vavasour, unable to stop himself, staggered backwards into it with a terrific splash.

Muddy water shot up in streams as the dandy of Highcliffe disappeared into the ditch.

But Wharton and Hilton had no eyes for him. Hilton's fists were crashing into Harry's face even as he struck down Vavasour.

Two good blows Hilton got home, and Harry staggered under them, but the Highcliffe fellow had no chance to strike another.

Relieved of Vavasour, Harry gave Hilton his whole attention, and he attacked the fellow with all his force.

Hilton retreated up the lane under a dazing rain of blows.

His guard was knocked right and left, and he did not get a single blow in upon Harry Wharton's flushed and angry face.

Wharton drove in his fists right and left, left and right, and Hilton staggered and staggered helplessly, till at last he crashed down in the dust.

Wharton stood over him with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

"Get up!" he exclaimed.

"Ow!"

"Get up and finish!"

"Ow! I give you best!" gasped Hilton.

Wharton sniffed contemptuously, and turned towards Vavasour. The junior captain of Highcliffe had just dragged himself from the ditch.

He was soaked with water, dripping with slime and mud, and looked the most miserable object that the sun had ever shone upon.

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh as he looked at him.

"Ha, ha!"

Vavasour gasped and spluttered.

"Ow! Groo! Yaroo! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Billy Bunter stood utterly dismayed. He had lost all account of time and space, and it had come upon him as a sudden shock that he had eaten the supplies he was supposed to take to Loder's study.

"You—you beast! I'm soaked! I— Groo!"
"Want any more?" asked Harry, advancing upon him.
The dripping and muddy hero of Highcliffe hastily retreated.

"No, I don't!"

"I'm quite ready for both of you if you're not satisfied."

"Ow! Keep off, you beast!"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders and turned away. Vavasour and Hilton looked at him with volumes of spite in their looks.

"You—you beast!" muttered Vavasour. "You can jolly well come over and see the match on Saturday afternoon, and you'll see whether we'll let the girls off lightly! You'll see that we'll give them a jolly time, you cad! Yah!"
"What-ho!" said Hilton.

Harry Wharton did not reply. His face was clouded as he strolled towards Greyfriars. It had been a great deal of satisfaction to give the cads of Highcliffe something of what they deserved. But he realised that in doing so he had made

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matters worse for the Cliff House girls. Vavasour & Co. would take their revenge in a safe way by making things rougher for the Cliff House team if the match came off.

Wharton gritted his teeth at the thought.

But that was a matter he could not interfere in—he was helpless—if the match came off. But the match should not come off. As he walked home Harry cudgelled his brains for a plan whereby the match could be prevented without Marjorie & Co. having to acknowledge themselves anxious to scratch.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Bunter Makes His Peace.

TEA was ready in No. 1 Study when Harry Wharton came in. Nugent had finished poaching the eggs, and Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh had made the toast. Billy Bunter had been pressing in his offers of help, but his aid had been declined. Bunter generally did most of the cooking, but the cooking was done by Nugent and Inky now.

A Splendid Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

Billy Bunter's services were not wanted. For two days the chums of the Remove had carefully kept their word. Billy Bunter had had no tea in the study. Tea in hall was a very poor substitute in Bunter's eyes. It was a frugal meal, and Bunter had an extraordinary appetite. He could have made three or four teas in hall and then partaken of a good dinner. This evening Bunter was simply squirming in his desire to make himself agreeable to the chums of the Remove in order to be admitted to the meal. But the faces of Nugent and Hurree Singh were grim and unpromising, and the face of Harry Wharton was equally so as he came in.

"Better let me make the toast, Inky," said Billy Bunter persuasively.

"Not at all, my esteemed friend."

"But you're making yourself so warm."

"I do not mind a bitfully."

"Can I poach the eggs, Nugent?"

"No, you can't."

"You know how nicely I do them," urged Bunter. "I've heard you say so yourself."

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Besides, I've done them," said Frank, as he turned the poached eggs out upon a dish.

Bunter blinked at them.

"There's only six, Nugent."

"Exactly."

"That won't be enough for four people."

"There's only three to have tea," said Nugent blandly.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Hallo, Harry! Tea's ready."

"Good! I'm awfully sharp set," said Wharton, sitting down.

"Where did you get that cut on your lip?" asked Nugent, looking at him.

Harry laughed.

"I met Vavasour and Hilton in the lane, and we had an argument about the Cliff House match. They have got worse than this."

"Good!"

"And they intend truefully to meet the girls in the playful match?" asked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Yes," said Harry ruefully; "and I'm afraid I've made matters worse for the girls. Vavasour said plainly that he was going to make his team play roughly to pay me out."

"The cad!"

"The cadfulness of the esteemed Vavasour is terrific."

"Oh, they're caddish enough for anything!" said Harry, looking worried. "I don't know what to do. We've undertaken to see Marjorie & Co. out of the difficulty, but I'm blessed if I've thought of anything like a plan yet."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I'm hungry!"

"Go and have tea in hall, then!"

"I've had it there," said Bunter pathetically. "That doesn't make any difference to me. You see, I've got a pretty good appetite—"

"Ha, ha! I've noticed that!"

"I've got a delicate constitution," said Bunter, blinking round for sympathy. "I can only keep going at all by taking plenty of good, nourishing food. It's really a blessing that I've got a good appetite, and can eat well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Pass the toast, Inky."

"With pleasurefulness, my worthy chum."

"I—I say, you fellows are only joking," urged Bunter. "I must have tea."

"You know what we said. If you pay the cash we gave Loder you can feed as usual. If you don't, we make it up out of your grub. You've got to have a lesson."

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"It didn't come, did it?"

"I'm not alluding to that one. You know how careless the postal authorities are. I'm afraid that one was lost in the post," said Bunter. "I'm expecting another one to-night, or by the first post in the morning at the latest, and I'll settle up out of that."

"All right! We'll talk to you when you've settled up."

"But—"

"Oh, ring off!"

Billy Bunter looked pathetic. The juniors went grimly on with their tea. As Wharton said, it was a strict necessity for Bunter to have a lesson. Nugent had explained that it might save him from going to prison some day, but Billy was not much comforted. He would have risked anything in the future for the sake of a good meal just then.

While they ate the juniors talked over the Cliff House affair, and discussed ways and means. They had done so many times before without hitting on a plan for extricating Marjorie & Co. from their difficulty.

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What was to be done?

The match was fixed for the morrow, and there was not much time left to act in. Billy Bunter sat blinking at the juniors.

"I say, you fellows!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But—"

"Shut up!"

"But I've got an idea!"

"Whose?" said Nugent sceptically.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Look here, Bunter, if you don't shut up you'll get shoved out of the study!" said Harry, looking round. "There's too much of you!"

"The too-muchfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific!"

"But I've got a scheme!"

"Oh, we know your schemes!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter sulkily. "It flashed into my mind all of a sudden, but if you don't want to help Marjorie—"

Harry Wharton looked straight at him.

"Now, I'll let you speak if you've got a scheme," he said; "but if it's only some more of your rot look out, that's all! What is it?"

"I feel so faint—"

"Out with it!"

"I'm afraid I'm too hungry to talk. You see—"

"Then out you go!" said Harry, jumping up. "I knew it was only a trick to get some grub! Outside!"

"Oh, really, Wharton!" Billy Bunter dodged round the table. "Oh, really, you know, I—I think I could manage to tell you if—if you'll let me have a snack afterwards, you know. If it's a good scheme I'm to have tea. That's only fair."

"Well, all right!" said Harry, after a pause. "Go ahead!"

"Look here, the Highcliffe fellows are going over in a brake to Cliff House to-morrow afternoon," said Bunter, speaking very rapidly.

"Yes; they get there at half-past two."

"They'll have to go along the lower lane, you know—it's an awfully lonely road at any time, isn't it?"

"I believe so. What on earth's that got to do with it?"

"Well, you see, there'll only be a dozen or so of the Highcliffe chaps—"

"Well, get on!"

"What's to prevent about twenty of the Remove laying low in the lane and collaring the brake when it comes by?" said Bunter. "We could easily do it. We could stop the brake, bundle out the Highcliffe chaps, and keep them shut up in the old barn till it was too late for the match with Cliff House. Then it would really be the Highcliffe chaps failing to turn up that caused the match to be scratched. See?"

The juniors stared at Bunter. It was really a good scheme; though somewhat adventurous, and they wondered how Bunter had come to think of it.

"Out of the mouths of babes and duffers—" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"It shows how hunger will sharpen the wits," said Harry, laughing.

"The sharpfulness is terrific. The waylayfulness of the esteemed Highcliffe rotters will be the easy thing," remarked Hurree Singh. "I thinkfully consider that our fat chum has earned his tea."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Wire in, Bunter."

Billy Bunter needed no second bidding.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Ambush!

IT was astonishing that Billy Bunter should have been the one to think of it; but it was really a good plan. That evening the chums of the Remove talked it over, and discussed it in all its bearings.

"It's a good scheme," said Bob Cherry, when he heard it. "Of course, it's only putting the thing off. The Highcliffe rotters will explain how they were stopped from coming, and claim another date for the match."

"I suppose so," agreed Wharton. "But the next half-holiday is Wednesday next week, and it gives us till then to think of a scheme."

"True!"

"It's really only putting off the match, not stopping it,"

ANSWERS

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said Nugent. "It's simply gaining time. But, as we haven't the faintest idea how to dish the bounders, what we want is to gain time. Before next Wednesday we shall have thought of something."

"I hope so."

"Just now, the thing is to carry out this plan," said Harry. "Now, in the first place, we mustn't let the Highcliffe chaps know we are mixed up in it if we can help it. We don't want them to be able to throw it in Marjorie's face that her friends interfered to save Cliff House from being licked."

"That's so."

"We're going to stop the brake in the lane, and stick the Highcliffe chaps into the old barn for the afternoon. We shall have to disguise ourselves."

Nugent rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Good! That's a chance for the Remove Dramatic Society. What about false beards and moustaches?"

"Good! But rather likely to come off if there's a tussle."

"Well, perhaps so."

"I was thinking of Guy Fawkes's masks," said Harry. "We have a lot left over, in the box-room, you know—the lot we used last November. You can't recognise a chap in a Guy Fawkes's mask."

"What-ho!"

"Then we can get a lot of sacks to hang over us, to cover up our clothes down to the feet. And we're not to talk, so that they can't recognise our voices. You see?"

"Yes, rather!"

"They may guess the highwaymen who stop them belong to Greyfriars, or they may think they're the village lads, or perhaps the Boy Scouts from Pegg," said Harry. "The Pegg scouts are always up to some larks, you know. They can guess; but they won't know. I think it will be ripping fun!"

"First rate!"

"And we'll take about twenty fellows, to make sure of them."

And so it was arranged.

A sufficient number of the Greyfriars Remove were let into the secret to make up a strong party for the waylaying of the Highcliffe eleven.

Twenty sturdy juniors made up the party, and they all entered into the spirit of the thing with great keenness.

The Greyfriars juniors were "up against" Highcliffe all the time, and any chance of lowering the Highcliffe colours was welcome; and as Vavasour & Co. were in this especial instance acting the part of cads, the scheme for flooring them was particularly welcome. The Removites felt themselves in the position of defending beauty in distress, and, naturally, felt rather pleased with themselves.

The chums went to bed that night in a satisfied humour. They chuckled over their scheme when they rose on Saturday morning.

Billy Bunter, taking advantage of the general satisfaction, asked Wharton to lend him half-a-crown off a postal-order that was coming for certain that evening; and Wharton lent it so readily that Billy was sorry he had not asked for five shillings.

The juniors were looking forward to the afternoon.

Morning school dragged through tediously; but at last the welcome hour of dismissal came, and the juniors trooped out.

Then there was a raid on the old store of Guy Fawkes's masks, and the juniors tried them on in the box-room, with shrieks of laughter.

Certainly there was nothing like a Fifth of November mask for disguising a fellow and totally changing his appearance.

Harry Wharton had bargained with the Greyfriars green-grocer for the loan of twenty sacks, which were to be left in the old barn near the lane, for the juniors to take when they wanted them.

Immediately after dinner the Greyfriars juniors packed the masks in their pockets, and left the school.

They had good time to get on the ground and ensconce themselves in their ambush before the Highcliffe brake came by.

In the old barn they took possession of the sacks. By cutting a slit in the bottom of each sack, and putting them on upside down, so that the sack hung from the shoulders to the feet, the juniors completely disguised themselves. The masks finished the disguise. Their nearest and dearest friends could not possibly have recognised them, and it was only by their stature that they could be seen to be boys at all.

They yelled with laughter as they looked at one another in the barn.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "This is ripping! Suppose we meet anybody going down to the lane?"

"Ha, ha, ha! We shall give 'em fits, I expect!"

"Come on!" said Wharton.

The juniors followed him from the barn.

They had to cross a field to get to the lane where they were to ambush the brake from Highcliffe School.

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WEEK:

"LINLEY'S LUCK."

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ONE
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A country lad was coming across the field, whistling. His whistle ceased suddenly as he caught sight of the astounding figures approaching him.

His jaw dropped, and he stared at the terrifying spectacle in open-mouthed horror for a moment; then, with a yell of affright, he took to his heels and tore away.

The juniors yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only aunt," said Nugent almost tearfully, "this is funny! I wonder if the Highcliffe chaps will take it like that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors reached the lane.

It was very narrow at the part Harry Wharton had chosen for the ambushade, and thick bushes grew along the sides, topped by young trees, now green with the new foliage of spring.

There was plenty of cover for a hundred fellows if necessary, and the Greyfriars band had no difficulty in concealing themselves.

They took cover in the bushes and ferns, and watched the road.

Wharton glanced at his watch as soon as his followers were in cover.

"It's time the Highcliffe brake was here," he said.

"Good!"

"Keep quiet, you chaps."

"The quietfulness is terrific!"

The ambush fell into silence, broken only by an occasional chuckle.

The juniors listened for the sound of wheels upon the road.

There was a deep silence upon the countryside. The road was very little used by vehicles, for the traffic to and from the village of Pegg usually took the upper road.

Wharton gave a sudden start.

"Listen!"

There was a rumble of wheels.

