

The Rivals of the Remove!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton and Co., and Jack Drake at Greyfriars School

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Harry Wharton and Co. Are Not Taking Any!

I SAY, you fellows!" Nobody heeded Billy Bunter.

There were five juniors in the biked when Bunter's fat figure loomed up in the doorway. Harry Wharton and Co., of the Remove, were getting their machines ready for a run that sunny afternoon. They had no time to waste upon William George Bunter.

Bob Cherry was in the throes of mending a puncture. It was a troublesome puncture, and Bob looked rather red and ruffled. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were giving an extra polish to their machines—partly to fill up time while they waited for Bob, and partly because they were going to have distinguished company in their spin that afternoon. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was helping Bob in tactful silence. Johnny Bull was informing the red and ruffled Bob—not

tactfully—that if he'd mended his puncture before he wouldn't have to mend it just before going on a spin. Which was perfectly true, but not specially comforting to Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows!" repeated Billy Bunter, more loudly.

Bob Cherry glanced round for a moment.

"Can't one of you fellows kick that fat owl out?" he demanded in an aggrieved tone. "You can see I'm busy."

"If you'd mended that puncture when you came in yesterday——" began Johnny Bull oracularly.

"Well, I didn't!" said Bob, in a tone nearly snappish as Bob Cherry's ever was.

"No. And now——"

"Where's that solution?" asked Bob.

"If you kept the solution where you could find it——" recommenced Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"My esteemed Johnny," murmured Hurree

Jamset Ram Singh. "your words are words of terrific wisdom, but there is a little too-muchfulness——"

"Here's the solution, Bob," said Nugent, laughing. "Go ahead and keep cool——"

"Who's not keeping cool?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! Here's the solution, anyway. Pile in! We don't mind waiting a bit."

"Marjorie will be waiting at Cliff House," remarked Johnny Bull. "I don't know whether she minds."

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter.

"For goodness' sake dry up, Bunter," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Roll away."

"I've got a message from Loder——"

"Bother Loder!"

"Loder of the Sixth——"

"Blow Loder of the Sixth!"

"Shall I go back and tell him you won't come?" asked Billy Bunter sarcastically.

Four glares were turned on Bunter. Bob Cherry was too busy with his unhappy puncture even to glare at Bunter.

Billy Bunter grinned.

As Loder of the Sixth was a prefect, it was scarcely possible to send a reply to him that the Removites wouldn't come. It would have led to a personal call from Loder, and trouble. The Famous Five of Greyfriars were not looking for trouble that afternoon. They wanted to get off and join Marjorie and Clara for a ride along the coast.

"What does Loder want?" asked Harry Wharton, after a pause.

"He wants a fag."

"Well, you'll do."

"A fag to bowl to him," explained Bunter. "Of course I'd do—as I'm about the best bowler in the Remove. But fellows think I can't bowl."

"Ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Bother Loder! We can't stay in and bowl to Loder this afternoon."

"Shall I tell him so?" grinned Bunter.

"No, you fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Which one has he asked for?" demanded Nugent. "He doesn't want us all to bowl to him, I suppose?"

"He told me to fetch a fag for bowling,"

said Bunter. "You fellows set up to be cricketers, so I came to you."

"Why, you fat sweep!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "Go and find somebody else then. Anybody will do."

"Well, you see——"

"There's those new chaps, Drake and Rodney. Go and find them."

"Too much trouble," answered Bunter calmly. "I've come to you! But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you're busy this afternoon——"

"We're going over to Cliff House, fathead."

"Oh, that's easily arranged then," said Bunter. "One of you can stop in and bowl for Loder, and I'll go in his place. Marjorie would rather see me than any of you, as you know."

"Ass!"

"Well, if I go back to Loder and tell him you won't come, he'll come down on you, and I fancy you'll all be kept within gates," said Bunter. "The fact is, you'd better be civil, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove did not look very civil at that moment. He looked as if he were on the point of committing assault and battery.

Bunter blinked cheerfully at the Famous Five. He felt that he held the whip-hand for once.

"By the way," he remarked genially. "Did I mention to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"It hasn't come," continued Bunter. "It's rather odd—it's a remittance, you know, from one of my titled relations generally quite reliable. Noblemen are, you know. But there's been some delay in the post. Could you lend me——"

"Get out."

"Could you lend me five bob till my postal-order comes, Wharton?"

"Ring off!"

"You can't?"

"No!" hooted the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, very well! If you're going to be mean, Wharton, I decline to discuss the matter any further. I'll just get back to Loder and mention that you won't come."

And Billy Bunter backed out of the doorway.

He had taken only one step backward, when Harry Wharton jumped forward and grasped him by one fat shoulder. Bunter suddenly found himself spinning into the bike-shed.

"You-ow!"

He stumbled on a bike stand, and sat on the floor with a yell.

"Keep an eye on that fat brute," said Harry. "If he moves, kick him."

"You bet!" grinned Nugent.

"Look here," roared Bunter indignantly. "I've got to get back to Loder——"

Frank Nugent drew his right foot back significantly. Bunter blinked at him, and blinked at his boot, and decided to stay where he was.

"If you fellows think you're going to keep me here till you've cleared out——" he howled.

"Shut up!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You can go back to Loder when we've started," said Harry. "Now just say one more word, and I'll squeeze some solution down your neck."

Billy Bunter bestowed upon him a glare that bade fair to crack his spectacles. But he did not say another word. He did not want any solution down his neck.

"That's done," said Bob Cherry, rising at last. "Sha'n't be many minutes now."

"Good!"

Johnny Bull opened his lips to make a remark, but closed them again without making it. Bob did not look as if he would benefit by any more oracular wisdom. Billy Bunter sat and glared as the Famous Five wheeled out their machines at last.

Harry Wharton changed the key to the outside of the door when they were all out. Then Bunter jumped up with a howl.

"If you lock me in, you beast——"

Click! The key turned, and the five Removites wheeled their machines away, leaving Bunter quite safe. They were sure of getting clear of Greyfriars now before he could return to Loder with the statement that they "wouldn't come."

Bunter's fat face was framed in the window, and he shouted remarks after the Co. as they

went. But they walked off cheerily, and in a few minutes were riding fast on the road to Cliff House School. Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was squeezing himself through the window—not an easy task for a fellow of Bunter's ample circumference.

He dropped outside at last, and grunted, and gasped for breath.

"Beasts!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away to the school-house in search of another victim.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Fagging for Loder!

"WHAT are we going to do this afternoon, Rodney?"

"Any old thing," answered Dick Rodney cheerfully.

Jack Drake and Rodney, the two new juniors in the Greyfriars Remove, were in their study—No. 3 in the Remove passage. Their study-mates, Ogilvy and Russell, had gone out, and the two new juniors were discussing what was to be done with the half-holiday. Jack Drake was sitting on the corner of the study table, swinging his legs, Dick Rodney occupied the window seat.

"I'd like some cricket," remarked Drake thoughtfully. "We haven't had any cricket yet since we've been here."

"There isn't any junior cricket going on this afternoon. Might fag for some of the seniors at the nets."

Drake grunted.

"Thanks. I'd rather not. I've been going to speak to Wharton about the cricket. I want to play in the Rookwood match when it comes off."

Rodney smiled.

"That's asking rather a lot, for a new chap," he said. "The Rookwood match is one of their big fixtures."

"They haven't a better batsman than my little self or a better bowler than you, Rodney, excepting perhaps that inky chap."

"We shall have to convince them of that," said Rodney, laughing. "We may get a show in the trial match. They're having a trial to pick out the players for the Rookwood match."

Drake nodded.

"But this afternoon we'd better have the bikes out," he said. "We haven't seen much of the country hereabouts so far. What do you say?"

"That's a very good idea," assented Rodney.

"Hallo, what does that fat bounder want?" said Drake, as Billy Bunter blinked in at the open door of No. 3 Study.

"I say, you fellows

"Still expecting that postal order, Bunter?" asked Drake, with a grin.

The new juniors had heard about Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order already.

"Exactly," said Bunter genially. "How odd that you should mention it. I'm expecting a postal order to-day—"

"The same one you were expecting when you were a fag in the Second Form?" asked Drake. "Russell mentioned that one. It seems never to have come."

"Oh, really, Drake

"The best thing you can do," said Drake seriously, "is to write to the Postmaster-General and demand an inquiry.

There must be a huge accumulation of postal orders waiting for you somewhere in the post-offices, Bunter, if what you have told us is true."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know," said Bunter. "I didn't come here to listen to your rotten

jokes, Drake. I've got a message from Loder."

"Who's Loder?" yawned Drake.

"Loder's a prefect of the Sixth Form, you silly ass. He wants a fellow to fag at bowling for him, and he's sent me to find somebody. He won't mind who it is. I'm too smart for him myself!"

"Tell him we're sorry we can't come," said Drake. "We're going out."

"Loder will be awfully ratty—"

"I've no objection to Loder being ratty, old top, if it agrees with him."

"You ass!" exclaimed Bunter. "He'll come down on you and lick you."

"Oh! Will he?"

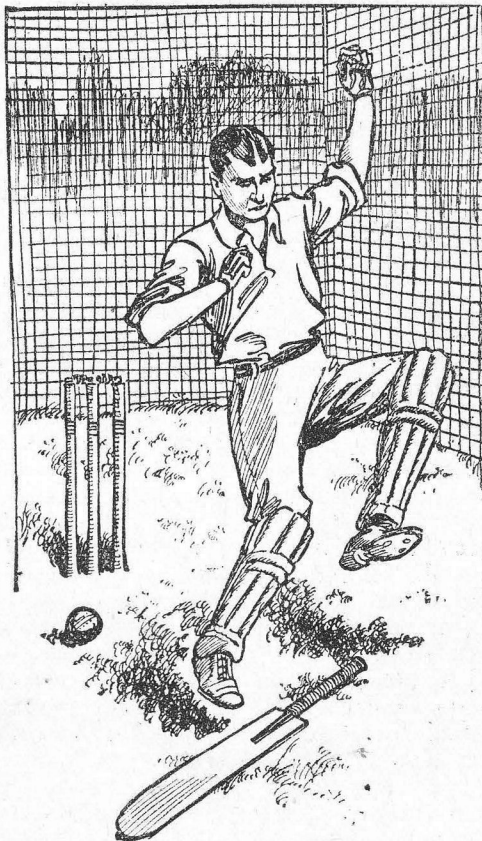
"Yes. But I think I can arrange the matter for you," said Bunter amicably. "Loder doesn't care which fag he has. I'll go and tell Linley or Penfold if you like. Of course, you understand that one good turn deserves another."

"I don't quite understand," said Drake, looking at him. "Suppose you explain, you fat owl."

"Well, I've mentioned that I'm expecting a postal order. Suppose you lend me

the five bob, and take the postal order when it comes? It's exactly the same thing, isn't it?"

"Not quite," said Drake, laughing. "Do you know that what you're asking for is bribery and corruption, Bunter, and that you are open to prosecution?"



The ball came whizzing down, and the next moment Loder gave a fearful yell and dropped his bat. "Yoop!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Well, one good turn deserves another. I'll rout out Linley, if you like—he's swotting in his study. Is it going to be five bob, you fellows?"

"Not at all!"

"If I tell Loder you won't come——"

"You can tell him at the same time that I kicked you—hard!" remarked Drake; and he slipped from the table.

Bunter made a jump for the passage, and Drake made a jump for Bunter.

Crash!

An active foot caught the Owl of the Remove as he fled through the doorway. There was a yell from Bunter, as he plunged into the passage, and landed on his hands and knees.

"Yow-ow! Beast!"

"Come back and have another!" said Drake invitingly.

"Yah! Beast!"

The Owl of the Remove picked himself up and fled. One was quite enough for William George Bunter.

Drake turned to his chum, laughing.

"Come on, Rodney!"

"But what about Loder?"

"Bother Loder! We're not going to spend our afternoon fagging for Loder. Let's get out."

"Oh, all right!"

The chums of the Remove left the study, and proceeded downstairs. In the doorway of the school-house stood Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form, with a bat under his arm and an angry expression on his face.

Billy Bunter was just explaining to him breathlessly that "Drake wouldn't come."

"And he kicked me!" said Bunter pathetically. "Kicked me hard, Loder!"

"Serve you right!" said Loder unsympathetically. "I'll kick you myself if you splutter at me. Oh, here's Drake! Drake!" called out Loder, as the two new juniors came along.

"Yes, Loder," said Drake politely.

"Come along to Big Side. I want a fag for bowling."

"You see, Loder——"

"Bunter says you wouldn't come when you were told I wanted you," said Loder, with a frown.

"You see——"

"You will take fifty lines, Drake."

"Look here——"

"And if you give me any more cheek, I'll lick you into the bargain!" snapped the bully of the Sixth. "Now get along."

"We're going out."

"What?"

"We're not going to fag on a half-holiday," said Drake.

Loder stared at him. He was more surprised for a moment than wrathful.

"Bunter!" he snapped.

"Ye-e-es, Loder."

"Fetch a cane from my study."

"Oh, certainly, Loder!" said Bunter, with alacrity.

He grinned at the new juniors as he rolled away for the cane. Loder gave Jack Drake a grim look.

"You haven't been long at Greyfriars," he remarked. "You don't seem to know the ropes yet. I'm going to help you to learn."

Jack Drake compressed his lips. He glanced out into the quadrangle, but Loder was in the way, and there was no chance of bolting. Dick Rodney pressed his arm warningly.

"Don't play the goat," he whispered. "Loder's a prefect. Can't be helped."

Drake nodded without speaking. He was feeling intensely exasperated; but he realised that he was in the toils. Billy Bunter rolled back with the cane.

"Here you are, Loder!" said the Owl of the Remove officiously.

Loder took the cane.

"Hold out your hand, Drake!"

Jack Drake hesitated for a moment. Loder stared at him.

"Do you want me to take you to the Head?" he asked.

"Drake——" whispered Rodney anxiously.

Drake held out his hands, with set lips. Swish!

"Take the cane back, Bunter. Now come with me, Drake; you too, Rodney; I may need you both. Carry that bat."

Loder turned and stalked out of the school-house. Jack Drake drew a deep breath.

