HEAD OF THE POLL!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

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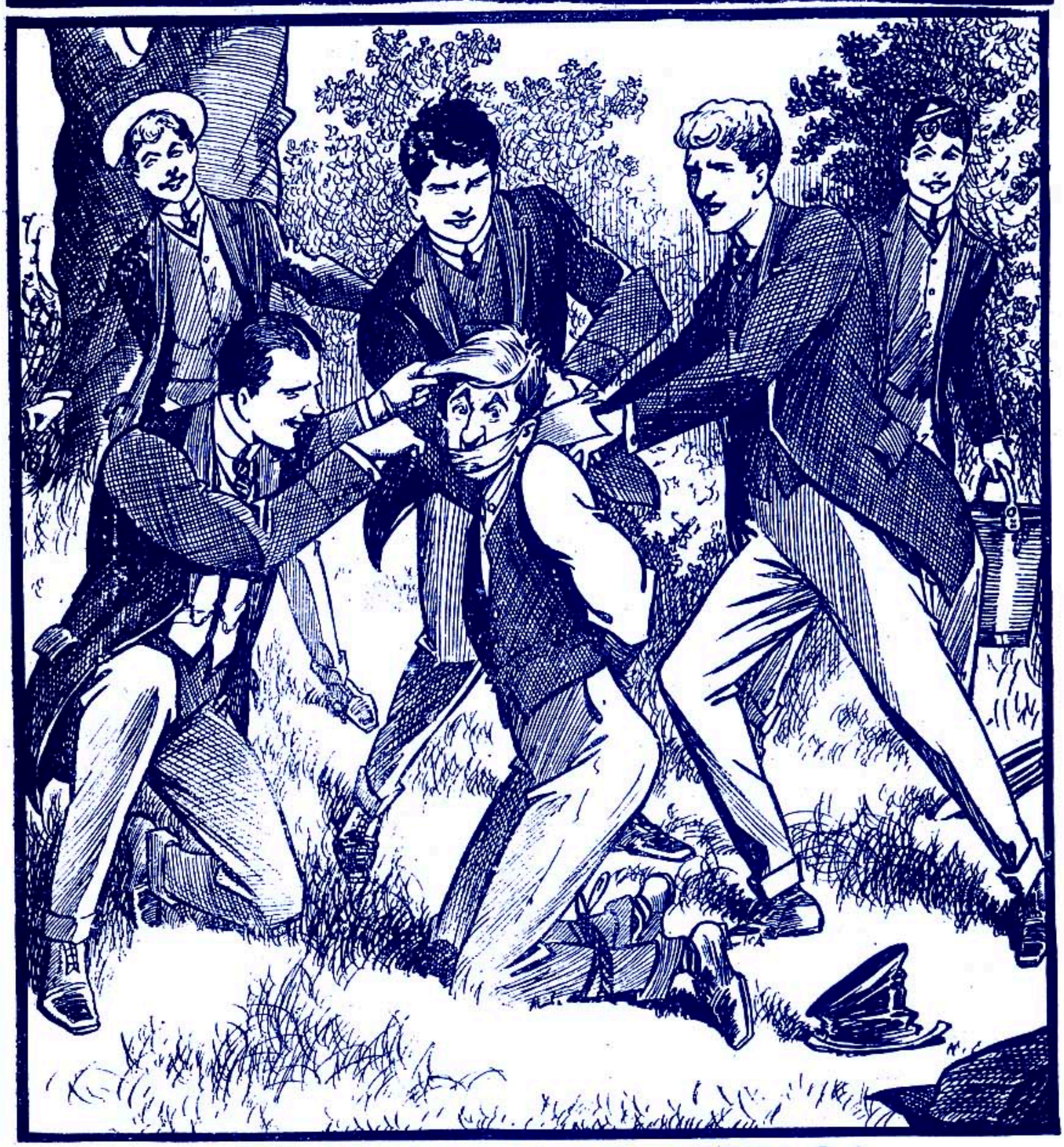

TODD IN THE TOILS!

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HEAD OF THE POLL!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Standing Firm!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry of the Remove Form at Greyfriars who spoke thus, and the cause of his exclamation was the appearance in the doorway of No. 1 Study on the Remove passage of three juniors.

The Famous Five were all there. Wharton looked up from his book and coloured slightly. Johnny Bull merely grunted. Frank Nugent and Inky smiled.

The visitors were the three Colonials—Tom Brown, the New Zealand boy; Piet Delarey, the Afrikander; and Sampson Quincy Iffley Field—Squiff for short—who hailed from sunny New South Wales.

"We've come—well, it's no giddy good beating about the bush—we've come to apologise, Wharton!" said Squiff frankly.

"But I really don't know why you should!" said Harry Wharton, with a touch of constraint.

"Oh, come off it!" retorted Squiff. "You know jolly well that we and you fellows haven't been on the best of terms lately. Bull and I haven't, anyway!"

That was undoubtedly a fact. The whole Form knew that Squiff had changed out of No. 14 into No. 12 because he and Johnny Bull, who had never had a serious quarrel before, were now on such bad terms that they did not care to sit at the same table.

"For the matter of that, Field," said Johnny deliberately, "I ain't at all sure that your apologising to Wharton is going to put everything square in half a jiffy!"

And Johnny looked very uncompromising indeed as he spoke.

"That's for you to decide, old chap!" said Squiff, who was evidently determined to keep his temper. He added, however: "I sha'n't apologise to you, anyway, for I haven't anything to apologise for!"

Johnny merely grunted.

Delarey spoke. The Rebel—as the Form called him—was looking unusually thoughtful.

He had been through a trying time during the last week or so. He had had the narrowest escape of expulsion. Everyone knew now that the mystery which had led to so much trouble was not of his making. Everyone agreed that through all the trouble he had behaved manfully and generously, though he had been foolish and wrong-headed in his defiance of Mr. Quelch.

The Form was glad to know that there was no likelihood of his having to go. Mr. Quelch knew the whole story, and had accepted the apologies Delarey had offered him. Master and boy were now on the best of terms, each understanding the other far better.

But Piet Delarey felt humbled.

It was mainly to two fellows that he owed the sudden change in his fortunes.

One of those two was Wibley, who had coolly run a biggish risk to help Delarey out of a scrape.

It had been easy enough to thank Wibley. That dramatic genius had declared—quite truthfully—that he did not want any thanks. The chance of playing such a part as he had played was enough reward for him, especially as he had come scot-free out of what might have been an awkward scrape. No one would deny now, Wib said, that he was way ahead of anyone else in the Remove at an impersonation.

The other fellow was Harry Wharton.

It was Harry's generous readiness to help Delarey—in spite of the fact that they two were on bad terms—which had made the others so ready to give their aid. It had been Harry who had suggested that dodge by which Wibley had done so much to throw off the scent the military escort which would otherwise have taken off Delarey's friend, Jim Sorrell, as a prisoner.

Instead of that, the man who had once saved Piet Delarey's life had been able, with Mr. Quelch's help, to return to his battalion to face a charge of overstaying his leave—not a light matter in the circumstances, but far preferable to a charge of desertion.

Little wonder that Piet Delarey was grateful. Everything had worked out well for him, and he felt that he owed it all to Harry Wharton.

Now he meant to say so.

"It isn't so much apologies that I want to offer you, Wharton, as thanks," he said. "I dare say there's room for the other thing, too; but I know you don't mind about that!"

"Of course I don't!" said Harry. "And I don't want to be thanked, either. You would have done as much for me, I'm jolly sure; and, anyway, I was only one in a crowd!"

"My hat! You're off it there, old scout!" said Bob. "We were all willing enough to help, but there wasn't a man-jack among us who would have taken things in hand as you did!"

"Rats, Bob!"

"Cherry's right, though!" said Tom Brown.

"Oh, drop it, do!" cried Harry, flushing. "I'm jolly glad you've made it up with Quelchy, Delarey, and that things have panned out all right for you; but I should be an ass if I thought there was any credit due to me for it!"

"I'm an ass, then, for I think there is!" answered the Rebel, with a smile.

"And I'm another, for I know there is!" said Squiff.

"Hear, hear!" growled Johnny Bull.

But whether he was expressing agreement with Squiff's sentiments, or with Squiff's admission that he was an ass, was not quite clear.

"We're all asses," said Bob—"except Harry, of course! That's how it was he knew what to do when we were all flabbergasted!"

"But we're all glad that the Rebel is safe now!" added Frank Nugent, with his winning smile.

"The safefulness of the honoured and ludicrous Rebel is terrific, and our gladfulness is also terrific!" purred Inky.

"I'm as glad as anybody!" said Harry. "There wasn't any real bad blood between us, even when we squabbled, Delarey; and I think the best thing we can do is to shake hands, and never say another word about it!"

Nothing could have suited Delarey better.

But Squiff and Tom Brown had still something to say. They had come to advise Wharton in rather a delicate matter. The air was cleared to some extent when Harry and the Rebel had shaken hands and put all feud behind them; but that did not settle everything.

"Look here, Wharton," said Tom Brown. "We've been talking to Toddy about this captaincy bizney!"

Harry Wharton's face changed at once.

"That's natural enough!" he said stiffly. "You're on his side."

"In a way, yes," admitted Squiff. "But——"

"Hang it all, you can't be on both sides!"

"Hear, hear!" growled Johnny Bull.

Squiff did not find it very easy to keep his temper just then.

"Look here, Wharton," said Tom Brown quietly. "I think you must admit that it wasn't entirely our fault that we went over!"

"I quite admit it," answered Harry, far less quietly, "but you've gone over! It needn't make any difference to our being on decent terms. I don't want it to. But we'll leave the whole election bizney alone—that's all!"

"But that's just what we've come to talk about—Browney and I!" said Squiff. "We're jolly grateful to you for backing up old Piet, but that's mainly his affair!"

"And the election's mine, and Todd's, and Bolsover's!" replied Harry impatiently.

His chums saw plainly the signs of gathering storm. This whole election business was to Harry Wharton like a red rag to a bull.

"It's our belief," blurted out Squiff, almost desperately, "that Toddy would be jolly glad if you refused to resign!"

"Tell him you've changed your mind about it!" added Tom Brown. "He won't make a fuss!"

"But I haven't changed my mind!" replied Harry, his lip curling.

"You can change it, I suppose?"

"Perhaps I can, Browney, but I'm not going to!"

"I should think not!" growled Johnny Bull. "Seems to me that you chaps have come talking about apologising to Harry so that you can work him round to apologise to Todd. And then, of course, everything in the garden would be lovely! But I'm hanged if I'd do it!"

"No one supposes you would, Bull!" said Squiff. "And no one ever accused you of being reasonable! But you're all wrong, anyway! Todd doesn't ask for an apology, and he doesn't want one!"

"Did he send you to say this?" asked Harry hotly.

"No. Doesn't even know we've come."

"But I'll tell you what he did, Wharton," said Delarey. "We have all promised him our votes, as I dare say you have guessed. He told us this morning, without a word from any of

us, that he didn't want to hold us to it."

"Jolly decent of old Toddy!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

It was. But then, Peter Todd was the sort of fellow who could always be counted upon to do the decent thing.

"Of course, it makes no odds if the blessed election comes off!" Squiff said. "We can't go back on a promise because the chap we gave it to is decent about it!"

"The election's coming off!" said Harry firmly. "I shall resign directly the Highcliffe match is over. I felt that I'd rather not do it before that. I dare say you fellows can understand why!"

It was easy to understand. The leading spirits of the Highcliffe team were among Harry Wharton's best chums. He did not want to have to explain to them. By the time the return game came along, if he were no longer skipper then, they would have learned of it.

Perhaps, too, he hoped that victory in this first match of the cricket season would help to rally to him some of those whom he had so often led to victory.

"I see!" said Tom Brown.

"But it would be a heap better to do without the election altogether!" Squiff argued.

"No, it wouldn't! Suppose Todd did agree, what about Bolsover?"

Squiff grinned.

"Bolsy's dead, as far as this bizney is concerned!" he said. "He may not know it, but that's the fact!"

"I don't see why Wharton should lower himself to Todd just to save you chaps from keeping a promise you'd never made if you'd been decent!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, dry up, Johnny!" said Frank Nugent.

"You won't think it over, then, Wharton?" said Tom Brown.

"If I did it would make no difference, Browney. I'm going through with this. Don't butt in again, there's decent chaps!"

Tom Brown's good-tempered face reddened at that. Squiff's brow was thunderous. The Rebel did not look too well pleased.

They went. There was no more to be said.

Two of the three, at least, did not feel as well disposed to Harry Wharton when they left the room as they had done when they entered it: and the breach between Johnny Bull and Squiff had decidedly not narrowed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Greyfriars v. Highcliffe!

"HALLO, Wharton, old chap! Feeling fit?"

"Oh, quite, thanks, Courtenay!" replied Harry.

He was fit enough; but he was not feeling too cheerful, and he was not looking too cheerful, either.

Frank Courtenay and Rupert de Courcy—otherwise, the Caterpillar—had just ridden up to the gates of Greyfriars on their bikes. They were in flannels, and Courtenay had a cricket-bag balanced on his handlebars. The Caterpillar hadn't. The Caterpillar, who shared the views of Herbert Lord Mauleverer on the subject of unnecessary exertion, had no doubt put his bat, pads, and gloves into his chum's bag.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had been waiting at the gates to meet the Highcliffians.

"By gad, though, Wharton, you don't look too chippy!" drawled the Caterpillar. "Whence the clouds that sit ominous on your noble brow; whence——"

"Bow-wow!" said Bob politely.

"Oh, quite so!" said the Caterpillar. "But Wharton isn't the chap I should have expected it of, by gad!"

"Expected what of, old ass?" asked Frank Courtenay.

"Goin' to the dogs, dear boy."

"Who said I was going to the dogs?" demanded Harry.

"Cherry did; at least, he seemed to imply as much in an epigrammatic an' concise manner by his remark."

"I didn't make any remark," said Bob, rather puzzled.

"Excuse me—you said, 'Bow-wow!'"

"You utter old idiot!" said Courtenay, laughing. "Here, catch hold of this bag!"

"Always eager to oblige you, Franky. But—er—you don't mean you want me to carry the bag, do you, by gad? Not really, carry it! I gather that you're expectin' deeds of derring-do—whatever that may be; I'm sure I don't know—of me this afternoon; an' I'm rather afraid of strainin' a muscle or somethin' if I carry anythin'. Why, here's our fat friend! Just the man for the job! What's-your-name, dear boy, would you like to carry this bag to the pavilion for me?"

Billy Bunter rolled up. He looked at the bag, blinking doubtfully. Bunter had as ingrained a dislike of hard work as Mauly himself.

But the Owl always did what he could to ingratiate himself with Rupert de Courcy.

"Oh, anything to oblige a pal, Caterpillar!" he said cheerily.

He smirked as he lifted the bag.

"But you needn't pretend you've forgotten my name, old chap."

"Oh, by gad, of course—Shunter, isn't it?"

"No; Bunter."

"I won't forget again, Grunter."

"But you've got it wrong already! Bunter, not Grunter!"

"Sorry, awf'lly! Can't help it. Must be association of ideas, or somethin' like that."

Bunter panted on by the Caterpillar's side, feeling rather puzzled.

He was not quite sure what association of ideas meant; but he had a hazy suspicion that the habits of a certain species of animal—to which he had often been likened by jealous tongues—were in De Courcy's mind when he talked like that.

The Cliff House Girls and Skinner. (*See Chapter* 4)

But it was impossible that his dear pal the Caterpillar could mean to be rude to him.

He rolled along, puffing under the weight of the bag, but happy exceedingly. The other fellows had gone on ahead, and William George Bunter had a scion of the aristocracy all to himself.

"How's the pitch?" asked Courtenay of Harry Wharton.

"Pretty rummy. Rain and sun, rain and sun again; it's bound to be a bowler's wicket, I should say. Nobody's going to make a century to-day, that's a cert!"

"Oh, my hat! That gives you fellows a better chance. You have batsmen right down to the tail end, and our tail—well, it doesn't wag too hard as a rule."

"Dunno about that, Courtenay. I've noticed that chaps who aren't reckoned batsmen sometimes come off on these queer pitches."

"Moreover, when scores are small, there's always a chance that the other chaps' score may be smaller than yours," said Bob.

"Which cuts both ways, old fellow. However, we can only do our best. And I really think we've the makings of a good team this season. What about you fellows?"

