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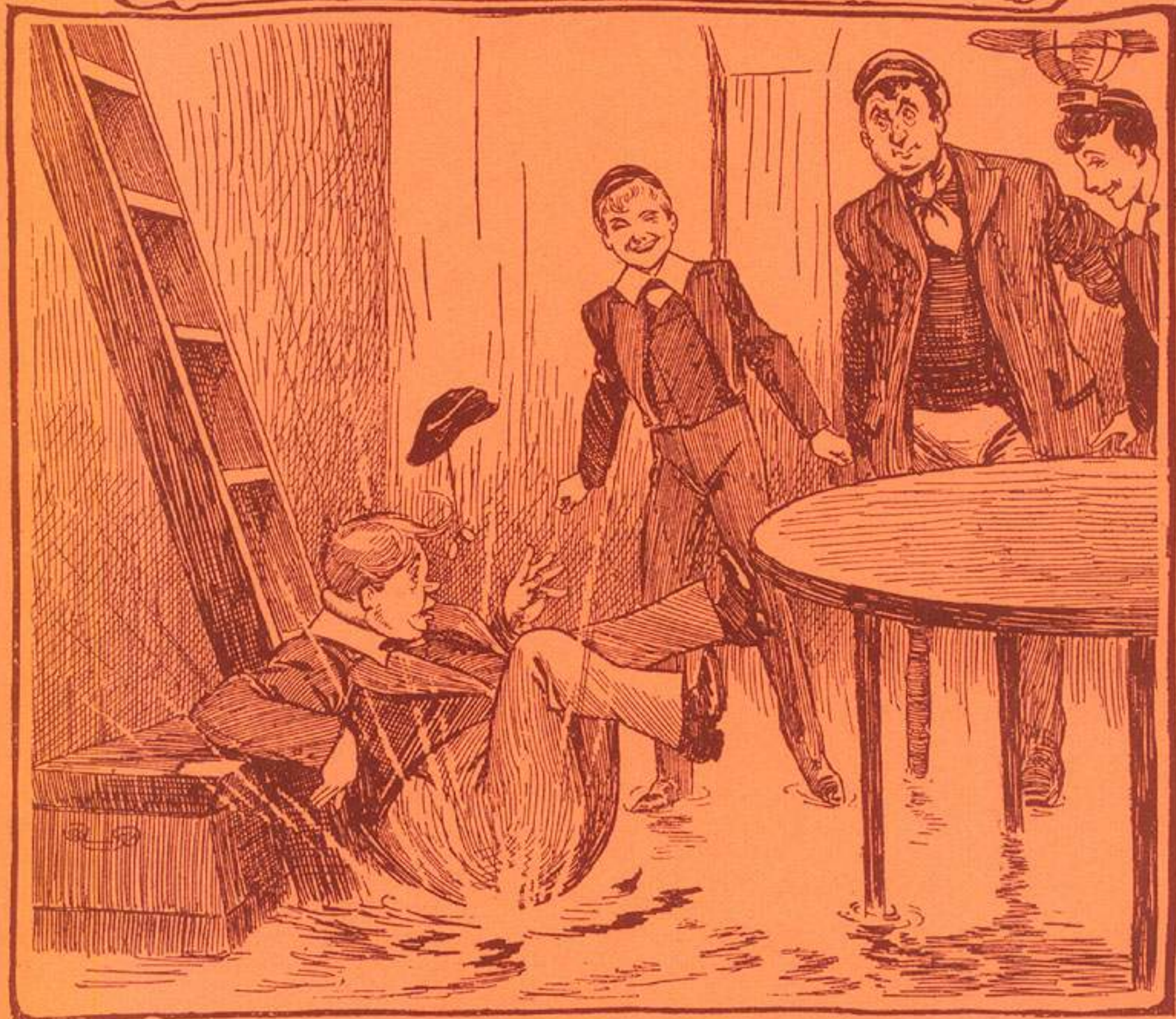
Vol. 2.

COMPLETE
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FOR ALL

GRAND SCHOOL TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.

THE GREYFRIARS SAILORS.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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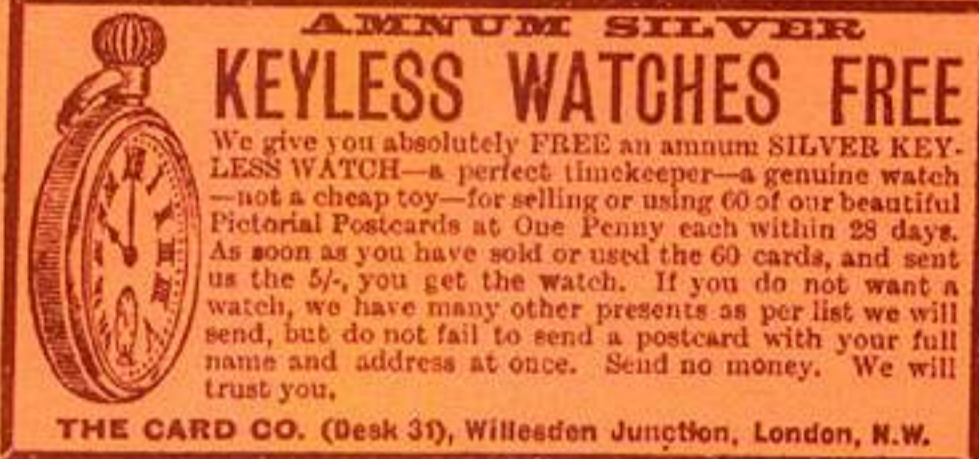
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THE
GREYFRIARS SAILORS.

A Grand School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wharton's Idea.

"WHAT'S on this afternoon?"

It was Bob Cherry who asked the question as the Remove Form came out of the class-room at Greyfriars.

It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at the old school, and a keen February day.

"Blessed if I know," said Frank Nugent, as he looked out into the Close and sniffed the fresh, keen air. "Lowerdale have scratched the footer match. We could get up a Form match at home."

"I say, you fellows—"

"The weatherfulness is excellent for the esteemed football," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, in the English he had not learned at Greyfriars. "The playfulness of the game is the good wheeze."

"I say, you fellows—"

"What do you think, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, was looking thoughtful. His chums usually looked to him for guidance, and Harry seldom failed to map out an afternoon in a way that would enable the Removites to extract the greatest amount of benefit from it.

"I was thinking—" began Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, do shut up, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Can't you see we're talking?"

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles indignantly.

"But I say, you fellows, I'm talking, too, and it's important."

"Then go and tell it to somebody else. We don't want to stand you a feed—"

"It isn't that."

"Well, we don't want to cash a postal-order in advance—"

"It isn't that either."

"And we don't want to listen to a ventriloquial entertainment—"

"But it isn't that. You see—"

"Oh, travel along, Billy, and give us a rest!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You were talking about what to do this afternoon, and I was going to make a valuable suggestion."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Go ahead, Owl," he said. "What is the valuable suggestion?"

"The rebuilding is finished to-day," said Bunter. "You surely cannot have forgotten that? You'll say next that you forgot that the Remove studies were burnt down at the beginning of the term."

"No," said Harry, laughing, "we haven't forgotten that. But suppose the rebuilding is finished, what about it?"

Bunter blinked at him in amazement.

"What about it? Why, of course, if the studies are finished, we ought to give a house-warming in No. 1, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that, Cherry. I was thinking of giving the house-warming myself, and asking all the fellows—especially you fellows, of course—but I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Same old postal order!"

"Not at all, Nugent. Quite a different postal order—"

"Same old disappointment, then," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, I don't see that a fellow's disappointment is anything to cackle at," said Billy Bunter, looking injured. "I must say I think you fellows are unsympathetic. But as I was saying, I was going to give a house-warming myself, but that's off now, owing to lack of funds. Of course, if you fellows cared to lend me the money—"

"We don't."

"Well, then, if you care to give the house-warming yourselves, I shall be glad to do anything I can," said the fat junior. "I like to be obliging. I'll do all the shopping for you, and cook the grub—"

"And eat most of it."

"Oh, really, Cherry, if I do all the cooking I suppose I'm entitled to a snack or two. You oughtn't to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, you know."

"That's no reason why we shouldn't muzzle the donkey that cooketh the eggs and bacon. But as a matter of fact, house-warmings are off," said Bob Cherry. "We're not going to stick indoors on a bright afternoon to see you feed."

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"So you can buzz off. We'll think of the house-warming later. Besides, we sha'n't be allowed to go into the studies the moment the workmen have left. They'll be damp. Now, Harry, what's the programme?"

"I was thinking—"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Ring off!" shouted Bob Cherry. "You've done your little bit. Ring off!"

"I was thinking," went on Wharton, "that a run down to the sea would be a good idea. You remember that schooner that was wrecked on the Shoulder the other day—"

"The rememberfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh.

"Well, there's to be an auction at Pegg," said Wharton. "The wreck isn't going to be removed, but is to be sold for what it will fetch on the spot."

"Yes; I saw that in the local paper," remarked Bob Cherry. "They say that the schooner can be refloated, and patched up, but is hardly worth the trouble it would cost to make her seaworthy again."

"That's it; and she's to be sold for what anybody will give, for the value of her timber, I suppose. Some of the fishermen down at Pegg have thought of buying her. If she went cheap, she could be used for pleasure excursions on the bay, you know, and a lot of money could be picked up that way in fine weather."

"Good! That would be all right for us on half-holidays."

"I was thinking that it would be great fun to go to the auction," said Harry. "Of course, we shouldn't bid—"

"Ha; ha! No, I'm afraid our pocket-money wouldn't run to the purchase of schooners, even at auction prices," grinned Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, rather not. But I should like to see the auction all the same, and after it's over we can have a boat out on the bay. That's a jolly good way of spending an afternoon, as the footer match is off."

"Good!"

"We might bid a bit, too, to keep up the spirit of the thing," suggested Nugent. "Only we should have to stop before it came to the finish."

"Rather a risky business," said Harry, shaking his head. "The bidding might stop just where we were, you know. But we'll go anyway, and we may as well start directly after dinner. It still gets dark early, you know."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo! Are you still there, Bunter?"

"Yes, I am, Cherry, as you know very well. If you fellows are going down to Pegg this afternoon, I don't mind coming with you. There's a fisherman's place there where you can get afternoon tea and eggs on toast, and I know the stuff is really good. I've tried it."

"Of course you have," said Bob Cherry. "You would! I— Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

"Lescue! Lescue!"

The curious pronunciation of the word showed that it was uttered by Wun Lung, the Chinese junior in the Greyfriars Remove.

The Famous Four looked round quickly.

Wun Lung was flying down the passage at top speed, his

loose Chinese garments blowing out, and his pigtail streaming behind him.

A burly junior was pursuing him, with a red, angry face. It was Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove.

"Stop, you heathen beast!" he roared.

"Lescue! Lescue!"

Wun Lung dashed among the chums of the Remove, and squirmed behind Harry Wharton. Wharton faced Bulstrode, and the bully of the Remove came to a breathless halt.

"Lemme get at him!" he roared.

"What's the trouble?"

"Mind your own business!"

Wharton's eyes glistened.

"Stand back, Bulstrode!"

"Let me get at that Chinese beast!" roared Bulstrode. "He—he's dropped my camera in a pail of water—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll wring his heathen neck—"

"Well, that was rough on your camera," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But I suppose you were fagging Wun Lung, as usual."

"I'll fag him if I like."

"No, you won't," said Wharton quietly. "You won't fag anybody, Bulstrode, while I'm captain of the Form. You can leave that till you get into the Sixth."

"You won't dictate to me!" shouted Bulstrode.

"I shall in this matter."

"Let me get at that Chinese beast!"

"Rate!"

"I tell you—"

"Bulstrode! Come to my study at once!"

It was a stern, deep voice—the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Bulstrode calmed down instantly, and swung round.

"I—I—I— Yes, sir!"

Then he glared in astonishment.

The passage was empty, and there was no Mr. Quelch to be seen.

"My—my word!" murmured Bulstrode. "He must have whisked off suddenly. I—I suppose I'd better go."

And with a savage look at Wharton, the bully of the Remove slowly took his way towards Mr. Quelch's study. The Famous Four looked at one another in amazement. They had not seen Mr. Quelch, but they had heard the voice.

"Blessed if I understand this," muttered Bob Cherry.

"I— Hallo, hallo, hallo!" He grasped Billy Bunter by the shoulder and shook him. The fat junior was grinning from ear to ear. "Is this some more of your ventriloquism, you young bounder?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I wish you wouldn't shake me! You disturb my nerves, and you might make my glasses fall off. If they should get broken you would have to pay for them, so I warn you."

"Was that a trick of yours, you young reprobate?"

"Yes, it was. Didn't I tell you I was a ripping ventriloquist," grinned Bunter. "I throw my voice on the famous Balmicrumpett principles—"

"I expect Bulstrode will throw you on the famous Hackenschmidt principles if he finds you out," said Bob Cherry.

"But he's gone to Mr. Quelch's study," exclaimed Wharton. "That was hardly fair on him, Bunter."

"Oh, he's a rotten bully!" said Bunter. "The more lickings he gets, the better, you know. I say, Wun Lung, I've got you out of a whacking."

"No savvy," said the Chinese junior.

"Bulstrode was going to give you a licking."

"No savvy."

"They've got some beautiful jam-puffs at the tuckshop."