"Come on, old fellow," murmured Rodney. "Needs must, you know. It's all in the day's work."

"If he thinks I'm going to fag at bowling——" began Drake savagely.

"Can't be helped. Do come on!"

Rodney drew his chum out of the house, and they followed Loder of the Sixth slowly. Billy Bunter chuckled as he blinked after them. He felt that the kick in the Remove passage was avenged now.

Drake's clouded face cleared as he arrived at the nets with his chum, in the wake of the Sixth-former.

"I suppose I've got to bowl," he muttered, with a glimmer in his eyes. "But I can bowl how I like. Perhaps Loder will be sorry he's fagging me this afternoon by the time I've sent a few balls down."

Dick Rodney looked a little uneasy.

"Loder doesn't look like a fellow to take a joke," he murmured.

"He won't have any choice about it—any more than I have about fagging for him," said Drake coolly.

"Drake!" rapped out the Sixth-former.

"Yes, Loder."

"I suppose you can bowl?"

"I suppose so, Loder."

"Did you play any cricket before coming here?" asked the Greyfriars Sixth-former, looking at him.

The question was really like insult added to injury, addressed to the finest junior cricketer of St. Winifred's. But Drake only smiled.

"Well, we played a bit," he said. "Not your style, I dare say."

"You young ass! Well, go on and see what you can do, anyhow. You can field the ball, Rodney."

"Yes, Loder."

And Jack Drake, with a glimmer of fun in his eyes, went on to bowl.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Cricket Extraordinary I

JACK DRAKE gripped the round, red ball, and glanced along the pitch. Loder of the Sixth stood with a careless straddle, gripping the willow. Loder was not a great man at cricket, and he was only "killing time" at the nets on this particular afternoon. Still, as a Sixth-former, he should have been

able to deal with any junior bowling. But the bowling he received from Jack Drake was of a kind never hitherto seen at Greyfriars—even when Billy Bunter and Coker of the Fifth disported themselves on the pitch.

The ball came whizzing down with plenty of force on it. The next moment there was a fearful yell from Loder.

He dropped his bat and hopped on the crease in anguish.

"How's that?" called out Drake.

There was a yell of laughter from five or six fellows who were on the cricket ground. Wingate of the Sixth came along with North, and stopped to look on at Loder's antics with surprise and interest.

"What on earth's the matter, Loder?" called out the Greyfriars captain. "Is that a new game?"

"Yooop!"

Jack Drake closed one eye at Rodney.

"Loder, what the thump——"

"That young villain has nearly punctured my ribs!" yelled Loder furiously. "He chucked the ball at me."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wingate.

"I—I—I'll——" gasped Loder.

"If the kid can't bowl, it's not much use fagging him at the nets," said the Greyfriars captain mildly. "Can't you bowl, Drake?"

"Eh! I am bowling," answered Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Temple of the Fourth. "Is that what you called bowling at your old school, Drake?"

"More like coconut shies, I should say," chuckled Skinner of the Remove.

Loder seemed inclined to rush along the pitch and test the weight of his bat on the bowler. He refrained, however, and Rodney fielded the ball and tossed it back to Drake.

"You can try again," said Loder, with a savage look, "and if the ball touches me, look out for trouble."

"I can't help it if you're leg before, can I, Loder?" asked Drake innocently.

"Send down that ball, you young fool!" howled Loder.

"Oh, all right!"

Drake took a little run, and sent down the ball. This time it was a wide—about six

yards wide. Loder glared, and howled to Skinner to chase after the ball.

"The kid can't bowl," said Wingate, laughing. "You'll have to put in some practice, Drake. You look as if you'd make a cricketer, if you tried."

Drake smiled.

The ball came back, and Drake bowled again. This time it was a still wider wide, and there was a fiendish yell from Temple of the Fourth, who was standing well away, half way along the pitch; how Drake could possibly send the ball at him by accident was a mystery. But it was Cecil Reginald Temple who got the ball, on the calf, and he hopped frantically.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'll scalp him! Ow-wow! Stop that dangerous idiot!" howled Temple. "Wharrer you give him a cricket ball to play with for? Ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall I bowl again, Loder?" asked Drake innocently.

"No, you born idiot!" exclaimed Loder angrily.

"I was thought rather a good cricketer at St. Winifred's——"

"Get off, you young fool!"

"Sure you don't want me any more?"

"No!" roared Loder. "Rodney, see what you can do. If you don't do better than that born idiot, I'll lick you!"

Rodney met Drake's eye as he went on the bowler's crease, and Drake's eyelid twitched. Dick Rodney grinned. He was quite prepared to take his cue from his chum, and help to make Loder sorry that he had fagged them that afternoon.

Rodney took a terrific run, and seemed to turn himself into a catherine wheel. But the ball came down with a crawl, and stopped of its own accord half way to Loder's wicket. Loder glared at him speechlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wingate. "There's a pair of them!"

"Arcades ambo—bowlers both!" chuckled Squiff of the Remove. "Jevver see such cricketers, you fellows?"

"Hardly ever!" grinned Skinner. "Bunter is a Grace to this."

"Put a bit of beef into it, kid," said Win-

gate good-naturedly. "It's a cricket ball, you know, not a beetle."

"Didn't I bowl hard enough?" asked Rodney, with great simplicity.

"Ha, ha! No. Look here! Hold it like this, and deliver so! Now try."

"Thank you, Wingate," said Rodney demurely.

He benefited by Wingate's instructions, to some extent, at least. The ball went down with tremendous vim. Gerald Loder jumped frantically away just in time to avoid catching it on his shoulder.

"You young ass! You're throwing it!" exclaimed Wingate.

"What's the difference?"

"The—the difference! Oh, my hat!" said Wingate, almost overcome by that question.

"What's the difference?" chuckled Skinner.

"You fellows ever heard of any difference between bowling and throwing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out, Rodney!"

Gerald Loder was chasing along the pitch with a business-like grip on his bat and a Hunnish gleam in his eye.

"Hook it!" exclaimed Drake.

The two new juniors fled.

"Hold on, Loder!" exclaimed Wingate, laughing. "Your own fault, for fagging two such young idiots at cricket. Field will give you some bowling."

"Pleased!" said Squiff cheerily.

Loder snorted angrily, but he went back to his wicket. Squiff gave him some bowling, which was certainly better—so much better that Loder of the Sixth lost his wicket twice in two balls. And even then Loder did not look pleased!

Drake and Rodney slackened down, at a safe distance from the cricket ground. They chuckled as they made their way to the bike shed.

"We've got off fagging fairly early," said Drake. "The silly asses don't seem to guess that we were pulling Loder's silly leg."

"Lucky for us Loder didn't guess it," remarked Rodney.

"Hem—yes, I suppose so. Never mind, we're free now for a spin."

"I say, though, the fellows have got a pretty rotten impression of our cricket," said Rodney. "That doesn't make it look any more rosy for our chances of getting into the Rookwood match."

"We'll undeceive them later," said Drake, laughing. "Come on."

The chums wheeled out their machines, and mounted at the gates. They took the road towards the sea, which soon burst upon their view, bright and smiling in the sunlight.

A mile or two from Greyfriars a bunch of cyclists came in sight—five juniors and three schoolgirls. The latter were Marjorie, Clara, and Barbara Redfern, of Cliff House School. Drake and Rodney raised their caps as the bunch swept by, and looked rather enviously after the Famous Five.

"They're the Cliff House girls," said Drake. "I rather think I'd like to join up. Right wheel, Rodney."

"But——"

"Oh, come on, old chap, and don't butt like a billygoat."

The two juniors wheeled round, and followed the bunch of riders. Johnny Bull was bringing up the rear of the little crowd, and Drake rode alongside and gave him an affable nod and smile.

"Lovely afternoon for a spin!" he remarked.

"Oh, lovely!" said Johnny Bull, in a very non-committal manner.

"Enjoying yourselves, what?"

"Quite."

"Going on to Cliff House after your ride?"

"Yes."

"I've never been to Cliff House."

"And you probably never will!" remarked Johnny Bull calmly; and he put on speed and joined his comrades.

Drake slowed down and grinned.

"No accounting for tastes, Rodney," he remarked. "For some reason, unknown to me, these fellows do not look like enjoying our company. Odd, ain't it?"

"Very odd!" said Rodney, laughing. "Come on, you ass—we'll make Marjorie's acquaintance sooner or later. Let's get going."

And the two rode away—leaving the Famous Five to follow their own devices.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Nothing Doing!

"ABOUT the cricket, Wharton?"

"The what?"

"Cricket!"

It was the following day, and the Famous Five of the Remove were just finishing tea in No. 1 study, when Jack Drake looked in. He had apparently come to talk business, and he seemed surprised by the loud chortle that greeted his opening observation.

"Cricket!" repeated Harry Wharton, smiling. "What do you know about cricket, Drake?"

"More than you could teach me, I imagine," retorted the new junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've heard all about it," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We haven't had the pleasure of seeing you play, but we've heard of your wonderful performances. Did they have an ambulance in attendance when you played cricket at St. Winifred's?"

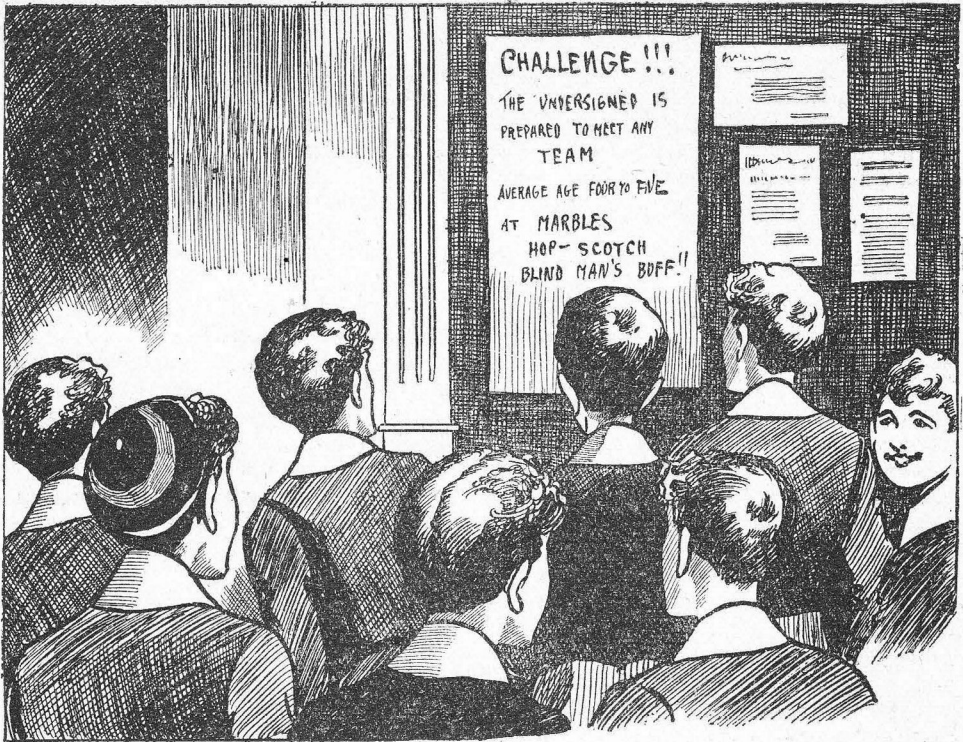
"Ever had up for manslaughter?" asked Johnny Bull.

Drake gave an impatient shake. The display on Big Side the previous day was already a joke up and down the Remove. Drake's object on that occasion had been simply to pull Loder's leg, and to escape cricket faggings. But it had made an unfortunate impression with regard to his cricketing abilities—and first impressions are not easily removed.

"Wingate's spoken to me about you, Drake," added the captain of the Remove. "He's asked me to take you in hand a bit, and show you a glimpse of two of the beginnings of the game. Come down to the ground on Saturday, and I'll try to make you understand the difference between bowling to a wicket and braining a bystander."

"The difference is really terrific, my esteemed Drake," remarked Hurree Singh. "It is our honourable custom to keep a score of runs at cricket, and not a casualty list."

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" said



There was a roar of laughter from the juniors as they read the notice, and Drake's face crimsoned
 "There now," said Bob Cherry. "That's what I call sensible of you!" (See Chapter 5.)

Drake crossly. "I think I could undertake to play your heads off, anyhow."

"No doubt—if we were within range when you got the ball in your fist," said Nugent.

"I'd rather keep my head where it is."

"I didn't mean that, ass—I meant——"

"Jevver play cricket at your old school at all?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Look here——"

"We played their crowd once," said Harry Wharton. "Chap named Daubeny was skipper. They played like—like—like—well, there isn't a word to describe how they played."

"This dear boy wasn't in the team," said Bob Cherry. "If he wasn't good enough for that team, what is he good for?"

"Nothing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" said Drake, restively.

"You can have your little joke. But I want to play in the Rookwood match."

"The what?"

"The which?"

"The Rookwood match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"I tell you——"

"Dear man!" gasped Wharton. "You shouldn't be so funny all at once! Of course, when we play Rookwood at marbles——"

"What?"

"Or at hop-scotch, we'll give you a trial. Not at cricket."

"Not at cricket, old bean!" sobbed Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five roared again,

Drake stared at them rather morosely. Although they were on friendly terms enough, there were something of rivalry between Study No. 1 and No. 3. Harry Wharton and

Co. were of opinion that Jack Drake had far too high an opinion of himself as a mere "new kid." He was much too cool, they considered, for a fellow who had been at Greyfriars such a very short time. He failed to be properly impressed by the lofty position of the Famous Five, who ruled the roost, as it were, in the Remove.

"If that was a fault, however, Drake had no intention of amending it. He had been the leading spirit of the juniors on the school-ship, the old "Benbow"; and he had no desire to take a back seat at Greyfriars. Indeed, it had entered his thoughts that, later on, he might give Wharton a tussle for the captaincy of the Remove. That was a long way off, as yet, however; so far he was only a new fellow, and had not yet made his mark in his Form.

