

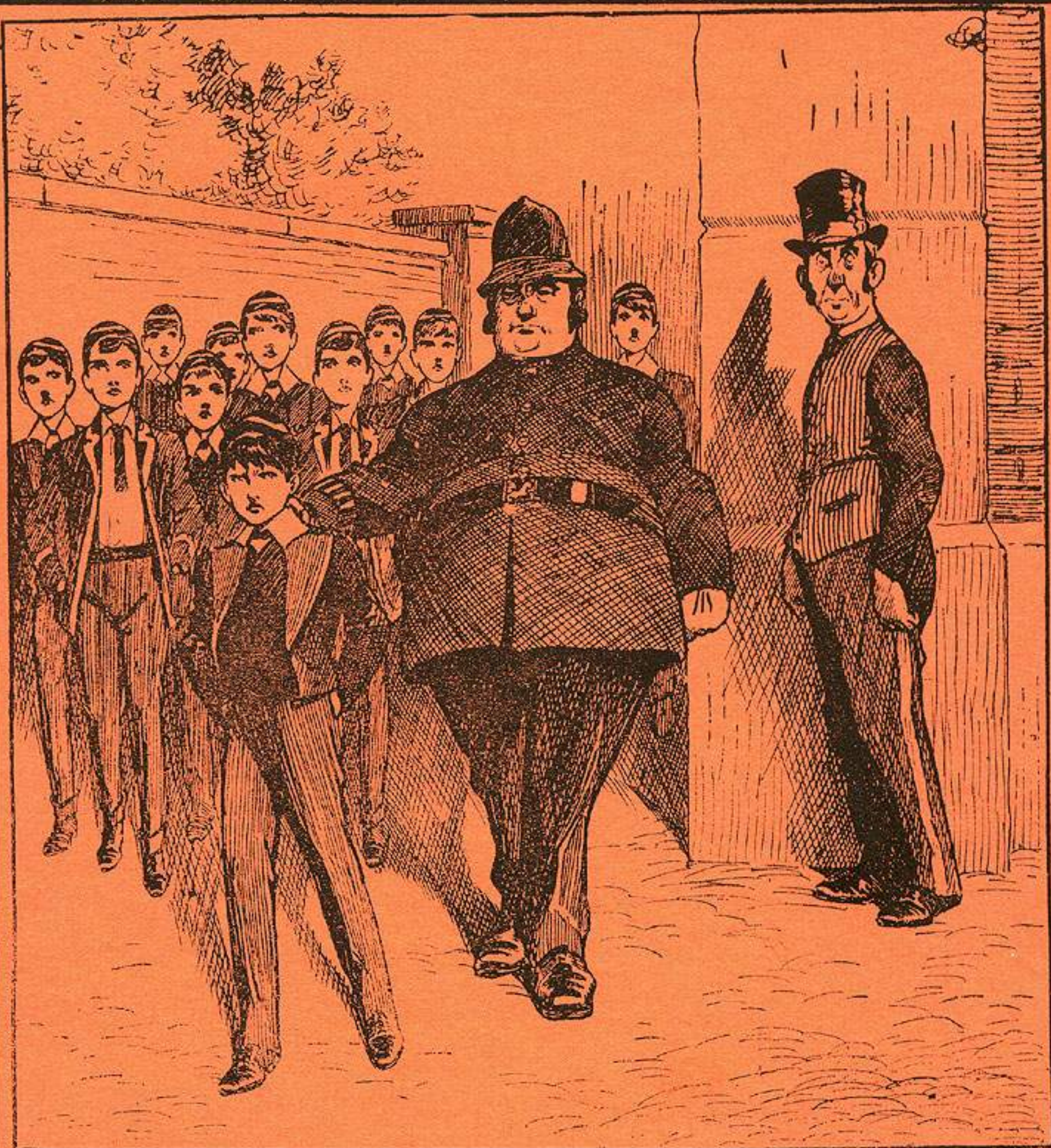
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A Long, Complete
Tale of Greyfriars
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Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Does Not Rejoice!

BULSTRODE of the Remove came down the passage with his hands thrust deep into his trousers' pockets, and his brows knitted together in a moody frown. Fags of the Second or Third Form, who saw Bulstrode coming, judiciously scattered out of his way. Bulstrode did not look in a good temper; and when Bulstrode was in a bad temper it was generally bad for small boys who got in his way. Bulstrode, it is true, had of late shown much improvement; but his reputation as a bully still clung to

him, and was likely to cling. Reputations of that sort are not easily lived down.

There was certainly something amiss with Bulstrode. His knitted brows told of unpleasant thoughts. He was thinking so deeply, in fact, that he was not looking where he was going, and he cannoned into Nugent minor, of the Second, at the corner of the passage.

He stopped, with a sharp exclamation.

Dicky Nugent jumped away, and backed against the wall, and put up his hands instinctively. Not that his hands would have been of much use against the burly Bulstrode, the biggest fellow in the Lower Fourth. But Dicky was fully expecting a ragging for running into Bulstrode, or, rather, being run into by him, and Dicky was "game."

"Hands off!" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode glared at him.

"Eh," he ejaculated. "What?"

"Keep your paws off me, that's all," said the fag, watching him warily. "You ran into me! Why couldn't you look where you were going?"

Bulstrode clenched his hand for a moment.

For that moment he was the old Bulstrode again, irritable and overbearing, more ready with a blow than with a word, and more ready with a savage word than a kind one.

But that was only for a moment. His hand unclenched, and his face cleared.

"It's all right, you young ass!" he said. "What are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid!" said Dicky Nugent promptly.

"I mean—I'm not going to touch you!"

"Well, it was your fault you ran into me," said Dicky Nugent. "But—ahem!—I suppose you're not ill, Bulstrode?"

"Ill!" said Bulstrode, staring. "Certainly not! Why?"

"Oh, I thought you might be," said Nugent minor; and he skipped away down the passage before Bulstrode could reply.

Bulstrode stared after him for some moments. Nugent's meaning dawned upon him then, and he flushed. Nugent minor meant that he must be ill because he had not bullied or ragged a fag who was at his mercy. It showed the estimation in which the fags of Greyfriars held him.

But it was only for a few seconds that the incident occupied Bulstrode's mind. He had other things to think of, and the moody frown returned to his face. He strode on, and ascended the stairs to the Remove passage. He did not stop at his own study, but went on to No. 2, and knocked at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out the cheery voice of Nugent major—Frank Nugent, of the Remove—the elder brother of Dicky.

Bulstrode opened the door.

There were two juniors in the study, Harry Wharton, formerly captain of the Remove—the position now held by Bulstrode—and Frank Nugent. Both of them were busy with their preparation.

Bulstrode looked at them.

"I suppose you haven't any time to spare, Wharton," he remarked.

Harry swung his chair round from the table.

"Certainly!" he said. "Anything up?"

"Yes!"

Bulstrode's expression was so gloomy and troubled that Frank Nugent also turned away from his work, and fixed his eyes curiously upon the bully of the Remove.

"Sorry!" said Wharton sincerely. "Sorry, Bulstrode! What is it—something wrong with the cricket?"

"Oh, no, it's not the cricket!"

"Chaps talking again about electing a new Form-captain?" asked Frank Nugent, with a grin.

Bulstrode grinned faintly.

"No, it's not that!"

"Row with the Upper Fourth——"

"No, no!"

"Well, what is it then?" said Harry Wharton, in wonder.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, perhaps!"

"Go ahead, then!"

Bulstrode hesitated.

Wharton and Nugent rose from their chairs. They could see that the captain of the Remove was deeply troubled in some way; but for the life of them they could not guess the cause. Lately, true, Bulstrode had been on bad terms with his people, owing to a misunderstanding while Mr. Bulstrode was visiting the school; but that had all been cleared up perfectly satisfactorily.

The way of a Form-captain was set with thorns, certainly; and Bulstrode was far from being a perfect character. Many of the Remove wanted Harry Wharton to be Form-captain again, and although Wharton had steadily refused to be nominated, Bulstrode's position was a little uncertain. But it could not be only that which brought such a deep frown of concern to the face of the burly Remove.

He had evidently come to Harry Wharton's study for counsel, but now he was there his tongue seemed tied.

The chums of the Remove waited for him to speak, but no words came. He shifted from one leg to another, and turned very red.

Nugent looked out of the window.

"Well?" said Wharton, at last.

"I'm in a rotten position!" said Bulstrode, with an effort.

"With the Form, do you mean?"

Bulstrode made a scornful gesture.

"Oh, no! A lot of them are yapping at me, just as they used to yap at you, and jawing about electing a new captain. I don't care if they do. It's not that!"

"No more trouble with your people, I hope?"

"Not exactly!"

"Then what is it?"

Bulstrode did not reply.

Nugent looked round from the window.

"Shall I get out of the room?" he asked. "I don't mind in the least, if it's anything private."

Bulstrode shook his head.

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"No—it's not that!"

"Sure? I don't mind in the least!"

"It's all right!"

"Very well!"

Frank drummed on the window-pane. Harry Wharton glanced at his books, but waited politely. He could not quite understand Bulstrode.

"Well, you see——" began Bulstrode at last.

"Yes?"

"I—I—I've got a brother——"

Frank Nugent laughed.

"So have I," he said. "So have lots of chaps. There's nothing particularly peculiar in that. Fellows have had brothers before, and no harm done."

"He's coming to Greyfriars!"

"Well, mine has come—and a troublesome little beggar he is!" said Nugent.

Bulstrode's expression was still gloomy.

"My minor is different from yours," he said, with a sigh. "I—I—well, Herbert isn't in the usual run of kids! He——" Bulstrode paused.

"Go on," said Harry.

"I don't know that I've got any right to jaw to you about it," said Bulstrode ruefully. "We've never been chums—in fact, very seldom on good terms. But——"

"That's all right, if I can help you in any way!"

"I don't know whether you can advise me. The fact is——" Bulstrode paused again, and then went on, with an effort: "The fact is, I don't see things in quite the same light now that I used to, and—and—well, Herbert is still the same old Herbert. We used to be as alike as two peas, but—but I think there will be a rift now."

Wharton nodded. He understood at last.

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, was one person; Bulstrode, the Form-captain—the fellow who was trying to do his duty—was quite another. And Bulstrode minor was a replica of the former of the two, that was clear.

"I've had a letter from Herbert," said Bulstrode. "He's coming to-day—he'll be here this evening. And—and here's his letter!"

Bulstrode handed a letter to Wharton.

"Do you want me to read this?" asked Harry.

"Please do!"

And Bulstrode stood with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a frowning wrinkle in his brow, while Harry Wharton read the letter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nice Boy!

HARRY WHARTON'S brows wrinkled over the letter from Herbert Bulstrode, till he was frowning almost as much as Bulstrode major himself. Nugent glanced at him curiously.

"Read it out," said Bulstrode, noticing Frank's glance.

Wharton nodded, and read out the letter.

"Dear George,"—it ran—"I'm coming to Greyfriars at last! I believe the governor mentioned it to you when he was down there for the cricket match last week."

"I'm glad I'm coming. I've been anxious to come ever since what you told me about your life there in the last vac. It's sickening at home—the mater always complaining about something, and the governor going for a fellow bald-headed if he finds him with a cigar, or even a cigarette."

"I dare say you will be able to teach me lots of things, but I think I can teach you some. I can beat Nobby Jim at billiards now—I ran out ten ahead of him at a hundred-up yesterday. I am going to bring a good supply of smokes to the school with me—in my box—as you mentioned that it was difficult to get them into the place. I shall have some cards in my box, too, and if there are some lively chaps in the Remove, we may be able to get up a game in the dorm. of a night. There might be some tin to be picked up that way, if some of your fellows are flush. I hope you are still on good terms with Vernon-Smith, the millionaire's son you told me about. A chap might make a good income out of a fellow like that."

"I'm looking forward to having a high old time at Greyfriars. It will be ripping to get away from home, and all this watching, and complaining, and grumbling. I'm jolly well going to have my fling, I can tell you!"

"See you to-night!—BERTIE."

Harry Wharton handed the letter back to Bulstrode.

He did not say anything. He did not feel equal to saying anything. Such a letter from a fag was enough to take his breath away.

Certainly there were some reckless fellows at Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, as he was called, was an arrant blackguard. In the Sixth there were black sheep, like Loder and Carne and Ionides. But in the lowest Forms—the Second and the Third—there certainly was no youth like Bulstrode



Bulstrode minor went down for the third time before Dicky Nugent's fists, and this time he did not rise. Then the form-room door opened and George Bulstrode looked in. "You young cads!" he shouted angrily. "What are you doing to my brother?" (See page 8.)

minor. The utter recklessness and want of principle in the letter shocked Wharton, though he was not easily shocked.

Bulstrode gave him a miserable grin.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he said. "Of course, this is in confidence. But what do you think of it?"

"Blessed if I know what to think of it," said Harry slowly.

"It's a bit rotten. How old is the kid?"

"Same age as Nugent's young brother."

"Then he'll go into the Second."

"Yes."

"He talks as if he were the worst old boulder in the Sixth," said Frank Nugent. "My young brother is a bit of a cough-drop, but I've never known him to play cards, and he doesn't smoke. This chap of yours seems to be a regular blighter."

"He's had bad companions, of course," said Bulstrode. "That's one reason why my father is going to send him to Greyfriars—to get him away from them. Unfortunately, I—I've not set him much of a good example. You fellows say I've changed a lot lately; well, I can see I've changed since last vac., when I used to jaw to Bertie about Greyfriars. I—I'm afraid I used to talk something in that strain myself; and as I'm captain of the Remove, and a big chap, he expects me to back him up and see him through. Only I can't back him up in this sort of thing."

"I should rather say not!" Wharton exclaimed.

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"Only, what's a chap to do?"

Bulstrode thrust the letter into his pocket, and his brows contracted again. The burly Removite was evidently in a worried and troubled state of mind.

"Blessed if I know!" said Harry slowly. "I think I should take him into my study as soon as he gets to Greyfriars, and give him a good talking to."

"Pitch it straight at him, like a Dutch uncle," said Nugent. "Straight from the shoulder, you know. My young brother was a regular young sweep when he came here, but he's settled down."

"That's true," Wharton remarked.

Bulstrode nodded gloomily. It was pretty clear that he did not anticipate much good from talking to his hopeful minor.

In the pause that ensued, a squeaky voice was audible at the door. Bulstrode had left it open behind him when he entered.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bulstrode swung round with an angry exclamation. Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, was blinking into the study through his big spectacles.

"You young rotter!" shouted Bulstrode furiously.

"You've been listening!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"You heard Wharton read the letter?"

"No, no, no!" roared Bunter, eyeing Bulstrode nervously,

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as the burly Removite clenched his hands. "I never heard a word! Besides, why shouldn't the chap smoke and have a little game in the dorm., if he likes? I'm sure I don't want to interfere with him."

Bulstrode snapped his teeth. It was clear that Bunter had been outside the door all the time the letter was being read aloud.

"You fat cad!" muttered Bulstrode savagely.

"I—I say, you fellows, I didn't hear a word, you know—honest Injun. I won't tell anybody about Bulstrode minor having smokes in his box, either."

"Oh, shut up, you stupid owl!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really! I—I looked in here to—to—"

"To spy!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Certainly not. I hope I should scorn to do so. I—I wanted to see Bulstrode, really. You see, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and as I know Bulstrode is in funds, I thought he might lend me something."

"Lend him a thick ear, Bulstrode," said Nugent.

Bulstrode did not need telling. He was already grasping at the fat junior. Bunter dodged into the doorway.

"Ow!" he roared. "Yow! Leggo! Yah!"

Bulstrode grasped him.

"Now, you fat sweep—"

"Yaroo! I—I—I'll tell Wingate about the smokes. Yow! I never heard a word. Oh, really! Ow! I say, if you make my glasses fall off, they may get broken—ow!—and then you'll have to pay for them. Yow! Yaroo!"

And with that last exclamation Billy Bunter went shooting through the doorway into the passage, with Bulstrode's heavy boot behind him.

Biff!

The fat junior bumped on the opposite wall, and rolled on the floor. He sat up and roared.

"Ow! Ow! Help!"

Bulstrode stepped out of the study. His foot was drawn back for another kick, but the Owl of the Remove did not wait for it.

With surprising agility, considering his weight, Billy Bunter leaped up, and bounded away down the passage.

Bulstrode delivered the kick, but his boot swept only the empty air.

Bunter was gone!

"The fat cad!" muttered Bulstrode, as he re-entered the study. "I suppose he heard all that was in the letter. Not that it makes much difference, as all the fellows will soon know what kind of chap Bertie is."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"This is rotten for you, Bulstrode," he said.

"Yes, you're right; only"—Bulstrode paused and coloured—"I'm not really thinking only of myself," he went on.

"What's to become of Herbert? He's expecting to have a high old time, as he calls it, here, but I can't let him. I shall have to stop him, and—"

"He'll come to see it in the proper light."

Bulstrode shook his head.

"He jolly well won't," he replied, with conviction. "If I try to change him, he'll hate me, that's all. I know him."

"Nice boy!" murmured Frank.

Bulstrode made a hopeless gesture.

"Well, I suppose it's no good bothering you with my troubles, anyway, Wharton," he said. "It's jolly good of you to listen to me at all, considering."

"I'll help you all I can," said Wharton quietly. "We might all of us take some notice of your minor, and give him a good time, as far as we can—teach him cricket, keep him occupied, and help him with his work, and give him something better to think about than smoking and playing cards in the dorm. Then he would gradually settle down to the collar."

Bulstrode gave him a grateful look.

"It's jolly good of you to suggest it," he said. "I think it's a good idea—the best that can be thought of—if you care to take the trouble."

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"Thanks, then—thanks! I'll buzz off now. I'm going to meet Herbert at the station. Thanks!"

And Bulstrode quitted the study. The chums of the Remove looked at one another, as Bulstrode's heavy footsteps died away down the passage.

"Well?" said Wharton.

"Well?" said Nugent.

"What do you think?"

"I think I never heard or read of such a horrid young blackguard," said Frank deliberately. "Bulstrode at his worst was never so bad as Bulstrode minor. Why, even Vernon-Smith couldn't have been such an utter blighter at his age. Bulstrode is going to have his hands full with the young beast, that's what I think. And it's really no bizney of ours."

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Harry Wharton nodded.

"But we'll help him all we can," he said.

And the chums of the Remove fell to their prep. again.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Minor!

"THIS Friardale?"

A youthful, discontented face was put out of the carriage window, as the train stopped by the long wooden platform in Friardale Station. A sleepy porter looked up only half awake, and nodded slowly.

"Yes, zur; this be Friardale."

Herbert Bulstrode opened the door of the carriage, and stepped out. He had a bag in his hand, a coat over his arm, and an umbrella under it.

"Look after my box," he said.

"Yes, zur."

A box was bumped out on the platform, and the train rolled on. Bulstrode minor looked up and down the half-lighted station. Night had fallen upon Friardale, and Friardale railway-station was never well lighted.

Bulstrode minor grunted in a dissatisfied way. He did not look as if he was ever quite satisfied. He was sturdy enough so far as build went, but it was pretty clear from his looks that his way of life had not been a healthy one.

His complexion was pale and sickly, and he walked with a stoop of the shoulders, and there was a general air of fatigue about him at the slightest exertion, which told that he was hopelessly out of condition.

Brown stains on his finger-nails told of the use of tobacco, and that gave away the secret of his short wind, his palpitating breath, and his sickly complexion.

Bulstrode minor was what he himself termed a "goer."

His "going" seemed chiefly to consist in making a fool of himself in as many ways as possible—any way being good enough, so long as it was reckless and unsportsmanlike.

Herbert Bulstrode grunted, and grunted again.

"I don't see why George couldn't have come to meet me," he growled.

"Hallo, Bertie!"

Bulstrode, of the Remove, came running up the platform. Herbert's face cleared, and he shook hands with his brother, as the latter stopped, panting.

"I was a bit late," Bulstrode explained, "I had to run. You've only just got in, haven't you?"

"About a minute," said Herbert.

"Good! Shove that box on the hack, porter, will you; and you can take this coat and umbrella and bag."

"I don't know about the bag," said Herbert, "it's got some things in—"

Bulstrode's face clouded.

"What things?" he asked shortly.

"Smokes, and other things."

"Well, it will be safe enough with the porter."

"Oh, all serene!"

Bulstrode minor yielded his possessions to the porter, and they were piled on a trolley. The trolley creaked away down the platform.

Bulstrode linked his arm in his brother's, and led him towards the station exit.

As they walked side by side, it could be seen that there was a great resemblance between the brothers, but the contrast between Bulstrode's healthy, ruddy face and the sickly countenance of his young brother was startling.

Yet there was no real ill-health in Herbert's looks; it was simply that he was utterly out of condition.

"Feel all right after your journey?" asked Bulstrode.

Herbert grunted.

"Oh, yes; well as I can expect."

"It won't take us long to get to the school."

Another grunt.

"I don't know that I'm in a hurry to get to the school," said Herbert. "I suppose you've got a pass out of gates to come and meet me?"

"Yes."

"Then you can stay out a bit longer if you like?" suggested Herbert. "You're not bound to go straight back to school, I suppose?"

Bulstrode hesitated.

"Well, I suppose not," he said.

"Then we won't go right in."

"But—" Bulstrode began.

"Look here, if your pass will allow you to stay out for a bit, let's stay out," said Herbert. "The things can be sent on to the school, and we can walk afterwards—after you have shown me round the town a bit."

Bulstrode was silent.

A few weeks before, perhaps, he would have assented cheerfully enough to his brother's proposition, and they would have gone "round the town" in a way that would have been very far from meeting with the approval of the Head of Greyfriars if he had known.

But things were different now. Only a few weeks had made a great change in George Bulstrode. The better side of his nature was uppermost—he was honestly striving to do his best, and to put the unpleasant past behind him.

It seemed as if Herbert had come to Greyfriars now to drag him back into the old ways—into his old habits when he was the associate of Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and the other black sheep of the Lower School.

Herbert looked at him sharply. "Well?" he said. "Don't you like the idea?" "I think we ought to go straight up to the school," said Bulstrode slowly.

"Why?" "The pass was given me by Wingate to come down to the station and meet you," Bulstrode explained. "If I stay out it will be rather taking an advantage of Wingate, don't you think?"

Herbert grunted. "I dare say it will. What does it matter?" "Well, it really amounts to this—that he's trusting me, and I shall be taking him in."

Herbert gave him another sharp look. There was clearly something about his major that puzzled him.

"I suppose you're not ill, George?" he asked. "Ill? No!"

"Then what's the matter with you?" "Nothing."

"You're not like yourself. You told me last vac. what jolly times I should have if I came to Greyfriars—yarns about little parties on the island, with card games and smokes, and so on. Now——"

Bulstrode flushed. "I dare say I talked a lot of rot," he said. "I'm sorry for it."

