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By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**



THE BALL SMACKED FAIRLY IN BULSTRODE'S FACE.

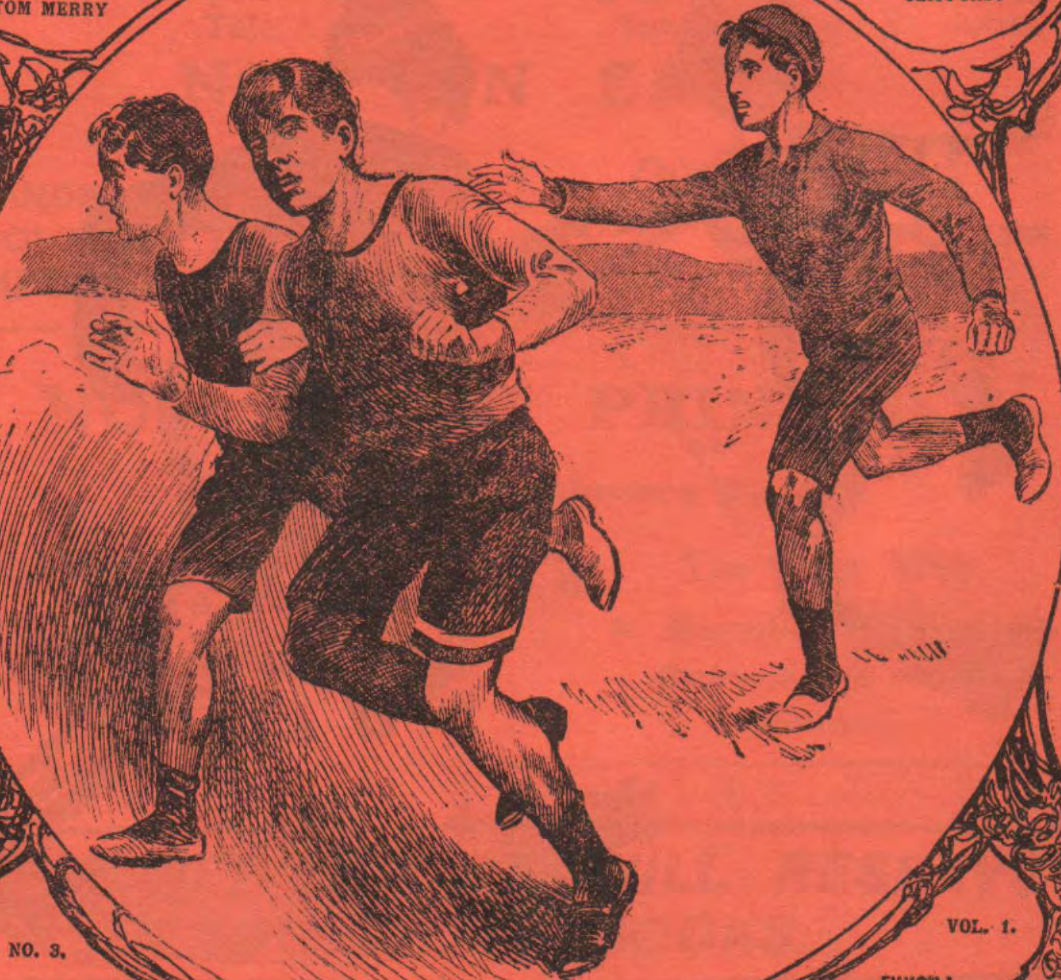
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Harry Wharton.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wharton Refuses!

BOB CHERRY, of the Remove, stopped at the door of No. 1 Study at Greyfriars, and rapped on it with his knuckles.

"Ready, Nugent?" he sang out cheerily.

The door opened, and Nugent appeared. There was rather a worried look upon Nugent's handsome, usually sunny face.

"Just a minute, Cherry."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Can't be did! The fellows are all on the ground, and Wingate, our respected captain, is there, too. Come along! You needn't stop to put bear's-grease on your hair for football practice, you know!"

Nugent laughed.

"It's not that; I'm waiting for Wharton!"

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Wharton again? That chap's a regular bother! Why isn't he ready?"

"I'm not coming!" came a voice from within the study.

"You needn't wait for me!"

Nugent looked more worried than ever.

"He says he's not coming," he muttered; "but—"

"But he's got to come," said Bob Cherry.

"Exactly; but he won't!"

"I'll speak to him."

Nugent hesitated, and did not move aside for Bob Cherry to enter. Nugent was the best-natured fellow in the Remove at Greyfriars, and he hated rows; and Bob Cherry, the new boy in the Remove, had already had more than one dispute with Wharton.

"Just a minute," he said. "Stop where you are. I'll speak to him."

And Nugent turned into the study again, and spoke in a low voice to the lad who was seated at the table, pen in hand, his books before him, deep in the conjugation of a difficult Latin verb.

Bob Cherry rapped his heels on the floor impatiently. How Nugent could be so patient with the obstinate, self-willed

fellow he chummed up with, Bob Cherry could not understand. Harry Wharton had his good qualities, but he was the most difficult fellow in the Remove to deal with. To refuse to come out to football practice that fine afternoon, when the captain of Greyfriars himself had given the order, was exactly like Wharton. In his stubbornness he never stopped to count the odds against him.

"I won't come!"

Bob Cherry did not hear what Nugent said, but Wharton's reply was distinct enough for anybody in the passage to hear.

"I tell you I won't come!"

"The captain—"

"Hang the captain!"

"There will be a row."

"I don't care!"

Bob Cherry stepped into the study, a frown upon his cheery face. Nugent turned towards him with a hopeless gesture, and Harry Wharton looked up from the table. A dark, handsome lad, with mobile mouth and passionate eyes, was Harry Wharton, whom the Remove had never quite been able to understand since he had come to Greyfriars.

He gave Bob Cherry a far from friendly look. It was not Harry Wharton's nature to forget that he had stood face to face, foot to foot, with Bob Cherry in the gym., and had received the licking of his life.

Not that Harry bore malice in a small or mean way. He did not hate Bob Cherry. He would not have injured him in any mean way. But he keenly resented his humiliation, and he looked forward longingly to the time when he would be able to avenge his defeat.

"I say," said Bob Cherry abruptly; "this won't do, you know, Wharton! You were at Greyfriars before I was, and you ought to know that it's one of the school's strictest rules that the Forms shall all turn up to regular football practice!"

Harry Wharton looked sullen.

"I don't think it's a good rule. For my part—"

"That's got nothing to do with it. It is a rule, and it's got to be observed!" said Bob Cherry quickly.

Harry Wharton made an angry gesture, and rose to his feet.

"Look here, you are interrupting my work!" he exclaimed. "I can't get on while you are chattering there! Why can't you leave me alone?"

"If we leave you alone, Wingate won't," said Bob Cherry. "You know how strict the skipper is on this point!"

"I tell you I'm going to work!"
Bob Cherry looked at him curiously.
"What the dickens are you swotting about now?" he demanded. "I didn't know you were such a glutton for work before!"

"He's entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy Prize," said Nugent. "Oh, and what's that?"

"The Latin prize; it's given every year to the best Latin scholar in the Remove," Nugent explained. "Wharton has made up his mind to go in for it; why, I don't know."

A slight sneer appeared on the lips of Harry Wharton. He had reasons good enough for entering for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize, and he was determined to carry it off in the teeth of all opposition.

His only serious rival was Hazeldene, of the Remove; but Wharton knew how dangerous a rival Hazeldene was, and that he would have all his work cut out to beat him.

"Well, of course, I can understand a fellow wanting to swot if he's going in for an exam," Bob Cherry admitted. "But it doesn't pay in the long run to neglect taking exercise. It's no good turning up on exam. day with your head crammed with knowledge, and your state of health too unfit to make any use of it. Anyway, the football practice can't be cut!"

"I won't come."
"If you don't, Wingate will send for you; or fetch you himself."

Harry Wharton's face darkened. He realised that what Bob Cherry said was true. The word of the captain was a law in Greyfriars in all matters connected with the sports, and a junior had no chance whatever of holding his own in such a contest.

But the work Harry had in hand needed to be done; and, besides, the obstinacy of his nature was fully roused by the hint of coercion.

He hesitated.
"Better come," urged Nugent.

Harry Wharton stood uncertain. His eyes were fixed on the floor and his hand was fumbling with the middle button of his jacket, a habit he had when he was vexed or disturbed in mind.

"Come on," said Bob Cherry; "it's only a half hour if you like—"

Harry Wharton shook his head.
"I won't come."

And he dropped into his seat again and took up his pen. Nugent and Bob Cherry exchanged looks.

"You can tell Wingate that I'm working for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize," said Wharton. "I'm not going to be disturbed. Now leave me alone."

"You obstinate pig—" began Bob Cherry wrathfully. But Nugent caught his arm and hurried him out of the study.

"There's bound to be a row," said Bob, as they went down the passage to the staircase.

Nugent nodded gloomily.
"Yes; Wharton has several times cut the practice, and Wingate has been very easy with him so far. I fancy he's got to the end of his patience, however."

"Well, that kid wants a lesson."

Nugent did not reply. Harry Wharton was his chum, and, with all his faults, that prevented Nugent from saying anything against him.

Hazeldene, of the Remove, came out of his study as they passed. He had a coat on over his football things, and he joined them.

"Is Wharton coming?" he asked, with a grin.
"No," said Nugent shortly.

"My word! Wingate has an idea that he won't turn up, I believe, and he's in the right temper for him," grinned Hazeldene. "My idea all along was that Wharton would go too far one of these times!"

"Oh, shut up, Vaseline!" said Nugent irritably. "I believe you'd be glad to see Wharton in a row with the skipper!"

"It would do him good!" grinned Hazeldene, who was known in the Remove as Vaseline in honourable recognition of his oily ways. "Not that I want to get him into trouble, of course. I rather like him, in fact!"

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent.
"I say—"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry.
And the two went on quickly, leaving Hazeldene to follow. Neither of them cared much for the company of the cad of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Brought to Book.

HERE was a goodly crowd of fellows in football garb on the junior ground, and over them towered the massive shoulders of Wingate, the school captain. Big, rugged Wingate had a heart of gold, and he was liked as much by the Junior Forms as he was by the Sixth. He was very keen on athletics, and could be relied upon to keep the school up to the mark.

There were some in the Remove who had shown a disposition to shirk regular practice, and among them was Harry Wharton. No one could have called Wharton a slacker, but his intractable nature caused him to take rank with the slackers, coercion being as intolerable to him as hard work was to the others.

Wingate looked round rather irritably as Bob Cherry and Nugent came up.

"You're late!" he rapped out.
"Sorry, Wingate, but—"

"All right. Are all the Remove here now? Mind, I'm going to put an end to the slacking in the Remove, and every fellow who hasn't a doctor's certificate excusing him has got to turn up. All here?"

Wingate looked round.

Bob Cherry and Nugent were silent, hoping that the captain of Greyfriars would not notice the absence of Harry Wharton. But if Wingate had been likely to overlook it, Hazeldene would not have allowed him to do so.

"All but one," he said. "Wharton's not here."
Bob Cherry gave him a savage look.

"You rotten sneak!" he muttered.
Hazeldene looked at him with an air of surprise.

"What do you mean by sneak?" he exclaimed. "Wingate asked an ordinary question, and I answered him; that's all."

"Quite right, too," said Wingate. "Hold your tongue, Cherry. Does anybody know why Wharton isn't here?"

"He's studying for the Seaton-D'Arcy exam," ventured Nugent. "He hopes you will excuse him this time, Wingate."

Wingate's brow darkened.
"And hasn't he any time to study for the Seaton-D'Arcy exam, except during the hour for practice?" he exclaimed.

"Go and tell him to come here at once!"
Nugent hesitated.

"Well, why don't you go?"
"Can't you let him—"

"Do you want a licking, Nugent? Go and fetch him at once!"

"Nugent means that he won't come," said Hazeldene; "and, as he's Wharton's chum, he doesn't want to have to yank him off by the ears!"

There was a giggle among the Remove.
"Oh, I see! Bulstrode, you're head boy of the Form; you can go and fetch Wharton. Some of you others go, too. If he won't come, carry him!"

Bulstrode, the bully of the Lower Fourth, grinned.
"Right you are, Wingate!"

And he hurried off, accompanied by Hazeldene and half a dozen others. Harry Wharton was not popular in the Remove. His proud, reserved ways jarred on the fellows, who had their faults, certainly, but were mostly a frank, good-natured set. And the Remove keenly resented this defiance of the school captain, whom they respected as much as they did the Head himself.

Bob Cherry and Nugent remained where they were. It was impossible to defend Wharton, who was hopelessly in the wrong. Bulstrode and Hazeldene and the rest entered the School House, and hastened up to the Lower Fourth studies. Bulstrode belonged to No. 1 himself, being the study-mate—very much disliked—of Harry Wharton. The door was ajar, and Bulstrode opened it with a tremendous kick.