Harry Wharton was a good sportsman, and if Drake had shown the necessary quality, Wharton would have played him in the Remove eleven without demur. But as the matter stood, the Famous Five were not displeased to have a really good reason for regarding this somewhat cheeky new fellow with derisive amusement. They were quite sure that he was a fumbler at cricket, and they did not mean to flatter him on that subject by any means. They were more likely to err on the side of excessive frankness.

"Don't be ratty, dear boy," said Bob Cherry, smiling at Drake's clouded face. "We'll teach you how to hold a bat, and then how to handle a ball, and then we'll instruct you in the difference between a wicket and a wicket-keeper—"

"There really is a difference, you know Drake," murmured Nugent.

"The difference is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Also it is needful to know which end of a bat to hold in your esteemed hands."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, Drake's got a lot to learn," agreed Harry Wharton. "We'll all give him some tips. Begin on Saturday, if you like, Drake."

"Look here—" began Drake hotly.

"Not Saturday," said Johnny Bull. "The trial match is on Saturday. We sha'n't have time for kindergarten."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about your minor, Nugent?"

asked Wharton. "Young Dicky plays fairly well for a fag in the Second Form. Perhaps he would be willing to take Drake in hand."

"I'll ask him!" grinned Nugent.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Drake.

"Keep cool, old top," said Bob, laughing. "Dicky Nugent will put you through your early paces. By the end of the term he may let you into the Second Form eleven, and then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No. 1 Study rang with merriment.

"Will you let me explain?" roared Drake.

"My dear chap, there's nothing to explain—"

"I was fooling Loder yesterday—"

"Easy enough bizney for a born fool!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I was playing the goat—"

"No doubt about that."

"On purpose, you dummy—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you I could bowl Loder's head off—"

"You nearly did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Temple's, too!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Temple is still vowing fearful vengeance."

"Wingate was trembling for his life, I hear," said Harry Wharton. "On second thoughts, I think Drake had better begin practice with a rubber ball. Cricket balls are a bit too dangerous in his hands."

"Will you listen to me?" shrieked Drake.

It was rather unfortunate that Drake's temper was rising. That circumstance only added to the hilarity of the Famous Five. They found entertainment in "getting his rag out."

"We'll listen," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Tell us about cricket! How many runs does a man score for braining the nearest spectator? Answer that!"

"You dummy!"

"Another question—suppose you were the only man left alive on the field, after your bowling, would you win the match?"

"I didn't come here to listen to rotten jokes," exclaimed Drake. "I want a show in the trial match on Saturday."

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Will you give me a show or not, Wharton?”

“No!” chuckled the captain of the Remove. “Lives are too precious, old top. We’re not insured against Benbow cricket.”

And the study rang again with laughter.

“Then you don’t mean to let me have a look in for the Rookwood match?” exclaimed Drake.

“Wharton waved his hand feebly.

“Don’t!” he gasped. “Don’t be so funny! Don’t over-do it! You might bring on apoplexy! Go easy!”

Drake stared grimly at the hilarious five.

“Well,” he said, “I’m going to play in the Rookwood match, I can tell you that. I’ll show you that I can play cricket, and somehow I’ll make you shove me into the team for Rookwood.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Drake retired from the study, and slammed the door after him. A fresh yell of laughter followed him.

The interview had not been a success.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Not Nice!

“HE, he, he!”

Thus William George Bunter, when Drake and Rodney came into the junior common-room that evening.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles in great amusement. And his fat chortle was echoed from other quarters.

Jack Drake glanced round, rather crossly. He did not see why his arrival should be the signal for an outburst of hilarity on the part of Rcmovites and Fourth-formers.

But it was—and he soon understood. His claim to play in the Rookwood match, after his extraordinary show on the cricket field, had become the favourite joke in the Remove by this time.

“Here’s two of the Graces!” chuckled Skinner.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Come and tell us about cricket, Drake!” bawled Bolsover major.

“Oh, go and eat coke!” snapped Drake.

“I’ve spoken to my minor, Drake,” said Frank Nugent. “He’s willing to take you in hand on Saturday.”

“Hang your minor!”

“Dash it all, that’s not grateful,” said Bolsover major. “My minor will take you in hand, too, Drake, and tip you about bowling—it being understood that you pay the insurance in advance.”

Drake’s eyes sparkled, and Rodney pressed his arm. Rodney was rather amused than otherwise by the state of misapprehension existing in the Remove.

“Keep smiling, old chap,” murmured Rodney. “They’ll find out their mistake when they see you on the cricket ground. Come and play chess.”

Drake nodded, and they sat down to the chess-board. A running fire of remarks was kept up among the juniors, on the subject of cricket, which Drake affected not to hear, though his ears burned. He was rather regretting, by that time, the extent to which he had pulled Loder’s leg. The joke against him was too entertaining for the juniors to part with easily, and they would require some very clear proof before they would believe that he could play cricket.

Dick Rodney was a good man at chess, at which brainy game Drake was rather indifferent, and in about ten moves Drake was mate.

He tried once again, and was given white, with the Muzio opening—and still Rodney won again in a dozen moves. Some of the juniors who were looking on derived considerable entertainment from the result.

“The dear boy is going to be a chess champion as well as a county cricketer,” remarked Russell.

“You should try draughts, old top,” said Ogilvy very seriously. “Indoors, draughts is your game, and outdoors, marbles. Stick to your own games, you know, and you’ll be all right.”

“Ass!” said Drake.

Skinner, who had been absent for a time, strolled back into the common-room with a grin on his face.

“You fellows seen the new notice on the board?” he asked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Something new?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes; Drake's challenge——"

Jack Drake looked up quickly.

"Mine!" he exclaimed. "I haven't put anything on the board."

"Well, it's there," said Skinner negligently.

"One of Skinner's japes, I suppose," murmured Squiff. "Let's go and see."

There was a rush from the common-room to look at the notice board. Drake and Rodney went with the rest.

Certainly there was a new paper on the board, and the juniors chortled as they read it. It was scrawled in a large round-hand, which was not Drake's "fist" by any means, and it ran:

CHALLENGE!!!

The undersigned is prepared to meet any team—average age four to five—at MARBLES, HOP-SCOTCH, OR BLIND MAN'S BUFF!!!—J. D., No. 3 Study, Remove.

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites, and Jack Drake's face crimsoned with annoyance.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Now,

that's really sensible of you, Drake——"

"You know I didn't put that up!" roared Drake.

"Quite in your line," said Bob, unheeding. "A fellow ought to know his own limitations."

"You silly ass——"

"I don't see why Drake shouldn't become hop-scotch champion of Greyfriars," said

Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I dare say it's quite a good game. I don't play it myself——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Drake——"

Jack Drake jerked down the notice from the board, and crumpled it angrily in his hand.

He was strongly tempted to lay hold of the grinning Skinner and punch him, but he restrained himself. He realised that it was ridiculous to lose his temper, and that would only add to the merriment of his form-fellows.

Rodney drew him away, and they strolled out into the quad instead of returning to the common-room.

Drake was silent for some time, breathing hard.

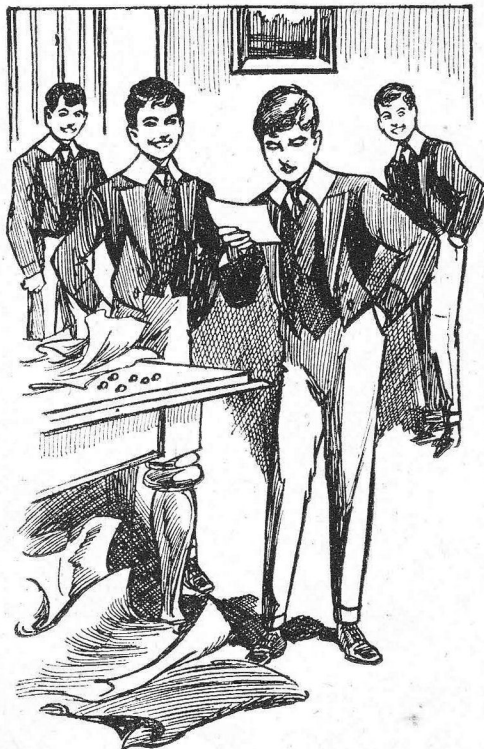
"No good getting your back up, old fellow," Rodney remarked soothingly. "The fellows will have their little joke."

"I don't like being made fun of!" growled Drake.

"Well, nobody does; but it's only fun," said Rodney. "Wharton himself will be glad to have you in the team for Rookwood when he knows what your form is really like."

"I sha'n't have much chance to show it if I'm kept out of the trials!" grunted Drake. "The match comes off next week. If this sort of thing goes on, I shall punch somebody's head."

"My dear chap, you must keep your temper," urged Rodney. "After all, they haven't seen you play cricket, excepting the weird show we put up fagging for Loder. You can't really blame them."



Drake looked from the marbles to the note. "What silly idiot brought this rubbish here?" he exclaimed angrily. (See Chapter 5.)

"Confound Loder! It's all his fault. Even that fat idiot Bunter is cackling at us!" growled Drake restively. "I'm getting fed up with it. But I suppose it wouldn't make Wharton see reason if I were to punch his head."

"Hardly," said Rodney, laughing.

The chums walked round the quadrangle in the cool evening air till Drake had walked himself into a good temper, and then returned to the school-house. They went to their study, No. 3, instead of the common-room, and found their study-mates, Ogilvy and Russell, there. Those two youths were smiling.

"This has come for you, Drake," said Ogilvy, jerking his thumb towards a parcel on the table.

Drake opened it.

"It's too late for post," he said. "How the thump did a parcel come for me?"

"We found it on the table," answered Russell.

Drake unfastened the parcel.

There was a considerable amount of wrappings, and when the wrappings were all removed, and the contents revealed, the contents proved to be six marbles, and a little note. The note contained the following message:

"A Present from the Remove! Go ahead with your game!"

Ogilvy and Russell chortled. Drake stared at the note and at the marbles. Rodney smiled. Perhaps his sense of humour was more highly developed than his chum's.

"What silly idiot brought this rubbish here?" asked Drake, looking at Ogilvy and Russell.

"Give it up, old bean!" chuckled Ogilvy. "We found it there! Rather kind of somebody to think of you, wasn't it?"

"Show us how you play your game, Drake?" suggested Russell. "Do you play it on the floor or on the table?"

Drake breathed hard.

"You chuckling asses!" he began.

But he controlled his exasperation, and contented himself with pitching the note, and the present from the Remove, into the grate. When the two chums turned up in

the Remove dormitory that night they were surrounded by smiling faces. Jack Drake laid his head on the pillow in a far from satisfied frame of mind. He fully intended, somehow or other, to make his mark in the Greyfriars Remove, but it was clear that he had not made a good beginning.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

From Words to Blows!

"**R**OTTEN!"

Jack Drake made that remark after lessons the next day. He had intended, that day, to turn up on the cricket ground, and let the Remove see that he was not the hopeless duffer they supposed at cricket. But when the Greyfriars fellows came out from lessons rain was falling.

"Yes, rotten, isn't it?" agreed Bob Cherry. "I only hope it won't spoil the pitch for the trial game to-morrow."

"Bother the trial game! I wanted to get out now," said Drake.

Bob smiled.

"The rain needn't interfere with your game," he said.

"Rot! Can't play cricket in the rain."

"No; but marbles——"

"What?" howled Drake.

"You can play marbles in the corridor, if a prefect doesn't come along," said Bob innocently.

"Or hop-scotch!" chimed in Johnny Bull. "I'll lend you a bit of chalk to make the lines, or whatever they are——"

"Or blind man's buff," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "You can play it gamefully in the boxroom, my esteemed Drake."

And the Famous Five chuckled in chorus. They found some compensation for the bad weather in pulling Drake's hapless leg.

Drake glared at them. His temper had been sorely tried of late.

"I suppose you fellows think you're awfully funny?" he said at last.

"Not at all; it's you we think awfully funny," said Wharton. "Especially at cricket——"

"And talking about cricket!" said Nugent.

"But we're open to believe that you're no end of a big gun at marbles," said Johnny Bull affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake turned away without another word. Dick Rodney had gone into Mark Linley's study to play chess with the Lancashire junior, who was a doughty opponent at that game. Drake put on his coat and cap, and went out to walk on the cliffs, having a feeling of being "fed" with things generally. He did not mind the rain, and a walk in the open air is an infallible cure for annoyance or bad temper. The Famous Five smiled after him.

"The dear boy is waxy," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Perhaps it's a shame to pull his leg so hard, but he shouldn't talk about things he doesn't understand. Fellows really shouldn't."

"They should not!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Now, there won't be any cricket to-day. We've fixed up a four-handed box with Temple and Co.—may as well ask them now. Who's on?"

"You four," said Harry Wharton. "I'm going over to Cliff House. I've undertaken to mend the puncture in Marjorie's bike."

"I wouldn't mind doing that," remarked Bob.

"My dear chap, I don't mind——"

"But you'd rather box with Temple," suggested Bob. "And I'm rather handier at mending punctures than you are."

"When you mend punctures, old nut, you're like the chap who made two blades of grass grow where one grew before," said Harry, laughing.

"Now, look here, you ass——"

"You stay in, Bob," said Nugent. "We want your mighty biceps on our side if we are going to box the Fourth."

Harry Wharton went for his cap and mack, and the other four members of the Co. proceeded to call on Temple, Dabney, and Co., of the Fourth, to arrange the details of the four-handed mill. Mending punctures was not a particularly pleasant occupation, but when Marjorie Hazeldene's bike was concerned, there was never a lack of offers. Bessie Bunter, at Cliff House, might have accumulated punctures by the score, and they would

have remained uncaulked; but with Marjorie it was quite a different matter. Harry Wharton started cheerfully to walk to Cliff House. He went by way of the cliffs, to breathe the keen sea air as he went.

By the time he came in sight of the sea, the rain had cleared off, only a few drops now falling, and the sun came out from behind a bank of clouds. The sea glistened like a flood of gold under the sunshine, rolling on the white sand at the foot of the cliffs.

Harry Wharton smiled as he caught sight of a figure on the narrow, steep cliff path before him.

It was Jack Drake.

