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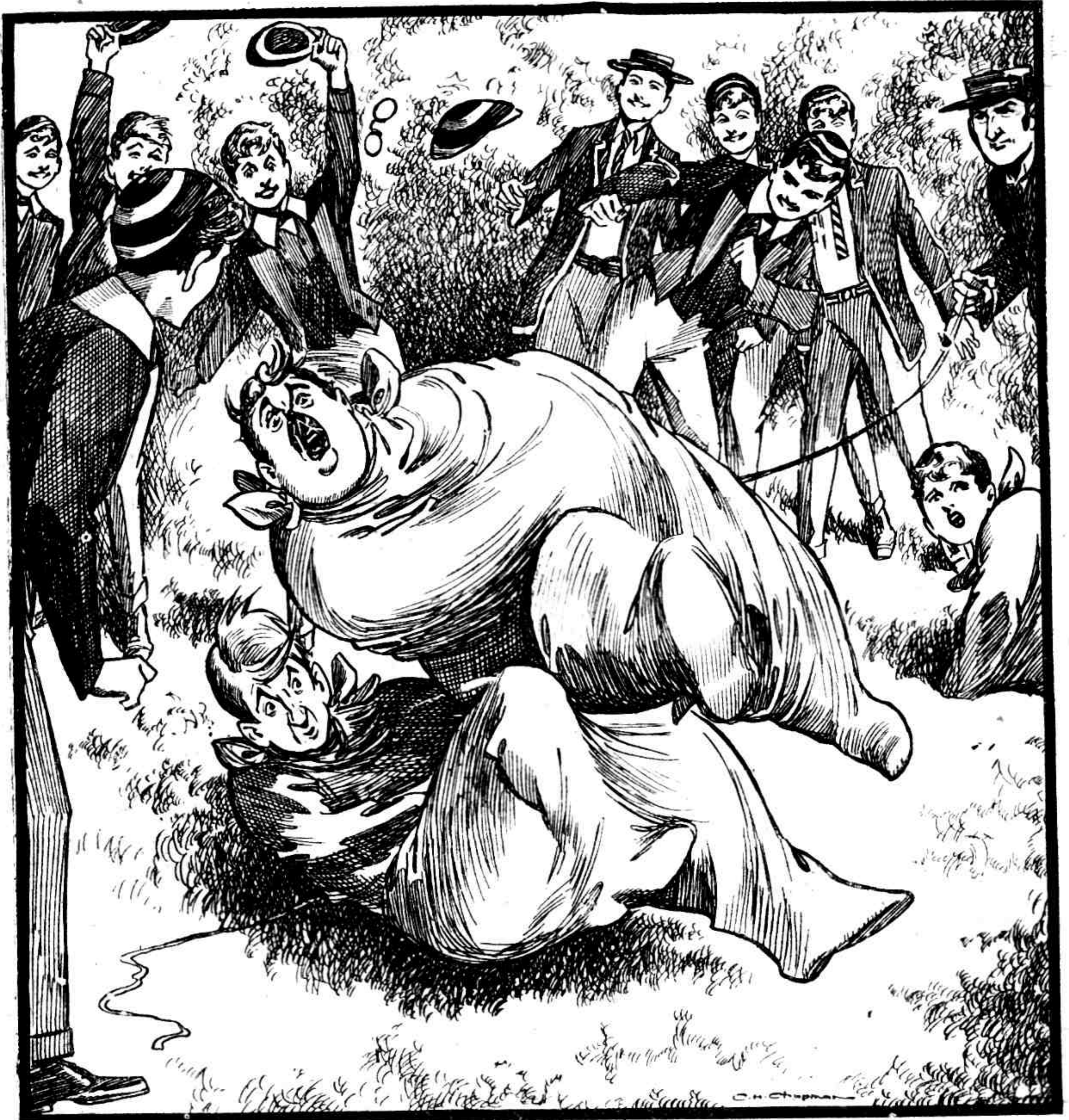
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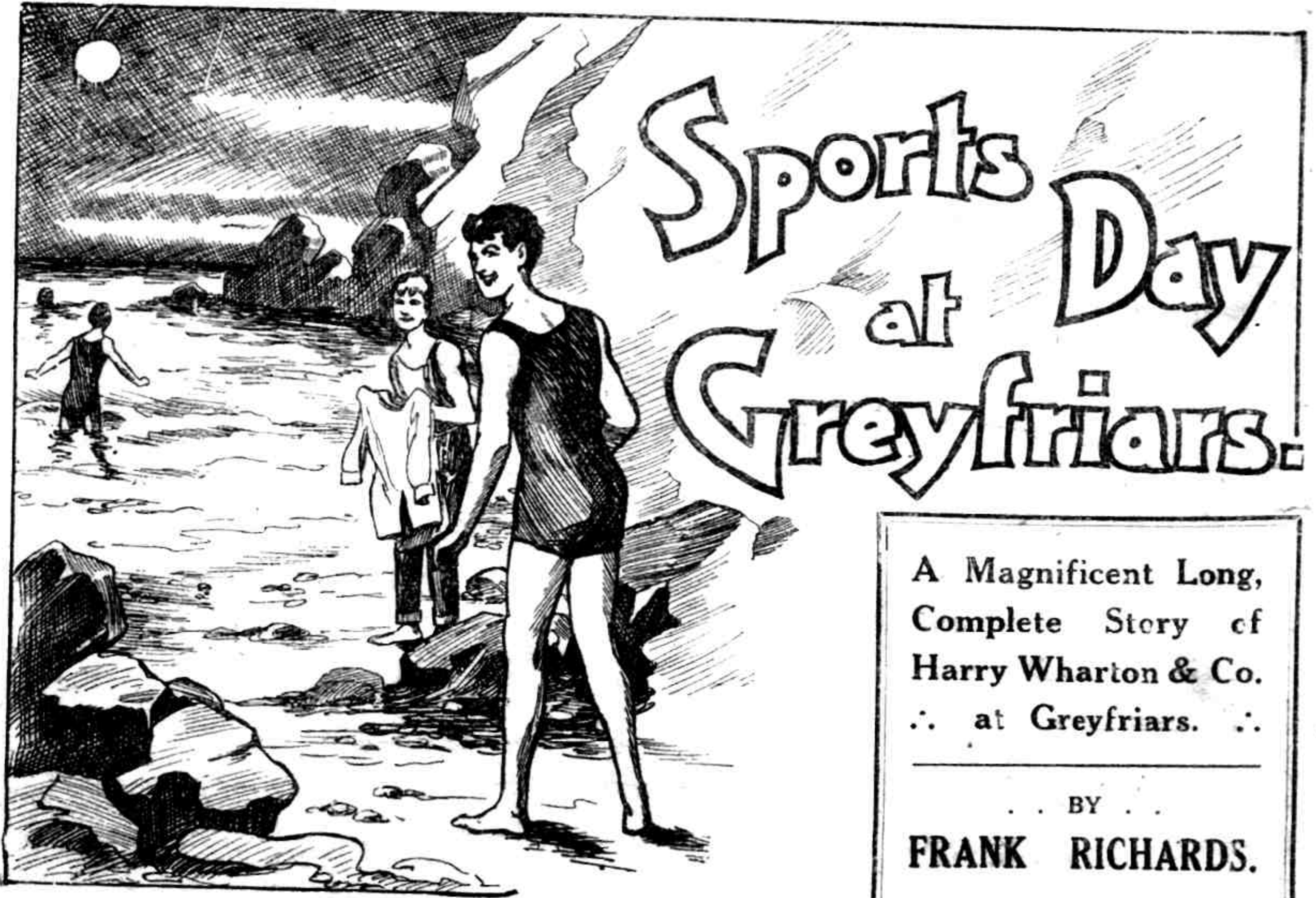


SPORTS DAY AT GREYFRIARS



THE END OF THE GREAT SACK RACE

(A Very Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



A Magnificent Long,
Complete Story of
Harry Wharton & Co.
∴ at Greyfriars. ∴

... BY ...
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker's Petition!

"I SHALL put it before the Head!" Coker of the Fifth uttered the words with an air of finality.

Potter and Greene, who were having tea with Coker in his study, stared at their chief in surprise.

"What are you going to put before the Head?" inquired Potter. "Not your face, I hope. He'll never survive the shock!"

"Never!" said Greene solemnly.

"Look here," said Coker wrathfully. "This study isn't a home for prize comedians!"

"Then what are you doing here?" asked Potter, in surprise.

And Greene chuckled.

Coker jumped up from the table. When Coker did that it was a sure sign that a storm was brewing.

Potter and Greene jumped up, too, and backed away in alarm.

"Are you idiots going to behave yourselves?" demanded Coker. "If not, I'll wipe up the floor with you!"

"We—we'll be as good as gold!" faltered Greene.

Both he and Potter had great respect for Coker's fists.

"Very well," said Coker, resuming his seat. "Now, listen to me."

"We are all ears!" said George Potter.

"Any ass can see that!" growled Coker. "I never saw a fellow with such big flappers in all my natural!"

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Potter.

"Dry up, and listen to what I've got to say! I'm going to put in a petition to the Head—"

"A which?" said Potter.

"A petition!" said Coker firmly.

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"What on earth for?"

"It's high time we had a Sports Day at Greyfriars," Coker went on. "We haven't had one for a dog's age. Most schools have a sports day, and I don't see why Greyfriars should be different from the rest."

"It's not a bad wheeze," said Greene, rather grudgingly. "But it's not your place to put it to the Head. That's Wingate's job, as captain of Greyfriars."

"Rats!"

"Greene's quite right," said Potter. "It's up to you to put it to Wingate, and then Wingate will approach the Head."

"Oh, will he?" growled Coker. "And take all the credit for my idea! I'm not quite such a fool as I look, George Potter!"

"Well, that's worth knowing, anyway!" said Potter.

"Do you think the Head would take any notice of a petition from you?" exclaimed Greene. "Why, he'd shy it into his wastepaper-basket! The Head doesn't allow a fellow in the Fifth to dictate to him!"

"No, rather not!" said Potter.

"We'll see," said Coker.

And he pushed his plate away from him, and substituted a writing-pad and an inkpot. After which the great Horace thoughtfully nibbled at a pen-holder.

"Want any help?" asked Potter.

Coker sniffed.

"I don't accept help from a fellow who can't spell!" he said.

"My hat!"

"Your spelling would be a disgrace to a fag in the Second!" said Coker scornfully. "Only the other day you told me there was no 'k' in exercise!"

"Neither is there!" gasped Potter.

"Don't talk rot! You know jolly well it's spelt 'e-k-s-e-r-s-i-s-e!'"

"First I've heard of it!" grunted Potter.

Coker shook his head sadly.

"You've got to learn, George Potter!" he said. "It's a pity you're so backward!"

"Backward!" hooted Potter. "Why, if I were so backward as you I'd go and suffocate myself in the nearest cupboard!"

"Same here!" said Greene.

Coker glared.

"You're going the right way to get your two silly nappers banged together!" he growled. "Dry up now! I'm going to write my petition."

Potter and Greene exchanged glances, and each tapped his forehead significantly, suggesting that Horace Coker was not "all there."

There was nothing wrong with Coker's idea of a Sports Day at Greyfriars; but the Head would not be likely to sanction it on the strength of a petition from a common or garden Fifth-Former.

Instead of tackling the situation in his usual high-handed way, Coker would have been wiser, in the opinion of his study-mates, to submit his idea to Mr. Prout, or to the captain of Greyfriars.

For some moments there was no sound in Coker's study save the steady scratching of his pen.

Coker disliked writing, and his spider-like scrawl was only produced after a great expenditure of effort. On this occasion he was actually in a state of perspiration by the time he had finished writing his petition.

"There!" said Coker, laying down his pen, and drawing an inky finger across his nose. "I think that will answer the purpose. It will make the Head sit up and take notice, anyway."

"I should jolly well think it would!" said Potter.

"May we read the touching appeal?" asked Greene.

"Certainly!" said Coker.

And he pushed the manuscript across the table.

Potter and Greene, as they perused the ill-written, ill-spelt document, could scarcely contain their merriment. On several occasions they were called upon to turn a chuckle into a cough.

Coker's petition—partially obscured by numerous blots—ran as follows:

"I, HORACE COKER, of the Vth Form at Greyfriars, do hereby sollumly petishun the headmaster to give his consideration to the suggestion hearby folowing.

"Other skools have their sports days. Why not Greyfriars? I respectfully beg to suggest that the whole skool be granted a fool day's holliday on Wensday neckst, for the purpuss of playing cricket, and cetra.

"If konvenient, will the headmaster plesse notify the aforemenshuned Horace Coker."

"Carry me home to die!" gurgled Potter.

"Eh?" said Coker sharply. "What was that?"

"I—I said that ought to hit home by-and-by!" stammered Potter.

Coker looked suspicious.

"There's nothing wrong with that petition, is there?" he demanded.

"Oh no!" said Greene promptly.

"It's perfect—except for the handwriting and the spelling; but they're minor considerations."

"Oh, quite!" said Potter.

"Coker seems to be in love with the letter 'k,'" said Greene. "He's used it in 'consideration,' 'konvenient,' 'school,' and 'next.'"

