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ONE HALFPENNY



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton Is Not Pleased.

HARRY WHARTON, of the Greyfriars Remove, sat in his study, with a letter in his hand and a cloud upon his brow. Twice he had read through that letter, and at each reading his brow had become darker. It was not a long letter; being, in fact, written with military brevity. Other eyes than Harry's might not have seen anything to look troubled about in the brief epistle. But it evidently weighed upon the mind of Harry Wharton.

His hand, with the letter in it, rested upon his knee, and he had fallen into a reverie, when he was startled by the sudden opening of the door of the study. A cheerful, sunny-looking junior came in.

"You here, Harry?"

It was Nugent, of the Remove, Harry Wharton's best chum since the day he had come to Greyfriars.

Harry had looked up hastily, crumpling the letter in his hand. Nugent's face grew concerned as he read his chum's expression. He came over quickly towards Harry.

"Anything wrong?"

"Yes."

"What's the trouble? Can I help you?"

"I—I don't know. Read that letter."

Nugent, with some curiosity, glanced over the letter. It was written in a stiff, military hand, and ran as follows:

"My dear Nephew,—I am coming down to Greyfriars to-morrow to see you. You have not written to me since

A JOLLY HALF HOLIDAY.

*A Tale of Harry Wharton and
his Chums,*

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

you have been at school, but I am glad to say that I have received excellent accounts of you from Dr. Locke. I hope to find you quite reconciled to your life at Greyfriars.

"Your affectionate uncle,
"JAMES WHARTON."

Nugent glanced from the letter to the gloomy, troubled face of his chum.

"Blessed if I see what there is to worry about in that letter," he said. "I suppose your uncle isn't an ogre. Most of the fellows are glad to have a relation come down and see them. It usually means tips, and sometimes a holiday."

Harry's face did not relax.

"I don't want either tips or a holiday through my Uncle James."

Nugent gave a whistle of comprehension.

"I see; you're on bad terms with him."

Wharton nodded.

"The letter doesn't sound ill-natured," said Nugent, glancing at it again. "He seems to really take an interest in you, and I shouldn't wonder if he were hurt at your not having written to him since you came to Greyfriars."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"There was no need to write."

"Well, a chap sometimes does things that are not absolutely needed, out of politeness," Nugent remarked.

Wharton looked at him quickly, but if Nugent was speaking ironically, there was no sign of it in his face. He was perfectly grave.

"What sort of a chap is your uncle?" went on Nugent. "He's got one virtue, anyway; he doesn't write long letters."

"He is an Army officer from India. He seems to believe in ruling a home as if he regarded it as a native regiment. I was happy enough at home till he came."

"Ah, yes, I remember your telling me that Miss Wharton looked after you, and your uncle thought you were spoiled."

"He said so."

"Well, as a matter of absolute fact, Harry, you weren't the nicest sort of chap in the world when you first came to Greyfriars," said Nugent, in his frank way.

Harry Wharton coloured. He was quite aware of that. He had had many faults when he first came to Greyfriars; and he had a good many of them still. More than once of late an uneasy suspicion had crossed his mind that, in those old bitter disputes with his uncle, the fault had not been wholly upon the side of Colonel Wharton.

"He hopes you're reconciled to your life at Greyfriars," Nugent continued. "You didn't want to come to the school in the first place, I believe."

"I was sent here against my will."

"And you cut up rough," said Nugent, with a smile, "and you naturally had a rough time of it. But hasn't it done you good, Harry?"

Harry was silent.

"You've pulled through," went on his chum. "The Remove didn't like you at first. Airs and graces don't go down in the Lower Fourth Form in any school, I believe. And you were a bit of a cough-drop at the start—excuse me. But the Form have taken to you kindly enough now. You are cricket captain in the Remove, and looked up to as a leader. You can't say things aren't pleasant enough at Greyfriars now. You don't want to leave the school, do you?"

"Oh, no!"

Harry started at the mere suggestion. It was true that he had come against his own inclination to Greyfriars; but to leave the school now, and break up the pleasant friendships he had formed—that would be a harder blow than he had ever been called upon to face before.

"Well, then," said the practical Nugent, "you see, your uncle was right in sending you here. You're glad to be here; and it has done you good. If he's an unpleasant rotter—"

Wharton flushed.

"Oh, he's nothing so bad as that, Nugent!"

"Well, then, it seems to me that you're bothering about nothing," said Nugent. "Perhaps you've been a bit unjust to him."

Wharton did not reply. The same thought was in his own mind; and it was not a pleasant one. He had nourished his ill-feeling towards his uncle, feeling that he was in the right to do so. His feeling was like that of the prophet of old; he felt that he did well to be angry. Now, his ideas were insensibly changing; but it was not agreeable to feel that he had been unreasonable and unjust.

"Anyway, he's coming down," said Nugent. "You'll have to make the best of it. Better tell him you're sorry you haven't written—"

"I can't!"

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not sorry."

Nugent smiled a little grimly. Greyfriars had done Harry Wharton good. But still, at times, there came out traces of the old obstinacy that had often tried the patience of his chum.

"Well, you ought to be sorry!" he rapped out.

"If you're going to lecture me, Nugent—"

"Oh, I'm not! I know how much good it would be," said Nugent, laughing, his good-humour damped only for a moment. "If you don't feel sorry, don't tell him you do, as that would be a cram— Only do try to feel a little kindly towards the old chap, who probably means as well as he is able."

"I don't see what he wants to come down for!" exclaimed Harry passionately. "Why can't he let me alone? We parted on ill-terms, and we have nothing to speak about—why can't he let me alone?"

"Perhaps it worries him a bit to have parted with his nephew on ill-terms."

"Oh, rot!"

"Thanks!"

"I—I mean—"

"Oh, never mind! But really, Harry, you had better make the best of the matter, and not meet the old fellow with a scowl on your face. If he means well, he ought to be encouraged, you know."

Wharton smiled slightly. But in a moment, as he glanced at the obnoxious letter, his face clouded over again.

"Well, if he's civil, I suppose I may as well be," he growled. "But if he starts any paternal lecturing, or any crowing over me—"

"Give him a chance till he does it," suggested Nugent.

"Hang it all, Nugent, you seem to have made up your mind to take my uncle's side in this matter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton irritably.

"Well, I don't want to see you bang your head against a brick wall," said Nugent. "You see, the trouble about a parent or guardian is that he has the whip-hand. If they always did as we told 'em, things would go more smoothly. But they're obstinate; they won't! They think they know best, you know; and really I shouldn't wonder if there was

something in it. If you sulk with the colonel because he sent you to Greyfriars, he may take you away again. How would you like that?"

"H'm! Of course, I shouldn't like it."

"Then take the old chap under your wing and be nice to him," advised Nugent. "Take him round the school, and stand him a feed."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I can't imagine anybody standing Colonel Wharton a feed! He is an old soldier and a regular martinet."

"Well, martinets have tummies, the same as the rest of us," said Nugent sagely, "and you may catch him hungry. Besides, he is an Old Grey Friar, isn't he?"

"Yes, he was at this school about thirty years ago."

"Good! An Old Boy is always easy to get on with. Come, Harry, cheer up, and we'll give the colonel a good time and you'll part the best of friends."

Harry shook his head.

"Is there anything else, besides your little tiffs at home?" asked Nugent anxiously.

"Yes."

"Well, get it off your chest. What is it?"

Harry Wharton's face went scarlet.

"The colonel sent me some money at the beginning of the week to get some new cricket things—bat and leg-guards and so on—"

"I know he did; and it was decent of him."

"Oh, it's my own money!" said Harry testily. "He's my guardian, you know."

"Well, go on. You've parted with your old bat, and you've blued the tin and haven't got a new one," said Nugent. "I'm aware of that."

"I didn't exactly blue it—"

"Well, you went out one afternoon by yourself and spent it," said Nugent. "I have a pretty clear idea of what it was for, too. You got Hazeldene out of his difficulty with the moneylender."

"Never mind Hazeldene," said Wharton hastily. "The fact is that the money is gone, and I haven't got the things. Of course, I was at liberty to do as I liked with the money—it's not a question of that—but the colonel will probably want to see the new bat, and he will wonder. And then I—"

"What else?"

"I haven't any watch now," said Harry uncomfortably.

"You pawned it at Dale on Wednesday?"

"Well, yes."

"My hat! Your uncle may get his back up over that, if he spots it," Nugent agreed. "It's considered absolutely rotten form for a kid to go into a pawnshop, of course, and it would mean a flogging if it were discovered by the Head."

"I had no other resource. It wasn't for myself that I wanted the money."

"I know, but it looks bad. If it had been in another week or two we could have raised the tin, and tided it over," said Nugent. "It's rather unlucky the colonel coming down like this so suddenly, while we're still all of us stony broke. Even Hurreo Singh hasn't been able to raise the wind yet. The only thing is, one of us will have to lend you a watch, and—"

Harry shook his head.

"My dear chap," said Nugent, "you don't want the colonel to spot the thing, do you?"

"I'm not going to deceive him. I'm not afraid of him."

"I never said you were; and if you hint that I'm counselling you to deceive anybody, it's about time this little discussion ceased," said Nugent, turning red.

"I'm sorry, Nugent; I didn't mean that."

"It sounded jolly well as if you did."

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"I mean, I don't want to use any device to get into his good books. If he rows me, I can stand it."

"Rats!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you're a confounded ass!" said Nugent coolly. "There would be no harm whatever in keeping the circumstances from his knowledge, as you have done no wrong, and the matter need not concern him anyway. But in allowing him to form a wrong opinion, and then refusing to explain, you act like a fool!"

"If that's all you have to say to me——"

"That's about all."

"Well, I——"

Harry Wharton was about to speak hot words, but he was interrupted. The door was kicked open, and Bob Cherry, Billy Bunter, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, came into the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Cash Wanted.

HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring at Harry Wharton and Nugent. "What are you two duffers arguing about? We heard your voices in the passage."

"The loudfulness of the honourable voices was terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh, in the peculiar English he had learned before he came to Greyfriars. "Is it possible that the peacefulness of the study has been invaded by the ghost of discord?"

"By the what? Oh, the spirit of discord!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Well, it sounded like it to me. Wherefore the argument, kids?"

"Oh, it was nothing!" said Nugent hastily.

Harry Wharton was silent, with knitted brows.

"I expect they're hungry," said Billy Bunter. "Fellows always start ragging one another when they're hungry. It's past tea-time, and we haven't had tea."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder. Wharton looks as if he was hungry for something—trouble, perhaps. However, don't argue now; there's a serious question to discuss."

"What the matter?" asked Wharton.

"We haven't anything for tea."

Harry made an impatient gesture, which Bob Cherry affected not to notice. He went on, looking at Nugent and Hurree Singh with a solemn visage of trouble.

"What's to be done? We can't do our prep. unless we have grub; and we can't have tea in the Hall. Wharton having got us into this fearful position, how are we to get out of it?"

"I—how did I get you into it?"

"You had thirty bob from your uncle the other day, and you didn't spend it on the cricket things, therefore you ought to be in funds!" said Bob Cherry severely. "You are not in funds, therefore, you are the cause of the present distressing scarcity in the study."

"The reasonableness of our Cherryful chum is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "What has our worthy chum to say?"

"Oh, rats!"

"The ratfulness of our esteemed friend's reply is only equalled by the pigfulness of his manners!" purred the nabob.

Bob Cherry and Nugent chuckled, and Harry turned red.

"Oh, hang!" he exclaimed. "I'm bothered about a letter from my uncle, that's what's the matter. Don't mind me."

"Oh, that's all right, kid! We won't mind you. It's not always pleasant to hear from your uncle," said Bob Cherry. "Does he hint that the ticket is up?"

"Eh?"

"And that the watch is going to be put among the unredempted pledges if you don't buck up?"

"What the dickens are you talking about?"

"That letter from your uncle."

"I was referring to my guardian, Colonel Wharton."

"Oh! I naturally thought you were referring to the 'uncle' in Dale, who has taken charge of your watch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

Harry Wharton, with a very red face, quitted the study.

"The excitefulness of our chum's honourable anger is great," the nabob remarked. "But the pressingful business of the moment is, how to sufficiently raise the breeze to purchase the grubfulness we require for teaful refreshment."

"And that's a jolly serious matter," said Billy Bunter, blinking solemnly at the chums through his big spectacles. "I'm hungry!"

"You always are, Owl."

"My postal-order hasn't arrived."

"Go hon!"

"I was expecting it to-day for certain. It will probably arrive by the evening's post, but that will be too late for tea."

"I expect it will be too late for tea when it comes,"

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet." ONE HALFPENNY.

agreed Bob Cherry. "It may be in time for a feed on your twenty-first birthday!"

"Ha, ha!"

"I really don't see any fun in that! That postal-order has been coming for a jolly long time, and——"

"It has, Billy—it has!"