The door flew violently back and crashed against the wall, and Harry Wharton sprang up from the table with a startled exclamation.

The Remove fellows rushed in.

Harry glared at them. The sudden start had scattered blots over the sheet he was writing, and over his Latin grammar.

"Come out!" roared Bulstrode.
"You've got to come!" said Hazeldene.

"Come on!" roared four or five voices behind.
Harry Wharton's eyes blazed.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed savagely. "Get out of this study!"

Bulstrode laughed mockingly.
"You've got to come to practice," he said; "Wingate has sent us to fetch you."

"I won't come!"
"Ha, ha! You've got to."

"I won't! You can tell Wingate—"

"My dear booby, Wingate has sent us to fetch you, and if you won't come, we're to carry you," grinned Hazeldene.

"If you lay a finger on me—"

Hazeldene started back from Harry's passionate gesture. But Bulstrode was made of sterner stuff. He advanced without hesitation, and the other Remove fellows backed him up. Hazeldene's eye fell curiously upon the written work on the table. He saw that Harry had been "swotting" at Latin, and he knew the reason; and Hazeldene's eye gleamed as he glanced over the work. Wharton was a much better Latin scholar than the cad of the Remove had deemed.

Hazeldene's lips came tighter together. As the Remove fellows advanced upon Harry, Hazeldene leaned on the table, a wicked look in his eyes.

"Are you coming, Wharton?"

"No."

Bulstrode wasted no more time in words.

"Collar him!" he shouted.

And the Remove fellows rushed straight at Harry.

With gleaming eyes, Harry Wharton faced them, hitting out right and left, and his blows were well planted. Bulstrode reeled back over a chair, and Trevor fell across him.

But the next moment Wharton was swept off his feet. Down he went with a bump that jarred every bone in his body, the Remove boys swarming and scrambling over him.

The shock of the heavy fall had dazed him, and he could offer little resistance now. He was pinioned in a moment.

Hazeldene sprang to help Bulstrode, and in doing so knocked the table over, and Harry's papers mixed themselves on the floor, with the oversight inkpot in their midst. And the cad of the Remove contrived to trample on them as he moved.

"My hat," exclaimed Hazeldene, "what a wreck! I hope those papers are not yours, Bulstrode."

The bully of the Remove grinned.

"No, they're not mine; they're either Nugent's or Wharton's. Wharton's, I expect. It doesn't matter. What a spitefire the chap is! Hold him tight!"

"We've got him!" panted Hughes.

Harry began to struggle, but with so many pairs of hands upon him he was powerless. He was dragged roughly to his feet.

"Wingate said carry him if he wouldn't come," grinned Bulstrode; "I fancy the frog's-march is about the thing, kids."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Let me go! I'll—"

"Ha, ha! What will you do? Seems to me you can't do anything just now. Now; then, over with him! Do you like the frog's-march, Wharton?"

"You cad!"

"Ha, ha! Bring him along."

The grinning juniors bore Wharton out of the study. Along the passage they went, frog's-marching the wriggling lad with a vim which showed how unpopular he was.

Hazeldene remained behind for a moment or two to give the finishing touch to the upset papers, and thus ruin work which had taken Harry hours to do. Hazeldene meant to win the Seaton-D'Arcy prize if he could, and he was not troubled by any honourable scruples as to how he won it.

Down the passage went the Remove crowd, bumping along with their prisoner, down the staircase, and out into the sunshine of the close.

A yell greeted their appearance. Boys crowded up from all sides, yelling and cheering, as the party marched on with their unfortunate prisoner towards the footer ground.

The Remove gathered there greeted them with a cheer, and came crowding round too, and even Wingate's stern face relaxed into a grin.

"We've brought him," said Bulstrode; "we've brought him, Wingate!"

"I see you have," grunted Wingate; "I didn't tell you to bring him in fragments. Let him stand up. Get back, Nugent!"

"But—"

"Stand back! Now, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton scrambled to his feet as the Removes released him. He was a truly pitiable-looking object. His clothes were rumpled and torn and dusty, his collar hanging loose, his necktie gone. His hair was ruffled, his face dirty, and a thin stream of red ran from his nose, which had received a hard knock in the scuffle. He was panting for breath as he stood, blinking in the sun like a newly-caught wild animal.

He realised that he cut a ridiculous figure. There was nothing dignified in this resistance to overpowering force. He had refused to come, and he had been brought by force, and there were sneers and grins on every face, jeers on every lip round him.

The boy's face was crimson, and he had hard work to keep back the tears of rage that welled up to his eyes. He knew what effect the sight of tears would have had upon the Remove.

Wingate's lip curled scornfully as he looked at the wretched object before him.

"Well, Wharton, what have you to say for yourself?" Harry set his teeth hard. "Will you speak?"

"I won't practise!" said Harry savagely. "You've brought me here. I won't practise, and you can't make me!"

Wingate's face set sternly. There had never been a junior at Greyfriars who dared to speak in those terms to the captain of the school. A yell of indignation rose from the Remove.

"Cad!"

"Slacker!"

"Rotter!"

"Knock his head off!"

And the Remove closed round angrily. A single gesture from Wingate was sufficient, however, to make them recede.

"Wharton, listen to me! Had any other junior at Greyfriars uttered those words, I would have taken him up before the Head for a flogging," said the skipper quietly.

"If I do not do so in your case, it is not because you are a person entitled to any special consideration, but because I know you have had a bad training. That bad training we are going to correct if you stay at Greyfriars."

"I won't stay—I—"

"I fancy you will. At all events, here you are at present. You have said that you will not take your part in the Form practice."

"I will not!"

"I have said that you will. I will not thrash you, as you deserve. I know that that probably would not do such an obstinate young brute any good. I shall leave you in the hands of the Remove, with instructions to see that you do practise."

"I won't!"

The captain smiled slightly.

"Very well. My lads, I leave Wharton to you. You will see that he does practise, and you will keep it up for half an hour. If he shirks, you know what to do."

There was a general grin. The Remove had dealt with slackers before.

"We know what to do, Wingate—rather!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "You can trust us."

"I know I can."

And, with a nod, the captain of Greyfriars walked away. And then, even in Harry's obstinate breast, came a kind of tremor, as the Remove closed round him like a pack of wolves.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Remove.

NUGENT thrust his way forward through the crowd.

Bulstrode glared at him.

"Keep back there, Nugent!"

"I won't!"

"Here, keep back!" exclaimed Hazeldene, thrusting his elbow against Nugent's chest. "You are in the way, kid."

Nugent's open hand came with a swinging smack on Hazeldene's cheek, and he reeled to one side with a howl of pain. Nugent thrust his way on, with Bob Cherry backing him up. Bob Cherry was just as much inclined to "rag" Wharton as any other fellow in the Remove, but he liked Nugent, and intended to stand by him.

"Collar the cad!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Stop!" cried Nugent. "Now, Wharton—Harry, old chap, you can see that it's no use. Come on to the field and—"

Harry Wharton's teeth snapped.

"I won't!"

Nugent had no time to say more. The Remove were not to be trifled with. A rush of the juniors swept Nugent and Bob Cherry away, and Wharton was seized by a dozen hands.

His struggles were not noticed with so many against him. He was dragged off his feet and rushed into the field, and Bulstrode and the roughest spirits of the Remove clustered round him.

"Where's the ball?" called out Bulstrode.

"Here you are," said Hazeldene, slinging the ball to the bully of the Remove.

"Stand back, you fellows!"

The Remove crowded back, leaving the gasping Wharton alone. Bulstrode slammed the ball at his legs.

"Now, then, Wharton, begin! You can start taking kicks at goal."

"Kick, you rotter, kick!"

Harry Wharton kicked, but not at goal. The ball flew from his foot and smacked fairly in Bulstrode's face, bowling over the bully of the Remove like a ninepin.

There was a roar of laughter as Bulstrode went down with a bump.

Bulstrode was on his feet again in a moment, however, his face red with rage where it was not black with mud.

"You young hound!" he roared.

He leaped at Wharton like a tiger. The Remove backed him up, and Harry was seized and frog's-marched to the centre of the field. Dazed and dizzy, he could offer no further resistance. Nugent made a movement to rush to his aid, but Bob Cherry caught him firmly by the arm and held him back.

"Let me alone, Cherry!"

"Sha'n't!" said Bob coolly. "You're not going to interfere with the Form, and get yourself ragged as well. Let them do what they like with the brute."

"He's my chum, and—"

"You've got a queer taste in chums, and no mistake. But you can't help him now. I suppose you're not going to buck against captain's orders?"

Nugent stopped.

"No, I suppose not; but it's rough on him."

"It will do him good, kid. Wingate knew what he was about. It's only rough handling from the Form that will do him any good."

Nugent was silent. He knew very well that Bob Cherry was right, but it was painful to him to see Harry Wharton in the rough hands of the Remove.

And rough enough they were! Harry hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels as he was flung down in the centre of the field, and told to stand up and kick.

Bulstrode threw the ball at his feet as he staggered up.

"You're having a lesson in footer!" he exclaimed. "You won't be let off till you've kicked a goal. Better buck up!"

He took care that Wharton should not get another goal on his countenance this time. The passionate lad kicked the leather out of the way, and tried to bolt. But the Remove seized him in a twinkling.

The boys were greatly excited now. Harry's obstinacy roused the worst side of their natures, and they were growing rougher.

"Use him for a giddy football, himself," said Hazeldene.

"Get a goal with the rotter! Here get out of the way, and give me a kick!"

"There you are!" said Trevor, planting a football boot well behind the cad of the Remove, and sending him sprawling.

"What did you do that for?" bawled Hazeldene, furiously, as he scrambled up.

"Well, you asked for it."

"But it's a good idea!" said Bulstrode. "Kick the rotten outsider, kids!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Hughes, a sturdy Welsh lad. "You're not going to kick a fellow while he's down, while I'm here."

"I'll kick you if you don't get out of the way."

"You won't!"

"Here, chuck it, Bulstrode!" exclaimed Trevor. "That's going too far. Make it the frog's march again. Wharton, you utter ass, why don't you give in?"

Harry gritted his teeth, but did not reply.

The trouble of the disliked practice was as nothing compared with the ordeal he was undergoing, but his spirit was not easily broken.

"Oh, all right!" growled Bulstrode, finding the majority against him. "The frog's march, then, and bump him this time!"

Harry Wharton went bumping round the field.

"Boys!"

The crowd suddenly halted. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was standing by the ropes, looking on at the scene in amazement.

"Boys! What is the matter? What are you doing?"

"It's all right, sir," said Bulstrode. "We're only frog's-marching Wharton, sir."

"Let him come here."

"He won't do the Form practice, sir, and Wingate told us to deal with him."

"Ahem! Let him come here!"

Harry Wharton was released. He staggered towards Mr. Quelch, who looked at the wretched figure with a mingling of compassion and disgust.

"Wharton, this is a disgraceful state for you to appear in!"

"It wasn't my fault, sir," said Harry doggedly.

"Is it a fact that you have refused to take part in the usual Form practice?"

Harry was silent.

"Answer me, boy!"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you deserve all you have received, and a caning into the bargain. Perhaps, however, you have received enough punishment for the present. Go at once into the house, and get yourself clean. Go!"

Harry Wharton, without a word, turned sullenly away. In spite of the presence of the Form master, a jeer from the Remove followed him. With burning face and burning heart, Harry Wharton disappeared into the house.

Mr. Quelch walked away, with a grave shake of the head.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Up Before the Head.

NUGENT came into Study No. 1 an hour later, and found Harry Wharton there. Wharton had cleaned himself and changed his clothes, but he could not remove the bruises from his body, nor the discolourations from his face. He was looking white and strained, and more sullen than Nugent had ever seen him before. He was not working, but sat, pen in hand, evidently unable to compose himself to study.

He looked up sullenly at Nugent. Nugent was the only fellow he liked at Greyfriars, but now his glance was not very friendly.

"Getting on all right?" asked Nugent cheerily, thinking it best to make no reference to the scene on the football field.

"No!" growled Harry.

"Why, what's the matter with your papers?" exclaimed Nugent, looking at the crumpled mass on the floor. They still lay where they had fallen.

Harry Wharton smiled bitterly.

"That was done when they fetched me from the study."

Nugent's face fell.

"I say, that will throw you back a lot, Harry."

"Yes."

"I wish you hadn't stuck out like that over nothing. The footer practice wouldn't have bothered you so much as this if you had taken it on. I say, that looks to me as if it were done on purpose."

"I believe it was. Hazeldene knocked the papers and ink down, and he stayed behind the others when they took me out."

Nugent started.

"Vaseline! Your rival for the Seaton-D'Arcy!"

