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SCHOOL & SCOUTING.

By
Frank
Richards.



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Rival Scouts



A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Boys of Greyfriars, — BY — FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Hidden Foes.

“WHAT the dickens is that, I wonder?” It was Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, who asked the question, as he looked round him with a puzzled expression. It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove were spending it in Friardale Wood. After a long ramble down the banks of the Sark, they had stopped to rest under the trees, and then a bag was opened and a substantial lunch produced, to which the hungry juniors were doing full justice. All the fraternity of No. 1 Study were there—Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. Last but not least was Billy Bunter, who was busily engaged upon one of Mrs. Mimble’s largest pork-pies, with a grin of great enjoyment upon his shiny fat face. Bob Cherry was opening a tin of condensed milk, holding it between his knees as he sat in the grass, and jabbing at it with a pocket-knife, having carelessly left the tin-opener at Greyfriars in the study. Bob, to judge by the perspiration

on his brow, and the way he gasped for breath, was finding his task a trying one. Nugent looked on, and offered him advice, which was received with no acknowledgment but an ungracious grunt or two. Harry Wharton laid down his sandwich, and looked round him. Round the juniors the trees were thick, with ferns and bushes growing between, and it was impossible to see far into the wood in any direction. “What is it, I wonder?” said Harry again. “Did you hear it?” Bob Cherry looked up, glad of a rest. “What is which?” he asked. “I didn’t hear anything, except Nugent talking like an ass! Nothing new in that, of course!” “I was only suggesting that you should try the short blade,” said Nugent mildly. “It’s stronger than the long one; and the way you are jabbing, you know—” “Oh, rats!” “There’s somebody hanging round the place,” said Wharton. “Three or four times I’ve heard a rustle in the thickets. Blessed if I know what anybody should want to come nosing about for!”

"Some of the Upper Fourth fellows, perhaps, out for a lark!"

"More likely some of the village kids," said Nugent. "Hallo, there! Who are you, and what do you want? Show yourselves!"

There was no reply.

The curious rustling that had awakened Wharton's attention ceased, and no sound came from the deep woods save the twittering of the birds.

"Must have been mistaken," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I wasn't! I heard it distinctly enough. But I dare say they've cleared off, whoever they were."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Blessed if I can get this open!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll just jab a hole in the lid, and we can squeeze the milk out. There! Oh!"

Snap!

"I told you——" began Nugent.

"Oh, ring off! Isn't it bad enough to break the best blade in my pocket-knife without having a silly ass say he told me so?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, very much aggravated. "I'll try the other blade!"

"Well, I said from the start that——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Bob Cherry succeeded in jabbing a hole in the top of the tin of milk, and by denting in the side he induced the sticky liquid to run out. It ran into tin mugs, to which water was added to form a pleasant drink. Bob Cherry shut up what was left of his pocket-knife with an air of satisfaction.

"I knew I should do it in the long run," he remarked.

"Yes; but if you had used the short blade first, you——"

"Look here! Do you want some of this condensed milk down the back of your neck?" demanded Bob Cherry warmly. "If you don't, you'd better ring off!"

"I only meant——"

"Never mind what you meant. Don't keep on like a giddy gramophone. Hand over some of those sandwiches, Hurree Singh Jampot, unless you want to scoff them all!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur smiled his gentle smile.

"The scoff-fulness is nil, as far as my honourable self is concerned," he remarked. "I eatfully consume only the excellent and worthy bananas."

"You're welcome to them. After two hours out, I'm ready for something solid," said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Bunter? Fancy Bunter stopping to speak when he's got grub before him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Wire in, Bunter, while you've got a chance! I'm going to start on the pork-pies as soon as I've finished with the sandwiches."

"I say, you fellows, I believe I can hear somebody in the wood!"

"So can I," said Harry. "I was not mistaken; and they're still there."

"It may be a raid," said Bunter anxiously. "That's what's bothering me. The village kids of Friardale might collar our grub if they had a chance. Then there's those fishermen kids at Pegg. We're at war with the Boy Scouts there, and they——"

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation:

"By Jove, I never thought of them! Now I come to think of it, they have a half-holiday the same day as we do, and they come into the woods for practice. Of course it's those kids playing at scouts we can hear."

"I say, you fellows, hadn't you better look out? It would be no joke if they raided the grub," said Bunter nervously.

"You can go and look out, Billy," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Go and scout in the wood, and bring in all you can find."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Oh, let 'em scout!" said Nugent carelessly. "They won't trouble us. Hand over the condensed milk, Bob! Not on my trousers, ass!"

But Harry Wharton was looking serious. He had started a corps of naval cadets in the Removite at Greyfriars, and they had come to warfare—in a good-natured sort of way—with the Boy Scouts of Pegg. He listened now, and the rustling in the thickets gave him the idea that the camp was being surrounded. It was quite possible that the Boy Scouts, out for training in the wood, had come upon the Greyfriars party, and meant to make them involuntarily aid in the training.

If six or seven sturdy young fishermen rushed the camp while the Removites were picnicking, the latter certainly wouldn't have any chance against them.

Wharton rose to his feet.

"Here, look-out, you chaps!" he said. "It may be a jape No. 65.

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they're going to spring on us. We don't want to be caught napping."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, springing up. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! If you kids are looking for trouble, come out and show yourselves!"

But there was no reply. There had been a faint rustling in the wood, but this ceased instantly when Bob called out.

Wharton knitted his brows.

"That shows that we're their object," he said. "They're out for training, and they're going to use our camp here as the objective of an attack."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well, I'll jolly soon rout 'em out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Just you wait a minute!"

And Bob dashed into the thickets. His chums waited. They heard a muffled shout, and that was all. They waited for Bob Cherry to return, but he did not come.

Nugent gave a low whistle.

"Phew! Where is he?"

"Bob!" shouted Harry. "Bob!"

But no answer came back but the echo of Wharton's voice. Bob Cherry was gone. Where was he—in the hands of the hidden enemy?

"By Jove!" muttered Wharton. "Bob hasn't routed them out; they've collared him instead! We can't leave him in their hands! Come on, you chaps!"

"Here, I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm. "Don't you leave me here alone, you know! Suppose they come——"

"Come with us, then!"

"What about the grub?"

"Blow the grub!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Come on!" said Wharton quietly.

With Hurree Singh and Nugent, he rushed into the thickets where Bob Cherry had disappeared.

Billy Bunter gave an uneasy look round, but he could not make up his mind to leave the pork-pies. Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh searched through the bushes, and shouted to Bob Cherry. But no reply came to their shouting, and they could not see a sign of Bob, nor of the enemy.

The skill with which the unknown foes had taken cover, and captured and silenced Bob, was a pretty plain proof that they belonged to the Boy Scouts of Pegg—the patrol captained by Trumper, the fisherman's son. The Greyfriars lads were on their mettle, and they would have welcomed an attack; but it was not made. For ten minutes they hunted through the wood round the camp—in vain. Then, disappointed and a little angry, they returned to the spot where they had left Bunter. But there a fresh surprise awaited them.

The pork-pies and the sandwiches, the lemonade and the tin mugs and the milk—all were there untouched, but Billy Bunter had disappeared.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Scouting Contest.

HARRY WHARTON looked round him, and whistled. Billy Bunter was gone—the glade was deserted.

"My hat! This is getting rather thick!" Nugent remarked. "It must be the Boy Scouts playing a little jape on us. There must have been a struggle before they got Bunter away from the pork-pie, yet we never heard a sound."

"The strugglefulness must have been terrific!"

Wharton's brows knitted a little.

"Hang it!" he said. "We shall have to go for them; they're laughing up their sleeves at us all the time! Let's have another look!"

"Right you are!"

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They hunted through the trees for Bunter and Bob Cherry. But there was no sign of them to be seen. After another five minutes of it, the juniors separated, and hallooed to each other as they pursued the search in different directions.

But all at once Nugent ceased to answer to the halloos. "Hallo, there!" called out Harry, stopping. "Inky!" "Hallo, my worthy chum!" came back the voice of the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hallo, Nugent! Frank!" But there was no answer. Wharton and the nabob called to one another again, but Nugent could no longer be heard. It was evident that he was in the hands of the enemy. Yet not a sign had been seen of the foe. They were doing their work well.

"Hang it!" muttered Wharton, half-laughing and half-exasperated. "Where are you, Inky? We'd better stick together."

"Here I am, my worthy chum." The voice came through a mass of brambles. Wharton plunged through to join his Indian chum, but on the other side there was no sign of Hurree Singh. Wharton called to him in vain; the nabob's voice did not reply.

Hurree Singh, like the others, had fallen into the enemy's hands. There was no doubt about it, and Harry Wharton cast uneasy glances round, expecting every moment to see one of the mysterious assailants.

He was the last left of the party, but he did not mean the Pegg fellows to take him by surprise. As he stood near the brambles, there was a rustle, and a hand gripped his shoulder; but Wharton's left flashed out, and a Boy Scout rolled on his back in the bush.

Wharton sprang away. "Try it again!" he exclaimed. "Ow!" murmured Dicky Brown, as he sat in the brambles and pressed his hand to his nose. "Ow!"

Wharton was on his guard. A sturdy fellow stepped out of the trees and confronted him—a lad of about Wharton's own age, with a tanned face and a pair of merry, dark eyes—whom Harry knew at once. It was Trumper, the scout-leader of Pegg. He was clad in the garb of a Boy Scout, with his sinewy legs showing under the short trousers, and a wide hat on the back of his head, a stout stick in his hand.

He grinned at the Removite of Greyfriars. "I suppose you guessed it was us?" he remarked. "Yes. Where are my friends?" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, don't cackle!" said Harry. "You've done us, but you haven't captured me yet."

"That's soon done." Trumper imitated the cry of the curlew, the signal of the Boy Scouts of Pegg, and three or four sturdy youths in scout costume appeared from the wood, and surrounded Wharton—at a respectful distance, however. "Now, then, you had better surrender at discretion."

"Rats!" "Come," said Trumper impatiently, "you can't fight half a dozen of us! Give in while you've got the chance." "More rats!" "We'll jolly well rush you if you don't!" "Rush, then!"

Harry Wharton placed his back against a tree, so that he could not be attacked from behind, and faced the scouts with his fists up, and his eyes gleaming behind them. He was standing up for the honour of the Greyfriars Remove, and he did not mean to surrender. The scouts collected upon the spot till there were six stalwart lads ready to back up Trumper. Dicky Brown was mopping his nose with a handkerchief, but the others were all ready for warfare. Trumper glanced over his patrol with an eye of pride.

"Now, then, collar him," he said. "We don't want to hurt you, Wharton, but we've got to collar you, you see. We're out for training. We came on your tracks in the wood, and trailed you down and surrounded your laager—I mean your camp—and then we settled to capture you all. It's a first-rate training, you know, and you are a party of German spies for the time being. You must admit that we managed it all pretty neatly; and you'd have been laid by the heels like the rest, if Dicky Brown hadn't bungled, as usual."

"Oh, hold on," said Dicky Brown wrathfully. "He dotted me on the boko." "You ought to have shoved him on the ground." "But he dotted me on the boko." "Never mind your boko. You were an ass." "He dotted me—"

"Shut up when your patrol-leader's talking. Now, Wharton—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" "Collar him!" shouted Trumper. And he led the rush at Wharton. But though the odds were on their side, the scouts did not have it all their own way. They had to deal with the best athlete in the lower

Form at Greyfriars, and the finest boxer in the Remove, who prided themselves upon being a fighting Form.

Wharton never faltered for a second. He hit out, and every blow was planted with an accuracy that Mr. Sullivan or Tom Sayers might have envied. Trumper rolled over on his back on the grass, without having a very clear idea how he got there. Spriggs fell across him, and bumped out what little breath was left in him. Dicky Brown received a fresh "dot" on precisely the same spot, and sat down with a suddenness that jarred every bone in his body.

Then Wharton's fists made play like lightning, and for some moments the rest of the scouts were kept at bay. As a matter of fact, strong and plucky as they were, they knew little of boxing, and Wharton's skill was worth the strength of three or four. It was admirable to see the way the single lad held them at bay, giving far more hard knocks than he received. A fourth scout rolled on the grass, and then Harry was in the grasp of his assailants.

Even then he gave them a tussle, and when he went down, he dragged two foes with him. But the scouts were piling on him now, and with three of them sitting upon his chest, the Greyfriars lad had to admit himself beaten.

Trumper staggered to his feet, gasping for breath. It was a full minute before he could speak. There was a streak of crimson running from his nose, but there was nothing like malice in his honest, sunburnt face. He evidently admired the way Harry had given an account of himself.

"Go easy, kids!" he exclaimed. "Don't hurt him. He's a plucked 'un!"

"You—you've got me!" gasped Harry, half-laughing, and wholly breathless.

"Yes, it looks like it. You might as well have given in at first."

"The Greyfriars Remove never gives in."

"Well, we've got you. Serve him the same as the others, kids."

