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A candle flickered, and showed up the bare garret, the cracked and dirty window, the mean and dirty bed. The juniors could not help shuddering as they saw it all. Bolsover groaned aloud. This was what he had driven his brother to! Billy looked at him and saw the tears wet upon his brother's cheeks. He wondered; but it brought happiness to the troubled heart. "Don't you worry, Percy," he whispered. "It's oriright now!" *(An incident in the long, complete school tale contained in this issue.)*

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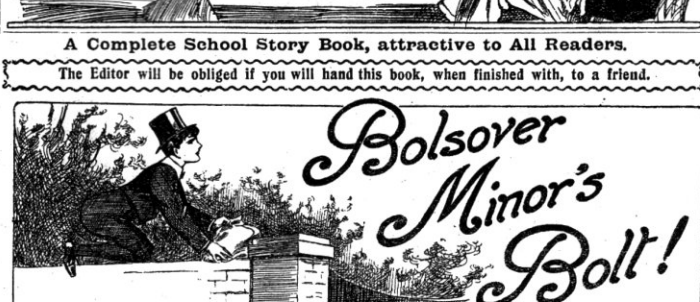

Bolsover Minor's Bolt!

A Splendid New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Ragged by Fags.

"CAD!"

"Rotter!"

"Yah!"

"Hallo—hallo—hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, of the Remove Form. "That sounds as if somebody's getting excited."

"It does," grinned Frank Nugent. "It's the Third Form fags. I think I can recognise Tubb's sweet voice."

"It's up against Bolsover major," said Harry Wharton.

The three chums of Greyfriars had just come out of the Remove-room, and were walking down arm-in-arm towards the big open doorway of the School House, through which the green elms in the old Close of Greyfriars could be seen.

From the Close came the shouting and jeering that had reached their ears in the Form-room passage. Many voices were mingled in the roar.

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Bully!"

"Rotter!"

"Yah!"

Harry Wharton & Co. reached the doorway of the School House, and looked out. There were a great many fellows in the Close, and most of them were looking towards the crowd outside the House. Nearly all the Third Form of Greyfriars seemed to be in the crowd, and they were in a state of great excitement. Bolsover major, of the Remove, was standing on the School House steps. He had just come out, and that greeting from the fags of the Third had met him.

Bolsover major had an iron nerve, and cheek enough, generally, to carry him through anything. But even he shrank from the storm of dislike and contempt and angry scorn that had met him as he appeared outside the House. He stood upon the steps, his hands clenched hard, and his cheeks pale, and his eyes glittering as he looked at the fags. The Remove bully's anger was usually to be feared by smaller fellows; but the fags, strong in numbers, did not care a button for Bolsover's anger now, and they showed it.

"Cad!"

"Rotter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stood and looked on. They had no desire to interfere. There was no doubt that Bolsover major was a cad and a rotter. His treatment of his younger brother proved that. Bolsover minor was in the Third, and it was upon Bolsover minor's account that the fags were demonstrating. Tubb and Paget, the leaders of the Third Form, had marshalled their fellows in array to greet the Remove bully as he came out. The fags yelled in chorus. There was no mistaking what they thought of Bolsover major.

"Cad! Rotter! Yah!"

"Shut up, you cheeky young scoundrels!" shouted Bolsover furiously, recovering himself a little. "I'll be among you in a minute!"

A yell of defiance answered the threat.

"Come on, then!" roared Tubb. "We're ready!"

"Quite ready!" said Paget. "Come on!"

"You cheeky sweeps——"

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Who told lies about his minor?"

"Bolsover major! Yah!"

Bolsover turned white to the lips. He looked round, as he heard Harry Wharton & Co. near him.

"You back me up to clear those young cads away!" he muttered. "It's rotten for Third Form fags to check the Remove like this!"

Harry Wharton looked at him scornfully.

"They're not checking the Remove!" he said. "They're checking you. And they're saying what we all think."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "Only they're not putting it strong enough."

Bolsover ground his teeth.

"Look here——" he began fiercely.

"Oh, don't talk to us!" said Wharton angrily. "You deserve all you get, and more. You deliberately tried to get your minor flogged by reading Quelch's papers, and getting some of them hidden in young Billy's locker. You've been flogged for it, and if you hadn't been flogged, Bolsover, I can tell you plainly that the whole Remove would have taken the matter up and given you a Form licking. As it is, we've let the matter drop. But the fags are wild about it, and you'll have to stand it."

"I jolly well won't stand it!" roared Bolsover. "Do you think I'm going to be ragged by a set of inky young sweeps? I'll——I'll smash 'em! I'll——"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You'd find it rather hard to smash 'em, I think," he remarked. "They seem to be in big force. But go ahead if you like. Only don't ask us to help you. We agree with the fags. You're a cad and a rotter, and we all say the same."

Bolsover sneered savagely.

"That's right! Go for a fellow when he's down!" he said.

"I don't want to do that," said Bob Cherry. "If you're down, it's only through laying a rotten scheme to get your own brother into trouble. You can't expect fellows to stand by you after that."

"The young rotter's a disgrace, and——"

"Oh, rats! He's got a jolly lot more reason for calling you a disgrace. He may be rough and ready, but he's as good as gold, and you're a rank outsider."

There was a fresh roar from the fags.

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Why don't you come on?"

"Yah! Funk!"

Bolsover's eyes blazed. He turned away from the Remove chums, and glared at the surging crowd of fags round the House steps.

His fists were clenched, and he seemed about to rush upon his tormentors.

There was nothing the Third-Formers would have liked better. Tubb yelled out his defiance.

"Come on! Yah! Funk! We're waiting for you."

"Cad! Rotter! Come on!"

Bolsover's face boiled over. He rushed down the steps, and hurled himself into the swarm of fags, hitting out right and left.

"Yaroo-oh!" roared Tubb. "Ow!"

"Yowp!" gasped Paget. "Collar him!"

"Yah!"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

Bolsover major was a powerful fellow, and a match in combat for many of the Fifth Form. The fags reeled right and left under his savage blows. But they had plenty of pluck, and they swarmed round him like locusts. Paget, and Tubb, and half a dozen more lay gasping and blinking on the ground, when a dozen pairs of hands dragged Bolsover down. Still struggling fiercely, the Remove bully was borne to the earth, and the fags swarmed, and sprawled, and rolled over him.

Paget staggered up, holding his nose, which was streaming red through his fingers.

"Ow! Collar the beast! Ow!" he gasped. "Sit on his head! Ow!"

"We've got him!"

"Bump him!"

"Give him the frog's march!"

"Hurray!"

Bolsover struggled desperately in the grasp of his tormentors. But he had no chance against so many. He could have tackled half a dozen of them, or perhaps a dozen; but there were thirty or forty, all struggling for a chance to get at him. Each of his powerful limbs was held in three or four pairs of hands, and his collar was grasped by two or three more, and even his hair and his ears were clutched. Gasping and spluttering for breath, the Remove bully was lifted bodily from the ground, and borne along, and carried round the Close, tasting the joys of the frog's march.

Fellows from all sides crowded to look on, but no one interfered. Even his chums in the Remove, Snoop and Vernon-Smith, never thought of helping him. The whole school was disgusted with Bolsover major. And prefects, who saw the disturbance and really should have stopped it, made a point of looking the other way. Bolsover major was frog-marched round the Close, amid yells and hurrahs, struggling in vain in the grasp of his tormentors.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Bolsover Minor to the Rescue.

"OH, I wish I 'adn't never come 'ere!"

The little fag who uttered the despondent words sat upon a form in the Third Form-room in the Greyfriars School House.

Through the open windows of the Form-room came a vague noise from the Close—a noise of shouting and trampling. But it fell upon deaf ears. Bolsover minor—otherwise known as Billy—did not heed it. He was thinking of other things.

His chums in the Third Form would not have understood his despondency. And little Billy, in spite of the fact that he had been lost by his parents in early childhood, and brought up in a slum, had made many friends in Greyfriars, both in his own Form and out of it.

He retained the peculiar Cockney dialect of his early training; it was likely to take years of education to eradicate that.

But in other respects he progressed very rapidly at Greyfriars.

He worked hard—his chief object being to make himself worthy of belonging to Bolsover major, so that his brother would not be ashamed of him.

For ashamed of him Bolsover major was, and he never troubled to conceal it, but rather "rubbed it in" on every possible occasion.

He was ashamed of his brother's days in the slums, of his Cockney dialect, of the fact that he sometimes addressed the other boys as "sir"—of everything, in fact, in connection with Billy, the one-time waif.

Billy's efforts to win his liking had been in vain.

Contempt and dislike had gradually grown, on Percy Bolsover's part, to something like hatred. Other fellows in the Remove had "chipped" him about Billy, and some of his enemies hinted that he had been brought up in a slum, too, only he kept it secret. They affected to trace his personal manners to this source. Nobody really believed it, but the mere hint was enough to exasperate Bolsover major, and he made him furious against his younger brother, who had brought this upon him.

Bolsover major's worst enemy had never expected him to do what he had done—to attempt to fix a charge upon Billy of which he knew his minor to be innocent.

Bolsover major had failed, partly owing to Coker of the Fifth, and Bolsover major had been soundly flogged by the Head, in the presence of the whole school.

But the bitterness he showed towards his minor afterwards may be imagined. Little wonder Billy gladly have allowed the matter to drop. But his friends in the Third would not hear of it. Bolsover had plotted against a member of the Third, and the Third Form were in honour bound to take it up.

The Third Form were wild with indignation. They had many old grudges to pay off against the Remove bully, and this had brought matters to a head. But every word uttered against his brother was a stab to the loyal little fag. For, bitterly hurt and wounded as he was, his faithful affection had never faltered.

Bolsover minor was working in the Form-room now, though afternoon classes had long been dismissed. Bolsover minor had a great deal of leeway to make up in his education, and he was an industrious little fellow, and only too willing to work harder than the others, to pull up level with them. And Mr. Twigg, the master of the Third, sympathised with him and helped him a great deal.

Billy was labouring painfully over the rudiments of Latin now. He did not see any use in learning Latin, especially since he had discovered that the Latins were all dead and that the language was no longer spoken. But he was obedient, and willing to take Mr. Twigg's word for it that it was very necessary. And he laboured away at hic, haec, and hoc in a manful way.

But just now Latin seemed drier to him than ever. He was thinking of his brother; of Percy's plainly-declared wish that he would get out of Greyfriars, and cease to disgrace him at the school.

Billy reached his brother's side and stood over him. "Keep back!" he said sturdily. "You ain't going to touch Percy!" Bolsover major struggled to a sitting posture. He was breathless and dusty and furious. He hardly realised for a moment that it was his minor, the boy he had injured and persecuted, who was defending him.

(*See Chapter* 3.)

"I wish—oh, I wish I 'adn't never come 'ere!" groaned Billy.

His father had sent him there, when he was found selling papers in London streets. His father had expected Percy to stand by him and help him. Bolsover major was far enough from doing that.

Billy thought of the slum he had once dwelt in—of Angel Alley, dirty, narrow, filthy, reeking with bad smells. Of the dirty, lazy men and slatternly women at the doors, and the ragged children playing in the gutter; of the hunger and thirst and cold.

But there was another side to the picture. He could think also of his old chum Tadger, and the joy of sharing a supper of fried fish together, under the shelter of an arch, when the day's takings had been good. Then there was the glare of lights from the corner public-house—the wild excitement of a fight outside the Red Lion on Saturday nights—and there was the hurdy-gurdy that ground out tuneless tunes to the huge delight of the population. Life in Angel Row had not been all hardship; it had had its bright moments.

He had been glad to come to Greyfriars. But now his heart was in his words as he said that he wished he had never come there.

If he could only go!

Percy would be rid of him then, and he would be satisfied. But his father? He could not go back to his father and explain. Most of all, he shrank from causing trouble between Percy and his father. He felt that Percy had the first claim upon Mr. Bolsover, and that he, so long lost and so lately found, had no right to come between them.

He could not go home!

He could not even tell his father that he was unhappy at Greyfriars, and ask to be taken away; for Mr. Bolsover would have inquired the reason at once, and would soon have discovered the truth.

If he left Greyfriars he could not go home.

Could he go back to the old life?"

It had had its bright hours. He had thought many times with regret of the wild excitement of Saturday night—of the rush of Fleet Street, the sale of the special editions, the dodging and twisting among the motor-omnibuses and the taxicabs.

But to leave Greyfriars—to throw up all he had gained!

Could he make that sacrifice, even for Percy's sake?

The little fellow had dropped his pen, and his elbows rested upon the exercise-paper before him, and his face had dropped into his hands.

From the Close came the roar of voices, louder and louder. But he did not hear them.

A different scene was before his eyes—different sounds in his ears.

He saw Angel Row and Angel Alley, and Murderers' Court, and the Red Lion ablaze with lights, and heard the raucous voices of the drunken loafers who were turned out of the public-house at closing-time.

Could he face all that again?

Louder and louder grew the shouting in the Close.

"Bump the cad!"

"Give him another frog's-march!"

"Down with Bolsover!"

"Bump the bully!"

Bolsover minor started.

His name—his brother's name—had struck upon his ears at last!

He started to his feet and listened.

There was a wild and incessant trampling and yelling going on in the Close—a very unusual disturbance in the quiet precincts of Greyfriars. The fag wondered. He ran to the Form-room window, and mounted upon the desk nearest to it, and looked out. He caught sight of a surging crowd of the Third across the Close—surging and crowding and shouting about some object in their midst.

Billy wrinkled his brows.

He knew how furious his Form-fellows were against Bolsover major; he had heard loud threats on the part of Tubb, Paget & Co. of ragging the Remove bully, as a punishment for what he had done.

Were they ragging him now?

At the thought Bolsover minor turned and raced for the door. He did not pause to think. Gone was the memory of his brother's coldness and indifference and cruelty, gone any recollection of the wrong Bolsover major had done him. He only remembered that his brother was being hardly used, and ran to help him.

He darted along the Form-room passage, and ran full tilt into a burly fellow coming out of the Fifth Form-room.

"Ow! You young ass!" gasped Coker, of the Fifth, grasping the fag to save himself from falling, and then promptly changing his grasp to Billy's ear.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Coker! Gemme go!"

"Not so jolly fast!" said Coker. "If this is a jape——"

"It isn't!" gasped Billy. "They're ragging my brother——"

Coker stared at him.

"I know that," he replied. "Let 'em rag him! He's done you harm enough, I should imagine."

Billy struggled.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"You can go when I like," said Coker, releasing him; "but I advise you——"

Billy did not wait for Coker's advice.

He tore away down the Form-room passage, and burst across the Close, and ran out on the steps, nearly colliding with Harry Wharton & Co. in his blind haste.

"What are they doing to Percy?" he panted.

"Only frog's-marching him!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "It's all right, young 'un—it will do Percy good! He's been asking for it for a long time! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come back, you young ass!"

But Bolsover minor had made a single bound to the bottom of the steps, and was tearing across the Close at top speed towards the crowd of struggling, swaying fags, with the bully of the Remove in their midst.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"The young ass!" said Harry Wharton. "It's amazing how he sticks to that cad of a brother of his, and yet you can't help liking him for it."

Quite indifferent as to whether he was liked or not for it, Bolsover minor sped across the Close. He burst breathlessly upon the crowd.

"Let him alone! Let my brother alone!"

There was a roar of jeering.

"Rats! Get back!"

"Keep off the grass, Bolsover minor!"

"We're doing this for you!" said Tubb indignantly. "You shut up!"

"Let him alone!"

"Rats! We won't!"

"Kick the young duffer out!" said Paget.

Billy clenched his fists, and dashed into the crowd, hitting out, and the suddenness and the force of his rush brought him to his brother's side.

"Clear out!"

"I won't!" said Billy sturdily. "You ain't goin' to touch Percy! Keep back!"

Bolsover major struggled to a sitting posture. He was breathless and dusty and furious. He hardly realised for a moment that it was his minor, the boy he had injured and persecuted, who was defending him.

Paget strode before the other fags, and waved them back. They had been about to make a rush, which would certainly have overwhelmed Bolsover minor.

"Look here, Billy," shouted Paget; "we're fed up with this. Get aside!"

"Rats!" said Billy.

"Are you going to stand by your major after what he's done?"

"Yes."

"You stick to him still—after he lied about you, and tried to get you flogged?"

Billy winced.

"Yes!" he said firmly.

"Then you're a young idiot!" said Paget angrily. "And if you stick to Bolsover major, you'll find that nobody in the Third will stick to you!"

"I don't care!" said Billy.

"Oh, you don't care, don't you?" said Tubb savagely. "Well, I'm done with you for one! Unless you turn your back on Bolsover major at once, I'll never speak to you again!"

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

"I say the same!" exclaimed Paget. "You're done with him, or we're done with you!"

"Rats!"

"Very well!" said Paget between his teeth, his eyes gleaming. "We're fed up with you, and with your bully of a brother. Now get aside, or we'll bump you as well as him!"

Billy did not move.

"Are you going?" roared Tubb.

"No!"

"Shift him, then!"

The fags rushed forward.

Bolsover minor hit out manfully, but he was borne over by the rush at once, and he went down with a bump on his major.

In another moment the two brothers would have been clutched up by the fags, and frog-marched round the Close, as Bolsover major had been already.

But just then, Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came striding up. Wingate had seen what was going on from his study window, and he had not been in a hurry to intervene. But he considered that the time had come for intervention now. The big Six Former strode into the crowd of fags.

"Stop this!" he exclaimed authoritatively.

"Hold on, Wingate——"

"I say——"

"We're only frog-marching a cad!"

Wingate laughed.

"Well, you've done enough of it," he said. "Stop it at once, and let Bolsover alone, and this kid, too! Buzz off, and hold your row!"

The fags looked angry and disappointed. But there was no arguing with the head of the Sixth. They dispersed, grunting and growling, leaving Bolsover major sitting on the ground, and his minor standing by him.

Wingate looked curiously at the two of them.

"You've got what you deserved, Bolsover," he said. "I must say it serves you right. I'd have had you kicked out of Greyfriars myself. But what have you got mixed up in this time, Bolsover minor?"

"I was helpin' Percy!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Last Word!

BOLSOVER MAJOR was dropped by the fags who held him, and he rolled upon the ground. He rolled there, gasping for breath, and covered with dust. His struggles in the grasp of the fags had made matters worse for him; and Bolsover had been very roughly handled.

Billy reached his side, and stood over his brother, with clenched fists.

"Auds off!" roared Billy.

"H's off, you mean!" grinned Williams.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get aside, Billy!"

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"Well, you're a queer young ass! I'd advise you to leave Percy to shift for himself!"

And Wingate walked away.

Billy did not take the Greyfriars captain's advice. He bent over his brother as Wingate departed, and looked at him anxiously.

"'Ave they 'urt you much, Percy?"

Bolsover grunted. The avenging fags had certainly hurt him considerably, and he was still panting painfully for breath. Bolsover minor caught his arm to help him to his feet, but the Remove bully shook his grasp off impatiently.

"Let me alone!" he growled.

Billy shrank back.

"I—I say, Percy——"

Bolsover major rose painfully to his feet.

"Don't Percy me, you young cad!" he grunted. "You're the cause of all this. If you'd never come to Greyfriars, I shouldn't have all this trouble. You've been a trouble and a disgrace to me ever since you were found!"

Billy paled a little. The cruel, unfeeling words cut him to the very heart.

"I—I say, Percy——" he stammered.

"Don't talk to me! I wish you'd never been found—I wish you were still in the filthy slum where you belong!" said Bolsover bitterly. "Hang you! You've disgraced your family by bringing your old slummy chum to this school! If you're so fond of him, why can't you go back to him?"

"Percy!"

"Why can't you get out of this school and leave me in peace?" said Bolsover, between his clenched teeth. "You know I'm ashamed of you, and you know I hate you!"

"Oh, Percy!"

"Get out of my sight!"

Bolsover major limped away towards the School House.

Billy stood quite still.

His brother had been hard and cruel to him before, and had spoken bitter, taunting words; but never had his words been so bitter and cutting as now.

"It's all up!" groaned Billy. "I oughter go—I know I oughter go! This 'ere school ain't no place for me!"

He came into the house with a heavy heart and a gloomy brow. His reflections in the Form-room came back into his mind. Could he face the poverty and dirt of Angel Alley after Greyfriars? He felt that he must do it.

Harry Wharton clapped him on the shoulder as he came in.

"Cheer up, kid!" said the captain of the Remove kindly. "You are a plucky little ass to chip in like that. Did you get hurt?"

"Not much, Master 'Arry!"

"What are you looking so downhearted about, then?"

Billy hesitated.

"Nothin' much, Master 'Arry! I'm afeard I'll never get on good terms with Percy, that's all. He thinks I'm the cause of all this—and so I am, in a way!"

"Nonsense!" said Wharton sharply. "It's your major's fault from beginning to end!"

Billy was silent.

"Don't think about it," said Wharton. "Bolsover major will come round in time, I dare say. You think a jolly great deal too much of your major!"

"He ain't so bad," said Billy, in a low voice. "But—but I wish I 'adn't never come 'ere, Master 'Arry. I think I oughter leave Greyfriars!"