"Of course!" said Coker. "That's as it should be."

"My hat!"

"By the way," said Potter, "what sort of game is 'cetra'?"

"Eh?"

"You talk about cricket, and cetra. I've heard of cricket, but the other thing's foreign to me!"

"Ass!" snorted Coker. "It means 'and so on,' of course!"

"Oh!"

"It's about time you fellows swotted up Latin!" said Coker.

"Look here," said Potter. "Do you seriously mean to say that you're going to send that petition to the Head?"

"Do you think I expended all that time and thought just for a joke?" roared Coker.

"If the Head sees that you'll get it in the neck—"

"Oh, let him go ahead!" said Greene.

"He won't be happy till he's made a champion ass of himself! Serves him right if the Head sticks his letter up on the notice-board for all the school to see!"

Coker ignored Greene's remarks.

He went to the door, opened it, and glanced along the passage.

In the distance was the retreating figure of Trotter, the school page. Coker hailed him.

"Take this along to the Head at once!" he said, handing the petition, duly folded and sealed, to the page.

Trotter nodded, and went on his way whistling.

Coker turned back into his study.

"I shall soon hear the result," he said.

"It'll probably mean six months—with hard labour!" said Potter.

Not for one moment did Coker's study-

mates imagine that the petition would prove successful.

But the unexpected happened.

Half an hour later Trotter appeared on the scene with a note addressed to Horace Coker in the Head's handwriting.

"My hat!" murmured Potter. "The Head's actually sent a reply!"

"Of course he has!" said Coker. "From one gentleman to another, you know!"

"I'll bet it's unfavourable!" said Greene.

Coker took out the Head's note, and read it.

"Well?" said Potter and Greene together.

"It's all serene!" said Coker. "Sports Day will be next Wednesday!"

"Garamon!"

Coker tossed the letter across the table.

"Read the letter for yourselves, then!"

Potter and Greene surveyed the Head's reply. It ran thus:

"Dear Coker,—On receiving your epistle, I at first considered I was being made the victim of a practical joke. I then recalled the fact that your knowledge of writing and spelling is extremely limited, and I realised that you had not wilfully misspelt every other word. I shall request Mr. Prout to give you half an hour's tuition each day, after school hours, in English composition and spelling.

"With regard to your request that next Wednesday may be treated as a 'fool holliday'—I presume you mean 'full holiday'—such a request should have been made to me through the captain of the school, or one of the Form-masters. Doubtless, however, you were not aware of this fact.

"I have given the matter my consideration, and have decided to grant your request. In future, however, please make your suggestions through the proper channels.

"(Signed) HERBERT H. LOCKE,
"Headmaster."

"My only aunt!" gasped Potter. "The Head's actually turned up trumps!"

"Of course he has!" said Coker. "I knew all along that he'd do the decent thing. But I can't understand what he means about my knowledge of writing and spelling being limited; and I'm dashed if I'm going to take lessons under Prout! Prout can't spell for toffee!"

"Great Scott!"

"Sports Day's a fixture for next Wednesday, anyhow!" said Coker. "That's all that matters. And the fellows have got me to thank for bringing it about!"

And the great Coker felt immensely pleased with himself.

His concluding remarks, although he did not know it, had been overheard by Billy Bunter of the Remove, who had followed Trotter along to the study to find out who the note was for, and what it was about.

"Sports Day on Wednesday!" murmured the Owl of the Remove, his little round eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. "That's ripping!"

And he rolled breathlessly away to the Remove passage, to acquaint Harry Wharton & Co. with the good tidings.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Night Adventure.

"IMPOSSIBLE!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter blinked at the captain of the Remove.

"I tell you it's a fact!" he said.

"Coker suggested to the Head that a Sports Day should be held next Wednesday—and the Head agreed!"

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry.

"Bunter imagines these things!" growled Johnny Bull. "Of course, it would be jolly nice to have a Sports Day, but the Head wouldn't take any notice of a chump like Coker. If the request came from us it would be quite another matter!"

"Oh, quite!" said Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter glowered at the Famous Five.

"I can see you don't believe me—"

he began.

"Go on!"

"But Coker will bear out what I say. You go along and ask him!"

"It isn't worth it," said Harry Wharton. "There's bound to be no truth in it. We know what a blessed Ananias you are, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

At that moment the door of Study No. 1 was thrown open, and Horace Coker appeared.

Billy Bunter at once appealed to the Fifth-Former.

"I say, Coker, isn't it a fact that Sports Day's on Wednesday?"

"Yes," said Coker.

There was a gasp from the Famous Five.

"You—you're not pulling our legs, Coker?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Of course not! I petitioned the Head, and he readily consented to my request!" said Coker loftily.

"There you are, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter, with a triumphant blink at the Famous Five.

Coker strode up to the Owl of the Remove and gripped him by the collar.

"You must have been listening outside my study door to get hold of this information!" he said.

"Ow! I wasn't—I didn't—"

Coker shook Billy Bunter like a fat rat. Then, with a superhuman effort, he hurled the plump junior into the passage.

Billy Bunter rolled over on the linoleum, and the study door was slammed in his face.

When he had recovered his breath—for Billy Bunter was no light-weight—Coker turned to the Famous Five.

"I want you kids to understand," he said, "that I'm going to be master of the ceremonies. The sports are going to be organised and controlled by me!"

"Rats!"

"You will draw up a programme, Wharton, and submit it to me for my consideration."

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" growled Wharton.

Coker glared.

"You refuse to recognise my authority?" he exclaimed.

"Right on the wicket!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"If we have to take orders from anybody," said Nugent, "we'll take them from Wingate!"

"Not for one moment would we dreamfully think of taking our esteemed orders from the boot-faced Coker!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker clenched his fists, and looked as if he were about to hurl himself at the Famous Five.

But wiser counsels prevailed. The Famous Five were in full force; and, moreover, they were very fine fighting-men.

"We shall see about this!" said Coker.

"I mean to make you kids toe the line!"

"Bow-wow!"

Coker strode from the study, shutting the door behind him with a slam which

re-echoed the whole length of the Remove passage.

When the enraged Fifth-Former had gone, Harry Wharton turned to his chums.

"We sighed for the day, and we cried for the day—and now the day has come!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I've hit upon rather a good wheeze in connection with the sports," Wharton went on. "I propose that the Remove Eleven play a cricket-match against the Rest of Greyfriars."

"My hat!"

"What sort of team would the Rest be?" inquired Nugent.

"It would be composed of all sorts—one or two fellows from each Form."

"Oh!"

"Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth, Blundell and Hilton of the Fifth, and so on," said Wharton.

"My dear chap," said Johnny Bull, "we shouldn't stand a dog's chance!"

"Oh yes, we should! Wingate and Gwynne would take some getting out, but the tail-end of the team would give no trouble. It would be composed of fags in the Second and Third."

"That's so," said Bob Cherry. "It's quite a new idea, and the Remove ought to come out strong. Wingate will skipper the Rest, of course?"

"I'll go along and ask him," said Wharton.

And the captain of the Remove went along to Wingate's study.

As a result of his interview with Wingate, the following announcement appeared on the notice-board in Hall that evening:

REMOVE VERSUS THE REST.

"On Wednesday next (Sports Day) this match will take place on Big Side.

Teams:

REMOVE (selected from): H. Wharton, R. Cherry, F. Nugent, J. Bull, H. J. R. Singh, H. Vernon-Smith, M. Linley, S. O. I. Field, P. Todd, G. Bulstrode, R. E. Russell, R. D. Ogilvy, R. Penfold, and M. Newland.

THE REST: G. Wingate (captain), P. Gwynne, G. Blundell, C. Hilton, C. R. Temple, E. Dabney, W. Fry, G. Hobson, R. Nugent, G. Tubb, and P. S. Paget.

"The match will commence at 2 p.m. sharp.

"(Signed) GEORGE WINGATE,

"Captain of Greyfriars."

That notice roused a great deal of comment.

Wingate and Gwynne, although members of the high-and-mighty Sixth, were quite willing to participate in a cricket match against the Remove.

Blundell and Hilton of the Fifth expressed it as their joint opinion that Harry Wharton & Co. would be beaten to a frazzle.

Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Upper Fourth, knowingly predicted the downfall of the Remove. And their views were shared by Hobson of the Shell, who had been given a place in the team.

As for the three fags—Dicky Nugent, Tubb, and Paget—they were positively bursting with delight. They were actually playing for a side which included such stalwarts as Wingate and Gwynne!

By one person, however, the notice was received with immense indignation.

That person was Horace Coker.

"The cheek of it!" exclaimed Coker.

"The awful nerve of it! After I've gone to all the trouble of arranging the sports, Wingate chips in and takes the law into his own hands!"

"Shame!" said Potter.

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"I should go and remonstrate with Wingate if I were you!" said Greene.

And Coker went.

A few moments later he burst into Wingate's study like a cyclone.

Wingate, who was deep in conversation with Faulkner and Gwynne, glared truculently at the Fifth-Former.

"Get out!" he said.

Coker advanced into the study.

"Look here, Wingate!" he exclaimed, flushed and wrathful. "What do you mean by queering my pitch?"

"Eh?"

"Who appointed you master of the ceremonies? That's my job!"

"I think not!" said Wingate grimly.

"But I tell you it is! Who set the ball rolling and organised the sports? Who persuaded the Head to give his sanction? Was it you? Not a bit of it! You would have been far too funky—"

Wingate's patience, already at a low ebb, gave out altogether.

He signalled to Faulkner and Gwynne; and Coker, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, quitted the captain's study. The manner of his going out was quicker than the manner of his coming in.

With a bump and a roar Coker landed in the passage without.

"Buzz off!" said Wingate angrily. "If you try to dispute my authority again you'll get it in the neck!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Coker sorted himself out, and limped slowly and painfully away to his own quarters. His claims to be master of the ceremonies were evidently not recognised in the Sixth.

"What luck?" inquired Potter.

"None!" growled Coker. "The sooner Wingate's kicked out of the captaincy, and a capable fellow takes his place—me f'rinstance—the better it will be for Greyfriars! What are you sniggering at, William Greene?"

"W-w-was I sniggering?" stammered Greene.

"Yes, you were! Are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, dry up, then!"

Horace Coker was in a very savage mood for the rest of the evening.

And his troubles were not yet over.

Harry Wharton & Co., feeling that they would like to let off steam, organised a raid on the Fifth Form dormitory that evening.

Long after lights out the Removites mustered in full force, and armed themselves with bolsters and pillows. It was their avowed intention to make the Fifth sit up.

"Gently does the trick!" murmured Harry Wharton. "We don't want any of the beaks on our track! Are you fellows ready?"

"Ready, ay, ready!" murmured Bob Cherry, lovingly handling a plump pillow.

"Lead on, Macduff!" whispered Frank Nugent.

Seldom had a raid been organised on such a large scale.

Even Billy Bunter, who usually snored steadily through the night, was up and doing. But it was Bunter's intention to avoid active service as much as possible.

The pyjama-clad figures stole softly from the Remove dormitory. It was like a noiseless army proceeding into battle.

In the Fifth Form dormitory all was dark and still.

Blundell & Co. had not anticipated anything in the nature of a night raid, and they were sleeping the sleep of the just.

Harry Wharton gave a whispered word of command, and then the fun started.

The noiseless army leapt suddenly into action.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

Pillows and bolsters descended with remorseless vigour on the slumbering forms.

Coker had a very bad dose at the outset. It so happened that both Bob Cherry and Bolsover major made a bee-line for Coker's bed, and their pillows rose and fell in unison.

Coker started up in bed with a gasp and a yell.

"Yaroooooh! Rescue, Fifth!"

"Carry on with the merry carpet-beating!" grinned Bolsover major.

And he and Bob Cherry fairly made the dust rise.

"Ow! Yah! Rescue!" roared Coker.

But the other occupants of the dormitory found it as much as they could manage to look after themselves.

They had no chance whatever against the hail of blows which descended on every side.

George Blundell made an heroic effort to get out of bed, and he was promptly dragged on to the floor and sat upon.

The pillows and bolsters continued to do great execution. Never before had the Fifth been so completely overwhelmed by their smaller rivals.

At last Harry Wharton gave the command to cease fire.

Rounding up his men, he led them from the scene of their triumph.

It was not until the Remove dormitory was reached that Vernon-Smith remembered that he had left his pillow behind.

"You'll have to leave it where it is, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "You'll be flayed alive if you go back for it!"

"Rats!"

"You mean to say you're going?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Of course! I dropped it just outside the dorm, so I can easily get it without being spotted."

And Vernon-Smith went on his errand.

As he mounted the stairs to the Fifth Form dormitory he fancied he heard footsteps, and promptly darted into the shadows.

The next instant, however, the strong rays of an electric torch flashed full into the Bounder's face, and he gave a startled gasp.

For the holder of the torch was Mr. Quelch!

The Form-master had heard the sounds of strife a few moments previously, and he had come to investigate. He looked a very grim figure in his dressing-gown as he frowned at Vernon Smith.

"Smith, what are you doing out of your dormitory?"

