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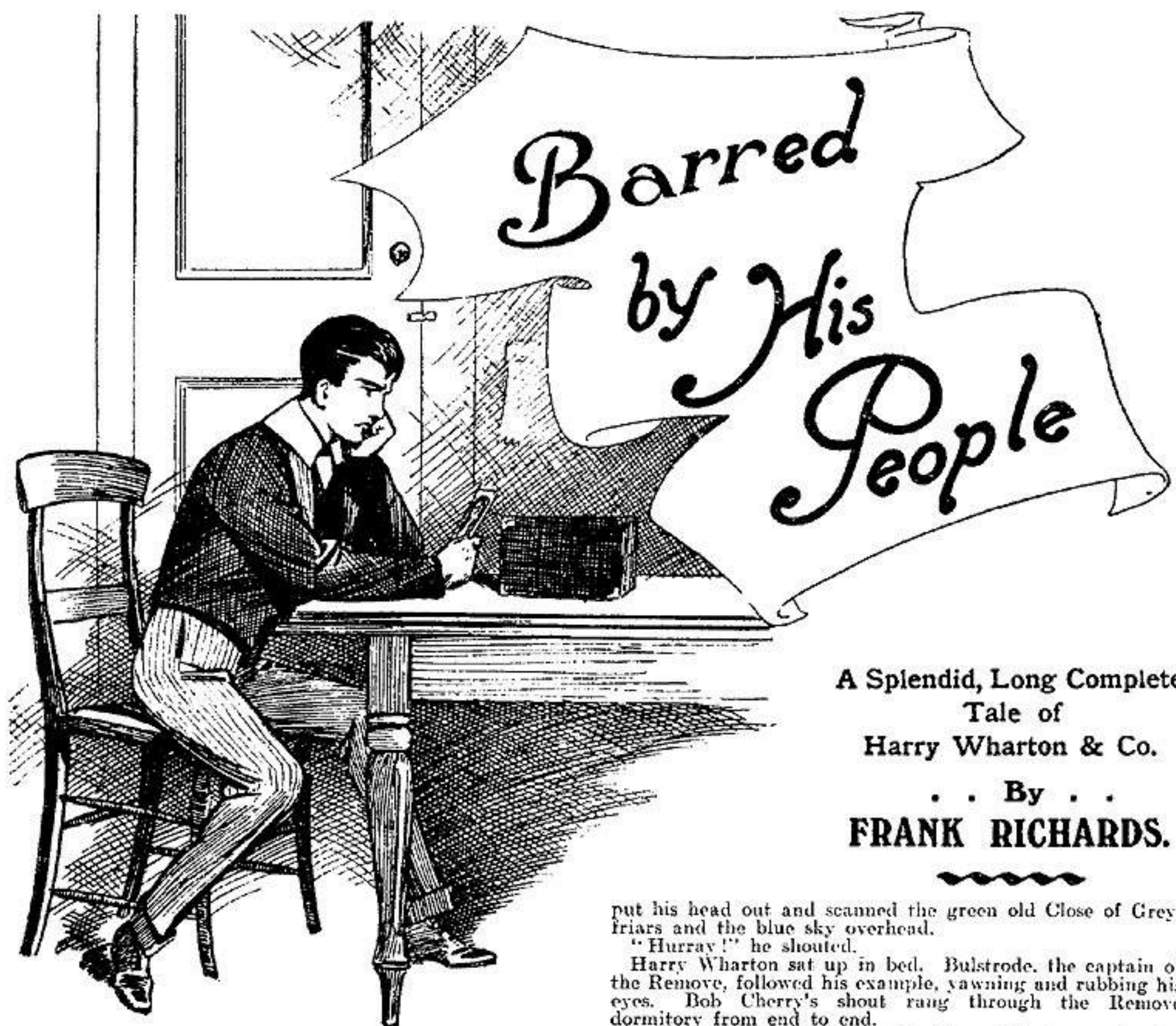


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FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Washing Day.

BOB CHERRY jumped out of bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. The first clang of the rising-bell was sounding through the clear, fresh air of the morning. Bob Cherry ran to the nearest window, and

put his head out and scanned the green old Close of Greyfriars and the blue sky overhead.

"Hurrah!" he shouted.

Harry Wharton sat up in bed. Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove, followed his example, yawning and rubbing his eyes. Bob Cherry's shout rang through the Remove dormitory from end to end.

"What's the row?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What are you yelling about, you ass?"

"It's a fine morning!"

"Well, ass, it's been a fine morning before, and no bones broken!" said John Bull, sitting up. "My hat! What a row Gosling is making with that bell!"

Clang, clang!

"The beast likes it!" granted Frank Nugent. "It's his revenge for having to get up early himself. Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Up you get!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Ain't I telling you it's a fine morning—fine and clear and sunny? It's going to be simply a perfect day!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Roll out, Bunter, and don't jaw! It's going to be a ripping day!" Bob Cherry exclaimed. "Tumble up! We couldn't have had a finer day for the St. Jim's match. And I think we ought to give the Head three cheers for granting us a whole holiday for the match."

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"I didn't say three yawns!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "I said three cheers! And if you fellows won't give them, I will! Hurray!"

"You ass—"

"Hip-pip—"

"Fathead!"

"Hurray— Oh!"

A pillow whirled through the air, and caught the enthusiastic Bob across the chest, and he sat down on the dormitory floor with a suddenness that stopped his cheering before it was finished.

"Ow! Ow! You chump! Who threw that?"

"I guess I did!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "Stop your row, you silly guy! I guess I'm fed up!"

"You Yankee ass—"

"I guess—"

Bob Cherry whirled the pillow back, and Fisher T. Fish left off guessing suddenly, as he was swept over the side of his bed. He gave a roar as he tumbled out on the floor, rolled up in his bedclothes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry, who seemed to be in great spirits that morning. "It's time for all you chaps to be up. We can't have any slacking on the morning of the St. Jim's match, especially when the Head has given us a whole holiday. Out with you, Harry, my son!"

"Hands off, you ass! Oh!"

Bump!

Harry Wharton landed on the floor, and roared. Bob Cherry turned cheerfully to Frank Nugent's bed, and there was another sudden bump on the dormitory floor. Then he ran towards John Bull, but Bull skipped out of bed on the other side in time.

"Bunter, old man, it's time to get up!" grinned Bob Cherry, laying violent hands upon Billy Bunter's bedclothes.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Cherry— Ow!"

"Out you get!"

"Oh! Yaroo! Oh, really, I— Ah! Yoop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter was a heavy-weight, and his impact upon the floor almost shook the Remove dormitory.

He staggered to his feet, and groped for his spectacles, and lodged them on his fat little nose, and blinked furiously at Bob Cherry.

"Beast!" he bellowed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted. There was no making any impression upon Bob Cherry, or reducing the gaiety of his spirits. The fat junior began to dress himself, and the boisterous Bob looked round for fresh victims.

But the Remove were all turning out now. The rising-bell had ceased to clang, and it was time for all to be up.

"Anybody want any help?" Bob asked blandly.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry turned to his washstand. He splashed himself over merrily with cold water.

Bob was very merry that morning; but all the Remove were in high spirits. There was a whole day's match on between Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

As there was a considerable distance between the two schools, the Head of Greyfriars and the Head of St. Jim's had arranged between them that that Wednesday should be a whole holiday instead of a half-holiday, as usual.

The St. Jim's fellows were to come over by an early train, and there would be ample time for the match. And the Greyfriars fellows meant to entertain them well for the day, and, incidentally, send them home well licked.

The prospect of a whole day's holiday, in ripping weather, with a cricket match thrown in, and a crowd of their people down to watch them, was quite enough to exhilarate the Remove.

Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevelyan were coming over from Cliff House School in the afternoon, and perhaps that had something to do with Bob Cherry's boisterous spirits.

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Bob playfully splashed Bunter with cold water as he washed himself from head to foot, and Billy Bunter yelled.

Bunter did not like cold water. When he rose in the morning, his custom was to dress himself before he washed. Then he would make a sort of hypnotic pass at his face with a sponge, and he was washed! Cold water was not pleasant to Bunter, and he never touched it if he could help it.

"You—you beast!" he howled. "You've wetted my arm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme a towel! Yow!"

"First time his arm's been wetted for weeks!" said Frank Nugent sympathetically. "It's really too bad, Bob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Horrid fat beast!" said Bulstrode. "We've got a little extra time this morning—let's give Bunter a wash!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good wheeze!"

The juniors shouted approval. Billy Bunter looked fearfully alarmed.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped, "I—I'm all right! I don't need much washing, you know! Don't play the giddy ox!"

"Wash him!" roared John Bull. "Here's some soap!"

"Here's a sponge! I can burn it afterwards!" said Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know— I—I say, you fellows, chuck it! I—I had a bath last week; I did, honour bright—well, the week before, then! I've got a delicate constitution, and it doesn't do to bath too much! I say, you know, I'm not one of those dirty chaps who need washing all over every day! Ow! Leggo!"

The juniors, laughing loudly, collared the Owl of the Remove. Harry Wharton gently removed his spectacles, and placed them in safety; the clothes he had put on were less gently removed.

The fat junior struggled as the Removites grasped at his clothes, and there were several sounds of tearing as the things were dragged off.

"Go it! Wash him!" roared Bulstrode. "Here, lemme get at him! I've got a scrubbing-brush here, and he needs it!"

"Ow! Ow! Hollup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Water was splashed over Billy Bunter; the floor round him was swimming in it. He roared and howled and yelled for help. There was no doubt that he needed a bath; and there was certainly no doubt that he was getting it.

Bulstrode scrubbed him over with no gentle hand. The juniors roared with laughter, and splashed him and soaped him and sponged him, and Bulstrode scrubbed away till Bunter was as red as a beetroot.

In the midst of the terrific din the dormitory door opened, and Wingate, of the Sixth, looked in.

"What's this horrid row about?" the captain of Greyfriars demanded.

Bulstrode looked round with a grin.

"We're bathing Bunter, to celebrate the whole holiday!" he said.

Wingate burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" roared Bunter. "Help! Yow! I shall catch cold! Yaroo! I'm delicate! Yow, yow! Yoop!"

"Your lungs aren't delicate, by the sound!" grinned Wingate. "I hope it will do you good, Bunter!"

"Yaroo!"

And the captain of Greyfriars went out and closed the door. Bulstrode threw the scrubbing-brush aside.

"There!" he gasped. "Will that do, Bunter?"

"Yow! Yes! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter towelled himself down, and dressed himself, and glowered fiercely all the time, while the Remove roared with laughter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Merely a Loan.

BULSTRODE went to look at the cricket-pitch before breakfast. Since Bulstrode had become captain of the Remove there had been some change in Bulstrode.

He had always been a pretty good cricketer, but not always keen; at times he had slacked very much, and his unreliability in that respect, and his uncertain temper, had caused him to be left out of the Form team on many occasions, when Wharton was captain.

But now there could not be a keener fellow on the subject of cricket. He worked hard himself, and he made his team work hard, and he had brought the Remove eleven into a



Billy Bunter, breathing hard and quickly, groped in the pockets of John Bull's coat. "Bunter!" It was the deep, stern voice of the captain of Greyfriars. Bunter swung round in terror towards him. "Oh!" he gasped. (See page 19.)

very good state. They had lately been beaten by Highcliffe, but they had every hope of winning in the St. Jim's match.

When Tom Merry & Co. came over from St. Jim's, they were likely to find the Remove team in unusually good form. Bulstrode was very keen on that match. The St. Jim's match was really the crucial test of the cricket season for the Greyfriars juniors, and if they came through that all right, they could rest upon their laurels, for the teams were not really quite evenly matched. The St. Jim's juniors were selected from the Lower School at St. Jim's—Shell and Fourth Form. But the Remove team was picked from the Remove alone—the Lower Fourth of Greyfriars.

At Greyfriars, the Upper Fourth and the Shell had been beaten on the cricket-ground by the Remove, and the school junior team was weaker than the Remove team by itself. A fact which was the cause of endless swanking on the part of the Remove.

It was Harry Wharton who had brought it about, and since Bulstrode had become captain he had stepped into the fruits of Wharton's work. To do him justice, he was doing his very best to justify his election to the captaincy. And Wharton, instead of sulking over the matter, as many fellows would have done, was backing up the new Form captain for all he was worth.

It was to be a great day at Greyfriars. Bob Cherry's father—Major Cherry—was coming down to see the match, and Bulstrode's people were coming, and the sisters and the cousins and the aunts of a good many of the players.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S BROTHER."

"The pitch is splendid!" said Bulstrode. "We shall have to roll it a bit more after brekker, that's all."

"We'll make Bunter do that!" said Bob Cherry genially. "It will bring down his fat a little!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Or we could use Bunter as a roller!" John Bull remarked. "Do you think he would be too solid?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at the juniors angrily through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, do stop rotting!" he said. "I've come here to speak to Bulstrode for the last time—"

"Hurray!" said Bulstrode.

"I mean, for the last time on the subject of this match. I'm willing to play against St. Jim's, unless I'm kept out of the team by personal jealousy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If my offer is declined now, I shall decline to repeat it—"

"Declined, with thanks!" said Bulstrode, laughing. "You see, this isn't a comic opera we're getting up; it's a cricket match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, we'll use Bunter as a roller!" said Bulstrode cheerfully. "Collar him!"

"Ow! Leggo! Oh!"

The fat junior clutched out wildly as he was rolled over on the ground. He dragged Bulstrode down with him, with a bump.

Another Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Oh!" roared Bulstrode.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

The juniors yelled with laughter. Bulstrode struggled in the frantic grasp of the fat junior. He scrambled to his feet, and there was a jingle of money on the ground.

Two sovereigns had rolled from his waistcoat-pocket. Bunter caught the glimmer of gold, and he sat up quickly.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I've dropped some money!"

"Why, you young fraud!" shouted Bulstrode. "It dropped from my pocket. It's a tip I had from my father last night. Didn't you fellows see it?"

"I saw it," said John Bull.

"Oh, really, you know—"

The juniors seized Bunter again, but they were not laughing now; their faces were angry and grim. Bunter's notions on the subject of money and tucks were very dim and ill-defined, and he had a way of laying claim to things that did not belong to him, in a way that the Removites often found very exasperating.

His impudent claim to the two sovereigns was a little too "thick," as Nugent remarked. All the juniors had seen them fall from Bulstrode's pocket; and they knew, too, that Bunter never had so much money of his own.

"You fat cad!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh! Ow! Really—"

"It was Bulstrode's money, and you would take it if you could!" said Harry scornfully. "You are no better than a thief."

"Bump him!"

"Yes, rather—and hard, too!"

Bump—bump!

"Yaroo!"

The juniors left Billy Bunter gasping on the cricket-ground as they walked in to breakfast. The Owl of the Remove clambered up gasping.

"Beasts!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rolled off slowly towards the House. In his mind's eye the fat junior could still see the glimmer of gold. Sovereigns had a fascination for him; he seldom had any of his own.

He poked Bulstrode in his ribs as they went in to breakfast. Bulstrode jumped.

"You fat ass! What are you trying to puncture me for?" he demanded.

"I—I say, Bulstrode, I'm expecting a postal-order this afternoon, and if you care to cash it in advance—"

Bulstrode shook him off, and went in. Bunter grunted as he went to his place. But his disappointment did not affect his appetite. Nothing ever did that.

After breakfast, the juniors prepared for the coming of the St. Jim's fellows. Some of them rolled the pitch, to bring it to the highest possible state of perfection. They changed into their cricketing flannels. It was a unique experience for the juniors to have a whole day for a cricket match, and they were looking forward to it with the keenest anticipation.

"The Saints will be over here by the half-past ten train," Harry Wharton remarked. "We may as well walk down to the station and meet them."

"Good egg!" said Bulstrode.

Quite a crowd of juniors tramped out of the school gates to go down to Friardale. Billy Bunter stood in the gateway watching them go.

"You're coming, Bulstrode?" Wharton asked.

The captain of the Remove shook his head.

"No; my people will be here earlier than that," he said.

"I shall have to be here to meet them."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton & Co. went away down the lane, and Bulstrode remained at the gates. Billy Bunter blinked at the Remove captain, with a curious expression in his round eyes. He noted that the captain of the Form had changed into his flannels, and he wondered whether he had taken the sovereigns out of his waistcoat-pocket when he changed. In the excited state he was in, it was very probable that Bulstrode had forgotten all about the money.

Billy Bunter rolled away towards the School House. He blinked round him as he went upstairs; the house was deserted and silent, everybody was out of doors in the bright July sunshine.

Bunter glanced at the letter-rack in passing. There was no letter for him; nor was he really expecting one, but Bunter had told his little fable about the expected postal-order so often that he had almost come to believe in it himself.

"Lemme see," he murmured. "Suppose I get a postal-order for—for two pounds, by the afternoon's post, then I—I could pay Bulstrode back his two sovereigns if he lends them to me. I should like to have a little ready cash to stand something decent to the St. Jim's fellows when they come. I was very chummy with D'Arcy of the Fourth once, and I want to do him down decently, at least. Suppose I borrow

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a couple of pounds of Bulstrode—the beast won't lend them to me—but I needn't mention the matter to him yet. I can replace the money when my postal-order comes—"

Bunter was in the Remove dormitory by this time.

Bulstrode's clothes lay carelessly thrown on his bed, where he had changed, and Bunter was upon the waistcoat in next to no time.

His fat fingers felt in the pockets, and he gave a grunt of satisfaction as they came into contact with two thick coins.

"By George, here they are!"

The fat junior extracted the two coins from the pocket. For a moment he hesitated. Whatever he might say to himself, he knew only too well what his action really was—though he would not call it by the right name.

His hesitation lasted only a moment.

He slipped the two sovereigns into his own pocket, and rolled out of the dormitory, his heart beating a little faster than usual, and his fat face a little paler.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Caught.

"What!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Coming?" asked John Bull, detaching himself lazily from the gatepost, and glancing out into the road.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Oh, no! I remember I didn't take the tin out of my pocket when I changed!"

John Bull laughed.

"I dare say Bunter will attend to that for you," he said.

"Just what I'm afraid of," he said. "That fat bounder never seems to know the difference between other people's money and his own. Will you wait here, Bull, and I'll go and get the tin. If my governor comes, tell him I'm in the House."

"Right you are!" said John Bull.

And he attached himself to the gatepost again, with his hands in his pockets, and waited lazily. Bulstrode hurried off towards the House. Bulstrode wanted his money, as a matter of fact, as he intended to take the St. Jim's fellows into the tuckshop when they arrived. But in any case it would hardly have been safe to leave it lying about when Bunter had once got on the scent of it.

The captain of the Remove hurried up to the dormitory, and found it vacant. His clothes were lying on the bed as he had left them.

He felt hastily in the pockets of the waistcoat.

They were empty.

"My hat! That fat bounder has been here, then."

Bulstrode remembered perfectly leaving the two sovereigns in his waistcoat-pocket. He felt through the other pockets, however, to make assurance doubly sure. But the sovereigns were not to be found.

An angry light gleamed in Bulstrode's eyes as he quitted the dormitory. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that Bunter had taken the two sovereigns; but a search of the fat junior would reveal the truth, beyond a doubt.

And Bulstrode looked for Bunter.

"Have you seen Bunter?"

He asked the question of everybody he met. Skinner of the Remove was able to give him some information.

"I saw him go into the tuckshop," he said.

Bulstrode snapped his teeth.

He might really have guessed it; the tuckshop was naturally the place that Billy Bunter would make for if he was in funds.

Bulstrode hurried off towards the tuckshop. There might be time yet to recover the money; and in any case to give the Owl of the Remove a hiding. Bulstrode had picked up a cricket-stump before quitting the House. He was very angry indeed, and he meant to make Billy Bunter smart for his depredations.

A fat face looked out of the door of the tuckshop uneasily. Bunter was on the watch.

The fat junior had been several minutes in the tuckshop, and he was ordering things right and left; and Mrs. Mimble, having seen him slam down a sovereign on the counter, was serving him with her most gracious smile.

Bunter changed colour as he caught sight of Bulstrode in the distance, striding towards the shop. He could see, short-sighted as he was, from the expression of the burly Removite's face, that he had discovered his loss.

"I—I say, Mrs. Mimble, my change, quick!" he gasped.

"Yes, Master Bunter."

"And—and can you let me out the back way?" stammered Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble looked at him in astonishment.

"Certainly, Master Bunter—but why?"

"There—there's a chap going to raid my grub," said

Bunter. "He—he is coming here to raid it, you know. I—I don't want him to catch me as I go out."

Mrs. Mimble understood at once—not wholly, certainly, but enough. The juniors of Greyfriars had a little way of raiding one another's supplies after visits to the tuckshop. And Billy Bunter was just the fellow whom the other juniors would be likely to raid.

"This way, Master Bunter."

Bunter clutched up his change in one hand, and a bag of good things in the other, and rolled after Mrs. Mimble into her little parlour.

"If—if Bulstrode asks for me, Mrs. Mimble, tell him I—I'm dead—or—or that I'm gone out picnicking for the day, will you?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, Master Bunter."

There was a loud rap on the counter. Mrs. Mimble returned into the shop. Bulstrode, with a face red with haste and anger, was banging on the little counter with a heavy fist.

"Is Bunter here?" he exclaimed, as the good dame came out of the parlour.

"Bunter!" repeated Mrs. Mimble, to gain time.

"Yes, Bunter!"

"He's been here, Master Bulstrode."

"Has he gone?"

"Yes, he has g-g-gone. I'm sorry, if you wanted to see him."

"He's been picking my pocket," Bulstrode roared. "I want to get the money back before he blues it."

"Oh, dear!"

"Has he changed any money here—gold, I mean?"

"He changed a sovereign, Master Bulstrode," said Mrs. Mimble, in alarm. "I—I hope he has not stolen it."

"He has, the young scoundrel! Where is he?"

"He went out the back way."

"Where has he gone?"

"He said he was going out picnicking for the day."

"Oh, rats!"

Bulstrode stamped out of the shop. He glared up and down the Close in search of the Owl of the Remove.

"Ah, there the cad is!"

He caught a glimpse of Bunter just entering the School House. He dashed across the Close again. Bunter disappeared into the House. Bulstrode ran in after him. At the same moment a lady and a gentleman entered the gates of Greyfriars; but Bulstrode had no eyes then for new-comers. He was thinking of Billy Bunter and his two pounds.

He ran into the House.

Bunter was not in sight, and the captain of the Remove raced upstairs, and along the Remove passage to Bunter's study.

The door was locked.

Bulstrode did not need telling Bunter was there. He hammered on the door, and shouted through the keyhole.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter!"

There was no reply. But he heard a quivering breath within the study. There was no doubt that the Owl of the Remove was there behind the locked door.

Bulstrode thundered at the upper panels again with his fist.

"Open the door, you young thief!" he bawled.

"I—I say, Bulstrode—"

"Let me in!"

"I—I can't! I—I've lost the key. What do you want to come in for, Bulstrode?"