"No savvy."

"Nothing like a dozen jam-puffs to give you an appetite for your dinner," said Billy Bunter persuasively.

The Chinese shook his head.

"No savvy."

Bunter sniffed in disgust. Wun Lung never "savvied" except when he chose to do so. When he did not choose to understand, his ignorance of the plainest English was amazing.

Harry Wharton had hurried after Bulstrode, with the idea of stopping him from paying that visit to the Form-master's study; but he was too late. Bulstrode had just tapped and entered as Harry came in sight of the door.

ANSWERS

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Is Mystified.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, looked round as Bulstrode came in. The sullen face of the bully of the Remove surprised him, and he hadn't the faintest idea what Bulstrode had paid him that visit for.

"Yes, Bulstrode," he said.

"I've come, sir."

"Yes, I can see you have come," said Mr. Quelch tartly, "and now the question is, what have you come for? Don't waste my time."

Bulstrode stared at him.

"I—I—I've come, sir," he repeated. "I—I wasn't going to hurt the little rotter—"

"What are you talking about?"

"Wun Lung, sir. He dropped my camera into a pail of water, and I was going to give him a clout, that was all."

"What has all this to do with me?"

"I—I thought you misunderstood, sir, when you came up, as you told me to come to your study."

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon Bulstrode.

"I told you to come to my study?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir."

"When did I tell you?"

"A couple of minutes ago, sir."

"Are you venturing to joke with your Form-master, Bulstrode?" said Mr. Quelch, in a terrifying voice. "I came straight to my study from the class-room, and have not seen you since I dismissed the Remove."

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Bulstrode!"

"You—you told me to follow you to your study," said Bulstrode, in a dazed voice. "It—it was a couple of minutes ago, at the door."

The Form-master looked at him attentively.

"Are you ill, Bulstrode?"

"Ill! No, sir!"

"Have you ever been subject to delusions?"

"Delusions! Certainly not, sir!"

"You do not look as if this were what you call a jape," said Mr. Quelch. "I can only conclude that it is a delusion. You may go, Bulstrode."

"But—but—"

"Doubtless you were engaged in an act of bullying, and your conscience made you imagine that you heard my voice," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I know you, Bulstrode. You may go."

And Bulstrode went.

He closed the door, and walked down the passage, feeling dazed. Billy Bunter was near the door, and he was still grinning. Bulstrode was irritated by the grin, though he did not guess the cause, and he reached out in passing, and gave the fat junior a cuff that sent him rolling.

"Ow!" roared Billy Bunter.

He sat down on the mat, clasping his hand to his head, and groping for his spectacles.

"You beastly bully!" exclaimed Mark Linley, who was passing at the moment. "What did you do that for?"

Bulstrode glared at him.

"I'll give you the same if I have any of your talk!" he growled.

Linley's eyes flashed, and he laid down the book he was carrying.

"Come on, then," he said, "give it me!"

But Bulstrode did not. He walked on, and went out into the Close. Billy Bunter rubbed his head and got on his feet. He could not avenge himself with his fists, but his ventriloquism was a ready weapon.

Skinner was standing on the steps, grinning after Bulstrode. He had expected him to "go for" Linley, but the lad from Lancashire had already proved himself too tough for the Remove bully, and Bulstrode had wisely decided to let him alone. As Bulstrode walked into the quadrangle, a voice squeaked after him, in the peculiar squeaky tones that were so well known as belonging to Skinner.

"Funk!"

Bulstrode started, and turned round savagely.

He didn't care to tackle the ready fists of the Lancashire lad unless he were forced to, but he was always ready to encounter a woody fellow like Skinner. Skinner was the joker of the Remove, but no fighting man.

"Funk, eh?" said Bulstrode, between his teeth. "I'll show you whether I'm a funk, you cad!"

And he rushed up the steps at Skinner.

Skinner saw him coming, with clenched fists and blazing eyes, but as he had not uttered a word, he naturally supposed that Bulstrode was returning to tackle Mark Linley, after all.

He gave the Remove bully a grin, and the next moment his grin vanished, and he uttered a wild yell as Bulstrode's fist smote him on the chin.

"Oh-oooooh!"

Skinner sat down violently on the steps.

"Get up!" roared Bulstrode.

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Skinner got up, and received another drive that sent him staggering down the steps. He looked dazedly over his shoulder, and saw the enraged bully coming for him again, and darted off across the Close.

Bulstrode, panting with fury, rushed in pursuit.

The two, pursued and pursuer, vanished from sight across the Close, and Bunter grinned with satisfaction as he looked after them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On Board the Schooner.

AFTER dinner the chums of the Remove put on their coats and caps, and left the school. The auction was to begin at four, and it was a good walk down to the bay, and the juniors wished to have a look round before they went in to the sale. They had not seen the schooner since the wild night when she was wrecked on the rocks of the Shoulder.

Of that wild night, and Harry Wharton's heroism, the Removites had not ceased to talk. Wharton had gone out with a rope at the imminent risk of his life, and saved one man from the wreck—a wooden-legged seaman, who was still hanging about the fishing village of Pegg.

Billy Bunter joined the chums as they crossed to the gates. Bob Cherry looked at him with marked inquiry.

"I suppose I'd better come and show you fellows where that place is," Bunter remarked.

"The place where the schooner was wrecked, do you mean?"

"No, of course not—the place where you can get a decent meal."

"We're going to the auction."

"But you'll be hungry afterwards."

Bob Cherry grunted.

They passed the gates, and took the road down to the sea. It was a fine, breezy day, very different from the wild night when the chums had gone down to the wreck. They rounded the hill, and came in sight of the blue water stretching away to the distant continent, dotted here and there with white sails or the blurring smoke of a steamer.

The road sloped down to the village of Pegg.

Beyond the village was the sand and the pebble ridge, and on the southern side of the sweeping bay rose the Shoulder.

The huge cliff, square and abrupt, jutted out against the blue sky, its steep sides affording a home for thousands of seagulls.

Many adventurous lads of Greyfriars had attempted to scale the cliff, but it was not known that any had ever succeeded in reaching the summit from the seaward side. There was a story of a bold climber who had fallen from the face of the cliff upon the terrible rocks at the bottom, and lost his life, but that was before the time of Wharton and his chums at Greyfriars.

The little village was unusually busy.

As a rule, Pegg was a quiet place, as quiet as Friardale, or more so. The fishermen were a stolid race, and they were not more than forty or fifty in number. There was one inn, the Anchor, a little tumble-down, old-fashioned place, that had one large room—used for the purpose of local meetings. It was in this room that the auction was to be held.

It was the auction that had brought an influx of strangers into the fishing village.

There was a notice up outside the Anchor, announcing the time and place of the sale, and a spruce-looking man standing at the door of the inn was evidently the auctioneer.

"Heaps of time yet," said Harry Wharton, looking at his watch. "The sale doesn't start for an hour yet."

"May as well be early, though, and get good places," said Bob Cherry. "The room at the Anchor isn't too big."

"I say, you fellows, there's good time to go and get some lunch—"

"Why, you young cormorant, you've only just had your dinner!"

"We've had a long walk since then; besides, I was really only suggesting it for the sake of you chaps."

"Don't mind us, Billy; we're all right."

"Come to think of it, though, I could do with a snack myself."

"Go and get one, then."

"I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Then I'm afraid you'll be disappointed about a snack, too," grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on, kids, and let's have a look at the giddy wreck."

The juniors went down to the shore, Bunter following them, looking very discontented. On that wild night on

NEXT TUESDAY: "BILLY BUNTER'S HOUSE-WARMING."

A Grand School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

the eastern coast, the schooner had been driven ashore on the rocks at the base of the Shoulder, and had jammed there fast.

But since then men had been at work upon her.

The owners had sent men down to get her off, with the idea of floating her into the Humber; but they had not found it possible.

The hulk was not worth the necessary trouble and expense, and they had decided to dispose of her on the spot for what she would fetch.

But some preliminary repairs had been carried out. The schooner had been patched up sufficiently to enable her to float in the calm waters of the bay, though it was a different matter if she had ventured out into the ocean.

She was lying now at anchor, with a list to port, and looking very dismal, with only the stumps of her masts showing above the deck.

"Rather an old creak, isn't she?" Bob Cherry remarked, looking at the schooner with a critical eye.

"Yes, she looks it; but she'd be all right for the bay," Frank Nugent said. "If she belonged to us, it would be a ripping chance to carry out Whar'on's new idea of a sailor corps for Greyfriars. Just the thing for a training-ship."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Just the thing," he said. "But rocky as she is, she'll fetch over a hundred pounds, I expect, at the lowest figure."

"Well, if we make a whip round towards it, you can put me down for a tanner."

"And my honourable self for the esteemed threepence."

"There's a lot of people looking over the craft," said Nugent. "We might as well go aboard. As we're going to the auction, we want to see what the thing's like."

"Arternoon, gentlemen!"

It was a deep-sea voice, and the chums turned to see the wooden-legged sailorman who had been rescued from the wreck on the night of the storm.

Captain Stump—as he called himself—touched his forelock, and grinned at the boys with a grin that wrinkled up his mahogany face.

"Glad to see you, young gentlemen," he said. "You see, I'm still at anchor in this 'ere port."

"I rather thought you had just come out of the Anchor," said Bob Cherry.

The sailorman chuckled.

"It's cold weather," he said. "I get a cold in my timbers if I don't take a little rum aboard this weather. Bust my topsails! If you young gentlemen would like a look over the schooner, I'm the swab that can show you round."

"Right-ho, captain!"

"You lay alongside me," said the sailorman, "I'll take you aboard." And he stumped towards the shore.

A fisherman's boat was taking the sightseers off to the schooner, and the chums of the Remove stepped into it with their companion.

Old Reuben, the fisherman, was doing a good trade that afternoon as a ferryman. He charged them twopence apiece, and Harry Wharton paid for Captain Stump.

They stepped on board the schooner.

Close at hand, they could see more clearly the damage done by the storm. There was hardly a fitting on board that had not been smashed. The hull of the ship remained, and that was battered and shattered, and patched up.

Several men were looking over the schooner, or talking on the deck. There were a group of fishermen at the stern, near the broken binnacle, talking in loud voices. A smart-looking young man, in dapper attire, was in their midst, talking to them all at once, and doing more talking than all the fishermen put together.

"That's young Smart, the solicitor's clerk from Friar-dale," said Bob Cherry, with a nod towards the group. "I wonder what he's doing here. He can't want to buy a schooner."

Captain Stump chuckled.

"He's employed by old Reuben and his friends to bid for the hulk," he said. "There's more'n a dozen of them clubbed together to buy it, and invest their savings in it. He's attending to the legal part of it for them. You got that?"

"I see."

"There's a 'Ebrew 'ere going to bid for it, too," said Captain Stump. "'Ere he is."

"A what?"

"A 'Ebrew."

Harry glanced towards the person the captain indicated with a jerk of his wooden leg. He was a short, stout, very fleshy gentleman, with a red, fat face and gold-rimmed glasses, and a fat, strong-smelling cigar. He had an aquiline nose, which hinted that he was of the Hebrew persuasion, but his fat face was very good-natured.

"Oh," said Harry, laughing, "I didn't quite catch on! So he is going to bid?"

"Ay, ay, my hearty! That's Mr. Schuster. They says he's got a heap of money."

"Any more bidders?"

"Yes, there's about six or seven more. I suppose you young gentlemen ain't going to bid?"

"No," laughed Harry. "The reserve price would be beyond our means, I am afraid."

"There ain't no reserve," said Captain Stump confidentially, "and I could put you young gentlemen up to a tip." He winked mysteriously. "Suppose you was to bid, and get the craft. She's a good craft."

"Oh, ripping!" said Bob Cherry

"Well, she's been a good craft. You should have seen her before a fair wind. She rolled a bit, and pitched a bit, and was bad tempered sometimes, but she was a good craft. Suppose you," said Captain Stump, looking at Harry Wharton—"your people is rich—suppose you got them to buy her."

"Couldn't be done."

"You could keep her for pleasure trips," said Captain Stump. "You could make me skipper of the craft."

"That's a good reason for buying her," said Nugent gravely.

"Ay, ay, my hearty! I've heerd that some of you young gentlemen up at the school have taken up the idea of bein' sailors. Where'd you find a better chance? You buy the craft, my hearties. That's an old sailorman's advice."

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "if she goes under half-a-crown, I'll snap her up."

Captain Stump looked at him, as if not quite understanding, but Bob's face was so grave that he could not be suspected of joking.

The captain shook his head.

"She won't go under a hundred pound," he said.

"And that's a mere nothing," said Bob.

"Buy her, young gentleman," said Captain Stump persuasively to Harry. "I've heerd all about your rich uncle. Buy her. He'll come down all right."

Harry laughed. He was not inclined to ask his uncle to find a hundred pounds, in order to buy a wrecked hulk to please the worthy Captain Stump.

The juniors went below. There was water washing about at the foot of the companion ladder, and it was pretty clear that all the leaks of the schooner had not been stopped. The companion steps were wet and slippery, and the chums of the Remove went down very slowly and cautiously.

Billy Bunter blinked down at them from the deck.

"I say, you fellows, get a move on!" he said, in a tone of remonstrance. "Don't keep me waiting all day."

"Look out, Billy!"