"I wrote to my cousin to-day in the City," said Billy. "He gives me tips sometimes, and I thought he ought to stand something, as I haven't borrowed anything at all of him since last holidays. I told him, if he sent me ten shillings, to mark it 'Urgent!' as we were practically in a state of famine."

"But he hasn't done it?"

"Well, there's been some delay."

"The question is, what is going to be done?" said Bob Cherry seriously. "We shall have tin again on Saturday. But we shall want a lot of it to wipe off the accounts we've run up at the tuck-shop. They won't give us any more tick there. Are we to go without our tea?"

"Impossible!" said Bunter hastily. "I'm surprised at you suggesting such a thing, Cherry."

"Well, can you suggest anything?"

"I think it's up against you fellows to suggest something. I always do the cooking in this study, and you fellows provide the grub. It's an equal division; and, in fact, you get the butt-end of the bargain, as you know very well you can't cook for toffee! I'm ready to keep my part of the bargain; I'm ready to cook. You fellows will have to find something for me to cook. Play the game!"

"Why, you young duffer, we should have plenty of tin, only you have cleared out the nabob over your confounded physical culture expenses."

"The clearfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "I am broke to the widefulness!"

"That's all very well, but I'm hungry! What I want to know is, where is the grub coming from?" said Billy Bunter. "I can't starve, you know!"

"You never know what you can do till you try!" Bob Cherry suggested.

"I'm jolly sure I'm not going to try! Look here, Bulstrode has a great deal of money, and he often lent me little sums when he was in this study, before Cherry came. Can't you borrow something of Bulstrode?"

"Yes, we're likely to borrow of that cad!"

"I don't see that his being a cad has anything to do with it. That's his own look-out. What I want is something to eat."

"You'd better go and look for that postal-order of yours, then!" said Bob Cherry. "I knew there had been a letter for Wharton, and I was in hopes there might have been something in it."

"His uncle is coming down to-morrow," said Nugent.

"Good! Is he the kind of individual one can touch for a feed?"

Nugent laughed.

"I don't think so, from Wharton's description."

"Still, you never know."

"We can't wait till to-morrow for our tea," said Billy Bunter. "Are you chaps going to raise the wind somehow?"

"We'll try," said Bob Cherry. "Come on, kids, let's go round on a borrowing expedition, and see what we can do."

"The goodness of the wheezy idea is great. It is quite probable that we shall be able to perform the borrowfulness of the necessary cash."

"We'll try, anyway!" said Nugent, not very hopefully.

And the chums left the study upon the forlorn hope. Billy Bunter remained alone, with a serious wrinkling upon his brow. He was hungry, and when he was hungry he was active. But though he wrinkled his brows and rubbed his forehead, he could think of no means of raising the wind—except borrowing of Bulstrode. And he had a painful feeling that that might mean a licking from the chums of Study No. 1, who were on bad terms with the bully of the Remove.

"But I'm not going to starve to please them!" grunted Bunter at last. "I'm jolly well going to Bulstrode's study, and chance it!"

And he went.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bully Bulstrode!

"I SAY, Bulstrode——"

Bulstrode was sitting in his study, working, when Billy Bunter's big spectacles glimmered in at the door. Hazeldene, who shared the study with the bully of the Remove, was looking out of the window, with his hands in his pockets. There was not much love lost between the study-mates, especially since Hazeldene had become on better terms with the chums of No. 1.

Bulstrode looked up irritably.

"Hallo, kid! What are you bothering about?"

"I haven't had my tea."

"Go and have it, then!"

"I haven't anything to eat."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Now, don't be brutal, Bulstrode! You used to lend me little sums when you were in our study."

"It's a bad habit I've got out of," said Bulstrode. "Go and borrow of Bob Cherry or your inky friend from India."

"They're stony."

"Then go to Jericho!"

"So I would, Bulstrode, if I could get my tea there," said Bunter. "But, you see, I'm fearfully hungry, and we haven't any grub in the study."

"Do the others know you've come cadging to me?" asked Bulstrode curiously.

"I don't see why you should call it cadging."

"Do they know you have come?"

"Oh, no! They might lick me if they did, and I depend upon you not to tell them that you are going to lend me ten shillings!"

Bulstrode grinned.

"I certainly sha'n't tell them I'm going to lend you ten shillings, you Owl, when I'm going to do nothing of the sort!"

"Well, if you're short of cash, I could make five shillings do!"

"Could you really?" asked Bulstrode sarcastically. "Why don't you ask for five pounds while you're about it? You would be just as likely to get it!"

"I don't want to be unreasonable. Five shillings—"

"Oh, scat! Get out!"

"Well, if you can't spare five shillings, suppose you make it one?"

"Clear! I've got my work to do."

"Look here, Bulstrode, I'm expecting a postal-order by the evening's post—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"It will be for ten shillings. If you like to spring eight now, you can have the whole postal-order when it comes."

"Rats! Get out, you young ass, or I'll lam you!"

"I think you're very selfish! I say, Vaseline, have you got any money to lend?"

"No!" snapped Hazeldene.

"I suppose you have given all of it to that Sheeney moneylender I saw you with the other day?" said Billy Bunter discontentedly. "Fellows are so selfish. I wish you were back in our study again, Bulstrode; I always had enough to eat then! If you can't stand me any cash, have you got a pie or anything, just for a snack?"

"I've got a ruler here," said Bulstrode, taking it up, "and I shall lay it about you if you don't clear out and leave me alone!"

"Don't be hasty, Bulstrode! You might break my spectacles, and then you would have to pay for them, you know. Besides, I want to do a trade with you."

"In what way?" asked Bulstrode suspiciously. "Have you got something to sell? I heard that Skinner got a bargain off you in cricket-bats the other day."

"Yes, I sold him a bat for five bob that was worth nine or ten," said Bunter. "It was a bit knocked about, but it was a splendid bat, and Wharton had knocked up a lot of runs with it, I can tell you!"

"Was it Wharton's bat?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha!"

"Nothing funny in that, that I can see. I have to attend to the commissariat department in the study, and if there isn't any cash, I have to raise some."

"If I had been Wharton, I'd have collared the bat back from Skinner!"

"Oh, Wharton wouldn't do a mean thing like that! Ow! What's the matter? Let go my ear; you're hurting me!"

"Am I?" said Bulstrode, giving the fat boy of the Remove a twist that made him wriggle. "I shall hurt you some more if I have any more of your cheek, you young porpoise!"

"Oh, please don't, Bulstrode! I say, I want to trade with you—"

"Are you selling Wharton's new bat?"

"He hasn't got his new bat yet. I've got a pocket-knife here I want to dispose of. It's got three blades, and a corkscrew, and a tin-opener, and a file and gimlet in it, and I know for a fact that it cost fourteen and six!"

"Is it yours?"

"I've got it to sell," said Bunter evasively. "It would be a big bargain for anybody at five bob, Bulstrode!"

"I dare say it would," said Bulstrode, looking at the knife. "I'll spring three and six for it, if you like."

"Oh, don't be mean, Bulstrode! Ow! Let go my ear!

If you won't go the five bob, I'll take three and six with pleasure! Hand it over!"

Bulstrode grinned, and handed over three shillings and sixpence, and pocketed the knife. Hazeldene dropped his hand on Bunter's shoulder.

"That knife belongs to Bob Cherry, Bunter."

"It belongs to Bulstrode now, Vaseline."

"You had no right to sell it."

"I have to raise funds for feeding in the study," explained Bunter. "Of course, I shall tell Cherry; otherwise, it would not be perfectly honest to sell his knife."

"You ought to have told him first."

"Oh, no; he would have been bound to raise some objection! It's more satisfactory in every way to tell him afterwards!"

"You young rascal!"

"I wish you wouldn't call me names, Vaseline! I don't like it, and it's not polite. Besides, you are a rotter yourself, you know, and you've no right to find fault. I can sell Cherry's pocket-knife if I like, but you swindled Harry Wharton over an exam., and got jolly well ragged for it by the Remove!"

Hazeldene turned red.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I'm sincerely sorry if I've touched on a tender spot, Vaseline," said Bunter; "but, really, a chap like you has no right to start preaching at people."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bulstrode, laughing. "He has you there!"

Hazeldene gave a mirthless laugh.

"I suppose he has," he said. "I haven't any right to preach, that's certain. All the same, Bunter oughtn't to have sold the knife and you oughtn't to have bought it, Bulstrode."

"Looking for a thick ear?" inquired Bulstrode.

Hazeldene quitted the study without replying. Billy Bunter followed, and took his way towards the school shop. This little establishment, within the walls of Greyfriars, was kept by Mrs. Mimble, the wife of the Head's gardener. Billy Bunter was one of Mrs. Mimble's most extensive customers, though he had a rather irritating little way of running up accounts and never settling them. Mrs. Mimble had of late shown herself rather sharp on that point, and she had warned Billy Bunter in round terms that it was no use his showing himself in the shop again till he was prepared to settle several little outstanding accounts.

But Billy had great faith in the efficacy of a persuasive tongue and the sight of ready money. He entered the school shop with the cash jingling in his pocket. Mrs. Mimble looked at him rather distrustfully.

"I've got nothing for you, Master Bunter," she said.

Billy slapped down three and sixpence on the counter.

"I've got ready money to pay for what I have now, Mrs. Mimble," he said. "The old account can stand over till my postal-order comes."

"I don't believe your postal-order ever will come."

"Well, it isn't right of you to damp my spirits that way, Mrs. Mimble. I look on it as very inconsiderate."

"Tush!" said the good dame. "What do you want now?"

"I'll look over the things. If I pay three and six, you won't mind my having seven shillings' worth, will you, and let the rest stand over till to-morrow?"

"Yes, I will!" said Mrs. Mimble, with emphasis. "What are you doing now? You are eating my jam-tarts, you greedy boy!"

"I'm so fearfully hungry," said Bunter, his mouth full of tart. "If I'm going to have the trouble of selling people's pocket-knives to raise the wind, I've a right to fill some of this emptiness before I get the tea, I think. You wouldn't like me to fall down dead in your shop, would you, Mrs. Mimble?"

"You might, if you eat so quickly!"

"Perhaps you're right, and I shouldn't start with jam-tarts," said Billy Bunter thoughtfully. "I'll have a rabbit-pie to begin with, and some of those pork-pies. That will take up half the tin, and I think I'm entitled to that much for my trouble. The rest will get some bread, and butter, and cheese for the other fellows. If they don't take any trouble about raising the tin, they can't expect to live on the fat of the land."

The rabbit-pie disappeared in a few minutes; the pork-pies followed; and then Billy Bunter, with the keen edge taken off his appetite, looked longingly at the jam-tarts. He took one just to taste, and another because the first was so nice, and a third absent-mindedly. A fourth and fifth followed almost unconsciously. Then Mrs. Mimble's hand rose warningly.

"You must not take any more, Master Bunter!"

"No," said Billy, with a heavy sigh; "I suppose not, Mrs. Mimble. I must leave something for the other

fellows. Will you give me the change out of the three and six in bread and cheese, please?"

"There isn't any change. What you have had comes to four shillings and threepence," said Mrs. Mumble severely. Billy Bunter gasped.

"You—you're joking!"

"I am not. You have been eating ever since you came into the shop. You owe me ninepence, and you must pay it."

"It will have to go down on the account," said Bunter. "I haven't any cash, and I don't suppose I shall be able to raise any until my postal-order comes, unless I can find Cherry's new bicycle lantern. I know Russell wants to buy a bicycle lantern cheap. Well, I'll see."

And Billy Bunter drifted out of the tuck-shop.

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Nugent, slapping him on the shoulder. "We've been looking for you, Billy. What have you been doing in Mrs. Mumble's shop?"

"Gorging!" said Bob Cherry. "You can see that by the look of him!"

"The tracefulness of the jam on the honourable big mouth of our worthy chum is distinctly clearful," remarked Hurree Singh.

Nugent shook the Owl.

"Where did you get the cash from, Billy?"

"I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Nugent. You'll shake my spectacles off, and they might get broken, you know, and then you will have to pay for them. Besides, I don't feel like being shaken after eating rabbit and pork pies and jam-tarts."

"Rabbit and pork pies and jam-tarts!" howled Bob Cherry. "Has your postal-order really come at last, you young cannibal, and you've blued it all on yourself?"

"No, it hasn't come yet, Cherry, though I'm really expecting it by every post," said Bunter. "I sold a pocket-knife to Bulstrode for three and six—"

"Whose pocket-knife?" asked Bob Cherry suspiciously.

"The whosefulness is an important point," Hurree Singh remarked.

"Well, as a matter of fact—"

"Whose pocket-knife was it?"

"You see, Cherry, it was up to me to get something for tea—"

"You've sold my pocket-knife!" roared Bob Cherry, seizing the fat boy of the Remove by the collar and shaking him violently.

"Please—please don't!" gasped Billy. "It makes me feel very uncomfortable inside. I remember now that rabbit and pork at the same time never did agree with me, though I was so hungry I forgot all about it. Make him leave off, you fellows!"

"You young villain!" said Bob Cherry. "How much did you get for the knife?"

