"THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS!"

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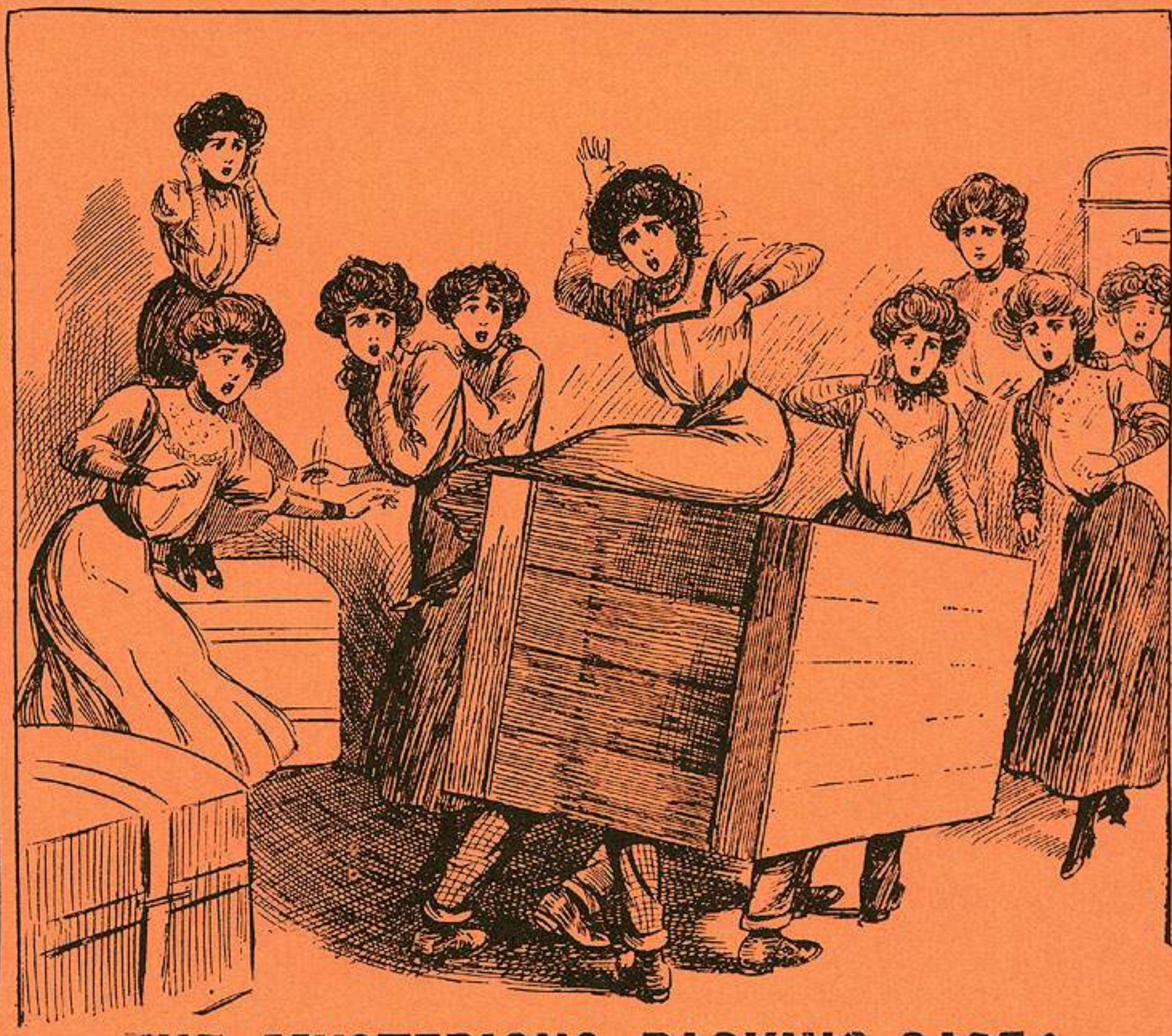
Complete Story for All.

A Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the

CLIFF HOUSE PUPILS.

By Frank Richards.



THE MYSTERIOUS PACKING-CASE!

Miss Clara gave a sudden cry of relief, mingled with anger. She had caught sight of several pairs of boots under the moving packing-case. In shoving it along Bulstrode & Co. raised it a little from the floor, and that gave them away.

The Bully of Greyfriars

A Long, Complete Tale

— OF —

HARRY WHARTON & Co.,

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Girls Go Ahead.

"PHEW!"

It was Bob Cherry of the Remove at Greyfriars who said "Phew!" and he said it with emphasis. He had glanced in passing at the notice-board in the hall. There were often notices on that board that concerned the juniors—especially the cricket notices relating to their own matches. Bob had glanced at it quite carelessly, but suddenly his glance had become fixed, and he stared blankly at the board and said:

"Phew!"

The sight of Bob Cherry standing before the notice-board with his hands in his pockets and his eyes and mouth wide open naturally attracted attention.

Several more juniors strolled up, and there were polite inquiries as to whether Bob had selected that spot to have a fit, or whether he was off his rocker. But Bob Cherry only said:

"Phe-e-e-ew!"

"What's the matter, you image?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What's the——"

"Look!"

Wharton looked, and he too said "Phew!" and stared blankly at the notice-board.

"My only hat!" said Frank Nugent, as he fixed his astonished gaze upon the notice on the board. "This licks everything!"

"The lickfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!" murmured Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The charming misses are going it strongfully!"

The notice that so amazed the juniors of the Remove was written in a very neat and graceful feminine hand. It did not need the signature at the bottom to tell the juniors that it was the work of Marjorie Hazeldene.

Things had taken a somewhat peculiar turn at the old school in the past few days. The discovery of some flaw in the foundations of Cliff House, the girls' school on the coast, near Greyfriars, had made it necessary for Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress, to send her fair pupils away for a time, and they had been sent to Greyfriars temporarily. Most of the boys had welcomed them, but there had been trouble in some ways.

Marjorie & Co. were not by any means new women, but they had shown a decided indisposition to follow tamely the lead of boys. They believed in "keeping their end up," as Miss Clara termed it in the boy-language she had learned

at Greyfriars, and from the first it was clear that they weren't going to take second place.

The boys, of course, intended to treat them awfully well. They were prepared even to play cricket with them—though the girls' cricket, according to Bob Cherry, might have made an angel weep. They were thinking of letting them into the debating club, and extending to them the membership of the Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society—in fact, there was no limit to the good intentions of the juniors—but—— There was a big "But"!

Perhaps there was a hint of patronage in all these good intentions—perhaps the girls felt that they were being tolerated, and treated as weaker persons—which, of course, could not be endured. At all events, Marjorie & Co. were "on their own," and insisted upon being on neither superior nor inferior terms. They were to be equals, or nothing. Hence the surprising notice on the board!

The notice was addressed to girls, but it was read by the boys with great interest. It was worded somewhat in the style of the notices Wharton, as captain of the Form, was in the habit of putting up for the edification of the Remove.

"NOTICE!

"A meeting will be held in No. 2 box-room at seven sharp to discuss a question of great importance to all of us. No boys admitted.

"Signed, MARJORIE HAZELDENE, Capt."

After the word "boys" another hand—doubtless Miss Clara's—had scratched in the words "or dogs." The notice read thus: "No boys or dogs admitted."

Nugent burst into a chuckle.

"This is funny!" said Wharton. "They're picking up our manners and customs wonderfully! I like the 'seven sharp'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'No boys or dogs admitted'!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That's a little bit personal, isn't it?"

"Oh, the dogs have been put in for a joke!"

"I wonder what the meeting's about?" said Nugent, chuckling. "I hear that the girls are rather edgewise about not having separate studies like ourselves. It may be a deputation to the Head they're thinking of, to allow them separate studies—or perhaps it's to plan a raid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good idea to bu'st up the meeting!" remarked Skinner. "What do you say, Bulstrode?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "Let 'em alone! Why shouldn't they hold a meeting if they like?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "They only want to talk, the little dears—and let 'em talk, I say! They're safer talking than playing cricket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Cherry——"

It was a feminine voice that made that remark. The juniors swung round quickly.

A charming girl, with golden curls and vivacious blue eyes, was looking at Bob with great severity, and making mysterious passes in the air with her clenched hands. It was Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie's right-hand man—or rather girl—and the liveliest of the Cliff House party.

Bob looked at her in astonishment.

She was winding one fist over another, as if unrolling an imaginary skein, and for the moment he did not understand.

"Did—did—did you speak to me?" he said.

"Yes. Are you looking for a thick ear?" demanded Miss Clara wrathfully.

"A-a-a-a-a thick ear!" stammered Bob.

"Yes. If you are, there's one ready," said Miss Clara.

"My—my hat!"

Bob understood at last what the mysterious revolutions of the little lady's clenched hands meant—she was putting up her fists to box!

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors, and Miss Clara looked round indignantly.

"Indeed, I mean it, Cherry! You have spoken disrespectfully——"

"Oh, no! I didn't mean to, really!" said Bob Cherry earnestly.

Miss Clara, placated, lowered her fists.

"Oh, very well; I will let you off this time," she said magnanimously. "We're sorry we can't let you boys in to this meeting. You see, we're going to discuss some important subjects."

"Something new in hats?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, no!"

"The latest thing in doing the hair?"

Miss Clara sniffed.

"We have much more important matters than such things as that to think of. Of course, you boys would be noisy, and interrupt the proceedings. We might let two or three nice boys come in and look on, if they promised not to talk."

"They wouldn't have much chance, would they?"

Miss Clara tossed her head and walked away.

"Narrow escape for you, Bob!" said Harry Wharton, laughing, as he passed his arm through his chum's "You nearly had the licking of your life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better be off," said Nugent, as the school clock chimed out half-past six. "We've got to get to the village and back before locking-up."

"Right you are."

The chums of the Remove went out into the Close in the summer evening. In the golden light there were two or three cricket-matches in progress, and the four chums looked rather longingly at the pitches. But they had business in the village of Friardale that could not wait. A junior was sauntering along to the gates with his hands in his pockets, his shoulders bent forward, and his head depressed. Bob Cherry chuckled as he glanced at him.

"That's Hazeldene, and a fine sample of the Eton slouch!" he remarked. "I wonder what's the matter with Vaseline lately? He seems to have something on his chest!"

Harry Wharton tapped the preoccupied junior on the shoulder. Hazeldene looked up with a start and coloured.

"Anything wrong?" asked Harry.

He had thought several times lately that something was wrong with Hazeldene of the Remove. The boy had a weak nature, and was frequently in difficulties—from more than one of which Harry had extricated him. Both on his own account, and on his sister's, Harry was interested in him.

"N-no," muttered Hazeldene; "I'm all right."

"Coming out?"

"I'm going to the village."

"So are we. Come with us."

Hazeldene coloured more deeply.

"I—I'm coming a little later," he said. "Don't bother about me." And he walked away.

Harry looked after him, and there was a frown on his face as he resumed his way.

"Something wrong there," said Bob Cherry. "Vaseline has been getting into trouble again. I wonder what it is this time."

"I wish I knew, but I can't very well question him," said Harry, wrinkling his brows. "I can't help thinking it has some connection with Lazarus, the old dealer, in Friardale. I've seen Hazeldene talking to him"

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"That's serious!"

"I hope it isn't, but one can't help a chap who won't be helped!" Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "I'm thinking more about Marjorie than about him. It's his sister's influence more than anything else that keeps Hazeldene straight. You know what he used to be! But if he won't speak, I don't see what we can do."

The Famous Four were very silent and thoughtful as they walked on towards the village. They were all thinking more of Marjorie, perhaps, than of her brother, who was likely to bring the shadow of disgrace upon her name

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
The Haunted Box-room.

BULSTRODE chuckled as he saw the chums of No. 1 Study cross the Close towards the gates. He was standing by a window, with his hands in his pockets, thinking. Skinner was sitting in the window-seat, and looking at him curiously.

"What's the joke?" asked Skinner.

"Wharton and his lot have gone out. I was thinking that it was a good chance for a jape, now that those interfering puppies are out of the way."

"About the girls' meeting in the box-room, you mean?"

"Yes. I was thinking that it would be a good joke to bust it up," said Bulstrode, grinning. "I don't see why we shouldn't rag them, if we choose. What's it to do with Wharton? Wharton has been too high-and-mighty for a long time, and I don't see why he should dictate to us."

"Of course not. What's the idea?"

"Well, they're meeting in No. 2 box-room at seven. They won't allow any fellows at the meeting. You know there's a lot of empty packing-cases in the room. We could shove some of the chaps into them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The big case that Miss Locke's piano came in is there," said Bulstrode. "It would hold three or four of us easily. When they're in the midst of the giddy meeting, we would give a fearful yell, and make them jump out of their boots."

Skinner chuckled.

"Good! Let's get there before they start. Suppose we take Stott and Snoop with us? Four will be enough."

Bulstrode nodded, and they hurried away. In five minutes the four of them were in No. 2 box-room. It was a room little used. At one end was a stack of old boxes, and close to them a huge and strong packing-case. There was ample room in the packing-case for the four Removites. Bulstrode grinned with satisfaction as he saw it.

"This is simply ripping!" he said. "You see, there's one end knocked out. We can turn it over so that the open end is on the floor."

"Then how are we to get into it?" asked Stott.

"Ass! Get into it while we're turning it over—turn it over on ourselves," said Bulstrode. "It will touch the floor all round us, and hide us completely. Then when they're holding the meeting we can walk along, making the case go with us by pushing against it from inside. If that doesn't make 'em shriek——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of feminine voices in the distance.

"Quick!" whispered Bulstrode.

The four juniors grasped the big case, and turned it over themselves. It covered them wholly as the edges touched the floor, and there were sufficient rifts in the wood to allow of light and air to enter. The practical jokers crouched very quietly in the packing-case, and almost held their breath as a light footstep entered the box-room.

Marjorie Hazeldene looked round the room.

The golden sunset was gleaming in at the window, and in the light the girl looked very charming. She had soft brown hair and soft brown eyes, and the lines of her figure were grace itself. Clara followed her in, with Milly Brown and Norah Flynn.

