"THE HAT TRICK," A Splendid Tale of the Greyfriars School Eleven.

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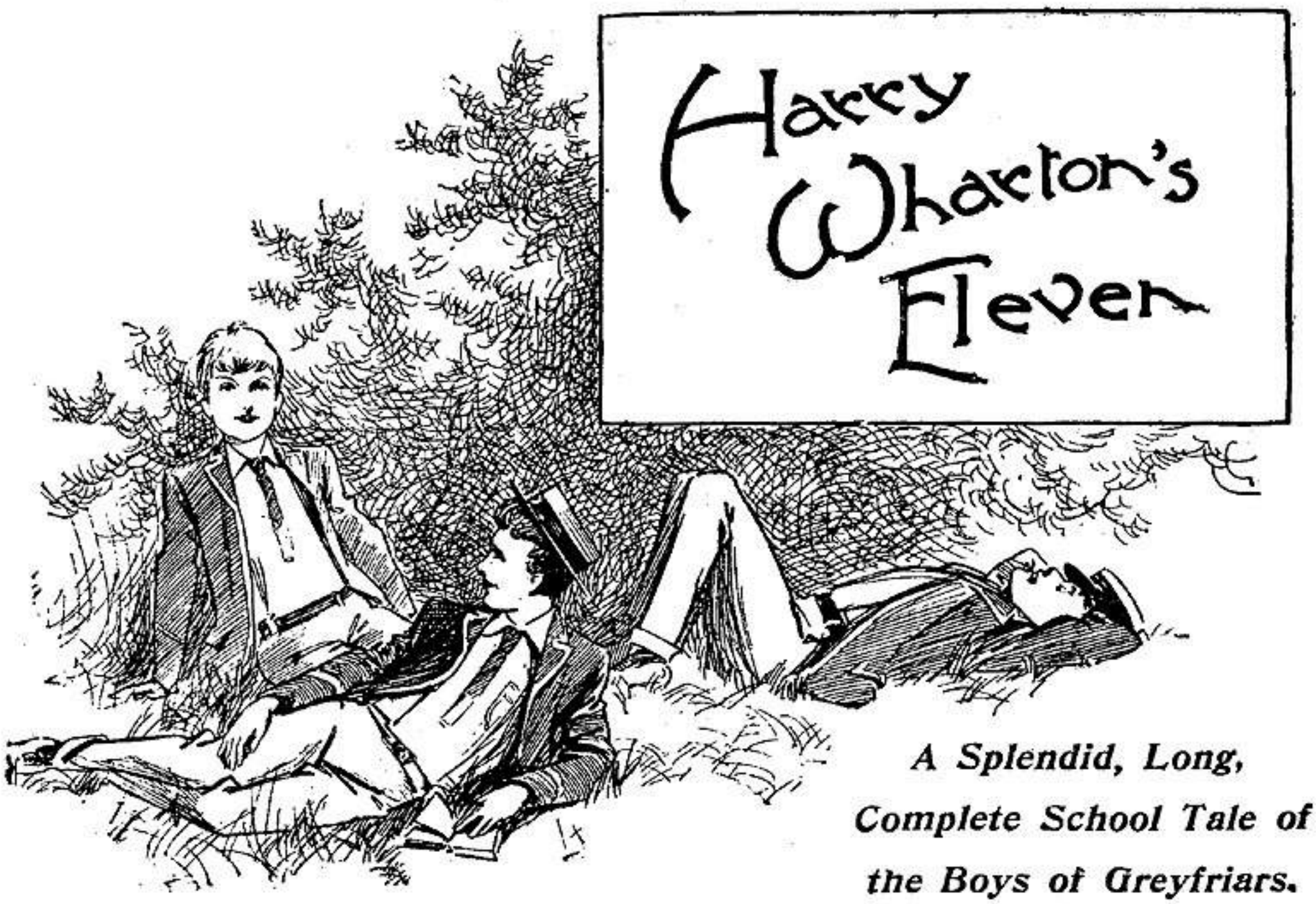


Harry Wharton's Eleven

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of the Boys of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Greyfriars Chums' Holiday.

"BLESSED if I can stand it!"

It was Bob Cherry who uttered the words, in tones of great exasperation.

He addressed his chums—Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh—who, however, did not seem to be much disturbed by Bob's excitement.

It really wasn't a time to be excited. The sun was blazing on one of the hottest of hot August afternoons. The three juniors of Greyfriars were lying in the grass on the bank of a rippling stream, the green grass round them and the blue sky cloudless overhead.

Harry Wharton was reading. Nugent was humming a tune. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was always happiest on hot days, was just gazing at the sky, without sound or motion, but with deep enjoyment in his dusky face—the mere enjoyment of living.

Greyfriars School had broken up for the midsummer holidays, and the fellows were dispersed to the four corners of the kingdom. The Remove—the Form to which our heroes belonged, and which had made so much history at Greyfriars—was scattered far and wide.

Micky Desmond was far away in the valley of the Shannon; Ogilvy was tramping the heather in the Highlands. Morgan was on the coast of Cardigan; Linley among the chimneys of Lancashire. To north, south, east, and west the Removites were gone, and with Harry Wharton, to his uncle's home, had come a party of four. The chums of the Remove did not care to be separated even in the vacation, and so the Famous Four were at Wharton Lodge, and with them was Billy Bunter.

The juniors were enjoying that August.

For the weather was fine. The woods round Wharton Lodge were open to them; there were horses in the stables, and boats on the stream at their disposal. Their host, Colonel Wharton, was a kind-hearted and jovial gentleman, and his sister, Miss Wharton, did everything in her power to secure the comfort of the boys. And she succeeded. It was, as Nugent remarked, a holiday of holidays.

On this particular afternoon the chums were slacking. The weather was so perfect, and they had had a long tramp during the morning, that they felt inclined to "laze" away the hottest hours of the afternoon. All except Bob Cherry. There never was a moment when Bob was not full of energy, and overflowing with vitality. Where he had gone the others did not know; they had not even missed him till he came tramping through the grass, and halted by the riverside, and looked down upon them with profound scorn.

"Blessed slackers!" said Bob.

No one replied. Wharton smiled, and went on reading. Nugent grinned, and continued humming his tune. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh never even moved an eyelash. Bob glowered at them. He evidently had something on his mind.

"Blessed if I can stand it!" he repeated.

Nugent yawned.

"Eh? Did you speak?"

"Yes, I did."

"Oh, don't do it again!"

"Don't do what again?"

"Speak!"

And Nugent yawned once more.

"Look here, you slacking wasters——" began Bob wrathfully.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, gently turned his head.

"The jawfulness is terrific!" he remarked.

"Look here, Inky——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Harry, looking up from his book. "How can a chap read while you're growling like a bear with a sore head, Bob?"

"I tell you I can't stand it!"

"Sit down, then!" said Nugent, yawning. "There's plenty of room on the grass."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"You can't stand what?" asked Harry, laughing.

"That blessed Montgomery Smyth!" said Bob Cherry, sniffing. "The way he swaggers about his cricket is absolutely sickening. And he can't play, you know; he can't play for toffee."

"Has he been on that subject again?"

"Yes. I shall bump him next time—I know I shall. They've been playing on the green again, and, of course, his lot have wiped up the villagers. My hat, he brags about it as if he had licked the Australians! I only wish we had a Greyfriars eleven here to give him a tussle."

"By Jove, I wish we had!" said Harry, closing his book with a snap.

"He made fifty against young Bates's team," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Young Bates knows as much about cricket as he does about aeroplanes. Smyth has just asked me if we're going to play again for Bates."

"And what did you say?"

"I came jolly near dotting him on the nose!"

"I hope you didn't do it."

"Well, I didn't. I came jolly near it, though. The fellow has a grin that I can't stand. He was getting at us, of course, over what happened the other day. I wish we had a few Greyfriars chaps here. I'd undertake to knock his eleven sky-high with the eleven worst players in the Remove at Greyfriars."

Wharton's brow was shaded a little.

What had happened in connection with Montgomery Smyth's eleven was not gratifying to his pride as cricket captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

Montgomery Smyth was the son of a wealthy City financier, who had taken a place near Wharton Lodge. During the vacation he had a host of visitors, and he and his friends had formed an amateur eleven, and announced their willingness to meet all-comers on the cricket-field.

But cricketing teams were not as plentiful as blackberries just in that part of the country.

Wharton Magnus, the village near Harry's home, boasted a local team, composed of farmer's sons for the most part—strong, hearty fellows, who could ride anything that went on four legs, and never baulked at the stiffest hedge, but who knew little more of cricket than the name of the game. They played cricket, and the way they played it would have made a member of the M.C.C. weep. Montgomery Smyth's eleven had met the local team, and, of course, had knocked it into a cocked hat. Bates and his men were drubbed soundly, and the Smyth brigade swaggered about their victory as if they had, in Bob Cherry's words, licked the Australians at Lord's.

A second match was played, Bates having asked Wharton and his friends to lend a hand. The Famous Four willingly gave their services. They had made a good stand, and given the Smyth party a tussle, but the rest of the team was useless, and four players could not hope to tackle eleven with success. The local side was defeated once more, and Montgomery Smyth, who had heard that Wharton was considered a good cricketer at Greyfriars, swaggered more than ever. The eleven Wharton captained at the school would have walked over Montgomery Smyth and his team in next to no time. But that eleven was scattered all over the kingdom for the holidays. Montgomery Smyth had to be suffered to "gas" as much as he liked, and he liked to gas a great deal.

He calmly assumed that he had beaten Greyfriars cricketers, ignoring the fact that there had been only four Greyfriars fellows in the team he had defeated. All the juniors felt a little sore, but they steadily declined to play in Bates's eleven again against the Smyth fellows. A fight of four against eleven was certain to be futile. But the manner in which Montgomery Smyth received their refusal to tempt fortune a second time was distinctly galling. His smile of superiority alone was deserving of a dot on the nose, in Bob Cherry's opinion.

"I don't see what we can do," said Harry. "If we play in Bates's lot again it will be another licking, without our having a chance."

"I suppose so. But——"

"The lickfulness will be terrific, but if we do not play the crowfulness of the esteemed ass, Smyth, will also be great," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"We're between the devil and the deep sea," said Harry, laughing. "If we play, we're licked without having a chance to score; if we don't play, Smyth will think we're afraid of his wonderful form. He'll crow in either case."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

The juniors looked round. Montgomery Smyth, the captain of the amateur eleven, was strolling down to the river-bank. He was in flannels, and had a bat under his arm, and was wearing a panama hat. He nodded to the Greyfriars fellows with a genial grin.

"Playing this afternoon?" he asked.

"I've told you—no!" grunted Bob Cherry.

Montgomery Smyth laughed. He was rather a good-looking youth, but the conceit in his look and manner did not enhance his good looks.

"I thought some of you might have changed your minds," he remarked. "We've got a second match on with the villagers this afternoon, as you know, and stumps are pitched. I think they expect you to help them, Wharton."

"Can't be done."

"You see, the villagers look to Colonel Wharton's nephew to stand by them at a time like this, and uphold the reputation and honour of Wharton Magnus," said Montgomery Smyth, with a grin. There was just a trace of malice in the remark. Since the Montgomery Smyths had settled near the village they had been surprised and not at all pleased by the discovery that, in spite of their boundless wealth, they were not regarded with the respect the country people showed to Colonel Wharton. They had ten times as much money as Harry's uncle, and made twenty times as much display, and consequently they expected at least as much respect, but they did not get it.

Wharton coloured a little.

"I thought you chaps played cricket at Greyfriars," said Smyth, with a yawn.

"So we do."

"Then why don't you play it now?"

Montgomery Smyth was standing looking down at Harry as he lay stretched in the grass. Bob Cherry had drawn back behind him. As he stood unseen by Smyth, Bob was making gestures with his right fist, as if about to give the obnoxious person a "oner" that would send him into the the stream.

Montgomery Smyth was quite ignorant of the joke, but Nugent could not restrain a chuckle as he watched Bob's antics, and Harry could hardly keep a grave face. Montgomery Smyth looked puzzled.

"I don't quite see anything to grin at," he remarked. "If you won't play, you won't, and that settles it. But I shouldn't have thought that Greyfriars fellows would be afraid of a licking."

"Afraid!"

The hot blood leaped to Harry's face at the word.

Montgomery Smyth was standing looking down at Harry

"What else do you call it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

Bob's fist was within an inch of Smyth's ear behind now, and Bob was making the most ferocious grimaces, indicative of what he would do to Montgomery Smyth if he were not restrained by considerations of courtesy.

Smyth looked in surprise at Nugent.

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smyth suddenly swung round, guessing at last that something was going on behind him. Unfortunately, his movement was so sudden that it took Bob by surprise. Before he had time to withdraw his fist, Montgomery Smyth's face had crashed upon it, and Montgomery Smyth gave a roar.

He clapped his hand to his nose, upon which Bob's knuckles had bumped with unintentional force.

"Ow!"

Bob Cherry turned scarlet.

"M-m-m-my hat!" he gasped. "I—I—I'm sorry!"

"You—you've punched my nose! I'll—I'll——"

"I—I—I didn't mean to!" gasped Bob. "I—I—It was a j-j-joke. I was only—only larking, you know. Look here, we'll—we'll play cricket with you this afternoon!"