"Now, keep still till I give the word!" exclaimed Harry quickly. "It may not be the Highcliffe fellows yet, you know."

"Right you are!"

"The rightfulness is terrific——"

"Quiet!"

Clatter, clatter went the wheels on the rutty road. A vehicle came dashing up, and an excited Removite, forgetting Wharton's caution, sprang out into the road.

"Bedad, and stop wid ye!" he shouted.

"Desmond, you ass——"

"Get down! It's not Highcliffe."

"Faith, and I——"

"It's the butcher's boy! Get back!"

"Howly mother av Moses!"

It was a light butcher's cart that was rattling along the road, driven by the butcher's boy of Friardale. The driver of the cart stared at Micky Desmond, and gave a yell of startled affright. He whipped up his horse, and dashed on at top speed, and the cart, rocking to and fro violently in the ruts, disappeared down the lane.

Nugent dragged Micky Desmond back into the bushes.

"You utter ass——"

"Faith, and I——"

"Keep hold of him!" growled Wharton. "If he tries to move again jam his head into the mud!"

"Sure, and I——"

"Dry up!"

Micky Desmond dried up. The juniors waited anxiously. Again there came a sound of wheels and hoofs on the rutty road.

"Look out!"

The juniors peered from the bushes. The great, heavy vehicle that was swinging down the lane could only be the Highcliffe brake.

The Highcliffe team were coming at last!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

On the King's Highway.

V AVASOUR & Co. were in high spirits. The Highcliffe fellows were crowded in the brake en route for Cliff House. There were thirteen fellows in all, and they were talking and laughing gaily. The joke on the Cliff House girls was one that appealed extraordinarily to Vavasour's somewhat peculiar idea of humour.

And the prospect, too, of annoying Wharton and his chums by giving the girls a rough time made the whole thing more enjoyable to Vavasour.

As the brake bowled along, the Highcliffe fellows dis-

cussed the coming match, and the expected dismay of the Cliff House eleven when they arrived.

"I expected to get a wire or a letter from Miss Marjorie," grinned Vavasour, "asking us to scratch the match. I fully expected it."

"So did I," said Hilton.

"And I," remarked Byng. "I can't understand the girls sticking it out like this. They will have to play the match now."

"Or else cry off at the last moment," grinned Vavasour. "If they do we'll never let them hear the end of it, that's a dead cert!"

And the Highcliffe fellows chuckled in chorus.

"We're nearly there," remarked Hilton. "We shall be in good time for the match. My hat! How they'll shriek at Highcliffe when we describe it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Halt!"

It was a sudden shout from the side of the road.

The driver of the brake looked astonished, and involuntarily pulled in his horses.

As he did so a score of strange figures burst out of the bushes by the roadside and surrounded the brake.

Twenty fellows, their faces covered by grotesque Guy Fawkes masks, and their whole forms concealed by inverted sacks, crowded round the Highcliffe vehicle.

Two of them ran to the head of the leading horse, and held it fast, so that it was impossible for the driver to drive on. Not that he thought of doing so. He sat in a stupified frame of mind, staring blankly at the strange figures.

The Highcliffe fellows simply gasped.

Who and what the enemy were they had not the faintest idea; but they saw very clearly that they were enemies.

The strangers swarmed round the halted brake.

Vavasour stared down at them in surprise and terror. It seemed almost impossible that highway robbery could be attempted on a public road in the broad daylight. But what else could it be?

"Who—who are you?" gasped Vavasour.

"Get down!"

It was the leader of the masked assailants who spoke, in a hard, deep voice—evidently assumed for the purpose of disguising the real tones.

Vavasour did not move.

"Who—who—"

"Get down!"

"We won't!" exclaimed Vavasour, with some spirit. "I suppose this is a lark. We'll jolly well not going to get down."

"Obey me!"

"Rats! We're going to the school at Pegg to play a football match, and we've got no time to waste," said Byng.

"Faith——" began one of the masked party.

Another gave him a sudden punch on the head, which made him stop short with a gasp.

The masked leader waved his hand commandingly.

"Get down at once, or take the consequences."

"I jolly well know this is a lark," said Hilton. "We won't! Who are you?"

"We are the Mysterious Members of the Blood-Curdling Brotherhood," said the masked individual, in deep tones, with a faint recollection of some American fiction he had read once, and there was a faint chuckle from under some of the masks.

"Order, there!"

"Faith, and sure I——"

"Shut up!"

"Shove them out of the brake," said the leader, as the Highcliffe fellows made no movement to obey the order to alight.

"Good!"

"Mind that none of them get away."

"W-w-w-what are you going to do?" gasped Vavasour, beginning to get really alarmed now.

"Make you prisoners."

"What for?"

"Faith, and we want the pleasure of ye're company——"

"Shut up!"

"Sure I was forgettin'."

"If you forget again you'll jolly well get a thick ear."

"Look here, Whar——"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"We're not going to get down," growled Hilton. "We know this is a rotten lark. If you try to get into the brake we'll shove you out."

"Lay the whip round them, driver!" exclaimed Vavasour.

The driver did not do so. Two of the enemy were up beside him now, and they made him very plainly understand that he would be thrown into the road if he resisted. One of them took the reins from his hands, and another the whip.

"Get out!"

"We won't," yelled the Highcliffe fellows.

"Throw them out!"

The masked juniors scrambled into the brake.

Highcliffe resisted, and two or three of the assailants, cumbered by the sacks, lost their hold and rolled into the road with heavy bumps.

But the rest came on grimly.

The odds were against Highcliffe—and the odds in pluck and determination, as well as in numbers.

The assailants swarmed into the brake, and the Highcliffe fellows, resisting in a half-hearted fashion, were thrown out one after another.

Two or three of them tried to dash into the bushes and escape, but the assailants were too keenly on the watch for that.

Each fellow, as he was thrown out, was seized and secured by at least one junior, and they were soon all in the road, and all held fast.

Some of them were still struggling, but it was in vain. The odds were too much against them.

"Get down, driver!"

"Zur——"

"Get down!" rapped out the hard voice under the Guy Fawkes mask.

The driver stepped down.

The two fellows in his seat drove the brake down the lane, and turned it into a by-path under the overhanging branches of great trees.

The Highcliffe fellows watched that proceeding in amazement.

"Look here! What are you up to?" blustered Vavasour.

"You'll get locked up for this."

"Silence, prisoner!"

"I tell you——"

"Bump every chap who speaks."

"Right-ho!"

"Look here——"

Vavasour broke off short.

He was bumped heavily into the dusty road, with a force that made the dust rise in little clouds round him, and brought an exclamation to his lips.

"Now, then, will you shut up?"

"Ow!"

"March!"

Each of the prisoners, held fast by one or two of the captors, was marched through a gap in the hedge, and across the field to the old barn.

They went unresistingly, after one or two had been bumped hard as a warning of what would be the result of struggling.

In a few minutes they were in the barn.

They looked round, and at one another, in dismay. The whole affair was a mystery to them. Who their assailants were they had begun to have a slight suspicion; but what was the object of this strange attack was a mystery to them.

"Where's the rope?"

"Here you are!"

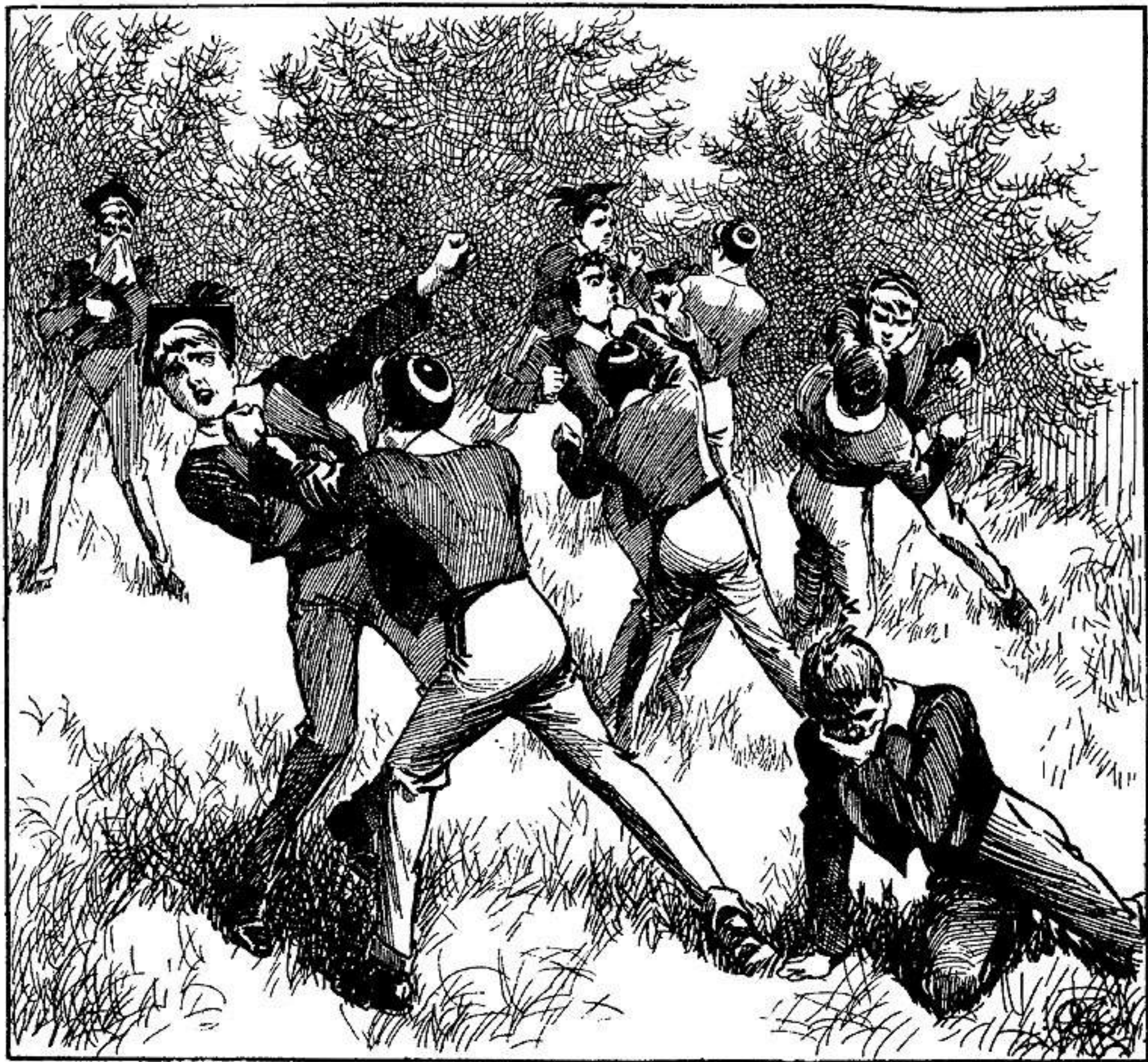
One of the masked juniors drew a long, thin rope out from under a bundle of straw. It was knotted to the wrists of each of the prisoners in turn, so that the Highcliffe fellows were soon all tied to one another, helpless to use their hands. Then the end of the rope was fastened to a beam.

The masked juniors surveyed the curious scene with great

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"Hurrah for Greyfriars! Go it!" shouted Bob Cherry, excitedly. "Give 'em socks!"

satisfaction when their work was finished. Vavasour was black with rage.

"You'd better let us go!" he exclaimed. "We know jolly well who you are. You're the cads from Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll complain to Dr. Locke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll get flogged for this!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton contemptuously. "You're going to stay here for three hours. It's what you've been sentenced to by the Mysterious Members of the Blood-Curdling Brotherhood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you make a row, you'll be gagged. There's plenty of straw for you to sit down on, and if you want something to do, you can think over your sins, and try to make good resolutions not to be such rotten cads in the future."

And the masked juniors walked out of the barn.

They left the Highcliffe fellows squirming with rage.

In spite of the warning they had received, several of the prisoners yelled for help when they were left alone.

One of the masked juniors immediately re-entered.

Hilton was shouting the loudest. The junior had brought in a bunch of muddy grass. This he cheerfully

proceeded to cram into Hilton's mouth, amid wild gasping and spluttering from the Highcliffe fellow.

"Groo-oo—gro-oo-oo!"

"If there's any more row, we shall gag the rest of you," said the masked junior.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A few moments later the driver of the brake was tied up in the row with the Highcliffe fellows. He was still looking dazed, and he made no resistance. But the captors kindly allowed him to fill and light his pipe, and he sat on the straw and smoked contentedly while the Highcliffe fellows raged and chafed.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Vavasour Is Wrathful.

M ARJORIE HAZELDENE stood at the gate of Cliff House and looked out.

There was a curious expression upon the face of the girl. She had not heard from Harry Wharton, and she did not know if he had thought of any "dodge" for extricating her from her difficult position. But the time was past now when the Highcliffe fellows should have arrived.

The time fixed for the kick-off was past, and the visiting team had not even arrived.

Marjorie was breathing more easily.

Something had certainly happened to prevent the Highcliffe fellows from keeping the fixture, and for that something she had little doubt that she was indebted to the chums of the Remove.

She was watching from the gates now in the expectation of seeing, not the Highcliffe brake, but some of the chums of Greyfriars.

It was a quarter past three when a couple of juniors came in sight, strolling down the road towards Cliff House.

Marjorie uttered an exclamation.

"Clara, here they come!"

Miss Clara came running down to the gates.

"The Highcliffe brake!"

"No. Harry and Frank."

Wharton and Nugent arrived at the gates. They were smiling serenely as they raised their caps to the girls.

"Well?" said Marjorie and Clara together breathlessly.

"It's all serene—for to-day, at least," said Harry.

"Vavasour is not coming?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"Making a short stay in a barn, for the sake of resting," said Harry. "He won't be along this afternoon. Perhaps I'd better not go into details, as it may be more suitable for you to know nothing about it till afterwards. But I thought we'd look in and tell you that the Highcliffe fellows are unavoidably detained, and there won't be any match this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, they really can't get away," said Frank Nugent. "They're sorry, of course. You must consider us as bringing their apologies."

"Exactly," assented Wharton.

Marjorie and Clara laughed merrily. Exactly where the Highcliffe fellows were they did not care in the least, so long as Vavasour & Co. did not come to Cliff House.