"First in the field!" said Miss Clara. "This is a ripping place for a meeting, without any danger of being interrupted by noisy boys."

Marjorie laughed.

"I was not quite sure about excluding boys," she said, "but then that unpleasant Bulstrode might have come, and that stupid boy Stott."

"And that dreadful Skinner," said Milly.

"Yes, perhaps it was best, upon the whole. Here they come!"

The "they" referred to the girls. The greater part of the Cliff House pupils then staying at Greyfriars attended the meeting. The room was soon pretty crowded, and there was a merry chatter of tongues ere the clock chimed out the hour. The girls were mostly excited. They had seen the Greyfriars juniors holding meetings, and they meant to hold a meeting too; but most of them had very vague ideas what the meeting was about.

"Here, here, this won't do!" exclaimed Miss Clara, who had placed herself on guard at the door, in case any stray boys should wander in. "Stop, please!"

The latest comer stopped.

It was Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, and he looked at the guardian of the portal with innocent, almond eyes.

"Me come in?"

"No, you can't come in."

"Me Wun Lung. Me come in."

"This is a girls' meeting," explained Clara patiently. "You can't come in."

"No savvy."

"It's a meeting on important subjects concerning only Cliff House," said Milly Brown. "Boys are not admitted."

"No savvy."

"My goodness," said Clara, "what a dreadfully stupid boy! And they say women oughtn't to have votes. Go away, Wun Lung!"

"Me comee in."

"But I tell you you cannot come in."

"No savvy."

Miss Clara made a sign to Milly and Norah, and they took Wun Lung by the shoulders and walked him out upon the stairs. There they left him, and returned to the room. The little Chinee trotted in after them.

"My goodness," exclaimed Clara, "here is that dreadful little heathen again! Wun Lung, you must run away!"

"No savvy."

"Lend me your scissors, Alice, and I will cut his pigtail off."

Wun Lung backed away.

"No cuttee!" he bawled. "Me savvy. No cuttee!"

"Then be off with you!" exclaimed Clara, brandishing the scissors. And Wun Lung "savvied" at last, and scuttled off. Miss Clara slammed and locked the door.

"We're not all here," said Marjorie mildly.

"Seven's gone," said Miss Clara; "the meeting's for seven sharp. All late comers are out of it. That's business."

"Very well, my dear. The proceedings will now——"

"Proceed," said Norah Flynn.

"Exactly. Speech, Marjorie!"

"Very good!" said Marjorie, mounting upon a box. "Ladies and gentlemen——"

"There aren't any gentlemen present," said Milly Brown. "Keep to the subject, dear."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Marjorie firmly—"I have heard my papa make speeches, and he always begins like that—if we are to hold meetings the same as the boys, we shall have to be businesslike, like them. Ladies and gentlemen, we are met upon a most important occasion."

"Hear, hear!" said Miss Clara.

"The foundations of our own school having proved to be—to be——"

"Rocky," suggested Clara.

"Having proved to be rocky," said Marjorie, with a nod, "we are taking up a temporary residence at Greyfriars. Most of the boys are nice——"

"Hear, hear!"

"But they all show a disposition to regard girls as something inferior to themselves—something to be encouraged and protected. Of course, that is all——"

"Piffle," said Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"Piffle!" repeated Miss Clara firmly. "Go on!"

"I will say nonsense," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "It is all nonsense. Girls can look after themselves as much as boys can. Why can't we have studies, and have tea in our studies, the same as the juniors?"

"Echo answers why?" said Clara.

"Why shouldn't we have—have rags, the same as they do? We are just as lively as they are; perhaps not quite so strong, but ever so much cleverer."

"Hear, hear!"

"Why shouldn't we stand a feed in the dorm., and break bounds to get in the—the——"

"Grub," said Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"Grub! Go on!"

"To get in the—the eatables," said Miss Hazeldene. "I don't see any reason why we shouldn't. It would impress the boys. We've got to keep our end up. We've already beaten them at cricket, but they only laugh when they speak of that cricket match. The fact is, the boys don't take us seriously."

"Shame!"

"We're going to make them take us seriously. Of course, there's no reason why a girl shouldn't be as brave as a boy, and take just the same risks, and—and that sort of thing. We're going to show them that we've got as much courage, as much nerve, as much pluck, as much—— Oooohohohohe!"

Marjorie's voice trailed off in a shriek.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Clara, in alarm. "What's the matter, dear?"

"That—that packing-case!" said Marjorie faintly. "It moved!"

The startled girls all looked round at the big packing-case. It was still enough now. Clara laughed.

"Nonsense, dear! How could it move?"

"I am sure I saw it move."

"Stuff! I—— My goodness!"

Miss Clara shrieked, and most of the girls shrieked, as the packing-case visibly moved. It moved towards them, without any visible means of volition, and the girls gazed at it startled and terror-struck.

"It's—it's haunted!" gasped Milly.

And there was another general shriek.

The girls had heard the juniors talk of a ghost at Greyfriars, and for the moment it really seemed as if they were in a haunted room. But Miss Clara gave a sudden cry of relief, mingled with anger. She had caught sight of several pairs of boots under the moving packing-case. In shoving it along, Bulstrode & Co. raised it a little from the floor, and that gave them away.

"Don't be afraid!" cried Clara. "It's a jape! There are boys in it!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Fairly Caught.

MISS CLARA recovered from her consternation in a moment. Bulstrode & Co., in the packing-case, giggled gleefully, and allowed the case to rest for a moment. In that moment Miss Clara acted promptly.

She ran towards the case, and pulled herself upon it, and sat there. The others, catching the idea, followed her example. In a few moments there were a dozen girls sitting on the packing-case, till there was not room for another. And when the juniors underneath essayed to shove it along again, they found that it would not move. The weight was too great for them to negotiate.

"Quick!" panted Clara. "Run downstairs, Milly, and get a hammer and some nails out of the workshop. Quick!"

Milly dashed away. It was not far to the room which the juniors who studied carpentry used as a workshop. In

less than a minute Milly was back with a heavy hammer and a dozen eight-inch nails.

Dismay had fallen upon the unlucky jokers in the packing-case. Then had intended to frighten the girls, and then to pitch the case over and get out; but things had not gone exactly as they had planned.

With the weight of half the meeting upon it, the packing-case was jammed down to the floor, and all their efforts could not shift it

And an ominous sound of hammering told them it was being yet more securely fastened down.

"My hat," said Skinner, in dismay, "we're in for it!"

"Shove again, you fools!" said Bulstrode.

"It's no good; we can't get it over."

"See if you can bust your shoulder through the side!"

"Rats! Try your shoulder!"

"Look here, Skinner——"

"It's no good, Bulstrode. We're done in."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth, and made a last savage and determined effort to throw over the packing-case, but it was in vain. The case did not even shake. The weight upon it was too great, and the nails were being driven in now.

Through the wood, and deep into the floor, the nails were steadily driven; Miss Clara beginning at the corners, and then going round the box, hammering away scientifically.

The girls were still shrieking, but it was with laughter now. The idea of the practical jokers being caught in their own trap struck them as comical.

From within the packing-case came muffled voices, which could not be distinguished in the loud hammering.

Knock, knock, knock!

Bulstrode gritted his teeth with rage. His vain effort to move the immovable case caused him to sink exhausted on the floor, and he was still gasping for breath when the knocking ceased.

Miss Clara had driven in the last nail.

"There," exclaimed that young lady, dropping the hammer; "I've finished!"

There was a wild shriek from Wilhelmina Limburger.

"Ach! Mein Himmel!"

Miss Clara looked at her.

"What's the matter with you, Wilhelmina?"

"Ach! It is tat you have drop te hammer on mein foot!" wailed Miss Limburger, standing on one foot and nursing the other.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Ach! Tat not dake avay te bain!"

"It will go away soon," said Clara consolingly. "I had no idea your feet reached as far as this from where you were standing."

"Ach!"

"It's all right. The naughty boys are safe enough," said Miss Clara gleefully. "What a noise they are making!"

Bulstrode & Co. were thumping away furiously inside the box.

"Let us out!" roared Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn the box over!"

"Hear us snigger," said Miss Clara. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Snigger!" repeated Clara obstinately. "Hear us snigger, you chaps. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us out!"

"Go and eat coal—I mean coke?"

"Will you unfasten this box?"

"Can't be done, dear boy! The nails are driven in, and we couldn't get them out if we wanted to. We haven't any pincers."

Skinner gave a gasp inside the packing-case.

"My word! She's right! They couldn't get those nails out again."

"What on earth are we to do?" muttered Stott.

Snoop began to whimper.

"We shall be suffocated in here. It's all Bulstrode's fault!"

"Shut up!" roared the exasperated Bulstrode.

"Yes; but I say——"

Biff!

Bulstrode brought his elbow hard against Snoop's chest, and the whimperer fell on the floor with a bump. Bulstrode glared down at him.

"Keep there!" he snarled. "If you get up again, I'll knock you down!"

And Snoop remained on the floor. There wasn't enough room in the packing-case for free movement, and the four juniors were feeling very cramped and confined. It was hot, too—very hot. And the savage temper they were getting into made them hotter. But there was no escape.

Bulstrode kicked savagely on the side of the packing-case.

"Will you let us out, confound you?"

"Certainly not!" said Clara resolutely. "You got in there of your own accord, and now you can stay there. You can stay there till some of your friends come and let you out. We will let the Remove know where to find you. Good-bye!"

Bulstrode yelled and threatened, but the girls, laughing almost hysterically, crowded out of the room, and the silence soon showed the trapped jokers that they were alone.

"My hat!" said Skinner. "They're going to tell the Remove. We shall have a crowd to come and look at us soon."

And Bulstrode groaned.

There was a patter of light footfalls in the room, and Bulstrode tapped eagerly on the wood. Someone had entered the box-room.

"I say, who is it?" he called out. "Get us out of this!"

There was a faint chuckle—a chuckle he knew. The unseen junior was Wun Lung, the little Celestial.

"Wun Lung," shouted Bulstrode, "help us out of this!"

"Who callee?"

"It is I, Bulstrode; I'm in the packing-case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You Chinese beast——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get us out of this, or I'll skin you presently!" roared Bulstrode, in a fury.

The little Chinee chuckled again. He put his mouth to a knot-hole in the wood, to speak in his quaint, chuckling voice.

"No lettee out."

"You heathen rotter, I'll pulverise you!"

"No catchee. Bulstlode beast—bully," said Wun Lung complacently. "He knockee Wun Lung's headee 'gainst dool. He say he cuttee off pigtail. He beast! Wun Lung no lettee out. Wun Lung teachee lesson!"

"I—I—I'll give you a bob if you let us out before the fellows come!"

"No lettee out."

"Five bob—half-a-sovereign, if you like!" said Bulstrode desperately.

"Lats!"

There was silence for some minutes—silence on the part of Wun Lung. The imprisoned juniors were noisy enough. Then the little Celestial became audible again. He plumped something down on the packing-case that clanged like metal.

"He's going to break it open!" said Stott hopefully.

But Bulstrode was silent. He had no such hope. There was a sound of knocking, and chips of wood flew. Wun Lung was knocking holes in the packing-case over their heads.

"What on earth's he doing?" muttered Skinner.

They soon discovered.

There were half a dozen holes gashed in the wood in a few minutes, and then there was a splash, as a vessel full of liquid was inverted over the packing-case.

Bulstrode gave a yell as a shower came from above. Ink was streaming through the holes in the packing-case—streaming in showers over the four unfortunate jokers. The little Celestial had emptied a can of ink over the packing-case!

The juniors yelled and squirmed as the inky shower descended upon them. All four of them were in Wun Lung's black books, for bullying and domineering over the little Celestial; but it was certain that Wun Lung had "got his own back" this time.

The little Chinaman doubled up in a fit of silent laughter as he heard the gasps and exclamations from the interior of the packing-case.

Then he glided from the room, and he passed on the stairs fellows who had heard the news, and who were coming

NEXT WEEK: **"THE CLIFF HOUSE PARTY."**

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

up to have a look at the captured japers. The box-room gradually filled, but no one seemed to be in a hurry to tackle the packing-case and release the prisoners.

There were few fellows in the Remove who had not at one time or another experienced bullying or ragging of some sort at the hands of Bulstrode, and, as his own special chums were in the packing-case with him, there was no one to extend him a helping hand.

Billy Bunter was the last to arrive on the scene, and he tapped on the packing-case.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Let us out!"

"I say, will you stand me a feed if I let you out? I'm rather faint from want of nourishment, and I'm afraid the exertion will be too much for me unless I have a snack. Will you stand me a—— Ow! Oh, really, Russell——"

Trevor, of the Remove, grasped the fat junior, and yanked him away from the case.

"You mind your own business!" he said.

"Oh, really Trevor——" said Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles at his assailant. "Oh, really——"

"Scat!"

And Billy, seeing Trevor double up his fist, "scatted."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

His Majesty the Baby.

"TODDLES all right?"

It was Harry Wharton who asked the question, as he entered a neat little cottage in the village of Friardale. A motherly-looking woman in a white apron had shown the juniors in. There was a rather concerned look upon her face, which Harry had noticed at once.

The Famous Four had come to Mrs. Fisher's cottage to see Toddles. Toddles was a youth of tender years, whom the juniors had taken charge of on a never-to-be-forgotten occasion, owing to the destitution of his mother.

A day of Toddles at Greyfriars had almost turned their hair grey. And as his mother reclaimed him, Toddles did not remain more than one day at the school. The mother had gone abroad now, to join her husband in Australia; and at the last moment, as Toddles did not seem fit for the long voyage, it had been decided to leave him behind in the charge of a respectable woman at Friardale.

The Head of Greyfriars was paying the expenses—only one of the many kind actions which endeared Dr. Locke to the poor people of the neighbourhood. Harry Wharton & Co., having once adopted Toddles, naturally took a great interest in his welfare, and they frequently called in at Mrs. Fisher's cottage to see him, and bring him toys and sweets.

The toys Toddles accumulated during a couple of weeks would have stocked an ordinary toyshop, and the sweets would have killed half a dozen youths of Toddles' tender years. Mrs. Fisher, however, judiciously disposed of most of the sweets, allowing Toddles as many as were not harmful for him.