Montgomery Smyth rubbed his nose.

"Oh, if it was only a lark it's all right!" he grunted. As a matter of fact, lark or no lark, he wouldn't have cared to go to extremes with the stalwart Removite of Greyfriars.

"So you're going to play?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Come on, then. The first over is to be bowled in a quarter of an hour."

And Montgomery Smyth nodded, and walked away, still rubbing his nose at intervals.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Rival Cricketers.

"YOU—you—you ass!" gasped Nugent.

Bob Cherry looked at him.

"Well, I had to make it up to him, after biffing him on the nose," he said apologetically. "Besides, it will do you chaps good. Better be playing cricket than slacking about like this on a hot afternoon."

"Cricket—yes; but that isn't cricket."

"Well, it's better than slacking."

Harry Wharton rose to his feet and stretched himself.

"Oh, come on!" he exclaimed. "Bob's let us in for it now, and we'd better get into our flannels. Anyway, I think I'd rather play than have that Smyth ass gassing that we're afraid of his team."

"Yes, if it were cricket. But this——"

"Never mind, let's give them the best tussle we can, anyhow."

Nugent grunted. They walked away towards the house, and as they passed under the trees, a squeaky voice was heard, from a fat junior who was sitting under a tree, finishing the last of a large bag of tarts.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that chap Smyth has just passed me, and he says we're playin' for Wharton Magnus against his lot."

"We are," said Harry. "You're not. You can't play cricket. You can go and eat toffee."

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. There was no possibility of convincing Billy Bunter that he couldn't do anything he put his hand to, and do it better than other fellows.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Of course, I shall play. I feel just inclined for a little gentle exercise now. You see, I've been telling the chaps in the village about my cricket, and they expect things of me."

"Telling them a lot of whoppers, I suppose!" growled Bob Cherry. He knew Bunter.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've told them how I played cricket at St. Jim's, when I was visiting young D'Arcy there, and how I played at Greyfriars."

"Did they laugh!"

"Laugh! No!"

"Then you couldn't have given them a true account of how you played cricket," said Bob, shaking his head. "It's enough to make a cat laugh."

"Oh, really, you know! I'm sincerely sorry to see that you're jealous of my form, Bob Cherry. But the long and short of it is, that they will expect me to play, and I think Wharton ought to play me."

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't know," he said. "Bunter can't play, but Bates's men can't play, either. He isn't worse than the worst of them."

"Oh, really——"

"Shove him in, then," said Nugent, with a grunt. "Make the blessed game as comic as possible. It will be worth putting on the cinematograph, altogether."

"I'll play with pleasure," said Bunter, getting up. "You'll be careful not to run me out, won't you?"

"What!" roared Bob.

Billy Bunter trotted off towards the house without replying. The Removites followed him, and they were soon changing into their flannels. Then they came out and walked down to the pitch. The Famous Four looked very handsome and fit in spotless white. But Bunter, as a cricketer, was not imposing. He was very well satisfied with himself, however, and he had smirked a great deal before the glass before coming out.

The village green was a short walk from the lodge. The cricketers were all there when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. Bates, a big, sturdy, country youth, came up to meet them eagerly. Bates was a keen cricketer, but a very poor player. He could ride to hounds with anybody, but he could not bat, or bowl, or field to any extent.

His men were worse than himself, and their tremendous drubbing at the hands of Smyth's eleven had made them nervous, and unwilling to meet the enemy again. Bates had had great difficulty in getting the team to the ground at all.

Montgomery Smyth was there, in all his glory.

He would have been a rather handsome fellow but for his air of insufferable conceit. He looked elegant enough in his flannels and his panama hat. The rest of the eleven were very like Smyth.

The team was made up of Smyth's visitors at Mount House, his father's mansion. Some of them were public school fellows, some were not; all were more or less like the great Smyth in looks and manners. They were elegant, and nicely dressed, and apparently thought the ground hardly good enough to walk on. They were in a good humour—a sarcastic sort of good-humour.

It was evidently a delight to them that Smyth had succeeded in bantering Wharton to play. They knew very well that the match would not be an equal one, with Bates's men to help Wharton & Co. But a victory was what they wanted, and they weren't particular about details.

"They've come!" Montgomery Smyth said to his special chum, an Eton fellow named Blaine. "They don't look joyful, though."

Blaine grinned.

"No. They know what to expect."

"We shall have an innings to spare, chappies," said Dawson, a youth with a lisp and a very vacant face. "They've not an earthly."

"Rather not."

The opinion was, as we know, shared by Harry Wharton & Co. They would not have cared for that, but for the insufferable airs they knew the Smyth brigade would put on afterwards. Wharton would have given a great deal to have an eleven from the Greyfriars Remove on the spot just then, to give Smyth & Co. the licking they so badly needed.

"I'm glad you've come, Master Harry," said Bates, with great relief. "The lads are afraid of the match, you know, sir. We have no chance. Master Smyth and his friends play cricket in a way we've never been used to."

"I dare say they do, Bates."

"Of course, we have no chance; but if you help us, we may make a show. Will you captain the team, Master Harry?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not a bit of it, Bates. We're under your orders."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I'll captain the team if you like. I rather fancy myself as a cricket captain, but I've been kept down by jealousy at Greyfriars."

"Oh, do ring off, Billy, old fellow!"

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Shut up!"

And Billy glowered and shut up.

Montgomery Smyth, with great condescension of manner, tossed for choice of innings with Bates, and won. He elected to bat first.

He opened his innings with Blaine and himself.

"Put me on to bowl, will you, Bates?" said Harry.

"Certainly, Master Harry!"

And Harry took the ball.

He was bowling the first over against Montgomery Smyth's wicket, and he put into that over all the skill that made him dreaded on the cricket-field at Greyfriars.

Smyth stopped two or three balls, and looked surprised, and a little bewildered. He wasn't used to this.

The fourth ball whipped his middle stump out of the ground, without his having taken a single run.

His face was a study.

"How's that?" shouted Bob Cherry.

And the red-faced landlord of the Wharton Arms, who was umpiring the match, grinned, and said "Out!"

It certainly was out, and Montgomery Smyth carried away his bat for a duck's egg with the worst grace in the world.

"It was a rotten fluke!" he told the fellows at the tent.

"Of course it was, chappy," said Dawson. "That chap Wharton can't bowl!"

"Not for toffee!"

"Look out for him, though, Daw," said Smyth, as Dawson took his bat to go to the vacant wicket. And Dawson nodded. He intended to.

All the Smyth cricketers, in fact, kept their eyes open for Harry Wharton's bowling after that.

When he had the ball, they took no liberties with the bowling.

As a rule they were swaggering cricketers, and decidedly flashy in their style; but a defeat now would have been so ridiculous that they were willing even to cease "swanking" and play cautiously when necessary.

The consequence was that Wharton had few chances.

The Smyth brigade stonewalled against his bowling, hardly ever hitting out; but when a weaker bowler was on they made the fur fly.

The villagers' fielding was deplorable.

The big, strong fellows padded after the leather like heavy colts, and run after run would be taken before it came in.

Ere long, the only fielding that was done was practically confined to Greyfriars fellows.

But of these, Billy Bunter was useless—or, rather, worse than useless, for he got in the way of the others, and frequently caused delay."

It was, as a matter of fact, a match of four cricketers instead of eleven, the villagers being entirely outclassed by the play that was going on.

They blundered to and fro, and got in the way; while a bowler and three fieldsmen played the game.

Naturally, under such circumstances, the Smyth score was a big one.

When the bowler—as frequently happened—gave a good catch, it was muffed, unless it came to Cherry, Nugent, or Hurree Singh.

A throw-in was certain to go wide of the mark, or else it nearly brained the wicket-keeper.

The Smyth brigade grinned—and piled up runs.

The last wicket fell for a total of a hundred and twenty—more than twice the score Smyth could have made against a Greyfriars junior team.

"I say, you fellows, that's pretty rotten," Billy Bunter remarked, as he looked at the score. "I warned you that you'd better put me on to bowl, you know."

"Oh, rats!"

Then the village innings commenced.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Licked—A Great Idea.

HARRY WHARTON was sent in first with Bob Cherry, and Dawson swaggered down to the pitch with the ball.

Dawson was a bowler with a manner. He took a quick, jerky run and half folded himself up, then let the ball go all of a sudden. He prided himself on looking like Knox, of Surrey; but no one ever saw any resemblance except himself. Certainly there wasn't much resemblance in the result of the bowling.

His bowling was play to Harry Wharton. He cut it all over the field, and the batsmen crossed and recrossed, amid cheers from the village crowd gathered on the green. They had looked despondent during the Smyth innings, but Wharton was waking things up now.

Twenty runs in the first two overs made the Smythites open their eyes. Smyth changed the bowling twice, but still the runs piled up. Bob Cherry was caught out at last by Blaine at point. Blaine appeared to be a pretty good cricketer, though he had about as much "swank" as the rest. Bob Cherry carried out his bat, and Nugent came in.

Billy Bunter stood leaning on his bat at the opening of the tent, watching impatiently.

He had his gloves and pads on ready, and was impatient to take the field. He had tackled Bates on the subject.

"Why don't you put me on?" he demanded. "It would encourage the team to see some really good batting at the start."

But Bates only grinned.

Nugent had bad luck. Blaine bowled him out the first ball of the next over, and he retired for a duck's egg. It could not be helped—and it was one of the chances that have to be expected; but it was unfortunate, for when the Greyfriars fellows were all out, the rest of the wickets were certain to fall like a house of cards.

"Rotten, wasn't it?" grunted Nugent, as he came out.

"The rottenfulness is terrific, my worthy chum," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur sympathetically.

And the dusky junior went to the wickets.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh kept the game alive for some time. They were splendid batsmen, and in the pink of form.

Hurree Singh's dusky face glowed with satisfaction as he sent the ball on its journey again and again, and the batsmen ran and ran, while the Smyth fieldsmen were fagging to and fro after the ball.

The villagers cheered again and again.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Master Harry!"

The score was of respectable dimensions so far.

When a skilful throw-in from Blaine knocked Hurree Singh's wicket to pieces, with his bat yet a foot off the crease, the figures stood at 54.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave his fellow-batsman a comical glance as he left the pitch.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

The innings was practically over now.

Billy Bunter was next man in. Bates gave him some credit for his tall stories about cricket; and, anyway, he was a Greyfriars fellow.

He tapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Get in, Bunter!"

"Oh, really—good! I'll show you something now, Bates."

"I hope you will, Master Bunter."

And Billy Bunter went blinking to the wicket. Blaine was bowling the over, and Billy Bunter faced him, blinking. As a matter of fact, he was so short-sighted that he could hardly see the bowler clearly, and when the ball came down it came quite unexpectedly.

Crash!

The wicket went to fragments.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter.

"How's that?" roared Montgomery Smyth.

"Out!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Out!"

"Oh, really——"

"Get off the pitch!" called out Wharton. "Don't be an ass! Next man in, Bates."

Bates was next man in himself. He came down from the tent with his bat. But Billy Bunter showed no desire to leave the wicket. He blinked indignantly at the grinning fieldsmen.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Buzz off!" shouted Dawson. "Buzz off, chappy!"

"Yes, but I say, you know, that was a trial ball."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wasn't it a trial ball, Wharton?"

"No, you young ass!"

"Wasn't it a trial ball, umpire?"

"Haw, haw! No!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Montgomery Smyth. "Is this the Greyfriars brand of cricket? Let him have it a trial ball if he likes; I don't mind."

"There, you see, Wharton——"

"But I mind," said Wharton sharply. "Get off the pitch, Bunter, or I'll give you a thundering good licking!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you're not captain, you know."

Wharton bit his lip.

As a matter of fact, he wasn't captain, and if the captain chose to accept Montgomery Smyth's concession, and the umpire concurred, Wharton had no say in the matter at all. His eyes gleamed with anger. It was bad enough to be beaten by the Smyth fellows, without having the side held

up to ridicule in this manner. But Billy Bunter was quite insensible to considerations of that sort.

"I say, Bates——" began Bunter.

But Bates's only wish was to back up Wharton. He clapped his hand on Bunter's shoulder, and jerked him away from the wicket.

"Get out!" he said.

"Oh, really, Bates——"

"Off!"

"But it was a trial ball——"

"Will you go?"

"The other skipper says so, and you can take his word, I suppose. It's up against Smyth if I stay at the wicket. Now——"

Bates swung round his bat, with the evident intention of giving Bunter a clump with it. The fat junior suddenly ceased his arguments, and bolted. He scuttled right into the tent without stopping, before he ventured to look back. The Smyth team were roaring with laughter.

Bates took up his position, and received Blaine's second ball. He stopped that ball, and the next, and the next. But the fifth ball of the over knocked his bails off, and he carried out his bat for a big round nought.

It was the beginning of the end.

Wharton kept his end up, and when he had the bowling he made some runs; but it was a hopeless struggle.

The wickets fell fast, and ere long the whole of the village team were out for under 60 runs.

Wharton was "not out" at the finish.