For once in a way the Bounder was at a loss for a reply. He simply stood and blinked in the rays of the electric torch.

"Well, Smith?" said the Form-master.

"I am waiting!"

"I—I was just taking a stroll, sir."

"Indeed! Do you not get sufficient exercise during the day?"

"I—I—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"I have reason to believe that you are engaged upon some silly practical joke! You will write a thousand lines, Smith, and hand them to me by Wednesday evening!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Vernon-Smith would much prefer to have been caned. An imposition of a thousand lines was anything but a joke.

Moreover, Wednesday was Sports Day.

Whilst his schoolfellows were enjoying themselves on playing-field and river Vernon-Smith would be grinding out lines in the Form-room.

The Bounder realised this fact, and he appealed to Mr. Quelch.

"Couldn't you cane me instead, sir?"



The noiseless army leapt suddenly into action. Biff! Thud! Pillows and bolsters descended with remorseless vigour on the slumbering Fifth-Formers. "Yaroo! Rescue, Fifth!" yelled Coker. (See Chapter 2.)

"Silence, Smith! How dare you presume to dictate to me in the matter of administering punishment? Go back to bed at once!"

And Vernon-Smith went, inwardly fuming at his bad luck.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Secret Swimming Society.

LEFT out!" Dick Russell, of the Remove uttered the words in some annoyance.

It was the eve of Sports Day, and the notice-board was covered with lists of the various teams.

"You're not left out of the cricket eleven, surely?" exclaimed Donald Ogilvy, who stood beside his chum.

"No. We're both in that! I'm referring to the swimming team. There's going to be a swimming-race against the Upper Fourth in the Sark, and here's the team!"

And Russell read out the names.

Only four fellows constituted the swimming team. They were Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh.

"Quite a good selection!" said Ogilvy.

"Yes; but why shouldn't somebody else be given a show? Those four aren't the only decent swimmers in the Remove."

"True, O King! But—"

"I think Wharton & Co. ought to stand down for once," said Russell. "I'm not posing as a giddy rebel, or anything like that, but I like to see fair play!"

"Faith, an' ye're right, entirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"Hear, hear!" said Morgan, who was present. "Wharton has things too much his own way, look you!"

Dick Russell reflected for a few moments. Then he turned to the others. "Why shouldn't we four form a swimming team?" he said.

"We're not up to Wharton's weight," said Ogilvy doubtfully.

"Rot! If we put in a couple of practice swims we should be able to lick all comers. My idea is this. We'll form a team, and if Temple & Co. win to-morrow—which is quite likely—we'll challenge them to a race!"

"Ripping!" said Micky Desmond.

"I'm game!" said Morgan.

Ogilvy was the only one who wavered. "There isn't time to get in a couple of practice swims!" he protested.

"Of course there is, fathead!" said Russell. "We can have one at midnight, and the other early in the morning."

"At midnight!" echoed Ogilvy, in astonishment.

"Yes. There will be a full moon to-night, and it ought to be rather an ad-

venture. We'll go down to Pegg Bay and have a good trial swim."

Micky Desmond and Morgan nodded their assent. The idea appealed to their sense of the adventurous.

Even Ogilvy was impressed. He, as well as Russell, was growing just a little tired of taking a back seat in affairs of this sort.

"Mum's the word!" said Russell. "We'll call ourselves the Secret Swimming Society, and we won't breathe our intentions to anybody. And to-morrow morning, if Wharton's team fails against the Upper Fourth, we'll go in and win!"

"Good!" said Ogilvy.

The four juniors retired to their dormitory that night in a state of great excitement. But they were careful not to betray, either by word or look, what was in the wind.

Dick Russell propped himself up on his pillows, and, despite the drowsy warmth of the summer night, he contrived to keep awake.

Boom!

The first note of twelve sounded from the old clock-tower.

Dick Russell slipped out of bed, and dressed noiselessly in the moonlight.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered.

There was no reply. Ogilvy and Morgan and Desmond had dozed off.

Russell stole softly towards each of

their beds and roused the occupants. The keenness for the midnight adventure had worn off somewhat.

"Hadn't we better cry off?" yawned Ogilvy. "It's an awful fog, getting dressed and tramping all the way to Pegg."

"To say nothing of the risk," said Morgan.

"Rats! Get a move on, you lazy slackers!" growled Russell.

The juniors hurriedly dressed; and a few moments later the quartette left the dormitory.

Having collected towels and costumes from their studies, they made their exit from the building by way of the box-room window—the usual means of egress for those who broke bounds at night.

The moonlight flooded the Close with its silver radiance.

"What a gorgeous night!" murmured Ogilvy.

Now that they were wide awake the spirit of adventure returned to the members of the Secret Swimming Society. They crossed the Close in high spirits.

"Shush!" said Dick Russell suddenly. The juniors stopped short.

"What's up?" whispered Ogilvy.

"I thought I heard somebody about."

"Rats! It was only the wind in the trees."

"Let's buck up and shin over the wall!" said Russell. "I sha'n't feel safe till we've left Greyfriars behind."

The four juniors scaled the school wall, and stepped out briskly in the direction of the little fishing-village of Pegg.

"Here we are!" said Dick Russell, stopping short at last. "My hat! I've never felt in better form for a swim!"

The sea was dead calm—a level sheet of blue.

Some distance out a boat was moored to a rock. Russell pointed to it.

"We'll swim out as far as that boat, and then back," he said.

"Oh, help!" said Ogilvy. "I'm not a blessed Burgess or a Captain Webb!"

"You can tackle that, surely?" said Russell.

"I'll try," said Ogilvy, "but I don't feel particularly happy about it!"

The juniors undressed on the rocky foreshore, and a moment later they were striking out through the water.

Dick Russell took the lead. He was a very strong swimmer, and he fairly revelled in the moonlight escapade.

Behind him came Morgan and Micky Desmond; and behind those two came Donald Ogilvy, who had an uncomfortable feeling that the distance would be beyond his powers.

But there was no retracting. Ogilvy had signified his willingness to be a member of the Secret Swimming Society, and to go back would be a confession of weakness. He would be considered a funk, too, by his chums.

So Ogilvy kept on keeping on, though his breath was laboured and his progress painfully slow.

Dick Russell reached the boat at last. He swam round it, and started on the return journey.

Even Russell was feeling a trifle fagged by this time. He had misjudged the distance, and the boat was much farther out to sea than he had supposed.

Shortly afterwards Morgan and Micky Desmond rounded the boat; and they, too, felt rather dubious as to their ability to regain the shore, for a strong current which they encountered on the return journey made progress difficult.

"Buck up, Don!" panted Dick Russell as he passed his chum. "You'll never reach that blessed boat to-night!"

"I—I can't go any quicker!" faltered Ogilvy.

Dick Russell detected a note of helplessness in his chum's tone.

"You'd better turn back, Don!" he said.

But Ogilvy did not mean to be beaten.

The other three had achieved their object, and he had a dread of being the only failure.

"I'm going on!" he said. And he struck out feebly through the moonlit water.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Between Life and Death!

AFTER what seemed an age Ogilvy reached the boat, and clung to the side of it for a few moments to rest and regain his breath.

Then, slipping back into the water, Ogilvy headed for the shore, which seemed terribly distant.

Summoning all his strength, he swam almost fiercely for a hundred yards.

Then he looked ahead of him, and lo! the shore seemed farther away than ever. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Ogilvy.

He began to feel strangely frightened. He knew now that he ought not to have undertaken the big swim. It was a physical impossibility for him to get back to the shore.

And then another feeling assailed him—a feeling which he knew only too well. He was in the grip of cramp!

The attack, which had sent so many strong swimmers to their death, completely overpowered the unhappy junior. He was able to keep afloat, and that was all.

To raise a shout would be worse than useless.

Even if his chums heard they would be powerless to help. It was as much as they could do to look after themselves at that juncture.

Ogilvy made a desperate attempt to return to the boat. He would find comparative safety there.

But he made little or no progress. And, with a sinking of the heart, he realised that he must abandon himself to his fate.

And what would that fate be? Death! Death, slow and terrible, in the spring-time of his youth!

Donald Ogilvy bitterly regretted his rash escapade.

As he lay on his back, staring with frightened eyes at the moon, which seemed to be smiling down on him in mockery, he thought of his school-fellows, safe and sound in their beds in the Remove dormitory.

What a fool he was! For fear of being thought a funk he had carelessly exposed his life.

But regrets were useless now. They could avail him nothing.

Ogilvy knew that he could manage to keep himself afloat for half an hour, perhaps more.

And if no help arrived during that interval—

Ogilvy shuddered.

There were no boats on the shore. They had all been stored away in the boathouse. There was no chance that one of his chums would row out to his help. And they were much too exhausted to swim out to him.

Perhaps they would rouse one of the old fishermen, and obtain help that way.

But supposing the help came too late? Ogilvy raised his voice in desperation.

"Help!" he cried. "Help!"

There was no answer.

Whether his cry had been heard or not the unhappy junior could not tell.

The minutes passed slowly by. Ogilvy became cold and numbed with his immersion.

And then he remembered to have read in books of swimmers who had warded off attacks of cramp by kicking vigorously with their legs.

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Ogilvy did the same, but the action only served to make him more exhausted.

He began to regret that he had ever learned to swim. Death by drowning is infinitely more terrible to a swimmer than to a non-swimmer.

Ogilvy's strength was fast failing him.

He saw that he had drifted back almost to the boat; but he lacked the energy to reach it.

His voice was raised in a final appeal:

"Help! Help!"

The next moment Ogilvy imagined he must be dreaming, or in a state of delirium.

For in response to his feeble cry came a shout:

"Hold on! I'll be with you in a jiffy!"

And then Ogilvy's ear detected the measured breathing of a strong swimmer.

Help had arrived at last!

A pair of strong arms grasped the exhausted junior, and then all was blackness and oblivion.

When Ogilvy came to himself he was on terra firma.

Wingate of the Sixth was bending over him, and his three chums stood close at hand.

"Feeling better now, kid?" asked Wingate kindly.

The junior pulled himself together, and the captain of Greyfriars assisted him to his feet.

"Wingate—then it was you! You—you saved my life!"

Wingate laughed.

"How very dramatic!" he said. "Cut it out, kid!"

"But—"

"Buck up and get dressed!"

Ogilvy soon recovered from the effects of his terrible ordeal.

Ten minutes later the four juniors, all looking decidedly sheepish, were escorted back to the school by the Greyfriars captain.

"How—how did you get here, Wingate?" inquired Ogilvy, at length.

"I followed you."

"Oh!"

"I fancied I caught sight of you bunking over the school wall, and I dressed and came after you."

"Faith, an' it's a lucky thing for Ogilvy that you did!" said Micky Desmond.

The little party tramped on in silence for some moments. Then Wingate said:

"Who organised this business?"

"I did, Wingate," said Dick Russell promptly.

If there was a price to be paid for the nocturnal escapade, Russell wished to bear the brunt of it.

"You're a silly young ass!" said Wingate shortly.

"Don't rub it in," said Russell. "I realise that already."

"It would serve you right," said the captain of Greyfriars, "if I reported this affair to your Form-master!"

Russell stared.

"Aren't you going to?" he exclaimed.

"No. I consider you've been punished enough."

"My hat!" muttered Ogilvy. "You're a brick, Wingate!"

"A brick of the first water!" said Morgan heartily.

So the breakers of bounds were to go unpunished, after all.

The juniors reflected what a different ending their escapade might have had if Loder of the Sixth had discovered them instead of Wingate.

Dick Russell & Co. clambered over the school wall, and Wingate followed.

"Get back to your dormitory," said the captain of Greyfriars; "and let this night's experience be a lesson to you!"

Ogilvy made one more attempt to thank his rescuer, but Wingate cut him short.

"I don't want heroics," he said, not unkindly. "Now, cut off!"

The four juniors reached their dormitory in safety; but not until the first grey glimmer of dawn did they settle down to sleep.

They had profited by Wingate's words of counsel. And from that time forth the Secret Swimming Society was no more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rivals in Sport.

SPORTS DAY dawned bright and clear.

Long before the rising-bell clanged out its shrill summons the Removites, with the exception of Dick Russell & Co., were up and doing.

Even Lord Mauleverer had turned out, though probably his unwonted activity was brought about by the diligent application of Bob Cherry's sponge.

Before breakfast Harry Wharton & Co. put in some practice at the nets.

Fellows from other Forms were practising, too.

Blundell of the Fifth was batting a short distance away; and Horace Coker, looking on, was giving Blundell the doubtful benefit of his advice.

Greyfriars was like a beehive. All was bustle and activity.

After breakfast the attention of the fellows was drawn to yet another notice which appeared on the board. It ran thus:

"The Headmaster of Greyfriars has kindly undertaken to present to the best athlete in each Form a silver medal. Those who score the biggest number of points will be adjudged the winners.

(Signed) GEORGE WINGATE.

"Captain."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Silver medals, by Jove! How ripping!"

"That is the stuff to impartfully give 'em!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head's announcement lent an additional spur to the Remove sportsmen. Great was the speculation as to which fellow would prove himself the best athlete in the Form.

