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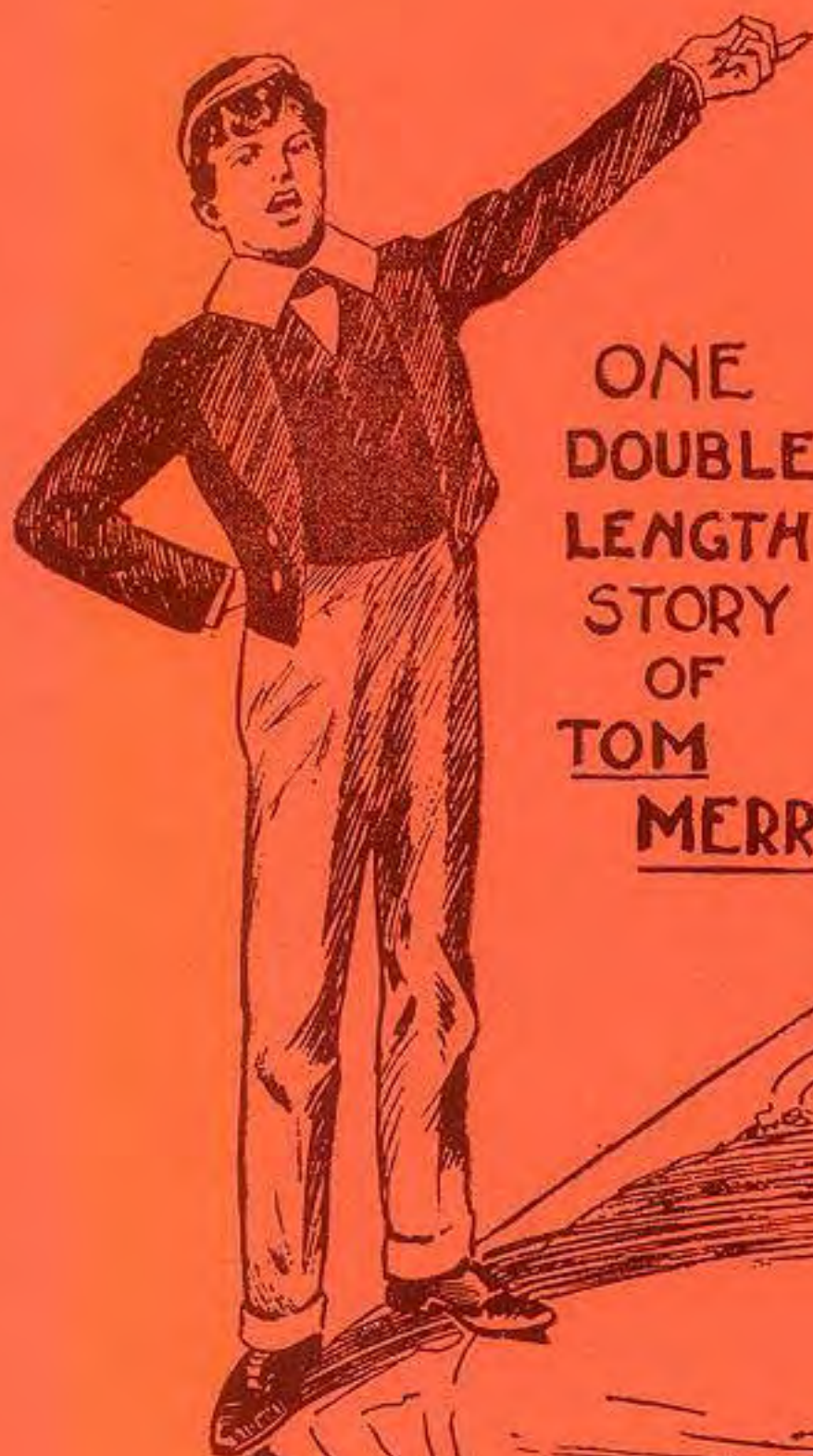
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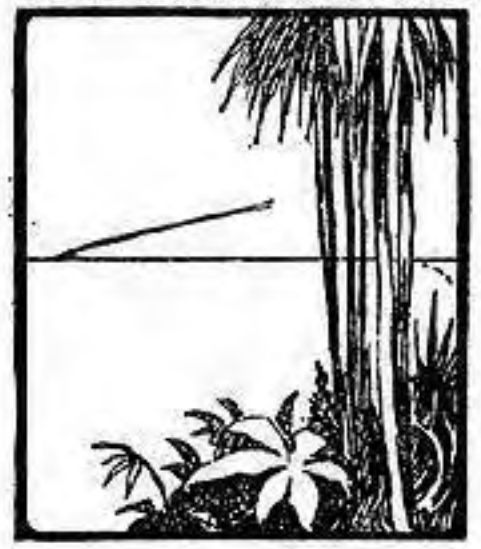
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Sent to School.

SEND Master Harry to me!" Colonel Wharton filled his glass from the decanter, held it up to the light, and then slowly sipped the contents, a dark shade of thought upon his bronzed face the while.

The colonel had dined, and he was alone now in the old, dark, oak-panelled dining-room at Wharton Lodge. A bronzed, grim-visaged old soldier was the colonel, but under the rugged exterior a kindly heart beat.

The door of the dining-room opened, and the colonel set down his glass, only half emptied, and compressed his lips slightly as he looked at the boy who came into the room.

A handsome, well-built lad, finely-formed, strong and active. Handsome indeed was the face, with its well-marked features and large, dark eyes. But there was a cloud upon it, a cloud that seemed habitual there, and in the dark eyes was a glint of suspicion and defiance. The whole manner of the boy was one of suppressed hostility, and the colonel realised it keenly enough without words being spoken.

"You sent for me, uncle."

In the tones of Harry Wharton, too, was a half-hidden hostility and defiance, as if he knew that he had not been sent for in a friendly spirit, and was ready to meet anger with anger.

"Yes, Harry." Colonel Wharton's voice was very mild. "Sit down, my boy. I want to speak to you."

Harry Wharton did not move. The colonel raised his eyebrows.

"Sit down, Harry."

"I suppose you are not going to keep me long," said the boy doggedly. "I want to go out on my pony before dark—"

The colonel half rose from his seat, a flush of anger darkening his cheek.

"Sit down!" he thundered.

For a moment it looked as if the order would be disobeyed, but there was something in the colonel's face that impelled obedience. Harry Wharton slowly moved to a chair and sat down, but the sullen cloud was darkening on his brow.

"Now, Harry," said the colonel, in a more kindly voice, "I want to speak to you seriously. I hope you will take all I am going to say in a friendly spirit. I am your uncle; you are the only son of my only brother, and you should understand that I have your truest interests at heart."

The boy's lips slightly curled, but he did not speak.

"I have come home from India," resumed the colonel, slightly raising his tone, "to find that you have run completely wild under the charge of my sister, and I should not be doing my duty to my dead brother if I did not take you in hand and make at least an attempt to put you on a better road. You have grown up wilful and headstrong, you have grown into the habit of dictating to Miss Wharton, and of overruling your tutor. Your education has been neglected—"

"Mr. Pynsent says I am quite as advanced as most boys of my age," said Harry, with a sulky look.

"Possibly, because you are naturally a quick and intelligent lad; otherwise, you would be a perfect ignoramus by this time. You have done exactly as you liked, and you have not the least idea of discipline. During the month that I have been at home I have tried to improve you—"

"Perhaps I don't want improving."

"You probably think so," said the colonel patiently. "But I think otherwise, and, as your guardian, I have my duty to do. You are obstinate and wilful, and inclined to

KINDLY FILL IN THE ORDER FORM.

be insolent to your elders. All that must cease. You have run wild too long. That must come to an end. But I cannot bring myself to exercise the severity necessary for the purpose, and my feeble attempts in that direction have made the house almost a pandemonium. You are determined to have your way, and I am determined that you are not to have it."

Harry Wharton smiled slightly. He knew perfectly well that the veteran from India had undertaken his reform, and, without thinking much about the matter, he had set himself against it. He flattered himself that the colonel would find it a thankless task, but he had not been quite prepared for this confession of failure.

The smile on the boy's face irritated the colonel, and he had to make an effort to speak calmly and dispassionately as he went on:

"I have, therefore, come to a new decision, Harry, which is what I want to tell you about now. I am going to send you to school."

Harry Wharton's face fell.

"To school?"

He repeated the words blankly. He had not thought of that.

"Yes, to school! I have written to Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars—the school where I was educated—and he is ready to receive you. You will go to Greyfriars to-morrow morning."

Harry Wharton sat dumb.

"I should like you to believe," said the colonel quietly, "that I have taken this step entirely for your own sake, and for your happiness in the long run. You will probably find life at a public school a little rough at first, especially until you change some of your ways, but I have no doubt that after you have roughed it a little, you will fall into the way of it, and—"

"I won't go!"

The words burst out passionately from the boy. Colonel Wharton frowned darkly.

"Harry!"

"I won't go! I won't be sent away! We were happy enough here till you came. Why can't you let me alone?"

"I cannot let you alone in the way you were going, Harry. I have my duty to do. The very way you are speaking to me now shows how much you are in need of proper training," the colonel said quietly.

"I won't go!"

"You will go, Harry. I shall give your aunt instructions to see your box packed to-night, and you will go by the nine o'clock train in the morning."

Harry was silent. He was quivering with anger and indignation and utter dismay. He had never thought of a blow like this falling upon him. And he knew, in spite of his passionate words, that he could not resist.

"I will, if you wish, come with you to the school, and—"

"I don't want you to—"

"It would make it better for you—"

"I don't want you!"

The colonel compressed his lips hard.

"I am sorry you should take my guardianship in this spirit, Harry. It only shows how necessary it is for us to part for a time, and for you to have the benefits of a strong discipline. You can go alone if you choose, but you must give me your word of honour to go directly to Greyfriars and report yourself to Dr. Locke."

The boy did not speak.

"With all your faults," the colonel resumed, in a kinder tone, "I have observed one quality which outweighs them all—truthfulness, and a strong sense of honour. If you give me your word, I know that you will keep it; and it is mainly this which leads me still to have hopes of you."

Harry Wharton set his teeth.

"Will you give me your word, Harry?"

"No!"

"Then I shall take you to the school to-morrow morning. You may go!"

Harry Wharton rose from his seat. His lips were white with the passion that was surging in his breast.

"You have me at your mercy!" he said thickly. "The law makes you able to play the tyrant if you choose. I will go; you need not come with me! I will go; but I won't stay there! If there's no other way, I'll soon make them glad to get rid of me!"

"My dear lad—"

But Harry Wharton was gone. The door of the dining-room closed with a slam, and the colonel was alone.

"And that is Henry's son!" he muttered. "It is hard on me, but I must do all I can for him; and the boy has the makings of a man in him, I am sure of that. Greyfriars is just the place!"

And with that comforting reflection the colonel finished his wine.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Row in the Train.

"CHANGE 'ere for Greyfriars!"

Harry Wharton started out of a moody reverie. For hours the express had been speeding through the green countryside, without a stop. Harry Wharton sat in a corner of the carriage, his eyes turned unseeingly upon the fleeting landscape. Sometimes his fellow-passengers had glanced at him, but his expression did not encourage anyone to speak.

His lunch-basket was unopened, his book lay on the seat. He had left home in a sullen passion against his guardian, against the school he was going to, against everything. He was not in a humour to eat or to read. His thoughts were black and bitter.

"Melthorpe! Change for Greyfriars!"

The boy rose to his feet. He picked up his book and left the carriage. The lunch-basket lay on the seat. The colonel had thoughtfully provided it, and Harry Wharton left it where it lay.

The local train which was to take passengers on the little country line to the station for Greyfriars was waiting on the other side of the platform. Harry Wharton glanced towards it, to ascertain if it was his train. A boy in Etons was sauntering down the platform, evidently having just alighted from the express as Harry had done, though the lad had not been him before.

Harry looked at him with some interest. He guessed that he was a youngster going to Greyfriars, and, as a denizen of the school he hated the mere thought of, Harry felt an instinctive dislike for him. Yet there was certainly nothing in the boy's looks to inspire dislike in any but a prejudiced mind. His age was about the same as Harry's, he was well built, and had a frank, open face and honest, blue eyes. His hair was thick and curly, and there was a school-cap stuck on the back of his head. He had a book under his arm, and a packet of toffee in his hand.

He glanced at Harry and met his eyes, and gave a nod and a grin.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, coming up. "Are you for Greyfriars?"

"Yes," said Harry shortly.

"New kid, of course?"

"I am going there for the first time," said Harry, not much liking the easy familiarity of the stranger's manner.

The other boy chuckled.

"You needn't tell me that, kid; I can see that. I'm going back late in the term; had an extra holiday, you know. I'm Nugent of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form, you know. What's your name?"

"I don't see how that concerns you," said Harry.

Nugent of the Remove stared at him.

"Eh? Where were you brought up, kid? What kind of a place did they dig you up from? Can't you answer a civil question?"

Harry Wharton coloured.

"What's your name, if you're not ashamed of it?" said Nugent.

"My name's Harry Wharton!" said the boy angrily.

"Well, that's all right, and there no reason why you couldn't say so at first, that I can see. But if you don't want to speak, I don't, and be hanged to you!" said Nugent.

And he stepped into the local train. During the colloquy the latter had got its steam up, and the guard was waving his flag. Harry Wharton hastily followed Nugent of the Remove into the carriage, and the door was slammed.