"I suppose they'd have taken about 6 or 7 runs if we hadn't been in the team," Bob Cherry remarked, as he sipped lemon-squash. "Look at those chaps who were left out to make room for us. They look as pleased as Punch."

"The pleasedfulness of their esteemed chivvies is terrific."

"Here, have a guzzle, Inky, old chap. Hot, isn't it?"

"The heatfulness of the esteemed weather is——"

"Terrific," grinned Bob Cherry. "The heatfulness of my worthy self is also terrific. It's jolly warm! Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the Smyth microbe jawing to Bates."

Bates came over to the Greyfriars chums.

"We are going to follow on our innings," he remarked.

"I suppose you couldn't do anything else," agreed Harry Wharton. "There's a chance yet, you know."

Bates grinned doubtfully.

"I don't know. I'm obliged to you for playing—it's helped us. But we're no match for them."

And he moved away, leaving the Greyfriars chums looking rather grim. Certainly their assistance hadn't enabled the village team to win. But they were conscious of being better players than the Smyth brigade, and it was rather hard, after their exertions, to be classed lower, by the very fellow they had come to help, and who had failed to back them up properly.

"That's the kind of thanks one generally gets for being so jolly good-natured," grunted Bob Cherry. "Bates and his lot think we can't play cricket like the Smyth crowd. Why, I wouldn't bat like Smyth for all his father's millions."

"Or bowl like Dawson," growled Nugent.

"Or swank like any of them," said Harry. "But there's no getting out of the fact that we shall be beaten, and Smyth will have an innings to spare. My hat! Don't I wish I could get a Greyfriars eleven here somehow! I'd make those swanking asses sing small!"

The villagers were following their innings. But it was pretty certain that the Smyth side would not have to bat again. Harry Wharton had the ill-luck to be run out by Bates early in the second innings; and though his comrades did their best, the result was deplorable.

The total score for the second innings was 30.

"Ninety the lot," growled Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat! Carry me home to die somewhere quietly!"

Montgomery Smyth came over to the chums of Greyfriars. He meant to be very polite, but he could hardly conceal the conceit that was bubbling over within him.

"Hard cheese!" he said.

"Yes," said Harry shortly.

"Well, you know, we've been doing a lot of playing," explained Smyth. "My men are in ripping form. You could really hardly expect to make much of a show."

"Not with such a side as we had."

"Oh, I suppose you were all much of a muchness, weren't you?" said Montgomery Smyth airily.

Wharton's eyes glistened for a moment. He knew that Smyth must be very well aware that it was the rotten play of Bates's team that had lost the match.

"The muchfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur softly.

"I jolly well wish we could get your lot at Greyfriars," said Bob Cherry. "We'd open your eyes about cricket."

"I wish you could," said Smyth blandly. "We're down here for some time, you know. If you could get up a team of your own, we'd be happy to meet you again."

"I wish we could," said Wharton. He gave a little start. "My hat! I'll jolly well have a try!"

Montgomery Smyth laughed.

"Do!" he said. "We'd be glad to meet you. I must say I think the result would be the same. But do try, old fellow."

"I will!"

And the rival cricketers parted.

"What's the little game, Harry?" asked Nugent, as they walked home after the match. "How can you possibly get a team together? You can't find anybody in Wharton Magnus who can play."

"I wasn't thinking of Wharton Magnus."

"Then where——"

"What about our own chaps, and the chaps we know? We've plenty of time. We might be able to get a team together for a special occasion. What?"

"Phew!"

"I'm jolly well going to try. Look here, you remember the chaps we played cricket with at St. Jim's. Some of them don't live so very far away. There's that chap D'Arcy, for instance, who was at the Crystal Palace with us. He's at home for the holidays, and he has some of the St. Jim's chaps staying with him; I remember his telling me they were coming. They'd play for us like anything, if we asked them, and told them the circumstances."

"By Jove!"

"Then we can wire to any of our own chaps who aren't too far off, and put it to them. We'll try to get a crowd together, so as to be sure of eleven. We only want seven chaps beside ourselves."

"Six beside ourselves, Wharton," corrected Bunter.

Harry laughed.

"I'm afraid you won't be in the team, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"If we could get D'Arcy, Blake, Tom Merry, and a few more like that," said Harry, "why, we'd wipe the Smyth family off the face of the earth!"

"The wipefulness would be terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I don't think you ought to allow jealousy of a chap's form to influence you in selecting the team——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

And the chums of Greyfriars eagerly discussed the project as they walked home. By the time they reached Wharton Lodge their plans were pretty well made. There was a surprise in store for Montgomery Smyth & Co.!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Expedition.

"I SAY, you fellows——"

It was the following morning.

Bright and early the holiday-party at Wharton Lodge were turning out. The hour was early, but the rays of the sun were streaming in at the windows, and the trees outside were full of the twitter of birds.

The chums of Greyfriars occupied a large room at the Lodge, with five beds in it, in a row, like the dormitory they were accustomed to on a small scale.

As the Famous Four turned out, Billy Bunter sat up in bed, and blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you awake, Billy?"

"Yes, I am, Cherry. You've woke me up with your row. What are you getting up so early for? Have you got anything on?"

"Not yet," said Bob cheerfully. "I shall have soon, though."

"Oh, don't be funny!" grunted Bunter. "I mean, is there anything on this morning? I shouldn't mind getting up early if you're planning an extra breakfast in the woods, or anything of that sort."

Wharton looked at the fat junior thoughtfully. The chums had an expedition on that day, and Wharton would have been best pleased to leave Bunter behind. But he could not forget that the Owl of the Remove was his guest.

"Billy, old man, would you like a drive with the colonel this morning?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"And a visit this afternoon to the ruined abbey?"

"Certainly."

"Good! We are going on a journey——"

"Oh, are you!" said Billy Bunter, groping for his spectacles, and adjusting them on his little fat nose. "You're going on a journey and leaving me behind, is that it?"

"Well, not exactly that——"

"If that's what you call being chummy——"

"Of course, you can come; it's for you to decide."

"That's better. Where are you going?"

"We're going to run up to D'Arcy's place, and see him

about getting up an eleven," said Harry, as he plunged into his cold tub. "It's a long journey, and you'll be tired. Please yourself."

"I'm jolly well coming, then," said Bunter, gingerly putting one leg out of bed, and slowly following it with the other. "That chap D'Arcy is the son of a lord, you know. I don't know any lords personally, though my family are very highly connected. Of course I want to come. He's bound to feed us pretty well, too."

Wharton grunted as he splashed. He didn't want Bunter at D'Arcy's place; but he knew that he ought to have thought of that before having him at Wharton Lodge. Why he had him at the Lodge he hardly knew. But Bunter was his study-mate, and expected to come.

Billy began to dress. He did not trouble about the morning bath, so he was dressed before the others, though he rose later. He was blinking cheerfully as the juniors went down to breakfast.

Colonel Wharton greeted his young guests in his cordial way. The bronzed Indian veteran was always pleased to see young faces round him, and he would always have taken a great deal of trouble for his nephew. He knew of Harry's project of raising an eleven to meet Montgomery Smyth & Co., the matter having been talked over the previous evening. And he was very pleased with it. Although on civil terms with his neighbours, the colonel did not much like the Montgomery Smyths, and he promised himself the pleasure of seeing the youthful Smyth and his swanking friends soundly licked on the cricket field, if Harry succeeded in getting a decent eleven together.

"We're all going, uncle," Harry said, when the colonel spoke about the journey. "We can catch the local at Wharton Magnus in half an hour from now, and change for the Winchester express."

The colonel smiled a little.

"It will be somewhat of a surprise for D'Arcy."

"A pleasant surprise, I hope," said Harry. "He's written to us since we were at the Crystal Palace with him, and asked us to give him a look in if we get a chance during the holidays. I know he meant it, too."

After breakfast, the colonel drove the boys to the station, and they caught the train, Bunter very nearly losing it by tackling an automatic machine at the last moment. The machine was a little out of gear, as automatic machines will be sometimes. Bunter jammed his penny in, but could not get the drawer open. He was tugging away at it frantically when the guard waved his flag.

"Come on!" shouted Harry, from the train

"I can't get it open!" shrieked Bunter.

"Leave it shut, then! Come on!"

"But——"

"Buck up!"

"My penny——"

"Come on!"

"The chocolate——"

"You ass!"

Colonel Wharton seized Bunter by the shoulder, jerked him away from the automatic machine, whirled him across the platform, and bundled him in. The guard slammed the door savagely.

Bunter sprawled among legs on the floor of the carriage. The colonel glanced in at the open window as the train moved.

"Sorry, Bunter," he said. "You would have lost the train. Good-bye, my boys!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

And the train rolled off, the boys cap in hand—excepting Bunter, who was on the floor, gasping for breath, and trying to move something off his chest—something which he presently found to be Bob Cherry's foot.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Cherry, you beast, lemme gerrup!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Why don't you get up, then?"

"Groo! You've got your beastly boot on my chest."

"My hat! So I have."

"Move it, then, you ass!" shrieked Bunter.

Bob moved it in a leisurely way, and the fat junior scrambled up. He was dusty, and he was red, and he was wrathful.

"I say, you fellows, if this is what you call acting decently——"

"Anybody like any toffee?" asked Nugent.

Bunter broke off at once.

"Yes, rather, Nugent! I'm feeling peckish already after the drive to the station, and I could do with some toffee. I couldn't get the chocolate out of that swindling machine. Something ought to be done about it. This is the second time in my life I've lost a penny in an automatic machine. Where's that toffee?"

"What toffee?"

"You said you had some."

"My dear chap, you're dreaming. I didn't."

"You—you said would anybody like—like any toffee."

"That's very different. I didn't say I had any."

Bunter glared.

"You—you silly duffer! You—you——"

"But I've got some butter-scotch," said Nugent, laughing. "Here you are, Billy. Take it under the seat and gnaw it."

And he handed the fat junior a big packet, and Billy Bunter was all smiles again. He sat in a corner seat contentedly devouring butter-scotch till it was time to change trains.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Pongo Causes Trouble.

"WALLY!"

"Hallo, old son!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's—now home for the midsummer holidays—put up his eyeglass, and stopped in the lane, to fix a withering glare upon his younger brother.

At St. Jim's, Wally was known as the scamp of the Third Form, and during the vacation he was apparently trying his best to keep up his reputation at home.

Wally was a great trial to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He tried to bring up his young brother in the way that he should go. But it was really like trying to bring up a restive colt.

Wally had his own ideas about things, and he had a strong predilection for having his own way. He was the reverse of his elegant major in most things. Hence trouble!

Even now, when Arthur Augustus had halted, and turned his monocle upon the hero of St. Jim's Third, that cheerful youngster did not seem abashed.

In fact, he closed his left eye with something that was perilously near a wink, and said unceremoniously:

"Oh, come off, Gussy!"

"Wally!"

"Come off, old man! None of your gammon, you know."

"You utter young wepwobate!" said Arthur Augustus, hardly finding words strong enough to express his feelings. "Wally! I scarcely know how to addwess you. I——"

"Then don't," said Wally cheerfully. "Hi, Pongo! Pong!"

And he gave a whistle that was reminiscent of that of a railway train. Arthur Augustus stopped his ears.

"Wally, I have wemarked a dozen times that I cannot endure that feahful wow."

"More like a hundred than a dozen," said Wally calmly. "You're always passing remarks. It's a bad habit you've got. Bad form, my boy."

For Wally to lecture his elder brother on form was a little too much. D'Arcy could only gasp.

"Come on, though," said Wally. "If you're going to stand here all day——"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Get a move on, Cocky!"

"Undahstand once and for all, Wally, that I wefuse to be addwessed in that uttahly vulgah mannah."

"Go hon!"

"That is also a widiculous expwession. It is slangy."

"My eye!"

"Wally, you positively shall not use such expwessions. You may say 'My hat!'—but you shall not say, 'My eye!' It is vulgah."

"I didn't say 'your eye,' I said 'my eye,'" said Wally cheerfully.

"Wally——"

"Look here, is this a conversazione, or are we going down to Easthorpe?" demanded Wally aggressively.

"We are goin' to Easthorpe——"

"Then come on."

"Yaas, wathah, but——"

"Oh, blow your buts! Gussy, old man, you're a nice little boy, but there's too much cackle about you. Come on."

Arthur Augustus came on, looking quite helpless. There was nothing to do with Wally except to fall upon him and smite him hip and thigh; and D'Arcy naturally hesitated about committing such an unbrotherly action, especially upon a holiday.

Wally whistled through his teeth, another objectionable habit upon which the swell of St. Jim's had remonstrated in vain.

"Wally, will you stop that noise?"

"What noise?"

"That feahful wow?"

"There isn't any fearful row, except when you're talking or singing a tenor solo," said Wally.

"You young wapscallion——"

Wally whistled again. Pongo barked, and frisked round his legs. He frisked round D'Arcy's, too. He wasn't a particular dog, and didn't mind whose legs he frisked round. But D'Arcy minded; he was particular.

"Wally, call that wotten mongwel away."

"Hi, Pongo!"

"He's not comin'. I shall be dwiven to kick him shortly. He is worse than Hewwies' bulldog at St. Jim's. He has absolutely no wespect for a fellow's twousahs. I am afwaid evewy moment that he will snap at my twucks."