Wharton started.

"Leave Greyfriars!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Master 'Arry!"

"Stuff and nonsense; when you're getting on so well here," exclaimed Harry. "Come into my study and have some tea, and then we'll have a dig at Eutropius, and you'll forget all about leaving Greyfriars!"

Billy shook his head.

"Thanky, Master 'Arry, I won't come. I—I don't feel as I can now. Thanky all the same!"

And Bolsover minor walked heavily away. Harry Wharton looked after him with an expression of great concern. It was partly through Harry Wharton & Co. that Billy had been found at all, and they took a protective interest in him—and their feelings towards Bolsover major may be imagined, when they observed his systematic cruelty and injustice to his minor.

Billy went back to the Third Form-room; but he found it crowded with fags, and they greeted him with hoots and hisses. Billy's championship of his major had made him as unpopular in the Third—for the present, at least—as Bolsover himself. Paget threw a sardine at him, and Tubb brandished his fist, and the rest yelled. Billy drew out of the Form-room, and sought the junior common-room, which was used mostly by the Upper and Lower Fourth and the Shell. There he sat in a quiet corner thinking—thinking—for a long time. When the juniors came trooping in from the Close, Billy rose quietly, and went up to the Remove passage, and tapped at Bolsover's door.

He looked into the study.

Bolsover major was alone there, lying back in his armchair, evidently still aching very much from his rough handling by the Third. He stared at his brother with an angry scowl.

"What do you want, you young cad?" he demanded savagely.

"Only a word with you, Percy!"

"Oh, get out!"

"I'm sorry you're hurt, Percy!" said Billy softly. "It wasn't my fault! I'd 'ave stopped them if I could!"

"Mind your own business!" shouted Bolsover major. "Get out of my study, or I'll get a cricket-stump to you! I'm going to give you a licking for what you've done, you guttersnipe! Look out for me to-morrow morning!"

"Percy——"

"Get out, I tell you! If I wasn't fagged out now, I'd wipe up the floor of the study with you!" growled Bolsover.

"Did you mean what you said to me in the Close, Percy—'bout wantin' me to get out of Greyfriars?" asked Billy, in a low voice.

Bolsover stared.

"Of course I did!" he said.

"You want me to go?"

"Of course I do. But you can't go. The pater won't take you away. You can't go without getting me into a row with him. I've got to put up with you. But I'll lick you into something like decency, in the long run!" said Bolsover.

Billy's lips quivered.

"But if it could be fixed, you'd like me to go?" he said.

"Yes, rather!"

"You don't never want to see me again?"

"No fear!"

"Orlright," said Billy very quietly. "That's all I wanted to know, Percy. Good-night!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Bolsover minor withdrew and closed the door softly. Bolsover major was left to grunt and groan over his numerous aches and pains.

—— ——

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Last Evening at Greyfriars.

MR. TWIGG, the master of the Third Form at Greyfriars, came into the Third Form-room as seven sounded from the clock-tower. Mr. Twigg was always punctual. The Third were all in their places, with one exception, when the Form-master came in to take them for evening preparation. Mr. Twigg glanced over his class, and spoke to Paget.

"Where is Bolsover minor?"

"I don't know, sir," said Paget.

Mr. Twigg frowned.

"Go and find him."

Paget grunted.

"Yes, sir."

Paget left the Form-room. He was feeling annoyed. His friendship for Bolsover minor was very sincere, and the fact that Paget's relations included earls and marquises, and that Billy had been brought up in a slum, made no difference to it. Paget was not snobbish. But there was one thing Paget could not stand, and that was Billy's championship of his brother. If Paget had had a major like that, Paget often declared, he would have boiled him in oil. He could not understand the loyalty that made Billy cling to his brother in spite of incessant wrongs and injuries, and it made Paget very impatient—chiefly for Billy's sake. Paget was now "fed up," as he expressed it. He meant to show Bolsover minor that he wouldn't stand it. Bolsover minor had to choose between his major and his chums in the Third.

Paget looked for Bolsover minor, wondering what had become of him. No fag was allowed to miss evening preparation; and Billy, who was only too anxious to make up for his many deficiencies, never showed any desire to miss it. Paget wondered what had become of the little waif of Greyfriars.

"Seen Billy?" he asked, as he met Harry Wharton in the passage.

"Isn't he in the Form-room?" asked Harry.

"No!" growled Paget.

"He was in the Remove passage ten minutes ago," said Wharton. "He passed my study."

Paget snorted.

"Been to see that precious brother of his, I suppose," he said. "I'm getting fed up with it! What does Billy see in that rotten cad, I wonder?"

And he went on his way. He found Bolsover minor at last in the Third-Form dormitory. Billy was leaning over his box, sorting out articles. He did not look up as Paget came in. If he had done so, Paget might have seen that his eyes were heavy with unshed tears.

"I suppose you know it's past time for prep.?" said Paget sarcastically.

Bolsover minor started.

"Is it? I forgot!"

"Twiggy sent me to look for you."

"Thanks!"

"Oh, rats! Better buck up!"

And Paget swung away. Billy followed him quietly to the Third Form-room, and Mr. Twigg met him with a frown.

"You are late, Bolsover minor!" he snapped.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Well, go to your place."

Billy went quietly to his place.

He sat through evening preparation like a fellow in a dream. It was evident that his thoughts were elsewhere. Mr. Twigg, who was really a very kindly man, glanced at him sharply once or twice. But he was very lenient with the little waif. He thought that Billy was thinking over his late unpleasant experiences, and forbore to be hard upon him.

When preparation was over and Mr. Twigg had quitted the Form-room, the fags left their places and betook themselves to their usual evening occupations; but Bolsover minor did not join in them.

He slipped quietly out of the Form-room.

He had expected Paget or Tubb, or some of the fellows to call him back, but they did not. Paget gave him a grim look, and that was all. The fags meant what they had said to Billy; he had to choose between his major and them. He had already chosen.

Bolsover minor returned to the dormitory, and no one followed him. Paget, Tubb & Co. left him severely alone.

But they would not have taken more interest in his proceedings if they had known how he was occupied. Billy was selecting articles from his box, and when he had selected them, he fastened them up in a bundle and tied the bundle with string. He concealed it under his bed.

If Tubb and Paget had seen that, they would have guessed that there was something very unusual in Billy's mind. But they did not see it.

When his task was done, Bolsover minor descended the stairs, his face clouded and his heart very heavy.

His mind was made up. He meant to leave Greyfriars.

He wandered about the School House, looking at the old place for the last time. He had not been long at the school; but he had come to love the place, to take as much pride in it as fellows who had been there for years. And now he was to leave it all. Could he go without saying good-bye to his friends—the fellows in the Remove who had always been kindness itself to him? If they suspected that he was going, they would take measures to stop him—he knew that. Yet to go without saying Bolsover minor shrank from the thought of appearing ungrateful and unfeeling. He went into the Remove passage, and hesitated for some minutes outside Harry Wharton's door. He could hear cheerful voices within, and the sound went strangely to his heart.

He knocked timidly at last.

"Come in!" called out Frank Nugent's voice.

Billy opened the door.

There was quite a party in Harry Wharton's study. Preparation was over, and the juniors were enjoying an unusually lavish supper before bed. Harry Wharton and Nugent, Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Johnny Bull and Bulstrode and Micky Desmond were there. They were eating roast chestnuts to finish their supper, and drinking home-brewed lemonade recklessly, while they discussed the latest wheeze in the Remove—amateur gardening. They all grinned cheerfully at the hesitating fag at the door, and shouted to him to come in.

"Here you are, kid!" said Harry Wharton. "There are some tarts left. And these chestnuts are ripping!"

"Thank you, Master 'Arry!"

Billy was pushed into a chair, and good things were set before him. But he ate with a very poor appetite. All the fellows present had been good friends to him, and after that evening he would never see them again. Tadger—good old Tadger!—would be his only chum in the future, and his other associates would be the urchins and hooligans of Angel Alley—the Moocher and Slimy Dick, and the rest. It seemed to Billy as if his days at Greyfriars had been a dream—a strange dream from which he was about to wake, to find himself a ragged and forlorn little street arab again.

He tried to be cheerful, but he tried in vain. His face remained clouded in spite of his efforts, and he could take no part in the merry talk about him. Harry Wharton looked at the clock on the mantelpiece presently.

"Bedtime, my sons!" he said.

And the cheerful party in Wharton's study broke up.

The juniors went talking and chatting down the passage, and Billy lingered behind. Harry Wharton glanced at him.

"It's past bedtime, kid," he said.

Bolsover minor nodded.

"Yes. I—I want to speak to you, Master 'Arry."

"Yes?"

"I—I wanter tell you——"

"Go ahead, lad!" said Wharton. "What is it?"

"Only—only I want to say that I'm thankful for all your kindness to me, Master 'Arry!" said Billy, with an effort. "You an' Master Frank an' Master Bob! You've been werry kind to me!"

"Have we?" said Wharton. "It wasn't much, Billy; and you're a good little chap. You seem to be feeling rotten. What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothin'! But—but I just wanted to say that!"

And Billy left the study hurriedly, before Wharton could question him. Wharton was surprised, and a little uneasy. He stepped out into the passage to speak to the fag, but Billy was already gone.

"Queer little beggar!" he muttered. "I suppose it's his rotten major bothering him! That brute ought to have the ragging of his life."

But Wharton did not guess what it was that was upon Billy's mind, and he went to bed without a suspicion.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Bolsover Minor Bolts.

GREYFRIARS was very quiet.

In the Third-Form dormitory there was only one of the Third wakeful.

Billy had not slept.

The other fags had hardly spoken to him when he went to bed. Paget and Tubb were very cold to him. They wanted him to understand how matters stood. But Billy scarcely noticed it.

He lay awake after the rest of the Form had gone to sleep.

He did not feel inclined for slumber. When all Greyfriars was sunk in repose, he intended to rise from his bed and make his way out of the school.

He lay wakeful, waiting for twelve to strike.

Eleven had sounded, and the watchful eyes did not close. The last sound of a closing door had died away in the great building.

Only from the Head's study a light still gleamed out into the darkness of the Close.

Billy's pillow was wet with tears.

It was a wrench to him to part from all that he had known of comfort, of decency. But he never faltered in his resolution. His last effort to win his brother's affection had been made, and it had failed. Nothing remained for him but to go—to vanish from Percy Bolsover's life as suddenly as he had entered it—to vanish completely, without leaving a trace behind to trouble Percy.

His father would think him wayward and ungrateful. But he would turn to Percy—he had always Percy. He would forget the boy who had been so long lost to him, and only lately found—at all events, Billy hoped that he would. It was better for him to go than to remain to be a trouble to Percy, and to make division between Percy and his father. When he was gone all would go on as before. He would be forgotten—Percy would be rid of him, and would be happier without him.

Boom!

It was the first stroke of twelve, sounding dully through the dim night.

Bolsover minor waited till the last stroke had died away.

Then he sat up in bed.

There was a gleam of starlight at the high windows of the dormitory, making strange shadows among the beds. The fags were all fast asleep—he heard Tubb's heavy breathing in the next bed.

Billy slipped out to the floor and silently dressed himself. Then he groped in his pocket, and brought out a folded paper. He placed it upon the pillow of his bed.

It was to tell that he had gone, and would not return.

A tear dropped upon the pillow as he placed it there; for a moment the little waif's resolution weakened.

But it was only for a moment.

Then he took up his bundle and crept towards the door. There was a sound of a fag stirring in bed.

But no one woke.

Billy opened the big door of the dormitory softly and stepped out into the passage, and closed the door behind him.

He stood in the darkness. The lights were all out in the School House, but he knew the way well.

Treading softly on tiptoe, the fag passed down the wide corridor and reached the window at the end.

He opened it, and the sash creaked. He paused, with beating heart, to listen. But from the great silent house came no sound.

He leaned from the window, and dropped his bundle and slid lightly to the ground outside. He heard the soft thud

Tadger, tattered and dirty—the same old Tadger—had placed his back against the wall and was defending himself against three boys bigger than himself. The trio were closing in upon him, when Bolsover minor appeared on the scene. Billy's eyes gleamed. He had arrived in his old haunts at a lucky moment for his old chum. "Buck up, Tadger!" he shouted. (*See Chapter 7.*)

as they fell, and paused to listen again. But there was no alarm.

He climbed out upon the window-sill, and closed the window behind him. Then he clambered down the thick, clinging ivy.

It was dangerous in the dark, but Billy did not think of that. The ivy rustled, and drops of wet shook upon his face as he climbed slowly down.

His feet touched the ground at last, and he stood breathing hard.

For a couple of minutes he rested while his breath came back, and then he groped in the shadows for his bundle and stick, and picked them up, and set out across the wide, shadowy Close towards the school wall.

He reached the wall, and turned to look back at Greyfriars. The school stood out a black mass against the starry sky.

From the Head's window a light still gleamed out into the gloom. Dr. Locke was up late. Even as Billy looked, however, the light suddenly went out, and all was dark.

Black and grim, the School House loomed up in the night, vague and formless.

A sigh left the boy's lips.

He remembered how once before he had come as far, with the same intention in his mind, to run away from Greyfriars.

That time he had not carried out his intention.

But now there was to be no turning back. The die was cast.

For some minutes the fag stood looking at the shadowy house in the darkness, and then he turned with a heavy sigh to the wall.

He climbed it, and looked over into the road.

A heavy footstep sounded upon the high-road, and Bolsover minor shrank close to the top of the wall, dreading to be seen and discovered.

A portly form came tramping by, and the boy, peering down from the top of the school wall, recognised Police-constable Tozer of Friardale.

He shrank closer, almost ceasing to breathe. If he were discovered now——

But the portly policeman passed on without a suspicion.

The heavy footsteps died away in the distance towards Courtfield.

Not until the last echo had died away did Bolsover minor move.

Then he clambered down the wall into the road.

He stood there, with the night breeze, laden with the smell of the sea, blowing upon his face.

The way before him was clear—there was nothing to stop him.

Yet he did not move.

He thought of his father—the father he had so lately found, and hardly knew. Would his father be grieved? He could not tell. He supposed that he would, but, after all, there would be Percy.

He thought of Percy. What would his brother say when

he found that he was gone? Would he be sorry that he had been so hard?

He shook his head at the thought.

He could not suppose so. Percy would be glad to be rid of him—glad that he was gone for good, and would not return again.

But—but why should he do this for Percy's sake—for one who had always been hard and unfeeling to him? Why should he give up everything—all that made life worth living? Was he called upon to do it?

He thought of the wretchedness he was going to. Hubert Bolsover—Bolsover minor of the Third Form at Greyfriars—was to cease to exist, and Billy the newsboy was to take his place. Cleanliness and comfort, education and a prospect in life, all lay behind him in the school he had deserted, and before him lay—what?

He could not deny that even amid the comforts of the school he had thought sometimes with regret of the rush and the roar of the great city, and had even longed sometimes for the excitements of his old life.

But now that he was going back to it——

Should he go? Why should he? What had Percy done for him that he should make this sacrifice?

He pulled himself together.

The die was cast, and he must go. He had set his hand to the plough, and he would not turn back.

Percy might be a little sorry—he might even think with some kindness of the boy who had given up all for his sake, which he would never do while the little waif remained at Greyfriars.

Bolsover minor took one last glance back at the school.

"Good-bye!" he murmured. "Good-bye, Greyfriars!"

Then he tramped down the road.

He did not look back again.

He tramped on steadily in the dim starlight, in the shadows of the trees. The sweet fresh air came to him—he breathed it deeply. He was breathing it for the last time. Henceforward the heavy, fevered air of the great city would be around him, the dust of busy streets, the foetid odours of the slums and the garrets.

He was homeless now.

At the cross-roads he paused once more, and cast a backward glance. Greyfriars had disappeared—from his sight and from his life.

A ragged, half-drunken tramp passed him and blinked at him. Billy hurried on. Behind him Greyfriars lay wrapped in darkness and slumber, before him was the great world.

Greyfriars slept on, unknowing, while darkness and the night swallowed up the boy who had fled from its shelter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Gone!

THE rising-bell had not yet sounded at Greyfriars, when Bolsover major sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory.

Percy Bolsover had slept very badly that night.

He was still aching from his rough handling by the fags, and it had broken his sleep, and he sat up in the morning light in a vile temper.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's cheerful voice "Wherefore that sweet smile, Bolsover?"

Bolsover scowled.

"Mind your own business!" he snapped.

"But it's so cheery, to see such a picture of good temper early in the morning," said Bob, grinning.

Bolsover grunted, and turned out of bed and dressed himself. He was not usually an early riser, and Bob Cherry looked at him curiously. He looked still more curious as Bolsover took a cricket-stump from under his mattress.

"What on earth do you want that for?" he asked.

"Oh, find out!"

"Nice polite chap!" murmured Bob. "What I like about you, Bolsover, is your ducal manners. Your people must be so proud of you at home."

Bolsover snarled, and quitted the dormitory. Bob Cherry turned out of bed, and shook Wharton and Johnny Bull and Nugent and Micky Desmond in turn. They yawned and woke and stretched themselves.

"Time to get down to the garden," said Bob Cherry. "You haven't forgotten that we are amateur horticulturists, I suppose. Buck up!"

"Where has Bolsover gone?" asked Nugent.

"Just went out with a cricket-stump; blessed if I know why."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"Some rotten bullying again, I suppose," he said. "Did he go towards the Third Form dorm?"

"Come to think of it, he did."

"Another display of brotherly affection," grinned Nugent. "Suppose we follow him, and pitch him downstairs?"

"Good egg!"

And the chums of the Remove dressed themselves quickly. Meanwhile, Bolsover major, with a tight grip on the cricket-stump, had made his way to the Third Form dormitory. His heavy brow was wrinkled in a frown. The ache of his rough handling was still in his bones, and, in his usual unreasonable way, he attributed all his sufferings to his minor. Billy was certainly the indirect cause of the trouble; but it was Bolsover's brutality to his minor that was the direct cause.

Bolsover opened the door of the Third Form dormitory and entered, with his teeth set and his eyes gleaming. The fags were all asleep, and there would be no one to interfere with him in delivering the thrashing he intended to bestow upon his minor. Long before the rest of the Third could come to the rescue he would have done enough. He strode across to his brother's bed.

"Now, you young cad——"

He stopped.

His grasp slackened upon the stump, and he stared at the bed with wide eyes.

The bed was empty.

For the moment he fancied that Billy had guessed of his intention, and had risen specially early to avoid him.

Then the note upon the pillow caught his eye.

It was addressed to himself.

Bolsover understood.

He moved backwards a step, his face going pale. He remembered the attempt Billy had made to run away from Greyfriars before. He remembered it; and he knew now what had happened.

His brother was gone.

His cruelty had driven the unhappy boy into running away from school. His bed was empty, and his place in the school would be empty for ever!

Tubb awoke, and sat up in bed.

"Hallo! What do you want here, you Remove cad?" he demanded.

Bolsover did not reply.

He did not even look round at Tubb. His eyes were fixed upon the empty bed, and upon the note that lay on the pillow.

"Hubert!" he muttered.

Tubb stared at the empty bed.

"My hat! Where's Billy?" he demanded. "What have you done with him, you brute?"

Bolsover major did not speak. He dropped the cricket-stump to the floor. He stepped closer to the bed, and picked up the note on the pillow, and opened it with trembling fingers. He could hardly understand the emotion, himself, that woke in his breast. A strange revulsion of feeling had come over him as he discovered that his brother was gone. From the bottom of his heart he wished that he had not been so hard upon the poor little fellow.

"Where's Billy?" called out Paget.

"What have you done to Billy?" demanded Tubb.

Most of the Third were awake now. Some of them had slipped out of bed. The rising-bell began to clang through the clear morning air of June.

There was a trampling of footsteps in the passage, and Harry Wharton & Co. came in. Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"He's here!"

"I guessed it," said Nugent. "But where's Billy?"

"Where's your minor, Bolsover?"

Bolsover did not answer.

He was looking at the letter Billy had written for him—a letter stained with tears, and written in the ragged hand of the little waif, in the queer spelling which Billy had not yet had time to unlearn.

"Dear Percy,—I'm leaving this for you, and when you git it I shall be gorn for good. I been thinkin' over wot you 'ave said, and I know you'll be 'appier when I'm gorn, and I 'ope that father won't think much about me. I ought never to 'ave come to Greyfriars. I knowed it at the time, but I wanted to stay so much, so I've stuck it out. But I ain't goin' to trouble you no more. I'm sorry I ever came 'ere to bother you, and I 'ope you will believe that of me, Percy. I'm goin' back to London, and you won't never see me again, and don't think that I blame you, 'cause I don't. Don't show this to father, 'cause he might think you was to blame, and you ain't. Good-bye!

"Yore loving brother,

"HUBERT."

Bolsover's hand shook.

"He's gone!" he muttered.

"What is that?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, striding towards him. "What have you got there, Bolsover?"

Bolsover looked at him with haggard eyes.