"Oh, I can come down all right."

"Look out!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I know I'm short-sighted, but I don't want to go crawling down the stairs like that, you know. I shall come down a jolly sight quicker than you fellows."

And he did. He stepped into the companion-way confidently enough, and his foot slipped on the top step, and he sat down. But he did not remain sitting still for more than a second.

The steps were slippery, and the impetus of his fall sent him sliding down, and in a sitting posture he went from top to bottom, with a series of bumps that shook every ounce of breath out of his body.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "We could have come down more quickly if we had done it like that."

"Ow!"

Bunter landed with a final hump in a puddle of water, and sent up a splashing of spray round him.

"Ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter staggered up.

"I think—ow!"

His foot slipped in the water, and he sat down again. The chums of the Remove howled with laughter. Bunter had indeed shown them how to come down quickly, but he did not seem to be enjoying the instruction as much as they did.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Auction.

"I—I say, you fellows, you might give a chap a hand up, instead of standing there cackling like a lot of blessed geese!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see anything to cackle at. Gimme a hand."

Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a hand.

Billy Bunter was staggering up, when Bob, apparently unable to support his weight, let him flop down again, and

again the fat junior bumped on the floor, with a gasp like escaping steam.

"Ow!"
"Let's all lend a hand," said Nugent seriously. "Billy isn't a featherweight, you know. Now, then, all together—haul away!"

Bob Cherry and Nugent took a hand each, and Hurree Singh, not to be left out, seized the junior by the collar.

They dragged at him, and he was jerked to his feet, breathless and very red in the face, and dripping with water.

"Well, of all the beasts!" he gasped.
Bob Cherry looked at him in surprise.

"Is that what you call gratitude, Bunter?"
"You—you—you rotters! You did it all on purpose."

"We helped you up on purpose, of course. You asked for it."

"I—I—I—I'm all wet!"
"You can't sit in water without getting wet. It's unreasonable to expect it."

And the nabob nodded gravely.

"The stiffness in the esteemed water is naturally com-
comitated by the honourable wetfulness," he remarked.

"You cannot have the one without the other. It is an im-
moral possibility."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I suppose you mean
moral impossibility."

"I think not, my worthy chum. I—"

"Well, I know I'm wet, and I'm jolly well going ashore.
You can muck about on this filthy old wreck without me."

grumbled Billy Bunter.

And he stamped away in an extremely bad temper. But
the chums of the Remove only laughed. Captain Stump

guided them through the interior of the schooner. There
was a tiny cuddy, and the cabins were, as Bob Cherry ex-
pressed it, merely cigar-boxes. The fore-castle was small

and stuffy, and the chums could hardly believe that ten
men had found accommodation there when the schooner was
at sea.

Everything had been terribly knocked about by the wreck-
ing of the schooner, and it was pretty clear that the vessel
was worth money as old timber, but very little more than
that.

The time for the sale drawing near, the visitors to the
schooner left off their inspection, and were taken ashore by
old Reuben, the boatman.

A goodly crowd drew towards the Anchor for the auction.

It was a very novel sensation in the little fishing village,
and all Pegg had resolved to be present—all that was not
at sea with the boats.

The chums of Greyfriars were entering the Anchor, still
with Captain Stump in tow, when Billy Bunter met them
again. The fat junior had managed to dry his clothes before
a fire at the inn.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're going to have a
bit of a snack before the sale," he remarked. "It may last
a long time, and you'll be hungry."

"No time to waste," said Wharton crisply. "Come on!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

But the Removites walked on. Billy Bunter followed
them, looking very discontented, and his little round eyes
were gleaming behind his spectacles now. Since Billy Bunter
had become a ventriloquist, he had a way of revenging
fancied injuries by means of that art in a way that often
caused trouble.

The room gradually filled, the fisher-folk taking up all
available space at the back, though not intending to bid.

The bidders were well at the front, the chums of the Remove
—with the cool nerve which was characteristic of Greyfriars
juniors—having quite as good places as Mr. Schuster or
Mr. Smart.

Behind Mr. Smart stood the group of fishermen who had
clubbed their little savings for the purpose of buying a vessel
cheap. If they succeeded, they intended to repair her by
their own labour, and then the bargain would become a very
paying one. Mr. Smart was looking very important. He
whispered and nodded to his clients in the most confident
way.

Mr. Schuster was quieter, and smiling genially. He had
his fur-lined coat open, and also his frock-coat under it, to
allow his thumbs to repose in the armholes of his waistcoat.

The auctioneer gave him a genial nod, which Mr. Schuster
returned.

The auctioneer cleared his throat, and gave a little tap to
centre attention upon himself.

"Attention!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We're just going
to begin."

The auctioneer began.

With the volubility of his profession, he informed the
gentlemen present that he was there to dispose of a schooner
—a thoroughly good and seaworthy vessel—which had sus-
tained some slight injuries by going ashore on the rocks, but
—as they would have seen for themselves—really nothing to
speak of.

The Removites, who had seen the dismantled condition of
the vessel, looked at one another in amazement.

Mr. Jones, the auctioneer, was evidently a gentleman with
the gift of imagination.

"My hat!" murmured Nugent. "He'll be telling us next
that the schooner has been slightly improved, if anything,
by the bump on the rocks."

Mr. Jones did not go so far as that. But he expatiated
upon the merits of the schooner, passed lightly over the
damage she had received, and at the end of his description,
anybody who had not visited the wreck might have imagined
that Mr. Jones was about to sell a handsome, well-found
vessel, fit for the Atlantic trade or a trip to the North Pole.

But the gentlemen who had inspected the schooner only
smiled. They knew the little ways of the auctioneer.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Jones, in persuasive,
honeyed tones, "what am I bid for this vessel—this stout,
seaworthy—"

"Tenpence!"

It was a voice from the back of the crowd, and it raised
a laugh.

The auctioneer laughed, too. The feeblest joke is sufficient
to put an auction crowd into a good humour, and a good
humour among the bidders means higher bids.

So Mr. Jones laughed heartily.

"Our friend is pleased to be facetious," he remarked.

"Now, gentlemen, I appeal to you, this excellent vessel—
slightly damaged by storm—"

"Dirty pound!" said Mr. Schuster.

Mr. Jones smiled sweetly.

"Ah! you are joking, too," he said. "Thirty pounds for
this excellent, seaworthy, splendidly-built, vessel—"

"Non-skidding, pneumatic tyres, complete," murmured
Bob Cherry.

Mr. Jones glanced sharply at the junior.

"Thirty-five!" said Mr. Smart.

"Forty!"

"Forty-five!"

"Feefty!"

When Mr. Schuster said "feefty" there was a pause. But
only for a few moments. Two other bidders chipped in, and
the bidding went on briskly between the four of them till
ninety pounds was reached.

Then a bronzed old fisherman pulled at Mr. Smart's sleeve.

"Oh, very well," said Mr. Smart, looking disappointed.

He was just entering into the spirit of the thing, and he
would have spent anybody's money to the last shilling rather
than give in. But ninety pounds was the limit in this case.

Mr. Smart stepped back, and Harry Wharton, who was near
him, was pushed a little forward in his place.

"Ninety I am bid," said Mr. Jones. "I need not say,
gentlemen, that it is ridiculous—ninety pounds for a
splendidly equipped, well found, seaworthy, seagoing
craft—"

"Ninety-five!"

"A hundred!" said Mr. Schuster.

"A hundred I am bid."

But the rival bidders were silent now.

Mr. Jones looked round.

A hundred pounds was a low figure, but probably a fair
enough price for the schooner in the state she was in. But
the auctioneer naturally wished to extract the best possible
sum from the purchaser.

"A hundred I am bid! A hundred! Did one of you
gentlemen say a hundred and ten?"

The gentlemen all grinned and disclaimed having said a
hundred and ten.

"Really, gentlemen—a hundred pounds for this splendid,
well-equipped, seaworthy craft! Really, gentlemen, there
is a member of the crew here present who can vouch for her
qualities."

"Aye, aye!" said Captain Stump. "She was a good
vessel, she was. She were a beauty. You got that?"

"You hear, gentlemen! The affection of this gallant
British seaman for his old craft is very touching. I am
bid a hundred pounds—"

"Better bid, young gentlemen," said Captain Stump to
Harry, in a stage whisper that was heard over the whole
room. "It's dirt cheap."

Harry Wharton laughed.

If he had had anything like the money, he would have
bid for the schooner, for he was thinking how useful the
old craft would be for carrying out his idea of forming an
amateur sailor corps for Greyfriars.

The auctioneer glanced at him, and with the eyes of an
experienced man of the world he read the thoughts in the
boy's mind.

"If the young gentleman wishes to bid," he remarked,
"there is no objection in the world. I suppose he is prepared
to give some—or—some evidence of his—or—ability to meet
the amount of the purchase money?"

"Aye, aye!" said Captain Stump. "This 'ere gentleman

is the nephew of Colonel Wharton, of Wharton Lodge. You got that?"

The auctioneer nodded.

"That is quite sufficient. If you wish to bid, sir——"

"I think I offer you vun hoondred pound," said Mr. Schuster, meaningly. "I tink tat you knock him down to me."

"Sorry, sir—ahem—a hundred pound I am bid," said the auctioneer slowly, to give Harry a chance. "A hundred pounds—going—going——"

"A hundred and ten!"

It was Harry Wharton's voice to the life, though Harry had never opened his lips.

Billy Bunter, who was just behind him, gave him a slight push at the same moment, so that Harry appeared to be nodding as he spoke.

The auctioneer smiled with satisfaction.

"A hundred and ten I am bid. Now, gentlemen——"

Mr. Schuster removed his thumbs from his waistcoat.

"I tink tat I am done," he remarked. "I not goes up to tat."

"Come, Mr. Schuster——"

"I tink tat I am done."

And the stout gentleman buttoned his coat.

The auctioneer gave a last glance round.

"Gentlemen! This magnificent, this splendidly-equipped vessel, going to this young gentleman for the absurd sum of a hundred and ten pounds! Going——"

He paused

But the bidders were silent.

"Who made that last bid?" Harry Wharton whispered to Bob Cherry, who was beside him. He had heard the bid, but had no idea that it was supposed to come from himself.

Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh were staring at him in blank amazement. They fully believed Harry had made the bid, and they could not understand it; and his question amazed them still more.

"Off your rocker?" asked Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean?"

"Going—going——"

The bidders were going, too. There was evidently nothing to be done but to knock down the schooner to Harry Wharton.

Knock!

"Gone! The schooner is yours, young gentleman."

Harry stared at the auctioneer.

For the moment he could not believe that it was he who was addressed; but Mr. Jones was looking at him with a genial smile.

"Yours," repeated Mr. Jones, stepping down from his rostrum, "and I congratulate you. A fine, handsome, well-equipped, seaworthy vessel, that has braved the battle and the breeze for a long time, as this gallant British seaman can testify——"

"But——"

"Fit for anything—pleasure-yacht or trading-vessel," said Mr. Jones. "Why, she's worth more than that for her timber and fittings. A hundred and ten pounds! Why, my dear sir, it's laughable!"

And Mr. Jones laughed.

"But——"

"I congratulate you. And now——"

"But," cried Harry desperately, "I don't know what you're talking about. I haven't bid for the schooner, and I haven't bought her."

"Eh—what—what?" gasped Mr. Jones. And he stared blankly at the Greymfriars junior.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Awkward Situation.

HARRY WHARTON was very red in the face, and looking utterly amazed. He could not imagine why Mr. Jones had knocked the schooner down to him; but he certainly did not intend to accept the result of the sale.

The room was rapidly clearing now, the excitement being over, and there were very few left besides the chums of Greymfriars and the auctioneer.

Harry Wharton's companions were still more astonished than he was. They had distinctly heard Harry give the bid, as they imagined, and they had not understood it—and still less did they understand his now denying having done so.

The only explanation was that he had spoken unconsciously, unaware that the words had passed his lips in the excitement of the sale.

Billy Bunter, who could have furnished another explanation, had slipped from the room with the crowd. The Famous Four were left alone with Mr. Jones.

The auctioneer looked amazed, and angry, too.

"I don't understand you, Master Wharton," he said. "You offered me a hundred and ten pounds for the schooner!"

"I certainly did not!"

"If you cannot meet the sum, you had no right to bid. I must say that you have acted in a way——"

"Hold on a minute," said Bob Cherry. "No need to waste words about it, or to get into a temper. There's a mistake."

"There's no mistake as far as I am concerned," said Mr. Jones, sharply. "I knocked down the schooner to the highest bidder, and that was this young gentleman. If I am left to make the sale over again to-morrow, I shall consider——"

"Hold on a bit! What do you say about it, Harry?"

Wharton looked helplessly amazed.

"Only that I didn't bid," he said. "Where on earth am I to get a hundred and ten pounds from? I haven't the odd ten, and I am not likely to have it."

"I appeal to you young gentleman," exclaimed Mr. Jones, "and to you, Mr. Stump! Did not Master Wharton bid?"

"Aye, aye, my hearty!" said Captain Stump, scratching his head in a puzzled way. "I thought I heard him bid a hundred and ten!"

"I did not!" cried Harry.

"Bust my top-sails! If the young gentleman says he didn't, he didn't, that's all!" said Captain Stump. "He didn't bid, sir!"

"You others heard him——"

"Did you?" said Harry, looking round. "Speak out!"