"Oh, blow your trucks!" said Wally unfeelingly.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—I—I mean, I wegard you as a young wottah. I shall be sowwy I bwought you out for a walk. Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's stumbled over Pongo, who was frisking too near. He lost his balance and staggered forward, and though he did not fall, his silk hat rolled from his head with the shock, and fell to the ground.

"Bai Jove! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You unfeelin' young wascal—stop him!" shrieked D'Arcy.

Pongo had made a bound for the hat.

Possibly he thought that it was thrown down for him to play with. Wally was in the habit of making him carry things, and he sometimes gave him his cap to carry, or his straw hat, just to keep him in training. It is quite possible that Pongo thought the silk hat was put there for him to carry. At all events, he carried it. His teeth met upon the brim, and he was off with it like a shot. D'Arcy sprang after him—too late!

"Stop! You howwid beast, stop!" yelled Arthur Augustus, brandishing his cane after Pongo.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally.

"Wally! Call him—whistle—whistle! Make him bwing my toppah back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wally! You young wottah!"

But Wally was too helpleasly doubled up with laughter to call or whistle. He sank upon the grassy bank beside the lane, and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my only Aunt Jane! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young wottah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not wait for more. There was no help to be obtained from Wally. The swell of St. Jim's broke into a wild run, and dashed after Pongo, who was careering gaily down the lane with the silk hat in his mouth.

"Stop, you beast! Stop, you wotten mongwel! Stop, old doggy! Stop!"

But Pongo declined to stop.

He might have brought the hat back if his master's voice had called him, but to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy he owed no allegiance.

He dashed on merrily.

Once he dropped the hat and began to bark, apparently for a change. D'Arcy's hopes rose, and he sprinted on; but before he could come up with the hat, Pongo seized it in his teeth again, and was off like the wind.

The elegant junior panted in pursuit.

It was nearly noon upon a hot August day, and the run brought the perspiration streaming down the face of Arthur Augustus.

But he ran on gallantly.

"Stop, you howwid beast! Stop!"

Pongo did not stop.

Ahead of him was a bend in the lane, beyond which lay the village of Easthorpe. Arthur Augustus was a good sprinter, in running clothes—but his present elegant attire was not calculated for muscular action—and, moreover, it was a blazing day. And at any time Pongo could have held his own in a race. Pongo was getting further and further off—D'Arcy dropping behind. As soon as he passed the bend he would disappear for good. D'Arcy know that, and he put on a desperate spurt to overtake him.

But Pongo put on a spurt, too. Indeed, he seemed all the time to be keeping something in reserve, and to be only bent on giving Arthur Augustus a good run. He whisked away round the curve in the lane, and there was a sound of sudden barking and yelping. D'Arcy's hopes rose again. Pongo must have dropped the hat to bark. The trees and hedges were so thick that D'Arcy could not get a glimpse of the road beyond the corner; but he hoped to find his hat there before Pongo picked it up again, and he tore on at desperate speed.

He came round the corner at full tilt——

There was a collision—a series of exclamations—and a yell of wrath from a fat youth in spectacles.

D'Arcy, completely winded by the shock, sat down in a cloud of dust, and gasped.

"Bai Jove!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Hearty Welcome.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS gasped, and blinked at the little crowd he had dashed into so recklessly. There were five of them, and they had been strolling along the lane when Pongo came racing round the corner. Pongo had bumped upon Bob Cherry's legs, and dropped the hat—barked, and vanished through a hedge. Before the juniors had time to realise that the owner of the hat was probably in pursuit, Arthur Augustus came upon them like a runaway locomotive.

He had met Billy Bunter fair and square.

Bunter was sitting in the dust now, groping for his spectacles and blinking. D'Arcy sat facing him, blinking, too.

The Famous Four, considerably startled, stood round staring at them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "An escaped lunatic, by Jove!"

"The lunaticfulness is terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter feebly. "Help me up, I—I'm dying! My backbone is broken, and my collar-bone has been driven into my lungs. Help me up!"

"Poor chap!" said Nugent, who knew very well that Bunter was only winded, and not otherwise hurt at all. "It's rough. Fancy the fattest chap in the three kingdoms being cut off in the bloom of his youth in that way! Would you like me to plant a stick of celery or anything on your grave, Bunty?"

"O-o-oh, really, Nugent——"

Harry Wharton good-naturedly lent a hand to the stranger who had knocked the fat junior over. As he extended his hand to the elegant youth sitting in the dust, he recognised him, and uttered an exclamation:

"D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Wharton, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! What on earth did you come bolting round the corner like that for?" demanded Harry.

"I was aftah that feahful dog," gasped Arthur Augustus. "He collahed my hat, you know, and wan off with it, like—like anythin'. Have you seen a silk hat?"

"There was one here," said Bob Cherry. "The dog dropped it——"

"That's wight—it's mine."

"Blessed if I can see it now," said Bob, looking round. "The dog didn't take it; he whisked off, and left it here."

"I say, you fellows, lend me a hand! I'm dying."

"Well, you might die quietly," said Bob reproachfully. "What's the good of harrying up our feelings by making a row about it?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Where's that blessed hat?"

"I'm expiring. I—I've broken my breastbone——"

"It was your collar-bone just now."

"My collar-bone as well. I've broken my breastbone and my collar-bone. I distinctly heard them snap as I fell."

"Where's that hat?"

"Help me up."

Harry Wharton and Nugent caught hold of the fat junior and raised him from the ground. There was a shout from Bob Cherry.

"There it is."

"Where, deah boy?"

"Bunter was sitting on it."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors stared at the hat. There it was—Bunter had fallen upon it. The fat junior was not a light weight. His fall had converted the silk hat into an opera hat at one fell swoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "That was what Bunty heard crack as he flopped. It wasn't his collar-bone—it was D'Arcy's hat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help laughing. Bunter did not laugh; he was feeling himself over, and would not have been sorry to find a bone broken, if only as a reproach to his companions. But his bones were too well-coated with fat to break easily. D'Arcy did not laugh, either. He looked at his ruined hat.

"Bai Jove! That toppah's wuined!"

"You could still use it for the opera," said Nugent gravely, picking up the hat. "It doesn't open very easily; but it closes all right."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Let's see how you look in it."

D'Arcy retreated hastily.

"Not at all. I could not appeah in such a howwid thing! Pway toss it ovah the hedge, deah boy!"

And the ruined hat went sailing.

"I shall have to go back immediately, now," said

D'Arcy. "Wally, I shall not be able to come to the village with you."

Wally came round the corner whistling. He grinned and nodded cheerily to the Greyfriars' boys.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm not going. I shall have to go and look for Pongo."

And he leaped through a gap in the hedge, catching a distant glimpse of Pongo in the field beyond, and was soon in hot pursuit of the elusive mongrel.

"Quite a pleasant surpwise meetin' you chaps," said D'Arcy. "Not vewy pleasant for you, Buntah, I am afwaid. I beg to apologise most sincerely!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Bunter, who had recovered his wind. "I don't mind. I can stand most things; only any sort of a shock makes me hungry."

"Bai Jove! What are you fellows doin' in this part of the world?" asked D'Arcy. "Can you come in to lunch with me?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter, before anybody else could speak. He wasn't going to run any risk of an invitation like that being passed over.

"Certainly!" said Wharton. "The fact is, we've come to see you, D'Arcy, and we were just walking up to your place from the station."

"Bai Jove, I'm awfully pleased, you know!" D'Arcy walked bareheaded with the chums of Greyfriars, with one last regretful look towards the field where the ruined topper reposed in the grass. "I'm vewy glad to see you. Blake's stayin' with me. You remembah Jack Blake, of my study at St. Jim's?"

"Oh, yes! Good!"

"And pewwaps you remembah Kerr? He belongs to the New House at St. Jim's. He's stayin' at Eastwood at pwesent. Some of the othah fellows have been with me, and some more are comin' latah, but only Blake and Kerr are there now."

"We shall be awfully glad to see them," said Harry. "Look here, this is a rather sudden visit, I know. We've taken you right at your word."

"That's wight, deah boys. I twust you can always take me at my word," said the swell of St. Jim's. "As a mattah of fact, I'm vewy glad you've dwopped in like this, as you will liven things up a bit. Some of the fellows are comin' down in a few days, but it's wathah quiet now. I have been arguin' with Blake this morn', and he's an obstinate ass! If he weren't my guest, you know, I should give him a feahful lickin'. Kerr is an obstinate wottah, too! Awfully decent chap, though, Kerr. How long can you stay? I'll make Tom Mewwy and Kangawoo come ovah from Hucklebewwy Heath if you'd like to see them."

"You live near Tom Merry?"

"Yaas; wathah! Only a short cycle spin, you know. Tom Mewwy's got that Austwalian chap stayin' with him—Hawwy Noble, you know. We call him Kangawoo, because he comes fwom somewhere—I forget where, where there are kangawoos—somewhere in Austwaliah, you know."

"Jolly good!" said Wharton. "If he's a Cornstalk he ought to know something about cricket."

"Yaas; wathah!"

"Good again! Look here, we've come to see you, but not to stay. We want you to come with us."

"Bai Jove!"

"You, and Kerr, and Blake, and Tom Merry, and Noble, if it can be fixed," said Harry eagerly. "Yes; and your young brother will make up the number."

"What numbah, deah boy?"

"Eleven—with us four."

"I say, Wharton——"

"Shut up, Bunter! We're getting up an eleven for a specially important match, and none of the Greyfriars' chaps live near my place. I thought you would help us out."

"Yaas; wathah!"

"I was thinking of wiring right and left to the fellows, you know, and bringing them any distance; but if you chaps could come and stay a day or two at my uncle's, and help us over the match, that would fix it rippingly."

"My deah chap, say no more. We're quite at your service. Did you want me to captain the team?"

Harry Wharton coughed a little.

"Well—er—no; I was thinking of doing that myself."

"Vewy good. We shall be happy to play for you."

"Can you answer for the others?"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall tell them the posish, and they'll play up like Twojans!" said Arthur Augustus. "You can wely upon them. Here we are!"

They entered the great park gates of Eastwood House.

"I'm sowwy my patah's away," said D'Arcy. "I'm keepin' it up while he's abwoad, you know. I w'ote to him that if he liked to spend his holiday here, at Eastwood, I'd bwing a jolly party fwom St. Jim's, and make things mewwy for him, but, somehow, he pwefers to go to the Wiviewa. I wouldn't go outside England in the summer for anythin'. There's nothin' to beat it."

And the Greyfriars' chums cordially agreed that there wasn't. Billy Bunter was looking a little disappointed. He had particularly wanted to meet Lord Eastwood. But the thought that, in so splendid a mansion as Eastwood House, the lunch was certain to be ripping, was a consolation, and his fat face was soon cheerful again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Lunch at Eastwood.

HARRY WHARTON and Co. had excellent appetites by the time they arrived at Eastwood House, and they were quite ready for lunch. Lunch was timed for one, and it wanted twenty minutes to that hour, however, so they accompanied D'Arcy in a stroll round the grounds to find Blake and Kerr. The two juniors of St. Jim's were not in the house, but the butler had seen them go into the gardens, and in that direction went the juniors in search.

"Bai Jove! I think I can hear Blake's voice," Arthur Augustus remarked, as they entered the shrubberies.

It was a voice raised in excitement.

"Look here, you ass, I don't want any rows while we're staying with Gussy, but I must remark that the New House is a rotten old show, and that everybody in it is a fossil and a worm, and can't play cricket for toffee!"

"And I don't want to be personal," said another voice. "I only want to point out politely that the School House is a casual ward of the most pronounced type, and that it is inhabited by measly wasters!"

"Look here, Kerr——"

"Look here, Blake——"

"I don't want to punch your head——"

"I don't want to dot you in the eye."

"But I shall have to do it if you don't talk sense."

"That's just what I was thinking."

"There's time to lick you before lunch."

"My dear chap, you couldn't do it if you took till dinner-time!"

"I'll jolly well show you!"

"Come on, then! I'm waiting to be shown."

There was a rustle in the shrubbery and a tramp of feet; then a sound of quick and gasping breaths.

The Greyfriars' chums grinned at one another. They knew all about that old house rivalry at the ancient college of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! I believe they're wowing!" said D'Arcy. "It sounds like it—doesn't it, deah boys?"

"It certainly does," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Why not separate them?"

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah! I nevah thought of that."

And D'Arcy ran through the shrubbery. Kerr was on his back on the ground, and Jack Blake was sitting astride of his chest.

"Now, then, which is cock-house of St. Jim's?" demanded Blake.

"New House!" gasped Kerr.

"My hat! I'll squash you!" ejaculated Blake. "Which is—— Ow!"

Kerr made a tremendous effort, and rolled him over. Blake bumped down on his back, and Kerr sat on top, grinning triumphantly.

"Now, then, Blake, which is cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"School House!" yelled Blake.

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

Kerr looked quickly round, perceiving the new arrivals for the first time. He jumped up quickly, giving Blake his hand to rise.

"Let me help you up, Blake, old chap!" he said, with elaborate politeness. "So sorry you—you slipped over and fell."

"Yes; it was clumsy of me," agreed Blake solemnly.

