

FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!

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

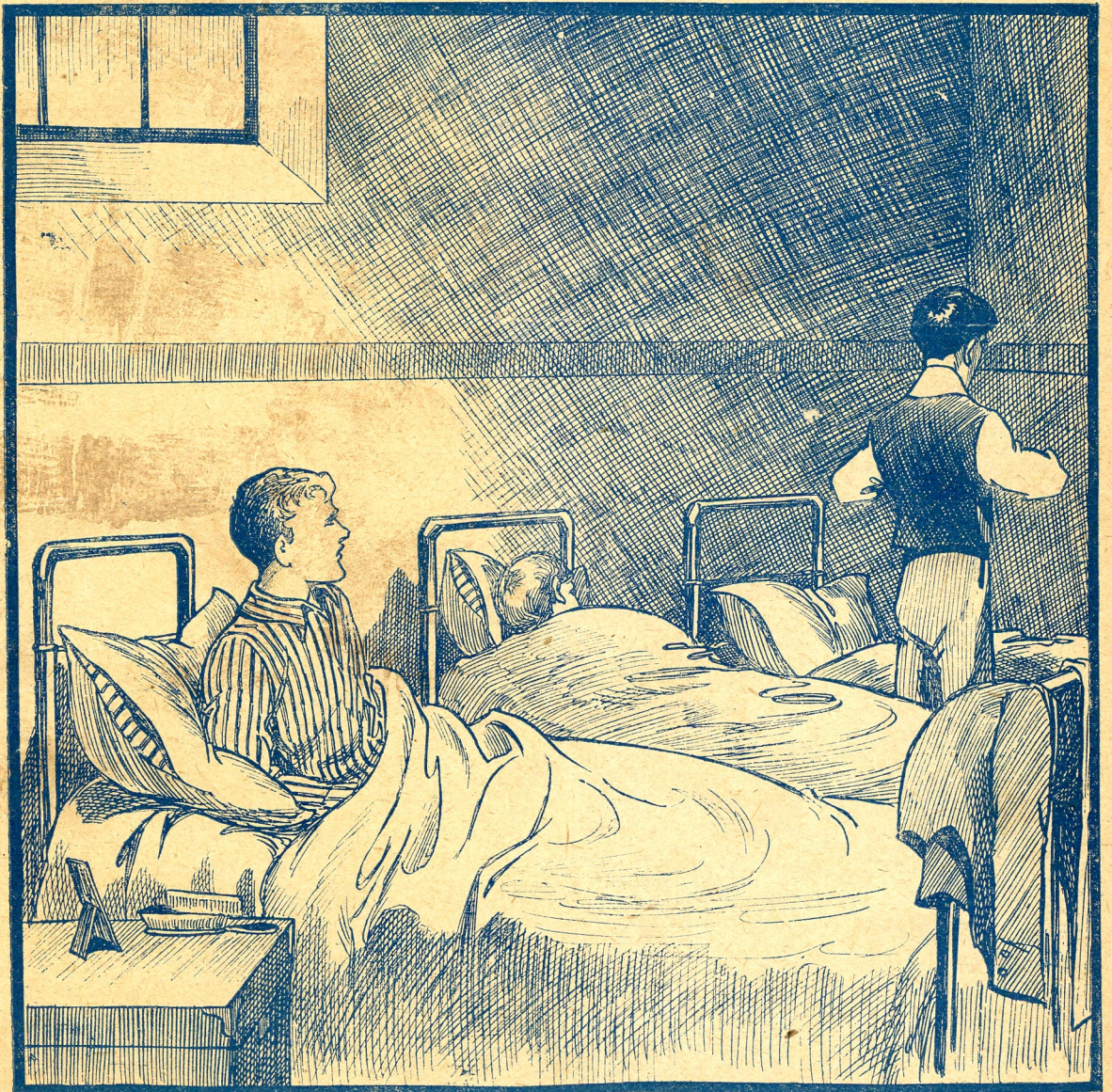


The Magnet 1st

Library

No. 434. Vol. 10. JUNE 3rd, 1918.





IS IT GOOD-BYE TO GREYFRIARS?

(An *Extraordinary* Scene in the *Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life* in this Issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," *rd.*, Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, *rd.*, Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" *3d.*, COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," *rd.*, Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price *3d.*, Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's grand, long, complete story of Greyfriars School centres around the great summer game of cricket, though there are many thrilling side-issues pented in that brilliant, attractive manner which has made the name of Frank Richards a household word wherever the English language is spoken. The Greyfriars First has a fixture with the famous Loamshire Regiment, and owing to the deep-laid schemes of Gerald Loder, Wingate is much occupied in his mind how to raise a team. Ultimately he is compelled—somewhat reluctantly, of course—to include several Removites in the side, and the enterprise and enthusiasm of Harry Wharton & Co. in

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH"

make next week's story capital reading for all lovers of clean, healthy sport.

FAIR PLAY OR CADDISHNESS?

Boys Who Condemn the Companion Papers Unread.

I am printing the following letter because it is typical of many which have reached my sanctum of recent weeks:

"Hartham Road,
"Tottenham.

"Dear Editor,—Not wishing to waste your time with a long letter, I will state the facts of the question as briefly as possible. I am working at an office in London, and one of my fellow-clerks is continually running down the 'Magnet' and 'Gem.' He says the minds of boys and girls are likely to be led astray by reading these books, and that their publication should be stopped. Of course, I was up in arms in a moment, and told him he was talking rot. And the best of it was that when I asked him, he had to confess that he had never read one of the papers. But he still keeps on running them down, so I thought I would write and ask you to answer him in the 'Magnet'."

"Hoping you will back me up, and apologising for wasting your valuable time, I remain, yours sincerely, B. C."

This is a subject on which I feel very strongly. How boys whose pride it is that they are Britishers, and therefore lovers of fair play, can condemn papers they have never read, passes my comprehension. The boy referred to in this letter seems to be going out of his way to cause my Tottenham chum petty annoyance. He can have no real grounds for taking exception to the Companion Papers, since he has never taken the trouble to examine one, fearing, I suppose, to contaminate his hands.

The old, old story, invented by a worm of the conscientious objector type some years ago, to the effect that the "Magnet" and "Gem" Libraries lead boys and girls astray, fairly makes me sick. I am certain that the young people of Britain have sufficient sense and good taste not to buy demoralising books. Blood-and-thunders do not flourish like a green bay-tree, as many fanatical people seem to think. I am convinced that, were I to instruct Messrs. Frank Richards and Martin Clifford to put knives and daggers into the hands of their characters, transforming them from harmless school-boys into murderous hooligans, the sale of the Companion Papers would dwindle down to almost nothing. What the boy of to-day wants is good, clean, lively literature; and that's what he's going to get, bark the critics never so loudly.

My advice to B. C. is short, sweet, and simple. He should try and persuade his fellow-clerk to read one of the stories for himself; and if he refuses to do so, then let him go his own way and be hanged. So vast is the number of genuinely loyal readers, and so widespread the name and fame of our little libraries, that cavilling critics who condemn the papers unread want packing off to Prussia; and as it is not within our province to do that—well, let them go to Jericho!

NOTICES.

Driver J. H. Sawyer, 14208, O.P. Medical Ward, 4th London General Hospital, Denmark Hill, S.E., would be much obliged for himself and his chums if some reader would kindly send him a mouth-organ.

A. Corney, 33, High Street, Oakfield, near Ryde, Isle of Wight, asks if anyone can let him have a copy of the "Magnet" containing the story entitled "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out."

Miss G. Bliss, 128, Kyrwick's Lane, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, wants a copy of the "Magnet" containing "Hurree Singh's Peril."

J. T. Lawrence, 425, Park Road, Hockley, Birmingham, would like to join a "Magnet" League in his neighbourhood.

Private R. Harman, B Coy., Signal Section, 3/8 Middlesex Regt., Sevenoaks, would be glad to correspond with readers of 18—22.

Eric Kent, 62, Stanmore Road, West Green, Tottenham, London, N., wishes to buy No. 172 of the "Magnet" ("The School on Strike") and No. 171 of the "Gem" ("The School Without Masters").

Private W. Watkins, 24270, 8th Batt. Gloucestershire Regt., 19 I.D.B. Section, 17, A.P.O., B.E.F., France, would be glad to have back (especially for the last three months) and current issues of the Companion Papers, and also asks for correspondence with a Scottish girl reader.

Isaac Goldring, 124, Antrim Road, Belfast, is willing to pay a good price for the first 200 numbers of both the "Magnet" and "Gem."

L. Ballamy, 25, Wells Street, Camberwell, S.E., wants to form a Snapshots-from-Home League for the benefit of soldiers and sailors, and would be glad to hear from any reader having a camera who would care to join.

Cyril Churchey, 110, Underhill Road, Dulwich, S.E., wants to form a "Magnet" and "Gem" League in his neighbourhood, and would be glad if anyone interested would write, or call between six and seven in the evening.

Chas. F. Piggot, Church Lane, Wilby, Wellingborough, asks for back numbers of the Companion Papers for a girl chum who has undergone three operations and is now bed-ridden.

Clarendon C.C., average age 15, want matches home or away, Saturday afternoons, within a radius of four miles of Bootle. Hon. Sec., F. Wait, 72, Marsh Lane, Liverpool.

G. Jenkins, 15, Moor Park Avenue, Preston, Lancs., wants to form a "Magnet" and "Gem" League for his town! Welsh readers in Preston cordially invited. Write, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, or call between three and four Saturday afternoons.

Regent C.C., average age 14, want matches after two o'clock Saturdays with teams in their district. Hon. Sec., L. Barnett, 39, Maple Street, Fitzroy Street, London, W.

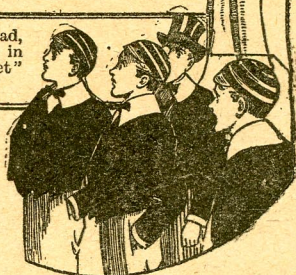
Private R. Claridge, 3487, A Coy., 2/8 Middlesex Regt., Western Frontier Force, Egypt, would be glad to receive back numbers of the "Magnet."

Will Wilfred Ashton, of Huddersfield, write to W. B. Fraser, 1, Bryn Draw, Chapel Street, Wrexham, whom he met at Rhyl last year?

A reader who has lost both his brothers in the war, and is very lonely, would be glad to correspond with other readers. Write Arthur Marshall, 146, Beatrice Street, Swindon.

D. Collins, c.o. Captain of Dockyards Office, North Yard, Devonport, and his chum, G. W. Sims, want to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to anyone in the United Kingdom, and will be glad if those interested will write to Collins.

R. H. Brown, 2, Arthur Street, Anlaby Road, Hull, wants members for his "Magnet" and "Gem" League, which is open to anyone in the United Kingdom. Will those writing to him please enclose stamped and addressed envelope.



Your Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.

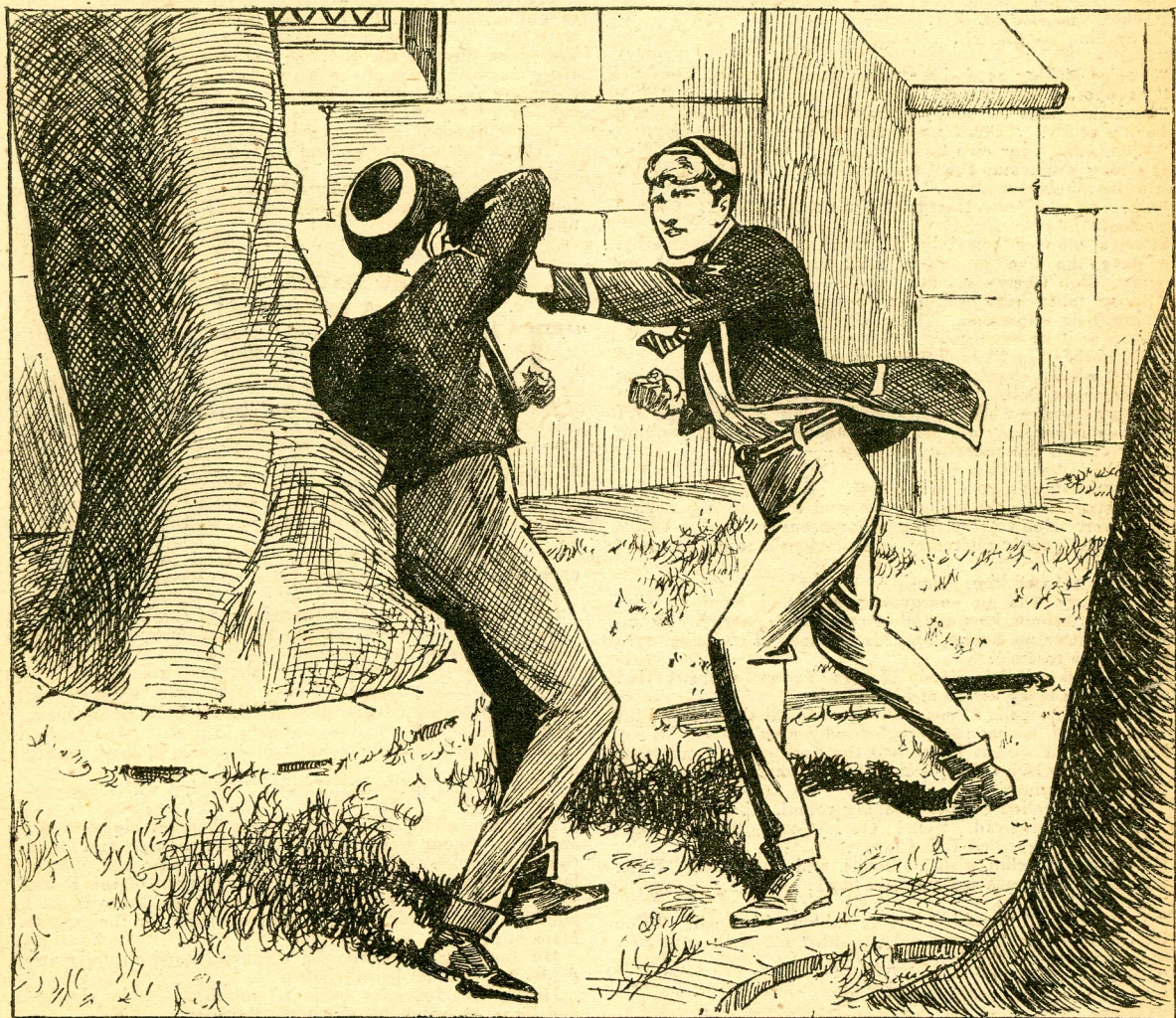


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!

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By FRANK RICHARDS.



Nugent's fist lashed out, and caught Snoop full in the face. The cad of the Remove fell at full length on the grass, gasping. "You cad!" said Nugent. "You rotten, treacherous cad! That's my answer to you!"

(See Chapter 8.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Very Cheery!

SNOOP'S looking awfully down in the mouth."
Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars
Remove, made that remark.

The Famous Five were stretched at ease on the
grassy bank of the Sark, looking lazily on the river.
Frank Nugent was idly tossing pebbles into the stream and

watching the ripples. The other fellows were not even exert-
ing themselves to that extent. They were enjoying a "slack" after
a hard bout at cricket practice.

They were too lazily comfortable even to talk cricket. It
was a glorious afternoon in early summer. Even Bob Cherry
was content to watch the shining river and the fleecy clouds
that floated idly across the blue sky above.

Sidney James Snoop, of the Remove, came along the
towing-path from the direction of the village.

Then Wharton made his remark.

Snoop did not notice the five juniors reclining on the bank. Snoop's face was darkly clouded, his brows were knitted, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. He tramped savagely along the towing-path with heavy footsteps. In spite of the warmth of the weather, his face was pale.

Bob Cherry yawned and looked at him.

"By George, he does look down!" he agreed. "What the dickens is he looking down for on an afternoon like this? This is what comes of sneaking off to smoke cigarettes instead of sticking to cricket practice—like us good boys. Poor old Snoop's had a fag too many."

"More serious than that, I should think," said Nugent, sitting up to look more intently at Snoop. "He's got into some trouble."

"Well, he's always doing that," said Johnny Bull. "Another gee-gee run away with his last quid, perhaps. Silly ass!"

"Hallo, Snoop!" called out Wharton.

Snoop started, and stopped suddenly, looking towards the juniors. His face flushed as he met their gaze.

"Well?" he said sullenly.

"Anything the matter?"

"No."

"You're looking as if there was," said Wharton.

"I suppose I can look as I like."

"Certainly—like a giddy gargoyle, if you like," said Wharton coolly. "Don't waste any politeness on a chap."

"Well, mind your own business, then," said Snoop. "I've had a long walk, and I'm tired, and that's all. Nothing for you to be inquisitive about."

"Oh, ring off!" said Harry. "I'm not inquisitive. Go and eat coke!"

Snoop's manner certainly did not encourage sympathy. He gave the five juniors a dark look, and walked on sullenly. Bob Cherry sat up.

"Snoop must have forgotten to polish his manners this morning," he remarked. "What's the matter with the ass? He looks as if he were going to his own funeral."

"Oh, bother him!" said Wharton, rather crossly.

"Well, when a chap's down in the mouth he wants cheering up," remarked Bob. "I think I'd better cheer him up. He slacks too much—what he wants is a bit of exercise. I haven't done anybody a good turn to-day—excepting yanking you out of bed this morning, Franky—"

"Fathead!" said Nugent.

Bob yawned, and rose to his feet. Snoop had stopped a little distance down the towing-path, and was standing staring at the river. Bob Cherry, with a humorous expression on his face, stepped quietly after him, his footsteps making no sound on the grass.

The Co. watched him, grinning.

Bob Cherry was an energetic youth, and even on that summer's afternoon he was full of suppressed energy. He intended to cheer up Snoop, and his methods of cheering were certain to be forcible.

He arrived behind Sidney James Snoop without that gloomy youth being aware of his arrival.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob, with all the force of his powerful lungs, his mouth close behind Snoop's head.

Snoop gave a violent jump, and the back of his head came in contact with Bob Cherry's chin with a loud crack.

Then Bob jumped, too.

"Yaroo!" yelled Snoop, spinning round, with both hands to the back of his head. "Oh! Ow! Yow! Yoooooh!"

"Gerrrrgh!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

He clasped his chin with his hands, and staggered. From along the towing-path came a loud howl:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Snoop, rubbing his head. "You silly, frabjous ass, you've nearly brained me with your silly chin! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Gurrrrrgh!"

