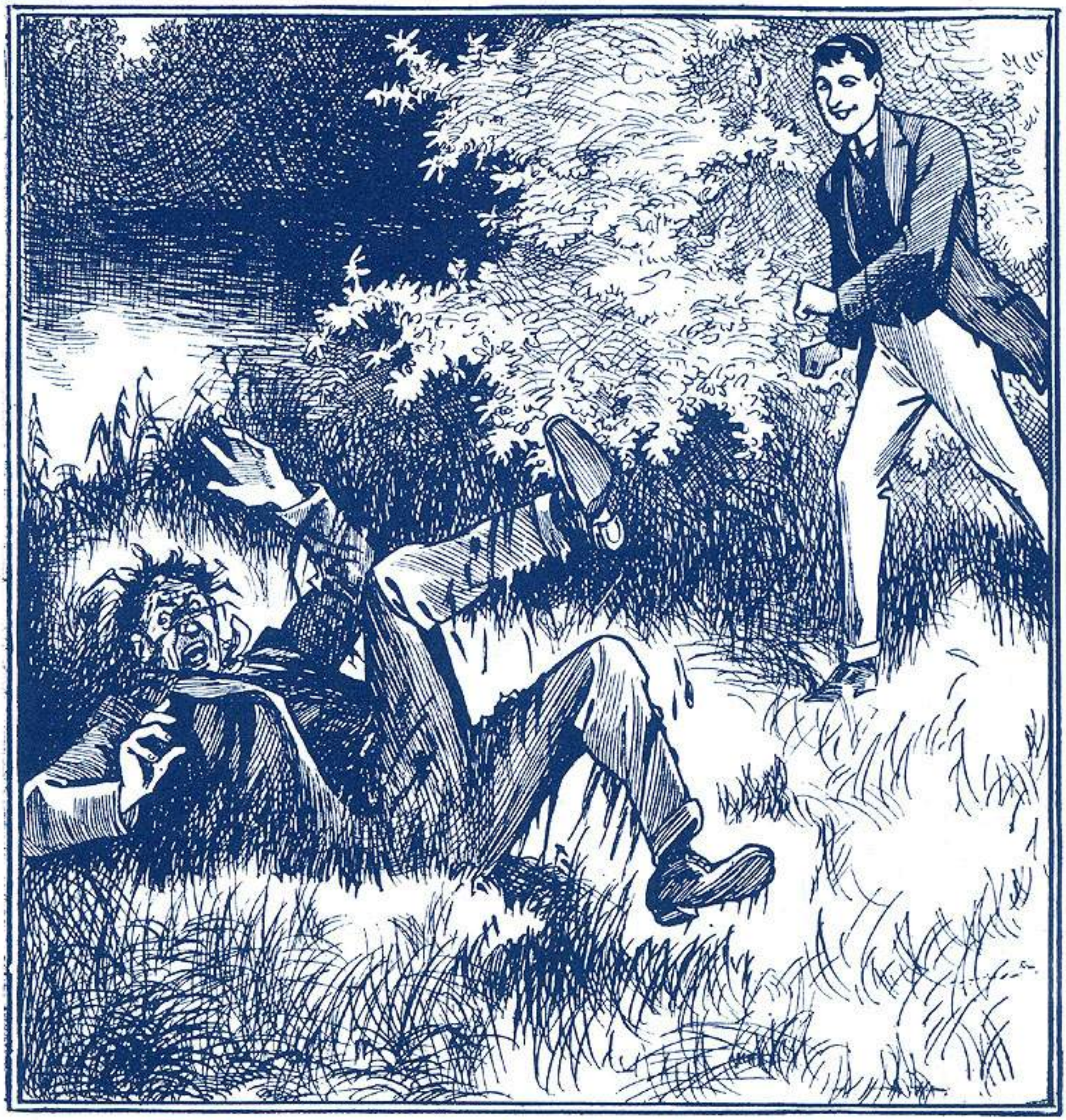
BOLSOVER'S WAY!

The Magnet Library

WAR TIME PRICE. 1½d.

No. 539. Vol. XIII.



NO SMILES FOR SMILES!

BOLSOVER'S WAY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Something Like a Scrape!

"LOOKS down in the mouth!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were coming down to Little Side to cricket when Bob Cherry made that remark.

A junior was mooching under the old elms near the field, with his hands in his pockets and a gloomy frown upon his brow.

It was Elliott of the Remove; and, as Bob observed, he certainly did look down in the mouth.

"He's leaving on Saturday," said Harry Wharton.

"Perhaps that is the downfulness of the mouth," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It will be a terrific loss to give up our esteemed society."

"But he won't share a study with Bolsover major any longer," remarked Frank Nugent. "That ought to be a consolation."

Elliott did not glance towards the chums of the Remove. He seemed to be buried in disagreeable reflections as he paced aimlessly under the trees.

Harry Wharton paused.

"I don't think it's leaving that's worrying him," he said. "He's going to a jolly good thing, from what I hear. I think I'll speak to him."

"Perhaps his latest smokes in Skinner's study don't agree with his little inside," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Harry. "Never mind that now. I'll see you fellows later."

And as his chums went on to the cricket-field the captain of the Remove joined Elliott under the elms.

The Removite looked at him grimly as he came up—certainly not with a welcoming look.

Wharton had had little to do with Elliott, but he felt a friendly interest in a form-fellow who was about to leave the school.

Their tastes were not much alike. Elliott cared little for cricket or footer, or any of the other activities in which Wharton was interested. Sometimes he would take up games for a time, and drop them again; at other times he would consort with Skinner and Snoop and the other black sheep of the Form. Wharton was wondering whether it was something of the latter kind that troubled him now.

"I hear you're leaving on Saturday, Elliott," he began.

"Do you?" answered the junior unamiably.

"Well, I heard Bunter say so."

"Bunter knows everything, doesn't he?"

"He generally seems to," said Harry, with a smile. "But if it isn't the fact ——"

"As it happens, it is the fact."

"According to Bunter, you're going to Canada with your uncle," said Wharton.

"That's so."

"I suppose it's a bit of a wrench to leave Greyfriars—what?"

"Not particularly," answered Elliott coolly. "I don't specially want to leave; but I shouldn't be likely to refuse my uncle's offer. It will be a good thing for me. He's got a big post out in Canada, and he's offered to take me with him, and I shall have ripping chances there. And it will be seeing a bit of the world, too. I'm glad to go with him."

"You don't look very glad, old scout."

"Oh, rot!"

Wharton coloured a little.

Elliott's manner was not encouraging, and Harry Wharton was about the last fellow at Greyfriars to offer friendship where it was not welcome. But he could see the signs of trouble in the junior's face, and Wharton's heart was kind.

"If there's anything the matter, Elliott——"

"What should be the matter?"

"Well, nothing, I suppose. But you look as if something was the matter," said Wharton bluntly. "If there's anything I could do, I'd be glad to do it. Don't be grumpy! There's nothing to snap at a fellow for!"

Elliott gave him a rather dark look, but his face cleared the next moment.

"I don't see why you should help me," he said. "We've never been friends; we've hardly spoken to one another except by chance, if you come to that."

"Never mind that," said Harry. "We're both Greyfriars chaps, anyway, and it's Greyfriars against the world, you know."

Elliott smiled.

"Well, I don't know that there's anything you can do," he said. "But I'll tell you about it, if you care to waste time listening."

"Go ahead!"

"I'm in a scrape."

"I guessed that," said Harry, with a smile. "What sort of a scrape? If it's money, I think I can help."

"You're a good chap, Wharton!" said Elliott gratefully. "Well, I'm in a scrape. It was through playing the fool with Skinner and Snoop and that set, of course. I got to know a friend of Ponsonby of Highcliffe—one of the shady rotters that fellows knows outside his school—you know the kind."

Wharton nodded.

He was very well acquainted with the kind of associate Ponsonby of Highcliffe delighted in outside the walls of Highcliffe School.

"A chap named Smiles," said Elliott. "I don't know what he is—a bit of a bookie, and a bit of a billiard-sharper, and a bit of lots of things, I think—all shady. I was a fool to have anything to do with him; but—but I was having a flutter, and—and lots of fellows do, you know."

Wharton made no comment on that. He had his own opinion; but he was not there to preach to the fellow who had landed himself into trouble through his folly.

"There was no real harm," continued Elliott. "But—but if it got to my Uncle George, he might change his mind about taking me with him. I don't want to lose a chance like that. He's rather a severe merchant, and would be horrified at a little flutter—he would call it gambling."

"Well, he couldn't very well call it anything else, I should say," said Harry. "But if it's over and done with——"

"It is, and it isn't. I was with a party of the silly fools—Pon and Gaddy of Highcliffe, and Skinner, and Snoop—down at the Three Fishers one half-holiday," muttered Elliott. "We played poker, and—and I lost. I gave Smiles my I O U. I was pretty excited, and never thought about not being able to meet it afterwards."

Wharton whistled.

"Of course, I was going to pay the fellow. I'm not a swindler, though I shouldn't wonder if he cheated me in the poker game. But—but now I'm leaving it's all up, you see. It—it comes to seven pounds."

"Phew!"

"I've been handing all my pocket-money to the fellow for the last term," said Elliott moodily. "But that doesn't clear it off. It doesn't touch it. He says he wants the money, and he's charged me interest, like a moneylender, you know. All I've paid him goes for interest, and I still owe him seven pounds."

"The rascal!" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Well, he is a rascal right enough, but it's my own fault for having anything to do with him."

"How much have you paid him?"

"Four quid."

"Then you owe him three," said Harry. "Suppose you pay him the three——"

"He won't part with my paper under seven. And—and when he hears I'm going he will want his money in a lump, or—or——" Elliott faltered.

"He can't claim it in law," said Harry.

"I know that. That's not the point."

"You think he might get you into trouble by sending it to the Head? But as you're leaving on Saturday——"

"He would do that if I were staying. But as I'm leaving he would apply to my people."

"Oh!"

"If it gets to my uncle's ears, I'm done for with him. I know I've played the fool. I was sorry afterwards, but I was under the beast's thumb then," muttered the junior. "I was afraid of his using the paper to cause me trouble here, and I've really been paying him to keep it dark. Now it's worse than that. The—the mater would make no end of a fuss, and she tells Uncle George everything—in fact, my uncle would have to find the money if it was paid."

"They needn't pay it, and they wouldn't," said Harry. "It's not a legal claim. Smiles must know that."

"Of course he knows it; but he knows it will disgrace me if he lets the paper come out, and that's his game. It's that, or he's got to have his money. And—

and I'm nearly stony. He's had all my tin."

Harry Wharton was silent for a few minutes, while Elliott moved uneasily to and fro.

Wharton was thinking it out.

"Don't think I'm asking you for seven quid!" muttered Elliott at last. "I know you haven't got it; and I shouldn't have the cheek to ask you for it if you had. I don't know what to do. I've told you because you asked me what was the matter. I know you can't help me."

"I can't find seven pounds, certainly," said Harry quietly. "I was thinking of a smaller sum than that. I've got thirty shillings, and I could borrow a pound or two. Seven pounds is rather a corker. But, in common fairness, you only owe the man three quid; and he may be willing to take that for your paper when he knows you are going away out of his reach. It won't benefit him in any way to cause you trouble with your people; and he can't know anything about your uncle."

Elliott shook his head.

"He's got a lot out of Skinner about my having a rich uncle," he said. "He's a cunning cad! Besides, I—I've rather swanked to Pon & Co. about my wealthy uncle. I may as well own it. I've been a silly fool all along the line!"

"Suppose you asked him——"

"I shouldn't have the nerve," said Elliott. "I know it would be no good, too.

Wharton compressed his lips.

It was useless to tell Elliott that his scrape was due to his own folly. He knew that already; and sermonising would not have mended matters. Wharton's only desire was to help the wretched fellow out of his scrape. He felt sure that Elliott was not a bad fellow in the main. It was chiefly carelessness and thoughtlessness that had made him follow the lead of Skinner & Co.

"Well, look here, Elliott," he said, at last. "I think the man might take the offer. It ought to be made. Suppose you see him——"

"It might come out!" muttered Elliott uneasily. "Now there's such a lot depending on it I daren't risk seeing him. I should have to go down to the Three Fishers; and—and if I were seen——"

"But you've seen him before!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, but—but not since I heard from my uncle. I've sent him money by post, you see."

"My hat! If you've written him letters——"

"I haven't; I'm not such an ass as that! I've sent currency notes with nothing else in the envelopes; and I've addressed the envelopes on Quelchy's taper, when he was out, so as not to give my fist away. One paper of mine in his hands was enough."

Wharton paused.

"Would you like me to see him in your place?" he asked, at last.

Elliott's face lighted up.

"Would you?" he exclaimed.

"I would, if it would do any good."

"But—but it's risky for you, too. Not so much as for me," added Elliott defensively. "You've got a good name in the Form; Quelchy would take your word. But I've been hauled over the coals for smoking, and Quelchy was down on me once for having a sporting paper in my pocket. You could do it safe enough, very likely. If—if you would——"

Wharton gave him a compassionate look. He could see that the unhappy junior was in a state of nerves, terrified at the bare idea of his folly coming to his uncle's knowledge. It is up to the strong to help the weak; and Wharton felt that, much as he disliked the idea of getting mixed up in such an unsavoury affair.

"I'll do it," he said. "I'll manage to get four quid together; and the man is pretty certain to take that for a worthless bit of paper. Where can I find him?"

"Any afternoon, at the Three Fishers."

"I'll go this afternoon," said Harry. "Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot.

"You—you were going to play cricket——"

"That's all right; I can manage that," said Harry. "Leave it to me."

"I—I say, I'm awfully obliged!" muttered Elliott, his troubled face much brighter now. "Smiles may take the offer—I don't know—and—and if I get out of this scrape I'll never get into another—I know that! I——"

"Come on, slacker!" shouted Squiff of the Remove, running from the cricket-field towards the trees. "I'm waiting for you."

Elliott walked away quickly, as the captain of the Remove turned to meet Squiff.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Wharton's Mission!

A CROWD of fellows on the junior cricket-ground had their eyes turned towards Harry Wharton.

There was a match that afternoon between the Remove and the Upper Fourth; and Wharton was captaining the Remove side.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were already on the ground, and most of the Remove were there. They were puzzled to see Wharton remaining in talk with a non-player when he was wanted on the ground.

"What on earth are you up to, Wharton?" demanded Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, as Wharton joined him. "Don't you know we're ready?"

"Sorry!" said Harry. "I'm coming."

He walked back to the cricket-field with Squiff.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Pull up your socks, my son! We're keeping his Highness Cecil Reginald waiting."

"Oh, don't hurry for me, dear boys!" drawled Temple, with an inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"The fact is, I'm standing out this afternoon, you fellows," said Harry. "I'll ask you to captain the side, Squiff."

"Any old thing," answered the Australian junior. "I'm your man!"

"Anything up?" asked Nugent.

"I'm going out on my bike," said Harry. "I'll tell you later; it's rather important, as it happens. You can beat the Fourth without me, you know."

"Easily," remarked Johnny Bull—a remark that drew a disdainful sniff from Cecil Reginald Temple.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, you'll want another man, you know, if Wharton's standing out."

"Did you work that out in your head, fatty?" inquired Peter Todd.

"I don't mind playing," said Bunter, blinking at Squiff through his big spectacles. "As it happens, I haven't any other engagement this afternoon; and I can spare the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Shall I get into my flannels, Field?"

"Certainly, if you like," answered Squiff. "Get into anything you please—from your flannels to your coffin. But don't come along here; your face will worry me while I'm playing cricket."

"Oh, really, you rotter——"

"I'm your man, Field," said Bolsover major, shoving forward. "It's about time I played for the Form, I think."

"About time you were up to doing it, I agree," answered Squiff. "But you've not reached that point yet, dear man. Where's Redwing?"

"Here's Redwing!" answered that youth cheerily.