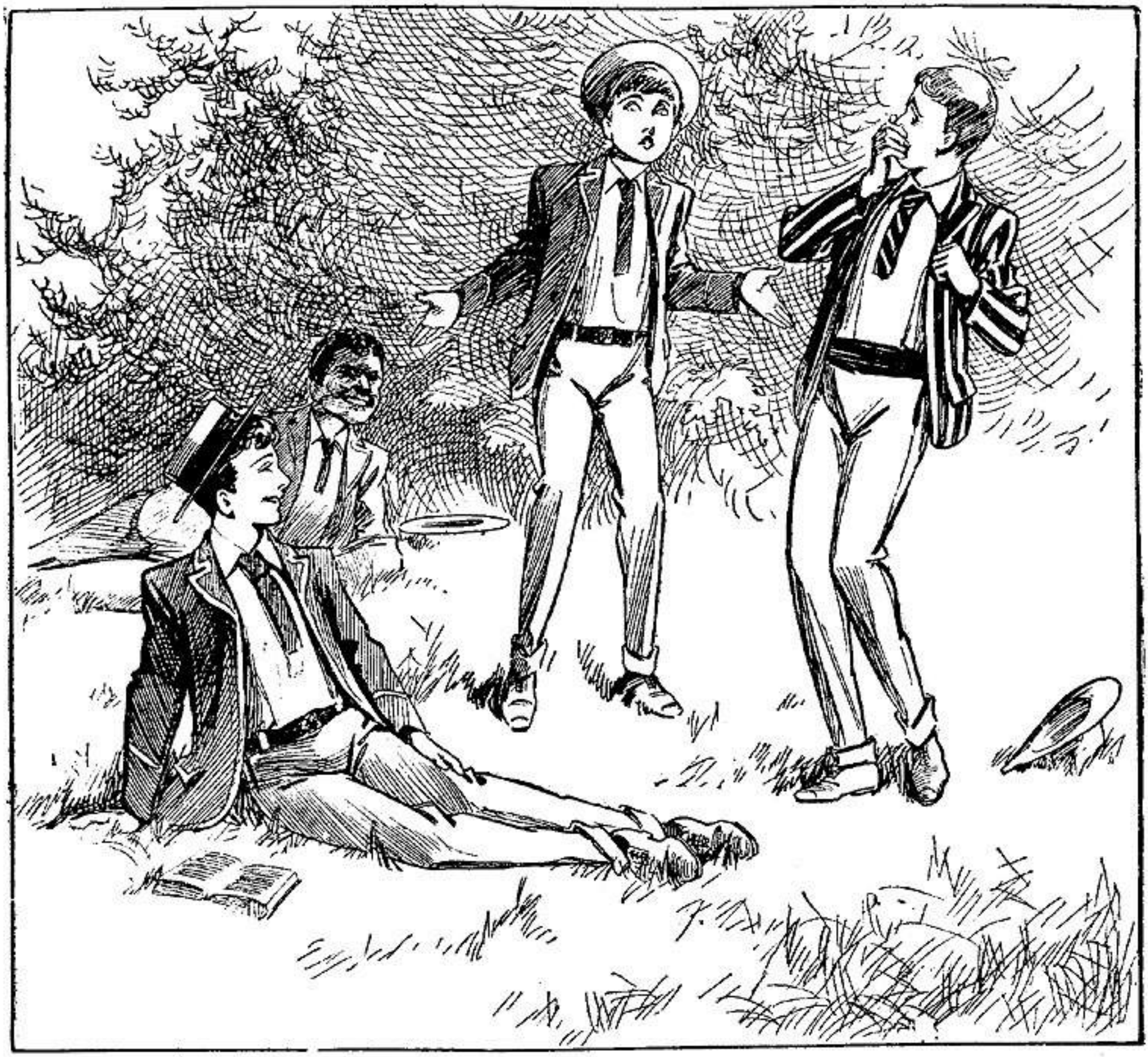
"Bai Jove, you two chaps ought to be on the stage!" said D'Arcy, with a grin. "You see, we were here fwom the start, so it's no good twying to take us in. You know these chaps."

"Glad to meet you," said Blake.

"Yes; rather," said Kerr. "I was showing Blake a little—er—trick——"

"Yaas; wathah! We know your twicks. Come in to lunch, deah boys."

And the Greyfriars' juniors, having removed the dust of travel, joined the St. Jim's fellows at lunch. And a handsome lunch it was. Arthur Augustus had unlimited



Montgomery Smyth clapped his hand to his nose, upon which Bob Cherry's knuckles had bumped with unintentional force. "Ow!" he said.
"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, turning scarlet. "I-I-I'm sorry!"

resources at his disposal, and he "did them down" in first-class style.

"We'll go ovah to Huckleberry Heath aftah lunch," said D'Arcy. "I'll have out the big Daimler—the one we use for getting votahs to the poll on election days. It will hold us all, with woom to spare, and it will be a wippin' wun."

"Good wheeze!"

"Got a chauffeur here?" asked Blake.

"No. The governah's chauffeur is away."

"Then how are you going to handle the motor?"

"I'm going to dwive myself, you know."

"You can drive yourself if you like," said Blake; "but you're not going to drive the motor if I'm in it. I've got only one life."

"Wats!"

"Look here, ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. It will be a very pleasant wun for these chaps, and we can bwing back Tom Merry and Kangaroo in the cah," said D'Arcy. "I'll send word at once for it to be got weady."

"Hallo! Haven't waited for me!" growled Wally, coming in late. "Just like you, Gussy!"

"You are late!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "And I weally think, Wally, you might have the decency to put on a clean collah and bwush down your clothes befoah comin' in to lunch!"

"Rats!" said Wally. "'Nuff of that when the governor's here. Not so much of your starch, Gus!"

"Gentlemen, I beg to apologise for the wude mannahs of my minor——"

"Cheese it, Gus, and carve the goose!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"I'm hungry. Here's Bunter, too, wants a second helping."

"Oh, really, you know, I could do with another helping!"

"Never knew a time when you couldn't!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The motah will be weady," said Arthur Augustus, after exchanging some words with the butler. "You Gweyfwiahs' chaps can be assured it's all wight. I've often dwiven a motah. My governah twusts me with it like anythin'. It will be a wippin' wun. Are you comin', Wally?"

"Of course I am! Do you think I'd let you go alone?"

"I object to your puttin' it like that!"

"Oh, don't begin again, Gussy!"

Wally was left to finish his lunch when the other juniors left the table. Billy Bunter stayed to keep him company. Bunter had started first, but Billy was always "not out," so to speak, at the end of a feed.

The big Daimler was a large enough car, in all conscience. It was a strong and heavy motor, and apparently well

adapted to the work D'Arcy said it had been used for. At election times the big car, streaming with flags and crammed with voters, would roll up to the poll in great style.

It was now crammed with juniors in high spirits, and D'Arcy sat at the steering-wheel. As a matter of fact, the swell of St. Jim's could handle a motor as well as most chauffeurs. He had a steady hand, and a nerve of iron.

If any mischance happened en route, it would not be due to want of skill on the driver's part, but to his rigidly standing upon his rights of the road. D'Arcy was strong on that point. A cheeky cyclist who insisted upon riding at a moderate pace in the middle of the road, with a motor snorting behind him impatiently, was likely to be startled if D'Arcy was in the motor.

A "road hog" who came round a corner on the wrong side, or who insisted upon having more than his fair share of his Majesty's highway, would have had a collision and an inquest on his hands before Arthur Augustus would have budged.

D'Arcy mounted to his seat, assuming the peaked-cap and goggles. They changed his appearance wonderfully, and he was quite unrecognisable.

"Weady, you chaps?"

The Greyfriars chums clambered in. They were enjoying their day out, and their faces were very merry. Blake and Kerr followed them in, and at the last moment Billy Bunter and Wally came bolting out, and bundled into the car. Numerous as the party now was, there was ample room in the huge car for them. D'Arcy looked back through his goggles.

"All weady?"

"Yes. Right-ho!"

Zip, zip, zip! Toot!

The car rolled down the drive, turned into the highway, and buzzed along the shady country road in the direction of Huckleberry Heath.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
The Road Hog.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. sat tight, thoroughly enjoying themselves. The car was a splendid one, and it ran easily and lightly. D'Arcy kept it going at a spanking speed, right up to the legal limit; and the wind sang past the ears of the juniors.

Billy Bunter was inclined to be alarmed when the car whisked round corners and shaved great trees that grew out in the road; but no one else was in the least nervous. They saw at once that Arthur Augustus, junior as he was, had the car in perfect control.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy was heard suddenly to mutter.

Wharton looked towards him quickly.

"Anything wrong?"

"Wathah not! But look—those two cyclists!"

Wharton looked ahead. Two cyclists had spun out of a side lane, and were riding on ahead of the motor-car towards Huckleberry Heath. They were two sturdy lads, very handsome in Norfolk jackets and straw hats. Even from the back view Wharton thought he saw something familiar in their appearance. An exclamation from Jack Blake showed him that he was right.

"Tom Merry! Kangaroo!"

The two cyclists were Tom Merry, of the Shell at St. Jim's, and his Australian chum.

"Don't say a word!" said D'Arcy, with a chuckle, and he slowed down a little. "I've got a jape on, deah boys!"

"Good!" said Blake. "What's the wheeze?"

"Keep your chivvies out of sight, deah boys! I'm going to wun them down, you know. They won't wecognise me. They're widin' stwaight back to Lauwel Villah, and we'll follow them wight up to the gate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be a joke up against the Shell-fish, deah boys! You Gweyfwiahs chaps don't mind goin' it a bit, I hope?"

"Not a bit!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

The car increased in speed again. The two cyclists had had their backs to the motor all the time, and had naturally not glanced towards it. D'Arcy, sitting erect and grinning behind his motor-mask, made the car fairly hum.

Toot, toot! Yaup!

Zip, zip, zip!

Buzz!

Tom Merry glanced carelessly back over his shoulder. He was about to turn from the high road into the long, narrow lane that led down to Laurel Villa, where he was staying for the holidays with his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. He started a little at the sight of the motor. It seemed to be rushing down upon him at a murderous speed, and it kept close to the left, too, instead of passing him on the right.

"Get in, Kangaroo!" he muttered. "There's a blessed road hog, and you can't argue with a motor when you're on a bike."

Harry Noble grinned and nodded; he had discovered that. The two St. Jim's fellows drew close in to the side of the road, but the motor closed in, too. Tom Merry heard it snorting behind him, and looked round again. It was alarmingly near.

A figure in goggles sat bolt upright, the fur coat close round him, the peaked-cap down over his brows.

"I say, stop that!" roared Tom Merry. "Take your beastly smell-trap on the right side, can't you? Do you want to run us down?"

Zip, zip! Toot! Snort!

That was the motorist's only reply.

"The worm!" muttered Kangaroo. "I wish he'd get out of that car for a couple of minutes!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Shall we get over?"

"No, I'm not going to ride on the wrong side, and be responsible if there's a blessed accident!"

"What price dismounting to let the hog roll by?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not much! We're on our rights, and I'll be run down first!"

"What-ho!" said Kangaroo cordially.

Snort, snort, snort!

The cyclists pedalled on rapidly. The motor snorted just behind, raising a cloud of dust, and exhaling that charming odour of petrol which is a distinguishing feature of English country roads in the summer.

The motorist could easily have whizzed by the cyclists if he had wanted to, but he seemed to prefer sticking just behind them, sounding his horn every second or two with terrifying blasts.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. He would have given much to have that motorist on the ground, within easy hitting distance, with or without gloves.

"Here's Laurel Lane!" he exclaimed.

They turned out of the high road into the lane. To their surprise, the car came whizzing round the corner after them.

"My hat! We're not done with it yet!"

Snort, snort, snort!

Toot, toot!

Buzz!

Thus sang the car as it hummed over the dusty lane about a dozen yards in the rear of the two cyclists. The big Daimler had necessarily slackened speed to avoid running over the riders, yet it seemed to them as if it was going to dash right into them every minute.

The worst of it was that Laurel Lane was so narrow that there wasn't easy room for the motor to pass if it had wanted to.

Tom Merry and Noble pedalled away for all they were worth. They had read of cases of intoxicated chauffeurs driving cars about to the danger of the general public, and they had little doubt that the driver behind them had been drinking.

They were half inclined to run their machines upon the belt of grass by the roadside, and jump off. But they would not give in.

Right on they dashed, right up to the gate of the long garden of Laurel Villa. With the big Daimler snorting behind, it was not safe to dismount in the road, and so they let their machines run on the grass.

They expected the obnoxious motor to whiz by, and leave them in a cloud of dust and petrol, to make remarks upon road hogs at their leisure. But it did not.

With a final obbligato on the horn, the big car came to a halt just outside the garden gate of Laurel Villa.

Tom Merry stared blankly at it. He had not expected the car to stop for a moment; but as it stopped, it gave him an opportunity of saying some things that were weighing on his mind. He let his machine run against the fence, and turned back towards the car.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "I want to speak to you. You're a pig! A road hog! An utter worm! You ought to be kicked! I——"

"Dwaw it mild, chappy!"

Tom Merry jumped.

"Eh?"

