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By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Wharton Interferes.

"DON'T—oh, don't, Levison!"
Harry Wharton heard the words as he came along the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and his handsome face clouded over.

"Don't—oh, don't!"
Harry knew the voice; that of little Benson, the youngest, and one of the cheekiest of the boys in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. The cry came clearly through the closed door of Ernest Levison's study.

Harry Wharton paused, irresolute. He did not like to interfere with any fellow in his Form—least of all with Levison—but anything in the nature of bullying "put his back up" at once; and, besides, as captain of the Remove, it was his duty to put down anything of the kind. And there was a note of pain in young Benson's voice that went straight to Harry's heart.

As he paused in the passage, a cry rang again from the study; and it was followed by Benson's voice once more, broken by a sob.

"Don't—oh, don't!"
Wharton made up his mind. He stopped at Levison's door and tapped. There was no reply from within, and he knocked again—more loudly. There was still no reply. Levison evidently did not want visitors at that moment. Nothing was audible from the study but the frightened whimper of the youngster.

Wharton's hand went to the handle of the door to open it, and then he paused once more. He had no doubt that Benson had been "saucy," and Levison was the last fellow with whom liberties could safely be taken. The captain of the Remove stepped back from the door without opening it, but as he did so there came a wail from the study.

"Don't! Oh!"
Wharton hesitated no longer. He knocked sharply, and threw open the door. His eyes glinted as he stepped into the room.



By
FRANK RICHARDS.

Levison turned his head, with an exclamation of annoyance; but as he saw who his visitor was, his expression changed, and he gave a short nod. He had started on very ill terms with Harry Wharton when he first came to Greyfriars, but of late they had been on a better footing, and Levison had tried to keep on good terms with Harry since the night when the latter had saved him from death on the rainy summit of the Black Pike.

"Hallo, Wharton," he said civilly; "I didn't know it was you!"

Wharton's glance was turned to the fag, who was squirming in Levison's grip. Little Benson's plump face was wet with tears. Levison had a hard grip on his wrist, and had plainly been twisting his arm. The fag's eyes turned appealingly on the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton, don't let him! He'll break my arm!"

"I'll break your neck for two pins, growled Levison. "I'll teach you to start chipping me in my own study! I'll teach you a lesson on the subject of cheeking your elders, my son! A few more twists like that, and I fancy you will leave the subject alone!"

"Oh, don't! Oh, Wharton, stop him!"
"Hang it, Levison," broke out Wharton sharply, "stop it! Let him alone!"

Levison looked at him sneeringly.
"Are you going to interfere?"
"Well, I think I ought to. I don't like doing it—"
"Ahem! You have a reputation in the Remove for interfering with most things, all the same," said Levison.

Wharton turned red.
"Well, I think I am quite within my rights in interfering here, anyway," he rapped out. "What do you mean by tormenting a kid like that?"

"I was teaching him a lesson for his confounded cheek," snapped Levison. "And I'm not finished yet."

"I don't know the rights of the case, but—"
"Then don't push your oar in."

"I must. You have no right to use Benson like that, whatever he has done. What have you been doing, Benny?"

"It—it was only a joke!" sobbed young Benson. "I—I was only making a little joke about Levison playing the detective, you know—I heard it from Bunter. He thought Wun Lung the Chinese was conspiring, or something, because he used to have postcards come with a cipher or something on them."

Harry Wharton could not repress a smile.

Levison was a suspicious boy by nature, and his suspiciousness had got him into trouble on that occasion. Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, had been playing a game of chess by correspondence, and the mysterious-looking postcards he received excited the suspicions of Levison, who was not a chess-player and did not know what the simple abbreviations, such as "K" or "Kt." or "Q," meant.

The suspicious junior had worked out an amazing theory, founded upon the supposed cipher, and had sent an anonymous letter to Scotland Yard, which had brought a detective to Greyfriars and caused considerable trouble.

Harry Wharton and his friends had intended to keep the matter a secret, but Billy Bunter, the chatterbox of the Remove had got hold of it and related it to several of his friends in the Remove.

Levison, who was of a proud and sensitive nature, had suffered keenly from the consequent ridicule, and his temper—never very good—seemed to be growing much sourer.

He set his teeth hard now as Benson spoke, and, reaching across to the table, pushed a sheet of cardboard towards Wharton.

"Look at that!" he said savagely.

Wharton looked at it. The cardboard was about a foot square, and an inscription was daubed upon it in the shape of an advertisement. It ran as follows:

"E. LEVISON, Private Detective. Fellows spied upon, and their letters read, at the shortest notice. Plots discovered to order, and anonymous letters written with promptness and despatch. All kinds of meanness undertaken, and spying into other chaps' correspondence a speciality."

Harry Wharton tried hard not to laugh, but he couldn't help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison's brow grew blacker. He had expected sympathy and he had received laughter, and the look he now gave Wharton was as savage as any he had given him in the days before they became friends.

"The young cur was pinning that on my door, when I came along and caught him," he said. "I am glad you find it amusing!"

"I am sorry, Levison," said Harry, checking his mirth; "but—"

"Oh, don't mind me! Of course, it's amusing! I made a fool of myself, and it's like you to make it a standing joke in the Form!"

"Nothing of the sort," said Harry, flushing. "I have never said a word about it, and neither has one of my friends. Wun Lung agreed to keep it dark. It was that young ass Bunter caught something of it and spread the tale."

"I—I heard it from Bunter," stammered Benson. "I—I didn't mean any harm, Levison; it—it was only a joke."

"I'll teach you not to joke with me!" exclaimed Levison furiously. And he gave the fag's arm a twist that made him shriek with pain.

Harry Wharton stepped quickly forward.

"Let him alone, Levison."

"Sha'n't!"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I tell you I won't see him bullied, then! He ought to be cuffed for this, if you like; but you've done more than enough!"

"I'll do as I like!"

"No, you won't while I'm captain of the Remove," said Harry determinedly. "After all, he's only a kid, and it was only a joke—and you let yourself in for it. You know you did wrong in the matter of Wun Lung, and you ought to be willing to take your gruel and live it down."

"I didn't ask you for your opinion, Wharton, and I don't want to hear it. I'll be obliged to you if you'll get out of my study."

"I'll get out with pleasure, but Benson goes with me. Come, young 'un!"

Benson made a movement to go, but Levison gripped his wrist tighter, with a hard and obstinate expression upon his face.

"Let him go, Levison."

"I won't."

Harry said no more. He took hold of Levison's hand, and

by sheer force unloosed his fingers and released Benson. The fag scuttled out of the study like a frightened rabbit.

Levison clenched his free hand as if he were about to dash it in the face of the captain of the Remove. But he restrained himself. He tore his hand from Wharton's grip as Benson scuttled away, and faced Harry with heaving breast and blazing eyes.

"Now go," he said, between his teeth. "You'd never leave this study without a hiding, or without giving me one, only—you know why I cannot fight you. You are trading on that—on the fact that you saved my life. Now get out, then!"

Wharton's face was crimson.

"I am not trading on that, or thinking of it," he said. "And I did no more on the Black Pike than a dozen fellows would have done. I'm sorry to cross you, because I know you're a decent chap, if it wasn't for your rotten temper; but I'm not going to stand by quietly while you torture a fag."

"Who was torturing him?" said Levison, with a harsh laugh. "I've had my wrists twisted often enough by a bully in the Sixth!"

"All the more reason why you shouldn't start the same tricks in the Remove."

"Bah! I don't want to argue with you! I've tried to be friendly with you, because—because of what happened that night on the Pike. That's done with. I'll never speak to you again, or any of your set. I hate the lot of you! I hate the Remove and all this place!" said Levison passionately. "I wish I had never come here! Get out of my study!"

Wharton turned without a word and left the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Carberry Finds a Fag.

CARBERRY, the prefect, was looking out of his study doorway. There was a frown of ill-temper on Carberry's face as he glanced up and down the passage.

Carberry wanted a fag, but he did not want to bawl "fag!" at the top of his voice along the passage, as was customary with the great men of the Sixth when they required service.

Carberry, prefect as he was, was the black sheep of the Sixth. He frequently required services of his fags that would have got him into serious trouble with the powers that be, if the matter had become known.

Some of the Sixth knew the kind of fellow Carberry was, and shrugged their shoulders at it, but it was only in the Fourth Form and the Remove that his character was really known in its true light, for from the lower school Carberry picked his fags, and in return for their services frequently initiated them into his own iniquities.

More than one young swaggerer of the lower school had smoked his first cigarette in Carberry's study, the reward of smuggling the "smokes" into the school; smoking being as strictly forbidden at Greyfriars for seniors as for juniors.

Hazeldene, of the Remove, had frequently been Carberry's emissary; but since Hazeldene had taken up with Harry Wharton and his friends, he had rather avoided the bully of the Sixth. And this was not a case in which bullying could help much. The prefect had to depend upon the discretion of the fag to keep his secret.

Carberry was having a couple of friends into his study that evening—friends of his own kidney, and he intended to "do them down" in first-rate style, and for that purpose he wanted a messenger to go to the Red Cow, in the village of Friardale, to obtain supplies.

But the question was, who should he send? As he stood looking out of his study door, he murmured the name of Harry Wharton, accompanied by anathemas. Since Harry had become captain of the Remove, Carberry had found the youngsters very shy of his study. It was due to Wharton's influence, and he knew it, and it intensified the hatred he had always felt for the boy.

There was a step in the passage, and a junior came along with a book under his arm. Carberry looked up, and gave a nod of satisfaction.

The junior was a new boy at Greyfriars—a lad named Mark Linley, who had come to the school on a scholarship. He had worked, in his earlier days, in a Lancashire cotton mill, and in consequence some of the more snobbish of the Greyfriars fellows kept aloof from him. He was just the boy, in Carberry's opinion, to need the protection of a prefect, and to be glad to be taken up by a Sixth-Former.

Carberry called to him as he passed, and Linley stopped. The lad from Lancashire knew very little of Carberry, except that the senior was something of a bully. He had not seen much of the prefect yet, and he was always willing to oblige. The prefect looked at him searchingly, and noted the big book he was carrying under his arm.

"What on earth have you got there, Linley?" he exclaimed.

"It's Wingate's Liddell and Scott," explained Linley. "He was kind enough to lend it to me."

The prefect stared at him blankly.

"In the name of all that's idiotic, what do you want with a Greek lexicon?" he demanded.

Mark Linley coloured a little.

"I'm doing Greek," he said. "It's an extra here, and—and I don't take it in class, but I'm doing it on my own, and Wingate helps me sometimes, and lends me books, and so does Wharton. I haven't a lexicon, you see."

Carberry burst into a laugh. He knew that the Lancashire lad came of extremely poor people, and that only the scholarship he had won by hard work enabled him to come to Greyfriars at all. Any "extras," outside the ordinary school curriculum, he could not afford, nor, probably, would his finances have been equal to the strain of the purchase of a Greek lexicon. The grit of the lad in sticking to a difficult study under such hostile conditions had found him helpers, but it did not appeal to Carberry in the least. Carberry had to do Greek, whether he liked it or not, and the sight of a Greek character was sufficient to throw him into a temper.

"Well, you'll do!" he exclaimed. "Of course, it's no good coming that humbug with me. I'm a little too keen for that; but it's deep, very deep."

Mark Linley looked puzzled.

"What's deep?" he asked. "I don't understand you."

"Oh, don't come that with me!" said Carberry impatiently. "I'll never believe that a junior tackles Greek for the fun of the thing. You're playing that little game to get round some master, or to curry favour with the Head. I know the dodge, and I've seen it worked before. Nice boy is accidentally discovered by master swotting over lexicon; is taken into favour from that moment, and always backed up by the masters afterwards. My dear kid, it's one of the oldest dodges possible, though I must say you've caught on to it very soon."

Mark Linley flushed crimson.

"I wasn't thinking of anything of the kind," he said. "My scholarship here is only for two years, and I want to make the most of my chances, that's all."

"I tell you you can't take me in," said Carberry, frowning. "But never mind that, keep it up if you like. I want you to go down to the village for me."

Linley's face fell.

He had looked forward to the next hour, to devote it to quiet study, while his study-mates were out of his quarters, and he could do it uninterrupted. But he knew that it was of no use to object. The Remove could always be fagged by the Sixth, and, besides, he was obliging a fellow. Carberry watched his face with an amused grin.

"I'll go, if you like," said Linley.

"Good! You understand—I suppose you understand—that you're to keep it dark? I mean, I don't want you gassing all over Greyfriars that you are going for me."

Linley looked surprised.

"I shouldn't be likely to gas all over Greyfriars," he said. "Besides, I don't see that it would matter if I did. A prefect has a right to send a junior to the village, hasn't he, or you wouldn't send me?"

"Keep off that, you young jackanapes! It won't work with me. I can give you a pass after locking-up, and if anybody wants to know what you're going to Friardale for, you're going to select a new football at Harvey's."

"But—but I'm not going to select a new football."

"I know you're not, ass! That's what you're to say if you're asked."

Linley's face set hard.