Toddles, curiously enough—for his stay at Greyfriars had been an exciting one, not wholly gratifying to himself—had developed a deep affection for Harry Wharton, and he liked to see the captain of the Remove. Sometimes he condescended to sit on Harry's knee, and at times he demanded a song, and Toddles was not to be refused when he made a demand.

Wharton, to his own amazement and amusement, sometimes found himself cudgelling his brains for scraps of nursery songs to sing to the little fellow. He liked Toddles, and he looked grave at once as he caught the shade upon Mrs. Fisher's face.

"Nothing wrong with Toddy, I hope?" asked Bob Cherry, looking round for the youngster, without discovering any trace of him.

Toddles was usually only too much in evidence.

"I'm sorry to say he's not very well," said Mrs. Fisher. "He's in my bed-room. Will you come in?"

The four followed Mrs. Fisher into Toddles's bed-room. The little fellow was in bed, and his usually ruddy face was paler. Mrs. Fisher had explained that it was only a childish ailment, and nothing really serious; but the juniors' faces became overcast as they saw the pale little face, and the listless hands playing idly with a toy.

Toddles's face brightened up wonderfully as he saw the juniors from Greyfriars.

"Oo come here?" he said to Harry.

Harry laughed as he sat by the bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "I hope you're not feeling bad, Toddy?"

"Do away!" said Toddles.

"Eh?"

"Do away! Odders do away, too!"

Bob Cherry grinned ruefully at Nugent.

"We're not wanted, it seems," he remarked. "We'll take a stroll with Inky, Harry, and look in again in half an hour."

Wharton nodded. Toddles was sitting up in bed, and he had already taken out Harry's watch. The mystery of the hands and the ticking seemed to interest him very much.

"Bless his little heart," said Mrs. Fisher, "he seems to be ever so much better already, Master Wharton! Your coming does him good."

"Then I'm jolly glad I looked in," said Harry, smiling. "I've got to get off at seven-thirty, though. Well, Toddles, can you tell the time yet?"

"Oo tell Toddles 'tory."

It was not the first time Harry had been called upon for a story by Master Toddles, and lately he had taken the trouble of looking out some fairy stories so as to be prepared for such a demand. He told Toddles now the story of "Puss in Boots," making it as simple as he could for the understanding of three years old. Toddles listened with the deep, intense gravity of childhood, as if he fully understood all that was said, though he certainly could not have understood more than half of it. Harry spun out the story to make it last till his chums called for him, and he had just finished when Bob Cherry looked in at the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time to be moving, or we shall be late for locking-up!"

Harry made a movement to rise. Toddles had fast hold of his sleeve with one hand, and he did not let go. He shook the other at Bob Cherry.

"Do away!"

"Certainly!" grinned Bob. "Come on, Harry!" And he disappeared.

"Tell Toddles 'nodder 'tory!"

"I'm afraid I must go now, chappy," said Harry gently. "I've got to get back to school, you know!"

"Tell Toddles 'nodder 'tory!"

"I'll tell you another story another time," said Harry, greatly distressed by the signs of tears in the little face. "I must go now."

"Toddles not well. Tell Toddles 'nodder 'tory."

"My dear little chap——"

"Tell Toddles 'nodder 'tory," said Toddles, his voice rising crescendo, and the tears beginning to flow. "Toddles not seepy. Tell Toddles 'tory!"

"Look here, Toddy, I'll come again and tell you a story another time—not just now," said Harry. "Let me go now, kiddy."

"Oo come soon?"

"Yes, yes; to-morrow!"

Toddles shook his head decidedly.

"Oo come nighty."

"I can't come to-night, chappy. It's not allowed."

"Oo come nighty!" shrieked Toddles.

"Bless his little heart!" said Mrs. Fisher, coming into the room. "He gets feverish of a night, and can't sleep. And most of last night he was asking for you, sir."

Harry Wharton looked troubled. The rules of the school were strict, and any junior outside the gates after locking-up was taken before the Head or a Form-master. He could not remain. And to visit the cottage at night meant breaking bounds after dark; a serious offence at Greyfriars.

Yet the thought that the child lay awake in the still hours calling for him touched Harry strangely. Like all lads with healthy bodies and sound minds, he was fond of children. And little Toddles, wilful little rascal as he was, had wound himself somehow round the junior's heart.

"Oo come nighty!" wailed Toddles.

Harry took a sudden resolution.

"Yes, I'll come and see you to-night, Toddy," he said quietly. And then Toddles was all smiles.

"Toddles seepy now," he said cheerfully.

And Mrs. Fisher was tucking him in when Harry left, and joined his chums outside the cottage. They strolled away through Friardale High Street towards the college. Bob Cherry whistled when Harry mentioned his appointment with Toddles.

"I say, Harry, it's a risky business," said Nugent. "You know how the Head is down on anybody who breaks bounds, especially after dark. Since that chap Levison had to leave for pub-haunting, the Head's been more strict than ever."

"I know it, Frank. But Toddles wants me, and I've promised the little beggar now."

"Suppose you asked Mr. Quelch?"

Harry shook his head.

"I couldn't. He'd refuse, anyway. Besides, I don't know how long Toddles will keep me. Better keep it dark. Quelch wouldn't understand. He'd think Toddles was a wilful little bounder who ought to be over-ruled. Perhaps

he is. Only he asks for me when he can't sleep, and—and I'm going, so that's settled!" said Harry, breaking off.

"Here's Lazarus's festive establishment," remarked Bob Cherry, as they passed a dusty-looking secondhand furniture shop. "Remember how we got the furniture here for the study after the fire at Greyfriars?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton, laughing. "I——" He broke off. He had suddenly caught sight of Hazeldene coming out of the old dealer's shop. The boy was looking white and worn, and his expression struck the chums of the Remove. Hazeldene did not see them. He walked away quickly in the direction of the school, and the chums, exchanging uneasy glances, followed more slowly.

There was no further doubt upon the point that Marjorie's brother was in some trouble with the old dealer of Friardale. Mr. Lazarus was reputed to have a money-lending branch to his business, and Wharton thought of that now with an uncomfortable sensation. What trouble was Hazeldene in that he looked so white and wretched?

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Mr. Quelch is Startled!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Where are all the fellows?"

The chums of No. 1 Study looked about them in surprise as they re-entered Greyfriars, just in time to escape being locked out by Gosling. The Close was clear of Removites, the common-room was drawn blank, and there were none of the Lower Fourth in the gym. The Remove passage was deserted, and the studies were nearly all empty. Where on earth were the Remove?

Wingate, of the Sixth, met the chums as they were looking about them, and he nodded.

Bob Cherry ventured to stop the captain of Greyfriars.

"Have you seen any of the chaps?" he asked. "They seem to have made a sudden disappearance somewhere."

"Now I come to think of it, I haven't seen so many microbes about the last half-hour," said Wingate genially. "Perhaps they've heard the rumour that all the necks in the Remove are to be washed in future, and have run away from school." And he walked on, leaving the juniors looking rather wrathful.

They looked into the studies along the Remove passage. One was found occupied at last. Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad, was at work in his quarters.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have the fellows all gone to sea?" asked Bob Cherry. "The whole Remove's disappeared."

Mark Linley laughed.

"I hear there's something going on in No. 2 box-room," he said. "Perhaps they're up there."

"Thanks! Let's go and have a look, my sons."

The noise in the box-room warned the four chums that the Remove were indeed there, as they mounted the stairs.

Thump, thump!

"Well, there's something on," said Nugent. "But I'm blessed if I can guess what it is!"

"The blessfulness is terrific."

They entered the box-room. It was crammed with fellows, all gathered round a packing-case nailed to the floor. They were laughing hysterically, and from within the nailed packing-case came thump on thump, and yell on yell. Harry recognised Bulstrode's voice, and he thought he understood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Faith, and it's Bulstrode! Ha, ha, ha! They hid themselves in the case to frighten the girls, and, sure, they're fastened up in it!"

"Let us out!" came a muffled voice from within the case.

The chums roared with laughter. The girls had evidently been interrupted in their meeting by the cads of the Remove, and had gained the upper hand.

"My word," said Nugent, "who shoved all this ink here? They must have been drenched inside the case? That wasn't Marjorie & Co."

"Me shovee inkee," said a mild voice. "Me inkee bully. Allee light."

"It won't be all right for you when Bulstrode gets out," grinned Bob Cherry. "You'd better make yourself scarce."

Thump, thump!

"Will you let us out? I say, Wharton, get this thing unfastened, there's a good chap!" called out Skinner. "We're suffocating and smothered with ink. 'Nuff's as good as a feast, you know!"

"Please let us out," came Snoop's whimpering voice. "I—I feel quite ill!"

"Perhaps they've had enough," grinned Trevor. "Somebody will have to get a crowbar to prise that thing up. The girls have nailed it down as if it were to stay there till Greyfriars fell to pieces."

After some delay a crowbar was found, and Bob Cherry set to work to prise up the case. After all, a joke was a joke, but the imprisoned juniors had had enough. It was time they were set at liberty. But it was no easy task to get the packing-case up. Bob tried to jam the crowbar under the edge, but there was no getting it in.

"We shall have to get a mallet," he said. "One of you chaps cut off and get a mallet, or something.

There was a further delay while a mallet was being found. Bulstrode, within the case, was breathing fury. When the mallet arrived Bob Cherry resumed operations, and there was a knocking in the box-room that could be heard all over Greyfriars.

"I'm off," Trevor remarked. "You'll have all the prefects here soon to see what that row is about."

"Faith, and it's right ye are!"

The Removites, still laughing, crowded out of the box-room. It was no easy task to unfasten the packing-case, but Bob Cherry succeeded at last. With a final wrench it came up, and the four juniors crawled out.

Their appearance sent the chums almost into hysterics. Their faces and collars were smothered with ink, and it looked as if a troupe of nigger minstrels had suddenly escaped from the packing-case.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Oh, come on! I shall have a fit if I stay here. Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Four hurried off, laughing hysterically as they went downstairs, and almost ran into a severe-featured gentleman who was coming up.

"Boys, stop!"

It was Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. The knocking in the box-room had brought him to the spot, and he was not looking amiable. He fixed his eyes severely upon the juniors.

"What is all this noise about?" he asked.

"N-n-nothing, sir."

"There is something going on in the box-room," said the Remove-master. "I cannot have these ceaseless disturbances!"

"If you please, sir——" began Harry, as Mr. Quelch made a movement to pass them and go up—"if—if you please——"

"Well, Wharton?" said the Form-master, looking at him.

Wharton hesitated. He was wondering what Mr. Quelch would think if he saw Bulstrode & Co. at that moment.

"If—if you please, sir, it's—it's all right!"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Quelch mounted the stairs. The juniors watched him go into the box-room, and Bob Cherry gave a breathless chuckle.

"It's all up now!"

Mr. Quelch, looking very angry, strode into the box-room, and the next moment he nearly jumped off the floor.

"Wh-wh-what is this?" he gasped.

He stared blankly at four weird-looking figures, with faces black with ink, that met him just inside the doorway.

Bulstrode & Co. stared at the Form-master in their turn.

For some moments there was silence.

Mr. Quelch, as he recovered from his astonishment, looked very grim.

"I presume this a Christy Minstrel rehearsal," he said, finding his sarcastic tongue again.

"You—you see, sir——" said Bulstrode haltingly.

"Yes, I see—I see four juniors who have got into a most disgusting state," said the Remove-master. "You will go and clean yourselves immediately. Then you will each write out two hundred lines of Virgil, and bring them to me before bedtime."

"If—if you please, sir——"

"Not a word! Go!"

They went, and Mr. Quelch followed them grimly down. It was no easy matter to get all that ink off, and when it was done, they had to set to work on the lines. Mr. Quelch was not a master to be trifled with on matters like that. The lines had to be shown up. They accounted for most of what was left of the evening; and when they were done, Bulstrode was in a mood for any kind of vengeance. But he found that his followers were far from agreeing with him.

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner, when Bulstrode broached the subject. "Bosh! I rather think we've had enough for once. Let them alone."

"Do you think I'm going to take this lying down?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"Well, you can't punch a girl's head, I suppose—and we started it, too. The fellows wouldn't let you touch them if you wanted to. We've got Quelchy down on us, too. Better let it alone. I've had enough."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. He, at least, had not had enough; and he watched his opportunity for retaliation.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Marjorie's Brother.

"I SAY, you fellows—I mean you girls!"

Marjorie and Clara looked round. They were in the Close, looking on at the Sixth Form playing cricket, when Billy Bunter came up. There was an ingratiating smile upon the fat junior's face, which would have warned any Greyfriars fellow of what he wanted; but the Cliff House girls did not know Bunter so well as the Removites did.

"I say," said Bunter, stopping and blinking at the girls through his big spectacles, "I'm in a bit of a fix. Could you help me out?"

"What is it?" asked Marjorie.

"I've been disappointed about a postal order," explained Bunter, "and the remittance I'm expecting from the Patriotic Home Work Association won't come till Saturday. I want five bob for a particular purpose, and I was thinking you might lend it to me."

"I am afraid——"

"I'm quite willing to pay you interest on the loan," said Bunter, with dignity. "I did with Wharton once. I paid him at the rate of sixty thousand per cent. per annum——"

"Bunter!"

"Yes, Miss Clara."

"Don't tell stories," said Miss Clara, in her candid way.

"Oh, really, Miss Clara——"

"You did no such thing."

"But—but I did. I didn't exactly pay it, perhaps, but that was the arrangement. If you could let me have the five bob, I'd repay it on Saturday with half-a-crown extra. This is a chance you don't often get."

"And we're not going to take advantage of it now we've got it," said Clara. "I haven't five shillings to give away."

"You don't understand," said Bunter patiently. "Women never do understand these things. It's curious how females lack the business faculty. It's a loan, which I shall repay on Saturday out of my cheque from the Home Work Association. If you can't manage the five bob, half-a-crown would do."

Marjorie hesitated, and then slipped her fingers into her little purse.

"Are you quite sure you can repay it on Saturday?" she asked. "I really cannot spare it unless you can do so."

