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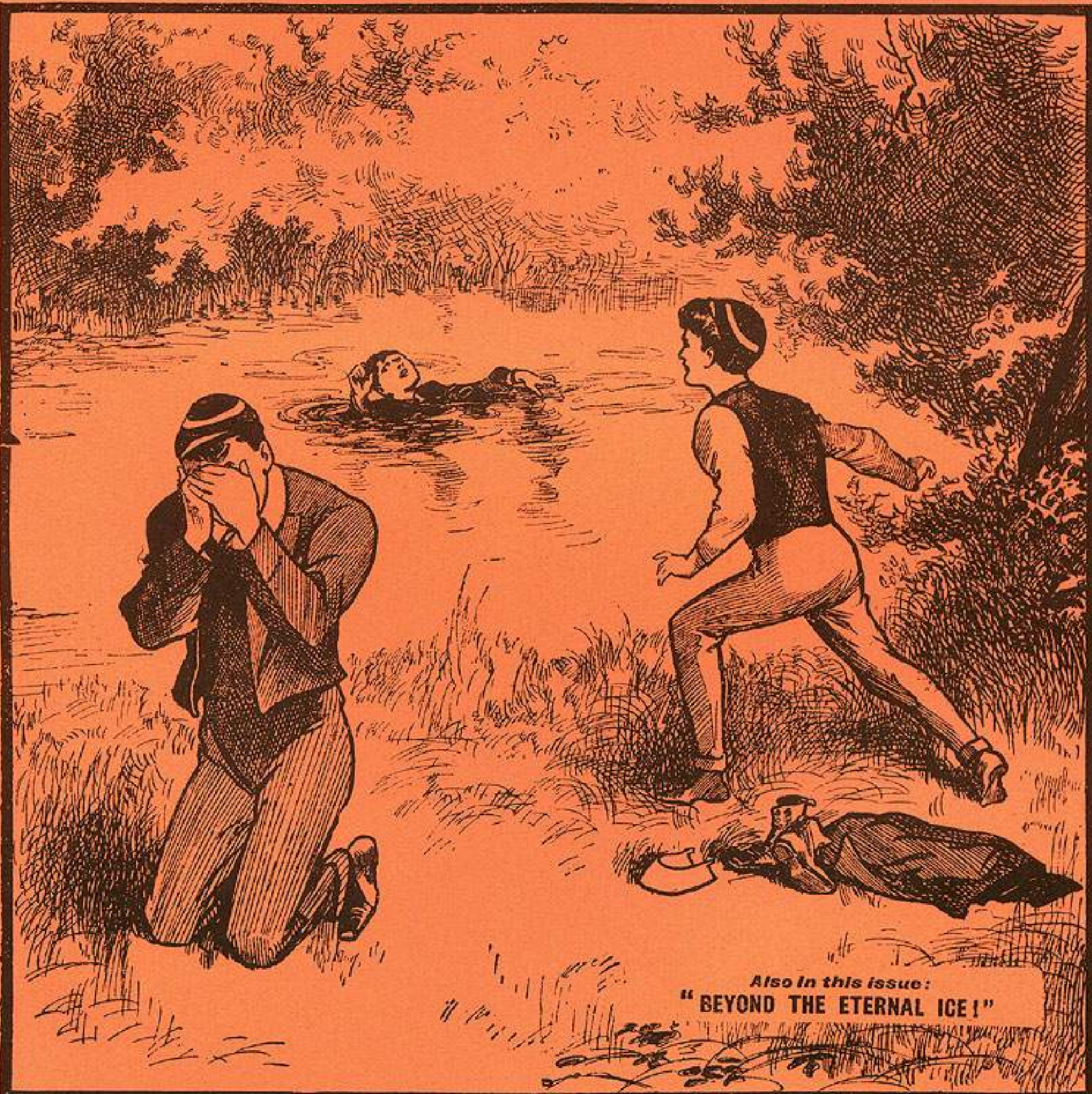
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No. 195

The Complete Story Book for All

Vol. 6



Also in this issue:

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE!"

Dicky dashed his jacket to the ground, and sprang towards the water. Bolsover sank upon his knees, overcome with emotion, turning his face from the river. He could not look upon the boy he dared not attempt to rescue. All the time he trembled, one thought was hammering in his brain! This was his chance—the chance he had wished for, the chance he had longed for, of proving to his school-fellows that he had courage, that he was not the mere bully and poltroon they deemed him. His chance! And he was letting it pass him by! But the flooding river—the whirling currents—the deep, dark recesses of the dangerous Pool—he could not face that. Splash! Nugent minor was in the river! (See inside.)



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An illustration for the book 'The Bully's Chance'. It shows a group of boys in school uniforms. In the foreground, a boy in a cap and striped trousers walks towards the left. Behind him, another boy in a cap and striped trousers is being carried on a stretcher by two other boys. A fourth boy in a cap and striped trousers stands to the right, looking on. In the background, a fifth boy in a cap and striped trousers is walking away. The scene is set outdoors with a stone wall and a tree in the background.

The Bully's Chance

A Splendid Long,
Complete Tale of
the Juniors of
GREYFRIARS
SCHOOL.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Too Much Bolsover.

THE Remove Form-room at Greyfriars was crowded. Lessons for the day were over—so was tea—in fact, it was time for evening preparation. But the Removites had not marched into the Form-room for that.

Unlike the fags of the Third and the Second, who had to prepare their lessons in their Form-rooms, under the eagle eye of a master, the Remove—the Lower Fourth—had the

honour and liberty of doing their preparation in their own studies, entirely "on their own."

But on this special evening preparation seemed to be far removed from the thoughts of the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

Nearly every member of the Form was in the room, but there was no sign of studiousness. Faces were excited, and voices were busy—most of the juniors talking at once. No one appeared to care very much whether anybody listened. The buzz of talk in the Remove Form-room rivalled that of the celebrated Tower of Babel.

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Order—"

"Will you shut up?"

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

"Look here—"

Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove, jumped upon a form, and waved his hand. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent shouted for silence.

"Listen to me!" roared Bulstrode.

"Hear, hear!"

"Don't say a word for Bolsover, or we'll rag you!"

"We're going to squash him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Silence!"

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

"Well, give a chap a chance," said Bulstrode indignantly.

"You're all jawing away, and you won't listen for a second."

"I know there's cause to be excited—"

"Yes rather!"

"Look at my eye!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Look at my nose!" shrieked Russell.

The features named were certainly striking in appearance. Ogilvy's right eye had been blackened, and it had been done thoroughly. It was the blackest black eye that had ever been seen in the Remove—and black eyes were not at all uncommon there. Fellows not infrequently explained to Mr. Quelch, their Form-master, how they had had accidents with punching-balls, and so forth, to account for discoloured optics. But Ogilvy's black eye was really, as one might have said, a beauty. And Russell's nose certainly deserved a glance. It was swollen to a great deal more than its usual size, and it had the brilliant hue of a freshly-boiled beetroot.

"Yes, I know all about your eye and your nose," said Bulstrode soothingly. "In fact, I was just coming to that."

"Look at my mouth!" roared Leigh.

Leigh's mouth was bleeding at each end. He had evidently had a terrific thump upon it not long ago.

"Yes, I've noticed your mouth," said Bulstrode.

"Look at my eye!"

"And my nose!"

"We'll smash him!"

"Squash him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!" bawled Harry Wharton.

Bulstrode held up his hand appealingly.

"Do give a chap a chance!" he exclaimed. "Look here, this is how the matter stands. We've had too much Bolsover!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got a fellow in the Remove," went on Bulstrode, "who's big enough, and old enough, to be in the Fifth—if he had sense enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's only one fellow in the Remove who can stand up to him, and that's Bob Cherry."

"Good old Cherry!"

"And Bob Cherry is laid up from a footer accident, and has to hop round on one leg. Bob Cherry can't tackle the beast. There's nobody else in the Remove who can touch him, and since Bob Cherry's been crocked, Bolsover has been swanking round like a cock of the walk."

"The rotter!"

"The cad!"

"Look at my nose!"

"And my eye!"

"We all know he's a howling brute," said Bulstrode. "I'm as much against him as you are, and you know I've tackled him, but it was no good. Wharton's tackled him, and that was no good. He's licked Johnny Bull and Nugent, and he's licked Tommy Brown, and even old Linley. There isn't a chap here has a chance against him in fair fight. Why, he had a row with Coker, of the Fifth the other day, and Coker didn't get the best of it."

"Down with Bolsover!"

"We'll rag him!"

"We'll squash him!"

"We'll pile on him!"

"Since Bob Cherry's been crocked, he's had it all his own way," said Bulstrode. "He's got into a way of hitting out at a word, and some of the Form have had big lickings. He is a bully and a brute."

"Hear, hear!"

"He's got to be stopped!"

"Hurrah!"

"As no single member of the Form can stand against him, the Form are going to take united action," said Bulstrode.

"United we stand, and divided we get it in the neck."

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"Hear, hear!"

"We'll explain to Bolsover that we've had too much of him, and we'll explain to him that every time he raises his fist to a chap it will become a matter for the whole Form to deal with. Licking for licking—that's the idea."

"Good egg!"

"You're all agreed?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Anybody object?"

"Yes, I do!" drawled Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "I get on very well with Bolsover, and I'm not taking any!"

There was a roar of wrath at once. Even Billy Bunter glared indignantly at the Bounder through his big spectacles. The Bounder stood with his hands in his pockets, looking coolly at the excited Removites.

"The cad backs Bolsover up!" Ogilvy exclaimed.

"Cad!"

"Rotter!"

"Blackleg!"

And Trevor rushed at Vernon-Smith, hitting out. He felt too deeply for mere words.

The Bounder put up his hands at once, and in a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs.

"Stop them!" exclaimed Wharton. "Kick the Bounder out!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Hold on, Trevor—"

The combatants were dragged apart. Vernon-Smith was dragged to the door by half a dozen pair of hands and pitched bodily into the passage. He rolled on the floor there, with his collar and tie gone, and his jacket split up the back. The angry Removites had not handled him gently.

The door was slammed upon him. In the Remove Form-room the buzz of voices continued. Excitement was growing higher. But no other dissentient voice was heard. If anyone shared the sentiments of the Bounder of Greyfriars, he did not venture to utter them. It was hardly safe to do so. Every voice that was audible was in favour of Bulstrode's plan, which had originated with Harry Wharton.

"You're all agreed?" Bulstrode exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then we'll put it straight to Bolsover," said Bulstrode.

"If he raises any objection we'll give him a Form trial."

Knock!

It was a sharp knock at the locked door of the Form-room.

Then an angry voice was heard.

"Open this door!"

It was the voice of Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, and for a moment there was dead silence in the Form-room.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Laid by the Heels.

BOLSOVER knocked at the Form-room door again.

"Open this door!" he shouted. "What do you mean by keeping me out?"

Bulstrode stepped down from the form.

"Let him in!" he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "Let him in! We've made up our minds what to do, and the sooner Bolsover knows the better!"

"Good egg!"

Harry Wharton strode to the door and unlocked it. He threw the door wide open, and Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, came into the Form-room.

Bolsover's face was dark with anger.

He towered over the other fellows in the Form-room. Even Bulstrode, who was a burly fellow, was not anything like so big as Bolsover.

As a matter of fact, Bolsover was much older than anybody else in the Remove, and it was sheer laziness that kept him from advancing in the school. He ought to have been in the Lower Fifth at least.

But Bolsover fancied the position of cock of the walk among fellows younger and smaller than himself. He was quite content to remain in the Lower Fourth.

He glared round upon the Removites, as if selecting the victim upon whom his anger should fall.

"So you're holding a Form meeting?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Bulstrode.

"Without letting me know?"

"Yes."

"And what was it about?"

"You."

"Me! What are you talking about? Who locked that door?"

"I did," said Harry Wharton.

"What for?"



"The Remove won't call you a coward again after this," said Gatty. "Precious few fellows would have cared to come into the fire for me. I know some of them would have. But lots wouldn't! A coward wouldn't! They'll never call you a funk again." "I shall never be a funk again," said Bolsolver. And he pressed the fag's hand and left him. (See Chapter 19.)

"To keep you out till it suited us to let you in," said Wharton coolly.

Bolsolver strode towards him, his hands clenched.

"Very well!" he exclaimed. "And now you can put up your hands, Wharton. You have wanted taking down a peg or two for a long time!"

Wharton kept his hands at his sides.

"I'm not going to fight you," he said. "Nobody in the Remove is going to fight you again. We've tried, most of us, and you're too big for us. You are a coward to take advantage of your size in this way."

"What!" roared Bolsolver.

"Go it!" chuckled John Bull. "Give it to him straight from the shoulder!"

"Since Bob Cherry's been crooked, you've been crowing over the whole Form without end," said Wharton. "We've held a Form meeting on the subject, and we've decided to put a stop to it. You've come to the end of your career as Form bully."

Bolsolver sneered.

"And what are you going to do?" he demanded.

"We're going to put you in your place," said Harry calmly. "If you break out again you will be given a Form licking."

"What!"

"If you lay a finger on any chap in the Remove the whole Form will deal with the matter," said Harry. "That's the long and the short of it."

"Why, you cheeky cad—"

"Better language, please. You'll be civil, too, or you'll

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get it in the neck," said Frank Nugent. "We mean business this time!"

"Oh, you mean business, do you?" said Bolsolver, looking from Wharton to Nugent, and back again, as if in doubt which one he should start upon.

"Just so!"

"I guess so!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, getting behind Wharton as he made the remark. "I guess we're going to cut your comb!"

"Yes, rather!"

"So you see, Bolsolver, it's hands off—hands off all the time," said Bulstrode. "That's the long and the short, and the beginning and the end of it."

"And we're all in it," said Penfold.

"Yaas, my dear fellow," remarked Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove. "We're all in it, and we mean biznai, begad!"

Bolsolver gritted his teeth.

"Well, here's for a start!" he exclaimed.

And he rushed at Bulstrode.

Before he could be seized, his heavy fists were beating upon the captain of the Remove, and Bulstrode went staggering back towards the desks.

"Rescue!" he gasped.

But he did not need to call. The Remove were already rushing to the rescue. Some of the more faint-hearted fellows hung back. Bolsolver was a terror when he was in a rage, and he had a way of hitting out with perfect recklessness of the damage he might do.

But there were plenty of fellows present who had pluck

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enough to tackle Bolsover, even if they were not big enough to fight him. Before he could follow up his attack upon Bulstrode, Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull had seized him and dragged him back.

With a whirl he was dragged away from Bulstrode, and he spun round and came to the floor with a crash.

The burly bully of the Remove sprawled at full length upon the floor, gasping for breath. There was a shout from the Remove.

"Hurrah!"

"He's down!"

"Collar him!"

Bolsover was already collared. Wharton had him by the shoulders, and John Bull had one wrist, and Nugent had the other. Micky Desmond stood upon his legs, with a complete disregard for the damage he did to Bolsover's trousers. Three or four other juniors obtained a hold, and the Form bully was quite helpless.

He struggled furiously in the grasp of the juniors, but he could not shake off the hold of so many.

"Let me go!" he roared. "I'll make you pay for this! Leggo!"

"Rats!"

"No fear!"

Bulstrode rubbed his nose. It was bleeding profusely from Bolsover's onslaught. The captain of the Remove dabbed it with his handkerchief, which was soon crimson.

"The beast!" he ejaculated. "He hits hard! But we'll take it out of him. There's a cord in my desk. Get it out, Bunter."

"Oh, certainly, Bulstrode!"

"I'll smash you if you do, Bunter!" roared Bolsover.

Billy Bunter hesitated. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and he did not want the after-wrath of the Form bully to fall upon him.

"I say, you fellows——" he began, blinking at the juniors through his big glasses. "I——"

"You get it, Ogilvy."

"What-ho!" said Ogilvy.

The cord was speedily brought. Under Bulstrode's directions, Bolsover's feet and hands were tied. The bully's fury was abating now. He realised that the Remove were in earnest; and, powerful as he was, he knew that he was helpless against the whole Form. He had driven them to turn upon him, and he had to suffer the consequences now.

"Now let him get up," said Bulstrode grimly. "He's going to be tried!"

Bolsover was dragged to his feet.

He stood with his hands tied behind him, and his legs shackled together, so that he could just stand, but could not walk or kick.

His face was scarlet with rage, but he was trying to control himself. Uneasiness was mingled with his fury now.

"Let me loose!" he bellowed.

"Rats!"

"I'll smash you for this; I'll lick every one of you—I——"

"Shut up!" said Bulstrode.

"I tell you, I——"

"If he doesn't stop bellowing, shove some ink into his mouth," said Nugent; "that will stop him. We don't want his yelling to bring the masters here."

"You—you—you——"

Nugent fetched an ink-bottle from the cupboard in the corner of the Form-room. Bolsover eyed it very uneasily.

"Now, are you going to dry up?" demanded Nugent.

"Look here, stop this rotting, then," said Bolsover, in a calmer tone.

"We're not rotting," said Bulstrode. "You'll find out that we mean business, my son. You're going to have a Form trial."

"What!"

"Stick him against a desk," said Bulstrode. "We're going to try him, and if found guilty, he will be punished according to law—Remove law."

"Hear, hear!"

Bolsover was silent. He had attempted to carry matters with a high hand; but he had failed. His invasion of the Form-room had placed him in the hands of the juniors, and he was at their mercy. And he who had shown no mercy when dealing with weaker opponents could not expect to receive very much.

Tom Brown locked the Form-room door. Then the Removites gathered round the fallen tyrant, with very business-like looks.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Bully Upon Trial.

"PRISONER at the bar——"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled Bolsover.

Bulstrode had seated himself upon Mr. Quelch's desk. He adopted a judicial attitude—as well as he could. It was not easy, as he had to pause every minute or two to dab his nose with the handkerchief.

"Prisoner at the bar——"

"Chuck it, I say! I'll lick you for this, Bulstrode!"

"Nugent!"

"Yes, your Honour."

"You are appointed warder of the court."

"Yes, your Honour."

"Whenever the prisoner interrupts the proceedings of the court, or utters scurrilous language towards the judge, you will pour ink down the back of his neck."

"Yes, your Honour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The whole Remove form the jury," said his Honour, from Mr. Quelch's desk. "Two counsel are required—one to prosecute—one to defend. We must conduct this trial according to law."

"Hear, hear!"

"Wharton, you are appointed prosecuting counsel."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton. "I mean, yes, your Honour."

"Who will speak for the prisoner at the bar?"

There was no reply. Nobody wanted to speak for Bolsover. Even fellows who were usually friendly with him did not like him—fellows like Skinner, and Snoop, who paid court to him because he was a bully, were glad enough to witness his downfall.

"I guess I'll do the trick," said Fisher T. Fish, at last.

"Very well. The court is now open."

"Oh, stop this silly rot!" growled Bolsover apprehensively.

"Warder, do your duty."

"Yes, your Honour."

Frank Nugent cheerfully poured ink down Bolsover's neck. The prisoner at the bar struggled violently, but there was no help for it. Ink ran over him in streams, and streaked his face.

"Lemme alone! Yow! Ow! I'll pulverise you for this!" he shrieked.

"Will you keep order, and observe the forms of the court?" demanded the judge.

"I'll smash you—I'll——"

"Give him some more!"

"Ow! Groo—ow!"

"Will you keep order?"

"Ow! No! Yes!"

"Very well. Keep an eye on him, warder!"

"Yes, your Honour."

Bolsover growled inarticulately, and shifted in the most uncomfortable manner. Ink was streaming down inside his shirt, and it was not pleasant.

The Remove were beginning to enjoy the proceedings now—all but Bolsover. A Form trial was an old institution at Greyfriars, though it was new to the bully of the Remove, who had not been long at the school.

"Prisoner at the bar," said the judge—and this time the prisoner did not interrupt him—"you are accused of being a bully, and a brute, and a rotten hound generally."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the jury.

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Warder——"

"Yes, your Honour."

Ink swamped down Bolsover's neck. He wriggled and roared.

"Leave off! Ow! Chuck it! Ow!"

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?" asked the judge, dabbing his nose.

"Yow! Not guilty!" shrieked Bolsover.

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"Very good! We shall now proceed to the trial. Nugent, lend me your hanky, will you? Mine's about done in."

"Here you are, your Honour."

"Thanks! Wharton, the prosecuting counsel speaks first, I believe."

"Very well, your Honour," said Harry Wharton. "I accuse the prisoner at the bar of being a brute, a bully, and a cad, and I can call witnesses to prove it."

"Good! Call your witnesses."

"Ogilvy!"

Ogilvy came forward. He was caressing his black eye in an affectionate manner. He gave the prisoner at the bar an extremely savage look. Ogilvy's evidence was certainly not likely to do the prisoner any good.

"Your name?" said Wharton.

"Eh! You know my name."

"That's got nothing to do with it. Your name?"

"What's the sense of asking my name, when you jolly well know it?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Oh, don't be an ass! There's not supposed to be any sense in legal forms, is there? You must state your name to the court."

"Ogilvy!" grunted the Scottish junior.

"You make a charge against the prisoner at the bar, Ogilvy?"

"I should jolly well think I do," said Ogilvy. "He blacked my eye."

"Acquaint the court with the circumstances."

"He was bullying a fag in the Form-room passage—Nugent minor, of the Second Form," said Ogilvy. "I chipped in."

"Oh, good!" said Frank Nugent, who had the honour to be the major of Nugent minor of the Second Form.

"Warder, please be silent."

"Sorry, your Honour!"

"I chipped in, and told him to chuck it," said Ogilvy.

"Instead of that, he landed out at me, and knocked me right across the passage. Look at my eye!"