"Well, I must say I did!" admitted Bob Cherry. "You bid a hundred and ten pounds plainly enough, Harry!"

Wharton almost staggered.

"But—but I didn't! What do you say, Nugent?"

"I heard you."

"The hearfulness was terrific."

Harry Wharton looked dazed.

"Bunter, what do you say? Where is Bunter?"

"He's gone!"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Jones, "I know you are a gentleman, and I dare say you made the bid hastily without thinking. But——"

"I tell you I did not make it! If I spoke, as you all seem to think, it was without being aware of it, and I can't understand that."

"Well, sir, you see my position. The auction is over, and the schooner has been knocked down to you, and your friends all bear witness that it was fair and square and above-board. You see my position. I have sold the schooner. Am I to be made a fool of? Am I to hold the sale over again to-morrow, on account of a schoolboy's joke?"

"But I tell you——"

"I relied upon your appearance in allowing a boy to bid. You can leave me in the lurch if you like, as you are under age; but if you do——"

"No recriminations yet, please," said Nugent. "This matter can't be settled by hard words, and Wharton will do what is fair, anyway."

Wharton looked helplessly at his chums. For once the cool, clear-headed captain of the *Remove* was taken off his balance.

The whole affair was so utterly mystifying that he could not grasp it. If he had indeed bidden unconsciously for the schooner, it showed that his faculties were in a state that might well alarm him.

"But—but I can't understand it!" he exclaimed. "I heard somebody make the bid——"

"You made it, and nodded to me at the same moment," said Mr. Jones.

"I—I—I nodded to you?" said Wharton, in amazement. "I certainly did nothing of the kind. I remember now that at the moment the bid was made Bunter pushed against me, and perhaps you thought I nodded. But——"

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Y s, and——"

"Bunter—Bunter! Don't you catch on? It's Bunter!"

"What's Bunter?"

"Bunter who made the bid!" yelled Bob Cherry. "The young villain! This is some more of his giddy ventriloquism!"

Harry Wharton started.

The moment the explanation was made it flashed through his mind that it was correct.

"Bunter! The—the young rascal!"

"Where is he?"

"Gone, of course!"

"The gonefulness is terrific."

The auctioneer looked at the boys. A rather unpleasant expression was intensifying upon his face.

"I don't know anything about this," he said. "What I think is—"

"You understand now," said Wharton quietly. "It was a trick by a ventriloquist. But, of course, that leaves you in the same position. I don't quite see what's to be done."

"You young gentlemen belong to Greyfriars, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Then I know what I shall do. I shall go up to Greyfriars the first thing in the morning, and see what your head-master has to say about it."

"That will be a flogging for Bunter," said Bob Cherry, "and serve him jolly well right!"

Wharton was gloomily silent.

"You can see the position I am placed in," said Mr. Jones angrily. "People have come here to bid, and they won't stay till to-morrow. The whole trouble of the sale will have to be gone through again—to say nothing of the trouble that falls on me for having knocked down the schooner to a boy. I suppose I was to blame, but I relied on your appearance. I did not think you would be the kind of person to dodge out of an obligation—"

Wharton flushed crimson.

"That's enough!" he said sharply. "I cannot see that I am under an obligation in the matter. I have been the victim of a foolish trick, as well as you. But I can see that you are in an unpleasant position, and it's due to a Greyfriars chap—a fellow I brought here myself. That's the only claim you have upon me. And I'll do my best for you."

"You mean, you will stand by the bid you made—or that was made, at any rate?"

"I say I will do my best," said Wharton quietly. "I will go and see my uncle this evening—at once—and try to induce him to take up the sale. That's the best I can promise."

The auctioneer looked relieved.

"I know you will do your best, sir," he said. "I'm willing to leave it at that. But if Colonel Wharton doesn't take the matter up, it means a dead loss and a great deal of trouble for me, and that's hard."

"I'll do the best I can!"

And Wharton, with a troubled brow, quitted the auction-room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way.

WHARTON'S chums followed him in silence. The situation was a difficult one, and they did not quite see the way out of it. Harry was looking deeply troubled. In the dusk outside a fat junior was waiting, and he sidled up to the Removites.

"I say, you fellows, I'll show you the way to the grub-shop, if you like. Ow!"

Billy Bunter yelled as Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar.

"Ow! Lemme go! Leggo, Nugent!"

"You young idiot!" said Bob Cherry, shaking him. "Do you know what you've done? You've landed Wharton with a hundred and ten pounds to pay!"

"Ow! Ow! You're chook-chook-choking me!"

"Well, you ought to be choked a dozen times a day at least!" growled Bob Cherry, still shaking him. "You've wanted choking for a long time."

"Ow-wow! You'll make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Now then, lend a hand, and we'll frog's-march him down to the bay and give him a ducking!"

Billy Bunter squirmed with terror.

"Ow! Don't! Ow!"

"Never mind!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "It's no good licking the young duffer. We've got to think of what's to be done."

Bob Cherry released the fat junior.

"Cut off, porpoise!"

"It—it was only a joke!" gasped Billy Bunter. "And I never expected that Wharton would have to pay!"

"Cut off!"

"Still, he can ask his uncle for the money, and that will be all right. It seems to me a wicked waste to have a rich uncle and not to ask him for anything."

"It would to you!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Will you buzz off, and give us a rest, or shall I start you?"

"Yes, yes; but what about tea? You can get tea here cheap."

"I think a hundred and ten pounds is about enough to waste on you in one evening," said Bob. "You can slide."

And he twisted the fat junior round, and gave him a kick to start with, and Billy Bunter went off at a run.

"And now what's to be done?"

Wharton's face was gloomy.

"I shall go and see my uncle about it," he said.

Bob Cherry made a grimace.

"If I asked my uncle to stand me a hundred pounds, I

jolly well know what I should get!" he remarked. "He would put it down to check."

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Well, it isn't exactly like that. My uncle is my guardian, you know, and he could let me have it out of my own money if he liked—at least, he could advance it off what I am to have when I am twenty-one."

"H'm! That's a jolly long time yet. I rather think the colonel will kick."

"I can only try. Bunter was one of us, and we can't let the auctioneer suffer for his stupid trick."

"No—er—no—but—"

"I shall go and see Colonel Wharton, anyway."

"But will the Head give you permission to go to Wharton Lodge to-night?" said Bob Cherry doubtfully.

"I shall go first and ask afterwards," said Harry, laughing. "Colonel Wharton will give me a letter to Mr. Quelch explaining, I hope. You can explain, too, when you get back to Greyfriars."

"I suppose there is nothing else to be done?"

"Nothing that I can see."

"The nothingfulness is terrific."

And the chums of the Remove having agreed upon this point, Bob Cherry borrowed a time-table at the Anchor, and looked out a train. Captain Stump nudged Harry as he stood waiting for Bob.

"Bust my topsails," said the old sailorman, "if you decide to sail the schooner, Master Wharton, you won't forget Captain Stump?"

"Certainly not!"

"I can put you up to all the tricks of sailing, and help you rig up the craft," said Captain Stump. "If you give the word, I'll have some jury masts on that hulk in a couple of days."

"I'll let you know."

"There's a train from Friardale at half-past five," said Bob Cherry. "Good time to walk over to the station. Better go and have something to eat first—you'll be hungry in the train if you don't."

The old sailorman stumped into the Anchor, and the Removites of Greyfriars looked out for the place of refreshment. It was a fisherman's cabin, where old Reuben's wife turned an honest penny by supplying meals to chance visitors. Billy Bunter was lingering outside, and his fat face brightened up as the Famous Four approached.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, come in!" said Wharton.

"Good! I say, Wharton, I'm sincerely sorry about that little joke—it was only a little joke, you know."

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!"

The meal was rather a silent one. Billy Bunter, as usual, ate enough for five or six, and was unwilling to leave the table when the others had finished. But he was got away at last.

The juniors walked home to Friardale, where Harry was seen into the train by his chums. The train buzzed off on its long journey, and then the others turned their faces towards Greyfriars.

It was necessary for them to explain to Mr. Quelch, their Form-master, why Harry had not returned with them, but it was not an inviting task. As Bob Cherry remarked, a Form-master was such an awkward customer to explain things to. They always seemed to expect such a lot, and never could understand boys.

Billy Bunter cut off the moment they entered the gates, not intending by any means to join in the visit to Mr. Quelch's study. Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh entered the School House, and hesitated.

"We may as well get it over," said Bob Cherry. "It's no good leaving it till calling-over, when Harry will be missed."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Come on, then!" said Bob Cherry, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, and marching off towards Mr. Quelch's door.

He knocked, and Mr. Quelch's deep voice bade him enter.

The three juniors went in, and the Remove-master looked at them.

"Well?"

The monosyllable was shot out at them like a stone from a catapult, and it made them feel more uncomfortable than ever.

"If you please, sir—" said Bob Cherry.

"Exactly," said Nugent, "if you please—"

"The pleasefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Remove-master frowned.

"I do not please to have my time wasted," he said. "If

you have anything to say to me, say it at once, and leave my study."

"Certainly, sir," said Bob Cherry desperately. "It's about Wharton—"

"He isn't coming back—"

"He's had to go away on business—"

"Important business—"

"He's coming back by the last train—"

"So will you please excuse him—"

"As it was very important—"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

"Will you kindly speak one at a time, and explain what you are talking about?" he said quietly. "You, please, Nugent."

"If you please, sir," stammered Nugent, "Harry—I mean Wharton—has just bought a ship—"

"Nugent!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir—I—I mean a schooner—"

"If this is a joke," said the Remove-master, "I fail to see where the humour comes in. I give you one minute to make yourself clear, Nugent."

"It was at the auction at Pegg, sir," said Nugent, hurrying out the words breathlessly. "There was a—a—a mistake owing to a silly joke, and the auctioneer knocked down the schooner to Wharton for a hundred and ten pounds."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, sir, and he's gone to raise the money—"

"Wharton raise a hundred and ten pounds! A junior in the Lower Fourth raise a hundred and ten pounds! Are you dreaming, Nugent?"

"He—he thought he'd better see his uncle about it, and he's gone to Wharton Lodge, sir," stammered Nugent. "He hopes you'll excuse him—we hope—"

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted.

"This is very extraordinary, Nugent."

"The extraordinaryfulness is terrific."

"Wharton had no right to go without permission, and I shall speak to him when he returns. You may go."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"You may go."

"We hope, sir, that—"

"You may go."

And they went!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Uncle and Nephew.

COLONEL WHARTON was sitting in the library at Wharton Lodge. The night had set in dark and windy, and the trees in the park outside were rustling and groaning. The colonel was alone. He sat in the deep easy chair, looking into the ruddy glow of the fire, and thinking.

He was thinking of his nephew.

The colonel had been a soldier all his life, and he had never married. Yet, like all men of sound and healthy natures, he had a strong affection for children, and a delight in the society of young people. And he was thinking, as he sat there, what a difference his nephew made to his life.

He was thinking, too, of the change time had wrought in Harry, his dead brother's son. He remembered how, on his return from India he had found a proud, high-spirited, headstrong boy in the charge of Miss Wharton at the Lodge—a self-willed boy who was determined never to accept the curb.

The colonel had tried his hand with him in vain—and then he had sent him to Greyfriars!

That had made all the difference.

Knocking about among lads who were not inclined to stand any nonsense had opened Harry's eyes more widely to facts, and he had lost almost all of the passionate, uncomfortable ways which had marred his character when the colonel had first taken him in charge.

He was a lad now of whom any father might have been proud; and his uncle was proud of him.

Some traces, doubtless, lingered of the old petulant, passionate nature—but taken all in all, Harry Wharton was the kind of lad to do anybody credit.

Colonel Wharton was thinking so as he sat there, slowly smoking his cigar—and thinking, too, that he would like to see Harry again.

The boy had spent the last vacation with a party of his friends at Wharton Lodge, and the colonel could not help remembering what a difference the merry young voices made in the silent old house.

There was a ring at the bell, and the colonel gave a start.

A minute later the door of the library opened, and the colonel rose in amazement at the sight of his nephew.

"Harry!"

The colonel looked at him keenly as he shook hands with him. He noted the troubled expression of the boy's face, but he made no remark for the moment. Harry gave his hat and coat to the footman, and the door closed.

The colonel pulled a high-backed chair up to the fire.

"Sit down, lad. Now, what is the matter? Anything wrong at Greyfriars?"

"Oh, no, uncle!"

"I suppose you have Dr. Locke's permission to pay me a visit, Harry? I need not say that I am glad to see you—in fact, I was just thinking of you—but—"

"I think Dr. Locke will excuse me if you ask him, sir."

"But—but why are you here, then?"

Wharton coloured a little.

"You told me once to come to you in any time of difficulty, sir," he said; "I am in an awkward fix now."

"You have come to the right place," said his uncle quietly. "Yet I can hardly think that you have been doing anything reckless, Harry."

Wharton smiled.

"Oh, no, sir! It's an awkward business, but it's due to a stupid fellow playing a joke. Only I am responsible."

"For another's action?"

"Yes, in a way. The young ass—I may as well tell you it was Bunter—you remember him—has taken up ventriloquism, and he made me appear to give a bid at an auction. The auctioneer believed that I made the bid, and the thing was knocked down to me. The chap was with me, you see, and I felt that I couldn't let an outsider be put to trouble and loss for what a fellow with me did."