"Get into your clobber, then, and hurry up."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Redwing fairly flew to change for cricket. Bolsover major scowled blackly.

"Look here, Field, you fool——"

Squiff turned away, and the bully of the Remove caught him by the shoulder.

"Look here, you idiot—— Yaroooh!"

The heavy end of Squiff's bat clumped on Bolsover's boot, and the burly Removite uttered a yell of anguish.

"Yow! Yoop! You imbecile! Yah! Oh!"

"You'll have it on your napper next, if you lay your paws on me, Bolsover," said Squiff coolly.

"Look here, Wharton, I'm entitled——"

"Squiff's captaining the side," answered Harry Wharton; "and Squiff seems to have made his meaning clear, Bolsover."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The captain of the Remove walked away towards the School House, leaving it at that. Bolsover major frowned after him, and then looked at Squiff. He was greatly inclined to enforce his claims to a place in the Form Eleven with his big fists; but he was aware that if he tried it on the cricketers would frog's-march him off the ground, and give him the ragging of his life into the bargain. So the bully of the Remove decided not to try it on.

Tom Redwing came dashing up, in spotless white, considerably elated at being given a place in the Remove team. Squiff tossed with Temple, and won, and the Fourth-Formers went into the field. The game had started, and was going strong, with Squiff and Tom Brown at the wickets, when Harry Wharton came out of the School House in Norfolks. He went round to the shed for his bicycle. It was a good distance from Greyfriars to the Three Fishers. As a matter of fact, that was all to the good; for a Greyfriars fellow seen visiting that disreputable resort would certainly have been booked for trouble with his headmaster.

"Well hit, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith had succeeded Tom Brown at the wickets when Wharton wheeled his bike out, and he paused a minute or two to look on at the game. Tom Brown had had bad luck, but Smithy was making up for it. The Bounder of Greyfriars was giving the Fourth-Formers as much leather-hunting as they cared about, and perhaps a little more.

"Well run! Oh, good man!"

Harry Wharton's handsome face clouded for just a moment as he looked on. He wanted to play cricket that sunny afternoon, and he did not want to visit such a dingy den as the Three Fishers Inn up the river.

He felt a tap on the arm, and looked round to see Elliott at his elbow.

"You're going?"

Wharton's face cleared at once.

Duty came before pleasure, after all, and the task he had taken upon himself had become a duty.

"Yes," he said.

"You've got the tin?"

"Three pounds fifteen," said Harry. "It was all I could raise. I had thirty bob, and I've borrowed the rest. That's all right; I shall be able to settle it in a week or two."

"I—I hope he'll take it."

"He's pretty sure to," said Harry reassuringly. "The paper's worth nothing to him, except to cause you trouble, and that won't pay the cad. I should think he'll jump at it if I tell him you're leaving the school in a few days. I'd better tell him, I suppose."

"I—I fancy he knows already," muttered Elliott. "He gets things out of Skinner. Skinner sees him often. But tell him anything you like. I leave it entirely in your hands. And—and I'm awfully grateful, really."

"That's all right," said Harry.

And he wheeled his machine on to the gates.

Elliott looked after him till he disappeared into the road, and then walked away moodily to the cricket-field. He watched the game for some time, but hardly saw it. His thoughts were elsewhere. He had worried and pondered over his scrape and his danger till his nerves were all on edge, and he could think of nothing else.

Skinner and Stott came out of the School House, looking very cheery. They spotted Elliott on the cricket-ground, and came over to him.

"Comin' along?" asked Skinner.

"Eh? Where?"

"We're on a little run this afternoon," grinned Skinner. "That fool Snoop won't come; he's growing chicken-hearted lately. You come, old scout; it's going to be lively. Pon and Gaddy and Vavasour will be there."

Elliott drew a quick breath.

"Where?" he muttered.

"Same old place—the Three Fishers."

"Oh!"

"We're rather late," said Skinner. "Are you coming, Elliott?"

"No!"

"Suit yoreself," said Skinner, with a shrug of the shoulders. And he walked away to the gates with his chum.

Elliott set his lips, and moved away to the School House. So there was to be a party of the Highcliffe blades at the Three Fishers that afternoon, and Harry Wharton undoubtedly would find them there. It was too late to give Wharton a warning; he was more than a mile away by that time. Elliott went to his study in a black and troubled mood. What would the Highcliffe fellows think if they found that Harry Wharton had come to that unsavoury den to visit the rascally sharper—what would they say? Elliott was not happy as he moved restlessly about his study, waiting anxiously and miserably for Harry Wharton's return.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Surprise for Pon & Co.

"BY gad!"

Cecil Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe uttered that exclamation suddenly.

He was lounging by the open French windows of the billiard-room at the Three Fishers.

Gadsby and Vavasour were knocking the balls about with a constant click-click of the ivory.

Ponsonby smoked a cigarette as he looked out. The scene was very pleasant from that window: the long gardens, shaded by trees, the shining river beyond, on one side; and on the other a lane under green boughs, which led from the road.

It was in the latter direction that Ponsonby was gazing as he spoke in tones of surprise.

Gadsby, who was waiting for Vavasour to make a shot, looked round.

"Anybody comin'?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Not Mobby, from Highcliffe?"

"No fear! I say, Smiles"—Ponsonby turned with an air of condescension to a sallow-faced man who was watching the billiards—"do you number a chap named Wharton among your friends at Greyfriars?"

Mr. Smiles shook his head.

"I've heard Master Skinner mention the name," he said. "I ain't ever seen him."

"Well, he's coming here."

"Comin' here!" exclaimed Gadsby, in astonishment.

"Look!" answered Ponsonby.

Gadsby joined him at the window, and Vavasour followed. The three nuts of Highcliffe looked in great surprise at Harry Wharton. It was the captain of the Remove, and he was wheeling his machine from the road up the narrow lane to the inn. It was clear that he was coming to the Three Fishers, a place strictly out of bounds for both Greyfriars and Highcliffe fellows.

Gadsby burst into a chuckle.

"My hat! Have we found him out?" he grinned. "Is the spotless, lofty, unapproachable Wharton tarred with the same brush as our naughty selves?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's comin' here," grinned Ponsonby. "Sure you don't know that chap, Smiles?"

Mr. Smiles glanced from the open window, and shook his head.

"No, sir, that I don't."

"Have you seen him here before, marker?"

The marker looked out.

"The young gent's a stranger to me, sir," he answered.

Ponsonby was puzzled. At the sight of Harry Wharton coming to the inn he had suspected at once that Wharton was addicted to his own shady practices. It was the kind of suspicion that naturally jumped into Pon's mind. But if it was not that, what did Wharton want there? So far as his habits were known, a public-house was the last place he was likely to visit, especially one with such an unenviable reputation as the Three Fishers.

The Greyfriars junior left his bicycle at the garden gate, and Ponsonby noticed that he carefully placed it where it would be screened by a bank of rhododendrons. Wharton did not want his bike to be seen there by anyone who might recognise it, as Pon guessed.

"He's doing this on the q.t., anyhow," said Pon.

"Plain enough," agreed Gadsby.

"I'm expectin' Skinner an' his friends," remarked Ponsonby. "But fancy Wharton! He can't know we're here."

"He doesn't see us," grinned Vavasour.

Wharton had entered the garden, but was not looking towards the billiard-room. He was going round to the main door of the place.

"Hail him!" suggested Gadsby.

Ponsonby stepped out.

"Hallo, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton stopped as his name was called, and looked round quickly. He was in forbidden precincts, and he did not want to be seen there. He knitted his brows, and his cheeks flushed as he saw Ponsonby, with Gadsby and Vavasour grinning behind him.

"Come in this way, dear boy," said Ponsonby.

From Pon's manner it would hardly have been guessed that he was on fighting terms with Harry Wharton and his friends at Greyfriars. But Pon was curious now. He wanted to know why Wharton was there, and it suited him to be civil.

Harry thought quickly. In order to see Mr. Smiles he must inquire for him in the house, and he shrank from appearing in the public part of the place. As Pon was an habitue of the Three Fishers, he thought it possible that Pon might be able to tell him just where to find Mr. Smiles, which would save him the painful ordeal of inquiring after him. So, as Pon was civil for once, Harry changed his direction, and came towards the group of nuts at the French windows.

"Fancy meetin' you here!" grinned Gadsby. "Quite a surprise!"

"Absolutely!" chortled Vavasour. "Naughty, bad boy!"

Wharton crimsoned.

"I've come here to see a man," he said quickly.

"So have we—several men," grinned Gadsby. "We shall be done with the table soon, if you'd like a hundred up."

"I haven't come for anything of that kind," said Harry quietly. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find a man named Smiles. If you can, I'll be obliged."

"Charley Smiles?" exclaimed Ponsonby.

"I only know his surname," said Harry. "But I've no doubt it's the man. Is he here, do you know?"

"I should say so," answered Ponsonby. "Smiles, old scout, here's a friend inquirin' after you. Show up!"

Mr. Smiles put his bullet head out of the French windows.

"Arternoon, sir!" he said.

"Good-afternoon!" said Harry, with an effort. "Are you Mr. Smiles?"

"If I ain't, I'm his twin brother," answered Mr. Smiles humorously. "But I reckon I am Charley Smiles, at your service, sir."

"I've called to see you," said Harry.

"Which I can only say you're very welcome," answered Mr. Smiles. He was very civil—a well-dressed Greyfriars fellow might prove a valuable acquaintance to Mr. Smiles. He had done very well out of Elliott of the Remove, and he made some small profits from Skinner & Co. Wharton looked as if he might be worth more than those merry youths.

"Can I speak to you in private?" asked Harry.

"Cert'nly."

"Too bad!" murmured Ponsonby, with a mocking grin. "Charley, you're beginnin' to have secrets from your pals."

"Oh, sir!" said Charley.

"You've got somethin' specially good for the race on Saturday, Wharton?" asked Ponsonby.

"No!" snapped Wharton. "I didn't know there was a race on Saturday."

"Wharton!" murmured Mr. Smiles, making a note of the name.

"You didn't know?" said Ponsonby. "My dear man, where have you lived?"

"Where races in war-time are considered disgusting and rotten!" answered Wharton tartly.

"Dear me!" said Pon. "There are persons who think so, I believe! Charley, old sport, I believe this chap has come to give you a sermon, not a bet."

Mr. Smiles was looking very curiously at Harry.

"Well, I'm at the young gentleman's service," he said. "I'll come into the garden, sir, if you'd like to speak private."

"Thank you!" said Harry.

Mr. Smiles joined him outside, and they moved off to the benches under the trees further on. Ponsonby & Co. looked after them curiously.

"Hoity-toity!" said Gadsby. "Lofty as ever—what? What price raggin' the cad before we let him get away, you fellows?"

Ponsonby nodded, his eyes gleaming. Wharton's manner had not pleased the dandy of Highcliffe.

"If he's come to be sportin', we'll take him in like a man an' a brother," he said.

"If he hasn't, we'll teach him not to come here with his nose in the air, preachin' at a chap. You two finish your game, while I keep an eye on him."

"Right-ho!"

The billiard-balls clicked again, while Cecil Ponsonby stood in the doorway smoking a cigarette and watching Harry Wharton in talk with Mr. Smiles under the oaks.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Not a Success!

HARRY WHARTON sat down on the bench, feeling extremely uncomfortable. Mr. Smiles lighted a cigar while he waited for him to speak, suppressing his surprise. There was something about Wharton which revealed that he had not come there for any shady follies like Ponsonby & Co. He looked as if he would be a valuable pigeon to pluck, certainly; but as if the plucking would be an extremely difficult task. But Mr. Smiles was all civility, as yet. He was very curious to know what this junior, so different from Pon and Gaddy and Skinner and the rest wanted with him.

"I've come for another fellow," said Harry, breaking the silence at last, and coughing a little as he caught the strong whiff of Mr. Smiles' cigar.

"Master Skinner?" asked the sharper.

"No. Elliott."

"Oh, Master Elliott!" said Mr. Smiles. "I ain't seen that young gent for a long time, and we used to be such pals. P'r'aps Master Elliott has sent you to settle up a little bill—what?"

"I've come about that," said Harry.

"Good man!" answered Mr. Smiles. "Seven pun will come in very useful to a man now, I do say! Master Elliott wants his little paper back now that he's going away—what?"

"Oh, you've heard that he's going away?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I've heard so—one of the young gents mentioned it when I asked arter him," said the sharper. "I was expecting to 'ear from him first. I don't think he'd go away and leave his old pal Charley in the larch—I don't think he'd care to." And the sharper grinned, making clear that he meant Elliott would not dare.

"You've got Elliott's I O U for seven pounds," said Harry.

Mr. Smiles tapped a fat pocket-book in his breast-pocket.

"Safe 'ere," he said. "Ready to 'and over as soon as Master Elliott pays up, and I've been waitin' a long time, too."

"Elliott has paid you four pounds already, I understand," said Wharton.

"Do you?" said the sharper, with an extremely unpleasant look. "I don't think you've got it right, Master Wharton. Seven pounds is the sum."

"But Elliott——"

"Master Elliott has paid a little in the way of interest, owin' to my letting the debt stand over," explained Mr. Smiles calmly. "It may amount to four quid. I dessay it does. That makes no difference. Seven pounds is the sum on this scrap o' paper, and it don't go a penny under."

Wharton drew a deep breath. He was coming to the tussle now. The rascal had an ugly and obstinate look, but Wharton did not think he would refuse hard cash for a piece of paper which was, after all, worthless.

"Now, look here, Mr. Smiles," he said, as calmly as he could. "Elliott is in a bad way; he simply can't pay the seven pounds. He has paid you four pounds, and he's willing to pay you the other three. Will you let him have the paper for that?"

"No."

"It's worth nothing."

The Nuts greet Wharton! (*See Chapter 3.*)

"Not in a law court," said Mr. Smiles, with a leer. "I knows that! But that paper showed to his headmaster would get him pushed out of his 'igh-class school fast enough, I reckon."

"He is leaving, anyway, on Saturday."

"Don't I know it?" sneered Mr. Smiles. "He's got me there, the young rascal! He knowed that was comin', and he sent me a little 'ere, and a little there, to keep me quiet till he was gone—hay? But there's his people, sir. There's his rich uncle that all his money comes from; and his uncle can pay me my little bit, too, if I ask him."

"You must surely know that Elliott's uncle would pay you nothing!" exclaimed Wharton.

"He might, and he might not. But if he didn't, it would cost Master Elliott more than seven quid, I 'ear," answered Mr. Smiles shrewdly. "I fancy Master Elliott wouldn't let that paper go to his uncle for seven quid. Don't you beat about the bush with me, Master Wharton! I'm fledged. I've got my eye teeth cut. Master Elliott dare not let his uncle see that paper."

Wharton was silent.

"Why," exclaimed the sharper warmly—"why, it's generous of me to let it go for seven quid! Some men would ask a tenner, seein' that the paper's valuable. But I'm an honest man. Seven pounds is the sum, and for seven quid there's the rag!"

He opened his pocket-book, and took out the scrap of paper, as if to tempt Wharton with the sight of it.

He held it up for the junior to see, taking care, however, to keep it out of the reach of a sudden snatch.

Wharton looked at it.

Ninian Elliott's signature was easily enough recognised.

"There's the paper, if you care to take it," said Mr. Smiles.

"I can't pay you seven pounds."

Mr. Smiles shrugged his shoulders, and replaced the paper carefully in his fat pocket-book, and slid the book back into his pocket. He rose from the bench.

"Then it ain't any good wasting further time," he said.

Wharton's heart sank; but he made another effort. He opened his little leather purse, and took out the three pounds fifteen he had collected before leaving Greyfriars.

"There's fifteen shillings over your just claim, Mr. Smiles," he said. "Take the lot, and give me the paper!"

Mr. Smiles paused.

There was an avaricious glitter in his deep-set, narrow eyes. He wanted money. Like most gentlemen of his profession, Charley Smiles was generally in want of money. The I O U brought him an occasional ten-shilling note from the unfortunate Elliott; but three pounds fifteen in a lump tempted him.