"Yes. He did that, of course."

"The mean rotter!" exclaimed Nugent angrily. "He ought to be cut by the Form! Of course, it's no good saying anything. He will pretend it was an accident, and was done in the scuffle. And really you brought it on yourself, Harry! How can you expect to be able to resist the captain of the school and the whole Remove?"

Harry Wharton bit his lip savagely.

It had been borne in upon his mind that he could not keep up his useless resistance, for he would not willingly have gone through that experience on the footer field again for a fortune. But the thought was bitter to him.

"I'd give up the prize," he said savagely, "but I won't let that rotter Hazeldene have it after that!"

Nugent nodded approval.

"Yes, it's a fellow's duty to keep it out of the hands of a cad like that," he exclaimed. "Hazeldene is the only fellow up against you, and if you drop out, it will be a walk-over for him. The other fellows knew his form too well to enter, but I believe you could beat him if you tried."

"I know I could," said Wharton. "The Remove doesn't think so, though. They are with Hazeldene from start to finish, and they want him to win, too."

"That's not because they like Hazeldene—they don't; but—"

"But because they dislike me," said Harry satirically. "I know that, Nugent, and that's why I went in for the Seaton-D'Arcy in the first place."

Nugent looked puzzled.

"I don't quite follow."

There was a bitter expression upon Harry Wharton's face. He knew that what he was going to say would shock and hurt Nugent, and for that very reason a half-gnomish sense of perversity impelled him to say it.

"I went in for the Seaton-D'Arcy because I knew the whole Form would hate to see me get it," he said deliberately. "They'd rather a cad like Hazeldene had it than I. They will be ready to tear their hair if I capture it. And that's what I went in for it for, and why I'm going to work hard to win, as a blow in the face for the whole Remove, for the way they've treated me."

Nugent's lips were set and quivering. He did not speak.

"Now do you understand?" said Wharton mockingly.

"Yes, I understand."

"And what do you think about it?" said Harry, driving him to speak. Nugent's eyes flashed.

"I'll tell you," he said. "I think you are acting the part of a fool, and worse. It's very well to go in for the Seaton-D'Arcy, and win it if you can, but your motives are caddish."

Harry Wharton turned crimson.

"You asked for my opinion, and now you've got it," said Nugent. "The Remove here is no better and no worse, I suppose, than the same Form at any other school. If you had treated them well, they'd have treated you well. You set up to hold them at arm's length, for no reason but your rotten, sullen pride, and they resent it; and they will keep you at arm's length now, and further."

"Nugent!"

"You asked me to speak. I think you're wrong all along the line, and worst of it all in what you've just said. If it wasn't that you saved my life the day you came to Greyfriars, I'd never speak to you again."

And Nugent turned away.

Harry Wharton bit his lip. Now that he had what he had asked for, he realised that he had risked Nugent's friendship out of sheer perversity, and at that moment he realised, as he had not realised before, how much Nugent's friendship meant to him, and how lonely he would have been in that great school without it. But it was not in his nature to retract.

"I saved your life," he said, "that's true; but I've asked you to leave that out of account."

"I can't, you see, and that makes all the difference."

Bob Cherry put in his head at the door.

"Wharton here! Ah, I see you are! The Head wants to see you in his study."

Harry hesitated.

"It's a fact, honour bright!" exclaimed Bob. "Mr. Quelch sent me to tell you."

Nugent's face was grave now. The resentment was gone out of it. It was extremely probable that Wharton's visit to the doctor's study meant fresh trouble for him.

"Very well, I'll go!" growled Harry.

Bob Cherry grinned and vanished. Harry, without glancing at Nugent, left the study, and made his way to the doctor's quarters.

But even his heart felt a little tremor as he knocked at the oaken door.

"Come in!"

The Head's deep voice was very impressive. Harry Wharton opened the door and went in. Dr. Locke was alone, and his face was very serious.

"Ah, it is you, Wharton!" he said. "I sent for you. Close the door. I want to speak to you very seriously."

Harry stood silent and rebellious.

"I hear," resumed the doctor, "that you refused to take your football practice with the Form you belong to this afternoon. I believe you were somewhat roughly handled in consequence."

Harry coloured. The doctor's keen eye seemed to be scanning the bruises on his face, and the far from pleasant-looking swelling of his nose. Somehow a feeling of smallness took possession of the boy as he faced the impressive figure in scholastic gown. The sullenness died out of his face, and uneasiness took its place. His hand fumbled with his jacket, for Harry Wharton never felt himself able to think clearly unless he was fumbling with that jacket button.

"Will you tell me what your reason was?" the Head went on quietly. "Were you ill this afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"Do you dislike athletic sports?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What was your motive, then, for keeping out of the practice?"

Harry was silent.

"Was it a desire to study?" asked the Head. "I know that you have entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy Latin prize, and you will have to work hard to beat Hazeldene."

"I did want to work, sir."

"But you know that there is a time for study and a time for exercise, and the laws of the school have not been made without a reason. An hour's exercise in the open air would have done you good, and would certainly have disturbed you less than the experience which you actually did undergo, I should imagine."

"Ye-es, sir!" said Harry, as the doctor paused and seemed to expect him to say something.

"Then it was not wholly a desire to work that prevented you from cheerfully doing your duty this afternoon?" said the Head.

"I didn't want to go out! I don't see why I should practise if I don't choose!" broke out Harry.

"Ah, I see! You have not yet learned the value of discipline. What are you fumbling with that button for?" said the Head testily. "Let it go! Now, Wharton, I suppose you understand that a school could not be maintained if every boy were allowed to do exactly as he liked?"

"I suppose not, sir."

"And you have no special right to privileges which are not granted to other boys, I suppose?"

"N-no!" stammered Harry, colouring under the quiet irony of the doctor's tone.

"Then am I to understand that your view is that schools

should be abolished?" asked the Head. "Really, that is the only logical outcome of your position."

Harry Wharton turned crimson. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he felt that at that moment he was looking utterly absurd.

"Now, you see, Wharton," went on the Head, in a kinder tone, "that you have taken up an absolutely impossible position. You have not reasoned it out, but have acted like a wilful child. For your own sake, and the sake of your uncle, Colonel Wharton, my old friend, I ask you to think this matter over, and come to a more sensible decision. May I depend upon you not to provoke again such a scene as that of this afternoon?"

"Ye-es, sir!" said Harry slowly.

"That is right, Wharton," said the Head encouragingly.

"If you do not persist in being wrongheaded, you will grow to like Greyfriars, and to be glad that you came here. You have entered for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize. I believe, from what I have seen of your work, that you have every chance of winning it. Do so, if you can, and show your Form-fellows that there is something in you. Play the game with the rest, and show them that you are not a slacker. You have the makings of a man in you, if you only give yourself a fair chance. You may go."

Harry Wharton left the Head's study with a strange feeling in his breast, a feeling he could not exactly define. He went slowly and thoughtfully back to Study No. 1 and found Nugent there. Nugent was looking gloomily out of the window and did not see Harry enter. A feeling of shame and remorse struck Harry as he saw the gloom in Nugent's face. He crossed the study quickly and touched him on the shoulder. Nugent turned round, but without the usual smile upon his face.

"I'm sorry, Nugent!" said Harry impulsively.

Nugent's face lighted up.

"That's enough, Harry. It's all right!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Plays Football.

THERE was a great deal of curiosity in the Remove the next day as to the course Harry Wharton was likely to take in regard to the football. The decree had gone forth from the powers that were, that the Remove were to "wire into" practice for a certain time every day, and that there were to be no exemptions without a doctor's certificate to back them up. And the Head of Greyfriars frowned upon doctor's certificates. Those valuable papers, wrung from medical men by anxious and fond parents, were generally not worth the ink they were written with, as far as testifying to a boy's unfitness was concerned. The happy possessor of an exemption was far more likely to be a slacker than an invalid. Harry Wharton could not be called a slacker, but he was certainly as obstinate as a mule, and there was even betting in the Greyfriars Remove as to whether he would turn up for practice again.

"He won't!" Hazeldene declared to a group of juniors in the close. "He's swotting over Latin in his study, you know, to try and get the Seaton-D'Arcy away from me, which he won't succeed in doing, either!"

"I heard that a lot of his papers were mucked up yesterday in the row in Study No. 1," Trevor remarked.

"I saw some of 'em on the floor," said Bulstrode. "Blessed if I quite know how they got there. We meant to rag him, but of course, we should draw a line at mucking up a chap's work."

"Of course!" agreed Hazeldene. "I didn't notice anything myself. But it was his own look-out, anyway. Fancy setting himself up against the captain!"

"Oh, he's a regular rotter!"

"Wingate will be on the ground to see if he turns up this time, I expect," Bulstrode remarked. "I suppose we shall have to fetch him again. I've got an idea. If we have to carry him out, we'll give him a ducking in the fountain while we're about it."

"Good egg!"

"It will cool his temper for him!" grinned Bulstrode.

And the Remove quite cottoned to the idea. Harry Wharton's conduct had put up the backs of his Form-fellows more than he himself realised.

When the time came, Bulstrode and his friends were quite ready. But somewhat to their disappointment their intervention was not required.

Prompt to the time Harry Wharton appeared on the junior football ground. He was clad in football shorts and shirt, evidently prepared for practice, and Nugent and Bob Cherry were with him.

Wingate glanced at them.

Harry reddened as he saw the captain's eye turn upon

him, expecting some reference to the affair of the previous day, but Wingate made no remark. He was not the fellow to rub in the humiliation of defeat.

"Let me see what you youngsters can do!" he exclaimed. "You can kick off for a practice match, Bulstrode. You'll take the other side, Nugent."

"Right-ho, Wingate!"

The juniors turned out into the field. There were twenty of them out for practice, and two teams of ten aside were quickly formed, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry filling places in Nugent's front line. The captain whistled for the kick-off, and looked on with interest as the juniors set to play.

Harry Wharton was in very good form. The handling of the previous afternoon had left him very fatigued, but to-day he seemed to have fully picked up. And there was no doubt that he could play football. His pace was splendid, his kick was sure, and his endurance equalled only by that of two or three others in the field, the best players of the Remove.

Wingate's eye followed him with interest.

Nugent's followers hemmed Bulstrode's team round the goal and broke through them with a fine rush, and Bob Cherry passed to Harry, who sent the ball into the net in spite of all the keenness of Trevor, who was keeping goal.

"Bravo!" shouted Wingate, with a clap of the hands. "You'll do, youngster!"

Harry Wharton gave the captain of Greyfriars a bright look. The praise from the captain who had been so incensed with him yesterday came as a pleasant surprise; and Harry was glowing with the healthy exercise of the game, and the pleasing consciousness that he was one of the best players on the field. Nugent patted him on the shoulder as they came off.

"By Jove, Harry!" he exclaimed. "You'll do! Keep on like that and it won't be long before you're in the college second eleven."

"What rot!" said Hazeldene, who had made a very poor show in the practice, and had not the remotest chance of ever getting his cap for the second eleven. "I can't see anything in that chap's footer!"

"What do you know about footer?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly. "Why not, as a new wheeze you've never worked before, try keeping your head shut, Vaseline, instead of snapping at your betters?"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" growled Hazeldene.

In spite of the sneers of the cad of the Remove, Harry's unexpected quality on the football field caused him to go up somewhat in the estimation of the Form.

Nugent did not conceal his delight. Although he had stuck to Harry through thick and thin, he had felt very keenly the taunts of the Form at having chummed up with a "slacker." The fellow who had kicked the only goal taken in the practice match could hardly be regarded as a slacker any longer.

There was an unaccustomed good-humour in Harry Wharton's face as he came into the study to tea after the practice. Bulstrode was there with Billy Bunter, the short-sighted, spectacled junior who was known in the Remove as the Owl. Billy looked up and blinked at Harry.

"Hallo! Is that you, Nugent?" he said. "What do you think of Wharton now—eh? Not such a measly rotter after all, is he?"

Harry coloured.

"Of course, he wants a licking worse than any other chap I've ever met," went on the unconscious Bunter. "He's an ungracious beast, and all that, but he can play footer; I'll say that anywhere."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bulstrode.

"What are you cackling at, Bulstrode? What—isn't that Nugent? My word! I say, you fellows, I thought that was Nugent. No offence, Wharton. If you've come in to tea, I don't mind having tea with you to show there's no ill-feeling. I'm stoney-broke just at present, but I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and then I'll settle up."

Nugent came in and broke into a laugh as he heard Bunter's remark.

"Same old postal-order, Billy!" he remarked. "Never mind, you can have tea with us, as it happens I've got in a good supply from the tuck-shop."

"Thank you, Nugent, you're a decent sort. I always liked you, and—"

"And the grub! So you did, Billy."

"I didn't mean that—"

"Never mind what you meant. Shove the kettle on and make the fire burn under it. Then you can lay the cloth."

