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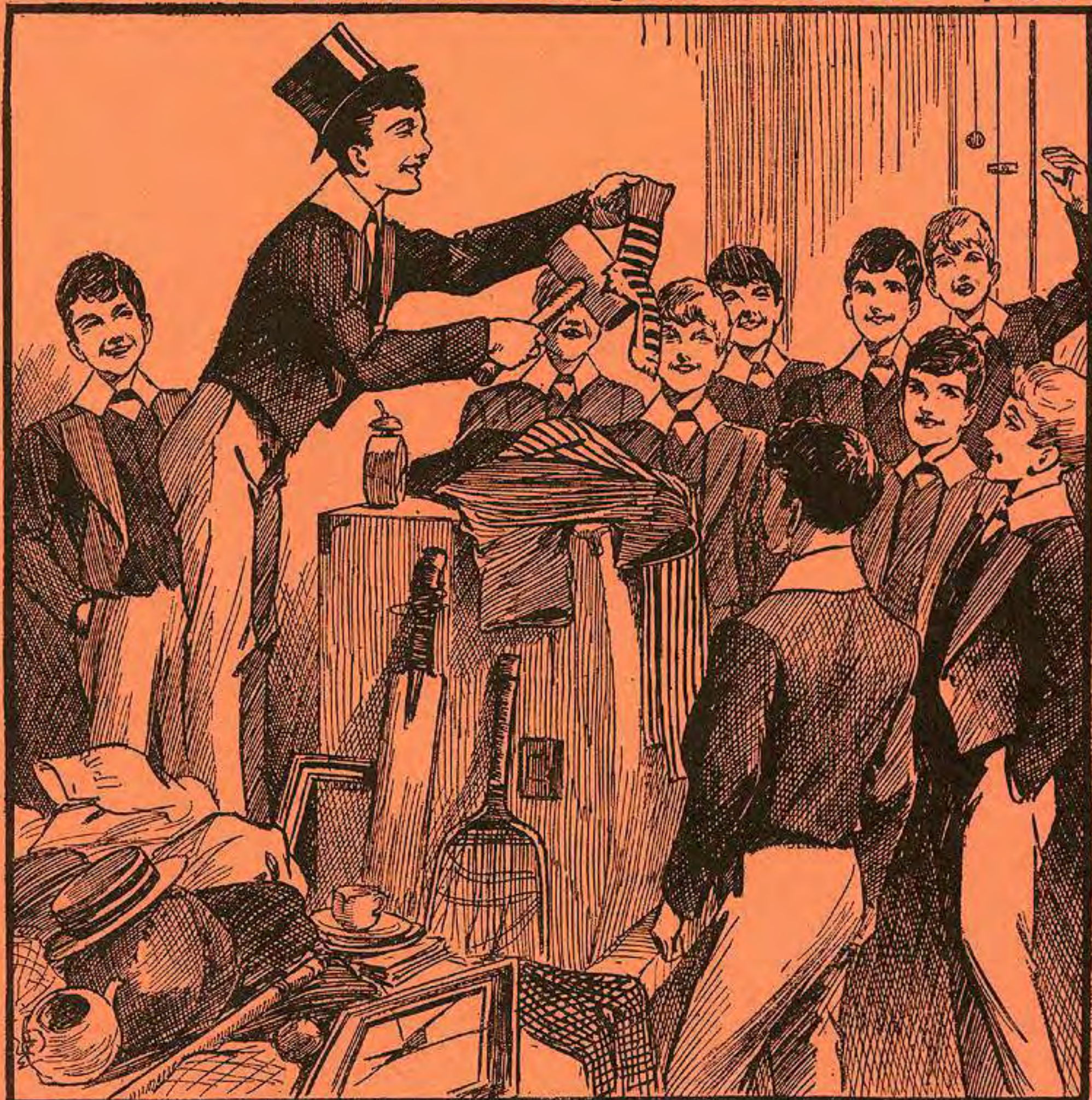
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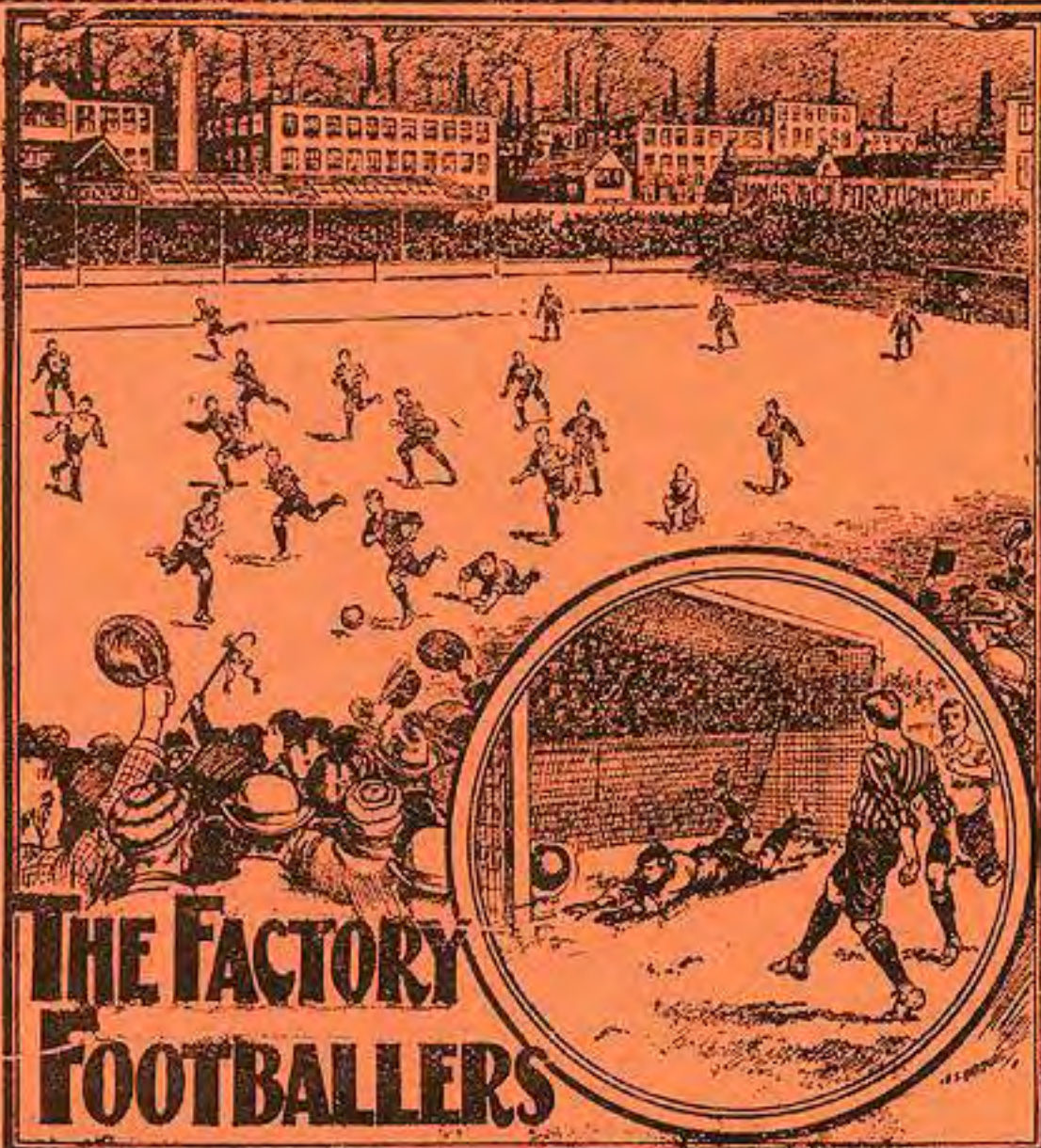
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By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Cash Down!

"PAY up!" Frank Nugent, of the Greyfriars Remove, jerked out the words peremptorily, and levelled his lead-pencil in an admonishing way at Harry Wharton. Wharton looked up in astonishment. He was seated in the armchair in No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage, with his feet on the table, and the chair tilted back to a dangerous angle. He lowered the book he was reading, and stared at Frank.

"Eh?"

"Pay up!" repeated Nugent.

"What are you talking about?"

"Pay up!"

"Look here, you ass——"

Nugent flourished a notebook under Wharton's nose. The notebook had various entries in it that were probably comprehensible to Nugent.

"I'm going to have the cash in at the beginning of the season, this time," he said. "I've got in all the subscriptions to the Remove Footer Club, excepting four. Yours is

one of the four. If you're hard up, I'll lend it to you; but I've got to have the subscription in."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, you ass! I see. I'm not hard up——"

"Then pay up!" said Frank.

"Can't!"

"Why not?"

"My money's in my trousers pocket, and I'm too comy to move," said Wharton. "I'll pay up presently."

Frank Nugent shook his head. Nugent, as secretary and treasurer of the Form football club, had onerous duties to perform. Getting in the subscriptions was one of the most onerous. It was curious how fellows would let that slide. Some were too hard up at various times to find the cash, some didn't like parting with it anyway, some left it over out of sheer laziness. But Frank was on the warpath now, and he meant to have the money in.

"You'll pay up now," he said serenely. "Hand it over."

"Now, look here, Frank, don't be an ass," argued Wharton. "It's not worth getting up for, when I'm fixed so comfortably."

"Pay up!"

"Fathead! I tell you——"

"Oh, I'll soon unfix you," said Frank.

He made a rush at Wharton. The armchair tilted over backwards, and Wharton gave a yell as he was shot over the back of it upon the floor. He bumped on the floor with a hard and heavy bump, and roared.

Frank Nugent roared, too, with laughter. He held his sides and shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you fathead!" roared Wharton, sitting up and rubbing the back of his head. "You silly ass! You—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well——"

"Pay up!" grinned Frank. "Now, you can't say you're too comfortable to move now—you can't be comfortable on the floor. Pay up!"

Wharton grunted and rose. A considerable quantity of his funds had been scattered on the floor, and he collected the money up. Frank Nugent stood waiting, notebook in hand. The secretary and treasurer of the R. F. C. meant business.

Wharton rose to his feet after collecting up the cash, and rubbed his head.

"Pay up!" said Frank cheerfully.

"Oh, here you are!"

"Thanks! That's right. Now you can sit down again," said Frank sweetly, and he nodded and quitted the study. "I'm going to collect the rest from the other slackers."

Wharton rubbed his head and grunted. Nugent walked cheerfully down the Remove passage.

Frank Nugent was always cheerful. He consulted his list as he went, conning over the names.

"Russell, Vernon-Smith, and Mauleverer," he muttered. "I'll begin with his lordship! He's bound to have the tin."

Nugent knocked at the door of the end study in the Remove, which belonged to Lord Mauleverer, the latest arrival at Greyfriars. A drawling voice bade him come in. Nugent entered.

"Hallo, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking up lazily from a heap of cushions, upon which he was reclining on a sofa under the window. "Glad to see you, my dear fellow."

"And I'm glad to see you," said Nugent, "and shall be gladder if you'll pay up."

"Pay up?"

"That's it."

"Is there anything to pay?" asked his lordship lazily. "I'll pay with pleasure. But who is it, and what is it?"

"Footer subscription," said Nugent, laughing. "You're in the Remove Football Club this season, ain't you?"

"Yaas!"

"I don't know whether you'll be any good as a playing member," Nugent remarked, with a disparaging glance at his lordship's lazy attitude. "You're a jolly lot too much of a slacker. But as a paying member you're all right; so pay up!"

"Certainly! Can you change a ten-pound note?"

"Oh, quite easily!" said Nugent, with heavy sarcasm. "Will you have the change in gold or notes?"

"I'm afraid I've only banknotes," said his lordship. "Take the tenner, and give me the change some other time, if you haven't it on you."

"Well, I must have the subscription, so I'll do that," agreed Nugent. "Hand over the giddy tenner."

"There's one on the mantelpiece, I believe," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent.

He glanced along the mantelpiece. There were several valuable vases there, and a French clock, but no sign of a banknote. Lord Mauleverer's study was a dream of luxuriousness, and the other Removites regarded it with awe and admiration. Lord Mauleverer was a millionaire, and had an unlimited allowance from his guardians, and he spent money in the most lavish way. Banknotes, to him, were as plentiful as threepenny-pieces to the other fellows. Liberty's had furnished his study at a cost of two hundred pounds, and it was luxurious. There had never been a fellow like Lord Mauleverer at Greyfriars before, and was not likely to be one again.

"There isn't a tenner here," said Nugent.

"Oh, I remember now, I used it as a bookmark!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Do look in the Latin dictionary, old chap, and save me the trouble of getting up."

"So you use tenners as bookmarks, do you?" growled Nugent. "You deserve to lose all your blessed tin."

"Really, dear boy—"

"Here's the dic., anyway," said Nugent. He opened the Latin dictionary, and found the ten-pound note. "I've got it; I'll change it with Mrs. Mumble, and give you the change later."

"Righto!"

Nugent pinned the banknote into his notebook for safety, and quitted the study. Lord Mauleverer stretched out his elegant limbs again on the sofa. Nugent went down to Vernon-Smith's study. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was the son of a millionaire, and he had been the richest fellow in the school before Mauleverer came. But certainly Lord Mauleverer had thrown him somewhat into the shade.

Nugent kicked at the door, and went in. There was a haze of tobacco-smoke in the room, and the blackguard of the Lower Fourth looked round with a startled expression as Frank entered.

"Oh! It's you!" he exclaimed.

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Frank Nugent sniffed.

"Yes," he said contemptuously. "It's I! Did you think it was a prefect?"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I shouldn't care if it was," he said.

"Rats! You'll get sacked from the school for this, one of these days," said Nugent; "and serve you jolly well right. But I didn't come here to give you a sermon—"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"I want your subscription for the footer club. I'm getting 'em all in early, and yours is the last but one."

"I don't know that I shall be in the club at all," said the Bounder, with a frown. "I know jolly well Bulstrode won't put me in the eleven."

"I dare say not—but you can look on at all the matches and cheer!" suggested Nugent.

"Not good enough, thanks!"

"Then you're staying out?"

"I think so."

"Stay out and be hanged, then!" said Nugent cheerfully; and he closed his notebook with a snap and left the study.

The Bounder resumed his cigarette. Nugent went along to Russell's study. Russell was the last name on his list, and Nugent meant to get the business finished up. He tapped at the door and opened it.

"Russell, old man, I've come— Great Scott!"

And Nugent broke off in amazement.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Junior's Secret!

RUSSELL of the Remove was seated at his table. His elbows were resting on the table, and his face was buried in his hands.

He had not heard Nugent's knock, and had not heard him enter. He did not hear his surprised exclamation. He sat motionless.

Nugent stood looking at him in amazement and wonder. Russell of the Remove was at all times something of a puzzle to the Removites. He was a very quiet fellow. He joined in all the sports of the Form, and, as a rule, in the japes and little diversions which enlivened existence in the Lower Forms at the old college. But there was always a certain amount of quiet reserve about Russell, which the other fellows had never penetrated. He had the reputation of being very well off; and Frank, who had been in the Third Form with him, could remember his having been in the habit of spending money freely at that time, when they were both Third Form fags. In the Remove, however, he was generally supposed to be a little stingy—though his frank face and kind manners did not seem like those of a fellow who possessed that most unboyish vice.

Russell was generally liked in the Remove, though the other fellows did not quite understand him. He was a good cricketer, a good footballer, and a prominent member of the Amateur Dramatic Society, and was popularly supposed to be very clever. When he entered for the Founder's Prize of a Hundred Pounds—the biggest "catch" at Greyfriars, and open to all Forms below the Sixth—there was a general opinion that he would get it—unless Mark Linley entered the lists against him.

"Russell!" said Nugent.

The junior did not speak or move.

Nugent was alarmed. He came closer to the boy and touched him on the shoulder. Then Russell started from his deep reverie.

He looked up with a sharp exclamation; his face was deadly white, and his eyes had a startled look in them.

"What—what—who is it?" he exclaimed.

Nugent stared at him in wonder.

"Russell, old man, what's the matter?"

"Matter! Nothing."

"You're as white as a ghost."

Russell passed a hand across his face vaguely.

"Am I?" he muttered.

"Yes. Are you ill?"

"No."

"You look horribly seedy."

"I—I—I'm all right."

"Fallen asleep over your work, I suppose," said Nugent cheerfully, glancing at the books on the table. "Todhunter, Liddell, and Scott. My hat! Cheerful companions, I must say! Are you mugging up for the Hundred, Russell?"

"Yes."

"You're going in for it in earnest, then?"

"Yes."

"I hope you'll get it, unless Linley does," said Frank Nugent. "Really, it would be of much more use to old Marky than to you, you know. Rich fellows ought to keep



"I will not allow you to withdraw from the examination, Richard," said Mr. Russell, raising his voice. "I decline to allow anything of the sort. If you will not enter it from your own free will, you will do so because I command you. Do you understand?" Russell stood dumb, for he had not expected this; he had not counted upon it. How easy the path of deceit and dishonesty had been—how difficult to try back to the path of honesty! (See Chap. 14.)

out of those competitions for money prizes; the old Founder intended them to help on poor chaps."

Russell smiled strangely.

"They're open to everybody," he said.

"Oh, yes, that's all right—please yourself!" said Nugent. "Wharton is standing out for that reason, though, and so is Johnny Bull. But you have a right to enter if you choose—and I dare say your people would like to see you rope it in."

"They would—indeed."

"But I didn't come here to jaw exams," said Nugent, "I'm after cash."

"Cash!" said Russell.

"Yes, the footer subscriptions, you know," said Nugent, opening his notebook. "You're the last chap who hasn't paid up, and I want the tin."

Russell coloured.

"Is there any hurry?" he asked.

"Frightful," said Nugent. "I want to get the money in. Marky used to be worried awfully over the cricket subscriptions, he was so easy-going. I'm starting a new game—inaugurating a new era, as Todd would have said. Money down."

"Oh, I see!"

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NEXT
TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

"So pay up!" said Nugent. "I'll give you a receipt." Russell still hesitated.

"Won't it do if I settle it presently?" he asked.

"What do you call presently?"

"Well, say to-morrow—or the day after."

"Expecting a postal-order, like Billy Bunter?" asked Nugent, with a grin. "Now, look here, I don't want to be worried over these blessed subscriptions. It's trouble enough to be secretary and treasurer, anyway, especially when chaps bother you with ten-pound notes to cash for them. Pay up!"

"Ten-pound notes," said Russell inquiringly.

"Yes; Mauly's given me a blessed banknote to change. The ass! He was using it as a bookmark," said Nugent, with a grin.

Russell sighed.

"Pay up!" said Frank.

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Pay up!"

"I—I—"

"I've screwed it out of all the others," said Frank cheerily. "Now I'm going to screw it out of you. My dear chap, you give a fellow a lot of trouble to save yourself a

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little. What possible difference can it make to you whether you pay up now, or pay up to-morrow, or the next day."

Russell's lips twitched.

"I suppose I had better tell you," he said.

"You'd better; for I don't intend to leave this study without the footer subscription," said Nugent.

"Well, I haven't got the money."

"Rats!"

"Honest Injun!"

"You mean you're short till your allowance comes?" asked Nugent. "Well, I suppose I can leave it till Saturday; or, rather, I'll lend you the money, and you can pay me back on Saturday when you get your remittance."

Russell shook his head.

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"Because I shan't get my allowance on Saturday."

"When do you get it, then?"

"Not at all."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Nugent. "I suppose you haven't given up having an allowance from home."

"I have."

"What on earth for?"

Russell smiled bitterly.

"What possible reason could I have, but one?" he said.

Nugent looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I know one!" he said.

"I may as well tell you, but don't tell all the fellows. I may be able to raise the tin for the footer subscription; if I do, I'll pay it," said Russell. "If I can't manage it this week, I'll stay out of the footer."

"But why?"

"I don't have an allowance from home now, because my people can't afford to give me one," said Russell.

Nugent whistled.

"You're not pulling my leg?" he asked.

"No."

"But you used to be jolly well off," exclaimed Frank. "I remember when you were a fag in the Third, with me, you used to have as much money as Bulstrode, and you spent it freely enough, too."

Russell nodded.

"That was some time ago," he said.

"Have things changed then with your people?"

"Yes. We were well off then, and we—we're not now," said Russell abruptly. "That's all there is about it. That's why I've gone in for the Hundred. If I get it, it means a lot to me. My fees are paid here by my uncle, and he does nothing else for me—just pays the fees—and it's decent of him to do that. My people can just keep me in clothes. If I get the Hundred—but I don't suppose I shall, with Linley and Dawlish against me."

"Poor old chap!" said Nugent sympathetically. "I never had a suspicion that matters were like this with you."

Russell smiled wearily.

"I've been keeping it dark," he said. "I didn't want to let everybody know it, and I suppose you won't spread it over the coll., now that I've told you."

Nugent coloured.

"Of course I won't," he said. "I shan't say a word. But I never suspected it. Some of the fellows think you are close with money, since you've been in the Remove—"

"A fellow is bound to be pretty close when he has no money to spend," said Russell quietly.

"I—I suppose so. I'm sorry I worried you about the subscription," said Frank. "I had no idea, of course. Look here, it can easily stand over till half way through the footer season, if you like."

Russell shook his head.

"I shall pay up this week, or keep out of the footer," he said. "I don't want to be in debt. I've kept clear enough of that, anyway; I don't mean to start it. I may be able to pay up this week; if I can't, I'll tell you."

"Right you are. I'm sorry."

"It's all right."

Nugent quitted the study with a cloud upon his sunny face. The door closed behind him, and Russell's head dropped into his hands again. He groaned.

"What am I to do? I can't stay here without money?" he muttered. "I should be sure of the Hundred, I think, but for Dawlish of the Fifth, and Linley of ours. But with those two against me—"

And a deep sigh broke from the lips of the junior, whom all the Remove believed to be well off and stingy, and who was in reality poorer than the lad who blacked the boots for the Greyfriars Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Keeps the Secret.

A FAT figure scuttled down the Remove passage before Nugent as he left Russell's study. Frank uttered a sharp exclamation, and darted after it. His hand dropped upon a plump shoulder, and he swung the fugitive round. A fat face, adorned with a big pair of spectacles, looked at him uneasily.

"Oh, really, Bob Cherry—"

"Bunter! You fat cad!"

"Oh, is it you, Nugent! I—I'm glad to see you," said Bunter. "I—I was really looking for you, you know."

"You've been listening!" Nugent exclaimed angrily, shaking the fat junior till his fat cheeks wobbled like jelly.

"Ow! Yow!"

"You've been listening, you young hound!"

"Ow! I—I— Don't shake me like that, you'll make my glasses fall off," yelled Bunter. "And if they get broken you'll have to pay for them, I can tell you!"

"You were listening at Russell's door?"

"I happened to pass—"

"You fat rotter! You—"

"Oh, really, Nugent, I don't think you ought to call me names, because I happened to be passing Russell's study while you were there!" said Billy Bunter, looking injured. "I never heard a word. I hope I should scorn to do such a thing as listen at a door. I haven't the faintest idea what Russell was saying to you, and I certainly shouldn't think of mentioning to anybody that he was hard up."