Dicky Brown looped a handkerchief round Wharton's wrists, and tied it, then did the same with his ankles. Then the scouts rose breathlessly, leaving him sitting in the grass against a tree-trunk.

"Bring the others here."

Some of the scouts went into the wood, and from their places of concealment amid the brambles the captured juniors were brought. They were all bound, and each had a handkerchief rammed into his mouth for a gag. These were now taken out, as the need for silencing them was past, and, having regained the power of speech, they began to make remarks. Bob Cherry's remarks were especially emphatic; but Nugent was a good second, and even the Nabob of Bhanipur was expressive. But the scouts of Pegg took it all good-humouredly. They were the victors, and the laugh was on their side.

"Just you wait till we get loose, that's all," Bob Cherry finished up.

"You won't get loose in a hurry, then," grinned Trumper. "We sha'n't set you free till you give your parole for the day."

"Bosh! Rats! We won't!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Don't forget that we're going to see Marjorie & Co. this afternoon, Bob. We can't stay here much longer."

"Well, I don't want to make terms with that worm—"

"Oh, rats!" said Trumper, laughing. "You're licked! Don't bear malice!"

"Who's bearing malice? I could lick you hollow if I had a chance! B-r-r-r! Why, I could scout you chaps off the face of the earth!"

"Cheese it," said Wharton. "We're done, though we really hadn't a chance! We'll make it pax for the day, Trumper!"

"The paxfulness is terrific."

"Yes, rather!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Who knows what may be happening to our grub all this time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "We'll make it pax, then, as you call it," said Trumper. "Let them loose."

The Greyfriars juniors, looking very red and rumpled, rose to their feet. They dusted themselves down rather sheepishly, but Billy Bunter did not stop for that. He glided away at once in the direction of the glade, where the pork-pies were awaiting him. He was anxious about those pork-pies.

The Greyfriars juniors had given their parole, otherwise there would certainly have been a scrimmage upon the spot.

But Harry Wharton, though he was not exactly pleased with the result of the encounter with the Pegg scouts, was not one to bear anything like malice.

"You chaps must be hungry if you've had an afternoon

out," he remarked. "We've got some grub yonder. Will you join us—as far as it goes?"

"Well, that's decent of you," said Trumper. "We will, rather!"

Billy Bunter looked rather dismayed as seven hungry young scouts sat down to the interrupted feast with the Greyfriars juniors. But a warning glance from Bob Cherry stopped the objections that rose to his lips. He comforted himself by wiring into the pork-pies at express speed.

The Boy Scouts were hungry, and so were the juniors; but there were plenty of sandwiches. But the late encounter was not forgotten. They were friendly enough, but they were rivals.

"You college kids should start some scout patrols," said Trumper. "We wouldn't mind giving you some points for a start."

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"I rather think we could give you some points, without starting a patrol," he said.

"The ratherfulness is terrific,"

"Yes it looked like it, didn't it, when we tackled you," grinned Trumper.

"Oh, rats! We were taken by surprise."

"Boy Scouts are never taken by surprise," said Trumper.

"Our motto is 'Be prepared!' And we live up to it."

"Yes, rather," said Spriggs. "Of course, you chaps can't expect to do anything in the scout line. You're too—well, soft, you know."

"If we hadn't made it pax, I'd jolly well show you," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "We'd scout against you any day."

"Would you?" exclaimed Trumper instantly. "We take you on, then!"

"Well, I mean——"

"Come on, I take you at your word! We want somebody to scout against. It makes the practice more realistic. If you're as good as your word, we'll get up a contest with you."

"We're ready," said Wharton immediately.

"Good! Now, this is the idea," said Trumper. "Suppose you try to send a man through our lines, and we've got to spot him, and capture him. It's like sending a man through the enemy's lines in war-time, you know. We fix on a certain locality, and keep guard there, and you've got to get a man through. What do you think of the idea?"

"Jolly good."

"Then we'll fix it. You can adopt any disguise you like—any trick—and get a man through to a certain point. If he gets through, you've won. If we stop him, you're beaten, and you sing small."

"We'll take it on," said Wharton. "It will be fun, anyway. When shall it be?"

"Next half-holiday."

"Right. Now for the place?"

"Take this wood," said Trumper. "It's big enough to give you a chance. You've got to send a chap from Greyfriars, to get through the wood down to the shore, and we'll hold the wood. It's giving you every chance. What do you say?"

"We accept."

Trumper rose to his feet, grinning.

"Right you are, then. It's settled. Any details can be arranged by letter. Thanks for the feed—it was ripping. Get a move on, kids."

And the Boy Scouts marched off into the wood; and the Greyfriars juniors, having packed the remnant of the feed in Bunter's bag, strolled away in the westerling sun towards Cliff House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tea at Cliff House.

HARRY WHARTON was looking very thoughtful. He and his chums had accepted the challenge of the Boy Scouts, but they had no very clear idea as to how they were to accomplish the task they had undertaken. Harry, as leader, had the responsibility of finding ways and means, and the other juniors cheerfully left it to him. And at present Harry did not see how it was to be done.

Trumper and his scouts had been training for months, and had picked up most of what was to be learned of scoutcraft and woodcraft. They knew the wood from end to end—every glade, every dell, every recess, almost every thicket. To pass through their lines, when they were once on the watch, would be a difficult matter—if not an impossible one. But that was what the Greyfriars juniors had undertaken to do.

"Penny for your thoughts, old chap," said Bob Cherry, when Harry had walked on, his hands in his pockets, and in deep silence, for five minutes.

Wharton started, and laughed.

No. 65.

"THE MAGNET" NEXT WEEK: "STONEY BROKE!" A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"I was thinking about the contest with the scouts. We've got to manage it somehow, but I'm blessed if I see how."

"We'll hold a study meeting, and a council of war, and settle it," said Bob Cherry airily. "That's not the bother at present. We shall be in sight of Cliff House in a few minutes——"

"Well, surely that's not a bother," said Nugent.

"I don't mean that, but——"

"Oh, I know! Is your necktie straight? No, it isn't."

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry.

He took off his collar and necktie, and, kneeling by the rippling Sark, plunged his hands and face in the stream, and laved them there. It occurred to the others that they were a little grubby after a long ramble in the woods, and they followed Bob Cherry's example. All except Billy Bunter. He was grubbier of all, but he was quite satisfied to remain as he was. He sat on the bank to wait. Bob Cherry raised his streaming face from the water.

"Pooof! This freshens you up!" he remarked. "Why didn't you think of bringing a towel in your pocket, Harry?"

"There's your handkerchief."

"Wag your head about, and it will soon get dry," said Nugent. "I've got a pocket-comb, and you can comb your hair as straight as it ever is. Pooof!"

The juniors, with streaming faces, knuckled the water out of their eyes. As they did so, a low ripple of laughter fell upon their ears.

Bob Cherry went as red as a beetroot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's—it's Marjorie!"

He dashed the drops from his eyes, and blinked at the new-comers. Three girls were coming down the bank of the stream, and they had stopped at the sight of the juniors at their ablutions. The boys, with their faces and front hair streaming with water, certainly did present a comical sight.

Marjorie Hazeldene could not restrain that rippling little laugh. Clara and Wilhelmina were smiling audibly. Bob Cherry was red, and Nugent blushed, but Harry Wharton laughed. As for Hurree Janset Ram Singh, it could not be seen whether he blushed or not.

"I'm so sorry," said Marjorie penitently. "I oughtn't to have—have smiled. But—but it was so funny."

"I dare say it is," said Harry. "As a matter of fact, we were coming to see you, and—and——"

Miss Clara made a low curtsy.

"And we are greatly honoured," she said solemnly. "However will you get your faces dry again?"

"In the sunful shine the dryfulness will soon be terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The happiness of the meeting with the charming misses is great."

Bob Cherry rubbed his face on his pocket-handkerchief, and reduced it to something like dryness. He tugged his hair as straight as possible, and then it dawned upon him that he had no collar on. Marjorie & Co. took pity upon his unhappy state, and mercifully looked away while Bob wrestled with his collar, his stud, and his necktie. The girls were going home towards Cliff House, and Marjorie asked the juniors in to tea. Billy Bunter's fat face brightened up at once. He had lately made a record meal, but he was always ready for another. And the Greyfriars juniors were not likely to decline that invitation, whether they were hungry or not. But, as a matter of fact, they had healthy, boyish appetites, and were generally ready to negotiate an extra meal.

Tea was almost ready at Cliff House when the chums of Greyfriars entered the wide, green old garden with Marjorie & Co. Miss Penelope Primrose, the principal of Cliff House, frequently had tea laid in the garden now that the afternoons were becoming fine and warm. The sight of the tea-tables, with their white cloths and shining crockery, was a very cheerful one. There was a crowd of girls in the garden, all of whom gave the Greyfriars chums bright smiles. Miss Primrose bade them welcome in her sweet, old-fashioned way. Her eye dwelt, perhaps, for a moment, upon Bunter's shiny, grubby face, but the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to notice it. The others noticed it, however, and they mentally resolved to give Bunter their opinion on the subject, later, at Greyfriars.

"Polly wants sugar!"

Harry Wharton looked round quickly as a cackling voice made that statement close at hand. Miss Primrose smiled.

"It is only Polly!" she said.

And Wharton laughed. A big green cage stood on a seat under one of the trees, and a brightly-coloured parrot was staring from it with his big round eyes. Polly was Miss Primrose's pet, and was dutifully petted by all Miss Primrose's pupils. His vocabulary was limited, but to Miss Primrose he was the most wonderful parrot that ever talked. He was supposed to be very old—older than any of Miss Primrose's pupils, at all events, and there was a current belief at Cliff House that Polly had been a gift

from someone connected with a romantic episode of Miss Primrose's youth.

"Polly wants sugar! Poor Polly!" said the bird.

"By Jove, what a ripping parrot!" said Bob Cherry.

"The rippingfulness is terrific."

"He is a dear," said Miss Primrose, with a fond glance at her pet. "He says a great many clever things, and sometimes I really fancy that he can think, he says things so appropriately. Whenever he sees the sugar-basin, he says 'Polly wants sugar.' Is it not wonderful?"

"The wonderfulness is great," said the nabob admiringly.

"In my country we have parrots that talk terrifically. There was one in Bhanipur who was taught to talk by a British sailor. He used to say—"

"I think tea is ready," said Miss Primrose hurriedly.

Perhaps she was nervous about her girls hearing what the British sailor had taught the parrot to say.

"He used to say: 'Shiver my timbers!' and 'I don't care a—'"

"Tea is ready."

"Yes, respected and esteemed madam; but as I was telling you, the sailor taught the parrot to say: 'I don't care a—'"

"Come on, Inky, and sit down," said Bob Cherry, dragging his chum by the arm.

"Yes; but I am telling the esteemed and ludicrous madam that the parrot used to say 'I don't care a—'"

"Here, you are, that's your chair."

Bob jammed the nabob down in a chair with a force that took his breath away. Miss Primrose was looking elaborately unconscious, but some of the girls seemed on the point of going into convulsions. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was innocent of having caused any alarm, and he stared at Bob Cherry in reproachful amazement.

"My worthy chum, you have deprived me of the breathfulness, and interrupted me in relating to the esteemed Miss Primrose how the parrot said: 'I don't care a—'"

"Ring off, you ass!"

"The ringfulness will be terrific when I have finished." Hurree Singh turned to Miss Penelope again with his most agreeable smile, and Bob Cherry, seeing that it was useless to seek to stop him, groaned with inward apprehension. "As I was saying, esteemed madam, the parrot used to say: 'I don't care a little bit for sugar.'"

Bob Cherry and his chums gasped with relief. Miss Primrose's face had been a study, but it cleared now. Having got safely over what the parrot said, Hurree Singh turned to his tea. He seemed surprised to see that some of the girls were very pink, and that others seemed on the brink of convulsions. Billy Bunter, who had listened with a grin, seemed struck by a sudden idea. He looked at the parrot, blinking solemnly in the red westering sun, and chuckled softly. Harry Wharton looked round at him.

"I say, Wharton, I've thought of a good wheeze," muttered the ventriloquist of Greyfriars. "Suppose the parrot talked, hey?"

"He does talk," said Wharton.

"I mean, suppose I made him say things," grinned Billy.

Wharton looked puzzled for a moment, and then he remembered Billy Bunter's ventriloquial powers. He was about to whisper dire threats of what would happen to Billy if he put his idea into execution; but just then Miss Primrose spoke to him, and he had to turn away.

Bunter was too short-sighted to see Wharton's expression. He chuckled again over his secret idea, and awaited a favourable opportunity of making the parrot talk.

It was a merry tea-party. The boys were made much of, and the Cliff House cakes and jam tempted them to another meal. In the midst of the light ripple of talk, there came a cackling voice from the parrot's cage.

"Hallo, hallo! Shiver my timbers!"

Miss Primrose gave quite a jump.

"My goodness gracious! What is that?"

"Shiver my timbers!"

"Bless my soul! It is Polly! I have never heard him say that before!"

Polly blinked at his mistress.

He was quite unconscious of having said anything of the sort, but the voice had certainly seemed to proceed from the parrot's cage.