"Certainly, Nugent. I'd do anything to oblige a nice fellow like you!" said Bunter. "In fact, I've filled the kettle already, thinking you would be coming in to tea now. I'll shove it on—"

"Keep that filthy kettle away from my trousers!" yelled Bulstrode, who was sitting with his feet in the fender.

"Oh, I'm really sorry, Bulstrode, I didn't see your legs here. I—"

"You utter idiot, you're jamming that kettle on my knees!" shouted Bulstrode, jumping up in a rage. "You've blacked my trousers, you shrieking idiot!"

"I'm so sorry! It's due to my short sight, you know," said Bunter, jamming the kettle on and stirring up the fire. "It really isn't safe to come near me when I've got a kettle in my hand, especially if it has hot water in it."

Bulstrode growled savagely as he dusted his trousers.

"You've got some good things here, Nugent," went on Billy, looking over the contents of the parcel Nugent laid upon the table. "These are all right. It's really very generous of you to stand a feed, and when my postal-order comes—"

"Oh, rats to that postal-order!" said Nugent. "And Wharton is standing half this grub, too!"

"I say, Wharton, you don't mind my calling you an ungracious beast just now, do you? It was really only a—figure of speech—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Harry.

"Certainly! I'd do anything to oblige you."

"You're quite welcome to have tea with us, but draw it mild about that postal-order, please," said Harry, with a smile; "and I'd advise you to have a good look at a fellow in the future before you start talking about anybody behind his back—"

"Oh, I wouldn't do a thing like that, Wharton—"

"I don't know what you call it, then. I say, Bulstrode, are you going? Won't you have tea with us?"

"No, I won't!" said Bulstrode.

And he stalked out of the study. Harry's face darkened. It was the first advance he had made to Bulstrode, and he had made it in a moment of unusual good-humour. The rude rebuff brought the blood rushing to his face, and he bit his lip hard.

"Pig!" said Nugent, as the door closed.

Harry Wharton was silent.

"Yes, you fellows, he is rather a pig, isn't he?" agreed Billy Bunter. "He ought to accept an invitation like that. Wharton is in a good temper now, and willing to make friends, and Bulstrode ought not to let the opportunity pass. When Wharton gets into a wax again it will be too late."

Nugent grinned, while Harry shrugged his shoulders impatiently. The fatuous Billy sometimes said things which raised a doubt in one's mind as to whether he was really quite so fatuous, after all.

Harry sat down to tea with a cloud on his brow. A rebuff was bitter to his proud nature, and his natural reserve prevented him from exposing himself to the chance of one. For the first time he had allowed his reserve to slip from him, and he had been hurt in return. Yet it was not to be wondered at.

He had assumed the right of being as stand-offish, so to speak, as he chose, and it was hardly to be expected that the first time he graciously chose to be in a good temper the other fellows would come round at once and become friends with him.

As a matter of fact, the rebuff would never have been administered by Bulstrode but for the circumstance that he had an invitation to tea in Trevor's study.

"I hope Bulstrode hasn't put you into a bad temper, Wharton," said Billy Bunter. "It's so rotten to sit down to tea with a chap in a bad temper, you know."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Certainly, I'd do anything to oblige a fellow I like. I hope you will get the Seaton-D'Arcy prize, Wharton. It will be twenty guineas in cash, and it's worth having. I want a new cricket-bat for the season, and you can buy me one if you like."

Harry grunted expressively.

"I suppose you're pretty safe for the written work," Billy went on. "I think that Vaseline himself thinks so, too, from what he was saying to Hughes the other day. But Hughes said—"

"Oh, hang what Hughes said!" said Harry irritably. "Why can't you shut up, and let us have some quiet?"

"I really don't think that's the proper way to speak to a guest," said Billy Bunter, shaking his head. "Do you, Nugent?"

Nugent laughed.

"I beg your pardon!" said Harry, colouring.

"Granted," said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "It was really a curious thing Hughes was saying. It was about the viva voce part of the examination, you know. He said—"

Harry muttered something. Billy Bunter's long-winded tales were terrible to listen to, but Nugent was interested now.

"Well, what did he say, Billy?" Nugent asked. "Why," said Billy, delighted to have found at least one willing victim, "he said—it was really curious, you know, and it struck me at once—"

"Yes, but what was it?" "It struck me—"

"I'll strike you, too, if you don't get on, you young ass!" said Nugent impatiently.

"Oh, don't get into a bad temper, Nugent. It would be beastly for me to be in this study if you grew to be a bad-tempered beast like Bulstrode and Wharton—I—I mean—I beg your pardon, Wharton—I mean, like Bulstrode, only—"

"Ha, ha! Go on, you young ass! What did Hughes say that was so curious?"

"Why, he said that in the jabberjee part of the exam. Wharton would be nowhere if he happened to lose that button off his jacket—the one he's fumbling with now. Funny thing how he's always fumbling with that button. I suppose it's really a kind of incipient insanity—"

"Ha, ha! But—"

"That was how Hughes put it. He said that whenever Wharton was doing anything he was always worrying that button, and that once when it was off his jacket he started fumbling for it in class, and answered Monsieur Millerand in German instead of French. Fact, Hughes said. I didn't remember it."

"By Jove, I do!" said Nugent. "I remember! I say, Harry, that's a good tip, you know. I've noticed it before, and—"

"Of course, it's a silly habit of Wharton's, but fellows do get into habits," said Billy Bunter. "I noticed Hazeldene seemed to be very much interested in what Hughes said. Of course, he hopes that Wharton won't be able to answer the questions when the time comes. He said that really Wharton ought to be in a lunatic asylum."

"Look here, you ass!" broke out Harry hotly. "Don't get into a temper, Wharton. I'm not saying that you ought to be put into a lunatic asylum, you know. It was Vaseline said so, and he said, too—"

"Never mind what he said," said Nugent. "Yes, but really—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton; and he walked out of the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Exam.

THE examination for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize was to be held on the Monday, and for the rest of that week both the rivals worked hard. Nugent gave Harry Wharton all the assistance he could in his studies, and Bob Cherry would willingly have helped, if Wharton had been a little more gracious about it.

As for Hazeldene, he was always gracious enough to anybody who could be of use to him, and he had so many sympathisers in his rivalry with the unpopular Wharton that he never lacked any aid he wanted. He could find favour in the eyes of the prefects, too, by a sufficient use of soft soap, as Bob Cherry scornfully termed it, and so any aid he wanted in the way of coaching by the Latin scholars of the Sixth was readily forthcoming. If Wharton had asked any help of Wingate himself, the captain would willingly have coached him, but Harry asked nothing of anybody.

He was determined to win the prize, however, and he worked hard. He was one of the cleverest boys in the Remove when he chose to exert himself, and his intellectual qualities were of a more solid description than Hazeldene's, who was much more fleshy and a great deal more shallow.

Given a fair trial, those who could judge would have said that Harry Wharton would have the better chance of winning the coveted Seaton-D'Arcy prize. Perhaps Hazeldene knew that. At all events, it was noticed that he grew sourer as the Monday drew nearer. Doubts were probably creeping up into his mind.

The written work for the exam had to be sent in on Saturday, and the two competitors had been allowed a certain freedom from class for the purpose of getting it completed. The papers were in by the set time, and then the rivals waited anxiously for Monday, to face the harder test of examination in the Head's study by the Head himself.

A curious proof of Harry Wharton's unpopularity was the anxiety manifested by the Remove that Hazeldene should win.

The cad of the Remove was not really liked by anyone, and yet there was hardly a fellow in the Form who would not have given a week's pocket-money to see him carry off the Seaton-D'Arcy prize.

Excepting Nugent, and perhaps Bob Cherry, Wharton had no sympathisers; but that fact was far from discouraging him. It only roused the obstinacy of his nature, and made him all the more determined to win in the teeth of dislike and opposition.

In spite of his determination, however, Harry Wharton felt a slight tremor as the time came round for appearing before the Head.

The examination was, by the rule of the foundation, in the hands of the doctor, the sole judge of the merits of the candidates. As five strokes boomed out from the old tower of Greyfriars, Harry Wharton gave a slight start, and his fingers fumbled nervously with his jacket-button.

"Not nervous, old chap?" said Nugent.

Harry shook his head.

"Oh, no! Hazeldene looks more nervous than I am, I think."

Nugent glanced at Hazeldene. He was certainly looking very disturbed, and he was licking his lips, which seemed very dry. His eyes were gleaming with a restless light. It seemed to Nugent at that moment that Hazeldene was thinking of something else than the coming exam.—something that troubled his mind and made him strangely disquieted. But it might have been only a fancy.

"As far as the written work is concerned," went on Harry, "I believe I shall come out ahead. As for the rest, I am not sure. I am certain that I am as good a Latin scholar as Hazeldene, as far as that goes, but in this sort of thing a great deal more depends upon coolness than upon knowledge."

"That's a fact!" agreed Bob Cherry, who had "been there" himself, and knew.

Harry Wharton made a gesture as if dismissing uneasiness.

"Well, we shall be through it before long," he said, "and a fellow can only do his best."

Hazeldene came towards Wharton, a curious expression upon his face.

"You think you are going to get it, Wharton?" he asked.

"I hope so," said Harry shortly.

"I don't think you've got the thing up better than I have," said Hazeldene. "I had an idea all along that I should get the best of it in the jabberjee part; but we shall see."

And he moved away, and stood in the doorway. At this moment Wharton's name was called.

"Well, good luck, old chap!" said Nugent.

Harry nodded, and went to the door. Hazeldene moved aside to let him pass, and then his foot seemed to catch in the mat, and he fell heavily against Wharton.

Harry reeled back against the door-post under the shock. Hazeldene threw his arms round him to save himself, and hung on to him for a moment ere he released him.

"I'm sorry," he exclaimed, as he stepped back—"beastly sorry! My foot caught—"

"It's all right," said Harry.

He passed on. Hazeldene strolled into the room again, a peculiar smile for a moment lingering on his lips. There was something in his right hand—something which had not been there when he fell against Harry Wharton—something which he now carefully slipped into his waistcoat-pocket without allowing anyone to see it.

Harry Wharton entered the Head's study. Dr. Locke was ready, with a long paper on his desk before him. The boy stood up to answer, feeling much more cool than he had expected. The Head's manner was very kind, and put him at his ease at once. Dr. Locke was certainly not one of those who wished him to lose.

At the first question Harry's hand went to the button on his jacket, by force of habit. Then a thrill of uneasiness went through him.

The button was gone! His fingers fumbled in the place, but there was no button, and a strange, lost feeling took possession of the boy.

His answer to the first question was absolutely at random. Dr. Locke looked at his flushed, uneasy face in surprise.

"Is anything the matter with you, Wharton?"

Harry coloured more deeply. He could not confess to the curious uneasiness which was the result of the loss of the button. He was the slave of a habit which was too absurd to be explained.

"No, sir," he stammered.

"You are not ill?"

"I am quite well, sir."

"Very well, we will continue," said the Head; but he was looking puzzled still.

The questions were resumed, but Harry's answers grew more random. It was useless to struggle against the nervousness which was growing upon him and overmastering him. It was not only that he failed to answer difficult questions, but matters of common knowledge in the Remove seemed too much for him now.

The doctor broke off at last.

"That is sufficient, Wharton," he said. "You may go."

Harry went miserably to the door. He knew that he had made a poor display; that any youngster out of the Third

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

Form would have shown up as well as he had done in that exam. He knew that he had failed.

He left the study with a heavy heart, and a sullen feeling of anger against Fate surging in his breast. What wretched ill-luck that that button should have become lost from his jacket just at that particular moment. It had been there while he was talking to Nugent, just before going in. What had become of it now?

Hazeldene glanced at Harry as he went to take his turn. The boy's pale and disappointed face was enough to tell the cad of the Remove how the examination had gone. Hazeldene walked on with a glitter of triumph in his eyes.

"I say, you're looking rotten, Harry!" exclaimed Nugent, as his friend came in. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"Yes; I have lost."

"You don't know yet," said Bob Cherry. "The result isn't made known until to-morrow."

Harry Wharton smiled bitterly.

"There's no need for me to wait for that to know," he said. "I know that I have made a fool of myself, and it's all up with my chance of the Seaton-D'Arcy prize."

"But how—why?" exclaimed Nugent. "You looked all right when you went in. Have you made some fearful blunder?"

"I have answered almost everything incorrectly."

"Why?" demanded the amazed Nugent.

"Oh, it's not worth talking about!"

"You may as well tell me."

"Well, it's that fool's habit I have of fumbling with my jacket-button," said Harry, turning red. "It happened to come off before I went into the Head's study, and that little thing threw me right out."

"Happened to come off? Why, you were fumbling with it when you were talking to me just before you went in!" Nugent exclaimed.

"I know; but it's gone now."