"Not so bad. Same old lot, in the main. I'm giving Delarey a show instead of Penfold, who can't turn out, or Rake, who hasn't struck form yet. We five, and Mark, Vernon-Smith, Todd, Squiff, Brown, and Delarey—that's the eleven."

"Seven and four!" murmured Bob.

"Eh?" said Courtenay.

But Bob did not explain. What he meant was that there were seven Whartonites—including Harry himself—and four Toddites in the eleven.

It was not really a matter of importance. But the Remove considered it so. The team-list had not met with approval in most quarters.

Johnny Bull said that he wouldn't have put Todd or any of his gang in. Rake, Bulstrode, and others of Peter's supporters, anticipated places in the next match, provided they could get their man returned in Wharton's place in the meantime.

Peter Todd himself kept a close mouth. But Toddy was just as unlikely as Wharton to make up a cricket-team on party lines.

"Where are the rest of your fellows?" asked Bob.

"Not far behind. They'll be here in a jiffy."

Billy Bunter, meanwhile, held the Caterpillar in discourse.

"I say, De Courcy, old man, did you notice how jolly down in the mouth Wharton looked?" the Owl asked mysteriously.

"Now that you mention it, Punter, I did observe that our friend scarcely resembled as much as usual 'the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la la,' as Tennyson or some other merchant in the poetic line has so beautifully put it. Do you read Tennyson, Munter?"

"Oh, yes! I'm a jolly poetic chap really. I like his 'Village Blacksmith' no end; and—and—er—that fine thing about bliss being ignorance and all that, you know!"

"Ah! You are a blissful person, Grunter—you are, by gad!"

Bunter quite failed to notice that the Caterpillar did not seem particularly anxious to discuss Harry Wharton with him. Bunter never did notice little things like that. It was necessary to snub Bunter good and hard if one meant to snub him.

"Jolly good reason, too," said Bunter. "This is about his last day as captain of the Form. Most of the fellows say it was like his blessed cheek to hang on for this match!"

"Oh, by gad! You don't say so, Shunter? Beg pardon—Grunter, of course. My mistake. I won't get it wrong again. I've only to look at you to remember that it's Grunter."

"But it ain't; it's Bunter! I say, Caterpillar, old pal, what do you think about it?"

"I don't often think, Bungrunter. Too beastly fatiguin'. But I should say it's quite the right name for the right fellow, don't you know."

"I don't mean that. I mean about Wharton. They won't stand him any longer, you know. They sent him a paper asking him to resign; that's what the Form did."

"Doosid civil of them, I must say. An' he's doin' it, you tell me? I shouldn't, you know, Bunshunter. I should just tell them, with polite firmness, to go an' eat coke!"

"He can't stick on. There's so many chaps dead up against him. He hasn't an earthly. At least—well, things might happen."

"Such as?" inquired the Caterpillar gravely.

"I've thought about giving him a lift," said Bunter fatuously. "It would make all the difference, you know."

"Sure to, Shungrunter!"

"I say, Caterpillar, this bag's jolly heavy!" panted the Owl.

"What? For a chap who can give Wharton such a lift, by gad? Don't tell me that, Grunter; it isn't doin' yourself justice."

"Toddy's putting up," went on Bunter. "So is Bolsover."

"You don't say so? Now, I thought Todd was rather by way of bein' a chum of Wharton's, by gad! Bolsover. That's the heavy-looking lout with a face like a member of the criminal classes, isn't it?"

"Toddy's quarrelled with Wharton. So have lots more. Squiff and Brown and Bulstrode and Rake and Wibley and Hazeldene and Delarey. But I'm——"

"Rather a scratch lot, Punter. Don't go mixin' with 'em," yawned the Caterpillar. "You can't be too careful, by gad—a fellow of your unique type! With you to give him a lift, Wharton need never despair, I'm sure."

The Caterpillar might jest, but he felt serious enough. Like his chum Courtenay, the Caterpillar thought quite a lot of Harry Wharton. Rupert de Courcy was not much in the way of showing his feelings; but friendship went deep with him.

He and Bunter reached the pavilion a minute or two after the three ahead. The Owl set down the bag with a heavy sigh of relief.

A few minutes later Yates, Smithson, Benson, and the rest of the Highcliffe team turned up.

Glancing round him, the Caterpillar thought he discerned signs that the Remove Eleven was scarcely so much of a happy family as usual.

Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, and Delarey had drawn into a group apart from the rest. Or it may have been that the rest had drawn away from them. It came to the same thing.

Toddy and Frank Nugent, neither a quarrelsome fellow in a general way, had had words. Johnny Bull had given Squiff the cut direct, and the Bounder had said something sarcastic which had ruffled Tom Brown's usually good temper.

And Delarey naturally held by his chums. Had they not held loyally by him in his trouble?

"It's a pity, you fellows," said Peter. "I shouldn't have been surprised if Wharton had left us out. Yes, I should, though, because that wouldn't have been quite playing the game."

"Wharton always plays the game," said Squiff gravely. "But hang that chap Bull! He's the giddy limit! I didn't think he'd got it in him to behave like this."

"Blessed if I feel much like cricket this afternoon!" said Tom Brown.

Piet Delarey said nothing. He recognised Harry's generosity in giving him a show. The other three were established members of the team; but it would have been quite easy for Wharton to put in someone else instead of Delarey.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The First Innings!

"WILL you call, Courtenay?" said Harry Wharton.

The coin spun in the air.

"Tails!" rapped out the Highcliffe skipper.

But it came down heads.

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry. "We bat, of course, Harry?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. I think I'll send them in first."

"Silly ass!" growled Peter Todd, in tones only audible to the three by his side.

"Dunno. There may be something in it," said Tom Brown.

"Chap's absolutely right," said Squiff. "You don't know it all yet, Toddy! The wind is blowing just right for drying the pitch, and it's sure not to be quite so bad later on."

But the Australian junior was the only member of the team who was certain the skipper was justified.

As for the Highcliffians, they were gleeful.

But they had lost some of their glee when, with Inky and the Bounder bowling, four wickets had gone down with only seven runs on the board!

Frank Courtenay, who had gone in first, was still there.

The weirdest breaks Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sent down seemed easy to him, and Vernon-Smith's bumpy, fast bowling was met with the skill and coolness of a real batsman.

Now Rupert de Courcy joined him, and a stand was made.

The Caterpillar was a far better bat than he would ever allow. He had good eyes, quick feet, and considerable power. It is true that he lacked Courtenay's finished style; but few schoolboys have that.

De Courcy took risks coolly and cheerily.

He sent the ball to the boundary several times in quick succession.

Courtenay did not try to keep pace with him, yet he, too, added to the score pretty fast.

The Caterpillar had made 31 of the 52 added for the wicket when he got under a ball from Delarey, who had been tried instead of the Bounder, and was cleverly caught at cover by Peter Todd.

Jones minor and Yates departed without a run. But the tail played up rather better than had been expected, and the total reached 92—quite good for a pitch which had never played easily.

Frank Courtenay carried out his bat, having gone right through undefeated, with 45 to his credit.

"They oughtn't to have got half as many!" growled Johnny Bull. "We have had them out for less than that on a plumb wicket. Why didn't you put Smithy on again, Harry?"

"Delarey took four of the last six wickets. Smithy was bumping too much—they went over the stumps."

"It's all serene! We're going to top that little lot!" said Bob, always hopeful.

In the pavilion grumbling was going on. Wharton did not doubt his own judgment even now.

But he did find it a little bit hard to know that he was being called several kinds of asses for putting Highcliffe in. Frankness of speech that would not have mattered at another time rather got on his nerves just now.

He posted up the order of going in, and Tom Brown came over to look at it.

"You're going in first with Nugent," he told Peter Todd, returning to his own group.

"Whaffor?" asked Peter.

He tried not to look at all pleased.

But it was not a big success. Toddy had plenty of self-confidence, and he had often thought he would like to be one of the first pair in. If he had not liked it, he might have grumbled at Wharton for not consulting him on the subject first; but, as it happened, he never even though of that.

"Dunno. But Wharton's put himself as number seven," answered the New Zealand junior.

Frank Nugent and Peter Todd walked out together, padded and gloved, without exchanging a word.

Nugent failed to stay. But Toddy shaped very well indeed, seeing how very little practice he had had. Courtenay's bowling had him in difficulties at times; but he lasted long enough to see Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and Inky depart before his stumps were spreadeagled by the Highcliffe skipper.

Loud cheers greeted him as he ran towards the pavilion. He had scored 27 out of the 42 for five, which now marked the progress made.

"Todd stock going up in the market," remarked Harold Skinner to Sidney James Snoop.

"Oh, who cares about a piffling game of cricket?" sneered Snoop. "I don't reckon it will be worth a single blessed vote to him it wouldn't be if he made a hundred!"

"Ass!" said Skinner politely.

Skinner cared no more about cricket than Snoop did; but he understood far better the keenness of others.

Harry Wharton and Mark Linley were now together.

Wharton played the first ball he received towards cover-point. It was not a forcible stroke, and Mark, seeing how slowly the leather travelled, rushed for a run to break his chum's duck.

"No!" rapped out Harry.

He had not moved.

Mark turned and scuttled back.

But the Caterpillar had darted in from cover. He seized the ball, and threw it straight for the wicket.

Mark slipped and fell. He stretched out his bat in a desperate effort to reach the crease, but failed by a good six inches.

The bails flew up. De Courcy had an unerring aim.

"Out!" said the umpire.

"Wharton's an utter idiot! Seems to be quite off his rocker to-day!" said Bulstrode to Mark, as he came in.

"It was entirely my fault," replied loyal Mark.

But the misadventure had upset Harry. He made a feeble stroke off the last ball of the over, and gave Smithson, at point, an easy catch.

Seven for 42! Things were looking black for Greyfriars indeed!

Delarey, who had succeeded Mark Linley, was now joined by Squiff. The Afrikander contented himself by keeping up his wicket, and found that none too easy a task. The Australian junior, shaping really well, made most of the 20 or so added during their partnership.

Squiff outlasted his chum, and saw Tom Brown and Vernon-Smith bowled by Courtenay. The innings closed for 71, and Squiff's contribution was a not out 22.

"Just what you might have expected!" said Dick Rake. "What did the Whartonites do? Why, nuffink! Who made the giddy runs? Why, our men—Toddy and Squiff!"

It was to Hazel he spoke.

"Oh, dry up!" retorted Hazel. "I'm sick of the whole blessed affair! You chaps seem to enjoy it. Hanged if I can see why!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Cliff House Girls!

"HALLO! There are the Cliff House girls!" said Kipps, behind them.

"This is where I bunk!" said Hazel. "I don't want to talk to my sister. If she doesn't know already, she jolly soon will, and she'll think me the biggest rotter that ever walked!"

"She won't say so, though, old chap," said Bulstrode.

"Perhaps not. But Phyllis or Clara won't make any bones about it!"

Hazel went.

"He's right there," said Bulstrode. "The girls are true blue Whartonites, and we needn't expect any mercy from them!"

"Blessed if I care!" said Rake.

The Cliff House trio—Marjorie Hazeldene, Phyllis Howell, and Clara Trevlyn—were looking very gay and charming. They had been accommodated with front seats before Greyfriars took the field again. But, having done that, their special chums among the juniors had to leave them; and for a while no one else came near. They could hardly avoid noticing it.

Wingate, the skipper of the school, spoke to Harry Wharton just before he went on to the field again.

"I think you were right, Wharton," said Wingate. "It was a bit of a risk to take, but it pays to take risks at times; and if it doesn't pay this time, don't worry!"

"Thanks, Wingate!" said Harry gratefully.

He went on, feeling really bucked.

But he saw, as the fellows filed out from the pavilion, that the four were still holding aloof from the seven. Peter Todd, Tom Brown, Squiff, and Delarey were the last out, and they walked into the middle together.

The blame—if blame there was—could not be saddled entirely upon them.

Harry knew that. But he could not help resenting their attitude.

Keen-eyed Phyllis Howell noticed it, too.

"What's the row, Marjorie?" she asked, in her usual frank, boyish way.

"I don't know, Phyllis. But I had a feeling that something was wrong. I wonder where Hazel is?"

"Keeping out of your way, Marjorie," said Miss Clara, with a suspicion of a snap in her tones.

Miss Clara had no great admiration for Peter Hazeldene.

"Those fellows aren't pulling together as well as they generally do," said Phyllis.

"I believe you are right!" answered Clara Trevlyn, frowning. "And I fancy that silly, long-nosed Todd——"

"Really, Clara!"

"He is long-nosed, Marjorie, you can't deny that, though you do hate to hurt anybody's feelings. And he's silly, too. He is at the bottom of this, I'm sure. And Squiff and Brown and that nice South African boy are in it as well—look at them! I may not be friendly enough with Todd to tell him what I think: but I shall talk jolly straight to those other three!"

"I did hear something a few days ago," confessed Marjorie. "But I felt sure it would blow over."

"Oh, you have such faith in human nature, my dear!" said Miss Clara, with a sniff that was almost a snort. "You expect people to do the right thing. I'm not so hopeful, and you are wrong oftener than I am—you can't deny that!"

Marjorie did not answer. She was looking for her wayward brother.

Instead of Hazel, Harold Skinner marched up.

He doffed his cap politely.

Marjorie and Clara did not like Skinner at all, and did not try to like him.

Phyllis did not really like him, either. But she tried to. She did not forget the time when the cad of the Remove had shown a real glimpse of better things. Her influence had helped in that, and it was only natural that she should have a little more hope for Skinner than her friends had.

"What's all this about, Skinner?" she asked sharply, but not in an unfriendly tone.

"All what, Miss Howell?"

"Oh, you know very well! What has Harry Wharton been doing that some of you are making a dead set at him?"

"Who says I'm making a dead set at Wharton?"

"If it was only you and your friends," said Miss Clara severely, "it really wouldn't be worth talking about!"

That was a snub for Skinner. He did not care. Clara Trevlyn was of small account to him. But his cunning eyes fell before the clear, candid gaze of Phyllis Howell.

"I believe you are one of the plotters—no, I'm sure you are!" the girl said.

Frank Courtenay and Smithson passed, padded and gloved. Skinner waited until they were out of earshot, and then said recklessly:

"I am, then! If you can call it plotting. I don't see it that way. Wharton's got too big for his boots——"

"Now, if Wharton's boots had got too big for him, and you had to clean them, you might—— But, there, you're not good enough to black Harry Wharton's boots!" broke in Miss Clara hotly.

"Oh, Clara, you shouldn't!"

"Yes, I should, Marjorie! It's quite enough if one of us three is soft and civil to people who don't deserve it!"

"And who is expected to take Harry's place? You?" asked Phyllis.

Her tone was scarcely less severe than Clara Trevlyn's.

Skinner flushed to the very roots of his hair. He was not too thick-skinned to feel Phyllis Howell's sarcasm.

"As a matter of fact, I'm not standing. Todd thinks he is to be the man. But I'm backing Bolsover."

"Bolsover!" said Clara Trevlyn, with such withering contempt that had Bolsover heard he must have wished for the earth to open up and swallow him.

"Neither Todd nor Bolsover is fit to take Harry Wharton's place," Phyllis Howell said. "I thought Todd was quite nice, in spite of his long nose and that silly forelock and his absurd legs, but ——"

"Now, you see, you were wrong, my dear," said Miss Clara decisively. "You may go, Harold Skinner. We don't require your attendance any longer!"

"Really, Clara, you are too bad!" said gentle Marjorie.

"Really, Marjorie, you're too soft!" mimicked Clara. "I'm not going to mince my words for anyone. My friends' enemies are my enemies, that's all. I don't want to talk to Skinner. I never did, and I never shall, and he knows that jolly well!"

Skinner looked almost imploringly at Phyllis Howell. But her face was set almost as hard as Miss Clara's.

Harold Skinner went. It was time for him to go.

There were tears in Marjorie's bright eyes.

"I wish we hadn't come!" she said.

"Where's that brother of yours?" snapped Miss Clara. "He can tell us all about it. Of course, he's on the wrong side, or he would have shown up before now. But we can put up with him, for your sake. I can't stand Skinner!"

"Shall I go and find Hazel for you, Miss Marjorie?" asked a voice behind them.

"Is that Wibley?"

"Yes, Miss Trevlyn."

"Please show yourself, then!"

Wibley stepped forward, rather wishing he had not spoken.

"Are you for Harry Wharton, or against him?"

"I've nothing against Wharton, but——"

"You've nothing against him, but——I suppose that means you are on the other side?"