Drake was standing on the narrow path, with his back against a big rock, only a few feet separating him from the edge of the path, where it dropped sheer towards the beach, a depth of a hundred feet or more. He was looking away towards the sea, bright in the sunlight.

He turned his head at the sound of Wharton's footsteps, and caught the smile on the junior's face. His own cheery expression disappeared, and he frowned. He understood that smile.

"Hallo!" he said gruffly, as Wharton came up.

"Admiring the scenery?" said Harry.

"Yes; it's ripping up here. Where does this path lead to?"

"Over the cliffs to Pegg, and Cliff House. It's a rather dangerous path for newcomers," said Harry. "A bit risky if you don't know the way."

"I haven't noticed any danger so far," remarked Drake, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Well, it isn't exactly safe just at this spot," said Harry. "A tumble over this cliff would be an end of all your troubles, and you'd never be able to show us how to play cricket."

Drake's eyes glinted.

"I'd have shown you to-day, if it hadn't been raining," he said. "Put me into the trial match for to-morrow and I'll open your eyes a little."

"More likely to close them for ever, if you get near me with a bat or a ball," said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" exclaimed

Almost a Tragedy !

Drake irritably. "I can tell you I'm getting 'fed' with these rotten jokes."

"My dear chap, you must expect fellows to smile if you are funny," said Wharton soothingly. "You shouldn't be such a humorist. When you talk cricket, you would make a donkey laugh."

"Not surprising, then, that it has that effect on you, I suppose," growled Drake. "But I tell you I'm getting 'fed,' and a chap who cackles at me is jolly likely to get his nose punched. That's a tip."

"If you punch noses as heftily as you play cricket, I advise you to leave it alone," said Wharton. "The results might be painful—to your own nose."

"If you'd like me to try," began Drake.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You can try if you like," he answered. "It doesn't matter to me one way or the other."

"Oh, doesn't it!" exclaimed Drake angrily. "Well, then, the next time you chip me about cricket, I shall hit out."

"My dear man, you'll get chipped about cricket without a limit so long as you chat about a game you don't understand," retorted Wharton. "Stick to marbles, and—ah!"

Drake was as good as his word.

At the word "marbles" he put up his hands and advanced upon the captain of the Remove, his eyes gleaming over his clenched fists.

"That does it," he said. "Now put up your hands, and you'll see whether I can punch noses or not!"

"I'm your man!" said Wharton disdainfully.

The next moment they were pommelling, both forgetful of the dangerous path upon which they stood.

They were reminded of it in a minute or less. Wharton's foot slipped on the rock, slippery with the recent rain, and he fell sideways. He made a spring to right himself, and would have done so, had the cliff path been wide enough. But his left foot came down over open space, and in an instant, before the horrified Drake could move a finger to help him, Harry Wharton had disappeared over the edge of the cliff!

JACK DRAKE stood numbed with horror.

The catastrophe had happened so suddenly, that it was more like the fleeting vision of a dream than reality.

A moment before, Harry Wharton had stood facing him on the narrow rocky path—and now he was gone from sight, over the edge of the yawning precipice.

"Good heavens!" panted Drake, white as a sheet.

All his anger was gone now.

For a moment he stood transfixed, frozen; then he roused himself to action. He dropped on his hands and knees, and crept to the edge of the cliff to look over. Even on hands and knees it required a strong nerve to approach the fearful verge.

A hundred feet or more below, a strip of shelving sand lay between the precipitous rocks and the rippling sea. The fall was almost sheer.

With staring eyes, the horrified junior looked to see his late adversary lying crushed on the beach far below. The next moment he almost sobbed with relief.

"Help!" came a panting cry from below.

"Wharton! Hold on!"

Four feet below the sharp verge of the rocky path the rock jutted out in a narrow jagged ledge, and upon the ledge Harry Wharton was hanging, holding on with both hands to the rough jags of rock.

His grasp had fastened there as he slithered down the face of the cliff, and he was holding on for his life.

Below him the ledge fell away to the cliff, so that his legs were swinging in empty space.

His face, white as chalk, was upturned to Drake as the latter peered over the cliff.

"Hold on!" panted Drake.

The injunction was not needed. Wharton held on with all his strength. It was death to lose his hold, and he knew it. The ledge was too narrow to be climbed upon, there was nothing for it but to hold with his hands—so long as his strength lasted.

Drake gave a wild look up and down the path.



Before the horrified Drake could move a finger to help him, Harry Wharton had disappeared over the edge of the cliff! (See Chapter 6.)

"A rope!" he muttered.

The path was lonely, there was no one in sight. Drake's glance returned to the white but steady face four feet below him.

"Wharton! Can you speak? Tell me: Where can I get help? Where can I get a rope?"

"The nearest cabin's half a mile away towards Pegg," muttered Wharton faintly.

Drake groaned.

Before he could have run half that distance it was evident that Wharton's hold would be gone.

His heart throbbed wildly.

Was there no way?

For a moment the sea and the cliffs seemed to swim before him, but he steadied himself with a strong effort.

"Wharton—you can hold on—a few minutes?"

"Yes." Wharton's voice was steady. Even in that fearful moment his courage did not fail him.

"I'm going to help you. Listen to me." Drake's voice came harsh and strained. "I'm going to lower myself over the edge——"

"You can't."

"And get my feet on that ledge you're holding to. You'll get hold of me and climb up, holding to me. You understand?"

"It can't be done," said Wharton faintly. "I should only drag you down, too."

"It's going to be done."

Drake did not speak again, he hurriedly whipped off his coat.

With an iron nerve he took a grasp on the sharp edge of the abrupt rock, and swung himself over.

His feet rested on the narrow ledge within reach of Wharton's hands.

"Catch on!" he called out, without looking down.

Wharton did not speak, it was his only chance of life, and he accepted it. Carefully, cautiously he shifted the grasp of one hand to Drake's ankle, and then the other.

Drake, with his arms over the cliff-path, held on for his life now, his fingers clutching at ridges in the rough rock.

It was a hair's breadth between life and death for both of them now. If Drake failed to support the weight, he knew what must happen; he would be dragged away from the cliff, and the two juniors together would go hurtling down to death.

But his courage did not fail. He set his teeth and held on, and slowly, slowly but surely, Wharton climbed.

It was a difficult task, but the alternative was a fearful death. Slowly, slowly his tenacious grasp travelled upward by inches, and the strain upon Drake grew more terrible.

Every nerve was at its utmost tension, it seemed to him that he must be torn away; but still he gritted his teeth and held on.

Slowly—slowly—

It seemed an age before Wharton's climbing grasp was on his shoulder, and then shifted to the cliff-path itself.

Then both juniors stood on the narrow ledge, holding on to the edge of the rock, exhausted, breathing in great throbs. They were both too spent to climb back on the path for a full five minutes. They held on and rested against the sheer rock, breathing, breathing.

It was Drake who moved first.

He dragged himself up, got his knee on the path, and plunged on into safety.

Then he turned to give a helping hand to Wharton.

Lying across the cliff-path, he grasped the junior's collar, and pulled him as he climbed, and, after a struggle, Wharton too landed on the path.

He sank down there, his back to the rising rock on the safe side, to rest—utterly spent with the effort he had made.

It was a long time before either of the juniors moved.

The fearful peril they had undergone had told upon them less than the physical strain,

which had been terrible; they were aching and throbbing from head to foot.

Jack Drake rose unsteadily to his feet at last, and leaned against the upper cliff. He looked down on Wharton with a whimsical smile.

"Precious pairs of duffers we were to begin scrapping in a place like this," he said.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Precious duffers to begin scrapping at all, for that matter," he answered. "We— we might both—"

He shivered, and was silent.

"All's well that ends well," said Drake, after a pause. "We're jolly well out of it." He picked up his coat. "You've about ruined your mack."

"Never mind the mack."

Harry Wharton rose now; he was recovering from the strain. He looked at Jack Drake, and hesitated. But he spoke at last.

"I'm sorry I chipped you, Drake, as you don't like it. No harm meant, you know."

"All serene. I was an ass to lose my temper," said Drake cheerfully. "My fault entirely."

"You've just saved my life," said Harry.

"After putting it into danger," said Drake, with a laugh.

"Well, that was my fault as much as yours. I suppose you know that the chances were about a thousand to one that I should drag you down?"

"The odd chance turned up in our favour," said Drake. "We're well out of it. All serene."

"I'm not a chap to jaw much," said Harry, colouring a little, "but—I'm grateful. What you did few fellows could or would have done."

"Rot! You'd have done it."

"I hope so, but that isn't doing it. You ran a frightful risk to get me out of that. I sha'n't forget it. I hope I shall have a chance of showing that I remember it."

"I'm not going to tumble over a cliff for you to pull me up," said Drake, with a grin. "Anything but that."

Wharton smiled, too, but his handsome face became grave again. He had been in the very shadow of death, and its effect was not yet gone.

"If ever I can do anything for you, Drake, you've only to say the word," he said. "I won't mention it any more, but I mean that. Now, I'll get on to Cliff House. Good-bye."

"Ta-ta!"

Harry Wharton tramped on by the cliff path, and Drake watched him out of sight with a rather curious expression on his face.

"Ass!" he muttered, addressing himself. "Ass!" And then he went on. "He's a good chap, though a trifle lofty—a really good chap. Thank goodness he came to no harm."

And Drake turned away to continue his ramble over the cliffs which had so nearly ended in a tragedy.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Bunter Does His Best

"I SAY, Drake, old chap!"

No. 3 Study were at prep. that evening when William George Bunter insinuated himself into the study.

"Hook it, Bunter!" answered Drake without looking up from his work.

"But I say——"

"Haven't you any prep. to do?" demanded Rodney.

"I don't need so much prep. as you fellows," explained Bunter. "I don't have to grind like duffy chaps like you. You don't mind my mentioning it? Brains, you know, it's brain that sees me through."

"It won't see you through if Quelchy calls on you to construe in the morning," remarked Ogilvy. "Go and do some work, and don't be a loafer."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy——"

"Anyway, let us do ours," exclaimed Russell. "Carry your entertaining conversation into your own study, Bunter. Toddy can stand it; he's your studymate, so he's bound to."

"Oh, really, Russell——"

"Cut off!"

"I came here to speak to you, Drake," said Bunter. "It's rather important. In fact, it's a chance that won't recur."

"Cut it short, then," said Drake impatiently.

"Wharton's had a five-pound note from his uncle," announced Bunter.

"What the thump has that to do with me?" exclaimed Drake in astonishment.

"Well, Wharton's rather mean, as a rule——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Horrid mean, as a rule," persisted Bunter. "He's refused several times to cash a postal-order for me. But on an occasion like this——"

"Like what?"

"This—after you've saved his life! He's bound to play up. My idea is that Wharton should stand a spread out of his five-pound note," explained Billy Bunter. "It's a special occasion, and I should suggest a rather select party. I don't mind making up a list of the fellows to come. Now, Wharton's bound to be a bit grateful to you for saving his life; in fact, he was saying something of the kind, so if you put it to him——"

"Put it to him," repeated Drake.

"Yes, if you put it to him, he can't very well say no," explained Bunter. "We'll have the spread in the Rag, with about seven or eight chaps, Wharton and you, and me, and——"

"Do you see that door?" asked Drake.

"Eh? Yes."

"Get t'other side of it."

"Oh, really, Drake——"

"You're nearest him, Ogilvy. You might give him a kick."

"Certainly," said Ogilvy.

Bunter dodged.

"Look here, Drake——"

"Cut off, you fat-idiot!"

"But Wharton's got a fiver—a whole fiver," urged Bunter. "Strike the iron while it's hot. I dare say his gratitude will have cooled down by to-morrow, 'tain't the sort of thing that lasts very long, as a rule. Look what I've done for ever so many fellows, frinstance, and are they grateful? Not they! Why, you're not grateful, you beast, though I'm offering you a chance of sticking Wharton for a first-class spread!" said Bunter indignantly. "Can't you see it's a chance not to be lost? You don't save a fellow's life every day, and a fellow doesn't have a fiver from his uncle every day. So you see——"

"What is the fat owl babbling about?"

asked Ogilvy, in wonder. "Have you saved Wharton's life, Drake? How did it happen?"

"Oh, it was nothing," said Drake. "Only a tumble on the cliffs. I suppose that owl has been listening at Wharton's door."

"Nothing of the kind," said Bunter warmly. "I happened to hear Wharton telling Bob Cherry—I'd stopped in the passage to—to—to pick up a—a pin, and I heard him—he said you jolly nearly went over the cliff with him, and that it was awfully plucky. I dare say he exaggerated, but what I want to point out is, catch him in the humour——"

"I'll catch you by the ear if you don't shift, you born idiot."

"Strike the iron while it's hot," urged Bunter. "I tell you he's got a fiver. I've seen it. I saw him take it from the letter. Look here—yah—beast!"

Bunter made his final remark from the passage, whither he had fled just in time to escape Jack Drake's boot. Drake slammed the door after him, and returned to the study table—to meet Dick Rodney's curious glance.

"So you've been doing stunts on the cliffs this afternoon?" said Rodney.

"Oh, rot!"

"I'll ask Wharton for the yarn," he said.

"For goodness' sake don't," said Drake crossly. "What the merry thump does it matter? Hand me that, Dick."

And prep. went on in No. 3 Study. But Rodney, Ogilvy, and Russell finished their prep with unusual speed, and adjourned to No. 1 Study to hear an account of what had happened on the cliffs.

When Drake came down into the common-room, he found all the Remove in possession of the story. Harry Wharton naturally had told his friends, and Billy Bunter's long ears had heard the story, with the result that it was soon known throughout the Form.

"I hear you've done a rather plucky thing, Drake," remarked Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth, in his lofty and somewhat patronising way. "I was goin' to lick you for biffin' me with a cricket ball the other day. Now I won't."

"You couldn't anyhow," remarked Drake cheerfully. "My dear old nut, you couldn't lick one-half of me."

Whereat the lofty Cecil Reginald sniffed and turned away, and did not bestow any more commendation on the cheeky new junior.

There was one result at least of the adventure on the cliffs that was not displeasing. The Famous Five ceased to "chip" the new junior. They felt that it was up to them now.