"What! Why, you—you—"

"I—I think it's hard enough on the poor chap to have no allowance, without having it talked about by all the fellows," said Billy Bunter. "I shouldn't think of saying a word! Of course, I understand why he always refused to cash a postal-order for me when I asked him. I thought he was suspicious and stingy."

"So you know all about it, you rotter?"

"Oh! I don't—not a word!" said Bunter. "I have no idea—I mean, I didn't hear anything, and I shall keep it quite dark, of course. I hope I'm an honourable chap."

Frank Nugent took Bunter by both shoulders and backed him against the wall. Billy Bunter blinked at him in great alarm.

"I—I say, you know—"

"If you say a word about what you've heard," said Nugent, slowly and impressively, "I'll squash you! Do you hear?"

"Ow!"

"You've got to promise, honour bright, not to say a word," said Nugent. "Otherwise, I'll bang your head against the wall. Savvy?"

"I—I— Ow! Of course, I promise, with pleasure. I won't say a word!" howled Bunter. "Lemme go! Yaroo!"

Nugent released him.

"Mind, a single word about Russell, and I'll give you the licking of your life," he exclaimed.

"Ow!"

"Now get out, you fat rotter!"

Billy Bunter did not need telling twice. He ran down the corridor with amazing speed, considering his weight.

Nugent, breathing wrath, returned to No. 1 Study. He had done all he could to keep Russell's secret; but he had great doubts of Bunter's discretion. A promise weighed little with the Owl of the Remove. As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter was too stupid to have very clear ideas about right and wrong; and his tongue was the most active part of him, and frequently ran on of its own accord, as it were.

Bunter stopped halfway down the stairs. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, study-mates in Study No. 13, were coming up,

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and Bunter almost ran into them. Bob Cherry stopped him with a grasp of iron on his collar.

"Where are you running to?" Bob asked pleasantly. "Can't you see where you're going, you fat duffer?"

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry, I—I was just looking for you. I say, I've got something to tell you fellows, if you'll keep it dark."

Frank Nugent heard the fat junior's voice from the passage above. He gave a snort of wrath, and came down towards the staircase.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Some more of your giddy yarns," said Bob Cherry. "You can tell it to the marines, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, Marky; we don't want to hear any of Bunter's precious yarns. He makes them up as he goes along."

"Oh, really, Linley, it's a real secret this time. It's about Russell. I could tell you something that would make you open your eyes, but, of course, you mustn't let it go any further. I—— Oh! Yowp!"

Billy Bunter broke off as a grasp descended upon him. He was swung round, and found Frank Nugent's angry face glaring at him. Bunter wriggled.

"Ow! Oh, really, Nugent! I wish you wouldn't grab me suddenly like that. I know you mean it only in fun, but——"

"You lying cad!" roared Nugent. "What were you just going to say to Cherry and Linley?"

"N-n-nothing, you know. I—I was just explaining to Bob Cherry that I couldn't possibly tell him anything about Russell because I had promised not to——"

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

"Oh, you blessed Ananias!" growled Nugent. "You were just going to blurt out the whole story. By Jove, I'll——"

"I—I wasn't! Besides——"

"Lend me that cricket-stump, Bob, will you?"

"Certainly!" grinned Bob Cherry. "With pleasure! Come on, Marky! Let's leave them to talk it over—with the stump."

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley went on up the stairs, laughing. Nugent grasped the cricket-stump in his right hand and Billy Bunter's collar in his left. He twisted the fat junior face downward over the banisters.

"Now, I'm going to give you a bit of a lesson," he said savagely; "and mind, if you say a word more on the subject I'll cut you to ribbons!"

"Ow! Yow! Yow!"

Whack!

"Yaroo!"

Nugent laid on with the cricket-stump in good earnest. Bunter roared and yelled, but suddenly his yells died away. A stern voice rang up the staircase.

"Stop that noise immediately!"

Nugent's arm dropped. It was the stern, deep voice of Mr. Quelch of the Remove, his Form-master.

"Ye-es, sir!" he stammered.

"Release Bunter at once!"

Frank released the fat junior. Bunter, gasping for breath, slid down the stairs in a great hurry. Frank was looking to and fro for the Form-master, amazed that Mr. Quelch was not in sight. Bunter turned back at the bottom of the staircase and grinned at him.

"Yah! Beast! I did you that time!"

And then he ran.

"My hat!" gasped Frank Nugent.

He realised too late that it was a little sample of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism.

The fat junior was a skilful ventriloquist, and he had played so many tricks with his voice in the Remove that the juniors had taken to ragging him whenever he gave an example of his powers, and since that time little had been heard of the mysterious voice that had often caused trouble. Billy Bunter had really shown great presence of mind on this occasion.

Nugent made two or three steps to follow him, but the fat junior had vanished. Frank turned back to his own study with a frown upon his brow.

He had had no faith in Bunter, and he knew now that the fat junior would not keep the secret. Bunter fancied himself as a purveyor of news, and the fact that he had a secret gave him a certain amount of importance. It was pretty certain that before night all the Remove who cared to know would be in possession of information as far as Bunter could give it to them, concerning Russell's affairs.

And Nugent knew what a blow it would be to the proud, high-spirited lad to have his poverty become a matter of common talk in the Form-room. Russell had been so careful to keep the secret of his people's altered circumstances that even Frank, who was more intimate with him than any other fellow, had never suspected it. But all Greyfriars would know it soon.

It could not be helped, but it brought a cloud to Nugent's face as he thought of it.

Things had been hard enough on Russell before, and this would make them harder.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT
TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

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TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Hits Hard.

DICK RUSSELL came downstairs, and walked slowly along the passage into the junior common-room. There was a shadow on Russell's face—there often was of late. His nature was cheerful and sunny, but a weight on the mind will darken even the sunshine, and Dick Russell had enough to worry him. Poverty at home, poverty at school, and a past reputation of wealth to keep up were enough to worry any lad. And Russell had a touchy pride that made him shrink from sympathy. He had an almost morbid desire to keep his poverty a secret, though with fellows more observant than the average schoolboy it could not long have remained a secret. Many fellows believed Russell to be stingy, when the truth was that he was poor; but with that singular perversity of many people to whom poverty is new, he preferred to be believed mean to being known to be poor. Mark Linley was poorer than he was, but Mark stood on a different footing. Linley made no secret of the fact that he had worked for his living in a Lancashire factory before he won the scholarship which had brought him to Greyfriars. He could not have made a secret of it if he had wished. And he did not wish to. But Linley had had a hard and uphill battle to fight at Greyfriars. It was different with Dick Russell. He had not known poverty until quite lately, and he had not learned to bear it unashamed.

There was a buzz of voices in the common-room.

The evenings were drawing in now, and the fellows were mostly indoors. There was quite a crowd of Removites and Upper Fourth fellows in the junior room. Dick Russell was too preoccupied to know or care what they were talking about, but he could not help observing that a good many peculiar glances were cast towards himself. Billy Bunter had been speaking, in his loud and untuneful voice, and he stopped all of a sudden as Dick Russell came in.

"Go on, Bunter!" said Skinner slyly.

Bunter coughed.

"I—I—— Oh, really, Skinner! I haven't anything more to say, you know."

Bolsover, the burly bully of the Remove, burst into his loud laugh.

"You mean you're afraid of Russell, you young rotter!" he exclaimed. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'm not, certainly, but I—I——"

"What reason should Bunter have for being afraid of me?" Russell asked. "I have no quarrel with Billy."

"Of—of course not!" said Bunter eagerly. "I—I think I'll go for a stroll in the Close, if you fellows will excuse me——"

"Stay where you are!" said Bolsover.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Bunter's been spinning us a yarn," said Bolsover, looking with a sneering grin at Dick Russell. "I don't know whether's there anything in it. He was listening outside your door when you were talking to Nugent——"

Russell turned pale.

"I wasn't!" howled Bunter. "I never said anything of the sort. I said that I was passing by chance along the passage——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"He heard you telling Nugent that you were as poor as a church mouse, or something to that effect, and couldn't pay your footer subscription——"

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"Didn't you say so, then?" demanded Bolsover, turning a threatening glance upon the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I—I said I happened to hear a few words——"

"That's a lie!" said Russell very quietly. "You couldn't have heard a word unless you'd had your ear glued to the keyhole. I spoke in a low voice."

"Oh, really, Russell——"

"We all know that," said Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove. "We all know how Bunter gets his information."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Shut up, you fat cad! If you'd had a rag of decency you wouldn't have said a word about it, anyway," said George Bulstrode scornfully.

"Oh, I say! I was telling you in confidence, of course——"

"A dozen of us in confidence!" grinned Skinner. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really——"

"But is it true, Russell?" demanded Bolsover.

Russell had a bitter expression upon his handsome face.

"Mind your own business!" he said. "It's no concern of yours whether it's true or not."

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Bolsover scowled.

"You'd better take care how you talk to me," he exclaimed. "For two pins I'd wipe up the floor with you!"

Russell's eyes gleamed.

"You can start as soon as you like!" he exclaimed.

Bolsover clenched his fists.

"You poverty-stricken cad——" he began.

He was suddenly interrupted. Russell stepped quickly towards him, and his open hand smote upon the bully's face with a sounding smack.

Smack!

It rang through the common-room, and echoed down the passage. Bolsover staggered back. He was hurt, but he was more astonished than hurt. That he, the bully of the Remove, monarch of all he surveyed in the junior-room, should be smacked on the face by the slim, fair-haired junior before him was amazing. Russell was never a quarrelsome boy, and he had no reputation as a fighting-man. He had, of course, had a tussle every now and then, but as a rule he was peaceable, and kept the peace with everyone. His action astonished the rest of the Remove almost as much as it astonished Bolsover.

"Why, you—you cad!" howled Bolsover, recovering himself. "I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll make a jelly of you!"

He rushed furiously at Russell.

The latter stood his ground. His hands were up, and his eyes were blazing. He met Bolsover's attack with steady eyes and hands.

The bully's rush was stopped.

There was a shout from the juniors, a shout of approval and encouragement for the smaller lad. They were glad enough to see anyone stand up to the tyrant of the Form. Bob Cherry was the only fellow in the Remove who had done so successfully. Even Harry Wharton had gone down before Bolsover.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Russell!"

"Pile it in, old chap! Give him socks!"

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

Russell had stopped his rush, and given him two or three sharp blows, but he would not be able to stand up to the burly fellow for long, that was certain. Bolsover pressed him hard, and Dick Russell was driven back, step by step, till the bully of the Remove was able to get in a powerful drive, and the younger lad fell heavily to the floor.

Bump!

Russell lay dazed. He had received a terrific blow, and it had made his head sing and his senses swim.

Bolsover stood over him, with his fists clenched and his eyes blazing. The bully of the Remove was in a towering rage.

"Get up!" he roared.

Russell made an effort to rise, but fell back again. Bolsover kicked him savagely in the ribs. There was a yell from the juniors.

"Shame!"

Bolsover glared round him.

"Any chap here can interfere, if he likes," he exclaimed, in his arrogant way. "Or any two, for that matter."

"Good!" said a quiet voice.

Bob Cherry had just entered the common-room with Harry Wharton. Bob said just that one word, and slipped off his jacket and threw it to Harry, and ran right at Bolsover. The bully of the Remove was taken aback. He had not expected Bob Cherry to drop in at that precise moment. But he had no choice about the matter now, and he turned away from Russell and put up his hands.

The Removites shouted joyously.

"Go it, Bob!"

"Hammer him!"

In a moment the two were "going it," hammer and tongs. Dick Russell staggered to his feet.

"Bob Cherry, hold on! I can stand up to him."

"Rats!" replied Bob Cherry, without turning his head.

"Keep off the grass!"

"But I tell you——"

"Bosh!"

Harry Wharton pulled Russell back.

"Keep back!" he said. "Leave him to Bob. Bob can handle him, and he's the only chap in the Remove who can. Keep back!"

Russell sank into a chair; his head was still singing. The juniors thronged round the two fighting-men. The combat was quick and decisive; there were no rules, but there was terrific energy. Bolsover, in spite of his size and his strength, was driven round the common-room, the grinning juniors making room for him to go. Bob Cherry followed him up step by step with hammering blows.

Crash!

The bully of the Remove was down at last, with a crash.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

that seemed to shake the floor. He gave a deep grunt, and lay there, gasping breathlessly.

"Any more?" asked Bob Cherry, breathless enough himself.

"Ow! No!"

Courtney, the prefect, looked in at the door of the common-room, with a frown.

"What's all this row? Stop it at once!"

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry. "It's all over, my son! Keep your wool on!"

And Courtney grinned and retired. He had seen Bolsover on the floor, and he knew too much of the character of the bully of the Remove to care how he got there.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Russell's Father.

RUSSELL left the common-room, and went towards the door on the Close. Frank Nugent tapped him on the arm in the passage.

"I'm sorry about this," said Nugent sincerely. "I found that Bunter had been listening, and I made him promise, honour bright, to keep it dark. He promised."

Dick nodded.

"It's all right!" he said. "It can't be helped. I don't blame you."

"I wish you hadn't told me now," said Frank. "It's rotten for it to come out like this; though if I were in your place, I don't think I should mind so much. After all, there's nothing to be ashamed of in it."

"I suppose not."

"It won't make any difference to any fellow that's decent," said Frank. "About the footer, that will be all right. The subscription can be left till the end of the season, and if it isn't paid at all we sha'n't miss it. Some of the other fellows will make it up between them. As treasurer, I can work that."

Russell shook his head.

"Thanks! I don't want to come in on the nod," he said. "I'm going to see my pater to-day, and he may be able to help me out. If he can't, I shall drop footer for this season, excepting the school practice."

"Better not. Look here——"

"I've made up my mind about it. I don't want anything I can't pay for."

And Russell gave Nugent a nod, and left the House. He walked away slowly towards the gates, his hands in his pockets, looking very downcast. In spite of himself, he could not help feeling downhearted.

The junior quitted the school gates, and walked down the lane to the village. He reached Friardale Railway-station. The station was lighted up. The sun had set behind the Black Pike, and the streets were dusky. Russell entered the station, and in the vestibule he was greeted by a tall, stately-looking gentleman, whose severe features had some resemblance to his own.

"I hope you haven't waited, dad?"

The old gentleman shook his head.

"No, Dick; my train came in only a few minutes ago," he said.

"Why won't you come up to the school?"

Mr. Russell shook his head.

"I would rather not. There is no need for the boys there to see, from your father's appearance, that your circumstances are altered," he replied. "Things have been going very hard with us, Dick, as you know. If it cost us anything to keep you at Greyfriars, you would have to leave. But I hope we shall be able to prevent that. Your uncle will continue to pay your fees as long as you remain; I have his definite promise on that point. And if you win the Hundred, Dicky, I think that he will do something more for you. He has the family pride, and that will touch it."

Dick nodded.

The father and son walked out of the station, and sat down upon a bench outside the old building under one of the big trees that shadowed the High Street of Friardale. Mr. Russell's face looked very worn and weary, but it was easy to see from his expression what a pride he took in his lad. Dick was one of the few consolations left to the man whose fortune had been dissipated on the Stock Exchange—that maelstrom into which so many fortunes are sucked, to disappear and leave no trace behind.

"That is your best chance now, Dick," said Mr. Russell. "If you win the prize, the money shall be set aside, and kept scrupulously to pay your school expenses. I know how wretched it must be for you to be at a school like Greyfriars without money in your pockets. The hundred pounds, used with care, will pay all reasonable expenses until you leave the school; and your success, if it comes about, will



"I've seen the examination papers, sir," Dick Russell blurted out the words as if he were in a hurry to get them uttered before he yielded to the temptation to keep the secret. Dr. Locke started. He had not expected that He fixed his eyes upon the boy. "You have seen the papers!" he repeated. (See Chapter 11.)

interest your Uncle Dick in you. You understand the importance of success quite as much as I do."

"Quite, dad."

"And what do you think of your chances?"

"They are good," said Russell hesitatingly. "I'm working like a nigger for the exam. There was a chap who competed for the Raven Scholarship, and he pulled it off, and he slacked all the time; they couldn't get him to work. We used to yank him out of bed in the morning with a rope round his ankle. If Carlton could pull off the Raven Scholarship, I certainly ought to be able to get the Hundred. I'm working jolly hard, and Mr. Quelch is helping me on. I've told him how I stand, and he's giving me a lot of extra toot. But—"

"But what, Dick?" asked his father anxiously.

"I've got two fellows to fear. Linley, of the Remove; he's a demon for work, and he came to Greyfriars on a scholarship that he won when he was a factory lad. That shows the kind of chap he is."

"And the other?"

"Dawlish, of the Fifth. You see, the Fifth are allowed to enter, and two or three of them are in it, as well as some of the Upper Fourth fellows. I don't believe the prize has ever been pulled off by anybody lower in the school than the Fourth Form; but I know Linley has a good chance, and I hope I have. Dawlish is a clever chap, and I think he's got the best chance of the lot."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT
TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

"He would have a better chance than you, Dick, being higher in the school, and older," Mr. Russell said thoughtfully. "Your only chance is to grind away."

"That's it, dad. Dawlish thinks it's a sure thing for him, and I know he's slacking. I'm putting in every minute I can."

"Good, my boy!"

"If I don't get it," said Russell, "I don't see how I can stay here. My clothes are getting shabby, and I know mother can't get any more for me. I've dropped out of nearly everything that costs money. I can't even pay my footer subscription, and I shall have to give that up."

"It's hard, my boy—very hard!"

"If I get the Hundred, it's all right. If I don't, dad, I think I'd better leave Greyfriars at the end of the term, and look for something to do."

Mr. Russell's face twitched.

"That will be a hard blow to your mother and to me," he said. "I hope it won't come to that. The exam. is near at hand now, and you must work your hardest. Have the papers been drawn up yet?"

"I believe so. Mr. Quelch is doing them, and I think they're finished and gone to the printer's," said Dick. "I only wish I knew something about them. But, of course, it wouldn't be fair if I did. Only if I had an idea—"

"I know you would not look at the papers, even if you had an opportunity of seeing them," said Mr. Russell.

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"Don't think any thoughts of that kind, Dick. It is better to lose the prize, and face anything the future may hold, than to be guilty of a dishonourable action."

"I know it, father."

"Work, and work alone, will do it," said Mr. Russell. "I shall pray for your success. I am sure no one deserves to succeed better than you do. And I know I can rely upon you to do your best, for all our sakes."

"You can, dad. I shall work like a nigger. If I fail, it won't be for want of trying," said Dick.

The father and son talked a little longer in low tones, and then the elder gentleman rose.

"My train will be in soon," he said. "Good-bye, Dick! Go straight back to the school."

"Good-bye, dad!"

They parted.

Russell walked back to the school with a grave and serious face. The interview with his father had had the effect of strengthening his determination to win the Hundred. But it had had a saddening effect upon him, too. He realised how utterly his people were depending upon his success. They knew that success was uncertain, yet they looked forward to it without daring to look at the alternative. For the alternative was that the boy they were proud of would have to leave Greyfriars, and abandon the career they had marked out for him, and that would be too heavy a blow for them to think of with equanimity.

Russell's thoughts were busy as he walked back to Greyfriars. The idle thought that had come into his mind while he was speaking to his father lingered there, and seemed to haunt him. What if he could obtain a sight of the examination papers?

He tried to drive the thought from his mind, to banish it, but somehow it lingered. How easy, how certain his success would be if only he knew what would be on the papers, and could work up the questions in advance!

It would be mean, dishonourable, akin to stealing. He made an effort, and drove the haunting, troublesome thought from his mind, but it had left him in a strange mood.

He entered the gateway of the old school. Gosling, the porter, snorted as he came in. Dick Russell had a pass from Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, but Gosling took it as a personal injury that he was not able to report him for being out after locking-up. Gosling had a liking for reporting juniors.

Dick walked on to the School House, and as he entered there was the sound of a laugh. Bolsover, whose features looked considerably damaged from his encounter with Bob Cherry, was standing in the hall, talking to a group of fellows. It was he who laughed as Russell came in.

"Isn't your governor coming up to the school?" he asked.

"No," said Russell quietly.

"Has he gone back?" grinned Skinner.

"Yes."

"Why doesn't he let us see him?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, the poor chap's hard up!" said Bolsover. "He doesn't want to come up to the school in those trousers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Russell clenched his hands for a moment, and then he walked on with burning ears. After all, what was the use of quarrelling about it? The cads of the Remove would allow the subject to drop, probably, when they were tired of it. Dick Russell walked on to Mr. Quelch's study, knocked at the door, and entered.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Terrible Temptation.

THE study was empty.

It was the usual time for Dick to come to the Form-master's room for the aid Mr. Quelch was giving him in his studies. Whenever any of his boys were entering for an exam. outside the usual Form examinations, it was Mr. Quelch's custom to give them assistance.

He had worked hard in helping the Slacker of Greyfriars, but he found the task of helping Dick Russell much more congenial, for Dick was working for success as very few fellows had ever worked before. And the Remove-master liked a hard worker; it made him feel that he was not sacrificing his leisure hours in vain. And it was a great deal of a sacrifice to Mr. Quelch—more than the boys understood—to give up hours to helping them on after a day's work that was by no means light.

Dick Russell understood how much service it was to him, at least, and he was never late for anything of this kind; as a rule, he was a little early. He was a few minutes early this evening, and Mr. Quelch had not arrived.

Dick sat down to wait for the Form-master to come in. There was nothing unusual in his doing that—the Form-

master had told him to do so, if on any occasion he should arrive the first of the two.

The lad sat quietly, the gaslight glimmering on his pale and troubled face, his mind devoured by gloomy thoughts.

He had been sitting, silent and pensive, for some minutes, wondering how long the Form-master would be, when he noticed that the drawer of the table was partly open. He noticed it idly enough, without thinking anything of the circumstance. His eyes rested unseeingly on the papers that showed in the drawer.

Suddenly he started.

There were several printed papers, evidently proofs, fastened together at the corner by a metal clip. A sudden thought rushed into Dick Russell's mind—a thought that turned him almost sick and giddy.

They were the examination papers!

He could not see much of them, but he could see that. He knew that Mr. Quelch was given the task of reading them over and making corrections in the printing; Mr. Quelch did many things of that sort to save the headmaster's time. There was no doubt in the boy's mind that these were the proofs of the examination papers for the Hundred Examination.

What else could they be? The Raven Exam. was over, and the papers were not likely to be left about, and there was no other exam. to take place within a short time. They must be the Hundred Exam. papers.

Dick turned sick at the thought.

The papers—the papers he had idly wished that he might have an opportunity of seeing—were there! They were the uncorrected proofs, to be sent back to the printer's, but quite explicit enough for anyone who saw them. He had only to read down those papers, and memorise the questions, and—and all was plain sailing! None of the other competitors could hope to have a chance against a fellow who had inside information of that sort. He would win the exam. hands down, so to speak; he would simply have to walk into the examination-room, dawdle through the work, and take the prize!

It was enough to make the boy giddy to think of it.

His father's words came back sharply into his mind. It would be dishonest—it would be dishonourable!

Yes; he knew all that, but the temptation—it was terrible! He needed success so much—more than any of the other fellows who had entered for the Hundred. Even Mark Linley, the factory lad, did not need the prize so much as he did. Besides, Mark had lately won a Fifty, and why should he have the Hundred as well? Why shouldn't another fellow have a chance?

