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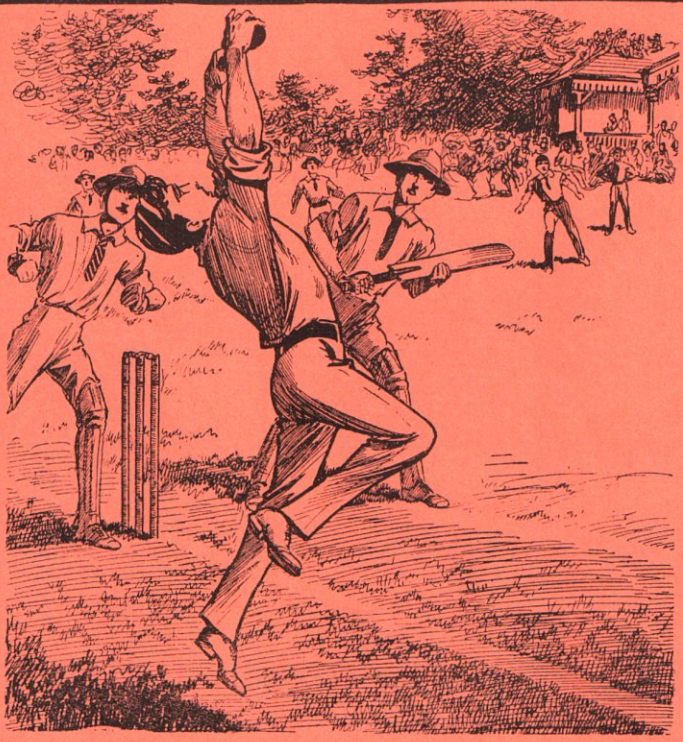
Grand Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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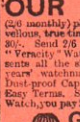

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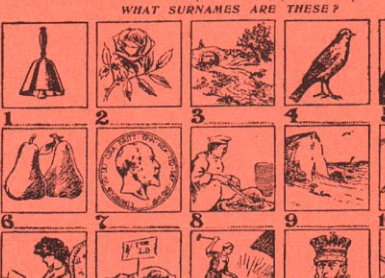

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Wharton at the Wicket.

"WELL hit!"

"Bravo!"

"Well hit, sir!"

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, stopped as he heard the shouting from the direction of the junior cricket-ground.

A junior match was in progress, and, as the Greyfriars captain glanced towards the cricket field, he saw that it was surrounded by a crowd unusually large for a junior match.

Seniors as well as juniors were standing round the ropes, and joining in the shouting.

"Hurray!"

"Well hit, Wharton!"

And a ripple of hand-clapping ran through the air.

Wingate had just come in. He called to a Sixth-Former who was strolling from the direction of the cricket-ground, with a bat under his arm.

"What's going on, Carne?"

"Nothing," said Carne. "I've been at the nets, but we've finished now."

"I mean on the junior ground."

"Oh, a Remove match, I believe."

"Wharton's batting?"

"I think so."

"They seem to be making a fuss of him," Wingate remarked. "I know he bats wonderfully for a junior."

Carne yawned. He did not take much interest in junior cricket, or in anything else appertaining to the lower school.

"Yes, I haven't noticed," he said.

Wingate frowned a little.

Without replying, he walked away quickly towards the

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cricketers. Carne looked after him with a sneer on his face. Carne played cricket chiefly because he was a good batsman, and liked to cut a good figure on the cricket-field, and because other fellows envied him his place in the First Eleven. Wingate's keen interest in all that appertained to the great summer game, the pains he took to help on even the fags of the Second Form in their practice, were incomprehensible to Carne. He did not care in the least for anybody's cricket but his own, and never cared to play unless it was in a big match with a good-sized crowd looking on.

Wingate strode up to the cricket-field. There were fellows three deep round the ropes, and all were excited, but way was made for the captain of Greyfriars.

A group of ruddy-faced lads in white flannels in front of the pavilion greeted him with welcoming exclamations.

"Here's Wingate!"

"Just in time, Wingate; we're going to win."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's Wingate! Just look on, and see Harry batting, old man—just look!"

Wingate smiled.

He could easily understand the enthusiasm of the Remove fellows. They were playing Topham juniors—a hard match for the Remove, for the Topham fellows were recruited from all Forms under the Fifth, while the Remove had only themselves—the Lower Fourth—to pick their men from.

The match was all the more interesting because, on the Saturday that week, the First Eleven were to play Topham Seniors. That was a fixture Wingate was looking forward to with some anxiety.

The captain of Greyfriars nodded to the Removites, and stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on. Harry Wharton, the Remove skipper, was at the wickets batting, with Mark Linley at the other end.

Wingate soon learned how the game stood. Topham Juniors had batted first, and had scored a total of 109. Mark Linley was last man in, and he had joined Wharton at the wickets, Harry having seen four batsmen out.

Greyfriars Juniors stood at 100 now, including the boundary Wharton had just hit as Wingate came.

"You're safe," said Wingate.

It certainly looked like it, for Wharton and Mark Linley were well set, and the Topham bowlers did not seem to be able to shift them.

Bob Cherry nodded a little doubtfully.

"They've got a demon bowler, though," he said. "Young Jones—he's not bowling this over, but he'll be on next—they're giving him all they can."

Wingate nodded.

The ball was spinning again, and Wharton's bat swept out at it, and sent it on its journey.

Again there was a yell.

"Well hit!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Run, you beggars, run!"

"Go it, Greyfriars!"

Wharton and Mark Linley were crossing the pitch like lightning.

One, two, three!

Wingate's lips came hard together. There was no time for a fourth, he could see that; but Harry Wharton had started. But it was only for a second. The next moment his bat was on the crease again, and he sat tight.

"Good!" muttered Wingate.

The ball was fielded, and the bowler took it in hand again. The crowd looked on with bated breath.

As a rule, a junior match was watched only by juniors, and not by all of them; but the splendid batting of Wharton, who had been in for half the innings while other batsmen came and went, had attracted general attention.

The Remove thronged round the ground in crowds, even Billy Bunter turning up, passing over the rival attractions of the tuck-shop for once. Even Vernon-Smith, the "Bounder" had strolled down to the ground to look on.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were there in great strength, shouting and clapping their hands at every good hit, forgetting for the nonce that they were rivals and foes of the Remove.

Even the fags of the Third and Second had come, and Nugent minor of the Second was making more noise than Nugent major of the Remove.

Down came the ball again, and Mark Linley batted, and a single resulted. Then another single finished the over, and Wharton had the batting for the next.

"105," said Frank Nugent.

"Four more to tie," said Bob Cherry regretfully. "Now Jones is going on again—and Jones is a beast!"

The beastfulness of the honourable Jones is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who had been dismissed for a duck's egg by the redoubtable Jones earlier in the innings.

"Dangerous beast," said Tom Brown, "but a ripping bowler!"

"Let's hope he won't make our last wicket rip!" grinned Hazeldene.

And the Removites gazed on with anxiety.

Jones took the ball in hand, and Wharton stood to receive the bowling. The ball came down with a cunning twist on it that would have proved fatal to many a batsman.

Click!

It dropped dead on the crease.

Harry Wharton was not hitting out now. He knew that he had to be careful when Jones of Topham was bowling.

Another ball—and the same result. Then Wharton saw his chance, and let himself go at the third ball.

Whiz!

"Well hit!"

"Run!"

"Hurray!"

Where was the ball? Long leg was racing for it desperately, and the batsmen were crossing the pitch at top speed.

Once, twice!

Then they stopped. The ball came whistling in to the wicket-keeper, too late to be dangerous.

"107," said Bob Cherry, rubbing his hands.

"Jolly good!"

"The goodfulness is terrific."

And the juniors looked on more eagerly than ever. Away went the ball again, and again the batsmen ran, and again two runs rewarded them.

Then there was a shout from Greyfriars.

For the scores had tied, and, at all events, there could be no defeat now.

"Greyfriars wins!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Hurray!"

But the over ended without another run being taken, and a new bowler came on to deal with Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad guarded his wicket well.

But fortune was against him.

At the fifth ball of the over a desperate chance was made the most of by cover-slip, and there was a yell as he showed the ball in his hand.

"Caught!"

"Well caught!"

"How's that?" gasped the Topham skipper.

"Out!"

Out it was. The match was ended—a draw. Wingate clapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder as he came off the field. The Remove skipper was looking very ruddy and very cheerful. He was disappointed at not scoring a victory, but a draw was very nearly as good, and it had been a good game.

"You've done well, Wharton," said Wingate. "I've been watching you. It was splendid! There are fellows in the Sixth who'd be glad to bat as you do."

Harry flushed with pleasure. Words of praise from the captain of Greyfriars were to be valued.

"Thank you, Wingate," he said quietly.

And then he was lifted off his feet, and rushed up to the pavilion by a crowd of exultant Removites.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Billy Bunter in Funds.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The Topham brake had rolled away, and the crowd of Removites were turning in at the gates of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the cheerful mood that follows a good game well-played—somewhat tired, but agreeably so, and very good-humoured.

"I say——"

"Well, Billy," said Wharton, glancing at the fat junior, "what do you want?"

"I was thinking——"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"I was thinking," he repeated, with emphasis, "that it would be a good idea to celebrate the licking we've given Topham——"

"But we haven't licked them," said Nugent. "It's a draw."

"Well, it's much the same. Anyway, we ought to celebrate it by a bit of a feed in the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "If we had been licked, Bunter would have been willing to celebrate it by a feed in the study."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But we've just had tea with the Topham fellows, Billy. You don't want another, I suppose?"

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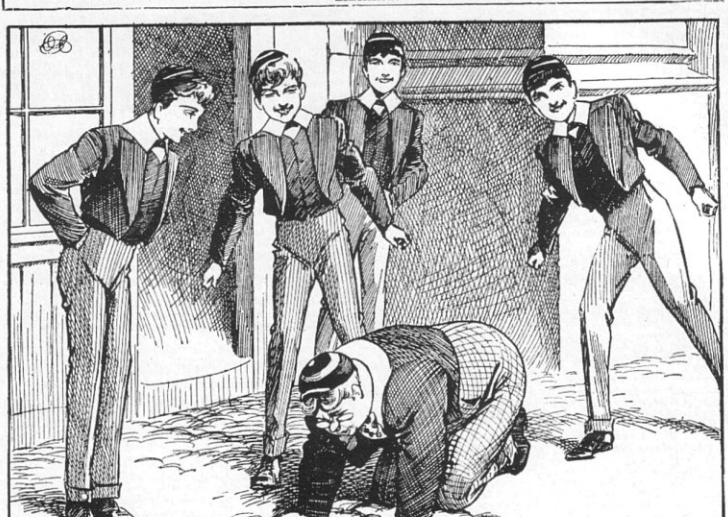

Billy Bunter hung over the grating with feelings too deep for words. The five-shilling piece was gone—for good.

"Well, you see, I've got a delicate constitution——"

"Oh! We've heard all about that," said Bob.

"That requires to be kept up——"

"Ring off!"

"By constant nourishment——"

"Cheese it!"

"And so I think it would be a good idea——"

"Rats!"

"I'm not asking you chaps to stand a feed!" exclaimed Billy Bunter wrathfully. "I'm going to stand it myself."

"Phew! Have you persuaded Mrs. Mimble to give you tick at last?" asked Tom Brown.

"No; Mrs. Mimble is a most unbusinesslike woman. I would be a constant customer on a system of credit; but she is quite blind to her own advantage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has your postal-order come at last, Billy?" asked Bob, with an air of interest.

"No; there's been some delay in the post——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle about in it. There's nothing funny in a delay in the post, which prevents a chap getting a postal-order when he's expecting one," said Bunter peevishly. "I've been thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General about it. It ought to be looked into. But I'm in funds all the same."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Cherry——"

"Seeing's believing," said Bob Cherry sceptically.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think you might take a fellow's word," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "Look here!"

He groped in his pocket, and produced a five-shilling piece.

The chums of the Remove gazed at it in astonishment.

For Bunter, the most impecunious and the most careless junior in the Lower Fourth, to be possessed of five shillings at once, was a wonder.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened, and he dropped his hand upon the fat junior's shoulder.

"Where did you get that, Bunter?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Where did you get it?"

"Well, you see, it's—it's mine."

Harry shook the Owl of the Remove angrily. Bunter's carelessness in money matters—to call it by no worse name—had caused trouble often enough. The fat junior was too stupid—or affected to be—to understand very clearly the difference between his own property and other people's.

More than once No. 1 Study had been called upon to extricate Bunter from some fix caused by this little failing of his; and Bob Cherry cheerfully predicted that the fat junior would end his youth in a reformatory, or his age in a prison.

"Where did you get that, Billy?"

"It—it was given to me."

"By whom?"

"That's a—a secret."

"Stuff! Who was it?"

"A—a chap I know. It's—it's all right, you know; I sold him something for it."

Nugent gave a shout. Bunter's habit of selling things in the study was an old one, and punishment had visited him for it often and heavily.

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"You young rotter!" exclaimed Nugent excitedly. "Have you been selling my fretwork tools again?"

"No, I haven't——"

"Or my other bat?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No."

"Or something belonging to my esteemed self?" asked Hurree Singh.

"Certainly not."

"Well, what was it, then?"

"I don't see that that matters," said Bunter, with dignity.

"I—ow—I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Wharton. You might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

"Where did you get that money?"

"I—— Oh, really, look here; come and have a feed!"

"Rats!"

"If you chaps make up five between you, that will be ten altogether, and we can get a really ripping feed for ten bob," said Bunter persuasively.

"Not unless you tell us where the money came from," said Harry distrustfully.

"Well, you see——"

"Are you going to tell us?"

"Under the circumstances——"

Wharton released the fat junior. He could have forced an answer from him; but it would certainly have been an untrue one.

The chums of the Remove walked on, leaving the fat junior standing alone. Billy Bunter blinked after them discontentedly.

"Rotters!" he muttered. "Fancy suspecting a chap like me—a perfect gentleman—of coming by money dishonestly! Retters!"

Wharton's brow was wrinkled as he walked into the schoolhouse with his chums. Billy Bunter was nothing to him, except that he was in the same study; but somehow or other Bunter always succeeded in making others bear all his worries.

"That stupid young ass is getting into trouble again, I suppose," Harry remarked. "He will get himself expelled from Greyfriars in the long run."

"Jolly good thing for Greyfriars," growled Bob Cherry.

"He can't have borrowed the money," remarked Mark Linley. "No one who knows him would lend him anything. He can never borrow except of new fellows, and——"

Wharton started.

"There's Vernon-Smith. Perhaps——"

"Not much," said Cherry emphatically. "Vernon-Smith is rolling in money, but he wouldn't be likely to give Bunter any."

"No, I suppose not."

"Talking of the Bounder, there he is."

Vernon-Smith had just come downstairs, and tapped at the door of Mr. Quelch's study. He had papers in his hand, and was evidently taking in an imposition to the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch opened the door himself; he was just coming out of the study. He glanced at Vernon-Smith.

"Ah, it is you, Smith! Is that your imposition?"

"Yes, sir."

"Place it on my table."

And Mr. Quelch walked away. The chums of the Remove went upstairs.

"Reminds me," Nugent remarked. "I've got my imposition to give in to Mr. Quelch before seven. It's all done, thank goodness."

Wharton glanced at his watch.

"It's a quarter to, now," he remarked.

"Good! I'll trot in with it," said Nugent. "Quelchy went into the master's room. He doesn't like being bothered there with lines; but that's his own look-out—I'm sure I didn't want him to give me an imposition."

He glanced round the study.

"Any of you chaps seen my impot?"

"No. Where did you leave it?"

"On the table, under the paper-weight."

"It isn't on the table now."

"Someone's shoved it somewhere, I suppose. Help me look for it."

The juniors looked round the study.

The imposition was not to be found.

They looked everywhere—on the table and under it, in the bookcase and the cupboard, in the drawer and the coal-locker even, but no imposition came to light.

Seven sounded from the clock-tower, and Nugent stopped in the hurried search, with an exclamation:

"My hat! There goes seven!"

Wharton looked perplexed.

"You're sure you wrote it out?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I had just finished it when the Topham brake got here."

"It's very curious!"

"The curiousness is terrific."

"Well, it isn't here," said Harry. "Somebody's moved it for a lark, I should say. You'd better explain to Quelch, or you'll get it doubled for not showing it up in time."

"I—I suppose so."

Frank hurried out of the study. He hastened to the masters' room, where Mr. Quelch was sitting by the window, chatting with Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth.

The Remove-master glanced round at him.

"What is it, Nugent?"

"If you please, sir, my imposition."

"Take it into my study and leave it on my table."

"Yes, sir, but——"

"You may go, Nugent."

"Yes, sir, but—but I haven't the impot!" gasped Nugent.

"You have not done it!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a portentous frown.

"Yes, sir, I—I've done it, but it's disappeared!" exclaimed Nugent breathlessly. "I—I think someone has hidden it for a lark, sir—a—a joke, I mean."

"A very foolish joke, in my opinion," said Mr. Quelch. "Very well, Nugent; I believe your explanation, of course. Take the imposition to my study when you find it."

"Yes, sir," said Nugent, in great relief. "Thank you, sir!"

And he left the masters' room. He returned to No. 1 Study to look again for the missing manuscript, but in vain; the imposition had disappeared, and left no trace behind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
How Bunter Stood Treat.

BILLY BUNTER stood looking at the five-shilling piece in his hand, and blinking in a thoughtful way. He was calculating exactly how much of Mrs. Mimble's stock he could obtain for it, and wishing that it were a half-sovereign, when he received a slap on the back that made him stagger, and the coin went with a clink to the ground.

"Oh, really, Cherry!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, is that you, Snoop?" said Bunter, picking up the five-shilling piece. "I—I wish you wouldn't be such a rough beast!"

"You're in funds," remarked Snoop, with a covetous glance at the crown-piece.

"Yes. What do you say to a feed, Snoop?"

"Good idea!" said the sneak of the Remove. "Come on!"

"Hold on! I was thinking that if you had five bob, you could treat me, and then I'd treat you," said Bunter. "This isn't enough for a really good feed."

"I haven't," said Snoop regretfully. "I've got only a bob."

"Well, that will do; come on."

"Right you are," said Snoop, who imagined that on these lines he would have the better part of the bargain.

And the two juniors entered the tuckshop kept by Mrs. Mimble within the precincts of Greyfriars. Wun Lung, the Chinee, was there, slowly and meditatively consuming an ice. He grinned in his affable way at the Removites.

"Nicee day," he remarked. "Nicee icee."

"Yes, we're in funds," said Bunter. "Would you care to join us in a feed, kid?"

The little Celestial nodded.

"Mo joinee handsome fat Buntee, one time."

"Good! Snoop's got a bob, and I've got five. How much have you got?"

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Wun Lung turned three shillings out of his pockets.

"Good!" said Bunter. "Snoop can begin, and you next, and I'll finish, as I have the most money."

"Alleo light!"

"Ginger pop for me," said Snoop, "and cake."

Mrs. Mimble, at the sight of silver, was all smiles. The sight of the five-shilling piece in Bunter's fat fingers made even the Owl of the Remove welcome.

Snoop's shilling was soon expended, and then Wun Lung's three passed over the counter, and were duly "blown" in ginger-beer, cake, and tarts.

"This is jolly good ginger-pop!" said Billy Bunter, slipping his five-shilling piece back into his pocket, and blinking at his foaming glass.

"Ripping!" said Snoop.

"Me likee muchee," said Wun Lung, draining his glass.

"Me likee mole."

"Same here."

"Yes, it's good," said Bunter. "Order some more, Wun Lung."

"No havee more money."

"All gone?"

"All gones."

"Oh, really, how the money goes," said Bunter, sipping his ginger-beer.

"Never mind! you've got some," said Snoop. "We've blued ours, but there's more left. I'll have some tarts."

"Me havee ginger-beelee and cakes."

"Go it, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter did not seem in a hurry.

He sipped his ginger-beer till it was gone, watched impatiently by the other two juniors, and then he took up his last tart in his fat hand.

"Tarts here, Mrs. Mimble," said Snoop, who was hungry.

"Who is paying?" asked Mrs. Mimble, who knew Snoop.

"Bunter."

"Ahem," said Mrs. Mimble, who knew Bunter, too. "Ahem! Master Bunter?"

"Pay up, Bunter."

"Payee, Bunter."

The fat junior coughed. He had been edging towards the door while he was eating the last tart, and now the tart was all gone.

He blinked dubiously at the others.

"You—you see," he remarked, "I—I forgot I—I have a debt of honour to pay with this—this five bob. I'll stand treat to you fellows another time. I——"

"What?"