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"Oh, really, Miss Hazeldene, I think you might trust a fellow! Ask anybody in the Remove, and they'll tell you how I am with money matters."

It would have been safer for Marjorie's half-crown if she had done so. She handed the coin to Bunter, who slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"Thanks!" he said airily. All the persuasiveness and the ingratiating effusiveness was gone from Bunter's manner when he had once secured the loan. "I'll see about this on Saturday or Monday."

"You said Saturday for certain!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Oh, very well!" said Bunter peevishly. "Saturday, as you're so particular. I was thinking I'd give it to you out of my postal order on Monday; still, you may as well have it out of the Home Work cheque on Saturday. I won't forget."

And the fat junior walked off. He made a direct line towards the tuck-shop, leaving Marjorie with a somewhat doubtful expression upon her face. She would need that half-crown on Saturday, and it began to look as if she might expect it in vain. But the sight of her brother strolling moodily under the trees with his hands thrust deep into his pockets drove the thought of Bunter and the half-crown from her mind. Miss Clara walked away as Marjorie joined her brother. Hazeldene looked up with a start as Marjorie came up to him.

"Hallo, Marjorie!"

The girl looked at him anxiously.

"Is anything the matter?" she said, slipping her arm through his. "What is it? You have been looking worried all the time I've been at Greyfriars."

"It's all right, Sis."

"But it isn't all right," said Marjorie. "Can't you tell me what it is? Have you been getting into debt again?"

Hazeldene shifted uneasily.

"So it is that," said Marjorie, her heart beating painfully. "Oh, and you promised to be so careful after Harry Wharton helped you out last time."

"It—it isn't exactly debt," said Hazeldene; "I suppose I may as well tell you. Look at this."

He dragged a crumpled paper from his pocket. Marjorie looked at it in wonder. In florid type it bore the heading—M. Lazarus, Dealer in Antiques. Genuine Old China Bought and Sold. Money Lent.

There was more of it, but that was enough. It was an invoice for goods delivered, and Marjorie looked down the list in amazement.

"One study table, £1 1s. Two ditto chairs, 15s. Square carpet, £1 5s. Genuine old French mirror, £2. Bookcase, £1 8s. 6d."

Marjorie looked at her brother in anxious amazement.

"Surely you haven't been buying all these things?"

The junior looked a little dogged.

"It was after the fire at Greyfriars," he explained. "You remember, the Remove studies were burnt down. All our things went. The fellows have to furnish their own studies here. Bulstrode's in my study, and he does things in good style, and—and I didn't want to have nothing. I was bound to take my whack, you know. The college made us some compensation for the things destroyed, but that didn't go far. I thought it would be a ripping idea to get some new things on the hire-purchase system."

"Oh, dear!"

"Wharton bought his new crocks at the same place," said Hazeldene. "He was able to pay cash, though. He's so hard-headed, too. When old Lazarus tried to persuade him to have things on tick, he stuck out against it. But the terms were so good, you know. What I bought came to about six-pounds ten——"

"Six pounds ten, and you have no money!"

"Don't you see, it was the hire-purchase system," said Hazeldene lamely. "When you have things on the hire-purchase system, you always have more than you can afford, you know, and you pay it off a bit at a time. This was all right; Mr. Lazarus offered ripping terms—only a shilling a week for all that stuff. I reckoned I shouldn't have to pay it all off till I was right through the Sixth Form."

"It could not possibly pay him to grant such terms—there must have been some intention to trick you."

"I—I suppose there was, now. I didn't understand that if a payment was missed the whole became due at once; but it's in the agreement plainly enough, and he pointed it out to me—after I had run behind. You see, the whole sum became due, and every week that it wasn't paid it bore interest at the rate of five per cent."

"Oh, dear!"

"I'm not very good at figures, but—but it's worked out all right. I owe him about nine pounds now," said Hazeldene hopelessly. "He's been dunning me for weeks. I've paid him all I could scrape together. It's no good speaking to Wharton. He couldn't possibly raise anything like nine pounds——"

"It would not be fair to ask him," said Marjorie quickly. "You must never, never think of that, whatever happens."

"Ye-es, you're right. I—I couldn't ask him," said Hazeldene haltingly. "I—I couldn't ask him. He couldn't do it, anyway, so it doesn't matter. The beast Lazarus has had about thirty shillings out of me already, and I still owe him nine pounds."

"But you are a minor," said Marjorie indignantly. "He had no right to supply you things on credit. He cannot claim the money."

"But he could go to the Head," said Hazeldene gloomily. "The Head would write to dad about it. I can't face it."

Marjorie wrinkled her brows.

"Don't you worry, Sis," said Hazeldene remorsefully. "I wish you hadn't asked me anything about it. I oughtn't to have told you. You can't help me."

"But is Mr. Lazarus threatening you now?"

"Yes. If I don't let him have another pound on Saturday he says he's going to the Head," said Hazeldene hopelessly. "I don't know what to do; unless I run away from school."

"You must not do anything so silly as that!"

"What else can I do? I can't face it, I tell you. The Head will take a serious view of it, if it comes to his ears. Lazarus will make it as bad as he can, and I shall be very likely expelled. That's one reason why I haven't told Wharton. I know he would want to defy Lazarus, and I daren't!"

"It is a shame," said Marjorie hotly. "The things in your study are not worth a quarter that he has charged for them. It is dishonesty all through."

"Well, his terms were very easy, you know," said Hazeldene weakly. "One can't expect everything."

"They haven't turned out to be very easy. But don't pay the man any more. Let him do his worst. If he keeps on like this, you will never be out of his clutches; and you will have to make a stand some time," said Marjorie earnestly. "Make a stand now, and let him do his worst."

"You don't understand," said Hazeldene peevishly. "I can't! It's no good talking like that. He's got me in a cleft stick, and he knows it. I was a fool to have anything to do with him, I know that. But—but if I can't raise a pound this week to stave him off, I shall cut it all."

"But you must not!"

"There's nothing else. I can't face the Head, Marjorie!" He broke out suddenly. "You can help me if you like. If

I can stave it off this week, I may be able to find some way of pulling out. Help me this once."

"How can I help you?" said the girl, in wonder. "I have no money."

"If—if you would lend me your ring——"

The girl looked down quickly at the ring on her hand, and for a moment her face set.

"It was a present from mother," she said, in a low tone.

"Well, it would only be for a time. I can raise money on it, you know, and later on I can get it back for you," said Hazeldene uneasily. "Never mind, if you don't want to; only I thought——"

The girl slipped the ring from her finger, and placed it in his hand. The junior's face lighted up.

"Thank you, Marjorie! You're—you're a brick! It will be all right. I'll see that you have it back again!"

And Hazeldene hurried off, with a weight lifted from his mind; and Marjorie stood still under the trees, with the tears gathering in her eyes.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Clara Means Business.

"MARJORIE!"

"Where's Marjorie?"

Clara and Milly were looking everywhere for Marjorie. It was growing thick dusk in the Close, and the girls were not allowed out of doors after dark. The slim form of Marjorie came from out of the shadows of the trees, and Clara uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Oh, here you are!" she said. "I was beginning to think that something had happened to you! What is the matter, Marjorie?"

"Nothing, dear."

"Well, you look a little—what do they call it?—down in the mouth," said Clara, peering at her chum in the dusk. "Is it that dreadful Bulstrode again? Has he been talking to you?"

"Oh, no; I am all right! Let's go in!"

They went in, Clara still looking a little puzzled and concerned. Marjorie was worried about her brother, but she assumed an air of cheerfulness to ward off the questions of her friends. The girls at Greyfriars had their meals in the Head's house, under the charge of Miss Locke, the Head's sister, who was a mistress at Cliff House. They went in to supper, and there was a subdued murmur of talk at the meal. The "Co," were full of the new idea that had been broached at the meeting in the box-room—especially Clara. Clara was a determined young lady, and she never gave up an idea when it had once taken possession of her.

"You haven't forgotten about the—the feed, Marjorie?" she whispered.

Marjorie started.

"Oh, Clara! The what?"

"The feed in the dorm.," said Clara obstinately. "You know we arranged to have a feed in the dorm., the same as the boys do."

"But—but——"

"I suppose you're not going to funk it now?" whispered Clara. "Nonsense—I mean piffle! Why, the boys would laugh at us!"

"Faith, and they would!" said Miss Flynn. "It's a good idea entirely!"

"But—but the school shop is closed," said Alice.

Miss Clara sniffed scornfully.

"Who's talking about the school shop? We're going to get the provisions—I mean the grub—from the village!"

"Good!" said Milly Brown.

"But that will be breaking bounds, Clara dear."

"That's exactly the idea!" said Clara triumphantly. "If it wasn't breaking bounds I shouldn't like the idea at all! The boys break bounds to go down to the village for grub, and we've got to show that we can do the same as the boys! You see, that's keeping our end up!"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"We'll toss odd man out, to see who's to go," said Clara. "We can do that in the dorm. The girl who goes can be let out of a window downstairs—I've heard Cherry say how they have done it. Then you get over the wall and scoot——"

"Oh, Clara!"

"And scoot down to Friardale," said Clara firmly. "That's the—the wheeze. Don't say any more—Miss Locke is looking."

And the famous project was not discussed any more till bedtime. Marjorie was of a somewhat less adventurous disposition than Clara, though in a time of trial her character would have proved the stronger of the two, but she entered into the scheme keenly enough. As leader of the Co. she could not decline to do so, and, though she had her doubts, she was not afraid.

Miss Locke put out the lights in the girls' dormitory, and she bade them good-night and closed the door without a suspicion. Five minutes had not elapsed when Miss Clara sat up in bed.

"It's all serene!" she remarked.

"Tat is goot," said Miss Wilhelmina Limburger. "I tink tat I am hungry, ain't it? I tink tat te supper is a goot vheeze."

"Marjorie—Marjorie!"

"Yes, dear?"

"We've got to toss up," said Miss Clara. "Odd man out—I mean odd girl out!"

"No, no; don't do that!" said Marjorie quickly. "It's not necessary."

"But how are we to settle——"

"I shall go," said Marjorie. "I ought to go, as leader."

"Oh, very well, if you volunteer! Milly and I will come and help you out."

The three girls dressed hastily and stole silently to the door. The dormitory they occupied was the old Remove dormitory—the Remove sleeping in the Upper Fourth quarters while the girls were at Greyfriars. From the passage outside an unfrequented staircase gave access to the back of the house, where there was a window in an obscure alcove which the Removites had sometimes used for leaving the house. The three girls stole down the passage, with their hearts beating violently.

It was all very well to plan this sort of thing in the broad daylight, and even to discuss it in whispers at a crowded supper-table, but in a late hour of the night it was a different matter.

The passage was dark—the lights there being turned out at the same time as the lights in the dormitories. In every corner, in every alcove, threatening shadows seemed to lurk. With wildly beating hearts, Marjorie & Co. reached the stair that led down to the place of secret exit. Suddenly Clara caught Marjorie by the arm.

"Oh—oh, dear!" she murmured. "I—I can hear somebody coming!"

"We—we shall be found out!" panted Milly, all her courage deserting her. "Oh, how silly it was of us to leave the dormitory!"

"Be quiet!" whispered Marjorie. "Hush!"

She drew her friends into a recess near the head of the stairs. Someone was certainly coming along the passage. A door had been heard to faintly close in the direction of the Upper Fourth dormitory. Down the passage came soft and almost silent steps, just audible to the throbbing ears of the girls.

Closer and closer!

"It is one of the boys," whispered Clara faintly.

Marjorie pressed her arm.

It was certainly not a master—or a senior boy. The quiet and cautious footfalls showed that the walker, whoever he was, was going to leave the house secretly by the same exit the girls had chosen. Who it was they could not imagine, but they knew that it was some lad going to break bounds.

The cautious footsteps passed them, and went on down the back stairs. Marjorie & Co. listened with beating hearts, and they heard a faint click from below.

"My goodness!" whispered Clara. "He is getting out of the window—our window!"

It was five minutes before the girls dared to move. But no further sound came from the gloom, and they quitted the recess at last.

"Come on!" said Marjorie firmly.

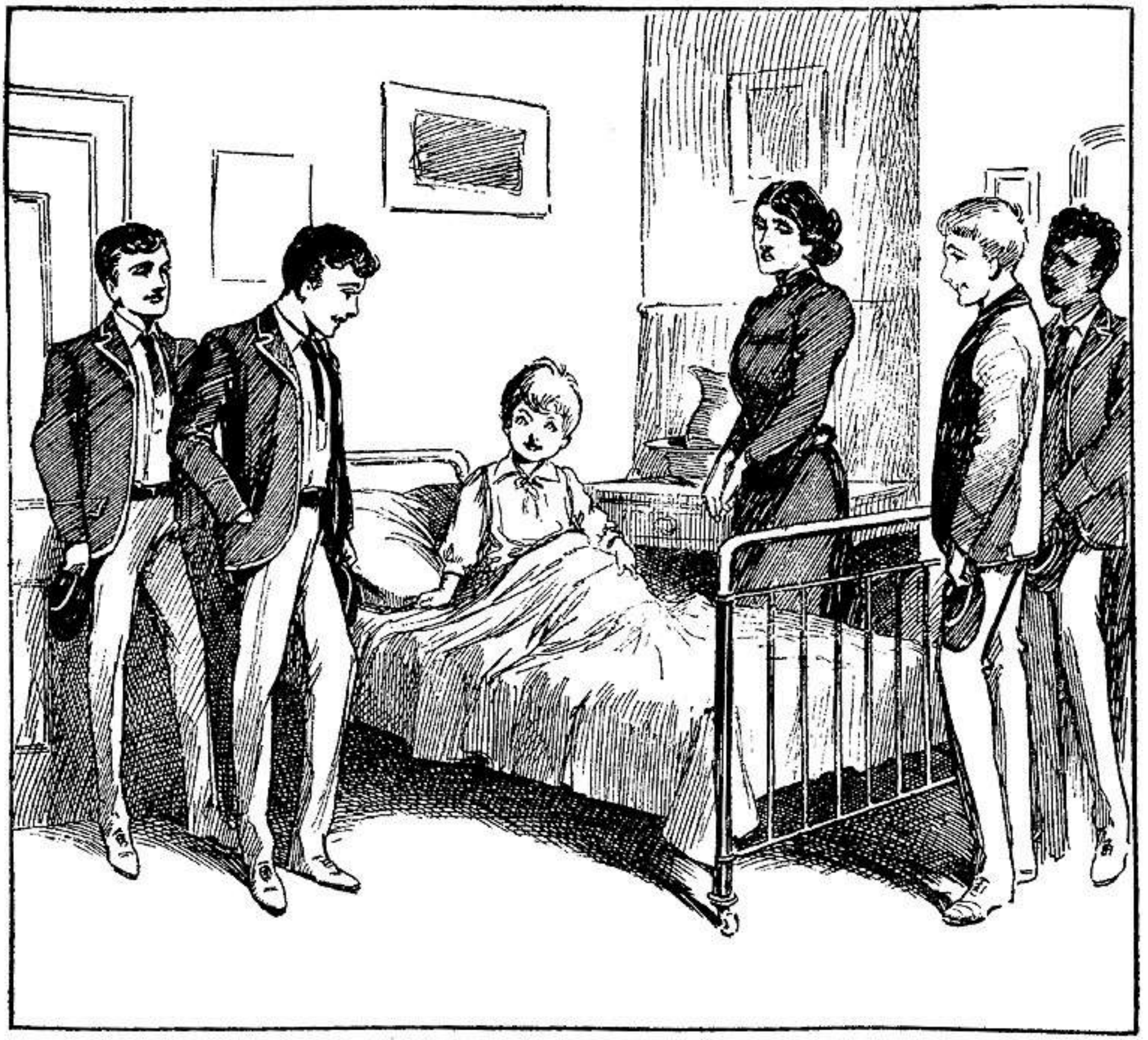
They crept down the stairs, feeling their way in the dense darkness, and reached the window. It was unfastened. Clara opened it softly and peered out into the gloom. There was no sound from the boy who had left the house. He was probably far away by that time.