"Any witnesses?"

"Only Dicky Nugent."

"Is Nugent minor present?" asked the judge.

"You know he isn't, you ass, as this is a Remove meeting, and we don't let fags come in!" said Ogilvy peevishly.

"Order!" said Nugent.

"If Nugent minor is not present—"

"All serene!" sang out an unexpected voice. "I'm here—as large as life!"

"My hat!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Found Guilty!

NUGENT MINOR was present.

He was seated in the open window of the Form-room, with one leg inside and one out—and he had risked his neck by climbing to that perch. But the scamp of the Second Form never paid heed to trifles like that. His saucy, sunny face grinned down upon the juniors from the high window, and quite upset the gravity of the court.

"You young boulder!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "How did you get there?"

"Climbed!" said Nugent minor cheerfully.

"You—"

"I heard the row going on here," Dicky Nugent explained, "and as I wanted to see what you were up to, I climbed the ivy. I've found it very amusing."

"You young sweep—"

"I call Nugent minor as a witness," said Ogilvy.

"Come down, Nugent minor!"

"No larks, then?" said the fag.

"No—honour bright."

"All serene!"

The fag dropped lightly into the Form-room, and came up to the court with an easy saunter, with his hands in his pockets. One of his cheeks was bulging out with a chunk of toffee.

He gave the judge a cheery nod.

"Go ahead, old cock!"

Some of the juniors grinned. The judge frowned.

"Order!" he said severely.

"Oh, all serene! Swim on."

"Were you a witness to Bolsover's assault upon Ogilvy?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, rather."

"Very well. Did he assault you?"

"He bunged me in the ear, if that's what you mean?"

"Ahem! Did you witness that, Ogilvy?"

"Yes, I did."

"Very good. You may stand down."

"But ain't the prisoner found guilty?" demanded Ogilvy warmly.

"Not yet. Stand down."

"How can I stand down when I'm standing on the floor already?" asked Ogilvy, who had a painfully practical mind.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ass! That's a legal expression."

"Can't see any sense in it."

"There isn't any. Stand down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ogilvy retreated. Dick Nugent shifted his chunk of toffee from one cheek to the other, and stood an interested spectator of the proceedings. He had many a long grudge against the bully of the Remove, who was a greater terror to the fags than to his own Form. When the time came for the prisoner's punishment, Dicky was ready to lend a very willing hand.

"Russell!"

"Adsum!"

"Stand forward!"

"Certainly."

"Your name?"

"Richard Russell."

"Did the prisoner at the bar assault you?"

"He swiped me on the boko."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was the attack unprovoked?"

"Entirely."

"You did not strike him first?"

"Certainly not."

"Did you use any provoking language?"

"Not at all. I called him a cad and a beast, but I didn't use any provoking language."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then he struck you on the nose?"

"Yes, a frightful swipe. Brown saw him."

"Stand forward, Brown!"

"Here I am!" said the New Zealand junior cheerfully.

"Were you a witness of the assault upon Russell?"

"What-ho!"

"The witness must answer yes or no," said the judge.

"Yes," said Tom Brown.

"Very well." The prosecuting counsel turned to the judge. "Your honour, I can call other witnesses if necessary, but I think that will be sufficient to make out my case. My lord, I have finished."

And Wharton sat down.

"Good!" said the judge. "The prisoner is found guilty—"

"Hold on!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "What price the counsel for the defence?"

"Ahem! I forgot. Go ahead—I mean, pile in."

Fisher T. Fish stood up. The American junior certainly did not like Bolsover more than the rest of the Form. But he was glad to have a chance of talking. He had a truly Transatlantic love for the sound of his own voice.

"Gentlemen of the judge—I mean, of the jury—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in court!"

"And your honour," went on Fisher T. Fish, "I guess there's not much to be said for my client. I guess—"

The prosecuting counsel rose to his feet.

"My lord, I protest—"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"I protest against guesswork being introduced into the case. We are here to deal with facts, not with guesses," said the prosecuting counsel, with a great deal of dignity.

The juniors laughed, and the judge grinned.

"I uphold the objection," said the judge. "The counsel for the defence must confine himself to facts."

"I guess—ahem!—I mean, I reckon I'm going to say as much for the prisoner at the bar as can be said. It isn't much. I can't very well deny that he is a bully and a cad and a brute, because the facts are self-evident—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The only plea I can urge is that he was born so, and can't help it," said the counsel for the defence. "I recommend that he has a thorough ragging, which I guess will do him good."

"Is that all?"

"Oh, no! I've got a speech to make."

"We can cut that, I think," said the judge, "the trial being ended."

"I guess—"

"Silence in court! Gentleman of the jury, do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" howled the jury with one voice.

"Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say before sentence is passed upon you?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said the prisoner at the bar.

"Warder, do your duty!"

"What-ho!"

"Ow! Yow—yow!" howled the prisoner at the bar.

"Yaroo!"

"Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty by the jury after a long trial, in which everything that can be said

has been said in your favour. You are found guilty of being a bully, and a cad, and a brute!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It only remains to pass sentence. You are sentenced to run the gauntlet of the whole Form in the Form-room upon the spot. Then you will be bumped, and then inked all over your chivvy, and released!"

"Hurrah!"

The judge descended from Mr. Quelch's desk. "Carry out the sentence," he said. "Unfasten the prisoner's legs so that he can run. Leave his hands as they are in case he is obstreperous. Form up!"

Bolsover's legs were released. The Removites, laughing and cheering, formed up in a double row, and each of them grasped some weapon to swipe at the prisoner with. Folded-up exercise-books were the favourite, but some of the fellows had twisted caps, and a few took off their shoes.

Bolsover glared at his tormentors.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll be sorry first, I think!" roared John Bull.

"We're ready!" sang out Ogilvy, with a boot grasped in one hand, and the other caressing his discoloured eye.

"Prisoner, you will now run the gauntlet!"

The prisoner did not move.

"I won't!" he roared. "Go and eat coke!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Bully's Punishment!

"PRISONER—"

"Rats!"

"You will now—"

"Rot!"

"— run the gauntlet!"

"Bosh!"

"Shove him along!" said Ogilvy. "Make him start."

"Get behind him, and kick for goal!" said Morgan.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dicky Nugent chuckled.

"I suggest a pin on the end of a cane," he said. "Here's one of old Quelch's canes, and I've got a pin that will do beautifully. I don't mind starting him."

Bulstrode nodded with a grin.

"Go it!" he said.

Dicky Nugent soon fixed the pin on the end of the cane. He showed such dexterity that it looked as if he had done it before. Perhaps that was one of the little jokes of the Second Form-room.

The Removites stood waiting in a double row. Bolsover still obstinately refused to start.

Dicky Nugent came towards him.

"Are you going?" he asked sweetly.

"No!" roared Bolsover.

Dicky Nugent, without the slightest ceremony, jabbed at the prisoner. Bolsover gave a terrific yell, and jumped clear of the floor. He made a wild rush at the fag, but as his hands were tied, it was easy enough for Dicky to elude him. The fag kept him at arm's-length, and punctured him in various places with the pin on the cane.

Bolsover stopped at last, yelping with pain.

"I'll smash you for this!" he howled.

Dicky grinned.

"Sorry you licked me in the passage?" he asked blandly.

"I'll lick you again. I'll—ow! Yow! Stop it, you little dand!"

"Run, then."

"I won't! Ow—ow—ow!"

The steady puncturing was too much for Bolsover. He was driven to where the two rows of Removites stood waiting. There he paused, but Dicky Nugent did not pause. He had no mercy for the bully of the Lower School. He jabbed away cheerfully, and Bolsover, making up his mind to it at last, ran the gauntlet.

He rushed through the rows of waiting juniors, putting on speed to get through as quickly as possible.

Then the fun began, though it did not seem funny to the bully of the Remove.

Blows rained upon him from both sides.

His run soon slackened down, as he reeled to and fro under the shower of blows.

He struggled and staggered on, and by the time he got through he hardly knew where he was, or what was happening, so confused was he by the attack.

He reeled against a desk, and leaned there, gasping for breath, his face aflame with rage and exertion.

"Make him run again!" yelled Stott.

But Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Once is enough," he said. "This isn't revenge, it's punishment."

"Look at my eye!" roared Ogilvy.

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"Never mind your eye!"

"Look at my nose!" shouted Russell.

"Oh, blow your nose!"

"Look here—"

"Bump him now!" said Bulstrode. "That's the second act. Some of you collar the cad, and we'll give him the bumping. Three bumps—hard!"

"Let me alone!" roared Bolsover, struggling in vain to drag his hands free from the cords that confined them.

"Will you promise to mend your ways?"

"No, hang you!"

"Then bump him!"

And Bolsover was collared and bumped. Three times he was lifted in the air, and bumped on the floor, and each time he let out a terrific yell.

He sat gasping when the infliction was over. Ogilvy, who was still caressing his eye, wore a satisfied grin now. The tyrant of the Remove was certainly going through it. It was very likely that Bolsover would think seriously before distributing black eyes and swollen noses so freely again.

"Have you had enough?" demanded Bulstrode.

Bolsover groaned.

"Oh, won't I make you sit up for this!" he muttered.

"He hasn't had enough," said Hazeldene. "Where's the ink?"

"Here you are," said Nugent.

"Wire in!" said Bulstrode tersely.

Bolsover, as he sat on the floor, was inked. The process was not carried out gently. Ink was splashed upon his face, upon his hair, and upon his clothes. It ran down his neck, and it ran into the corners of his mouth.

In a couple of minutes he was transformed into a very good imitation of a nigger minstrel. The juniors yelled with laughter as they looked at him.

Bolsover panted for breath.

He was beginning to weaken now. Even his savage obstinacy was breaking down under the severity of his punishment, and under the knowledge that he would not be allowed to escape from the hands of his tormentors until he had humbled himself.

"Have you had enough?" asked Bulstrode sternly.

"Oh! Yes! Oh!"

"Very good! Do you confess to being a bully?"

"Hang you! No!"

"Bump him!" said Bulstrode.

"Hold on!" yelled Bolsover. "Yes! I confess!"

"You are a bully?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"A rotten, cowardly, mean bully?"

"Ye-es."

"Are you sorry?"

"No!" shrieked Bolsover.

"Bump him!"

"Hold on! Yow! Ow! Yaroo!"

Bump!

Bolsover gasped as he was set down again. The avengers were not gentle. He was aching in every bone in his body now.

"Are you sorry, Bolsover?"

"Ow! Yes!" groaned the Remove bully.

"Are you awfully sorry?"

"Ye-es!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes!"

"Good! I think we've brought him to reason at last," said Bulstrode, with satisfaction. "I don't like handling a chap like this, but he had to be brought to his senses. We ought to have done it before. Are you going to mend your ways, Bolsover?"

"No—yes!"

"Do you apologise to Ogilvy for blacking his eye?"

"Yes," groaned Bolsover.

"Do you apologise to Russell for enlarging his boko?"

"Yes."

"Do you apologise to Leigh for altering the shape of his mouth?"

"Yes."

"Then I think we can let you off," said Bulstrode.

"What do you fellows say?"

"He's had enough, I think," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He's certainly been through it! I think this will be a warning to him."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Micky Desmond. "He won't be in a hurry to go through this again, intirely, I'm thinking."

"Let him loose, then," said the Remove captain.

Bolsover was released.

The bully of the Remove had intended, as soon as he was released, to run amuck among his tormentors, and hit out



Gordon Gay stood before a glass and worked swiftly. He was very much of D'Arcy's build, and already he was the double of the Swell of St. Jim's. His chums grinned joyously as they looked at him. (An amusing incident taken from the grand, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. and their rivals of the Grammar School, entitled "D'ARCY'S DOUBLE," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of "The Gem" in advance. Price one penny.)

right and left. But he did not do it. He had neither the strength nor the courage left. He had been reduced to reason. He stood unsteadily upon his feet, scowling savagely, and panting for breath.

Nugent unlocked the door of the Form-room.

"You can get out!" he said.

"I can't go out in this state!" shrieked Bolsover.

"You can go out on your feet, or on your neck," said Bulstrode, "and you can take your choice."

Bolsover decided to go out on his feet.

He walked out of the Form-room, gritting his teeth, and a yell greeted him in the passage.

The noise in the Remove-room had brought a good many fellows along the passage, and they simply shrieked at the sight of Bolsover.

Fags of the Third and Second, and fellows of the Upper Fourth and the Fifth, laughed in chorus, as the blackened bully of the Remove strode furiously along the passage.

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Wingate, of the Sixth, met him in full career, and stopped him. Wingate was head prefect, and captain of the school.

"What on earth does this mean?" he demanded. "Is that Bolsover?"

"Yes!" snapped Bolsover.

"How did you get into that state?"

"I've been ragged!" yelled Bolsover.

"Who ragged you?"

Bulstrode stepped out of the Form-room. He was quite willing to take the responsibility of what had been done, if responsibility was to be taken.

"We all did," he said. "I was leader. We've ragged Bolsover for being a beastly bully, and knocking smaller fellows about. I hope we've cured him."

Wingate smiled grimly. He knew Bolsover's character, and had more than once taken him to task himself.

"It seems to me that you've got what you've been asking for for a long time, Bolsover," he said. "You had better go and get yourself clean, and mend your ways."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Crooked.

BOB CHERRY, of the Remove, was sitting in his study. He was not in a good temper. Bob Cherry's good temper was proverbial in the Remove. On the rare occasions when he was cross, it lasted a very short time. But just now Bob was in an extremely irritable mood. He sat with one leg on another chair, resting it. He had had a severe kick on the ankle in a football match, an accidental kick, but it had crooked him. He could only limp about, and when he was in his study, he rested his foot on a chair, as if he were, to use his own expression, a gouty old bounder. Bob Cherry lived out of doors—indoor confinement was always a trial to him. And now that he was crooked, he took an extremely gloomy view of life and things generally.

"Hallo, Bob!"

Mark Linley came into the study.

Bob Cherry looked up with a growl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he said. "Where have you been? Nobody seems to have been in the passage at all for hours."

"We've been putting Bolsover through it."

"Oh!"

"He's had a Form trial," said Mark. "He was found guilty, and punished, and he's begged everybody's pardon, and promised to mend his ways."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Lot of good that will be," he said. "He's a born brute, and he can't mend his ways. Nothing will ever make any difference to him."

"Oh, I hope so!"

"Rats!"

Mark smiled a little. He was growing used to his study-mate's new grumpiness, and he was very patient with Bob.

"Anything I can do for you, Bob?" he asked.

"No!"

"Like to have you ankle rubbed with Elliman's?"

"No!"

"Done your prep.?"

"Yes; and you'd better do yours, or you'll be ragged in the morning by old Quelch," growled Bob. "You've spent a lot of time over that precious rotter."

"I'm just going to begin."

Bob Cherry grunted.

Mark Linley settled down to his work. Bob Cherry watched him, and shifted in his chair, and stared at the fire. He took up a book and laid it down again. Then he burst out:

"My hat! Can't you speak a word to a chap?"

Mark patiently turned from his work.

"Of course," he said. "What is it?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Can I do anything for you?"

"No!"

"Like to have a chat?"

"No!"

Mark laughed.

"I'm sick of this," said Bob Cherry. "What can a chap do when he's stuck indoors, and can't even get out into the Close for a sprint—hey?"

Mark Linley reflected.

"Suppose you put in a little extra study?" he suggested.

Bob Cherry snorted. That idea evidently did not appeal to him in the least.

"Can't you suggest anything sensible?" he demanded.

"You might learn some poetry by heart."

"My hat! That's a more rotten idea than the other! Shall I learn 'Mary had a little lamb?'" demanded Bob Cherry, with withering sarcasm.

"Suppose you mug up some Latin verbs—you know you're jolly weak in them, Bob. I'll take you through some irregular verbs."

Bob Cherry reached out for a ruler.

"Ahem! Would you like me to read to you?"

"No!"

"Or ohat with you?"

"No!"

"Shall I call in some of the fellows—"

"No!"

"What can I do then, Bob?"

"Oh, go on with your prep., and shut up!"

Mark Linley smiled, and went on with his prep., shutting up. Bob Cherry shifted in his chair, and gave a little gasp as his ankle hurt him. He was silent for a few minutes, watching the steady, thoughtful face of the Lancashire lad as he worked patiently.

"Marky!" he exclaimed suddenly.

Mark looked up cheerfully.

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"Yes, Bob."

"I'm a grumpy beast," said Bob. "How do you stand it? If I had a chap like me in the study, I'd biff him with a dictionary in no time."

Mark laughed.

"I don't want to biff you with a dictionary, Bob," he said. "I know how you feel being shut up in the house. It's rotten. I could stand it, because I've my studies; but you don't take to work as I do. It's beastly for you."

"Yes; that's it—beastly!" said Bob, with a sigh.

"I wish I could think of something to amuse you," said Mark thoughtfully. "I wonder—"

He paused, and laughed.

"Well?" said Bob.

"I've been thinking about Bolsover," said Mark.

"Oh, hang Bolsover!"

"He's had a pretty rough time," said Mark Linley. "I fancy it will make some difference to him. You see, he never, quite understood before how the Form regarded him. A lot of the fellows kow-towed to him because he was so big and strong, and he fancied they were his friends. It has been an eye-opener to him, I think, to discover that he is hated or disliked by every fellow in the Remove, with hardly one exception. I can't help thinking that this will make a difference to him. He's not all bad, by any means, and I believe he's more stupid than anything else."

"Well?" said Bob.

"Well, I think if some fellow were to take him in hand now, and jaw to him like a Dutch uncle, it might do him good," said Mark.

"My hat!"

"It wouldn't do for me to do it, because I'm a scholarship boy, and he's a rich fellow," said Mark. "He isn't particularly refined, and he would most likely suspect that I was making up to him. And the other fellows, too—Wharton, or Nugent, or any of them—he might suspect them of trying to avert his wrath."

Bob grinned.

"Very likely," he assented.

"It's a job for you," said Mark. "You're the only fellow in the Remove who can lick him, and you have licked him. He can't imagine that you're afraid of him, or that you want to make up to him. Suppose you took him in hand?"

"Phew!"

"You've nothing to do," urged Mark. "It would occupy your time, and might do Bolsover a lot of good. The poor beast has shut himself up in his study now, and he must be feeling pretty rotten. Don't you think so?"

"Serve him right!"

"Yes, I know. All the same—"

"Do you really think it would do him any good, Marky?"

"I think it might."

"I can't stand the chap, you know."

"You'll be able to stand him better if you improve him."

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh.

"You ought to be a giddy lawyer, Marky," he said. "You've got an answer for everything. If you think it's any good, I don't mind jawing to the rotter. What am I to do—advise him not to be a disgusting cad?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I should put it a little more gently than that. Tell him that it would be a good idea to think over things, and to make a new start, and that it's a rotten idea to have the Form against him, and so on. I expect he's in a humour now to see things in a reasonable light."

"I'll try."

"Good!"

Bob Cherry rose from his chair. He winced a little as he put his damaged leg to the floor.

His expression was very dubious as he limped to the door of the study. He was going to do as Mark suggested, but he was extremely doubtful as to the result.

"I'll do my best, Mark," he said hesitatingly.

"Go it!" said Mark.

And Bob Cherry limped out of the study. He limped down the Remove passage. Three fags of the Second Form were coming up the passage from the stairs—Nugent minor, Gatty, and Myers. They stopped at the sight of Bob Cherry.

"Hallo!" said Dicky Nugent. "How's your game leg?"

Bob Cherry grunted.

"You leave my game leg alone," he said. "What are you young rascals doing here?"

"I've brought the kids to show them Bolsover," said Dicky Nugent. "He hasn't got all the ink off yet, I'll be bound. He's a pretty picture."

Bob Cherry pointed down the passage.

"You be off!" he said. "Don't you know better than to crow over a chap when he's down?"

"Oh, rats! We're not going to crow over him," said

Gatty. "We're only going to look at him, and give him a yell."

"That's all!" said Myers, with righteous virtue.

"You're not going to do anything of the sort!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "You buzz off, you young bounders, or I'll lam you."

"Oh, rats!"

"What?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Rats!" said the three fags together, backing away.

Bob Cherry made a rush towards them, and then remembered his damaged ankle. He had forgotten it for a moment, but he could not forget it longer than that. He stopped, gasping with pain.

"You—you young rotters——"

"Shouldn't try any sprinting with that damaged pin," said Nugent minor, wagging his forefinger at Bob Cherry in an extremely exasperating way. "It's no good! Better go and embrocate it."

"Yes, run away and play," said Gatty.

Bob Cherry gasped.

"You cheeky young rotters——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buzz off, Cherry, my son!" said Nugent minor airily. "Don't worry!"

Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose. With his limping leg, he certainly could not chase the elusive fags, and they were at liberty to "slang" him as much as they liked. But Nemesis was at hand. Harry Wharton's study door opened, and the fags, in the amusement of ragging Bob Cherry, did not notice it. Wharton looked out into the passage.

"Come on, Cherry, kid!" said Gatty. "Let's see you dot and carry one again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Couldn't we make him a crutch out of a ruler, or something?" Myers suggested sympathetically. "Poor old wreck! We don't want to hit you, Cherry, but you must really buzz off! We're going to see Bolsover."

"Collar them!" roared Bob Cherry, as Harry Wharton came down the passage behind the heroes of the Second Form.

Wharton's grasp fell upon Nugent minor and Gatty. Myers fled for the box-room stairs, dodging past Bob Cherry. Dicky Nugent and Gatty roared in the grasp of Wharton, as he knocked their heads gently together.

"You cheeky young rascals!" he said.

"Yow!"