The junior's brain seemed to be swimming with the thoughts that thronged into it. His eye followed what printing he could see on the paper—he read half a paragraph of an extract from Horace. He had gained that much already, before he knew what he was doing. It was from the Tenth Ode.

What was he doing?

He turned his head away quickly; he closed his eyes. He felt like a thief! What would his father say?

He knew what his father would have said. His father would have counselled him to resist the temptation, to turn his eyes away—to face anything rather than face dishonour, if it were death itself! He would never even dare to tell his father that he had been tempted lest he should see scorn and contempt in the severe face he respected and feared as much as he loved it.

His father!

He knew that his father would be shocked and disgusted, only to know the thoughts that were passing through his mind at that moment.

Dick Russell reached out his hand and closed the drawer. At all events, he could remove the temptation from his sight.

But it left him feeling giddy, and his heart was beating hard.

What an opportunity! If he failed, after all, would he not curse his folly in not having taken advantage of it? Would he not?

He wished that Mr. Quelch would come in. How careless—how criminally careless—it was of the Form-master to leave the examination papers about in that way. He could not understand it; the Remove-master was habitually methodical and careful. But, then, he would never dream that any boy in his Form could be dishonourable enough to look at the papers. Perhaps such a thought had never entered his mind. It would never have entered Dick Russell's, if he had not been worried and harassed, almost driven to the wall.

Why did not Mr. Quelch come in?

The door opened, the Form-master entered the study. Dick rose to his feet, and Mr. Quelch gave him a kindly nod.

"Ah, you are here already, Russell!"

"Yes, sir," faltered Dick.

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It seemed to him that the Form-master must be able to read guilt in his face. But Mr. Quelch noticed nothing.

"I hope you have not waited long?" said the Form-master.

"Oh, no, sir!"

How long had he waited? Not more than five minutes, perhaps; but it had seemed like hours, or, rather, centuries, to the troubled lad.

"I am sorry!" said Mr. Quelch. "I was detained with the Head, discussing the examination for the Hundred Prize. This is the last preparation I shall be able to give you. Russell, as to-night I shall read the proofs for the exam. papers. The Head drew them up and sent them to the printer's, but they have now come, and I shall correct the proofs. Under the circumstances, it would be scarcely fair for me to prepare any of the competitors—my mind would naturally run upon what I knew to be in the examination papers."

"I—I suppose so, sir!"

"We can have a couple of hours, if you like, as it is the last," said the Remove-master.

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"You have brought your books?"

"Yes, sir. Shall we begin with Horace?"

"Certainly, if you like! I imagined that it was in mathematics that you needed most coaching, though, Russell."

"Yes, sir!" stammered Russell.

"But we will certainly begin with Horace, if you prefer it," said Mr. Quelch, seating himself and drawing his Horatius Flaccus towards him. "I think we were doing the Third Ode last evening."

"I was thinking we might try the Tenth, sir."

"The Tenth! Certainly!"

Mr. Quelch opened his volume at the Tenth Ode.

"Very good!" he said. "The Ode to Mercury—'Mercuri, facunde nepos Atlantis'—We will begin here, Russell."

"Thank you, sir!"

They began to work together. But the hardest-working junior in the Remove was, for once, absent-minded and strangely preoccupied. Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp glance several times.

Dick was feeling the utmost misery in heart and mind. Why had he chosen Horace? Why had he selected the Tenth Ode? He knew the reason—because he had seen that fragment of the Ode on the examination paper in the drawer.

He had determined not to act dishonourably, and it was as if some voice, not his own, had said that to Mr. Quelch, and taken that unfair advantage of the other entrants for the examination.

What a fool he was! Mr. Quelch, from his own words, had evidently not seen the exam. papers yet, or had not read them, at all events. When he came to do so, and saw the Tenth Ode to Horace, what would he think? Would he not guess that Dick must have seen the paper in his table-drawer?

The junior's brain was in a whirl.

He could not fix his attention upon his work, and after a time Mr. Quelch quietly closed the book.

"You are overtired, Russell," he said softly. "You have been working too hard."

"Oh, no, sir—no!"

"You are, my lad. I am sorry, as it was our last opportunity of reading together for this examination; but I shall ask Mr. Prout to give you some assistance. Yours is a case that we must all sympathise with, Russell, and I sincerely hope that you will be successful. But you had better leave off now."

Dick Russell left the study miserable enough.

Would Mr. Quelch guess? he wondered. It was only too probable. If he did not, it would be dishonourable, caddish, to enter the exam. without telling him! But—

But that would mean that he might be forbidden to enter at all. And Dick Russell thought of his people, earnestly set upon his success, not daring to think that he would fail, and he hardened his heart.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sale Now On.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Seen a ghost?"

Bob Cherry propounded that query as he met Dick Russell in the passage. Dick stopped, with a queer throb in his heart. He had just left Mr. Quelch, and it seemed to him, for the moment, that Bob Cherry was able to read the thoughts that were passing through his mind. What would Bob think, if he could have read them? Russell could guess.

"Hallo!" said Russell quietly.

"Seen a ghost?" repeated Bob Cherry.

"No. Why?"

"Well, you look like it! You're the colour of chalk, and you look sort of startled," said Bob Cherry, regarding him attentively. "I say, you're not ill, are you, Russell?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Not at all!"

"You're out of sorts, then. The best thing you can do is to have a quarter of an hour at the putting-ball, and then trot round the gym.," said Bob Cherry.

Russell smiled faintly, and shook his head.

"I'm all right!" he replied.

"You're not! Come into the gym., and I'll give you a round or two with the gloves!"

"Thanks! Another time! I've got something to do now!"

"I hear you're thinking of giving up the footer this season," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, you can't do anything of the sort! Bulstrode will very likely give you a permanent place in the Form eleven, now that Vernon-Smith has definitely got the order of the boot from the footer club. You'd like to play for the Form, surely!"

Russell's eyes glistened.

"Yes, rather; but—"

"Is there any truth in this yarn that's going round, that you're stony?"

"Yes," said Russell.

"It's hard cheese, kid; but if you can't raise the footer subscriptions, we could work it somehow for you."

"I couldn't have that. But I've got an idea for raising some tin. I need some, to get some new books I need, and I shall have to raise it somehow. I shall be able to pay up my subscription, I hope."

And Russell nodded to Bob Cherry and left him. A quarter of an hour later, the juniors were gathering before the notice-board in the hall, staring at a most peculiar notice pinned up there. It read as follows:

"NOTICE!"

"At 8 p.m. an Auction Sale will be held in the Remove Form-room. Fellows who want to get books, furniture, and sports requisites at bargain prices should roll up in their thousands.

"Signed:

R. RUSSELL, Auctioneer."

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "That takes the cake!"

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, sneered and shrugged his shoulders.

"Greyfriars is coming to something," he remarked.

"Yes—it's a home for blackguards, since you've been here," Bob Cherry remarked cheerfully.

"Oh, this is all right!" said John Bull. "Auction sales have been held in Form-rooms before, and no harm done."

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess I shall be along to rope in some bargains," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I guess I shall—some."

"Russell's got a lot of decent things," Bulstrode remarked. "Left over from his better days, I suppose. His uncle used to send him big gilt volumes for birthday presents when he was in the Third. Somebody will have a chance to pick up guinea editions of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and 'Eric,' or 'Bit by Bit.'"

"Ow!"

"I think we all ought to turn up," said Harry Wharton. "If Russell is trying to raise cash, we may as well chip in and buy the things, if they're any good to us. If he called in a dealer he would be done all along the line."

"What-ho!"

"I guess I'm on, sonny."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a smack on the shoulder that made him squeak. "Are you going to the auction? Better wire to some of your titled friends for some tin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry! That was just what I was going to do, only there wouldn't be any time for the money to come down, you see."

"There wouldn't be any money, either, would there, Bunt?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—I was going to suggest that, as I want to attend this auction, some of you fellows might advance me something off my postal-order, which won't be here till to-morrow morning, I think."

"Perhaps not even by then," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows, I don't see anything to cackle at! The postal-order can't be delayed later than to-morrow morning; if it is, I shall complain to the Postmaster-General. If you cared to advance me something, Wharton—"

"Rats!"

"If you cared to advance me something, Cherry—"

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry blandly.

"You'll advance me something?" Bunter exclaimed eagerly.

"Yes; I'll advance you my boot," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are!"

And he advanced his boot, and Billy Bunter gave a roar and staggered away.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" yelled Bunter, from a safe distance.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad!" said a sleepy voice, as Lord Mauleverer strolled up to the group before the notice-board. "Begad! This is something new. What!"

"Hallo, Mauly! Here's a chance for your millions," said Frank Nugent. "Russell is selling up his happy home to raise the funds."

"Begad, you know! Let's all turn up in force and buy the things," said Lord Mauleverer. "I want some books for my study."

"What on earth do you want books for?" demanded Wharton. "How much reading do you do?"

"Not very much," confessed his lordship. "But I've got room on my shelf for some books, so I shall put some there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better rope in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,'" said Nugent, with a grin. "If you don't want to read it, it's a nice interesting book to have in the study; and so is 'Eric,' or 'Fragment by Fragment.'"

"Some of you fellows lend me a hand?" asked Russell, joining the group.

"Certainly," said Harry Wharton at once. "What do you want done?"

"Some things carried out of my study to the Form-room."

"Good! We're on!"

Russell was looking very quiet and cheerful. The selling up of his property did not seem to trouble him much. If he won the Hundred, he would be able to replace the things; if he did not, he felt that he could not remain at Greyfriars. So that it was all one to him.

The auction caused a good deal of excitement in the Remove. It was sufficiently unusual a proceeding to excite general interest. Fellows in the Upper Fourth and the Fifth heard about it, and determined to come, as well as the Remove. The auction-room was likely to be crowded.

Russell was known to have been very well off at one time, and his study was crowded with presents from his relations—cricket-bats, fishing-rods, set of books, pictures, and musical instruments, and so forth. He had heaps of the things, ornamental or useful, that are generally coveted by boys, and certainly the auction ought to be a great success.

Many fellows with keen eye for bargains determined to attend the sale to pick up valuable articles cheap; others merely wanted to give a helping hand to a fellow who was in hard luck—and two or three wealthy ones, like John Bull and Lord Mauleverer, had some dim idea of giving fancy prices, if possible, for the sake of setting Russell up financially, in a delicate way.

The chums of the Remove helped Russell to convey his property to the Form-room.

Bolsover and Skinner and Snoop and a few others sneered at the whole proceeding, expressing the opinion that if a chap had no money it was time for him to leave Greyfriars. To which Bob Cherry retorted that if a chap had no decency it was time for him to leave Greyfriars, and asked Bolsover and Skinner when they were going; and to that Bolsover had no rejoinder to make, as his latest licking from Bob Cherry had left him feeling much less warlike than usual.

Towards eight o'clock, there was a big crowd in the Remove Form-room. Russell was there, with his various "lots" piled up round a desk, upon which he was to stand, hammer in hand. There was a smile upon Russell's face; it was no longer clouded as it had been so much of late. The humour of the proceedings appealed to him as much as to the others. Until that day he had kept his poverty a secret; but that evening, thanks to Billy Bunter, it was known to all the Lower School. And since it was known, Russell had no hesitation in making the sale of his superfluous property, which he had hesitated to do before. Billy Bunter had really in a way done him a service.

Bob Cherry had kindly drawn up a list of the "lots," and marked the lots themselves with corresponding numbers. The crowd was filling the Form-room before he had finished. He completed the last number, and Russell tapped him on the shoulder.

"Thanks very much!" he said. "Would you care to take the hammer, Cherry?"

"Certainly," said Bob Cherry immediately. "I rather fancy myself as a giddy auctioneer. If you'd like me to—"

"I would!"

"Then I'm on!"

And Bob Cherry took the hammer in his hand, and ascended the rostrum.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

DON'T MISS

the special new story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"BOUND BY HONOUR,"

in this week's "GEM" Library. Price One Penny.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Auction.

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, the sale of these magnificent properties is about to commence," said Bob Cherry. "Now is the chance of a lifetime—a chance to secure these splendid freehold lots at really reasonable prices."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I trust that gentleman will keep order," said Bob Cherry severely. "If Bunter cackles so much he will be the first lot to be knocked down under the hammer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Lot No. 1," said Bob Cherry, consulting his list, "is a really splendid volume of the famous work, 'Sherrick; or Scrap by Scrap.' It is bound in calf, and has gilt edges, and is—ahem!—uncut. What offers for this splendid volume, which the purchaser will have the pleasure of reading for the first time?"

"One penny!" said Skinner.

"Three halfpence," suggested Bolsover.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!"

"Twopence," said Hazeldene.

"This really splendid volume—never been read before—leaves uncut—bound in calf with gilt edges, going at the ridiculous price of—"

"Fourpence!"

"Fourpence!" said the auctioneer. "I am convinced that the gentleman is jesting. He intended to say four shillings."

"Rats!"

"Ahem! What offers for this really magnificent edition of 'Herrick; or Bit by Little'? Going at the ridiculous sum of—did you say ten shillings?"

"No—I said tenpence."

"Ahem! Tenpence for this magnificent—"

"Draw it mild; we've had that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen are requested not to interrupt. Going at the ridiculous sum of tenpence, this splendid edition of 'Cherrick; or Little by Bit.' Going—going—"

"A bob."

"A shilling is offered me for this splendid volume, which would have an improving effect upon any mind—and there are a lot of minds here that need improving. Did you say two shillings, Mr. Fish?"

"I guess not."

"Did you say eighteenpence, Mr. Wharton?"

"No fear."

"Any rise on a shilling for this splendid volume? Gentlemen, look at this volume—a splendid edition of 'Derrick; or Jot by Jot.' In this volume you read of the downward path of a chap who used his school as a half-way house to the pub. You learn to avoid public schools as you would the billiard-saloon or the free library. You learn lots of things—how to mooch out of a night and drink rum, and how to run away to sea, and how to die at an early age to slow music. Gentlemen, this really valuable volume contains more hints on blackguardism than any paper in the United Kingdom. Did you say a thousand pounds, Vernon-Smith?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bouncer of Greyfriars scowled.

"Gentlemen, this volume is going at a shilling. Mr. Trevor, the volume is yours, at the absurd price of one shilling. Hand the volume to Mr. Trevor."

Trevor, of the Remove, handed over the shilling, and took the volume and put it under his arm, apparently not quite knowing what to do with it. As a matter of fact, the following day he traded it off for a knife with two blades to a fag in the Second Form who was greatly taken with the gilt edges. True, within an hour the gilt edges palled upon the fag, who demanded his knife back; a proposition which Trevor laughed to scorn as unbusinesslike. But we are anticipating, as they say in the novels.

Bob Cherry had begun to warm to his work. He flourished the hammer and started on the second article in the catalogue. It was a picture, an oleograph copy of Turner's "Venice," in which the colours—striking enough in the original, goodness knows—were turned out in much more striking fashion than the great landscape painter ever intended. Bob Cherry held up the oleograph to general admiration, and certainly it evoked more enthusiasm than "Eric; or Little by Little."

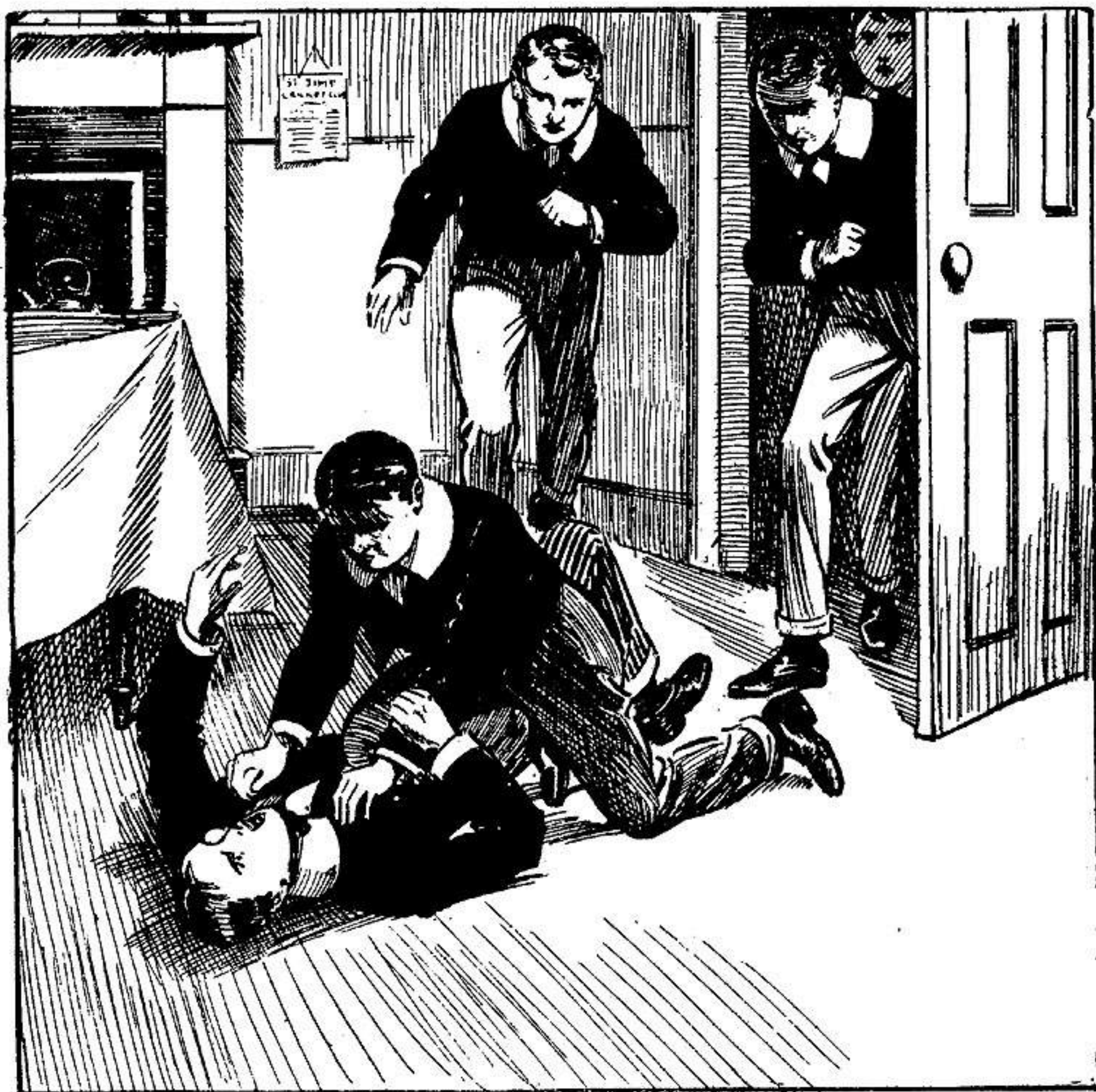
"Gentlemen, you see this picture—this magnificent picture—"

"Is it a picture?" asked Tom Brown.

"Certainly. It is a picture of Venice by night—"

"By day, you ass!" said Wharton.

"Ahem! It is a picture of Venice by day, and you see that the colour of the sky is brought out very effectively."



"What's the row about?" cried Digby, dashing into the study. "I'm chuckin' this wottah out!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he rolled over on his back, and Bully Gore sat astride of his chest. (An amusing incident in "Bound By Honour!"—the splendid, new, long complete tale of school life at St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, contained in our companion paper, the "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny. Please order your copy early.)

Gentlemen, I need not describe Venice to you—the city of lagoons and things—one lagoon, anyway, and a lot of canals. Any fellow would like to spend a vac. in Venice, among the gondolas and things, and if he cannot do that the next best thing is to have Venice hanging in his study. This is a copy of the famous work by J. W. Turner. What offers for this great picture?"

"Tuppence!" said Hazeldene.

"Nonsense! This famous work——"

"Sure it's an original painting?" asked Coker of the Fifth, who had just joined the group of bidders. "If that's an original painting by Turner, I don't mind springing half-a-crown!"

There was a roar of laughter. Coker of the Fifth had plenty of money, but he was not greatly gifted with brains. The Greyfriars juniors, certainly, were not connoisseurs, but they knew enough to know that original Turner's could not be picked up at half-a-crown apiece. Coker stared round at the laughing juniors.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

"I regret to say that the picture is not an original," said the auctioneer. "If it were, I am afraid the gentleman would not secure it for the modest sum of half-a-crown. It is a copy. However, it is a very striking copy, and I believe the colours come out much more brightly than in the original, which, of course, is an advantage. What offers for this splendid work of art?"

"Two bob!"

"This work of art, which would grace the walls of any picture-gallery in the United Kingdom, is going at the ridiculous sum of two shillings. Look at that picture, gentlemen. In the course of time the value may increase greatly—just as we hear of a picture being bought quite cheap, and being sold to the nation for seventy thousand pounds, sometimes, or even a hundred thousand pounds. Gentlemen, if you purchase this picture, your descendants may be able to extract almost anything from a patient public by threatening to let this inestimable art treasure cross the Atlantic. Did anybody say five pounds?"

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Two-and-threepence!"

"Going at two-and-threepence! This inestimable art treasure going at two shillings and threepence—going—going—gone!"

The hammer came down, and the inestimable art treasure was the property of Tom Brown for the modest sum of two shillings and threepence.

"Lot No. 3," said the auctioneer; "a handsome mahogany desk, a present to the owner from an aunt, going at a sacrifice, the original price being eight guineas. Gentlemen, what offers for this handsome desk?"

The desk was really a handsome and expensive one for a schoolboy, and the bidding woke up. Many fellows would have liked that desk, among them Billy Bunter. Bunter blinked at the desk most covetously. He started the bidding with sixpence, an offer which was laughed at by all the crowd.

"Cheese it, Bunter!"

"Dry up, you ass!"

"Gentlemen, our fat friend is quite within his rights in starting the bidding with sixpence, ridiculous as such an offer is. Gentlemen, this handsome desk——"

"Ten bob!" said John Bull.

"This handsome desk going at ten shillings. The original price was eight guineas. What rise on ten bob!"

"Fifteen!"

"Going at fifteen bob—this handsome desk, of which the original price was eight guineas. Gentlemen, this is an auction sale, not a practical joke. You do not seriously expect me to knock down this handsome desk for fifteen shillings. Gentlemen! Gentlemen!"

"A pound!" said Bulstrode.

"A sovereign is offered for this handsome desk. The original price—as I believe I have mentioned—was eight guineas. I am offered a pound——"

"One pound five!"

"I am offered one pound five for this handsome desk, of which the original price, I should inform you, was eight guineas. Twenty-five bob for a handsome desk that cost——"

"Thirty bob!"

"Thank you, sir. Thirty bob I am offered——"

"Thirty-five!" said John Bull.

"Thank you! What increase upon thirty-five shillings for this splendid desk, which contains pigeon-holes suitable for any noble lord to keep his banknotes in."

There was a laugh, in which Lord Mauleverer joined.

"Two pounds!" said his lordship.

"Ah! we are getting on," said the auctioneer, with a little flourish of the hammer. "Did anyone say an advance on two pounds?"

"And ten!" said John Bull.