"I say, that's very curious!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Was it loose?"

"No, I never noticed it."

"Let me have a look at it."

Bob Cherry took hold of Wharton's jacket, and looked closely at the spot from which the troublesome button was missing. Then he gave a whistle.

"It's plain enough!" he exclaimed. "It has been cut off!"

"Cut off?" exclaimed Nugent and Wharton together.

"Yes. See how clean cut the thread is; it wouldn't look like that if it were broken. The button was snipped off with scissors or knife."

Harry looked bewildered.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "How could it have been done without my knowing it?"

"Well, it was done, plain enough."

"I remember now. Hazeldene fell against me, and clung hold of me, as I went in!" Wharton exclaimed. "Is it possible—"

"You've hit it!"

"He must have been jolly quick about it," said Nugent doubtfully.

"Well, he was quick about it," said Bob Cherry practically. "It was cut off, you can see that, and Hazeldene is the chap who had the strongest interest in putting Wharton off his form."

"Yes. And, by Jove," Nugent exclaimed excitedly, "you remember what Billy Bunter was telling us the other day, Harry! Hughes said to Hazeldene that if you should lose that button on the day of the exam, you would be done in. Billy said Hazeldene seemed to be greatly struck by the idea."

Wharton nodded.

"I remember! I suppose it was Hazeldene."

"The cad!" exclaimed Bob Cherry wrathfully. "If he gets the Seaton-D'Arcy by a mean trick like that, he sha'n't keep it! I'll explain to the Head first. Let's wait here for him till he comes out, and then we'll talk to him. If he stole the button he's probably got it about him still."

And the three juniors, with set faces, waited for the cad of the Remove to come out from the exam.

H AZELDENE came along the passage with a light step and a cheerful face. A glance at him was sufficient to show that he believed that he had won. He halted, and changed colour a little, as three determined-looking juniors closed round him.

"Hallo!" he said, in a tone of rather strained cordiality. "You want to know how I've done? Pretty well, I think."

"Where's that button?" asked Bob Cherry.

Hazeldene turned white.

"That—that—that what?" he gasped.

"The button you snipped off Wharton's jacket just before he went into the Head's study."

For a moment terror had gleamed in the eyes of Hazeldene. But he recovered himself in a moment, and burst into a laugh.

"Come, come!" he exclaimed. "Is that meant for a joke? What the dickens should I want to snip off Wharton's buttons for?"

"To put him off his form for the exam."

"Come, now, Cherry—"

"Where is the button?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Have you it with you now?"

"Really, Cherry—"

"Hand it over, you cad," exclaimed Nugent fiercely—

"hand it over, and own up, or we'll search you for it!"

Hazeldene took a step backward. His glance went to and fro in the passage like that of a cornered hare.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you're joking—"

"You'll see that we're not, if you don't—"

"If Wharton has lost any of his buttons, of course, it's nothing to do with me. If he has a silly habit, and suffers for it, that's his own look out."

"Where is that button?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"You snipped it off Wharton's coat!"

"I didn't do anything of the kind!"

"Very well," said Bob Cherry quietly. "Come into one of the studies and let us look through your things for the button, and if it isn't on you we'll consider about the matter. If you are innocent we don't want to make a row."

Hazeldene changed colour again.

"I won't do anything of the kind!" he muttered. "It's an insult—"

"I don't believe a thing like you could be insulted!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily. "I know perfectly well that you fell against me simply for the purpose of snipping off that button, because you knew how it would bother me. You were talking it over with Hughes the other day."

Hazeldene gave a start.

"If Hughes says that, he's a—"

"Hughes did not say it, but I heard about it. Now, then, Hazeldene, you're bowled out. Are you going to own up?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then we shall search you for the button."

Again Hazeldene cast a hunted look round. But there was no one in sight in the passage, and he had no chance in running against the three fleetest-footed junior footballers at Greyfriars.

"Oh, very well," he exclaimed, with the look of one making a virtue of necessity, "if you insist—you're three to one—"

"Well, we do insist!" said Bob Cherry.

"Then let's get into a study, and you can search if you like."

"Come along, then!"

Bob Cherry linked his arm in Hazeldene's, and they went up the passage. To get into a junior study it was necessary to go up the great staircase, and Hazeldene's eyes gleamed as they drew near it. He knew that he would find help there if he wanted it. As it happened, Carberry, of the Sixth, a prefect who had a great dislike for both Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton, was standing near the stairs talking to another senior.

Hazeldene made a sudden effort to tear himself loose from

Please Fill in The Order Form.



At the first question Harry's hand went to the button on his jacket, by force of habit. Then a thrill of uneasiness went through him. The button was gone!

Bob Cherry. Bob stuck to him, however, and they began to struggle, and this brought the attention of the Sixth-Formers upon them at once.

"Stop that row there, you whelps!" called out Carberry.

"If you please, Carberry, Cherry won't let me go——"

"Let him go at once, Cherry!"

"He says I've stolen a jacket-button belonging to Wharton," said Hazeldene, as it were, taking the bull by the horns. "I haven't done anything of the kind."

"He has!" exclaimed Bob wrathfully. "He cut——"

"Don't talk such rot to me, Cherry!" said Carberry angrily. "Let him go at once!"

"But I tell you——"

"Let him go at once, and shut up, or I'll knock your confounded cheeky head off!" exclaimed Carberry, striding towards the juniors.

There was nothing for it but to obey. Bob Cherry reluctantly released Hazeldene.

"Now be off, if you don't want a hiding!" exclaimed Carberry threateningly. "You can come with me, Hazeldene. I want you to fag."

"Certainly, Carberry; with pleasure!"

And Hazeldene spoke the truth for once in his life. He would have fagged willingly for anybody just then, to keep out of the way of the chums of the Remove. He grinned

mockingly at Bob Cherry as he walked away with Carberry. The three Remove fellows looked at one another.

"What's to be done?" said Nugent, looking perplexed.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"I'll give him a hiding, at all events," he muttered; "that will be some satisfaction! I am certain now that he did the trick."

"Not much good giving him a hiding," remarked Bob Cherry. "We want to show him up, that's the thing. I think we ought to ask the Head to let you have a fresh exam——"

"I don't see how we could," said Harry. "The whole thing seems so ridiculous."

"And we couldn't betray even Hazeldene," Nugent remarked.

Bob Cherry rubbed his chin in a thoughtful way.

"Well, no, I suppose not!"

"I've lost the exam," said Harry gloomily. "The whole confounded Form will be glad about it! But I'll get even with them all yet."

"That's not the way to talk," said Bob Cherry, who was a favourite in the Remove, and inclined to think well of the Form in consequence. "The Form treat you quite as well as you allow them to treat you, Wharton."

Harry gave him a bitter look.

"I didn't ask you for a lecture, Cherry."
"You can have it unasked," said Bob coolly. "You want it, and a good many more, too. If you'd only have a little more sense—"
"You'd better measure your words when you're speaking to me."

"Rot! I shall speak as I like!"
Harry Wharton's hand clenched hard. Bob Cherry's eyes were gleaming, too, and Nugent looked very uneasy; but Harry turned abruptly on his heel and walked away, leaving the two together.

Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose.
"It isn't easy to stand him, Nugent," he remarked; "but for the sake of fair play we must see this thing through."
Nugent nodded.

"And so, before the Head decides about the matter, I think we ought to speak to him," said Bob Cherry decisively.
"But—" Nugent hesitated. The idea of facing the Head in his study, upon such an exceedingly curious business, was not attractive to Harry.

"Oh, come along!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll do all the talking. I am always pretty strong in that line. Come along!"

And he led the way to the Head's study, and knocked upon the door with enviable coolness, and entered, followed more slowly by Nugent.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Explains to the Head.

DR. LOCKE looked curiously at the two juniors.
"You wish to speak to me?" he asked. "I am rather occupied just now, so pray lose no time. What is it?"

Nugent nudged Bob Cherry.
"Go on, Cherry," he whispered.
The Head smiled slightly.
"Please speak out!"
"Certainly, sir!" said Cherry. "It's—it's rather an important matter, sir. It's about the exam. for the Seaton-D'Arcy."

The Head looked at him in astonishment.
"What can you possibly have to say to me about that, Cherry?"

"You see, sir—"
"No, I am afraid I do not see. I shall be glad if you will explain as quickly as possible," said the doctor.
Bob Cherry coloured a little.

"Yes, sir. This is how it is—Wharton has failed."
"The result of the examination has not been announced to the school yet, Cherry," said Dr. Locke coldly.

"I know, sir; but—but I know Wharton made a rotten show—I mean, that he failed, and it was because—because"—in the presence of the Head, Bob Cherry's usual coolness and nerve were not quite so conspicuous—"because, sir, he was put off his form. He wasn't up to the mark."

The Head started a little.
"I don't quite understand you, Cherry. I noticed that Wharton did not seem quite himself, and I asked him if he were ill, and he replied that he was quite well."

"So he was, sir, only—only he was put off his form."
"How do you mean? Do you imply that some harm was done him, so that he would fail in the examination?" asked the doctor.

Bob Cherry rubbed his chin. How to say enough, without saying too much, was rather a puzzle; but he was in for it now.

"Not exactly that, sir; but—but something like that. The worst of it is that we know what was done, but we haven't any proof yet, and when we have, we can't sneak on the roster who—"

"On the what?"
"The fellow, sir, who played that trick on Wharton."
The Head's brow grew stern.

"You say that a trick was played upon Wharton by someone who wished him to fail in the examination for the Seaton-D'Arcy prize."

"Yes, sir."
"This is a very serious allegation, Cherry."
"I know it is, sir. I shouldn't have said a word about it, only I want justice to be done. It doesn't seem fair for Wharton to lose the prize simply because—"

"You were quite right to speak to me, Cherry, if there is anything in what you say. But are you sure that you have not been led away simply by regard for your friend—"

Bob Cherry grinned.
"But he's not my friend, sir. Wharton hasn't any friends in the Remove, excepting Nugent, who is friendly to him because Wharton saved his life, not because there's anything in the chap to like."

"Oh, drop all that!" said Nugent, turning red.

"Ahem! Am I to understand, Cherry, that you are thus championing the cause of a lad with whom you are not on friendly terms?" asked Dr. Locke, looking with new interest at the frank, if not exactly handsome, face of Bob Cherry.

"Well, yes, sir; we want fair play, you know. I don't get on very well with Wharton, but I've seen his work, and I've seen Hazeldene's, and it doesn't need much keenness to see which of them ought to have the Seaton-D'Arcy."

The doctor's brows were puckered in thought.
"This is a very curious matter, Cherry. I observed that Wharton did not seem quite himself, but that is nothing unusual at an examination. Hazeldene was nervous to some extent. You say you suspect a certain person of having played this trick upon Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."
"But you have no proof?"
"Not as yet, sir."

"Then it would not be fair to mention his name. I cannot listen to any accusation made without proof, and neither would you wish to make one."

"Certainly not, sir! I—I thought that you might be able to put off the award of the prize for a little, so as to give Wharton a chance. If another exam. were held, I know he would knock Vaseline—I mean Hazeldene—into a cocked hat!"

The doctor shook his head slowly.
"I don't see how that can be done, Cherry, unless proof is forthcoming. Hazeldene will naturally expect the award. You do not accuse Hazeldene himself—"

"I don't accuse anybody, sir," said Bob Cherry hastily.
The doctor looked at him keenly.

"Well, well, under the circumstances I will leave the announcement till to-morrow evening; but that is the latest. If you find anything to bear out your suspicions by then, you can acquaint me with it; but I can take no notice of vague surmises. It is quite possible, you know, that with the best intentions, you may be making a great mystery out of nothing."

"Oh, no, sir!"
"Well, we will leave the matter at this, and if there is anything in what you suspect, Cherry, I have no doubt that you will be able to discover some fact I can take notice of."

"I will do my best, sir."
"Very good; you may go."
The juniors left the study.

"Haven't done much good there," Nugent remarked, as they went down the passage. "The Head half believes that we're making a mountain of a molehill."

"It was something to get him to listen to us at all," replied Bob. "We've got to set to work and bowl Hazeldene out, that's all."

"We can't give him away to the Head."
"N-no," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "We can't, that's a fact. Whatever dirty trick he has done, we can't play the sneak. The Remove would cut us if we did."

"Then I don't see what good—"
"Oh, we can show him up to the Form; that's something. Then we can make him own up to the Head."

"Catch Vaseline doing that!" ejaculated Nugent. "Why, he would be expelled!"

"H'm—yes! Still, if another exam. were held, on fair terms, Wharton would get in all right, and we may manage that. Anyway, the first thing is to get at the truth, and make Hazeldene own up before the Form."

