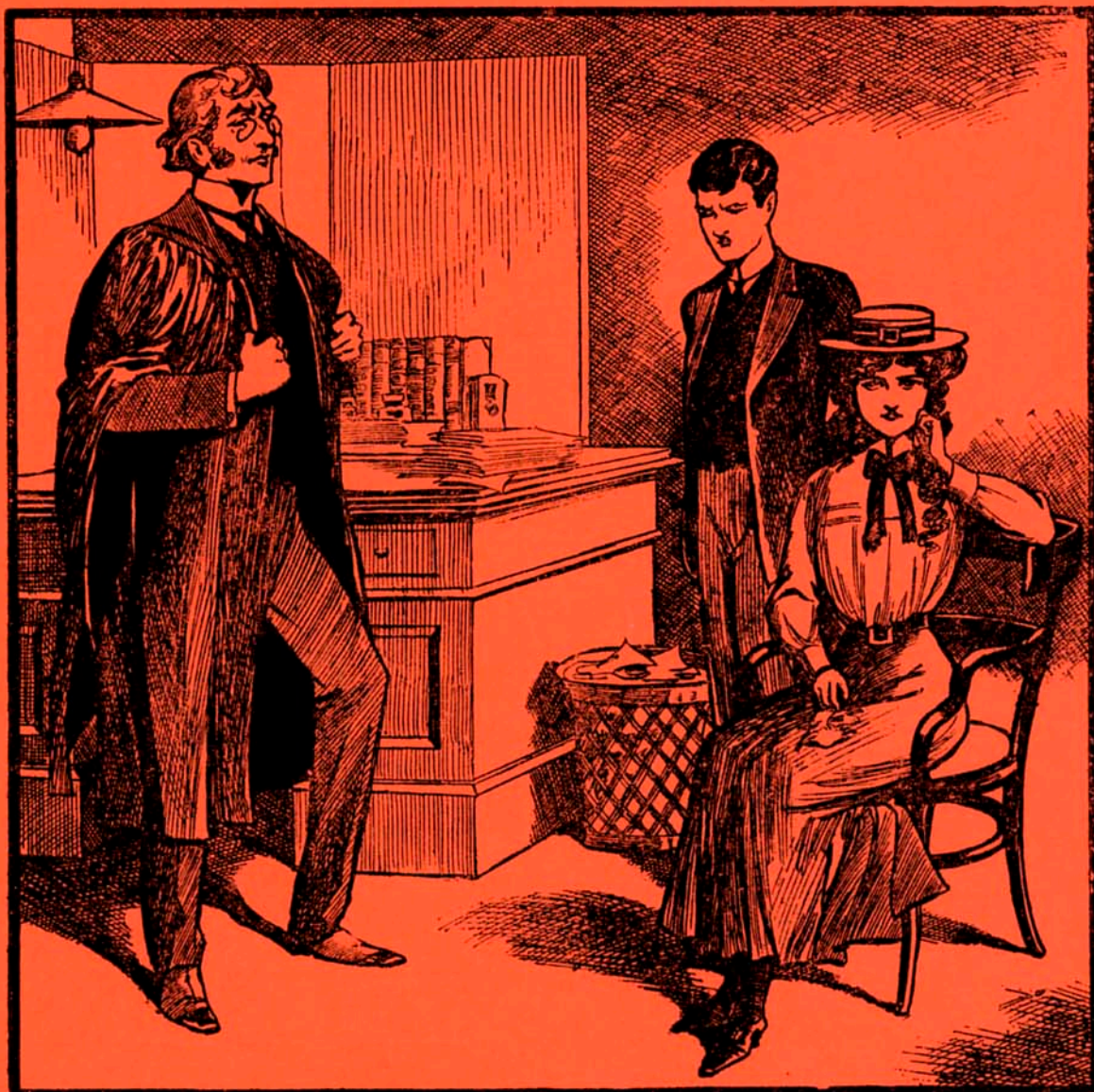


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THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Visitor for Hazel!

"**G**REAT pip! Who's that merchant?" Bob Cherry uttered that ejaculation. A group of fellows belonging to the Remove were chatting on the steps of the School House at Greyfriars, when the "merchant" came in sight. Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the stranger in surprise.

He had come in at the school gates, and was advancing across the Close towards the School House, when the juniors spotted him. A slight tendency to zigzagging in the "merchant's" walk hinted that he had partaken of the cup that cheers, not wisely, but too well. He was a florid gentleman, with a loud waist-coat, and a louder watch-chain, and a silk hat set at a rakish angle upon his head. His whole appearance was of the horse-horsey, as Frank Nugent put it.

He was certainly a most remarkable visitor for Greyfriars School, and he was favoured with inquiring stares from all the fellows who saw him.

"Looks like a giddy bookmaker," said Harry Wharton. "One of Smithy's friends come to pay him a visit, perhaps."

"Smithy wouldn't be idiot enough to have him here. I should think," said Bob Cherry. "I wonder what he wants?"

"Good heavens!"

That ejaculation came from Hazeldene of the Remove, who had just come out of the School House. The juniors looked quickly at Hazel. All the colour had fled from his face, and his eyes were fixed upon the "merchant" with the rakish silk hat, wide-open with terror.

Billy Bunter puffed up the steps to where the chums were talking. "I say, you fellows, do you see that chap over there? He's Rawlings the bookie! I saw Hazel talking to him the other day in the lane!"
(See Chapter 1.)

"Do you know him?" asked Wharton.
 "It's Rawlings!"
 "And who may Rawlings happen to be?"
 Hazeldene did not reply. He turned quickly and ran into the house, and the juniors heard his footsteps die away on the stairs within.
 Harry Wharton and Co. exchanged looks of surprise and dismay. It was evident that Hazeldene knew that exceedingly flashy-looking gentleman; and equally evident that he was very unwilling to meet him.
 "The ass!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The silly ass! He has got himself into a fearful pickle this time! That man's come here to see Hazel."

There was consternation in the faces of the juniors. Hazeldene, always weak and wayward and obstinate, was incessantly in a scrape of some kind, and his friends were getting tired of helping him out of them. Indeed, they would probably have left him alone, to go to the dogs in his own way, but for one consideration—his sister Marjorie, their girl chum at Cliff House School. For Marjorie's sake, Harry Wharton and his chums had chipped in many times to save Hazel from the consequences of his own folly. But this time the matter had gone too far.

If the Head, or any of the masters, caught sight of that disreputable merchant who was zigzagging across the Close, there would be an instant inquiry into his reason for visiting Greyfriars. And when it transpired that he had come to see Hazeldene—

"Oh, the ass!" said Wharton, between his teeth. "To let the man come here, of all things!"

"He doesn't seem to want him here," said Nugent drily. "It's pretty clear Hazel owes him money, and he's come for it. The duffer was trying to borrow quids in the Remove this morning—and that's what he wanted them for—to keep his friend Mr. Rawlings away."

Harry Wharton nodded. He knew that Hazel had been making desperate attempts to borrow money for the last two days. But as Hazel was an exceedingly bad debtor, and had no prospect whatever of repaying the sums he borrowed, he found it difficult to raise loans. He had not succeeded in raising the sum he wanted—and this was the result! His creditor had come to the school.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and there was a senior football-match going on. Most of the prefects were in the First Eleven, and so were fortunately off the scene. But the football-field was in sight of the Close, and Wingate or Courtney, or Walker might easily catch a glimpse of the merchant during a pause in the play. The Head might look out of his window—Mr. Quelch or another of the masters might come out of the house at any moment. And if that man were seen, there was only one possible result for Hazel—he would be called into the Head's study for a stern inquiry, and he would be immediately expelled from the school.

"It means the sack for him!" said Bob, in a low voice.
 "Serve the silly ass right!" said Johnny Bull. "We pulled him out of just such a hole as this not long ago, and he promised to chuck it for good."

"Serve him right, right enough!" said Bob. "But—"
 "But what?" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm fed up with him. If he can't be decent, the sooner he gets the order of the boot, the better."

"Yes; but—but—Marjorie!" said Bob.
 "Oh, hang!" said Johnny Bull uneasily.

That thought was in the minds of all the Co.—how Marjorie would feel if her brother were "sacked" from Greyfriars. For that reason they had stood by Hazel many times when they were disgusted with him, and tired of his folly. Wharton remembered the anxious look he had seen on Marjorie's face the last time she had come over to Greyfriars. He realised now that the girl knew that her brother was in trouble again, and that all that had been done for him had been done in vain.

"We can't do anything now!" said Nugent. "Why, the

Head must see him if he happens to look out of his window. The rotter's just in front of it!"
 "And Quelch may come out any minute!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's all up now!"
 "I say, you fellows," Billy Bunter, the fattest junior in Greyfriars, came puffing up the steps. "do you see that chap over there? I know him! He's Rawlings the bookie! I saw Hazel talking to him the other day in the lane—"
 "Oh, you shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.
 "Oh, really, Bull! I shouldn't wonder if he's come to see Hazel. I know Hazel owes him money, because I happened to hear them talking—"

"You happened to be eavesdropping, as usual!" snapped Wharton. "Shut up!"

"Shan't!" said Bunter. "I think this kind of thing is disgraceful, you know. After all I've done for Hazel, too!"

"Let you've ever done for anybody, you fat porpoise. What have you done?"

"Well, I—I stood by him!" said Bunter virtuously. "I felt I was bound to, you know, considering that Marjorie is rather mashed on me, and— Ow, ow!"

Bump!
 At that point, Bob Cherry had introduced his boot into the conversation, and Billy Bunter rolled down the steps, and sat on the ground gasping.

"Ow! Cherry, you beast!" Bunter blinked furiously at the group of juniors, and as he saw Bob coming down the steps towards him, with face aflame, he picked himself up and fled, without waiting to conclude his remarks.

Meanwhile, the merchant had zigzagged himself across the Close, and he reached the steps of the School House as Bunter dashed off.

He turned a fishy eye upon the juniors.
 "Afternoon!" he said thickly.

"What do you want?" asked Harry Wharton curtly.

"I've come to collect a little debt," said Mr. Rawlings affably. "Young gentleman of the name of Hazeldene. Ows me five quid. Where is he?"

"You oughtn't to come here," said Harry sharply. "You know it will get him into trouble."

Mr. Rawlings nodded. He had been drinking, but he was not intoxicated, and the juniors guessed that he had inspired himself with "Dutch courage" for that visit to the school.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Rawlings. "Wot I know is, that I want my money!"

"What does Hazel owe you the money for?" asked Harry.

"A little flutter on a 'orse," explained Mr. Rawlings.

"You know you can't collect gaming debts; they're illegal," said the captain of the Remove; "you know that as well as I do."

"I'm goin' to collect this one, or there will be a row!" said Mr. Rawlings emphatically. "I've got his paper 'ere—I O U five quid. And that five quid is goin' to be paid, on the nail, or there will be trouble for Mr. Swindler Hazeldene. If I don't see him, I'm goin' to see the 'Ead."

"You'd better clear off—"

"I ain't clearing off without my money," said Mr. Rawlings, raising his voice. "Now, I ain't come 'ere to jore. I want five quid! Where's that young swindler?"

The juniors looked at Mr. Rawlings, and at one another helplessly. They shivered at the thought of what would follow if Mr. Quelch should hear the man's voice and come out. They knew that the Remove-master was in his study.

And there was no getting rid of Mr. Rawlings. He had evidently come there with the special intention of making a scene unless his claim was met. What was to be done?

It was no business of theirs, certainly. Hazel had brought it upon himself by his folly, and he had to face the consequences. But—there was Marjorie—and Wharton had not forgotten that he had promised the anxious girl to look after her brother as much as he could.

Wharton thought the matter over quickly, and made up his mind. To have any dealings with this disreputable black-guard might be dangerous to himself; but for Marjorie's sake, he was prepared to run the risk.

"We've got to stop the brute's mouth," he muttered quickly. "Let's do our best—for Marjorie."

And the other fellows nodded. They were prepared to take the risk, too. Mr. Rawlings had not been seen, so far, by masters or prefects, and there was a bare chance that the situation might be saved, if he could be got rid of.

"Where's Master Swindler Hazeldene?" repeated Mr. Rawlings, raising his voice still louder. "I want to see 'im! Where's my five quid?"

"Hold your tongue," said Wharton savagely. "Look here, clear off, and you shall have the money. I promise you."

Mr. Rawlings grinned sceptically.

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The newcomer turned a fishy eye upon the juniors. "What do you want?" asked Wharton curtly. "I've come to collect a little debt," said Mr. Rawlings affably. "Young gentleman of the name of Hazeldene owes me five quid. Where is he?" (See Chapter I.)

"I come here for money, and not for gas," he remarked. "You 'and over the five quid, and I'll get off quick enough. But I ain't going without my money."

"Do you think I've got five pounds in my pockets, you fathead?" said Wharton angrily. "I give you my promise."

"Promises is like pie-crusts," said Mr. Rawlings sententiously. "Made and broken, you know. I want my money."

"You shall have it to-morrow, if you'll clear off now," said Wharton desperately.

"I'll have it inside five minutes, or I'll raise a row 'ere that will make Master Hazel sorry he tried to swindle me," said Mr. Rawlings. "I'm an honest man. I pay up when I lose. The young swindler has had money outter me. Now he's goin' to pay."

"He can't."

"Then he can take the consequences. And who are you to interfere, anyhow? I'm going to see Hazeldene."

And Mr. Rawlings tried to push his way through the juniors into the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. were strongly tempted to seize THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 303.

upon him, and hurl him bodily down the steps. But that would only have precipitated the scene they dreaded. He had to be got rid of quietly, if Hazel was to be saved. And he would not go without his money, and the juniors had nothing like five pounds about them. Five shillings would have been nearer the mark, so far as their financial resources were concerned.

Wharton's brain worked quickly. Time must be gained, and, meanwhile, the man must be got out of sight.

"Well, come in," said Wharton. "You shall see Hazel. Come up to my study."

His chums stared at him aghast.

"To the study!" Nugent muttered in dismay.

"It's the only thing to be done, before he's seen, too," said Wharton hurriedly. "Come on—this way, Mr. Rawlings."

Wharton prayed fervently, as he led the bookmaker into the hall, that nobody would be there to see him. There were two or three Remorites, and Coker of the Fifth, and Temple of the Fourth Form, and they all stared curiously at Mr. Rawlings. But fortunately there was no master, and no

member of the Sixth Form, in sight. And Wharton hurried the bookmaker up the stairs at top speed, Mr. Rawlings grunting in a dissatisfied way as he went. In the Remove passage Peter Todd met them, and he stared blankly.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Todd. "Who's your friend, Wharton?"

But Wharton did not reply. He hurried Mr. Rawlings into No. 1 Study, and breathed more freely when the door had closed upon him there.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Considers It His Duty.

MR. RAWLINGS sat down in Harry Wharton's arm-chair, and stretched his legs out comfortably, with the evident intention of making himself at home. He had not taken his hat off, and Wharton could hardly restrain himself from knocking it off. The insolence of the rascal was growing. The anxiety the juniors displayed to keep him out of sight showed him the power he had in his hands.

"Well, where's Master Hazeldene?" demanded Mr. Rawlings, taking out a big black cigar, and snipping off the end with his teeth. "Produce 'im!"

"Wait here a bit, and I'll fetch him," said Harry.

"I ain't goin' to wait long," said Mr. Rawlings, lighting his cigar. "You run along and fetch 'im quick, young shaver, or there'll be trouble."

Wharton trembled with rage, but this was not the time to resent the rascal's mode of address. He whispered to Nugent.

"Stay here, Franky, and see that he doesn't get out of the study, while I look for Hazel, will you?"

Nugent nodded.

Harry Wharton left the study, closing the door behind him. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had remained in the passage. They were on guard to see that no one entered Study No. 1 while Mr. Rawlings was there. To have that half-intoxicated, disreputable blackguard found in the study would have meant very serious trouble for the chums of the Remove.

Harry Wharton hurried along the Remove passage to Hazel's study. He guessed that the wretched youth had taken refuge there. He was right. He saw Hazel as he opened the door. With a face like chalk, Hazel sat there, and his eyes turned with a terrified gaze upon the door as it opened.

"Has that man gone?" he panted.

"No, he wants to see you."

"I—I can't see him! I can't let anybody know I know him! I—I should be expelled from the school!" stuttered Hazel.

"You can't deny that you know him."

"I will—I shall!"

"I won't say anything about that being a lie," said Wharton quietly. "But you can't deny that you know him, when he's got your I O U with your signature on it."

Hazel groaned.

"I'm ruined! Oh, what a fool I've been!"

"Have you got any money to pay him?" asked Wharton.

"No, none. I—I owe the beast five pounds. He—he said that Blackamoore was certain to win!" groaned Hazeldene. "It was a dead cert! And—and I had information, too—from a tipster who often gives really good things. Only—the rotten horse came in sixth, you see, and—and I was done in."

"And you betted on credit, without the money to pay if you lost?" demanded Harry.

"Well, you see, I was so certain of winning," said Hazel weakly.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Do you know what that was?" he asked. "It was swindling—swindling, pure and simple! Rawlings is no worse than you are."

"I—I believe he knew I couldn't pay, but he thought I'd get it from my friends," said Hazel miserably. "He knows Marjorie has helped me more than once. Only—only Marjorie hasn't any more money, and—and—"

"You've had it all, you mean," said Harry, in disgust. "I must say you're a pretty specimen. Anyway, you've got to see Rawlings, whether you can pay him or not. He's in my study, and he's waiting for you."

Hazeldene started up.

"I—I can't see him! What's the good? I can't pay him anything."

"If you don't he's going to see the Head."

"He threatened that he would. He said he would come here if I didn't square up, and—and I've been in torment the last two days. I'm ruined."

"Come along."

Hazeldene allowed himself to be led from the study. His

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knees were knocking together as he accompanied Wharton down the passage. From old it was said that the way of the transgressor is hard. Hazel was finding it so. He had plunged into the scrape with utter recklessness, and now that the time had come to "face the music," the emergency found him without nerve, and without courage. He threw himself helplessly upon others, and if they did not save him he was ruined. Yet, angry and scornful as he felt, Wharton could not help feeling compassion for the wretched, white-faced boy, whose folly had led him to this terrible pass.

"See that nobody comes in, you chaps," Wharton muttered, as he passed Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry at the door of No. 1 Study.

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton went in with Hazeldene. Johnny Bull and Bob, looking very grave, remained on the watch outside. Hurree Janset Ram Singh, their Indian chum, joined them there. Fellows looked at them curiously as they passed. Most of the juniors of the house knew who was in Wharton's study, and only the Co. knew that the man had come to see Hazeldene. That Wharton should have such a disreputable acquaintance amazed the Removites, and they could not understand it. Several fellows asked questions, but the questions were not answered. The chums were not in a mood for chatter. But when Billy Bunter rolled upon the scene, he was not to be denied.

Bunter blinked at the three juniors, and put his hand on the door of No. 1 Study. Johnny Bull shoved him back roughly.

"You can't go in," he said.

"Oh, really, Bull, I'm going in, you know. I want to see Wharton."

"You can't."

"Why can't I?" demanded Bunter warnly. "What right have you got to keep me out of Wharton's study—my old pal Harry's study? Like your rotten cheek, I think. I'm jolly well going in."

"If you come near that door again, I'll boot you down the passage," said Johnny Bull, in a concentrated voice.

Bunter backed away.

"Oh, all right! I know who's in there. Rawlings, the bookmaker. I thought he had come to see Hazel, but it turns out he's come to see Wharton. My hat! And Wharton always pretended to be a giddy model! He, he, he!"

"Clear off!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

Bob made a rush at the Owl of the Remove, and Bunter scampered down the passage. As Bob returned to the study door, Bunter came cautiously back.

"I say, you fellows, I'm sincerely sorry, but I can't have this!" he said. "I consider it a disgrace to the school, Wharton entertaining bookmakers in his study. I'm sorry, but it's my duty to speak to a prefect."

"If you dare to sneak, you fat cad—"

"I don't call it sneaking. I regard it from a point of view of duty," said Bunter loftily. "I'm sincerely sorry, but I've got my duty to do."

And he rolled away to the stairs. The juniors exchanged glances of alarm. If the Owl of the Remove told tales to a prefect, whether from a sense of duty or not, all the fat would be in the fire with a vengeance. Bob Cherry seemed to gulp something down, and he called after the fat junior, as Bunter reached the head of the stairs.

"Bunter, come here!"

Billy Bunter looked round.

"Sorry I can't stop, Cherry," he said, stopping all the same. "You see, they're at half-time now, and I must speak to Wingate."

"Come here, you fat beast!"

"No larks?" said Bunter suspiciously.

"No larks!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter rolled back.

"You're to keep your silly head shut about Rawlings, Bunter," said Bob, in a low voice. "Do you understand? You'll be scragged if you say a single word!"