"It's rough luck on Smithy," said Frank Nugent. "He's landed with a thousand lines."

"How many has he written?" asked Wharton.

"When I saw him last night he'd only completed two hundred."

"My hat!"

It was, as Nugent had remarked, extremely rough luck on the one-time Boulder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith would have been well in the running for one of the Head's medals; but his imposition had to be handed in by nightfall, and—unless he openly defied Mr. Quelch—he would be unable to participate in the sports.

The morning was still at an early stage when the Greyfriars fellows adjourned to the playing-fields.

The ground had been roped off into several divisions, each space being occupied by a separate Form.

The Remove were lucky, for their pitch was situated, for the most part, beneath shady trees.

The masters had consented to act as judges, and Mr. Quelch occupied this capacity for the Remove.

"This fairly puts the kybosh on poor old Smithy!" said Squiff. "He can't

possibly take a hand with Quelch's gimlet eyes on him."

Squiff was right.

Vernon-Smith realised the futility of taking part in the sports under the Form-master's nose, and he resigned himself to a morning in the Form-room.

In the afternoon the cricket-match was to take place. And Vernon-Smith made up his mind that he would not miss that for whole hemispheres. Come what may, he intended to take his usual place in the Remove Eleven.

The first item on the programme, so far as the Remove were concerned, was the two hundred yards race.

Nearly every fellow in the Form wished to compete, so it became necessary to run off some preliminary heats.

Those who finished first in each heat, namely, Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Hurree Singh, lined up for the real race.

Bob Cherry was the favourite. Bob's long legs took him over the ground at a tremendous pace.

"Are you ready, my boys?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

The four runners, crouching low, nodded their heads.

Craak!

Mr. Quelch fired the pistol, and the race started.

It ended almost as soon as it began.

Bob Cherry beat Hurree Singh by inches, and secured the verdict. Bob's time was just under eleven seconds, which was very good going.

Then came the hurdle-race. This fell to Squiff, who also won the high jump a few moments later.

Peter Todd secured the long jump, and then came the first real surprise of the morning.

Bolsover major, whose awkward, shambling gait did not stamp him as a trained runner, romped home first in the quarter-mile. His success was loudly cheered by friends and foes alike.

"There used to be a fellow in the Remove called Harry Wharton," murmured Bob Cherry. "What's become of him?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I haven't got into my stride yet," he said.

"The fact of the matter is," sneered Skinner, "you're no good. This will show you up in your true colours!"

"Dry up, you cad!" said Nugent.

"The Form captain," continued Skinner, "is also supposed to be the best sportsman. And Wharton hasn't captured a single giddy event!"

"I'll tell you what," said Bob Cherry, noticing that Mr. Quelch's back was turned. "we'll introduce a new contest. The fellow who throws Skinner the farthest scores a point."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry strode towards the cad of the Remove, and swung him off his feet. Then he hurled Skinner away from him with all his force.

"Yarooooop!"

Skinner landed on the grass with a thud, at the feet of Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the astonished Form-master. "Are you indulging in acrobatic feats, Skinner?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"If so, I cannot say that I admire your performance!" said Mr. Quelch coldly. "Get up at once!"

And Skinner obeyed, looking daggers at Bob Cherry.

In the next event Harry Wharton came into his own.

He threw the cricket-ball a distance of ninety-one yards—an achievement which remained unbeaten.

"Sack-race next!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, noticing the presence of Billy

Bunter for the first time. "What are you doing here, porpoise? Is the tuck-shop closed for the duration of peace?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his school-fellows.

"I'm going to win the sack-race!" he said.

"Really, my dear Bunter," protested Alonzo Todd, "I quite fail to see how you can bring about such a consummation!"

"Why?" demanded Bunter.

"Because I am going to win the sack-race myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in an amused chorus from the Removites.

In the opinion of Harry Wharton & Co., Alonzo Todd stood just as much chance of winning the sack-race as Billy Bunter. In other words, no chance at all!

"Come, boys!" said Mr. Quelch impatiently. "Get into your sacks!"

"There's bound to be a bit of delay, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean, Cherry?"

"Bunter can't find a sack big enough to get into, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Through the joint efforts of the Famous Five, however, Billy Bunter was squeezed into a sack.

A still further delay was occasioned by Dick Penfold, who insisted upon taking a snapshot of the Owl of the Remove—a fantastic figure.

Mr. Quelch rapped out the word of command, and the sack-race commenced.

There were numerous casualties at the outset.

Bob Cherry, who took the lead, pitched headlong, and thus obstructed the progress of those immediately behind him.

The competitors were piled up into a sort of pyramid, with Bob Cherry gurgling and gesticulating underneath.

Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd, who had both been very slow in getting off the mark, were not mixed up in the struggling mass of humanity on the ground. They had a clear field, and, breaking away from the others, they rolled towards their goal.

The fellows looking on were doubled up with helpless laughter. Even the owl-like gravity of Mr. Quelch broke down at the sight of Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd, wriggling towards the outstretched tape.

"Go it, Lonzy!" said Skinner encouragingly. "Six to one on Lonzy!"

"Pray do not introduce race-course terms into the proceedings, Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch.

The race was nearing the finish now.

All the competitors were out of the running, with the exception of Bunter and Alonzo.

The latter gained a slight lead—ever so slight, but sufficient to fill Bunter with alarm.

The fat junior realised that his only hope of winning the race was to impede Alonzo's progress.

Accordingly, he deliberately cannoned into his rival.

Alonzo Todd completely lost his balance, and went crashing to earth.

Billy Bunter, his face illuminated like a full moon, rolled on to the tape—and victory!

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Bunter!"

But Mr. Quelch was a fair-minded man.

"Todd is the winner," he said.

"Todd!" hooted Billy Bunter, quite forgetting the respect due to a Form-master. "How do you make that out?"

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"You are disqualified for obstruction, Bunter!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But for your unsportsman-like conduct Todd would undoubtedly have reached the tape first!"

Billy Bunter was inclined to argue the point; but Mr. Quelch was adamant.

"Well played, Lonzy!" said Bob Cherry, when he had struggled out of his sack. "I can see you collaring the Head's medal yet!"

Alonzo beamed.

"My ambitions are concentrated upon such an object, my dear Cherry."

"Then I hope you'll succeed, my dear dictionary!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were six more events, including the mile.

Bob Cherry won two, Harry Wharton won two, and Frank Nugent and Mark Linley secured one each.

Bob Cherry held the lead, so far, in the matter of points; but it was by no means certain that he would secure the silver medal.

Three points were to be awarded to the highest scorer in the cricket-match, two points to the second highest, and one point to the third. And Bob Cherry would need to go all out to retain his lead.

Harry Wharton and Squiff were still in the running, and each of them meant to leave no stone unturned in his effort to win.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

An Exciting Race.

"I THINK we shall pull it off, you fellows!"

There was cheerful confidence in Bob Cherry's tone.

The last event before lunch was the swimming-race between the Remove and the Upper Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple, who in the course of the morning had proved himself to be the best athlete in his Form, was confident of victory. And he had good grounds for his confidence, for the Upper Fourth team—consisting of Temple himself, Dabney, Fry, and Scott—were strong swimmers, and bigger fellows than the Removites.

Quite a crowd of spectators lined up on the banks of the river.

Even Coker of the Fifth had condescended to come and look on, which was saying a good deal, for Coker was heartily sick of the sports.

"It's a beastly shame!" he confided to Potter and Greene. "I go and persuade the Head to hold the sports, and somebody else comes along and collars all the credit!"

"What did you expect?" asked Potter.

"A free hand, of course! Now, if I had controlled the sports—"

"There wouldn't have been any!" said Greene.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"The fellows would have refused to take part in any event which you were judging!" said Greene, with delightful candour.

Coker glared.

"Are you suggesting that my judgment would be at fault?" he demanded.

"Of course not!" said Potter. "For the simple reason that you haven't any judgment!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Greene.

Coker had reached the end of his tether.

He had been unable to realise his ambition to be master of the ceremonies; he had failed to distinguish himself during the morning; and the satire of his two study-mates was the most unkind cut of all.

Clenching his big fists, Coker lowered his head and rushed at the two scoffers like an infuriated bull.

"Help!" gasped Greene.

And he sprang nimbly to one side.

Potter promptly did the same.

The result of this side-stepping was alarming.

Coker's fist smote the air, meeting with no resistance. And Coker himself, continuing his wild rush, toppled headlong into the river.

Splash!

The burly Fifth-Former disappeared beneath the surface, a number of ripples marking the spot where he had struck the water.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, sprinting towards the scene with the Famous Five. "Coker's giving a special diving exhibition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's face, crimson with fury, bobbed to the surface.

With furious strokes he made his way towards the bank.

"We'll give him a helping hand!" said Bob Cherry.

And the humorous Bob picked up a boathook.

"The monster fish will now be landed!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The end of the boathook was inserted in Coker's jacket at the back, and the other members of the Famous Five willingly helped Bob Cherry to haul the unhappy Horace out of the water.

Coker rose bodily in the air, with his

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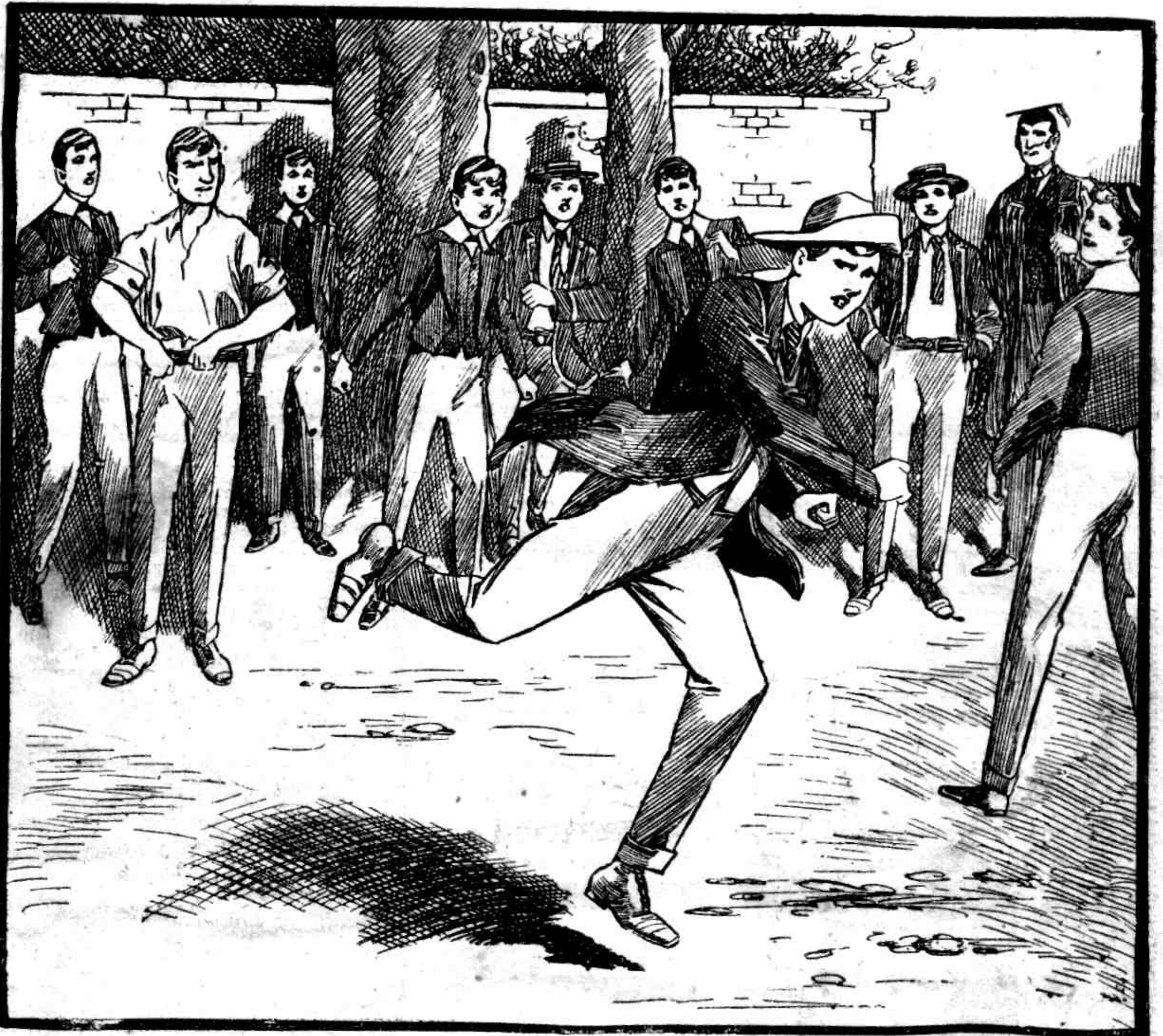
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There was only one thing for Vernon-Smith to do as he spotted the approaching figure of Mr. Quelch. He took to his heels, and raced away towards the school building, leaving a buzz of excited comment behind him. (See Chapter 8.)

arms and legs spread-eagled, and he was deposited on the bank like a huge tortoise. Rivulets of water oozed out of his clothing.