"I told you; three and six!"

"And it cost my uncle fourteen and six! Why, I—"

"Well, I had to raise the wind somehow to get tea," said Bunter, in an aggrieved tone. "I never expect thanks from you fellows, but I think you might be civil."

"You—you—you—"

"Oh, never mind," said Nugent, laughing; "when we're in funds we'll get the knife back! I'm famished now, and if Bunter has got tea we'll forgive him. Let's go and feed!"

"The goodfulness of the wheeze is great."

"Oh, well, come along!" said Bob Cherry. "Where is the grub, Billy?"

Billy Bunter turned red.

"You see—"

"We don't see the grub. Where is it?"

"You see, I was so hungry, I thought I ought to have just a little snack before getting tea, to keep up my strength—"

"Well, no harm in that; but where's the grub?"

"I—I—you see, you fellows, I was fearfully hungry, and it ran up almost without my noticing it. And—and as a matter of fact—"

"Where's the grub?"

"There isn't any!"

"Isn't any?" shouted three voices together.

"No. It's—it's all gone. I'm sincerely sorry; but, you see, I was so famished, and I really didn't notice—"

"You young cormorant!"

"I owe Mrs. Mumble ninepence, too," said Bunter. "The things came to four-and-threepence. The worst of it is that I'm still hungry."

What the chums of the Remove would have said will never be known, for just then there was an interruption. Skinner of the Remove dashed up, evidently excited.

"Is Bunter here? Ah, I see him! Billy, there's a post-office messenger asking for you."

"What?"

"It's your postal-order at last, Billy."

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It's come."

Billy Bunter glowed with satisfaction.

"I knew my cousin would turn up trumps!" he exclaimed.

"He's rather a practical joker, you know, and he thought it funny, I dare say, to keep me waiting."

"Can't understand that sort of fun," said Bob Cherry; "but I suppose his heart has softened, as he has sent the thing down by messenger."

"Yes, rather! Now, you chaps, you'll see that I'll keep my word. I'll stand the rippingest feed we've ever had in Study No. 1!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Where is he, Skinner? I say, you fellows, come along!"

And the Removites hurried down to the gate, where a lad in uniform was just coming in.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Postal Order.

"M. R. BUNTER!"

"Here I am!" beamed Billy. "You have an express letter? Hand it over!"

"Yes, sir. One-and-six to pay, please!"

Billy Bunter stared.

"Eh?"

"One-and-six to pay, please."

"But there can't be anything to pay, you know. That letter is from my cousin, and he wouldn't leave it for me to pay for."

The lad in uniform grinned.

"One-and-six to pay, please," he said again.

"Oh, hang it!" said Bob Cherry. "If there's a postal-order for ten shillings in the letter, you needn't grudge eighteenpence, Billy."

"I don't, Cherry; but, you see, I haven't it."

"One-and-six to pay, please."

Billy Bunter felt in his pockets. He felt in all of them very carefully, in the hope that some coin might have been overlooked in previous searches; but the hope was vain.

Not a single coin came to light. He turned out a variety of articles, ranging from marbles and toffee to caramels and whipcord; but there was not a single solitary coin of any description whatever. Billy Bunter turned to his companions.

"Have you got any money, you fellows?"

"Not a rap," said Bob Cherry.

"Not a red cent," said Nugent.

"The brokefulness of myself is terrific," said the nabob sadly.

"Oh, I say, that's too bad!"

"One-and-six to pay, please."

"You're quite sure that there isn't any mistake, my lad?"

"Yes, sir. I've had to bring this over from Dale."

"It was careless of my cousin, but I suppose I oughtn't to grumble at a chap who is sending me half-a-sov.," said Billy Bunter.

"Are you going to take the letter, sir?"

"Yes, of course. It's for me."

"One-and-six to pay, please."

"Look here, I'll tell you how we can fix it. I'll have the letter, and give you my I O U for the amount."

"I'm not allowed to leave it without the money, sir."

"Well, hand it over, then, and I'll open it, and change the postal-order, and then I can square with you."

The messenger-boy shook his head.

"Can't hand it over without the money, sir."

"But I can settle as soon as I get the postal-order out."

"Not allowed, sir."

"Look here, don't you be a young ass! There's a postal-order in that letter for me value ten bob, and as soon as I change it—"

"Not allowed, sir."

"Look here—"

"One-and-six to pay, please."

Billy Bunter tore his hair. He gazed longingly at the envelope bearing his name upon it, as if meditating a personal attack upon the messenger-boy. Bob Cherry jerked him by the shoulder.

"You can't have it, Bunt, unless you can square for it. Don't be an ass!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well, what is it?"

"Back me up, and I'll jolly soon have it," whispered Billy Bunter; "then we can change the postal-order, and pay up."

"You young ass—"

"Really, Cherry—"

"Do you want to be shoved into prison for highway-robbery?" said Cherry. "You utter young idiot! This is what comes of selling other fellows' bats and pocket-knives."

"Oh, I say—"

"Are you going to take the letter, sir?"

"Of course I am."

"I have to get back to Dale Post-office, and—"

Bunter ran his fingers through his hair in despair. What was to be done? It was a really desperate situation. There was the envelope containing the postal-order, and here he was, broke to the world, unable to lay hands upon the prize for want of a paltry eighteenpence!

What was to be done? To allow the letter to go back to Dale Post-office was not to be thought of. But there really seemed to be no alternative.

"My hat!" groaned Bunter. "What can we do? Don't be in a hurry, kid. You've got lots of time to get back to Dale Post-office. This is a serious matter."

He went through his pockets again. He took out a little penknife with a silver handle, and turned it over in his fingers.

"Yates offered me eighteenpence for this the other day," he said. "It's worth double, but for the sake of the ten bob—"

"There's Yates!" said Bob Cherry, with a nod towards a lad who was passing with a cricket-bat under his arm. "Now's your chance, kid!"

"Hi, Yates! Hi! Come here, will you?"

The Removeite came towards them.

"What do you want, Bunter?"

"Will you give me two bob for my knife?"

"No, I won't!" said Yates promptly.

"Then I'll take the one-and-six you offered me the other day," said Bunter. "This kid has a letter for me, and he won't give it up unless I pay first."

"Knows you, perhaps," suggested Yates.

"Oh, I say, Yates, have you got that eighteenpence?"

"Yes, here it is. Hand over the knife first."

"Oh, I say—"

"Hand it over; I'm in a hurry!"

"Well, here it is. Thank you! It's worth double—"

But Yates was already gone, and Bunter was left with a shilling and sixpence in his palm.

"That's rather rotten, you fellows, selling a penknife for half its value!"

"Yes, if it happens to be your own knife," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Still, it's worth it. Hand over that letter, young 'un."

"One-and-six to pay, please."

"Here you are. Now let me have the letter, for goodness' sake."

The money was paid over, and the letter was given up. The messenger-boy went down the road whistling. Billy Bunter turned the letter over in his hands gloatingly. His plump, spectacled countenance was glowing with satisfaction.

"Well, aren't you going to open it?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Certainly, but—"

"Open it, then."

"The quickfulness would be gratifying under the circumstances," Hurree Singh remarked. "We are all extremely attacked by the famished hungerfulness."

"Yes, but I say—"

"Don't say anything, old chap. Open the letter."

"But, I say, you fellows have made a lot of jokes about my postal-order. You've always been hinting that it would never come. Well, here it is."

"The exactfulness of the statement is terrific," said the nabob; "but the factfulness remains that we have not yet beheld the actuality of the postal-order. The letterful communication might contain otherfulness."

"I'll jolly soon show you that!" said the fat boy of the Remove.

He slit open the envelope. There was no letter inside, but there certainly was a postal-order. It was folded, with the face inside, but the colour could be seen through the flimsy paper.

"By Jove," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "it really is a postal-order! What bounder was it who said that the age of miracles is past?"

"Wonderfulnesses will never cease," said the nabob. "As your poet Shakespeare remarks: 'Can such things be? And overcome us like a summerful cloudfulness, without our special wonder.'"

"Well, let's see how much it's for," said Nugent.

Billy Bunter opened out the postal-order. Then a change came over his gleeful face. His grin disappeared, his jaw dropped, and he gave a gasp like an expiring fish.

"Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look!" said Bunter faintly.

He held the postal-order out to view. The chums of the Remove looked and stared, and then burst into a roar of irresistible laughter, for upon the postal-order was printed, plain to every eye:

"ONE SHILLING."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hazeldene to the Rescue.

"ONE shilling!"

Billy Bunter was staring at the cruel words. "One shilling!" gasped Bob Cherry, with the tears of laughter running down his cheeks. "My only hat! One shilling!"

"And it cost Buntie eighteenpence!" gasped Nugent.

"My solitary turban!" ejaculated Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The disappointfulness is great, but the jokefulness is terrific. Ha, ha, ha!"

"One shilling!" murmured Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rotter! One shilling! If it isn't a mistake, it is a rotten joke. I don't know what you fellows are cackling at. There's nothing funny in this to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You said your cousin was a practical joker. If this is a sample of his practical joking, I'm glad he's your cousin, and not mine."

"By Jove, yes!" said Nugent. "If I had a practical joker like that in the family, I should get rid of him regardless of funeral expenses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was still staring ruefully at the postal-order. The little joke of his humorous cousin did not appeal to his sense of what was funny in the least.

"Well, this is a sell!" he grunted at last. "Where's that messenger kid? Has the young rotter gone? I'm going to have my money back."

"Ha, ha! You can't, especially now you've opened the letter."

"It's a swindle. Yates ought to give me back my knife; but he's a selfish chap. I think it's rotten all round. I don't even get any sympathy from you chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't like cackling over a fellow's misfortunes. I'm hungry! I suppose I can get Mrs. Mimble to change this order. A shilling is better than nothing."

"It will get bread-and-butter and cheese," said Bob Cherry. "We'll go with him and change it, kids, and see that he doesn't scoff it up."

"I say, you fellows, I think you might trust me—"

"Yes, we're sure to, after your scoffing up my pocket-knife," said Bob Cherry. "Take his other arm, Frank."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent affectionately took an arm each of Billy Bunter, and walked him off towards the tuck-shop.

"There is no arm for me to take," Hurree Singh remarked, "but I shall be pleased to help our esteemed friend along footfully."

"Ow!" grunted Billy. "Keep your great hoofs off my trousers, you inky beast!"

"Then you had better assume the hurryfulness," suggested the nabob. "So long as you are nearfully reached with my boot, you are in danger of experiencing the kickfulness."

"Chuck it! I'm going!"

And Billy Bunter kept on the run to the tuck-shop. Mrs. Mimble greeted the sight of her best customers with an expansive smile. The smile grew a little less expansive when she learned that they had only a shilling postal-order to change.

"Is this your postal-order, Master Bunter?"

"Yes. Not really the one I was expecting, but another," said Bunter. "Will you change it for me, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Certainly."

Mrs. Mimble put the postal-order away in a drawer, and pushed threepence over the counter towards Bunter. Billy gazed at it.

"What is that for, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Your change, Master Bunter."

"But it was a postal-order for a shilling. What do you mean by giving me threepence for a shilling postal-order?"

"You remember the ninepence a little while ago, Master Bunter. You promised it when your postal-order came."

"My—my only hat! But I meant another postal-order, not this one!"

"There is your change, Master Bunter," said the dame, with lines of evident determination in her face. "And when you get another postal-order, please do not forget that you owe me eleven shillings."

"But really, Mrs. Mimble—"

Billy stammered the dismayed Billy.

"Can I get you anything, young gentlemen?"

"Rather!" said Bob Cherry. "If you don't mind chalking it up over Saturday, Mrs. Mimble."

The dame shook her head.

"Well, we'd better get all we can for threepence," said Bunter. "Are those new cream puffs you've got there, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Yes; I made them to-day. They're a penny each."
 "H'm! I'll taste one."
 Bunter tasted one, and it disappeared in a moment. Almost before the chums of the Remove knew what he was doing, he had bolted a couple more.

"Come along, chaps," he said. "They're nice, but three wouldn't go round, so I know you don't mind. Mrs. Mimble has acted meanly, and in future I shall transfer my custom to the tuck-shop in the village. Let's get out."

"You young cormorant!"
 "It's no good calling me names, Bob Cherry. It doesn't improve matters in the least. Hasn't any bounder here been able to raise any tin?"

"Not a sniff of it."
 "Where's Wharton? Perhaps he's had better luck."
 "Oh, he went off in a huff! He's not thinking about tea," said Bob Cherry.

"Never mind, here he is," said Billy Bunter, spotting Harry crossing the Close with his head bowed a little in thought, and his hands in his trouser's pockets. "Let's see whether he's managed it, anyway. I say, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton stopped for them to come up. There was still a shade upon the brow of the captain of the Remove.

"Hallo, Wharton! Have you had any luck?"
 "What do you mean?"
 "I mean, have you been able to raise any tin?"
 "I haven't been trying to."