"Come on, kid!" said Clara. "Out you go!"

She dropped from the window into the grass beneath, and the others followed. Miss Clara reached up carefully and closed the window. Then the three girls crossed the gardens and made their way towards the wall which gave upon the Friardale road. Little did they dream that as they turned away a spiteful face was flattened against the glass of the window.

"My hat!" murmured Bulstrode, his eyes gleaming with malevolent pleasure. "I hardly expected a chance like this! I followed Wharton to shut him out, and now here's a chance to——" He paused, and hesitated for a moment. He had intended to play a scurvy trick upon Harry Wharton, his rival in the Remove, and Fate was playing into his hands in another way. His hesitation was only momentary. "Shut me up in a packing-case and set the whole Form laughing at me, will they? It will be weeks before the fellows leave off chipping me! Let 'em stay out!"

And Bulstrode fastened the window securely, and crept back to bed, chuckling.



The thought that the child lay awake in the still hours calling for him touched Harry Wharton strangely.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Breaking Bounds.

"WHERE'S the place, Clara?"

"I've heard Cherry say they climbed up a tree close to the wall."

"But there are a lot of trees close to the wall."

"It's where the ivy is."

"The ivy is all along."

"My goodness! I wish it wasn't so dark! We must find it somehow."

"Here it is," said Milly Brown. "I remember now—it was pointed out to me. It's this old, gnarled tree. I suppose it's easy to climb, with all these big lumps on the trunk. I'll help you, Marjorie."

"But—but the other side of the wall——"

"Did you think I'd forgotten the rope, you goose?" said Clara, uncoiling a thick rope from round her waist. "I bought this of Gosling specially!"

"Help me up, then."

"Right-ho!" said Miss Clara cheerfully. "I'll give you a bunk up!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Rats! Are you ready?"

"Ye-e-es, I'm ready."

Marjorie took hold of the rough, weatherbeaten trunk of the old tree rather gingerly. She was afraid for her frock and for her hands; but it was too late to think of that now.

The climb had probably not occupied Wharton more than a few seconds. It was a more serious matter to the girls.

Clara and Milly loyally bunked up their friend, and Marjorie clambered on the sloping, knotted trunk and reached the lower branches. With the aid of them, and of the strong tendrils of the ivy growing close to the tree, she managed to reach a branch on a level with the top of the wall.

"All right?" asked Clara.

"Ye-es, I think so.

"Then I'll come and help you with the rope. Give me a bunk, Milly!"

"Ye-es—mind my hat!"

"You shouldn't have put a hat on—I haven't. If I kick your hat——"

"If you kick my hat I won't speak to you!"

"Rats! Give me a bunk."

Clara clambered on the trunk and Milly. In spite of all her caution, she did kick the hat as she clung to the first branch, and Milly started back and let go. Clara had been depending on her, and Milly's defection left her hanging to the branch. Her feet wildly swept the air.

"Oh! Ow! My goodness! I'm falling!"

"My hat!"

Milly did not intend that as a slangy exclamation. She

was examining her hat, upon which Clara's boot had plumped with considerable force. Marjorie stared down from the top of the wall.

"What is the matter? What is it?"

Clara clung desperately to the branch. If she had dropped there was only a couple of feet to drop, but she did not think of it at the moment.

"Help!" she gasped. "I'm hanging here! Oh, I know I shall fall! Milly, you horrid, horrid girl, help me! I'll never speak to you again! Oh, dear! My goodness! Oh, dear!"

"My hat is spoiled."

"Help me! Quick!"

"You've disarranged all the flowers——"

"Oh, dear! I know I shall fall!"

"And the trimming is torn, I think."

"Oh, dear! My goodness!"

"And the crown is quite knocked in. I sha'n't be able to wear this hat again. It was very cruel of you, Clara!"

"Will you help me?" shrieked Clara.

"Oh, dear, somebody will hear you!" gasped Marjorie.

Thud!

Clara had dropped from the bough. The fall did not hurt her, but she fell over, and there was a splash as her frock swept into a puddle left near the wall by the last rain. Clara gave a cry. Milly's hat was not so very important, but her own frock, of course, was another matter.

"Oh, my goodness! My frock is spoiled!"

"Look at my hat!"

"Never mind your hat! It was an old thing, anyway, and quite out of fashion. Miss Locke is sure to notice my dress. Oh, dear!"

"It wasn't an old thing!" exclaimed Milly indignantly. "I wore it on Sundays the beginning of this term, and I've only taken it for week-days the last fortnight."

"Well, look at my dress—all through your letting me fall."

"Well, your dress never suited you, you know—the colour didn't suit your complexion," said Milly. "It doesn't matter about your dress. A dress of that kind never does suit you pale girls——"

"Pale!" exclaimed Clara excitedly. "Did you say pale?"

"Yes, pale—pale—pale!" said Milly emphatically. "You pale girls!"

"I'm not pale!" exclaimed Clara. "You know I'm not pale. I'm fair! I wouldn't be a girl with a travelling-bag complexion for anything. There!"

"I—I'll never speak to you again!" exclaimed Milly, who was very proud of her dark, smooth skin, which really did not resemble a travelling-bag in colour at all—but Clara was excited. "You are a horrid girl."

"And you are a—a creature!"

"A—a creature! I—I——"

"Oh, dear!" said Marjorie, who had been for some minutes vainly remonstrating from her perch on top of the wall. "Oh, dear! Pray don't quarrel now! Do make it up!"

"I won't be called a pale girl——"

"I won't be called a creature——"

"Somebody will hear you! I sha'n't speak to either of you any more," said Marjorie. "I think you are both horrid!"

"Well," said Clara, repenting. "I didn't mean that Milly was really a creature. Of course, we know she isn't a creature."

"And I didn't mean that you were a pale girl," said Milly, relenting in her turn. "It was horrid of me to say so!"

"Oh, no, it was horrid of me! I'm so sorry, Milly."

"I'm so sorry, dear."

There was the sound of a kiss under the shadow of a tree. The brief quarrel was over, and they had made it up again.

"I wish you would come up and help me," said Marjorie.

"I'm coming, dear. Will you help me, Milly?"

"Of course I will, Clara dear."

And Miss Clara struggled at last into the branches of the tree. She joined Marjorie on the wall, and the rope was fastened to a branch. It dropped on the outer side of the wall into the road.

"Down you go, Marjorie."

"How dark it looks down there!" said Marjorie. "And how lonely."

"Yes, but it will be dark and lonely till morning, and then it will be too late to go," said Clara practically.

"I know, dear. I will go."

"If you'd rather not——"

"Oh, no; I'll go! The boys would say we were afraid."

"Then go it, dear. Milly and I will come out in exactly an hour to help you in again, and if you're not here we'll wait."

And Marjorie swung herself down the rope into the road.

As her slim figure disappeared into the shadows towards Friardale, Clara descended from the tree, leaving the rope hanging inside the wall, where it was quite hidden in the ivy. The two girls returned quietly towards the house, Milly carefully carrying her damaged hat. They reached the window from which they had emerged, and Clara tried to open it.

It did not move.

She tried again, and again, but the sash was fast. The girl turned pale,

"What is the matter?" whispered Milly. "Can't you open it?"

"No; it's jammed, or something."

"Oh, dear! Let me try!"

Milly tried, with the same result. The two girls looked at one another in utter consternation.

"It's not jammed," said Milly, in a low voice. "It's been fastened."

"My goodness!"

"Somebody has seen it unfastened, and put it right—or else some wretch has done it for a joke. Oh, dear! Whatever shall we do?"

"We—we had better wait for Marjorie to come back."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Well, it's no good crying! That won't open the window."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The two girls, on the verge of tears, waited in the darkness—waited for Marjorie to come back. Though, as far as they could see, the return of Marjorie would not help them much. What was to be done?

———

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie in Peril.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE, quite ignorant of the catastrophe which had overwhelmed the Co., turned her back on Greyfriars with a beating heart, and plunged into the shadows of Friardale Lane.

In the summer day that road had been bright and sunny, the green banks and trees cheery to look upon, the wide fields and woods pleasant to the eyes. But night made a profound difference.

All was dark and lonely and gloomy. The big trees, indistinct in the darkness, cast grim shadows over the road, and the few stars struggling through the clouds only seemed to render the darkness visible.

The fields were silent, save for low occasional sounds, which might have been made by moving cattle, or by the wind in the trees, but the very vagueness of the faint sounds added to the uneasiness with which they inspired the girl.

Before she had gone a dozen yards from Greyfriars, Marjorie realised with great clearness that, whether boys could break bounds at night or not, it was no task for girls.

She kept along the middle of the lane, casting fearful glances to either side as she went, in vague dread of seeing she hardly knew what. But she knew that the terrors of the country road at night might not be all imaginary ones. For the road was constantly used by tramps passing from one part of the coast to another, and those gentry frequently travelled by night. To come upon some ruffian, perhaps intoxicated, in the midst of the lonely road, would be an experience far from pleasant.

"It is foolish, foolish," Marjorie said to herself. "I—I deserve to have my ears boxed! I will never, never do such a thing again—never!"

Good resolutions might be a comfort, but did not help her much just then. She was in for it now, and she was too proud to give up the expedition from fear of the lonely road.

She kept resolutely on, and darkness swallowed up the school behind her. Suddenly, in a part of the lane where the great trees met overhead and shut out every glimmer of a star, her eye caught a gleam of red light.

For a moment she thought it must be a light in some cottage window, and it gave her a sense of being less lonely. But that was only for a moment. She remembered that there were no cottages near; and, besides, the light was red and glowing, and she soon saw that it was close at hand. A smell of tobacco on the wind warned her of what it was. It was a cigar-end, and the pleasant scent of the tobacco told that it was a good cigar.

The girl stopped, trembling. A good cigar indicated someone decent, no doubt, and not the imaginary tramp she feared to meet. But a meeting in that lonely place, at such an hour, with anybody, was sufficiently alarming.

The light was moving, and it was steadily coming towards her. The girl stood rooted to the ground. A burly, uncouth figure loomed up in the gloom, and a husky voice exclaimed:

"Lummy!"

The girl's heart gave a wild throb. It was a tramp after all.

NEXT WEEK: "THE CLIFF HOUSE PARTY." Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

The cigar was evidently a stolen one. The man's clothes were ragged and foul-smelling, his dimly-seen face was bristly with unshaven beard, his eyes were red and bleared with drinking.

"Oh, Heaven!" murmured Marjorie, petrified.

She stood spellbound, unable to move a limb, while the tramp peered at her with astonished eyes in the gloom.

"Lummy!" he said again. "It's a gal! Lummy!"

He was evidently astounded by the meeting. He was too surprised to do anything but blink at the girl in the darkness.

"Fancy meetin' you!" he chuckled at last. "'Ave yer lost yer way, my dear?"

"No—oh, no!" panted Marjorie. "Please let me pass—oh, please!"

"Lummy!" The ruffian chuckled again, apparently amused by her terror. "You ain't in such a hurry. 'Old on!"

Marjorie turned towards the school, but in a moment he was in her path. His red eyes were gleaming evilly.

"No, yer don't," he remarked. "I dessay you ain't come out without your purse, missy. I'm smokin' me last cigar. I got it cheap," he chuckled; "but it's the last. P'r'aps you kin spare a quid to 'elp a poor cove on his way."

"No, indeed, no, I——"

"Lummy! I——"

The tramp broke off suddenly. He had placed himself between the girl and the school, and cut off the first attempt at flight. But Marjorie was desperate. She turned suddenly, and before he could catch her she was running towards the village.

The tramp uttered an oath.

"Stop! Stop, I tell yer!"

But the terrified girl only ran the faster.

Thud, thud, thud! The heavy footsteps of the tramp rang behind her, and filled her with terror. She ran, and ran, gasping for breath, her head swimming with terror, with only one thought in her mind—to reach the village and escape the clutches of that horrible man.

Closer came the footsteps. She ran swiftly, but not so swiftly as the pursuer. He was gaining upon her—easily!

Marjorie cast a wild glance towards the hedges. She thought of taking to the fields, but there was no time. But that would not have saved her. The footsteps were close behind; she could feel the hot breath laden with the fumes of gin, and it sickened her with disgust and fear.