"I want my two sovereigns."

"I—I haven't seen them."

Crash! Crash!

"I—I say, Bulstrode, you'll break the lock if you go on like that, you know. I—I say, you know, hadn't you better go and get ready for the St. Jim's chaps. They may be here almost any minute now."

Crash!

"I—I believe you're expecting your people, too. It would be too bad not to meet them when they come in, Bulstrode."

Crash!

"You'll bust the lock, Bulstrode. Look here, I've only borrowed the two quid, you know, and I'm going to return it from my postal-order this afternoon."

Bump! Crash!

"I'm expecting several postal-orders from some titled friends of mine, and I'll settle it all up this evening, honour bright!"

Crash!

The lock gave way, and there was a yell of terror from Billy Bunter as Bulstrode rushed into the study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Senior.

JOHN BULL took off his cap as an elderly, stoutly-built gentleman, with a lady on his arm, stopped in the gateway of Greyfriars School. They glanced about them, and looked at John Bull as he advanced towards them.

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"Mr. Bulstrode?" asked Bull politely.

The gentleman nodded. He was a man very like Bulstrode in appearance, with a redder face and heavier brows, and an expression of bulldog determination. It was easy to see where Bulstrode of the Remove got his overbearing characteristics from. The lady was very quiet and very subdued. Perhaps the neighbourhood of her determined and overpowering husband made her so.

"Yes," said Mr. Bulstrode, in a heavy, powerful voice—everything about Mr. Bulstrode was heavy and powerful—his voice, his manner, his clothes, his silk hat, his watchchain—everything—"Yes. I am Mr. Bulstrode."

"Bulstrode's been waiting here for you, sir," said John Bull. "He's just gone into the School House, sir."

"Very well. Thank you."

The stout gentleman turned to his wife.

"Come, Amelia! We will see the doctor first."

"Very well," said Mrs. Bulstrode—"very well, dear."

Judging by her tone, if Mr. Bulstrode had said "We will now jump into the fountain," Mrs. Bulstrode would have replied in the same meek voice: "Very well, dear."

They walked to the House. As they entered, there was a sound of hammering above stairs, but they did not guess what it portended. Trotter, the page, showed them into the Head's study.

Dr. Locke greeted his guests politely. The Head of Greyfriars had all sorts and conditions of parents to meet, and he had the same courteous manner for all of them. Mr. Bulstrode was a somewhat formidable visitor, but the Head was as urbane as possible.

"So glad to welcome you to Greyfriars," said the Head.

"Pray sit down, my dear madam, my dear sir. What a really satisfactory day for the cricket match."

"Quite so, sir—quite so," said Mr. Bulstrode, without allowing his wife to speak. "We shall enjoy seeing the match—shall we not, Mrs. Bulstrode?"

"Very well, dear."

"But I should like to speak to you about my son, if I may, sir," said Mr. Bulstrode.

"Oh, certainly!" said the Head.

"In last term's report of him, you were pleased to say some complimentary things," said Mr. Bulstrode. "I was very pleased to read them."

"I am glad to say that there has been an improvement in your son," said Dr. Locke. "He was very much inclined to overbearing conduct towards smaller boys—bullying, in fact—but a wonderful improvement has taken place in him. I was very glad indeed to see it."

"Bullying," said Mr. Bulstrode, in his fiercest tone—"bullying is a thing I detest! A man who speaks positively or raises his voice, or loses his temper, is my abhorrence, sir." Mr. Bulstrode's voice rose emphatically while he was speaking. "These traits in my son's character should be cut out of it, sir—cut out."

"I am glad to say they seem to be disappearing of their own accord, without any drastic measures being taken, Mr. Bulstrode."

"Very good, sir—very good. I desired very much to speak to you upon this subject, Dr. Locke. I have been very anxious about my son upon that account. Where he could obtain his overbearing proclivities from is a mystery to me. I am sure his mother is the sweetest-tempered woman in the world, and I am a quiet and unassuming man. There is no accounting for these things, sir."

"I fear not, Mr. Bulstrode."

"I will not take up any more of your time, sir," said Bulstrode's father. "I will go and see my son."

"Trotter will show you—"

"Thanks; I know my way!"

"Very good, sir. I shall see you at the cricket match, suppose? I have promised the Remove to watch part of it."

"I shall certainly be there, Dr. Locke. I hear that my son is now captain of his Form cricket team."

"That is correct, sir."

"I dare say I shall find him in his study," Mr. Bulstrode said. "Come, Amelia."

"Very well, dear."

Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode left the Head's study, and Dr. Locke settled down to have a peaceful few minutes before the next visitors arrived.

"This way, my dear," said Mr. Bulstrode, in his powerful voice. "We will catch him in his study—eh?"

"Very well, dear."

Mr. Bulstrode led the way to the Remove passage. He knew the way well; it was not by any means his first visit to Greyfriars. As a matter of fact, he was rather fond of coming down to the school and watching his son's progress. Not that Bulstrode senior was particularly tender-hearted. He was quite capable of playing the Roman parent on occasion. Mr. Bulstrode personally had a great admiration for the

First Brutus who had his sons scourged and executed, when he might have pardoned them—from a sense of duty. Mr. Bulstrode would not have carried his sense of duty to that length, certainly; but there was a great deal of the Brutus about him.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Bulstrode, as he reached the Remove passage. "That is George!"

Bulstrode's voice could be heard from Bunter's study.

"You rat! You rotten young hound!"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Mrs. Bulstrode.

Mr. Bulstrode's brow grew as black as thunder.

"Ha! That does not sound as if George has improved much, Amelia."

"Oh, dear!"

"You fat boulder—hand over the money, I tell you!"

Mr. Bulstrode marched down the passage with thunder and lightning in his glance. He strode into the open doorway of the study, and a startling scene burst upon his gaze.

— — —

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Barred.

BILLY BUNTER was writhing in the grasp of the captain of the Remove.

Bulstrode, his face inflamed with anger and excitement, was shaking the Owl of the Remove savagely.

"You young hound!" he roared. "Give me the money!"

"Ow!"

"Hand it over, I say!"

"Yaroo! I—I won't! It's mine! Ow! Yah! Help!"

Neither of the juniors noticed, for the moment, the two new-comers in the doorway. Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode gazed upon the scene, the former with a thunderous brow, and the latter in deep distress.

Certainly Bulstrode had never shown up in a more unfavourable light.

He had grasped the fat junior in a grasp of iron, and having shaken him till his head was spinning, he proceeded to turn the money out of Bunter's pockets.

Billy Bunter was resisting feebly.

"That's only one pound four," said Bulstrode. "I want more than that."

"Ow! Help!"

"Hand it over, I tell you!"

"Yaroo! Help!"

"George!" thundered Mr. Bulstrode.

Bulstrode jumped.

"George!"

"Father!"

Bulstrode released Bunter. The fat junior reeled away, gasping for breath, but clutching at the money at the same time.

Bulstrode stood flushing and panting before his father.

His mother gave a little cry.

"Oh, George dear, how could you?"

"I—I—"

"So this is how we find you!" thundered Mr. Bulstrode.

"Bullying a small boy, and robbing him of his money!"

"Father—"

"Scoundrel!" said Mr. Bulstrode.

"I—I—"

"Help!" gasped Bunter. "He's nearly throttled me! He's trying to rob me of my money. Ow! Help! Yow!"

"Wretched boy!" said Mr. Bulstrode. "This is worse than I ever expected. If you could not restrain your bullying, surely you might have observed common honesty, and not taken this lad's money."

Bulstrode went crimson.

"His money!" he exclaimed. "It's my money."

Mr. Bulstrode snorted. When he was angry, he had a snort like a horse.

"Your money?"

"Yes, father."

"How did it come into this boy's pockets, then?"

"He took it from mine."

"Nonsense!"

"Father! Don't you believe me?"

"No, sir," thundered Bulstrode senior—"no, sir, I do not! I have heard about your bullying before; I know that you have a reputation for being a bully, and for making small boys miserable."

Bulstrode bit his lip. It was true that that had long been his reputation; and he could not be surprised if it stuck to him after he had ceased to deserve it.

"Father—" he began.

"Silence!" Mr. Bulstrode turned to Bunter. "Boy, what is your name?"

"W-w-william George Bunter, sir."

"Is that money yours, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you take it from my son?"

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"N-n-n-no, sir," stammered Bunter. "Do I look as if I could take it from a big chap like Bulstrode?"

"Certainly not."

"It was in a waistcoat-pocket I left in the dorm.," Bulstrode said.

"It's a lie," said Bunter viciously—"it's a lie, sir!"

"You young hound!"

"Silence, George! I have caught you bullying this boy in the most brutal way, and taking away his money—"

"I—I swear—"

"Silence! If the money was yours, and Bunter had taken it, you should have asked him for it—"

"I did ask him!"

"And if he refused to give it up, you should have explained the matter to a master. You should not have attempted to take it by violence."

"But—"

"It is your word against his," thundered Mr. Bulstrode; "and I prefer to take the word of the victim, not of the bully!"

"Father—"

"I am ashamed of you," said Mr. Bulstrode. "Your mother is ashamed of you, too. Are you not, Amelia?"

"Very well, my dear," said Mrs. Bulstrode feebly.

Mr. Bulstrode waved a large and heavy hand.

"You are no son of mine now," he said. "If it were possible I would disown you. As it is, I decline to speak to you until you have reformed yourself. You understand that? I am here for the day, but I have nothing to say to you. Your mother has nothing to say to you either. Is it not the case, Amelia?"

"Very well, dear."

"And unless this reform takes place in your character, George, you need never expect a kind word from either of us again," said Mr. Bulstrode, and he gave his arm to his wife, and led her away.

Bulstrode stood transfixed.

Bunter, with a sly glance at him, slipped the disputed money into his pocket and stole quietly out of the study.

Bulstrode did not move.

He did not even see Bunter at that moment. His own bitter thoughts were enough to occupy him then.

This was the day he had looked forward to—this was the day when he was to appear as captain of the Form eleven in a big match, and to play under the eyes of his parents, and shine in the eyes of the school.

This!

On this day, of all days in his life, he was disgraced, cut, and barred by his own people! He stood in the study, silent, stunned.

Mrs. Bulstrode ventured a feeble protest as she walked away with her husband.

"Perhaps, dear—"

Mr. Bulstrode snorted.

"There is no perhaps about it, Amelia. George is a bully, and he is dishonest, and I have nothing more to say to him."

"Then we had better go," said Mrs. Bulstrode.

"Go?"

"Yes, dear. There is nothing to stay at the school for, if —"

Another snort.

"I shall certainly not go!" said Mr. Bulstrode. "I came here to see the cricket match, and I shall stay to see the cricket match. It would not be consistent with my personal dignity to quit Greyfriars because my son has misbehaved himself. I think you fail to appreciate my character, Amelia."

"But—"

"There are no buts in the case."

"However—"

"However, we are not going!" said Mr. Bulstrode. "I shall not be sorry to show all Greyfriars how strongly I disapprove of George's conduct."

And Mr. Bulstrode finished with a snort so emphatic that the unfortunate Amelia did not venture to say another word.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Saints.

BAI Jove! Jollay glad to see you again, dear boys!"

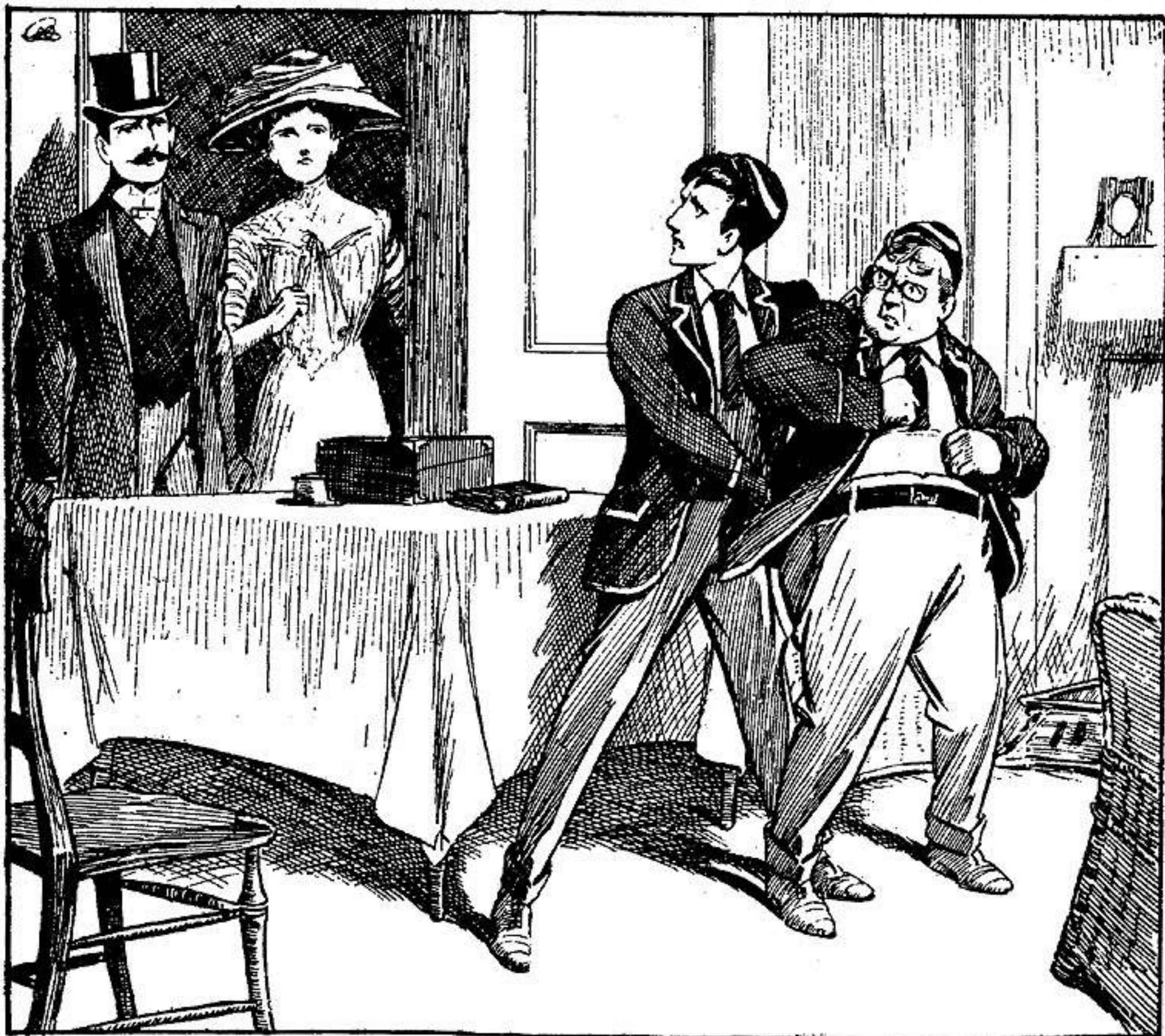
An elegant youth, in the most elegant attire, leaned gracefully out of the window of a first-class carriage as the train came into Friardale Station.

Juniors were crammed in the carriage behind him, and in the next carriage, and the next. More than eleven St. Jim's fellows had come over for the match.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's the one and only!"

"Hurrah!"

The elegant junior jammed an eyeglass into his eye and gazed at Bob Cherry in a rather doubtful sort of way.



Bulstrode had grasped the fat junior in a grasp of iron, and having shaken him till his head was spinning, he proceeded to turn the money from Bunter's pockets. "George!" thundered a voice. Bulstrode jumped, and turned to see his father and mother standing in the doorway. (See page 6)

"Weally Chewwy—" he ejaculated.

"Jolly glad to see you, D'Arcy!" said Harry Wharton.

"We thought we'd come down and meet you."

"Thanks awf'ly, deah boy!"

Tom Merry, the captain of the St. Jim's juniors, jumped out of the train, and the other fellows followed him fast from the carriages. The St. Jim's junior eleven were a fine-looking set of fellows.

Tom Merry, the skipper, and Manners and Lowther and Noble belonged to the Shell; Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Figgins and Kerr and Wynn, to the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. There were four or five other fellows with them, who had come over to see the match.

Bob Cherry slapped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy heartily on the back.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a little howl.

"Ow!"

"All serene—eh?" asked Bob.

"Weally, Chewwy, I wish you would not be so howwibly wuff!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You have thwown me into quite a fluttah, and caused me to dwop my eyeglass."

"Sorry!" said Bob, giving him a slap on the other shoulder. "That any better?"

"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

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"Weally, Chewwy, I must say that I wegard you as a dangewous ass," said Arthur Augustus, backing away from the boisterous Removite. "Pway do not be a wuff beast. You have wumpled my jacket now."

"Looking for anything?" asked Bob Cherry, noticing that Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's was gazing up and down the platform in a lost sort of way.

Wynn started.

"I was wondering whether there was a buffet in this station," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Trust Fatty to think of that!"

"Well, it's an important thing, ain't it?" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry. I always get hungry after a journey; and I have a jolly keen appetite in this July weather, you know."

"And in every other blessed weather!" murmured Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There isn't a buffet here," said Harry Wharton, with a smile; "but there's a jolly good tuckshop in the village, and we pass it going to the school. There's time to stop there for a little feed."

"Oh, good!"

"This way, then."

The juniors poured out of the station in a merry crowd, the St. Jim's fellows carrying their bags.

Fatty Wynn dropped a little behind with Harry Wharton,

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and nudged the Greyfriars fellow in the ribs. Harry looked at him in some surprise.

"I say," whispered Wynn, "where's that tuckshop?"

"Only down the street."

"Could you manage to take the other fellows on while I slip in by myself?"

"What on earth for?"

"Figgy's such a beast," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "He thinks I sha'n't be able to bowl if I have anything decent to eat. He keeps me frightfully short of food when there's any blessed cricket on. If you could keep him occupied for five minutes or so, I could have a bit of a tuck-in before he found out."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't be quite fair on your skipper," he said. "You're the champion bowler on your side, you know, and it wouldn't be cricket to get you out of form by letting you stuff—I mean, eat."

"Look here—"

"Why not put it gently to Figgy?"

"Oh, Figgy's an ass!"

"Hey?" said Figgins, who had slackened pace in time to hear that remark. "Who's an ass?"

"You are, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry."

"You can have a sandwich, and one stone ginger," said Figgins.

"Look here, Figgy—"

"And nothing more," said Kerr. "You're not going to let St. Jim's down in this match if I know it!"

"Wathah not! I'm surprised at you, Wynn, weally."

"Oh, you cheese it, Gussy!" said Fatty Wynn crossly.

"Look here, Figgy—"

"I'm looking," said Figgins grimly.

"You see—"

"Yes, I'll see that you don't have any tarts or jam-puffs till after the match."

"If I don't lay a solid foundation—"

"Rats!"

Fatty Wynn heaved a deep sigh, and walked on slowly.

They passed a confectioner's, and Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. Then they halted at the village tuckshop.

"Here we are!" said Harry Wharton.

"Come and have your sandwich, Fatty," said Kerr kindly.

Fatty Wynn shook his head.

"Thanks, I won't come in!"

The St. Jim's juniors stared at him blankly. So did the Greyfriars fellows. They knew Fatty Wynn pretty well. It was certainly the first time he had ever been known to decline an invitation to enter a tuckshop.

"Not ill, are you, Fatty?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"No, I'm not. But I'm not going to eat any blessed old sandwiches! I'll come in and have a good feed if you like."

"You jolly well won't!" said Figgins.

"Not much!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"Then I'll stay out!"

"All right, sit down on the bench. We sha'n't be long having a ginger round," said Monty Lowther.

Fatty Wynn grunted and sat down. The juniors crowded into Uncle Clegg's little shop and rained orders upon that crusty old gentleman. Uncle Clegg served out gingerbeer and doughnuts in great quantities.

The Saints had had a good breakfast before they started; but the journey was a long one, and it had given them a good appetite. They devoured sandwiches, but light pastry was barred till after the match.

Figgins wore a puzzled look as he ate sandwiches. He was thinking about Fatty Wynn. It was not like the hearty, good-natured Fatty to sulk—and he had not looked sulky either. But what did he mean by staying outside the tuckshop and having nothing to eat at all?

The matter worked so upon Figgins's mind that presently he went to the door of the shop and looked out for Fatty Wynn, to speak to him.

Then he uttered an exclamation of amazement.

Fatty Wynn had disappeared!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Jammy!

"My hat!"

Figgy's surprised exclamation brought a crowd of juniors to the doorway.

"What's the matter?" Tom Merry asked.

"Fatty!"

"What's the matter with Fatty?"

"He gone!"

"Gone! My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

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Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! So that was his little game!"

"What was?" demanded Tom Merry, staring at Bob.

"What was his little game? What do you mean?"

"He's gone to the confectioner's."

"Oh!"

In a second the St. Jim's crowd were tearing down the street towards the confectioner's shop. If Fatty Wynn were allowed time to raid the pastrycook's wares, there was no telling what his bowling would be like in the match with the Greyfriars Remove.

The Removites roared with laughter.

"Blessed if that chap doesn't beat Billy Bunter, of ours!" said Bob Cherry, with tears of merriment in his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. reached the confectioner's shop, and rushed in.

There was Fatty Wynn!

He was standing at the counter, and there was a pile of pastry before him. The confectioner was regarding him with almost an affectionate smile. He had seldom had so good a customer as Fatty Wynn.

Jam-tarts and doughnuts, cream-puffs and buns were disappearing at a really remarkable rate of speed.

Fatty Wynn's plump face was glowing with enjoyment.

"This is something like!" he murmured.

"Fatty!" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn started, in the act of taking a huge bite out of a jam-tart, and choked as the great mouthful went down the wrong way.

"Grooooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! He's chokin'!"

"Gerroroooooh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Oh! Ow! Groo—"

"Thump him on the back—quick!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Here goes!"

"Lend a hand!"

"Groo-oo-oo!"

Five or six juniors started thumping Fatty Wynn on the back at the same time. The fat Fourth-Former gasped and gurgled and roared.

"Gerrooh! Leggo! Lemme alone! Ow! Yow!"

"Go it, deah boys—he's wecoverin'!"

Thump—thump—thump!

"Feel bettah, Wynn, deah boy— Ow!"

Fatty Wynn was hitting out wildly. D'Arcy caught a fat fist upon his nose, and sat down on the floor of the confectioner's shop.

"Ow!" he gasped. "My nose! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme alone!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I'm all right! By George, I'll—I'll biff this ginger-beer at you if you don't cheese it, you chumps!"

"Sure you feel all right?" asked Manners, with his hand raised ready for another terrific thump.

"Ow! Yes, idiot! Ow!"

D'Arcy scrambled to his feet. His aristocratic visage was red with wrath, and his beautiful trousers were very dusty.

"You uttah ass!" he shouted. "Ow! My nose! My twousahs! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to laugh at, you uttah asses! Ow! My twousahs! My nose!"

Figgins and Kerr grasped hold of Fatty Wynn.