"Do you mean that I am to tell lies?" he asked, with his Lancashire directness. "If you do, I won't, for you or anybody else!"

"Why, you cheeky young scoundrel—"

"I'm not going to start telling lies on your account!"

"You never told any when you worked in a mill, I suppose?" sneered Carberry. "You never lied when you were late, or when you broke anything, eh?"

"No, I never did. Lancashire lads don't tell lies, as a rule," said Mark contemptuously. "As a rule, they've grit enough to face the music."

"You'll have some music to face if you don't do as I tell you," said Carberry threateningly. "I want you to go to the Red Cow in the village—"

"We're not allowed to go there."

"And give a note to the landlord, and bring back whatever he gives you," went on Carberry, unheeding, "and keep it dark. I'll give you a tanner for your trouble."

"I don't want your money, and—and I can't fetch you anything from the Red Cow," broke out Mark. "It's against the rules, and you've no right to ask me!"

"There's no danger, if you're careful."

"It's not only the danger. I—I can't do it. You've no right to ask me. You, a prefect, too!" exclaimed Mark indignantly.

Carberry's brow lowered like a thundercloud.

"I've told you," he said, in a grating voice, "that acting won't go down with me. I'm up to all that kind of thing. Can't you see, you young fool, that it will pay you best to be candid with me?"

Mark was silent.

"You are sent to Coventry by most of the Form you belong to," said Carberry. "I can help you in a hundred ways, if you make yourself useful to me. I always thought north-country people had a keen eye to their interests. Can't you see that you can make a good thing out of being backed up by a prefect?"

"I shouldn't wonder! But—but I can't do it."

Carberry almost panted with rage. It was not only the humiliation of being braved by a junior, it was the sneaking sense of inferiority he felt, for he had a secret feeling that Linley was not acting, after all. He looked as if he would spring upon the junior, and Linley backed away a little.

"I'm sorry," said Mark quietly, "I can't do it. I'll do anything else you like, but you've no right to ask me that. You know very well what the Head would say if he knew."

"So you are going to tell tales, you young sweep?"

Mark flushed crimson.

"No, I'm going to do nothing of the sort; but I won't go to a public-house for you, and that settles it."

And he walked away down the passage. Carberry would have given a great deal to rush after him, and send him spinning with a savage blow, but he could not venture to do so. He had placed himself, to a certain extent, in the junior's power. If Mark Linley chose to talk, he could deny; but such a controversy would do him no good.

"Wait a bit, you insolent young scoundrel!" he muttered, glaring after the Lancashire lad. "Just you wait a bit! I'll find an occasion soon, and then I'll make you squirm for this. But—but what shall I do now? I suppose I had better look for that young cad Hazeldene, and see if he—"

Carberry broke off, as he felt a touch on his elbow. He looked round, and saw Ernest Levison.

There was a curious expression upon Levison's face, a curious, reckless gleam in his eyes. Carberry looked at him savagely.

"What do you want, you whelp?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing. I heard what you said to young Linley."

Carberry gritted his teeth.

"Don't get your rag out," said Levison coolly. "All I want to say is that I'll go to the Red Cow for you, if you like."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Levison is Obstinate.

HARRY WHARTON was standing at the door, looking out into the Close, when Bob Cherry and Nugent came along. There was a shade on the brow of the young captain of the Remove, and he was plunged into a deep reverie, and did not notice the approach of his chums till Bob Cherry smote him across the shoulder. Then he started, and turned round with an angry look, which faded away immediately at sight of Bob's cheery face.

"You mustn't fall into these fits of absent-mindedness, kid," said Bob Cherry, wagging a warning forefinger. "I've been looking for you. You have utterly overlooked the fact that it is teatime, and have given us the trouble of coming down to look for you. It won't do, you know."

"Sorry," said Harry, laughing. "I forgot tea."

"Better not tell Billy Bunter so. He has been making omelettes, and I must say that they're a marvel. It's a special surprise for you, so come along and be surprised. You must be hungry."

"Ye-e-es, but—" Wharton hesitated, and Bob Cherry and Nugent looked at him with some curiosity.

"What's up?" said Nugent. "Been having a row with somebody?"

"Not exactly a row. It was that chap Levison."

"Oh, Levison! My dear kid, haven't I told you a dozen times that it's no good trying to keep on good terms with Levison? He's a suspicious beast, and you never know how to take him. It's a marvel to me how you've kept from rowing with him for so long."

"He's not a bad sort, take him all in all."

"I shouldn't like to take him anyway; but what has he been doing now?"

"He was ragging young Benson. The little rascal had been cheeking him, over that ridiculous affair of Wun Lung's postcards, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was absurd, of course," said Harry, his face relaxing. "Levison made a fool of himself, and showed up in

a very mean light. He meant well, but he ought to have known that a chap has no right to do a dirty, mean action for ever so good a motive. And the affair ended so ridiculously, too! Bunter got hold of it, and half the Form has been laughing at Levison since; and he can't stand that kind of thing. He's too sensitive."

"If he had been a bit more sensitive on the point of honour, he would never have got into the scrape," said Nugent indifferently. "I can't say that I feel very sorry for him."

"No; but— Well, he's a fellow with a curious temper, and he feels a thing like that more than most. He's getting soured over it; he's quarrelled with most of his friends because they chipped him, and he seems to fancy solitude. I had to interfere between him and young Benson, and now he's got his back up against me."

"Let him rip! Come and have the omelettes!" said Bob Cherry.

"I suppose I may as well."

Harry Wharton was turning away with his chums when Levison came towards the door, with coat and cap and scarf on. His eyes glinted as he saw the chums of the Remove, but otherwise he took no notice of them.

"Cut along, you chaps!" muttered Harry. "I want to speak to Levison for a minute."

Bob Cherry and Nugent grimaced, but they did as he desired, and Harry stepped over towards Levison. The latter halted, and looked at him coolly.

"I want to speak to you, Levison," said Wharton, a little abruptly. "I'm sorry there was that little breczo between us an hour or so ago."

"You're sorry you interfered with me?"

"Well, no! I think you'll admit, on reflection, that you were carrying things a little too far," urged Wharton.

Levison clicked his teeth.

"I'm not inclined to admit anything of the sort! I think you interfered with me like a meddling ass, if you want to know my opinion! And, unless you say you're sorry for it, I don't want to have anything more to say to you!"

"You make it very hard for a chap to get on with you," said Harry, biting his lip.

"I don't want you to get on with me; I want to be left alone!" said Levison bitterly. "You are making a set against me in the Remove!"

"I'm doing nothing of the sort!"

"Most of the fellows are, and you don't back me up in any way. I can't show my nose in the common-room now without a howl going up about that confounded affair with the Chinees. I shall never hear the end of that! I'm chipped to death in my own study. I've had enough of it. Hang the Remove! I've got friends in another part of the school, and the Remove can go to Putney!"

"I don't quite understand you," said Wharton. "But I'm not against you, as far as I'm concerned. And that affair will soon die out, if you let it alone. It's your flying out in a temper about it that makes the fellows keep it up. So long as you lose your temper over it, they'll keep up the joke."

"Hang them all!" said Levison. "I'm done with them, and with you! I don't know what I'm standing here jawing for now; I've got to get to the village."

He turned towards the door. Harry Wharton stepped quickly after him. There was a savage recklessness in Levison's manner that made him very uneasy.

"Wait a moment, Levison! Are you going out?"

"Haven't I said so?"

"You needn't snap a fellow's head off! It's snowing!"

"I know it is!"

"Look here, old man, you can't go to the village after locking up! Gosling will be closing the gates now. You know what that means."

"Suppose I have a pass?"

"Oh, of course, that makes all the difference!" said Wharton. "It's a jolly queer time to choose for going to the village, though. I should prefer to leave it till the daytime myself."

"The daytime wouldn't suit me," said Levison coolly. "You see, I'm going down to the village for Carberry."

And he strode out of the door. The steps were white with snow, and the Close was wrapped in a winding sheet of the white flakes. But Harry Wharton ran after the junior, hatless, and in his Eton jacket as he was.

"Levison, hold on! Stop, I say!"

Levison did not even look round. Wharton caught him up, and dropped a hand on his shoulder. Levison had to stop then.

"Well, what do you want?" he said savagely.

"I must speak to you. I know what it means when Carberry gives a junior a pass. You are going to a public-house for him?"

"What if I am?"

"Levison! I don't want to preach at you, but—but you know you oughtn't to do a blackguardly thing like this!"

"I shall do as I like!"

"Yes, I know you can do as you like. But listen a minute. It's not only the wrong of it, but think of the danger."

"I'm not afraid of the danger!"

"It's not a question of being afraid. Suppose you are caught, as you very likely will be? Wingate and the other prefects are very sharp after that sort of thing. If you are caught, do you think Carberry will stand by you? He will deny having had any knowledge of your action."

"Do you think I don't know that?"

"Do you understand what I mean? A flogging, or you might be expelled."

"I shouldn't care much if I were!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry sharply. "Levison, you can't go—you can't—"

"I shall go!"

"I've a good mind to call a prefect now, and have you stopped!" said Harry Wharton passionately.

Levison smiled very unpleasantly.

"It won't do any good your playing the sneak, even if you have a mind to, Wharton. If I am questioned, I am going to Harvey's for a new football, and that's why Carberry gave me the pass!"

"You mean to say that you would tell lies?" exclaimed Harry scornfully.

"Don't force me to it, then. Let me alone."

Harry Wharton stepped back, without another word, and Levison disappeared in the falling snow.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Wharton's Study.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Wharton came into Study No. 1. "What on earth have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"You—you duffer! You're smothered with snow! And no coat or cap on! You'll catch cold! You ass!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm all right!"

"You're not!" said Bob Cherry determinedly. "You've got to change all your things, or you'll catch cold! Bunter's cold made the study uninhabitable for a week, and we don't want any more. Go and change!"

"H'm! I suppose I may as well," assented Harry, who was usually very careful in such matters.

He knew that to sit in damp clothes was the surest way of catching a cold, and there was nothing slovenly about him. He hurried out of the study while Billy Bunter was serving up the omelettes.

"I say, you fellows, these will be ripping!" said Billy Bunter, blinking contentedly through his big spectacles. "I must say I think my cooking is up to the mark. These are worth the money I spent on them."

"The money who spent on them, my worthy chum?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Hindu chum, in a tone of mild surprise.

"Well, you fellows subscribed the cash, but I laid it out," said Bunter. "I spent the money, Inky. And I think they are ripping."

"So they are," said Bob Cherry. "You're worth your weight in bacon fat, Billy, and I wouldn't change you for any other pig in the United Kingdom!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I like a fellow who begins," said Nugent. "Come on, and leave Wharton's on the hob!"

"I've cooked fifteen eggs," said Billy Bunter. "That will be a couple each for you fellows, and—and the rest for me! I feel very peckish this evening."

"Young cormorant! Serve, and don't jaw!"

Harry Wharton re-entered the study; he had only been a few minutes changing. In the keen winter air the juniors developed remarkable appetites, and they did full justice to the meal Billy Bunter had prepared.

The omelettes, flanked by ham and huge piles of bread-and-butter, disappeared as if by magic. Billy Bunter's fat face was glistening contentedly.

"I really think this is ripping!" he remarked. "I'm sincerely sorry it won't run to a feed like this every evening. If you fellows started a catering fund, and put your tin into it, instead of wasting it on football and other rubbish, as you do, we could live like fighting-cocks in this study."

"Like prize pigs, you mean!" granted Bob Cherry.

"Well, I've often thought that prize pigs have a jolly good time of it," said Bunter. "Of course they die a sudden death, but everybody has to die some day, and they live a jolly happy life while it lasts. If I hadn't been disappointed about getting a prize in 'The Gem' football competition, I should have stood a series of extensive feeds in this study, and shown you what things might be like if we devoted our

energies to one important end. As a matter of fact, though, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and— What are you fellows grinning at?"

"Nothing," said Bob Cherry. "Pass the ham, my son!"

"Certainly, Cherry! As I was saying, I'm expecting a postal-order for ten shillings this evening, and if one of you fellows likes to cash it—"

"We'll cash it when it comes, Billy!"

"But it won't come till after the tuck-shop is closed, unfortunately. If you'd like to cash it in advance, it would be only a matter of a few hours—"

"More like a few centuries!" yawned Nugent. "Do get off the subject of that postal-order, Billy! You know it's a standing joke in the Form."

"If you fellows can't trust me, this discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"A jolly sight better!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Pass the bread-and-butter, Porpoise!"

"The betterfulness is terrific!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Yes; but as I was saying, you fellows—"

"Rats! The discussion has ceased! Ring off!"

"But this postal-order is bound to come—"

"Scat!"

"In fact, I shouldn't wonder if it came by the last post, and is waiting for me in the rack downstairs. I'll go and look after tea."

"And for goodness' sake shut up till then!" implored Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton was very silent during the meal. He was thinking of Levison. The junior would be at the Red Cow by that time. Whether he had ever been there before Wharton did not know, but he felt that this would not be the last visit.

To Levison, in his present reckless mood, the place was one of the most dangerous conceivable. And Harry, knowing the good that there really was in the junior, in spite of his unpleasant temper, could not help thinking of him.