Billy Bunter stared at him in surprise and indignation. "You haven't been trying to—when you know that it's nearly an hour past tea-time, and there's nothing in the larder! Are you off your onion?"

"Oh, bother!" said Harry.
 "I suppose Cherry was right when he said you had gone off in the sulks."

Harry flushed crimson, and darted a quick glance towards Bob Cherry. The latter turned red, too.

"You young idiot!" exclaimed Bob. "I didn't say anything of the kind. I said Wharton had gone off in a huff!"

"Well, I can't see much difference myself. Here we've been hunting high and low for some tin, and Wharton hasn't even thought about it. What have you done for your own tea, Wharton?"

"I haven't had any."
 "Well, you want some, I suppose?"
 "I suppose so. It doesn't matter."

"When I hear a fellow say that a meal doesn't matter, I can't help feeling that there's something very wrong with him somewhere," said Bunter. "However, if you haven't any tin, it's no good talking. Let's get over to the Hall, chaps; it's better to have the school tea than nothing."

"Tea's over by this time," said Nugent.
 "Ow! I never thought of that! We may be in time to get something, though."

Bunter cut off at top speed. The chums of the Remove followed more slowly, Harry Wharton joining them after a rather doubtful glance at Bob Cherry. Bob, however, seemed to be quite unconscious that there had been any friction.

They reached the door of the dining-hall, to find that Nugent's words were quite correct. Tea was over, and the tables cleared. Billy Bunter was standing in the doorway, the picture of dismay.

"We're done," he said hopelessly.
 "Well, you've had a big gorge not much over an hour ago," said Bob Cherry. "You haven't anything to grumble at. But we—"

"You don't get as hungry as I do. Oh, dear!"
 "Hallo, chaps!" It was Hazeldene's voice. The junior who had always been called the cad of the Remove, came towards them. "Anything the matter? Have you had your tea?"

"No," said Bob Cherry, with a grimace.
 "Good! I—"
 "You may call it good, Vaseline," said Billy Bunter. "I don't call it anything of the kind. I'm famished."

"I was going to say—"
 "I don't know what will happen if I don't get a feed. Mrs. Mimble is a hard-hearted woman, and doesn't care if I die of inanition."

"Let me speak, Billy. I was going to ask you fellows if you would come to tea with me," said Hazeldene. "I've had a remittance from my governor, and I want to stand a feed, if you'll accept. What do you say?"

Bob Cherry hugged him round the neck so suddenly that he staggered.
 "Here, I say!"
 "Corn in Egypt!" exclaimed Nugent. "Will we have tea with you? Well, rather!"
 "The ratherfulness is terrific."
 "Come to my heart," sobbed Bob Cherry. "Come to my heart, and let me weep briny tears over your shoulder down the back of your neck."
 "We'll come; rather!" said Harry Wharton, with a curious look at Hazeldene. "We'll be jolly glad to come."

"And we'll help you with the shopping if it isn't over yet," said Bob Cherry. "And Billy Bunter will attend to the cooking department."
 "I'd be jolly glad to," said Bunter. "Of course, you don't mind if I have a snack first, to keep me up while I'm doing the cooking?"
 Hazeldene laughed.

"Certainly not, Billy. You chaps won't mind having the feed in your study instead of mine, will you? Bulstrode is a beast, and—"

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry. "You shall stand the feed where you like—on top of the clock tower if you please. The chief thing is to stand it quickly."
 "Come on, then, and we'll do the shopping," laughed Hazeldene.

And the chums of the Remove, greatly relieved in their minds, followed Hazeldene to Mrs. Mimble's shop; and though that good lady looked glum enough when they entered, she soon melted at the sight of a five-shilling-piece in Hazeldene's hand. Ten minutes later the sorely-tried Removites were feasting.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
 Hazeldene Inquires.

HAZELDENE "did" that tea in really good style. With five shillings to expend, with Bob Cherry to help him expend it in the most judicious manner, and Billy Bunter to act the part of chef, and all the juniors as hungry as hunters, the feed was bound to be a success. If it had been held in Hazeldene's own study, Bulstrode would have made things unpleasant; but by meeting in Study No. 1, the feasters avoided the bully of the Remove, and everything in the garden, as Bob Cherry remarked, was lovely. Only a cloud hovered over the brow of Harry Wharton at intervals. He was thinking of his uncle's visit on the morrow.

Hazeldene looked at him curiously once or twice. He could not help seeing that Harry had a worry on his mind, though he tried to be cheerful. The prospect of being questioned as to what had become of his watch, and why he had not bought his new bat, was not pleasant to Harry. To fully explain, seemed like lauding up the good act he had done to save Hazeldene from ruin. Besides, he was not the kind of fellow to be questioned and cross-examined. Yet the thought of standing before the colonel's keen grey eyes in the position of a culprit, was unpleasant, although he had courage enough to refuse to explain, and to take the consequences.

"Well, this is all right," said Bob Cherry, as he filled up his cup with tea for the fourth time. "Hazeldene, you are a friend in need, and here's to you."

"Yes, ratherfully!" exclaimed Hurreo Janset Ram Singh, lifting his teacup. "Here is to your honourable self much-fully, my worthy and esteemed chum. We were famishing for want of the foodful refreshment, when you nobly came to the rescue, and everything was gardenfully lovely."

Hazeldene laughed.
 "It hasn't been a bad feed," said Billy Bunter, with the air of a critic. "I've seen better, and I've seen worse. But when I think that but for Vaseline we might have had to go without any tea at all, I feel as if I could cry, you know. No wonder Wharton looks down in the mouth!"

Harry Wharton started.
 "Eh? I'm not looking down in the mouth," he said.
 "Oh, aren't you? I can't see very well, you know. I'm extremely short-sighted," said Billy Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "But I certainly thought you were looking down in the mouth."

"Oh, rats!"
 "Certainly, Wharton, I'll shut up if that's what you mean. I dare say I was mistaken, and you were not looking down in the mouth at all," agreed Bunter. "I know you don't understand the importance of having enough to eat, and having it at the right time. I dare say you've forgotten already about the danger we were in of missing our tea, and are thinking about your uncle coming down to-morrow."

Hazeldene glanced quickly at Harry.
 "Your uncle is coming down to-morrow?" he asked.
 "Yes."
 "That will be jolly for you."
 "Ye-es."

Hazeldene said no more. But when the tea was over, and the juniors separated, he followed Billy Bunter down the passage, and drew him into a quiet corner. Bunter followed him willingly. He expected that Hazeldene's action meant the production of some sweets or tarts that had been reserved especially for himself. But he was disappointed.

"I say, Vaseline, what is it? Toffee?"
 "Toffee? No, I want to speak to you."

"Oh! You could have done that in the study."

"What's that about Wharton's uncle coming down to-morrow?" said Hazeldene, unheeding. "Why should he be down in the mouth over that?"

"Oh, I only know what I gather from a few words I happened to hear; you know, a fellow does happen to hear things—"

"I know you do, Billy—I mean, go on."

"Colonel Wharton is coming down to see him to-morrow, you see, and I fancy Wharton is in a blue funk about it."

"Why should he be?"

"Oh, didn't you know?"

"Know what?" said Hazeldene impatiently. "How should I know anything? Go on."

"Wharton has parted with his watch," said Bunter. "Sold it or pawned it, you know. I don't know what for, for he's been stony ever since, and he certainly didn't bring the money back to Greyfriars. I shouldn't like to think that Wharton had been betting on Dale racecourse, but you never can tell. It looks suspicious."

"You young—I mean, is that why Wharton was depressed?"

"I suppose so, and then there were his cricket things, you know. He was to have spent thirty bob on them, and the colonel will expect to see them."

"I see," said Hazeldene, with a strange expression upon his face.

"Wharton blued it all that same afternoon in Dale," explained Billy. "It must have been on the races. He couldn't have spent two pounds or so on grub, could he?"

"I suppose not," said Hazeldene absently.

"He thinks the colonel will inquire about it. Of course, he will—I would, if I were a chap's guardian, and he pawned his watch," said Bunter. "It isn't as if he did it to stand a feed or anything of that kind."

Hazeldene nodded.

"The worst of it is, that Wharton never was on good terms with his uncle," went on the loquacious Billy. "He was bundled off to Greyfriars in the first place against his will, and the old chap seems to be a tyrant, from what I hear."

Hazeldene turned away.

"I say, Vaseline, where are you going?"

Hazeldene did not reply. He walked away with a dark shade of thought upon his brow. Billy Bunter stared after him in surprise.

"Well, I call that rude!" he ejaculated. "Fancy walking away while a fellow's talking to you! I wonder if all those fellows are out of the study yet? If they are, I may as well get back and finish the cake."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Old Boy at Greyfriars.

"HARRY, my boy!"

It was a cheery, hearty greeting. The Remove were in their class-room, and Harry had been in his place in the Form, when a message was brought in to Mr. Quelch, and the Form-master signed to Harry to come out before the class.

Harry guessed at once what it meant, and he rose unwillingly from his place and went out towards the Form-master. Mr. Quelch gave him a kind look.

"Your uncle has arrived, Wharton. You are excused the rest of the lesson."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry.

But his look was not joyful as he left the class-room and went out into the hall, where Colonel Wharton was waiting for him.

The colonel gave him a quick, searching look as he came into view. Harry advanced towards him with downcast eyes, not knowing how to greet the guardian he had parted with on such ill terms.

"Harry, my boy!"

Wharton started involuntarily. There was true heartiness in the colonel's deep voice, true regard and affection in the look he gave Harry as he grasped his hand. In spite of himself, Harry melted a little, and he raised his eyes to his

guardian's face with something like a smile. The old soldier surveyed him critically.

"By Jove, Harry, you've improved!"

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Yes, I do, certainly. You are twice the fellow you were. How do you like Greyfriars?"

"I like it very well."

"I thought you would, when you got used to it," said the colonel, with a cheery nod. "I was a boy here myself thirty years ago, and the old place looks just the same. It's a splendid place for the right kind of lad. I have just seen the doctor, Harry, and you are excused the rest of morning lessons. It's some time since I have seen you, lad. Let's get out into the Close—or, rather, show me up to your study. I'd like to have a peep at your quarters."

"Certainly, uncle!"

In spite of his prejudice, Harry could not help thawing in the presence of this frank, unaffected heartiness and cordiality. His own look and feelings became insensibly more cordial.

He led the way to the staircase, and the Indian veteran followed him up to the Remove passage and into Study No. 1. Colonel Wharton looked about him with the keen interest of an "old boy."

"By Jove, just the same place! Same little dens, and jolly comfortable, too. Do you have your tea in here, the same as we used to thirty years ago?"

"Yes," said Harry, smiling.

"Good! What sort of fellows do you chum with here?"

"There's Nugent and Bob Cherry and Bunter in this study," said Harry, "and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur."

The colonel uttered an exclamation.

"By Jove! Is it possible?"

"Do you know Hurree Singh?"

"Do I not?" said the colonel, with a grim smile. "I fought by the side of his father, the old Nabob of Bhanipur, in India, and I have carried Hurree in my arms when he was a child of five, through the tulwars of a rebel mob!"

Harry's eyes gleamed.

"I should like to hear about that, uncle."

"I'll tell you the story some time," laughed the colonel.

"I don't suppose Hurree Singh remembers it, or remembers me; but we shall see. You have four chums in this study with you?"

"Well, three chums," said Harry, "and Billy Bunter."

"Good! I have asked the Head if he could allow you, and any special friends of yours you could name, to have a holiday this afternoon, and he has promised to think of it. I am going to lunch with him, and I shall push the attack home, and I am pretty certain about that holiday. What do you think of the idea?"

Harry's face flushed. It was rather a needless question, to ask a healthy schoolboy what he thought of the idea of having a half-holiday.

"It is very kind of you, sir," said Harry. "I—I—" He broke off.

"What is it, Harry?"

"I"—the boy went very red—"I—you are very kind to me, sir. I—I am glad I came to Greyfriars, and—and you were right in what you said when I left home; it was the best place for me."