"He's gone!" he said.
"Billy's gone?" exclaimed the Removites together.
"Yes."
"Gone where?" shouted Tubb.
"Do you mean he's run away?" asked Wharton.
"Yes."
"Run away from school?"
"Yes."
"You awful cad!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth. "You've driven him to this."
"Did he leave that note for you?" Bob Cherry asked.
"Yes."
"You'd better take it to the Head."
Bolsover held it out.
"Read it!" he muttered.
The chums of the Remove read the ill-spelt, tear-blotted letter. Bob Cherry, who was always tender-hearted, felt a lump rise in his throat.
"Poor little chap!" he muttered.
"Poor little Billy!"
Tubb caught at the note and read it. He glared furiously at Bolsover. The fact that he had solemnly announced to Billy the evening before that he had "done with him" did not remain in Tubb's memory now. He only thought of his missing chum—gone back to a life that seemed all the more fearful to Tubb because he knew little or nothing about it. If Bolsover minor had been swallowed up by an earthquake at his feet, Tubb could hardly have felt more dismayed and horrified.
"Oh, you brute!" he yelled. "You awful brute! You've made him do this."
"He's got to be found, and brought back," said Paget.
"He won't be found; he'll take care of that, the young ass," said Tubb, half blubberingly. "He's done this to please that awful cad, and he won't be found. He's gone for good, and whatever happens to him will all be Bolsover's fault."
Bolsover groaned.
"Do you think I don't know that?" he muttered huskily. "I—I had no idea of this. I—I never suspected——"
"You drove him to it, and never thought or cared what you were doing," said Harry Wharton scornfully. He pointed to the cricket-stump on the floor. "What did you bring that here for?"
"I—I——"
"You were going to lick him—why? Because you have been found out trying to injure him, and punished for it? You coward!"
"Pile it on," said Bolsover miserably. "You can't say half I deserve."
Wharton's expression changed.
"Well, I don't want to pile on a chap who's down," he said. "If you're sorry——"
"Sorry!" yelled Paget fiercely. "Catch that brute being sorry for what he's done! He won't be sorry unless Billy is brought back, or unless he gets licked for driving him to this—the cowardly brute!"
Bolsover winced.
But he showed no sign of anger. It seemed as if anger had been driven out of him by the shock he had received. His face was deadly white. He thought of the little fellow thrown on the world—the forlorn waif stealing back into the wretched hovel in the London slums—and Bolsover felt what it was to know remorse.
"Billy says you're not to show that letter," said Harry Wharton. "It will get you into a row if you do."
"I'm going to take it to the Head," said Bolsover dully.
"It will mean trouble."
"Not more than I deserve."
And Bolsover major, without another word, took the letter, and strode from the Third-Form dormitory.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Angel Alley.

LONDON!
London once more!
Bolsover minor gazed about him as one in a strange city.
It was not very long since he had left London. He could count the time by weeks since he had raced down Fleet Street with a sheaf of papers, damp from the Press, under his arm—since he had added his voice to the shrill chorus about Charing Cross Station—"Extra Special—All the Winners!"
But in those weeks much water had passed under the bridges, to follow the saying, many things had happened to Billy, the newsboy.
The change in his life had been complete.
The little street arab had doffed his tattered garments, and had become Bolsover minor of the Third Form at Greyfriars, respectably dressed—with a sometimes almost oppressive respectability—and had learned that there was such a

language as Latin, such a tongue as French, and that even English was supposed to be spoken with some care.
He had fallen out of his old ways.
As he stood, in Etons and silk hat, in the thronging street, Bolsover minor could hardly believe that he was the tattered urchin whom Harry Wharton & Co. had befriended there, and who had shared fried fish with Tadger under the shelter of a waggon in a yard on a rainy night.
The rush and the roar of the traffic, the thundering motor-'buses, the whizzing taxi cabs, the endless throngs of pedestrians, struck him as strange and almost overpowering.
He was pushed and jostled, as he stared about him, as surprised and overcome as the veriest bumpkin visiting the great city for the first time.
And this was London!
It seemed to Billy that he had been away, not weeks, but years—that he had passed quite out of the way of things.
He drew in a deep breath—breath that was heavy and dusty after the pure air of the countryside round Greyfriars.
But it was pleasant enough to him. He was a true son of the City, after all, and his heart beat in unison with the rattle of hoofs, the whir of engines.
Greyfriars seemed far off now—a dim, quiet spot in the remote past, where life flowed on quietly and peacefully; but now, once more, he was in the heart of things.
And his eye grew brighter, his step more elastic.
After all, had he given up so much in leaving Greyfriars? He had come back to what he had always known, and as every step he grew more assured, felt more of the influence of his old life creeping upon him.
He had slept in the train most of the way to London, and he did not feel fatigued. He had been walking about the busy streets for some time now, wondering, interested, picking up the threads of his former life, as it were.
He climbed upon a motor-'bus at last, and gazed down into the streets as it whirled him along, grunting and grinding.
Seated there, with his bundle at his feet, Billy thought of what he should do. His intention, when he left Greyfriars, had been to seek out his old friend, Tadger, and throw in his lot with him. He knew that Tadger would be glad to see him. Tadger had missed him since he went—his letters to Greyfriars had revealed that plainly enough. He would return to Angel Alley—and to Tadger. He would not be able to remain in Angel Alley for long, for he felt that he would be searched for, and the inquirers would find their way there. Tadger would come with him, and he would find new quarters.
Then to take up his old life—selling papers for a living—and living how he could—the life of a true Bohemian of the great city.
He glanced down at his clothes, and smiled. Selling papers, in an Eton suit and a silk hat! But he had no others, so far—he would have to make these do until he had obtained a change.
His bundle contained a necessary change of linen, and a few articles that had grown indispensable, such as a bath-sponge, and a tooth-brush. Such articles were not considered indispensable in Angel Row—in fact, they were quite unknown there. But Billy, in parting from Greyfriars, could not part from all that he had learned there. Cleanliness, at least, he could keep. In such places as Angel Alley and Angel Row, and Murderers' Court, the water supply was not plentiful—certainly. There were certain difficulties in the way of keeping clean. But that would be one of the battles he would have to fight—and he would do it.
He slid off the roaring motor-'bus at last, and took his way on foot to his destination.
Not far from a great artery of traffic—not far from where half a dozen theatres opened nightly to a well-dressed crowd—was the district where he had dwelt, and where he was to dwell again.
A mean street, and another mean street—dirty, ill-kept, smelling of garbage. Houses that were crazy and ill-built, alternating with other buildings that had been mansions in their day, but now were in rack and ruin, and let as lodging-houses, and swarmed with tattered children and slovenly men and women.
The sight was old and familiar, but it saddened Bolsover minor now as it had never saddened him in the old days.
Then it was all he had known—it had seemed natural enough to him. But he had seen comfort and cleanliness since—he had seen the green countryside—he had known quiet voices, and quiet manners.
The dirty, mean streets, the flaring public-houses, the slovenly men—above all, the dirty and miserable children—filled him with a curious pain as he saw them.
Was it all necessary—was all this sin and misery and dirt necessary, in the greatest city in the world? Those little mites, sitting on the kerb, dabbling in mud, some of them

with pinched cheeks, telling of want of food, some with hideous sores showing through their dirt—all of them with raucous voices and hard eyes—surely there ought to be some way of rescuing them from this. These thoughts passed dimly through Billy's mind as he wended his way on.

The Red Lion at the corner looked the same as of old. There was Slimy Dick leaning against the post at the corner, as Billy had seen him for more years than he could remember.

Glances were attracted from all sides by Billy's respectable clothes. The shine of his silk hat seemed to be taken as a personal insult by several urchins, who yelled after him. As he paused at the corner, and looked about him, there came loud voices in quarrel from Angel Alley—the narrow, ill-paved recess, with two posts at the end, shutting off wheeled traffic, and worn smooth by the lounging of loafers of many generations. Angel Alley—a sink of damp and mist in winter, an oven of heat and foul odours in the summer—lay before him.

He listened. He knew a voice among those that were raised in fury.

"'Ands orf, I tell yer."

Bolsover minor started.

It was Tadger's voice—Tadger, his old chum. He swung round the posts, and looked down the alley.

"Git 'im down!"

"'Ave them pipers orf 'im!"

"Nah, then!"

Tadger, tattered, dirty, the same old Tadger, had placed his bundle of papers behind him on the ground, close to the wall, and was defending them against three boys bigger than himself—three young hooligans, raggeder, dirtier, and brutal-looking.

The trio were closing in upon Tadger, when Bolsover minor appeared upon the scene.

Billy's eyes gleamed.

He had arrived in his old haunts at a lucky moment for his old chum.

"Out 'im!" yelled one of the young rascals.

"'Ands orf, I says!" gasped Tadger. "'Elp!"

"Buck up, Tadger!"

It was Bolsover minor who shouted.

He dropped his bundle, and rushed to the rescue.

Crash!

A crushing right-hander sent one of the young hooligans reeling to the ground, where he lay gasping.

The other two turned ferociously upon the new-comer.

"A blessed toff!"

"Strike me pink!"

Biff!

Bolsover minor's left caught the left eye of the young gentleman who had requested to be struck pink—and he was certainly struck, if not pink.

He went with a bump to the ground, and Tadger, left with only one opponent, hurled himself upon him, and got his head into chancery.

"Now, then, Smithy," said Tadger grimly.

Smithy howled and roared in Tadger's grasp, while the newsboy hammered him without mercy.

The two young hooligans on the ground jumped up, and Bolsover minor squared up to them, with all the skill he had learned from Paget, of the Third, at Greyfriars.

But they had had enough. One of them dashed away, and the other, finding himself deserted, followed fast.

Only the unfortunate Smithy remained a prisoner in the strong grasp of Tadger, and the recipient of a shower of terrific blows.

Bolsover minor burst into a laugh.

"Let him alone, Tadger."

Tadger heard his voice, and in sheer amazement released his victim. Smithy took advantage of the relaxing of his grip, and twisted himself out of Tadger's grasp, and fled. Tadger turned towards his rescuer, and gazed at the well-dressed junior of Greyfriars in blank amazement.

Bolsover minor chuckled as he held out his hand.

"Don't you know me, Tadger?"

Tadger gasped.

"Crumbs! Billy!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
A Bully's Remorse.

THERE was more than one gloomy face in the Form-rooms at Greyfriars that morning. Bolsover minor was gone!

The whole school knew it before breakfast, and many were the faces that were clouded at the thought of the poor little waif thrown upon the wide world without a home. His chums in the Third were inconsolable.

Tubb almost blubbed, as the fags expressed it, and Paget looked very serious and solemn. The other fellows in the Third were sorry enough. Almost all of them had liked Billy. Paget and Tubb felt their hard words to Billy very heavy upon their consciences. They had quarrelled with him about his brother, they had told him that they were done with him, and he had evidently taken them seriously.

"Of course, we didn't mean it!" groaned Tubb. "Billy ought to have known that we didn't mean a word of it, Paget, old man."

Paget nodded.

"Of course we didn't," he said. "He made us waxy, and we rowed him; but we've rowed him often enough. He ought to have known we were going to stick to him."

"He'll have to be found," said Tubb.

"I hope he will," said Paget. But he did not speak hopefully. They knew it was not upon their account that Bolsover minor had gone. They wished—they wished fervently—that they had never spoken an angry word to their unfortunate chum. But it was his brother's harshness that had driven him away from Greyfriars.

Their anger and bitterness against Bolsover major knew no bounds. But it was not only the Third that were down upon the bully of the Remove. In the Remove Form he had black looks from all sides.

Even his own friends, Snoop and Vernon-Smith, both of them worse fellows than himself, did not defend him.

Harry Wharton & Co. scorned him, and said so. But they were disarmed to some extent by the way the Remove bully took it.

If he had been hardened, if he had tried to brazen it out, they would have visited their wrath upon him, in very painful ways.

But he did not.

Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, the hard-hearted fellow who had been consistently cruel and unfeeling to his unfortunate minor, seemed to have changed.

He need not have taken Billy's letter to the Head; but he had done so. Dr Locke had read that letter, and then he had looked at Bolsover over it, with a quiet, stern glance that made the Remove bully flush.

"So you are the cause of your brother's action, Bolsover major!" the Head asked, quietly and coldly.

"I'm afraid so, sir," faltered Bolsover.

"He recommends you to keep this letter to yourself," said the Head, glancing at it. "Why have you shown it to me?"

"I don't want to avoid being blamed, sir."

"Indeed! That is very curious, after your treatment of your brother," said the Head caustically.

Bolsover's lip quivered.

"I—I didn't mean to be so hard on him, sir," he muttered. "I—I never fully understood. And—and he took everything so quietly."

"That you fancied you could ill-use him, without any danger of the worm turning, I suppose," said the Head.

Bolsover coloured with shame.

"Your minor has done wrong to run away from school, and he will certainly be sought after and found," said the Head. "I shall communicate with your father at once. You will be punished for your part in this, Bolsover."

"I know that, sir."

"I hardly understand you, Bolsover. After driving your brother to this desperate action, you do not seem to be pleased at your success."

"I'd do anything to get him back, safe and sound, sir."

The Head looked at him hard.

"I hope you are telling the truth, Bolsover major, and that that is not merely hypocrisy to disarm resentment of your wicked conduct," he said.

Bolsover turned crimson.

"I mean it, sir."

"I hope you do. You may go."

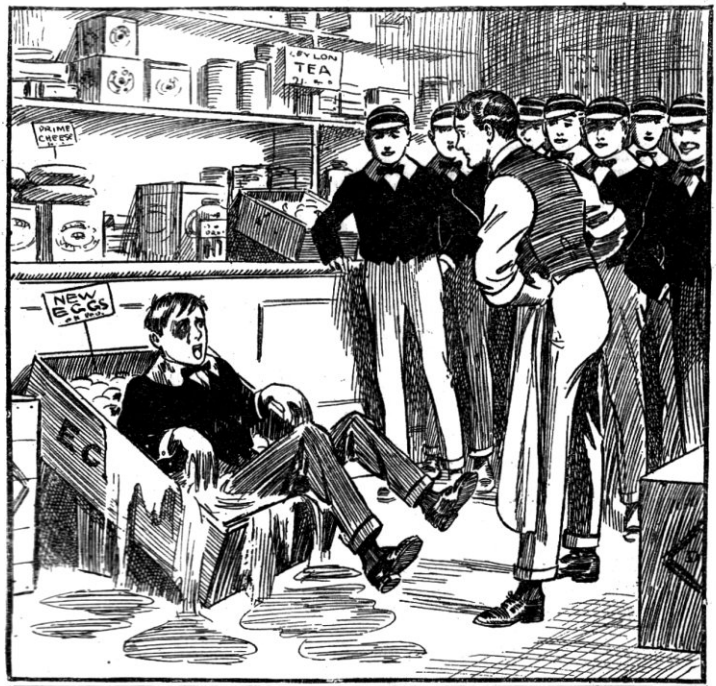
And Bolsover went.

Nobody in the Remove spoke to him now. The pale, miserable face of Bolsover major was very unlike that the juniors were accustomed to in the bully of the Remove. They could not pardon him for what he had done and caused; but it was not a time for scorn and reproaches.

Bolsover sat heavy and silent in the Form-room that morning.

The deep cloud upon his face was reflected in the faces of the other juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co. were thinking more of the absent



Gore reclined in a box of eggs. He had broken about twelve dozen, and they were simply swamping over his clothes. He sat in a sea of yolk, gasping. "I shall have to charge you for those eggs, sir," said Lumley-Lumley calmly. "Twelve dozen at eighteen for a shilling—that will be eight shillings please, and the broken eggs are yours, if you care to remove them, sir." (*For the above humorous incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled "SHUNNED BY HIS FATHER!" by Martin Clifford, which is contained in our popular companion paper, "The Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.*)

fag than of their lessons, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, understood, and was very easy with them.

Back to Harry Wharton's mind came the picture of Billy as he had first seen him—tattered, dirty, yet cheerful and good-natured, and full of pluck. He had gone back to the life of the streets—the life of a city arab, without a home, without a friend.

What would become of him?

He would be searched for, but would he be found? Mr. Bolsover had been telegraphed to, and he had replied that he was coming down to Greyfriars by the first available train. When the boys thought of Bolsover's coming meeting with his father, they could feel sorry for the bully of the Remove.

Morning lessons were over at last, and the Removites crowded out of the Form-room, unusually silent and grave. The unknown fate of Bolsover minor seemed to hang like a shadow on the school. For a boy to run away from Greyfriars was unknown, or almost unknown; but any other boy would have had his home and his people to go to. Bolsover minor had neither. For his letter made it clear that he was not thinking of going to his father—the father he hardly knew. He intended to disappear out of his brother's life, and never trouble Percy again. That meant that he was going back to the slums—to the old life of poverty and want and misery.

Would he be found? It was so easy to disappear in the great city, and he did not wish to be found. He must know that he would be searched for, and he would seek to avoid discovery.

In the teeming city, where there were thousands of such lads, what clue could be found to the unhappy boy who had deliberately plunged into the crowd to be lost?

Harry Wharton & Co. talked it over with gloomy faces after morning lessons, in the sunny porch. The June sun

was blazing down upon the Close of Greyfriars; the grass and the old elms gleamed and glistened green in the sunshine. The same sun was shining down upon Bolsover minor—where? In some reeking haunt of misery and shame.

"Poor kid!" said Bob Cherry, for the tenth time. "If he's not found——"

"Poor old Billy!"

"It must make Bolsover feel pretty sick, I should think," said Harry Wharton savagely. "He has been trying to drive Billy to this. Now he has succeeded. He doesn't seem to enjoy his success."

"The utter brute!"

There was a yell from a crowd of fags in the passage, as the bully of the Remove came by, with bent head.

"Yah! Cad! Rotter!"

Bolsover major looked up, his cheeks flushed as the yell of scorn and hatred rang upon his ears.

But no angry words came from his lips.

He glanced at the fags, and did not reply. He came on towards the Removites, and fags hooted and hissed from the passage.

Bolsover halted, and looked at the Famous Four. They drew back a little from him, as if he were a thing unclean. Bolsover saw it, and winced.

"I suppose you fellows think pretty badly of me," he muttered.

"What do you expect?" growled Bob Cherry.

"I—I know."

"What will become of that kid?" said Nugent. "He's gone away for your sake. He won't be found if he can help it. What will become of him?"

Bolsover groaned.

"Do you think I'm not thinking about that?" he muttered hoarsely. "If he's not found, and brought back from—from that—I shall never have a minute's rest again. He came to my study last evening, and I—I didn't understand."

"He came to me, and I didn't understand," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I can see now that he was saying good-bye."

"He—he asked me," faltered Bolsover. "He asked me if—if I really meant it, that I wanted him to go."

"What did you say?"

"I—I said I did. I—I thought I did, too. I didn't really mean it. He was such a good little chap." Bolsover's voice trembled. "I was up against him all the time. I know that. And yet— Do you remember when he tried to run away before? He found me in danger, and came to help me, like the little bricke he always was. I—I should have turned to him then, only—only then came that ragged rascal, Tadger, to see him, and—and the fellows chipped me about it, and—and he wouldn't give up Tadger, and—and——" He broke off.

"You let fellows chip you into being a brute to your own brother?" said Wharton scornfully. "That's a nice confession to make."

"I'm sorry enough now. I'd make it up to him if we got him back here," muttered Bolsover miserably. "But I know he won't come back. He was always a plucky little beggar, and he'll have this in mind for a long time. He won't let them find him; we sha'n't see him here again. Heaven only knows what will become of him. He may starve to death for all I shall know. And it's all my fault."

The chums of the Remove were silent. They had bitter thoughts in their minds, bitter feelings in their hearts. But the Remove bully's face was working, and his eyes were heavy with tears he was too proud to shed. Reproaches were useless now, and they would not be hard upon a fellow who, after all, was sorry for the harm he had done. There was a rattle of wheels on the gravel in the Close, but Bolsover did not hear it.

"And to think that I went to his dorm. this morning to lick him!" he muttered. "I was going to lick him, and he was gone."

"Better not think of it," said Bob Cherry, with an attempt at comfort. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's the station cab from Friardale, Bolsover. Your pater's come."

Bolsover turned towards the door, and the chums of the Remove glanced at him curiously, not without compassion.

"Blessed if I understand Bolsover," said Johnny Bull. "He simply drove the kid to this, and now he's sorry."

"Shows he's not all bad, at all events," said Nugent. "But I'm blessed if I can quite make him out, either."

Bolsover could not quite make himself out. He only knew that remorse was tearing at his heart, and that he would have given anything and everything to have the brother whom he had so cruelly wronged safe and sound back at Greyfriars.

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Old Pals!

"BILLY!"

Tadger stared at Billy like a fellow in a dream. The sudden and amazing appearance of his old friend in Angel Alley dumbfounded him. He took Bolsover minor's hand mechanically, staring at Billy as if he were a ghost.

His astonishment was so great that Billy could not help grinning.

"I ain't a ghost," said Billy, shaking Tadger by the hand, with a grip that proved that he was indeed of solid flesh. "It's me, Tadger, ole man."

"Billy!"

"Yes; I've come back."