"So they won't be coming to-day," said Marjorie. "I'm so glad. I suppose we can consider the match as off."

"Yes, rather—unless they explain how they were unavoidably detained, and demand another date."

"Oh!"

"We can refuse," said Miss Clara.

"That would be as bad as scratching the match," said Marjorie. "As a matter of fact, I gave Vavasour his choice of dates between to-day and next Wednesday, and he knows we could meet him on Wednesday if we liked."

"We'll think of a new dodge before Wednesday," said Nugent. "Of course, it wouldn't be possible to work the same dodge twice. But we'll manage it somehow."

"I'm sure you will," said Miss Clara. "We needn't feel at all anxious about it. Let's go down to the bay."

"Jolly good idea!" said Wharton.

"But where are Cherry and Hurree Singh?"

"They're staying to keep the Highcliffe chaps company. You see, there were quite a lot of us met the Highcliffe brake on the road; but after meeting them, and paying them some polite attentions, I sent the rest back, and only Cherry and Inky are staying to look after them."

Marjorie looked a little puzzled.

But it was best, as Wharton had said, for her not to know the particulars till afterwards, so she asked no questions.

"Bob and Inky will be detained there till we go back at five or so," said Harry. "It's all right. We tossed up which two should stay. Let's get down to the boats."

"Very well."

And in a few minutes the two juniors and the girls were in a boat on the bay, speeding along with a white sail glancing in the spring sunshine.

The juniors enjoyed the sail, and they did not return to the shore until a little later than they had intended. As the boat at last sped landward Marjorie glanced at her watch, and uttered a little exclamation.

"We shall be late for tea."

Harry whistled softly.

"I told Bob to let them go at five," he remarked. "They'll be out before now. I shouldn't wonder if we see something of them."

The boat ran upon the sand.

Two figures were standing there, evidently having been on their way to Cliff House, and having stopped at sight of the boat coming in. They were Vavasour and Hilton.

There was nothing to be seen of the other Highcliffe fellows. Wharton and Nugent helped the girls out, and while they were doing so, Vavasour and Hilton came striding up, their faces red with rage.

"Good-afternoon!" said Marjorie. "You did not come for the match, so we went for a sail. I suppose you have some explanation to make?"

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Vavasour spluttered with rage.

"Yes; we have!" he almost shouted. "We've been kidnapped by a gang of young ruffians!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Our brake was stopped in the lane by a gang of rotters," said Vavasour, almost choking with rage. "We were forced to get out, and taken into a barn, and our hands were tied with a long rope."

"Goodness gracious!"

"What a rough experience!" said Harry Wharton sympathetically. "I wonder you didn't put up a fight, or something of the sort."

"The odds were against us," said Vavasour, scowling. "There were at least thirty of the scoundrels. We were fastened up in the barn, and the driver of the brake with us, and the brake was tied up in a turning."

"By Jove!"

"Did you recognise the chaps who collared you?" asked Frank Nugent innocently.

Vavasour gave him a furious look.

"No, we didn't. They were afraid to let their faces be seen. They had Guy Fawkes masks on, and sacks over their clothes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must have looked funny," said Marjorie demurely.

"And did you stay a long time in the barn?" asked Miss Clara, with fun dancing in her eyes.

"We had to stay," said Vavasour—"we had to stay till the cads chose to let us go, as we were tied up. They left us there till five o'clock. We heard the church clock strike across the fields. Then two beasts came in—the others had gone away as soon as we were tied up, I suppose. Anyway, we only saw those two. If they had let us loose then, we would have smashed them."

"I'll wager you would, as you were thirteen to two," said Wharton.

"I'm not talking to you, Wharton. But they didn't let us loose—they just loosened the brake-driver, and told him to untie us. One of the beasts gave him half-a-sovereign as a compensation for having been tied up all the afternoon, and that satisfied him. But we're jolly well not satisfied!"

"What, haven't you had enough?" asked Nugent.

"We're going to make a row about it, I can tell you!" said Vavasour savagely. "You'll see. We're not going to take that sort of thing lying down. But about the footer match, Miss Hazeldene. You see, we were prevented from coming."

"Yes; I suppose you were."

"And I think I can guess who it was that prevented us, and why," said Vavasour, with a savage look at Wharton. "I suppose you want to scratch the match, and own up that you would be licked if you met us—that's what it amounts to."

Marjorie coloured with anger.

"I haven't asked you to scratch," she said.

"Then you're still ready to meet us?"

"The fixture remains on, if you like."

"Good! You said Wednesday afternoon would suit you as well as to-day. Will you meet us on Wednesday afternoon?"

"We'll make that the date, if you like."

"And lick you!" said Miss Clara.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind playing on our ground?" suggested Vavasour. "We've got a good ground at Highcliffe for the junior matches, and accidents seem to happen to teams visiting Cliff House."

"Anywhere you like."

"Very well—Wednesday afternoon on the Highcliffe ground," said Vavasour, with a spiteful glance in the direction of Harry Wharton.

"That's right," said Marjorie.

And the two Highcliffe fellows walked away. They were feeling a little more pleased with themselves now. The match was to come off, after all, and on their own ground.

When Vavasour and Hilton were gone, Marjorie and Clara looked at the juniors in silence and dismay.

"I suppose I ought to have scratched," said Marjorie restlessly. "But he was so dreadfully impertinent I felt I could not give him the advantage."

"How I wish we could lick them!" said Miss Clara.

"There's time between now and Wednesday to think of a dodge," said Wharton. "You can rely on us. The match sha'n't come off, and you sha'n't have to scratch—even if we have to set Highcliffe on fire!"

And the juniors walked home to Greyfriars cudgelling their brains for a "dodge." Billy Bunter's idea had worked well; but it had simply meant the gaining of time. The situation remained the same, only the difficulty was put off till Wednesday. What was to be done to save the Cliff House girls from that match, and to save their face at the same time? It was a difficult question to answer.

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"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
 "What's the matter?"
 "Phew!"
 "What's the matter, ass?"
 "Look!"

Bob Cherry was standing at the door of the gymnasium, looking out into the quadrangle. It was Monday, and morning school was over. Three figures had caught Bob's eye as they came up from the direction of the school gates, and made for the house.

Harry Wharton and Nugent and the Nabob of Bhanipur joined him at the door.

"My hat!"
 "Vavasour!"
 "And Hilton and Byng!"

"What on earth do they want here?" exclaimed Wharton, in amazement, as he watched the three fellows from Highcliffe enter the School House. "They haven't come to see us, that's a dead cert."

Bob Cherry grunted.
 "I know jolly well what they've come for."
 "What, then?"

"To complain to the Head."

Harry Wharton whistled softly.

"My word!" he said. "I should hardly think even the Highcliffe fellows were cads enough for that. I should imagine that even Vavasour would draw the line at sneaking."

"That's jolly well what they've come for!" said Bob Cherry, with conviction. "We shall be called over the coals."

Harry Wharton looked grave. It had been a first-class jape to capture the Highcliffe fellows, and prevent the match at Cliff House. But it was quite possible that Dr. Locke would take a more serious view of it.

That the Highcliffe fellows could be mean enough to tell tales to their head-master seemed almost incredible to Wharton. Yet he felt that Bob Cherry was right. Vavasour & Co. had come there to complain.

"My hat," said Nugent at last, "this means trouble!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Looks like it. The Head may think it rather more than a joke. Perhaps it was."

"What are we going to do?"

"I don't see that we're called upon to say anything to incriminate ourselves," said Harry slowly. "Suppose we keep silence. The Head is a sport. He wouldn't ask a chap to give evidence against himself."

"But the Highcliffe chaps will say—"

"They can't say they recognised us."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I don't see that it matters much what they say," went on Wharton thoughtfully. "Unless the Head makes us speak and convict ourselves, we're all right, and Vavasour & Co. will have had their walk for their pains."

"Ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove strolled over towards the School House. They fully expected to be called into the Head's study; and they were not disappointed.

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, called to them in the passage.

"Here, you youngsters!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"The Head wants to see you," said the senior. "Wharton and Nugent and Cherry are to go in. What mischief have you been up to now, you young rascals?"

"Oh, Wingate, as if we ever get up to mischief!"

Wingate laughed and walked away. The chums of the Remove went to the Head's study, and Harry Wharton tapped at the door, and they entered.

Vavasour, Hilton, and Byng were standing there. The Head of Greyfriars was looking very grave.

There was a lurking smile of triumph on Vavasour's face.

It was pretty clear that he considered that he had cornered the chums of the Remove in a way there was no escaping from; and the meanness of his conduct in tale-bearing did not seem even to have occurred to him.

Dr. Locke fixed his severe glance upon the juniors.

"Wharton, I have received a very serious complaint from these lads, who belong to Highcliffe School, as you are doubtless aware."

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

"Master Vavasour declares that on Saturday afternoon, as he and his friends were going to Pegg in a brake from Highcliffe, they were set upon by a number of boys disguised in Guy Fawkes' masks."

Harry's face never changed a muscle.

"Indeed, sir?"

"They were taken out of the brake, and confined in a barn by violence, and not released till it was too late for them to proceed on their way."

"Yes, sir?"

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ONE PENNY.

"Vavasour declares that the outrage was perpetrated by Greyfriars boys."

"Does he, sir?"

"In short, Wharton, he accuses you and your friends."

"Has he any proof to offer, sir?"

Dr. Locke looked curiously at Wharton.

"He says that he knows it was you, Wharton."

"He can say what he chooses, sir, but surely he is called upon to produce some proof," said Harry.

Dr. Locke glanced at Vavasour.

"You assert that Wharton was one of the boys who attacked you?" he asked.

"Yes," said Vavasour fiercely. "And Nugent was another. I know jolly well those two were there, and I think I could point out a dozen of the others, too."

"What have you to say, Wharton?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing!"

"No, sir."

Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows.

"I do not fully understand you, Wharton, I am afraid. What do you mean to imply by saying that you have nothing to say? Do you admit Vavasour's accusation?"

"No, sir."

"Then you deny it?"

"No, sir."

"I must ask you to be a little more explicit, Wharton."

"I don't think I ought to be called upon to say anything, sir," said Harry respectfully. "Suppose I know the fellows who japed the Highcliffe cads—I mean kids. It would be sneaking for me to give them away."

The Head paused.

"There is something in what you say, Wharton, and I will not ask you about the others. But you can answer in regard to yourself."

"I will if you insist, sir, as you know best; but it doesn't seem fair to me that I should have to convict myself if guilty," said Wharton. "If Vavasour thinks I was there, let him prove it."

"Can you prove it, Vavasour?"

"How am I to prove it when he was masked?" howled Vavasour angrily.

"Don't raise your voice here, please," said the Head sharply.

"Well, I can't prove it, and he knows I can't!" said Vavasour sulkily. "I know jolly well that he was one of the gang!"

"But you have no proof to offer?"

"Of course I haven't. He won't deny it if you ask him. I know that."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"Then in effect, Vavasour, you have come here to make an accusation against Wharton, relying upon his sense of honour to make him convict himself?"

"I know he was there."

"If you have any proof to offer I will listen to it, and certainly punish any boy who was connected with such a trick," said the Head. "But I will certainly not ask any boy to convict himself in order that he may be punished."

Vavasour gritted his teeth.

"Of course, you won't punish a boy in your own school," he said, with a savage sneer. "I was a fool to think you would."

The Head's brow darkened.

"That is not the way to speak to me, boy."

"Well, Wharton was there, and he played that trick on us, and we'll pay him out for it some time!" said Vavasour spitefully.

"Silence!" The Head turned to the Removites. "You may go. I shall not ask you any question on the subject."

"Thank you, sir." And Harry Wharton and his chums left the study, feeling very much relieved.

Vavasour & Co. came out a few moments later with scowling faces. Vavasour gave Wharton a savage look.

Harry met it with a smile of contempt.

"Well, you've gained nothing by sneaking," he remarked. "You might as well have acted decently."

"Oh, he couldn't!" said Bob Cherry. "It's no good expecting impossibilities, you know!"

"It would serve the cads right to give them a jolly good bumping while they're here!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

Vavasour & Co. looked alarmed, and quickened their pace, but Harry Wharton restrained his indignant chum.

"Let them alone," he said; "they're not worth touching."

And the Highcliffe fellows quitted Greyfriars unmolested, and breathed more easily when they were in the road outside the gates. They had had their walk for their pains. As Harry had said, they had gained nothing by sneaking, and the chums of the Remove were none the worse for being hauled over the coals.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Wonderful Wheeze.

DURING the next few days the chums of the Remove gave the matter a great deal of thought, but without any result. As a matter of fact, the situation seemed an impossible one, and they had set themselves a hopeless task.

To capture the Highcliffe team a second time was out of the question, and there was no other way of preventing the match. And if the match were played, the Cliff House girls would have a rough time and a humiliating defeat.

Harry Wharton ransacked his brains, so to speak, for a plan, but without result.

Billy Bunter offered to think one out. He declared that if he were well fed on the best of everything for a considerable time, he had no doubt whatever that a first-class scheme would occur to him. To which the Remove chums responded that they weren't taking any, so Bunter's valuable services as a schemer were not available.

But what was to be done?

"If only we could meet the Highcliffe chaps instead of the girls meeting them," Tom Brown remarked, at tea in No. 1 Study on Tuesday evening, "then it would be all O.K."

The chums of the Remove had met round the tea-table in a final council of war. Harry Wharton and Nugent and Huxee Singh, Bob Cherry and Mark Linley and Tom Brown and Hazeldene, were discussing the matter in the hope of hitting on some scheme or other at last.

"Yes, by Jove," said Wharton. "If we were playing Highcliffe it would be all right—we could take the matter up for the girls. But, of course, Vavasour wouldn't meet us. If he did, it wouldn't be the visiting team that would get licked at Highcliffe to-morrow."

"The foot would be a boot on the other leg," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"But, of course, that's impossible."

It was at this moment that Frank Nugent, who had been silent for some minutes, suddenly gave a wild yell.

"My hat!"

They all looked at him.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Are you ill?"

"Off your rocker?"

"Shut up."

"I've got it!" yelled Nugent.

"Got what?"

"It!"

"Do you mean to say you've got a scheme?" exclaimed Wharton eagerly.