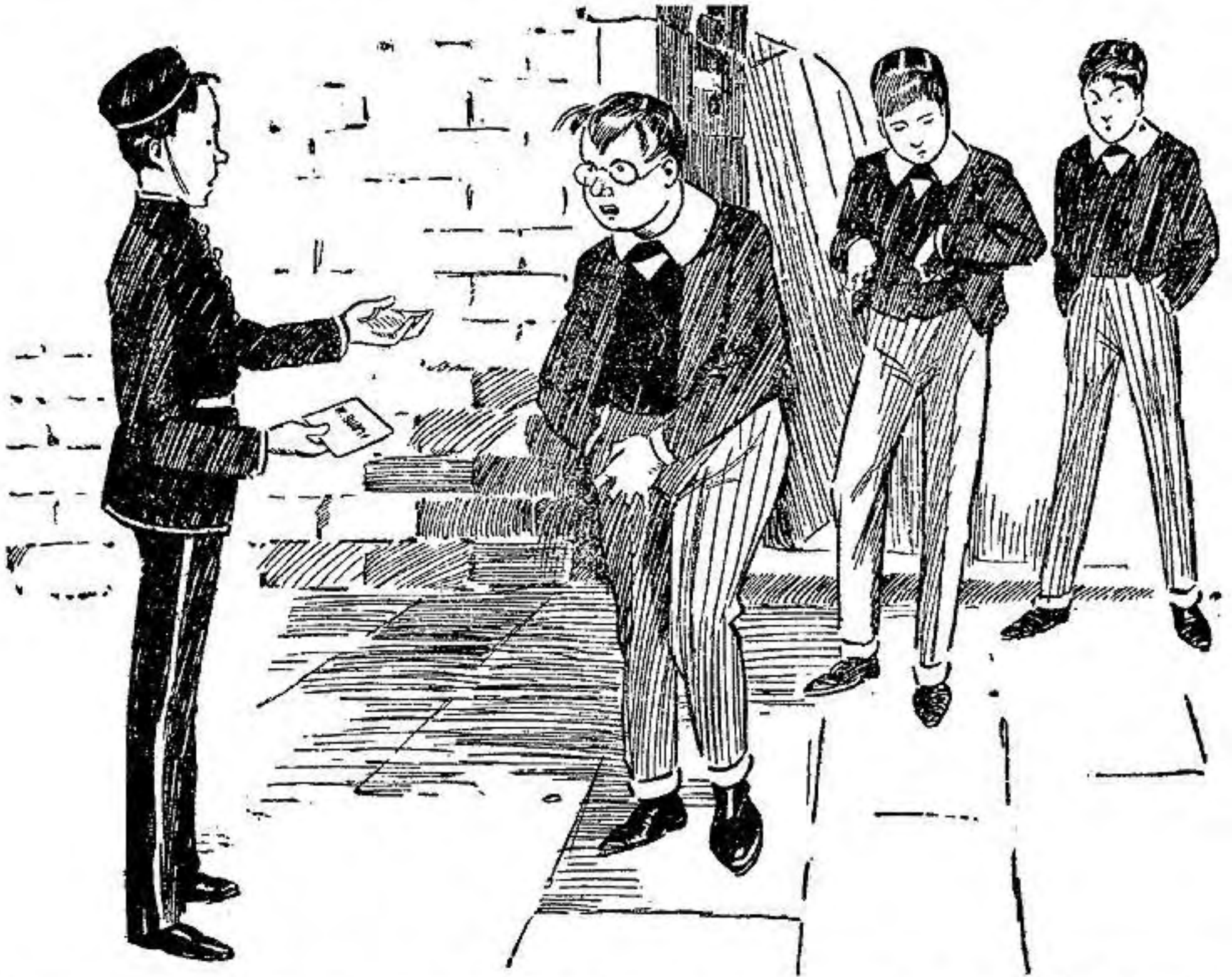
The colonel patted him on the shoulder.

"I am glad to hear you say that, Harry, lad—very glad indeed. I thought you would come to see things in that light in time. I always knew there was sterling stuff in you; as, by Jove, there should be in the son of a soldier who died fighting for his country, with his face to the enemy! Let's go for a stroll round the Close, Harry. I'm curious to see the old place again."

They left the study and the school-house, and Harry played the part of cicerone. At almost every step fresh delighted exclamations broke from the colonel, as he recognised some familiar spot. The space behind the chapel rails, where many of the fustian encounters of Greyfriars took place, brought reminiscences to the colonel. It was the spot where he had licked Baker Major in seven rounds, as he told Harry with great gusto.

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"One-and-six to pay, please," said the messenger. Billy Bunter felt in his pockets. He felt in all of them carefully, in the hope that some coin might have been overlooked in previous searches; but the hope was vain.

"That was something like a fight, too," said the colonel. "I was half a head shorter than Baker, but I licked him. I had better wind than he had, that was the reason. He stood it out as long as he could. Poor Baker! We were in India together after that, and the best of friends, and we often had a little jaw about that fight behind the chapel. Baker always maintained that if his foot hadn't slipped in the last round he would have licked me. Of course, I couldn't allow that."

Harry laughed. These reminiscences were curious enough from a grim old bronzed veteran who had faced danger and death in a dozen fields.

"By the way, how does the time go?" exclaimed the colonel suddenly. "I mustn't be late for lunch with the Head."

Harry coloured.

"I cannot tell you, sir," he said, in a low voice.

The colonel laughed heartily, and felt for his own watch.

"Same old tale!" he exclaimed. "Has somebody been pouring water into your watch, or have you trodden on it?"

"Oh, no, but—"

"Well, never mind, accidents will happen to watches, especially schoolboys' watches," said the colonel good-humouredly. "If it is really done for, Harry, tell me, and I'll send you down another from town."

Harry's face went crimson.

"It is not that, sir, but—"

"Well, never mind," said the colonel, noticing the boy's red and confused face. "It doesn't matter a bit. It's time we were moving."

Harry silently walked by his side. It was like deception to leave the colonel under this misapprehension, yet—

"Uncle!" said Harry abruptly.

The colonel looked down at him.

"I have parted with my watch."

Colonel Wharton laughed.

"Ah, I see! Well, my lad, you needn't look so bothered about it. Changed it for a bat or a fishing-rod, I suppose."

"No. I have parted with it outside the school."

The colonel's face became grave.

"If you were short of money, Harry, you might have written to me. You know I don't want to treat you meanly. There was no need to sell your watch."

"I—I have not sold it."

"Then what the deuce have you done with it?" said the colonel, a trifle testily. "You have not pawned it, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have."

Colonel Wharton stopped dead, and looked at his nephew. The moment had come at last. They faced each other in silence.

"Things have changed here a little since my time, after all," said the colonel. "The boys in my time did not visit pawnshops."

Harry's face was scarlet.

"When did you pawn the watch, Harry?"

"Last Wednesday."

"And you preferred that to writing to me?"

"I—I did not think of it, and there was no time."

"Do you mean to say that you had a sudden call to meet?"

"Well, yes, it was like that."

"I really don't quite understand how it could be. Would you mind explaining?"

Harry was silent.

"You surely had some other resource, without that, even if you did not care to ask me?" said the colonel. "There was the money I sent you for the cricket things; you might have used that, and postponed getting them."

"I have done so."

The colonel knitted his brows.

"Now, Harry, I'm the last fellow in the world to inquire into a boy's private affairs; young fellows have their right to privacy as well as old ones, I am aware of that; but I don't see how a lad in the Lower Fourth could have wanted two or three pounds in a great hurry, unless he had been—well, transgressing in some way. Have you been getting into any difficulties?"

"No, sir."

"Then what did you want the money for?"

Harry did not speak.

"You don't want to explain to me?"

"I'd rather not."

"Suppose I command you to do so?"

Harry Wharton's face set obstinately.

"I shall not do anything of the kind," said Colonel Wharton quietly. "But I cannot rest satisfied with this matter as it stands, Harry. You have no right to visit such a place as a pawnshop, and you have no right to spend so much money without giving me an explanation. I suppose this is all a secret?"

"The Head does not know, of course."

"So I should think. I must turn this over in my mind. Leave me alone for a bit, please."

Harry Wharton walked away in silence. The Remove had come out of their class-room and were pouring into the Close. Harry passed Hazeldene, who looked at him curiously, but Harry did not see him.

Hazeldene drew a quick breath. He had seen Harry part from his uncle, and noted the gloomy expression upon the boy's face. He guessed that something had happened; and, in the light of what Billy Bunter had told him the previous evening, he could guess what it was.

It was a difficult position for Hazeldene. A few weeks ago the cad of the Remove would have shrugged his shoulders and dismissed the affair from his mind. But Hazeldene was no longer the cad of a few weeks ago. There had been a change in him; he saw many things differently now.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Hazeldene Plays the Man!

COLONEL WHARTON walked slowly under the elm-trees, his head bent a little, and a gloomy frown puckering up his brows. The discovery he had just made had come as a heavy blow to him.

He had had faith in Harry. The boy was full of faults, hurried into them by his obstinate and passionate temper, but the colonel had believed that he was made of sterling stuff. He had believed that the faults were all on the surface, and that with a judicious training they would pass away. Now his belief had received a rude shock.

For the right kind of boy a public school was the right place. But for the wrong kind of boy? For the boy prone to fall into reckless or evil habits, it was by no means the right place. He had never dreamt that his nephew was that kind of boy, but he had his doubts now. A lad who spent a large sum of money—large for a junior—and refused to explain how or why—who immediately thought of the pawnshop when it was necessary to raise money—was not the kind of boy he had believed Harry Wharton to be.

Yet the colonel could not help reflecting that, had the lad been really mixed up in any disgraceful transaction, it would have been easy for him to keep the secret. A lad who had gambled away his money would probably have few scruples in prevaricating to account for it. Harry could easily have pretended that his watch had been lost or broken. Surely the boy's sturdy truthfulness was a sign that his character was sound, though it might be reckless. Yet what had become of the money? Why did the boy refuse to explain, as he could easily have done, if there was nothing in the secret to be ashamed of?

"If you please, sir—"

A rather timid voice at his elbow roused the colonel, with a start, from his gloomy reverie. He glanced down at Hazeldene. The Removeite was pale and red by turns, but there was a determined look upon his face.

"What is it, my boy?" said the colonel, kindly enough.

"Do you want to speak to me?"

"Yes, if you are Harry Wharton's uncle."

"I am Colonel Wharton. What is it?"

Hazeldene hesitated. Colonel Wharton looked at him keenly, wondering what was the cause of the emotion visible in the somewhat weak face of the junior.

"What do you wish to say to me, my lad?"

"It's about Wharton, sir. I—I think I ought to tell you, but I don't want him to—to know—"

Hazeldene broke off in confusion. The colonel's face hardened. Hazeldene's words sounded like the preamble to tale-bearing, and tale-bearing was a petty meanness for which Colonel Wharton had a very strong contempt.

"I don't want to hear any tales about my nephew, if that is what you mean," he said abruptly.

Hazeldene went crimson.

"It's nothing of that sort, sir; I've nothing to say against Harry. I—I think I ought to tell you, because you'll be down upon him—"

The colonel started.

For the first time it occurred to him that the boy might be able to enlighten him as to the affair of the watch; perhaps explain what seemed black against Harry. The old soldier's grim face relaxed.

"Go on, my lad," he said kindly enough.

"I don't know whether you know that Wharton parted with his watch," blurted out Hazeldene, "and that he hasn't bought the cricket things you sent him the money for? I found out that he was worried because he thought you would ask him—"

"I know all about it. Go on."

"Well, I think you ought to know why he did it," said Hazeldene eagerly. "Only if you tell the Head I shall be expelled, that's all."

"You will be expelled? What do you mean? Have you been mixed up with Harry in any affair as serious as that?"

"Oh, no; it was all my fault! I—I got into difficulties," stammered Hazeldene. "It was a rotten money-lender, you know. Wharton found it out, and made up his mind to help me—I don't know why, because I always treated him badly enough, but he did it—and he pawned his watch, and gave up buying the cricket things; to get me out of a horrible fix. Isaacs was going to show me up to the Head, and I should have been expelled."

The colonel gave the junior a keen glance.

The tale was evidently true; it was no made-up explanation. The words seemed to be, as it were, torn from Hazeldene; he only uttered them with a great effort. And his fear lest he should be compromising himself by saying so much was evident.

And a load seemed to lift from the colonel's heart.

"Let me understand you," he said quietly. "Had my nephew anything to do with your getting into the clutches of the moneylender?"

"Oh, no! He never knew till it had been going on for weeks."

"And then he helped you?"

"Yes."

"You hadn't been the best of friends?"

"We had been mostly on bad terms."

"Whose fault was that?"

"Mine, I suppose; though Wharton wasn't the easiest fellow to get on with when he first came to Greyfriars!"

The colonel smiled slightly; he could quite believe that. It was probable that even yet Harry was not the easiest of fellows to get on with.

"And yet he did this for you?"

"Yes; and he wasn't going to let me know, either, only I found it out. But I knew he wouldn't explain to you, and I knew you would be down on him; only—only, if you tell the Head I shall be expelled."

"I shall not tell the Head, my lad. You seem to have acted foolishly, and to have hardly deserved what my nephew did for you, but your explaining this to me shows that you have real good in you. I shall keep the secret, of course."

Hazeldene breathed more freely.

"Thank you, sir! And you won't tell Wharton?"

"Why should I not tell him?"

Hazeldene shifted uneasily.

"Well, he's so jolly touchy, you know. He might think I was interfering in his affairs. I don't want to quarrel with him."

The colonel smiled grimly. That was Harry to the life, and he knew it; and he quite understood Hazeldene.

"Well, I must think about it," he said. "By Jove, that's the hour striking, and I shall keep the Head's lunch waiting! I am very much obliged to you, my boy! What is your name, by the way?"

"Hazeldene, sir."

"Good! I shall remember."