"I am offered two pounds ten shillings for this handsome mahogany desk, which cost eight guineas when purchased by the respected and venerable aunt of the owner. I——"

"Three pounds!" said Billy Bunter.

There was a laugh. The Owl of the Remove was as likely to have three thousand pounds about him as three; it was extremely doubtful if he had three shillings. The auctioneer gave him a severe look.

"This is no place for jokes, Mr. Bunter," he said. "I have to request that the proceedings may not be interrupted by frivolity. What rise on two pound ten——"

"Three pounds!" repeated Billy Bunter firmly.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked round indignantly.

"I suppose I can bid if I like!" he exclaimed.

"You haven't any tin!" said Fish.

"I may have more tin than some fellows who swank round," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I have a right to bid if I like! Three pounds!"

The auctioneer looked puzzled. He had no right to refuse to let anyone bid, or to call upon him to show his money until the article was knocked down to him. There was nothing for it but to go on.

"Three pounds, gentlemen. What advance on three pounds?"

"And ten!"

"And five!"

"Four quid!"

The bidding was growing quite brisk, and the auctioneer rubbed his hands. He glanced round encouragingly at the crowd.

"Four pounds I am offered for this handsome desk, which cost eight guineas in the first place. Gentlemen, you do not want me to knock down this handsome desk at four pounds. I am confident that the desk will fetch a much handsomer price, and that the purchaser will never regret it. Gentlemen, this handsome desk is going at four pounds——"

"Five!" said Lord Mauleverer.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

DON'T MISS

the special new story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"BOUND BY HONOUR,"

in this week's "GRM" Library. Price One Penny.

"Thank you, sir. Five pounds I am offered——"

"Five ten!" said Billy Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"I am offered five ten. I beg to remind the stout gentleman that this sale is for cash only—cash on the nail. Five ten I am offered——"

"Six pounds!"

"I thank your lordship. Gentlemen——"

"Guineas!" said John Bull.

"I am offered six guineas. This handsome desk, costing eleven guineas in the first place, is going——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seven!"

"I thank your lordship. I am offered seven guineas for this handsome desk, which would be a credit to any fellow's study. Going at——"

"Eight!" said Billy Bunter.

"Rats!"

"Eight!" repeated the Owl of the Remove firmly.

"Any further offers?" asked the auctioneer, looking round.

"This handsome desk, of which the original price was sixteen guineas——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is going at eight guineas—dirt cheap—a most ridiculous sacrifice. What did your lordship say?"

"Nine!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"A guinea more than the cost price," murmured Nugent.

"Russell looks like doing pretty well out of this sale."

"Ten guineas!" said Billy Bunter obstinately.

"Cheese it, Bunter!"

"I am offered ten guineas," said the auctioneer; "ten guineas for a desk which cost—only a few years ago—eighteen guineas in spot cash. Gentlemen, I trust you are not finished. This splendid desk is going at ten guineas, going—going—GONE! Mr. Bunter, the desk is yours!"

"Right-o!" said Billy Bunter. "One of you chaps might give me a hand with it to my study, will you?"

"I beg to remind the stout gentleman that this is a cash transaction, and that the desk cannot be removed until paid for."

"Well, you see, all my money's in my study, and——"

"Then you had better go to your study and fetch it. I will pass on to the next lot while you are gone. Gentlemen, Lot No. 4——"

"Ahem! The fact is, I am a trifle short of ready cash," said Billy Bunter. "I suppose it will be all right, Russell, if I settle up in the morning?"

Russell started out of a brown study. But he did not need to reply; the auctioneer answered for him, in the most emphatic tones.

"You are dealing with me, not with the owner, Mr. Bunter. You will pay immediate cash, or you will not take the desk!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Kindly pay up!"

"Well, you see, I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning," Billy Bunter explained. "Until then I am somewhat short of cash. Of course, the inconvenience is only temporary. To-morrow morning——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Can you pay up?" roared the auctioneer.

"Not at this moment, but——"

"Then the desk goes to the next highest bidder, Lord Mauleverer, for nine guineas. Lord Mauleverer, the desk is yours for nine guineas."

"Thank you, my dear fellow," drawled his lordship. "Can you change a tenner?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"That desk is mine!" roared Bunter. "I've bought it—it was knocked down to me. It's mine, and Mauleverer's not going to have it. I tell you——"

"May I request the gentlemen present to remove that brawler?" asked the auctioneer.

"Yes, rather!"

"Kick him out!"

"Ow—yow—yah—yarooh! Oh!"

And Billy Bunter was promptly kicked out, and he rolled under the desks at the further end of the Form-room. He sat there, gasping and panting, and red with rage, while the sale went on.

ANSWERS

BOB CHERRY certainly made an excellent auctioneer. For all the "lots" that were worth anything he obtained very good prices; and he was fortunate, too, in having a wealthy fellow like Lord Mauleverer in the crowd of bidders. Lord Mauleverer did not care what he gave, and John Bull was also in great funds, and paid high prices. Between the two of them the bidding ran high at times, and Coker of the Fifth bid on the same lines. The news of the auction that was going on in the Remove Form-room soon spread over Greyfriars, and fellows of the upper Forms dropped in to look on, and some of them to bid. Loder, the prefect, came in with Carne and Ionides, the Greek, and Wingate looked in with Courtney. The seniors bid for a few things, but in most cases Lord Mauleverer outbid them. They took that good-humouredly enough, excepting in the case of Loder. Loder wanted a fishing-rod which was going cheap, apparently, and when he raised the bid to six shillings he expected to secure it. Lord Mauleverer made it ten at once. Loder, with a scowl, made it twelve, to which his lordship retorted with fifteen, and at that Loder let it go, giving the junior a most unpleasant look.

Billy Bunter had recovered himself by that time, and he came back and sat at a desk near the scene, not venturing to rejoin the crowd of bidders lest further damage should befall him. It was not of much use Bunter bidding, but the fat Removite had other ideas in his mind. His little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles as he sat at the desk watching the sale. Bunter intended to bid, but by using his powers as a ventriloquist. It was possible to cause a great deal of trouble that way, and that was Billy Bunter's amiable object.

Bob Cherry was at Lot 15 now. It was an armchair, a very comfortable-looking leather armchair, that tempted many of the juniors, and the seniors too. Loder would have liked the armchair in his study very much, but he was not inclined to give very much for it. But for Lord Mauleverer and John Bull he might have secured it for ten shillings or so, and he started bidding with the expectation of being outbid, and he was scowling in consequence, and his voice had its most rasping tone.

Bob Cherry, standing on the form which served him as a rostrum, pointed with his hammer at the armchair, which was standing close at hand.

"Gentlemen, the next lot is this handsome armchair, stuffed, best leathern, nicely finished, and extremely comfortable. I have sat in that armchair many a time, and I have found it most comfy. Gentlemen, what offers for that elegant and comfortable article of furniture?"

"Five bob," said Bulstrode.

"I did not ask the gentleman to provide me with a joke. What offers for that handsome and valuable piece of furniture?"

"Ten bob," said Tom Brown.

"I am offered ten shillings—ten shillings, gentlemen, for that armchair, that handsome and elegant——"

"Fifteen bob!" said Loder.

"A pound!"

"Twenty-five shillings!"

"I thank your lordship. I am offered twenty-five shillings. What advance upon twenty-five shillings for this elegant article—this most comfortable and handsome armchair?"

"Thirty bob!" rasped out Loder of the Sixth.

"Thirty-five!"

"Two pounds!"

"Two pound ten!" shouted John Bull.

"Three!"

"Four!" said Loder savagely, with a scowl at Lord Mauleverer. The noble junior winked one eye at the auctioneer. It was not safe, as a rule, to rag the bully of the Sixth. Loder was very heavy-handed. But in this case he could hardly "go for" a junior simply for bidding against him, and Lord Mauleverer enjoyed the sport.

"Five!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Loder bit his lip. The armchair was worth six guineas at least; it had been sent down to Russell's study by a fond mother in days of prosperity. But Loder could certainly not afford more than four, and he was equally certainly unwilling to pay full value for anything that he bought. He could go no higher.

"This handsome armchair going for five pounds," said Bob Cherry, waving the hammer towards the handsome armchair. "Five pounds I am offered. Gentlemen——"

"Six!"

It seemed to be Loder's voice, and to come from Loder. Nobody would have had any doubt on the subject, unless it was Loder himself. But Loder thought that somebody else was speaking, and, in fact, he looked round for the reckless bidder. Billy Bunter kept his eyes on the crowd, and there was a grin upon his fat face. The Greyfriars ventriloquist was at work.

"Six!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Good! I am offered six——"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Seven!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Eight!" Loder's voice again.

"Nine!" said his lordship.

"Ten!"

"Eleven!"

There was a moment's pause. The crowd were wildly excited now. Eleven guineas was nearly double the value of the armchair; the contest was evidently only being prolonged out of obstinacy. It was a battle between Loder of the Sixth and Mauleverer of the Remove. Lord Mauleverer had plenty of money to gratify all his tastes, however extravagant they were. But Loder? Loder had a good allowance, certainly, but nobody had imagined that he could afford to pay ten guineas for an armchair. But, on the other hand, a prefect of the Sixth could not be supposed to be bidding, like Billy Bunter, without the money to back up his words.

"Going at eleven guineas!" said Bob Cherry, looking at Loder, and highly delighted with the bidding. "This splendid volume—I mean armchair—going at the absurd price of eleven guineas. Going—going——"

"Twelve!" came the rasping tones.

"Thirteen!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Fifteen!"

"Twenty!" said his lordship triumphantly.

There was a buzz.

Twenty guineas was a surprise, even from Lord Mauleverer, who had more banknotes than he knew what to do with. It was surely impossible that even a prefect of the Sixth could beat that bid. Every eye was turned upon Loder. He was standing with his hands in his pockets, thinking, and apparently taking little interest in the proceedings.

"Going at twenty guineas, this handsome armchair! Going——"

"Twenty-five!" came the rasping voice.

"My hat!"

"He's off his rocker!"

"He can't pay it!"

"Thirty!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Great Scott!"

"Thirty-five!"

"Forty!"

"A hundred guineas!"

Then the juniors gasped. Even Lord Mauleverer stopped at that. His funds did not run into hundreds of pounds.

"A—a—a hundred guineas!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You—you really mean that? You bid a hundred guineas for that armchair?"

"Yes," came the rasping answer.

"Any rise on a hundred guineas?" asked the auctioneer encouragingly.

"Yes; twopence," said Bolsover.

And there was a laugh; but it was a breathless one. The mere thought of a hundred guineas took the juniors' breath away.

"Going—going at a hundred guineas!" said Bob Cherry.

"Going—going—going—gone! Mr. Loder, the chair is yours."

Billy Bunter grinned quietly.

Loder started, and gave the auctioneer a stare.

"Mine!" he repeated.

"Yes; you've topped the bidding. The armchair's yours, and I'll trouble you for a hundred guineas," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Mad?" asked Loder.

"Eh?"

"What do you mean, then? I went up to four pounds for the chair, and that's more than it's worth."

"I hope you do not mean to repudiate your own bidding. Mr. Loder," said the auctioneer warmly. "I call all the gentlemen present to witness that you bid a hundred guineas for that chair. Gentlemen!"

"Rot!"

"You certainly did!" said Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. "I suppose you were only rotting, but you certainly did."

"I didn't!"

"Nonsense! I heard you."

"I heard you, too," said Courtney.

"So did I!" said Valence of the Sixth.

"So did we all!" shouted the juniors in chorus.

Loder looked round almost wildly.

"I—I didn't!" the prefect exclaimed. "I tell you I didn't! I was thinking about something else, and not listening to the bidding at all."

"Pay up!"

It was a threatening yell from the juniors, and they crowded round Loder. Prefect as he was, he was not to be allowed to "rot" at the junior auction without paying the price. The yell grew menacing.

"Pay up!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets It!

LODER stared at the crowd of excited fellows blankly. He certainly hadn't made that extraordinary bid, and he could not understand why they believed that he had. Billy Bunter could have explained, but he did not choose to do so. He only hoped that there would be a row between the prefect and the juniors, and that the auction would end in a wild disturbance.

"Pay up!"

"Pay up, you rotter!"

"Wingate, make him pay up!"

Loder panted.

"I tell you I didn't make the bid!" he shouted. "Do you think I'm idiot enough? Where do you think I should get a hundred guineas from, you duffers? I didn't say anything of the sort. You must be mad."

"We heard you!"

"Your own voice!"

"Pay up! Pay up!"

Loder began to get hustled. He hit out angrily, and there was a shout of anger from the juniors. They closed round excitedly. Wingate strode through the crowd towards Loder, and waved the juniors back.

"Quiet!" he exclaimed. "Hands off!"

"Make him pay up, then!"

"I guess he ought to shell out!"

"Faith, and he ought to be made to, intirely!"

"Pay up, you cad!"

"Yah! Pay up!"

"You shouldn't have made the bid, Loder," said Wingate sternly. "It was utterly unfair on the kids to upset their sale in that way."

"I didn't!" yelled Loder.

"Nonsense! I heard you."

"I didn't—I didn't—I didn't!"

"I suppose I know your voice," said Wingate tartly. "What's the good of saying you didn't, when we all know that you did?"

Loder gasped for breath.

"But I didn't—I didn't!" he roared. "Can't you believe me, you idiots? I tell you I never said a word. It must have been somebody else. It was somebody playing a trick, perhaps."

Harry Wharton uttered a sudden exclamation. Loder's words had brought a quick suspicion into his mind.

"Hold on, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "Is Bunter here? You remember his blessed ventriloquism? Where is he?"

Billy Bunter made a sudden movement towards the door. In a moment he was in the grasp of Nugent and John Bull.

"Oh!" he roared. "Leggo! It wasn't me! I didn't do it! I say, you fellows—Ow! I tell you I couldn't imitate Loder's voice if I tried. Ow!"

"So it was you, you fat cad!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily.

"Ow! No! Certainly not! I never opened my lips. Yow! Besides, it was only a joke; it was only in fun. You see—ow—ow!"

"You did it in fun, hey?" demanded Wingate.

"Yes, that's all—I—I mean, certainly not. I didn't do it."

"I—I'll smash him!" exclaimed Loder, making towards the fat junior.

"Ow! Lemme go!"

"Kick him out of the room!" exclaimed the auctioneer.

"Hurray! Bump him out!"

"Yow—ow—ow—oh! Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire! Oh!"

Many feet helped Billy Bunter out of the Form-room. He rolled into the passage, and the door was slammed behind him.

Loder went out, too, with a scowling face, and he bestowed an extra kick upon the fat junior in passing. In the Form-room, Bob Cherry, in an extremely exasperated frame of mind, recommenced the sale of the famous armchair. Lord Mauleverer would have stood by his bid of forty pounds, although it had been caused by fictitious opposition.

but that could not be allowed. The armchair was knocked down to him for five pounds.

The other lots went off more or less well, and at the end of the sale the juniors who had made the purchases removed their new possessions. The sale had realised over twenty pounds in all, a much larger sum than Russell could possibly have hoped to obtain had he called in a dealer to buy his property.

The money was handed over to the junior.

"There you are!" said Bob Cherry proudly. "And although I say it, I really think that you have had a jolly good auctioneer."

Russell smiled.

"Thanks!" he said. "I think I've had some very friendly bidders, too. Mauleverer will have to take back that extra guinea on the desk. It cost a guinea less than he has paid, in the first place."

"Can't be done!" said Bob. "An auction is an auction; and if a chap chooses to bid more than cost price for a thing, that's his own look out."

"Yaas, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer. "Besides, some of the things went cheap, and so it's all right."

"Oh, very well!"

And Russell put the money in his pocket. Russell had several accounts to settle, which he had left over to be met out of the sale of his property, and he was able to pay up his subscription to the Form football club, much to the satisfaction of Frank Nugent, secretary and treasurer. He had money enough left to purchase the new books he needed, and five or six pounds over—a very new experience for the junior, who, for several terms past, had had little or no pocket-money.

Billy Bunter met the juniors as they left the Form-room after the proceedings terminated. There was a very injured expression upon Bunter's fat face.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "If you come near me, I shall slog you on the boko, so I give you warning."

Bunter backed away hastily.

"I—I was only trying to help on the bidding," he said. "It was really entirely out of friendship for Russell, you know!"

"Rats!" said Russell.

"Oh, really, you know! Look here, Russell has done jolly well out of the sale, and, under the circumstances, I think he ought to stand a feed to the Form—"

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"Good!" said Bolsover. "He certainly ought."

Dick Russell hesitated. He was a generous lad enough, but he had learned, only too severely, the value of money. The little sum he possessed would have to last him a long time if he left Greyfriars, and it was not enough to keep him there.

"Oh, rot!" broke out Bob Cherry angrily. "Shut up, Bunter. Russell's not going to do anything of the sort."

"Oh, really, I don't think he ought to be mean—ow!"

Bunter sat down suddenly on the floor, and the juniors walked on. The Owl of the Remove sat up and blinked after them through his spectacles, and snorted.

"Yah! Beasts!"

"I think we ought to have a feed," Lord Mauleverer remarked thoughtfully. "I should be glad if all you fellows would join me in the tuck-shop. Whoever would like a bit of a feast, say tarts."

And with one voice fifty juniors, at least, replied:

"Tarts!"

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll let you stand a feed to celebrate the occasion, as you're rolling in filthy lucre. Lead on, Macduff!"

And Lord Mauleverer led the way to the school shop, and gave orders on a lavish scale that delighted the heart of Mrs. Mumble. And when the feed was in full swing, Billy Bunter came rolling in and sneaked up to the counter and joined in the feeding. He was allowed to stay; and although he was a late-comer he accounted for more of Mrs. Mumble's good things than any other fellow in the crowd.

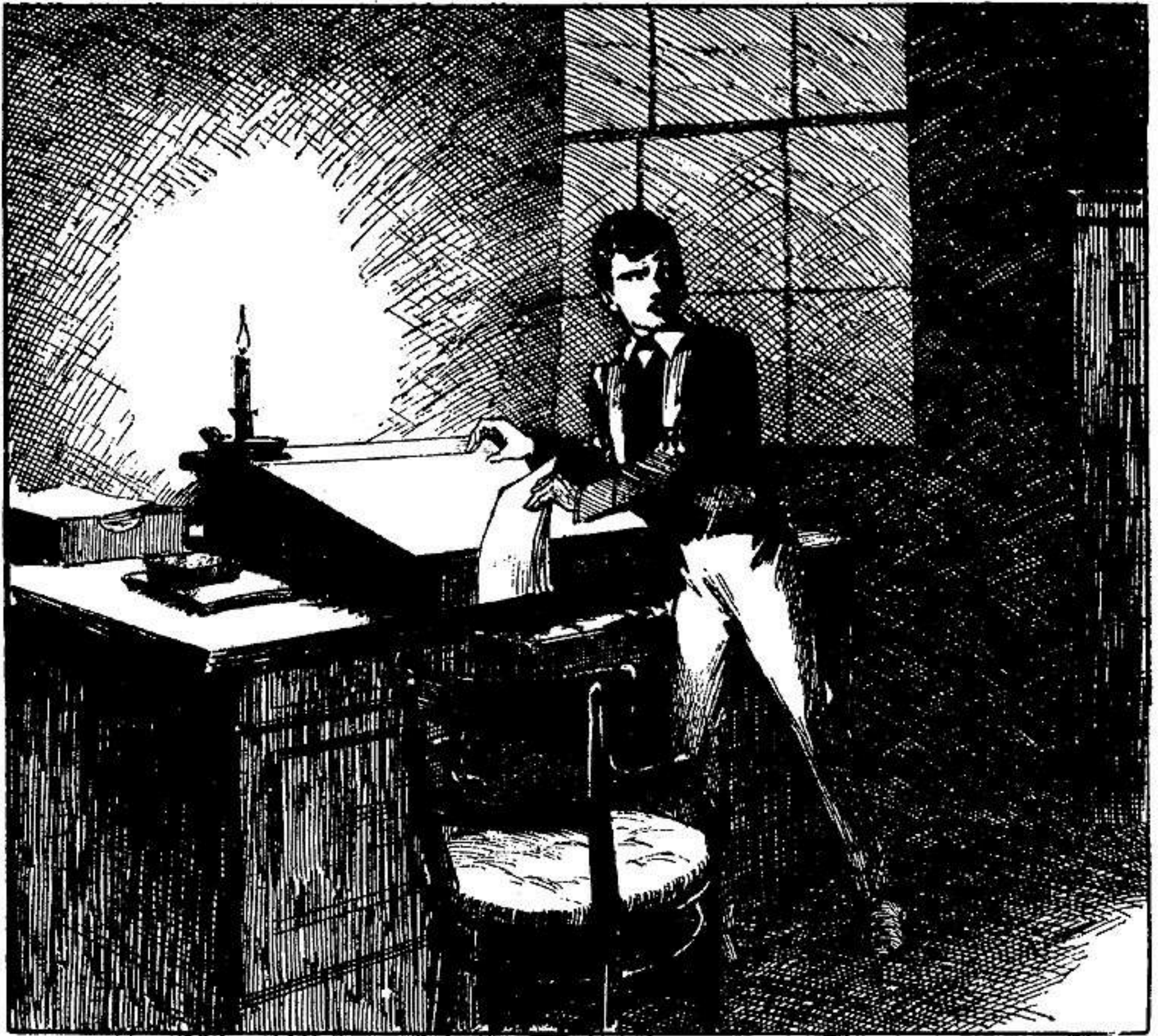
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The boy drew back, a cold sweat breaking out over him. "Oh! I—I won't touch them! Heaven help me, I won't touch them!" It was like a cry of despair from one who felt himself sinking—sinking—he knew not whither, but into black depths. All that was best in Dick Russell was in that cry.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night!

MR. QUELCH came out of his study, and paused as he met Russell in the passage. Dick Russell had left the juniors enjoying themselves in the school shop, and was about to go up to his study to put in a little more work before bedtime. He started as he saw the Form-master, and paused as Mr. Quelch signed to him, his heart beating hard.

He knew that by that time Mr. Quelch must have gone over the proofs of the examination-papers. Had the coincidence struck him, of the Tenth Ode of Horace being in the paper, and of Dick Russell having asked for coaching on that very Ode? Surely such a singular coincidence could not have escaped the acute master. Mr. Quelch was known to be as sharp as a needle. Dick stood before him like a criminal waiting for sentence; and his heart was beating almost to suffocation. Scorn and anger were what he expected to see in the Form-master's face and to hear in his voice, and the doom that he was not to be allowed to enter for the exam.

But Mr. Quelch's face was kindly, his voice as kind as usual. There was no change in his manner since the last time Russell had seen him.

"Ah, I wanted to speak to you, Russell!" said the Remove-

master. "Dear me! How pale you are, my boy. Have you been working hard?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"I am afraid that you are allowing this matter of the examination to weigh upon your mind, Russell," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "You must try to avoid that. That is not the way to get into a state to win."

"I suppose not, sir."

Dick's heart beat more freely. It was evident that the Form-master suspected nothing. Yet he could not understand it. Mr. Quelch, usually so keen, so keen that he was almost suspicious, seemed to be blind now.