"Come on!" said Figgins grimly.

"Look here, Figgy—"

"This way to Greyfriars."

"Beg pardon, sir," said the grinning confectioner. "The young gent. hasn't paid yet, sir."

"Yes, of course, I haven't paid," Fatty Wynn exclaimed, glad of any excuse for lingering. "You—you see, I—I haven't paid. How much is it?"

"Six and sevenpence, sir."

"Leggo, you fatheads!"

Figgins and Kerr let go Fatty Wynn while he felt in his pockets for the money. The juniors all watched the fat Fourth-Former like cats watching for a mouse, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was dusting his trousers with a cambric handkerchief.

Fatty Wynn cast a longing glance at the unfinished tarts on the counter. They seemed to him to cry to be eaten.

"I—I say, Figgy, perhaps I'd better finish the tarts," he murmured.

Figgins grunted.

"Just you try, that's all!" he said.

"Suppose I have one—"

"Better not."

"Look here, just one—"

"Pay up, you chump, and come out!"

"But I say—"

"Are you going to pay?" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn snorted, and threw the money on the counter. "There you are! I want fivepence change."

"Yes, sir."

Fatty Wynn turned away from the counter, and then suddenly turned back, and made a grab at the tarts. He couldn't resist the temptation.

But Figgins and Kerr were watching him.

As he seized a tart in each hand they grasped his wrists, and they biffed the hands containing the tarts upon Fatty Wynn's face.

The tarts were squashed there, and the plump face of the Fourth-Former was smothered with jam and pastry.

Fatty Wynn gave a roar.

"Yah! Oh!"

He gouged the jam out of his eyes and nose, sputtering and snorting furiously. The juniors yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! I— Oh—ah! Yah!"

Figgins and Kerr seized the fat Fourth-Former and rushed him out of the shop.

"Leggo!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I've got to get a wash now. I can't go to Greyfriars in this state, can I, you fat-heads?"

"You're jolly well going to, whether you can or not!" grinned Figgins. "Don't let go his arms, Kerr."

"Rather not!" chuckled Kerr.

"Look here, you idiots—"

"Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Fathead—"

"This way!"

"Chump—"

"Quick march!" grinned Figgins.

And Fatty Wynn was quick-marched off. The Greyfriars juniors yelled at the sight of him.

"Is that something new in fly-catchers?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gr-oo-hoo! I want a wash! Yah!"

"You can get a wash at Greyfriars."

"B-b-but look here—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Fatty Wynn was marched by sheer force out of Friardale, and along the lane to Greyfriars, and it seemed to Fatty Wynn that every fly in the county must have settled upon his jammy face at one time or another during that walk in the July sun.

By the time the juniors reached Greyfriars Fatty Wynn had repented very sincerely of that visit to the confectioners.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Under a Cloud.

BULSTRODE met Harry Wharton & Co. and the party from St. Jim's as they came in, but there was a strange change in Bulstrode.

The cheeriness of his manner was gone. There was a dark cloud upon his face.

Wharton looked at him in surprise.

"Nothing wrong, is there?" he asked, in a low voice.

"No," said Bulstrode.

"You're not ill?"

"I'm all right."

"You look pretty sick."

"Oh, that's nothing."

"Something's happened."

"It's all right."

It was evident that Bulstrode did not mean to say any more.

Wharton felt very uneasy. Bulstrode certainly did not look just then like a skipper who was to lead a cricket team to victory.

That something had happened was certain, and Wharton could not help wondering what it was.

Whatever it was, it had left its mark upon the captain of the Remove.

Bulstrode looked as if all the brightness and cheerfulness had been taken out of him, and grim despondency put in its place.

"Something's up," said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Hang it all, what's the matter with Bulstrode? That isn't how a chap ought to look on a whole holiday, with the cricket match of the season just in front of him."

"I should say not."

Bulstrode greeted the St. Jim's fellows cordially enough, but Tom Merry & Co. could not help noticing the strain in his manner.

Arthur Augustus gave Bulstrode a light, friendly tap on the shoulder.

"Pway buck up, deah boy," he remarked. "Of course,

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you've got no chance; but don't take it like that, you know."

Bulstrode started.

"Ah! What's that?" he exclaimed.

"Of course, you are booked for a fearful lickin'," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully, "but buck up."

"Oh, rats!" said the Remove skipper.

"Weally, Bulstwod—"

"We're going to walk all over you chaps."

"Wats, deah boy!"

"Don't swank, Gussy!" said Jack Blake severely.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Jack Blake of the Fourth with a perfectly withering expression.

"Did you address me, Blake?" he queried.

"Yes, rather!"

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as swank. I wegard you—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy."

"Yes, I know. Come on!"

The cricketers went down to the pitch. A goodly crowd was already gathering there. It being a whole holiday at Greyfriars for the Remove, the whole of the Form had determined to see the match.

Fellows of other Forms were to be there, too, while lessons were not "on," and visitors were expected in any number.

"Your people are here, ain't they, Bulstrode?" John Bull asked.

Bulstrode flushed. "Yes," he said awkwardly.

"Mater and pater?"

"Yes."

"They ought to be told the match is going to begin, then. I suppose you can't leave the ground now? I'll send Fish—he's not playing."

"I guess I'll go with pleasure," said the American junior.

Bulstrode hesitated.

"I'll tell them," he said.

He walked off the ground. Fisher T. Fish looked after him with a peculiar expression on his face.

"Bulstrode been having any trouble with his people?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," said John Bull.

"It looks odd."

"Yes, it does," John Bull remarked thoughtfully; "Bulstrode's got something on his mind. I hope it won't muck up his play. We shall have all our work cut out to beat the Saints, in any case."

"Yep."

"His people can't be ragging him on a day like this, I should think," said John Bull.

"His pater looked a bit of a goer, but—"

"Look there!" said Fish.

"My hat!"

Bulstrode, crossing towards the School House, met his parents coming towards the cricket ground.

Mr. Bulstrode was walking very upright and stiffly, and his wife had a troubled expression upon her face.

Bulstrode hurried eagerly towards them to speak.

His father gave him one hard glance, and then lifted his chin very high in the air, and walked on as if Bulstrode were a perfect stranger to him.

Bulstrode stood rooted to the ground.

His face went pale and red by turns. He looked after his father, without speaking a word.

Mr. Bulstrode and Mrs. Bulstrode came down to the cricket ground, and Harry Wharton hastened to find them seats before the pavilion.

"My hat!" murmured Bull. "What can be the matter? His own people won't speak to him!"

Fish nodded.

"He's barred by his people," he said.

"It's rotten for Bulstrode."

"Horrid."

Bulstrode came back slowly towards the ground.

His face was very pale now, and there was a deep wrinkle in his forehead. John Bull tapped him on the arm.

"Bulstrode, old man—"

Bulstrode looked at him dully.

"Yes—what is it, Bull?"

"I don't want to interfere in your affairs," said John Bull quietly. "But I can see that there's some trouble between you and your people."

Bulstrode nodded without replying.

"Is it a misunderstanding?"

"Yes."

"Can't you explain?"

"My pater won't listen to me."

"But—"

"It can't be helped," said Bulstrode. "Let's get to the cricket."

"Could I do anything?"

Bulstrode shook his head.

John Bull did not pursue the subject. It was no business of his, but he would have been glad to help if he could. The stumps had been pitched. Tom Merry and Bulstrode tossed for choice of innings. Bulstrode won, and he elected to bat first.

Tom Merry and Co. went out to field.

Handsome and very fit they looked, eleven figures in spotless white, on the level green of the cricket-field.

As they took up their positions, there was a sudden shout from Bob Cherry, who was looking away towards the gates.

"My governor!"

A ruddy-faced, military-looking old gentleman, with a fierce white moustache, was bearing down upon the juniors' ground.

It was Major Cherry!

Bob dropped his bat, and rushed across to meet his father, and the major shook hands with his son, and slapped him on the shoulder, evidently delighted to see Bob, and to see, too, that he was playing for his Form.

As for Bob, he was grinning with delight.

"This way, dad," he exclaimed.

"Bogad. I'm glad I'm in time," said the major.

"Just in time—we're just going to begin. This is Mr. Bulstrode, Bulstrode's pater—our skipper's pater, you know. My father, sir! Here's your chair, dad. Marjorie's going to have the next one, when she comes over!"

And Bob ran off to open the innings with Bulstrode.

Bulstrode gave one last look at his father as he came down with his bat under his arm, buttoning his glove.

Mr. Bulstrode did not seem to see him.

A dark cloud settled over Bulstrode's face, and he tramped heavily on the turf, as he went to take up his place at the wicket.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hard Cheese!

TOM MERRY of St. Jim's looked Fatty Wynn up and down. That fat Fourth-Former of the New House at St. Jim's had washed the jam off his face. He bore no outward traces now of the little scene in the confectioner's shop. But inwardly he was puffing and short of breath. The sudden meal of light and indigestible pastry had told upon him.

"You're not fit," said Tom Merry severely.

"Oh, yes, I am," said Fatty Wynn. "You gimme the ball and see me bowl."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"You're not going to take the first over," he growled.

"You can field."

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Where shall I field, then?" he asked.

"Anywhere you like, only keep out of the way," Tom Merry said crossly.

"Oh, I say—"

"Cheese it, and buzz off."

"But where shall I go?" howled Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, go down into the long-field, and stay there!"

And Fatty Wynn trotted off.

He avoided meeting the glances of Figgins and Kerr. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn belonged to the New House at St. Jim's; the other fellows to the School House at that famous foundation. Figgins and Kerr were very anxious, naturally, for their house-fellow to shine in the team; but under the circumstances they could not blame Tom Merry for declining to give him the first over.

The ball was tossed to Monty Lowther, and the Shell fellow went on to bowl against Bulstrode's wicket.

Bulstrode had his bat on the crease, and was looking out. He glanced back once towards the pavilion, to see whether his father was looking at him, and he found the old gentleman's gaze fixed steadily before him in an icy stare.

Bulstrode's face fell and grew darker.

"Look out, Bulstrode," Harry Wharton muttered, from where he was standing. "What's the matter with you, old man?"

"Buck up!" muttered Nugent.

Bulstrode started, and pulled himself together.

"I'm all right," he said.

And he watched for the first ball.

Bulstrode's heart was heavy, and, in spite of himself, he could not drive the cloud from his face.

The day which was to have been so happy was likely to be the most miserable of his life, and, try as he would,

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he could not "buck up," against the influence of the heavy despondency that overwhelmed him.

If only he could have had one kind glance—one look to show that his people cared whether he distinguished himself or not.

But his father's gaze was fixed and hard; and his mother's troubled eyes were on the ground.

Monty Lowther took a little run, and sent down the ball! Round the ground, a crowd of fellows watched the first delivery.

It was an easy ball to tackle; any fag in the Second Form could have stopped it with ease, if not scored off it. Not so Bulstrode!

The captain of the Remove made a swipe at the ball, and—

Missed it!

Crash!

The middle stump of the wicket went crashing to the ground under the impact of the ball, and the bails were on the ground, and the wicket was left with a peculiarly toothless aspect.

There was a deep buzz from the spectators.

"How's that?" yelled Jack Blake.

And the umpire grinned as he said:

"Out!"

Bulstrode stared down at his ruined wicket.

He was out—there was no doubt about that—out, first ball of the first over!

He put his bat under his arm, and tramped off towards the pavilion, his ears burning as he heard the comments passed by the crowd upon his performance.

The St. Jim's fellows were grinning. They could not help it, and it was excusable. Monty Lowther was not their champion bowler, by any means; but he had bowled the captain of the opposing side with the greatest of ease.

The Saints knew nothing, of course, of the trouble that was weighing on Bulstrode's mind; and they only wondered how it was that the Greyfriars Remove, so keen on cricket, should have chosen such a rotten, bad batsman as skipper.

There was a cheer for Monty Lowther from his friends, but it was drowned by the mocking yells for Bulstrode. The Remove did not stand upon ceremony in expressing their opinion of a cricket captain who was out first ball of the first over.

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"The fathead!"

"The chump!"

"What a skipper!"

"Oh, he's looking for ducks' eggs!"

Bulstrode heard those remarks, and many others, as he tramped off. He paused for a moment to speak to Harry Wharton.

"You're next in," he said. "Get in, and for goodness' sake do what you can to get something for the side. I'm no good."

Wharton looked really concerned.

"I'm sorry, Bulstrode," he said softly.

Bulstrode gave a miserable laugh.

"Oh, I know I've come a beautiful mucker!" he said. "Hear what the fellows are saying. I suppose it serves me right."

"It doesn't; you're not yourself now."

Bulstrode passed a hand over his brow.

"I'm not," he said. "It's rotten—what's happened wasn't my fault! What's a fellow to feel like, with his own people cutting him, before a crowd?"

"It's hard cheese. But—"

"Go in; they're howling for next man."

"All right."

Wharton went down to the wickets.

Bulstrode tramped into the pavilion, and flung his bat down with a crash, and then flung himself into a seat, his brow black and moody.

From without, he heard the merry click of bat and ball, and then a shout, ringing loudly over the cricket-field and the old walls of Greyfriars.

"Bravo, Wharton! Well hit!"

Bulstrode did not move.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Greyfriars Innings.

"**B**RAVO, Wharton!"

"Go it, Harry!"

"Hurrah!"

The ball was sailing away, away, away! It dropped far, and the fieldsman ran for it, and Wharton and Bob Cherry crossed the pitch, and crossed it again, and crossed it a third time, and yet a fourth.



"Thee will sit down," said a big farmer, crushing Knox down into his seat by main force. "If thee get oop again it will be the worse for thee!" (An amusing incident from the splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Fighting Schoolmaster," by Martin Clifford, contained in this week's "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

Then the round, red ball came hurtling in seconds too late!

The new batsman had started his innings with a four, and the hopes of the Greyfriars fellows rose.

Bulstrode's start had disheartened the team. But Wharton had succeeded in bucking them up again.

Wharton, the old captain of the Remove, was evidently the one who would pull the match out of the fire, if it could be pulled out.

Harry Wharton's eyes were sparkling.

He was in splendid form, and prepared to play the game of his life. And the game of his life was needed, for the Saints were very keen, and in deadly earnest.

An odd run gave Wharton still the bowling, when the bowlers were changed. Figgins gave Tom Merry an imploring look.

"Try Fatty, now!" he muttered.

Tom Merry nodded curtly.

"Chuck him the ball!" he said.

Fatty Wynn went gladly on to bowl.

He was not in his best form, but he was determined to play up as well as he could, and show that that feed in the confectioner's in Friardale had not really had its supposed effect upon him.

Harry Wharton faced the bowling steadily. Though not at his best, Fatty Wynn sent down some deadly bowling, and it taxed all Harry's resources to stop it.

The over gave him a single run, at the sixth ball, and so it came that he was still batting when Jack Blake bowled the third over.

Fatty Wynn dropped back into his place with a flushed

face and a deprecating smile. He had not done what was expected of him.

"Ass!" murmured Figgins.

"Really, Figgy, you know!"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, rats!"

And Fatty Wynn thrust his hands deep in the pockets of his white trousers, and tramped into the long-field.

Jack Blake bowled well. He was a good bowler, one of the best in the St. Jim's junior team, but he was not up to Fatty Wynn's style. He could not touch Wharton's wicket, and the over gave Harry six more runs.

Then Bob Cherry had a chance of batting with Lowther sending down the ball. Bob was a slogging batsman, and Lowther's bowling lent itself to slogging.

The Greyfriars score went up and up.

Loud shouts from the Greyfriars fellows hailed every successful hit. Even Billy Bunter, who was blinking on at the game through his big spectacles, joined in the cheering when Bob Cherry hit a boundary.

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose.

"Those two bounders are getting set," he remarked, as the field crossed over once more. "Something will have to be done, or they'll declare soon, I should think."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll go on and bowl if you like, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry snorted.

"I don't like," he said.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Give Fatty another chance!" said Figgins.

"Oh, blow Fatty!"

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S BROTHER."

Another Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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Kangaroo—Noble, of the Shell—was put on to bowl. The Cornstalk junior from St. Jim's made an impression on the wickets at last.

Harry Wharton was bowled, with a score of thirty runs to his own individual credit. He was loudly cheered as he went off the pitch.

Hazeldene took his place.

Kangaroo's eyes glinted as he sent down the leather to Hazeldene. With one ball he had taken Hazeldene's measure. With the second he knocked the Remove's bails sky-high.

Hazel went out for a duck's egg.

There was a groan from the Remove, and Hazeldene flushed. He was very sensitive, and that duck's egg weighed heavily upon his mind. But he comforted himself with the hope of doing better in the Greyfriars second innings.

Frank Nugent went in, and he and Bob Cherry kept the ball on the go very merrily for quite a long time, while the score mounted up.

Dr. Locke had joined his guests outside the pavilion, and with him came his two daughters to watch the match—Miss Rosie, a charming young lady of seventeen, and little Molly. Little Molly joined in the hand-clapping which greeted the successful hits, but Miss Rosie, with the great dignity of seventeen years, was less demonstrative. But she watched the cricket very keenly. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was a great cricketer, and perhaps that had something to do with Miss Rosie's enthusiasm for the summer game.

"Give Fatty another chance, Tommy," said Figgins, at the end of nearly every over; and at last Tom Merry relented, and the ball was entrusted once more to the Falstaff of the New House at St. Jim's.

Fatty Wynn was in great form now, apparently.

He accounted for Frank Nugent's wicket at once, and the run-getting of the Greyfriars' batsmen was reduced at once, though the wickets did not fall fast.

Figgins clapped his hands enthusiastically as Nugent's wicket went down.

"What did I tell you, Tom Merry?" he shouted.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's all right, Figgy."

"All right!" repeated Figgins. "I should just say it is! Just you watch Fatty, that's all; you just watch him!"

And Fatty Wynn was worth watching just then. He seemed to be getting into better and better form with every ball, and he was evidently a rod in pickle for the Greyfriars cricketers.

Bulstrode came to the door of the pavilion, and looked out. His clouded face was in strange contrast with the bright scene on the cricket-field.

He glanced at the play, and saw Tom Brown's wicket go down before a deadly googly. Greyfriars were now five down for fifty. Ogilvy went on with his bat. Bulstrode came slowly over towards where his father was sitting.

He touched the old gentleman lightly on the shoulder.

"Father!" he muttered. "Won't you speak to me? I can explain—"

His father gave him a hard stare.

"I think I told you I wished to have nothing to say to you," he said, very distinctly.

Bulstrode gulped.

"You're very hard on me," he said. "I could prove—"

"Not another word!"

"But, father—"

"Silence, I say!"

Bulstrode's lips closed. He looked at his mother, but she avoided his glance. He moved away. Some of the fellows standing near had heard what had passed. They turned away their heads in studious indifference; but they could not help feeling amazed.

Bulstrode walked away quietly towards the House.

He was not wanted till the innings was over, and he wanted to be alone. To the miserable lad the whole bright scene, the merry crowd, and the shouts and cheers, were intolerable. The day which was to have been a day of triumph was a day of disgrace and defeat, and Bulstrode's heart was too full.

He went into the House, and no one noticed him go. All eyes were on the game. No one gave another thought to George Bulstrode until the last Greyfriars wicket fell, and the Remove were all out for seventy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Bulstrode?

"BULSTRODE!"

The Removes were inquiring on all sides for "Where the dickens has that chap got to?"

"Where's Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode. It was only twelve o'clock, and lunch had been fixed for half-past, so there was time for the St. Jim's innings to begin before lunch.

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READ the splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. entitled:

"THE FIGHTING SCHOOLMASTER"

In this week's "GEM" Library. Price 1d.

"Do you know where Bulstrode is, sir?" Bob Cherry asked, addressing Mr. Bulstrode.

The old gentleman frowned.

"No, I do not," he replied curtly.

"I think he went towards the House," said Vernon-Smith, who was lying on the grass on his elbow. "Looked as if he had a headache, or something."

"I'll look for him there!"

Bob Cherry ran off towards the House.

Why Bulstrode should go in, when the Greyfriars innings was nearing its close was a mystery; but evidently he was not on the cricket-ground, or in the pavilion.

Bob Cherry entered the School House.

The whole holiday had been granted only to the Remove, for the purpose of the St. Jim's match, and the other Forms were still at lessons. The afternoon was a half holiday for all Greyfriars. Bob Cherry heard the droning voice of Temple from the Upper Fourth Form-room, as he went down the passage calling for Bulstrode. Temple was construing under the eye of Mr. Capper. From the Fifth Form-room came the well-known tones of Coker, stumbling over easy verses in the *Aeneid*. Bob Cherry grinned. Virgil seemed miles away from him at the present moment, imbued as he was with the spirit of cricket and the open air.

"Bulstrode!"

Bob Cherry looked into the Remove Form-room.

It was empty. Bulstrode was not there. The junior ran upstairs to the Remove passage.

Bulstrode's study door was open, and as Bob Cherry came down the passage, he heard a sound like a suppressed sigh.

He started.

Could that be Bulstrode—Bulstrode, the burly and truculent? Bob Cherry stepped along to the study, and looked in.

Bulstrode was seated there, plunged in deep and dejected thought. There was a portrait in his hand, and Bob Cherry knew it at once; it was the face of the gentle, kind, subdued woman who was by the side of Mr. Bulstrode at the cricket pavilion. It was the picture of Bulstrode's mother!

Bob Cherry coughed.

Bulstrode started up, and thrust the portrait into his pocket, turning a suddenly red face upon the junior.

"W-w-what!" he began.

There was wet on Bulstrode's eyelashes. But Bob Cherry affected not to see it. As a matter of fact, Bob, burly and boisterous as he was, was more moved than might have been expected by that unexpected discovery of the tenderness in Bulstrode's character.

Bulstrode was the last fellow in the world of whom he would have expected this.

"You're wanted," said Bob.

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed.

"My father wants me?"

It was a sudden exclamation, straight from the heart.

"No," Bob Cherry said, awkwardly enough. "Not your pater. You're wanted, old man—the innings is over."

"Oh, I see."

"We're all down for seventy," said Bob Cherry. "Tom Merry's waiting to begin his innings. It isn't exactly cricket to get off the ground like this, is it?"

Bulstrode nodded indifferently.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm out of sorts. I'd forgotten."

"What, forgotten the match!"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a whistle. "Better not tell the fellows so. They might think it time to get a new captain."

"I don't care if they do."

"Well, come on," said Bob. "There's no time to lose. Lunch is in half an hour or less, and we want to take some St. Jim's wickets before then."

"All serene!"

Bulstrode followed Bob Cherry downstairs. He blinked a little as they came out into the bright sunshine in the Close.

The crowd on the ground greeted Bulstrode in a way that was not exactly complimentary, considering that he was captain of the Form. Greyfriars all down for seventy in the first innings did not satisfy the Remove.

"Here he comes!"

"Where have you been hiding your blushes, Bulstrode?"

"Found any ducks' eggs?"

"I suppose you're looking for a pair of spectacles?" suggested Vernon-Smith.

