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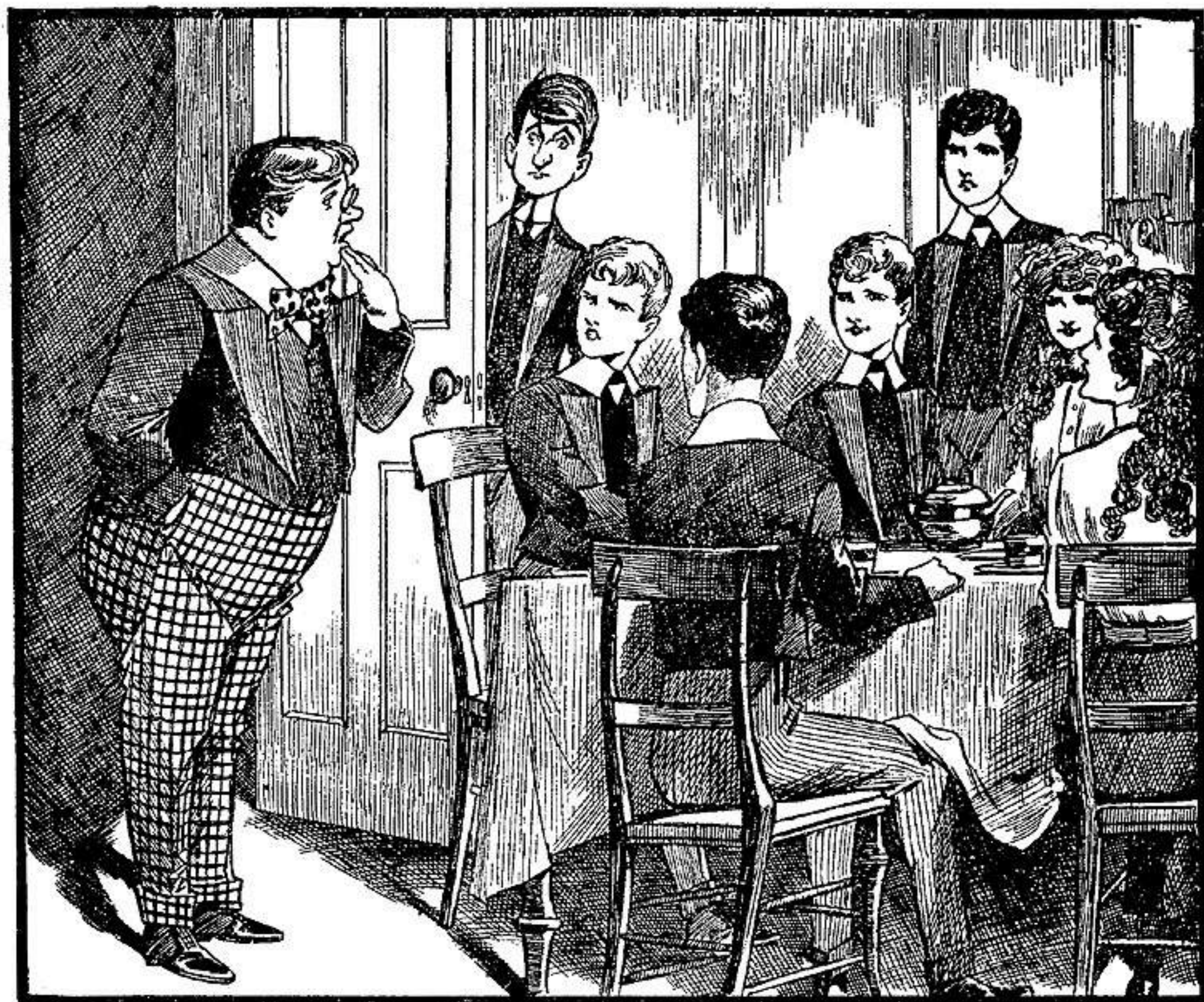


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HAZELDENE'S HONOUR!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



There was a buzz of cheery voices in the study when the door opened, and a fat face looked in. "Here we are again!" said Billy Bunter affably. "How do you do, Marjorie? Jolly glad to see you, Miss Clara. Sorry I'm late, you fellows! I had rather an important engagement. (See Chapter 7.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Snoop Surprises the Remove!

"WHERE'S Hazeldene?"

Harry Wharton asked that question impatiently.

On Little Side, at Greyfriars, the Remove eleven had gathered for practice—or, rather, ten of them had gathered. The goalkeeper was missing.

It was a cold, windy day. The keen breeze from the

sea cut almost like a knife. The Remove fellows had the ground to themselves. Harry Wharton's team was opposed to a scratch eleven, captained by Bolsover major. As a rule, a practice match drew a number of spectators to the ground, but on that bitter afternoon no one seemed inclined to watch the footer. The twenty-one juniors were there by themselves. They were anxious to start, if only to get warm, but Hazeldene had not turned up.