But he suspected nothing, that was the great thing. Dick was not to be barred from the examination that meant so much to him. As for what he knew—well, he could leave the Latin section of the paper till the last. He might not do it at all, but might win on the rest of the marks; that would enable him to avoid taking a dishonourable advantage of the other fellows.

"I have spoken about you to Mr. Prout," went on the Form-master. "He is quite willing to give you some coaching, and he will be prepared to see you in his study every afternoon at five until the examination."

"Oh, thank you, sir! It is very kind of you, and of him."

"I should like to see you succeed, Russell. You are a deserving lad, and certainly you are working hard enough for success."

And Mr. Quelch, with a kindly nod, passed on. Dick Russell went up slowly to his study. He had escaped—he hardly knew how. He had certainly given himself completely away in the Form-master's study by selecting Horace's Tenth Ode for study with the master's assistance; yet Mr. Quelch suspected nothing. It was a lesson to the boy; after that terrible risk, he felt that he would not run another.

He would act as his father would have had him act; he would win the Hundred by fair means, or he would not win it at all. That was the best way—it was the only way for an honourable lad. Russell made up his mind upon that matter, and dismissed it from his mind.

It remained out of his thoughts for some time, while he was hard at work in his study. When he went up to bed with the Remove, he joined cheerfully enough in the chatter of the juniors. Bolsover looked at him, and would have been glad to make some sneering reference to his newly-discovered poverty, but Bob Cherry was looking at Bolsover, too. And Bolsover knew that any sneering words from him would bring down the wrath upon him of the only fellow in the Remove whom he was afraid of; and so the Form-bully remained silent.

As for the other fellows, they cared little about the matter. It surprised Russell, and perhaps wounded him a little, to see how slight an interest they took in the question of whether he was rich or poor. Many fellows, who had previously supposed him to be mean, thought better of him, and those who were disposed to sneer at him because he was "hard up" were very few. Russell was looking quite cheerful as he turned in, and after Courtney had put out the lights Dick joined in the cheery talk on the prospects of the coming football season as cheerily as anybody.

It was when the talk in the dormitory had died away, and silence and darkness reigned, that other thoughts came creeping back into the mind of the junior.

He tried to sleep, but he could not. Hard work had excited his faculties, and he found it hard to settle himself to slumber. And at every moment the thought of that printed paper in Mr. Quelch's table drawer would come into his mind.

The printed letters seemed to dance before his eyes in the darkness of the dormitory.

He sat up in bed, in a cold perspiration. The thought of creeping downstairs, of stealing into the Form-master's study and looking at the printed exam-paper, had come into his mind, and he was trembling.

What was to prevent him?

The other fellows were all asleep—the Form-master never locked his study door of a night, and his bed-room was a good distance from his study, on a different floor. It would be quite safe.

No one would see him!

Why not?

The junior trembled as he wrestled in the darkness with the terrible temptation. He knew, in his heart of hearts, that if he looked at the exam-paper in advance it would be the act of a thief. Yet—

Yet, as in all such cases, sophistry was ready to come to the aid of the tempter. He needed the money so much. He wanted so much to stay at Greyfriars. His people would be so bitterly disappointed if he failed—if he had to abandon the career they had so fondly sketched out for him!

If he failed to take advantage of this opportunity, his mother would suffer, his father would suffer, everything would go wrong. He had doubts about his ability to win the prize—against such opponents as Dawlish and Linley. But with the questions all ready in his head, with the paper in his hand to prepare for, the exam. would be child's play. He would come out with flying colours—the cleverest fellow could do nothing against a competitor who had read the paper in advance.

Why could he not sleep? He laid his head on the pillow again and closed his eyes and tried to sleep; but sleep would not come. Unconsciously, he found himself sitting up in bed again, thinking it over—thinking—thinking—till his aching brain was in a whirl.

"You fellows asleep?"

He asked the question in a low and shaking voice. He would have been glad if some voice had replied—it would have shown him that he could not leave the dormitory unobserved—it would have forced him to remain where he was.

But no voice replied—the juniors were all sleeping. The dormitory was very silent and still! What hour was it? Through the deep silence of the night the strokes from the clock-tower boomed out with muffled tones.

Twelve!

The last stroke died away, leaving a silence more profound than before. It was midnight; and all Greyfriars was silent and still. Everyone would be in bed now and sleeping; the studies would be empty, deserted. And the Remove were

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sleeping soundly; no one was stirring in bed. Billy Banter's snore echoed softly through the dormitory. Russell, trembling, breathing unsteadily, spoke again.

"Anybody awake?"

His voice was little more than a whisper. He did not know what he intended to do; but he did not speak loudly enough to awaken his nearest neighbour. Why this caution—if he had not determined upon doing what he knew he ought not to do? Yet he had not determined—he was still in the same doubtful frame of mind—it seemed as if some strange power outside himself was forcing him to act.

He stepped from his bed.

With quick, silent hands he drew some of his clothes on, and trod softly towards the door of the dormitory. At the door he paused to listen. Even yet he had not made up his mind; his brain was in a whirl, and he did not know what he intended to do.

No one stirred.

He opened the door quietly and passed out into the corridor, and closed the door noiselessly behind him. His heart was thumping against his ribs as he stole downstairs into his study and groped for a candle. He found it, and left the study.

Where now?

As if it were against his will, his footsteps led him in the direction of the Remove-master's study. There was no light in the passage, no light under the door. Mr. Quelch had long been in bed.

Dick Russell paused outside the door.

He paused there a long time; how long, he did not know. What was he going to do? Suddenly a thought flashed into his mind—he wondered he had not thought of it before. The exam. papers proofs had been lying in Mr. Quelch's drawer, doubtless waiting for the Form-master to correct them; but now that it was done, they would be there no longer. Mr. Quelch would surely have locked them up in safety, even if he had not already posted them back to the printer—as was very probable, with the examination so close at hand.

The thought brought a strangely mingled feeling of disappointment and relief to the tortured junior. Disappointment, because his chance was gone—and he realised then how much he had built upon it, in spite of his indecision. Relief, because now, whether he liked it or not, he would have to play the game—it would be impossible to do the dishonourable thing he had contemplated.

He would take one look into the Form-master's drawer to satisfy himself that the papers were not there, and then he would go back to bed. Why that last look—why? He knew that something within him—some evil genius that possessed him—hoped that the papers might be still there, and he hated himself for that lingering hope. But he entered the study, and closed the door softly behind him.

He placed the candle upon the table and struck a match. He started as the light glimmered out in the darkness of the study. He lighted the wick of the candle with a trembling hand—trembling so violently that for some moments he could not get the candle alight.

It flared up at last. He looked at the table drawer; it was closed. With a hand still trembling he drew it open.

Of course, the papers would not be there—Mr. Quelch could not have been so criminally careless—the papers could not be there, ready to the touch of any comer. It was impossible—he had only to see that they were not there, and to go back to bed—still honest, still honourable. The drawer slid open, and Dick Russell gave a violent start, and a choked cry came from his throat. The papers were there, just inside the drawer. Where he had seen them before, they still lay.

The boy drew back, a cold sweat breaking out over him.

"Oh! I—I won't touch them! Heaven help me, I won't touch them!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Into the Depths.

IT was like a cry of despair from one who felt himself sinking—sinking—he knew not whither, but into black depths.

All that was best in Dick Russell was in that cry.

But he did not rush from the study and throw the temptation behind him, as he should have done—he had not the strength for that. He was too strained and over-wrought to know clearly what he should do. He meant to do what was right. But he remained where he was, staring at the papers with a fascinated stare.

There they were—printed proofs, fastened at the corner with a metal clip, and that fragment of Horace showing, easy to read. He could make out the words in Latin as the candle-light gleamed upon the papers.

"Te bovas olim—"

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"Per. dolum—"

"Voce d—"

That was all he could see, but he knew what it belonged to. His hand stretched out towards the papers, and he drew it back.

"I won't—I won't touch them!"

But the words were not sincere now. He could have laughed bitterly at his own hypocrisy. He knew now that he was going to take the papers. Conscience was banished for the time being; he was too weary with the struggle to be able to struggle any longer.

He stretched out his hand again, and this time he did not draw it back. He grasped the papers and drew them from the drawer. He cast a quick glance over his shoulder at the door; it seemed to him that the form of Mr. Quelch must enter, to discover him in his crime.

But there was no sound.

The papers were in his grasp. He blew out the candle, and took it up and groped his way to the door. The study seemed to be stifling him.

Out in the passage he breathed more freely. He felt his way to his study and entered it, and closed the door behind him. He drew down the blind carefully, and laid a coat along the floor to screen the light from the passage and then lighted the candle again. He jammed the coat closely along the bottom of the door, and hung a cap over the key-hole. If by chance anyone passed down the Remove passage he would not know that a light was burning in Russell's study; and the dim glimmer was not likely to be seen from the Close, even if anyone should go out there at such an hour.

He was safe.

Safe from all but his own conscience—and conscience was silent for the time being; he had much to do, much too much to have time to think of his conscience. All that would come later—later, when he had committed this wickedness, and repentance would come too late.

He took blank foolscap from his drawer and dipped his pen in the ink. He opened the examination papers and took a hasty glance through them. Then he began to copy.

It was not necessary to copy out the whole. A hint here, a jot there—that was enough. All that he required to know, in order to get up perfect knowledge on the subject, he was able to jot down on a single sheet.

It did not take him long; but it seemed like hours, days, weeks, to the wretched lad, in momentary terror of seeing the door open and someone enter to denounce his treachery. He gasped with relief when the last line was jotted down; his task was finished.

He laid down the pen.

The candle was guttering down. He took up Mr. Quelch's papers—they had to be returned to their place. His copy he placed in the inside pocket of his jacket. It would be safe there. He left his study, blowing out the candle before he went. He groped his way in the dark to the Form-master's study. He could replace the papers by the light of a match. His heart was beating so loudly that it seemed to him like a great pulse beating in the shadows round him.

He paused suddenly.

From the distance came a sound—a faint sound—but it made his heart leap in his breast, and the colour flow and ebb in his cheeks. It was the sound of a closing door! All, then, were not asleep in Greyfriars.

He stood with throbbing heart.

He deserved to be caught—caught, with the examination proofs and the written copy both upon him—caught, and exposed to all the school. He deserved it—he knew that—and for the moment he almost hoped that it would be so. Yet he trembled, and his knees bent under him at the thought.

But the sound died away, and there were no footsteps—he was in no danger. But it was several minutes before he found the strength to grope his way on in the darkness. The sudden terror had made him almost sick.

He found Mr. Quelch's door again; he went in, and struck a match softly, and replaced the papers in the drawer as he had found them.

Then he groped his way into the passage again and closed the study door. It was done, and the copy was in his pocket.

Slowly, cautiously, Dick Russell made his way back to the Remove dormitory.

The door creaked slightly as he opened it, and his heart throbbed again; he stood with the door open, listening.

From the great room came sounds of steady breathing, and the sound of a snore. He stepped in and closed the door.

He made his way to his bed.

The paper was in his pocket. He took off the jacket he had been wearing and drew out the paper. It would not do to leave it in his pocket. True, it was unlikely enough that anyone would look in the pocket, but while he was not wearing the jacket he dared not run a risk.

But what was he to do with it?

He could place it under his pillow, but he was beset by a

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terror that he might forget it, and leave it there in the morning. If it were found—

True, he was not likely to forget it; but he might! What was he to do with it—the paper, the proof of his guilt, that was sufficient, if it were found and understood, to cause him to be expelled from Greyfriars with the utmost ignominy?

There was a silent groan in the heart of the miserable boy. He wished he had not done it; yet he did not destroy the paper. After all, what was the use of destroying it now? He knew too well what was on it. Even without further study, he remembered enough of what he had written down to be able to prepare with practical certainty for the exam. He folded the paper up, and felt in his pocket for a piece of string to tie it round his neck. He found the string, and the paper fell clumsily from his hand to the floor.

He drew a quivering breath.

The strain of the night and its work had told upon him; he was in a state of strung nerves; his courage was in rags. He stooped hastily to pick up the paper and knocked his head against his bedstead, and gave a cry.

There was a sleepy exclamation in the darkness, and the sound of a movement from the next bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?"

Dick crouched in the darkness in terror. If Bob Cherry should fully awaken—if he should see him!

But Bob was only half awake. His breathing was soon placid and steady again; he slept, and the trembling junior breathed.

He waited five minutes or more before he dared to grope for the paper. He dared not leave it on the floor; he hardly dared search for it. It was impossible to strike a light without betraying himself; and he had a morbid fear of making some sound in the darkness, some clumsy blunder. His hand searched over the floor. Where was the paper?

It was folded small, difficult to find in the gloom. Where was it? He kicked against the bed, he knocked against the washstand, and trembled and listened. No one awoke, but he crouched in a sweat of fear.

There it was at last, close to him all the time; but he had missed it. The paper crumpled and crackled in his hand. He seemed to be choking as he rose to his feet. Not for a thousand exams., not for a thousand prizes, would he go through the sickening fear again! It was the fear of the thief that was upon him—the fear of the guilty one in terror of every honest glance.

He fastened the string to the paper with shaking fingers, and tied it round his neck. There, at all events, it was safe—and he was safe! He crept into bed—the bedstead creaked as he lay down, with a sound that seemed to his throbbing ears almost deafening; the bedclothes rustled as he drew them over him—surely someone must hear.

But no one heard. The sounds, terrible as they seemed to him, were slight, and the juniors of the Remove were sound sleepers. Dick Russell laid his aching head upon the pillow; the night was not warm, but he was pouring with perspiration. What had he done? What had he done? From the darkness about him mocking faces seemed to look; in the rustle of the old elm branches outside the window he seemed to hear whispering voices denouncing him—as a thief—as a cheat.

As a cheat—as what he was. Oh, what a fool he had been! Why had he done this? And it was too late to retrieve that false step. He had sunk into the depths now, and there was no retreat.

The time for retreat was past.

The unhappy boy closed his eyes. He tried to sleep, but sleep, often wooed in vain by the innocent, would not come to the guilty. Slumber refused to visit his eyes. He closed them, and opened them again, and lay with staring eyeballs through the long, dark hours. Would morning never come?

Sleepless, tortured, he lay, while the long, slow night crept past—sleepless, with blank eyes looking into the shadows; weary, exhausted, but sleepless, till at last the grey light of dawn crept in at the windows, and glimmered upon the white beds in the dormitory.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Conscience.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Awake already?" said Bob Cherry, as he projected a long leg over the side of his bed, and blinked at Dick Russell.

"Yes," said Russell.

"You're looking pretty seedy," said Bob. "Jump up, and let's have a run down by the river before brekker. It will do you good, old son. You look as if you hadn't slept all night."

"I'll come."

Dick Russell was only too glad to get up. He had watched

the slow approach of morning as anxiously, as longingly, as a sick man, to whom the night seems endless. In the bright sunlight, and with somebody to talk to, conscience did not seem so terrible.

The pale, troubled lad turned out of bed, Bob Cherry looking at him anxiously. Bob liked Russell very much, and regarded him as what he called a "jolly good sort," and his idea was that Dick was overdoing the work for the exam.

The necessity Dick was under of winning the Hundred, if he could, and of working his hardest for it, made Bob feel very sympathetic; for if there was one thing Bob Cherry would have abhorred in his own case, it was swotting for an exam. He could, and would, have worked as hard as you pleased at footer or cricket, or rowing, or swimming, or cycling, but to be chained down to a desk indoors, with weary books always under his eyes, would have been torment to the sturdy, healthy junior. And so he could feel very much for Russell, whose tastes were also for an outdoor life when he had time to gratify them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry exclaimed, in surprise. "What the dickens have you got round your neck, Russell?"

Dick turned crimson.

"My—my neck?" he stammered.

"Yes. My hat! Is it a giddy locket, with a portrait of Angelina?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You don't mean to say—"

"Of course it isn't!" said Russell irritably.

"No, by Jove! It's a folded paper," said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Is it a billet-doux from Gloxiana, or a bill from your tailor? Gentle shepherd, tell me which!"

"Oh, it's nothing!" said Russell.

"Well, it's a queer place to wear it, anyway," said Bob, in wonder.

"Look here, Bob Cherry—" began Russell hotly.

"Oh, keep your wool on!" said Bob, his wonder growing greater still. "No need to get ratty about it, my son. It's no bizney of mine."

Russell did not reply. He dressed himself, and placed the folded paper in his pocket.

The two juniors left the dormitory and strolled down to the banks of the Sark. The river was shining and rippling in the morning sunshine. All was bright and cheerful by the green, wooded banks, and Bob Cherry shouted aloud out of sheer carelessness, but Dick Russell's face remained clouded.

"Thinking of the exam?" asked Bob Cherry, when his companion had not spoken for more than five minutes.

Russell started out of a brown study.

"Yes," he stammered.

"No good letting it weigh on your mind," said Bob sagely. "It will make you nervous, and may make you come a mucker on the day. Better try not to think of it."

"I do try, but it isn't much use," said Russell ruefully.

"But you've got a jolly good chance."

"Oh, I'm certain!" said Russell, his hand resting upon the folded paper in his pocket for a moment. "I don't think I have any doubt now."

Bob Cherry looked surprised.

"You haven't been so sure as all that before?" he said.

"No. I was rather afraid of Mark Linley, and of Dawlish, of the Fifth. But now I think I shall pull it off."

"I hope you will," said Bob Cherry heartily. "I shall be sorry for old Marky to lose, for he needs the tin pretty bad; but I'd rather you win than anybody else except Marky. I'm glad you feel so sure about it."

Dick Russell winced as they turned back to walk to the school. He wondered what Bob Cherry would have thought if he had known why Russell felt so sure now—if he had known that the junior had taken a copy of the examination papers in advance.

Dick could imagine the scorn that would have blazed in Bob's eyes, the contempt that would have curled his lip.

He shivered uncomfortably, and walked more quickly. He did not speak again till they reached the school. At breakfast that morning he sat very silent. In the Form-room he was deeply preoccupied. He went through his lessons like one in a dream, and Mr. Quelch looked at him sharply several times.

When the Remove left the Form-room for their recess after third lesson, Mr. Quelch signed to Russell to remain behind. Dick stopped at his desk, and the master of the Remove looked at him very seriously and earnestly.

"You are not yourself this morning, Russell," he said.

"I advise you to pull yourself together, and take the matter more cheerfully. I know how much is at stake for you, but you are letting it harass you into a state of nerves. That is not the way to be successful. Keep yourself in hand."

"I'll do my best, sir," said Russell heavily.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

And he followed the juniors out of the Form room.

Mr. Quelch did not understand—the others did not understand. It was not only the exam. that was weighing upon Dick Russell's mind, and driving the colour from his cheeks, and the light from his eyes; or, rather, it was not the exam. at all now. He had no fear for the exam.; in sporting parlance, he would simply "romp home" on the exam. papers. That was a certainty. What was harassing the junior was the heavy weight of guilt—the knowledge that he was not fit to speak to the fellows who were so kind to him—the feeling of miserable inferiority which guilt must always bring.

If the other fellows knew what he had done—that was the wretched thought that was harassing the junior. They did not know—they could not know, unless he chose to tell them—but the thought haunted him. Cold glances, averted looks, scornful sneers—that would be his portion, as he well deserved. And in his worried, excited frame of mind it seemed to him that he could already detect suspicion and contempt in many faces, and he read dark meanings in the most innocent glance.

The exam. was early in the following week; to-day was Saturday. The first football practice for the season began that afternoon, and the juniors were in high spirits about it. Bob Cherry slapped Russell heartily on the back as they came out after dinner.

"Footer, my son!" he said joyously. "Footer this afternoon—first practice!"

"I—I'd forgotten."

"Oh, rats! You couldn't forget," said Bob Cherry. "You're dreaming. A born idiot couldn't forget footer. Now, stop thinking of that blessed exam., and come and play. It will make you feel a new man."

Russell shook his head.

"I don't feel up to it," he said.

"Bosh!"

"I—I can't play."

"Got to," said Bob Cherry. "It's not a match, so it doesn't matter whether you're in form or not. It's just goal-kicking and passing, and I suppose you feel up to that? It will do you good, and stop you from moping. You can't mope your way through an exam., you know. Better come and punt about, and forget the blessed exam."

"Thanks, I don't really feel up to it."

"Going to swot?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"N-no."

"I see you're not working so hard as you were, anyway. Do you feel so jolly sure about the examination?" asked Bob curiously.

Dick smiled—a miserable, tremulous smile.

"Yes, quite sure," he said.

"It's odd, considering how doubtful you were, but I'm glad. If you feel so sure about it, chuck up mugging for this afternoon, and come and kick the ball."

But Russell shook his head, and disengaged himself from Bob's arm. He did not feel inclined to play footer that afternoon; he did not feel inclined to play anything. Some of the Remove were still playing cricket, and Russell was asked to bowl, but he shook his head. Everything jarred upon him that fine, sunny afternoon.

What was the matter with him? He sought the quiet shades of the old Cloisters—the oldest part of Greyfriars, where the flagstones were worn down by the sandalled feet of monks who had trodden there five or six hundred years ago. In the cool, quiet shade, the unhappy boy felt that he could think at his ease. From the distant playing-fields came the shouts of the juniors, but they rang discordantly upon the ears of the miserable boy in the shady Cloisters.

Dick Russell's whole being was out of tune with his surroundings that afternoon. The weight upon his mind seemed intolerable. He despised himself; he wished a thousand times, with wild earnestness, that he had never yielded to that terrible temptation. He must have been mad—mad! And now it was too late; now he could not save himself. The knowledge he had gained placed success within his grasp, and he could not part with that knowledge, even if he wished. It was too late—too late.

He rose at last, an almost desperate expression upon his face. In his anguish of mind, the thought of the cool, restful waters of the Sark had flashed into his brain with a strange and deadly fascination.

But he knew that that would not do. He knew that was the way madness lies. He drove the black thought from his mind—he drove the voice of conscience to its recesses, to wake again, perhaps. He strode back to the School House, locked himself up in his study, and took out the guilty paper and read it over. Then he gathered his books and commenced to study. With grim, deadly determination he worked on, regardless of the passing hours—worked and worked, forgetful of hunger and fatigue, while

the golden afternoon passed away, and darkness once more descended upon the earth.

The sound of juniors tramping in the passage awoke him at last. He started up, passing his hand over his eyes. He had been working for four solid hours, and he was sick and faint and giddy. But every difficulty in the exam. paper had been mastered, and he knew, without the slightest shadow of doubt, that if he sat down to the exam. with that paper before him he would take the coveted Hundred.

Conscience was stifled for the time. Success was his—what he had been fighting for would be his. He would bring joy to the hearts of his father and mother. He would remain at Greyfriars, and that was enough. He determined, with a wild and almost hysterical determination, not to think of the means by which his success was brought about.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Dick Russell Makes up his Mind.

SUNDAY!

It was always a very quiet and restful day at Greyfriars. There were two services which the fellows had to attend, and apart from those they had the day to do as they liked with.

The fags of the lowest Forms were generally taken out for walks by their Form-masters, nice little treats for them, which they did not enjoy. Nice little boys, in nice little white collars and nice little silk hats, certainly looked very nice and select as they marched along in order with their benignant master; but the village boys and the country fellows persisted in seeing something comic in it, and they would often gather round in crowds, and hail the Greyfriars youths with jeers and catcalls.