"I hardly wegard that as an appwopwiate gweetin' for an old fwiend payin' an aftahnoon call, deah boy!"

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy removed the motor-mask, and grinned cheerfully.

"We gave you wathah a wun, deah boy!"

And a yell of laughter rose from the crowded car.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Ready Recruits.

HARRY WHARTON and his comrades alighted, and Tom Merry looked at them in astonishment. D'Arcy waved his hand.

"You know these gentlemen, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "They've done me the honah to call upon me, and I've bwought them ovah to see you on important business. Let me see. I don't think you chaps know Noble. Where's that Cornstalk?"

"Here I am!" said Kangaroo, digging the swell of St. Jim's in the ribs.

"Ow! Pway don't be a wuff beast, deah boy! Pway allow me to intwoduce my fwiend Noble, who is wathah a wuff beast, but one of the best, deah boys!"

Noble shook hands with the Greyfriars fellows. Tom Merry was looking at Arthur Augustus in an undecided sort of way. D'Arcy caught his eye.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?"

"No," said Tom Merry. "I was just thinking——"

"Yaas?"

"Whether I should roll you in the ditch, or not!"

D'Arcy started back in alarm.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I suppose you were japing me all along the road in that smell-box of yours," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was a jolly good joke," said Wally. "My only Aunt Jane! The way you fellows pedalled would have taken first prize on any cycle track."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed too.

"Well, come in," he said. "I'll overlook it, as Gussy isn't responsible for his actions."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I'm jolly glad to see you chaps. Come into the garden, and sample the lemon-squash. It's jolly hot."

The juniors accepted the invitation cheerfully enough. Miss Priscilla Fawcett was seated in her garden-chair under the shade of a spreading apple-tree. She greeted the boys with her old-fashioned, kindly courtesy. The garden of Laurel Villa was very extensive, and it was the delight of Miss Fawcett and her gardener.

The juniors were soon making themselves comfortable in garden-chairs and hammocks, and sucking straws immersed in the reviving lemon-squash. Then Harry Wharton came to business.

D'Arcy introduced the subject in his inimitable way.

"Wharton has come ovah to wope in some cwicketahs," he remarked. "I've pwomised for all of us."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Awfully obliging of you, Gussy. Still, we'll be glad to play—eh, Kangy?"

"What-ho!" said the Cornstalk.

Then Harry explained the situation.

Tom Merry listened with attention, and he grinned at the finish.

"You'll have a jolly good eleven, though I say it," he remarked. "If you take along the whole crowd, that will just make up the number. That young rascal Wally can play well for a Third-Former, and Gussy knows one end of a bat from another—sometimes."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I wish we had Fatty Wynn here; he's the best bowler at St. Jim's. But he's travelling in Wales, like Jonah. Kerr can bowl, though, after a fashion."

"The New House bowling can knock spots off you chaps," said Kerr disdainfully.

"Wats! I——"

"Then there's Noble——"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy."

"I know that, Gussy. Then there's Noble. He can bat and bowl rippingly, and he's good in the field. I can play myself, too," added Tom Merry modestly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You'll have a jolly good team, Wharton."

"That's what I want," said Harry Wharton. "These Montgomery Smyth chaps are awful swankers, but they can play, you know. One or two of them are really good. I want to make sure of giving them a really good licking. It will do them worlds of good to be licked by a younger team, and they average a couple of years older than we are."

"Good!"

"Now, if you can all come——"

"We can all come, deah boy."

"When can you come? That's the next question."

"Any time you like, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus answered for all the rest; but they all said the same.

"This is jolly decent of you," said Harry. "I——"

"Wats! We're jolly glad to get a decent game of cwicket."

"Yes, rather!"

"If you could come back to-day, it would be ripping. If you can't, fix a date, and one that will suit you. Then I'll arrange with Smyth."

"Suppose you fellows stay at Eastwood till to-morrow, and then we'll come back with you," suggested Arthur Augustus.

And this was decided upon.

Harry Wharton & Co. spent the afternoon at Tom Merry's, and a very pleasant afternoon it was. Tom Merry had a cricket pitch laid out in an adjoining field, where he was accustomed to practice when at home, and the juniors fixed up a practice match of six a side, Billy Bunter being allowed to come in to make up the number.

It was good practice, and it showed them all to be in first-class condition.

Tom Merry and Noble returned with D'Arcy's party in the motor to Eastwood House, and stayed the night there, and the next day the whole party took the train for Wharton Magnus.

Harry Wharton was feeling very pleased with himself as he stepped into the train at Easthorpe.

He had had great good fortune in getting together such an eleven, and he had the best anticipations of the match with the Smyth team.

He could imagine what their faces would look like when they saw Kerr and Tom Merry bowling, and Kangaroo and Blake at the wicket.

The train was just starting when Bunter scrambled to the door of the carriage.

"I say, you fellows, I've left it on the seat!"

"What seat?"

"The seat on the platform, ass. I've left it there."

Bob Cherry grasped him fast.

"Well, you fat duffer, you didn't want to bring the seat on the platform into the train, did you? Of course you've left it there!"

"I mean I've left my sandwiches there—my packet of sandwiches!" bawled Bunter. "Stop the train! Hold on!"

"Can't! We're started now."

Billy Bunter made a clutch at the communication cord, and Jack Blake yanked him back just in time.

"You young ass!"

"Oh, really, Blake——"

"It's all wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I've got a lunch-basket."

"Oh, that alters the case, of course!" said Bunter, sitting down contentedly. "You see, you chaps, I have to be careful in these matters. I've got a jolly delicate constitution, and if it isn't kept up by constant nourishment, something might happen at any moment. Yes, you can snigger, Bob Cherry, but you wouldn't like me to fall down and expire in agony at your feet."

"You'd better not start expiring in agony at my feet," grunted Bob Cherry. "I should jolly well kick out, I can tell you."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

But Billy Bunter's voice was drowned. The juniors in the carriage began to talk cricket, and Bunter wasn't able to make himself heard. An hour later he woke up from a pleasant doze in a corner seat, and blinked at the juniors. Harry Noble was relating a story of a test match he had witnessed in Australia, and Billy was frowned upon on all sides when he interrupted.

When the story was finished he tried again.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I sha'n't shut up, Cherry. I——"

"Ring off!"

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"But, I say, you know——"

"Pway allow the young ass to speak," said D'Arcy. "What is it, Buntah?"

"Isn't it time the lunch-basket was opened?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I might have guessed that was it. Choke him with a pork-pie, for goodness' sake!"

The lunch-basket was opened, and Billy Bunter was happy. It was a pleasant journey for all concerned, only Wally wondering once or twice if Pongo was "all right" at Eastwood. They arrived at Wharton Magnus, and a quarter of an hour later were being greeted by Colonel Wharton at the door of the Lodge.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Montgomery Smyth.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Montgomery Smyth laughed loud and long.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" asked Dawson, across the breakfast-table at Mount House. "If there's anything funny in the letter, you can read it out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut the cackle and come to the 'osses," said Blaine.

"It's from Wharton," said Montgomery Smyth, with tears of merriment in his eyes. "The chap we licked the other day, you know."

"Yes, rather. What does he say?"

"He's got together an eleven since then, and he wants us to play again. I told him after the licking that we'd meet any eleven he could get together."

"So we will—and lick them, too," said Dawson, chipping an egg. "I'd like another game. We don't get all the cricket in this part of the country that we could do with. I hope he's got a decent team."

"A set of junior kids, from what I can make out," said Montgomery Smyth, tossing the letter across the table. "A lot of juniors from a school somewhere—St. Jim's, I think. Much the same as his own lot, I dare say."

"Well, we'll meet them—eh?"

"Oh, yes! Another licking will do them good."

And that morning Montgomery Smyth wrote the reply to Wharton. Harry had asked him to name a date, and he named the following day.

And on the following day the Montgomery Smyth brigade turned out in high spirits.

The game was not to be played on the village green, as in the case of the Bates match. Wharton's ground within the walls of Wharton Park was much better, and it had been decided upon. Stumps were to be pitched at eleven in the morning, to allow plenty of time for the match.

It was only a short distance from Mount House to the Lodge, but the Smyth contingent did not think of walking over, and carrying their bags in their hands. That was not sufficiently glorious for Montgomery Smyth. There were always three cars in the garage of Montgomery Smyth senior, and all three of them were requisitioned to carry the Smyth party over to the Lodge.

They arrived in great state.

Harry Wharton and his guests were already on the ground, in their flannels.

It was a brilliant August morning. The hour of eleven was close at hand, and it looked as if the Smyth party would be late, when the zip of the motors was heard.

Montgomery Smyth & Co. came on the ground with a decided swagger.

They were so confident in themselves and in what they could do, that they did not think it worth while to conceal their belief, and they were not much restrained by any considerations of modesty.

Harry Wharton greeted them with great politeness.

The Wharton eleven had been practising again early that morning, for an hour or so, and they were in wonderfully fit condition.

Their play was miles above that of the Smyth brigade, with one or two exceptions; and if Smyth had been a little more courteous about it, Harry would have felt sorry for him.

But the swank of the son and heir of the millionaire Smyth was so pronounced, that the juniors could only feel pleased that a fall was to follow his arrogance.

"Jolly glad to meet you," said Montgomery Smyth, with a condescending bow to the Lodge cricketers. "Feeling quite fit, eh, Wharton?"

"Yes, rather," said Harry, cheerfully.

"Look here," said Smyth, "we want to be fair. I'm willing to play ten against eleven if you like, to make the game interesting."

"Thank you."

Well, it's no good blinking obvious facts, it it?" said Montgomery Smyth. "You're outclassed. I don't say it offensively, you know, but in a friendly spirit. It's no good playing a game with a foregone conclusion, is it?"

"Not much."

"With ten men we shall give you more of a show. It will make the game worth watching. You accept?"

"Oh, no."

Montgomery Smyth frowned a little.

"Come, Wharton, you don't decline?"

"Yes, I do. Thanking you all the same, you know."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, have your own way. It means us only playing one innings, and I'd rather have had a whole day's cricket."

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, as Smyth rejoined his friends, "I wegard that chap as a fearful boundah, you know."

Harry Wharton grinned.

"That's Smyth! We are going to surprise him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Montgomery Smyth won the toss, and batted first. The umpires took up their positions, Colonel Wharton umpiring for his nephew. The Colonel was an old cricketer, and had played for his county in his younger days. He had seen Wharton's eleven at practice that morning, and he too was anticipating with grim amusement the surprise of Montgomery Smyth.

Montgomery Smyth lounged down to the wicket with his bat under his arm, to open the innings with Dawson. Dawson took up his position with a flourish, and grinned at his companions in front of the tent.

Wharton had placed his men to field, and given Kerr the ball for the first over. Kerr went to the bowler's wicket in his quiet way. There was no swagger about Kerr—he was a fellow who could do things, and he did not need to swagger.

Montgomery Smyth received the first over.

He smiled as he dropped the end of his bat on the crease, and waited for the ball to come down.

Kerr took a little run, and the ball went down like a shell.

Montgomery Smyth just stopped it.

The confident smile died away from his face, and he looked a little puzzled, as the ball was fielded and thrown back to the bowler.

It came down again.

Montgomery Smyth was a little less confident, and a little more careful for the second ball of the over.

But that did not save him.

The ball looked an easy one—but it broke in from the off in the most unexpected manner, and there was a clack!

Montgomery Smyth blinked at his wicket.

The middle stump was at an angle of forty-five, and the bails were on the ground.

"M—m—my hat!" gasped Smyth.

"How's that?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Out!"

There was no doubt upon that point. Montgomery Smyth was out—second ball of the first over.

"My only hat!" said Blaine, as his friend came out with his bat in his hand, and a most amazed and lugubrious look upon his face. "How did that happen, Monty?"

Montgomery Smyth shook his head.

"Blessed if I know! It was a fluke, of course."

"Oh, yes, of course it was a fluke."

"The chap couldn't do it again! Go in and make a better show, old chap," said Montgomery Smyth.

And Blaine laughed and said he would.

He went in, and he did indeed make a better show. But he did not make much of a show, all the same. Blaine could play cricket, and before that over was finished, he realised that he had first-rate bowling to deal with.

And the Eton fellow was very careful, and as a result he lived through the over, but he did not score.

When the field crossed over, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was put on to bowl.

Dawson, like Smyth, attributed the fall of the first wicket to a mere fluke, and his manner was as confident as ever as he faced the bowling of the Indian.

But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream when the Nabob of Bhanipur settled down to work.

He gave Dawson two balls that he easily stopped, and then a third that dodged his bat in the easiest way imaginable, and knocked his middle stump clear out of the ground.

Dawson looked at the wicket, and his friends looked at Dawson.

"Out!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" said Dawson dazedly.

And he walked back to the tent.

There was a gentle smile upon the dusky features of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. He was enjoying himself. And the gentle smile intensified, and the eye of the nabob half-closed in a wink, when the next batsman went out for a duck's egg.

Montgomery Smyth and Co. looked at one another.

They could not understand it. It was no dream: these things were really happening. But they could not grasp them, as it were.

The rot that had set in at the start did not continue unchecked.