"Then you were only swanking—there was nothing in it?"

"I wasn't swanking, but——"

"But what?" exclaimed Herbert, sharply and irritably. "But things have changed a bit since then, Bertie. After all, it's a mug's game. What's the good of ruining one's health by smoking and keeping late hours, to say nothing of the risk of being expelled from the school?"

Herbert sneered. "Hang the risk! Are you turning preacher, then?"

"Oh, hang it, no—no! But——"

"Then let's have a walk round the town before we go in," said Herbert sulkily. "Hang it all, you don't have a minor come to the school every day!"

"Well, come on then!" said Bulstrode, shortly enough.

And Herbert's bag and umbrella and box being left in charge of the Friardale porter, to be sent on to Greyfriars College, the two brothers walked down the old High Street together.

There was a look of anticipation on Herbert's face, but George Bulstrode's brow was darkly clouded. The coming of his minor to Greyfriars meant nothing but trouble to him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Round the Town.

HERBERT glanced at his major several times. He could not quite make his brother out, but he realised that something had influenced Bulstrode in an unusual direction since the last time they had met. But that made no difference to Herbert. He was accustomed to having his own way, and he had little doubt that his major would soon "come round."

Bulstrode halted at the village tuckshop, the little establishment kept by Uncle Clegg. Uncle Clegg was a crusty old gentleman, but he was very pleased to see Bulstrode, who generally had money to spend. He bade the captain of the Remove good-evening in his least gruff tones.

Herbert looked round the little shop with a discontented air.

"What have we come in here for?" he asked.

There were plenty of things in the little shop to please a boyish eye. Jam tarts were there in abundance, and doughnuts, and all sorts of pastry; ginger-beer and lemonade, and ices and iced drinks, but Herbert apparently was not tempted by any of Uncle Clegg's stock.

"Well, this is the tuckshop," said Bulstrode. "I suppose you'd like to see it?"

"Well, I've seen it," said Herbert. "Let's get on."

"Wouldn't you like some tarts?"

"No."

"Aren't you hungry after your journey?"

"No. I had some grub in the train."

"These cream puffs——"

"I didn't come to Greyfriars to eat cream puffs," said Herbert sulkily. "For goodness' sake, let's get out of this stuffy shop!"

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NEXT TUESDAY: "BOB CHERRY IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER!" A Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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Uncle Clegg looked daggers across the counter. Herbert was already walking to the door, and his major followed him.

"Won't you have some ginger-pop, Bertie?"

"No, I won't!"

Bulstrode made a hopeless gesture, and followed his minor into the street. The High Street of Friardale was lighted up, and the moon was soaring high over the steeple of the old church.

Herbert stopped, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers' pockets, and a sulky frown upon his brows.

"Where are we going now?" he demanded.

"Oh, up the High Street," said Bulstrode.

"No more of those blessed pastrycooks, mind!"

"All right."

They walked up the High Street. Bulstrode stopped at the outfitter's, and pointed out where the boys of Greyfriars usually bought their cricket bats and fishing tackle. Herbert grunted.

Then they strolled round the church, and Bulstrode explained to his minor that part of it dated from the time of William Rufus—a piece of information which his minor received with a discourteous snort.

"For goodness' sake, come on!" Herbert exclaimed.

"Right-ho!"

They walked on.

"Where are we going now?"

"We'll have a look at the river, above the bridge," said Bulstrode. "It's very ripping seen by moonlight."

"What?"

"Painter chaps often come down here to paint it," Bulstrode said. "It's really a very taking sight."

Herbert halted, and stood facing his brother, his hands in his pockets, his eyes glittering under contracted brows.

"Are you mad?" he asked.

Bulstrode started.

"N-n-no!"

"I think you must be."

"Why? I——"

"What are we supposed to be doing now?" Herbert demanded.

"I'm showing you round the town," said Bulstrode innocently.

"Round the town!" almost shrieked Herbert. "Do you call this showing a chap round the town—taking him into pastrycooks' shops and round churches and graveyards?"

"I'm showing you the sights——"

"Hang the sights!"

"Well, if you don't want to see the sights, what's the good of going round the town?" asked the Remove captain.

Herbert snorted.

"I want to see something lively," he said. "Where's the Cross Keys?"

"It's on the border of the village, by Friardale Lane."

"Let's go there."

"We can't."

"Why not?"

"It's out of bounds."

"You've been there before, haven't you? You've told me so, at any rate."

"Ye-es."

"Wasn't it always out of bounds?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, if you've been there before when it's out of bounds, you can go there again when it's out of bounds," said Herbert. "Let's go."

Bulstrode did not move.

"Are you coming?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I can't, Bertie. Even if I went myself I couldn't take a kid of your age—it would be too rotten. Besides, what is there to see there? Only a set of fellows drinking and playing cards. It's rotten!"

Herbert's eyes glistened.

"Just what I want," he said.

"You see——"

"You promised me some fun when I came to Greyfriars. It was quite understood that I was to go to the Cross Keys with you."

"I'm afraid I—I said too much. The fact is, Bertie, things have altered a bit since then. I—I don't do that sort of thing now."

ANSWERS

"Rats! Are you trying to gammon me?"

"No, I'm not," said Bulstrode flushing. "I—I've thought better of some things, that's all."

Herbert gave a scoffing laugh.

"If you mean that, we may as well get to the school," he said.

"Very well."

And the brothers walked to Greyfriars. They did not exchange another word the whole of the way.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The New Boy in the School.

"YOUR minor come, Bulstrode?"

Harry Wharton asked the question as he met Bulstrode in the Remove passage.

Bulstrode nodded.

"Yes," he said.

"Where is he?"

"Oh, he's with Mr. Pyle now."

"The Second Form-master? He's going into the Second?"

"Yes."

"Then he'll have the inestimable pleasure of making the acquaintance of my young brother," said Frank Nugent, laughing.

Bulstrode's brow was gloomy.

"He won't do your young brother any good," he said.

Nugent made a grimace.

"Thanks for the warning. But——"

"He's a reckless young blighter," said Bulstrode. "I've got to stand by him, I suppose, because he's my brother. But——"

"But otherwise——"

"Otherwise, I'd wring his neck!"

And Bulstrode walked away glumly. Wharton and Nugent exchanged glances, and Frank smiled a little.

"It's a bit rough on Bulstrode, when he's turning over a new leaf," Frank remarked. "His young brother, I suppose, is his old self come back again."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"It looks like it," he said.

"Oh, I dare say he'll get licked into shape in time!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's have a look at the kid, and see what we can make of him."

"That's a good idea! I'd like to help Bulstrode if I can," said Harry.

And the chums of the Remove were in the passage outside Mr. Pyle's study when the new junior came out.

Bulstrode minor looked up and down the passage discontentedly. Apparently his interview with the Second Form-master had not been wholly satisfactory. He did not, of course, know Harry Wharton & Co. by sight; but they knew him at once by his resemblance to Bulstrode, and by the fact that he was a new fellow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Herbert looked at them.

"Hallo!" he said. "Can you tell me where the Second Form-room is?"

"Yes, rather! Come this way," said Harry Wharton.

"You're Bulstrode minor, I suppose?"

"I suppose I am," grunted Herbert.

"We're Form-fellows of Bulstrode's. All in the Remove—the Lower Fourth, you know," Harry Wharton explained.

"We're glad to see you."

"Are you?" said Herbert, looking at them suspiciously.

"Are you old friends of my major's?"

"Well, yes, in a way."

"I mean, are you friends he's made since he started this goody-goody bizney?" said Bulstrode minor.

"Nice boy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! We—we hadn't noticed the goody-goody bizney," said Nugent. "Bulstrode is a decent chap."

Bulstrode minor snorted.

"I came here expecting to have a good time," he said.

"I seem to be going to have nothing but preaching. I suppose they serve out tracts after brekker every morning?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's not quite so bad as that," he said. "But we expect a chap to be decent. Come along, and I'll show you the Second Form-room. Nugent's got a brother there, and he'll introduce you."

"Oh, all right!"

The reply was not gracious, but the chums of the Remove affected not to notice that. They felt a sincere desire to back Bulstrode up, and help him in the difficult problem of his young brother.

Herbert followed them to the Second Form-room. There was a peculiar smell proceeding from that room—a smell in which cooking herrings and burning toffee were tastefully mingled.

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Bulstrode minor sniffed emphatically.

"Anything wrong with the drains here?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No. The Second Form are having supper, that's all."

"Oh!"

Nugent flung open the door of the Form-room. Although the Second and Third Forms had the right to use the junior Common-room, they generally preferred their own Form-rooms, which they were allowed to use as they liked after lessons, excepting for the hour and a half devoted to evening preparation in the presence of their Form-master.

Prep. was over now, and the Second were free till bedtime, and they were enjoying their leisure in the way of fags.

Nugent minor was cooking herrings, impaled upon pens, at the Form-room fire—and there was a big fire, although the month was July, and the weather very hot. Gas-cookers were not provided in the Form-room, as Gatty had humorously remarked. So what was a fellow to do?

Gatty was occupied at the same fire, making toffee in a frying-pan. The frying-pan had been very imperfectly cleaned after its last using—and it had last been used for frying bloaters. This gave a very peculiar smell to the toffee, and probably imparted a peculiar flavour to it. Gatty was burning his toffee, too—a fact which he imputed loudly to Nugent minor's occupying too much room at the fire.

"Can't you keep those rotten herrings off a bit?" growled Gatty. "The smell of them will get into the toffee."

"They're not rotten," said Nugent minor indignantly. "I gave a penny for four—it was a bargain, off a hawker in the lane."

Gatty sniffed.

"Well, give a chap more room, then."

"Oh, rats! You won't be able to eat that toffee; you may as well throw it away at once."

"This toffee is jolly good——"

"More like a burnt brick than toffee, when you've finished, I think," said Nugent minor. "I recommend you to chuck it out of the window at once."

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Is that a new disinfectant you fags are trying here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gatty and Dicky Nugent at once suspended their own little dispute, to turn upon the Removites who had ventured into the domain sacred to the Second Form.

"What do you want?" snapped Gatty. "Buzz off!"

"Get out!" said Nugent minor.

"It's all right!" said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"We've brought you a new recruit. This is the Second Form-room, Bulstrode minor, and this is the Second Form."

The fags gathered round Bulstrode minor and looked at him.

Herbert was not troubled with shyness or diffidence. He returned the stares of the fags with a stare and a sniff.

"You can keep him," said Dicky Nugent.

"Bury him if you like," said Myers.

"Oh, this is the Second Form-room, is it?" said Bulstrode minor. "Where's my study?"

"Your what?" demanded the three Removites, with one voice.

"My study? My major has a study, I believe?"

"My dear kid, fags in the Second don't have studies," said Harry Wharton kindly enough. "You do your prep. here, under old Pyle's eagle eye, and you have a locker to keep your props in."

"Oh, I see! It's rather rotten, not having a study."

"Better speak to the Head about it," Bob Cherry suggested. "He may turn out of his own study and let you have that when he knows what an important chap you are."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you cheeky young bounder, if you say 'rats' to me——" began Bob Cherry, growing red in the face.

"Rats!" said Herbert.

Bob made a step towards him.

Harry Wharton caught him by the wrist and jerked him away. Bob turned on him wrathfully.

"What the——"

"Cheese it, Bob! Don't go for him."

"But the cheeky young——"

"Never mind, let him alone."

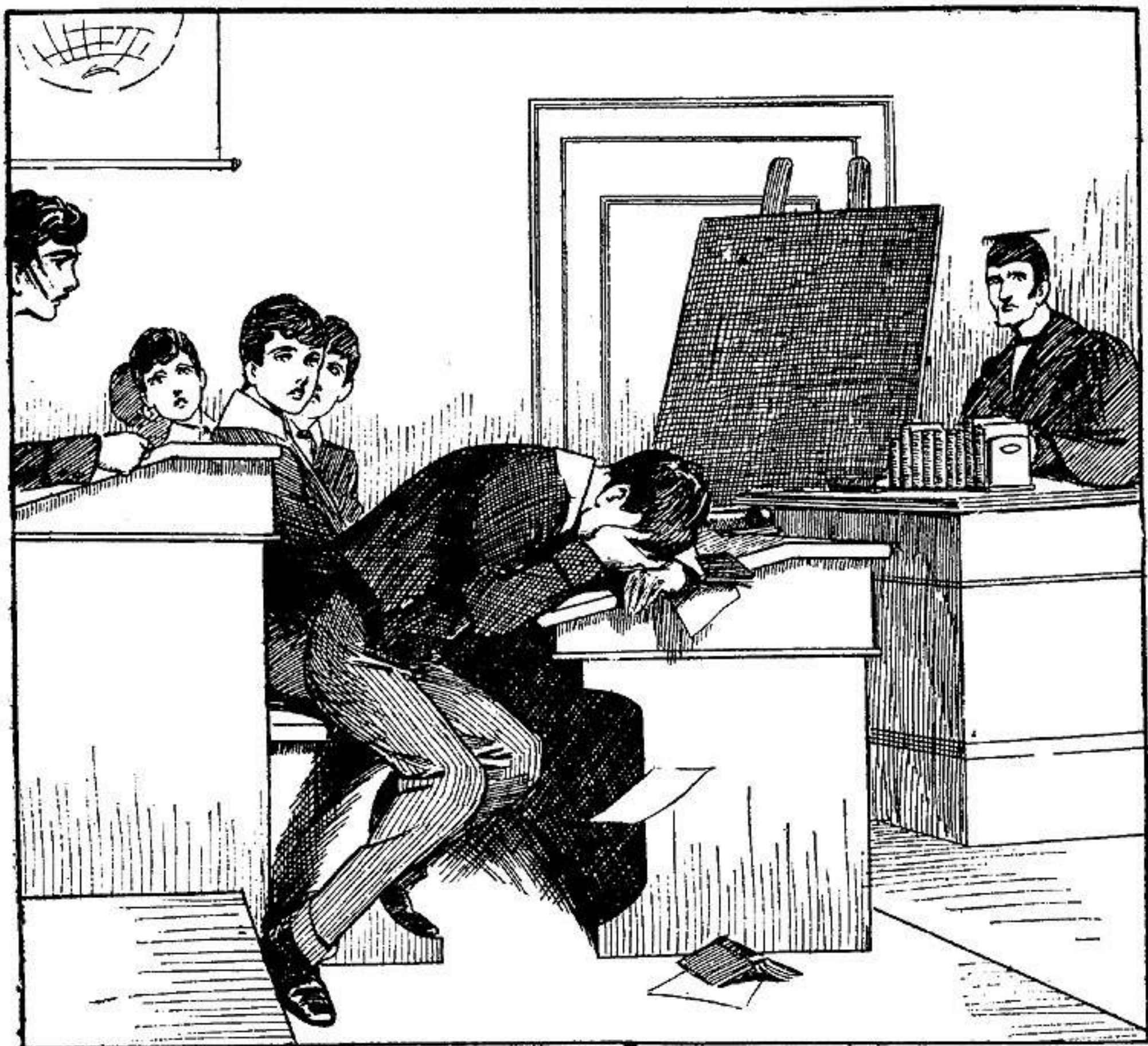
"He ought to have a lesson——"

"I dare say he'll get one in time."

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh. His anger never lasted long.

"Oh, all serene!" he exclaimed. "Let's buzz off! I don't think I could stand this smell much longer, anyway."

And the chums of the Remove quitted the room, leaving the new fag alone with the Second Form.



The burly Removite tried to construe but suddenly laid down his book, and covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Licked.

THE Second-Formers had gathered curiously round Bulstrode minor. They wanted to look at the new boy, and to know all about him. That was only natural. Their looks were not very favourable to the new boy. Bulstrode minor had a dogged, offensive air that did not propitiate people in his favour, and there was a prejudice against him even before he spoke. Bulstrode major had often made things rough for the Second-Formers; and they were not inclined to like his minor. Indeed, many of them thought it an excellent idea to take it out of Bulstrode minor for the faults of Bulstrode major—which was not very just, but probably very human.

And Herbert's manner was not the manner to disarm dislike. He looked up and down round the Form-room, with a sniffing, discontented air.

"Perhaps you don't like the place?" Myers suggested, with a dangerous look in his eyes.

"That I jolly well don't!" said Herbert. "I want a study to myself."

"Cheeky cad!"

"I don't see why I should be penned up here in a crowd with you kids," said the new junior sulkily.

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"My hat!"

"The cheek!"

"The cad!"

"Listen to him!"

"I suppose I've got to put up with it," said Herbert sulkily. "I suppose it can't be helped, as I'm here."

The fags looked at one another with gleaming eyes.

New boys had all sorts of manners and customs, true, and many sorts of new boys had arrived at Greyfriars since that ancient foundation had a local habitation and a name. But surely no new boy had ever had the temerity to venture among a crowd of fags, already hostile, and express his opinions in that way before.

And the curious part of it was that Herbert Bulstrode seemed to have no idea that he was in danger of "getting it in the neck," as Myers put it.

He sniffed round him like a discontented dog, blind to the fact that the fags were already almost at boiling-point.

"Is there anything we can do to make things nicer for you?" asked Dicky Nugent, adopting a manner of heavy sarcasm which was completely lost upon the new junior.

"Yes—throw those beastly herrings out of the window!"

Nugent minor jumped.

"What?" he roared.

"You're making the place smell sickening."

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"W-w-what?"

"Well, he's quite right," said Gatty, with a grin. "But the cheek—"

"You're no better with that beastly toffee," said Herbert.

"Chuck it away!"

"Hey?" roared Gatty.

"Blessed if I can stand the smell of it!" said Herbert.

"Look here, chuck it away!"

"What?"

"If you don't, I'll jolly soon chuck it away for you!" said Herbert.

Gatty looked at him dazedly.

"I suppose I'm dreaming," he said at last.

"He's a chip of the old block," said Nugent minor, with a grin. "It's as good as having Bulstrode in the Second—Bulstrode in his palmy days, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The worm!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Herbert Bulstrode. "Shut up, for goodness' sake! Look here, you can throw those rotten herrings away, or take them out of the room."

Nugent minor gasped.

"I suppose I'm dreaming, too," he said.

"Are you going to do it?"

"Eh?"

"I tell you I can't stand the smell of them," said Herbert irritably. "I'm not accustomed to an atmosphere of this sort, I can tell you."

Nugent minor looked at him.

"No," he said very quietly, "I'm not going to throw them away, or take them away. I'm going to cook them."

"You're not!"

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am."

"Oh, he's mad!" said Myers. "He must be fairly off his rocky rocker."

"Yes, rather!"

"Bump him!"

"Frog's march him!"

"Squash him!"

The voices of the angry fags rose to a roar, and there was a general movement towards Bulstrode minor.

He glared round at them savagely.

"You'd better keep your paws off me!" he exclaimed.

"Hold on!" said Nugent minor, very blandly. Dicky was always very bland when he was very dangerous. "Hold on! He's going to stop me cooking these giddy warriors. Let him!"

The fags drew back.

Although the Second Form did not formally elect a Form-captain, like the higher Forms, they generally had a leader, and Nugent minor was the acknowledged leader of the Form at this time.

The fags were quite content to leave the chastisement of the insolent new-comer in the capable hands of Dicky Nugent.

Dicky turned to his herrings, and pushed them a little closer to the fire. They really did not need it, for they were half-burnt already. But Dicky Nugent was thinking less of the herrings than of the threat made by the new junior.

Herbert's eyes glared.

He made a step forward, and thrust out his foot, and kicked the herrings and the pens they were impaled upon into the grate.

There was a perfect yell of wrath from Dicky Nugent.

"You utter worm!" he roared.

"I told you I would. Ow!"

Biff!

Nugent's hard knuckles caught the new fag upon the nose, and he went over backwards with a crash to the floor. The fags yelled.

"Hurrah!"

"Give him another!"

"Lick him!"

"Squash the cad!"

"Go it!"

Bulstrode minor sat up dazedly. Evidently he had not expected that retaliation for his high-handed action.

"Ow!" he ejaculated.

Nugent minor was tearing off his jacket, and tossing it excitedly to Gatty. He pushed up his cuffs, and fairly danced round the new junior, as he sat gasping on the floor.

"Get up!" he roared. "Get up!"

"Ow! Wow!"

"Get up, and have some more!"

And the fags roared in chorus.

"Get up! Gerrup! Yah!"

Herbert Bulstrode staggered to his feet. He was flushed with rage, and his hands were convulsively clenched. Bully, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 178.

as far as he was able, he certainly was, but he did not lack courage.

He rushed right at the leader of the Second.

"You hound!" he roared.

Biff, biff, biff!

Left and right, and then left again, Nugent minor let him have it, and Herbert rolled over on the floor for a second time.

"Yah! Ow! Oh!"

Nugent minor brandished his fists.

"Yah! Gerrup! Yah!" he roared.

"Go it, Dicky!"

"Smash the cad!"

"Squash him!"

Up jumped Bulstrode minor again. Nugent gave him time to get upon his feet, and then went for him. They crashed upon one another hammer and tongs, and for three or four minutes they were pommelling wildly, and looked like a curious network of arms and legs and flaming faces.

Then Bulstrode minor went down for the third time, with a crash that seemed to shake the floor of the Form-room.

This time he did not rise.

Dicky Nugent stood gasping and panting, but quite ready to go on, but his opponent did not come up to the scratch. Bulstrode minor was done.

The fags howled with glee.

"Licked!"

The Form-room door opened, and George Bulstrode looked in. The captain of the Remove had come to look for his minor, but he had not expected to find him like this.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

GEORGE BULSTRODE stopped in the doorway, looking in.

"Licked!" roared the fags.

"Serve him right!"

"Hurrah!"

Nugent minor mopped his streaming face with a handkerchief. He was wet with perspiration, and there was a liberal trickle of crimson from his nose.

"Ask him if he wants any more," he said.

Gatty stooped over Herbert.

"Want any more?" he asked.

"Ow!"

"He's done!"

"Gruh!"

"Done to a turn!" said Myers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young cads, what are you doing to my brother?" shouted Bulstrode angrily, striding into the room.

The Second-Formers turned upon him fiercely enough.

Bulstrode major might be a terror to fags in the Close or in the passages, but in their own Form-room, strong in numbers, they would not have been bullied by half a dozen Bulstrodes.

He ran to the side of his fallen minor, and picked him up. Herbert was dazed and helpless, and he leaned heavily upon his brother's arm.

"Who did this?" shouted Bulstrode.

He was quite the old Bulstrode again for the moment—the bully of the Remove, the overbearing "boulder" whom everybody had disliked or feared.

Nugent minor stopped mopping his perspiring face for a moment.

"I did it," he replied coolly.

"You—you young hound!"

"Yes, and I'll do it again if I have any more of his cheek," said Nugent minor. "We don't allow new-comers to swank in the Second Form."

"No fear!" said Gatty.

"Smash him!" muttered Herbert. "Smash him! Go for the cad, George! Smash him!"