"You dangerous lunatic!"

"Gurrrg!"

Snoop shook his fist at Bob Cherry's anguished face, and strode away savagely towards the school. Bob Cherry did not follow a step. He had had enough of cheering up Snoop. He sat down on the bank, clasping his chin and gurgling.

Harry Wharton & Co. detached themselves from the grass, and came along grinning. Bob looked at them with anguished eyes.

"Hurt?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Gurrrrrgh!"

"Did it cheer Snoop up?" asked Nugent.

"Yowwwgggh!"

"Damaged your chin?" grinned Wharton.

"Yooooop!"

"The damagefulness must be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Is there any bumpfulness?"

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"Wow-wow-wow!"

"My hat! You must have dislocated your chin, at that rate," said Wharton. "Let's have a look at it, old chap!"

"Yow-wow! I've b-b-bitten my tut-tut-tongue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow-wow! You cackling ass, there's nothing f-f-funny in b-b-biting your t-t-t-tongue!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You chortling jabberwocks! Grooh! Oh, ctumbs!"

The chums of the Remove yelled. They were sympathetic, but they could not help yelling.

"And it didn't even cheer Snoop up!" gasped Nugent. "If he could see you making that face now, old chap, it would cheer him up no end."

"Gurrrgh!"

"Never mind, it's cheered us up," chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Your face is worth a guinea a box, old chap!"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet and gasped.

"Oh, dear! Let's get in to tea. Oh, dear! I've a jolly good mind to punch Snoop's silly head! Ow!"

The Famous Five strolled away to Greyfriars—four of them chuckling, and Bob Cherry still mumbling dolorously. As they came in at the school gates they sighted Snoop again. The black sheep of the Remove was walking to and fro under the elms with his hands in his pockets.

Johnny Bull nodded towards him.

"There's Snoop, Bob!"

"Blow Snoop!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Don't you want to go and cheer him up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry snorted, and stalked away to the School House, followed by his grinning chums—leaving Sidney James Snoop uncheered.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Cool Request!

"TIME for the rehearsal," remarked Harry Wharton, as the chums of the Remove finished tea in No. 1 Study.

The Remove Dramatic Society were at present engaged on "Hamlet," having decided to honour Shakespeare by giving him a turn. Wibley, the general manager, had fixed a rehearsal for that evening, between tea and prep.

"Well, I'm ready," said Bob Cherry. Bob had quite recovered by this time, and his good humour was fully restored. "Come on, Franky! What are you mugging over that book for?"

Frank Nugent had a pencil in his hand and a pocket-book on his knee, and his youthful brow was wrinkled.

"Accounts," he said cheerily.

Nugent was secretary and treasurer of the Remove cricket club, and he was very careful with his accounts. But Bob Cherry grunted:

"Oh, bless the accounts! Come and get on with the rehearsal. You're Ophelia."

"I'll come down when I've finished. I shan't be long," said Nugent. "I've had several subs in to-day. If I forget to enter 'em, and ask the fellows again, they'll want to scalp me."

"Well, buck up!" said Harry. "Wibley will scalp you if you're late!"

The juniors left the study, leaving Nugent alone with his accounts. Snoop was hanging about the passage, and he gave them a sour look. Wharton paused as he saw him. Snoop's face was troubled and worried. The captain of the Remove had little doubt that Snoop's misdeeds were the cause of his trouble; but he felt a touch of compassion for the wretched black sheep.

He was about to speak, when Snoop turned abruptly away, evidently to avoid being spoken to.

Harry Wharton gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders, and followed his chums down the staircase.

Snoop watched them go sullenly, and then moved to the door of Study No. 1. He hesitated there several minutes, with a haggard look on his face. Finally he raised his hand, and tapped at the door and opened it.

"Can I come in?" he asked, in a low voice.

Nugent looked up, and closed his book with a snap.

"Yes, if you want to," he said. "I'm just going down, though."

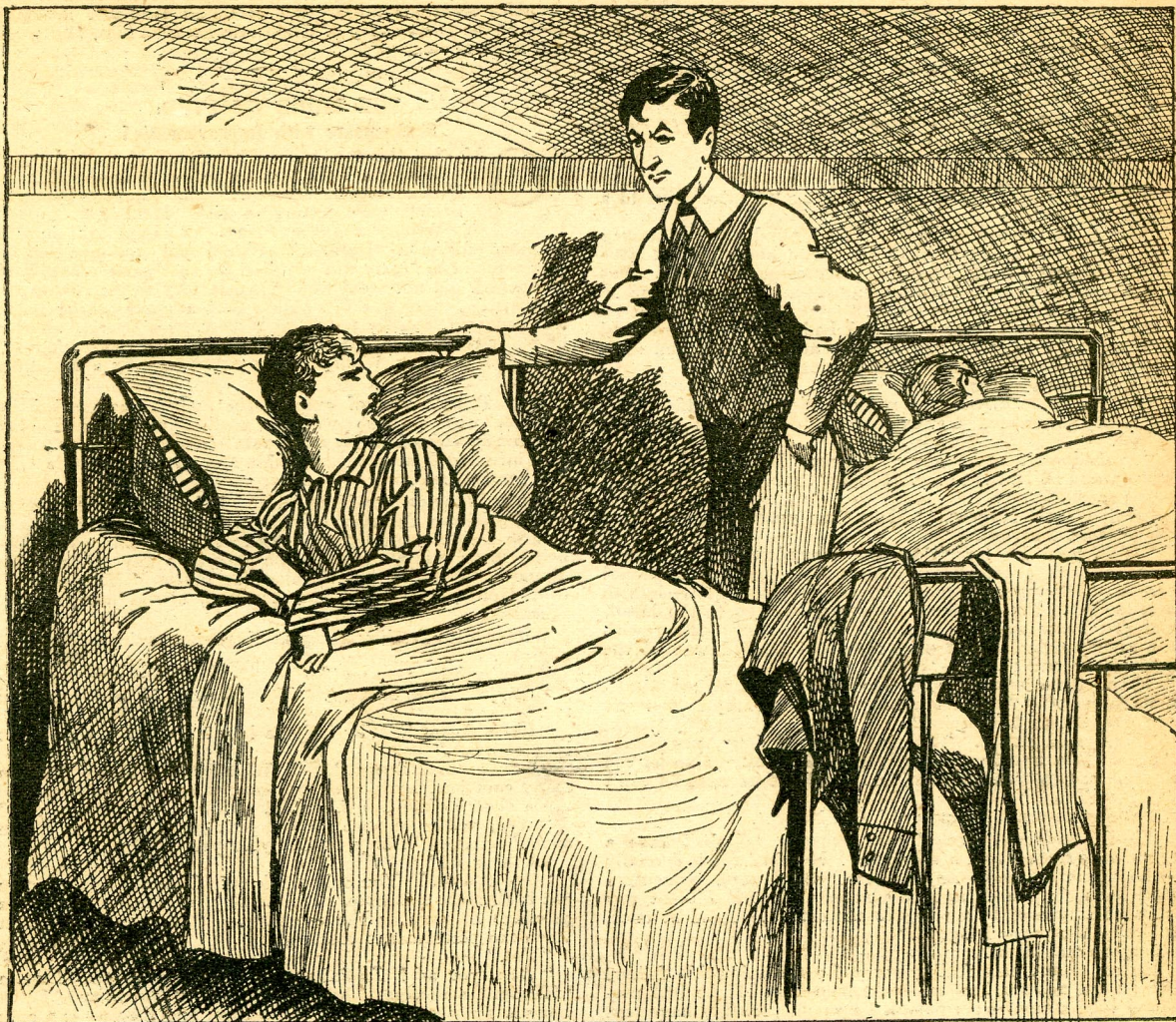
Snoop came in, and closed the door behind him. He advanced further into the study, his face flushing and paling by turns.

Nugent watched him wonderingly.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Snoop, with a gasp.

Nugent smiled.



"Nugent"—Snoop's voice was low and eager—"you'll help me? You'll never be sorry for it, old chap!" Nugent made up his mind. "I'll help you!" he said. "Go back to bed, and promise me that you won't think of bolting." (See Chapter 4.)

"You can't pay your sub?" he asked. "I was going to ask you for it this evening. Never mind. We've lots of cash in hand. I've got some payments to make for the club next week, but I've more than enough for that."

"You've got a good deal in hand?" asked Snoop.

"Well, I've got enough—about six pounds," said Nugent. "Most of it's got to be paid away for the new nets and things, but there will be some over. So if you're worrying over your sub, Snoopey, you needn't."

"It's not that."

"Well, if it's not that, you can hand it over," said Frank, opening his book again.

"I don't mean that. I can't pay. But it's not that I'm worrying about."

"Oh, I see. Anything I can do?"

"Yes; if—if you would."

Frank Nugent regarded him curiously. He had never been friends with Snoop—hardly on speaking terms with him. The black sheep of the Remove did not pull well with the Famous Five. Cigarettes in the wood-shed, secret bets on gee-gees, and surreptitious visits to the Cross Keys in Friardale, did not quite accord with the ideas of Harry Wharton & Co.

But Nugent was good nature itself. He would have shared his last sixpence with friend or foe.

Snoop had evidently come to him with his trouble, whatever it was; and though it was certainly cool of Snoop, under the circumstances, Frank was quite ready to help him if he could.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

But Snoop seemed to have some difficulty in stating what he wanted. He opened his lips several times, and closed them again without a word. Nugent watched him in increasing wonder and some alarm.

"I say, you look quite ill, Snoopey!" he remarked.

"I feel pretty bad," groaned Snoop. "I—I've almost made up my mind to bolt!"

Nugent started.

"Bolt!" he repeated blankly.

"Yes. Run away from Greyfriars."

"Well, you champion ass!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I don't see what else is to be done, unless you can help me," muttered Snoop, "and—and I suppose you won't! It's like my cheek to ask you—I know that. I asked Vernon-Smith, and he laughed at me; and I asked Skinner, and he told me to go to the dickens. And I've been more friendly with them than with you."

"Well, you haven't been friendly with me at all, if you come to that," said Nugent. "But I'll help you if I can. You're jolly well not going to play the fool by running away from Greyfriars, anyway!"

"Better that than being sacked."

Nugent whistled.

"Is it so bad as that?"

"Yes," muttered Snoop.

Nugent's handsome, good-natured face was very grave.

"I won't say I told you so," he said quietly. "But anybody could have told you you'd come a cropper at last if you

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



didn't take care, Snoop. I'm sorry for you, but if you've done something to be expelled for, I don't see how I can help you."

"It mayn't come out if I can pay up."

"You owe somebody money?"

Snoop nodded.

"Some precious bookmaker?" asked Nugent, with a curl of his lip.

"No, no!"

"Well, if it's one of the chaps here——"

"It isn't."

"Who the dickens is it, then?"

"A moneylender."

"Well, you ass!" exclaimed Nugent. "You've been to a moneylender?"

"I had to," groaned Snoop. "I—I owed a lot of money right and left. I had to settle up. You know I don't have much of an allowance since my pater came a cropper. But I went on spending just the same, and—and I had bad luck."

"Betting, I suppose you mean?"

"Well, that and other things. I had to pay up, and—and I thought I'd raise enough money and get clear, and start fresh, and leave that kind of thing alone."

"Well, that was sensible."

"So I went to Straus, the moneylender, at Courtfield."

"That naturalised German beast!" exclaimed Nugent, aghast.

"That doesn't make any difference. I had to have the money, and he lent it to me. It wasn't much I wanted—only four pounds."

"Only!" said Nugent. "More than your allowance for a whole term, I suppose?"

"Well, yes. He lent it to me. I suppose the rotter was glad to have a Greyfriars chap on his books," muttered Snoop. "Of course, he can't claim the money in law—lent to a schoolboy. But if I don't pay him he'll go to the Head, and you know what that means. Tain't only dealing with the moneylender, but it may come out what I wanted the money for; and then——"

"Then the chopper would come down, and no mistake!" said Nugent. "Well, I must say you're a frabjous ass. So you owe Straus four quid?"

"Six," said Snoop. "The interest's piled up, you know. And—he won't wait any longer. I've offered to let the interest run on till next term, but I suppose he thinks I can't pay it up at all."

"Well, you can't, I suppose?" said Nugent.

"I—I could next week," said Snoop. "I shall have a remittance from—a relation. I've asked for it specially—the whole amount. As true as I stand here, Nugent, I shall have six pounds next Wednesday. But if I don't pay Straus to-morrow, he's going to write to the Head at once, enclosing the paper I signed."

Nugent was silent.

He could not help feeling sorry for the miserable fellow, but he did not see how he could help him. If he had possessed such a sum as six pounds he would probably have lent it to Snoop, and chanced the repayment. But a solitary half-crown was the extent of his financial resources.

"If a fellow would lend me the tin, I'd settle up on Wednesday, honour bright," said Snoop, his eager eyes fixed almost feverishly on Nugent's face. "I—I know it's a cheek to ask you. I know that. But—but it's that, or bolting from the school. Will you do it, Nugent?"

"I can't! I've not got the tin," said Frank. "Where the dickens do you think I should get six pounds from? I don't have more than that in a term, tips and all."

"You've got it."

"I've got half-a-crown," said Frank. "You're welcome to that if it's any good."

"You've got six pounds."

"I tell you I haven't, you ass!" said Nugent impatiently.

"What on earth are you driving at? I——" He broke off suddenly as Snoop's meaning dawned upon his mind. "Why, you confounded cheeky ass, are you talking about the cricket club money?"

"It's only till Wednesday," muttered Snoop huskily. "You'll have it back before you have to make those payments you were speaking of."

Nugent started to his feet, his face flushed with anger.

"Confound your cheek! The money's not mine, and you know I can't touch it! Do you think I'm going to pinch the club funds for you? Get out!"

"You won't help me?"

"I can't! For goodness' sake get out and leave me alone!"

Snoop did not look angry. He gave Nugent one miserable look, and left the study without another word. Nugent shifted uncomfortably.

"The cheeky ass!" he muttered angrily. "To ask me—Pah! That fellow leaves a bad taste in a chap's mouth!"

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And Nugent left the study, and hurried downstairs to join the rehearsal in the Rag. He tried to dismiss Snoop and his troubles from his mind. But somehow that last miserable look of the black sheep of Greyfriars haunted him, and would not be dismissed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Shakespeare with Improvements!

"OH, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!"

Wibley's voice was to be heard in the Rag, as Frank Nugent entered. The Remove Dramatic Society were getting on with "Hamlet."

Wibley was the Prince of Denmark in the Remove edition of "Hamlet." Wibley had explained that the best actor in the caste was required for that part—an explanation which did not seem wholly satisfactory to the rest of the company. Squiff was of opinion that a good-looking fellow was required, and he put it to Wibley, as a friend, whether he really considered that he—Wibley—fulfilled that condition? To which question Wibley had retorted only by a disdainful snort.

Billy Bunter was of opinion that what was needed for Hamlet was a chap with a good figure, and he had generously offered to play the part on condition that a feed was introduced in each act, with real grub. Bunter's offer had been refused.

Harry Wharton was Horatio, and Bob Cherry was Laertes, and Squiff was Polonius. Frank Nugent was the Ghost, and he also understudied Ophelia—his fresh and good-looking face being more suitable for a girl's part than any other in the Remove. But the real Ophelia was Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House, who could not, however, attend many of the rehearsals.

Wibley left off soliloquising as Nugent came in, and emitted a growl.

"You're late, you ass!"

"Sorry!" said Nugent. "Snoop came in and jawed to me."

"Blow, Snoop! Why isn't he here? Snoop was going to be a courtier."

"Never mind Snoop," said Wharton. "We've got too many courtiers, lords, and gentlemen already. We've had to use a chair as the Ghost, Frank, owing to you staying out."

"Well, you're in time for the next ghost scene, as you've come," grunted Wibley. "Got your part all right?"

"I think so."

"Great Scott! You only think so? I should think you've got it all right this time," said Wibley, who had a manager's privilege of ragging the company. "Have you forgotten when the performance comes off?"

"Yes."

"Why, you ass! Look here, I tell you we've got to make 'Hamlet,' a success!" howled Wibley. "The Fourth Form bouncers say we can't do Shakespeare, and that we can only act in rotten comedies and farces. We're going to show them. What are you scowling about now?"

"I wasn't scowling," said Nugent indignantly; "I was thinking!"

"Well, don't think!" snapped Wibley. "This isn't a time to think! Have you been rowing with Snoop?"

"No; only——"

"Only rats! You have to shove everything else out of your mind when you're going to rehearse Shakespeare. If you haven't memorised your lines, keep an eye on your script. Now shut up!"

And the autocratic Wibley proceeded to soliloquise, while the rest of the company grinned and listened. There had been many "cuts" in the Remove edition of Shakespeare, reducing it to about half its original length. But none of the speeches or soliloquies of Hamlet had been cut. Indeed, as some of the company had warmly remarked, the play was jolly nearly all Wibley. But the manager's word was law, and an actor-manager was expected to give himself a "fat" part.

The Removites were very keen on amateur theatricals, and Frank Nugent was generally as keen as the others. But his thoughts were wandering a little now.

He could not help thinking of Snoop and his miserable fix. He was exasperated that Snoop should have come to him, of all people, for help in the wretched difficulty that was the result of his own folly. They were not friends, and never had been friends.

And Snoop's cool request that the cricket funds should be borrowed to help him out of his scrape was intolerable.

But Nugent was good nature itself, and he could not help feeling sorry and concerned for the wretched fellow. He wished he had not spoken so sharply to him, or dismissed him so abruptly. He could not help wondering what Snoop

would do. If he carried out his intention of running away from school, it was ruin to him. Nugent could not feel that it was no business of his. He could not say, like Cain of old, that he was not his brother's keeper.

Snoop was nothing to him, certainly, but he was a school-fellow in a terrible strait. Nugent would have helped him if he could. But Snoop's suggestion of the only possible way of helping him was outrageous. It was not to be entertained for a moment. It was a kind of embezzlement that he had asked the club secretary to commit for his sake. Nugent was angry as he thought of it. No fellow but Snoop would have dreamed of asking such a thing. Yet Snoop's miserable and despairing face haunted him.

"Enter, you idiot!" came Wibley's bawling voice, waking Nugent from a gloomy fit of thoughtfulness. "You silly ass, have you gone to sleep?"