"I'm sincerely sorry," said Bunter loftily. "You fellows don't quite understand what it is to have a keen sense of duty. You don't quite come up to my standard. But I can't allow these things to go on without chipping in. That's how I feel about it."

Bob glared.

To be preached at by a young rascal like William George Bunter was a new and painful experience for Bob Cherry; and it was very hard to bear. But just then the Owl of the Remove held the whip-hand, and he knew it, and he intended to make the most of it.

"I suppose you're expecting a postal-order, Bunter?" Bob asked, as calmly as he could. "You generally are."

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles. The

discussion was reaching the point he had intended it to reach all along.

"Yes," he replied, "I'm expecting a remittance from one of my titled relations."

"I'll lend you a couple of bob in advance upon your postal-order, if you like," said Bob Cherry.

Bunter shook his head.

"The postal-order will be for four shillings," he explained. "Perhaps you'd better hand me the four bob, and take the postal-order when it comes. Then I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go and have a snack in the tuckshop, and consider whether I could possibly hold my tongue about these disgraceful proceedings in No. 1 Study. I'd like to do anything I could for old pals, even though I can't help regarding their conduct with contempt, you know."

Bob Cherry's fists clenched convulsively. The negotiations were in great danger of ending with Bunter sprawling on the floor. But Bob held his temper in check.

"I can't bargain with the ghoul," said Bob, in a choking voice. "Lend me some tin, you fellows."

"We'll stand our whack," said Johnny Bull, with a furious glance at Bunter. "Here's a bob towards it, anyway."

"And here are two honourable bobs," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry found a shilling in his pocket. It was his last; but it had to be sacrificed for the good of the cause, so to speak. Bunter's little, round eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he received the coins in his fat palm.

"Thanks!" he said airily. "Of course, I'm going to settle this out of my postal-order—when it comes."

"Clear off!" said Bob.

"And I'll think over Wharton's conduct, and decide whether I can possibly allow him to go on without reporting him," said Bunter. "I'll do my best. But if you fellows were as sensitive as I am, you'd understand how painful it is to have to struggle against a sense of duty for the sake of friendship."

"Will you clear off?" said Bob Cherry, in a sulphurous voice. "I sha'n't be able to keep my hands off you much longer."

And Bob looked so dangerous that the Owl of the Remove decided to clear off, without giving any further expression to his sense of duty. He rolled away, and made a direct line for the tuckshop—where his new and oppressive sense of duty was forgotten, for the time, in the joys of ginger-beer and jam-tarts.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Hard Terms!

HAZELDENE had entered the study with Harry Wharton, and the door had closed immediately. Mr. Rawlings looked at him through the thick smoke of his strong-smelling cigar, and gave him a nod.

"Afternoon!" he said.

"Good-afternoon!" faltered Hazeldene.

"I've got your bit of paper here," said Mr. Rawlings. "Five quid it is. Of course, you're going to settle up."

"I told you last night that I couldn't," said Hazeldene, his face as white as chalk. "You must give me time, Mr. Rawlings."

"I've give you all the time I'm goin' to give you," said Mr. Rawlings. "Now, I'll tell you wot I'll do, and it's a good offer. I'll give you until I've finished smoking this 'ere cigar to find the money. Then, if I ain't paid, I'm goin' to the 'Ead."

Hazeldene leaned one hand on the table to support himself.

"That wouldn't do you any good," he said. "The Head wouldn't pay you."

"I'm going to ask him for your father's address."

"My father! He wouldn't pay a gambling debt."

"I reckon he would make you pretty sorry you 'adn't paid it, though, and so would the 'Ead," said Mr. Rawlings, with a chuckle. "I should think it was worth more'n five quid to you not to be kicked out of your school. But I dessay you know best. 'Ave your way. Don't mind me. I give you till I've finished this 'ere cigar."

"How can I pay you when I haven't any money?" said Hazeldene helplessly. "Do be reasonable, Mr. Rawlings."

"You 'ad not the money when you laid the bet," said Mr. Rawlings. "You said you could raise it from your friends."

"I—I hoped—"

"Your friends ain't so anxious to shell out—wot?" asked the bookmaker, with a grin. "I s'pose so—friends are often like that. Well, that's your look-out. If you try to swindle me, you'll suffer for it. That's all!"

Hazeldene turned a haggard look on Wharton and Nugent, who were looking worried and uneasy.

"Can you fellows help me?" he muttered. "You—you see what's at stake! I shall be able to raise the money some time—Marjorie will help me. I'll let you have it back, on my word—only help me now to get that man away."

"That man ain't goin' away till he's paid," chuckled Mr. Rawlings.

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NEXT MONDAY—

"IN BORROWED PLUMES!"

Rawlings, through the thick smoke of his cigar. "E knows a trick worth two of that."

"It's impossible," said Wharton curtly. "I haven't more than a few shillings, and Nugent is nearly stony."

Frank Nugent nodded assent.

"The other fellows—" muttered Hazeldene.

"I don't suppose we could raise more than a quid among the lot of us," said Harry. "Dash it all! Where do you think we are to get pounds from?"

"You—you might borrow it of Lord Mauleverer," faltered Hazeldene. "You're on good terms with him, and he's got lots of money."

"I'm not on cadging terms with him," said Wharton sharply; "and Lord Mauleverer has gone home to see his people this afternoon."

Hazel groaned.

"Then it's all up with me," he said hopelessly. "That man will go to the Head, and show him the paper with my signature on it. I can't deny that. I shall be sacked—and my father—"

His voice broke.

"Comes 'ard on a bloke when he tries to swindle, and can't get through with it, don't it?" said Mr. Rawlings, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "Honesty is the best policy, young feller. You hear that in mind, and don't you try to swindle again—especially a downy bird like yours—truly."

But Hazel was too scared and wretched to care for the insolence of the rascal in the armchair. He was thinking only of his danger, and the apparent impossibility of escaping from it. His eyes were turned beseechingly upon Wharton. Instinctively, he turned to that stronger nature to help him.

Wharton exchanged a glance with Nugent. They would save the wretched boy if they could—but how was it to be done?

"Look here, Mr. Rawlings," said Harry, in a conciliatory tone as he could adopt, for his hands were itching to be laid upon the insolent rascal. "If you'll give us time to raise the money, I'll see that you are paid. You can take my word."

Rawlings stared at him insolently.

"And who are you?" he demanded.

"I am Harry Wharton, and if you knew a decent chap when you saw one, you'd know that my word was good enough."

"Well, Master Harry Wharton, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Mr. Rawlings, after some reflection. "I don't want to lose the money. I'll take 'arf of it down, and your I O U for the other 'arf to be paid this week."

Hazel looked imploringly at Wharton.

"I haven't the money," said Harry.

Mr. Rawlings was eyeing him keenly. The rascal was a keen enough judge of character, and he could see easily enough that Wharton was a very different sort of fellow from Hazeldene. The handsome, frank face of the captain of the Remove was a guarantee that his word was as good as his bond—not that Mr. Rawlings had any intention of taking his word when he could get his bond. As he noted Wharton's anxiety to save the wretched black sheep of the Remove, a cunning scheme outlined itself in the rascal's brain. His manner became less insolent.

"I'm sure I don't want to be 'ard on a young gent," said Mr. Rawlings. "Look 'ere—and this 'ere is my rock-bottom offer. I'll take two quid down, and your note of 'and for three quid, Master Wharton, and clear out. Wot price that?"

"You can raise two pounds, Wharton," said Hazel. "You can do that—the fellows will lend it to you, though they won't to me. And—and I'll settle up—I get my allowance on Saturday—and Marjorie will help me—"

"I don't want Marjorie's money," said Wharton savagely. "If I pay this man, I don't expect ever to see the money again!"

"I promise—"

"You promised to have nothing more to do with fellows of this sort," said Harry angrily; "and you promised to repay the money we paid for you when you were in a scrape before. What was that promise worth? You haven't paid a penny!"

"Oh, pile it on!" said Hazel bitterly. "I'm down now, and you can hit as hard as you like!"

Wharton relented at once.

"I don't want to pile it on," he said, more gently. "But don't talk rot about repaying the money! You know you can't do it, and you know you'll forget all about it as soon as you're out of danger! Look here, Mr. Rawlings; I'll undertake to pay the money if you'll clear out!"

"Two quid down," said Mr. Rawlings. "I'm 'ard up. To tell you a secret, I've got to settle my bill at the Cross Keys, or get out. I've 'ad bad luck. Two quid down, and"



your note-of-and for the rest, and I'll travel. And I stay 'ere till the two quid is paid!"

"I'll try to raise the money," said Harry. "But get out of here. Can't you understand what it would mean if you were found here? You wouldn't get paid, for one thing; and Hazel would be kicked out of Greyfriars, for another!"

"I don't leave this 'ere room without two quid in my 'and!"

The man was evidently determined, and it was useless to argue with him. He had drunk just enough to make him quarrelsome and obstinate, without clouding his faculties. He settled himself back in the armchair, and pulled at the cigar.

"Stay here a bit, and see that nobody comes in," said Wharton, in a low voice, to Frank Nugent. "I'll get along and see what I can do."

And he quitted the study with a frowning brow. Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry and the Nabob of Bhanipur met him with anxious, inquiring glances in the passage.

"You fellows got any tin?" asked Wharton.

"I have an esteemed half-sovereign," said Hurree Singh, producing it. "It is quite at your service, my esteemed chum!"

"Thanks! And you chaps?"

"Stony!" said Bob.

"Broke!" said Johnny Bull.

"Then I want thirty bob more. That rascal won't go without two pounds down," said Harry. "I'm going to try to raise it. Keep your eyes open here!"

"Right-ho!"

Mark Linley of the Remove met Wharton in the passage. Linley was in football rig, with a coat and muffler on, and a footer under his arm.

"I've been looking for you, Wharton," he said. "Have you forgotten the match?"

"The match!" said Harry.

He had, as a matter of fact, forgotten it. There was a Form match on that afternoon between the Remove and the Upper Fourth, and Harry Wharton was skipper of the Remove eleven. Mark Linley looked at him in astonishment.

"The fellows are waiting," he said. "Temple & Co. have been on the ground some time. Is anything the matter?"

"Yes," said Harry; "and something jolly serious, too. Hazel is in trouble again!"

Mark raised his eyebrows. He was not surprised to hear it.

"There's a man come to see him—a disreputable sort of bookmaker," said Harry. "We've got him in the study out of sight; but he won't go without his money!"

"My hat!"

"I can't play—and the other chaps can't. Tell Smithy I want him to captain the team this afternoon, and to fill five places."

"Phew!"

"There's nothing else to be done. We can't keep the Fourth waiting any longer. Buzz off, there's a good chap!"

"Right-ho!" said Mark. "We'll do our best."

And the Lancashire lad went down to the football ground, while Harry Wharton hurried off on his borrowing expedition.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Coker is Too Good!

HARRY WHARTON tapped at the door of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

He had come to a resolve that was almost desperate; but it was the only thing to be done. He could not go about asking the Remove fellows for money; the presence of the bookmaker in the study had attracted enough attention as it was. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, could probably have lent it to him, but it went against the grain to ask him, and it was quite possible that Smithy would refuse. Besides, Smithy was on the footer-ground with the other fellows, beginning the match with the Upper Fourth.

Wharton had met Bulstrode and Ogilvy in the house, but both of them proved to have resources limited to a few shillings. Lord Mauleverer, who would have lent him the money at once, was absent. There was nothing for it but to get an advance from his Form-master, if he could—with-out, of course, acquainting him with what he wanted the money for.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch was seated at his table, with a typewriter before him, engaged upon the literary work that occupied most of his leisure hours; but he paused, and glanced kindly enough at Wharton as he came in, noting the unusual colour in the face of the junior.

"Well, Wharton?" he said.

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"I've come to ask you a favour, sir," said Harry. "I want thirty shillings to settle a debt. I can get it from my uncle in a couple of days, but I want to pay to-day. Would you have the very great kindness, sir, to let me have it?"

Mr. Quelch smiled good-naturedly. If Billy Bunter or Snoop or Skinner had made such a request, Mr. Quelch would have refused with cutting curtness; but with Harry Wharton it was different. He had never asked a favour before; and Mr. Quelch knew, without inquiring, that any debt Wharton might have contracted would be of an honourable nature, that he would not be afraid to explain, if necessary.

"Ah, you have been outrunning your resources!" said the Remove-master indulgently. "If you were a reckless or extravagant boy, Wharton, I should certainly decline to oblige you; but, knowing you as I do, I shall have no hesitation in the matter. You may certainly have the money!"

Wharton drew a breath of relief. The Form-master did not intend to ask him what he wanted the money for. He concluded that it was for payment of some expense of the Remove football club—nets or goalposts, or a new match ball, or something of the sort—and he did not want it to be explained.

"You're very kind, sir," said Wharton, as Mr. Quelch unlocked his desk, and extracted a sovereign and a half-sovereign from a drawer inside it.

"Not at all, Wharton. I am very glad that a boy in my Form should look upon me as a friend as well as a master," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

But Wharton thanked him warmly as he received the two coins. He left the study with a lighter heart.

The sound of voices raised in warm argument met his ears as he returned to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. Coker of the Fifth was standing there, and Bob Cherry and Bull and Hurree Jamsset Singh were lined up outside the study door. Coker turned a frowning glance upon Wharton as he hurried up.

"What's the trouble?" asked Harry.

"Coker wants to meddle, as usual," said Bob. "He's come here asking to be chucked downstairs!"

Coker frowned majestically.

"You've got a bookmaker in that study!" he exclaimed.

"Mind your own business," said Johnny Bull.

"I think it's everybody's business to stop that sort of goings on," said Coker, of the Fifth. "I'm interfering for your own sakes. What do you think would happen if a prefect spotted you?"

"You don't understand," said Harry. "And, anyway, it's no business of a Fifth Form chap. You get out of our passage!"

Coker shook his head. Coker was a good-natured fellow in his way, but he had an idea of his own importance that was quite out of keeping with the facts. Coker believed in keeping a firm hand upon juniors, and he sometimes assumed more airs and graces, as Bob Cherry expressed it, than a prefect of the Sixth.

Coker had decided that it was his duty to interfere in this matter, and, after turning it over in his mind, he had come to No. 1 Study to eject the bookmaker—with a complete misunderstanding of the state of affairs there, of course. His idea was that the Famous Five were recklessly entering into things that would cause their disgrace and expulsion from the school, and Coker of the Fifth meant to chip in to time.

"That man's going to be chucked out," said Coker firmly.

"Why, I know him by sight. He's Rawlings, a regular blackguard. Decent bookies won't have anything to do with him, and he's been warned off the racecourses for swindling. He's got an awful reputation. You kids are simply asking for the sack!"

"You don't understand," repeated Harry.

"Do you deny that you've got Rawlings the bookie in your study?" demanded Coker.

"No; but—"

"Well, I'm going to chuck him out!"

"Fathead!"

"What do you think Wingate would do if he knew he was here?" said Coker. "He'd boot him out of the school, and report you young rascals to the Head. I'm not going to report you, as I'm not a prefect, but I'm going to boot that scoundrel out. Let me get in!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Wharton gritted his teeth with annoyance. Coker's interference was a new complication in a matter already sufficiently dangerous. Once Mr. Rawlings was settled with, there would be great difficulty in piloting him out of the school unseen. With Coker of the Fifth on the warpath, the matter was ten times more difficult.

"Be a good chap, Coker," said Wharton. "It's not as you think. The man's going in a few minutes; but if you touch him he'll kick up a row here!"

"Let him!" said Coker.



Mr. Quelch unlocked his desk, and extracted a sovereign and a half-sovereign from a drawer inside it. "You're very kind, sir," said Wharton gratefully. "Not at all, Wharton. I am very glad that a boy in my form should look upon me as a friend as well as a master," said Mr. Quelch kindly. (See Chapter 4.)

"It will make trouble for all of us."

"Serve you right! If you haven't sense enough to do the decent thing, you must take the consequences," said Coker. "I suppose you knew that it was dangerous when you let such a man come into your study?"

"You don't understand," said Wharton helplessly.

"I understand that that man's going to be kicked out of Greyfriars, as a warning to him not to come again!" said Coker.

And Coker strode towards the study door.

Wharton sprang into his way.

"Stand back, you silly ass—"

"Bosh!" said Coker.

And he shoved the junior aside.

"Collar the fool!" said Johnny Bull.

"Hands off!" yelled Coker. "I'll wipe up the floor with you! I'll— Ow—ow—ow!"

Bump!

Horace Coker went down on the floor with the four juniors clinging to him. He gasped and roared under their weight.

"Gerooh! Lemme gerrup!" he roared. "I'll smash you! I'll—"

"Chuck him downstairs," said Bob.

"Yaroo! Leggo! Hands off! Yah!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"IN BORROWED PLUMES!"

Coker was rolled along the passage to the stairs, and bundled down. Several feet helped him to go, and he did not stop till he reached the first landing. There he arrived in a dusty and dishevelled heap. He sat up, with his collar harghing down his back, his hair ruffled, and his face very red.

"You—you young rascals!" he howled. "I'll pulverise you for this! I'll—" Words failed Coker, and he sprang to his feet, with the evident intention of charging up the stairs at the chums of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. lined up at the top of the stairs, waiting for him. They looked so grim that Horace Coker paused. He realised that he would be at a great disadvantage if he charged upstairs at four determined juniors. He paused in time.

"Get off, and mind your own business," said Wharton.

Coker snorted.

"I'm going," he said. "But I'll get Potter and Greene, and wait outside for your precious pal, and we'll duck him in the fountain when he comes out."

And Coker strode away.

Harry Wharton and his chums looked simply horrified. There was no doubt that the enraged Fifth-Former would keep his word. They could already hear him calling to his

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

chums Potter and Greene, in the Fifth-Form passage, on the next floor below.

"Well, all the fat's in the fire now," groaned Bob Cherry. "I'll all come out now, and we've only made matters worse by having the rotter in the study. Why, the blessed fountain is right in front of the Head's window, and Coker means business."

"What awful luck that that silly ass should take it into his silly head to meddle with us now!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

"The awfulness of the luck is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a doleful shake of his dusky head.

"We shall have to the bookie out by the back way, somehow," said Johnny Bull quickly. "Get settled with the beast as quick as you can, and we'll manage it. But buck up."

"Right-ho!"

Wharton hurried into the study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Black and White!

NO. 1 STUDY was thick with smoke.

Mr. Rawlings had lighted a second cigar, and was blowing out thick clouds of a pungent smoke, that made Nugent and Hazeldene cough, and caused Wharton to cough too, as he came into the study. The room was simply reeking with it, and Frank Nugent had opened the window wide.

"Have you got the money?" Hazeldene asked anxiously, turning to Wharton as he came in.

"Yes; two pounds."

"Oh, good luck!"

Harry Wharton laid the sovereign and the two half-sovereigns upon the table. Mr. Rawlings looked a little discontented.

"You've got that easy and quick enough," he grunted. "I reckon you could 'ave got the rest if you'd wanted to."

"I suppose you are going to keep your word?" said Harry sharply.

"I'm a man of my word, I am," said Mr. Rawlings. "You 'and me the two quid, and your note of 'and for the other three, and I'll travel."

Wharton hesitated.

"I don't want to put anything into writing," he said. "You know you can take my word. Let it go at that."

"Wot's the 'arm of putting it into writin', if you mean business?" asked Mr. Rawlings. "I don't take nobody's word in money matters."

"Give him the paper, Wharton," urged Hazeldene. "Where's the harm? You'll get it back when you pay the other three pounds."

"Yes, but—"

"I ain't leavin' 'ere without it," said Mr. Rawlings.

There was nothing else to be done. After all, where was the harm? Wharton was certain of getting the money by Saturday, and then he could pay and recover the paper.

"Very well!" he said. "Tell me what you want."

"You write: 'I promise to pay Mr. 'Enery Rawlings the sum of three pounds on Saturday, in full settlement,' and put the date," said the bookmaker, "and sign your name."

Wharton dipped a pen in the ink, and wrote it upon a sheet of imput paper. He signed his name, and showed it to Mr. Rawlings.

"Is that all right?" he asked.

"That's all right," said Mr. Rawlings, with a peculiar gleam in his cunning eyes. "Give me that, and the two quid, and 'ere's Master Hazeldene's bit of paper in exchange."

"There you are!"

Mr. Rawlings placed Wharton's note in his pocket-book and the two pounds in his waistcoat pocket. Then he produced Hazeldene's I O U promptly enough.

"There's your bit of writin', Master Hazeldene."

Hazeldene pounced upon it.

"That's mine," he said. "It's all right."

"Put it in the fire," said Harry.

Hazeldene obeyed gladly enough. His face brightened as if a weight was lifted from his mind, as the paper crackled up in the flames and was consumed. His burden was gone—shifted upon the shoulders of another!