The fellows on the bank were almost in hysterics.

As for Potter and Greene, they discreetly made themselves scarce. Coker was not a pleasant person to encounter just then.

"Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled the unfortunate Horace.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker picked himself up, and started to walk back to Greyfriars for a change of garments.

He encountered Mr. Prout en route.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the master of the Fifth. "Has the swimming-clothes race just taken place, Coker?"

"I fell into the river!" growled Coker.

"Dear me! Then you must be very wet!"

Mr. Prout had an unfortunate habit of commenting on things which were perfectly obvious. It was not necessary to survey Coker through a microscope to discover that he was wet.

"I should advise an immediate change of clothing, Coker!" said Mr. Prout.

"Isn't that just what I'm after?" grunted Coker.

Mr. Prout glared.

"Coker! Boy! You are impertinent!"

"Br-r-r!"

Coker strode on his way. In his present humour he would cheerfully have cheeked the Head.

The comedy of Coker's tumble into the river was soon forgotten by Harry Wharton & Co., who had to concentrate their minds and energies on defeating their rivals of the Upper Fourth.

"The relay-race will now commence!" said Mr. Quelch.

And the first pair of swimmers—Harry Wharton and Cecil Reginald Temple—stood ready on the diving-raft.

On the word of command they dived cleanly into the water.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Stick it, Temple!"

The enthusiasm on the bank was contagious.

Harry Wharton swam with great vigour. Temple's stroke was the more graceful of the two, but he was not quite so fast.

Wharton reached the rope which was stretched across the river, and turned

back towards the diving-raft. Temple followed hard in his wake.

"Come along, Harry!" urged Bob Cherry, who was the next man to plunge in for the Remove.

But Wharton needed no urging. He reached the raft several yards to the good of Temple, and the second man—Bob Cherry—took up the running.

Temple got home a few seconds later, and Dabney made a clean, sweeping dive, and followed hot and strong after Bob Cherry.

The race became very exciting.

Bob Cherry was a splendid swimmer, but Dabney went great guns. He gradually gained on Bob, and the two were level on returning to the raft.

The third man—Fry and Frank Nugent—started off in style.

Of the two swimmers Fry was the most powerful, and at the finish he gained a slight advantage.

There was a burst of excitement when Scott, the Fourth-Formers' last man, dived from the raft.

But this was nothing to the shouts which hailed the Remove's last man—Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Now then, Inky!"

"Let's hear from you!"

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"Spurt for your life, my dusky and esteemed chum!" shouted Bob Cherry. Hurree Singh needed to spurt. Scott had a start of six yards. This does not sound much, but six yards in swimming requires a good deal of picking up.

By the time Scott had completed half the course the six yards had lessened to four.

"No go!" said Nugent, shaking his head glumly. "Inky can never do it!"

Even Bob Cherry, usually the soul of optimism, began to share Nugent's opinion.

But neither had made sufficient allowance for Hurree Singh's almost fierce determination.

The dusky junior from India's coral strand was swimming his hardest. He brought his swiftest form of side-stroke into play, and went ahead like a human submarine.

Scott, on the other hand, was slowing up. He made the fatal mistake of thinking that he had too good a lead to be overtaken.

A dozen swift, sweeping strokes and Hurree Singh was home. His dusky

hand clutched the side of the diving-raft a second in advance of his rival.

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly well played, Inky!"

The Removites cheered till they were husky.

Even Mr. Quelch, the austere master of the Remove, unbended to the extent of saying:

"An excellent performance, Hurree Singh!"

"Splendid, by Jove!" said Temple, who knew how to accept defeat like a sportsman.

Hurree Singh escaped from the cheering crowd, and towelled himself vigorously, feeling that he had deserved well of his country.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith's Ruse!

"HOW goes it, Smithy?"

Harry Wharton asked the question as he looked into the Remove Form-room just before lunch.

Vernon-Smith was seated at a desk, scribbling away as if for a wager.

He looked like a very busy editor—a human island surrounded by a sea of manuscript.

There were sheets of impot paper to right of him, and ditto to left of him. There were more sheets in front of him, and several scattered about the floor.

The Bounder raised his head as Wharton spoke to him. Smears of ink were on his face, and his hair was rumped and dishevelled.

"This is a rotten game!" he said.

Harry Wharton nodded sympathetically.

"I know," he said. "I've had some. How many have you done?"

Vernon-Smith made a rapid calculation.

"Five hundred and twenty," he said.

"Phew! That's not much more than half!"

"And I've been working like a nigger all the morning!"

The Bounder rose, and stretched himself.

"It was awful!" he said. "I've been haunted all the time by the shouts from the playing-field. Every minute I wanted to rush to the window and see how things were going; but I forced myself to concentrate on this beastly job! Who's scored most points so far?"

"Bob Cherry."

"And how do you stand?"

"I can only expect to win the silver medal by making top score in the match this afternoon."

There was a gleam in Vernon-Smith's eyes.

"I shall be there!" he said.

"You! But—but you'll still be here, grinding out lines!"

"Not a bit of it! I'm going to play in that match this afternoon or perish in the attempt!"

Harry Wharton stared.

"But you won't get your lines done!" he protested.

"Quelchy can whistle for 'em!"

Wharton looked serious.

"You'll get it in the neck!" he said.

"Who cares?"

All the Bounder's old recklessness was manifest as he spoke. He was the Bounder of bygone days, ready to do and to dare, recking not of the consequences.

"I know you think I'm playing the giddy ox," he said. "But just put yourself in my place. For hour after hour I've sat here listening to the cheering and the applause. I actually heard them cheering Bunter!"

Wharton grinned.

"The fat Owl won the sack-race—at least, he would have won it if he hadn't been disqualified!"

"Just think of it!" said Vernon-Smith, returning to his subject. "Everybody out in the open air, having a high old time, and me sitting here grinding out mouldy, meaningless chunks of Latin! It was maddening!"

"I can guess how you must have felt, Smithy," said Wharton quietly.

"I'm not going to let Sports Day go by without taking a hand!" said the Bounder. "I'm playing in that cricket-match if the skies fall!"

"But you forget," said Wharton, "that Quelchy will be on the ground. He'll spot you in a jiffy, and send you back to the Form-room!"

Vernon-Smith smiled.

"I don't think he will," he said.

"But how can you prevent it?"

"By a very simple plan," said the Bounder. "I shall wear a mask."

"What!"

The Bounder's cool suggestion fairly took Harry Wharton's breath away.

"I can get hold of a jolly good mask," continued Vernon-Smith, "and even

HARRY WHARTON



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Quelchy's gimlet eyes won't spot the fact that it's me."

"My hat!"

"I shall also sport a summer hat, pulled well down over my eyes. That ought to do the trick!"

"You're a curious chap, Smithy!" said Wharton. "You'll either finish up as a very successful man or in prison!"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I hope I shall be cute enough to dodge the latter fate," he said.

"You've overlooked just one thing," said Wharton.

"Namely?"

"That Quelchy will wonder who the merry dickens you are! He knows every fellow in the Remove, and he's bound to be curious. You're not proposing to put on a Chinese mask, and disguise as Wun Lung, are you?"

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"I'm not small enough," he said, "or else I might. I shall simply wear a mask—not one of those hideous things that you tie round the back of your head with string, but a flesh-tinted mask, as used on the stage. And if Quelchy wants to know who I am, I shall pitch him the yarn that I'm a new boy!"

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"There's just a chance that you'll get through," he said. "The other fellows will have to be told, of course?"

"Yes; but you'd better keep mum about it until I'm actually on the field. If a word were let drop beforehand I should be bowled out!"

"Quelchy will be furious because you haven't done your lines."

"I'm quite ready to face the music. By the way, will you lend me your bike to nip over to Courtfield? Mine's in dock for repairs."

Harry Wharton readily consented, and then he joined the other fellows, who were trooping in to dinner.

Vernon-Smith was giving the midday meal a miss. He had something more important on hand.

Mr. Lazarus, whose little shop at Courtfield was stacked with all sorts of theatrical requisites, came up to the scratch.

He supplied Vernon-Smith with a flesh-tinted mask, which considerably changed his features, transforming him into a fellow whom Greyfriars had not seen before.

There was no suspicion of make-up in the Bounder's appearance, unless he were scrutinised very closely. This was a possibility which had to be faced, and Vernon-Smith was quite ready to take the risk.

The Bounder surveyed himself critically in the big looking-glass, and was satisfied that he would pass muster.

With the summer hat pulled well down over his forehead he looked like a typical schoolboy cricketer, but totally unlike Vernon-Smith.

"This is quite O.K.!" said the Bounder.

And, having paid for his purchase, he cycled back to Greyfriars in the scorching noonday heat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, who with the other members of the Famous Five, was standing in the school gateway. "Who's this merry merchant?"

Only Harry Wharton could have answered the question, and Harry chose to remain silent.

"Looks like a new kid," said Frank Nugent.

"It's not usual for new kids to turn up in cricket flannels, though," said Johnny Bull.

Vernon-Smith dismounted from his machine, and nodded genially to the Famous Five

"Welcome, little stranger!" said Bob Cherry. "You're a new kid—what?"

The Bounder nodded.

"What's your name?" asked Nugent. "Which Form are you coming into?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Whose esteemed study are you going to sharefully occupy?" queried Hurree Singh.

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"You'll be asking me who my father and mother are next, and which wars my ancestors fought in!" he said. "I decline to tell you anything, except my name! You'll discover the rest later!"

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry. "What's your name?"

"Herbert Vernon."

"Had a long journey?" asked Nugent.

"Yes; all the way from Courtfield!"

"My hat!"

Vernon-Smith's questioners hardly knew what to make of him. But they decided that he was a decent fellow, as Bob Cherry's next words showed.

"Come along to the tuckshop," he said, "and we'll stand you a feed. Luckily, we're in funds."

"Well, I don't mind," said the Bounder. "I'm jolly hungry. This is very decent of you!"

"I'll take your bike along to the shed," said Harry Wharton hastily.

He was afraid lest his chums should recognise the bike as being his own property.

A few moments later "Herbert Vernon" was attacking a large veal-and-ham-pie in Mrs. Mimble's establishment.

Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh were playing the part of hosts.

Bottles of ginger-pop were uncorked, and all sorts of tempting delicacies were set before the supposed new boy.

The juniors would have had several sorts of a fit had they known that their guest was Vernon-Smith of the Remove! That knowledge was to come later.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious!

ALTHOUGH he felt comparatively safe in his disguise, Vernon-Smith did not wish to expose himself too much to the scrutiny of others.

The great match—Remove versus the Rest—was not due to take place for a full hour.

Meanwhile, it behove the Bounder to make himself scarce.

When he had finished his feed at the tuckshop, Vernon-Smith slipped from his stool.

"Thanks awfully, you fellows!" he said. "You've filled the hungry with good things. And I was just about peckish, I can tell you!"

"You're quite welcome, kid," said Bob Cherry. "We're always ready to entertain the stranger within the gates—provided he's a decent sort of stranger."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

The Bounder glanced out into the Close, and saw that, save for the approaching figure of Harry Wharton, it was all clear.

"So-long, you fellows!" he said. "See you later!"

And he strode out of the tuckshop.

Harry Wharton spoke to him in passing.

"I should go into hiding for an hour if I were you, Smithy."

"Precisely what I'm going to do," said the Bounder.

And he entered the building and went along the Remove passage.

Billy Bunter, ever on the look-out for new boys, caught sight of the Bounder, and rolled towards him.

"Jolly pleased to meet you, kid!" said the fat junior.

Vernon-Smith grunted.

"Stand aside!" he said.

"Oh, really, you know! That's hardly a civil way to speak to a Form captain!"

"Eh?"

"I'm captain of the Remove!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "If you keep in with me you'll be all right. I'm a good friend, but a fierce enemy!"

"My hat!"

"At the present moment," said Billy Bunter, "I happen to be—ahem!—rather short of cash."

"Will you stand aside?" hissed Vernon-Smith.

He was fearful lest a crowd of fellows should be attracted to the spot.

"A loan of ten bob is all I want," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'm not greedy. In fact, I could make do with five at a pinch. I'll pay it back promptly in the morning—when my postal-order comes!"

Vernon-Smith was about to remark that he had heard of that postal-order before. But he checked himself, and brushed past the fat junior.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. And he clutched frantically at the Bounder's arm.

Vernon-Smith turned, and planted his fist in Bunter's chest.

The Owl of the Remove sat down suddenly in the passage.

"Yow! Beast!" he gasped. "I'll pay you out for this! I'll call a Form meeting, and make you run the gauntlet!"

Vernon-Smith ignored that preposterous threat.

He strode on to his study, which he entered, locking the door after him.

"I wonder if that fat worm saw me come in?" he murmured. "If so, he'll raise a hue-and-cry."

But Billy Bunter had been too concerned with sorting himself out to watch the movements of his assailant.

For upwards of half an hour the Bounder was left in peace.

Then a heavy tread became audible in the passage.

Somebody tried the handle of the study door.

"You there, Skinney?" inquired the voice of Bolsover major.

There was no reply.