"Yes."

"A wheeze?"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors gathered eagerly round Nugent.

"What is it?"

"Go ahead."

"Get it off your chest."

"Propound."

"You see—"

"Yes, we see—buck up!"

"You see, the Highcliffe chaps are determined to meet a team of girls—"

"We know that."

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"And the Cliff House girls are not up to their form—"

"Tell us something we don't know."

"But there's nothing to prevent Marjorie from getting in recruits to strengthen her team if she likes, from outside Cliff House."

"Well?"

"Well, that's the wheeze."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"Well, you ass! The Cliff House girls can play footer quite as well as other girls, I suppose, and besides, where—"

"I haven't finished yet."

"Then for goodness' sake finish."

"You remember the time we had a contest with the Boy Scouts of Pegg?" began Nugent.

"Blow the Boy Scouts of Pegg!"

"What on earth have the Boy Scouts of Pegg got to do with it?"

"Stick to the subject."

"That's what I'm doing, as much as I can with a set of howling asses interrupting me!" exclaimed Nugent. "Do shut up and let a fellow get on."

"Oh, go ahead!"

"You remember the contest with the Boy Scouts?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"We had to send a fellow through the wood without his being stopped by the scouts, and we succeeded," said Nugent. "I was the chap, and I was dressed up as a girl, and that was the way we dished them."

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"Yes, yes, yes."

"Get on."

"Well, don't you see?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Hazeldene. "What on earth has that old affair got to do with the girls playing a footer-match at Highcliffe?"

Nugent sniffed.

"Oh, you're dense! If I could dress as a girl for a scouting contest, I could dress as a girl for a footer match."

"Oh!"

"And you fellows could do the same."

"Oh!"

"And we could go to Highcliffe and lick those bragging bounders hollow!" exclaimed Nugent triumphantly.

"Oh!"

The Removites stared blankly at Frank Nugent. The scheme was simply stupendous, and it almost took their breath away. But as they thought over it, it appealed more and more to their imagination.

The prospect of meeting the Highcliffe fellows in fair fight on the football-field was a very attractive one, and they all looked forward to it. And if the trick could be played without discovery, it was a certain way of extricating Marjorie & Co. from their difficulty.

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton at last. "It's—it's splendid! But it will have to be kept awfully dark."

"The darkness must be terrific."

"I don't see why it shouldn't work."

"It's tremendous!" said Tom Brown. "Fancy the faces of the Highcliffe chaps when the girls begin to score goals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just picture Vavasour, with a girl charging him off the ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's ripping!"

"If it will work!" said Hazeldene.

"Why shouldn't it work?" said Nugent warmly. "The Highcliffe fellows don't know half the Cliff House girls by sight. They don't meet much. Besides, Marjorie is at liberty to get in recruits from outside the school. If most of the team are strangers to Vavasour, he won't suspect anything from that."

"Right enough."

"I dare say we shall look a bit sturdy for girls, too; but, then, girls who go in for footballing would naturally be a bit bigger and stronger than other girls."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Marjorie can captain the team, and she can keep goal, so as to be out of the crush. Our goalkeeper won't have much to do in a match with Highcliffe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clara can take the place of a back, too, to help keep up appearances. We'll see that the Highcliffe cads don't get near her. Then there can be nine of us—we're seven here, and we can have, say, Ogilvy, and young Jones."

"Good!"

"Well, what do you think of the idea?"

"I think it's splendid," said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to consult Marjorie, and see what she says, that's all."

"And the sooner the better," said Hazeldene.

"I'll get a pass from Wingate, and buzz over there on my bike now," said Harry.

"Then off you go!"

And in five minutes Harry Wharton was pedalling rapidly over to Cliff House.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Taken for a Walk.

BILLY BUNTER was puzzled.

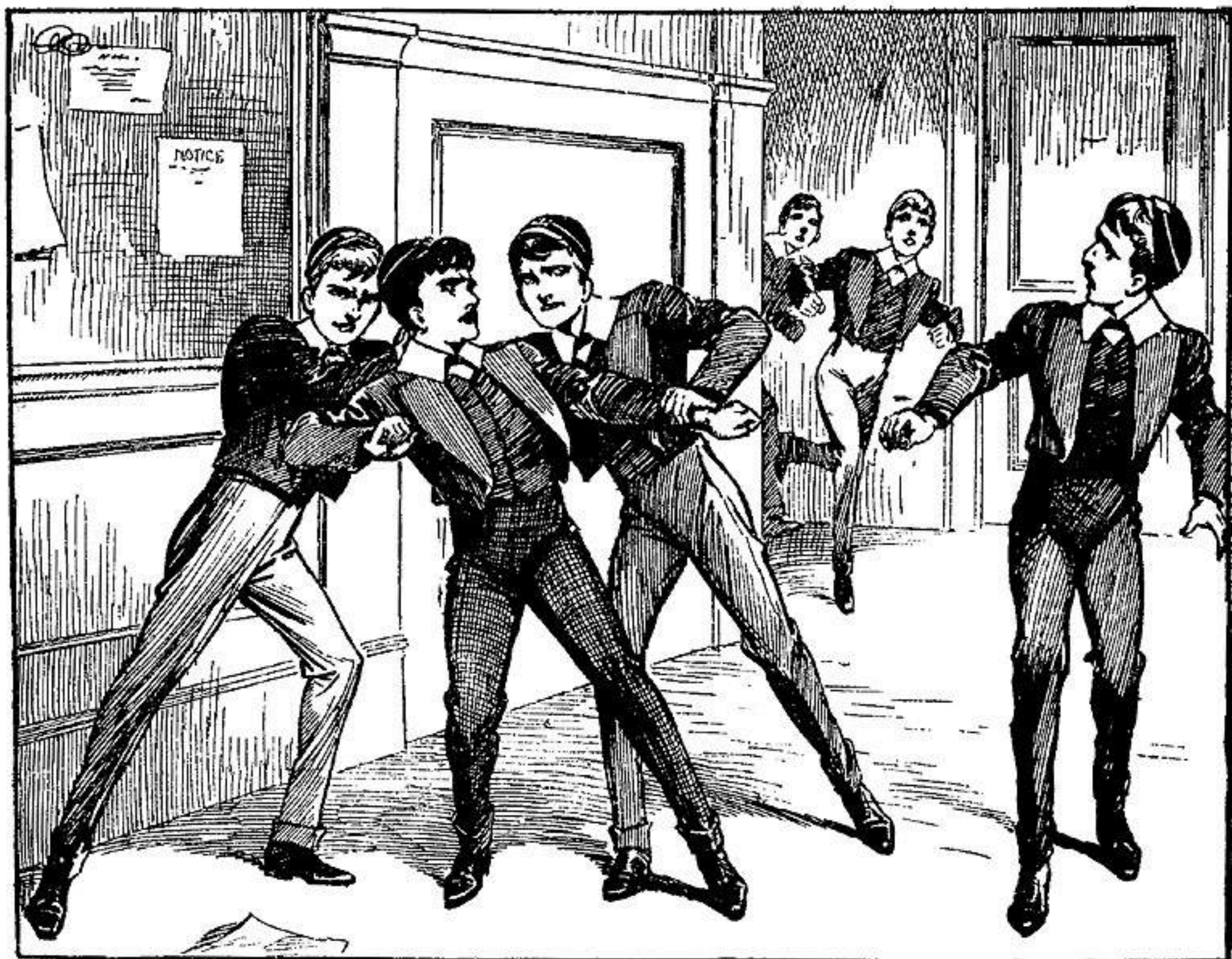
There was something going on in No. 1 Study to which he was not admitted—a secret was being kept from him, and anything of that kind greatly incensed the fat junior. He was the Paul Pry of the school, and in the habit of minding everybody's business but his own, and there were few things going on at Greyfriars which escaped his knowledge. But on the present occasion, Billy Bunter was out of it.

He had come up to No. 1 Study unsuspectingly for tea. He had not been admitted. Wharton had handed him a shilling, and told him to go to the tuckshop. And when Billy Bunter began explaining that a shilling was a ridiculous amount to be expended in a feed for a fellow like himself, Wharton had cut the argument short by closing the study door and locking it.

Bunter had not taken long to dispose of the shilling. Then he had returned to the study, in time to see Harry leave and take out his bicycle.

The fat junior was allowed in the room now—but the meeting had broken up. He caught hold of Tom Brown's sleeve as the New Zealand junior came down the passage.

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As the two bullies caught hold of him, Gordon Gay sent a shrill cry ringing down the passage. "Coo-ee!"
(An exciting incident in the splendid, long complete school tale, contained in "The Empire Library." Now on Sale. Price One Halfpenny.)

"I say, Brown, what's going on?"

"I am," said Brown.

And he went on, leaving Billy Bunter blinking. The fat junior buttonholed Mark Linley next, and asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing," said Mark.

"But what were you all meeting in the study for?"

"To discuss a matter."

"Yes—what was it?"

"Don't ask questions."

"But I want to know."

"Rats!"

And Mark Linley jerked himself away from Bunter's detaining clutch, and walked off. The fat junior next applied himself to Bob Cherry. Bob Cherry took him by the ears, turned him round and applied his foot gently to Bunter, and Bunter moved rather hastily along the passage. Then Bob followed Mark Linley.

The fat junior gasped.

"Beast! But I'll jolly well know what's going on, all the same."

And he went into No. 1 Study. Nugent was roasting chestnuts, and chatting with the Nabob of Bhanipur. The two juniors ceased speaking at once as Billy Bunter came into the study.

Bunter blinked at them wrathfully.

"Look here! What's going on here?" he demanded.

"I'm roasting chestnuts," said Nugent innocently.

"What were you saying to Inky?"

"Words!"

"Eh? Don't be funny! I want to know what's the matter. You're jolly well not going to keep me out of it. I suppose you know I'm to be trusted?"

"That's just what we don't know," said Nugent, with a

grin. "We'll tell you to-morrow, perhaps—and perhaps we won't."

"Look here——"

"Oh, ring off!"

Bunter snorted angrily. He waited for Harry Wharton to come back. When the captain of the Remove came in, Bunter was in the study.

"It's all right, you chaps," exclaimed Wharton, "Marjorie thinks it's a jolly good idea."

"Careful," said Nugent.

"Oh, all right!"

"What's a jolly good idea?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Oh, never mind!"

"But I do mind!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly;

"I want to know all about it."

"Then you can go on wanting," said Wharton cheerfully, "because you are jolly well not going to know a word."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

"The hear—heerfulness is terrific."

"Then I'll jolly well find out," said Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Why don't you mind your own business, Billy?"

To which question Bunter returned no answer but a sniff. He was on the look-out for the rest of the evening. He saw Wharton speaking to Ogilvy and Jones minor, and caught the word football, and saw them laugh and nod, but that was all—and that did not convey much information.

But he caught a few words in No. 1 Study later, as he came along the passage.

"Marjorie laughed like anything," said Harry. "She and Clara think it's a good idea. They are going to get the things we shall want, and we're to get over to Cliff House as soon as possible after dinner to-morrow. Then we can be fixed up. We shall have a brake from Pegg to Highcliffe."

"Good!" said Nugent.

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A Splendid Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
WEEK:

"LINLEY'S LUCK."

"Marjorie and Clara have undertaken to have the things ready, and we can depend on them. As for altering our faces a bit, we must do what we can. After all, what's the good of belonging to an amateur dramatic society if you can't change the look of your chivvy?"

"Oh, we can do that!"

"Yes, rather. The wigs will do a lot towards it, and then a little rouge and chalk will make better complexions for us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The eyebrows can be darkened, and the mouths made smaller by shoving on some red, and whitening the corners," said Wharton. "We shall pass all right."

"Oh, I've no doubt of it! We—"

"Sh! There's somebody at the door!"

Wharton stepped quickly into the passage, and dragged Bunter into the study by the scruff of his neck.

"You young cad!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "You were listening."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I've a jolly good mind to lick you."

"I—I—I don't hear a word. I don't know that you're going over to Cliff House to-morrow immediately after dinner, or—"

"Ha, ha! You young ass! Get out!"

And Bunter got out

But Billy Bunter determined to be very much on the watch the next day, and when the chums of the Remove made a move, he meant to make a move, too. Bunter's thoughts generally ran on feeds, and he suspected that there was some great feast planned, from which he was to be excluded. And the very thought of that made Bunter warm with indignation.

The next morning it was plain enough that there was "something on," if anybody had taken the trouble to observe it.

The chums of the Remove discussed the afternoon's campaign in whispers, when they were together, and shut up if anybody else came by.

During morning lessons some of them earned lines by paying more attention to the scheme for japing Highcliffe than to their work.

When classes were over for the day, and the Remove poured out into the Close, Billy Bunter kept a watchful eye on the chums.

But he discovered nothing.

The juniors had their dinner, and immediately afterwards Harry Wharton & Co. prepared to go out. Wharton, and Nugent, and Linley, and Bob Cherry, Tom Brown, and Hazeldene, and Ogilvy, and Jones minor, met in the hall. They were joined by Morgan and Hurree Singh. It had not occurred to the juniors at first, but, of course, it did later, that the Nabob of Bhanipur would have to be left out. No amount of make-up would change his dusky complexion into that of an English girl. Morgan has been let into the secret, and he was to take Hurree Singh's place.

"Sorry you can't be in it, Inky," Harry Wharton remarked, as the group of juniors left the School House.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, also, on the part of my worthy self," remarked the Nabob.

"But there's one thing you can do, and that's keep an eye on Bunter. The fat young bounder is determined to nose the thing out if he can."

The Nabob grinned and nodded.

"I will keep an eyeful watch on the esteemed Bunter," he promised.

Billy Bunter followed the juniors across the Close, and came down to the gates with them. Hurree Singh linked arms with him.

"Are we to have the esteemed honour of your company in this little walk, my worthy fat chum?" he inquired affectionately.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Yes, I'm coming, Inky!"

"Then do me the esteemed honour to walk with me," said the Nabob. "I yearn for the honourable and august company of the excellent Bunter."

"Oh, all right!"

The chums of the Remove strode on at a rapid rate on the road. Bunter was a slow walker; and as long as he kept one of the party with him, he thought that it would be all right. He strolled on with Hurree Singh, while Harry Wharton & Co. were soon out of sight.