The chums of the Remove had listened breathlessly to Harry's story of the peril he had been through, and they had agreed that Drake was a jolly good sort, with no end of pluck; and, much as he entertained them on the subject of cricket, they nobly determined to refrain from any more chipping. So for that evening Jack Drake had a welcome rest from the painful topic.

Billy Bunter eyed him rather morosely. He made an attempt to renew his valuable suggestion with regard to "sticking" Wharton for a spread, but he had to stop suddenly and retire out of range of a boot. Bunter was puzzled and disgusted. When you had a claim on a fellow, and that fellow had a five-pound note, the course seemed clear—to Bunter. The obvious thing to do was to "stick" him for as much as possible out of the fiver. Why Drake refrained from doing so was a deep and puzzling mystery to the Owl of the Remove. The new junior was letting a good chance pass him by—and it was not likely to recur, for two reasons—gratitude was a thing that cooled very rapidly, in Bunter's opinion, and five-pound notes did not last long in junior pockets. As Drake was so obstinately blind to his own interests, Bunter determined to put in a word for him, and he approached the Famous Five, who were seated in the window, chatting about the morrow's match. Harry Wharton was drawing up the final list for the twenty-two in the trial game.

"I say, Wharton——" began the Owl.

Wharton waved him away.

"Travel!" he said.

"It's rather important. Drake thinks——"

"Oh, what does Drake think?" asked Bob Cherry. "We know he thinks he can play cricket. Anything else?"

"He thinks that, as he saved your life this afternoon, Wharton, and you've got a

five-pound note, it's up to you to stand a spread in the Rag."

Wharton stared at the fat junior.

"Drake thinks so?" he ejaculated.

"Yes." Bunter nodded. "You see, as a sort of celebration of his pluck, you know—that's what he thinks. You really can't do less. Shall I tell him you've decided on it?"

"Do you mean to say that Drake said so?" stuttered Wharton.

"Well, not exactly said so," admitted Bunter cautiously; "but—but that's what he thinks."

"How do you know what he thinks?"

"Well, you—you see——"

"Bunter's a giddy thought-reader!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Or perhaps he knows what he would think in similar circs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's just it," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I know what I should think, so, you see, that's what Drake thinks. He's bound to think you're rather mean, Wharton, if you don't——"

"You silly owl!" said Wharton, in measured tones.

"Drake doesn't think anything of the sort, and you wouldn't suppose so if you weren't an over-fed Hun! Roll away!"

"Well, to be candid, he said so," said Bunter desperately. "In confidence, you know—he—he—he said——"

"Well, what did he say?" asked Wharton grimly.

Bunter blinked out of one eye at Drake.

That youth was playing chess with Ogilvy at a safe distance.

"He said, 'Look here, Bunter, you can speak to Wharton about it, if you like; but if he doesn't stand me a feed, after what I did, I shall think him jolly mean!' Those were his very words," said Bunter impressively.

The Famous Five stared at Bunter as if fascinated. Bunter had the most remarkably mixed ideas on the subject of truthfulness, but his "whoppers," though many and various, generally had the drawback of being incredible. The fat Owl of the Remove seemed to be quite unaware that there was any reason why his statement should not be believed.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry at last. "Bunter beats Baron Munchausen and George Washington rolled into one! Why ain't you in Parliament, Bunter? You're wasted at Greyfriars, with your gifts!"

"If you think I'm not speaking the absolute truth, Bob Cherry——"

"The truth!"

said Bob faintly. "Oh, my hat!"

"There are fellows," said Bunter loftily, "who scorn to tell a lie. George Washington was one of them, and I'm another. I know that you fellows are not quite so particular!"

"What?"

"You don't come up to my standard," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I'm not



The majority of the juniors left Drake and Rodney by themselves—some of them stood some little way away, laughing. (See Chapter 12.)

blaming you ; there are very few Washingtons and Bunters in this world ! ”

“ Too many, though ! ” said Johnny Bull. “ What else did Drake say ? Let’s have it all, because we’re just going to ask him. ”

Bunter started.

“ I—I say, you needn’t mention to Drake that I’ve told you what he said, you know, because—because—because—— ”

“ Because he didn’t say it, ” said Harry.

“ Oh, no ! I mean, because—— ”

“ Drake ! ” boomed Bob Cherry, across the common-room. “ Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Drake ! ”

“ Don’t bother ! ” answered Drake, without turning his eyes from the chess-board.

“ Bunter’s given us your message. ”

Drake looked up at that.

“ Eh ? I haven’t given Bunter any message, ” he answered.

“ I—I—I didn’t say he had ! ” gasped Bunter. “ I—I was only putting a case—a—a—really a figure of speech ! Leggo my nose, Bob Cherry, you awful beast ! Yow-ow-ow ! Led go by dose ! ”

Bob Cherry compressed a vice-like finger and thumb upon Bunter’s fat little nose.

“ Now own up, if you want any of your boko left ! ” he said. “ Say ‘ I’m a fat fabricator. ’ ”

“ Yow-ow ! You’re a fat fabricator ! ” gasped Bunter.

“ You silly ass ! You, not me ! ” snorted Bob.

“ You silly ass ! You, not me ! ” gasped Bunter.

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Have you been telling fibs ? ” said Bob.

“ Yow-ow ! No ! Yooooop ! I mean, yes—yes ! ” wailed the Owl of the Remove. “ Led go by dose ! Yez—yez ! Yow-ow-woop ! ”

“ That’s better, ” said Bob, and he released the red and fiery “ boko ” of William George Bunter. “ Now roll away and learn not to tell fibs, Bunter ! ”

“ Yow-ow-ow ! ” Bunter rubbed his flaming nose furiously. “ I’ve a jolly good mind to lick you, you beast ! ”

“ Go ahead ! ” grinned Bob.

“ Only you’re not worth it ! ” said Bunter disdainfully. “ I scorn to soil my hands on you ! Yah ! ”

And Billy Bunter rolled away, still rubbing his glowing nose, and leaving Bob Cherry quite unwithered by his crushing disdain.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Held to His Word !

“ JOLLY good weather to-day ! ” said Frank Nugent, with much satisfaction, on the following morning.

A bright sun was shining on the old quadrangle of Greyfriars when the juniors came out from lessons on Saturday morning. The sky was of cloudless blue, and the chums of the Remove surveyed it with satisfaction.

“ All right for the game this afternoon, ” remarked Bob Cherry. “ You’ve settled about the twenty-two, Harry ? ”

Harry Wharton nodded.

“ Yes, Smyth is going to captain the other side, and I’ll let him pick his men from the list I’ve given him, ” he said. “ Every fellow in the Remove who can put up anything like a game will have a show to-day. ”

“ What price little me ? ”

It was Drake’s voice at the elbow of the captain of the Remove. Harry turned with a smile.

“ You can score for us, if you like, ” he said.

“ Thank you for nothing ! ”

“ Well, you can come and look on, ” suggested Bob Cherry. “ You’ll pick up some tips about the game. ”

“ I want to play ! ”

Harry Wharton looked a little uncomfortable. After what had happened the previous day, he felt constrained not to speak with his former frankness on this subject.

“ Well, I’m sorry, but it can’t be done, ” he said mildly. “ You see, this is a trial game to pick out the final team for the Rookwood match next week. If it was just an ordinary practice match, I’d play you, really. ”

“ I’m not specially keen on a trial match, if it comes to that, ” said Drake. “ What I really want is to play Rookwood. ”

“ Ahem ! You see—— ”

“ Don’t be an ass, old chap ! ” urged Bob Cherry.

"Put me in the list for Rookwood, Wharton, and I shall be satisfied."

"You know I can't!" said Wharton, with some sharpness.

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"Well, you ought, then!" said the captain of the Remove shortly.

Drake smiled.

"Suppose I tell you I'm a really good cricketer?"

"What's the good of talking rot?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Do give us a rest, Drake!" said Frank Nugent. "You're really getting quite a bore on that subject!"

"The borefulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Drake!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Can I have a word with you, Wharton?"

"Yes, if it's not about cricket," said Harry. "It's really no good speaking on that subject, Drake. I'd do anything I could to oblige you, after what you did for me yesterday, but I'm cricket captain, and it's a question of a captain's duty. I can't muck up the Remove eleven to please anybody. You really ought to know enough about cricket to know that."

"Come into the quad and let me jaw to you a few minutes, anyway."

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton resignedly.

He went out into the quadrangle with the new junior, and they walked under the elms. The Co. glanced after Drake rather curiously.

"Now," said Drake, stopping under the elms and fixing his eyes on Harry Wharton, "I believe you're a fellow of your word?"

"I hope so," said Harry drily.

"Do you remember what you said to me yesterday?"

Harry started.

"Yes," he answered, very quietly.

"You said that if you could do anything for me, I should only have to say the word," said Drake ruthlessly.

Wharton felt his heart sinking.

"I said so," he answered.

"You meant it, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, play me in the Rookwood match next week."

"Drake!"

"I'm saying the word," said Drake coolly. "That's what you can do for me, and that's what I want. Play me."

Wharton stood very still.

"When I said that I wasn't thinking about cricket, of course," he said slowly.

"Think about it now, then!"

"I can't play you."

"You can if you like. You're cricket captain!"

"I know, but——"

"Play me, then!"

There was a short silence.

"This isn't a matter for me personally," said Harry at last, in a constrained voice. "Playing a hopeless duffer like you would be chucking away the Rookwood match. It's one of our most important fixtures, next to St. Jim's and Highcliffe. If I played a dud, Jimmy Silver and Co., of Rookwood, would simply walk over it. A single wicket thrown away would make all the difference; a single run might make all the difference. You don't understand what you're asking, Drake!"

"I do, quite! I'm asking you to play me and to play my pal, Rodney, in the Rookwood match next week."

"Two of you?" said Wharton bitterly.

"Two of us," assented Drake.

"I can't!"

Drake shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you never meant——"

"I did mean it, and you know I did!" broke out Wharton. "But you're asking for a thing that's outside my power. I shouldn't be doing my duty as captain if I did as you ask."

"My dear chap, I'm offering you a first-class bat and a ripping bowler!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Wharton.

"Seriously, I was considered the best bat in the Benbow crowd, and Rodney was far and away the best bowler."

Wharton laughed impatiently.

"And a holy crowd they were at cricket!" he exclaimed. "Our Second Form could have beaten them. Don't be a fool, Drake; you know you can't play cricket. I can't play you, and there's an end. If you hold me to my word——" Wharton paused and drew a deep breath. "I wasn't thinking of anything

like this, as you know very well. But if you hold me to my word——”

“ Well, what then ? ”

Wharton bit his lip.

“ I shall think it rotten mean ! ” he said.

“ I'm not asking you what you think, but what you're going to do ! ” said Jack Drake cheerfully.

“ If you pin me down——”

“ I do pin you down ! ” said Drake with a nod.

“ If—if you claim——”

“ I do claim ! ”

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

“ Then I don't know what to do, ” he said.

“ I can't break my word to you—but I can't play two hopeless duds in the Rookwood match. The fellows would be wild. I should have to tell them the reason——”

“ I don't mind your telling them. ”

“ You don't mind the fellows knowing that you're taking a beastly mean advantage—for that's what it is ! ” he exclaimed.

“ Not in the slightest. ”

“ If I play you, ” said Harry, his lip curling, “ it's as likely as not that the fellows will turn me out of the captaincy. I've no right to do it, and if they sack me they'll be more than justified. In fact, if you drive me to put you and Rodney on the list, I hope they will ask me to resign. ”

“ Oh, they won't do that. ”

“ They may—and I hope they will. If they get a new skipper, the new man won't play you, and that will save the match, at least. ”

Drake shook his head.

“ You underestimate your giddy value, old bean, ” he said. “ The match would be lost without you—you're wanted to make runs, as well as to captain the eleven. A new skipper won't beat Rookwood, and the fellows know it. ”

“ Look here, Drake, if you like to ask anything else——”

“ I don't want anything else. ”

“ It's not decent to ask a thing like that. ”

“ Never mind—I'm asking it. Do Rodney and I play next Wednesday, or don't we ? ” asked Drake calmly.

“ Yes, ” said Harry at last. “ I can't break

my word ; but I hope that the club will sack me when they see your names on the list. Tell Rodney to get ready this afternoon—you'd better play in the trial game, and perhaps you'll learn enough to keep out of the way next Wednesday. ”

Drake thanked him and said :

“ My dear chap, if we play in the trial game this afternoon you'll discover that you've got two jolly good recruits for next Wednesday. ”

“ I suppose you think you can play, ” said Harry wearily. “ You don't seem to understand what a beastly mean thing you're doing. Give me a rest now. ”

And Harry Wharton walked away with a deeply clouded brow.

Drake glanced after him, and smiled. Then he joined Dick Rodney, who was sauntering under the elms.

“ Pull up your socks, old top, ” he said. “ We're wanted in the trial game this afternoon. ”

Rodney brightened.

“ Good ! But what's made Wharton change his mind ? ”

“ He thinks a little practice will do us good, as we're booked to play in the Rookwood match on Wednesday. ”

Rodney jumped.

“ The Rookwood match ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Us ? ”

“ Little us ! ” smiled Drake.

“ But how—why, which—— ” stammered Rodney.

Drake explained.

Dick Rodney's face was very grave as he listened. He did not seem to look upon the situation as a good joke, as his more volatile chum did.

“ Of course it's all right, ” he said. “ We can show them this afternoon that we're as good as anything they've got at Greyfriars. but until then, Drake, you'll make all the fellows think you frightfully mean. ”

“ Let 'em ! ” said Drake carelessly. “ When they see us play they'll know they've jumped to the conclusion too quick, like a set of silly asses. Until then they can think what they like, and be blowed to them. ”

"Well, it will be all right after the trial game," said Rodney.

"Right as rain!" said Drake cheerily. "Mind you put your beef into the bowling—you're the best bowler here excepting Inky. And I fancy I can keep my end up at batting with any fellow in the Remove without swanking. Don't you think so?"

"I know you can," answered Rodney. "Wharton's as good as you are, but no better. But till they know——"

Billy Bunter came rolling by. He paused to turn his big spectacles on Jack Drake, with a scornful blink.

"Yah!" he said.