Harry sat down in a corner seat, and the train glided out of the station. Nugent was sitting opposite him, and he kept his eyes studiously fixed upon the countryside. The train ran on between deep green embankments, with here and there a glimpse of wood and meadow.

Harry sat with a moody brow. He was feeling hungry now, and beginning to regret the sulky abandoning of the lunch-basket. Nugent turned his eyes from the green banks, and stole a look at him. Harry, as it happened, was glancing at him at the same moment, and their eyes met. Harry coloured.

Nugent of the Remove burst into a laugh.

"I say, Wharton," he exclaimed, "we're stuck in this carriage by ourselves for nearly half an hour! What's the good of being sulky?"

Harry Wharton did not reply.

"What Form are you going into at Greyfriars?" went on Nugent, not to be rebuffed.

Again Harry was silent.

"If you come into the Lower Fourth, we'll soon knock the sullenness out of you!" his new acquaintance said confidentially. "We wouldn't stand it, you know!"

"Wouldn't you?" said Harry, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Not a bit of it! Been to school before?"

"No."

"Brought up at home by a maiden aunt, I suppose, and spoiled!" grinned Nugent.

Harry turned very red.

Carelessly spoken as the words were, Nugent had hit upon the exact truth, and it came as a sort of painful shock to Harry to realise how he was looked upon by a disinterested outsider.

"Ah, he blushes!" said Nugent. "The shot tells! My dear chap, Greyfriars is the last place in the world for mammy's own boy to come to! We sha'n't coddle you there, I promise you. What are you coming for?"

"I don't want to come; my guardian sends me."

"Oh, I see! That's rough—on Greyfriars!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Harry angrily.

"Oh, keep your wool on! I can foresee a high old time for you at Greyfriars. Your airs and graces won't go down there, I can tell you!"

"I don't want to go to the rotten place at all!"

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Nugent, looking warlike at once. "What are you calling a rotten place?"

"That beastly school I am going to."

Nugent rose to his feet.

"I don't want to be hard on mammy's darling," he said; "but anybody who calls Greyfriars a rotten place and a beastly school stands in need of correction. I shall take it kindly if you will apologise for those rude remarks."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Harry.

"Look here," said Nugent, "I don't know what sort of a lunatic asylum you were brought up in, but this won't do, you know. Do you know that there isn't a fellow in the Remove I can't lick into a cocked hat? I've wiped up the ground with bigger fellows than you, for far less cheek than you've given me."

"Don't talk rot!"

"Don't what? Are you hunting for a thick ear? Because, if you are, I'm the very individual to give you one. My special thick ears for beastly bounders are just what you want, and there's for a start!"

And Nugent gave the new boy a flick, more in jest than earnest; but it was enough for Harry Wharton.

In a flash he was on his feet, hitting out straight from the shoulder. All the passionate exasperation of the morning seemed to be thrown into that angry blow. It took Nugent by surprise, and he went down with a bump that shook the floor of the carriage.

Harry stood over him, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched.

Nugent of the Remove lay on his back on the carriage floor, staring up at him with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment.

It took him a full minute to realise that he—he, Nugent, the great fighting man of the Remove at Greyfriars—had been flogged with a single blow by a new boy. But when he did realise it, he jumped up.

"Take off your coat, Wharton!" he said.

"Sha'n't!"

"Very well, fight with it on, then," said Nugent. "Are you ready?"

Harry did not reply. Nugent was squaring up to him in a businesslike way. Harry knew little about the manly art of self-defence, but he put up his fists in the way he saw Nugent do it.

"Ready?" asked the Greyfriars boy considerately.

"Yes, hang you!"

"Then here goes for your boko!"

And Nugent came on sharply. His left swept Harry's feeble guard away with ease, and his right crashed on the new boy's nose.

Harry went down as if he had been shot. Nugent of the Remove stared at him.

"My hat! Don't you know how to box?"

"No, hang you!"

Harry Wharton scrambled to his feet. His nose was bleeding and already swelling, and the pain had brought the water to his eyes. He was in a fury at the thought that Nugent might think that he was crying.

"I didn't know you were such a muff!" said the Remove boy, rather apologetically. "I thought you could fight, as you tackled me. Let's chuck it!"

"Look out for yourself!" said Harry Wharton thickly.

He sprang at Nugent. The Greyfriars lad guarded himself well, and retreated until the carriage door prevented his retreating further.

"I say, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "I don't want to hurt you, you know. You gave me a one, and I gave you one, so we're even. I tell you, I don't want to lick you."

Harry Wharton did not reply. He closed in on his enemy, as he deemed him, and hit out right and left. Nugent had no choice in the matter left him, and his own temper was rising now. He struck out in return, harder and harder, and the new boy was soon getting decidedly the worst of it.

At arm's length Harry realised that he was a child in the hands of his adversary, and he made desperate attempts to

close. Had there been more room, Nugent would have laughed at it, but in the confined space of the carriage he had no room to manœuvre.

Harry succeeded in grappling with him, and Nugent stumbled against the seat, and was for a moment powerless. In that moment Harry got his head into chancery, and began to punish him.

Nugent roared and struggled, but it was a full minute ere he could get his head free, and those sixty seconds were painful ones to him, for Harry Wharton was lashing out with all the passionate force of his arm.

Then Nugent's turn came. He tore himself loose, grasped the new boy round his neck, and the "chancery" was reversed.

Harry Wharton struggled and gasped, as the pummelling fists rained on his face, but he could not get loose, and he had to take his punishment until Nugent chose to let him go. Then, with a twist of the arm, the Greyfriars boy flung him upon the seat, where he sprawled, dazed and sick.

"There, you bounder!" panted Nugent. "Have you had enough, or—"

Harry Wharton made an effort to get on his feet. He was game to the backbone, but he sank back again on the seat from very exhaustion.

The angry face of the Remove boy cleared. He had received a good hammering, but he was used to hard knocks at a public school, and he was too good-natured to bear malice for them.

"I say, I'm sorry I've hurt you," he said. "You came for me like a giddy wild-cat, you know, and I had to hit out."

Harry Wharton scowled savagely.

"I—I will give it all back to you some time!" he gasped faintly.

The Remove boy's lip curled.

"Oh, shut up about that, kid! Don't bear malice; it's a rotter's game! You've given me pretty nearly as much as I've given you. Don't be a cad!"

Harry did not reply. He was sick and furious and miserable. This was the beginning of his Greyfriars career! What was it to be like later?

He sat in his corner, silent, breathing hard, with a black brow, while the train rushed on. He had been hurt, but his pride had been hurt more than his body. It was the first time Harry Wharton had been licked; but licked he now was without a doubt about it. It was a new experience and a painful one.

Nugent went to the other side of the carriage, and looked out of the window. Only once he glanced towards Harry, and then he held out his packet of toffee.

"Have some toffee, kid?" he asked.

Harry Wharton did not reply. Nugent gave an expressive shrug of the shoulders, and ate the toffee himself. The train slackened down at last, and stopped in the little local station of Friardale—the station for Greyfriars.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Real Pluck.

NUGENT of the Remove jumped out of the train, and Harry Wharton followed more slowly. The one and only porter of Friardale grinned at Nugent, as he touched his cap. The Remove boy seemed a popular character in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars. He passed the barrier, and left the little station, and the driver of the one and only hack touched his cap, and grinned, too.

"Stick my box on the top, chappy!" said Nugent. "I've come back, you see. Aren't you glad to see my bonnie face again?"

"Haw, haw!" grinned the driver. "You're a funny one, Master Nugent!"

"Rats!" said Nugent. "I'm not the funny one; I've brought the funny one with me. Look at him! Isn't he a prize-packet?"

And he nodded in the direction of Harry Wharton, who had just followed him out of the station.

Harry knit his brows, and looked daggers at the Remove boy. The driver, seeing the bruised faces of the two youngsters, chuckled as he drew his own conclusions.

"Is this the only hack here?" asked Harry abruptly.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Nugent.

"I wasn't speaking to you, but to this man."

"I beg your lordship's pardon!"

"If it's the only one, I suppose I must take it!" said Harry, with a disparaging glance at the ancient hack, and almost equally ancient horse. "I want to—"

"This young gentleman has just engaged me," said the driver, none too civilly, for Harry's manner could not be called prepossessing.

"That's so," said Nugent coolly. "The one-and-only is my property for the time being, Wharton; but if you're a good boy you shall come in with me. I say, porter, put both the boxes on top. Come in, Wharton!"

"I won't be beholden to you, or any of your set," said Harry savagely. "I can walk."

"It's a good two miles."

"That's my business."

"Oh, do just as you like, ass!" said Nugent, losing patience; and he jumped into the hack.

The ancient vehicle drove off. Harry scowled after it, and set out to walk. He did not know the way, but so long as he kept the hack in sight he would not go astray.

The vehicle moved at a very moderate pace. Harry Wharton was a good walker, and he kept pace without much difficulty by putting his best foot foremost. Nugent looked out of the window once, and waved his hand—whether as an invitation to come into the hack, or in derision, Harry did not know.

Beyond the thick trees a grey tower rose to view against the sky. Harry looked at it, and knew that his destination was near. He was growing tired, and he was not sorry to see the tower of Greyfriars.

Before him lay the rippling Sark, the stream which flowed past the grounds of Greyfriars. Near the school it was a pleasant stream, but here, where the road crossed it by the bridge, it was deep and swift.

Under the bridge were shallows, but a dozen yards lower down were unknown depths and dangerous currents, which even the most experienced swimmers of the Upper Forias at Greyfriars avoided.

Harry was falling behind now, but the hack was still in sight as it rumbled on to the old stone bridge, with its low parapets hardly a couple of feet high. Suddenly the driver was seen to draw in his horse, and make frantic efforts to pull in to the side of the bridge.

Harry Wharton stared. Something was evidently the matter. He could not see what, for beyond the bridge the road made a turn, and the further way was lost to sight behind the trees. But a sharp, staccato sound on the keen air soon enlightened him.

"Zip—zip!"

A motor-car was rushing on down the narrow, country road at full speed, and instead of slackening down, the chauffeur—evidently of the "road-hog" type—was sounding his horn loudly for others to get out of the way, and taking the curve full tilt.

A cry of alarm left Harry's lips as the huge car suddenly swept into view from beyond the bridge.

It seemed to be dashing down directly upon the hack, which the driver was desperately endeavouring to pull to the side. At the best of times there was scant room for two vehicles to pass on the narrow bridge.

"They will be killed!"

The words broke from Harry Wharton, and involuntarily he broke into a run, with a vague idea of rendering assistance if he could reach the spot.

But long before he could reach it the catastrophe came. The hack had pulled aside, but the chauffeur saw the danger too late to be able to apply his brakes with effect. It all passed in a flash. A second after the car was sighted it had thundered past, dashing against the rear wheel of the old hack, and sending the vehicle simply flying.

The hack crashed over the low parapet on its side, and the horse, tugging desperately at the traces, broke them, and went careering down the road. The driver was flung into the dust, and lay gasping.

From below the bridge sounded a deep splash, which told where the passenger had gone. Nugent had flung open the door in frantic haste to spring out, and he had been hurled straight into the river like a stone from a catapult.

The car swept on. Harry Wharton had just time to spring out of the road to the belt of grass that bordered it, when the car swept by, and disappeared in the distance in a cloud of dust. Whether the chauffeur knew the harm he had done was doubtful, but certainly he did not intend to stop to see.

Harry Wharton ran swiftly on to the bridge. The half-stunned driver of the hack staggered to his feet.

"Master Nugent!" he gasped.

The wrecked hack was lying dangerously over the low parapet, and a touch seemed sufficient to send it hurtling into the water below. Harry Wharton sprang to the parapet, and gazed down anxiously.

Colonel Wharton had said that Harry, with all his faults, had the makings of a man in him. So indeed it seemed now, for in that moment of fearful peril he forgot all the sulkiness of his previous mood, all the wrongs he had received or imagined, all his animosity against the boy who had licked him in the railway carriage.

He was only conscious that a fellow-being was in danger

of death, and that he, Harry Wharton, would save him if he could.

He gazed down upon the stream. A white, half-conscious face looked up from the rushing waters as it was swept away. A hand was flung up in dumb appeal for aid.

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. His mind was made up without thinking. He flung off his cap and tore off his jacket in haste. The hack driver gripped him by the shoulder.

"Don't!" he panted. "It's death—death! The cross-currents—"

Harry Wharton shook off the detaining hand, and sprang upon the parapet.

At Wharton Lodge he had passed much of his time afloat on the river, or in swimming there, and there was little he had to learn of the swimmer's art. Nugent had beaten him easily at boxing, but Nugent was a poor swimmer, and Harry Wharton was a splendid one. His skill stood him in good stead now.

He threw his hands together, and was gone from the bridge like a flash. The driver followed him with strained eyes.

He struck the water like an arrow, and disappeared. He was on the surface the next moment, swimming with powerful strokes down the stream. The rushing water swirled round him and sang in his ears.

"Help!"

A faint, far cry; but it was guide enough. Harry's splendid strokes bore him along, and in a few moments he was level with Nugent. The Remove boy had been twice under; and his senses were almost gone now. Harry's hand came in contact with his hair, and he clutched hold. His clutch brought a white, deathly face above the water.

"Courage!"

Harry Wharton gasped out the word. Nugent was too far gone to reply, or even to hear. He was clutching wildly at Harry, and the boy had to fight him off, or both would have gone to the bottom together.