Yet there was nothing more that Harry could have done; he had done all that was in his power.

Hazeldene, of the Remove, looked into the study. Wharton glanced up, and beckoned him to enter.

"Had your tea?" he asked. "If not, here you are!"

"Right-ho!" said Hazeldene. "I see you've got omelettes, and it would be a sin to waste such good grub on Bunty! Tinned beef is good enough for him; he only wants quantity!"

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"But I looked in to see if Levison is here," said Hazeldene, seating himself at the table. "Quelch is asking for him, and is looking rather wild. If Levison can't be found, he wants to see you, Wharton."

"What does he want Levison for?"

"I don't know; but I fancy our suspicious friend is booked for a row, to judge by Quelch's look. Levison has been in all sorts of tantrums lately," grinned Hazeldene. "It's that affair of the Chinese, you know. The fellows won't let it rest, and Levison seems to be determined to go the wrong way to work to stop it."

Harry Wharton rose from the table.

"I suppose I'd better go to Quelch," he remarked.

"Where is he, Hazeldene?"

"In his study. By the way, what's become of Levison? He's not to be found."

"He's gone out."

"Then he'll get warmed when he comes in, I opine."

Harry Wharton made his way to the study of the Remove master. He found Mr. Quelch standing on the hearthrug, with his back to the fire, looking very annoyed and disturbed.

The Form master looked at him with a clouded brow.

"Ha, it is you, Wharton! Where is Levison?"

Wharton involuntarily coloured. He knew that Levison was either at the Red Cow, or on the road home from it. But it was impossible to betray the reckless and foolish fellow to the Form master.

"He has gone out, sir," said Harry.

Mr. Quelch made an angry gesture.

"Gone out! At this hour!"

"I think—I mean I know he has a pass, sir."

"But he has no right to go out. I gave him an imposition this morning, for a flagrant case of bullying a younger boy," said Mr. Quelch. "He had orders to bring it to me by six o'clock. It is now half-past six, and you say he has gone out."

"He—he must have forgotten, sir," faltered Harry.

"He will learn not to forget a Form master's orders," said Mr. Quelch, setting his lips. "You may go, Wharton, but look for Levison, and bring him to me the moment he enters the house."

"Yes, sir."

And Harry Wharton left the study with a clouded face. It was of course impossible for him to have concealed the fact that Levison was absent, when several juniors were looking for him and he could not be found. The hardy recklessness of the boy in going out under such circumstances

amazed Harry. It looked as if Levison was deliberately looking for trouble in a quarter where trouble would be most serious for him.

Wharton did not return to his study. As captain of the Remove, he sometimes had duties to perform that were distasteful enough to him, and the present was one of them. He waited downstairs for Levison, having no choice but to do so, and to conduct the delinquent to Mr. Quelch's presence as soon as he came in.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Levison Takes His Gruel.

HARRY WHARTON had not long to wait. About ten minutes later Ernest Levison came in, looking tired and cold. The mud and wet clung to his boots and trousers, and snow was thick on his cap and coat. He shook himself as he ground his boots on the mat, and glanced at Wharton with a surly expression. His walk to the village had not been a pleasant one in the bitter December evening.

Wharton felt awkward enough in the position he found himself in, but there was no help for it. He went directly towards Levison.

"Mr. Quelch has been inquiring for you, Levison," he said.

"Has he?" said Levison sourly. "And I suppose you told him where I was?"

"I told him nothing, except that you had gone out; and he knew that. He says I am to take you straight to his study the moment you come in."

Levison chuckled, and indicated a parcel under his arm.

"Precious row there would be if I took this into Quelch's study," he said. "I must nip upstairs a minute first."

Wharton looked uncomfortable.

"It can't be done, Levison. I had strict orders from Mr. Quelch, and he might see you go up from his study door. You must come at once."

"Don't be a fool! Do you know what I've got in this parcel?"

"I can guess."

"Well, you know I can't take it into Quelch's study, then. There's a bottle of whisky and a box of cigarettes. Don't be a fool!"

Wharton hesitated. As it happened, Mr. Quelch's door was open, and it commanded a view of a part of the big staircase. If he happened to be glancing in that direction, he would see the boy go up, and would know that Wharton had disobeyed him.

"It's impossible, Levison. You can't go upstairs," he said at last.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I see your game; you want to ruin me, and you think—"

"Don't be a fool!" said Wharton sharply. "I don't know what to do. It's your own fault for going there, and I warned you beforehand. You've no right to shunt the responsibility upon me now."

"You know jolly well I shall be expelled if I take these things into Mr. Quelch's room. Look here, I'll tell you what. You take the parcel, and put it into Carberry's study, and I'll go in to Quelch."

Wharton started back.

"What! Take those filthy things to Carberry, and make myself a party to—"

"Very well," said Levison, clenching his teeth, "I'll take them in to Quelch, and you can have the pleasure of getting me expelled. I'll remember this."

"Give it to me," said Harry heavily.

What else could he do? Levison spoke the truth. It was expulsion, and nothing less, to be discovered in possession of the smokes and intoxicants. The punishment would not be undeserved. But Wharton could not make up his mind to let the junior meet the fate he had deliberately risked against repeated warnings.

He took the parcel Levison handed to him, and the junior, with a sneering smile upon his face, walked down the flagged passage to Mr. Quelch's study.

Harry, with a heavy heart, went upstairs. He had said that he would take the things to Carberry's study, and he did so. The study was dark and empty; Carberry and his friends were not yet there. The feed was, in fact, fixed for eight o'clock, when the prefect's evening duties would be over until half-past nine, when he had to put out lights for the Remove.

Levison walked down to Mr. Quelch's study with almost a jaunty air, tapped at the open door, and entered. The stern eyes of the Form master fixed themselves upon him.

"So you have come back, Levison?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"Friardale, sir."

"And for what purpose?"

"I've been to Harvey's, sir, to select a new football," said Levison, with perfect calmness. The die came trippingly enough to his lips.

Mr. Quelch gave him a searching glance. It seemed that some vague suspicion was in the Remove master's mind. But Levison met the glance with perfect nonchalance.

"This is surely a strange time to choose for going to Harvey's about a football, Levison."

"I had a pass out of bounds, sir."

"Who gave you the pass?"

"Carberry, of the Sixth, sir."

"For the purpose of selecting a new football at Harvey's?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you affirm that that is why you went to the village?"

"Yes, sir. I like a walk in the snow; it freshens one up."

"I should write a note to Mr. Harvey, and ask his corroboration of your statement," said Mr. Quelch sternly; and Levison turned white. "But I cannot bring myself to express in public doubt of a Greyfriars boy's word."

Levison breathed again. His eyes were on the carpet now.

"I hope you have told me the truth," said Mr. Quelch. "With your visit to Friardale, then, I shall not deal, but I shall speak to Carberry on the subject. What I have to remind you of is that you had an imposition to bring to me at six o'clock. It is now near seven. Where is the imposition?"

"I—I haven't written it, sir."

"You preferred to go out—to select a new football at Harvey's!" said Mr. Quelch, in a tone of sarcasm.

Levison was silent.

"Did you forget it, Levison?"

"No, sir," said Levison sullenly.

Mr. Quelch turned pink.

"If you had forgotten it, Levison," he said sternly, "I should have caned you for your negligence; but you tell me that you did not forget. Am I to understand that you have deliberately disregarded my orders?"

"I—I haven't had time to write it, sir."

"This is mere trifling. You have gone out, instead of doing the task I set you—a task which was only a light punishment for the fault you were guilty of. I do not quite understand you, Levison. You have frequently been guilty of impertinence, and more frequently of egging on weaker boys to be impertinent. Of late your whole character seems to have taken a turn for the worse. Under the circumstances, I must conclude that gentle usage has encouraged you, and I have no alternative but to administer a severe punishment. Hold out your hand."

Mr. Quelch took up a cane. Levison hesitated for a moment, but the stern glance of the Form master compelled obedience.

He held out his hand, and received a stroke that made him tingle with pain from head to foot. His eyes blazed, and his face went white, but he uttered no cry. The reckless, obstinate nature of the boy came out in full force now.

Five more cuts he received, each as hard and stinging as the first, but not a sound escaped his lips. But for the drawn, strained look about his lips, and the blaze in his eyes, he might have been a statue standing there, under the blows of the cane, so little did he give a sign of suffering.

Mr. Quelch looked hard at him, and laid down the cane.

"You may go, Levison."

Without a word Levison left the study. He closed the door hard—very like a slam. Mr. Quelch started, and his eyes sparkled, and the words rose to his lips to call the junior back. It was an act of intentional disrespect, and Mr. Quelch was not the master to forgive it, as a rule. But he did not call Levison back. The junior's punishment had already been severe, and the Remove master let him go.

Levison paused in the passage, uncontrollable hate and rage welling up in his breast. He pressed his hands under his arms to assuage the pain, but the relief was very little. The strokes had been laid on with a strong hand, and the pain was aching and tingling through all the junior's nerves.

"Oh!" muttered Levison. "Oh!"

He went slowly down the passage. His white, drawn face attracted glances from several fellows he passed, and one or two of them stopped to inquire what was the matter.

Levison did not answer them; he did not even hear them. He went straight to the Remove dormitory, where he knew he would be able to escape observation. There alone he could expect to find solitude.

In the long, lofty, shadowy room the wretched junior flung himself upon his bed, and no longer fearing observation, the hard-held tears burst out in a passionate flood.

There was a step in the darkness, and Levison started up.

"Who's there?"

"Don't be alarmed," said a quiet voice, "it's I—Wharton."

"So you have followed me!" said Levison savagely.

"You want to triumph over me. Can't you leave me alone?"

"I wanted to see if I could do anything for you. Levison, old chap, do be reasonable. I—"

"If you want to do anything for me, get out, and leave me alone."

"Very well."

Harry Wharton left the room. Levison remained alone, sitting on the bed in the darkness, his burning eyes glimmering in the shadows, and hatred and anger and all uncharitableness running riot in his breast.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Little Conviviality (?)

"YOU'LL never get your prep. done," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded without speaking, and sat down in the study at the table. The other juniors were getting through with their work, but Harry found it hard to concentrate his attention upon it. Bob Cherry looked at him curiously once or twice, and at last spoke.

"Where have you been all this time, Harry?"

Wharton explained. A glimmering of fun came into Bob Cherry's eyes at the mention of the packet placed in Carberry's study.

"Rotten low cad!" he said. "Levison is a reckless fool, but Carberry is a blackguard. He ought to be expelled! Fancy a bottle of whisky!"

"The fools!" said Nugent. "They'll start drinking whisky and water in the study, and smoking, and pretend they like it; and there isn't one of them that wouldn't rather have a stick of toffee if he only told the truth."

"True enough. I say, it would be rather a joke to doctor that stuff," said Bob Cherry. "I'm thinking of paying a visit to Carberry's study."

"What's the wheeze?"

"Well, if the precious party aren't there yet, I think I may be able to work up some comical effects," grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't you fellows come; I can manage alone, and a crowd would attract attention."

And Bob Cherry left the study.

He hastened at once to Carberry's quarters, anxious lest the prefect should have returned there, and so spoiled his intended joke. But the study was still dark and unoccupied.

It was dangerous for a junior to venture into a Sixth Form study without permission—especially Carberry's study. But Bob did not hesitate. He went in, and closed the door, and lighted the gas, turning it just high enough for a light.

Wharton had placed the obnoxious packet on the table, and it still lay there. To untie the string and open it was the work of a moment.

A bottle of whisky and a box of cigarettes were disclosed. Bob opened the box and found it nearly full of gold-tipped cigarettes.

"My aunt!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That's one way to get rid of one's tin! Such extravagance ought to be nipped in the bud, and it's the duty of a good junior to see that his elders are stopped on the downward path. Good little boys in books are always preaching to their elders and telling their parents how to behave; and now I'm going to be very good. It will be a little surprise for Carberry, too, and I like preparing little surprises for my kind prefects."

There was a jug of water-containing flowers at the window, and it did not take Bob Cherry long to dip the ends of the cigarettes in the water, wetting them a third of their length, so that it would be impossible to light them.

Then he wiped them dry on his handkerchief, and restored them to the box. The tobacco, of course, remained wet, and would never light, if whole boxes of matches were expended for the purpose.

Then the humorous junior turned his attention to the bottle of whisky.

The seal had already been broken, and the cork drawn, and Bob noted that the bottle was only three-quarters full. Doubtless even Carberry and his precious friends did not want a whole bottle for their convivial meeting, and Mr. Jolliffe, of the Red Cow, had sent the quantity ordered in an old bottle, for convenience of carriage. Bob Cherry opened the bottle, and poured half the contents into the jug of water with the flowers. Then he added an amount of liquid sufficient to restore the liquor to its former quantity. But it was not water that he added. He used several ingredients, as they came handy; among others cycle lubricating oil, gum, and paraffin.

"I think that will do," murmured Bob, as he recorked the bottle, and he proceeded to tie up the parcel as he had found it.