"That's a good price for a bit of paper, Mr. Smiles," said Harry, as pleasantly as he could force himself to speak to the man. "Make it a bargain!"

"It's 'ard," said Mr. Smiles, with a shake of the head. "But seeing as Master Elliott is going to Canady——" He seemed to reflect. "Three pun fifteen! A chap who can raise three pun fifteen can raise seven quid, Master Wharton!"

"It's not Elliott's money," said Harry, colouring. "A—a friend's raised this to help him out of his scrape."

Mr. Smiles winked into space. He had no doubt that Elliott could obtain money from his wealthy uncle, and had, in fact, done so to pay this debt. Mr. Smiles' view of Wharton's mission was that he had come to buy cheap what Mr. Smiles wanted to sell dear. And Charley Smiles had his own ideas about that.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Harry.

"You drive a 'ard bargain," said Mr. Smiles, with a sigh. "But I'm not a 'ard man to deal with. 'And it over, and there's your paper."

Mr. Smiles seemed to be in a mood more of sorrow than of anger.

"Here you are, then," said Harry, greatly relieved.

Mr. Smiles examined the currency-notes carefully, and counted the odd silver, Wharton watching him impatiently.

"It's right, isn't it?" he exclaimed.

"That's right," said Mr. Smiles, slipping the money into his trousers-pocket, and smiling. "Three-pun-fifteen! That leaves Master Elliott owin' me three-pun-five!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Three-pun-five!" said Mr. Smiles.

He walked away towards the billiard-room.

Wharton stood dumbfounded for a moment.

It was difficult to realise the utter baseness of the man. He had taken the money, and did not intend to hand over Elliott's paper in exchange.

As that dawned on Wharton's mind his eyes blazed, and he rushed after Mr. Smiles and caught him by the shoulder.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"'Allo!"

"Give me the paper!" shouted Wharton. "You agreed to give me the paper for what I handed you!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Mr. Smiles.

"Will you give it to me?"

"No, I wont!"

"Then give me the money back!" exclaimed Wharton.

Mr. Smiles shook his head.

"That cash is paid on account," he said. "The paper's there as soon as the rest is paid. I can't say fairer than that. 'Ere, 'ands off!"

He staggered back as Wharton rushed on him, hitting out furiously. The captain of the Remove, swindled out of the sum he had raised with difficulty to redeem Elliott's paper, lost his temper—which was not surprising. He had a vague idea of taking his money back by force—not an easy task, as he was a boy against a man. As a matter of fact, it was hopeless, for there was plenty of help at hand for the honourable Mr. Smiles.

The sharper staggered under Wharton's lashing fists, and shouted hoarsely:

"'Elp! 'Elp, 'ere!"

"This way, you fellows!" shouted Ponsonby.

It was the marker, or a potman, that Mr. Smiles expected to come to his aid; but it was Ponsonby & Co. who arrived. Pon and Gadsby and Vavasour came up with a rush.

"Stand back!" shouted Wharton, his eyes blazing. "That scoundrel has robbed me!"

"What a yarn!" grinned Ponsonby. "Nail him!"

"'Elp a cove, young gents!" panted Mr. Smiles, whose red, fat nose had already suffered under Wharton's lashing knuckles.

The Highcliffians piled on Wharton at once. Those cheery young gentlemen were not troubled by any considerations of fair play.

Harry Wharton's blood was up now, and he was a difficult handful, even for the four of them.

His mission had been a ghastly failure. He had not improved matters for Elliott, and he had been swindled of all the cash he had. Now he was likely to get a thorough ragging thrown in.

But he was a dangerous customer to corner.

Vavasour was hurled back by a drive on the jaw that knocked him, half silly, into the grass, and he stayed there, groaning.

Heavy blows fell on Wharton from Gaddy and Pon and Mr. Smiles, who was quite infuriated by the damage to his nose. He hardly noticed them. He struck out fiercely in return, and Gadsby yelled and went down, his hand clasping his eye, which was closed. Mr. Smiles received an upper-cut that jarred every tooth in his head, and hurled him, dizzy, against a tree.

Ponsonby backed away, finding himself alone against Wharton for the moment. Harry rushed on him, and sent him whirling with a crashing blow in the face.

But Gaddy was up again by that time. Mr. Smiles rushed on, and the fat marker came out of the billiard-room, and a potman came tearing round the house.

Wharton, in the midst of so many foes, was simply overwhelmed.

Pommelled and hustled and dragged, he was whirled down the path to the gate, and pitched fairly over it into the lane outside.

Ponsonby took his bicycle, and sent it spinning out of the gates, and it fell with a crash across the junior's legs as he lay breathless.

Harry sat up dazedly in the dust.

The Highcliffe juniors lined the gate, jeering. The potman leered at him, and the marker chortled. Wharton stared at them dizzily, feeling as if he had been in the middle of an earthquake.

"You 'ook it!" gasped Mr. Smiles. "You 'ook it, you young ruffian! And you tell Master Elliott, what you've come from, that if he don't pay his just debts he'll get into trouble."

Ponsonby & Co. strolled back to the billiard-room. Wharton rose painfully to his feet outside the gate. Over the gate Mr. Smiles shook his fat fist at him. His jaw was aching, his teeth felt loose, and his nose was streaming red, and the enraged sharper hurled a volley of vile language at the Greyfriars junior.

"You young 'ound!" he roared, with a sprinkling of oaths. "You talk to me—you and Elliott, too—young swindler! You 'ear me? To-morrer I'm coming to see young Elliott. You 'ear? I'll wait for ten minutes for the young thief at the Friardale cross-roads at half-past five. He'll bring me the seven pounds he owes me. Mind, if he don't, I'll come straight on to the school, and show this here paper to his 'eadmaster, and then send it by registered post to his uncle! You tell 'im that! Seven quid, what he owes me, or else I'll show 'im up! Seven quid is the sum!"

Wharton did not reply.

There was evidently nothing further doing at the Three Fishers, and against such odds there was no possibility of recovering his money.

He picked up his bicycle, panting for breath.

As he started wheeling it away, Mr. Smiles still hurling abuse across the gate, Skinner and Stott came up the lane from the high-road.

They stared blankly at the dusty, dishevelled captain of the Remove.

"By gad!" ejaculated Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott, in great merriment. "Wharton the Magnificent chucked out of a pub! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton did not answer. He did not feel equal to a row with the two black sheep of the Remove just then. Aching in every limb, he wheeled his bicycle back to the road, and mounted. Skinner and Stott, chortling, went into the Three Fishers, to join the cheery youths from Highcliffe.

Wharton, with an aching body and a heavy heart, mounted, and rode away for Greyfriars. His mission had been a hopeless failure, and he had black news for Elliott of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major is Wrathy!

CRASH!

The door of Study No. 10 flew open under the impact of Bolsover major's heavy boot.

Elliott, who was staring gloomily from the window, looked round angrily.

Bolsover major strode into the study.

The bully of the Remove was in a savage temper. He wanted to play for the Remove that afternoon, and he had been refused a place in the eleven. The fact that Tom Redwing was much better worth a place did not interest Bolsover. His lordly will and pleasure had been thwarted, and he was angry and disappointed.

"Don't make such a thundering row!" snapped Elliott.

Bolsover major scowled at him.

"Oh, shut up!" was his polite response.

The Remove bully was in a humour for a quarrel with anyone, and when he was in such a humour he generally quarrelled with his study-mate. Life in No. 10 was, in fact, generally of the cat-and-dog variety.

As Bolsover was a big fellow, with tremendous punching powers, Elliott did not seek trouble with him as a rule. There were few fellows in the Remove who could stand up to Bolsover major, and he took full advantage of his size and strength. Bolsover had his good points, but consideration for the weak was hardly one of them.

But Elliott was in an irritable temper himself that afternoon. His nerves were in rags. Bolsover major's truculence was likely to cause trouble in the study.

"Did you ever hear such rot?" snapped Bolsover major, glaring at Elliott as if to dare him to contradict. "Wharton's standing out of the match, and that fathead Field has put Redwing in, instead of me! Cheek!"

"Oh, rot!"

"What?"

"Rot!" answered Elliott.

"Perhaps you think Redwing's a better cricketer than I am?" roared Bolsover.

"I know he is!"

"Oh, do you?" ejaculated Bolsover, taken aback.

"Yes; and so do you!" said Elliott tartly.

"You cheeky rat!" shouted Bolsover.

"Oh, shut up! You can't play cricket for toffee!" snapped Elliott.

Bolsover major stared at him blankly. This was quite a new tone for his study-mate to take.

"I can't play cricket?" he gasped.

"No; you can't! You handle a bat as if it were a mallet."

"A—a mallet?"

"Yes, or a coke-hammer."

"Why, you—you—you——" stuttered Bolsover major.

"And you bowl like a kid in the Second Form," continued Elliott, apparently finding some solace for his inward worry by ragging Bolsover major. "You're too clumsy and thick-headed and obstinate to learn!"

"Do you want me to mop up the study with you?" shouted Bolsover major, greatly enraged by these unexpected home-truths.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Bolsover major pushed back his cuffs, and strode right at his study-mate. Half as much as Elliott had said would have made a fight inevitable.

Elliott put up his hands with a savage look.

Bolsover major's bullying, on top of his other troubles, was too much to endure, and he was feeling quite as savage as the bully of the Remove.

"I'll smash you, you cheeky cad!" exclaimed Bolsover, as he attacked. "Now, then, that's for your nose!"

Elliott guarded the drive, and it was Bolsover's nose that got the first blow. The burly Removite uttered a yell.

A moment more and they were fighting hammer-and-tongs.

Elliott was by no means his study-mate's match; but he put up a fierce fight, and Bolsover was looking damaged by the time Elliott went to the carpet.

He glared down on the junior.

"Had enough?" he gasped, as he mopped his streaming nose.

"You rotter!" panted Elliott.

"Now can I play cricket, you cheeky worm?"

"No, you can't!"

"Get up, and have some more, then!"

Elliott scrambled to his feet.

The fight recommenced, and Bolsover major received some punishment. But his heavy attack was not to be withstood, and Elliott went to the floor again at last, where he lay gasping.

"That settles you!" panted Bolsover.

Elliott gasped for breath. He was quite done.

"Now," said Bolsover savagely, "can I play cricket—eh?"

"No!" panted Elliott.

"Get up, then!"

"I can't, you bullying cad!"

"Can I play cricket?" roared Bolsover major.

"No!"

The bully of the Remove clenched his hands again. But even Bolsover had his limits, and he would not hit a fellow who was down.

He grasped Elliott by the collar, and whirled him along the carpet to the door.

"Out you go!" he said. "You can come back when you're civil!"

Elliott struggled feebly; but he was whirled through the doorway and pitched into the passage.

Bolsover major stood grinning at him from the doorway as he scrambled painfully to his feet there.

"Like to come back?" he jeered.

The junior gave him a dark look, and limped away down the passage. Bolsover major laughed mockingly, and turned back into the study.

He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and stood looking out of the window in the direction of the playing-fields. From the distance a shout floated to his ears.

"Well bowled, Squiff!"

Bolsover major snorted.

Another shout in a few minutes:

"Caught! Oh, well caught! Good old Redwing!"

Another snort from Bolsover major. He did not see the catch, but it was probably one he could not have made. Tom Redwing, the sailorman's son of Hawkscliff was doing well for his side.

Bolsover major scowled into the quadrangle.

He was not feeling quite satisfied with himself, as a matter of fact. It was certainly not Elliott's fault that he had been left out of the cricket team; and Elliott was leaving Greyfriars at the end of the week. Bolsover wished he had not knocked him about quite so much, considering that.

"His own fault, the silly, cheeky ass!" muttered Bolsover; but he felt uneasy, all the same.

A step sounded in the doorway, and he looked round. If it was Elliott coming back, Bolsover had some vague idea of expressing regret in a rough, gruff way. But it was Harry Wharton who looked into the study.

"Elliott here?" he asked.

"Can't you see he isn't?" snapped Bolsover major nastily.

"Do you know where he is?" asked Wharton quietly.

"No; and don't care!"

Wharton glanced at the burly Removite's swollen nose.

"You haven't been fighting with Elliott?" he exclaimed.

"Suppose I have?" growled Bolsover. "No business of yours, is it?"

"You confounded brute," exclaimed Wharton angrily, "to set on the chap now, when he's——"

He broke off suddenly.

"I'd forgotten that he was leaving on Saturday," muttered Bolsover major, a little shamefaced.

"I wasn't thinking of that."

"Eh? Nothing the matter with Elliott, is there?" asked Bolsover. "I've noticed he's been down in the mouth for a long time, now I think of it."

Wharton did not answer the question, but turned away. Percy Bolsover made a step after him, and stopped again. He had been rather puzzled at Elliott's attitude, for it was very unusual for his study-mate to meet him half-way when trouble threatened. Bolsover was not a very observant fellow, but he could not fail to be aware that Elliott had seemed to have some trouble on his mind for days past.

He resumed his staring out of the window in a more dissatisfied mood than ever. He wished he had kicked Bunter, or punched one of the Fourth, instead of rowing with Elliott that afternoon as a vent for his wrath. But it was rather too late to wish that now.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Last Hope!

HARRY WHARTON looked for Elliott after leaving Bolsover's study. He had hardly glanced at the cricket as he came in. Elliott's trouble, and the fact that his well-meant help had made matters worse instead of better, occupied all his thoughts now.

He found the junior in the Common-room, alone there. Everybody else was out of doors on that sunny afternoon, mostly either playing cricket or watching the game.

Elliott was in one of the big armchairs, and he did not rise as Harry came in, but looked at him inquiringly. His face showed very visible traces of his encounter with Bolsover major, as Wharton noted with a feeling of irritation against the bully of the Remove.

"Well," said Elliott, "you've seen him?"

"Smiles? Yes."

"Did he take the money?"

"Yes; but——"

Elliott's face brightened.

"Good! I thought perhaps he would, but I hardly dared to hope he would. I say, that's good, Wharton! You've got the paper safe?"

Wharton coloured.

"I'm sorry, Elliott—no!"

"Wha-at! But you say he took the money!" exclaimed the junior, his face falling.

"He took the money, and refused to give me the paper," said Harry.

"He—he—he did! But—but he couldn't!" gasped Elliott blankly. "Why, that's stealing! It's swindling! It's—it's——"

He broke off in utter dismay.

"He did," said Wharton. "I couldn't have guessed that anybody could be such a sneaking thief, Elliott! I might have been on my guard, only—only he pretended to agree, and I was taken in. He took the money, and said you could have the paper on paying the balance, after agreeing——"

"Then we're where we were before," said Elliott gloomily. "I can't pay him the balance."

"I'm afraid it's worse than that, old chap," said Wharton. "I went for him when he wouldn't give me the paper, or the money back."

"I hope you hurt him!" said Elliott savagely.

"I did, a little; but there were a gang of Highcliffe chaps there, and they helped him. I—I was chucked out," said Harry. "And—and he's put up the price to seven pounds again, so he says; so what I've paid him counts for nothing."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And he howled out a message for you," went on Wharton. "He wants to see you at the Friardale cross-roads at half-past five to-morrow, and you're to pay him the money then."

"I can't!"

"If you don't, he says he's coming straight on to the school, after waiting ten minutes for you."

Elliott sat bolt upright.

"Coming here?"

"So he says."

"Oh, I say! What shall I do?"

Elliott sat aghast, staring at the captain of the Remove. The news seemed to have overwhelmed him, as well it might.

"Coming here!" he repeated faintly. "To see the Head?"

"I suppose so!"

The junior groaned.

"Then I'm done for! If there's a row here, my uncle will hear of it. He's sure to, even if Smiles doesn't tell him. Oh, what a fool I was to let you chip in—you've ruined everything!"

Wharton crimsoned.

He had not been successful, but he had done his best; he had suffered in Elliott's cause. But the wretched junior was thinking only of himself.