"To tell you the truth——"

"You'd better!"

Miss Clara seemed cut out by Nature for a headmistress of the most severe type. Wibley fairly wilted before her.

"I'm backing Todd," he said, half sullenly.

"Then we will certainly not ask you to do anything for us!" snapped Miss Trevlyn.

Wibley went. Phyllis Howell laughed quietly a minute or two later.

"What are you giggling at?" Miss Clara inquired.

"I didn't. But you would have laughed if you had heard Wibley trying to induce Bulstrode and Rake to come and tackle you!"

"They wouldn't find it very funny if they tried it!" answered Miss Clara grimly.

But Rake and Bulstrode did not try it.

"Oh, there's one of them out!" cried Phyllis, whose interest in the game was far keener than Clara Trevlyn's.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The Second Innings!

BUT it was the wrong man out—from the Greyfriars point of view.

Smithson's wicket had gone down to a diabolical off-break from Inky. If only it had been Courtenay's!

Yates failed to make any stay, and two wickets were down for only five runs.

Benson only stayed an over or two, and three were out for 8.

Now came from the pavilion the Caterpillar, bareheaded, nonchalant, buttoning his right-hand glove as he sauntered to the vacant wicket.

He took guard as if the operation bored him, faced Inky, and slammed the first ball he had over the pavilion for 6!

"Oh, crumbs!" said Miss Clara.

Now Frank Courtenay had Johnny Bull to deal with. Johnny had been cultivating the googly, and was no end keen on showing what he could do.

Courtenay hit 4, 2, and 3 off the first three balls of the over.

Johnny growled. He was resolved that the fourth really should google. It would be an off-break action, but the ball would come in from leg. And, of course, the Caterpillar, miscalculating it, would be done!

But the Caterpillar did not wait for the break. The ball was a bad length—too far up. He stepped out, and took it on the full pitch.

The Highcliffe team and their supporters in the field yelled as one man when they saw the ball go soaring well over the boundary—another 6!

Even Ponsonby & Co. yelled. Pon and the nuts generally were not enthusiastic, but they did not mind applauding De Courcy once in a way. It made their silence, when Courtenay had earned applause, all the more marked.

Harry Wharton turned, and motioned to Bob Cherry, in the long field, to get right out to the boundary.

Another mighty swipe!

Right over Bob's head, surely! No chance for him this time!

But appearances are often deceptive in such cases. There was less force behind this than the last. The Caterpillar had failed to get it as squarely in the middle of his bat.

It began to drop within the ropes. Bob's eyes were on it. The eyes of everyone else were on Bob.

"Good thing he's got big hands!" murmured Miss Clara.

A nasty catch to judge. It looked like falling right upon Bob's head, and he could not back another inch.

But he waited patiently, coolly, steady as a rock. And his keen eyes never left the small, descending sphere.

"Hurrah! He's got it!"

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Good old Bob!"

Greyfriars roared applause. The Toddite faction—even the Bolsoverites—joined in.

The Caterpillar, his handsome face quite impassive, lounged back to the pavilion, and Benson took his place.

Benson did little enough; but those who followed him did less.

Delarey replaced Johnny Bull. Another over of Johnny's googlies might cost too much. Vernon-Smith was tried at the other end. Both bowlers were fast, and both were well on the wicket. The Bounder could keep them lower now.

None of the other Highcliffe men could time them. But Frank Courtenay stayed, and now he was hitting his hardest. He chanced a good deal, but he never gave an actual catch.

The score was 87 when the last wicket fell, and he was still undefeated, with no fewer than 61 to his credit!

"Bother Courtenay! It would have been a procession if it hadn't been for him!" said Miss Clara.

"But he played splendidly, Clara!" cried Phyllis. And she and Marjorie joined heartily in the applause which met the hero of Highcliffe.

Comrade and foeman alike cheered him as he came in. But Ponsonby & Co. did not cheer. The upstart! What did he mean by coming off like this when others failed?

That was the way the nuts looked at it. Better that Highcliffe should go under than that Courtenay should triumph! Though, of course, a Highcliffe victory would be a nasty jolt for Wharton & Co., whom the nuts by no means loved.

And it really looked like a Highcliffe victory.

The Remove wanted 109 to win. Not an impossible task, but not at all an easy one.

This time Wharton decided to go in first, taking Peter Todd with him. It suited Frank Nugent to take a later place. He had the dread of a pair hanging over him.

Perhaps Frank forgot that Harry was in the same position. But it is doubtful whether Wharton thought about it either.

It was of the issue of the game he thought, though not everybody gave him credit for that.

To the Form generally the situation had a special interest not without thrill.

Bolsover might be left out of account. Whatever he might think, his chance of the captaincy was a very small one.

The decision lay between Todd and Wharton; and here were those two going in together. Moreover, Toddy had been top scorer in the first innings, while Wharton had failed completely.

And Greyfriars needed every run that they could make!

"Wharton will run him out," sneered Snoop. "That's his merry little game!"

The hand of Herbert Vernon-Smith came down with considerable force upon the head of Sidney James Snoop.

"There's more where that came from, Snoop! And I suppose there's plenty more where that lying sneer of yours came from. But you will keep the rest back, if you value my advice," said the Bounder grimly.

"I don't value it a ha'porth," snarled Snoop.

But he moved out of reach.

Wharton was very careful indeed at the outset. He would not take any risk at all.

Peter Todd took any number. Some of his strokes were distinctly flukey; but he had rattled up fifteen before Harry broke his duck.

"Good old Toddy!" said Rake.

"Toddy will pull us through!" said Bulstrode.

Squiff, hearing, sniffed. It would have suited Squiff very well to see Peter do that. And what Peter was doing helped, of course.

But Squiff knew too much about the game to expect it to last long.

Peter Todd was a cool hand, as a rule. But he must have been a trifle overexcited when he called Wharton for that run. It was altogether too risky at this stage of the innings, and Harry, the best judge of a run in the Lower School, saw that at once.

"Go back!" he shouted.

And it was his call, too.

But Toddy ran on.

Harry yelled again.

On came Peter yet, like a bull at a gate.

Then, with something like a muffled groan, knowing that he did wrong, sure that one good wicket must pay the penalty, Wharton started.

But before they had crossed the bails flew off the wicket Todd had left. He heard the crash of falling timber, and stopped dead, face to face with his partner and rival!

For a second he glared. But it was only for that second he could persuade himself that the fault was Wharton's. Then his better nature got on top, and he spoke as one would look for Peter Todd to speak.

"Sorry, Wharton!" he said. "My silly fault!"

"I wish I'd started sooner, though," replied Harry.

"Rats! You oughtn't to have started at all. Stay here, and pull it off for us!"

Now it had become evident that time might play a part in the decision of the match. If Greyfriars failed to make the runs, wickets outstanding would not matter, for Highcliffe would have won on the first innings.

So Squiff, next on the list, and alive to every point of the game, like a true Australian, met Toddy before he reached the pavilion gate.

"There was no run, old chap. You shouldn't have slanged Wharton," he said.

"Didn't!" replied Peter. "My own fault. I said so!"

Not everyone heard that. But the three Cliff House girls did, and Miss Clara looked at Phyllis meaningly. Wharton's opposers were not quite so black as they had been thought, it seemed!

Certainly Squiff and Peter Todd were not black. The best of good sportsmen, both! But there were fellows in the Remove who did not understand the game as they did, and who were all too ready just now to believe any slander against Wharton.

Sidney James Snoop posed as a prophet. Nothing Peter could say

availed. Some of them thought him an ass not to seize the chance, whatever he might privately believe.

Squiff and Wharton did not start at once to force the pace, though both realised that time mattered. They knew that no useful purpose would be served by risking too much.

The game might have seemed dull had not so much been hanging in the balance.

At last Frank Courtenay had to give up the ball. He was by far the best bowler Highcliffe had; but he could not go on for ever.

Now the two batsmen scored faster. The score began to jump up.

Sixty—and only one wicket down!

Greyfriars were in the ascendant now!

But Squiff's end was near.

He stepped out to a slow. His intention was to send it into the neighbourhood of the middle of next week.

But he missed it altogether, and behind him the wicket-keeper yelled frantically:

"Howzatt?"

Squiff did not even look round before marching away. He was a yard out of his crease, and only a horrible mull by the man behind the stumps could have saved him.

Johnny Bull came.

Johnny went. The score was unaltered.

Mark Linley was next. Of Mark big things were hoped.

But the high hopes were dashed. Mark stayed for a few overs, but he never looked like staying long.

Harry was set now. He added 10 to his score during Linley's stay—a drive for 4, a pretty cut for 2, and a rather lucky boundary through the slips.

But Mark only just managed to break his duck before Yates bowled him.

Four down for 73. The chance was still quite a fair one. But the clock seemed to be hurrying.

Now Frank Nugent walked in.

"Play up, Franky!" said Wharton to him, aside. "There's nothing in the bowling—dead easy stuff."

"Oh, isn't there?" groaned Frank. "Courtenay's going on again. See? He'll get me, safe as houses."

It was Harry who had to face the rival skipper. He took fresh guard, and played three balls very carefully. They were too good to be hit. But the fourth he got neatly round past short leg, and they ran an easy single.

Nugent faced the crack Highcliffe bowler now.

The ball pitched a trifle short. Frank knew what to do with such a ball as that. But he did not do quite as well as he knew, for he should have kept it down, besides hitting it hard.

Still, it looked safe enough. It went high over Courtenay's head.

"Hurrah!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, dash it!" growled Johnny Bull.

Courtenay had jumped like a roebuck, had got his left hand to the ball, when it seemed impossible that he should reach it, had tipped it up in the air, and, wheeling round, had caught it in both hands as it fell!

It was a catch in a thousand. And probably that was what Rupert de Courcy, who was not given to superlatives, meant when he said:

"Quite decent, by gad, Franky! You're really improvin'. I don't think I've wasted my time coachin' you."

Which was certainly true. The Caterpillar had never wasted any time coaching anybody—or even spent any time in that industry.

"Good old Courtenay!" howled Smithson.

Harry Wharton looked very grave. Right down to the last man there was batting talent; but 75 for five was a slump after 60 had gone up with only one man out.

Cheery as ever, in came Bob.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob. "Sort of a kind of a game of cricket going on, I see. May I have an innings?"

Everybody grinned. Bob took guard, and faced Courtenay.

One out of the box, that! It whipped in from the off like a live thing. It might have beaten Warren Bardsley. It beat the cheery Bob all ends up!

His middle wicket did an acrobatic turn. Highcliffe chortled. Greyfriars groaned. Bob walked out—cheery still, but not quite so cheery.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
The End of the Match!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH was next on the list. His Oriental face was grave and inscrutable. No one could have guessed how he felt.

He stayed for a while. He could not get Courtenay's bowling away, and he was like a cat on hot bricks when confronting the weird lobs which the Caterpillar was now serving up from the other end. But he stayed, and that was something.

The Caterpillar's lobs were not good lobs. Indeed, to be plain, they were very bad lobs, and the Caterpillar knew it.

But the average schoolboy detests underhand slows which do funny things, or even look like doing funny things!

Harry Wharton, though well above the average, found them troublesome.

He dealt with them very gingerly indeed. It takes a good bat to play lobs carefully. The only other way to play them successfully is to slam them hard. And if you are not a pretty good bat, that is not likely to last long.

The score crept up. The clock sped on—so it seemed.

"What's the use of it?" sneered Skinner. "Licked on the first innings! There's no sense in anything but going all out now."

"Do you think you know better than Wharton?" snapped Dick Russell.

"Shouldn't wonder," returned Skinner, shrugging his shoulders. "After all, Wharton doesn't know everything!"

"Bowling may be either too good or too bad to be hit," said Russell.

"Have it both ways, if you like. I can't see it. If bad bowling can't be slammed, what can?"

"What you don't know about cricket, Skinner, would fill a library," replied Russell.

And he walked away, feeling that he could not stand any more of Skinner, with things in their present state of tension.

He knew, too, that he was only partly right. Bowling cannot really be too bad to be hit—unless the batsman makes it in effect good by his fears of it.

Others besides Dick Russell were finding conversation too much to be borne at that critical period. One of these was Peter Todd.

Peter's personal share in the match, now over, was not a matter about which he needed to worry. He had finished off his second innings by a bad blunder: but he knew that he would not have made a long stay in any case. His total for the two innings of 42 was a highly creditable one, and he had done fine work in the field.

But Peter felt badly disgruntled—at odds with himself and everyone else.

He took a walk round the ground alone. In a corner he came upon Ponsonby & Co.

The nuts were bored. Cricket was out of their line, and they would have found it hard to explain why they had come along at all.

To them the question of who might win the match was one of very small importance. They hailed Peter Todd's appearance with malicious pleasure, and started at once to chip him.

Skinner had had some conversation with the nuts, and they knew what the state of affairs in the Remove was.

So with the kindly object of making things worse, if possible, Ponsonby hailed Peter.

"Hallo, Todd! Rough luck—eh, what?"

"I don't quite follow you," said Peter.

"Jolly nice being run out by Wharton, by gad!" said Pon.

Now, at the best of times, Peter Todd had no use for Cecil Ponsonby, and just now Peter was very ready to get on his ear.

"Good judge of cricket, aren't you, Ponsonby?" he asked, with a deceptive coolness that was rather contradicted by the lurid gleam in his eyes.

"Oh, any idiot could see what Wharton was up to!"

"Any idiot, perhaps—or any cad! Not any decent, sensible chap!"

Ponsonby stared. This was outside his range. He could not understand a fellow at odds with another who did not seize instantly any chance to make the other out a rotter.

Peter stared back. Ponsonby got riled.

"I'll pull that long nose of yours for you if I have much of your cheek, Todd!" he drawled.

"I'll pull your blessed nose without any more cheek from you!" snapped Peter.

And he suited the action to the word.

"Yarooogh! Hellup, you fellows!" howled Ponsonby.

There were five more of the nuts—Gadsby, Morton, Monson, Drury, and Vavasour. Of course, the six could have swamped Peter.

But they did not even attempt it. They were in the enemy's stronghold, and well they knew that the enemy had many an old score to pay off.

Peter Todd gave the nose of Cecil Ponsonby a final wriggle and a parting tweak.

"I think that will do for the present, Pon," he said. "I won't pull it off; it's too beautiful!"

"Oh, you rotten cad! I'll be even with you for this!" said Ponsonby fiercely.

Peter shrugged his lean shoulders, and passed on.

Somehow, he felt much better now. Meeting Cecil Ponsonby had done him good.

He went back to the pavilion. In passing, he raised his cap to the three girls, but he did not stop to speak. And, indeed, their rather curt nods were no encouragement to him to stop.

"They'll pull it off all serene," said Squiff. "Browney won't have to go in at all!"

"Don't mind if I don't," said Tom Brown, padded ready to take his turn.

Peter Todd glanced at his watch.

"They aren't hustling quite enough," he said.

It is possible that the same idea had just occurred to Inky, for at that moment he slogged at a ball for all he was worth.

But he failed to time it correctly, and the ball went soaring up, to descend almost midway between the wickets.

"My catch!" sang out Frank Courtenay, running in from point.

"Come on!" yelled Harry Wharton to his partner.

The thud of flying feet was in the ears of the Highcliffe captain as the ball reached his hands.

But it did not throw him off his balance. He held the catch, and Inky had to go.

Smithson & Co. howled applause from the field. There was still a chance for Highcliffe!

"What's all the blessed row about?" mumbled Pon, still caressing his injured nose.

"Oh, your friend Clare showing off again!" said Gadsby.

"Hang him!" snapped Pon.

Ninety-five for seven! Three wickets to fall—fourteen runs to get—barely ten minutes to go!

Piet Delarey met Inky half-way to the pitch.

Harry cast an anxious glance at the pavilion clock.

He had the bowling now, for he and Inky had crossed before the catch was made. It was just as well. There was no time to waste.

"Can they do it?" asked Marjorie.

"Oh, they'll do it all right!" answered Phyllis Howell confidently.

The Caterpillar had sent down quite as many bad balls as good ones. His next was really atrocious. It pitched little more than half-way.

Wharton ran in. Crack! He hit with all his force.

"Hooray! A boundary!"

"Sorry, Franky," said the Caterpillar.

"Can't be helped, old chap," replied his chum. "All the same, I shouldn't be too liberal in asking Wharton to help himself!"