"See you later!" exclaimed Bunter hurriedly, and he dodged out of the tuckshop.

Snoop and Wun Lung stared at one another blankly for a moment.

"Spoofed!" gasped Snoop.

"Bunteo tiefee!"

"The rat!"

"The lotter!"

"The cad!"

"The lascal!"

"After him!" yelled Snoop. "He's jolly well going to fork out!"

"Alleo lightee!"

They ran out of the tuckshop.

Billy Bunter had disappeared. He had felt that it was not prudent to remain near the two juniors he had despoiled while the five shillings was in his possession, at any rate, and he had fled at top speed. Snoop and Wun Lung searched the Close for him, and finally they heard his voice in the gymnasium. Bunter was not alone. He was talking to a crowd of Second-Form fags as the searchers came in with wrathful looks.

"You see, I'm in funds," Bunter was explaining. "My idea is for some other fellows to make up as much as I have and have a decent feed. The Remove chaps won't do it, but if you kids like——"

"Good idea!" said Nugent minor. "You've got five bob, I've got one."

"I've got two," said Gatty.

"Ninepence here," said Todd.

"You young burglar!" roared Snoop, rushing in. "Come and stand——"

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"You worm—you toad——"

"You lotten lascal—"

"I say, you fellows, kick those rotters out!" said Bunter. "I——"

The Second-Form fags wanted no more. They promptly kicked Snoop and Wun Lung out. They might have hesitated to tackle any of the athletes of the Remove, but Snoop and the little Chinee were not formidable. The fags swarmed upon them, and they were hurled out of the gym. without being even able to make their wrongs known.

"Now, come along to the tuckshop," said Bunter.

"Right you are, Tubby!"

The fags crowded over to the school shop. Billy Bunter went in with them, the five-shilling piece in his hand.

Nugent minor and Todd and Gatty laid their cash on the counter and gave their orders, and Mrs. Mimble served them, and Bunter ate and drank faster than any of the others. But the fags lost little time. Like most healthy youngsters, they could always eat. The cash faded away in next to no time.

Then there was a call on Bunter.

The fat junior was already edging to the door. If Bunter had been allowed to carry out his schemes he would have roped in feed after feed, and still kept his five-shilling piece intact.

"Now, then, Bunter——"

"Your turn, Fatty!"

"Go it, Owl!"

"Excuse me, you fellows!" said Bunter. "I—I forgot I—I've got an appointment with a chap, and——"

He scuttled out of the shop.

"Come back!" roared Nugent minor.

"The cad! He's sloping!" ejaculated Todd.

"Hallo! What's that?"

There was the sound of a struggle outside the door.

"Got him!" roared Snoop.

The fags rushed out. Billy Bunter was struggling wildly in the grasp of Snoop and Wun Lung.

"Gotfee the lotte!!" gasped Wun Lung. "Hullay!"

"Here he is!" grinned Snoop. "Here's the swindler!"

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"He's bilked us, and was going to bilk you!" said Snoop, with a chuckle. "So we waited for him. Collar him!"

"Ow! Leggo! I've dropped my five-shilling piece! Yow! If you make my glasses fall off——"

"Hallo! Look out!"

The coin that had dropped from Bunter had rolled upon a drain grating near the little shop. As Todd uttered the exclamation of warning it rolled over one of the bars, and slipped down.

The fat junior gave a roar.

"Ow! You chumps! Yow! My money! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop.

"You—you beast—— Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's gone!"

"Selvee the lotter lightee! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the fags roared.

Billy Bunter hung over the grating with feelings too deep for words.

The five-shilling piece was gone—for good. From all his victims he had certainly not had as much as three or four shillingsworth of plunder. Too late it dawned upon the fat junior that honesty was the best policy.

Bunter's face was a study. The fags roared with laughter.

"Look here, Snoop, you owe me five bob——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You owe me five bob, Wun Lung——"

"He, he, he!"

"Beasts!" growled Bunter. "Catch me standing treat again to any of you! This is what I get for being generous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter went his way disconsolately.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Missing Imposts.

"BUNTER!"

"Y-e-s!" said the fat junior, as he came into No. 1 Study, and he blinked rather nervously at Frank Nugent, who was looking warm and dusty and irritable.

"Have you seen my impost?"

"Your—your what?"

"I left my lines on the table, and some ass has shoved them out of sight somewhere," exclaimed Nugent. "Have you hidden them for a lark, you fat duffer?"

"Oh, really, Nugent, as if I should do such a thing!"

"Well, they're jolly well gone," said Nugent. "I suppose you haven't eaten them? You eat everything that's left about in the study."

"Oh, really——"

"It's a very odd thing," said Wharton. "Some other fellow must have been in and taken them. Some chap who had lines to do, perhaps—he may have passed off yours on the beaks."

Billy Bunter started.

Wharton's hand dropped upon his shoulder, and the fat junior blinked at him in alarm. Harry looked steadily at Bunter.

"Do you know anything about it, Billy?"

"About w-w-what, Wharton?"

"Whether anybody has taken Nugent's lines to give in as his own."

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"Oh, really——"

"Come to the point, you fat young bounder! Have you had an impot. to do to-day?"

"No," said Bunter. "Really——"

"Have you taken in Nugent's lines to Mr. Quelch?"

"Certainly not! I hope you don't suspect that I would do such a thing?" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I wouldn't think of it; and, besides, I haven't had any imposition to do."

The second reason is more convinceful than the first," remarked Hurree Singh. "If the esteemed Bunter had no impot. to do——"

"I hadn't, you know, really; and, besides, I hope you don't think I would do a mean thing like that——"

"There are precious few mean things you wouldn't do!" said Nugent bluntly. "I can't understand what's become of the lines."

"It's very curious."

"I say, you fellows, perhaps—perhaps the rats have eaten them," said Bunter, making a brilliant suggestion. "You know we were overrun by rats here once——"

"Ass!"

"Oh, really——"

"Cheese it!"

The chums of the Remove left the study to make a further inquiry about the missing lines.

But they could get no news of them.

It was pretty certain to Nugent's mind that someone had seen them on the study table and taken possession of them, having lines to do.

It was not uncommon for one fellow to write another fellow's impots., for they were seldom read, and one sprawling hand was very like another, anyway.

But to have one's imposition raided in this way was too bad; and Nugent was very naturally what he called "wrathy."

But his wrath found no object to wreak itself upon.

Nobody appeared to have seen anything of the lines.

Shortly before bedtime Mr. Quelch spoke to Nugent on the subject.

"I have not seen your lines, Nugent," he remarked.

"I—I'm sorry, sir; they're gone."

"Gone!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. I wrote them out, honour bright—I—I mean on my word, sir—and left them on my study table when I buzzed down to the cricket, and when I came in they were gone. I think they must have been hidden for a lark—a—a joke, sir."

"Ahem! I hope they will be found," said Mr. Quelch. "However, I take your word, Nugent, and the matter can rest there."

"Thank you, sir!" said Frank gratefully.

"Quelch is a brick," he said, when they went up to the dormitory. "Some masters would have suspected that it was a yarn to get out of doing the lines. Quelch knows a chap who wouldn't lie."

"You've got off jolly cheap, though," said Skinner. "You won't have to do the lines again. I've got an impot. from little Charpentier doubled because I didn't do it. Have you sent in your lines, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith did not seem to hear the question.

Skinner glanced at the Bounder, who was undressing.

"Did you take your lines in to Quelch?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Bounder, no longer able to avoid a reply.

"Blessed if I know when you did them, then," said Stott. "You were out of doors all the afternoon, and——"

"Well, I've taken them in."

Nugent glanced quickly at the Bounder.

The thought occurred to him that Vernon-Smith might have "lifted" his lines. But he did not care to ask the direct question, without a shadow of evidence to go upon, and the matter was suffered to drop.

The next morning Nugent had another look for his lines, but they were not to be found, and he gave the search up as hopeless.

During morning school Bulstrode was careless, and earned an imposition of fifty lines of Virgil; and Vernon-Smith, for a fit of sulkiness, was awarded the same. Bulstrode did not seem much concerned as he came out of the class-room after they were dismissed, though he had been ordered to take in the lines before afternoon school.

"Coming down to the river, Skinner?" he asked.

"Yes; but what about your lines?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, that's all right; I've got some in hand," said Bulstrode, with a grin. "I did fifty of the 'Aeneid' for Capper, a week or more ago, when he was taking us, and he forgot to ask for them. They'll do for Quelch."

"Ha, ha! How good!"

"Jolly good!" murmured Billy Bunter, blinking after the two juniors as they went out into the green, sunny close. "Jolly good! He, he, he!"

And Bulstrode went down to the river, careless of the impot. It was after dinner, and near time for afternoon school, when he went into his study for the lines.

Five minutes later he was raging down the Remove passage.

"Who's got my lines?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that?"

"My lines!"

"What's the matter with your lines? Haven't they fallen in pleasant places?"

"Don't be funny! Somebody's collared my impot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode glared.

"I had fifty lines all ready for Quelch," he howled. "Now they're gone. Some blessed thief has taken them."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, that's a rotten thing to say!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Well, they're gone."

"Perhaps the rats have eaten them."

Bulstrode gave Bunter a shove that sent him staggering against the wall, and interrupted his brilliant suggestion. He glared into study after study in search of his lines; but very few fellows were indoors, and certainly the impot. was not to be seen. Before he could carry his inquiries very far the bell went for afternoon classes, and he had to fall in with the Remove for the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him as he passed the desk without stopping.

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes, sir?" said Bulstrode, his heart sinking.

"I gave you an imposition, I think."

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"If you please, sir, it's—it's gone."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"What! Gone!"

"Yes, sir."

"This is very singular," said the Remove-master, who did not trust Bulstrode as he trusted Frank Nugent. "Very singular indeed, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir, isn't it?" said Bulstrode innocently.

"You had written out the task, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir."

"And left it——"

"In my desk, sir."

"And it has been taken?"

"Taken clean away, sir."

"I hope your statement is correct, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch dubiously. "The same thing happened to Nugent yesterday."

"You did not doubt his word, sir," said Bulstrode, with a touch of insolence in his manner.

"No, Bulstrode; Nugent is a boy whose word I can rely upon," said the Form-master, with a little emphasis. "However, I accept your assurance. But I must say here that this explanation will not be accepted on another occasion. A boy who has an imposition to do must take care of it, and bring it to me at the appointed time, or he will be punished in the usual way. And as there seems to be a boy in the Remove with a fancy for playing jokes of this description, I should recommend you to make some effort to find him out."

"Yes, sir."

And Bulstrode went to his place, very much relieved at not being questioned as to whether he had written out the imposition that day; for Bulstrode would not have told a lie direct. But Mr. Quelch had not thought of asking that, and he was safe. But during afternoon lessons the minds of the Remove were very much exercised on that matter—who had taken the lines?

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The First Eleven.

"WHERE are you fellows off to?" asked Billy Bunter, as Harry Wharton & Co. came out after lessons were over that afternoon.

"Cricket-ground," said Wharton briefly.

"I say, ain't you dry?" asked Bunter. "What do you say to some ginger-pop?"

"Try the fountain," said Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"I'm not asking you to stand treat," he exclaimed. "I'm going to pay for the ginger-pop."

"Rats!"

"I'm in funds."

"Ha, ha, ha! So the postal-order's come?"

"Well, no, but——"

"New fellow in the Remove?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Not that I know of."

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"I tell you I did not know the lines were Ogilvy's," said the Bounder. "I bought them off Bunter, thinking that he had written them himself."

"Then you haven't been able to borrow any money."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm a chap with resources," said Bunter. "A fellow of my brains need never be without money. Look here."

He held up a half-crown between his fat finger and thumb.

The chums of the Remove stopped in sheer amazement.

Bunter was in funds again. Yesterday he had had five shillings, and to-day there was half-a-crown. They knew he had only a shilling a week pocket-money, and that he always spent it the moment he received it.

"Where did you get that, Billy?" asked Wharton sharply.

Bunter blinked mysteriously.

"Oh, I've got resources," he said. "A fellow of my brains——"

"Oh, cheese it. Have you been looting?"

"Oh, really——"

"Look here, Billy, I can't help thinking you're getting yourself into trouble," said Harry quietly. "Where did you get that money? Tell me."

"A fellow of my brains——"

"Oh, rats!"

Wharton set his lips and walked away. His comrades went with him, and Bunter hurried after them.

"I say, you fellows, don't you want any ginger-pop?"

"No."

"Oh, really——"

"You're so generous in standing feeds, Billy, too," said Nugent. "We've heard how you treated Snoop and Wun Lung yesterday, and how you tried to treat the Third-Formers, you fat young fraud."

"Well, you see——"

"Oh, go and take that half-crown back to the fellow it belongs to, and shut up," said Bob Cherry.

And the juniors strode on at a pace the fat Removite found it impossible to equal, and Bunter stopped, gasping for breath, and blinking indignantly.

He stood blinking after them for a few moments, and then bore down upon the tuckshop, and the half-crown was soon going at express speed in ginger-beer and tarts and ices.

Wharton frowned thoughtfully as he went on with his chums to the cricket-ground. He could not help feeling a little worried about Bunter. But it was certain that the Owl of the Remove would not give him his confidence, and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

The juniors stopped on the senior ground. There was a practice of the First Eleven on, and they wanted to watch it. Afterwards, they intended to put in a little while at the nets, but, after the hard match of the preceding day, they were not inclined to push it too hard. Besides, there were valuable points to be picked up by watching the play of the best batsmen and bowlers in the Fifth and Sixth.

The First Eleven were playing Topham Seniors on Saturday afternoon, at Greyfriars, and the match was one of the most important of the season. Now that their own match with Topham Juniors was over, the Removites thought more of the senior match, and took a deep interest in it.

They had only succeeded in getting a draw with the Topham Juniors, and they fervently hoped that Wingate and his comrades would succeed in wresting victory from the seniors.

The elder brother of young Jones was captain of the seniors, and he was reputed to be as crack a batsman as many a fellow who played for his county, and, as the Grey-

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friars' juniors said with bated breath, "almost up to old Wingate's form."

And the juniors, taking a fatherly sort of interest in senior cricket, settled themselves in comfortable attitudes to watch the practice.

"They're a good team," Bob Cherry remarked, in a rather patronising tone, as Wingate and his men came into the field. "Wingate's a splendid hitter, anyway—quite up to Jessop."

Wharton laughed.

"Well, he's jolly good," he remarked. "Courtney's a good bat, too, and a splendid bowler. North is jolly good."

"What price Carne?"

"Carne is all right when he chooses," said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "If he keeps off smoking for a day or two before the match——"

"Which he won't do."

"Very likely not. Then he'll get pumped, and his showy batting won't be of much use if he can't run."

"Quite true."

"The truthfulness is terrific."

"I wonder Wingate plays him," Tom Brown remarked.

"Well, he's a fine, showy batsman when he likes, and he's got a late cut that anybody might be proud of," Harry Wharton remarked. "If he chooses to keep himself fit, he'll make a good show in the Topham match. And I think he'll have some sense to do it. If he lets the side down, Wingate would never forgive him."

"And he'd lose his cap for the First Eleven, too."

"Yes—and for good."

The object of these remarks was passing the juniors while they were speaking. Carne certainly made a good figure in his cricketing clothes. Bully as he undoubtedly was, reckless as the juniors knew him to be in his ways, blackguardly as some of his amusements were, as they knew only too well, still it was certain that he could bat well, and that he could give a good account of himself in the senior match if he chose. And he had incentive enough to try.

The cap for the First Eleven was the most coveted of distinctions at Greyfriars, and Carne had plenty of conceit, and there had been a new swagger about him ever since Wingate had put him into the First Eleven.

He glanced at the juniors, sitting or lying in the sunny grass, and his face clouded for a moment.

He knew instinctively that he was the object of their remarks, and he guessed that the remarks were not flattering.

Carne was on the worst of terms with the chums of the Remove.

"What are you young sweeps doing here?" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"We've come to see the practice," he said.

"Well, you're not wanted. Get out!"

"Hang it all, Carne," broke in Wingate, who overheard the words—"hang it all, let the youngsters alone!"

"Confound the youngsters!" growled Carne.

"Stay where you are, kids," said the Greyfriars' captain, with a glance at the juniors. "Don't move!"

"All right, Wingate."

The juniors had not intended to move, unless Wingate told them to. Carne had no right to order them off the ground.

Carne bit his lips savagely, and did not look in the direction of the juniors again, but he remembered.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on with interest when the practice commenced. It was not a scratch match, but simply practice, every fellow taking his turn, and Wingate looking on keenly to watch their form. The final list for the eleven on Saturday was not made out yet, though most of the fellows knew what it would be like.

Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, were both in the team, and the juniors gave them a cheer as they batted well against Courtney's bowling.

Blundell and Bland were the only Fifth-Formers in the eleven, the rest belonging to the Sixth Form.

"Jolly good team," said Bob Cherry presently. "Only one thing wanted to improve it."

"And what's that?" asked Wingate, who was passing at the moment, and happened to hear Bob's remark. "What's wanted, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Only a few juniors in the team, Wingate," he replied.

Wingate laughed.

"Cheeky young beggar!" he said, and passed on.

"All the same, I could name a junior or two who could play in the First Eleven," said Bob Cherry, looking round at his grinning companions. "Modesty compels me not to mention one name, but there's Harry——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Wharton, laughing.

"You bat as well as Carne does, though, Harry," said Bob Cherry, becoming serious. "Of course, you're not his size or strength, but you're in better condition, if he happens to have been smoking with Loder and Ionides, and——"

"Cheese it!" murmured Mark Linley, as he saw Carne coming by, with a brow like thunder.

Bob Cherry promptly cheesed it; but Carne, who had certainly heard his words, made no remark.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Wingate's Warning.

"GOT anything to smoke?"

It was Carne who asked the question, as he looked into Loder's study that evening, Loder, the prefect, grinned.

"Nice question to ask a prefect," he remarked.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Carne. "I haven't smoked for a dog's age, and I simply must have a fag now. I intended to cry off till after the Topham match——"

"And you'd better," said Loder, with unusual seriousness. "We'll have a big beano after the match on Saturday."

"But a cigarette to go on with won't do any harm," said Carne. "Hang it all, I'm not a baby! And I haven't any. Got any here?"

Loder shook his head.

"Sorry; no. Ask Ionides."

"Right-ho!"

Carne went along the Sixth-Form passage to Ionides's study. The Greek senior generally had cigarettes in his study, as well as a bottle of wine. The Greek was in the habit of indulging himself in little luxuries like this. He was rolling in money, and he had never been accustomed to deny himself anything. And it was easier for a senior than for a junior to allow himself such indulgences. Vernon-Smith had tried it in the Remove, with disastrous results to himself. The Remove had fallen upon him, and cured him of his little ways in great style.

Ionides was in his study, and, at Carne's request, he immediately took out a box of very expensive gold-tipped Egyptian cigarettes.

"That's something like!" remarked Carne.

"You're welcome," said Ionides.

"Thanks! I'm dying for a smoke!"

And Carne was really serious. The habit of smoking had grown upon him, and he felt a craving for it if he left it off for a few days.

Ionides struck a match, and Carne pulled at the cigarette; and as he blew out the first few whiffs there was a tap at the door, and Wingate came in.

"I want to see you, Ionides. Hallo!"

Wingate broke off short.

The sight of a member of his eleven smoking rather took the wind out of his sails.

Carne turned red, and removed the cigarette from his lips.

Wingate looked at him grimly.

"I seem to have come in at the wrong moment," he remarked.

Carne muttered something.

"Throw it into the fire!" said Wingate.

The senior hesitated a moment, and then obeyed. Ionides shrugged his shoulders, and put the box of cigarettes back into the drawer he had taken it from.

"Now, look here, Carne," said Wingate seriously, "I don't want to lecture a chap of my own age as if he were a junior. You know this sort of thing is against the rules; and, you know, you ought to set a decent example to the youngsters."

"Hang the youngsters!" said Carne.

"Besides that, there's the match. You're in the First Eleven. I told you you would have to stop this sort of thing if I put you in."

Carne forced a laugh.

"Well, I did stop it," he said; "but I felt that I must have one. Hang it all, this isn't a Sunday-school, you know!"

Wingate's brow grew stern.

"It's not a tap-room, either!" he said angrily. "Now, look here, Carne, this won't do. If you must do this sort of thing, you should leave it till after the match."

"Oh, all right! Don't lecture me, then."

"I can't spare you from the eleven, and you know it!" said Wingate warmly. "I tell you plainly that if I could spare you I'd drop you at once; but I want you to play against Topham."

Carne grinned a little.

"Well, I'm going to play."

"Yes; but—— Hang it all, Carne, you're taking an unfair advantage, and you know it. It's not cricket!"