"I did all I could!" he muttered.

"Coming to Greyfriars!" said Elliott. "Do you think the Head will let me stay even till Saturday, after that man's been here, and he's seen the paper signed by my hand? You've done it now!"

"I don't see——"

"What did you want to hit him for?" exclaimed Elliott, forgetting his own remark of a few minutes before. "That was bound to make him wild. He might do anything when he's wild—he's a boozy, vicious brute with a rotten temper. You might have left him alone, at least!"

Wharton was silent.

Elliott jumped up from the chair, and paced to and fro, his face pale and his eyes gleaming restlessly.

"It's all up now! My uncle won't have anything to do with me when he hears of it—and the Head won't let me stay at Greyfriars, either. I'm done for all round! The rotter! The cad! Where does he think a chap in the Remove can get seven pounds from in a hurry?"

"I'm afraid he thinks you can get money if you like," said Harry. "You see, paying him three-pounds-fifteen to-day shows there's money about."

"But that was your money!"

"Yes, but——"

"But he will think that if that much can be raised, I can raise more—I understand. It would have been better if you hadn't paid him anything."

"I know that—now!"

"I've got to get the money from somewhere!" muttered Elliott feverishly. "I've got to meet him, of course, and pay him. That's the only way. Where can I get the money from?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"I must get it!" exclaimed Elliott shrilly. "He's got to be paid. You can see that! You must help me, Wharton!"

"I——"

"You've landed me in this! He might have kept quiet if you hadn't pitched into him! You did that! Now he's got to be paid; and the money's got to come from somewhere!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You can raise it among your friends," said Elliott bitterly. "Mauleverer will lend you money—he wouldn't

me. Inky's got a lot of tin. Smithy would lend you money."

"I couldn't repay it if they did!"

"It's up to you!" exclaimed Elliott. "I didn't ask you to interfere, did I? You offered to help me. Now you've landed me worse than ever. It's up to you, and you can't leave me in the lurch. Besides, I can pay you later—my uncle treats me well, and he's going to give me the money for my outfit. I can save the tin out of that, and pay you easily!"

Wharton shook his head.

"It might be managed, Elliott," he answered. "But, don't you see—the man is an utter swindler! You might meet him to-morrow, and pay him the seven pounds, and he might play the same trick over again, and keep back the paper."

"He wouldn't if I pay him right up—he couldn't!"

"I believe he would! If you take him such a sum of money, it will only make him all the more certain that you can raise money when you like. It will make him more greedy," said Wharton quietly. "He will think that that bit of paper is worth no end of money to him—so long as he keeps it. And he will keep it, as he did before. I feel sure of it!"

"He wouldn't—he couldn't!"

"I tell you——"

"Oh, you'd tell me anything, after landing me in this horrible mess!" said Elliott bitterly. "I'm done for, and you've done it!"

Wharton set his lips.

But a glance at the junior's white, harassed face disarmed his anger.

Wharton's view of the matter was evidently the correct one. Mr. Smiles made it clear enough that he was utterly unscrupulous; and it was certain that he would not readily part with the paper that brought him such profits. But Elliott simply dared not recognise that that was the case. Whatever he felt, he would not admit that it was so. The truth was too terrifying to be faced. To pay, and pay, and pay again, and finally to be betrayed by the sharper when his greedy demands had to be refused—that was a prospect the wretched junior had not the nerve to face, and self-deception was his only resource.

Self-deception was not much use to a fellow with Wharton's clear head and steady nerve; but Elliott was not built on the same lines as Wharton, or he would never have been in the scrape at all. And now he was not quite himself. His nerves were in tatters, all the more through his recent hammering at Bolsover major's hands.

Elliott paused at last in his hurried walk to and fro, and fixed his gleaming eyes on Wharton's troubled face.

"Will you help me?" he muttered feverishly. "Will you try to raise the money? I tell you I'll settle it later—in a few weeks; I sha'n't leave you owing the money!"

"And you'll trust that man, after what he's done?" asked Harry.

"Can I do anything else?" panted Elliott. "Can I let him come on here? Even if it's as you say, I daren't let him see the Head. I'm done for if he does, both with my uncle and here! What can I do?"

"You can go to the Head, and make a clean breast of it," said Harry. "That is the best thing you can do, in the circumstances."

"Oh, you're mad!" exclaimed Elliott. "He would pitch me out of the school—I shall have to go—by the next train!"

"I don't believe so, since you're leaving on Saturday."

"He would tell my uncle, anyway!"

"Most likely not——"

"My uncle's coming here for me on Saturday!" cried Elliott shrilly. "Do you think the Head would keep that dark, when my uncle sees him, and asks him about me, and gets his report of me?"

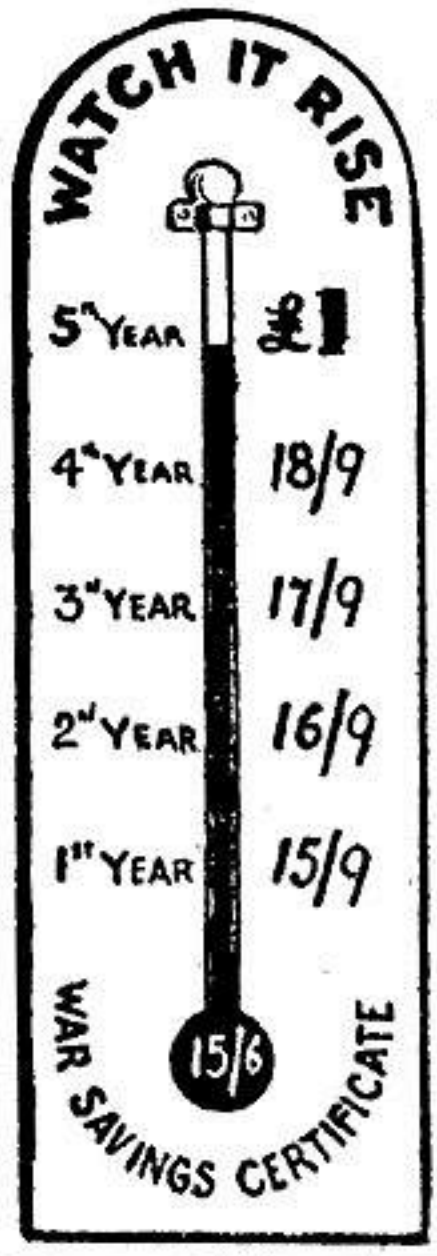
Wharton was silent.

"You know it would come out—it must! I tell you I've got to pay the man. Even if he kept the paper it would stave him off. So long as I keep him at arm's length till I sail for Canada that's all serene!"

"He wouldn't be kept at arm's length until then, Elliott," said Harry quietly. "He knows you're leaving on Saturday—he knows you're going to Canada—he's got it all from Skinner, or somebody. If you pay him seven pounds to-morrow, he will think he can blackmail you to any tune he likes. He won't give you the paper—he will demand another seven pounds—perhaps ten or twenty——"

"You're making out that he's a regular criminal!"

"He is a criminal!" said Harry. "Any man who plays cards for money with a schoolboy is that, in my view!"



"Oh, don't give me your dashed sermons now!" hissed Elliott fiercely. "It's a bit too late for that. I've got to pay him, and you've got to help me! You can't get out of it! Will you find the money, and take my word for it that I'll pay you when my uncle gives me the tin for my outfit?"

"I tell you it's useless!"

"Will you do it?" shouted Elliott.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If you insist upon it, Elliott, I must do it," he said. "If you think I've made matters worse for you, I must do it. I only warn you in advance that it will be throwing away the money, and that the man will keep the paper, and blackmail you for bigger sums afterwards."

"It's all very well to talk; but you can't suggest any other way of dealing with him!" growled Elliott. "I don't believe he's such a rotter as you make out. He was waxy to-day because you pitched into him—and no wonder! You're too jolly high-and-mighty, Wharton! You think you can punch a man, and he's going to be civil afterwards. I believe he will give me my paper if I pay him his money."

"If you think so, I'll find the money somehow, and you can try," said Harry quietly. "It's possible that you're right, of course."

"I'm sure of it!" said Elliott eagerly. "I—I say, don't mind the things I've been saying—I'm a bit excited—and a bit silly through that beast Bolsover punching me so hard I'm really very much obliged to you. But I feel sure it will be all right if I pay the man—I'm certain of it!"

"It's a go, then!" said Harry.

And he left the Common-room with a heavy heart, and went out to join the cricketers.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Raising the Wind!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry greeted his chum in great spirits. The cricketers were coming off the field as Harry Wharton arrived on Little Side.

"How has it gone?" asked Harry.

Bob laughed.

"How could it go against a scratch lot like Temple and his gang?" he answered. "We didn't have to bat a second time. Temple calls that cricket. Ha, ha!"

"Our win," said Squiff, with a grin. "I won't say it was due to the Remove having an extra good skipper this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five went in to tea, four of them in great spirits. Harry Wharton was very grave, however, and his chums glanced at him very curiously once or twice. His other engagement that afternoon puzzled them a little. They had heard nothing of it till right up to the commencement of the match.

The five had their rations, and what other comestibles they were lucky enough to possess, in Study No. 1 for tea together. Wharton tried to join in the cheery talk, but he found it difficult. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came to the point.

"The esteemed Wharton is in a mood of terrific thinkfulness," he remarked. "If he has something on the brain, let him confide it to his excellent pals."

"On your mind, Inky means," chuckled Bob Cherry. "What's the matter, Harry? You've been looking for trouble and finding it, I can see that."

Wharton flushed.

"I want to raise some tin," he said.

"Pooh! Is that all? I've got ninepence you can have," said Bob.

"Fathead!"

"Ninepence not enough? It's not a bad offer for war-time," said Bob. "You can buy nearly threepennyworth of grub for ninepence, you know."

"You were in funds this morning," said Nugent. "Have you been taking up Skinner's game, and strewing the poker-table with your cash?"

Nugent's remark was meant humorously, but Wharton's flush deepened as he made it.

"I want seven pounds!" he said.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Not seven hundred?" gasped Nugent.

"No, seven."

The door of Study No. 1 opened, and Harold Skinner smiled in.

"Hallo, Wharton! What luck did you have?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" snapped Harry.

"At the Three Fishers, you know!"

Wharton gave him a dangerous look.

but the cheery Skinner rattled on unabashed.

"Fancy a solemn old sobersides like you, Wharton, going in for a flutter in your old age! I hope you had good luck."

"You haven't been to the Three Fishers, Wharton?" asked Johnny Bull, in astonishment.

"I saw him there," chuckled Skinner.

"I have," said Harry. "Skinner knows that I was not there for any of his kind of blackguardly rot, though."

"How should I know?" answered Skinner coolly. "I know you were there. I saw you chucked out by the potman and the billiard-marker."

"What?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"What would the Head say?" chortled Skinner. "Oh, my hat! Wharton, the spotless, chucked out of a pub! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner roared.

His roar was suddenly cut short as Wharton ran across the study and grasped him by the collar.

"Here, leggo—— Yarooh!" howled Skinner, as he went spinning into the passage.

Wharton slammed the door after him, and returned to the tea-table with a crimson face.

"Would you mind explaining what this means?" asked Johnny Bull, in rather a grim tone.

Wharton gave him an angry look.

"If that means that you believe a word of Skinner's, Bull, I don't choose to explain!" he snapped.

"Easy does it!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It doesn't," answered Johnny Bull calmly. "I think you ought to explain, all the same."

"I went to the Three Fishers because I'm a silly ass, if you want to know!" said Wharton bitterly. "I was trying to get another silly fool out of a scrape, and I've landed myself in it as well as him, that's all!"

"Elliott?" asked Nugent quietly.

"No need to ask that," said Bob. "It's Elliott plain enough. That's why Wharton chucked the cricket-match after stopping to speak to Elliott. I hadn't thought of it before, but it's plain enough."

Wharton shifted uncomfortably.

"It's got to be kept dark if I tell you," he said. "It was Elliott, of course. He's in trouble, and I tried to help him out of it."

"And now you want seven quid?"

"Yes."

"Will that see him out of his trouble?"

"He thinks so."

"But you don't?" asked Bob.

"I hope so," answered Harry. "He knows the man better than I do. It may be all right. After taking a hand in the thing, I can't refuse to find the money, and I hope it will turn out all right."

"You're not bound to find money for Elliott," said Johnny Bull.

"As the matter stands, I feel bound to. Of course, I'm standing this by myself," added Wharton, flushing. "I shall have to borrow the money to settle up when Elliott squares. If he doesn't, or can't, I can settle up in the long run; in fact, I shall sell my bike to do it."

"You won't sell your bike," answered Johnny Bull calmly. "I think you're an ass. I feel bound to mention that. I've noticed it about you before ——"

"Look here——"

"But you can't help it," said Johnny kindly, "and your pals are going to stand by you. I dare say we can raise the tin, and if we can't we'll stick the Bounder for a loan. Now, the word is shell out."

Johnny Bull held out a saucer for contributions. He put two pound notes in it himself. Bob Cherry added his ninepence, with rather a grimace. Nugent put in five shillings. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the wealthiest of the Co., added three pounds ten shillings.

Down on his luck! *(See Chapter 9.)*

Wharton watched the operation in great discomfort. He was clearing his chums out of money. But he could not refuse. For that matter, he would have done exactly the same for any of them. The Famous Five, like the early Christians, were ready to share things with one another.

"Five pounds fifteen and ninepence," said Johnny Bull. "I've got enough change to make it up to six quid. You only want one more. I'll go and borrow it of Smithy, if you like."

That was a surprising offer from Johnny Bull, who seldom or never asked favours of anyone.

"Leave that to me," said Harry. "As I'm doing it, I may as well have that job."

"Rot!" said Johnny. "I can undertake to settle this week, and you can't, can you?"

"Well, no."

"Leave it to me, then."

Johnny Bull left the study to visit Vernon-Smith's. He came back in a few minutes with the required pound note.

"There's the seven," he said.

Wharton took up the money.

The sum was large for juniors, and Wharton felt inwardly that it was simply throwing it away to hand it to the ruthless swindler, Charlie Smiles.

But there was no choice about that now. And even now he did not regret that he had tried to help Elliott. His regret was that he had not been successful; but in the nature of the case success had not been possible.

Without stopping to finish his tea, he went to look for Elliott. He found that unhappy youth mooching dismally about the Remove passage, with his hands in his pockets.

"There's the tin," said Harry quietly.

Elliott's hands trembled as he took it.

"I say, you're awfully good, Wharton!" he muttered. "I—I suppose this has stuck you pretty hard."

"Never mind that," said Harry, with an effort.

"Of course, I shall settle; you know that."

"I only hope this will see you out of your fix," said Harry.

"Oh, I'm sure of it!" said Elliott eagerly. 'That man Smiles is a rotter, of course, but he's not exactly a criminal. Pon has dealings with him, you know."

"Pon wouldn't give him anything in writing, I fancy," said Wharton drily.

"Well, no; and I was a fool to do it. But I shall get the paper back to-morrow, and it will be all right."

"I hope so," said Harry; and he left him with that.

He wondered whether Mr. Smiles' roguery had really any limit. Certainly if he retained the paper after being paid the full amount he would be a wretch of uncommon baseness. Wharton hoped that Elliott was right, and that he was wrong. That, at all events, would be known on the morrow.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
A Ruthless Rascal!

"HOW'S your nose?"

Bolsover major asked Elliott that question after lessons on the following day.

Elliott had been in trouble several times that day with the Form-master. It was difficult for him to keep his attention fixed on lessons, though Mr. Quelch was far from guessing the cause of his inattention.

He stared glumly at Bolsover as the latter joined him in the corridor when the Remove came out.

"None the better for your punching it yesterday, you bully!" was Elliott's answer.

And he walked away.

Bolsover major stood with clouded brow. He had intended that question as a sort of gruff expression of regret, but Elliott was not prepared to accept the olive-branch, evidently.

"He, he, he!"

