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By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Remove Meeting—And the Minute Gun.

“MY hat, how it blows!”
It was Bob Cherry who uttered that ejaculation, as he looked out of the window into the Close at Greyfriars.

It was a wild night. The old trees were groaning under the force of the wind, and the gale shrieked furiously round the old roofs and chimneys.

Through the roar of the wind had sounded, more than once, a crash of falling masonry, as some fragment hurtled down from the shaky walls of the old tower.

“How it blows!”

“By Jove, it does!” said Frank Nugent. “I shouldn’t care to be at sea to-night. Bunter says he can hear the waves breaking on the shore from here.”

Bob Cherry grinned.

“He must have jolly long ears, then. But it must be a rough night in the bay, and jolly dangerous for any vessel that comes too near the Shoulder. I’d like to have a run down to the shore to-night. There hasn’t been a gale like this since I’ve been at Greyfriars.”

Nugent shook his head.

“It’s too rough, even if we could get out without being spotted. Besides, there’s Wharton’s meeting just coming off.”

“Jove, I’d forgotten that!” Bob Cherry looked at his watch. “It’s just on seven. Come along!” And the two Removites turned away from the window.

Every window and door at Greyfriars seemed to be straining or shaking under the buffets of the wind, and the old building was full of sound and echo.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” exclaimed Bob Cherry, slapping a fat junior in spectacles on the shoulder. “Are you coming to the meeting, Bunt?”

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

“I wish you wouldn’t make me jump like that, Cherry. It disturbs my nerves; and besides, you might make my

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glasses fall off, and if they got broken you would have to pay for them. I say, you fellows—”

But Bob Cherry did not stop to listen. He hurried on to the Remove Form-room, in which direction a number of juniors were streaming. Harry Wharton was captain of the Remove—the Lower Fourth—and when he called a meeting most of the Form usually turned up.

There were a good many fellows in the Form-room when Bob Cherry and Nugent entered.

Harry Wharton was standing by the master’s desk, talking to Hurree James Ram Singh, the Hindu junior, when Bob and Nugent joined him. The young captain of the Remove glanced at the class-room clock.

“Just on seven!” he said cheerily. “Most of the fellows are here, so we may as well begin. By Jove, how the wind roars!”

“The roarfulness is terrific!” murmured Hurree Singh, in his peculiar English.

“I say, you fellows —”

Harry Wharton rapped on the desk.

“Gentlemen—”

“I say, you fellows—”

“Silence!” said Bob Cherry. “Our respected Form captain is about to address the meeting. Shut up.”

“Gentlemen,” said Wharton, “I dare say some of you are curious to know why a meeting of the Form has been called this evening.”

“Faith, and ye’re right!” said Micky Desmond. “If it’s a new concert ye’re thinkin’ of, faith, ye’ll have to excuse me, for I’m too hoarse intirely to spake a single word.”

“It’s not another concert—”

“Hear, hear!” said the meeting heartily. Whether they simply meant to encourage the speaker, or whether they were relieved to find that it wasn’t another concert, it is impossible to say.

“I’ve been thinking out a rather good idea,” went on Harry Wharton modestly. “It has occurred to me that Greyfriars is not quite up to date on some points. When it

comes to football, we can hold our own pretty well with most schools, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"And in the summer, when it comes to cricket, I think we can keep things going pretty well."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Go it, Wharton! On the ball!"

"But in some other respects we lag behind. It has occurred to me—"

"Hear, hear!"

"That Greyfriars has no cadet corps. I suppose you chaps have heard of the Volunteers?"

"Well," said Skinner sarcastically, "I think I've heard the word somewhere. It has a familiar sound."

And there was a laugh.

"Well," said Wharton, unhoeding the laugh, "that's the idea. What price a volunteer corps for Greyfriars? Suppose England were invaded by a foreign foe, what would Greyfriars do? Suppose we saw the German troops advancing from the sea-shore up the road to Greyfriars, what should we do?"

"Bunk," suggested Skinner. And the meeting giggled again.

"We might do something better than bunk," said Harry Wharton. "In these times, when there are rumours of war in the air, every Briton ought to join a Volunteer corps of some kind, and learn how to handle a gun and face an enemy. A Volunteer corps for the Remove is the idea, and I think it's a ripping one myself."

"Oh, come up to date!" said Bulstrode. "You mean a corps of Territorials."

"I don't care what you call 'em, so long as the idea's carried out. It will be good fun, and it will make the Upper Fourth sing small, too. Temple, Dabney & Co. have never thought of anything of the kind. I put it to this meeting whether the Remove shall form a corps of Volunteers—"

"Territorials!" said Bulstrode.

"Well, Territorials, then. I think it's a ripping idea myself. And besides, we might get permission from the Head to carry out manoeuvres, and that would mean a run out of bounds on half-holidays for all who belonged to the corps."

"Good wheeze!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"What about the outfit?" said Bulstrode. "That costs money. Chaps like Linley, for instance, haven't any tin."

Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, turned red. Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Don't be a cad, Bulstrode, if you can help it. As for the tin, there would have to be a Form subscription, and the things would be the property of the whole corps. But—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to shut up. I've got something important to say. While you're all gathered together like this, it's a splendid opportunity—"

"Ring off!"

"I say, you fellows, it's a splendid opportunity, if Wharton's done talking, for me to give a little ventriloquial entertainment."

There was a general groan

"Chuck him out!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Silence! Order!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove—" said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"I've got a book here to take down the names of all who feel inclined to join the Remove Cadet Corps. Now, first man in."

"You can shove me down," said Bob Cherry.

"And me," said Nugent promptly.

"I say, you fellows, will grub be provided for members of the Cadet Corps?"

"No, you young cormorant."

"Then I don't see the use—"

"Hark!" cried Mark Linley suddenly.

Through the roar of the gale outside came a deeper and more sombre sound. A hush fell upon the meeting of juniors, and even Billy Bunter was silent.

"Wh-what was that?" muttered Hazeldene.

"Some of the old tower falling," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"What was it, then?"

"A gun at sea." He held up his hand. "Hark!"

It came again, booming heavily through the gale, and this time there was no mistaking the sound.

It was the minute gun—the signal from a ship in distress upon a rocky coast.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds.

THE boys were silent. The deep sound from the sea had sent a chill to every heart. From the summit of the tower of Greyfriars, in fine weather, the sea could be seen—the wide bay, the great Shoulder jutting out into the German Ocean. Well the boys knew what the scene must be like now, with the breakers crashing on the pebble ridge, and the great Shoulder almost hidden in lashing spray and foam.

"By Jove!" muttered Bob Cherry. "The minute gun!"

"A wreck!" said Nugent, in a hushed voice.

There was no doubt about it. A minute more had elapsed, and then the boom of the gun came heavily through the shriek of the wind once more.

The meeting broke up. No one had the heart to go on with the business that had called them together, after that deep and chilling sound from the tempest-tossed ocean.

Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh left the room together.

There was a thoughtful expression upon Harry Wharton's face, which showed that he was turning over some idea in his mind. As soon as he was out of hearing of the rest he stopped.

"It's a ship in the bay," he said. "If she's near the Shoulder on a night like this, Heaven help her. I'm thinking—" He paused.

"I can guess what you're thinking," said Bob Cherry. "We might be able to help."

Wharton nodded.

"Yes. Half the countryside will be there, and I don't see why we shouldn't go too."

"The Head wouldn't allow it."

"I wasn't thinking of asking the Head," said Wharton, laughing. "We can break bounds for once in a way. We might be of use there. Hallo, there's Wingate going!"

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, had come downstairs with a waterproof on, and a cap with flaps drawn down over his ears, and thick gaiters. North and Westcott, similarly attired, were with him. The Sixth-Formers were evidently going down to the shore. Wingate opened the door, and a terrific gust of wind came roaring in.

"Shut this door, you youngsters!" called out Wingate.

"Right you are, Wingate!"

The chums of the Remove rushed to the door. The Sixth-Formers went out, and Wingate pulled the door from outside, and the juniors put their shoulders to it within. Even then it was hard work to shut it against the wind.

It was slammed at last.

"My hat! How it blows!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It won't be easy to get along in a wind like this, Harry."

"Are you chaps game to try?"

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Then let's get off."

The Famous Four hurried up to the Remove dormitory. It did not take them long to prepare for the excursion. As they came out of the dormitory in coats and scarves, there was a glimmer of spectacles in the corridor, and Billy Bunter came into sight.

Wharton muttered a word of impatience.

Bunter was the chatterbox of the Remove, and if he saw them going, he would soon let the whole school know about it.

But there was no time to avoid the Owl of the Remove.

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Billy Bunter stopped and blinked at them inquiringly. "Hallo, Bulstrode—or is it you, Skinner? Dear me, it's Wharton! Are you chaps going out?" "Yes, confound you!" growled Wharton. "Oh, really, Wharton, don't get waxy, you know! Of course, I sha'n't say a word to a soul!" "Mind you don't!" "Certainly. But, I say, you fellows, don't hurry away. I want to speak to you on a most important matter, Wharton." "Wait till I get back, then!" "But it's important. I say, Wharton, hold on a minute, I want to speak to you before you go out!" bawled Bunter. Wharton clicked his teeth. "You young fool——" "Better let him jaw," growled Bob Cherry. "Anybody might hear him shouting. Now, what is it, you young duffer?" "I don't think you ought to call me names, Cherry, just because——"

"What do you want?" "I wish you wouldn't interrupt me in that sharp way, Wharton. It confuses my ideas, and makes me really longer explaining. What I was going to say is, that I'm expecting a postal order by the next post, but in this gale the postman will be certain never to come out of Friardale. Could you lend me five bob for to-night, and have my postal order for it in the morning?" "You—you—you——" "The postal order will be for ten bob, and if you can spare it, I'd like the whole ten now. That will be cashing the order in advance, you know." "You young ass! Here's a bob for you——" "What about the postal order?" "Oh, blow the postal order!" "But I'm hungry," said Bunter. "We never have any study feeds now, since the study was burnt down, and you know I've got a delicate constitution. I'm only kept going at all by plenty of nourishing food. If you could make this two bob, I'd let you have it back out of my postal order——" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh silently drew a shilling from his pocket, and placed it beside Wharton's coin in the junior's fat palm.

"Thank you!" blinked Bunter. "This will be a bob each to you and Wharton, Inky. Wait a minute while I put it down to the account. You shall have it back to-morrow morning."

"Oh, don't talk rot!" growled Wharton. "You know you never pay anybody. Come along, you chaps."

The chums turned away. "I say, Wharton—I say, you fellows, hold on a minute."

"What is it now, confound you?"

"I want you to understand that I can't take this except as a loan. I may be poor," said Bunter, with dignity, "but I've got a proper pride, I hope." He slipped the shillings into his waistcoat pocket. "Unless it's clearly understood that I settle up for this to-morrow morning, I can't accept it."

"You—you—you——"

"I don't think you ought to rave at me like that, Cherry, because I like settling up my debts promptly. It may not be your way, but it is my way."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh. "Oh have it any way you like!" he exclaimed. "Only do shut up now, and let us go!"

"Certainly. Then it's clearly understood that I settle up for this to-morrow morning out of my postal order?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Then you may as well make it three bob while you're about it, and I'll—— Ow—ow—ow——"

Bunter rolled on the linoleum as a heavy hand smote him, and the chums of the Remove walked away.

The fat junior sat up and blinked in a dazed manner.

Harry Wharton and his friends had gone, and Billy Bunter, feeling very bewildered, sat for some minutes there blinking round in the gloom.

Meanwhile, the Removites, chuckling, made their way to a window at the back of the building by which they intended to gain egress into the quad.

One by one they dropped to the ground, and the window was silently closed. Outside, the gale was raging furiously, and the chums crouched against the wall to allow the fierce wind to sweep by.

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry. "This won't be easy to get through."

The others did not reply. They did not hear his voice in the hoarse roar of the wind.

Harry Wharton led the way.

Crouching low to avoid the wind as much as possible, the chums of the Remove stole along the wall, and reached a spot where the clinging ivy made it possible to cross the outer wall into the road.

In five minutes or less they were outside the school wall.

There, amid the roar and the groaning of the trees, they listened for the sound they had heard in the Form-room in Greyfriars.

Clearly it came to their ears. Boom! From the blackness towards the shore came a glimmer of light, that shot athwart the sky and died away. "A rocket!" muttered Harry Wharton. Keeping close together, the chums plunged on through the lane that led down to the shore, fighting their way step by step through the buffeting of the furious wind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Wreck.

BOOM!
Boom!
Still through the black night came the dull, sombre sound of the minute gun.

The breaking waves of the German Ocean were audible now to the ears of the Greyfriars chums—the thundering of huge billows on hard rocks.

Spray borne by the wind lashed their faces as they drew nearer to the sea. Lights twinkled in the gloom on the shore. Fisherfolk and country-people from all quarters had gathered there, to see what was to be seen, and in the hope of lending aid to the vessel in distress.