Blaine and several others of the team made a stand against it, and they began to score. But the scoring was never high

For when the batsmen were able to keep their wickets up, and got a chance of sending the round red ball on its

journey, then they had to deal with fielding of the very first class.

Blaine was "out" to a smart throw-in from Tom Merry, which knocked his wicket to pieces while his bat was still a foot from the crease.

The next wicket fell to a difficult catch brought off in the slips by Noble, and the other fellows gave a cheer for Kangaroo.

Montgomery Smyth's face was a study.

He hardly dared to look at the board.

But others were looking at it. The villagers had been given free entrance to the Lodge grounds for the match, and there was a considerable crowd of them round the field.

They cheered heartily every good ball and every good catch, thoroughly enjoying the discomfiture of the swaggering team who had defeated Bates, and made so very much out of it.

The runs piled up slowly: the wickets fell fast.

Last man in found the score at 40.

It was less than half what Montgomery Smyth had fully expected to make. Last man in did not increase it, either. He was bowled out by Tom Merry at the second ball of the over.

All down for 40.

The Montgomery Smyth brigade hardly looked one another in the face.

They were asking themselves what the Wharton eleven's batting would be like, after this display of bowling and fielding.

They were soon to see!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Licked to the Wide!

BOB CHERRY and Frank Nugent opened the innings for the home team. Blaine went on to bowl the first over for the visitors.

Blaine could bowl—but he did not succeed in making any impression upon Bob Cherry's wicket in that over. Bob scored two, and let it go at that. Then the bowling came to Nugent, from Dawson; and he soon realised that he had a weak bowler to deal with. He looked for the balls and swiped them right and left. Ten for the over made the crowd shout.

"That chap can bat," short slip remarked to Montgomery Smyth, as the field crossed over.

Montgomery Smyth nodded without replying.

It was pretty evident that Nugent could bat: but he knew that. The Greyfriars fellows had played well in the Bates match. They had played against every disadvantage, but made a good show considering. Now was to be seen what they could do when backed up by a good team. Montgomery Smyth was beginning to see!

It was curious to note how the swagger gradually dissipated from the manner of the visiting team.

It seemed to drop off them like a cloak.

They set to work to play the game hard, playing their hardest: and they put into it all they knew.

But the conviction was gradually being forced upon their minds that they were outclassed. They—the great Montgomery Smyth and Co.—were outclassed by this team of juniors—juniors from the Lower Forms!

It was incredible—but it was true.

Montgomery Smyth remembered his offer to play ten men against Wharton's eleven, and even Montgomery Smyth blushed as he thought of it.

Nugent was caught out at last by Blaine, and Harry Wharton went in. Wharton stayed in while three successive batsmen came and went. All the time he was piling up runs. His score was at 80 for himself alone, out of a total of 140, when he gave Dawson an easy catch. It was clear to Harry that he would have to declare the innings, and he didn't want to declare without giving his allies from St. Jim's a show.

The wickets lasted a long time, and the Smyth bowlers exhausted themselves against them in vain. Tom Merry added 40 to the score, and Kerr was responsible for 20. Kangaroo was not out at the finish, having already added 30. There were still three wickets to fall when Wharton declared, for a total of 230 runs.

Two hundred and thirty!

Against forty!

No wonder the Montgomery Smyth fellows looked as if there had just been an earthquake.

If Wharton had not declared, the total might easily have run up to over three hundred, a score that a county team would have been proud of in a first-class match. But Montgomery Smyth & Co., of course, were not first-class opponents. Harry Wharton had played harder matches against a scratch team in the Greyfriars Remove. Tom Merry remarked to Blake that a match against a Third Form eleven from St. Jim's would have been harder. Wally, less restrained by the laws of politeness than his elders, was laughing most of the time. He seemed to regard the whole affair as a huge joke. So did the others, as a matter of fact; but they were reserving their merriment till after the departure of Montgomery Smyth & Co. Jack Blake confided to Bob Cherry that he would give a week of the vacation to throw himself down in the grass and roar; and Bob admitted that he was feeling exactly the same himself.

The cricketers lunched with the colonel, and during lunch something of the old manner came back to Montgomery Smyth & Co.

After all, they had been unlucky. They would pull up in the afternoon—they would show Harry Wharton and his cricketers what stuff they were made of.

And they did—though not in the way they intended.

After lunch, the second innings of the Montgomery Smyth brigade opened, and Dawson and Blaine went to the wickets.

Wharton was merciful, and he put on Wally to bowl.

His idea was that the Third-Form fag would be about the weakest of the team, and would give the visitors something like a chance to save their face. Wharton meant to lick the Smyth eleven soundly; but he did not want to be too hard.

There was a wicked gleam in Wally's eyes as he took the ball.

He was a splendid bowler for his age, and there wasn't a wicket in the Third Form at St. Jim's that could stand against him.

Montgomery Smyth, at their first meeting, had patted him on the head and called him "little boy." Wally had that insult to avenge. Smyth had meant to be agreeable and patronising; but Wally would have preferred a right-hander in the eye. He meant to make Montgomery Smyth repent that pat, and that "little boy."

He bowled first against Dawson's wicket, and Dawson, seeing that he had only a fag to deal with, let himself go. He swiped the ball right back to the bowler, and ran.

There was a roar!

"Well caught!"

Dawson stopped in dismay. Wally was grinning and holding up the ball.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, unable to restrain himself. "Caught and bowled, Wally—caught and bowled D'Arcy minor! Oh, carry me home to die!"

"Shut up!" said Wharton, hardly able to help laughing himself.

"Oh, I can't help it! Why will they be so funny?" sobbed Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as awfully funnay, you know, myself."

"The funnifulness is terrific!"

"How's that?" grinned Wally.

"Out!"

Dawson walked away with a glum face, and another batsman came in. A minute later, that batsman was looking down at a wrecked wicket as if he could not imagine what was the matter with it.

"Out!" grinned the umpire.

"Hurrah!" roared the crowd.

Then in marched the mighty Montgomery Smyth himself. He had been dismissed for a duck's egg in the first innings; but his look showed that he didn't mean history to repeat itself.

But Wally's eyes were gleaming. Little boy! He would give the unspeakable Smyth little boy!

And he bowled, and Montgomery Smyth smote manfully where the ball wasn't, and the ball shot on where the wicket was, and there was a clack!

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"M-my hat!" said Montgomery Smyth feebly.

"Bravo!" roared the crowd. "The hat trick! Hurrah!"

"Bwavo, Wally! Bwavo, deah boy!"

And Wally chuckled.

Harry Wharton, grinning, called the redoubtable fag off after that over, and Wally didn't bowl again. But he had avenged himself upon Montgomery Smyth. The great Smyth had been cleaned bowled by a Third Form boy! The hat trick had been performed against his team by a fag! It was a blow that it was probable Montgomery Smyth would never recover from.

What need to relate the mournful close of that innings?

Montgomery Smyth & Co. were all down at the finish for 30, and their total for the two innings was thus 70. Wharton's eleven had won the match by an innings and 160 runs. They could have won it by many more if they had chosen, only, as Bob Cherry remarked, it was a fag to keep on running all day.

When the last wicket fell, Montgomery Smyth packed his things in his bag. The motors were buzzing in the lane. The visiting eleven were pressed hospitably to stay to tea. But they declined. There was no ill-feeling exactly. But they realised that they looked utterly ridiculous. There was no disgrace in being beaten in a match; that might happen to anybody. But to be beaten after swaggering about with more than the importance of county cricketers—there was the rub. The villagers were openly laughing; and Harry Wharton & Co., in spite of their politeness, could not wholly conceal their merriment. Montgomery Smyth & Co. took their leave, and buzzed off in the motors, sadder and wiser youths.

When they were fairly gone, and courtesy no longer placed restraint upon the victorious eleven, there was an outbreak.

Colonel Wharton, with a grim smile upon his bronzed visage, walked back to the house, and there he chuckled to himself. But the juniors threw themselves in the seats or upon the grass, and yelled.

"It's too funny!" sobbed Bob Cherry. "Montgomery Smyth & Co. ought to be on the front page of a comic paper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard them as bein' weally the limit, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The funnifulness of the esteemed rotten cricketers is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The honourable eggs of the worthy ducks are cheap to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" gurgled Wally. "He patted me on the head, and called me a little boy! Ho, ho, ho! Why, Pongo could play cricket better than that chap! Little boy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton wiped his eyes at last.

"Well, we ought to be obliged to Montgomery Smyth," he said, gasping. "I haven't had such a laugh for ages! Montgomery Smyth is the prince of humorists!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

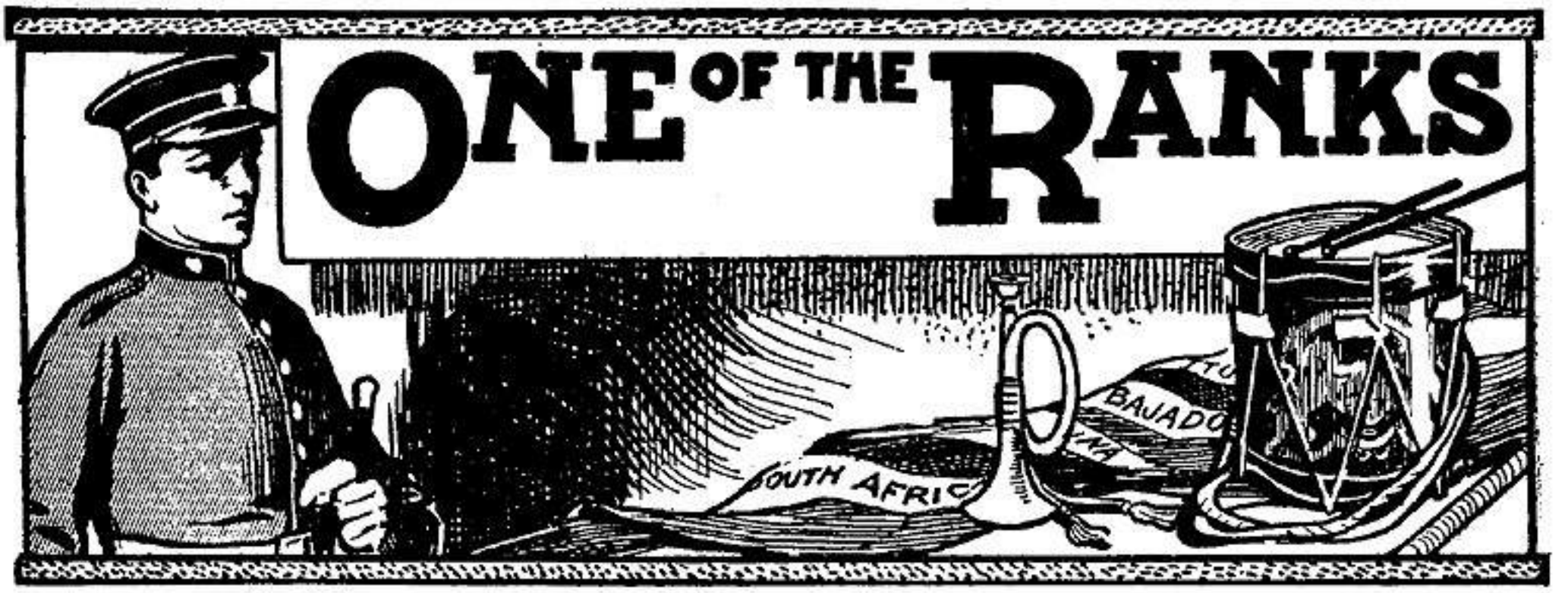
And all the eleven agreed that he was.

* * * * * * * * *

Montgomery Smyth had had a shock; but Montgomery Smyth was always Montgomery Smyth. In less than twenty-four hours he was the same Monty; but when he told wondrous tales of his feats on the cricket field, he never, never by any chance mentioned that match with Harry Wharton's Eleven.

THE END.

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 to Woolchester. Arrived there, Ronald unfortunately manages to fall foul of Bagot, a bullying sergeant, and Foxey Williams, a private, on the first day, and so he comes in for a rough time. On the night that he is doing his first sentry-go, Ian Chenys, his unscrupulous step-brother, enters the regiment as a subaltern. Ronald is persuaded to act as the regimental champion against a Navy boxer, and goes into strict training. On the night of the great fight, however, it is discovered that Ronald has been drugged, and the fury of the regiment knows no bounds. Though feeling very bad, Ronald manages to ward off the Navy man's blows for a time. But at last, spurred on by the cheers of his backers, the sailor rushes at him like a tornado.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Craft of Foxey Williams.

A yell went up suddenly, for Ronald was down. He was on his feet in an instant though, but again the sailor's smashing hits sent him to the boards.

Still he scrambled to his feet, without taking respite, and still the stoker pressed his attack, using his brawny arms like piston-rods. Ronald seemed to be smothered—helpless. He was dashed upon the twanging ropes and catapulted back on his opponent. Again the champion lashed out; but this time Ronald was too quick for him. He ducked, seemed to hang for an instant, and then his own good "right" swung short and sharp.

There was a jolting thud as his glove met the sailor's jaw, his opponent's arms flew up, he turned half round and fell full length, then rolled over upon his face.

The champion was "out!"

"One—two—three!" The timekeeper's voice droned out the flying seconds. Then a mighty yell arose. Ronald had won in spite of all the odds.