Mr. Rawlings rose to his feet.

"Glad we've come to a friendly settlement," he said. "I'll come 'ere on Saturday, if you like, for the rest, and 'ave you back your note of 'and."

"You can't come here," said Wharton sharply.

"Then you can send it by post to the Cross Keys," said Mr. Rawlings, "and I'll let you 'ave your paper by return of post."

Wharton paused, and bit his lip. To send this rascal the money, and trust to his honour to return the paper, was too great a risk. What was to prevent Mr. Rawlings from pocketing the cash, and keeping the paper all the same? That he was rascal enough to do it Wharton had no doubt whatever.

"You don't like that idea?" asked Mr. Rawlings.

"No," said Harry uneasily. "I'd better hand you the money personally."

"All right—come to the Cross Keys on Saturday—"

"I can't come there; it's out of bounds."

"Master Hazeldene has managed it often enough, and I s'pose it's out of bounds for 'im, too," said Mr. Rawlings, with a grin. "Howsoever, I'm an accommodatin' gent. I'll meet you somewhere if you like on Saturday."

That, too, was exceedingly disagreeable to Wharton. He knew that he might be seen speaking with the bookmaker, and if it were reported at Greyfriars, it would mean inquiry and trouble. But there were difficulties on both sides. Meeting Mr. Rawlings and handing him the money in return for the paper was the least objectionable manner of settling the matter, Wharton considered.

"Make it after dark, then," he said. "It gets dark soon enough now, and I can get out of gates, say, about six o'clock."

"Anythin' to oblige," said Mr. Rawlings.

"I'll come to the old barn—you know it—on the Friardale road," said Wharton, "soon after six on Saturday? Will that suit you?"

Mr. Rawlings nodded.

"Done!" he said. "Don't forget to bring the money with you, fur if you do, I shall finish my little walk by coming up to the school."

"I shall keep my word," said Wharton sharply.

"Right-ho! Don't get ratty at a word of friendly advice. Only raising three quid in three days ain't always easy for a boy of your age, you know."

"I shall ask my uncle for it."

"I've applied to my uncle in times of difficulty," grinned Mr. Rawlings. "Uncle Solomons—three brass balls, you know."

"I don't mean that!"

"Must be a very accommodatin' uncle to let you 'ave three quid for the askin'," said Mr. Rawlings, with a curious look at the juniors. "Plenty of money—what?"

Wharton gave him a freezing look. Mr. Rawlings' personal interest in his private affairs was the last word in impertinence.

"My uncle is very well off," he said. "But that doesn't matter now. You will have your money, and that's all you need worry about."

"Right-ho," said Mr. Rawlings. "I'm goin'."

"Hold on a minute; it's not so jolly easy to go," said Harry. "It's got out that you are here, and there are some fellows waiting for you in the Close. They intend to rush you as you go out, and duck you in the fountain."

Mr. Rawlings looked ferocious.

"If a 'and is laid on me, I'll yell for 'elp," he said. "Then we'll see what your 'cadmaster has to say!"

"We can't help it," said Wharton. "The fellows I speak of are seniors, and we can't stop them. We've tried to. We just chucked one of them downstairs because he wanted to come in here and start on you."

"I 'eard a row," admitted Mr. Rawlings. "Well, I don't want to make no rumpus if it can be 'elped. Wot am I to do?"

"We must smuggle you out the back way somehow," said Harry, knitting his brows in thought. "If you go down by the back stairs, you may be able to slip out by the tradesmen's gate. The sooner the better, so come on."

"I'm ready!"

Wharton led the bookmaker out of the study.

"Coker & Co. are waiting outside the house," said Johnny Bull, who had stationed himself at the passage window overlooking the Close. "They've got Fitzgerald with them now. There's four of them. Coker looks excited."

"I think we can dodge them," said Harry.

He led Mr. Rawlings along the passage towards the back of the house. There another passage gave admittance to the servants' staircase. There was no one in sight on the staircase, and Wharton led the bookmaker down it and into a

ANSWERS

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passage leading to the kitchen-garden. Just as they reached the door, Trotter, the page, came in from the garden. He stopped at the sight of Wharton and his companion, surprised at the sight of a junior in that part of the house, and still more surprised by the sight of Mr. Rawlings, with whose face he was well acquainted.

Trotter's astonished stare brought a flush to Wharton's cheeks.

"Mum's the word, Trotty!" said Harry hastily. "Look here, I want to get this chap out of the house without his being seen. Don't say anything."

"Cert'nly, Master Wharton."

"Ow do you do, Trotter?" said Mr. Rawlings affably. "When you want a bob each way on a geegee, you know where to come."

"Thank you, Mr. Rawlings. I leave that to my betters," said Trotter sarcastically, and Harry Wharton's flush deepened. He could see that the page supposed Mr. Rawlings to be his visitor, but he did not care to explain and mention Hazel's name.

"I'll get him out for you if you like, Master Wharton," said Trotter obligingly. "You mustn't be seen with 'im if he's spotted. It was awful risky having him here, sir."

"I didn't want him," said Harry. "He didn't come to see me. I shall be awfully obliged if you can get him away, Trotter."

"I'll do it, sir."

Trotter led the bookmaker into the kitchen-garden, and piloted him carefully and cautiously away, and finally got rid of him at the tradesmen's gate. Mr. Rawlings indulged in a deep chuckle as he walked away towards Friardale. He took Wharton's note of hand from his pocket-book, and looked at it, and chuckled again.

"Three quid!" he murmured. "Three quid! Thirty's near the mark, I fancy—or a hundred, for that matter."

And Mr. Rawlings restored the paper to his pocket-book, and walked on, still chuckling, evidently in a great state of satisfaction.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Unexpected!

HARRY WHARTON returned to Study No. 1 as soon as the bookmaker was clear of the house.

Hazeldene was still there, and the Co. were in the study. They all turned inquiring glances upon Wharton.

"Is he gone?" asked Hazel eagerly.

"Yes."

Hazel drew a deep, deep breath.

"Thank goodness! And he's not been seen?"

"Only Trotter."

"Oh! Trotter may jaw about it," said Hazel anxiously.

"I wish you could have got him out of the House without Trotter seeing him."

"Well, I couldn't," said Harry shortly. "And I think we've had good luck. He's got away without a master or a prefect spotting him. We've been luckier than we could have expected, and I only hope this is the end of it."

"It's the end of it as far as I'm concerned," said Hazel, with unusual earnestness. "I won't say anything about repaying the money—I mayn't be able to do it, I know. But this is the last time I'll ever get into a scrape like that. I thought my heart would stop beating when I saw that villain in the Close. I sha'n't forget it in a hurry."

"You'll keep clear of him, and the other rotters like him, if you've got any sense," said Harry. "We've saved you this time, and we don't know that it's all over. Lots of the fellows know that he was in this study, and it may mean trouble for us yet."

"I—I hope not," said Hazel uneasily. "I—I say, I'm awfully obliged to you chaps, and I swear I'll try every way I can to get the money to repay you!"

"Don't ask Marjorie for it," said Wharton grimly. "I'd rather lose it than take it from her."

Hazel flushed.

"I suppose you needn't interfere between my sister and me," he said. "That's a matter that concerns me personally."

Evidently Hazel was becoming himself again now that the danger was past. The old obstinacy and the cool "cheek" were reappearing.

"That's all rot!" said Wharton directly. "You've planted your personal affairs on us, and forced us to interfere, and you can't grumble if all the interference isn't to your liking. I tell you I won't have you asking Marjorie for money to pay me with! I'd rather lose it! And don't gas any rot about your personal affairs. I don't like it. If you want to set up independence, you can keep your personal affairs to yourself all the time, and not plant them on us when you're in difficulties. Excuse me speaking plainly, but I'm fed up!"

"Well, I shall pay you," said Hazel sullenly.

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"Where did you get the tin to settle with that ghoul?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Inky stood half-a-quid, and I borrowed thirty bob from Quelchly," said Wharton.

Hazel started.

"From Quelchly!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. There was no other way."

"Good heavens! You've let Quelchly know—"

"Fathead! If I'd told him what the money was for we should all have been yanked into the Head's study before you could catch your breath, and flogged—the lot of us!" said Wharton savagely. "I told Quelchly I had to pay a debt, but I didn't tell him what debt."

"It was awfully risky. You oughtn't to have gone to Quelch—"

"I had to find the money, and there was no other way."

"Well, I suppose you know best," growled Hazeldene. "I shouldn't have advised going to Quelch. If anything should come out, he will remember that you had money from him to-day to settle a debt."

Wharton's eyes flashed. To be reproached now, and by Hazeldene, for the way in which he had managed the affair, was really the last straw.

"Can you suggest any other way I could have raised the money?" he demanded.

"You might have tried Smithy—"

"I'm not on the terms with Vernon-Smith to borrow money of him, and besides, he might have refused. And besides that, he was playing footer, and I should have had to ask him before a crowd of fellows."

"Well, I think it was risky to go to Quelch," said Hazel.

"I shouldn't have done it. But perhaps you know best. Thanks, once again, for what you've done! I'll let you have the money back as soon as I can."

And Hazel left the study.

The Famous Five looked at one another, and Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If it wasn't for Marjorie—" he muttered.

"The ungrateful rotter!" growled Johnny Bull. "Pity we didn't let the bookie show him up after all. He'll come to it sooner or later."

"No; I'm not sorry we saved the silly ass, but—but it's a bit hard to have him ragging me for the way I managed it," said Harry. "I suppose he can't help being a fool. I couldn't have got the money from Smithy."

"Of course you couldn't," said Frank Nugent. "Don't think about that cad and what he thinks. We're done with him now, anyway."

Bob Cherry glanced out of the window.

"Coker's still waiting," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study door opened as the juniors burst into a laugh, and a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in. Billy Bunter blinked round the room, evidently in search of the visitor, and seemed surprised not to see him. There was a shiny look upon Billy Bunter's face, and a sneer of jam on his fat chin. They were signs that he had already disposed, in the tuckshop, of the four shillings which his sense of duty had compelled him to extract from the chums of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, where's the visitor?" he asked. "Hidden him under the table—what? I say, I've been thinking it over."

"Thinking what over, fathead?" said Wharton crossly. Wharton's temper had suffered, and he was not in a humour to be bothered by the Owl of the Remove.

"I told Bull that I couldn't allow these goings on," said Bunter, with dignity. "I said I'd think it over, and I've thought it over. I can't permit it. I shall have to let Wingate know about that man being here. Wingate will come and turn him out. It's my duty. I'm sincerely sorry, but there you are!"

The juniors grinned. They understood that Bunter, having expended his bribe, had come back for another. But he had come a little too late, as Mr. Rawlings was gone, and was at a safe distance by that time.

"How much do you want now?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, that's a rotten way to put it!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "Of course, I'm only thinking of my duty, from a point of view—of a sense of honour, you know. I've said before that you perhaps haven't my fine sense of honour, and I say it again. I'm sincerely sorry, but I can't allow these disgraceful goings on. It's no good hiding your bookmaker friend. I know he's here."

"As a matter of fact, he's gone," said Bob Cherry. "He's jolly near at Friardale by this time, you fat rascal! Get out!"

"You can't stuff me up, Bob Cherry! I've been keeping one eye on the House to see if he went," said Bunter, with a

chuckle. "Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"You're expecting a postal-order which you won't get, and you're not expecting a hiding which you will get," remarked Johnny Bull. "Collar the cad!"

"Ow! Hands off! Yah!"

Billy Bunter was promptly collared and slammed face downwards on the study table. Then Johnny Bull found a slipper, and commenced operations upon Bunter's fat person. The roars of Bunter were like those of a wild bull.

"Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!"

"There!" panted Johnny Bull. "Now you clear off, and don't try blackmail any more as a means of raising the wind."

"Oh! Ow! Yah!" roared Bunter.

"One second to get out of the study, or you'll have another dose," said Wharton.

One second was enough for Bunter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Hazel's Sister!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came down to the football-ground. The match with the Upper Fourth was in the second half now, but they wanted to see the end of it.

Without the Famous Five in the team, the Remove eleven was much weaker, of course, and Temple, Dabney, & Co. had a better chance than usual. They were making the most of it. The score was level, goal for goal, and the match was still very keen. Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley, Tom Brown and Penfold, were doing great things for the Remove, and Bulstrode was very strong in goal. But the reserves who had been played in the place of the Famous Five were not up to the form of the Upper Fourth, and it looked like finishing in a victory for Temple, Dabney, & Co.

Johnny Bull grunted with dissatisfaction as he watched the Fourth-Formers bearing down upon the Remove goal in great force.

"Looks like a licking!" he growled. "That's another thing we've got to thank Hazeldene for! Blessed if I think he's worth it!"

"Marjorie is, though," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, we don't want to be licked. It will count in our record for the season. Look at Temple! He's getting through!"

There was a yell of delight from the Fourth-Formers watching the match.

"Go it, Temple!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The ball was in the net.

"Two up for the Fourth! Rotten!"

"Well, it was a good goal," said Wharton, trying to be good-humoured about it. "I don't grudge Temple his goal. But it's rotten to be standing here looking on, when we might be wiping up the ground with them."

"The Bouncer isn't in his best form, either," said Nugent.

Wharton had already noticed it. Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, was one of the finest footballers in the school—when he liked. Now that he was captaining the Form team in Wharton's place he had an opportunity of showing himself at his best. His play was splendid, but he was evidently out of condition. The Bouncer, who was as hard as iron when in form, had "bellows to mend" now, and several times he had failed in the brilliant rushes for which he was famous in the Form. Wharton knew only too well what the matter was, and he frowned.

"Smoking again!" he growled.

But the Bouncer, out of form as he was, played up well, and just before the call of time he put the ball in again. The score was level, and there was still five minutes to play. There was a bare chance of victory for either side, and both teams played up hard. The Famous Five looked on with keen interest, but Bob Cherry's eyes wandered away from the ground towards the school gates every minute or two. And suddenly Bob darted away from his companions, and rushed towards the gates.

Two girls had walked in at the gates, and Bob recognised Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara from Cliff House School. Marjorie had promised to come over and see the match if she could get away in time, expecting, of course, that her friends would be playing in the Remove team. She looked surprised as Bob ran up in Etons.

"Jolly glad to see you!" exclaimed Bob. "Come on; it's not quite over!"

"I am sorry we couldn't get here earlier," said Marjorie. "I hoped to be able to see the second half; but Clara was detained."

"Lines!" said Miss Clara, with a grimace. "Rotten!"

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Miss Clara had picked up some of the Greyfriars fellows' expressions.

"You're not playing?" asked Marjorie, as she walked towards the football-ground with Bob.

"No; we're standing out this time," said Bob.

"Why, Harry said that you would all be in the team for certain."

"Yes; but—something happened to make us change our minds," explained Bob, reddening a little. He did not mean to explain to Hazeldene's sister what the "something" was. "But Smithy is going great guns. Come and see the finish!"

The match was almost over as the girls arrived on the ground and joined the Co. But the Remove forwards were attacking hotly, and Vernon-Smith was well to the fore. The Bouncer caught sight of Marjorie Hazeldene as she stood with Harry Wharton & Co., and he made tremendous efforts. He wanted very much to perform feats, with Marjorie Hazeldene looking on.

"Time!" said Frank Nugent, looking up at the clock in the tower.

"There was a roar!"

"Bravo, the Bouncer!"

"Goal!"

Almost on the stroke of time Vernon-Smith had put the ball into the net. The Removes roared applause, and Marjorie clapped her hands. The match was over, and the Bouncer's face was glowing as he came towards the group.

"That was a jolly good goal, Smithy!" Harry Wharton exclaimed heartily. He had intended to have something to say to the Bouncer about his "bellows-to-mend" condition in private. But after that brilliant goal he felt that he could not very well find fault with the fellow who had pulled the game out of the fire. And the goal had certainly been a superb one.

"It was ripping!" declared Miss Clara.

"First chop!" said Bob Cherry, giving the Bouncer a slap on the shoulder that made him wince. "I was afraid the match was a goner."

"I wish we had seen more of it," said Marjorie. "Is my brother here, Harry?"

"In the School House, I think," said Wharton. He had not seen Hazeldene since the latter left No. 1 Study. "We'll find him somewhere."

They walked off the football-ground. The juniors grinned at the sight of Coker & Co. standing in a group by the fountain talking together. The Fifth-Formers were still waiting for Mr. Rawlings to come out of the house.

They met Hazeldene in the hall. Marjorie greeted him warmly, and Hazel gave her rosy cheek a perfumery kiss. Hazel was still looking worried and disturbed, haunted by the fear that the consequences of Mr. Rawlings' visit were not yet over.

Harry Wharton & Co. drew aside a little while brother and sister were speaking. A new and troublesome problem had dawned upon their minds. As usual, when Marjorie and Clara came to Greyfriars, there was to be tea in No. 1 Study, and the whole available funds of the Co. had been expended in satisfying Mr. Rawlings. Inky's half-sovereign, and the shillings extracted by Bunter, represented the whole of their financial resources. And the study cupboard, like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard's, was bare. It was a serious situation, and the juniors wondered how it was to be met.

"Is it all right now, Hazel?" Marjorie asked, in a low tone.

"Yes," said Hazel.

"But you told me you needed five pounds—"

"It's all right now."

"Then you have found the money?"

"Oh, don't ask questions, Marjorie!" said Hazel irritably. "I've been worried enough about the rotten affair. I tell you it's all right."

"I won't ask questions, Hazel," said Marjorie patiently. "I only hope, Hazel, if it's all right now, that you won't let it come to pass again."

"And don't start that, either! I've had enough of that from Wharton," said Hazeldene bitterly. "I'm fed-up with sermons."

"Then it was Harry helped you out of the difficulty?" Marjorie asked.

"I suppose you must know all about it. Yes, it was."

"Did he find the money?"

"I suppose so."

"Then it must be repaid, Hazel."

"Well, if you can pay it, you're welcome," said Hazel.

"I can't. I'm stony. Wharton says he doesn't want it."

"We are not beggars to take his money," said Marjorie, her lip quivering. "It will have to be paid, and as soon as possible."

"Well, I can't do anything. For goodness' sake let the



Coker of the Fifth burst into the study, with Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald behind. "We've waited long enough for your precious friend. We're going to boot him out—we—oh—ah—I—I didn't see you, Miss Hazeldene! I'm sure I beg your pardon!" stuttered Coker, as he caught sight of Marjorie, and he bolted from the study. (See Chapter 7.)

matter drop. I tell you I'm fed up with it. I suppose you're going to have tea with the fellows. I'll get out on my bike, I think."

"Aren't you coming?"

"Thanks! I don't want any more sermons."

And Hazel swung away sullenly. Marjorie compressed her lips a little. Her affection for her wayward brother was very strong, but sometimes he tried her patience to its limits. Vernon-Smith, having changed after the football match, came down, and stopped to speak to Harry Wharton & Co. He noticed the earnestness with which they were consulting, and smiled grimly, guessing what was the matter.

"Will you fellows come to tea in my study, and bring your friends?" he asked. "I've got a rather ripping spread."

"Corn in Egypt!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Wharton hesitated a single moment. But it was a way out of the difficulty, and the Bounder was making himself so agreeable that it was difficult to refuse his invitation.

"Thanks!" said Harry. "We'll come with pleasure. I'll ask Marjorie."

"Her brother's coming," said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, good!"

Marjorie and Clara accepted the Bounder's invitation, as THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 303.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"IN BORROWED PLUMES!"

they saw that the Co. wished them to do so. The Bounder looked very pleased.

"Ready in a quarter of an hour," he said. "I've got Bunter there getting it ready, and it will be really very decent."

"Thank you very much!" said Marjorie.

The Bounder walked on, looking very cheerful. His attempts at friendliness with Miss Hazeldene had generally been repulsed, and he felt that he was getting on better this time.

"I want to speak to you, Harry," Marjorie said, in a low voice.

Wharton looked worried. He guessed what it was about. "Let's get up to the study, then," he said.

Marjorie gave a little start as she entered Study No. 1. The rank smell of a strong tobacco was still thick in the air. The two girls coughed a little.

"You've been smoking!" exclaimed Miss Clara, pointing an accusing finger at Bob Cherry.

"No fear!" exclaimed Bob promptly, with an alarmed look at Marjorie. "I haven't!"

"Somebody has!" said Miss Clara oracularly.

"It was a chap we had here," said Wharton. "Not a

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

Greyfriars chap—a man, you know. It will clear off in time. He smoked beastly strong cigars."

Miss Clara sniffed a little, and walked out of the study with Bob Cherry. The other fellows lounged into the passage understanding that Marjorie wanted to speak to the captain of the Remove.

"I want to know what you have done about Hazel," said the girl, looking at him with her clear, steady eyes.

"We've made it all right!" he said.

"You paid the money for him?"

"Yes; part of it!"

"And the rest?"

"The man's agreed to wait till Saturday for the rest."