"Quiet!" panted Harry. "Don't—don't grip me! I've got you safe!"

But Nugent was not himself. Harry struggled with him, and it was fortunate that the Remove boy's strength was almost spent. Harry succeeded in twisting him round and getting a grip on the back of his collar. Nugent was still struggling, but he no longer incommoded the rescuer.

Harry was gasping now. Gripping Nugent's collar with one hand, he swam with the other, and tried to look about him. He had felt the force of the current, and expected to be far out of sight of the bridge, but, to his amazement, he saw it hardly more than a stone's throw away, with the anxious face of the hack driver looking down upon his struggles.

He quickly understood the cause. There was a whirl of currents in this spot, and he had been swept round and round. Now the current was sweeping him towards the shore, but he was yet a dozen feet distant from the steep bank when he was whirled out into mid-stream again.

A chill went to the heart of Harry Wharton. He could not fight against the force of the current, and he allowed it to bear him away; but at that rate he would certainly never reach the shore.

And there was no boat to be seen along the lonely bank, and the only human being in sight was the old hack-driver, whose terrified face stared down helplessly from the bridge.

Did it mean death for him? A sudden anger rose in his heart—anger against Fate. He did not think of releasing his burden. But there was spite in the energy of his struggles now with the whirling currents.

The swirl of the water dazed and sickened him, and he was already fatigued when the fight for life in the whirling currents commenced. The waters seemed to whirl round him with a deafening roar, and strange lights were dancing before his eyes.

He knew what that meant, and he put forth all his strength in a final effort. He struggled to fight his way downstream, where, once out of reach of the sucking currents, he might be able to steer to the bank with his burden. The wild waters dashed him to and fro, to and fro. His struggles seemed of no avail, and he felt as powerless in the waters as a wisp of straw afloat upon their surface.

Was it death?

Suddenly the wild whirling ceased. The water still swirled about him, but he was no longer dashed to and fro. His eyes opened wide, with a gleam of hope in them. Somehow, by chance as it seemed, he was out of the whirl, and floating down the river.

"Thank Heaven!"

He did not utter the words. It was a silent breath of thankfulness. He struck out shoreward, and, fatigued as he was, he supported his burden to the sloping banks of green.

A farm labourer was running along the bank now, waving his hand and shouting. Harry clutched at the grass with his free hand, and held to a tough root.

The man on the bank bent down, and he was gripped and drawn ashore, still with his hand fastened tight on Nugent's collar.

Then darkness swept down upon him like sudden night, and he knew no more.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The First Day at Greyfriars.

HARRY WHARTON stirred, and moaned, and awoke. Where was he? That was the first question that flashed through his mind.

His eyes dwelt upon a whitewashed ceiling, and as he moved his head he saw white walls, with windows set high up near the ceiling.

He was lying in bed, and on either side of him beds with white coverlets seemed to stretch away in endless rows.

"He is awake."
Harry looked up, too weak to move again. A kindly face, with white whiskers and beard and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, looked down upon him.

"Are you better, my brave lad?"
"Where am I?"
"At Greyfriars School."

The words brought back Harry Wharton's recollections with a rush. A dark shade came over his brow, and he turned aside from the kindly face.

"He is not quite himself yet," said another voice—the voice of the doctor, who had been called in the moment Harry was brought into the school insensible.

"I suppose not," said Dr. Locke, the head of Greyfriars. "He has been through a trying time. There are few lads, or men either, who would not have thought twice about diving into the Sark from the bridge."

"Very true. He will be a credit to the school."

Harry did not turn his head again. The recovery of his consciousness had been followed by bitter thoughts. He was at Greyfriars now—the school which was a prison to him—the place of his banishment.

If he had at that moment determined to make the best of things, and to look the future squarely in the face, and accept the inevitable, it would have saved him much suffering; but he did not. His training had not fitted him for that. He hardened his heart, and turned his face from those who would willingly have been his friends.

The whispering voices died away. He was left alone, to sleep. He did not care to sleep; his head was throbbing, and he was nervous and miserable. He raised his head, and saw that the dormitory was empty. He had refused to speak when he was not alone; yet now, in his sulky humour, his loneliness smote him with a sense of injury.

He cast a bitter look up and down the room. His strength was returning now, and he sat up in bed. In the failing light of day the dormitory was a dreary-looking place, and the dimness and loneliness of it struck him like a chill.

"And this is my home now!" he murmured. "I was happy enough till uncle came home. It is all due to him. Oh, I—I hate him!"

The door opened, and a boyish figure came in. Harry recognised his companion in the train—Nugent, of the Remove, whose life he had saved at the risk of his own. Nugent was looking somewhat pale, otherwise none the worse for his adventure. The brunt of that terrible fight for life had fallen upon the rescuer.

He saw Harry sitting up in bed, and came towards him hastily. His face burst into a glow as he came up to the bedside—a glow of friendship and gratitude.

"I—I looked in to see if you were awake," he said eagerly. "If you want to go to sleep, old chap, I'll clear."

"I don't want to go to sleep."
The reply was ungracious enough, but Nugent hardly noticed it.

"I—I say, old fellow," he said, "I'm sorry about that row in the train. I know what you've done for me—what only a real plucked 'un would have done. You saved my life, and came near throwing your own away. It was grand!"

"Rot!" said the new boy.
"You may call it rot, but I know better. It was splendid! I—I say, Wharton, if you want a friend at Greyfriars, you won't have to look further than me—"

"I don't want a friend—you, least of all!"
Even Nugent's warmth was damped by that answer. He stared blankly at Harry, for the moment quite at a loss for words.

"I don't want a friend here," said Harry, with a kind of spiteful glee at the sight of the pain his words gave. "I hate the place, and I hate the people! I sha'n't stay here longer than I can help."

Nugent, of the Remove was still silent.
"As for what I did for you," went on Harry, "I don't want any nonsense about that! I don't know why I did it; because I was a fool, I suppose! I hadn't much reason to help you, after the way you treated me."

"I am sorry I licked you."
It was an unlucky word. Harry Wharton flushed red.
"You wouldn't have licked me, only—well, you won't do it again, that's all!"

"I shall never try."
"You will try!" said Wharton grimly. "As soon as I'm able I'm going to tackle you again, and we'll see who comes off best!"

Nugent bit his lip hard.
"I'm sorry you should bear malice," he said shortly, "especially after what you've done for me. I'm sorry we came to blows, but I can't see that it was any more my fault than it was yours—" Nugent broke off. "If you won't be friends, I can't help it; but I will never fight you."

"Why not?"
"I can't fight a fellow who risked his life to save mine."
"I tell you I don't want to hear anything about that!" cried Harry savagely. "Why can't you let that rest? As for fighting me, you shall do it, as soon as I am able to tackle you on fair terms!"

"It's not much good my staying here," said the Remove boy quietly; "I'd better go! I'm sorry I came!"

He walked to the door. For a moment Harry Wharton's heart softened, but it was only for a moment. His face was grim and sullen, as he watched the door close behind the boy who would have been his friend.

The new boy at Greyfriars slowly drew himself from the bed, and looked for his clothes. The wet clothing had been taken away, but his box was there, and it did not take him long to get out a fresh suit and don it. His head was dizzy, and his face very white. He staggered a little in his walk as he moved towards the door of the dormitory.

He opened the door, and went out into the passage. At the end of the passage was a broad staircase, and lights glimmered below. He could hear the sound of voices, and now and then a laugh.

A wretched feeling of isolation smote upon him. He was alone; in that great school he had no place. No one was thinking of him—no one cared!

His face was dark and bitter as he went downstairs. A big, broad-shouldered fellow passed him on the next landing, and stopped to look at him.

"Hallo, youngster! What's the matter?"
"Nothing!"

"There must be something the matter!" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and he looked at the boy keenly. "You look as white as a sheet! Oh, I think I understand! You are the new junior—Wharton—who went into the Sark for Nugent?"

"I am Harry Wharton."
"You ought not to be up! Have you received permission to get up?"

"I suppose I can do as I like?"
The captain of Greyfriars stared at him.

"If you've come to Greyfriars with that notion in your head, Wharton, the sooner you get it out the better," he said. "You can't do as you like here. You had better go back to bed at once!"

"Sha'n't!"
"You don't know who I am? I am the captain of the school!"

"I don't care who you are!"
Wingate's eyes blazed. Harry would have paid dearly for his words, but for the captain's knowledge that he was in no condition to stand a licking.

"You must go back to bed, Wharton!"
"I won't!"

The captain's hand dropped lightly upon Wharton's shoulder.

"Better come!" he said quietly.
Harry Wharton looked at him. The captain's manner was quiet, but very firm. It was useless to struggle, and he taken away by main force. Harry, with a heart too full of bitterness for words, turned, and slowly made his way up the stairs again. And a crimson flush came into his cheeks as he heard a derisive chuckle follow him from the juniors looking on at the scene.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Study Row.

THE new boy at Greyfriars did not rise again till the next morning, when he came down with the rest of the juniors, and breakfasted with them in the hall. He had been put into a vacant bed in the Lower Fourth dormitory for the first night, but he did not yet know whether he was to remain there.

After breakfast he was called into the doctor's study. Dr. Locke spoke a few kindly words to him, in recognition of the gallant deed of the day before, but there was a curious expression on the doctor's kindly face.

He had received some hints from Colonel Wharton as to the character of the boy who was being sent to Greyfriars, and he knew more about Harry than the boy guessed.

Then the new boy went through a brief examination, and was informed that he would be placed in the Remove, or Lower Fourth Form, and would study in No. 1, with three others—Nugent, Bulstrode, and Bunter.

Harry Wharton left the Head's study, and at a quarter-past nine took his place in the Remove class-room, and came under the eye of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master had not forgotten the little affair of the previous day, but he made no allusion to it, nor was his manner towards Harry different from his manner to the others. He meant to give the new boy a chance, at all events.

To the new boy, unaccustomed to regular schoolwork, the morning was like a nightmare. The Remove master was easy with him, and let him off lightly, on purpose. But Harry's head ached as he left the class-room at last, and his hatred of school was confirmed by this first experience of it.

As he went out of the class-room Nugent came quickly after him, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"I say, Wharton!"

Harry looked at him without speaking.

"You found it a bit rough in class to-day, I expect?" said Nugent. "Would you like me to go over the books with you a little? I will, if you like."

"No!"

"It would save you a lot of difficulties."

"I'll ask for your help when I want it!"

Nugent bit his lip as Harry went on. Bulstrode, his study mate, gave him a thump on the shoulder, with a loud laugh.

"What are you sucking up to the new kid for, Nugent?" he demanded. "Why don't you let the sulky little brute alone?"

"He saved my life," said Nugent.

Bulstrode laughed.

"Suppose he did? Any fellow would have jumped in—"

"Oh, rats, Bulstrode; you wouldn't!"

Bulstrode turned red.

"Well, I can't say you're civil, Nugent! I'll tell you what—if that young hound had spoken to me as he has to you, I'd wipe the floor with him!"

"So would I, only—"

"I suppose you're afraid of him, if you come to the facts!" sneered Bulstrode.

"I'm not afraid of him, or of you, either, Bulstrode!" said Nugent quietly. "I'm not afraid of any fellow in the Remove, and I'm ready to prove it to you, with or without gloves!"

Bulstrode laughed uneasily.

"Better prove it by licking the new kid for his insolence!" he said.

Bulstrode was a good deal of a bully, but he always carefully avoided coming to a test-match with Nugent, the best boxer in the Form.

"Well, I'm not going to do anything of the kind. There's something wrong with the kid—bad training, I suppose. I'm going to see if I can't help him on."

"Oh, rats! Why don't you take on a job as dry-nurse, and have done with it? By the way, I hear that that object is coming into our study."

"So Mr. Quelch said."

"Well, if he puts on any airs and graces in our quarters," said Bulstrode, "he'll get slung out of the window, and sharp!"

Nugent walked away without replying. He was a kind-natured boy, but if he could be forbearing himself under provocation, he could not expect others to be so. Wharton had saved his life, but Bulstrode was under no obligation to the new boy.

After dinner Nugent went up to his study, No. 1, and found the new boy there. Wharton was poring over his books on the study table, evidently trying to make himself more familiar with them for the next lessons.

Nugent glanced at him, but did not offer his help again. Wharton did not look up. Bulstrode came into the study a few minutes later with his camera in one hand, and a developing-tank in the other. Bulstrode went in for photography, and as a dark-room was not to be had by a junior, he had laid in a daylight developing outfit, which he used in the study.

"Hallo! Give us some room!" he exclaimed, seeing the table pretty well covered with Wharton's books and papers. "Do you want the whole room?"

With a sweep of the hand he sent half Harry's books to the floor.

The new boy jumped up, his eyes glinting.

"Leave my books alone!"

"Hallo! Who are you talking to?" exclaimed Bulstrode, staring at him. "Are you looking for a thick ear?"

Harry Wharton's breast was heaving already. It did not take much to rouse his temper in his present mood. Bulstrode, who was half a head taller than the new boy, grinned at the look of fury in his face, and, reaching out, deliberately sent the rest of Harry's books sweeping off the table, and the inkpot and a heap of foolscap with them.

A shout of rage broke from the new boy. He sprang straight at the bully of No. 1 Study, only to reel back before a sharp left-hander that caught him on the point of the chin.