"Now buzz off, or I'll kick you down the passage."

"Yow!"

"Yarrah!"

And Gatty and Dicky Nugent "buzzed off" at top speed. Harry Wharton laughed as he turned to Bob Cherry.

"Too bad, Bob!" he said. "How's your poor old pin?"

"Getting better," said Bob. "It's rotten; but Marky has found me something to do."

"What's that?"

"Talk to Bolsover."

"Eh?"

"Marky thinks if I talk to him like a Dutch uncle he may repent of his sins, and live in righteous goodness for ever afterwards," grunted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You don't seem to think much of the wheeze," growled Bob.

"Ha, ha! Good luck, that's all! If Bolsover cuts up rough you'll only have to yell out, and we'll come," said Harry. "I'll leave my study door open."

"H'm! Thanks!"

Wharton went back to his study, and Bob Cherry, with considerable misgiving, tapped at Bolsover's door.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Puts It Plainly.

BOLSOVER was in his study.

The bully of the Remove was alone there. Other fellows shared the study, but they did not care to present themselves just then. The Remove tyrant was only too likely to be an unpleasant neighbour, after his painful experience in the Form-room. They did their prep, downstairs, and Bolsover had his quarters to himself.

The Remove bully groaned as he lay in the armchair. He was aching all over. He had cleaned himself as well as he could, but he was still very inky, especially about the ears and the hair. He did not mind that so much, but he had a good many bruises, and his bones had an ache in every one of them. The burly Removeite had always prided himself upon not being "soft," and upon being able to bear pain, but that was probably chiefly because he had had little pain to bear, as he generally got easily the better of every encounter. It was quite possible that he never quite realised how much pain he inflicted upon others. But he had an opportunity of realising it now, if experience was worth anything.

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"Come in!" he grunted out, as he heard the tap at his door.

Bob Cherry limped into the study. Bolsover regarded him with a look of extreme disfavour. He was not likely to be fond of the one fellow in the Remove Form who was able to lick him.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked ungraciously.

"Nothing."

"Then get out!"

Bob Cherry closed the door. He limped to a chair, and sat down facing Bolsover. The bully of the Remove made a motion to rise, but sat down again. At any other time he would probably have started operations upon Bob Cherry, but the lesson of the Form-room had not been lost upon him. If he attacked Bob Cherry while the latter was disabled, it was only too probable that his late painful experience would be repeated.

"I want to speak to you, Bolsover," said Bob Cherry. "I haven't come here for a row, or to rag you, or jaw you. I'm crooked, and I couldn't put up a fight with a Third-Form fag. Tubbs of the Third could knock me out in one round. Therefore, you see that I've come on a friendly footing."

And Bob Cherry rested his damaged leg on the fender. Bolsover grinned a little.

"Well, you can squat down here if you like," he said.

"What do you want to say to me?"

"You've had a pretty rough time in the Form-room, I suppose?"

Bolsover scowled savagely.

"If you've come to talk about that——" he began.

"I haven't. I was only alluding to it as a firstly," said Bob Cherry, with some recollection in his mind of the form of Dr. Locke's sermons on Sunday. "The whole Form has turned upon you, Bolsover—they're fed up with you."

"Look here——"

"Secondly, it's agreed by all the Remove that whenever you start bullying again you're to go through the same experience," said Bob Cherry.

"Hang them!"

"Thirdly——"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"Thirdly, is it good enough?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ask yourself the question, my son," said Bob Cherry, finding it quite easy to deliver a sermon now that he was once started. "Ask yourself—is it good enough? You're pretty well hated by all the chaps in the Remove—even the fellows who are civil to you because they're afraid of you hate you more than the rest. Is it good enough? What do you get out of it?"

Bolsover stared at him.

"Blessed if I know what you're getting at!" he said.

"I'm talking to you in a friendly way," explained Bob Cherry. "You are a bullying brute, and a general rotter——"

"What?"

"Excuse my plain speaking. But you're bound to have some good points in you—everybody has. You know what Shakespeare says——"

"Blow Shakespeare!"

"Certainly, if you like. But he says: 'There is some soul of goodness in things evil, if men would observingly distil it out.'"

"Look here, Bob Cherry——"

"That's what I'm trying to do. There must be some good in you, though I've never noticed it. Why don't you try to start fresh, and stop being a bullying cad? Suppose you were to take up footer instead as an amusement? You'd make a splendid back if you gave your mind to it."

Bolsover stared blankly at Bob Cherry. He had been preached at before many a time, but certainly never in this singular way. He did not know whether to laugh or be angry.

"Better think it over," urged Bob Cherry. "Now's your chance, you know, to show that you've got some sense, and that you can learn things."

Bolsover grunted.

"If I give in now the fellows will all think that I'm afraid of being ragged," he said.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully. There was little doubt that Bolsover was quite right in that.

"Well, that's unfortunate," he said, "but—but you can prove in the long run, you know, that you're not a coward—that is, if you're not one. I don't know whether you are or not. They say that bullies are generally cowards, but I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. If you're not a coward you will be able to prove it to everybody."

"Look here——"

"Better think it over. If you behave yourself you'll find things much more tolerable in the Remove," said Bob Cherry. "It's a chance for you, and if you let it pass you're an ass. I'm speaking quite disinterestedly, you see, as I don't care for you twopence personally. But I'd like to see you trying to be decent."

Bolsover rose, and went to the door and threw it open.

"Would you mind getting out of my study?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry, limping to the door. "I've done my best for you, and if you're an obstinate mule you'll get it in the neck again, and serve you right! That's all!"

And Bob Cherry limped away.

Bolsover closed the door, and threw himself into his chair again. There was a scowl upon his brow, but the scowl gradually changed into an expression of deep thought. The general detestation in which he had discovered that he was held had made an impression upon the bully of the Remove. He liked to be feared, but no one likes to be hated. And Bob Cherry's little sermon, oddly as it was put, had impressed the bully in spite of himself. And the thought of a repetition of the punishment in the Form-room made him ache in anticipation all over.

After all, why should he not think it over?

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Even Bunter!

THERE was a general grin in the Remove when Bolsover took his place in class the next morning.

Bolsover was looking extremely self-conscious. He felt that all eyes were upon him—as indeed they were. His eyes gleamed with anger, but he was very quiet.

In spite of himself, Bob Cherry's words were in his mind. Most of the fellows in the Remove were content to let well alone. They had punished the bully, and apparently brought him to his senses; but they had no desire to crow over him.

But there were some fellows who, seeing Bolsover thus tamed, considered it a good opportunity for triumphing over a fallen enemy. Billy Bunter, who probably had less pluck than any other member of the Form, not even excepting Snoop, and who, as a rule, was afraid of Bolsover's shadow, lifted up the heel, so to speak, against the conquered enemy.

"I say, Bolsover," he whispered in class—the Remove bully looked round—"how do you like ink?"

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

"Shut up, Bunter!" muttered Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I think I heard someone speak," said Mr. Quelch, looking round. "I think I recognised your voice, Bunter. You will take fifty lines."

"Oh!"

And Bunter's remarks for that morning were finished.

When the Form was dismissed, Bolsover strode away by himself. He heard several expressive chuckles from some of the Remove, but he did not look round.

He understood now that the Form were in earnest, and that if he bullied one, the whole Form would take up the matter and punish him.

Under the circumstances, it was wisest to let the Remove alone; at all events until the matter had blown over, and the juniors were disunited again.

Bolsover strode away across the Close in the direction of the tuckshop. Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, rolled after him.

"I say, Bolsover," he said, blinking into the shop—"I say——"

"Buzz off, you fat brute!" growled Bolsover.

Bunter rolled into the shop. Bunter was not clever, but he was cunning, far more so than the bully of the Remove.

"I say, Bolsover——"

"Don't talk to me!" exclaimed Bolsover angrily.

"I shall talk to you if I like," said Bunter coolly. "Who are you? If I have much of your cheek, I'll get you a Form licking again."

Bolsover simply gasped. To be ragged by the Form was bad enough, but to be cheeked like this by a fellow like Bunter was the worst humiliation he had experienced. But he hesitated to touch the fat junior. On this occasion, if on no other, Billy Bunter had the Form behind him.

"You fat cad!" said Bolsover at last.

"Better language, please," said Bunter threateningly; "I don't want any of your lip. I've had enough of that from you, you hulking rotter."

"I—I—I——"

"Look here," said Bunter, "I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, but I'm short of cash at the present moment. Can you advance me five bob on my postal-order?"

"No fear!"

"I could make half-a-crown do, perhaps."

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"You won't get a half-crown out of me, you cadging cad," said Bolsover.

Bunter blinked at him angrily.

"Now, look here, Bolsover——"

"Get out!" shouted Bolsover.

"Rats!"

"What!"

"Rats!" said Billy Bunter, planting himself squarely on his fat little legs, and blinking defiance at the bully of the Remove. "Go and eat coke!"

That was too much for Bolsover. With a rush he was upon Bunter, and he seized the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and swung him round. Bunter was whirled to the door with a speed that took away his breath, and flung out into the Close.

"Oh, deary me!" exclaimed Mrs. Mimble, behind her little counter. "You will hurt him, Master Bolsover, you will indeed!"

Bolsover came back into the shop breathing heavily. Billy Bunter did not get up. He lay on the ground outside the shop, where he had fallen, yelling for help. Bunter was hurt, but he intended to have his injuries avenged, with interest.

"Help! Ow! Help!"

Fellows came running up from all sides. They knew that Bolsover was in the tuckshop, and they fully expected that he would break out again soon. And they were ready.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ow! I'm hurt! Yow! Bolsover has nearly killed me! Yaroop!"

"Bolsover!" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Yow! Yes."

"Collar the cad!" shouted Tom Brown.

"Bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "You know what Bunter is. We don't want to go for even Bolsover too quick. Bunter's very likely lying."

"Never mind; a bumping will do Bolsover good," said Ogilvy, rubbing his eye.

"No. Hang it all, let's be fair!"

"Ow! He kicked me out of the tuckshop," groaned Bunter. "He told me to get out, and I wouldn't—ow!—and he slung me out. Yow! Two of my ribs are broken—groo!—and I've got a sprain in my backbone. Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows— Groo!"

Harry Wharton strode into the tuckshop, with a crowd of the Remove at his heels. Bolsover was standing at the counter, looking very flushed and uneasy. He realised that he had brought a storm upon himself by allowing his temper to get the better of him. It would have been wiser to endure Bunter's impertinence patiently. But a bully is not cured in a day.

"Bolsover!" rapped out Wharton.

"Hallo!"

"Did you throw Bunter out?"

"Yes, I did," growled Bolsover.

"What for?"

"Because he cheeked me."

"How did he cheek you?"

"Oh, mind your own bizney!"

"That won't do," said Wharton grimly. "You remember what you were told last evening. You're beginning again. I dare say Bunter cheeked you, but you can't throw a fellow about because he cheeks you."

"I'll fight anyone of you here!" shouted Bolsover.

"No, you won't. When Bob Cherry's right again you can have a fight if you want one," said Wharton coolly. "Until then you'll be bumped by the Form every time you begin playing the bully. Collar him!"

"Hold on, I——"

"Collar the brute!"

The juniors rushed at Bolsover. The Remove bully put up his hands, hitting out furiously.

Wharton caught a terrific drive on the chin, but he came on, grasping the bully grimly.

Nugent and Johnny Bull and Tom Brown fastened upon him, and he was whirled over.

"Leggo!" roared Bolsover.

"Rats!"

"Bump the cad!"

"Hurrah!"

Bump!

Bolsover came down heavily upon the floor. He gave a yell of anguish. He was still very sore with the bumping of the previous evening.

"Another!" said Wharton grimly.

Bump!

"Ow! Stop!"

"Will you beg Bunter's pardon?"

"No!" roared Bolsover.



Bully Bolsover looked round his study with a white face and wild eyes. The insulting placards pasted all over the room were only telling the truth. He had earned every title that was inscribed on them—he had disgraced the Remove and disgraced himself! (See chapter 15.)

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooh! Oh!"

"Will you beg Bunter's pardon?"

"No! Oh! Yow! Yes! Yoop!"

"Bunter, Bolsover wants to apologise."

The fat junior rolled into the tuckshop. He stood blinking at Bolsover through his spectacles with a very important air.

"Now, then, Bolsover——"

"I—I—I——"

"Get it out!" said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand.

"I've a jolly good mind to wade in and give you a licking myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"I—I—I beg your pardon!" gasped Bolsover.

"Granted!" said Billy Bunter loftily. "But don't do it again. I sha'n't let you off a second time, so look out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded out of the tuckshop, leaving Bolsover sitting in the sawdust, gasping.

Bunter paused in the doorway to wag a warning finger at the bully of the Remove. But Bolsover had no spirit left to resent even that.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Collecting a Debt.

DICKY NUGENT came out of the Second Form-room, after that day, and paused in the passage. Gatty and Myers paused with him, and Sammy Bunter—Bunter minor—stopped too.

From the looks of the chums of the Second, Sammy Bunter could see that something was on, and Sammy scented a feed.

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NEXT TUESDAY'S
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And Sammy, like his major, was the kind of fellow never to be left out, if he could help it, when a feed was going.

Dicky Nugent was going through his pockets methodically. He turned out many things into public view—a penknife with a broken blade, and a ball of string in which was embedded a chunk of toffee, and a few pen nibs, and a pencil without a point, and some marbles. But apparently he did not turn out what he was in search of, for he gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"What have you got?" asked Gatty.

"Not a brown."

"I've got a ha'penny!" said Myers.

Nugent minor sniffed.

"We shall be able to stand a gorgeous feed on that—I don't think!" he remarked. "What have you got, Gatty?"

"Twopence."

"Scat!"

"Looks as if the feed's off," said Gatty, "unless we can borrow something of Sammy."

Sammy Bunter rolled away down the passage. When borrowing was to be done, Sammy Bunter proffered to be active rather than passive. Gatty grinned.

"Well," said Nugent minor reflectively, "we've got two chances."

"Blessed if I can see them. We can't borrow money in the Second. Everybody seems to be in the same stony state," said Gatty despondently. "Never knew such a money famine."

"I've got a major in the Remove," said Dicky Nugent. "It's not all honey having a major, but he comes in useful sometimes. I may be able to make a raise from Frank."

"Well, you may as well try. But what's the other wheeze?"

"Bolsover."

Gatty and Myers stared.

"Bolsover! You don't mean to say you're ass enough to think of raising a loan from that big brute. He'll squash you."

Dicky Nugent smiled serenely.

"You listen to your uncle!" he said. "Bolsover is turning over a new leaf—or he's having a new leaf turned over for him, which comes to the same thing. You remember Bolsover's nice little way of borrowing our tin, and clouting our ears when we asked for it back? He owes me five bob this term, altogether!"

"You won't see it again!"

"I never expected to; but I think there's a chance now. The Remove have been making an example of him. He lets Bunter cheek him in public."

"My word!"

"What price our marching in to his study, and demanding our cash?" said Dicky Nugent boldly.

Gatty and Myers looked very dubious. To enter the study of the Bully of the Remove, and ask for the little suns he had "borrowed," seemed to them a great deal like entering a lion's den to ask for a bone.

"He'll go for us!" said Gatty.

"I don't think he's got nerve enough, under the circumstances," said Nugent minor. "Besides, it's our money. He had no right to take it!"

"I know that, but—"

"Hallo, there's Frank! Come on!"

Frank Nugent and Harry Wharton were in the Form-room passage. The three fags hurried over to them. Frank nodded to his young brother.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked. He knew that his minor must want something, or he would not have had the honour of receiving his attentions at all.

"Tin!" said Dicky Nugent tersely.

Nugent major laughed.

"Then you've come to the wrong shop!" he said. "I'm stony!"

"Lot of good having a major like you!" grunted Dicky Nugent. "Go and eat coke! Where's Bolsover?"

"What on earth do you want with Bolsover?"

"He owes me some money—five bob!"

"He's in his study," said Harry Wharton, doubtfully. "But—"

"All serene. Come on, kids!"

The heroes of the Second marched upstairs. They presented themselves at Bolsover's study. The Remove bully was there, with a frown upon his face. The frown deepened at the sight of the fags.

"What do you want?" he demanded sharply.

"You owe me five bob!" said Nugent minor.

Bolsover stared at him. Bunter's impertinence had been a bitter pill to swallow, but the Remove bully realised that he must swallow it. But he had not imagined that the fags of the Second would venture to turn upon him. It was the turning of the worms with a vengeance.

"Five bob!" repeated Nugent minor, coming just inside the study. "Would you mind settling up now, Bolsover?"

"You see, we're hard up!" ventured Gatty.

"And we should be glad if you'd square," said Myers.

Bolsover found his voice at last. He had been tamed, but not to this extent, yet.

"Get out of my study!" he roared.

Dicky Nugent backed away a pace or two.

"What about the five bob?" he asked.

"Get out!"

"But what about the— Oh!"

Bolsover's grasp was upon him. The bully of the Remove swung the fag into the room, and boxed his ears right and left. Dicky Nugent roared.

"Ow! Help! Rescue!"

Gatty and Myers rushed desperately to the rescue. They had not much chance against the bully Bolsover, but they meant to do their best. They tore at him, and hacked at him with their boots. Bolsover swung round his strong arm, and sent both of them staggering across the study. Gatty crashed down into the fender, and Myers into the bookcase. Then the bully of the Remove started on Nugent minor again.

Gatty staggered into the passage.

"Help!" he yelled. "Help!"

The passage was in a buzz at once. Wharton and Nugent were dashing upstairs, and Removites were swarming from all quarters. The word ran round at once that the Form bully had broken out again.

John Bull was first on the scene. He rushed at Bolsover without a word, and closed with him, dragging him from his victim. Dicky Nugent fell against the table, gasping for breath. His hair was wild, his face was crimson, and he was breathless and exhausted. He had been dazed and

almost stunned by the savage blows of the Remove bully "Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, you cad! Oh!"

Bolsover was struggling furiously with Bull. But the other fellows were on the scene now. Wharton and Mark Linley grasped the bully, and dragged him down. John Bull planted a knee upon his chest as he lay on his back.

"I've got him now!" he said grimly.

"Get off!" shrieked Bolsover.

"Not much!"

Bulstrode came into the study, pushing his way through the juniors. He stood over the fallen bully, who glared up at him savagely.

"What's the row?" asked the captain of the Remove quietly.

"That rotter has been ragging my minor," said Frank Nugent, between his teeth.

"Stick him in a chair, and we'll look into the matter," said Bulstrode. "Second Form fags have no right in a Remove study. But we'll see!"

Bolsover was planted in a chair, and three or four pairs of hands held him there. Then Dicky Nugent breathlessly explained.

"He owes me five bob! Five bob!"

"Do you owe him five bob, Bolsover?"

"No!" yelled Bolsover.

"Ahem!" said Bulstrode. "When did you lend him the five bob, Nugent minor?"

"A bob at a time," said Dicky Nugent. "He had me by the ear each time, and said that I'd better lend it to him—and I did!"

"I saw him once," said Gatty.

"I saw it twice," said Myers.

"Lots of chaps in the Second have been done the same way," said Dicky Nugent. "I don't see why we shouldn't have it back!"

"Quite right!" said Frank Nugent. "We all know Bolsover's ways, and we can take it as proved."

Bulstrode nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "You will have to pay up, Bolsover!"

"I won't!"

"Then you'll be bumped until you do. Collar him!"

"Hold on," yelled the unhappy bully of the Remove, "I'll settle up!"

"You admit having had the money from Nugent minor?"

"Yes."

"Good! Then pay up! Let him go!"

Bolsover was released, and with an exceedingly ill grace he counted out five shillings, and flung them on the table. Dicky Nugent grinned as he collected them up.

"My hat, this is a windfall!" he said. "You're getting him into really good order, I must say. If we had him in the Second, we'd squash him! Come on, you chaps!"

And the three fags left the study in great spirits. Five shillings in a lump was quite a large sum for them to expend.

Bolsover glared at the Removites.

"Now, get out of my study!" he said.

"That won't do," said Bulstrode coolly. "We've had enough of your swank, Bolsover. I've told you that before. You'll say please!"

The bully gave him a ferocious look; but the juniors were ready—and only too willing—to begin on him.

"Please!" he muttered between his teeth.

"Certainly!" said Bulstrode blandly.

And the bully of the Remove was left alone in his study. He scowled, and jammed his cap on his head, and went out, tramping out at the gates of Greyfriars with his hand thrust deep into his pockets, and his brows knitted.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Funk!

"WHEW! I'm in for it now!"

Bob Cherry made the remark. Bob had been out for a tramp in the lane, for the first time since his accident. The hero of the Remove was still limping, but his ankle was much better, and he had ventured to take a walk. He was coming back towards Greyfriars, when he sighted four school-caps in the lane—Highcliffe caps. A moment later, and Ponsonby, Vavasour, Gadsby, and Monson, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, swung into view. The four Highcliffe fellows were walking abreast, and taking up nearly all the width of the lane, with their silk hats on the back of their heads.

There was very bitter feeling between Greyfriars and Highcliffe, and Bob Cherry had cause to be alarmed. Lately there had been a football match between the juniors of the two schools; and the Highcliffians had been guilty of the blackest treachery in an attempt to win the match by foul means. After it was over, the Greyfriars fellows

had scratched off all fixtures with Highcliffie, and told Ponsonby & Co., in the plainest possible English, never to come on their ground again. And Ponsonby & Co. were not likely to forget or to forgive that.