He had just finished, and was putting up his hand to turn out the gas, when there was a sound of footsteps outside the study door.

"Here we are!" said the voice of Hacker, one of Carberry's intimates.

Bob Cherry turned out the gas instantly, and drew to the side of the door. He hoped to be able to slip out as the seniors entered.

Carberry threw open the door.

"Blessed if I didn't think I saw light under the door!" he exclaimed. "I—Hullo! What's that?"

"That" was Bob Cherry trying to slip out of the study. He whisked past the surprised Carberry, and bolted; but Datchett, of the Sixth, was a pace or two behind the others, and he put out his hand and caught the junior by the collar.

"Hold him!" exclaimed Carberry furiously.

"I've got him," said Datchett. "Is it your fag?"

"No. It's one of those Remove brats—Cherry, I think. Hold him while I get a light."

Bob Cherry was dragged into the study by Datchett and Hacker, while Carberry lighted the gas.

The prefect turned a glinting eye upon the junior.

"So it is you, Cherry," said Carberry. "I thought so."

"Yes, I think so," assented Bob, with unshaken coolness.

"Will you kindly take your paws off my collar, Datchett? I'm not particular, but I bar having fellows' paws on my collar. That's a clean collar—or was a minute ago."

"Cheeky young whelp!" said Datchett.

"Give him a hiding!" suggested Hacker.

Carberry gave a harsh laugh.

"That's what I'm going to do. Lay him across the table, while I get my cane."

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"Hold on," said Bob Cherry. "I might kick, you know, and knock that parcel down, and bust your whisky-bottle."

Carberry started.

"That young fool Levison! Fancy leaving the things there!" he exclaimed, catching sight of the parcel. "Anybody might have come in—Cherry, you brat, have you been spying into that parcel?"

"He's been drinking!" exclaimed Datchett. "There's a jolly strong smell of whisky in the study!"

Bob Cherry could not help grinning. There certainly was a decided aroma from the whisky he had poured into the flower-jug.

"I suppose so," said Carberry. "I've often suspected those brats in Study No. 1 of that sort of thing. They keep up appearances so jolly well that there must be something behind it."

"Break his neck for him, then!"

Carberry hesitated. He would gladly have thrashed Bob Cherry, but he feared that the junior, if exasperated, might talk too much. The Removeite was not likely to sneak to a master, but he might spread the tale in his own Form; and it would not be pleasant for Carberry to have half the Remove come along the Sixth Form passage to peep in at his convivial meeting.

"Better let him go," he said, after a pause. "You can cut, Cherry; but if you say a word outside this room, I'll skin you alive."

"I shall say what I like, when I like, how I like, and to whom I like," said Bob Cherry independently, as he shook himself free. "You know jolly well I sha'n't sneak, you pig. It would serve you right if I did, though. And you'd lick me now if you dared; and you're a set of rotters, anyway."

And Bob Cherry scuttled out of the study.

The three seniors looked at one another with rather sickly expressions. The junior's plain speaking, which so evidently came from the heart, was not palatable to any of them. Carberry forced a laugh.

"Cheeky young brat!" he said. "I'll take it out of him another time. Close the door, Datchy, and we'll get the stuff out."

"Right you are, old man!"

Datchett closed the door and locked it, and Hacker stirred the fire to a cheerful blaze. Carberry opened the parcel, and took out the bottle of whisky and the box of cigarettes. He set a kettle on the fire, and produced a couple of lemons, a basin of sugar, knife, spoons, and glasses from his cupboard. Three chairs were drawn up round the fire, and the whole scene certainly looked very cosy.

There was not one of them who would not have preferred lemonade or coffee, and each in his heart knew it perfectly well, but they would have died rather than admit it. Hacker and Datchett kept up a look of eager anticipation as Carberry uncorked the bottle. Hacker sliced the lemons, and the scent of them neutralised the smell of the whisky, which was unpleasant to them, in spite of their elaborate sniffs of appreciation.

"Jolly good stuff," said Carberry. "Puts life into you. It's just what you want on a cold night like this. Wingate takes a trot round the Close to warm his feet; let him if he likes. I prefer this stuff."

"Yes, rather!"

"You'll find the smokes good, too—real Turkish, and gold-tipped."

"Ripping!" said Hacker.

They would have preferred the mildest of mild Virginia, but nothing would have induced them to say so.

The glasses were filled, with whisky and water and lemon, and the three absurd young donkeys settled down to pretend to enjoy themselves.

"Here's to you!" said Hacker.

They clinked their glasses, and drank—and then there was a yell in the study, followed by the crash of three glasses on the floor.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Oooch!"

Carberry frantically spat into the fire. Hacker stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth. Datchett sputtered and choked and gasped.

"Call that whisky!" panted Datchett. "If that's your idea of a joke, Carberry, it's the last time I'll ever enter your study."

"I'm poisoned!" moaned Hacker.

"You fool!" snarled Carberry. "Can't you see I'm poisoned myself as much as you are. Somebody has been doctoring the stuff."

"Gr-r-r-r-oo-o-o-oh!"

"I—I—I feel sick."

"It must be a joke of Jolliffe's, or one of the fellows at the Cow."

"What about that brat we found in here?"

Carberry uttered a fierce exclamation.

"Cherry! Of course—it was he! That's what he was doing here! That's why there was a smell of whisky! He'd been doctoring it!"

"What—what did he put in it? I—I feel as if I were going to die!" moaned Hacker.

"Oh, don't be an ass! It tasted like oil to me."

"It was like paraffin to me."

"Yes, there was paraffin, too. It's not dangerous, and you didn't swallow enough to hurt you, anyway. But—but that young villain—"

"I'll smash him—"

"Let's go and collar him—"

"Hold on! We don't want to start a row, and have it blabbed all over the coll. that we had a bottle of whisky here. I'll take it out of him later. I'm sorry this has happened, you chaps," said Carberry, remembering that he was the host. "Never mind; I've got some lemonade in the cupboard, and we can drink that with the smokes. The smokes are ripping!"

"That's all right, old fellow!"

The lemonade was forthcoming, and, as a matter of fact, the convivial party, upon reflection, were not sorry for the substitution. The smokes were handed round, and the three essayed to light them.

Carberry struck match after match, but his cigarette would not light.

"Something wrong with that!" he muttered, throwing it angrily in the fire, and taking another from the box.

"Mine won't light, either!" grunted Hacker. "It seems to me to be damp. Careless of Jolliffe to let his smokes get damp."

"Mine's damp, I think," said Datchett. "It won't light."

The three Sixth-Formers took fresh cigarettes, but the same difficulty recurred. They would not light.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Carberry savagely. His little party was a decided frost, and Hacker and Datchett were looking very discontented. "I've tried four of them, and they won't light!"

"They seem damp," said Hacker thoughtfully, feeling over the cigarettes in the box. "Why, look here, the bottom of the box is quite wet!"

Carberry gave a yell.

"That young scoundrel again!"

"What do you mean?" cried Hacker.

"Why, he's been playing tricks on the smokes, too! They've been dipped in water!" said Carberry, almost raving with rage.

"My hat! So they have!"

"The young villain!"

Carberry, with an oath, hurled the cigarettes into the fire.

"I'll make that young scoundrel wriggle for this!" he exclaimed savagely. "Let him wait till after lights out to-night, that's all! I'll go into the Remove dormitory with a cane, and give him such a hiding that he won't be able to crawl!"

And the unconvivial party broke up.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Bob Cherry's Little Scheme.

LEVISON did not show himself in the common-room that evening, and his absence led to many jocular remarks. Bulstrode suggested that he was off following up a trail in search of another mare's nest; a suggestion that was received with loud laughter. Ogilvy was of opinion that he was hanging round the letter-rack looking for a chance to read somebody's postcards. All sorts of suggestions were made, and when the Remove lined up to go to bed, and Levison took his place in the ranks, there were some whispered inquiries as to the progress of his supposed new case.

Levison made no reply to the humorous queries of his Form-fellows. He never could bear ridicule, and the knowledge that he had fairly earned it did not make it any the more palatable.

There were some fellows who did not join in the general chipping, among them being the chums of Study No. 1, Wun Lung the Chinese, and Mark Linley, the new boy. The latter, indeed, felt sorry for Levison. Levison's absurd conduct towards the Chinese junior had taken place before Mark came to Greyfriars, but he had heard all about it, and he was keen enough to see how the sensitive lad writhed under his outward mask of indifference.

Mark Linley's sympathy, however, was worth little to Levison, for Mark himself was to a great extent avoided by the Form. Since he had thrashed Bulstrode the lad from Lancashire had no open "ragging" to fear, but the prejudice against him was still strong in some quarters. But the chipping of Ernest Levison had taken the general attention off Linley ever since Billy Bunter had blurted out the story of Levison's blunder.

Levison said no word in reply to the jokes he was assailed with, only his eyes burned.

The Removites went to bed, and Carberry came to see lights out. The prefect's eyes were gleaming as he glanced at Bob Cherry.

"Anything wrong, Carberry?" asked Bob, with elaborate innocence.

"Oh, no, Cherry," said Carberry. "Quite the reverse."

And he turned out the lights, and quitted the room without saying "good-night!"

A couple of minutes later Bob Cherry skipped out of bed and lighted his candle.

"Who's game for a lark?" he demanded.

Larks in the junior dormitories were common enough after lights out, and at Bob Cherry's words half the Remove sat up in bed. Bulstrode growled. Bulstrode was the bully of the Form, and his recent licking at the hands of Mark Linley had not improved his temper. He made it a point to growl and assail any suggestion made by another boy, and frequently would take a plan out of the hands of weaker boys, adopt it as his own, and carry it out amid general admiration, after bullying or cuffing the originator of the idea in order to put down any possible rivalry.

"Oh, shut up!" he said. "Let's go to sleep!"

"You can go to sleep if you like, beast," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We're going to have a lark. What price a pillow-fight?"

"Good!" said a dozen voices.

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode, sitting up in bed. "We've had enough pillow-fights, goodness knows! Why can't you think of something new?"

Bob Cherry looked reflective.

"Well, anything for a quiet life," he remarked.

"Suppose we have a race up the dorm., jumping over the beds—or, better still, from bed to bed?"

"You'll bust the beds, you ass!"

"Rats! I suppose it doesn't matter if we bust a bed or two. They're not our beds."

"Ha, ha!" cackled two or three. "Come on! A bed race, then!"

"Well, if you bust my bed I jolly well warn you that I shall sleep in yours, that's all," said Bulstrode threateningly.

"Oh, don't be a pig, old chap. Are you ready?"

The juniors were soon ready. It was a chilly night, and most of them were cold on going to bed. Sleep was not

possible till the limbs were warm, and so a race up and down the dormitory was just the thing to appeal to the youngsters. It would set the blood flowing freely, and was a quicker and healthier way to get to sleep than by lying in bed waiting for warmth to accumulate.

The juniors, in nightshirts and pyjamas—the latter having the advantage—were soon ready for the race. Bob Cherry led off. He sprang upon the end bed, and leaped to the next, and one after another the juniors followed suit.

Billy Bunter sat up in his bed in alarm.

"I say, you fellows, I'd rather you went round my bed, if you don't mind," he exclaimed. "I don't want to get up, you know, but I can't have you jumping on me."

"Get out of bed, Bunter!"

"I'm very sorry, but I can't—Ow!"

Bob Cherry landed on the bed within an inch of Bunter, and the shock nearly threw the fat junior out. Bulstrode came next, and he purposely trod on Bunter, and the Owl gave a squeak of pain.

"You beastly bully!" muttered Nugent, who came next.

But the fat junior had taken warning, and he had squirmed promptly out of bed, and gained a safer place.

The race went on, the length of the dormitory. The distance between the beds was considerable, and a good leap was required to carry a lad from one to another. There were suppressed shouts of laughter when a junior fell short, and rolled over on the hard floor.

The beds, too, groaned and creaked when the juniors landed on them. Bob Cherry, whenever he landed on Bulstrode's bed, seemed to come down with special force, and that bed had more to stand than any of the others.

The inevitable happened at last.

There was a terrific crash as Bob Cherry came down on Bulstrode's bed for the sixth time, and a yell from Bob.

Crash!

The bed went right through, and Bob Cherry disappeared in a mass of bedclothes, and two or three other juniors, unable to stop themselves, rolled over him on the wrecked bed.

"Oh!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ow! Gerrof me neck!"

"Oh, murther!" howled Micky Desmond. "It's broke up I am intirely!"

"Oocoooh! The brokefulness is terrific!"

"Me blokec—me blokee to pieccee!" moaned Wun Lung, as he rolled off the bed to the floor, and gasped for breath.

"Me velly much blokec!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the rest of the Remove.

Wharton and Linley dragged Bob Cherry from the wrecked bed. It was a wreck, and no mistake!

Bulstrode came up with a threatening brow.

"I'm going to have your bed, Cherry," he said aggressively.

"That's only fair," said Hazeldene.

"I don't care whether it's fair or not. I'm going to have Cherry's bed to-night," said the bully of the Remove.