The next ball was quite a different kind—a high, dropping one, with plenty of spin on it. A most difficult ball to judge, at the best of times.

And it caught Wharton in two minds. A four meant so much, yet he knew there was risk in running in to meet the ball.

He hesitated, then ran in. The ball dropped over his shoulder, pitched behind him, and lowered his middle stump!

Eight down for 99! Only Tom Brown and the Bounder to come—good men both; but the New Zealander had not struck his best form yet, and Vernon-Smith had a crocked left arm, and had been played in this game solely for his bowling.

The cheering that rang out as Wharton neared the pavilion lacked the lustiness it would have had at another time. Some fellows kept silence altogether, and tried to persuade themselves that Harry had deliberately thrown away the game.

"Oh, well played, Harry!" said Marjorie, as he dropped into a seat beside her, his face flushed, his eyes bright with excitement.

"It was splendid!" added Phyllis.

"All but the end," said Miss Clara severely. "That was a mistake."

"Getting out always is," replied Harry lightly.

"Oh, well played, Harry! Sixty-two!" cried Frank Nugent.

"And then to get out to a rotten ball like that!" sneered Skinner.

"Rats!" growled Bolsover. "You don't suppose the chap got out to be funny, do you?"

Tom Brown and Delarey were now together, and Delarey faced the Highcliffe skipper.

The ball was too good for him. The bails went flying over the head of the wicketkeeper.

Nine down for 99!

But there was the Bounder to come yet. True, he was damaged; but all knew his pluck and coolness, and all knew, too, that Tom Brown could hit. Smithy would stay while Browney hit off the runs—so Bob Cherry said.

Vernon-Smith had taken guard before Delarey had reached the pavilion. Even seconds might count now.

The Bounder played each of the remaining balls of Courtenay's over; but no run came. They were too good.

Except in the corner where the nuts of Highcliffe still yawned away the minutes, too slack to make up their minds to start back, excitement was at fever-heat.

Tom Brown faced the Caterpillar.

Courtenay believed in bold measures. A less resolute captain might have feared to risk another over of lobs, with the possibility of three or four easily-hittable balls—more especially as Highcliffe led on the first innings, and there was no absolute necessity to put all Greyfriars out.

But Courtenay wanted a win right out, and he believed the Caterpillar had a better chance than Yates or Smithson or anyone else he could put on.

Whack!

Tom Brown had slammed hard, but no run came. Benson at mid-on stopped the ball neatly.

Slam! They ran. Cover rushed in to meet the ball, seized it, and threw hard at the wicket.

He had missed! The batsmen turned for a second run.

Harry Wharton sprang from his seat.

"No!" he shouted.

He had seen what they failed to see—that Yates, moving from short leg, had the ball.

Tom Brown pulled up. The Bounder tried to scramble back, but Yates made no mistake.

The ball went straight to the hands of the wicketkeeper, and the Bounder's bat was grounded a second too late.

"Out!"

Highcliffe had won by nine runs!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
After the Match!

INSIDE the pavilion a hubbub arose.

"They'd have done it if that ass Wharton hadn't muddled them by singing out!" said Bolsover.

"Rats!" retorted Bob Cherry. "There wasn't the ghost of a run!"

"Yates had the ball right in his hands," said Frank Nugent.

"He might have chucked at the wicket if they had gone on running!"

"Yes, and missed!"

"Likely, isn't it?"

"You bet not! Yates wasn't giving anything away!"

"Wharton hadn't any right to yell out!"

"Wharton doesn't seem to have any right to breathe, according to some of you idiots!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What did he——"

"Oh, ring off! Where should we have been without Wharton, Skinney?"

"Where we are now! Licked—licked to the wide—by Highcliffe!"

"Well, as it happened to be Highcliffe we were playing, nobody else had quite as good a chance of licking us as they had to-day!" said Bob, with elaborate sarcasm.

"He ran out Linley——"

"That's a lie, Skinner!" flashed Mark, with unusual heat.

"He ran out Todd——"

"That's another!" said Peter sharply.

Johnny Bull stared at Toddy.

"Don't you think it was all Wharton's fault?" he snapped.

"Are you off your rocker, Bull?" retorted Peter.

"Come away, old chap!" said Squiff. "He'll toss and gore you if you don't!"

Johnny Bull gave Squiff a furious look.

Now Vernon-Smith and Tom Brown came in, not looking too well pleased with themselves.

"Isn't it a fact that Wharton muddled you by singing out like that, Browney?" demanded Bulstrode.

"Didn't even hear him," answered the New Zealand junior candidly. "The thing was my own fault."

"You needn't take any blame, Brown," said the Bounder. "It was my call for a second run, and how I failed to see that the thing was impossible I can't make out."

Now the Highcliffe fellows came in, flushed and exultant, full of pride for Courtenay's fine all-round play and Yates' coolness at the critical moment, and still more full of pleasure at having beaten Greyfriars—a feat which, with all their striving, they had but seldom accomplished.

The disgruntled ones faded away. Skinner and those of his kind might squabble before the visitors, but that sort of thing was not in the line of Bulstrode and Rake and such as they.

Not a fellow in the team had anything to say against Wharton's leadership or his play. He might have made mistakes; but everybody does that. And they knew that if the Remove had snatched the fine victory which had at one time looked likely, they would have owed it more to the pluck and resolution of their captain than to anything else.

But outside the team there was much dissatisfaction, even among fellows who were cricketers enough to know better. And quite certainly the match had done nothing to improve Wharton's chance of retaining the captaincy.

The pavilion was clearing. The Famous Five, with Mark Linley and Vernon-Smith, came up to the Cliff House girls, who had kept their seats.

"We can offer you some sort of a tea," said Harry. "It won't be quite like the old teas, as you can guess; but——"

"Oh, no, thank you, Harry!" said Marjorie. "We had something here, you know, and we shall not be back so very long before supper-time. We must go now."

"May we come along with you?" asked Bob eagerly.

"That," replied Miss Clara, "is naturally what we were expecting you to do!"

But Bob did not seem at all crushed, though Miss Clara spoke with some severity.

They moved off. Marjorie and Harry dropped a bit behind the rest.

Perhaps Bob was just a little bit disappointed. He and Phyllis were the best of chums; but Marjorie held first place with Bob, as with Harry. Neither of them had changed about that.

But Bob did not show his disappointment. He and the Bounder and Mark served as bodyguard to Miss Howell, while Frank and Johnny and Inky escorted Miss Trevlyn.

And everywhere the conversation took very much the same turn. Clara and Phyllis both wanted to know about the dead set made by a section of the Remove against Harry Wharton, and what they had heard that afternoon had roused their excited indignation to a pitch at which such straight and direct questions as they might have shrunk from asking at another time seemed only natural.

"Oh, I wish we had votes for the Remove election!" said Miss Clara.

"The votefulness of the honourable

young misses would be of the extremeful reasonfulness," replied Inky.

"I jolly well wish you had!" growled Johnny Bull. "You girls have heaps more sense than half our chaps!"

"And every bit as much as the other half," added Frank. "We only wish you had, Miss Clara!"

"I can't understand Squiff being on the wrong side," remarked Miss Trevlyn, who had held Squiff in rather special favour.

"He's an ass!" said Johnny. "But—well, you know, the chap isn't a rotter, and he's not bitter against our man."

Johnny Bull, for all his readiness to fall foul of Squiff, had not forgotten their old friendship.

"Do you really think Harry will get in again?" asked Phyllis Howell.

Bob said he was sure of it. Mark and the Bounder did not go as far as that, but expressed good hopes.

"Todd's a pretty strong candidate, you know, Miss Howell," said Vernon-Smith gravely. "He's the right sort of fellow to be skipper, if the Form needed anyone but Wharton."

"And he's shown up well all through," added Mark quietly. "If one admits there's no harm in his trying to grab the job—and that is not a crime at worst—one has to admit that he has played the game all through."

Phyllis' bright face was very serious now.

"It makes things so difficult when they are like that," she said. "I've been feeling as though Peter Todd were a kind of would-be usurper—a sort of Perkin Warbeck—and disliking him for it. But when you say things like that, I see that all the right is not on one side. I'd so much rather it should be! That's how I like to feel about my side. But it really doesn't make any difference in a way. Because we are all for Harry to the end, and we are bound to do all we can for him. I only wish we could do more!"

The talk between Marjorie and Harry was even more serious.

"Hazel hasn't come near me all the afternoon, Harry," said the girl.

"That's too bad of him," answered Harry.

"Oh, I know you won't say a word to make me think worse of him!" flashed the girl, with an unusual touch of bitterness. "But I'm ashamed of him—utterly ashamed! After all you have done for him! It's—it's treachery!"

"Don't, Marjorie! I don't feel so badly about it as that, really. Toddy's no end of a good chap, and I haven't been quite as decent to him as I might have been."

"I can't believe that. You are always——"

"I wasn't to Toddy, or to Delarey—no, nor to Squiff and Browney. It's my own fault if they are up against me. I can't feel nasty with Hazel for being so too. I've made lots of mistakes. I suppose I'd got too self-satisfied. No, it wasn't quite that either. But I really think that the best way out of it all after to-day is that I should resign and not stand for re-election. Toddy's sure to beat Bolsover. We'll all vote for him. And the Form will have a good skipper, and we can all be friends as we used to be. Isn't that best, Marjorie?"

Phyllis Howell would have been up in arms at once at such a suggestion, he knew. Miss Clara would very likely have told him not to be a bigger ass than he could help. But he rather expected Marjorie to agree with him. She could understand self-sacrifice better than most people; better than most she could realise that sometimes humility is the best and truest form of pride.

But Marjorie did not agree.

"No!" she said, as firmly and even as sharply as Phyllis could have done. "I know just how you feel, Harry, and you are wrong! It's a kind of doing penance, and I'm quite sure you have not done anything which calls for such a penance as that. And if you do it they will feel that you have let them down—not only Bob and Frank and Mark Linley and the rest, but Phyllis and Clara, too. You don't know how much we all think of you, Harry Wharton—how much we all believe in you and care for you!"

There were tears in Marjorie's bright eyes now.

Harry felt a lump in his throat that made answering difficult.

"I don't think it's possible that you believe in me more utterly than I do in you, Marjorie," he said manfully. "There is no one else I know—not even old Bob—who sees things so straight and clear, without a bit of selfishness; and it's hard to beat old Bob in that! If you say I ought to go on, I shall go on. I shan't ask anybody else at all. It's just what you say that will settle it."

"Then I say that you are to go on, Harry. And I feel that I could almost pray that you will win."

"I think I shall win, Marjorie, for now I shall feel that I'm fighting your fight as well as my own, and that, for your sake, I must not fail!"

Ahead of them the talk went on. The clear young voices came to them on the soft spring evening air.

But they fell into silence—the silence only possible to very dear friends. It seemed as if that talk had forged a new bond between them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Harry Wharton Resigns!

BACK at Greyfriars. Harry made his way at once to Mr. Quelch's study, and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" called the master sharply. He was busy on that monumental task of his, "The History of Greyfriars," and at such times no interruption pleased him much.

But one glance at the junior's face drove out of his mind all thought of annoyance.

This visit was a pretty big ordeal to Harry. He rather feared that to Mr. Quelch the situation might seem absurd and trivial.

But the Form-master's first words helped to reassure him.

"Well, Wharton, my boy, what is it?"

Nothing could have been kinder than the tone in which those words were spoken.

"I have come to resign the Form captaincy, sir," answered Harry. Best to get that out first, he thought.

"For what reason, Wharton? For I am sure this is no mere whim. I do not ask you to enter into elaborate explanations, if you would prefer not to do so. Say as little—or as much—as you like. But speak as to a friend. I think you know that you can count upon me in that capacity."

"Indeed I can, sir!" replied the junior gratefully. "But for you to say so makes it no end easier than I had fancied it would be. The fact of the matter is that a lot of the fellows seem fed-up with me—I mean, tired of having me as captain."

"I do not understand that. You have always done your duty, Wharton, and that with an absence of officiousness rare in a boy placed in so responsible a position. It is not too much to say that by your tact and thoroughness you have done for your Form things which no master could do, because no master could know of the need of them till it was too late to act. And you have stood on your own feet in manly fashion; you have never been inclined to rush to me or even to Wingate for help directly there was a difficulty to be overcome."

Harry flushed with pleasure.

"It's good of you to say that, sir," he said. "I've made lots of mistakes, but I have tried hard."

"Are you sure of what you say now?"

"They have not left me in much doubt about it, sir! More than half the Form have signed a request to me to resign. It was civil enough, but they meant it."

Mr. Quelch's brows knitted. He knew well enough that at ordinary times Wharton had a majority in the Remove. Something must have gone wrong to make more than half the Form keen on his downfall.

"Whom does the Form propose to put in your place?" the master asked abruptly.

"I should say Peter Todd would have the best chance, sir, though Bolsover major means to stand, too."

"Ah, an election! Well, that is the constitutional method of settling the matter, and we cannot claim that an election in the Greyfriars Remove will have a disturbing influence on the prosecution of the war. Todd is a strong candidate. He has brains and ballast. I cannot say as much for Bolsover; but let that pass. Perhaps I should not have said it. What is your position, Wharton? You resign outright, and leave these two to fight it out?"

"No, sir. If you consider that there is nothing against it, I should like to put up again!"

Mr. Quelch frowned and pursed his lips.

"Why resign at all, Wharton?" he asked. "Why not wait and let this trouble blow over?"

"I can't wait any longer, sir. I feel I owe it to the fellows who are standing by me to stand again. There may not be much of a chance for me; but they seem to think there is. And I have promised to do it—unless you refuse to allow it."

"I certainly shall not refuse, Wharton! I see your point of view now, and it is a manly and courageous one—as I should have expected."

"It wasn't really my idea, sir. The—— I mean, Vernon-Smith suggested it."

"I am glad to hear that, in a way, for it tells me that Vernon-Smith is standing by you—as he should do. For you have stood by him in the past."

There had been a time when Mr. Quelch had seen no gleam of hope for the Bounder. It was very different now.

"Shall I post up a notice of resignation at once, sir?"

"Yes. Stay—write it here!"

The Form-master handed Harry a sheet of paper, and Wharton wrote:

"I hereby tender my resignation as captain of the Remove Form.

"H. WHARTON."

Mr. Quelch took the paper, and wrote underneath this:

"I accept Wharton's resignation with great regret. He is not in any way disqualified from standing again by it, and he has given me notice that he intends to stand again.

"I notify the Form that a meeting will be held in the 'Rag' at 6 o'clock on the evening of Monday next, for the purpose of electing a captain, and any other candidate must hand in to me by 12 o'clock on that day his nomination-paper, signed by at least three of his Form-fellows.

"(Signed) H. QUELCH, Form-master."

In prior elections the matter had been left very much more to the Form than Mr. Quelch meant to leave it this time. But the master was well within his rights in taking a hand, and he evidently intended to do so.

"I cannot say more, Wharton," he said. "If I asked the Form to return you at the head of the poll the result might not be what I wished. I must leave that to the Form's common-sense. But I will tell you that my earnest wish in the matter is to see you reinstated."

"I don't know how to thank you enough, sir!"

"There is no need for thanks. Wharton, my boy, I have watched you through good days and bad. I have seen you make mistakes. I have had to punish you. But I have never known you mean or cowardly or dishonourable; and if you were my son, I should be proud of you—nay, I am proud of you as it is!"

Was it any wonder that Harry Wharton went out of Mr. Quelch's study feeling no end bucked up?

It was good to know that the stern, just master of his Form thought of him like this. But it did not make him feel unduly puffed up. He had been learning things during the last few weeks!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Peter Among the Philistines!

"OH, I say, you chaps, look here!" It was Gadsby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe who spoke, and his remark was addressed to his fellow-nuts—Ponsonby, Monson minor, Vavasour, and Drury.

The five amiable young gentlemen were spending a fine hot Sunday afternoon in the fashion that best suited them—with cards and cigarettes under a spreading oak-tree.

"By Jove! That rotter Todd, and all alone, too!" said Cecil Ponsonby, peering through the hedge. "Good egg! This is where I get my own back! Let's stalk the beggar, and put him through it!"

"Oh, absolutely!" chimed in Vavasour, who always appreciated odds heavily on his side.

"I say, though, let's play this hand out first!" objected Monson, who had just called "Nap!" on a hand he felt sure must triumph.

"Let's leave him alone altogether," suggested Drury, who was somewhat less of a bully than the other nuts, and not quite as much under Ponsonby's thumb.