At the sight of Bob Cherry, limping down the lane, the four juniors quickened their pace, exchanging a grin. The Highcliffie fellows never entered into a row, if they could help it, without being two or three to one. Under the present circumstances, Bob Cherry was quite at their mercy, for he was not only alone, but he was disabled. Ponsonby & Co. surrounded him, and Bob was brought to a halt.

"Hallo!" said Ponsonby affably. "What's the matter with your foot?"

"Hurt," said Bob laconically.

"Oh, so sorry! Must be painful for you to walk!" said Ponsonby.

"Yes, it is."

"Too bad! I think we'd better carry him!" Ponsonby remarked, looking at the others.

The Highcliffians chuckled.

"Look here, you let me alone!" said Bob Cherry. "I can't pitch into you now, and if you've got any decency at all, you won't go for a chap who's laid up!"

"But we're only going to carry you," said Gadsby. "If we bump you on the ground at all, it will be accidental!"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Quite!" grinned Monson.

Bob Cherry tried to back away. Monson put up his foot, and he stumbled. He caught himself on his injured leg, and gave a cry of pain. The four Highcliffians burst into a laugh.

"Poor kid, he's in pain!" said Gadsby. "Does your mammy know you're out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack!

The back of Bob Cherry's hand came with sounding force across Monson's face. The junior staggered back, and Bob, with a bound, reached a tree at the side of the lane, and put his back to it.

"Now come on, you cads!" he exclaimed, putting up his hands.

The Highcliffians were not slow to accept the invitation. They rushed straight at Bob Cherry. They were four to one; but they had to do with a fellow who was a first-class boxer, and who had boundless pluck. Bob Cherry hit out straight from the shoulder, and Gadsby rolled backwards into the dust. The next moment Monson fell upon him.

Then Bob Cherry was fighting at close quarters with Ponsonby and Vavasour.

"Rescue!" shouted Bob, in the faint hope that some Greyfriars fellows might be within hearing. "Rescue, Remove!"

Ponsonby grinned savagely.

"There's none of your precious Remove here!" he exclaimed. "My hat! We'll squash you, you cad! Take that!"

"Look out!" muttered Monson, who had struggled to his feet, covered with dust.

The Highcliffians looked round. A burly junior in a Greyfriars cap was coming down the lane. It was Bolsover. Bob Cherry caught sight of him at the same moment.

"Rescue!" he shouted.

The next moment Bob was dragged down with a crash to the ground, and Gadsby sprawled on top of him. The injured ankle knocked on a stone, and the pain almost made Bob faint. He was utterly at the mercy of the Highcliffians.

Bolsover saw the scene, and quickened his pace for a moment. But, as Bob Cherry, with his senses swimming, lay gasping on the ground, the four juniors turned upon Bolsover.

The bully of the Remove halted.

"Go for him!" muttered Ponsonby. "He's finking it!"

And the four rushed at Bolsover.

The burly Removeite hesitated. He was not inclined to stand up for the Remove, since his late treatment, and he had never been on good terms with Bob Cherry. That feeling, undoubtedly, influenced him, as well as his unwillingness to tackle four fellows who were known never to fight fairly. He backed away, and as the Highcliffians came for him, he jumped through a gap in the hedge.

Ponsonby stopped, and burst into a laugh.

"He won't interfere with us!" he exclaimed. "Let's look after Cherry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mocking laughter of the Highcliffie fellows rang in Bolsover's ears, but he did not return to the road. With a scowling brow, he took a field-path, and disappeared. Bob Cherry raised himself on his knees, with difficulty, for the renewed pain in his bruised ankle was very great. He expected to see Bolsover engaged with the enemy, and was ready to lend what aid he could. He saw Bolsover's cap disappear behind a hedge, and the Highcliffians returning towards him.

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NEXT TUESDAY'S
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"You rotten funk!" yelled Bob Cherry furiously. "Come and help!"

But he received no reply from Bolsover.

The four Highcliffians surrounded Bob Cherry again. All four of them had been hard hit in the tussle with Bob, and they were in a mood for vengeance. Bob was quite at their mercy now. They stooped and grasped him, picking him up bodily. Bob Cherry glared defiance at them.

"You cowards!" he exclaimed. "You rotten funks!"

"March!" said Ponsonby.

The Highcliffians marched.

They carried Bob Cherry between them, and at every third or fourth step they lowered him with a bump to the ground.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

Bob Cherry struggled feebly in the grasp of his enemies. But he could not free himself. He was marched on towards the gates of Greyfriars.

By the time the school was in sight, Bob was aching in every bone, and almost fainting with the pain in his ankle.

Harry Wharton was in the gateway, looking out. He caught sight of the Highcliffie juniors with their victim, and stared for a moment, in blank astonishment. Then he gave a shout, and ran out to the rescue.

"Scoot!" shouted Ponsonby.

The Highcliffians obeyed the order promptly. They did not wait for Wharton to get to close quarters. They dropped Bob Cherry with a bump into the dusty road, and ran. Before Wharton could reach the spot they had vanished into the wood.

Wharton dashed up breathlessly. He was tempted to rush on after the fleeing Highcliffians, but he did not. He stopped by Bob Cherry.

"Bob, old man, have they hurt you?"

Bob Cherry groaned.

"Yes, rather! Help me into the school."

Harry lifted him, and Bob hung on his shoulder. Two or three other juniors had come out, and they lent a hand.

"The cads!" Frank Nugent exclaimed wrathfully. "If one or two of our fellows had been there they wouldn't have dared!"

"One was there!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Bolsover was there, and he ran."

"Bolsover!"

"The worm!"

"The rotter!"

The juniors helped Bob Cherry into the school. The hero of the Remove was taken up to his study, where he sank exhausted into a chair. He had had a very rough handling, and even his sturdy frame ached with it. Mark Linley rubbed his ankle with embrocation, and the other fellows left the study, burning with indignation. But their indignation was not directed so much against the Highcliffians as against Bolsover.

As Nugent said, they knew that Ponsonby & Co. were cads and cowards; but there was no excuse for a Greyfriars chap finking a row. They had not expected that even of Bolsover.

They waited for him to come in, with knitted brows.

Bolsover came in at last, with a very moody look, and apprehension in his eyes. As he fully expected, a crowd of Removeites met him.

He stopped, and gave them a look of sulky defiance.

"Oh, we're not going to touch you!" said Harry Wharton scornfully. "We only want to tell you what we think of you. You ran away from the Highcliffie fellows."

"They were four to one!" growled Bolsover.

"You left Bob Cherry alone with them."

"I couldn't have helped him."

"Listen to the cad!" said Nugent. "He isn't even ashamed of himself. Why, a fag in the Third Form would have had more pluck."

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess so," said Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon Bolsover is white-livered all through."

"The cad!"

"Worm!"

"Funk!"

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

But he had not a word to say for himself. What could he say? He had carried things with a high hand in the Remove, until the Form had turned upon him. He had been a bully—and now he had shown that he was a coward as well. His face was red with shame as he pushed his way through the crowd of hissing, hooting juniors, and went to his own study.

ANSWERS

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Down!

"BETTER?" asked Mark.

Bob Cherry suppressed a groan. "Yes, it's better," he said. "The blessed thing got a knock, that's all, and I suppose I shall be limping for a few more days now. It's rotten!"

Mark's eyes blazed.

"The Highcliffe cads shall pay for this!" he exclaimed. "But Bolsover's worse than they are. He ought to be kicked out of the school!"

"Thank you!" said a bitter voice.

Bolsover had opened the door of the study. His face was very pale. Mark Linley turned upon him with a flushed face.

"Oh, you heard me, did you?" he exclaimed. "Well, now you can hear some more! You are a cad and a coward, and not fit to speak to. And now you can come on if you like, you hound!"

Never had anyone in the Remove seen the quiet Lancashire lad so roused. His eyes fairly blazed at the bully of the Remove.

But Bolsover did not accept his invitation to come on. The Remove bully was strangely subdued.

"I didn't come here for a row," he said. "I want to speak to Cherry."

"I don't want to speak to you," said Bob Cherry curtly. "You can clear!"

"Just a word—leave us here, Linley."

"Don't go, Mark," said Bob.

"Very well," said Bolsover. "I'll find another time. But—but I wanted to say—" He paused.

Bob Cherry looked at him curiously. Bolsover's face was white and miserable. The bully of the Remove looked very little like his old swaggering self. He had gone through enough in the last day or two to have an effect upon him, and certainly he looked changed. Bob's heart was touched a little.

"Well, I suppose you can speak if you want to," he said.

Mark Linley stepped out of the study and closed the door. Bolsover stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at Bob Cherry, as the latter sat in the armchair, with his injured leg resting upon a stool.

"Well?" said Bob.

"I—I'm sorry!" said Bolsover.

"So you ought to be, I should think," said Bob tartly. "I won't give you my opinion of you. I dare say you can guess it."

"I don't know what made me funk it," said Bolsover. "I'm not a coward. I'm not afraid of those Highcliffe cads! But—"

Bob Cherry's lip curled.

"But you bolted, all the same," he said.

"Yes," muttered Bolsover, "I—I bolted."

"I think the fellows will have only one opinion as to whether you're a coward or not," said Bob Cherry. "You won't have much of a time in the Remove after this. Why, the smallest fag in the school would have had more pluck."

Bolsover bowed his head.

"If it would happen again," he said. "If I had a chance

— Look here, it was really because I had my back up—I was ratty—"

"That won't wash!"

"Well, that was as much the reason as anything else," said Bolsover. "I wish I had a chance to show you whether I'm a coward or not."

"You've had the chance, and funk'd it."

"I—I suppose so."

The Remove bully was silent. His look was so utterly dejected that Bob Cherry could not help feeling a little compassion for the wretched fellow.

"You've done yourself in," he said. "The best thing you can do is to lie low. If you swank round in the Remove-room any more, you'll get it in the neck. You're shown up, and you can't get over it. That's all there is about it. Nobody would care so much if you hadn't been such a rotten bully. But after lord-

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ing' it over the Remove, you might at least have stood up to the Highcliffe chaps. That's what the fellows think."

Bolsover nodded.

"I can see that plainly enough myself," he replied. "I suppose it's no good telling you that I—I see things in rather a different light now. You'd think I was humbugging."

Bob Cherry laughed grimly.

"I'm afraid I should," he said. "You are under the weather at present, and, I suppose, feeling rather repentant. That's all. If the Form would stand it, you'd begin the old game again to-morrow."

"You're not fair to me, Cherry."

"Oh, I don't want to rub it in!" said Bob Cherry. "But you'll find it pretty hard to convince the Remove that you're not a funk, after this. If you get a chance, I should advise you to make the most of it."

Bolsover did not reply. He quitted the study, and went down the Remove passage with his head drooping. He was hard hit.

There was a yell from the end of the passage.

"Here comes the funk!"

"Yah!"

"Who ran away from the Highcliffe cads?"

"Yah!"

Bolsover did not even look round. He seemed crushed. He went out into the Close, and hisses and hoots followed him.

The Remove bully did not appear in the Form-room that evening. He could not bear to face the contemptuous looks that waited for him there. The smallest fellows in the Remove had lost their fear of the once terrible Bolsover. Even Snoop and Skinner ventured to sneer at him as they passed.

Bolsover remained in his study, where he was left severely alone. He did not see the Form again until bedtime, when he went up to the Remove dormitory.

No one spoke to him there. There were a few hisses, but Bolsover's tameness disarmed most of the juniors. They were content to leave him alone—severely alone. Even Vernon-Smith did not speak to him. The Bounder of Greyfriars, with all his faults, was no coward, and Bolsover had disgusted even him. Bolsover said good-night to him as he turned in, and the Bounder did not reply.

Wingate turned lights out in the Remove dormitory. There was the usual chatter from bed to bed after lights out, but Bolsover did not join in it. He would not have been answered if he had made a remark.

Bolsover was the last to sleep.

For a long time he lay awake, a prey to miserable thoughts. He realised very clearly what a fool he had been. He had been so high-handed that he had forced the juniors to combine against him, and then at the first onslaught he had fallen from his position as cock of the walk. Then he had funk'd a contest with the special enemies of the Remove, and deserted a Greyfriars fellow in the hands of the enemy. He felt that his day was done. He could never hold his head up in the Remove again.

And it was at this time, curiously enough, that better feelings were stirring in Bolsover's breast. For the first time, he felt a desire to do better than he had done—to mind

his ways, to make himself liked instead of hated and feared.

If he had stood up for Bob Cherry against the Highliffians, that would have gone a long way towards setting him right with the Remove. But he had failed.

The miserable junior fell asleep at last.

In the morning it was the same—no word was addressed to Bolsover as the juniors chatted cheerily over their washing and dressing. He was not exactly sent to Coventry, but for the present, at least, he was ignored.

Had that happened a few days earlier, Bolsover would certainly have broken out into a rage, and there would have been trouble.

But the Remove bully was learning his lesson.

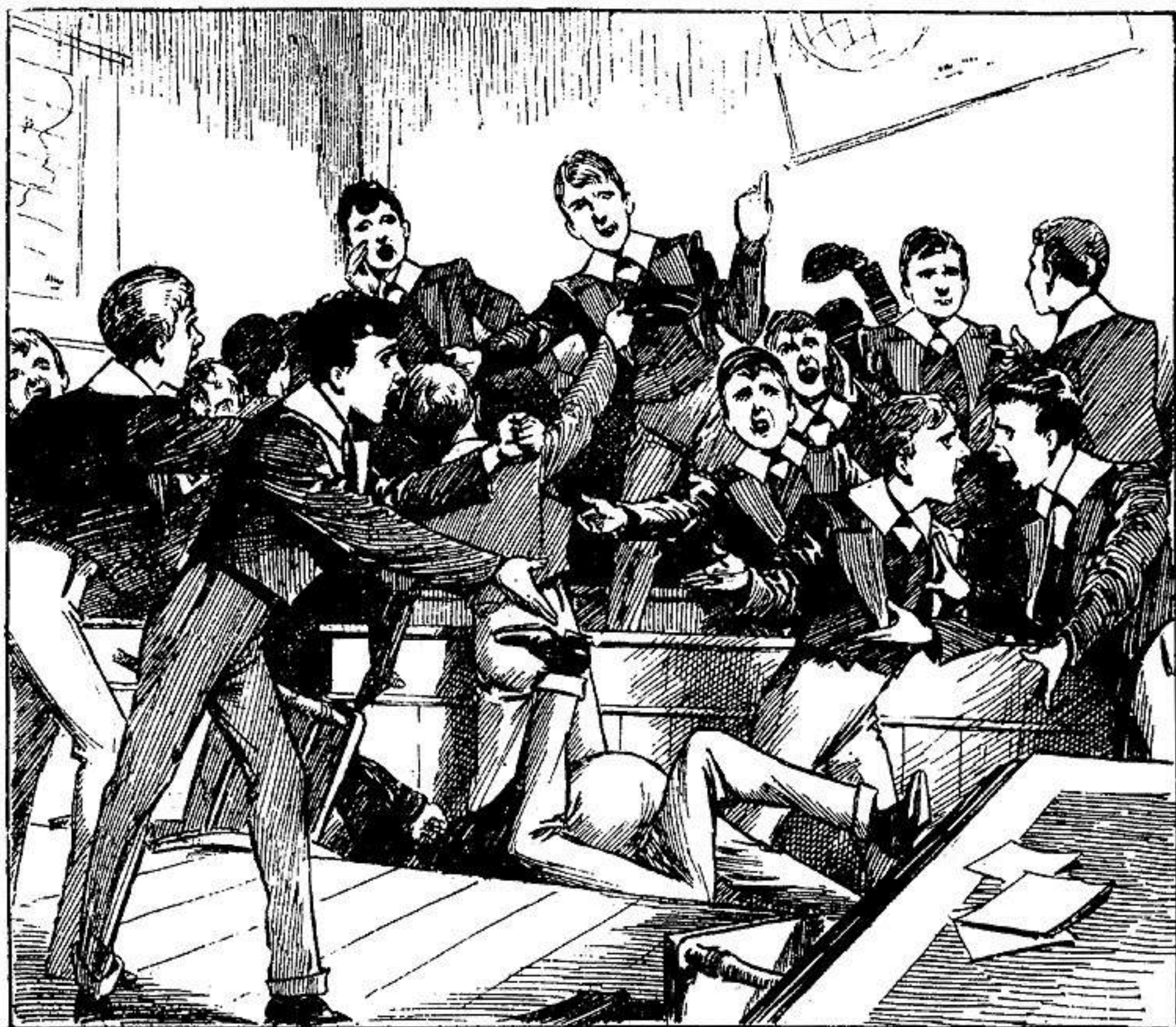
The juniors were ready enough to handle him again if he made himself trouble-

**Next
Tuesday:**

**"For the Honour
of His Chum!"**

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

**ORDER
EARLY!**



When the excitement was at its height, Trevor rushed at Vernon-Smith, hitting out. He felt too deeply for mere words, and the next moment the two Removeites were fighting hammer and tongs. (See chapter 1.)

some, and against two or three his great strength was useless.

He was tamed.

He was very subdued that morning, and very quiet in the class-room. He had often amused himself in Form by half impertinence to Mr. Quelch, but this morning the Remove-master had no more tractable pupil than Bolsover.

After morning lessons, his solitude was broken a little—one junior spoke to him. But it was only Billy Bunter, and Bunter, as usual, was "on the make." He nudged the burly Removeite as they came out into the passage.

"I say, Bolsover," said Bunter, with his fat chuckle, "you must be feeling pretty lonesome now—ch?"

Bolsover glanced at him. At any other time he would probably have replied with a box on the ear which would have made Bunter's head sing for hours. But now he did not.

"Yes," he said quietly.

"I should say so! It was rotten your finking a row with the Highcliffe chaps," went on Bunter. "The fellows seem determined to send you to Coventry. I don't mind speaking to you now and then."

"Thank you!" said Bolsover, with a sarcastic contempt that was quite lost upon William George Bunter.

"Not at all," said Bunter airily. "By the way, Bolsover, could you oblige me with a small loan of a few bob—say ten?"

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"No!"

"The fact is, I'm expecting a postal-order," said Bunter confidentially, "and there's been some delay in the post. It hasn't come yet. You might lend me five bob, and I'll let you have it back out of my postal-order to-night."

"Oh, let me alone!"

"Look here, you cad——"

Bolsover made a movement, and Billy Bunter promptly backed away. Bob Cherry and two or three other Removeites were near, however, and the Owl of the Remove took courage.

"You rotten cad!" said Bunter. "You worm! For two pins I'd wade in and lick you! You're a beastly, rotten—— Ow! Yow!"

Bob Cherry's grasp was on the back of Bunter's neck. Billy Bunter was shaken till his teeth seemed to rattle in his head, and his spectacles slid down his fat little nose.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh, really, Cherry—— Yow! Groo! Leggo! If you sh-sh-shake me like that my glasses will fall off, and—and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them—— Ow!"

Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a twist that made him sit down with considerable violence.

"There's such a thing as not chipping a fellow when he's down!" said Bob. "If I hear you ragging Bolsover again, you fat worm, I'll squash you! Do you hear?"

"Ow!"

Bolsover walked away. Bunter blinked at Bob Cherry, and put his spectacles straight.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Beast!"

Bob Cherry shook a warning finger at him, and left him sitting on the floor, gasping. Billy Bunter sat there for some minutes, gasping for breath.

"Beast!" he murmured. "Ow! Beast!"

But Billy Bunter did not venture to chip the fallen bully of the Remove again.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover's Chance.

"LOOK out!"

"What's the row?"

"Bolsover!"

"Oh, hang!"

Gatty looked round nervously. Dicky Nugent and his chum were on the towing-path beside the Sark, eating oranges. Dicky had a bagful of the succulent fruit on the grassy bank beside him, and the two fags were enjoying a feed. The last of the five shillings, so painfully extracted from Bolsover, had been thus expended.

The sight of Bolsover, himself, coming down the towing-path was very unwelcome to the two fags. They were at some distance from the school, and there was no help at hand. And they had not the slightest doubt that the bully of the Remove would take this opportunity of making them smart for the scene in the study.

The two fags rose to their feet.

Bolsover had not seen them yet. He was walking moodily along, with his hands plunged deep in his trousers' pockets, and his chin sunk. He looked the picture of dejection. As the two fags rose from the grassy bank, Bolsover looked up and saw them. Gatty and Nugent minor instinctively drew together, and clenched their fists.

Bolsover scowled. He came on towards the two fags.

"Hang it all, we'd better buzz!" said Gatty uneasily. "He'd be quite brute enough to duck us in the river, and the water's jolly cold now!"

Dicky Nugent nodded.

"Right-ho! Sprint!" he said.

"You young duffers!" called out Bolsover. "I'm not going to touch you!"

"Only your word for that!" said Dicky Nugent promptly.

"Look here——"

"Oh, rats!"

Bolsover made an angry movement, and the two fags broke into a run. They ran up the towing-path, over a knoll that projected into the river. Round the steep slope there, the current ran and raced, and bubbled in the rushes. Gatty uttered a sudden, sharp cry. In his haste he slipped where the slope was steepest, and rolled down the bank.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Help!"

Splash!

The cry had barely escaped his lips, when he was in the water.

He struggled frantically; but he could not swim. In a moment he was under, and the current whirled him out into the river.

Bolsover dashed forward.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "He—he will be drowned!"

Dicky Nugent was petrified with horror for a moment.

It had happened so quickly that he hardly realised it at once. Gatty was right out in the stream, in full flood, and a despairing cry for help was choked by the bubbling water. Dicky sprang towards Bolsover and caught him by the sleeve.

"Save him!" he shrieked.

"I—I——"

"Save him!" yelled Dicky. "You can swim! I've seen you! Go in for him!"

Bolsover was pale as death.