Carne shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall be fit enough to play," he said, "After all,

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what's a cigarette? But if you're so jolly nervous about it, I'll keep off till after the match, anyway. Is that all right?"

"Yes," said Wingate shortly.

He turned to Ionides, and Carne left the study. The Greek looked at the captain of Greyfriars with his slow, mocking smile.

"You keep a tight hand on your men, Wingate," he said.

"I need to. We play cricket to win, not just for fluff," said Wingate. "I looked in to tell you, Ionides, that I'm willing to give you a trial this season if you care to take up cricket."

"And drop some other things?" said the Greek, with a laugh.

"Yes; turn over a new leaf, and become decent!" said Wingate bluntly.

The Greek shrugged his shoulders.

"Thanks! But it's not good enough."

"You should think it over," said the Greyfriars' captain. "You can't go on as you're doing for ever. The Head is lenient with you because you're a foreigner, and because you've been pampered. But some time——"

The Greek yawned.

"Oh, don't lecture me, my good Wingate! Keep that for the members of your eleven."

Wingate turned on his heel and quitted the study. There were times when the Greyfriars' captain found it hard to keep his hands off the handsome, sardonic Ionides, and this was one of the times.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Bounder Declines.

CARNE was looking clouded as he came into Loder's study. The prefect grinned as he saw his knitted brows.

"No go?" he asked.

"Wingate came in as I was taking a whiff," said Carne abruptly.

Loder laughed.

"Did he spank you?"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said Carne angrily. "He pointed out to me — Well, hang it, I've told him I won't smoke again till after the match, anyway."

"More fool you!"

"Nice advice from a prefect!"

"Well, I wouldn't be dictated to by Wingate," said Loder, with a shrug of the shoulders. "It's all very well to keep the fags in tight order, but what's the good of being in the Sixth if you can't do as you like?"

"That's so."

"I'm a prefect, and I smoke; and Wingate knows it."

"I wonder he doesn't let the Head know it, too."

Loder chuckled.

"Well, it's a jolly difficult business bringing a prefect to the judgment-bar," he remarked. "Wingate doesn't want trouble of that sort on his hands. He's too easy-going. Not easy-going enough to be head of the Sixth, though, in my opinion. I think there ought to be a new election, and one of us might get in as captain."

Carne shook his head.

"Not the ghost of a chance of that, Loder. Wingate is a little tin god among the fellows, especially the juniors."

"'Pride goeth before a fall,' though!" grinned Loder. "We may have him on the hip some day. And you haven't had your smoke?"

"No."

"And you're going without?"

"I suppose so."

"More ass you."

"Oh, rats! I can't go into Ionides's study and ask him for another, and I'm blessed if I know where else to go."

"Try the Remove."

Carne stared.

"What the dickens! The juniors."

"You've forgotten that delightful now boy," said Loder—"I mean Vernon-Smith, of that ilk. He generally has smokes galore, I believe. I've confiscated some pounds' worth since he's been at Greyfriars."

"The other young sweeps have been looking after him," said Carne. "They've burnt all his smokes, and licked him into decent habits lately."

"I expect he's got a few left," said Loder. "I rather fancy from the look of him that it will take a considerably long time to lick him into shape. If he hasn't any, send him down to Friardale to fetch some. He's just the kind of specimen to enjoy a trip like that. He'll feel he's doing something shady."

"Blessed if I don't," said Carne. "After all, Wingate has no right to dictate to me, as you said."

"Of course! Besides, you needn't be afraid of Wingate. Your place in the team is assured. You're up to Wingate's own form at batting, and better than he is at fielding. He'd rather part with his own chum Courtney than with you."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it, my boy," said Loder, with a grin. "You needn't be afraid of losing your cap. Wingate is as nervous as an old hen about the Topham match. You've only got to threaten to resign from the eleven to bring him to heel."

"By Jove! that's a new idea. I thought I was jolly lucky to get into the eleven, especially as Wingate doesn't like me."

"Would he put you in, as he doesn't like you, if he could possibly do without you?" demanded Loder.

"Well, I suppose not."

"It's all right. You needn't eat humble pie. Wingate won't dictate terms till after the Topham match, anyway, if you smoked cigars in the Close."

Carne laughed, and quitted the study. He turned his steps in the direction of the Remove passage. On reflection, he realised that there was a great deal in what Loder said. He was too valuable in the cricket team for the Greyfriars captain to part with him lightly.

A fellow with much delicacy would have seen in that a reason for being especially careful in his conduct, especially careful to avoid appearing as if he wanted to take advantage of his position.

But Carne was not burdened with too much delicacy.

If he had power in his hands, he would use it if he could increase his own comfort thereby. That was his only idea.

He passed the open door of No. 1 Study in the Remove, and Harry Wharton caught sight of him as he passed.

"Trouble for somebody," he remarked.

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent warmly. "Carne's not a prefect, and he's jolly well not going to come and make trouble in our passage."

"Right-ho! If there's a row——"

"We'll be in it."

"The infulness will be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with emphasis.

And the chums listened for the expected "row."

If Carne had come there to bully some Removite, Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready to chip in on behalf of the injured party, and make things warm for the bully of the Sixth.

But there was no sound of a row from up the passage, save the closing of a door.

Carne had gone into No. 9, which Vernon-Smith shared with Snoop and Skinner. The Bounder of Greyfriars was there alone.

He looked a little nervously at Carne. The insolence Vernon-Smith had shown when he first arrived at Greyfriars had been knocked out of him to a great extent; and he had learned especially that it was not safe to be insolent to seniors.

Carne glanced round the study.

"I hear you've been smoking again," he remarked quite untruthfully.

The Bounder shook his head.

"I haven't," he replied.

"Oh, rubbish!"

"It's true, Carne. I haven't anything to smoke. Wharton and his lot burnt up the blessed lot, and I haven't bought anything since."

Carne turned over a new leaf, I suppose?" said Carne, with a sneer.

"Well, what can a chap do against the whole Form?" said Vernon-Smith sullenly. "They made my life a burden till I came round."

"Well, that's quite right and proper, and all that," said Carne, in the same sneering tone. "But I hear that you've got smokes in your study, and I've come here to—to confiscate them."

"I haven't any."

"Now, none of your rotting," said Carne, closing the study door. "Better hand them out at once, and I'll say no more about the matter. I don't want to be hard on you."

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet.

That closing of the door, which had reached the ears of the chums in No. 1 Study, alarmed the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I tell you I haven't any," he repeated.

Carne looked at him keenly, and decided that he was telling the truth. Vernon-Smith would have produced the smokes rather than risk a licking.

"Very well," said Carne. "If you haven't any, you haven't, and—and, of course, it's quite right you shouldn't have. A friend of mine wants some cigarettes, though, and you can cut down to the village and get them."

"It's not allowed."

Carne stared at him.

"Eh! What do you mean, you cub?"

"It's not allowed to smuggle in smokes."

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"You care a lot for the rules of the school, I must say," said Carne, with a sneer. "Don't come any spoof with me."

"I don't care a twopenny rap for the rules of the school," said the Bounder sullenly. "But if the Remove catch me bringing the things in, they'll rag me in the dormitory to-night, and I've had enough of running the gauntlet."

"Keep it dark, then, you ass!"

"How can I? They suspect me, and they've always got their eyes on me. I daren't do it."

Carne's face took on a most unpleasant expression.

"Are you more afraid of the Lower Fourth than of the Sixth?" he exclaimed. "Mind, you'll do as I tell you, or you'll get a first-class thrashing."

"I may as well be licked by you as by the Remove, hang you! But I tell you that if you touch me, we'll see what the masters think of sending a junior for smokes!" said Vernon-Smith, with an unpleasant grin.

"So you'll sneak, will you?"

"Yes—if you touch me."

Carne gave him a grim look.

"Very good," he said. "You'll sneak; but I'm not going to lick you for not fetching cigarettes, you young fool. I never asked you to fetch any. Such an idea never crossed my mind. I'm going to lick you for—for bullying a fag in the Second Form this morning. I saw you kicking young Todd, I remember. That's what I'm going to lick you for, and I'll own up to any master in Greyfriars; and if you tell any lies about my asking you to fetch cigarettes, you'll be laughed at, and licked again, mind you. And now you can sneak if you like."

And Carne, with a savage laugh, caught the Bounder by the shoulder with one hand, and began to box his ears with the other.

Vernon-Smith yelled.

He was quite surprised by the attitude Carne took up. It had never occurred to him previously that there might be cads at Greyfriars as bad as himself. And, with the reputation he had earned since he had been at the school, any accusation he brought against anybody was certain to be very lightly regarded. He was too dazed to think much about it, however, under the savage shower of blows that fell upon him.

"Now, then," said Carne, pausing for a moment and glaring at the junior, "are you going to do as I asked you?"

But all the obstinacy of the Bounder's nature was roused now.

"No!" he yelled.

"Then take that—and that!"

"Help!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "Help! Rescue!"

It was the first time he had called upon the Form to remember that he was one of themselves—he had always been at daggers drawn with the Remove. But his yell rang along the passage now, and it was not unanswered.

Harry Wharton heard the yell from the Bounder's study, and he stepped towards the door of No. 1 at once.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Nugent. "That's the Bounder's yell."

And the juniors paused irresolutely.

If the Bounder was being licked, the chances were ten to one that he deserved it; and that interference from his Form-fellows was quite uncalled for.

And such was the opinion of the rest of the Remove.

Half the Form were in their studies at that hour, and at the yell of "Rescue" from a Remove study, a couple of dozen fellows turned out in hot haste, with cricket-stumps in their hands, or rulers, or twisted cap, ready for a scrimmage.

But when they heard that the appeal came from No. 9 they stopped.

"It's the Bounder," said Russell.

"What-ho!" said Bulstrode. "I know his sweet voice."

"Are you going?"

"Not much."

And Bulstrode went into his study again. Hazeldene followed him in. The Bounder was nothing to them.

"Oh! Rescue!"

"Let him yell," said Trevor. "He has turned his nose up at the Remove, and he can jolly well look after himself."

"Good."

"Serve him right."

"Besides, he's most likely only being licked for some beastly rot," said Lacey. "Smoking, or perhaps swilling—you know the Bounder."

"Well, Carne isn't a prefect," said Mark Linley, "and we know he's a bully. I think we might look into it, Wharton. It sounds as if Smith is getting hurt; and Carne wouldn't know when to stop, even if Smith is in the wrong."

Wharton gave a quick nod.

"Yes; I don't care if it is the Bounder. I'm going to look into it. Come on, you fellows."

And Wharton, making up his mind, ran along the passage to No. 9.

Nugent and Hurree Singh and Mark Linley followed him, and Tom Brown and Ogilvy and Morgan, after a moment or two.

Wharton threw open the door of No. 9.

Vernon-Smith was gasping now, and he was certainly getting a very warm time. Carne had received a savage kick on the shins, and was hopping with pain as he thrashed the Bounder. He had completely lost his temper now, and was thrashing Vernon-Smith in the most brutal way.

"Help!" gasped Vernon-Smith, as the door flew open.

Wharton's eyes blazed.

"Let him go, Carne."

The senior paused for a moment, panting, and glared savagely at the Removites as they crowded into the study.

"Get out, you cubs!"

"Let Smith alone."

"I'm licking him."

"He's had enough, if he deserved it; and you're not a prefect, anyway. Let him alone!"

"Get out!"

"Rats!"

Carne panted with rage. But the Removites were in strength, and he had not the authority of a prefect to back him up. To touch a member of the Sixth was certainly a serious matter; but Harry Wharton & Co. had handled a Sixth Form bully before now, and Carne knew it. They were not afraid of him.

"Look here," he said, "I'm licking this whelp because——"

"Because I wouldn't go to the village and fetch cigarettes for him," yelled Vernon-Smith.

Carne shook him savagely.

"It's a lie!" he said. "He's been bullying the fags——"

Wharton's lip curled.

"A lot you care for that," he said.

"Look here, Wharton——"

"He's lying," said the Bounder. "He threatened me if I wouldn't fetch cigarettes for him, and now——"

"Hold your tongue——"

"I won't! I——"

"Take that!"

Carne's hand descended savagely again, and the Bounder roared and kicked. Harry Wharton sprang forward, grasped the senior by the shoulders, and whirled him away from his victim with a powerful wrench.

Carne relaxed his hold upon the Bounder, and staggered towards the table, catching at it only just in time to save himself from falling.

The Bounder retreated behind the Removites. He was untidy and gasping for breath.

"It's true what I've told you," he said, between his gasps. "He told me to fetch him cigarettes, and—and I wouldn't——"

"Turning over a new leaf—eh?" said Morgan.

"I—I——"

"I dare say he was afraid to go, after the lesson we've given him," grinned Ogilvy.

"Anyway, we've been educating him," said Nugent, "and we're jolly well not going to have Carne undoing the good work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe what Smith says," said Harry Wharton quietly, "Carne is a cad."

The senior turned upon him fiercely.

"Wharton! By George! I'll lick you——"

"You'd better not try!"

"I—I'll——"

"You'll have the whole family to tackle," said Nugent, with a grin. "Line up, you chaps!"

The Removites lined up, and as they were standing in front of Vernon-Smith the senior had no chance of getting at the Bounder of Greyfriars without tackling them.

And they looked rather too formidable to tackle, Carne thought.

He gave them a black look, and, after a moment's hesitation, strode from the study. The Removites grinned at one another.

"This is where we gloat," murmured Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His highness has walked his noble chalks! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton tapped Vernon-Smith on the arm.

"You're all right," he said, "you can always reckon on the Remove to back you up against bullying. And you've acted jolly decently, whatever your motive was."

"That's so," said Ogilvy. "Give him the benefit of the doubt. Even the Bounder can be decent at times."

"Three cheers for the Bounder!" grinned Nugent.

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"You beasts!" yelled Billy Bunter. "You burglars! You've scoffed my grub!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three raiders.

And the juniors chuckled and left the study.

"You see, our trouble with the Bounder wasn't wasted," Harry Wharton remarked, as he entered No. 1 Study. "We've educated him, you see. When he came here, he would have jumped at the chance of getting into the black-guardly swim with the smart set in the Sixth. Whatever his motive was, he's done right; and we back him up."

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, Bunter! Still in funds?"

"N-no," said Billy Bunter ruefully. "Mrs. Mimble is such an unbusinesslike woman. When I've explained to her that the whole modern system of commerce is built up on credit, and that men make millions of pounds simply by giving and taking credit, you'd think she'd understand, wouldn't you? But when I suggested letting a half-crown's worth of grub stand over till next week, she only sniffed. It's a curious thing. Women are clever at some things—cooking and so on—but they never seem to be able to understand business."

"Well, as your idea of business seems to be that people should give you things for nothing, I'm not surprised at it," Nugent remarked.

"Oh, really, Nugent! As a matter of fact, it isn't the—credit—"

"You'd get an extension of the belt, I suppose, and perhaps you'd burst," said Nugent.

"Better let ill alone. You eat enough for four as it is."

"I think it's fortunate I've got a good appetite, as I have to keep up my strength by taking constant nourishment," said Billy Bunter, blinking at them. "I think Mrs. Mimble is simply stupid in business. When the grub ran up to half-a-crown she made me pay for it, and wouldn't trust me for a tuppenny tart beyond."

"All the better for your inside."

"Oh, really, Wharton! You see, I'm hungry. You fellows treat me pretty meanly in this study. That beast Carne passed me in the passage just now, and gave me a kick. He looked in a fearful temper."

"Ha, ha! No wonder. He's just been turned out of No. 9. He wanted Smithy to fetch him cigarettes, and Smithy wouldn't. We had to persuade Carne to go," said Nugent.

"Oh! By the way, as it's your fault that Carne kicked me, you might lend me a tanner to get some sticking-plaster for the—the wound."

"Are you hurt?"

"Yes, aw-awfully," said Bunter, beginning to limp. "I—I think the bone is injured——"

"Sticking-plaster's no good for broken bones," said Nugent, with a shake of the head, "you'd better go and ask to be sent into the sanatorium, and have a doctor."

"Oh, really, Nugent! You see, on an extensive system of the bone that's injured, but the—the skin. A bit of sticking-plaster is the thing, and with a tanner——"

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"Let's look at the ghastly wound."

"I—I'm afraid to have it touched. It's so tender. You might give me a tanner to get some—some sticking-plaster, Wharton."

"You'd be sure to spend it in sticking-plaster," grinned Nugent.

"Well, perhaps some refreshment would set me up, and make me able to bear the—the agony better," said Bunter thoughtfully. "I'll have the sixpence, and——"

"Ha, ha! You won't spend it on sticking-plaster, you fat fraud!"

"Look here, Nugent, what does it matter to you how I spend my own money?" demanded Billy Bunter.

Nugent roared.

"Ha, ha! But it isn't your money, it's our money you want to spend."

"Oh, really, Nugent! As soon as you've handed me the tanner, it's mine——"

"But we haven't handed it to you, and we're not going to, either."

"Look here," said Bunter, leaving off his limp, as it was of no use, "you're a set of rotten, mean beasts——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And stingy rotters——"

"Ha, ha! Go it!"

"And miserly worms——"

"Hurrah!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and went out of the study and slammed the door, leaving the chums of the Remove roaring with laughter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Has Conscientious Scruples.

BILLY BUNTER frowned darkly as he went along the passage. He had lately consumed pastry to the value of half-a-crown, as well as his usual tea; but the fat junior was hungry again, and when Billy Bunter was hungry matters were serious. It was necessary to raise money, a task that Bunter always found difficult. As he never by any chance returned a loan, lenders were naturally few and far between. The fat junior looked in at No. 9, in the hope of getting a little cash from Vernon-Smith; but he looked in on the Bounder at a most unlucky moment. Vernon-Smith was still smarting from the licking Carne had given him, and he greeted the Owl of the Remove with a scowl.

"I—I say, Smithy," said Bunter, a little disconcerted, "have you—er—had any more lines to-day?"

"No, I haven't."

"None since afternoon classes, either?"

"No."

"Then you don't want——"

"I want you to get out of my study," said Vernon-Smith.

"Yes—er—certainly. But——"

"Oh, get out!"

"Couldn't you lend me a little off——"

"Outside, confound you!"

"Well, look here," said Bunter, with a businesslike air, "I've got a postal-order coming to-morrow, and if you like to advance me——"

Bunter got no further. He made one bound out of the study as Vernon-Smith reached for a ruler, and the door slammed.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "Beastly parvenu—rotten newrich—sickening outsider! I don't know how I stand that cheap. Ever all I've done for him, too."

And Bunter went discontentedly down the passage. But a sudden thought came into his mind, and he grinned, and turned his steps towards the Sixth Form quarters.

The fat junior tapped rather nervously at the door of Carne's study, opened it, and blinked in.

The bully of the Sixth had his trouser-leg rolled up, and his sock pushed down, and was rubbing his shin with embrocation. He looked round savagely as Billy Bunter blinked into the study.

"I—I say, Carne," stammered Bunter, eyeing him nervously. "I—I hear that you want somebody to go down to the village for you, and—and I'll go, if you like."

Carne's expression changed.

"You can come in, Bunter."

Billy Bunter came in.

"Now, then, what is it?"

"I—I hear that you wanted Vernon-Smith to go and fetch you something, and he wouldn't," said Bunter. "I—I think a fag ought always to do what a senior tells him, you know, and—and I'd like to go."

"Oh, all right!" said Carne, feeling in his pocket. "Go down to the Golden Pig, and ask for the packet for Mr. Carne. They'll understand."

He handed the fat junior a two-shilling piece.

Bunter blinked at the coin.

"Am I to give them this, Carne?"

"Yes, of course."

"Will there be—be any change?"

"No."

"I—I say, you know, could you—er—lend me a couple of bob?" asked Billy Bunter. "I've got a postal-order coming by the last post to-night, but the tuckshop will be closed then, you know. If you could advance——"

"Get out!"

"A couple of bob——"

"Will you go?" roared Carne.

"But—but—I——"

"You can have a couple of the cigarettes when you bring them in," said Carne. "I'll give you twopence for yourself as well."

"Thank you, Carne; but if you could lend me——"

The senior made a movement towards the fat junior, and Billy Bunter skipped out of the study. He grunted discontentedly.

"Mean beast!" he murmured. "Fancy offering me twopence for running the risk of being spotted by a prefect and licked—perhaps expelled. Beast!"

Billy Bunter went away in a very thoughtful mood. He had offered his services to the senior in the hope of extracting something from Carne, but Carne was not of a generous nature, and not prone to give.

The fat junior was the last person in the world to undertake a long walk to oblige anybody, and the offered twopence—after the journey, too—did not appeal to Billy Bunter at all.