The colonel, with the cloud all gone from his brow, strode away rapidly towards the Head's house. He left Hazeldene feeling relieved in his mind, and yet not without some uneasiness, too, as to how Wharton might regard the matter if he came to hear of it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

"The Colonel Sahib's Little Party."

THE chums of the Remove joined Harry Wharton in the Close. They surrounded him and he had to stop, and he made an effort to clear his countenance.

"The troublefulness is great in the honourable

countenance of our esteemed chum," Hurree Singh remarked. "Why this thusness?"

"Oh, it's all right!"

"I am truly relieved to hear that it is all rightful, as I had a fearfulness that it was all wrongful. Has the worthy uncle turned up triumphfully?"

"He's here."

"I saw him," said Nugent. "He looks a decent old boy!"

"He is one."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Lucky bouncer! I suppose the Head will be letting you off this afternoon?"

Harry was silent.

"Has he asked you about your watch, Wharton?" asked Billy Bunter, whose curiosity was never restrained by discretion.

Harry flushed angrily.

"Mind your own business, Bunter!"

"Oh, don't get ratty, Wharton! Of course, you could have told him some yarn; and I dare say you did—you couldn't very well explain that you had had a day on the race-course at Dale, and had blued four or five pounds—Whatever are you doing, Wharton?"

Wharton took the talkative and indiscreet Billy by the throat.

"Do you want me to bang your head on the floor?" he asked wrathfully.

"Certainly not. Mind how you shake me, or you'll make my spectacles fall off, and if they break you'll have to pay for them."

Harry released the fat boy of the Remove with a short laugh.

"Oh, get out!"

"I'm sincerely sorry if I've said anything to offend you," blinked Billy. "Of course, I didn't know you were keeping that about the races secret from the other fellows."

"You young ass, I haven't been to the races!"

"Oh, haven't you? Well, I don't see why you should cut up so rusty at the idea, then. Looks to me like a guilty conscience. But, of course, I take your word for it. I say, if your uncle stands you a feed, don't forget me."

Nugent slipped his arm through Harry's as the latter walked away.

"Don't mind that young ass, Harry!" he said. "But really, are you in any trouble with your uncle, old chap?"

"Yes. He knows I have pawned the watch."

"And you haven't told him what for?"

"I couldn't."

"Then I've a jolly good mind to."

Harry started.

"You don't know yourself, Nugent."

Frank Nugent laughed.

"I've got a jolly good idea, though. It was to save Hazeldene. You paid the moneylender Isaacs, and got him out of his fix."

"Mind you don't say a word to my uncle about it, anyway."

"I don't see why not."

"Do you think I am going to make capital out of it?" demanded Harry passionately. "I won't curry favour with him. If he chooses to think badly of me, let him. I don't care."

"It may be worse than that. He may speak to the Head."

"I don't care."

"You would care, I suppose, if you were called up before the Head, and ordered to explain, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps. But I shouldn't explain."

"Then—"

Harry looked at his chum. There was a determined frown upon his face.

"I don't want you to say a word, Nugent. If you've guessed the secret, that gives you no right to give it away. I expect you to say nothing."

"Of course, I shouldn't speak against your wish."

"That's all right, then."

"But it looks to me as if you were in for a fearful row, Harry, unless you explain."

"I can stand it, I suppose."

After dinner the chums of the Remove went up to the study, where Billy Bunter was roasting chestnuts. Bunter had made a good dinner, but he had plenty of room left for any amount of chestnuts.

There was a knock at the door a couple of minutes later, and Bob Cherry sang out, "Come in!" and Colonel Wharton walked into the study. The veteran's face was very bright and cheery.

"I've good news for you, Harry—at least, I hope you will regard it as good news. The Head has given me permission to take you out with me on a little holiday this afternoon, with a few friends to be selected by yourself."

"Hip-pip!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Harry, old fellow, don't forget that we were brought up together under the same old roof—for the last few weeks, at any rate."

"Show not forgetfulness to the newness of your esteemed

friends," purred Hurree Singh. "In the case of my esteemed self, the gratefulness of the friendship is only equalled by its newfulness."

The colonel laughed.

"You haven't introduced me to your friends yet, Harry."

Harry hardly knew what to make of the colonel's look and manner. The cloud under which they had parted an hour ago seemed to be completely gone. The colonel was more cordial, more jovial, than ever.

Harry presented his friends to the veteran, who shook hands heartily with each of them, not forgetting Billy Bunter.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, all of you!" said the colonel heartily.

"The same with us, sir!" blinked Billy Bunter. "I really don't see what Wharton was so worried about at his uncle coming—Ow! What are you treading on my foot for, Bob Cherry, you clumsy beast?"

But the colonel had apparently heard nothing.

"Let me see. How many will there be for this little excursion?" he said. "Harry, and Cherry, and Nugent, and my old friend Hurree Singh—"

"And Bunter," said that individual promptly.

"Yes, Bunter," said Harry, with a smile.

"Is there anybody else—any special chum?"

Harry hesitated.

"Well, there's a chap I should like to take, but I can't call him a special chum," he said. "I should like to take Hazeldene."

"Good idea!" said Billy Bunter. "He stood us a tea last night, and we ought to show that we're grateful; and then Wharton's very fond of his sister—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Certainly, Wharton. I'm sincerely sorry if I've said anything to offend you. But, as a matter of fact, we know jolly well—Ow! What beast was that kicked my shin?"

"That's six," said the colonel. "I shall be very glad to have Hazeldene. I have already made his acquaintance."

Harry Wharton gave a start. He did not need telling more. The change in the colonel's manner was explained now. Hazeldene must have acquainted the old gentleman with the true facts.

It came as a surprise to Harry. He knew that Hazeldene had turned over a new leaf, and had been trying hard to live up to it; but a generous act like this Harry had been far from expecting of the cad of the Remove.

It was generous; for the colonel might not have taken it in the right spirit. A fussy old fellow might have considered it incumbent upon him to tell the whole story to the Head. In that contingency, Hazeldene would have been made to suffer for speaking out.

"Six," said the colonel. "The Head asked me to give in a list of the names to the Remove master before afternoon school. One of you lads may as well write it down and take it to Mr. Quelch."

"With great pleasurefulness, sir!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Nugent will write it down, and Cherry will take it to Mr. Quelch, which will be an equal division of labourfulness. I cannot fully express the joyfulness of my hearty satisfaction at meeting the honoured sahib," went on Hurree Singh. "I have often heard my father speak in my childhood of his esteemed friend Colonel Wharton, but I did not know that the august Colonel Sahib was the relation of my honourable chum, the name not being uncommon. I have heard my father say that I was carried through a rebel mob in the streets of Bhanipur in the honourable arms of the Colonel Sahib, with the tulwars of the rebels flashing round him."

"By Jove, so you were!" said Colonel Wharton. "I'll tell you that story this afternoon, my lads. But now for the programme. My idea was to make a picnic of it, as it's such a beautifully fine May afternoon. We can stroll down to the village, get a brake or something there, and load it up with provisions, and then drive to some quiet spot. You can bring your fishing-rods with you. There's a nice pool on the Sark a mile or so up, where we used to land some fine specimens thirty years ago."

"It's still there," grinned Bob Cherry. "I've fished there myself."

"And I've reclined upon the bank and watched the fishfulness of my worthy chum," said the nabob. "In that spot everything is gardenfully lovely."

"Then the sooner we get off the better," said the colonel.

"What do you all think of the idea?"

"Ripping!" was the general verdict.

"Then how long will it take you to get ready?"

Bob Cherry jammed his cap on the back of his head.

"I'm ready!" he announced.

"About two ticks!" said Nugent, grinning. "We haven't

got to curl our hair, or anything, you know. Bunter had better wipe the jam off his face."

"Oh, I say, Nugent—"

"I'll cut along and speak to Hazeldene," said Harry Wharton.

"That's right. Hurry up!"

Harry Wharton found Hazeldene in the Close. Hazeldene looked at him rather nervously as he came up. He had made up his mind to take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

"I say, Wharton—"

"I was just coming to speak to you—"

"I've told your uncle about you helping me the other day," said Hazeldene abruptly. "I felt that I ought to. I hope you're not going to get ratty about it."

Harry laughed.

"I guessed something of the sort. Oh, it's all right. As a matter of fact, you've got me out of a fearful fix by telling him. I was expecting a row, with the Head mixed up in it. It's all right now."

Hazeldene drew a breath of relief.

"Oh, that's good, then! But a fellow never knows how you are going to take things."

Harry frowned a moment. The reference to his uncertain temper was not pleasing; but his face quickly cleared.

"Oh, that's all right. I was coming to speak to you, Hazeldene. My uncle has got us a half-holiday this afternoon, and I want you to come."

"Can I get off?"

"Yes, I have permission."

Hazeldene's face brightened up wonderfully.

"This is jolly decent of you, Wharton! Of course, I shall be glad to come—jolly glad! What do the others say about it?"

"They all want you to come, the same as I do."

"Right you are!"

And Hazeldene was one of an extremely jolly party that left Greyfriars a little later.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The Picnic.

A BRIGHT and pleasant May afternoon; a roomy brake; two big lunch-baskets crammed with a variety of good things, the best that the local tuckshop could supply, regardless of expense! Colonel Wharton was doing that little holiday in good style, and the chums of the Remove appreciated it.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "This is really ripping! If you'd rather I drove, Nugent—"

"I wouldn't!" said Nugent tersely.

"Think you can manage two horses all right?"

"Better than you could, I think, Bob."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Oh, all right. We don't want to break our necks—at least, mine."

"The breakfulness of the esteemed neck would mar the jollification of the holiday," purred Hurree Singh. "But our worthy Nugent seems to manage the horseful team in good stylefulness. Still, if he were tired at all, I should have pleasurefulness in relieving him of the trouble of driving."

"No trouble," said Nugent.

"I don't see the fun of driving," said Bunter. "I'd rather eat toffee any day, especially toffee like this."

"Why, the young cormorant has started already!"

"Only just a little snack, Cherry, to whet my appetite."

"The snackfulness of the esteemed Bunter is only equalled by the hearty dinnerfulness of otherful persons," the nabob remarked.

Harry Wharton was sitting silent in the brake beside the colonel. There had been no explanation between the two, and relations were still a little strained—that is, they were a little strained on Harry's side. The colonel seemed to have forgotten that there had been any friction.

Harry's feelings were mingled. The colonel's treatment of him to-day had come as a complete surprise, and he had not yet got his bearings, so to speak. He had expected something very different—a stern uncle, an unyielding martinet. A cheery old soldier, with a boyish fun and good-humour in his scarred and bronzed face, was very different from the uncle Harry Wharton had expected. The colonel had been nothing like this at home.

Yet he had been the same man! It was borne in upon Harry's mind that in those days at Wharton Lodge the fault had not been on his uncle's side. The colonel had been the same man, but Harry had been different. That was what it meant.

To the sulky, passionate, spoiled boy the colonel had been unable to show the kinder side of his nature, or when he had done so Harry had deliberately misunderstood him. That was how the case was now presenting itself to Harry Wharton's mind, and it gave him a sense of discomposure.

It was not pleasant to feel that he had been in the wrong, and that the injuries of which he had nursed the remembrance had been mostly imaginary.

Nugent stopped the brake at last.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll leave the brake here, and let the horses graze, and walk down to the river. Bunter can carry the lunch-baskets."

"Oh, I say, Cherry—"

"I expect you'll carry away about half the contents, anyway!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Mind you don't roll into the river, Billy. There's a current out a bit from the land, and it's dangerous. The bank is sloping here, so the only thing I can think of is to tie a rope to Bunter's ankle, and have somebody holding it all the time. If he once started rolling, we should lose our Owl for good."

"The goodfulness of the wheezy idea is great," said Hurree Singh; "but if we fixed some of the fishful hooks into the ears of the esteemed Bunter, it would serve the purposefulness equally well!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hand out the lunch-baskets," laughed the colonel. "I will carry one of them. You can hobble the horses, and give them a little run here. Don't forget the fishing-rods and the cans."

Laden with their various properties, the cheerful Removites quitted the brake, and followed the short footpath down to the green, sloping banks of the Sark.

It was an ideal spot for fishing. The glimmer of the May sun on the wide, rolling river, and the moving shadows of the foliage upon the water close to the grassy bank was pleasant to see.

Bob Cherry looked about him with glistening eyes as he lengthened his rod.

"My hat, Wharton, I wish you had an uncle come to see you every day!" he remarked. "This beats swotting over Latin in a class-room. What?"

"Rather!" said Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"It is jolly!" said the colonel. "It makes an old fellow feel a boy again. Mind the water, you know. I remember that it's deep and dangerous here; and there was a fellow drowned a little lower down, in my time."

"I know, sir!" exclaimed Nugent. "It was Haywood minor of that day. They still call it Haywood's Pool here."