Harry Wharton sat down with a jar to every bone in his body, feeling as if his jaw were broken and half his teeth loosened.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode. "Is that how you like it done? Will you have some more?"

Harry did not reply or rise from the carpet. He was too dazed by the shock. As he sat there, another junior belonging to the Lower Fourth came hurriedly into the study, and ran right into him. The new-comer was a somewhat stout junior, with a broad, pleasant face and an enormous pair of spectacles.

"Ker-woosh!" ejaculated the junior, as he sprawled on the floor over Harry Wharton's legs. "What's that in the way? What do you mean by having a dog in the study, you silly bouders, for a short-sighted fellow to fall over?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter looked round as he rose, and peered at Harry through his big glasses. It was pretty clear that, big as his spectacles were, they did not assist his vision very much, for he had to put his head within a foot of Harry's to make him out.

"My word, it's the new kid! Well, what does he mean by sprawling on the floor? I say, you new fellow—"

What Billy Bunter was going to say remained a mystery, for the new boy shoved him violently away and sprang to his feet.

Bunter collapsed into a chair, and Harry Wharton sprang towards Bulstrode with clenched fists and flaming eyes.

The bully of the Remove faced him with a mocking laugh. He dashed the enraged junior's blows aside, and drove his fist into Harry's right eye with a force that made the new boy stagger. He was about to follow it up with his left when Nugent grasped his arm.

"Hang it, Bulstrode, you sha'n't!"

"Let me alone!" roared Bulstrode.

"You sha'n't—"

Nugent got no further. Bulstrode's elbow came against his chest, and he was hurled back. But at the same moment Harry Wharton sprang to the attack again. He had caught up the nearest weapon, and it happened to be Bulstrode's camera.

"Put my camera down!" yelled Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton brought it down with a crash upon the bully. Bulstrode put up his hands to save his head, and the camera crashed on his arm and fell to the floor. White with rage, the bully sprang at Harry Wharton, and they closed in a savage grip. It was about the unwise thing Bulstrode could have done, for as they staggered to and fro in strife Wharton's foot came with a crash upon the camera, and it smashed to pieces under the concussion.

Bulstrode gave a howl of rage as he heard the crash of the breaking camera.

"You young hound!" He twisted Harry back till the boy was bending backwards over the table. The edge of the table hurt Wharton's back cruelly, but he had set his teeth hard, and not a sound of pain came from his lips. He was struggling furiously, but the bully had him at a disadvantage. "You young beast! I'll teach you to break my camera!" he hissed. "I'll make you pay for it, and give you the hiding of your life in addition!"

"I say, Nugent, are they fighting?" queried Bunter, peering through his glasses at the combatants. "There's a great deal of noise."

Nugent did not reply to the question. He sprang to Bulstrode, and pulled him back.

"Let me alone, Nugent!"

"You fool, you are hurting him!"

"Well, ass, I mean to hurt him! Do you think I am doing this for fun?" howled Bulstrode.

"You don't mean to break his back, I suppose? Let him go, or I shall start on you. Now, then, let him go!"

He dragged Bulstrode back. At the same moment Wingate looked in at the open door of the study.

"What's all this thundering row about?"

"I believe they're fighting," said Bunter, blinking at the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate laughed slightly.

"Well, I believe they are," he said. "Stop that at once, you kids! What's all the row about?"

"He's broken my camera!" shouted Bulstrode, releasing Wharton.

"Did you break his camera, Wharton?"

"Yes, I did, and I'd do it again!" cried Wharton. "I'll break him, too, as soon as I get a chance! Oh, I hate this place, and everybody in it!"

The captain of the school looked at him grimly.

"There's never any getting at the rights of a Fourth Form quarrel," he remarked. "You can settle it yourselves, only don't make any more row, or you will get into trouble."

"What about my camera?"

"If you want it paid for, take your claim to the Head, and tell him the whole story, unless Wharton chooses to do the proper thing."

"He won't get anything out of me!"

"Very well, you know what to do, Bulstrode. Now, no more rows, mind, in this study, or you'll get turned out of it, I warn you, and have to do your work in the Form-room."

And with that dire threat, the captain of Greyfriars withdrew.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Meeting of the Form.

BULSTRODE glared at Harry Wharton as the captain's footsteps died away down the passage. But he did not venture to renew the conflict after what Wingate had said. He turned to his broken camera, and began to collect up the fragments.

Harry Wharton stood breathing hard. He hesitated whether to speak to Nugent. He had received a favour at Nugent's hands—without asking for it, it is true—and it galled him to feel under an obligation. Finally, he turned towards Nugent.

"Thank you for pulling that brute off," he said awkwardly.

Nugent gave him a cold look.

"You can save your breath," he replied. "I pulled him off because I was afraid he would injure you. If he had given you a sound thrashing I should not have interfered."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"You had no right to use his camera like that!" went on Nugent indignantly. "He acted like a pig, I know; but that camera cost two guineas, and you know very well that a fellow in the Fourth Form can't afford a new one."

"I don't care—"

"You ought to care. If you don't pay for it—"

"I certainly sha'n't do anything of the kind!"

"Then, you're a—— But enough said. No good us rowing, too. And I don't want to be turned out of this study by the prefects."

And Nugent turned away sharply.

The colour came into Wharton's cheeks. His nature was headstrong and passionate, but not ungenerous. He was quick to feel anything like contempt, and it came to him now with a painful shock that Nugent despised him.

To be disliked or hated was nothing. To be despised was very different, and the hot, sensitive nature of the boy was stung to the quick. He had an impulse to follow Nugent, to say—he hardly knew what. But before he could decide upon anything, his attention was taken by Bulstrode. The bully of the Remove had picked up the wreck of his camera, and seen that it was hopeless of repair.

"You—you rotten outsider!" said Bulstrode, in tones of concentrated rage. "You're not fit to be at a decent school. But I'll make you sit up for that!"

"I am not afraid of you."

"No; because Wingate's got his eye on this study," said Bulstrode scornfully. "But never mind that. Are you going to pay for this camera?"

"Certainly not!"

"Very well, we'll see what the Form have to say about it," said Bulstrode, with a black scowl. "You'll be wanted in the Remove-room after school to-day."

"I sha'n't come!"

"Won't you," said Bulstrode grimly. "Then, you'll be fetched."

As he strode from the study, Billy Bunter blinked round the room.

"I say, Bulstrode, you know, don't be too hard on the new fellow. He didn't mean to break your camera, I'm sure."

There was naturally no reply, as the bully of the Remove was no longer in the study. But the Owl—as the short-sighted junior was politely nicknamed by his Form-fellows—did not see that he was gone.

"You hear, Bulstrode? I tell you the new chap's a silly ass, but he doesn't mean any harm, I believe. Let him down lightly."

Bunter was blinking at Wharton as he spoke.

"Still," he went on, with an air of consideration, "it would be a good idea to give him a Form ragging, to take some of the nonsense out of him. Don't you think so?"

Still no reply. Billy Bunter was puzzled.

"I say, don't you think it would be a good idea to rag the boulder a little, just to show him his place?" he said.

"Don't you think he's a sulky beast?"

"No, I don't," said Harry, smiling, in spite of himself.

Bunter gave a jump. Short as his sight was, there was nothing the matter with his hearing, and he knew as soon as Harry spoke that he had been addressing the wrong person.

"My word!" he murmured. "I am sincerely sorry, Wharton. I thought I was speaking to Bulstrode, or I should not have called you a sulky beast."

"Oh, get out!" said Harry.

He did not feel much in a humour for further study. He went out into the quadrangle to get a little fresh air before afternoon school. He saw a number of Remove boys, all of whom looked at him curiously.

Harry Wharton was certainly the most-talked-of person in the Form at that time, and the looks he received seemed to indicate that some surprise was being prepared for him—a surprise, undoubtedly, of a far from pleasant nature.

But the boy, though he guessed that some unpleasant experience was coming, showed no sign of fear. The thought that the whole Form was against him only added to the doggedness of his spirit.

Afternoon school was a little less painful than in the morning. Harry Wharton was naturally a boy of quick intelligence, and the knowledge that he had to go through with his lessons, whether he liked it or not, made him bring all his mental powers to bear on the task, and it was easier than he had expected. Mr. Quelch, too, who had had a chat with the Head about the new boy, was very lenient with him, and helped him in many quiet ways; and Wharton, sullen as he was still, could not help feeling the beginning of a respect and liking for the Remove master.

Afternoon school finished at last, Harry Wharton drifted out into the quad. He was feeling the effects of his struggle with Bulstrode. His nose was red and swollen, and there was a dark shade about one of his eyes. None of the masters, however, had made any inquiries as to how he came by the tell-tale signs, preserving a judicious ignorance of the matter.

Harry felt refreshed by the cool air blowing into his face, and he went down to the football ground to look on at the game. The days were growing longer, and football practice was possible for a short time after school.

The Sixth Form eleven were at practice, and Harry watched the game with interest. He had played football in his time, and naturally he liked the game, and it dawned upon him that life at Greyfriars might have its attractions, after all.

Wingate saw the youngster looking on eagerly, and when he came off the field for a rest the Greyfriars captain tapped Harry on the shoulder. Harry looked up at him, his face a little less dark than usual.

"You play footer, I suppose?" asked Wingate.

"I have played it."

"You will have to play in the Form practice here. No boy is let off from the sports without a doctor's certificate. You had better report yourself to your Form captain."

"Who is that?"

"Oh, you know him—Bulstrode, of your study."

"I should not play with Bulstrode."

Wingate stared.

"You will do as you are told," he replied. "Don't let me miss you from the Fourth Form practice to-morrow, that's all, or you will be warned."

And the Greyfriars captain walked on. Wharton walked away angrily. He felt a sense of being assailed on every side. He could not even be allowed to keep to himself now, but must join the other fellows in their practice. He inwardly determined that he would not do it, come what might.

As Harry walked away from the football ground in the growing dusk, several Remove fellows followed him, and others dropped into line, and in a few minutes Wharton noticed that he had an escort of something like a dozen boys as he walked towards the house.

He turned away from the doorway, as if to go to the

gym., and then the Remove fellows disclosed their intentions openly enough. They closed round him in a rapid ring, and his escape was cut off on all sides.

He glared round at the circle of grinning faces like a stag at bay.

"Let me pass!" he said savagely.

Bulstrode and several others burst into a laugh.

"You're wanted in the Remove-room," said the bully of the Form.

"I'm not coming."

"Don't be an ass!" said Russell. "You must come. It's a Form meeting, and you're wanted."

"I don't care a rap whether I'm wanted or not; I'm not coming!"

"He, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "My word! He says he's not coming. Collar him, and carry him in, kids, this side up with care!"

The Remove fellows closed round the new boy. Harry clenched his fists, his eyes gleaming savagely. He looked round the closing ring, doubtful where to attempt to break through. Before he could decide, they had seized and pinned him.

"Got him!" said Bulstrode, with a laugh. "Come on!"

Harry Wharton struggled furiously.

"Hold the brute tight!"

"I've got him!" shouted Bunter, who had his fingers firmly fixed into a collar. "He can't get away. I've got him!"

"You ass!" roared a voice. "You've not got him. You've got me!"

"My word! Is that you, Skinner?"

"Yes, it is, you howling blitherer!"

"I'm sincerely sorry. I certainly thought it was the new kid's collar I had hold of. It is so hard to see in the dusk."

"Yes, for a blind owl like you!"

"I can't help being short-sighted, Skinner. You ought not to throw that in my face."

"I'll throw my fist in your face if you get hold of my collar again! If you want to grab something, grab the new kid."

"All right, I've got him now—"

"That's my hair!" yelled Russell. "Pull him off! He's scalping me! Kill him, somebody! Kick him out! He's dangerous."

"My word! I'm sincerely sor—"

But Billy Bunter was hustled out of the way, and the Remove fellows closed round the new boy, and, in spite of his struggles, he was torn off his feet and hustled away. In a laughing crowd the Remove gang went through the passage to the Form-room, empty now save for the Fourth-Formers, who were waiting for them there.

But the news of the capture of the "outsider," as Wharton was generally called, soon spread, and the Remove came pouring into the Form-room from all quarters.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tried by the Form.

WHARTON tore himself free, and looked round him savagely. A group of Remove fellows were at the doorway, cutting off his escape, and the others were round him, ready to pin him again if necessary. The new boy at Greyfriars breathed pantingly. He was fairly in the toils now. Bulstrode was regarding him with a sneer.

"We've got you, you see!" he exclaimed. "You can't slither out of it, you beastly cad! We're going to give you a Form trial."

Harry Wharton did not reply. He was too enraged to speak, and his eyes were flaming fire. But his rage only drew louder laughter and jeering from the Remove.

"Nice-looking kid, isn't he?" said Russell. "Sweet-tempered, and all that. His people must be proud of him, and must like to have the dear boy at home."

Harry Wharton flushed hotly. He knew how much he was wanted at home—about as much as he was wanted at Greyfriars, for that matter. It was a galling thought.

"Ah, he blushes!" said Skinner, grinning. "Is it possible that he is not valued in his home circle—that he is not the adornment of a happy fireside—?"

Wharton made a spring towards Skinner; but the Remove clustered round him and dragged him back.

"None of that!" said Bulstrode. "If you want a licking, you can have it presently, cad! At present we're going to see into the matter I've called a meeting for. Kids, here you behold the outsider who has had the cheek to stick himself into our respectable Form; and I ask you if you ever saw such a rank outsider in all your natural?"