"Poor Polly!" said Marjorie. "Polly like sugar!"

"I don't care a bit for sugar."

"Dear me," said Miss Primrose, in wonder. "Isn't he a marvellous bird? He has picked that up through hearing our young friend say it."

"The marvellousness is terrific."

"Poor Polly! Say it again, Polly."

"Rats!"

Miss Primrose started.

"Polly!" said she faintly.

"Rats! Get your hair cut!"

Miss Primrose sank helplessly into her chair.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Polly Surprises Miss Primrose.

THE Cliff House girls looked at one another, and the Greyfriars juniors stared blankly at the parrot. Polly had certainly taken on new and wonderful gifts of speech, but had not taken the trouble to study the laws of politeness at the same time. Miss Primrose was amazed, and she could only stare at the parrot. Polly blinked at her solemnly.

"My goodness!" said Miss Clara. "I have never heard anything like that! What is the matter with Polly?"

Harry Wharton gave Billy Bunter a sharp look. But the fat junior could not see it, and it was impossible for Wharton to speak to him without being overheard, and so giving the whole thing away.

It was not exactly the thing for Bunter to be playing a trick on his kind hostess, but it would only make matters worse to let the truth become known. Wharton was responsible for the conduct of the fellows he brought with him, and he angrily told himself that he might have known what to expect of Bunter.

At the same time, the thing was certainly funny. Polly only was unconscious of any flutter.

"Stuff!" said Polly. "Nothing's the matter."

"My goodness!"

"I'm all right—go and eat coke!"

"B-b-b-bless my soul!" murmured the principal of Cliff House faintly. "Polly must be ill!"

"Rats!" said Polly. "I'm all right. I want something to drink. Is there anything left in the bottle?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Cack, cack, cack!" crowed Polly. "Cackle, cackle! Get your hair cut!"

"Oh, dear! Good gracious!"

"Kiss me!" said Polly. "Kiss me, and call me Algernon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help laughing, and the girls could not help joining them. Miss Primrose's face was a study.

"This—this is amazing!" she said faintly. "I—I have never heard anything like it! Polly—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Polly. "Where's that drink?"

"Polly, dear Polly, be silent—"

"No fear! Hurroo! We won't go home till morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Primrose looked much distressed. She signed to one of the trim maids who attended the tea-tables.

"Take Polly indoors," she said; "he is ill. Take him in at once."

"Yes, ma'am."

The cage was lifted from the seat. Polly seemed to object, for he blinked and cackled—genuinely this time. But his protests were not heeded.

"Take him away at once."

"Here, draw the line, you know!" came a voice from the receding cage. "This is rather too thick! I don't want to go in! Blessed if I'm going to stand this! Mind your front hair doesn't come off! Yah!"

Bob Cherry kicked Bunter's leg violently under the table, and the fat junior gave a yell and sprang up. Teacups and tea went flying as he bumped against the table, and Miss Clara's pretty dress had a narrow escape. Nothing more was heard from the parrot, but something was heard from Bunter.

"Dear me!" said Miss Primrose. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Bob Cherry, with a glare at Bunter. "It's a spasm. Bunt is often taken like that after over-eating."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Sit down, and don't talk."

"Look here—"

But Bunter, shortsighted as he was, couldn't help seeing the united glares of his friends, and he sat down and was quiet. He looked sulky, but he comforted himself with tea and cake. Harry Wharton stole a look at Marjorie. A very cold look had come over the girl's face, and Harry knew that she remembered that Bunter was a ventriloquist, and that she knew where the parrot's unexpected remarks had come from. The Removite felt extremely uncomfortable. He found an opportunity of speaking quietly to Marjorie a few minutes later. The girls were all discussing the strange outbreak of Polly.

"I say, Marjorie," said Harry awkwardly, "I suppose you know—"

"About the parrot? Yes."

"I'm sorry. I won't let that young porpoise come here again. I hadn't the faintest idea—"

"I'm sure of that," said Marjorie softly. "But it was wrong to play such a trick upon Miss Primrose."

"I'll talk to him presently about it," said Harry grimly. Marjorie gave him a quick look.

"No, no—don't! I mean talk to him, but—nothing else!"

Wharton laughed.

"He ought to have a licking," he said.

"Oh, no, no!"

"Right-ho, I'll talk to him, then!" said Harry. "But you're not angry?"

"Not at all." And Marjorie smiled again.

There was no more ventriloquism from Bunter, and a little later the teaparty broke up. Harry had told Marjorie of the coming contest with the Boy Scouts, and the girl was very much interested.

"You will see something of us on Saturday afternoon if you are on the shore," Harry remarked, as they walked down to the gate. "We have to send a man through Friar-dale Wood, you know, to get to the shore uncaptured. I don't quite know how we shall do it yet, but we're going to try."

Marjorie nodded, with a smile.

"We are going out for a walk with Miss Primrose on Saturday afternoon," she said. "I dare say we shall see you. I hope so—I shall like to hear how you get on with the scouts. Good-bye."

They shook hands at the gate. The Greyfriars juniors strode swiftly down the road to Greyfriars, and reached the gates well before locking-up. Billy Bunter walked at a little distance from the others, having a feeling that they intended to make some personal remarks on the subject of his ventriloquism. But the juniors were discussing the scout affair now. Bunter dodged in at the gates and made off—but a heavy hand descended upon his shoulder before he could escape.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You young ass!" said Harry. "I've promised Marjorie not to lick you, or else I'd wipe up the Close with you on the spot! What on earth are you turning on that greasy grin about?" he went on, looking intently at Bunter. The fat junior was certainly smirking in a curious way.

"Oh, nothing! Only—"

"Only what?" asked Bob Cherry, coming nearer to Bunter with a glint in his eyes.

"Nothing. I don't want to make Cherry jealous. Only Marjorie making you promise that shows—he, he— Of course, you understand!"

"No, I don't think I understand," said Wharton quietly. "What do you mean—if you mean anything?"

"Well—he, he, he—I told you Marjorie liked me, and— Ow! Cherry, you utter beast, leggo—you're pulling my ear off!" wailed Bunter.

Bob Cherry did not let go, he only pinched the harder; and as Bunter squirmed round in anguish, he applied his boot to the fat junior.

"There, you worm," he said, releasing Bunter at last; "is that enough for you?"

"Ow! Oh! Groo! You beast! You're jealous, and—ow!"

Bunter darted off as Bob came for him again, and disappeared at a surprising speed across the Close. Bob looked very red and flustered and angry.

"That fat little beast sha'n't go to Cliff House again!" he exclaimed. "I'm blessed if I know what we stand him at all for! Pah!"

And it was some time before Bob Cherry cooled down. The chums of the Remove strolled into the School House, and Harry Wharton stopped to speak to a lad who was reading a letter in the hall. It was Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire—"the scholarship boy," as some of the fellows called him. Linley was looking very pleased over the letter he was reading, and he did not notice Wharton till he felt the tap on the shoulder.

He looked up with a cheery smile.

"Good news from home?" said Wharton, smiling.

"Yes," said Mark. "My sister's going to London soon, and I may be able to see her."

Wharton looked interested.

"That will be jolly for you!" he said.

"Yes, won't it?"

Wharton passed on, and Mark went on reading his letter. The Lancashire lad's face was very bright. Though some of the fellows in the Remove treated him well, and most of the masters were kind enough to him—though it was really by a great stroke of good fortune that he had been able to come to Greyfriars at all—at the same time, the lad had felt home-sickness keenly at times. He was far away from his own kin and among people who, naturally enough, had little in common in thought and feeling with the lad who had worked in a Lancashire mill. The term seemed very long to Mark sometimes, and the prospect of seeing his sister again before the holidays was a happy No. 65.

"THE MAGNET" Library, No. 65.

NEXT WEEK:

"STONEY BROKE!"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

one. True, London was far enough from Greyfriars, but if Mabel were in London, he would find some opportunity of seeing her at the house of his relations there, even if she could not come to Greyfriars. But if she could come there—if he could have the pleasure of showing her over the great school, the old grey tower, the ancient chapel, the time-worn cloisters—what a happy time it would be for both of them!

Mark Linley's face was usually more grave and thoughtful than was natural at his age, but for the rest of this day it wore a bright expression which Bob Cherry characterised as a smile that wouldn't come off.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Makes a Suggestion.

HARRY WHARTON wore a look of great thoughtfulness at intervals during lessons the next day. His chums had cheerfully left him the task of planning the contest with the Boy Scouts of Pegg, and he had to decide on a "wheeze"; but so far he had not succeeded in thinking of anything that would be likely to succeed. After lessons that day there was cricket practice, but as the chums of the Remove came out of the class-room, Wharton called to them.

"Get to the study, kids!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the game? We've got to play cricket!"

"We've got to hold a council of war!"

"Councils of war are off. Cricket's the word, my son!"

"Cheese it, and come on."

Wharton's word was law. He had the responsibility, and he had the authority too. Bob Cherry grumbled and followed him, and Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh fell into line. Billy Bunter, who was going towards the door, turned round and followed them upstairs. Nugent turned round and looked at him.

"Cut!" he said briefly.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Rats! You're not wanted. Bunk!"

"I suppose a fellow can come into his own study if he wants to," said Billy Bunter, looking very injured. And he followed the Famous Four along the Remove passage and into No. 1 Study. "I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, get off, you fat earth-worm!"

"I want to cook for you, you know. I can't leave you in the lurch when you've got a feed on. It isn't like you to leave a chum out, either. Besides, I'm going to stand a series of big feeds shortly myself. I'm expecting three pounds on Saturday from the Patriotic Home Work Association for some picture-postcards I've been colouring for them, and—"

"My hat! Isn't he like the little brook?" said Bob Cherry. "He goes on for ever! Get out, Bunter—you're no good in a council of war!"

"A-a-a-a what?" exclaimed Bunter.

"A council of war, ass! Get out!"

"Well, of all the swindles!" said Billy Bunter. "Blessed if I care about your rotten councils of war. I thought it was a feed, or I shouldn't have taken the trouble to fag upstairs after you. Yah!"

And the fat junior rolled out of the study.

"Thank goodness he's gone!" said Bob Cherry. "That fat young porker is beginning to get on my nerves! I wonder if we could get him to change into some other study?"

"We might get him to, but we shouldn't get any other study to take him in in a hurry!" grinned Nugent. "Never mind Bunter. What about the giddy council of war?"

"Well, it's Thursday to-day," said Wharton. "We've got to face the scouts on Saturday afternoon. It's time something was settled. One of us has got to get through the lines on Saturday. Which one of us is to try it?"

"Volunteers," said Bob Cherry.

"I don't mind trying," said Nugent. "I know the wood better than you chaps do, as I've been longer at Greyfriars than any of you. I may be able to dodge them. Only they're such keen young beggars, you know, and then they've a signal that can be heard nearly from one end to the other of the wood. If one of them spots me, I shall have the whole family on my neck in next to no time."

"That's the trouble." Bob Cherry looked serious. "It looks to me as if we've bitten off more than we can chew. It was really my fault."

ANSWERS

"No good talking about that now," said Wharton, in his incisive way. "We're in for it, and we've got to go through with it."

"Right you are! If it were to take place after dark, we could send Inky. He wouldn't be seen after dark," said Bob regretfully.

"My worthy chum—"

"Me come in?"

It was a quiet voice at the door. Wun Lung, the little Chinese junior at Greyfriars, came into the study, with his usual bland and agreeable smile.

"Oh, come in!" said Harry. "What is it?"

"Me no wantee anything. Me helpee you."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can't help us, kid. We've got to send a chap through the scouts in Friardale Wood on Saturday afternoon—"

"Me knowee; Buntel tell me yestelday," said Wun Lung. "Everybody knowee."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Of course that young ass would jaw! I suppose we shall have the whole Remove grinning at us if we fail to pull it off."

"The grinfulness will be terrific."

"Me tinkee me knowee."

"Do you mean that you've got an idea?" said Harry, more attentively. He knew that the little Celestial had a way of finding solutions for difficulties; and in some of the Remove "wheezes" Wun Lung's advice had been useful. "Go ahead, then, kid!"

"You goee in disguisee."

"We've thought of that," said Bob Cherry. "Only there's a limit to the disguises we could go in. It's no good putting on a grey beard like a chap in a detective story, or dressing up as a messenger boy or a Red Indian, you know."

"Me savvy."

"Then what disguise do you suggest?" asked Wharton. "I've run over pretty nearly everything in my mind, and I can't think of one that's at all feasible."

"Girlee."

"Eh?"

"Goee as girlee," said Wun Lung. "What you tinkee?"

The chums of the Remove stared at him speechlessly.

They had thought of nearly every possible plan of hoodwinking the Boy Scouts, but the thought of a fellow going through their lines disguised as a girl had never even crossed Wharton's mind.

But immediately Wun Lung had spoken, the possibilities of the idea rushed into the brain of the captain of the Remove.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Splendid!"