"Somebody's in here," continued Bolsover, rattling the handle. "Who is it?"

Still no reply.

"Let me come in!" shouted Bolsover.

"Rats!"

"My hat! I—I'll jolly well slaughter you when I get hold of you!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bolsover went—not to eat coke, but to collect a number of fellows to help him to force open the study door.

He gathered up Wibley and Morgan and Micky Desmond, and several more.

"Somebody's locked himself in Smithy's study," he explained. "I believe it's some cheeky new kid or other. I can't recognise the voice."

"Supposing it's a prefect?" said Wibley.

"Rats! Why should a prefect want to lock himself in a junior study? It's a new kid right enough. Give me a hand with the door, and we'll jolly soon see what he's up to!"

The juniors went along to Vernon-Smith's study.

"I'll give you one more chance, whoever you are!" shouted Bolsover through the keyhole. "Unlock this door!"

"Not for a pension!" came an unfamiliar voice from within.

Although he faced the situation with his usual coolness, the Bounder was growing rather uneasy.

He knew that Bolsover would not scruple to break the door in; and escape by the window was not possible, for the simple reason that a crowd of fellows were standing underneath in the Close.

"Looks as if I'm between two fires!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"All together!" came Bolsover's voice from without.

And seven or eight sturdy juniors hurled themselves at the locked door.

It would only be a matter of moments before they forced an entry into the study, and the Bounder knew it.

Had he cared to divulge his identity, Bolsover would have desisted from the attack.

But to acquaint Bolsover major with his little scheme would be too risky. Bolsover was not to be relied upon to keep a secret, and if Mr. Quelch came to know the facts the Bounder would not play in the match at all, masked or unmasked.

Continued pressure was brought to bear upon the door, and at last it was fairly swept off its hinges.

Bolsover major, at the head of his party of helpers, rushed into the study.

"I thought so!" growled the bully of the Remove, glaring at Vernon-Smith. "You're a new kid, and you've had the cheek to lock yourself in Smithy's study!"

Vernon-Smith calmly surveyed the invaders.

"You'll have to pay for the damage done to that door!" he said.

Bolsover snorted. "Something else is going to be damaged as well as the door!" he said.

"If you mean your chivvy," said the Bounder, "I quite agree with you!"

And he shot out his left, catching Bolsover fairly between the eyes.

The bully of the Remove staggered back into the arms of his schoolfellows.

"My only aunt!" gasped Wibley. "This is something new in new kids!"

"He's a prize-fighter, by Jove!"

It was rather curious that Wibley, himself an expert in the art of disguise, failed to recognise Vernon-Smith.

To a large extent it was the summer hat which prevented recognition.

Bolsover major, dazed at first by the unexpectedness of the blow, gradually pulled himself together.

"You—you—" he spluttered, looking daggers at Vernon-Smith.

"If you want a scrap, I'm your man!" said the Bounder.

He regretted the words the moment they had left his lips.

Instead of having a pitched battle in the study, Bolsover insisted on the fight taking place on the cricket-ground under the trees.

Bolsover was quite confident of his ability to polish off his presumptuous new boy, and he wanted the fight to be as spectacular as possible. That was Bolsover's way.

A move was made to the cricket-ground.

Vernon-Smith made up his mind to get the affair over and done with as swiftly as possible.

Unfortunately for the Bounder, quite a crowd of fellows came along to see what was going on.

Nobody had known that a new boy was arriving at Greyfriars that day. And the fact that the supposed new boy was already involved in a fight with Bolsover major caused great excitement.

A human ring was formed under the trees, and the two combatants stepped up to each other.

Bolsover had removed his coat, but his opponent had made no preparations of

this sort. His summer hat was still tilted over his forehead.

Some unauthorised person shouted "Time!" and the next moment the fight was in full swing.

The Famous Five appeared on the scene, and Harry Wharton looked rather alarmed.

The captain of the Remove knew nothing of the circumstances which had led up to the fight, and he considered that Vernon-Smith was exposing himself to a grave risk.

The contest was not a scientific one, divided into rounds. It was on the old and approved lines of schoolboy warfare—a bout with bare fists.

Vernon-Smith, at the outset, acted up to Shakespeare's famous maxim: "Thrice is he armed who gets his blow in first."

Bolsover major reeled under a smashing right-hander; and then a powerful upper-cut sent him sprawling in the grass.

"Hurrah!"

"Well hit, sir!"

The enthusiasm was tremendous.

Bolsover major, although not a bad fellow in some respects, was never popular with his schoolfellows. His bullying, blustering ways frequently got their backs up.

Very few of the spectators were sorry to see the bully of the Remove go crashing to earth.

"That new kid knows how to use his fists!" said Bob Cherry, in great admiration.

And the others agreed.

"He's almost as useful with his fists as you are, Bob," said Frank Nugent.

"And he's quite as good as Wharton or Smithy"—a remark which made Harry Wharton chuckle softly to himself.

"Talking of Smithy," said Johnny Bull, "I wonder how he's getting on with his lines? Directly this little entertainment's over I think I'll go and inquire."

"There's no need," said Wharton, hastily. "I saw Smithy just before lunch. He's written just over five hundred."

"Oh, help! Then he won't be able to play in the match this afternoon."

Wharton did not contradict that statement.

As a matter of fact, it was becoming increasingly doubtful that the Bounder would play. At any moment his identity might be discovered by someone in authority.

Bolsover major had been sent to the grass, but he had plenty of fight left in him.

He was on his feet the next instant and rushing at his man.

Vernon-Smith met his attack coolly, warding off several sledge-hammer blows which, if they had got home, would have rendered the Bounder incapable of playing cricket for a week.

Then, scenting an opening, Vernon-Smith sailed in and beat a tattoo upon Bolsover's ribs.

"Ow!" gasped the burly Removite, who was beginning to feel like a pricked balloon.

Vernon-Smith continued to play with his opponent like a cat with a mouse.

Everybody saw that Bolsover was booked for a licking.

"Finish him off!" rose the cry.

"On the ball, Vernon!" said Bob Cherry.

And then an extraordinary thing happened.

The Bounder had spotted in the distance the approaching figure of Mr. Quelch.

There was only one thing to do in the circumstances. Vernon-Smith did it.

He took to his heels and raced away

towards the school building, leaving a buzz of excited comment behind him.

"The fellow must be potty!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He was winning, too—winning hands down!" said Frank Nugent.

"And he bunked!" said Johnny Bull in wonder.

"The bunkfulness was terrific!"

The juniors could not understand it at all—with the exception of Harry Wharton, who had also seen Mr. Quelch looming up in the distance.

"Buck up, Bolsover!" he said.

"Here's Quelch!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He can't see you at the moment, because you're surrounded by fellows. You've just got time to put your coat on and clear!"

Bolsover major did not wait for a possible encounter with his Form-master. He cleared.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Masked Cricketer!

THAT fellow Vernon's a giddy poser!"

Thus Bob Cherry as the Remove cricketers foregathered in the pavilion in readiness for their match against the rest of Greyfriars.

"I wonder if he's as good a cricketer as he is a fighting-man?" said Squiff.

"You'll have an opportunity of finding out shortly," said Harry Wharton.

"How's that?"

"He's playing cricket for the Remove this afternoon."

"My hat!"

"You've shoved a new kid in the team?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

Wharton lowered his voice.

"He's not a new kid," he said.

"Then who in thunder is he?" gasped Johnny Bull. "He said his name was Herbert Vernon."

Wharton nodded.

"His name's Herbert Vernon right enough—with a 'Smith' tacked on."

There was a chorus of amazement from the Remove cricketers.

"You mean to say it's Smithy?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Right on the wicket!"

"Oh, come off!" said Frank Nugent.

"This isn't the time for leg-pulling, Harry."

"It's a fact," said Wharton. "Smithy's turning out for the Remove. He's wearing a mask."

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"It's a risky game," said Wharton, "and I told Smithy as much. We shall have to screen him from view as much as we can. If any inquiries are made you can let it be understood that he's Herbert Vernon."

"He'll be taken for a new kid," said Mark Linley.

"Exactly!"

Whilst the juniors were speaking Vernon-Smith came into the pavilion. It had been necessary for the Bounder to run the gauntlet, as it were, for there were fellows everywhere; but he had reached his goal in safety.

"Smithy, you old spoofer!" said Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"That was a ripping feed you stood me in the tuckshop!" he said.

"You cute bounder!" said Frank Nugent. "I believe you could give points to Wibley in the matter of make-up."

"I'm pretty certain he could," said Harry Wharton. "But he'll have to go warily."

"Wingate's coming!" said Peter Todd suddenly. "You'd better stow yourself away in a quiet corner, Smithy!"

And the Bounder seated himself on a form at the back of the pavilion, screened from view by the Remove cricketers.

The match was due to commence.

Wingate, the skipper of "The Rest," came up the pavilion steps, and behind him trooped the other members of the eleven.

The burly figures of Wingate and Gwynne, and Blundell and Hilton, stood out in marked contrast to the diminutive ones of Dicky Nugent, Tubb, and Paget.

Wingate nodded cheerily to Harry Wharton.

"Are you ready, kid?"

"Quite!" said Wharton.

And he spun the coin.

Wingate called "Heads!" and he was wrong. However, Harry Wharton decided to put his opponents in first.

It was to be a single-innings match; and, as Wharton remarked, there was nothing like knowing exactly how many runs it was necessary to make.

The umpires—Faulkner of the Sixth and Fitzgerald of the Fifth—strolled on to the pitch in their white coats.

The Remove fieldsmen followed.

Vernon-Smith walked in the centre, completely hidden from view by his loyal form-fellows.

"You'd better field on the extreme boundary, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "Then there will be less chance of you being spotted."

The Bounder nodded, and retired to a distant corner of the field.

Shortly afterwards Wingate and Gwynne came in to open the innings. The Remove had a gigantic task before them.

Once they had succeeded in getting the big fellows out, all would be plain sailing. But the big fellows would take a great deal of getting out!

The match opened in style. Wingate hitting a fast ball from Hurree Singh to the boundary.

Hurree Singh was the Remove's best bowler, but both Wingate and Gwynne treated him with scant respect.

Mark Linley bowled at the other end, and he was dead on the wicket. But the batsmen punished him mercilessly.

It soon began to look as if the game would degenerate into a farce.

When 50 runs had been rattled up, however, Wingate happened to smite a ball to the boundary, where it was brilliantly caught by a fieldsmen with a summer hat pulled down over his forehead.

There was a burst of cheering from the spectators.

"Hurrah!"

"Well held, sir!"

Wingate, who had not anticipated his downfall, glanced curiously towards the fellow who had caught him.

"Who's that?" he inquired.

Nobody seemed to hear Wingate's question. He repeated it.

"That's a fellow called Vernon," explained Harry Wharton.

"A new kid—what? I should like to congratulate him!" said Wingate.

"Oh crumbs!"

The Remove fieldsmen exchanged startled glances as Wingate walked over to the fellow who had brought about his downfall.

Vernon-Smith, however, was quite prepared for the ordeal.

"Well caught, kid!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "You're no dud at cricket, I can see!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Vernon-Smith, in a low voice.

"Don't be an ass! You don't address the captain of the school as 'sir'!"

"Oh! Are you the captain of Greyfriars?" asked Vernon-Smith, in well-feigned surprise.

Wingate nodded.

"I shall hope to see more of you later on," he said. "You strike me as being a very promising player."

And Wingate turned away.

When he had gone, Vernon-Smith drew a deep breath of relief. He had played his cards well, and his identity was not apparent to George Wingate.

After the captain's departure, Gwynne was joined by Blundell of the Fifth.

Blundell was a good cricketer, and he showed supreme contempt for the Remove bowling.

When the score had risen to 80, Hurree Singh suddenly changed his tactics. Instead of sending down his usual speedy delivery, he bowled a slow, miserable ball which crawled along the grass.

Blundell rashly swiped at it, and missed. The ball trickled on to the wicket with just sufficient impetus to knock off the bails.

Blundell shook his bat in playful anger at Hurree Singh, and went back to the pavilion.

"That's two good wickets down!" said Bob Cherry, with satisfaction. "Keep it up, Inky!"

"I will performfully do my esteemed best!" said Hurree Singh.

Hilton, the next man in, helped Gwynne to take the score to 100, and then he was clean bowled by the dusky junior.

After which came the anticipated collapse.

Hobson of the Shell was bowled first ball. Temple, Dabney, and Fry, who followed on, fared little better.

Towards the finish Dicky Nugent and Percival Spencer Paget made a game and determined stand. They were very lucky, both being badly missed in the slips at an early stage of their innings. But they profited by their escapes, and managed to snatch quite a respectable number of runs.

The innings of "The Rest" closed for 149.

"We're not up against it so much as I expected," said Harry Wharton. "I thought Wingate would have made a century off his own bat."

The Remove's most troublesome opponent had been Pat Gwynne, who had been caught at the wicket midway through the innings with his score at 55.

"We want 150 to win," said Frank Nugent, "and it's a tall order."

"We've been up against much bigger scores than that," said Peter Todd.