Nugent started.

"Eh? What!" he exclaimed.

"Buck up, Franky!" said Wharton. "What the dickens are you dreaming about? This is where the Ghost enters!"

"Oh, all right!"

"Well, enter, then!" hooted Wibley.

"You didn't hear your cue, Frank."

"Give it to the duffer again!" growled Wibley.

"Look, my lord, it comes!" said Wharton-Horatio.

Nugent, with a faint grin, "entered."

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!" exclaimed Wibley, fixing a look of horror upon Nugent, thus suddenly transformed into the ghost of Hamlet's father.

Wibley delivered his lines with great energy till he came to:

"Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?"

Then he left off to glare at Nugent.

"Fathead! Why don't you beckon?"

"Eh?"

"The Ghost beckons to Hamlet, you ass!"

"Oh, does it?" said Frank. "Here you are, then!"

He beckoned.

"Beckon without jawing, you dummy!" said Wibley.

"Now, pile in, Wharton!"

"It beckons you to go away with it," chimed in Wharton.

More lines. And then:

"Beckon again, you idiot!"

Nugent beckoned again.

"Hold on," said Squiff, "that isn't in the play!"

"What isn't?" roared Wibley.

"Your last line," said Field, consulting his script.

"Hamlet doesn't tell the Ghost to beckon. The Ghost does it on his own."

"Fathead!"

"Well, you can look in the copy yourself."

"Ass! I was speaking as prompter, not as Hamlet."

"Oh, I see!"

"Now beckon again, Nugent, you sleepy-headed duffer!"

Another beckon from Nugent.

"That's better. It waves me still. Go on; I'll follow thee."

"Don't be an ass!" said Tom Brown, who was Marcellus in the play. Wibley gave him a withering look.

"You fathead! You have to say, 'You shall not go, my lord.'"

"Oh, all serene! You shall not go, my lord."

"Hold off your hands!" thundered Wibley as Hamlet again.

"I'm not touching you," said Brown.

"Ass!" shrieked Wibley. "Who said you were?"

"Well, you told me to hold off my hands, and my hands weren't anywhere near you!" said Tom Brown warmly.

"It's my line, ass!"

"Oh, you were Hamlet that time!"

"Yes, duffer!"

"Well, how's a chap to know when you're Hamlet, and when you're prompter, and when you're stage-manager?" demanded Tom Brown.

There was a pause in the rehearsal while Wibley told Tom Brown what he thought of him. Then Wharton, as Horatio, went on:

"Be ruled; you shall not go!"

But Hamlet insisted upon going, stating his intention in energetic blank verse. Then he glared at Nugent—not as Hamlet, but as Wibley.

"Why don't you go, you unspeakable ass?"

"That's not in the play," said Tom Brown. "Look here, Wib, I don't believe in gagging in Shakespeare. It's all very well in a comedy, but not in Shakespeare."

"I wasn't gagging!" yelled Wibley.

"Well, I defy you to find that line in the script!"

"Take that idiot away and put him in a strait-jacket!" howled Wibley.

"That isn't in the play, either," said Brown, consulting his copy; "and I don't believe there were any strait-jackets in Denmark in those days."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up! Ring off! Dry up!" shouted Wibley. "Now THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 434.

NEXT MONDAY—

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

get off the grass, Nugent. Thank goodness that idiot Brown's not in the next scene!"

"That's not in the play," said Brown obstinately. "You've made all that up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wibley snorted, and followed Nugent to the next scene. This was a platform of the castle of Elsinore, represented for the time being by a corner of the Rag. The rest of the company, being off in that scene, looked on with their hands in their pockets.

"Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak!" spouted Wibley, addressing the Ghost.

"Oh, here will do!" said Nugent, stopping by the corner of the big table.

"Is that in your part, you howling ass?"

"No; but that isn't in yours, either."

"Will you speak your lines?" raved Wibley.

"Mark me!" said Nugent, referring to his copy.

"I've a jolly good mind to mark you on the nose!" growled Wibley.

"That's not in the part!" shouted Tom Brown across the table. "Don't you begin gagging again, Wib."

"Shut up!"

"Well, don't make rotten puns! Shakespeare's puns are rotten enough, without you shoving more in!"

"Sit on his head, somebody!" howled Wibley. "Get on, Nugent!"

"You haven't given me my cue yet," said Nugent triumphantly.

"Oh, all right! Lemme see—what did you say?"

"Mark me!"

"I will!" said Wibley-Hamlet.

"My hour is almost come," said the Ghost.

"Well, go on."

"When I, to sulphurous and tormenting James—"

Must render up myself."

"To what?" yelled Wibley.

"Sulphurous and tormenting James."

"Flames, you fathead! Flames, you burler!"

"It looks like James in my copy," said Nugent. "I wrote it out carefully enough, too. Are you sure it's not James?"

"Oh, you cuckoo! Flames!"

"All serene! Don't get excited. When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames must render up myself."

"Alas, poor ghost!" sighed Hamlet-Wibley.

"Pity me not, but lend thy spurious hearing to what I shall uphold."

Wibley danced with rage.

"You've got it wrong! Serious hearing, fathead! And unfold—not uphold!"

"Sure?"

"Yes, ass! Yes, fathead! Yes, jabberwock! Unfold, fathead!"

"Oh, all right! Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold, fathead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You don't say fathead!" roared Wibley.

"Why, you told me to!"

"I didn't, ass! I didn't, burler! I—I—I—"

"He's making all that up!" came Tom Brown's voice. "That isn't in the play at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Speak! I am bound to hear!" resumed Hamlet, with a glare across the table at Tom Brown.

"I am thy father's spirit," said Nugent.

"That's better. Go on."

"But that I am forbid

To tell the secrets of my prison-house,

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word

Would harrow up thy soul—sneeze—I mean, freeze—thy young blood,

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their squares—"

"Spheres, you fathead!" amended Wibley.

"Thy knotted and combined locks to part,

And each particular hair to stand on end,

Like quills upon the frightful porcupine—"

"Fretful porcupine!" bellowed Wibley.

"You don't come in there," said Nugent. "Hamlet shuts up till I get to the end of my speech."

"Hamlet never shuts up in this play," remarked Tom Brown.

"Fretful porcupine!" shrieked Wibley. "Not frightful porcupine!"

"Oh, I don't mind! Frightful porcupine seems better to me, though."

"Of course, you can improve on Shakespeare, like Bernard

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Shaw!" said Wibley, with crushing sarcasm. "We'll stick to Shakespeare, if you don't mind."

"Time we got on with our prep," observed Horatio, looking at his watch.

"Blow prep! Bother prep! We haven't finished the rehearsal of a single act yet! Never mind prep!" hooted Wibley.

"Quelch will mind in the morning!" grinned Tom Brown. "Chuck it, Wib! Calm down, and go and do your prep. Give the fretful porcupine a rest."

"Look here——"

"Bow-wow!"

The Shakespearean company settled the matter by marching out of the Rag, and the stage-manager grunted and followed them. Harry Wharton joined Nugent as they left, looking rather curiously at his chum.

"What's bothering you?" he asked. "You did your lines rottenly."

"I was thinking about something else," said Nugent.

"Better not tell Wib so," said Harry, laughing. "Got something on your mind, Franky?"

"Oh, no! Not exactly."

"Got the accounts wrong?"

"Not at all. I was just thinking of something."

Nugent did not tell his chum what he had been thinking of, however, and Wharton wondered a little. What Snoop had told Nugent had to be treated as confidential; Frank could not repeat it to another—even his chum. He was very silent over prep that evening in the study. He tried to dismiss Snoop and his affairs from his mind; but somehow he could not.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Frank Nugent Makes Up His Mind!

FRANK NUGENT glanced at Snoop in the Remove Dormitory when the Lower Fourth went up to bed. Snoop did not look at him.

Apparently he had given Nugent up as hopeless, and did not intend to renew his request. He was looking white and harassed, and a good many of the Remove fellows noticed that something was wrong with him.

Skinner and Stott, who were generally his associates, were avoiding him, as Nugent could see. Snoop had been making desperate attempts of late to borrow money of them. They had little to lend, and what they had they were not disposed to part with. The date of repayment would have been altogether too uncertain.

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, gave Snoop some ironical looks. The Bounder, who had plenty of money, had a well-developed faculty for looking after it, too. He did not like Snoop, and never pretended to; and Snoop's cool request for a loan of six pounds, which he could not possibly repay, had only elicited a laugh from the Bounder. Snoop had known that the Bounder would not lend him—or, rather, give him—the money; for that was what it amounted to. But he had tried. He would not leave a stone unturned.

Indeed, there was hardly a fellow in the Remove whom Snoop, in his extremity, had not pestered for money. During the last few days the fellows had fallen into a habit of avoiding him. Snoop and his desire to borrow had become a general nuisance, and he received a good deal of plain speaking on the subject from some of the Removites.

But Snoop cared little for that. There was no humiliation he would not have suffered to extricate himself from his terrible scrape.

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, who had any amount of money, and was generally very good-natured, had been tried in vain by the hapless borrower. Snoop had tried him too often. When his lordship found that the money he lent Snoop had gone on "gee-gees," he closed up like an oyster, and declined even to listen to Snoop on the subject of further borrowings. Snoop already owed him several pounds, which he had neither the ability nor the intention to pay, and it was not surprising that even the good-natured Mauly had "cried off" at last.

Snoop turned in without a word to any of his fellows. Nugent did not speak to him. Somehow, the fact that the wretched fellow had come to him as a last resource gave Frank a feeling of responsibility in the matter. He would willingly have helped if he could.

At the same time, he was angry with Snoop for having come to him at all.

Nugent was thinking over the matter after he went to bed, and thinking, too, of Snoop's decision to "bolt."

That would be a sudden end to Snoop's school career. It was certain that if he "bolted" under such circumstances he would never be allowed to return to Greyfriars. And what would become of him? Nugent knew the wretched story of Snoop's home—that his father, for a share in a huge swindle,

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had gone to prison. Most of the fellows made it a point never to remind Snoop of that decidedly unpleasant fact. It was, in a sense, some excuse for Snoop's own rascalities. He was paid for at the school by relations, but the liberal allowance he had been accustomed to had been dropped. Snoop's speculations on "gee-gees" had been intended to set him up again financially—with the result that might have been expected.

Nugent was still thinking of Snoop and his troubles when he dozed off. He slept lightly, and he was awakened by the sound of a movement in the dormitory.

He thought of Snoop at once, as he sat quickly up in bed.

In the starlight from the high window he saw a moving figure.

"Snoop!" he called out softly.

He knew it was Snoop. The junior was dressing himself in the dark. He gasped at the sound of Nugent's voice.

"Is that you, Snoop?"

"Yes," muttered Snoop.

"What are you doing out of bed?"

"I'm going."

"Snoop, you can't!" said Nugent hurriedly. "Don't be an ass!"

"Don't wake all the fellows!" muttered Snoop savagely. "I've got to go, and you know it! The Head will know about Straus to-morrow. What's the good of waiting another day to be sacked—and perhaps flogged as well?"

Nugent was silent. After all, there was something in what Snoop said. Certainly, if Dr. Locke learned what Mr. Straus was to tell him on the morrow, there was no hope for Snoop.

Snoop finished dressing.

"Where are you going?" asked Nugent at last.

"I don't know. Anywhere out of this!"

"You're going home?"

Snoop laughed bitterly.

"I can't go home. My home's with my uncle now. I get growls and grumbles from him every holiday, because he has to pay for me here. What do you think he would say if I went home and told him I'd left debts here for him to pay?"

"Then where are you going?"

"I don't know. Into the river, perhaps," said Snoop sullenly. "That would make an end of it, anyway!"

"You silly fool!" muttered Nugent.

"Well, it needn't worry you," sneered Snoop. "You could have saved me if you'd liked, and you didn't choose to!"

"I'd have done anything I could."

"There's still time," Snoop came towards Nugent's bed, his eyes glistening in the dark. "Nugent, old man, why can't you help me? I tell you I shall have the money next Wednesday, honour bright. You won't want it before then!"

"You're asking me to lend you money that doesn't belong to me."

"What difference does it make? You've got it locked up in your desk, and you won't touch it till next week. Before that time comes you can replace it. I shall pay you on Wednesday. What does it matter whether you pay the cricket club bills with that money or other money? What's the good of leaving it lying idle for a week, when it would save me from being sacked?"

Nugent wavered.

Put in that way, it seemed to him for the moment that he was acting in a hard and unfeeling way.

Nothing would have induced him to touch the money for his own use; but to let Snoop have the use of it for a week—to replace it before the bills had to be met—was there harm in that?

"You could do it," muttered Snoop feverishly. "Think what it means to me, Nugent! I've got to go. You think yourself I might as well go to-night as stay here to be sacked to-morrow, and perhaps flogged as well. What's going to become of me? I daren't go home; I daren't face my uncle. I shall have to beg or steal, goodness knows!"

"You can't run away," said Nugent.

"I must, unless you help me."

"I can't do it! I've no right——"

"You'd rather see a chap ruined for life!" said Snoop bitterly. "You'd rather leave it lying idle in your desk, when the use of it for a week would save me from beggary and starvation!"

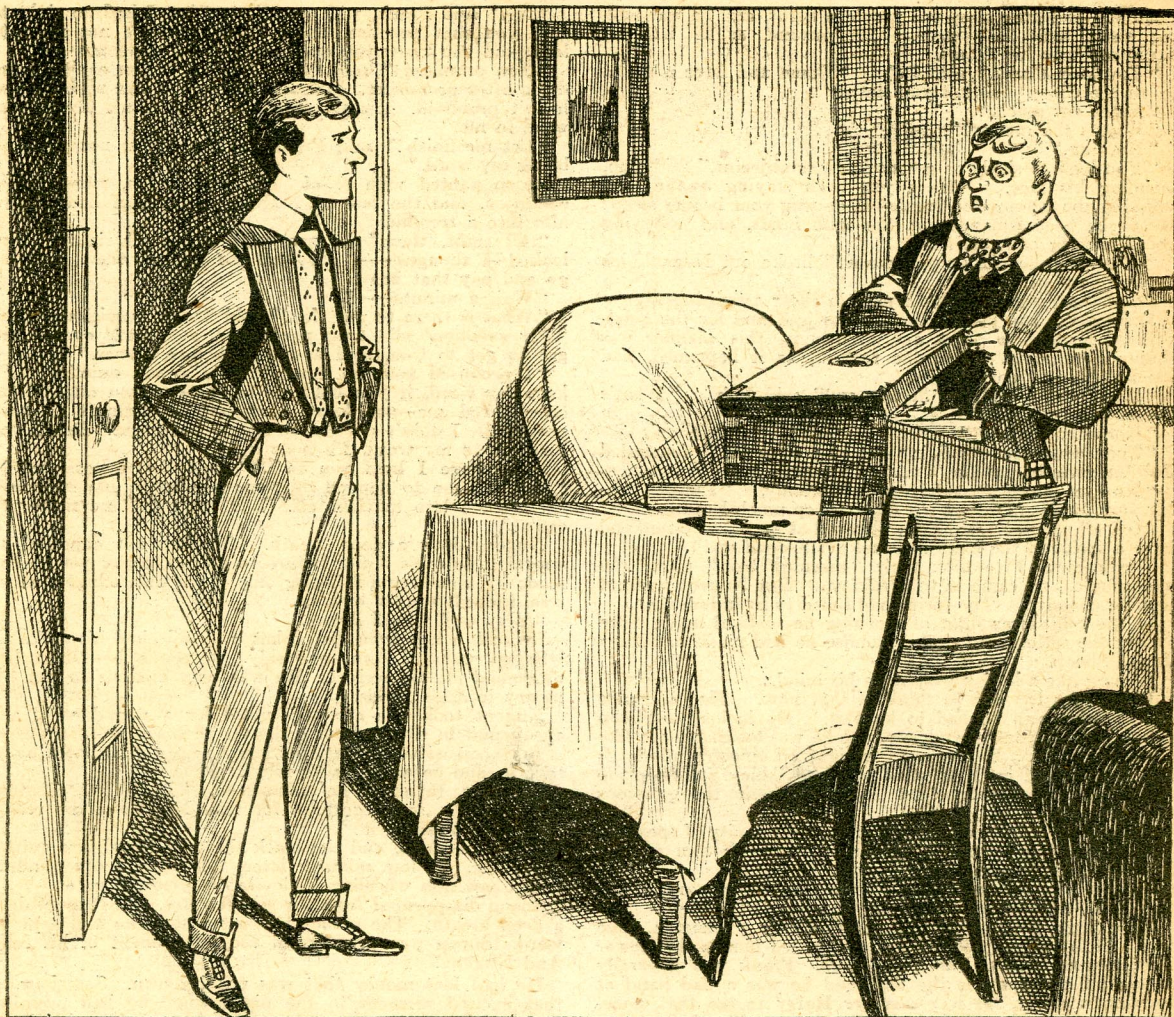
"It isn't that. But—but——"

"Oh, all right! Of course, I've no right to ask favours of you; we've never been friends!"

"That doesn't make any difference."

"And it's my own fault; I know that," muttered Snoop.

"But—but I used to have enough money. You know what happened; my pater went to chokey. Then I never had any



Bunter pulled out drawer after drawer in eager search for cash. He was so busy that he did not hear the door open, and he gave a wild jump as he suddenly became aware that Vernon-Smith of the Remove was standing in the doorway with his eyes fixed on him. The Bounder was smiling grimly. (See Chapter 6.)

tin. I tried to make some. It was silly enough—I know that now; but I don't see that I was so much to blame, considering. If I got out of this, I'd make a fresh start. I've had a lesson!"

"You mean that?" said Nugent, hesitating again.

"Of course I mean it. Do you think I want to go through this again?" said Snoop huskily.

"I—I suppose not. Look here, Snoop, are you quite certain—"

"About what?"

"About having the money on Wednesday?"

"Honour bright!" said Snoop.

Nugent did not speak for a moment. He tried to think it out clearly. But what was clearest in his mind at that moment was that Snoop was going out in disgrace to an unknown fate, and that the use of the money that was lying idle would save him, and no harm would be done to anyone. What harm in lending it to Snoop for a week?

"Nugent"—Snoop's voice was low and eager—"you'll help me? You'll never be sorry for it, old chap!"

Nugent made up his mind.

"I'll help you," he said. "Go back to bed, and promise me that you won't think of bolting!"