"The splendidfulness is terrific, but—"

"There was something of the kind done by a scout organisation in London," said Harry excitedly. "I heard some fellow speaking about it, now I come to think of it. It's a ripping idea, if we can work it."

"But can we?" said Bob Cherry doubtfully. "You see, how are we to make a boy's face look like a girl's? Boys' faces are rougher, you know, and not so—well, not so good-looking as a rule."

"Well, there are plain girls, too," said Nugent. "You would pass, as far as that goes, Bob."

"I wasn't thinking of myself," said Bob, frowning. "A chap may be good-looking, too, but not the same kind of good looks. Then there's the hair."

"Some girls wear short hair."

"Well, it would cause notice, and if we excite notice, we're done."

"What price a wig, then?"

"The wigfulness is the proper caper, my worthy chums," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "I think it a wheezy good idea. Our Chinese chum has come to the rescue in the needful hour like an indeedful friend."

"Good old heathen!" said Bob Cherry, giving Wun Lung a slap on the shoulder that nearly felled him to the floor. "It's a ripping wheeze, whether we work it or not. But—" He broke off, and his face changed. "I—I say, would it be considered—well, anything like disrespectful, to dress like a girl, because if so—"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Harry quietly. "If the idea were disrespectful, we shouldn't think of it for a moment, of course. But I don't see that it is. Scouts in war time have dressed like women, to observe the enemy or to get through an enemy's lines, as we're doing now; and, anyway, there can be no disrespect where none is intended. I think that's all right."

"Good! Then is it settled?"

"We shall have to think that out. I think it's a good idea; but which of us is going?"

Wun Lung glided out of the study with his silent step, leaving the chums of the Remove looking at one another

dubiously. They had all agreed that it was a good idea—but which of them was to dress as a girl to pass through the enemy's lines?

That was a different matter!

The absurdity of the situation if the individual should be caught was apparent to all of them, and no one liked the prospect.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Nugent!

HARRY WHARTON broke the silence, which had lasted some minutes. No one in No. 1 Study seemed to have any suggestion to make.

"We'd better get to business," he said. "Before we decide on the individual, let's settle whether the scheme's to be adopted. 'Yes' or 'No.'"

"Yes," said Bob Cherry and Nugent.

"The yesfulness is terrific."

"Good! I say 'yes,' too. Now, the individual has to be selected. There are no volunteers, of course?" Wharton paused for a reply, but one did not come. "Very well. Now, in the first place, Inky's barred, because his beautiful complexion would give him away at once. We couldn't palm him off on the Boy Scouts for a Hindu girl."

"Ha, ha! No."

"So it's among us three."

"I'm afraid it's us two," said Nugent. "Bob will have to be barred. I put it to you, did any girl in the wide world ever have feet that size?"

"You let my feet alone," growled Bob Cherry, who was rather sensitive on that point. "I'd rather have feet a chap can stand on, than little girly tootsies like yours, anyway."

"You mean feet that several chaps can stand on—"

"Oh, shut up! Let's talk business. If Nugent is going to be funny, I retire from the council of war."

"There's something in what Frank says, though," said Wharton. "Your feet are ripping for getting goals with, Bob, but they're not what anybody would call ornamental. Besides, your legs are so jolly long, and then your face is all right for a boy, but a girl with a face like that—"

"Oh, keep it up!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Anybody would think I was anxious for the job. I shall be jolly glad to keep out of it."

"And, as a matter of fact, I'm not good-looking enough to pass for a girl under any circumstances," said Harry, a little hurriedly. "So you see, Frank—"

"Do I?" said Nugent grimly. "I don't!"

"You've got such a smooth skin—"

"Thanks!"

"And nice, soft eyes—"

"Nice soft head, too, if I took in all your soft sawder."

"And pretty hands and feet," urged Wharton, "and—"

"First time you've mentioned them."

"Well, there hasn't been occasion to mention them before. Then you'd have a good figure, too, if you wore a skirt and blouse—"

"Rats! I'm not a volunteer this time."

"Then we'll toss up for it," said Wharton resignedly.

"Oh, come off! If you chaps really think I should work it better, I'm willing to offer," said Nugent. "It's for the good of the cause."

"Well, I do think so, honest Injun," said Wharton. "You really have a nice, soft skin and decent eyes, and smaller hands and feet than the rest of us. Of course, you'll look a bit bulky as a girl, all the same; but, then, there are bulky girls. Wilhelmina at Cliff House, for instance."

"Oh, all right! I'm the giddy victim, then," said Nugent. "We've got to beat the scouts somehow. What about the disguise?"

"We shall have to keep it awfully dark, of course. I will cut down to Friardale on my bike now and buy some cheap girl's clothes at the second-hand shop there. I can get them all pretty cheap; they needn't be first-class quality or fit, you know. You can wear a sash, and—"

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to wear a rotten sash!" grumbled Nugent, half repenting of his offer now that it was accepted. "You're not going to make me look more of a guy than is absolutely necessary."

"My dear chap, a girl has to wear a sash. I believe they all do. Marjorie wears a sash, so I should think a sash is good enough for you."

"I should think so," said Bob Cherry indignantly. "I'm really surprised at you, Nugent."

"Then there's the flaxen wig we wear in the private theatricals," said Wharton thoughtfully. "It's pretty well"

known at Greyfriars, but the scouts at Pegg haven't seen it. That suits Nugent's pretty milky complexion to a T."

"Oh, let my beastly complexion alone. Look here, I'm not going to wear a rotten wig."

"Can't be helped. It's only as long as Marjorie's hair, and if Marjorie can have the fearful trouble of wearing long hair always, I suppose you can have it for one afternoon."

"I should think so," said Bob Cherry. "Really, Nugent—"

"Oh, pile it on," said Nugent. "It's different. I believe girls like long hair. Never mind; I'll wear a wig, and a false beard, too, if you like. Don't mind me."

"Right; we won't. I'll go and get a pass from Wingate now, and buzz off to the village on my bike," said Wharton.

And he hurried away. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, gave him the pass to go down to the village, freely enough; he knew he could trust Wharton. Hazeldene was in the bicycle shed when Wharton entered it to get out his machine.

"Coming out for a run?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, if you like," said Hazeldene. "My machine's rather rocky. I've had it two years, and it wasn't much to begin with. That's a clipper of yours."

Harry Wharton's machine was a present from his uncle, and it was really a handsome one. That was partly due, however, to the care Wharton took of it, while Hazeldene was given to neglecting his bicycle except when he wanted to use it. A bicycle, like a horse, requires plenty of attention, and is worth it. The two Removites wheeled their machines out, and mounted in the road. There was plenty of time to get to the village and back before lighting-up. They went down the country road at a good speed, Wharton's machine going soundlessly, smooth as flowing oil, while Hazeldene's "jigger" emitted the occasional cackle and clink of the neglected bicycle. They rode into the village of Friardale, and a stout man with an aquiline nose lifted his hand and beckoned to Hazeldene as they passed a furniture shop.

Wharton saw it, and glanced at Hazeldene, and to his surprise he noted that Marjorie's brother had changed colour. He knew the fat man—it was Mr. Lazarus, the furniture-dealer of Friardale, of whom the chums of No. 1 Study had bought new furniture for their quarters after the late fire at Greyfriars. Hazeldene had done the same, furnishing his study in a style that had surprised the rest of the Remove, for Hazeldene was not a rich boy.

Hazeldene slackened speed, and jumped off.

"You needn't wait for me," he said awkwardly.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Come on to the shop, then," he said; and he pedalled on.

He looked, and felt, rather uneasy. There had been something imperative in the way Mr. Lazarus beckoned to the Removite, and Hazeldene had evidently not ventured to disregard the beckoning. It occurred to Wharton that Hazeldene might be in debt; and the recollection of a previous experience in connection with Hazeldene came unpleasantly into his mind.

He rode on to Mr. Popper's, however, and dismounted there. More than once the Greyfriars juniors had been to Mr. Popper's shop for clothes to be used in the amateur theatricals of the Greyfriars Operatic and Dramatic Society, and Wharton was very well known there. Mr. Popper received him with great politeness.

Harry did not give any indication of what he wanted the things for, leaving Mr. Popper to draw his own conclusions. He looked over the second-hand stock, and selected a really nice-looking serge frock, a blouse that had been white, and would doubtless wash white again, a sash of green silk, and a hat adorned with flowers. Fortunately, he had remembered to take Nugent's size in boots and stockings, and these were soon procured. Then a pair of gloves and a lace-edged handkerchief, and Harry thought the outfit was complete.

The goods were made up into a bundle, and Wharton paid for them. Mr. Popper offered to send them up to the school, and he was quite willing to let the bill stand over, but Harry promptly declined both offers. He was taking the bundle out to his bicycle when Hazeldene wheeled up his machine. Marjorie's brother was looking extremely downcast.

"Finished here?" he asked.

"Yes, just done."

"What on earth have you been buying?"

Wharton explained. Hazeldene could be trusted with the secret. The junior chuckled. But his face was overcast again as he mounted his bicycle to ride back to the school.

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, breaking a gloomy No. 65.

silence, as they came in sight of the gates of Greyfriars, "is anything the matter, Hazeldene?"

Hazeldene started and coloured.

"What should be the matter?" he asked evasively.

"It's no business of mine. But you look down in the mouth. If there's anything I can do—"

Hazeldene shook his head.

"No; it's all right."

And he did not speak again till they entered Greyfriars. And then Harry Wharton carried the bundle up to No. 1 Study, and the chums of the Remove were soon busy with its contents.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Miss Nugent.

BILLY BUNTER looked into No. 1 Study in good time for tea, and gave a most expressive snort. There were few signs of tea in the study. On the table was a big bundle of clothes that Wharton and Cherry were unwrapping, and Nugent was cutting chunks of bread and cheese, and adding hot water to some glasses of milk. It was clear that tea in No. 1 Study that evening was to be a very hasty and informal affair.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out!" said Bob Cherry, looking up. "There's no tea here. We're busy. You can take a chunk of bread and cheese into the passage."

"I can get something as good as that in Hall," said Bunter sulkily.

"Then go to Hall, and don't bother!"

"Look here—"

"Oustide!"

Bob Cherry took Bunter by one fat ear, led him into the passage, and slammed the door and locked it. Bunter stared at the locked door with feelings too deep for vocal expression. To be turned out of his own study like this—and to have the visions of fried sausages fade away from his mind like a beautiful dream—it was really rough on Bunter!

Slowly and disconsolately the fat junior turned his steps in the direction of Hall, to join in the school tea—a very poor meal compared with what he was accustomed to in Wharton's study.

But the Famous Four were too busy to think of tea, or of Bunter either. Chunks of bread and cheese did not appeal to Bunter, but they were good enough for the less fastidious four. They could eat while they worked, and that was a saving of time.

The bundle was unfastened, and the newly-purchased clothes were turned out. The Removites admired them very much, with the exception of Nugent. The more he thought about the idea the less he liked it. There was no retreat now, but Nugent was not enthusiastic.

"Makes a chap feel such a silly ass!" he grunted. "Blessed if I know how girls can stand wearing all this rot!"

"Stands to reason they like it, or they wouldn't do it," said Wharton. "You'll get to like it in time."

"No fear! This is the first and last time I'm going to be made a guy of!"

"Stuff! How can you call it being made a guy of, to be dressed in the same sort of togs that Marjorie has to wear every day?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "Really, Nugent—"

"Oh, rats! What's that thing?"

"That's a blouse."

"Have I got to wear it?"

"Well, I haven't bought it for you to eat," said Wharton.

"Get some of those things off, and we'll try these on. We may have a lot of sewing and altering to do, and we can do it better with the things on you. Dressmakers use a dummy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Dressmakers use a dummy in the same way—"

"If you call me a dummy—" began Nugent.

"I wasn't calling you a dummy," said Wharton. "I only said dressmakers use a dummy to try things on for the fit, same as we're going to do with you. I suppose you can act the part of a dummy without being a dummy?"

"I don't know. You fellows don't seem to be able to."

"Get those things off. Blessed if I know what you're grumbling about! Girls' clothes are ever so much prettier than boys' togs."

"I don't want to look pretty."

"He's satisfied with his face as it is," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Cherry—"

"All right, old son! Tuck into the tommy, and get those togs off."



"You-you've got me!" gasped Harry Wharton, half laughing and wholly breathless. "Yes, it looks like it!" agreed the scouts, propping him up in the grass against a tree-trunk.

Nugent devoured bread and cheese, and glowered. The idea of being dressed as a girl appealed less and less to his mind. The stockings and the pretty boots would have charmed many a feminine heart, but they only made Nugent frown. The sash was a charming one, but it did not bring a smile to Nugent's face.

"Look here," he said flatly, "I'm going to have my own clothes on, all the same. You can fix it how you like, but that's settled. Suppose I got spotted? I may have to yank these things off in a hurry and bolt, and—"

"Well, of all the duffers!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Do you think the scouts wouldn't pass any remark on a girl who went out in a short skirt and Eton trousers?"

"The remarkfulness would be terrific."