And there was a general yell of laughter at that sally from the Bounder of Greyfriars.

If Bulstrode made a duck's egg in the second innings, as well as in the first, he would be the possessor of that dreaded adornment, a "pair of spectacles." Hence Vernon-Smith's little joke.

Bulstrode reddened, but he made no reply to any of the remarks and jeers. He was not feeling fit to enter into a wordy warfare with anyone.

Tom Merry nodded to him cheerfully. "We're ready to begin as soon as you like," he said. "Right-ho!" said Bulstrode. "We knock off at half-past twelve for lunch. Sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Not at all." "Wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I was glad of a little rest myself. The weathah is decidedly warm, and I find cwicket most exhaustin'."

"You haven't been playing cricket," said Monty Lowther cheerily.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Call it cricket?" grinned Kerr. "My dear chap, that isn't cricket. What you've been doing is trotting about like a pony in a paddock, and missing the ball every time."

"Weally, Kerr—" "Did you say lunch at a quarter-past twelve, Bulstrode?" asked Fatty Wynn anxiously.

Bulstrode smiled. "No; half-past."

"It might be a good idea to have lunch before we start our innings," Fatty Wynn suggested, in a disinterested sort of way. "You see—"

"Oh, cheese it, Fatty!" "Well, it would be more convenient in some ways, and—"

"Come on!" "Did you say lunch at—at twenty-past twelve, Bulstrode?"

"No," said Bulstrode; "half-past."

"Oh!" Fatty Wynn was dragged away. Tom Merry and Jack Blake opened the innings for St. Jim's. Harry Wharton was put on to bowl the first over against Tom Merry's wicket.

Wharton was a good, steady bowler, though it was as a batsman that he really shone. But he could generally be depended upon to take wickets. He found Tom Merry's wicket hard to take, however.

The St. Jim's junior captain was a first-class bat. Wharton gave him a variety of balls, but he stopped them all, or sent them soaring.

Runs began to pile up for St. Jim's at a very quick rate. Bulstrode changed the bowling several times, and Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Tom Brown, the New Zealander, tried their best, but Jack Blake and Tom Merry were still at the wickets when half-past twelve rang out from the clock-tower, and the cricketers adjourned for lunch. And the score to the credit of St. Jim's already was 20 runs.

Naturally enough, the St. Jim's fellows knocked off in high spirits.

They had started well; they meant to finish well; and already, in anticipation, they saw themselves victors, with wickets to spare.

Fatty Wynn was the cheerfulest of them all—partly because of the initial success of the St. Jim's batting, but chiefly because lunch-time had arrived.

A really good cold collation had been prepared for the cricketers, and they had keen appetites to enjoy it. And after lunch and a brief rest, the St. Jim's fellows prepared to resume their innings, with the full intention of giving the Greyfriars field the complete "kybosh."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Bunter's Particular Friend.

"GLAD to see you, Gussy, old man!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye a little more tightly, and looked down at the round, fat junior, who was blinking at him through his big spectacles.

Billy Bunter did not look particularly prepossessing at that moment. He had just had his dinner; and as Bunter always ate more than was good for him, his complexion had a shiny look now, and his eyes a slightly bulging appearance, and he seemed to breathe with some difficulty.

"Weally, you are vewy kind," said Arthur Augustus, in a stately way.

"Of course, you remember me?" Bunter remarked.

The swell of St. Jim's nodded. "Yaas; I think I have seen you before," he remarked.

The coldness of D'Arcy's tone would have frozen off anybody excepting William George Bunter. But Bunter was not easily frozen off. Bunter had once upon a time paid D'Arcy a special visit at St. Jim's. He had done it without being asked, and had made himself extremely unpleasant while he was there.

But the St. Jim's fellows had treated him civilly, and Bunter had come back firmly convinced that D'Arcy was his friend for life. He had talked of the great friendship Lord Eastwood's son had for him, till fellows in the Remove were tired to death of the subject.

Now that D'Arcy had come over with the St. Jim's cricket team, Bunter meant to claim him as a close chum, and parade him before the whole school in that character. As

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S BROTHER."

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for D'Arcy, he had completely forgotten Billy Bunter's existence until the fat junior himself reminded him of it.

Billy Bunter was far too obtuse to see if one was cold to him, and he would not have seen it if he could. He was going to chum up with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whether D'Arcy liked it or not.

Several Greyfriars fellows were lounging near them, and they were looking towards the two, and Bunter meant to show them that his talk on the subject of Lord Eastwood's son had not been all empty "swank."

"You remember my visit to St. Jim's?" said Bunter brazenly. "You wrote to me a lot of times asking me to come, and I came over at last. I must say I had a ripping time there, and I still remember it. You fed me jolly well."

"I do not wemembah w'itin' to you, Buntah; but I wemembah your comin', now I think of it," said Arthur Augustus. "I am twuly glad you enjoyed your visit."

And D'Arcy nodded to Bunter and strolled away. But William George Bunter was not to be so easily dismissed. He rolled along by D'Arcy's side, and tried to link arms with the swell of St. Jim's. But D'Arcy's arm eluded his somehow—perhaps by chance.

"I say, I want to return your hospitality a bit, you know, now you're over here," said Billy Bunter. "I'm in funds to-day; I've had a remittance from a titled friend. Will you come into the tuckshop, Gussy?"

D'Arcy breathed hard through his nose for a moment. "Gussy" was a name bestowed upon him by his most intimate friends, and it annoyed him extremely to be called "Gussy" by this fat little bouncer, whom he was very far from regarding as a friend. But D'Arcy was a fellow of almost fastidious delicacy, and he shrank from anything like incivility to a Greyfriars fellow on Greyfriars ground.

If Bunter had patted him on the shoulder, or poked him in the ribs, he would have endured it with the patience and fortitude of an early Christian martyr.

"Thank you very much, Buntah!"

"Oh, call me Billy!" said the fat junior.

"Weally, deah boy, I couldn't take such a liberty! I should pwefer to call you Buntah, if I may," said D'Arcy.

"And, weally, I don't think I would like to eat anythin' you know. We've only just finished lunch."

"Something light—a few sausage-rolls and some jam-tarts and doughnuts," said Billy Bunter persuasively. "A fellow can always tackle them."

"Weally, you know—" "You see, I want to return your hospitality," Bunter explained. "You and that chap Wynn made a fuss of me, and I want to do the same. Hallo, Wynn! Will you come to the tuckshop?"

Fatty Wynn was reposing in the grass, with a Panama hat shading his face. He appeared to be asleep, but he jumped up as if electrified as Bunter spoke.

"Well, yes, rather," he said.

"Yaas; you go, Wynn. I will wegard you as my wopresentative in the mattah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Bunter, who did not intend to let a lord's son escape him so easily. He had all his yarns about D'Arcy's friendship for him to prove yet. "Really, you know, I shall take it very unkindly if you don't come. You fed me up when I was at St. Jim's, and, really, you know—"

"Quite right," said Fatty Wynn. "If Bunter wants to stand a feed, I think it's a jolly good idea myself. What's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"I'm not hungwy, deah boy!"

"Well, you needn't eat much. Have a cake and box of biscuits and a dozen tarts or so, and leave the rest to me."

"Weally, Wynn—" "You other chaps come--do!" said Bunter, with a princely air.

He had thirty shillings in his pocket, and he knew that if he did not spend it he would not be allowed to keep it after Bulstrode's people were gone. Bulstrode was not likely to take the loss of his money patiently after then. And Bunter meant to "blue" every penny of it, and he could not do so better than by "swanking" before a crowd of fellows.

Next to feeding, Bunter's great weakness was swanking.

D'Arcy reluctantly walked round to Mrs. Mimble's little shop with Billy Bunter and Fatty Wynn. He did not like Bunter, but, under the circumstances, he felt it to be impossible to decline his hospitality. Fatty Wynn had no doubts. Fatty Wynn was not given to deep reflection where a feed was concerned. He was apt to go straight for a feed, like an arrow for a target.

Three or four Greyfriars fellows joined them. Bunter did not particularly want to treat Skinner and Snoop and

Another Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Hazeldene, but he wanted witnesses to his extreme friendliness with the lord's son.

He marched up to the counter with the air of a prince. "Order what you like, you fellows!" he exclaimed, with a wave of his fat and not over-clean hand.

Mrs. Mimble gave the fat junior a peculiar, hesitating look.

"Master Bunter—"

"Trot out the ginger-beer, Mrs. Mimble."

"Yes, Master Bunter; but—"

"And the jam-tarts—"

"Yes; but—"

"And mind they're fresh ones, Mrs. Mimble!" said Bunter severely. "This is my special friend, Mr. D'Arcy—Lord Eastwood's son. I want something very special for him."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Ices, too," said Bunter. "Ices all round!"

"Yes, Master Bunter; but—"

"Oh, if you're thinking about the money, there you are!" Bunter exclaimed, slapping a sovereign down upon the counter. "I sha'n't want any change."

"Yes; but—"

"But what, for goodness' sake! Can't you serve us, and talk afterwards? Isn't my money all right?" demanded Billy Bunter warmly.

"Yes, Master Bunter, if—if it is your money."

"Hey?" howled Bunter.

"Master Bulstrode said—"

"Never mind Bulstrode! He's a bully and a beast, and he'd say anything. He tried to rob me of this very money to-day, and his own father was down on him," said Bunter. "He's barred by his own people because of that."

"Bai Jove!"

"His pater won't speak to him," said Bunter. "He came on him suddenly, trying to take my money away from me. Bulstrode's an awful bully. He thinks nothing of taking a chap's pocket-money away. Look here, Mrs. Mimble, I'm waiting for you to serve me."

"Yes; buck up!" said Skinner.

And Mrs. Mimble served; and Bunter's sovereign and the rest of his money—or, rather, Bulstrode's money—was soon liquidated. Bunter certainly spent his money very freely, and by the time it was gone he was in a very painful state of indigestion, and even Fatty Wynn looked as if he had had enough. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ate very little, and that little only for politeness' sake.

Figgins put his head in at the door.

"Wynn, here! Fatty, you bounder—"

"Just coming, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn hastily.

"You—you bounder! Feeding again!" roared Figgins.

"I—I've only had a taste, that's all—some sausage-rolls, and ginger-beer, and tarts, and buns, and cakes, and dough-nuts, and—"

"Come out, you porpoise!"

"Look here, Figgins— Oh!"

Fatty Wynn was rushed out of the tuckshop, and the others followed. It was time for the St. Jim's innings to be resumed.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

D'Arcy Does not Shine.

TOM MERRY and Jack Blake resumed their innings, with the intention of making it last quite a long time. But, alas, for their anticipations! Tom Brown bowled the first over after lunch, and with the second ball he knocked Blake's stumps over. Tom Merry's wicket fell at the end of the same over, and St. Jim's were two down for 20. Monty Lowther and Herries took their places at the wickets, and added to the score before they were sent out—Herries caught by Wharton, and Lowther bowled by the New Zealander. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left in with Digby. "Four down for 35," said Harry Wharton. "It's not so bad, after all, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode nodded without speaking.

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There was a much larger crowd on the cricket-ground now. Fellows of all Forms had gathered to look on, lessons for the day being over at Greyfriars. Wingate, of the Sixth—the captain of the school—honoured the junior match with his presence. Whether the Greyfriars captain was keenly interested in junior cricket, or whether he found some kind of pleasure in standing beside Miss Rosie's chair and talking to her, we cannot undertake to say; but certainly Wingate had cut cricket himself for the afternoon, and become a patient spectator.

Mr. Bulstrode, true to his word, was watching the match out, and chatting with Major Cherry. The old gentleman sat bolt upright, his eyes fixed straight before him, and he joined in the clapping at good hits and good catches; but his eyes never once fastened upon his son.

Bulstrode brought off a very clever catch, getting Digby out for 2; and as the cheer rang out from the Greyfriars crowd to greet the performance, Bulstrode glanced round to where his mother and father were sitting.

Mr. Bulstrode did not look at him.

The cloud deepened on Bulstrode's face, and he seemed to go through his fielding duties after that in a mechanical sort of way.

Fatty Wynn picked up his bat as Digby's wicket fell. Tom Merry called to Kangaroo:

"You go in next, Kangy!"

"Here, I say!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "What's that? I'm next man in!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"You're not," he replied.

"I'm next on the list!"

"You're going to be last man in!" Tom Merry growled. "You can't bat when you're stuffed up to the neck with pastry!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, sent!"

And Fatty Wynn "scatted." Kangaroo took his bat and went in, and partnered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a cheerful nod and a word of encouragement as he passed to go to his wicket.

"Kangy, deah boy—"

"Hallo!" said the Cornstalk. "Fagged out?"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Certainly not! I have taken only six wuns, so fah."

"Well, that's a pretty good allowance for you, ain't it?" said Kangaroo.

"Weally, Kangy—"

"Still, try to make it a dozen," said the Cornstalk, encouragingly.

"You uttah duffah! I'm goin' to make it a centuwy," said D'Arcy, loftily. "What I wanted to say, was, I want you to do some stone-wallin'."

Kangaroo stared.

"You want me to do what?" he roared.

"Stone-wallin'," said D'Arcy. "You can leave the wun-gettin' to me, deah boy. I'll pile up the wuns, if I can depend upon you to back me up by stonewallin'."

Kangaroo stared at the swell of St. Jim's with feelings too deep for words.

"Man in!" yelled Tom Merry.

Kangaroo tramped on to his place. He could not have adequately expressed what he felt at that moment, excepting by felling Arthur Augustus to the earth with his bat. He gave D'Arcy an expressive look, and went to his wicket.

"Don't forget, deah boy," D'Arcy called after him. "Stone-wall like anythin', and leave the hittin' to me."

"My bat!" murmured Kangaroo. "If we weren't on the pitch, I'd do some hittin' myself."

Harry Wharton went on to bowl against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's stood in a very handsome attitude, and really looked a pretty picture as he stood at the wicket.

NEXT WEEK:

THE BULLY'S BROTHER!

Another Splendid, Long,
Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



The captain of the Remove made a swipe at the ball and missed it. Crash! The middle stump of the wicket went crashing to the ground. "How's that?" yelled Jack Blake. The umpire grinned, "Out!"
(See page 10.)

But, as a matter of fact, he was, as Monty Lowther remarked with a sniff, rather ornamental than useful.

Wharton sent down a fast ball, and D'Arcy played it a little too late, and his off-stump was lifted out of the ground.

There was a roar.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned the umpire.

Arthur Augustus looked down at his wrecked wicket, and then jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked again. He did not seem to be able to make out what had happened.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come out!"

"Weally, you know—"

"You're out!" stuttered the umpire. "It's not an optical illusion, and it's not a dream, neither is it a miracle. You're out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall I go on with the stone-walling, Gussy?" roared Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Bai Jove! I—I suppose that wasn't a twial ball?" D'Arcy suggested.

"Ha, ha! No, it wasn't!"

"Bai Jove! I'm out, then!"

"It's just dawned on him that he's out," murmured Bob Cherry. "Perhaps he'll be good enough to go off the pitch presently."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy apparently realised that there was nothing more to be done. He put his bat under his arm and went out. Figgins came on in his place. D'Arcy paused as he passed Tom Merry at the pavilion.

"That was vewy queeah!" he remarked.

"Eh? What was queer?"

"My gettin' out like that."

"Blessed if I see anything queer about it," said Tom Merry. "It would have seemed queer to me if you had stayed in."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You've taken six runs," said Monty Lowther. "That's a couple more than I expected, as far as I'm concerned."

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Lowther. I had intended to make a centuwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatever for wibald laughtah. That was a fluke—a vewy mystewious fluke."

"These flukes will happen," said Jack Blake. "I believe they happen quite frequently when you're batting, don't they, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"By George! Figgy is making the fur fly!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "Bravo, Figgy! Well hit—well hit, sir!"

Figgins and Kangaroo were running. There was no doubt that Figgins was going to do well for St. Jim's. Never had he been in better form. With Kangaroo backing him up at the other end, Figgins proceeded to pile up runs.

Once only Figgins gave the enemy a chance—a catch at slip. Bulstrode was there, and Bulstrode ought to have caught him out. But the ball glided past Bulstrode's slow fingers and dropped to the ground.

There was a groan from the Remove.

"Oh, rotten!"

"Butter-fingers!"

Bulstrode flushed, and picked up the ball.

After that, Figgins gave the Greyfriars fieldsmen no chance. Wharton tried him with his best bowling, but it was no use. Kangaroo was caught out by Ogilvy, and the St. Jim's score was then at 60. Kerr came in to join Figgins, and added well to the score before he was dismissed by a googly from Tom Brown. Manners came in, and Manners's first hit brought the St. Jim's score to 70. They had tied with Greyfriars already on the first innings, and they had three wickets left.

"Looks nice for us—I don't think!" grumbled Lob Cherry. "What the dickens is the matter with Bulstrode? He's given Figgins a new lease of life, and Figgins seems to be a giddy Grace; and Fry, and Jessop, and Ranji rolled into one."

"He's out of sorts," said Wharton.

"Oh, blow his sorts!"

Manners did not stay in long. He was clean-bowled by Tom Brown, and retired. Then the word went out: "Last man in!" Fatty Wynn rolled upon the pitch. Figgins shouted to him:

"Buck up, Fatty! Buck me up!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

And he did back up Figgins nobly. He knew that with the cargo of pastry he had taken aboard he was not in his best form, and he carefully blocked the balls instead of seeking to distinguish himself. But when Figgins made him run, he ran well, and the runs piled up. The score was at 98 when Fatty Wynn just failed to get home in time, and the wicket-keeper knocked his bails off, ball in hand.

"Out!"

Figgins was "not out," and he carried off his bat in triumph, to receive quite an ovation from his comrades. St. Jim's had scored 98 against Greyfriars' 70, in the first innings. And the Saints might be excused if there was some slight trace of swank perceptible in their manners.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Funds Urgently Needed.

"I WANT you to open the innings, Wharton," Bulstrode said abruptly.

Wharton looked at him curiously.

"Just as you like," he said. "Are you still feeling out of sorts?"

Bulstrode nodded.

"I never thought I should feel it like this," he said.

"But—but it makes a fellow feel a silly ass, anyway, having his people on the ground and their not speaking to him. My pater's doing this to punish me."

Wharton looked concerned.

"But what's wrong?" he asked. "I don't want to inquire into your business, but if it's anything that I could help to set right—"

Bulstrode shook his head wearily.

"No; it isn't. It's my own fault, too."

"Oh, in that case—"

"I mean, it was my fault in a way. My father's heard about"—Bulstrode hesitated, and flushed—"about my—my having been a bit of a bully. Lots of fellows thought so, anyway, and it seems to have got to my father. He gave me

a lecture in the last vac., and threatened all sorts of things. You see, he's thinking of sending my young brother to Greyfriars, and—and he thinks I ought to be very careful, so as to be able to help young Herbert when he comes. I—I have been trying to do the decent thing, lately—"

"You've been all right," said Wharton. "I won't say that you hadn't some jolly big faults, but everybody's noticed that you have changed. You've been a different chap ever since that affair with Alonzo Todd."

"Well, I—I've tried to be decent. But my reputation has clung to me, and my pater came down prepared to drop on me on the least provocation. And when he caught me ragging Bunter—the little beast deserved it, and I wasn't really bullying him—my pater took the worst possible view of it, of course. And he's down on me, and he's made my mother the same. And he won't come round—I know him. He's going to keep up the Roman parent business, and it's no good trying to explain to him. And it's getting on my nerves frightfully."

"I don't wonder."

"You saw what a muck I made of my first innings, and how I missed that easy catch," said Bulstrode. "I couldn't help it."

"It's jolly rotten for it to happen on the day of the St. Jim's match," said Harry Wharton. "Pull yourself together, you know. They're ahead of us, and we've simply got to beat them!"

"I hope we shall. I want you to open the innings. I'll come in at the tail-end, when their bowling is worn down a bit."

"All serene!"

It was time for the Greyfriars second innings to begin. Tom Merry & Co. were turning out into the field.

Billy Bunter rolled up to Harry Wharton, as Bulstrode left him. Wharton was fastening on his batting-gloves, and he had his bat under his arm.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hallo!" said Wharton grimly. "You young fat boulder! You've been causing trouble between Bulstrode and his people, I hear!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"That wasn't my fault, Wharton! Bulstrode came into my study to bully me, and his people happened to come along at the right time to catch him."

"What had you been doing?"

"Nothing," said Bunter promptly.

"You're lying, most likely!" said Harry angrily.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, you generally are!"

"Look here, you know what a beastly bully Bulstrode is. You know how he nearly killed poor old Todd, knocking him about," said Bunter.

Wharton was silent. True enough, Bulstrode had always been a bully, and his bullying had had serious results on at least one occasion. There was really no telling where the rights or wrongs of the matter lay.

"I'm not surprised at Bulstrode's people being down on him," Bunter went on. "He's an awful beast, and he was bullying me frightfully, and trying to take money away from me!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, he was, and his father caught him, and made him give me my money back," said Bunter. "That's why they're down on him, and serve him right! But what I wanted to say was, can you lend me a little tin, Wharton?"

"No; I can't!"

"Look here, it's most important! My friend D Arcy—"

"Your what?"

"My friend D Arcy!" said Bunter loftily. "Lord Eastwood's son, I mean. He's a very special friend of mine, and I was close chums with him at St. Jim's."

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I've just been standing him a feed, and he said—he—he said that it wasn't the feed he cared for, but being with a chap like me was a real pleasure to him. I expect he's going to ask me to his place for the next vacation, and I'll try to take you with me, if you like!"

"You horrid young boulder!" said Harry, in disgust. "Have you been fishing for invitations to the St. Jim's fellows?"

"Ahem! Look here, I've ordered a lot of ices and things for the St. Jim's chaps, and Mrs. Mimble is going to have them all ready after the next innings. I'm standing treat all round. Only—only I've found that I'm running out of tin, you know, and—and I should like you to lend me a sovereign!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You'd better wire to one of your titled friends for it!" he said. "You're just as likely to get it as by asking me!"

"But look here, I must have it! The things are all ordered, and the fellows know it, and Mrs. Mimble won't

ANSWERS

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let me have them unless I pay cash. She is a very suspicious old woman, and doesn't understand business!"

"I should think she does understand it, if she won't let you have the things without the money!" said Harry, laughing.

"Perhaps half-a-sovereign!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you going to stand talking there all day, Wharton?" bawled Bob Cherry. "I'm waiting!"

"I'm coming!"

Wharton walked away, leaving Bunter grunting. The fat junior was feeling extremely uncomfortable. The impression he wanted to make upon his old friend Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was likely to be irretrievably ruined if the goods he had ordered, in a moment of swank, were refused for want of payment.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "I simply must have the money! Bulstrode has plenty, I know, but it's no good asking him, under—under the circumstances! I—I shall have to find it somewhere!"

And Billy Bunter thought out the problem. As he said, he simply had to have the money, but there appeared to be no possible way of getting it. Harry Wharton joined Bob Cherry at the wickets.