"I promise. You don't think I want to bolt, do you?" muttered Snoop. "I know what it would mean for me!"

"Then I'll help you. Go back to bed!"

Snoop crept back to bed.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

He was soon sleeping. The weight was off his mind, and he could sleep.

But sleep was not easy for Frank Nugent.

He hardly knew whether he had done right or wrong. But his word was given now, and there was an end of it. But the summer dawn was creeping in at the dormitory windows before Nugent could sleep.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nugent Keeps His Word!

BOB CHERRY jumped out of bed as the rising-bell rang out over Greyfriars. Bob was generally first up in the Remove, and always willing to lend a helping hand to slower fellows. He jerked the bedclothes off Billy Bunter, and rolled him out, yelling, on the floor, and squeezed a wet sponge over Lord Mauleverer, causing his lordship to hop out of bed with a shriek.

Frank Nugent was still sleeping. He had not been awakened by the rising-bell, and Bob came to wake him. Nugent came out of dreamland with a gasp as his bedclothes were dragged away.

"Turn out, slacker!" said Bob severely.

Nugent sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Hallo! Is it rising-bell?"

"Is it rising-bell?" said Bob. "Rising-bell's stopped. Would you like this sponge down your back?"

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"No, fathead! Gerroff!"

Nugent turned out of bed.

He had had little sleep the previous night, and he was feeling tired and heavy-eyed. He yawned as he left the dormitory with his chums.

"You look sleepy," said Bob. "Come and have a sprint round the Close. Didn't you sleep?"

"N-no; not much."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"You look as sickly as a conscientious objector," said Bob, scanning his face. "Have you been staying awake and thinking about your sins, instead of getting your beauty sleep? Have you been squandering the club funds, and worrying about making both ends meet?"

"What the dickens do you mean?" broke out Nugent, his face crimsoning.

Bob Cherry stepped back a pace in sheer astonishment.

His remark had been a thoughtless jest, and for the good-natured Nugent to break out angrily in this manner was simply astounding. But the remark, as it happened, had touched Nugent on the raw.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Steady on!" said Bob. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing, you ass!"

"Then what are you flying out at a chap for?" demanded Bob indignantly. "Can't you take a little joke?"

"No—yes—sorry!" said Nugent hurriedly. "I'm not feeling very fit this morning. I didn't sleep much last night!"

"Oh, all serene!" said Bob, placated at once. "Come and have a sprint in the fresh air, and get livened up!"

The Famous Five took their "morning trot" round the quadrangle, and came in to breakfast. But Nugent was not looking cheerful. The sprint had failed to liven him up.

In the cold, clear light of morning he realised much more clearly the seriousness of the promise he had made to Sidney James Snoop.

It hung like a leaden weight on his mind.

But it was too late to think of that now. He had made the promise, and he had to keep it. He looked at Snoop at the breakfast-table, and saw that he was looking more like his normal self. There was a weight off Snoop's mind; it had been placed on Nugent's instead. Sidney James Snoop had slept more soundly than Frank Nugent the previous night.

After breakfast Snoop looked for an opportunity of speaking to Nugent, but Frank's chums remained with him till the Remove went into their Form-room.

Nugent was very quiet during morning lessons, and Snoop was full of suppressed eagerness.

Both were glad when lessons were over. Wharton, who was a little anxious about his chum, joined him as the Lower Fourth came out of the Form-room. Frank was generally as candid and open as the day, and he was a bad hand at keeping a secret. It was easy for Harry to see that something was on his mind, and it was so unlike Nugent to keep secrets that he could not help being surprised.

"Nothing wrong at home, is there, Frank?" he asked.

"No. Why?"

"Your minor been getting into trouble?"

"Dicky! No."

"Then you're not feeling fit, I suppose?"

"Oh, I'm fit enough!" said Nugent irritably.

Wharton gave him a quiet look, and strolled out into the quadrangle, whistling. He saw that Nugent's nerves were not in good order, and he left him to himself. Frank went to No. 1 Study, sorry for his irritation, which he knew would perplex his chum, and dissatisfied with himself and everybody generally.

Snoop, seeing his opportunity, followed him to the study. He came in, and closed the door behind him, apparently not noticing Frank's gloomy look.

"Jolly glad of a chance to see you alone," he said. "Of course, you're not mentioning it to the other fellows?"

"Of course not!" snapped Frank.

"Can you hand me the tin now? I can cut over to Courtfield before dinner on a bike—I'll borrow Skinner's jigger. If I get to Straus before afternoon lessons that will be all serene."

Nugent did not move.

Snoop watched him with catlike eyes. An expression of alarm came over his face as he read Nugent's looks.

"Nugent, you're not going back on what you said last

night?" he panted. "You're not playing fast and loose with me?"

"No," said Frank, with an effort; "but I had no right to give you that promise, Snoop. The money's not mine to lend, and you know you oughtn't to have asked me—"

"You promised!" said Snoop shrilly. "You can't let me down after promising. I should have gone last night if you hadn't promised. It's too late now. You can't break your word to me."

"Let me finish!" said Frank angrily. "I'm not going to break my word."

Snoop panted with relief. His nerves, too, were out of condition, and the fear of Nugent failing him had thrown him into a tremble.

"All right, then," he muttered. "It's all right. You looked—I thought—Give me the money, then. Let me go and pay that beast!"

"Wait a minute—"

"What is there to wait for?" said Snoop, suspicious again. "For goodness' sake keep your word, and get it over! I've got to get to Courtfield and back before dinner."

"I promised you the money," said Frank quietly. "I'll keep my word, if you hold me to it. But you oughtn't to have asked me—you know that—and I oughtn't to have promised. I didn't see that so clearly last night. But if you hold me to my word, I'll keep it."

"Of course I hold you to it!" said Snoop passionately. "You led me to depend on you; you made me stay here till it's too late to clear off. You can't fail me now—you can't!"

Nugent drew a deep breath. He had not expected an appeal to Snoop's better nature to be much use; yet he had made it. Snoop was thinking only of his own danger, which was, indeed, serious enough.

"Very well" said Frank.

He took a key from his pocket and unlocked his desk.

Snoop watched him feverishly. Nugent's hesitation had awakened all his terrors. He was only anxious to get the money into his hands.

Nugent took five currency notes for a pound each, and one pound in silver, from a drawer in his desk, and passed it to Snoop without a word. Snoop's fingers trembled as he took it, and he gasped with relief.

"Thanks, thanks!" he stammered. "I—I'll get off now. I—I say, I'm really grateful for this, Nugent—I am really, you sha'n't regret it!"

Nugent nodded, and the black sheep of Greyfriars quitted the study. A few minutes later, from the study window, Frank saw him wheeling a bicycle down to the gates.

Snoop disappeared from the school gates, and Nugent drew a deep breath. The money was gone now; he had kept his word. Snoop was saved from the punishment of his folly. And Nugent?

He had lent money that was not his own. Somehow, in that excited moment in the night when he had promised Snoop, it had not presented itself to his mind in that light. If Snoop failed to return the money, the effect would be that he had used the club funds—that he had embezzled the money committed to his charge. But that would not happen. Snoop had promised—he had plainly stated that the money was coming to him the following Wednesday.

That would be all right! After all, was there any great harm done? Snoop was a blackguard, but he was weak and perverse—he had been hardly dealt with by Fate. His father was dishonest, and was in prison, and the sudden fall from comparative wealth to poverty had thrown Snoop off his balance a little. He had tried to make money by blackguardly means—gambling—but there were thousands of grown men who did that and were considered respectable. Had not Nugent done right to save him, and give him another chance? For after this terrible lesson, this fearfully narrow escape, even Snoop could hardly fail to have sense enough to run straight.

And yet—and yet—Nugent could not regret that he had saved Snoop from ruin; but the thought hammered on his mind that he had used the club funds unknown to the owners—that he had acted as he had no right to act—and that only the certainty that the money would be replaced saved him from a prospect of disgrace he shuddered to think of.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are, then!" Bob Cherry came into the study in his boisterous way. "I've been looking for you, Franky. Why don't you come down to the cricket?"

"Eh? I was just coming!" stammered Nugent.

"Come on, then!" said Bob. "Not doing accounts again—what?"

"No, no!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is this how our giddy treasurer looks

ANSWERS

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after the cash?" grinned Bob, pointing to the open desk. "Suppose Billy Bunter came in and found your desk like that, Franky? Good-bye to the club's cash!" Nugent hastily locked the desk.

He followed Bob Cherry from the study. Bob could not help noting that there was something odd in his chum's manner; but he did not remark on it, remembering how touchy Nugent had been already that day.

On the cricket-field Nugent recovered his spirits a little. After all, he had been making a mountain out of a molehill—it would be all right! He was looking more like his usual self when he came in to dinner.

Snoop came in a few minutes late to dinner, looking bright and cheerful. He had evidently finished his business at Courtfield in a satisfactory manner. He spoke to Nugent when they came out of the dining-room.

"It's all right!" he said, in a low voice. "I've got my paper back—I've burnt it. All serene now!"

"I'm glad of that," said Nugent.

"I sha'n't forget it," said Snoop, with some earnestness in his manner. "Anything I can ever do for you, you'll only have to say the word!"

"Only keep straight, and don't forget to square up next Wednesday," said Nugent.

Snoop nodded.

"Honour bright!" he said. "It's all right!"

And Frank Nugent tried to drive the secret uneasiness from his breast, and to think that indeed it was all right.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Bunter Feels Quite Justified!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

William George Bunter came into No. 1 Study with a very determined manner. It was Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday. Wharton and Nugent were chatting in the study, it not being time yet for the match with the Upper Fourth, which was to take place in the afternoon. The chums of No. 1 Study had been going over their lines from "Hamlet." Wharton was nearly letter-perfect in the part of Horatio, but Nugent was sadly wanting both as the Ghost and as Ophelia.

"You'll have to mug up the lines a bit better, Franky," said Harry. "You seem to be all at sea, and you're generally one of the quickest chaps in learning lines. Your blessed wits have gone wool-gathering."

"I shall have the part all right," said Nugent wearily. "The Ghost isn't much of a part, anyway, and I'm only understudy for Ophelia. Marjorie's taking that part when the play comes off."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! You're getting jolly snappy lately," said Bunter. "Bless if I've seen you in a good temper all the week. You're getting as bad-tempered as Wharton, jolly nearly."

"Why, you cheeky porpoise—" began Harry warmly.

"Don't you begin, too, Wharton. Nugent's enough, snapping a fellow's head off!" said Bunter peevishly. "If you chaps are doing 'Hamlet' now, I don't mind helping you. I'll show you how I do Hamlet, if you like."

"Bow-wow!"

"If you fellows weren't blinded by jealousy, you'd see that I do the part ever so much better than Wibley," said the fat junior, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big glasses. "I have the figure, for one thing, and then, I'm a good all-round actor—"

"All round, certainly," agreed Wharton, laughing. "Not much of an actor, though."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Just you hear me roll off some of Hamlet's lines. Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!" declaimed Billy Bunter, striking an attitude which he fondly imagined was appropriate to the Prince of Denmark.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha! That too, too solid flesh won't melt!" roared Wharton. "It's too jolly solid for that!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Then hear me do the soliloquy—"

"To be or not to be, that is the question!

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Or to take arms against a sea of bubbles—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wibley don't deliver the lines like that!" snorted Bunter.

"Ha, ha! He doesn't! Wibley makes it a sea of troubles, not a sea of bubbles!" yelled Wharton.

Bunter sniffed.

"What rot! There isn't such a thing as a sea of troubles."

"That's in Shakespeare."

"Must have been a misprint," said Bunter, with a shake of the head. "Shakespeare must have meant a sea of bubbles—"

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that makes sense. I've seen lots of bubbles on the sea; I've never seen any troubles there. It's a sea of bubbles, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! Look here, I didn't come here to talk about Hamlet, either. Something's happened."

"Have the Huns landed?" yawned Wharton.

"Of course they haven't, ass! 'Tain't that. I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Is that all?"

"That's enough, I suppose. I was depending on receiving a postal-order to-day, and it hasn't come. It's all due to this conscription bizney, I suppose."

"Have they conscripted the Postmaster-General?"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"Perhaps it's that conscription of wealth they've been talking about," grinned Nugent. "Conscripting money as well as men. They've conscripted Bunter's postal-order."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it hasn't come," said Bunter. "I was expecting a postal-order for ten shillings from—from a titled relation. Now, the point is, can you fellows lend me ten bob till the postal-order comes?"

"Ask again after the war."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! I borrowed ten bob of my cousin Wally, and he's hard up. I suppose I can't remain under an obligation to a poor relation—a chap I take notice of out of kindness," said Bunter loftily.

"Better off without your kindness, I should think, if it costs him ten bob a time out of his salary," said Wharton.

"I've got to pay up," growled Bunter. "I'm very particular on such points. I know some fellows are not. Now the question is, are you going to lend me ten bob, or are you not?"

"Not!"

"You were jolly friendly with Wally when he was here," growled Bunter. "And you know he's hard up—a poor beast who has to work for his living."

"You were a fat rotter to borrow of him," said Wharton. "He's worth fifty of you, and I wish we could shove you into Wally's office, and have Wally here instead. I'd lend you the money to pay him, if I had it; but funds are short."

"What about you, Nugent?"

"Stony."

"Then there's only one thing to be done. You'd better lend it to me out of the money in your desk."

Nugent started. As a matter of fact, there was no money in his desk, excepting a few shillings; but Billy Bunter was not aware of that.

"Why, you young rascal!" exclaimed Wharton. "Do you mean the cricket-funds?"

"Yes, I do. It will be all the same to Nugent. I shall hand over my postal-order immediately it comes, and—"

"Oh, kick him out!" growled Nugent.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put his dusky head in at the doorway.

"My esteemed chums, we are waiting for you to begin cricketfully," he remarked.

"Right-ho!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bow-wow!"

"But look here, I say—" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton and Nugent followed the nabob down the passage, paying no heed to Bunter. The fat junior blinked after them angrily.

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled to the study window and blinked out. The Remove cricketers were going down to Little Side. Bunter turned back from the window, with a cunning gleam in his eyes, and fumbled in his pocket and produced a bunch of keys.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "Fancy having all that money shut up there—and my postal-order coming for a dead cert to-morrow—Monday, anyway—and not lending me ten miserable bobs! Under the circumstances, I feel quite justified in borrowing ten bob, if—if one of these dashed keys fits the desk! I'll put my postal-order there when it comes, to show that suspicious beast Nugent that I can pay my debts honourably."

Click! Click—click! Click!

Feeling quite justified, under the circumstances, Billy Bunter proceeded to try a variety of keys on Nugent's desk. There were fifteen or sixteen keys in the bunch, and Bunter found one at last that would turn the lock. His little, round eyes glimmered behind his spectacles as he opened the lid of the desk.

He hesitated a few moments before he went further.

With his peculiar powers of reasoning, he had worked it out to his own satisfaction that he was justified—under the

NEXT
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"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

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circumstances—in borrowing ten shillings from the club funds. But he was quite well aware that the Remove fellows would take a different view if they caught him "borrowing."

"Well, I must have it!" he murmured. "It's Nugent's fault for being so beastly mean! I hate a fellow who's mean! Now, where does the beast keep it? I'll take exactly ten shillings, and put my postal-order there on Monday morning. Even a beast like Nugent couldn't complain then. But where's the cash?"

Bunter pulled out drawer after drawer in eager search for the cash. He was so busy that he did not hear the door open, and he gave a wild jump as he suddenly became aware that Vernon-Smith of the Remove was standing in the doorway with his eyes fixed on him.

The Bounder was smiling grimly. Bunter's jaw dropped. He blinked at the Bounder in dismay. Vernon-Smith advanced into the study.

"Well?" he said grimly. Billy Bunter gasped.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Money Missing!

VERNON-SMITH waited for the Owl of the Remove to speak. But it was a full minute before Bunter found his voice.

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I was just—just—"

"Stealing?" asked the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"What were you doing here, then?"

"What are you doing, if you come to that?" said Bunter feebly.

"I looked in for Wharton, to come down to the cricket," said the Bounder calmly.

"That—that's just what I did!" murmured Bunter. "As—as Wharton isn't here, I—I just—just—"

"What have you taken from Nugent's desk?"

"Nothing," growled Bunter. "If you think I'm a thief, Smithy, this discussion had better cease!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to explain what you were doing at that desk," said the Bounder. "Unless I'm mistaken, that's where Nugent keeps the club funds."

"Look here, Smithy! If—if you mean to insinuate—"

"Bob!" called out Vernon-Smith, as he heard Bob Cherry's heavy footsteps in the passage.

Billy Bunter looked alarmed. He had not succeeded in annexing the ten shillings, and he realised now that he would have to pay for the sin that was not even committed.

He made a bound to the doorway.

"Stop him, Bob!" shouted the Bounder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry strode on more quickly, but Bunter dodged him and fled down the passage. Bob looked into the study in wonder.

"Wharton here? Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row, Smithy?"

The Bounder pointed to the open desk.

"That's the row," he said. "I looked in here for Wharton, and found Bunter at that desk. I suppose Nugent did not leave it open." He picked up a bunch of keys from the floor. "Bunter dropped this."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob, aghast. "Nugent keeps it locked, of course. That's where he keeps the club-money; and there's a lot there now."

"You'd better look, then. I've got a suspicion that it mayn't be there now," said the Bounder drily. "Bunter wasn't prying into the desk for amusement, I suppose?"

"Well, I'll soon see. I know where Franky keeps it." Bob Cherry strode to the desk and pulled open the money drawer. There were three shillings and a sixpence in it.

"Great Scott!"

"Gone?" asked the Bounder quietly.

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"There's three-and-six here, instead of about six pounds, I think," said Bob.

"My hat!"

The two juniors looked at one another.

"The fat idiot!" burst out Bob. "This is a bit too thick, even for Bunter. Raiding a chap's grub is bad enough, but taking money—"

"The silly idiot's too big a fool to realise that it's jolly serious," said Vernon-Smith. "He was going to borrow it, of course, and put it back some fine day when he's got lots of tin. You know what a fool he is. But there's no harm done. Let's run the lunatic down and make him bring it back, and then give him a hiding and let the matter drop. We don't want a disgrace."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Right you are! Let's get after him. The silly ass may hide it somewhere, and make us show him up. He's fool enough."