The Remove fieldsmen returned to the pavilion, carefully screening the masked player from the gimlet-eyes of Mr. Quelch, who occupied a prominent seat near the railings.

Harry Wharton & Co. were eagerly looking forward to their "knock." Upon it hinged the result of the contest for the Head's silver medal.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton were both in the running, and each was determined to bat as he had never batted before. The reputation of being the best athlete in the Remove was well worth striving after.

Harry Wharton wished Bob Cherry the best of luck, and vice versa; and then these two old and tried chums went in to open the innings for the Remove.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Luck!

HARRY WHARTON'S chances were shattered by the first ball he received.

Wingate bowled; and it seemed to the batsman that the ball was well outside his off-stump. He let it pass.

Then the ball swerved in suddenly, and the captain of the Remove was clean bowled.

"Rough luck, old scout!" called Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton mustered a grin—though it must have cost him an effort. His hopes of winning the Head's silver medal were completely scotched.

Wingate continued to bowl with deadly effect. In quick succession he disposed of three of the Remove's best batsmen—Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Mark Linley.

Not often was the Lancashire lad sent back to the pavilion with a "duck's egg" to his credit; but such was the case on this occasion.

Bob Cherry seemed to be the only batsman who could do anything with the bowling. And even Bob was very ill at ease at times.

The Remove's rate of scoring was considerably lower than that of their opponents.

After what seemed an age to the impatient spectators the 50 went up. And four good wickets were down.

All hope of victory had evaporated. The Removites concentrated themselves upon losing by the least possible margin.

Harry Wharton was hoping that Mr. Quelch would soon disappear into the building for tea, so that he could send Vernon-Smith in to bat.

But Mr. Quelch—not usually a keen sportsman—happened to be deeply interested in the game. He seemed to have taken anchor to his seat near the railings.

Hurree Singh was now batting with Bob Cherry, and the game brightened up a little. The Nabob of Bhanipur played rather a reckless game, but his luck held good.

As for Bob Cherry, he was no longer ill at ease. His display showed the other fellows that Wingate's bowling only needed to be tackled with courage and determination. To shrink from it, or to resort to half-measures, would have proved disastrous.

"Bob's great!" said Frank Nugent, with sparkling eyes. "I believe he still thinks there's a chance of pulling the game round."

"He's giving Wingate plenty to think about," said Johnny Bull. "There he goes again!"

The ball came speeding to the boundary, beyond the reach of Blundell, who was fielding in the vicinity.

Several more boundaries followed.

Sometimes the ball landed dangerously near to Mr. Quelch; but that gentleman did not budge. He sat as if rooted to his seat, closely following the fluctuating fortunes of the game.

With the score at 75 Hurree Singh was run out, thanks to a smart throw-in on the part of Dicky Nugent.

Then followed a further chapter of accidents for the Remove.

Peter Todd, Squiff, and Dick Russell were disposed of without any addition to the score.

In desperation, Harry Wharton signed to Vernon-Smith to go in and join Bob Cherry.

There was a buzz from the spectators as the Bounder, bat in hand, ran down the pavilion steps.

Mr. Quelch glanced in obvious surprise at the batsman, but he made no comment.

Wingate, who had bowled unchanged so far, made up his mind to settle the new boy's hash with all possible speed. He sent down a ball which was suggestive of fireworks. Vernon-Smith coolly tapped it back to him.

"That kid's hot stuff!" remarked Gwynne, who was fielding close to Wingate.

Vernon Smith settled down to play the game of his life. To be dismissed for a few paltry runs would not justify the risk he had taken in order to play in the match. Having got the measure of the bowling, he hit out freely—but not more so than Bob Cherry, who was also playing the game of his life.

The hundred was hoisted amid a cheer that might have been heard at Friardale. It was rapidly followed by 110, and then 120. And Bob Cherry and the Bounder, like a certain famous brand of Scotch whisky, were still going strong.

"They'll do it yet!" muttered Squiff excitedly. "Jove! What a game!"

The excitement had reached fever-pitch.

George Wingate, who well knew how to keep a cool head in an emergency, was bowling as accurately as ever. And he was well backed up in the field.

Mr. Quelch, who had seldom been visibly moved by the sights and scenes at a cricket-match, began to view the game in a new light. He did not rise to his feet and dance a jazz, or anything like that; but he was very excited, for all that.

Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith continued to lay about them right merrily.

The former had now won, beyond all doubt or dispute, the Head's silver medal.

But Bob wasn't thinking of silver medals just then. All his energies were

concentrated upon winning the match for his side.

Shortly afterwards the scores were level.

A hush fell upon the spectators—a hush of expectancy.

It fell to Bob Cherry to make the winning hit.

Wingate made his first bad blunder of the match. He sent down a loose ball, and Bob Cherry, leaping out of his crease, sent it soaring into space.

A storm of cheering arose to hail the Remove's victory—cheering which died suddenly away as the attention of the spectators was directed to Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry's winning hit had caused the ball to strike the Remove-master with great violence on the shoulder.

Mr. Quelch had collapsed, and a number of seniors were bending over him.

Thinking the injury might be serious, Walker of the Sixth had cycled into Friardale for Dr. Short.

When the medical man arrived, however, it was found that Mr. Quelch was suffering mainly from shock.

"A day in bed will put you right," said the doctor.

Bob Cherry, who had hurried to the spot, was profuse in his apologies.

"You are in no way to blame, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch. "The affair was a pure accident."

The Form-master was assisted to his quarters, and the cricketers retired to the pavilion.

The Remove were in high feather.

Bob Cherry, ably assisted by the masked cricketer, had won them the match. And there was a bumper spread in Study No. 1 that evening in celebration of the great event.

Vernon-Smith emerged from his ordeal with flying colours. He removed his mask at the first opportunity; and the majority of the Greyfriars fellows were much mystified by the fact that they saw no more of the amazing new boy who had licked Bolsover major and put up a great innings for the Remove.

Mr. Quelch being indisposed, Vernon-Smith had ample time in which to complete his imposition. And when he presented his thousand lines to the Form-master the following evening, Mr. Quelch imagined that they had been finished on Sports Day. Had he asked Vernon-Smith point-blank if this were the case, the Bounder would have admitted otherwise. But, fortunately, Mr. Quelch did not ask.

And Harry Wharton & Co. would always retain pleasant memories of that particular Sports Day at Greyfriars!

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE SCHOOL-BOY BARBER!" — next Monday's Grand Long Complete Story of Greyfriars School — by FRANK RICHARDS.)

There is also a fine Picture Gallery of the celebrated characters at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood.

Apart from these interesting features there is a splendid long romance of olden days, and a ripping long Red Indian story.

OTHER GREAT FEATURES.

Among this book full of splendid things are some very clever articles. One on Stamp Collecting will, I know, be very eagerly read by the thousands of followers of this great hobby among my readers. Also, the articles on Boxing and the Mechanism of a Motor-Cycle will make a great appeal.

There are scores of features which I have not space to describe, such as tricks, shadow-graphs, conjuring, etc.

A grand play for amateur actors is included. It is entitled "The Fortune-teller," and introduces Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

The whole book is illustrated by

HUNDREDS OF PICTURES.

and all I have room to say now is: Don't miss it on any account! The price will be 5s., and it will be the cheapest five shillings' worth in London in the way of books for boys and girls. It will be on sale on

OCTOBER 15th.

NOTICES.

Football.

B. Wynne, 71, Gartroo Street, Leicester, wishes to hear of any Highlife boys for his football team—16-18.

Players wanted for coming season—18-1 mile Chelsea.—Write or call, F. A. Finnimore, Hans Crescent Hotel, Belgravia, S.W. (staff).

Gipsy Athletic—3 miles—home and away.—Write E. A. Grimwood, secretary, 37 Chapel Road, West Norwood, S.E. 27.

Earlsmead Athletic want football matches, preferably in North London districts. Also two or three good players—16-18.—Secretary, 45, Lennox Road, Finsbury Park, London, N. 4.

Bowersdale F.C.—16—away—2 miles radius. All letters answered.—Secretary C. Davidson, 9, Plum Street, Seaford, Liverpool.

A. E. Wilmore, 54, Blundell Street, Caledonian Road, London, N. 7, secretary Blundells' United F.C., wants away matches—average age 15-17.

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE GEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

CHEERS FROM EVERYWHERE.

That sums up the expressions of approval from readers of the Companion Papers in regard to my announcement that the "Greyfriars Herald" will reappear in October.

I have received hundreds of letters from readers who are delighted to hear the good news, and they are all telling hundreds of others about the coming treat.

THE FIRST NUMBER

of the "Greyfriars Herald" will be on sale on October 20th. It is now completed, and has gone to the printer. I am as eager, as I know most of you will be, for the publishing date to arrive, because I want to know what you will think about it.

Not that I have any doubt, however, for I am absolutely certain that you will be delighted beyond measure.

Now, don't forget the first number will be on sale on October 20th.

The new edition of

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD"

is going to be the greatest production in the way of school journals that the world has ever seen.

I have not room to say any more about it this week, because I want to tell you something about ANOTHER GREAT TREAT!

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!

For Boys and Girls.

That is the full title of the great Annual that I have been telling you about for the past several weeks.

The great task is finished now, and the printing works are busy turning out thousands of copies of the book. In spite of that, however, I can tell you emphatically that

unless you order your copy well in advance you are liable to grave disappointment.

There is going to be a tremendous rush for copies on October 15th, the publishing day, and only those who have given a definite order will be certain of obtaining one.

WHAT IT CONTAINS.

Now, I want to tell you something about the contents of the great "Holiday Annual," but I hardly know how or where to begin.

In the first place, it is a very thick book, bound in strong, stiff covers, with a beautifully coloured cover. The incident depicts a gallant schoolboy diving into a lake to rescue a schoolgirl who has fallen in.

Directly you see the "Holiday Annual," and before you have had time to look inside the covers you will say "What a grand book!"

Numbers of people who have seen the rough copies have already said that.

There are four beautiful coloured plates in the book, which have been painted especially by some of the foremost artists of the day.

Also, there are four splendid art photo-gravures depicting exciting and amusing incidents in the school stories.

Speaking of school stories, you will be delighted to hear that there are

FOUR GRAND SCHOOL STORIES

of fifty pages each, dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars; Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's; and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

They are magnificent stories, and will bring joy indescribable to all readers.

There are dozens of bright and "catchy" poems about the famous schoolboys of these famous schools, and numbers of short stories—clever and cheery—by various smart juniors of the schools.



Goggs, Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Johnny Goggs comes to Rylcombe Grammar School from Frankingham with his chums Trickett, Blount, and Waters.

Goggs is a jiu-jitsu expert, and a clever impersonator, and the organiser of many brilliant japes. He leads an expedition of Grammarians to St. Jim's, and accomplishes one of the most daring night raids ever perpetrated.

Gerald Cutts of St. Jim's falls foul of Bingo, the butcher, and after a scrap, in which Cutts is worsted, Bingo picks a quarrel with Goggs.

Bingo is completely defeated, and Cutts loses a big bet. Goggs accepts Bingo's challenge to a return fight.

Snipe, Larking, and Cutts kidnap Goggs during the night before the day of the fight. Consequently, he fails to appear at the appointed place in the wood. At the last minute Blount is handed a letter in Goggs' handwriting. He then has to inform Bingo and the crowd of spectators that Goggs is not coming.

(Now read on.)

A Challenge to Grundy.

IT was bad enough to see the downcast faces of Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and the Woottons and all the rest of the Rylcombe Fourth-Formers who believed so firmly in Goggs.

That belief was going to have a severe shock now.

But it was worse to note the wondering countenances of the St. Jim's contingent. Most of them, too, had believed in Goggs.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were Laere, Talbot, Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy major, Roylance and Durrance, Noble and Dane and Glyn, Gore, Racke and Crooke and Scrope and Clampe, Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn, Koumi Rao, Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, Lumley-Lumley, Julian and Reilly and Hammond and Keruish, Tompkins and Mulvaney minor, Clive and Levison major and Cardew, Grundy and Gunn and Wilkins, Clarke and Thompson and Pratt and French—very nearly everyone in the Shell and Fourth who counted for anything, and some who did not.

There were comparatively few seniors. But among them were Cutts and Gilmore and St. Leger, and Darrell and Kildare.

"There must be some mistake!" said Tom Merry.

That was what Bingo and his backing seemed to think. They had no more doubt as to the pluck of Goggs than any of his hosts of friends had. It was hardly too much to say that some of them might fairly be counted as his friends. Certainly there was no malice in the broad breast of Bingo, while Heavins was plainly upset by this unexpected announcement.

"Where is he, Blount?" asked Clifton Dane, who had been Goggs' first friend at St. Jim's.

"Yes, that's it! Where is he, Blount?" cried in the great Grundy.

"On his way home," answered Bags, with a gulp.

"Oh, rot!"

"That can't be right!"

"Tell the chap he's a liar, then!" sneered Crooke.

"You're a liar!" Cardew said, turning upon him.

"Eh? What are you insultin' me for, Cardew? I'll—"

"Oh, my mistake, I suppose! You didn't say what chap, an' to oblige you I told the

nearest—unless Racke happens to be an inch or two closer than you are."