He dragged himself from his brother's arm, his face flaming with rage and spite. But Bulstrode major did not need urging on.

He ran straight at Nugent minor.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Gatty, getting between them.

"Chuck it! Oh!"

Gatty was swept off his feet by a furious back-hander, and he went sprawling on the floor of the Form-room.

"Yaroo!" he roared.

There was a resentful yell from the fags.

"Go for the Remove cad!"

"Buzz him out!"

"Down him!"

Bulstrode had grasped Nugent minor. Dicky struggled fiercely, but his struggles would not have been of much use against the burly Bulstrode, had not help been at hand.

But there was plenty of help to be had. The Second Form

were not disposed to stand by and see their leader handled by a fellow in the Remove.

They rushed upon Bulstrode as one man—or, more correctly, as one fag.

The bully of the Remove hit out savagely.

"Take that! Han's off, you young cads! I— Oh!"

Bulstrode was swept off his feet by the rush of the fags.

He went rolling on the floor, dragging down half a dozen of the fags with him, and a dozen more piled on him and pinned him down.

The bully of the Remove almost disappeared under a crowd of excited, yelling youngsters.

There was pandemonium, to judge by the noise, in the Second Form-room. Seldom had it witnessed such a terrific tussle.

Bulstrode was burly and powerful, and his blood was up. He struggled and fought, hitting his hardest, and the fags had a rough time of it.

But numbers told.

Bulstrode was held down by innumerable hands, and rolled over and bumped upon the floor till he roared with pain.

Herbert ran to his aid. But half a dozen pairs of hands grasped Herbert, and he was rolled over and bumped too.

"Hold that cad!" gasped Nugent minor, staggering to his feet. "He wanted to chuck my herrings away; he shall take them away himself."

Dicky picked up the half-cold herrings from the ashes, and plastered them upon Herbert's face, and jammed them down his collar.

The fags roared with laughter, and Herbert roared with rage and disgust; but he had all the herrings before Dicky Nugent desisted.

"The other beast may as well have my toffee," said Gatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give it him!"

Gatty gave it him!

The toffee was half cold, but liquid enough for the purpose. Gatty smeared it over Bulstrode's face, and jammed it into his hair.

"Oh!" gasped Bulstrode. "Yah! Oh! Stop! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two Bulstrodes presented a shocking picture by this time.

"Now kick them out!" gasped Gatty.

"Hurrah! Kick 'em out—both of 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The brothers were hauled and shoved to the door.

Nugent minor held it open, and the Bulstrodes, major and minor, were hurled forth into the flagged passage.

There was a shout of laughter as they came whirling out. The noise in the Second Form-room had attracted a crowd of fellows.

"Faith," exclaimed Micky Desmond, of the Remove, "and phwat are they intirely? Sure, it's the wild man from Borneo and his minor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! I've paid a tanner to see less funny things at a circus!" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth. "Who are they? What are they?"

"Cave! Here comes Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was coming down the passage, with an angry face, and in so great a hurry that his gown was trailing behind him in the breeze he made in his rapid progress.

But Bulstrode did not see him.

Bulstrode was blind to everything—excepting the grinning faces crammed in the doorway of the Second Form-room.

He struggled to his feet, and charged at the fags madly.

"Bulstrode!"

But Bulstrode did not hear.

Right at the fags he rushed—and they met him with a yell, and he was hurled forth into the passage again.

He landed gasping at Mr. Quelch's feet, and the Remove-master just saved himself in time from falling over him.

"Bulstrode!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

The crowd in the passage melted away.

Bulstrode sat up dazedly, and blinked at his Form-master through matted hair and clinging toffee.

"Ow! Yes, sir! Oh!"

"What does this mean, Bulstrode?"

"Ow!"

"Nugent minor! What—"

"He came here bullying us," said Nugent minor stoutly.

"We chucked him out!"

"Ahem! Bulstrode, you had no right in the Second Form-room."

"Ow!"

"Take a hundred lines, Bulstrode, for entering the Form-room and causing a disturbance there."

"Ow!"

"Be off with you at once, sir, and get yourself cleaned."

"Ow!"

"Do you hear me?" shouted Mr. Quelch.

Bulstrode staggered away.

Mr. Quelch turned a very expressive look upon Herbert, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 178.

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who was frantically trying to extract the herrings from his collar.

"If you belonged to my Form, I should have something to say to you, too," he said sternly. "As it is, I advise you to clean yourself also."

And the new fag followed his brother.

"Keep order here, and less noise," said Mr. Quelch, "or I shall ask your Form-master to look into the matter."

"Yes, sir," said Nugent minor meekly.

Mr. Quelch rustled away.

The fags of the Second turned into their Form-room again, grinning. Nugent minor had lost his herrings, and Gatty his toffee, and most of the fags had some mark to show of the combat. But they did not care. They had scored over the bully of the Remove, and they had shown the new fag, as Gatty said, what was what. And they were content.

"And that young cad will have a lively time in the Second, if he doesn't change his manners and customs a bit," Dicky Nugent said.

In which opinion all the Second Form heartily concurred.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Bad Beginning.

"GROO!"

"Ow!"

"Gerrooh!"

"Wr-r-r-r-r!"

Such were the remarks that Bulstrode major and Bulstrode minor made, in the bath-room, as they cleaned themselves after their unpleasant experience in the Second Form-room.

They had dragged off their clothes, and were scrubbing themselves under hot water, but it was not easy to get rid of the toffee and the herrings.

The flavour of the latter clung to Bulstrode minor in the most affectionate way.

Bulstrode major looked at his brother through a cloud of steam and a foam of soap-lather.

"You young ass!" he growled.

Bulstrode minor snorted.

"You silly chump!" he replied.

"What did you want to get into a row in the Second Form for, on your first blessed day at the school?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"Nice state I've got into, helping you out, haven't I?" growled Bulstrode.

"Oh, rats!"

"I've a jolly good mind to——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Bulstrode clenched his hand and made a step towards his minor.

Herbert looked at him with sullen defiance, grasping a scrubbing-brush.

"You'd better not touch me!" he snarled.

Bulstrode swallowed his rage with an effort. The late occurrences seemed to have soured his temper, and made him much more like the old Bulstrode—the bully of the Remove, and the terror of the fags.

But he was still trying to be patient with his brother. He had determined from the first that whatever Herbert did, he would stand by him and help him. But Herbert was a difficult person to help.

"Well, don't jaw me, Bertie," said Bulstrode, with an effort. "Don't jaw me, and—and I'll do all I can for you."

"I don't want you to do anything for me," said Herbert sullenly. "You've not kept your word to me. I was to have a jolly time when I came to Greyfriars."

"So you may, if you set about it the right way," said Bulstrode. "Getting the backs of your own Form up against you isn't the way."

"Oh, hang the Form!"

"You've got to live among them, and work among them," said Bulstrode. "You can't get on if they're all against you."

"Hang them, I say!"

Bulstrode said no more.

He finished his cleaning, and quitted the bath-room, going upstairs collarless to get some clean linen.

It occupied his minor much longer to get rid of the traces of the herrings, and even when he had finished, there was a strong fishy flavour about him.

It was close upon bedtime now, and the juniors were called in to their supper of bread and cheese in the dining-room—such of them as wanted supper. Herbert came into contact with the Second Form again at the table.

They grinned when he came in; but in the presence of the masters it was impossible to do more than grin.

Herbert's face showed very plain signs of his fistical encounter with Nugent minor. His nose was swollen on one

side, and one of his eyes had a dark circle round it, growing darker.

"We'll give the cad a high old time in the dorm. to-night," said Myers.

But Dicky Nugent shook his head.

"Let him alone," he said.

"But look here—"

"He's had enough," said Dicky, with a compassionate glance at the disfigured, sullen face. "Let him alone, unless he begins again."

"I don't think he's likely to do that," said Gatty.

And Gatty was right. Bulstrode minor was sullen and sulky, but he did not pursue his too candid way of speech. If the Second Form dormitory dissatisfied him when he saw it, he did not say so. He was learning manners, if not contentment, already.

His box had been delivered at the school, but it was not yet unpacked, or even uncorded. Bulstrode minor cut the cord, and opened the box.

Several of the fags drew round him with somewhat less hostile expressions upon their faces.

Bulstrode was known to have money, and it was probable that his minor had come to the school with a well-stocked box, and if he intended to stand a dormitory feed to the Second they were prepared to tolerate him—for the time, at least.

But Bulstrode minor was not thinking of anything of the sort.

There was no feed in the box—nothing in the shape of cakes and jam and currant-wine—nothing to eat, and nothing to drink.

Herbert Bulstrode's refreshments were of a different order. Among the things he unpacked from the box was a packet carefully wrapped in tissue-paper; but through the tissue the juniors could see that it was a cigarette-box.

"Smokes, by gum!" Gatty exclaimed.

Bulstrode minor looked up with a sneer upon his face.

"Well, what about it?" he exclaimed.

"So you smoke, do you?" said Dicky Nugent.

"Yes, I do."

"You'd better not smoke here."

"Why not?"

"Because the prefects will catch you and make things warm for you, that's all."

"Hang the prefects!"

Dicky Nugent chuckled.

"With pleasure," he replied. "But it can't be done. You see, fags don't rule the roost in a public school."

"I shall do as I like."

"Very well—start smoking, and see when Pyle comes in."

Herbert's eyes gleamed. He was tempted to do so; but even his "nerve" was not equal to that.

He went on sullenly unpacking his box.

"Hallo! Pink paper," said Myers. "Sporting paper—eh? So we bet on races, do we, as well as smoke?"

"Suppose I do?"

"Well, in that case, I should say you're a precious young blackguard, that's all."

"Yes, rather!"

"The chap's an unspeakable cad," said Smith minimus. "Let him alone! He's not fit to talk to!"

"Yes, let me alone—that's all I want," growled Bulstrode minor. "I don't want to have anything to say to you."

"Look out—here's Pyle!"

Mr. Pyle, the master of the Second Form, entered the dormitory to see lights out. Nugent minor had good-naturedly called out the warning; but it was too late to be of service to Herbert Bulstrode.

He had the cigarette-box in his hand, and the pink paper was lying on the bed beside his box.

Mr. Pyle jumped as he saw it.

"What—what is this?" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder.

Herbert made a grasp at the paper to put it out of sight. But the Form-master caught it from his hand.

"Good heavens, boy, does this belong to you?"

Herbert was silent.

"Bulstrode minor, does this belong to you?"

"Yes," said Herbert sullenly.

"You—you have a sporting paper in your possession! You dare to bring such a paper into this school!" thundered the Form-master.

Herbert bit his lip, and was silent.

"And that box," exclaimed Mr. Pyle—"what is in that?"

Herbert did not reply.

"I can see that it is a cigarette-box," said Mr. Pyle. "But I hesitate to believe, Bulstrode minor, that it contains cigarettes. Open it!"

Herbert opened the box.

Cigarettes with gold tips were packed closely in it—a hundred of them. Mr. Pyle stared at them as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

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"Boy!" he gasped, "is it possible that you smoke—that you smoke to this extent—you, a mere lad in the Second Form?"

"I smoke at home!" said Herbert sulkily.

"Does your father permit it?"

Herbert did not answer.

"I understand, then, that you have formed this habit—a disgusting habit in a young boy—without your father's knowledge or consent!"

No reply.

"Well," said Mr. Pyle, "with what you have done before coming to Greyfriars I have nothing to do. But boys here are not allowed to smoke, and they are severely punished when found to have tobacco in their possession!"

Herbert breathed hard through his nose, but said nothing.

"Give me that box!"

"It's mine!"

"What?"

"It's mine!" said Herbert sullenly. "I bought it and paid for it. It's mine!"

"Hand it to me at once!" shouted Mr. Pyle.

He took the box from the fag's hand.

"I shall destroy these cigarettes!" said Mr. Pyle. "I shall not punish you for having them in your possession, as you are apparently in ignorance of the rules of this school. But such ignorance will not be allowed as an excuse in the future. Remember that, Bulstrode minor!"

The new junior stood gnawing his under lip without speaking.

"If you are found with tobacco, or with racing papers, in your possession again, you will be caned severely!" said Mr. Pyle. "Enough now—go to bed!"

The Second Form turned in.

Mr. Pyle extinguished the lights, and retired from the dormitory, taking with him the cigarettes and the racing paper—both of which he duly burnt in the grate in his own room.

There was a volleying of chatter in the Second Form dormitory until the boys dropped off to sleep, one by one.

But Herbert Bulstrode did not take part in it. He lay with sullen brows, and savage eyes, staring into the darkness of the dormitory—with bitterness, and hatred, and all uncharitableness in his heart—wide awake, and thinking angry, bitter thoughts long after the rest of the dormitory slept.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Merely a Loan.

HARRY WHARTON looked out for Bulstrode's minor the next morning. He was curious to know how the new fag had fared in the Second Form; and he was a little concerned for Herbert, on Bulstrode's account.

He found Bulstrode minor in the Close, with his hands in his pockets, quite alone, and with a sulky expression upon his face.

Wharton tapped him cheerily upon the shoulder.

"Hullo!" he said, pleasantly enough. "How are you getting on in the Second, kid?"

Herbert looked at him sulkily.

"Rotten!" he said.

"I'm sorry!"

"You needn't be—it's no bizney of yours, that I know of!"

Harry Wharton controlled his temper with an effort. He did not want to lick Bulstrode minor; but he was very much tempted to do so at that moment.

"You look as though you've been through it," he said quietly. "I hope you'll pull with the other chaps in time. You'll find Nugent minor a decent fellow."

Herbert's eyes glinted savagely.

"I owe this to Nugent minor!" he said, passing his hand over his bruised face. "I sha'n't forget it, either!"

"You've been fighting with him?"

"Yes!"

"It was a fair fight, I suppose?"

"Yes!"

"And he licked you, did he?"

"Yes!" growled Herbert. "Hang him! I'll make him smart for it yet, somehow!"

Wharton looked at him sternly.

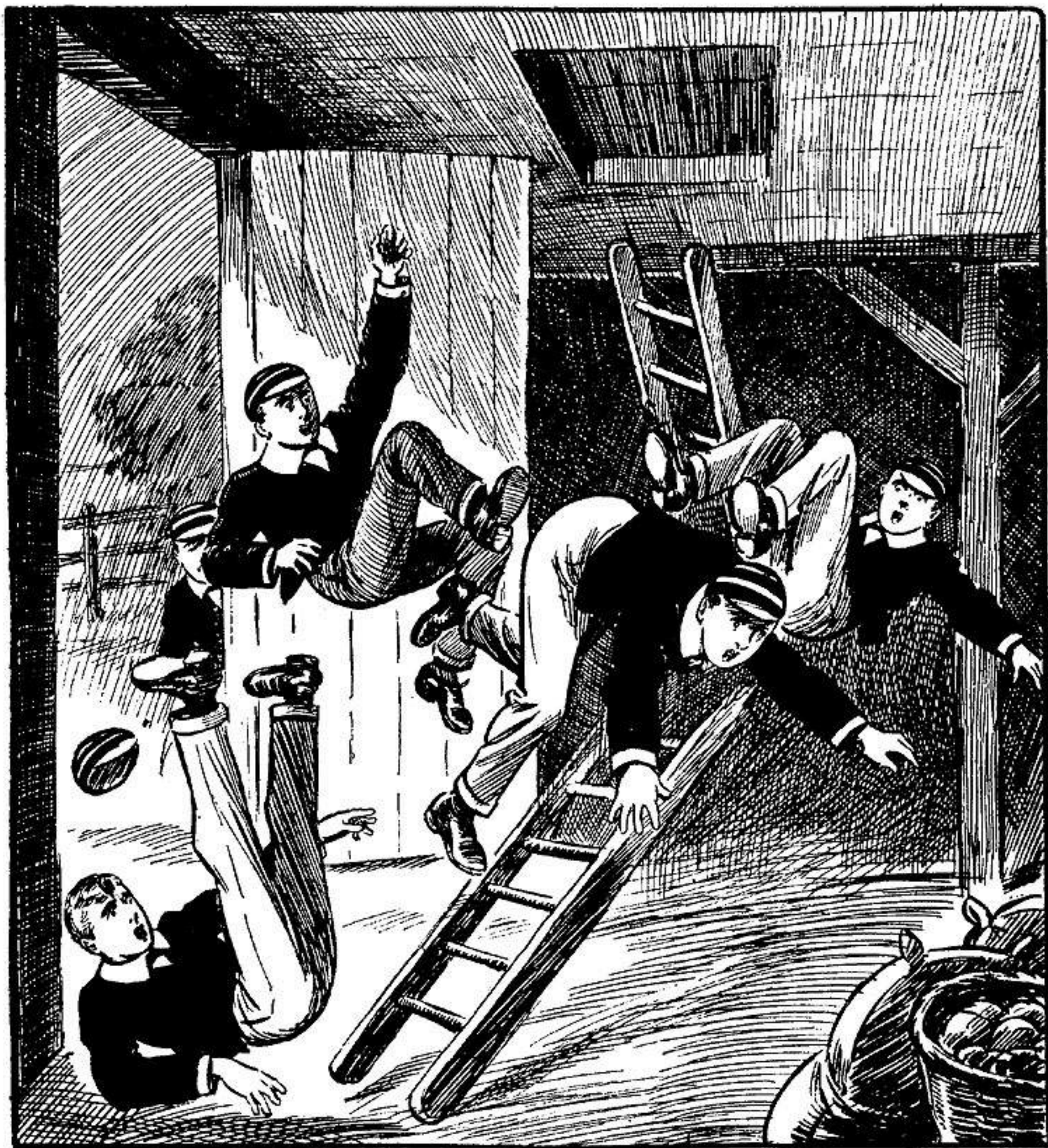
"My advice to you is not to bear malice," he said. "If it was a fair fight, what have you got to complain about? Nugent minor is decent, and he'll treat you well if you are decent to him. Don't bear malice, that's my advice!"

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it!"

Harry Wharton turned and walked away. He could not trust himself near Bulstrode minor any longer; he felt that he could not have kept his hands off him.

Bulstrode minor looked after him with a sullen brow.

He was miserable enough at the school, and the fact that he had brought it upon himself—even if he would have admitted that—was no comfort.



"Now then, all together!" shouted Tom Merry. The juniors crowded on the ladder gave a simultaneous heave. "Creak, Crash!" But it was not the trapdoor that gave way—it was the ladder, and the four juniors bumped to the floor of the barn with wild yells! (An amusing incident in the splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Stowaway of St. Jim's," by Martin Clifford, contained in this week's "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

The amusements that he had promised himself, with his brother's assistance, did not seem to be forthcoming—and his discontent and bad temper had brought general dislike and hostility upon him.

He was not likely to feel very happy under the circumstances.

The bell rang for classes, and Herbert turned sullenly towards the House. A fat junior in spectacles joined him, with an agreeable grin.

Herbert looked at him.

"You're Bulstrode minor, ain't you?" asked the fat youth.

"Yes!" growled Herbert.

"I'm Bunter minor!"

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"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes. I'm Billy Bunter's young brother," Sammy Bunter explained. "You see, we've both got majors in the Remove—so has young Nugent."

"Oh!"

Herbert's dry reply showed that he was not in the slightest degree interested in either Sammy Bunter or Billy Bunter—in either Nugent major or Nugent minor.

But Sammy was not easily rebuffed.

"You see, I rather like you," he explained. "I saw you take the smokes out of your box in the dorm. last night, and I thought you were just the chap I should like."

"Oh!"

NEXT TUESDAY: "BOB CHERRY IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER!" A Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"I said to myself that you were just the chum for me," said Sammy Bunter confidentially. "Look here, if you want some more smokes, I'll get them for you!"

Herbert's face brightened a little.

"Well, I do!" he said.

"Good!"

"I'm not going to be stopped smoking if I choose to smoke," said Herbert. "If I can't do it openly, I'll do it secretly!"

"Bravo!" said Sammy admiringly. "That's what I call courage, you know, I do really. I say, shall I get in the smokes for you?"

"Can you?" asked Herbert.

"Oh, quite easily," said Sammy, blinking at Herbert through his big glasses, in a way very like his elder brother's. "You give me the money, and I'll get them for you. How many do you want?"

"A bob's worth!" said Herbert.

"Give me the bob, then."

"Sure you can do it?" asked Herbert dubiously. "I hear that the prefects keep a sharp eye on fellows here."

Sammy chuckled.

"You can trust me to dodge the prefects," he said. "I often get in smokes for fellows in the Upper Forms—Loder, and Carne, and Ionides in the Sixth."

"Oh, all right!"

Herbert placed the shilling in Bunter minor's fat hand.

Sammy slipped it into his pocket. They went into the Form-room together.

Mr. Pyle had a sharp eye upon Bulstrode minor that morning.

The new boy had made a very bad impression upon him, naturally, and he was not inclined to be easy with Herbert. And Herbert was not a pleasing pupil.

He was careless and slovenly in his work, and had an irritating way of appearing to regard it as a matter of no great importance.

Naturally enough, Mr. Pyle was not gratified.

During the morning Herbert earned a caning and two impositions, and when the Form was dismissed after morning lessons, Herbert quitted the class-room in a savage and sulky temper.

He looked round for Sammy Bunter, the only fellow in the Form with whom he was on speaking terms so far.

Bunter minor had disappeared.

"Have you seen Bunter minor?" Herbert asked, addressing Bob Cherry, of the Remove, whom he met in the Close.

Bob Cherry jerked his thumb in the direction of the school tuckshop.

"He's there!" he said.

Herbert walked away without even a "Thank you!" Bob Cherry looked after him with a rather droll expression.

Bunter minor was standing at the counter of the little tuckshop when Herbert found him. He was eating ices.

"Where are those smokes?" asked Herbert.

Sammy blinked at him through his spectacles.

"Smokes!" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes. I gave you a shilling to get them," said Herbert.

"Oh!" said Sammy, as if suddenly recollecting. "You mean that shilling you lent me this morning!"

Herbert stared at him.

"Lent you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; that little loan you made me just before first lessons. I suppose that that's what you're alluding to."

"It wasn't a loan. I gave it to you to get—"

"Ices. I've got them—I'm just eating the sixth!"

"You—you swindler!" said Herbert. "You know I gave you the shilling because you said you would get cigarettes for me!"

"If you want your shilling back," said Sammy loftily, "I'll let you have it!"

"Hand it over, then!"

Sammy gulped down the rest of the ice before replying. Then he blinked at the indignant and angry new junior.

"I'm sorry I can't do it at the present moment," he said.

"You see, I shall have to get it from my major, and he can't lend it to me until he gets a postal-order he's expecting. When that comes, I'll settle up with you at once."

"You'll settle up with me now, or I'll go to the head-master and complain that you've cheated me!" said Herbert, trembling with rage.