Only too well he knew the deadly dangers of the Sark at that point, where it swept round the knoll to the deadly currents of the Pool.

He could swim—that was true. But once in the grip of the whirling Pool, the strongest swimmer would be in terrible danger. And burdened with the drowning fag, what chance would he have?

He knew that Bob Cherry, or Wharton or Nugent would not have stopped to consider what chance he would have. Even Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, would have gone in like a shot, without giving a thought to the danger.

And it was Bolsover's fault, too, that the fag was in the water. True, he had not intended to have touched the

fags. But it was his reputation that had made them afraid to let him get within reach of them there. They had expected him to bully and ill-use them, as had been his wont. It was his fault!

His fault!

And the fag was struggling blindly in mid-stream, sweeping on to death in the flood of the whirling Sark.

And Bolsover, white as chalk, stood hesitating.

Dicky Nugent's voice rose to a shriek.

"Bolsover! Coward! He's drowning! Save him!"

"I—I—I can't! There's no chance!" Bolsover muttered thickly. "It's impossible! What's the good of two being drowned instead of one?"

"Save him!"

"I—I can't!"

"Coward!" shrieked Dicky furiously. "Coward! Oh, help!"

"He can't be saved! I——"

"Get aside!"

Dicky Nugent snatched off cap and jacket and boots. His hands worked like lightning. The fag's intention was plain enough. Slight as his power was likely to be to save the drowning boy, he was going in for his chum.

Bolsover clutched at his shoulder.

"Nugent minor! You're mad! You can't save him!"

"Don't touch me!"

"I tell you——"

"Coward!"

Dicky dashed his jacket to the ground, and sprang towards the water. Bolsover sank upon his knees, overcome with emotion, turning his face from the river. He could not look upon the boy he dared not attempt to rescue.

All the time that he trembled, one thought was hammering in his brain:

This was his chance!

The chance he had wished for, the chance he had longed for, of proving to his schoolfellows that he had courage, that he was not the mere bully and poltroon they deemed him.

His chance!

And he was letting it pass him by!

But the flooding river, the whirling currents, the deep, dark recesses of the dangerous Pool—he could not face that.

Splash!

Nugent minor was in the river.

He had dived in to the rescue of his chum—dived in to death, as Bolsover well knew!

For if the task had been a terribly dangerous one for a powerful fellow like Bolsover, it was quite beyond the strength of the fag.

Dicky Nugent had gone to his death.

Bolsover groaned aloud.

He dared not look towards the river. He dared not look upon the death of the feeble swimmer. He listened. What did he hear?

A splash—splash again—a bubbling cry!

"Help!"

Bolsover shuddered.

"Help!"

Fainter the cry now.

Bolsover covered his face with his hands.

The scene he dared not look upon was terrible enough. Dicky Nugent, with desperate strokes, had reached Gatty, and grasped him. Gatty was unconscious. Dicky's grasp brought his white, insensible face above the surface. But both of them now were in the whirl of the current, and Dicky could do no more. Once, twice, he strove to reach the shore, but he was whirled back. The deep, dark waters roared in his ears. Still, he clung to his insensible chum.

Round him, now, was the gleaming surface of the Pool—the deep, deadly Pool that could have told many a fatal tale. It was all over, but he struggled on. He tried to cry for help, but the water bubbled in his mouth.

Was it the end?

His senses were leaving him, but he clung tight to Gatty. Like one in a trance he heard the splash of an oar in the water, but he was too far gone to realise that it meant help. He was sinking—sinking—sinking with a dull roar in his ears, and it was as if bands of iron were compressing his throat and his breast.

Suddenly it ceased. Something touched his neck. His head came up into the blazing sunlight and the fresh, free air of heaven.

A face looked down upon his swimming eyes.

"My brave lad! It's all right now!"

He did not hear. His senses were going. He was lifted into the boat and laid beside Gatty. Then he knew no more.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Pheew!"

"Look!"

"It's Nugent minor!"

"My young brother!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, in alarm. Nugent ran towards the school gates. A crowd of fellows were at his heels. Men were carrying in two still forms upon hurdles. One of them was Gatty, and the other was Nugent minor. They were drenched with water, and neither moved nor spoke.

Nugent felt as if an iron hand were gripping his heart. His brother Dicky! What had happened to him?

He caught at the hurdle and stopped the bearers. He bent over the still form and peered with wild eyes into the pallid face.

"Dicky! Dicky!"

"He's not dead, sir," said one of the men bearing the hurdle. "But he was pretty near it, sir. He went in after the other chap, sir."

"Dicky!"

Harry Wharton drew Frank aside, and the improvised stretchers, with their unconscious burdens, were carried on towards the School House. Bolsover had followed them in at the gates. His head was drooping; he dared not raise his eyes to his schoolfellows.

They did not know as yet. But when they did know—

No one looked at Bolsover for the moment. With sad and alarmed faces the juniors followed the gloomy procession to the house.

Frank Nugent seemed almost stunned.

The two fags were carried into the Second Form dormitory and laid in their beds. The local doctor was telephoned for at once.

Frank hung over his brother's bed with ghastly looks. He was thinking of his mother.

Mr. Quelch and the Head were there. What had happened had been explained to them. One of the rescuers had seen the two fags struggling in the pool, and had put off in a boat just in time to save them. Dicky Nugent was not dead, but he had been very near to it.

Dr. Locke laid his hand gently upon Frank's shoulder.

"Courage, Nugent!" he said softly. "Your brother is not in danger. Thank Heaven he was taken from the river in time!"

Frank looked up with haggard eyes.

"Oh, sir, he looks—"

"He is already recovering consciousness," said the Head. Nugent minor's lips moved, and he muttered something.

They bent low to hear what it was.

"Bolsover! Coward!"

The Head looked puzzled.

"He is speaking of one of the Remove boys?" he said.

Frank gritted his teeth.

How the fags had come to be in the river was not known. It was known that Nugent minor had jumped in to save his chum, but that was all. How had Gatty come to be in danger, in the first place? Was it through Bolsover?

Frank remembered how once Bolsover had knocked a Remove fellow into the river in a fit of temper. His teeth came together hard. But, for the present, he could not think of punishment for the bully of the Remove. He was too anxious about Dicky to leave his brother's bedside.

Dicky Nugent's eyes opened. He gazed wildly at his brother and the Head.

"Oh, save him!" he gasped faintly. "Save him! He's drowning."

"Dicky!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Is that you, Frank? Save him!"

"Dicky, old son—"

"He's drowning! Gatty's drowning!"

Dicky stared about him wildly and realised that he was no longer in the river.

"Hallo! How did I get here?"

"You were rescued from the Pool," said the Head.

"Gatty—"

"Gatty is safe."

"All serene, then!" said Dicky Nugent. "My word, I thought we were goners! Blessed if I thought we should get out of the Pool alive!"

"How did you get into the river?" asked the Head.

"I went in for Gatty, sir."

"But Gatty—"

"He fell in."

"Ah!"

"We were running along the bank, and he lost his footing and fell in, sir," said Dicky Nugent.

He did not intend to mention Bolsover's name to the Head. In the Second Form-room it would be a different matter. Among the juniors the Remove bully should be branded as a coward and a poltroon. But Dicky had no intention of betraying him to the Head. He did not even say that it was fear of Bolsover's bullying that had made the juniors run in that perilous place.

Gatty had not come to himself yet.

They waited anxiously for the arrival of the doctor from Friardale.

He came quickly enough, though it seemed a long time to the anxious Head of Greyfriars.

He examined the two fags. Dicky Nugent was little the worse for his perilous adventure. The rescuers had done their best for the fags immediately they were taken from the water, and Dicky was very tough. But with Gatty it was different.

He had been in the water longer, and had come nearer to grim death. He was not yet conscious.

He was not in danger, the doctor thought. But he would need great care. He was to be moved to the school sanatorium, where he could have perfect quiet, and a nurse would be required to attend him.

The doctor's instructions were carried out. Frank Nugent remained alone with his brother in the Second Form dormitory.

Dicky Nugent was sitting up in bed now, and a trace of colour had crept back into his cheeks. But his usually sunny face was overcast. Even his volatile nature was impressed by the terrible peril he had gone through, and still more by the state of his chum.

Frank's heart was relieved of a load. He was sorry for Gatty, but his great anxiety had been for Dicky.

In spite of the incessant disagreements between them, the bond of affection between the two brothers was, at bottom, very strong. And Frank had thought of his mother, too—of her grief, and her reproaches, if anything should happen to her youngest and favourite son.

"I say, this is rotten, Franky!" said Dicky, in a low voice.

"You're feeling better, Dicky?"

"Oh, I'm all right! But poor old Gatty!"

"Yes, it is bad," said Frank. "How did Gatty come to fall in the river?"

"He slipped, as we were running."

"What were you running for?" said Frank. "Was Bolsover after you?"

Dicky wrinkled his brows reflectively.

"I don't know," he confessed. "He came down the towing-path, and we thought that he would go for us, and we bolted. Then Gatty slipped and fell in."

"Why did you call him a coward when you first came to?" Dicky gritted his teeth.

"Because he is a coward—a rotten coward!" he said, with blazing eyes. "It was his fault that old Gatty went in, and he ought to have tried to save him!"

Frank started.

"Did he see him?"

"Of course he did! He was standing beside me all the time till I jumped in," said Dicky Nugent savagely. "The rotten coward funk'd it!"

"He knew—"

"I yelled to him to try to save Gatty, and the rotter flopped on his knees and turned his rotten face away!" snapped Dicky.

"And then you—"

"I jumped in after old Gatty."

"And what did Bolsover do?"

"Blessed if I know! Sneaked away, I suppose!"

Frank set his teeth.

Mrs. Kebble, the housekeeper, came into the dormitory. "You must run away now, Master Nugent," she said. "Master Dicky is to be taken into the sanatorium as well as Master Gatty, the Head says. It will be better for him." "Oh, rot!" exclaimed Dicky Nugent indignantly. "I'm not ill!" "My dear little boy—" "Gammon!" said Dicky. "Look here, you're jolly well not going to make an invalid of me! And I'm going to have my usual grub, mind—not any of your beastly gruel!" "Dear Master Dicky—" Frank left the dormitory, leaving "dear Master Dicky" still arguing with the housekeeper. Frank was not smiling; he did not feel inclined to smile. He was going to speak to Bolsover.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Coward!

BOLSOVER was seated in a shadowy corner of the Close, under one of the elms, among the old leaves that were falling thickly. He was alone on the bench under the trees; he wanted to be alone. Sooner or later, he knew, the story of his poltroonery would be all over the school, and he shuddered at the thought of it. He had already fallen low enough—he did not think that he could have fallen any lower. But in the lowest deep there is a lower deep still! His last action would condemn him for ever in the sight of his schoolfellows. He could never hope to raise his head at Greyfriars again.

"Bolsover!"

"Where's Bolsover?"

The Remove bully heard his name called. He did not reply. He could guess that the story was out now. Dicky Nugent had explained, perhaps, or someone might have seen what had happened on the banks of the Sark.

"Bolsover!"

"They were looking for him, then!"

"Here he is!"

"Here's the cad, skulking away!"

"We've found him!"

The juniors came tramping through the fallen leaves. Half the Remove were there, and a good many fellows of other Forms, too. They gathered round Bolsover as he sat upon the bench, with drooping head, and face as white as chalk.

There was no pity for the disgraced bully of the Remove. There was only scorn, and angry contempt and loathing.

"Bolsover!"

It was Frank Nugent's voice.

Bolsover raised his head. His eyes quailed before Frank's flashing glance.

"What do you want?" he muttered.

"Only a few words with you," said Frank Nugent. "You were going to ill-use Gatty and my young brother when they ran away from you!"

"I—I wasn't!" muttered Bolsover hoarsely. "I swear I never meant to touch them! I called out to them that I wasn't going to touch them! I swear it!"

"They thought you were going to," said Frank bitterly, "because you were a rotten bully and had ragged them often enough before."

Bolsover was silent.

"Gatty fell into the river," said Frank. "My young brother asked you to try to save him, and you refused!"

Bolsover's lips moved, and he seemed about to speak. But no word came.

"You stood on the river-bank and saw two kids drowning, and never moved a finger to help them!" said Frank, in tones of concentrated scorn. "You let a fag of the Second Form jump into the river to do what you were afraid to do!"

Bolsover did not speak.

"Now, tell us again what you saw, Mauleverer."

Lord Mauleverer came forward. His kind face was unusually stern.

"I was on the Black Pike," he said. "I happened to be looking towards the river, and I saw what happened. I was nearly a quarter of a mile away across the river, and it was all over long before I could get near. But I saw what happened. That cad Bolsover was on his knees in a blue funk, and Dicky was jumping into the river. Bolsover never made a move to help them in any way, begad!"

"You hear that, Bolsover?" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, I hear it."

"It's true?"

"Yes," muttered Bolsover.

There was a growl of wrath from the juniors.

"Bump the cad!" exclaimed John Bull.

"Rag him!"

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"Frog's march him!"

Harry Wharton beld up his hand.

"Hold on!" he said. "We don't want any of that now. Dicky Nugent's laid up, and Gatty's in a serious state. Bolsover's got enough to answer for; but if he's got a conscience at all, he will be punished for it without being bumped."

"I guess you're right," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bolsover groaned.

"Do you think I don't feel it?" he muttered thickly. "And you can jaw me, but how many of you would have jumped into the Sark, close up to the Pool, as Dicky Nugent did?"

Some of the juniors looked conscious. There were many there who would not have done it. But they had not swanked as cocks of the walk in the Remove; they had not forced themselves so much into the public eye as Bolsover had done. The heaviest charge against Bolsover was that he had lorded it over the Form, and then, when he was put to the test, had acted with less courage than a small fag. He had disgraced himself and disgraced the Form.

"That's not the point," said Harry Wharton sternly. "You were the cause of Gatty's being in the river at all, and in common decency you ought to have tried to save him. And what right had you to swagger about as you've done, if you're a rotten coward all the time?"

"Pile it on," said Bolsover wretchedly. "I know I deserve it."

"Well, that's something," said Bob Cherry. "The best thing you can do is to get your people to change you into some other school. I can tell you that your life won't be worth living in the Greyfriars Remove after this—especially if—if anything should happen to Gatty."

Bolsover gave a convulsive start.

"How is he?" he muttered hoarsely.

"The doctor says he's in a serious state."

Bolsover's face dropped into his hands.

The juniors looked at him, with grim and scornful looks, and left him there. No one thought of ragging him now.

While Gatty was in the school hospital, at least, there should be no ragging. The shadow of a schoolfellow's danger lay upon all of them.

Bolsover was left alone.

He sat under the trees, the withered leaves slowly fluttering down about him, his face buried in his hands.

He did not look up.

A sob shook the burly form of the bully of the Remove, and through the fingers that covered his face the hot tears slowly trickled.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Scorned by All.

BOLSOVER came into the house at last.

A group of Second-Form fags on the house steps hissed him as he passed, but the bully of the Remove did not look at them.

Open sneers greeted him in the hall and the passage; but he passed on, with his eyes on the floor, and made no sign.

He went slowly upstairs to the Remove passage.

John Bull was standing at the door of No. 1 Study, talking to Bulstrode. Bolsover paused for a moment, and spoke to him.

Bull gave him a cold stare, and turned his back.

Bolsover breathed more quickly, but even then he showed no sign of resentment. The miserable junior was past resentment now. He went on with slow and heavy steps to his own study. But as he entered the study, he started back, his face going white.

His study was placarded over the walls with insulting words.

"Bully!"

"Coward!"

"Who disgraced the Remove?"

"Funk!"

The words were scrawled on paper and cardboard, and pinned upon the walls, and scrawled on the window and looking-glass in ink or chalk.

Bolsover gasped.

He looked round the study with wild eyes. His punishment was growing greater than he could bear.

"Bully!"

"Coward!"

"Funk!"

Yes, he was all those—the placards were only telling the truth. He had earned every title that was inscribed there—he had disgraced the Remove, and disgraced himself. Even the hard, obstinate nature of the Remove bully could not

bear up against the load of obloquy that had fallen upon him.

The tears came into Bolsover's eyes.

He sank into a chair, and sat there, for a long time, in miserable thought. Bob Cherry's advice recurred to his mind—the best thing he could do was to ask his father to place him in another school, where he could start afresh, and have a chance of doing better.

Yet, to leave Greyfriars in such shame—to have the stigma of coward attached to him, ineradicably—that was not pleasant.

What could he do?

"If I had a chance!" he groaned.

Then he almost laughed, himself, at the thought. He had had his chance. Twice a chance had been given him, and each time he had failed. Each time he had funked, and covered himself with disgrace.

He stirred restlessly.

It was all up, and the sooner he got out of Greyfriars the better. But what explanation was he to give to the people at home for his desire to be changed into another school? He could hardly tell them the facts.

And then there was Gatty. While the fag was in the school hospital, Bolsover felt that he could not go. Gatty's illness was due to him—he knew that. He was anxious about the fag. If the adventure in the river should have any permanent ill effects upon the fag the blame would lie at his door.

No one came to his study.

He remained there for the rest of the evening alone. When he left, at bed-time, his preparation was not done—he had had no heart to work. A more utterly wretched boy was not to be found in the walls of Greyfriars. His eyes were down as he entered the Remove dormitory; he felt, rather than saw, the scornful looks that were directed towards him.

As he was sitting on his bed, taking his boots off, a group of Removites came over to him. Bolsover looked up.

"Do you want to know how Gatty is?" said Frank Nugent.

"Yes," muttered Bolsover.

"He's going to be ill for a long time, most likely."

"He's not in danger?"

"Not exactly in danger, but still, in a serious state."

"And we've got something to say to you, Bolsover," said John Bull. "We want you to write to your people to take you away."

"I can't!"

"We're sick of you here," said Tom Brown. "You've made yourself hated by everybody, and despised, too. You're a rotten coward as well as a rotten bully. If you stay in the Remove you'll be sent to Coventry."

"I guess so."

"Nobody will speak to you—you're not fit to be spoken to," said Frank Nugent. "You'd better turn it over in your mind."

"Oh, give me a rest!" muttered Bolsover. "Don't you think you're piling it on too thick?"

"I don't think we can pile it on too thick enough for a cad like you," said Harry Wharton. "You've disgraced the whole Form. If you had any decency left, you would get out. And it will be better for you if you do."

Bolsover did not reply.

Loder came in to see lights out, and the juniors turned in. For long hours Bolsover lay sleepless in his bed.

What was he to do?

He slept at last, but his sleep was broken by troubled dreams. In the visions of the night he saw again the scene of the river-bank—the hands of the drowning fag tossed up in wild appeal for help—the choking cry drowned by the babbling waters—and he shuddered and moaned in his sleep.

He awoke in the morning, pale and unrefreshed.

He was down first of the Remove, and he wandered in the Close by himself, in a dejected humour. He walked over to the school sanatorium—a little building standing apart from the other school buildings, surrounded by trees. He glanced up at Gatty's window—he knew which was Gatty's bed in the sanatorium. Gatty and Nugent minor were there—both ill—one of them seriously so. And it was his doing!

He walked away aimlessly.

He did not go into the house till the bell rang for breakfast. He came in, to the Remove table, and found that the fellows had crowded up so as to leave a vacant place on either side of him.

Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, was at the head of the table, and he noticed it. But he did not make a remark. The story of Bolsover's cowardice was all over the school, and had reached the master's ears.

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ONE
PENNY.

Bolsover's face flushed crimson as he glanced at his plate. On the white china someone had scrawled, in black ink: "COWARD!"

In the Form-room he was left with plenty of room on the form. After morning lessons he was avoided as one plague-stricken.

He walked across to the sanatorium and asked to see the matron. Mrs. Kebble met him with a severe face. She evidently knew all about it, too, and Bolsover flushed as he saw her expression.

"Can I see Gatty?" he asked.

"No!" said Mrs. Kebble shortly.

"Isn't he well enough?"

"No."

"How is he this morning?"

"Much the same."

"He is conscious, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is conscious."

"Has the doctor been?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't he say there is any improvement?"

"Yes—a slight improvement."

"I'm glad of that," said Bolsover.

Mrs. Kebble was grimly silent.

"And I can't see him?" said Bolsover.

"No, you cannot."

"Can you give him a message from me?"

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Kebble hesitatingly.

"Tell him I'm sorry."

"Very well!"

There was nothing more to be gained by staying.

Bolsover walked away, fully conscious that Mrs. Kebble's glance was following him scornfully.

In the Close, when he returned there, a group of Second-Form fags set up a loud hooting.

"Here comes the funk!" yelled Myers.

"Yah! Cad!"

"Coward!"

"Who ran away from the Highcliffe cads?"

"Funk!"

Bolsover's eyes burned for a moment. He was tempted to rush among the yelling fags, and hit out right and left.

But he did not.

He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and strode away, with moody looks; and a derisive yell from the fags followed him.

"Yah! Funk!"

It rang in his ears as he walked away. He entered the school shop. Several Removites were there, chatting and sipping ginger-beer. As soon as Bolsover entered they put down their glasses and quitted the shop without a word.

Bolsover breathed hard.

It was worse than being sent to Coventry; it was as if the fellows would not even breathe the same air with him. How long would he be able to endure it? What was to be the end of it?

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Invalids.

DICKY NUGENT yawned portentously.

The order had gone forth that he was to remain for a day in the sanatorium—and although he was not unwilling to keep his chum company, Dicky was terribly bored.

Gatty was a good deal improved now.

He was able to sit up in bed, propped upon pillows, and though his face was very pale he was looking much better, and there was a trace of colour in his cheeks.