Hence the unpopularity of those Sunday walks, though, as a matter of fact, it was only the presence of the master that would prevent the little rascals from getting into some mischief or other.

Boys of higher Forms took their walks "on their own," and enjoyed them more, but sometimes came back from them with trousers torn and dusty from climbing fruit-trees, or with boots full of water from tramping by the sea, or with black eyes caused by terrific encounters with the boys of Pegg or Courtfield.

That Sunday afternoon Harry Wharton & Co. were going over to Cliff House to tea, and as Miss Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara and the other girls were all to be there, naturally the juniors were very careful about dressing themselves for the occasion. Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry and John Bull were the party; but Harry Wharton asked Russell to join them, with the idea of cheering him up. He knew that Marjorie would not mind.

But Russell shook his head.

"Thanks very much, old fellow," he said. "I don't think I'll come. I'm feeling rotten to-day, and I don't want to inflict it on the girls."

Wharton looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing in particular."

"Not ill?"

"Oh, no!"

"Bob says you're certain about the result of the exam. now," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose, if that's the case, the exam. isn't worrying you?"

"Oh, no; not at all!"

"Then I'm blessed if I can make you out," said Wharton, puzzled. "I suppose it must be the reaction after working so hard. It would do you good to see some cheerful faces, especially Marjorie's; that would do anybody good. You'd better come."

"No; excuse me. Thanks, all the same!"

"Just as you like. But you're an ass!"

"I know I am," said Dick miserably. "I don't need telling that."

Wharton left him, feeling puzzled and concerned. Russell was certainly in a very strange state. Wharton could not make him out; Russell, indeed, could hardly make himself out. He felt a shrinking from all society; he felt that he could not meet a glance. And whenever a lip moved to speak to him, it seemed to him that the fellow was going to ask him whether he had seen the exam. paper.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER."

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

It was as much as he could do to master himself, to keep calm. He felt a desire to cry out aloud with the misery that was preying upon his heart. How long would he be able to bear it? If he could only get away from the crowded school, get away into some quiet place. And yet solitude terrified him. When he was alone, the spectre of his guilt seemed to haunt him with a more deadly persistence.

The unfortunate lad was never made to be dishonest, and his first act of dishonesty had thrown him completely off his balance. A kind of hysteria was working up within him, and at times he felt a mad desire to take some boy apart and pour into his ear the whole story of how he had abstracted the examination paper from the master's study, and copied it out.

It was safer for him to be alone, and yet solitude increased the trouble in his mind. He wandered aimlessly about the Close or the cloisters during the afternoon, and it was a relief to him when the time came for evening service.

He went quietly into chapel with the other Removites. Dr. Locke always preached a very short sermon; he knew that that was more likely to be listened to and taken heed of. Dick Russell was too busy with his own miserable thoughts to listen at first; but slowly the words seemed to penetrate his dulled mind, and he found himself listening. The text was an old one—one that everybody would do well to remember, one that Dick should have remembered in time: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It seemed to Dick as if the sermon were levelled especially at him, as if the Head singled him out while he was speaking.

It was not so, but the impression was very strong upon the mind of the junior. Every word came home to him after he had begun to listen.

What shall it profit a man?

Or a boy, either? He could not help realising, only too clearly, how strangely applicable the text was to his own case.

He had made it certain that he would gain his heart's desire. At what price? What would it profit him?

He was already reaping the results of his action—miserable thoughts, a heavy heart, a burdened conscience, sleepless nights, and a terror of discovery. And afterwards, in the days to come, what would it profit him? A successful career, founded upon dishonesty! Could such a career be successful? Even if he gained success, worldly success, great position and wealth, what would it profit him, when he despised himself all the time and could not bear to think of what had first caused his success?

The tears ran down the boy's cheeks in the quiet, shady pew.

Bob Cherry was beside him, and Bob noticed his strange emotion, and looked at him. He squeezed Russell's arm.

"Dicky, are you ill?" he muttered.

Russell shook his head silently.

"Buck up, old chap!"

Bob wondered what was the matter with Russell. Bob had nothing on his conscience to make him fear the words he heard, and it never occurred to him that Dick Russell had. He put the junior's emotion down to the strain caused by preparing for the examination. Dick was in a state of nerves; that was all Bob could suspect.

Dick's brain was in a whirl as he left the school chapel with the other fellows. He had put his conscience to sleep for a time; he had stifled it, and its voice had been almost silent. Now it had awakened with fresh vigour, like a giant refreshed. The tortured boy wandered into the cloisters to think it out.

Think it out!

He could not think; thought was impossible. He could only feel utterly wretched. What was he to do? It was too late to retrieve that false step; there was nothing to be done. There was only one way he could undo his evil work, only one way he could regain his honour now. That was by not entering for the examination.

If he did not enter for the exam., certainly the knowledge he had surreptitiously gained would not benefit him. He would save his honour, but—but—

It was impossible! That would place him in a worse position than before he had seen the exam. papers. Then he had had a fair chance of winning. But if he withdrew from the examination, the matter was all ended.

What would his father say? What would the fellows think? And what would be the result? Ruin to all his prospects, ruin all round for him! Yet the words, spoken in the doctor's deep voice, rang still in his ears—"What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

He pressed his burning forehead against the cold stone of

the cloisters, and tried to think. But the effort was useless; he could only suffer.

He was quiet, silent, like a fellow in a dream when he went up to bed with the Remove that night. After lights were out, the lad slipped from his bed and knelt beside it, with his head bowed upon his clasped hands, and repeated the prayers he had learned long ago at his mother's knee—prayers almost forgotten in school life, where such customs were seldom kept up by the fellows; where, indeed, such a custom was likely to get a fellow the reputation of being "soft."

But it made the boy feel better.

Things seemed to be growing clearer in his mind now. His duty lay marked out plain and clear. There was one chance of saving himself from the black depths into which he had fallen. He must refuse to enter for the examination.

That was the only course he could take, unless he was to win unfairly, to act like a cheat and a thief, and to go through life branded with dishonesty.

He knew it, and as he lay sleepless in bed that night he resolved upon it. It was the only way to save himself from his torture. It was what his father would have advised, if he had known. Not that Dick would dare to tell him. He could only tell his father that he could not enter, and the old man's anger and disappointment would be part of his punishment for what he had done.

For it was in the nature of the thing that he could not do wrong without making others suffer as well as himself, and those others the people whom he loved best in the world.

But his mind was made up, and, miserable as he was, he felt the better for it; and he fell at last into a deep sleep, from which he awoke refreshed and something like his old self in the morning.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch is Angry.

"MAY I speak to you for a minute, sir?"

Mr. Quelch paused in the passage. It was early in the morning. Dick Russell was losing no time. He felt a feverish desire to have the matter over and done with.

"Certainly, my lad!" said Mr. Quelch kindly. "What is it?"

"I have decided not to enter for the exam., sir."

"What!"

Dick was silent. He had said it now, and he had to stand by it. All doubt and hesitation were finished with for good.

Mr. Quelch looked at him very sharply.

"What do you mean, Russell," he asked brusquely—"what do you mean? Not enter for the exam.? But you have entered for it."

"I wish to withdraw, sir."

"Why?"

"Because—because——" The junior broke off helplessly. What reason was he to give? It was impossible to give one.

"Well, because what?"

"I—I don't wish to go in for it, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"I mean it, sir."

"Nonsense!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "You have been working too hard, and your nerves are in a bad state. You have been looking very pale and ill lately, Russell. You have as good a chance as any other competitor; in fact, a better chance than any of the others, in my opinion. You must go on with it now."

"I—I'd rather not, sir!"

"I cannot have this," said the Remove-master. "It is nonsense! What will your father say? You have told me how he has been building on your success."

"I know, sir; but—but——"

"But what?"

"I can't go in for it, sir."

"Do you mean that you have no hope of success?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then what do you mean?" asked the Form-master sharply and irritably. "I suppose you have some motive for this very strange conduct, Russell?"

"I—I don't want to enter, sir; that's all."

"Yet you believe you have a good chance?"

"Yes, sir; I suppose so."

"I cannot allow this. Of course, I suppose you are free to act as you like in the matter; but if you decide upon this, I insist that you write at once to your father, and tell him what you have decided upon," said Mr. Quelch. "He has a right to know and to give his opinion on the matter."

"Yes, sir. I intended to tell him."

"The examination is on Tuesday," said the Remove-master. "Take till this evening to think it over, Russell. That will leave time to write to your father."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

"I—I would rather write to him at once, sir. I've made up my mind about the matter."

"I refuse to allow you to worry your father in this way!" said Mr. Quelch sharply. "You will take till to-night to think it over, and try to come to a more sensible decision. Then, if you are still of the same mind, come and tell me so, and you shall write to Mr. Russell and tell him."

"Very well, sir!"

The Form-master walked on angrily. He did not understand Russell, and he could see that Dick's decision was caused not wholly by mere nervousness. He had taken a great deal of trouble in helping Dick, and the boy's conduct seemed to him rude and ungracious. Two or three fellows had heard the colloquy, and they gathered round Dick after the Form-master was gone.

"What on earth do you mean, Russell?" Harry Wharton asked. "You can't seriously mean to stand out of the exam.?"

"I do."

"But after working for it as you have—after all you have done?"

Dick smiled in a ghastly way.

"It's what I've done that makes me withdraw," he said.

"I don't understand you."

"Well, I can't explain, but it's impossible for me to enter for the exam.," said Dick, almost wildly. "Don't ask me about it! Don't talk about it! I can't stand it."

And he walked away.

The juniors looked after him, and looked at one another, in astonishment and alarm.

Dick Russell puzzled them more and more.

"Blessed if I don't think he's going off his giddy rocker," said Bob Cherry soberly. "This is what comes of sticking indoors swotting, instead of playing footer."

"It must be over-study," Harry Wharton agreed. "I hope Russell will change his mind. He's been working for the exam. like a nigger."

"That's what it is," said Mark Linley quietly. "I remember when I was going in for my scholarship I had worked very hard, and just before the exam. I felt quite sick about it, and I came jolly near giving the whole thing up, and going back to the factory."

"Jolly lucky you didn't."

"Yes; and I hope Russell will think better of it."

"I think there's something more in it than that, though," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Russell seems to have had something on his mind lately—blessed if I understand what. I never knew he was such a bundle of nerves, anyway."

By the time morning lessons were over, all the Remove knew that Dick Russell was going to cut the exam. for the Hundred. Some of his friends remonstrated with him, but they could not even get the junior to talk on the subject. Bolsover & Co. averred that he knew he had no chance, and had only entered for the exam. from "swank." But that taunt failed to have any effect upon Russell. He had marked out the path he was to follow, and he followed it.

He was very quiet and subdued that day, but much easier than he had been in his mind ever since that unlucky moment when he had seen the exam. paper in Mr. Quelch's study.

Early in the evening he tapped at Mr. Quelch's door, and the Form-master bade him enter.

Mr. Quelch's face was unusually stern as he saw Russell.

"Well, Russell, I hope you have come to tell me that you have thought better of your extraordinary decision," he said.

"No, sir."

"What have you decided upon, then?"

"Not to enter for the exam., sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp and searching look.

"Sit down, Russell," he said abruptly.

Russell sat down.

"Now, my boy," said the Form-master, "explain to me what you mean by this. I know you are in a state of nervous tension, but that alone does not account for your action. You have some other motive."

Dick's lips moved, but he did not speak.

"Is that not the case, Russell?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"You suppose so! You know, I should presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what is the motive?"

Dick was silent.

"I have a right to know," said Mr. Quelch. "As your Form-master, and as your well-wisher, I have a right to know, to say nothing of the fact that I have expended a certain amount of valuable time in preparing you for this examination."

"I—I—I am sorry, sir."

"When did you come to this decision?"

"On Sunday, sir."

"And why?"

No reply.

"You refuse to confide in me, then, Russell?"
 "I—I have nothing to tell you, sir."
 "Do you mean to say that you have taken this extraordinary step, Russell, and that you are prepared to inflict this bitter disappointment upon your father and mother, with no motive at all?"
 "Oh, no, no, sir!"
 "Then what is your motive?"
 Silence.

Mr. Quelch waited for a few moments, and then a frown settled upon his brow. He was angry—very angry, and Dick knew it; but he could not help it. He was doing what was right, what he felt driven to do. It was through his own act, but he had no other resource but to act as he was doing. And it was impossible to explain.

"Very well," said the Remove-master, compressing his lips; "I shall have to form my own conclusions. Either you are too idle to continue to work for the examination, or you must have made some arrangement with another competitor to stand out."

Dick started.
 "Oh, no, sir—no!"
 "You had a motive other from those?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "And you refuse to tell me what it is?"
 "I—I cannot, sir."

"That is nonsense. However, I will not argue with you. I have spoken to you for your own good, and you decline to listen to me. Go and write to your father; and I also shall write to him," said Mr. Quelch. "Leave my study."

And Dick left it, to go to his own room and write that letter to his father. It was not an easy letter to write, but it had to be written. He could not allow his father to imagine that he was attending the exam., when he was doing nothing of the sort; and besides, Mr. Quelch was going to write, in any case. The letter had to be written, but Dick began it a dozen times without satisfying himself. He persisted at last, and wrote the letter through, and a miserable, tear-stained letter it was that he finally enclosed in an envelope and addressed to his father.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Driven to the Wall!

THE day of the examination dawned upon Greyfriars. To the fellows who were not directly concerned in the exam. for the Hundred, the day was as other days; but to the competitors it was a day of mental stress and anxiety. There were six or seven of them, of different Forms, and they were all keen to win. Keenest of all, probably, had been Dick Russell; but now Dick Russell's name was scratched from the list. He was not to enter, and the other entrants heard the news with satisfaction, for the most part.

Dick Russell, Mark Linley, and Dawlish, of the Fifth, were supposed to have the best chances, and Dick's withdrawal meant that a dangerous opponent was gone.

Dick was silent about it; and his Form-fellows, curious as they were, were not able to satisfy their curiosity.

Mr. Quelch did not mention the subject to Russell again. He was very angry and annoyed, and he looked upon the boy as capricious and ungrateful, and refused to trouble his head about him further.

Dick wondered whether his father would come to Greyfriars about the matter. He had little doubt that he would. He could guess what sensation and dismay his letter had caused in the family circle. His father would be annoyed, alarmed, angry. It was almost certain that he would come directly to Greyfriars, by the first available train, to remonstrate with the boy. Dick tried to nerve himself for the ordeal.

At every sound in the Close that morning, while lessons were going on, Dick Russell started nervously. It came at last. Trotter brought in a message that Russell's father had come, and wished permission to speak to his son. Mr. Quelch signed to Russell to come out from the class.

"Your father is waiting to see you in your study, Russell," he said coldly. "You may go there and see him."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick, with a sinking heart.

He walked slowly out of the Form-room. It was not very far to his study, but it took Dick some time to arrive there. He shrank from the interview, but it had to be gone through. He opened the heavy door at last and entered the quiet, shady room.

His father was standing there.

Dick looked timidly at his face. It was paler than usual, and the severe expression was more severe, the brows were knitted. There was no kindness in it.

"Father!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT TUESDAY: "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

Mr. Russell waved his son's timid hand away.
 "I had a letter from you this morning, Dick."
 "Yes, father."
 "You inform me that you have decided not to enter for the examination."
 "Yes, father," Dick muttered.
 "I had another letter from Mr. Quelch, telling me that for some utterly inexplicable motive you had withdrawn from the examination at the last moment."
 "Yes, father."
 "I have come to listen to your explanation," said Mr. Russell harshly. "What explanation have you to give?"
 Dick did not answer.
 "I am waiting, Dick."
 "I can't give any explanation," said Dick desperately. How could he confess the truth to this harsh, severe man? Mr. Russell, probably, had never had a dishonourable thought in his mind all his life long, but, like many thoroughly honourable and upright men, he had no understanding of, or sympathy with, a weaker nature. If he had known what Dick had to tell him, he would have turned from his son in horror and contempt. And that Dick felt that he could not endure.

Mr. Russell frowned more thunderously.

"No explanation, Richard?"

"N-n-no, sir." Dick's voice faltered; when his father called him Richard, he knew that the old man was bitterly angry.

"And why not?"

Dick was silent.

"Mr. Quelch has explained to me that it is not because you feel you have no chance of success. Even if you did feel so, it would be your duty to enter, and do your best, for the sake of your family."

"I—I know, father."

"Then what motive—what honourable motive—can you have for refusing to enter?" demanded Mr. Russell.

The boy did not answer.

"Am I to conclude that you have made a compact with some other competitor—that you are acting in this way for a bribe?" asked his father.

Dick flushed crimson.

"I hope you don't think so badly of me as that, father."

"Then what am I to think?"

"I—I—"

"Explain your conduct, sir. You know what a blow this is to me. You cannot remain at Greyfriars after this term without money, and this is your only chance of obtaining money honestly. Your uncle may do something for you if you pass this examination. If you throw it up he will wash his hands of you. He may even decline to pay your fees here further, even if you could stay. Your mother will be cruelly disappointed. I have not told her yet, but if you persist in this I must tell her. Are you mad, Dick? Will you cause all this trouble for a mere whim, a caprice?"

"Oh, father!"
 "If you have any motive—any reason that is reasonable, anything that can be understood, tell me what it is."

"I—I—"

"I am waiting, Richard."

"I haven't anything to say, father."

"Richard!"

The tears came into Russell's eyes. He knew how his conduct must appear to his father—capricious, neglectful, undutiful. He was paying the penalty now, and the penalty of what he had done seemed too heavy. After all, why should he not enter—why should he not make use of the knowledge he had gained? His own father—unknowingly—was urging him upon the downward path.

There was silence in the study. Mr. Russell was keeping his anger in check, and Dick had nothing to say. The temptation lasted only for a moment; he drove it from his mind, and stood firmly before his father.

"Richard!" said Mr. Russell, at last. His voice was cold and hard, and seemed to cut like steel. "You tell me that you have resolved upon this?"

"Yes father."

"There is one thing you seem to have forgotten—that even in these modern days, when young people take so much upon themselves, the authority of parents is not wholly abolished," said Mr. Russell grimly. "You have forgotten that; I must recall it to your mind. I will not allow you to do this."

Dick started.

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"I will not allow you to withdraw from the examination, Richard," said Mr. Russell, raising his voice a little. "I decline to allow anything of the sort. If you will not enter for it from your own will, you will do so because I command you. Do you understand?"

Russell stood dumb. He had not expected this; he had not counted upon it. How easy the path of deceit and dishonesty had been. How difficult it was to try to get back to the paths of honesty! How hard—how terribly hard—to do what was right!

"You understand me, Richard?"

"Yes, father."

"You will enter for this examination. You will try your hardest, and you will, I hope, win. If you fail, you will have done your duty. You understand?"

"Father, I can't."

"You will not refuse to obey me, Richard?"

"Father!"

"I hardly think that you will do that," said Mr. Russell, his voice harder and sharper than ever; "but if you do not obey me, Richard, you will do well to think of the consequences in advance. A son who refuses to obey me is no son of mine. If you disregard my authority, I will never see you again—my home shall not be your home. I will never speak to you, I will never look upon your face again. Weigh the consequences, Richard, before you decide to rebel against your father's authority."

Russell groaned.

"But you will not disobey me," said Mr. Russell coldly. "You will do as I tell you. You will enter the examination."

"I—I can't!"

"You can, and you shall!" Mr. Russell raised his hand, and his voice took on a deep and commanding tone. "I order you to enter this examination. Disobey me at your own peril! I have no more to say to you."

He turned and left the study.

Russell stood as if stunned. He heard his father's footsteps die away down the passage, and he did not move. He came to himself at last. He ran to the door.

"Father!"

His voice echoed in the empty corridor. His father was gone.

Dick Russell turned back dully into the study. His father had ordered him, with all the weight of a father's authority, to do what he knew he could not do—what was left out of that terrible tangle?

There was only one way out—confession!

The boy realised it with a groan. That was what he had fought against—what he had staved off as long as possible—but it had come to that! He was driven to the wall at last!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Confession.

BOB CHERRY clapped Russell on the shoulder sympathetically when the Remove came out of the Form-room after lessons. Russell was looking white and sick.

"Had a ragging?" Bob asked.

Russell nodded.

"I thought so. I caught sight of your guv'nor's face as he passed the Form-room door," said Bob. "Of course, you could only expect him to cut up rough, under the circumstances. He must have been ratty."

Russell smiled faintly.

"He was!" he said.

"But it's all over now," said Bob encouragingly. "Parents do these things, you know. A chap always expects a certain amount of ragging from his honoured elderly relations. These things are only sent to try us, you know; so buck up, and come and have a ginger-pop, and then help me punt a footer about."

Russell shook his head.

"I've got to see the Head," he replied.

Bob whistled.

"Going to enter for the exam. after all?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Going to have a licking?"

"No."

"I see—it's just a friendly call on the Head, to have a chat with the old boy about the weather, and things generally," said Bob Cherry with a grin.

But Russell did not laugh; he did not feel like laughing just then. He gave Bob Cherry a nod and walked away towards the Head's study. Bob looked after him, and shook his head very seriously.

"It won't do!" he remarked.

"What won't do?" asked Nugent.

"This won't! If I ever found a school, and found prizes
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

and things," said Bob Cherry sagely. "I shall have a hundred quid for the chap who's the best kick at goal, and fifty quid for the best bowler, and prizes for swimming and cycling. None of your blessed Latin prose and rotten maths. for me! But those old johnnies never had any sense, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Russell tapped at the Head's door. The deep, pleasant voice of Dr. Locke bade him enter, and he went in. Dr. Locke had just seated himself at his desk, but he laid down his pen very patiently. He had intended to put in a quarter of an hour at the edition of Q. Horatius Flaccus, which he was preparing to astonish the scholastic world with. But he was always resigned to interruptions.

"Russell! Ah! Mr. Quelch has spoken to me about you," he said, in his kindly way. "It seems that you have withdrawn from the examination for this afternoon."

"Yes, sir," said Dick.

"Mr. Quelch is disappointed, and I understand that your father is also. I trust you have an adequate reason for this decision."

"Yes, sir."

"It is very unfortunate, under the circumstances. It is not too late for you to change your mind once more," said the Head kindly. "Have you considered the matter carefully?"

"Very carefully, sir."

"I suppose you know your own business best, Russell; but I have seen your father this morning, and I understand from him that he has commanded you to enter. In that case, of course, you have no choice in the matter. It is impossible for you to disregard a command from your father, I presume."

"Oh, sir!"

Dr. Locke frowned a little.

"You are surely not thinking of disobeying your father, Russell," he exclaimed sternly.

"I don't know what to do, sir," muttered Russell.

"Ah! You have come to me for advice on the subject. Undoubtedly you must obey your father, whatever reason you may have had for your decision," said the Head. "There can be no question whatever upon that point, Russell. I am amazed that you should even think of hesitating!"

"But—but you don't know what my reason was, sir."

"I am prepared to hear it."

Dick Russell stood before the Head with downcast eyes. Now that the crucial moment had come, he felt that he could not utter the words. How could he tell that kindly old gentleman of what he had done? How could he look into that candid, honourable face, and explain that he was a cheat? But it was easier to tell the Head than to tell his father.