More than one good ship had come to grief on the Shoulder, the great rock that jutted out on the north side of the bay. High on the summit of the cliff gleamed the light of the lighthouse, gleaming far over the wild waters.

The foot of the rugged cliff was buried in darkness, save where the foam of the breaking waves showed with a stray gleam.

Under the rushing breakers the sand was churned and tossed, and occasionally a wave came rushing higher and higher up the strand, and the spectators crowded back wildly from the clutch of the angry waters.

"Here we are at last!" Bob Cherry shouted in Harry Wharton's ear. "Can't see anything!"

Wharton shook his head.

There was blackness on the sea, blackness on the shore and he could see nothing of the distressed vessel. But the sound of the gun, which was still fired at intervals, showed that she was near the shore.

"Look!" exclaimed Nugent suddenly.

A rocket shot up from the vessel at sea.

For a moment the chums caught a glimpse of the outlines of the vessel. She was a small schooner, with two masts, and the mainmast had gone by the board at the maintop. The topmast and the rigging clung round the ship. The schooner was terribly near to the great, towering Shoulder. Nugent, who had often swum in the bay in the summer, and who knew it well, gave a groan.

"She'll be on the rocks! It's only a matter of minutes now!"

"If she could get round the Shoulder——"

"She can't—she'll be on the sunken rocks in a couple of minutes! There's no chance for her now!"

The chums watched and listened with painful intensity.

It was impossible to aid the doomed vessel. There was no lifeboat for miles along the coast, and none of the fisherfolk would have put off in such a sea for untold gold. No boat could have lived long in the raging billows.

"Hark!"

Through the dash of the waves and the roar of the wind came a dull, grinding crash!

"She's struck!"

It was a shout from the fishermen. The juniors of Greyfriars echoed it.

"She's struck! It's all up now!"

A flash of lightning darted across the inky heavens.

Harry Wharton was watching keenly. In the flash he caught sight of the doomed schooner—jammed by the rush of the billows upon the sunken rocks at the foot of the towering cliff.

Round her the wild waves were roaring and tossing, breaking over her sloping deck as she lay jammed on the rocks.

Wharton set his teeth hard.

The vessel was not fifty yards from the shore, but between the shore and the sunken rocks was deep, deep water, raging and tossing in fury.

"There's a chance for them!"

"What's that, Wharton?"

"There's a chance yet," said Harry, shouting to make his voice heard. "She's not gone down—she's jammed fast! Look when it flashes again!"

"But——"

The lightning came again, and showed the position of the ship more clearly.

The thundering waves seemed to be hammering her still

more firmly upon the rocks, and she showed no sign of sliding off into deep water.

"She'll stick there till she breaks up," said Nugent.

The sea was breaking clean over the schooner, and it was clear that, whether she broke up or not, no soul on board could long survive.

There was a look of grim determination on Harry Wharton's face.

"There's a chance for them yet."

"But—but what—"

"If a rope could be got out to them—"

"Impossible! No boat could live in that sea."

"I wasn't thinking of a boat."

Nugent laughed nervously.

"You weren't thinking of a swimmer, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Harry quietly.

"But—why, there's not a man on the coast would enter that sea for a thousand pounds!"

"I wasn't thinking of a man."

"Look here, I can see what you're thinking of, and you're not going to do it!" shouted Bob Cherry. "You'll just stick here."

Wharton shook his head.

"You know I'm a good swimmer—"

"I know it jolly well," said Nugent. "You fished me out of the Sark the day you came to Greyfriars, and saved my life. But you couldn't swim that water, and you're not going to try it."

"It's no good talking, kids! I'm going to try it!"

"You can't! You sha'n't!"

"Look!" said Wharton quietly.

The lightning was blazing again. The deck of the wrecked schooner could be seen, and three or four dim forms clinging to the rigging. One of them was that of a wooden-legged man. The flash passed, and the scene was blotted out as by a curtain falling.

"There are men there doomed to death," said Harry quietly. "We should be cowards not to try to save them."

"It's impossible!"

"Well, I think I can try. We must get a rope, and you can tie it round my waist, and hold it. Come on!"

The Removites were accustomed to following Wharton's lead, and his determination carried the day.

Keeping a wary look-out for Wingate—who would certainly have stopped the enterprise immediately—the Removites prepared to carry out Harry's desperate plan. Harry had not come unprepared for such a contingency, having foreseen that something of the kind might happen, as it had happened before on the rocks of the Shoulder. He had a coil of cord in his pocket, and it was only necessary to obtain a strong rope from one of the fishermen.

Wharton's idea was to tie the cord round his waist and swim out to the Shoulder, and then to pull the heavy rope after him to the deck of the schooner.

If he passed the raging waters alive, the plan would succeed. If not— But he did not think of failure, and his comrades dared not think of it.

The fishermen at first demurred, and, in fact, refused point blank to supply the rope, having no doubt that the brave lad would be going to his death. But when they found that he was determined to go, they lent their aid at last.

Brave men they were, and yet they did not venture. They had their wives and families to think of, or even the risk of death would not have deterred them. A coil of strong rope was brought from one of the boats lying high up on the sand, and the end of it was fastened to Wharton's cord.

The brave lad threw off his coat and jacket and boots, and walked down to the sea. The breakers came creaming over his feet as he stood there, and looked towards the wreck, waiting for another flash to fix the position of the ship firmly upon his mind before he plunged in.

Perhaps, at that moment, he faltered a little; but if so, it was only for a second, and it never showed in his calm, handsome face.

Nugent and Bob Cherry were pale as death.

They felt that their chum was going to his doom—that the chances were ten to one that in a few minutes more his body would be dashed, broken and disfigured, upon the jutting rocks of the Shoulder.

But there were lives to be saved—fellow-creatures clinging to the wreck out there in the hungry maw of the sea!

"God help him!" muttered Bob Cherry. "If—if he doesn't come back, I shall go after him!"

Nugent caught the words, and nodded.

"We won't go back without him!" he whispered.

The flash came.

It showed the schooner jammed on the rocks, the sloping, water-swept deck and three clinging figures. If there had

been four—as Harry thought—one had been already swept away.

"Hold on to the rope!"

And Harry Wharton, meeting a huge billow as it rolled up the shore, plunged into the water, and was carried out into the darkness by the receding wave.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Pluck.

HARRY WHARTON was gone!

The roaring waters had swept him out of sight. Nugent grasped Bob Cherry's arm with a convulsive grip.

Hurree Singh was trembling in every limb.

It was a moment of cruel anxiety.

The cord was running out between Bob Cherry's fingers, but that told nothing. The boy to whom it was attached might already be a shattered corpse dashing on the savage rocks.

There was a crunching of footsteps in the sand, and Wingate dashed up. He looked angrily at the boys.

"What are you doing here?"

They did not answer; they hardly heard him. Wingate shook Nugent angrily by the arm.

"Nugent! You here! How dare you? What are you doing?"

"Wharton's gone!" muttered Nugent.

"Gone! Where?"

"To the wreck!"

Wingate staggered back.

"Good heavens! The fool—the mad fool!"

The lightning glimmered, and the captain of Greyfriars stared seaward. He made out the wreck, and a dark spot in the midst of the lashing waters.

It was blotted out the next moment.

But Wingate knew that he had seen Wharton's head, and that so far, at least, the hero of the Remove was alive, and swimming hard.

"God help him!"

Alive still, and fighting the sea—but for how long? As Harry Wharton battled with the waters, he knew that the fight was probably a losing one; his strength was going. Wild waters were swirling round him. He could see nothing, hear nothing but the thunder of the sea.

He knew that at any moment the swirl of the waters might dash him upon some cruel rock where he would be maimed, and flung back helpless to the devouring waves. He felt his strength giving out with the terrible struggle, and knew that if he failed to reach the wreck, he would never have strength enough to fight his way back to the shore.

Yet he faltered not for a moment now. All his thoughts, all his energies, were bent upon the task in hand—to reach the schooner.

In the tossing waters, the impenetrable darkness, he seemed to be swallowed up—engulfed, and several times he feared that he was being swept from his path; but the lightning came again to glimmer on the rigging of the wrecked schooner, and to show him that he was right.

Something struck his hand in the rough water, and a chill ran through him. His whole body shuddered in the horror of a crash upon the rugged rocks.

But it was not the rocks of the Shoulder that his hand had touched. It was a floating spar, and the next moment he caught a rope, and he knew that he was in the midst of the rigging trailing over the side of the schooner.

He clung to it convulsively.

The sea tossed him to and fro, but he clung on, and climbed closer to the vessel. Higher out of the water, till he gripped the woodwork of the schooner itself.

A lightning flash came, and showed him a white, wet face within a yard of his own.

Two pairs of eyes met, staring, in the darkness. It was the wooden-legged man who was gazing at Harry, and his face was blank with amazement.

"Bust my topsails!"

Harry heard the words—an ejaculation of amazement. The next moment, as the darkness closed in, a hand grasped him and dragged him on the sloping deck. A mouth was put close to his ear, and a voice bawled:

"Hallo, my hearty! Where did you spring from?"

"I have swum out with a rope."

"A rope! Bust my topsails! And you a kid, too! Bust me!"

Wharton clung with one hand to the seaman, and with the other dragged in the cord. It came freely, and the rope followed. The seaman, with a grunt of relief, caught the rope in his strong hands, and made it fast to a stanchion.

"That's safe, youngster!"

"Good! How many are there of you here?"

A lightning flash glimmered over the deck and gave the reply to Harry's question.

Besides the wooden-legged man, there was only one form clinging to the torn rigging, that of a dusky, foreign sailor. The others had been swept away by the thundering seas.

The survivor seemed to be too dazed by fear to see what was happening, or to hear the shouts of the wooden-legged seaman.

He had none of the iron nerve of the British seaman in that hour of terrible peril.

He was clinging to the rigging like a cat, with his hands and feet, now and then engulfed by the surging seas.

"Beppo! Beppo!"

The Italian made no reply.

The wooden-legged man gave a grunt of disgust.

"It's no good yellin' at the blessed Eytalian!" he growled.

"Hang on 'ere, kiddy, while I haul him over."

Harry only imperfectly heard the words, but he understood.

He clung to the rope while the wooden-legged seaman scrambled away, with surprising agility considering his loss of a limb.

There was a sharp cry in the darkness, and Harry's heart thumped against his ribs.

Did it mean that the wooden-legged seaman had been swept from the wreck? He feared so, and he waited in tense anxiety for a lightning flash.

The flash came, and it showed the seaman still on the wreck, clinging to the combings of the hatchway; but the Italian was not to be seen.

The torn rigging to which he had been convulsively clinging was gone, and the hapless foreigner was gone with it.

He had vanished amid the white foam that dashed round the sunken rocks of the Shoulder.

The English seaman had evidently had a narrow escape of following him. He hung where he was for some time to recover his strength, while Wharton waited anxiously in the darkness.

The seaman scrambled back at last. His wet face was white in the gloom.

"Beppo's gone," he muttered.

"There is no one else?"

"No. The skipper was the first to go—bust my topsails! Let us try the rope."

"You go first."

"Ay, ay!"

The seaman clung to the rope, and without a moment's hesitation swung himself from the wreck into the tossing sea.

He vanished in the black waters, and Wharton waited anxiously for some minutes. Had the wooden-legged man reached the shore? He could see nothing, and the roaring of the waves drowned every other sound.

At length he commenced to drag himself along the rope; the seaman, alive or dead, must be off the rope by this time.

Round the boy, as he plunged shoreward, the raging waves tossed and foamed, and many times it seemed to him as if he must be dragged from his hold. But he held on like grim death.

His strength was almost spent, and his senses were reeling with the din and the buffeting of the waves, when he felt the shifting sand beneath his feet. A shadowy form dashed through the swirling water and grasped him.

"Here he is!"

"Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars reeled through the breakers with Harry Wharton in his arms.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh rushed to his aid, and in a few seconds more Harry was lying on the wet sand out of reach of the sea. For some minutes he lay breathing convulsively. He was quite spent, exhausted, and his senses were swimming, and he was hardly conscious that he was safe at last. But his brain cleared, and he looked round him in the gloom, and sat up with the help of Nugent's ready arm.

"Thank Heaven you're back!" muttered Nugent; and there was a break in his voice.

Harry pressed his hand.

"But the seaman—where is he?"

"He's safe!"

"Bust my topsails!" said a familiar voice, as a mahogany-coloured face glimmered close to Harry's in the gloom.

"'Ere's old Stumpy. He's all right!"

Harry Wharton smiled faintly.

"I'm jolly glad to hear it."

"Bust my topsails! Old Stumpy's all right," said the wooden-legged man. "'Ere I am, wooden leg and all! And all through you, young gent. Thar ain't many, men or boys, who would have swum out with that rope."

"Right!" said Wingate grimly. "And if I'd been here, I'd have stopped that young beggar doing it. But I'm glad as it's turned out."

"The gladfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And Stumpy, as the wooden-legged man called himself, was taken into the cabin of a hospitable fisherman, and Harry, leaning on Nugent's arm, turned towards Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hauled Over the Coals.