He walked downstairs with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a frown of deep thoughtfulness upon his fat brow.

A sudden slap on the shoulder woke him from his meditations, and he gasped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Thinking out a mathematical problem, Billy, or trying to get at a scheme for raising the wind?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Whence that pensive brow?" asked Bob Cherry, grinning.

"I—I was thinking——"

"Oh, I see! What made you start a new habit like that?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"But keep it up," said Bob encouragingly. "You'll find it hard at first, but you'll find it easier every time you do it, till at length——"

"Don't be an ass, Cherry! The fact is, I was turning over a question of right or wrong in my mind, and I don't quite know what to do."

"My hat! Here's Bunter bothering over moral questions!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Here, you fellows, gather round! Bunter in the throes of a conscientious problem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"What's the matter, Bunty?" asked Wharton. "Are you trying to think out a scheme for paying off your debts?"

"My hat! Is he a giddy millionaire, then?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows might advise me," said Bunter. "I don't want to do wrong."

"First time you've had any doubts on the subject!" said Nugent. "But go ahead! What's the giddy problem?"

"Suppose a chap wanted me to break the rules of the college——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Go on! This is getting interesting!"

"By making a secret excursion to the village——"

"Good! The plot thickens!"

"Go ahead, Bunter! You shut up, Bob!"

"Well, then, suppose I was asked to fetch in smokes for a senior—I won't name any names——"

Wharton's brow darkened.

"Has Carne asked you to do it, as Smith won't?" he exclaimed.

"I don't want to mention any names!"

"Well, go ahead!"

"Ought I to go?" demanded Billy Bunter. "That's the question on my mind. I said I'd go, in the heat of the moment——"

"You young sweep!"

"Well, you see, it's occurred to me that I oughtn't to go," said Billy Bunter. "Ought I to go when I said I would, when I know I oughtn't to?"

"You oughtn't to go, and you sha'n't go!" said Harry Wharton. "If I catch you going out of gates, I'll lick you with a cricket-stump!"

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"Oh, really Wharton——"

"Mind, I mean it!"

"But—but suppose Carne goes for me?" faltered Bunter. "Will you fellows stand by me? He's such a bullying beast, you know!"

"Of course we will," said Bob Cherry. "That's all right!"

"Yes; but——"

"You can rely on us," said Wharton. "We stood by Smith, and he's a bounder and an outsider. If you want to do the decent thing, you may be sure you can rely upon us to help you. We're only too glad to see you acting decently for once!"

"Well, you see, I—I thought that as I had conscientious scruples about going, I—I ought to ask you fellows to advise me."

"Well, you're not going; that's settled! We'll look after you if Carne gives you any trouble, and we'll rag you baldheaded if you do go!"

"I sha'n't go," said Bunter.

"That's right!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bravo, Bunter!"

And he gave the fat junior an appreciative slap on the back that knocked nearly all the breath out of the Owl's fat body.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
The Feed That Vanished.

HARRY WHARTON looked a little perplexed as he gazed after Bunter, who—still gasping from Bob Cherry's vigorous mark of appreciation—was hurrying across the Close to Mrs. Mimble's little shop. The captain of the Remove could not understand the attitude Billy Bunter had taken up.

"I don't quite catch on to that," he remarked. "Bunter hasn't the least scruple about fetching in anything, if it were a bottle of brandy instead of a box of cigarettes. Why did he tell us about it?"

"Perhaps he's too lazy to go?" suggested Tom Brown.

"Maybe Carne isn't giving him anything for his trouble," Nugent observed.

Wharton nodded.

"H'm! I suppose that's it."

And the matter dropped. But for whatever motive Bunter had refused to go to the village for the Sixth Form bully, Harry Wharton & Co. meant to stand by him if he were called to account for it.

That Bunter had received the money for the cigarettes from Carne, and did not mean to return it to the senior, never even crossed their minds. Honest as the daylight themselves, every fresh piece of dishonesty from Billy Bunter came as a surprise to them.

The Owl of the Remove scuttled away towards the tuckshop, and he found Bulstrode and Hazeldene there.

"Hallo! In funds again, Bunter?" exclaimed Bulstrode, as the fat junior came puffing in.

"Well, I've got a couple of bob," said Billy Bunter. "It isn't really mine—it's a—a loan, and I'm going to repay it out of my postal-order to-night."

"Oh, you're getting a postal-order to-night, are you?" asked Hazeldene, with a grin.

"Yes. If you'd like to advance me a few bob of it, Hazel, you can have the postal-order when it comes, and I'll stand treat now!" said Bunter generously.

"Thank you for nothing!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! I'm thinking of standing a party on Saturday afternoon, on the occasion of the Topham senior match, and asking your sister and her friends from Cliff House, and——"

"Where are you going to get the tin?"

"Well, I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, I've got other resources!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I can raise money by the use of my brains! A fellow of my ability——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted, and turned to the counter.

"Ginger-pop, please, Mrs. Mimble," he said, "and jam tarts!"

"Standing treat all round?" asked Bulstrode, with a grin.

"Well, I should like to, Bulstrode, you know; but I've got a delicate constitution, and I'm bound to eat a certain amount to keep my strength up!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "Otherwise, I'd be jolly glad to stand you something! Of course, if you like to advance me something off my postal-order——"

"It's jolly near time for the postman now," said Bulstrode, looking at his watch.

"Yes; my postal-order may come any minute. I've got just two bob, Mrs. Mimble, and I want ginger-beer, jam tarts, cream puffs, and ices to that amount. If you like to give me credit for an extra couple of bob, I'll settle out of my postal-order!"

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Mrs. Mimble did not deign to reply to that remark.

She set out eatables and drinkables to the exact amount of Bunter's two-shilling piece, and Billy reluctantly handed that coin across the counter.

Bulstrode winked at Skinner, and stepped outside the shop. It was dusky in the Close, and the lights from the windows were gleaming out over the trees.

Bulstrode rushed back into the tuckshop.

"Bunter! Bunter!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Yes, Bulstrode?" said Billy, with his mouth full of jam tart.

"Are you expecting a registered letter?"

"Yes."

"A very heavy one—feels as if it were full of coin?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Then you'd better cut after the postman," said Bulstrode. "I suppose he couldn't find you at the House to sign for it, and he's taking it——"

Billy Bunter did not wait to hear the rest.

He dashed out of the tuckshop, with a glass of ginger-beer in one hand and a half-eaten jam tart in the other.

"Where is he, Bulstrode?" he gasped.

"Cut off to the gates, Billy!"

"Right! Thanks!"

And Billy Bunter tore away towards the gates through the dusk.

Bulstrode strode up to the tuckshop counter. Mrs. Mimble had gone back to her little parlour. Skinner grinned.

"Has the postman been?" he asked.

"Possibly; I haven't the faintest idea!" said the Remove bully, helping himself to Billy Bunter's feed. "Try these tarts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ginger-pop's good, too!"

"What-ho!"

Snoop came into the tuckshop, and glanced at them.

"What's the matter with Bunter?" he asked. "He's just passed me going towards the gates, tearing along as if he had Gosling's terrier after him!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's all right! I think he's taking exercise to get up an appetite," said Bulstrode. "Have some of these tarts; it's Bunter's treat!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Try the ginger-pop, too!" said Bulstrode liberally.

"Hurrah!"

The three worthies wired into Billy Bunter's feed, and made havoc with it.

The last crumb almost had vanished under their vigorous onslaught, when the fat junior, blown and breathless, presented himself at the door again.

"I—I say, you fellows, he was gone!" he gasped.

"Gone?" said Bulstrode.

"Well, I couldn't find him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" growled Billy Bunter. "It's no joke, having to wait till to-morrow morning for my remittance! Why—what—how—who—where's my grub?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really! Oh, ow! Where's my feed?" yelled Bunter.

The three young rascals simply roared.

Bunter blinked at the few crumbs remaining, and then at the yelling Removites, and understood. He knew now that the postman and the registered letter had been figments of Bulstrode's fertile imagination, and that he had been tricked into leaving the tuckshop while the juniors "scoffed" his feed.

The fat junior's feelings were too deep for words.

He stood blinking at the three, who were almost going into hysterics by this time.

"You—you beasts!" gasped Billy Bunter at last. "You—you burglars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You owe me two bob!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Look here, you cads——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode. "This is too rich! Ho, ho, ho! Come on! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three juniors, yelling with laughter, staggered from the tuckshop. Billy Bunter yelled after them:

"I—I say, you fellows! Beasts! Look here, Bulstrode, you ought to pay up, you know—like a decent chap! Rotter! Do—do the decent thing—cad, beast!"

The laughter of the practical jokers died away in the Close, and Billy Bunter was left alone with the crumbs of his feed—a sadder and wiser junior.

NEXT WEEK: "THE REMOVE EIGHT." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Bunter in Distress.

CARNE put his head into the junior common-room later in the evening, and looked round with a knitted brow. Most of the juniors who happened to be there glanced at him.

"Lost anything, Carne?" asked Skinner, with veiled impertinence.

Carne scowled at him.

"No."

"Oh, I thought you might have lost your temper!"

Skinner dodged round the table as Carne made a step into the room.

The Sixth-Former checked himself.

"I'm looking for Bunter," he said. "He isn't here?"

"No," said Stott. "He's big enough to be seen."

"Saw him last in the tuckshop," grinned Skinner.

"Oh, if he comes in, tell him to come to my study."

"All right."

And Carne departed.

"What the dickens does he want with Bunter?" exclaimed Ogilvy. "He looks as though there might be trouble for Bunty."

"Oh, I know what it is," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter was told to fetch cigarettes for him, and he wouldn't go."

"Oh, is that it?"

"And if Carne goes for him there'll be a row," added Bob.

And he walked away to No. 1 Study to see Harry Wharton. Wharton and Nugent had finished their prep. when Bob arrived in the study.

"Bunter here?" asked Bob, looking round.

"No. Do you want him?"

"Not much!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But Carne does. He's looking for him, and he looks as if there's thunder in the air."

Harry Wharton's lips tightened.

"So he's after Bunter! All right; he'll have us to tackle as well."

"Hark!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh suddenly.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the corridor.

Billy Bunter came scuttling along like a frightened rabbit, and burst into the study, and slammed the door.

"I—I say, you fellows! Ow—oh!" he gasped.

"What's the matter, Billy?"

"Carne!" gasped the fat junior breathlessly. "He's after me."

"Oh, let him come."

"Lock the door!"

"No; let the door alone!"

"Just remember what you promised me!" howled Bunter, in mortal terror, as a heavy footstep sounded in the passage. "You're going to stand by me."

"In front of you would be better!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Get behind us, Bunter!" said Wharton crisply; and the fat junior obeyed—only too gladly. He shivered into a corner.

The door of the study was flung clanging open.

Carne's angry face looked into the room.

"Is Bunter here?" he demanded savagely, not for the moment seeing the fat junior crouching in the corner.

"Yes," said Harry quietly. "What do you want with him?"

"Come here, Bunter."

"I—I——"

"Come here!" roared Carne.

"Wharton, you—you said——"

"Stay where you are, Billy."

And Billy did.

Carne was trembling with anger.

"Will you come here, Bunter?" he said, between his teeth.

"I—I—I won't, you know. I—I'm sincerely sorry, but—but you see——"

"Shut up, Billy."

"Oh, really——"

"Shut up!"

Bunter quavered into silence.

Carne made a furious step towards him. Four determined juniors lined up in his path.

"Stand back, Carne," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You won't lay a finger on Bunter. We know all about your sending him for smokes, and we ordered him not to go—we wouldn't let him go. If you want to row anybody, you can row us."

"You young hound!" said Carne, almost choking with passion. "He came to me and offered to go——"

"Oh, really, Carne——"

"Is that true, Bunter?"

"Well, you see, I—I—you see, I—I wanted to be obliging, but—but I thought afterwards that I'd better not go, and—and you advised me not."

"Quite right. You had no right to send him, Carne."

"You interfering puppy!" shouted Carne, enraged at being placed in the position of being judged by a junior of the Lower Fourth. "If you give me any of your impudence, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

Wharton's lips set hard.

"You can begin as soon as you like," he said curtly. "There are four of us to tackle, if you do, you hulking rotter."

"That young thief has taken my money!" exclaimed Carne furiously.

Wharton started.

"What!"

"I gave him money to fetch the—to fetch something for me, and he didn't go, and he has kept the money!" shouted Carne.

"I didn't know that."

"Well, you know it now; and now, stand out of the way, and let me give him the licking he's earned," said Carne, more quietly.

"Wait a bit!"

Wharton turned to the fat junior, with an expression that made Billy Bunter quake more than Carne's furious anger had done.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Ye-e-e-es, Wharton."

"Have you got Carne's money?"

"No, I haven't."

That was true enough, for the money had been expended in the tuckshop.

"The lying young hound!" exclaimed Carne, in a rage. "I gave him a two-shilling piece, and he's got it now."

"Is that true, Bunter?"

"I haven't got a penny!" stammered Bunter. "You—you can search me, if you like. I haven't got any money."

"Did Carne give you any, though?"

"No; he refused to give me any, though I offered to repay it out of my postal-order, which is coming to-night for certain."

"He did not hand you any money at all?" asked Wharton, who knew the way Bunter could play round and round the truth without telling an outright lie, and yet managing all the time to convey a false impression.

"You said give just now," mumbled Bunter. "He didn't give me any."

"Did you receive any money from him for any purpose whatever?"

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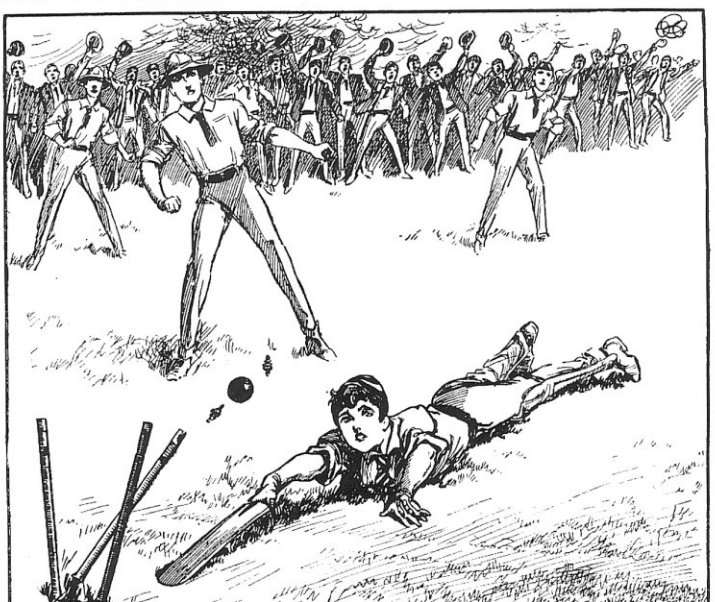

Harry Wharton, flinging himself down, just reached the crease with the end of his bat, when the ball crashed into the wicket. "Not out!" came from the umpire.

"Well, there was a two-shilling piece."

"He handed you that to get the cigarettes?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Did you return it to him?"

"Not yet."

"Oh, I see. Well, give it to him now."

"I—I haven't any money till my postal-order comes."

Wharton's brow grew black.

"Do you mean to say that you've spent Carne's money, Bunter?"

"No!" howled Bunter, desperate at the thought that the chums were going to abandon him to Carne's tender mercies, as he knew that he richly deserved. "No. I—I borrowed it for a time. I'm going to return it this evening."

"How?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"You young rascal! The last post is in already."

"Well, in—in that case the letter will be here to-morrow morning at the latest," said Bunter. "I hope Carne doesn't think that I want to keep his rotten two shillings. I shall settle up as soon as ever I get the postal-order cashed in the morning."

Harry Wharton stepped aside.

"I've nothing more to say!" he exclaimed angrily. "You've taken Carne's money, and you deserve the biggest hiding he can give you."

"Oh! Oh, really——"

"And I hope he'll lay it on well," said Nugent.

"Tho hopefulness is terrific."

"You—you said you'd stand by me if I didn't fetch the cigarettes!" howled Bunter, in great alarm. "You—you promised——"

"You had deceived us."

"Well, you promised, and—and you ought to keep your promise," wailed the unhappy Owl of the Remove. "Play the game, you know."

"Well, I like that, from you," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton snapped his teeth angrily.

"Tho fat owl cheated us out of that promise," he said. "Still, we made it, and we'll keep it. Carne was to blame in the first place for ever suggesting sending a junior for the cigarettes. You'll let him alone, Carne."

"Yes, rather!"

"Tho ratherfulness is terrific."

"You young hounds! Do you think I am going to be robbed, and——"

Wharton flung two shillings on the table.

"There's your money, Carne. Take it, and go!"

"I'm going to lick that young thief," said Carne, pocketing the money as he spoke.

"You're not."

Then the juniors and the senior exchanged a glance. But the juniors did not quail, and they looked too dangerous to tackle. Carne bit his lip.

"Very well; look out, Bunter, that's all!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Carne——"

The senior stamped furiously out of the study. Then the Famous Four turned grimly to the shaking Owl of the Remove. Bunter smiled a sickly smile.

"I—I'm much obliged to you fellows——"

"Don't speak to me," said Wharton, sharply. "You're what Carne called you—a thief. You have spent his money, and you know you can't pay it."

"But—but you've paid it, Wharton, so it's all right. It's not necessary for me to pay it now," said Bunter feebly.

"But if I had not——"

"But you have. What's the good of discussing 'ifs?'" said Billy Bunter. "Better let the subject drop. I'm willing to if you are."

"Why, you young rascal——"

"I don't think you ought to call me names, Wharton, just because I have conscientious scruples, and can't do some things that other fellows don't mind doing in the least," said Bunter.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If I wasn't pretty certain that Carne will get hold of you, and thrash you, I'd give you the licking of your life, this minute!" he said. "As it is, if you want me to keep my hands off you, you'd better get out of my sight!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Harry made a quick step towards him, and the fat junior scuttled out of the study, and his footsteps died away down the passage.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in Hot Water!

THE Owl of the Remove had been saved for the present; but he knew well that Carne was only biding his time. In fact, Bunter had probably made matters worse for himself, for Carne would have licked him, and let the matter drop, but now he was saving up his wrath, and he would probably make Bunter smart, in addition, for the humiliation he had had in backing down before the Famous Four. Billy Bunter's reflections were not pleasant that evening.

He kept a keen look-out for Carne, but the senior did not appear to be looking for him again, and bedtime came, and Bunter was still safe.

He breathed more freely when the Remove went up to their dormitory.

"Shouldn't wonder if Carne pays you a visit to-night, Bunter," said Snoop maliciously.

The fat junior started.

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"Better stay awake and watch," said Bulstrode, with a grin.

"I—I think I will!" stammered Bunter.

And he got into bed with the intention of staying awake, and fell asleep within five minutes. Bunter was almost as good at sleeping as at eating.

Carne did not, however, pay the Remove dormitory a visit. He had tried to score off the juniors that way before, but it had generally worked out to his undoing. He let the matter pass for that night, and on the morrow morning Billy Bunter hoped that his anger had had time to cool, and that the affair would be suffered to drop entirely.

Carne was very far from intending to pass it over.

Just before morning school Billy Bunter almost ran into him in the Close, and the senior reached out for him, and Bunter scuttled off just in time. He dashed into the Remove Form-room, and remained there till lessons commenced, palpitating. He was paying dear for that two-shilling-piece, especially considering that it had been expended chiefly in providing a feed for others.

Bunter was, for once, first in the Form-room that morning. And for once he was not looking forward to classes being dismissed. The thought of Carne waiting for him was a disturbing one. His absentmindedness in class was noticed by Mr. Quelch, and he was detained for half an hour after the others; but that punishment was the lightest that could have been meted out to the fat junior at that time. In the Form-room he was safe from Carne, at least.

Vernon-Smith received lines that morning, too, for having neglected his prep. the previous evening, and Bunter blinked with satisfaction when he heard the imposition given. He seemed to take a great interest in the new boy's lines.

The Remove went out, leaving Bunter sitting alone in the Form-room for the space of his detention.

When the half hour had ticked away on the Form-room clock, Billy Bunter was free to go, and he went. He blinked cautiously out of the Form-room before he left it, but the passage was clear. There was no sign of Carne.

At the end of the passage, however, he caught sight of the senior chatting with Ionides.

The Greek saw Bunter at the same moment, and muttered something to Carne. The senior turned his head.

He made a sign to Bunter to approach.

The fat junior hesitated.

"Come here, Bunter!" said Carne.

Bunter blinked round helplessly. In the open hall he felt that Carne could not "go for" him, and he approached the senior in a gingerly way, a great deal like a cat.

Carne looked at him grimly.

"Go to my study and fetch me a paper that's on the table," he said.