"But what am I going to do?" asked Bob Cherry, with unusual meekness, and a lurking glimmer of fun in his eyes that Bulstrode did not see.

"Sleep on the floor, for all I care!" retorted Bulstrode.

"All I know is, I'm jolly well going to have your bed, that's all!"

"You'd better not."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"Well, I dare say I could stop you if I tried," said Bob Cherry. "But you can have the bed if you like."

"I'm jolly well going to, whether you like it or not!"

Bulstrode's manner was very hard for anybody to bear, and Harry Wharton's eyes were beginning to gleam, and Nugent clenched his hands. But Bob Cherry took it all with amazing urbanity.

"Very well," he said. "Don't forget that I warned you you'd better not have that bed. But if you insist, Bulstrode, there's an end of the matter."

Bulstrode grunted, and went to Bob's bed to turn in. The noise had been too great to continue, and the Remove went quickly to bed, anxious lest some alert prefect should have heard the crash, and should come along to investigate.

Bob Cherry cocked his eye thoughtfully at the broken bed. It certainly did not look very inviting.

"My hat! A fellow can't sleep there!" he exclaimed.

"I say, Bulstrode, can I have half that bed with you?"

"No, you can't!" grunted Bulstrode, turning over.


"I sha'n't take up much room, you know—"

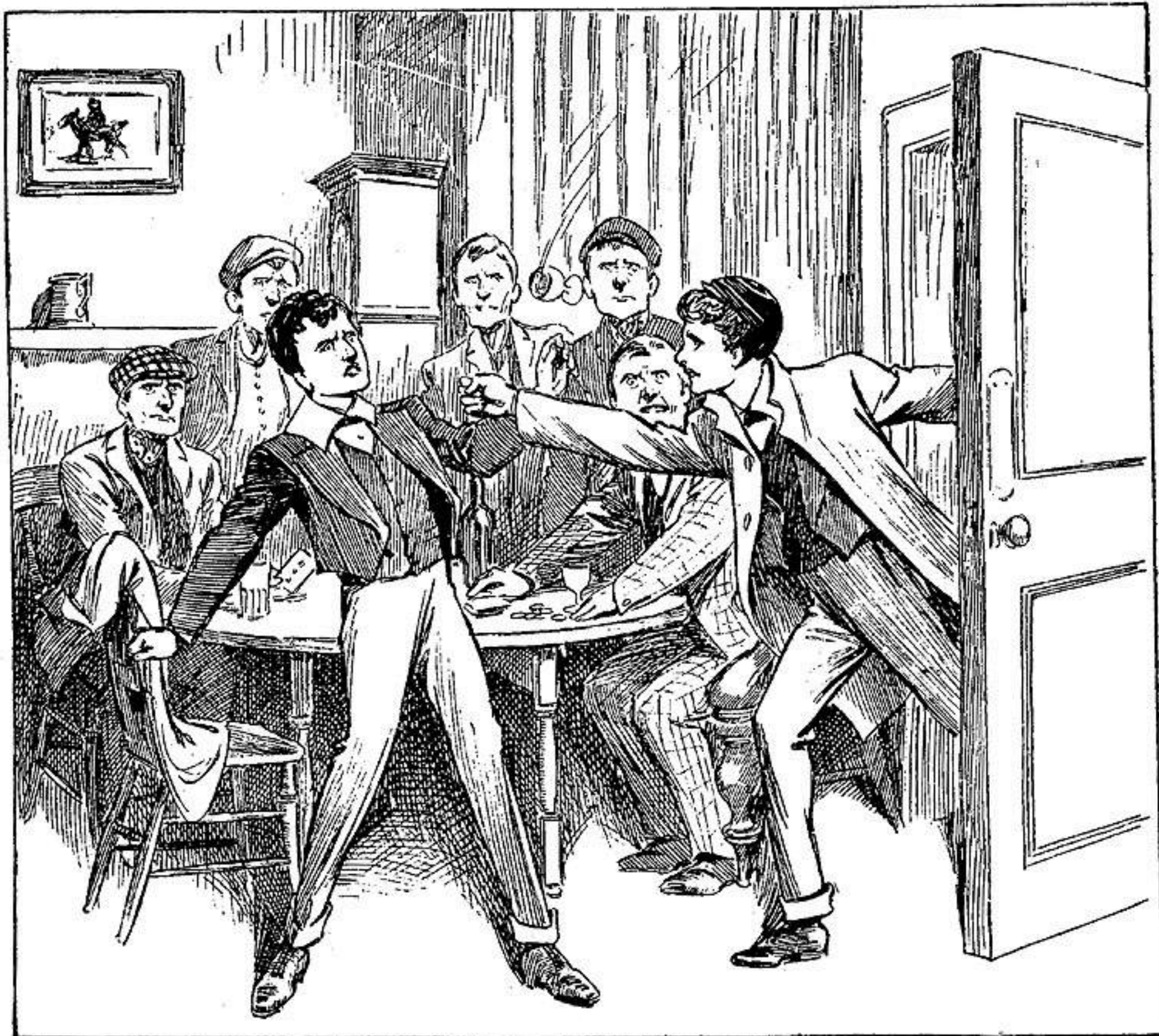
"You're not coming in here!"

"Come in here, Bob," said Harry Wharton, making room.

And Bob Cherry blew out his candle, and came over to his chum's bed, grinning in the darkness.

"What's the little game, Bob?" demanded Harry, as the junior slipped into his bed. "What are you knuckling under to that beastly bully for?"

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Harry Wharton sprang into the room, and with a blow of his fist dashed the glass from Levison's hand, before he had taken more than a mouthful of the liquor.

"Oh, he's entitled to my bed, as I busted his."

"But he isn't entitled to bully you, and—"

"Oh, that's all right; I don't mind."

"I suppose you've got some little game on," said Harry. Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I warned Bulstrode that he'd better not sleep in that bed," he murmured. "He disregarded my warning. It's his own look-out what happens."

And Bob Cherry turned over to go to sleep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Rather Rough on Bulstrode.

"OH!"

There was a sudden roar in the Remove dormitory. It was half-past ten, and every junior in the long, lofty room was sleeping soundly, when all of a sudden a fearful yell awoke the echoes. It was followed by another and another, and the sound of a cane thrashing upon bedclothes and the form under them.

"Oh, oh, oh! Help!"

It was Bulstrode who was yelling.

The Remove, startled out of their slumber, sat up in blank amazement in bed, calling to one another to learn what the matter was.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"There, you young whelp, that will teach you to play tricks in my study!"

It was the voice of Carberry, the prefect.

"Oh!" yelled Bulstrode, in anguish and amazement.

"Oh! Ow!"

Thwack—thwack—thwack!

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, springing out of bed. "What is it there?"

"Ow—ow—ow!"

Thwack—thwack—thwack!

"It's all right," murmured Bob Cherry. "I warned Bulstrode that it would be better for him not to have my bed, but he wouldn't take any notice."

"There, you young sweep, that will teach you!" came the voice of Carberry again. The bully of the Sixth was panting for breath.

A light gleamed out in the dormitory. Nugent had lighted a candle, and at the same time Desmond lighted a bicycle lantern. The light showed the Sixth-Form bully standing over Bulstrode's bed with a cane in his hand, panting from his exertions.

Bulstrode was writhing in the bedclothes, his face red, and his eyes nearly starting out of his head. He was as amazed as hurt—and he was very considerably hurt.

"What does this mean, Carberry?" exclaimed Harry Wharton fiercely. "What do you mean by coming in here at this time of the night, and—"

The prefect scowled savagely at him.

"I came in here to give that rascal Cherry a lesson. Why—why—it—it isn't Cherry! This is his bed!"

"Of course it isn't Cherry!" howled Bulstrode. "It's me.

"Bulstrode! What are you doing in Cherry's bed? Where is Cherry?"

"Here I am," said Bob Cherry coolly. He had slipped out of bed, and picked up the jug of water from his washstand. "Come on, old chap, if you want a wash!"

Carberry, red with rage, started towards him; but Bob held the jug ready, and his intention to send the contents over the bully was so plain that Carberry halted in time. He didn't want a drenching in icy water on that freezing December night.

"You—you young rat! You did this on purpose. You knew I was coming, then!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Bulstrode insisted on having my bed," he remarked. "I didn't want to fight him over it, and I thought you might be coming. Are you hurt, Bulstrode?"

"Oh—oh—oh!" moaned the Remove bully.

"Well, I warned you not to have my bed."

"Oh—oh—oh! Ow!"

"It's like your cheek to come here like this, Carberry!" said Harry Wharton, his eyes flashing. "If it had been Bob Cherry in that bed, we'd have given you a hiding before you got out, prefect or no prefect. Now get out!"

Carberry glared at the junior. He did not like to take orders from the Lower Fourth boy, but the aspect of the Remove was threatening.

"Out you go!" said Bob Cherry. "No dogs or Sixth-Formers admitted here! I give you two seconds before I chuck this water at you!"

"You young scoundrel——"

"One!"

"I'll tan your hide——"

"Two!"

"I'll—— Ow—ow—oooooch!"

Bob Cherry had kept his word. The water from the jug swished over Carberry, and drenched him to the skin. The prefect gave a horrified gasp, and staggered back, and then, with a face like a demon, he flung himself forward at Bob Cherry.

But Harry Wharton sprang upon him and dragged him back, and then Nugent and Desmond and Mark Linley joined in, and the prefect went over on the floor.

The bump he gave rang through the house. He struggled up furiously, but the Removites clung to him, and more and more of the juniors piled on him, clinging to him like cats, till Carberry had a dozen assailants to contend with, and sank to the floor again under their weight.

Then Bulstrode, seeing an opportunity of getting a little of his own back, jumped out of bed, and wrenched the cane from Carberry's hand, and commenced to lash the legs of the bully—the only parts of him that could be seen from under the sprawling heap of juniors.

The yells of Carberry rang far and wide. A light gleamed in at the door, and the stern face of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked in.

He had been going up to bed when he heard the terrific din proceeding from the Remove dormitory, and he had at once hurried to see what was the matter.

"Boys!" he exclaimed.

At the Form master's voice the scuffle immediately ceased. The Removites bolted back to bed like rabbits to their burrows, and in a marvellously short space of time Carberry was left alone, sprawling dizzily on the floor.

"Carberry! Is that Carberry?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in amazement.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" gasped Carberry, getting up.

"What does this riot mean?"

"Those young villains——"

"Those young what? How dare you use such an expression, Carberry?"

"I—I mean those young rascals attacked me!" gasped Carberry. "They set on to me, as you see, sir!"

"What are you doing in the dormitory at this hour of the night?" asked the Form master coldly.

"I—I came to chastise Cherry for—for an act of impertinence, and—and——"

"At this hour? I hardly understand this, Carberry. You were certainly wrong to do anything of the kind, and I am not surprised that the boys set upon one who startled them at such a time of the night. This is not the way to make the office of prefect respected, Carberry. If I hear of anything of the kind happening again, I shall consider whether to speak to Dr. Locke on the subject. Leave the dormitory at once!"

"But, sir——"

"Do you hear me, Carberry?"

And Carberry, gritting his teeth, left the dormitory, aching in every limb and wild with rage. Mr. Quelch gave one expressive glance along the row of beds, and then went out and shut the door.

From the Remove came a long though suppressed chuckle. They had never triumphed so signally before over the bully of the Sixth.

"What a brick Quelch is!" said Nugent. "He knew that Carberry came here to bully, and so he was down on him. He's a brick!"

And the dormitory unanimously agreed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mark Linley's Advice.

"ALLO there! 'Skuse me——"

Harry Wharton looked round. The snow was falling in the Close in the grim December midday, but Harry Wharton was tramping round to get a whiff of fresh air before dinner. A red, fat face was looking in between the bars of the gate, and a hand was beckoning to him.

Wharton's brow darkened a little as he looked at the person who called. He knew him by sight, and knew that he was the young man from the Red Cow, in Friardale. The young man wore a loud check overcoat and a bowler hat tilted on one side of his head, and had a straw between his teeth. His nose was red with cold and with something he had taken to keep out the cold, and his eyes were fishy. He grinned with oily amiability at the disgusted Removite.

"'Skuse me!" he said, "your name don't 'appen to be Levison, I suppose?"

"No, it doesn't!" said Harry shortly.

"You know Mister Levison?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell him that Ted wants to see 'im, or give him this note?"

Harry looked straight into the fishy eyes of the young man from the Red Cow.

"No, I won't!" he said. "Take yourself off!"

"Eh?"

"Get out, or I'll come out and kick you along the road!"

The young man from the Red Cow was twice the size of Harry Wharton, but he had probably not half the strength and nerve of the sturdy, clean-living schoolboy. He blinked uncertainly at Harry, and ejaculated, "My word!" Then he turned to go down the road, again exclaiming, "My word!"

"Hold on, Ted!"

Levison's voice rang out, and the junior came scudding up to the gate. He gave Harry a look of quick suspicion and dislike, and held out his hand between the bars.

"Is that a note for me, Ted?"

"Yes, sir," said the young man from the Red Cow. "Mr. Jolliffe, he——"

"Shut up! It's all right."