The two juniors hurried out of the study. It was time for the cricket match on Little Side, but that had to wait. Johnny Bull and Squiff were coming down in their flannels, and Bob hastily explained the matter to them, and enlisted their services to run Bunter down.

"Seen Bunter?" called out Bob, as they passed Ogilvy in the hall.

"Just gone out into the quad."

"Come on!" said Squiff. "We shall find the fat idiot in the tuckshop, if he's got any money on him."

The four juniors ran across the quad and into the tuckshop. But Billy Bunter was not there.

"He's hiding somewhere!" exclaimed Bob wrathfully.

"Or hiding the money," said the Bounder.

"By Jove, I've a jolly good mind to go to Quelch about it at once!" said Bob. "It's too thick. I don't see why we should be so easy with a blessed thief. We shouldn't let anybody but Bunter down lightly if he did a thing like that."

"Well, he's more fool than rogue," said Squiff pacifically. "Let's find him and make him shell out, and wallop him. That will be all right."

"But where is the fat beast?"

"Seen Bunter, Bolsover?" called out Bob.

Bolsover major was on his way to the cricket-field. He paused and looked round.

"Yes; he's just gone in."

"Gone in again! The dodgy beast!" growled Bob. "Come on!"

The juniors ran back to the School House. From Ogilvy they learned that Bunter had gone upstairs. They ran upstairs, and stopped at the door of No. 7 Study. Bob Cherry threw open the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Billy Bunter had taken refuge in his study. Peter Todd was there. Todd was not playing cricket that afternoon, but was improving the shining hour by "mugging" up law, Toddy's ambition being to follow in his father's footsteps and become a solicitor some day. Bunter felt safer with his study-mate.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Peter.

"Why ain't you fellows playing cricket?"

"We're looking for that fat burglar."

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo! What's Bunter been doing now?" asked Todd, rising. "Burgling a study cupboard again, you fat owl?"

"Burgling Nugent's desk," growled Bob Cherry. "He's taken the cricket club money, all but a few bob!"

"Great pip!"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "I'm surprised at you, Cherry! Don't take any notice of him, Toddy. I say, I'll hold your jacket if you'll lick him!"

"You fat idiot!" roared Bob, exasperated. "Don't you know you'd be expelled if this came out, and perhaps sent to a reformatory?"

"Hold on!" said Todd quietly. "Has Bunter been to Nugent's desk?"

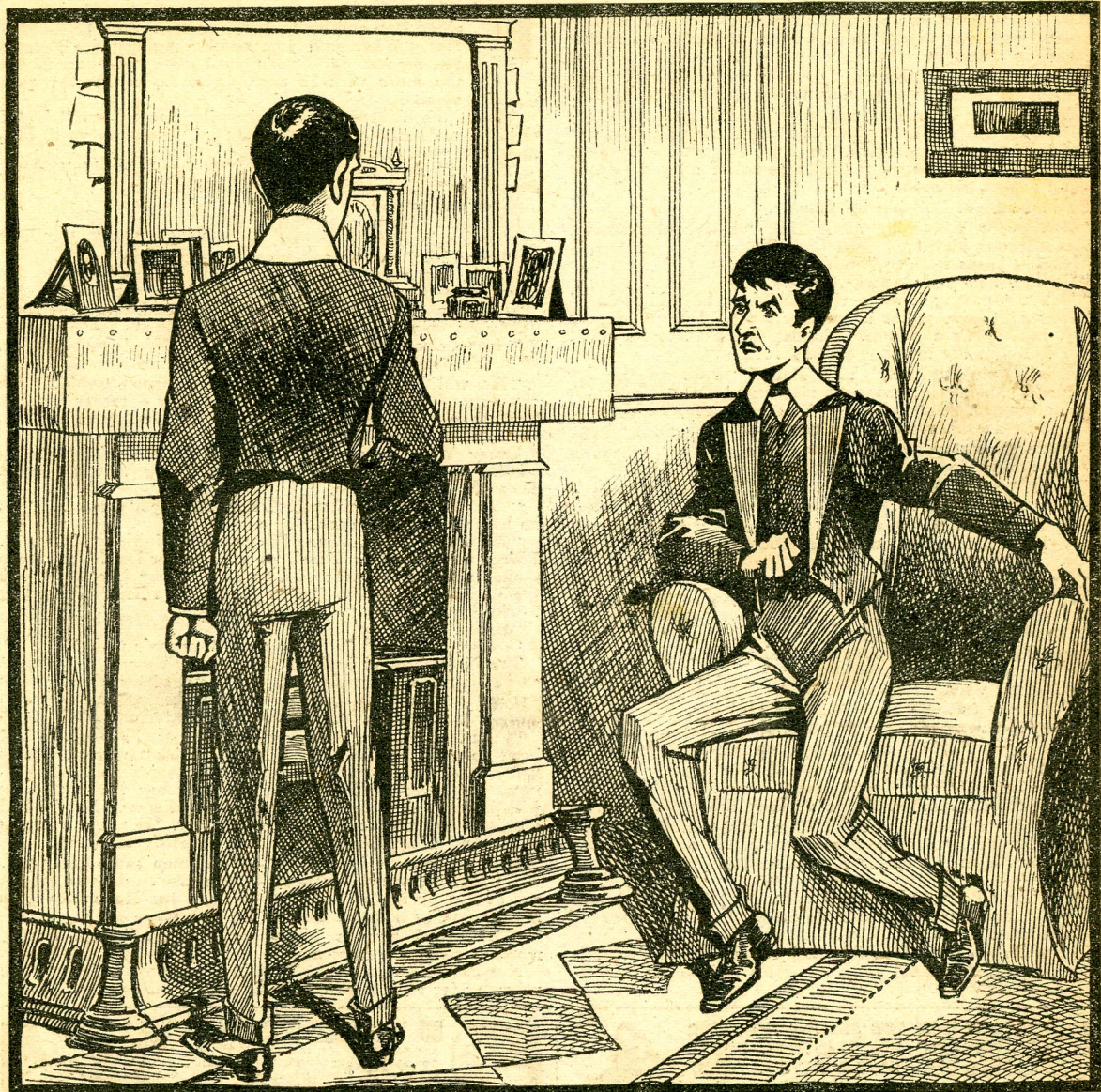
"Yes, and opened it with a key. He left a bunch of keys on the floor," said the Bounder. "Here they are."

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"I've locked the door so that we sha'n't be interrupted. I may have to break your neck if you don't tell me what I want to know," said the Bounder, very agreeably. Snoop jumped, and rose hastily from the armchair he had sat in. "What the dickens do you mean?" he demanded hotly. (See Chapter 11.)

"Anybody see him there?"

"Yes, I did; caught him at the desk."

"Well, Bunter, what have you got to say?" asked Peter Todd, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"Oh, really, Peter," said Bunter feebly, "I—I went to the desk to—to borrow Nugent's Latin grammar—"

Peter Todd picked up a stump.

"You went for what?" he asked.

"I—I mean, I—I was going to borrow ten bob, and put my postal-order there when it came," gasped Bunter.

"You were going to steal ten shillings?"

"Borrow it, you beast!"

"And you decided to steal the lot instead?"

"No, I didn't. Smithy came in before I could find it."

"How much have you taken, Bunter?"

"Nothing at all," said the Owl of the Remove indignantly. "I'm surprised at the question, Toddy. You might stand by a chap in your own study!"

"He's taken the lot," said Bob angrily. "There were

three shillings and sixpence left, and I know there ought to be six pounds there."

"You hear that, Bunter?"

"I haven't taken anything!" howled Bunter. "I hadn't time—I mean, I'd scorn to do anything of the kind. I was going to borrow ten bob. I've got a postal-order coming to-night, and—"

"You're sure the money's gone, Bob?"

"Yes; I've looked."

"And Bunter's taken it," said Vernon-Smith. "Better go through the fat fool's pockets. I expect it's still about him."

"Come here, Bunter!"

"You can search me if you like," said Bunter disdainfully. "I think you're a lot of suspicious beasts. You're welcome to all the money you find on me. I don't believe it's gone. If it has, I dare say Smithy took it."

"What!" yelled the Bounder.

"Or—or perhaps Bob Cherry," said Bunter.

"I!" gasped Bob.

"Yes; or perhaps you both went halves in it. Here, keep off, you beast! There's nothing to get waxy about, is there?" gasped Bunter.

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh, in spite of himself. Bunter apparently did not regard an accusation of theft as a reason for getting "waxy."

Peter Todd "went through" Bunter most efficiently, but there was no trace of the missing money about the fat junior.

"He's not got it on him, anyway," said Peter.

"Didn't I tell you so?" chortled Bunter triumphantly.

"He's hidden it somewhere," said the Bouncer. "Bunter, you fat fool, can't you see it would be better for you to own up and return the money?"

"I haven't got it!" howled Bunter.

"Hold on!" said Peter judiciously. "Is it quite certain the money was there?"

"Nugent keeps it there," said Bob.

"Perhaps he's paid it away."

"He's not paying it away till Thursday; he told me so."

"He might have put it in another place. I know it's not likely, but there's a chance. Nugent will have to be asked about it before the matter goes any further."

"He's playing cricket," said Bob. "Still, as the fat bouncer's hidden the money, it may as well stand over till after the match. Only you keep an eye on him, Toddy, and see that he doesn't spend it this afternoon."

"Bunter will stay here with me."

"Oh, really, Toddy, I'm going out!"

"Start!" said Peter grimly. "You'll get this cricket-stump as soon as you do. But start, if you like."

Billy Bunter did not start. He grunted discontentedly, and threw himself into the armchair. Snoop looked into the study.

"Thought I heard you here," he said. "Wharton's sent me for you. The Remove's batting, and you're next on the list, Cherry."

"I'm coming," said Bob.

Snoop looked at the juniors in wonder. He could see that something unusual had happened.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Bob Cherry left the study without replying, followed by Squiff and Vernon-Smith and Johnny Bull.

"What's up, Toddy?" asked Snoop curiously.

"Time's up," said Peter. "Good-bye!"

"But what's the row about? What have those chaps been hunting you for, Bunter? I saw them in the quad."

"The silly asses think I've taken the cricket money," growled Bunter. "Just because I was going to borrow ten bob from Nugent, and let him have my postal-order on Monday—"

Snoop looked very oddly at Bunter.

"Is the money really gone?" he asked.

"Find out!" growled Peter.

Snoop shrugged his shoulders and quitted the study. His face was very thoughtful as he made his way to the cricket-field.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Snoop's Plan!

FRANK NUGENT was at the wickets with Tom Brown when Bob and his companions arrived on Little Side. Harry Wharton had opened the innings with Nugent, but he was out in the third over. He had started the score with 12 runs, however, so he was quite cheerful about it.

"What the dickens has been keeping you fellows?" he exclaimed, as the four juniors came up. "I had to go in first, instead of you, Smithy."

"Sorry!" said the Bouncer. "I simply couldn't come. Something's happened. Bunter's boned the club funds."

Wharton jumped.

"Bunter! The cricket club funds!"

"Yes; and hidden the cash somewhere. But Toddy's got an eye on him, so he won't be able to spend it."

"Well, my word!" said Wharton wrathfully. "The fat bouncer ought to be kicked out. You're sure?"

The Bouncer concisely explained the circumstances. Sidney James Snoop was hovering near, and he did not lose a word.

"Seems clear enough," said Harry. "This is rather thick, even for Bunter. The money was there right enough."

"He will have to shell out!" said Vernon-Smith. "He can't spend the money; and I suppose he'd rather hand it back than be taken before the Head. We'll give him his choice after the match."

Harry Wharton nodded. He had little doubt that the missing money would be recovered, owing to the prompt discovery of its absence.

"It's jolly lucky you spotted him, Smithy!" he said. "So he had a key to the desk?"

"He had a big bunch. Borrowed it of Fishy, I expect. Fishy's always got a bunch of keys to lend a fellow for a tanner a time. Quite useful to an amateur burglar!" said the Bouncer, laughing. "I've got the keys here. I'm going to chuck them away."

"Good!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes Browney's wicket!"

The New Zealand junior was out, and Vernon-Smith went on in his place. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth were putting up an unusually good game that afternoon. The Fourth had hopes of beating the Remove for once.

Frank Nugent was batting well. During the week he had been haunted by the thought of the cricket money, and it had sometimes imparted to his manner an irritable snappishness that surprised his chums, though they bore patiently with it, supposing that Franky was out of sorts. But he had dismissed the matter from his mind now. It was a glorious afternoon. Nugent was thoroughly enjoying the game.

He was in great form, and four batsmen came and went, while Nugent was still strong at the wicket. He was caught out at last by Scott of the Fourth, and the Removites gave him a cheer as he came back to the pavilion.

"Come and have a ginger-pop, Nugent," said Snoop, meeting him as he came off the pitch.

Nugent had been about to join his chums. He was not yearning for the company of Sidney James Snoop.

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"I want to speak to you," added Snoop, in a lower voice.

Nugent looked at him quickly.

"About the money, you mean?"

"Yes. It's important."

"Can't it wait till we're finished with the Fourth?"

"I tell you it's important."

"I'll come," said Nugent abruptly.

He had fancied for the moment that Snoop meant that he had the money. He realised that that was not the case now. His brow darkened as he followed Snoop, with his bat under his arm. Was Snoop about to tell him that he could not, after all, repay the money on Wednesday, as he had promised? The mere suspicion was enough to throw Nugent into a tremor of anger and alarm.

"Never mind the ginger-pop," he said, as they left the cricket-field. "Now, what have you got to say?"

They stopped under the elms in the quad.

"There's a jolly curious thing happened," said Snoop.

"It may mean a stroke of luck for both of us."

"Have you got the money?"

"No."

"You'll have it on Wednesday?"

"I—I'm afraid not."

It seemed to Nugent that an iron hand was gripping his heart. His breath came fast and thick.

Somehow, he had never doubted that Snoop would be able to keep his word. Once or twice the thought had come into his mind, but he had dismissed it.

Snoop had promised so solemnly: he had explained with so much detail that it was simply the "use of the money" he needed for one short week, to save him; it was impossible to suppose that he had been deliberately lying and entrapping Nugent into parting with the club money under false pretences.

Nugent could not speak for some moments. He was almost overcome. The brightness of that sunny afternoon had faded away for him now. He broke out at last, his voice shrill and loud:

"You won't have the money on Wednesday? You rotter! You thief! You've made me a thief, too!"

"Hush!" said Snoop, in alarm. "Don't shout, you fool! Let me explain!"

"You can't explain if you can't pay. You told me the money was coming to you on Wednesday, you promised me, you made me believe—What am I going to do? You knew it wasn't my own money. What am I to do, then?"

"I tell you it will be all right, if you have sense. Give a chap a chance to explain," said Snoop. "Listen to me! I tell you it will be all right, if you choose."

"What have you got to say?" snapped Nugent.

"I—I can't raise the money on Wednesday," said Snoop, flushing. "I—I hoped I could. But I simply dare not ask my uncle for it. He wouldn't send it if I did."

"You told me—"

"I—I know I did. I was scared out of my wits by that moneylender beast; should have been sacked if I hadn't paid him."

"You know I shouldn't have handed you the money if I hadn't believed you!" said Nugent passionately.

"I tell you I hoped to have the money," said Snoop. "I—I thought then that I might get it from my uncle. I was a duffer to think so, but I was scared to death at the time. Anything seems possible when you're in that state of mind. But—but it's no go. I wrote to him and gave a hint, and he's answered me in a way that shows it's no good to ask. And—and I can't raise the money any other way."

"Oh, you villain!"

"It's no good calling me names," said Snoop sullenly. "I've done my best. Can't you raise the money yourself?"

"You know I can't!"

"Your people are pretty well off—your father—"

"Yes, I can imagine what my father would say if I asked him for six pounds in a lump in war-time!" muttered Nugent.

"What about Wharton? I've heard that he's got some money in the bank."

"Shut up, you rotter! Am I going to tell Wharton that I've embezzled the club money, and ask him to make it good?" said Nugent fiercely.

"Can't you put off the payments for a bit? Something might turn up."

"What could turn up?"

"I—I don't know."

"I can't put off paying the bills any longer. They should have been paid this week, and I've put them off till next Thursday already."

Snoop drew a deep breath.

"Then there's only one way," he said. "What's happened this afternoon is a stroke of luck."

"What the dickens are you talking about?" snapped Nugent. "You beast, you rotter! You were lying to me—lying like a Prussian. You knew you wouldn't be able to give me the money back. You only wanted to get it away from me, and you'd have said anything. And I believed your word, knowing you as I do! It serves me right!"

Snoop bit his lip.

To do him justice, he had a vague hope that he would be able to return the money in time. But he had been thinking of his own danger, not of Frank Nugent's. So long as he saved himself from the moneylender, what happened to Nugent was a very secondary consideration.

"What have you told me this for now?" demanded Nugent. "In the middle of a match! A pretty game I shall put up after this! Why couldn't you keep it till after the match?"

"Because something's happened this afternoon that makes a big change. If you really can't replace the money yourself—"

"I can't!"

"And I can't," said Snoop. "I'm sorry; but there it is—I can't. Well, there's only one thing to be done. I'm speaking as a friend now, and giving you jolly good advice. If it comes out that the money's gone, it won't make much difference to the club what you took it for. The fact will be that you took it."

Nugent winced.

"I see that now!" he said.

"The club may agree to keep it dark, and give you time to pay up," said Snoop. "But—but it's bound to get out, of course, and you'll be called a thief!"

"I sha'n't stay at Greyfriars," said Nugent savagely. "If I can't replace the money before Wednesday I'm done for here, and you know it. You knew that when you robbed me—for that was what you did!"

"I—I hoped—"

"Oh, don't tell any more lies! If you'd told me then that you only hoped to be able to pay up, do you think I should have let you have the money?"

"No; of course not! I had to get out of Straus' clutches," said Snoop. "I'm sorry it's turned out like this, but I couldn't help it. After all, you lent me the money of your own free will."

"Go on!" said Nugent, between his teeth. "I deserve that."

"It's no good having rows," muttered Snoop uneasily. "I'm suggesting a way out of the fix. For goodness' sake keep your temper! Look here! There's supposed to be six pounds in your desk, and it ain't there. The only thing to do is to make out that it's been stolen."

"Stolen!" said Nugent.

"Yes. If a chap has burgled your desk, and taken the tin, that accounts for it not being there. See?"

Nugent's face flamed.

"You think I could make up a lie like that, and stick to it?"