Bunter breathed more freely.

"Oh, all right, Carne! I—I'm sincerely sorry about that affair yesterday."

"Never mind that—go!"

"My postal-order didn't come this morning; there's been some delay in the post. It's bound to be here this evening, though, and I'll settle up."

"Get away!"

"Oh, really——"

Carne made an angry gesture, and Billy Bunter scuttled off to the Sixth-Form passage. The two seniors followed him with quick steps.

Bunter entered Carne's study, and looked for the paper on the table. He was glad enough to make his peace with the senior by performing a little errand like that. There was no paper on the table, and Bunter blinked round the study for it. He could not see it, and he was about to leave the study to tell Carne that he could not find it. But it was not so easy to leave the study. As he turned towards the door, the fat junior found the doorway blocked by Ionides and Carne.

He backed away in dismay.

"I—I say, you fellows, I can't find the paper," he said nervously.

Carne laughed sardonically.

"Nothing surprising in that," he remarked. "You see, there wasn't any paper there."

"Oh, really——"

"Shut the door, will you, Ionides?" said Carne. "You might stay in the passage for a few minutes to see that nobody comes in."

The Greek grinned and nodded.

"Right you are, Carne."

He closed the door, remaining outside. Bunter made an attempt to wriggle towards the door, but wriggled away again as Carne made a grasp at him. He dodged round the table, gasping with fear.

"I—I—I say, Carne——" he stammered.

He knew now that he had been tricked into entering the study, so that Carne could have him at his mercy, and his heart thumped as the senior picked up a cricket stump.

Carne laughed unpleasantly.

"You're going through it now," he said. "You offered to go to the village for me, and you stole my two shillings. Now you're going to pay for it."

"Wharton has paid you, and——"

"Come here!"

Billy Bunter made a rush to the window, which was open. He had a wild hope of sighting a friend in the Close and yelling for help. As it happened, four or five juniors coming up to the cricket-field were passing within easy distance of the study windows, and Bunter's heart beat as he saw them.

"Wharton!" he yelled. "Rescue! Carne——"

The next moment a fierce grasp whirled him away from the window, and the sash was jammed down.

But Harry Wharton had heard.

Carne dragged the fat junior away from the window, and gritted his teeth as he forced Bunter's plump person across the table.

"Now you fat cad!" he exclaimed.

"Ow!" roared Bunter, in anticipation.

Carne laughed, and the stump rose and fell.

Billy Bunter had reason to yell then in earnest.

And he yelled.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Take that!"

"Ow! Yow! Yoop!"

"And that!"

"Yaroob! Yoop! Rescue!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Carne's Threat.

HARRY WHARTON glanced up towards Carne's study window as he heard Bunter's shout. He saw the window jammed hastily down.

His eyes flashed.

"Bunter's in Carne's study," he exclaimed.

"Serve him right," said Bob Cherry. "But I suppose we must look after him."

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"You know what a brute Carne is!" said Harry. "Come on!"

The juniors ran into the house.

In a few seconds they were in the Sixth-Form passage, and running down to Carne's door. Ionides was leaning against the wall outside the study, and he smiled in his unpleasant, sardonic way at the sight of the excited juniors.

"You can't come in here!" he said.

Bunter's howls could be heard in the study.

"We are going in," said Harry.

"Stand back, you cub!"

"Get out of the way, Ionides!" said Harry, as the senior stood before the door, his brow dark with anger. "Mind, we're going in!"

"Stand back!"

"Charge!" shouted Wharton.

The juniors rushed forward.

But Ionides's craven heart failed him as they charged. He would have been rolled over in the passage if he had stood his ground; but he did not stand it. He stepped quickly aside, and the juniors reached the study door.

Wharton threw it open.

"Look out, Carne!" called in Ionides.

And he strolled down the passage, affecting an indifferent air.

The juniors rushed into the study.

Billy Bunter was sprawling, face downwards, across the table, and Carne was lashing him with the cricket-stump, and Bunter was howling wildly.

Wharton did not stop for words.

He ran straight at Carne, wrenched the stump from his hand, and flung it with a crash into the corner.

The senior turned upon him with blazing eyes.

In a moment they were gripping one another, and Wharton went to the floor under the weight and strength of the Sixth-Former.

But he did not let go, and Carne fell with him.

Billy Bunter squirmed off the table.

Although the licking had been soon interrupted, Bunter had suffered considerably, and the tears were streaming down his fat face.

"G-g-go for him!" he gasped. "Give him b-b-beans! The beast! He's b-b-broken my b-b-bones! I'm aching all over!"

"Collar the cad!" said Bob. "Get him off Wharton!"

And the senior was dragged off.

Wharton staggered to his feet.

"Cut!" said Nugent hastily to Bunter.

The fat junior did not need telling twice.

He scuttled out of the study, rushing down the passage blindly, and rushed fairly into the arms of Wingate, who was coming along.

The captain of Greyfriars staggered back, and only saved himself from falling by throwing his arms round Billy Bunter and hugging him.

"Ow!" roared Bunter, thinking that he had been captured by Ionides. "Yow! Leggo, you beast! Leggo, you rotten alien waster! Help!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Is it you, Wingate! I—I thought it was that Greek beast!"

"What the dickens are you racing about like that for, Bunter?" exclaimed Wingate, grasping the fat junior by the shoulder. "Have you been playing tricks on Ionides?"

"N-no!"

"What's that row in Carne's study?"

"I—I—I don't know!"

Wingate released the Owl of the Remove, and strode into Carne's study. Bunter scuttled off breathlessly. He did not desire to figure in the explanations that would doubtless follow.

Carne had seized the cricket-stump again, and seemed about to hurl himself upon the juniors. They faced him resolutely. Carne was stuttering with rage.

Wingate gazed at the scene in astonishment.

"What's the row here?" he exclaimed.

Carne glared at him.

"Better put that stump down, Carne," said the Greyfriars' captain quietly.

The senior hesitated a moment, and then laid the cricket-stump on the table. He was trying to calm himself.

"What's the trouble, Wharton? What are you doing in Carne's study?"

"He was bullying Bunter," said Harry, in his quiet tones. "We came to interfere. He was licking Bunter with a stump."

Wingate's brow darkened.

"Carne——"

"And I'll lick him again," said Carne—"and Wharton, too! That cub has laid hands on me one of the Sixth! If you back up the juniors in that sort of thing, Wingate, you can bet on it that you won't be captain of Greyfriars long."

"Don't talk rot!" said Wingate irritably. "You had no right to thrash Bunter with a stump, whatever he had done; and you know it, Carne."

"I'll do as I like."

"What had Bunter done?"

"Never mind what he had done," said Carne, who did not care for the whole story to come out. "He cheeked me, anyway."

"That was hardly enough for a whaling with a cricket-stump."

"Are you going to dictate to me?"

"Yes; in anything of that sort," said Wingate gruffly. "I'm captain of Greyfriars, and I won't have any bullying. I dare say Bunter deserved a licking—he generally does—but you should draw a line."

He signed to the juniors to go.

Harry Wharton & Co. moved to the door. They had no desire to push the matter any further.

Carne made a step forward.

"That young cub has laid hands on me, I tell you, Wingate!" he exclaimed shrilly. "I'm going to lick him!"

Wingate shook his head.

"If you don't choose to tell me the facts, Carne——"

"Bunter has stolen money from me, and Wharton is backing him up!" said Carne savagely.

Wingate started.

"Impossible!"

"Ask him."

"What do you say, Wharton?"

"I say it's a lie!" said Harry, with flashing eyes. "Carne gave Bunter money to fetch cigarettes from Friardale. I never meant to say a word about it, but I have to now, as Carne chooses."

"To fetch cigarettes?"

"Yes."

"After what you promised me, Carne?"

"You're not my father confessor, I suppose?" said Carne sullenly.

Wingate compressed his lips.

"Go on, Wharton."

"Well, you know what Bunter is with money," said Wharton. "Carne knows it, too, and he oughtn't to have trusted him. Bunter spent the money, intending to repay it afterwards, when—when he had a postal-order. Of course, he ought to be licked. But I repaid Carne the money as soon as I heard of it."

"If you took the money, Carne, you should have let the matter drop," said Wingate. "You can't have it both ways. And you know jolly well the trouble you'd get into if it were known to the Head that you sent a junior for smokes. The best thing you can do is to let the matter drop at once. Bunter was a rotten rascal, but no worse than you were for tempting him."

"I—I——"

"You kids had better go——"

"And—and you back up the juniors in cheeking the Sixth like this?" exclaimed Carne furiously. "You think I'm going to let Wharton go, after he has struck me?"

"The fault was yours, to begin with," said Wingate, looking worried. "What do you want?"

"I'm going to lick that cub!"

"You're not."

"So you stand up for him?"

"Yes," said Wingate quietly. "If you hadn't acted like a cad in the first place, the trouble would never have arisen."

Carne drew a deep breath.

"You stand up for Wharton?" he said. "You back him up against me?"

"I don't know about backing him up, but certainly I'm not going to let you rag him, as you seem to have done with Bunter. If anybody wants a hiding, it seems to me that you want it yourself," said Wingate angrily.

Carne set his teeth.

"Very well. You choose to back up the Remove against the Sixth, and you can go to the Remove for your recruits for the First Eleven, if you like."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Carne, his voice trembling with anger—"I mean that if you stand by Wharton, if you interfere with me now, you can look somewhere else for a bat for the Topham match."

The juniors looked at one another. Nugent whistled softly. Wingate's brow grew black, and he looked hard at Carne.

ANSWERS 17

"You don't mean that, Carne?" he said.

"I do."

"You will be sorry for saying it presently. You kids can cut."

The juniors left the study.

"Mind," said Carne, "I'm in earnest. If you back up Wharton against me now, I don't play in the eleven to-morrow."

Wingate left him without a word.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trouble for the First Eleven.

BILLY BUNTER was in No. 1 Study, collapsed in the armchair and gasping for breath, when the Famous Four came in. The fat junior blinked at them. The four juniors were looking grim and serious.

"I—I say, you fellows, is it all right?" stammered Bunter.

"No; it's all wrong. Hold your tongue!" said Harry.

"But—but, I say——"

"Shut up, will you?" exclaimed Harry, so sharply that the fat junior gasped again. "You've made enough mischief."

And Billy Bunter sat silent, blinking at them.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry, after a few minutes' silence, broken only by the gasping of Billy Bunter. "I suppose Carne meant that?"

Wharton nodded.

"And we're the cause of it, in a way."

"Well, I don't see how we could have acted differently," said Nugent. "We had to get that fat brute out of Carne's hands in."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I—I say, is anything wrong?" said Bunter nervously.

"Yes, ass!"

"W-w-what is it?"

"Carne has refused to play for the First Eleven to-morrow!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, in great relief. "Is that all? Blessed if I didn't think it was something serious, from your looks!"

Bob Cherry made one step towards the fat junior. Billy Bunter looked at him, and was out of the chair and out of the study in a twinkling.

"The fat wastrel!" growled Harry. "He's always causing mischief. But this is too rotten. Carne meant what he said."

"If he doesn't play for the eleven——"

"Wingate will have to find another bat—almost at the last minute, too. Hang it! It's too bad."

"It's caddish of Carne."

"Of course; but what's Wingate to do?"

The juniors shook their heads.

That Carne should drag a private quarrel into such a matter as a cricket match was caddish enough, certainly; but that did not help Wingate. Where was the Greyfriars' captain to look for another bat as good as Carne?

There was not one in the Sixth, or the Fifth either, as the juniors well knew. Carne had been showing wonderful form lately. Other fellows could have been found to equal him, and to surpass him, in the field or with the ball; but, as it happened, the First Eleven was in need of strong batsmen just then, and Carne was just what was wanted. If a weaker player was put into his place, it might mean all the difference between victory and defeat—and probably would.

The juniors felt culpable in the matter. Carne had acted like a cad; but what was Wingate to do? It would have been better to leave Bunter to take his licking—much better; a thousand times better, as Bob Cherry remarked. But how were the juniors to guess that Carne would take this line?

"I don't see that we're to blame, and I don't think that Wingate thinks so, either," said Harry, after a pause. "All the same, I feel very rotten about it."

"Same here."

"The shamefulness is terrific."

"I—I'd rather have taken the licking from Carne that he wanted to give me," said Harry ruefully, "rather than get old Wingate into the like this."

"Carne will cry off," said Nugent. "It stands to reason he will. He's not such a mug as to throw up a chance of playing in the First Eleven."

"I don't know. He's an obstinate rotter, and he thinks Wingate can't do without him."

The chums of the Remove discussed the matter for some time with clouded faces. They had not been really to blame, but it was through them that the trouble had come, and they felt decidedly disturbed about it.

And they were concerned for Greyfriars, too.

Wingate's eleven, at the best, could only be considered a match for Topham; in any case, there would be a hard fight for victory. If it were weakened at all, Topham would probably sweep all before them.

And Greyfriars wanted to win what was one of the hardest fights of the season.

There wasn't a little fag in the Second Form or the First Form who didn't long to see the Greyfriars' colours triumph in the Topham match.

The bell for afternoon classes called the chums of the Remove to their Form-room. They had been very silent over dinner, very silent after. There was nothing to be said; they could not interfere in the matter. They would have greatly enjoyed getting Carne into the Remove quarters and ragging him; but that was impossible, and would not have helped matters much, anyway.

Afternoon school passed over, and when Harry Wharton & Co. came out they found that most of Greyfriars knew of the split in the First Eleven.

That Carne had refused to play for the First was a topic in every study and in every passage.

The cad of the Sixth made no secret of it, or that he was willing to come to terms if Wingate liked.

"Have you heard?" exclaimed Temple, of the Upper Fourth, joining Wharton when the Fourth Form came out.

Wharton nodded.

"About Carne you mean? Yes."

"He says he won't play for the First against Topham, unless Wingate says he's sorry."

"Wingate won't do that."

"Rather not. I don't know what the row was about. Carne was bullying, I suppose? There was a junior mixed up in it. Know who he was?"

"Yes—myself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Temple, with great interest. "What was the row?"

"Carne was bullying, and Wingate stopped him—that's the long and the short of it."

"Just as I guessed."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"Wingate wouldn't give in, I know that," Fry remarked. "He couldn't. But if he doesn't, Carne won't play for the eleven."

"He'll lose his cap for good, then."

"He doesn't seem to care."

"I hear that the Sixth are going to remonstrate with the brute," said Temple. "Look there—there he goes!"

Carne had come out of the house, and was sauntering across the Close with his hands in his pockets.

There was a considerable amount of swagger in his walk.

The furore that had been caused by his refusal to play for the First Eleven had flattered him enormously, and his conceit was swelling almost visibly.

He had been glad, in the first place, to get his cap for the First Eleven, and he had worked hard to get it and to keep it.

But his success had got into his head; and Loder had not failed to point out to him that he was more valuable to Wingate than Wingate was to him. He had spoke in the heat of rage about resigning from the eleven. But now he was glad that he had spoken.

He had little doubt that Wingate would come round and eat humble pie, and ask him to play, for the sake of the side, and then Carne would take up a position of superiority it would be hard to dislodge him from.

Carne was suffering very much from swelled head just at present. Valuable as he knew himself to be to the team, he had hardly expected his defection to make so much excitement as this.

If Wingate himself had been unable to play, it could hardly have caused more dismay in the team and in the school generally.

Carne felt that his true value was being recognised now, and he was in no hurry to depart from the position he had taken up.

If Wingate were sufficiently civil, he would come round, and he would consent to play, but he would keep the Greyfriar's captain on tenterhooks of suspense for some time as a punishment for having offended him.

Such were the thoughts that were passing in Carne's mind as he swaggered into the Close after lessons that day.

The juniors eyed him with disgust.

"The cad, he's pleased with the trouble he's giving," said Wharton. "Anyone but a rotten worm would be quiet about it, at least."

"He thinks Greyfriars can't do without him," said Bob Cherry, with a sniff.

"Yes, and the worst of it is, that as far as the Topham match goes, he's right."

"Worse luck."

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"The worse-luckfulness is terrific."

"There are the fellows going to him, as if he were a giddy emperor!" snorted Temple, as Courtney and North and some more of the First Eleven came up to Carne. "Like a blessed Czar holding a court."

"The rotter!"

"Let's see how it goes."

And a crowd of fellows gathered round the seniors in the Close. Carne smiled with self-satisfaction. He felt that all Greyfriars was hanging on his words, waiting for his decision, and that was what he enjoyed.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
No Surrender.

COURTNEY was speaking to Carne. Courtney was Wingate's special chum, and had never liked Carne; and liked him less than ever now. But for the sake of the team, he had constrained himself to speak civilly to the cad of the Sixth.

"You don't really mean it, Carne?" he was saying.

Carne shrugged his shoulders.

"What are you speaking about?" he asked.

"You know what I mean," said Courtney tartly. "About your resigning from the eleven for the match to-morrow."

"I mean every word I said to Wingate."

"You are not playing?"

"Not unless Wingate comes round."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't mind explaining. I've been cheeked by a young sweep in the Remove, and Wingate takes his part. You all know how he backs up the juniors."

"Rot!"

"True enough," said Ionides. "He does."

Courtney turned on him angrily.

"You shut up!" he exclaimed. "You don't play cricket, and you won't get anybody to put up with your rot."

The Greek flushed.

"Look here, Courtney——" he began.

"Shut up!"

And two or three of the seniors elbowed Ionides out of the way. They had to be civil to Carne; but similar insolence from the Greek they had no object in putting up with, and did not mean to put up with.

"Now, then, Carne——"

"Well, you know how the case stands," said Carne. "Wharton was an insolent cub, and ought to be licked. I was going to lick him, but I'm willing to leave it to Wingate as captain of the school, and a prefect. If he chooses to see the matter in a proper light, I'm willing to do anything to oblige."

"What has licking a junior got to do with the Topham match."

"Oh, nothing."

"Then why shove in the two together?" exclaimed North. "Hang it all! You ought to have more sense, Carne; and more decency, too."

The senior shrugged his shoulders again.

"I've said my say," he replied. "I don't see why we should all knuckle under to Wingate because he's captain of the school, especially when he backs up the juniors against the Sixth. I've had enough of that."

"Come to the point. What do you want?"

"Nothing."

"You are determined not to play for Greyfriars in any case, then?"

"Oh, no. If Wingate comes round——"

"What do you mean by coming round?" said Courtney.

"Well, I think he should say that he's sorry for interfering with me in my own study, and give that junior cub a licking."

"If he's decided not to, you can't expect him to go back on his own word, Carne."

"I don't care whether he does or not. I know jolly well that I sha'n't play for Greyfriars to-morrow unless he comes to my terms."

"Then," said Courtney hotly—"then, you're a rotten cad, Carne, and I tell you so to your face."

Carne yawned.

"Thanks," he said.

Courtney clenched his fists, and strode angrily away. Two or three other Sixth-Formers remonstrated with Carne, but without effect.

"I'm upholding the dignity of the Sixth," he said. "I don't see why we should all kow-tow to Wingate as if we were Fourth-Form fags."

But there were very few to agree with Carne in that view. Ionides, and Loder, and one or two more; but the mass were against him.

He knew it very well, but he did not care.

He felt that he was in a strong position, and he did not mean to abandon it. Wingate must ask him to play, or face almost certain defeat on the morrow.

"The cad!" said Wharton, as Carne walked away.

And several of the juniors howled after the senior:

"Cad!"

Which Carne thought it better to pretend that he did not hear.

Harry Wharton thought the matter over, and then made his way alone to Wingate's study. The captain of Greyfriars was there, talking to Courtney, as Wharton came up to the open door.

"He says you've to say you're sorry, and to agree to Wharton having a licking, or he won't play," said Courtney gloomily.

Wingate snapped his teeth.

"I sha'n't do either," he replied.

"I told him so."

"What then?"

"He said that if you didn't, he wouldn't play. And—and I believe the howling cad means it," said Courtney.

"I think—— Hallo, Wharton! What do you want?"

The Greyfriars' captain spoke irritably. He had had plenty to try his temper just lately. Wharton coloured.

"I—I'm sorry if I'm interrupting, Wingate."

"What do you want?"

"Only a word."

"Sharp, then."

"I—I wanted to tell you that—that if I could do anything, I was willing," said Wharton, stammering a little. "I'm willing to let Carne give me a licking if he's so set on it, I mean. I can stand it."

Wingate's expression softened.

"All right, Wharton. I won't allow you to do anything of the sort; but it's decent of you to offer. I wouldn't give in to injustice if it cost Greyfriars every match in the season. Cut!"

Wharton departed.

He had said what he had come to say, and that was all. Wingate turned to Courtney with a thoughtful frown on his face.