"Hazel said he would not wait," said Marjorie.

Wharton smiled a little.

"Well, I suppose he knew that Hazel couldn't raise the tin. But I've promised him, and he knows that I can pay, I suppose."

"Then you have seen him?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Well, yes!"

"Did he come here?" exclaimed the girl, in alarm.

"Was it that man who smoked those horrid cigars here?"

"Ye-es!"

Marjorie drew a quick, terrified breath.

"He came here—here to the school! Why, it might have ruined Hazel. Was he seen?"

"We smuggled him into the study, and got rid of him as soon as we could," said Harry.

"If he had been found here—"

"It's all right—he wasn't found!"

"You ran a great risk."

"Oh, it wasn't so much!" said Harry, with a carelessness he did not feel. "Nobody was likely to look into my study, you know."

"That is why you missed the football match?"

"We were rather late for it, when the man had gone."

"It is a shame that you should be troubled like this by my brother," Marjorie said, her bright eyes filling with tears.

"I don't know how to thank you for your kindness."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Harry. "Marjorie dear, don't cry! Hazel's all right now—it's all over and finished!"

"I'm not going to cry," said Marjorie, with a rather tremulous smile, "and I'm not thinking of Hazel just now, but of your kindness. He does not deserve that you should take so much trouble about him. But—at all events, you shall not lose the money—that shall be repaid."

"I wish you wouldn't bother about it," said Harry.

"Hazel is a Greyfriars chap, you know, and—and we wanted to stand by him."

"All the same, we cannot remain in your debt," said Marjorie. "We owe you enough without that. I shall contrive it. I—"

"Wharton, you young rotter!" Coker of the Fifth strode into the study, with Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald behind him. "We've waited long enough for your precious friend. We're going to boot him out—Ow—oh—ah! I—I didn't see you, Miss Hazeldene! I—I'm sure I beg your pardon!" stuttered Coker, as he caught sight of Marjorie.

And the burly Fifth-Former backed out of the study so quickly that he trod heavily upon Potter's feet, and there was a gasp of anguish from Potter.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Clear off!" muttered Coker.

And the four Fifth-Formers cleared off, very much disconcerted at having rushed ferociously into the presence of Miss Hazeldene.

Wharton grinned. But Marjorie's face was very grave.

"They know that that man was here?" she asked.

"Yes; Coker took it upon himself to interfere. He never can mind his own business!"

"But he thinks the man came to see you!"

"Let him think so!" said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I don't care what Coker thinks. Coker can go and eat coke!"

"But it is a shame that you should be supposed—"

"I'm not going to explain to Coker. It doesn't matter. Don't think any more about it, Marjorie."

And Marjorie said no more; but her look was very troubled.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Called Over the Coals!

VERNON-SMITH did the honours of his study with great embarrassment.

He was delighted to have Marjorie Hazeldene there to tea, and his manner showed it; but there was none of the familiarity that had made Marjorie take a dislike to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Vernon-Smith had improved in many respects of late, and now he was exerting himself to make a good impression upon Hazeldene's sister.

Hazel looked surprised when he came into the study, and found his sister and Miss Clara there, with the Famous Five.

He did not look very pleased, either.

Hazel had intended to have a snug tea with the Bounder and Skinner and Snoop, and a smoke and a game of nap afterwards; but under the circumstances his programme was not to come off. Skinner and Snoop were not there; the Bounder had not asked them; and the smoke and the game of nap were evidently "off." Billy Bunter was there, having performed the duties of a cook in return for being asked to tea. The whole party were cheerful enough with the exception of Hazeldene, who was sulky, and as soon as he could, Hazel excused himself and cleared out.

Marjorie's brow showed a little wrinkle for a moment when he went, but she went on speaking cheerfully.

Vernon-Smith looked curious for a moment; he could see that something had happened, and he wondered what it was. He had not yet heard about the visit of Mr. Henry Rawlings; but he was soon to be enlightened.

A few minutes after Hazel's departure, a fag knocked at the door of the study and looked in. It was Nugent minor, of the Second Form.

He nodded to Marjorie and Miss Clara, and grinned at his elder brother and Wharton.

"You're wanted!" he said.

"Clear out, you young sweep!" said Frank, with a warning look.

"Wingate's sent me!" said Dicky Nugent.

"Oh, my hat! What does Wingate want?"

"He wants you and Wharton—for smoking in your study," chuckled Dicky. "I'm surprised at you, Franky. After all the lectures you've given me, to be caught smoking in your study! Shame!" And Dicky Nugent shook his forefinger at his major.

"I haven't been smoking, you silly young ass!" exclaimed Frank, reddening.

"Then Wharton has—the study fairly reeks with it!" said Dicky. "I put my head in, and I know. Wingate went there to speak to Wharton about the footer, and found it like that, and he sent me to hunt you up. I've been looking for you everywhere."

"Oh, buzz off!" growled Frank.

"Well, Wingate's waiting for you," said Dicky, and he departed whistling shrilly.

"We shall have to go!" said Harry, rising.

Marjorie half rose.

"Will Wingate punish you?" she asked.

"Only lines," said Harry lightly; though he was not, as a matter of fact, quite sure of that. The captain of Greyfriars was very severe upon juniors for smoking in the studies.

"You must tell him how it was," said Marjorie hastily.

"It was not you—and you must not be punished for what you have not done!"

"Oh, a few lines don't matter!" said Frank Nugent.

"Bless you, we have lines every other day for something or other. A few more or less won't make any difference."

"What in the name of Dickens have you been smoking for?" asked the Bounder, in amazement. "You're down enough on me for smoking!"

"We haven't!" said Wharton. "It was a visitor. Don't worry, Marjorie—we shall be all right."

Wharton and Nugent left the study. Marjorie remained, looking very distressed. Wharton could not explain to the captain of Greyfriars without mentioning Mr. Rawlings, and that would undo all that the chums of the Remove had done that afternoon. The only thing to do was to rest patiently under an unjust imputation, and take the undeserved punishment in silence.

It was bitter enough to Marjorie to know that that had been brought upon her friends by her brother's folly.

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another grimly in the passage.

"I'm afraid it won't be lines," said Frank, rubbing his hands in painful anticipation.

"Well, whatever it is, we've got to grin and bear it," said Harry. "It's only a little more, after all the rest!"

They presented themselves in Wingate's study. The captain of Greyfriars had a cane lying ready on his table. Evidently the matter was not to be settled by lines. He fixed a stern glance upon the two juniors.

"I looked into your study, and found it reeking with smoke," he exclaimed. "What have you to say?"

"Nothing!" said Harry.

"I remember once Loder reported you for smoking, and it turned out that a master had visited you in your study,

and smoked there," said Wingate. "I don't want to whop you without giving you a chance to explain. Was it a master?"

"We haven't anything to say," said Wharton. "If you're going to lick us, Wingate, get it over, like a good chap!"

"I'm surprised at this, Wharton," said Wingate, looking at him hard. "I never looked upon you as that sort of fellow. Vernon-Smith and Snoop have been punished for such things; but they don't seem to be in your line. Was it Smith who was smoking there?"

"No!"

"Or any other Remove fellow?"

"No!"

"That settles it. Hold out your hand."

The two juniors were caned in turn. And the head prefect of Greyfriars, justly indignant from his point of view of the case, laid the swishes on very hard. Then he laid the cane down and pointed to the door.

"Clear off, and don't do it again!" he said.

The juniors cleared off without replying. They tucked their hands under their arms in the passage, and squeezed them hard.

"Ow!" murmured Nugent. "The beast must have been getting his muscle up on purpose for us. Ow!"

Wharton set his lips hard.

"I hope this is the finish," he said. "We've got into trouble enough for Hazeldene, I think."

"And what a thankless brute he is, too!" growled Nugent. "Still, I'd take more than a licking for Marjorie. She's a ripping girl—and I'm blessed if I understand how a worm like Hazel came to have such a jolly sister!"

The chums of the Remove returned to Vernon-Smith's study when the first pain of the caning had worn off. In spite of their attempt to look indifferent, it was easy to see that they had been caned, and Marjorie's face was deeply clouded. In spite of the efforts of all concerned, a depression fell upon Vernon-Smith's tea-party, and no one was sorry when it broke up.

The juniors walked home with the two girls to Cliff House, and then they returned to Greyfriars. Wharton sat down in the study—still smelly of smoke—to write to his uncle and guardian, Colonel Wharton. His uncle was very generous to him, and Harry had no doubt whatever that he would send the money required, but he disliked very much having to ask him to do so. But there was no help for it.

"We're all going to stand our whack in this," said Johnny Bull. "I'll get thirty bob from my aunt to pay Quelch, I can get it before Saturday."

"And my esteemed half-sovereign was contributed to the goodness of the cause, with hearty goodwill-fulness," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Then I'll ask my uncle for three quid!" said Harry.

"Two!" said Bob. "Nugent and I can stand ten bob, at least. My pater isn't rolling in filthy lucre, but I can have ten bob extra if I ask for it. I wish I could take a full share, but I can't."

"I've got ten bob coming on Saturday," said Frank—"that goes in. Ask you uncle for two quid, Wharton; it's not fair you should have to stand it all."

"Well, it was my idea to deal with the beast at all," said Harry.

"Oh, rats! We're all in it!"

"Marjorie wants to repay the money for Hazel, but we're not going to let her," said Harry. "It's too beastly for her money to be spent on paying a beast like Rawlings. You fellows agree to that?"

"Yes, rather!"

So Harry Wharton crossed out the "three" in his letter, and wrote "two" over it, and was very glad to make the change. And the next day the remittance arrived from Colonel Wharton, without a single question as to what it was wanted for—a piece of kindness for which Wharton felt duly grateful.

On Saturday morning, the other remittances having come to hand, Wharton handed the thirty shillings to Mr. Quelch. That part of the debt was easily settled; but the settlement with Rawlings was a more troublesome matter. The more he thought of meeting the bookmaker the more Wharton disliked the idea—but there was no getting out of it, and he had to make up his mind to the ordeal.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hazel's Gratitude!

ON Saturday the Remove were playing an out match with Redelyffe School. Wharton intended to leave the brake on the homeward journey and call in at the old barn on the Friardale road to see Mr. Rawlings. He had the money in his pocket, and he was very eager to have the interview over and done with. The thought of it had been weighing upon his mind ever since the bookmaker's visit to Greyfriars. Hazeldene came to look for him just before the team started for Redelyffe. Hazel had hardly spoken to Wharton

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since the tea-party in Smithy's study. He had been sullen and depressed every time Harry had seen him. Whether his conscience was at work, or whether he was simply in fear of further consequences of Mr. Rawlings's visit, Harry did not know—probably it was both.

"Is it all right?" asked Hazeldene abruptly.

"Quite all right," said Harry, as cordially as he could.

"You've got the money?"

"Yes, in my pocket!"

"I'm sorry I've got you into this, Wharton!" Hazel said, with an effort. "I've no right to bother you with my affairs. You're not exactly a pal of mine, either."

"I'm quite willing to be," said Harry.

"You don't like the sort of people I like," said Hazel uneasily. "You don't get on with Skinner and Snoop, nor with Smithy, as a rule. I didn't mean to plant my troubles on you; but you really chipped in of your own accord when Rawlings came here, didn't you?"

"I did."

"And I should never have advised you to go to Quelch for the money. I can't help thinking that that may lead to trouble. And I've heard that Wingate found out that there was smoking going on in your study on Wednesday."

"Nugent and I were licked for it."

"Well, a licking isn't much, if that were all," said Hazel. Hazel had not had the licking, so perhaps he could afford to regard it lightly. "Only—if anything comes out to make Wingate suspicious, he will remember about that—he must have been surprised when you told him you'd been smoking."

"I didn't tell him so!" exclaimed Harry sharply. "It would have been a lie."

"Well, you let him think so; it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"No, it doesn't. I said I had nothing to say, and took the licking!"

"It would have been better to own up right out," said Hazel—"that would have prevented Wingate from wondering over the matter."

"If you mean it would have been better to tell Wingate a barefaced lie, I don't agree with you," said Harry coldly.

"Don't get on the high horse, for goodness' sake!" said Hazel irritably. "I get more than enough of that from Marjorie. She wants me to put aside my allowance every week to pay you that five pounds."

"Well, you ought to do it, without Marjorie asking you!" said Harry bluntly.

"You said you didn't want the money."

"I said you needn't trouble to pay it—and you needn't," said Harry Wharton. "That doesn't alter what you ought to do."

"I suppose you mean that I've got to pay it, if you come down to facts," said Hazel. "Well, I'll do my best; I can't expect you to pay my debts, I suppose. If I only had some luck—" He paused abruptly, as a steely glitter leapt in Wharton's eyes.

"You were going to say?" asked Harry.

"Oh, nothing!"

"We'll have this out, Hazel. You were going to say something about having luck with some more of your silly foolery—betting on horses. Do you mean to say that you're thinking of playing the fool again in the same way, after what's happened?"

"I've promised not to have anything more to do with Rawlings, and I'm going to keep my word," said Hazel sullenly.

"Nor with any other fellows of his kidney?" said Harry.

Hazel was silent.

"Now, look here, Hazeldene," said Wharton, in a low, hard voice. "You're going to stop this. You're going to keep clear of Rawlings, and all that set of rotters. You've given us, and Marjorie, trouble enough."

"Has my sister asked you to look after her?" said Hazel, with a sneer.

"No; but if I haven't the right to look after her, I have the right to look after myself, and I'm going to do it. You're going to keep clear of this rotten blackguardism."

"Take care what you say to me, Harry Wharton. I'm not bound to put up with your rotten insults, because you've paid a debt for me."

"I'm not going to mince words with you. You've got into trouble, and simply forced us to mix up in your dirty proceedings, and have dealings with low blackguards like Rawlings!" said Wharton hotly. "How do you know I may not be seen speaking to him this very afternoon? What would happen then?"

"Then you could explain, and get me the sack!" snapped Hazeldene.

"You know I shouldn't do that. I should have to let it be supposed that I was the rotter, and not—"

"Not me!" sneered Hazel. "Pile it on. You've paid for the right to slang me, I suppose. Take your money's worth." Wharton clenched his hands hard. It was all he could do to keep them off Hazeldene at that moment.

"I mean what I say!" he said, between his-teeth. "You're going to keep clear of this kind of business. You won't be allowed to play the giddy ox again."

"Who's going to stop me, if I choose?"

"We are! Begin anything of the kind again, and as soon as we find it out, we'll rag you till you wish you'd been decent!" said Wharton angrily. "I'm fed-up with your fooling. What you want is a good hiding, and for two pins I'd give it to you, here and now. You don't seem to have any sense of common decency! I tell you we're fed up, and if you haven't sense enough to keep out of a scrape like this, we'll try to knock some sense into your head!"

"I think that's about the five-pounds' worth!" said Hazel cuttingly. "Now, I've had enough of it. Go and eat coke!"

Wharton's eyes blazed, and his hand was raised—but just then Bob Cherry joined them, and he caught Wharton by the arm.

"Easy does it!" said Bob cheerily. "No rags in the family circle, you know. Time to get into the brake, my son!"

And Bob Cherry marched his chum away, leaving Hazeldene standing with an ugly sneer upon his face. Wharton was breathing very hard.

"No good rowing with him, you know," murmured Bob. Wharton nodded.

"I know. But—but—well, I'm glad you came up, Bob. I don't want to lay hands on Marjorie's brother, if I can help it," said Harry. "Let's get off."

And the Remove footballers mounted into the brake, with coats and mufflers on over their football garb, and started for Redclyffe.

Harry Wharton's clouded brow had cleared before they arrived on the Redclyffe ground. It was a fine clear winter day, just the weather for football, and the Remove eleven were in great form. Only Vernon-Smith looked a little off-colour. His face was somewhat pasty in complexion, and he looked generally seedy. Wharton gave him more than one sharp glance. He guessed that the Bounder had been having one of his secret smoking-parties in his study the evening before.

But when the ball was kicked off, the Bounder played up very well. He was not at the top of his form by any means, but he was quite as good as any reserve that could have been played in his place, and he was lucky in getting a goal in the first half. So Wharton held his peace on the subject of the smoking-party. It was a thankless task to assume the role of

 GOOD TURNS.—No. 20. 



A Magnetite on his way home from his newsagent, where he has been to get his favourite paper, sees a poor newspaper-seller sheltering from the pouring rain under the awning of a coffee-stall. Our more fortunate friend stops, and immediately buys a mug of hot coffee and offers it to his shivering fellow-being, thus doing a real good turn!



Coker sat up, with his collar hanging down his back, his hair ruffled, and his face very red. "You—you young rascals!" he howled. "I—I'll pulverise you for this! I'll——" Words failed him, and he sprang to his feet with the evident intention of charging the grinning juniors at the top of the stairs. Harry Wharton & Co. lined up, and Coker paused. (See Chapter 4.)

a superior person lecturing a delinquent, and Wharton shrank from doing it, though he felt that trouble must come.

With the Bounder far from being at his best, and with Wharton worried by the thought of the coming interview with Rawlings—a thought he could not dismiss from his mind in spite of all his efforts—the Remove team did not play up so brilliantly as they had intended. Indeed, but for a goal by Mark Linley, almost at the finish, they would have counted a defeat that afternoon. As it was, the match was a draw—two goals to two.

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"Never mind," said Bob Cherry, as they climbed into the brake for the homeward journey, "Redclyffe visit us next week, and we'll simply wipe up the ground with them."

And the Removites all agreed that they would.

A cloud settled darkly and more darkly upon Wharton's brow, as the brake neared Greyfriars. The wretched interview with the bookmaker was close at hand now. The nearer it came the more Wharton shrank from it.

"Better let us come with you, old chap," Bob Cherry said,

in a low voice, seeing the trouble in Harry's face, in spite of his attempt to conceal it.

But Wharton shook his head.

"No, I'd better go alone. We don't want to run any risk of attracting attention, Bob. It's rotten enough as it is. I'll drop off the brake in Friardale, and walk the rest of the way across the fields."

"Get in as soon as you can," said Nugent anxiously. "I sha'n't feel easy until that paper of yours has been burnt."

"I sha'n't be long after you," said Harry.

The brake rolled on from Friardale without him. When it was out of sight Wharton left the village, and crossed the fields in the deep winter dusk towards the old barn. It was almost dark when he arrived there; but the red glow of a cigar, and a strong smell of tobacco, announced that Mr. Rawlings was already upon the spot to keep the appointment.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bit of Writing!

MR. RAWLINGS was walking to and fro outside the old barn, to keep himself warm. It was a bitterly cold winter evening, with a keen wind from the sea. The bookmaker took the cigar from his mouth, spat, and nodded to Wharton.

"I've been waitin' for you," he said.

"It's only just gone six," said Harry.

"I'm an early bird," said Mr. Rawlings, with a chuckle. "The early bird catches the worms, young gentleman. I'm after the worms. He, he, he!"

Wharton did not quite see the joke, and he did not smile. He was not in a humour for smiling. He felt in his pocket for the three sovereigns.

"You've got the spondulicks?" said Mr. Rawlings.

"I have the money."

"Right you are," said Mr. Rawlings. "'And it over."

Something in the bookmaker's manner made Wharton vaguely suspicious. Mr. Rawlings did not seem quite at ease with himself. He looked, indeed, like a man who was planning some act of extra rascally iniquity, and was not quite at ease with his conscience about it. And if that was the case, Mr. Rawlings' intentions must have been very bad indeed, for his conscience was a decidedly tough one, and could stand most things quite easily.

"Give me my paper," said Harry.

"Your paper?" said Mr. Rawlings.

"Yes, and I will hand you the three pounds."

Mr. Rawlings coughed. He returned his cigar to his mouth, and blew out a cloud of smoke, and took the cigar out of his mouth again. He seemed to be pulling himself together for an effort.

"Well, now, as a matter of absolute fact, we've got to 'ave a little talk about that there bit o' writin'," said Mr. Rawlings.

"I don't see anything to talk about. I've got your money, and you're to give me my acknowledgment in return for it," said Harry sharply. "What is there to talk about?"

"The fact is," said Mr. Rawlings slowly. "I've an idea that there bit of writing is worth more than three quid."

"What do you mean? There are three pounds still due on what Hazeldene owed you, and I'm going to settle it now."

"You ain't settled it yet."

"Give me my paper, and I'll settle it fast enough."

"Can't trust the money in my 'ands, eh?" said Mr. Rawlings truculently.

Wharton watched his face in the deep dusk with growing uneasiness. Rawlings was trying to work himself into a temper—for what?

"Please give me the paper, and let me get off," said Harry. "I shall be late for calling over if I don't return to the school at once."

He showed the three sovereigns in his palm. They glistened in the glow from the bookmaker's cigar.

Mr. Rawlings hesitated, and then drew a folded paper from his pocket, and held it out. Wharton caught at it eagerly, and the three coins dropped into the bookmaker's palm. He promptly transferred them to his pocket.