"Well, I'll wear the loose trousers we use when we're sailing in the Naval Corps," said Nugent. "I can roll them up above the knees."

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Wharton approvingly. "Get into them, then, and let's get to business."

Nugent, still looking decidedly grumpy, donned the loose sailor trousers, and rolled them above his knees, and then put on the stockings and boots. Then Harry held the skirt for him to get into. Nugent eyed it doubtfully.

"Which end do you get in?" he demanded.

Wharton looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I know! Do you know, Bob?"

"It stands to reason you get in at the big end," said

Bob Cherry, with an air of great wisdom. "Put it over his head, and pull it down round him."

"It won't go over his head, I'm afraid."

"Ass! There's something that unfastens at the waist; there must be."

"Good! Here's a hook!"

"Shove it over his napper."

The skirt was dragged upon Nugent. The hooks refused to meet round his waist, as was only to be expected.

"Better wear a cricket-belt outside it," said Bob Cherry. "The sash will cover it up, and it won't be noticed."

"H'm! I suppose so."

"Now there's the blouse. You'll have to have your waistcoat off, or you'll spoil the shape entirely."

"I don't see it."

"Oh, don't argue, old chap. I'll help you off with the waistcoat."

The waistcoat was removed, and Nugent was arrayed in the blouse. Wharton discovered that this was fastened at the waist with strings, instead of hooks, and that it could be let out or drawn in to any extent. This was a great comfort. Nugent was beginning to look very like a girl, but the chums weren't quite satisfied with the set of the blouse.

"It doesn't look quite right," Wharton remarked, with a shake of the head. "Have you chaps ever noticed how it is done?"

"No, I haven't," said Bob Cherry. "That only shows how necessary it is for a chap to keep his eyes open, and notice things. I think the blouse ought to be tucked into the top of the skirt."

"Oh, no; that's not it. You see, it's bigger than the skirt."

"Well, perhaps the sash is supposed to cover up the join," said Bob perplexedly. "Let's try the effect of the sash."

The sash was applied, and certainly it did improve the appearance of the join.

The chums of the Remove gazed at Nugent in great admiration. Up to his neck he was certainly a very passable-looking girl, but his Eton collar and his short hair and dissatisfied face did not match his clothes.

"Off with that collar!" said Harry briskly. "The blouse fastens round the neck, and you can wear a scarf or something. Where's the wig?"

"Here it is, my worthy chum."

"Stick it on."

The flaxen wig made a startling difference to Nugent. Except for his face, he was now quite a girl in appearance. His face was very soft and good-looking for a boy, but the feminine attire had the effect of making it look harder and bolder in outline than usual.

"Something will have to be done to the chivvy," said Harry, shaking his head. "I thought Nugent was good-looking, but he doesn't make a very pretty girl. The skin's too rough, and his mouth's too big."

"You let my mouth alone!" growled Nugent.

"I wasn't running down your mouth," said Wharton mildly. "We've got to look the facts in the face, you know, if we're to make a success of it. I suppose some of the paints we use in the amateur theatricals will make the matter right. Powder and paint will work wonders."

"Blessed if I'm going to have my face dabbed with that mess!"

"Don't be unreasonable, old chap. It's necessary. It would have the effect of improving the deception, too, if you smiled a bit."

Nugent grinned.

"There, that's better already! Now, a rub with the powder-puff and a touch of rouge, and you'll be a lovely young lady!"

"I don't think," murmured Bob Cherry.

Wharton had had some practice in the theatricals of the Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society of the Remove. He gave Nugent's face some deft touches, and it could not be denied that the effect was wonderful. Nugent would have been taken for a girl by a casual observer—there was no doubt about that.

"And we can be a bit more careful with the details on Saturday," said Wharton. "So far, I think it's ripping."

"The rippingfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur softly. "Would Miss Nugent mind if a handsome Hindu youth were to steal a chaste kiss from those esteemed lips?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Miss Nugent! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop your cackling!" growled Nugent. "If you bring your black chivvy near me, Inky, I'll knock a hole in it, so mind!"

"Far be it from me to offend the charming miss—"

"Shut up!" roared Nugent.

"Here, hold on, you can't use unladylike language like that!" said Wharton, in a tone of remonstrance. "Girls don't say 'Shut up!' You should say, 'Oh, dear, you naughty boy!' or something of that sort."

Nugent grunted, and began to take off his new garments. The rehearsal of the disguise had been quite satisfactory, and the chums of the Remove had little doubt that Saturday's contest with the Boy Scouts of Pegg would be a success. They were grateful to little Wun Lung for his suggestion—at all events, Wharton, Cherry, and Hurree Singh were grateful. Nugent's feelings were rather mixed.

After changing his clothes once more, Nugent went out of the study, and he met the little Celestial near the common-room. Wun Lung smiled blandly at him.

"Allee lightee?" he asked.

"Eh?" growled Nugent.

"Girlee idea all lightee?" asked Wun Lung. "Me tinkee lipping wheezo! What you tinkee?"

Nugent's hand descended heavily upon the Chinese and flattened him down. Nugent strode on, leaving Wun Lung in a sitting posture blinking after him in amazement.

The little Celestial rubbed his head.

"Me no savvy," he murmured.

And he really could not "savvy."

No. 65.

"THE MAGNET" NEXT WEEK: "STONEY BROKE!" A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No Feed for Bunter.

HAVING decided upon their plan of campaign, the chums of the Remove looked forward to Saturday very keenly. Nugent was not expecting to enjoy himself, but he was anxious to get it over. The secret was kept from all who could not be absolutely relied upon. Hazeldene and Micky Desmond and Ogilvy and some others were let into it, but fellows like Bulstrode were strictly left out—and so was Billy Bunter. They knew that something was going on, and they were very curious about it, but they were to know nothing till the contest with the Boy Scouts was safely over. Any indiscretion on the part of someone in the secret might have spoiled the whole matter.

Saturday came, and the juniors impatiently laboured through morning lessons. The welcome hour of dismissal came at last, and Harry Wharton and his chums poured out of the class-room, full of their scheme. After dinner, Harry went to his box, where he had kept the disguise safely locked up. His box was in the Remove dormitory, and as he bent over to unlock it Bunter looked in at the door. He watched Harry through his big spectacles, and his eyes glistened as he saw the big bundle Wharton drew out of the box. Wharton turned to leave the dormitory, and started as he saw the Owl of the Remove blinking at him.

"I say, Wharton—"

"No time to jaw now, Billy!" And Wharton hurried out.

The fat junior followed him, breaking into a trot in the passage to keep up with Wharton's vigorous stride.

"Yes, but I say, Wharton, if it's a picnic—"

"It isn't."

"But you're going out, aren't you?"

"Yes, but it's not a feed—nothing that would interest you, Billy. I'll tell you about it afterwards."

"Yes, when all the grub's gone," said Bunter, discontentedly.

"Don't you hear me say it isn't a feed?" said Wharton sharply. "I suppose you don't doubt my word, do you?"

"Oh, no, of course not!" said Bunter. "I should be sincerely sorry to doubt your word, Wharton—still, I don't see why I shouldn't have some of the grub!"

"You young ass!" said Wharton, half-laughing. "I tell you there isn't any grub in this parcel! Everybody doesn't spend all the time dreaming about grub!"

"Then what is in it?"

"That's a secret for the present."

"I suppose I can come with you chaps, though? Of course, I don't doubt your word, but I'd like a little run this afternoon."

"No, you can't! Here's a tanner. Go and get some buns at the tuckshop, for goodness' sake, and give us a rest!"

"Thanks, Wharton! Will you have this back out of my next postal-order, or out of the three pounds I shall receive this evening from the Patriotic Home Work Association?"

"Oh, rats! Buzz off!"

"I can only accept it as a loan. There's such a thing as independence. I know you're not so particular about money-matters as I am, but it's my way. You see—"

Wharton swung up the bulky parcel with both hands.

"Now, cut!" he said. "If I swipe you with this parcel, you'll be hurt! Are you going?"

"Oh, really, Wharton— It's all right—I'll put it down to the account!" And Bunter scuttled off.

Wharton laughed, and joined his chums in the Cloak, where they were waiting for him. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh looked very cheerful, and Hazeldene and Micky Desmond, who had joined the party, were grinning with anticipation. Nugent wore a serious look.

"Ready?" said Harry. "Come on, before any of the fellows spot this parcel. Some of them are jolly curious about the matter already."

The chums left the school grounds without losing time. The quarter-to-three chimed from the tower, and the contest with the Boy Scouts had been arranged to begin at three o'clock. Trumper had written details to Wharton, and they had been agreed to. Between three and four the Greyfriars' juniors were to send their man through the wood from the Greyfriars' side down to the shore of Pegg Bay, and the scouts were to stop him if they could.

By this time Trumper and his patrol would be on the watch in the wood, ready for the attempt to be made to break through their line.

It was impossible, of course, for Nugent to don his feminine attire in the school—it would have occasioned too much remark. A barn in a deserted place had been fixed upon by Harry for the change. It did not take the juniors long to reach it, and then the bundle was unfastened.

Nugent donned the nautical trousers and rolled them over his knees, and then the stockings and boots, the skirt and blouse. Practice improves everything, and the attire set much better now than at the first essay in the study. The wig was carefully adjusted and fastened securely, and a pretty scarf was twined round his neck and the sash round his waist. Then Harry touched up his face with powder and paint.

"Faith, and it's lovely ye are!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, I'd never know ye from ye're own sister!"

"I suppose I shall pass all right," grunted Nugent.

"Sure, the only danger is that the Boy Scouts may fall in love wid ye, and carry ye off wid them!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Harry Wharton stepped back to get a good view of his work, and he admired it immensely. "Miss Nugent" was a huge success.

"By Jove!" said Harry. "I hardly thought it would turn out quite so rippingly as this! Nugent's not only a girl, but he's a jolly good-looking one! The scouts will never dream that he's one of us!"

"Well, let's get off," said Nugent.

"I-I-I say, you fellows—"

Wharton uttered an exclamation. Bunter's spectacles were glittering at the open door of the barn. The Owl of the Remove had not been quite satisfied that it wasn't a feed, and he had followed them.

He blinked in amazement at Nugent. Bob Cherry was about to smite the inquisitive junior in his wrath, but Wharton signed to him to stop. Bunter evidently had not seen the dressing, and he did not know Nugent. He raised his cap as he came into the barn.

"Isn't there a feed?" he said, in a tone of disappointment. "I—"

"This is Miss Nugent," said Wharton. "Miss Nugent, this is Billy Bunter—you have heard of him."

Nugent grinned, and played the part.

"Oh, dear, yes," he said, in a high-pitched voice; "my brother Frank has told me about him! He's a greedy young rotter, isn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Nice language for a lady!"

Bunter blinked at "Miss" Nugent.

"Is—is that Nugent's sister?" he said. "I never knew he had one. She's awfully like him. I—I say, Miss Nugent, it's quite a mistake about my being greedy. Your brother doesn't understand a chap like me, you know. I'm of a delicate constitution, and I can only keep up by taking plenty of nourishment. Blessed if I can see what you fellows are cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent roared as loudly as the rest. Bunter blinked at him again, and the truth dawned upon him. He saw Nugent's jacket lying on the ground, and understood.

"Oh, really, you fellows! It's Nugent himself! Is this what all the mystery was about? What's the game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I'd have come here for this!" said Bunter peevishly. "I've fagged all this way, thinking it was a feed! If one of you fellows would lend me five bob off the three pounds I'm getting this evening, I—"

"It's all right," said Hazeldenc. "If it's taken in Bunter, who knows you, it will take in Trumper, who's only seen you casually!"

"The take-infulness will be terrific."

"Come on, then," said Harry; "it's turned three."

Nugent started for the door. Bob Cherry gave a shout. "Hold on; girls don't tramp along like that! You'd give yourself away at once!"

"I suppose I must walk?"

"Yes, but not such jolly long steps—something like this."

Bob Cherry minced towards the door. Nugent looked at him.

"Girls don't walk like that!" he said positively. "I've seen girls walk often enough, and they don't look like hens on hot bricks!"

"I wasn't looking like a hen on hot bricks that I know of," said Bob Cherry, turning red. "I mean that you must do something graceful—"

"Was that graceful?" asked Nugent, in astonishment.

"Look here—"

"Faith, and don't begin raggin' now. It's time Miss Nugent was in the wood."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton. "Buzz off, Frank, and do your best. We'll go down to the shore by another way, and we shall be there soon after you, if you get through."

Nugent nodded and left the barn. The chums of the Remove kept well out of sight in the barn. Now that Nugent was in his new attire, it would not do to be seen with him. They grinned hugely as they saw the "girl" walking across the field. The deception was wonderful. The juniors, knowing the secret, could see a great many little faults that would otherwise have escaped their notice.

but they all felt pretty certain that "Miss Nugent" would do.

"With decent luck, he'll get through," said Wharton.

And when Nugent was out of sight, the Greyfriars' juniors left the barn, and by a roundabout route, avoiding the wood, they made their way down to the shore.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Through the Enemy's Lines.