"Never!" said the Remove, with one voice.

Russell stood up on a form.

"Order!" he exclaimed. "Order, gentlemen! Bulstrode has called a meeting of the Form to decide a matter between him and the new kid, and as we've got no time to waste, I vote that we look into it at once. I'll be judge—"

"That you won't!" said Bulstrode. "I'm judge."

"Fathead! You—"

"Who are you calling a fathead?"

"I'm calling you a fathead, and so you are! Hang it, how can a chap be accuser and judge as well? It's not in reason. You might as well try the prisoner in your own study, without calling the Form into the matter at all."

"Oh, you can judge if you like; I don't care."

"Very good. I am judge, and everybody present is on the jury. The prisoner is accused of— Who's that?"

Someone was pushing at the door of the Form-room. It was opened, and Nugent presented himself. He looked round him inquiringly.

"Hallo! What are you kids up to?" he asked.

"It's a Form meeting," said Russell, with dignity, "and I'll thank you to be a little more respectful, Nugent."

"Oh, rats! Are you bullying the new kid?"

"We'll bully you if you don't shut up!" said Bulstrode angrily. "Shut that door, and don't let anybody else in, chaps. We can't be all night about this affair. You shut up, Nugent. Go on, Russell!"

"Go on, Russell!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Right-ho! The prisoner is accused of wilfully and deliberately and with malice aforethought breaking and destroying a camera—"

"Don't be so beastly tautological, Russell!"

"Don't you interrupt me, Skinner!"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"The camera belonged to our esteemed fellow-citizen Bulstrode," went on Russell, with a withering glance at Skinner, "and he demands compensation for the damage to the same. Wharton busted the camera. He is hereby sentenced—"

"He hasn't been tried yet," said Nugent.

"Oh, I forgot! Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you forthwith according to law?"

Harry Wharton did not reply.

"Prisoner at the bar," roared Russell, "have you any thing to—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The judge turned red.

"The prisoner is found guilty of contempt of court," he exclaimed, "and sentence is passed accordingly—"

"Wait a bit!" said Nugent, stepping forward. "The prisoner hasn't defended himself yet. I'm counsel for the defence."

The judge looked puzzled.

"We never have counsel for the defence here!" he exclaimed.

"Then it's time we did."

"I leave it to the jury," said Russell.

"Let Nugent speak," said several voices. "It won't make much difference, anyway."

There was a general laugh. The prisoner had been found guilty beforehand, as it were, and already sentenced, in the minds of the Remove, and the trial was only a matter of form.

"Very well. Counsel for the defence, go ahead!"

"Bulstrode hasn't made his accusation yet."

"He accuses the prisoner at the bar of—"

"Can't he speak for himself?"

"Yes, I can!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "I say the new chap broke my camera by bashing me with it, and that he owes me two guineas for it."

ORDER, PLEASE.



It took Nugent by surprise, and he went down with a bump that shook the floor of the carriage.

"Have you any witnesses to prove the assault?"
 "Why, you ass, you were there yourself!"
 "That has nothing to do with it. I'm counsel for the defence, not a witness for the prosecution!" said Nugent severely. "A fat lot you know about law, and no mistake, Bulstrode! Have you any witnesses to call?"
 "Yes, there's the Owl."
 "Where is the Owl? Produce your Owl."
 Billy Bunter was brought forward. He blinked round through his big spectacles at the assembly in the dusky Form-room.
 "Are you the witness for the prosecution?" demanded Nugent.
 "Yes, he is," said Bulstrode.
 "Silence in court! I will have no tampering with the witnesses," said the counsel for the defence. "I appeal to the judge for protection."
 "Right-ho!" said the judge. "Bulstrode has to shut up. Let the Owl speak for himself. He's got a tongue in his head."
 "Oh, rot!" said Bulstrode savagely. "I—"
 "Silence in court!" said the judge, with a frown.
 "Are you the witness for the prosecution?" demanded Nugent again.
 "Yes, I suppose so," bleated the Owl.
 "You suppose so? Do you not know whether you are or not?" said the counsel for the defence severely.
 "Yes, I do. I'm the witness," said Billy Bunter.
 "Then why could you not say so at once?"
 "Well, you see—"
 "What I see is not evidence. It is what you saw that the court wishes to know."
 "Yes, but you see—"
 "You must not repeat yourself, witness."
 The witness looked hopelessly muddled. He blinked round without speaking again. The counsel for the defence turned to the judge.
 "I put it to you, sir, that this witness is absolutely unreliable," he said. "He does not know what he saw, and makes persistent and unmeaning references to what I saw, which has nothing to do with the case."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Remove.
 "I perceive that the jury are amused," said Nugent. "I do not wonder at it when I look at the witness whom the prosecution have had the audacity to bring forward. I de-

mand that my client be dismissed without a stain upon his character."

"You howling ass!" shouted Bulstrode. "I tell you he's busted my two-guinea camera, and you saw him do it yourself!"

"The prosecutor has entirely failed to make out his case," went on Nugent imperturbably. "He tells us something about a broken camera, and cannot produce a single witness to prove—"

"Billy Bunter saw it all. He—"

"I have proved Bunter's evidence to be unreliable."

"Well, I'll question him, and—"

"You can't; it's not in order."

"I appeal to the judge."

"The prosecutor is at liberty to question the witness, if he doesn't keep us all night about it," was the decision of the learned judge.

"I protest against—"

"Rats to you! Go on, Bulstrode!"

"Right-ho, your worship! Now, Billy Bunter, were you in No. 1 Study when the prisoner bashed me with the camera?"

"Yes, I was," said the Owl.

"Did you see him bash me with the camera?"

"No; you know I'm short-sighted," said Billy Bunter innocently. "I saw—"

"Ass! You saw the camera go on the floor?"

"No, I didn't! I heard a fearful row, and asked Nugent if you were fighting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the jury.

"The witness is unreliable," exclaimed Nugent; "I said so from the first! He saw nothing, and I demand that the case be dismissed at once, with damages for my camera!"

"I'll damage him, if he doesn't pay for my camera!" howled Bulstrode.

"I must hold that the prosecution has failed to make out its case—" began the judge.

"Hold on," exclaimed Bulstrode; "question the prisoner!"

"That's not in order," cried Nugent instantly.

"Yes, yes, yes!" shouted the jury.

"Good! Now, prisoner at the bar, did you, or did you not, break my camera?"

Harry Wharton glared at the prosecutor, but did not reply.

"Did you bash me with a camera?"

KINDLY FILL IN THE ORDER FORM.

Still the new boy was savagely silent. "Better answer," whispered Nugent; "no good being sulky about it, Wharton. Speak up!" "I'm not going to take any part in this fooling!" "Don't be an ass; you——" "Oh, shut up!" Nugent bit his lip hard. The Remove were all waiting for the new boy's reply, but it did not come. "Prisoner at the bar," said Russell, "you have heard the prosecutor's question. Have you any defence to make?" Harry Wharton was doggedly silent. "Do you deny bashing Bulstrode with the camera, and breaking it?" Still silence. "The prisoner refuses to answer," said the judge; "the natural conclusion is that he has no defence to make; and so I sentence him——" "Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Nugent. "I was on the spot, and I can tell you!" "You're not a witness!" "Bulstrode knocked Wharton's books off the table, and punched him, and then——" "You're not a witness!" "I can prove that the prisoner was provoked, and——" "You're not a giddy witness! You couldn't give evidence against the prisoner when Bulstrode wanted you to, and so you can't give it in his favour. That's the law!" "Yes, yes! But I tell you——" "Shut up! The prisoner is found guilty, and sentenced——" "You're an ass! It's the jury have to find the prisoner guilty, not the judge!" growled Nugent. "Very well, I leave it to the jury. Gentlemen of the Remove—I mean the jury—is the sulky-faced waster—I mean the prisoner at the bar—guilty, or not guilty?" "Guilty!" shouted the Remove. "Prisoner at the bar, you are found guilty by a jury formed of your fellow-countrymen, after a fair and judicious trial. You are found guilty of being a cad, and a rotten outsider, and a sulky beast——" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Silence in court! Also of having broken Bulstrode's camera, with malice aforethought and felonious intent, and you are hereby sentenced to pay two guineas for the camera." "Good!" said Bulstrode. "And if you do not, by the end of the week, pay that two guineas to the prosecutor, you will be adjudged a dishonest and unprincipled bounder, and will be cut by the Form." "Hear, hear!" "And will receive a dormitory licking into the bargain." "Bravo!" "The court is now dissolved," said Russell, looking at his watch; "it's high time we had tea. Prisoner at the bar, you are at liberty to scoot. Bunk!" Harry Wharton swung himself away savagely. He felt himself an object of derision to the whole Form, and, although he had provoked the feeling by his own humour, he felt it none the less keenly. Nugent would have spoken to him as he went, but he swung off, and a chorus of hissing followed him. And the meeting of the Remove broke up.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The First Licking.

THE Remove at Greyfriars usually had tea in their studies—at least, when they were in funds—and very cosy some of those meals were. Seldom more than half the Form turned up for tea in the hall. After the trial in the Form-room, Billy Bunter went straight to No. 1. It was his turn to get tea, and he proceeded to the duty at once. Nugent looked out for Wharton, and found him staring out of one of the tall windows in the hall. He tapped the new boy on the shoulder. Harry turned round his head, and looked at him. The expression of his face was not pleasant. The scene in the Form-room had left him in a state of smouldering fury, and he was in a mood for a quarrel. "What do you want?" he asked abruptly. "Nothing; only it's tea-time." "Is it? Where do we have tea in this rotten place?" "That's according," said Nugent, pretending not to hear the disparaging epithet applied to Greyfriars. "Fellows who have the tin generally have tea in their studies—you can get tuck from the school shop. You'll fall into that later. At present, I'll be pleased if you'll come to tea in the study." "I suppose I can have my tea in the hall?"

"You can if you like, of course; but if you'd rather go to in the study, we can make an arrangement. But for this evening, you will be a guest."

"Thanks; I'll go to the hall."

Nugent's eyes glinted. Wharton had saved his life, and Nugent was grateful, and he had a patient temper and a real compassion for a boy who was the victim of a bad training. But patience had its limit, and he felt that he was reaching it.

"You might be a little more civil about it, at all events," said Nugent angrily; "it isn't every fellow who would take any trouble over you!"

"I don't want you to take any trouble over me," said Harry sullenly. "Why can't you let me alone? I haven't asked any favours at your hands, or anybody else's here. I hate the place and the people. Let me alone, then!"

"I'll take you at your word," said Nugent, between his teeth. "I wanted to make things a bit easier for you, because——"

"Because I pulled you out of the river," snapped Wharton. "Can't you let that rest? I was a fool to do it, and I wouldn't, if it happened again!"

"Very well," said Nugent, compressing his lips hard; "I'll leave you alone, as you wish. You won't be troubled by me any more. But, by George," he added, his anger breaking out in spite of himself, "if it wasn't that you ran that risk for me, I'd——"

"Well, what would you do?" sneered Wharton, as he paused.

"I'd give you such a licking that you wouldn't be able to crawl for a week afterwards!" exclaimed Nugent, with flashing eyes.

"Would you? Suppose you do it now?"

"No, I won't! I could if I liked, and you know it."

Harry bit his lip. The experience in the train had shown him that he was no match for Nugent. It was useless to blink at a fact like that.

Nugent looked at him bitterly for a moment, and then turned and walked away. Harry stared out of the window gloomily. There was something like remorse in his heart. He knew that Nugent meant well by him, and he knew that he had thrown away a friendship that might have been priceless to him. His solitude in the midst of the great, busy school was bitter to him, and Nugent, at least, was willing to be his friend. But the sullen obstinacy which had always been his curse was not so easily cured.

The sound of a bell ringing came to his ear, and he guessed that it was the signal for tea in the hall. He made his way thither, and found the Remove coming in; not more than half the Form. He went to the same table and sat down, but no one spoke to him. Curious glances were thrown at him, a good deal as if he were a peculiar animal, but he kept his eyes upon his plate as he ate.

After tea there was the usual preparation to do, which the Remove had the privilege of doing in their own studies, instead of in a class-room under the eye of a master. Harry Wharton made his way to No. 1 Study, and, as he opened the door, a scene of extreme cosiness broke upon his view.

The fire was burning brightly, and the light glimmered upon a white cloth and gleaming crockery. The juniors were finishing their tea, and Billy Bunter was refilling his cup. The kettle was singing away in the grate with a cheery, homely sound.

The scene was very cosy—very different from the chilly great hall. At that moment, more than any other, a sense of his isolation smote upon Harry.

Billy Bunter looked up as the door opened.

"Hallo, who's that?" he said, blinking. "Is it you, Skinner? Have you seen that new cad? He hasn't condescended to have his tea with us!"

Before Harry could speak, Bulstrode gave a yell. The short-sighted Owl was pouring out the tea as he talked, and he had sent a stream of it into Bulstrode's plate.

"You ass!" shouted Bulstrode. "Look what you're doing! You've flooded my sardines!"

Bunter blinked at the plate.

"I'm sincerely sorry," he exclaimed; "I didn't see——"

"Well, you'd better look next time, ass! Give me some more sardines!"

"I'm sincerely sor——"

"Hang all that! Give me some more sardines!"

"I'm sinc——"

"Ass! Sardines! Sardines! Ass!" roared Bulstrode.

"I'm sincerely sorry, but there aren't any more!" gasped Bunter.