"Right-ho! I'm with you there!"
"The question is—what has he done with that button? Of course, he would keep it about him till he could safely get rid of it. He wouldn't care to be seen ridding himself of the thing, and he hasn't had much chance yet. We've got to watch him! If it hadn't been for that beast Carberry—"

"Hallo, what's that?"
Carberry was coming along the passage, and he had heard the uncomplimentary reference to himself. He made a dive straight at Bob Cherry, but the junior was not easily caught. He dodged the bully of the Sixth, and darted along the passage, with Nugent at his heels. Carberry soon gave up the chase, and the two Removites went out into the close to look for Hazeldene.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor.

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Hallo, Billy, what's the matter with you?"
"Nothing the matter with me, Cherry, except that I'm rather hungry. If you're going to the tuck-shop, now—"

"But I'm not."
"Well, never mind. Of course, if you stood treat for a dozen tarts or so, I should settle up. I'm expecting a postal-order by the first post in the morning."

"Is that what you were going to say when you stopped me?"

"Oh, no! As I was saying, there's nothing the matter with me, but I believe there is something the matter with Vaseline," said Billy Bunter mysteriously.

"Hazeldene! Have you seen him? We're looking for him."

"Yes, I've seen him. I suppose it was working for the exam, so hard that has turned his brain, or else there's insanity in the family."

Bob Cherry and Nugent stared at the Owl in amazement. Bob seized him by the shoulder and gave him a shake.

"What are you driving at, Billy? Do you mean to say that Hazeldene has gone off his rocker? What makes you think so?"

"I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Cherry!"

"Yes, but tell me—"

"You see, it disturbs my nerves, and you might make my spectacles fall off, and they might break, and then—"

"Blow your spectacles!"

"It's all very well for you to say blow my spectacles, but I can't see without them, and I can't afford to keep a second pair by me, so it would be a serious matter if they got broken."

"Would it be a more serious matter if your neck got broken?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, yes, I suppose it would; but I'm in no danger—"

"That's your mistake; you are. Your neck will be broken in the next two minutes if you don't explain yourself, and stop maundering. What makes you think that Vaseline has gone off his dot?"

"Why, the way he behaves, you know. I saw him a few minutes ago. He came out of the House, and took something out of his pocket, and threw it—"

"Was it a button?" asked Nugent eagerly.

"How did you know it was a button, Nugent?"

"Then it was one?"

"I really don't see how you could guess—"

"Oh, let him get on his own way," said Bob Cherry resignedly. "I suppose if he goes wandering on long enough, he'll come to the point."

"I don't see how you can say I'm wandering from the point, Cherry. Only I was curious to know how Nugent could guess that it was a button."

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"Very well. I saw Vaseline take something out of his pocket, and throw it as hard as he could over towards the five's court. I was rather curious to know what it was he was throwing away, and I went and looked."

"Of course you did. And what was it?"

"I'm coming to that. I went over and looked for it. I had heard it chink on the ground, and I soon found it; and what do you think it was?"

"I know what it was—a button."

"Yes, it was a button; but I really don't see how you guessed. You weren't there—at least, I didn't see you if you were."

"There are heaps of things you don't see, Billy. Have you got that button now? If you have, hand it over, and I'll stand a dozen tarts at the tuck-shop."

Billy Bunter looked utterly dismayed.

"Would you really stand a dozen tarts, Cherry, for a rotten old jacket button?" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes, I would; and I will. Where is it?"

"But what good is it to you?"

"Never mind that; I want it."

"I don't see what—"

"How can an owl like you expect to see anything? Hand over that button, and come and feed on the tarts, like a good ass."

"I wish I had known—"

"Hand it over!"

"Oh, I haven't it now!"

"You haven't it!" roared Bob Cherry, shaking him.

"Please don't shake me, Cherry; you will make my glasses fall off, I am afraid, and then you will have to pay for them."

"What have you done with the button, your horrid image?"

"I haven't told you all."

"Oh, get on, then, and let's have the rest."

"Why, you see, of course I didn't know that the button would be of any value to you, Cherry. I never suspected that you were collecting old buttons, or anything of that sort. By the way, what do you do with 'em?"

"I know what I'll do with you if you don't come to the point," howled Bob. "I'll take you by the neck and wipe up the ground with you, spectacles and all. Get on!"

"I'm getting on as fast as I can. I had just picked up the button, and was looking at it, and then Hazeldene must have spotted it, for he came running up, and it was curious, you know, but he looked quite pale."

"What did he do?"

"He tried to snatch the button out of my hand, but I wouldn't let him. Then he asked me to give it to him, and

I asked him what he wanted it for. He said it was his, and I said that it wasn't his after he threw it away. He said he had thrown it away by mistake for another. I suppose there is some value attached to that button, Cherry, as he was so particular about it, and you want to give a dozen tarts for it."

"There is. But do get on!"

"Well, I wasn't going to give up the button, but he said he would lend me sixpence if I did, till my postal-order comes; and as there's a chance that the postal-order may be delayed, I thought I'd accept, so I gave him back the button. Of course, I thought he was off his rocker, you know. A chap doesn't throw an old button away and then give a tanner to get it back again unless he's wrong in the upper story, does he?"

"He must have seen that you saw him throw it, and could prove that it was he who had had the button."

"Well, so I could; but that doesn't make any difference, does it? It's not wrong to have an old jacket button and throw it away, is it, Cherry?"

"It's wrong to be a howling ass," growled Bob Cherry. "If I were in the same study with you, Bunter, you'd turn my hair grey. Which way did Hazeldene go?"

"Do you mean after I gave him the button?"

"You utter ass, I don't mean before! Where is he now?"

"I really don't know where he is now, Cherry. I wish I could tell you, as I'd like to oblige a chap I like as much as I like you; and I suppose you'll stand those tarts all the same, as—"

"Can you tell me which way he went when he left you, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, with all the patience he could muster.

"Oh, yes, Cherry, I can tell you that much; but you asked me where he was now, and of course I don't know, as I can't see—"

"Which way, then, you young villain?"

"Over towards the Head's garden."

Bob Cherry waited for no more. He dashed off towards the doctor's garden, with Nugent at his heels. Billy Bunter stared after them in amazement. Then he shook his head solemnly, probably coming to the conclusion that insanity was in the air, and that Bob Cherry and Nugent were equally afflicted with Hazeldene.

"Lucky we met that aggravating little beast," panted Bob Cherry, as he ran on. "Vaseline is trying to get rid of the button, that's as plain as anything, and Billy Bunter was the right ass in the right place for once."

"Yes, and it must have been a bit of a shock to Vaseline when he saw the button in the hands of a little chatterbox like Billy Bunter," chuckled Nugent.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, stopping at the gate of the doctor's garden. "I suppose Hazeldene has gone in."

The gate was not fastened, but none of the boys of Greyfriars used the garden, excepting an awfully select few in the Sixth Form, who sometimes walked there in great state.

But it was pretty certain that Hazeldene had gone there to get rid of the troublesome button, as the safest place, as it was little frequented by the boys.

Juniors had no business in the garden, but that little circumstance did not trouble Bob Cherry of the Remove.

He opened the gate and entered, followed by Nugent, and looked round for Hazeldene.

"There he is!"

Beyond a belt of rhododendrons a figure could be seen, and the two juniors cut towards it at once. It was Hazeldene, as they knew at a glance, in spite of the dusk that was deepening over the garden. The cad of the Remove saw them coming, and his hand went quickly into his pocket.

Bob Cherry saw the motion, and he knew what it meant. Hazeldene had been looking for a hiding-place for the tell-tale button, and not expecting to be interrupted, he was taking his time about it, to make all secure. The sight of the two chums made him put the button quickly back into his pocket. He dared not part with it where they might find it.

"Stop, you cad!" shouted Bob Cherry, as Hazeldene darted off.

But Hazeldene did not stop. He dodged among the bushes, and came out by another path to the gate, and without stopping to open it, he made a spring and fairly cleared it.

Bob Cherry and Nugent came racing up the next moment, and they heard a terrific crash and a wild yell on the other side of the gate.

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha! He's cleared the gate, and lighted on somebody! Come on!"

He tore open the gate, and they darted through. In the dusk of the close Hazeldene was squirming in the grasp of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Cornered!

YOU young rascal!" roared Wingate, shaking the cad of the Remove violently. "What do you mean by jumping on me all of a sudden like that?"

"I—I—I—"
"You've planted your silly hoofs on my trousers! Look at the mud!"

"I'm sorry, Wingate."

"You've hurt me, you silly young ass!"

"If you please—"

"You've been trespassing in the doctor's garden."

"I—I—I—"

Wingate shook him again.

"Now, then, have you got anything to say before I lick you, you young reprobate?"

"If you please—"

"Hold him, Wingate!" panted Bob Cherry, coming up breathless. "Don't let the young beast wriggle away! I—"

The captain of Greyfriars turned on him sharply.

"So you have been trespassing in the Head's garden, too, have you, Cherry? And Nugent! By Jove, you want a licking all round!"

"I went in for Hazeldene; he's got something that belongs to me—or, rather, to Wharton."

"What is it?"

"A button—a jacket button."

Wingate stared.

"If this is one of your little jokes, Bob Cherry, you are playing it on the wrong person," he said sternly. "You ought to know better than to cheek me."

"But I'm not cheeking you, Wingate," said Bob earnestly.

"Vaseline—I mean Hazeldene—has got a button he snipped off Wharton's jacket just before the exam. for the Seaton-D'Arcy—"

"I haven't!"

"Well, if he has, what is there in a jacket button to make a fuss about?" Wingate demanded, still keeping hold of the wriggling Hazeldene, however.

"If you'll let me explain—"

"Look sharp, then."

Bob Cherry explained. An expression of incredulity came upon the captain's face as he listened, but when Bob told him how he had seen the Head on the subject, he seemed more impressed. He was quite grave when the junior had finished.

"I suppose you're not romancing, Cherry?" he said at last, with a frown upon his brow, and his grasp tighter upon the wretched Hazeldene.

"Certainly not!" broke in Nugent eagerly. "I know as much about it as Cherry does, Wingate, and I'll vouch for every word he's said."

"And then there's Billy Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "If you ask him, he'll tell you that he saw Hazeldene fling the button away, and then give sixpence to get it back when he found that it had been picked up."

"What have you to say, Hazeldene?"

"It's a string of lies. They've got this up between them to try and do me out of the Seaton-D'Arcy prize," said Hazeldene savagely. "It's all a game to get the twenty guineas for Wharton; and I suppose he's going to share out with them if they bring it off. That's the truth of the matter."

Bob Cherry turned scarlet.

"Why, you worm!" he exclaimed, making a step towards the cad of the Remove. Wingate pushed him back.

"None of that," he said quietly; "I am going to look into this matter."

"Of course, we don't want to sneak," said Bob Cherry hastily; "it can't be taken before the Head. We only want to show up Vaseline before the Form, so as to get a second exam. for the Seaton-D'Arcy, and give Wharton a fair chance."

"I understand. I don't want to put you in the position of sneaking, and I shall look into this matter simply as George Wingate, and not as a prefect."

"Thank you, Wingate," said Bob Cherry, with great relief. As a matter of fact, in the excitement of the moment he had forgotten all about Wingate being a prefect, but the captain of Greyfriars was not the fellow to make a junior regret a confidence.

Wingate looked sharply at the junior wriggling in his grasp.

"You deny this, Hazeldene?" he asked.

"Every word of it."

"You did not snip the button off Wharton's jacket?"

"I did not."

"And you haven't such a button about you now?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Have you any objection to a search to prove that point?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, his eyes still fixed upon the face of Peter Hazeldene.

Only for one brief instant was there a sign of hesitation in the face of Hazeldene. He knew, of course, that it would be useless to refuse.

"I have no objection at all, Wingate."

"Very well, come to my study, then. You youngsters come too."

Still keeping a hand upon Hazeldene, in case he should be inclined to bolt, the captain of Greyfriars walked him into the house and into his study. Bob Cherry and Nugent followed them, somewhat uneasy in their minds. Hazeldene's confidence was not reassuring to the two investigators. It was possible that during that hurried flight he had thrown the button away. Still, a search through the doctor's garden might, in that case, discover it, and Billy Bunter's evidence would be all that was required to bring the act of treachery home to the cad of the Remove.

Wingate called to a fag in the passage as he went to his study. The fag happened to be a Remove fellow, named Glenn. He followed the captain into the study, and the door was closed.

"I want you to search Hazeldene, Glenn," said Wingate quietly. "I have reason to think that he has a button—a jacket button—somewhere about him which does not belong to him. See if you can find it."

Glenn was utterly amazed. But he obeyed without question. Wingate's word was law to the juniors of Greyfriars.

Hazeldene stood silent and sullen, while Glenn, with a good deal of gusto, went through his clothing in a really scientific manner. Bob Cherry and Nugent looked on.