"Come to visit me 'ere!" ejaculated Tadger. "My eye! It's good of you, Billy. I came to Greyfriars to see you, but for you to come 'ere—my 'aunt! You ain't ashamed to come back to the old alley, eh?"

"Don't look like it, does it?" said Billy.

Tadger gripped his hand again.

"No, it don't," he agreed. "I'm jolly glad to see you, Billy. But—but wot are you going to do?"

"Where are you living now, Tadger?"

"I got a room in old Eardley's stable," said Tadger. "'Tain't bein' used now, you know; but there's a lot of straw left there, and the weather's warm enough. Times is bad, and I've been kicked out of Mother Molly's."

"Ard cheese!" said Billy.

"I got a tanner, and that's all," said Tadger. "Look 'ere, I sha'n't be able to look arter you like you did for me at Greyfriars. You'll 'ave to tike your chance."

"That's all right, Tadger. You glad to see me again?"

"Not 'arf!" said Tadger emphatically, by which he evidently meant that he was wholly glad to see his old pal.

"'Ow's the pipers goin'?"

"Oh, so-so. Ain't no special news to sell 'em since the Titanic, you know," said Tadger despondently. "They went orf quick enough then, but since only so-so."

"Sorry to 'ear it," said Billy. "I'm goin' to take 'em up agin, unless I can 'appen into somethin' better."

Tadger stared.

"You're goin' to sell pipers agin, Billy?"

"What-ho!"

"But wot for?" demanded Tadger.

"For a livin'."

"A—a—a livin'?" repeated the dazed Tadger. "But—but wot about Greyfriars?"

"I left."

"Left!" yelled Tadger. "Left school?"

"Yes."

Tadger gave a whoop.

"And you've come back, then?"

"Yes," said Billy. "'Ere I am, on my uppers, same as you, Tadger."

"You've come back to stay?"

"Yes, for good."

"Urrah!" shouted Tadger.

And Tadger executed a double-shuffle in the middle of Angel Alley to demonstrate his delight. Billy watched him with a grin. The evident pleasure of his old pal was a solace to him. After all, if he had given up everything else, he had not given up friendship. Even in the murky depths of Angel Alley friendship was to be found.

But Tadger suddenly ceased his shuffle, and turned to his pal again with a grave and serious face.

"Old 'ard, Billy!" he said. "This is orlright for me, but wot about you?"

"It's orlright for me," said Billy.

"But wot 'ave you left Gr'yfriars for?"

Billy flushed.

"I didn't get on with Percy," he said briefly.

Tadger made a grimace. He had met the estimable Percy, and formed his own opinion of him—an opnion he did not communicate to Bolsover minor.

"So you 'ooked it?" said Tadger.

"Yes, I 'ooked it."

"Your father know?"

"I ain't told 'im; he'll know later."

"Then you'll be looked for!"

Bolsover minor nodded.

"I sha'n't be found," he said quietly.

"You mean that, Billy—you don't want to go back to the big school again?"

"I don't mean to go, Tadger."

"I'm glad to 'ave you back, Billy," said Tadger, still very gravely. "but it will be 'ard arter wot you've got used to down there. You won't care about eatin' fried fish with your fingers—when you can get it."

The Greyfriars junior laughed.

"I think I can stand even that rather than go back," he said.

"But if they look for you——"

"I shall give 'em the slip."

"Then it won't do to stay 'ere," said Tadger shrewdly. "Your father knows about your 'avin' lived in Angel Alley, and they'll search 'ere first thing."

"That's so; I'm goin' to 'ook it. I only came 'ere to look for you first, Tadger."

"Well, you've found me. Let's get out; it won't take me long to git my things from Eardley's stable. There ain't a grand pianner among them," said Tadger, with great humour.

By this time half Angel Alley had gathered to stare at Bolsover minor and his wonderful clothes, and people who recognised him called greetings to him. Billy replied to them cheerfully enough. But the aspect of his old quarters had struck him almost with a chill at his heart.

It seemed amazing to him that he had never noticed, in the old days, how filthy everything was—how crazy and patched the houses, how foul the air, how dirty and unkempt the inhabitants.

He had been used to it then. But fresh from Greyfriars, it struck and jarred upon his nerves with an unpleasant effect.

"'Ere's Mother Molly!" said Tadger, as they moved towards the two posts at the end of the foul alley.

A hag in a dirty red shawl, with her arms akimbo, appeared in a doorway of a cracked and tumbling building, of which the windows were stuffed with paper where the glass had been broken. There was a short black pipe between her teeth, and her face was red from long and habitual drinking. She had fierce black eyes and beetling brows, and a heavy fist, which had often been felt by some recalcitrant lodger who could not or would not pay what was due. She looked with her glittering little eyes at the two boys, and gave Billy a grin of recognition.

"It ain't Billy?" she exclaimed.

"It is, mother!" said Billy, with a nod.

"Ain't we dressed up fine!" said Mother Molly.

"Oh, let 'im alone!" said Tadger.

"Who's torkin' to you?" demanded Mother Molly fiercely. "You shut up your tater-trap, my lad. Fine feathers makes fine birds, hey, Billy? Are you lookin' for a room in the old 'ouse with your old Mother Molly?"

"Thanks, I ain't," said Billy.

"You've kem back quite a toff," said the old woman, in a wheedling tone. "You're goin' to spend some of your money among your old friends, Billy? You're that sort."

Billy laughed.

"I ain't got much money, old girl," he said.

"You've got rich friends and relations."

"I've run away."

Mother Molly's expression changed.

"Run away!" she repeated.

"Yes, mother."

"More fool you!" said the old woman. "Do you mean to say you've kem back to the alley on your uppers?"

"Yes."

"And you ain't brought nothin' in your pockets?" she demanded.

Bolsover minor coloured. Coming from a wealthy quarter, his old acquaintances in the alley expected that, as a matter of course, he would have stolen something to bring away with him.

"No; I ain't brought nothing," he said.

"More fool you!" shrilled the old hag. "Still, if you've got the rhino, you can 'ave a room in the old 'ouse, and so step right in, Billy."

Billy shook his head.

"Thank you, but I'm going further on," he said.

Mother Molly's grin of welcome vanished as if by magic. She scowled, and took the pipe from her lips, and shook it at Billy.

"Get hout, then!" she said angrily. "I dessay the coppers are lookin' for you, if the truth was known. Don't come rahnd 'ere with your toffy clothes and your lah-di-dah airs! You 'ear me?"

Billy walked on with Tadger, making no reply. A torrent of shrill abuse followed him from Mother Molly till he turned the corner and left Angel Alley and its inhabitants behind him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Tadger's Hospitality.

Tadger looked curiously at Billy.

Billy's face was strangely serious and thoughtful. Tadger wondered what thoughts were passing in his mind. Glad as he was to have his old pal back with him, he was shrewd enough to realise that Billy had been too long among other surroundings ever to mix as of old in the life of Angel Alley. Between Billy, the newsboy, and Bolsover minor, of Greyfriars, there was a great gulf fixed. Tadger realised it more clearly than Billy did, and it made his heart heavy. He had found his friend again. His old pal had returned in the flesh but not in the spirit. But Tadger would not look despondent about it. He meant to make Billy's first day in his old surroundings as cheerful as possible.

"You're 'ungry?" he asked suddenly.

Billy started out of a reverie.

"Yes," he said. "I ain't eaten nothing to-day 'cept some chocolate I got out of a nortymatic machine on the station. And it's past three now."

"I've got some grub in the stable, and I can git some more," said Tadger. "I've got a tanner, and if I sell some more pipers——"

Billy dug his hand into his pocket.

"It's share and share alike 'atween us now, Tadger," he said, showing a bright gold sovereign. "'Ere you are."

Tadger stared at the sovereign. It might have been the first one he had ever seen, by the amazement in his face.

"A real thick 'un!" he gasped.

Billy grinned.

"Yes, it's real enough," he said.

"My heye! Put it out of sight!" said Tadger, with an anxious glance round. "It's enough to git you scragged 'ere!"

"I forgot," said Billy.

"If you've got a bob?" said Tadger.

"I've got five, as well as this."

"My heye! But you're a blessed millionaire!" said Tadger, in admiration. "You got enough to last till you git the pipers goin'. When are you goin' to start?"

"To-day," said Billy promptly. "No good wastin' time."

"But in them clobber——"

Billy glanced down at his clothes.

"I'll git a change, and sell these clothes to-morrer," he said. "But it will be all right for once. It will 'ave to be."

"'Ere's Eardley's," said Tadger.

They entered a narrow stable-yard, shut in by high brick walls. A dark, foul-smelling stable was before them. It was deserted, but its state showed that it had been recently used, and that the stablemen, whoever they were, were not cleanly. There was a dim half-light in the stable, that recalled to Billy, strangely enough, the dim, religious light of the old chapel at Greyfriars, with its stained-glass windows.

"This is where I've camped," said Tadger. "I could 'ave these quarters for two or three days if I liked; but we'll git out to-morrer mornin', Billy, in case they comes rahnd 'ere nosin' arter you."

"Good!" said Billy.

"Now you gimme that bob, and I'll git in something to gnaw at," said Tadger. "I'll put my tanner to it. As for that thick-un, you keep it dark."

"Not 'arf!"

And Tadger, armed with the princely sum of eighteen-pence, went forth to forage. Billy sat upon a trough and waited for him. His eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and his nostrils to the heavy air. But his face was dark and depressed. In thinking it over at Greyfriars, and coming to his resolution, he had determined to go back to his old life. But he realised now that he had determined upon an impossibility; his old life no longer existed. The old ways were there, and the old places; but he had changed. He could no more go back to being Billy, the newsboy of old, than he could go back to his tenth year. He was Bolsover minor now, and he would remain so. If he fell back to his old state, it would be by slow and painful degrees. He could not plunge into it at once.

And Billy realised, with a guilty sense of shame, that even Tadger—old Tadger—was not exactly clean. He had never noticed it in the old days. But there was the dirt of weeks on Tadger's neck, and his finger-nails were in such a state that Billy felt a secret misgiving in touching his hand. He blamed himself for it, almost hated himself, when Tadger was so kind and chummy. But there it was—he was clean, and Tadger was dirty, and between cleanliness and dirtiness what communion could there be? Billy felt a flush of shame rising to his face. He felt treacherous towards his friend, and he drove the wretched thoughts from his mind with an effort; and when Tadger came back into the stable, Billy was more chummy than he had even been before.

"Good old Tadger!" he said, with great heartiness. "That's prime!"

"Ain't it!" said Tadger enthusiastically.

Tadger had brought in a noble supply.

There was fried fish in Tadger's cap; there was a great heap of chips in an old newspaper; there were chunks of bread sticking out of Tadger's ragged trousers pockets; and he extracted a paper of butter from another pocket. The only implement for dividing the viands was a large pocket-knife, which Tadger opened. He evidently considered

that four fingers and a thumb on each hand were implements enough for anybody.

"'Ere you are!" said Tadger.

The fried fish smelt very appetising, undoubtedly. Billy had some slight doubts about that fish, but he was hungry.

Tadger spread a newspaper on the ground, and pitched the fried fish into it out of his cap. Then he replaced the cap on his head with much indifference. Little things like that did not worry Tadger. But Billy could not help fixing a horrified glance for a moment on the cap, thinking of the horribly greasy and smelly state Tadger's hair would be in. Fortunately, Tadger, busy in dismembering the fish with the pocket-knife, did not notice it.

"Go a'ead, Billy!" said Tadger.

Billy was very hungry.

There was no opportunity to stand upon ceremony, and Billy plunged his fingers into the fried fish and potatoes, and ate. Tadger took a chunk of fish in his right hand and a bunch of chips in his left, and ate, too.

"Prime, ain't it?" said Tadger.

"Ripping!" said Billy, involuntarily wondering what Paget and Tubb would say if they could see him now.

"Ole Peter Bird's fried fish is a corfdrop!" said Tadger. "I allers go 'ere when I've got the spondulics. It's dearer than Nawkins, but it's better."

"Yes, it's better," agreed Billy.

"I got fi'pence lef' outer the one-and six," said Tadger proudly. "'Ere you are—'arves!"

"It's jolly good!"

"Ave some more bread."

"Thanks."

"Nother bit of fish, Billy?"

"No, thanks. I'm finished."

"Full up?" inquired Tadger.

"Yes," said Billy.

"You ain't got the appetite you useter 'ave!" said Tadger, with a shake of the head. "You've lorst it at Gr'yfriars, Billy!"

"Oh, I'm all right."

Billy wondered why it was that Tadger's peculiar pronunciation of the name of his school jarred upon him so much. When he had first gone to Greyfriars, he had pronounced the word Gr'yfriars. Tadger still did so, and it jarred on his ear.

"Well, that's orlright," said Tadger, ejecting a bone from his mouth, and proceeding to pick his teeth with a chip of wood he had extracted from the old straw. "I've enjoyed that, Billy."

"So 'ave I," said Billy, with great enthusiasm.

"Dry?" asked Tadger.

"Yes, rather."

"Come on, then, and we'll get some corfee at old Hummer's stall."

"Good!"

Billy was not sorry to leave Tadger's palatial quarters in Hardley's stable. It did not take Tadger long to put all his worldly goods together. They filled a very small bundle.

The two boys quitted the stable together, and Billy brushed straw from his outside. His good clothes still called forth occasional remarks from the inhabitants of the quarter he passed through.

At a coffee-stall the two boys paused for coffee, and Tadger remarked humorously that they were growing quite toffy, with corfee after dinner. The last time Billy had drunk coffee was when he and Paget had brewed some over the Form-room fire at Greyfriars. It had certainly not been so good as this. But Billy, as he drank his coffee, looked at Tadger, tattered, dirty, his face shining with good-humour and friendliness and fried fish. Their eyes met his eye, and Billy smiled cheerfully—but that cheerful smile cost him an effort.

"Orl right, ain't it?" said Tadger.

"Prime!" said Billy. He was already learning to say "Prime" instead of "Ripping." "Now then, about them pipers! It's time we had the six o'clock 'Evening News.'"

"Kim on, then!" said Tadger.

A quarter of an hour later a youth in Etons and a silk-hat was racing round the gates of Charing Cross Station with a sheaf of papers under his arm, and his voice ringing out in the chorus:

"'Evenin' News!' White 'News!' All the winners! 'Ere you are, sir—'Evenin' News!' Thank you, sir!"

And Billy's eyes were bright now, and his face was flushed, and he was happy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Father and Son.

"PERCY!"

Mr. Bolsover could say no more as he grasped his son's hand.

Bolsover major looked at his father, and his heart smote him as he saw the new lines that had appeared upon the kind old face.

Bolsover groaned inwardly.

He knew—he knew only too well—how long and how heavily the loss of his infant son had weighed upon Mr. Bolsover. He knew the deep joy the old gentleman had felt when Hubert was found.

And now, through him, Mr. Bolsover had lost his son again—through his elder boy, who should have been the friend and protector of the younger.

"Percy, my dear boy, I know how you must feel this!" said Mr. Bolsover.

The Remove bully winced.

"Oh, father!"

Mr. Bolsover entered the House. The other fellows drew aside, to leave the father and son alone together. Mr. Bolsover pressed Percy's hand.

"How did it happen?" he said, in a low voice.

"You don't know, father?"

"No. I have merely had a telegram from Dr. Locke, to tell me that Hubert has run away from school. I know nothing more. Was he unhappy here, Percy? He never told me so if he was."

Bolsover muttered something indistinctly.

"But you would have noticed it, and would have told me," said the old gentleman. "I know you did your best for him, Percy. You need not tell me that. I am afraid it was simply the wish for freedom—the desire to get back to a nomad life—that has led Hubert to do this. Do you think so?"

"Better see Dr. Locke," said Bolsover desperately. "He's got a—a letter from Hubert that the kid left behind him. I—I'll wait for you in my study, father."

"Very well, my boy."

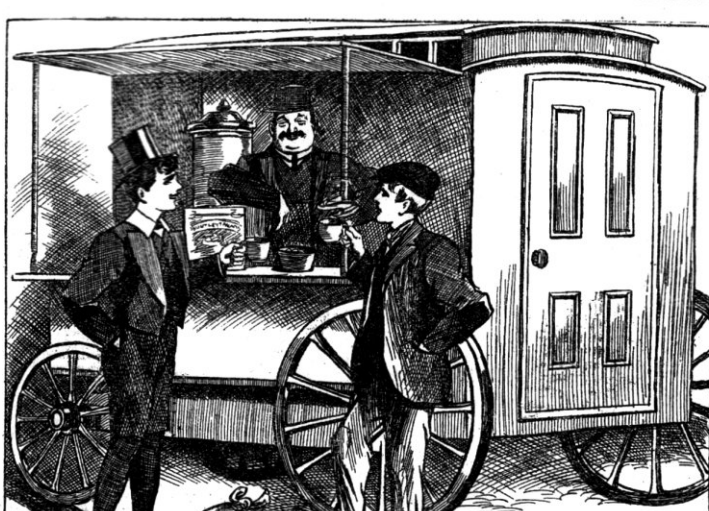
And Bolsover major tramped up to his study, while his father went in to see the Head of Greyfriars. Bolsover was in an unenviable frame of mind. He waited in his study, with a throbbing heart, for his father to come.

What would his father say?

He would know soon that it was all Bolsover's fault. His simple words of trust had gone straight to the junior's heart. He took it for granted that Percy had taken a kind and loving interest in the boy. He had known, certainly, that Bolsover's feelings had not been very brotherly towards his minor at first, but he fancied that that was all over. He had fancied that since that time when the fag was struck down in defence of his elder brother, Bolsover had been all kindness and devotion. What would he say when he knew the truth?

What defence could Bolsover make? He felt that he could make none. His father could not condemn him as bitterly as he condemned himself. He did not desire to make excuses; he only wanted his father to know the truth at once, and to get it over.

The wretched junior had tried to feel that he was not so much to blame. But he had failed. It seemed to him like



Billy, as he drank his coffee, looked at Tadger—tattered, dirty—his face shining with good humour and friendliness and fried fish. Tadger met his eye, and Billy smiled, cheerfully—but that cheerful smile cost him an effort. "Oriright, ain't it?" said Tadger. (*See Chapter* 10).

an evil dream, what had happened between him and his brother.

Why had he been so hard, so brutal? If he had dreamed that it would ever come to this, certainly he would never have acted as he had done. He would never willingly have driven Billy away and caused his father this grief. Yet he had gone on recklessly and hard-heartedly from bad to worse, making his minor's life a burden, till the unhappy lad was glad to give up everything and go. If he could only be brought back again, the junior said to himself, he would make up for all of it.

But deep in his heart was a feeling that Billy would never be found. He had vanished into the whirlpool of London, with the intention of hiding himself. He would never be found; and Bolsover would be left with remorse gnawing at his heart, to know, from bitter experience, the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.

The Remove bully groaned as he walked to and fro in his study. If he could only undo the evil he had done, if he could only go back and have things different—have them as he wished to have them now! How many a guilty wretch has longed the same!

He looked out of his study window into the bright and sunny Close, with haggard eyes. Four or five fags of the Third Form were staring up at his window, and there was a yell as Bolsover was seen:

"There he is!"

"Cad!"

"Rotter!"

"Where's your minor?"

"Cad!"

Bolsover drew back from the window, his face deadly pale. That was what Greyfriars thought of him!

Paget's voice rang up from the Close:

"Where's your brother, you villain?"

Bolsover shuddered.

Where was his brother?

The angry question brought strangely to his mind that question that was asked in the olden time of the man whose hands were first red with blood: "Where is Abel, thy brother?" And Bolsover shuddered miserably as the answer to that question came into his mind: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

He groaned aloud.

If only the boy would come back he would not shrink from being his brother's keeper. How gladly he would take on that task—or any other—to undo the harm his evil temper and his hard heart had wrought!

The door opened, and Bolsover hardly dared to look up as his father came in.

The old gentleman's face seemed older, whiter, and his lips were trembling. He closed the door.

Bolsover stood with his eyes on the carpet.

"Percy!" The old man's voice was shaken. "Percy, what have you done?"

Bolsover gave a cry:

"Oh, father!"

"Percy, it is you who have done this. I have read Hubert's

letter. He has given up his school, his home, his father—for you! And you have driven him to it!"

"I know it!" muttered Bolsover. "Oh, father, I—I didn't know what I was doing! I've been a brute, a coward, a villain! But—but it never seemed plain to me how it was till I found that he was gone. Father, I'd cut off my right hand to bring him back!"

The old gentleman looked at his son, and he read sincerity in Bolsover's face, and his own softened.

"Percy, I think you mean that."

"I mean it, father! I wish I could prove it. Tell me anything I can do, and you'll see," said Bolsover huskily. "I—I thought I wanted to get rid of him; but—but as soon as he was gone, I understood! I don't know how it was! I thought I hated him; but when he was gone—— Oh, father!"

He broke off with a sob.

Mr. Bolsover's face twitched.

"If you repent of the harm you have done, Percy, I can forgive you; and Hubert will forgive you, too, when we find him," said the old gentleman brokenly.

"But shall we find him?" groaned Bolsover.