"You fellows can go and fish," said Billy Bunter. "I haven't a rod, and I don't want to fish, so I'll look after the lunch. I'll spread the cloth, and boil the kettle, and get all the things ready for you. I have very seldom seen so really ripping a feed as this one. Your uncle is a brick, Wharton!"

"The brickfulness of the honourable colonel sahib is great!"

"Let's get to the fishing," said Wharton. "You brought your rod, Hazeldene?"

"I borrowed Russell's," said Hazeldene. "I sold mine a week or two ago." He coloured a little. "This one of Russell's is all right."

"Come on, then!"

The juniors made their way to the bank. With rods and lines, and bait and cans, they looked very businesslike, but whether they had the patience necessary to the true angler was a question.

The colonel went up the bank, and pulled out an Indian newspaper. He didn't want to fish, but he wanted to know what his old regiment was doing at Boggleywallah.

Billy Bunter paid his attention to the feed. That was just in Bunter's line. He had the spirit-stove going very soon in a sheltered spot, and the kettle singing away cheerily on it. He spread the cloths on the grass, and laid out the catables in enticing array. So enticing, indeed, did they look that it was impossible for Billy to resist the temptation to sample them.

After all, he reflected that there was plenty—and he was hungry. The fishermen had their backs turned to him, and were intent upon the stream. Bob Cherry had a bite, and there was great excitement. It turned out to be a fragment of a sardine-fin from the bottom of the river, and there was a general grin at Bob's expense as he landed it. Then they fished again; but all at once it occurred to Nugent that Bunter was very silent. He looked round.

There was Billy, kneeling among the catables, in the very act of tilting a bottle into his mouth.

Nugent gave a shout.

The sudden alarm made Bunter jump, and the bottle slipped, and the contents ran all over his neck and chest.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

Billy Bunter gasped.

"Ow, you beast, Nugent! What did you do that for?"

"What were you scoffing the grub for, without giving a fellow a chance?" demanded Nugent. "Look at the gorging young villain, you chaps!"

"Ow! My shirt is all wet, and this stuff is sticky. Ow!"
 "Serve you right!" said Bob Cherry. "You young cormorant! Still, if he's sticky, we'd better duck him into the water and clean him, chaps!"

"Ow! I won't be ducked in the water!"
 "Collar him!" cried Bob Cherry.
 "The collarfulness is swift!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, grasping Billy Bunter by the back of the neck.
 "Here is the young gorger!"

"Lemme alone!"
 "The duckfulness in the river would be a wheezy good idea."

"Yank him along!"
 "Ow! Leggo!"
 "Roll him down the bank."
 "If he once gets started, he can't stop. He'll go on like a barrel!"

"The stopfulness would be impossible after the startfulness. Roll the esteemed rotter down the bank, my honourable chums!"

"Ow, Harry Wharton—ow! Stop them!"
 Harry Wharton was laughing. The Removites rolled the helpless Billy down the bank, as if fully intending to roll him into the water. Harry Wharton picked up the spectacles, and placed them on a basket in safety. Billy Bunter blinked and roared and gasped. The colonel laid down his paper at the uproar, and looked through the trees at the noisy Removites.

"By Jove, what is the matter there, boys?"
 "Help!"

"It's this young cormorant has been scoffing the grub!" said Bob Cherry. "We're thinking of drowning him, sir, to see if it will cure him."

"Help! Murder!"
 "Here, chuck it, kids!" said Harry Wharton, as Bunter was rolled into the sedges on the bank. "The young ass thinks you are in earnest!"

"The earnestfulness is terrific."
 "Will you promise never to eat anything again as long as you live, Bunt?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Yes, certainly! I'll never taste a morsel again!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"The promiscuousness is prompt, but what price the performfulness?" said Hurree Singh, grinning.

"Ow! Lemme gerrup! I'll punch all your beastly heads!"

The chums of the Remove released Bunter. Harry Wharton stepped towards him to help him to his feet; but Bunter, without his glasses, was as blind as the owl from which he derived his nickname. He fancied it was one of the juniors about to seize him again, and he hit out.

The right-hander caught Harry Wharton on the chest, and he staggered back, upset by the unexpectedness of the blow.

"Look out!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

But it was too late. Harry Wharton was staggering on the verge of the steep bank, and, even as Bob Cherry's horrified cry rang out, he toppled over with a mighty splash into the deep water.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. In peril of his life.

SPLASH!
 The splash of Harry Wharton in the river was followed by a cry of horror from the chums of the Remove.

"Harry!"
 "He's in!"
 "Good heavens! You know how deep it is there!"

The chums ran forward to the water's edge. Billy Bunter was blinking, hardly knowing what had happened, but he was forgotten now.

Harry Wharton was in the midst of the waters. He had fallen backwards into the river, and the crash upon the water seemed to have had a stunning effect upon his head. He had gone under like a stone, and came up again some distance from the bank. He was seen to struggle, but his attempt at swimming was a feeble one, and he was caught in the current, which was evidently too strong for him.

Nugent threw off his jacket.
 "I'm going in!"

Bob Cherry dragged him back.
 "No good. You couldn't swim there, and you know it. I'm the chap. Stand back!"

"I——"
 They had forgotten the colonel. There was a heavy footstep beside them, and the veteran was staring out over the river, with a face suddenly pale.

"Harry! Keep back, boys! I will save him!"

The colonel had thrown off hat and coat as he ran to the water's edge. He put his hands together, and plunged into the gleaming Sark. The juniors watched him breathlessly.

The current, a dozen yards out from the bank, was swift and strong, and Harry Wharton was being whirled along

with it. The colonel swam towards him with powerful strokes. The lad was keeping himself afloat, but he seemed unable to do more.

"I say, you fellows, is that somebody fallen into the river? I'm sincerely sorry."

But no one was listening to Billy Bunter now.

The chums of the Remove hurried along the bank, following the swimmers down the river, hardly able to keep pace with them.

Harry Wharton was usually in good form in the water, but the manner of his fall had dazed him. He was not much like the strong and sturdy swimmer who had dragged Frank Nugent from the jaws of death that first day at Greyfriars, which Nugent had never forgotten.

"Help!"
 Harry gasped out the word feebly.

"I am coming!"

It was his uncle's voice, close at hand. The powerful grip of the colonel closed upon Harry's collar, and the sinking head was jerked up above the surface again.

In the midst of the racing stream, far out from the gliding banks, Harry Wharton looked into his uncle's face, as pale as his own.

"Uncle!"
 "My dear lad, I will save you!"

The old soldier's powerful grip sustained Harry. But the current had already swept them far, and now the water was running like a mill-race. In the distance, as the colonel knew, was the weir; and then——

He set his teeth, and fought his way shorewards. He heard the shouts of the juniors on the bank. He knew they were shouting warnings of the weir. He did not need them. His schoolmate of thirty years ago had been drowned there, and he knew the danger.

He struggled landward, but the eddying current sucked him away again and again. Harry uttered a gasping exclamation:

"Uncle, the weir! You can hear it now!"

"I can hear it."
 "Save yourself!"

"And you, too!"
 "You cannot! Uncle, save yourself!"

"Both, or neither!" said the old soldier, between his gritted teeth. And he spoke no more. He needed all his breath.

His hand struck something in the gliding water—something that moved and swayed. It was a broken branch trailing down from an overhanging tree. He grasped it; he hung on with a strong grip, and the race to death was stopped.

There he hung, dragged to and fro, but clinging on with desperate tenacity.

"Help!"

The cry was answered. The juniors were tearing along the bank. They were abreast of the hanging branch and its burden in a minute or less. But how to help him? The bank was steep, the water of unknown depth. To plunge in was to be swept away, and the trailing branch would bear no greater weight.

Bob Cherry cast a desperate glance round.

A long, slender branch projected from the tree on the land side, and Bob Cherry saw it, grasped it, and called to his comrades.

"Get this off—quick!"

They understood, and lent their aid. The weight of four sturdy juniors was thrown upon the slender branch; it cracked and groaned—and broke. The juniors dragged it from the parent trunk.

"Now then!" panted Bob Cherry.

Grasping the branch by the foliage at the one end, they pushed the other extremity into the water. The branch was quite long enough to reach the spot where the colonel floated, with the almost fainting boy in his arm.

"Catch hold, sir!"

The colonel understood. Hope flashed up again in his bronzed face.

"Can you manage it, boys?"
 "Rather, sir!" shouted Hazeldene. "Catch hold!"

The colonel shifted his grasp from the trailing branch, to the end of the stem held out to him. He gripped the new hold firmly, and the four Removites drew him in towards the bank. The river raced under and round him, seemingly eager as a beast of prey to drag its victim away to death.

But the arms of the juniors were strong—the colonel's hold was tenacious. He was drawn close to the bank, and Bob Cherry bent down and seized Harry Wharton, and dragged him safely ashore.

Then the colonel was able to scramble out of the water unaided.

Harry had been laid on the grass. He was white as death, gasping painfully, and his eyes were half closed. He was

utterly exhausted. The colonel, forgetful of himself, knelt in the grass beside the boy.

"Harry, my dear lad! Safe now!"

Harry's eyes opened, and seemed to speak a volume as they met those of the colonel.

"Uncle! And it is you who has saved my life?"

There were tears in his eyes. In that moment the distrust and dislike had passed away for ever; henceforth there would be no cloud between those two.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER, Better Friends!

HARRY WHARTON had had a narrow escape, but after getting a rest, and his clothes dried at a neighbouring farmhouse, he was little the worse for his experience; and the colonel was quickly himself again. It was a somewhat long walk back to the scene of the picnic, but the party were all feeling cheerful enough when they arrived there.

Billy Bunter had not succeeded in finding his glasses, and he was blinking among the eatables. He had a bun in his hand, but evidently had not had the heart to take a single bite, a clear enough proof that his feelings were deeply stirred. He blinked mournfully at the party as they arrived.

"Hallo! I'm sincerely sorry that Wharton has been drowned!" he said, not perceiving Harry with the rest.

"It's a horrible thing to have happened on a picnic!"

"But I'm not drowned!" said Harry, laughing.

Billy Bunter gave a jump.

"Is that you, Wharton? I thought you fell into the river."

"So I did, but my uncle fished me out."

"I'm really glad! I thought you were drowned, and it quite took my appetite away!" Bunter plunged his teeth into the bun, as if to make up for lost time with the least possible delay, and went on speaking with his mouth full.

"I say, Wharton, I was very sorry to think you were drowned, especially as I can't find my glasses. You picked them up. What did you do with them?"

"Ha, ha! Here they are, under your nose!"

"Dear me, so they are!"

Bunter adjusted his spectacles, and blinked with satisfaction. He took another enormous bite out of the bun.

"I say, you fellows, as nobody has been drowned, we may as well go on with the picnic. I should have been sincerely sorry if it had been spoiled! You must all be awfully hungry by this time; I am, though I've had a snack."

"We are hungry!" Colonel Wharton laughed. "Come, the feast looks enticing enough, and we have lost time. Let us get to table!"

Table was a cloth spread on the grass, but the feast was enjoyable enough. The shadow of the narrowly-averted tragedy was still on the boys to some extent, but as the feast progressed it passed away, and the happy laughter of the juniors rang through the trees and over the sunny river.

In spite of the almost tragedy, it turned out a jolly half-holiday—one of the jolliest the juniors remembered at Greyfriars. Harry was called upon to tell the story of the kidnapping of Hazelden's sister by the gipsies, when the chums of the Remove had rescued her, and the colonel was deeply interested.

And then the colonel told a story—a tale of revolt in the wild land of Bhanipur, and of a child carried to safety by a horseman through a crowd of savage rebels, whose weapons gleamed on every side, and yet had been escaped. And the juniors listened with breathless eagerness, especially Hurree Singh, whose narrow escape from death the colonel was telling of, though the nabob hardly remembered that wild event in his infancy.

The time to return to Greyfriars came all too soon. The last toast had been drunk in currant-wine and ginger-pop, the last tart consumed by Bunter. The colonel and his young comrades walked down to the brake with cheery, happy faces. The horses were put in, and the party drove back to the village.

And there the colonel said good-bye.

He had to catch his train at Friardale, and the juniors saw him off before walking back down the lane to the school. The colonel shook hands with each of them on the platform, last of all with Harry.

There was a strange emotion in the boy's handsome face as he shook hands with his uncle, the man he had disliked and distrusted, and who had risked his life for him in return.

"Good-bye, Harry!"

"Good-bye, uncle! And—and——"

The colonel smiled quietly.

"Yes, Harry?"

"I—I can't say what I feel, uncle! I—I'm not used to talking much, I suppose," said Harry, with the colour in his cheeks. "But—but I think you understand. I've been an ungrateful brute! That's the matter!"

The colonel pressed his hand.

"No, Harry. You have been hasty, and perhaps I was not quite patient enough. But that's all over now. Good friends from this day forward—eh?"

"Only I don't deserve it," said Harry, in a low voice.

"Nonsense! We start fresh now, and bygones are bygones. Good-bye, Harry!"

The train was snorting.

"Good-bye, uncle!"