"Better than being called an embezzler, I suppose," said Snoop.

"You idiot! Do you think the fellows would believe me, even if I piled on as many lies as you could make up for me?"

"I know they would. It's all cut and dried. You don't know what's happened this afternoon."

"You keep on harping on that. What's happened, then?"

"Bunter got a key to your desk, and opened it. Vernon-Smith caught him in the act, and he dodged out of the study."

"The fat beast! He was after the cricket funds, I suppose?"

"Yes; and he's supposed to have taken the cash."

"How could he take it if it wasn't there?"

"All the fellows believed it was there. They looked for it when they found Bunter had opened the desk, and found that it was gone. Naturally, they put it down to Bunter."

"Good heavens!"

"The fat brute is a thief, anyway—he went to the desk to steal it. The fellows think he's hidden the money somewhere. They couldn't think anything else, as they don't suspect for a moment that you had spent the money—"

"Spent it!" said Nugent fiercely.

"Well, lent it!" said Snoop. "It comes to the same thing: the money's gone! Todd's keeping Bunter under his eye, and there's going to be an inquiry after the match. Bunter denies taking the money, but, of course, he isn't believed."

"Well, he will be believed when I tell them the money wasn't in the desk," said Nugent.

"You mustn't!"

"Eh? I shall tell them so at once, of course!"

"You'll tell them you've used the money—"

"I shall tell them it wasn't in the desk. Never mind where it is—that's my business—till next Thursday, anyway."

"But, don't you see," said Snoop eagerly, "you've only got to hold your tongue. Bunter's fixed it on himself. Don't say a word. The money's gone, and Bunter's taken it—see? Nobody could believe anything else. Bunter's a thief, anyway. He meant to have the money."

Nugent stood quite still, looking fixedly at Snoop. For a moment or two, he did not realise fully the baseness of the proposal the cad of the Remove was making. He stared at him open-eyed.

"That clears you," went on Snoop eagerly. "The money's gone, and Bunter's taken it—not a question will be asked further. Bunter will be licked, and serve him jolly well right. I don't suppose the chaps will show him up and get him sacked for it—they're always easy with Bunter, because he's such a silly ass. Anyway, he'll have to take his chance. The thing couldn't have happened better; it's just as if Bunter did it on purpose to help you out."

Nugent trembled with rage.

"So I'm to put it on Bunter?"

"Yes, that's the idea! Yah! Oh! Oh!"

Nugent's fist lashed out, and caught Snoop full in the face. The cad of the Remove fell at full length on the grass, gasping. He lay and blinked at Nugent, in surprise and fury.

"You hound!" said Nugent. "You rotten, treacherous blackguard! That's my answer to you!"

Snoop sat up dazedly.

"Hang you!" he stuttered. "Hang you! I was trying to help you out, you embezzling rotter—hang you! Help yourself, then! I'm done with you!"

"Nugent, old chap—"

It was the Bounder's voice. Vernon-Smith was coming towards the spot from the cricket-field. Nugent turned on him angrily.

"What do you want?"

"Keep your wool on," said the Bounder coolly. "I've only come to tell you the innings is over, and we're having some ginger-pop before we field. But if you've got a fight on, there's time to finish. I'll hold both your jackets, if you like."

Nugent made an angry gesture, and strode savagely away. The Bounder glanced after him, and then fixed his eyes on Snoop, who was rubbing his nose furiously, still seated in the grass.

"Woke up the wrong passenger, Snoopey—what?" said the Bounder cheerily.

"Mind your own business!" growled Snoop.

"What did you call Nugent an embezzling rotter for, Snoop?"

"Find out!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, and followed Nugent to the cricket-ground, with a very thoughtful expression on his face.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Temptation!

"BUTTER-FINGERS!"

That derisive yell was addressed to Frank Nugent. The Remove were fielding. Temple of the Fourth had driven the ball fairly into Frank Nugent's hands, but it had dropped to the ground. It was the easiest of catches, and its "muffing" by Nugent made his comrades stare. Nugent was generally a smart and reliable fieldsmen. The fellows round the field hooted.

Nugent's face crimsoned as he heard the derisive shouts.

Temple and Dabney were running, and Nugent stooped to pick up the ball. He tossed it in to the wicket-keeper. The batsmen were taking risks, and there was ample time for the wicket-keeper to stump Temple, but Nugent's throw-in was wild, and the ball whizzed away across the pitch.

Temple reached home safely, and clumped his bat on the crease, after two runs to the good. He grinned breathlessly. He knew that he ought to have been out twice over for those two runs.

"They call that fielding!" remarked Bolsover minor of the Third to his chums. "We shouldn't allow that in the Third!"

"No jolly fear!" said Tubb emphatically.

Harry Wharton looked at his chum in astonishment. Nugent avoided his glance, and went back sullenly to his place.

He had begun that match in high spirits, and his score at the wicket had been valuable to his side. But his fielding was "rotten." He had bowled one over, and bowled like a fag, and Wharton had given him no more bowling after that. But in the field he was evidently quite useless.

It was plain that Nugent was off his form.

Since he had batted had come Snoop's communication. The money he had relied upon was not to be forthcoming. There was no possible means of replacing it—in a few days' time he would have to admit to his comrades that the money placed in his hands as treasurer was missing.

Whether he had spent it, or whether he had lent it, mattered little. He had used it—it was gone!

Only too clearly the unfortunate junior realised that.

Whatever his object in taking the money entrusted to his care, he had taken it; and that was what was called embezzlement.

Weak, good-natured, a kind heart and a trusting disposition had landed him in that terrible scrape, from which there seemed no hope of escape.

To replace the money himself was impossible; and Snoop, after all his promises, had failed him. The cad of the Remove had saved himself, and left Nugent to bear the brunt.

In such a frame of mind Nugent was not likely to play good cricket.

He could not keep his thoughts on the game. He hardly saw the players. What he saw was a picture conjured up in his brain—of grave and shocked faces when he should tell the cricket committee that he could not produce the money placed in his hands.

That horrible humiliation and shame, he knew, he could never endure. He would rather run away from Greyfriars than suffer that.

What a fool he had been! That was his miserable thought. He had known that he ought not to touch money that was not his own, even for the worthiest object, even for an hour, let alone a week. He had known it, but he had not realised it, somehow. For himself, he would never have touched it. For another's sake—that had seemed different. He had saved Snoop at the price of his own good name—and he had learned now how much Snoop was worth saving!

In the first impulse of righteous anger he had knocked Snoop down for his base proposition to fasten the guilt upon another. But it was a terrible temptation, all the same. Bunter was a dishonest young rascal. He had intended to take the money, or some of it; only the fact that the money was not there had prevented that. Bunter would not suffer as Nugent would. The matter, too, could be hushed up. Bunter would get a licking, which he richly deserved. The money would be made up in time. Nugent could pay it himself in the long run, somehow, and nothing more would be said. Suppose—suppose he did as Snoop suggested? Suppose—

"Butter-fingers!"

"Send that dummy off the field!"

Nugent hardly heard the shouts. Harry Wharton ran up to him. The ball had dropped at Nugent's feet, and he did not even know it was there.

"Franky, old chap," exclaimed Wharton anxiously, "what's the matter?"

"Eh? What?"

"Would you like to get off, Frank? You're not fit," said Wharton. "I'll put on a substitute to field."

Nugent nodded.

"Yes; I—I feel queer. I'll go off, if you don't mind."

"That's all right. Here, Ogilvy!"

Nugent left the cricket-field, followed by laughter from the onlookers. His blunders in the field caused general derision.

He did not heed—or, indeed, hear—the remarks of the juniors. He walked away unsteadily towards the School House.

Vernon-Smith looked after him with a knitted brow. The Bounder was puzzled. What was the matter with Nugent? Why had Snoop called him an embezzler? Smithy had heard that word, and it had astounded him. There were strange thoughts working now in the mind of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

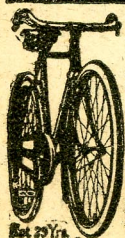
Nugent went directly to his study, and threw himself into a chair.

What was he to do?

He drove the temptation of Snoop's base suggestion from his mind, but it would come back.

After all, how would it hurt Bunter? If the money had been there, he would have taken it. It was only the same as if it had been there, and he had taken it. The wretched thought would insinuate itself into his mind, though he drove it fiercely away.

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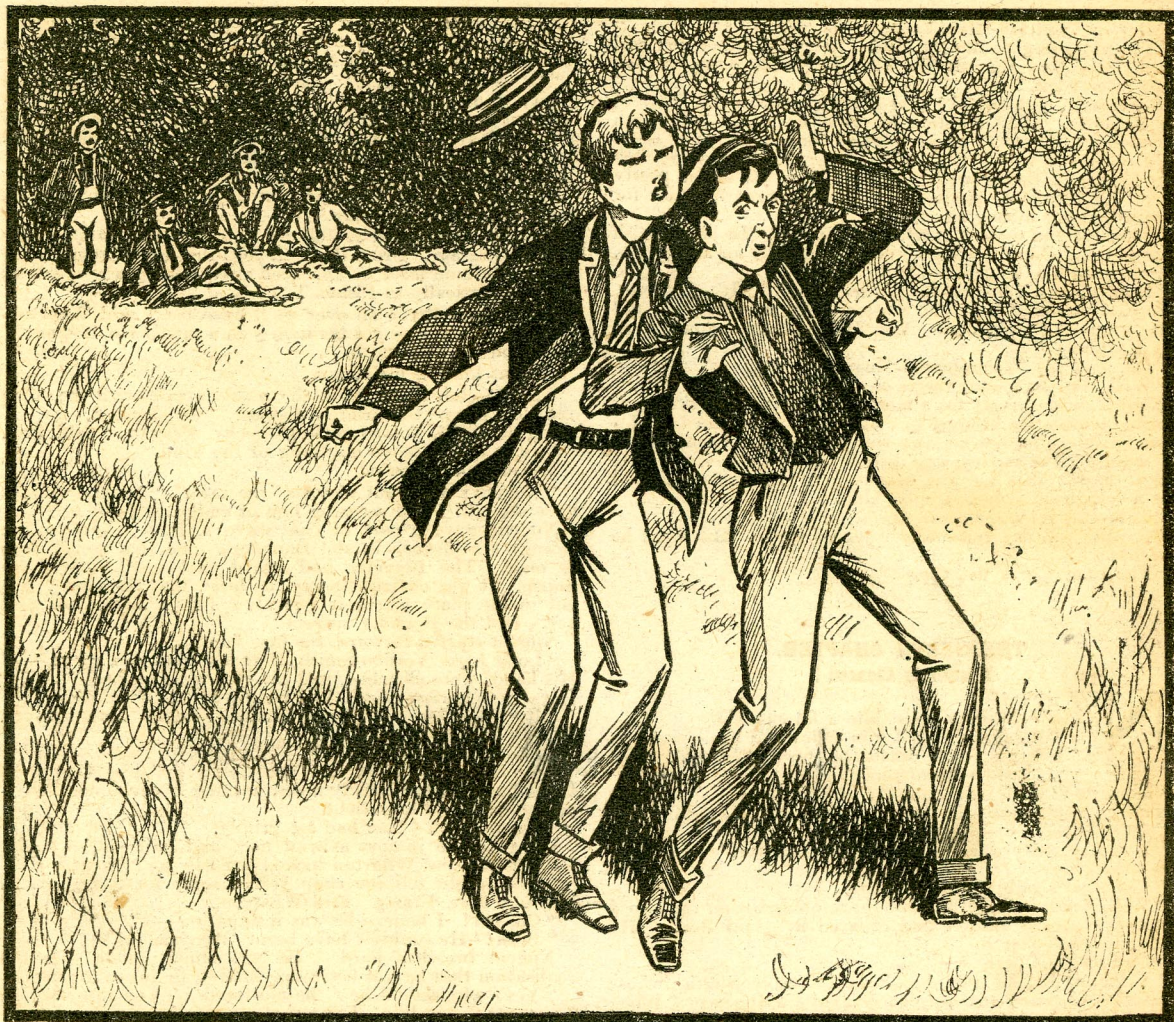
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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, with all the force of his powerful lungs, his mouth close behind Snoop's head. Snoop gave a violent jump, and the back of his head came into contact with Bob Cherry's chin with a loud crack. (See Chapter 1.)

Embezzler! That was what Snoop had called him. That was what all Greyfriars would be calling him when the truth came out.

He realised, with a shudder of horror, that it would be true. It was what he had done that counted, not what his motives might have been.

"Franky!" Wharton looked into the study with a concerned face. Nugent rose to his feet, trying to collect himself.

"We're battling again," said Harry. "Do you feel fit?"

"No, no, no!" "All right, old son. We're well ahead of the Fourth, and a wicket less won't make much difference to us. We shall beat them. I say, old fellow, if you feel ill—"

"I'm not ill." "You look a bit queer, Franky."

"For goodness' sake, let a fellow alone!" broke out Nugent. Then, as Wharton drew back, amazed and pained, he added quickly: "I—I'm sorry! I'm feeling beastly this afternoon. My nerves are all in a jangle. Don't mind me."

"All serene!" said Harry cheerily. "Don't worry. Take a rest for a bit."

And Wharton returned to the cricket. Nugent threw himself into the chair again.

"What would he say if he knew?" He wondered. Perhaps the fellows would not believe that he really had given the money to Snoop at all. It would be like Snoop to deny it. Indeed, after what had happened

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under the elms, it was only too probable that Snoop would deny it. What if they thought his explanation was a clumsy lie to cover the theft of the money?

But if they were left to believe Bunter guilty— That thought would return.

The afternoon was a long-drawn-out horror to Frank Nugent. He wished his chums would come in from the cricket, yet he dreaded their coming. But there was a tramp of feet in the passage at last.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Squiff, came into the study. Peter Todd followed them in, with his hand on Bunter's collar. Vernon-Smith came in last.

Nugent rose from the armchair. He understood what was coming.

"We've beaten them, kid!" said Bob Cherry, under the impression that that news would be a comfort to Nugent. Frank had almost forgotten that there had been a cricket match at all.

"Oh, good!" said Nugent dully. "Still feeling queer?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I'm all right, thanks!" "There's something we've got to go into," said Wharton.

"But if you'd rather not be bothered now, Nugent—" "Oh, go ahead! What's the matter?"

"It's about Bunter. He's collared the cricket money in your desk."

"Oh, really, Wharton—" "Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going to shut up when Wharton's calling me a thief!" said Bunter indignantly. "My opinion is that the money wasn't there, or I should have found it—I mean—"

"Dry up, you fat idiot!"

"I'm not going to dry up, Bob Cherry. I think you and Smithy ought to account for what you were doing in this study after I left."

"Cheese it, you idiot!" said Toddy, shaking the Owl of the Remove. "The question is, what have you done with the money? Nugent, Smithy found Bunter at your desk. He'd opened it with a key. The money was gone, and Bob says he knows the drawer you keep in it. It seems pretty clear; but before we settle the matter we want to know for certain that the money was there."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nugent. In his feverish state of mind Peter Todd's words sounded like an accusation. Todd gave him a surprised look.

"Don't I speak plainly?" he demanded. "It's just possible that you may have put the money somewhere else, and that it wasn't in the desk. You know whether you did or not, I suppose?"

"Oh, I—I see!" stammered Nugent.

"Well, was the money there, or wasn't it?"

Nugent did not reply for a moment. For the last time that horrible temptation seemed to clutch him. It seemed as if a power within him, not his own will, was forcing from his lips the words, "The money was there." Only those few words, and it meant that he was safe—safe! His honour saved! Not a breath of suspicion upon him!

But he did not utter those words.

His voice was dry and husky when he spoke. But what he said was:

"The money was not there!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Cleared!

"NOT there!" Billy Bunter burst into a fat chuckle.

"What did I tell you fellows?" he demanded.

"I hope you'll apologise now, Wharton! And you, Toddy—all of you, in fact!"

"Shut up!" said Wharton. "I'm jolly glad it's all right, though! You're sure the money wasn't there, Frank?"

"Quite sure."

"I found three-and-a-tanner in the drawer," said Bob.

"It's there now."

"Yes, that's right," said Nugent.

"Well, I knew there was about six quids beside that, so I naturally thought Bunter had collared it," said Bob. "He went there to collar it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I found him at the desk," said Vernon-Smith, whose eyes were lingering curiously on Nugent's white face. "When Bob said the money was gone, there seemed only one conclusion to draw. It's lucky that you had put the money somewhere else, Nugent."

"Yes, wasn't it?"

"Bunter would have had it," said Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Bull, you're an insulting beast! Nugent knows perfectly well that I asked him to lend me ten bob to pay my Cousin Wally. He refused, and I considered myself justified—"

"You fat rascal!"

"I considered myself justified in borrowing ten bob. I was going to put my postal-order in the drawer on Monday. That would have made it all right. It's simply disgusting of you fellows to suspect me of stealing! It shows a suspicious mind. Under the circumstances—"

"Oh, kick him out!" said Bob.

"Under the circumstances, as Nugent's got the money, I consider that he ought to lend me the ten bob all the same—Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter left the study suddenly, jerked out by Peter's grip on his collar. He was jerked along to No. 7; and then there was a sound of wailing and yelling, accompanied by the rhythmic swipe of a cricket-stump. Billy Bunter was learning that the way of the borrower, like that of the transgressor, is hard.

"Well, I'm jolly glad it's ended all right!" said Harry Wharton. "How jolly lucky you had put the money somewhere else, Frank! I thought you always kept it in that drawer."

Nugent nodded.

"So the money's safe now?" asked the Bounder, still with that intent look fixed on Nugent's face.

"Of course it's safe!" said Bob, before Nugent could speak. "And jolly lucky! Bunter went there to borrow ten bob, but he wouldn't have left much of it if he'd got his paws on it. It's lucky for Bunter, too. One of these times he will find himself in a reformatory, with his blessed tricks."

"Nobody's safe from the beast!" growled Johnny Bull. "He must have got that bunch of keys from Fishy. I think I'll go and speak to Fishy."

The juniors grinned as Johnny Bull strode away along the Remove-passage. From the wild yells that came from No. 14 Study a minute later, it appeared that Johnny was speaking very emphatically to Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, now that's all over we'll have tea," said Wharton. "I suppose you've got the money in a safe place, Nugent?" remarked Vernon-Smith.

Nugent knitted his brows.

"If the club don't think the money's safe with me, they can elect a new treasurer, I suppose?" he snapped.