CARBERRY, the prefect, looked into the junior common-room at Greyfriars, and pointed to the clock. Carberrry was in a bad temper, as he usually was, and though it wanted several minutes to half-past nine—the bedtime of the Lower Fourth—the boys thought they had better not stand upon that. There was a general bustle of the Removites. Carberrry glanced round the room. He noted the absence of the Famous Four.

As the Remove studies had been destroyed in the late fire, they could not be in their own quarters, and as soon as he saw that they were absent from the common-room, it occurred to the prefect that they had gone out.

"Where is Wharton?" he snapped.

Carberrry would willingly have given a week's pocket-money for a chance to catch Wharton in a real fault that could be reported to the Head. More than once he had attempted to damage the boy he disliked so intensely, but somehow it had always recoiled upon himself.

No one replied to Carberrry's question. All the fellows knew, through Billy Bunter, where Wharton and his chums had gone, but no one was inclined to enlighten the bullying prefect.

Carberrry scowled darkly.

"Where is Wharton? Where's Nugent, and Cherry, and the nigger?"

"They're not in my waistcoat-pocket," observed Trevor, feeling there as if to make sure.

And the juniors giggled.

"They're gone out, I suppose," said the prefect, with an unpleasant grin. "Well, get off to bed, you young monkeys. If they don't turn up by half-past nine I shall have to report the matter to the Head."

The absentees did not return by half-past nine. The Remove went up to bed, and Carberrry went to make his report. He met Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, in the passage, and mentioned the matter to him.

The Remove-master was startled.

"Four boys absent! You are sure, Carberrry?"

"I believe so, sir. They have not gone up to bed with the rest, and I cannot find them anywhere."

"Dear me! This is a serious matter. You may leave it in my hands."

"I thought it my duty to report it to the Head, sir."

"You may leave it in my hands," said the Remove-master quietly.

Carberrry bit his lip, but he had to give in. However, if the juniors did not return soon, Mr. Quelch would have to report the matter to the doctor, he knew that. And, as a matter of fact, half an hour later he saw the Form-master going to the Head's study. The Head looked very worried.

"I am afraid they have gone down to the shore," he said. "Let them be sent in to me immediately they return."

"Yes, sir."

But the juniors did not seem to be in a hurry to return. Half-past ten chimed from the clock-tower, but the Famous Four had not put in an appearance, neither had Wingate and his friends returned.

It was near eleven when a ring came at last at the bell, and Gosling, the porter, rose, grumbling, from his glass of gin-and-water, and went to the gate.

He stared in blank amazement at the Removites as they came in with Wingate and the other Sixth-Formers.

"Which this is a nice night for kids to be out," he remarked.

"The nicefulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh; while Bob Cherry pretended to warm his hands at the porter's nose.

Gosling grunted and retired to his lodge.

The boys went into the school-house, and Carberrry, the prefect, who was on the look-out, met the four Removites as they were going upstairs. He dropped his hand on Harry Wharton's shoulder.

"No, you don't!" he remarked.

Wharton looked at him quietly.

"Well, what's the trouble?" he asked.

ANSWERS

The prefect grinned maliciously.

"You'll soon see. I've reported your absence, and you've got to go before the Head. I've been waiting for you to come in."

Wharton compressed his lips. He had intended to get back to Greyfriars before bedtime, but his adventure at the wreck had made that impossible; and the meeting with Wingate rendered it useless to re-enter the school secretly.

He was in for it now, and the prefect's expression showed how much he enjoyed the situation.

"Come with me, all of you," said Carberry.

"Very well."

The prefect led the way, and the four juniors followed him to the Head's study. They were dripping with water, and their boots squelched on the linoleum as they walked.

"Are you going to tell the doc. all about it?" asked Nugent, in a whisper.

Harry shook his head.

"No."

"But—"

"We broke bounds," said Harry quietly. "We can face the music without making a fuss, I suppose. The Head's quite right if he canes us; as a matter of fact, there's no getting out of that. And Carberry's quite right to report us; only he mightn't be such a confounded cad about it."

"But if the Head knew you had saved a man's life—"

"I'm not going to dodge behind a thing like that. It's all right."

Carberry tapped at the Head's door, and entered, followed by the juniors. Dr. Locke laid down his pen, and turned his chair round to get a good look at the culprits. He looked shocked as he saw the state they were in.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "You are wet through! How could you be so careless as to get into this state? Where have you been?"

"Down to the shore, sir."

"You broke bounds—at night?"

"We heard the minute-gun, sir, and we thought we might be of some use."

The Head smiled slightly.

"And you were curious to see what was going on?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You know perfectly well that you have committed a great breach of discipline, Wharton," said Dr. Locke sternly. "I blame you, because I am sure the others only followed your lead. I shall punish you severely in the morning. At present, you must go straight to your room, and get those wet clothes off. You might have an illness as the result of this foolish escapade."

"Yes, sir."

"You have done very wrong, Wharton! I shall cane all of you, but I shall cane you most severely, as the ring-leader. You did very right to report this matter, Carberry. Such breaches of discipline must be put down with a heavy hand."

"Yes, sir," said Carberry.

"You may go, boys. I am very much disappointed in you."

The juniors left the study.

They were very silent as they went up to their room.

"Rotten!" said Nugent, at last, as they were stripping off their soaked clothes. "I would rather have a licking than have the doc. talking in that strain. I suppose we were giddy asses to go out."

"The assfulness was terrific."

"Well, I can't very well be sorry, considering how it's turned out," said Wharton.

"No, that's so, too."

"After all, we can take a licking. The Head's right; but I'm jolly glad we went, all the same."

And the Removites, having been rubbed down with rough towels, turned in, and were soon sleeping soundly. They had been tired out by their adventure, and even the roaring of the wind round the roofs and chimneys of Greyfriars failed to keep them awake.

Ten minutes after they had turned in, Wingate looked into the room with a candle in his hand.

The captain of Greyfriars had changed his clothes, and looked none the worse for his soaking.

He glanced at the juniors, and saw that they were fast asleep, and withdrew quietly from the room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. An Unpleasant Prospect.

CLANG! Clang! Clang!

The rising-bell rang through the morning air, but the four juniors did not awaken. They were still sleeping soundly. The late hours and the exhausting tramp through the wind the previous night had fagged them out.

Bulstrode, and Wun Lung, and Billy Bunter sat up in

bed. There were only seven beds in the room, the temporary quarters of a portion of the Remove while the dormitory was being rebuilt.

"I say, you fellows" said Bunter, putting on his spectacles and blinking towards the still sleeping chums, "that's rising-bell, you know."

"Let 'em sleep," said Bulstrode, with a grunt. "There'll be a prefect up presently with a cane to wake 'em."

Wun Lung, the Chinee, blinked sleepily at Bulstrode, and then slipped out of bed and glided towards Harry Wharton. He shook the captain of the Remove gently by the shoulder.

Wharton's eyes opened.

"Hallo! By Jove, it's time to get up, I suppose?"

"Lising bell gonee."

Harry sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Hum! I suppose I was tired out. Thanks, kid."

He jumped out of bed. Bob Cherry, and Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were awakened, and they turned out reluctantly enough.

The juniors were soon down. As they came downstairs, Carberry met them, with a dark look on his face.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Wherefore that sweet and haunting smile, Carberry?"

Whereat the prefect scowled still more darkly.

"Wharton's got to turn up in hall after prayers," he said grimly. "The whole school's called together to see him put through it."

Harry Wharton started.

"What's that? The Forms called up?"

"Yes. Head's orders; and mind you're there."

And the prefect stalked away.

There was a cloud on Harry Wharton's face.

"What can it mean?" said Nugent. "The school wouldn't be called together for anything but a flogging, and the Head can't mean that."

"I don't know," said Harry gloomily. "He was very ratty last night. He may be going to make a flogging affair of it."

"The rottenfulness would be terrific," said the nabob. "Suppose we go and speak remonstrately to the worthy doctor?"

"No good, Inky. If it's to be a big row, I suppose we shall have to stand it."

But the nabob's face was thoughtful. He felt that if the Head understood the matter, he would never go to such extremes, and the assembling of the school in hall certainly looked as if Wharton was to be flogged.

The nabob remained standing in the doorway when the chums of the Remove went out into the quad.

It was a breezy morning, the high wind of the previous night having not yet completely died away.

The Removites were punting a football about, holding on their caps in the wind, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh stood for some minutes watching them. Then he walked quietly away. There was a determined expression on his face.

It was the Head's habit to spend some time in his study before breakfast, and the nabob knew when he would be coming out.

He waited patiently in the corridor.

At last the Head's door opened, and he came out, and looked at the waiting Hindu in some surprise. Hurree Singh bowed low.

"Salaam, sahib."

The doctor smiled.

"Good-morning, Hurree Singh. What are you doing here?"

"I was waiting for the serene presence of your worthy self."

"What do you want?"

"To speak to your worthiness with respectable frankness," said the nabob. "It is about the summonfulness of the school to witness the ordeal through which my esteemed friend, Wharton, is to painfully pass."

"Indeed!"

"The affair of the lastful night was equally shared in by all of us," said Hurree Singh. "Why should all fall to the share of the esteemed Wharton? Why is the callfulness of the entire school upon his account, when there were others who sharefully took part in all the proceedingfulness?"

The Head looked at him intently.

"Do you claim to have taken an equal part in this with Wharton, Hurree Singh?"

The nabob nodded emphatically.

"The undoubtfulness is terrific, honoured sahib."

"Indeed! I was not aware of that."

"I assert it on the honourable word of a respectable Nabob of Bhanipur," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with dignity, "and my worthy chums will bear me out."

"I understand that it was Wharton alone who went upon the rope to the wrecked vessel. That, at least, I gathered from Wingate."

"That is correctfully accurate; but the others were all there spotfully on the scene, and all equally shared in the worthy enterpriso."

"I do not quite understand you, Hurree Singh, but as Wharton went alone upon the rope, I am bound to believe that the account given me by Wingate is correct."

"The correctfulness is great, but—"

"And I can spare no more time now."

"But—"

"You may go, Hurree Singh."

"Honoured sahib—"

"Will you go at once?"

"Honoured and never - sufficiently - to - be - respected sahib—"

"Go!" thundered the Head.

And the nabob went.

It was evidently useless to push the matter further in that quarter, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh departed with a troubled brow. His heart was heavy for his esteemed friend, as he would have expressed it himself.

But his friendly efforts were not over yet. He sought out Mr. Quelch, and opened his heart upon the matter to the Remove-master.

"If I may speakfully address the worthy sahib," the nabob began diffidently.

"You may if you are brief," said Mr. Quelch.

"It is about the honourable Wharton. I am informfully told by the esteemed Carberry that he is called up before the whole school."

"That is correct."

"I wish to respectfully protest, as I had quite as much to do with the matter as the esteemed Wharton, and I think—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch. "You did not go out upon the rope."

"But I held it handfully."

"That is nothing. I am surprised at you, Hurree Singh."

"Respectable and honoured sahib, I—"

"You may go."

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave it up again. He met Wingate in the passage, and at once started on the captain of Greyfriars.

"Respectable captain, may I bogfully solicit the honourfulness of speaking to you?"

"Oh, fire away!" said Wingate. "Cut it short."

"The shortfulness is great. I hear that the worthy Wharton is to be called before the whole schoolful assembly."

"That's right!"

"I think it is unjust."

"Do you? Then you're an ass."

"Because we all had equal hands in the proceedingfulness—"

"Bosh! You didn't go on the rope!"

"That is correctful; but really, that only adds to the worthy bravery of the esteemed Wharton."

"Of course it does, ass!" said Wingate, walking away. He left the nabob looking very puzzled.

When the chums of the Remove came in to breakfast, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined them, looking very doleful.

"The uselessness of the intercedefulness is great," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What have you been up to, Inky?"

"I have intercedefully interviewed the Head, and the honourable Quelch, and the respectable and ludicrous Wingate. They are as hard as the worthy lion."

"You ass!" said Bob Cherry. "It's like your cheek!"

"But could I allow the esteemed Wharton to be flogfully licked when the mere wordfulness might save him?" said the nabob reproachfully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, don't bother now, Billy!"

"But, I say, you fellows, I hear that Wharton is to be flogged before the whole school for breaking bounds last night. Bulstrode told me. He had it from Carberry."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The chums went in to breakfast, looking very gloomy. They ate little at that meal, and it was with heavy hearts that they turned up in the school hall after prayers, Wharton, looking very pale, in his place at the head of the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of Greyfriars.

THERE was a hush in the crowded hall.

Most of the fellows were looking towards Harry Wharton, who stood with his eyes on the floor.

He did not meet a single glance. His face was pale, but quite calm. He felt that he was "in for it." It was not the pain he cared for, though that was likely to be severe. It was the disgrace of a public punishment like flogging.

And he could not understand it.