The colonel waved his hand from the carriage window. The juniors waved their caps back, and the train rattled out of the station.

Not till it had disappeared down the line did the juniors turn away. Harry's face was very grave. Nugent tapped him on the arm, and Harry looked at him.

"What do you think of your uncle now, Harry?"

"I think you know, Frank," said Harry, in a shaken voice.

"Yes, I think I do, old chap—and I'm jolly glad."

"Well, he's a jolly good fellow," said Bob Cherry. "You must have brought your uncle up very carefully, Wharton, for him to turn out such a credit to you. About time we hopped into Greyfriars, I think, or we shall be late for calling-over."

The juniors reached the school just before locking-up. It had been a happy afternoon and they were in a happy humour.

The next day there was something of a surprise for Harry Wharton. A parcel arrived for him, and was taken up to the study, and the chums of the Remove gathered round it with great curiosity as it was opened. It was a bulky parcel, and Harry suspected its contents before he cut the cord.

"My hat! A new bat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, unconsciously dropping into rhyme.

It was a splendid new bat. And that was not all. There was a small leather case, and when Harry opened it, he found it to contain a new silver watch, with his monogram engraved on the case. There was a wisp of paper attached, with the words: "From your affectionate uncle, James Wharton."

The tears started to Harry Wharton's eyes.

"In his letter the other day, my uncle mentioned that I had never written to him," he said. "I shall write to him now—and I wish I could tell him all I think."

And Harry wrote, and poured out more of his heart in that letter than the proud, sensitive lad had ever been able to do in words. The colonel's visit to Greyfriars had, although he had not foreseen it, resulted in much for Harry Wharton—much more than a jolly half-holiday.

THE END.

(Another tale of Harry Wharton and his chums next Tuesday, entitled "Billy's Competition," by Frank Richards.)



"BILLY'S COMPETITION."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS,

NEXT
TUESDAY.



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. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxennis."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually receiving threatening picture post-cards from Leigh-on-Sea from a man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax visits Leigh, and pursues his investigations among the regular senders of picture post cards in the district. Meanwhile, Dennis by chance acquires a post card addressed to their client, which is picked up by Grip, after having fallen from the pocket of one "Sleeping" McDonald, a pugilist lodging with Mrs. Brewer. When Lomax returns from Leigh, Dennis shows his chum the postcard. McDonald is enticed into calling upon them, but refuses to explain matters to "Maxennis."

A Visit to Wonderland.

Robert Lomax returned to Leigh-on-Sea. Frank Dennis bent his steps towards Wonderland, as he had told his chum he should do. Sleeping McDonald was going to fight there that night, and Dennis had a queer fancy to see him in the ring. If he had any other reason for wishing to go, he did not mention it to Lomax.

There is scarcely any need to say what is Wonderland, that Mecca of the London professional boxer, which is situated in the Whitechapel Road, and where, week after week throughout the months, are presented the modern likenesses of those fistic encounters which nearly a hundred years ago delighted prince and peasant, and gained for Englishmen a notoriety for the effective use of their fists which has never left them.

There was a big crowd outside the doors when Dennis arrived on the scene. The gate at Wonderland is always a profitable one, and that night there promised to be a bigger demand for seats than usual, attributable, no doubt, to the important contest between McDonald and the South African champion.

The crowd was rough, but good-tempered, and though Dennis was spotted at once, and made the subject of more than one remark, nothing further happened.

He paid his shilling, and entered. A shilling secured a fairly good seat, though not too close to the ring. This, however, was in agreement with Dennis's views. He did not wish to be very near to the roped enclosure.

To those unacquainted with Wonderland—from the inside—a visit when an important boxing match is on the carpet is something more than interesting. It is a liberal education in itself, and, far more than anything else, brings home to one the extent of the love of boxing which exists in this part of the great Metropolis. It does more to prove how keen and whole-hearted is the devotion given to the game of fisticuffs than acres of printing.

The East-End is a sportsman, and though he may like his amusement a trifle highly-coloured, he is very thoroughly in earnest. Besides, he knows the game he pays to see. He is no armchair critic full of beautiful theories, and his interest is the reverse of academic.

Of those who fill the great hall the large majority have a very practical knowledge of the game, acquired by experience—the knowledge that comes of performance instead of watching.

They are boxers themselves, and they are critical of those lads who step into the ring for their patrons' delectation, and to demonstrate to the benefit of their own pockets that they are acquainted with the science and strategies of fist-play.

They know a good man when they see him, and don't hesitate to say so, even though he suffer defeat. Nor do they, on the other hand, fail to express their disapprobation of conduct which strikes them as being open to censure. They are generous, but they are also just; and they are delightfully independent in their beliefs and opinions.

That there are scapegraces, gentlemen who live by their wits, and are not above earning a livelihood at the expense of their fellows, taking with the strong hand—or, rather, the light fingers—that which they require, is not to be denied. No one who is gifted with wisdom would go to the hall with his pockets full of gold, or with much jewellery ostentatiously displayed—that is, if he wished to return home without his stock of worldly possessions having suffered a decrease. But even these gentry who are unable to distinguish between "mine and thine" recognise certain limitations. Of this Frank Dennis was quickly made aware.

As he travelled with the crowd—it couldn't be said he walked, for the press was so great, one had to go forward willy-nilly—from the pay-desk to the interior he suddenly felt a hand insinuating itself into his left-hand trousers-pocket.

There wasn't much there in the way of cash, for Dennis wasn't quite a fool, and had been to Wonderland before; but that was no reason for permitting the theft of it. He shoved down his own hand, and got a grip of the intruder's wrist. To stop was impossible; he had to go on, and he held his tongue. There was no sense or good in crying aloud what was taking place.

But he turned his head a few inches. Half a dozen pairs of eyes met his. Which belonged to the owner of the hand he held he could not say. He meant to act directly the hall should be reached, and he was able to move.

Before, however, this could be done the hand was suddenly wrenched from between his fingers, and by the time, half a dozen paces further along, the crowd was able to widen out and disperse to capture seats, and he turned round in a moderately clear space to see if he might locate the would-be thief, he found it an impossibility. There was nothing he could do.

"Lost anyfink, guv'nor?"

A young fellow, sallow and clean-shaven, had noticed the expression of Dennis's face, and stopped beside him.

"Think not," Frank answered. "But it wasn't the chap's fault he didn't get anything."

"Ah"—Dennis's interrogator looked at him meaningly—"I wouldn't do that if I was you, even if I saw him," he remarked.

"Do what?"

By way of reply, the young fellow pointed at Frank's fist, which had involuntarily clenched.

"Betier not," he said.

"But—"

"Say, guv'nor, yer leave it to me"—this in a confidential voice, almost a whisper, and the speaker stepped nearer the young detective. "Don't yer make no fuss, even if th' boys do do a bit o' pinchin'; an' they won't do that if yer've got, say, a bob as yer'd like to 'and over to me. If yer like, we'll look after yer."

"Who will?"

Dennis was more than a little amused by this quiet suggestion of the payment of a sort of blackmail.

"Me an' my mates."

"If I give you a shilling—"

Frank began slowly. "We'll see as yer don't lose nuffin," the young rascal interrupted coolly. "If yer do, tell me, an' I'll git it back—see?"

"And if I don't?"

"Well; yer—"

Perhaps he was being victimised; and if not, the idea of paying for protection was one not very agreeable. But

still, Frank, smiling faintly, laid a shilling in the grimy hand of the young fellow. He took it eagerly, but he was a shrewd, keen-witted youth, and he could see by the expression in Dennis's humorous eyes that the payment was not dictated by fear.

"Yer'll be all right now, gov'nor!" he said cheerfully, and disappeared.

"Sort of insurance premium," murmured Frank, as he turned away to secure a seat.

What sort of interest the investment of that shilling was to bring him he could not then know. Had he been gifted with second sight, he would have known it to be a good one.

In spite of the delay the foregoing incident had caused, Dennis contrived to secure a good position, one from which he could see the ring, but was little likely to be noticed by any occupant thereof.

For the next half-hour he amused himself with watching and listening to the crowd—hardly as quiet and undemonstrative as would have been found in a West End place of entertainment. Everybody seemed to be acquainted with everybody else, and bits of personal information, as well as items of general interest, were shouted from one part to another with consistent frequency and a great deal of vigour.

But when the M.C. entered the ring and the first pair of boxers was announced, a more reasonable state of things ensued. The spectators made a strong effort to be quiet; indeed, those who were most insistent upon the quietude of others were before long those who made the most noise.

The officials took their places, the timekeeper gave the signal, and the fun commenced.

There were many bouts, most of them well contested, and all of them shorter than the arrangements stipulated. Your East-ender likes a fight to be a fight. He isn't "gone" on sparring, and a "knock-out" is to him the best of all terminations; and that night he got more than satisfaction.

Whatever it was the boxers got in the shape of pecuniary reward for their victories, it could not be denied they earned it. It probably wasn't much, though no doubt it seemed to them quite a large sum to be earned in so short a space of time; but they certainly earned it.

As for the losers—well, any man not brought up to the trade would have considered that their share of the collection thoughtfully made amongst the spectators for their benefit was a poor consolation for the hammering received.

Dennis put a shilling in the receptacle the first time the collection touched him, and he became a marked man. The pugilist who gathered it in looked at him somewhat as does a churchwarden at the man who puts a sovereign in the collection-plate.

Coppers were the rule, and Frank's neighbours eyed him with something approaching awe. The eyes of one or two suddenly sparkled as if agreeable thoughts had come into their heads, some whispering took place, and expressive nods and winks telegraphed information to those whom a whisper couldn't reach.

At nine o'clock the big event was announced amid some excitement, and Dennis saw his visitor of the morning—now in the buff so far as his waist, and black pants and red socks lower down—enter the ring.

Out of his clothes he looked even a tougher customer than he did in them. His limbs were short, thick-muscled, and powerful; his body long and round. He looked capable of lasting a week against such an opponent as was the South African boxer, who was of the greyhound type, quick, and nervous-looking.

The first round began, and the spectators left off shouting advice and encouragement to their favourite in order to use their eyes. McDonald appeared a trifle worried. Someone asked him if he had pawned his grin, a remark which seemed to show the Southwark champion usually took these little matters cheerfully.

His opponent was anxious, but meant business.

Something was wrong with McDonald, and the crowd noticed it, and resented it. They didn't like seeing their favourite getting the worst of an encounter. They begged him to "buck up," implored him not to go to sleep, and most of them were very glad indeed when "Time!" was called.

McDonald had had all the worst of the round. The other man was decidedly the quicker, hit more often, if lightly, and ran up points fast. McDonald seemed preoccupied, boxed without life, and missed the opportunities for those terrible right-hand swings which had floored all previous opponents. Towards the end of the second minute he was sent down in his own corner, and got up looking as if he didn't like it.

Rounds two and three were much the same. A hard drive drew blood from his nose, and for a few seconds he appeared to wake up; but the effort died away, and the spectators fairly howled with annoyance.

Ten rounds the contest was scheduled for, and when it had gone half its length it was "all Lombard Street to a china orange" that the foreigner would be the winner. But there were those—and the number was many—who believed that the Englishman was only lying low. However many points his opponent scored, they would be of no use to him, for soon McDonald would set about his man and finish the business by putting him to sleep with one of his terrible right-handers.

But these folk couldn't but admit that McDonald didn't shape that way, that he was boxing very differently from usual, and that, so far, that triumphant grin which he usually wore when he was biding his time and getting ready to cut short his opponent's career hadn't made its appearance.

In the seventh round McDonald received a clip on the chin that staggered him. Half an inch to the left, and he would have gone down and out. That was what the spectators thought, and their observations addressed to the Southwark champion became more and more pointed.

Why didn't he go in and knock Buckle—that was the South African's name—into the middle of next week? Was he afraid? Had he a white feather about him, or was it a "cross"—a faked match?

His seconds talked to him forcibly and impressively, but he did not give them much attention.

"Hold yer tongue!" he growled at last; but his eyes were wandering around the building with that queer, apprehensive glance of one who fears to see something or somebody the while such recognition is hoped and prayed against. Like the spectators, the seconds could make nothing of him. He seemed different from what he had ever been before.

By the end of the ninth round Buckle began to think the game was in his hands, as indeed it was. He gave up his tactics of long leads and tricky footwork, and went in to hit.

The spectators had the mortification of seeing their favourite made a perfect chopping-block of. All of them shouted; some went so far even as to hoot the champion.

The contest ended with McDonald in one corner of the ring, taking punishment enough to have disabled two ordinary men. There was scarcely need for the referee to give his decision. The veriest novice must have known it beforehand, so obvious was it which was the better man.

Nevertheless, the naming of Buckle as the winner was the signal for such a demonstration as was extraordinary even for Wonderland. Men had lost money over McDonald's licking, and they didn't forget it.

Frank Dennis, having seen the defeated man leave the ring, had extricated himself from the crush of shouting spectators around him, and hurriedly left the building.

(Another long instalment of this fine serial next week.)

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