The colonel looked grave.

"I suppose you are right, Harry."

"Only, if you don't take the same view, uncle, I don't see what's to be done. It seems rotten that a chap I took with me should cause an auctioneer loss—and it will mean a good deal."

Colonel Wharton nodded.

"But what is the sum?"

"A hundred and ten pounds."

Colonel Wharton almost jumped.

"What?"

The plunge was made, and Harry went through with it now.

"A hundred and ten pounds, sir."

"Harry! A hundred and ten pounds! What the dickens is the thing you have bought, then?" cried the colonel, in amazement.

"A schooner!"

"A—a—a—a what?" gasped the colonel.

"A vessel, sir."

"Oh, a schooner!" said Colonel Wharton. "You mean a ship?"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you have bought a ship—a ship for a hundred and ten pounds!"

"You heard of the wreck in Pegg Bay, sir—"

The colonel's face softened.

"I remember how you risked your life, you young scamp, to fetch a wooden-legged seaman off it."

"Well, sir, that's the schooner—she's floating now, and though she's awfully rocky, she's worth the money if it can be found."

"It can be found, Harry, if you are bound in honour to find it."

"I feel that I am, sir. The auctioneer was acting in perfect good faith, and it would come hard upon him to have to make a fresh notification of a new sale, and go through all the business over again—to say nothing of making him look ridiculous. I feel that I am responsible."

"Very good—the money shall be paid."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry gratefully. "Of course, I want you to pay it from—from what I am to have when I am twenty-one—"

The colonel smiled.

"We will talk of that another time, Harry. But about this ship—I suppose we had better let it go for as much as it will fetch, and minimise the loss as much as we can."

"If you think best, sir, certainly," said Harry Wharton slowly.

His uncle looked at him quickly.

"Had you any other view, Harry?"

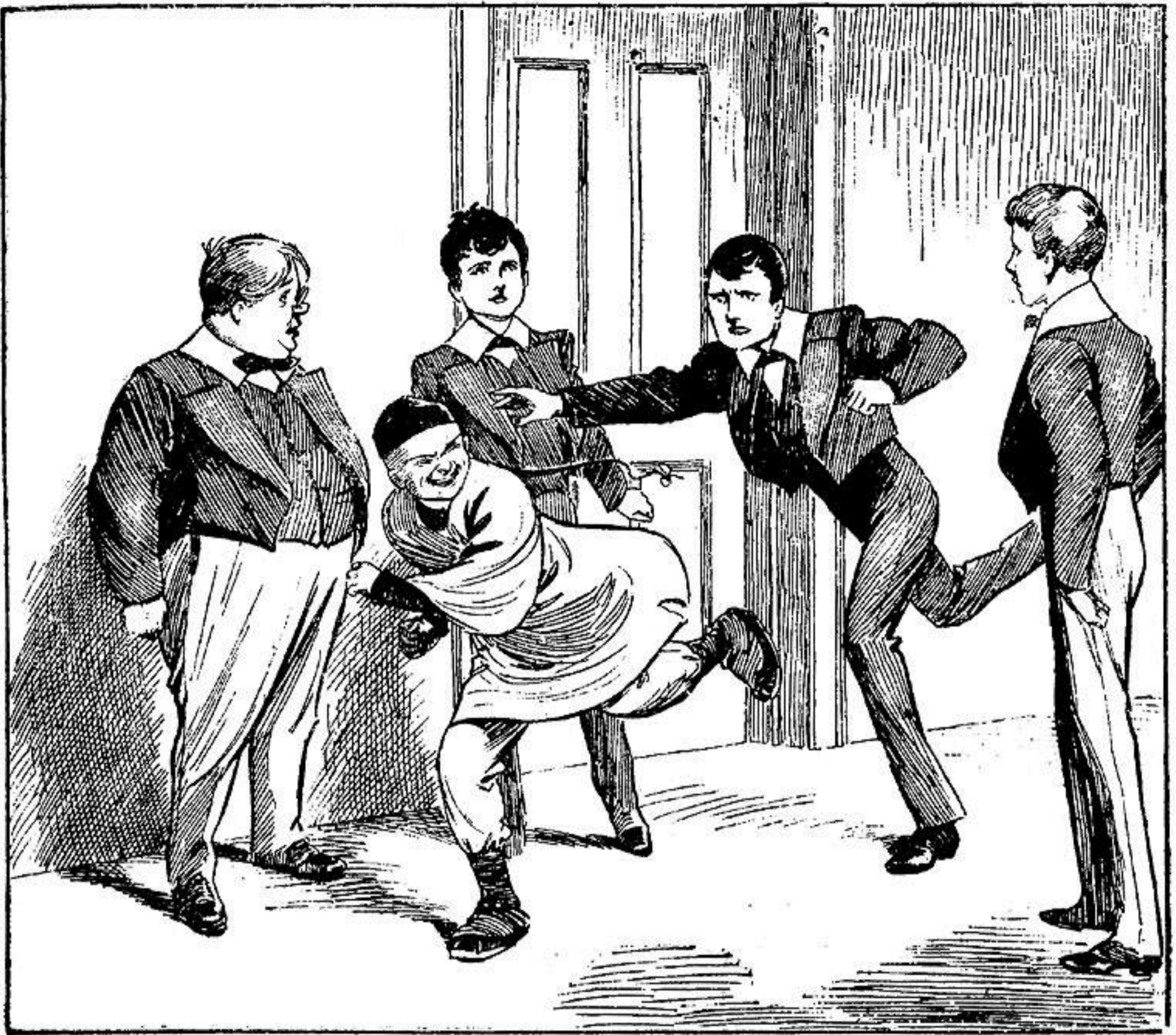
"Yes, sir; if I may tell you—"

"Go ahead!" said the old soldier, in his terse way.

Then Harry plunged into the explanation of his new idea—the sailor cadet corps for the Greyfriars juniors.

The colonel listened with kindly attention to the boy's enthusiastic explanation, watching meanwhile the handsome, animated face.

"Of course, I had no idea of getting this vessel," said Harry, "but now that it is ours, I thought—"



"Let me get at that Chinese beast!" roared Bulstrode. "He—he's dropped my camera into a pail of water!"

"I see, Harry."

"If you wish to sell it again, sir, the fishermen at Pegg would give ninety pounds, and there was another gentleman there who bid a hundred. But if you thought we might keep it—"

Colonel Wharton smiled.

"Suppose we keep it for the present, Harry? If your scheme comes to anything, there is the vessel—if not, we can sell it again."

"Oh, thank you, sir; that's exactly what I should like!"

"Then that's settled. Give me the auctioneer's name and address, and I will send him his cheque to-night. And I will write a letter of explanation to your Form-master, or I am afraid this will get you into trouble at the school."

The colonel did so, and walked down to the station with his nephew. They parted with an affectionate handshake. Harry Wharton leaned back upon the cushions with a soft light in his eyes.

"Dear old uncle!" he murmured. "And it's only a few months since—since I used to dislike him; and gave him cause enough to dislike me! I hope I shall have a chance some day of showing him that it's changed now!"

It was a late hour when Harry Wharton rang up Gosling, the porter at Greyfriars. He found the Remove gone to bed, and Mr. Quelch sitting up for him. He tapped at the Form-master's door and went in, and Mr. Quelch laid down his book.

"This is from my uncle, sir," said Harry quietly. Mr. Quelch, without a word, read the colonel's letter. "Very well, you are excused," he said; "but if anything of this kind happens again, Wharton, it will need more than a letter from your guardian to excuse you. You may go."

"I am sorry, sir—"

"I hope you are. Good-night!"

And Harry Wharton went to bed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Sailors!

THERE was a great deal of excitement in the Greyfriars Remove the next day. It was known to all that Harry Wharton had bought the schooner at the auction, and that his uncle had paid for it.

The possession of an uncle who could, and would, pay down a hundred and ten pounds, was a distinction which made Harry the talk of the school for some time.

Even the seniors took a great interest in the matter, and Carberry, of the Sixth—the bully of Greyfriars—condescended to speak to him civilly.

The chums of the Remove, of course, were delighted.

This was a chance at last for the Greyfriars sailors to carry out their idea of half-holidays on the ocean wave.

After morning school the next day they met to discuss the matter, and Harry Wharton found no lack of backing for his idea.

Nearly the whole Remove was eager to join in the sailor scheme.

Bulstrode and his friends stood out, affecting to sneer at the whole business, but nobody took any notice of them.

"We'll go out for the first cruise on Saturday afternoon if it's fine," said Bob Cherry. "It will be ripping! I suppose we had better make Wharton skipper?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Agreed!"

"I accept the post," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Now, you chaps, we'd better talk this over." Nearly all the Form had met in the gym. for the discussion, and they were all eager to hear what the amateur skipper had to say. "We're going to form a sailor cadet corps—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And train ourselves ready to fight for England if need arises when any giddy foreign enemy comes."

"Bravo!"

"We've got the ship, we've got the men, we've got the money, too!" sang Bob Cherry at the top of his voice.

"Shut up, Cherry!"

"Silence for the skipper!"

"Go ahead, Wharton!"

"All the Remove will be welcome to join the corps. We'll think about letting in the Upper Fourth afterwards. Seniors, of course, are barred. If they want a cadet corps, they can form one for themselves."

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific."

"We can't have Fifth and Sixth fellows messing around and wanting to run things," said Wharton. "For the present, at least, the wheeze is confined to the Remove. I expect we shall have our imitators, gentlemen, but we must remember that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery."

"Hear, hear!"

"I will take down the names of all who desire to enrol themselves, and practice can begin at once. On Saturday afternoon a crew will be made up to navigate the schooner—"

"Hurrah!"

"But hold on! Nobody will be allowed to join the crew who can't swim."

"Oh!"

"I have obtained permission from the Head for the sailor practice to be carried out on board the schooner on half-holidays in fine weather. But he has made it an express condition that no boy shall be on board who has not learned to swim."

"Oh, we can dodge that," said Skinner.

"We could, perhaps, but we sha'n't," said Wharton. "There won't be any mean tricks played while I'm skipper, Skinner. Besides, the fellows have got to satisfy the swimming-instructor at Greyfriars first; so I don't see how we could dodge it if we wanted to."

"Well, I can swim, thank goodness!" said Bob Cherry. "Of course, every fellow ought to be able to swim."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "I'm another. And Wharton swims like a fish, as he showed the time he fished me out of the Sark—"

"Oh, get off that!" said Harry, laughing. "I shall begin to wish I had left you there. Swimmers can come along first to put their names down."

"The swimfulness of my honourable self is resembling that of an esteemed fish," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "I have paid great attentionfulness to the art. In my case the drownfulness is the immoral possibility."

"You can put my name down, then," said Mark Linley.

"I can swim—that is, if you want me."

And the lad from Lancashire coloured a little. The son of a mill-worker, at Greyfriars with a scholarship, he had lately been made to feel his position only too keenly by the more snobbish members of the Form—though, to do them justice, the Remove, though certainly a rough and unruly Form, had few members who could really be called snobs. But those few were real rotters, as Bob Cherry had remarked.

There was a howl from two or three as Linley spoke. "Well, if you have factory-hands in the crew you can leave me out," said Snoopy.

Harry Wharton flushed darkly. "I shall leave you out in any case," he exclaimed. "You can't swim, and you can't play a decent game of any sort, and you can't do your lessons—you can't do anything except gibe at a fellow whose boots you aren't fit to clean!"

Snoopy turned purple.

Harry Wharton had a painfully frank way of speaking at times, and snobbishness was a thing he never could stand patiently.

"Well, you've got it, Snoopy—and you've got it in the neck!" chuckled Hazeldene.

"Will you put my name down, Wharton? I've learned to swim, you know."

"You can leave me out!" shouted Bulstrode. "And if you want a name for your ship you can call it the Workhouse, or the Casual Ward, or the Factory!"

"Hold your tongue, Bulstrode!"

"I'll hold my tongue when I like!"

"You'd better like now, then, or there'll be trouble. Come on, you chaps, I'm waiting to take your names down. Only swimmers need apply."

"Put in my name," said Trevor.

Harry gave him a quick nod. Trevor was the son of a rich Lancashire manufacturer, and he had been one of the set to rag Linley when the mill-lad first came to Greyfriars. But he had dropped that now.

Names came in fast enough. But as only good swimmers were wanted, Wharton had to weed them out. The whole number were enrolled as members of the cadet corps, but only a dozen or so were found suitable for the crew of the schooner.

"Good!" said Harry, closing his book at last. "That's done! Now, all you chaps who can't swim will have to take that as the first lesson. It's a bit cold for the river at this time of year. But there's the swimming-bath here at Greyfriars, and instruction to be had for the asking. Now for another matter. We can't man a ship and sail it in Eton jackets, can we?"

"Blessed if I see why not!" said Trevor.

"Oh, it wouldn't be the thing. Besides, we may get duckings and spoil our clothes. Then parents and people who pay will begin to grouse about it. Besides, it will look ever so much more businesslike to be in yachting-clothes."

"By Jove, rather!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"We're going to have a complete rig-out in Navy blue," said Harry; "caps and all complete. I rather think that's the proper caper."

"I say, you fellows—"

"But that will cost money," said Hazeldene doubtfully.