There was nothing illogical or unreasonable about

Wharton. He had broken the rules of the school with his eyes open, knowing what to expect if his escapade came to the knowledge of the Head. He did not grumble at punishment, when he knew that he had been—technically, at least—in the wrong.

But it was the magnitude of the punishment that surprised and disheartened him. A public flogging was a punishment only less severe than expulsion, and it was reserved for the worst offences. Breaking bounds was sometimes punished by lines, sometimes by a caning. Flogging for it was unknown, and it seemed as if the usually kindly Head had changed his nature all of a sudden, and developed into a merciless tyrant. There was hot rebellion in Harry's heart.

His calm, outward aspect gave no indication of it, but his blood was boiling. He had made up his mind that he would not take the flogging—that he would walk out of the room and leave Greyfriars first.

But he was more amazed than angry. He was puzzled, too, by the kindly smile Mr. Quelch gave him when he entered the hall, and the cheery nod from Wingate.

Then he caught Carberry's spiteful eye, and saw the malicious grin on the sour face of the prefect.

Now he stood with his eyes bent down, waiting for the ordeal.

There was a faint murmur as the rustle of a gown was heard, and the doctor entered at the upper end of the hall in full academics.

Bob Cherry looked at the doctor, and gave a start. The face of Dr. Locke was serious and kindly, and he certainly did not look like a man who was about to visit a light offence with a severe punishment.

"Buck up, Harry!" whispered Bob encouragingly.

"The Head's in a good temper."

Wharton nodded in silence.

"Boys!"

A pin might have been heard to drop in the great hall.

"Boys, you have been called together for an occasion which, as Head of Greyfriars, I could not suffer to pass unnoticed. Last night there was a wreck in the bay—a vessel went to her doom on the rocks of the Shoulder. One man was saved from the wreck, a seaman who could never have got ashore without assistance. A boy belonging to this school took out a rope to the wreck at the risk of his life. Harry Wharton, stand forward."

Dumb with amazement, Wharton walked out of his place.

The silence was broken, and a ringing cheer from a hundred throats rang through the echoing hall.

The Head listened to it with a smile. He held up his hand for silence.

"Wharton, you broke bounds last night."

"Yes, sir."

"You went down to the shore without permission, for which you naturally deserved a severe caning, which last night I resolved to give you."

"Yes, sir."

"Since hearing the particulars of last night's occurrence from Wingate," said the doctor, "I have changed my intentions. I have called the whole school together to hear what I have to say. For your breach of the rules of this college, I think you will admit that you deserve punishment."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton quietly. "A caning, but not a flogging. I do not admit that I deserve that."

The Head stared at him.

"A flogging! Who is speaking of a flogging?"

"Did you—do you—I—I understood that I was called up for a flogging," stammered Wharton. "Carberry said—I—I mean—"

The doctor's brow darkened ominously.

"You understood that you were called up for a flogging, after your act of heroism last night?" he said. "Am I to understand that Carberry said so?"

"I—I—I—"

"Stand forward, Carberry!"

The prefect, looking a little white, stepped out of the ranks of the Sixth. He was feeling a little sorry now that he had allowed the malicious deception to go so far. The Head looked at him sternly.

"Did you tell Wharton that he was called up for a public punishment, Carberry?"

"No, sir."

"It's a lie," yelled Bob Cherry excitedly, "he did."

"Silence, Cherry!"

"Yes, sir, but it's a lie."

"I said nothing of the sort to Wharton," said the prefect coolly. "If he drew that impression from my words, I can only put it down to a guilty conscience. I certainly never said anything of the sort."

Wharton's eyes blazed.

"You gave me that impression," he exclaimed fiercely.

"You knew all the time that I drew that impression from what you said."

Carberry shrugged his shoulders.

"Really, I did not think anything at all about the matter. I delivered Dr. Locke's message, and gave it no further thought."

Bob Cherry hissed loudly, and a score more juniors joined in. Carberry flushed red, and the doctor held up his hand for silence.

"I hope, Carberry, that what you state is correct, and that you did not seek to give Wharton this false impression," he said.

"I assure you, sir—"

"I must accept your word, as there is no proof either way," said the doctor. "It is probably a misunderstanding. You may go back to your place."

Carberry went back to the Sixth. Wingate, who was next to him, gave him a look of contempt that made even the bully flush uneasily.

"I am sorry, Wharton, that you should have entertained this idea for a moment," said the Head kindly. "I understand now why a companion of yours addressed me upon the subject. I presume that Hurree Singh was interceding for you."

"The correctfulness of the worthy sahib is terrific."

"I drew the wrong impression that Hurree Singh was seeking to share in the credit of your heroic action, and I ask his pardon for it."

"It is all rightful, and everything is gardenfully lovely," said the nabob, with a benignant smile.

"And now to proceed," said Dr. Locke. "I have, as I said, changed my intentions. Wharton was guilty of a great fault in leaving the college last night, but under the circumstances I overlook that fault."

There was a murmur, which would have swelled into a cheer, but the doctor raised his hand.

"Wharton swam out to the sinking ship, and carried out a rope to the unfortunate men aboard her. Only one man was saved from the crew, I am sorry to say; but that man was saved wholly by the courage and devotion of the head boy of the Greyfriars' Remove—Harry Wharton."

"Hurrah!"

This time the cheer could not be held back.

"Hurrah for Wharton!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The room seemed to rock with the sound. Wharton's cheeks were scarlet.

The change from the anticipation to the reality was great, and the junior hardly realised for the moment that he was being cheered by the whole school, instead of being sentenced to a flogging in the sight of all Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry cheered frantically.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And in the exuberance of his spirits Bob stamped on the floor, till called to order by a severe glance from Mr. Quelch.

The doctor raised his hand at last.

"You are right to recognise the pluck and devotion of your schoolfellow, my boys," he said. "Wharton has acted like a hero. He is pardoned for his breach of discipline, and I tell him before you all that Greyfriars is proud of him."

And again the cheers burst forth. And then Bob Cherry, who never lacked nerve, started "He's a jolly good fellow" at the top of his voice, and the whole hall took it up.

The great apartment rang and echoed with the sound, and in the midst of it the Head gave the signal to dismiss, and left the room.

There was a rush of the Remove to surround Wharton. He was shaken by the hand and thumped on the back till he was aching all over.

"The Head's an old sport, after all," exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You're a giddy hero, and we're all proud of you."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry. "Let it drop, for goodness' sake!"

"Rats! Here, you chaps, shoulder-high to the classroom!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry, struggling. "Don't be such asses! Let me down!"

"Rats! More rats! Bring him along!"

And Harry's resistance was in vain. The excited Removites raised him shoulder-high, and he was carried to the classroom over the heads of his Form-fellows, and they marched in with him, heedless of the astonished gaze of Mr. Quelch.

The Form-master smiled at Wharton's flushed face.

"It's only a procession, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Very good," said Mr. Quelch. "And now go to your places."

And Wharton was allowed to slide down at last.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Testimonial.

THERE was little attention given to lessons that morning in the Remove-room. The scene in hall had excited the boys, and the story of Harry's heroism, which they had learned for the first time from the doctor's lips, was in every mind. There were whispers and nods among the Removites, but Mr. Quelch, for once, was lenient, and kept one eye closed. The morning's lessons over, he dismissed the Remove, giving Harry a kindly glance as he passed out with the rest.

In the passage there was a whisper among the fellows, and a rush was made for Harry to chair him round the Close. But Harry had had enough of hero-worship, and he dodged the admiring juniors.

"Nuff's as good as a feast," he said. "Haps off! I'll take it all for granted, if you don't mind! Thank you all the same."

"Oh, rats!" said Russell. "Up you go!"

"More rats! I'm not!"

And Wharton escaped into the Close, and hurried off to the football ground with his chums, to elude the intended demonstration.

"Behold the giddy hero's blushes!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, don't you start, too, you chaps!" said Wharton.

"Blessed if this isn't worse than going out with the rope, and that wasn't enjoyable at all."

"The herofulness of the esteemed Wharton is great," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, "but his modestfulness is terrific."

"Oh, cheese it, Inky, and kick that ball out!"

And in the excitement of football practice, the matter was allowed to drop, as far as the Famous Four were concerned. But it was too interesting a topic to be dropped readily by the rest of the Remove. Billy Bunter, in particular, was thinking a great deal about it, and he opened his mind to Hazeldene and Desmond on the subject.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, cornering them in the passage, "it was really ripping of Wharton to climb that rope."

"Faith, he didn't climb any rope," said Micky. "Ye're wrong."

"Well, to pull the rope, or whatever it was," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I haven't heard exactly what it was, but everybody says he acted heroically, and I've no doubt he did."

"Faith, he swam out to the wreck with the rope in his teeth, so I hear—"

"Tied round his waist," said Hazeldene.

"Sure, Bulstrode said it was in his teeth."

"Bulstrode's a—fabricator."

"I say, you fellows, whatever it was he did, I know it was something to do with a rope, and it was very heroic, you know. I was thinking that you two fellows might like to join in the testimonial."

"The what?"

"I dare say you know there's a testimonial to be given to Wharton for his heroic conduct."

"This is the first I've heard of it."

"Well, you've heard of it now," said Bunter. "I'm collecting subscriptions. No humbug about it, you know—you put your name down in this book, and the amount of your subscription, and I hand it in to the committee."

"That seems all right," said Hazeldene doubtfully. "But Wharton isn't the sort of chap to take a testimonial, you know. He hates humbug!"

"But a testimonial to his wonderful courage and resource isn't humbug. I think myself that Greyfriars ought to make some public recognition of the matter."

"I don't know how he'd take it."

"Well, if he won't take the testimonial, the contributions will be returned to the subscribers," said Bunter. "Small amounts will do, you know, according to your means. I have put myself down for five shillings."

"Where on earth are you going to get five shillings from?" demanded Hazeldene.

"He'll borrow it of Wharton," chuckled Micky.

"Nothing of the sort! I'm expecting a postal order this evening, and I shall put half of it in the fund. The subscription doesn't close until to-night. How much shall I put you fellows down for?"

"Faith, and I'll make it a tanner!"

"Same here," said Hazeldene. "But mind, we are going to keep an eye on the testimonial. No fake, you know."

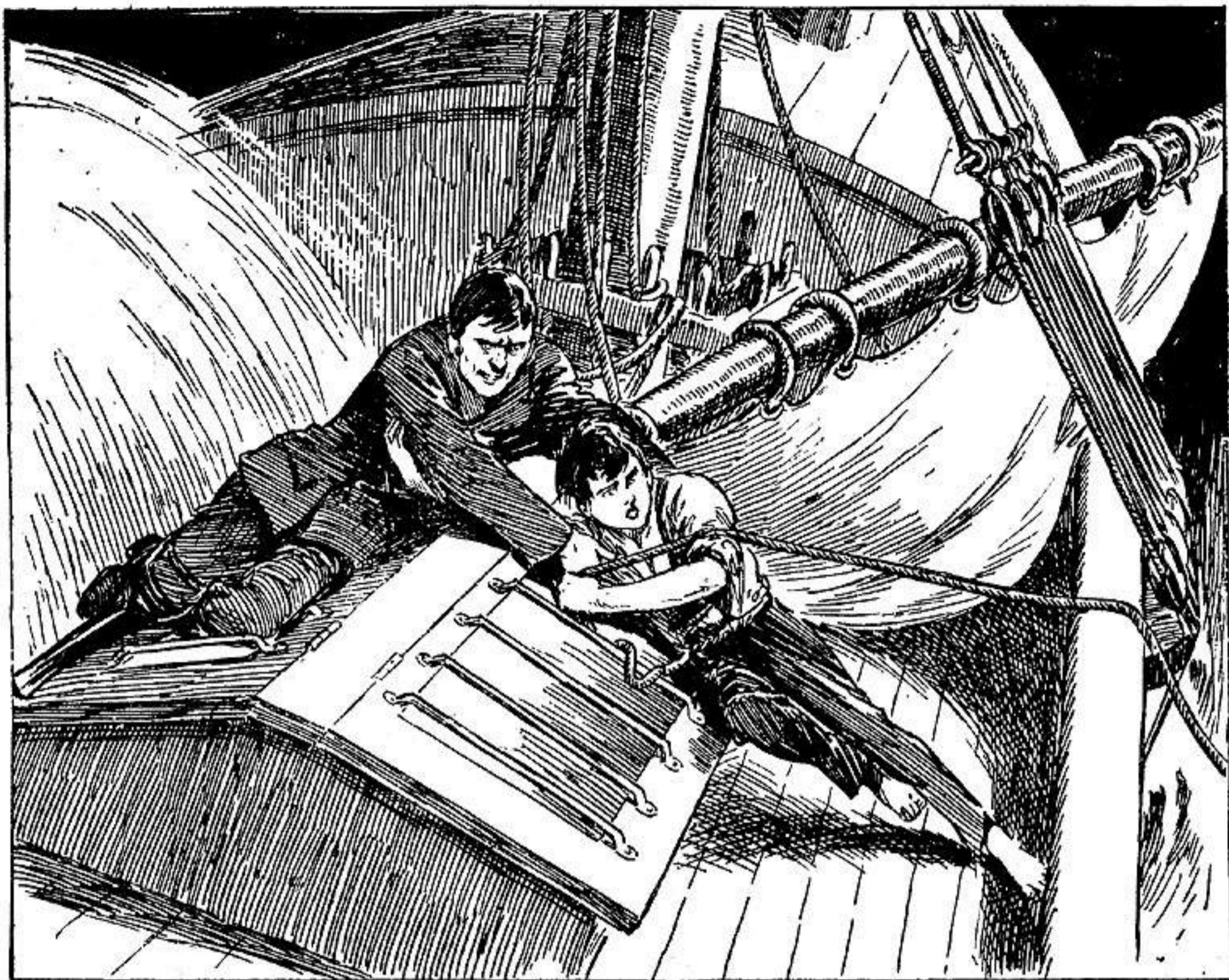
Billy Bunter blinked indignantly.