Bolsover major scowled round as he caught Billy Bunter's unmelodious cackle.

Bunter was greatly tickled by that snub administered to the bully of the

Remove. It would have been wiser of him to express his amusement at a safer distance, for Bolsover's big hand descended at once on his collar.

"Well, what's the joke?" asked Bolsover grimly.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! Make him leggo, Wharton!" howled Bunter.

Harry Wharton came up.

"Let Bunter alone!" he said quietly.

Bolsover major tightened his grasp on the Owl of the Remove. The slightest opposition always raised the bullying tendencies of Percy Bolsover.

"I'll suit myself abut that!" he retorted.

"Let him go!"

"I won't!"

"You will!" said Harry; and he advanced upon the bully of the Remove with a glitter in his eyes.

It was rather the hammering of Elliott on the day before that angered Wharton than the shaking of Bunter now. He was fed up with Bolsover major's aggressiveness.

Fortunately, Mr. Quelch came out of the Form-room at that moment.

"Bolsover!" Mr. Quelch's voice was very quiet, but it seemed to cut like steel. You are bullying again, Bolsover! Release Bunter at once!"

Bolsover flushed, and obeyed.

"You will take a hundred lines, Bolsover! The next time I find you tyrannising over a smaller boy I shall cane you!"

Mr. Quelch walked on, frowning; and Billy Bunter scuttled away while he was safe. Bolsover major gave Wharton a grim, savage look, and stalked away. He no longer felt inclined to express contrition to Elliott, and when he caught sight of that junior in the quad, crossing to the gates, he only scowled after him.

Elliott was looking a good deal more cheerful now.

Owing to Wharton's efforts in raising the wind Elliott had seven pounds in his pocket, and he was feeling assured—or nearly assured—that by the payment of that sum he would recover the tell-tale paper from Mr. Smiles.

He hardly dared to think of what would happen if the sharper carried his roguery to the extent of tricking him as he had tricked Wharton. Besides, he intended to have the paper safe in his hands before he parted with the money.

Harry Wharton glanced after him as he went down to cricket practice. He, too, hoped for the best, or tried to.

Elliott walked down the lane to the cross-roads.

It was rather a public place for him to meet such a character as Charley Smiles, and he was nervously anxious to get the interview over.

Mr. Smiles was already at the place of appointment when he arrived there.

The sharper was leaning against the sign-post at the cross-roads, smoking a cigar. He grinned as Elliott came in sight, and waved his cigar to him.

"'Ere I am, old sport!" he said cheerily.

Elliott came up hurriedly.

"I—I'm glad to see you, Smiles," he said, with a miserable attempt at geniality. "I'm glad you're here."

"And I'm glad to see you, Master Elliott, if so be you've brought the spondulics," answered Mr. Smiles. "I've waited for that money long enough, I think."

"I've brought it."

Mr. Smiles' eyes glinted.

"Seven quid?" he asked.

"Yes."

The sharper stretched out a hand that was decidedly in need of washing.

"'And over!" he said laconically.

"You've got the paper?"

"Course I 'ave!"

"Well, give it to me," said Elliott.

"Money first!" said Mr. Smiles, with a leer.

Elliott drew a panting breath.

"Look here, Smiles, here's the money!" He showed it in his hand. "Now give me the paper, like a good chap!"

"A good chap I am," said Mr. Smiles. "Nono better. Only a good-natured man would 'ave waited so long for his money."

"I've paid you a good bit for waiting!" muttered Elliott.

"What was that?" demanded Mr. Smiles in a bullying tone. "I've 'ad to wait. I've 'ad to miss some good things 'cause of not 'aving that money in my pocket—my own money, too! I've lost over it! I'm out of pocket! Then you send a cocky young blackguard to see me, what punches a man's 'ead." Mr. Smiles rubbed his nose. "I've been assaulted by your pal, Master Elliott—assaulted and battered, I 'ave!"

"I'm sorry, Smiles," said Elliott, with trembling lips. "I am, really. I—I never thought Wharton would do anything of the kind. I didn't want him to. It—it was like his cheek."

"Well, I'm glad you can see that, at any rate. I don't want to be unfriendly or 'ard," said Mr. Smiles. "I'm an easy-going man, though I've been insulted, and assaulted, too. You 'aven't 'anded me the money."

"Give me the paper!"

"Can't you trust me?" demanded Mr. Smiles, bullying again at once.

"Yes, yes, of course!" muttered the wretched junior. "But—but do give me the paper, Smiles. I mustn't be seen here. I——"

"The fact is," said Mr. Smiles deliberately, "I've kept that paper longer than I wanted to. You wouldn't settle up. Now you're going away, you and your rich uncle. Arter Saturday I don't see you again. To put it business-like, Master Elliott, you can afford to pay for that bit of paper."

Elliott trembled.

"You 'and me the money," pursued Mr. Smiles. "But what with your rich uncle, who sends you money, you can afford to spring another fiver. Now, I put it to you fair and square."

"I can't!" said Elliott hoarsely. "I've had no money from my uncle. What I have here was lent me, and goodness knows when I shall pay it!"

"You must 'ave rich friends to borrer seven quids for the asking!" sneered Smiles.

"Will you give me the paper?"

"That there paper's in my pocket-book," said Mr. Smiles, tapping his chest. "It's going to stay there for the present."

"You villain!" exclaimed Elliott shrilly.

"A man ain't going to be assaulted and battered for nothin'," said Mr. Smiles. Even the callous sharper felt impelled to make some flimsy excuse for his baseness. "I've been assaulted. Look at my nose! You can thank your 'igh-and-mighty friend Wharton for this. But I'm an easy man. Feller that can raise seven quid can raise another fiver. 'And me the seven pounds now, and I'll give you my word to 'and you the paper to-morrer for a fiver! Ain't that fair an' square?"

"You wouldn't! You wouldn't! Wharton was right!" gasped Elliott. "You won't get a penny out of me unless you hand over the paper!"

A very ugly look came upon Mr. Charley Smiles' face.

"You won't pay up?" he asked.

"Not unless you give me my paper!" said Elliott desperately. "You rotter, you've been paid once, and over! And now here's the money again! Give me the paper, you thief!"

"Thief, am I?" exclaimed Mr. Smiles, working himself into a state of indignation. "Well, then, my fine young gentleman, we'll see about that. If I've been paid for the paper, I'll 'and it to your 'eadmaster, and see what he says!"

He started up the road towards Greyfriars.

Elliott looked after him, almost stupefied. Then he ran after Mr. Smiles, as the sharper knew he would, and caught him by the arm.

"Stop!" he panted.

"Let go of my arm!" answered Mr. Smiles.

"Stop, I tell you!"

"Are you going to pay up?"

"Give me the paper!"

"'Ands off!" snapped Mr. Smiles.

He strode on towards the school at a great rate, shaking off Elliott's detaining hand. The junior, with a white, terrified face, ran by his side.

"Smiles!" he panted. "You—you won't do it! You can't!"

"Can't I?" said Mr. Smiles grimly.

"I—I'll give you something!" faltered Elliott.

Mr. Smiles halted and fixed a grim look on him.

"You'll 'and me that seven quid this minit!" he said slowly and distinctly. "You'll 'and it over, and you'll bring me a fi'-pun note to-morrow at the Three Fishers, or I'm going on to your school now!"

Elliott groaned in utter misery.

Greyfriars School was in sight now, and the wretched junior was in terror of being seen with the sharper. And Mr. Smiles well understood the state of his feelings.

Mr. Smiles strode on.

"Stop!" said Elliott hastily. "I—I'll give you the money, Smiles!"

"Sharp, then!" growled Mr. Smiles.

Elliott's trembling hand passed the currency notes to him. Mr. Smiles shoved the money into his pocket, scowling.

"Now you'll give me the paper, Smiles," said Elliott, in a pleading tone. "Be a good chap, you know."

"You called me a thief a few minutes ago!" said Mr. Smiles sarcastically.

"I—I'm sorry. I didn't mean it, Smiles. Give me my paper, won't you?"

"I'll 'and over that paper for a fi'-pun note, an' cheap at the price," said the sharper. "Bring me the spondulics to the Three Fishers to-morrow and the paper's yours. I can't say fairer than that."

"I can't! I can't find the money!"

"You found this!" sneered the sharper.

"Wharton got that for me. He borrowed it——"

"Let him borrow some more for you, then."

"He couldn't—he wouldn't——"

"It'll be bad for you if he don't!" said Mr. Smiles venomously. "Tell him that! Tell him he's got to pay for punching my nose!"

"Smiles——"

"Oh, don't whine at me!" said the sharper. "I've give you my terms. You'll get more'n that out of your uncle, if what I hear from Skinner is true. You get that fi'-pun note or it'll be worse for you!"

Elliott groaned. He knew how the matter stood now. Even if he raised the money the paper would still be retained, to be held over his head for further demands. It was sheer blackmail. The sharper held the power in his hands, and intended to use it to the uttermost.

"You come along to the Three Fishers to-morrow," said Mr. Smiles. "I ain't taking a long tramp like this 'ere again.

You come, and if you don't—why, you can expect to see me at the school! Good-evening to you, Master Elliott!"

Elliott did not answer. With a contemptuous look at him, Charley Smiles swung away, taking the footpath towards the river. With a white, sick face, Elliott moved away blindly towards the school, despair in his heart. He was paying a high price for the little flutter, which had seemed so merry and doggish at the time. He was ruined, and he knew it; and there was no hope left in his breast.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major akes a Hand!

HARRY WHARTON met Elliott as the latter came in at the gates. He was anxious to know what had happened; and one look at the wretched, white face was enough. He joined the unhappy junior.

"What's happened?" he muttered.

Elliott gave him a haggard look.

"What you said would happen," he answered, in a gasping voice. "He's got the money, and won't give me the paper!"

Wharton clenched his hands.

"He wants another five pounds for it to-morrow; and then he wouldn't give it up—I know that now," said the junior drearily. "It's no good; I'm done for! It's your fault!"

Harry gave a start.

"My fault!" he said huskily.

"He says it's because you went for him——"

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "I went for him after he took the money from me and refused to give up the paper."

"If you'd let him alone he might have gone easier with me!" muttered Elliott. "You needn't have punched him. Anyway, I'm done for now! If I give him five quid to-morrow he will most likely ask ten after that; and when I'm gone home he will begin again on me there! It's all up! I've a good mind to chuck myself in the river and end it that way!"

"Don't be a fool!" said Harry sharply.

Elliott gave a miserable laugh.

"I haven't the nerve for that, either," he said. "I shall be kicked out of Greyfriars, and my uncle will turn his back on me—and serve me right! Never mind what I said just now, Wharton. I know you did your best, and I dare say it's made matters no worse. I've got to stick it out now."

He went on towards the School House, leaving the captain of the Remove in troubled thought.

The unhappy junior went into his study, glad that Bolsover was not there. He threw himself into a chair, plunged in black and bitter reflections.

"What shall I do?" he muttered aloud, again and again. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

The door opened.

Bolsover major came in, and scowled at his study-mate. But the white misery in Elliott's face caught his eyes, and his expression changed.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed, in alarm.

Elliott stared at him wretchedly without answering

Bolsover gazed at him uneasily. The terrible trouble in the unhappy lad's face touched his heart, though that heart was not a very tender one.

"I—I say," Bolsover muttered awkwardly, "you're not feeling bad over that hammering yesterday, are you? You gave it to me pretty hard, you know."

Elliott did not speak.

"Something else the matter?" asked Bolsover.

"Yes, you fool!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, shut up! Can't you give a chap a rest?" exclaimed Elliott, almost hysterically. "I'm going to be kicked out of the school to-morrow, and ruined for life! Isn't that enough for you?"

Bolsover major gave him a blank stare.

"What on earth have you been doing?" he gasped.

"Gambling with a swindling welsher—pub-haunting, playing the merry dog!" said Elliott, with bitter amusement. "Having a good time—a merry time! Don't I look as if I've enjoyed it? Oh, it's ripping!" Then his mood changed, and he covered his face with his hands. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

Bolsover major was silent for a minute or so. He could see the tears trickling through Elliott's fingers.

"Look here," he said, at last. "Tell a chap what's the matter! We've had rows in this study; but, after all—— Look here, I've got some money. Is it money you want?"

Elliott shook his head without speaking.

"Money's no good?" asked Bolsover, puzzled.

"Not unless you're a millionaire," said Elliott bitterly. "I'm being blackmailed, if you want to know, and the more I give the villain the more he wants! Now you know!"

"Well, you must be a thundering idiot!" said Bolsover. "If a man tried to blackmail me I'd slog him in the jaw! That's what I'd do. Tell me who the man is, and I'll smash him up for you, if you like! I should think I'm big enough."

Elliott grinned faintly, in spite of his misery. Bolsover major's ideas were always of a drastic nature.

"Look here, tell me how the matter stands," said Bolsover. "I ain't clever, like Wharton, I know that; but I've got some common-sense. Let's see if I can help you out. I'd do it like a shot. Honour!"

"You can't help me!"

"Let's see, anyway."

Elliott shook his head; but in his trouble a sympathetic listener was something, and he poured out the whole story at last.

Bolsover major listened, clenching his big fists, and sparring into the air occasionally, as if at a mental picture of Mr. Smiles' features.

"The awful rotter! The sneaking toad! The Hun!" Bolsover kept up a running commentary like that, as Elliott faltered out his story. "The cad! The sneaking Hun! Yah! I wish I had him here!"

He reflected when Elliott had finished.

"So it comes to this," he said. "The man's got your paper for seven quid, and you and Wharton between you more than paid the money. Now you've paid him another seven, and he still wants more?"

"Yes."

"Where does he live?"

"At the Three Fishers. What does that matter?"

"But you've just seen him about here?"

"I left him just outside the school," said Elliott. "He didn't care if he was seen with me, the cad!"

Bolsover major drew a quick breath.

"Was he going home?" he asked.

"He went down the footpath towards the towing-path," said Elliott. "He was going home, I suppose."

"It's a good many miles to the Three Fishers," said Bolsover major. "How long since he left you?"

"Eh? About a quarter of an hour," said Elliott irritably. "What the dickens are you asking such questions for?"

"Because I've got an idea. He's got the paper on him?"

"Of course."

"And he's got the seven quid he's just stolen from you?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And he's walking back to the Three Fishers by the towing-path, is he?" said Bolsover major. "Rather a lonely walk for him. And he's only been gone a quarter of an hour!"

"What on earth are you driving at?"

"Never mind! I'll see you later, Elliott."

Bolsover major strode out of the study, leaving Elliott staring after him blankly.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover's Way!

MR. SMILES strolled homeward in the sunset in a cheery mood. There were seven pounds in his pocket, and more to come—much more, if Mr. Smiles played his cards well. No wonder he was cheery!

"I reckon," Mr. Smiles murmured, as he lighted a fresh cigar—"I reckon that that young rip will be worth a small fortune to me! I reckon that that bit of paper is a sight better nor a Bank of England note to you, Charley, my boy! You're a downy bird, Charley, and you deserve a drink; and you shall have one as soon as you get home, Charley!"

As Mr. Smiles thus apostrophised himself, with great satisfaction, he heard the whir of a bicycle on the towing-path behind him.

He glanced round irritably. Cyclists were not allowed on the towing-path; but fellows in a hurry sometimes left the law to take care of itself on that subject. The cyclist who was coming up behind Mr. Smiles was plainly in a hurry. He was driving at the pedals as if riding in a race.

Mr. Smiles jumped out of the way, and the rider shot by him. But he did not go far. A dozen yards ahead of the sharper he jumped down, and pitched his bike against a tree near the bank.

Then he stood on the towing-path breathing rather hard, and waiting for Mr. Smiles to come up.

The sharper frowned at him. He was a schoolboy, but a very burly and muscular one, and Mr. Smiles recognised the Greyfriars cap, though he did not know the wearer. So far, he had not had the honour of making Bolsover major's acquaintance. That honour was about to be bestowed upon him.