Wharton was about to thrust the paper into his coat, but he paused, and unfolded it. It hardly seemed possible that any man could be base enough to trick him in such a way, and he was ashamed of the suspicion, but Mr. Rawlings was such a tricky customer that he felt that he could not be too sure. He opened the folded paper, and struck a match, and looked at it. The paper was blank!

Wharton was almost stunned for the moment by that sudden discovery of the rascal's treachery. The bookmaker had handed him a blank and worthless sheet of paper, and Wharton's note of hand was still in his possession.

The junior uttered a startled cry.

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"This isn't the paper."

"I told you we'd got to 'ave a little talk about that there bit of writing," said Mr. Rawlings. "Don't get excited about it. I'm going to play you fair and square."

"Then give me my paper."

"As a matter of fact, I ain't got it with me," said the rascal coolly. "I left it at the Cross Keys, as it 'appens."

"Then give me my money back."

"That's all right. I ain't parting with any money. We're going to 'ave a little talk—"

"I'm not going to talk to you, you thief and scoundrel!" Wharton burst out furiously, trembling with rage. "Will you give me my paper?"

"That's wot we've got to talk about. I've an idea that that there bit of writin' is worth man than three quid."

"How can it be worth more when Hazel only owes you three pounds?"

"I thought that a young gentleman with a nice uncle rolling in money, might be willing to pay a bit more than face value!" chuckled the bookmaker. "I've 'ad a lot of trouble over this matter, you can't deny that—comin' up to the school, and dodgin' out of back stairs, and all that. I've got to be paid for my trouble."

"I have another five shillings," said Wharton. "I'll give you that, if you like, if you'll hand me my paper."

"Five quid would be nearer the mark."

"What!"

"That bit of paper is worth five quid, I should say. You don't want to be kicked out of your school, any more than Master Hazeldene," grinned Rawlings.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"I'm in no danger of that, you villain. The Head would lecture me for getting mixed up with a scoundrel like you, but if it all came out, he would sack Hazel, but he wouldn't be hard on me for trying to help a chap in my Form. I might get a licking—nothing worse than that. You can't threaten me as you did Hazel."

"Can't I?" said Mr. Rawlings. "We'll see about that. You see, it won't all come out; it'll come out that I came into your study at the school, and it'll come out that I came there to see you."

"To see me!" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, you!" said Mr. Rawlings coolly. "It was your study, wasn't it? And Trotter thought as I was your visitor, didn't he? And you've given me your note of 'and, haven't you? You can't deny your own signature, I s'pose?"

"That was for Hazel. You know it was."

"P'raps I do, and p'raps I don't. The question for you to answer is, will the Head know it?" grinned Mr. Rawlings. "My opinion is, that he'll fancy you gave me that paper for your own account. Fellers ain't as a rule anxious to give their little notes for other fellows' debts."

Wharton drew a deep breath. He understood now the bookmaker's scheme, in the whole of its cunning duplicity, and he saw how he had been caught in the trap. He understood, too, why Mr. Rawlings had so suddenly become reasonable and conciliatory that afternoon in No. 1 Study. This unscrupulous scheme had undoubtedly come into the rascal's head then. Wharton was almost dazed as he realised what he had fallen into in his attempt to help Marjorie's brother out of his scrape.

"Do you mean that you will accuse me of owing you money for a gambling debt?" he asked thickly.

"That's about the size of it," said Mr. Rawlings calmly.

"It will be a lie—a horrible lie!"

"Never told one yourself?" asked Mr. Rawlings facetiously.

Mr. Rawlings was evidently one of those persons who believe that lying is a natural human gift, like speaking or smelling. Mr. Rawlings would not have taken the word of George Washington himself—indeed, he would have characterised George's celebrated statement to his father as the biggest "whopper" in George's career.

"You can't do it," muttered Wharton.

"Can't I? You'll see."

"You can't—you can't!"

Rascal as he knew the man to be, the junior could not realise yet that he would do this. It seemed impossible that any man, however rascally, could do such a thing. Even Mr. Rawlings had had to make an effort, as it were, to screw himself up to the right pitch. But he was screwed up now, and he was quite determined. Rascality was a new thing in Harry Wharton's experience; but Mr. Rawlings was well acquainted with it in all its forms.

Mr. Rawlings tossed away the stump of his cigar.

"I reckon I'd better be going," he remarked. "It's pretty parky 'ere. When you want that paper, the price is five quid."

"It is my paper. I have given you your money."

"Five quid will fetch that paper out my desk at the

Cross Keys in Friardale," said Mr. Rawlings. "Not a penny less."

"You thief!"

"Ard words break no bones, and likewise soft words butter no parsnips," said Mr. Rawlings. "Still, don't you go calling me names, or I may raise the price to ten quid."

Wharton drew his breath hard. He had been dazed at first, but his brain was clear now. He understood that he had to deal with an utterly unscrupulous man. The man had stolen the three sovereigns, since he had taken them without handing over the paper in return, and Wharton did not intend to let him get away with them if he could prevent it. Mr. Rawlings might have the paper about him; his statement that it was at the Cross Keys might be another falsehood. And if so—

Wharton measured the bookmaker with his eye.

He was fat, clumsy, unwieldy, and in the worst condition, owing to his dissipated mode of life. But he was a big and muscular man, all the same; and Wharton's heart sank as he rapidly thought it out. He was no match for the bookmaker. And Mr. Rawlings, too, as if in anticipation of possible trouble, had brought a thick stick with him, and he was keeping it quite handy. Mr. Rawlings could not see the junior's face clearly in the dark, but the tenseness of Wharton's attitude betrayed his thoughts, and the bookmaker drew back a pace or two and half raised the stick.

"No, you don't!" he said grimly. "You try to lay a 'and on me, and I'll lay you on your back with a cracked skull afore you can say Johnny Walker!"

Wharton clenched his hands till his nails dug into the palms.

"You scoundrel! You say you want five pounds for that paper, after I have paid you the whole of the debt, and you have the money in your pocket?"

"Five quid is the price."

"Where do you think I am to get five pounds from, then? Do you think I have an allowance anything like that?"

"Our kind uncle who shells out money," grinned Mr. Rawlings. "Try him again."

"So that is why you wanted to know whether my uncle was rich?" said Harry, between his teeth. "You had this scoundrelly scheme in your mind then?"

"P'raps," said Mr. Rawlings. "I've warned you agin callin' me names. I put a pound on fur that. The price of that 'ere paper is six quid now."

"I have paid you all that is due. I shall not pay you one shilling more."

"Then we'll see what the 'Ead of Greyfriars has to say about it when I make my claim to him," said Mr. Rawlings.

"The first thing that would happen would be that you would be kicked out of the place!" said Wharton savagely.

"And the next thing would be that you would be kicked out arter me," chuckled Mr. Rawlings. "And it would be a bit more serious for you than for me. I ain't got nothing to lose in the way of reputation. You 'ave."

"You couldn't prove a lie to be the truth. The Head would not believe you!" said Harry desperately.

"Put it to the test, if you choose. I've your name to the bit of writing."

"It was for Hazeldene. You know it!"

"Prove it!"

"Hazeldene would come forward and say so, if you tried to plant it on me."

"Would he?" said Mr. Rawlings, with another chuckle. "P'raps you know that young gentleman better'n I do. My opinion is that he wouldn't."

Wharton's heart sank again. Mr. Rawlings was quite right—there was no possible inducement that could make a weak and selfish fellow like Hazel come forward to take the punishment of his own misdeeds, if it was possible to leave that punishment to be borne by another. Wharton had nothing to hope from Hazel.

"But I've got a witness!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Frank Nugent was in the study when I signed the paper, and he knew it was for Hazel."

"He might say so, but p'raps he wouldn't be believed," said Mr. Rawlings coolly. "One thing I know—Master Hazeldene would deny it."

"He—he wouldn't!" muttered Wharton.

"He would; and you know it as well as I do."

There was a silence.

It occurred to Wharton that this, after all, was to no purpose. Even if, with Nugent as a witness, he could prove that it was Hazel, and not himself, who had dealings with the bookmaker—did he want to prove it? Did he want to level an accusation at Marjorie's brother, and to see him expelled from Greyfriars? For that was what it amounted to. If Mr. Rawlings betrayed Wharton to the Head, and made a lying statement against him, Harry Wharton could clear himself only in one way—by giving Hazeldene away, and proving that Hazel was the guilty party.

And every principle of honour forbade him to do anything of the kind. He could not betray Hazel. Even if the worst happened, he could not betray him.

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"Well, I'll be going," said Mr. Rawlings. "I'll tell you wot. I'll come 'ere on Monday evenin', the same time, for the six quid. You bring the money, and you'll 'ave the paper."

Wharton ground his teeth.

"And how do I know that you will not cheat me again, as you have done to-night?"

Mr. Rawlings hesitated.

"You shall see the paper in my fist afore you pay over the money," he said finally. "If you see your own signature that'll be enough, I reckon."

"But I have not the money. I cannot get six pounds in two days."

"Try," said Mr. Rawlings grimly. "One thing's sartain—if I don't get paid when I come 'ere on Monday evening I go straight on to the school and see the 'Ead."

"What will you gain by that, if you do?" said Wharton desperately.

The bookmaker's eyes glittered with malice.

"I'll gain this," he said venomously—"I'll make you smart for the names you've called me, and for your high-and-mighty airs, Master Stuck-up Wharton! That's wot I'll gain. And I'd almost as lief 'ave that as the money. So you take care, and bring the spondulicks along on Monday evening, or you'll get it 'ot and 'eavy!"

And, with that threat, Mr. Rawlings turned and walked away. And Wharton, his face pale, his eyes gleaming, strode away towards Greyfriars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Scapegoat!

"HALLO! hallo! hallo! Here he is!"

"Tea's ready, old man!"

"Lovely muffins!" said Nugent.

"The goodness of the esteemed muffins is terrific, my worthy chum!"

Tea was ready in No. 1 Study. Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Inky, and Johnny Bull had prepared it ready for Wharton's return. The study looked very cosy and cheerful, with the fire glowing in the grate, and the well-spread table, and the cheery faces of the juniors.

But the cheery look faded from their faces as they caught Wharton's expression. Harry was still in his overcoat and muffler; he had come directly to the study on coming in.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bob anxiously. "It's all right about calling-over, as we were playing out, you know. I told Quelch you were following us home."

Wharton nodded. He had forgotten all about calling-over.

"Has that rotter cut up rusty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes," said Wharton, sinking into a chair.

"You paid him?"

"Yes."

"And the paper—"

"He's keeping it."

"Keeping it—after you've paid him?" exclaimed Nugent in astonishment.

"Yes."

"Great Scott! The awful rascal!"

"But didn't you get hold of the paper before you handed over the money?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He handed me a folded piece of paper, and I paid him. I looked at the paper, and it was blank. He spoofed me."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"But what does he want to keep the paper for?" asked Nugent. "He can't expect you to pay him another three quid on it."

"He wants six pounds for it."

"What-a-at!"

"Or else he is going to take it to the Head, and represent to him that I gave it to him for a gambling debt—make out that I have been betting, and not Hazel at all."

The chums of the Remove looked utterly aghast.

"Well, that takes the biscuit!" said Johnny Bull, with a deep breath. "I never heard of such an awful scoundrel! Why, that's blackmail! He could be put in prison for that!"

"Only we couldn't prove it," said Wharton. "He's got my signature on his paper. If he showed that to Dr. Locke, what could I say?"

"You could tell Dr. Locke exactly how it was."

"Would he believe me? There's my signature," said Harry hopelessly. "A fellow who would gamble with a blackguard like Rawlings wouldn't be above telling lies about it afterwards. That's how the Head will look at it. Besides—"

"You've forgotten one thing," said Johnny Bull. "we all know it was Hazel, and we'd all roll up and say so."

"Only Nugent was in the study when I signed the paper."

"Well, my evidence is worth something," said Frank. "I'd tell the Head—"

"All the evidence is against me. Quelch will remember my borrowing the money of him. Wingate will remember about the smoking in the study, and it will come out that the man was here. Most of the fellows think he came to see me. How could I prove that it was all on Hazel's account? Besides, I can't."

"Why can't you?"

"Can I give Hazel away? We did it all to save him. Suppose I clear myself, and plant it on him, what's going to happen?"

"He will be sacked, I suppose," said Johnny Bull, "and serve him jolly well right. He's brought all this on us. I suppose you're not going to face the sack yourself, and let the guilty party sit snug in his study all the time."

"I can't give him away."

"But he'll own up," said Bob Cherry. "Dash it all, Hazel isn't such a fearful rotter as to sit tight while you're sacked in his place."

"Own up, and be sacked! Not Hazel!" said Harry bitterly.

"We'll make him!"

Wharton shook his head.

"It can't be done, you chaps. I'm not going to give Marjorie's brother away to save myself. I chipped in to save him, and now I'm in the hands of that scoundrel instead of Hazel. I can't round on him now to save myself."

"But he must own up, if it comes to that—he must."

"He won't!"

There was a grim silence. All the juniors knew in their hearts that Hazel would not own up. Far from that, he was more likely to deny any knowledge of the transaction at all. Rawlings's accusation against Wharton would clear Hazel, so far as the bookmaker was concerned, and Hazel would wash his hands of the affair. Between Rawlings's statement on one side, and Hazel's denial of the other, Wharton was hopelessly caught, even if he tried to put the guilt where it belonged. And that he would not do. He felt that he was bound in honour not to betray Hazel.

"What about letting the villain have the money, then, and getting the paper?" said Bob Cherry. "The money can be found, if we're sure of getting the paper."

"I suppose we could raise the money," said Wharton slowly. "I could borrow it of Lord Mauleverer, and pay him back later—sell my bike, if necessary. But the rotter may cheat us again, and take the money and keep the paper."

"He won't do that," said Johnny Bull. "Where are you to meet him?"

"Same place on Monday evening."

"Then we'll all be there out of sight, and if there's any trickery, we'll jump on him and take the paper by force."

Wharton's face brightened.

"Good egg. If he brings the paper with him, and he's undertaken to show it to me before I hand over the money. Of course, I shouldn't part with the money again without seeing the paper and making sure of it."

"Then it's only a matter of letting him squeeze six quid out of us," said Johnny Bull, "and we'll all stand our whack in settling with Mauly, if he stands us the tin now."

"It's awful to think of letting that villain make money out of us in this way," said Nugent thoughtfully. "But it's the only thing to be done. Under the circumstances, we shall be lucky to get clear of him for six quid."

There was a knock at the door of the study, and Hazel-dene came in. He was anxious to know the result of the interview with Mr. Rawlings.

"Is it all right?" he asked.

"No, it's all wrong," said Wharton.

Hazel changed colour.

"What do you mean? Tell me!"

Wharton explained.

"Oh, the awful scoundrel," said Hazeldene, "the awful villain! You shouldn't have parted with the money till you had the paper safe."

"He tricked me, as I've told you."

"You shouldn't have let yourself be tricked. Now he will have to be paid again, and paid double," said Hazeldene.

"I think it's all rot about his accusing you to the Head. He wouldn't gain anything by doing that."

"He would do it out of spite, if he couldn't get the money."

"Well, you must have made him jolly savage to make him feel like that," said Hazeldene. "I don't see why you couldn't be civil to him. Fair words don't cost anything."

"I haven't any fair words to waste on your precious friends," said Wharton, "and I can't help fearing that he'll trick us somehow yet. And if it should come to the worst, what are you going to do?"

Hazeldene started.

"I! What have I got to do? I've got nothing to do with THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 303.

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it now. You've taken it into your hands, and you've managed it in a way I didn't like. It's your business."

"You wouldn't own up?" said Johnny Bull.

"Are you dotty? Own up, and be sacked!"

"You'd rather Wharton were sacked in your place, I suppose?" said Bull scornfully.

"Wharton took this into his hands of his own accord. I didn't ask him to. I was against his going to Quelch for the money. I wanted him to be civil to Rawlings. He's only got himself to thank for it," said Hazel sullenly. "That man's got a bad temper, and Wharton should have been careful not to irritate him."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I'd rather be sacked, or hung, for that matter, than fawn on a filthy cad like Rawlings," he said.

"Well, you'll have your choice, then," said Hazel angrily.

"Anyway, I'm out of it now. Mind that. And if you try to drag me into it again, I'm prepared to deny knowing anything about the matter at all. I'm not going to be sacked from the school because you're too high and mighty to be civil to a man."

Wharton pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said.

"Are you going to give me away?" demanded Hazel.

"No! Whatever happens, you're safe as far as I'm concerned. But I can't stand the sight of you. Get out!"

Hazel left the study. The contempt in the faces of the juniors stung him, but his chief feeling was relief that he was safe. His concern for the scapegoat who was to bear the burden of his sins was quite secondary. Indeed, his chief feeling towards Wharton was one of irritation—the bitterness of a weak and selfish nature towards a strong and manly one.

"And that's Marjorie's brother!" said Bob Cherry. "If Marjorie knew!"

Wharton made a quick gesture.

"Marjorie's to know nothing—nothing at all! Take care of that, you fellows. Not a word to Marjorie!"

And the chums of the Remove agreed to that.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coming to Blows!

SUNDAY was a day of anxious depression for Harry Wharton, and of anxiety to his chums.

The more they thought over the complication that had arisen, the more alarmed they were at its possibilities.

Rawlings was so slippery, so utterly unscrupulous, that there was no telling what trick he might be planning next. Was he prepared to hand over the paper for the additional sum he had demanded? It was not likely. He knew that Wharton had a rich uncle whom he was able to ask for money. He knew that he had friends with plenty of cash, of whom he could borrow in case of necessity. The paper with Wharton's signature upon it, so long as he could hold it, was the means of a regular income to him.

Always he had in his hands the power to ruin the captain of the Remove so long as he kept that paper. Was he not certain to strive for further profit out of it—after the six pounds, other sums to follow—without end? That was the regular scheme of the blackmailer, and it was quite possible to achieve so long as he kept the paper—the bit of writing, as he called it. Unless he was driven to it, he would not part with the paper.

But if he brought it with him to the old barn on Monday, he would not take it away with him again, the juniors were determined on that. All five of them would be there, and they would use violence, if necessary, to obtain the paper. But what if he did not bring it there?

Monday morning found the juniors more anxious and worried than ever. Mr. Quelch, in the Remove Form-room, could not help noticing that Harry Wharton was not quite himself, and he gave the Remove captain more than one sharp glance. He remembered the loan he had made him on the previous Wednesday, and he could not help connecting it with Wharton's worried and absent-minded manner. He could not help suspecting that the junior was in money difficulties, and money difficulties for a boy in the Lower Fourth meant some kind of shady conduct.

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, cheerfully made the loan that was required of him, and he parted with a five-pound note and a sovereign with perfect unconcern. Wharton hated the task of borrowing, but certainly Lord Mauleverer was the easiest fellow in the world to borrow of. Wharton found him in his study, reclining on the sofa and yawning over a book, after dinner, and Lord Mauleverer gave him a friendly nod as he came in, flushing and uncomfortable.

"I want to borrow some tin of you, Mauly," said Wharton, his colour deepening. He was ashamed of his errand.

"Right-ho, dear boy!" said Mauleverer. "How lucky!"
"Lucky that I want to borrow your tin?" asked Harry, forcing a laugh.

"No; lucky that I'm in funds," said the dandy of the Remove. "How much, my dear fellow?"
"Six pounds!"

Any other fellow in the Remove would probably have fallen down, if he had been asked for a loan of six pounds; but the money was nothing to the schoolboy millionaire. Lord Mauleverer did not even look surprised.

"Certainly, dear boy!" he said.
"I can let you have it back in a week's time, Mauly," said Wharton. "I give you my word. It's for all of us, you understand, and we'll raise it among us and repay it in a week."

"As long as you like, old chap!"
"And—and it's not awkward just now to lend it?"
"Not at all—I sha'n't have to get up," said Lord Mauleverer innocently. "There are some banknotes in the table-drawer, and some sovereigns in the Japanese jar on the mantelpiece. Help yourself!"

Wharton laughed, and helped himself.
"I've taken a fiver and a quid," he said. "Until next Saturday, Mauly!"
"Yaas!"
"You're a good chap, Mauly!"
"Yaas!"
"And I'm very much obliged."
"Yaas! I mean, don't mench!" yawned Mauleverer.

And Wharton left the study with the money in his pocket. It was dark before six o'clock, and the school gates were always locked at dark; and so it was necessary for the chums of the Remove to get passes out, or to leave the school unseen. They did not want to draw attention to themselves by asking a master or a prefect for passes; but it was easy enough to get out of bounds. At a quarter to six, the Famous Five sauntered across the Close in the dark, and met at the school wall—and in a couple of minutes they had clambered over it, and dropped into the road.