"You'll go and tell Dr. Locke that you wanted me to fetch in smokes for you?" said Sammy blandly. "All serene! I don't envy you what you'll get when you've told him."

Herbert clenched his hands.

"You hound!" he muttered.

"Oh, rats!" said Sammy. "I'll tell you what I'll do! Lend me another bob, and I'll give you back half-a-crown when I get it from my major."

Herbert did not reply. He stood before the fat fag

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with clenched fists—but upon the whole Sammy Bunter was too big for him to tackle. He thrust his hands into his pockets and stamped out of the tuck-shop. Sammy turned back to the counter with a soft chuckle.

"Another ice, please, Mrs. Mumble," he said.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In Charge.

"SEEN my minor?"

Bulstrode, of the Remove, asked the question.

It was Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Bulstrode minor had been at the school nearly a week now, and he had not won golden opinions.

He had settled down in the Second Form to have no friends, and few acquaintances even. The fellows did not like him, and he did not take any trouble to make them do so. As a matter of fact, his tastes were older than theirs.

Bulstrode minor was, in plain language, a precocious young rascal. His amusements were those of a man, not of a boy—and not of a high-minded man either.

If his major had been the old reckless Bulstrode, he would hardly have been quite so hardy and reckless as Herbert wished to be.

As Bulstrode had changed, the brothers had little in common.

From a sense of duty and affection Bulstrode stood by his minor as much as he could. But he was in a different Form—two Forms above his minor—and there was little he could do, beside give advice.

And advice was the last thing that Herbert Bulstrode wanted.

He wanted to neglect his lessons, do his prep. in a slovenly, careless way, and find all sorts of forbidden amusements outside the school. He had looked to his brother to help in that all; and at one time Bulstrode might have done so. But that time was past. He was willing to help Herbert, but only in the right path—and the bitterness of the younger brother against the elder grew and augmented every day.

Bulstrode generally went about with a gloomy expression upon his face in these days, and Harry Wharton & Co., who understood what his feelings were, did all they could to make things easy for him.

But they could not stand Herbert.

The best they could do with the new fag was to let him alone, and that they did.

Herbert's major had refused to introduce him to Mr. Cobb and the set of sporting gentlemen who met at the Cross Keys to make things lively, and sometimes to make night hideous. But Herbert had no intention whatever of being left out of that select set. He knew all about it, from what Bulstrode had told him, and his intention was to join the company at the Cross Keys at the earliest possible moment. And, as he had plenty of pocket-money, he was certain to be a welcome guest there—at all events, so long as his pocket-money lasted.

On this special half-holiday, the Remove were playing a practice match, with two elevens from their own Form in the field. Bulstrode ought to have been thinking wholly of cricket, as captain of the Remove. As a matter of fact, he was thinking almost wholly of his minor.

After dinner, Bulstrode minor had disappeared. Bulstrode had intended to take him down to the nets and instruct him in the rudiments of cricket—a game for which the new junior showed the keenest dislike.

But Herbert was not to be found.

Bulstrode looked up and down and round about for him, but he was not to be discovered; the Close and the cloisters were drawn blank, and he was not in the passages or in the Form-rooms.

Bulstrode asked everyone he met for news of him, and he received unsympathetic replies from most of the fellows.

"I haven't seen the cad, and I don't want to," said Coker, of the Fifth.

"Lost him?" asked Temple, of the Fourth. "Good thing, too! I hope you'll never find the young blighter again."

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were looking for Bulstrode, and they met him in the Close, heated and worried by his long search.

"Seen my minor?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. I suppose he's gone out."

"We're waiting to begin," added Bob Cherry. "Come on, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode's brows contracted.

"I—I can't come," he said. "I'm anxious about Herbert. You know what he is—I can't help thinking the young ass has got into trouble."

"Why?"

"He's made the acquaintance of Cobb and his set," said Bulstrode, with a worried look. "I heard it from Vernon-Smith. He saw Herbert at the Cross Keys."

Wharton frowned.
"Vernon-Smith's not over-truthful," he said. "I shouldn't take too much notice of what he says, if it's against anybody."

Bulstrode shook his head.
"Oh, I asked Herbert!" he said.
"And what did Herbert say?"
"He told me to mind my own business."
"H'm!"
"And now I suppose the young fool has gone down to the Cross Keys," said Bulstrode. "I know Vernon-Smith's gone there, and he'd be glad to lead Bertie into anything of that sort, out of sheer caddishness."

"I shouldn't wonder."
"But—" began Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

There was a hubbub in the direction of the gates. A crowd of juniors could be seen there, and over the forest of Greyfriars caps appeared the helmet of a policeman.

"P.-c. Tozer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.
"What's the row, I wonder?"
The three Removites walked down quickly towards the gates. The exclamations they heard as they approached quickly enlightened them.

"Tozer's got him!"
"It's Bulstrode's minor!"
"He's been caught!"
"Serve him right!"
"What are you going to do with him, Tozey?"
Bulstrode turned pale.
"It's my minor!" he exclaimed.
"Looks like it."

Bulstrode pushed his way forcibly through the excited crowd. There were angry ejaculations as he shoved and elbowed; but when the fellows saw whom it was they let him pass.

Bulstrode's face was pale and set.
"Herbert!" he exclaimed, as he reached the spot where the policeman stood, with his grasp upon Bulstrode's minor.

P.-c. Tozer, the constable of Friardale, had his grasp upon the scruff of Herbert's neck, and the black sheep of the Second Form was a helpless prisoner.

He was wriggling in the grasp of the fat policeman, but he had no chance of getting away.

"What's the matter?" demanded Bulstrode huskily.
"What have you been doing, Bertie?"

"Which I've caught 'im!" said P.-c. Tozer loftily.
"Caught him! What was he doing?"
"Smoking!"
"Oh!"

"And I'm taking 'im to the 'Ead," said P.-c. Tozer.
"I'm taking 'im to Dr. Locke, as in dooty bound."

"Serve him right," said Dicky Nugent. "I warned him about his caddish tricks, and he won't take a warning."

"A licking will do him good," Sammy Bunter remarked.
"You see, he's setting a horrible example to all us decent chaps!"

"First I've heard of your being decent," said Dicky.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

P.-c. Tozer pushed his way on, dragging the reluctant Herbert after him. Bulstrode whispered to the policeman.

"Let him go," he muttered, "he's my brother. Look here, if half-a-crown's any good to you, Mr. Tozer—"

Mr. Tozer hesitated.
Half-a-crown would have been of a great deal of use to him, and would have been speedily expended in liquid refreshment if it had come into his possession.

But there were too many eyes upon him; Mr. Tozer felt that he could not accept the half-a-crown while he was thus the cynosure of all eyes. And as it was impossible to take it, he declined it with great dignity.

"I 'ope you are not attemptin' to bribe a hoffer in the hexecution of his dooty, Master Bulstrode," he said.

"Look here, Tozer—"
"Come hon, you young rip!"

"I'll make it five bob—"
"You can't bribe the police, Master Bulstrode!"

"Not in public, anyway," said John Bull.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. P.-c. Tozer marched Bulstrode's minor onward, and they disappeared into the House. Ten minutes later, anybody who had passed the Head's study could have heard mournful howls proceeding from it.

Bulstrode's minor was paying for his sins.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Does Not Go.

BOB CHERRY sat up in bed.
All was dark in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. Bob, as a rule, was a sound sleeper. He knew that some sound must have awakened him, and he sat up in bed listening.

There was a dragging sound in the Remove dormitory—the faint sound of someone getting out of bed and pushing off the bedclothes.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry drowsily. "Who's getting up?"

There was no reply.
The sounds ceased at once.

"What's the little game?" asked Bob.
Silence!

"What the dickens don't you answer for?" Bob Cherry asked, getting puzzled. "Who's getting up, I say? What's the game?"

"Hallo!" came Bulstrode's voice.
"Bulstrode! That you?"

"Yes. What are you jawing about—talking in your sleep?" asked the captain of the Remove. "You woke me up!"

"Are you getting up?"
"Getting up?"

"Yes," said Bob. "Someone is!"
"Well, I'm not."

Bob Cherry reached out for a box of matches, and struck one. The light glimmered out into the darkness of the dormitory.

A junior was standing beside his bed, dressing quickly and silently.

It was Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars—the blackest of the black sheep in the Lower School.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going, Smithy?"
The Bounder turned an angry scowl upon Bob.

"Mind your own bizney!" he said savagely.
Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not my bizney!" he said, "but if I were Form-captain, I'd jolly well know what you were dressing yourself for at this time of night! Why, it's past eleven!"

Bulstrode sat up in bed.
"I'm Form-captain," he said, "and I'm going to know. Where are you going, Vernon-Smith?"

"Find out!"
"That's what I'm going to do," said Bulstrode, putting a leg over the side of his bed. "I think I can guess—you're going to break bounds."

"What if I am?"
"And go down to the Cross Keys, I suppose?"

"Perhaps!"
"I guess there's no perhaps about it," said the voice of Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. Half a dozen of the Remove were awake by this time, awakened from sleep by the voices in the dormitory. "I guess it's a solid fact."

Bob Cherry lighted a candle-end.

Bulstrode stepped out of bed. There was a dangerous gleam in his eyes as he stepped towards the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"You are going out?" he asked.
"Perhaps."

"Answer me plainly."
Vernon-Smith gave him a savage look.

"Well, yes, I'm going out, if you want to know," he said, between his teeth; "and you're not going to stop me, if that's what you're thinking of."

"I'm captain of this Form, and you know what a Form-captain's business is in this cell," said Bulstrode quietly.

"You're not going to break bounds at night."
"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am."
Vernon-Smith clenched his hands.

"So you are following Wharton's tactics?" he exclaimed, with a sneer. "We're all to be good little boys, or else be spanked. We didn't make you captain of the Remove for this sort of thing, Bulstrode."

"I don't care why I was made captain of the Remove. I know I should get into a row if I allowed this sort of thing, now I'm head of the dormitory."

"Go to sleep, then, and don't know anything about it."
"Get back to bed!" said Bulstrode.

"Rats!"
"Mind, I mean business."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"
Bulstrode's lips trembled with anger. Half the Remove were awake by now, and there were several candles alight. The juniors looked on curiously, wondering what the captain of the Remove would do.

"Look here," said Bulstrode, as calmly as he could, "you're not going out. I can't have it, and I won't."

"I'm going all the same."
"Take your things off, and get back to bed."

"I won't!"
"Very well, I'll make you. Put up your hands," said Bulstrode, advancing upon the Bounder of Greyfriars with his fists up.

Vernon-Smith backed away.
"I don't want trouble with you now," he said. "I'm ready to meet you to-morrow in the gym, if you like."

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"You'll have trouble now if you don't get back to bed at once."

"Well, I sha'n't do that."

"Then put your hands up."

And Vernon-Smith had no choice about that. Bulstrode was hitting out, and he was hitting hard.

The Bounder of Greyfriars put his hands up.

In a moment more they were going at one another, hammer and tongs.

Their bare feet made little sound in the dormitory, and only their quick, hurried breathing and the thuds of the blows broke the silence.

"Go it, Bulstrode!" said several voices. But there was no voice to speak up for the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Pile in!"

"Lick him!"

"Go it!"

Bulstrode was going it with a vengeance. It was a strange scene—the long, lofty dormitory, dimly lighted by the flickering candles, the juniors sitting up in bed watching with eager faces, and the two combatants, in their pyjamas, hammering one another with savage earnestness.

The Bounder was strong enough, and he was a good boxer, but he was no match for the burly Bulstrode, the fellow who had been cock of the walk in the lower school when he was the bully of the Remove.

In five minutes the Bounder was knocked across his bed, and he lay there gasping for breath, with all the combative-ness knocked out of him.

Bulstrode stood panting.

"Are you going on?" he asked.

"Oh, oh! No!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"Will you go back to bed?"

"Hang you!"

Bulstrode advanced towards him, his fists clenched and his eyes gleaming. Vernon-Smith watched him like a spiteful cat.

"Are you going back to bed?" Bulstrode repeated.

"Yes," said the Bounder sullenly.

"Very well!"

Bulstrode stood, breathing hard, while the Bounder slipped off his clothes, and returned to his bed. Mr. Cobb and the select party at the Cross Keys who were expecting Vernon-Smith that night were destined to be disappointed.

"Good old Bulstrode!" said Bob Cherry. "Blow those lights out, and let's get to sleep. I don't think the Bounder will bound to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode turned to his bed. But a sudden thought struck him, and he turned back, and came towards Vernon-Smith. The Bounder looked at him with eyes that scintillated like a cat's in the dark.

"Smithy," said Bulstrode, in a low voice, "you were going to the Cross Keys. Were you going alone?"

A bitter sneer crossed the Bounder's lips.

"Find out!" he said.

Bulstrode breathed hard.

"Will you tell me if you were going alone?" he said.

"No, I won't."

"Was my young brother going with you?"

"Find out!"

Bulstrode turned away. He did not go back to bed; he slipped on his trousers and a pair of slippers, and turned to the door of the dormitory. He paused to call back a word to Harry Wharton.

"Wharton, old man—"

"Do you want me?" asked Harry at once.

"Only to see that Vernon-Smith does not get out—so long as you are awake, any- way. I can depend on you to hammer him if he does."

"Yes, rather!" said Harry promptly.

"Thanks!"

And the captain of the Remove quitted the dormitory.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Locked In!

BULSTRODE strode cautiously along the dormitory passage. The suspicion was in his

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mind that his minor had intended to accompany Vernon-Smith on that night expedition. It was only a suspicion, but the Remove captain intended to know whether it was well-founded or not before he went back to bed.

He paused near the door of the Second Form dormitory.

The passage was very dark, and he had to grope his way along; but he knew his surroundings pretty well, and he paused within a couple of feet of the door.

As he did so a voice came from the darkness.

"Is that you, Smithy?"

Bulstrode started and gritted his teeth.

It was the voice of his brother.

His suspicion had been correct—Vernon-Smith's companion in the night excursion was to have been Herbert Bulstrode.

"The hound!" muttered Bulstrode inaudibly.

He was speaking of Vernon-Smith, not of Herbert.

Herbert caught some faint murmur of his voice, and peered at him through the gloom. They looked like black shadows to one another in the dark passage.

"Smithy, is that you?"

"It is I, Bertie."

There was a gasping exclamation.

"You, George?"

"Yes."

"Hang it! What are you doing here?"

"I have come instead of Vernon-Smith," said Bulstrode grimly.

Herbert muttered something.

"You see, he couldn't come," Bulstrode explained.

"Are you coming with me?" Herbert asked, in a low voice.

"Yes—into the dorm."

"Out, I mean."

"You are not going out."

Herbert ground his teeth.

"Are you going to interfere with me?" he muttered.

"I must, Bertie."

"You can't! You sha'n't!"

Herbert's voice came in a hissing whisper. He was trembling with anger and disappointment.

"I must! You can't go out, Bertie."

"Why not?"

"You know why not as well as I do. You can't go. You must go back to bed. Bertie, old man, you know you must."

Bulstrode's voice had dropped to a low tone, and it had become pleading. Fellows in the Remove would have been amazed if they had heard it then, so unlike was it to the usual tones of George Bulstrode, the bully of the Lower Fourth.

But it had no effect upon the obstinate Second-Former.

"I know nothing of the sort," he said, with a kind of snarl. "I'm going out! You hear me? I'm going out, with Vernon-Smith."

"Vernon-Smith is not going out."

"How do you know? Has he changed his mind?"

"I've changed it for him," said Bulstrode grimly.

"What! How do you mean?"

"I mean that I found him sneaking out, and I've licked him till he can't stand," said the captain of the Remove.

"Vernon-Smith won't get out of bed again to-night. Even if he felt inclined for it, Harry Wharton is keeping an eye on him."

"You prevented him from coming?"

"Yes."

"And I suppose you intend to prevent me from going out, too?" Herbert asked, in a low voice of concentrated rage.

"Yes."

"Well, I won't be prevented," said Herbert. "I'm going. If you touch me, I shall strike back. You hear that?"

"Bertie, old man, don't play the giddy ox. Look here, you can't go! I can't let you. What would the pater say if he knew?"

Herbert laughed sneeringly.

"What would he say if he knew of your having done it yourself, as you used to tell me?" he asked bitterly.

Bulstrode was stricken silent.

NEXT WEEK:

Bob Cherry in Search of His Father!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars College.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Bulstrode read the terrible truth in his form-master's face. He sank into a chair beside his brother's bed, his face dropped into his hands, and he sobbed as if his heart would break.

It was only too true; what he was forbidding to Herbert was what he had done himself, many a time—what he had boasted about doing, too.

But that did not make it right. Herbert's words hit him hard, but they did not change his resolution.

"Well, I'm going!" said Herbert, breaking the silence. "I'd rather have gone with Smith, but I can go alone."

"You can't go alone."

"Come with me, then. Stop all this rot, and come with me, and have a good time, as you used to do," said Herbert. "That's all over."

"It's not over for me."

"Bertie, old man—"

"Look here," said Herbert, "I've lost enough time already. I'm late. I'm going out now, and you're not going to stop me."

He made a movement to pass Bulstrode in the passage. His brother's arm closed upon his shoulder and held him fast.

Herbert paused. He had no choice in the matter; there was no escaping the iron grip that was fastened upon him.

"Let me go!" he muttered thickly.

"You can't go."

"I will go!"

Bulstrode drew him towards the dormitory door.

"Get back to bed, Bertie. It's the best thing you can do."

"Get back!"

"I won't!"

"You know I don't want to hurt you," Bulstrode said,

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with a quiver in his voice. "But I can't let you go out to visit those scoundrels, and that's the end of it. I shall keep you here; and if you compel me to use force, I shall use it. Think of what you are doing; you're risking being expelled from the school."

"You've risked it in the same way."

"Yes, but—but—"

"But—but—" mimicked Herbert. "Oh, I'm sick of your 'buts.' Look here, I don't ask any favours of you. I'm your brother, and you don't choose to help me—well, let us be strangers, then. I've other friends. Let me go!"

"I can't."

Herbert trembled with passion.

"If you don't let go my shoulder, I shall hit out," he said.

"I won't let you go!"

Thud!

From the darkness a clenched fist came crashing—full upon Bulstrode's face. He gave a sharp cry and staggered back. His grasp relaxed, and in a second the fag had torn himself away, and dashed down the passage.

Bulstrode staggered against the wall, almost blinded by the blow, his senses reeling.

Herbert had reached the top of the stairs before his brother could think of following him. Then Bulstrode dashed in pursuit.

"Herbert, stop!"

A low ejaculation of defiance answered him, and that was all, save for the sound of Herbert's receding footfalls.

Bulstrode dashed down the stairs.

He was afraid of missing Herbert in the darkness—and there were a dozen windows from which the fag could easily have made his escape. Bulstrode threw himself upon the banisters, and went sliding down at a terrific speed. It was dangerous enough, in the dark, but Bulstrode was not thinking or caring about danger just then.

He reached the bottom of the dormitory stairs just as Herbert reached it. He knocked against the fag in the darkness, and Herbert fell to the floor.

Bulstrode's grasp was upon him the next moment.

"Bertie—"

"Hang you! Let me go!"

"Come back," said Bulstrode angrily. "You young cad! Come back! Mind, I mean business; if you don't come quietly, I'll thrash you as I've thrashed Vernon-Smith."

"Hang you!"

"I give you one minute."

Bulstrode minor did not require the minute. He sullenly returned upstairs with his brother, and they reached the door of the Second Form dormitory.

Bulstrode opened it, and pushed his minor in.

"You'll go back to bed," he said. "I'm going to lock this door on the outside; I'll come early in the morning and unlock it. Good-night!"

"Hang you!"

Bulstrode changed the key to the outside of the lock, closed the door, and locked it. Then he returned to the Remove dormitory.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Breaking Bounds.

HERBERT BULSTRODE stood within the Second Form dormitory, trembling with rage.

He was locked in.

There was no escape from the Second Form dormitory; Mr. Cobb & Co. would wait in vain for him in the little parlour of the Cross Keys.

Herbert was a prisoner.

He clenched and unclenched his hands, he ground his teeth, all the wild ungoverned passion of his nature coming to the surface then.

For his brother, he felt nothing but hatred—bitter hate, and a longing for revenge.

But he was helpless.

From one of the beds came a drowsy voice.

"Who's that making a row?"

Herbert stood silent.

He did not want to awaken any of the Second Form boys; he knew that Nugent minor would probably be just as "down" upon his night excursion as Bulstrode was.

And Herbert had not by any means given up the idea of getting out of the school that night and visiting the rascals at the Cross Keys.

He remained silent for full five minutes, thinking it out.

Then he crossed to one of the dormitory windows, drew himself up to it with his hands, and looked out.

The moon was climbing above the old tower of Greyfriars; the Close, and the old cloisters, glimmered in the silvery light.

Bulstrode minor dropped back and returned to his bed. Not with the intention of going to bed, however. He had far other thoughts in his mind.

He drew the sheets silently from the bed, ripped them with his pocket-knife, and twisted them into ropes.

The counterpane followed suit, and then he knotted the twisted strips together at the ends and quite a long rope was manufactured.

He returned to the window, climbed upon the deep wooden frame, and opened the lattice. He fastened the end of his improvised rope to an iron bar across the centre of the window. There was ample room for him to squeeze out below the bar.

His eyes were glittering as he squeezed through the window.

The rope, he knew, was hardly long enough, but it would allow him to reach the sill of a window on the first floor, from which he could easily clamber to the ground.

As for what would be the consequences of his escapade, the passionate lad did not seem to think of that at all.

The inquiry that was certain to follow the damage done to his bedclothes would not occur till the morning, and by then he might have some story invented. It would be easy to say that the other fags had ragged him by cutting up his bedclothes. And a lie or two would not lie very heavily upon Herbert's conscience. It had a great deal to bear already, and bore the load quite easily.

Herbert squeezed himself out of the window, grasped the rope of sheets, and swung himself off the sill.

A tremor ran through his frame as he found himself hanging in space.

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Suppose the improvised rope should break—suppose he should fall? It was death upon the hard flagstones below!

For a moment he regretted his foolhardy enterprise, and was minded to climb back into the window of the dormitory.

But it was only for a moment.

All the obstinacy in his nature had been aroused by opposition, and he was determined to go through with this, cost what it might.

He slid carefully down the rope.

Hand below hand he went, swinging in space, his feet clinking against the wall, sometimes on hard stones, sometimes on rustling ivy.

Lower and lower!

He swung past a window, and then another. Then his hands were at the end of the rope; and his feet were on a window-sill.

He let the rope swing loose, and clambered down from the sill to the ground.

He paused for a moment to shake his fist at the building, and then ran quickly across the Close towards the wall on the road.

The rope of sheets hung and fluttered in the breeze. The breeze was rising; it had been a warm day, and a warm evening, but the night was turning stormy. A drift of clouds obscured the moon, and a few drops of warm rain fell in the Close of Greyfriars.