And a troubled look came over Mark Linley's face. His scholarship at Greyfriars carried no money with it—only board and education—and he had already sorely felt, more than once, the want of a little money to enable him to take an equal place with the other fellows.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Wharton cheerily. "My uncle is going to see to that. He has promised to stand the rig-out for the first crew of the schooner. I told him that we should make it a dozen, and he's going to foot the bill for it."

"My only Aunt Maria!" said Russell. "I wish I had a few uncles like that! Awfully useful to have about the house, I should think."

"The usefulness is terrific."

"So that point's settled," said Harry. "And there's another point. There's that old sailorman in Pegg with the wooden leg who calls himself Captain Stump. So long as the schooner belongs to us my uncle is going to pay him to look after the vessel, and to help us sail it."

"Bravo!"

"So I should think the wheeze will be a success. I may as well say that I have wired a London tailor to come down and take the measurements for the yachting-suits."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Were you talking, Bunter?"

"Yes, Cherry, I was, and you knew it all along," said Bunter, with an indignant blink. "I want to have my name put down for the crew."

"But you can't swim."

"Yes, I can; I can swim like a fish. I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry, to see you trying to detract from me in this way."

"But we sha'n't want any ballast in the schooner," said Nugent. "You'd be superfluous."

"Oh, really, Nugent! I say, you fellows, you'll want a cook; you have to have a cook on a ship, you know, and I don't mind doing anything to oblige you chaps."

"Oh, we'll put Bunter down as cook," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Well, I think you ought to, you know, as you really owe it to me that you have the ship at all," said Billy Bunter. "You must admit that you got it through me."

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He's taking credit to himself for that now."

"Oh, he can come as cook. The cook, of course, will be expected to provide all the grub—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And any yarn about a disappointment or a postal order won't be accepted."

"Oh, really—"

"The tailor will be down to-morrow," said Wharton.

"The meeting will now adjourn for swimming exercise."

And the meeting adjourned.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Some Kind Offers!

EXCITEMENT still ran high in the Greyfriars Remove. That day and the next the boys talked of nothing but the cadet corps and the cruise planned for Saturday afternoon. As we have said, even the seniors took an interest in the proceedings, and Carberry, of the Sixth, was kindness itself.

The Sixth Form bully met Harry Wharton in the Close on Friday, after morning lessons, and assumed an agreeable grin for the occasion.

"Hallo, Wharton!" he said. "Stop a minute, will you?"

Harry stopped. He disliked Carberry very much, but he was always civil; and, besides, the Sixth-Former was a prefect.

"I hear you're getting up a cruise on a schooner or something," said Carberry agreeably. "It looks like being a fine spring day to-morrow, and I rather think it will be jolly out on the bay."

"I hope so, Carberry."

"Some friends of mine think it would be a good idea to take the schooner for a sail round the bay," said Carberry.

"We should want it after dinner and until tea-time."

Wharton's face set grimly.

"Would you? Is that all?"

"Yes; and then you kids could have it," said Carberry unsuspectingly. "Some of you might come. We couldn't be bothered by a parcel of kids, but you and one other could come. You could make yourselves useful."

"Yes, I've no doubt we could make ourselves useful."

"And Bunter, too. We should want him to cook."

"Bunter's a good cook."

"Then it's settled."

"Not quite," said Harry Wharton coolly. "You see, we want the schooner ourselves on Saturday afternoon."

"But I've told you I want it—I and my friends."

"Then I'm afraid your and your friends will be disappointed. You see, we want it, and as it's ours, we mean to have it."

Carberry's brow darkened.

"So you mean to refuse, you young cad?"

"I don't mean to give up an afternoon's cruise to lend you the vessel," said Harry quietly; "and only a pig would ask such a thing."

And he walked away, leaving the Sixth Form bully pale with anger.

"Hallo, you've been ruffling up Carberry!" remarked Blundell, of the Fifth, stopping Harry Wharton a dozen paces away. "Anything wrong?"

Harry laughed.

"Oh, no; only a little difference of opinion."

"Jolly cool, to have a difference of opinion with a prefect," said Bland, who was with Blundell. The two Fifth-Formers seemed to be in a particularly amiable mood. As a rule, they were too lordly to talk too familiarly with members of the Remove, or Lower Fourth Form.

"But I say," said Blundell, "I hear you're sailing that wrecked schooner round the bay to-morrow afternoon, and you've got an ancient mariner to help you."

"That's so."

"We were thinking—Bland and I—that we'd come and take command," said Blundell. "We're rather nervous of you kids getting into trouble, and we shouldn't mind a little exertion to see you safe through—should we, Bland?"

"Not at all," said Bland.

"What do you say, Wharton?"

"Sorry, only the command is filled," said Wharton politely. "We could take a couple of extra hands as waiters, if you like."

And he walked away, leaving the Fifth-Formers glaring. He had just reached the School House door when Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, collared him. They surrounded him with agreeable smiles. By this time Harry knew what was coming, but he grinned politely and waited.

"I hear you're skippering a schooner," remarked Temple. "Jolly pleasant sort of thing in the decent weather we're getting now."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"We were thinking—" began Fry.

"Let me finish, Fry."

"You never do finish, Temple."

"We were thinking," said Temple, with a frown at his follower, "that we'd help you youngsters out. We'll come down in a party and show you how to handle the vessel."

"Oh, rather!"

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"Thanks!" said Wharton. "But we're not asking any help at present."

"Well, not to put too fine a point on it, we'd like to come," said Temple, as if that great condescension from the captain of the Upper Fourth settled it.

"Sorry; but we've no room."

"Look here, we're coming down to help you out—"

"If you come on board the schooner we shall help you out!" said Wharton. And he went into the School House. Temple & Co. were speechless for a full minute after he had left them.

Wharton hurried into the common-room. He had received word that the tailor from London was there, and he had come in to see him. He found most of the crew of the schooner assembled, and a little bald man with wisps of hair over his temples.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here you are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's Mr. Green waiting for you. Mr. Green, this is our respected skipper, Harry Wharton."

Mr. Green ducked his head.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Harry. "Here you are. Fetch in the other fellows, Bob, will you?"

Mr. Green ran his tape over Harry Wharton's sturdy form. When Billy Bunter's turn came, Mr. Green eyed him very dubiously.

"No extra charge for the porpoise," said Bob Cherry. "You can make it up on Skinner. He's as thin as a lath."

"I say, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't insinuate that I'm fat," remonstrated Billy Bunter. "I admit I've got some flesh on my limbs—"

"More flesh than limbs, I rather think," said Bob Cherry.

"Still, you can't help being double-width."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Mr. Green ran his tape round Bunter's plump form.

The measurements were all taken at last, and then came the question of the delivery of the goods.

"Let me see," said Mr. Green, rubbing his chin with the stump of his pencil. "Shall I come down to fit you—say, this day next week—"

"Eh?"

"And the clothes can be delivered the following week."

"Which?"

"That won't do," said Harry Wharton. "We want to wear them to-morrow."

The "tailor" smiled deprecatingly.

"My dear sir—"

"You see, we're going for a cruise to-morrow afternoon," explained Wharton. "If we don't have the things then, they're no good."

"Then will you allow me to make a suggestion? We have a ready-made department, and I have no doubt that these sizes can all be found there with—with perhaps one exception. A few alterations can be made to-day, and the goods sent off to reach you during the morning. That is the only method by which you can obtain the suits on Saturday."

Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Reach-me-down, complete rig-out, one guinea," murmured Bob Cherry.

"I suppose they'll fit?" said Wharton dubiously.

"I can answer for them," said Mr. Green blandly. "Any little further alterations you require can be made later, the goods being returned to us for that purpose."

"Very well, then. We simply must have them to-morrow."

And Mr. Green departed with his order.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER

The Anchor's Weighed.

THE next day, sure enough, the consignment from the tailor's "ready-made" department arrived at Greyfriars.

It came during morning lessons, and was carried into the new Remove dormitory, and there the juniors hurried when work was over, and they were free to try on their new attire.

The bundle was unfastened, and the yachting suits spread out to view.

Mr. Green's goods had some qualities; the cloth was good, and the cut, considering that they were of the "reach-me-down" variety, was rather good.

But the fit!

Mr. Green had blandly promised that the nearest sizes to those he had taken should be sent, and any little alterations should be made afterwards.

It soon became clear that some little alterations would be required.

Harry Wharton was kept talking by the Form-master for some minutes after school was dismissed, Mr. Quelch cautioning him once more to use great care in making that cruise on the bay in such an unlucky craft as the schooner.

Harry arrived in the dormitory a few minutes later than the others, and found most of the crew of the schooner already rigged out in their new garments.

He stared blankly at them.

Skinner, the thin junior, had clothes on that bagged round him like empty sacks. Billy Bunter, with a very red face, was cramming himself into garments that threatened to split with every new effort.

Russell was turning up the trousers that were six inches too long, and Trevor was trying to button up the jacket that was six inches too narrow.

Bob Cherry and Nugent, being medium sizes, had pretty good fits, except that Bob's long legs stuck out of the ends of his trousers with a liberal display of ankle.

"My hat!" said Harry, staring.

"Faith, and it's suffocated I am!" gasped Micky Desmond, who was crammed into a suit much too tight for him. "I believe the buttons will go every minute, begorra!"

"I—I—I don't think I can get into this!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Go it, Bunty!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "It will make you feel a little like a sardine in a tin, but you'll get used to it."

"The fitfulness is terrific," said the nabob.

Hurree Singh looked very nice, and so did Mark Linley, whose sturdy form was well fitted by the new garb. Harry Wharton slipped into his own suit, and found that it was a pretty good fit also.

"Faith, and I'm sure the buttons will go!"

"When you buy a reach-me-down, you have to sew the buttons on over again," said Bob Cherry. "We ought to get Hazeldene's sister to sew them for us."

"I wish Marjorie were here," grunted Hazeldene. "She could let this jacket out a bit over the shoulders for me, but I don't know how to do it."

Pop!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's that firing a pistol?"

"Faith, and it isn't a pistol; it's one of my buttons going!" gasped Micky Desmond. "Sure, I'm thinking the rest will follow, bedad!"

Pop, pop, pop!

"You'll have to wear the jacket unfastened," laughed Harry Wharton. "I say, Billy, don't burst anything, you know."

"I've got 'em on!" gasped Bunter.

"Hurrah!"

"They feel awfully tight, you know. I'm blessed if I know how I shall ever get 'em off again."

"You needn't think of getting 'em off yet," said Nugent. "If you have anything to eat this afternoon, they'll burst, and you will get out that way. You'd better be jolly careful what you eat out of doors."

"I say," said Bunter, in alarm, "I—I think I'll change back into my other things. I—I feel awfully hungry already."

"Oh, they'll stretch," said Wharton reassuringly. "Better turn up the trousers; they're too long as well as too narrow. You'll flop over. Look out!"

The warning came too late.

Billy Bunter moved along, but there was a foot or more of loose cloth flopping over his boots, and he stumbled and went staggering.

He caught Hurree Singh round the neck to save himself, and brought the hapless Nabob of Bhanipur to the floor with a bump.

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"O-o-o-o-o!" gurgled the nabob. "The removefulness

of this terrific weight would be the savingfulness of my valuable life, my worthy chums."

Nugent rolled the fat junior off, and there was a significant rending sound.

"Ow! They're bursting! I knew they would!"

"It's only the waistcoat," said Nugent comfortingly. "This can't be the first waistcoat you've burst. You're all right."

Pop, pop!

Desmond's last buttons went.

"We shall have to make them do," said Wharton, laughing. "We can have them altered next week, in time for next Saturday's cruise. It's time to get down to dinner now."

The dozen juniors caused rather a sensation when they entered the dining-hall in yachting garb.

Wharton had obtained Mr. Quelch's permission, and so nothing was said; but all Greyfriars stared at the amateur sailors.

They did not mind that, however—in fact, they rather enjoyed it. The Remove liked making a sensation.

After dinner, the sailors prepared to go down to the beach. All the rest of the cadet corps formed up to march with them, though only the dozen—or thirteen, including Bunter—were to begin the navigation of the schooner.

Most of Greyfriars collected at the gates to cheer them, or send derisive yells and catcalls after them, according to their humour.

Little cared the Remove.

They marched forward down the road to the sea, and they burst into a cheer as they rounded the base of the Black Pike, and came into sight of the wide, blue waters. Their entrance into the quiet fishing village of Pegg caused a fresh sensation. The fisherfolk stared at them, and the Remove enjoyed being stared at. Captain Stump was waiting on the shore, ready for them.

He saluted Harry Wharton, with an admiring glance at the lad, who really made a handsome figure as a young yachtsman.

"Bust my topsails!" ejaculated Captain Stump, ejecting a stream of tobacco-juice with deadly aim at the gunwale of an upturned boat on the beach. "As fine a crew as I ever sailed with, bust my topsails!"

And he turned his quid, and grinned approval.

"We're ready to go aboard," said Harry. "You've made a difference with the craft, Stump. Good."

There was, indeed, a change in the aspect of the schooner. Jury masts had been rigged, and though they were neither so tall nor so strong as the original masts, they were a very handy makeshift.

Captain Stump, with local assistance from Pegg, had done the work, and very proud of it he looked.

The juniors were pulled aboard in old Reuben's boat, leaving the cadet corps on the beach waving their hats and cheering.