"What are you up to, ridin' on the towin'-path?" demanded Mr. Smiles, as he came up. "Don't you know it's agin the bye-laws?"

"Mr. Smiles?" asked Bolsover major.

"Oh, you know me, do you?" said Mr. Smiles.

"Yes; I've seen you about," answered Bolsover major. "I know you, my man! I've come after you."

"Oh, you 'ave?" said Mr. Smiles in surprise.

"I'm a friend of Elliott's."

"I ain't got nothing to say to that young feller," said Mr. Smiles. "Don't you give me any message from 'im! Let him do as I've told 'im, and he's all right. Otherwise, not. That's all!"

"That's not quite all," said Bolsover coolly.

He was measuring Mr. Smiles with his eye as he spoke.

The sharper was a man, and Percy Bolsover was a boy. But Bolsover was renowned in the Remove for his fighting powers. Even fellows in the Fifth Form

did not care to handle Bolsover. Even Coker of the Fifth was a little less aggressive towards Bolsover than towards any other junior.

The sharper was not a big man by any means; and drink and bad living had not made him fit. Bolsover's opinion was that he could handle Mr. Smiles, and handle him easily; and doubtless Bolsover was right.

Mr. Smiles essayed to pass him, but Bolsover planted himself in the way and was not to be passed. The man stared at him in angry astonishment.

"Out of the way!" he snapped.

"Not just yet," answered Bolsover major. "I've come from Elliott——"

"'Ang Elliott!"

"You've swindled him, Mr. Smiles! You've got a paper of his, and seven pounds. Give them to me, to take to him!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Deaf?" roared Bolsover. "I've asked you for Elliott's paper, and for the seven pounds you've stolen from him. Give them to me at once, before I lick you!"

"Lick me!" gasped Mr. Smiles, wondering whether he was dreaming.

Bolsover major nodded.

"I'm going to lick you, anyway!" he said. "But give me those things first. Now, then, buck up!"

"You cheeky young 'ound!" roared Mr. Smiles. "Get out of my way before I knock you over!"

"Knock me over first!" suggested Bolsover.

Mr. Smiles clenched his hands; but he unclenched them again. He realised that knocking Bolsover over was not an easy task, and he began to feel alarmed.

The towing-path was a lonely place, and there was no one in sight. Not that it would have made any difference to Bolsover major if there had been.

"Well, are you going to knock me over?" grinned Bolsover, pushing back his cuffs in readiness for the fray.

"I don't want no trouble with you," said Mr. Smiles. "You get out of my way, and let a man pass."

"I've got to get back for calling-over," remarked Bolsover. "I've no time to waste. Put up your hands!"

"Wot?"

"Put 'em up, I say!"

Mr. Smiles made a desperate rush to get past. Bolsover grasped him at once, and they struggled for a moment, and Mr. Smiles was hurled back.

He brought up against a tree, and stood there, panting and furious.

"Try again!" grinned the Greyfriars junior.

"Ow!" gasped Mr Smiles. "You young 'ooligan! I'll 'ave the law of you! This 'ere is agin the law!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover. "You care a lot for the law, don't you? Isn't it against the law to blackmail a chap and steal his money?"

"'Ands off!"

Bolsover was advancing, and Mr. Smiles backed away in extreme alarm. He could see that the junior was in deadly earnest, and there was cause for alarm.

"Are you giving me that paper?"

"No, I ain't!" yelled Mr. Smiles. "And this 'ere is robbery—'ighway robbery! I'll 'ave you took in charge!"

"I'll risk that! Better put up your hands!" advised Bolsover.

Mr. Smiles thought he had better, too, for Bolsover was driving at his nose.

He made another attempt to rush past, and received a drive on the side of the head that sent him with a crash to the ground. Bolsover major was a terrific hitter, and there was plenty of weight behind his punch.

The sharper rolled in the grass, panting.

But his fury was fully roused now, and he sprang up and closed in on the junior, fighting savagely.

Bolsover major met him more than half-way.

The weedy, unfit, liquor-soaked sharper was scarcely a match for the burly Removite, even if he had had the courage for a hard struggle. But courage was not one of Mr. Charley Smiles' strong points.

He fought like a cat for five minutes or more, and then the heavy blows of the Greyfriars junior proved too much for him.

He staggered back, and as Bolsover followed him up he made a spring back to escape attack.

"'Ands off!" he gurgled. "'Ands off! I give you best!"

"You've got to give me something else," answered Bolsover. "You've got to give me the paper and the money."

"This 'ere is 'ighway robbery!" stuttered Mr. Smiles. "It's agin the law! Don't you know it's agin the law?"

"We'll settle that in the police-court, if you like," grinned Bolsover. "You can tell the magistrate you were robbed of a paper you were using to blackmail a schoolboy! Think you'd make out a good case?"

"Oh, you young villain!" gasped Mr. Smiles.

"Are you ready?" asked Bolsover.

"'Ands off, I say!"

"Give me the paper!

"I—I ain't got it about me," stammered Mr. Smiles, backing away hastily as Bolsover major followed him up.

"I'm sorry for you if that's the case," said Bolsover, "for I'm going to hammer you till I get the paper. You'll be a jelly by the time I've finished if you haven't got it about you!"

"'Ands off, I say!"

Crash!

Bolsover major made a rush, and both his heavy fists drove into the sharper's face. Mr. Smiles went down like an ox.

He howled with anguish as he sprawled in the grass. Bolsover major grinned down on him.

"Is that enough to go on with?" he asked.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Get up!"

"Yow-ow-woop!"

"Will you give me the paper now?" chuckled Bolsover. "I'm going to begin on you with my boots unless you do!"

"Yow-ow!"

As Mr. Smiles made no movement to produce the paper Bolsover major suited the action to the word. Mr. Smiles uttered a hideous howl.

"Have another?" chortled Bolsover major.

"'Elp!" panted Mr. Smiles. "Perlice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of a man like Mr. Charley Smiles calling for the police was funny enough, and Bolsover major roared. At the same time he let Mr. Smiles have his other boot, and the rascal squirmed and yelled.

"'Old on!" spluttered Mr. Smiles. "'Old on! You're a-injuring of me! Ow-ow-ow! I'll 'and over the paper! Ow!"

"Buck up, then!"

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Don't keep me waiting, or I shall help you on—like that!"

"Yaroooh!"

Mr. Smiles sat up, and dragged out the fat pocket-book. He opened it with shaking hands, and with one eye on Bolsover's big boot.

"Keep 'orf!" he panted. "I'm getting it, ain't I? Oh, crumbs! I'll 'ave you locked up for this! Ow, ow!"

He picked Elliott's I O U out of the pocket-book. Bolsover major took it from his hand, and examined it with great care. He did not mean to risk being tricked by the sharper.

But he knew Elliott's handwriting well enough. It was the right paper. With great satisfaction, Bolsover major slipped it into his inside pocket. He had succeeded where Harry Wharton had failed. There was much satisfaction in that reflection.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Mr. Smiles. "Ow-ow! You let a man alone! Ow!"

"Buck up with the tin!"

"You ain't going to rob a man of his money?" gasped Mr. Smiles.

"I'm going to take back to Elliott the seven pounds you've stolen from him," said Bolsover major sternly. "And if you don't hand it over at once you'll get some more of this!" He applied his boot to Mr. Smiles' suffering body as he spoke by way of illustration.

There was a dismal howl from Mr. Smiles.

This was worse than his worst experience on the racecourse, where, in his career as a welsher, he had had some exciting times.

But the prospect of losing the money spurred him on to an effort. He leaped to his feet, and sprang at Bolsover like a cat.

Bolsover met him, grinning. He drove down his feeble fists, and planted a set of knuckles that seemed like iron fairly in Mr. Smiles' eye.

Crash!

The sharper was on his back again, his eye closed. The other eye blinked feebly at Bolsover major in terror.

"Ha, ha!" roared Bolsover. "Have some more?"

"Oh, my eye!" groaned Mr. Smiles. "Keep orf—keep orf! Yow-ow-ow! I'll 'and over the money, you young villain! Oh, dear! Oh, crikey!"

"Seven pounds!" said Bolsover.

With a deep groan, Mr. Smiles counted out the money. Bolsover major counted it, too, and rattled it into his pocket.

"Now let a man alone!" groaned Mr. Smiles.

"Well, I was going to give you a hiding," remarked Bolsover; "but I think you've had enough. Let me see you round Greyfriars, though, and I'll give you something that will make this seem like a joke. You want a lesson, my pippin! P'r'aps I'd better duck you —"

"Lemme alone!" howled Mr. Smiles.

But Bolsover major grasped him by the collar, and by main force rolled him into the rushes by the river. The water was shallow there, but the mud was thick, and Bolsover roared with laughter as the miserable wretch rolled and squirmed and gasped in it.

"That'll do for you!" said Bolsover Major. "Don't let me see you again, Mr. Smiles. Better keep clear of Greyfriars chaps after this—what? Ha, ha, ha!"

And, in high good-humour, Bolsover major walked away towards his bicycle, mounted it, and pedalled off to the school. Mr. Smiles, in the deepest depths of misery, extricated himself from the mud, and crawled up the bank. Too exhausted and wretched even to swear, the sharper limped away towards the Three Fishers, and for a week afterwards Mr. Smiles was not visible to the eyes of his sporting friends, being confined to his bed with a severe cold.

Harry Wharton was in Study No. 10, with Elliott of the Remove, when Bolsover major came in.

Wharton had come there in the vague hope of being able to help, though the

situation seemed hopeless, as far as he could see. Elliott had given up hope, and he was in a state of misery that moved Wharton deeply.

"It can't be helped," he was saying, as Bolsover major came in. "You did your best, Wharton; I'm not ungrateful. But I was fairly landed from the first, I can see that now. It's all up!"

"Not quite!" said Bolsover, with a chuckle.

The two juniors looked at him.

Bolsover major felt in his pocket, and laid a paper on the table. Elliott's eyes fixed on it, and he started up with a cry.

"The paper!" he panted.

"Your I O U!" exclaimed Wharton, in amazement.

"Yes, yes. How did you get it?" Elliott clutched the paper, and even as he spoke he struck a match and set it to the tell-tale paper. "How did you get hold of it, Bolsover?"

"Met Smiles on the towing-path, and talked to him," said Bolsover, with a careless air. "I've got something else, too—your money, Wharton."

"What?"

Bolsover threw the seven pounds on the table.

"You got it back from Smiles?" shouted Elliott.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grinned Bolsover.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. That was all he could say.

"How did you do it?" asked Elliott dazedly.

Bolsover major laughed.

"Oh, my way!" he said.

"And what was your way?" asked Harry.

"I handled him a bit."

"Oh!"

"Fairly smashed him up," said Bolsover, with great satisfaction. "I've had a few knocks—not much. A worm like that wasn't up to much in the way of scrappin'. I've thrashed him and ducked him, and I believe he won't bother Greyfriars again in a hurry. Anyway, his teeth are drawn now—and there's the money he swindled you out of."

"It's yours, Wharton," said Elliott.

Harry Wharton nodded, and gathered up the money. It was a great relief to him. The loss had meant serious difficulties.

"I'm jolly glad," he said. "You're all right now, Elliott; the man can't hurt you now."

Elliott was smiling. He could smile now.

"Right as rain!" he said. "Let him come near me if he dares; I'll give him the same as Bolsover gave him. I wish he would!"

"I don't think he will!" grinned Bolsover. "He will be nursing his features for a bit, I fancy. They need it."

Elliott laughed.

"Good man, Bolsover!" said Harry Wharton. He moved to the door, and then looked back. "We're playing the Third on Saturday, Bolsover. If you'd care to play for the Remove, I can find a place for you."

"I'm your man!" answered Bolsover major, quite graciously.

"Right you are!"

Harry Wharton left the study, much relieved at heart. And his chums were relieved, too, when he told them what had happened, and the cash was returned to its owners. Elliott was out of his scrape, and that was good news to all the Co.

"And fancy Bolsover managing it!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "That beats me! He isn't such a bad chap!"

"All right in his way!" conceded Nugent.

"But the wayfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

When Saturday came round Elliott of the Remove was called for by his uncle, and he said good-bye to his friends with a happy and smiling face. Harry Wharton & Co. saw him off to the gates; but his last handshake was for Bolsover major, and he left Bolsover in great good-humour. For two or three days Bolsover major did not quarrel with anybody—which was not at all Bolsover's Way!

(Don't miss "NAPOLEON OF GREYFRIARS!" — next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.)

A Great New Serial Story.

THE BROWN TORRENT.

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NEW READERS START HERE.

Rupert Thurston buys an idol bearing the inscription, "I am Sharpra, the Slumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!" Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, Maddock, Prout, and O'Rooney arrive. The idol's eyes are seen to open, and with a terrific crash the hotel collapses.

A lank Indian, named Gadra Singh, is employed as cook; and the one-time rebel, Larput Raj, is the shikari. While watching the idol he sees its eyes open, but they quickly shut.

Duke Payton arrives and joins the expedition to the cactus country. They are out hunting a tiger, and Ching Lung manages to shoot it. They find a blue-eyed native who has been killed by a python, and bury him.

(Now read on.)

The Forest of Strange Lights. (*Continued.*)

Thurston and the prince soon rubbed off their stiffness. Nacha had set his bearers going at a good pace, and they had kept it up. Even Weeping Willie, the mule, who objected strongly to hard work, appeared anxious to get out of the forest, so Gadra Singh had not to push him, howl at him, and threaten him with many varieties of violent death quite so much as usual. Gan-Waga, of course, was doing his bit gallantly. He waddled behind the mule, smoking a large cigar and carrying a very small parcel, that contained a tooth-brush and a pot of some preparation of whale-oil, or some other substance, with which he polished up his jet-black hair.

"Av ye've a free hand, Ben, and a dacently clane handkerchief," said Barry O'Rooney, who was loaded with three rifles and as many bandoliers of cartridges, in addition to other articles, "d'ye mind woipin' a gallon or so of the perspiration from my baby brow? Och, bhoy, the soight of that lazy Iskimo gives me pain! Whoy don't ye worrk, ye spalpeen?"

"Work all rightness fo' donkeys, Barry," replied Gan-Waga cheerfully. "It too hotfuls, old dears. Not in these trous of patrses, I don't think. How longs now, Chingy? I about sicks of this."

"We're only a little more than half-way through, but keep up your pecker," said Ching-Lung. "We'll be coming to the rose-garden soon, and when you get a whiff of it you'll cheer."

Presently the light began to wane. Ferrers Lord spoke to the shikari, who shouted an order to Nacha. With no regrets the bearers ridded themselves of their loads. The bundles were so well packed that they ran little risk of damage from damp even in that moisture-saturated atmosphere. More dangerous enemies were the white ants, that seem capable of gnawing their way through anything except metal, but none of these destructive pests had been seen. The whole forest, in fact, seemed to be shunned by bird, beast, and insect alike.

"We shall have darkness on us in another half hour," said Ferrers Lord. "You're the guide, Mr. Payton. Are you ready there? What's the trouble now?"

A burst of laughter answered him. Weeping Willie was the trouble. The intelligent mule had noticed that the bearers had ridded themselves of their loads, and he did not see the fairness of it. As no one volunteered to rid him of his burden, he proceeded to rid himself of his collection of tinware and ironmongery by buck-jumping, sending Gadra Singh almost frantic.

"Share the stuff amongst you," said Ching-Lung. "There isn't time to reload him; and by the way the docile creatures waggles his left ear, I think he'd soon have it off again if you did. There's a light and easy job for you, Gan, to bring Willie along. If you feel very tired you can hang on to his tail."

"All rightness, Chingy," said Gan-Waga, with a grin. "I brings the old pets along. I not loses him, Chingy."

Some time later Barry O'Rooney looked back. Gan-Waga was not keeping to the exact letter of his promise, for the old pet was bringing the Eskimo along. Gan-Waga was perched on the back of Weeping Willie, and the mule seemed quite content about carrying him, although he had objected to a much lighter weight.