Should he tell him?

There was yet time. He could make some flimsy excuse for having come there. He could enter the examination, and carry off the prize—it was yet possible. It seemed as if some tempting demon were whispering in his ear.

"Well, Russell?" said the Head, surprised at the boy's silence. "I am waiting for you. Please do not waste time."

Dick pulled himself together.

"I can't enter the exam., sir," he said, in a low voice. "I—I can't! It's impossible, and I must tell you why, because—because my father has ordered me to do it!"

"Well?"

"I can't enter, sir, because—because— Oh!" Dick's voice broke and trailed away. "Oh, I can't tell you!"

"Go on, Russell!" said the Head, very quietly. The anguish in the boy's face moved him strangely. He understood that there was something in this that neither Mr. Russell nor the Remove-master had suspected.

"I've seen the papers, sir."

Dick Russell blurted out the words, as if he were in a hurry to get them uttered, before he yielded to the temptation to keep his lips closed and keep the secret.

Dr. Locke started. Whatever he might have expected, he had not expected that. He fixed his eyes upon the boy.

"You have seen the papers!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir." Dick spoke more freely now that it was once out. That weight was gone from his mind, at all events.

"I've seen the papers, sir."

"The papers for the examination this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you amaze me," said the Head. "Do you mean to say that the papers, which I entrusted to Mr. Quelch, have been left about, and that you have seen them by accident?"

Dick groaned under his breath. Even yet the Head did not understand, so hard was it for him to comprehend meanness and dishonesty.

"No, sir," muttered the junior.

"Then what do you mean?"

"It—it was not by—by accident."

The Head frowned.

"You have seen the papers—but not by accident? Do you mean, then, that you have deliberately looked at the papers in advance, Russell?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good heavens!"

The Head was silent for a few moments, his eyes fixed upon Russell. He was surprised, shocked, and angry. His voice was very different when he spoke again.

"You did this utterly dishonourable thing, Russell, with the intention of taking an unfair advantage of your competitors in the examination?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"But I do not quite understand. It is inconceivable to me that Mr. Quelch could be so careless with the papers. It is always a custom to keep them under lock and key. Tell me how you came to see them."

"I—I saw them by chance in a drawer in Mr. Quelch's room, sir," muttered Dick. "I was there for extra tuition—Mr. Quelch was helping me. That was before he had seen the papers himself, of course. I suppose he had put them in the drawer till he had time to see to them. I—I saw a bit of the print by chance, and guessed what it was."

"But that was not enough to tell you much, Russell—a slight glance, for a moment, at a portion of the paper."

"I—I came down that night, sir, and—and took out the papers, and copied them down," said Russell, in a faint voice.

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Quelch left the examination papers in an unlocked drawer, where any boy might have seen them?"

"He must have, sir—I found them there."

"I cannot understand this. Mr. Quelch is usually so careful, so methodical. I simply cannot understand it. However, if you tell me that you have done so, I suppose it is true. You have, then, in your possession a copy of the papers that will be served out for the examination this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have studied the questions, I suppose, to prepare yourself for the examination?"

"I have sir."

"Then you have simply to walk into the examination-room and take the prize?"

Dick nodded; his voice was failing him. There was thunder on the brow of the Head, and the junior would not have been surprised if the doctor had expelled him upon the spot. He stood like a criminal awaiting his sentence.

But slowly the frown faded away from the doctor's brow.

"And why have you come to me, Russell?" he said, more softly. "If you deliberately did this dishonourable thing, with the intention of scoring unfairly over the other boys, why have you told me about it, when it makes it impossible for you to enter? Is that why you wished to withdraw from the examination?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why?"

"I—I felt I couldn't do it, sir," Russell muttered. "I—I felt like a cheat and a thief."

"You would have been both if you had entered the examination-room with this knowledge gained beforehand," said the Head severely. "But, I must take it, that you repented of your conduct, and did not wish to profit by it?"

"Yes," groaned Dick. "If you knew what I've been through, sir, since I copied down the paper, I think you'd feel sorry for me."

"My dear boy, I can understand—and although I blame you very severely for what you did, I can understand, too, that you are opposed to dishonesty by nature, when you determined not to profit by your knowledge," said the Head kindly. "You intended, then, to withdraw from the examination, and say nothing?"

"Yes, sir; that is what I meant to do."

"Then, why have you come to me?"

"Because—because my father has ordered me to enter," said Dick miserably. "I—I couldn't—and—and I hadn't the pluck to explain to him. I had to tell you, sir; now you know, it's impossible for me to enter, and you can tell my father so. I—I don't mind how much you punish me, now that's off my mind."

"It is certainly impossible for you to enter for the examination, if you know the papers in advance," said the Head. "But I cannot help thinking that you are labouring under some mistake. Such carelessness on the part of Mr. Quelch is incredible. Pray, wait here, Russell, while I speak to Mr. Quelch."

The Head rang the bell for Trotter, and gave him a message. The page departed, and in a few minutes the Remove-master entered the study. He glanced at Russell, and then at the Head.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Quelch. I have heard a strange story from Russell—a very strange story," said the Head. "I do not

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

understand it, and I wish you to throw some light on the matter."

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch, in wonder.

He glanced at the junior again. Russell did not meet his eyes; his glance had sunk, and he dared not raise it. His face was burning—burning with bitter shame! He had done wrong, and he had repented—and he expected punishment—but the humiliation of it was almost more than he could bear.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

DICK RUSSELL stood silent, with burning cheeks. He wished it was over—done with! Why had the Head sent for Mr. Quelch—why was there to be talk about it? Why did not the Head cane him—expel him—anything, so that he could escape from all eyes and get away somewhere alone with his disgrace and misery?

"Mr. Quelch! I gave the papers for the examination that takes place to-day, to you?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"You corrected the proofs, and returned them to the printer?"

"Yes."

"What did you do with them while they were in your hands?"

"I kept them locked in my desk, sir," said Mr. Quelch, in wonder. "I assure you that every care was taken of them, if that is what you mean, sir."

"You did not leave them in any place where it was possible for a junior to see them by chance or design?"

"Certainly not. Except when they were in my hands, they were under lock and key, and certainly no one had any opportunity of seeing them."

Dick Russell raised his eyes. His brain seemed to turn in a whirl as he listened. What was the Remove-master saying? He could hardly think that Mr. Quelch was telling falsehoods to conceal his own carelessness. But what else was he to think? Had the Form-master taken leave of his senses?

"You did not leave the papers in the drawer of the table in your study, Mr. Quelch?"

"Certainly not!"

The Head smiled a little.

"Then Russell is labouring under a strange mistake. He has confessed to me his reason for not entering the examination, and that is, that he has seen the papers in advance, and does not wish to profit by having done so!"

Mr. Quelch looked amazed.

"The boy must be dreaming!" he exclaimed. "He has certainly not seen the papers. All the time they have been in my care, excepting when I had them in my own hands, they have been locked up."

"You hear that, Russell?"

Dick started.

"Yes, sir, I hear it. I don't understand. It was just as I told you, sir—Mr. Quelch must have forgotten."

"I have forgotten nothing," said the Remove-master, with asperity. "Where and when do you pretend that you have seen these papers?"

"I saw them by accident in the drawer of your table, sir, and—and came down the same night and copied them," faltered Dick. "I've owned up to the Head, sir."

"You must be dreaming. This appears to me to be a hallucination, sir, perhaps due to overwork in preparing for the examination," said Mr. Quelch. "I certainly never placed the papers in the drawer of my table—and if I had done so, I should hardly have left the drawer open for anybody to see them. I simply cannot understand how Russell got this idea into his head."

"But—but I have the copy of the papers, sir!" gasped the junior.

"What!"

"I copied them down, sir—I—I have the copy in my pocket," muttered Dick. "Don't you remember, sir, when I asked you to coach me on the Tenth Ode of Horace. It was because I had seen a bit of that Ode on the paper. I—I was afraid you would guess, but you didn't."

Mr. Quelch looked more and more astonished.

"That is convincing," he said. "Dr. Locke, as you drew up the papers in the first place, you will remember that there is nothing from the Tenth Ode of Horace upon them."

The Doctor nodded.

"I am quite aware that that is so," he said. "This unfortunate lad—"

"But I have the paper—the copy I made!" almost shrieked Russell. For one terrible moment the thought assailed him that it was indeed a hallucination—that he was mad. "I tell you I have the copy, sir."

"Show it to me, then," said Mr. Quelch abruptly.

Dick Russell fumbled in his pocket for the guilty paper.

He drew it out, and passed it to Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master, more amazed than ever at this proof that Dick's story was not the mere figment of an over-excited brain, took the paper, and unfolded it. He read through the jottings upon it with growing astonishment.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed at last.

"Well, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head. "What do you make of it?"

"Dear me!"

Then Mr. Quelch burst into a laugh.

"Mr. Quelch!" exclaimed the Head.

"Excuse me, sir," exclaimed the Remove-master, becoming grave again at once. "But really, this matter has its humorous side. Russell has certainly copied down a paper that was in the drawer of my table—I had forgotten it, because it was of no importance whatever. If Russell had searched further, he would have found a good many such papers in that drawer. This paper, which he has copied down, is the paper that was used in the same examination last year, and it bears no resemblance whatever to the paper used this year."

The Head smiled.

Dick Russell staggered back. He caught at a chair for support, or he would have fallen to the floor! He understood now!

"This is simply an old examination paper," said Mr. Quelch. "It was certainly for the exam. for the Founder's Hundred, but it was last year's exam. Russell, of course, did not enter for that, and did not know anything about the paper—hence his mistake. You foolish boy, if Horace's Tenth Ode had been on the paper, and you had asked me what you did, do you think I should not have suspected something?"

"I—I—I wondered why you didn't, sir."

Mr. Quelch laughed again.

"And can you think that I should be so extraordinarily careless, Russell, as to leave important examination papers in such a place? Those papers that you have copied are still in the drawer of my table. The real examination papers are locked up in my desk, where they have been since they came back from the printer's; and they will remain there till they are served out in the examination-room this afternoon."

Dick gasped for breath.

"Oh, sir."

Mr. Quelch slowly tore up the paper at a sign from the Head. Dick Russell held on to the back of the chair. He felt as if he would faint! How he had suffered—and all for nothing! If he had gone into the examination-room, prepared for those questions and for no others, he would have had little chance of winning. The certainty he had counted upon—what was it? Truly enough, honesty was the best policy.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon the boy.

"You have done very, very wrong, Russell," he said; in

his grave voice. "But I think we may say that you have atoned for it by a sincere repentance. When you believed that the examination was in your hands, you refused to profit by the knowledge you had unfairly gained, and, I think, may be taken as a sufficient atonement. I do not think you are likely to stray into such a path again."

"Oh, no, sir, never," muttered Dick. "I've been punished—you don't know what I've felt on the matter, sir."

"I think I do know, Russell, and for that reason I pardon you, and shall say nothing more about the matter," said Dr. Locke gravely. "And as it turns out, Russell, that you know no more about the examination-papers than any other person does, there is no reason why you should not compete after all."

Dick gasped.

"You—you will allow me to enter, sir?" he stammered.

"Yes, Russell. What you have done shall be forgotten—you have atoned for it. From this moment you shall look ahead, not back—but I am sure you will not forget the lesson you have had. You shall enter for the examination—there is no reason why you should not. You may go, my boy; and remember, always, that the old saying is true, that honesty is the best policy, and that the best thing a boy, or a man either, can do, is to play the game—to play the game fair and square all the time, Russell. You may go!"

Dick Russell seemed to be walking on air as he left the study. He ran into Bob Cherry in the passage, and clapped him on the shoulder, with a happy laugh. Bob stared at him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Blessed if I ever saw such a quick-change artist as you are!" he exclaimed. "You seem to have had a jolly pleasant chat with the Head about the weather, if it's bucked you up like this."

Dick laughed joyously.

"I'm going in for the exam. after all!" he said.

"Oh, you've changed your mind again, have you?" said Bob Cherry. "I'm glad to hear it. I hope you'll have good luck. Best wishes, my son!"

And Bob Cherry's good wishes seemed to bear fruit; for Dick Russell did have good luck!

When the announcement was made, Russell's name stood at the head of the list, Mark Linley's coming second, and Dawlish's third. Dick Russell had carried off the Hundred by sheer hard work and determination, and his Form-fellows congratulated him, but none of them knew what the lad had been through during those dark days when he had allowed himself, for a short time, to abandon the path of honour, and had been driven to the wall!

THE END.

("ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER!" is the title of next week's long, complete tale of "Harry Wharton and Co., at Greyfriars, by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price 1d.

ATTRACTIVE TALES.

(Told by "THE MAGNET.")

WHY TEACHER WAILED.

"You boy over in the corner!"

Thus the brutal examiner to the most nervous boy in the New House.

The boy over in the corner shot up like a bolt.

"Answer this," continued the examiner. "Do we eat the flesh of the whale?"

"Ye-yes, sir!" faltered the scholar.

"And what," pursued the examiner, "do we do with the bones?"

"P-please, sir," responded the nervous one, with chattering teeth, "w-we leave 'em on the s-sides of our plates."

A QUESTION OF HEARING.

The strapping farmer strode anxiously into the post-office.

"Have you got any letter for Mike Howe?" he asked.

The new postmaster looked him up and down.

"For whom?" he snapped.

"Mike Howe," repeated the farmer.

"I don't understand," returned the postmaster, turning aside.

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DON'T MISS

the special new story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"BOUND BY HONOUR,"

in this week's "GEM" Library. Price One Penny.

"Don't understand!" roared the farmer. "Can't you understand plain English? I asked you if you've got any letter for Mike Howe!"

"Well, I haven't!" snorted the postmaster. "Neither have I a letter for anybody else's cow! Get out!"

QUITE CORRECT.

His name was Stein, and he wore a diamond ring. Also, he was a commercial-traveller for the well-known City firm of Stein, Stein & Stein.

On the train he encountered Berg, of the firm of Berg, Berg & Berg.

"Mine friendt," exclaimed Stein enthusiastically, "I haf joost goom from Birmingham! How much do you dink I soldt haf?"

"How should I know—eh?" asked Berg.

"Of gourse you don't know!" replied Stein. "But vhat do you guess?"

"Oh," hazarded Berg, "about half!"

"Eh!" exclaimed Stein, puzzled. "Half vhat?"

"Vhy," retorted Berg, "half vhat you say."

THE SEATS OF THE MITEY.

"Cheese, sir?" inquired the Sandow-muscled waiter.

"Certainly!" replied the diner. "Catch me a Limburger."

The waiter made a grab at the sideboard, and seized one just in the nick of time.

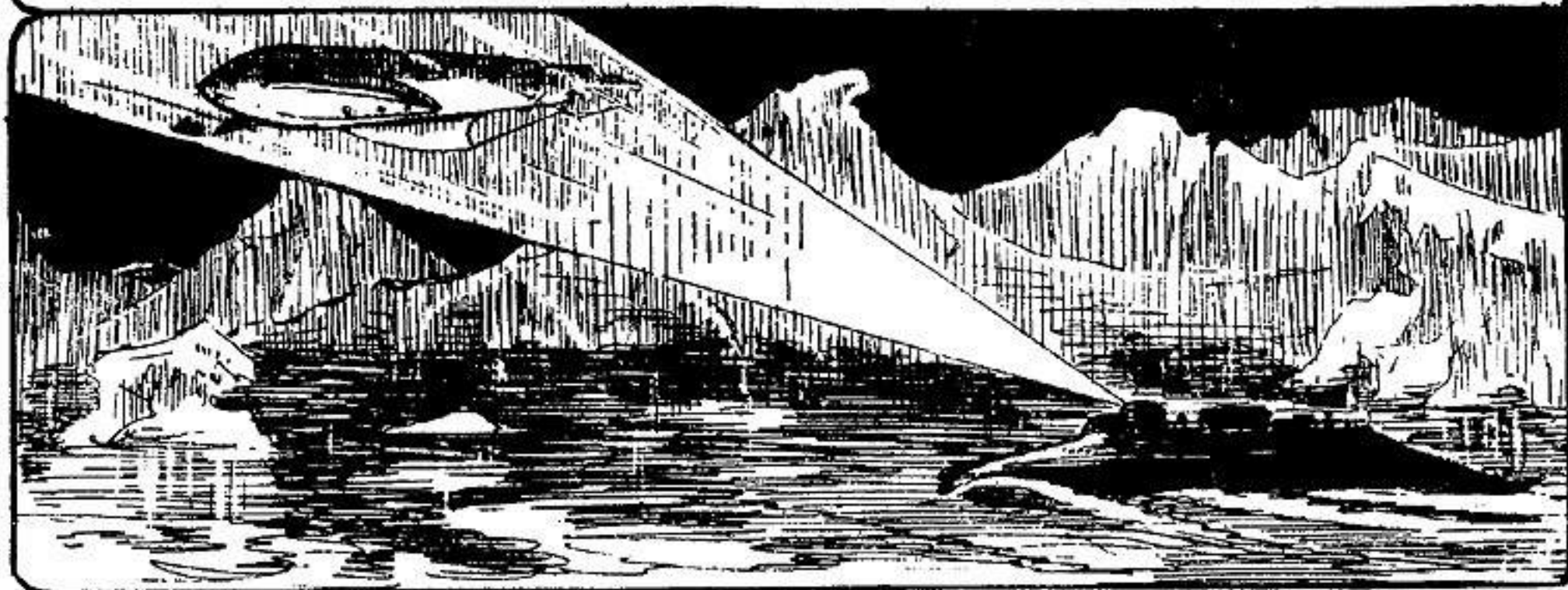
"Now catch me a gorgonzola," said the diner.

Grappling with it violently, the strong waiter brought it over.

"Now," said the diner, "let them race across the table to me, and I'll take the winner."

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE!"

A Thrilling Story of the Amazing Adventures of Ferrers Lord, Millionaire, Ching-Lung, and Rupert Thurston.

By **SIDNEY DREW.****THE OPENING CHAPTERS.**

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire and inventor, startles the world by entering the lists against Professor Hugley, the celebrated American scientist, who is about to start in search of the North Pole in his wonderful airship the Cloud King. Lord announces his intention of starting for the Pole at the same time in his mysterious submarine the Lord of the Deep, and makes a match of it with the professor for the gigantic sum of a million pounds! The preliminaries are settled, and two judges are appointed—one to travel on board each of the two strange competing craft. Ferrers Lord is accompanied by all his old friends on the Lord of the Deep, including Ching-Lung and Rupert Thurston; while Professor Hugley has a Cuban named Paraira with him, and Estebian Gacchio, a negro. The two scoundrels murder Professor Hugley and two of the crew on the voyage, assume command of the Cloud King, and plot against the life of Ferrers Lord.

Meantime, Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Thurston, Van Witter, and Gan-Waga, an Eskimo, go out hunting, the latter three on a sledge, and Ching-Lung and the millionaire on snow-shoes. Ching-Lung sights a small balloon, and on shooting it discovers that it bears a message from Clement Morwith, the judge on board the Cloud King, asking for their help. While pursuing musk-oxen, the occupants of the sledge suddenly disappear. Ferrers Lord, hurrying to the spot, finds them seated at the bottom of a deep snow hole.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Passage to the Pole—Mysterious Footprints—A Mastodon!

"Hallo!" Ferrers Lord said. "What are you doing down there?"

"I reckon it's a kind of a dog-fight!" said Van Witter. "Our noble and esteemed friend Thurston was driving, and pride comes before a fall."

"I couldn't help it, old chap," grinned Thurston. "How could I pull up in time? Why don't they build these disgustin' sledges with brakes? Say, Gan, anything broken?"

Gan-Waga chuckled as he examined the harness. All was intact, but the accident would cause some delay. The hole was quite fourteen feet deep. Ching-Lung, hearing sounds of mirth, came slowly up, winking to himself, and pushing a snowball before him. The snowball grew rapidly in size. He shouldered it almost to the edge of the hollow, and then propelled it over the brink.

It fell on Gan-Waga and Thurston, and, bursting, buried them waist deep.

"Dear me!" said Ching-Lung, staring innocently at the sky. "What a big snowflake!"

"All right!" roared Thurston. "Wait till I get hold of you, you little imp! We'll torture him, Gan, till he squeals again. How are we going to get out of here?"

"Easy 'nough," answered Gan-Waga. "Make steps, and pull dogs up. I show you."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT
TUESDAY:**"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER,"**

He took a broad hatchet from his belt, and swung it back to drive it into the frost-bound earth beneath the thin layer of ice and snow. The hatchet shot out from his hand, and the snow poured down in an avalanche. The mystery of the vanished oxen was explained—a dark hole gaped before them, almost twelve feet square. Uttering a cry of amaze, Ferrers Lord leapt into the hole.

"A cave!" he said eagerly. "The fall of the ledge must have brought down sufficient snow to cover the opening. The musk-oxen have a retreat in here, or, what is more probable, there is a passage leading right under the hill. Gan-Waga, take my snow-shoes, and get back to the ship for lamps. Give him a hand, Ching-Lung!"

He dragged off his snow-shoes. The Eskimo scrambled on Thurston's shoulders, and was hauled up by the prince. He darted over the snow like a skater over smooth ice, and Ferrers Lord entered the cavern.

Ten paces from the entrance the darkness was intense. At every stride the air grew warmer. His rifle, stretched at arm's length above his head, found no roof. Evidently the place was of fair size, and not a mere cavern. He was too wise to go without a light, for the place might be full of chasms and pitfalls.

He turned back. Ching-Lung was at work with the axe on the side of the hole opposite the entrance of the cave.

"Waal," drawled the Yankee, "this is kinder exciting, and I'm beginning to learn a few things I didn't know. It's news to me, though I've read a bit in natural history books, that the musk-oxen was a gentleman that went to roost in a cave."

"Hardly that," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "They have some outlet not far away. We'll soon find out when the lights come. Help me unharness the dogs, Rupert. I am quite pleased at this find. There is a rumour among the Eskimos of an enormous cavern tenanted by all kinds of evil spirits and weird beasts. There is generally some foundation to such rumours."

Gan-Waga speedily returned with four electric lamps strapped to his back.

"We'll take the dogs," said the millionaire. "Keep close to me, and pick your way carefully."

They entered the caves, the powerful lamps throwing out broad beams of light that flashed on a roof and floor of solid ice. The air was many degrees warmer than the air outside.

"Which way?" asked Ching-Lung.

Two lofty wide passages opened before them. Ferrers Lord hesitated until a puff of freezing air touched his cheek.

"To the right," he said. "The oxen have gone to the left, which proves that the other opening is in that direction. Score the walls here with your axe, Ching, and also any other turning we may take. It is easy to get lost in a labyrinth like this."

The ice-splinters flew, and then they went on. The passages narrowed and cut away almost at right angles. It was warmer than ever here, and water dripped steadily from the roof in huge splashes.

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Pah!" said Thurston. "What an odd smell! It's like strong mushroom ketchup."

Again the passage twisted abruptly. A cry of wonder and admiration broke from every lip.