"MISS NUGENT" felt extremely uneasy as he—or, perhaps, we should say "she"—went down the lane to the wood. It was a very new experience,

The skirt seemed to hamper all his movements, and he felt a general feeling of being fastened in. But the wide-brimmed hat shaded his face from the hot sun, and that was one comfort. The shadow it threw on his face was also useful for the purpose of concealing the disguise there.

He stopped and looked at his reflection in a pond by the wayside, and started. The reflection was that of a very good-looking though very sturdy girl.

The fun of the thing began to appeal to Nugent, and he went on his way more cheerfully. He passed a butcher's boy from Friardale whom he knew by sight, and the butcher's boy stared at him in open admiration.

In a village row Nugent had punched that youth's nose hard only a few days before, and had he met him undisguised there would probably have been fisticuffs. But the young butcher evidently had not the slightest suspicion.

As Nugent looked at him, he seemed encouraged, and winked. The junior could not help laughing as he hurried on.

His disguise had passed muster twice. There was no reason why it should not impose upon the Boy Scouts of Pegg.

But he felt uneasy as he entered the shades of Friardale Wood. The knowledge that six or seven fellows lurked unseen in the wood, ready to pounce upon him, was enough to make him uneasy.

He looked to and fro anxiously as he followed the footpath that led down towards the sea, winding through the shady old wood.

There was a rustle in the trees, and he started. It was certain that the footpath would be watched, and he was not surprised by the sight of the bare legs of a Boy Scout among the bracken.

Dicky Brown jumped out of the thicket. The young scout had heard footsteps on the path, and was on the alert; but at the sight of a girl all the alertness disappeared from his manner.

Nugent had started back, and Dicky Brown had the impression that his sudden appearance had startled the girl. Like a true scout, Dicky was all politeness and courtesy to a member of the gentle sex, and he lifted his broad-brimmed hat at once.

"Sorry I jumped out like that, miss!" said Dicky awkwardly. "I hope I did not frighten you."

Nugent drew a quick breath. Dicky Brown had been very near receiving an upper-cut from the charming young lady, which would have astonished him very much; but Nugent took his cue at once.

"Oh dear!" he said, making his voice very high-pitched—"oh dear! You won't hurt me, will you?"

"Of course I won't!" said Dicky. "I'm looking for a chap, that's all. Have you seen a chap—one of the fellows from Greyfriars—in the wood?"

"Greyfriars?" said Nugent inquiringly.

"Yes; that's a school near here. You'd know the chap by his school cap. Have you seen one about?"

Nugent shook his head.

"I haven't seen one since I came into the wood," he said.

"Oh, I'll have him, anyway, if he comes along!" said Dicky Brown determinedly. "You see, this is a scouting contest. They've got to get a man through our lines. I'm watching this footpath. There's another chap further along, in case the Greyfriars kid should be able to dodge me."

"Oh, is there?" murmured Nugent to himself.

"But he won't get past me!" said Dicky Brown. "I'm on the alert, I can tell you!"

"And you are really a Boy Scout?" murmured the "girl," with a look of such great admiration that Dicky Brown was immensely pleased.

"Oh, yes, rather!" he said. "I'm corporal in the Curlew Patrol. Trumper's our scout leader. He's all right."

"Is this the right way to the shore?" asked Nugent sweetly.

"Yes; you keep straight on, and don't leave the path."

You'll pass another of our chaps---young Spriggs---but he won't hurt you."

There was a rustle in the thicket, and Trumper stepped out.

"Here, young Brown--hallo!"--he tilted his hat to Miss Nugent--"you're not keeping watch, you Brown!"

"Yes, I am!" said Dicky Brown indignantly. "Nobody will pass along this path without my knowing it, I can tell you!"

"It's not in the scouting code to talk to strangers when on duty," said Trumper. "Sorry, miss, but I have to keep up discipline."

"I suppose it's a scout's duty to tell a lady the way?" said Dicky Brown scathingly. "What about the rule of always doing a good turn to somebody every day?"

"Oh, that's all right! I'll see the young lady safely through our lines!" said Trumper, with quite the air of a field-marshal.

Nugent could hardly help laughing at the way Trumper spoke of his "lines," as if he had been in command of an army corps at least. But he remained grave, and he gave the scout leader a sweet smile.

"Oh, thank you so much!" he murmured.

"Not at all!" said Trumper. "Quite a pleasure. You stand on guard here, Dicky Brown, and---"

"Hadn't I better show the lady the way?" said Dicky Brown. "You've had more experience than I have as a scout, and---"

Trumper waved his hand.

"Don't you start arguing with your patrol leader! I'm going to show the lady the way, and you can stay here and keep guard!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Dicky Brown.

"This way, miss!" said Trumper gallantly. "I'll see you safe through."

"Oh, thank you!"

Trumper strode on his way, with Miss Nugent walking very demurely by his side. The chief of the Boy Scouts of Pegg was feeling very satisfied with himself. He would not have felt so satisfied if he had guessed the real identity of the "girl" at his side.

He explained the matter to his pretty companion as they went on. Nugent listened with great interest.

"They won't beat us!" said Trumper. "It's turned half-past three already, and they've less than half an hour left. They've given it up, I expect."

Miss Nugent smiled.

"Halt!"

It was a sudden call, and Spriggs sprang out into the footpath. He seemed surprised at the sight of his patrol leader.

"Hallo! Is that you, Trumpy?"

"It's all serene!" said Trumper. "I'm seeing this lady through the lines. I'll be back with you in a jiffy. Keep your eyes peeled."

"Right you are!"

Trumper and Nugent walked on. Through openings of the trees came a glimpse of the wide blue of the ocean. Nugent's heart beat faster. He was very near the end of his journey now.

As they came out of the trees, in the distance on the shore appeared the boats of the fishermen, and near them the bright colours of many parasols. Nugent remembered that the girls of Cliff House were to be taken out for a walk that afternoon by Miss Penelope Primrose.

"Well, here you are, miss!" said Trumper. "I've seen you through, and I shall have to get back to my men. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" said Nugent softly.

He held out his hand. Trumper took it, and Nugent gave him a grip that made the scout leader jump.

He had never met a girl who could give a grip of the hand like that. He stared blankly at Nugent.

"Good-bye!" said Nugent, speaking in his natural voice now. "I'm awfully obliged to you for showing me through the wood, Trumper! I rather reckon we've knocked you into a cocked hat this journey."

Trumper almost fell down. He stared at Nugent, his jaw dropping, his mouth and eyes wide open, in the uttermost amazement. His expression was so astounded and almost idiotic that Nugent roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why--what--how--"

"Ha, ha, ha! Thanks so much, kid! My dear chap, you've been done! Don't you understand? D-o-n-e--done! I'm Nugent, of the Greyfriars Remove."

"Nu-Nu-Nu-Nugent!" gasped Trumper.

"Yes, rather!"

"Of the Remove!" said Trumper faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trumper glared. He was recovering from his stupefaction

now, and he realised how utterly and hopelessly he had been done.

"You're Nugent! My hat!"

"Good-bye!" said Nugent. "You can go and tell the others."

And he strolled on. He left Trumper staring dazedly after him. The Boy Scout remained there, staring blankly, for a good five minutes, and then he slowly turned, and went back into the wood. The Boy Scouts would have been very glad to see Nugent come back through the wood again; but Nugent was too wise for that.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

An Awkward Predicament.

NUGENT had beaten the Boy Scouts hands down, though they could hardly be blamed for their defeat, under the circumstances. But now he found himself on the shore, he was somewhat nonplussed. He had expected to see his chums there, but his undelayed passage through the wood had taken little time, and Wharton, going a much longer way round, was not yet near the scene.

Nugent knew better than to go near the wood again, and chance falling into the hands of the exasperated Boy Scouts. They would not have hurt him, but they would probably have given him an uncomfortable time. He walked on slowly, swinging his parasol, and wondering how on earth the adventure was to end.

He had lost sight of the Cliff House girls, but suddenly rounding a big rock on the shore, he came upon them.

The girls were on the sands with Miss Primrose, and Nugent was in the midst of them before he realised it. Then it was too late to retreat.

When the Cliff House girls went out for a walk with Miss Penelope Primrose, they were very, very good. They walked in twos, and conversed with serious faces, or else kept a decorous silence.

When they were told they could rest, they rested in the same decorous manner. Sometimes, when Miss Penelope was not looking, girls like Clara were known to scatter sand about, and even to whistle; but they would not have shocked Miss Primrose for worlds.

But, fond though they were of the kind old lady, there was no doubt that those prim and orderly walks bored the girls to distraction--almost as much as schoolboys are bored under similar circumstances.

Any kind of an interruption was welcome, and so the sudden appearance of Frank Nugent caused glances to be thrown in his direction, and caused some interest. Not one of the girls had any suspicion that he was other than what he appeared to be.

As a matter of fact, a new pupil was joining Cliff House that day, and when Marjorie & Co. caught sight of Nugent, they imagined naturally enough that he was the new pupil, and had come to join them on the sands.

He was dressed differently from the fisher-girls of Pegg village, and neither did he look like one of the village girls from Friardale. His clothes were not of the best, but they had a town cut, and anyone would naturally have imagined that he belonged to Cliff House.

"By Jove!" said Miss Clara, an expression she had picked up from the Greyfriars boys. "Here is the new girl."

Marjorie glanced kindly at the new-comer.

"Come here, dear," she said, in her soft voice.

Nugent coloured hotly.

He saw that the Cliff House girls did not know him, and he felt horribly mean at being received with such kindness, yet a confession of the truth was not feasible. He had a keen sense of the absurd, and he had no mind to become the object of the ridicule of two score of laughing girls.

He came awkwardly towards Marjorie. The latter only intended to be kind to the new girl, and the evident bashfulness of Nugent did not deter her. It was only natural that a new girl should be a little constrained.

"I am so glad to see you, dear!" she said, in her kind, soft voice. "Have you seen Miss Primrose yet?"

"Yes--no!" muttered Nugent.

"What is your name?" asked Miss Clara.

"Nugent! I--I mean--"

"Nugent!" exclaimed Marjorie, with interest. "I thought I knew your features. You are a relation of Frank Nugent at Greyfriars, I suppose?"

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"How nice. I have a brother at Greyfriars," said Marjorie confidentially. "I suppose Frank is your brother? He is a very nice boy."

Nugent could not help grinning.

This was a good character, at all events, from a person whose good opinion he valued. Marjorie held out her hand.

"I am sure we shall be good friends," she said. "Come this way, and I will take you to Miss Primrose."

Nugent shook hands with her. He was so confused by this unexpected turn of events that he hardly knew what he was doing, and he gave Marjorie a grip of the hand almost as vigorous as that he had given Trumper.

The girl started.

"Good gracious! How strong you are!" she exclaimed.

Nugent went crimson.

"I—I—I'm rather strong," he stammered. "It's the exercise in the gym., you know, and the cricket and footer! I—I mean—"

He broke off dismally. He seemed to be getting deeper and deeper into the mire with every word he uttered.

The girls were all looking at him very curiously.

"You play cricket!" said Marjorie. "So do we. We beat Greyfriars Remove in a cricket match a little while ago."

"And footer!" said Miss Clara. "We don't play football. I should like to, but Miss Primrose would not approve."

"Fancy Miss Nugent playing football!" said Alice. "I did not know girls played football."

"You—you see," stammered Nugent, "when I—er—say football, I don't mean—er—exactly—football, you know!"

"No," said Marjorie demurely. "What do you mean, then? Hockey?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Miss Clara.

"You see, I—I—I—"

"Dear me!" said the voice of Miss Primrose. "Is that my new pupil? Come here, my dear!"

Nugent, inwardly raging, crossed over to Miss Primrose, running the gauntlet of countless eyes.

The old lady gave him a kindly smile.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," she said, stooping to kiss Nugent on the cheek. The boy started, but there was no getting out of it. "When did you arrive?"

"Er—er—I don't know exactly!"

"You did not notice the time? Have you been up to Cliff House yet?"

"N-n-n-no, ma'am!"

"Very good! It is time for us to return," said Miss Primrose. "Come with me, my dears! You walk by my side, dear!"—this was to Nugent.

"Yes, ma'am!"

Miss Primrose marched off, with Nugent by her side, and the girls following in prim order. Marjorie was looking at Frank very curiously now. In his confusion, he had several times forgotten to put the high pitch in his voice, and had spoken in his natural tones.

Marjorie Hazeldene was not suspicious, but she was observant. She remembered what Harry Wharton had told her of the intention of sending a junior in disguise through the Boy Scouts' lines that afternoon.

A gleam of fun came into her eyes.

"You must be tired, my dear, after your long journey," said Miss Primrose. "Are you hungry?"

"N-n-n-no, ma'am!"

"We shall be in in time for tea, my dear. I think you will be very happy at Cliff House; you will find the girls very kind. Marjorie, you will look after our new young friend, will you not?"

"Certainly, Miss Primrose!" said Marjorie demurely.

She walked beside Nugent, apparently by way of looking after him for a start, and passed her arm through his.