He did not like the confinement of the sick-room any more than Dicky Nugent did. But he knew that he was not strong enough to go down.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" came from Dicky's bed. He was sitting up, and blinking at Gatty.

Gatty grinned faintly.

"Sick of it, Dicky?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"So am I, especially of that slop they give me to eat," said Gatty, with a sigh.

Dicky Nugent sniffed.

"Yes; isn't it rotten! They give me better stuff than you!"

"Yes; it's not fair! I'm iller than you are!" said Gatty.

"That's why you've got the beastly gruel, you ass!"

"You're jolly lucky not to be among the fishes in the pool."

"So are you, for that matter!"

"Won't we make Bolsover sit up for this?" said Dicky.

Gatty grunted: "What-ho!"

"Frank says that the Remove are going for him," said Dicky. "He says they're going to squeeze him out of the school, by hook or by crook. I hope we shall be out before he goes. I want to give him one!"

"Same here."

Dicky yawned again.

"Gatty, old man, I can't stand this. I shall be bored to death!"

"Think of me when you're gone," groaned Gatty. "You're going to be let out this afternoon, and I'm booked for four or five days!"

"Yes; it's rotten," said Dicky sympathetically; "and that beastly stuff you have to eat, too—and the medicine! Doctors are no class—they take advantage of a chap when he's down, to make him swallow all sorts of disgusting stuff!"

"Caddish, I call it!" said Gatty.

"Look here, old man; you shall have something decent to eat!" said Nugent minor. "I'll manage to get one of Mrs. Mumble's rabbit pies in to you, somehow!"

Gatty's eyes glistened.

"My hat! If you only could, Dicky. I feel as if it would save my life."

"I'll try. I can get a ladder from the stables, after dark, and get up to this window," said Dicky Nugent. "I'll bring the spirit-stove, too, and make some coffee, and we'll have a jolly little feed together, my son!"

Gatty looked joyful, but dubious.

"What about Mrs. Kebble?" he asked.

Nugent minor chuckled.

"That's all right! She doesn't stay with you when you're asleep. You can go to sleep at, say, eight o'clock, and snore like anything. I'll be up here soon after eight. She won't stay if you're sleeping like a top."

"Good egg!"

"I'll get as far as the window, and tap on it," said Dicky Nugent, "and if the old girl is still here, you can whistle."

"Good!"

"I'll have the rabbit pie, and some cake and jam, and the coffee-pot and the spirit-stove in a bag on my back," said Dicky, warming to the plan. "It will be quite simple."

"Mind you don't get the spirit spilt over the rabbit pie," said Gatty apprehensively.

"Oh, that's all right."

"You remember you did once at a picnic——"

"That was your fault! You biffed into me——"

"You mean, you biffed into me."

"Now, look here, Gatty——"

"Look here, Nugent minor——"

"You obstinate ass——"

"You giddy mule——"

"I'll jolly well——"

"Oh, scat!"

Dick Nugent grasped his pillow to hurl at his chum in the next bed. Gatty put up his hands.

"Chuck it, you ass—I mean, don't chuck it—you'll make me iller!"

"Well, then, don't you——"

"Rats!"

"You cheeky young bounder——"

"My dear, dear children!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble, hurrying in. "How can you? My dear——"

Dicky Nugent relinquished the pillow.

"Oh, it's all right, Mrs. Kebble," he said, "we were only arguing!"

"And poor Master Gatty so ill——"

"I ain't ill," yelled Gatty; "I'm only hungry!"

"Would you like some more nice gruel, my dear child?"

"No, I wouldn't! I want some cold chicken and ham!"

Mrs. Kebble held up her hands.

"But the doctor's orders, my little dear——"

"I ain't a little dear, and I don't care twopence for a doctor's orders, anyway!" said Gatty, with more emphasis than politeness. "What does Dr. Short know about boys, anyway? He ain't even a married man!"

"My dear Master Gatty——"

"Lemme have a baked potato to go on with, then!"

"Impossible!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Yes, it's rotten!" said Nugent minor. "If I become a doctor when I grow up, I shall always make it a point to order a plentiful diet for invalids. In a case like this, I should order beefsteak and kidney pies, rabbit pies, and

plum pudding, and plenty of them. That's what I call being a medical man!"

"My dear Master Nugent——"

"And I should order ginger-beer instead of medicine!" said Nugent minor.

"Hear, hear!" said Gatty.

Mrs. Kebble smiled.

"You will be out in an hour or two, Master Nugent," she said. "And I really think it will be all the better for Master Gatty when you are gone, as he will be able to get a little quiet."

Whereat the two young rascals exchanged a grin. Mrs. Kebble was in sublime ignorance of the scheme whereby the meagre diet of the sanatorium was to be supplemented.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Smugglers!

"DICKY, how are you?"

Frank Nugent met his young brother at the door of the sanatorium. Dicky was looking a little less ruddy than usual, but that was all. Otherwise, he was his old, saucy, sunny self again.

"Oh, I'm all serene," said Dicky. "Gatty is still on the rocks, poor chap!"

"I'm jolly glad to see you out again, at all events!" said Frank. "Thank goodness it was all no worse, Dick!"

"Yes, lucky, wasn't it?" said Dicky carelessly. "So you're glad to see me out—eh?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Very glad?"

"Certainly," said Frank, in wonder. "You don't doubt it, do you, Dicky?"

"Oh, no; but I was wondering if you were glad enough to lend me ten bob?"

Frank laughed.

"Certainly," he said. "I've got a remittance for you. Mother has sent me a pound, in case you are in need of anything."

Dicky's eyes glistened.

"Good old mater!" he exclaimed. "That's ripping! You can let me have ten bob now?"

Frank handed over ten shillings, and Dicky slipped them into his pocket with much satisfaction. He had been in his usual state of stoniness, and he had anticipated a round of borrowing to raise the money to supply Gatty's wants. The remittance from home came like corn in Egypt in a lean year.

"Don't keep it up too much at first, Dicky," said Frank warningly. "You're not quite strong yet, you know, and you want to keep quiet."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Don't make yourself ill, Dicky!"

"Don't you preach like a blessed Dutch uncle, Franky!"

Frank laughed and turned away. Dicky was evidently very much his old self again.

Nugent minor had no intention of telling his major the little scheme he had planned with Gatty. It never even occurred to Dicky that it might be bad for the patient to neglect the medical man's directions. Dr. Short was a fussy little gentleman, and the juniors had no great respect for his powers. To Dicky's mind, Dr. Short was an absurd faddist who took advantage of a fellow when he was crocked, to make him live on slops and poisonous compounds in bottles. To dodge the doctor seemed an excellent joke to Dicky—and to give his chum something decent to eat was the very height of friendship. It was what Damon might have done for Pythias, or Patroclus for Achilles.

And there was great fun in smuggling supplies into the very sanatorium itself—the building sacred to gruel and medicine, and hungry patients. And then make some coffee there, and have a regular little feed—that was splendid. But Dicky had a suspicion that his major might not approve of it—that Frank might want to put his foot down on the whole scheme. Therefore, Dicky did not mean to breathe a word excepting to his personal chums in the Second Form.

A yell of welcome greeted Dicky Nugent when he reappeared in the Second Form-room.

The fags crowded round him, shaking his hand, and thumping him on the back, till there was really danger that he would be made quite ill again.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Dicky, in his unceremonious way.

"I'll take your word for all that! Don't you give me your fat paw, Bunter minor. You know I've had a remittance?"

"Oh, really!" said Sammy.

"Get out!"

Dicky Nugent drew Myers aside, and walked him out of the Form-room, and confided to him, in mysterious whispers,

his little plot for helping Gatty endure the confinement of the sanatorium.

Myers whistled softly.

"There'd be a row if you were nailed!" he remarked.

"Very likely. I'm going to do it, all the same!"

"Well, it's worth while risking a licking, to help old Gatty," said Myers. "I'll come and help, with pleasure. Got the tin, though?"

"Ten bob!"

"Oh, good. This way to the tuckshop!"

The two fags crossed over to Mrs. Mimble's little shop. Dicky Nugent expended his ten shillings very judiciously. When he had packed his bag with good things, he certainly had a feed which might have tempted an emperor, let alone a hungry fag. Needless to say, Mrs. Mimble had no suspicion of the intended destination of the comestibles.

As eight o'clock drew near, Dicky Nugent and Myers scouted warily round the sanatorium.

The building stood by itself, and the trees surrounding it almost shut it off from view of the grounds.

"We can get the ladder here all right in the dark," said Dicky. "Gosling leaves it in the stable-yard, and we can get it quite easily."

"Yes, rather!"

"Leave the bag here, under the window."

The bag was deposited, and the two young rascals hurried off in the direction of the stables.

The ladder was easily taken from its place, and the fags, keeping in the shadows, bore it to the sanatorium.

They halted breathlessly under Gatty's window.

"There goes eight!" exclaimed Myers, as the hour began to strike from the clock-tower.

Eight strokes boomed out.

"Good!" said Dicky Nugent. "Mind how you raise the ladder. We don't want to biff the end through the window. Old Kebble would be sure to hear it!"

"Right-ho—be careful!"

"Oh, don't jaw!"

The ladder was raised cautiously. The top rested against the window-sill nearest to Gatty's bed. Dicky Nugent crept cautiously up the ladder, Myers holding it below.

The hero of the Second reached the window, and raised his head cautiously above the level of the sill.

The light burned within near Gatty's bed. There were four beds in the room, the other three, of course, unoccupied. Mrs. Kebble was seated in an armchair beside Gatty's bed, knitting.

She glanced several times at the patient. Mrs. Kebble was a very careful nurse, and she had a real affection for the boys under her charge. But she had many duties to do, and when Gatty was safely asleep, she intended to leave him.

Gatty's eyes were closed, and he was snoring so loudly that the sound of it came to Dicky Nugent through the window.

Dicky grinned. Gatty was carrying out his part of the compact admirably. Mrs. Kebble rose to her feet at last.

"You are asleep, Master Gatty?" she asked, in a low voice.

Gatty snored.

"You are quite comfortable?"

Snore!

"Good-night, Master Gatty!"

Sno-o-ore!

Quite satisfied, Mrs. Kebble quitted the room. She left the electric light burning, intending to return later and look at Gatty again. It was too early for the fag to settle down for the night yet.

The moment the door had closed behind the matron, Gatty's snoring ceased, and he opened his eyes wide.

He gave one look at the door, to make sure that Mrs. Kebble had gone, and then looked at the window. He discerned a nose flattened against the pane.

He propped himself up on the pillows, and waved his hand. Dicky tapped at the glass to show that he understood.

"It's all serene," said Gatty softly.

Dicky cautiously raised the sash.

"Right-ho!" he whispered.

"Got the stuff?"

"Yes, rather! Myers is down here with the grub in a bag."

"Good enough!" said Gatty with much satisfaction. "Get it in; I'm frightfully hungry."

"We'll have it in in a jiffy."

Dicky Nugent slid down the ladder. There was a grunt from Myers as one of Dick's boots clumped against his head.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Quiet!"

"Yow! You've biffed my head with your silly foot, you ass!"

"Keep your silly head out of the way, then."

"Look here, Nugent minor——"

"Oh, rats! Shut up!"

Myers was about to make an angry retort, when a footstep crunched in the gloom. In a second the two fags were breathlessly silent, listening.

A form loomed up in the gloom. It was not big enough.

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ONE
PENNY.

to be a prefect, but it looked very big for a junior. Dicky Nugent gritted his teeth.

"Bolsover!" he muttered.

There was a sharp exclamation, and the bully of the Remove came quickly towards them.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not in the Programme

BOLSOVER stared blankly at the two fags.

The Remove bully had come towards the sanatorium, impelled by an uneasy desire to look upon the place where the sick fag lay. He did not like to face the scornful looks in the School House, and he was glad to get out of the sight of the Remove. He had been far from expecting, however, to come upon anything like this, in the deep shadow of the trees round the little building.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, with something of his old domineering tone.

"Mind your own business," said Dicky Nugent savagely, "you rotten bully—you coward! Have you come here to hurt Gatty again?"

Bolsover recoiled. The suspicion of the fag struck him like a blow. That was the opinion the fellows had of him!

"No," he muttered huskily—"no. Are you mad? Why should I want to hurt Gatty?"

"What do you want, then?"

"I—I was anxious about him," said Bolsover.

"Oh, rats!"

"It's true."

"Well, he's getting better, if you're anxious about him," said Nugent minor sarcastically. "Now will you buzz off?"

"But what are you——"

"Don't ask questions."

"You have been going in to see Gatty?" said Bolsover, with a glance at the ladder.

"Suppose we have?" said Dicky defiantly. "It's got nothing to do with you, has it?"

"But it can't be good for him," said Bolsover uneasily.

"Let you care about that!" said Myers, with a sneer.

Bolsover winced.

"But I do care about that," he said. "You kids ought not to go in. You can't! The doctor said Gatty was to have quiet."

"Oh, the doctor's an old frump!"

"But I say——"

"Mind your own business," said Nugent minor. "I should think you've injured Gatty enough, without wanting to stop his friends seeing him."

"If it's bad for him——"

"Well, it was bad for him to be drowned, but you left him in the river," said Dicky Nugent caustically.

"You'd better not go in to see him."

"We shall do as we jolly well like, and you're not going to stop us."

Bolsover hesitated. He felt that the scheme of the fags ought to be stopped, but violence on his part was not the way. And to betray them was out of the question. He knew how that would be looked upon by all the Remove.

"Well, aren't you going?" asked Myers.

Bolsover muttered something, and retreated into the shadows. Nugent minor grunted discontentedly.

"It's rotten that that cur should be hanging about here," he said. "But even Bolsover won't be cad enough to give us away. Come on!"

"I don't know," said Myers dubiously. "I think perhaps I'd better keep watch here, Dicky."

"What about the feed?"

"I must be in that, of course. I'll come in."

The two fags climbed the ladder, Dicky Nugent taking the bag. They clambered in at the window, and Dicky closed the sash down after them. Gatty looked at them eagerly.

"I heard you talking to somebody," he said.

"It was Bolsover," said Dicky. "Lock the door, Myers, in case old Kebble comes back."

"Bolsover! What did the brute want?"

"Oh, he was hanging about. I suppose the fellows have made the house too hot for him. Never mind Bolsover. He won't split, anyway. Here's the grub."

Gatty's eyes glistened at the sight of the good things Nugent minor turned out of the bag. It was indeed a feed. Nugent minor set up the spirit-stove on a chair, and uncorked the bottle of methylated spirit. Myers stood ready with the matchbox.

"Careful!" said Gatty. "You don't want to get the place alight."

"Oh, don't be nervous!"

"I'm not nervous, but you're such an ass, and you know you set fire to the old barn once with your blessed methylated spirit."

"That was Myers's fault. He pushed me."
 "Rats!" said Myers warmly. "You spilt a blessed lot of methylated spirit, and dropped a match in it because you were a clumsy josser."

"Look here, Myers—"

"Look here, Nugent minor—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Gatty impatiently. "If you wanted to jaw you could have done that in the Form-room. Get the stove going; I want some coffee."

"Right-ho! Shut up, Myers!"

"Shut up yourself!" growled Myers.

"Where's that match?"

"You haven't got enough spirit in the stove yet."

"Rats! There's plenty. No good over-doing it."

"I say there's not enough."

"Oh, bosh! Gimme a match."

Myers grunted, and handed over the matchbox. Dicky Nugent lighted the stove, and the flame buzzed under the tin kettle he set upon it. He filled the kettle from the water-jug. The stove having been started, the catables were set out. A cloth was spread over Gatty's knees, and he was provided with a tin plate and a knife and fork.

"Regular picnic, ain't it?" said Myers.

"Oh, it's ripping!"

And Gatty started operations on the steak-and-kidney pie. Gatty was certainly hungry, though whether the steak-and-kidney pie was likely to do him good in his present state was another question.

Dicky Nugent lifted the lid of the round tin kettle and looked in.

"Nearly on the boil!" he remarked cheerfully.

Myers snorted.

"The flame's going down," he said. "I told you you hadn't put enough spirit in the stove."

"Oh, rubbish!"

But Myers was right; the flame certainly was going down, and the kettle did not boil.

The two fags reached out for the spirit-bottle together, and knocked it over. It had been carelessly left uncorked, and there was a gush of the spirit over the chair and the floor.

Dicky uttered an exclamation of wrath.

"You fearful ass—"

"Well, you chump—"

"It was your fault."

"It was yours, you fathead! If you hadn't—"

"If you hadn't—"

"Oh, keep it up!" said Gatty sarcastically. "You'll have Mrs. Kebble back here in a minute, and you'll be chucked out on your necks."

"Yes. Shut up, Myers!"

Dicky Nugent had saved the bottle before all the spirit was spilt. He replenished the stove with what was left, and the kettle began to sing again. He looked through the bag for the materials for coffee-making.

"Hallo! Did you put the sugar in, Myers?"

"I put the coffee in," said Myers.

"But what about the sugar?"

"I left that to you."

"Ass! I left it to you."

"You don't mean to say that you've forgotten to bring any sugar, Nugent minor," said Myers, in measured tones of scorn.

"You frightful ass! You've forgotten it."

"I left it to you—"

"And I left it to you—"

"You haven't got any sugar?" said Gatty, with a sniff. "Well, I must say you are a precious pair of boobies. One of you had better cut off and get some."

"Myers had better go," said Dicky. "If I leave him here he'll upset the spirit-stove, or something, as sure as a gun."

"I can't leave you here," said Myers obstinately; "it wouldn't be safe."

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"But I suppose the ass will get nabbed if I let him go for the sugar," said Dicky Nugent discontentedly. "I'll go; but don't you come near the stove, Myers."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"If you want a thick ear—"

"Get the sugar, and don't jaw, for goodness' sake!" said Gatty. "I want that coffee. I can hear you chaps jaw another time. Do buzz off and get the sugar, Nugent minor."

"All right. I'll be back in a jiffy."

Dicky Nugent clambered out of the window again, and slid down the ladder, and sprinted away in the direction of the tuckshop. Myers helped Gatty to more pie, which the invalid devoured with great relish.

"Look after the kettle," said Gatty; "it's boiling."

The kettle was beginning to boil over. Myers made a hasty lunge to take it off, and knocked it over. He clutched

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wildly at it, and scalded his fingers, and gave a wild howl, and his elbow crashed upon the spirit-stove and sent it flying off the chair.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he howled, sucking his scalded fingers.

"Yow-ow!"

"Look out!" shrieked Gatty. "The stove—the stove! Quick!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"The stove—quick!"

There was a wild flare of flame. The spilt spirit on the chair and the floor had caught from the flame of the upset stove, and the blaze soared up in a sheet.

Myers staggered back with a startled cry.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Fire! Oh!"

"Put it out!" shrieked Gatty.

"Oh! Fire! Fire!"

"You chump! Put it out! Here, wrap this over it!" yelled Gatty, throwing the coverlet off his bed towards Myers.

Myers grasped it, and strove to wrap it over the flame. He burnt his fingers severely in the attempt, and let go the coverlet, yelling with pain. The coverlet itself flamed up, and smoke eddied in thick gusts round the room, and there was a buzz of flame.

Myers, losing his head completely, rushed to the open window, and yelled for help:

"Fire! Help! Oh! Fire!"

The flames had caught to Gatty's bed. Gatty rolled out, bumping heavily on the floor, and tried to run to the window. But his strength was not equal to it. Sitting in the bed, he had felt almost well, but the moment he tried to walk he realised that he was powerless. His legs refused to support his weight, and he fell heavily to the floor again.

"Myers!" he gasped faintly. "Help! Oh!"

There was a roar of flame. Myers, at the window, was shrieking. He had completely lost his head. The room was thick with smoke now, and he could not see Gatty. There was a crashing at the door of the room. But the door was locked on the inside. That fatal precaution of Dicky Nugent's barred out the rescuers.

Myers shrieked wildly from the window:

"Fire! Help! Fire!"

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance.

"FIRE!"

Bolsover heard the wild cry as he tramped under the trees, with his brows moody and his hands plunged into his pockets.

"Fire!"

The burly Removite started, and swung round towards the sanatorium. He saw the glare of dancing flame on the window-panes. He saw the thick smoke rolling from the open window. He caught sight of the white, terrified face of Myers, framed against the smoke and flame.

"Fire! Help!"

Bolsover stood petrified for a moment.

The sanatorium was on fire!

A sick lad, unable to move, was in the burning building!

Bolsover's brain was in a whirl for a moment.

He ran towards the building. There was no one else near at hand. He ran, and paused. The danger was terrible. The ladder was there, but from where he stood the room looked like one mass of flame and smoke.

His very heart turned to ice at the thought of entering it.

He stood irresolute.

"Fire! Help!"

Bolsover stood rooted to the ground.

Then a thought flashed into his mind—a thought that seemed to hammer upon his brain.

It was his chance.

He would not allow himself to think. If he paused to reflect, he knew that he would shrink from the danger. But this time he would not fail—he would not! The Removite should not have cause to brand him as a coward again.

He dashed to the ladder, and climbed it rapidly. He grasped the terrified, shrieking Myers by the shoulder.

"Come!" he rapped out sharply.

"But Gatty—"

"I will save him! Where is Nugent minor?"

"He's gone to the tuckshop!"

Bolsover waited for no more. There was but one to save, then! He dragged Myers through the window, and swung him upon the ladder with one hand, with an exertion of his great strength. Myers clung blindly to the ladder.

"Go down!" shouted Bolsover.

He put his elbows on the window-sill and clambered up.

Myers slid down the ladder, clutching at it. He fell

before he reached the ground, dragging the ladder aside with him, and it slid along the wall, and crashed to the ground. Myers lay dazed, half-stunned, lost to his surroundings.