Suddenly a form loomed up ahead, dim in the gloom. A lad in cap and overcoat was standing in the lane, looking back. He had heard the footsteps, and turned back to see what was the matter. Marjorie caught sight of the dim form, and gave a cry. It might be another enemy—but it might be a friend.

"Help, help! Oh, help!"

There was an exclamation of amazement.

"Marjorie!"

The girl could have shrieked with delight; she knew the voice.

"Harry! Save me!"

Harry Wharton was at her side in a moment. The junior was in cap and overcoat, and carried a thick stick in his hand. He was on his way to Mrs. Fisher's cottage to see Toddles, and Marjorie had overtaken him. The tramp, dashing up breathlessly, almost ran into Harry. He stopped, and backed away a little, as he saw that the girl was not alone.

Harry faced him with blazing eyes, his right hand gripping the stick hard.

"You scoundrel! Get back!"

The man hung back for a moment. He was out of breath. Marjorie clung almost fainting to the Greyfriars junior.

"Has he hurt you?" asked Harry, between his teeth.

"No! Oh, no! But he—he was following me to—to rob me."

"The hound!"

The tramp was coming on again, his red eyes glittering. He saw that he had only a boy to deal with.

"Lummy! If I don't smash you, young shaver——"

"Stand back!"

The tramp muttered a curse, and sprang forward, and Harry struck. His face was as hard as iron at that moment, and all the force that there was in his strong right arm he threw into the blow.

The stick crashed across the face of the ruffian, and he gave a fearful yell and staggered back, and dropped heavily into the road.

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

He stood with the stick ready for another blow; but the tramp did not rise. Marjorie was still clinging to him, and crying softly.

"Don't be afraid," said Harry; "it's all right. The brute can't hurt you now."

The tramp stirred, and sat up in the dust of the road. His face was white, save where a terrible red mark ran across it—across forehead, and nose, and cheek—a mark that would not soon be effaced.

Slowly he rose, and Harry Wharton stood ready; but the ruffian did not attack him. He was dazed and stupefied by the blow, and all the fight was taken out of him. He blinked at Harry with his red, evil eyes.

"You—you whelp!" he muttered. "I'll meet you agin, perhaps, and then——"

Harry laughed scornfully.

"I'm not afraid of meeting you at any time, you cowardly brute."

The tramp muttered a savage oath, and turned, and lurched away in the darkness. He went unsteadily, with his hand to his face. Marjorie shuddered.

"Harry, how—how brave of you to face that fearful man!" she murmured.

The junior laughed lightly.

"Lucky I had the stick," he said, "though I should have given him a bit of a tussle, anyway, before he touched you, the brute! But—but what on earth are you doing out here this time of night, Marjorie?"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Toddles is Satisfied.

HARRY WHARTON looked at the girl in amazement as he put the question. In the excitement of the sudden meeting and the encounter with the tramp, he had not had time to think of it. Now he was overwhelmed with surprise. What could Marjorie possibly be doing out of bed and out of school at nearly eleven o'clock at night?

The girl coloured deeply.

"It—it was foolish of me to come out," she said. "I can see that. It seemed so different—thinking of it in the daytime."

"But—but where are you going?"

"To the village."

"Then you had better let me see you there," said Harry, a little drily. "There may be other tramps on the road."

"Thank you, Harry."

They walked on in silence for some minutes. Marjorie was still trembling, and Harry felt the hand that was resting on his arm still shake. The junior was lost in wonder.

"You—you don't know what to think of me, Harry?" said the girl, with a short, uneasy laugh. "You can't guess what I'm going to the village for?"

"No, I can't, Marjorie."

"I'm going to the tuckshop."

"The—the tuckshop!"

"Yes. We—we intended to have a dormitory feed, as you boys do," said Marjorie bravely, "and—and I volunteered to go down for the—the—the grub."

Harry stared at her, and then burst into a laugh.

"Excuse me," he said, "but—but it's funny, you know. You—you little goose, to even think of such a thing!"

"Of course, it was silly," confessed Marjorie. "I shall never do anything of the sort again. It seemed so different in the daylight. Not that I'm exactly afraid," she added quickly. "Girls are as brave as boys, you know."

"Of course they are," said Harry, "but in a different way. This sort of thing isn't in a girl's line."

"No—no, I suppose not."

They entered the village, and paused at the tuckshop. It was closed, and very dark and silent. It would have been no new experience for Uncle Clegg to be knocked up at night by a junior from the school, but he would certainly have been surprised to see Marjorie.

"Here's the tuckshop!" said Harry. "But, I say, you can't go back alone. It wouldn't be safe. And I sha'n't be going back for another hour. I can't, you see. I'm going to see Toddles."

"Toddles?"

"Yes, he's queer, and wants me," said Harry simply; "that's why I've cut out of bounds to-night. Suppose you come with me, and we'll go back together. I'll wait here while you get your things."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"What's the matter?"

"I've lost the money."

"Phew!"

Marjorie had dropped her little purse in the flight from the tramp. All her money was in it—her own, as well as the half-sovereign subscribed by the Cliff House girls for the surreptitious feed.

The tears almost came into her eyes, but she forced them back. It was too bad; the whole expedition had been unfortunate. It was worse than useless to knock Uncle Clegg up in the middle of the night to ask for credit. He wouldn't give credit in the daytime.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry!" said Harry, really concerned. "I wish I had some tin with me; but I didn't bring any

out, you know, in case of accidents. I haven't more than sixpence in my pockets. Is it all gone?"

"Yes, and the purse."

"What rotten luck!" said Harry. "I suppose it's no good going back along the lane to look for it?"

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"No, I think not." There was silence for a moment. "I shall have to give it up, that's all. It cannot be helped."

"Will you come with me to see Toddles?"

"Yes; I should never dare to go back alone," said Marjorie, with a shiver.

They walked on to Mrs. Fisher's cottage. There was a light burning in the window.

The good dame opened the door at Harry's knock. She expected Harry, but she looked surprised, as well she might, at the sight of Marjorie.

"Miss Hazeldene has come with me to see Toddles," said Harry quietly. That was quite sufficient explanation for Mrs. Fisher.

"Please come in, miss," said the good dame.

Toddles was sitting up in bed. He had been asleep once, but he had woke up again, and imperatively demanded Harry. He was still demanding him when Mrs. Fisher re-entered the room, followed by the boy and the girl.

"Toddles want Harry!" he announced. "Toddles not seepy. Toddles want to 'peak to Harry."

"Harry's here, kiddy," said Wharton, coming forward, "and I've brought Marjorie to see you."

Toddles looked over the girl with a critical eye.

"Toddles love Marjorie!" he finally announced.

Marjorie laughed merrily.

"And Marjorie loves Toddles," she said, kissing the little fellow. Toddles chirruped. His face had become quite cheerful now that his visitors had arrived.

Harry and Marjorie sat down, one on either side of the bed, and Toddles sat amidst pillows as upon a throne, surveying his subjects. He seemed undecided at first what to demand, but finally he turned to Marjorie.

"Oo tell Toddles 'tory."

"Yes, dear," said Marjorie. "What story shall I tell you? A nice story about a little boy who had a plum-cake on his birthday?"

Toddles shook his head decidedly.

"Tell Toddles 'tory about the pussy with pink eyes."

"I don't know that story, dear."

Toddles turned to Harry.

"Oo tell Toddles 'tory about pussy with pink eyes."

Harry laughed and shook his head.

"I don't know anything about the pussy with pink eyes, kid. Shall I tell you about Jack the Giant Killer?"

"Oo tell Toddles about pussy with pink eyes!" shrieked Toddles, who evidently had heard that story, and liked it, and was determined to hear it again. "Marjorie tell 'tory about pussy with pink eyes."

"Make up something about it," whispered Harry. But Toddles' ears were as sharp as needles.

"Tell true 'tory," he said suspiciously.

"Yes, dear," said Marjorie. "There was once a pussy cat with pink eyes, who—who lived in a cottage——"

"Lived in a bowl of keem," said Toddles.

"Oh, dear! Who lived in a bowl of cream," said Marjorie, smiling. "He had white whiskers——"

"Pink whiskers," said Toddles.

"My hat!" said Harry. "This is going to be story-telling under difficulties. I say, Toddy, won't 'Puss In Boots' do?"

"Tell Toddles 'tory of pussy with pink eyes," insisted Toddles.

And Marjorie did. With endless corrections from Toddles, all made with a perfectly grave face and an admonishing manner, the history of an imaginary cat with pink eyes was unfolded. Fortunately, by the time Marjorie's invention was at an end, Toddles was dropping off to sleep.

"Going to sleep now, Toddles?" asked Harry softly.

Toddles' sleepy eyes opened wide.

"Toddles not seepy. Tell Toddles nodder 'tory."

Harry smiled. Even as he spoke the child was falling fast asleep. He murmured again, and Harry and Marjorie bent to catch the words.

"Toddles—not—seepy."

They smiled to one another. After the last word, Toddles was in a deep sleep. They quietly said good-night to Mrs. Fisher, and left the cottage.

Harry Wharton grasped the stick, and kept a keen look-out, as they went down the dark lane. Once the boy thought he saw a moving shadow by the hedge, and stood ready; but if it was the tramp, he did not show himself. They reached the college, and stopped under the wall. There was no sign of Milly or Clara.

"I am late," said Marjorie. "It could not be helped, but—but I suppose they are gone in. There is a rope in the tree."

"Good! I'll jolly soon let it down to you."

Harry took a short run, and sprang, and caught the wall with his hands. To clamber up and get into the tree was the work of a moment. He found the knotted rope and lowered it, and in a few minutes Marjorie had joined him. He helped her down on the inner side of the wall, and followed. There was an exclamation from the shadows of the Close:

"Marjorie! Is that you?"

"Yes, dear; and Harry."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

"Why, are you crying, Milly—Clara? What is the matter?" asked Marjorie anxiously.

"Somebody has fastened the window, and we are shut out!"

"Oh, dear!"

Marjorie looked utterly dismayed; and Harry Wharton gave a long, low whistle.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A Sudden Alarm!

THEY were silent for a full minute—the silence of dismay. The tears were in the eyes of Clara and Milly. They had waited nearly two hours in the darkness and silence, and they were in a state of terror that kept their nerves on the quiver. They were fatigued and sleepy, too, but it was impossible to rest, and during that long and weary waiting they had had leisure to repent having essayed to imitate the boys in the matter of breaking bounds. Marjorie did not cry, but her face was very pale and troubled.

"My hat!" said Wharton. "This is a bit rough! Don't fret; we shall find a way out of it somehow. You're certain the window is fastened?"

"We've tried ever so hard to get it open."

"H'm! I think we'll have a look at it, and if I can't open it we'll look further," said Wharton, who would not have been surprised to learn that the window had simply jammed, and defied the feeble efforts of the girls from outside.

They moved across the Close in the grim shadows. In the dismay of being shut out, neither Clara nor Milly thought of asking Marjorie where the expected bag of good things was. They would have been glad enough to get into the house without the anticipated feed. As a matter of fact, nobody in the girls' dormitory except Miss Limburger particularly wanted that feed. It was only planned at all, as Miss Clara had said, "to keep their end up."

"Oh, it's been so horrid!" said Clara, in a low voice. "We've been waiting by the wall for an hour or more. Once I thought you were coming back—I heard a sound just like somebody climbing the wall, and I was so frightened."

"Did you call out?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, no; I was too afraid! I thought it might be Marjorie, or—or anybody! Lots of times I thought I saw something moving in the shadows, and I came near ringing the door bell to make them let us in. Oh, Marjorie, it was silly of you to start this nonsense at all."

"Of me!" said Marjorie, surprised. "But you——"

"Never mind," said Clara. "We'll never do it again, that's certain. I've had enough of being out of bed at night. If you don't find a way to get in, Harry, I don't know what we shall do!"

"I'll try, anyway."

They reached the window at the back, opening on to the foot of the back stairs. Harry Wharton knelt on the low window-sill, and peered through the glass before trying to open it. Dim as it was within, he could see that the brass catch was flush with the glass—that is to say, that the window was not fastened.

He looked down at the girls with a quiet smile.

"It's all right," he said; "the catch is back."

Clara uttered a breathless exclamation:

"What! Is it unfastened?"

"Yes."

"Impossible!" said Milly. "We tried——"

"Quite impossible!" said Clara emphatically. "Why, I got on the window-sill, and I could see the brass catch quite plainly. It was fastened—at right angles with the window!"

"Are you certain of that?" asked Harry, in an altered voice.

"Quite certain."

The junior's brows wrinkled in thought. He could hardly doubt Clara's positive assertion about the catch. Did it mean that the window had been fastened by a practical joker—who had repented, and come back and unfastened the window again? Or—Harry remembered

Clara's fancy of having heard someone climb the school wall!

The window might have been opened from without!

The boy's heart beat faster for a moment, and he flattened his face against the glass to peer within.

He could dimly make out the stairs, because he knew they were there; but he could see nothing else—only dimness, vague shadows.

"Well, can you get it open?" asked Milly.

Harry Wharton looked down at them.

"Yes," he said, "it will open easily enough. But if you saw it fastened it's very curious! It's unfastened now. It may be some joker, or—— How long ago was it that you thought you heard somebody climbing the wall, Clara?"

"I should think about a quarter of an hour."

"H'm! Keep quiet as you get in."

"Do—do you think there may be a burglar?" whispered Marjorie breathlessly.

"There was a burglar here once before," said Wharton. "But I hope not."

He opened the window quietly. Within was gloom and silence. But the boy did not know what lurking figure there might be in those silent shadows. His heart throbbed a little as he dropped within, and grasped his stick firmly and looked about him.

No sound, no movement! It was past midnight now, and all Greyfriars had long been asleep. Not a light gleamed from a single window. The silence of the great building was only broken by the faint sound of a rat scuttling behind the wall.

Harry, reassured by the stillness, turned to help the girls in. Marjorie came first, and then Milly and Clara. They breathed more freely when they stood within the house safely once more.

Marjorie pressed Harry's arm.