Nugent writhed inwardly; he had caught a curious look on Marjorie's face, and he was afraid that she guessed.

He shivered at the thought of being marched into Cliff House. Once within the walls, what was to be done? There would be no escape for him, and when the inevitable exposure came, he shuddered at the thought of the ridiculous figure he would cut. Miss Primrose might even imagine that he adopted the disguise for the purpose of playing some trick at Cliff House; he might even be reported to the Head of Greyfriars.

He wished the Boy Scouts of Pegg and their challenge, and Wun Lung and his valuable suggestion of disguise, at the bottom of the bay together.

As he walked on, with Marjorie's arm through his, he revolved plans of escape. He caught sight of several juniors coming down through the village, and recognised his chums.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped dead as they saw Nugent in the Cliff House ranks, and stared at him as if they could hardly believe their eyes.

Then Nugent saw Bob Cherry stuff his handkerchief into his mouth, and the nabob turn his back and become the prey to a kind of convulsion.

He simply snorted.

It was bad enough for them to have got him into a fearful fix like this, but for them to stand there laughing—that was too bad.

The procession of girls passed on, and the juniors of Greyfriars were left staring blankly after them.

"My only hat!" gasped Wharton. "That was Nugent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and he wasn't looking happy, either!" Micky

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Desmond remarked, with a chuckle. "Sure, I'd like the situation myself!"

"How on earth did he get with them?" said Wharton. "He ought to have had sense enough to keep out of their way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's beaten the Boy Scouts, at all events," said Hazeldene, grinning. "He must have chummed up with the girls on purpose."

"He didn't seem to be enjoying himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha, ha, hafulness is terrific!"

"Poor old Nugent!" murmured Bob Cherry, wiping the tears from his eyes. "Blessed if I know how he'll get out of it! They seem to have adopted him now. We can't rescue him, can we?"

"Ha, ha! No."

And the chums of the Remove laughed in chorus. It was rough on Nugent, no doubt, but it was very funny. They followed the girls at a distance, keeping an eye on Nugent, wondering what on earth was to be done in the matter, without being able to hit on any scheme for helping the unfortunate junior out of his difficulty.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nugent Bolts.

MARJORIE talked cheerfully and kindly to Nugent as they walked on to Cliff House. But her cheerfulness and kindness were wasted upon the wretched junior.

What did he care about the class-room arrangements and the meal-times at Cliff House, about the customs and manners and holidays there? He only wanted to escape. And he more than half believed that Marjorie knew who he was.

As a matter of fact, the girl was satisfied on that point now.

Nugent's answers were so constrained and awkward, and in his unguarded moments his voice was so easily recognised that the girl could not remain long in the dark.

But Marjorie thought he deserved to have a lesson for his impertinence in dressing in girls' clothes and deceiving them, and so she was not inclined to help him out of his difficulty yet.

Miss Clara, who was as sharp as a needle, had come to the same conclusion as Marjorie, and she was struggling not to laugh. Her eyes were full of fun, and she was disposed to fully enjoy the joke at Nugent's expense.

"How your hair is blowing about, dear!" she said. "Shall I lend you a hairpin?"

"N-n-n-no, it's all right," muttered Nugent, in deadly fear lest his flaxen wig should come off under Miss Clara's hands.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Miss Clara. "It looks untidy!"

"Does it? N-n-never mind."

"Shall I tie it for you?"

"N-n-n-n-no, thanks!"

"No trouble at all," said Miss Clara, producing a bit of ribbon from her pocket. "I'll tie it up beautifully."

And she gathered up the long, flaxen curls. It was clear to her, of course, that they were imitation, as soon as she touched them, if she had not known it before. Her eyes were full of mischief. She caught up a straggling lump of seaweed that some fisher-lad had dropped in the path, and calmly tied it up in the ribbon with Nugent's false hair.

The junior had not the slightest suspicion of what she had done.

Only too relieved that she did not jerk his wig off, he walked on, with the seaweed straggling down his back over the blouse.

Marjorie tried not to laugh, but without success. The other girls were shrieking. Miss Primrose turned round to them.

"My dear children," she said gently, "you must not laugh loudly in public. It is very bad form indeed."

"I'm so sorry, Miss Primrose," said Clara.

"Oh, yes, dear Miss Primrose, we are all so sorry."

"Very good, my dears."

And Miss Primrose marched on again. They entered the gates of Cliff House.

By this time Nugent was desperate.

"My dear child!" exclaimed Miss Primrose. She had stayed behind to lock the gate, and as she came up the path, she caught sight of the seaweed tied to Nugent's hair. "Whatever is that?"

"I—I—I—"

"What is tied to your hair?"

"My—my hair?" stammered Nugent.

"Yes! What is it?" Miss Primrose put up her glasses, and stared at the pendant seaweed. "Come here, child!"

Nugent approached her nervously.

"It is seaweed," said Miss Primrose, in wonder. "Seaweed tied to your hair! This is very strange indeed! Stand still while I pull it off!"

And she jerked at the seaweed.

The natural result followed. The flaxen wig came off in her hand, bringing Nugent's hat off with it.

Miss Primrose gave a faint cry. She was too astounded to move, or to do anything but stare at Nugent's bare head, and at the wig and hat in her hand.

The girls stared, too, blankly.

Nugent wished the earth would open and swallow him up.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Miss Primrose, at last. "Goodness gracious me! What—how—Who are you?"

But Nugent did not reply to the question. All was up now, and only flight could save him. He broke into a wild dash for the gate.

The girls looked after him. The supposed girl clambered over the gate, and went rolling over to the other side.

Miss Primrose almost fainted at the sight.

"Goodness gracious me! It is not a girl at all! Goodness gracious me!"

Nugent rolled down into the road. To pick himself up and dash off was the work of a moment, and he went down the path with the speed of a racehorse.

He rounded a bend in the path, and dashed full into half a dozen juniors.

"Here she is, begorra!" shouted Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's the charming miss, my worthy chums."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beasts!"

Nugent glared at his chums. But they were roaring with laughter; they could not help it. He glared, and then strode angrily away. Harry Wharton ran after him, and slipped a hand through his arm.

"Don't be ratty, old chap! It was funny, you know."

Nugent's face cleared.

"Well, I was an ass to go in for it, and I wouldn't do it again for a million," he said. "I suppose it was funny, but it didn't seem funny at the time, I can tell you."

"How did you get away?"

Nugent explained, and the Removites roared again at the mental picture of Miss Penelope Primrose standing petrified with the flaxen wig in her hands. That wig was lost for ever to the Amateur Dramatic Society; but, as Bob Cherry said, the laugh was worth it.

Some distance down the road they met Trumper and his patrol. The Boy Scouts grinned ruefully at Nugent and his companions.

"You've done us," said Trumper. "We own up; but we'll go for you again some time, and make you sit up!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "We'll be ready for you. I don't blame you for being taken in. The Cliff House girls were taken in by Nugent, too. He makes such a jolly good girl that it's a pity for him to change back."

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent. "Thanks awfully for showing me the way through the wood, Trumper!"

Trumper smiled a sickly smile, and the Greyfriars juniors walked on grinning. Nugent changed into his own clothes at the barn, and felt an immense sense of relief at being a boy once more.

"This is jolly," he said. "Let's get back. I'm ready for tea."

And by the time they had tea in the study, Nugent was quite prepared to laugh over the adventure. He had certainly gone through some harassing experiences, but the great point was that they had beaten the Rival Scouts!

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the boys of Greyfriars and the pupils of Cliff House next Tuesday, entitled "Stoney Broke." Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

The First Chapters of a Grand Story.



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

CHARACTERS AND BRIEF RESUME OF FIRST CHAPTERS.

RONALD CHENYS, a young cadet in his last term at Sandhurst. He is on very bad terms with

IAN CHENYS, his half-brother, who narrowly escapes being killed by the accidental discharge of his gun during a struggle with Ronald.

MRS. CHENYS, who hates her step-son Ronald, accuses him of trying to murder Ian. She poisons the mind of

GENERAL CHENYS, who promises to disown Ronald unless he passes his Army exam, at the next attempt.

During the progress of this exam., the professor in charge finds a paper of skeleton notes on the floor at Ronald's feet, and accuses him of cheating, sending him to his room under arrest. On going to his desk Ronald finds it has been forced, and the skeleton notes he had put there are gone. At this juncture Private Slaney, Ian's soldier servant, enters with dinner, and offers to sell Ronald certain information, showing him one half of a cuff-link which he knows belongs to Ian. Ronald kicks the blackmailing scoundrel out of his room, and returning to his seat, buries his head in his hands. Was this, then, the truth of it all? Had the bitter enmity that his step-brother had always shown him culminated in this?

(Now go on with the story.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER—Continued.

Ronald remembered the stiff grating of the desk-lock as he turned the key. It must have been tampered with—the desk opened, the slip of notes abstracted, folded up, and tossed through the window into the examination hall below.

Ronald crossed to the window, and made sure that this was possible.

He remembered, now, that Ian had finished his papers early, and left the examination-room. He would, therefore, know of his position by the open window.

Ronald's servant, Flanigan, had gone sick, and it had fallen on Slaney to attend to his room.

Somewhere or other—under incriminating circumstances obviously—he had discovered the broken half of Ian's cuff-link. This, and the other evidence besides, Ronald could purchase at a price, and use to prove his own innocence.

The temptation was strong until he weighed the cost. He thought of his proud old dad, and all that this exposure of his favourite son would mean to him. It would level the Chenys pride to the dust, and break his heart.

No, the cost was too great. The truth would reveal itself some day; he, at least, would meanwhile fight his own battle with clean hands. If he lost, and the verdict went

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"THE MAGNET" NEXT WEEK: "STONEY BROKE!" A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

against him, he would have to go. After all, the world was wide, and he was strong.

The college band had struck up on the lawn, and the distant strains of the music lulled his tortured nerves, and lent him strength.

A knock came to the door.

"Come in," he called wearily; and a tall, broad-shouldered corporal entered. It was Cosgrave, the senior corporal of the day. He and Ronald had been old chums, and until the latter had failed at his previous exams, they had been brother corporals of B Company.

"I say, old man," said Cosgrave, advancing and dropping a friendly hand on his shoulder, "the governor has sent for you."

"All right, Cos; I've been waiting for the word. I'm ready!"

"I needn't say, Ron, old chap, that there's not a man who knows you who believes you guilty of this charge," continued Cosgrave, "and not one but hopes you'll be acquitted without a stain."

"Thanks—thanks, again!" said Ronald, with quivering lip. "We shall see. The facts are as black against me as they well can be, and I have only my word."

"There must be foul play somewhere, Ron," Cosgrave went on earnestly. "Have you no idea, no suspicion? No clue you can offer which would help us to fathom it?"

"None," replied Ronald, in a voice as cold as ice. "Come along; we must not keep the governor waiting."

Cosgrave shot a puzzled look at the set face before him, and turned on his heel, Ronald following.

Their footsteps had scarcely died away when Ian Chenys glided from a distant study, and slipped into the room. With feverish haste he dropped upon his knees, and began groping and searching in every nook and corner. Turning up rugs, and moving every article which came in his way.

His lips were compressed and bloodless, and terror shone in his eyes.

Suddenly a stealthy movement behind him made him turn his head with a gasp of fear.

Slaney was already in the room, and standing by the table at which he knelt. He had entered like a shadow.

"Mr. Ronald don't seem to have had much appetite tonight, sir," he volunteered with easy assurance, and began to collect the dishes.

"No," replied Ian, trying to hide his chagrin at his surprise.

"And no wonder, p'r'aps. A very nasty thing that what 'appened to him this afternoon," pursued Slaney insinuatingly, giving the covers an extra clatter; "and I sha'n't be sorry for the man who laid the trap for him, when they come to find it out."

"Confound you! What do you mean?" demanded Ian hoarsely, rising to his feet.

"No offence, sir, I'm sure! I was only venturing an 'umble expression of my own opinion," said Slaney, with a smirk. "Excuse me, was you looking for anything, sir?"

"No, hang your impudence! Clear out of this!"

"Certainly, sir. I was only just wondering whether it was the half of a cuff-link which you broke, because, if so—" Slaney broke off with a meaning glance.

"Yes," said Ian, clutching at the table.

"Because if so, I've found it already."

He opened his hand, which he had dipped into his pocket, showed the gold oval, and calmly returned it to his jacket.

There was a challenge in the action, which was not lost on Ian. He stood in silence, glaring at Slaney as if he could cut him down where he stood.

"A curious thing, sir," returned the soldier-servant, turning again to the table, "a most curious thing, that the window of the examination-hall, where Mr. Ronald was sitting, is almost opposite to this. It would really have been quite easy for someone, who had a grudge against him, to flick a paper, like what was found, down on top of 'im; wouldn't it? In fact, it's been done afore this."

He dipped his hand into his pocket, and pulled out three screwed-up bits of paper. Ian's cheeks went white as death at the sight of them.

"You—why?" asked Ian, in a voice he scarcely recognised as his own.