"He shall—he must be found! I shall spare no effort. The police will help me—I shall set detectives at work everywhere. I shall offer a reward. Sooner or later we must find him. We must find him! To think of his being lost to us again, after we had lost him for so many years!"

"And it's all my fault!" said Bolsover miserably.

"Do not think of that now, Percy. If you have repented, that is enough—and I believe you have. Only think now of what you can do to make it up to him when he returns to Greyfriars—for he shall return."

"Oh, if he only does—that's all I ask!"

Mr. Bolsover pressed his son's hand.

"I must go now," he said. "Not a moment must be lost."

"You'll let me know how they get on, if there's a chance?"

"I will write every day, Percy. And as soon as he is found I will wire you. I must go now. Good-bye, my dear boy! And keep up your courage."

He was gone.

Bolsover flung himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

The Greyfriars juniors would have been amazed if they could have seen him at that moment. Was this Bolsover major—the bully, the overbearing tyrant of the Remove? They would hardly have known him now!

When Bolsover came down from his study he was very pale, and Harry Wharton, as he met him, saw the red rims of his eyelids, and guessed. The captain of the Remove clapped his old rival and enemy impulsively on the shoulder.

"Buck up!" he said. "He's bound to be found, Bolsover, old man!"

"If I could only think of a way!" muttered Bolsover.

Wharton nodded.

"I wish I could, too," he said. "I wonder—we'll jolly well think it over, Bolsover, and see whether we can think of a way. I wish the Head would let us go and look for him. But I suppose it's no good thinking of that."

From the passage came a yell.

"Yah! Bully! Where's your brother?"

And then there was a scuttle of retreating feet as Bolsover looked round.

"Shut up, you young sweeps!" called out Wharton sharply.

"Oh, let them go on!" said Bolsover. "I'm only getting what I deserve—and not half enough, either. I feel like Cain!"

And he walked away with a moody brow.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
Robbed!

"SPECIAL!"

"Extra Special!"

"Full report Titanic inquiry!"

"'Ere you are, sir! Latest edition, sir!"

Bolsover minor was Billy the newsboy now, and, as Tadger would have said, "no error." All the go and excitement of the old life had come back again.

Billy dashed across the station yards, round gates and entrances, dodged taxicabs and hansoms, was nearly overwhelmed a dozen times by thundering motor-'buses. His sheaf of papers grew smaller. People were astonished to see a newsboy in a silk hat and Etons. But Billy had not lost his old knack of selling papers. The "Evening News" went off like hot cakes.

"Extra Special! Full Titanic report!"

"'Evening News,' sir!"

The hour was long past bedtime at Greyfriars. At the old school the juniors and the seniors were all in bed, sleeping healthy sleep. Even the masters had mostly retired to their rooms. But in London—Billy gazed round him, when the thought of Greyfriars came into his mind, and wondered. Was this always going on? He knew it was, and yet he wondered. Where did all these endless throngs come from—passing, repassing, incessant, uncountable? The great world was moving round him—people bent on business, people bent on pleasure—wearing themselves out in the feverish life of the great city—in the glitter of lights, the whir and the roar of incessant motion. Greyfriars, far away, was sleeping—and here was Bolsover minor, wide awake, alert, shouting out his latest editions at the top of his voice.

It was amazing!

But he had quickly fallen into the way of it.

He met Tadger presently outside one of the entrances to Charing Cross Station, and they compared notes gleefully.

"All gone?" asked Billy.

"Every one," said Tadger.

"Same 'ere!"

"Good luck!"

"Could do another stroke of business with the theatre crowd when they come out," Tadger suggested. Then he looked closely at Billy. "But you ain't used to it now—you're tired. Let's get 'ome, and we've got to find somewhere to sleep yet."

"Orlright!" said Billy.

"Still got that quid?"

"Yes," said Billy, grinning.

"Keep it dark, then."

The two boys walked away together. Billy was feeling happy and elated. But as they came into a dark turning there was a sudden rush of feet, and the two youngsters were bowled over in an instant. They rolled on the ground, with three or four rough rascals sprawling over them. Billy recognised Smithy of Angel Alley in a momentary glimpse of one of his assailants.

"Look out, Tadger!"

Tadger was struggling fiercely.

The four or five hooligans rolled them over, and kicked them, and in little more than a minute left them and fled.

Tadger sat up

"Ow!"

"Oh!" gasped Billy.

His Etons were not looking very creditable now. They were smothered with mud, and his collar was torn out, and his jacket ripped up the back. His silk hat had been squashed out of all semblance to a hat.

"Nice, ain't it?" groaned Tadger. "That was Smithy's gang. They're up agin me, you know; Smithy says I took 'is pitch, and I never. 'E's a rotter!"

"Ow, the beast!" gasped Billy. "Look at my 'at!"

"Done in!" said Tadger sympathetically.

"I wonder——" Billy jumped up and felt through his pockets excitedly. "Oh, crumbs!"

"Wot's the matter? 'Urt?"

"My quid!"

"Is it gorn!" asked Tadger, in dismay.

"Ow! The rotter!" yelled Billy. "That was wot 'e wanted! 'E must 'ave seen me showin' it to you, Tadger. He's boned my quid!"

"And the bobs?" asked Tadger anxiously.

"Every blessed cent!" said Billy.

"'Ard luck!"

Billy looked round furiously. He had been cleaned out—the sovereign and the shillings he had brought from Greyfriars, and the coppers he had made by selling papers that evening—all were gone.

Tadger had been more lucky. He had threepence left.

"The perlice!" exclaimed Billy.

Tadger stared.

"Wot about the perlice?" he asked.

"I'll git a perliceman to look for 'em——"

"You let the perlice alone!" said Tadger. "They ain't for the likes of us."

Billy calmed down. Tadger's advice was sensible. For the moment he had spoken as if he were still a Greyfriars fellow. But he remembered that he was a newsboy now.

"I s'pose it ain't no good!" he said gloomily.

"Course it ain't!" said Tadger. "Wait till you see Smithy agin, and dot 'im one on 'is kisser. That's orl you can do."

"I s'pose it is."

But Billy could not conceal his dismay. The sovereign had been a kind of nest-egg, and now it was gone. He was "stony," and Tadger was little better off. Threepence was not a large sum to two boys in want of supper and bed.

"They must 'ave been watchin' us," said Billy.

"Not 'arf!"

"Wot are we goin' to do, Tadger?"

"I've got three 'd' left," said Tadger, going through his

rags carefully. "We kin git a penny doss cacn, and a penny fer bread. Wot say?"

Billy was silent. A penny doss had been good enough for him in the old days, but now—after the clean dormitory of Greyfriars—he shivered.

"Cold?" asked Tadger.

"It's getting cold," said Billy.

A light rain was beginning to fall, as if to add to their discomfort. The prospect of a decent lodging had faded away, and the two boys were left with only threepence in the world to depend upon.

"I can raise some tin to-morrow on my clobber," said Billy.

"And your ticker?"

"It's gorn—Smithy's got it."

"Wot rotten luck."

"Well, it can't be helped!" said Billy, as cheerfully as he could. "We oughter kep' our eyes open, Tadger. Gum! It's raining!"

"Nice, ain't it?" groaned Tadger. "Crikey!"

"We got to git under something."

"I know where we can git a doss for a penny," said Tadger.

Billy gulped something down. He had no right to keep Tadger out on a rainy night, because he was too proud for a penny doss. After all, it was very chummy of Tadger to throw his last three d., as he called it, into a common fund for the two.

"Good enough!" said Billy, as heartily as he could. "Where'll we go, Tadger? 'Tain't no use goin' to Mother Molly's—she never dosses you under tuppence."

"Can afford it!" said Tadger. "Look 'ere, we'll 'ave a 'a'penny corfee and a 'a'penny doorstep, and then 'ump it round to old Bricks."

"Good egg!"

Tadger led the way. Under the shelter of a coffee-stall they shared the available penny in coffee and bread. It was a frugal supper, but it cheered them up, and then they made their way to "Old Bricks." It was a hideous building with gaping windows, and a common staircase upon which the dirt of ages had accumulated. Tadger paid down his twopence to a stubbly-bearded man in shirtsleeves, who looked like a retired prizefighter, and they passed into a large, ill-ventilated room. For twopence each they would have been entitled to a kind of rug for sleeping in; for a penny each they had the shelter of the room, and room to lay their tired bodies on bare planks—if there was all. The planks were not quite bare—they were caked with dirt. The stifling atmosphere of the doss-house almost choked Billy as he entered, though Tadger did not seem to mind it.

Billy glanced up and down the room in the dim glimmer of light from an unshaded gas-burner turned low.

The light, such as it was, glimmered on the dirty floor, the dirty walls, the cracked and smoky ceiling, and upon forms stretched on the floor in slumber or conversation.

Low muttering voices came from the gloomy shadows—and here and there the gleam of eyes like those of wild animals in their lair.

"I—I s'pose we couldn't have a winder open!" Billy murmured.

Tadger chuckled softly.

"Yer'd git 'arf-murdered if you tried it!" he replied.

And Billy felt that that was true. The denizens of "Old Bricks" were not lovers of fresh air. The room was stiflingly hot, from so many bodies, and so much breath packed in the narrow space. But there would have been a yell of indignation if anyone had proposed to make an opening in any of the rag-stuffed windows.

"'Ere's a place!" said Tadger comparatively free from lodgers. He stretched himself on the floor, and pillowed his head upon his little bundle. Billy's bundle was gone, along with his money and his watch, in the hands of Smithy & Co. Billy stretched himself down, and rested his head on his arm. The floor had an evil smell—the room was reeking with foul odours. The muttering voices sounded dully in the boy's tired ears.

It was for this he had left Greyfriars.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
How the Poor Live.

BILLY slept—tired youth will sleep anywhere, and under any conditions. The room grew warmer and more crowded. The secluded corner was invaded as the night grew older. A man with a sticking-plaster on his face and crusted blood on his towzled hair, smelling strongly of drink, came and laid down beside Billy, and he woke.

He came out of a dream of Greyfriars—a dream of airy Form-rooms and green cricket-fields. For a moment he fancied himself still at the old school.

"'Tain't rising-bell!" he murmured.

There was a grunt from the man beside him.

"That you, Tubby!"

"Shet yer 'ead!" came a growling voice. "Can't you git to sleep, and let a feller git to sleep, 'ang yer! Shet up!"

The coarse, grumbling voice recalled Billy to himself, and to his surroundings. He sat up dizzily.

The foul atmosphere of the dosshouse stifled him. Tadger was sleeping soundly. In the old ways, the dosshouse had been known to Billy, and there was nothing unfamiliar in the sight that greeted his sleepy eyes. But now it was unspeakably revolting to him.

The gas, burning low, still glimmered upon the recumbent forms. The muttering voices had died away, save in one corner, where two ruffians were talking in low tones. One glance at their brutal faces was sufficient to show that they were talking over some ill deed done, or planning one for the next day. It came to Billy, with a shock, that he had come back, not only to poverty, but to crime. If his old enemy, the Moocher, had not been in prison, he might have met him here.

The drunken man beside him growled.

"Can't yer keep quiet?"

"Sorry!" said Billy.

"Lie down, then, 'ang yer!"

And the ruffian thrust out his boot, and kicked the boy beside him.

"Look 'ere," said Billy; "you let me alone!"

"I'll out yer if yer don't shet up!" said the ruffian, sitting up on the floor, and breathing horrid odours of rum and gin over the sickened lad. "Let me tike orf me belt to yer, and ye'll see!"

"Go and eat coke!"

The ruffian staggered to his feet.

"I'll show yer!" he snarled.

There was a growl from two or three sleepers.

"Shet up there!"

"Lie down!"

The man in shirtsleeves, with the broken nose, who had taken the money at the door, looked into the room.

"Now then," he said; "that you makin' a row, Bill Corker? Do you wanter go out of this on yer neck?"

Bill Corker growled, and laid down again quietly. He was evidently afraid of the big man in shirtsleeves, who indeed could have tossed him out of the room quite easily. The guardian of "Old Bricks" had probably been selected for his size and strength.

Billy laid down also, and tried to sleep.

But it was long before his eyes would close.

Greyfriars was in his mind—Greyfriars, with his clean bed in the clean dormitory, and he shuddered at the contast of the horrible ruffian beside him. A creepy feeling was over his whole skin. The enemies of repose were thick in the dosshouse, and some of them had invaded Billy's clothing. In the cleanliness of Greyfriars he had almost forgotten that such miseries existed. They were brought back to his memory now.

This was what he had to endure for his brother's sake! Was it worth while—was the game worth the candle? Why should he do it?

The questions throbbed in his mind. But his resolution did not falter; he thought of Greyfriars—but as a haven which he had left for ever.

He slept again.

When he awoke once more, it was with a heavy boot stirring him in the ribs, and he looked up with sleepy eyes to see the man in shirtsleeves standing over him. The room was nearly empty, and the guardian of "Old Bricks" was evidently going round the dosshouse waking the last sleepers in this kindly and gentle manner.

"Now then!"

"Orlright!" gasped Billy. "You awake, Tadger?"

Tadger yawned and rose.

"'Ere I am," he said cheerfully.

They rose, and quitted the dosshouse. Outside, in the street, the June sun was shining down; but there were puddles from last night's rain, and the cracked and dirty pavement was reeking. Tadger looked rather queerly at his chum.

"Slept all right?" he asked.

"Pretty good!" said Billy.

"Bit different from Greyfriars?"

"Well, yes!"

"What are we goin' to do for a mouthful, I wonder?" said Tadger.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Let's tork it over!" said Tadger.

They sat down upon the shaft of a waggon backed in a yard near at hand. Tadger did not speak of a morning wash, let alone a bath. There was not even a tap in the yard where a

"sloosh" could be got. That did not trouble Tadger, but it worried Bolsover minor considerably.

"Look 'ere," said Tadger. "You can't stand it!"

"Can't stand what?" asked Billy evasively.

"This 'ere life!" said Tadger positively. "You've got used to other kinder things. I'll bet you're feelin' this minnit that you wanter wash!"

Billy admitted that he was.

"Well, washin' is scarce round 'ere," said Tadger. "Likewise grub. If you was at Greyfriars, you'd 'ave your breakfast all ready. There won't be no breakfast for us, till we've earned it—and that's touch and go, too! We may pick up a few coppers rahnd Covernt Garden, and agin we mayn't! You know that!"

"I s'pose so."

"It's hard lines on you," said Tadger. "I'm used to it; but you've got out of the way of it. Better chuck it up at the start, than go and starve, and chuck it up arter all."

"I shan't never chuck it up!" said Billy quietly.

"You'll 'ave to. Gittin' on badly with your brother ain't so bad as goin' short of grub!" said Tadger practically. "I don't wanter lose you, Billy, I wanter keep you. Things ain't been the same since you left. But I knows wot's good fer you, and I tell you straight. The best thing you can do is to git back to school!"

Billy shook his head.

"But think about it!" urged Tadger. "You've got all you want at Gr'yfriars, and 'ere you'll 'ave to chance it fer every meal. It ain't good enough, Billy; and you've got outter the way of it, too. You can't stick it!"

"I can stick it, Tadger, and I'm going to!" said Billy sturdily. "You don't savvy. It ain't because I don't git on with Percy zactly—but Percy don't want me there!"

Tadger stared.

"S'pose he don't," he said; "wot about it? He can't prevent you bein' there, can 'e?"

"No; but I got out to leave him there without me!"

"You don't mean to sye you come back to this fer 'is sake!" asked Tadger, in boundless astonishment.

Billy nodded.

"Oh, you're orf your chump, that's wot you are!" said Tadger, in exasperation. "You ought to go back, and I tell you straight!"

"I'm not going back!"

"Not never!"

"Never!"

"Well, you knows your own bizness best, I s'pose?" said Tadger, giving it up. "Blessed if I know wot you're doin' it for. If I 'ad a brother like that, I'd smash 'im on the smeller. I know I would! However, if you're goin' to stick 'ere, instead of doin' the sensible thing, the sooner we see about gittin' sometnin' to eat, the quicker!"

"I'm ready!" said Billy cheerfully. "Look 'ere, let's go to Moses and git something for my clobber!"

"That's all right!"

They soon found themselves at the establishment of Mr. Moses. That gentleman glanced over Bolsover minor's clothes, and graciously offered him three shillings for them, still more graciously throwing in, as a kind of makeweight, the offer of a suit of rags that hung in a corner of his shop. Mr. Moses was likely to make considerably more than ten per cent. by the transaction, but Billy was in no position to bargain. He changed into the rags, and took the three shillings, and the two boys quitted the stuffy little shop.

"Three bob!" said Tadger enthusiastically. "Why, that's prime! Look 'ere, we'll 'ave a slap-up breakfast, and spend a bob on it, and then go out and look for a job!"

And they did.

And so the arab existence began again for Billy, and he fell into the way of it more and more, until, as day followed day, Greyfriars seemed more and more like a distant dream, and the rush and the whirl of the great city about him the only reality. And ere long, if his mode of life continued, it was certain that the last trace of Bolsover minor of Greyfriars would vanish, and only Billy, the newsboy, would remain.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
Bob Cherry's Idea.

BOB CHERRY uttered a sudden exclamation in the Form-room at Greyfriars, nearly a week after the departure of Bolsover minor.

"I've got it!"

The Remove were grinding Latin. But several of them were thinking more of the missing fag than of the noble tongue of Virgil and Cicero.

Bob Cherry was one of them. Harry Wharton & Co. seldom ceased to think of poor little Billy, thrown upon his own resources in the wide world. They had talked the subject over in the study many a time, wondering what they could do to aid the search that was being made. That search had continued unremittingly, but without success.

Mr. Bolsover did not give up hope, though his son despaired. And in these days Bolsover major looked so white and troubled that even the fags of the Third had ceased to worry him. They realised that remorse was punishing the bully of the Remove far more than any ragging on their part could possibly do. Paget was even heard to mutter that he was sorry for the poor beast, to repeat Paget's elegant expression.

Mr. Quelch looked sharply at Bob Cherry as he spoke. Bob had evidently not been thinking of the Latin; he had not got that, even the rudiments of it.

"Cherry!"

Bob coloured crimson.

"Ye-e-s, sir?"

"Will you kindly explain what you were alluding to?"

"I—I—I was thinking——" stammered Bob.

"I am glad to see that you were indulging in that decidedly necessary, if somewhat unusual exercise!" said Mr. Quelch, with ponderous sarcasm.

There was a chuckle from the Remove.

When Mr. Quelch condescended to make a little joke, the Remove chuckled dutifully, as in judicial proceedings "laughter in court" always follows the feebly-humorous efforts of the learned judge.

"I—I," said Bob. "I was thinking of a way to find Bolsover minor, sir!"

"Oh, indeed! In that case, I will excuse you. But kindly remember, Cherry, that the Form-room is a place for work, and not for thinking of extraneous subjects!"

"Certainly, sir!"

And Bob Cherry kindly remembered it for the rest of the afternoon.

But when the Remove were dismissed, Bob Cherry clutched Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent eagerly in the passage.

"I've got an idea!" he said.

"Whose?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, don't be funny! Look here— Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bolsover!"

Bolsover major had come up eagerly. His troubled face was brighter.

"Did you mean what you said to old Quelch in the Form-room, Cherry?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"You've thought of a way of finding my brother?"

"Yes."

"Tell me what it is!"

"Listen, then, my children!" said Bob Cherry. "You know when we first met Bolsover minor—before we discovered that he was Bolsover's brother—he was earning his living selling papers in the streets?"

"I remember," said Bolsover.

And his face contracted with the painful memory of the fact that he had bullied the unknown newsboy, not knowing that he was his father's son.

"Well," said Bob, "it's pretty certain that he will go back to the same trade. He doesn't know any other."

"Quite certain," said Frank.

"If he takes up selling papers in London, it stands to reason that he'll sell them outside the stations. There's a good trade done there by newsboys, and he was used to it, too. We first met him outside Charing Cross Station."

"Quite so!" assented Wharton. "But——"

"Well, that's where he's got to be looked for," said Bob Cherry triumphantly. "If we could get permission from the Head to hang outside the London stations and watch for him, we'd spot him sooner or later."

"But the police and half a dozen private detectives are looking for him," said Harry Wharton. "They must have thought of all this, Bob."

"The thoughtfulness of the esteemed police is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a nod of his dusky head.

"Only we've got more sense than the police!" Bob Cherry explained. "Of course, it would be no good explaining that to a policeman."

"Ha, ha! I should say not!"

"But it's a fact, all the same. Besides, we know Bolsover minor by sight, and they don't. They've got a photograph of him as he was at Greyfriars—in Etons, clean and tidy. But it stands to reason that he must have shed his Etons long ago. He will be in his old rags, or other rags like them, and his hair will be rough, and his face most likely dirty, and, as a matter of fact, he won't look in the least like his photo."

"True enough," said Bolsover heavily. "The photograph the police have got isn't much good to them, I expect."

"But we knew him before he became a Greyfriars chap,"

went on Bob Cherry. "We know just how he would look in tatters, and we should spot him at once."