"Hallo, what's biting you, Fatty?" asked Drake in surprise.

"I've heard—Wharton's just told Cherry, and I heard him. You'll be sent to Coventry for this!" said Bunter. "Yah! I call it rotten mean! You'll very likely get bumped! Yah!"

And Billy Bunter sniffed scornfully and rolled away. Bunter's was the first expression of the public opinion of the Remove on the subject. But it was not to be the last!

THE TENTH CHAPTER

The Finger of Scorn!

"You awful rotter!"

That was Bob Cherry's remark as he met Jack Drake coming in to dinner.

"Eh!" ejaculated Drake.

"What sort of a Prussian do you call yourself?" exclaimed Bob, his rugged, honest face pink with indignation.

"I don't call myself any sort of a Prussian," answered Drake coolly. "What's the matter with you, fathead?"

"If I hadn't promised Wharton to keep my hands off you I'd wipe up the quad with you, here and now," roared Bob Cherry in great wrath.

"Go ahead, old top."

Bob Cherry clenched his hands. But he restrained himself, and strode into the school-house sim-mering with wrath.

Nugent joined Drake as he was going in.

"You're surely not serious in this, Drake?" he said quietly.

"In what?"

"Pinning down Wharton to play you in the Rookwood match."

"Oh, quite."

"It's beastly mean."

"Think so?" said Drake affably.

"Everybody thinks so," said Frank hotly. "I wonder you're not jolly well ashamed of yourself."

"Go on wondering, old scout!" answered Drake, and walked into the house humming a tune.

Dark looks were cast at Drake and Rodney at the Remove dinner-table that day. It was known in the Remove that the two new juniors were to be played in the match with Rookwood, and the reason was known. It was a shock to the juniors. There was only one opinion among them on the subject. Wharton, in the fullness of his heart, had made a reckless promise to the fellow who had risked his life to save him—but only the



Drake's bat swept through the air—it met the ball—and sent it whistling on its journey—a boundary! (See Chapter 13.)

meanest kind of rotter would have taken advantage of that promise to pin the captain of the Remove down in such a way. If, as Squiff had remarked, it had been the case of a good player who hadn't been given an opportunity, it wouldn't be so bad—but for a "dud" to foist himself into the eleven this way was simply sickening.

Even Billy Bunter glowered scorn—and a fellow who was scorned by Billy Bunter must have sunk very low indeed!

So mean did the Removites consider Drake's action that some of the more good-natured ones opined that the new junior was pulling their leg—merely taking a rise out of Wharton, intending to let him off at the last moment. Perhaps Wharton nourished some faint hope to that effect—but if so it was faint.

As the juniors come out from dinner, Johnny Bull and Squiff joined Drake, one on either side of him, and accompanied him into the quad.

"Now look here——" began Johnny Bull.

"Look here——" said Squiff.

"You can't do this!"

"You simply can't, you know."

"Tain't decent!"

"Tain't honourable!"

"Take an ear each!" said Drake affably.

"Take it in turns to burble, or go it both at the same time, I don't mind."

"Look here, you rotter——"

"Look here, you outsider——"

"It's beastly——"

"Mean——"

"And rotten——"

Drake walked away, whistling. Johnny Bull and Squiff looked at one another. They had intended to try the effect of persuasion upon the obstinate new junior; but somehow their tongues had run to words of wrath. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh followed Drake as he sauntered quietly in the quad.

"My esteemed and ridiculous friend," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hallo, Inky! What time does the trial game begin?"

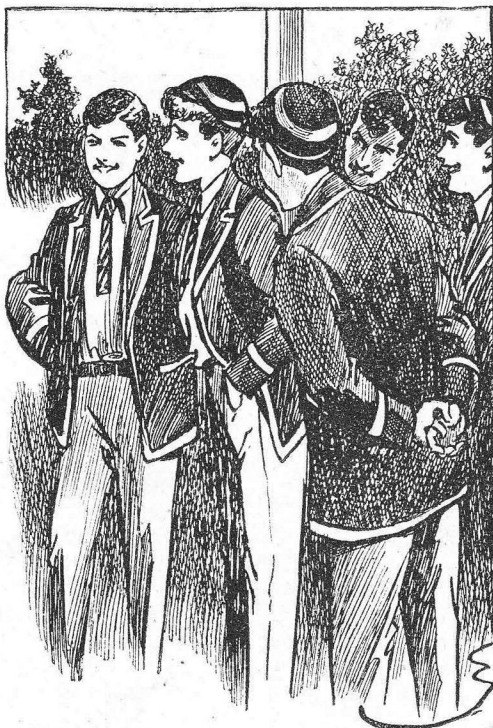
"Two-thirtyfully, my esteemed friend. But you are not really in the terrific earnestness to play this miserable and disgusting trick upon us?" murmured the nabob. "It is simply the pullfulness of the leg, is it not so?"

"Not at all."

"You will lose us the esteemed match with Rookwood."

"Win it, you mean."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave it up and walked away with quite a cloud on his dusky face. When Drake and Rodney changed into flannels, and came out with



The juniors could only stare as Drake lashed out at the ball. "Am I dreaming?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Do I sleep—or is visions about?" (See Chapter 13.)

their bats under their arms for the trial game, they received very expressive looks.

"After all, they may not turn out such awful duds," said Vernon-Smith hopefully.

"They look fit enough."

"Take one of them in your crowd, Smithy, and I'll take the other," said the captain.

"Righto—which shall I take?"

"It doesn't matter which out of a pair of hopeless duffers."

"Oh, draw it mild," exclaimed Drake, who came along in time to hear that uncomplimentary remark. "You'll see soon."

"Give us a chance!" said Rodney, mildly murmured.

Wharton's eyes flashed at them. He was bound by his word; but he did not take the trouble to conceal his disgust at being held to it in this way.

"You won't alter my opinion of you," he answered, with a curl of the lip. "You've got me in a cleft stick, and you're using your advantage in a mean way."

"Sorry you think so," said Drake politely. "It's the only way you've left us, since you've made up your silly mind that we can't play cricket."

"If the fellows choose they're at liberty to ask for my resignation," said Harry Wharton, looking round. "I've landed the eleven into a rotten scrape, and I deserve to be turned out of it."

"Oh, that's all rot," said Bob Cherry uneasily. "We can't beat Rookwood without you, Harry."

"No fear!"

"We can't beat Rookwood with two passengers in the team," said Harry.

"Well, we'll try."

"I've a jolly good mind to resign anyhow!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove passionately.

"You can't!" said Drake. "That would be creeping out of keeping your word to me, and you know it."

"I do know it," said Wharton savagely, "and that's the only reason I don't resign on the spot and stand out of the eleven. I'd be more pleased than otherwise if the fellows turned me out."

"Well, we're not going to do that," said Vernon-Smith. "Let's get going in the trial game. You take one idiot and I'll take the other. Drake, you'll play for me."

"Pleased, old top."

"That's more than I am, then," grunted the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"You're entertaining an angel unawares, you know," said Drake with a grin.

"Oh, don't talk rot."

It fell to Wharton's eleven to bat first in

the trial game, and the Bounder led his men into the field. Drake tapped his arm.

"Where am I going to field?" he asked.

"Anywhere you like, so long as you don't get in the way," growled Vernon-Smith.

Drake looked impatient.

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Don't talk to me."

Drake went to cover, and was promptly ordered off. He went to cover-point, and was shifted by Penfold. He looked rather angrily towards Vernon-Smith, who waved him back.

"Where am I to go?" shouted Drake.

"Out of the way."

Drake's eyes glinted. He crossed over to where Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were coming down to the wickets.

"Look here, Wharton——" he began.

"Go to your place," answered Wharton.

"I've got no place; that fool Smithy only tells me to keep out of the way," said Drake.

"About the best thing he can tell you," said Harry, and he went to his wicket.

"The best you can expect when you shove yourself in where you're not wanted," growled Bob Cherry, and he, too, went to his place.

"Get out of the way there, dud!" shouted somebody.

"Don't let Drake bowl!" yelled Skinner from the ropes. "Give us a warning first if Drake is going to bowl, Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake's temper was rising. He glanced round at the fellows looking on, and met with mocking and scornful glances on all sides. Then he walked to where Dick Rodney stood—rather distant from the other waiting batsmen.

"Where are you on the list?" he asked.

"Last man in," said Rodney with a grimace.

"They've made up their minds we're a pair of duds, and if they can help it they won't give us a chance to prove we're not," said Drake. "I was going to put 'em out of their misery this afternoon—now I think we may as well go on pulling their leg. It's only a trial game, and most likely won't be finished, so the result doesn't matter. Play the goat."

"What!" exclaimed Rodney.

"I'm going to fool 'em to the top of their bent," said Drake coolly. "You do the same.

Then they can wriggle with anxiety till they see us playing in the Rookwood match next Wednesday. You can see what they expect of us this afternoon; well, let 'em have what they expect."

"But——" muttered Rodney.

"That's my game, anyhow; will you back me up?"

"Yes; but——"

"That's settled, then."

Drake went back into the field. So little was he regarded as a fieldsman that the game had already started while he was off the ground talking to Rodney. As he came back, and hovered afar, there were several hisses from the crowd that had gathered round the fields, and two or three "boos" and catcalls. Drake heard them plainly enough, though he did not look round. And they rendered firmer his intention of "pulling the leg" of the Remove cricketers—and leaving them under a woefully mistaken impression until the great match with Rookwood came off. As a matter of fact Harry Wharton and Co. had jumped rather hastily to a conclusion with regard to the two new juniors, and perhaps they deserved a little punishment. Drake considered that they did, at all events; and he intended that they should have it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Cricket?

"LOOK out!"
"Wake up, Drake!"

"Ass!"

Drake was in the long field, and nobody on the field of play cared whether he was there or not, till the ball came whizzing at him. Then, as it happened, Drake was the only fellow with a chance to stop it, and he was shouted at on all sides.

It was an easy catch enough, and Drake's first instinct was to catch Harry Wharton out, naturally. He made a quick move—and then stopped.

He had forgotten, for the moment, the rôle he intended to play that afternoon. The ball came down, and almost brushed his arm as it dropped into the grass.

There was a howl from the cricketers.

"Butterfingers!"

"Fathead!"

"Boooooh!"

The Bounder ran up. He gave Jack Drake a glare that was quite ferocious.

"You—you—you——" he stuttered.

"They're running," remarked Drake.

"Hadn't that ball better be sent in?"

"You—you——"

"Is this a cricket match or a conversation?" inquired Drake, with a gentle smile of polite inquiry.

The Bounder repressed his feelings—with an effort—and sent in the ball. He was strongly tempted to send it at Jack Drake just then.

There were groans and hisses for Drake from the crowd.

"That's the fellow who's shoved himself into the Rookwood team!" said Skinner. "If Wharton plays him he ought to be made to resign."

"I guess Bunter could have made that catch!" said Fisher T. Fish, with a shake of the head.

"Why, you almost could, Fishy!" said Skinner.

"I guess——"

"Yah! Butter-fingers!" roared Billy Bunter. "Call that fielding! Call that cricket! Yah! Go home!"

Drake's ears tingled. But he did not depart from his resolve. The Greyfriars fellows had chosen to set him down as a dud; and a dud he was going to be—till the Rookwood match came round.

This rather weird jape, of course, would not have been played in a match; but the trial game was only practice, and the score on either side was of no consequence. For the rest of the innings Drake had little chance of showing what he could—or could not do! He got in the way several times, and was shouldered out of it by indignant fieldsmen, but that was all. When Rodney came to the wicket—last man in for Harry Wharton's team—there were grinning and mocking glances cast towards him. Everyone expected him to go down first ball—and he did. Vernon-Smith bowled him out with a careless ball for no runs.

Drake expected some remark from Harry Wharton before the Bounder's innings commenced. But the captain of the Remove said no word.

The show the two new juniors had put up was more disastrous than he had anticipated with his very worst anticipations; it was clear to him that if they played against Rookwood School they would be two helpless passengers for the Greyfriars eleven to carry. But his word was plighted.

There was nothing to be said; and it was useless to recriminate. So Harry Wharton carefully avoided the two happy recruits.

The Bounder's innings began, and Drake was left to the tail-end. Nobody expected him to make a single run when he came to bat—and laughter greeted him when he made his appearance, at last, at the wicket. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went on to bowl to him. The nabob was the best junior bowler at Greyfriars, but he did not trouble to exert his skill against Drake's wicket. He tossed down a careless ball, and Drake slashed vigorously a foot from it, and crashed his wicket over with the willow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that, my esteemed umpire?" chortled Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Am I out?" asked Drake, with a very innocent look at Temple of the Fourth, who was umpire at his end.

Cecil Reginald grinned.

"I rather sort of think you are, you know," he drawled. "Of course, you might be still in, the way you played cricket at your old school. Accordin' to Greyfriars standards, you're out."

"Do I count anything for that?" further inquired Drake.

"Eh?"

"I mean is it a run to me?"

"A—a run to you?" said Temple faintly.

"Nunno—not quite! I should rather say not! Speakin' under correction, I think not, dear boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of sight, for goodness' sake, you ass," growled Bob Cherry. "Go back to your marbles, or noughts and crosses. I

don't believe you can really play marbles—you haven't the brains."

"And you want to play Rookwood!" said Johnny Bull, in sulphurous tones.

Drake nodded coolly.

"Yes, I think I can keep my end up against Rookwood," he answered.

"By knocking down your own wicket?" inquired Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"What on earth will Rookwood think of us, if we have that idiot in the field!" said the Bounder. "Jimmy Silver will think we're potty."

"I'm going to try and knock up a century against Rookwood," said Drake innocently.

"Oh, dry up!" snorted Vernon-Smith.

The trial game was single-innings, and it was finished now. The cricketers cleared off in great disgust.

Rodney and Drake strolled away to the school-house together, with smiling faces, apparently quite unmoved by the angry scorn they had evoked. That evening there was a meeting of the cricket committee in No. 1 Study. It was rather an excited meeting, but it settled nothing. Harry Wharton was admitted to be bound to play the two new recruits if he remained skipper, and the committee had no idea of asking him to resign. Weighed in the balance, the presence of the two duds was no worse than the loss of their very able captain, they considered. And they still hoped that Drake might do the decent thing. Bob Cherry, indeed, proposed ragging him till he gave up his claim to play, but that suggestion was vetoed at once by the captain of the Remove.