"D'ye see that, Ben?" said O'Rooney, with tears in his voice. "Ut's cruelty to a dumb baste. Fifteen or twinty stone of candle-chewin' Iskimo that was born toired breakin' the spoine of the gintle craytur in two halves. Howld these guns, bhoy, whoile Oi foind a squashy wan, and, sure, Oi'll give the blayguarrd mushroom-ketchup!"

There was an unlimited supply of squashy toadstools. Barry selected a very ripe and juicy specimen as a useful little present for Gan-Waga. He swung back his arm, and hurled the fungus. A large drop of water had just splashed down on the Eskimo's neck, and he was looking up to see where it

had come from, when the squashy one arrived. It caught Gan-Waga on the chin, broke into clammy pulp, and spread itself over his features. Gan-Waga uttered a wail of anguish and horror, and rolled backwards off the mule.

"What's the matter?" cried Ching-Lung out of the deepening gloom. "What's Gan-Waga squealing about?"

"Ut's all roight, sor," said Barry. "He's been foightin' a toadsthool, sor, and the toadsthool has bit him, Oi think."

"Oh, badness awfuls!" walled Gan-Waga, as he scraped the ruins of the missile from his face. "Oh, horridness! Oh, mi! If I knowed who done thats, I killses him! Yo' waits till I finds yo'. I murders somebody. I—I poisoned! Oh, dears!"

"Souse me, I'd give a month's pay if I could believe you were speaking the truth," said Maddock unfeelingly. "Get up and come along now. Must you be always lying down resting? You dirty boy! Why don't you wash yourself?"

"What's that delay behind there? Keep together, and come along! Hustle them up there, will you, Ching, if you please?"

At the sound of the millionaire's voice Gan-Waga gave his face a final polish, using the end of the mule's tail as a towel, and fell into line.

"And get your pipes going," advised Ching-Lung. "We're getting near the scent distillery, and it's gorgeous."

Suddenly the light failed them. But Ching-Lung and Payton imagined they had left a track in the trodden fungi that it would be quite easy to follow by the beams of a flash-lamp. Payton moved here and there, throwing the light before him, and then hesitated and stopped.

"A sort of wash-out," he said, "or, better still, a sort of snowed-under. The beastly toadstools have grown up since we were here and buried our tracks six inches deep. I'll make another attempt. Perhaps the crop hasn't been such a flourishing one further out, and I may strike the trail there."

"Och, those same toadsthools are moighly quick to grow, but av ye want to see threes and plants grow at all, at all, go to Ballybunion," said Barry while they waited. "My Uncle Dinnis used to tell a tale about plantin' a young three. Ut was quoite a little three, and ut was a hot day. Just as Uncle Dinnis had planted the little three along comes Terry O'Flindery, carryin' his hat and moppin' his hot face. He wanted to borrow a hoe, and whoile Uncle Dinnis goes for that same hoe Terry bangs his hat on a branch of the little three. And, bedad, the next minute when he looks round the three has growed six foot or more, so Terry starrts shinning up ut to get his hat. The quicker Terry shinned the fasther the three growed. As Terry hadn't come down up to the last toime Oi was at Ballybunion, Oi'm thinkin' he's sthill chasin' his hat."

"I reckon that must have been a chestnut-tree, souse me," said Maddock, "for the yarn's a chestnut, anyhow. You'll never learn to speak the truth, Barry. That's the signal that Mr. Payton has found the scent, I take it, so fall in and follow your noses. Hang on to Weeping Willie, blubberbiter! We don't mind losin' you, but the mule is a useful animal."

Payton went on now without any further check, and then the odours that Ching-Lung had promised began to make themselves manifest. They held their noses. Suddenly Duke Payton extinguished his flash-lamp. A faint greenish glow shone through the spectral aisles of the cactus forest, and pale lights winked. Even Larput Raj was startled.

"It is nothing, shikari," said Ferrers Lord in the vernacular—"nothing but the lights you have all seen in the dark on rotting fish or over a stagnant lagoon. It comes from the decaying trees, old wolf, and tell thy men so. It is nothing."

"Phosphorescence," said Ching-Lung, with a laugh; "and very useful, too. If it's not bright enough to dazzle some of you, it will keep you from falling over your own big feet and treading on my little ones. Very kind of them to switch it on."

The strange light lasted till they came to the edge of the forest.

"By Jove!" cried Ching-Lung. "Old Sharpra was only blinking before. He's wide awake now!"

The sky beyond the foothills was one vast crimson flame, and the noise of distant explosions boomed through the air.

Gan-Waga Again Takes to the Water.

"THERE is one useful thing about Sharpra," said Rupert Thurston—"he has given us fair warning. Some volcanoes, after such a long rest, don't play the game at all. They just go up in the air before you're ready. This gentleman wakes up usefully. He snorts and snores and grunts and coughs, and makes a real fuss about it. If he keeps on like this he may tire himself out before he's really awake, and have to go to sleep again."

"I wish some kind person would muzzle the brute!" remarked Ching-Lung. "He may mean it kindly and usefully, as you suggest, Ru, but if he goes on like this all night the old chunk of rock can't have much consideration for others. Because he's been asleep so long he seems to think no one else wants any sleep."

"He's a bit too big to plug up with a cork," said Thurston; "so it seems we must grin and bear it."

The boomings and rumblings went on for an hour or more, but there were no tremendous detonations like the one they had heard when emerging from the cactus forest. The glare still burned in the sky. They were very tired, but after the sweltering damp of the forest the air was sweet and refreshing, though Barry O'Rooney declared that he could detect a smell of brimstone in it, with a strong flavour of exploded squibs.

Ferrers Lord seemed fully satisfied with the progress they had made, and slightly surprised that the waterless sand-belt, where they had expected difficulties to arise, had proved so narrow.

"On my first visit I kept a line more to the east," he said to Payton, "and I can only presume that Larput Raj did the same, and that the belt of sand is much wider there. It is most unlikely that we shall go short of water now."

Payton nodded as he took a glowing stick from the fire to light his pipe.

"There'll be no lack of water," he said; "and we ought to find plenty of fresh meat. This part of the divide should swarm with game, by the look of it. There's always game in the foothills, and I'll try my luck at dawn."

No tents had been pitched. In the bearers' camp old Nacha had started a melancholy kind of chant, and now and again the other bearers joined in, to the disgust of Mr. Barry O'Rooney, who had a musical ear.

"Loike a hundred dolein' pigs, only worse!" growled the Irishman. "Hop across, Gan, and tell thim, wid my compliments, that av they don't put the lid on ut Oi'll soon be round wid a big sthick! Ain't the ould volcano barrkin' and grumblin' bad enough, widout all that screechin' and squealin'?"

"What the matterness with yo', old dears?" asked the Eskimo. "Yo' want everybody to be miserablefuls, hunk? I think it very niceness. Ifs yo' not enjoys it, tells them yo'selfs to goes into the next streets."

Certainly the chant was weird and dirge-like. Barry's mouth worked as if he had just sucked an extremely sour lemon. He could bear it no longer. He got up and went over to where Nacha and the other songsters were squatting in a circle round a roaring fire. As Nacha had only a limited knowledge of the English language, Barry might have found it difficult to explain. But suddenly another objector came in the shape of Weeping Willie. It is possible, of course, that the mule did not object, but only wished to share in the chorus.

Willie came out of the shadow into the light, extended his neck above Nacha's head, and let go a squeal so shrill and bloodcurdling that it nearly put out the fire—a squeal that lasted for seventy-five seconds without a single pause for breath.

The concert came to an end. Willie had given it the knock-out blow in the first round.

"Pace, gintle pace, at last!" said O'Rooney, as he wrapped his blanket round him. "Bhoys, that's an intelligent baste, that same ould mule. Did Oi iver tell ye, lads, about the mule my Uncle Dinnis bought at Ballyslam, and brought back to Ballybunion Castle? Ut's name was Lancelot, Well, bedad——"

"Oh, dry up, souse me, and shoot your Uncle Dennis!" said Mr. Benjamin Maddock.

"And no more about Lancelot neither, by honey!" growled Mr. Thomas Prout. "We're fed up with you and your silly relations! Keep your family affairs to yourself, and give us a chance. Good-night!"

Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, laughed rudely, and departed to find a soft resting-place as near as possible to Ching-Lung.

As the light of the fires began to grow dimmer Ferrers Lord stood up and shouldered his rifle. Duke Payton also rose. The millionaire nodded to him, and they moved away to the edge of the scrub.

"Were you asleep, Mr. Payton?" asked Ferrers Lord, in a low voice.

"No; I'm queerly restless," said Payton. "I haven't tried to sleep. I have the knack of being able to do so when I try. Sharpra is pretty quiet again. Did you hear anything unusual?"

"Nothing at all unusual—just the howling of a wolf and the hoot of an owl. The fellows were so leg-weary that I did not care to put any of them on sentry duty. It did not seem necessary either. Like you, I am rather restless."

For a time they stood in silence watching the smouldering red in the sky, that was broken now and again by fitful and paler flashes. A few white-winged moths fluttered round them, and fireflies danced like glowing sparks.

"You think we ought to keep a guard?" said Ferrers Lord.

"You have quite an uncanny way of reading a man's thoughts," said Payton. "I do think it, and I was thinking it just as you spoke. I have no reason to give except the seemingly absurd one that we don't know."

"To me it appears to be a sensible reason," said the millionaire. "As you have the knack of being able to sleep at will, you may as well turn in for a few hours. I'll wake you when it's time to take your turn, though it is hardly fair to ask you to do any of the donkey-work."

"I'm quite ready to take my share," said Payton. "I can do with less sleep than most people. Two hours will be ample."

There was no alarm. For two hours the millionaire kept his silent vigil over the slumbering camp. Then he shook Payton. Payton was alert at once. He loaded his rifle, and walked away into the gloom.

After breakfast there was a consultation. The broken country before them was well timbered and well watered.

"I see no reason to break our necks," said Rupert Thurston. "I want to see what the shooting is like, and, with plenty of water to be obtained, why should we make a sort of steeplechase of it? We're not pressed for time."

"Any old thing you suggest will do for me," said Ching-Lung lazily. "But we'd better leave it to the chief."

"Then you may have a day's shooting, and I'll give the bearers a rest," said Ferrers Lord. "Personally, I think it would be better to push on, and take things easily on the return journey. However, a day will make no difference, so decide it yourselves. The day is yours. I am not in a game-killing mood, but I'll go with you."

A breeze with a faint tinge of smoke in it was blowing. Though he hated to be parted from his beloved Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga was not very dejected when the prince suggested that he should remain behind with O'Rooney and Maddock. The Eskimo did not shine as a climber of hills.

"I not minds, Chingy, but don'ts be too longfuls," he said cheerfully. "Come back soonness, old dears. I catchee some fishes. I founded a butterful pool with a fallwaters, Chingy. I'll be all merry and brightness."

"Well, don't go falling over the butterfuls waterfall you found," said Ching-Lung. "And if you use my rods and things, do pack up the tackle properly when you've finished. Don't shove a bunch of fishhooks in the breast-pocket of your pyjamas in your usual style, and then want to hug me when I come back."

"The morning waits for none, sahibs," cried Larput Raj. "The shikari who hunts at noon brings back little meat. By the rifle the Viceroy gave me, we waste time! And surely there will be joy out younder amongst the wild ones, for the great sahib carries no death in his hand."

"No; I am not shooting to-day," said Ferrers Lord, flicking his slender, gold-mounted cane. "Thou art right, old wolf; the morning waits for none. So if you are ready, gentlemen, let us make a start."

As they set off Gan-Waga, who looked upon Ching-Lung's property—or anybody's property, if he felt so inclined—as his own, sought out a fishing-rod and a basket of tackle. He invited Mr. Barry O'Rooney to go with him. The Irishman snorted with disdain.

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors at The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, England. Subscription, 8s. 10d. per annum. Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z. South Africa, The Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Saturday, June 8th, 1918.

"Go tiddler-catchin', is ut?" he said. "Whoy, ye two-legged oil-factbory, Oi've got somethin' betther to do than watch ye thryin' to tache a worrm to be a submarine. Run away and froy pancakes!"

Maddock also declined the invitation in a similarly polite way. Gadra Singh was more agreeable. He wiped his hands, and went for his ancient gun and a flask of shot, for the old smooth-bore would shoot that as well as ball, and almost equally badly.

Mr. Benjamin Maddock removed the corn-cob pipe from his mouth and grinned.

"Souse me, Barry," he said, "here's old legs and wings going fishin' with a blunderbuss! They must be after flying-fish, I reckon. They go 'Shoo-oo!' and when the poor fish, that's sitting quiet on its nest hatching its eggs flies off they bang it over, purviding they hits it, which ain't likely. Good-bye, dears! Good-bye-ee!"

Gan-Waga set off at a waddling run to keep face with the great strides of Gadra Singh's bony legs. It was not far to the pool the Eskimo had discovered. It was a circular pool, deep, and full of swirling eddies. A waterfall poured into it over a wall of fern-grown rocks.

The cook put a percussion-cap on the nipple of his gun, and while Gan-Waga was fitting the fishing-rod together he crawled to the edge of the pool on hands and knees.

The next instant there was a scurry and rush of many wings, a deafening noise of quacks and whistling, a tremendous bang, and violent thumps and thuds.

Gan-Waga sat down amid the smoke, holding his head and fancying that a thunderbolt had hit him, though it was only a defunct wild duck. The cook was also in a state of repose, if not collapse. Gadra Singh had surprised a splendid and varied collection of wild fowl in the pool, and at last he had hit something. One of the somethings had also hit him—a full-sized white swan. The cook lay breathless, with his legs in the air, with the beautiful swan reposing on his bosom.

"Oh, moaz awful!" moaned the cook, who had been knocked flat by the recoil of the gun and the impact of the falling bird. "I blow my head moaz wicked! I blow my head moaz full of pain!"

"I wishes yo' blow yo' silliness old head offs!" said the Eskimo, rubbing his own. "I chucks yo' ins for tuppences! Dears, dears! Why, yo' longness, leanness, blackleaded olds——"

The cook sat up just in time. The wild duck Gan-Waga aimed at him passed behind the back of his neck. Then the sad eyes of Gadra Singh grew bright with joy when he discovered what he had slain. He felt that the old dream was coming true at last, and that before long he would be a shikari.

With an armful of swan and wild duck and his gun on his shoulder he made for the camp with the spoils.

"He gotted them badfuls!" thought Gan-Waga. "He mightiness proud of himself because he kills a little poultry. The one that tumble on my poor old brainbox kills himself twices, I think."

Gan-Waga fitted a glittering imitation of a fish to the line, and sent it spinning far out across the pool that lay twenty feet below him. The bait fell right under the surge of the waterfall. The Eskimo had no idea what species of fish might reside in those waters. But it was an ideal spot for mahseer, and one of them was at home—thirty odd pounds of him. The fish made for the gleaming bait with a hungry rush, and the next instant Gan-Waga had him fast, and knew it.

The mahseer raced up and down the pool. Gan-Waga thought nasty things about the cook for having gone home. To get that fine fish out of the pool without help was almost as easy as to extract a five-pound note out of an empty purse, for he could not haul thirty pounds or more of mahseer up twenty feet of rock with a line that would scarcely lift a dead weight of fifteen pounds.

The mahseer had had enough of it. He lay, gasping, just below the surface, a lordly prize, so near and yet so far. Gan-Waga thought Gadra Singh might be returning, and looked round.

What he saw made his little black eyes goggle and his heart bump against his ribs. Four men were standing behind him. Three had bows with arrows fitted to the strings, and the bows were bent. The third carried a long-barrelled Afghan gun, the stock inlaid with brass and mother-of-pearl. They were very brown-skinned fellows, scantily clad in loin-cloths, sandals, and their own shining, black hair twisted at the back into a sort of queue, secured by a leather thong.