They ran most of the way to the old barn. The juniors reached the rendezvous very quickly—but the red glow of a cigar showed that Mr. Rawlings was already there.

The juniors paused in the dark shadow of the trees.
"Don't show yourselves if it's all fair and square," said Harry, in a whisper. "But if I call out, rush on the rotter, and see that he doesn't get away."
"Right-ho!"

And leaving his chums in the shadows, Wharton walked on to the barn to meet the bookmaker.
Mr. Rawlings nodded to him affably. There was a strong odour of rum about Mr. Rawlings, and he looked a little more disreputable than usual. The three pounds he had obtained from Wharton had probably all passed over the bar of the Cross Keys by this time.

"Got the tin?" asked Mr. Rawlings, in a hoarse voice, wafting a smell of rum and tobacco upon the junior as he spoke.
Wharton tried to conceal his disgust.
"Yes," he said. "Have you got the paper?"
"Course I 'ave!" said Rawlings indignantly. "Do you think I am a welshe?"

Wharton did not offer his opinion on that point. It would not have been agreeable to Mr. Rawlings. He took the money from his pocket without replying, and the bookmaker's eyes glistened at the sight of the sovereign and the rustling five-pound note. There was greed in the bookmaker's eyes—in his whole look. Why had he not demanded more?—that was the thought in his mind. The junior's resources were evidently greater than he had supposed. He had brought six pounds at two days' notice—and how he had obtained it, and what anxiety the repayment might cost him, did not matter in the least to Mr. Rawlings. The rascal was only thinking of what further eums he might succeed in extracting from his victim.

"And it over," said Mr. Rawlings, holding out an eager and exceedingly dirty hand.
"Give me the paper!"
"Not till I 'ave the money!"
"Show it to me, then!"

"Well, you can see it!" said the bookmaker, and he fumbled in his pockets, and produced a paper, which he unfolded carefully. He held it out for the junior to see, and Wharton read the words by the glow of the cigar—"I promise to pay Mr. Henry Rawlings the sum of £3—Three Pounds—in full settlement.—Harry Wharton."

"'Ere's your paper, and now 'and over the cash!" said Mr. Rawlings.
Wharton was about to do so, but a sudden suspicion flashed into his mind. He had been caught once—he did not mean to be caught again.
"Wait a minute!" he said. "That doesn't look like the paper I gave you!"

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"Wot do you mean?" demanded Mr. Rawlings, in a bullying tone.

His manner convinced Wharton that his suspicion was well-founded. It was not the genuine paper—it was not written upon the impot paper of Greyfriars, as the original note had been. It was a copy—one more of the cunning tricks of the blackmailer. The genuine paper was to be kept back!

Wharton trembled with rage as he made the discovery.
"You thief! You thief! That is only a copy, to take me in, and make me part with the money! Give me the real paper, or—"

Mr. Rawlings, with a very ugly look upon his face, tore the paper into four, and scattered the pieces on the wind.
"Mighty smart young gentleman, ain't you?" he said, with a sneer. "There ain't no pulling the wool over your eyes—wot?"

"Give me my paper!" said Wharton, in a choking voice.
"Here is the money! Give me the paper, you villain!"
"I ain't parting with that paper!" said Mr. Rawlings, driven to showing his whole hand at last. "I'm keeping that paper. That bit of writin' is worth more'n six quid—nearer sixty, I should say."
"You won't give it to me?"
"No; I won't!"
"Then I won't hand you a penny!"

Mr. Rawlings' eyes glittered.
"You'll 'and over that six quid," he said, "and you'll come 'ere regular once every week, and 'and over a couple of quids—do you understand? And the first time that you don't pay up, I go straight to your 'eadmaster with this paper."

It was out at last—the whole cunning, unscrupulous scheme, in all its bare wickedness. It was blackmail pure and simple—and the blackmailer meant to bleed his victim white. Wharton understood, and he called out sharply:
"Come on, you chaps!"

Mr. Rawlings jumped.
"You ain't alone?" he ejaculated.
He soon had proof that Wharton was not alone. There was a rush of feet in the darkness, and the rascal was surrounded.

"Now we'll talk business to him," said Johnny Bull, "and we'll begin by giving him a hiding! Collar him!"
Mr. Rawlings backed to the wall of the old barn, and raised his stick menacingly.
"Don't you lay a 'and on me!" he blustered.
"Look here," said Wharton quietly. "I've got six pounds here—and you can have it for my paper. Will you give it up?"

"I ain't got it with me!"
"I don't believe you. Will you take the money, and hand over the paper—or shall we take it by force, without paying anything for it?"
"If you dare to lay a 'and—"
"Will you give up the paper?"
"I ain't got it!"

Wharton deliberately placed the six pounds in his pocket again. That money could be returned to Lord Mauleverer intact. It was open warfare now, and he was determined that not a shilling more should be paid to the blackmailer, whatever happened. The debt had been paid once—and the paper belonged to Wharton. Mr. Rawlings watched him with growing uneasiness.

"Very well!" said Harry. "Now, I shall pay you nothing. Not a penny! Now I give you a chance to hand over that paper quietly, before we take it!"
"I ain't got it!"
"We'll see whether you've got it! Collar him!"
"You don't dare—"

But Mr. Rawlings saw very soon that they did dare. The five juniors rushed right at him. Mr. Rawlings slashed out furiously with his stick, and Johnny Bull caught it on his arm, and gave a grunt of pain. But Mr. Rawlings did not have time for more than one blow. The next instant, he was gripped by the indignant juniors, and he went rolling and sprawling on the ground, with the Greyfriars fellows clutching him and keeping over him.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
Ragging a Rascal!

"HOLD him!"
"Sit on the cad!"
Mr. Rawlings struggled fiercely for a few moments, and then collapsed, helpless and breathless, under the scrambling juniors.
"We've got him!" said Johnny Bull.
They had him, there was no doubt about that. Bob Cherry was kneeling on his loud check waistcoat, and Johnny Bull

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was standing on his legs. Nugent and Inky were holding him by the collar of his coat. The stout rascal wriggled and panted under them.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he stuttered out. "I'll make you sorry for it!"

"Will you give up the paper now?"

"I ain't got it; but if I 'ad it, I wouldn't give it up. I'll ruin you—arter this! I won't 'ave any mercy on you. You wait a hour or two, that's all!"

"If you don't hand it over we shall search you for it!"

"Search and be blanked!" said Mr. Rawlings.

They took him at his word. Holding the rascal securely, they turned out all his pockets, pitching the contents into the damp grass. The pockets were drawn blank—and then they searched through his clothes for a secret hiding-place—but they found none.

Wharton's face became very clouded.

The man had told the truth when he said that he had left the paper at his inn. He had been too cunning to carry it about with him, perhaps fearing some desperate attempt on Harry Wharton's part to regain possession of it. The bit of writing was too valuable to be risked.

The bookmaker was pretty roughly handled in the process of searching, and he swore savagely and muttered threats of vengeance.

The search ended at last; the paper was not there.

Wharton felt a chill at his heart. He had not succeeded in recovering the paper with his signature upon it; and, after what had happened, there was no doubt that Rawlings would do his worst.

Yet it must have come to it sooner or later. Even if Wharton had yielded to his extortion and paid him what he demanded, sooner or later the junior would have come to the end of his resources, and then the bookmaker would have betrayed him—as soon as he could extract no more money for his silence. The exposure, if it was to come, might as well come soon as late—and better before the blackmailer had profited by his rascality.

It was better to have it over than to live in fear under the rascal's thumb. Whatever might happen, Wharton would not regret that he had taken sharp measures with the unscrupulous rascal.

"Well, he's not got it," said Bob Cherry dismally. "I was sure the beast would have it about him, but he hasn't. Where is it, you brute?"

"Find out!" said Mr. Rawlings.

"Very well," said Bob Cherry, picking up Mr. Rawlings's stick. "Turn him over, you chaps! We'll find out!"

Swish—swish—swish—swish!

Bob laid on the lashes heavily across the fat shoulders of Mr. Rawlings, and the bookmaker roared and struggled like a bull.

Wharton looked on grimly. He was to suffer from the man's rascality, and there was some satisfaction in seeing him well thrashed in advance.

"Now will you tell us where the paper is, or will you have some more?" panted Bob.

"It's in my desk at the Cross Keys," gurgled Mr. Rawlings.

"Oh, I'll make you pay for this!"

"I suppose we can't get it from there?" said Bob dubiously.

Wharton shook his head.

"No; and if we made this scoundrel promise to bring it, he wouldn't keep his word. We're done. But I'm glad he hasn't had any money out of me. That's one comfort."

"What can we do now?"

"Punish that scoundrel for blackmailing," said Harry.

"He's going to the Head to tell lies about me. He sha'n't do it for nothing. There's a ditch on the other side of the hedge. Pitch him into it!"

"Good egg!"

"You let me alone!" shrieked Mr. Rawlings. "Don't you dare to pitch me into no ditch! I'll 'ave the law of you! I'll complain to your 'eadmaster! I'll—"

Splash!

The ditch was full, from recent rain. Mr. Rawlings disappeared into it, and he came up spluttering and snorting and coughing.

His silk hat had been trampled out of shape already, and was left in the field; his collar and necktie had been dragged off, his coat torn up the back. Now, as he scrambled out of the ditch, wet and muddy from head to foot, he looked a fearful object.

He was stuttering with cold and with rage. He shook a muddy fist at the juniors as he squealed out into the lane.

"I'll make you suffer for this! I'll—"

"Pitch him in again!"

Splash!

The juniors walked away towards Greyfriars, leaving the bookmaker struggling out of the ditch for the second time.

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They half expected him to follow them towards the school, and if he had done so, they were ready to handle him again. But Mr. Rawlings had had enough of them for the time being, and he limped away towards Friardale, squealing water and mud out of his boots and breathing vengeance as he went.

The juniors walked home in silence.

They climbed the school wall, and dropped into the dusky Close unseen, and reached No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. They found Hazeldene waiting for them there. The excited looks of the Co. showed Hazel that matters had not gone well.

"Did you get your paper back?" was his first question.

Wharton explained what had happened. Hazel uttered a cry of dismay.

"You licked him! You ducked him! You must be mad! Why, he'd do anything now to make you suffer for that! If you offered him a hundred pounds for the paper, he wouldn't take it now! You've done for yourself!"

"You've done for me, you mean, you cad!" Wharton cried savagely. "It all comes of your betting with him, you fool! And now you've got me into this horrible scrape, you haven't the decency to own up and get me out of it!"

Hazel gritted his teeth.

"I thought it would come to that!" he said. "I knew you'd round on me in the long run! Own up! I might as well have done that, if I was going to, before you meddled in the affair at all! If you didn't want to see it through, you shouldn't have interfered in the first place."

"Quite right," said Wharton bitterly. "I shouldn't. Next time I shall know better than to help a coward and a cur!"

"Pile it on if you like; only don't expect me to take this on my shoulders, because you've meddled and bungled it!" exclaimed Hazel passionately. "If you try to get me into it, I shall deny every word; and you'll have to prove it, remember that!"

And he swung out of the study, and slammed the door furiously.

"If he wasn't Marjorie's brother," said Wharton, between his teeth, "I'd go after him and smash him! But—"

"You're not going to stand the racket for what he's done?" said Nugent. "If Rawlings really goes to the Head—"

"He will; I know that!"

"Then you'll have to let him know it was Hazel."

Wharton shook his head.

"But you can't be sacked for him!" yelled Bob Cherry angrily.

"What Hazel said was quite right—if I wasn't willing to see it through, I shouldn't have interfered," said Wharton quietly. "I've got to see it through now."

"And you won't say a word?"

"No!"

"Then we will," said Bob. "If you don't tell the Head the facts, I shall go to him and tell him, I warn you!"

"You won't, Bob," said Harry. "I may get out of it all right; but—but I shall have to face the music, and you fellows are not to say a word. I want you to promise me that. We can't round on Hazel, because I've got myself into trouble trying to help him. I've brought it on myself, and I've got to face the music!"

The juniors flatly refused to promise, but in the end they gave in. Harry Wharton was right—he had tried to help Hazel of his own accord, and he had brought this terrible trouble upon himself by so doing. He had no right to betray the fellow he had undertaken to protect to save himself. What Hazel ought to do was clear; but he did not intend to do it. What Wharton ought to do was also clear, and he did intend to do it; that was the difference.

And Wharton, with his mind made up, waited grimly for the arrival of Mr. Rawlings. He knew that it would not be long delayed.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Condemned—For Another!

WINGATE of the Sixth opened the door of No. 1 Study when Wharton and Nugent were doing their preparation that evening.

The captain of Greyfriars was looking very grim.

"You're wanted, Wharton," he said abruptly.

"The Head?" asked Harry, rising to his feet.

"Yes."

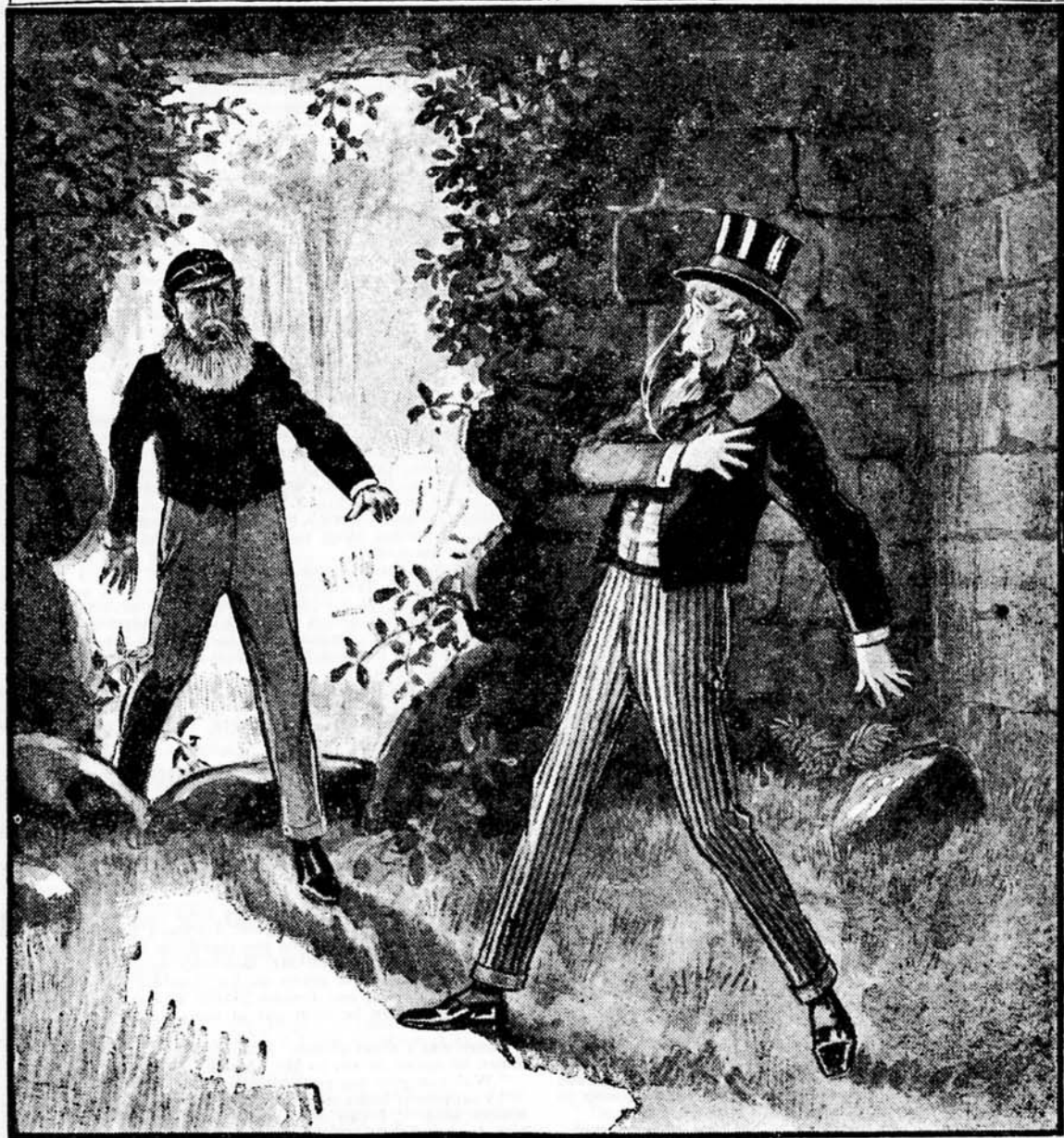
"Very well."

"You expected this?" asked Wingate, looking at him narrowly.

"Yes," said Harry.

"Do you know who is with the Head now?"

"Rawlings, I suppose."



The red-bearded stranger caught sight of D'Arcy, and started back. "Who are you?" gasped Gussy, with a dreadful feeling that it was a detective in search of him. "Ciel! Who are you?" shrieked the red-bearded stranger. "It is zat I know zat voice. It is ze voice of ze pauvre garçon zat I have keel!" (This picture appears on the cover of our companion paper, and is an incident taken from the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, entitled "THE SCHOOLBOY RAIDERS!" by Martin Clifford, in "THE GEM" LIBRARY. On sale at all Newsagents' on Wednesday. Price One Penny.)

"Yes," said Wingate. "Rawlings, the bookmaker and blackguard. You are to come to the Head and answer what he has to say. Wharton, surely you cannot have been fool enough to get yourself mixed up with that man?"

"That's just what I have been," said Harry bitterly. "Not in the way you think, though. I haven't done anything I need be ashamed of!"

"I hope you'll be able to make that clear to the Head," said Wingate. "Come on; Dr. Locke's waiting for you!"

"Haden't I better come, too, Harry?" Nugent asked. Wharton shook his head.

"You couldn't do any good, Franky. Wait here!" Wharton followed the Sixth-Former to the Head's study. Wingate took him in, and Dr. Locke made the Greyfriars captain a sign to remain. Mr. Quelch, the master of the

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Remove, was also in the study. Dr. Locke had evidently sent for him, Wharton being in his Form.

Standing in the middle of the Head's study, with his silk hat deposited on a chair for once, was Mr. Rawlings. His flushed face showed that he had been drinking before he paid that visit. Without that, he would probably never have found the courage to face the Head of Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke was looking stern and severe.

"You know this man, Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "His name is Rawlings."

"Have you ever had any betting dealings with him?"

"No, sir."

"Do you owe him any money?"

"No, sir."

"I was sure that Wharton would be able to deny it, Dr.

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Locke," said Mr. Quelch, with a breath of relief. "I am assured that he is incapable of such conduct!"

"I trust it will prove to be so, Mr. Quelch. Wharton, this man makes a claim upon you for a debt of three pounds. He has a paper here with your signature, promising to pay the money on Saturday—last Saturday, by the date of the paper. Do you deny that the signature is yours?"

"No, sir," said Harry quietly. "It is mine."
"Then," said the Head, raising his voice a little, "what do you mean by saying that you do not owe that man any money if you have given him a written promise to pay him three pounds?"

"I paid him the three pounds, sir, and he tricked me by giving me a blank piece of paper instead of that."

"It's a lie!" growled Mr. Rawlings at this point. "There ain't no money been paid to me!"

Wharton did not trouble to make a rejoinder. He took no notice of the bookmaker's presence at all. Mr. Rawlings might not have been there, for all the acknowledgment Wharton made of his existence.

"Then it comes to this, Wharton, that you have owed this man money?" said the Head. "That is as serious as owing it at the present moment. What did you owe him money for?"

"I put it on a 'orse for 'im," said Mr. Rawlings. "I did it to oblige the young gentleman, never thinking as he would refuse to pay up arterwards."

The Head looked at him.

"If you helped a boy of Wharton's age to bet on horses, Rawlings, you are an unmitigated scoundrel!" he said. "I am not sure whether you cannot be punished by the law. At all events, you shall not be paid. A man who would do as you have done is quite capable of tricking a boy as Wharton describes, and I have no doubt that his statement is correct, and that you have cheated him. You will not get any money here."

"Don't you call me names—" began Mr. Rawlings blusteringly.

Dr. Locke cut him short with raised hand.

"Silence!"

Wingate made a slight movement nearer to the bookmaker. The stalwart captain of Greyfriars could have tossed him out of the window if he liked, and Mr. Rawlings, after a glance at him, subsided into sulky silence.

"I am waiting for your explanation, Wharton. I am quite prepared to believe that you have already paid this man, and that he has attempted to obtain more money from you, and has betrayed you because he has failed to do so. But what did you owe him money for? He says it was for a betting transaction."

"It was not, sir."

"Then what was it?"

Wharton was silent.

"You must explain to me, Wharton. You have denied that you owed the man money, but your signature to this paper bears out that part of his statement. I would not accept his word on any matter, of course, but there is your signature. You owed him money, yet you have denied it."

"I didn't owe him money, sir," said Wharton at last. "Then why did you give him a written promise to pay him money you did not owe?"