But Drury found no support, and Monson had already won more than the rest liked parting with, so they had no desire to wait till the hand was played.

"No time, Mon. We shall lose our chance," said Ponsonby.

"Hang him! What did he bring his silly long nose here for?" said Monson savagely, as he got up with the rest.

Peter Todd did not usually moon about alone.

But that Sunday afternoon had found Peter very thoughtful, and with a distaste for the society of any of his supporters.

He did not actually repent of the decisive step he had taken in handing his nomination-form as a candidate for the captaincy to Mr. Quelch. He owed that to the fellows who were backing him.

No, he did not actually repent—at least, he told himself he did not, and he should have known.

He had wanted the captaincy of the Remove about as badly as he had ever wanted anything in his life.

But now that it seemed more than likely he might get it he was no longer quite so keen.

Suppose he got it? Could things ever be the same again between him and Wharton and his chums?

There were three fellows at least who had promised to vote for him, and declined to be released from their promise, who were really hoping that Wharton would be at the head of the poll.

Squiff, Tom Brown, Delarey—good chaps all!

Suppose he got in by only two or three votes? Or even by five or six? And at the best he was not likely to have a bigger majority than that.

How would they feel about it, knowing that the transfer of their support would have turned the scale?

How would he himself feel?

They were not his only supporters whose opinions carried weight.

Bulstrode, Rake, Wibley, Kipps, Desmond, Ogilvy—he was not minded to belittle them, and they all stood firm. But not one of them had ever been his chum as Harry Wharton had.

Tom Dutton would not have been sorry if he had turned it up. Peter Hazeldene would have been glad. Hazel was profoundly miserable. He had no right to desert Wharton, and he knew it. Because of that he had slunk out of his sister's way on the afternoon of the match.

There was Alonzo, again. Alonzo was simple, but he was utterly honest, and he found it hard to understand how his Cousin Peter had come to put himself into opposition to Harry Wharton.

Six votes that would be cast for him by fellows who did not really agree with his ambitious projects—at least, not now. They had done, most of them, a little earlier, maybe. But they had had time to think since.

And Peter had had time to think, too, and his thoughts had become far from pleasant.

So with his hands behind his back, his long nose thrust forward, and the tuft of hair drooping over his forehead, Peter mooned on across the meadows.

No suspicion was in his mind of the enemy so near at hand. He had clean forgotten pulling Pon's nose.

And no warning came to him. There was none at hand to cry:

"Ho, Samson,
Upon thee the Philistines are!"

Like a bolt from the blue the five nuts sprang upon him.

Peter went down at once beneath their combined weight.

"Got you, you cad!" howled Ponsonby. "Pull my nose again, will you, by gad?"

"Yes!" snapped the undaunted Peter, struggling hard, but vainly.

Five to one was odds too heavy for the pluckiest. But the high-hearted struggle on as long as may be. And Peter did that.

"Tie him up!" commanded Pon.

"Got nothing to tie him up with!" growled Monson, who wanted to get back to that nap hand.

His temper had not been improved by a jab in the waistcoat he had had from someone's knee. It might have been Peter's or not; but, of course, Monson put it down to Peter.

"Besides, what's the beastly good?" asked Drury, still less keen than the rest.

"Off with his jacket, and collar his braces!" ordered Pon.

"My hat, that's a tope-hole notion, old scout!" grinned Gadsby.

"Abso-bally-lutely!" chimed in Vavasour.

Monson said nothing, but he helped. Drury did nothing even in that way, but he had not backbone enough to protest.

Peter Todd's legs were tied up with his own braces, and his wrists with a piece of string which Gadsby produced. Then he was gagged with his own clean Sunday handkerchief.

Then—and not till then—did the heroic Pon proceed to pull his nose.

It was the sort of nose that might seem to an enemy to invite pulling, and Pon pulled it with great gusto.

"Oh, that's enough!" said Drury.

"I want my turn, Pon," said Gadsby. "I owe that rotter several old scores!"

Pon resigned in favour of Gadsby. Vavasour would have liked to take a turn; but he dreaded the next meeting with Peter if he did.

"Let's paint his silly sheep's face!" said Ponsonby.

"Absolutely ripping notion!" said Vavasour, and then quailed as he encountered Peter's vengeful glance.

"Only thing against it is we've got no paint," Gadsby said.

"I reckon there are one or two other things against it," Drury ventured to observe.

"There's something that will do in that shepherd's hut in the next field," Ponsonby said. "I saw a pail of that red stuff they mark sheep with. Just the thing for Todd, by gad! No one will know he ain't a giddy sheep when we've done with him!"

But Ponsonby would learn that there was more of the lion than the sheep about Peter Todd when they next met on even terms!

Gadsby went off to fetch the pail of raddle. Drury looked at Monson. If Monson would have backed him up, Drury might have made a stand for decency even thus late.

But Monson was thinking about that nap hand. Also he felt pains in the region of the waistcoat. And, anyway, Monson didn't care much about decency.

Gadsby returned, full of unholy glee. The raddle was horrible stuff to put on a fellow's face; but that fact only made Gadsby gloat all the more.

"Here's the rouge!" giggled Vavasour.

"Half a mo! Let's shear him first!" said Pon. "He won't be fit to touch after we've rouged him."

The sharpest of knife-blades is not an ideal barber's instrument. But somehow Pon hacked off the long tuft over Peter's forehead, and also some of the rest of the hair. Toddy may have needed a clip, but he was far from feeling grateful for that one.

Then the raddle was plastered thickly over Peter's face.

Even Drury grinned at that, though he did not feel easy in mind.

Peter vowed a deadly vengeance. Never, as long as he lived, would he forget or forgive this! Henceforth, the Highcliffe nuts—never friends of his—were classed in his mind with the Huns—people outside the pale!

It was done, and the nuts drew back to admire the effect.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ponsonby.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Gadsby and Monson.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Vavasour.

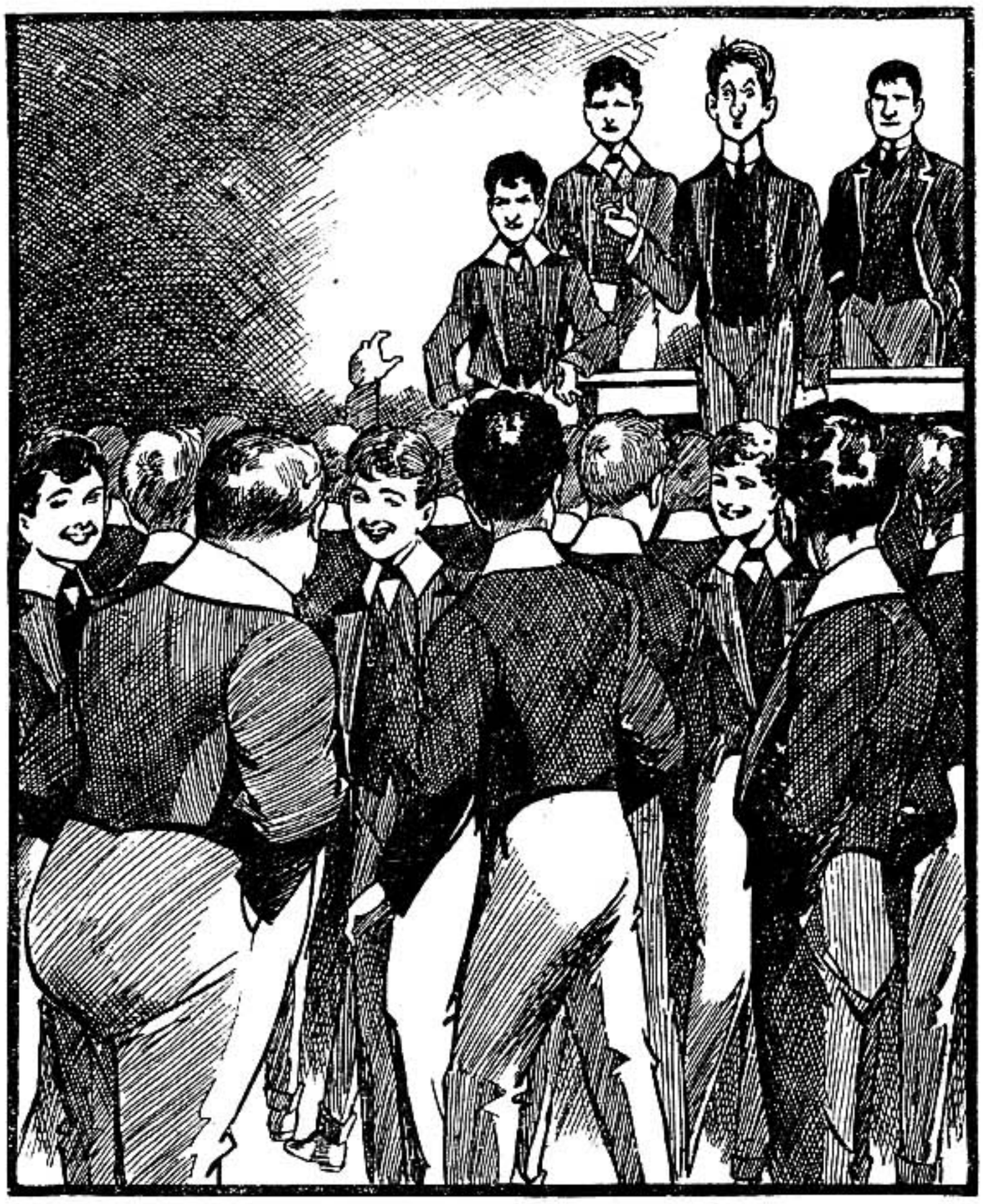
Drury grinned in rather a sickly way.

They went, leaving Peter in a corner of the field, full in the blaze of the hot sun.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Friends in Need!

PETER TODD lay there crestfallen, discomfited, miserable beyond words.

It was all over with his chance of the captaincy now! Let Greyfriars see him like this, and he would be the laughing-stock of the school. Serve him right, many would say. Had he not consented to a dodge to make Harry Wharton look ridiculous?



Peter Todd's Speech! (*See Chapter* 13.)

He had not been keen on that dodge, it was true; but he had agreed to it, and Peter Todd was not the fellow to defend himself by saying that he had agreed under protest.

And he had not been feeling so set on getting the captaincy. But to be beaten in a fair tussle was one thing; to face Greyfriars like this, to be obliged to crawl out, the butt of the Form, was quite another.

It is possible that Peter exaggerated the influence his misadventure was likely to have. It could do him no good, of course. But it could hardly do him all the harm he imagined.

Even his friends would grin. But even the fellows who were not specially friendly with him—all the decent fellows—would be too bent on vengeance upon the Highcliffe nuts for this outrage to find his plight entirely funny.

Peter chewed upon the rag, and despaired. The thin string cut into his wrists, the buckles of his braces hurt his legs, and his face felt as horrible as he did not doubt it looked.

But Peter Todd was not the fellow to let despair hold him long in its fell grip.

He must get free—somehow or other he must! He must get Tom Dutton—who was entirely to be trusted—to cut his hair close all over his head, so that the ravages of the knife might be hidden. And the whole affair must be kept from knowledge of Bunter. If the Owl once knew, all the school would soon know.

Somehow, he must get free. But how?

The minutes seemed like hours to poor Peter. Why didn't the sun set? It must surely be long past its time! But it continued to pour down blazing rays upon him.

That beastly stuff on his face! He could taste it now; in spite of the gag, some of it had found its way into his mouth. It might be poisonous—it tasted badly enough to be so.

If it was poison, Peter only hoped it would do its work quickly.

The fellows could hardly laugh at him if he were found dead. And there would be a chance of Ponsonby's being hanged. That thought gave Peter warm consolation for a moment or so.

But there was too much warmth about him already. The afternoon was like August rather than early May. Not a breath of air stirred. The heat was dreadful to one so bound up and helpless as Peter.

Then something happened.

"Oh, by gad, what's this?"

The drawling voice was the voice of Rupert de Courcy.

"My hat! If it isn't a Greyfriars chap! I do believe it's Todd!" answered Frank Courtenay.

Hope dawned in the heart of Peter, and he made queer noises behind his gag. It was bad enough that these two should see him in such a plight, but it was not quite as bad as if they had belonged to Greyfriars.

Courtenay knelt and took out the gag.

"Thanks!" gasped Peter.

"Franky, dear boy, do not be too precipitate," said the Caterpillar.

"Oh, hang it all, we must help a chap in a plight like this, Rupert!"

"No doubt you feel that way, Franky. You're tender-hearted, by gad! It's one of the weaknesses of the workin' classes, dear boy. Now, I'm as hard as nails——"

"Rats!"

"I am, Franky—really, I am!" said the Caterpillar, shaking his head as if he were deploring the stoniness of his heart. "Before I lend a hand to succour the unfortunate Todd, I should like to make sure of one or two things."

Peter gave the Caterpillar a glare like a basilisk. He did not know what was coming, but it seemed to him that it was not playing the game to take advantage of his position like this.

He had a notion that Courtenay thought much as he did.

"Well?" asked Frank Courtenay, smiling at his chum.

"The first item of information I desire from the unfortunate Todd is, how comes he in this predicament? That's a reasonable question, I think. It may turn out that we have no right to interfere, by gad!"

"Some of your rotters!" growled Peter.

"I deduce the hand of Pon. Like mercy and the gentle rain, the hand of Pon—when backed by sufficient odds—falleth alike upon the just and the unjust. With a distinct leaning towards the just, as being in natural opposition to Pon & Co., by gad! Todd, do you belong to the just or the unjust?"

Courtenay felt that it was very rough on Peter to be interrogated thus at such a time; but he could not help smiling.

"What do you mean, you ass?" said Peter hotly.

"Oh, by gad, Todd, you might be more polite, I consider! What I want to know is—are you a repentant Todd?"

"I don't understand you!" growled Peter.

"I think you do—oh, yes, by gad, I think you do!"

"I tell you I don't. Courtenay, are you going to let this madman——"

"Do you repent of your plot against Wharton?" demanded the Caterpillar solemnly.

Frank Courtenay stared in surprise, though he knew now all about the split in the Remove.

Peter's antagonism was thoroughly roused. In a sense he did repent, though that was not the word he would have chosen to use. But he certainly was not going to buy his release by giving in to De Courcy.

"What's that to do with you?" he snapped.

"Oh, heaps, my most unfortunate friend! Wharton's a chap for whom I have a high regard. In fact, save and except for Franky here, who is sui generis—you can translate that, no doubt, Todd?—I know no fellow for whom I entertain a higher esteem, by gad!"

"And you think that I'm going to say I repent just to get you to untie these blessed things?" howled Peter.

"That puts it rather coarsely, Todd. But I will go so far as to say that I shall have greater pleasure in undoing, as far as may be, the work of the merry Pon, if you assure me that your scheme—quite unworthy of a fellow of your high character, most unfortunate Todd—had been abandoned, by gad!"

Peter was furious now.

"Go and eat coke, both of you!" he roared. "I refuse to be helped by you! I'd lie here all night first! I thought you were a decent chap, De Courcy; but hanged if I don't believe now you're a bigger howling cad than Pon!"

"Go easy; he doesn't mean it, old chap," said Courtenay.

"You're wrong, Franky, by gad! Let us leave him to it. He has refused, in

contumelious terms, to be aided by us, and to press our assistance upon him after that would be highly indelicate. Let us make exit, Franky!"

They went. Peter groaned. His heart was hot within him.

"We can't leave the chap there, Rupert," said Courtenay decidedly.

"Of course we can't, Franky. An' the consummate obstinacy of the unfortunate Todd is such that there does not exist the remotest of chances that he will give in. Therefore we must ere long release the hapless victim of the merry Pon. But I think we may as well let him stew in his own juice for half an hour or so first."

Courtenay did not half like it. But he, too, was feeling aggrieved with Peter. These two had always known Peter Todd as a chum of Wharton's, and to them his defection seemed treacherous.

They sat on a stile out of the range of Peter's vision. The Caterpillar whistled softly, and Courtenay looked thoughtful.

"Oh, by gad!" exclaimed De Courcy ten minutes or so later. "There are some of the Cliff House girls!"

Courtenay jumped off the stile at once. But he was too late.

"No go, dear boy!" said the Caterpillar coolly. "They've seen him!"

"Oh, hang it!" groaned Courtenay. "I wouldn't have had this happen for anything! Todd will never forgive us!"