Wingate had, of course, called in a third party to make the search, in order that it might be absolutely above suspicion. Glenn could not be suspected of placing the button in a pocket if he found it in one. But as it turned out, the button was not found. Every pocket and every recess was searched by the nimble fingers of Glenn, who seemed to enjoy his task as an amateur detective. But he had to give it up at last. The missing button was not to be found.

Bob Cherry bit his lip as Wingate's eye turned questioningly upon him.

"It's not there," said Glenn.

"I can see it isn't," said Wingate. "Do you still hold to your accusation, Cherry?"

"Certainly I do!" said Bob emphatically. "He has managed to throw the button away, that is all. We'll find it in the morning."

"Very well, the matter will have to be left over till then. If you are innocent, Hazeldene, I am sorry for this trouble you have been put to. It is quite possible that I should have attached no importance at all to such a story had I not known you to be of a mean and deceiving nature. You have nothing to say, I suppose?"

Hazeldene shook his head.

"You still persist that you know nothing about the button?"

Hazeldene nodded.

"Very well, we shall see. You may go."

Hazeldene walked to the door.

"Stay a moment!" exclaimed Bob Cherry—"stay, I—"

Hazeldene quickened his pace, and passed quickly through the doorway. Bob Cherry sprang towards Glenn and seized him by the shoulder.

"You didn't look in his mouth!" he shouted.

Glenn started.

"My hat, no! I never thought—"

"That's it! I wondered why he didn't speak! Come on, Nugent!"

And Bob Cherry rushed like a madman from the study.

Hazeldene was running along the corridor towards the stairs as fast as he could go. Bob broke into a run, and went down the corridor like a champion sprinter. Hazeldene cast a glance of terror behind as he heard the pattering of feet, and raced down the stairs. Fast behind came Nugent, and Wingate was following. The captain of Greyfriars had no doubt that Bob's surmise was correct. On the way to the study Hazeldene had contrived to slip the button into his mouth, and it was there still.

Pat-pat-patter, went the rapid feet down the corridor. Bob went down the stairs three at a time, and came in sight of Hazeldene again as he darted across the hall to the open door into the close.

"Stop, you rotter!"

But Hazeldene did not stop. Out into the shadowy close he went desperately, with Bob Cherry close at his heels, his hand outstretched to seize him.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Justice at Last!

"GOT you!"

Bob Cherry's hand dropped upon Hazeldene's shoulder from behind, and the cad of the Remove was swung round. His right hand was clenched, with the missing button in it. He swung his first round and brought it full into Bob Cherry's face. But Bob did not release him. Hazeldene made a desperate attempt to tear himself loose, in vain.

"Got you! Come on, Nugent!"

Bob Cherry's hand grasped at Hazeldene's wrist; he knew where the missing button was! Hazeldene threw up his hand, and something whirled away from it through the air. Bob uttered a sharp exclamation as he saw the action.

"He's thrown it!" He broke off suddenly.

From the distance came a sharp crack of something striking upon glass, and Bob knew that the whizzing button had struck a window. He gazed in the direction of the sound.

There were several windows there, and it might have been any one of them. Most of them were lighted, it now being quite dark at Greyfriars. Hazeldene wriggled in his grasp.

"Let me go, Cherry, you brute!"

"No fear!"

"Let me go—"

Nugent came panting up. He at once grasped hold of Hazeldene to make sure of him. Wingate had remained indoors.

"Got the beast!" exclaimed Nugent triumphantly.

"Where's the button?"

"He's thrown it away."

"Where did it go?"

"It struck a window. Ah, look there!"

Bob Cherry pointed. One of the lighted windows showed a dark shadow across the blind. There was a movement of the blind within, and it ran up.

"The Head's window!" gasped Nugent.

Hazeldene gave a whimper.

"Let me go!"

The Head's window slowly opened. The doctor himself looked out. In the light from the interior of the room the boys saw him clearly, but they were themselves swallowed up in the darkness of the close, and he did not observe them. The Head looked out into the gloom searchingly.

"Dear me"—the muttered words came clearly to the ears below in the silence of the evening—"dear me, I distinctly heard a clink at the glass! It sounded like someone throwing stones. Surely no lad would have the unheard-of impertinence to throw stones at my window!"

The juniors remained silent.

The doctor stared out into the close for some moments more, and then he glanced at the flower-box on his window-sill. A sharp exclamation was heard.

"Dear me, a button—a boy's jacket-button! That undoubtedly was what was flung at my window! What a surprising circumstance!"

Hazeldene made a sudden effort, and tore himself away. Bob Cherry made a grasp at him, but the cad of the Remove was too quick for him, and vanished into the darkness before he could be seized.

Dr. Locke heard the sounds below, and he called out sharply:

"Who is there?"

"It is I, sir," said Bob Cherry—"Nugent and I!"

"It is Cherry's voice, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come up to my study immediately, Cherry."

"Certainly, sir!"

The window closed down, and the blind was drawn. Bob Cherry and Nugent turned back to re-enter the House.

"I suppose we shall have to go up!" muttered Nugent.

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE HALFPENNY. LIBRARY.

"Of course we shall; and I want to. I'm going to explain to the Head," said Bob Cherry coolly.

"You won't give Hazeldene away?"

"No! It would serve him right; but it can't be done. But I can explain without mentioning names, and call upon Wingate, if necessary."

"Good!"

And the two juniors made their way to the Head's study. Dr. Locke was waiting for them with a peculiar expression upon his face. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was in the room with him. The clink of the button on the glasses had startled both the gentlemen, who had been discussing the Seaton-D'Arcy examination.

"A most peculiar circumstance," said the Head, as he held up the button between his finger and thumb to show it to Mr. Quelch. "What do you make of that, Mr. Quelch?"

The Remove master adjusted his glasses and stared at the little object held up for his inspection.

"It looks to me like a button," he replied—"an ordinary jacket-button."

"Yes, yes," said the Head, a trifle testily; "I am quite aware that it is a boy's button. The singularity of the matter is that it should have been hurled at my window."

"Yes; that is certainly very surprising."

"Cherry and Nugent were in the close, and I have called them up, yet I hardly think that either of them is the lad to play such a foolish and disrespectful trick."

"I quite agree with you, sir."

"Yet— Ah, here are the boys! Come in!"

Cherry and Nugent entered the study. Nugent was looking a little nervous, but Bob Cherry was as cool as the proverbial cucumber.

"Now, Cherry, kindly explain what this means," said the Head. "This button was thrown at my window, was it not?"

"Yes, sir. It was flung away, and it struck your window by chance."

"Indeed! And why was this button thrown about in the dark in the close?"

"The fellow wanted to get rid of it, sir."

"Indeed! And who was the 'fellow'?"

"The fellow who had it, sir," said Bob Cherry evasively.

"If you please, sir, we've discovered about that trick that was played upon Wharton, to make him lose the exam."

"Ah," said the Head, with interest, "I shall be glad to hear about that, Cherry! But what has that to do with this button being flung at my window?"

"Everything, sir. If you will allow me to explain—"

"Certainly, you may go on."

Bob Cherry made his explanation. Like Wingate, Dr. Locke was inclined to be incredulous at first. But Mr. Quelch nodded complete assent.

"What do you think of this, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head.

"I think it is quite correct, sir. I have myself noticed that singular habit of Wharton's, and have once or twice spoken to him about it. I think it is quite probable that this button being absent from its place at the critical moment may have thrown him into a confusion of mind. A disturbance of an old habit is calculated to have that effect."

The doctor pursed his lips thoughtfully. It was a strange story; but stranger things had happened. And he had himself been struck by the singular confusion shown by Harry Wharton during the examination—a confusion for which he had been at a loss to account—till now.

"If the button was found in the possession of the boy whom Cherry suspected, sir," Mr. Quelch went on, "that

IT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

NEXT TUESDAY:

"CHUMS OF THE REMOVE."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton.

must be regarded as a proof. Cherry offers to call Bunter and Wingate as witnesses if required. We have his word that the button was flung away by the rascal just as he was seized, and then it struck your window."

"But there is one point not touched upon," said the doctor. "You have not told me the name of the boy in question, Cherry."

Bob Cherry turned red.

"Speak!" said the Head, looking at him curiously. "You know whom the boy is, and you need have no hesitation in telling me."

But Bob Cherry was still silent.

"I think I understand," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "You wish to keep the name secret, Cherry, in order not to be accused of sneaking by your Form fellows."

Bob gave the Remove master a grateful look.

"That is exactly it, sir, if Dr. Locke will pardon me."

The doctor's face was very grave.

"But don't you see, Cherry, that this casts grave doubt upon the whole story?"

"Oh, no, sir! Wingate knows the fellow, and Wingate will answer for it that I have told you the truth."

"Of course, I can fully rely upon Wingate," said the Head. "I will speak to him about the matter."

"He has promised not to give the fellow away, sir."

"I shall not ask it of him; but the culprit ought to be punished. I know that Wharton is unpopular in the Remove, but nothing can excuse such an attempt as this to injure him. The culprit must be punished."

"I could give him a hiding, sir," said Bob Cherry eagerly.

The Head tried not to smile.

"That would be rather informal, Cherry. But I will not ask you his name. Yet I do not think he ought to pass unpunished. However, I will say no more upon that point. You may go, my lads, and tell Wharton he may come here and fetch his button."

"Certainly, sir!" said the delighted juniors.

And they left the study and hurried up to the Remove quarters. Harry Wharton was in Study No 1, sitting alone with a book in his hand, which he was not reading. There was a shade of the deepest gloom upon his face.

Bob Cherry gave him a resounding slap on the back. Harry started up with an angry exclamation.

"What the dickens—"

"It's all right, old fellow," said Nugent, before Bob Cherry could speak. "We've found the button, and bowled Hazeldene clean out."

Harry Wharton's face brightened.

"You've got proof?"

"Heaps of it."

"But—" Harry's face fell again. "What's the good? You can't give the cad away to the Head! You can't sneak on him!"

"I've arranged all that, my son," said Bob Cherry serenely. "We've told the Head everything but the fellow's name, and he believes us."

"Good. But what—"

"You're to go to him now, and fetch your button," said Nugent. "Of course, he's going to tell you something about the exam. Buck up, and get back as quickly as you can. We're dying to know."

"Buzz off!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I'll have the gloves on with you while he's gone, Nugent. I want a little practice, as I'm going to ask Hazeldene to come along to the gym to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm ready."

And Nugent and Cherry were soon sparring away cheerily enough. Bob had driven Nugent into a corner, and was keeping him there, when Harry Wharton came back into the study with a radiant face.

"Hallo, what's the news?" asked Bob Cherry, ceasing his attack, and turning round eagerly.

"The best. The exam. is to be held over again, and this time—"

"This time take care not to lose any of your buttons."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I will, by Jove!"

Bob Cherry peeled off the boxing-gloves, Nugent jammed the tea-kettle down on the fire.

"I fancy I'm in pretty good form for Hazeldene," said Bob Cherry.

"You're going to meet him?" asked Harry.

"Yes." Bob Cherry grinned. "The Head let me off telling him the name of the rascal, but he gave a broad hint that if the rotter were punished, he wouldn't have anything to say against it. I said I'd give the fellow a hiding, and he didn't say I wasn't to. A nod's as good as a wink. I am going to put Vaseline through it this evening."

"It's really my business."

"Oh, that's all right! I make it mine," said Bob coolly.

"I'm really very much obliged to you, Cherry, for what you've done."

"I should say so. It's as good as twenty guineas in your pocket," said Bob Cherry coolly. "You're bound to win this time. I shall expect you to stand a ripping feed out of the Seaton-D'Arcy prize."

"And I will, too. Meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile, I'll join you at tea. In looking after your interests, I've neglected my own, and I'm pretty certain the fire's out in my study. I'll stay to tea with you, with pleasure."

"That's right."

Billy Bunter looked into the study.

"I say, you fellows, are you going to have tea? My postal-order hasn't come yet, and I'm stoney. I should like to have tea with you if you don't mind."

"Oh, come in!" said Nugent, laughing.

So the four sat down to tea. It was an unusually jolly tea in Study No. 1, and the four juniors enjoyed it, and for the first time since he had been at Greyfriars, Harry Wharton realised what good fellowship meant.

That he would win in the second exam. was a foregone conclusion. He had no doubts upon that point. He owed it to his friends, in a place where he had done little to deserve friendship, and he realised that now. There were no signs now of the perverse temper which had made him so many enemies. Bob Cherry realised with some wonder that Harry Wharton was rather a pleasant fellow, after all.

And after tea the juniors went down to the gym, where Hazeldene, much against his will, was forced to put on the gloves with Bob Cherry. His act of treachery had been exposed to the whole Remove, and the Remove were in a ring round him to see that he did not get out of paying the penalty. He had to face Bob Cherry; and although they had the gloves on, he received a thrashing that he remembered for many a long day.