"If you think I am likely to fake the thing, Vaseline—"

"Oh, ring off! Here's the tanner."

"Very good. I've booked sixpence each to Desmond and Hazeldene. I hope the subscription will amount to sufficient to buy Wharton a new bicycle."

And Bunter went in search of fresh contributors.



"Hallo, my hearty!" bawled the wooden-legged man, dragging Harry on to the sloping deck. "Where did you spring from?"

Having two names down already as well as his own, the subscription list looked genuine enough, and though they knew Bunter pretty well by this time, many of the fellows, enthusiastic over Wharton's pluck at the shipwreck, willingly contributed.

Bunter tapped Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, on the arm as he stood watching the chums of the Remove at practice.

The little Chinese turned his almond eyes inquiringly upon the fat junior.

"You wantee speakee?"

"Yes, rather, Wun Lung. How much are you putting towards the subscription for the testimonial to Wharton?"

"No savvy."

"Look at this list. Half a dozen names down already, but the biggest sum is ninepence. I suppose you are going it a bit stronger?"

"No savvy."

"As you're the richest fellow in the Remove, Wharton will naturally expect you to come down handsome," urged Bunter. "A chap like you could easily spare a fiver."

"No savvy."

"Well, say a sovereign, then."

"No savvy."

"Ten shillings would look all right in the list."

"No savvy," said Wun Lung imperturbably.

"You'd jolly well savvy if you chose!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, exasperated. "Why don't you say you're too beastly mean to contribute, and have done with it?"

"No savvy."

"Wharton will see the subscription list, and he will feel rotten about it if your name isn't there."

"Me askee Whalton."

Billy Bunter looked alarmed. He had fears for the safety

of his skin if Harry Wharton saw that subscription list, and learned of the use the fat junior was making of his name.

"Don't do anything of the sort!" he exclaimed hastily. "It's a secret from Wharton for the present. He's so jolly modest about the thing that we don't want to make a fuss. Most of the Remove are in this, you know, and I've taken the lead. How much shall I put you down for?"

"Me lookee."

The Chinese felt through his capacious pockets.

Billy Bunter watched him anxiously.

Wun Lung usually had plenty of money, and was very careless with it, and a sovereign or a couple of sovereigns would not have been much to him.

But apparently the Celestial was short of money just now. He went through pocket after pocket with a slow deliberation that kept Bunter on tenterhooks.

At last a sweet smile lighted up his face, and he drew his hand out with something in it.

Bunter wetted the point of his pencil eagerly.

"How much shall I put you down for?" he asked.

"What you tinkee?"

"Say a sovereign," said Bunter.

"You puttee as likee."

"Well, a couple of sovereigns would look better, of course."

"You puttee as likee."

"Two quid, then," said Bunter, writing it down. "Hand over the cash, and put your initials here. You can use this pencil. That's the place."

Wun Lung inscribed a mysterious-looking Chinese character in the book, something like a spider, and something like a harrow.

"Now hand over the cash."

Wun Lung pressed a couple of coins into Bunter's hand, and walked away. The fat junior looked at them. For the moment he could scarcely believe his eyes—or, rather, his spectacles.

"The—the—the heathen beast!" he muttered.

Two French halfpennies—or, to be more exact, five-centime-pieces—reposed in his fat palm. Bunter blinked at them, and blinked at them again, and then dashed after Wun Lung.

But the little Celestial seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere, for he was walking at a very rapid pace.

The fat junior fagged and panted after him. He broke into a run, but as soon as the patter of his running feet was heard, the little Chinese also ran, as if it had suddenly occurred to him that he was in a great hurry.

Bunter shouted after him angrily.

"Wun Lung! Hi, there! Stop, old chap! Hold on, you heathen-rotter! Stop!"

But the Chinese did not stop.

Bunter fagged after him, with the perspiration running down his fat red cheeks. He came closer and closer, and all of a sudden the Celestial stopped, so suddenly that Bunter ran right into him. The fat junior reeled back from the shock, and sat heavily upon the ground.

"Ow! Wow!"

Wun Lung turned round, and surveyed the fat youth with a smile that was childlike and bland. He was apparently very much surprised to see Bunter sitting there.

"You lunnee aftel me?" he asked.

"You—you heathen pig, you jolly well know I was running after you!" panted Bunter, groping for his spectacles, which had fallen down his little fat nose.

"No savvy."

"Look here." Bunter staggered to his feet, still gasping for breath. "Look here, you horrid heathen! You've given me two French halfpennies!"

"No savvy."

"I've put your name down for two pounds."

"Lightee. You puttee down as likee."

"But you haven't given me any quids."

"No savvy."

"You—you—you Chinese cannibal, you were only rotting all the time!"

"No savvy."

Billy Bunter gave it up. It was evidently impossible to make Wun Lung savvy when he did not choose to understand. Bunter crossed off the amount put down to Wun Lung, and hurled the two French coins far from him with a dramatic gesture, and stalked away. He left Wun Lung chuckling in his curious, silent way.

Subscriptions came in slowly. Bunter received several promises, but the cash was not plentiful, and, as a matter of fact, many of the fellows guessed that Wharton would be annoyed by a testimonial, while others had strong doubts as to the reliability of Billy Bunter in money matters. More thoughtless ones, however, contributed, and slowly the list crept up.

In an hour Bunter had pretty well exhausted the Remove, and he had received about thirty shillings in promises and six in cash. He gave no further thought to the former, but the latter he turned over lovingly in his hands.

"It's a curious thing that fellows should be willing to subscribe for a rotten, useless testimonial to a chap like Wharton," he muttered, "and they'd see me suffering from the pangs of insufficient nourishment without moving a hand or foot. And that reminds me. I'm awfully hungry, and I can't possibly hold out till dinner. I suppose if I had a snack out of this, and made it up out of my postal-order this evening, it would be all right."

Bunter thought it out. While he was thinking it out, he drifted towards the tuck-shop. He looked in—and entered.

Mrs. Mimble gave him a very suspicious look.

Bunter would gladly have been her best customer as far as purchases went, and he would have allowed his account to run up to any figure. But Mrs. Mimble had her own ideas about that.

Bunter caught her look, and he stiffened up with dignity. With assumed carelessness he slapped down six shillings on the counter. Mrs. Mimble looked surprised. She had seldom seen Bunter in possession of so much money before.

"I'll have some of those steak-pies, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter; "hot, of course! And some baked spuds and celery, and a rabbit-pie."

Bunter was fairly in for it now. He had entered the shop with the honest intention of having only a snack, as he termed it; but almost before he knew what was happening his orders had run up to the full amount of his capital.

When Mrs. Mimble, with grim insistence, raked in the six shillings before supplying the things ordered, Bunter drew a long face for the moment. But in the enjoyment of the feed he soon forgot his troubles. After all, it would all be

made up out of his postal-order that evening—and sufficient for the hour was the evil thereof.

And so Bunter travelled through his feed, and, in the enjoyment of it, he forgot all about the testimonial to Harry Wharton, and he left Mrs. Mimble's little shop at last feeling fully at peace with himself and all the world.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor.

BILLY BUNTER came into dinner with a greasy smile of satisfaction upon his face. He had just consumed six shilling's-worth of solid provisions at the tuck-shop, but he did full justice to the dinner. He was not hungry just then, but he might become hungry, and so he never neglected to lay in provisions at every possible opportunity. And the fat junior had the digestion of an ostrich.

He had quite forgotten the testimonial by this time; but, as he was to learn, the subscribers hadn't. After dinner Micky Desmond tapped him on the arm in the Close, and received an inquiring blink.

"Hallo, Trevor—"

"Faith, and it's myself, ye owl!"

"Oh, is it you, Desmond? Can you lend me a couple of bob till my postal-order comes this evening?"

"Sure, it was my last tanner I gave ye for the subscription. How is the testimonial getting along?"

"Oh, fairly well!" said Bunter. "The money isn't coming in as I could wish, but it's six shillings already."

"Faith, and that's good! Does Wharton know yet?"

"Oh, no; he won't be let into it till the subscription list's full!"

"Got the money safe?"

Bunter felt a qualm.

"Oh, it's safe enough!" he said. "Truly, it was safe enough—in Mrs. Mimble's till."

"Good! Mind you don't get blueing it on tommy!"

"If you think I can't be trusted with money, Desmond," said Bunter, with great dignity, "you had better take the amount of your subscription back."

Micky laughed and walked away. It was fortunate that he did not take Bunter at his word, for the fat junior would have found it extremely difficult to restore the Irish junior's sixpence.

But his inquiries after the testimonial worried Bunter a little. He foresaw further inquiries, and, sooner or later, the matter was bound to come to Harry Wharton's ears. The fat junior began to think that his feed might be too dearly purchased.

He looked out for Wharton. The young captain of the Remove was talking to a group of Removites in the Close, and Bunter joined them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" said Bob Cherry, taking him by the ear. "Can't you see that you're interrupting our respected Form captain?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Travel off, then!"

And Bob Cherry lifted his boot, as if to help the Owl of the Remove on his way, and Bunter thought he had better go. The Removites were having a serious discussion upon the subject Harry had brought up at the Form meeting the day before, when the minute-gun from the bay had interrupted the proceedings.

"It's a jolly good idea, in my opinion," said Nugent, "but the fellows don't seem to catch on to it. Soldiering isn't in their line, I suppose."

"There ought to be a cadet corps of some sort, though," said Ogilvy. "I like the idea."

"And it will be a pull over the Upper Fourth," Hazel-dene remarked.

"Still, there's no getting out of the fact that the wheeze doesn't seem to catch on as we might have expected," Harry Wharton said frankly. "The training would take up a lot of time, of course, and the outfit would be expensive. But since what happened yesterday, I've thought of an improvement on the plan."

"Go ahead!"

"Let's have the wheeze with the latest improvements," said Bulstrode, in his sneering way. "Silence for the wheeze of the Hero of Greyfriars!"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Shut up, Bulstrode. I won't have any chipping from you on that subject."

"Yes, shut up, pig," said Bob Cherry. "You wouldn't have had the pluck to go down to the sea at all, let alone to do what Wharton did. Scat!"

"My idea is this," went on the captain of the Remove. "To have a cadet corps, as suggested, but to have a corps

of sea cadets. In a word, instead of training as soldiers, to train as sailors."

There was a buzz in the crowd of Removites.

From the lighting up of the boyish faces, it was easy for Harry to see how the mere suggestion caught on and fired their minds. In every true British boy the love of the sea is inherent. The natural Briton is a sailor at heart. And so the looks of the Greyfriars juniors showed now.

"As a matter of fact," went on Wharton, warming to the subject, "the Navy is the country's first line of defence. Our Army isn't big enough to tackle the forces Germany could land on our coast in a few hours if our Navy were crippled. We are a nation of sea-fighters, just as Germany is a nation of land-fighters. A corps of sea-cadets is just the thing for us."

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"I can see you like the idea. It's a go, then—the Remove Sailor Corps is the thing. We can get some craft on the bay for training, and we can spend the half-holidays on the salt water."

"Jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, heartily. "I suppose there's nobody here who knows the difference between boxing a compass and hoisting the maindeck overboard, but we can soon learn."

Wharton laughed.

"We sha'n't want to learn to hoist the maindeck overboard, I suppose," he said. "As for the rest of the instruction, I don't see why we shouldn't get some seaman to teach us how to handle ropes and manage a vessel. And that kind of knowledge is jolly useful, and just the sort of thing a British boy ought to have. And when we can't get down to the sea, we can practise on a river, or on a pond."

"Ripping!"

"Spiffing!"

"Ay, ay, my hearty!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Shiver my timbers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A bell rang, and the open-air meeting broke up to go to the class-room. Bunter pulled Wharton by the sleeve as he went in, and the captain of the Remove glanced at him.

"I say, Wharton, I'm sincerely sorry to bother you, but—"

"Go ahead!"

"Can you lend me six shillings? You don't mind my asking?"

"Not at all! That's an answer to both questions," said Harry Wharton cheerfully; and he walked on.