"It was for another fellow," said Harry. "The rotter was driving a chap hard, and I tried to help him out of the scrape. That's all I can say, sir. I never had anything to do with the man myself."

"The man says he came here to see you in your study. He has described your study, and there is no doubt that he was there."

"That's true, sir. He was there last Wednesday."

Wingate uttered an exclamation.

"Then it was he who smoked there, Wharton, and I caned you for it?"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Yes, Wingate. I couldn't tell you I'd had a bookmaker in the study."

"Was it to pay this man that you borrowed money of me?" Mr. Quelch asked.

"Yes, sir. I paid him two pounds, and gave him my written promise for the rest. It was five pounds in all."

"And you declare that it was not your own debt?" said the Head, looking at Wharton very hard indeed.

"It was not mine, sir."

"Why did you have this man in your study if you do not know him?"

"I smuggled him there to keep him out of sight, sir. I knew it meant the sack for the fellow he came to see if any of the masters saw him about."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "Your statement, then, is that you planned to shield some boy, who had acted in a

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disgraceful and blackguardly way, from his just punishment?"

Wharton flushed. That was not the way he had looked at his action in helping Hazeldene.

"I—I didn't mean it like that, sir. I felt that I was bound to stand by a Greyfriars chap—a silly fool, too, who doesn't know how to look after himself."

"I could excuse you for that," said the Head. "I understand a feeling of schoolboy chivalry—indeed, your conduct was generous and noble if it is as you have stated. But your statement is so extraordinary, Wharton, that I cannot take it without some proof. This boy you speak of, is he a very close friend of yours?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"It is not one of your intimate chums?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Then, Wharton, how am I to believe you?" exclaimed the Head sternly. "You tell me that you took this man to your study for another boy's sake, that you signed a promise to pay him this other boy's debt, that you placed yourself in danger of being expelled from the school if the matter should come to my knowledge—and all this for the sake of a boy who is not even your personal friend? Can you expect me to credit such a statement?"

"I suppose it sounds rather thick, sir," faltered Wharton; "but it's true, all the same."

"It is preposterous, Wharton!"

The junior was silent.

"There is, however, an easy way of putting it to the test," said the Head. "Whatever boy it is who has had betting transactions with this man will be expelled from the school. I cannot allow such a boy to remain at Greyfriars. Give me his name."

Wharton did not speak.

"You cannot, Wharton?"

"I can't, sir. It wouldn't be decent to give him away."

"This is too important a matter for considerations of that sort, Wharton. I command you to give me his name!"

"I promised him not to give him away, sir."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"I cannot credit you, Wharton. You make a preposterous statement, and shelter yourself behind a story of a promise not to reveal the real guilty party. Your explanation is simply absurd."

"I—I suppose it sounds so, sir."

"I am glad you can see that." The Head turned to Mr. Rawlings. "Mr. Rawlings, was it with Wharton or with another boy that you had this transaction?"

"With Master Wharton, sir," said Rawlings, with a malicious grin at Harry.

"Have you had dealings with any other boy at Greyfriars?"

"Cert'n'y not!"

"Wingate, will you kindly show that man out? If he is ever seen near this school again, I should be very pleased to hear that he had received the thrashing he deserves."

"Look 'ere—" began Mr. Rawlings wrathfully.

But Wingate's iron grasp on his shoulder cut him short. Mr. Rawlings cast one furious glance at the athletic Sixth-Former, and then he went out of the study as quietly as a lamb.

There was a short silence. The Head was thinking deeply. When he spoke, it was to Mr. Quelch, not to the junior.

"Will you give me your opinion?" he asked.

"I suppose it looks very bad for Wharton, sir," the Remove master said. "I can only say that I have always known him to be strictly truthful and honourable, and that this matter comes as a terrible surprise to me."

"You are evidently of my opinion," said the Head. He turned to Wharton. "Wharton, give me the name of the boy you have spoken of!"

"I can't, sir."

"This boy—if your statement is true—is he likely to confess and save you from being punished for his sin?"

Wharton smiled bitterly.

"Not likely, sir. He's thinking of his own skin, that's all."

"And for such a boy you have made this sacrifice? You have made yourself the scapegoat to bear the burden of what he has done?"

"I didn't mean to do that, sir. I couldn't foresee that Rawlings would be such a rascal. I thought he would give me back the paper when I paid him, and that the matter would be ended."

"But now, as it has turned out—"

"I took the matter up of my own accord, sir. I told the chap I'd stand by him. I can't give him away now."

"I wish I could believe you, Wharton. But you will see for yourself that this statement you have made could be made by any accused person, however conclusive the evidence.

If such statements were accepted, there would be an end of all justice. I would willingly believe, Wharton, that you are acting from a sense of mistaken devotion. But it is impossible."

Wharton grew very pale.

He could see what was coming, and he braced himself to meet it. Punishment was easier to bear than self-contempt, and he would have despised himself for ever if he had betrayed the fellow he had promised to protect. There was another silence. The Head seemed at a loss.

"I shall not decide hastily, Wharton," he said at last. "Considering your honourable record in the school, I wish to give you every opportunity of clearing yourself. If this boy you speak of has a spark of decency, he must confess—if your statement is true. I will leave the matter over for two days. During that time you may consider your position, knowing that unless you can clear yourself I shall write to your uncle to take you away from Greyfriars."

Wharton's lips tightened.

"Very well, sir."

"Now you may go."

And Wharton went.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie Chips In.

BILLY BUNTER stopped in the lane, and blinked through his big spectacles at a graceful form coming up the lane. Morning lessons were over on Tuesday, and Billy Bunter was waddling disconsolately down to the village. Bunter was in his usual state of impecuniosity, and he was yearning for tarts. His recent conduct had made it impossible to raise a loan in No. 1 Study, and Mrs. Mumble, at the school shop, was very decided on the subject of "rick," with so doubtful a customer as Bunter. Bunter had rolled forth on a forlorn hope, to attempt to soften the hard heart of Uncle Clegg at the tuckshop in Friardale, without much hope of success. But his fat face brightened, and his little round eyes glistened behind his spectacles, at the sight of Marjorie Hazeldene coming up the lane. He stopped in the road, and raised his hat to Marjorie with a manner that was intended to be graceful and courtly.

Marjorie gave him a curt nod, and walked on. She did not like Bunter, and she had no time to waste on him. She was going to Greyfriars to see Hazel, and she had to be back at Cliff House in time for afternoon lessons. The girl was in a very anxious frame of mind.

It was a trouble to her that Harry Wharton should have been drawn into the meshes of Mr. Rawlings' net on account of her brother, and she was anxious to know whether the matter had come to an end. Little did she dream how it was turning out. It had been understood that Wharton was to cycle over to Cliff House, and tell her all about it when it was over, but he had not come. And the girl had an uneasy foreboding that matters had not gone well.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bunter, puffing along beside Marjorie. "I say, Miss Marjorie—"

The girl did not pause.

"I've got some news for you," puffed Bunter.

Marjorie stopped.

"News for me?" she asked.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes; quite exciting, you know. Come along to the village—it ain't far off—and I'll tell you all about it at Uncle Clegg's. I'm going there."

"I have no time," said Marjorie.

"Better come and have a ginger-pop," urged Bunter, whose active brain had already formed a scheme for consuming "tuck," and leaving Miss Hazeldene to pay for it. "Uncle Clegg has jolly good tarts, too."

"I am going to Greyfriars," said Marjorie. "If you have anything to tell me, tell me now."

"Better come to Uncle Clegg's, and I'll tell you all about it. It's quite exciting, you know. We don't have a fellow sacked at Greyfriars every day."

Marjorie's heart stood still.

"My brother—"

"Oh, it ain't Hazel!" said Bunter. "Hazel's all right. It's Wharton."

"Wharton!" exclaimed Marjorie, in astonishment.

"Yes; he's bowled out at last," chuckled Bunter. "I can't say I'm sorry for him. He was always mean about money. When I was in his study I never used to have enough to eat."

"What has happened?"

"He's found out," explained Bunter, trotting along beside Marjorie. The girl was walking towards Greyfriars again, at a pace the little fat junior found it difficult to equal. "It's come out about his having a bookie in his study the other day, you know, and it turns out that he owed him money for betting and things, and the man came up to see the Head as Wharton wouldn't pay him. The whole school's buzzing with it. Your brother looks pretty sick about it, too. Don't know why. I

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ONE
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know he doesn't like Wharton. In fact, I happen to know that they had a row the other day, and Wharton was going to punch his head when Bob Cherry stopped him. I say, Miss Marjorie, there's no hurry. I—I'm rather out of breath, you know."

"Do you mean that Wharton is supposed to have owed money to Mr. Rawlings, and that he is to be expelled for it?" said Marjorie, her face very white.

"That's it!"

"What does my brother say about it?"

"He hasn't said anything that I know of."

"But Wharton has denied it, surely?"

Bunter chuckled.

"Yes. He wants to make out that he was acting for another chap, but he can't give the chap's name. All bunkum, you know! As if a fellow would get into a fix like that for another fellow! I know I wouldn't."

"No, I'm sure you wouldn't," said Marjorie, with a quiet scorn that was quite lost upon William George Bunter.

"No, fear. I'm not quite such a mug as that," said Bunter, with a satisfied grin. "Of course, I don't believe it. I suppose Wharton thought that yarn would go down. But if it was true, why can't he give the chap's name? He's going to be sacked to-morrow. His uncle's coming down for him. Of course, if he could get out of it, he would. Stands to reason, don't it?"

Marjorie did not reply. She was walking so quickly now that Billy Bunter fell hopelessly behind, though his fat legs were going like clockwork.

Marjorie entered the school gates, and hurried across to the School House. Bob Cherry met her in the doorway. Bob's usually jolly face was long and glum.

"What is this about Wharton?" Marjorie exclaimed breathlessly. "I've just met Bunter, and he says—"

"The chattering beast!" growled Bob.

"I want to know about it," said Marjorie. "Is it possible that Wharton has been supposed to have done what my brother has done?"

Bob hesitated.

"Tell me!" Marjorie exclaimed imperiously.

"We agreed not to say anything to you about it," said Bob reluctantly. "I—I say, shall I walk back to Cliff House with you?"

"I'm not going back to Cliff House yet. I must see to this. Is Wharton to be sent away from Greyfriars?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Because he won't tell about my brother?"

"I—I suppose it amounts to that."

"But Hazel!" exclaimed Marjorie, her face flooded with colour now. "Has Hazel allowed it? Hasn't he owned up—"

"Don't be hard on Hazel," said Bob, feeling called upon to say something. "He hasn't the nerve, you know. He can't face it—"

"Then he is letting Wharton suffer for him, without saying a word?"

"Well, you see—"

"Tell me—tell me. Yes or no?"

"Well, yes, I suppose."

"But you others. You know all about it!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Have you said nothing, and allowed this injustice to be done?"

"We couldn't prove it," said Bob.

"Do you mean that Hazel would deny the truth?"

Bob was silent.

Marjorie clenched her little hands.

"We promised Wharton to say nothing about it," said Bob. "We wanted to, but he made us promise. He thinks he's bound to see it through. You know it's no good arguing with him. I'm blessed if I know what ought to be done!"

"I know what ought to be done!" exclaimed Marjorie, her eyes flashing. And she ran into the house. Bob darted after her.

"Marjorie!" he exclaimed, in dismay. "Marjorie, where are you going?"

But Marjorie was already at the door of the Head's study, and knocking on it. Bob drew a deep breath, and turned away. He knew the girl's intention now, and he was glad of it.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Head.

Marjorie entered the study. Dr. Locke looked up, expecting to see one of the masters, and he was astonished at the sight of the girl with her face flushed, and her eyes full of excitement.

"Miss Hazeldene!" said the Head. "Pray come in! What is the matter?"

"Dr. Locke"—Marjorie was almost panting—"is it true that Harry Wharton is to be expelled from Greyfriars?"

The Head looked distressed.

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A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

"Yes, my dear child, I am sorry to say that it is. Surely you have not come to speak to me about that?"

"Yes, yes! He is innocent," Marjorie exclaimed. Dr. Locke smiled patiently. He understood the girl's distress on finding that her boy chum was to be sent away in disgrace from the school, and he supposed that she had come to make some appeal to him. He could not, of course, be influenced by that, but he was sorry.

"My dear girl—"
"I tell you I know who it is, sir. I knew all along. It was because we are friends that Wharton did this," Marjorie exclaimed.

The Head looked at her keenly.
"I cannot quite understand you," he said. "But if you can tell me anything about the matter I shall be glad to hear it, of course. Wharton's explanation is that he was acting on behalf of another boy, but it is impossible to admit such an explanation."

"But it is true, sir."
"How do you know?"
"I know who the other boy is. I knew it all along."
"If that is the case, Miss Hazeldene, the matter is very much altered, and I thank you for coming to me," said the Head gravely. "I was very, very much surprised to find that Wharton was guilty of such conduct. Tell me what you know."

Then Marjorie hesitated.
"The—the boy is to be expelled, sir?" she faltered.
"Most decidedly."

The girl's lip quivered. She could not allow Wharton to suffer for her brother. She was quite decided upon that. But to tell Dr. Locke the truth, and to see Hazel in consequence expelled from the school—it was a cruel position for her.

"Well," said Dr. Locke patiently, "what have you to tell me, Miss Marjorie? Are you quite sure that you are not mistaken? My dear child, don't cry—there is nothing to cry about, surely?" the kind old gentleman exclaimed, in alarm.

Marjorie sobbed.
"If I tell you, you will expel him—and if I do not, you will expel the best and kindest boy in Greyfriars!" she murmured.

"But why should it matter to you, my dear child? If there is a boy in the school who is so base that he would allow Wharton to suffer for his wickedness, surely he should be severely punished," said the Head gently.

"Yes, yes—but—but—but—"
"But what?"
"But he is my brother!" sobbed Marjorie.

Dr. Locke started.
"Your brother—Hazeldene of the Remove!"
"Yes!"

It was out now.
"My dear, dear child," said the Head, in great distress. "Pray—pray do not cry! I—I will see what can be done. You are quite sure of what you say?"

"Yes, yes. Harry was trying to save Hazel—because he is kind and generous. It is shameful that Hazel should have let him suffer in his place," said Marjorie, almost inaudibly. "But—but now I have told you, you will punish my brother—"

"Do not distress yourself, Miss Hazeldene. I must take into consideration the fact that you have told me. I cannot allow you to be the cause of your brother's expulsion from the school," said the Head kindly. "I will consult with his Form-master, and see what can be done. It was very noble of you to come to me as you have done, Miss Hazeldene. But I must be sure of the facts. I will send for your brother."

"And—and you will not expel him, sir?"
The Head paused for a full minute, and then answered:
"No!"

He rang the bell, and sent Trotter for Hazeldene. In a

few minutes the junior entered the study, looking white and scared. He started at the sight of his sister, her cheeks wet with tears.

"Hazeldene!" said the Head sternly. "I have just made a very painful discovery. Is it possible, sir, that you have been sheltering yourself behind the mistaken chivalry of your Form-fellow?"

Hazel almost staggered.
"I, sir! No—I—Marjorie, what have you been saying?"
"Listen to me, Hazeldene. Tell me the whole truth, and I will not expel you from the school. At any cost, this matter must be cleared up! Tell me the whole truth at once, and I will consider what lesser punishment will meet the case."

Under the stern eye of the Head, Hazel had not much chance of prevaricating. His conscience had made his life a misery to him since Wharton's sentence had been pronounced. It was almost with relief that he now blurted out a halting confession.

The Head listened in stern silence.
"Then it was you that Rawlings came to see here?"
"Yes, sir."

"You had been betting with him?"
"Ye-es, sir," faltered Hazeldene. "I—I somehow got into it—he talked me over, and—and—I know it was wrong, sir, but I didn't realise—I—I'll never do anything of the kind again, sir. I—I sha'n't forget what I've been through in the past few days."

"Yes, I think that is probable enough," said the Head. "You have had a lesson, I should imagine. You have acted foolishly and wickedly—but your connection with Rawlings was nothing in comparison with your baseness in allowing Wharton to suffer for your fault. Do you understand what terrible injustice would have been done, if your sister had not been more honourable than yourself?"

"I—I—I couldn't own up!" muttered Hazeldene, getting the words out with difficulty. "I couldn't face my father—"

"So you left it to Wharton to bear the burden of your rascality!" said the Head sternly. "You will be punished severely, Hazeldene. I shall not expel you, for your sister's sake—considering the manner in which I have learned the truth, I feel that I cannot take that step. You will be flogged, and I trust that this lesson will keep you in honourable paths in the future. And if you have even a little common-sense, Hazeldene, you will take example by your sister, and strive to become a better boy."

And the Head made a gesture of dismissal.
In the passage outside, Hazel looked at Marjorie in an uncertain sort of way. He did not know whether to feel angry with her, or to feel relieved at having the matter over and done with—his feelings were mixed.

"So you gave me away, Marjorie?" he muttered.
"I saved Wharton," said Marjorie. "Oh, Hazel, it was base of you not to own up, when he was to be expelled for your fault. I could not have believed it of you."

"Well, it's over now," said Hazel sullenly. "You can go and tell Wharton that it's all right."

And Marjorie did. She found Harry Wharton in the Close, moodily pacing under the leafless elms. His face was dark and clouded—but it brightened as Marjorie breathlessly told what she had to tell.

"You should not have done it, Harry," said the girl, almost sobbing. "It was kind and generous—but you should not have done it! It was too much!"

But Wharton shook his head.
"I think Hazel will keep straight, after this," he said. "Don't be too hard on the poor chap, Marjorie—he has been feeling this. We're going to look after him—and if he plays the giddy goat again, we'll rag him bald-headed—that's the best way."

And Marjorie laughed.



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By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gau-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour. As they are steaming along one day the bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. A continuous booming, caused by the cracking of shrivelled weeds, comes from the floating island, which also gives forth a disagreeable odour. Before sunrise the next morning, a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be mostly an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life upon it. They are inspecting a black lake, when there is a sudden commotion, and some huge monster makes a momentary appearance in the water. All the adventurers could distinguish were its writhing limbs and its eyes—two huge, glaring, green circles, horrible to look at.

(Now go on with the story.)

Barry has an Accident—The Cave of Terror and Wonder.

"It wasn't an octopus, I'll swear!" said Ching-Lung. "Those things looked more like arms, with hands and fingers attached, than tentacles. They were flattened out at the ends. Ugh! The brute! Why didn't you fire, Tom?"

"By hokey, I was too much took by surprise, sir!" said the steersman of the Lord of the Deep. "I couldn't get the gun up to my shoulder. It was that roar as settled me. I never heard such a screech—never!"

Ferrers Lord, his own rifle in readiness, walked quickly round the pool. He stopped and beckoned them.

"What do you make of that, Ching?"

Thurston uttered another whistle. Stamped deep in the salty ooze were several circular impressions, fifteen or sixteen inches in diameter. They led up the slope into the forest, and told their own tale. The denizen of the black pool was an amphibian who crawled from his gloomy lair when darkness came to hunt his prey in the weird forests of Mysteria.

"Whew!" said Ching-Lung. "So the brute strolls abroad, does he? He's got feet the size of an elephant's. I don't feel at all anxious to camp out in this pleasant wood. It wouldn't be a bit pleasant to wake up and find that beauty looking over the edge of your hammock, taking you for a sort of free lunch—eh, what? Oh, no, thanks awfully! Had some!"

The millionaire bent thoughtfully over the gigantic spoor. That the dark depths of the ocean held monsters as yet unseen by any human eye he did not doubt. Even he himself, conqueror of the watery realms, could not explore those great, illimitable realms of glassy gloom and utter

silence, where those terrible shapes, like hideous nightmares, ranged, roamed, and reigned supreme. And why should not Mysteria, tossed up from the bosom of the ocean, have brought some of her dread inhabitants with her? He had always felt that she would do so, and now the conviction was confirmed. One, at least, of Mysteria's monsters had accompanied his birthland to the world of light and sunshine.

"Can you make anything tangible of it, old chap?"

"Little or nothing, Rupert," said the millionaire, "but I hope to make the gentleman's better acquaintance in the near future. He seems to have feet, finned feet, by the tracks he has left, and a tail like a fan." He pointed to the ridges in the mud that might have been caused by the teeth of a large rake. "I fancy he makes his home here, and that we shall find him when we need him. A dynamite cartridge will produce him for our quiet inspection."

They lingered for a few minutes, their fingers pressing the triggers of their rifles, but the dread denizen of the pool made no movement. Then they turned away and climbed higher into the reeking, shadowy forest.

All of them were more alert now. In any of the scattered jungles of oozy, matted weed a monster might be lurking. They kept their guns ready, for they did not know what they might meet. Thurston's flushed face showed his keen excitement, and Barry's eyes jumped from side to side as if fixed on pivots and manipulated by a string. Ching-Lung and Ferrers Lord were proof against excitement, and the stolid steersman strode along quite unconcernedly.