"Something in that," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"Lots in it, my boy. Besides, we're agreed that Billy will have gone back to Tadger. Now, we know Tadger by sight, and the detectives don't. If we could spot Tadger, Bolsover minor wouldn't be far away. But the detectives have no chance at all of spotting Tadger; they don't know him from Adam or Christopher Columbus!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "There's something in it; and if the Head would let us try, we might do something."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. They were all very keen to help in finding Bolsover minor. And they could not deny that the prospect of a run up to London for a few days appealed to them very much.

"Suppose we put it to the Head?" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, it wouldn't do any harm."

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "You said your pater was coming down to-day, Bolsover?"

Bolsover nodded.

"Sure, and why not put it to him, then, and get him to spake to the Head for us, intirely?" said Micky Desmond, with true Irish shrewdness. "He're more likely to get permission if Mr. Bolsover asked the Head."

"Good egg!" chorused the juniors.

And they waited eagerly for the arrival of Mr. Bolsover. The old gentleman had been down to Greyfriars several times during the past week, to see his son, and tell him of the progress of the search. So far, he had failed to bring good news. But it was a comfort to him to see the intense eagerness with which his elder son looked for tidings. It was an unfailing assurance to him that, if Billy were found, there would never again be any bitterness between him and his brother. And that was something.

Harry Wharton & Co. waited at the school gates for the arrival of Bolsover's father. When the old gentleman appeared, Bolsover ran up to him.

"Father! Any news?"

Mr. Bolsover shook his head sadly.

"None," he said.

"Oh, dad!"

"But we have not lost hope, Percy," said the old gentleman steadily. "The search, at all events, will never cease till Hubert is found!"

"But haven't they discovered anything, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes. Hubert's movements in London have been traced. It is certain that he returned to Angel Alley, and that he left it in company with a boy named Tadger—the same who visited him here. His watch has been found—it was pawned by a young ruffian named Smith, who confesses that he stole it. But he can give no information about Hubert, save that he was in company with Tadger at the time. That was nearly a week ago, and nothing has been learned of Hubert since."

"Then it's time we got to work!" said Bob Cherry. "We've got an idea, sir."

And he explained.

Mr. Bolsover smiled dubiously.

"I don't know that it would be any use," he said. "But certainly it is a chance. I think the police would be able to identify Hubert if they came in contact with him, but Tadger they do not know; and if you found him——"

"Then we should find Billy, sir."

"It is a chance," said Mr. Bolsover musingly. "If the Head would give you permission to leave school in my care for a few days—he might——"

"We thought that you might ask him, sir, intirely," suggested Micky Desmond.

"I will do so."

"Hurray!"

Mr. Bolsover went into the School House. The juniors waited anxiously in the passage while he was with the Head. Ten minutes later they were called into the Head's study. Dr. Locke was very grave.

"Mr. Bolsover thinks that you boys may be of assistance to him in finding Hubert Bolsover, perhaps, by recognising the boy Tadger," he said. "The chance appears to me very slight, but I am unwilling to leave a stone unturned in searching for the unfortunate lad. I give you permission to accompany Mr. Bolsover to London."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said the juniors all together.

"Not at all. You will be in Mr. Bolsover's charge. I only hope that you may be of some assistance to him."

And the juniors left the Head's study to prepare for the journey. It did not take them long to pack their bags. When the next train started from Friardale Station Harry Wharton & Co. were in a carriage with Mr. Bolsover and his son en route for London to search for Bolsover minor.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
Hard Lines.

COUGH!
Crash!
Cough!
Crash—crash!

So it had gone on for hours.

It was a bare and dirty garret in a squalid building. High over a narrow, mean street the tattered and crazy building reared its hideous front. A dozen flights of filthy steps led to the garret under the roof, where the rain came in in pools when the weather was wet, and where the heat of the sun was terrible in the summer afternoons. The garret was furnished with a rusty iron bedstead, with a ragged coverlet, and a stool. The bare boards of the floor were caked with dirt. Wretched and mean as the garret was, the rent of it was half-a-crown a week, which had to be paid "on the nail," as Tadger put it, or it meant the order of the push.

Billy lay upon the rickety bed with the single coverlet over him, his white face glimmering in the light of the tallow candle. Tadger sat beside his bed upon the stool, his back propped against the wall. Tadger dozed off to sleep every few minutes till the cough of the boy on the bed woke him again. It was a warm, close night; there had been rain, and water was dripping through the crazy roof, and yet the heat was intense. Not a breath of air stirred in the foul street below.

The garret was small—it had once been larger, but a thin wooden partition had been run up, changing it into two apartments. Sounds could be heard with great clearness through the thin wall, and every cough that Billy gave on his bed was heard in the adjoining room, and then came the thump, thump on the wall of the lodger who was trying to go to sleep, and who was awakened by the cough.

Billy had been in bed all day. He was ill—more ill than he knew, or Tadger knew. One night, when the two boys were penniless, they had slept under a stone arch by a railway, with the rain dropping round them, shivering, hugging together for warmth. In the morning Billy had a bad cold, and a cough followed the cold. The whole of the succeeding day had been spent without food. In the evening Tadger rejoined his chum, and showed him half-a-crown. Billy never knew where he had obtained it—he was too ill to ask. But out of the half-crown Tadger paid half a week's rent on the garret in Tadger's Rents and obtained food and drink for his sick pal. But Billy could eat little of the hard, coarse fare, though he drank greedily. His cough had become worse, and he tossed half unconsciously on the hard bed, sleeping in snatches, mumbling in his sleep, and waking to cough.

Tadger's weary eyes blinked open again. It was three o'clock in the morning. From the adjoining room came the crash on the wall again, and a rough voice followed it.

"Shet up! Can't you let a feller sleep?"

"Shet up yourself!" shouted Tadger. "My pal's sick."

"Can't 'e go to a 'orspital, then? Let a feller sleep!"

Billy groaned.

"I can't 'elp coughin', Tadger, ole man," he said, in a whisper; "but I'll try. I say, ole pal, this is rough on you."

"Oh, I'm orl right," said Tadger.

"You ain't gettin' no sleep."

"Oh, I'm sleepin' in winks," said Tadger.

Billy coughed again.

Crash!

The flimsy partition shook under the savage blow from the other side.

"Will you shet up that row?" roared the disturbed lodger.

Cough!

Thump, thump!

So it went on through the night.

Morning, grey and grim, dawned in at the little cracked, curtainless window. Billy turned restlessly upon the wretched couch.

"You oughter 'ave a doctor," said Tadger uneasily, as he rose and rubbed his bleared eyes.

Billy grinned, and then coughed.

"Can't afford luxuries like that," he remarked.

"Wot about a 'orspital?" asked Tadger dubiously.

"No fear!"

Tadger did not urge his pal. He shared the strange horror of hospitals which is so universal among the very poor.

"It's orlright," said Billy; "I'm gittin' better. Wot 'ave you got fer breakfast?"

"Arf a 'addock," said Tadger, "and some bread."

"'Arves, then," said Billy.

"Oh, I ain't 'ungry," said Tadger indifferently.

"Don't tell whoppers!" said Billy. "'Arves, or I won't take nothin'."

Tadger grinned.

"Right-ho!" he said.

They shared the frugal meal. Tadger's financial resources were exhausted. He looked from the cracked window into the dim, grey street. Far away on green countrysides the sun of June was shining down in glory. In the narrow, mean street in the heart of the great city scarcely a glimpse of it was to be seen. Smoke hid the heavens from view, and roofs climbed to the sky and shut out the sunlight.

"I'll 'ave to leave yer a bit, Billy," said Tadger hesitatingly. "I've got to look for a copper or two."

"That's all right, Tadger."

Tadger sat down on the edge of the bed and looked seriously at Billy.

"Billy, old pal," he said, "let me tork sense to yer. This 'ere can't go on. You ain't fit to stand it as I am, Billy. Fellers who live this kind of life 'ave to be 'ard. Lots of 'em die, anyway. I'm 'ardened to it. You've growed soft at school. You can't toe the line, covey. Let me write to your people."

Billy shook his head.

"I ain't got a stamp," said Tadger, "but they'd pay tuppence on it at Gr'yfriars. I'd write a line to Master Wharton——"

"No, Tadger."

"Look 'ere, Billy, you're ill!"

"I ain't very ill."

"You might be wery ill without knowin' it," said Tadger sagely. "You remember young Pegs—the kid with the wooden leg—who uester 'ang about Angel Row? Young Pegs caught a cold one night selin' matches outside the theayters; then he was a deader the day arter. You knew him."

Billy laughed.

"I shan't be a deader, Tadger."

"Let me write to 'em, Billy."

"No, I tell you! That's done with!"

"P'r'aps your brother is sorry 'e drove you out now," suggested Tadger. "You never know. Chaps are queer like that. He might want to 'ave you back."

"You don't know him," said Billy.

"If he's such a beast, then, why don't you go back and let 'im 'ave it 'ot?"

"I'm not going back."

"You're a hobstinate cove, Billy. There ain't no doin' nothin' for yer," said Tadger. "I think I oughter write."

"You'll 'ave to row with me if you do, Tadger."

"Spose you was wery bad, Billy, and they took you away to a 'orspital?"

"I'd stand it."

"Oh, you're a chump, Billy! But I s'pose you've got to 'ave your way."

And Tadger, with a glum face, quitted the garret, and Billy heard his clumsy boots rattling and clumping down the stairs.

The sick boy lay upon the wretched bed, breathing hard. His face was white, save where an unhealthy flush glowed in either cheek. His look was strangely pinched. A strangely hollow look had come about his eyes.

"Young Pegs was a deader!" he murmured. "Well, if I was a deader Percy wouldn't be bothered with me no more, and I dessay he'd be glad. I don't care if I was to be a deader."

Weakness from illness and hunger had plunged the boy into gloomy despondency. It was true, as Tadger said, that he was not fitted to face the life he had chosen. Even the short time he had spent at Greyfriars had unfitted him for it. And he had never been so hardy as the tough Tadger. Tadger had come through nights of wet and days of hunger and was the same, but Billy had been knocked over by it. Hunger was gnawing at him now as he lay there, his dull eyes fixed upon the grey, dirty patch of window.

It seemed hours and hours that Tadger was gone. He came in at last, and sank wearily upon the stool. Billy looked at him.

"No luck!" said Tadger, with an assumption of carelessness. Billy muttered:

"I'm goin' to try agin." said Tadger. "I know I can git the pipers, and I shall make something out of them, Billy. 'Eaven bless the evening pipers! If it wasn't for them, I dunno 'ow the likes of me would live."

"I'm a rotten trouble to you, Tadger, old man," said Billy miserably. "You'd git on better without me. I'm beginning to wish I was a deader like young Pegs."

"'Ere, don't you talk that rot!" exclaimed Tadger in alarm. "You're good enough for me, Billy, and you keeps me straight, old man. I 'ad a chance at a purse this morning."

"Tadger!"

"I didn't touch it," said Tadger. "I knew wot you would 'ave said, Billy. I ain't never done it, but jest now I feel like——" He broke off.

"Don't you never do it, Tadger!" exclaimed Billy, in great anxiety. "Better anything than that, Tadger—an orspital, or anything. Don't you think of it!"

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Tadger nodded.

"I ain't going to," he said. "Don't you worrit, Billy. Think you can 'old out while I get out with the 'Six o'clock News.'!"

"I'll 'ave to," said Billy.

"I'll git back as soon as I can," said Tadger.

Billy was alone again. Dusk was falling on the great city—lights gleamed in the streets—from afar came the never-ceasing roar of traffic to the ears of the sick boy. He lay in the gathering darkness and dozed and woke to cough, and dozed again. Hunger gnawed him, till he was too faint and weary even to feel hunger!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.
Back at Greyfriars.

"LATEST edition!"

"'Evening News'!"

The roar of London was in the ears of Harry Wharton & Co. The juniors stood in a group outside the great station, watching the ceaseless stream of traffic. Every cry of a newsboy, announcing the "Evening News" or the "Star," made them turn to look. But now that they were actually engaged upon their task, they began to realise the almost hopelessness of it.

Bob Cherry's idea had sounded very well when they discussed it at Greyfriars. In the great wilderness of London they realised what a very slender chance it was. Yet it was a chance, if a slender one, and the juniors entered upon the task with hope and resolution.

They had now been staying two days in a London hotel with Mr. Bolsover, and they had not lost a minute of their time. It was not a question of sight-seeing. Every moment was devoted to the task of looking for Bolsover minor.

Bob Cherry was the most hopeful of all. He usually was.

"It's a jolly good wheeze, though it hasn't worked so far," he said, as they stood outside the station, jostled by passing pedestrians. "This is where we first saw Billy, and if he was selling papers here before, why shouldn't he again? He must have had some reason. I dare say this is a specially good pitch."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Or Tadger," he said. "If we see Tadger, it's just as good, as we know they're together."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

Bolsover did not speak. He was scanning the faces in the never-ceasing throng as if every fresh face might be that of his brother.

"Latest 'News'!"

Whenever a newsboy's cry rang out, it raised hope in their hearts—hope that was to be dashed to the ground again.

But suddenly Harry Wharton started, and pushed his way through a crowd towards one of the station exits. It seemed to him that there was a familiar tone to his ears in a voice that was shouting.

"Extry Special! All the winners! 'Ere you are, sir, extra-special!"

"Tadger!"

Wharton caught sight of the boy. He had a bundle of papers under his left arm, and one in his right hand, which he was offering in vain to the passers-by. There seemed no demand for papers that evening. Tadger it was, and his face was white and pinched, and it was only too plain to an observer that much depended for him upon selling his papers. But the heedless crowd did not know or care.

"Extry Special!" called Tadger, and there was almost a sob in his voice as he thought of his sick chum waiting, hungry, in the garret in Blodgers' Rents. "Latest edition!"

"Tadger!"

Tadger swung round at Harry Wharton's voice.

For a moment he stood transfixed at the sight of the Greyfriars junior.

Then flight entered his mind, and he turned; but before he could go, Wharton's muscular grip was on his shoulder.

"Hold on, Tadger!"

"Master Wharton——"

"What are you running away for?"

"I—I—I'm in a hurry," stammered Tadger feebly.

"Stop where you are."

"I got my papers to sell, Master Wharton," said Tadger. "I got to get rid of 'em or I don't get no supper."

The other juniors had come up by this time, and Tadger was surrounded, and his escape was quite cut off. He realised it, and did not make any effort to go. He guessed that the Greyfriars fellows were in search of his pal Billy, and it was his loyalty to Billy that had made him attempt to flee.

"Never mind the papers," said Harry Wharton. "We'll take the lot, for that matter. Look here, Tadger, we want you."

"Yes, Master Wharton."

Bolsover grasped the newsboy by the shoulder.

"Where is my brother?" he asked huskily.

Tadger gave him a quick look of bitter dislike.

"Wot do you want 'im for?" he asked savagely. "Goin' to lick 'im, you brute?"

Bolsover winced.

"I want to take him back, Tadger," he said. "I want to treat him well. It was my fault he bolted from school, and I want to make it up to him.

Tadger looked incredulous.

"I don't believe you," he said frankly. "You want to go for Billy, and I ain't tellin' you nothin' about it."

"It's all right, Tadger," said Bob Cherry. "You don't think we should be helping Bolsover look for his brother, if he meant to bully him, do you?"

"I—I s'pose not," said Bob.

"We want to find Bolsover minor, to look after him, and take him back to school. He's not going to be punished. The Head said so. We know that he was with you, Tadger. The detectives discovered that much. Is he with you still?"

Tadger hesitated.

"Come, you've got to tell us," said Frank Nugent.

"He is with me at 'ome," said Tadger.

"Why isn't he out with you?"

"He's ill."

Bolsover major caught his breath.

"Ill?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tadger shortly. He could not get over his dislike of Bolsover major all at once.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Bolsover anxiously.

"Wet and 'ungry," said Tadger coldly. "Same as most pore people suffer from, I reckon. He's kep' awake by a corf, and he's got nothing to eat."

Bolsover shuddered.

"And that's what I've done—to my brother," he muttered. "Oh, Heaven! Tadger, take me to him at once, do you hear?"

"I ain't doin' it!" said Tadger sturdily.

"You must!" said Harry Wharton. "Look here, Tadger, you can see that we all mean well to Billy, even his brother. If Billy knew that his brother wanted to find him, he'd be only too glad to be found."

"Yes, I s'pose that's so," admitted Tadger.

"Then show us where he is."

"Orlright," said Tadger, after some hesitation. "You come along o' me."

And Tadger led the way. They crossed the Strand, and after that Tadger was the guide, and the juniors knew not whither they were going. But they followed Tadger without hesitation. Mr. Bolsover was at his hotel, and they were eager to take Billy back with them to the old gentleman, or, at least, news of him. Bolsover touched Tadger on the arm as they hurried on, and the little waif looked round.

"Didn't you say Billy was hungry?" asked Bolsover, in a low voice.

Tadger nodded.

"He hasn't anything to eat?"

"Nuffin."

"Let us take something in, then."

"Got the dibs?"

"The what?"

"The dibs."

"Oh, the money! Yes, plenty."

"Stop 'ere, then," said Tadger.

He took five shillings from Bolsover's hand, and plunged into a shop. He came out in a few minutes with a bundle.

"That's orlright," he said. "Billy will be pleased. We ain't far orf Blodgers' Rents now."

They stopped in the ill-lighted, mean street at last, in the common doorway of the crazy building. Late as the hour was, little children were playing there, or fighting, as the humour seized them. Tadger led the way into the house, and up the murky staircase, passing floor after floor, where raucous voices could be heard, and strange smells of cooking smelt.

"Is my brother here?" Bolsover muttered.

"Yes—top floor."

"Poor Hubert!"

Tadger did not reply. He tramped on up the stairs, and the juniors followed him, saddened and sickened by what they saw and heard. From one room they passed there came a sound of crashing crockery, a woman's scream, and a man's voice raised in fury. From another proceeded the incessant wailing of an uncared-for child. Laughter rang from other rooms, showing that all the inhabitants of Blodgers' Rents were not depressed by their surroundings.

Tadger, out of breath, stopped and gasped on a narrow landing at the top of the house. A skylight encrusted with dirt shed a little light there in the daytime, but now all was black.

"Careful!" said Tadger, in the darkness. "'Ere's the last step, and don't fall through the final. It'll go. Come careful."

There was no need to tell the Greyfriars juniors to be careful. They were picking their way with the greatest caution in the deep darkness, up the steep and shaky staircase. Tadger opened a door, and there was a faint gleam of light. It came through the window from the street, for there was no light in the room.

"That you, Tadger?" came Billy's faint voice from the gloom.

"Me orlright, Billy."

"Ad any luck?"

"Eaps!"

"Oh, good! You got some grub?"

"Yes, 'eaps!"

"Good egg! I'm awful 'ungry, Tadger."

"I know you are, old sonny," said Tadger, "and I've got the stuff 'ere. Wait a bit till I light a candle!"

"There's somebody with you?" muttered Billy, peering into the darkness with feverish eyes. "Who's there?"

Bolsover major, unable to control himself any longer, stumbled forward towards the dim outline of the bed.

"Hubert!" he exclaimed.

"That you, Percy?"

"Yes, Hubert."

"Wot do you want 'ere?" said Billy resentfully. "Wot are you huntin' for me for? I got out of Greyfriars, same as you wanted, and wasn't that enough for you? Why can't you let me alone 'ere?"

"Hubert, old man——"

"I ain't doin' you no 'arm," said Billy. "I ain't disgracin' you 'ere, am I? Wot you follerin' me for?"

"Hubert, old man, I'm going to take you back to Greyfriars!" Bolsover groped for his brother's hand in the darkness, and found it, and held it in his own. "Billy kid, I've been a beast to you. But I'm sorry! Give me another chance. Come back to Greyfriars, and I swear you'll find me different! I mean it, Billy. I've been a rotter to you. But that's all over now, if you'll come back."

"You mean that, Percy?"

"Every word, Billy."

"You—you ain't foolin' me!" said Billy, in a faltering voice. "Percy, you mean it?"

"Honour bright!"

"You'll come back, kid," said Bob Cherry. "Your father's at the hotel, waiting for you. You don't know how cut up he's been over this. You've got to come back, Billy, and we'll kill the fatted calf for you."

"Yes, rather," said Harry Wharton & Co., with one voice. "You're verry good to me," muttered Billy. "If Percy wants me to come back——"

"I do—I do, Billy. I want you to come."

"I'll come, then," said Billy. "But—but Tadger? I can't leave Tadger 'ere. 'E's been a good pal to me."

"Father will do something for Tadger," said Bolsover. "If he's helped you, Billy, he shall be helped, too."

A candle flickered up, and showed up the bare garret, the cracked and dirty window, the mean and dirty bed. The juniors could not help shuddering as they saw it all. Bolsover groaned aloud. This was what he had driven his brother to! Billy looked at him, and saw the tears wet upon his brother's cheeks. He wondered. But it brought happiness to his troubled heart.

"Don't you worry, Percy," he whispered. "It's orlright now! I'm coming back, if you want me, old man."