Herbert hardly noticed it.

He hurried across the Close and reached the ivied wall, and swung himself up to the top of it and looked over into the road.

There was no one in sight—the road was lonely and dark.

Bulstrode minor dropped lightly from the wall.

Tramp! Tramp!

Heavily the footsteps sounded in the gloom.

The junior stopped, shivering, and crouched low in the shadow of the wall.

Tramp!

Through the gloom of the road a portly figure loomed up, and the fag of the Second dimly recognised P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale.

The drift of clouds was still over the moon, and the constable did not see the crouching figure in the shadow of the wall.

If he had seen him, he would certainly have taken him in charge, and rung up the porter of Greyfriars and marched the junior into the school.

Bulstrode minor waited with beating heart for the policeman to pass.

The clouds fled from the moon, and light streamed down again into the lane, and over the old stone walls of the college.

But the policeman was past by that time; and he did not turn his head.

He was only four or five feet from the crouching junior; but his broad back was turned, and he tramped forward steadily upon his round, never dreaming of what was just behind him.

Herbert Bulstrode scarcely breathed.

Tramp! Tramp!

P.-c. Tozer's steps died away in the distance, and his portly figure disappeared among the shadows along the road.

Herbert rose to his feet.

He was shaking a little, but a sneering smile curled his lip.

"That was a narrow shave," he muttered.

He glanced after P.-c. Tozer, and then set his face towards Friardale, and tramped away himself as fast as he could go.

Half-past the hour rang out in chimes from the tower of Greyfriars. It wanted but a half-hour to midnight.

It was no time for a junior of the Second to be abroad; but late hours were no new experience to Bulstrode's brother.

Young as he was, he was old in reckless ways; and at home many and many a time he had crept into his room at the window, while his father and his mother were asleep and never even dreaming of where and how the lad was occupied.

Right on down the lonely lane the junior went, never looking to right or left, caring nothing for the silence, the solitude, the darkness.

A muttering voice from the stile in the lane made him pause—a drunken tramp sat there, balancing himself with difficulty, and huskily jerking out snatches of some coarse song.

He raised his frowsy head, and looked at the lad with red, bleared eyes, and Herbert involuntarily quickened his steps.

"Goo'-nigh!" muttered the tramp.

The junior did not reply. He hurried on as fast as he could. The man slid unsteadily off the stile, and stumbled after him.

"I said goo'-nigh!" he stammered thickly. "You young rip! Gimme a bob, I say, to get a bed to-night."

Herbert broke into a run

He heard stumbling footsteps behind him, and ran the faster. Lights gleamed up through the thin summer rain—the lights of a public-house on the border of the village.

The footsteps behind him died away; he had shaken off his pursuer. The lad slackened pace, breathing hard. He was wet with the rain, but he hardly noticed it. He avoided the front entrance to the Cross Keys, plunging into the dark alley beside the inn.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Night "Out"!

MR. COBB, the landlord of the Cross Keys, and the greatest rascal in Friardale—or in the whole county, for that matter—sat in his little parlour. The hour was late, but Mr. Cobb showed no signs of fatigue. Perhaps that was because he was accustomed to lie in bed until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning; or perhaps he derived support from the bottle that stood at his elbow, and from which he incessantly replenished his glass. Mr. Cobb had a very red face and a still redder nose, which showed that he was a frequent indulger in the cup that cheers, or, at all events, inebriates.

Mr. Cobb was not alone. Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, was sitting at the table opposite to him, also with a glass at his elbow and a fat cigar in his mouth.

There was no one else in the room, but the French window opening upon the garden was open, and it looked as if the two men were expecting someone.

They were playing cards. When Mr. Banks was at the inn he generally spent his evenings in that way.

The expression upon Mr. Banks's fat face showed that he had been losing. Although accustomed to work together when there were pigeons to be plucked, the two rascals filled up the time by gambling with one another, and on this particular evening the luck had evidently been with Mr. Cobb.

The bookmaker threw the cards down at last with an oath. Mr. Cobb looked across at him and grinned, and filled his glass again.

"Finished?" he asked.

"Yes, hang you—and the cards!"

The landlord of the Cross Keys chuckled, and mixed his whisky-and-water—very little water and a great deal of whisky.

Mr. Banks glanced at the clock with a growl.

"They're late," he said.

"An hour late," said Mr. Cobb.

"They can't be coming."

"I don't know. Give them a chance till midnight, anyway. You see, they may have found some difficulty in getting away."

"What is the kid coming for?" Mr. Banks asked abruptly. "I suppose his few shillings are not worth the trouble."

Mr. Cobb chuckled again—a very evil chuckle.

"In the first place, young Bulstrode has more than a few shillings," he said. "He is well supplied with money, and I have made a five-pound note out of him already. But it's mostly Vernon-Smith's idea. The young rascal is the brother of the fellow Bulstrode who used to come here. Bulstrode is what they call Form captain of Smith's Form. If he should get bowled out, he would be able to drag Bulstrode minor into it, and force Bulstrode to protect him."

Mr. Banks grunted.

"I see—"

"Vernon-Smith will make a pretty villain when he grows older," said Mr. Cobb, with evident admiration. "If he weren't the son of a millionaire, I suppose he would become a racing tout, or something of that sort. That's what he was born for, I'm sure. He—Hullo!"

There was a step in the garden.

"Good-evening, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Cobb blandly, rising to his feet.

But it was only one person that came through the open French windows—Bulstrode minor, red with haste and dripping with rain.

Mr. Cobb looked past him into the darkness and dripping rain.

"Where is Master Vernon-Smith?" he asked.

Bulstrode minor gasped for breath.

"He can't come," he said.

"Can't come!"

"He's been prevented."

"Oh! So you've come alone?" said Mr. Cobb surlily.

Herbert flushed.

"Yes. If I'm not welcome—"

"Oh, you're right welcome!" said Mr. Banks, who, in his present state of stoniness, was eager to relieve the junior even of a few half-crowns. "Sit down and dry your boots. Better take your jacket off."

"Thank you!"

Mr. Cobb ran the cards through his fingers. They were not the cards he had used to play with Mr. Banks. Mr. Cobb looked across at him and grinned, and filled his glass again.

Banks was far too old a bird to play with cards provided by his amiable friend of the Cross Keys.

Mr. Cobb had taken a new pack of cards out of a drawer for Herbert Bulstrode's benefit. They were conveniently marked on the backs so that the dealer could tell which cards he was giving out, and Mr. Cobb was an old and experienced dealer, and well accustomed to the marks on those cards.

The swishing of the cards as Mr. Cobb shuffled them was like music to the ears of the foolish lad from Greyfriars.

He turned towards the table with eager, gleaming eyes.

"I'm ready to play!" he exclaimed.

"Better dry your boots—"

"Oh, my boots are all right!"

"Just as you like," said Mr. Cobb. "What is the game to be—nap or banker?"

"Nap," said Mr. Banks.

"Right-ho!"

Herbert Bulstrode dropped into a chair by the table.

As a matter of fact, his trousers and his jacket were both wet, and he felt a chill as he sat down, but he hardly noticed it in his excitement.

The unfortunate junior felt highly honoured at being allowed to play with old, experienced sportsmen like Mr. Cobb and Mr. Banks. He did not seem to have the least suspicion that he was as wax in their hands, and that their only use for him was to fleece him of his money.

"The luck was against you last time, young sir," said Mr. Banks. "I dare say you will clean us out this evening."

"Oh, I hope so!" said Herbert.

"Are you heeled?" asked Mr. Cobb facetiously.

The landlord of the Cross Keys meant by that question to ask if the junior had come supplied with money.

For answer, Herbert drew his purse from his pocket, and turned out a banknote for five pounds and a couple of sovereigns.

"Look at that!" he said.

The two rascals looked, and their eyes glistened.

Seven pounds would be quite a little haul for them, and, for once in a way, Herbert was as valuable a pigeon to pluck as Vernon-Smith himself.

"I suppose that money's yours?" said Mr. Banks, with a grin.

Herbert flushed.

"I'm not a thief, if that's what you mean," he said.

"Not at all; but—"

"My father sent it to me to get a bike," Herbert explained. "I'm having one made in Courtfield, and some of the money is paid down. This is the rest; but I can spend it in any way I like."

"Of course!"

"Besides, if I win, I shall get the bike all the same."

Mr. Cobb grinned cheerfully.

"Exactly—if you win," he assented.

"Change the fiver, and let's start," said Herbert.

Mr. Cobb went into the bar, and brought back change for a five-pound note. He laid the money upon the table before Herbert, who did not even count it. This saved Mr. Cobb from laying down the five shillings he had kept back out of the amount, and which he would have produced, pleading a mistake, if Herbert had counted the money. But this was really honest for Mr. Cobb.

Herbert's eyes glittered as Mr. Banks dealt out the cards. He had a pile of small silver before him, and it seemed to him that he must win before that money was gone.

Then he would return to Greyfriars several pounds in pocket, and would pay the balance due on his bicycle all the same.

What he would do if he lost the money he did not stop to reflect. That was a consideration which would not occur to his mind till afterwards. For the present, he had the money, and he intended to gamble with it.

Nap is a game at which a great deal of money may be won or lost—generally lost. Herbert had not the slightest chance against the two experienced players, even if they played fairly.

But that they never dreamed of doing. They cheated him almost openly, and if he won sometimes, it was only to keep up the hollow pretence of a game; they could have fleeced him in every round if they had chosen.

An hour clicked away on the metal clock on Mr. Cobb's mantelpiece. The whole building was silent save for the movements and occasional muttered remarks of the gamblers in the inn parlour.

All the time the pile of silver before Herbert Bulstrode diminished more and more. At the end of the hour he was down to his last coin, and he lost again, and had to owe a balance to the others.

Then he paused, white and haggard.

Luck, as he fancied it, had been against him, and he had

lost; he was cleaned out. He had not a coin left in his pockets.

Mr. Cobb and Mr. Banks exchanged glances. Not a glimmer of pity for their unhappy victim was in their looks or in their hearts; only grim amusement, which they hardly troubled to conceal. They were too accustomed to fleecing the foolish and ignorant to have any tender feelings left on the subject.

Herbert gave them a haggard look.

"I'm cleaned out!" he muttered.

"Quite out?" asked Mr. Banks.

"Quite. Will you take my I O U?"

Mr. Banks rose from the table.

"I'm afraid I must be off now," he remarked. "I've stayed too long, as it is. You'll excuse my hurrying off, Cobb?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Cobb.

Mr. Banks went by way of the bar, and Mr. Cobb accompanied him. Herbert sat alone and miserable. He heard a clinking of glasses in the bar. Mr. Cobb came back into the little parlour alone.

Herbert looked at him gloomily.

"So you won't play on my I O U?" he said.

Mr. Cobb smiled blandly.

"I would with pleasure," he replied, "but it's so late. Do you know it's close on one o'clock? We've been closed here a long time. I must get to bed."

"You could stay up long enough to win all my money," said Herbert bitterly.

Mr. Cobb turned upon him.

"Do you want me to give it you back?" he asked scornfully. "When we let you into this game, we took you for a sportsman."

"I don't want it back; but—"

"We'll give you your revenge at any time," said Mr. Cobb.

"Yes, but—"

"But just now you ought to be getting back to bed. Bless it all, you came an hour late, and you've been here over an hour," said the landlord of the Cross Keys. "I should get into trouble if it were known, anyway."

Herbert rose heavily to his feet.

"I suppose I'd better go," he said dully.

"Yes. Good-night!"

Herbert Bulstrode did not reply.

He crossed to the door, put on his cap, and strode out into the darkness and the rain. Mr. Cobb meditatively mixed a fresh glass of whisky-and-water, with a smaller proportion of water than ever.

"Seven quid," he murmured. "Three-pun-ten for me, and three-pun-ten for Banks. And not so bad for an hour's work, neither."

He sipped his whisky-and-water with great enjoyment. When it was finished, he crossed to the window to close it. He started a little as a drench of rain came into his face.

"By gum!" murmured Mr. Cobb. "It's still raining."

He gazed out into the rainy night in some uneasiness.

The rain was descending in blinding torrents, and the Greyfriars lad had gone out into the heart of it, without even an umbrella, without even an overcoat.

"By gum!" murmured Mr. Cobb. "He'll get wet!"

He closed the window.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor.

HERBERT walked blindly away from the darkened inn. There was not a single light gleaming from a window in the front of the Cross Keys, as Herbert came out into the street. There was no light in the street save the glimmer of a street lamp far away.

The moon was hidden behind black clouds. The rain was coming down fast, thicker and thicker every moment.

Herbert Bulstrode hardly noticed it.

Or rather, the dash of the cold rain in his face had a reviving effect upon him. He did not think for the moment of the danger of getting wet, after the heated and stifling atmosphere of the inn parlour.

He tramped out blindly and doggedly into the rain.

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READ the special new story of the "THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S" in this week's "GEM" Library. Chums of St. Jim's, entitled: Now on Sale. Price 1d.

The unfortunate lad turned his face towards the distant school. He was exhausted, tired out, depressed, utterly miserable.

His money was gone.

The luck he had hoped for had not been his—he had lost all his money, and now he had the prospect of the result of it to face.

For the money could not be lost without inquiry. His father had sent it to him to pay for his bicycle. If the machine was not paid for, his father would hear of it. How would he explain the loss of the money?

He could not even say that he had lost it, for the number of the note would then be sent to the police, and it would be stopped. And that note was in Mr. Cobb's possession.

Certainly, it would serve Mr. Cobb right to lose it if he had to give it up. But it would be only too clearly proved that Herbert had gone to the Cross Keys that night—and that meant expulsion from Greyfriars. And he knew what kind of a reception his father would give him at home if he returned there expelled in disgrace from Greyfriars.

How was he to account for the loss of the money?

His brother might help him. He thought of that with a sudden sense of relief.

His brother, whom he had insulted and injured—would he help him? Could he help him to that extent?

But even that was not all! Even if the money were replaced, what then? The foolish lad was already thinking of further attempts to win back what he had lost. To win back one's losses—the mirage that has led so many gamblers on to their doom. That was the wild vision that Herbert could not drive from his mind.

He tramped on through the rain.

The water was soaking through his clothes. He was drenched to the skin, even his boots were soaked. But he did not notice it. Rapid motion kept him warm, and he did not care for the rain.

A figure loomed up in the gloom and wet.

"Stop, there!"

Herbert Bulstrode started.

He knew again the husky, drunken voice—it was that of the tramp he had passed in the lane on his way to the Cross Keys.

He had forgotten the man—quite forgotten him. The drunken wretch had been revived, probably, from sleep under a hedge by the cold rain. He was staggering along in the direction of Friardale, and he almost ran into Herbert Bulstrode.

"Stop!"

A foul hand grasped the boy's shoulder.

Through the rain came a momentary gleam of the moon, and the man blinked at the junior with bleary eyes.

"So it's you," he muttered.

Herbert struggled in his grasp.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"You give me your purse!"

Herbert, with a fierce laugh, drew the purse from his pocket.

"You may take it," he said. "There is not a coin in it."

"Your watch, then."

"I won't!"

A heavy hand crashed upon the junior, and he reeled under the blow. He gathered all his strength, and crashed his two fists into the brutal, bleared face.

The ruffian gave a cry and fell.

Herbert ran down the lane.

He heard a savage voice behind him, but he ran on furiously, and the tramp did not follow him far.

Herbert stopped at the school wall, out of breath.

"Hang him!" he muttered.

He clambered over the wall. He was feeling sick and faint. The blow the tramp had given him had made his head sing.

He rolled over the wall, missed his hold, and fell inside. He had not the strength to rise for the moment. He lay dazed in the rain.

When he staggered to his feet at last, he groped his way across the Close, the rain beating down upon him hard and fiercely.

The boy paused by the house wall, where the rope of sheets hung fluttering from the window of the Second-Form dormitory.

He supported himself with his hand upon the stone wall, while he groped for the window-sill above him.

As a matter of fact, the unfortunate lad was almost in a fever by this time, although he did not realise it.

He climbed upon the window-sill, and groped and groped for the fluttering rope, which the wind carried out of his reach.

He grasped it at last, and began to climb. His head was swimming.

"I must get in!" he muttered fiercely. "I must get in!"

He clung desperately to the rope.

But he could not climb. Again and again he tried, but it was impossible. His strength was spent; his brain was reeling.

He made an effort to get upon the lower sill again, and missed it. The rope slid through his hands, and he fell. Crash!

He hardly felt the shock as he fell—only a dull pain, and then oblivion.

He made one feeble movement, and lay still—silent—his white, set face upturned to the pouring rain.

Heavier and heavier the rain beat down upon him—harder and heavier. It ran over him in little streamlets, it covered him and soaked him. He did not move.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, stirred in his bed and awoke.

A strange sound was echoing through his room, and several times he had stirred in his sleep, unconsciously disturbed by it, and now at last his eyes opened.

Swish, swish!

The Remove-master sat up in bed.

Swish, swish!

What was that strange sound? It was as if someone were lashing at the panes of his window with a cloth.

But surely it could not be that!

He listened intently.

Swish, swish!

Clout!

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

He stepped out of bed. The thought of burglars was in his mind—the thought that someone was trying to enter his window.

He stepped to the window and looked out. There was no blind down, and the window was open at the top. Mr. Quelch was hygienic in his ways, and did not sleep with his window hermetically sealed.

Nothing was to be seen.

Darkness blotted the window, broken only by a fitful gleam of the panes as the rain lashed upon them.

Swish, swish!

Mr. Quelch started as the sound came again at the window.

Something white fluttered through the darkness, and swished on the window-panes, and fluttered away again.

For some moments the Remove-master stood petrified. Then a swift thought flashed into his mind, and he threw the window up.

Swish!

He caught at the fluttering object with his hand, as the wind blew it nearer.

It was a rope of sheets, soaked and dripping with rain, blown about by the wind, which was rising and blowing more freshly from the sea every moment.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

He knew what the rope of sheets meant. It meant that someone had descended from a window above, and, from the situation of the rope, Mr. Quelch knew that it must be from the Second-Form dormitory.

A very grim look came over his face.

He turned on his electric light, dressed himself quickly, and quitted the bed-room.

With quiet steps he made his way up to the next floor, and stopped at the door of the Second-Form dormitory.

The door did not open to his hand.

But as he tried the handle, he felt the key in the lock on the outside.

The Remove-master was amazed. Someone had evidently quitted the dormitory by way of the window. But who had locked the door on the outside?

It was amazing!

But the Remove-master did not stop to wrestle with that problem then. He unlocked the door, entered the dormitory, and switched on the light.

The sound of the door opening, and the sudden glare of light, awakened many of the boys. Dicky Nugent sat up in bed rubbing his eyes.

"Hallo!" he muttered.

"Groo!" said Gatty.

"Wharrer marrer?" murmured Sammy Bunter, half in his sleep.

Mr. Quelch strode into the room.

"Someone has broken bounds and gone out of this dormitory by means of a rope from the window," he exclaimed sternly.

"My hat!"

Mr. Quelch glanced up and down the dormitory. The bed next to Sammy Bunter's was empty.

"Bunter minor!"

"Groo! Yessir! Yaw-aw!"

"Whose bed was this, next to yours?"

"Bulstrode minor's, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. He had already observed

something of the little ways of Bulstrode minor, although the new boy was not in his Form.

"Bulstrode minor!" he repeated. "Where is he now?"

Sammy Bunter groped under his pillow for his spectacle-case, put his glasses upon his fat round nose, and blinked at the empty bed.

"He seems to be gone, sir," he stammered.

"I know he is gone. He had evidently left the room by a rope from the window," said the master of the Remove.

"My hat!" ejaculated Sammy Bunter involuntarily.

"Do you know where he is gone?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know, Nugent minor?"

Dicky Nugent shook his head.

"No, sir. I had no idea that he was gone."

"Does anyone here know?"

There was no reply.

Most of the Second-Formers were awake by this time, but the few who had some suspicion of where the new boy was gone were not inclined to betray him to a Form-master. They might dislike Bulstrode minor, and they might rag him, but their code of honour forbade anything like sneaking to a master about a Form-fellow.

"Has Bulstrode minor ever been absent of a night before, Nugent?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I don't know, sir."

"And you cannot tell me where he is gone?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Very well. I shall acquaint Mr. Pyle with this, and he will doubtless look into the matter," said the Remove-master quietly. "What are you getting up for, Nugent minor?"

"I was thinking, sir—" Dicky Nugent hesitated a little.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"It was a jolly risky bizney getting down from the window, sir," faltered Nugent minor. "The silly young ass may have fallen, and—"

Mr. Quelch started.

"I will look in the Close at once," he said. "You may go back to bed."

"Yes, sir."

The Remove-master extinguished the light and left the dormitory, but the Second Form did not go to sleep in a hurry.

The novel occurrence had excited them too much for that. They sat up in bed discussing it in low, excited tones.

Mr. Quelch hurried down to the bed-room of the Second Form-master, and called Mr. Pyle. That gentleman when he heard what the Remove-master had to tell him, dressed himself at once.

"This is very shocking, Mr. Quelch," he said. "I had observed that Bulstrode minor had no very good character, but I never suspected anything of this sort."

"Neither did I," said Mr. Quelch, with a frown.

"It is terrible."

"There is some danger that the reckless lad may have fallen, although I do not really think it is likely," said the Remove-master. "I thought that we had better take a look into the Close. Of course, the matter is yours to deal with."

"We will go at once."

Mr. Pyle lighted a bicycle lantern, and the two masters descended the stairs. They put on macintoshes, and went out into the Close.

The wind and the rain drove forcefully into their faces, and they gasped for breath as they quitted the shelter of the doorway.

"Bless my soul! What a night for a lad to venture out!"

Mr. Pyle gasped.

"I imagine he went out before the storm came on," Mr. Quelch said.

"Yes, yes, I suppose so."

"This is the way."

Keeping close to the wall, to avoid, as far as possible, the force of the wind, the two masters made their way to the spot directly beneath the window of the Second Form dormitory.

Mr. Pyle flashed the light through the rain.

A sudden cry broke from him.

"Good heavens!"

"What is it?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, look!"

Then the Remove-master echoed the other's exclamation.

The light of the lantern gleamed upon a white face upturned in the rain—a white, set face, that seemed already to have the seal of death set upon it.

"Bulstrode minor!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in horror.

"Then he had fallen!"

"Oh, heavens!"

Mr. Pyle looked at the white face in fascinated horror. For the moment he could not find his voice. He trembled

in every limb as he looked upon the ghastly countenance of Bulstrode minor.

"Is he—is he——" he faltered

He could not finish the sentence. The terrible word that was in his mind seemed to refuse to pass his lips.

Mr. Quelch did not reply immediately.

He knelt beside the insensible junior, and felt his heart for a moment. A low exclamation of relief escaped him.

"No," he said quietly.

"He lives?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven!"