Bolsover, hanging upon the window-sill upon his elbows, felt the ladder slide from under his feet.

A horrible thrill ran through him for a moment, but he would not allow it to master him.

He clambered up, and knelt upon the window-sill, holding to the sash, and peered into the thick smoke of the room.

"Gatty! Gatty!"

He heard a groan from the midst of the smoke.

Bolsover jumped in.

He heard a sound of heavy knocking, but could not make out whence it came. He stumbled towards the bed through the blinding smoke.

"Gatty!"

He reached the bed.

He knew which was Gatty's bed, and he reached it, and groped over it blindly for the fag. The smart of the smoke was in his eyes, and he could not see.

But Gatty was not there.

Where was the fag?

"Gatty! Gatty!"

There was a low moan from the eddying smoke.

Bolsover plunged in the direction of the sound.

"Help!"

"Gatty!"

"Oh, help!"

Bolsover stumbled over something that lay on the floor—something that moved, and that feebly tried to raise itself.

It was Gatty!

The sick fag, utterly exhausted, and half-suffocated by the smoke, was incapable of a movement to save himself.

Bolsover grasped him.

"Is that you, Dick?" gasped Gatty.

"It's I—Bolsover!"

"Oh, save me!"

"I'll save you!"

Bolsover lifted the fag in his arms. That was little

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ONE
PENNY.

Bolsover placed Gatty on the window-sill, as far from the flames as he could, and held him there.

"Help!" he muttered.

But hardly a sound of the cry he tried to utter passed his parched and scorching lips.

Alone, he might have clambered from the window, and held to the sill till a ladder was brought. But he would have had to abandon Gatty.

The fag was quite unconscious. Bolsover held him upon the sill, while the flames licked behind him.

Myers staggered to his feet, his senses reeling.

"Here's a ladder!" he shrieked.

Some of the fellows had seen it already. Wingate and Courtney, of the Sixth, seized the ladder, and dragged it up.

There was a rush of fellows to mount it.

But the captain of Greyfriars waved them back, and climbed the ladder himself—swiftly, unhesitatingly.

His strong grasp received the insensible fag from Bolsover's hands, and he bore him down the ladder.

Bolsover clambered out of the window.

He clung upon the ladder, his senses reeling, the whole scene swimming round him.

Like one in a dream he saw the sea of flames, the rolling smoke, the crowd of upturned faces.

"He's falling!"

Harry Wharton tore up the ladder.

He was just in time to catch Bolsover as his grasp relaxed.

He supported the weight of the burly Removite, and Wingate and Courtney came up to his aid, and the fainting Bolsover was lowered to the ground. He lay, blackened, scorched, fainting, in the midst of the crowd.

Dicky Nugent came up breathlessly.

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enough for the powerful Removite to do. He would have carried him to the window, but the smoke was thickening round him now, and he could not see the window.

He blinked and glared round with smarting eyes. The rush and roar of the flame dazzled and stunned him.

The smoke was smarting in his eyes—he could not see—he could hear nothing but the roar of the flame.

Where was the window?

He plunged wildly in what he thought was the direction, but flames drove him back. His clothing was alight in places now—he was scorched, burnt, suffocated.

Where was the window?

There was a strong shudder from Gatty—the fag had fainted. It was better for him. He lay like a log in Bolsover's arms.

A rush of cooler air for a second—it was the window. Bolsover heard the cracking of glass in the heat of the flames, and it guided him.

He reached the window.

He put his head out, and dragged Gatty upon the window-sill. Round him the smoke was whirling in great eddying clouds, behind him the flames roared. The floor under his feet was scorching his boots.

Where was the ladder?

It was gone.

Bolsover looked out with straining, despairing eyes.

His face was blackened with the smoke, scorched with the flame; he was unrecognisable—he looked like some demon from the heart of the flames, as he stood there at the window, trying to shriek for help, but finding no voice. His throat was dry and parched; he could not speak.

There were shouts in the Close—shouts, running feet! Fellows were gathering from all quarters.

"A ladder!"

"Get a ladder!"

"Quick!"

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NEXT TUESDAY'S
Grand Complete Tale:

"FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS CHUM!"

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"Gatty! Where's Gatty?" he shrieked.

"He's safe!" said Myers.

Dicky stared at Myers.

"Who brought Gatty out?"

"Bolsover!"

"What!"

There was a shout of amazement from the crowd.

They stared down at the fainting junior. Slowly they made out the scorched and blackened face.

"My hat!"

"It's Bolsover!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Bravo, Bolsover!

"BOLSOVER!"

The crowd repeated the name, as if hardly able to believe their own eyes.

Bolsover!

It was the funk of the Remove who had saved Gatty from the burning building.

And at terrible risk to himself, and a terrible cost. He was blackened and burnt—how severely they could not tell.

"Bolsover!" said Bob Cherry, who had limped out after the rest. "Bolsover! My hat!"

"I guess this beats Banagher!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Then he's not a coward!"

"My hat! I should say no! Look at the flames!"

"Lift him up!" It was the Head's voice. "Bring the brave lad in—and Gatty, too! Bring them into the School House!"

The two insensible juniors were borne tenderly away. Flames were bursting out of the windows of the sanatorium now, but the fire had no hold upon the lower part of the building. Gosling had fixed the hose, and water was poured

upon the fire, and all Greyfriars, from the head of the Sixth to the youngest fag, worked like slaves in fighting the flames.

The fire was got under at last.

The upper part of the sanatorium was a blackened ruin, but the greater part of the building had been saved. The boys, smoky and dirty and exhausted, gathered in the School House again.

There was one thought in every mind.

What of Bolsover?

Dr. Short had come to see Gatty, and he had arrived on the scene just after Bolsover was carried into the School House. He had been with him ever since. He had not yet left the patient.

The Greyfriars fellows waited anxiously for news. They were still wondering. Bolsover had proved himself a hero—there was no question of that. Many another fellow at Greyfriars would have done as he had done, certainly. But Bolsover had been on the spot, and he had done it.

And feeling in the Remove underwent a revulsion.

Bolsover the bully—Bolsover the funk—Bolsover the coward was now the hero of the Form!

"You see, there was good in the chap," said Bob Cherry. "Perhaps we were a bit too hard on him, after all."

"I guess so."

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "And by the same token I'll go to his study and take down those blessed placards."

"Yes, rather!"

Dr. Short came down at last. The juniors gathered round him eagerly for what news he could tell them. The little medico's face was very serious.

"How's Bolsover, sir?"

A score of voices asked the question.

"Very badly burnt," said the doctor, "but he is in no danger. Gatty is suffering from severe shock, and I'm afraid he will be ill for a long time."

And Dr. Short took his departure.

The Removites breathed more freely.

Bolsover would be laid up, and his illness would certainly be painful. But it was something to know that his life was in no danger.

The Head had inquired into the cause of the fire. The terrified Myers had explained, and the brunt of the blame fell upon Dicky Nugent. But Nugent minor did not care for that when he heard that no life was endangered by the accident. The Head reprimanded him very severely, but he felt that the fag had been sufficiently punished by the fright, and he was too thankful that matters were no worse to visit a very heavy punishment upon the scamp of the Second. Dicky Nugent was very repentant, and very glad to escape from the Head's study with nothing worse than a severe lecture.

"You ought to be flogged, you young ass!" said Frank grimly to his younger brother. "You and Myers want a flogging apiece—well laid on."

Nugent minor gave an expressive sniff.

"It wasn't my fault," he said. "How was I to know that that ass Myers would upset the spirit-stove? I know I shall give him a jolly good licking for it."

"A nice little bill to be sent in to the pater for the damage you've done!" growled Frank.

"Well, that can't be helped," said Dicky philosophically. "I think we ought to be thankful that it's no worse."

And in the Second Form-room Dicky Nugent duly pommelled Myers for having been the cause of the accident. The more anxious he felt about Gatty the more he pommelled Myers; and Myers, for many reasons, was glad when the patients were reported to be convalescent.

Bolsover's burly frame bore the ordeal well. Many a fellow would have had a long and severe illness, but Bolsover was only a few days in bed. Gatty was still in a bad state, when one morning Bolsover was allowed to get up and dress.

Bolsover crossed over to Gatty's bed. The fag looked up at him with a peculiar grin. No one was more astonished than Gatty himself was by Bolsover's heroic action.

"Feeling pretty seedy?" asked Bolsover.

"Yes," grunted Gatty; "and hungry."

Bolsover grinned.

"Would you like Nugent minor to bring in another feed and a spirit-stove?" he asked.

"My hat, no!"

"Gatty, kid—" Bolsover paused. His face was very grave.

"Yes," said Gatty.

"You remember that day you fell into the river—"

"I'm not likely to forget it," said Gatty, with a remissive shiver.

"I didn't mean to touch you," said Bolsover. "You were scared for nothing."

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Gatty nodded.

"All serene!" he said.

"And—and I'm sorry I funk'd going in for you," said Bolsover. "I—I did funk it. I ought to have gone in for you, and—and I didn't."

"You've more than made up for that," said Gatty. "You fetched me out of the sanatorium. Blessed if I know how you came to do it! But it was plucky! It was ripping!"

Bolsover was silent.

"The Remove won't call you a coward again after this," said Gatty. "Precious few fellows would have cared to come into the fire for me. I know some of them would have, but lots wouldn't. A coward wouldn't. They'll never call you a funk again."

"I shall never be a funk again," said Bolsover.

And he pressed the fag's hand and left him.

It was known that Bolsover was coming down that morning, and a crowd of the Remove were waiting for him to appear.

As soon as he came in sight there was a cheer.

"Here he is!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Bolsover!"

The bully of the Remove paused, and looked upon the crowd of faces. There was friendly kindness in every one—the old scornful look was gone. The burly Removite was silent, with strange emotions conflicting in his breast.

He thought of the trial in the Form-room—of his punishment—of the long and bitter persecution—and now! It was a change indeed. He could not speak. But he realised how much he had gained.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The Removites thronged round Bolsover, shaking hands with him, and clapping him on the back as they cheered.

"Bravo, Bolsover!"

"Jolly glad to see you back again," said Bulstrode. "You are looking a bit burnt, but jolly well, considering."

"Oh, ripping!" said Bob Cherry. "Give us your fin, old son! We're all jolly proud of you, I can tell you that!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah!"

Bolsover caught his breath.

"Thanks," he muttered—"thanks! I—I—" His voice broke off. "This—this is a bit of a surprise for me."

"It was a bit of a surprise for us your going into the fire after Gatty," said Frank Nugent. "We sha'n't call you a funk again."

"I guess not!"

"Bravo, Bolsover!"

Bob Cherry linked arms with Bolsover as they went into the Form-room.

"What did I tell you?" said Bob Cherry. "Look here, Bolsover! You told me that you wanted a chance. Well, you've got it. Keep your temper, and don't bully, and you won't lose what you've gained. Isn't that good bizney?"

And Bolsover nodded, with an earnest look.

"I'll try it!" he said.

And he meant it.

THE END.

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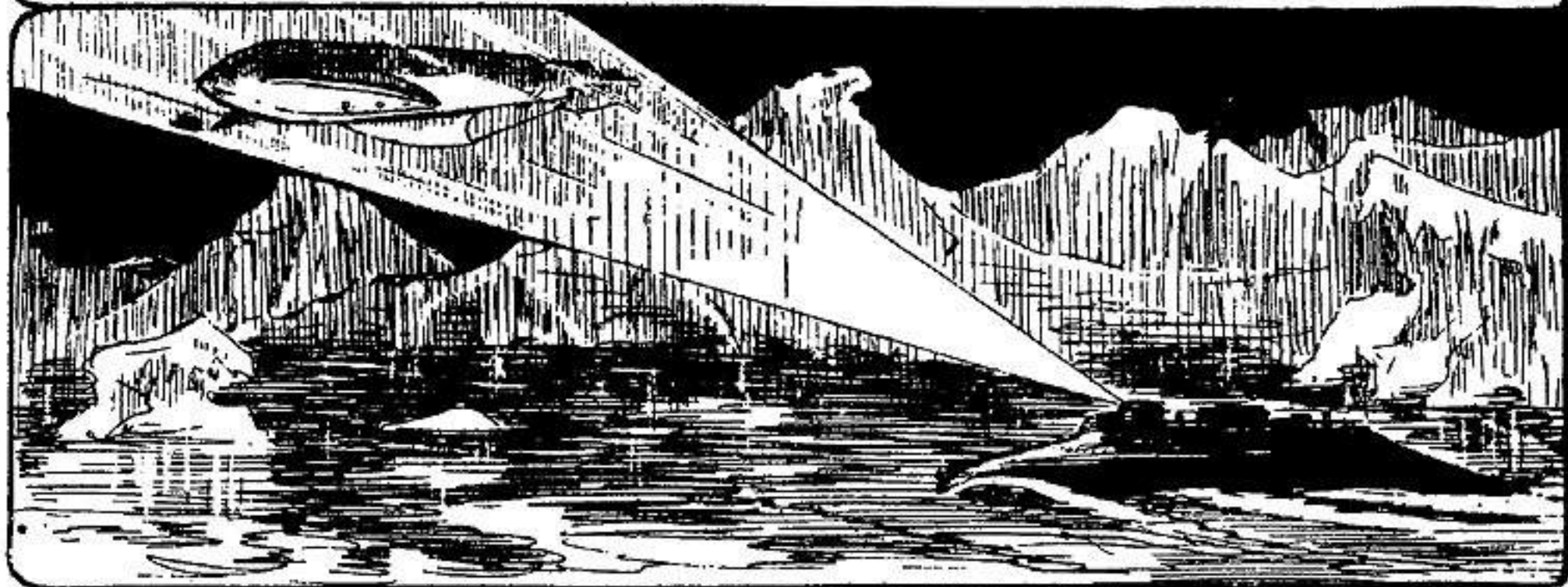
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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Professor Hugley, the renowned American scientist, startles the world by announcing that he is off to find the North Pole in his wonderful air-craft, the Cloud King, there is only one man who dares to enter the lists against him on behalf of Great Britain, and that man is Ferrers Lord, the famous millionaire and inventor. Lord pits his wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep, against the Cloud King in the most amazing race the world has ever seen; the goal is the North Pole, and the prize a million pounds!

The preliminaries are soon settled, a judge is appointed to accompany each of the competitors, and the great race commences.

With Ferrers Lord are Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, an Eskimo, while Hugley is accompanied by Paraira, a Cuban, and Esteban Gacchio, a huge negro. These latter soon show themselves in their true colours, and the Cloud King no sooner reaches the region of ice than Hugley, and such of the crew as are loyal to him, are murdered, and Paraira and Gacchio assume control of the airship.

In the meantime Ferrers Lord and Thurston, at the head of a party, are exploring a mysterious chain of caves, which seem to offer a means of gaining the Pole.

Esteban Gacchio and Paraira, on board the Cloud King, plot to wreck the Lord of the Deep. They drug Sir Clement Morwith, and fire upon the Lord of the Deep. The submarine, however, escapes their fire.

In the state-room aboard the Lord of the Deep, Ferrers Lord tells Ching-Lung and Thurston that he knew before the race commenced that Professor Hugley was to be murdered during the journey. The two look at him stonily, hardly believing what they hear.

(Now go on with the story).

Stranded—The Poisoned Dart—Watched by Unknown Foes.

"And you let him go!" gasped Thurston. "You let him — Lord, you couldn't! It's too awful!"

"Patience, Rupert! Heaven knows, I did all I could to put him on his guard! He laughed at me for my pains. I intended to save him. Never for a moment did I think they would kill him on the outward journey. As far as I could discover, only two men on board could navigate—himself and Morwith. He was teaching Paraira navigation. I felt sure that until Paraira learnt enough to enable him to make out and follow a course Hugley was safe."

Rupert drew in a hoarse breath of relief.

"You meant to rescue him before they started for home, then?"

"I did! Did you really imagine—"

"No, old chap—no!" cried Thurston, holding out his hand. "I know it was all right. Forgive me. It was a frightful thought to ever enter my head. We'll live to see those two reptiles hanging, I hope. How is Van Witter?"

"Better. I came back to get him some cigars and a bottle

of wine. Come back with me. He's as merry as a cricket. Just telephone for champagne, Ching!"

The Yankee welcomed them heartily. He was sitting up, propped with pillows, and though pale and weak still, his eyes twinkled, and, like a sensible man, he was making the best of a bad affair.

"Waal, it's like a little tea-party," he said, "and I'm mighty pleased to see you! I wish you wouldn't fire guns off, though, when I'm taking a nap and dreaming of mammoths, and such like. Could I drink a glass of fizz, did you say? Can a mouse eat cheese? Show me the colour of it!"

A servant handed the glasses round.

"One moment, gentlemen, before you drink!" said Ferrers Lord. "Our true journey commences now. Before we were like a racehorse going to the starting-post. I want you to drink success to our underground voyage. There goes the bell! The Lord of the Deep has entered the cavern."

A bell sounded, and they raised their glasses to their lips.

"And how far are we from the Pole?" asked Van Witter.

"In a direct line, one hundred and twenty-six miles."

"Waal," drawled the Yankee, "that's something like a long tunnel. Fancy if they run trains through—ch? By hokey, as the great Prout has it, you'd never get a seat at all!"

"Why not?" inquired Ching-Lung.

"Why, all the engaged couples would have bought them up! Think of one hundred odd miles in the dark, and nobody to see 'em cuddling all the way. I'll try another drop of wine. Say, did you take any photos?"

"A few," answered the millionaire. "I'll develop them later on, after I've bandaged you up again. You're getting on grandly, and we'll have you on your legs again in a week. You've seen Gan-Waga, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes! We've been yarning together. He's a funny customer. I had some vaseline, and that's gone mysteriously, and so has my tooth-paste. It strikes me he's eaten them both."

They chatted for almost an hour, while the vessel lay on the surface of the water in the cavern's mouth. The crew had plenty of work to do. They were twisting a belt of twisted rope round the Lord of the Deep to soften the impact, in case she struck or grazed the rocky walls. It was tiring labour.

When it was done the lights were extinguished, the water surged into her tanks, and she sank.

To navigate the winding tunnels and passages of the great cavern was a terrible task, and the progress was slow and tedious. A couple of knots an hour was the vessel's best pace, for the lead had to be kept going constantly. And then, to the disgust of all, in spite of every precaution, the Lord of the Deep grounded at tide turn.

They were only two miles beyond the silver cavern. Prout tore his hair, and Maddock raved.

"It's serious," said the millionaire, in answer to Thurston's

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questions—"very serious. I found deep water a few hundred yards higher up, but we cannot drag her off."

"But she'll lift with the tide," said Ching-Lung.

"In a couple of days."

"Great Scott! Don't we get a tide every twenty-four hours, then?"

"Yes; but not a tide high enough to float her. It's aggravating, but explorers have had to put up with worse things. We must grin and bear it, Ching. And, by the way, I must make prisoners of you. You must not leave the vessel without my permission. I don't want to lose you, and this is an uncanny place. I haven't forgotten the strange fellow we chased in the cavern. There may be more about."

"By Jove!" put in Thurston. "You're right when you say it's uncanny! And we've got to stay cooped up here for two days. What lovely luck!"

"Somebody will suffer!" grinned his Highness. "I feel it coming on! If we stop here for two days I shall turn the ship upside down. If there is a dickens of a row, you'll let me off lightly, old chap, won't you?"

The millionaire's face softened affectionately.

"You are a licensed joker, Ching," he said, "and you can't help it, I know. Somehow I can't be angry with you. Play as many of your ridiculous pranks as you like, but don't disturb me. Who is to be the victim now?"

"I think I'll try my hand on Joe, the fat and fair. The others are getting to know me too well."

The millionaire stirred his coffee, and hid a smile.

"So it's to be Joe—eh?" he drawled. "Poor, innocent Joe! Let him down gently."

An effort was made to tow the great vessel into deep water by means of the launch. One cable snapped, and the attempt was abandoned. Once or twice the men imagined they saw ghostly shapes hovering over the ship. Rupert himself distinctly heard a strange cry. The black pit seemed full of weird secrets and mysteries.

Evidently Ferrers Lord was uneasy. The torpedo nets were kept out, and the watch was doubled and frequently changed. Rifles were stacked there, and blue lights were kept in readiness. Joe and another of the crew were on duty, when Ching-Lung came up to breathe the damp air of the cavern.

"Evenin', your 'Ighness!" said Joe, with his best salute. "Darkish, sir!"

"Oh, wait until moonrise," answered Ching-Lung, with a laugh. "Where's Prout?"

"Comin' on in an hour, sir—your 'Ighness. I'm much obliged!"

Ching-Lung wanted to improve his acquaintance with Joe, and he began by presenting him with a cigar. It was an excellent cigar, but, to his disgust, the fat carpenter began to cut it up to put in his pipe.

Something shot over his hands, struck the wheel, and stood quivering in one of the spokes.

Ching-Lung sprang back, staring at the thing which had entered by the open door. It was a dart, tipped with a bunch of wool. He sprang to the door and closed it. A sharp thud echoed against the glazed panel.

"Don't touch the thing!" he said to the startled man. "Let it stay where it is!"

He pushed the telephone indicator to the number of the millionaire's cabin, and sounded the bell.

"Come here, old chap," he said quickly, "as soon as you like! I'm on deck."

The millionaire sprang up the companion.

"What's that?" asked Ching-Lung, pointing to the dart, which quivered still.

Ferrers Lord showed no atom of surprise.

"Bring the magnifying-glass out of the state-room!" he said.