"You—you villain, you've spoiled my last sardines!"

"It was all Skinner's fault for coming in so suddenly!"

"That isn't Skinner, ass; it's the outsider!"

"Oh, is it? Then why don't you give him a licking for coming in so suddenly?" said the Owl.

"I want to do my preparation," said Wharton.

Bulstrode grinned ill-naturedly.

"Then you can wait till we've done with the table, or you can take your books on your knees," he said.

Harry looked dubiously round the study. There was not much room in the little apartment for four people, at the best of times, and for tea and preparation to run on simultaneously was rather an impossibility. He instinctively looked at Nugent for advice, but Nugent did not look at him.

"I don't see how you can do your prep. here at all, either," said Bulstrode. "There isn't room in one of these studies for four fellows. I don't see why we should be bothered with you! Go and do it in the Form-room!"

"Well, I'd rather do it there than in your company!" said Wharton.

"Well, go and do it, then!"

Harry Wharton gave another glance round, and took his books and left the study. The bully of the Remove grinned.

"We've got rid of that rotter!" he exclaimed. "If we stick together over it, we can keep him out of the study altogether. I don't see why we should be troubled by him. The Form-room is a great deal too good for the cad! I wonder how he'll like it?"

Harry Wharton did not like it at all.

There were several other youngsters of the Remove in the Form-room, as well as most of the Third Form, doing their preparation. The room was in a buzz, excepting when a master was there, and it was chilly and cheerless. The fire in the grate was not near the desks, and it burned very low, and the boys did not dare to make it up too high. Harry Wharton thought of the cosy study with something like a sigh.

When bed-time came, Wharton joined the rest of the Form going up. No one spoke to him, but a good many of the Remove talked "at" him, in a way that showed how extreme was his unpopularity.

"Lights out in ten minutes!" said Wingate, looking into the dormitory.

The Remove began to undress. Bulstrode came over to Harry's bed.

"I say, cad," he remarked politely, "you haven't told me when I am to expect the cash for that camera!"

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

"You will never get it from me!" he said.

"You refuse to pay up?"

"Yes; it was your own fault it was broken."

"By George, if you don't pay up, I'll make you smart for it; and I think you'd better have your first lesson to-night! Hallo!"

The door opened, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came in.

"I have a word to say to you, boys," he said, as the buzz of voices died away. "There has been too much noise in the dormitory of late, and it must cease. I shall be specially attentive to-night for any disturbance, and I warn you that none had better take place. The offenders will be severely punished!"

"Yes, sir!" said Bulstrode.

"Good-night, my boys!"

And the Form master retired. Bulstrode scowled after him savagely.

"What the dickens does that mean?" he exclaimed. "It's the first time Quelch has been so beastly particular about a little noise."

"Oh, I know what it means!" said Skinner, grinning. "He thinks we're going to rag the new fellow, and he doesn't want us to do it."

"So we were! Well, that's what I call rotten! Fancy a master stepping in to save mammy's boy from being put through it! I suppose Wharton has been sucking up to him!"

"That's a lie!" said Wharton.

"Oh, it's a lie, is it?" said Bulstrode, turning upon him. "Well, Quelch or no Quelch, I'll make you eat those words!"

"Shut up now, Bulstrode!" said Nugent. "Let him alone! A row after what Quelch said means a half-holiday's detention for the whole Form, and I'm not going to stand that on your account!"

"Right-ho!" said a dozen voices. "Shut up, Bulstrode!"

The bully of the Remove scowled, but he gave in. He strode back to his own bed, and Harry Wharton was left alone.

Wingate found the Remove dormitory in a state of unusual quietness when he came in to turn the light out. And he left it so. After the Form master's warning, the boys of the Remove did not leave their beds, and the new boy at Greyfriars escaped what would probably have been the severest ordeal of his experience at the school.

Harry slept pretty soundly, and did not wake till the rising-bell went. It was a crisp, cold morning, and the Remove turned out into the quadrangle for a run before breakfast.

Harry Wharton went out also, and even he felt the influence of the crisp air and the bright sunshine, and his face was cheerful for the first time since he had arrived at Greyfriars.

The Remove were warming themselves with a game of leap-frog, and Harry looked on, thinking that he would willingly join in if he were asked. But he was "the outsider," and no one looked at him. He had made a bad start at Greyfriars, and a bad start was not easily retrieved.

"Get out of the way!" shouted Bulstrode.

Harry looked round quickly, but not in time. Bulstrode came rushing by to take his leap, and shouldered the new boy roughly aside. Harry staggered and fell at full length on the ground.

Bulstrode laughed jeeringly as he went on. The new boy sprang to his feet, his face dark with passion.

But Bulstrode was gone. He was almost at the end of the line by this time, and as Harry ran towards him, he was bending to make a back in his turn. Before Harry could reach him, he was hustled back by three or four fellows.

"Get out!" cried Skinner angrily. "What are you trying to do? Get out of the way!"

"I—"

"Shut up! Get aside!"

Half a dozen fellows hustled Wharton away, and he had to retreat. Sore and savage, he walked away, and was first in to breakfast. Bulstrode sat opposite to him at the breakfast-table, and grinned at him across the board.

Harry scowled in reply; but his scowl only drew upon him derisive glances and muttered gibes. Sulky looks were about the worst thing for anybody at Greyfriars, as Harry was slowly discovering.

"What is going on down there?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, from the head of the table. "What is all that laughing and muttering about?"

"It's only the new kid, sir!" said Bulstrode. "He's looking as if he would like to murder somebody!"

"Bulstrode, how dare you use such an expression?"

"Well, he is, sir! Look at him!"

The Form master looked at Harry, and the new boy's sullen face grew more sullen as he felt Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed upon him.

"What is the matter with you, Wharton?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing what?" exclaimed the Remove master angrily.

"Nothing, sir!" said Harry unwillingly.

"You had better not forget to address me in a respectful manner the next time you speak," said Mr. Quelch. "And now, take that scowl off your face instantly! You are among civilised people here, and I object to your sitting down to table scowling like a hooligan! You hear me?"

The Form master's words were not likely to remove the sullenness from the new boy's face. Every eye at the table was fixed upon him, and his ears were beginning to burn. He felt that he looked foolish, and the tears of utter vexation started to his eyes.

"He's snivelling!" muttered Bulstrode, loudly enough for the whole table to hear. "Poor little thing! He misses his mammy, you know! Diddums!"

Harry's sullen face blazed out into wrath.

He could not reach his taunting enemy with his hands, but he caught up his teacup, and, without stopping to think, he flung the contents full in the face of the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode started to his feet with a yell. The hot tea smothered his face and hair, and drenched his shirt and waistcoat. He reached over the table towards Harry, in mad rage; but the Form master was on his feet now.

"Wharton," he thundered, "leave the room instantly! Go and wait for me in my study! I will deal with you there!"

Harry hesitated a moment. He was in a humour to disobey even a Form master. But he turned and went, and a muttered hiss followed him.

In the Form master's study he waited, like a wild animal in a cage. He could not keep still, but walked to and fro while he waited for Mr. Quelch to come. His cup of bitterness seemed to be full now.

It was a quarter of an hour before Mr. Quelch entered. His face was very grave and stern. He fixed his eyes upon the boy's sullen, savage face.

"Wharton," he said quietly, "you have not done well since you came to this school. You seem to have done everything you can think of to make the Form you belong to dislike and despise you."

"I hate them," muttered Harry.

"Silence, sir! You must not speak like that. You should be ashamed to use such an expression. Mark me, if I did

KINDLY FILL IN THE ORDER FORM.

not know that there were certain peculiarities in your training which formed some excuse for you, I should send you in to the Head to be severely flogged for your conduct this morning!"

Wharton set his teeth, but did not speak.

"As it is," went on the Remove master, "I shall not do so. I shall see whether a caning will have any effect upon you before I try severer measures." He picked up a cane from the table, and tested it in his fingers. "Hold out your hand, sir!"

Harry Wharton did not stir.

The brow of the Remove master became black as night. He seemed on the verge of an explosion, but he restrained himself.

"Did you hear me, Wharton? Hold out your hand instantly!"

"I won't!"

"What!" Mr. Quelch spoke in tones of forced calmness. "Do I understand you to say that you will not, Wharton?"

"I won't!" muttered Harry doggedly. "I didn't want to come to this place! I don't want to stay here! I won't be caned!"

"Will you hold out your hand?"

"No!"

Mr. Quelch wasted no more time in words. He seized Harry by the collar with his left hand, and with the right he caned him. The blows fell with lashing force upon the junior's back, stinging him severely.

Harry did not utter a cry. He did not struggle, for he was helpless in the iron grip of the Form master. The rain of blows made every nerve in his body tingle with pain, and not until his arm was tired did Mr. Quelch release him.

"There," said the Form master, flinging the cane into a corner, "I hope that will be a lesson to you, Wharton!"

Harry did not speak; his face was white and his lips quivering, and if he had spoken he would have burst into a torrent of tears.

"Go! Leave the room, sir!"

Harry Wharton left the Remove master's study without a word.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The "Outsider" Leaves Greyfriars.

"LICKED, by Jove!"

Bulstrode uttered the words in tones of derision as Harry Wharton came out of the study. The boys of the Remove were going to early chapel, but Harry Wharton did not join them. He turned towards the stairs.

Nugent made him a sign to come.

"You can't cut chapel, Wharton!" he said. "Come along!"

Harry did not reply, or even turn his head. He went upstairs and flung himself upon a chair in No. 1 Study. He was furious, but even his fury was not equal to the misery and humiliation he felt. A sense of his utter helplessness was oppressing him, too. He had set himself to defy the discipline of the school, and it was dawning upon him that he had no more chance of success than a stickleback might have of stopping the progress of a mill-wheel.

He was feeling too sick and dazed—too utterly "rotten"—to think or care what might come of his absence from morning chapel. He heard the quarter chime from the school tower, and knew that it was time to appear in the class-room.

He was inclined to remain in the study, defying everything, but what was the use? He would be taken by force if he did not go, and a fresh humiliation under the mocking eyes of his Form-fellows would be too bitter.

He rose wearily, and glanced in the glass. His face was white and drawn-looking, and his eyes strained. He smiled bitterly at the reflection. Nugent looked in at the study door.

"Time for class, Wharton!" he called out, and vanished.

Harry Wharton slowly left the study.

"I won't stay here," he muttered—"I won't stay here! I've had too much of it! I hate them—I hate them all! I'll run away!"

The thought had crossed his mind before.

Why should he stay—why should he not run away? He had no home to go to. He knew how Colonel Wharton would greet his return if he went back to the Lodge. Cold looks, and curt words, and a forced return to Greyfriars—that was all he had to expect at his uncle's house.

No; he could not go home—he no longer had a home. But the world was wide; there were many roads to take; and he was no coward. He could face his fortune, whatever it was.

He went downstairs, and made his way to the Remove-room. The boys stared at him as he entered—several minutes after the rest of them had taken their seats—but

Mr. Quelch seemed to be unaware of his late arrival. Harry took his seat, Nugent making room for him, to receive a black look in return for his kindness.

But the signs of suffering in the "outsider's" face were so evident, that a less good-natured chap than Nugent would have borne with him patiently then.

Mr. Quelch was sometimes a severe man, but he was just. He knew that the new boy was in no condition at that moment to do his work well, and he passed over him lightly. Harry was not called upon to construe, and in the German class later he was let alone, Mr. Quelch having spoken a word to the German master. Harry did not observe it; he was too occupied with his own thoughts to know that he was the object of kindness, or to feel anything like gratitude if he had noticed it.

After morning school he withdrew by himself to a solitary quarter of the grounds, to think over his new project and make his plans. The Remove fellows went down to the football-ground.

In the afternoon, Mr. Quelch expected Harry to do his work like the rest; but the boy's mind was too busy with his secret thoughts for that. He was soon in trouble again. In construing, he blundered in the simplest passages, amid the suppressed titters of the class, and was finally rewarded for his efforts with an imposition of fifty lines.

Harry smiled grimly as he received the imput. He was to show up the lines on the morrow, but he was determined that when the morrow came, Greyfriars would know him no more.

His plans were made. When school was dismissed, he left the class-room with an elastic step. He heard the whispered jeers of the Remove boys without heeding them. He would soon be rid of them all!

"The outsider's bucking up!" Skinner remarked to Bulstrode. "He looks as if he had found some ripping new wheeze, or something. What's in his little mind, I wonder?"

Nugent wondered, too. He could see that Harry was thinking of something that he kept a secret. The new boy did not come into the study that evening, taking his tea in the hall with the Form. Nugent met him shortly afterwards.

"You can come into the study to do your prep.," he said. "No need for you to stick in the Form-room, you know."

"I'm not going to do any."

"Eh? Do you know what that means to-morrow morning?"

"That's my business."

Nugent stared after him as he walked away.

"Off his rocker!" he muttered. "That must be it. By George, he'll get flayed if he starts bucking against the powers that be in this manner!"

"That kid's got a bee in his bonnet, I believe!" said Bulstrode, coming into the study when Nugent had nearly finished his preparation.

"What kid?" yawned Nugent, laying down his pen.

"That new rotter! I just met him on the stairs, and he's got his cap and overcoat on—not his school cap, either. I asked him if he were going out, and he only glared at me, and said never a word!"

"He can't go out; it's past locking up."