"Shall we take the esteemed short cut through the wood?" asked Hurree Singh.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "I hate walking just after dinner—it fags me. I know those chaps are going to Cliff House, you know. You're going there, ain't you?"

"Not at all, my worthy chum."

"But I heard Wharton say—"

"I am going to the village."

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"But—"

"Does the esteemed Bunter care to come with me?"

"Yes, rather!" said Billy Bunter, with emphasis. "I'm jolly well not going to lose sight of you, I can assure you of that!"

The Nabob chuckled. They took the short cut through the wood to the village, and arrived there, Bunter feeling somewhat fatigued. He hinted that it would be a good idea to take a brief rest in the village tuckshop, but the Nabob did not appear to see the hint.

"Is my esteemed chum tired?" he inquired.

"Yes, rather!" grunted Bunter.

"He would like a rest?"

"Yes."

"And something to drink?"

"Oh, rather!"

"There is a seat outside the inn, and a fountain where the cold water can be obtained in any quantity," said the Nabob gravely.

Bunter snorted.

"Look here, Inky—"

"I am sorry that I must now take leave of the esteemed Bunter."

"I—I say—"

But Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had begun to walk very fast, and it was impossible for the fat junior to keep up with him. Bunter broke into a run, but he soon stopped that. He halted, and shouted after the Nabob.

"Inky! I say Inky!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur did not turn his head.

"Inky! Come back, old chap. Stop, you black bounder!"

Hurree Singh chuckled, and walked on faster. Bunter sank down upon the bench outside the village inn to rest. He was boiling with indignation. Hurree Singh walked on fast, and as soon as he was out of sight of the fat junior he took the shortest cut for Cliff House.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Deep Disguise.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had arrived at Cliff House, and they found Marjorie and Clara ready for them. The two girls were smiling gleefully. The joke on the Highcliffe fellows was an excellent one, and it was a way out of their difficulty that they had never dreamed of. They welcomed the chums of the Remove eagerly.

"We mustn't say a word about it," said Marjorie—"at least, not till afterwards. Miss Primrose might not see the joke. But it is very funny."

"It's simply shrieking, the joke of the season," said Miss Clara.

"Are the things ready?" asked Harry.

"Yes. We have nine dresses ready for you."

"Good. Where are they?"

"In the shed," said Marjorie. "We placed them there for you to change. There are coats for you to put on, too, and you can do your making up there. We've engaged a brake from the Anchor, and it's to be here at half-past two. Will that be all right?"

"First-rate."

"That's plenty of time."

"There's a path through the shrubbery, from the shed down to the side gate," said Marjorie. "You can go out that way. You'll find us in the brake."

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors of Greyfriars made their way to the shed. They were chuckling gleefully over the enterprise. The more they went about it, the better they liked it.

Harry Wharton had brought over a bag containing the make-up necessary for the occasion. The juniors all belonged to the Amateur Dramatic Society of Greyfriars, and they had had some experience in this line. They had a great many "props," too, and Harry had obtained additions to the supply, on hire, from the costumier in Friardale.

The juniors had no doubt of their ability to make-up in a way that would completely blind the Highcliffe fellows.

In the shed, they found all was prepared. Marjorie had hired a number of ready-made dresses of a strong serge, and the nimble fingers of the Cliff House girls had made such alterations in them as were deemed requisite.

Harry Wharton closed the door, and they proceeded to change.

The chums of the Remove took off their outer garments, and donned the serge skirts and jerseys. Wharton had thoughtfully brought a huge supply of safety-pins, and they were needed. The appearance of the juniors, with boys' faces and close-cut hair, appearing over the girls' dresses, was curious enough. But that was only a beginning.

They pulled on the stockings, and then donned the football boots. Certainly their feet looked decidedly large for girls. But then, as Nugent remarked, footballing girls would

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have pretty, well-developed feet, and, besides, football boots were bound to look substantial.

Then the make-up commenced.

Wharton and Nugent and Tom Brown were the most skilful in that line, and they touched up each other's faces, and the faces of the rest.

The difference in their appearance was soon marvellous.

Wigs of long and curly hair, of various hues, were fastened on, and the hair looked very natural, and made a great alteration in their looks.

Then eyebrows were darkened, and eyelashes touched up, lips reddened, and cheeks made pinker.

By the time the make-up was finished, the juniors' nearest relations would not have known them, and it would have needed a very keen observer indeed to detect that they were not girls.

True, a close observation would have detected the rouge and the powder, but the natural assumption would have been that they were the kind of girls who assist Nature in her work of beautifying by one or two touches.

Harry Wharton surveyed his team with great admiration when the work was finished.

"Jolly good!" he exclaimed.

There was a tap at the door, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in. The nabob was looking a little dusty, but smiling cheerfully.

"My solitary hat!" he exclaimed. "It is rippingful."

"What do you think of us, Inky?"

"Amazeful."

"You think we shall take in the Highcliffe cads?"

"The thinkfulness is terrific."

"Good."

Harry Wharton looked at his watch.

"Time to get to the brake," he remarked. "We shall have to leave you behind, Inky. By the way, where is Bunter?"

"I left the esteemed fat Bunter resting his wearyful limbs on a bench in the village," he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He is not likely to reach the Cliff House in time to make any discoveries," said Hurree Singh. "I think he was somewhat tired, my worthy chums. We had a long and pleasant walkful stroll. I will come with you as far as the brake."

"Ready, my sons?"

"All ready."

"Then, come on."

And the team left the shed, and took the path through the shrubbery down to the gate. They left the grounds by the side gate into the lane. A brake was waiting there, with Marjorie and Clara sitting in it, and the driver in his seat. The driver glanced at the girls, but did not smile. It was evident that no suspicion crossed his mind. Marjorie and Clara gave a shriek.

"Oh, splendid!"

"Ripping!"

"Better put on your coats," said Marjorie.

With the girls' coats wrapped round them, the juniors looked more like girls than ever, as their sturdy proportions were more concealed. They took their places in the brake, and Hurree Singh stood in the road and waved his hand as the vehicle rolled away.

"Good luckfulness, my worthy chums," exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I hope to hear that you have lickfully beaten the esteemed rotters at Highcliffe."

"What-ho!" said Wharton.

"Good-bye, Inky."

The brake rolled away. The Nabob of Bhanipur strolled down the path towards the sea. A fat form came into sight, and bore down upon the Nabob of Bhanipur. It was Billy Bunter. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced round hurriedly; but the brake was out of sight, and he was relieved.

Billy Bunter halted, and blinked indignantly at the nabob. "You—you inky bounder!" he gasped. "So I've found you!"

"The appearfulness is such, my worthy chum."

"Where are the others?"

"They have gonefully departed."

"But where have they gone?"

"The esteemed Bunter may have the pleasure of finding out."

"But—but. I say—look here—"

But the Nabob of Bhanipur was walking away, and Billy Bunter was left to address his indignant inquiries to the desert air.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match.

MARJORIE & CO. were in high spirits as they drove along in the brake in the bright spring sunshine. The team that was going to meet Highcliffe was very different from the team Vavasour was expecting to meet. And the prospect was that the Highcliffians would experience the surprise of their lives. And that prospect made the Cliff House team smile.

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NEXT WEEK: "LINLEY'S LUCK."

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That the disguise was excellent, and would pass muster, was made evident by the fact that no suspicion was excited on the road.

The vicar of Friardale passed the brake, and it stopped while he spoke to Marjorie, and he glanced at the others without a suspicion.

People in the lane glanced at the brake, without any expression which hinted that they suspected things to be other than as they seemed.

And the spirits of the footballers rose higher.

They felt certain now that they would pass muster; and, once they had a chance of meeting Highcliffe at fair football, they had no doubt of the result.

Vavasour & Co. would begin the match with an airy confidence that would soon be replaced by quite another feeling.

"We shall be all right," Marjorie remarked, as Highcliffe came in sight. "You had better let me do all the talking—as is only proper, as I am captain."

"Of course."

"If you have to speak, you must make your voices high-pitched."

"I will talk for you," said Miss Clara. "Marjorie always says that I do enough talking for three or four."

"Oh, Clara!"

"Well, so you do, Marjorie, and I dare say it's true. Here we are."

The brake rolled in at the open gates of Highcliffe.

Several fellows were standing about, evidently watching for the arrival of the Cliff House team, and they raised their caps and smiled.

There was not a single glance of suspicion.

The general feeling seemed to be one of amusement.

The idea of a girls' team coming over to play Vavasour's eleven struck the Highcliffe fellows as funny.

Vavasour, with a wide smile upon his face, came to welcome the team.

He helped Marjorie to alight from the brake, but the others jumped down without assistance.

"So you've come," said Vavasour.

"Certainly," said Marjorie. "We arranged to come, didn't we?"

Vavasour laughed.

"Yes; but I thought something might turn up to prevent you, you know."

"Oh, not at all."



A Splendid Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"You see, we hardly took you seriously," said Vavasour, with that insufferable air of condescending patronage that made Marjorie long to shake him. "Girls can't play footer."

"Of course, they can't," said Hilton.

"Rats!" said Miss Clara warmly. "We're jolly well going to lick you, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we're ready to be licked," said Vavasour, with a laugh. "Here, I'll show you into your dressing-room. Kick-off at three. You'll be ready."

"Quite."

The girls went into the pavilion.

A general chuckle from the Highcliffe fellows followed them.

Highcliffe anticipated fun. And fun was coming, though not exactly of the kind that the Highcliffians anticipated.

The home team were already in their football garb, ready to begin. The Cliff House team had no changing to do.

Round the field a big crowd was gathering.

The match was an unusual one, and it excited great interest at Highcliffe. Fellows of all Forms were turning up to see it.

Vavasour and his team went out into the field, and laughed in response to the general chuckle that greeted them.

"My hat! It will be funny," said Byng. "The funniest thing of the season. The girls seem to be pretty confident about it, too."

"Ha, ha!"

"The only thing I'm sorry for is Wharton and his friends not being here," said Vavasour.

"I should awfully like them to see the fun."

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I suppose they will hear about it," grinned Hilton.

"The Cliff House team will go home with a tale of woe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They will explain to the sympathetic Greyfriars chaps that football is really a rougher game than tennis or croquet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that the Highcliffe fellows are dreadfully rough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here they come!"

Marjorie & Co. were coming out of the pavilion.

All the Highcliffe crowd looked very curiously at them as they came out. They were not exactly as the fellows had expected to see them. There was very little feminine delicacy about most of them.

A running fire of comments from the crowd greeted their appearance in the field.

"My hat! There are a couple of pretty ones, but the others—"

"Look at their feet!"

"And their waists!"

"Enormous!"

"And their ohivvies!"

"Phew! That one's got powder on!"

"And that one has painted her face!"

"Phew! Nice, isn't it, at fifteen or so?"

"Nice crowd, I must say!"

"And look at their fists! Did you ever see girls with hands that size?"

"My hat! What a team!"

"They may be able to play footer, but they wouldn't take prizes in a beauty show."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the remarks reached the ears of the Cliff House team, but only made them smile. Harry Wharton & Co. were not touchy on the point of their personal beauty.

Besides, they expected to make rather masculine-looking girls.

The chief point was, that they were not recognised or even suspected, and that the Highcliffe crowd had not the faintest idea of the real state of things.

And that was enough for the Greyfriars juniors.

Vavasour tossed with Marjorie for choice of goals.

Marjorie lost the toss, and Vavasour chose the goal from which the wind was blowing, placing his own team at an advantage to begin with. The teams lined up, and Marjorie went into goal, and Miss Clara took the position of left back.

With the Greyfriars juniors between them and the enemy, the Cliff House girls were not likely to get any of the rough handling Vavasour intended for them.

The disguised juniors took the places they were accustomed to take in playing, in their own proper persons, for Greyfriars.

A senior of Highcliffe was refereeing the match. He blew the whistle, and Harry Wharton kicked off.

The Highcliffe fellows lounged round the ball.

They did not suppose for a moment that any exertion on their part was required, and they were content to walk through the match, so to speak.

But a change came o'er the spirit of their dream

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The Cliff House forwards followed up the kick off with a rush into the home half, and Wharton was on the ball all the time.

He drove it down the field with a tremendous kick, and the forwards followed it with a rush that scattered the Highcliffe defence.

Right through Highcliffe the attackers rushed, and the ball was brought right up to goal. The goalkeeper stared dazedly. He hadn't expected anything of this sort, and he was far from being ready for the attack, or capable of dealing with it if he had been ready.

The ball flew in from Mark Linley's foot, and found a lodging in the net.

There was a surprised gasp from the crowd.

"Goal!"

Marjorie clapped her hands ecstatically in her own goal.

"Goal! Goal!" she cried.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "Goal!"

Vavasour & Co. looked simply aghast.

How the goal had been taken they hardly knew; but it certainly had been taken, and there it was—one up for the visitors.

"My word!" muttered Vavasour. "I—I don't know what to make of this!"

"Blessed if I do, either!" grunted Hilton. "They seem to know how to play footer, after all, Vav."

"Well, we weren't prepared for anything of the sort. We really let them take that goal."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"We shall have to look out," said Byng.

"Play up, hard," said Vavasour. "And look here, don't mind being a bit rough. They can't expect chaps to play footer with kid gloves on, even if they are girls. If they don't like a little roughness, they should keep out of a game like football."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Then go it!"

The sides lined up again. The Highcliffe fellows were looking very spiteful. They did not mean to allow another goal to be taken if they could help it. The Cliff House team grinned at one another.

The fun was beginning!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like Football.

VAVASOUR & Co. meant business this time!

They kicked off, and then followed some hard play; and the Highcliffe fellows played as hard as they knew how.

But they found their opponents unexpectedly tough.

The natural supposition was, that when a fellow charged a girl roughly, the girl would fall down, or, at least, lose her head and begin to shriek. But nothing of the sort happened.

Vavasour rushed at the Cliff House centre-forward, who was on the ball, in a desperate attempt to charge her off it.

But the forward stood the shock like a rook, and Vavasour reeled back and crashed to the ground himself, lying there for several moments in a dazed state.

And then, in a scuffle for the ball at close quarters, Hilton grasped one of the Cliff House halves, forgetting the rules in his bad temper and excitement, and endeavoured to wrench her aside.