Joe hurried away. Taking out his handkerchief, the millionaire covered his hand with it, and drew the dart out of the wood. When Joe returned, blowing like a grampus, Ferrers Lord examined the little weapon carefully. Then, beckoning to the prince, he hurried down the ladder.

He did not pause until he reached the state-room. Then he scrutinised the dart again.

"Well?"

"It is far from well," drawled Ferrers Lord. "What do you argue from this little bit of wood and metal?"

"That some human being is watching us."

"Some being, though, perhaps, not human in our sense of the word, Ching. This dart is cleverly made. Its point is like a needle. No, don't touch; it's poisoned!"

Ching-Lung had stretched out his hand to take the dart, but the millionaire snatched it away.

"Poisoned?"

"I think so—I am sure of it! This is one of the most amazing things we have met with yet, and one of the most serious. In the forest, along the banks of the Amazon, I have seen these deadly darts before. The natives fire them

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from blow-pipes, and this has been shot from some similar instrument. This is terrible, Ching!"

"I don't see it, old chap."

"Then I do! A graze from one of these would mean death. How many of these unknown imps are watching us and dogging us, we cannot tell. The darkness is all against us, though no doubt they can see us. Against this flying poison our nets are no protection, for the meshes are too large. Every time a man goes on deck he risks his life. Why, it's maddening! They may pick us off one by one while——"

Ting, ting, ting, ting! It was the telephone, and Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders angrily as he listened.

"Keep in!" he said. "On no account open the door an inch!"

"Something else amiss, Lord?"

"The launch was not taken in," answered the millionaire, "and they have heard shouts. Uncanny is no word for this. It gives one the creeps. We had better go on deck again."

Both Joe and his comrade had heard strange cries. Rupert joined them, and was told of the strange occurrences. Now all was silent, except the swish of the water. Their faces showed that all were uneasy.

"I'd sooner face a battery of guns than this!" said Rupert. "I object to being potted at in the dark by gentlemen I can't see. It's worse than being an Irish landlord. Listen! Was that a cry?"

"I heard nothing," said Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung was bending forward intently, straining every nerve to listen. They all heard something now, or fancied they heard strange rustlings or whimperings. The millionaire switched off the light. No human eyes accustomed to the sunlight could pierce the velvety blackness of the tunnel.

A sound like pattering of hailstones crept out of the silence. What did the darkness hide? What caused the odd sound? Who were these dwellers in the everlasting gloom?

Patter, patter, patter, patter! The sound echoed loudly through the vault, and then sank into silence. Out shot the glaring searchlight, and eager eyes watched the luminous circle it threw as it flashed round the rocky walls. It revealed nothing but the bare sides of the tunnel.

"Odd," said the millionaire uneasily. "Except for the affair of the dart, I should say that the sound was caused by fragments of rock falling from the roof. But——"

He looked towards the stern, and whistled softly. The launch had been moored there. It was gone. Joe missed it at the same time. Then he uttered a shout as the light pierced the gloom, showing the launch drifting slowly down the sluggish current.

And she was not empty. Shadowy forms were moving in her. They seemed to crawl rather than walk. Whether they were human beings or not, they could not tell, for even the searchlight was uncertain. They stood for a moment paralysed with amaze. Then, seizing a rifle, Ferrers Lord dashed to the door.

"Do not follow me!" he cried. "Keep in!"

He levelled his rifle. Hiss, hiss! Two somethings, that he knew were poisoned darts, passed above his head. He fired, and the report rolled and crashed like thunder through the caves. The water was broken by the strokes of ghostly swimmers.

Ferrers Lord sprang into the wheelhouse again, and rushed below. He was back without delay, his head guarded by a fencing-helmet of leather with a face shield of fine wire.

"A knife!" he said quickly. "We must recover the launch!"

"Don't go, old chap!" pleaded Ching-Lung.

"Don't open the door after I have closed it until I return!"

He went down on his hands, and crawled away. The launch, lying broadside now and drifting sluggishly, was apparently deserted. But what did the inky shadows around conceal? Would their leader ever come back?

"This is awful!" groaned Thurston. "Worse than awful!"

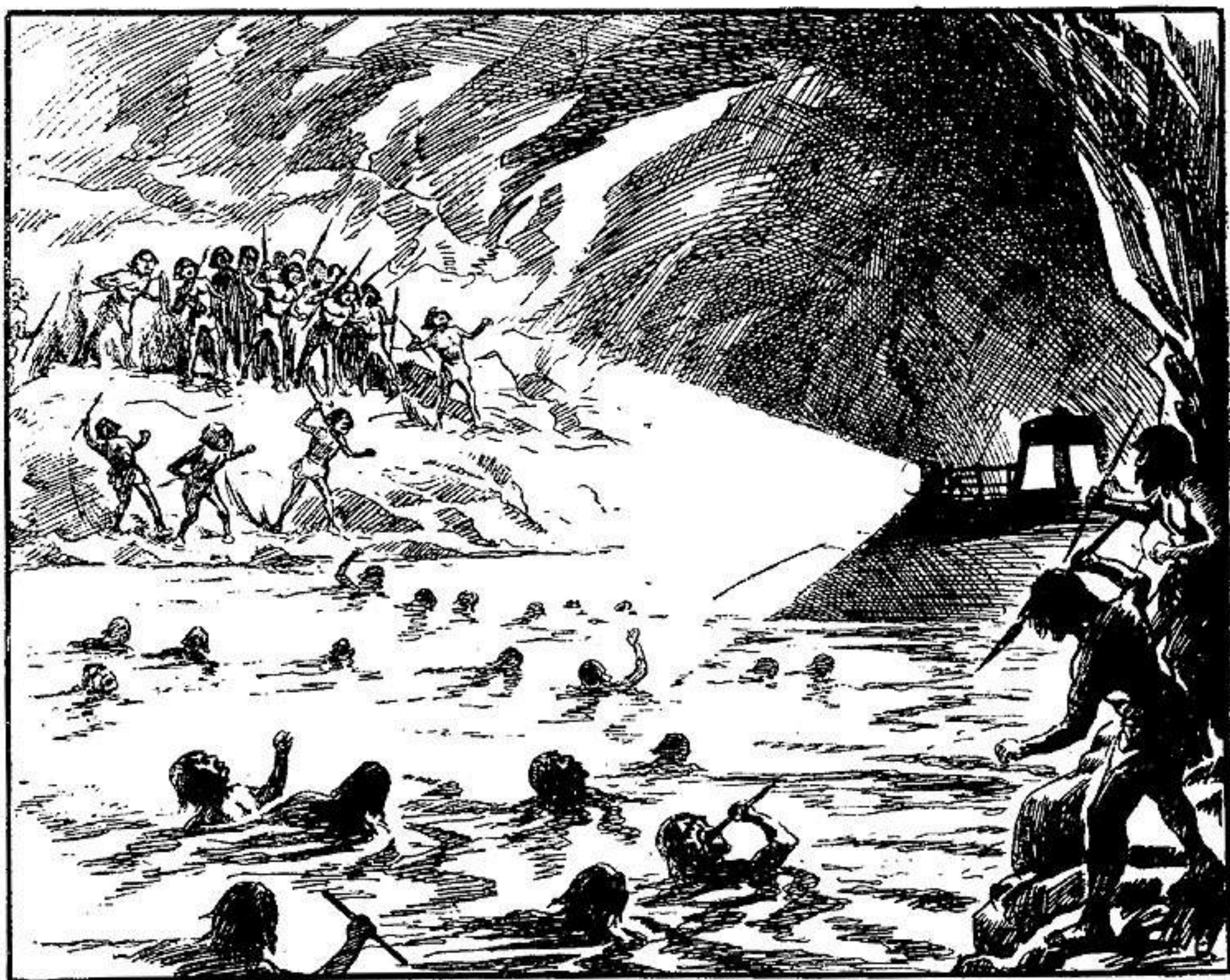
"Can you see him?"

"No."

Patter, patter, patter! The sound came nearer, passed overhead, and rolled away into silence.

Dragging himself forward inch by inch, the millionaire gained the side. For all he knew, the darkness might be full of watching eyes. At all risks he was compelled to make a desperate effort to recover the launch. Once it was out of sight, there were thousands of chances to one against ever finding it again. Even his iron nerves failed a little as he lowered himself into the water, lifting the net.

He swam as low as possible, trying to make no sound. The glaring light was focussed on the launch. His feet struck the bottom, and he looked back. He could see the



The sudden light seemed to turn the battling pigmies into stone. Those on the upper ledges stood with poised spears, as if petrified as they were in the act of hurling them. Those in the water had their slender blowpipes to their lips. (See below.)

figures in the wheelhouse, but the darkness defied him. Then he held his breath. He could hear a faint panting behind him. He let himself sink.

When he rose the silence had fallen again. Suddenly the black head of a swimmer appeared in sight.

"Bah! They are only miserable dwarfs, after all!" muttered Ferrers Lord.

The swimmer turned and put a long tube to his lips. The little dart with its plume of cotton shot upwards. Then the swimmer vanished, and a splash drifted suddenly through the blackness.

Patter, patter, patter, patter! It was the uncanny sound again. The millionaire stood chin deep in the water, puzzled and amazed. The dart had not been directed at the launch, but at the roof above. More than that, his brief glimpse of the swimmer had shown him a different type of pigmy to those who inhabited the cavern of fire. His hair was black and closely cropped, while the others wore long masses of matted red hair. Nor had he noticed any weapons, except the broad-bladed spears among the dwellers in the fire-cave.

Again he heard a soft panting. There were other swimmers near him. And then the air was noisy with cries and yells.

To attempt to reach the launch would be madness. The water was swarming with hidden figures, yelling, shrieking, splashing. And from above, from the roof itself, shriek answered shriek. He gripped his knife, and began to wade back to the ship.

He felt a clutch upon his arm, the clutch of fingers. A gurgle answered the upward sweep of the knife through the water, and the grip relaxed. He began to swim. Thurston saw his dripping figure through the glass, and opened the door.

"We thought they'd got you!" he said hoarsely. "What does all this yelling mean?"

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NEXT TUESDAY'S
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"I think there's a battle going on," said the millionaire. "We'll soon see."

He fumbled with some electric wires. They waited breathlessly. Then a dozen blue lights blazed out together, making the cavern as bright as day.

Ferrers Lord had hit upon the truth.

Theimps of the cave were making war. The ledges of the rocky walls were crowded with pigmies armed with gleaming spears, and the water was dotted with black heads. Doubtless the pigmies fought as much by sound as by sight.

The sudden light seemed to have turned them to stone. Those on the upper ledges stood with poised spears, as if petrified as they were in the act of hurling them. Those in the water had their slender blowpipes to their lips. Here and there a lifeless body lying in the ooze under the rocks told that many a shaft had struck home.

Their wild yells were frozen.

It lasted perhaps for a minute, perhaps for less. Patter, patter, patter! It was the sound of naked feet on the rocks above. They scattered away like frightened rabbits, and the rest dived like seals. Except for the stunted bodies of the dead all had disappeared.

"Now, for the launch!" drawled Ferrers Lord. "We'll put on our diving-dresses in case these gentlemen take it into their heads to come back. They will stop the darts, and I don't care sixpence about the spears. Strange that wars should happen everywhere like this—on sea, on land, in the air, and even under the sea and under the land. Ching, you must teach that dwarf urchin of yours English as soon as you can. I want to know something about these odd people."

"Oh, Yalleroo is getting on!" said the prince. "He can say 'What-ho she bumps!' already."

The millionaire laughed.

"Well, get into your diving-suit and don't waste time!"

Aided by Joe, they dressed themselves in the heavy clothes, the lead-soled boots, and the goggle-eyed helmets. The cylinders of air were strapped to their shoulders, for Ferrers Lord's invention did away with air-pumps and tubes that communicated with the surface.

Above water they could hardly stir, on account of the tremendous weight; but the moment the helmet dipped below the surface they felt as free and light as air.

Ferrers Lord carried a powerful electric lamp. The bottom of the sea was composed of white sand. A corpse drifted past them, and the millionaire pointed to the dart sticking between the naked shoulders. Then the shadowy keel of the launch loomed above them.

Strapped to their waists they carried bags filled with leaden weights.

The foul air escaped through a valve in the upper part of their helmets. Naturally, as the fresh air in the cylinders became used up, the cylinder lost its buoyancy and lifting power. The weights acted precisely like the sandbags did in a balloon. By throwing one away an exact balance was kept. Ferrers Lord discarded two, and rose slowly to the surface, followed by Ching-Lung. With difficulty they scrambled on board the launch. She had been looted by the pigmies, but her machinery had not been damaged. As she churned alongside the Lord of the Deep the men cheered lustily.

The torpedo-nets were pulled back, and the davits creaked as they lifted the launch into safety.

Joe went off duty, and presently his fret-saw began to buzz in the fore-castle. He was clever with both carving tools and fret-saw, and he had made a cuckoo-clock that was his joy and pride. He had kept the clock in the fore-castle, but Prout got tired of hearing the wooden bird yelling cuckoo at midnight, and so did others. They swore not only to wring the bird's neck, but Joe's into the bargain, if he did not take it away. So the clock went into the cook's galley, where it could do no harm, for the cook was as deaf as a column of tin soldiers.

Ching-Lung, bent of mischief, sauntered along the corridor after breakfast, and looked in at the galley. Gan-Waga was eating soup, with lumps of fat floating in it like yellow islands on a brown lake.

"You look happy, candle-face," said the prince. "Is it nice?"

"Butterful!" gurgled the Eskimo. "Fine—hunk!"

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Gan-Waga dropped the spoon and looked round.

"What dat?"

"Sounded like a bird," said Ching-Lung, slightly twisting the hands of the clock round.

There was a whir and a click, and, to the unbounded amazement of Gan-Waga, out hopped the bird.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

The bird vanished and the little door closed. Gan-Waga put down the basin.

"Dat's funny!" he said.

"Not know it was alive, and could talk. Make him come again!"

"Haven't any time," said the prince. "You see, the sly little beggar only comes out now and again."

"Does he live in dere, hunk?" inquired the Eskimo.

"Oh, yes!" Ching-Lung winked to himself. "We often see him, but nobody has ever caught him. If you can catch him I'll give you some candles. You mustn't touch the clock, though."

"How many cangles?" inquired Gan-Waga.

Ching-Lung held up five fingers, and then pushed the hands again, making the bird's next appearance due in three minutes. Then he went away and stole back and glued his eye to the crack in the door.

Gan-Waga had discovered a cardboard box for his capture. He was examining the clock carefully. He placed his right eye close to

the little door and prepared to seize the bird. Ching-Lung choked.

"Can't catch a bird, hunk?" said Gan-Waga contemptuously. "I show 'em. Are you coming, dicky?"

The long hand of the clock touched twelve. Gan-Waga puts his eager eye nearer the door. Out shot the bird like a little wooden hammer, making Gan-Waga jump back with a yell, with his hand to his injured eye.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Again the doors closed, and so did Gan-Waga's eye. The sound one, however, glowed with wrath and indignation. To be pecked savagely by a miserable little bird was more than he could bear. He would have it out and wring its neck, if he had to make firewood of the clock. He rushed at it.

The clock hung on a hook, and Gan-Waga wrenched it down. Unfortunately he slipped, tried in vain to regain his balance, and instead of falling backwards he fell forward.

He fell on the clock and flattened it out. The glass broke, and the spring lost control of itself, and whizzed out like a lively snake, tying itself round the Eskimo's neck. Wheels ran all over the place, and the bird tried to say "Cuckoo!" but only managed a few feeble squeaks.

Ching-Lung heard an approaching footstep, and discreetly fled, leaving the flabbergasted Eskimo scratching his head among the ruins. The cook entered, and stared aghast. Gan-Waga had the bird in his hand, and was examining it with an air of utter hopelessness.

Then the cook went down the corridor at full speed.

"Joe, Joe!" he cried. "Come quick! Yer blessed cuckoo 'as laid a hegg!"

Joe heard the cook's astounding news quite calmly. The cuckoo had caused him anxiety and grief before, and he thought the cook was trying to work off some ancient jest. Joe closed his left eye, and placed the tip of his finger on the bridge of his nose, and remarked:

"See any green?"

"Wait till yer sees yer giddy cuckoo!" grinned the cook. "It's moulted all over, and got its neck twisted out of joint. It ain't no bogey what I'm tellin' yer, but solemn facts. Come and see!"

Still Joseph lingered, looking doubtfully at the cook. The cook was holding his sides and rumbling like a small boiler.

"Daniel," said Joe, "tell me the joke."

"Joe," said Daniel, wiping away an imaginary tear, "I loved that bird. Every 'arf-hour out the little darlin' used to pop and chirp 'Cuckoo!' It startled me a bit, but I loved it so well that I never thought of braining it with a frying-pan. And now I s-shall n-never l-listen to his s-sweet v-voice again, 'cos—'cos— Ow! It will break my heart—I know it will!"

Overcome with emotion, the cook fell on Joe's neck, sobbing bitterly, at the same time winking at Chug, the parrot, over the carpenter's shoulder.

"'Ere, get out of it!" roared Joe. "What in the thunder is it all about? Git out, you idiot!"

"And to think," sobbed the cook, clinging tighter, "that the l-little p-pet has t-turned up his t-toes. I m-must get out me b-black c-coat, and tie c-rape on me whiskers!"

"The whole boilin' ship'll be wearing crape for you if you don' get!" yelled Joe.

The cook mopped his face with a huge handkerchief, and took Joe gently by the hand.

"C-come!" he said. "B-but b-be b-brave! We'll f-face the s-sad sight to-gether." He led the puzzled and angry carpenter to the galley door, and pushed him in.

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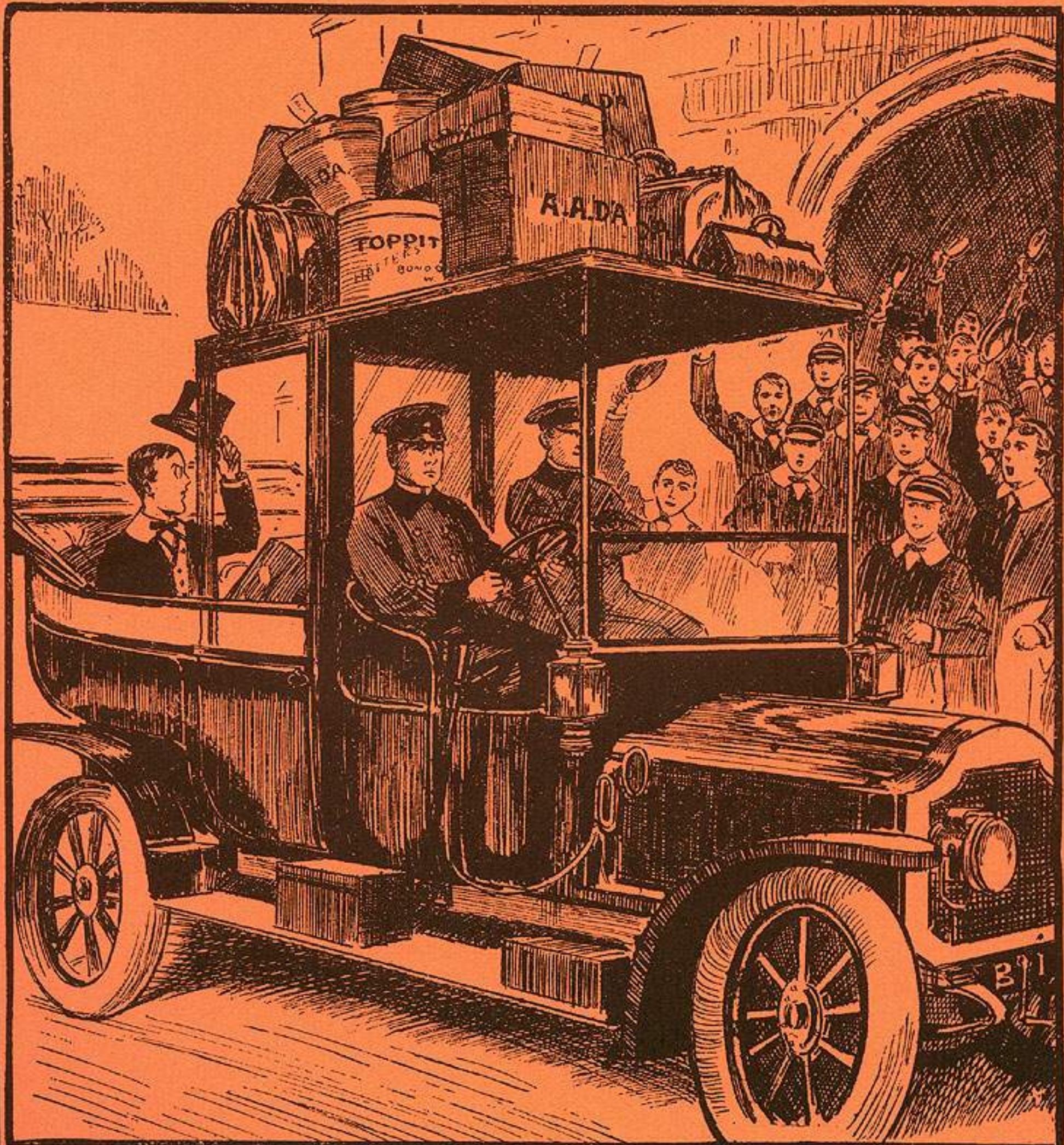
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"Good-bye, old chap!" The car moved off. Arthur Augustus raised his silk hat to the crowd outside the School House. There was a cheer from Tom Merry & Co., and ringing good-byes from the whole crowd as the car passed out of the gates of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was gone!