"I'll be closer to you in about half a second!" snarled Crooke.

"I shouldn't trouble, if I were you. You might get in one before I took my hands out of my pockets, but after that—well, it would be much as Eliza Cook, or Marie Corelli, or one of those good ladies describes the dilapidated state of the heroic Casabianca:

"The boy—oh, where was he?
Ask of the winds that all around
With fragments strewed the sea!"

"No sea here, I'm aware, but the principle's the same. Keep off it, Crooke, for if Goggs really has shown the white feather I shall feel like hurtin' someone, an' you'd do nicely! I had so counted on seein' the butcher slaughtered again this mornin'!"

No one but Crooke was listening to Cardew, of course, and Crooke was pretending not to listen. Grundy was trying to get the collective ear of the crowd.

"Look here!" he roared. "I don't believe Goggs has funkéd it, and no one's going to make me believe that. If he's gone home instead of coming here, it's for some jolly good reason. Well, then, what's it matter? I'll take his place!"

"Ass!" snorted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Gwunday's weally too—"

"Shut up, and let's hear what Bags has to tell us, Grundy!" said Gay.

Bags handed him over the letter.

"You'd better read it to them," he said.

"There's nothing private in it."

"Why not read it out yourself, old fellow?"

"Can't," replied Bags.

And Gay understood.

He glanced down the page, then read aloud, clearly and strongly, that all might hear:

"My dear Bags,—I am extremely sorry to disappoint everyone, and I fear that everyone will be disappointed when I fail to put in an appearance at the rendezvous. But, on mature consideration, I have come to the conclusion that it really is not worth while.

"Put it to yourself, now. I have already thrashed the dear Binks. No one has any right to doubt that, bar luck, I can thrash him again. But why should I be troubled to do so? Where is the profit? Shall I go to the maiden aunt who eagerly awaits my coming, to display to her a contused countenance, haply a black optic or so, possibly a mouth lacking its proper complement of teeth? Shall I?"

"I think not!"

"Probably I shall be suspected of funk. But what does public opinion matter to me? I am a law unto myself. I know that I am not afraid, and I can afford to despise those who think that I am!"

"So, without saying anything to anyone, I am leaving by the early train. Next term we shall meet again. By that time this will all have been forgotten, I trust. If it is not forgotten, I shall have pleasure in talking to any gentleman who is disposed to disapprove of my action.—Yours ever, my beloved Bagshaw,

J. G."

"It sounds like Goggs," said Harry Wootton. "That's just the giddy silly way he talks!"

"It's his fist," Frank Monk said, looking over Gay's shoulder. "Not so sure that it sounds quite like him."

"I don't know Goggs as well as some of you fellows," Reginald Talbot said quietly.

"But I agree with Monk. To me it sounds like someone trying to write like Goggs. It's a caricature of his way of talking."

"Did he ever call you 'my beloved Bagshaw,' Blount?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, that's nothing! He's called me all sorts of things. And I don't know that there's a single thing in that letter he might not have said. And it hangs together well enough, and makes sense. And yet, somehow, it isn't Goggs, though it's his fist?"

"He never wrote it!" said Wagtail stolidly. "I don't care what anyone says—he couldn't have written it!"

"Could anyone else?" asked Carboy. "We all know Goggs' writing, and this is it, sure enough."

The letter was being passed round now.

Most of the St. Jim's fellows kept silence. This was so much more an affair for the Grammar School than for them; and, despite the old feud and the general readiness of both crowds to hail with joy a score against the other, their sympathy for Gordon & Co. at this moment was really strong.

If Tom Merry had let them down as Goggs seemed to have let the Grammarians down they would not have expected their rivals to chortle; and they abstained from chortling.

But it was only natural that the village lads should have something to say.

Wraggle spoke first.

"Well, I'd never 'ave believed it of 'im!" he said.

"You shut up!" roared Bingo. "What you believe ain't nothin' to do with it at all. If that letter's true, he's disappointed me worse'n he has anybody, Goggs has. An' I didn't think it of him—that I didn't! It's treatin' of me with sorter kinder contempt, an' I didn't reckon he felt like that nohow!"

"He doesn't," said Bags quickly. "Goggs thinks a lot of you. He says you're a good chap."

"Ear, ear!" cried Heavins. "An' that's what we think about 'im!"

"He ain't funkéd," went on Bingo. "I know he ain't funkéd—no more'n I am. I ain't sayin' I should have licked him, though I cert'nly ain't allowin' that I 'adn't no chance. But there it is! An' I dunno what to say about it, excep' as I'll take on with pleasure any two of you what says he's funkéd!"

"You are a good chap, Binks!" muttered Bags.

"Now's your chance, Racke an' Crooke!" shouted Cardew. "Bingo will take on the two of you! Summon up your courage, an'—"

"Racke an' Crooke, eh?" roared the butcher lad. "Show me them two, and I'll attend to them!"

"Here they stand," Cardew said, indicating the precious pair by a wave of the hand.

"Who says we said—?" began Racke.

"A dozen fellows standin' round here heard your sweet remarks," broke in Cardew. "Clive, Durrance, Levison, Lumley-Lumley, I appeal to you whether—"

"Oh, what's the good, Ralph?" said Clive hastily. "You know those cads won't fight, and that they wouldn't do the school any credit if they did."

"That's it! They wouldn't, and what's wanted is someone who would! And I'm the man!" bellowed Grundy.

"Do you really think, Grundy, that this has anything at all to do with St. Jim's?" asked Kildare quietly. "If there's any obligation on anyone to put up another champion, it's strely upon the Grammar

School fellows. But I don't think there's any in their case."

"And I don't know that we're anyone to put up who has more than half a chance," said Gordon Gay frankly. "All the same, I'm willing. Bingo's above my weight, but I guess I can take what will come to me without grousing about it."

"I'm not a-goin' to fight you or any other Grammar School chap," said Bingo. "It's Goggs or nobody out of your lot, an' no offence in sayin' that intended. An' I see that them two what opened their ugly mouths so wide are slinkin' away. But I'd like to take 'im on!"

And he pointed to George Alfred Grundy.

Bingo v. Grundy.

"I'm on!" cried Grundy. Racker and Crooke, who had been moving off, turned back at this.

"Good old Grundy!" shouted Wilkins.

"Silly old ass!" said Gunn.

"Can't stop him!" Tom Merry said to Kildare.

"Of course he can't—or you—or anybody!" snorted Grundy. "This is holiday-time, you know. Kildare's got no authority over me."

The skipper of St. Jim's shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know that I should trouble to exercise it if I had, Grundy," he said. "You're asking for trouble, for I'm sure our butcher friend here is a heap too good for you. But you'll get what you ask for, so that's all right."

Kildare voiced the general opinion. Nearly everyone felt sure that Bingo carried too many guns for Grundy.

But neither in the Grammar School camp nor in that of St. Jim's was Grundy's action exactly unpopular.

A good many of those present had delayed their journeys home in order to see a fight; and Bingo v. Grundy was better than nothing at all.

Moreover, Grundy improved his position by what he said as he began to strip.

"Goggs is a friend of mine," was his pronouncement. "I like Goggs, and I believe in him. That's why I'm willing to take his place—anyway, that's one reason. And if the butcher chap licks me—though I don't think he will—I sha'n't mind so much, because I consider him a very decent chap for speaking up for Goggs as he did."

And Grundy beamed upon Bingo. It was just like Grundy to regard his approval of both Goggs and Bingo as a thing that mattered. That was his conceit, perhaps. But there were better things than conceit behind his readiness to do battle.

Preliminaries were soon arranged. Tom Merry and Gordon Gay seconded Grundy; Heavins and Wraggle again did duty for the village bruiser. And Kildare once more acted as referee.

"This clears me with you bounders!" said Cutts to St. Leger and Gilmore.

"I'm not worryin'," replied Gilmore. "After all, it was a dashed off-chance that you'd ever be able to pony up."

"An' if your uncle does come down handsomely we can have some lively times next term with his tip," added St. Leger.

Cutts fairly beamed upon them. They seemed to have no suspicion at all.

And, in fact, they had not. They knew

that their dear pal was by no means a scrupulous person; but they would have needed some evidence to convince them that he would have plotted to swindle his chums after this fashion.

But Cutts' face soon lost its smile.

It would be beastly awkward for him if it ever came out, he reflected. He could never hold up his head at St. Jim's again.

Conscience was not much in the line of Gerald Cutts; but during those summer holidays he was to endure doubts and worries that might have been prompted by conscience in a fellow who had possessed anything of the sort.

"Have anythin' on this?" asked St. Leger.

"I'll back the butcher," answered Cutts.

"What's your price?"

"Oh, five to one, six to one—anythin' you like, in fact."

"Then I like twenty to one, in quids, an' that's givin' you a quid," said St. Leger.

Gilmore refused to bet even at that price. St. Leger was right. Bar extraordinary luck, the fight was a sure thing for Bingo.

Grundy was hefty, and no duffer. He had any amount of courage and endurance.

But so had Bingo; and in all else save height he had the advantage of the St. Jim's Shell fellow.

Weight, length of arm, muscular development, punch, ringeraft—all were on Bingo's side. And if Grundy had plenty of self-confidence—as he had—Bingo also had no lack of that useful asset.

From the first Bingo was winning—winning all the way.

Yet Grundy did not put up a poor fight.

Out-punched, out-maneuvred, out-fought, he stuck to his opponent like the bulldog he was; fought on and on long after all hope had fled; and was only knocked out at last at least five rounds after he had been obviously beaten to the wide.

Kildare patted him on the back. Bingo shook hands with him, growling praises and good-will. Grammarians and St. Jim's fellows alike cheered him.

His bruised and battered face was all one wide grin. In spite of all the punishment he had received, he was happy. In spite of his licking, he was happy. For he was right in the limelight, and George Alfred dearly loved the limelight.

The crowd began to melt away through the wood, most of its members making station-wards. But a few remained, and Grundy was one of them.

Bags and Tricks and Wagtail stayed—Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and the two Woottons, Talbot, Noble and Dane and Glyn, Cardew and Clive and Levison.

Others went with reluctance. But they had to go. In the cases of these fellows there was no such compulsion.

Goggs' three special chums were due at their homes. But they could all wire that they were detained by circumstances, and their absence would not grievously upset any arrangements made.

Gay and the two Woottons were putting in the first week or two of the holidays with Monk and his people.

Talbot was starting on a tour of the Lake District with Mr. Railton in a few days' time. His uncle, Colonel Lyndon, was with the Rhine Army still.

Noble and Dane were to be guests of their chum, Bernard Glyn.

Levison and Clive were booked for a fortnight with Cardew; and Ralph Reckness

Cardew, in his lordly way, said that it did not matter in the least when that fortnight began. It was only necessary to let his grandfather's major-domo know that they would not turn up that day, and were to be expected when he saw them.

As for Grundy, he admitted that he did not care to take his face home till it looked a little better than it did at that moment, and added that his people were used to his ways—which statement no one doubted.

During the fight there had been growing a conviction that in some way or other there must be more behind the Goggs' letter than there appeared to be.

Now the fifteen stayed in the wood to talk it over, while the rest, having spoken their good-byes and demanded to be informed if anything out of the way did eventuate, cleared off.

"What's the first thing to do, Talbot?" asked Gay.

"Wire to Goggs' maiden aunt to ask whether he's got there, if anyone knows her address," replied Talbot promptly.

"My hat! Goggs hasn't any maiden aunt! I'd forgotten all about that!" said Bags.

"So had I. But he calls his uncle all sorts of things—"

"No, he doesn't. Tricks! When he calls him anything out of the facts, it's always his grandmother. Don't you remember how he played the granny stunt on us at Franklingham?"

"Same way he did here?" asked Jack Wootton, grinning.

"Not quite. It was warmer here. He produced her—though she was really herself. At Franklingham he talked about her no end, and then, when his uncle turned up unexpectedly one day, he introduced him to us all as his dear grandmother. And the uncle's a chap who's been everywhere and done everything. It was he who taught our Johnny-bird boxing and ju-jitsu, and lots of other things."

"Can't think how we came to take in that maiden aunt yarn," said Tricks.

"Oh, it was being rushed like that, I guess!" said Monk. "Where is the uncle now?"

"Wait a minute! Johnny was to have come home with me; but there was something a day or two ago that upset it. His uncle has been in Sweden for the last few weeks, and it wasn't certain that he wouldn't want the bouncer to join him there. But that wasn't it, either. Oh, I know! Goggs meant to go to town and wait for his uncle, who was expected back some day this week. It was all a good deal in the air—kind of thing that would make most fellows bothered about what really was going to happen to them—and no certainty about it at best. Some talk of their coming on to us—some suggestion that they might go up North, Inverness way—all mixed up so that nobody knew exactly what; and I'm hanged if I thought a word about it when I got that letter. I was only thinking of Johnny's letting us down."

"He would not have hurried off like that to join an uncle whose time of arrival was so very uncertain, I should say," said Talbot.

"It's jolly fishy," said Levison. "Looks like dirty work!"

(There will be another splendid long instalment of this grand school story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy in advance.)

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