Bunter blinked after him. Then he caught Bob Cherry by the arm.

"Can you lend me six shillings, Cherry?"

"Six rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, Nugent, can you lend me six bob? I am faced with a serious difficulty if I can't raise six bob this afternoon."

"Then I think you'll have to put up with the difficulty," said Nugent. "Ask me for six pounds while you're about it, old son!"

Billy Bunter looked disconsolate. He button-holed Bulstrode as he came by, and asked the same question, but the bully of the Remove only shook his hand off. Then he tried Skinner, the amateur humorist of the Remove.

"I say, Skinny, old chap, can you lend me six bob?"

"Ask me another," said Skinner cheerfully, "I don't know the answer to that one."

"You—you ass; it's not a conundrum!" said Bunter. "I want to know— Hold on! You beast, to walk away while I'm talking!"

And Bunter was last in the class-room, still with his demand unsatisfied for the required six shillings. In the class two or three fellows whispered to him to inquire how the subscription was getting on, and Bunter wore a worried look as lessons proceeded.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Troublesome Sailorman.

GOSLING, the Greyfriars school-porter, snorted. His bell had tinkled, showing that someone wanted admittance at the gate, and Gosling hated work. And just then, expecting no more callers for a time, he had settled down comfortably in his easy chair in the lodge, with his feet on the fender and a glass of gin-and-water at his elbow.

"B-r-r-r!" said Gosling. "Can't let a honest man alone to 'ave a quiet drink arter slaving all day! Course not! What I says is this 'ere. That a 'ard-working man can't 'ave a rest and a quiet drink—ow!"

A terrific clang at the bell made the porter jump, and his elbow crashed against the glass, and the gin-and-water splashed over the table.

Gosling's face was a study for a minute.

"The hass, whoever he is!" he muttered. "Fancy

making a honest man jump like that! The hass! What I says is this 'ere—"

Clang, clangle, clang!

The visitor at the gate was evidently impatient. The bell rang continually, as if the pull was being tugged at without a moment's cessation.

Gosling looked wrathful, but he had to go. He went to the gate and stared angrily through the bars at the figure that was visible in the road outside, pulling at the bell.

He was a rather curious-looking fellow.

His clothes showed that he was a sailorman. He had a wooden leg, and a face the colour of mahogany. In form he was short and thickset, and evidently possessed of great strength. There was a red flush under his bronzed skin that showed that he was labouring under unusual excitement, and Gosling had no difficulty in guessing that he had been drinking.

The wooden-legged man was tugging away industriously at the bell, apparently unconscious of the school porter glaring at him through the gate. Gosling's anger knew no bounds at the discovery of this disreputable-looking visitor.

"Let that bell alone!" he roared.

The sailorman looked round, and let go the bell-pull.

"Ay, ay, my hearty!" he exclaimed. "Ahoy! Is this 'ere craft Greyfriars?"

"This is Greyfriars Collidge," said Gosling, with dignity.

"Ay, ay! Bust my topsails! Then it's the port I'm bound for!" said the wooden-legged sailorman. "I want to be taken aboard."

"You can't come in."

"Can't I, you lopsided son of a sea-cook? Hopen this gate!"

"What I says is this 'ere—you can't come in!"

The sailorman came close to the bars, and looked between them at the angry porter with intoxicated gravity.

"Look 'ere, mate," he said, "I'm Captain Stump. Got that?"

"Clear hout!"

"I'm Captain Stump. I was fetched orf the wreck last night by a young feller. I don't know his name, but he's here. You got that?"

"Clear heil!"

"I've come to thank him," said the wooden-legged man. "That's what I've come for. I want to be taken aboard, and showed into his cabin. You got that?"

"I'll set the dorg on yer."

"Take me aboard, you swab!"

"You can't come in 'ere; you're drunk!"

The sailorman steadied himself by holding on the bars of the gate.

"Who says I'm drunk?" he said slowly. "I'm Captain Stump. Perhaps the boys have been 'settin' them up a little. Ain't I been rescued from a watery grave, you swab? Can't a sailorman have a drink when he's been rescued from a watery grave?" And then the old tar, in the most inconsequential manner, began to sing, "'Ere a sheer 'ulk lies poor Tom Bowling, the hidol of our cre-e-e-ew."

Gosling snorted.

"Oh, get away!" he said.

"You take me aboard. I've come 'ere to thank the young gentleman, and I ain't going away without that. You got that?"

"You ain't coming in 'ere!"

And Gosling strode away. The sailorman shook the bars of the gate, and, finding that useless, he returned to the bell-pull. The clanging of the bell rang through the porter's lodge, and through the quiet Close.

Gosling turned back to the gate, snorting with rage.

"Let that bell alone!" he roared.

"Ay, ay, my hearty, when you take me aboard!"

"You intoxicated beast," said Gosling, with virtuous indignation, forgetting the gin-and-water on his table. "You're a low-down drunken sailor, and you can get off, or I'll come out and bust your wooden leg over your head."

The sailorman left off pulling the bell, and glared at Gosling.

"You'll come out?" he said. "Come out, then, you swab! Bust my topsails, let me get alongside of you, that's all!"

Gosling unfastened the gate. He had no doubt of his ability to handle a wooden-legged man, especially one who was the worse for rum, and Gosling was quite heroic when he thought there was no danger. He pulled the gate open, the sailorman watching him the while, and then he squared up to Captain Stump.

"Now, then," he roared, "har you going to get hoff?"

"Ay, ay, when I've seen the young gentleman."

Gosling did not argue further. He rushed at the wooden-legged man, hitting out, but he met with a surprise.

The tar certainly had accepted too much rum from his

sympathisers in the fishing village, but he was quite able to take care of himself.

He knocked up Gosling's hands, and caught him under the chin with a right-hander that sent Gosling in a heap in the road.

Then he prodded the dazed porter in the ribs, with the end of his wooden leg.

"Nuff?" he roared. "Will you lay aboard me agin, you swab? Will you lay aboard Captain Stump, you landshark? Bust my topsails!"

"Get off!" said Gosling feebly. "I'll call the perlice!"

But he did not attempt to do so. The sailorman grinned, and, leaving Gosling lying in the road, he stumped into the school grounds.

The School House door was open, and Captain Stump had no difficulty in entering, and in the wide, flagged passage he paused and looked round him.

Carberry, the prefect, came along from the Sixth Form-room, on his way to the Head's study to fetch a book Dr. Locke required. He stared at the wooden-legged sailorman in blank amazement.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing here?"

Captain Stump grinned at him affably.

"I've come to see the young gentleman who rescued me from the shipwreck," he said. "Captain Stump's my name, otherwise called Old Stumpy. I'm a sailorman."

"And you've got a jolly good cargo aboard!" grinned Carberry. "So you've come here to see Wharton, have you?"

"Bust my topsails! I don't know his name."

"Oh, it was Harry Wharton of the Remove who pulled you off the wreck," said Carberry. "The whole school's making a song about it."

"Ay, ay! He was a real plucked 'un," said the sailorman. "I've come here to see him, and give him my thanks. That's where I'm bound. Where is he?"

Carberry grinned maliciously. He knew what a furore the entrance of the excited sailor into the Remove Form-room would cause, and he rather liked the idea. He took Captain Stump by the arm, and led him along the passage.

"That's the room," he said, pointing to the door of the Remove room. "You'll find young Wharton in there."

"Thanky kindly, sir; you're a white man."

Carberry went on his way grinning, and the sailorman knocked a thundering knock at the door of the Remove room.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Captain Stump Is Grateful.

THE Remove were busy just then. Mr. Quelch was taking the form on a personally conducted tour through ancient Rome, and the Senate had just received the news of the battle of Caunae, when the thundering crash came at the door.

Mr. Quelch started so suddenly that he dropped his book.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated. "Whatever can that be?"

Crash!

"There's somebody at the door, sir, I think," said Skinner.

"It sounded like a knock."

And the class giggled.

"Come in," said Mr. Quelch, with a stern brow. He meant to speak very plainly to the applicant for admission when he came in. But the visitor had not waited for the invitation to enter. The door opened, and the rolling figure of Captain Stump appeared.

Amazement held the whole Remove silent.

The strange figure of the wooden-legged sailorman appeared in the doorway, framed there, and the boys gazed at him wonderingly.

Mr. Quelch could not find his tongue for the moment.

The sailorman studied himself by a grasp on the door-posts, and looked in with the affable grin of good-tempered intoxication.

"Arternoon!" he said.

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Who—what—how—"

The sailorman turned his glance on the Form-master.

"Aho! Are you the skipper?"

"I—I—I am master here."

"Ay, ay! Yours to command," said Captain Stump, pulling at his ragged forelock. "I'm Captain Stump, I am. I'm a British sailorman. You got that?"

"I—I—I—"

"Ay, ay, ay!" repeated Captain Stump. "I was wrecked in the bay last night. The skipper was drowned, likewise the crew. I was pulled off by a young gentleman belongin' to this craft. I come 'ere to thank him. You got that?"

"Dear me!"

"Which you might think I was drunk," said Mr. Stump cautiously. "I ain't. You can take the word of a sailorman."

The boys was setting them up, and I couldn't refuse a drop of rum. But I ain't had a drop too much. You see how I can walk."

And the sailorman stumped into the class-room, and by way of showing how straight he could walk, reeled right up to the master's desk, and clutched it to save himself from rolling over on the floor.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

Amazement had held the boys silent hitherto, but now they could restrain their laughter no more, and a wild yell burst from the whole Form.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Stump, holding on to the desk, looked at them affably.

"The young gentlemen is in high sperrits," he said. "I always like to see young gentlemen in high sperrits. Where is he?"

"Where is—is whom?"

"The young gent that saved me from the wreck. I'm Captain Stump," said the wooden-legged man confidentially.

"I'm a British sailorman. You got that?"

"The—the boy is here," said Mr. Quelch. "It—it is very right and proper for you to—to feel grateful to Wharton for saving your life, but you should not have come here."

"I wanted to see him, to—"

"Especially in this state," added the Form-master severely.

The sailorman glanced down at his clothes with a disparaging look.

"Ay, ay, you're right, my hearty!" he said. "The sea-water does spile a man's things. But what was a sailorman to do? I didn't bring my chest ashore with me, and the young gentleman hadn't time to stop for it?"

"I was not referring to your clothes. You are intoxicated."

"I'm a sober man," said Captain Stump, with dignity.

"I'm a teetotaler, and have been one for years. The boys was a-setting them up, and I couldn't refuse a little rum. Otherwise, I'm a strict teetotaler. I've always made it a point to be a teetotaler between the drinks—always."

"You cannot stay here—"

"I ain't come 'ere to drop anchor, shipmate," said Captain Stump, letting go his hold on the desk, and slapping Mr. Quelch on the shoulder, much to the horror of the dignified Form-master. "I want to see the young gentleman."

"Wharton, you had better speak to this—this person. I would rather get rid of him without a disturbance, if possible."

Harry Wharton rose in his place with a smile. He had a boy's natural disgust for intoxication, but in the case of the sailorman he could make excuses. He could understand how drink had been pressed upon the wrecked seaman by thoughtless sympathisers.

Captain Stump looked at the boy, and evidently recognised him, for a grin overspread his mahogany face.

"That's 'im! That's the young gent!"

He stumped over to the desks, and held out a horny hand across the first row of boys, rumpling Bulstrode's hair as he leaned over him.

"Put it there, shipmate; you saved my life!"

"I'm glad to see you," said Harry, shaking hands with the sailorman. "I'm glad I was able to help you off the wreck. I'd like to see you again, if you're staying at the village."

The sailorman beamed upon him.

"I'm hanging on till they're decided about the hulk," he said. "I've gotter give evidence. They can't do without Bill Stump. I'm proud to shake hands with you, Master Wharton. You're a 'ero!"

"Thank you!" said Harry, laughing.

"I'd like to see you agin," said the sailorman. "I'm staying on. Anything you wanter know about the sea you can ask Captain Stump. I'll show you how to manage a ship. Bust my topsails. I'll spin you yarns about the sea. Did I ever tell you the story of how I was nearly chawed up by cannibals in the Fijis?"

Considering that Captain Stump had only met the boy once before, amid the breakers on a shattered wreck, the question was somewhat superfluous. But the sailorman's mind was not very clear at that moment.

"No," said Harry. "I—"

"I'll tell you, then. We was sailing in the brig Wapping Belle—"

"Will you kindly leave the class-room?" said Mr. Quelch.

The sailorman turned an uncertain eye upon him.

"Was you hailing me?" he asked, roaring out the question as if he were speaking a ship across a dozen cables' length of water.

"Yes. Kindly leave the room."

"Ay, ay, my hearty! We was sailing in the Wapping Belle—"

"Will you leave the room?"

"P'r'aps," said Captain Stump—"p'r'aps you think I'm intoss—toss—tossicated, you swab in petticoats!"

Mr. Quelch turned purple. It was not so much being

called a swab, as having his scholastic gown described as petticoats, that raised his ire.