To his amazement, the half laid a grasp on him in return that seemed like iron, and he was lifted off his feet and sent whirling away.

He joined Vavasour on the ground.

Several more little incidents like this occurred, and it dawned upon the Highcliffe team that if rough play was to be the order of the day, the Cliff House side could give as good as they got.

And in fact, as soon as it was made manifest that the Highcliffians meant to play with intentional roughness, the Cliff House team took up the gauntlet, and began to indulge in heavy charging and shoving, themselves.

And the last state of the Highcliffe team was worse than its first.

For the disguised juniors were ahead of them in every way—in physical strength as much as in skill in the noble game of football.

The Highcliffe forwards toiled after the ball in vain.

They sometimes had possession of it, but they seldom succeeded in getting it near the visitors' goal.

Once only came a chance in the first half for a shot, and then Vavasour sent in the ball with a really good kick.

But Marjorie Hazeldene, in goal, was on the alert.

She fisted out the ball, and Clara cleared it, and then the forwards were upon it again, and it was taken out to mid-field.

The chance did not return to Highcliffe.

The visitors kept them too busy defending for them to have much time for attacking.

Highcliffe had their hands full, and they realised it. And hard shoves and sly kicks were returned with so much interest that Vavasour & Co. dropped that game at last.

In every way the girls seemed more than their match, even at rough play.

The crowd looked on in amazement.

Their sympathies were all with the home team, and all of them were conscious of how ridiculous it would be for Highcliffe to be beaten by a team of girls.

But even so, they could not restrain a cheer at times when some fine bit of play on the part of the visitors caught their attention.

Another goal was added to the Cliff House score, and then, just before the whistle went for half-time, a third.

At half-time Highcliffe had not scored a single goal. Cliff House were three to nil. The girls walked off the field laughing.

Highcliffe did not feel like laughing. They were puzzled, savagely angry, and very much fagged. Some of them had hardly a run left in their legs when the welcome whistle brought them a spell of rest.

Of the two teams, the most casual observer could have seen that the Cliff House side were the fresher, and in better form in every way. Even Vavasour could not blink the obvious facts of the case.

"We're jolly well done," said Hilton despondently. "Who on earth would have expected girls to play footer in this way?"

Vavasour shook his head.

"Blessed if I can understand it," he said. "No wonder Marjorie Hazeldene wouldn't scratch the match, when she had a team in form like this!"

"I simply can't get on to it!" said Hilton, as he ruefully sucked a lemon. "Most of the girls, too, are strangers to me. I don't remember having seen them among the Cliff House crowd, at church, or anywhere."

"Nor I!"

"Well, I suppose Marjorie Hazeldene has roped in recruits from all quarters, all the girls she knew who could play footer," said Vavasour thoughtfully.

"By George! She has succeeded, too!" said Byng. "Look here, it jolly well looks to me as if we shall be licked!"

"Well, three goals to nil in the first half does look like it, doesn't it?" said Vavasour, with a shrug of the shoulders. "And the wind will be against us when we change ends."

"We haven't a look in, and that's a fact."

"What a set of giddy asses we shall look, if we let the girls beat us!" said Vavasour restlessly. "I wish we had never accepted the challenge, now."

"It's rather late in the day to wish that."

"I suppose there's no excuse we could work up for abandoning the match?" Hilton suggested.

"It's no good making any bones about the matter, you know. We're booked for a licking, and if we can get out of it, we must."

"What excuse is there?"

"That's what I was asking."

Vavasour shook his head hopelessly.

He would have been glad enough of any excuse, the smallest and slightest, of getting out of the match without finishing it. But there was none. The game had to be played out to the bitter end; and bitter enough it was likely to be for the Highcliffe fellows.

Vavasour groaned in spirit at the thought of the endless chipping he and his team would be subjected to for having been beaten by a team of girls.

And the worst of it was, that they had taken on the match in such an airy way, with the declared determination of making the Cliff House girls look ridiculous.

The ridicule was on the other side now, with a vengeance!

While the Highcliffe fellows were despondently discussing the situation, the Cliff House team were chuckling gleefully.

The scheme had worked like a charm.

No suspicion had been excited, and the Highcliffe fellows were being licked to the wide. The disguised juniors had cause for satisfaction.

"That will be a come down for Vavasour & Co.," grinned Bob Cherry. "I say, Frank, some of your complexion is coming off."

"My face is damp," grinned Nugent. "Give me another touch up, Harry, old man. You've got the stuff with you."

"Yes, rather! Here you are!"

Most of the juniors looked as if they would be a little better for a touch up, the perspiration having had some effect upon their complexion. Harry was busy for some minutes. He was touching up his own face before the glass, when a well-known voice was heard in the pavilion.

"Are the Greyfriars chaps here?"

Wharton's heart almost stood still for a moment.

It was Billy Bunter's voice.

The fat junior had tracked them down.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 109.

NEXT WEEK: "LINLEY'S LUCK."

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"My only hat!" breathed Bob Cherry. "It's Bunter!"

"The young rotter! How did he get here?"

Wharton went out quickly. Bunter was there, and it was necessary to shut him up before he could blab out awkward information to the Highcliffe fellows.

Bunter was standing in front of the pavilion. His fat face was covered with perspiration, and his clothes and boots were dusty. He had evidently walked from Pegg to Highcliffe, and the walk was a long one, and it had fagged the fat junior. He had arrived on the ground just as the first half of the football match finished.

"What do you want here?" asked Harry, disguising his voice as well as he could.

Bunter blinked at the girl, as he supposed Harry to be.

"I'm looking for some chums of mine," he said. "I lost them over at Cliff House. Do you belong to the Cliff House team?"

"Yes."

"Good! Have you seen Harry Wharton and the rest? I lost them at Cliff House, owing to a trick played on me by an inky bounder; but I guessed they might have come over to Highcliffe to see the match here, so I walked over. I'm jolly tired!"

"You'd better buzz off again!"

"But isn't Wharton here? I——"

Billy Bunter stopped suddenly.

He had shared the same study with Harry Wharton at Greyfriars for a good time, and he was familiar with his features, and with every tone of his voice. Something in the supposed girl had struck the fat junior.

He blinked at Harry Wharton with wide, open eyes behind his big spectacles.

"Why—why—who—what——?"

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Quiet, you ass!" he muttered.

"Why, Wharton, what——"

"Not a word!"

Billy Bunter gasped helplessly, like an expiring fish. He could not remove his eyes from Wharton's face. Some of the other juniors came out, seeing what was on, and a group of the supposed girls, surrounded Billy Bunter, keeping the amazed junior screened from the observation of the Highcliffe fellows.

Bob Cherry grasped him by the shoulder.

"Quiet, Bunter!"

"Not a word, you ass!"

"M-m-m-my hat!"

"Shut up!"

"Is it—is it a jape?" whispered Bunter, in a tremulous whisper.

"Yes, you young sweep! What have you come poking round here for?" demanded Harry Wharton, in angry, muttered tones. "Why couldn't you keep off the grass?"

"I—I didn't know!"

"Well, you know now. Keep your mouth shut!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the disguised juniors in blank astonishment, but a glimmer of intelligence was appearing in his eyes.

He recognised Marjorie and Clara, and it dawned upon him that the rest of the Cliff House team were the chums of the Remove in disguise.

He comprehended now what was the plot that had been so carefully kept from him.

"My word," he said, "fancy that! You might have trusted me. You know the kind of fellow I am at keeping a secret."

"Yes, we do!" growled Bob Cherry. "That's why we didn't tell you."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Will you keep your silly head shut?"

"Oh, really Wharton——"

"If you give us away you'll get the biggest licking you ever had in your life," said Harry, in a fierce whisper.

Billy Bunter looked at him indignantly.

"I'm not likely to give a chum away, I hope, Wharton, especially a fellow I like. You can depend on me not to say a word, of course."

Wharton eyed him doubtfully. He had very little faith in the discretion of William George Bunter.

"Well, mind you don't," he said.

"It's a jolly good wheeze," said Bunter. "I hope you'll lick the Highcliffe chaps. I thought you fellows might be here to look on, you know, and I came over, as I supposed there would be a feed. I'm hungry."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"The Highcliffe chaps are in the field," said Miss Clara.

"The referee is looking over here."

"Time we were on the ground."

"Hold on a minute," said Billy Bunter. "I suppose that

the Highcliffe chaps would scratch the match now, if they discovered the facts."

"I suppose so!" growled Wharton. "And they'd be jolly glad of an excuse to escape a licking, too. But they can't discover anything, unless you tell them, and if you do we'll skin you afterwards at Greyfriars."

"I'm not likely to tell them anything, Wharton," said Bunter, with dignity. "The only thing is, I feel so faint, that there's no knowing what I might say. Do you know, there's a tuck-shop down the road, a short walk from here."

"I don't care if there is."

"Well, I think I ought to have a snack, or I may be ill, you know. I have a very delicate constitution, and I can only keep it up by taking constant nourishment. I have a postal-order coming to-morrow—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"It will be for ten shillings," said Bunter grimly. "Now, I was thinking that you fellows might like to cash it in advance, between you, and let me have the money now."

"Rats!"

"You see, I must have something to eat, or I may faint. If I have to borrow it of the Highcliffe chaps, I may blurt out something about you fellows by accident, and then they will be on the track."

"You young cad!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to call me names, just because I'm hungry. How would you like me to expire at your feet?" asked Billy Bunter pathetically.

"Awfully!" said Wharton. "But you won't do anything half so obliging, so there's no need to talk of it. Have you chaps got any money?"

"I'd rather punch his fat head!" growled Nugent wrathfully.

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Oh, I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!"

"Yes, but—"

"I'll find the tin," said Wharton, "and you can go down to the tuck-shop and gorge. Don't come back here, or you'll get a licking."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Dry up!"

Wharton had some money in his coat-pocket, and he went into the dressing-room to fetch it. It was more than time to commence the second half, and the Highcliffe fellows were getting curious and impatient. The referee came over to the group as Wharton came out of the pavilion.

"All right," said Harry, "we're coming!"

He pressed the money into Bunter's hand.

"Now cut off, Billy!"

"Hold on a tick! I say—"

Wharton turned round wrathfully. He was afraid every moment that Billy Bunter would blurt out something that would give the whole show away.

"Well, what is it?" he whispered fiercely.

"About this loan—"

"Well, quick! They're waiting for me."

"It's just barely possible that my postal-order may not come in the morning," said Billy Bunter hastily. "If it doesn't—"

"Oh, buzz off, confound you!"

"Yes, but it's better to be business-like. We ought to settle this. On second thoughts, will you have this back out of my postal-order, or shall I put it down to the account?"

Harry Wharton did not reply in words. He reached out, and gave the fat junior a box on the ear that made him sit down suddenly. Then he ran after the others into the field.

There was a buzz of surprise from the spectators, who saw the supposed girl box Bunter's ears, and Harry, who had forgotten for the moment that he was a girl, coloured as he joined the footballers.

Billy Bunter sat dazed for a moment. In his fall some of the shillings had escaped from his hand, and rolled on the ground.

He blinked, and groped after them discontentedly.

"The beast!" he muttered. "Just because I wanted to be businesslike. The beast! This is how a fellow gets treated for having strict notions of honesty and regularity in money matters."

And Billy Bunter gathered up his shillings, and drifted disconsolately away, and never smiled again—till he was in the tuck-shop, and then he smiled broadly over well-filled plates.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Eight to Nil.

PHIP! rang the whistle, and the ball was kicked off for the second half of that peculiar football-match.

The Cliff House team were looking very fresh after the brief rest, but the same could not be said for Vavasour & Co.

The gruelling they had had in the first half had told on them, and there were very few of the Highcliffe eleven that had any freshness left.

Several of them did not seem to have a run in their legs at all, and played through the second half a great deal as if they had been skittles.

The Greyfriars juniors were entering into the spirit of the thing now.

Victory was in their hands, and they were not disposed to spare the enemy. For a good team struggling against adversity they could have felt keenly; but for a team of cads, who had wished to take a mean advantage of the girls, and who had actually tried to play roughly against a feminine eleven, they had no pity.

Vavasour & Co. were "in" for it.

With hair streaming in the wind, as it escaped from its fastenings—for the juniors naturally were not accustomed to having their hair done up—and with skirts flying as they ran, the disguised juniors threw themselves into the game.

They rushed Highcliffe all over the field, till the unfortunate defenders hardly knew whether they were standing on their heads or their heels.

Vavasour, early in the second half, gave up all hope of attempting to equalise, and packed his goal to defend, with the sole idea of reducing the margin of goals by which the Cliff House team would beat him.

But even in that the unfortunate junior captain of Highcliffe was not destined to have any success.

In the visitors' goal, Marjorie Hazeldene kept a useless watch and ward; ever since the whistle had gone for the second half, she had had nothing to do. Not once had the ball been anywhere near the Cliff House citadel.

The struggle was all in midfield or in the home half; and most of the time it was just in front of the home goal.

The Highcliffians exerted themselves to keep their goal intact, but their exertions were in vain.

In the first ten minutes the Cliff House forwards slammed the ball in, and it was slammed in again and again.

Six goals to nil!

And twenty minutes more to play. Vavasour & Co. were utterly knocked out. Some of them were simply standing about the field, without a run left; the others defended feebly, and prayed inwardly for the whistle.

The spectators were laughing.

Although it wasn't pleasant to any Highcliffe fellow to see Vavasour & Co. licked by a team of girls, the comic aspect of the matter appealed to all irresistibly.

The utterly absurd figures cut by the one time self-sufficient, boastful Highcliffe team would have provoked a misanthrope to merriment.

Another goal! Seven to nil!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A shout of laughter greeted it—a shout that stung Vavasour & Co. into one more effort. They made a struggle to get possession of the ball, and to get away with it, but it was only a flash in the pan. The Cliff House team soon put "paid" to it, and the home team were driven back to defend their own goal. Their defence was more feeble than ever. Again the leather went in, and lodged in the net. The goalkeeper was nowhere against the Cliff House shooting.

How many goals the visitors would have taken if the match had lasted a half-hour longer it is difficult to say. Fortunately for the pride of Highcliffe, the whistle went then, and the match terminated with the visitors victors by eight goals to nil!