Suddenly Ching-Lung, who was leading the little procession, halted abruptly.

"What's the matter?"
 "It's turned jolly cold all at once," said the prince.
 "Don't you notice it?"
 They all noticed it. The air, damp and warm enough before, was now harsh and chilly, and there was no breeze to explain the swift fall in temperature.
 "Oi ixpict we're near some big lake, sor," said Barry.
 "Gettin' close to wather often makes ut faal loike this."
 "It looks to me a queer place for a lake to be," said Ching-Lung. "We seem to have banged into a dead wall."
 He struck forward with the back of his axe, and the metal struck sharply against a wall of solid limestone. Barry dashed his pole deep into the heart of a mass of dense weeds. The pole and the Irishman disappeared together.
 "Good heavens, he's fallen into a hole!" gasped Thurston.
 "Barry, Barry!"
 Ching-Lung and Prout frantically cut away the weeds. There was a hole below filled with darkness almost to the brim, a pit of unknown depth that seemed to them to sink into the very bowels of Mysteria.

"Barry, Barry!"
 No answer came back.
 "Stand aside," said the millionaire quietly.
 The beam from his electric lamp shot downwards and moved to and fro, revealing the grey, sloping bottom of the hole. The pole lay there, but there was no sign of the Irishman. The first sheer drop was only one of seven or eight feet, but the tunnel fell away at a sharp slant that defied the lamp.
 "Barry, Barry!"
 The dull echo of their own voices rumbled back along the tunnel, but nothing more. Ching-Lung sprang down.
 "Be careful," said the millionaire, as quietly as ever.
 "Look out for pitfalls, Ching-Lung."
 Thurston and Prout craned forward in an agony of suspense.
 "Here's his pipe," called Ching-Lung.
 He picked up Barry's smouldering briar under the arch of the tunnel. The incline was steeper, but the sides and bottom of the tunnel were smooth and slippery. The prince lighted his lamp, and crept forward, his one terror being that he would reach a sheer pit in whose depths the mangled body of the gallant Irishman would be lying.

Ferrers Lord was close behind him.
 "Careful," said the deep, warning voice—"careful now, Ching."
 "I'll be careful enough!" answered the prince hoarsely.
 "Barry! Ahoy, Barry!"
 He listened for a reply. Strange whisperings filled the air, and the damp breath of the place felt like ice on his cheeks. He crawled on foot by foot. The angle of the descent narrowed and the roof grew higher. Water trickled away under his feet, and a powerful odour of brine penetrated his nostrils. Taking advantage of the widening of the gallery, the millionaire reached his side, and both lamps flared downwards into the heavy gloom, and Ching-Lung trod on a rifle.
 "He's there," said Ferrers Lord.
 Barry was lying on his face, quite still. They turned him over gently, and unbuttoned his waistcoat and shirt.

"Yes?" questioned Ching-Lung.
 Ferrers Lord withdrew his hand.
 "He's very much alive. Prop him up while I give him some brandy. He must have had a nasty fall and a long roll down that slope. Run your hand over his arms and legs and ribs. I hope no bones are broken."
 "You do that, old chap, while I put the others out of suspense. They're jolly fond of poor old Barry."
 Ching-Lung was up the tunnel in a twentieth part of the time it had taken him to come down it.
 "It's all serene, boys!" he shouted. "Barry won't kick the pail just yet. I fancy he's had an ugly spill, but it will take more than this lot to settle the merry member for Bally-bunion. Come down and see."
 Barry's eyes were open when his comrades gathered round him.

"That was a nice thing to do, to try and smash rocks with your face, by hokey!" said Prout. "Ow are you feeling, Irish?"
 "Faix, Oi faal moighty muzzy, and that's the truth of ut," answered Barry, with a feeble grin. "Ut's a trick that nades a lot of practice to perform nately. Oi knowed Oi'd taken the wrong ticket the minute Oi started, but ut was too late to stop the thrain. Oi faal as av somebody was playin' 'Hiawatha' on my poor head wid a foire-shovel and crowbar. Will, will! Worse things happened at the battle of Waterloo. Help me up, Tommy acushla."

The Irishman managed to stand without support. He tried his limbs one after the other, and heaved a sigh of relief when he found them intact. He had raised a lump on the side of his head, and lost a good deal of skin from his left cheek. After another sip of brandy, he pulled himself together.

"Now Oi'm ridy for anythin' from dominoes to toiger-huntin'," he said; "and Oi beg to apologise to iveryan for the inconvenience Oi've caused. Phwat an owlish thrick to tumble down the coal-cellar steps. If ut was a beer cellar Oi cud understand ut, yez see, but— Arrah, Oi'm ashamed of yez, Barry, intoirly, for after doing ut. Whisht, whisht! Oi'll have to sit down a bit longer. Me legs want to go widout me, the unkoind rascals."

Barry was not nearly so well as he had imagined himself to be.

"Help him out into the light," said Ferrers Lord, and into what little fresh air there is, Prout. This seems an extensive place. Shall we go in a little further, Ching? Leave one of the lamps here. Do you care to come, Rupert?"

"I think I had better stay with Barry just now."
 "Yes, I think you had. We shall not go far. Leave the light there, Prout."

He shot the beam of his own lamp upwards, and it flashed on a grey-white roof.

"I believe the hills we saw are as hollow as a drum, Ching," he said, "and that Mysteria is simply a shell. That would explain her buoyancy to a great extent. Hold the light for me."

The grey splinters flew as he struck at the floor with his axe. He picked up one of the chips.

"Petritied weed and chalk full of the remains of marine insects," he said, examining the fragment close to the lamp. "Let me try— Ah!"

He moved forward a few paces, and then stopped with a quick exclamation. There were marks on the slimy ground—prints of great, strangely-shaped feet.

"Have you found something interesting, Lord?" asked Ching-Lung.

"You had better decide that. Come and look."

Ching-Lung rubbed his nose.
 "Those, for a fact, are the feet-prints of the slimy Slonkey-doodle," he said. "My word, it's all interesting enough, Ferrers, but it's too uncanny. I'm not keen on exploring this hole. I'm only human, and boogies like this scare me. Th's brute must be six yards long. In the daylight I'm not



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so squeamish about meeting freaks and frighten-yous, but in the dark— Hadn't we better put off this pleasant picnic for a bit?"

"Let us go a little way, at least. Whatever the creatures are, they are pretty certain to be slow and clumsy. I shall explore this place if I have to light every inch of it."

"How—by electricity?"

"No; by simply cutting a hole in its roof."

Ching-Lung was of opinion that it would savour of wisdom to postpone the exploration until the hole had been made, and said so. The millionaire only laughed, and walked on.

"Hallo," he called, "here are some props!"

Several great pillars rose from the ground, their summits lost in the upper darkness. The millionaire flashed the lamp on one of them, and recoiled. A cry burst from Ching-Lung.

"They're alive! They're alive!"

The column seemed to writhe and squirm like a monstrous snake. It swelled and narrowed and twisted before their horrified eyes. And then it burst into a mass of green and golden light that shimmered and swam in a seethe of dazzling colour. Out of the darkness came the dull bellowing of some nameless monster.

They both turned and ran wildly towards the unwinking circle of light that marked the lamp and the way to safety.

Panting and breathless, Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung dashed up the sloping tunnel and emerged into the forest. It was a pale, unhealthy light, but they welcomed it with sensations of unbounded thankfulness and relief. It was not cowardice, according to what is called cowardice, that had made them turn tail and rush madly from the cavern of terror and wonder, for they were as fearless as any men who ever breathed. But as Ching-Lung had said, they were only human, and human nature revolts instinctively against

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

any horror that is unknown and that it cannot satisfactorily explain.

Thomas Prout yelled a warning as they saw the millionaire and the prince leap into view from the black mouth of the tunnel, and three rifles were at once levelled to cover their retreat. To see the grim millionaire and the fearless Ching-Lung scuttling out like rabbits with a weasel at their heels was a sight never to be forgotten. It cured Barry O'Rooney of his dizziness, and made Prout's jaw drop. Gaining the edge of the pit on opposite sides, Ching-Lung and the millionaire looked across at each other and began to laugh.

"What's it all about? Has something chased you? Did you see a ghost? What was it?" questioned Rupert volubly.

"Dashed if I know what it was, or what we saw," said Ching-Lung, pressing his hand over his rapidly beating heart. "I think it was that yell that settled me. I was in the bluest funk of a lifetime. Talk about spooks and spectres and hobgoblins! What a wicked hole! I'm frightened now! Look at that!"

The hand he raised to his forehead was wet with perspiration.

"Was ut something alive?" asked Barry excitedly.

"Undoubtedly it was," said Ferrers Lord. "Mysteria, the marvellous, has given me another new sensation—it has made me afraid, and I honestly confess it."

"But what was it? What did you see?"

(Another splendid, long instalment of this grand Serial next Monday. Order your copy in advance.)

GRAND NEW FEATURE. No. 6.

OUR WINTER EVENING PROBLEM CORNER.

The Problem set this week will form an excellent test of skill for my ingenious chums. I have given a reproduction of a letter written by one of the Greyfriars' boys, and the artist has obliterated every third word. What my chums have to do is to fill in the missing words so as to reconstruct the letter exactly as it originally appeared. Readers will find the correct solution published on this page next Monday.

No. 7
PROBLEM
NEXT
MONDAY.

This is how last week's picture-puzzle should look when properly pieced together. It is a silhouette figure of George Wingate—captain of Greyfriars.



My dear Bentley,

Just a lines to you that
 intend to Harry Wharton's
 on Wednesday and we be jolly
 if you turn up it. We subbed
 together we have enough tin give
 a up feed (dished out five!)

The are that all meet
 the wood-shed five o'clock Six
 third kids will on us they
 have to wash necks for
 occasion! Try turn up.

ever,
 Bob



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
 AND EVERY WEDNESDAY
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor
 is always
 pleased to
 hear from
 his Chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"IN BORROWED PLUMES!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars School, Billy Bunter—the Owl of the Remove—is unable to resist the temptation of investing himself for the time being with the identity of Lord Mauleverer, the aristocratic Removite. By chance the opportunity comes to him, and Billy Bunter eagerly seizes it. It is not long, however, before the fat junior makes the discovery that there are certain drawbacks even about being a lord, and he is soon quite ready to proclaim himself William George Bunter, and none other!

"IN BORROWED PLUMES!"

is absorbingly interesting, and in parts highly amusing—altogether a story which every "Magnetite" will read with keen enjoyment.

SUNDERLAND WANTS ONE, TOO!

Below I publish a letter which is typical of quite a large number that I receive from my readers. As I have not space to print them all, this one will have to serve as a sample:

"55 Bk., Devonshire Street, Monkwearmouth,
 Sunderland

"Dear Mr. Editor.—As my friend and I are desirous of forming a 'Magnet and Gem' ('lub'), we would be very glad if you would kindly give us a few hints as to the forming and keeping up of a club. As there are not many lads around our part, we would be pleased if you could find space and time to advertise for about six lads to join our club. All boys wishing to join to communicate with J. Dobson at the above address, and those wishing to call to do so between two and three p.m. on Saturday afternoon. With the best of luck to the 'Invincible Trio,'

"TWO LOYAL READERS (J. D. and R. L.)."

The first request of my chums, J. D. and R. L., is one that I always give the same answer to—that is, in five words: "I leave it to you." All the "Magnet" Leagues are run entirely by readers for readers, without any Editorial interference; the members make their own rules, and run the clubs just as it seems best to them.

Their own enterprise and initiative called the clubs and Leagues into being, and will surely serve to run them also. Nevertheless, perhaps one or two of my two chums' fellow-readers, who are members of some "Magnet" League, could give Masters J. D. and R. L. a few hints that might be of great assistance to them, and would, I am sure, be greatly appreciated.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

J. R. Nelson (Otley, Yorks).—Very many thanks for your interesting letter.

C. Faith (Brixton).—There is no "Magnet" League controlled from this office. You may, of course, form a League of your own.

Constant Reader (Liverpool).—Cement can be obtained from any oil shop. It is made by mixing water with the powder, according to the quantity. I should think any contractor in your neighbourhood would let you have some ready made for a small sum.

Constant Reader (Middlesbro').—Running, skipping, jumping, walking, and ordinary gymnasium all tend to keep one fit for footer.

OUR POSTCARD VOTE.

Some weeks ago one of my readers, who signed himself "Londoner," made a novel and important suggestion in a letter which I published in the Chat page of this paper. My correspondent's suggestion was, briefly, that something on the lines of the Comic Supplement, which has recently been crowded out of "The Magnet" Library, should be brought out in the form of an extra companion sheet to this paper, so that readers could enjoy a whole budget of funny pictures, without any curtailment of the reading matter already contained in "The Magnet" being necessary. This suggestion struck me at once as being one worthy of the fullest consideration, and I adopted "Londoner's" further suggestion, and asked my readers to vote by postcard for or against this proposal.

The result has been astonishing to a degree. Ever since that paragraph appeared, postcards have been flowing into this office in a steady stream. And this is the wonderful part—at the time of writing

Over Ninety-six Per Cent.

of the votes have been emphatically in favour of "Londoner's" idea! In a matter of this kind such unanimity is most exceptional, and, needless to say, it has afforded me the greatest gratification. I am most grateful to my chums for putting their verdict so plainly before me, and to "Londoner" for originating such a brilliant and, as it turns out, popular suggestion. I can promise all my "Magnetite" chums some new developments and a very pleasant surprise in connection with this matter very shortly.

LIFE AS A WIRELESS OPERATOR.—No. 3.

A skilled operator will rarely or never confuse the signals transmitted to him as the result of atmospheric disturbance with the signals of a real message. When a message is very much disturbed by atmospheric influences, the operator must ask for it to be repeated when the disturbing influence has passed away, but he has to bear in mind the fact that a busy transmitting operator greatly objects to having to repeat a message.

A Lonely Station.

Often a wireless operator may be sent to take charge of some lonely station on the Pacific coast, where he will find life extremely dull and monotonous, and where his only companions will probably be a couple of other operators. How long he may be left in such a place depends a good deal on himself. These lonely stations are regularly inspected from time to time, and the inspector never lets a keen, intelligent, enterprising operator languish there long; but if an operator shows no special aptitude for his work, or makes no effort to improve his knowledge of wireless telegraphy, or speed in the sending of messages, he may spend all his life on one of these lonely stations.

It is now a well known fact that it often spoils a good operator to leave him for long in one of these lonely stations. He has so little to do and finds his life so easy that his whole character becomes deteriorated, and he becomes quite unfitted for more strenuous and responsible positions.

A case was told to the writer recently of a young operator who gave every promise of rising to a high position, who was sent to a station somewhere on the Pacific coast. A year later, when he was offered a better position elsewhere, he declined to take it, and asked to be left where he was. He found life so easy and, according to his ideas, so pleasant that he lost all his ambition to rise to a better post. He was not granted his wish, however, and he was transferred to a liner first of all, and then to a busy naval station. Eventually he recovered his old keenness and intelligence, and is now in a first-rate position.

(A Splendid New Series of
 Special Articles on "HOW
 TO SAVE MONEY" will
 begin Next Week.)

The Editor

You Will Enjoy Reading This Grand Story!

THE EXILE!

A Splendid Long, Complete Story, Dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of the Three Famous Comrades—
JACK, SAM, and PETE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.



The bear stood on its hind legs and struck at Pete with its front paw. "Here, you go down, sah!" cried Pete, giving it a heavy kick on the snout with his foot. "Dere ain't room for two up here!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Starving Exile—Pete Asserts His Authority—How He Got Rid of Schultze.

ON the eastern slope of the Andes, five hundred miles south of Peru, and a thousand miles from anywhere else, as an Irishman would say, lies Death Gulch. Neither its name nor its reputation is nice; but although we know on good authority there is nothing in a name, there is a good deal in a reputation.

Be this as it may, Death Gulch has neither a decent name nor reputation. Those gold diggings may reform, the same as we may have to shoot our matutinal bacon, if we happen to have powder and shot for such luxuries, and if pigs take to flying.

However, Dr. Hiram Cosch was at home, and, judging by the expression of his dark, clever eyes and anxious movements, he looked very much as though he wished he were abroad. He was quite a young man, with a dark, handsome face, and slightly aquiline nose. To gain his diploma had been an easy matter to him; to gain his patients, an impossible one. He had tried several countries, but no one seemed to require his services. Then he tried Death Gulch diggings, and found starvation there far simpler than in any place he had yet visited.

Very few, if any, of the miners troubled themselves about religion, yet because Hiram was a Jew they would have nothing to do with him.

Now, when a man is near starvation his nerves become unstrung, especially if he is aware of the fact that he may be lynched at any moment; therefore, when Hiram's door was flung violently open, and a stentorian voice roared out, "Hallo, old hoss! What hab you got to eat?" Hiram leapt to his feet and placed his hand on his revolver-butt. But when he saw the jovial face of Pete the negro, he appeared to be somewhat reassured, and the entrance of Jack and

Sam, followed by Rory, seemed to complete such reassurance.

But when Rory walked round the young doctor, then placed his paws on his knee and kissed his hand, it was too much for Hiram.

Mind, he was nearly starving, and it seemed to him he had found a friend in all the world at last.

Hiram buried his face in his hands, and a sob shook his sinewy features.

"See here, old hoss!" cried Pete, poking his head on one side, and trying to glance at the young doctor's face. "Dere's no sense in dis. 'Spect you'm a man, and got to face de world!"

"I am Dr. Hiram Cosch, the Jew."

"What's dat got to do wid us? We'm Jack, Sam, and Pete. Dat's Rory. Don't suppose you'm such a mighty scoundrel, else he wouldn't make friends wid you. Now, we want some food, and mighty sharp at dat!"

"You can get it at the store, my friends. You cannot get it here," answered Hiram.

"How's dat?"

"Well, they say I am a Jew, and refuse to give food to hungry men."

"Den I suppose you'll sell it?"

"No. You can get plenty at the store. Good-night!"

"What do you tink 'bout dis, boys?" exclaimed Pete, glancing keenly at the young doctor.

"It is very strange!" exclaimed Jack. "Has chance brought us here? Come, Hiram, my friend, is anything wrong?"

"Thank you; nothing that you can cure."

"How do you know that?"

"Gentlemen, there is nothing to be said. I wish you good-night. Do you expect a Jew to entertain strangers?"

"See you here!" cried Pete. "I'm just a nigger. Dat don't count. Rory seems to like you; dat counts two-free. Don't 'spect Jews are bigger liars dan oder men. You'm got to answer—Golly! Are you dying?"

Pete had grasped the young man's arm, the flesh on which was flaccid—the arm so wasted that it felt as though he were grasping a bone.

"By degrees," answered Hiram, with a sad smile.

"What's de matter wid you, sah?"

"Mine is a simple case to diagnose. We will call it inanition."

"Anything like measles?"

"Scarcely."

"Eber had dognose and in-a-mission, Jack?" inquired Pete.

"He means that he is starving," answered Jack quietly.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Tought it was something serious. You'm coming to de store."

"No; they will not have me there."

"Won't dey?" exclaimed Pete. "I'll bet you five dollars to one cent dey will! Don't 'spect you'm as strong as dis child. Trot along, Sister Mary—trot along! We'll get dere by-and-by."

Then Pete got his arm beneath the young doctor's and walked him across the diggings towards the store, which he could easily tell by the lights burning there.

"Dinner for sixteen!" roared Pete, flinging the door back.

"I don't serve dot Jew!" cried a big fat man.

"Is dat so, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Und I don't serve niggers."

"Mighty bad job dis. Who are you?"

"Schultze—de proprietor of dis place."

"Den I tell you what you'd better do, old hoss—you'd best buzz off, and we'll mighty soon serve ourselves. Dis way to London!"

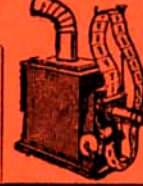
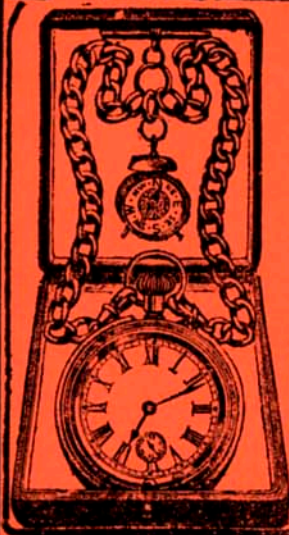
Pete grabbed the German proprietor by the back of the collar and seat of the trousers and flung him through the doorway, then shut and bolted the door.

(You must see how Pete and the poor exile fare at the hands of the miners, by reading the conclusion of the story, which appears in our companion paper, "The Penny Popular," now on sale at all newsagents. Get a copy to-day.)

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