"Where the dickens is he?" exclaimed Wharton irritably. "He knows we're starting now. Anybody seen him?"

"I think he went out after dinner," said Penfold.

"Then why hasn't he come back?"

"Put another chap in goal and let's get going," suggested Bob Cherry, who was brandishing his arms to keep warm. "We can't stand about here and freeze."

"We want Hazeldene in goal," growled the captain of the Remove. "He's got to keep goal in the Highcliffe match on Saturday, and he's got to practise."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes somebody!"

Wharton looked round quickly as a junior came out of the distant School House. But it was not Hazeldene. It was Snoop, of the Remove.

Somewhat to the surprise of the footballers, Snoop came down to the ground.

Snoop was not generally interested in footer, being a slacker of the first water, and that he should have chosen this especial afternoon, when the weather had driven hardier fellows indoors, to come down and watch the practice was surprising.

"Seen Hazeldene?" Wharton called out, as Snoop came up to the field.

"No. Isn't he here?"

"If he were here I shouldn't be asking you if you'd seen him," snapped Wharton.

"Don't bite a chap's head off," said Bob Cherry good-naturedly. "Isn't Hazel in the House, Snoopey?"

Snoop shook his head.

"He went out on his bike after dinner," he said.

"He's had time to get back, I suppose," growled Wharton.

"Might have had a puncture."

"Oh, rats!"

"Chaps do have punctures, you know," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Hazeldene may be wheeling his jigger home at this very minute. Shove another chap in goal."

Harry Wharton frowned. He specially wanted the whole team to practise together that afternoon. There had been a time when the Highcliffe match was a mere walk-over to the Removites. But that time was gone, since Frank Courtenay had become junior football captain at Highcliffe. The match was certainly not one of the toughest on the Remove list, but it was a game that needed hard play. And Wharton wanted his team to be at the top of their form on Saturday. The weather had been playing ducks and drakes with footer practice of late. That Wednesday afternoon was the last chance the Remove eleven had of practice all together before the Highcliffe match came off.

The absence of the goalkeeper was, therefore, exasperating. Putting another fellow in goal would allow the practice to proceed, but it would not be the same thing.

"The silly ass!" Wharton exclaimed. "He ought to be here."

"Yes, but he isn't," remarked Frank Nugent. "Blow Hazel! Let's get on."

"You want another fellow?" asked Snoop, looking at the captain of the Remove. "I'll play in goal, if you like."

Wharton's frown vanished, and he grinned. Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"You in goal, Snoopey! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The goalfulness would be terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the outside-right of the Remove eleven.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sidney James Snoop scowled. It was true that he was no footballer, but he did not like his offer being received in this humorous spirit.

"Well, it would give Bolsover's men a chance," chuckled Johnny Bull.

"But where should we come in?" grinned Squiff.

"We shouldn't come in at all; we should be snuffed out," said Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you might be civil about it, anyway," exclaimed Snoop. "I've offered because you want a goalie, and Hazeldene don't seem to be coming. I'm willing to do my best."

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"Excuse us, dear boy," said Bob, chuckling. "But it struck us as funny. You never play footer, you know. You couldn't stop a ball."

"I'd do my best, Wharton," said Snoop. "The fact is, I want to take up footer."

"You want to take up footer!" ejaculated Harry.

"Why not? You fellows have slanged me often enough for not taking it up."

"Well, yes; but it hasn't had any effect on you, so far."

"Give me a trial," said Snoop. "It's only a practice match, anyway."

"Well, something in that," said Wharton thoughtfully. "With a duffer in goal, it will make the backs buck up, at any rate. That fathead Hazel seems to have disappeared for the afternoon. Get into your jersey, Snoopey, and run into goal. We'll give you a chance."

"I'll be ready in a jiffy."

Snoop rushed off to the House.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "That's a new departure for Snoop. Football instead of smoking in the box-room! Wonders will never cease."

"Blessed if I understand it," said Harry. "But if he's going to take up footer instead of playing the giddy ox, he's welcome to all the help we can give him."

"Oh, yes, rather."

The juniors punted the ball about while they waited for Snoop. But they had not long to wait. In a few minutes Snoop reappeared, racing down from the House with his football clothes on, and a coat and muffler.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes."

Snoop arrived panting, and threw off his coat and muffler.

"I'm ready!" he announced.

"Get into goal!" said Harry.

The two junior elevens lined up. As it was only practice, there was no referee on the ground. As half-past two boomed out from the clock-tower, Bolsover major kicked off the ball.

Bolsover major was grinning.