"'Fraid not, dear boy. But it can't be helped now, by gad! An' I don't feel at all inclined to face the look in that little Miss Hazeldene's eyes when she knows of our base betrayal. As for the other two, by gad, I fancy they are not quite so soft-hearted. And they're all three Whartonites. I'd wager my last bob on that!"

The Caterpillar was no bad judge of human nature.

Of the three Cliff House girls only one was as shocked as she would have been had this thing happened a week earlier, and that one was Marjorie.

Peter did not see them until they were close upon him.

Then he twisted round, so that his face was hidden, and howled desperately:

"Don't come near me!"

"It's Todd!" said Clara, elevating her charming little nose, which always had a slight inclination heavenward. "I vote we don't hear him. He asks us not to, you know!"

"Somebody's been playing a cruel trick on him!" said Phyllis Howell uneasily. "I think, perhaps, we ought to help. But I don't feel very sympathetic, I'll own. I won't say he deserves it, but—What are you doing, Marjorie?"

Marjorie Hazeldene had run forward.

"Don't come!" she called, over her shoulder. "Let me go alone!"

They stood still. Marjorie dropped on her knees by Peter's side.

"You mustn't mind me!" she said, almost breathlessly. "I understand. You don't want to be seen like this. But you won't mind me, will you? I—Oh, it would be much easier for me to cry than to laugh! I can't think how boys can be so cruel!"

Her little hands were busy with the bonds. Peter Todd had always liked Marjorie; at that moment he almost worshipped her.

But he kept his face hidden—that horrible, raddled face, with the shorn head above it. His thanks came in a muffled voice; but they were none the less sincere. Peter did not know that all three girls had seen the full extent of the havoc wrought upon him. And Marjorie did not tell him.

"What had we better do?" she asked.

Again Peter's voice came, muffled.

"If you would go and tell Dutton," he said; "he's the chap I can trust best! I can't go to the school like this! He must bring soap and pumice-stone, and towels and things!"

"Phyllis and Clara will go," said Marjorie gently. "Let me stay here with you, please!"

"I'd ever so much rather you didn't!" sounded Peter's muffled voice.

But he was not sure that he meant it. With anybody else it would have been different: but Marjorie's sympathy was so real, so free from the smallest tincture of amusement, that it really comforted him.

Phyllis and Clara agreed to go.

"Dutton's the deaf boy, isn't he?" said Clara Trevlyn, tossing her head. "A nice sort of job you're giving us, Marjorie—I don't think! But I suppose it must be done. You can tell Todd I have not the least pity for him, though! The boys who did that were utter cads; but he deserves it!"

But Marjorie did not tell Peter that!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not so Bad as it Might Have Been!

"WHY, there are Harry and Bob and the rest! Shall we tell them, Clara?"

"Of course, my dear! They are just the people I should choose to tell!"

"I'm not sure about that!" said Phyllis doubtfully. "It's really a bit rough on Todd; and, you know, Clara, that he is quite a nice boy, apart from all this trouble with Harry!"

"You're afraid of Marjorie, Phyllis, my dear! I'm not! I should just as soon be afraid of a tame squirrel! But don't strain your conscience! I will tell them! You needn't say a word!"

"It's just as well, I think!" agreed Phyllis. "They were going that way, and they would be bound to see him!"

Seven juniors were approaching—the Famous Five, with Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley.

Now they saw the girls, and hurried towards them.

"Where's Marjorie?" asked Harry at once.

"Playing nurse to a great friend of yours!" answered Miss Clara.

This mysterious reply made all seven stare.

"Oh, don't stand there looking like dummies!" Miss Clara snapped.

Now Courtenay and the Caterpillar came up.

Neither felt quite easy in mind about having left Todd as they had found him—except for the removal of the gag, which was certainly an improvement in his condition, but scarcely seemed to have inspired his gratitude.

But while Courtenay showed his uneasiness, the Caterpillar was as nonchalant as usual. Both doffed their caps to the girls, and then De Courcy asked:

"Have any of you fellows seen Todd lately?"

"Alonzo or Peter?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, Peter of that ilk, by gad! Not sure that I know Alonzo!"

"Well, we don't know Peter when we see him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Speak for yourself, Johnny!" said Wharton.

"Oh, that's the way of it, is it, by gad?" said the Caterpillar blandly. "However, it may interest some of you to be informed that the illustrious Todd lies beyond yonder hedge, a victim to the nefarious practices of our merry nuts. Even as Samson—celebrated historical character, Samson, you know—was shorn have they shorn him, for I presume the Philistines or the Moabites, or whoever they were, who played barbers to Samson, didn't bother about an artistic finish, by gad!"

"He seems to be wound up!" whispered Miss Clara to Phyllis. "But I'm glad he is telling them. After all, when it came to the pinch, I didn't half like it!"

"I wouldn't mind his talking so much if he would only talk a little faster!" said Phyllis.

But the Caterpillar went on in his own leisurely way:

"They have bound Todd; they have anointed Todd's face with a loathly unguent. In short, Todd has been put through it—yes, by gad, put through it most thoroughly an' unpleasantly!"

"And you fellows left him like that?" said Harry, in wonder.

"Serve him jolly well right!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"I'm with you there, Bull!" said the Bounder.

"We didn't really mean to!" said Frank Courtenay. "We had meant to go back in a few minutes, though he refused our help on account of—well, of things Rupert said to him. But then the young ladies came along!"

"And Marjorie is staying with him while we went to fetch someone he could trust!" said Clara Trevlyn. "But I am not sure you are at all the person he wanted, Harry Wharton!" she added, with a touch of malice.

"I'm going!" Harry said at once. "Poor old Toddy! It's beastly rough luck for him!"

"The roughfulness is terrific, and the pigheadedness of the ludicrous and esteemed Todd——"

"I sha'n't meddle!" said Johnny Bull flatly. "I'll help to take it out of Pon all right. But as far as Todd is concerned——"

"I'm with you again, Bull!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Good for you, Smithy! Who else?"

"Me, for one!" said Frank Nugent, unexpectedly.

It was hardly like the gentle Frank; but his resentment against Peter Todd was not on his own account.

"After considerfully thinking, I am also with the revered and absurd Johnny!" said Inky.

Bob Cherry stood doubtful.

"I'll come with you, Harry!" said generous Mark.

Wharton looked at Bob and the two Highcliffe juniors.

"On the whole, Wharton, I prefer to associate myself with the opposition!" said the Caterpillar deliberately. "Todd was not polite to me, by gad!"

"I'll come with you if you want me, old chap!" said Courtenay. "But I don't much think Todd will care to see me just now!"

"Perhaps not!" said Harry. "Coming, Bob?"

"Yes, I'll come!" Bob said.

"I say, you chaps, don't breathe a word about this at Greyfriars!" Harry said earnestly.

"Why not?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Why not, indeed?" asked the Bounder. "It is just the thing to make hay of Peter the Great's chances, and I'd be game to use it, as he would if the tables were turned!"

"I'm not sure of that!" answered Harry. "Anyway, I'd ever so much rather you keep it dark!"

"Wharton you're almost too good for this wicked world, by gad! But, confound it all, you're a white man!" said the Caterpillar, with unusual emphasis.

"We'll keep our mouths shut!" Johnny Bull said.

"May we have the honour of escortin' you young ladies?" asked the Caterpillar urbanely.

"We must wait for Marjorie!" answered Phyllis.

"Oh, yes, by gad! We'll all wait, if you don't mind!"

So Harry and Bob and Mark went off. A few minutes later Marjorie joined the bigger party, looking very serious. But she said not a word of the way in which Peter had received the other three.

Peter groaned when he saw them. Their coming seemed to him like an aggravation of what had gone before.

"I don't want any help from you fellows!" he said, in muffled tones, keeping his face hidden.

"Don't be a bigger ass than you can help, Toddy!" said Bob cheerily. "We haven't come to gloat, you know!"

"I am sure they have not!" spoke Marjorie's gentle voice. "If I thought they had, I should not go, and I should never, never speak to them again!"

With that she departed. And all three of the juniors were glad they had come, for all valued no end Marjorie Hazeldene's good opinion.

"I'm not making any terms with you, Wharton!" snapped Peter.

"Shouldn't think of asking you to, old chap!"

"Those Highcliffe bounders did!"

"What—Pon & Co.?"

"Rats! I mean Courtenay and De Courcy—the Caterpillar mostly!"

"That was only their joke!"

"Pretty rotten joke, I think!"

None of the three attempted to deny that. They did not approve of the joke. There was something almost tragic as well as something funny in Todd's plight. Toddy had a good deal of pride, and it had been hurt.

He sat up now, and they saw his face. It is to their credit that none of them laughed, though Bob nearly burst the boiler in keeping back his amusement.

"What's to be done?" asked Harry.

"Let's go back to Greyfriars like this. That's the dodge. It's a dead cert for you, or for Bolsy, to-morrow evening, then!" replied Peter sardonically.

"Oh, rot! I shall do what you'd do yourself, Toddy!"

"I should leave you to it!" said Peter grimly.

"No, you wouldn't! Look here, Bob and I will go back to the school, and get stuff to clean your phiz with. Marky will stay here with you till we get back!"

Peter agreed. In the choice made of his companion he recognised real delicacy. Bob could not have kept from japing him a little. Between him and Harry there must have been a strained feeling. But it was different with Mark. Peter could stand him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
Election Day!

PETER TODD got back into Greyfriars unseen, while most of the fellows were at tea.

It had been quite impossible to get all the raddle off his face before he started back, though Harry and Bob had brought along everything they could think of as likely to help. The raddle still stuck in places, while in others the skin had come off. Small wonder that Peter's temper was not of the best! But he did try to refrain from venting it on the fellows who had so generously sunk the feud and come to his assistance.

He saw Mr. Quelch, gave him an account of the affair that was not complete, since it omitted names, but was accepted by the Form-master, and obtained permission to go to the sanatorium and to stay there till his face was cleansed. He could not well ask to stay till his hair had grown again, though he would have liked to.

Tom Dutton came to see him, brought a pair of scissors, as requested, and took off some of the jagged edges Pon & Co. had left. But Tom was not a skilled barber. He left Peter fuming. Peter had had to explain; and explaining such an affair to deaf Tom Dutton was no joke.

Dick Rake came. Peter did not want him. And Peter wanted his advice even less than he wanted Rake himself.

"You'll have to keep out of the way to-morrow, Toddy," said Rake. "It's your only chance. You may lose a few votes by not being there to jaw to the crowd; but, hang it, man, you're bound to go down if you show up such a beastly scarecrow as this!"

"I shall do exactly as I think best!" snapped Toddy.

He did not know yet what he meant to do. He could not make up his mind.

Backing down seemed craven. Not to show up seemed craven. But to show up was to face the chaff of the whole Form.

He wished now that he had not set up his standard in opposition to Harry Wharton's. Wharton was a good fellow—no better anywhere!"

Peter did not appear in classes on the Monday. A few knew why, and those few kept the secret faithfully.

There was an atmosphere of subdued excitement all day that interfered a good deal with work. But Mr. Quelch was merciful. He seemed to understand the feeling—even to share it, to some extent.

Bolsover major was very conspicuous during the periods between classes. Bolsover had not given up hope. Whatever his faults, he was undeniably a sticker.

He looked up his prominent supporters, rallied the faint of heart, laboured to make converts at the eleventh hour.

The wheeze which Rake had started and Dick Russell improved upon was

almost forgotten by this time. But Bolsover was to find that fatal paper rising up against him at the most inopportune moment possible.

He should have destroyed it when he had it in his grip. Instead of that, he had wasted his time in going for the fellows he held responsible—among them Bunter, who had brought it to him. It is true that Bunter's action had had other motives than pure good will to Bolsover; but that was a detail, as was anything Bunter had suffered at the bully's hands.

Tea was over. The hour of the election drew nigh.

Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Inky were going towards the Rag together, when the howls of Fisher T. Fish fell upon their ears.

"Let me go!" hooted Fishy. "Lemme go, you mugwump! How was I to know that Russell would play such a low-down game on me? I calculated he was dead straight! And I'm entitled to the dollars I've earned—— Yarooogh! Oh, droppit, Bolsover! Look hyer, lemme go, and I'll say no more about the durocks you owe me! Oh, Christopher Columbus! Leave off screwing my arm! You'll have it out of its socket! I'll let you off paying! I won't ask you for a red cent—there!"

"I don't care a hang what you ask me!" snarled Bolsover. "This is the only way you're going to get paid, and you can have as much of this coin as you want!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! I've had a heap more'n that already!" groaned Fish. "Help, Smithy! Help, Rake! Russell, you jay, you got me into this scrape! Cherry——"

Bob shook his head.

"Guess we're nootral, Fishy!" he he said. "I feel just like your man Wilson—can't see the difference between the two sides."

"The election agent has rendered his account at what appears to be an untoward moment," remarked Vernon-Smith.

"But he ought to have a chance to prove it," said Russell, grinning. "Do the names on this paper count, Fishy?"

And he flourished a paper headed in red ink. The very paper that was at the bottom of the trouble—the paper on which the majority of the Form had promised, not to vote for Bolsover, but to give him a bumping.

"Where did you get that?" howled Bolsover, and left Fishy to make a dash at Russell.

But the other fellows closed round Russell. They would not let Bolsover get near enough to touch him. Russell, chanting in a sing-song voice, recited the roll of Bolsover's willing bumpers, while his hearers howled with merriment.

The crowd was thickening fast. Squiff and Tom Brown and Delarey came up—together, as usual. Skinner and Trevor and Treluce were just behind them.

Bolsover turned in fury upon Skinner.

"You were at the bottom of this, you rotter!" he roared, and struck at his confederate's face.

Skinner warded off the blow somehow, shrinking back. Then the infuriated bully seized him by the throat.

"Y-y-you're c-c-choking me!" gasped Skinner.

"I promise to vote for Bolsover's having a first-class bumping," chanted Dick Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd.

"Gerrrrgh!" gasped Skinner.

"And hereby undertake——"

Delarey's voice struck across Russell's chanting.

"Drop that, Bolsover!"

The words rang out like a pistol-shot.

So amazed was Bolsover that he obeyed.

"What's it to do with you, Rebel?" he snarled, turning upon the Afrikander.

"Skinner's a friend of mine—that's all!"

There was not a fellow present who did not look astonished; but the most astonished of them all was Harold Skinner. Tom Brown said afterwards that he had never seen such a look on anyone's face as he saw on Skinner's then.

Bolsover went for Delarey like a mad bull.

Right—left! Biff—biff!

Someone reeled and crashed down. But it was not Piet Delarey.

Bolsover struggled up. His nose spurted crimson, and his left eye was closing.

"Sure, we'll be havin' Quelchy here in a moment!" Micky Desmond warned them.

"Cave! Here he comes!" said Ogilvy.

The combat ceased at once.

Mr. Quelch cast a glance around. It was plain enough to be seen that he noted Bolsover's condition with disapproval. But he said nothing about it then.

He passed on into the Rag, and the juniors crowded in after him.

On the platform he stood, and faced them all. He looked very grave indeed, they noticed.

"The hour of election has come, my boys," he said. "You may be surprised to see me here, since it has not been my custom to take any share in the matter of settling such things as this. Whatever a master's opinion may be, the giving to a Form a leader whom it does not want would hardly be likely to prove an administrative success."

"He's going to tell everybody that we've got to vote for Wharton, whether we like it or not," whispered Snoop to Stott.

"Silence, there! Do not imagine that because I have come here to say a few words I have any intention of conducting the proceedings. I shall retire after having seen the meeting properly started. And, as the Form has no captain since Wharton's resignation took effect, I do not consider that it will be out of order for me to nominate from among you a chairman whom I can trust to see that matters are conducted in order."

"Take the chair yourself, sir! We'd rather you did!" cried Bob Cherry.

"Sucking up to Quelchy!" sneered Stott.

"I second Cherry's proposition!" said Monty Newland quickly.

"Another of 'em! But what can you expect from a Sheeny?" returned Snoop.

"If no one objects——"

The Form-master looked round. It might have been anticipated that those bold and independent spirits Snoop and Stott—would indicate their conscientious objections. But Snoop and Stott did nothing of the sort.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, plainly gratified. "I will take the chair; but it will only be for a few minutes. I will then retire, having first nominated my successor. The candidates for the captaincy are Wharton, Todd—I should say Peter Todd—and Bolsover major. Bolsover I perceive, but——"

Mr. Quelch paused, frowning. But it was not at the absence of Wharton and Todd he frowned. It was at the presence of Bolsover—in such a state. It was not hard to perceive Bolsover. The difficult thing would have been to overlook him.