"Dash it all, you're getting touchy, Franky!" said Bob.

"Smithy didn't mean anything of the kind."

Vernon-Smith smiled.

"Nugent's a bit out of sorts" he said. "Anybody might have thought I was accusing him of embezzling the tin."

Nugent gave a sort of convulsive start. There was a strange significance in the Bounder's tone that struck him at once. The Bounder had heard that word uttered by Snoop. It was curious, to say the least, that the money was not in the place where it was always kept under lock and key. Did the Bounder suspect?

Nugent started forward, his face flaming.

"Look here, Vernon-Smith, if that's what you mean—" His hands were clenched, and his eyes were blazing.

Harry Wharton caught him hastily by the shoulder.

"For goodness' sake, draw it mild, Frank! How can you be such an ass?"

"Smith says—"

"He doesn't. What are you flying out like that for? Don't be so dashed touchy about nothing!" exclaimed Wharton, puzzled and impatient.

Vernon-Smith's face had set grimly.

He gave the juniors a brief nod, and quitted the study. Bob Cherry and Wharton looked uneasily at Nugent.

"You might tell the chap you're sorry for flying out at him like that, Frank," said Wharton.

"Oh, rot! I believe he was insinuating—"

"Bosh! He couldn't have been. Why should he?"

Nugent breathed hard. He was almost giddy with the realisation that he was betraying himself by his excitement.

"Yes; why should he?" he muttered. "You can tell him I'm sorry if you like. I'm out of sorts to-day."

"Let's have tea," said Harry.

Hurree Singh and Mark Linley and Johnny Bull came in to tea. Wharton went along the passage, and looked into Vernon-Smith's study.

"Don't mind, Nugent, Smithy," he said. "He's out of sorts. He says he's sorry for jumping out like that."

The Bounder laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm sorry Nugent took what I said amiss. Everybody knows there isn't a more honourable chap than Nugent in the school. He must be a duffer to suppose I thought anything else."

"Of course!" said Harry.

But when the Bounder was alone again, there was a very peculiar expression on his face. He remained for a long time deep in thought.

Tea in No. 1 Study was not a very cheery meal. Nugent was gloomy and preoccupied, and it was plain that he was decidedly out of sorts. He spoke hardly a word, and quitted the study as soon as he could. His chums could not help feeling anxious, but they were far from attributing Frank's gloomy looks to their real cause.

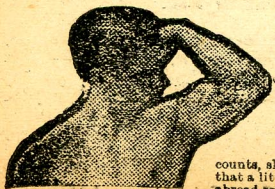
The next day, and the next, Nugent seemed still more deeply plunged in gloomy despondency.

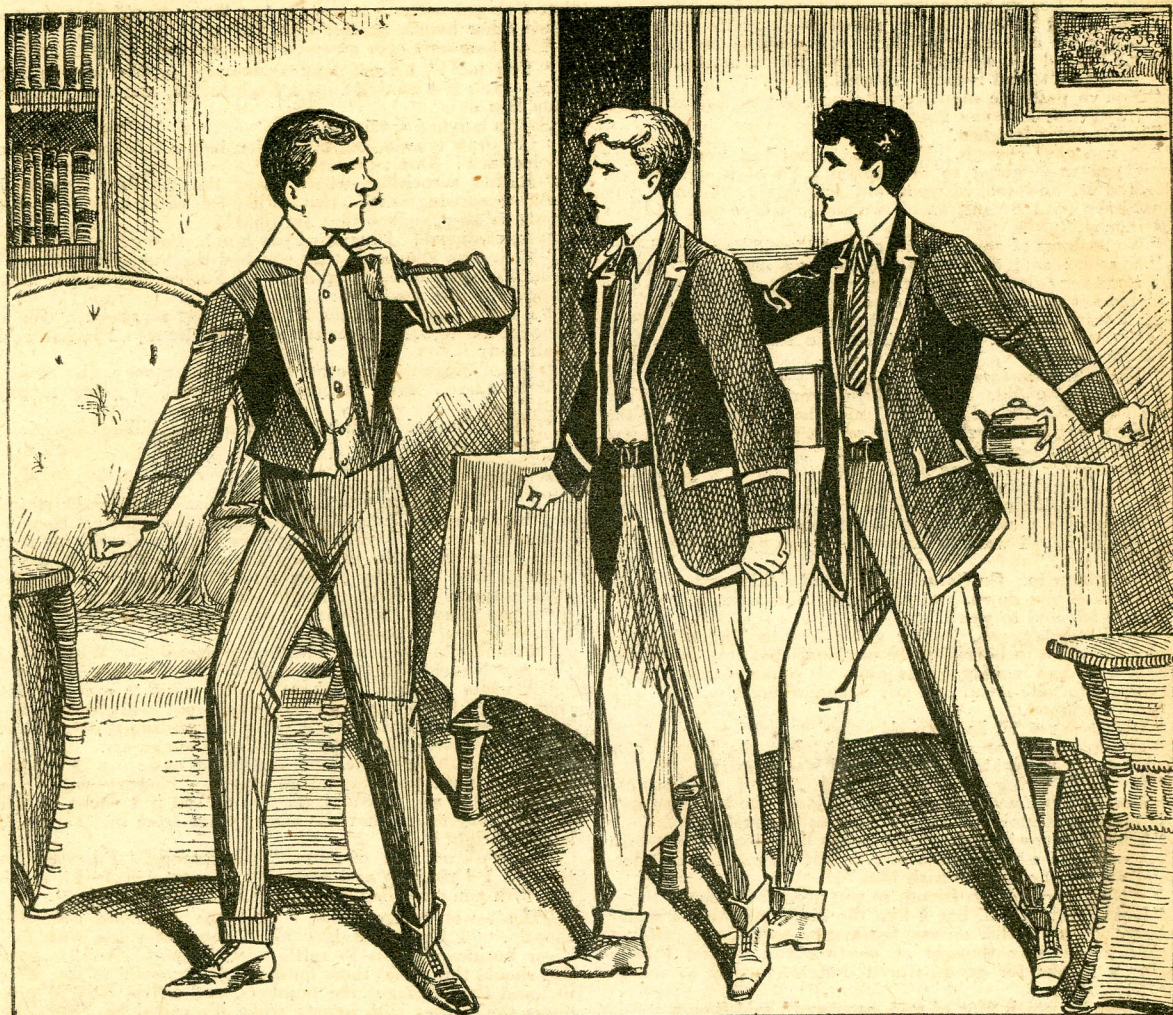
His friends had ceased to remark on it, as any remark only caused a burst of irritability. They concluded that

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Nugent started forward, his face flaming. "Look here, Vernon-Smith, if that's what you mean——" His hands were clenched, and his eyes were blazing. Harry Wharton caught him hastily by the shoulder. "For goodness' sake, draw it mild, Frank! How can you be such an ass?" (See Chapter 10.)

Nugent's health was suffering, and certainly he was "off his form" in every way.

As a matter of fact, the unfortunate junior was in an almost-desperate frame of mind.

The date was coming closer when he had to account for the money, and the money was gone. Snoop had not spoken a word to him since that interview under the elms. But in any case there was no help to be looked for from Snoop.

There was no help to be looked for at all, Nugent felt himself in a net from which there was no escape. The hour was coming nearer and nearer when the disclosure must be made, and there was no help. Nobody suspected yet, though once or twice Nugent could not help thinking that the keen, clear-headed Bounder suspected something. It mattered little. He would know soon.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Chaps In!

"SNOOPEY, dear boy!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars tapped Snoop on the shoulder in a friendly way. It was Monday, after lessons.

Vernon-Smith had been out on his bicycle, and after his return he had looked for Snoop. He found him hanging about the doorway.

His cordiality surprised Snoop. Very glad would Sidney The Magnet Library.—No. 454.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

James have been to "pal" with the millionaire's son, but the Bounder had never shown any desire in that direction.

"Hallo, old chap!" said Snoop.

"Come up to my study, will you?"

"Certainly!"

Snoop smiled as he followed Vernon-Smith upstairs. He supposed that he was being asked to the Bounder's study for a smoke; for Snoop, for one, had never believed in the Bounder's reform. Snoop did not believe good of anybody if he could help it.

Vernon-Smith opened the door, and Snoop entered, Smithy following him in. Then the door was shut and locked. This seemed a proper preliminary to a smoke, and Snoop laughed. "Same old Bounder!" he remarked. "Where are the smokes?"

"Smokes! There aren't any smokes," said the Bounder pleasantly. "I've brought you here for a little talk, Snoopsey."

"Oh!" said Snoop, disappointed.

"I've locked the door so that we sha'n't be interrupted. I may have to break your neck if you don't tell me what I want to know!" said the Bounder, very agreeably.

Snoop jumped up, and rose hastily from the armchair he had sat in.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he demanded hotly.

"Sit down!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Sit down!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Snoop sat down again. The Bounder's manner was imperative.

"Blessed if I know what you're driving at!" said Snoop sullenly. "You're not going to bully me, Vernon-Smith."

"I'm going to talk to you. Last week you were trying to borrow up and down the Remove—you had the nerve to ask me to lend you six pounds to settle with a moneylender."

"You didn't lend it me!" sneered Snoop.

"You've paid the man since."

"I don't see how you know."

The Bounder laughed.

"It was easy enough. You went about last week looking as if you were going to be hanged. All of a sudden you chucked it, and looked your old self again. I knew you must have paid Straus, and I wondered where you had got the money."

"No business of yours, that I can see!" said Snoop sullenly. "Exactly; so I didn't bother my head about it," agreed the Bounder calmly. "Your business doesn't matter to me, and I don't care two pence whether you're sacked or not. In fact, I think it would be a good thing for the school if you went. But I didn't bring you here to tell you that. You paid Straus?"

"That's my business!"

"I know you did. I've been over to his office on my bike," said the Bounder. "I've met the man before—in the old days, you know, when I was as big a blackguard as you are! I asked him, and he told me. You've paid up, and got your paper back from him."

"Blessed if I see why you took the trouble! I suppose you're not thinking of sneaking to Quelch about it, now you're so jolly virtuous?" sneered Snoop.

"Not at all. I want to know where you got the money."

"Find out!"

"I'm going to. On Saturday you had a talk with Nugent. He knocked you down, and you called him an embezzler."

Snoop affected to yawn.

"On Saturday, too, Bunter got a key to Nugent's desk, and went there to borrow some of the cricket club cash. He would have had it, only it was gone. It appears that Nugent happened to take it out and put it somewhere else."

Snoop grinned.

"Did he say so?" he queried.

"He didn't say so. I noticed that. But the fellows concluded so. I was watching him, and I wasn't satisfied."

"If you're trying to get something out of me against Nugent, you can save your breath. I don't like him, and he's a hot-tempered fool, but I've nothing to say against him."

"That isn't my object. Nugent has been looking down in the mouth for a week, or nearly. His friends can't understand what's the matter with him."

"Well, you're not his friend, so you needn't bother."

"Not exactly a pal, but I like the kid," said the Bounder calmly. "He's rather an ass, but a good sort of ass. Only a duffer would have thought of trusting you. And I have rather a regard for good-natured duffers—they're so unlike me."

"Nugent's worth fifty of you, anyway!" said Snoop.

"Agreed. That's why I'm going to get him out of this hole," said the Bounder. "I'm pretty certain he's in a hole. He can't keep a secret. Everybody can see that there's something on his mind. Putting one thing to another, I'm satisfied as to what it is. You pay Straus—getting the money from goodness knows where—and the same day Nugent begins looking worried and driven. It turns out that the cricket-money isn't in its usual place—the only safe place Nugent has for keeping it in."

"You call him an embezzler, and there's nothing he could embezzle excepting the cricket funds. He knocks you down, and he wouldn't trouble to soil his hands on you unless there was something between you—some specially dirty trick you had played him. He was touchy, and flew out at me, when I purposely made a remark about embezzling the cricket club money. I did it to draw him, and he was drawn as easy as a baby. Putting two and two together, and making four of it, there's only one construction to be put on the matter."

"And what's that?" asked Snoop, shifting uneasily.

"This! You got round Nugent to lend you the cricket money to pay Straus. You couldn't have got it anywhere else. He's a soft ass, and you worked on his feelings—promised it back, I suppose, in a short time. I wouldn't have trusted you an inch, but Nugent hasn't brains. He must have been mad to lend you the money. But you worked on his feelings somehow."

Snoop was silent.

The cool, clear brain of the Bounder had worked the little problem out quite simply, and Snoop wondered why he had done it. Once, indeed, Vernon-Smith had been very much "up against" No. 1 Study. But for a good time now he had been on the best of terms with Harry Wharton & Co.

"Nugent's acted like a rogue because he's a fool," said

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Vernon-Smith. "You've acted like a rogue because you were born one. Am I right?"

"Find out!" said Snoop sullenly. "Nugent turned on me, but I've got nothing to say against him. You'll have to find some other handle against him, Smithy."

The Bounder's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"You fool!" he said contemptuously. "I'm not against him. He's got himself into a frightful fix, and I'm going to help him out."

Snoop laughed scoffingly.

"Oh, draw it mild, Smithy! You help a fellow who's down on his luck! Don't be funny!"

"Rather surprising—what?" said the Bounder, unmoved. "But, surprising as it is, that's what I'm going to do. You're going to pay Nugent that six quid!"

"You fathead! How can I pay him? I've got nothing!"

"That's an admission that you had the money from him," said Vernon-Smith, laughing. "You're not quite keen enough for me, Snoopey!"

"I don't admit anything!" said Snoop savagely. "When Nugent has to account for the money, if he says I've had it, I shall deny it."

"When Nugent has to account for the money, the money will be there," said Vernon-Smith. "You're going to pay him."

"You silly ass! I can't! I haven't six shillings, let alone six pounds!"

"I'm going to find that."

"You!" yelled Snoop.

"I!" The Bounder took out his pocket-book, and counted out six currency notes for a pound each under Snoop's astounded eyes. "I'm going to give you the money, my son, and you're going to pay Nugent—without giving him the slightest hint that the money comes from me. If Nugent even suspects that for a single instant, I'll see that Straus gives you away to the Head. I can arrange that with him for a quid or two. I mean it, mind!"

"I think you're dotty," said Snoop dazedly. "Why should you pay Nugent?"

"A whim of mine. Perhaps I don't want to see a decent chap ruined for saving a dashed rascal from his deserts. Perhaps I think Nugent deserves it for not putting it on Bunter, as he could have done easily. Perhaps I am an ass. Anyway, the tin is nothing to me, and I'm going to do it. Put that money in your pocket, and go and pay Nugent—without a breath about me. I could get you sacked if I chose, and if Nugent ever learns that the money came from me I'll do it, honour bright!"

"I shan't tell him, of course," said Snoop. "I'd rather he thought I'd paid up as I promised, of course. I—I'll settle this with you some day, Smithy, if I have any luck."

"Don't worry about that," said the Bounder contemptuously. "I know just how much you will settle with me. Your business now is to settle with Nugent. And, in case you should think that those quids would be useful to you, bear in mind that I've got the numbers, and unless Nugent produces the cricket club money when it's called for, you'll be charged with stealing them!"

Snoop flushed crimson. He was not quite capable of that. But the Bounder left nothing to chance. He left the study with the notes in his pocket without another word.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Cloud Lifts!

FRANK NUGENT was in No. 1 Study alone. He was pacing restlessly to and fro in the study.

His secret was weighing like lead upon his mind. In a few days it would be a secret no longer. He would have to face accusing looks, contemptuous smiles, disgust, aversion. He had failed in his trust! Whatever way he looked at it, that was the fact.

His own chums would stand by him, doubtless. They would make every allowance for his motives, for his weak good nature. But in the general eye he would be condemned. He knew that he could not remain at Greyfriars afterwards—to be despised, to be pitied! His cheeks burned at the thought.

Snoop came quietly into the study.

The unhappy junior turned upon him furiously. Nugent's temper was little under control now. He was in a state of nerves that came near to being hysterical.

"Get out! What do you want here? Get out!" he shouted.

"Keep your wool on!" said Snoop coolly. "I've come to pay up!"

Nugent staggered back.

"You—you've come to pay up?"

Snoop nodded. He was rather enjoying the situation.

"Yes; rather earlier than I promised. You gave me till

Wednesday, and it's only Monday. But I thought I'd set your mind at rest, as I've got the money."

"You've got the money!" said Nugent dazedly.

"Yes."

"Then—then why did you tell me on Saturday—" panted Nugent. "Do you know what I've gone through since then?"

"Well, I gave you the tip because it seemed doubtful then; but, as it happens, it's turned out all right. I promised to pay, and here's the money. Count it!"

And Sidney James Snoop, with a flourish, laid six pound notes on the table.

Nugent stared at them.

"Well, that's all right—what!" said Snoop.

"Yes, it's all right. Thanks!"

"All serene, then! Ta-ta!"

Snoop strolled out of the study, humming a tune.

Frank Nugent sank into a chair, almost overcome. The money was in his hands now; the horrible word embezzlement would not be uttered now. The money had been returned, and he could face his friends with unflinching eyes.

But his conscience was not clear. The money was returned; there would be no default in his accounts. But he had done wrong; that was not altered by the fact that now it would never be known.

"Coming, Frank? Wib's waiting to begin the rehearsal, you know."

Harry Wharton came into the study. He glanced in surprise at the currency notes crumpled in Nugent's fingers.

"Carrying the money about with you, in case Bunter burgles the desk again?" he asked, laughing. "It's all right; Bunter's not got a key now. Better lock it up!"

"Come in and shut the door, Harry."

"Eh? What's the matter?"

"Shut the door!"

Wharton, in wonder, closed the study door, and turned towards his chum. Nugent's face was pale and tense.

"For goodness' sake, what's the matter, Frank?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, in vague alarm.

"I've got something to tell you," said Nugent. "I—I shouldn't have told you, only—it's all right now. I lent the cricket-club money to Snoop to get him out of a fix with a moneylender!"

"Frank!"

"You can call me what you like," said Nugent moodily. "I know what it was, though it wasn't so clear when I did it. Snoop would have been sacked if I hadn't, and he promised to return it in a week; and then—then on Saturday he told me he couldn't return it!"

"That's what's been the matter with you?" said Harry, very quietly.

"Yes."

"Well, you were an ass!" said Wharton. "Of course, you shouldn't have done it!"

"I know it was embezzling."