"'Opes as I 'asn't let any cats out the bag, Mister Levison——"

"It's all right. Get along."

"Right-ho!" said the young man from the Red Cow; and he went down the road with a rollicking gait, slipping very often in the snow. Levison put the letter in his pocket, and looked at Harry's anxious face with a sneer.

"You couldn't tell me he wanted to see me!" he said savagely.

"No," said Harry directly. "I wouldn't have a hand in anything of the sort. You've no right to have such acquaintances, and you know it."

"Mind your own business, confound you!"

"It's any decent fellow's business to keep out of helping on an acquaintance like that!" said Harry scornfully. "You could see that the fellow was three-quarters intoxicated. Suppose a prefect had been near, and had heard him asking for you?"

"Yes, he was a careless fool. I suppose Jolliffe gave him the note to get it to me, but didn't mean the dummy to come to the gate like that," muttered Levison, half to himself.

"If a master had heard him, he would have taken the note and read it."

"Shoul'n't wonder! I shall speak to Jolliffe about it, and I suppose you are not going to blab?" said Levison, with a sneer.

"I don't know whether I ought not to," said Harry. "It seems that you know this rotten cad Jolliffe pretty well."

Levison shrugged his shoulders. His visit to the Red Cow on Carberry's business had been the first real step in his acquaintance with Jolliffe. Since then the acquaintance had ripened. The first visit had not been the last.

Only a few days had elapsed, but Levison had gone a pretty good distance on the downward road—driven by his own obstinacy and recklessness, and the desire to flaunt his independence in the face of one whom he believed to desire to control his actions.

He pretended to be indifferent to Harry's opinion, but, as

a matter of fact, it was the desire to wound and taunt the captain of the Remove which actuated him as much as anything else.

"Levison! If you reflected a little——"

"Don't preach to me!"

"I'm not preaching!" exclaimed Harry, reddening angrily. "I'm talking plain sense. If you reflected a bit you would see that this is rotten, low-down foolery, and that it can't last. I know you've been to the Red Cow several times lately. I haven't watched you in any way, but I know it. Every fellow in the Remove knows it, and these things can't be hidden for long. It will come to the ears of a prefect or a master before long; it must."

"Perhaps you will tell them."

"I sha'n't tell them; you know that. I don't know whether I ought not to, though. If a fellow persists in making a fool of himself, he ought to be stopped."

"Suppose you attend to your own affairs, and leave me to manage mine!" suggested Levison, with a sneer.

"I don't like to see a chap going to the dogs. I suppose that note means that you are going down to the Red Cow to-night. I've more than half a mind to stop you."

"You couldn't."

"I could, but I can't make up my mind to do it. I don't like the idea of telling, even for a good object; but if ever it would be justified, it's now."

"Oh, don't talk to me! I've had more than enough of you and your airs of superiority!" growled Levison. "Let me alone, to go my own way, that's all I want."

And he walked angrily away.

Harry Wharton thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strode towards the house. He was in a mood of painful indecision. Whatever he might say to Levison, it was impossible for him to betray the reckless lad to the masters. Yet to stand by while he went from bad to worse—how could he do that?

He knew the kind of company the boy met at the Red Cow. Even in a few days the difference in Levison had become noticeable.

The boy had had few friends, though his bitter tongue had made fellows fear to be his enemies. But many of the Remove were now openly avoiding him. The master's eye was sternly upon him, too. On one occasion, a packet of cigarettes had dropped out of Levison's pocket in the classroom, in the full sight of Mr. Quelch, and had considerably opened the master's eyes. He had observed Levison's slackness with his lessons, as Wharton had observed his slackness out of doors.

This open revelation of his bad habits explained matters. The junior was severely caned, but that was the worst possible remedy to a boy of Levison's temperament. He had the peculiar faculty of always seeing the wrong side of a question, and obstinately sticking to an opinion against all reason. Mr. Quelch smoked a pipe himself, and why shouldn't his pupils smoke cigarettes if they wanted to? So argued Levison, shutting his eyes to facts, and refusing to see any difference between the pipe of a middle-aged man, and the cheap and nasty cigarette of a growing boy. That smoking spoiled his wind, and would stunt his growth if persisted in, did not appeal to Levison. Why shouldn't he risk it if he wanted to, was the way he chose to look at it.

There were some fellows in the Remove who agreed with him, but they were naturally the worst class of the boys—slackers morally and physically—fellows who would have dropped exhausted before half-time in a game of football, and who were always at the bottom of the class in the Form-room. The better sort of lads let Levison severely alone, and, in fact, Harry was the only one who remained at all intimate with him, and he did that in spite of Levison's continual insults, for the purpose of yet averting the boy's ruin if he could.

Harry, with his hot and passionate temper, was the last fellow one would have expected to exercise such patience. But Harry had learned a lesson at Greyfriars, and he had not forgotten how a chum had stood by him not so long ago and helped him to win a battle with himself.

But his influence over Levison seemed to have fallen off entirely. The boy seemed to take a kind of gnomish delight in outraging his opinions, and shocking his feelings.

Harry met Mark Linley a few minutes after he had left Levison. The lad from Lancashire stopped to speak to him.

"I say, Wharton——But never mind, if you're busy," he broke off, seeing the cloud on Harry's face. "It can wait."

But Harry stopped at once.

"It's all right," he said. "I'm not doing anything now. What is it?"

"It's a passage in Xenophon," said Mark ruefully. "I—I almost wish the Persians had scoffed up the Ten Thousand, sometimes! It's a shame to bother you, but you seem to do these things so easily."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Let's go and have a look at it," he said.

And the two juniors walked away to Mark Linley's study, which the Lancashire lad shared with Russell and Lacy, and

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Russell and Lacy were out, but Wun Lung was curled up in the armchair before the fire. He blinked sleepily at the two English lads. Linley's books were on the table, but he hesitated before he settled down to them.

"You were bothered about something when I met you in the quad," he said. "You've often looked bothered lately—excuse my remarking on it. It seems absurd for a fellow like me to offer to help you, but if there was anything I could do——"

"It's nothing," said Wharton. "Thank you all the same. Yet——" He paused a moment. "You are a sensible chap, Linley, and you must have seen more of life than we fellows at school, and I shouldn't wonder if you could advise me."

Wun Lung glided noiselessly from the room. There was a great deal of delicacy about the little Chinese. The juniors hardly noticed him go.

"It's not about myself," said Wharton, a little abruptly. "But you must have noticed that chap Levison."

Mark nodded.

"He hasn't treated you very well, I know, Linley—he was one of the set who sided with Bulstrode to rag you; but he wasn't as bad as Bulstrode. He isn't a bad sort, only he seems to have a kind of impishness about him. He's always doing ill-natured things and yet he has often owned up and taken a licking when he has got another chap into trouble. He's got his good side, though he doesn't keep it uppermost. He's taken the chipping he's had lately very much to heart, and he's quarrelled with me because I stopped him ragging a fag who had cheeked him. I had to stop him, but—now he looks on me as an enemy." Harry laughed a little constrainedly. "It was through Carberry that he came to be mixed up with the Red Cow people; but he seems to be going very strong there on his own. He's got a fancy into his head that we are all down on him, and, as a matter of fact, since he took to pub-haunting, most of the decent chaps give him a wide berth. What would you do in my place, Linley?"

The Lancashire lad looked very thoughtful.

"That's a difficult question to answer," he said. "It would be easy enough to say 'Let him alone,' but you want to help him. I've seen too much of the evils of drink in my early life to spare any trouble to keep a fellow from going that way. Levison is too cool-headed ever to become a drunkard, I should say; but you never know what this kind of thing will lead to. They will make him drink at the Red Cow, and I haven't much doubt that he plays cards for money there, and bets on horses, and that kind of thing, poor wretch! He happens to have plenty of money, and it is worth Jolliffe's while to fleece him. You could stop him by telling a prefect, but you can't do that. I suppose you've argued with him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And what does he say?"

"He tells me to mind my own business," said Harry, reddening. "I dare say you wonder why I trouble about him after that. But—but I can't let him go, somehow. It isn't as if he was all bad. He has his good points, as I've said."

Linley wrinkled his brows in thought.

"I can only say stick to it," he said at last. "You're doing right in trying to save him, that's certain, and so sit tight, and stick to it."

"I thought you would say so, Linley, and I'll do it."

"You think he is going to the Red Cow again?"

"I feel pretty sure that he is going to-night."

"Suppose you went and fetched him away, and gave the rascals there a piece of your mind?" suggested Linley. "Tell them that if a Greyfriars fellow comes to the place again, you'll let the police know about it. Jolliffe would be pretty scared at the idea of a showing up, I think. I'll come with you and back you up, if you like."

Wharton's face brightened up.

"There's something in that!" he exclaimed. "No, I won't let you come in case anything should go wrong. You can't afford to run risks, Linley. I'll go, if Levison does."

And, having made up his mind, Harry Wharton opened the Xenophon, and the two juniors were soon busy retreating over again with the heroic Ten Thousand.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Caught.

HARRY WHARTON started and awoke. It was very dark in the Remove dormitory, and the boy's open eyes stared into the gloom unseeingly. What had awakened him?

Harry's sleep had been light. He had been thinking of Levison and his rascally friends at the Red Cow when he went to sleep, wondering that the reckless junior had not

left the school during the evening. He woke now with the thought of him in his mind. He had heard some sound, he did not know what it was, but it seemed to echo in his brain like the sound of a door quietly closed.

Harry Wharton, like most fellows in good health and condition, awoke from sleep with all his faculties clear. In a couple of seconds he had stepped out of bed, and groped his way towards Levison's. He knew before he touched it that it was empty; but he passed his hand lightly over it to make sure. His suspicions were correct. Levison was gone.

Harry stood silent, shivering in the bitter cold of the December night. This was worse than he had anticipated. Stolen hours at the public-house during the evening were bad enough, but for the junior to leave his bed at a late hour of the night, and break bounds while the college was sleeping—Harry could hardly realise that Levison had really done it, though the evidence of the empty bed was before him.

His heart beat passionately. He was tempted to leave the fellow to his fate. After all, why should he persist in a thankless task?

But that was only for a moment.

He groped back to his bed, and dressed himself, taking care to awaken no one else in the dormitory. He remembered Mark Linley's advice, and he determined to follow Levison. If he could not prevail on the foolish fellow to come back, he could at least make it impossible for Jolliffe to allow him to enter the Red Cow again. And a desire to speak out his mind to Mr. Jolliffe, and make him feel the scorn he felt for him, was very strong in Harry's breast.

He quietly left the dormitory. The Removees had broken bounds by night before, from motives of boyish recklessness, such as setting night lines in the river, or getting in a feed from the village shop. But "pub-haunting" was a new thing in the Remove. Harry knew which window Levison would have used to get out of the house, and as he expected, he found it unfastened.

A minute more, and he was in the Close, scudding towards the wall through the falling snowflakes.

There was a place where the wall was easy to cross. The snow was brushed away from the top, and showed that Levison had passed that way. How far was he ahead of Harry? The junior, as he dropped into the road, broke into a run, in the hope of overtaking Levison before he reached the public-house.

His feet pounded through the drifting snow on the road. Before him the lane ran like a white ribbon between gaunt, leafless trees. Round him whistled the bitter wind, carrying the flakes upon it to and fro. Harry heeded neither wind nor snow. He ran hard, and the ground flew under his feet. But Levison had a good start, and had lost no time. He did not come in sight, and Harry had seen nothing of him when he arrived at last in the glimmer of light from the windows of the Red Cow.

Eleven struck from the village church.

Harry Wharton hesitated in the glimmer of yellow light from the windows. What was he to do now? To enter the place—to face the hostile looks and ribald laughter of the crew who nightly gathered there—he shrank from the thought. The Red Cow was the worst place in Friardale, and bore little resemblance to the village inn where the labourers and village cronies gathered of an evening. Under Mr. Jolliffe's rule, the place was the resort of all the blackguards in the neighbourhood, and especially of "sporting" characters from the not distant racecourse. To face such a crew was not a pleasant task, but the thought that Levison was there amongst them was enough.

Wharton strode on firmly. He did not enter the public doors, but went down the lane at the side of the building into the garden, upon which opened the windows of the parlour where Mr. Jolliffe and his special friends gathered. Harry knew that, for he had heard all about the story of a fellow at Greyfriars who had been expelled for going there, and whose adventures were whispered with bated breath by the juniors. On most evenings the Jolliffe set were gathered in that room, and Harry found the window streaming with light as he expected. A door opened upon the garden, and a wave of yellow light rolled out upon the snow. The sound of voices came to the boy's ears as he looked in from the snow and darkness.

"It will do yer good, young master."

It was the coarse voice of Jolliffe. He was speaking to Levison, who had removed his coat and cap, and stood at the table, about to sit down, where three or four others were seated. There were cards on the table, and little heaps of

money, and the landlord was offering a glass to Levison, steaming hot.

The junior shook his head.

"No, thank you, Mr. Jolliffe."

"It will do you good on a cold night," persisted Mr. Jolliffe. "We're proud to have you among us, Master Levison. You can't refuse to taste a drop with your old friends."