At this moment Harry Wharton came in, alone. He was a trifle pale, but his shoulders were braced, and he looked ready for any fate.

Still Mr. Quelch paused, and now heads were turned and necks craned.

Peter Todd entered.

Poor old Toddy! It had taken all his courage to bring him there. Not many fellows would have had courage enough.

The ripple of laughter that greeted his appearance made his face already scarlet take on a deeper tint. But it made him pull himself together, too. When he entered he had looked utterly unlike himself in every way. Now there came back to him his old spirit, and though it might be a figure of fun that faced the grinning countenances of the Remove, it was also the fellow whom they had always known as plucky as any there, with audacity and coolness far beyond most.

Dick Rake and Tom Dutton behaved like the good fellows and true supporters they were. They struggled through the crowd, and Rake took one arm of their leader while Dutton seized the other.

Peter's hair, usually worn a trifle long, was cropped closely. The forelock had gone. It had never been a thing of beauty; but everyone was used to it, and its absence gave Toddy's face a singularly queer aspect.

The face itself was streaked with various lines of red. The raddle was no longer upon it; but in getting it off Peter had sacrificed quite a lot of skin.

"Will the three candidates step forward?" said Mr Quelch.

They moved. Dutton and Rake let go Toddy's arms. Harry Wharton laid a hand on Peter's shoulder. It was shaken off, but not roughly or rudely. Harry understood, and so did Peter.

"Bolsover, do you consider a boy in your disgraceful plight a fit and proper candidate for the captaincy of the Form?" thundered the master.

"I don't see why not, sir," answered the bully sulkily. "Anyway, I'm no worse than Todd!"

"Say no more, Bolsover! All I have to say is that if you are elected I shall be forced to take a very low view of the intelligence of my Form."

"Hear, hear, sir!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Sure, sir, it's not potty we are!" cried bold Micky Desmond.

"If by any chance you are elected, I shall raise no further objection. You will be given a chance to prove your capacity—or otherwise."

"My oof's on Otherwise!" grinned Squiff.

"Good old Otherwise! He'd be a sure winner in this race," said Tom Brown.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Toddy's Renunciation!

"THE method of election will be the customary one—a show of hands," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall not stay for it; but if any difficulty should arise calling for an impartial decision from outside the ranks of the voters, a messenger will find me in my study. I will now nominate a chairman to take my place."

He looked round him, and then nodded to Monty Newland.

A rush of blood tinged the Jewish boy's handsome face. He did not move.

"If you mean me, sir," he said, "I'm not sure that I'm the right person. I'm for Wharton, all out, and I think everybody knows it."

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull led a roar of cheering.

"I do mean you, Newland. And I see no great force in your objection. Everyone here is a partisan, I suppose; but no fair-minded boy will doubt your fairness, I am sure."

Snoop and Stott looked as if they would like to say something. But they thought it wiser to lie low.

Mr Quelch, with a word or two about order and decorum, left, and Newland took his place on the platform, where also stood now the three candidates.

"We'll get on at once," said Newland. "Any objection to taking the three in alphabetical order?"

No one made any.

"Bolsover comes first, then. Hands up, those who——"

"Hold hard! I've got something to say," struck in Peter Todd.

"Rats! Shut up till your turn comes! It's my turn now!" hooted Bolsover.

"The word is with Bolsover," said Newland gravely.

And Peter subsided.

"Look here, you fellows! I've been done down—spoofed!" roared Bolsover.

"You have, old scout! You have!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just a few!" drawled the Bounder.

"That cad Russell——"

"Won't do, Bolsover!" spoke the chairman sharply.

"Well, after all, that's no great odds. You all know me. I'm no good little Georgie!"

"Oh, you big, bad Percy!" roared Rake.

"If I'm elected, I sha'n't pry into your private affairs like——"

"Order, Bolsover!"

"Go and eat coke, Newland! Like Wharton always has done. And long-nosed Todd would be worse! Elect me, and I don't care a hang what you do—as long as you keep off my toes!"

He glared round. He really could not understand why the greater part of the crowd seemed to take his speech as humorous.

"Hands up for Bolsover, and liberty to do as you like," said Newland solemnly.

Stott, Snoop, Trevor. That was all at first. Then Treluce and Elliott, both looking very doubtful. Bolsover glared like an angry tiger at Skinner and Fish. But it was no go!

"Five," said Newland. "Now, Todd!"

Peter's voice was rather shaky as he began.

"I've been an ass, you fellows——"

"Tell us some news, Toddy!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Shurrup, idiot!" growled Johnny Bull. "Give him a chance!"

"I've been an ass," repeated Peter. "I never ought to have started this thing. The Form doesn't need a better skipper than Wharton, and if it did I'm not the man. Look at me!"

"Can't be off doing that," said Bolsover. "Hanged if I ever saw anything like such a scarecrow!"

"I owe this to the Highcliffe nuts, and you bet I'll get even! But let me tell you what I owe to Wharton—to other fellows, too, but most to Wharton. He and the others did everything they could for me, just as if we'd been the best of friends—and I hope we always shall be after this! Linley and Cherry helped; but others kept it dark—Bull and Nugent and Hurree Singh and Vernon-Smith. They were all hard up against me. But they were all straight and decent. Yes; more than that! Rake and Dutton knew of it through me. Can any other chap here stand up and say that he heard even a word of what happened to me yesterday?"

Many an eye was turned upon Bunter. It was almost a miracle if he had not heard.

But the Owl did not stand up.

"They kept the secret for me, though to tell it would have done Wharton's chances to-day no end of good. I don't know that I would have done as much for one of them. I'm rather a jealous beast. But I know what I've got to do now, and I mean to do it. I sha'n't retire——"

"My hat! What's the good of all that if——"

"Shurrup, Bob!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I'm standing! But I ask every fellow who has promised me his vote to give it to Wharton! Wharton's the right man. I don't say I'm a duffer. I don't think I am. I'd have fought Bolsover to the limit. But he's as good as dead. I'm not going to fight Wharton. If you are my friends, you fellows, vote for Wharton!"

For a moment there was silence. Peter's action had taken everybody by surprise. Then Hazeldene found his voice, though it trembled as he cried:

"Good old Toddy! He's one of the best! But I sha'n't vote for him!"

"Three cheers for Toddy!" shouted the Bounder.

"Afterwards, please!" said Monty Newland. "Hands up for Todd!"

Up went two hands—Tom Dutton's and Alonzo's.

"My hat! I might have known Dutton wouldn't understand!" gasped Peter. "Lonzy, you idiot——"

"My dear Cousin Peter, I cannot help it! You have behaved so nobly—so generously!" faltered Alonzo, moved almost to tears. "I am sure that our Uncle Benjamin——"

"Oh, blow Uncle Benjy!" snapped Peter.

"Two!" announced the chairman. "Hands up for Wharton!"

Bob Cherry jumped up on a form and elevated both his hands, yelling his hardest. Up went a forest of hands, amid a mighty din.

Harry looked round. It was a proud moment for him, yet there was something besides pride in what he felt.

Bob's hand, Frank's, Inky's, Johnny's—oh, of course! Those four were to be counted on through thick and thin.

The Bounder's, Mark Linley's, Dick Russell's, Penfold's, Newland's, Wun Lung's—there had been no doubt about those.

But Squiff's, Delarey's, Brown's, Manleverer's! And Hazeldene's, Bulstrode's, Rake's, Wibley's, Ogilvy's, Desmond's—all Peter Todd's foremost partisans!

More, too! Sir Jimmy, Kipps, Smith minor, even Bunter, Fish, yes, and even Skinner!

There was no need of a count. Harry Wharton was returned at the head of the poll by an immense majority.

"I declare Wharton duly elected," said Newland. "Does anyone challenge the verdict?"

"Oh, come off it!" growled Bolsover. "Who could?"

"Harry Wharton for ever!" shouted Peter Todd.

The cheers made the rafters ring.

"Three times three for Toddy!" shouted Harry.

And again the rafters rang.

"Now for the bumping of Bolsover!" howled Dick Rake.

"You'll leave Bolsover alone!" said Piet Delarey.

"Getting giddy important, aren't you, Rebel?" asked Rake. "It ain't exactly for you to say, you know."

"I don't want your protection, Delarey!" snapped Bolsover.

"Didn't suppose you did. But I suppose you'll shake hands now it's all over?"

Bolsover hesitated, fingering his closed optic. Then he held out his hand. And, having done that, he turned to Skinner.

"I say, Skinney, I didn't really hurt you, did I?" he asked.

"You did. But never mind," replied Harold Skinner.

"Shake with me, Bolsover?" asked Wharton.

"And with me?" added Peter Todd.

"Dunno why I should. But I will if you like," growled Bolsover.

Harry and Peter did not shake. There was no need for that. Peter was the guest of honour at a tea in Study No. 1 the next day. A far less lavish spread than of old, because of war-time conditions, but very jolly. There was such a crowd that it overflowed down the passage. Most of the Remove were present. And Cliff House sent a charming trio. And Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar were there.

It was Phyllis Howell, with the colour mantling her cheeks, who gave the toast of "Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove."

And it was Rupert de Courcy who proposed that of Peter Todd, hoping that bygones might be bygones, by gad!

"That's all right, De Courcy, as far as you're concerned," replied Toddy. "But that rotter Pon and his crew had better look out for themselves!"

"My dear man, it's a matter of the most absolute indifference to me what Pon suffers," drawled the Caterpillar. "Pon's a Hun, by gad, an' deserves to be treated as a Hun!"

"Without any Donington Hall in it!" put in Miss Clara.

The Caterpillar bowed gracefully.

"Your words are words of wisdom, Miss Treylyn," he said. "Almost do they make of me a declared Suffragist!"

THE END.

(Don't miss "NATIONAL SERVICE AT GREYFRIARS!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.)

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BACK NUMBERS, Etc., WANTED.

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THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 17.—FISHER TARLETON FISH.

Fisher Jarlton Fish

"JEVVER get left?"

That used to be Fish's favourite query. If it is no longer so, the cause is not any decrease of craft on Fish's part. But in these days Greyfriars in general knows the cunning Yankee better, and he does not so easily find victims.

American readers and some few British ones—complain of the presentment of Fish's character. They say that he is not a fair type of the American character.

He is not! He is not a type at all. Mr. Frank Richards is far too keen a student of human nature to be bothering himself about delineating types. His characters are individuals. It is as futile to take Fish as a type of the American schoolboy as it would be to accept Bunter as a type of the English schoolboy.

No author produces real live stuff if his main concern is that of presenting types. It is by chance that his dramatis personæ can be taken as types. If Bob Cherry is such—that of the cheery, happy-go-lucky boy—it is not because he is drawn as a type. He is also Bob Cherry, an individual with his own ways, his own virtues, his own faults—a type by accident, as it were.

Fish is a braggart. Fish is a selfish schemer. Are all Americans braggarts and selfish schemers in the eyes of the man who drew Fish? Of course not!

Another objection sometimes, though less often made, is that the other fellows don't treat Fish quite nicely.

Fish gets the treatment he deserves. It may be rough justice, but rough justice is often the most telling kind.

Those who remember the stories dealing with Fish's early days at Greyfriars will know that he had as hearty a welcome as any fellow could wish for. The rest were so far from being down upon him because he came from over the Atlantic that, on the contrary, they were disposed to take unusual trouble to make him feel at home. Harry Wharton and his chums practically adopted him. They were only too pleased to put him up to things—to show him the ropes.

But Fish did not want showing the ropes—not he!

At once he began to expound the superiority of all things American to all things English. There could be no doubt about this—according to Fish. Anyone who could not perceive it at once must be the silliest sort of jay.

We don't perceive these things. We are a patient and long-suffering people, slow to wrath, not apt to fire up at imagined slights. But when a Yank—or anyone else—comes along and sneers at us and all that is ours, our patience proves itself something short of endless. We may be behind in some respects, but it is too much to expect us to believe that we are behind in everything!

Fish was quite sure, for instance, that he could do all things that were done at Greyfriars better than any other fellow of his age and weight could do them. When he failed to make good his brag, he had always an excuse ready—that wasn't quite the way they played the game "over thar."

Football wasn't the American variety, in which, of course, Fish had great skill. Americans did not think much of cricket, anyway—this was after Fish had shown that, whatever he may have been able to do, he certainly could not play cricket. And so with other sports. Now, baseball may be considered the national game of America. It takes some learning. But one would back Wharton, or Bob Cherry, or a score of other fellows in the Remove, to play baseball better than Fish after half a dozen games. For, in their varying degrees, they are athletes. Fish is not, and never will be. But he is not typically American in that by any means. The United States has produced many great athletes.

It was not his bragging that caused Fish to get the cold shoulder after a bit from the fellows who at first were well disposed to him. The cloven foot of greed showed, and that choked them off him.

Then his atitude when the war began contributed to his unpopularity. He was a "nootral," and he was proud of it.

The war was distinctly not good business for those engaged in it. It was so for neutrals. And "business" is Fishy's idol. What do little things like honour matter when dollars are on the other side of the balance? That was the way he looked at it.

And he tried to make his profits out of the war, in corners, after the style of his father, Vanderbilt K. Fish, whom Fishy calls his "popp-r"—reputed a millionaire railway king, but not at all liberal, for an alleged millionaire, in the matter of pocket-money for his son.

The Remove somehow did not take kindly to corners at the expense of war funds. They disliked them even more than the earlier wangles at the expense of their own pockets which Fish had practised. And they made their dislike apparent in fact, they made it painfully apparent—to Fish.

He had tried enough and to spare of these wangles. To give anything like a full account of them would run far over the space it is possible to allow. None of them was honest. Fish's notion was always to get more than his goods, his services, or whatever it might be he offered, were worth. That was his theory of business. It is not the true theory. A really great business is built up upon the giving of good value.

Fish has been a pawbroker, a money-lender, a shopkeeper, an auctioneer, a speculator. He was the same in all roles—a cheat! He has organised a fag agency, an insurance society, a "Get-it-Done" bureau. Not one of them was a straight proposition. They were all traps to catch money.

Perhaps the most amusing of them all—and it is one that may stand as a fair specimen of his methods—was the competition swindle. He offered a prize of £1 to each and every person who filled in correctly the missing words from this incomplete sentence: "The early . . . . catches the . . . ." Looks easy—eh? Fish counted on that. "Bird" and "worm" were the obvious words to fit it. But that astute individual, Herbert Vernon-Smith, thought it out, and came to the conclusion that "The early American catches the Britisher" was more likely to be the rendering of the old proverb set down on the paper which Fish had deposited, as a proof of good faith, with Coker of the Fifth. And each entrant sent in the Bounder's version. Then did Fish strive desperately, but in vain, to get that paper back from Coker. No go! Still, he was not completely floored. He induced each of the fellows who were due to receive a sovereign from him to take shares in a syndicate for the promotion of a new competition, in which all the money was to go as a prize to the competitor who got nearest. No one was very keen on risking more entrance-fees. One deluded member of the Remove entered. Fish persuaded him into selling his entry. As it was the only one, and Fish held it, Fish scooped the pool. He regarded it as quite a proper business transaction. But the Remove differed, and expressed their dissent forcibly.

Is it any wonder that the inventor of dodges such as these, the braggart who funks when it comes to a fight—"too proud to fight," as the Remove sarcastically say the boasted "Republican" who is a snob and a toady, the owner of a bunch of keys which he is willing to hire out to anyone without asking awkward questions, though he knows well that the chance of their being wanted for any legitimate use is small indeed—is it any wonder that he has come to be classed with Skinner and Snoop, and that because of him the country he hails from has suffered undeserved contempt? For the Greyfriars boys are no more superior than our readers to the fallacy of seeing a type in the individual.

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Masters arrives in Cape Town to meet his cousin, Jasper Orme. Jasper sends him up country with a scoundrel named Faik, and it is made apparent that Faik and Jasper are in league to put Bob out of the way. Disgusted with Faik's bad treatment, Bob escapes, in company with Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, and they take with them the map which shows the spot where a treasure is located, and which it was Faik's aim to seize. The two lads push on into the wilds, and are captured by savages. They are imprisoned in a kraal, and food is brought to them by a slave of their captors. Mendi, the slave, helps Bob and Ted to escape. He tells them of a mysterious ancient city under a lake. Mendi takes his companions up country into the remote wilds, where they meet with MacGregor, an old Scot, long resident with the natives. Bob is acclaimed by the savages as their chief, but Mopo, a warrior, challenges him as a rival. Ted knocks Mopo senseless. Mopo is afterwards defeated in fair fight. Bob is recognised by the old chief, Kazna, and MacGregor leaves the two together, telling Bob to stay till he returns.