Over chairs and barriers the Wessex men came clambering, carried away by the excitement of victory, and now only thirsting for vengeance. Discipline was at an end!

The attempt upon their champion must have been made during his passage from the dressing-room to the arena, and thither the mob fought its way. The police were swept back and almost flung off their feet.

"Where is he? Who is he? Show us the scoundrel!" shouted the crowd.

Spud Murphy was making his way grimly to where Foxey had retreated against the wall. He had no proof that the Cockney was the traitor; but he knew that he, of all men, was the one most likely to have struck the blow.

Foxey watched him crushing his way through, and read his fate in the Irishman's eyes; but his craft had prepared for such an emergency.

Turning suddenly on Alf beside him, he gripped him by the throat.

"Here he is! This is the man what done it!" he yelled. "He's got the knife now in his tunic!"

Alf's buttons had yielded to the frenzied tug he gave, and something small and glittering fell, to be caught by his accuser. It was not a knife, but it looked as deadly to the excited eyes of the soldiers as Foxey held it up.

"I see him creep up to Chester," he yelled, while Alf stood dumb with horror and surprise, "then I see him hide this where we found it!"

The Wessex men waited to hear no more. They flew at the ex-hooligan as hounds fly at a fox, jostling one another in their mad desire to get their hands upon the traitor.

Ronald cleared the ring-ropes at a bound. Unless he could win his way at once to the heart of that struggling mob, murder would be done. Admirals, generals, and all, his voice was the only one that would be listened to in that mad moment.

Of one thing Ronald was certain. Whoever was responsible for the dastardly attempt to drug him as he made his way through the crowd to the arena, it could not have been Alf.

Morphia had been injected into his arm by means of a hypodermic syringe. The needle point of this had been driven into the skin, and the drug forced into the blood, to be diffused through his body, dulling his senses, and making his limbs like lead.

Fortunately the convulsive start he had given as the silver needle pricked him, had almost entirely frustrated the plot.

The only one capable of such a despicable act who had got within arm's length, was Foxey Williams. Ronald had no doubt but that he was the guilty person; but Foxey, with consummate craft, had hoodwinked the crowd, and his comrades were at that instant wreaking vengeance on an innocent man.

Alf had been proclaimed traitor not only to Ronald, but to the regiment, and his comrades, in their blind rage, seemed intent on tearing him limb from limb.

In vain Spud Murphy used his giant strength to protect the wretched victim. George, his bosom pal, Corporal Kedge, Tony Truscott, the garrison police, all who tried to stem the rush were swept back and crushed out of range of helping.

Alf was pummelled and punched, kicked and pounded until he lay an inert mass upon the floor. That he might have been killed outright there is no gainsaying; but Ronald managed to force his way through the crowd at last, and, standing astride the ex-hooligan, threatened to ram his fist down the throat of the next who raised finger or foot against him.

"Stand back, you fellows! By Heaven, I mean it!" shouted Ronald, his eyes flashing, his terrible right arm crooked for the blow. "This man is innocent!"

"Innocent!" The men recoiled in dismay.

"But Foxey said——" began one.

"Foxey lied!" answered Ronald quickly. "Whoever it was tried to drug me so that I should lose, it was not this poor fellow you have been battering here. Take my word for that!"

"Then who was it?" roared someone. "Name him, Chester, for by crumbs we'll make him pay double, the scoundrel!"

"I don't know, and if I did I wouldn't tell you! You

have forgotten one thing in this mad moment—that you are neither judges nor executioner, but soldiers!"

The men fell back under the rebuke, while Ronald knelt beside his one-time enemy, raising his bruised and blood-stained head on to his arm.

By this time the officers, who had been sitting in stupefaction, had risen and taken the reins of discipline into their hands.

Colonel Conger was furious at the disgrace which the act of treachery in the first place, and the savage vengeance which followed it, had brought upon his regiment.

Every man of the Wessex rank and file present in the hall was put under arrest, while some of the most prominent of the lynchers were collared by the military police and sent under escort to the station.

As for the poor victim, he lay senseless, waiting for an ambulance to take him to the Royal Marine Hospital near by.

It was a depressing ending to an otherwise glorious evening.

Ronald was dragging himself painfully into his regimentals in the dressing-room when Lieutenant Bob Fairly entered.

Mouldy Mills and Hookey Walker, who were helping Ronald into his clothes, were promptly ordered out, and Lieutenant Bob sat down.

"Now, Chester, what do you make of this?" he asked firmly. "You say this poor brute who was denounced as the traitor was not the guilty man. You know that much, perhaps you know more, and can tell us who is?"

"I'm afraid I cannot, sir," answered Ronald.

"Can't, or won't?" asked Lieutenant Bob, looking at him fixedly through his eyeglass; and then, without waiting for an answer, he went on: "You know, Chester, there's a good deal of mystery about you. At least, that is the impression you give. You have enemies—deuced desperate ones, too, it seems. There was that queer business on sentry go. You must have known who it was mauled you like that."

"I did, sir; and said so!"

"Exactly, and refused to reveal his identity. Why, Heaven alone can tell. Next, there's that scrimmage in the gymnasium, and now to-night. Who was it tried to inject that morphia into your arm? Why did he do it, and where did he get the deadly little instrument to do it with? See, I have it here!"

He held open his hand, and there on the palm lay a tiny silver syringe such as doctors use, and morphia maniacs who have fallen under the spell of the terrible drug.

"I'm afraid I'm as much in the dark as you are, sir."

"You can't possibly be! Think again. You know of one enemy who attacked you face to face on a foggy night, and whom you shielded at the expense of fourteen days' pack-drill. Don't you think that the same scoundrel may be responsible for this piece of blackguardism?"

"I don't know, sir, and even if I did I should have to maintain silence."

"Exactly! That confounded air of mystery again!"

"Yes, sir, there is a mystery, I admit it. But I have reasons for not divulging my share of it, and I beg you not to probe further."

"But don't you see how it ties our hands; how this quixotic idea of yours makes it possible for blackguards in our midst to do these acts and escape unpunished?"

"They will not escape for ever sir," said Ronald.

"Not if I, for one, can help it," answered Lieutenant Bob. "I don't want to probe into any man's private affairs, but where the honour of our regiment is concerned none of us can sit idle while these things happen. I, too, have my suspicions. I shall follow up my clues, and be the end ever so bitter for somebody, I will bring him to book. Understand that, Chester."

"I am in your hands there, sir," said Ronald. "Only I hope that day will be long in coming; not for my own sake, but for that of others, to whom the shock would come with deadly force."

Lieutenant Bob looked at him for a long minute, and then said:

"Um! It's like that—eh? Well, as I have said, I don't want to poke into any man's private affairs, but then—well, if I tumble across anything I think is a solution of this contemptible mystery, I'll consult you before making a definite move. That's only fair, perhaps."

"And now about to-night," he continued after a pause. "The colonel says that a corporal and one man are to be left behind to look after that poor wretch Sheppard, and I have got Captain Carthew to detail Kedge and you for the job. There'll be nothing to do but to see him into hospital, and after that you can get to bed early and rest, for you must be in need of it."

Ronald thanked Lieutenant Bob for his kindly thought, and the officer took his departure, a deal more puzzled and nonplussed than before.

In due time an ambulance lumbered up, and, poor Alf having been lifted into it, Corporal Kedge and Ronald climbed in too, and were trundled away.

As Lieutenant Bob had said, there was nothing to do but hand their insensible comrade over to the hospital staff for the night, and then seek quarters in the Royal Marine Barracks adjoining.

They tried in vain to find out before leaving how near the bruised and battered man was to death, for that he was terribly injured was evident to all.

At about two in the morning, in the midst of a hideous dream in which Ronald found himself battling the contest over and over again, beset by all sorts of phantom foes, he was roused up by the corporal of the guard, accompanied by a hospital orderly.

"You're wanted," said the latter. "The cove you brought in has been hollerin' for you, and the doctor says you are to come and quieten him."

Ronald rose at once, and scrambling into his clothes, roused Kedge to tell him of his errand, then followed his guide out.

In one of the double rows of cots in a long hospital ward, looking doubly grim at that uncanny hour, Private Alf Sheppard lay tossing on the borders of delirium.

"Where's Chester, I tell you? Fetch 'im, carn't yer? He thinks I done it, and I wants ter tell 'im. I ain't a rat, a—— Ah, there he is!"

As Ronald came up to the bedside, and stood looking down with pity on the battered cripple, the wild, burning eyes seemed to focus themselves a little as they rested on his face, and the mind, reeling with fever, to steady itself.

"I want to see you bad. You don't believe what he said—Foxey, I mean—the lying hound! You don't believe I'd done such a dirty thing, does yer?"

Ronald opened his lips to answer "No," but Alf read the reply already in his eyes.

"Shake 'ands! I knew you wouldn't!" he said, and struggled to raise his arm. "There, nothink seems to work about me. I'm all broke up, though 'ow was they to know when Foxey set 'em on? The sneakin' cur, to save 'is own skin like that! 'E done it 'isself; I'd swear it, though I never seen 'im. But I was watchin' 'im, me and George. We knew 'e'd got it in for you thick ever since you and us joined. So 'ad we—George and me—only we ain't Foxey's sort, quite. 'E came sneakin' round us more than once, but we give 'im the shove arter a bit. We don't 'ave to go crawlin' round a feller's back afore we dare strike 'im, like Foxey. You believe that, don't yer?"

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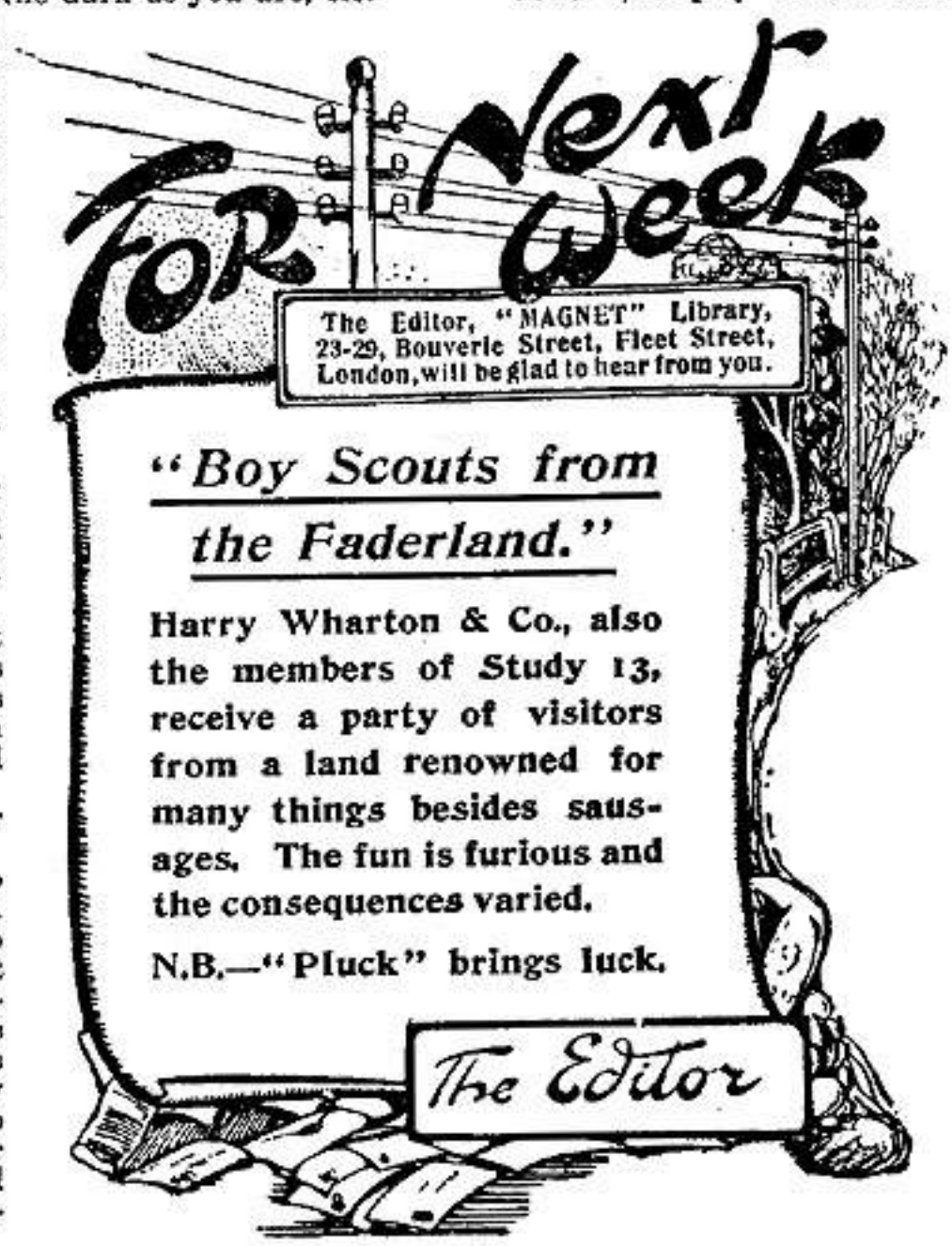

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