"Marjorie will be here soon," said Bob confidentially. "She's coming with Clara for the afternoon, you know. They'll have tea with us."

"How ripping!" said Harry.

"Yes; isn't it? I wonder if Marjorie will come in time to see me bat?"

"Awful loss for her if she doesn't!"

"Oh, rats!"

And Bob went to his wicket.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Poor Old Bob.

BOB CHERRY began to bat, with one eye on the bowler and the other on the distant gates. He was wondering whether Marjorie Hazeldene would arrive in time to see him bat; but it was pretty certain that if he continued to bat as he started, his innings would not last long.

Harry Wharton shouted to him along the pitch:

"Bob!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo?"

"Going to sleep?"

Bob Cherry turned red.

"No. What do you mean?"

"Buck up, then!"

The first ball was a wide, and fortunately for Bob Cherry. Bob put a little more attention into the game for the second, and hit it into the slips. There Fatty Wynn distinguished himself by missing a catch, and Figgins and Kerr looked daggers at him.

"Oh, I'll give you jam tarts and ginger-beer presently!" murmured Figgins.

"It wasn't the tarts," said Fatty Wynn.

"Then it was the buns!" said Figgins. "Scat!"

Bob Cherry began to look after his wicket a little more carefully, and he lived through the over.

Harry Wharton hit out well to the bowling, and started the running. Twelve for the over gave a good beginning to the Greyfriars second innings.

The field crossed over, and Bob Cherry had the bowling again. Harry Wharton kept rather an anxious eye upon him. He could see that something else besides cricket was in Bob Cherry's mind, and he was anxious for the wicket.

Bulstrode might have given Bob a warning, but Bulstrode was standing by the pavilion door, his hands deep in his pockets, and a gloomy expression upon his face.

There was a sudden exclamation from Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who was standing near the pavilion.

"Miss Marjorie!"

Two graceful forms had come into view, walking under the old elms towards the level green of the cricket-field.

They were Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara, the girls of Cliff House. Bob Cherry swung round, and as he did so the ball came down from Blake, and missed his wicket by an inch.

There was a roar from Greyfriars.

"Look out, Cherry!"

Bob dropped the end of his bat on the crease just in time to stop being stumped. His eyes were dancing.

"Look out, Bob!" yelled Nugent. "What's the matter with you? Has the lemonade got into your silly head?"

"Oh, it's all right!"

"Is it all right, you ass? What are you going to sleep for?"

"I tell you—"

"Are you trying to chuck the wicket away?" shouted John Bull.

Bob Cherry snorted, and stood ready to bat. The ball was tossed back to Blake, who grinned.

Blake was pretty certain he would soon have that wicket. Whatever was the matter with Bob Cherry, it was pretty

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clear that he was hardly wideawake enough at the present moment to stand up to hard bowling.

Vernon-Smith had walked over to meet the girls. The juniors who were the special friends of the Cliff House girls were all in the cricket team, and Vernon-Smith felt that he would be able to make the running this time if he tried. Bob Cherry was his special aversion, and he knew how tormented Bob would be with jealousy and annoyance if he—the Bounder—appeared to get on chummy terms with Marjorie. And that would have been very amusing to the Bounder; nothing, in fact, would have amused him more than seeing Bob Cherry lose his wicket through being upset and exasperated.

The Bounder raised his straw hat to the two girls.

"So jolly glad you've come!" he exclaimed. "Let me take you to your seats; they're all ready!"

"Thank you!" said Marjorie.

Vernon-Smith pushed himself between the two girls, and would have taken an arm of each, but Marjorie's arm remained rigidly down to her side, and Miss Clara followed her friend's example.

The Bounder bit his lip.

They walked on to the cricket-field together, however, and Vernon-Smith made it a point to talk all the time in a very animated way.

Bob Cherry looked round from his wicket, just after hitting a ball. There was time for a run, but Bob forgot to run.

He was astonished and disgusted to see the Bounder apparently on such familiar terms with the girls from Cliff House. He had always understood that Marjorie disliked the Bounder.

"Here you are, Miss Hazeldene!" said the Bounder. "You can see everything from here. Not that there's anything going on at present; but I dare say we shall get some decent batting presently."

The words were said purposely loud for Bob Cherry to hear, and the unfortunate batsman coloured to the ears.

But the reply from Marjorie made him smile again.

"Thank you, I will not sit there! Come here, Clara dear; let us sit with Rosie and Molly!"

"Yes, rather!" said Miss Clara, in her boyish way. "I should say so!"

"But—" began the Bounder.

The two girls walked over to where Miss Rosie sat with her sister. The Head's daughters greeted them most affectionately, and they sat down together, and a very pretty picture the four girls made in their bright frocks and summer hats.

The Bounder snapped his teeth.

He had seldom been so openly discomfited; he prided himself upon his finesse, too! His finesse had been sadly at a loss in this case.

Bob Cherry hit away another ball from Blake, and then turned his head to smile at the girls from Cliff House.

Whiz!

The ball came in from the slips, and there was a crash of a falling wicket.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

He glanced down at his wicket in dismay.

Two of the stumps were reclining at odd angles, and the bails were on the ground. There was a yell from St. Jim's:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Oh!" said Bob Cherry again blankly.

He walked off the pitch. A groan from a crowd of Removites greeted him. He had not even broken his duck.

"You ass!" said Frank Nugent.

"You chump!" said John Bull.

"You fearful, frabjous ass!" said Tom Brown.

"I guess it was the blindest idiocy I've ever struck," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "I've seen some idiots in my time, but Bob Cherry just prances off with the whole biscuit factory—some!"

"I—I couldn't help it," said Bob feebly.

"Couldn't help it!" roared John Bull. "Why, you ass, it was as plain as—as your face! Everybody on the field excepting you saw the fat chap slinging the ball in."

"But I—I—"

"Bob was taken off his guard," said Mark Linley gently. Linley was not playing in the match, owing to an injury to his ankle in a practice game, but he was there to look on. "It really wasn't his fault."

"Yes, and I know what he was looking at," growled John Bull.

"Oh, shut up!" Bob growled.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Why don't you jaw him, Bulstrode?" demanded Hazeldene indignantly. "I think he's a chap who ought to be jawed, if ever there was one."

"Eh?" said Bulstrode, starting out of a reverie.

"Why don't you slang him?"

"Slang whom?"

"Bob Cherry."

"W-what for?"

"What for?" yelled John Bull, in exasperation. "For chucking a Greyfriars wicket away, of course! What else?"

"Oh!" said Bulstrode.

"You saw it, I suppose, didn't you?" demanded Nugent.

"I—I— No, I didn't," said Bulstrode.

The juniors stared at him. What sort of a cricket captain was this?

"So you're not watching the game?" said Nugent. "You get duck's eggs when you're on the pitch, and you go to sleep when you're off it. A ripping kind of a cricket captain you are—I don't think!"

"I—I was thinking about something," Bulstrode stammered.

Nugent snorted.

"Thinking about your grandmother! What the dickens do you start thinking for when you ought to be all eyes and ears for the game? Captain! Groooh!"

"I guess Bulstrode's playing the giddy ox to-day, some."

"Man in!" the field were yelling.

"You're keeping them waiting," said Mark Linley, in his quiet way. "You're the next man in, Frank."

"Oh, all right!"

And Nugent, with a grunt, went in to take Bob Cherry's empty wicket.

Bob gave a deep sigh, and deposited his bat in a corner, and walked over to where Marjorie Hazeldene was sitting.

Marjorie gave him a sympathetic glance. She knew how he would feel the loss of that wicket.

"I'm so sorry," she said.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Bob, with an effort. "Chaps have bad luck sometimes."

Miss Clara's eyes danced.

"You weren't looking at the ball," she said.

"No, I—I had my eyes off the field for a moment."

"What were you looking at?"

Bob Cherry coloured like a beetroot.

"It was hard luck," said Marjorie, replying before Bob Cherry could find his tongue. "Don't tease Bob, Clara. Sit down here, Bob, will you?"

And Bob Cherry was forthwith translated into the seventh heaven by being allowed to drop into a seat beside Marjorie.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Pair of Spectacles.

HARRY WHARTON was still batting, and the score was going up for the next ten minutes. Nugent was keeping up his end well; but, the effects of the pastry having somewhat worn off, Fatty Wynn was getting into his stride now as a bowler. Fatty was being put on for every other over now, and Fatty began to make the fur fly, as the delighted Figgins expressed it.

"You give Fatty a chance," Figgins said to Tom Merry a dozen times; till at last the St. Jim's junior captain consented, and Fatty was entrusted with the ball.

And he proved at once that Figgins was right.

Nugent was dismissed for 7 runs; and John Bull, who took his place, was caught and bowled by Fatty Wynn.

The St. Jim's fellows looked joyful.

"This is something like!" said Figgins, rubbing his hands.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You watch Fatty," grinned Figgins. "He'll give us the hat trick in his next over, you see if he doesn't!"

"Bai Jove, yaas, he's in form!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I couldn't have bowled better than that myself, you know."

"I'll jolly well bet you couldn't!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Look out, there, and don't jaw!" sang out Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Monty Lowther bowled down to Harry Wharton. Wharton let the bat fairly go at an easy ball, and sent it spinning through the air.

The batsmen started running. So did the field—after the ball.

Where was it? Was it a boundary?

Crash!

The sudden sound told where the ball was. Mr. Bulstrode leaped up from his chair and danced, his silk hat flying off his head, a perfect wreck.

"My hat!" ejaculated John Bull.

"His hat, you mean!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—what—what was that?" roared Mr. Bulstrode, in his powerful voice. "What? Is that a trick? Hah! What?"

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Tom Merry ran up.

"Chuck in the ball quick!" he exclaimed.

"What?" roared Mr. Bulstrode. "You have knocked off my hat with your wretched ball, boy!"

"Sorry, sir! Quite an accident!"

"I—I—I—" Mr. Bulstrode was fairly snorting. "I—I—I—"

"Gimme the ball!"

Miss Rosie picked up the ball and tossed it to Tom Merry, and Tom Merry whirled it across to the wicket-keeper.

Mr. Bulstrode picked up his hat and regarded it with an offended eye. His face was red with angry excitement.

"Begad, this place is not safe!" he exclaimed. "Hah!"

"It was an accident, sir," said Miss Rosie softly. "These things will happen."

"My hat is ruined."

"Shall I try to straighten it out for you, Mr. Bulstrode?" asked Marjorie.

Mr. Bulstrode glanced at her, and the girl looked so sweet and smiling that, in spite of himself, his anger died away, and he smiled, too.

"Never mind, I will try," he said.

And he punched out the unfortunate topper into some semblance of its original shape, and restored it to his head.

"Your son has not batted yet, has he?" said Miss Clara innocently.

Miss Clara thought that this was a topic which would be bound to interest the testy old gentleman; and, of course, she could not know anything about the real circumstances of the case. She was only surprised to see Mr. Bulstrode turn purple.

"No," said Mr. Bulstrode shortly.

"He is a very good batsman," said Marjorie.

"Oh!"

"I am sure he will do well for the side."

"Ah!"

"How many did he get in the first innings, Bob?" Marjorie asked.

Bob Cherry made a grimace.

"He had bad luck," he said.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"It was a duck's egg," said Bob. "But I've no doubt that he'll pick up in the second innings. Bulstrode is a good bat when he's in form."

"I hope he's not ill?" said Clara.

"Oh, no! But he seems worried," said Bob, with a sideways glance at Mr. Bulstrode. "I think something has happened to worry him to-day—somebody going for him, or something of that sort, you know."

Mr. Bulstrode turned a deeper shade of purple, and closed his jaws like a vice.

"Yes, I guess that's the case," said Fisher T. Fish, with a wink at Bob. "Somebody has turned round on him, or something—somebody he ought to have been able to depend on."

Mr. Bulstrode's jaws opened.

"I quite understand your allusion!" he exclaimed, giving Fisher T. Fish a fierce glance. "It is not in the best of taste, boy."

"I guess—"

"I have discarded my son," said Mr. Bulstrode. "I have declined to speak to him; and as all present are aware of it, I should perhaps explain. My son has always had the reputation of being of a bullying nature; but I had heard that he was improved. But on my arrival here to-day I discovered him in the act of bullying a smaller boy and taking money from him by force. That is the reason why I have treated him with the contempt he deserves; and I am quite willing that he should be held up to the contempt of the school."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"That is all," said Mr. Bulstrode, shutting his jaws again.

"Pray let me hear no more of the matter."

"But, sir—"

"No more, I say."

"But are you sure—"

"I am sure—quite sure!"

"But it might—"

"Silence, please!"

And Mr. Bulstrode turned to the game again, and fixed his eyes upon the field, with a frown of such deadly determination that the juniors did not venture to pursue the subject. They drew a little apart from him, and the girls edged their chairs away, to put their heads together on the matter.

"It's a shame," murmured Miss Clara, "even if Bulstrode has done wrong. It's a shame to make him feel so miserable to-day, of all days."

"Yes, it is," said Marjorie. "Couldn't something be done? Was Bulstrode really to blame, Bob?"

Bob shook his head.

"I don't know the cires," he said. "But as the victim

was Bunter, I dare say the fat little bounder deserved all he got. But Bulstrode doesn't seem inclined to speak on the subject."

"Ask Bunter about it," suggested Marjorie. "You may get the truth out of him; and if Bulstrode was not really so very much to blame you may be able to explain to his father."

"Blessed if I thought of that!" said John Bull. "I'll ask him."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes Wharton's wicket!" Bob Cherry exclaimed.

Harry Wharton was out to a deadly fast ball from Fatty Wynn. The Greyfriars wickets were going down rapidly now.

The score for the second innings was at sixty when there was the call for last man in, and Bulstrode went in to join Ogilvy, who was at the other end.

All eyes were at once upon the Remove captain.

After the poor show he had made in the first innings, and the general moodiness and incapacity he had shown all day, no one expected great things of him. They were all prepared to see him fall before the enemy.

And they were not disappointed, as far as that went.

Bulstrode had to face Fatty Wynn's bowling, and it needed a keen and ready batsman to do that with any prospect of success.

Bulstrode was neither keen nor ready. Fatty Wynn sent down a ball with a break on it that would have puzzled many a county batsman; and Bulstrode missed it by a foot or more.

Whack!

The wicket went down.

Greyfriars were all out for a total of 60; and Bulstrode's score that day was the most miserable a cricketer could show—the dreaded two noughts—the "pair of spectacles."

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Wingate Saw.

JOHAN BULL was looking for Bunter, and as tea-time was near at hand the Owl of the Remove was not hard to find. Whenever a meal was going on, Bunter was likely to be found in the vicinity. And the fat junior was, as a matter of fact, looking for John Bull at that moment. They ran into each other, at a corner of the pavilion—literally—and as Bunter had the advantage of weight, it was John Bull who sat down on the sward.

"Ow!" gasped Bull. "You ass! I'm looking for you!"

"Oh," said Bunter, "I'm sincerely sorry! I was looking for you."

Bull staggered up, gasping.

"I—I've got something to say to you, Bull," Bunter said confidentially. "It's rather important, too."

It occurred to Bull at once that Bunter was coming to the subject of his own accord, and he nodded to the fat junior to go on.

"You see, I've ordered a lot of things from Mrs. Mimble, to stand my friend D'Arcy and his friends something decent at tea-time," Bunter explained. "D'Arcy's an awfully close chum of mine—he's a lord's son, you know, and I've lots of friends among the aristocracy."

"Oh, cheese that rot!"

"Oh, really, Bull! You see, I've run out of cash—and I want to raise a little loan, to tide me over till my postal-orders come. I'm expecting postal-orders for about two pounds this evening."

"Rats!"

"You have plenty of money, Bull—your old aunt sends you big tips. I know you've got a good many pounds in your pockets now."

"And they're going to stay there," said Bull emphatically.

"Ahem! You see—"

"I don't see that I ought to give you any money, you cadging bounder!"

"It's only till my postal-order comes. I should refuse to take the money as a gift. I hope I've got a proper pride," said Bunter loftily.

"Look here," said John Bull, "I wasn't looking for you to give you tin—I want to ask you about Bulstrode."

"Blow Bulstrode!" said Bunter crossly.

"What was the cause of the row, when his pater came down on him like a wolf on the fold?" asked John Bull.

"He was bullying me in my study, and taking my money away."

"Your money?" asked Bull significantly.

"Yes, my money!" said Billy Bunter defiantly. "I shouldn't be likely to have anybody's else's money in my pocket, I suppose."

"I don't know: I should think it quite likely myself."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Had you been boning the tin from Bulstrode in the first place?" asked the sturdy junior suspiciously.

"I decline to answer a question which reflects upon my personal honour," said Bunter, with his fat little nose very high in the air.

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ONE
PENNY.

"My hat! Look here—"

But Bunter was rolling away. There was evidently no money to be got out of John Bull, and there was nothing for Bunter to linger for. John Bull thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strolled away with a thoughtful brow. Whatever it was that had happened in Billy Bunter's study, they were not likely to get the truth of the matter out of the Owl of the Remove. It was not by means of Billy Bunter, evidently, that Bulstrode could be set right with his parents.

As for Billy Bunter, he also had a worry on his mind.

If he did not pay Mrs. Mimble, the ordered goods would not be given up—Mrs. Mimble would not trust him an inch.

She knew him too well for that. Only money down on the counter was sufficiently convincing for the good dame who kept the school shop at Greyfriars.

But if the goods were not delivered, Bunter's "swank" would be knocked into little pieces. He had ordered the feed for his friends in the most lordly way. He was showing off D'Arcy to all Greyfriars as his noble friend. It was really too bad to have his card castle shattered in this way for want of a little ready money.

But what was to be done? Billy Bunter's thoughts, when he was in want of money, naturally ran to borrowing; but he had tried borrowing, without effect. There was no money to be raised in that way; all the fellows were too well acquainted with his little ways.

Bunter had raised money that morning in another way, and, having once passed the Rubicon, it was only natural that his thoughts should revert in the same direction. But where was cash to be found.

The fat junior looked about him, and rolled towards the pavilion. The Greyfriars innings was just ending, and all eyes were on the field. Bunter paused at the door of the pavilion, and looked round him cautiously.

Billy Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and his big glasses did not seem to help him much. He was a great deal like the ostrich, who, burying his head in the sand, imagines that he cannot be seen because he cannot see. Bunter's cautious glance round before he entered the pavilion caught the eyes of several fellows; and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, gave him a sharp, suspicious glance.

There was something so cautious, so sly, and so cunning in Bunter's expression at that moment, that Wingate could not help observing it.

"What is that little beggar up to?" the captain of Greyfriars muttered.

And, after a moment's hesitation, he stepped to the pavilion himself.

Billy Bunter, quite unconscious of the fact that his extreme caution had given him away, hurried into the pavilion, and in a few seconds he was among the coats that were hanging on the pegs.

He paused for a second to blink around him, debating in his mind whether he should honour Bulstrode's or John Bull's jacket with his attention.

Bull was likeliest to have plenty of cash in his pockets, he thought, and so he decided upon John Bull's jacket.

He groped in the pockets, breathing hard and quickly, and sure enough, there was the little leather purse he had seen John Bull use, and it was full of money.

Bunter drew it out with a shaking hand, and opened it to make sure that the coins inside were not copper.

There was a shimmer of gold and silver as a stream of shillings and sovereigns ran into his fat palm.

Bunter uttered an exclamation of delight.

"B-b-b-by Jove!"

From the cricket-field rang the shouts which announced the end of the innings.

Bulstrode had come off with a pair of spectacles to his score; the innings was over, and the field broke up for tea. But Bunter heard nothing at that moment. He was blinking eagerly at the stream of cash pouring from the purse into his fat palm.

"Good! By George! This is all right!" he ejaculated aloud.

He whipped the money into his pocket, and then stepped back to replace the empty purse in John Bull's jacket.

"Bunter!"

The fat junior jumped clear of the floor.

It was the deep, stern voice of the captain of Greyfriars. Bunter swung round in terror towards him.

Wingate strode in, and grasped him fiercely by the shoulder.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!"

"You thief!"

"Ah!"

"You have just been stealing from one of these coats!"

"Ow!"

"You infernal young blackguard!"

"Oh! Ah! I—I—I can explain everything!" stammered Bunter. "You—you see—you startled me, Wingate! I—I—"

"I was watching you from the door!" said Wingate sternly.

"It's—it's all a mistake! I—I picked up Bull's purse, you know, and I—I just came here to put the thing in his pocket, so that he wouldn't miss it, you know. I—I thought he might be anxious about it!"

"You lying cad!" said Wingate. "I saw you take the purse out of the pocket and empty the money into your hand, and put it in your own pocket."

Bunter gasped for breath. He had had no idea that Wingate had seen all that, or he would have varied his falsehoods considerably.

"I—I—you're quite mistaken!" he gasped. "You see, I—I—"

"Well, what?"

Bunter gasped and stammered. Accomplished liar as he was, he felt nonplussed now. What was he to say—what falsehood could possibly serve him?

"Do you deny that you have a great deal of money in your pocket at this moment?" Wingate exclaimed sternly.

"I—I—I—"

"You are a thief, Bunter. Come!"

"What?"

"I am going to show you up to the fellows, that's all!"

"Oh! Ow! Oh, really, Wingate, I—I— Oh!"

"Ah, here they are!"

The cricketers were crowding towards the pavilion, as Wingate dragged the Owl of the Remove out of the dressing-room.

There was a general exclamation at once.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with Bunter?"

"What's the row, Wingate?"

"It's this," said Wingate grimly. "I've just caught Bunter in the act of picking a pocket in the dressing-room!"

"Oh!"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Clearing Bulstrode.

THE Greyfriars cricketers were crowding round. The St. Jim's fellows, realising that this was a scene in which they had better not be "on," delicately drew aside. Bulstrode, with his bat still under his arm, was foremost, and he looked very curiously at Bunter as Wingate dragged him into view, with a hand on his collar.

"Picking a pocket!" repeated a dozen voices.

"My hat!"

"I guess this takes the bun!"

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the angry faces in terror and dismay. Even through his stupidity there penetrated a realisation of what he had done, and the penalty he might have to pay.

He had stolen—and stealing was an offence which was punished at Greyfriars in only one way—by expulsion.

Had not Bob Cherry been "sacked" from the school on a charge of stealing—a charge afterwards proved untrue?

And now, in Bunter's case, the guilt was brought home full and clear—there was no possible doubt upon the subject.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had seen him—he was caught in the very act. The fat junior squirmed uncomfortably in the powerful grasp of the Sixth-Former.

"I—I—I—" he stammered.

Wingate shook him.

"Hand out the money!" he exclaimed.

"Ow! D-d-d-don't shake me like that, Wingate! Y-y-you might make my glasses fall off, you know; and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them!" Ow!"

"Whose pocket was he picking?" asked Bulstrode.

"Bull's, I think."

John Bull uttered an exclamation.

"Mine! My hat! I had four or five pounds in my pocket, and that young rotter knew all about it, too!"