There was a certain amount of distinction in being selected to skipper the scratch team, but Bolsover had not expected to put up much of a show against the great players of the Remove. But with Snoop in goal, the prospect had changed. Bolsover major entertained ambitious hopes now of beating the Form eleven.

Bolsover & Co. attacked hotly, but it was a long time before they had a chance at goal. Sidney James Snoop stood between the posts, stamping to keep his feet warm, and waving his arms. The fresh air and the motion brought an unusual colour into his pasty cheeks, and he looked more fit than usual. The attack was mostly on the Remove side, and Wharton soon put the ball in, and his goal was quickly followed by another from Penfold. The forwards were evidently in the pink of condition.

And when Bolsover & Co. succeeded in getting going at last they found that Mark Linley and Toddy and Bob Cherry, the halves, were hard to beat; and behind them, Johnny Bull and Tom Brown, the backs, were like unto a bronze wall in defence. It really looked as if Snoop's part, in goal, would be simply that of a spectator most of the time.

But towards the end of the first half there came an attack upon the Form goal, and Snoop was put to the test.

The ball came in from Skinner's foot, and Snoop jumped at it.

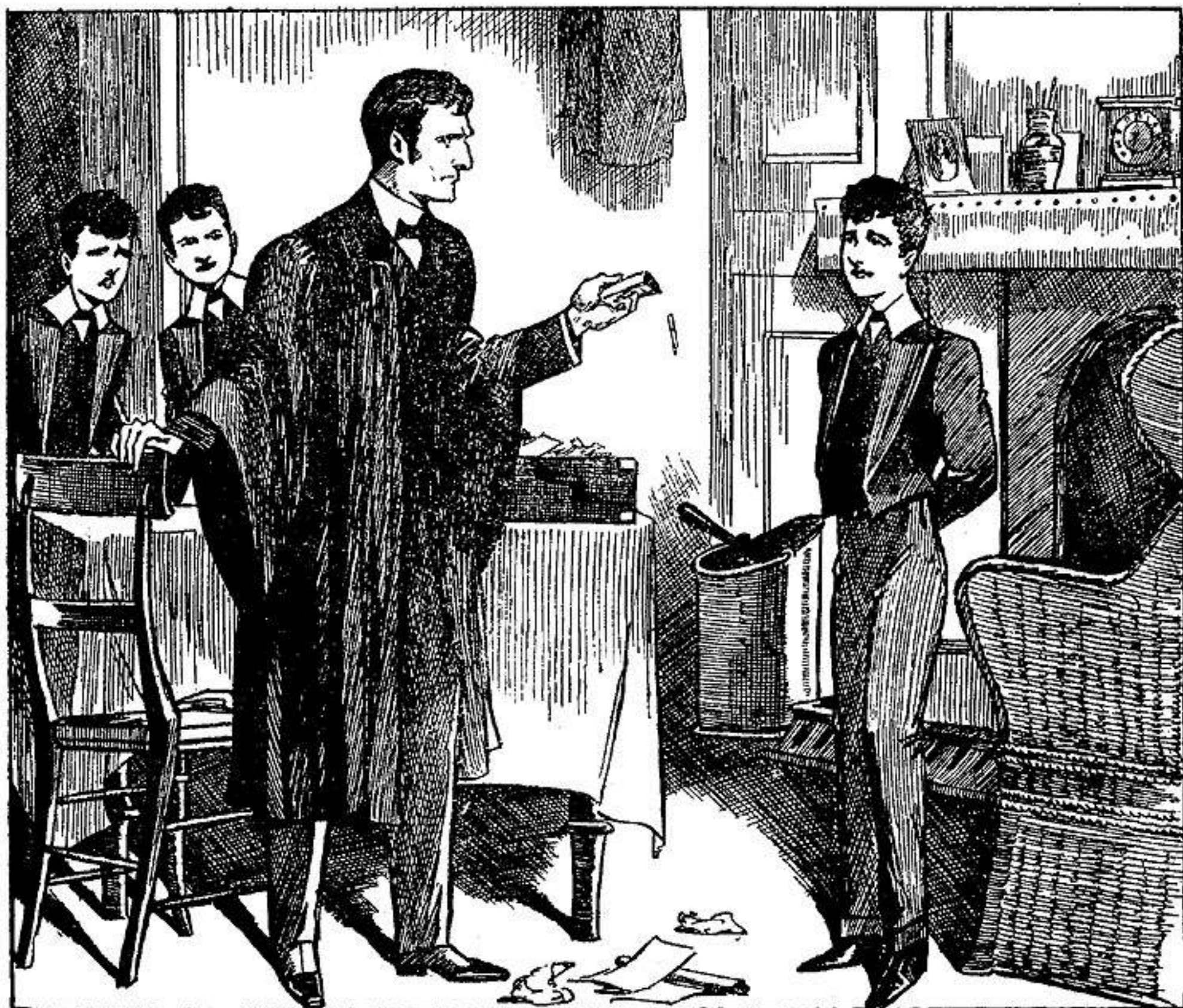
To the surprise of the whole field, he fisted it out. Bolsover major headed it in at once, and Snoop headed it out. Probably he was favoured by luck, but he did it, and the Removites gave him a cheer, as Bob Cherry cleared to mid-field with a powerful kick.