* * * * *

The missing fag had been found, and ere long his father was with him, and a couple of days later Bolsover minor reappeared at Greyfriars. But Tadger was not deserted.

Tadger, who had been Bolsover minor's great pal in the time of distress, was not left in the garret at Blodgers' Rents, or the hovels of Angel Alley. Mr. Bolsover took charge of the boy, and Tadger had an opportunity of becoming apprenticed to a good trade, an opportunity that Tadger jumped at. And so Tadger's future was assured. He was sure, too, of meeting his old chum Billy on many occasions, for neither wished to lose sight of the other.

It was a great day at Greyfriars when Bolsover minor was brought back. Dr. Locke had forgiven the fag for his bolt from the school. He felt that the little waif's motives excused him, and surely, too, he had suffered enough? All the Third Form turned out to welcome Bolsover minor when he came back, and most of the other juniors, and many of the seniors. It was easy to see how popular the little fellow was.

The fags rushed upon Billy, and bore him off to the Third Form-room for a grand celebration, a celebration which left them very sticky and jammy and happy. Which was a very happy sequel to Bolsover minor's bolt from Greyfriars!

(Next week's grand long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars is entitled "THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!" by FRANK RICHARDS. Order a copy of next week's "MAGNET" in advance—Price 1d.)

TWICE·ROUND·THE·GLOBE!

THE STORY·OF·THE GREAT MAN-HUNT

BY **SIDNEY DREW**

Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.

Prince Ching-Lung, Adventurer, Conjurer and Ventriloquist.

Nathan Gore, Jewel collector, and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST WEEK'S CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started especially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder" was to be put up for auction, and now it seemed that this thick fog which had suddenly fallen over the Channel was to spoil everything. For the great sale was to take place at midday, and already the captain had told Nathan Gore that it would be impossible to reach Southampton before that time. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and, as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" presently asked the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?"

The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart; a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord.—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and win back my diamond." "But the hunt will be so tame," said Thurston, when he is told of the proposal. "That remains to be seen," replied Lord. "Have I ever disappointed you?"

(Now go on with this instalment.)

A Man Hunt.

"And I will not disappoint you now," Ferrers Lord added, looking at his watch again. "Nathan Gore has three minutes' more law, and then the hunt will begin. Prout and Maddock left for York at a quarter-past five. They will be aboard the Lord of the Deep about midday. We have to discover now whether the mad millionaire left for the Continent by any of the early boats. He could not have reached Liverpool or Southampton, but he may have got to Dover by special. Of course, he may be in London."

He rose, and, crossing to a side-table, began to fill up telegraph-forms. He handed them to a servant.

"Amuse yourself until I get the replies," he said; "but don't go far away. Now, Honour, to work again."

He vanished with the engineer into the mysterious work-shop. Rupert and Ching-Lung went to the billiard-room.

"This is a queer go, Ru," said Ching-Lung.

"It's a caution, Ching. I can't make head or tail of it. Lord seems to think the chap a terror."

"And I expect he knows," answered the prince thoughtfully. "The dear old chap never makes a mistake. Still, it's what vulgar people would call a knock-out. I should have the police on the blackguard, and be done with it. Just whistle down for Barry to mark for us."

Rupert pressed the button of the electric bell, and told the footman to send up Mr. O'Rooney. The servant came back.

"Mr. O'Rooney is in bed, sir."

"The lazy rascal," said Rupert. "Is he ill?"

"No, sir. He's waiting for his clothes to dry," said the servant.

"How did he get wet?"

"The Eskimo gentleman went mad, sir, and then——"

"What? Gan-Waga mad?" gasped Rupert.

"Yes, sir; and—— Ooh! Help!"

The servant hurled himself under the ottoman, and flinging himself upon the same piece of furniture, Ching-Lung laughed wildly. In the doorway stood Gan-Waga. He had cut away most of the hat, but much of it still clung to his head like a ragged black crown. Gan looked the picture of misery.

"You freak," said Rupert. "What are you doing with that halo, Gan?"

"Not come off," moaned Gan. "Him stucked. Bad 'nough awful. Stick dere for ebberlasting. What I going to do? Nebber come off no morerer. Him glueded dere. Do pig he laugh at me."

Gan shook his fist madly at the frightened footman, who was on hands and knees under the ottoman.

"Oh, I didn't, please," wailed the footman. "I wasn't larfin. I swear I wasn't, sir!"

"Yo' wases!" yelled Gan, seizing a cue. "I give yo' laugh at misfortuning gentleman, yo' ole yaller legses. I jab de laugh parts out ob yo'! Take dat and dat!"

Gan-Waga's fur had been ruffled the wrong way. He poked at the horrified footman with the cue, and every poke elicited a yell. Rupert, fancying the hot weather had upset Gan's reason, made a spring to drag him back. The mat rose, so to speak, on its hind legs, and Rupert was flung upon the ottoman, which Ching-Lung vacated just in time to avoid being flattened.

The footman emerged on the other side, and fled as if pursued by a swarm of hornets. Gan chased him upstairs. The footman bolted into the first bed-room he came to, locked the door, and, throwing up the window, howled for help.

Gan turned back. There was an open door close at hand. His wrath vanished at the sight of a long marble bath and a row of polished taps. Gan rolled into that bath, with a sigh of perfect peace, and turned on the cold water. He lay down, and took a cigar and a matchbox from his pocket. Lighting the cigar, he folded his arms and closed his eyes. The gushing water rose higher and higher, and Gan floated in its cool, refreshing embrace. The delicious splashing lulled him. He rocked to and fro, forgetting all his troubles, and fell asleep. Even when wrapped in slumber he continued to smoke, and as the bath filled the cigar dwindled.

Immediately below him was the butler's private room. In the ordinary run of things the chief servant of a millionaire ought to possess a nice room, and this was a very nice room indeed. Mr. Lamper was the butler's name, and he was a good servant. Ferrers Lord troubled little about his household affairs, for he was seldom at home. He left his solicitors to examine Mr. Lamper's account, and to pay the bills. Had he been told that he was being robbed he would only have laughed, and said that probably his butler robbed him far less than another might. It mattered nothing to Ferrers Lord, and certainly considering his advantages for lining his pockets, the butler was most honest.

Mr. Lamper had summoned a meeting of the servants. There were five footmen present, several grooms, and three coachmen. The meeting was to protest against the presence of Gan-Waga in the house. Mr. Lamper was in the chair, and several bottles of rich port wine had been opened. They were all smoking shilling cigars, and very indignant.

"Gentlemen," said the butler, "I suppose you all know why I've invited you 'ere."

"We does," said several voices.

"Then I won't bother to make no speech. I simply wants your opinions. I calls on Mr. George Niggs."

A thin and husky-voiced footman rose amid hushed applause, for Mr. Niggs was supposed to be something of an orator. He blew his nose on a red handkerchief, cleared his throat, and took a sip of port.

"Mr. Cheerman and gentlemen," he began, "you 'ave give me the honour to first haddress you on a question that involves our rights and liberties. We have been houtraged, our tenderest feelings have been houtraged, our rights have been houtraged. I don't say we ain't got a good master. I don't deny we've got a soft job. That there would be a lie. (Hear, hear!) Still, that ain't the p'int. No master has no reason to bring wild, yellin', screaming savages into this 'ere 'ouse to send a thrill of fear even into our manly bosoms, and to send the ladies of the establishment into faints and hysterics. (No, no! Hear, hear!) I calls it tyranny. We are in terror of our lives."

Mr. Niggs grew so husky that he was compelled to refresh himself.

"What is more," he went on, gazing round him, "there may be wuss to come. How do we know, gentlemen, what 'orrid, blood-curdling deed might he wrought at dead of night, when graveyards yawn, and—what is it?—give up their dead? A stab in the dark—a groan—a corpse!" (The audience paled and shuddered). "A corpse, I say! And then an awful meal of human flesh, for Eskimos is cannibals and man-eaters. The fattest gent will be his pick."

"Oh, lor'!" groaned the butler, shivering like a leaf (for he was the stoutest amongst them). "Oh, lor'!—oh, lor'!"

Mr. Niggs's fearful picture was too awful for contemplation. They gazed at him in silent horror.

"Therefore," continued the thin footman, "action swift and sure must be took. I proposes an ultimatum. The meaning of an ultimatum is a final decision—a thing you won't go back on, a last word kind of thing when you've made up your mind. I have drawed up the follering for your happroval and signatures."

He took a greasy paper from his pocket, and read as follows:

"'To Ferrers Lord, Esq.—Honoured and respected Sir,—We, the servants of your London establishment, while deeply thanking you humbly for all past favours and kindnesses, deeply regret that something has arisen which has caused

us much anxiety and mental and bodily suffering.' How's that?"

"Prime!" said a stout coachman. "Move on!"

"'We resents the presence in our midst of a savage Eskimo——'"

"Sure you've spelt 'Eskimo' right?" interrupted the coachman.

Mr. Niggs threw a glance of withering scorn at him, and resumed:

"'We are in terror of our lives and limbs. He has on various occasions attempted to murder us in cold blood. He attacked us to-day with a hatchet——'"

"I thought it was a mop," said the coachman.

"Gents," said Mr. Niggs, "I won't proceed if I'm to be browbeated by that ignorant man."

Up jumped the coachman, and off came his coat in a twinkling.

"Oh, I'm ignorant, am I?" he said, turning up his shirt-sleeves. "I'll browbeat yer face into calves'-foot jelly, you lantern-jawed skeleting. Come on, and I'll show you!"

"Order—order!"

"Come on!" roared the coachman, squaring his fists.

Mr. Niggs turned ghastly white. He was not a fighting man. There was an uproar. Mr. Niggs apologised, and peace was restored by the apology. Mr. Niggs said the coachman was the finest gentleman in the world, and the coachman declared that if he could find a better fellow than Niggs he'd eat the biggest horse in the stables, and swallow a set of harness to keep it down.

"Gents," said the speaker, "the ultimatum winds up in a poetical fashion. There's nothing like poetry. I can't say that the idea was my own. It came from our respected friend, Mr. O'Rooney, and from his pen. This is it, and very fine it is:

"'Oh, kind sir, this is our ultimatum:
We loathe Gan-Waga, and we hate 'um;
We are in terror of our lives
From pistol-shot and keen-edged knives.
Pray let him go, or we must leave you;
'Twill grieve us much, and maybe grieve you.
Our hearts are sad to think that we
Should ever want to part from thee.
We've served you well, and e'en the ocean
Can never drown our deep devotion.
Oh, send——'"

The poem came to a startling and unexpected end. It came to an end about a second, or perhaps less, after Gan-Waga's cigar did. Gan had left the tap running, but the overflow ran out through the waste-pipe, and kept the bath at its level. There was no waste-pipe to the cigar. In his sleep Gan had smoked it down to the bitter end.

It was a very bitter end, and a very hot one. It burned Gan-Waga's lip, and he bounded up with a yell of agony. He fell back with a mighty splash that practically emptied the bath.

The water rushed through the floor, carrying away the plaster of Mr. Lamper's room. It came down in a mighty torrent, and closed the meeting.

The screaming, soaked, horrified members of the audience fought with each other madly to reach the door.

The butler got under the sofa, and yelled for a lifeboat, but nobody brought one. Mr. Niggs lay flat on the table and tried to swim, with his head through a fallen oil-painting and the wreckage round his neck. The cat bolted under the open lid of the piano, and, getting mixed up with the strings, began to howl and play an accompaniment at the same time. It may have played "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," but it sounded more like three dog-fights and a succession of bricks being hurled through plate-glass windows.

The room was ankle-deep in water; the meeting was over.

Gan rubbed the end of a tallow candle on his sore lip, refilled the bath, and went to sleep again.

. . . .

Prout, Maddock, and Joe marched down the platform of the little country railway-station arm-in-arm, while a porter staggered behind them with their baggage. The air was full of sunshine, and had a crisp, salty taste in it that told that the sea was not far off.

The station-master was at the gate, and outside was a waggonette.

"Hallo, Mr. Prout!" said the station-master. "You got left behind, then, did you?"

"When—how—what, my Puffing-Billy merchant?" asked Prout.

"Why, by Mr. Lord's special, that ran in three hours ago."

"By hokey, I didn't know he had a special!" said Tom Prout. "We came express to York, and crawled from there

at the 'eadlong, dangerous pace of nine miles an hour. Joe, give that miserable porter a bob!"

"Give him a bob yourself!" said Joe.

"You, then, Ben. Joe is as mean as a starved cat! Climb aboard there, and hoist anchor!"

The waggonette rattled away along the cliff-road. The sea was a bright and dazzling blue, and the sight of it warmed the hearts of the three sailors.

"I shall squeal with joy when I get fair afloat again, by hokey I shall!" said Prout. "I'm sick of land properly. There's something in the wind, you bet, boys. We weren't sent back 'ere in such a hurry for nothing. Funny that the chief should run a special in front of us and not take us with him."

"It is queer," put in Joe. "Hallo, that's a trim craft."

He pointed to a trim, white steam-yacht, that was churning along barely half a mile out.

"She's a spanker!" said Maddock. "I guess her skipper knows the water, or he wouldn't risk her there. It's a nasty place."

A twist of the road made them lose sight of the sea. The uplands were covered with furze and bracken. In the distance the towers of a mansion shot above a forest of trees. The carriage passed through the great iron gates and along a winding drive. It halted before the terrace.

"Home again!" said Joe. "This is better than London, boys. What's the first thing to do?"

"To ax if there are any noo orders," said Prout.

"You do it, then."

Prout went into the house. He was only absent a few minutes.

"By hokey, the chief ain't come!" he said, a puzzled look on his face.

"That station Johnny must have been bluffing," said Maddock.

"Then, that being the case," added Joe, "the old orders hold good, so come along."

He led the way through a magnificent shrubbery. Steps carved out of the solid rock wound downwards to the sparkling sea. They caught a glimpse of the white yacht again. Her nose was turned eastwards, and the milky foam trailed away from her propeller. They reached a platform where a man with a rifle on his shoulder was pacing up and down.

"Anything to report, Sam?"

"Nothing, sir," answered the sentry, "except that yacht. She's been dodging about since daybreak. She dropped a boat with three men in it, and they started fishing."

There was an iron-studded door let into the rock. The sentry opened it, showing a tunnel slanting downwards. It was lighted by electricity, the lamps being about thirty feet apart. Here and there were short flights of steps. Prout turned sharply to the left, and touched a switch.

A dozen great arc-lamps hissed and spluttered. The three men were in a lofty cavern. A gallery guarded by a steel rail ran completely round the cave. From the roof hung festoons of stalactites, shining like icicles in the light.

It was the home of the Lord of the Deep. The long, cone-shaped vessel, built to voyage beneath the sea, slumbered on the bosom of the black pool, her deck almost flush with the water.

"There you are, my old beauty," said Maddock; "and I believe you've had all the rest you'll have for a bit."

"Don't I 'ope it!" said Tom Prout fervently.

A ladder, clamped to the rock, gave access to a little landing-stage, where a boat was moored. They followed each other down it, crab fashion, and entered the boat.

"Push off!" said Prout.

There was a wild, thunderous roar. The horrified men saw a red gush of flame shoot out from the submarine vessel's stern. The lights went out, shivered to atoms, and blackness came. A splash of water blended with the rattling echoes.

Then the boat was flung upwards and over, and they were fighting for life in the icy grip of the wave-tossed pool.

Tells How Gan-Waga Again Causes Trouble.

Gan-Waga had not eaten any breakfast. The hat had occupied his attention too much. He awoke, and, experiencing a sinking sensation, got out of the bath. He shook himself as dry as possible, and then began to think about something to eat. Somehow, Gan shrank from the idea of repairing to the regions below, where there was food enough to feed a small army. After what had occurred he was not quite certain about his reception. They might receive him with open arms, or they might receive him with saucepan-lids and other missiles. Gan was pretty sure of one thing—they did not love him much.

"Must get some grubs," thought Gan. "Bad 'nough 'ungry all over. Look for some canglos somewheres."

He looked into several bed-rooms, but candles are scarce in this age of electric light. Though so hungry, Gan did not want to face the irate Barry O'Rooney; so, instead of descending, he mounted higher.

At last he found himself gazing up at a glass dome, through which the sun shone brightly. An iron staircase led up to a glazed door. Gan went up, and uttered a gurgle of pleasure. The millionaire's house had a pretty roof-garden on it, and the skill of the gardener in arranging the shrubs and flower-beds made it look quite of large extent.

Gan walked about delightedly until the railings stopped him. He looked into the street, and watched the carriages for a time. And then he began to sniff the air eagerly.

"Dat bacon—nice, butterful fat bacon!" he murmured. "Where it come from now?"

He had a wonderful nose. The delicious odour was wafted towards him over the chimneys of Lord Doubleduke's house. Gan made in that direction, but the railings again pulled him up. There was a gate, and in the lock was a key. A bridge, placed in case of fire, connected the two houses. The smell grew richer and stronger, and, opening the gate, Gan crossed the bridge.

Lord Doubleduke had also a roof-garden, and in the centre of it stood a pretty summerhouse. His lordship was away on his yacht, and the butler was giving a light lunch to a few special friends. The lunch was taking place in the summerhouse, and the odour that attracted Gan rose from a dish of boiled bacon and beans.

Gan heard voices, and hesitated. He was ravenous, and hunger knows no law. He loved boiled bacon, and the smell was too much for him. For boiled bacon he was ready to sell his soul.

Down he dropped on his hands and knees, and began to crawl round the tubs. He stalked the summerhouse skilfully. Corks were popping within. Gan raised himself inch by inch, until his eyes were level with a little open window. Three men, all fat and clean-shaven, were seated round a table eating sardines and drinking light sherry. A steaming tureen of soup was waiting its turn as second course, and under Gan's very nose was the huge dish of bacon and beans. The sight of it made his eyes bulge out and set his mouth watering.

Gan's hand crept up, entered the window, and stole down towards the dish. Just then the fattest man leaned back, and the water which was dripping from the Eskimo's sleeve fell on his bald head.

"Mercy!" he yelled. "It's raining!"

Gan's arm flew out of sight. The astonishment of the butler and his two guests was supreme. He showed them the water, and they examined the roof. The sky was without a cloud.

"Most extraordinary thing I ever knowed!" said the butler.

"Some sort of natural phenomenon, most like," said one of the guests. "Shall I sarve the soup?"

The Eskimo did not move for several minutes. He was rather inclined to abandon the bacon, but he could not. He rose again, and again his hand stole in. His fingers closed upon the spoil.

And they unclosed in the twenty-thousandth of a second! The bacon was scalding hot—so hot that Gan hurled it from him with a howl of horror and agony, and it fell on the head of the gentleman who was serving the soup.

This unexpected gift rather startled him. In his confusion he mistook the butler's shiny cranium for a soup-plate, and poured a ladleful of mulligatawny over it. Like the bacon, the soup was hot!

The butler, startled in turn by such an unlooked-for present, bounded up like an indiarubber ball. The table was light. It upset, and the third gentleman received the rest of the soup in the centre of his waistcoat.

Gan-Waga was too terrified to stir. Yells and howls rang from the summerhouse, and people in the street stared up at the sky to see whether a fleet of balloons was passing over London. And then, armed with carvers and soup-ladles, and ready for murder, those three fat and greasy gentlemen rolled out of the summerhouse.

The Eskimo saw them coming, but for a moment his legs refused to obey him. They gave way, and Gan collapsed gracefully into a tub containing a splendid aloe. The aloe had spikes all over its leaves an inch long. It was a silly thing to sit on. Gan found that out in a twinkling, and he heralded the discovery with a piercing yell. The three fat men, howling "Burglars! Police! Fire!" halted suddenly. They were not exactly heroes, and they did not like Gan's looks.

Gan rolled out of the tub, clutching himself wildly, and dancing about.

"Perleece! Perleece! Perleece!" roared the fat butler.

"Murder! 'Elp!" roared the two fat gents.

Gan ran for it. The moment the retreat began, the fat gentlemen felt wonderfully brave. Round and round the

tub raced Gan. His screaming pursuers panting after him. Gan-Waga looked in vain for the bridge. His lordship's garden was quite a little maze, and they were close behind him. Oh, for somewhere to hide!

He had made the circle about a dozen times when he saw what seemed to be the mouth of an open sack. The soup-ladle hit him in the back, and, turning, Gan's heart dropped into his boots when he saw that a policeman had joined his pursuers. He was almost pumped. With one last yell of despair he dived into the sack.

Then, clutching madly at nothing, and feeling sure that the end of the world had come, Gan went sliding down through darkness, for what he had imagined in his innocence to be a sack was Lord Doubleduke's patent tubular fire-escape.

Gan's descent ended at last, and he lay kicking feebly, still enveloped in the canvas. Bang! came a pair of heavy boots into the small of his back. The plucky constable had followed him.

that floated up the tube made him imagine that the police-man and the desperado were engaged in a life and death struggle below. As his lordship insisted on his servants taking part in fire-drill once a fortnight, the butler was accustomed to the escape.

"He's being murdered!" he puffed. "He's being killed! Go to the rescue!"

"We d-daren't!" said the stout guests, who were very pale.

"Cowards!" hissed the butler. "Then I will!"