"That's a decent lad, Courtney," he said.

Courtney nodded indifferently.

"Yes; but what's to be done about the eleven to-morrow?"

"I'll speak to Carne."

"Could you—could you meet him half-way?" said Courtney hesitatingly. "Say that you're—well, you're sorry there was trouble, or something like that."

Wingate's face set hard.

"If I let Carne dictate terms to me, old man, how shall I ever keep the team in order?" he said. "A cricket captain can't kow-tow to a chap who gets a swelled head. Carne will have to toe the line or get out of the team."

"And the match to-morrow?"

"It must take its chance. Carne has acted like a cad all through, and I can't pretend to think he's done anything else. I'll speak to him, and give him a last chance of playing Topham."

"And if he declines?"

"He'll decline for good, then," said Wingate. "He'll never play for Greyfriars again while I'm captain, if he leaves us in the lurch like that. And we'll play Topham without him."

"It means a licking."

"I'm not so sure."

"I've above our strength, anyway," said Courtney, with a shake of the head. "It's a tough fight, and very likely a licking, anyway. But with a weaker side than we have already, they may beat us by an innings."

"Oh, don't be a Jonah, old chap!"

"I'm looking at the facts."

"So am I; and one fact is, that I'd rather never win again for Greyfriars than allow the biggest cad in the school to dictate to me," said Wingate. "But an idea's just come into my mind—we're not so hard up for a new batsman as I thought. I wonder it didn't occur to me before."

Courtney stared at him.

"Whom are you thinking of?" he asked.

Wingate smiled as he rose from his chair.

"I won't tell you till after I've seen Carne. I don't say I like the idea, but—any port in a storm. Wait a minute."

He left the study.

Carne had come in, and Wingate, looking into his room as he passed, found the cad of the Sixth there. Carne looked up as he stopped in, and met a very grim look from the Greyfriars captain.

"Hallo!" he remarked. "You've come to speak about the match?"

"Yes."

"Are you coming to terms?"

"What terms?"

"I've told Courtney," said Carne, with a yawn. "I suppose he's told you?"

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"Never mind what Courtney's told me; tell me yourself," said Wingate, in a cold and uncompromising tone.

"Well, if you care to say you're sorry——"

"Sorry for what?"

"For interfering with me in my own study."

"For stopping you acting like a cad and a brute," commented Wingate. "Go on."

Carne flushed angrily.

"Put it like that if you like. And if you like to let Wharton have his licking——"

"It is not likely!"

"Then I stick to my word."

"I shall not give up an atom on either point, Carne," said the Greyfriars' captain. "That's understood, to start with. Not an atom."

"Very well; you know the consequences."

"You refuse to play to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Carne defiantly.

"You are acting like a low-down cad."

Carne shrugged his shoulders.

"Mind," said Wingate, with a blaze in his eyes, "I don't ask you to play. I offer you the chance of playing, if you choose."

"Thank you for nothing."

"I want one word from you—yes or no. Are you playing in the eleven against Topham to-morrow?"

"No," said Carne.

"That's enough. You won't play to-morrow now, if you ask for it."

Carne sneered.

"I'm not likely to do that."

"Very well, you won't play; and you'll never play for Greyfriars again while I'm captain."

And without another word Wingate strode out of the study. Carne stood biting his lip a little dubiously. A doubt was creeping into his mind as to whether he had done so very wisely, after all.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
Wingate Finds His Man.

"YOU fellows done any lines?"

It was Billy Bunter who asked the question. The chums of the Remove had had their tea in the study, and were about to go down to the cricket-field. Billy Bunter was thinking of anything but cricket at that moment.

"No," said Nugent, shortly. "Don't bother."

"Haven't you had any impots. to-day?"

"No. What the dickens does it matter to you, anyway?"

"Oh, nothing."

Nugent glanced curiously at the fat junior. He remembered the lines that had been missing for the past few days, and wondered if they had any connection with Billy Bunter's unaccountable interest in the matter.

"Somebody had lines this afternoon," said Bunter meditatively.

"Ogilvy had some," said Nugent; "and Vernon Smith had an impot. this morning. Curious thing about Smith. He's had several impots. lately, and he never seems to do them, and yet he always takes them up in time."

"Ogilvy, eh?" said Bunter.

He said no more, but quitted the study, looking very thoughtful. Wharton took his bat out of the corner, and as he went to the door, Wingate looked in.

The Greyfriars' captain nodded genially to the juniors.

"Going down to practice?" he asked.

"Yes, Wingate."

"Good! I've been keeping an eye on you lately, Wharton. You're getting into good form. You batted splendidly against Topham Juniors on Wednesday afternoon."

Harry coloured with pleasure.

"Thanks, Wingate!"

"Not a bit of it! Come down now; I want to see you bat. I've my reasons."

The juniors followed Wingate out, somewhat surprised. The Greyfriars' captain took a keen interest in junior cricket, and helped the lads on in every way; but they were surprised, all the same, at the earnestness he showed now.

There were several members of the First Eleven on the ground when the chums of the Remove arrived with Wingate.

"We're ready," Courtney remarked.

"Right-ho! I want to see Wharton practise a little before we begin."

The seniors stared at him.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Smith major. "There isn't much time for watching fags at practice now, Wingate, is there?"

"You heard what I said."

"Oh, all right!" said Smith, shrugging his shoulders.

Wharton was quite as surprised as the seniors. But he knew how to obey, and he did not say a word against Wingate's orders.

"Get to the wicket, Wharton," said Wingate.

"Here?" said Harry, for they were on the senior ground, where the First Eleven had been about to begin practice.

"Yes."

Wharton obediently went to the wicket.

Wingate tossed the ball to Courtney.

"See if you can get him out in an over," he said.

Courtney laughed.

"I'll try."

He walked down the pitch. Harry Wharton, surprised as he was by the unaccountable behaviour of Wingate, took up his position, determined to do his best. Splendid batsman as he was for a junior, he knew that it was quite a different matter facing senior bowling, especially Courtney's.

Courtney sent down a fast ball, and Wharton stopped it. Then a slow one, and he stopped that. Then a medium one, and that was stopped. Then a fast again, and Wharton let the willow go at it.

Smack!

The ball went away down into the long-field, and a junior fielded it.

Wingate grinned.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

Courtney set his lips rather tightly as Morgan tossed the ball in to him. He did not like the idea of a junior standing up against his bowling.

"Finish the over," said Wingate.

Courtney finished it, and Wharton's wicket was still intact. The Removites looked on in great glee, and a crowd of fellows were already gathering to look on too. Among them was Carne, who was curious to see what was going on.

"What the dickens is Wingate at, Loder?" he asked the prefect, who was with him. Loder shook his head.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "He's always making a fuss of the young cubs, that's all. I don't see what the game is this time, though."

Wingate sent on bowler after bowler of the First Eleven to bowl against Harry Wharton.

The junior was in splendid form. He defended his wicket well, and it was hardly in danger once in a dozen overs.

Wingate looked on with a grin of satisfaction.

It was not till Wharton had lived through fourteen overs from the best bowlers in the Fifth and Sixth that he was caught out by Smith major—bowled and caught.

"Jolly good!" exclaimed Wingate. "We have chaps in the team who wouldn't put up a better show than that, Courtney."

"Quite so. But——"

"But what?" grinned Wingate.

"I don't see what you're getting at."

Wingate chuckled.

"Good! Go to the wicket."

"The wicket!"

"Yes; Wharton is going to bowl you."

"Oh, all right!" said Courtney resignedly, humouring his chum.

He carried his bat to the wicket, and Wingate tossed the ball to the junior.

"Try an over," he said.

"All right, Wingate."

And Wharton, who had not shown a sign of fatigue yet, went on to bowl. He sent down some bowling that made Courtney realise the fact that all the good bowlers of the school were not in the Upper Forms.

Five times Courtney found that he had to look out to keep his wicket up, and the sixth time he looked out in vain.

The ball curled in under his bat, and there was a clack, and his middle stump and his bails went to grass.

"Phew!" said Courtney.

Wingate laughed.

"We're going to play now," he said; "Wharton will field."

"What the dickens——" began Smith major.

"Don't argue, old chap; do as I say."

And the perplexed Sixth-Formers obeyed. They bowled and they batted, and Wharton was put in the slips to field. And it was not long before he made a very good catch off Smith major's batting, whereat Smith, of the Sixth, did not look over pleased.

Wingate clapped his hands.

"Good enough!" he exclaimed.

"What does he mean?" muttered Carne.

Loder shrugged his shoulders. Wingate signed to Harry

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Wharton to come to him, and the Removite, as much puzzled as anybody else, came up.

Wingate glanced round at the perplexed Sixth-Formers.

"I suppose you don't know what I've been driving at," he remarked. "I should think you might have guessed, though. We want a recruit for the First Eleven to-morrow, and we've found one."

Wharton's heart leaped into his mouth. Did Wingate mean—could he mean—— The junior's head swam for a moment.

"What!" yelled Carne.

And Courtney gasped.

"What! Wingate! What!"

"We've found the recruit we wanted."

"You've found him! Who?"

"Harry Wharton!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.
The New Recruit.

"HARRY WHARTON!"

The name was uttered in tones of amazement by seniors and juniors alike.

Wharton stood silent, his cheeks burning.

For a junior to be played in the First Eleven, into which Fifth and Sixth-Formers competed to enter, was an unknown thing.

He was dazzled for the moment.

The seniors stared at Wingate, and there was a chorus of amazement.

"Wharton!"

"A junior!"

"In the First Eleven!"

"Rot!"

"Look here, Wingate, old chap——"

"Dash it all——"

"My word!"

Carne strode forward angrily.

"Are you serious?" he exclaimed. "You're going to play a junior in the First Eleven, against a team like the Topham?"

"What the dickens has it to do with you?" said Wingate coolly. "You're not in the eleven."

And Carne bit his lip hard.

"But really, Wingate——" began Courtney.

"I've chosen Wharton to fill the vacant place in the eleven," said Wingate quietly.

"But really——"

"You've chosen Wharton?" said Smith major, "a junior—in the Lower Fourth."

"I've said so."

"But look here——"

"Hang it all, Wingate——"

"What do you say, Wharton?" exclaimed the Greyfriars' captain. "You haven't spoken yet. You'd like to play for the First?"

Wharton's cheeks were red, his eyes gleaming.

"Yes, rather, Wingate," he said promptly. "Of course I would. I'd give my little finger to play. But——"

"There are no 'buts' in the case."

"If you think I'm good enough, I suppose I am good enough," said Harry simply; "and I'll do my best."

"Bravo!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hurray!"

Wingate grinned.

"If you do your best, that's all right," said Wingate. "Well, what are you fellows looking like a set of moon-calves for?"

"Blow it!" said North. "I've never heard of playing a Lower Fourth fag in the First Eleven before, that's all."

"My dear chap, look at the thing sensibly. I've put Wharton through his paces; he has shown you what he can do."

"Yes; I don't deny that he's pretty good——"

"But a junior——"

"A Remove fag——"

"Any port in a storm," said Wingate. "I'd rather have put in a senior, Fifth or Sixth, but we haven't one. Wharton is in splendid condition, and he can be trusted to keep himself so. You've seen how he bats—and his bowling and fielding are good, too. We sha'n't need a bowler; but we're hard up for bats, and that's where he comes out strongest. I'm going to play Wharton."

"But a junior——"

"Oh, don't sing that same song over for ever and ever!" said Wingate good-humouredly. "If you fellows can suggest anything better, I'm willing to listen to reason; but I believe I know something about cricket."

"Well, yes, but——"

"But you know more, of course, Smith."

"Oh, no!" said Smith major hastily. "But——"

"Well, it's settled."

"Oh, all right, but——"

"Let's get some practice before it gets dark."

NEXT WEEK: "THE REMOVE EIGHT." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co By FRANK RICHARDS.

Wingate nodded to Harry, who left the ground with his chums, and the seniors turned to practice. Most of them were still looking surprised and very dubious. Wingate certainly had been in a hole for a man, but the expedient of playing a Lower Fourth cricketer in the First Eleven seemed a desperate one.

Carne could scarcely control his rage as he walked away with Loder.

He had hoped to put Wingate in such a hole that the Greyfriars' captain would have to eat humble pie, as Carne had elegantly expressed it to Loder.

The result had been, however, that Wingate had decided to do without him, and that a chance—the chance of a lifetime, had been given to Wharton, the junior whom Carne hated, and over whom he had quarrelled with Wingate in the first place.

The senior gnawed his lip savagely.

"He can't mean it," he said a dozen times to Loder. "He can't."

Loder shook his head.

"He must be pretty desperate to think of playing a junior in the First," he agreed. "Of course, Wharton is wonderful form for a junior."

"Yes, but in the First Eleven——"

"Of course, it's rot."

"And against a team like Topham——"

"Suicide, of course."

"Wingate ought to be stopped," said Carne savagely. "He's throwing away the match to spite me; that's what it amounts to. The committee ought to interfere with him."

Loder shook his head.

"That's impossible. If the committee interfered with Wingate in selecting the team, he'd throw up the captaincy on the spot. You know what he is."

"Something ought to be done."

"Well, you've placed yourself out of court, as a matter of fact, old fellow," said Loder, after a pause. "You see, you can't very well raise an objection to Wharton's being put in the team, when you got out yourself of your own accord."

"I didn't foresee anything like this."

"No; no one did. I fancy it only occurred to Wingate himself at the last moment, when he was casting round for anything or anybody to fill the place."

"It's sheer rot——"

"Of course it is; but Wingate's an obstinate brute."

"I believe it's only spoof, to make me come round," said Carne angrily. "I jolly well won't! I won't say a word."

"Perhaps if you went to Wingate and offered——"

"Well, I won't," said Carne sulkily. "If he wants me he can come and ask me. I won't say a word. I'm sure it's all spoof. He'll be round to my study this evening to ask me if I've changed my mind."

Loder shook his head; he did not think so.

The chums of the Remove saw Carne's face as he walked away from the cricket-ground, and Bob Cherry nodded towards him with a chuckle.

"Observe his highness's noble chivvy," he remarked. "I'll bet a week of Nugent's pocket-money that Carne would give a great deal to have his place in the eleven again. He was only bluffing all the time."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; "but the esteemed Wingate has promised the honourable cricketful prize to our worthy chum Wharton, and he will not return backfully upon his august word."

"Not likely!"

"If Carne came round, and Wingate wanted to give him the place, I should get out at once, of course," said Harry quickly.

"Of course. But Wingate won't change his mind; he's not the kind of chap. Besides, Harry," said Bob seriously, "to be frank, you're as good a bat as Carne any day in the week. Of course, he has the advantage of age, size, and strength; but you've got a better style at the wicket, and you're more fit. Wingate's done a jolly clever thing in putting you in."

"The cleverfulness is great."

"I agree with Bob," Nugent remarked. "Hang it all, why shouldn't a junior play? My belief is that Wharton could run Carne's head off in any game."

"Well, without bragging, I think I could stand up to Carne," said Harry; "but he's a jolly good batsman, all the same. Anyway, it's for Wingate to decide, and if he puts me in, I'll play my best for Greyfriars, and that's all there is about it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The news is getting round already!" grinned Bob Cherry, as Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, bore down upon them.

Temple, Dabney & Co. stopped directly in front of the

Removites and stared at them. They stared and stared, as if that was all they came for.

"Well," said Bob cheerily, "you'll know us again."

"Not if you wash yourself," retorted Fry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," began Bob warmly.

"Well, we're looking," said Temple. "We're trying to make it out. Is it really possible that one of you Remove kids is going to have the cheek to play in the First Eleven."

"Looks like it."

"Awful nerve, I call it."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Of course, it's a good idea to put a junior in the team," Temple observed; "but Wingate should have thought of the Upper Fourth."

"Oh, rather!"

"I'd have played with pleasure, or Dab——"

"Oh, rather!"

"But the pleasure would have been all on your side," said Nugent. "You must think of Wingate, too. He didn't want to throw the match away."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I understand it!" growled Temple.

"There are lots of things you can't understand," grinned Bob. "There are more things in football and cricket, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

"And you're really going to play, Wharton?" Harry laughed.

"Yes, really."

"Well, it's like your cheek."

"Better explain that to Wingate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I hope you'll do well, anyway," said Temple suddenly. "It will be a big thing to have one of the Lower School in the match, though I really think Wingate might have remembered the Upper Fourth. Good luck!"

"Thanks!" said Harry.

And Temple, Dabney & Co. were not the only ones who wished Harry Wharton good luck in the difficult part he had to play. The Remove were with him to a man, and the Upper Fourth, and the Second and Third, too. All the Lower School had resolved to turn up for the match and yell for their champion. Billy Bunter, when he heard about it, showed some enthusiasm, too.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you'll be standing a feed to celebrate it, won't you, Wharton? I'll come."

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.
The Mystery of the Lines.

THAT evening was a very jovial one to the chums of the Remove.

The whole Form was in high good-humour, and No. 1 Study was particularly merry.

They had a chum in the First Eleven, and that was quite enough to make Nugent and Hurrée Singh rejoice; and the prospect of a celebration feed made Billy Bunter rejoice, too.

Tom Brown and Bob Cherry, Mark Linley and Hazeldene, and the rest, congratulated Harry warmly, and without a trace of envy.

Even Bulstrode gave him a smack on the back, and said he was jolly glad there was a Remove chap in the First Eleven for once.

Harry, perhaps, was the only fellow who had any shadow on his mind.

He was naturally greatly elated at the honour done him; but his confidence in himself was not so unbounded as the confidence his chums had in him.

Suppose he should be bowled, perhaps first ball?

Supposing he should only add a duck's egg to the score for Greyfriars.

Such things had happened and might happen to the best batsmen; and if he were in the least nervous the Topham bowlers would make short work of him.

He set his teeth at the thought.

Topham should not dismiss him easily, at all events. He would play the game of his life; such a game as he had never played before. He would not make old Wingate sorry that he had put him into the team.

If he fumbled in the game now, he knew how awkward it would be for Wingate. The Greyfriars' captain had put him into the eleven against the general feeling of the whole team. If he proved no good, the fellows wouldn't say "I told you so!" to Wingate; but they would think it, and Wingate would know that well enough.

And when it was too late, doubts would cross the skipper's mind as to whether he had done wisely in braving the public opinion in the Sixth.

Wharton's brow clouded at the thought. He resolved almost passionately that he would play in a way that would uphold Wingate's judgment.

"It's all right!" said Tom Brown. "Win or lose, we shall have had a Remove chap in the First Eleven, and they can't get out of that. But we're going to win! Wharton will knock up thirty at least for Greyfriars."

Wharton smiled.

"I hope so," he said. "I'll try."

"Oh, you'll do it!"

"Dead cert.!" said Bob Cherry.

"The certfulness is terrific!"

Ogilvy looked into the study, where the Remove chums were eating roasted chestnuts and chatting. Ogilvy was looking rather excited.

"Any of you chaps been in my study?" he asked.

"No," said Bob, looking round. "What's the trouble?"

"Seen my lines?"

"Your what?"

"Lines!" howled Ogilvy. "Li-ne-es—lines!"

"What's the matter with your lines?"

"They're gone!"

"Oh! What sort of lines were they—clothes lines?" asked Bob humorously.

"Ass!"

"Or ancestral lines?"

"Chump!"

"Or military lines?"

"Don't be an idiot!" roared Ogilvy. "They're my lines I'd done for Quelch, and I've got to take 'em in before bed!"

"Well, take 'em in!"

"They're gone, I tell you!" roared the Scottish junior. "I had written them out, and left them on my study table, and now they're gone!"

"'Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away,'" Nugent remarked. "I suppose it's the same with lines. You remember what Quelch said: 'Keep an eye on your lines; no excuses accepted at the bar in future; only lines are legal tender.'"

"Oh, cheese it, you ass!"

"But, I say, this is very curious," said Mark Linley. "Everybody seems to have been missing lines lately. What's the good of them to the chap who takes them?"

"It must be a lark," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" said Bunter. "More likely it's a rat."

"Ass!"

"I think very likely it's a rat. You know how voracious they are, and perhaps they—they like the taste of the ink."

"Bosh!"

"Oh, really——"

Ogilvy came over to the Owl of the Remove, and grasped him by the shoulder, and gave him a powerful shake.

"Do you know where those lines are?" he demanded.

"Ow! Yow! Don't shake me, you ass; it disturbs my digestive system, and you may make my glasses fall off, and——"

"Do you know where those lines are?"

"——and if they break you'll have to pay for them."