"I won't, I tell you."

"Oh, very well, if you're afraid."

"Who says I'm afraid?" broke out Levison fiercely. "Do you think I care what they say at the school, even if they knew? Not that I care whether they know or not. Give it to me!"

He took the glass, and put it to his lips. The men at the table gave him approving grins, and rapped on the board.

"That's right, sir!"

"Be a man, and let the old fogies go hang."

Levison's face was flushed and angry. He began to drink, but before he had taken more than a mouthful Harry Wharton sprang into the room. He dashed the glass from Levison's hand with a blow of his fist, and it smashed on the table, the hot liquor splashing over the cards and the men sitting there. They sprang to their feet with surprised oaths, and Mr. Jolliffe grasped Harry by the shoulder.

"You young jackanapes! What do you mean?"

Levison, for the moment, was dumb.

"Hands off!" cried Harry fiercely. "Hands off, I say! You blackguard—you dirty, cowardly blackguard, to give that filthy stuff to a schoolboy!"

"You—you young hound!"

"Hold your tongue!" cried Harry imperiously. "You're a dirty scoundrel, and your friends here are the same, and I tell you so to your faces. Yes, you can scowl as you like," he went on, facing Mr. Jolliffe's friends, who were drawing nearer to him with savage looks. "Don't you dare to lay a finger on me. If—"

"Kick the cub out!" growled Jolliffe.

"Do," said Harry, "and I'll go straight to the police-station, and tell them what I've seen here!"

Jolliffe changed colour.

"Or if you like to come on one at a time, I'll give you all the fighting you want," cried Harry, with flashing eyes.

The sporting gentlemen of the Red Cow did not accept the invitation. There was something in Harry's courage, and in his flashing eyes that daunted them; and, indeed, the champion athlete of the Remove would have been a tough customer for any one of the flabby-muscled set to tackle.

But Levison broke in now. He had been too surprised by Harry's sudden appearance to speak before, but now he broke in furiously.

"You have followed me, Wharton. Spying, as usual!"

"I have not spied."

"You have followed me. Put up your hands!" cried Levison, advancing fiercely upon the captain of the Remove. "I've had enough of this. Put up your hands, I say!"

Wharton dropped his hands to his sides.

"I won't fight with you," he said; "at least, not here. I came here with a purpose, not to spy on you, but to speak my mind to that scoundrel Jolliffe."

"That what?" exclaimed Jolliffe furiously.

"What else do you call yourself? You're a low, gambling thief," cried Harry, who was too angry to measure his words, "that's what you are! And I tell you plainly that if any Greyfriars fellow comes here again, you shall be shown up. You're breaking the law, and you know it."

"If this is the kind of thing you're going to bring on us, Master Levison, the less you come here the better," snarled Jolliffe, without replying to Harry.

Levison was cool again now. He looked at Jolliffe with a sneering smile.

"It's not my fault," he said. "The fellow persists in taking an interest in my welfare against my will. As for coming here, I assure you I don't want to. There are plenty of other blackguards in Friardale for me to associate with when I want such excellent company. I assure you that I'm not fastidious about my blackguards."

Mr. Jolliffe turned purple.

"Get out of my 'ouse!" he yelled.

"Certainly," said Levison. "I'm going to make this interfering puppy smart for this; but, all the same, what he says is quite true, you know. You're a set of low, gambling thieves! Good-night!"

And Levison, having, as usual, made himself as unpleasant as possible, walked out of the room, followed by Harry Wharton.

In the little lane beside the public-house he stopped, and turned upon Harry with a face almost convulsed with rage. His sly coolness was quite gone.

"This isn't the first time you've meddled with me," he said thickly. "Now, put up your hands, you puppy!"

ANSWERS

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS."

A Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

Wharton thrust his hands deeper into his pockets. "If you're of the same mind to-morrow, I'll fight you," he said quietly. "I won't fight you to-night."

"Coward!" Harry reddened, but the taunt did not move him. He stood calm and quiet, and Levison dropped his hands. "Very well," he said savagely, "to-morrow, then." And he strode sullenly out into the street. Wharton followed. The two boys emerged into the glimmer of light from the house, and a quiet voice, with tones that seemed to cut like a knife, fell upon their ears. "Levison! Wharton! Stop!" It was Mr. Quelch!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. Expelled.

HARRY WHARTON had little more sleep that night. He lay in bed, troubled and restless, thinking, thinking! No sound came from Levison's bed, but Harry was pretty certain that Levison was awake also.

What would happen on the morrow? He could not tell. Mr. Quelch had discovered the two boys in the act of leaving the public-house. He had naturally drawn the conclusion that they had gone there together. What else would he assume?

Wharton could have explained; but he felt that it was impossible to announce himself as having gone for the purpose of saving Levison from his folly. There would be so much of the "good boy" about it, so strong a savour of the self-righteous prig-hero of a good story-book. He had acted rightly, he knew that; but to explain his righteousness to another was a very different matter. Besides, would Levison have borne him out? Levison was in a bitter humour, and had already shown that a lie came easily to his lips. If he had denied the truth of Harry's explanation, that explanation would certainly have been discredited. Harry would have appeared in the unenviable light of having wished to clear himself by further blackening his associate in wrongdoing.

Besides, to thus clear himself, even if successful, would only make the case worse against Levison. And Harry had not spoken.

Mr. Quelch had asked them if they had any explanation to give. Harry Wharton had kept silence, and Levison, with a curious smile, had answered "None!" He evidently intended to let Wharton share in his punishment.

What would come of it? Mr. Quelch had told the two boys to go back to bed, and to come into the Head's room the following morning after breakfast. The matter was to be dealt with by the Head himself. It was too serious for the Form master.

Unless Harry was cleared, he could hardly fail to be expelled. As for Levison, his fate was certain. And how could Harry be cleared, when he could not open his lips? Sleep was impossible. The unhappy lad was up long before the rising bell in the morning, and tramped round the Close in the dim dawn, trying to compose his mind and think of what he could do. He thought of his uncle, the kindhearted but unbending old colonel. What would he think if his nephew were expelled? Even if he believed the explanation the boy would give, what a blow it would be to him!

Harry's face was gloomy when he came in to breakfast. His chums noted it, but his look did not invite inquiry. They could not help him, and Harry resolved to keep the matter to himself till the worst was known.

It would not be long now. Mr. Quelch's face was like iron as he sat at the head of the breakfast-table. He did not look at either Wharton or Levison.

Levison cast more than one glance across at Harry. Harry kept his eyes upon his plate. But without looking at Levison, he knew that a cynical smile was playing upon the sneering mouth.

It was almost as if the boy who had ruined him enjoyed the situation.

A fellow like Levison was not likely to feel expulsion so keenly as another. Yet it could not fail to be a blow to him. He could not hope to escape, caught in the very act of flagrant wrongdoing as he had been. Was the prospect of involving Harry in his ruin a consolation to him?

Breakfast over, the Remove left the Hall, and Harry, slipping away before his friends could speak to him, made his way to the Head's room. Levison followed him, and the juniors looked at one another outside the Head's door.

"A bust-up at last," said Levison, with a sour smile. "Yes," said Harry quietly, "and as bad for me as for you."

"I warned you to let me alone, you know." Harry made no reply, but tapped at the door, and the deep base voice of the Head bade him enter. Mr. Quelch

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was already there. The Remove master had reported the matter to the doctor the previous night, and so Dr. Locke was fully informed. There was a shade of care on the good old doctor's brow.

He fixed his eyes upon the juniors as they entered. Harry Wharton's manner was calm and respectful, but there was a flippancy about Levison's bearing, which brought a frown to the doctor's face. The outcast of the Remove knew that nothing could save him, and evidently he did not mean to attempt to propitiate where it could do him no service.

"My boys," said the Head quietly, "I have received a very painful report from Mr. Quelch. I am pained and surprised, especially in your case, Wharton. Have you anything to say, my boys?"

Harry Wharton was silent. "Nothing, sir!" said Levison. "Mr. Quelch having received a hint that Greyfriars boys had been seen about the Red Cow at night, went there to investigate," said the Head. "He discovered you two in the act of quitting the place. That it was your first visit, I cannot believe! The discovery confirms the vague reports that first drew your Form master's attention to the place."

The juniors were silent. "Once before, and not long ago, Wharton," went on the Head, directing his glance towards the captain of the Remove, "you were accused of something of the same sort by a prefect. You succeeded in making me believe that you were innocent."

"I was innocent, sir." "In the light of your present conduct, Wharton, I cannot help fearing that you deceived me on that occasion."

"I am sorry you should think so, sir. I have never deceived you. I should think Mr. Quelch could answer for my character."

"I would have done so gladly up till last night," said Mr. Quelch sadly. "You cannot expect me to do so now, Wharton."

The junior did not speak. "Mr. Quelch found you leaving the Red Cow, the worst place of its kind in the village, Wharton?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir." "You have been in that place?" "Yes, sir."

"At a late hour of the night? Leaving your dormitory, and breaking bounds for the purpose? You need say no more!"

"One moment, sir. I went there without any intention of acting in a way you would not approve. I—I had a good motive for going."

"That is very hard to credit, Wharton. What good motive could you possibly have had for entering into association with a set of low, drinking wretches at a place of that description?"

"I—I cannot explain, sir; but—" "You cannot explain, and you expect me to take your bare word in the face of the strongest evidence!" said the Head sternly.

There was a grim silence in the study for a few moments. Mr. Quelch, who was looking more wretched than Wharton had ever seen him before, turned away his head. The Form master, cold as he sometimes was, had taken a deep interest and pride in the head boy of his Form. He had learned to like and trust Wharton. He would have taken his word without question the day before. But now— It was a blow to Mr. Quelch—harder than he could have expected. His faith in Wharton had been strong, and if Wharton had been deceiving him, how could he ever place faith in any boy again?

The Head waited some moments for the accused lad to speak, but he did not. With a sigh, Dr. Locke turned to Levison.

"Levison, have you any explanation to make?" "No, sir!"

"You broke bounds last night to go to the Red Cow?" "Yes, sir!"

"For what purpose?" "To play cards with the gang of rotters there, and smoke, and to drink whisky-and-water, sir," said Levison, with perfect coolness.

The Head almost gasped, and Mr. Quelch's face grew very stern.

"Levison! What?" "You asked me, sir!" "Boy, this astounding impudence will not serve you!"

"I suppose you wanted me to tell you the truth, sir?" said Levison, with affected humility. "I will tell you lies, if you like, sir. I will say that I went to the Red Cow with a good motive, and the best intentions in the world."

Wharton flushed crimson.

Levison was parodying his words, with the gnomish humour that was his strongest characteristic. A mocking grin met Harry's glance of hot indignation, and the boy felt his heart sink. There was no hope of Levison's speaking out, then!

"That is enough, Levison!" said the Head sternly. "It would be impossible for me to allow you to remain at Greyfriars, but I expected some slight signs of repentance and proper feeling. I can only regret that two culprits caught in the act of wrongdoing should take refuge, the one in brazen impudence, the other in what, I am afraid, I can only regard as prevarication. Wharton, is there nothing else you can say? Can you give me no explanation at all?"

"No, sir!"

"Then I must do my duty. You will both be expelled from Greyfriars."

Wharton started convulsively. Levison smiled grimly. He had known what was coming, and he was prepared for it.

"Very well, sir," said Harry, in a low voice.

The Head's glance searched his face, but it was quiet and cold. There was no sign of conscious guilt there. But the evidence was too strong. The doctor turned wearily to Mr. Quelch.

"The school will be assembled after prayers, Mr. Quelch," he said. "There is no need to delay this most unpleasant duty. I—"

"Why don't you speak, you fool?" said Levison, looking at Wharton. "Do you think I should be cur enough to lie about you now?"

Wharton did not look at him, but a wild hope sprang up in his heart. Dr. Locke turned quickly to Levison.

"What is that, boy?"

Levison gave a scoffing laugh.

"I meant to speak all the time," he said drawlingly. "I was letting it go on to see whether Wharton would hold out. Wharton is innocent!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. He did not come to the Red Cow with me last night. He followed me there to fetch me away."

"What!"

"He has been good enough to constitute himself my father-confessor for a long time past," said Levison sneeringly. "I did not appreciate his kindness. He came to the Red Cow to repeat his lectures, and had a row there with Jolliffe and his friends. They would have thrown him out if they had had the pluck. He made Jolliffe turn me out by threatening to show him up if he allowed me to come there again. That's all."

Mr. Quelch drew a long, deep breath of relief. The Head's glance searched Levison's face, and then he looked at Wharton.

"Is this true, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

"And why did you not explain?"

"Because—because I could not. You must see, sir, that I could not!"

"Besides, you wouldn't have believed him, sir," said Levison coolly. "Not if I had refused to bear him out, anyway."

The Head shivered a little.