The next day—Sunday—Harry joined the two new chums as they came away from morning service to make one last effort. Drake greeted him with a smiling visage.

"You're looking rather blue," he remarked. "Anything up?"

"You know what's up," said Harry shortly. "I want to make an appeal to you, Drake."

"Go ahead."

"Will you let us win the Rookwood match if we can?"

"Why, I'm going to help you."

Wharton repressed the desire to make an angry retort.

"You know you can't play cricket," he said patiently.

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"After the way you played yesterday——"

"Oh, you'll see quite a difference when I'm playing Rookwood. Same with Rodney. He's going to take Jimmy Silver's wicket for you."

"You can hardly think I shall give Rodney any bowling in the Rookwood match, even if I play him."

Drake knitted his brows.

"That's rather rotten," he said. "Rodney's a bowler——"

"Oh, rot!"

"Give him one over at least, early in the game. Unless you do that, you can't call it playing him," said Drake warmly. "Look here, give him one over when we play Rookwood, and if you're not satisfied, Rodney will agree to quit the team, and you can play a substitute."

"I'll agree to that," said Harry. "His wicket won't be worth anything, anyway. But—but won't you think better of it, Drake. Won't you let me off?"

"I would, only——"

"Only what?"

"Only I want to help to beat Rookwood," said Drake sweetly.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"That's your last word?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Very well."

Harry Wharton turned on his heel and walked away. Drake closed one eye at his chum.

"His noble nibs is ratty," he said. "His gorgeous nibs is indignant. His eye gleams with the fiery light of scorn. Why ain't we withered? Your hide must be like a giddy rhinoceros's, Rodney, if you're not withered."

Dick Rodney laughed.

"It seems rather a shame to pull his leg to this extent," he said.

"Oh, it will do 'em good," said Drake.

"They'll be all right when they see how we really play Rookwood. To-morrow we're going to put in some practice, must keep our hand in."

"But if they see us——"

"They won't," said Drake coolly. "We're going down to the village green to do some practice all on our lonely own, where the village chaps play. The giddy secret's going to be kept till Rookwood day."

And it was.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Not Popular!

DURING the next two or three days the two new juniors at Greyfriars were regarded by their Form-fellows with a very peculiar regard.

The treatment meted out to them varied from honeyed politeness to incivility that was well-nigh ferocious.

The politeness was wasted on them by fellows in a persuasive humour; and the incivility was lavished upon them, because they were deaf to the voice of the charmer.

But after school hours on Monday and Tuesday they were seen little of, not that anyone cared whither they went, or how they were occupied. Drake had made friends with Trumper, of the village eleven, and the two chums did some good practice with the villagers, the Greyfriars fellows remaining in blissful ignorance of that fact. When they came in on Tuesday just in time for evening callover, Bob Cherry greeted them with a snort.

"You can't even turn up on Little Side to practice," he said.

"Practice!" repeated Drake.

"Practice!" mimicked Bob Cherry sardonically. "Do you know what the word means without the aid of a dictionary? I shouldn't be surprised if you didn't."

"Oh, practice!" said Drake, with a smile. "You see, we don't need so much practice as you fellows do."

"What?" howled Bob.

"We're in rather better form, you know."

"In—in—in rather better form," stammered Bob.

"Exactly."

"After your show in the trial game?"

"After your show in the trial game," assented Drake, with exasperating good humour. "The fact is, we don't think so jolly much of your cricket here at Greyfriars."

"You—you—you don't?"

"No. Wharton's not bad as a bat——"

"Oh, Wharton's not bad, isn't he?" gasped Bob.

"No, and you're fair to middling——"

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"Inky's a good bowler," continued Drake.

"I may say, perhaps, that Inky is nearly on a par with Rodney here at bowling."

"N-n-nearly on a p-p-par?"

"Yes, nearly, but not quite. But your other bowlers couldn't touch Rodney, quick or slow. You wait for the Rookwood match. You'll be surprised," said Jack Drake cheerily.

Bob Cherry seemed to be suffering from an internal struggle.

"The Rookwooders will be surprised, you mean," struck in Bolsover major. "When they see you fellows in the team, they'll think they've got a visit from a lunatic asylum."

"Well, they won't be far wrong, will they?" said Drake.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"And suppose they saw you in the team?" suggested Drake. "What on earth would they think, then? You see, matters might be worse."

And Drake and Rodney walked on before Bolsover major could think of any adequate reply.

That night in the dormitory the Removites looked at the two new chums as if they could eat them.

They had given up hope now that Drake would do what they called the "decent thing." Evidently the hopeless ass was bent on claiming the fulfilment of the bond, like Shylock of old; exacting his pound of flesh with supreme indifference to the sufferings of the victim. The Removites admitted that the shrieking duffer fancied he could play—that was his only justification. But that didn't alter the fact that he couldn't play, and that he ought to be lynched for "wedging" into the Remove team as he had done.

Fellows who weren't in the team felt just as sore as the playing members. They were almost equally interested in the success of the eleven that was going over to Rookwood on the morrow. Success now was much more than problematic.

Greyfriars juniors required to be at the top of their form to beat Jimmy Silver and Co.; and Wharton had made up his mind that he would be, practically, playing nine men. It was, indeed, worse than even that; for the presence of two "rotters" had a demoralising effect on the team.

Harry Wharton still hoped to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, as it were; but the hope was faint. Still, cricket was a game of glorious uncertainty, and it was never lost till it was won. The mighty batsmen of the Remove dreamed of knocking up centuries which should neutralise the heavy handicap they laboured under. But it was a dreadful reflection that two wickets in each innings, at Rookwood would be "gonners" without a hope.

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny.

That day was always a half-holiday at Greyfriars; but on the occasion of the Rookwood match it was a whole one, for the members of the eleven and a select party that accompanied them. At a very early hour Harry Wharton and Co. were making their preparations for departure; they had a good distance to travel, and a very early train was to be caught.

Drake and Rodney turned out cheerily with the rest, and made their preparations in cheery spirits.

"Taking your bat, Drake?" asked Bob Cherry, in a tone of sarcastic surprise.

Drake looked up in astonishment.

"My bat! Of course."

"You won't want a bat, will you?"

"Ass!"

"You can knock down the wicket with your boot."

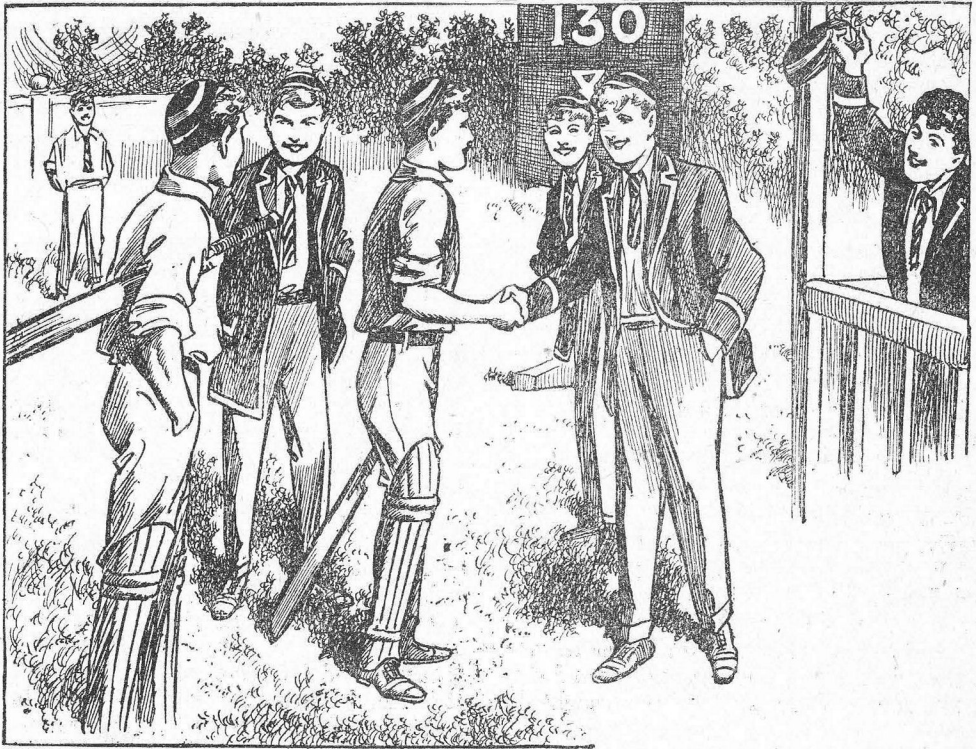
"Oh, rats!" growled Drake.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Jimmy Silver will think you're potty. You'd better drop Drake out on the line."

"I jolly well wish we could!" growled Johnny Bull.

Ogilvy approached Drake when the cricketers gathered in the hall ready to start. The Scottish junior had a most expressive and persuasive look on his face.

"Drake, old chap," he murmured.



The two juniors looked rather flushed and a trifle breathless as they came out, but they were smiling cheerfully. "You spoofers!" said Bob Cherry. "I told you we could play cricket!" was Drake's reply. (See Chapter 14.)

"Hallo! I was a cheeky beast yesterday," said Drake in surprise. "Where do you see the improvement?"

Ogilvy coughed.

"Look here, old fellow," he said. "You're my study mate, and it's up to you to act decently, for the credit of No. 3."

"That's what I'm going to do. It will be no end of kudos to No. 3 Study to have one of its members a winning cricketer."

"Oh, you fathead!"

"Same to you, dear boy, and many of them," said Drake affably.

"Two good men are left out of the eleven to make room for you two idiots," said Ogilvy. "I should very likely be in but for that. Now, old fellow, do the decent thing."

Ogilvy's look was quite imploring.

"My dear old grouser," said Drake, "I'll tell you what. I'm really a good cricketer——"

"Oh, you frabjous jabberwock!"

"If I don't do the team credit, you can kick me when I come back," said Drake, smiling. "That's a fair offer."

Ogilvy stared at him.

"Do you actually think you can play fellows like Silver?" he asked in wonder.

"I do—actually."

"Well, I'll take you at your word," said Ogilvy grimly. "If you don't do the team credit—and you won't—I'll give you the heftiest kick you ever heard of when you come sneaking home. Mind that."

"Righto!"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton.

There were fifteen or sixteen in the party; the eleven being composed of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, Squiff, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, Drake, and Rodney. Frank

Nugent went with them—feeling rather sore—for he would probably have had a place in the eleven but for the two obnoxious intruders. But, as a matter of fact, there were a dozen fellows in the Remove who considered that Drake and Rodney had their places—and certainly the whole dozen could not have been satisfied by the withdrawal of the “duds.”

In the train for Rookwood, Drake and Rodney found themselves in a rather chilly atmosphere.

Harry Wharton was icily polite; but some of the team were exceedingly gruff, and there were a good many remarks made about duds, and duffers, and thrusting outsiders, and wedging rotters. All of which Rodney and Drake contrived to bear without feeling unduly “down.” The fellows who accompanied the team made the most obnoxious remarks to them—they nourished a hope, perhaps, that at the very last moment the two “duds” would back out and make room for better men. If so, they were disappointed. Drake and Rodney had not shown a sign of repentance by the time the party arrived at Coombe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

A Slight Surprise!

JIMMY SILVER, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was at Coombe Station, with a brake, to meet the arriving cricketers. The brake rolled on to Rookwood with Harry Wharton and Co. on board. Jimmy, who knew Drake and Rodney slightly, greeted them cheerily enough; but before the brake reached Rookwood School, he was aware of a certain “something” in the atmosphere surrounding the two, and realised that all was not quite as it should be with the Greyfriars’ party. However, as that was not Jimmy Silver’s business, he did not trouble his head about it.

The sun was shining down on Rookwood, as the cricketers had left it shining on Greyfriars. Stumps were pitched early, most of Rookwood being in the form-rooms; at Rookwood, as at Greyfriars, it was a whole holiday only for the eleven. So there were few on-lookers when the game began.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and elected to bat first. He had looked over the Rookwood

cricketers with a critical eye, and he realised that he was “up against” a tough proposition. He knew all the fellows—Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Dodd, Cook, Doyle, and Towle. And he could see that they were in good form and quite confident. He did not feel happy at the thought of Drake and Rodney standing up to bowlers like Jimmy Silver and Erroll—he knew that they would test the powers of the strongest bats in the visiting eleven. Two wickets short—in each innings—against a team like that! And all through that unlucky adventure on the cliffs! But repining was useless, and Harry Wharton faced the prospect as cheerfully as he could. It would not be the first time he had fought an uphill fight.

Drake and Rodney were down for the tail-end of the innings, as they expected.

Drake tapped Wharton on the arm as he put on his pads.

“You wouldn’t like to open the innings with me?” he asked.

Wharton looked at him.

“Is that a joke?” he asked drily.

“Not a bit of it; serious as a judge—or, rather, more serious than most giddy judges!” said Drake. “Serious as a professional humorist!”

“Well, don’t be an ass!”

“I’m asking you not to be one. Put a good man in to begin. *Pour encourager les autres, you know.*”

“Drake,” said Harry, in a low voice, “if this game you’re playing is only a jape—only a rotten practical joke—there’s still time for you to stand down. Nugent and Russell are here, and could take the places——”

“They’re not really up to Rookwood form,” said Drake, shaking his head.

“Are you?” said Wharton savagely.

“Oh, yes!”

“That’s enough!”

Harry Wharton signed to the Bounder, and they went in to open the innings for Greyfriars. Jimmy Silver and his merry men were ready, and Jimmy himself went on to bowl the first over. Harry Wharton had the bowling, and he was soon aware that the Rookwood junior skipper was quite at the top of the form for which he was famous.

The first ball that came down gave Wharton something to think about; the second gave him further food for reflection. He did not venture to hit out till the fourth, and then one of those unlooked-for disasters which happen in cricket, as in everything else, occurred. The batsmen were running when there was a yell, and Arthur Edward Lovell, of Rookwood, held up the ball and chortled:

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, his face falling.