"'Ero!" said the two stout guests admiringly.

The valiant butler lowered himself into the escape, and glided out of sight. Some ten seconds later he was sitting on the policeman's head. The policeman objected, and hit

The snake managed to climb the steps, but then its tail stuck and stopped any further progress. Ladders were found, and the grinning faces of grooms and stable boys from the mews behind lined the wall. (*See p.* 26.)

Gan crawled out hastily. He had the advantage of the man-of-law, for he had come down head first, and it is much easier to crawl forward than to wriggle along backwards. Gan shot one terrified glance round him.

He was in a little grass-covered square at the back of the house. There was a good deal of the escape on the ground, and it was dancing, and wriggling, and bulging. With one frenzied part of despair, Gan caught up the canvas and gave it a twist. It was tough and stiff, but terror gave him strength. He tied a huge knot in the tube—a knot that made the hapless constable a prisoner.

Then Gan left, and the policeman began to yell and kick. The fat butler could not see what was happening. The yells

the butler in the eye, and the two stout and pale guests, who were bending anxiously over the mouth of the escape, heard sounds and language which froze their blood.

One of them bent over a little too far, and slipped. Naturally, in order to save himself, he clutched the other. He did not save himself, but brought the other with him. They shot down, howling like hyenas, and joined the party at the bottom.

The howls were awful. They were very muffled, or they would have roused the whole neighbourhood. A frightened boy-in-buttons and a maid came running out of the house. The escape was writhing and bumping over the grass like a huge snake, and uttering horrid screams. The maid fainted

on a bed of geraniums, and the boy fled, and, locking himself in the coal-cellar, roared for the police.

None of the men had a knife. The supports at the top broke, and the whole apparatus fell down.

At last a seam gave way, and the policeman managed to get his head out.

"Murder! Murder!" he shrieked.

Ching-Lung dropped his cue, and flung up the window of the billiard-room, and saw the amazing sight.

"Great pip, Ru," he shouted, "look at this!"

Thurston hurried to the window, and saw the wriggling mass and the fiery face of the policeman. Ching-Lung was already flying down the stairs. Seizing a ladder, he scaled the wall.

"What is it? What are you doing there?"

"Smotcherit! Dyin'!" moaned the policeman. "Get us out! Get us out!"

"Oh-ooh! Murder! Ow, ow, ow, ow!" came the muffled chorus. "'Elp! Ow, ow, ow! 'Elp, 'elp, 'elp!"

Thinking there had been an accident during fire-drill, Ching-Lung sprang down. He took out his knife, and struggled with the seam of the canvas.

Out shot another fiery, yelling head. Another cut brought the butler's features to view, and a third revealed the face of the last prisoner.

They were not hurt. Ching-Lung knew that by the way they bellowed. He dug his knife into the canvas, and cleverly smashed both blades.

"Why don't you let us out?" howled four voices.

"I've smashed my knife," said Ching-Lung.

"Clumsy brute!" screamed the polite butler.

"Pig! Beast!" added the stout guests.

"Pigtailed hass!" said the policeman.

This was gratitude indeed! Ching-Lung bowed low, and grinned.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I youl velly humble selvantee. I only little Chinee boyee, and I not puttee you in. You velly nice to me. You gettee in, so you justee gettee outee. Good-bye!"

Ching-Lung vanished over the wall, and met Rupert.

"What is it all about, old chap?"

"Nothing, I guess!" said Ching-Lung. "None of them are hurt, not their heads free, and then they began to call me names. Nice names, such as 'clumsy brute,' 'pigtailed hass,' 'pig,' and 'beast.' I left them to think it over."

"'Elp! Murder! Ow, ow, ow!" came the shrieks.

Rupert looked over the wall, and Ching-Lung perched himself beside him.

They burst into screams of laughter. The four-headed snake was crawling across the grass in a ludicrous and ungainly fashion. They were trying to reach the house and obtain a knife. The yells, no longer muffled, were attracting attention. People were hammering at the gate, which was locked. The wall was too high to be scaled without a ladder.

The snake managed to climb the steps, but then its tail stuck and stopped any further progress. Ladders were found, and the grinning faces of grooms and stableboys from the mews behind lined the wall. A row of spikes kept them from crossing it.

And at that precise moment a figure crept across the roof on tip-toe and entered the summerhouse. It stole back across the bridge with its spoil.

The villain was Gan-Waga, and the spoil was a dish of bacon and beans. He gorged himself, and with a face that shone like a full moon he waddled into the bathroom, rolled into the bath, heaved one long sigh of content, and slept like a babe, cradled and rocked on the bosom of three feet of cool water.

A Failure—Ferrers Lord Flings Twelve Thousand Pounds into the Flames—Waiting—News at Last.

The fragments of the little airship built by Hal Honour and Ferrers Lord lay among the Tibetan hills. Though it had served its purpose splendidly, it was little more than a plaything, and the millionaire had destroyed it. His heart was set on a greater invention—a vessel that would float, fly, and journey beneath the sea.

His model was built already, but it was not perfect. There were still many difficulties to be overcome. Both millionaire and engineer were confident of ultimate success. They were chatting together in the underground workshop, whose mysterious threshold even Ching-Lung had never crossed.

It was a long, narrow room, packed with machinery and lighted by electricity. In the centre stood a tank of crystal glass, filled almost to the brim with water. Engineer and millionaire were examining the model which floated in the tank.

The model was five feet long and twenty inches wide in its widest part. It tapered steadily into a cone. There was a false keel, like a huge centre-board, to steady her when running through a choppy sea. She had sixteen vertical pillars, each topped by a fan-shaped screw. These were to keep her suspended in the air. The vertical pillars were all hinged, and could be lowered to the deck at will, where they fitted into grooves.

She had driving-screws fore and aft—these were double, enormous fan-shaped screws for forcing her through the air, and heavy-fish-tail propellers for use in the denser element—water. The source of the power that worked her was Ferrers Lord's own secret. Even to Hal Honour it was a mystery. He knew it was electricity, but he did not know how it was produced.

Ferrers Lord touched the little model; the vessel began to race round the tank. The engineer stood watch in hand. At every revolution a bell clanged.

At the tenth stroke the millionaire raised his hand.

"Well, Honour?"

The engineer was pencilling on his shirt-cuff.

"Thirty-nine knots," he said laconically.

"Poor," answered Ferrers Lord; "that will not do for us. Work it out again."

Hal Honour checked his figures.

"Power for power and dead water," he answered, "nine-and-thirty."

"Miserable!" growled the millionaire; "no better than the best torpedo-boat destroyers! Hal, this will not do for you and me; it is child's play! Are you ready? Count miles this time."

He touched the model again. There was a whizzing sound; her vertical screws were spinning. She leapt from the water, and began to tear through the air in a wide circle. Again the bell clanged ten strokes. The vessel sank, and floated on the water.

"Well?"

"One hundred and four miles an hour," said the engineer.

"Test your figures, Honour."

There was a pause.

"The same," said the engineer.

"It is better, at any rate. Are you ready?"

Hal Honour looked at the watch.

"Go, old chap!"

"I must put the crew aboard," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "They are always anxious for their trip."

He crossed the room, and took a cage from the wall. Three white mice nestled in his hand. He opened a manhole in the model's deck, and dropped the little creatures in.

"Now," he said, "are you ready?"

"Quite."

The model sank under water. Her vertical columns lay flush with the deck, and were invisible. There was no sound to check her movements, but at every journey a beam of light flashed from one of her tiny portholes.

"What speed?" asked Ferrers Lord, after the tenth flash.

"Twenty-seven knots."

"Check again."

"Twenty-seven," repeated the engineer, as he verified the calculation.

Ferrers Lord set free the mice, and took them back to their cage. There was a frown on his handsome face.

"Hal," he said, "I am not satisfied."

"No man can perform miracles."

"We can, and we must," said Ferrers Lord. "This will not do. We are evidently working on the wrong lines."

"It would astonish the world at least."

The millionaire laughed.

"Perhaps it would. But sometimes we differ, Hal. It is a wonderful model, no doubt, but it is not fast enough for me. I repeat, we are working on the wrong lines. We have a system, and we think we can improve on it. There's our mistake. We don't get on fast enough. It is like the locomotive. A train driven by steam on rails can go eighty miles odd an hour. You cannot make it go any faster, for the system has attained perfection. We want a new system. People think that pace quite good enough, but I do not. I am never satisfied. Our system for this boat cannot be improved upon, so I intend to get another. How much did it cost us?"

Without our time and labour, that model cost twelve thousand pounds."

Ferrers Lord laughed again. The invention would have staggered the world. To these two giants of brain it was a failure. They both knew that they could not get another mile an hour out of the finished vessel. They had arrived at perfection as far as their system was concerned. Such perfection was not enough for them. They must forget the old method completely, and begin on new lines.

Hal Honour lighted his pipe as the millionaire lifted the dripping model out of the water.

"A pity!" he said.

"Do you think so!"

The engineer shrugged his shoulders.

"No," he answered.

The furnace, worked by electricity, was sending the air hissing through the furnace. Ferrers Lord raked away the coke cinders, revealing the glowing mass of fire below.

"Twelve thousand pounds, Hal!" he cried. "Do you still think it a pity?"

"No; let it burn."

Ferrers Lord flung the model into the fiery depths of the furnace. Twelve thousand pounds! He turned on a stream of oxygen, and in the flame of his gas steel will burn like tinder. The model crumbled, faded, collapsed, vanished.

The bellows ceased to roar, and Hal Honour filled his pipe.

"Now," said the millionaire, "we have settled with that. The old scheme has failed, so here's for the new."

"At once?"

"At once."

Honour smiled. These two never cried "Enough!" The engineer sat down and began to rule out diagrams, and Ferrers Lord crossed to the blackboard. Lines of figures and decimals poured from the chalk between his fingers. He had not to pause, to consider or reckon. Whenever he halted, it was to renew his chalk or to raise the board in its frame.

"I think you will find these tables accurate, Honour," he said, tossing away the chalk. "I have calculated the pressure our plates will have to withstand at depths varying from one to a thousand fathoms."

"To the last ounce per inch of surface?" asked Honour.

"To the thousandth part of an ounce per inch of surface. We must know to the weight of a hair the pressure the plates can take. Glance through the figures at your leisure."

The silent engineer nodded, but he knew it would be a waste of time. Ferrers Lord could not blunder in a calculation. Standing beside a bench, the millionaire began to file a number of small brass castings, every one of them made by his own hand.

And so the two indomitable men worked on, happy only in their work, Nathan Gore and the stolen diamond utterly forgotten.

* * * * * *

Ching-Lung had a suite of rooms always at his disposal in the millionaire's house. One of these rooms, like the workshop, was a place of mystery. No one entered except Ching-Lung, and the servants were terribly curious to know what it contained. Most of them agreed that it was a joss-house, and that its principal article was a huge and hideous idol which the prince worshipped.

Once, during Ching-Lung's absence, a footman made a bet that he would discover the secret. He attacked the door with a hammer, chisel, and screwdriver. He came back, dancing and yelling, with his hair and face dyed a tender pea-green. The dye had come through the keyhole, and it took six long weeks to wear off. After this they let the room alone.

After his stolen feast of beans and bacon, Gan-Waga, at peace with everybody, came waddling down the stairs. He sat down in the middle of the second flight as some unknown person or thing gave him a tap on the head. Gan-Waga looked up and down.

"Dat bad 'nough!" he muttered. "Git punched and nobody punching. I—— Ow, ow!"

Ching-Lung's head and shoulders suddenly shot into sight above the banisters.

"Oh, mercy me!" said Gan. "Yo' frighten me, Chingy, bad 'nough! How yo' get up here? Are yo' floatin'?"

"Is it likely, full-moon features?" grinned the prince. "Where are your eyes?"

The wondering Eskimo looked over the banisters. Ching-Lung was on stilts.

"My, what long wooden legses, Chingy!" said Gan. "Can yo' walk on dems?"

"Walk? I can dance jigs and play football. I've got some more, and I'll teach you to walk if you want to. Would you like it?"

"Chingy, I could swallop yo'!" said the delighted Gan.

"Swallow, silly. Swallop is not good, genteel English. Get on my back."

"Yo' not drop me and break me?" said Gan hesitatingly.

"Get on and see."

Gan put his arms round the prince's neck, and lowered himself cautiously. He soon felt that he had nothing to fear. Ching-Lung strode along the landing, and stumped down the staircase.

"Look out!" he cried.

"What you goin' do, Chingy?"

"Dismount! Hold fast up there?"

Ching-Lung sprang from the stilts with the Eskimo still on his shoulders.

"Now," he said, "hop off your perch, and come in here. I'll show you how to become a stilt-walker in less time than you could eat a candle."

"Lubly, lubly!" gurgled Gan. "Yo' dear ole foolow, Chingy!"

"Don't you call me names."

"I meaned fellow, Chingy," said Gan. "Sometimes get mixed a bit; but spokes English a treats."

"So you do, my Ganus. In you get."

He unlocked the door of the mysterious room. It was lined with closed cupboards. There were guns, fishing-rods, cricket-bats, and tennis-rackets in profusion, a few masks and kites, and a quantity of foils, boxing-gloves, and single-sticks.

From a corner Ching-Lung brought out a second pair of stilts, rather shorter than his own. As a teacher, Ching-Lung was untrivalled, and in Gan-Waga he found an eager and apt pupil. Gan had many falls and many mishaps; but in less than half an hour he could stump about gallantly.

"How do you like it, fatty?"

"Most butterful lubly," beamed Gan-Waga. "Like a lot to go long walk. Room too smallisher, and not fat 'nough. I goin' out in de garden."

"And I'm with you," said Ching-Lung.

Gan was not accomplished enough to attempt the risky walk downstairs. Ching-Lung descended with ease and grace, and danced a jig at the bottom. Carrying their stilts, they left the house.

"I think we'd better go further on," said Ching-Lung. "There'll be trouble if you start falling about on these geranium-beds. Lovely things, these flowers. The red ones remind me of Prout's nose."

Ferrers Lord stabled his horses behind the house. The stables and coachhouses formed three sides of a square, and the grooms and attendants lived above the buildings. It was the quietest time of the day. A few stable-boys looked mildly interested when the prince and the Eskimo went clattering down the yard.

"You seem pretty quiet here," said Ching-Lung to one of the lads.

"Oss show day, your 'Ighness. One or two of us has to stay, but Mr. Ferrers Lord gives the rest a 'oliday to go there. We've got ten 'osses on show. Old Grunter ain't gone, wuss luck!"

"Who is he?"

"Second groom, your 'Ighness. Makes us work like slaves. He's got the gout, and can't 'ardly——"

"Blow yer!" roared a hoarse and angry voice. "Can't yer carry a bucket, without sloppin' the place all over? I'll sack you at the end of the week, you clumsy ass!"

The angry voice proceeded from an upper window. It so startled the youth with the pail that he let it fall, and sat down in it. Mr. Grunter shook his fist, howled a string of threats, and then closed the window with a bang.

My Readers' Page.

Whom to write to:—Editor, "The Magnet" Library, 23-9, Bouverie St., London, E.C.

GRAND, NEW, WEEKLY FEATURE.

Next Week's Story:

"THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!"

Next Tuesday's splendid, long, complete tale of Greyfriars School, entitled as above, gives the interesting and highly amusing history of yet another series of episodes in the long-drawn-out rivalry between the Remove and the Upper Fourth Forms at the old school.

Coker & Co. make yet another attempt to magnify the prestige of their Form at the expense of the Removites, with results that will be shown next week in

"THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!"

A NEW DEPARTURE.

The latest departure in connection with our popular companion paper is embodied in this Thursday's issue of "The Gem" Library, which has been announced as the first full-sized

All School-Story Number

of a paper that has long been famous, principally by reason of its grand school tales of the inimitable Tom Merry & Co.

So greatly has the taste for first-class school stories grown upon the regular readers of "The Gem" that they have, with concerted voice, demanded more, and the happy result is that a

Grand New School Serial

has been specially written, introducing characters which are, after Harry Wharton & Co., and Tom Merry & Co., undoubtedly the most popular schoolboy characters in fiction. Need I say that I refer to the famous

Gordon Gay, Frank Monk & Co.

of Rylcombe Grammar School!

I doubt whether any further recommendation of this week's grand issue of our wonderful companion-paper is necessary, but to all my chums I do say, emphatically, that if ever "The Gem" Library was worth buying, it is worth buying this week—the week of the magnificent All School-Story Number, which will be on sale everywhere at the usual price of one penny.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

H. F. (Manchester).—I hardly think that it would be advisable for you to take any special steps to put on more flesh just yet, as you are already considerably above the average weight for your age.

King (Hastings).—Thank you for your letter. I am sorry that I cannot accede to your first request. With regard to the second one, there is plenty of time yet for that to happen.

D. C. Swart (South Africa).—You can obtain such a book as you require—Irish jokes, etc.—from Messrs. Barr & Co., of 28a, Bow Lane, London, E.C., England, for sevenpence. I am sorry that I cannot insert the notice you send, but you have no doubt seen the explanation by now.

B. Phillips (Melbourne).—Many thanks for your letter. I am glad you find THE MAGNET stories both interesting and amusing.

Miss Bar and Friends.—Your opinion, as given in your letter, does not agree with those which many other readers have expressed, but I will do what I can to keep the balance as even as possible between my readers' conflicting desires.

"Boy Reader" (Devon).—Thank you for your interesting postcard. You will probably hear more about the characters you mention in the course of a few weeks.

T. W. Griggs (K. I.).—Thank you for your letter and the appreciative way in which you speak of "The Magnet." Your idea has already been suggested to me, and is now being considered.

A. D. (North Kensington).—A good cure for knock knees is: First place yourself with body erect, feet together, hips well back, chest forward, and shoulders firmly braced. Separate knees by side movement as though to make them spring apart. During this movement the feet must be kept perfectly still. Then let them return to their position. Repeat this movement until the legs become tired. Do this exercise every night until the knees are in their right position.

"Une Amie" (Kilburn).—Thank you for your interesting letter. Lomides of the Sixth is still at Greyfriars School.

V. B. H. F.—Many thanks for your letter. On the whole, I should say that the best typewriting machine for you to learn on is the Empire.

L. T. (Gainsborough).—In answer to your question, I must tell you that "Green as Grass" is the first story by Cedric Wolfe to be published in "The Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library.

C. S. (Bermondsey).—Pennies dated 1864 are of little more value than they were when first issued. The common, but false, notion is that in making the pennies of that year a bar of gold was accidentally dropped into the molten bronze, thus giving the coins a greater value.

"Old Reader".—Without having some idea of the qualifications you possess, etc., I am afraid I am unable to advise you definitely whether to go to college or into the gas-mantle business. The former course would doubtless be an advantage to you late in life if you can afford the necessary time and money to take it.

HOW TO MAKE LUMINOUS PAINT.

The boy scout and the photographer will find that luminous paint, although so very easy and inexpensive to make, is a very handy thing to keep by one. It can be smeared upon the face of a watch or a clock, and so save burning a match where one would be disastrous to any particular kind of work that was being carried on, and will be found useful for many other purposes. The following is a cheap and simple method of making luminous paint, and can easily be carried out at home.

First obtain some oyster-shells, and cleanse them thoroughly in warm water, making sure that every particle of dirt and foreign matter is removed. Then put them into the heart of a fire for about half an hour, keeping the heat as constant as possible, and, taking them out, allow them to cool. Then obtain a small metal dish, and, placing the shells into it, pound them up into a fine powder. It will be found that amongst the powder there is a number of pieces of grey shell. These have to be removed, because they have not the luminous properties that are to be found in the other parts.

Get some flower of sulphur from a chemist's for a few pence—and make it into a stiff paste with beer.

Put the powdered oyster-shells into a crucible, or some strong earthenware receptacle, in alternate layers with the sulphur. When the crucible—the larger it is, of course, the more paint can be made—is filled, cement it thoroughly over with the paste.

Now, place it over a good clear fire, or in a hot oven, and bake it for an hour. At the end of this time, remove it. When the mixture is hot it gives off chemical fumes that are extremely obnoxious and dangerous, so allow it to get perfectly cold before the cement is taken from the top of the crucible.

The result, when the receptacle is opened, should be a thin white powder. If it is not, it is a sign that it has not been sufficiently baked, and should be re-covered and again put in the fire for another half an hour or so. Another reason for the result not being a perfect white is failing to remove all the grey shell. In this case, fresh will have to be mixed.

When the white powder is obtained, it has to be made into a thin paint with gum water. This result is not luminous in itself, but it can easily be made so by exposing it for one whole day to the light. It will then remain luminous far into the night, which should be quite sufficient for ordinary use. As long as it is exposed sufficiently to the daylight, it will continue to give off light at night.

Give an object to be covered two thin coats.

To use it on a watch or clock suitable for scouting purposes, or the dark-room, paint a thin ring all round the edge of the glass on the inside. Another way is to paint the centre, just leaving sufficient space to show the ends of the hands and the figures.

THE EDITOR.

Printed and published by the Proprietors at 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Agents for Australia: Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, June 22nd, 1912.

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