"Ow! I didn't!"

"You were speaking to me about it not ten minutes ago," said John Bull.

"I—I wasn't!"

"Go and see whether your money is there," said Wingate. "Bunter dropped a purse when I collared him—see if it yours."

"Certainly."

John Bull went into the dressing-room. The juniors stood round glaring at Bunter. It was just like Bunter to bring disgrace upon the school when there was a crowd of

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strangers present—fellows whom the Remove wanted to make a good impression upon.

Bunter cowered under the savage looks that were cast upon him.

"The worm!" said Nugent. "He ought to be boiled."

"Or scalped!" said Tom Brown.

"I guess he ought to be lynched some."

"The rotter!"

"The fat beast!"

"Oh, really, you fellows," mumbled Bunter feebly, "it's—it's all a mistake, you know. I—I can explain everything—if—if you give me time."

"A judge will be giving you time, jolly soon, I should think," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really—"

"Bai Jove, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a low voice, "this isn't the place for us, you know. When these chaps start pickin' one another's pockets, and so on, we'd better look the other way. Suppose we get along to the tuckshop and get some ices or somethin'."

Figgins gave the swell of St. Jim's a slap on the shoulder.

"Good! You're simply full of good ideas, Gussy."

"Ow! You wuff ass!"

The St. Jim's juniors strolled away with elaborate unconsciousness.

But the Greyfriars fellows hardly noticed them go. They were all looking at Bunter, who was squirming in Wingate's grasp.

"I can explain everything," Bunter mumbled. "I—I—"

"Here's Bull!"

John Bull came out with the little leather purse in his hand.

"Is that your purse, Bull?" asked Wingate.

"Yes."

"Anything in it?"

"Nothing," said Bull.

"Did you leave anything in it?"

"Four or five pounds—a tip I had from my aunt yesterday."

"That is the purse I saw Bunter take from a jacket," said Wingate. "He emptied the money out of it, and put it in his trousers' pocket."

"Ow! I didn't!"

"I saw you," said Wingate sternly.

"I—I— Oh! Ow! It's all a mistake!"

"Turn out your pocket!"

"I—I—"

"Turn out your pockets, you hound! Show up the money you have stolen!" almost shouted Wingate.

"Begad! What is this? Something more from that precious son of mine, I suppose?"

It was a hard, harsh voice—the voice of Bulstrode senior. The stout gentleman pushed his way forward through the group. He had heard Wingate's words, and he saw the head of the burly Bulstrode towering over the crowd, and he guessed at once what was the matter—guessed wrongly, as people generally do when they jump to conclusions.

"What, what! So you have been at it again, George!" said the Roman parent, in his most Roman voice, more like Brutus than ever.

The fellows stared at him.

Bulstrode did not speak. The Roman parent was making an ass of himself, and Bulstrode did not feel inclined to stop him.

"Again, George—again in one day!"

"Eh?" said Bulstrode.

There was a whimpering voice from Mrs. Bulstrode.

"Oh, dear! I am sure you misjudge poor George!"

Mr. Bulstrode frowned fiercely.

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"Silence, please, Amelia."

"Very well, dear."

"For the second time in one day, I find you guilty of disgraceful conduct, George," said the stern parent, in his sternest tones.

Bulstrode's face set doggedly.

"What are you driving at, sir?" said Wingate, rather tartly. "There is no accusation of any sort against your son."

Mr. Bulstrode started.

"What! I heard you say—"

"I was speaking to Bunter."

"Bunter!" ejaculated Mr. Bulstrode.

"Yes, this wretched young rascal."

Mr. Bulstrode stared at Bunter. He recognised the boy whom he had seen in his son's grasp in the study, and whom he had believed that George Bulstrode was bullying and despoiling.

"Oh, Bunter!" he said.

"Yes. The young scoundrel has been picking a pocket in the dressing-room."

Mr. Bulstrode snorted.

"The place seems to be full of thieves!" he exclaimed. "It is an extraordinary state of affairs at a public school, I must say."

Wingate flushed crimson. Any reflection cast upon the old school he belonged to was likely to get his back up at once.

"I don't understand you, sir," he said gruffly. "Bunter is the only thief I know of at Greyfriars, and he will be expelled."

"Ow!"

Mr. Bulstrode pointed to the captain of the Remove.

"Look!" he said.

"Well, what is the matter with your son? Blessed if I catch on in the least to what you're driving at."

"I am willing for the whole school to know him as I know him. This morning I found him taking money from that boy."

"From Bunter?"

"Yes, by force."

Wingate looked sternly at Bulstrode.

"Is that the case, Bulstrode?"

"Yes," said the Remove captain doggedly.

"You took money from Bunter?"

"Yes."

"By force?"

"Yes."

"And why?"

"Because he had stolen it from me."

"Ow! I didn't! I—I only borrowed—I—I mean, it's all a mistake! I can explain everything, if—if you give me time!"

Wingate's grip tightened upon the fat junior.

"So you only borrowed it?"

"Ow! Yes."

"Then you admit taking it?"

"Ow! No!"

"You have admitted it," said Wingate grimly. "It's too late to get out of that now, Bunter."

"Ow! You—you see—"

"Yes, I see. You are a thief, and you stole from Bulstrode this morning, and you lied to his father about him!" exclaimed Wingate sternly.

There was a growl of rage from the juniors, and they closed round Bunter as if they would seize him, and mob him on the spot. Wingate waved them back.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Ananias Minor.

MR. BULSTRODE stood silent and struck.

The Roman parent was at a loss.

If Brutus, of olden time, after sentencing his sons, had discovered that they were innocent, he would probably have been sorry that he had been quite so Roman.

And it gradually dawned upon the heavy and obstinate mind of Mr. Bulstrode that the Roman parent might not, after all, be really a safe model to copy. Brutus, as a matter of fact, was out of date.

If Bunter was a thief this time, he had probably been a thief on the previous occasion, and Bulstrode's explanation had been the truth!

And, in fact, the fat junior had practically admitted it. Wingate, in the course of many shakings, proceeded to shake the rest of the truth out of the Owl of the Remove. Mr. Bulstrode listened with remorse in his heart.

"We must have this affair out," said Wingate. "It will have to be sifted to the bottom, and there's no time like the present."

"Nice for the St. Jim's chaps to hear," murmured Nugent.

"They're gone to the tuckshop," said Harry Wharton. "That's all right."

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ONE
PENNY.

Wingate shook the Owl of the Remove, and Bunter gasped feebly.

"Ow, ow!"

"You say that Bunter took the money from you, Bulstrode?"

"Yes."

"How did he do so?"

"I dropped a couple of sovereigns this morning, and Bunter saw them. When I changed in the dorm., I left my waistcoat on the bed, with the money in the pocket. I thought of it afterwards, and went to take it away, but it was gone. I found Bunter in his study, and he had my money."

"How do you know it was your money?"

"Bunter was stony before that."

"Where did you get the money from, Bunter?"

"I—I had a postal-order."

"When?"

"This—this morning."

"From whom?"

"From my—my—my father."

"Oh! A postal-order for how much?"

"T-t-two pounds."

"Where did you cash it?"

"A—a—a fellow cashed it for me," said Bunter, realising at once that it could be easily proved that he had not been down to the post-office that day.

"What fellow?"

"A—a—one of the Highcliffe chaps," said Bunter. "I met him in the lane, and he took the postal order off my hands, to save me going to the post-office. I—I allowed him a bob out of it for his trouble."

The juniors stared at Bunter in wonder. They knew that he was lying—there was not the slightest doubt of that. But it was really amazing the way he could turn out lies to order, at a moment's notice, all fitting nicely together.

Wingate fixed his eyes on the fat junior sternly.

"What was the name of the Highcliffe fellow?" he asked.

"I—I think it was Gadsby."

"We can refer to Gadsby, of Highcliffe, later, if necessary," said Wingate. "But I think we can get the truth out without that. You say that you had a postal-order for two pounds this morning, Bunter?"

"Ye-es. Exactly two pounds."

"From your father, you said?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I will send a wire to your father, asking him to substantiate your statement."

Bunter shuddered.

"I—I—now I come to think of it, it wasn't my father," he stammered.

"Oh," said Wingate, "it wasn't your father! Then who was it?"

"M-m-my uncle."

"Your uncle! Where does he live?"

"In Australia," said Bunter desperately.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter ought to be a novelist or a reporter, or something, or at least a member of Parliament. He ought really."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Whereabouts in Australia?" asked Wingate mercilessly.

"I—I forget."

"It must have been an Australian postal-order, then?"

"No—I mean yes."

"And the Highcliffe fellow took an Australian postal-order off your hands, did he?"

"Yes."

Wingate shook the fat junior.

"How a chap can stand there and roll out lies like that simply knocks me over!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you anything like a conscience, you fat rascal?"

"Ow! No—I mean yes."

"You admitted just now that you borrowed the money, as you call it, from Bulstrode—"

"Only till my postal-order came—I mean—"

"But you just said that your postal-order did come."

"That—that was another postal-order," said Billy Bunter haltingly. "That was from—from my uncle in Australia. The one I'm speaking of now was to come from—from my aunt in—in Burmah."

"My word!" murmured Nugent.

"And you borrowed Bulstrode's two sovereigns—"

"Yes—that is to say, no."

"Did you intend to pay them back?"

"Yes, of course, when my postal-order came—I—I mean, of course, I never borrowed them at all!" wailed Bunter.

"You awful liar!" said Wingate. "You've told half a dozen contradictory lies already, and you've admitted taking Bulstrode's money. If he took it back from you, and licked you into the bargain, it was only what was to be expected."

"That's what I did," said Bulstrode; "only my father made me give him the money again, and I suppose he's spent it now."

"Oh!" murmured Mr. Bulstrode.

Mrs. Bulstrode was crying softly. The poor lady was only too happy at seeing her son's name cleared; and, indeed, she would never have been so "down" on him at all, but for her terror of her lord and master.

"Now, if you like to own up to the truth, do it," said Wingate; "otherwise, I'll take you straight to the Head."

"Oh, really—perhaps—well, perhaps, now I come to think of it, I—I may have borrowed the money from Bulstrode's waistcoat-pocket," said Bunter. "Of course, it was only a temporary loan."

"Oh, of course!" said Wingate angrily. "You thief!"

"I don't think you ought to call me names, Wingate, when I'm owning up to a thing in a frank and manly way, entirely of my own accord, and to save Bulstrode from getting into trouble with his parents—"

"Oh!"

"I think a chap ought to have some credit for being frank and honourable," said Bunter. "I'm often getting into trouble for that. I suppose I have rather nicer ideas than most fellows—a more gentlemanly way of looking at things—"

"Oh!"

"I'm sincerely sorry there's been any misunderstanding, and I intended to explain to Mr. Bulstrode all along, of course— Oh!"

Bunter broke off with a gasp as Wingate's grasp tightened on his collar.

"Ow! Ow!"

"Come with me," said Wingate grimly.

"Ow! Where?"

"To the Head!"

"Oh! Ow! I—I say, you fellows—"

But Billy Bunter said no more. Wingate marched him off, and he disappeared, wriggling, in the direction of the School House.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "I really think that Bunter has got to the end of his tether at last!"

"The blessed fibber!" said John Bull. "He ought to be called Ananias minor. The sooner he gets the order of the boot the better."

"Yes, rather!"

"He ought to have been sacked long ago," growled Bob Cherry. "I think he's certain to get it in the neck this time. What about tea?"

"It's ready," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, so am I; come on, then."

Bulstrode was left alone with his father and mother.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Bravo, Bulstrode!

BULSTRODE did not speak.

He was waiting for his father to speak; and the old gentleman seemed in no hurry to do so.

He cleared his throat several times, with a conscious little cough, and opened his lips, but no words came forth.

Mrs. Bulstrode dried her eyes, and put an arm round her son's neck in the shadow of the cricket pavilion.

"My dear—dear boy," she murmured. "I knew it wasn't true—I knew it."

Bulstrode's eyes moistened.

He had been prepared to be very hard and obstinate—to turn a sullen brow to his father, and make it as difficult as possible for the hasty old gentleman to climb down.

But tenderer thoughts came into his mind now.

He kissed his mother gently.

"It's all right, mum," he said. "Never mind now, mater. It's all over, and I suppose father will admit that I was innocent."

Mr. Bulstrode cleared his throat again.

But he did not speak. He generally had plenty to say; but on this occasion, somehow, words seemed to be lacking.

"Your father was a little hasty, that is all," said Mrs. Bulstrode.

Then the old gentleman found his voice.

"What!" he roared. "Hasty! I hasty!"

"Yes, dear."

Mr. Bulstrode snorted.

"I should like you to understand, Amelia, that I am never hasty!" he exclaimed. "I decline to be called hasty."

"Very well, dear," said Mrs. Bulstrode meekly.

"As for you, George—"

"Well," said Bulstrode, with a glitter in his eyes, "aren't you satisfied yet, father?"

"Yes, I am satisfied."

"Oh, good!"

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"My poor, dear boy—"

"Please let me speak, Amelia."

"Very well, my dear."

"I have been unjust, George," said Mr. Bulstrode, with a magnificent wave of the hand, as if his making this statement so openly and frankly far more than atoned for his injustice, and was indeed a very great feather in his cap.

"George, my boy, I have been unjust to you."

Bulstrode nodded.

"You have," he said.

"I am sorry."

"Very good; we'll say no more about it," said Bulstrode. "I think you might have given me credit for common honesty, that's all."

"Circumstances were against you—"

"You might have taken my word."

"So I should have done, if your reputation had been good enough to back up your word," said his father.

Bulstrode coloured.

"But I admit freely," said the old gentleman, "I have been unjust, and I am sorry. There is my hand, my boy."

Bulstrode took his father's hand.

"Very well, sir—let's forget all about it. It's made me muck up the match of the season, but that can't be helped now."

And Bulstrode took his people to tea. Fellows who had seen the peculiar behaviour of the Bulstrode family earlier in the day, were surprised to see the captain of the Remove walking between the two, his arm through his mother's, and his father's hand on his shoulder.

Bulstrode was evidently "all right" again with his people.

Glad enough were Bulstrode's friends to see it. The St. Jim's fellows—still with an elaborate unconsciousness of the unpleasant incident at the pavilion—joined the Greyfriars fellows at tea, and tea was quite a merry meal.

In the long, sunny July day there was plenty of light after tea to finish that memorable match. There remained the second innings for St. Jim's; and Tom Merry & Co. did not believe for a moment that they would want all their wickets. They had a cheerful and serene anticipation of going out with five or six to spare.

They had made 98 in one innings. The two innings for Greyfriars had totalled 130. St. Jim's, therefore wanted only 33 runs to win; and they meant to get them quickly enough.

The Greyfriars cricketers were far from hopeful.

"Our only chance is dawdling out the match, I guess, and stopping for the bad light," Fisher T. Fish remarked, after tea.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"That's not cricket," he said.

"I guess it's the only chance of not being licked."

"We'll be licked then. What do you say, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode nodded emphatically.

"Yes," he replied. "We'll be licked if we must—but we'll play the game. No playing against time for us. We'll give the Saints a fair run for their money, and if they beat us, we're beaten, that's all."

"I guess that's not business."

"No; it's cricket."

And the rest of the Remove team backed up Bulstrode's opinion. They would play the game, and if they were beaten on their merits, such a licking was more to their credit than an unfinished match would be.

The St. Jim's second innings commenced, and a keen crowd watched it. Miss Rosie came out with Molly and Marjorie and Clara, after tea, to see the finish of the match, and Major Cherry and Mr. Bulstrode watched from the pavilion. Mrs. Bulstrode's eyes never left her boy, from the moment he stepped on the field.

And there was a change in Bulstrode now.

It seemed as if a weight had been lifted from his mind, and he was a new fellow. His eyes were bright, his movements were alert, and he never missed a chance that came his way.

"My word!" said Bob Cherry. "Bulstrode's bucking up. Did you see that catch? Hurrah! Hurrah! Well caught! Hurrah!"

And Tom Merry ruefully carried out his bat for 3, a lower score than he had made for a long time. The Greyfriars crowd cheered lustily. The St. Jim's captain was out—and five minutes later Blake was stumped. Two down for 6 runs—and those two, two of the best.

Bulstrode's eyes flashed.

"There's a chance now," he muttered to Harry Wharton.

"Yes—thanks to you, Bulstrode!"

"Oh, rot!"

Bulstrode glanced round, however, at the pavilion. Marjorie was clapping her hands, and there was a stentorian roar from Mr. Bulstrode joining in the cheering.

Figgins and Kerr proceeded to punish the bowling, and runs mounted up. Then Bulstrode went on to bowl.

Bulstrode was a very good bowler, but not exceptional, as a rule. But he seemed to be a new Bulstrode now—or else it was his lucky day! His first ball sent Figgins's wicket into shivers, and his second downed Digby, who replaced Figgins. Kangaroo came in next, only to share the same fate, and there was a roar from Greyfriars.

"The hat trick! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Five down for 20! Bulstrode's example seemed to buck up the whole field. A smart throw-in from Micky Desmond sent Kerr back to the pavilion. A few minutes later Monty Lowther was stumped.

Seven wickets down for 27 runs! Six runs wanted to win—it seemed that it should be an easy task, badly as things had gone for St. Jim's in the second innings.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! This is beginnin' to look wotten! But, of course, we shall beat them. If you fellows will back me up, I'll twy to get a centuwy, you know."

"I hope you'll get a single," growled Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Man in!"

Another wicket down—stumped. Arthur Augustus went in tenth man. In spite of the sad show he had made in the first innings, there was a perceptible swagger in his walk. And he started well. His first hit was for two, and then he hit out for two more—and was stumped in attempting a third.

Thirty-one for nine wickets. One run wanted to tie, two to win. Herries went in, last man in for St. Jim's.

Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder as he went in.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Careful, Herries, old man—careful; the match hangs on this over."

"What-ho!" said Herries.

And he went to the wicket with the intention of being very, very careful indeed. Perhaps he was a little too careful. Bulstrode sent down a fast ball, and the next moment Herries's bails were spinning in the air.

Greyfriars roared.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Tom Merry gave a snort.

"All down—beaten by a run! My hat!"

Greyfriars had won!

That there was a tremendous celebration in the Lower School at Greyfriars that evening, we need hardly say.

They had won the St. Jim's match—won it by a hair's breadth, it is true—but they had won it; that was the thing.

And they rejoiced.

The St. Jim's fellows were seen off at the station by a cheering crowd, and they parted in very good humour; after all, both sides could not win, and they had come very near to victory. And at Greyfriars the rejoicing continued till lights-out—and, in fact, after that. And the most popular fellow in the Remove that day was easily Bulstrode—who had been barred by his people—and who had won the match for the Remove.

THE END.

(A splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., Bulstrode, and Bulstrode minor—a new boy—next week, entitled "The Bully's Brother!" Order your copy of the MAGNET now. Price 1d.)

A NEW ADVENTURE TALE OF ABSORBING INTEREST!

LION AGAINST BEAR.

A Thrilling Story of the Further Amazing Adventures of
FERRERS LORD, MILLIONAIRE.
By **SIDNEY DREW.**

READ THIS FIRST

Rupert Thurston, friend of Ferrers Lord, the millionaire, and commander of the latter's wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep, receives mysterious orders to sail for the Chinese seas. He reaches his destination, and meets Ferrers Lord, to whom he reports all the happenings of the journey. As soon as his friend leaves the Lord of the Deep, Thurston continues his journey to Shanghai, where he is again to meet Lord. On arrival there, Ching-Lung, the Chinese boy, and Maddock and Prout, two seamen, get leave to go ashore. At the time arranged, Thurston lands in Shanghai, and is taken by Lord's carriage to the Russian Embassy, there to attend a ball. Here he meets Lady Violet, Lord's niece, and learns from her that under the mask of the ball a great conspiracy is being formed.

(Now go on with the story.)

The arrival of Ching-Lung, otherwise known as Prince Tu-Li-Hoan.

"You have heard of Prince Tu-Li-Hoan," said Lady Violet, as she danced with Thurston. "He is tremendously rich, and nearly as powerful as Li-Hung-Chang. All through the present terrible rising he has kept his provinces quiet, and refused to join either with the Empress or the Allies. There have been whispers of a secret agreement between France and Russia to seize a large portion of Northern China. Maravitch left Shanghai months ago on a mysterious mission. We have found out that he went to Tu-Li-Hoan. Unless they could win over the prince, the plot could not succeed. Maravitch did win him over."

Rupert made a false step in his excitement.

"Then you mean to say that Britain is beaten?"

"Not at all, Mr. Thurston. That is not quite decided yet. Tu-Li-Hoan has left the province, and is expected here to-night. He will come, and yet he will not come. He is quite a young man, only twenty-four."

Thurston gasped. He was beginning to think he was mad.

"Only twenty-four, eh?" he groaned. "And yet I am supposed to be tutor to his two sons. Do children in this country have tutors before they've finished with their

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S BROTHER."

feeding-bottles. He'll come, and still he'll stay away. I must beg your ladyship's pardon, but that strikes me as a bit of a riddle."

"Perhaps it is, Mr. Thurston. Please be patient."

They whirled on to the strains of the waltz. Both were superb dancers.

"You must forgive me for being so dense," said Rupert suddenly, "but I can't grasp the thing yet. That brute Scaroff, who was our gaoler, is no fool. He knows very well I have never been tutor to the prince's children. He'll give the whole thing away at once."

Lady Violet was panting.

"Let us sit down for a moment," she said; "the room is very hot. The insolent brute is coming to speak to us!"

Rupert's blood boiled as he saw the handsome Russian moving towards them. Scaroff bowed to her ladyship.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he drawled, in perfect English. "In my wildest dreams I never imagined to find my illustrious passengers in Shanghai. Good-evening, my lady! You look more than ravishing. My dear Thurston, it is an insult and an outrage to frown in such bewitching company. I hope your ladyship's programme is not full?"

"Quite full enough to leave no room for you, prince."

"Then you bear malice," drawled Scaroff, twirling his moustache. "That is unkind."

Rupert's muscles tightened.

"Be wise, Scaroff," he said, between his teeth, "and leave us before I forget myself, and where I am. Come, Lady Violet."

The girl took his arm, and he led her into an alcove.

"I hope you are not engaged for the next dance?" said Thurston. "I see it is only a miserable polka."

"I fear I am," answered her ladyship, glancing at her card, "to some fat little Frenchman."

Suddenly the music ceased, leaving the dancers in confusion, and a voice cried:

"His Highness Prince Tu-Li-Hoan and suite!"

There was a chorus of cheering, and a salvo of handclaps as the great dignitary appeared. He was a short, wiry little man, with a boyish face, and was magnificently dressed. Armed slaves helped him from his litter, and he looked gravely round him.

"Great Scott," gasped Thurston, "it's Ching-Lung!"

A touch on his arm recalled him, and, looking up, he met Lady Violet's warning glance.

"Silence!" she whispered.