"Faith, and it's a ripping craft," said Micky Desmond enthusiastically. "Ye'll be making me steersman, Wharton. It's heaps of steering I've done on the loughs in ould Ireland."

"Ay, ay!"

"Ha, ha!"

Wharton looked at Cherry, who had laughed.

"What are you cackling at, Bob? Ay, ay, is the correct expression."

"It strikes you rather comical at first," said Bob, grinning. "But it's all right, my hearty. Heave away!"

"I see you've had the name painted on the ship," said Hazeldene, looking pleased. It was his sister's name that had been bestowed upon the schooner.

"Yes," said Harry, laughing. "The Marjorie. Now, you chaps, we've got to form up the crew. We won't trouble about separate watches as we shall all be on deck all the time. I appoint Bob Cherry first mate—"

"Ay, ay, captain!" said Bob Cherry, touching his cap.

"And Frank Nugent second mate—"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"And Billy Bunter cook—steward—purser—cabin-boy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I accept the post," said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"I'm the only chap here who knows how to cook."

"And you can purse and stew, I suppose?" said Skinner.

"Purse and stew?"

"Yes; I suppose that's what a purser and steward has to do."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Micky Desmond is coxswain, and Ogilvy boatswain—"

"Faith, and I'll steer ye well. I've steered on the loughs in ould Ireland—"

"But what about a pipe?" said Ogilvy.

"What on earth do you want a pipe for? You don't smoke; besides, smoking isn't allowed."

"Ass! I mean—"

"No member of the crew is allowed to call the skipper an ass."

"Well, I mean the bo'sun's pipe—the whistle, you know. How am I to pipe all hands if I haven't a pipe?" demanded Ogilvy.

"Oh, I see! Here's a football whistle."

"Good! That will do rippingly." And Ogilvy forthwith proceeded to blow piercing blasts to get into form ready for his new duties as bo'sun.

"Ow!" roared Bob Cherry, stopping his ears with his fingers. "Shut up! Ring off! You're not refereeing a match with the All Blacks, you ass."

"Shut up, bo'sun!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Now, then! All hands on deck!"

Skinner, the funny man of the Remove, solemnly knelt down and spread his hands on the decks, pretending to misunderstand. Bob Cherry promptly trod on them, and Skinner jumped up with a fiendish yell.

"Now, then, my lads—"

"Ow! He's nearly squashed my hands!"

"Serve you right!" said the skipper severely. "There's a time to be funny, and a time not to be funny. Shut up! Now, my lads, stand by the capstan. The anchor's got to be weighed."

And Skinner, who was rubbing his fingers ruefully, actually forgot to ask how much it was expected to weigh.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. Everything Goes Swimmingly.

THE schooner glided out into the bay. There was a strong current setting across the bay towards the towering Shoulder, and as soon as the vessel was released from the anchor, she drifted into it.

The wind was very light, but there was quite enough for the schooner, if the sails were once set.

Captain Stump, who was certainly an experienced sailorman, stumped up and down deck and gave directions.

He treated Harry Wharton with marked respect, never speaking to him without touching his cap, and whenever he could, giving him information quietly. It was tactful of the old salt, and Wharton appreciated it. It would have been easy for the wooden-legged sailorman to act otherwise, especially as the safety of the Marjorie depended upon his guidance. For the bay was full of perils to the unwary, and not one of the Greyfriars juniors could be considered much of a sailor so far.

Micky Desmond, probably, knew less about sailing than anybody else there, though he had cheerfully constituted himself steersman.

He had steered boats on the Irish loughs, but that was a very different matter from steering a ship on the deep ocean.

But fortune favoured him at first, and he had good luck with the wheel.

Under the directions of the wooden-legged salt, the mainsail was shaken out.

The mainsail was almost in tatters at the time of the wreck, but Captain Stump had industriously patched and sewn, and sewn and patched, till it was something like a sail again. The mainsail was at present the only sail the schooner possessed, but it was quite sufficient for the speed the youthful crew required.

When the canvas was seen to fall out, and fill in the wind, there rang a loud cheer from the shore, where the rest of the Remove were watching eagerly.

From the shore, the schooner seemed to glide along very easily, and it looked like the easiest thing in the world to sail her.

The same impression was felt by most of the amateur sailors.

The sail had been set successfully, and the schooner was sweeping on through the blue waters in the bright sunshine, and the juniors felt extremely pleased with themselves.

"Everything seems to be going on swimmingly," Bob Cherry remarked. "Blessed if I thought it was so jolly easy to sail a ship."

"You want to steer clear of the rocks, sir," said Captain Stump, with a faint grin. "I'll just go below for a turn, and I'll be up in a minute."

And the old sailorman descended the hatchway.

Harry Wharton looked round him.

The sea was calm, and the schooner, save for a slight list, sailed well. It did, indeed, seem an easy thing to be a sailorman.

There was the sound below of something gurgling into a glass, and Bob Cherry grinned.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Stumpy's sampling the rum!" he remarked. "I didn't know you had any aboard, Skipper!"

"And I didn't, either," said Harry, looking vexed.

"Hallo, we're getting near the Shoulder! Yonder's the place where the schooner was wrecked."

"We'll give it a wide berth, then."

"The widefulness of the berth should be terrific."

"I say, you fellows." Bunter put his head up from below. "There's nothing here but a rotten old oil-stove to cook with."

"Sorry," said Bob Cherry. "We'll have the latest thing in electric stoves fitted up for you next Saturday."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm afraid I can't do much cooking with such accommodation. The place isn't very big, either. It's lucky we brought some sandwiches, as I shall be some time with the cooking."

"Yes, so it is; you can serve the sandwiches round."

"I can't."

"Yes, you can—you're steward. You can't shirk your stewing duties like that."

"I don't want to shirk 'em, but there aren't any sandwiches left."

"Why, we brought a fearful lot."

"Yes; but I had to have a snack, if I'm going to cook."

"My only hat! He's scooped all the sandwiches!"

"I suppose you don't want me to sink down from exhaustion, Bob Cherry?"

"Blessed if I care! I know I wanted some of those sandwiches. Go down and cook something, and cook it quick, or I'll come and cook you!"

"Yes; but—"

"Down below!" roared Bob Cherry, picking up a belaying-pin.

And Bunter disappeared.

The schooner glided on. The great rock of the Shoulder rose more clearly before the amateur sailors, with the sea-gulls flying about the summit.

"I say, we shall have to steer clear of that," said Wharton. "Starboard, Micky."

"Faith, and starboard it is, alanna."

Captain Stump put his head up on deck. A strong scent of rum proceeded from him, and he was lurching slightly in his gait as he came up the ladder.

"Ahoy, shipmates! I—"

The wooden-legged sailorman stopped abruptly.

The sight of the great Shoulder towering above the vessel seemed to petrify him. He stared at it blankly, and gasped. Then he came stumping excitedly on deck.

"'Bout ship!" he roared. "Man the lee braces! Bust my topsails, we shall be aground before you can say Jamaica rum!"

"There's plenty of room to turn!"

"Hard-a-port!"

"We're a quarter of a mile off the Shoulder yet!"

"But the sunken rocks!" yelled the sailorman.

"My hat! I—"

"Hard-a-port!"

The sailorman yelled directions, and rushed to the wheel, stumping along at a great rate. The boys, feeling that there was danger, yet hardly knowing what it was, tried to carry out his orders. But there was no time. The sailorman seized the spokes from Micky Desmond, and jammed the wheel hard down.

At the same moment came a grinding crash. It was the hull of the schooner scraping on a sunken rock.

The sailing of a ship was not, after all, the easy matter the amateur sailors had at first thought.

Captain Stump gave a yell.

"She's aground!"

Crunch!

Grind!

The schooner slid back from the grinding rocks, and there was a very audible sound of water pouring in below.

Some of the juniors changed colour.

Billy Bunter bolted up from below like a rabbit from a burrow.

"The water's coming in!" he roared. "She's sinking! All the grub will be spoiled."

But the others were thinking about something more important than grub.

Harry Wharton was thankful at that moment for the Head's caution in allowing only swimmers to man the schooner.

Owing to that there was no danger to life, for the bay was quite calm, and the shore no great distance away.

The schooner was sinking.

She had struck upon the rock with a great thud, and there was a yawning gap in her timbers below.

The tide was full in the bay, and the rocks that had gashed her timbers were completely covered with water.

The schooner slid back further from the rocks, and the sound of water gushing in below was loud and threatening.

There was no chance of stopping that. And there was no boat. The boats belonging to the Marjorie had been swept away and destroyed in the storm at the time of the wreck.

The juniors had not much time to think.

The water was washing over the deck almost before they

knew that the schooner was done for, and there was a general rush for the side.

"Keep cool!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "We've got to swim for it. But we've swum bigger distances before."

"Yes, rather! We're all right!"

"The all-rightfulness is terrific!"

"I—I—I—I say, you fellows—"

"Keep close to me, Bunter, and I'll help you. Bob, you give Stump a hand!"

"Right-ho!"

"Thank you kindly, young gentlemen! It's my fault; I ought to have stayed on deck!"

"Well, you ought, as a matter of fact," said Harry; "but it can't be helped now. The schooner will be uncovered again at low tide, and we shall be able to save her. But we shall go down with her now if we don't hurry."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And, without waiting for the schooner to sink away under their feet, the amateur sailors plunged into the water.

Thanks to Harry's coolness, there was no panic.

The juniors swam steadily, Harry giving aid to Billy Bunter, and Bob Cherry to the wooden-legged sailorman.

There was a crowd on the beach as the unfortunate voyagers swam in.

The tide was still going in, having not quite reached the full, and that was a fortunate thing for the swimmers.

On the shore were the sailor cadet corps, most of them grinning from ear to ear.

Most of the fisherfolk of Pegg, too, seemed to have collected to see the amateur sailors come floating in.

"Well," grinned Bob Cherry, as he dragged himself upon

the submerged sand, "everything has gone swimmingly, at all events!"

But the juniors were too wet to laugh at the joke.

They dragged themselves out of the water, and were met with a chorus of polite remarks from their comrades ashore.

They were asked if the water was wet, and if they always sailed vessels straight downwards, and whether they enjoyed a life in the ocean wave, and so on.

With a grinning and chuckling escort, they made their way to the Anchor Inn, where a good fire and a brisk rub down made them feel more like themselves.

They had to go to bed while their clothes were drying, where they had the pleasure of hearing the shouts and laughter of the other fellows boating on the bay.

"Never mind!" said Bob Cherry, with unshaken optimism. "One swallow doesn't make a summer, and we'll be more careful next time. We can get at the schooner at low tide, and we'll have another try next Saturday."

"Yes, rather!" said Harry emphatically. "We're not going to give up a good wheeze because of one accident. Hallo, Bunter! What are you snuffling about?"

"I've got a gold. I'm sneezig like anythig."

"Never mind—"

"But I do mind!" howled Bunter. "And all the grub's wasted, too! I'm huggry, and I've got a fearful gold!"

But the rest of the amateur sailors were undaunted, and before they were dry they were looking eagerly forward to the next cruise of the *Marjorie*.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Boys of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "Billy Bunter's House Warming." Please order your "Magnet" Library in advance.)

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard joins the Ploughshares. 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 I O U for £95, which Dashwood had given to Sligo as hush-money, falls into Colonel Greville's hands.

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 Ploughshares, is captured by tribesmen while asleep in the deserted encampment, and made to mount his pony.

Lieutenant Blennerhasset, in command of a troop of the 25th, rescues the Hon. Algy; but is forced to retreat and take up a position in a dell near the Cave of the Winds. All Khan, the Indian chieftain, prepares for an assault on the small British force, and distributes his followers into three sections. "You, Ackbar, go with your men by the path that leads to the Cave of the Winds," said the wily All Khan. "You, Mirza Ali, steal to the well of the Lhama. We will stay here!" (Now go on with the story.)

A Lucky Find.

It was a little unfortunate for the gentle Ackbar that the path that he and his followers had to take was very steep and circuitous, making, in fact, a detour of nearly two miles. The spot he wished to reach was not a thousand yards from the dell in which the Hussars lay, and entirely commanded it; and when Sergeant Howard started off to reconnoitre, he struck the opposite end of that path, found that horses might ascend with some little difficulty, pushed on, and discovered a perfectly ideal spot for their purpose, the identical Cave of the Winds for which Ackbar was making.

It was a curious dome-shaped hollow in the centre of the high mountain, and it had two openings—two narrow arches in the natural rock. Through the eastern one a spring of crystal water, from a hole in the floor of the cave, went gurgling down the mountain-side, and Tom's first action was to go down on his knees and drink a deep draught. Some straggling deodars grew close to the western arch, and Tom instantly saw that a very effective abattis might be constructed if it were necessary; and after a hasty look round, he hurried down the path again and reached the officers, with excitement in his face.

In a few words he told them what he had discovered. The path leading up to the cavern was concealed from the rascals on the slope below them, and they straightway began to get the horses up, a task which they accomplished without any serious accident.

NEXT TUESDAY: "BILLY BUNTER'S HOUSE-WARMING."

A Grand School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

When this was done, Mr. Blennerhassett withdrew his rearguard, and remained with the Hon. Algy and the sergeant, looking down on the track beneath them.

"Funny those beggars don't come up. I wonder what their little game is?" said the Hon. Algy.