"You fat waster——"

"Ow! Yow! Oh, really——"

"It's all right, Og!" said Tom Brown, laughing. "Bunter hasn't taken them. He's not had any impositions to do, and even Bunter wouldn't take them to eat!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

Ogilvy released the fat junior, who put his glasses straight and blinked at him angrily. The Scottish lad still eyed him dubiously, however.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "What does he mean with his rot about the rats eating them, then? I've heard him suggest that before, too. Looks to me as if Bunter knows something about it."

"Oh, really——"

"I can't understand it," said Nugent. "My lines have been taken, too. It looks to me as if someone has been taking our lines to palm off as his own. It would be easy enough, as Quelch never looks at them."

"Then the question is: Who's had any impots. to do lately?" said Tom Brown. "Anybody had one to-day, besides Ogilvy?"

"Yes; the Bounder!"

"My hat! Vernon-Smith! Why, he's just the sort of worm to collar another chap's impot.!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I know he's been showing up his lines as regularly as clockwork lately, too," remarked Bob; "and he never seems to write any, either."

"I'll jolly well speak to the Bounder!" said Ogilvy wrathfully. "If he's got my lines, I'll make him disgorge, and put his nose out of shape, into the bargain!"

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And Ogilvy left the study with a wrathful countenance. Billy Bunter squirmed uneasily in his chair.

"I—I say, Hazeldene, it was rotten to tell Ogilvy that Smithy had his lines," he said.

Hazeldene stared.

"What do you mean? I don't know whether Smithy has Og's lines or not."

"Well, you've put the idea into his head, and now——"

"By George, I believe Bunter does know something about those missing lines!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Brown——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?"

"My hat!"

"Hark!"

There was a sudden uproar in the passage. There was a yell, a trampling and scuffling of feet, and then Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, came hurtling into the study, gasping and panting. The cause of the hurtling was Ogilvy, who had a powerful grip upon the Bounder's collar, and upon the back of his jacket.

"There he is!" roared Ogilvy.

The juniors sprang to their feet.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Look at him!"

"What——"

"He's got my lines!"

"What!"

"I just caught him taking them in to Quelch!" gasped Ogilvy. "He's got them in his fist still, and I ran him in here to show him up before everybody! The rotter has been collaring our lines all the time, and palming them off as his own!"

"Shut the door!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter, trying to push past Bob Cherry, who was closing the door. "I—I want to see a chap——"

Bob pushed him back into the study, and closed the door, and put his back against it.

"The chap can wait!" he remarked.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Sit down!"

And Bob Cherry backed up his order with a shove that sent Bunter staggering into the armchair he had just quitted, and Bunter sat down with considerable violence.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.
Bunter, the Line Merchant.

VERNON-SMITH was gasping for breath, and could not find his voice for some minutes. The Scottish junior had not handled him gently. The sheets of foolscap fluttered from his hand, and Nugent picked them up and placed them on the table. All the juniors knew Ogilvy's writing, and they had no doubt of the guilt of the Bounder. Grim looks were cast upon him from all sides.

"You see it's my impot.?" said Ogilvy.

"Yes, rather!"

"He was just coming down the passage with it in his hand," said the Scottish junior. "I asked him where he was going, and he said he was taking his impot. to Quelch. I asked him to let me see it, and he did, and there was my own fist staring me in the face!"

"That's curious!" said Wharton.

"How so?"

"I mean, it's curious he should be willing to show you the impot. I suppose he knew you'd know your own writing!"

"Well, I should have made him if he hadn't been willing!" said Ogilvy, with a grin. "Then I collared him and rushed him in here."

"Let's be fair," said Wharton. "We all know that Smith has been a better sort since he came to Greyfriars. But I must say I didn't think he was the kind of chap to steal another fellow's lines. Bunter might do it——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"But I didn't think it of Smith. Let's give him a chance to explain."

"If he can explain having my lines in his hand, and going to take them into Quelch's study as his own, I'm willing to listen," said Ogilvy, with a sniff.

"Go ahead, Smith!" said Harry. "Can you explain?"

"I—I—I——"

"I—I—I!" mimicked Ogilvy. "Of course he can't!"

"Give him a chance!"

"Oh, go ahead with your lies, Smithy, and get 'em over!" Vernon-Smith glared round.

"I didn't know the lines were Ogilvy's," he said.

"You didn't write them yourself?"

"Of course I didn't!" said Vernon-Smith, with a curl of the lip. "I never do! I don't see the sense of writing out lines when you can get another chap to write them out for you!"

"You don't mean to say that Ogilvy——"

"I tell you I didn't know they were Ogilvy's. I bought them off Bunter, and I supposed that he had written them himself."

"What!"

"Bunter!"

It was a general roar.

"Yes," said the Bounder, with a vicious glance at the Owl of the Remove; "Bunter! I've bought a lot off him lately, and I understood that he had written them, or that they were given to him. He told me so!"

The fat junior rose to his feet.

The looks that were bent upon him from all sides made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

Contempt, it is said, will pierce the shell of the tortoise, but Bunter perhaps had a thicker skin than a tortoise, for contempt did not trouble him much. But he was in fear for his skin now.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered, "you—you know what an awful fibber Smithy is!"

"Did you sell Smith those lines?" asked Wharton sternly.

"Certainly not!"

"You deny it?"

"Of course! I hope you don't think I'd be capable of such a thing?"

"I jolly well do!" said Harry. "Did you sell him Nugent's and Bulstrode's lines?"

"Certainly not, Wharton!"

"He's sold me a lot!" said Vernon-Smith viciously.

"You ought to have known better," said Wharton. "It was a cad's trick, anyway!"

"The seniors do it!"

"Some of them—yes. But——"

"I'd rather pay money than fag over impots., and I don't see any harm in it!" said Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"You have too much blessed money!" growled Bob Cherry. "You might be a decent chap if you weren't such a blessed newrich!"

"Still, that's not the point now," Mark Linley observed. "The question is, whether Bunter sold the Bounder those lines? I believe he did!"

"Oh, really, Linley——"

"Bunter has been in funds lately," said the Lancashire lad quietly. "He's never explained where the funds came from, either."

"I—I——"

"Where have you been getting money from lately, Bunter?"

"You—you see, I——"

"I gave it to him for the lines," said Vernon-Smith. "He told me he wrote them, and that other fellows helped him sometimes."

"Oh, really, Smith——"

"Well, I must say it looks like the truth, though the Bounder says it," Ogilvy remarked. "It was odd his showing me the lines so readily, now I think of it, if he had taken them from my study himself."

"The oddfulness would be terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, alarmed by the looks of the juniors round him. "I—I say, I hope you won't take any notice of a chap like Smith. You know what a rank outsider he is."

"I believe he's speaking the truth," said Wharton. "Now, come to the point, Billy. Did you sell him those lines?"

"No, I didn't."

"Did you take them from Ogilvy's study?"

"Well, you see," stammered Bunter, who generally shirked the lie direct till it was too late. "I—I——"

"You did, then?"

"I—I might have moved them," said Bunter. "I didn't exactly take them. As for selling a fellow's lines, I'd scorn the action."

"You gave them to Vernon-Smith?"

"Well, perhaps—you see——"

"You said just now that you didn't?"

"I said I didn't sell them, Wharton. Don't put your own words into my mouth," said Bunter, reproachfully. "Play the game, you know."

Wharton glared. It was rather too much to be told to "play the game" by a fellow like Billy Bunter.

"You fat worm! So you gave them to Vernon-Smith."

"Yes—yes, perhaps I did."

"Did you or not?" roared Wharton.

"Yes!" gasped Bunter, with a jump.

"I gave him half-a-crown for them," said Vernon-Smith.

"It's a lie!"

"Why, you fat young rotter, you know I did! You've got it about you now, I believe. Look in his pockets."

"You—you needn't trouble," said Billy Bunter hastily. "I—I've got half-a-crown. Vernon-Smith lent it to me. I should scorn the idea of selling lines for money. It wouldn't be honest, and you chaps know how honest I am."

"We do," said Bob Cherry, with a grin—"we does."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

NEXT WEEK: "THE REMOVE EIGHT." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"I—I gave Smithy the lines as—as a favour, and he lent me the half-crown as—as another favour," said Bunter stammeringly. "I told him plainly that I should put it down to the account. Didn't I tell you so, Smith?"

"I don't know what rot you said," replied Smith. "I know I've paid you for the lines each time you've done any for me, and pretty high, too."

"I put it down to the account, and I shall certainly square up when my postal-order comes. I was sorry to put Ogilvy to any inconvenience—"

"You'll be sorrier shortly," said Ogilvy grimly.

"Oh—oh, really! I—you see, Ogilvy writes such a beautiful hand, I—I thought he ought to—to write some more, you know, and he's such a nice chap that—"

"Can't he turn on the soft sawder a treat?" said Ogilvy.

"He's going to get a first-class licking, all the same."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy, I'm sincerely sorry—"

"You can get out, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, opening the door. "I should recommend you to write your own lines in future, and not flash your filthy lucre about so much." He closed the door behind the scowling Bounder, and pushed back Billy Bunter, who had made an ineffectual attempt to follow Vernon-Smith out. "Now for Bunter."

"The—the matter's closed now, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I—I've explained, haven't I? Ogilvy has his lines back, and he's got nothing to complain about."

"What about my lines?" said Ogilvy.

"Well, Mr. Quelch excused you, so that's all right."

"You fat rotter," said Harry Wharton. "You've disgraced the study enough, I think. Now, you can either go to Mr. Quelch, and confess to him what you've been doing, or you can take a licking here."

"I won't do either, thanks. I—"

"Yes, you jolly well will."

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Lay him face downwards on the hearthrug, and kneel on his shoulders," said Bob Cherry. "I'll handle the ruler."

We draw a veil over the scene of anguish that followed. Bob Cherry explained all the time that it was for Bunter's good, and that a sharp lesson then might save him from going to prison some day. But Bunter didn't appear to be able to see it in that light. However, Bob did his duty nobly; and for the rest of the evening Billy Bunter showed a marked disinclination to sitting down. Also, he decided that he would have to raise the wind in future by some safer method than setting up as a merchant in lines.

Meanwhile, Carne was waiting in his study—for the expected visit from Wingate, and the request to play in the Topham match. But Wingate did not come, and the request was not made; and Carne went to bed in the most savage of tempers.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Carne Repents Too Late.

WINGATE looked out into the Close the next morning, and smiled a smile. The morning was fresh and clear, and gave promise of a sunny, cloudless summer's day—a day which is made for the grand old game. Wingate slapped Courtney on the back with unusual gusto.

"Ripping day!" he remarked.

"Yes, that's so," said Courtney. "Hallo! There are the fags at practice already. Oh, it's Wharton!"

Harry Wharton could be seen on the junior ground, batting against Bob Cherry and Tom Brown and Nugent, who were taking turns to bowl.

Wingate nodded with a grin.

"That youngster is hot stuff," he said. "He'll shape well to-day, Courtney—you mark my words."

"I hope he will," said Courtney. "I must say I wish it were Carne instead."

Wingate's brow darkened for a moment.

"Carne will never play for the First Eleven again, in my time," he said.

"I rather think he's coming round, Wingate, old man. Suppose he asks you—"

"He can ask from now till the cows come home, but he won't play in my eleven," said Wingate grimly. "I'd rather give the match away to Topham."

After breakfast, as Wingate left the dining-room, Carne came up to him. Carne was looking a little red and flustered, and the Greyfriars' captain guessed what he was going to say before he opened his lips.

"Can I say a word to you, Wingate?" said the senior.

"Certainly, if you want to."

"I've been thinking over my decision not to play for the First. On the whole, I'm willing to let personal matters drop, if you are—and—and—and play."

"Well, I'm not willing," said Wingate curtly. "I've nothing to say that I didn't say last evening."

"I'm more than meeting you half-way," said Carne, in a low voice. "You said yesterday that a chap oughtn't to let personal matters interfere with cricket. That's just what you're doing now."

"Nothing of the sort. You refused to play, after I warned you that it was your last chance; and that ended it. You'll never play in the First again."

"You mean that?"

"Every word."

"And you'll throw away the match from personal spite, will you?" said Carne, his voice trembling with anger and mortification.

"That's what you were willing to do," said Wingate, with a curl of the lip. "But I'd rather throw a match away than go back on my word, or be dictated to by a man in my team. You had your chance, and you threw it away; and you'd have thrown away Greyfriars' chance, too. But you needn't be worried about that—I've got a good man in your place."

"A junior!"

"One of the best! I don't say he's quite up to your form, perhaps—that's not to be expected of a chap in the Lower Fourth—but he's more reliable, and has a better sense of honour—"

"Mind what you say."

"I say what I mean, and I'm willing to stand by my words, with the gloves on or off," said the Greyfriars' captain scornfully. "I say Wharton has a better sense of honour than you have, and he's thinking more of Greyfriars than of himself, though it's enough to turn most juniors' heads to be asked to play in the First Eleven. Look at him now! He's been at practice before breakfast, and he's kept himself fit all the time, for the sake of being fit; and I had work enough to keep you off smoking while you were intending to play Topham. Wharton's worth fifty of you. That's my opinion."

And Wingate turned away.

"Then you've quite decided?" said Carne, between his teeth.

"Quite," said Wingate, without even looking back.

And Carne was left standing alone.

Carne had few sympathisers. Most of the fellows regarded his punishment as less than he deserved, and some of them reminded him that pride goes before a fall. But most of the First Eleven doubted Wingate's wisdom in not accepting the olive-branch held out by the senior.

It was a risky business playing a junior against Topham—and Carne had come round. But the fellows recognised that it was no use arguing with Wingate when he had made up his mind; he never did a thing unless he firmly believed that it was right, and then no argument could shake him.

"No go, old chap?" asked Loder, joining his chum.

Carne shook his head.

"No; he declines to put me in, on any terms."

"All the worse for the team."

"I hope they'll lose," said Carne, clenching his hands viciously. "Oh, I hope they'll get the licking of the season."

"They jolly well will," said Loder.

But Wingate did not appear to think so. After morning school he called Wharton to him, and the Remove captain came up with beating heart. He wondered whether peace had been patched up with Carne, and he was not to play after all. The coveted cap for the First Eleven seemed to fade away like a vision.

"How do you feel, kid?" asked Wingate.

"Quite fit, Wingate."

"Still in good form—eh?"

"Yes."

"Not nervous?"

"Well, I don't feel nervous now," said Harry. "I rather expected to; but I don't. I don't know how it will be when I'm facing the Topham wing, of course; but I hope it will be all right. I think it will."

"Good! Mind, no nerves; play exactly as if you were playing in a junior match, and you'll be all right."

"You want me to play, then?"

"Play! Of course."

"I—I thought perhaps Carne—"

"Carne is out of the team for good. Of course, a Lower Fourth fellow can't have a cap permanently for the First," said Wingate, with a smile. "But if you shape well to-day, I shall keep your name in the First reserves."

Wharton's eyes danced.

"Rely on me," he said.

"I do. And remember, as it's only a single innings game—there's no time for more—there won't be a chance to retrieve any mistakes in a second innings. Play as if

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you were playing the Upper Fourth—that's all. You'll be all right."

"I'll do my best."

And Wharton, somewhat to his surprise, really felt quite cool and collected as the time of the match drew near. He seemed to have no nerves at all. And the look of hate that Carne gave him when he passed only made him set his lips hard with determination.

Carne should not see him let the side down, he mentally resolved. He would play up like a Fry, if only to back up old Wingate.

And his nerve was quite steady when a ringing cheer announced the arrival of the Topham brake.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Topham Match.

THE Remove were early on the match-ground. Bob Cherry remarked that they didn't often have an opportunity of seeing a Removite play in the First Eleven, and that they had better make the most of it. Which the whole Form resolved to do.

"Feeling fit, Harry?" asked Bob, as Wingate was chatting with Jones major of Topham, the skipper of the visiting team.

"Fit as a fiddle, Bob!"

"Good. Go in and win!"

Wharton laughed. He felt quite himself—fit, and ready to play the game of his life. More than one of the Topham fellows had glanced at him curiously, surprised to see a junior standing in flannels with the seniors.

"That a recruit of yours, Wingate?" Jones asked.

"Yes—Wharton."

"Been picking up babies to play against us?"

"He doesn't play like a baby," said the Greyfriars' captain.

Topham won the toss, and elected to bat first.

Jones and Hudson of Topham went in to open the innings, and Wingate led his merry men out, in spotless white, to field.

Wharton went into the slips, followed by a cheer from the Remove. The Remove were ready to yell at a moment's notice, for anything or nothing.

They had the best places round the field. Some of them were sitting on the roof of the pavilion, some perched on the branches of the old elms. Round the ropes seniors and juniors thronged, thick at blackberries.

It was a goodly audience.

Topham fellows looked round at it, and grinned. The bigger the audience the better they liked it. They meant to give Greyfriars a good licking, and retire with half a dozen wickets to spare.

It was a single-innings match, and that was the only reason Topham believed, why they would not lick Greyfriars by an innings.

Wingate gave Wharton one glance as the home team went out to field. Wharton was cool, calm, in the pink of condition, and apparently without nerves. And Wingate gave a nod of satisfaction.

Bowlers he was not in want of; but at fielding and batting, he verily believed, Harry Wharton would be quite as good as Carne could have been.

Carne was standing in the crowd with Loder and Ionides to watch the game. His face wore a decidedly unpleasant expression.

But for his own folly he might have been playing himself, and he bit his lips hard at the thought, with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness running riot in his breast.

But there was no help for it now, and he was left the poor consolation of hoping that his school would be defeated.

The beginning looked, too, as if Carne was likely to have his patriotic wish gratified.

Jones and Hudson piled up runs in a way that made the Topham fellows grin, as they lounged in front of the pavilion, and that made faces lengthen among the Greyfriars crowd.

The Topham score was thirty for no wicket in a quarter of an hour, and Carne turned to his companions with a sneer on his face.

"They'll declare in about an hour," he remarked.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Loder. "I—hallo!—look! Well caught, by Jove!" he broke out involuntarily.

Jones had driven the ball into the slips, and it seemed no chance for a catch.

But a little figure had leaped into the air, and a hand swept over a head, and there was a soft sound, between a click and a kiss.

And the ball was in Harry Wharton's good right hand, and he held it up, flushed and excited, for the whole field to see, as his feet tramped into the turf again.

There was a wild roar from all Greyfriars.

"Well caught! Oh, well caught!"

Jones's face was a study. He had been caught out—by a junior! The junior he had humorously referred to as a baby.

Wingate grinned with delight.

He slapped Wharton on the back as the field crossed over.

"Good, jolly good, Wharton," he said. "My hat! If you do nothing else in the match you justify my shoving you in. Good again!"

"I'm jolly glad, Wingate! It was touch and go!"

"It was splendid! Your Form ought to be proud of you, kid."

And they were.

The Remove were yelling, cheering, and clapping their hands like madmen. Bob Cherry was surprised to see even Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, clapping and yelling away with the rest. Even the Bounder of Greyfriars had caught the infection.

The first wicket was down, and it was Jones of Topham—Jones the youthful Jessop—Jones, Topham's champion bat—who was out!

No wonder Greyfriars were delighted, and especially the Remove. For that lucky catch might mean the loss of fifty runs to the visitors. Jones might'n't have given another chance for a dozen overs.

Wharton's face was flushed, and his heart was beating, as he took his place again. He did not expect to be put on to bowl, but he was doing well in the field—very well—and the glances of the senior cricketers showed that they were changing their opinion, and coming round to Wingate's way of thinking. Courtney had given him an encouraging word, and North had smacked his shoulder eloquently. He was proving that old Wingate had been right, and the knowledge of that was quite reward enough for the junior.

But the Topham batsmen were in fine form and the runs piled up.

Fifty for two wickets, sixty for three, eighty-four for four! They seemed to be piling the runs up with the greatest of ease, and the Greyfriars' fieldsmen were given leather-hunting galore to do.

Wingate wore a worried look.

"They're strong beasts, and no mistake," he confided to North, as the field crossed over once more. "The bowling doesn't seem to be able to touch them."

North nodded dolefully.

"No. As a matter of fact, Wingate, to tell the candid truth, they're a wee bit above our weight, you know."

Wingate grunted.

"Well, that's Job's comfort, anyway."

"Never mind, we'll give them a run for their money, old chap."

Wingate gave the ball to Blundell of the Fifth, and Blundell sent down an over. It enriched the Tophams by eleven runs.

Then Courtney bowled, and Topham were seven more to the good at the end of the over.

There was a shout from the Removites.

"Give Wharton the ball!"

"Let Wharton try!"

"Go it, Remove!"

Wingate glanced round with a frown for a moment; then his face cleared, and he slapped his thigh with a sound like a pistol-shot.

"Blessed if I don't!" he exclaimed.

And the ball was tossed to Harry.

He caught it, and held it, not understanding for a moment. Wingate pointed to the bowler's wicket.