**The Prince Acts in a Most Amazing Fashion, and Mr. Thomas Prout Becomes a Full-Blown Mandarin—
"You are Foiled, My Dear Scaroff; the Lion Wins!"**

Rupert was standing like a man transfixed. Though Peking had fallen long ago, that mad hatred of foreigners, which is every Chinaman's birthright, could not be crushed. It would break out again sooner or later all the more fiercely. In the yellow land the life of no European is safe, or can be safe, until the Dragon is flung down, and the flag of some great civilised Power floats over the Sacred City. But which flag—the Union Jack or the Russian Eagle? The Lion or the Bear?

There was a strange hush as Ching-Lung approached the wife of the Russian Ambassador. So Tu-Li-Hoan was only a mere lad? His name was whispered through the length and breadth of China as the man who held the key of the whole situation in his hand. He had only to wave his hand to bring a million yellow warriors flocking to his green banner. He was lord of eight hundred square miles of fertile land, and even the Empress trembled before his power.

If Russia could win him over, the whole of Northern China would lie at the feet of the Tsar; he could pour his Cossack hordes southwards unopposed, and every British hope of Chinese conquest would be gone for ever. Thurston felt Lady Violet's soft touch again on his arm.

"Sit down," she whispered, "or Scaroff may begin to suspect."

"But," gasped Rupert, "Ching-Lung was his servant! He will recognise him at once!"

"Then you do not know Ching-Lung," said her ladyship, "or Ferrers Lord, either. Be patient."

The countess curtsied low before her distinguished guest. Ching-Lung fanned himself with a paper fan, and then, snatching the eyeglass from the eye of Fat-Fin-Yow, his umbrella-bearer, screwed it into his own eye, and stared at her fixedly. Then he smiled, and winked at Fat-Fin.

"Velly fine gal," he squeaked, in English, "ain't she, Fat? Lilly bit too stoutee—eh? She dye her hail and gotee false teeth. He, he, he! Numbel ninee in slippels, nicee painted complexion, and weighee fifteen stone. Kissee me!"

The countess uttered a little scream as Ching-Lung embraced her.

"Oh, your Highness," she said, blushing through her paint, "I am deeply honoured. I did not know your Highness spoke English. Of course, you speak French?"

"Good gracious me!" said Fat-Fin-Yow.

Ching-Lung sprang round and kicked his umbrella-bearer.

"You talker-talker when you askee, you ole golilla," he shouted, "and shutee youl big mouf when you notee! I beg youl paldon, my lily pet!" he added, turning to the countess. "You inquitee whether I paley-voe Flench. Not a bitee. Flench silly language, but English allee lightee. I mighty clobber at languages. I can sweal in the hunderd and ten of 'em. Getee me a pint of ale, and fetchee in dat chapee wid no whiskels on him head!"

The countess nearly fainted at the thought of such a horridly common drink as beer.

"Surely your Highness means champagne?" she gasped.

"Youl Highness meance nuffin' of de solt, ducky-lovee!" said Ching-Lung. "He meance ale. You justee be jolly quicke, Fat-Fin, or I out de heads off fifty of you!"

All the time Ching-Lung had kept a wary eye on Michael Scaroff, shielding his face with his fan. Suddenly the Russian moved stealthily forward, and Thurston, who could see the pretended Tu-Li-Hoan clearly, gasped again. The moment Scaroff approached, Ching-Lung's face altered. He was a different person at once.

There was consternation in the gorgeous ball-room. Everyone wanted to laugh, but to laugh at the man they imagined held the whole future of China in the hollow of his hand might have been fatal. They saw the umbrella-bearer, with his pigtail protruding through a hole in the crown of his old white hat, waddle forward, carrying a foaming tankard of beer. He knelt, and handed it to the prince. Unluckily for himself, he spilled a few drops on the polished floor.

"You clumsy ole idiot!" roared Ching-Lung. "Takee dat!"

His slippered foot shot out, striking Fat-Fin-Yow under the

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the chin. Curled up into a ball, the umbrella-bearer went spinning across the floor, and came to a halt, with a terrific crash, beneath a table. Ching-Lung drained the cup at a draught, hurled it at the head of another of his servants, and then whipped out his sword.

"Fetchee him out!" he cried. "De mancee who spill glolious beel not fitee to live! Bling him folth!"

Two brawny yellow soldiers, armed with rifles, seized the luckless umbrella-bearer by the ears, and dragged him out from beneath the table and pushed him forward. The white hat had been knocked over Fat-Fin's eyes. The women screamed with horror as he knelt with bent head before his lord, and the flashing sword went up.

"Great heavens!" gasped Rupert, white with horror.

Women ran screaming towards the door. The sword streaked down like a flash of light, and a human head, wedged into a battered white hat, fell at Ching-Lung's feet. He picked it up, and tossed it to one of his bodyguard. A moment later the headless trunk rose to its feet and walked to the door. Horrified, the half-fainting women shrank back to let the dreadful thing go past.

"Exolusee me," said Ching-Lung, wiping his bloodstained sword, "what allee de fuss 'bout? We findee himce anothe headce latel on. Comee back, ladies, if you pleasee. Dealy me, what de mattel? Justee tell Fat-Fin to bling in de chapee wid no whiskels on him topknot!"

Grey to the lips, the countess was staring at her strange guest. Scaroff caught her wrist, and drew her aside.

"Show no fear," he said hoarsely, "and get those fools to come back! If we offend him, all is lost. Bah, you have lived in China long enough to know that this is only a juggling trick in which these brutes delight! If we anger him, the toil of months will be wasted. I have recognised the man he pretended to behead. I saw him in Peking last year, when I visited the Empress. For Heaven's sake get these people back, and humour the Prince! Send your servants to explain!"

"You are sure?" the countess gasped. "I am all unstrung. It looked horribly real!"

"Sure? I am certain! Look, here's the very man!"

The man who entered was either Fat-Fin-Yow, or else Fat-Fin-Yow's double, wearing another white hat and another eyeglass. Not for the wealth of the Indies would the countess have angered Prince Tu-Li-Hoan. Her guests, too, were well aware of the extreme delicacy of the situation. They must bear with his pranks and eccentricities, for an empire was at stake.

Scaroff hurried into the garden by another door, and spoke to the terrified women. They came back by twos and threes, still looking white and scared. Ching-Lung was sitting on the back of a chair in the middle of the ball-room smoking a cigar.

"Where dat chapee wid no whiskels on him cocoanut?" he said. "Fetchee him in!"

Two of his yellow bodyguard marched to the door, and returned with Mr. Thomas Prout.

"Great heavens," gasped the Countess Maravitch, "this is awful!"

"Silence!" whispered Scaroff. "Let the madman play his pranks!"

If the steersman of the Lord of the Deep recognised Ching-Lung, his face did not show it.

"Beautiful!" squeaked Ching-Lung, rubbing his jewelled hands over Prout's bald head. "He, he, he! What you polished him wid—monkey bland soapee? We glow a few whiskels on him in 'alf a moce. Givee me youl hatee, Fin."

The umbrella-bearer pulled off his old white hat, and, placing it on Prout's head, Ching-Lung hammered it down with his fist. Prout did not move a muscle. When the hat was raised the steersman was bald no longer. He had a splendid head of fiery-red hair.

A murmur of applause and astonishment filled the room. Ching-Lung beamed upon the guests, thrust his cigar into Prout's mouth, and said:

"He lookee bettel now, don't he? What youl namee, callots?"

"Smithoffski!" roared the steersman.

"Dat soundee likee a velly bad cold!" grinned Ching-Lung. "Allee lightee. Me tookee a fancy to you. You a mandalin now. I takee you homee wid me and makee you lich. Hele, you lubly gal, wid de falsee teeth!" He waved his hand, and the horrified countess came to his side. "I inteldooce you," said Ching-Lung. "Lubly gal, Mandalin Smithoffski; Smithwotscename, lubly gal! Kiss her!"

For the second time the countess nearly fainted. Luckily for her, the gallant steersman merely kissed her hand, and a quick, warning glance from Michael Scaroff steadied her.

Ching-Lung stood up cleverly on the back of the chair and looked round him. He caught sight of Lady Violet, and, springing down, hurried to the alcove. Rupert had concealed himself behind the palms.

"May I have de suplemee delightedness of one lily dance?"
nid Ching-Lung, bowing low
Lady Violet rose smiling.
"With pleasure, your Highness."

The countess fumed as the English girl took the prince's arm. It disgusted her to think that her niece Imra had not been chosen for the honour.

"Now, you music, fellels," said Ching-Lung, turning and shaking his fist at the band, "you just tune up velly shalpee. You give us a polka, and notee a silly, slow ole waltz. If you don't makee tings humee I bundlee de lot of you into youl own dlum, and pitchee you down de steps! Now, Mr. Mandalin Slopslopsi, you dancee wid de lubly gal!"

"Great mércy!" moaned the countess. "Must I dance with a common sailor?"

Prout scratched his red head and grinned.

"I ain't never danced in my life!" he roared.

Ching-Lung clapped his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"You doee what I tellee you," he said threateningly, "or I chopce you into suet! If you no lealned to dancee, you play leapee-flog wid de lubly gal, dat's allee. He, he, he! You leady, madam? Den go!"

The band struck up a rattling polka, and Ching-Lung and his beautiful partner sailed away. He was a brilliant dancer, and he saw the laughter in Lady Violet's blue eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Ching-Lung," she said, "you will kill me if you carry this on much longer! I am afraid you have almost killed that poor countess already."

Ching-Lung chuckled. The ambassador's wife, puffing and panting, was being whirled and bumped about by the newly-created mandarin.

"I don't know," answered the Chinese boy, in perfect English. "I fancy she's pretty tough, my lady. The fun cannot last much longer, as Mr. Ferrers Lord will be here before midnight. I'll speak to her soon—tell her I am enjoying myself immensely, and hint that I am hand and heart with the Tsar. By the way, I should like to pay back on old debt with Michael Scaroff. With whom is he dancing?"

"With Imra Maravitch. She is the ambassador's niece."

"Good!" said Ching-Lung, his eyes twinkling. "Here he comes!"

Scaroff was close upon them. With a sudden skilful twist, Ching-Lung threw himself in the Russian's way, and thrust out his foot. It was all so cleverly done that even the keenest observer would have wagered his life that it was an accident. Scaroff tripped, tried in vain to regain his footing, and then fell with a crash to the floor.

Ching-Lung's face turned white with passion, and, unsheathing his sword, he sprang upon the Russian, and uttered a shrill cry. Four of his bodyguard dashed forward, and, dragging Scaroff to his feet, held him fast.

"Ah, miserable scoundrel!" cried Ching-Lung. "You dilt, you foreign debil, how dale you insult a plincee of de loyal blood? Hele, takee de swold, Fat-Fin, and cutce off him head!"

In an instant the countess was kneeling before him.

"For mercy's sake, your Highness," she wailed, "think what you do! Oh, apologise, Scaroff, in Heaven's name! He did not mean it, prince; he could not help it! It was an accident."

Blood was trickling from the Russian's mouth, and he quivered with rage. Apologise to a miserable heathen! The thought stung him like the cut of a whiplash.

"Lubly gal," said Ching-Lung, "arise. Mandalin, tell him de apologise him gotee to makee."

Tom Prout winked, and touched his forelock.

"All right!" he roared. "Kneel down!"

Scaroff was forced to his knees. His face was livid.

"Now," roared the steersman, "you repeat this: 'Please, your Royal 'Ighness—'"

"Please, your Royal Highness—" began Scaroff, his lips trembling with passion.

"I grovel here before your sublime greatness, pig that I am—"

Scaroff was silent. The words would have choked him.

"For Heaven's sake," moaned the countess, "obey him, or he will do murder!"

"Go on," roared Prout, "or, as a servant of his 'Ighness, I'll take the liberty of chokin' yer!"

To the bitter end, in a hoarse, half audible whisper, Michael Scaroff, Russia's richest and most powerful nobleman, went through the degrading apology. Ching-Lung's face was so strangely altered that, although only a bare yard divided them, Scaroff did not recognise his old servant. In the alcove, Rupert nearly strangled himself in his effort to restrain his laughter.

"Now you getee up, one-arm," said Ching-Lung, "and we go and havee a dlink."

Scaroff was compelled to obey. They went together to the buffet, and opened a bottle of champagne. Ching-Lung dropped into a chair, and, putting his feet on the table, became suddenly grave.

"You speak Chinese, prince?" he said, in his own language. The Russian bowed.

"Then," said Ching-Lung, "let us have an end to this

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ONE
PENNY.

foolery. I may look young, prince, and, like many another, I may love to play pranks; but I do it all for a purpose. You have several English people here to-night. Come, I will play the game through. They will think Tu-Li-Hoan a madman, and that will do away with all suspicion of intrigue. When the ball is over we will talk, and you will tell me what your lord, the Tsar, wants of me, and the price he is willing to pay. But, mark you, if he tries to play me false, my warriors will eat him up!"

Scaroff's face brightened.

"Hush!" he said. "Do not speak so loud. I heard your Highness mention the name of Thurston. What is he to you?"

Ching-Lung took out a jewelled cigar-case and lighted a cigar.

"Oh," he answered, in Chinese, "he was with me last year, teaching my two little boys. He stayed about six months, and I got very fond of him. Then another Englishman came up-country, and they went away together. I was sorry, for I liked Thurston."

"An Englishman!" gasped Scaroff. "His name?"

"Ferrers Lord."

Scaroff started, nearly letting the wineglass fall.

"And yet," he said, trying to steady his voice, "when I sent a messenger to your Highness asking for the honour of paying you a visit, you refused."

Ching-Lung smiled, and deliberately winked.

"That was before I knew you Russians had so much money to spare," he answered. "Frankly, my dear prince, it is all a matter of money with me. If you can outbid the British, I am at your service. I know well enough that the old state of affairs in China cannot last. When Li-Hung-Chang goes, Tu-Li-Hoan, by right of birth and power, must take his place, and the nation with whom Tu-Li-Hoan sides will have the firmest hold in China."

When he returned to the ball-room, Michael Scaroff sought out the countess.

"We must be wary!" he whispered. "Though he looks like a boy, and acts like a mountebank, he is more cunning than a fox. Your husband is only a few hours behind him. They did not dare come together, for the place swarms with British spies. Get through the programme as fast as you can. He says he intends to return home at dawn. It is win or lose now!"

"Then you lose!" cried a deep voice. "You are fooled, my dear Scaroff! The lion wins!"

The Russian spun round, and then reeled back.

Ferrers Lord stood before him with folded arms. He was in evening-dress, and for once a tinge of colour glowed on his cheeks.

"Beaten," he said, with a laugh, "and at your own game! Prince Tu-Li-Hoan died a week ago. Here is his nephew and heir, Prince Ching-Lung. And do not forget, my vanquished foe, that Ching-Lung is no crawling, treacherous, corrupted Chinaman. Though his skin is yellow, his heart is white, and he is British to the core!"

Baffled, beaten, tricked, Scaroff staggered back against the wall, half stunned. Then his hand leapt towards his pocket.

"Be careful!" drawled Ferrers Lord. "Look there!"

Standing in the doorway was the armed escort from the Lord of the Deep, headed by Ben Maddock. They were standing rifles in hand. The terrified dancers fell aside; the music of the band stopped abruptly. Ching-Lung, too, had drawn a revolver, and was covering the Russian. Rupert and Lady Violet had also run forward.

"Come," said Ferrers Lord, "let us go. Is your Highness ready?"

"One lily moment!" grinned Ching-Lung. "We goee in style. Now, you band, you stlikee up 'God Save the King.'"

"God Save the King" in a veritable hot-bed of Russian conspiracy! For a moment the shivering conductor hesitated, until he saw Ching-Lung's revolver pointed at his head. Then the strains of that grand old tune, the British National Anthem, crashed through the ball-room of the Russian Embassy.

"Quick—march!" cried Ferrers Lord.

It was a victory indeed.

Prince Ching-Lung's Gets Two Receptions—Grave News from the North—The Sailing of the Cloud King—Kwai-Hal.

The little party reached the quay safely and triumphantly, and scrambled into the launch. The little vessel carried no lights, and the gloom was intense. Ferrers Lord was at the helm, and Rupert had crawled into the bow. An approaching circle of red light signalled the advance of Ching-Lung's cigar, and naturally Ching-Lung was behind it. As he squatted down, Rupert gripped him by the hand.

"By Jove, Ching—I mean your Highness," he said—"I'm

delighted to hear the news! I thought it was all part of the game until Mr. Ferrers Lord told me just now it was quite true. So you're a great prince now, with mints of money, and more real power than any European emperor, except the Tsar. How strange you should have known nothing about all this!"

"Me know allee de timee!" chuckled Ching-Lung.

"What! You knew, and yet said nothing about it?"

"Whatee de good?" said the Chinese boy. "It no use blagging, and nobody believe me. Me tellee Mr. Fellels Lord de lastee time him come. It likee dis, savvy? My ol uncle Tu-Li-Hoan hatee me velly much-muchee; but he likee my bluddel Chan-So, who youngel dan me. He wantee Chan-So to be plince when him die. Fat-Fin-Yow heal him tellee de Empluss I gotee be killed, and ole Fat him tellee me. Den I lun away wid deal ole Fat, and Fat teachee lots of conjuling ticks. Aftel dat, Fat havee to hooke it to savee him neck, and I go on Lussian ship as sailor. Dat fivee yeals ago, and de wicked ole captain sellee me to Sealoff."

The launch was rushing swiftly across a dark, waveless sea.

"And I suppose we must lose you now?" said Rupert sadly.

"It will make a big gap in our little circle."

Ching-Lung flung his cigar overboard.

"Oh, I dunno!" he answered somewhat huskily. "It velly haldee to palt. Me gotee to go back to my ownee peoples, of couse, fol a bitee. I'd likee you and Plout and Maddock and lily Elic to come, too. I velly fondree of you allee. We see what Mr. Lord sayee. Dele may be some fun. Hallo, what dey doing?"

Ferrers Lord was standing up, lantern in hand. Ahead loomed the lights of the Lord of the Deep. The millionaire waved the lantern, and the quick-eyed sailor on watch in the conning-tower took down and deciphered the message:

"Man the sides and fire salute!"

The launch ran towards the submarine vessel. Two tongues of flame shot out of the darkness, and a dull report rolled over the sea. The low-lying decks of the Lord of the Deep were crowded with men. A searchlight was turned upon the launch, and Ferrers Lord shouted:

"Three cheers for Prince Ching-Lung!"

Hats placed on rifle-muzzles were waved in the air, and three rousing British cheers rang out:

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

As Ching-Lung entered the conning-tower he was greeted with hearty shouts of welcome and congratulation. Ned Horton, to whom Ferrers Lord had flashed the news from Shanghai, gripped his hand. Everyone loved Ching-Lung, even Monsieur Pierre.

"It allee lightee, Mr. Holton," said the Chinese boy, with a beaming smile. "Don't you makee no fuss 'bout me. I bloughtee you lily plesent."

It was a magnificent meercaum pipe, heavily mounted in gold. Before the delighted diver could speak his thanks, Ching-Lung was calling for Fat-Fin-Yow. The umbrella-bearer approached, bowing low.

"I s'pose you notee mind double glog to-nightee, Mr. Lupelt?" said Ching-Lung.

"Not a bit!" answered Thurston. "Of course, you will have supper with us?"

Ching-Lung shook his head.

"No, t'ankee you allee de samee. I stick to de fo'c's'le fol a bitee. Comee 'long, Fat, and allee you boys!"

There was another cheer, and Ferrers Lord smiled.

"By Jove, Rupert," he said, "you made a find when you met Ching-Lung! After our adventure of the Crimson Hill he told me he was Tu-Li-Hoan's nephew. I could hardly believe my ears; but he directed me to Fat-Fin-Yow, who held the proofs. When I left you I ran to Shanghai, and sought out our friend Fat-Fin. By secret message we learned that Tu-Li-Hoan had died suddenly, and that Chan-So, Ching-Lung's younger brother, was the new prince. My spies told me, too, that the Russian Ambassador had been intriguing with Tu-Li. We kidnapped him at Kwai-Sen, twenty miles north of Shanghai, and compelled him to write to his wife, arranging the ball. You saw how it ended."

Rupert flung himself into a chair, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"It was the funniest thing I ever heard of!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ching-Lung is a born genius. I nearly exploded once or twice. But, by-the-by, what has become of Lady Violet?"

"Oh," said Ferrers Lord carelessly, as he lighted a cigarette, "she is going to Pekin to the British Embassy! A most wonderfully clever girl, my dear fellow! She will act as our intelligence department. Just mix a couple of whiskies-and-sodas. They seem merry in the fore-castle," he added, as a roar of laughter rang through the ship.

And they were merry in the fore-castle. Ching-Lung's sudden ascent to greatness had not spoiled him in the least.

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The men were squatting round him on the floor, while Maddock presided at the rum-barrel. Though Ned Horton had only divulged the news half an hour before, the merry-hearted, quick-handed sailors had draped the fo'c's'le with flags and bunting. Ching-Lung shook hands all round. Somebody called for a speech.

"Certainly, my loveebilds," said the prince, hopping upon the back of the chair.

"Hurroo!" roared Mr. Prout.

Ching-Lung paused, and eyed him sternly.

"Chuck him out!" shouted several voices.

The steersman blushed. Then, to the amazement of all, he roared:

"You're a cheeky brute, Ben Maddock! Chuck me out, eh? I'll flatten yer face for yer!"

"Shame!" cried half a dozen voices.

Maddock leapt to his feet, while Prout looked helplessly round him. He knew he had not spoken, and yet the voice was his own.

"Or'r'te!" growled the bo'sun, turning up his sleeves. "I'll see about that flattenin', I will. Yer 'Ighness'll excuse me, I 'ope, while I knocks him inter pulp?"

"Certainly," answered Ching-Lung. "Biff him fol his outrageous cheek. Haw dale he intellupt de speake!"

"Wait a bit!" roared Prout, jumping up. "If there's a fight on, I'm going to be in it, you bet. I never said I'd flatten yer, I swear; but I'm ready ter do it now. Put yer punchers up!"

Monsieur Pierre was standing near the stove, curling his moustache very fiercely. With wonderful skill, as he lighted a cigarette, Ching-Lung altered his voice. To the amazement of all, the Frenchman shouted:

"Death of my life! Ha, ha! Zo ze two Engleesh fools zink zey can fight. Sare, eet ees too beaucoup funny!"

For a moment Prout and the bo'sun stared aghast, too petrified at Monsieur Pierre's audacious impudence to stir. Then, flinging off his coat, the steersman roared:

"Oh, Jupiter, did yer 'ear that? Oh, I'll paralyse him! I'll gormandise him! I'll electrocute him! I'll——"

He hurled himself upon the innocent Frenchman like a human tornado.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

A bell tolled noisily through the ship, and in an instant the men were rushing wildly for the deck, snatching their rifles as they ran. In the light that shone from the conning-tower they saw Ferrers Lord and Thurston. They fell into their positions silently. Ching-Lung and Horton walked down the line together. Above their heads hung a dark, shapeless thing, tugging and straining at its cable. It was a balloon.