"He is insensible," said the Remove-master, in a low, agitated voice. "How much he is injured it is impossible to tell here. Help me to get him into the house."

"Yes, yes!"

They lifted the lad between them, and, drenched by the rain as they went, they bore him into the house.

"Bring him into my room," said Mr. Quelch.

"But——"

"He cannot be taken into the dormitory. It may be impossible to move him again, and he may need quiet. He shall be put into my bed."

"But you——"

"Never mind me."

"Very well."

Bulstrode minor was carried into Mr. Quelch's room. He was laid upon a couch, and there the Form-master undressed him to examine his injuries. The junior was still insensible. Mr. Quelch glanced round at the agitated master of the Second.

"Will you wake Wingate?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, certainly! But——"

"Tell him a boy has had an accident, and ask him to cycle to Friardale for a doctor."

"In this weather——"

"It may be a case of life and death. Tell Wingate so, and he will not hesitate."

"Very well."

Mr. Pyle quitted the bed-room. The Remove-master stripped the unhappy fag and rubbed him dry with a towel. The fall from the rope had not caused any great injury—it had been too short—but the boy was evidently in a serious state. The Remove-master put him into the bed and covered him warmly up.

Then Mr. Quelch sat by the bedside watching him, sleepless now, anxious only for the lad whose temerity and desperate hardihood had cost him so dear; and, meanwhile, Wingate of the Sixth was on his bicycle, riding furiously through wind and rain for the doctor from Friardale.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Black News.

MORNING dawned upon the old school.

At the first clang of the rising-bell, Bulstrode of the Remove jumped out of bed. He had not forgotten the locked door of the Second Form dormitory.

If that door were found locked it would lead to inquiry and suspicion, and Bulstrode was very anxious that nothing should be discovered of his brother's attempted escapade. Of what had happened since he had locked the dormitory door upon Herbert, Bulstrode, of course, he knew nothing.

The captain of the Remove hurried on his clothes and strode from the dormitory before the rising-bell had ceased to clang.

He reached the Second Form dormitory very quickly, and attempted to turn the key. He gave a start as he discovered that the door was already unlocked.

He opened it, and looked into the room.

The Second-Formers were already getting up. As a rule, they stuck to their beds till the last sound of the rising-bell had died away—some of them later than that. But this morning they were all early risers, and their excited looks showed that something very unusual was the cause of it.

"Herbert!" called out Bulstrode.

The fags looked at him.

"Where is my brother?" asked Bulstrode, looking up and down the dormitory in surprise. "He hasn't gone yet, surely—not gone down yet?"

"He's not here," said Nugent minor.

"Then he's gone down?"

"No."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Bulstrode angrily.

"He must have gone down if he's not here, I suppose?"

"He went out last night——"

"What?"

"And he hasn't come back."

Bulstrode staggered against the door.

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"Went out, and hasn't come back!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"Yes."

"But—but——"

"I don't know what to make of it," said Nugent minor. "Quelch came in in the middle of the night inquiring after him. He found he was gone, and that there was a rope of sheets from the window."

"The window! Oh, I never thought of that!"

"Since then we don't know anything, excepting that your minor hasn't come back, Bulstrode."

"He hasn't come back? B-b-but—— Then he was out all night!" gasped Bulstrode. "Oh, the young fool—the reckless young duffer! He'll be expelled for this! But what has become of him—why hasn't he come back?"

Dicky Nugent shook his head.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "The rope's still there, and he could have climbed in, I suppose; and he hasn't fallen, or we should have heard something about it, I should think. I don't know what's become of him."

Bulstrode almost staggered from the dormitory.

His face was pale as death.

After locking the dormitory door upon his minor the previous night, he had gone back to bed thinking that Herbert was safe for the night, and never dreaming but that he would be found safe in his bed at rising-bell.

That the lad would have the temerity to quit the house by the window, at such a breakneck height from the ground, by means of a rope of twisted sheets, had never even occurred to him. It occurred to him now too late.

His face, as he re-entered the Remove dormitory, drew general attention towards him.

The Removites were busy with sponge and towel. Harry Wharton suspended the sponge that, dripping with cold water, he was passing over his glowing skin, as the captain of the Remove came in.

"Good heavens, Bulstrode! What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Trouble, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bulstrode looked at them almost wildly.

"My young brother?"

"What's happened to him?"

"I don't know," panted Bulstrode. "He got out of the dormitory window last night, and he hasn't come back."

"Great Scott!"

Vernon-Smith burst into a scoffing laugh.

"You'd have done better to let me go with him, after all," he exclaimed.

Bulstrode did not reply. In his anxiety and fear for his young brother he did not even notice the scoffing words of the Bounder.

"I say, this is serious," Bob Cherry exclaimed. "I suppose there hasn't been an accident? If he had fallen——"

"It was a risky thing to do."

"Yes, but—— Look here, you'd better inquire. The matter must be known, anyway," said Harry Wharton. "It can't be hidden that he's away from school now."

"Quelch knows. He was in the Second dorm. last night, looking for Bertie."

"Then ask Quelch if he knows anything."

Bulstrode nodded, and quitted the room. It was a good idea. Mr. Quelch knew already as much as he could learn from Bulstrode, and there could be no betrayal of Herbert in speaking to him on the subject.

Bulstrode went to Mr. Quelch's room, and tapped on the door. The master of the Remove did not bid him enter. The door was opened quietly from within, and Mr. Quelch himself stepped out into the passage. Bulstrode caught a glimpse of a man in black, in the room near the bed, ere Mr. Quelch closed the door again.

The Remove-master looked at Bulstrode inquiringly, and very kindly.

"Speak low," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode, in wonder. "Certainly. I—I want to ask you about my young brother, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at him.

"Did you know that he was breaking bounds last night, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"You know he intended to do so? You had better tell me all, Bulstrode—this has developed into a fearfully serious matter."

"I knew he intended to go, sir. I stopped him."

Mr. Quelch started.

"You stopped him, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir, and locked the door of the Second dormitory upon him," said the captain of the Remove. "I never suspected that he would try to climb out of the window."

"Ah! It was you locked the dormitory door on the outside, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"I found it so," said Mr. Quelch. "Your brother did not return; we found him in the Close, under the window."

Bulstrode gave a wild cry.

"Not—not—"

He broke off helplessly.

"Calm yourself, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch, in his quiet voice. "Nothing of the sort. He had fallen, but the fall was not far enough to hurt him. He had evidently fallen in beginning to climb the rope on his return."

"Then—then—"

"He was insensible, and—and in a feverish state, too. He had lain there in the rain—how long, I do not know; but I suppose we shall discover when we learn what were his movements last night, while he was away from the school. He was drenched, and he awoke this morning in a high fever."

"Oh!"

"Wingate cycled last night to Friardale for the doctor, and brought him here, and he is here yet," said Mr. Quelch. "Your brother's state is serious, but we have every hope. The poor lad has been through a terrible time, and he was in no physical condition to stand it, owing, I am afraid, to his own folly."

"Poor old Bertie!"

"I am very sorry for him, and for you," said Mr. Quelch. "You have the satisfaction, however, of knowing that he does not owe this to you—that his escapade was entirely his own, and that you did your best to save him."

"If—if I had let him go, he wouldn't have climbed out of the window," Bulstrode said brokenly. "He might have been all right."

"You must not think such thoughts as that," said Mr. Quelch. "In the first place, the fall did not hurt him; he certainly did not fall from a greater height than the lowest window-sill, upon which he must have climbed to reach the rope, and if he had been getting in at the window instead, he might have fallen in precisely the same way. But even if he had broken his neck, Bulstrode, in a fall from the dormitory window, you would still have done your duty in stopping his going out as you did. It is useless, and may be wicked, to think that things would be better if one did not do right. It is always best to do what is right."

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode miserably.

"I will let you know how your brother progresses, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch. "You must bear this bravely, my lad."

Bulstrode nodded, without replying, and Mr. Quelch entered the bed-room again. The captain of the Remove turned slowly away.

It was black news that he had had that morning, and the news that was to follow was blacker.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER. Under the Shadow.

THERE were hushed voices in Greyfriars that morning. Even the Second Form were quiet, and moved about on tiptoe.

Bulstrode minor was sick.

That was all the news at first, but it was known, and perfectly well understood, that the sickness was of a serious nature.

All kinds of rumours were afloat on the subject; but one thing seemed to be clear—that Bulstrode minor had broken bounds the previous night, that he had failed in his attempt to re-enter the school, and that he had lain for some time unprotected in the rain, in a faint of some sort.

Such an experience was likely to tell heavily upon the strongest constitution, and Bulstrode minor's constitution was far from being strong.

It might have been, but by his own ways and habits, he had reduced himself to a frail and irritable condition, prone to break up utterly under any unusual strain.

And under this strain, the weak and ill-conditioned body had failed him. He was awakened in a fever, and even yet he did not know the faces round him.

Dr. Payne had not left the school. That alone was a serious aspect of the case, for the local doctor was a busy man. And when Trotter, the page, was sent down to the village at breakfast-time, with a telegram for Bulstrode's father, an electric shock ran through the school.

Mr. Bulstrode had been telegraphed for.

Then there was no time even for a letter! The discovery gave the whole school a painful shock. It was realised that there was danger!

Danger!

And at that terrible word, voices grew hushed, and the most careless of faces became serious.

Bulstrode minor was in danger!

The Greyfriars fellows were very quiet when they went in to lessons that morning. There was a stony calmness in George Bulstrode's face.

He was thinking of his brother, and he could hardly realise the terrible truth of it. Bertie was in danger! Forgotten now was the sullen, obstinate nature, the fierce recklessness

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of the black sheep of the family, the cruel blow he had struck the previous night. All was forgotten, excepting that he was Bulstrode's brother, and in danger!

Bulstrode moved about like a fellow in a dream. And every other fellow in the Remove tried to show him some kindness. They felt for him—they understood.

Mr. Quelch looked grave and reserved as he took the class that morning. He purposely spared Bulstrode, giving the captain of the Remove little or nothing to do. But presently it came to Bulstrode's turn to construe, and he rose to his feet, book in hand.

His eyes wandered on the page, wildly, as he vainly strove to fix his attention upon his work.

The printed page danced before his eyes—instead of the lines of the old Roman poet, he saw a white face with the imprint of death upon it, looking at him from the book.

"Go on from *Est in conspectu Tenedos*," said Mr. Quelch softly.

Bulstrode tried to go on.

But his voice broke.

He suddenly laid down the book and covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

There was a strange thrill in the class.

Such a scene had never been witnessed in the Remove Form-room before.

The burly Removite stood, his face hidden by his hands, his strong form shaken by a heavy sob, while the class sat silent, grim. Mr. Quelch came a step towards the captain of the Remove.

"You need not go on, Bulstrode," he said kindly. "If you do not feel fit for work this morning you shall be excused lessons."

"Thank you, sir," Bulstrode faltered.

"You may leave the class-room, if you prefer."

Bulstrode moved out of his place.

The Form-room door closed behind him, and the Remove were left with concerned faces. Few had ever dreamed of seeing Bulstrode, once the bully of the Remove, break down in public in this way.

Lessons were done that morning in a very desultory fashion; but the Form-master was not hard upon the Remove.

When the class was dismissed, they trod from the Form-room on tiptoe, and gathered in groups in the passages and the Close to talk in hushed whispers.

How was Bulstrode minor getting on?

That was the question that was in all minds.

He was in bed in Mr. Quelch's room—the Remove-master had given up his room to the invalid. He was not in a state to be removed to the school sanatorium. Dr. Payne was still at the school. He had driven away for a couple of hours in the morning, but he had returned—and remained.

Bulstrode's father and mother were expected every minute now.

Bulstrode was hanging about the gates to meet them. His face was colourless, and he was untidy in his appearance, his eyes haggard. The weight that had fallen upon his life seemed to have completely crushed the captain of the Remove. He had not the heart to go down to the station and meet his parents, but waited for them at the gates of the school, hanging about with drooping head, and his hands in his pockets.

Even Gosling, the school porter, gave him a sympathetic look.

"You cheer hup, sir," said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—you cheer hup, and 'ope for the best, Master Bulstrode."

Bulstrode nodded without replying.

He could not speak. Hardly a word had passed his lips since he left the Form-room that morning, after breaking down in his work.

There was a sound of wheels in the road, and Bulstrode's weary eyes raised themselves from the ground.

It was the hack from the station that was approaching, and Bulstrode could see his father and his mother in it.

Only lately they had visited Greyfriars on the occasion of the cricket-match with St. Jim's College, and on that occasion there had been trouble between Bulstrode and his people. That was over now; but there was trouble of a more serious kind to greet Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode on this visit to Greyfriars. The Head's telegram had naturally caused alarm; and Mrs. Bulstrode was crying softly in the hack, and the old gentleman, who prided himself upon being hard and self-contained, was sitting bolt upright, keeping his features composed, but with a great effort.

The hack stopped, and Bulstrode opened the door.

Mr. Bulstrode, forgetting for the moment the attitude of superhuman calmness he had assumed, grasped the hand of his elder son.

"George!" He broke off, gasping. "George!"

"Yes, dad."
 "George! He's all right—so far? For goodness' sake, tell me!"

"He's only a little worse, the doctor says."

"Only a little! Oh!"

They walked to the house together. Mrs. Bulstrode was leaning heavily upon her son's arm. Her veil was thick over her face to hide her tears, but it could not wholly hide them. The boys took off their caps respectfully as they passed.

"Mother," whispered Bulstrode, "it wasn't my fault—you know that. I looked after him all I could."

"I'm sure you did, my boy."

"I tried to keep him in. Goodness knows I did my best! I'd have done anything," said Bulstrode miserably. "Oh, mother, I wish I were lying there now, in his place, if he could only be well and strong again!"

"How did it happen?" said Bulstrode's father.

Bulstrode told him. He made it as kind for Herbert as he could. The old gentleman listened with knitted brows.

"Poor old Bertie was only reckless—he never meant any harm," said Bulstrode, with a break in his voice. "I—I wish I could have helped him more."

"I've no doubt you did all you could, George," said the old gentleman. "Take us to him—we must see him."

"This way, father!"

Mr. Quelch received them at the door of his room, and showed them in to the bedside where the sufferer lay.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Scene.

HERBERT lay in bed, and the pillow under his head was hardly whiter than the face that lay upon it.

His eyes were wide open, staring blankly at the ceiling overhead, and his white lips were never still for a moment.

From his moving lips poured an incessant babble of words, as the fever moved him—words that had a strange sound upon the lips of one so young—half-told, broken stories of reckless doings and wild experiences.

"Bertie," murmured his mother—"Bertie! Don't you know me?"

The wild eyes did not even turn upon her.

"He is delirious," said Dr. Payne, softly; and he drew the weeping mother aside, and she sank into a chair by the window.

Mr. Bulstrode stood looking down upon the delirious junior. He heard from his son's lips words he had never dreamed of hearing from them.

Mutterings of gambling, of night excursions, of smoking, and even of drinking—wild mutterings that were half true and half imaginary—the fevered images of a maddened, distorted brain.

"Good heavens!" muttered the unhappy father. "Good heavens!"

Bulstrode stood with frozen lips. He had expected all this. He had known more than his father what his younger brother was like.

But there was no condemnation now in Bulstrode's face. What Herbert was saying was only what he might himself have said a few months before. Herbert was no worse than he had been; but he had changed, and Herbert had not. That was the difference.

And the downward path had led the unhappy boy to this! Truly it was said, from of old, that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Mr. Quelch tapped Bulstrode lightly upon the shoulder.

The boy understood, and he left the bed-room silently, closing the door behind him.

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He walked away miserably down the passage. At the end of the passage a group of Removites were waiting for him.

Harry Wharton squeezed his arm.

"How is he now, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode groaned.

"Worse!"

"I'm sorry! You're sure?"

"The doctor doesn't say so, but I can see it in his face," Bulstrode muttered. "Herbert is delirious now."

"Still delirious?"

"Yes, and when that goes——"

Bulstrode did not finish.

The tears started to his eyes, and he strode abruptly away, his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"It's bad," said Bob Cherry, with a miserable face. "It's rotten! But—but the poor kid can't be going to—to——"

He broke off with the word unuttered.

Harry Wharton shuddered. The same terrible thought was in his own mind, and in the minds of all the other fellows.

"Heaven forbid!" he muttered.

"I guess this lays me out," said Fisher T. Fish. "It's awful! Poor old kid! I'm glad, now, that I was never down on him."

"We did our best for him," said Harry. "It wasn't much good, but it was all we could do, and I'm glad about it. But—but I wish I could have prevented this. It's terrible! I never expected to see poor old Bulstrode cut up like this."

The juniors went into afternoon lessons with grim and gloomy faces.

A shadow was hanging upon the school! It seemed as if a shadow hung over the old place, and dimmed the bright rays of the July sun.

Was it the shadow of the wings of the Angel of Death?

Work was a mere hollow pretence that afternoon. No one in the school could put his mind to it, for it was known now that Bulstrode minor would probably not live through the night.

When the fever went it would leave life at the lowest flickering point, and the unhappy lad had no fund of vitality to draw upon to tide him over the crisis.

A lad in good health, a lad who had spent his leisure hours on the cricket-field, or in healthy exercise, would have had a good chance. But Bulstrode minor had never done that. He was in no condition to stand the strain put upon him.

Without anything being actually stated on the subject, the juniors came to understand gradually that there was little or no hope.

It had a stunning effect upon them.

Fellows moved about the school as if in a waking dream, and spoke only in whispers, or did not speak at all.

Bulstrode minor was dying!

Every heart went out to Bulstrode at this hour of anguish. Even fellows who had disliked him tried to show what they felt, tried to do any little service for him.

The captain of the Remove noticed nothing.

He was like a fellow crushed and dazed by a cruel blow. He never spoke; he did not eat; he hardly raised his eyes from the ground.

When, in the cool of the evening, Bulstrode was called into the sick-room, all the fellows knew what it meant, and they gathered in a crowd at the end of the passage, very silent.

Bulstrode entered the room of death with white face and faltering steps.

He knew—yet he could hardly realise—that he was about to lose his brother!

Herbert lay back in the bed upon a heap of pillows, his face white and drawn, his eyes strangely large and seemingly luminous.

He was quite conscious now.

The delirium had passed, and he had been left at the point of utter exhaustion. The candle of life flickered very low; the flame, with nothing in reserve to draw upon, was about to expire. Life was spent in the frail and wasted frame.

Herbert's eyes turned upon his brother. Mrs. Bulstrode was sobbing silently in a chair by the window. Mr. Bulstrode stood grim and silent, stunned. Bulstrode drew slowly up to his brother's bedside.

Herbert's white lips twitched into a kind of smile.

"George!" he murmured, barely audibly.

Bulstrode came closer.

"Oh, Bertie!"

"I—I'm going!" muttered Herbert. "I know it! They won't say so, but I know it! I'm so sorry, George!"

"Bertie!"

"I've been rotten to you, and you've done all you could for me," said Herbert hoarsely. "I struck you last night!"

Bulstrode groaned.

"Don't speak of that, Bertie, don't! Do you think I care for that! Oh, if I had only known—if I'd only known."

Herbert smiled faintly.

"But you didn't, George; you couldn't help it! I never thought it was the last wild night—last night—but it was. What a fool, what a fool I've been."

Bulstrode groaned again.

"Good-bye, old George; and—and be good to mother—better than I've been," muttered Herbert. "I've caused her worry enough. You must make it up."

Bulstrode nodded, sobs choking his voice.

The white lips did not move again. The light was fading from the face of Herbert Bulstrode. His brother held his hand, and terrible fear tugged at his heart as he felt it grow cold in his grasp.

Herbert stirred once.

"It's cold!" he muttered. "Cold! Oh, mother!"

His mother was sobbing by his bedside. The boy did not speak again. Like a flame that is burnt out, the life of Herbert Bulstrode flickered away.

Mr. Quelch gently detached the cold hand from Bulstrode's grasp. Bulstrode staggered, his eyes turning wildly upon the Form-master.

"He—oh, he's not! I won't believe it!"

"Compose yourself, my poor lad."

Bulstrode read the terrible truth in the Form-master's face. He sank into a chair by the bedside, and his face dropped into his hands, and he sobbed as if his heart would break.

The news had been expected in the school, but it came as a terrible shock, nevertheless. The sympathy of all for Bulstrode was very keen.

That the captain of the Remove was fearfully cut up was easy to be seen.

Those who saw him stagger away from the sick-room, after the final scene, noted the haggard face, the sunken eyes, the

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terrible grief in every feature, and their hearts ached for the fellow who had once been called the bully of the Remove.

"Poor old chap!" Harry Wharton said. "I wish there was something a fellow could do—something he could say—but there's nothing."

"Nothing," said Bob Cherry hopelessly. "Poor old Bulstrode!"

It was known that Bulstrode was to leave Greyfriars for a time, with his people. After what had happened, his life could not go on as before without a break.

When the time came for departure he shook hands with Harry Wharton & Co., his face white and set, but composed.

"I'm going," he said. "I shall come back. I don't know when. And I want you to become captain of the Remove, Wharton, while I'm gone, at any rate. It was your old place, and you ought to have it. I think the fellows will respect my wishes, as far as that goes; but if not, there can be a new election. And now, good-bye, and thank you all for your kindness to me."

"Good-bye, Bulstrode, old fellow—and buck up!"

And so Bulstrode went!

The familiar face was missing from the whole school, but Bulstrode was to return.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "Bob Cherry in Search of his Father!" By Frank Richards. Order your copy of The MAGNET Library in advance. 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, Shanghai, and at the time arranged goes ashore to meet Ferrers Lord. He learns that a great conspiracy, in which Russia plans to get China for her own, is being formed, and that Prince Tu-Li-Hoan, otherwise known as Ching-Lung, alone can stop the disaster. On the return to the submarine, Lord receives a message stating that the Russians have attacked Ching-Lung's territory. Lord, Thurston, Ching-Lung, the Norwegian boy, Hagensen, and two of the sailors of the Lord of the Deep, embark on a journey to the North of China in a balloon. They are driven out of their course by a gale, and when they land Ching-Lung sets forth to spy out the land for the advance of the small party.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ching-Lung's Ghost—The Captured Train—Clearing the Line.

Suddenly, as Ching-Lung walked on in the dark, a tall tree rose like a spectre before him. He mounted the tree as cleverly as a monkey, and looked ahead. A dazzling flash of lightning—the first flash during the whole of the gale—streaked across the sky, and a crash of thunder followed that seemed to shake the earth.

Ching-Lung chuckled. The flash had shown him what he wanted—the famous railway built by German capital. Beside the line he had seen a few miserable zinc-roofed sheds.

He slid down the tree and sped on. A faint, flickering light shone through the gloom.

"Someone there," thought Ching-Lung. "That means mischief in a place where they only run a train a day."