"Because, sir, they was covered with your own 'and-writing, and I thought, as your servant, I'd take charge of them, not knowing but what they might not be valuable."

"Give them to me," said Ian, reaching out a shaking hand.

"Valuable to me, p'r'aps I should have said!" exclaimed Slaney, ignoring his command. "But I must be getting along."

He picked up the tray, and made briskly for the door.

"Slaney," whispered Ian, in a cowed voice.

"Sir!" replied Slaney, turning, and standing stiffly to attention.

"I know what you mean. You think this is awkward for me," said Ian, with a miserable attempt at indifference.

"I don't think; I know!" retorted Slaney, with great No. 65.

meaning. "Mr. Ronald's before the governor now. If I don't look sharp, I shall be too late to get a hearing."

"Stay! You have your price?"

Slaney grinned, as much as to say "What man hasn't?"

"Have you mentioned anything of this to my brother?" inquired Ian huskily.

"Well, I don't mind telling you I would have done, only afore I could 'ardly open my mouth he kicked me out, hang him!"

"Did you mention me?"

"Never a word, sir. It wasn't likely till I 'ad got the dibs."

Ian stood for a moment biting his lips with humiliation and rage.

Just when all he had plotted and planned seemed to have gone so well, this grinning lout stepped in to threaten exposure and disaster, which was unthinkable.

Still, it needed no second glance to see that Slaney was determined. He held him completely in his power, and his silence must be purchased at all costs.

"Very well, Slaney," Ian said, with an effort, "I think we understand each other. You can trust me to do my part. I'll see you in the morning."

"Very good, sir," answered the servant. "The offer will be kept open till twelve o'clock sharp, and after that—well, there's no knowing what may happen!"

And, with this parting shot, he turned on his heel, leaving Ian to make his way back to his room, trembling in every limb.

For several minutes he paced up and down like a caged tiger, halting every now and again with pent-up breath to listen as a chance footstep resounded in the corridor without.

At last one came more slow and leaden than the rest. It passed on towards Ronald's study, and paused. Then a door shut.

He could hear half a dozen doors open at the sound, and he set his ajar. Someone else was coming more briskly along the corridor.

It was Cosgrave, the corporal of the day, and his face looked grave and drawn as he strode beneath the lights.

"What's the result, Cos?" asked one anxiously.

"Expelled!" answered the corporal, with a groan. "Poor old Ron, he doesn't seem to have made any fight for it at all. Just took it lying down. Can't make it out—not a bit. Hallo, young Chenys!" he added, catching sight of Ian's face. "Heaven knows, I'm sorry for this; the only consolation is that it can't be true!"

"What can't?" exclaimed Ian, almost taken off his guard.

"Why, this charge of cheating. Is it likely that old Ron—the best of fellows, as we know him to be—could stoop to such a despicable thing? Pshaw!"

Ian held his peace, as Cosgrave and the others remembered later—writing young Chenys down as cur from that time forth.

"When does he go?" he asked, muffing by a violent effort all the ring of exultation which might have betrayed him still further.

"As soon as possible," answered Cos, sighing. "The sentence will have to be forwarded to the Secretary of State for War for confirmation, and then that'll be the end."

The end! They could all realise what that could mean to Ronald Chenys, and none better than his half-brother who had betrayed him.

There was a smile on Ian's lips as he closed the door, and turned back into his room, a smile of triumph and of slaked revenge.

Discipline is a sacred thing at Sandhurst, and its laws say that no one may visit the room of a cadet under close arrest.

If anyone but Cosgrave had been on duty, a score of Ronald's chums might have been disposed to risk it; but old Cos was a martinet among martinets, and as vigilant as a hawk.

So "Last Post" echoed away into the stillness, and Ronald was left alone.

He had been busy, moving quietly about his little room, overhauling his desk, destroying private papers, setting everything to rights.

Then he sat down at his desk and wrote. The pen travelled slowly, and sheet after sheet of paper was torn up, and the letter commenced afresh.

(Another long instalment of this splendid Army story next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

IN THE RANKS.

(Conclusion.)

Finis.

The cliffs echoed with an unwonted sound, and this time it was the familiar cat-call of Corporal Bill Sloggett, supposed to be under arrest, pending the court-martial. The colonel recognised him, and his mouth grew stern.

A flash of steel, a plunge of his mare this way and that, Hogan, slogging steadily through the old "pursuit practice," Bill using a science that was largely his own, and then a cheer from the Hussars, in which even the colonel joined, as the last of the Mahmuds flung his shield away, and ran pell-mell for the mountain-side.

Amid a roar of cheering, Bill Sloggett stepped on to the plain, and stood at attention before the colonel.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said, his chest still heaving from the combat. "I thought I might do more good here than stopping in the guard-tent!"

The colonel looked at him silently, stroked his moustache, pointed to Sloggett's horse, and said sternly:

"Return to your arrest! I will deal with you presently!"

The trumpets rang out, and, there being no more tribesmen in sight, Colonel Greville returned to camp with his men. The colonel had a very stirring report to make to his general, who—when he had heard it with flashing eyes—looked stern.

And so the fiat went forth that a court-martial should sit on hero Bill, who, in face of the evidence produced, was very properly reduced to the ranks. As for his breaking his arrest, no mention of it was made.

Next day the leading brigade of General Ellis reached the valley, and Sir Bindon Blood rode out with the cavalry to meet him at Lakarai. Then, after a conference, it was decided that Ellis, reinforced by the third brigade, should clear out the Bedmanai Pass, and put the finishing stroke to the discomfiture of the Hadda Mullah. Sir Bindon was to march with the cavalry to join Jefferies in the Mahmud Valley; and so some of our friends, whose fortunes we have followed in this story, parted for a time.

Long was the handclasp between our hero and little Dick Vivian.

"Well, it has come right, old chap," said Dick cheerily. "I am thundering sorry we are not going to do any more fighting side by side. Still, we have done our little bit together, and it has all come out right for you. Don't forget to write to my people when you have a moment to spare. They would think the world of a line from you while on service."

And Dick's eyes twinkled as he thought of that button from Jack's forage-cap, which pretty Muriel treasured at Vivian Towers.

The Hussars moved off. The and the Hussars returned the Ploughshires cheered them, cheer.

As for Hogan, there was nothing for it but for him to ride with the squadrons, as it was impossible to send him down-country at present, and the old man shared the cavalry work that took place when the "Big General" joined Jefferies in the Mahmud Valley.

There was some hard fighting of a kind, but at length the Mahmuds gave in their submission, and that difficult campaign, undertaken as all our campaigns are, with too few men at the outset, came to a successful termination.

Before that, however, there appeared in the "Gazette" at home an announcement which, when it found its way to that far-off Indian frontier, and was read out in orders, filled everyone with wild delight, and sent the Hussars half-mad with joy.

The adjutant read it one evening when they were bivouacking in a lonely valley:

"Promotions.—25th Hussars, Sergeant Sir John Dashwood, baronet, to be second-lieutenant, to complete establishment."

It was an honour not altogether unexpected by those who knew anything, but it was so rare a thing for a man to be promoted to a commission from the ranks into the regiment in which he had served that they felt it could only be due to the long connection of his gallant father with the 25th Hussars, and the personal representations that had been made to the War Office by brave old Sir Ponsonby Smithers and Colonel Greville himself.

After the roar of cheering had died away—a burst which the adjutant made no attempt to check, for he was laughing all over his face—he cleared his throat, and proceeded:

"Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to signify her intention of conferring the decoration of the Victoria Cross on the undermentioned officers and man: Second-lieutenant Sir John Dashwood, baronet, 25th Hussars, for distinguished gallantry during the operations in the Plain of Khor. First Battalion Ploughshires, Lieutenant Richard Vivian, for remaining behind and rescuing a wounded private of his regiment, keeping off the enemy, and carrying him into the entrenched camp at Nawagai."

How Jack's heart beat when he heard these words read. And how he longed to clasp his friend by the hand, and tell him how glad he was. He made up for it, though, by leading the cheer that rang out when Corporal William Sloggett—the authorities were not aware that poor Bill had reverted—was awarded the same honour for half a dozen distinguished acts of bravery in the face of the enemy.

Then the colonel shook hands with our hero, and with Bill, too, and said some brief soldierly words that made Jack blush to the tips of his ears. Mr. Blennerhasset came forward with the Hon. Algy, eyeglass in eye, and both congratulated him heartily.

"Awfully glad, Dashwood!" said the Hon. Algy. "You will be a credit to the mess, bai Jove! And if there is anything in my kit that will fit you, you are welcome to it, you know."

But perhaps the welcome that touched Jack more than any other was when old Patrick Hogan came upon him in a quiet place all by himself, and, holding out both hands, spluttered forth in a choking voice:

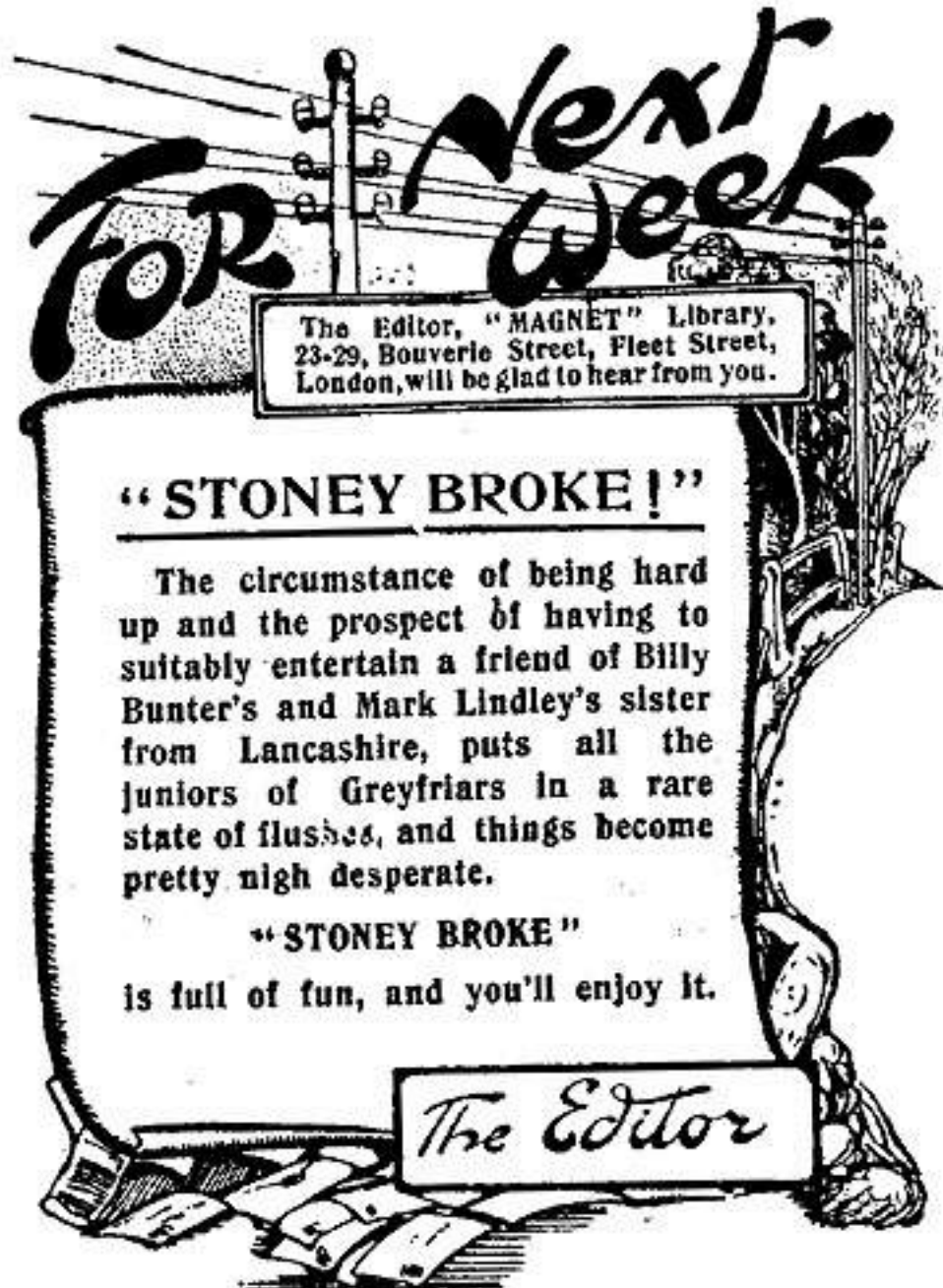
"Masther Jack—Masther Jack, if the kurnel had only lived to see this day!"

And then, turning hastily on his heel, the old man burst into tears.

And now I have told you how my old friend Jack Dashwood won his first commission. He is still in the 25th Hussars, and is one of the youngest majors in the Service. You must have read of his exploits in the late Boer war, though, of course, under another name than Dashwood; for Jack, besides being unusually modest, has put on flesh of late, and his fighting weight is such that I dare not run the risk of giving his right appellation as it appears in the official Army list.

THE END.

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