"You—you—" he spluttered. "Will you go, or shall I send for the porter and have you ejected?"

Captain Stump chuckled.

"That swab is run aground," he said. "He lay alongside me, and I sank him with one broadside. P'r'aps you'd like to turn me hout? P'r'aps you'd like to put them up with a British sailorman?"

And the shipwrecked seaman put up a pair of fists that looked capable of knocking down an ox, and squared up to the horrified Form-master.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, springing from his place. "Lend a hand here, you chaps!"

Half a dozen of the Remove rushed to help him. He caught the sailorman by the shoulder.

"Stop that!" he exclaimed sternly.

Captain Stump looked fierce for a moment as the juniors closed round him, but then he recognised Wharton, and became affable again.

"Which it's you," he said. "I'm Captain Stump. I'm a British sailorman, and you're the young gent who pulled me off the wreck. You got that?"

"Come along!"

"Ay, ay!" said the sailorman. "I'll sail under your orders anywhere, young gent. Just you steer a course."

Wharton steered a course for the door, and the sailorman went as quietly as a lamb. He had one arm round Harry's neck for support, and he went without demur into the Close. There the juniors sat him down on a wooden seat and left him.

"Stay there!" said Harry, laughing.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And he stayed.

The juniors returned to the class-room, grinning over the incident. Mr. Quelch was still looking a little flustered.

"Thank you very much, Wharton!" he said. "You may go to your places, boys."

And lessons were resumed; but the Form-master cast more than one uneasy glance to the door. But the sailorman did not reappear, and presently a stump-stump was heard in the Close, dying away in the direction of the gates.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Pays the Piper.

"WHARTON! I say, Wharton, do stop a minute!" Harry Wharton stopped. Billy Bunter was looking really distressed, and besides, his grasp on Harry's sleeve would not have been easy to unloose without force.

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry resignedly.

"Can you lend me six shillings?"

"No, I can't! I haven't half as much at the present moment!"

"I must have it!" said Bunter. "No, it isn't for a feed, so you needn't grin! It's a debt—a debt of honour!"

"You don't mean to say that anybody's trusted you with money?" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"Oh, really, Wharton! You see, I was expecting a postal-order by this evening's post, but I've had a disappointment. Blessed if I can see anything to grin at in a fellow having a disappointment. I know you're an unfeeling chap, Wharton, but you might stand by a fellow at a time like this. I've got a debt of honour to pay, and I must have six shillings."

"Oh, rats! I tell you I haven't it; and I couldn't spare so much if I had. You should make it a bob a time, Billy, when you borrow. Be reasonable, old chap."

"I never borrow any money without putting it down to the account," said Bunter, with dignity.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I can't give you six shillings to put down to the account, and that settles it!"

"Hold on a minute, Wharton. Suppose the fellows should raise a fund to present you with six shillings—"

"Are you off your rocker? Why should they?"

"Well, supposing they did? Could I have the cash?"

"Yes, you see. You can have all the funds they raise for me," said Wharton, laughing. "But only a duffer like you would think of anything of the sort."

And he walked off.

Billy Bunter grinned contentedly.

"Well it's mine now!" he murmured. "Nobody can start ragging me for spending my own money at the tuck-shop. Hallo, Bulstrode, I wish you wouldn't clap me on the shoulder like that so suddenly!"

"Faith, and it's myself! How is the fund getting along?"

"Do you want to make a further subscription, Desmond?" asked Bunter, feeling for his notebook and pencil.

"Faith, and I haven't any tin!"

"Then the subscription-list is closed—I mean it's closed, anyway."

"What about the testimonial? What's going to be bought for Wharton?"

"N-n-nothing. You see—"

"You've blued the tin, you young embezzler?"

"I don't think you ought to call me names, Desmond. I'm sincerely sorry that you should suspect me of base actions like that. As a matter of fact, Wharton preferred the cash to any present. He particularly wanted to lend someone six shillings, and the fund came to exactly six shillings."

Micky looked at the fat junior suspiciously.

"Faith, and I don't believe a word of it!" he said bluntly.

"You can ask Wharton," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Sure, and I will!"

"I—I—I mean, it's no good bothering Wharton about it now—N say, Desmond—"

But Micky was gone. He was looking for Wharton. He found the captain of the Remove in the juniors' room, talking to the chums of No. 1 Study on the subject of the sailor idea. The scheme had caught on, and half the Remove were making plans and scheming schemes.

"Faith, and have ye had the testimonial intirely?" asked Micky, addressing Harry, who looked at him in astonishment.

"The what?" he asked.

"Sure, we were raisin' a testimonial to present ye wid, in recognition of ye're pluck," explained Desmond. "Bunter—"

"You duffer!" said Wharton, his brows contracting a little. "What on earth were you doing anything so stupid for?"

"Well, it was Bunter's idea, and he was raising the fund. He raised six bob, and he says you preferred to have the cash."

"I—I preferred to have the cash? Are you off your rocker?"

"Well, he says so! I was thinkin' that we'd perhaps get ye a new bicycle—"

"For six bob?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we expected to get more than that," said Micky apologetically. "But Bunter says ye preferred to have the cash."

"Why, I—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Here's the fat porpoise! Now, then, Bunter—"

"I say, you fellows, if Desmond's been telling you—"

"Sure, I've only told them what you told me!" said Micky indignantly. "You said that Wharton preferred to have the cash!"

"I—I meant—Ow!"

Wharton took Bunter by one of his fat ears. A crowd of juniors soon gathered round. The subscribers to the fund were all there, and they were curious to know what had become of their money.

"Now, then, Bunter, we'll have this out," said Wharton quietly. "You seem to have raised six shillings with some humbug about making me a presentation. I may as well say that I shouldn't have accepted anything of the sort, and I think it was a rotten idea from start to finish. But you raised the money."

"It was only six shillings, Wharton!"

"It will have to be returned to the subscribers. Where is it?"

Bunter blinked at him with an injured expression.

"Well, I like that from you, Wharton—I do, really!"

"What do you mean?" roared Wharton. "Do you mean to say that I knew anything about it, or ever saw anything of the money?"

"N-not exactly. But—but you know jolly well I asked you that if the fellows made up a fund for you, could I have it, and—"

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"But I didn't know anything about this!"

"That's not my fault!" said Bunter obstinately. "You said I could have it, and I—"

"Where is the money?"

"Mrs. Mible's got it. I came over so faint that—"

"But that must have been before you mentioned the matter to me. That wasn't ten minutes ago. When did you have the feed?"

"Before dinner. I—I mean—"

"Then the money was gone before you asked me?"

"I—I expected a postal-order this evening. There's been some delay in the post, and it won't be here till to-morrow morning now. When it comes, I shall immediately return you the six shillings," said Bunter, looking extremely dignified. "I told you at the time that I should put it down to the account."

"Faith, and it's a swindler ye are!"

"Oh, really, Desmond—"

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, "it was a rotten idea to raise a testimonial, and it was still more stupid to trust Bunter with money. It serves you all jolly well right to lose it!"

The subscribers to the testimonial looked at one another. Wharton's attitude could not be regarded as really overwhelming grateful.

"But Bunter ought to be licked," said Wharton. "If I had had any idea that this silly-ass fund was being raised, I shouldn't have answered him as I did, and he knows it jolly well."

"I've got a postal-order coming in—"

"Oh, get off that, for goodness' sake! My view is that it serves you fellows right to lose the money, and that it would be a good idea for you to take that fat young rascal

and frog's-march him round the room as a warning to him to be a little more careful in money matters."

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily.

"The wheezefulness is terrific!"

"Oh, really—I say, you fellows, I'm sincerely sorry! If you make my glasses fall off they'll very likely break, and then you'll have to pay for them. Ow! Wow! Leggol! Ow! Ow!"

But Nemesis had overtaken Billy Bunter at last, and he underwent the horrors of the frog's-march amid yells of laughter from the Remove.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Boys of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "The Greyfriars Sailors." Please order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

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. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard joins the Ploughshires. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. A trooper named 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. One day Sligo has a letter from his wife, describing how, while cleaning out a certain set of offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, she discovered a dusty document under a safe, relating to Tom Howard's affairs, and that Sergeant Hogan, a former servant of Colonel Dashwood's, with whom Mrs. Sligo was acquainted, had joyfully affirmed that it established Jack Dashwood's claim to the Colonel's estates. This letter Sligo maliciously shows to Leonard Dashwood, who manages to destroy it, together with one from Sergeant Hogan to Tom Howard, who has been promoted to sergeant. An IOU for £95, which Dashwood had given to Sligo as hush-money, falls into Colonel Greville's hands. The latter then interviews Tom, who is slightly wounded, and asks him a number of questions. Sligo, in the next tent, overhears the interview, and this causes him to ask Tom what he would give to know the whole truth of Lieutenant Dashwood's infamous plots.

A general advance is now ordered, and the column moves into the difficult Mahmud country. Shortly after the departure of the column, the Hon. Algy, of the Ploughshires, is captured by tribesmen while asleep in the deserted encampment, and made to mount his pony.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Hon. Algy Makes a Bold Bid for Freedom

The tribesmen proceeded up a mountain-side, almost as steep, it seemed to the Honourable Algy as the roof of a house, and when they had gone about a mile, their prisoner detected in the far distance the glow of red lights that indicated the presence of camp-fires.

Some of the men scowled upon him and handled their weapons when he chanced to look at them; but others, of the good-humoured sort, jabbered volubly as they went. He knew that he was in a very awkward situation, and might be murdered at any time; but, for all that, he rode along in their midst with that calm indifference to danger and its future possibilities that is exhibited by most of the younger officers of the British Army.

When they had reached some overhanging rocks on the

mountain-side the chief held up his hand and everybody stood quite still. Below them, on the plain at their feet, clustered the roofs and walls of a collection of stone huts—in reality, the village which our men had partly burned the day before, and from which the inhabitants had all since fled. The doors stood open, and the place was so deserted that not even a dog bayed the moon.

The chief now took the bridle of the British officer's pony, and led it towards the village. It slipped and stumbled so alarmingly that the Hon. Algy leaned over on one side, rested his foot on the rocky ground, and allowed the pony to walk from under him.

"If it is all the same to you, Moore and Burgess, I think I'd rather walk. By Jove, you know, you fellows do remind me of the Christy Minstrels! Mr. Johnson, I am going to ask you a conundrum!"

And the Hon. Algy, with suppressed humour lurking about his mouth, blinked his eyes after the solemn fashion of the corner-man as he addressed the chief.

That important individual returned the gaze with Oriental dignity, and pointed with a brown forefinger to the village they were approaching. At the commencement of it was a house of more importance than the rest—evidently the residence of a khan, or chief. It had a round stone tower at one corner, into which on occasion the tribe would retire when their neighbours paid them a friendly visit with loaded rifles, which was not uncommon; and the Hon. Algy saw that the door stood open.

He walked beside the chief and an idea occurred to him. He had been into several of those places before during his sojourn in that wild region, and he also remembered his old Eton days when the Hon. Algy was renowned as a sprinter. Twenty yards from the house the chief stretched out his arm and grasped his prisoner by the sleeve.

"All right, officer, I'll go quietly," said the Hon. Algy, with his tongue in his cheek.

But when the distance had lessened to a dozen paces, the Hon. Algy's left foot shot out and took the chief's legs from under him. At the same time one of the tan gloves made intimate acquaintance with Ali Khan's right eye, and, before anybody knew what was going to happen, the Hon. Algy made a bee line for the open door, rushed in, banged it behind him, shot the heavy bolt into its socket, and leaned against the wall in a paroxysm of laughter. They came hot upon his heels, those fierce, wild tribesmen, and they thundered on the door with the butts of their guns and flung themselves upon it, and jabbered and howled, and showered threats upon the white man inside. But the white

man, taking out his matches, struck a light and proceeded to explore the interior with all haste.

His first care was to examine all the windows, which were so small that no one could gain access that way; and then, passing through the house, he ascended the tower, striking another match, and stopping suddenly with an exclamation of surprise. A stack of at least three hundred rifles, all in excellent condition and well greased, were stored on a little room on the first floor, and, investigating a large packet done up in a goat-skin, over which he had nearly tripped, he found it to contain cartridges for the rifles.

"Bai Jove, there's every facility here for doing a defence of Khars on one's own!" said the lieutenant.

And, taking one of the rifles, he filled his pockets with cartridges, slipped one into the breech, and mounted the steps until he came out on top of the tower. Cautiously putting his head over the parapet, he looked down and saw the Mahmuds engaged in angry dispute outside the door.

"I say, you beggars," said the Honourable Algy, "it's awfully late, you know, and you're making a beastly row!"