"Of course. I don't see what he wants a coat on for a stroll in the quad for, on a fine night like this. Perhaps he's going to run away, though!" said Bulstrode, bursting into a laugh.

Nugent gave a start, left the study, and hurried downstairs and out of the schoolhouse. He ran down quickly to the gates, and, as he suspected, he saw the new boy just turning away from them.

Wharton had evidently determined to go out, and had gone down to the gates to leave the school, and found them locked. The next moment he hurried away, and, in the darkness of the wide quadrangle, Nugent lost sight of him.

Nugent stood hesitating. He had little doubt now as to the new boy's intentions. He had made up his mind to run away from Greyfriars. But, having found the gates locked, was he likely to attempt to scale the wall?—where, as in places, the ivy grew thick on the wall, that would not be difficult, but—

Nugent hurried in the direction in which Wharton had disappeared. He could hear a rustling, which he knew was the sound made by the thick ivy as someone climbed through it. Nugent ran towards the wall, just in time to see a dim form surmount it and vanish on the other side. There was a slight thud of the boy dropping into the lane.

"Wharton!"

Nugent called out the name cautiously. He would have given anything to induce the reckless lad to return. He knew, though Harry did not, what a terrible offence against the school discipline the new boy was committing, and how severe the punishment would be. But the runaway either did not hear, or did not heed.

Nugent did not hesitate long. He clambered into the ivy,

crossed the high wall, and dropped down into Friardale Lane.

He knew that the new boy must have gone in the direction of the village. His only hope of escape was to get on the railway. With a beating heart, Nugent ran through the black shadows of the lane, towards the village. In a few minutes he came in sight of a form tramping doggedly onward through the gloom. He quickened his pace, and dropped his hand upon Harry Wharton's shoulder.

Wharton swung round as quickly as if an adder had stung him. The moment he had passed the school walls the terror of recapture had fallen upon him. His heart beat like a hammer, and he gave a cry of anger as he recognised Nugent.

"You!" he cried. "You have followed me?"

"Yes," said Nugent quietly.

"What—what do you want?"

"I want to prevent you from making a fool of yourself!" said Nugent, somewhat sternly. "Do you understand what you are doing?"

"What I am doing is my own business."

"You can't get away."

"I am going to try," said Harry doggedly. "I am not going to stay at Greyfriars. I hate the place, and everybody in it. I hate you! Now let me go."

"I won't let you go! Were you thinking of going home?"

"Home?" Harry Wharton laughed bitterly. "No, I wasn't thinking of going to my guardian. He would send me back to Greyfriars. I am going out into the world."

"You are mad—mad! Come back with me!"

"I tell you I won't."

"We'll keep this secret, no one need ever know you thought of running away. I tell you, Wharton, you'll be sorry for this. You would be sorry for it if you got away. But you can't get away; they'll search for you!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Fight in the Dark—Struck Down!—And a Fresh Start.

HARRY WHARTON strode on savagely after his parting with Nugent. But amid the rage that swelled in his breast, there was a secret feeling he did not care to acknowledge to himself—a feeling of shame. He had struck the boy whose only aim had been to befriend him, and Nugent had not returned the blow! And, although his anger was still at white-heat, the secret, half-acknowledged consciousness that he had acted like a cad was discomforting.

As he strode on, he had eyes and ears for nothing, and he did not observe a shadowy figure that lurked in the gloom of the trees by the roadside. He did not observe it till there was a sudden footstep, and a grasp on his shoulder.

"Stop," muttered a hoarse voice, and a cudgel whirled in the air—"stop, young shaver! I want—"

Harry Wharton was in no mood to stop for anybody. He lashed out with his fist, and the footpad reeled back from a fierce blow. Then, with a muttered curse, he brought the cudgel swinging down.

The boy gave a cry of pain as the heavy weapon crashed on the arm he instinctively threw up to defend his head. The blow numbed him, and he sank on his knees. The stick whirled over his head again.

"Now, hang yer! Your money—your ticker! Quick, afore I—"

There was a patter of footsteps, and a form came dashing up, dim in the gloom, and before the tramp realised that he had a new foe to deal with, a blow in the face sent him staggering. Harry Wharton reeled away, and fell in the

IT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

"They won't search for me yet. I sha'n't be missed till calling-over."

Nugent drew a deep breath.

"Yes, you will, for I shall tell them."

Harry snapped his teeth with rage.

"You will betray me?"

"Yes," said Nugent firmly, "to prevent your ruining yourself."

"You—you hound! You coward!"

"Call me what you like; you'll thank me for it some day."

"Well, betray me if you like; I don't care! I don't ask any favours of you. I'm going all the same, and I defy them to take me back. Let me go!"

"Wharton, listen to me!"

"I won't listen! Take your hand from my shoulder!" said Harry, in a low voice of concentrated passion.

"I tell you I—"

"Then take that!"

Wharton lashed out furiously, and Nugent staggered back from a blow full in the face. He uttered a sharp cry, and his hand went up to his cheek.

"Now betray me if you like!"

And Harry Wharton strode on down the lane, and in a moment the darkness had swallowed him up from sight.

Nugent reeled unsteadily. He leaned against a tree, pressing his hand to his cheek, where he felt the stinging pain of the blow. He was dazed and confused, but one thought was clear in his mind—he had done with the ingrate now!

"Let him go—let him go! I—"

Nugent ceased the muttered words. From the darkness of the lane rang a sudden startled cry—a cry of pain—and then there was a sound of scuffling feet in the gloom.

The next moment Nugent was running towards the spot as fast as his legs would carry him.

road, and Nugent stood over him, facing the footpad with clenched fists.

There was a muttered curse, and the ruffian, black with rage, sprang at him. The cudgel whistled through the air, and Nugent could not escape the blow. There was a thudding sound, and the boy dropped into the road.

Harry Wharton scrambled up.

"Help! Help!" he shrieked.

There was a crash in the hedge, a pounding of rapid footsteps across the adjoining field. The footpad was gone. He had no mind to deal with two foes, and he had made good his retreat. But, if he had only known it, he had little to fear, for that savage blow had stunned Nugent, and he lay still and silent in the dust of the lane.

Harry Wharton looked about him wildly.

"Nugent! Was that you, Nugent?"

There was no reply. Harry moved a few steps, and stumbled over the insensible junior. He gave a cry of horror.

"Nugent! Is it you?"

The dead silence was broken only by the echo of his own voice. He dropped on his knees, and felt over Nugent's face with his hands. Something warm, something wet, came on his fingers, and a terrible shudder ran through him.

"Blood!" he whispered aloud.

He fumbled in his pocket for a box of matches. He struck one, and the wind blew it out; but a second one he succeeded in sheltering in his hand, and he caught a glimpse of Nugent's face.

A groan of horror left his lips.

The face was white and deathly, save where a red streak ran from under the curly hair, and tinged the white skin with a terrible crimson.

"Nugent, for mercy's sake, speak!"

The terrible thought was in Harry's mind that his rescuer

KINDLY FILL IN THE ORDER FORM.

was dead. The wind caught the match and blew it out. Darkness swallowed up the white, red-smudged face.

"Nugent! Oh, heavens, Nugent, forgive me! I—"

Harry broke off, a wild sob choking his voice. The mark of his blow was still on Nugent's cheek, and Nugent lay at his feet, insensible—struck down in his defence!

The boy sprang wildly up. Nugent could not—could not—be dead! He must get help—he must! His brain was in a whirl. As he was starting to run wildly from the spot, a low groan broke the silence.

A groan, but it was music to Harry Wharton's ears! It showed that the worst—the horror he feared—had not happened.

In a second he was on his knees at Nugent's side again.

"Nugent, can you hear me?"

There was no reply.

"Nugent, answer me! If you can speak—speak, for mercy's sake!"

Still that same grim silence.

A shudder ran through Harry Wharton's limbs. Was that groan that he had heard, thrilling through the darkness, the last sound Nugent would ever make audible to human ears?

He groaned himself at the thought.

"For my sake! It was for my sake—after I—after I had—"

He broke off, with a hot rush of tears to his eyes. The remembrance of what he had done was too terrible.

He scratched another match, but the wind instantly blew it out again. Another, and in the glimmer ere it was extinguished he caught two dark eyes fixed upon him from the colourless face of the lad before him.

He flung down the burnt match, with a glad cry.

"Nugent!"

He heard a faint moan in the darkness, a sound of pain from lips struggling to shape words!

that. He put his hand to his temple to still its throbbing, and sat up in the road.

"I shall feel more fit soon," he muttered. "It was a hard crack. Never mind, all's well that ends well. It might have been worse."

"Heaven knows, it might! But—"

"Get some water from the ditch in your cap, Wharton! My head is on fire! That will do it more good than anything else. There's blood on my face, too, and that must not be there when I get back to Greyfriars. The less said about this affair at the school the better."

Harry Wharton obeyed. Nugent sat up, leaning back against a tree. Wharton brought the water, and the cut on the head, under the thick hair, was washed. The blood was still oozing, but Harry, under the cool directions of the injured lad, bound it up with their handkerchiefs.

"Nugent, it may be dangerous."

"Rats!" said the Remove lad cheerfully. "It was a painful knock, but my cap protected me, and I partly dodged it. If it had caught me fairly on the head, I rather think I should have been a goner. Ugh!"

"Nugent, can you—can you ever forgive me?"

The words broke abruptly from Harry Wharton. It was new to the proud, passionate lad to express contrition. The words came strangely from his lips. But they came from his heart.

Nugent gave a whistle. His head was aching horribly. The injury was not a serious one, but it was extremely painful. A feeling of satisfaction came over him, however.

"Do you mean that, Wharton? I thought all along you weren't such a hopeless rotter as the chaps thought, and I would have stood by you—"

"I know you would, and—and I hated you all the more for your kindness! But—but if it happened over again—"

"Let it happen again! Let's get back to Greyfriars!"

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OUT THIS OUT.

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"Heaven be praised! I—I feared— Oh, Heaven be praised! Nugent, speak to me!"

"What—what—" The voice came eerily from the boy extended there, swallowed up in the gloom, sounding faint and far-away. "Wharton, is it you?"

"It is I!"

"What—what has happened?"

The tears were running down Harry Wharton's cheeks.

Little accustomed were his eyes to such moisture, but the relief at finding that the worst had not happened to Nugent was too great, and he was overwhelmed.

He seized the fallen lad's hand in his own with a convulsive grasp.

"Nugent! Oh, I feared—"

"I—I remember!"

Nugent made an effort to rise, and sank back again with a groan of pain and weakness.

"Don't move; we are safe now!"

"That ruffian struck me down!"

"Yes; instead of me. You saved me, perhaps from death!"

"My head is burning! By Jove, how it pains! I am glad I came up in time, though! I shall be better in a few minutes," said Nugent, his voice growing stronger as he spoke. "I—I must have been stunned."

There was a sob in the throat of Harry Wharton.

"I feared that you—that you were—"

He broke off; he could not finish the sentence. Nugent pressed his hand. He understood.

"Don't speak of it, old fellow! I know how you must have felt."

"Can you get up? I must help you to the school."

Nugent drew a deep, quivering breath. The pain in his head was intense, but he was not one to say much about

Harry Wharton hesitated.

Nugent staggered to his feet. His brain swam with the effort, and he leaned heavily on the new boy's shoulder.

"You must come back," he said, "for the simple reason that I cannot get to the school without assistance."

A pang of remorse smote the new boy.

"All my fault—all my fault!"

"Well, that's so," said Nugent: "it was all your fault! But come back with me, and we'll keep all this dark, and make a fresh start. You won't find the fellows in the Remove so hard to get on with if you try. You haven't tried, so far. If you come to a place determined to find only enemies there, you're pretty certain to find them."

"I have been a fool!"

"Exactly! Come, give me your arm, and let's get back!"

And Nugent, leaning upon the new boy's arm, moved towards the school. Harry Wharton made no resistance. The die was cast for him now; he was to return to Greyfriars, to take up the thread of life there again.

"You're coming?" said Nugent joyfully.

"Yes."

"Good for you! Make up your mind to it, old fellow, and I can promise you that you'll find Greyfriars a ripping place. The Remove don't like you now, but we'll stick together, and bring them round. Is it a go?"

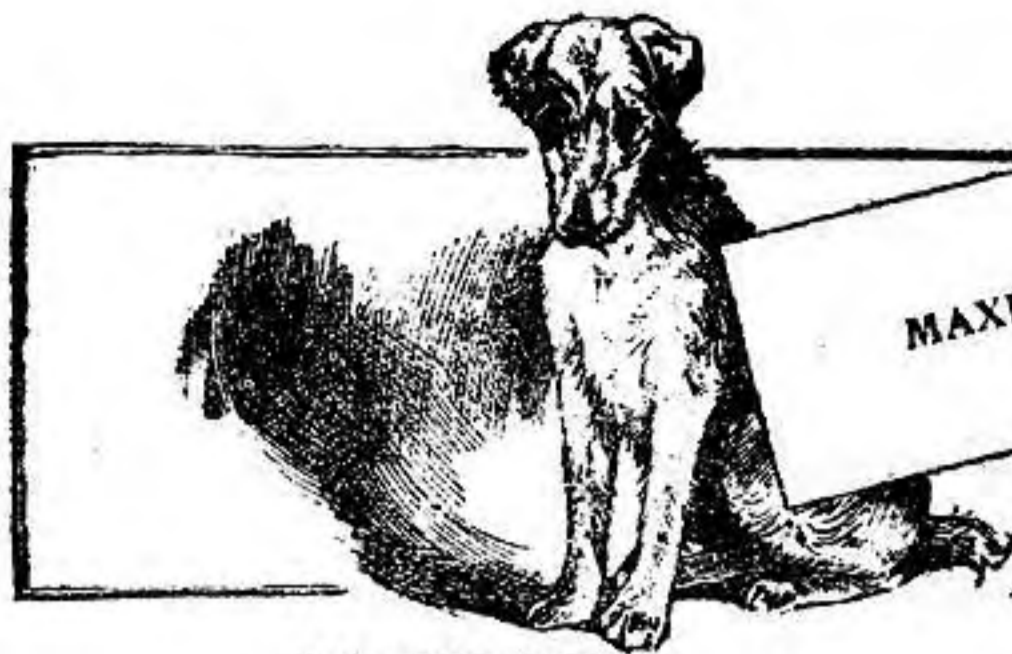
"Yes, yes!"