In Dire Peril!

Bob looked at MacGregor, and realised from his face that he stood in great danger. The Scotchman hurried from the kraal, followed by Ted.

Old Kazna was muttering in a low voice; his forehead was creased up. Clearly he was trying to stir his memory. Once he arose, and held out his hand to Bob in friendship, but before the lad could grasp it he shrank back with a hideous scowl.

Bob turned to leave, and found that Mendi was at the door.

"O whiteface and master, here you are safe!" Mendi whispered. "Outside you would meet your death. Hearken to the wise councils of Barelegs, whom I now go to meet. See, the great chief falls back. Ere long he will sleep. Stay by his side."

Mendi slipped noiselessly out of the kraal into the darkness, and the lad sat down.

Meantime, MacGregor was striding through the village. On the outskirts he stopped.

"We must get a hand on this fellow Mopo at all costs," he said to Ted. "If he hears what is in the wind, Bob will be knocked out for certain."

"But I don't understand. Why should Bob be in such danger?" Ted asked.

"Old Kazna knew his father years ago. I'm thinkin'. He met him in stirring times. He sees the likeness in Bob's face, and that has jogged his memory. But he can't think clearly; and there was some man who did him a great injury."

"A white man?"

"So it wad seem. I dinna believe for a moment that Bob's father played a shabby trick. Bob wouldn't be the straight fellow he is if his father had been that sort. Like father, like son, you know. It's my belief that Bob's father stuck by Kazna, and that some other white man played it low down on him. But the old fellow can't be sure. And Mopo——"

"Yes?"

"He told Mopo the tale. He wants to hear it now from him, so that he can know whether he should treat Bob as a friend or an enemy."

"And Mopo——"

"Ye ken weel what he'll say. This gives him a chance to have Bob wiped out, and he'll mak' himself the new chief.

With a cry, Mendi stepped back. *(See page 18.)*

If Mopo sees old Kazna, nothing can save Bob."

They were striding fast. Hearing the soft patter of feet they looked back, and recognised Mendi.

"Just the man we want!" MacGregor said. "If anyone can lead us to Mopo, he can. Mendi, why dae ye come?"

"Because I heard all, and I would fight to the death for the great white-face whose servant I am," Mendi replied. "For was I not outside the kraal, and are not my ears keen to hear? And do I not know the evil heart of Mopo? Hasten! And let us slay him without more words."

"We'll nab him, onyway," MacGregor replied, "if only you can bring us to him."

"And do I not know where the lion sulks when his head is sore? And is this the first time that Mopo has left his people with fury in his breast?" Mendi asked. "Follow me! The way is not far."

They pressed on, the old Scot hard put to it to keep pace. Across the veldt they hurried for three miles, and then, as the moon arose, they saw a kopje in the distance. Mendi pointed to it.

"There is his lair," he said. "There he often broods for many days and nights, praying that the spirits may bring destruction to all who thwart him. There also does he devise his wicked plots. Be ready with the rifle, that this night may be his last."

"We'll cover him with the rifle, and he'll hae to give in," MacGregor said, panting hard. "But dinna fire, Ted, unless he goes for us or tries to escape. The shot on a night like this would carry back to the village."

Very cautiously they approached the kopje. They climbed it, creeping from rock to rock. They reached a wide opening. With a cry, Mendi stepped back.

The cave was empty! Mendi, like a hound nosing the ground, hurried hither and thither, showing greater alarm every moment.

"He has been here!" he gasped. "Others have come—three of them. Caka was one, for I see the impress of his foot that the lioness gnawed, and Caka is the strong friend of Mopo. They have gone back to the village. There is all their spoor together."

He pointed to a patch of soft earth. But MacGregor did not even glance at it. He knew that what Mendi said would be true.

"Someone was ahead of us!" he groaned. "Mopo has hurried back, and we mann get back, though all now seems lost."

Despite his age and fatigue, he broke into a run. But in a few moments Ted and Mendi had far outdistanced him. Ted had not the least idea what he could do. His sole thought was to be with Bob again and share his peril.

Mendi soon forged ahead. Ted laboured to catch up with him, and behind MacGregor came, sometimes breaking into a run, sometimes sinking down exhausted. As they drew near to the village they heard the drums beating, and knew that trouble had already arisen.

Mendi dashed in amongst the kraals. Ted, a couple of hundred yards behind, entered the main path, to see the savages gathered in groups, shouting and gesticulating. He pressed on, but was soon surrounded. His rifle was wrenched from his hand, he was flung down, his arms were swiftly bound, and he was dragged to his feet again.

Every moment the uproar grew louder. Around the central kraal a score of savages with axes stood on guard. Of Bob and Mopo Ted had not a glimpse. What was happening?

Vainly he struggled to break away, his captors jeering as they held him firmly. And then the guard before the central kraal raised their axes and shouted a cry of triumph, and, as they parted, he at last saw Bob, bound like himself, dragged from the kraal. The lad's face was pale, but he did not shrink.

Behind him came Mopo, his ugly face full of exultation. And behind him, to Ted's astonishment, tottered old Kazna. Great must have been the malice that had given him the strength to arise thus from his dying bed.

A sickening feeling crept over Ted, and his brain began to swim. His eyes clouded. When he could see clearly again Bob was close to him.

"Bob!" he wailed.

Bob looked at him.

"It's all up, old chap!" he said. "But it's only me they mean to deal with. That cur Mopo has got his chance. It can't be helped. They won't harm you. Do you clear out with MacGregor. Good-bye, old man! I'm not worrying as much as you think."

Again Ted struggled desperately, but in vain. His chum was swept past by the guard. The other savages followed; and Ted's captors, eager to see the execution, swept him along, too.

At the entrance to the village the procession stopped. Here there was a large tree. Bob was tied to it. Mopo, brandishing his axe, danced a war-dance.

Then old Kazna raised his arm.

"Lo, my people!" he began. "I am as the old branch that soon must fall, yet, behold, it is still given to me to smite my enemy! Then shall I die happy! For a strange tale have I to tell. Gather close, and harken to my words!"

All pressed forward. Kazna's face was alight, and had changed marvellously under the stress of his passion. His eyes were glowing; he stood firm and erect.

"Hundreds of moons ago, when I could run like a deer, a whiteface came to my kraal," he began. "He warned me that an enemy tribe was on the way to give us battle; and thus, not taken unawares, we went forth to conquer.

"And lo! there was another whiteface, with the heart of a giraffe, but with the cunning and cruelty of a lion, and he, too, came to us, and spoke fair words, and I listened.

"He, too, said he was my friend, and told many things about my enemies—what numbers they were, and where we could find them, and how, if we followed him, we could sweep upon them like eagles. And we went the way he told, he leading us.

"And, lo, it was a trap! And he had been paid thus to lure us to our doom. And when our hearts were rejoicing, and when we lay down to rest, thinking that our enemies were still many miles away, they fell upon us, and thus we were betrayed.

"We fought with the strength and the courage of warriors, but we were outnumbered. All through the night we fought, and on the morrow there was but one alive where had been twenty. And thus were my people destroyed, and all my oxen taken, and I was left without a kingdom. And that whiteface, liar and coward, I never saw again: but I see him now!"

He pointed at Bob.

"There stands he!" he said. "For the face, though it be young, is the same. I knew him, and yet I could not remember, but Mopo remembers, for I told him the tale. And as Mopo remembered, so shall Mopo now avenge me, whose arm has lost its cunning. Do I speak wisely? Is this your wish?"

A shout went up. Every face was working with fury. Mopo, now leaning on his axe, looked around, and grinned in triumph.

"And thus shall the prophecy be fulfilled that was denied me to-day!" Mopo said. "And thus shall it be proved that I, and I alone, am worthy to take the place of the great Kazna! Speak the word, O chief, that my axe may hiss like a serpent as it speeds on its mission! For this we long!"

"Nor will I delay!" Kazna rapped out. "Though thus I cut short my joy, for when yonder rascal falls I shall be an old man again, with naught to live for! Art thou ready?" he asked of Mopo.

"Stop!" Ted cried, his voice ringing with anguish.

"Stop!" another voice protested.

Kanza looked round. MacGregor, hardly able to stand from exhaustion, had at last reached the spot.

"And what would thou, Barelegs?" the old chief asked.

"This is not thy enemy!" MacGregor panted. "Neither was his father thy enemy! For there were two whitefaces, and one was your friend. And in this lad you have that friend again!"

The old chief's eyes blazed.

"Thou talkest folly!" he snapped. "For Mopo knows. And what he says is true!"

"I speak truth!" [illegible] swered. "And, O Kazna, have a [illegible] lest this deed may be the ruin of your race!"

"I hear no more! Strike, Mopo!"

The savage raised his axe, and advanced towards Bob. In horror Ted closed his eyes.

Then a shout arose. Ted looked, and saw Kazna staggering back and pointing at the entrance to the village. A white man was being dragged along by some warriors, and the white man was Faik!

"Wonder of wonders!" Kazna cried. "For behold, here is the white coward by whom I was betrayed! Halt, Mopo, till we know the truth!"

"Vengeance Is Not Mine!"

Faik was dragged up, and the old chief Kazna recognised him. Ted sprang forward, gripping Mopo's right wrist in both hands. Mopo's axe was already raised to strike. Ted clung to the savage with the strength of desperation.

Kazna still stared at Faik. The old chief shook with fury.

"The whiteface who betrayed me!" he cried, with shaking voice. "And he is in my power at last! His hour hath come!"

MacGregor's voice rang clear.

"And the young whiteface whom you doomed to death, he whose father was your friend?" he asked. "Is he to perish?"

Kazna turned. Bob and Ted were alike in deadly peril. Mopo had nearly shaken off the Irish lad.

"Have done!" Kazna thundered. "Seize him, my men!"

On the command half a dozen warriors sprang forward and seized Mopo. The axe was wrenched from his grasp, and he went staggering back. Old Kazna turned and again faced Faik, whose yellow face had gone almost green with terror.

"Ah, viper!" Kazna hissed. "By your

(Continued on page 20.)

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IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 18.)

treachery were my people destroyed, and I was sent, a broken, lonely man, into the wilderness. Through you many brave men perished; through you our enemies triumphed! In vain will you plead for mercy! By my own hand shall you fall, that my vengeance may be accomplished!"

"Mercy!" Faik croaked, clutching at his throat. "Mercy, great chief! There is a mistake! Let me but explain. 'Twas not I who willingly betrayed you; I was deceived, and myself suffered much. Often have I sought thee, that by my help——"

"Dog and liar!" old Kazna hissed. "My heart is like unto a whirlwind in its wrath, but my mind is now clear. I was near to doing an evil thing for which my people would have suffered. Yonder young whiteface, called hither to rule after me, would have died by my command had not Fate brought you here. Bow your neck that my blow may be sure! That is the only kindness I will show."

He handled Mopo's axe now, and he was like a man transformed. His aged face worked like fury, and great veins like knots stood out on his forehead. With axe in hand he moved forward. He tried to raise it, but failed. Once more he tried, and this time his near-spent strength served. With a muffled cry he struck.

But the axe missed Faik, and fell from Kazna's nerveless fingers. He raised his arms, broke into a cry like a sob, and clutched at his heart.

"Too late! The vengeance is not mine, but his who will follow me!" he moaned. And he slipped to the ground.

MacGregor was the first to reach his side. All the brief strength had fled. As he lay helpless there he looked the old, old man he was.

MacGregor spoke solemnly.

"Kazna will never lead his people more. His spirit goes forth in the wind," he said.

A wail arose. But it was quickly succeeded by a gust of fury. The crowd rushed at Faik.

"'Tis his doing! Then let his spirit follow the spirit of the great chief!" they shouted.

The wretched man was in their grip; blows rained upon his head and face; it looked as if he would be beaten to death. But help from an unexpected quarter was at hand.

For Ted had not been idle. Unheeding all else at first, he had rushed to the tree and unbound Bob. And as Faik went down Bob rushed forward. MacGregor was already in the thick of the scrimmage, and the lad fought his way to his side.

"Stand back!" he shouted.

MacGregor took up the command.

"Ay, listen, ye of the Inrobi!" he cried. "For lo, the new chief speaks! Hearken to his words. For him it is to decree what shall be done to this whiteface!"

The crowd fell back. Faik was a terrible sight. Fear had robbed him of all his strength, and two of the braves were supporting him.

"This is no time for strife, whilst the great chief Kazna lies yonder unheeded," Bob said. "Raise his body from the ground, and bear it with all reverence to his kraal. Let all mourn for the loss of one so great and brave. As for this man"—and he pointed to Faik—"I will deal with him later, as his crimes deserve. For the present I will guard him myself, with these my friends, who are your friends also. Now begone, and we will shortly follow."

The tribesmen obeyed. Some raised Kazna from the ground, and the rest formed a procession behind, the men uttering weird cries at intervals, and the women wailing continuously. Across the village they went, and soon were lost to view.

Faik had been laid down. Bob began to show the effects of the terrible ordeal through which he had passed with such courage. He was very pale, and trembling slightly.

"My head is buzzing; I can't think straight," he said. "All this seems like a terrible nightmare. I should have been dead by now if that cur Faik had not turned up. I don't know what to do or say, and I would like to rest and forget all these horrors."

"Yon was a verra close shave," MacGregor remarked. "Naething but yon villain's capture would hae saved ye, and naething but the death of poor auld Kazna could hae saved Faik. You are a' richt, however, from this on!"

(Another splendid instalment next week.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"NATIONAL SERVICE AT GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

Everybody's doing it! Well, nearly everybody—of course, there are exceptions.

Doing what? Why, growing potatoes. It is Cecil Reginald Temple, the stylish captain of the Upper Fourth, who starts the scheme for Greyfriars. But the Remove, not being too proud to adopt a wheeze, and being quite sure that they can improve on the efforts of Temple & Co., take it up at once, and get well ahead. Whereof come ructions with the Upper Fourth, and a pitched battle in the trenches—the potato trenches!

Fish comes into it—in what way the more perspicacious of my readers may guess. And Wibley comes into the yarn—perhaps a little guessing here may suggest how, though I fancy not! And Tom Brown, who knows something about agricultural methods, proves his value.

Altogether a first-class story, not without its serious side, but chiefly humorous.

THE PAPER TROUBLE.

This is a very serious matter. It would be difficult to exaggerate its seriousness for everyone who has to do with the publishing and newsagent trades.

Wastepaper has gone up to prices hitherto unheard of. But the paper we use is not made from wastepaper. It is made from wood-pulp, and that wood-pulp has to be brought overseas. Ours came from Newfoundland. Much of what was imported came from Sweden. The Swedish ships have practically been frightened off the seas by the ruthless submarine campaign, though even before that there had arisen difficulties with Sweden, in connection with the war, which cut down the supply obtained thence. Now, there is so little room to spare in the ships which cross the Atlantic that the Government has placed severe—though, of course, necessary—restrictions on the amount of paper-making material they are allowed to carry.

You have been used to seeing the windows of newsagents' shops and the railway bookstalls crowded with daily, weekly, and monthly papers. Even before these lines are read there is likely to be a very big change in this respect. The best show possible will be made, no doubt, but there will be a real scarcity of any periodical whatever for casual sale.

They will have to be ordered if you want them. This system of ordering will enable the publishers to print just the number of copies needed, without waste—waste which simply cannot be afforded now.

The result of this will be that lots of papers will go under. The survivors will be those whose readers are really attached and loyal enough to take a little trouble. And it is extraordinary how very little trouble will choke anyone off a thing that he or she does not keenly want!

I believe my readers to be as loyal as those of any paper in existence; and I ask them to prove their loyalty by ordering in advance. There is no other practical way of helping us just now. Only this will serve!

Of course, a decrease in circulation means a saving in paper. But, obviously, that is, from our point of view, a saving in the wrong direction. We do not want to lose readers. That sort of thing can be carried so far as to raise the question whether paper and cash cannot be better saved by ceasing to print at all! What we want is to supply our readers without wasting a single copy. Do you see? And will you do your share by giving your order? A form for filling up and handing to your newsagent will be found on this page.

Yours Editor

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(Signed) .....