There was a hush as Ferrers Lord strode forward.

"Men of the Lord of the Deep," he said, in his deep, impressive voice, "stirring news has come. I have just learned that the death of Tu-Li-Hoan, who controlled two-thirds of Northern China, has become known. Your old comrade Ching-Lung is, of course, the prince; but his brother Chan-So has been appointed by the Empress. His capital, Kwai-Hal is in a ferment; for Chan-So is too weak to govern. The moment the news reached St. Petersburg, Russia decided to seize the opportunity, and are ready to pour twenty thousand troops over the border.

"If Russia gains a footing in the north," he went on calmly, "nothing can stay her advance. I have called you together to tell you that Mr. Horton, during our absence, is in sole command of the vessel. He is the master of life and death here, so obey him as you would obey me. I shall want Maddock and Prout. In an hour the bell will ring again."

He hurried back to the saloon, followed by Thurston and Ching-Lung.

"This is a bad business," he said gravely. "What does your Highness think?"

Ching-Lung puffed out a dozen smoke-rings, and caught them on his finger.

"We must go to Kwai-Hal at once. Fat-Fin-Yow has always worked hard for me, and the people hate my brother Chan-So. Though Tu-Li-Hoan gave it out that I was dead, nearly all of my subjects know I am alive. We shall have many dangers to face; but I am certain that the moment I raise my banner four or five hundred thousand men will flock to it. Unless we can seize Chan-So, he will raise a second army. We shall have our hands full to beat the rebels back, and at the same time sweep aside the Russian invaders."

The millionaire sat down, and spread out the map of Northern China. He flung the map aside.

"If your loyal troops were well armed," he began, "we——"

A bell whirred, and the needle of the telegraphic instrument ticked backwards and forwards. There were two messages. The first read:

"Ten thousand Russian troops moving southwards from

Chita at dawn, fully equipped. Destination undoubtedly Kwai-Hal."

Ferrers Lord crunched the paper up in his hand. The second message was even more urgent and alarming:

"Chan-So utterly routed loyalist troops two days ago, and communicated with Russian general, asking help to crush rebellion. Many loyalists beginning to despair, thinking Ching-Lung dead. Rumoured Scaroff will meet Russian army Kwai-Hal, and take command of advance to south. Strike at once, or lose all."

Ferrers Lord silently handed the telegram to Ching-Lung. The Chinese boy whistled.

"Very black indeed," he said. "The wind is in the right quarter, and it is foolish to waste time. We must start now. If Chan-So gains another victory, Russia will then win China."

"I shall never live to see that day," drawled Ferrers Lord grimly.

The warning bell rang again, and the crew massed on the deck. A smart breeze had sprung up, and the low decks were awash. The late moon had risen, but dark clouds were moving angrily across its disc.

The windlass creaked, and the rope ran over the drum. Foot by foot, as the strain increased, the monstrous balloon neared the deck.

"Get aboard," said Ferrers Lord.

Rupert shook hands with Horton, and, wishing him good luck, scrambled into the car. Ching-Lung, Fat-Fin-Yow, and little Haggensen followed, then came Maddock and Prout.

The millionaire was the last to leave the deck.

"Cast off!" he cried. "To Kwai-Hal, for the sake of the land we love!"

The great balloon leapt skyward like a living thing, and the lights of the Lord of the Deep faded.

"Listen!" said Ferrers Lord.

A sound of voices reached them like a good omen. The crew were speeding them farewell with the stirring strains of "Rule, Britannia!"

Wrapped in their greatcoats, the men listened until the strains of "Rule, Britannia" melted into silence. The blinking lights of Shanghai faded into darkness, the roar of the wind-lashed waves grew fainter. Moment by moment the breeze was increasing, and the surging clouds that raced over the moon told of an approaching gale.

"It will be a nasty storm, I fear," said Ferrers Lord. "Hand me the lantern, Rupert."

He flashed the light on the barometer. The balloon was travelling rapidly to the north-west at a height of fifteen hundred feet above the level of the sea. The millionaire turned towards Ching-Lung.

"How high is the peak of Kwalien-hun?" he asked in a whisper.

"Over three thousand feet."

"And it is about one hundred and fifty miles from Shanghai?"

"To an inch," said Ching-Lung.

Ferrers Lord knitted his brow. The Cloud King was only an ordinary balloon, and therefore absolutely at the mercy of the wind. It was possible that the balloon, if the gale did not veer, would pass either to the east or west of the great volcano of Kwalien-hun. By an expenditure of ballast he could raise the balloon high out of danger of collision with the mountain, but precious time would be wasted. To strike when travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour would be fearful; to rise might mean to find a second breeze at a higher altitude which would hurl him out of his course.

He opened a rough sketch of the route and bent over it.

"You see," he said, in such a low tone that only Thurston and Ching-Lung could catch the words, "our time is more precious than gold. If Chan-So defeats the loyalists again we shall only reach Kwai-Hal to leave our heads there. If this wind holds we ought to be able to descend close to the town. That beastly mountain stands in our way. To rise would be to risk losing the favourable wind. It is as black as pitch, too."

Ching-Lung looked keenly at the chart.

"We shall get plenty of warning," he said. "The mountain is nearly always in eruption at full moon."

The cold was bitter, and great drops of moisture fell into the car from the network above their heads. Nothing could be seen of the dark land over which they were racing in the clutch of the gale. There was a dull, distant roaring that made Ferrers Lord tremble.

"The sea again," said Thurston.

"No; a forest," answered the millionaire. "lashed by the wind. Here it is on the map—Tient-Hiez. We have

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travelled nearly fifty miles in an hour. The wind must be more powerful below to beat the trees into such an uproar. We will descend a little."

The gas rushed out as he tugged at the valve-cord, and the balloon sank. To the voyagers the car seemed motionless, for they travelled with the wind at its own pace. Tom Prout was not happy. He said to the bo'sun:

"I can understand a train, and I can understand a ship; but these 'ere flyin' thingummys ain't in my line. Now, just serpose it was ter bust."

"I reckon somebody 'ud dror yer club-money," murmured the bo'sun. "You'd fall with a bit o' a thump."

Little Haggensen was as happy as a bird. Muffled to the chin in a warm rug, with Shakespearean Willyum, the rat, dozing in his pocket, Eric snuggled close to Ching-Lung, asking a thousand questions. Fat-Fin-Yow was even less comfortable than Prout. He seemed to have an idea that the balloon was a kind of flying dragon.

Suddenly Ching-Lung stood up and pointed ahead.

"Kwalien-hun!" he cried.

Ferrers Lord seized the night-glass and focussed it. A spot of red light hung like a lamp in the blackness—the burning peak of Kwalien-hun. It was miles away, but the balloon was being hurled onwards and onwards with terrible velocity.

"We're making straight for it," said the millionaire quietly. "What does the compass say, Thurston?"

"Due north-west, except about a tenth by west."

"Then we shall clear it by a furlong."

He lighted a cigar and leant forward. The spot of light grew in size till the whole northern sky was lurid red.

Ching-Lung stood up again.

"The news has spread," he said. "China is like gunpowder. It only requires a spark to set all ablaze."

The balloon was passing over a ridge of low hills. Behind every jutting rock that offered enough shelter to keep the glowing embers from being whirled away by the gale watch-fires blazed.

"What is the meaning of it?" asked Ferrers Lord.

"I think they must be afraid of an attack on the railway," answered Ching-Lung. "I suppose the telegram meant that the railway was torn up north of Kwai-hal. The line skirts the hills and turns north-west beyond Kwalien-hun. The junction is there. There may be some other trouble that we know nothing about."

"Perhaps," said the millionaire thoughtfully.

The watch-fires vanished swiftly. Fat-Fin-Yow lighted the spirit-stove and made coffee. The cold seemed to grow more piercing, and the balloon was so saturated with water that a couple of sandbags had to be emptied to lighten her.

Brighter and brighter grew the red glow of Kwalien-hun, till the whole sky seemed aflame.

"We shall pass the mountain a mile to the west," said Ferrers Lord, lowering the night-glass.

Thurston heaved a sigh of relief.

"It is a wonderful sight," he said, "but one I prefer to look at from a safe distance. It's in full eruption! Look at that!"

Suddenly a mass of flame shot upwards, and a crash reached their ears. Then Ching-Lung uttered a cry that sent their hearts into their throats with dread.

"The wind has veered!"

As if by magic, the shapeless mass of Kwalien-hun, its rounded crest plumed with fire, seemed to leap out of the darkness. The wind had changed a point, and was driving the balloon headlong towards the crater. Shaking with horror, Prout and Maddock hurriedly scrambled to their feet.

"We must descend," gasped Thurston, "and try the grapnel!"

Ferrers Lord shook his head.

"No grapnel could hold for a minute in such a gale," he answered.

The fierce red glare shone upon their anxious faces. The remorseless, pitiless wind flung them wildly forward.

"We must go over the crater," said Ching-Lung hoarsely. "There is just a chance of clearing it. It is death for all of us to strike the mountain at this speed. Out with everything except rifles and cartridges."

Over the crater! For a moment they stared at the Chinese boy, dumbfounded.

"Ching-Lung is right," said the millionaire. "It is our last hope. Quick! Overboard with everything!"

They worked like fiends. Sandbags, instruments, pro-

visions, blankets, and the water-keg, were flung out of the car. Already they seemed to feel the scorching heat of the volcano on their faces; the glare dazzled their eyes. Thus greatly lightened, the balloon sprang up nearly fifteen hundred feet.

"Not high enough yet!" shouted the millionaire. "We shall drift right into the crater. Half the ammunition must go!"

Ching-Lung lifted ease after ease and sent them toppling over the edge of the car. The balloon rose another three or four hundred feet. It was not enough. Then he whipped out a knife.

"Scramble into the nets," he said, "and fill your pockets with cartridges!"

They were drifting into the very vortex of flame, where fierce heat would consume the balloon like tissue paper.

Little Hagensen was the first to obey. He climbed up like a cat. Rupert and the rest followed, all but Fat-Fin-Yow. Frozen with horror, the Chinaman crouched in the bottom of the car.

It was no time for gentle measures. Ching-Lung saw that the man was dazed. A cannon fired close to his ear would not have aroused Fat-Fin-Yow from his stupor of terror. But there is something a Chinaman fears more than death—the loss of his pigtail. Ching-Lung whipped off the battered white hat, and shouted something in Chinese. The knife flashed across Fat-Fin-Yow's shaven skull and grazed his pigtail.

With a yell of horror, he leapt up and clambered into the net. White to the lips, the men gazed ahead. Kwalien-hun seemed mad with rage. A deafening roar came from his fiery throat, and he spat out an avalanche of flame and lava. Only a mile separated them from the crater. They were face to face with a hideous death.

Ching-Lung's ready knife hacked at the ropes. The car fell sideways, and the balloon tilted sickeningly. The Chinese boy hung like a monkey from the net, and with one quick slash severed the last remaining cord. The car vanished, and little Hagensen uttered a shrill cry.

Something fell, striking Ching-Lung's dangling foot. There was one wild, blood-curdling scream, and then a choking cloud of smoke, shot with beams of lurid red, blotted out the glare of the crater. Their cheeks were blistered, their lips cracked, their eyes smarting.

But they had crossed the furnace of Kwalien-hun—all but Fat-Fin-Yow, who lay battered, shapeless, and lifeless on the mountain-side.

Ferrers Lord was the first to break the tense silence. His voice sounded like the voice of another man.

"We must descend," he said hoarsely, "or we shall die of cold. Can you reach the valve, Rupert?"

The valve-cord was dangling in Thurston's face, but his fingers were so numbed that he could hardly hold it. He placed it between his teeth, and the gas rushed out.

"One of us has gone," went on the millionaire. "Who is it?"

"Fat-Fin-Yow, sir," answered Maddock, with a shiver. "He nearly dragged me down with him."

Ching-Lung's plucky heart was almost broken at the loss of his friend, but Ching-Lung thought of his own sorrow and danger last of all. One of his strong arms was clasped round Eric, who was almost fainting.

"You allee lightee," said Ching-Lung cheerily, dropping back into his soft broken-English to encourage the terrified lad. "I takee care of you. Don't you be frightened. We going down now, and allee de dangel is ovel."

"Heart of gold," thought Ferrers Lord, who caught the words. "He shames us all."

But the danger was far from being over. The grapnel was gone, and the gale was raging with even wilder

fury. Like a cork in a millrace the falling balloon was hurled on, sinking rapidly.

"Let the valve close," said Ferrers Lord.

Rupert unclenched his teeth and freed the cord. Ching-Lung peered downwards, but the country below was only like some huge blot of ink. They could hear the crashing of wind-tossed trees, and the weird sbricking of the wind among the branches.

Ching-Lung wormed out of his blouse in some miraculous fashion, and with it and his yellow sash tied Eric securely to the network. Then, crawling like an eel, he reached Ferrers Lord.

"The forest of Chefang," he whispered.

"Yes, I guessed it."

"And the lake is below. Why not sink the balloon in the lake? It will float for hours."

The millionaire started with a sudden thrill of hope. The balloon was scudding over the forest only a thousand feet above the tree-tops.

"By Jove," he whispered, "you have given me a fresh hope of life! Watch for the water!"

They saw the dull, leaden gleam of the lake through the blackness almost at once.

"The valve!" cried Ferrers Lord.

A drenching, icy rain was falling in torrents from the scudding clouds. Rupert found the dangling cord again and jerked open the valve. Weighted down by the rain, the balloon was slowly sinking; but even with the valve wide open it sank too slowly, for the lake was only six miles across. Ching-Lung cut a gaping hole in the silk.

"She's dropping like a stone!" panted Rupert. "The water seems rushing up to meet us!"

The valve and the rent were swiftly draining the balloon of its buoyancy. Like a swallow it dipped into the lake, rose, and dipped again, drenching its human freight. Then, after a dozen plunges, each weaker than the last, it settled down. The wind caught it and swept it onwards.

"Are all safe?" asked Ferrers Lord.

Hoarse voices answered. Clinging to the net, with their heads and shoulders alone above the water, they were dragged through the gloom.

"Land!"

Ching-Lung uttered the cry as his feet struck the bottom. Ferrers Lord gave his orders clearly.

"Do not let go your hold until I tell you, or it may be fatal to some of you. Are you all ready? Let go at once."

The great balloon was far from exhausted. Like a wounded duck it rose, dripping, from the water as the weight was withdrawn, and disappeared into the ebon gloom.

What was to be done? They were in the midst of foes, unarmed, and worn out with fatigue. Little Hagensen was almost unconscious, and the terrible strain had told upon Rupert and Prout. Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, and Maddock

had iron muscles and nerves of steel, but Maddock felt faint and shaky.

Beyond them lay a patch of woodland that might offer some poor shelter against the teeming rain and raging wind. Ferrers Lord took Ching-Lung aside.

"We are in a sorry plight," he said. "All we can do, I suppose is to wait for the dawn."

"No good," said the Chinese boy. "It will be dawn in an hour. We can't be far from the railway; but we'll get no mercy if we're collared. You shelter in the wood, and I'll go and explore. Here, take the boy!"

He thrust Eric Hagensen into the millionaire's arms, and ran swiftly away. The shore sloped upwards sharply, and it was intensely dark. But darkness was nothing to Ching-Lung. He pushed his way through the long, coarse grass, disturbing a few wild ducks, which shrieked and flapped around him.

(To be continued in next week's MAGNET.)



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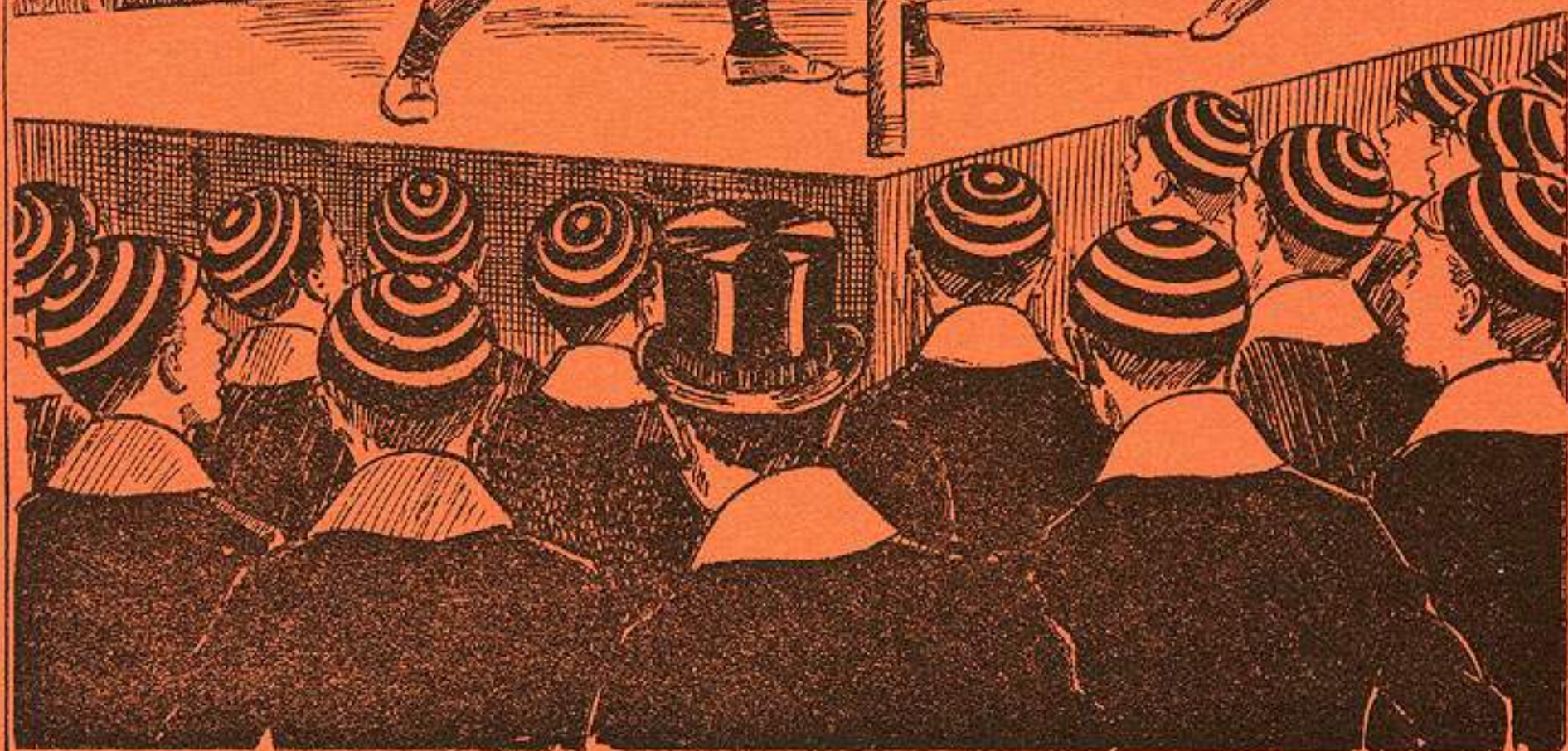
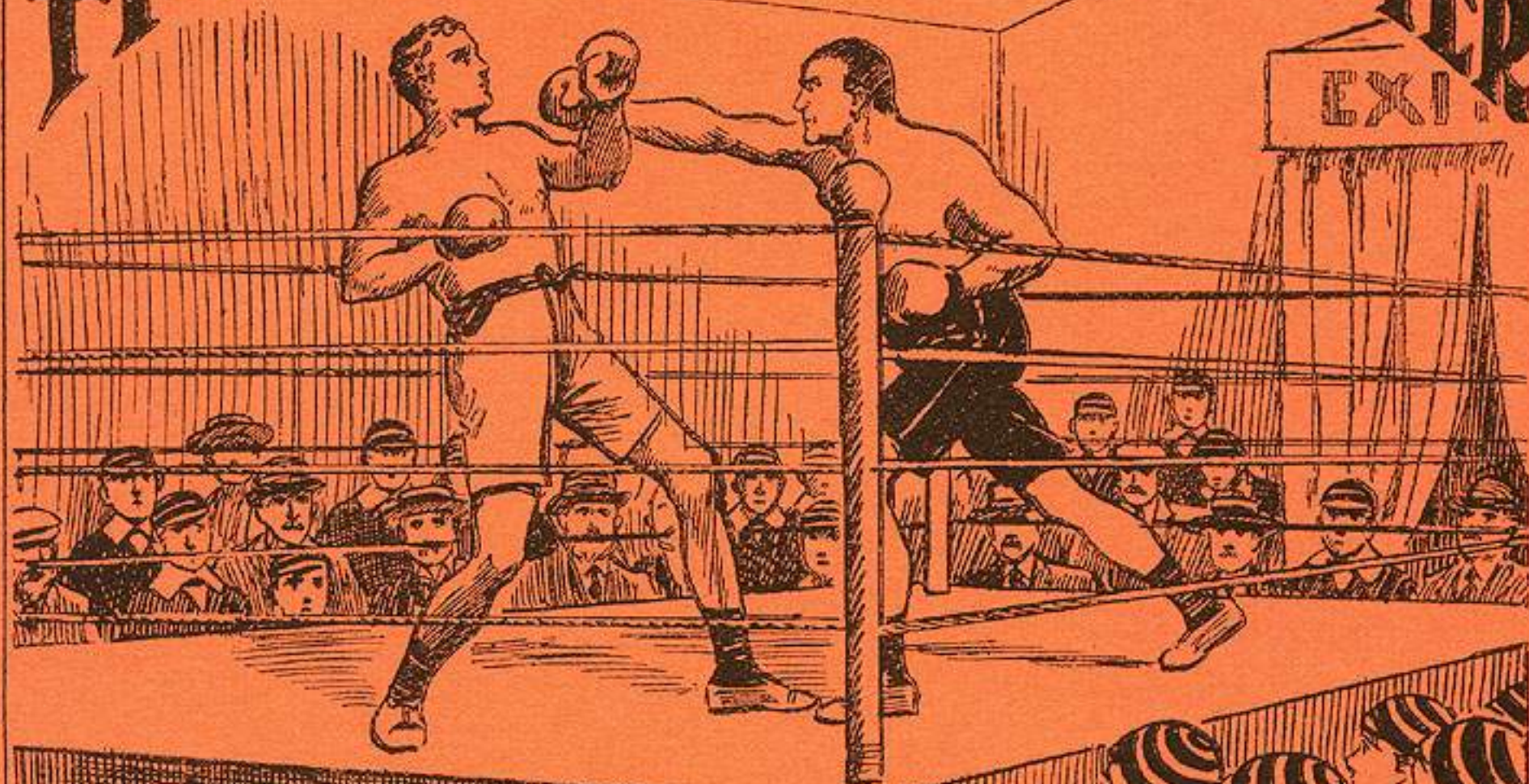
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