Harry Wharton's feelings were not to be expressed in words. He had hoped that, somehow, a wonderful score should make up for the presence of the passengers in the team; and, lo and behold! by the cruellest luck, he was out without a single run to his credit.

Words were quite inadequate. No language, not even German, could have done justice to Wharton's feelings at that moment. With an impassive face, he carried his bat back to the pavilion.

"Man in," he said quietly.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Bob Cherry; and he went out to the vacant wicket.

Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith, between them, proceeded to make some runs; but Rookwood was "all there." The Bounder was clean bowled by Erroll for a total of ten, instead of the fifty the Greyfriars fellows had confidently looked for. And Bob Cherry, the mighty hitter, smote a ball right back into Jimmy Silver's hands after Jimmy had bowled it when he had only eight to his credit. The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another.

"Just our luck!" said Johnny Bull pessimistically. "We're loaded up with two silly fools, and our best men get it right in the eye at the same time! We may as well make Rookwood a present of this game!"

"Never say die!" remarked Jack Drake.

Johnny gave him a ferocious look.

"Don't you jaw!" he said savagely. "It ain't easy for a fellow to keep from rapping his bat on your silly head, as it is! You've landed us in for a record licking with your tomfoolery!"

"Perhaps I shall help to pull the game out of the fire," suggested Drake.

Johnny Bull's grip closed on the cane handle of his bat. Only the unseemliness of a "row" on the Rookwood ground prevented him from laying it round the obnoxious junior. He turned away with a grunt of wrath and disdain.

Peter Todd and Squiff were at the wickets now, and, as a rule, Toddy and Sampson Field could be relied upon for deeds of derring-do. But when a "rot" sets in, it sometimes works in weird and unexpected ways. Toddy was dismissed for six, much to his astonishment, and Squiff bagged only ten before he was caught out by Valentine Mornington.

Johnny Bull did some steady stone-walling while Mark Linley, at the other end, was knocking up runs. Johnny Bull was still at the wickets when there were only two more to fall, and Dick Rodney came in to join him. Bob Cherry almost groaned aloud as he looked at the score.

"Forty runs for eight wickets!" said Bob faintly. "Jevver see the like? Ducks' eggs are cheap to-day! Sorry, Harry, old chap! But jevver see anything like it? Forty for the innings!"

"The innings isn't over yet," Drake ventured to remark.

Snort from Bob Cherry.

"It's the same as over, isn't it?" he growled. "You and Rodney will last one ball each. Johnny will be 'not out.'"

"We may knock up a run or two," said Drake sarcastically.

"Oh, don't talk out of the back of your neck!" said Bob crossly. "The scorer can go for a little run now; he won't be wanted any more."

"Johnny may make a few if that fool at the other end keeps the innings open!" said Nugent.

"Last ball of the over, and it will do for Rodney, anyhow!" groaned Bob.

But it didn't.

Dick Rodney stopped that ball, apparently with ease, much to the surprise of the Greyfriars fellows.

The field crossed over.

Bob Cherry rubbed his hands.

"Johnny's got the bowling," he said:

"Johnny may put something on; old Johnny's good for a few. We may raise fifty."

Alas for Bob Cherry's hopes!

Johnny Bull was playing a cautious game—perhaps a little too cautious. At all events, he landed the ball in the open palm of Kit Erroll, and the umpire gave the disastrous verdict, "Out!"

Bob Cherry heaved a deep sigh.

"It never rains but it pours!" he said. "We're done—foiled, diddled, dished, and done! Is it worth while keeping the innings on for those two idiots to play the goat, Wharton? May as well shut up shop now!"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Get on, Drake," he said. "Get it over!"

"There's still time for you to stand out and let a real man go on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm the real man, old top!"

"Idiot!"

Jack Drake went to the wicket calmly and cheerfully. Jimmy Silver was bowling, and Drake had taken Jimmy's measure. He had had a very careful and scrutinising eye on the game. He knew that he had hard work before him, but he was confident that he could play the Rookwood bowling. At all events, he meant to do his best.

"Look out for ducks' eggs!" said Bob Cherry dispiritedly.

"There he goes!"

The ball came down, hot and whizzing from Jimmy Silver's hand. The Greyfriars fellows looked on glumly, with the instant expectation of seeing Drake's wicket shivered—if he did not knock it down with his bat before the ball reached it.

But neither catastrophe happened.

The ball was stopped dead on the crease.

"Saved his bacon," said Bob, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"I say, though, that was rather neat," said Vernon-Smith. "That was a tricky ball. I shouldn't have played it. Drake was right to stop it like that."

"Sheer chance."

"I suppose so. But——"

The Bounder looked on with renewed in-

terest as the ball was sent back to the bowler, and Jimmy Silver whizzed it down again.

Drake's bat swept through the air.

It did not crash on the wicket, and it did not miss the ball—it met the ball, and sent it whistling on its journey—a long—long—journey.

As the fieldsmen ran, the batsmen crossed the pitch with lightning speed, and crossed again, and they were safe home when the ball came trundling in to the wicket-keeper—too late.

Harry Wharton stared. Bob rubbed his eyes.

"Am I dreaming?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Do I sleep, do I dream, or is visions about? What?"

"They can play," said the Bounder quietly.

"The playfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh. "Is it possible that the worthy and disgusting bounders have been pulling our esteemed legs?"

"Look!" yelled Johnny Bull in great excitement.

"Oh, my hat!"

The round red ball went on its travels again, and again the batsmen were crossing the pitch, hardly seeming to touch the ground. Once, twice, thrice! Three, and safe home, with Dick Rodney at the batting end.

Harry Wharton and Co. gazed on speechlessly.

The ball came down with a vim, and Rodney let fly. The batsmen did not run this time. Drake made a slight movement, but Rodney smiled, and waved him back.

"Why don't they run?"

"Ass! It's a boundary."

"A—a—a boundary!" whispered Bob Cherry. "That crass idiot, that hopeless dud, that shrieking frumpitious chump, is hitting boundaries! Wake me, somebody!"

"Look!"

"Oh, my word!"

"Two for the last ball of the over," said Harry Wharton dazedly.

Then there was a yell from the Greyfriars cricketers, a yell in which astonishment and relief and admiration were mingled.

"Well, done! Bravo, Rodney! Bravo, Drake!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

All Serene!

JACK DRAKE chuckled.

He was beginning to enjoy the game.

He was at the top of his form, and in a mood for a winning game, and that mood was shared by his chum. They intended to play the game of their lives to-day, and undoubtedly they had started well.

Harry Wharton and Co. watched them, in growing wonder and relief. Somehow—anyhow—the two hopeless duds were playing up in the most remarkable way. The first success or two might have been flukes, but this could not be a series of gigantic flukes. They were two men as good as any in the Remove eleven, there was no denying that now. Jack Drake was equal to Wharton in his best form, and Dick Rodney was quite on a par with any other member of the Greyfriars eleven. It was the plain fact, amazing as it was, for all to see; and the Greyfriars party for the present felt only relief and gladness that it was so. As they watched that startling innings, they realised that the two chums must undoubtedly have been pulling their leg, there was not a shadow of a doubt about that now. The fine play they were now witnessing came all the more surprisingly by way of contrast with the unlucky opening of the innings. It was exactly what was needed to pull the game out of the fire—and it was there when it was needed.

A smile came over Harry Wharton's face as he looked at the score board. The figures stood now at seventy for nine wickets.

"Jevver hear the like?" murmured Bob Cherry, still half wondering whether there were visions about.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thank goodness it's turned out like this," he said. "But who'd have thought it?"

"Cheeky rotters to pull our leg like that," grunted Johnny Bull indignantly. "What did they mean by it?"

"Oh, well hit!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

"That'll be a three," said Peter Todd.

But it was a four.

"Come to think of it," said Harry Wharton slowly, "they did tell us—at least, Drake

told us—that they were only pulling Loder's leg that day they played the goat on Big Side at Greyfriars."

"We thought the silly ass was rotting."

"But in the trial match," said Nugent, "you know what they did?"

"Pulling our leg, of course, because we'd set them down as duds," said Harry Wharton rather ruefully. "Perhaps—perhaps we were a little hasty, might have made them feel a bit sore."

"Like their cheek, though," grunted Johnny Bull.

"The cheekfulness was terrific, but the playfulness on the present occasion is a sublime corker," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bravo, Drake! Oh, good man, good man!"

"Up it goes!" chortled Bob Cherry. "I was promising Drake the licking of his life after this match, I'll hug him instead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose we can forgive them for spoofing us," said Harry, laughing. "And—and in the circus, I—I suppose Drake was entitled to a place in the team. It—it wasn't the mean trick we thought, seeing how it's turned out."

"Better Drake than little me," said Nugent frankly. "I couldn't stand up to Silver's bowling like that. I'm jolly glad he's in the team."

"Same here."

"The samefulness is terrific."

"The Rookwood chaps are getting more leather hunting than they bargained for," chuckled Squiff. "They thought it was all over bar shouting, and now they're getting tired in their little leglets."

"Bravo, Drake!"

"Good man!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. undoubtedly were surprised at this sudden, as it were telescopic, lengthening out of an innings they had supposed nearly over. The Rookwood bowlers did their best, the field was alert and wary, but the two batsmen had wonderful luck. They were getting set, and the utmost efforts of Rookwood seemed of no avail to shift them.

By this time Rookwood School was out of

morning classes, and a crowd was gathering round the field. They looked on with keen interest—and certainly they would have been surprised if they had known that these two batsmen had been brought along as “passengers” by the visiting team. There was not much of the “passenger” in their looks.

There were cheers from the Rookwood crowd for some of the mighty hits, and the Greyfriars party shouted stentorian approbation. Just then it would be safe to say that Drake and Rodney were the most popular fellows in the party from Greyfriars.

But the end came at last. Rodney was stumped in a gallant effort at four, and the innings closed—Jack Drake not out.

They came back to the pavilion to be greeted with loud cheers. They had earned them, for Rodney had made thirty runs, and Drake twice that number. Greyfriars first innings, after all, had closed for a total of 130.

The two juniors looked rather flushed and a trifle breathless as they came out, but they were smiling cheerfully.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo, you spoofing bounder!” roared Bob Cherry, greeting Drake with a mighty thump on the shoulder, “What do you mean by it, eh?”

“Ow!” gasped Drake.

“You spoofers!” said Nugent, laughing. Drake chuckled.

“I told you we could play cricket!” he remarked. “You wouldn’t believe it! You simply asked to have your legs pulled!”

“Well, I suppose we did,” said Harry Wharton, with a smile. “Anyhow, I’m glad you’re in the team!”

“Honest Injun?” said Drake.

“Yes, Honest Injun,” said Harry, laughing; “and—and I take back some things I’ve thought about you.”

“Same here,” grinned Bob Cherry.

“I think you’ve all got some remarks to take back,” said Drake. “As for holding you to your word about that promise you made, Wharton, you ought to have known I should not have done it if I hadn’t been a good man for the team. It mayn’t be modest, but, you see, I happen to know I can handle a bat, and there were some good cricketers at St. Winifred’s, though you didn’t see them when you

played Daubeny’s crowd. Sure you don’t feel sore any more?”

“Quite sure,” said Wharton, laughing.

“Good! Only this morning you were withering me with the fiery eye of scorn——”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Jimmy Silver came up with a smile.

“You’ve got two jolly good new recruits there, Wharton,” he remarked.

“We have!” assented Harry.

“We have!” chuckled Bob.

“We’ll dish them after lunch, though,” said Arthur Edward Lovell. “Who says lunch?”

They all said lunch, and they adjourned to it in the cheeriest of spirits. There were many smiling faces in the Greyfriars crowd at lunch.

No need to follow that exciting match through all its details. Harry Wharton did not need pressing to “give an over” to Dick Rodney when the Rookwooders were batting; he pressed the ball upon him, and Rodney rewarded him with the “hat trick” twice. Jimmy Silver and Co. put up a great game; but in the Greyfriars second innings Harry Wharton had better luck, and his followers all did well—his two new recruits almost equaling their performance in their first innings. With the result—very satisfactory to Greyfriars—that Rookwood were short of sixty runs when their last wicket went down—that being the margin by which Greyfriars beat them. And the homeward journey of the Greyfriars crowd was a very hilarious one.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

The Great Celebration!

“WHERE’S that ass Drake?”

Ogilvy of the Remove wanted to know. The cricketers, tired after a long journey, arrived at Greyfriars after the summer sun had gone down, and came in a merry crowd across the dusky quadrangle. And two or three score of voices hailed them to inquire how many wickets, or innings, they had been licked by.

“Where’s Drake?” howled Ogilvy. “I owe him a kick.”

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's Drake," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Here I am, old top——"

"Did they beat you by an innings?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"How many runs then?" bawled Billy Bunter. "I'll bet they beat you by a hundred runs, yah!"

"No."

"How many then?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha! None!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"We beat them!" explained Wharton.

"You beat Rookwood, with those two howling idiots in the team!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Those two frumptions chumps!" howled Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, don't be funny," said Billy Bunter. "Give us the facts, you know."

"We beat them by sixty runs!" said Bob Cherry, with a chortle.

"Sixty?"

"Phew!"

"Draw it mild!"

"And what did Drake do?" asked Ogilvy, blankly. "Don't I owe him a kick?"

"Ha, ha! No! Drake knocked up sixty in the first innings——"

"Gammon!"

"And nearly fifty in the second——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Honest Injun!" said Harry Wharton. "The ass can play cricket, and so can the other ass, only they're too funny. They ought to be ragged for pulling our legs—but they helped more than anybody else to win, so——"

"Well, my hat!" said Ogilvy. "Did you ever?"

"Hardly ever!" grinned Bob Cherry. "They ought to be jolly well thumped, but we're going to let them off; in fact, we're going to stand them a spread in No. 1 Study. Come on, you funny asses!"

It was a great celebration in honour of the victory at Rookwood, and Harry Wharton and Jack Drake wore smiling faces at the feast. For the present, at least, the hatchet was buried, and the most amicable peace reigned between the rivals of the Remove.