Eight to nil.

The "girls" smiled as they walked off the field. The crowd did more than smile. They yelled with laughter.

Vavasour & Co. fairly crawled away. They were stiff and aching from their unaccustomed exertions. The match which was to have been a joke and a walk-over had turned out the toughest in their experience—tougher, in fact, than anything they had ever gone through before. And the licking had been so sound, so complete, that there was no explaining it away. They were beaten to the wide—thoroughly licked, and there was not a word to be said on the subject. But Vavasour & Co. were not inclined to say anything, indeed, just then. They wanted to sit down and rest, and pour forth gallons of embrocation, and gasp for breath. That was their cheerful occupation for some time after the match.

The Cliff House party, in gleeful triumph, donned their coats and mounted into their brake. They did not feel inclined to linger at Highcliffe after the match; as soon as they were clear of the field, they departed.

As the brake rolled down the road, they burst into a yell of laughter that rang far and wide over the countryside.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes, and wiping away some of his complexion at the same time.

"Did you ever—"

"Never!" sobbed Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it was ripping!" said Hazeldene. "The biggest joke of the season, though Bunter nearly spoiled it. Hallo! Here he is!"

Bunter was standing in the road, waving his hand to the brake. Wharton signed to the driver to stop, and the fat junior clambered in. Billy Bunter was looking fat and contented, and there was a smear of jam on his mouth.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You young sweep!" said Wharton. "You nearly spoiled it all. You ought to have a licking. If you say a word we'll chuck you out of the brake!"

Bunter's mouth opened, but he closed it again. He did not want to have to walk home, and so he did not say a word. He sat in the brake and munched toffee.

It was a happy party that drove up to Cliff House. Marjorie and Clara were in high glee. They had beaten Highcliffe, and the vainglory of Vavasour & Co. had received a check it would probably never recover from.

From the date of that match, the Highcliffe fellows would have to hide their diminished heads, and in case of any boastfulness on the part of Vavasour & Co., it would only be necessary to whisper the word "Football."

"It's been ripping fun," exclaimed Clara, as Cliff House came in sight. "And it was awfully good of you fellows to stand by us like this and get us out of a difficulty."

"Awfully good!" said Marjorie softly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It was ripping fun," he said. "I wouldn't have missed it for worlds! Hallo, Inky!" The Nabob of Bhanipur came up as the brake stopped. "It's all right, my son! Eight goals to nil!"

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"The allrightfulness is terrific," grinned the nabob. "The esteemed Vavasour will have to sing smaller with his diminished head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors changed their clothes in the shed, and removed their make-up. They stopped to tea at Cliff House, without Miss Penelope Primrose having the faintest idea that her boyish guests had lately been playing a football match in feminine attire. That secret was kept; and at Greyfriars the chums of the Remove chuckled over it among themselves, but said never a word to anyone else.

Not a word—except from Billy Bunter. Bunter, of course, kept his promise of secrecy as he usually kept promises—and he related the story to everyone who would listen. But Bunter's reputation as a yarn merchant was too well known, and he found no one to believe him, and Harry Wharton & Co. maintained a discreet silence on the subject. And so Highcliffe never knew the real identity of the "girls" who had licked them so soundly on the football field.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled: "Linley's Luck," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

The First Chapters of a New Serial.



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having just returned from Egypt, after clearing up the case of the King's Messenger, is walking along the Thames Embankment at midnight, when he hears a cry and a splash.

Pulling off his overcoat and boots, he at once plunges into the chilly water, and swims towards where he hears a faint, splashing about the centre of the river.

An Exciting Swim—Attempted Murder—The gleaming Eyes.

Stanley Dare thought nothing of his own danger, for, with a strong ebb tide running on a dark and foggy night, he ran the risk of being dashed against some obstacle, such as the stone buttress of a bridge or an anchored barge, and being so hurt, and possibly stunned, that he would go under—never to rise again.

There was a human life to save, that was enough for him!

By the time he reached what he supposed must be the middle of the river, the tide swept him under the central archway of Waterloo Bridge, so close to one of the buttresses that he touched it with one of his elbows.

"That was a narrow shave!" he murmured. "I must swim more cautiously."

He knew that sound was carried a long distance on the surface of the water, so he stopped swimming altogether, and turning on his back, floated, with his head just enough raised to prevent the water rushing to his ears.

Confused and indistinctly, but nevertheless unmistakable, it came to him as he floated, listening with strained attention. A faint splashing again, as of someone feebly beating the water with his hands, and mingling with it a sobbing moan, the last despairing expression of one who has abandoned all hope of aid. It was not far away.

He struck out again, and a few minutes later his right foot touched some object that was just beneath the surface.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"LINLEY'S LUCK."

He turned and dived for it, and his fingers gripped some portion of a man's clothing; then with a desperate effort he brought the body to the surface.

It was not till he scrambled on shore, thoroughly exhausted, that he saw clearly the face of the person he had rescued. He was a young fellow of about Dare's own age, with good-looking, clear-cut features, although now they were grey with the hue of death.

But he was not dead. The young detective could distinguish a faint pulsation of the heart, and he set to work to do his best to restore circulation. After half an hour's exertion, which fairly made him perspire, despite the coldness of the night, and which therefore was of direct benefit to himself, he had the satisfaction of bringing him round.

"Where am I?" gasped the rescued youth. "What has happened?"

"I'll tell you all I know later on," said Stanley Dare briskly. "Now that I'm sure you are alive, I'll find out a place where we can get some hot coffee and dry clothes."

The tide had carried them below Blackfriars Bridge, and as Dare, carrying his companion, emerged into the thoroughfare known as Bankside, he struck off to the right, then took the first turning to the left, and finally stopped before the door of a small inn which bore the sign of the Dolphin.

After hammering for several minutes at the door, which did not possess a knocker, a window above was opened, and a round, red face was thrust out.

"What's all the row about?" demanded the owner of the red face.

A Splendid Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars,
By FRANK RICHARDS

Dare explained the situation briefly, at the same time informing the landlord who he was.

"Mr. Dare—the young detective!" exclaimed the landlord. "That's good enough for me. Bob Duckett ain't the man that'd be likely to refuse you admittance, under any circumstances. You can tell me all that's happened afterwards, if it so be that you're disposed to do so."

The head disappeared, and the window was closed, and about three minutes later the street door was flung open.

"This way, lad, this way!" exclaimed Bob Duckett. "Good Lord, what a night to have to swim for your life in the river! I'll soon have a fire going. It ain't quite out, I reckon, for I was a bit late going to bed."

The genial landlord, who had a great liking for Stanley Dare, although he was by no means partial to the Scotland Yard men, hurried through into the kitchen at the back of the house, and, true to his word, very soon had a roaring fire, which blazed up cheerfully.

"Strip off your wet clothes," he cried, "and I'll fetch down a couple of blankets to wrap round you."

All his movements were brisk and full of life, although he was as round as a tub, and would have turned the scale at fourteen stone.

In far less time than it takes to tell, he had some excellent coffee, and laid out a supper on the table which gave Dare an appetite simply to look at.

Cold fowl and ham, pickles, the whitest of bread, biscuits, cheese, and butter that looked as if it had come fresh that evening from a farmhouse, were the principal ingredients of that repast. While it was being prepared, Dare had an opportunity of learning something about the young fellow he had rescued.

"How to thank you—to repay you for your gallantry in saving my life, I don't know," he said. "But one thing is certain, you have a right to know all that I can tell you about the attempt to murder me, which ended in my being flung from Hungerford foot-bridge into the Thames."

"An attempt at murder!" echoed Stanley Dare. "I was right, then, when I put it down to foul play, and not an accident or an attempt at suicide."

"Certainly not the latter with me," smiled the young stranger. "To begin with, I must tell you that my name is Tom Winfield, that I hail from Launceston, Tasmania, and that I am on a short visit to England. I sail on my return voyage to Tasmania on Thursday next on board the Valetta. You will hardly, perhaps, credit me when I tell you that my life has been attempted three times—twice in the Colonies, and the attempt to-night here—and yet my assailant is quite unknown to me, and I am utterly at a loss to understand what motive he, or any man, can have for wishing to kill me."

"I quite credit all you say," replied Dare, "for in the course of my business I hear many strange things. I am a private detective."

"A detective! But you surely can't be twenty years of age yet!"

"None the wuss for that," put in the landlord. "And if you want my decided opinion, I can tell you that there ain't another detective in England, private or professional, old or young, that is Stanley Dare's equal, unless indeed it be Sexton Blake."

"Stanley Dare!" exclaimed Winfield, gazing at him in mingled wonder and admiration. "I have heard your name even out in the Colonies, and I have read in the papers some account of your adventures. Oh, if I could only persuade you to come out to Tasmania with me, I should believe that there was some chance of this terrible mystery which hangs over me being cleared up! Life will soon become unendurable if these attempts at murder by an unknown assailant are continued."

"You speak of him as an unknown assailant," said Dare. "You mean that he is a stranger to you, that you have never to your knowledge seen him before the first attempt?"

"No. What I mean is, that I have never seen his face. On the first two attempts he was masked, but to-night he stole up behind me and struck me down before I was aware of his presence. I staggered to my feet and attempted to call out for help, but he put his hand over my mouth. I struggled to free myself from his grip, but I was half stunned from the blow he had given me; and as he was still behind me, he had a double advantage. Then, suddenly, he ended the matter by lifting me bodily in his arms and flinging me over the rail into the river."

"What is your weight?" asked Dare.

Winfield was evidently surprised at the abrupt query, but he replied that he was about ten stone six.

"He must have been a fairly muscular man to have lifted you up and thrown you from the bridge," said Dare.

"Judging by the way in which he gripped me he is very strong."

"You say that your life was twice attempted in Tasmania," pursued the young detective. "We may assume

that in those two cases it was by the same man; but there is nothing to show that it was he that made this third attempt. It may have been an ordinary attempt at robbery with violence; not at all uncommon in London, I can assure you, on dark and foggy nights like this."

"I am sure it was the same man," replied Winfield.

"Why?"

"For this reason. My assailant is evidently particularly fond of a certain kind of scent—wood-violets. On each occasion I have detected it. To-night a whiff of the perfume came to me at the very moment I was struck down. It is not to be supposed that if I was attacked by a different man to-night that he, too, would have a partiality for wood-violets. Such a coincidence would be too improbable."

"Well reasoned out, young sir!" exclaimed the landlord. "But you can talk and eat as well. Come and have some supper."

"You are quite right Winfield," said Dare, as they seated themselves at the table, and attacked the viands placed before them. "That wood-violet scent, recurring as it has done, is a most important clue. The would-be assassin must, then, have followed you to England, which is conclusive proof that he means to leave no methods untried to kill you. He must be a man of unusually determined character, and his reasons for wanting to put you out of the way more than usually potent ones. He must have known that you were returning to the Colonies, and yet he followed you to England. That would seem to suggest a time limit beyond which it would be useless to interfere with you. How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty in three months' time."

"Will you inherit any property then?"

"Not that I'm aware of," replied Winfield. "So far as I know I am already in possession of all the property that I am ever likely to have, except such as I may obtain by my own unaided work."

"Well, I must confess that at present the whole affair appears mysterious to the last degree," said Dare; "but then, of course, if I was investigating the case, I should hope to make discoveries that would fit one to the other as pieces of a puzzle do. One clue there is to work on, the wood-violets. Many thousands of persons, of course, use the scent, but when a man uses it, it would seem to betoken a refined taste."

"A murderer with a refined taste!" cried Winfield.

"In some matters," answered Dare, "cases have been known, as any detective will tell you. It does not, of course, follow as a certainty that a man may have a refined taste because he uses a delicate scent, but it is a conclusion which must be taken into consideration."

"Yes, I understand—"

Tom Winfield stopped abruptly, and then uttered a sharp cry of alarm, at the same time pointing to the window.

The blind was partly drawn up, and as Stanley Dare swung round he caught a glimpse of a pair of gleaming eyes at one of the lower panes of the window. They had vanished the next instant, but the young detective was just able to make out that all the face—the eyes excepted—was covered in some black, soft substance, which gave a most startling and uncanny effect.

Dare leaped to the window and flung it open, forgetting for the moment that it was impossible for him to go in chase of the mysterious watcher, as his only garment at the time was the blanket which the landlord had lent him.

He leaned far out of the window, Winfield by his side, but the man had vanished in the darkness and fog. Bob Duckett, the landlord, had rushed to the back door, and so into the yard in the rear of the premises; but all search was unavailing.

Tom Winfield, whose nerves had been very much shaken by his recent terrible experiences, was pale as a ghost.

"It must be the man who is hounding me down," he cried excitedly, "who will shadow me until he has succeeded in his murderous design. I cannot be on guard for ever against an enemy whose face I have never seen. He might even be a fellow-passenger with me on board the Valetta, possibly sharing my cabin, and I should have no idea of it. And I already know that it is quite useless to appeal to the police, for I can give them no more definite information than I have given you. I am surely doomed, as though my—"

"Come, come!" said Dare, interrupting him. "You must not give way like that! There is a dark and sinister plot against your life, and possibly there is more than one man concerned in it. But you must face the situation bravely. Or, better still, we will face it together, if you are willing. The case interests me in a remarkable degree."

"Do you mean that you will come over with me to Tasmania?" cried Winfield delightedly. "That you will investigate the case on my behalf? It seems too good to be true. I have a few hundred pounds in the bank, and I am in receipt of a fairly good income from my appointment in

the Woods and Forests Department; so that if you will let me know your fees—"

"Aren't we getting on a little too fast, now?" said Dare, smiling. "We will leave the question of fees until later. Payments by results, I think, would be a good plan. I have been working hard lately, and feel that I want a holiday. The voyage will be the holiday, and a very good one, too. Work will recommence the moment I set foot on shore in Tasmania. The solution of the mystery can only be arrived at out there. And now, I think, if Mr. Duckett can provide us with beds, a few hours sleep will do us both good."

"Bob Duckett," said the landlord, "will provide you with anything his house contains. And he hopes if you come back safely that you'll give him a look-up on your return."

On the following Thursday the Valetta sailed for Melbourne, carrying Stanley Dare and Tom Winfield among her passengers.