"Oh, thank you!" she whispered. "What should I have done to-night without you? Oh, I am so glad it is over!"

Harry closed the window and fastened it.

"I will see you to the door of the dorm," he whispered.

They ascended the narrow stairs cautiously. The shadows were full of terrors for the girls. Suddenly Marjorie caught Harry's arm, and stopped him.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Look—there—there!" she breathed.

Harry looked. They had reached the upper passage, and at the end glimmered the tall window. The window was dim, for the night was dark, but it showed up a glimmering square at the end of the passage.

And against the glimmer of the glass appeared the black outline of the head and shoulders of a man!

Harry's heart gave a throb.

That black outline was not outside the glass—there was a sheer drop of more than thirty feet outside that window. It was within!

The mystery of the unfastened window was now explained. There was an intruder there—at the end of the passage they were now following. They had entered the house almost in the footsteps of the burglar!

"Quiet!" whispered Harry, fearing an outbreak of shrieks, which would alarm the housebreaker at once.

But the girls were too terrified to shriek. They crouched against the wall, breathing hard, their eyes dilated with fear. Even Marjorie was trembling like an aspen.

There was a glimmer of light at the end of the passage. Harry knew what it meant. The burglar had crept along the passage, and he had stopped there to light his lantern. Of course, the ruffian had not the slightest suspicion of the youngsters up and awake, and so near to him. He had forced back the catch of the window with a flat blade from outside, little dreaming that he was opening a passage for them to enter by.

Harry had no time to think what he should do. The burglar was coming back along the passage, with the light gleaming low before him as he came. He had evidently missed the way to the great staircase in the dark, and gone on to the end of the corridor, and now he was coming back to look for it. The man was unacquainted with the interior of the house, and was feeling his way, as it were.

There was no time to dodge, to hide—even if the junior had wished it. A few seconds after the light had glimmered out the intruder was upon them.

The lantern-light glimmered on Wharton's face, and on the frightened girls, and the man stopped dead.

"Lummy!"

The exclamation broke from his lips involuntarily, as he stared at the junior.

And then Wharton knew who it was!

It was the ruffian of the lane—the scoundrel he had already encountered once that night!

The savage gleam in the red-rimmed eyes showed that the burglar had recognised the junior at the same time.

"You again!" he said thickly.

Wharton grasped his stick—he knew what was coming. The light of the lantern was suddenly shut off. After the

light the passage seemed black as ink. He could see nothing—he heard only a low breathing, like that of an animal in the darkness. He gave a shout that rang through the house:

"Help!"

The next instant the ruffian was upon him.

Wharton struck, and struck fiercely, but in the blackness there was no aim. The stick slid from a shoulder and jerked from his hand, and then the grasp of the powerful ruffian was upon him.

And the next moment the man and the boy were fighting desperately.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Struggle in the Dark!

"HELP!" shrieked Marjorie.

And Clara and Milly added their cries. The house rang with the alarm, and doors opened on all sides.

In the darkness was heard a suppressed breathing and gasping, and the sound of trampling feet, as Wharton and his enemy fought grimly.

Wharton was strong for his age, and there was no junior athlete at Greyfriars who could compete with him; and he knew every trick of wrestling. In spite of the great difference in size and strength he held his own at first.

But the brute force of the ruffian was bound to tell. The strong arms crushed the junior, and he was slowly but surely forced back and downwards, and a hand groped for his throat.

Marjorie, shaking like an aspen, felt her way along the wall to where she knew the electric-light switch to be. She was almost fainting with terror, but she forced herself to move. Her hand touched the switch, and a flood of light blazed out in the dark passage.

It startled the ruffian, and his grasp relaxed for the moment.

There were hurrying footsteps in the passage, and calling voices, doors opening on all sides.

The man gritted his teeth, and leaving Wharton, he ran on towards the back stairs. The boy was in no condition to stop him. He was exhausted. Marjorie ran up to him, her face white as chalk.

"Oh, Harry! You are hurt!"

"No." He gasped for breath. "I'm all right! The brute will get away. This way, you fellows—this way!"

Wingate dashed up, with a poker in his hand

"What is it? What's the row?"

"Burglars!" gasped Harry.

"Where?"

"He's getting away! There—quick!"

He pointed, and Wingate rushed on. He went down the back stairs three at a time. The fleeing burglar had reached the window, and attempted to throw it up. In the haste of the moment he did not reflect that it might be fastened now. The window held fast, and the man muttered a curse. It cost him only a moment. He would have had the window open in a moment more.

But that moment was not granted him

Wingate was at his heels, and as the man unfastened the window he closed with the ruffian, and bore him back heavily against the wall. Half a dozen fellows were at Wingate's heels now, and they came to his aid. In the grip of three or four big Sixth-Formers, the ruffian was dragged down and secured. He lay panting and muttering in the grasp of his captors.

"Have you got him?" called down Wharton.

"Yes, we've got him all right."

"Good!"

Harry turned quickly to the girls.

"You'd better cut into the dorm.," he whispered. "There's no need for anybody to know that we had just come in when we found the burglar; but if we're questioned we shall have to tell how it was. Buzz off!"

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"You are right. Good-night, Harry!"

"Good-night, Marjorie."

The passage was filling with excited, half-dressed boys, all wanting to know what was the matter. The girls hurried into their dormitory, little noticed in the confusion.

Wharton was glad that they were gone before the Head appeared on the scene.

Dr. Locke was looking very much disturbed and alarmed. He shuddered as he looked at the savage, sullen face of the ruffian in the grasp of the Sixth-Formers.

"It's all right, sir," said Wingate cheerfully. "We've got him. It was Wharton gave the alarm, sir. He would have got away otherwise."

"Did he attack you, Wharton?" asked the Head, noting the junior's disordered clothes and flushed, bruised face.

"Yes, sir."

"But how comes it that you are out of your dormitory, and fully dressed?" said Dr. Locke, his brows growing sterner. "You have probably saved the house from being robbed, Wharton, but at the same time you appear to have been—— What have you to say?"

Wharton coloured.

There was no concealing the fact that he had been out of bounds, but it was possible to keep the girls out of it.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said unflinchingly but respectfully; "I've been out of bounds."

"Out of bounds at night!" The Head's look grew sombre. "You know, Wharton, that a short time ago a boy was compelled to leave Greyfriars for that very reason. I should hardly have expected you to follow in Ernest Levison's footsteps."

"I hope I am not likely to do so, sir. I have been to see Toddles."

"Toddles!"

"The—the kid, sir. He's ill, and wanted me. I—I know I oughtn't to have gone without permission, sir, but—but I couldn't ask you, and—and the kid wanted me" Wharton was crimson, but cool. "I hope you'll look over it, sir."

The Head looked at him very keenly.

"Under the circumstances, Wharton, I shall look over it," he said. "I feel that I can take your word; but as a matter of form I shall see Mrs. Fisher on the matter. You have no objection to that?"

"None at all, sir."

"Very good. You have done wrong certainly; but considering everything, perhaps I do not blame you so much. You had better go to bed now. Wingate, will you wake Gosling, and tell him to get the trap out, and that ruffian can be taken to the police-station at once."

"Yes, sir."

Wingate hurried off; and Harry, surrounded by his chums—who, of course, had come out to see what the row was about—returned to the Upper Fourth dormitory. Before he was allowed to go to bed he had to give a detailed account of his adventures.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "You've had a night of it! The Head'll believe you, of course; but if he speaks to Mrs. Fisher about it, she'll very likely mention that Marjorie went there with you, and then the cat will be out of the bag. But—my word!—of all the funny businesses, I think girls breaking bounds at night for a dorm. feed are about the funniest!"

And the juniors generally agreed with Bob Cherry.

Wharton had done his best to keep the girls out of it, but it was not needed, as it happened. For the next morning Marjorie, whose conscience smote her, persuaded Clara and Milly to go with her to Miss Locke and make a clean breast of it. And they did so, and were all the better for it, for Miss Locke, though greatly surprised, did not take too serious a view of the matter, and was satisfied with a promise of greater circumspection in the future.

"No more breaking bounds for me!" said Marjorie firmly to the Co., when they left Miss Locke's room. "And—and I don't think it's so very necessary to keep our end up, Clara!"

To which Miss Clara, who was quite in her usual spirits again now, replied with more force than elegance:

"Rats!"

THE END.

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

The Opening Chapters of a Grand Story.

A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys, a cadet in his last term at Sandhurst, is falsely accused of cheating in an exam., so one night, packing up a few necessaries, he leaves Sandhurst with his dog Rough. He walks to London, enlists in the Royal North Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester, and is sent down as one of a draft of recruits for that regiment to Duchester. His travelling companions consist of Corporal Kedge; Tony Truscott, with whom Ronald has already struck up a friendship; two roughs, who are reposing under the seats; and four other men, one of whom, a weedy ex-shop assistant named Augustus Smythe, poses as a gentleman ranker.

(Now go on with the story.)

Augustus Smythe's Mistake.

Augustus had always fancied that a soldier's uniform was the very thing for his manly figure, and he was contemplating many conquests in the future, when he could jingle his spurs about town, and smack his tight-trousered leg with a riding-whip.

For, sad to say, the guileless Augustus had been misled. It was his mild delusion that it was a cavalry regiment he was going to. He had particularly asked to join a cavalry regiment, and the recruiting sergeant, knowing better what was good for Augustus than he did himself, and being anxious to get the Wessex draft completed, answered "Certainly!"

And that is how it happened. Augustus Smythe is not the only victim of such guile. Many a simple youth before him, and since, has offered his five foot six inches for the Life Guards, and been accepted apparently, only to wake up and find himself, by some unfortunate mistake, in the ranks of the Army Service Corps, or the "Linseed Lancers."

Hope of redress is out of the question, and Augustus Smythe and his fellow-victims are left lamenting that they took so much for granted, and did not read more closely the papers they signed.

Meantime, blissful in his ignorance, Augustus puffed a cigarette with exquisite grace, and bestowed a glance of well-bred contempt on all around, except Ronald.

He was inclined to admit Ronald on the same exalted social plane as himself, and therefore threw out constant smirks of contemptuous amusement for his benefit during the musical performances, as much as to say: "What egregious company for two such gentlemen as we to be compelled to rub shoulders with!"

"Corporal!"

It was Alf's voice, rising in plaintive accents from under the seat; but as a full chorus was in progress at the moment, the appeal was unheeded.

"Oh, the pipes are calling, Jenny, mine,
The troops are falling into line;
Wear the ribbon that I gave you,
For auld lang syne."

"Corp'ral, I say, corp'ral! Let me out o' this for 'Eaven's sake!"

"Hallo! Cease fire!" ordered Corporal Kedge, stopping the harmony with a bull-throated command. "What's the trouble below there, eh?"

"'Ere, do us a good turn, corp'ral, and let us out!" sniggered Alf. "We're arf choked with dust darn 'ere—me and my mate, and I've got cramp somefink awful! We won't give no more trouble! Come on, corp'ral! No kiddin'!"

"Not much!" answered Kedge flintily. "You're going up to barracks as you are, on a wheelbarrow, and straight into the clink. That's the only place for the likes of you. You'll get two years for attempted desertion," he added cheerfully, with a wink to the others, "and another two for strikin' a non-commissioned officer—that's me! So you lie quiet and make the best of your last two hours of sweet, glorious liberty!"

Corporal Kedge's irony raised a roar of laughter from the others. Even the youth with the swollen jaw and the bruise on the ankle forgot his painful defeat at the hands of the fallen tyrants, and sniggered.

It was not Kedge's style, however, to ruin a new recruit's career by getting a black mark set against him at the outset, and, after leaving the crestfallen pair to squirm in misery for another half-hour, he cut their bonds and told them to crawl out and behave themselves.

They were penitent enough in words, but by the ugly glances which they shot every now and again in Ronald's direction, he knew, at least, that he had made two relentless enemies, and that he would have to keep a sharp look-out for trouble in the future.

The release of George and Alf cast a damper on the harmony for the remainder of the journey, a fact which the two pals noted with undisguised pride. The mouth-organs vanished as quickly as they had appeared, and the rest sat looking glum and uneasy.

"We'll be in Dunchester in another two minutes now," said Kedge, at last, to everybody's relief. "You that have got kits had better get them together. We'll march into barracks as we did to the station, and any more 'anky-panky from you two," he said, addressing George and Alf, "will end in your going slap into the guard-room, d'ye hear? If you go quiet, though, I'll say no more about what happened this afternoon, though that's against my dooty."

The two culprits grunted something which might have been an expression of thanks, and then the whir and screech of the brakes warned them all that their journey was at an end.

Dunchester Barracks—A Warm Reception—Mouldy Mills and Hookey Walker.

There was a thin sprinkling of other men of the Wessex Regiment among the mob of passengers which emerged from the train, and the new draft came in for a good deal of rough chaff as it was shepherded into double rank by Corporal Kedge.

"'Allo, corporal!" exclaimed one pasty-faced private. "Goin' to set up in the freak business?"

"Well, I've been thinking of it ever since I first saw you," answered Kedge drily. "They tell me up in London, though, that there ain't any more like you left outside of Barnum's, so I dropped the notion. Hook along, smart, young fellow, now, or you'll only be giving these chaps the hump of the regiment before they're half started."

The facetious warrior slunk off abashed, quickening his pace as two stalwart comrades wearing drab wristlets with "G.M.P.," in bold, black letters, hove in sight. These were Garrison Military Police, whose duty it was to keep an eye on late arrivals. George and Alf, in the light of their experience with the Redcaps, regarded them with sullen eyes.

Corporal Kedge knew, however, that he had nothing further to fear from the pair that night, and, giving the word to march, the squad straggled out into the lamplit streets.

"What company are you going into, Chester?" asked Kedge suddenly, in an undertone.

He had been striding silently beside Ronald on the march, casting more than one admiring glance at his tall, well-knit figure.

"Haven't the least notion," answered Ronald.

"I didn't know if you had any friends in the battalion, or whether perhaps old Duffy at the depot might have been putting you up to a tip or two on that score. But as he hasn't, take my advice, and put in for 'B.' It isn't the show company, perhaps—in fact, it's fairly rough; but we've got some vacancies for hefty chaps like you. The new skippers' a good 'un, and promotion should be quick."