The startled Eskimo did not wait for any further introduction. He gave an ear-splitting yell, and a headlong leap that carried him deep into the ice-cold heart of the pool. He grasped a boulder to keep himself there, and did some hard thinking with the rush of the surface water loud in his ears.

The Attack.

FOUR brown faces and eight curious eyes were dimly reflected in the pool as the owners of the eyes and faces peered down. The water was almost as clear as crystal, but the bubbles and ripples and little swirling patches of foam hid everything there.

The mahseer, feeling no strain, had also gone down rather groggily. The Eskimo was almost an amphibious animal. Probably no human biped could remain longer under water than Gan-Waga without suffocating. But presently the strain began to tell.

Grasping the stones, he dragged himself in the direction of the waterfall with surprising speed. The commotion was chiefly at the top, and even four feet below the surface there was very little current or backwash. He climbed up, and found himself under the fall that curved over the rock above, forming a narrow arch of silvery water with an air-space between.

Gan-Waga put out his little snub nose and filled his lungs and blinked his eyes clear.

Through the screen of flashing water he could see nothing at first, and if there had been anything to hear he could not have heard it on account of the splashing and swishing. Then he raised himself a little and was gone. He had seen a pair of naked legs. The proprietor of the legs either knew previously, or had just discovered, that there was a ledge under the waterfall. The legs were moving along it sideways as a crab moves.

A bunch of waterweed, sucked down by the eddies, wrapped itself round Gan-Waga's neck. He clutched it eagerly. Up he must go, and very soon, for another gulp of air. Gan-Waga remembered the bent bows and the arrows. He did not want to be harpooned in that way, as he had harpooned many a seal and walrus, and that would probably be his fate if he ventured to rise in the pool. To rise under the waterfall was almost as dangerous, but it had to be. It seemed a trifle less perilous than the other.

Gan-Waga twisted the fingers of his left hand into the bunch of water-weed and held it above his head. Then he went up, using the weed as a screen for his face. The man was there—the man with the Afghan gun. He stood with his back to the rock on the slippery ledge, holding on with one hand and peering down.

The weed seemed to arouse his suspicion, or Gan-Waga's eyes may have glittered, for he made a prod at the green flotsam and poked the muzzle of the gun into the Eskimo's ear.

Feeling that he was discovered, Gan-Waga seized the gun and tugged.

Down came the native, following his weapon, and vanished in a swirl of water.

Gan-Waga did not show himself. He was across the pool, swimming deep and rapidly, before the native's head bobbed up amid the flashes of foam on the pool side of the waterfall, much to the astonishment of his comrades. The Eskimo shot out of the deeps into the shallow water, where concealment was no longer possible if they happened to look that way.

"Barry! Ben! Helps!" he bawled, as he splashed ashore and began to run. "Helps, old dears! Helps! Be quickfuls!"

An arrow went over his head with a spiteful, waspish buzz; but he was not followed.

Five minutes later Maddock, O'Rooney, Nacha, the cook, and half a dozen bearers were dashing towards the pool. There lay the fishing-rod, with the line still in the water, and a good many feathers, but nothing more alarming.

"Drat that same Iskimo!" said Barry. "Oi do belave he's sold us another pup, Ben!"

"It looks like it, souse me! But I don't think he'd sell us a pup about a thing like that," said Maddock. "Niggers with guns and arrows is a bit too serious. Here he comes, half a mile behind everybody, like a two-legged tortoise with gout! Here, you tallow-eating son of a margarine merchant, what's this leg-pulling game of yours?"

"They goned, hunk?" asked Gan-Waga. "I not pull yo' silly leg, Ben. Yo' nots enough quickful. They goned!"

"Goned! Was they ever here? Phwat d'ye mane at all? Is ut a hoax? Is ut wan big loie?" demanded O'Rooney.

Gan-Waga's answer was to take a header into the pool. His plump right arm appeared above water first, the hand clasping a long-barrelled gun. Then came his head.

"Ho, ho, hoo!" he laughed. "Come alongs the banks, Ben, and bring my olds Chingy's rod, for I not wants to breaks it. I gotted them boths. I gotted the gun and I gotted the olds fishes. That's the stuff to give 'em, hunk? Ha, ha, ha!"

Gan-Waga swam on his back to the shallows, carrying the Afghan gun and tugging the mahseer after him. Nacha shook his head gravely as they examined the dripping weapon. One of the bearers picked up the arrow.

"Och, ut doesn't mane much to worry about, Ben!" said Barry O'Rooney. "There's only wan place for this lump o' gaspoipe, and that's a museum; and for bows and arrows, too. The bastes moight loike to be spoiteful, so we'd betther not go wanderin' about alone. Ut's an iligant sort of counthry for a bit of snoipin'. And four inches of arrow loike that in a man's ribs wouldn't make him fale loike puttin' a ragtoime chune on the gramophone and doin' a cake-walk."

"They mean mischief or they wouldn't have twanged the thing off at the blubber-biter," said Maddock. "These little things are sent to worry us, but I refuse to be worried on a nice day like this, souse me!"

They went back to the camp, old Nacha still shaking his head.

O'Rooney inspected a bale of rifles thoughtfully.

"Bedad, Oi was wondherin' whoy we were luggin' those things wid us!" he said. "The chafe must have had permission, for Oi belave ut's almost a hangin' matther to give a native a firearrm or thrade wan to him." He spiked the arrow into the canvas covering of the bale. "I't's funny to think that big battles was fought and won wid things loike that," he added. "If you were a knoight wid a tin coat and zinc throusers, ye stood a fair chance. At Ballybunion, Ben, we used to kape the suit of armour belongin' to my ancesthor, Sir Dinnis O'Rooney, and polish ut up reg'lar wid sandpaper and bathbrick whin the helmet wasn't in use for boilin' the prathies. There was plenty o' dents in ut, but whether they were caused in battle or Lady Dinnis did them wid the rollin'-pin whin the ould bhoy came home a bit late for his tay about four o'clock in the mornin', Oi——"

The arrow split into two halves before Barry O'Rooney's astounded eyes. There was a yell of pain from behind. Then came a report that might have been made by an elephant-gun, and a cloud of smoke rose out of a bush about forty yards away.

Maddock snatched up the nearest weapon, which was Gadra Singh's old smooth-bore, and took aim at the bush. There was no cap on the nipple, but the erratic firearm exploded all the same, and sent a scattering hail of buckshot into the bush. A brown-skinned figure, undoubtedly badly peppered, leapt up like a startled stag and bolted.

Old Nacha had lost the little finger of his left hand, smashed by the bullet that had cut the arrow in halves. Maddock was not a surgeon, but he knew at a glance that the finger had been shattered beyond all hope of saving it. He amputated it as gently and skilfully as he could, and Nacha did not flinch or blink an eye.

Barry's rifle was busy. He sent a bullet through every bush and into every patch of scrub within moderate range. The mule squealed at every shot, and the instant he had finished bandaging Nacha's finger Maddock hastened to help the cook, Gan-Waga, and the bearers to form a circular barricade with the bales.

"The bastes have declared war, bad luck to thim," said O'Rooney, "so somebody looks loike gettin' hurrt! Oi wondher av ould Sharpra has anything to do wid ut? Ye've hearrd a bit o' the nonsense, Ben? When the ould man yondher loights 's poipe and goes off wid a bang, the niggers get the wind up and go on the war-path. I't's some such infant school yarn as that—pure rot! How's your hair, blubberboiter? Oi can see ut stickin' up on ind wid froight, ye spalpeen!"

Gan-Waga wrinkled up his little snub nose with contempt.

"Yo' say that so I not look at yo' old knees and see them bumpings together," he said. "Never minds, Barry. Yo' can't helps it. I only wish my Chingy and Ruperts and the rest was back. Can't yo' sends nobody to warn them, Ben?"

(To be continued.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 75.—MONTAGUE NEWLAND.

NEWLAND belongs to a race with a wonderful history—a nation without a native land, dispersed all over the earth. The Jews have experienced horrible things at the hands of the Gentiles—one should not say the Christians in this connection, for there was certainly nothing Christian in the oppressions practised upon the seed of Jacob by other races.

Even to-day there are countries where the Jews are ill-treated merely because they are Jews. But in this country, as in the United States and some other lands, no one denies them either the full rights of citizenship or whatever esteem they may earn. It does not matter that a man or a boy is a Jew; what matters is whether he is a good fellow. And I think that some Jews are inclined to be unduly sensitive, and to fancy that people are thinking of their race when no such thought is present. I doubt whether there will ever come a time when race will not matter at all.

Now, the Jews have a wonderful history, as I have already said. Think of how they have held to their religion and the traditions of their race through all the centuries of their scattering! They are proud of that, and rightly proud. Yet some of them are too apt to think that other people despise them for being Jews. If I had the honour to be a Jew I should look upon those people as fools not worth considering. What would you say to anyone who affected to despise you for being British?

But a good deal of this supposed despising is quite imaginary, and I only mention it here because it often crops up in letters from Jewish readers. They want Jews to be made more prominent in the stories to show that Jews can be fine fellows.

Who doubts it? Why should it need showing? And what is the matter with the Jews who figure in the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories?

Personally, I should not want to meet nicer fellows than Monty Newland of Greyfriars and Dick Julian of St. Jim's. They are emphatically the right sort. There is no want of pluck or of honour in either. They are particularly clean, decent, chivalrous boys. They are long-headed compared with many of their schoolfellows; but only the fool thinks wisdom an unpleasant trait; and, anyway, neither Newland nor Julian is so wise that he cannot take his part in boyish fun and mischief with keenness.

Newland had at the outset a very rough time at Greyfriars. There was strong and bitter prejudice against him. Practically everyone barred him. He was "The Schoolboy Outcast," as the title of the story in which he first appeared indicated. That was bad—for Newland and for the other fellows. But it was not due to the mere fact of his being a Jew. The Famous Five, Squiff, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, and others of their type, would not have barred a fellow for that. Wrong impressions concerning Newland prevailed. There were stories about his relatives.

Newland lived down his unpopularity, though he had to suffer before the Remove found out what a good, sound fellow he really was.

He had money in greater plenty than most of his Form, and Loder & Co. tried to rook him. They did not succeed; the Jew is not usually an easy mark for the sharper. Loder and his gambling chums found Newland too wide for them. He showed up well in the footer-field, and that helped him. He thrashed Bolsover major, and that helped quite a lot, for in those days Bolsover had not gone under so many times as he now has; and even now he is by no means a fellow to be despised as an antagonist.

But it was Newland's saving the Head from the clutches of a scoundrel that did most for him with the Remove. Greyfriars fellows generally think a lot of the Head. He is not one of the strongest of men, and he has done one or two foolish things that his boys know about; but they do not hold him in the less affection for that, though perhaps he is held in less awe than Dr. Holmes of St. Jim's, a stronger character in every way, is. And it is little to be wondered at that Dr. Locke is loved, for he is full of kindness and sympathy. He deserves it.

An ordinary boy could hardly have tackled with any hope of success the problem which Newland solved. But Monty is thoughtful beyond his years, and he has not only a knowledge of business ways in excess of the common boyish smattering, but he has also that instinct for business which Jews so often possess—a quality by no means to be despised. He saved the Head, and thereafter he was no longer an outcast. Since then he has played his quiet part in the activities of the Remove—more of a man in brain and heart than most boys of his age—thoughtful and studious, but not putting himself outside the interests of the rest. His talent for business displayed itself again when Billy Bunter went "The Way of the Transgressor." Many of you will remember that story, I am sure. Bunter had borrowed money of a man named Strauss. It seems strange that anyone should be willing to lend Bunter money; doing that sort of thing on behalf of an ordinary schoolboy is very risky, since the under-age plea can always be made. But Mr. Strauss thought himself safe to get his money back—which would appear to indicate that he was not an acute reader of character, for Billy Bunter is not an expert at cashing up. The Remove tried to get the fat fellow out of his scrape, but Newland was the only one of them all able to give advice of much use. He went to Mr. Strauss, and he talked to Mr. Strauss as one man to another—but not as one man to another of his own kind; it was

Montague Newland

the honest man talking to the man who was not straight, who had something to conceal. Newland, in short, threatened Mr. Strauss, of whom Newland's father knew a good deal. In an ordinary case this sort of thing might not be admirable. But this was not an ordinary case; and the coolness with which Monty carried out his mission was admirable. He had already tried to help Bunter with money; but obviously the more money Mr. Strauss got the more he would demand, and an end had to be made of the business somehow.

Newland ended it. Was Bunter grateful? Mind you, Newland owed Bunter nothing. The Owl had never been a friend of his. Was Bunter grateful? Not likely! He thought it was like Newland's cheek to tell his father about the private affairs of W. G. Bunter without permission! But he allowed that Newland might have meant well.

I can only recall one other story in which Newland played at all a leading part—"Under Suspicion." Mr. Capper had a valuable stamp stolen—a British Guiana one cent of 1866. Only three juniors were known as ardent stamp collectors—Newland, Gadsby of the Shell, and Banthorpe, a Removite, who has disappeared from the yarns long ago. So serious a view did Mr. Capper take of the matter that he called in Inspector Grimes, of the Courtfield police. All three of the juniors were questioned, and their boxes were searched. Banthorp, a very nervous fellow, showed up badly under the inquisition. Newland, as might be expected of him, answered the questions put coolly and clearly; but, of course, he did not enjoy the ordeal. He kicked Bunter out of his study when he caught him searching for the stamp. Dalton Hawke, the schoolboy detective, solved the mystery. He felt sure from the first that Newland could not be the thief—not that sort! Gadsby—not the Highcliffe nut, by the way—was bowled out, and Banthorpe and Newland were completely cleared.

But if he has not been much in the foreground, Newland may be found in minor parts often enough. He has consistently supported Harry Wharton—he did so in the days when Peter Todd raised head against the skipper of the Remove, and on many another occasion. He does not belong to the inner ring of Harry's friends; but Wharton and they look upon him as a friend, and he goes on in his quiet way, making no great stir, but always to be counted on as an influence for good, because he is essentially sound at heart.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"NAPOLEON OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

The story which will appear next week, though it has its serious side, is quite one of the funniest I have read for a long time. The coming of a French boy to an English school has often been dealt with in schoolboy fiction—sometimes by people who knew about as little as could well be known of French manners and customs and the French language. Mr. Richards is not in this position. He knows the language well; he has spent a considerable time in France, and knows how the French live. And in Napoleon Dupont he gives us a real live modern French boy—very different from any English or Scottish or Irish boy, but every bit as good a fellow in his way.

You will read of Napoleon's mistakes in language; of his cooking, and the effect it had upon Billy Bunter; of his weird attempts to play cricket; of Bolsover major's enmity against him, and of how that enmity ended. And I have not the very smallest doubt that you will like the story and want to hear more about Napoleon Dupont.

THE FLAX HARVEST SCHEME.

Captain E. A. Elgee writes me from Salter's Hall, E.C., to say that a Chat paragraph in a recent issue brought him a large number of applications from schoolboys and others all over the country, and he asks me to give a little more information for the benefit of those who are thinking of lending a hand.

He says that the Flax Harvest Volunteer Scheme was started originally for City workers and others with two weeks' holiday. It was thought that the present railway and food difficulties would prevent many overworked people from obtaining the change of air and occupation they needed, and unskilled labour could be profitably employed on this particular work, thus giving these people a chance to be useful while getting the change.

An age-limit of sixteen was suggested because boys under that age were not thought likely to be able to look out for themselves or to enjoy such an outing in the company of older people. But in the case of strong, well-grown lads of from fourteen upwards Captain Elgee will be delighted to enrol them, provided they go in parties and under the leadership of a master, a Cadet officer, or some other responsible grown-up person.

Boys wishing to enrol should therefore first try and get some friends together, and then an "officer commanding" for the party, who could write to Captain Elgee at the address given above to make the necessary arrangements.

The number of camps contemplated has been largely increased. There are now twenty—in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Suffolk, and Somerset. As far as possible those who have a preference for any special district are allowed to go thither.

YOUR EDITOR.