A Surprise — Professor MacAndrew Turns Up — At the International Hotel, Launceston, Tasmania—A Midnight Visitor.

"Great Scott, it's the professor!"

These were the first words uttered by Stanley Dare as he stepped from the gangway of the Melbourne steamer on to the quay at Launceston, Tasmania.

It was not often that the young detective was astonished, but here was cause for some astonishment. Waiting to welcome him, with hand outstretched—which Dare was not slow to grasp—was Professor Seth MacAndrew. He stood there as calm and serene as though Launceston were his home, and the greater part of his life had been spent there.

"I was expecting ye yesterday, laddie," said MacAndrew, as though Dare were simply paying him a visit somewhere a few miles out of London, "and I've secured rooms for your friend and yourself at the International Hotel in Brisbane Street. Lunch'll be ready at two o'clock—"

"Hold on a bit, professor!" exclaimed Dare, laughing. "Let us straighten things out a little. How on earth did you get here? I thought you were back in London. You were on your way back from Rome when I wrote to you."

"Ay, that's so," replied MacAndrew. "I received your letter in Florence, and as I thocht I would like a bit of a change myself, I juist turned back on ma tracks, went to Brindisi, crossed to Alexandria by the mail-boat, went on tae Suez by the train, and caught the P. and O. boat there, that was juist leaving with the Australian mails. I was a week ahead of ye, laddie, ye see."

"I know of no one that I should be better pleased to meet here than you, Mac," said Dare. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Winfield. We have talked about you more than once during the voyage, and Winfield knows the great assistance you have always been to me in any cases that we have worked out together. Of course, you are going to take a hand in unravelling this mystery, and our chances of success are increased fifty per cent. by that fact alone."

"I canna leesten to such gross flattery," exclaimed the professor, although he was evidently well pleased with the compliment. "Ye came straight oot by sea all the way from London to Melbourne, isna that sae?"

"Yes," replied Dare. "At Melbourne we transferred to the Tamar, the local boat, and crossed over here. We've been thirty-seven days on the whole voyage."

"Ay, ay; thirty-seven days. If ye'd come oot via Brindisi ye'd hae done it in thirty-three."

"Possibly. But Winfield had his return passage booked by the Valetta."

"Exactly! Ye gave me an account of the case sae far as it went in your letter, I was thinking it might have been advisable for ye to have come oot by the short route. Jump in, and we'll drive tae the hotel; your light luggage is in the trap. Lunch will be waiting, and I've the appetite of a stock-rider."

It was not until lunch was disposed of, and the trio were seated comfortably in the smoking-room of the hotel, which they had to themselves, that the subject which was uppermost in all their minds was broached again.

"Why should you have suggested, professor, that it would have been advisable for us to have come out by the shorter route?" asked Tom Winfield.

"Weel, it's juist this way," replied MacAndrew. "Your unknown assailant, who seems so determined tae put an end to ye, will follow ye oot here again. It's no likely that he'll remain in England after ye left, since it is as certain as anything connected with criminal investigations can be, that he is a Colonial, or at least a resident in the Colonies."

"I have always supposed that."

"He would ken weel the steamer you had booked your passage in," pursued MacAndrew. "And being a mon of determination, he'd like as not gang the overland route, so as to get here ahead of ye. It might give him an advantage, ye ken."

"I never thought of that!" cried Winfield.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 109.

NEXT
WEEK.

"LINLEY'S LUCK."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ay, but Stanley Dare has thocht of it, I'll warrant. By the way, Dare, ye said, in your letter, I think, that the would-be murderer was fond of a scent, which perfumers miscall 'wood-violets.'"

"Yes."

"Then I'm thinking it possible he called at this hotel yesterday—mebbe to see if you had arrived."

"Did you see him?" cried Winfield.

"Mon, I shouldna ha known him if I had seen him. Ye've not sent me a description of him. Bide a wee, while I fetch something!"

The professor was away about three minutes. When he returned he was carrying a handkerchief between his finger and thumb, as though there was something about it to which he had a strong objection.

As a matter of fact, there was. He hated scents of all descriptions, regarding them as effeminate. The handkerchief—a man's—was strongly impregnated with the scent of wood-violets.

"I picked it up," he said, "in the hotel coffee-room. As it happened, a lot of men used the coffee-room yesterday, but nobody claimed it when I asked who had lost a handkerchief. Mon, it's as guid a trail to follow as a red herring!"

"It seems that we must be more alert with our sense of smell than with our senses of sight and hearing," said Dare. "But we mustn't waste our time in endeavouring to trace every man who uses wood-violet scent on his handkerchief, or we shall have more than enough to do. All the same, it behoves us to be on our guard, for the man may be hanging about in Launceston. Now, my plan is, that Winfield and I change bed-rooms, but without the knowledge of the officials—"

"What!" exclaimed Winfield. "For you to run the risk of being murdered instead of me? I couldn't think of it. If the assassin means to make an attempt on my life while I am in this hotel, I shall be ready for him. I intend always to have a loaded revolver in my possession, and if occasion requires, I shall not hesitate to use it!"

"Laddie," said the professor, "I like your speerit, but ye must remember that you're in our hands noo. Ye mustna think your enemy will try his old plan again. Na, na! The next time he tackles ye it'll be in an entirely unexpected manner, that ye have taken no precaution against. Ye must change rooms wi' Dare. He is an expert in baffling criminals of all sorts and conditions, but you are not. I tell ye that the mon who tries to put him oot of the way is gae to have an unco' bad time!"

The professor's fiat decided the matter, and as nothing further could be done that afternoon they hired a trap and drove out to the cataracts, where some grand scenery of a regular Tasmanian type is to be seen. They returned in time for a seven o'clock dinner, and after the meal Stanley Dare went out alone.

He had his reasons for doing this, for he reflected that if Winfield's mysterious assailant was really in Launceston he would probably be keeping a watch on the hotel, to find out as much as he could of Winfield's movements.

He had walked the whole length of Brisbane Street, which was fairly crowded at that time of the evening, and having an idea that he was being shadowed, he turned and strolled slowly back.

At the corner of St. John's Street he stopped abruptly. A red-bearded man, who was dressed in a workmanlike riding "get-up," and carried a stock-whip in his hand, after sauntering on a few paces on the opposite side of the road, also came to a stop.

"So that's the game—eh?" thought Dare.

The fellow glanced across in his direction once or twice, but Dare did not pretend to notice him. Two "larrikins," who were loafing at the street corner, appeared to know the man, by name at least, for one said to the other:

"Hallo! What is Jim the Tracker doing here? I thought he was over at Waratah."

"Been hanging about Launceston for the last week," was the reply. "Got something on, you bet. Jim don't lose a chance of making money, and he ain't over particular how he gets hold of it."

"So long as he don't have to work for it," returned the first speaker, at which both men laughed, and then adjourned to a bar to quench their thirst.

"That information is worth something," thought the young detective. "The fellow is evidently a 'bad egg,' but he is certainly not the man who followed Tom Winfield to England. But he is probably an associate, otherwise there could be no reason for him shadowing me. Well, my friend, you may be an excellent 'tracker' in the bush, but you're a very poor hand at shadowing in a town. I think I will give you a little exercise; it may do you good."

Starting off at a brisk pace, Stanley Dare went up St. John Street, round by St. John's Church, then doubled, and made his way to the public gardens, walked round them, then made

his way by a zig-zag course right down to the wharf, where, amid some piled-up bales of wool, he shook Jim the Tracker off.

This had occupied about twenty-five minutes of smart walking. After Dare had re-entered the hotel he kept watch at one of the coffee-room windows, and presently had the satisfaction of seeing Jim the Tracker, looking hot and angry, turn into the street and take a stand opposite Irvine & MacCachern's grocery stores, from which point he could see everybody who entered or quitted the hotel.

"You will be able to get cool there, my friend," laughed Stanley Dare, as he turned from the window.

The professor and Winfield entered the room at this moment.

"Who will be able to get cool?" asked Winfield. "And where have you been all this time, old chap?"

"Have you ever met, or heard of, a man called Jim the Tracker?" said Dare, replying in Scotch fashion, by asking another question.

"I have heard of him," replied Winfield, "and come across him once, I think. A fellow with a bad record, who at one time belonged to a notorious gang of bushrangers. What about him?"

"He has been shadowing me, that's all," said Dare. "No doubt he thought he was doing it very cleverly at first, but I fancy he has quite a different opinion now. You can see him from this window—the red-bearded fellow."

"That is the man," said Winfield. "A dangerous fellow to meet alone in the bush, unless you happen to be armed; but—"

"Does he scent himself wi' wood-violet?" asked the professor.

"Oh, no! He is not the man we want, but he is an associate, or a paid subordinate. The knowledge that he has some hand in this business is an important gain to us, and may help Winfield to make a surmise as to who his secret enemy is."

But Tom Winfield shook his head, and negatived the suggestion.

"It gives me no clue," he said. "So far as I know, Jim the Tracker is not associated with any acquaintance of mine, whether a friend or an enemy. Indeed, I cannot dream who the man can be who is so great an enemy that he should desire to take my life."

"Well, he may not be an enemy in the ordinary sense of the word," said the professor. "My ain opinion is, that he is a man who will gain in some way by your death—a large sum of money, or some property of great value."

"Surely I should know before anyone else if I was heir to money or an estate," said Tom.

"Mebbe ye would, mebbe ye wouldna," replied MacAndrew.

"It is of no use indulging in speculations," exclaimed Dare. "Jim the Tracker is evidently engaged by some greater villain, who is keeping in the background for the present. Let us go into the billiard-room and see if there is a table vacant. We'll have one game, and then I shall retire to bed."

Stanley Dare was keeping a weary vigil that night. He had retired to his bed-room, but not to sleep. He was lying on his bed half-dressed, alert and wakeful. A revolver was on a chair by his bedside. The room was in darkness.

Through the partially open window came the occasional cry of a night-bird; and at regular intervals he could hear the deep tones of a church clock which boomed out every half-hour.

How long they seemed—those half-hours! Twelve struck, half-past twelve, then one, and still he lay there waiting with the patience of a Red Indian for what-ever might befall.

Suddenly the stillness of the sleeping hotel was broken by the sound of a footstep in the passage, faint and stealthy as that of a wild animal stalking its prey. Dare reached out his hand and gripped his revolver.

He had purposely left the room door unlocked

and the window partially open, so that the midnight visitor whom he was expecting should find no obstacle to his entrance. It was not his intention to keep him out, for he meant to capture him.

The room door opened cautiously, and someone came in, closing the door softly after him. Dare could just make out a dim figure in the darkness, but could not discern his features.

With noiseless and catlike tread, the intruder crossed the room to the bedside. A faint, sickly odour pervaded the atmosphere—the odour of chloroform.

Dare smiled grimly. It occurred to him that it would not be put to the use which its owner intended. He was able to discern now that the man wore a half-mask that came as low as his lips. Below the mask a red beard was visible. He knew who his visitor was now, but it was certainly not him that he expected. The discovery troubled him a little. Was there more than one plot afoot in the hotel that night?

The man leaned over the bed, and, as he supposed, over the sleeping figure upon it. All at once, something cold and hard was pressed against his forehead. He started back with a half-stifled cry. It was the muzzle of a revolver!

"Hands up!" cried Dare. "Don't move! If you stir a single inch I'll put a bullet through you!"

The man threw up his arms, and a chloroform pad dropped to the floor. Dare sprang from the bed and kicked the pad into a corner of the room. Then he reached out his hand and switched on the electric light.

"Let me see what sort of a face that mask hides," he said, as he snatched off the piece of crape. "Ah! Jim the Tracker! And what may your business be in my room?"

The fellow gazed at the young detective in fear and astonishment.

"How did yer know my name?" he gasped. "You ain't been in the place twenty-four hours. How did yer come to know my name?"

"It is my business to know many things," answered Dare. "For instance, I knew that either you or your villainous associate would pay a visit to this room to-night, and, as you see, I was prepared to receive you in proper style. But it wasn't me you expected to find here—eh, Jim the Tracker?"

"I didn't know. I thought perhaps—" The fellow hesitated and stammered.

"It seems to me you have given yourself away very completely," said Dare. "Turn round!"

"You ain't goin' to murder me?" cried Jim the Tracker. "Are yer goin' to put a bullet into me when my back's turned? It'll be murder if you do, and you'll swing for it! I wasn't goin' to do you no harm—"

"Of course not!" interrupted Dare sarcastically. "Just a friendly visit—eh? I've had them before. Turn round, as I order you. You must not judge me by your own standard. I am not a murderer."

The fellow turned round, though evidently with some reluctance.

"Lower your hands—down behind you!"

Jim the Tracker obeyed. There was a sharp "click!" and his wrists were firmly secured in a pair of handcuffs of finely-tempered steel.

"Look here!" snarled the fellow. "Who are you? Ordinary folks don't carry handcuffs about with them."

"It is not the custom, I believe," said Dare, in his cool, impassive manner, that nothing seemed to disturb.

"But don't waste your breath in asking questions that are not likely to be answered!"

Crossing the room he rang the bell until the hotel servants were roused.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs and in the passages; voices of men and women could be heard asking each other what was wrong. The manager, followed by two waiters, pushed into Dare's room—or, at least, the room which he was occupying in place of Tom Winfield—and demanded what was the matter. Stanley Dare pointed to Jim the Tracker.

(Another instalment of this grand serial next Tuesday. Please order in advance. Price One Penny.)

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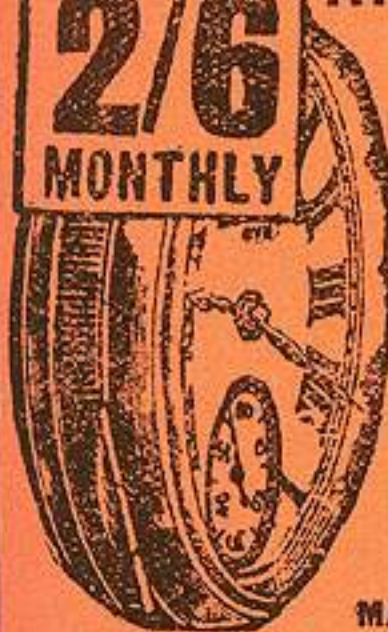
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