And the two juniors—friends now, and for life henceforth—shook hands upon the compact. And so Harry Wharton faced his difficulties again, to fight his battle out, with a true chum by his side to help him to win.

THE END.

(Next week's long, complete story of Harry Wharton introduces two new characters:—Bob Cherry and Vaseline.)

KINDLY FILL IN THE ORDER FORM.



NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A Discussion and its Result.

"By George, if he isn't a wonder!"

The speaker brought down his fist with a bang on the desk at which he was seated, exclaimed "By George!" again, and concluded his outburst of feeling with a long-drawn out "Oh!"

The other occupant of the room—a dark, dusty, fusty room of no great size, furnished with a couple of desks, a table, two stools and a chair, a copying-press, sundry books on a shelf, and various files of papers—looked up from the book he was perusing, and stared in mild surprise at his companion, who had thus broken the silence which, for the last twenty minutes, since the departure of Mr. Crosby, the head clerk, to his lunch, had filled the dingy office.

"Who? Who's a wonder?" the disturbed reader inquired.

"This chap here," was the answer.

"Well, who's he?"

"Why, in this book—Sherlock Holmes. By George, he's ripping, Bob! I've just been reading how he—"

"Pooh!"

The derisive ejaculation aroused the first speaker from the condition of admiring wonder into which the consideration of Conan Doyle's famous creation had thrown him. Swinging round on his stool, he looked at his companion with a half-angry expression on his good-looking face.

He was a fair-haired, blue-eyed young fellow of that period of life when one may be either a boy or a man, according to one's deeds, actions, or character. Frank Dennis by name, good-natured, quick and impulsive, and somewhat imaginative of character, he shared with his present companion of the office the honour of acting as junior clerk to Driver & Driver, Solicitors, of Little Buckingham Street, W.C.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded, in answer to the "Pooh!"

"Why, that I don't think such a mighty lot of your precious Sherlock Holmes. It's easy as winking for a chap to sit down and write a detective story like those Sherlock Holmes figures in; he knows just what's going to happen, and he can make his characters do anything he likes. Blessed if I think much of Holmes!"

There was an emphasis and decidedness about the speaker's words and utterance that proved, anyway, he was one of strong opinions—one not easily convinced he was wrong, or afraid to say what he thought. In appearance he was the direct opposite of Frank Dennis, being grey-eyed and black-haired, a trifle greater of bulk, though more loosely built than the other, and with heavier, more strongly-marked features. He looked somewhat the older, also. There was doggedness, resolution, and pertinacity written in his broad, protruding chin and square-set jaw; his cheek bones were somewhat high, eyes deeply set, and far apart. Altogether he had a stronger, if not quite so prepossessing a countenance as his fellow-clerk, chum, and fellow-lodger, Frank Dennis.

Both he, Robert Lomax, and Dennis had been in Driver & Driver's office getting on for two years, and neither of them were quite in love with their job. For the one it gave promise of leading to nothing, for the other it was a long way too slow.

"Suppose you think you could have done as well as Holmes if you'd been in his place," Dennis observed, with a slightly contemptuous laugh.

"Yes, if I'd had his knowledge and experience."

"That's just it!" Dennis said gleefully. "It was because he had all, that he was able to unearth mysteries that'd have baffled anyone else."

"Rot! And let me tell you, Frank, I think there's a lot of humbug about this detective business."

"Humbug?"

"Oh, I didn't mean about the business, but the wonderful

gifts, the skill and cleverness, I mean, of Holmes and all the rest of his crew. It's my firm belief that any-ordinarily intelligent chap, if he gave his mind to it, could do as well as ever these marvellous fellows in books do."

"Wonder you don't take it on!"

"So I would for two pins," Robert retorted, firing up.

"Pretty ass you'd make of yourself!"

"Not such an ass as you are at present, thinking such a mighty lot of Holmes & Co. Now, if they were all real fellows—"

"They wouldn't be able to do what they did."

"Bet you they would, and a good deal more!"

"Rats! Chuck it!"

Lomax did "chuck it," taking his friend's observation literally, and as "it" was a fair-sized and weighty blotting-pad, and "it" caught Dennis on the ear, small wonder is it that active personal hostilities followed.

Not for the first time in their clerical career had the present situation arisen, therefore they fell to work with a practised rapidity. The stools were kicked out of the way, the table shoved close against the wall, and they got to grips. The arena thus formed for their bout was not large, but it served. Locked together, they swayed backwards and forwards for a few seconds, and then Dennis, giving a sudden wrench, got his right arm and the upper part of his body across Lomax's back from his right side, right across the loins where his fingers joined with those of his left hand, his arm having been passed across his adversary's stomach. Before Lomax quite knew what was happening, he was lifted clean off his feet, his heels elevated, and with a dexterous twist deposited flat on his back with a bang that made a tumbler on the mantelpiece jingle.

"There's a good West Country 'heave' for you!" panted Dennis, who came from that part of England.

"And I'll give you a North Country tall that'll better it," Lomax replied, gathering himself up.

There was no malice or ill temper in face or voice of either of the contestants. These little wrestling bouts were of frequent, almost daily, occurrence, and they were conducted without the slightest ill-feeling, and left no disagreeable or revengeful thoughts behind.

"If you can," laughed Dennis; and they went together again.

Suddenly Lomax shook himself free, gripped his chum by arm and neck, and backheeled him with a scientific precision and effectiveness that left nothing to be desired. Frank Dennis measured his length on the floor.

"One and one; now for the conqueror!" laughed the victor. "Nothing like a good old Cambrian chip for felling a chap."

"We've better men in the West," retorted Dennis; and set to work to prove it.

But the question at issue was not decided—at least, upon that occasion.

The lads were locked in a fierce embrace, twisting and tripping, and stumbling, each with muscles pliant and tough, and bent on obtaining fair, good-tempered, and sportsmanlike mastery, when the office-door opened with a sudden sharp cracking sound, and a visitor stood upon the threshold of the office, staring at the contending wrestlers with an expression of horror, amazement, and severe disapprobation on his thin face.

"Good heavens!"

The exclamation had been twice repeated before the lads became aware that their sport had received interruption. Their fingers unloosed, their muscles relaxed, and they fell apart, staring at the interruptor with wide eyes and open mouth.

The thin-faced man, with ferret eyes and straggling side whiskers, who surveyed them, was their boss Zachary Worritt, Driver being only a name, the owner being long since dead.

"So this—" began Mr. Worrith.

And then Frank Dennis burst out laughing—he couldn't help it. Mr. Worrith's face, so he afterwards informed Lomax, was like that of an indiarubber monkey in a fit.

The solicitor flushed; he opened his mouth widely, as if he had a great deal to say, and then closed it with an ominous snap, like the shutting of a rat-trap.

"You can do your next laughing—and wrestling, too, if you've a mind—outside," he said grimly. "You'll do no more here, both of you. You understand? You're both dismissed!"

The lads remained silent, and their employer continued, his anger increasing with every sentence. He was only a little man, physically speaking; two such as he would have been a poor match for either one of his junior clerks, but in power of tongue one would have looked far to have found a worthy rival to him.

"You're a disgrace, the pair of you!" he thundered. "A disgrace to yourselves, and to me, to my office! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, acting like children or blackguards, and turning my office into some low pothouse. But I suppose you're past feeling ashamed. You shall have no further opportunity; this is your last day here. Pack up your things and go! Go at once! I will not have you here another hour—another minute!"

"But surely, Mr. Worrith—" began Lomax seriously.

"Yes, I do. I won't have my office turned into a bear-garden. This is no gymnasium; this is a workhouse not a playhouse—"

"A workhouse!" gasped Frank; and again he laughed loudly. The idea tickled him.

But his mirth, instead of turning Mr. Worrith's anger, did but aggravate it. His little black eyes fairly flashed fire, and his voice rose to a shrill scream.

"You shall laugh the other side of your mouths, you vagabonds—you rascals—"

"That's slander, uttered in the presence of a witness," interrupted Robert Lomax; and his employer favoured him with an expression that was murderous.

"Be off!" It was all he could trust himself to say.

Lomax looked at Dennis, and the latter nodded; he began feeling in his jacket pockets.

"Our salaries," said the former. "If you dismiss us—"

"You have given adequate cause for dismissal," returned the solicitor. "Not a farthing will I pay you, and if you choose to sue me you can. Get out!"

"With much pleasure!" the irrepressible Dennis replied. "We'll make you a present, sir, of our office-coats."

Five minutes later the two friends were standing at the corner of Little Buckingham Street and the Strand, staring in an indecisive fashion at the stream of people flowing in both directions.

"I vote we go and get some grub. Come along!" And off to a teashop the pair went.

"How much have you got, Frank?" was Lomax's first remark when, the meal over, they were outside the shop.

Frank thrust his hands into his pockets.

"It's near the end of the month," he began. "Three half-crowns, a two-bob piece, a shilling, three sixpences, and fourpence-halfpenny in coppers exactly," he replied.

"Twelve-and-four-pence-halfpenny! Well, that's ninepence more'n I have," his friend observed.

"Question is," he remarked, a minute after. "what are we going to do?"

"Know what I'm going to do," Dennis replied briskly. "I'm going home, fetch Grip, and take him out for a walk."

"Right you are; can't see anything better for the moment," said his friend.

Robert and Frank, Grip at their heels, strolled along one of the squares that lie at the back of Oxford Street.

Grip, the terrier, a wire-haired, white-coloured dog, with a blackish-grey patch over one eye, and another covering the root of his tail, having nothing to think

about, and accepting his unusual outing with philosophic cheerfulness, began to do things.

First he chased a well-fed-looking cat that was sitting on a doorstep, looking as if the entire square were her own property; next he scared the life out of two biggish boys, who mistook his expression of good temper for one of broken-spirited meekness, and made aggravating noises at him as they passed; then he doubled up a snub-nosed pug-dog whose supercilious expression hurt his feelings, and was skirmishing round a cautious-looking collie when something attracted his attention, and he bolted off to the other side of the square, where a solitary cabman rested with his back against the railings.

"Well, so far as I can see the best thing we—"

"What the dickens!" suddenly interrupted Lomax, turning his head behind him. "What are you up to, Grip? What is it, old chap?"

The fox-terrier had suddenly appeared behind the two boys. Growling contentedly, he was dabbing his muzzle against Robert Lomax's leg, his tail going like clockwork all the time. He was trying to attract their attention.

"What's that in his mouth?" cried Frank, his eyes also going to the dog. "Why, he's got a mouse. No; it's a little rat!"

"No, it isn't! Here, Grip—here, let's see what you've got. Good dog—good dog—good old chap!" And Lomax, who had bent down towards Grip, detached something from between the animal's jaws and patted him vigorously.

"What is it?"

Lomax stood upright, the object in his hand.

"By George, Frank! It's a purse Grip has picked up!"

There was no one beside themselves in the square, and Frank's head bent towards his chum's as the latter turned the purse over in his hand.

"Open it and see what's inside," he suggested.

But if there was any expectation in Dennis's mind of the purse holding anything of great value he was disappointed.

There was a small miniature portrait frame, gold, and containing the picture of a fair-haired, blue-eyed baby girl, and at the back of this a thin coil of hair, a newspaper-cutting of a marriage notice, a visiting-card, but no money.

Silently the boys read the clipping and the card—the latter bore a name and an address in a town in the United States. The name, a man's, was the same as that of the bridegroom in the marriage notice. The purse itself was of worn and faded green leather, with greatly worn and whitened edges, and fastened by an overlap and clasp.

"Well," observed Dennis, "it isn't worth much, anyway."

Lomax looked up quickly.

"You're wrong there, Frank, it is; or will be."

Dennis stared, laughed, and then "How?" he asked.

"Why, don't you see? This locket is an heirloom, see the hair and the portrait; I'll bet the youngster was the

child of that marriage in the newspaper, and the father emigrated to America when his wife and child died. Now he's over here again, come back from his Yankee home to the old country; he was walking along here and dropped the purse."

Frank Dennis stared and laughed again.

"By Jove, Bob," he exclaimed, "that isn't bad for you! How on earth—But what are we going to do with it?"

"Find the owner," was the prompt reply.

"How?"

Lomax looked serious. "I thought you'd read 'Sherlock Holmes,'" he said.

"I'm with you, then," said Frank, laughing. "By George, Bob, but this—To think of you going off on that tack."

"Grin if you like," was the sober rejoinder. "We're going to find the owner of this purse."

(Another instalment of this Detective Tale next Tuesday.)

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