There was certainly a light in the rickety shed. Ching-Lung crossed the line.

There was a faint smell of smoke and burning oil in the air that made the Chinese boy quicken his pace. There was no need for caution, either, for the noise made by the wind would have deadened the tramp of an army. The light came from a dirty, narrow window let into the side

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of the nearest shed, and the station did not boast a platform. He stumbled against a pile of boxes covered with tarpaulins.

"Cartridges!" he muttered. "Allee lightee!"

The rifle slung over his shoulder—a Mauser—was dripping with water, but that would make little difference, for the cartridges were watertight, and a drop of oil would clear the barrel. He set his knife to work silently, and pressed open one of the boxes. To his disgust the cartridges were intended for the Lee-Netford pattern of rifle, and therefore useless.

He filled his pockets all the same, and, creeping towards the window, cautiously raised his yellow face.

There were five men in the room—four Chinese and a bearded European. They were squatting round a wood fire, smoking and chatting. Ching-Lung saw their rifles stacked in a corner, and noticed that the European had a revolver at his hip.

"Some nicee lily game on, I'll betee!" reflected Ching-Lung. "Letee us see what smellee so muchee."

He slipped away and ran down the line, which curved sharply. The mingled smell of smoke and oil was explained at once. He saw the flash of a furnace-fire. An engine with two trucks was standing on the line getting up steam, a solitary Chinese stoker shovelling wood and coal into the furnace.

Ching-Lung rubbed his hands together gleefully, and then, turning round, ran like a deer.

"Coo-ec!"

Ferrers Lord started as the cry reached him. Then the Chinese boy came crashing through the brambles.

"What news?" asked the millionaire.

Ching-Lung chuckled.

"Lubly!" he squeaked. "Dey got a tlain on de—"

"For Heaven's sake," said the millionaire irritably, "speak English, and not that gibberish!"

"All right," said Ching-Lung, not at all abashed, "just as you like. They are up to some mischief. There's a train on the line with two truck-loads of rifles and ammunition."

NEXT TUESDAY: "BOB CHERRY IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER!" A Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

I expect it's for Chan-so, for there's a Russian in command of the six men. Steam will be up in ten minutes. Why shouldn't we go to Kwai-hai in the train ourselves?"

"An excellent idea," drawled Ferrers Lord, "if we could manage it."

"We can manage it," said Ching-Lung. "Listen to me."

He whispered a few words, and the millionaire laughed.

"It's certainly feasible," said Ferrers Lord, "and our position is so desperate that we must seize any chance."

He spoke to Rupert, and ordered Prout and Maddock to follow. Eric was too weak to walk, so Ching-Lung carried him. With the wind and rain at their backs they moved towards the miserable station. Then Ching-Lung handed over his charge to Ferrers Lord and slipped away.

The Chinese stoker was still flinging coal into the furnace. Ching-Lung clambered into the rear truck and examined the goods it contained. He crept forward, and, crouching low between the buffers of the first truck and the tender of the engine, watched the toiling man with glittering eyes. All unconscious of his peril, the Chinese turned to examine the steam-gauge. Ching-Lung looked at it, too, and saw that it registered sixty pounds pressure to the square inch. It was not enough. He must wait.

The flames roared merrily through the boiler-pipes, and great red shafts of lights flashed from the open door.

"How long, Wun-Hu?" shouted a voice.

Wun-Hu called back an answer in Chinese, and the speaker, with an oath, re-entered the shed. Ching-Lung thought over his plan again. It was four unarmed men against six armed ones. To try and rush the shed and capture its occupants would be fatal. True, they might wait until steam was fully up, overcome the stoker, and escape on the train.

But such a scheme would be fatal, too, for the message would be flashed ahead, warning the rebels to pull up the rails.

"Dere's only once way," thought Ching-Lung, watching the gauge with eager eyes.

The Chinaman squatted down on the footplate to light his pipe. Inch by inch Ching-Lung drew his lithe body over the coal. He wriggled like a snake until he was within striking distance. His supple hands shot over the stoker's shoulder, one on either side, and closed like a vice upon the man's throat.

There was no sound.

Ching-Lung's teeth were clenched, his whole amazing strength seemed thrown into that iron clutch. His fingers relaxed at last. Wun-Hu remained motionless and inert, with blackened throat and lolling tongue. Ching-Lung gagged him, and bound him with his own sash.

Then from one of his wonderful pockets, which seemed to contain everything under the sun, he took a cord and three lead tubes. He laid the cork on a shovel and scorched it over the fire. Taking a drop of oil from the oilcan, he mixed the burnt cork into a greasy paste, and placed a bit of broken mirror before him.

One of the tubes contained red paint, the other a composition of phosphorus and oil, which is known as luminous paint. In a few minutes the transformation was complete. He blackened his forehead, cheeks, and shaven head, placed two glowing circles of luminous paint round his eyes, coloured his nose and chin a brilliant purple, and then assumed a hideously weird expression that nothing can describe.

"Dat legulal allee lightee," he tittered. "Dey tink de bogey-man gotee dem fol celtain. He, he, he!"

He flung more coal upon the roaring fire and sprang to the ground. Wun-Hu stirred, but Ching-Lung knew that he was helpless. He dragged his limp body out and swung it over his shoulder. A shadow crept across the line.

"Are you ready?" whispered Ferrers Lord.

"In one lily moment," chuckled Ching-Lung. "I wantee a bit of stling."

He had seen a coil of rope in one of the trucks, and a stunted tree grew on either side of the shed. He crawled back for the rope, and, unwinding it, fastened one end to the nearer tree, and then hurried to the other. The rope crossed the doorway about thirty inches from the ground.

"Havee you gotee de sticks?" he asked.

"Yes; we cut them while we were waiting for you."

"Den," laughed Ching-Lung, "callee out yonl floops."

Like shadows, Rupert, Prout, Maddock, and Ferrers Lord clustered round the door. The men were still squatting round the fire smoking and talking. There was a crash of glass and a weird burst of unearthly laughter. They leapt to their feet, startled, and looked towards the window.

Even the stolid Russian paled with superstitious dread as he saw the horrible, grinning face of Ching-Lung.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Dazed with horror, the Chinamen huddled together. Then they rushed madly to the door and dashed it open. The rope tripped them, and four cudgels wielded by lusty arms did the

rest. The Russian alone stood his ground, and snapped his revolver point-blank at the Chinese boy's head.

The shot came close, but not close enough, and a cloud of blinding smoke filled the room. Like some nimble clown or pantomime demon, Ching-Lung bounded through the shattered window, dropped lightly on all fours, and then sprang upon the Russian.

They fell with a crash.

"Help!" shouted Ching-Lung.

Ferrers Lord dashed to the rescue and pinned the Russian down. In ten minutes the five men were gagged and securely bound.

"Now," said the Chinese boy joyously, "we justice cut de telegraph-wires, and dere we was."

A few swift hatchet-blows brought one of the poles down, dragging with it in its fall a length of wire. The wire was severed, and they mounted the train. An examination of the trucks proved more than satisfactory. They contained rifles, ammunition, a Maxim, and shells for heavy guns; all intended, no doubt, for the use of Chan-So. Ching-Lung went back to make certain that the prisoners were secure.

"Where's Wun-Hu?" he shouted. "He gonee!"

They dashed down in alarm, but it was too late. The Chinaman had wriggled out of his bonds and vanished.

"We bettel get a movee on jolly quicke," said Ching-Lung gravely. "Dere's anothel station fivee milee up de line, and if de tief gettee dere it allee up. Dere's de long blidge, lemembel."

"Hush!" said Ferrers Lord warningly.

He knew what Ching-Lung meant. The whole country between them and Kwai-hai was in a ferment. The long bridge that spanned the Po-sin-whaien was thirty miles ahead. To search for the escaped prisoner in the darkness and rain was hopeless. Their one hope was to make good speed before Wun-Hu could reach the telegraph-station and flash the news ahead.

Ferrers Lord opened the throttle and the wheels began to revolve.

The permanent-way—a single line—was terribly bumpy and uneven. As the train gathered speed rifles were served out, and Prout and Maddock set to work to put the Maxim gun together and mount it. Ching-Lung crawled forward and lighted the lamp. When he returned little Eric was warming himself.

"Well, my lily sweethealt," said Ching-Lung, "how you feelee now?"

"Better, dank you, very mooch," said Eric, with a smile.

He was a handsome, sturdy lad, in spite of his freckles and red hair. Ching-Lung squatted down beside him.

"Where's Shakespealee Willyum?" he asked suddenly.

Eric turned deadly white as he thrust his hand into his wet pocket. The rat had gone!

"Oh, I've lost him!" he wailed. "I've lost him!"

Ching-Lung patted his red head.

"Dat allee lightee," he said. "Nobody evel losee ole Shakespealee when I on de spotee. When you get seasick in de balloonee I takee him fkom you. Dere he is allee smiling. See!"

Eric seized the dragged white rat and kissed it rapturously. The train was racing swiftly through the darkness.

"The station," said Ferrers Lord.

They rushed past the few straggling sheds with a roar. Ching-Lung rose.

"It wouldn't be a bad plan to cut the wires here," he said. "We must be well ahead of Wun-hu."

The brakes grated against the wheels and the train came to a standstill. Rupert sprang down, axe in hand, and did his work swiftly and well. Then the throttle was flung open and they rushed on.

Prout and Maddock knew their business, and speedily had the Maxim mounted on the rear truck. Ferrers Lord knew the line like a book, and could name every station, gradient, and bridge. He fancied that the greatest danger that menaced them was the danger of collision. With a single line, where trains pass each other by the clumsy method of sidings, the risk was tremendous, for a wrong point would wreck the train. He whispered his fears to Ching-Lung.

"We've just to take the chance," said the Chinese boy. "No doubt Chan-So is expecting the train, and everything is clear for it. There, what did I say?"

Just as he spoke the train dashed round a curve. There was a flash of light, and a volley of cheers.

Bang!

It was Prout's rifle that rang out. Ferrers Lord turned upon him furiously.

"You fool!" he cried. "What have you done?"

Prout quailed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said dolefully; "the thing went off by accident. It was on half-cock, too."

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

There was a spatter of rifles from the vanishing station, and

a dozen bullets whistled harmlessly after the train. Ferrers Lord ground his teeth. The chance rifle-shot might spoil all. The rebels who had assembled to cheer the train had guessed something was wrong. Ching-Lung whistled, and shook his head at the steersman.

"Dat a tellible blundel, Thomas," he squeaked. "You no lightee to havee anyting but a popgun."

"Ow could I help it?" moaned Prout. "It's one of them blessed rifles made in Germany."

"Never mind," said Rupert; "accidents will happen. We must cut the wire here, too."

"If we are in time," drawled Ferrers.

The train was stopped, and the third pole came crashing down. Thurston had appointed himself stoker-in-chief, as he termed it, and he kept the furnace roaring gallantly. But the miserable engine refused to do more than twenty-five miles an hour on the level, thirty, perhaps, down a good incline, and barely twelve uphill. It was an old-fashioned six-wheeled affair, probably bought from some American company, and roughly tinkered up. Anything is good enough for China in that respect.

Ferrers Lord chafed with impatience.

"You'd better be careful, Rupert," he said, "or you'll be blowing us sky-high. The scrap-iron boiler won't stand much. I don't suppose the old tin pot ever did more than ten miles an hour before. I wonder if we shall ever be able to mount the big gradient below the bridge?"

"We'll do it, or break her," said Thurston. "Luckily, we're not short of fuel."

They were descending an incline between two dark walls of forest. Ferrers Lord leant out and peered ahead. A ball of fire suddenly leapt into the sky.

"A rocket!" cried the millionaire. "Every ounce of steam, for Heaven's sake! We cut the wire too late! To the gun, Prout! If they've torn up a rail we're finished! Here they come!"

Above the rattle of the train they heard a chorus of menacing shouts. The dawn was creeping up steadily. Guns spitted and cracked, and moving figures flitted through the gloom. Ferrers Lord answered the fire, emptying the magazine of his rifle twice in quick succession.

On the slope the train was travelling well. Not two hundred yards away figures were struggling frantically to tear up the line before the rushing monster could reach them.

They were too late. The train dashed down upon them, scattering them right and left. Shrieking and yelling, others crowded up behind, snapping rifles and revolvers, and racing after the train.

"This is where we come in, Tom!" growled Maddock. "Give it to 'em!"

Prout sent the ribbon of cartridges flying through the breech. With a shrill f-r-r-r! the deadly gun sent a stream of lead into Chan-So's followers. Then the engine darted round a curve.

"Phew!" said Rupert, mopping his forehead. "That was warm while it lasted!"

"Too warm," answered the millionaire. "We're in a tight place now. I think we had better abandon the engine."

"Abandon the engine! Why on earth do that?"

"Because," said the millionaire drily, "we have muddled things. That idiotic shot has spoiled everything. To keep to the line now is like running our heads into a noose. They will make every effort to stop us, even to destroying the bridge."

Ching-Lung shook his head.

"They'll not do that," he answered. "The bridge is too useful to Chan-So."

"Then what do you suggest?"

"I say keep to the line. It will be daylight in an hour. The next station is eighteen miles, and we shall have to pass through flat paddyclands all the way to Kwai-hal. Even if they pull up a rail or two, we can keep them back till we repair it, for there is no cover, and the fields are sure to be flooded. They may destroy the bridge, but until we are sure they have destroyed it, stick to the train. We must get to Kwai-hal."

Rupert flung open the furnace door.

"And when we do get there, Ching?" he asked.

"I will tell you then."

The dawn had grown brighter, and the gale was dying away. The engine groaned and grunted as it climbed the steep gradient the millionaire had spoken of. They kept their rifles ready, and keenly scrutinised the dark woods.

At last the crest of the hill was gained, and the speed increased. The grey light of the morning showed the submerged paddyclands stretching out on either hand, and the line winding through the water like a snake.

All were ravenously hungry, but they could find nothing but a tin of pressed beef and a few insipid cakes made out of rice.

"There's the river!" cried Ching-Lung.

They caught sight of a few distant brown sails. The wind sank into a gentle breeze. Ferrers Lord shaded his eyes.

"I see the bridge, too," he said. "By gad! What's that?"

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A plume of black smoke floated above the river. Ching-Lung sprang upon the coal to get a better view.

"It's a steamboat," he said quietly. "And they're waiting for us. They've got a big gun on her. Give me that hook. Into the tender, Thomas, for your life!"

Ferrers Lord seized him by the shoulder as he seized the coupling-hook.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"You'll see presently," answered the Chinese boy. "Slow up a little, Mr. Thurston, and let her go when I say!"

Rupert obeyed mechanically as Ching-Lung scrambled over the coal, and, lying at full length, passed the hook under the coupling-chains.

"Let her go," he shouted, "for all she's worth!"

They were almost at the mouth of the bridge, and the gun on the steamboat sent a shell shrieking towards them. The engine leapt forward, freed from the waggons, and separated the distance between itself and them every second. With a roar it rushed on to the bridge. A second shell, better aimed, struck one of the waggons.

There was a sudden, deafening crash, an avalanche of flame, and the air grew dark with fragments of shattered iron and splintered wood. A gaping rent was cut through the first span of the bridge, but the engine was safe.

Ching-Lung looked at the scared faces of his comrades with a beaming smile.

"I forgottee to tellee you I found a lottee of dynamite in that tuck," he chuckled. "Dat shell foundee it, too. He, he, he! Dey tealin' deir locks now, I bet. We allec lightee. He, he, he!"

Kwai-Hal—A Dash for Life—The Tower of Silence—The Rebels are Beaten Back, and Tom Prout and Rupert Thurston Both Meet Old Acquaintances.

The wind died down, and the crimson light of a glorious morning flooded the eastern sky. The warm sun revived their flagging spirits and jaded limbs. They were running short of coal to feed the furnace, and the water in the boiler was low. And suddenly, as the engine rounded a curve, they saw the strange, jumbled roofs of Kwai-hal lying at their feet.

Ferrers Lord slackened the speed to whisper to Ching-Lung. It was a hazardous thing to rush blindfold into a city of riot and bloodshed—a city at war with itself. And when at war the Chinaman knows neither civilisation nor humanity. He hampers himself with no prisoners or wounded. To fall into his merciless clutches is death.

Then through the warm morning air came the crisp rattle of rifles. Ching-Lung's eyes sparkled.

"They are holding out!" he said quickly.

"Who are holding out?"

"Yes-Kiang and his men. I spoke to you of him. He was my mother's brother, and he is fighting against Chan-So for me. He wrote to Fat-Fin-Yow that he had seized the palace. He is braver than a lion."

Ferrers Lord nodded as he listened to the cracking rifles.

"Can you draw a plan of the town?" he asked.

With a piece of chalk Ching-Lung scrawled a rough plan of Kwai-hal on the footplate. The railway ran north towards the Russian border, skirting the hill on which the palace stood. The station was beyond the palace. At the foot of the hill was a thick belt of trees, which no doubt screened the attackers. It was a strong position for the besieged.

"It seems to me," said the millionaire, "Yes-Kiang is pretty comfortable. Only two things can drive him out—hunger, or shell-fire. How many men do you think he has?"

"Probably a thousand."

"And plenty of ammunition?"

"No. In his message to Fat-Fin-Yow, he said he had only ten thousand rounds, and most of it bad."

Ferrers Lord rubbed his chin thoughtfully. In the warfare of to-day it has been proved that on an average only one man dies for every twenty thousand cartridges fired. But then Yes-Kiang was not firing at long range and a hidden foe. The distance from the belt of trees to the palace forts was not more than eight hundred yards, and at such a range even a poor marksman ought to be deadly.

"We must act quickly, whatever we do," said the millionaire. "There is no retreat."

"Why not get the Maxim on the tender," suggested Rupert, "and make a dash for it? We could pepper them out of their cover, climb the hill, and get into the palace."

Ferrers Lord laughed drily.

"My dear fellow," he drawled, "much as I love you, I cannot think a great deal of your advice. What earthly use would it be to gain the palace and abandon the ammunition? We should simply be starved out and murdered afterwards."

Rupert flushed, and bent over Ching-Lung's plan.

"What is this ring here?" he asked, pointing to a circular chalk mark.

"The Tower of Silence," said Ching-Lung.

Thurston looked up inquiringly, and saw the millionaire start.

"A Tower of Silence!" he said quickly. "By Jove, I see a way! You do not understand what a Tower of Silence is. Rupert. A certain sect of Buddhists and Parsees do not believe in burying their dead. They build these towers and place their dead bodies there to crumble away, or be eaten by the crows and vultures. It is a horrible place, but we cannot pick and choose. Have you the flag, Ching-Lung?"

"Yes."

"Then take the Maxim to pieces."

Ching-Lung rubbed his hands. He understood the scheme, but the others were puzzled. Luckily the Maxim and its ammunition, together with several rifles, had been placed on the tender before the Chinese boy had uncoupled the trucks. The ammunition was scanty, and therefore priceless.

The engine had come to a stop at the head of the incline, and the noise of rifle-fire was louder. When the Maxim was unpacked and its portions distributed, the last of the coal was flung into the furnace, and Ferrers Lord flung open the throttle.

With a piercing hoot from the whistle, the engine roared down the hill.

"Don't waste a shot!" cried Ferrers Lord. "And take care not to expose yourselves!"

A wild yell rose from below. Ching-Lung tied a flag to his rifle, and it fluttered above them. It was a yellow flag, with a black dragon in the centre.

The train dashed into the belt of woodland. Shrieking men poured from the shelter of the trees, and bullets whistled round the engine.

"Look!" shouted Ching-Lung. "Yes-Kiang has seen us!"

A second flag fluttered from the palace roof, but Ferrers Lord had no time for a second glance. For an instant a sea of yellow faces seemed to surround them, and the air was full of noise and flame. Urged forward by their maddened comrades behind, men were flung forward and mangled by the flying wheels.

But it was the turn of the besieged now. The attackers had left their ambush, and five hundred rifles cracked from the palace forts, sending a hail of lead into their surging ranks. It mowed them down like chaff. They scattered, leaving their dead, and plunged into shelter.

"Now, men, run for your lives!" cried Ferrers Lord.

High above them rose a tower of rough grey stone—the tower of the dead. Loathsome birds wheeled about it, or sat on its protruding stones, glutted with their horrible feast. The rebels, from the shelter of the trees, were firing wildly as the millionaire forced down the brakes.

"Come!" he shouted. "Run like deer!"

Ching-Lung caught up Eric. There was little need for Ferrers Lord's advice. They crossed the narrow open space swept by shrieking bullets, and gained the tower. It was a hideous place, but they could not pick and choose. Bleached human bones glistened in every dark niche of the walls as they raced up the winding stairs.

Ching-Lung put Eric down, and told them to stand back. He did not wish them to face the horrors above, and Ferrers Lord knew the reason. Alone, the Chinese boy stepped out upon the platform, hoisted his flag defiantly, and then, shuddering and holding his breath, he scared away the birds and flung down the corpses that lay there.

"Alles lightee!" he shouted, with a shiver.

The others ran up and mounted the Maxim. By twos and threes they could see the maddened Chinamen stealing from the shelter which was a shelter no longer. Prout straddled down over the Maxim and spat on his hands. If the terrible balloon voyage had unnerved him, he was like a lion in a fight.

"Now then!" he roared. "This is where we get a little bit back!"

"You bet!" chuckled Maddock. "Dust the varmints, me boy—dust 'em properly!"

With a crash the Maxim came into action, and raked the scrub and bushes. They could see the white splinters flying from the tree-trunks. The ambushed rebels bore the withering fire for five minutes. Then they broke from their hiding-place and swarmed over the line. It was madness.

The gun went round, the cartridges raced, through the breech, and a torrent of bullets cut great gaps through them. Mad with terror, they plunged again into the trees.

"By Jove," said Rupert, refilling the magazine of his rifle, "they're cornered!"

"Yes," answered the millionaire, "I fancy they are. They can only escape by facing Yes-Kiang's rifles, and running over the shoulder of the hill. And there they go!"

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The wood was untenable; it was impossible to cross the line. Tunics of every colour—red, white, blue, black—were mingled at the foot of the hill. There was a dip to the left that would screen Chan-So's rebels, but to gain it they had to cross two hundred yards of open ground.

As they swarmed up, flinging their guns away, a blaze of fire sprang from the palace forts.

"Bravo, again!" cried Ching-Lung. "Look there!"

They saw the great gates of the palace open. A troop of horsemen, two hundred strong, thundered out and galloped down the hill. They cut through Chan-So's flying warriors like a knife cuts through butter, reformed cleverly, and charged again. A few riderless horses dashed back up the hill. It was all over.

Ferrers Lord sped down the steps, followed by his men. The cavalry cantered up to the tower, their swords dripping, and formed in a circle. A grave-looking Chinaman, mounted on a tall horse, advanced. Then he sprang from the saddle and knelt at Ching-Lung's feet.