"Don't know, old man; suppose we shall find it out soon enough. We will now retire with all the dignity possible; and as we drew rations before we set out, and Howard says there is plenty of water, we will just snap our fingers at yonder scum until we are relieved, or until they get sick of the thing and go away."

They clambered up the path, rolling pebbles down under their feet; but when they were within sight of the western entrance, Corporal Sloggett suddenly appeared, waving his arm and beckoning them like a man possessed.

"What's wrong?" said the lieutenant.

"Couple of 'undred niggers comin' up the other side, sir. I ordered the men not to fire until you arrived. But we 'ave them on toast, for they're comin' up single file, and the mountain's as steep as the side of a 'ouse."

Tom and the officers quickened their steps, and springing into the cavern, peered down through the exit on the other side, to see the precipitous path white with the turbans of Ackbar and his followers, who came crawling up, sword in hand, taking their time, as yet unacquainted with the fact that the enemy were already in possession.

Tom Howard took one glance at Ackbar and his men, and then touched Mr. Blennerhassett on the sleeve.

"Do you see what is happening, sir?" said the sergeant. "I recognise that chief down there perfectly. I cut his left ear off when we came through them in the village below. They have divided forces, and are going to attack us in the front and in the rear. I don't mind betting that other lot we've just left will be on our track in another five minutes. Look! By heavens, I'm right!"

And swinging round on his heel, Tom pointed down the path up which they had brought the horses. There stood Ali Khan, with his followers behind him, looking up at the cave, and everyone of the little party realised that they were going to have a very hot time.

Mr. Blennerhassett counted his men quickly, and found that there were twenty-four in all, including himself and his brother officer.

"Armstrong, you take one side, and I'll take the other; and, mind you, every shot must tell."

The Hon. Algy screwed his glass into his eye, lit another cigarette, lay down in the shadow of the cavern, and, after seeing that his revolver was loaded in all its chambers, arranged a little row of cartridges on the rock in front of him.

"Take your time from me, boys," he said, "and don't two of you fire at the same man. One nigger, one bullet; and here goes for the yellow-faced gentleman with the green standard."

Bang! went the revolver, echoing through the vaulted cave, and the yellow-faced gentleman, springing into the air, fell backwards, and, rolling down the steep slope, carried half a dozen Mahmuds away with him.

For a moment the tribesmen, completely surprised to find the Cave of the Winds occupied by the very men they had come to annihilate, paused; but the next moment, with a chorus of savage yells, they came clambering up the slope, led by Ackbar in person. The shot, too, brought a howl of astonishment from Ali Khan at the bottom of the other slope, and, brandishing a long spear, he came running forward at a great pace, shouting to his men to follow.

Mr. Blennerhassett decided to give them a volley to cool their ardour, and cried "Fire!"

The simultaneous report of eleven carbines and a Service revolver crashed out, and died away in manifold echoes among the hills beyond. The track was instantly strewn with wounded men, Ali Khan alone remaining unhurt, and over the prostrate bodies sprang the savage natives, thirsting for vengeance.

Their position in the cave seemed impregnable; but the first note of warning was given when Corporal Sloggett, groping in his pouch, said:

"Hallo! I'm used up. Give me a handful of cartridges, Rogers!"

"Only got seven left, old man," said the private.

"Cease fire, men!" said Mr. Blennerhassett, the Mahmuds having at that moment drawn back a little to take breath for another rush. "How many rounds have we got left?"

Each man hastily counted the contents of his pouch, and called out the numbers. They were indeed lamentably few.

"Nine, sir!" "Eleven, sir!" "I've only got four!" And so it went on, Mr. Blennerhassett finding that he had only a total of some forty-eight rounds with which to keep the opening; and a tremendous shouting from the bottom of the slope attracted their attention to the mob of turbans

that poured down the winding path on the other side of the little valley.

"Reinforcements, by heavens!" said the Hon. Algy.

And he was right; for Mirza Ali, hearing the firing, had come helter-skelter from his own rendezvous with a couple of hundred Ghazis at his back.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Tom Howard, as both the officers looked very glum, "those fellows don't seem to have any rifles with them. If we could tear some of these branches down"—and Tom pointed to a clump of trees a few yards from the cavern's mouth—"we could make a very effectual barricade, and stop them hand to hand."

"That's a very good idea of yours, sergeant. Come on, half a dozen of you!" And Mr. Blennerhassett, revolver in hand, sprang out into the sunshine. "You will have to fall back on rocks, Armstrong!" he cried over his shoulder. "Your men can build a breastwork in five minutes. After all, the position is not so bad, and we will hedge every cartridge we have left."

Down below the two Mahmud chiefs held a noisy conclave in the middle of their followers. It was only a matter of a few minutes before they would return to the attack, but in the few minutes busy hands were wrenching boughs and branches from the trees, and twining them in front of the cave, forming a very respectable obstacle, which would make even a Ghazi pause.

Several of the men ran to the horses, which had been whinneying and stamping at the other end of the cave, and returning with half a dozen picket ropes, bound the branches together. Then Mr. Blennerhassett gave the order to draw swords, and they waited.

In the meantime, on the Hon. Algy's side they threw up a rough sangar of stones, of which there were plenty lying about, leaving only a gap where the stream ran over the edge of the slope.

And it was about this time that Bill Sloggett, running into the interior of the cavern for a large piece of rock he had seen there, chanced to look upwards, and far above him saw a tiny ray of sunlight filtering through the roof.

"Hallo," said the corporal, "there's a 'ole up yonder! And blow me if there ain't something like steps!"

Bill drew out his vestas, struck one, and examined the cavern's sides, uttering a loud exclamation when he discovered that the rock had been roughly hewn, and that it was possible to ascend in the direction of the light.

He looked hastily around, and seeing his comrades still busy, clambered up on hands and knees, the light growing brighter as he drew near it, until at last, after a short climb, his head suddenly protruded into the bright sunlight.

"Great Scott," exclaimed the corporal, "if it wasn't for the 'orses, we could all get out this way!"

He reconnoitred hastily, and then went down again to impart his discovery to the others. The Hon. Algy and Mr. Blennerhassett went up and had a look for themselves.

Mr. Blennerhassett took out his glasses, and scanned the wild country that lay below them, seeing the little village less than half a mile away, and the broad, brown valley extending east and west.

A cry from the Hon. Algy, who was clambering up behind, made him look into the opening.

"What's wrong?" he said.

"Wrong? Why, jumping Moses, man, we're in luck!" And the Hon. Algy held up a long object, swathed in a straw band, which he had taken from a crevice at one side of the opening. "We have struck one of their secret hiding-places!"

And, unwrapping the straw band, he revealed a Government Martini.

"There's a score of these things in here," cried the Hon. Algy excitedly, "and a barrellful of ammunition. By heavens, we will hoist them with their own petard! We will give the beggars socks!"

He shouted down, and Tom Howard responded quickly to the summons.

"Here, take as many as you can, sergeant, and mind how you go!"

Amazed at their good fortune, Tom scrambled back to the floor of the cavern with three rifles, and sending up a fatigue party of half a dozen men, in a very few moments the air resounded with a hearty British cheer, as twenty-two Martinis, in excellent condition, and a thousand rounds of ball cartridge, were drawn from their coverings, and distributed among the men.

"And now let 'em all come!" said the Hon. Algy, as they took post once more.

And they did all come, a hundred and fifty up one slope,

and three hundred up the other, and for a very hot five minutes the cavern rang with shouts and shots, and the sharp click of the breech, until, despairing of getting within striking distance, the Mahmuds rushed panic-stricken for shelter.

At the Peril of their Lives.

The Hon. Algy and Mr. Blennerhassett were seized with a simultaneous desire to congratulate each other, and met, with a very firm hand-grip, in the centre of the cavern.

"By gad, that was hot work!" said Blennerhassett. "I thought at one time they would get in on my side. How have you got on?"

"Come and look for yourself," said the Hon. Algy, lighting another of his interminable cigarettes.

And Mr. Blennerhassett went over to the eastern entrance of the cavern, and saw the steep slope literally carpeted with dead tribesmen. They lay for the most part on their faces; but some had rolled down in little heaps, and gathered like snow in the clefts and crevices of the black rock.

"By Jove, Algy we ought to get something for this, you know!" said Mr. Blennerhassett. "There have been worse things mentioned than this in despatches!"

"They seem to have bolted this time for good," said the Hon. Algy, taking out his glasses and examining the valley below, where not a sign of the Mahmuds was to be seen.

"Won't do to count on it, old chap," said Mr. Blennerhassett. "We shall have a few hours' rest; but as sure as eggs are eggs, these chaps will attack us just before day-break, you mark my words. What is it, sergeant?"

And he turned to Tom, who had approached and saluted.

"We have used up all the cartridges again, sir," said Tom, in a low voice, not wishing the other men to hear.

"The dickens we have!" said Mr. Blennerhassett.

And he looked blankly at his brother officer; but to his surprise the Hon. Algy smiled a smile of serene contentment, and, looking joyously up at the black roof above him, blew rings, sending one through the other with unerring accuracy.

"I don't know what you are grinning about, Algy! The position is jolly serious!" said Mr. Blennerhassett, rather testily. "Have you got something up your sleeve?"

"Yes, I know where to put my hands on a couple of thousand rounds, but it will want a bit of doing!"

Then, throwing aside his careless manner, he reminded them of the find he had made in the Khan's tower in the village beneath them.

"Never thought of that," said Mr. Blennerhassett, wheeling round and frowning thoughtfully at the red sunset, which was beginning to pour in through the opposite arch. "But how is it to be done?"

"Beg pardon, sir," said the sergeant, "but, if Mr. Armstrong will describe where the cartridges are, I will go out as soon as the darkness comes and do my best!"

"By gad, you are a good plucked 'un, Howard," said the Hon. Algy. "I'll go with you! The chances are that one of us will get back alive!"

"I don't know," said Mr. Blennerhassett. "The odds are strongly against either of you getting there at all, if the niggers have gone back to the village."

"We will chance our luck, anyhow. In the meantime, I think we ought to strengthen the breastworks at both openings. If we don't come back you will have to depend on your swords, and a sword fight in the dark is no joke."

They set to work, after posting a couple of sentries to keep watch on both approaches, and, as long as the light lasted, every man was busy, the two officers working in their shirt-sleeves with the rest of them, and by the time it had got too dark to see, the abattis had been much strengthened and

a barrier of stones built within it, the breastwork on the other side being raised a couple of feet.

Then a whisper went round among the men as they sat down and opened their haversacks, that the Hon. Algy and Sergeant Howard were going to make a very desperate attempt, and a dozen of the party volunteered to go with them. Bill Sloggett was particularly eager, and relapsed into moody silence when he found that no entreaty could prevail with the officers. Bill had viewed the abattis with particular disfavour, as it stood between him and the greatest pleasure earth afforded—namely, a hand-to-hand fight; but, before the night was finished, Corporal Sloggett was to have his wish satisfied.

While there was yet a little light lingering in the sky, the two officers and the sergeant had gone up to the square opening in the roof of the cavern, and, lying down on their faces, had examined the sinuosities of the spur below them. Mr. Blennerhassett making a rough sketch-map of the ground, and the trio holding a council of war as to the best method of reaching the village. A few of the tribesmen could be seen prowling about it; but, as far as they could tell, Ackbar's band had joined forces with Ali Khan, and the glow of their watch-fires could be seen reddening the cliffs away on their left hand. Posted on a rock, his figure outlined against the firelight, they could see a tribesman, sitting motionless, evidently posted to watch the western arch of the cave; but the other side appeared to be unguarded, save by the dead.

It was agreed by the two adventurers that they should follow the course of the little stream which, after running down the eastern slope, wound through a deep ravine until it lost itself in the sand of the valley. And after a last examination, which revealed no firelight in the village itself, they descended into the cavern to make preparations for a start.

"I have got something in my wallet that you will find better than those boots, old man," said Mr. Blennerhassett.

And he produced a pair of rubber-soled tennis shoes, which the Hon. Algy put on.

Mr. Blennerhassett had one cartridge left in his revolver, and this weapon he handed to Tom; and then divesting themselves of all weight, and each carrying, in addition to their weapons, a couple of empty haversacks, they approached the breastwork and listened intently—all the men of their little party standing up in a silent group, with a good deal of heart-thumping.

The night was very still. The only sound was the gurgle and splashing of the water at their feet, and sometimes a hoarse shout from the Mahmuds' bivouac, away on the other side.

"Have you got plenty of matches?" said Mr. Blennerhassett, sinking his voice to a quite unnecessary whisper.

"Yes, I'm all right now. So long, old man! Are you ready, Howard?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

And, clambering noiselessly over the barricade, they disappeared into the darkness.

Once, those listening at the cavern's mouth heard a stone roll down the slope, and once Tom's heel slipped on a rock, and every man drew an excited breath. After that, nothing but dead silence, except for the gurgle of the stream and the moaning of the night wind through the cave.

For a long time the little beleaguered band lined the breastwork, and not a word was spoken. Those two comrades, the officer and the sergeant, were carrying their lives in their hands to bring them succour; and when at last the men had seated themselves in an irregular group, and, tired out with the day's exertions, several of them fell into a fitful doze, Mr. Blennerhassett continued to flit backwards and forwards, every nerve at high tension.

(Another Long Instalment next Tuesday.)

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