"If it's your company, nothing would please me better," replied Ronald thankfully. "I'd like Truscott to come, too, though, if he will, and if there is room for both of us."

"Right you are; but that'll rest with the adjutant, of course. By the way, that's what's called a picquet," he said, indicating a dozen men in overcoats, and wearing side-arms, who came tramping along two deep, at the side of the road at the slow march. "After tattoo first post—that's 9.30—they'll be clearing all chaps out of the pubs, and sending 'em back to barracks."

Ronald was very nearly replying: "Yes, I know," when he remembered that the less knowledge he showed of military affairs, the fewer questions would be asked.

Yet for the life of him he could not help squaring his shoulders and stepping out like a soldier as the draft turned in at the barrack-gate.

Passing under the deep archway, where a sentry was pacing, they caught a fleeting glimpse of the guard-room.

In this cheerless, whitewashed apartment, two or three men were seated round a smoky fire, while others were curled up on the long plank bed, snatching an hour's sleep before taking their turn of duty.

A wide, unlit square now fronted the new recruits, and on every side frowned gaunt blocks of barrack buildings, with rows of windows, dimly lit, which seemed to peer down upon them inquiringly.

Marching his charges straight to a smaller building graced with a colonnade, Corporal Kedge halted them before an open door, on which the words "Orderly Room" were painted, and made his way in.

He was out again like a shot, however, before Ronald had time to take stock of his surroundings, and, giving the word to enter, the batch of recruits filed in at his heels.

A burly, bull-necked man, in dark serge jacket, with a gold crown on his cuff, surveyed them critically from under a pair of bushy eyebrows.

"So that's the lot, is it?" he snorted, in deepest disgust. "Pommysam! Not content with pitchforking a gang of unlicked ignoramuses slap into us, instead of sending them to the depot first, they must needs saddle us with all the cack-handed, cockeyed, double-blanked objects that they could have matched in a march from here to Jerusalem! Pommysam! It beats everything!"

Augustus Smythe, not believing it possible that he could be included in this sweeping denunciation, ventured an ingratiating smile, as much as to say: "I'm with you there!"

"Great jumping Jupiter, there's a man there with St. Vituses! You!" roared the sergeant-major, for it was none other than this exalted personage at whose feet they trembled. "What the dickens are you making faces for, you swivel-eyed imitation of a stuffed monkey?"

"Sorry. No offence, guv'nor!" stammered Augustus, turning very pale.

"Guv'nor!" choked Sergeant-major Tozer, turning purple. "Say 'sir' when you speak to me!" he roared. "D'ye hear, you—you! Here, corporal, march 'em outside, quick, before I get apoplexy! I'll see them in the morning. One minute, though! Halt, that man there! What's his name? That tall chap!"

Ronald turned his head, and found the S.-m. pointing at him.

"My name? Chester, sir," he replied, falling back, as the rest huddled out, glad to be free of the awful presence.

"Chester," grunted the S.-m., running over the sheaf of pages delivered up by Corporal Kedge. "Ah, yes, Ronald Chester! Hum! Ha!"

"What brought you to enlisting?" he rapped out after a pause, suddenly flinging himself back into his chair.

Ronald hesitated for an instant.

"Am I bound to answer that question?" he asked respectfully.

"Not if you don't want to," answered the S.-m. "It's no business of ours, of course; but by the look of you, I should say that you're not quite the usual type we get in the ranks of a line regiment, and that's what made me ask. You've not taken up soldiering with any tomfool notions of being made a colonel in six months, I suppose?"

"No, sir; nor a subaltern even in sixteen years," answered Ronald, with a twinkle. "I've enlisted because I've only one ambition in the world."

"And that's soldiering?" suggested the S.-m., quickly smoothing his ruffled plumage. "Well, I won't say you're a fool, although you'll probably arrive at that conclusion for yourself later on."

"I hope not," answered Ronald quietly.

"So do I," said the great man warmly. "Stick to it, and you'll find that soldiering is as good a trade as most, and a sight better than some. But it's a rough life for a

chap at first that's had the upbringing you may have had. However, plug away. Make up your mind never to be beaten, cultivate a thick skin, jump at every word of command, keep yourself to yourself, and, who knows," he added, with a dry chuckle, "you may get made a lance-corporal some day? You can go now. To-morrow you'll be told off to a company. Have you got any ideas of your own on that point?"

"I'd like to join B Company, if I may."

"The dickens you would! Who has been putting you up to that?"

"It's Corporal Kedge's company."

"Quite so. Oh, well," exclaimed the S.-m., after a pause, "I don't know but what it would be the best place for you! Can you hold your own in a rough and tumble?"

"I can try, anyway."

"All right, then. Cut off now, and good-night!"

Outside, Ronald found his comrades waiting for him.

"Still got more hair left than you expected?" inquired Kedge, with a laugh. "Oh, yes, I know! The major's all right. One of the best, in fact, only a bit ratty at having to kick his heels waiting for us to report ourselves. Still, I'll give you all the tip now. When you've got anything to do with him, just 'ware wire. He can be a perfect terror, so treat him as you would dynamite. Come on, now—quick march!"

Corporal Kedge led the way to the empty barrack-room which the draft were to occupy that night.

Probably Ronald was the only one not taken aback at the daunting bareness of the apartment; and as for poor Augustus Smythe, his breast fell straight into his cheap boots, and he groaned. In the dim light afforded by two rusty pendants armed with worn-out burners, it looked positively prison-like. The floor was bare, the walls distempered a dingy yellow. A square, massive stove and a huge iron coalbox formed a hideous centre-piece, flanked by a long wooden table and a couple of forms on iron trestles. On either side of the long room and across the further end were rows of iron bedsteads, on each of which was a pack of coarse, brown blankets, and three squares of mattress, known as biscuits.

Seated at the table were a couple of old soldiers, with many good-conduct badges on the sleeves of their rusty old slops.

"Now, then, make yourselves at home, you fellows," said Kedge briskly, "and if there's anything you want to know, you can ask Mills and Walker here, and they'll tell you. The canteen closes at half-past nine, though, and it's close on that now; so if any of you want food or drink, you'd better look sharp and get it."

"A werry thoughtful siggestion on the part of the corp'ril, I calls that," said one of the two soldiers, as soon as the door had closed on Kedge. "Wot say you, Mouldy?"

"Suggestion!" exclaimed Mouldy Mills, with pretended horror. "Why, Hookey, I'm surprised at you settin' a bad example to these young gentlemen! Why, that was an order! Besides, don't you remember what it ses in the King's regulations, in the chapter about the reception of noo recruits?" he continued, with a wink. "Don't it say that the colonel, as soon as ever a man jines the regiment, is to take him down and introduce 'im to the canteen steward at once; and if 'e can't go, 'e is to 'and over the dooty to the adjutant, or some other responsible party?"

"Of course, Mouldy! Lor', I don't know what my memory is a-comin' to, ever since that 4.7 shell went through my brain-box at Kronje's laager!" replied Hookey. "An' talkin' of laager, ain't there somethink in them regulations about the party as is told off on canteen conductin' dooty not 'avin' to 'ave more than one pint with each noo recruit, unless 'e wants to?"

"There is, Hookey; and a werry necessary safeguard it is, too, when we 'ave such a generous, 'igh-souled party of young noblemen to deal with as we've got 'ere to-night. Allow me to take your hat, sir."

Mouldy had made a profound bow to Augustus, and the latter, though rather surprised at this attention, loftily handed over his three-and-ninepenny billycock.

"Aw, thank you!" he said, staring mildly at Hookey, who had betrayed a sudden tendency to go into convulsions. "And I say, fellah, is this the best you can do in the way of a bed-room?" he inquired.

"I'm sorry to say it is, sir," replied Mouldy Mills, with perfect composure. "But the colonel said as 'ow I was to be sure an' explain 'ow sorry he was that the pink bed-room in the east wing was occupied to-night; but if 'e 'ad only known for certain that you was comin', he'd 'ave shifted the general into the billiard-room, and 'ad it ready for you. But he hopes you'll take a bit of dinner with 'im and the wife ter-morrer night, and then he'll see what can be done to make you comfortable."

Augustus looked a shade more surprised at this, but Mouldy's face was like the Sphinx.

"Aw, thanks!" said Augustus, after a doubtful pause. "I suppose I'll have to make the best of it. You might get me a cup of tea, though, and something to eat."

"Yes, sir, certainly! Stewed salmon and cowcumber, 'ashed venison, truffle tripe, or kidney and termarter?" asked Mouldy obsequiously.

"Er—er—how much is—er—er—kidney and tomato?" inquired Augustus, flushing nervously and feeling in his pockets.

"Oh, nothing at all! It's all free. Wot they calls 'free rations' in the Army."

Hookey Walker, being unable to contain his mirth any longer, made a dash for the door at this, and Ronald and Tony Truscott took the opportunity to follow suit.

The First Night in Barracks.

"Lor', bless my 'eart, that's Mouldy all over!" choked Hookey. "'E'll kid that poor silly cove till 'e'll be walkin' into the orficers' mess to-morrow, if somebody don't stop 'im, and callin' the colonel 'old chappie' to 'is face. But come on, you two! It wants only ten minutes to first post now, and 'ere we're wasting all these precious moments. 'Ow are yer feelin'? Hungry, thirsty, or both?"

"Both!" answered Ronald.

"Then through 'ere first!" answered Hookey briskly, as he ushered the pair into a great room packed with soldiers grouped about the long trestle tables, or wedged against the bar, into a noise which was almost stunning to the unaccustomed ears of the two recruits.

It was like a score of crowded public-house taprooms rolled into one.

The reek of beer and the dense clouds of tobacco smoke, which hung like a fog over the whole scene, almost took away all appetite at a breath.

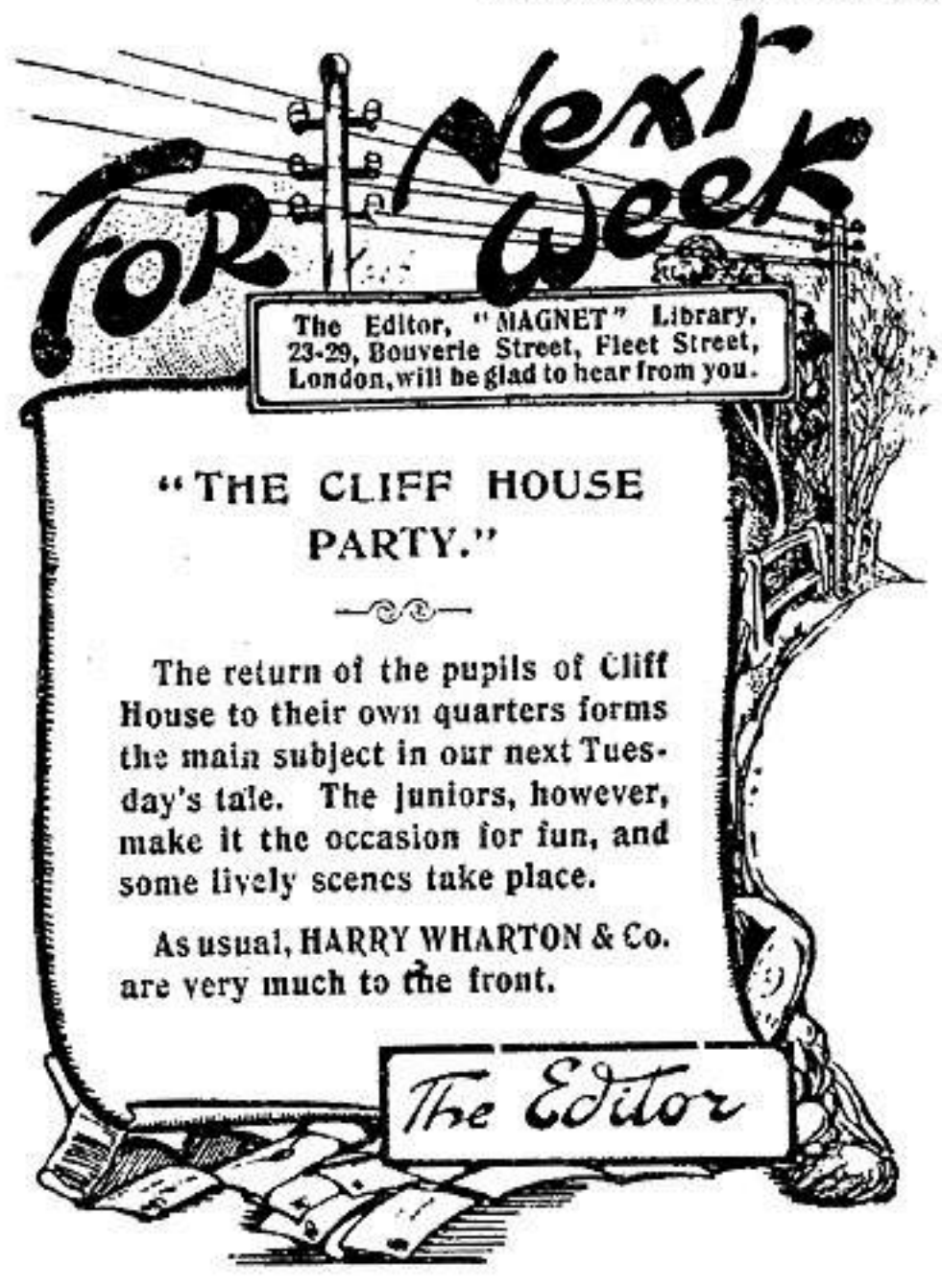
Hookey, however, was oblivious to these trifling drawbacks, and leading the way through to a quieter and sweeter apartment, bade them be seated.

"Now then, sharp's the word! What's it goin' to be? Faggots, liver and bacon, or cold meat?"

Both chose cold meat; and Hookey being invited to join in too, he soon reappeared bearing three substantial portions, which, with an ample supply of bread, represented the princely charge of sevenpence.

Others of the squad now came in, escorted by Mouldy, the humorist; but of Augustus there was no sign.

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



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