"This is Yes-Kiang," said Ching-Lung; "my uncle. He speaks English."

"If Yes-Kiang can speak English as well as he can fight," said the millionaire, with a smile, "the rebellion in Kwai-hal will not last long. That charge was magnificent. We must take advantage of it, and search the woods there, for we want ammunition badly. May I have the honour of shaking your Excellency's hand?"

Yes-Kiang smiled gravely.

"The honour is on my side," he answered, "where Ferrers Lord is concerned. I saw you once when I was attached to the Chinese Embassy in London. Let me introduce you to my right hand—Mandarin Kennedy."

"A Scotsman, I presume?"

"No; an Oirishman, be jabers!" said a voice, in a rich Irish brogue. "An' it's plazed Oi am to meet yez!"

Mandarin Kennedy was an enormous man, with a big, laughing face, almost as red in colour as Ben Maddock's hair. He rode an absurdly small horse, and smoked an enormous cigar. Ferrers Lord shook hands with him. Tom Prout was staring open-mouthed.

"Why," he roared, "it's Baby Mike!"

The Irishman turned and uttered a yell of delight.

"Tom Prout, by all that's wonderful! Give me the flipper av yez! Bedad, I thought yez was drowned in the ould Caledonia! Sure, it's meself that's better for a look at yez ugly mug!"

Prout and "Baby Mike," as the Irishman was generally called, had been shipmates long before on the ill-fated Caledonia, which sank outside Table Bay. There was little time for an exchange of confidences just then, for the rebels might re-form. Six men were sent to bring down the Maxim, others were despatched to take out the ammunition and destroy the engine, and the remainder searched the trees.

The search was amply rewarded. In their wild, disorganised rout, the rebels had abandoned almost everything. A pile of ammunition-boxes and nearly two hundred rifles were found. The belt of woodland was filled with dead. Ching-Lung picked his way through the trees.

Suddenly he heard a groan close beside him, and parted the bushes. A man lay there, dressed in Russian costume. Ching-Lung bent over him, and then uttered a shrill whistle that brought Thurston running up.

"Look!" hissed Ching-Lung, his eyes ablaze.

Thurston's hands clenched, and his teeth snapped together.

"Nathan Trethvick!"

A Council of War and a Desperate Resolve—The Treasures of the Palace of Kwai-hal—A Dastardly Shot.

Yes-Kiang was a born leader. He was a travelled Chinaman, and during his five years' stay in Europe he had carefully studied all civilised methods of warfare. He was far too clever to permit the advantage he had gained to slip through his fingers. The town swarmed with rebels, but with five or six hundred men he struck home at once, and set the buildings about the palace ablaze.

Then he called a council of war.

Ching-Lung was wildly cheered, as, dressed in his princely robes, he entered the council-chamber. He frowned.

"I don't want any foolish fuss made," he said bluntly. "It is all very well to be a prince. There must be no distinction here. You are all my friends, and all my equals. What have you to say, Yes-Kiang?"

Yes-Kiang bowed low.

"Illustrious son of the stars——"

"Illustrious son of a pig!" cried Ching-Lung. "Don't make an ass of yourself! I tell you we are friends and

equals here, and I want none of such rubbish. Speak plainly, I beg of you."

Yes-Kiang did not tell a cheering story. The whole country was up in arms. The loyal army in the north, commanded by General Yung, lay in deadly peril between the invading Russians and Chan-So's force. Chan-So was hated, and his army was a weak one, but it was certain that if he joined hands with the Russians the doom of Northern China was sealed.

"Then what is our own Government doing all this time?" asked Thurston.

Ferrers Lord laughed.

"Dancing like a doll to the wires they pull at Peking," he answered. "They know there is a rebellion; they know, too, that Russia has massed troops on the frontier. From Peking they hear that the rebellion is nothing, and that the Empress is straining every nerve to put it down. They ask why Russia is hurrying forward troops. Russia replies that the rebels have made sorties into her territory, and she must protect her border. That seems only right."

"It seems fatal to me," said Thurston.

The millionaire laughed again.

"My dear fellow," he drawled, "you do not know your own country. She always blunders like that at first, wastes time, and loses opportunities. That is why we are such a great race, perhaps. We bear a great deal, but Heaven help the nation that hits us hard enough to hurt! Let them only give us a few hard knocks, and we suddenly wake up, take off our coats, and, as they say, 'dust the floor with them.' That's what we did with France; that's what we did with the Khalifa; that's what our friend Kruger experienced. And Russia will have her second dose—a proper one this time—if she isn't careful."

Yes-Kiang nodded his head gravely.

"A wonderful nation!" he said. "Born fighters. I do not know which of you is the best—English, Irish, or Scotch."

Baby Jim grinned, and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Bedad," he laughed, "if yez have a Scotchman wid yez I'll soon show yez! I'll take him and Prout on together with one fist!"

Everybody laughed. Jim Kennedy could have fought a regiment.

"Not me, thankee!" said the steersman. "I'm off earthquakes!"

They were wandering away from the all-important subject, and Ching-Lung called their attention sharply to the fact. To remain in the palace with no hope of reinforcements was hopeless and useless. Their one chance—a terribly dangerous and weak one—was to make a forced march and attack Chan-So's army in the rear. With such a forlorn hope in view it was necessary to warn General Yung of their intention. Ching-Lung wrote out the despatches, and signed them with what looked more like a spider's web than a signature.

"You must pick out six of your most trustworthy men, Yes-Kiang," he said, "and let them try to get through. We march at ten."

Though Rupert had been almost petrified with amazement at the sight of Michael Scaroff's hireling, Nathan Trethvick, Ferrers Lord had evinced no surprise. He knew well enough that the dwarf had joined the Russian after being dismissed from the Lord of the Deep, and he knew also that Prince Michael was at the head of the vast conspiracy to win China for the Tsar.

The dwarf was seriously, but not dangerously, wounded as far as could be seen by a rough examination. His head had been gashed by a flying splinter, stunning him, and causing him to lose some blood. Yes-Kiang looked quite perplexed and astonished when Ferrers Lord declined to let the wounded man be butchered.

"But he is an enemy," he said, spreading out his yellow hands. "It is foolish to let an enemy live to kill you another time."

"My dear mandarin," drawled the millionaire, "there is certainly a good deal of truth in what you say. This man is a bitter enemy, and I have no doubt that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to stick a knife into me. If I talked to you for a week I could not give you a reason for letting him live that you would understand. We are built on different lines, you and I. He is a traitor, fighting against his Queen and country, but he is sick and wounded. If he had murdered my own father it would be my duty to be kind to him and cure him."

"And when he was cured?"

"Hang him!" said Ferrers Lord, with a laugh.

Yes-Kiang gasped.

"Mad!" he muttered. "Cure a man, and then hang him! All these British are mad!"

The palace of Kwai-hal was a city within itself, surrounded by forts and entrenched by a dry moat. Some years had passed since Ching-Lung had fled from it with Fat-Fin-Yow, to save his life, but he remembered every inch of the huge building, and the wonderful gardens outside. The garrison

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lived in a queer row of thatched sheds, and only a few of the soldiers were allowed to cross the threshold of the palace.

Thurston wandered into the garden. A stream of crystal water fell with a merry tinkle into a marble basin. He sat down, inhaling the scent of strange flowers, and watched the goldfish swimming lazily among the water-plants. Suddenly a pebble dropped with a splash into the basin, and he looked up. Ching-Lung was standing on the verandah, beckoning to him.

"Do you want me?" asked Rupert.

"Yes. I'm going to show you something. Here's the latch-key."

Rupert laughed. On his shoulder Ching-Lung carried an enormous key of bronze, as long as a good-sized crowbar.

"The key of your money-box, I suppose?" said Rupert.

"That's it. Nice lily bit of ilonmongely—eh?" answered the Chinese boy, dropping into his pigeon English. "It do key of de treasurechamber. Ole Tu-Li-Hoan a terrible misel, and he knewee how to getee hold of money. He heal some mandarin velly lich. Den he sayee, 'Allee lightee, I havee somee of dat. If de manee no stump up quick, he getee his nappel chopee off in no timee!' He, he, he! We go and look how muchee oof Tu-Li-Hoan got. Oh, my ole uncle velly, velly smalt!"

There was a sound of footsteps behind them. Two soldiers with drawn swords were following.

"What do you two sons of pigs want?" asked Ching-Lung sharply, in Chinese.

Both men bowed till their pigtails swept the ground.

"His Excellency Yes-Kiang has ordered us to accompany your glorious Highness," they answered.

Ching-Lung looked at Rupert, and groaned.

"De penalty of gleatness," he sighed. "Me no wantee those two fat louts following me about, and I'll justee tell them so."

To show his princely anger at thus being followed about, Ching-Lung sprang upon his bodyguard, knocked their heads together, boxed their ears, and then, when they turned to fly, he followed up their retreating forms with a shower of kicks.

"Don't you think that rather undignified behaviour?" asked Rupert, trying hard to keep back his laughter.

"Not a lily bitee. You see, dey not knowee me velly well yetee, and dey tink Yes-Kiang big chop mandarin, and doee what he tellee dem. Dat why I showee dem I no stand any nonsense. Good gracious me, you lookee like a tlam!"

Rupert paused before a mirror, and surveyed himself. The balloon voyage, the sousing in the lake, his duties of stoker on the engine, and his fighting had not improved his appearance. His clothes were in rags, and soaked with oil, and his face was black with grime.

"Well," he said, "there is certainly a Tired-Tim kind of a look about me, now you mention it."

"We soon altel dat," squeaked Ching-Lung. "Come to de waldlobe-place."

The wardrobe of the palace of Kwai-hal was well supplied with wonderful garments of gorgeous silk. There were no European clothes, so Rupert had to content himself with a blouse of blue silk, baggy white trousers, and felt slippers with crimson soles. He buckled on a broad-bladed sword, and examined himself in the mirror again.

"I feel as if I were off to a fancy-dress ball!" he laughed.

"What's the next move, Ching?"

"I tink we dless up Maddock and Thomas, too," said the Chinese boy. "I sendee fol dem."

The two abashed soldiers, who were waiting outside the door, answered his shout. He despatched them for the bo'sun and steersman, and after a short delay they heard a noise of scuffling and yelling. Rupert sprang forward, but Ching-Lung caught his arm.

"Dere no hully!" he squeaked. "Waitee a lily bit."

"But they're fighting!" cried Rupert, as the noise increased.

"Nevel mind," said Ching-Lung, with a wide grin. "Let 'em fight."

The noise of yells increased.

"Let me go, you yellor ape!" roared Prout's voice. "Wot d'yer want? I'll yank the pigtail off yer 'ead, so I will!"

"Punch him in the eye!" chimed in the bo'sun. "Hi, look out! He's drored his pig-sticker! 'Ere, help!"

The door crashed open, and the two frightened sailors dashed in, followed by a dozen of the bodyguard, with drawn swords.

Ching-Lung raised his hand, and the bodyguard vanished.

"My dear lilly Thomas," said Ching-Lung, "what da mattel? You lookee whitee 'bout de whiskels."

"Matter?" roared the panting steersman. "You'd look white if you'd been chased by a howling mob of yaller lunatics! Tell 'em to come back. I'm ready now!"

"But what has happened?" asked Rupert.

"Well, sire," said Maddock, "we've just escaped with our blessed lives! Me and Tom was havin' a quiet smoke in the gadding, sir, when up comes two ugly Chinese chaps with swords—a fat 'un and a thin 'un. 'Hallo,' I says, 'wot d'ye want, buttercups?' The fat 'un says, pointing to the palace with his sword, 'Ballo-walla-scrap-slush!' or summat like that. Bein' a Henglishman, I wasn't going to stand a dirty, yaller heathen swearin' at me like that."

"Quite right, Ben," said the steersman. "And what d'ye think he called me, sir?"

"I can't imagine."

"Why," roared the steersman, "I'll swear he said I was a 'washa-washa.' If that ain't Chinese for washerwoman, I don't know what is. It riled me a bit, so I just biffed him under the jaw, and knocked him into the fountain. The next minute there was twenty of 'em arter us, so we didn't think it very 'ealthy to stop."

While Ching-Lung rolled like a pig on a heap of cushions, choking with laughter, Rupert explained to the ruffled sailors that, far from meaning anything insulting, the bodyguard merely wished to tell them that Ching-Lung had sent for them. Maddock was convinced, but Prout shook his head doubtfully.

"Of course, I must take your word for it, sir," he said; "but a man wot calls me a 'washa-washa' had better get insured first, that's all. It was another dig at me about me mother-in-lor. How can I help havin' a mother-in-lor—eh?"

Both men hung back at the thought of dressing in Chinese clothes; but Ching-Lung was obdurate on the point, and they had to yield. Maddock did not look so bad, but Prout, with his bald head and flowing beard, was like some bloodthirsty river pirate or mountain bandit. As they stared at each other they grinned.

"Oh, Tom," said the bo'sun, "I do like the fit of your trouserettes!"

"Wot about yer own feet?" snapped the steersman. "It's a wonder you could get any trousers wide enough to let 'em through at all!"

"Prout!"

The door was open, and Ferrers Lord was standing in the room. Prout stood stiffly at salute.

"Yes, sir!"

Prout answered promptly enough, but he groaned deeply under his breath. The duty of attending on the man who had often treated him like a dog was not to his taste. He saluted again, and followed Maddock out.

"How are you amusing yourself, Rupert?" asked the millionaire.

"We are going to view the treasure-chamber. Will you come?"

"Not now. Yes-Kiang and I are busy planning out the march. We must find some means of concealing the treasure before we go. Do not be long. I want all of you to have your say in the matter before we decide anything. It is a good idea to put on Chinese dress. If we get into a hot corner, as seems very probable, we shall have a better chance of escaping being shot down. They are certain to pick out anyone in European clothes."

He turned to the door.

"By the way," said Rupert, "have you spoken to Trethvick?"

"Yes, but he is sullen. Chan-So left him here to take the palace. They want the treasure badly to buy arms and ammunition. Yes-Kiang was too quick for them. Do not be absent more than an hour. The rebels are reforming."

A few straggling shots sounded from the forts in answer to a weak volley from the rebels, who were stealing back into the wood at the foot of the hill. Ching-Lung still lay among the cushions

smoking a cigar. As Ferrers Lord hurried from the room, he rose and picked up the massive key.

"Now, Mr. Thurston," he squeaked, "we go and looker at ole Tu-Li-Hoan's money-box."

He dragged aside a rich Persian rug, and stamped on the flagged floor with his heel. One of the flags glided back, revealing a steep flight of winding steps. An old-fashioned Eastern lamp—like the one that brought Aladdin all his riches in the fairy-tale—hung on the wall. It was filled with oil, showing that it had been used fairly recently. Ching-Lung lighted the protruding wick.

"You not afraid?" he said.

"Afraid? Great Scott! What should I be afraid of?"

"You nevel knowee," answered Ching-Lung gravely. "Tleasule a velly funny t'ing, and ole Tu-Li-Hoan a velly funny ole misel. He wanted nobody to haveo his gold, and velly likely it gualded pletty stlong."

"Guarded? How do you mean?" asked Rupert.

"You nevel knowee," said Ching-Lung again. "P'laps dere's a holee likee solid glound, and when you tlead on it you goee down, down into a well a million feet deepee; p'laps you knockee your shin against a bitee of wile, and a gun goee pop, and blowee you outside in—that's allee."

"Pretty cheerful, too. Never mind. I'll take the risk."

"Justee as you please," said Ching-Lung. "Only if you getee killed don't you blamee de pool Chinese boy."

The descent was steep and treacherous, and the smoking lamp gave little light. Ching-Lung led the way, whistling as he went. At the foot of the steps lay a dark corridor. Ching-Lung raised the lamp and let the light shine on some strange characters painted on the wall. He started back.

"Dat's a culse," he said, in a whisper—"a tellible, awful culse! No one mustee come downee here except the true prince, or de culse getee holdee of him, and he die."

Rupert laughed. He didn't believe in curses—especially Chinese ones; but Ching-Lung was white.

"You no laugh!" he muttered. "I forgot de culse. I de real prince, so no halmeee comee to me. But you mustee go back, else you die! I folgot—I folgot!"

He was trembling. Astonished, Rupert caught him by the shoulder.

"My dear Ching," he said, "I thought until now you were a thorough white man, but I see some of the Chinaman still in you. Surely you don't believe in such tomfoolery as this?"

"Comee back!" gasped Ching-Lung—"comee back! You no undelstand!"

Thurston looked into his face. The bright, slanting eyes were dilated with fear.

"Look here, Ching," said Rupert, "you're such a queer little imp that I never know whether you are joking or not. If there were fifty thousand curses, written by as many Chinese magicians, it wouldn't make an atom of difference. Curses won't put bullets or stick knives into people. Don't be silly! I'm going ahead at once!"

"No, no! You no undelstand. It's death!"

Rupert snatched the lamp from his hand, and hurried forward. Ching-Lung uttered a cry that was almost a wail, and started in pursuit. He said no more, but his yellow eyeballs were rolling, and his hands clenched.

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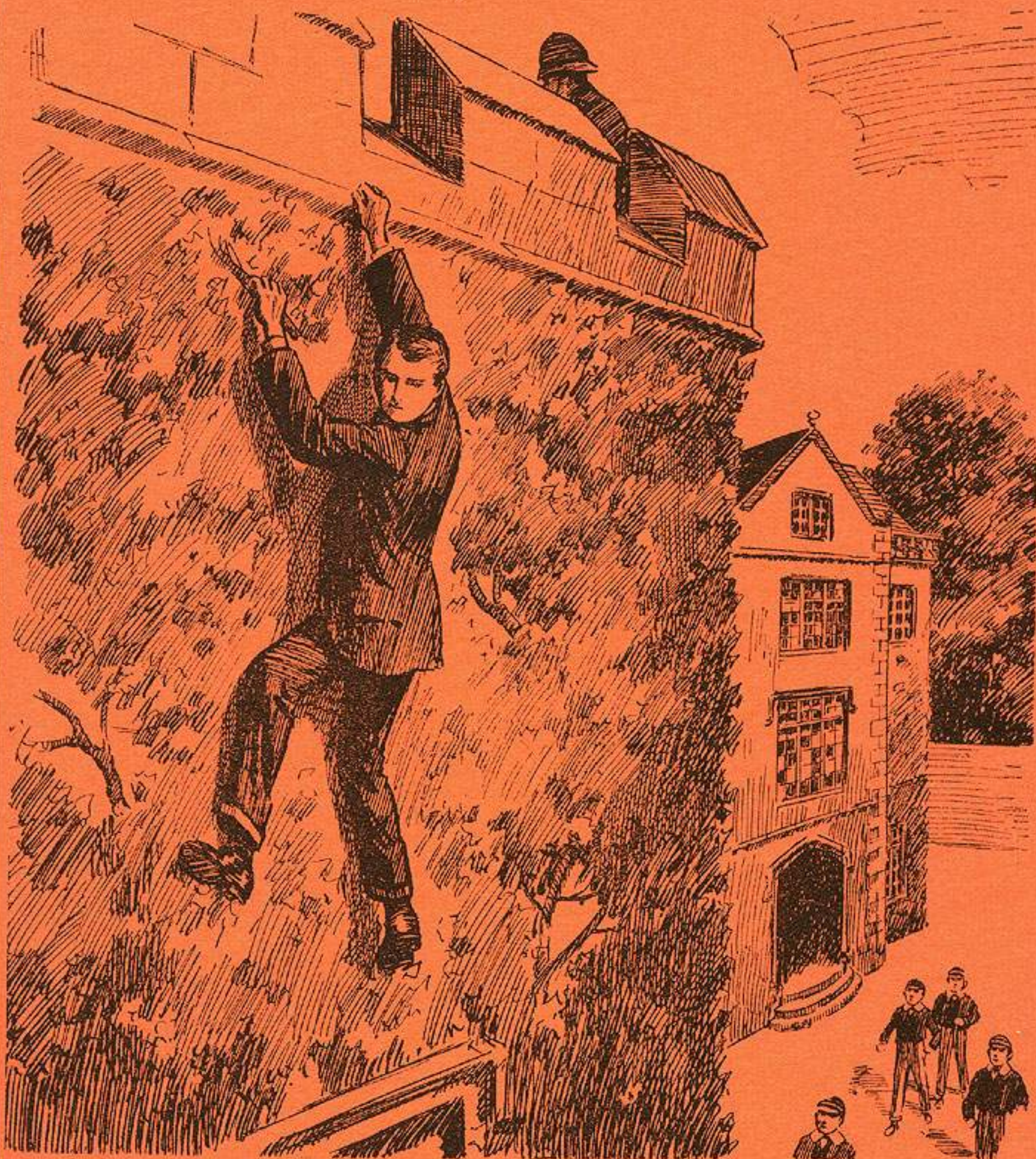
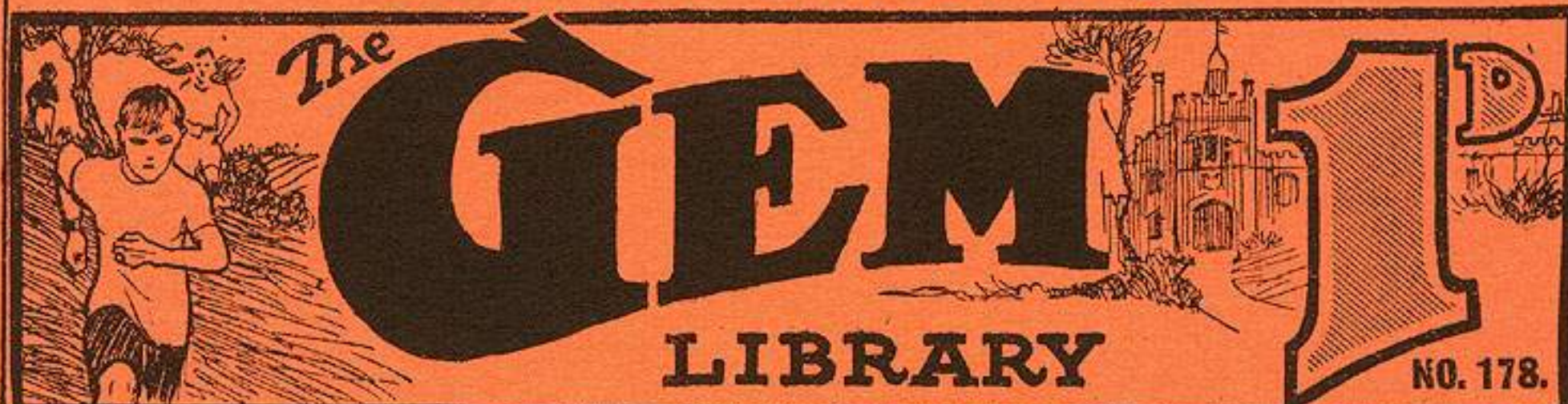
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