"I have come very near to doing a terrible injustice," he said. "Levison, I hardly understand how you can find a pleasure in torturing in this way a boy who, on your own showing, has tried to be your best friend. Of the disrespect shown to me, I will not speak. But I am glad you have told the truth now, at all events; and I thank you for that. I cannot allow you to remain at Greyfriars; but at least I will spare you the degradation of a public expulsion. You will leave the school this morning. You shall leave quietly and without fuss, while the other boys are in their classrooms. You may go."

Levison left the room without a word.

The Head placed his hand on Harry's shoulder.

"I can only say, I am sorry, Wharton," he said. "And Mr. Quelch shares my feelings. You have acted like a hero, though I think you have strained a sense of honour too far in refusing to acquaint me with the true facts. Give me your hand, my boy!" And the Head shook hands with the captain of the Remove, and then Mr. Quelch followed his example.

Harry Wharton left the study with a lighter heart than when he had entered it. But he was still thinking of Levison, and he went up to the dormitory, where the expelled junior was packing his box. Levison was a little white, but his coolness had not deserted him. He looked up with a curious grin as Wharton came in.

"Thank you, Levison!" said Harry. "You have saved me—as I tried to save you, and failed."

"It cost me nothing to speak out," yawned Levison. "I was booked for the sack, anyway. You've nothing to thank me for. No humbug, you know."

"You spoke out because you are a decent chap, and good-hearted at bottom," said Harry, taking no notice of Levison's words. "I shall always remember that. And I'm sorry you're going."

"I'm not. I made a bad start here, and I shall be glad to get gone." Levison paused a moment, and then held out his hand to Wharton in a frank way. "Give us your fist, old chap. You're a good sort, and you've been a better friend to me than I deserved, and I know I'm an ungrateful pig. It's my nature, I suppose. You did your best for me, but it was pulling against the tide. I've gone under here; but—when I make a fresh start I shall remember this, and—hang it, I'm not much of a hand at jawing, but—I shall do better next time."

And the grip of his hand sealed the promise.

Greyfriars knew Ernest Levison no more, but Harry Wharton did not forget him, and he did not forget Harry nor the lesson he learned from him.

THE END.

NEXT TUESDAY.

NEXT TUESDAY.

"HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS."

Another Grand Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

Order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Unfortunately for Jack, however, his Cousin Leonard is attached to the 25th as second lieutenant, and, with the aid of a bullying trooper named Sligo, succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his stripes. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard transfers into the Ploughshares, while Jack is soon reinstated favourite, and becomes once more full corporal. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. Sligo is bribed by Dashwood to drug Tom Howard one night while the young corporal is on picket duty. Tom falls asleep at his post and is told that in due time he will be court-martialled. In the meantime, Tom, with Bill Sloggett, is told off to accompany a party of sappers who are to blow up an old ruin, in the underground passages of which a number of Pathans are lurking. Becoming impatient of delay, Tom and Bill enter the passages, unaware that two equally impatient Bengal Lancers have preceded them, and lose their bearings. Suddenly they hear a man stealing along towards them. "If he turns this way, creep into the first corner you can find," whispers Tom, shutting off his lantern.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Strange Situation.

At last Sloggett's hand found a gap, and, creeping into it, he felt the ground suddenly give way beneath his feet, and, with a stifled cry of warning, he fell through the darkness.

Tom checked himself just in time, and, groping with his foot, found that he was on the edge of a yawning cavity, from which no sound came. What had happened to his companion he knew not, and, with a strange mingling of sensations in his heart, and a decided raising of his hair under his helmet, he gripped his carbine and waited.

The same low shuffle of feet went by him in the darkness, and again he heard the mysterious figures descending the stairs up which they had come. He waited for several minutes, full of anxiety for Bill Sloggett. And then, hearing nothing, he turned round again, opened his lantern, and peered into the gulf.

Fifteen feet below, the circle of yellow light showed the figure of Sloggett sitting in a heap of sand, and looking up with a curious expression on his face.

The corporal knelt down and flashed the lantern round about. The place was a species of vault, with rock-hewn walls; evidently the very foundations of the temple itself, from the sand-drift that littered the ground. Tom put his head back into the corridor and listened a moment.

"Is there any door?" he whispered, making a trumpet of his hands.

"Yes. Likewise, there's a black 'ole in the corner 'ere!"

"Has your lantern gone out?"

"No, it's all right!"

"Then just see what you can make of it," said Tom.

And Sloggett, rising from his recumbent position, stole along with his bulleeye half on, like a policeman in chase of a burglar.

"I say," he said, coming under the opening again; "there's a long passage goes straight on, and at the end of that passage there's a red light—looks like a fire to me."

"Stand clear," said the corporal; "I'm coming down!" And, closing his lantern, he leapt into the sand.

Both men waited a moment, lest the clatter of the corporal's accoutrements should have been heard; but as universal stillness reigned, they started out on their new voyage of discovery.

It was a long passage—a species of tunnel—burrowing in the very heart of the hill, and they had not gone far when the chatter of voices fell on their ears.

As they stood listening, a faint sound came to them from somewhere up above.

"D'yer 'ear that?" said Sloggett. "That's the Engineer officer. They're blowing the retreat. I say, 'Oward, if they fire their train before we're out of this, it'll be monkey-nuts, and no mistake!"

A terrible possibility flashed on Tom's mind, and he frowned.

"Anyway, we've got to find out what this light means," he said. "Come along!"

And with redoubled caution they crept along the sand until they suddenly emerged in a large chamber with two rows of pillars, behind one of which they sheltered. And, sure enough, squatting on their hams round a wood fire, sat Jamra Khan, his leg bound up in a turban cloth, and eighteen of his followers with him.

"Hush," said Tom; "there's somebody moving over yonder!"

They turned their heads, and were conscious in the dim light of the fire that a couple of figures were sheltering behind the pillars, even as they were, and watching the hunted rebels. They could see no more than that they were Asiatics by the turbans on their heads, and so got deeper into the shadow of the pillars, for they knew that they were in a dangerous place.

One of the tribesmen was gesticulating violently, and though they did not know it, his was the face on which Tom's lantern had flashed when they first entered the temple.

From time to time Jamra Khan, his face convulsed with pain, turned and looked over his shoulder; and he, too, heard the distant bugle-call, which was repeated many times.

There was keen excitement depicted on the faces of the men round the fire, and the news the messenger had brought them was evidently of terrible importance. Tom made a mental resolve that if he ever got out of that place alive, he would master the various dialects of India. One sergeant of the Rifle Brigade, to whom he had talked, had told him that he understood twenty-seven of them—finding the knowledge invaluable when he was on transport duty at Quetta.

"What are those two fellows doing over there?" murmured Sloggett. "I think they've seen us!"

And sure enough the turbaned men sank on to their knees, and began to crawl towards them. Against the red glow of the fire that shone between the pillars Tom saw that they were approaching stealthily nearer and nearer, and, touching Sloggett on the arm, he began to crawl away in the opposite direction.

"Keep close to me, Bill," he whispered. "We may be mistaken. Anyway, these pillars run round the whole place, and we must simply keep ahead, that's all, and trust to find some way out. If only we could lead the sappers straight here, we would give them a volley that would astonish them."

Jamra Khan presently motioned to one of his followers

and said something to him in a guttural voice, and the man rose to his feet and went away.

Tom and Bill Sloggett continued to pass from pillar to pillar, but always when they looked back they saw the two men still stalking them. Then they lost sight of them, and a little later saw to their dismay that they had turned, and were circling round in the opposite direction.

"Hold hard, Sloggett, we shall meet them at this rate," Tom whispered. "What does it mean, and why the dickens don't they give the alarm to the others?"

They did not know that the two mysterious figures were those of a duffardar and a sowar of the Bengal Lancers. The natives' sharp eyes had detected the unmistakable British helmets, and they set to work to stalk them, fearful of disturbing the rebels. Two men against nineteen were too long odds, even for the gallant troopers of the 11th Bengal Lancers; but four men might do wonders, and the duffardar and his cousin Bolar Din, crept forwards on hands and knees, with a broad grin of expectancy on their dark-skinned faces.

"By the beard of the prophet," muttered the duffardar, stopping so suddenly that his spur nearly took the eye out of the son of his mother's sister, "the sahibs have mistaken us for rebels! Let us go back and meet them!"

Bolar Din turned, and the two Lancers wormed their silent way through the sand, keeping a sharp eye through the openings of the pillars, lest the Pathans should see them.

At last a long-drawn bugle-call came from the upper floor of the temple. The Engineer captain had given it up for a bad job; and, ignorant of the immense extent of the building, had decided that the two Hussars must have found their way out by another door, and signed to his havildar—or native sergeant—to prepare the fuse. They had laid half a ton of powder and a quantity of dynamite in three piles connected by a train, and for the last time the bugler blew his warning.

"Wait!" said Bolar Din. "The sahibs have come back. That's not one of our calls. Would it not be better to find them, and guide them hither?"

"No!" said the duffardar, his hand clenching his tulwar. "Seldom do we get so good a chance as this. Think of it, my cousin—four men against nineteen, and the light of the fire to help us!"

"As you wish. But see, the sahibs have stopped yonder. If we approach them they will give the alarm before we are ready."

"Oh, son of little invention!" said the duffardar. "What matters it? Go you one way, and I will go the other, and when they see us stand erect, the uniform we wear will tell them who we are."

So it came about that the duffardar turned once more and crept rapidly back round the vault, the veins swelling on his forehead, and his white teeth glistening, as he smiled, with the blood lust in his eye.

Tom and Sloggett had stopped behind a pillar larger than the rest, and were silently debating what to do. There were nineteen men before them, all armed with sword and spear and shield, and already the alarming possibility had flashed into Tom's brain that the engineer might fire his charge before they could get out.

"We must get away somehow, Bill," he whispered.

Sloggett stepped further back into the shadow of the pillar, and drew his sword.

"I'll bet my bottom dollar, Howard, we'll have to fight for it. Twice nine is eighteen, and one over. If you're game, I am. Let's rush in before they can stand up. I don't see any other way for it!"

The blood lust that shone in the eyes of the duffardar was gleaming now in the twinkling orbit of Bill Sloggett.

"Don't be a fool!" whispered the corporal. "You don't understand what it means. If you're tired of

your life, I' not! Let's get back to that passage, and see if we can't find another exit; those fellows have got in here somehow."

But, even as he spoke, a tall figure rose up out of the darkness immediately opposite, and both men sprang on guard.

"Do not fire, sahibs!" said a quick voice, in broken English. And Duffardar Lalah Singh stepped from behind a pillar.

Both the corporal and his comrade had given vent to a sharp gasp as the Bengal Lancer came so suddenly upon them, that half a dozen of the rebels turned, and they were discovered. With a yell they rose from the fire, paused for a moment, and then rushed in a body towards our friends' concealment. It was a fortunate thing that Lalah Singh and Bolar Din had divided forces. The sowar now fired his carbine, thus causing a momentary diversion. It checked the mad rush, and enabled the duffardar to penetrate the darkness with his keen eyes.

"This way, sahibs," he said. "There's a corner here which will serve us well."

And, bounding after him, the three men took up a position in an angle of the chamber, and prepared to do or die.

With a wild screech, so familiar in the throat of the Indian cavalryman, whether he be charging the enemy or galloping madly on to a peg, Bolar Din sped away into the darkness, in the mad hope of gaining his comrades' side, pursued by the brother-in-law of Jamra Khan and two or three of the tribesmen. The rest, finding that the shot had come from one man alone, came forward in a body to attack the trio, who were plainly seen by the light of the fire. Whooping and dancing with delight, they advanced, brandishing swords and spears, their heads bent down, and their shields set forward, Jamra Khan limping behind them, his face contorted with agony at every step.

He recognised Tom Howard, and gave a scream of delight. "Allah is good!" cried Jamra Khan. "Stand aside, that I may meet the boy who ate my salt and repaid my hospitality with blood!"

And, knowing the temper of their chief, the others drew aside a little, and the Pathan limped boldly forward to meet our hero. As Tom fired his carbine, the chief dropped on one knee, and the ball killed the man immediately behind him; and then, forgetting his pain in the ecstasy of slaying an enemy who had outwitted him, Jamra Khan leaped forward, and their blades met.

Active as a cat, in spite of his wounded foot, Tom found that he had to play the Swat carefully; but Jamra Khan's infuriated strokes were no match for Tom's scientific sword play. Three times he wounded him with as many thrusts, and though Jamra Khan's curved blade slashed Tom's puttee from knee to ankle, and he felt the warm blood gushing down his shin bone, the clumsy cavalry sword, wielded by the strong young wrist, drove its inevitable way into the heart of the chief, and, throwing up his arms, with a wild squeal, Jamra Khan fell back dead.

In the meantime, the duffardar and Bill Sloggett had been leaping backwards and forwards, assailed by a veritable forest of steel; but the pace was so hot that both men found themselves pushed back into the angle of the masonry, until Bolar Din, who had outdistanced his pursuers, suddenly cleft his way into the rear of the tribesmen, killing three with his sword, and braining a fourth with a well-aimed blow from his clubbed carbine.

But the angle was narrow, and though it afforded protection from behind, that very protection cramped them, and the duffardar gave a shout of warning as he saw half a dozen of the men run back to the fire and pick up their rifles.

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