The discovery of Hazeldene's treachery caused something of a change in the feeling of the Remove towards Harry Wharton, at least for the time; and when it was known that Harry had won the Seaton-D'Arcy prize, after the second test, Hazeldene's disappointment found no sympathisers; but there were cheers for Harry as he received his reward at the hands of the doctor in the presence of the whole school.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale dealing with Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and the Owl, next week. Please fill in the Order Form and oblige—The Editor.)

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NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. But Grip, their dog, finds a purse containing certain heirlooms, the owner of which the chums are fortunate in finding. They are well rewarded for their labour and decide to make the detective business their profession.

The Plunge Is Taken.

The scheme was a bold one—daring enough to have been conceived only in the brains of two young fellows of some considerable grit, intelligence, and resource, and who found themselves on their beam ends. And this about filled the bill for Robert and Frank.

Mr. Worritt had never informed them that they were exceptionally intelligent or resourceful; on the contrary, he had called them careless, lazy, and troublesome; but, then, Mr. Worritt had never been heard to speak a good word of anybody, so that neither Lomax nor his chum were at all depressed or unnerved by the knowledge of the low opinion their late employer had of them.

That they were on their beam ends was certain. Their pecuniary resources, as we have seen, were limited, for the necessities of life—that is, the cost of board and lodging—swallowed up so much of the meagre salary which Mr. Worritt had paid to them, that the opportunity for saving had never existed. With only a few shillings in the world, blessed with hearty appetites—to say nothing of Grip—dismissal from the solicitor's office was a very serious matter indeed. But it had not been discussed; and the business of the purse the terrier had found had been too absorbing for their minds to be given to any other matter, since they found themselves, each conscious of a curious feeling of relief, walking slowly up Little Buckingham Street.

But Lomax had contrived to do some thinking since leaving Mr. Percival—whose generosity had driven away, for the time being, all consideration of their immediate necessities—and if Dennis's remark as the pair stopped outside Simpson's was more or less of the nature of an inspiration, Robert's reply, guarded as it had been, was not. Still, he said no more on the subject, and not until next morning—when Dennis awakened to find his chum lying on his back, broad awake and staring up at the ceiling four feet away from him—was the matter again broached.

It was the clock striking seven that had awakened Dennis—the customary signal for their rising; since it had been one of Mr. Worritt's pleasing requirements that his junior clerks should be at the office not later than eight-thirty. But now they were no longer in Mr. Worritt's employ, and a slight postponement of getting up would hurt nobody.

Dennis was the first to speak.

"Bob," he said, "what are we going to do?"

"Get up, soon, and have breakfast; I shall be ready for mine in about an hour."

"I didn't mean that; I meant now that we've left old Worritt's. Or perhaps I ought to have said what are you going to do?"

Silence for a while, and then Lomax said:

"You've made up your mind, then? Are you going home to your people?"

Dennis flushed. He didn't know if the words were meant nastily, or not; though it was not like Bob to speak so.

"No," he said shortly.

"Neither am I."

A longer silence—so long that Dennis thought his pal had gone to sleep, and he sat up in his bed and looked across the intervening space at him. "Bob!" he called.

"Well?"

Frank dropped down again.

"You'll stay in London?" he said tentatively.

"Of course. So will you?"

"I don't think so; I shall enlist."

"What's that for?" Lomax's voice showed neither curiosity nor interest.

"Because I—oh, because, well, I've got no money—I told you—and so I can't stop here after the end of this week, and I'm not going into an office again."

"But you have got some money!"

"Yes," Frank laughed shortly; "about twelve bob!"

"You don't owe anyone a fiver, do you?"

"Owe a fiver?" repeated Frank, in great surprise. "Of course not; don't owe sixpence!"

"Well, then."

"Well, what?"

"Why, you've still got that five-pound note of Percival's; you can't have spent it!"

"He didn't—"

"Now, see here, Frank"—Bob Lomax sat up in bed and looked his chum squarely in the eyes. He was frowning, and spoke in a curt, decisive tone of voice, that left no doubt as to the meaning of all that he said. "Now look here, Frank, don't let us have any more of that silly nonsense! You know as well as I do that half of what Percival gave us last night is yours. For two pins I'd punch your head for daring to suggest anything to the contrary! You—"

"But I had nothing to do with the restoring of the purse to the American," objected Dennis. "It was—"

"Will you hold your tongue!" Lomax shouted fiercely.

"Aren't we partners in this business? Aren't we going into it on the share and share alike principle? Don't we each bring about the same capital into the concern? Aren't we going to do equal shares of the work? Of course we are! Or, if you're not going to agree to it, and mean to back out, why, then, I've done with you for good. You can clear out, and go to Jericho. But I did think you were real jannock; true all through, and a pal to be proud of; perhaps I'm mistaken, but I didn't think so. And if you're going to do the straight thing, as I thought you were, why, then, we're going into this business, as I said before—share equally work, play, everything good, everything bad, divide the kicks as well as the ha'pence, and stick by one another through thick and thin! Now; then, what d'you say?"

There was a challenging note in the elder fellow's voice, though his apparent anger was more than half assumed. Leaning over the edge of his bed he looked at his chum, who leaned to him. Their arms were extended, their hands came together, and remained in a long, and close grip.

"I'm with you, Bob."

That was all Frank Dennis said, but it was not necessary to say more; the hand-grip, and the expression in his blue eyes, were quite sufficient; they were partners.

Their hands unclasped, and Lomax stepped out of bed.

"The firm begins business this very day," he said solemnly.

"Partners, Lomax and Dennis; capital, ten guineas or thereabouts, and a fine and new stock of brains, hope, and pluck; business, anything and everything in the detective line, anyhow and anywhere; profits, unlimited; place of business, that remains to be seen. Get up, you lazy beggar over there, and begin work! If you don't want your breakfast, I do!"

Dennis burst into a loud peal of laughter as he jumped out of bed and commenced dressing.

"With whom and where are we going to do our business?" he asked.

"If business don't come to us, we'll go and find the business," Robert declared stoutly. "There's a demand for the sort of work that we're going to do, and we'll precious soon make people see that we're the ones they want to do our sort of work. We'll drink success to our firm, Lomax &

Dennis, in a cup of coffee in a quarter of an hour's time. And we will get on, Frank, old boy; we will for certain. We've got more capital than many an American millionaire started life with; and we've health and strength, and youth and patience—not too much of that, but just enough—and before long Lomax & Dennis will be knocking all that Sherlock Holmes & Co. ever did into the most battered of cocked hats. Lomax & Dennis—Lomax & Dennis! My boy, Lomax &—"

"No, no," interrupted Frank Dennis; "not Lomax & Dennis—it's a mouthful that's too big to swallow! Lo—Lo—Max—Lo—den— Hurrah! I have it, Bob—I have it! We'll not be the firm of Lomax & Dennis, but Max—Max—Here it is—what d'you say to this?—Maxennis, detective!"

Silence followed the great shout with which the excited young fellow concluded his speech, and then Lomax walked across and seized his hand.

"Frank," he said impressively, "it's an inspiration—a stroke of real genius—that name! Maxennis—Maxennis! Why, when people see that name they'll just have to come to us! Maxennis! It's great—a masterpiece! Sherlock Holmes! Why, it might be just plain Jack Jones alongside ours! Lad, you've made our fortune! You—"

A rap at the door cut him short, and a shrill, none too good-tempered voice outside shouted:

"When are you gentlemen goin' to make yer breakfast? It's past eight o'clock, an' missis wants to know!"

"Jerusalem! We'll get no grub!" Dennis exclaimed. "All right, Annie; tell Mrs. Williams we'll be down in a couple of ticks; and, say, just see that we have a couple of pieces of hot, buttered toast apiece this morning!"

Never had the two newly-made and self-constituted partners enjoyed a breakfast more thoroughly than they did that morning. In the first place, they were their own masters, and taking the meal at a time agreeable to themselves, and not determined by the requirements, or will of an employer. Moreover, they might take their time. As principals, their idea of their own importance grew; they were somebody now, and somebody with a high-sounding name!

Mrs. Williams viewed with alarm the deprecations made upon her breakfast-table; she had noted the alteration in the time of the meal, and the want of any anxiety of the two young men to leave the house; and, being a shrewd woman—one who had not been a lodging-house keeper for twenty-two years for nothing—she jumped to a rightful conclusion as to the cause of these alterations in the daily rule. Her lodgers were out of work—got the sack, as she put it; such were always abnormally cheerful and hungry the first day of their enforced idleness. She knew the signs well and was not to be deceived.

She began to fear for her bill, being a prudent woman, and lost no time in ascertaining in what financial condition her lodgers were left. If they had no money they must go at the end of the week; that she should be paid up to then she would make certain. There was only another day. Perhaps it would be as well to find out to-day whether the bills would be met.

"Bustling into the breakfast-room with a jug of water in her hand, she began to pour some of its contents into flower-pots holding sickly specimens of various kinds of plants, talking the while and keeping the tail of one eye on the faces of her two boarders.

"Not going into the City to-day, Mr. Lomax?" she said. "Taking a holiday, I suppose?"

"Yes, Mrs. Williams; a holiday for both of us," Lomax responded, with a sober wink at his chum.

"Queer day of the week, isn't it, sir, Friday, to take a holiday?" the good lady continued.

"As good a day as any other, Mrs. Williams," was the cheerful, if irritatingly uninformative reply.

And Frank Dennis chipped in:

"We don't mind, Mrs. Williams, if Friday is supposed to be unlucky; we'll put up with it."

There was an impudently cheerful note in the young

man's voice, aggressive, defiant almost, that convinced the landlady that her suspicions were well-founded.

"And I suppose you won't be going to business to-morrow, Mr. Lomax?" she went on, pointedly ignoring Dennis. Her voice was considerably less genial.

"Quite correct, Mrs. Williams; we shall not be going to the office to-morrow either," Lomax answered.

"And a very good job, too," put in Dennis, who had read the good lady's thoughts and couldn't resist the opportunity of playing to them.

Mrs. Williams bridled, suspended her watering operations, and drew herself up stiffly.

"And let me say, Mr. Dennis," she said severely, "that it's not a very good thing for two young men to have lost their situations; and it's certainly not a matter for them to make jesting remarks about. I'm not sure how far removed it is from flying in the face of Providence for young men to act so that their employers aren't able to put up with their nonsense no longer, and felt themselves, as it were, in duty bound to discharge them. Bread and cheese is not so easily got that a young man can afford to laugh and be merry because he has lost it; and, not being a deceitful woman, I make no secret that I'm downright sorry that a young man as I know should act in such fashion. It's very nice to have a holiday and all that, but it ought to be earned; and, as the Scriptures say, 'Pride goeth before a fall,' as perhaps you, Mr. Dennis, may find out one of these days. Not that I'm wishing anything dreadful may happen to you, far be it from me, it isn't in my nature to rejoice over the misfortunes of others; but I do think you ain't showing a right and proper spirit—keeping yourself unrepentant, as I may say—in the face of what is no doubt a visitation from Heaven, sent to try you, or as a punishment for past sins, which, as everybody knows, we have all to answer for some day or other, and there's no getting away from it. And it's a more humble and contrite heart I wish to both you gentlemen, and you in particular, Mr. Dennis, and trust that you may see the seriousness of your faults, and be brought to repent of the errors of your ways, and the sooner the better. And the same, likewise, I may say in regard to the bill which I may remind you young gentlemen will be owing to me to-morrow afternoon, and which I will take it as a favour if you will be able to pay."

It was with the greatest difficulty only that Frank Dennis could refrain from laughing or interrupting in some other fashion the formidable and overwhelming outburst of eloquence that his unfortunate remark had brought down upon his and his chum's devoted head. Only by making his teeth work overtime was he able to keep back the mirth that was consuming him.

But Lomax, with a grave and serious face, listened to the lengthy, and somewhat complicated reproval with the greatest attention. When want of breath brought the worthy matron to a standstill, her face flushed with honest indignation and righteous disapproval, he looked her squarely in the eyes.

"Is that all you have to say, Mrs. Williams?" he asked,

with just a noticeable emphasis on the "all."

"I'm sure I—that is—I have said—and it is quite right; young men oughtn't —" stammered the good lady, beginning to think that, after all, she might be mistaken.

"Precisely; but is that all?" interrupted Bob.

"Why, yes!" was the sulky answer.

"Then please be good enough to let us have your bill—for both of us—up to and including breakfast this morning, and we shall be most happy to pay you."

There was a quiet decisiveness in Lomax's tones that made the landlady wish that she hadn't been so ready with her tongue. She had not meant to drive her lodgers away like this. They did not pay extravagantly, but still, they gave her a fair margin of profit, and she didn't want to lose it.

(To be continued next Tuesday.)

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THE EDITOR.

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**“You—you mad idiot!”
he muttered hoarsely.**

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