"Try your luck!" he said.

Wharton drew a quick breath.

"You want me to bowl?"

"Yes, kid."

Wharton walked to his place without another word. A burly Topham batsman—a big Sixth-Form fellow with huge shoulders and long legs, grinned along the pitch at him. There was a chuckle in the crowd.

"Gulliver among the giants!" murmured Temple.

And there was a laugh.

"Never mind. Gulliver will make the giants hop, you see!" said Bob Cherry, with unbounded confidence.

And Bob Cherry was right. Never had Harry Wharton been in such splendid form. Never had he delivered such all-round excellent bowling.

The ball went down, and the batsman stopped it—just. He stopped it again—just. The third ball he did not stop.

It took his middle stump out of the ground as clean as a whistle, and there was a yell from all Greyfriars.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned the umpire.

And the big batsman carried out his bat. The field rocked with cheering. Wingate's eyes were blazing with delight.

"Go it!" he muttered. "Oh, my hat! What a godsend that Carne was sulky, and made me put this kid in the team!"

Down went the ball again, to the new batsman, and that batsman simply glared at his wicket. He did not quite know how it had come to pass; but the wicket was down, and the umpire's laconic "Out!" sounded his doom.

And the crowd yelled again.

"Well bowled!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Give us another!"

"Give us the hat-trick!"

The hat-trick Wharton could not give, the over finishing blank; but he had done wonderfully well. Topham were two more down, making a total of six for 102 runs.

And by this time the best of the Topham bats had fallen. It was the tail of the innings that Greyfriars had to go through now, and they went through it with ease now that the back of the innings was broken.

At four o'clock Topham were all down for 150, and friends and foes fraternised over the tea-table, Greyfriars with high hopes now of victory.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.
Not Out.

"MAN in!"

"Go it, Greyfriars!"

"Play up!"

Greyfriars' innings was opening. Courtney and Blundell went in first, and Jones of Topham bowled.

The crowd looked on anxiously.

They had seen the Topham batting, and they realised that it was very good, and that Greyfriars had been lucky to get off so lightly. If the Topham bowling was as good, the result of the match was very doubtful.

And Jones of Topham soon proved that his bowling was as good as his batting. For at the very beginning of the innings he delighted his followers with the performance of the hat-trick—a performance Greyfriars had hoped for in vain from their own bowlers.

Courtney's wicket fell to his second ball, and then Bland's, and then Dodd's. And there were but two runs up to Greyfriars at the time.

Three down for two! No wonder faces looked blank in the crowd. Three down for two! Was there ever a more ghastly beginning to an innings.

And the Topham fellows grinned, and grinned more than ever when Blundell was caught out in the next over, without adding a run to the score.

Four down for three.

"Keeping on at the same rate means a total of about nine for the innings," said Carne to Loder, with a grin.

Loder nodded assent. But he was not looking pleased. Loder had few good qualities, but he did not want to see his school beaten.

There was a faint cheer from the crowd as Wingate was seen to go to the wickets.

"Good old Wingate! Go it!"

Wingate took his place, sixth man in, with North at the other end. Then things looked up a little for Greyfriars.

Wingate could always be depended upon to stand up for his side, and make things go. The runs piled up, and the wickets went down, but not Wingate's.

Harry Wharton watched from the pavilion.

He was put down on the list as last man in, and it was right enough. But he was eager to get to the stumps and strike a blow for Greyfriars.

Forty for six wickets. The Topham fellows were assuming a jaunty look now. They regarded the match as being all over bar shouting.

Another wicket down, caught out in the slips. With a score of forty-six. Then another, stumped by the wicket-keeper.

Eight wickets down for forty-three!

The crowd looked sick.

"Game's up," said Bob Cherry gloomily. "May as well go in. Anybody coming for a game of marbles?"

"Wharton hasn't batted yet," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Wharton can't stay a rot like that."

"The rotfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "But while there is lifefulness, the hopefulness is not non-existent."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look! There goes another."

Nine down for fifty.

"Last man in," said Temple.

"Here's Wharton."

"Play up for Greyfriars!"

"Buck up, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton, looking very quiet and collected, came to join Wingate at the wickets. He was last man in, and had the Greyfriars captain at the other end. Wingate spoke to him as he passed.

"You see how it is, Wharton. There's not much chance, but do your best for the old school. They can't touch me easily, and if you keep your end up, there's a sporting chance of pulling the game out of the fire yet."

And Harry Wharton nodded and went to his wicket.

Jones went on to bowl against the youngster. Jones was grinning. He remembered that the junior had caught him out, and he thought that his turn had come now.

Never was a bowler more mistaken.

He delivered an over to Harry's wicket in his finest style, and the result made the Topham fellows open their eyes, and the Greyfriars crowd yell. A two, a four, a nought, then a four, and a two again, and then a three! Fifteen for the over, and the bowling still to Wharton for the next.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Jones. "Lucky for us they didn't put any more kids in the team."

Wingate grinned gleefully.

"Keep it up, Wharton," he called out.

"What-ho!" said Harry.

And the Remove yelled with delight.

Wingate, they knew, the Topham bowlers would never shift. Wingate was safe for "not out." It depended upon Wharton. If Wharton kept his end up, however slow the scoring was, the game would be pulled out of the fire.

Would he—could he? Against a senior team—good bowlers, good fieldsmen! But Harry Wharton was more than himself to-day—at the top of his form—playing like a Jessop, a Hayward, and a Grace put into one.

The next over gave him eight, and then Wingate had the bowling. Wingate put up ten. He could always be depended upon to improve the score.

Then they bowled to Wharton again. Jones bowled himself, and he put all he knew into the bowling. But he could not shift the junior.

The runs were piled on. There was a yell from Greyfriars when the score had passed the 100.

"Fifty wanted to tie," said Bob Cherry, on the roof of the pavilion. "Fifty-one to win, and Wharton will get them! What ass was that talking just now about going and playing marbles!"

Topham were putting their best efforts into it now. Never had the fielding been so alert; but they had no chances. Once the crowd trembled as slip almost made a catch; but it was too hard, and the ball dropped. Saved once more! And the score was going up—not creepingly, but by leaps and bounds.

One hundred and forty!

"My hat!" said Jones. "They'll beat us yet! I'll get that kid out or bust something."

And he bowled another over—with the result of nine runs to Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton had the bowling for the next over, with two runs to get to win!

And now the cheering had died away—the matter was too keen now for cheering. The crowd looked on with bated breath.

The bowler faced the batsman, and sent down a lightning ball. Wharton was all eyes. There was a flash of the bat, and the ball went on its journey.

And they ran! And ran again—the run for victory—the run that was wanted to win; but there was a groan from Bob Cherry on the pavilion roof.

"Too late!"

It looked like it. Wingate had reached his end, and his bat was on the crease, but he had covered the ground more quickly than the junior. Wharton was straining home; but the ball was coming in—not to the wicket-keeper, but in a straight line for the wicket—coming in from the hand of Jones, who never missed a throw-in!

Coming—coming. Greyfriars gasped! Wharton was flying—and his bat was out before him—would he do it!

Crash!

The wicket was down—and Wharton, flinging himself forward, had the end of his bat on the crease. Greyfriars trembled for the verdict; but the umpire shook his head. The bat had been there first, after all.

"Not out!"

The winning run had been taken, and Greyfriars was victorious. Jones of Topham, defeated as he was, tapped Wharton on the shoulder, and shouted "Bravo, kid!" Wharton could only gasp. Wingate grasped his hand, and shook it as if he mistook it for a pump-handle, and Wharton gasped again.

But the Remove were not to be denied. They swarmed on the field. They seized their champion, and with wild yells and cheers they bore him to the pavilion. Wharton was set down at last with hardly a gasp left in him, but as happy as a prince. He had helped to win for Greyfriars, and that was all he wanted.

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

"And now hurray for Harry Wharton, of the Remove!"

"Hip, hip, hurray! Bravo!"

And so ended the Topham match, and one of the greatest of days for Harry Wharton!

THE END.

(Another long complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "The Remove Eight," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of "The Magnet," Library in advance. Price 1d.)

NEXT WEEK: "THE REMOVE EIGHT." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The First Chapters of a New Serial.

STANLEY DARE
The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having disappeared in the course of investigating a case, his friend, Professor MacAndrew, goes in search of him. His quest leads him to the house of Mr. Thorndyke, on the outskirts of Deal. Terrible cries ring out from the house, and MacAndrew, rushing in, finds his way to a dark chamber, where he is attacked by an unseen assailant. Stanley Dare, disguised as a Hindu, makes his appearance, and comes to his friend's rescue, and the two search the house, including the dark chamber, for traces of Mr. Thorndyke. Their search is in vain, and MacAndrew suggests questioning the housekeeper.

Back at the Lugger Inn.

"I am inclined to think that the housekeeper knows very little of what has really taken place in this house of mystery. But we will question her if she has recovered from her fright," said Stanley Dare.

All that the housekeeper was able to tell them they knew already; and it was very evident that the good, honest soul was only retained in her position because of her unsuspicious nature.

Her simplicity was evidenced by the fact that she really believed Finlay, the manservant, to be a good man of a religious turn of mind; and his sudden and mysterious journeys with Mr. Thorndyke, she thought, were merely connected with business matters.

In fact, she believed anything which the hypocritical scoundrel Finlay chose to tell her. She was beginning now to be undeceived.

On one point, however, she was positive; and that was that Mr. Thorndyke never had any lady visitors, either relatives or friends; and she was quite certain that no lady could possibly have stayed in the house without her knowledge.

The thorough search which Dare and MacAndrew made of the premises confirmed this statement.

"I am convinced that the solution of this mystery is to be found in one place, and that is the Lugger Inn!" exclaimed Stanley Dare, as he and the professor were on their way back to the town. "I intend to pay another visit to that den of thieves—and worse—to-night!"

"Not in your present disguise, surely?"

The young detective laughed and shook his head.

"No; one more in keeping with the character of the place," he said. "The visit of a well-dressed Hindu, with jewels in his turban, would only arouse suspicion. Moreover, Finlay would recognise the Hindu who dropped in upon the scene at the Lodge and made things so unpleasant for him!"

"Ye think that Finlay is an associate of the gang o' scoondrels at the inn, then?" said Professor MacAndrew.

"I am sure of it," replied the young detective.

Stanley Dare had not, of course, gone back to the Southdown Hotel, but had taken a room over the shop of a second-hand clothes dealer, who had more than once supplied him with costumes when he—the dealer—was in business in London. Dare had found it necessary to take this man into his confidence, otherwise he would have been placed in a position of considerable difficulty in the matter of his disguises. And he knew that Isaac Hart, the dealer in question, was perfectly trustworthy.

That night, between the hours of nine and ten, there slouched into the bar of the Lugger Inn a somewhat disreputable-looking individual, with scrubby beard and unkempt hair. He was dressed in an old pilot-cloth coat which had seen better days; blue serge trousers, frayed and patched; a red flannel shirt, and a peaked cap.

This disreputable longshoreman—for he had the general appearance of one of the "bad bargains" of that class of waterside workers—was Stanley Dare, in another of his clever disguises.

"Give me a pint of six ale, landlord!" he said, tossing a two-shilling piece on to the bar.

The landlord picked up the coin and rang it on the counter. After having satisfied himself that it was genuine, he served the beer and gave the change.

The pretended longshoreman, in his turn, tested every coin of the change he had received.

"What are you doing that for?" growled the landlord.

"To see if they are good ones," replied Dare. "You tried the money I handed to you; why shouldn't I try the money you handed to me?"

"I've been done too often by customers," said the landlord.

"And I've been done too often by landlords!" retorted Dare. "At least, they've tried the game on, but not always with success!"

"You've been keeping bad company, I should think!" snarled the landlord.

"Well, I'm keeping it still!"

With the utmost coolness the young detective looked round at the half dozen men in the bar—as evil a looking crowd as one would wish to see—and, winking solemnly at them, raised the pot of beer to his lips.

But although he pretended to drink, he took care that only a very small quantity of the "doctored" stuff should go down his throat.

"Any work to be got in this part of the country?" inquired Dare, in his character of the longshoreman, addressing the company generally.

"For those who like work there's some to be got, I dessay," observed one of the fellows surlily.

This appeared to be a joke that was appreciated by the others, for there was a hoarse burst of laughter. Moreover, it was regarded as a set-back to this free-spoken stranger, whom they reckoned wanted "taking down a peg or two."

But as Dare laughed with the others, and with even a greater appearance of enjoyment, the joke fell flat, after all.

"It depends upon the sort of work you want," put in Joe Drecker, the landlord.

"Little to do and plenty of money," replied the young detective. "That's the sort of job I'm after!"

"I don't think you're likely to get it in Deal."

"Perhaps not; but, on the other hand, perhaps I can!" pursued Dare. "Anyhow, I've just finished a job of that kind, and what can be found in one place can be found in another!"

Joe Drecker suddenly became interested—and civil.

"I should like to hear about it," he said.

"I'm not a mug," replied Dare, pretending to become suddenly cautious. "People that talk too much don't get jobs like that; but they get something else sometimes."

He touched a sheath-knife, that he wore at his belt, significantly. The landlord eyed him with a curious and uncertain glance.

"You don't expect I can help you to find those sorts of jobs, do you?" demanded the landlord.

The pretended longshoreman who had spoken of these mysterious but easy ways of earning money, leaned over the bar and answered under his breath, "I do."

Joe Drecker started ever so slightly, while his customers—four of whom were also his associates in crime—favoured the free-and-easy new-comer with glances that were a mingling of suspicion and curiosity. They had not overheard the two words which Dare spoke, but they had heard the question, and made a shrewd guess at the reply.

NEXT WEEK: "THE REMOVE EIGHT." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"You've got some rum ideas," said Drecker. "Original ones, I should call them. That's what makes them a bit interesting—to me. Maybe you could pitch a yarn or two about things you've seen and places you've been to. If so, I wouldn't mind introducing you to a friend of mine in the bar-parlour. He takes an interest in the yarns of travellers."

"I'm with you, landlord," exclaimed the seedy-looking longshoreman, "but first of all I'd like to stand drinks for the crowd. They can drink out here while I'm yarning in the bar-parlour—they won't miss my society so much then. My clothes ain't worth much, but the pockets are good enough to hold my money."

He tossed a half-a-crown upon the counter. The thirsty loungers, who had a lurking suspicion that he regarded them with something like contempt, and were ready to vent their anger or spite upon him should an opportunity offer, were now ready enough to drink at his expense, and to vote him a good fellow—until his back was turned.

Dare was quite ready to pay for as much as they would drink, for it would keep them engaged, and possibly leave them helpless. He did not venture to hope, however, that he could get the better of the landlord by those commonplace means. He was a master of craft, and a dangerous man at all times to deal with.

The bar-parlour was a small room at the back of the bar, into which only favoured guests were admitted. Drecker had thought that this longshoreman, or whatever he was, would make an excellent recruit for the gang, judging from his manner, and the words he had let drop. And the gang wanted some fresh blood in it, for two of its members had been "put away," and the others seemed to be losing their nerve. And Drecker had planned out some big schemes—of a criminal nature it is needless to say—which would require audacity and nerve in an unusual degree to carry out.

But first of all it would be necessary to "sound" this possible recruit, and also find out a bit more about him. Drecker had no intention of running unnecessary risks by letting a stranger know too much.

A man was seated in an armchair, smoking, when Dare and the landlord entered the bar-parlour.

He turned round sharply, and a pair of beady eyes scrutinised the young detective from head to foot. Dare nodded carelessly and bade him "Good-evening." He had expected to see this man here.

It was Finlay, the servant of Mr. Thorndyke.

"Here's a gentleman that I think wants to have a little private chat with us," said the landlord. "I'd like to introduce him to you. He hasn't told me his name yet."

"Walker," interposed Dare pleasantly.

"Mr. Walker, then," pursued Drecker. "This is——"

Finlay had been examining the contents of his pocket-book before they came in, and there were some papers and letters on the table, close to the edge.

Dare, in stepping forward, had, with apparent clumsiness, brushed all these papers off on to the floor. With many apologies he stooped to gather them up, but Finlay stopped him.

"I prefer to pick them up myself, thank you," he snapped. "They won't get disarranged then."

"Certainly," said Dare. "Sorry I knocked them down."

As a matter of fact the young detective had knocked the papers down intentionally, for as soon as he entered the room his eyes had lighted on one of them which he determined to gain possession of. It was merely the torn half of an envelope with some words written on it in pencil, but he knew the moment he saw it that it was the missing half of the message which had been brought to him by the man whose memory was now a blank.

In stooping, Dare's fingers had not appeared to touch the fallen papers, but when he rose he had succeeded, by a clever sleight-of-hand trick, in "palming" the fragment of the envelope, and it was now reposing in his side-pocket. Finlay had not missed it.

"I was just about to introduce you two," continued the landlord, who seemed inclined to be ceremonious. "So now that you've picked up your letters and things I'll go on with it."

"For the present," interrupted Finlay. "I prefer that my name should not be mentioned to strangers."

"No occasion to mention it," said Dare, with a cheerful smile. "I know it already."

"You know it!"

"Yes. You are the manservant at Thorndyke Lodge, and your name is Finlay."

The manservant regarded the pretended longshoreman with an expression that it was hard to define. He rubbed his hands together softly, and as his shoulders rounded almost into a hump, he looked like a brooding vulture, and a human vulture he certainly was.

"How did you find that out?" he demanded.

"By keeping my eyes and ears open," replied Dare. "I like to know as much as possible of any new neighbourhood that I may come into, and the people who live in it."

The landlord smiled contentedly. Here was a man who was likely to be useful. Finlay continued to rub his hands together softly.

"It is sometimes dangerous," he said, "to know too much."

An Interview with Finlay.

"Look here. Before we go any further," said the landlord—who, careless enough as to whether or not his associates quarrelled as a rule, was anxious for more than one reason that there should be nothing of the sort just now —"I think we had better have in some refreshment. I've got some whisky that I can recommend."

"Not for me, thank you," replied Dare. "I only ordered that pint of beer I had for 'the good of the house.' I didn't drink much of it. I came here with the idea of doing business, and if I've got to talk business I want to keep my head clear."

"Waterside men don't usually get fuddled with a glass of beer and a 'go' of whisky," said Drecker.

"Our friend Mr. Walker is wonderfully cautious," sneered Finlay. "It is to be hoped that his caution will prevent him from prying into business which don't concern him."

"Whatever business the landlord talks over with me will concern me," replied Dare. "He knows I'm after 'work' of a particular kind, and, if he has any to offer me, well and good. I suppose you have an interest in it too. But whether you have or not, I just want to give you a couple of hints. You are not dealing with a fool; and I don't allow any man to threaten me, either openly or in a back-handed manner."

Finlay turned to the landlord.

"This new acquaintance of yours will want to boss the show if we take him into partnership in our business," he said. "There's no harm done so far, let him go the way he came."

Drecker evidently seemed to consider that there was some wisdom in Finlay's remark, and as he did not intend that anybody but himself should be "boss," he suggested to Dare that "perhaps after all it would be better to say no more about the business."

"I think I shall be able to prove to you that it will be to your benefit to take me into partnership, if you like to put it that way," replied Dare.

"How?"

"Your friend Finlay said just now that it was sometimes dangerous to know too much. I can't agree that it is ever possible to know too much."

"You're a longshore lawyer, I should think," interrupted Finlay. "Perhaps you'll give us a sample of how much you do know."

(Another long instalment of this story next Tuesday.)

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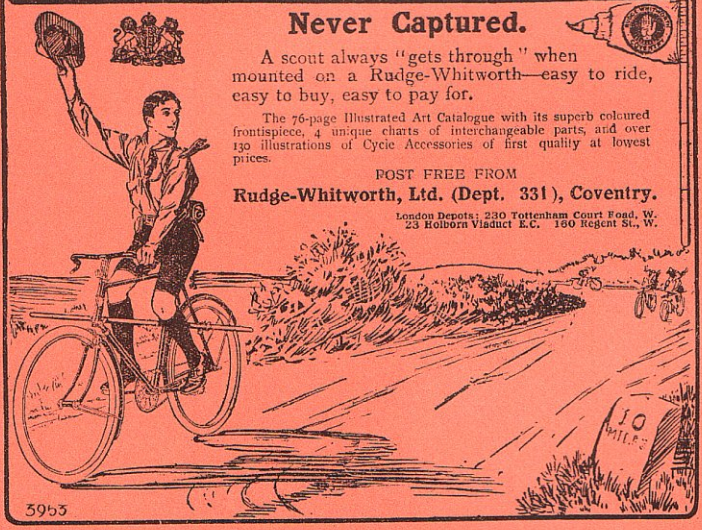

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