The dark faces looked up, and a chorus of baffled rage rose from the crowd. The Honourable Algy took a quick sight, and fired into the middle of them, dodged back, and re-loaded. A wild howl rang out in the silence of the night, accompanied by the rush of many feet. Up popped the lieutenant's head, and he fired a second time, three or four shots from the ground below him mingling with that of his own rifle. With his eyeglass still fixed, and a good-humoured smile on his face, the future Earl of Snowden fixed another cartridge in, crept to the parapet again, and, taking off his helmet, placed it in full view of the tribesmen. It was instantly lifted from its resting-place, and hurled into the air, pierced by a score of bullets; then, knowing that every piece below had been discharged, the Honourable Algy rose coolly into view, picked out his man, and shot him through the head.

"In the words of the immortal Artemus Ward," said the Honourable Algy, "enough of a thing's enough. I'm going down to see what the old chap has left in the larder."

Far away up the valley the sound of that firing fell upon the ears of the Hussar picquet, and the camp listened, wondering what it might mean. They were expecting another detachment of the force to join them, and the general began to fear that they had been attacked, as the Buffs had been a few days before.

"As soon as it is light," he said to Colonel Greville, "you had better send a party down yonder to see what is going on, and report to me!"

All the rest of that night, at intervals, Tom Howard and his comrades listened impatiently to the crack of the Martinis, for the Honourable Algy, finding nothing but some bread and dried goat's flesh and a bowl of sour milk, had returned to the top of his fortress, and made very good shooting at intervals, killing in all five men, and rousing Ali Khan to a pitch of ungovernable temper.

"If the Kaffirs were not so close yonder," he said, pointing in the direction of the British field force, "we would roast him alive; but fire shows far in the distance. To-morrow he shall fry in his own juice, and boil in Tophet hereafter!"

When the first light came into the east, Colonel Greville ordered Mr. Blennerhassett to take twenty men, and carry out a reconnaissance.

"Don't get yourself in a hole, Blennerhassett," said the colonel, "and if it's anything serious send back a man to me."

The tribesmen had now learned wisdom, and kept well under cover of the other houses, from which they fired at the parapet whenever the Honourable Algy showed his head above it. He varied the monotony of the proceedings by occasionally creeping down the stone staircase, and letting fly from one of the narrow windows, and though he was haunted by the fact that his provisions would very soon run out, and could not possibly sustain him for more than two days—and that on quarter rations—all his sporting instincts were roused, and he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

In the meantime, other roving bands of the Mad Mullah's fanatical followers, attracted like vultures to the carnage by the firing, had come down into the valley, and a very respectable force of something between three and four hundred men gathered about the tower, and the Honourable Algy began to find that Mahmud shooting was quite as exciting as big game, and was likely to prove more disastrous in the long run. One or two bullets fired from some distance had starred on the flat roof of the tower, and the little garrison of one cast an anxious glance up and down the valley. He was lying on his face, peeping through a fissure in the stone wall, when he spied a cloud of dust in the distance, and, as it drew nearer the welcome sight of a score of khaki helmets, undulating with that peculiar motion that showed they were mounted, told him that some cavalry were coming down the valley. He lit a cigarette, and lay there watching them, the angry murmur of the tribesmen below increasing every moment.

"By gad, I don't think there are more than half a troop of

them!" muttered the lieutenant. "I wonder how the niggers will stand a charge? I know exactly what those fools yonder will do. They will open out, and start firing, and probably have to retire, and the position will remain in statu quo ante—not to say uncle!"

But to the Honourable Algy's surprise, the "fools yonder" did no such thing. Mr. Blennerhassett was conducting his first independent command, and, in spite of the colonel's warning, was determined to make the most of it, finding a very able second in Sergeant Tom Howard, who borrowed Mr. Blennerhassett's glasses, and took a long survey of the position.

The powerful binoculars showed the sergeant the cluster of stone huts surrounding the Khan's tower, the excited mob of tribesmen humming like bees all about it, and on top of the tower itself a thin brown face, looking in their direction under a thin, brown hand. Sergeant Howard gave vent to an ejaculation which is not laid down in the red book.

"That is Mr. Armstrong, sir!" said Tom, handing the glasses back to the lieutenant. "I will eat my hat if he's not on top of that tower!"

"By gad," said Mr. Blennerhassett, adjusting the focus, and tilting the peak of his helmet back. "What's to be done?"

Tom pursed up his resolute mouth thoughtfully, looked at the tribesmen, who were waving their banners and flashing their swords, and then turning in his saddle, cast a glance backwards in the direction of the camp. The bulk of the tribesmen were hidden by the houses, but Tom knew that they considerably outnumbered their own party.

"I suppose we ought to send back word, sir; but I should awfully like to rush those beggars. They haven't seen us yet, and we can get very close to them if we keep in the shadow on the right of the valley."

"That's just what has occurred to me, Howard. I should like to have a whack at the beggars. Let's dash on, and chance our luck, and, if we find they are too strong, we can easily gallop clear, and send for some more of our chaps."

The Hussars heard his words, and every face was turned towards him with an expectant look that betrayed their eagerness; and, with a cheery "Come on, boys!" Mr. Blennerhassett went forward at a foot pace in the cool, dark shadow of the spur, passing his hand through his sabre-knot, and allowing the weapon to dangle at his wrist as he drew his revolver from its case.

Sergeant Howard and Corporal Sloggett rode close upon his heels, the rest of the men following with no regard to order, bending forward over their horses' ears, hoping fervently that they would be able to creep up unseen.

The Honourable Algy, seeing their little game, opened fire again, to keep the attention of the tribesmen upon himself, and their backs to the valley, and if his shots went a little wide, they had the desired effect. The Hussars had approached within a hundred yards of the village before a loud howl from the Mahmuds proclaimed that they had been discovered.

"Keep together, lads," said Mr. Blennerhassett, "and ride all you know. We may have to clear out, but we will have some fun anyway!"

And then the low thunder of galloping horses and the eager shouts of the riders mingled with the yells of the Mahmuds, as Ali Khan and his friends poured through the gaps in the stone huts, and began to fire like mad upon them.

The Honourable Algy sprang upon the parapet, and cheered at the top of his voice, and the little troop, mingling with the tribesmen, was lost for a moment among the waving of white garments and the flashing of weapons, and then burst irresistibly out, and came dashing to the base of the tower. Six times Mr. Blennerhassett's revolver had cracked out, and then he let it drop to the end of the lanyard, where it swung, banging against his thigh, which it bruised black and blue.

He caught his sword by the hilt, and the muscular young giant, whose prowess at lemon-cutting and the Turk's head was well known at the regimental gymkhanas, found the real thing far more exciting as he sliced and pointed at the crowd of turbans with very satisfactory results.

So sudden had been the rush, and so irresistible the pace, that for a moment the party found itself clear of the tribesmen, and at the base of the tower Mr. Blennerhassett raised his sword arm in the air, and shouted, "Rally on me boys!" looking up at the tower top as the Hussars pulled in beside him, and wheeled their horses round.

"Hallo, that you, Armstrong?" he shouted.

"Yes. That you, Blennerhassett? Rum go, isn't it? Floreat Etona! But you're not half strong enough, you know. There are about four hundred of these beggars. I'm all right up here for a bit. You'll have to get through them, and bring some more of our fellows back."

"Think you're right, old chap," said Blennerhassett, as

the tribesmen, seeing how very small was the force that had come against them, took heart of grace and streamed forward with loud yells.

Tom's sword was smeared with a dark stain, as indeed were all the swords of the little party; but the sergeant's brow contracted as he realised they were hopelessly outnumbered.

"Form up, lads!" cried the lieutenant, as his excited horse reared. "Now for it! Charge!"

And once more, pressing in on their left until they formed a solid front, the Hussars went forward with a hoarse cheer, plunging smack into the turbaned horde like a gallant ship into a foaming sea.

The Cave of the Winds.

Every sabre was red from point to hilt, for their onslaught had been so sudden that each man had cut down at least one of the enemy, and probably bowled over another three, to say nothing of the lieutenant's revolver shots.

The sight of the galloping horses getting under way for their second charge produced a momentary panic among the tribesmen. They scattered to let them through, and in another moment the Hussars would have been off and away to return with reinforcements; but unfortunately Mr. Blennerhassett, seeing what he thought was a band of terror-stricken fugitives, among whom they could have worked great slaughter, shouted "Right incline!" and laid himself along his horse's neck, with his sword drawn well back.

The Hussars followed him with another cheer; but before they could reach the flying Mahmuds the whole posse of the enemy sprang out of sight, and a chorus of "Look out!" rang from every throat.

Mr. Blennerhassett had only time to wrench his mare on to her haunches at the edge of a deep nullah, or dry water-course, whose presence they had not suspected, when the Hussars jumbled up in a disorganised mass.

It would have been madness to have taken the horses down the steep slope, from the bottom of which the tribesmen, facing about, began to fire. A thought occurred to Sergeant Howard, who lost no time in imparting it to his leader.

"We shall have to ride back the way we came, sir," he cried, glancing over his shoulder at the village. "Don't you think we have time to take Mr. Armstrong up behind one of us, and get away with him?"

"By gad, we will try!" cried the lieutenant; and touching his mare with the spur, he reined up at the base of the tower again. "Come down, old man, and we will give you a lift!" he shouted, waving his sword to the Honourable Algy, who immediately disappeared, and sped down the stone stair, at the imminent risk of breaking his neck.

To unbolt the door and fling it open was the work of a moment, and Corporal Sloggett being the first man he saw, the Honourable Algy sprang up behind him with an agility that raised him considerably in the estimation of our old friend Bill.

"Old tight, sir!" cried the corporal, in very much the voice of a London bus conductor in a hurry to pull the check-string; and, lining up once more, the little party got under way.

Mr. Blennerhassett made for a gap between the stone huts; but when he was within a couple of lengths of it, the gap was suddenly filled from side to side with a rushing mass of the enemy—seemingly about a hundred men—and at the same moment Sloggett's mare, too heavily weighted, fell and rolled, pitching her riders head over heels into the sand.

"Get them up, you chaps!" shouted Tom, seeing what had happened. "We will have to keep these beggars back, sir, and ride away to the left yonder. The coast is clear there."

And ranging up alongside Mr. Blennerhassett, with half a dozen others, they presented a bold front to Ali

Khan and company, while Bill and the Honourable Algy clambered to their feet, and caught the mare as she was about to scamper off.

They were up again in a moment, this time the Honourable Algy in the saddle, and Bill clinging on behind; and with one accord the Hussars rammed their spurs in, and streamed along in front of the houses towards the rising ground.

A hail of bullets followed them, and with loud yells the swift-footed tribesmen started in hot pursuit, Tom and Mr. Blennerhassett forming the rear guard.

"Ride until you can find some place where we can dismount," shouted the lieutenant. "This is rather a hornets' nest, sergeant, and it will take us all our time to get clear of it, I fancy."

Tom said nothing, and the party galloped on, the ascent, gentle at first, becoming gradually steeper, for they were following a track that led up into the hills that overhung the valley.

"Look here, sir," he said, "there must be heaps of places in these hills that we could hold until all's blue if we had enough ammunition. We have put fear into these chaps already, for they are not coming on. But we must not waste a single cartridge. Will you stay here, and let me go and reconnoitre on foot? There's a path winding up there towards those deodars. If we can only get the horses up, we shall be as right as rain, and the colonel is certain to send after us."

"Right you are!" said Mr. Blennerhassett. "Don't fire, boys!"

And there ensued a pause, a dozen of the Hussars kneeling with their rifles behind the rocks, with their fingers on the triggers, while below them stood Ali Khan and his followers, suddenly hushed into unaccountable silence.

As a matter of fact, a thought had occurred to the wily Mahmud, and, raising his hand, he addressed his followers.

"Allah is great," he said; "the infidels cannot escape us. But the sound of firing will bring more of the dogs down upon us. We must be as cunning as the serpent. Let us divide into three bands. You, Ackbar, go with your men by the path that leads to the Cave of the Winds. You, Mirza Ali, steal to the well of the Lhama, where the great chenar tree grows. We will stay here. In a little while they will send a party to the village to look for these men. If we are silent they will find them not; and when the dogs have gone back, we will fall upon these fools."

The wisdom of Ali Khan was duly acclaimed, and, dividing into three bands, two of them descended the track towards the plain, and crept noiselessly away to their respective rendezvous.

And the thing that Ali Khan had prognosticated came to pass. Blennerhassett failing to return, and the sound of heavy firing coming from the valley, Colonel Greville came

in search of him with three squadrons, found the village littered with dead men, but no trace of the missing party anywhere, for the strong, hot wind that blows in those regions had obliterated the hoof-prints, and the valley was deserted.

The only consolation they had was that all the slain were Mahmuds. And after searching for an hour, the colonel rode back to make a report, very ill at ease at the unaccountable disappearance.

If he had only known it, only a quarter of a mile away, the Hussars lay in the hollow of the mountain side, watching Ali Khan, while the two other parties crept round to effect their destruction. And then a watchful tribesman, who had been down for the express purpose, came hot foot to the chief with the news of Colonel Greville's retirement. And Ali Khan smote himself upon the breast, and declared his profound conviction that there was only one God, and Mahomet was his prophet.

(To be continued.)

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