"No, it wasn't, fathead! You didn't use the money yourself!"

"A good many of the fellows would have called it that," said Nugent bitterly, "and they'd have been right. What ought I to do now?"

"Keep your mouth shut," said Wharton. "Don't be such a dashed good-natured ass again, and don't jaw about it. It's just like you to get yourself into a fix for a chap who isn't worth the trouble. But do you mean to say Snoop's paid up?"

"He's just brought me the money."

Wharton whistled.

"Then he can't be such a rotter. Why didn't you tell me before, you duffer? You know I've got money in the bank!"

Nugent shook his head.

"You think I'd better say nothing now?" he asked. "I feel inclined to tell all Greyfriars, and wear sackcloth and ashes!"

"If you say a word I'll punch your silly head! Lock that money up, and come down to the rehearsal!" said Wharton.

Nugent locked the money in his desk.

"It's all right, Frank," said Wharton quietly. "You've only been an ass; there's nothing to be guilty about. It's all over now; shove it out of your mind. You ought to have told me before."

"I couldn't!" muttered Nugent. "I—I was going to clear off—" He broke off. "I'll take your advice, Harry, and shove it out of my mind. It won't happen again, anyway. Let's get out!"

Frank Nugent was looking quite cheery when he came into the Rag with Harry Wharton. And that rehearsal of "Hamlet" passed off even to Wibley's satisfaction.

THE END.

(Do not miss "FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 434.

NEXT

MONDAY—

"FIGHTING TO THE FINISH!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

BRIEF REPLIES

To Readers of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY.

"Lenytas."—We get the New Year first, as Australian time is about twelve hours behind ours. I think it is generally held that the middle coaches of a train are likely to suffer least in a collision.

W. G. T. (Cardiff).—If you will get a copy of the "Boys' Friend," you will find the Anti-German League Pledge. Hope your eyes are quite recovered now. Pleased to hear you liked "The Rubies of Sheba."

"A Girl Reader" (Renfrew).—Your reasonable and well-argued letter is very welcome. You adopt a completely opposite attitude to "Sydney G.," who wants all the slang cut out of our stories; and I quite agree with you that Bob Cherry wouldn't seem quite the same old Bob if he said "Dear me!" and "Good gracious!" and that it would be difficult to express what one thought of Bunter and Fish at their worst by saying: "My opinion of you is not an agreeable one." So I will reconsider my decision. And anyway—between you and me—it is not so easy to drive Messrs. Clifford and Richards if they don't like the road chosen.

Cyril B. thinks that Sydney G. must have been talking out of the back of his head. Really, Cyril B.! Why don't you say something like this: "I do not agree with Sydney G., and I regard his opinions as ill-judged and pedantic." I note your criticism of the photo scheme. You think that those who send along their photos are swanky—ahem!—I mean, are vain and—er—dear me!—the dictionary words are not half as easy to remember as the other sort, after all. Well, I don't agree with you. But we shall not quarrel about it. Vernon-Smith is the surname. The Bounder's Christian name is Herbert.

G. R. E. (Ramsgate).—Newland is about fifteen. The omission of his name from the supplement was a pure accident.

Private R. W. U. (B.E.F.).—Very glad to hear that you and your chums are so keen on my papers. Yours is the sort of message I like to get. But a word in your ear! You say you will stand B. B. a feed, as you are one of his titled relations. Don't—unless you are a millionaire!

C. A. M. (New South Wales).—Right-ho! Look out for a Squiff yarn before long.

Faithful Magnetite (Melbourne).—Imaginary. I edit the "Gem"—not the other paper you mention.

J. R. (Tasmania).—Are you tired of the Famous Five?

A. O. (Malvern, Victoria).—As things are now, there would be small chance of your parcel finding its addressee, with the delays caused by the time your letter takes to reach me, the time before the reply appears, and the time before you see it.

A. V. R. (Hawthorn, Melbourne).—If you send your full name and address, I will let you have a few back numbers of the "Magnet," trusting you to distribute them among non-readers when you have read them. The Christmas Supplement will have answered some of your questions, but I simply cannot tell you where the boys live.

J. A. J. (Adelaide, South Australia).—Thanks for your interesting card. Adelaide seems to be a fine city, with plenty of churches. "Mystery Island" is already published in book form at 3d.

P. B. V. (Shooter's Hill).—The places named are imaginary.

Roy D. (New South Wales).—Squiff hails from Sydney, I believe. Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Squiff are three of the best cricketers in the Remove.

"King's Scout."—Hazel is Hazeldene's name among his friends, and it is quite natural Marjorie should fall into the habit of using it.

J. L. H. (Swadlincote).—Correspondence Exchange closed. No; we shall not publish the "Herald" in volume form. But it is quite easy to get copies bound.

J. E. (Highworth).—Send fourpence in stamps to this office, and you can get a copy of "School and Sport." Bunter's relatives are rather mysterious persons, so I can't tell you if they are in khaki. Don't know about Brandreths.

Rifeman A. E. Carter wishes to thank heartily the numerous readers who sent him copies of the companion papers. They were much appreciated by him and his comrades, he says.

M. G. (Stoke Newington).—Thanks!

Readers will find a further List of Notices on Cover, page ii.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story.



: : By : :

T. C. BRIDGES.

The First Instalments Briefly Told.

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain MATTHEW SNELL is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempts to kill the two chums.

Dick and Dudley eventually find Matthew Snell hiding in a small cave, and with his help they flood out Ezra Cray's camp, thus compelling the gang to evacuate it.

Cray and some of his colleagues escape from the island, but a storm arises, and their ship is blown back on the island, where it becomes a wreck.

Ambrose Bent, one of Gray's colleagues, swims ashore, and is the only survivor.

As they are short of food, Dick decides to swim out to the wreck with a rope, and asks Bent to assist him.

"It's going to be the last thing you'll ever do in your life!" Bent answers.

(Now read the conclusion of the story.)

Safe and Sound!

"Someone's got to do it," snapped Dick; "or else you'll starve with the rest of us. There's only two days' grub left on the island!"

As he spoke he was knotting one end of the rope round his own body. Dudley and Snell were almost in despair, Dudley in particular. He looked at Dick, then down at the wreck, which was now as bare as a bald head, and sluiced every moment by the ever-growing seas. The wind was increasing every minute, and at times it was almost impossible to stand against the furious gusts.

Ambrose Bent rose to his feet. He took hold of the loose end of the rope in his enormous hands.

"Be you sot on trying it, mister?" he asked of Dick, in his deep, grunting voice.

"Yes," said Dick curtly. "Come on!"

Bent gazed at the boy, and there was a queer look on his thick, heavy face.

"I guess you're white," he said. "I guess there ain't no yellow streak in yew. Yew kin jest take that there rope right off of yourself."

"What the mischief are you talking about? For good-

ness' sake, hurry up!" retorted Dick irritably. "The whole hull will be gone before I can get down to her!"

"There ain't no need fer yew to do daown," drawled Bent. "Thar's grub an' to spare without your killing of yourself down among them there rocks."

"Oh, I ain't crazy!" he continued, as he saw the incredulous amazement of the other three. "Old Snell, thar, he looks ez if he thought I was loony or lying, but I ain't either. The stuff's cached—that's why yew ain't seed it. We cached it becos we was skeered them there niggers might get a hold of it. But I knows where it be, and yew kin hev it any time yew've a mind to."

"So, you sees," he added, with a grim smile, "yew lads didn't do yourselves sech a bad turn as might be when yew pulled me outer the water."

He was telling the truth. There was no longer any doubt about that—at least, in Dick's mind. As for Dudley, he drew a long breath of deepest relief. Never in his life had he been more miserable than during the last few minutes, since Dick had announced his intention of going down the bluff.

Before any of them could speak again there was a crash that sounded loud above the scream of the gale and the roar of the waves.

"She's gone!" cried Dudley. "She's gone!"

All four turned quickly. A wave more gigantic than any yet had caught the stern of the schooner, lifting her with such irresistible force that her hull was broken clean in two. Before their eyes she melted into a litter of planking which for a moment blackened the heavy waves, then was almost immediately scattered in every direction.

"Come on!" said Dick sharply. "Come down to the beach, all of you! Every plank is precious if we've got to build a new craft!"

He was right. They all knew that, and they followed him down to the strip of beach. Within the next few minutes all sorts of stuff, carried inwards by the rising tide, began to come ashore.

For the next two hours, until the tide covered the beach, and drove them back to higher ground, they toiled furiously, and their efforts were rewarded by a great stack of timber, as well as several casks of flour, biscuits, and other odds and ends.

By that time they were all aching with fatigue. Also, it was fast getting dark.

"Guess we may as well get home, boys!" said old Snell, who had done his full share in the work of salvage. "Supper and sleep ain't a-going to hurt any of us!"

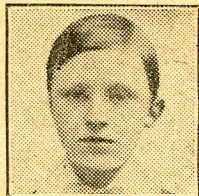
"Where be yew going?" asked Bent, who had been putting his great strength to good use. "Back to yewr old cabin?"

"There ain't any cabin left," returned Snell sharply. "And

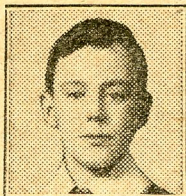
(Continued on page iv of cover.)



ALBERT BROWN,
Coventry.



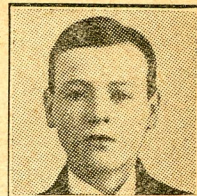
WALTER HOLLIWELL,
Oldham.



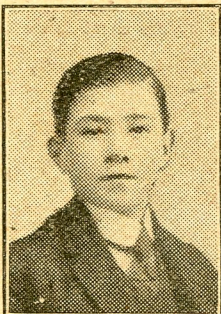
ERNEST WOODCOCK,
Carlisle.



PERCIVAL MEAD,
Glasgow.



WILLIAM NIXON,
Barnsbury, N.



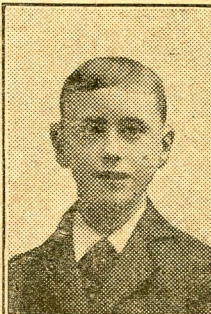
W. A. HARPER,
Bethnal Green.



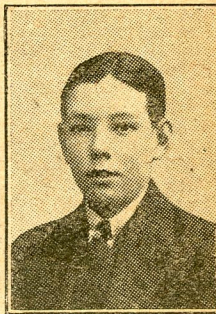
REGINALD CLARKE,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.



T. G. POULTON,
Welwyn, Herts.



A. F. HENNING,
Margate.



WALTER JOHN FLYNN,
Llanelli, S. Wales.



R. EVANS (Scout),
Hounslow.



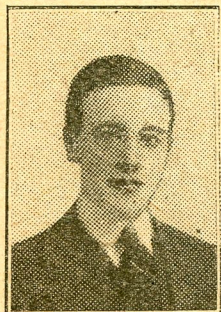
H. POOLE (Scout),
Sheerness.



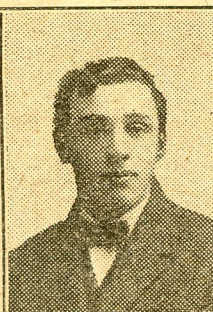
Lt. R. W.,
An Officer Reader.



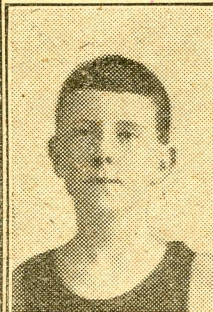
R. E. WOOD,
Melbourne, Australia.



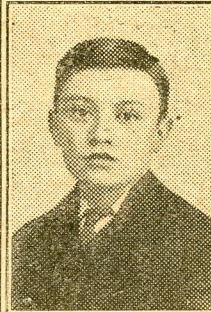
EDWIN HALSTEAD,
Dewsbury.



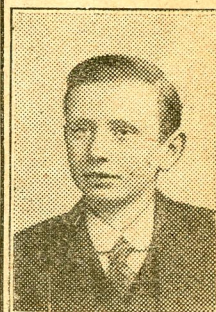
F. BROWN,
Grimsbey.



ALBERT STEATHAM,
Coventry.



J. E. LAKE,
Norwich.



R. A. OSBORNE,
Newcastle-on-Tyne.



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Thirkleby Park.



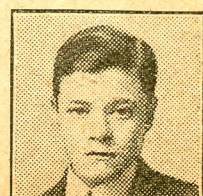
J. WATTINGHAM,
New Cross, London.



S. WORBOYS,
Clay Cross, Derbyshire.



J. RICHARDSON,
Southport.



ARTHUR C. BEVIS,
London, N.

THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from page 20.)

anyway, if there had have been, I guess you folk made it a derned sight too dirty to live in!"

"Cray always was a hog!" observed Bent, not at all offended.

Snell whispered to Dick.

"Say, d'ye reckon we better take him to the cave?"

"Every time!" Dick answered. "We can keep an eye on him there!"

So Bent went with them to the Blowhole. The other three watched him keenly, but he did nothing in the least suspicious. Dick came to the conclusion that he really was to some extent grateful for his rescue, and that he was able to see that all his interests lay in making himself agreeable to his rescuers.

All his old associates were gone. He himself could do little alone against three well-armed men. No doubt he had made up his mind to make the best of a bad job, and was willing to be as helpful as possible in the hope that he might perhaps be allowed to go free with a small share of the gold. It was to Dudley that Dick confided these ideas. To his surprise, Dudley did not agree.

"I wouldn't trust the fellow round the corner," he said. "No sir. Bent may not be as bad as Cray, but he's not white. He'll do us down if he gets one little chance, and don't you forget it!"

"But what can he do?" remonstrated Dick.

"Nothing, if I can shoot quick enough!" answered Dudley. Then, in a more serious tone: "See here, Dick. There's thousands of pounds of gold ready dug and waiting in that cache. Bent ain't the sort to let that go. It's my belief he'd cut the throats of the lot of us if he saw his chance. So you just watch out. That's all I've got to say!"

There was food enough in the cave for that night, and whatever Dudley's suspicions, Bent showed no sign of justifying them. He said little, but helped with all the work. Next morning they were all up bright and early. The gale had blown itself out, the sun shone warmly, and a light breeze rippled the blue sea.

They set to work at once. Bent, true to his promise, showed them the cache where the food had been buried. There was plenty for them all for about a month. They collected the negroes, rationed them, and went down to the bay to get in all the wreckage that they could find.

They got a great deal—so much that their hopes rose. It seemed as if it would actually be possible to build a boat fit to take them to the mainland.

They built a small slip at the sheltered end of the bay, and set to work. By the second evening the keel was laid.

Snell knew what he was about, and Bent proved a useful workman. He behaved so well that even Dudley's suspicions seemed to be allayed.

For about a week the work went on well. Then they found themselves short of nails, and it was necessary to go and hunt up the ruined remains of the cabin in order to pull from it all the iron they could find.

But the pieces were scattered for half a mile among the trees, and much seemed to have vanished altogether. They spent a whole day at the work, and it was a very discouraged party who gathered again by the stockade to compare notes and see what they had got.

Snell looked very serious.

"I'll be blamed if I know how we're ever going to finish out, boys," he said gravely. "We ought to have another twenty pound o' nails!"

Dick and Dudley did not answer. They were both feeling depressed.

"Whar's Bent?" asked Snell presently. "Maybe he's done better'n the rest o' us!"

"I haven't seen him since dinner-time!" said Dick.

Dudley started.

"No more have I!" he exclaimed. Without another word he hurried off.

"What's up?" cried Dick. But Dudley did not pause.

Dick ran after him, and caught him at the cache.

"I told you so," said Dudley grimly, pointing at the pit, which was open. "I told you so! He's put it over us all right!"

And Dick, gazing with horrified eyes at the almost empty cache, could only acknowledge that Dudley had had more sense than he.

"But whar's he gone?" demanded Snell, when they told him what had happened. "Whar's he gone? He can't have left the island!"

"Not unless he swam for it," replied Dick grimly.

"Or built a raft," put in Dudley.

Snell shook his head.

"I ain't got no notion what the feller's up to," he said.

"Well, I'm going down to the bay," said Dick, picking up his rifle. "Dudley, you'd best slip across to the south side, and go on round by the Blowhole. We'll meet there and report."

He went off at a run. He was very sore, and very angry. What Bent was playing at he could not conceive, but at any rate he had credited the man with common decency. At the same time, he was utterly puzzled.

Pushing rapidly through the thick bush on the way to the bay, he heard heavy footsteps coming towards him. Next moment Bent himself appeared, slouching along with his usual long, slow stride.

Dick fairly gasped with surprise, and suddenly flung up his rifle.

Bent raised his arm. There was a curiously sheepish expression on his face.

"You don't need to shoot, pardner, unless you wants to," he said. "I wuz a-coming back!"

Dick stared, then slowly lowered his rifle.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to explain," he said curtly. "I'll tell ye," said Bent, "or mebbe yew'd best come and see."

He turned and led the way down to the bay. He took Dick right round to the western side where the water was shallow, and mangroves grew out on the foreshore. He led the way straight down among these, and presently they came to a little opening.

There, floating in a sort of tiny dock lay the catboat!

Dick could hardly believe his eyes. He had thought her wrecked long ago; yet here she was, safe and sound as the day they had left her adrift to board the schooner.

"I found her a week ago," said Bent. "She ain't hurt any. Must hev just drifted in here."

"And you were going off with her?" said Dick severely, pointing to the stores aboard.

Bent nodded shamefacedly.

"I wuz!"

"Why didn't you, then?"

"Guess I couldn't!" growled Bent.

For a moment Dick stared at him. Then impulsively he put out his hand.

"I knew you were white!" he said shortly.

Two mornings later the four white men arrived safely at Lemon Bay. They landed before dawn, and not a soul was about.

When they were all out of the boat, and had tied her up, they paused and stood together on the beach. Then Dick handed to Bent a small, but heavy leather pouch.

"That's your share," he said. "I think it's enough to start you anywhere you like to go."

Bent nodded.

"Guess I'll shift out o' here anyways," he said, with a slow grin. "Mebbe I'll go west. Waal, good luck to ye, Mr. Daunt! Good luck to all of ye!" He shook hands all round, then turned, and without another word vanished in the gloom.

"I've seen worse chaps!" remarked Dick quietly.

"A heap!" agreed Dudley. Then, in a more cheerful tone: "What price digging old Ladd out of bed? Gee, but he'll stand on his red head with joy when he sees us turn up again safe and sound!"

THE END.

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