They were standing on the verge of a forest of giant fungi. Enormous toadstools, blue, green, yellow, and red, their stalks thicker than a man's waist, choked the great cavern. It was like a scene from a gorgeous pantomime. They almost expected to see children dressed as fairies, dwarfs, gnomes, butterflies, and frogs, stream out and join in a fairy ballet amongst the stems.

"Say," muttered Van Witter, "don't waken me just yet. I want to see this show through."

That broke the spell. Everyone laughed, and the cavern took up the echoes with a hundred tongues.

"You could start a spanking mushroom-farm here," said Thurston. "What a sight!"

"Creepy, though," put in Ching-Lung. "I wonder if they're tough?"

He tried to shake one of the stalks, but it did not even quiver. The axe rang against it with a metallic sound.

"It is practically vegetable ivory," said Ferrers Lord. "And look at the sand they grow in. The sea has been here once upon a time, for the sand is full of shells. It was well worth coming to see a sight like this."

He flashed his lamp down. The sand was a greyish silver in colour, and rose like ashes under their tread.

"We must follow the old backwoods idea now," said Van Witter, "and blaze the trees, if we are going any further, or we'll get mixed up. And I reckon," he added enthusiastically, "we're not going to waste this lot. By hokey, sir, we'll float the biggest company on record. There's fifty million dollars in it. Who owns the land, anyway?"

"Denmark has some sort of claim," said Thurston.

"Denmark be hanged!" answered Van Witter. "Why, our company could buy her up when we form it. I'll give the chap who bosses Denmark a business call later on, and settle with him. There's twenty fortunes in it. Vegetable ivory is booming. Why, you can make anything of it—fork-handles, buttons, paper-knives, picture-frames, piano-keys, collar-studs, billiard-balls, penholders, knitting-needles, work-boxes, and false teeth."

They all laughed again, excepting Gan-Waga, who was solemnly chewing a wax candle.

"Well, gentlemen," said Ferrers Lord, "let us defer our discussion of the vegetable ivory trade, and get on."

In their thick furs they found the increasing warmth almost oppressive. The forest of mushrooms grew denser as they advanced, and they had to walk in single file. The dogs roamed in and out of the stems, but the strange cavern seemed empty of animal life. Gan-Waga led the way. He came from Alaska and knew nothing about the tradition of the cavern and its imps.

They had gone about two miles over the yielding sand, when the Eskimo halted and pointed forward.

"Water!" he said.

In a moment they were all on the edge of a subterranean lake, whose waters were as black as ink, and as still as death. Ferrers Lord dipped his finger into the water and put it to his mouth. Then he glanced round him. The sand of the shore was ribbed and hard. His white face flushed, and he waved his rifle over his head.

"Salt water!" he cried triumphantly. "I have found it! Look, there is a tide here. You can see the marks on the sand. I have found the way to the Pole."

Ching-Lung uttered a wild "Hurrah!" Thurston and Van Witter, who did not understand, stared in amaze.

"The way to the Pole, Lord! What are you talking about?"

The millionaire's eyes flashed exultantly.

"I have found it—I have found it! This is no lake, but the sea. It is sea-water, and it ebbs and flows. Feel how cold it is with the touch of eternal ice? Were it only an underground lake, it would be warmer. Bah! I can smell the salt breeze! There, to the north, through that darkness, lies the way to the Pole. And there is proof. Look—look!"

A great head and back broke the water.

"A whale!" shouted Ching-Lung.

Undismayed by the glare of the lamps, the monster spouted and disappeared.

"He is making for the north," said Ferrers Lord—"making for some sea unknown to us. Where that whale can go, our ship must go! We shall find the opening."

Thurston and Van Witter shared his excitement now. Underground to the Pole! Who could have dreamed of such a voyage, except Ferrers Lord? What wonders, what mysteries, lay wrapped in the dense gloom of that eerie cavern?

Ferrers Lord snatched up his lamp and hurried feverishly along the shore.

Perhaps even now he was mistaken; perhaps the channel

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 187.

ended abruptly. They followed him. Rolling a piece of paper into a ball he tossed it into the water. He held his compass in hand and watched closely. Slowly the paper floated further and further from the shore.

The current was flowing northward—northward to the unknown.

"We'll get back," he said quietly. "If I had remembered my compass before, it would have saved you using your axe, Thurston. We can safely take a short cut without any risk, and save a good mile."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Ching-Lung, "for those brutal snow-shoes have taken the skin off my ankles."

"And I'm as hungry as a shark," said Van Witter.

Gan-Waga gravely produced a couple of tallow candles, and invited the Yankee to help himself. Ching-Lung giggled.

"No, thanks," said Van Witter, shuddering. "It's awfully good of you, but I'm not quite hungry enough for that. A nice chop, or some liver and bacon—"

"Some what?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Liver and bacon."

"Oh, liver—eh? Well, old Gan got as near it as he could. He hadn't any liver handy, so he offered you lights."

Thurston and Van Witter groaned aloud. The pun was atrocious, and terribly old.

"And besides," went on Ching-Lung sweetly, "lights and mushrooms ain't bad, and there are plenty about; only, I reckon if you sampled one of those candles you wouldn't have much room for mushrooms, and—"

Rupert seized a stone, and Ching-Lung climbed up a toadstool like a cat to get out of danger.

"Come, babies," said Ferrers Lord, "it is nearly three o'clock! Down with you, Ching!"

Ching-Lung slid down to the ground and made the peace by presenting Van Witter and Rupert with cigars. They plunged boldly into the uncanny forest, and, with compass to guide them, retraced their steps along their former path.

Ferrers Lord was silent and thoughtful, but the others were in high spirits. Ching-Lung insisted upon singing a Chinese song, and had to be kicked before he would desist.

They stopped abruptly as the millionaire raised his hand.

"Gan-Waga!" he said hoarsely. "Stand back, you others, please! What is that?"

He pointed to the sand. It was trampled and hard as granite, forming a wide cross-path winding through the grisly forest. But where he stood a little stream of water trickled out of the darkness, crossed the path, and disappeared into the darkness again.

And in the soft ooze beside the stream was the print of a monstrous hoof.

"Not know!" muttered Gan-Waga, his eyes rolling.

"Never see 'fore! Big 'nough!"

The others bent over the monstrous track in amaze.

"An elephant!" said Thurston. "Can there be elephants here?"

"An elephant, then," said Ferrers Lord drily, "and at least twenty-five feet taller, and weighing eight or ten tons—perhaps more. Personally, I have never seen such a monster. Look how he has beaten this track into a road like macadam. This mark is not an hour old, for the water has not had time to fill it. He is not far away."

The listeners began to feel creepy and to peer into the gloom. What great beast was it that ruled over these great realms of darkness and silence?

"Gentlemen," went on Ferrers Lord, "you will kindly return to the ship."

"And you?" gasped Ching-Lung.

"I am going to make the acquaintance of the monarch of this cavern. I shall go alone, for I do not wish to expose any of you to danger. Take the compass and go."

"Not I!" said Ching-Lung.

"And I'll see you hung first!" cried Thurston.

"Waal," drawled Van Witter, "I guess that's my sentiment to a hair! I'm no elephant hunter, and I don't like floundering about in the dark among a lot of overgrown toadstools, but I'm just going right along."

Ferrers Lord laughed.

"This is rank mutiny," he said, "and I may court-martial you for it. As the Irishman said when he went to the sea-side and saw a five-ton anchor: 'Bedad, Oi'll never go home until Oi sees the man what uses that pick!' I don't mean to return to the Lord of the Deep until I get a glimpse of the gentleman who left that footprint behind. Let the dogs roam ahead, Gan-Waga. Gentlemen, look to your rifles, and don't waste a shot."

Hearts beat fast as they advanced along the trampled path. They felt they were on a quest that no human being had attempted before. What would be the end of it? The dogs bounded forward. Then, from the darkness, came the sound that thrills every sportsman—the yapping of the dogs



There stood the mammoth, perhaps the last of the race. Ten thousand years ago, perhaps a hundred thousand years, perhaps a million years ago, such monsters as these roamed the earth. There he stood, his huge eyes blinking dazedly at the unaccustomed light. Then came a roar—awful, deafening, blood-curdling. "For your lives!" shouted Ferrers Lord. "Scatter—scatter!"

who have scented game. They clutched their rifles tighter. Silence followed.

What a weird, ghastly place! Grass ten feet high grew thick and dense between the giant fungi. It was as white as snow, and no breeze ever stirred it. It was like a jungle cut out of ivory.

"Horrible!" muttered Thurston, shuddering. "Great heavens, think of a man being lost in here!"

Even Ferrers Lord hesitated. The dogs began to bay wildly. A crashing sound echoed through the cavern. The writhing body of a dog shot over the grass, thudded against one of the trunks, and fell mangled and lifeless. Their fur bristling with dread, the rest of the terrified pack rushed out of cover.

Then came a roar—awful, deafening, blood-curdling.

"For your lives!" shouted Ferrers Lord. "Scatter—scatter!"

It broke into sight, tearing the grass aside. Ferrers Lord stood his ground and flashed his lamp upon it. Peering round the stems, they stared, their blood congealed.

"A mastodon!" gasped the millionaire. "A mammoth!"

Face to Face with the Mammoth—The Pursuit—The Monarch Dies—Lost in Impenetrable Gloom.

There he stood, perhaps the last of the race. Ten thousand years ago, perhaps a hundred thousand years, perhaps a million years ago, such monsters as these roamed the earth. There he stood, his huge eyes blinking dazedly at the unaccustomed light.

From hoof to shoulder he must have measured thirty feet. His mighty tusks, curved like sickles, gleamed yellow. Masses of shaggy hair hung from his wrinkled sides, and his tufted tail, swishing from side to side, cut down the tough

grass like some monstrous sickle. His breath came and went in a dull, hoarse roar, and his eyes glowed red.

The light seemed to blind him. He tossed his mighty head from side to side, as if to shake it away. Evidently he could not see his strange foes who dared to invade his territory. Up rose his curved tusks, the gaping mouth opened, and a thunderous roar roused the echoes of the cavern.

Then the dogs were upon him again, yapping, snarling, jumping. They might as well have tried to bite at steel as to fasten their teeth in his wrinkled hide.

Ferrers Lord levelled his rifle and fired full at the centre of the massive skull.

The great brute bellowed and charged blindly. Ferrers Lord darted aside. Shaking the earth, the maddened brute dashed on, and charged away into the darkness. The stems cracked and snapped like carrots, the giant mushrooms toppled down. He vanished, but the noise of his stampede echoed back like the rattle of a battery of guns.

White-faced, they gathered in the path.

"A mammoth!" gasped Thurston hoarsely.

"Yes, a mammoth."

Gan-Waga's knees were knocking together.

"Bad 'nough!" he muttered. "Dis bad place—horrible bad! We go 'way, hunk!"

"So I should think!" said Van Witter uneasily. "You hit him hard. Look at the blood on my hand. And there's more here. By the great hokey, I've had a turn! My heart's going like a flail!"

"I tried to get a shot into him myself," said Ching-Lung, with an uneasy laugh; "but my hand shook so much that I couldn't find the trigger. I vote for a quick march. Give me some rabbit-shooting. It may not be so exciting, but it is much safer."

The millionaire's brow was wrinkled in thought. He was always craving for hazardous adventures. Chance of fate had put him in the way of an adventure so amazing and wonderful that he could not abandon it. But it was not fair or right to risk the lives of his friends, his servants, and, above all, his guests. He was responsible for their safety and welfare.

"Gentlemen," he drawled, calmly lighting a cigar, "I am in a dilemma. I would give a great deal for the fellow's tasks. As Mr. Van Witter says, I hit him hard. If I do not follow him up now, I shall certainly return to-morrow. In big game-hunting it is the best thing to strike while the iron's hot. The mammoth is frightened now, but when the first pain is gone from him, he will get surly, and probably sulk in the grass, where we cannot get at him without great risk. Come, let chance decide. Head, we follow him up; tails, we return to the ship."

He tossed up a sovereign, and it fell.

"Head!" cried Ching-Lung.

"Then quick, march!"

Ferrers Lord took half a dozen cartridges from his pockets, carefully selected one, and cut a nick in the nose of the bullet with his knife.

"What's that for?" asked Van Witter.

"Surely you know!" said the millionaire, in tones of mild surprise. "I should advise you all to do the same. We really want explosive bullets and heavier guns. Smooth, hard-nosed bullets such as these make a clean wound, and do not shatter the bone. If you nick them, however, they flatten, and make an ugly wound. It was a trick of the Boers, I believe."

Knives were out at once, and every rifle loaded with a clipped bullet. Van Witter could not help glancing at Ferrers Lord. The amazing coolness of the man, who calmly walked, cigar in mouth, beside him, seemed something more than mortal. Except Gan-Waga, they all carried firearms, and the Eskimo, who brought up the rear, was muttering something to himself in his native tongue.

It was easy enough to see the wide track of the mastodon, but hard to follow it, owing to the fallen stems. The millionaire talked to keep up the courage of his comrades. He told them about the far-away times when mighty forests once covered the earth, when perpetual thunderstorms raged ceaselessly, when the sun was hidden by dense mists, and strange monsters of hideous shapes peopled the warm seas, the reeking ooze, and the limitless forests now turned into coal. What a wealth of learning this man had! Van Witter listened and wondered more and more.

"By Jove," he drawled at last, "you talk as if you had lived there with the pterodactyl and the cave-bear, and driven a four-in-hand drawn by mammoths and three-toed elks. Now, I guess, if we only hook that chap alive, Barnum & Bailey's biggest show on earth would come down rather handsome to get him in their collection."

Van Witter was always thinking of money-making, like the true American.

"Perhaps you would not mind doing the hooking part, old chap," said Ching-Lung. "I've got a bent pin, and I dare say we can find a worm. You'll be pretty certain to get a bite."

"And perhaps get severely bitten," put in Thurston. "Now, Gan, buck up! You look as miserable as a stewed eel!"

The Eskimo was slinking disconsolately at their heels, followed by the dogs.

"Bad 'nough," he muttered—"bad 'nough! No good at all! Gan sick an' 'fraid. Bad, dark place."

"Why, old Gan," said Ching-Lung, turning and laying his hand kindly on the Eskimo's shoulder, "you allee lightee. You no getee down in the mouf. We not in dangel, an' I stickee to you. You good chapee, Gan, and I likee you a lotee. We makee these two lascal—Ole Thomas an' Ben—sittee up and squeal. Stickee up youl backee, Candleface, and betee on me!"

Gan-Waga brightened up a little. He was beginning to adore Ching-Lung, but the gloom, the silence, the awful beast he had seen, added to the superstition rooted in every savage, weighed heavily upon him. Even the dogs were scared and limp, and even for these poor soulless brutes it was full of nameless terrors.

"The sea," said Ferrers Lord.

They had reached the black water again, but where was the mammoth? The lamp revealed his track. It vanished at the water's edge.

"There he is—there he is!"

He was on a narrow strip of sand about eighty yards from the shore. Four shots, sounding like one, crashed out. The monster tottered.

"Again!" shouted Ferrers Lord. "Behind the ears, lads—quick!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack! This time it was a straggling volley.

The mammoth rolled sideways into the water, sending up a deluge of spray. His tenacity of life was appalling. His great head and gleaming tusks rose above the water as he swam to the shore. Two more volleys failed to stop him. The mastodon rose, his shaggy mane dripping, and charged.

The millionaire's foot slipped, and he fell sprawling. Sick with horror, Ching-Lung shaded his eyes. Ferrers Lord rolled aside and gained his feet. The lumbering brute turned and charged him, the dogs doing their utmost to turn it. Twice Thurston, his heart standing still, fired in vain. The mighty tusks almost grazed the millionaire. He doubled like a cat, and dived into the water.

The blood rushed back through Ching-Lung's veins. The mammoth was weak and reeling now, and blood was gushing from his mouth.

"His eye, Ching!" cried a voice from the water.

The prince fired. A shiver ran along the creature's flanks. Slowly its knees bent closer to the ground. For a moment it propped itself up with its curved tusks. The swishing of its tail grew more feeble. Then it swayed and rolled over, quivering and gasping. The dogs rushed in and began to tear at its flesh.

"Dead!" said Thurston.

"Ching has all the luck," drawled the millionaire, emerging from the water. "That last shot of yours ended matters. Down, dogs—down!"

They clustered round the fallen giant of the cave.

"We must leave him," said Ferrers Lord, "and take his tusks when we find the passage. Like the rest of you, I am getting hungry. This must be an offshoot of the channel we saw, as it is quite shallow. I wonder how far this chap has led us out of our way?"

"Miles," answered Ching-Lung.

"Well, we have the compass. Let us see where we are. Luckily it is watertight."

He thrust his hand into his pocket. His face turned white.

"Lost!"

"What is lost?"

"The compass, Rupert."

They stared at each other in stony horror.

"But we blazed some of the trees," said Van Witter, with trembling lips.

Ferrers Lord was silent. True, they had blazed some of the trees, but what hope had they of ever seeing these marks? They might, guided by Providence, discover their own trail in the sand. Every inch of the horrid forest was alike. Trusting to the compass, he had failed to take any precautions. And there was one haunting terror which he kept to himself.

The lamps! They had been burning some time now, and they could not last for ever. If the lights failed before they discovered the tracks! If they were abandoned there to grope blindly in darkness and gloom, to die a death of agony, hunger, and thirst!

(This thrilling adventure story will be continued in next week's number of "The Magnet" Library. Order early. Price 1d.)



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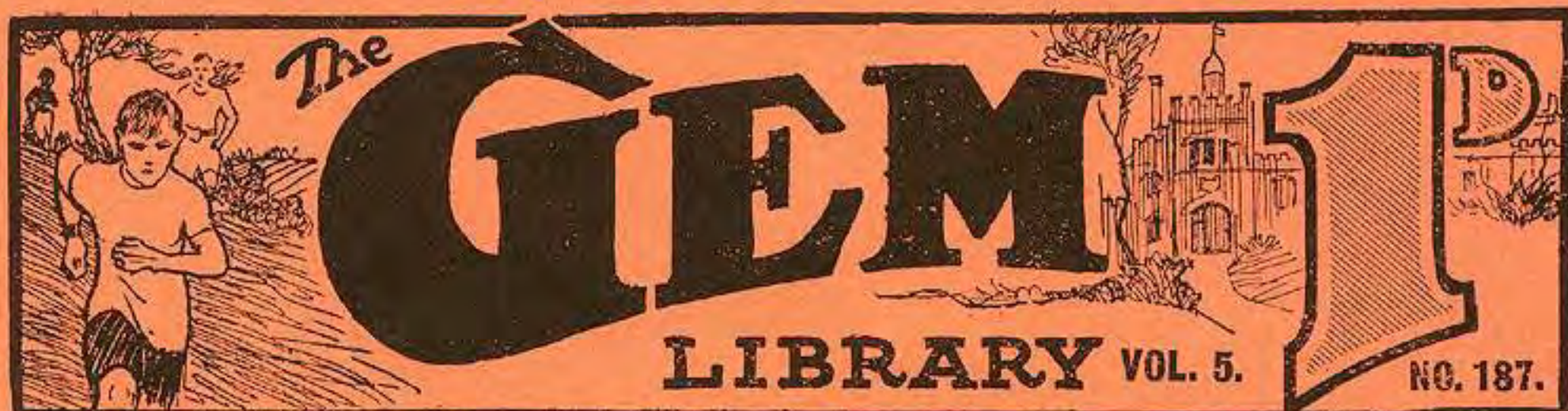
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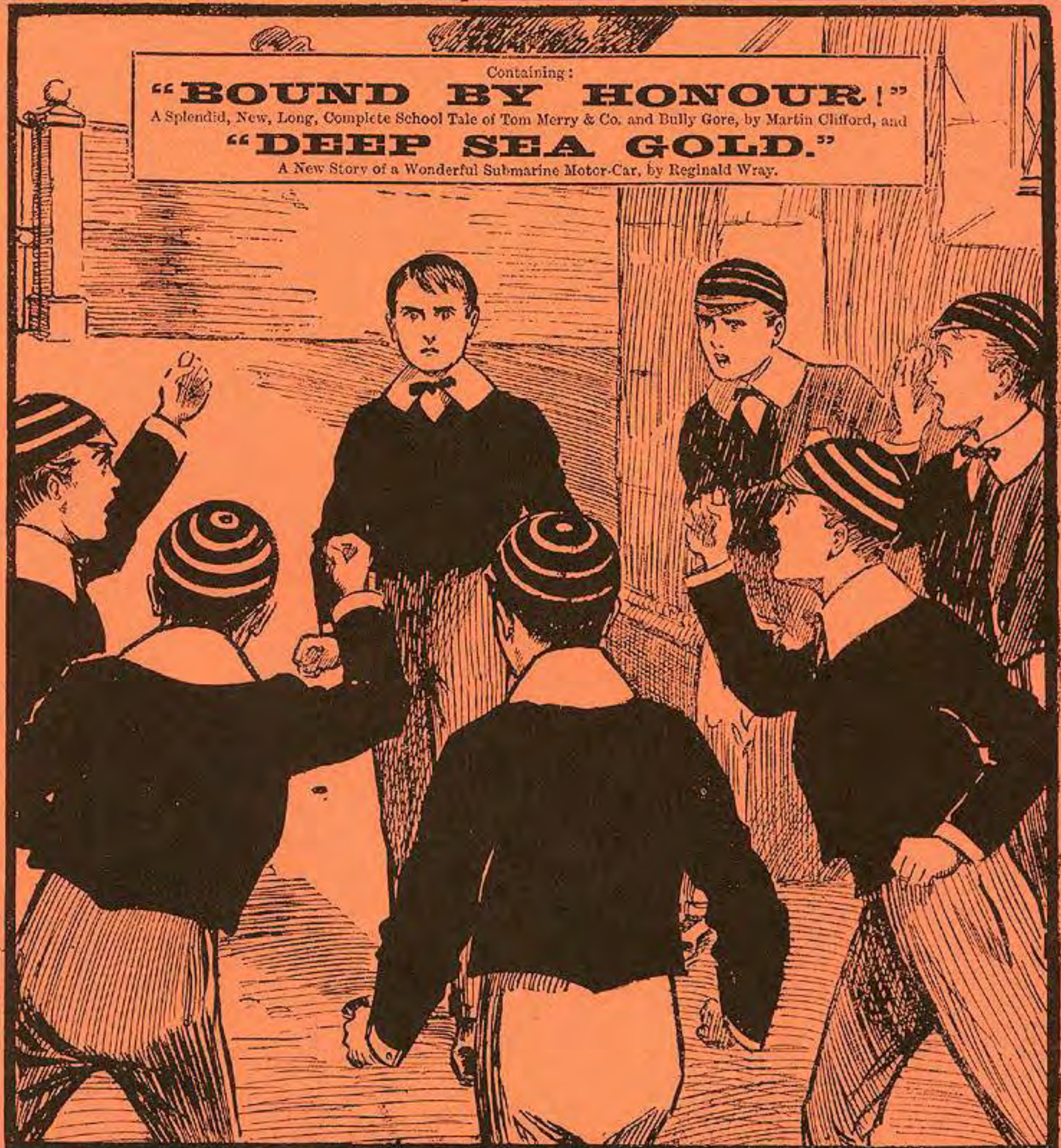
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