"Well saved, Snoop!"

"Jolly good, Snoopey!" called out Harry Wharton, with much more cordiality than he usually showed to the slacker and cad of the Remove. "Keep that up."

"What-ho!" said Snoop.

But it was not till the second half was well on its way that Snoop was called upon to save again. This time the ball came in from Bolsover major, and Snoop was on it at once. Out it came in a twinkling. Certainly, it



Mr. Quelch uttered a sudden exclamation. "What is this?" He held up a packet. It was open at one end, and cigarette dropped from it as he held it up. Hazeldene started violently. (See Chapter 6.)

was not a difficult shot to deal with; but, at all events, Snoop dealt with it.

It was not till the ninety minutes were nearly up that Ogilvy put the ball in, beating Snoop all the way.

By that time the Form had taken four goals, and a few minutes later the practice match was over. Harry Wharton clapped Snoop on the shoulder as he came out of goal.

"You've done jolly well, considering," he said. "Of course, the attack didn't amount to much. But you stopped it, anyway. I'm glad to see you going in for footer, Snoop. Why not come down for regular practice?"

Snoop smiled in a rather curious way.

"I'll be glad to," he said.

"Good egg! Then it's a go!" said Wharton heartily. "If you don't mind my giving you a tip, you'd better chuck smoking; you'll find your wind improve."

"I'm going to," said Snoop. "In fact, I have already."

"Good man!"

The Famous Five put on their coats and mufflers and walked back to the House. They were ruddy and warm from the footer, and in good spirits. Two things puzzled them, however. One was the absence of Hazeldene; the other was the surprising new departure on the part of Sidney James Snoop. The former was annoying; the latter was heartily approved. The chums

of the Remove did not like Snoop, and they did not pretend to. But they were more than willing to give him a helping hand if he had resolved at last to play the game.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Ponsonby & Co.!

"PEN!"

"Hallo!" said Penfold.

Pen was rubbing himself down in the dormitory after the game. The other fellows had gone down, excepting Snoop, who lingered.

"Will you lend me your camera?" asked Snoop.

Pen smiled.

"Taking up photography as well as footer?" he asked.

"Not really taking it up," said Snoop. "I've had a lot of practice, and I have a camera at home. I sha'n't damage it."

"That's all right," said Pen good-naturedly. "It's in my study; you can take it."

"I'll pay for the plates I use, of course."

"All serene."

Sidney James Snoop descended to the Remove passage, and took the camera from Penfold's study. He slung it over his shoulder, and was making for the stairs, when Frank Nugent stopped him.

"Coming to tea?" asked Nugent cheerily.

Snoop stared a little. It was the first time he had ever been asked to tea in No. 1 Study.

"I'd like to come," he said, "but I've borrowed Pen's camera, and I'm just going out. Thanks all the same."

"Right-ho!"

Snoop went on his way thoughtfully.

He understood that the curious display he had made of footer enthusiasm that afternoon had had its effect on Harry Wharton & Co. As a rule, they had little to say to Snoop, and that little was not over-courteous.

But evidently they had resolved to give him a chance. If he wanted to throw over his "rotten" ways, and play up like a decent fellow, he would receive every encouragement from No. 1 Study. They were always ready to help a lame dog over a stile.

But the reform of a character like Snoop's was not so simple a business as the chums supposed. It was true that Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, had turned over a new leaf and stuck to it. But Snoop had none of the Bounder's strength of character. He was not likely to turn over the new leaf, much less to stick to it for any long period if he did so.

A cynical smile crossed his lips as he made his way down to the gates. He turned into the road to Courtfield, and walked on quickly.

He had told Pen that he was going out photographing. It was odd enough, therefore, that he did not pause on his way, and did not open the camera-case. He walked quickly through Courtfield, and along the road to Highcliffe School.

Two fellows were chatting in the gateway of Highcliffe as he came up—Courtenay and De Courcy of the Fourth. They nodded to Snoop, who paused.

"Is Ponsonby about?" he asked.

"I don't know anything about Ponsonby," said Courtenay, shortly enough.

De Courcy chimed in:

"You'll find him in his study, Snoop. But he's sportin' his oak, dear boy. There's a little game on."

Snoop grinned.

"That's all right," he said. "He'll see me."

"You're one of the old brigade—what?" asked the Caterpillar. "One of the wild an' roarin' blades—eh?"

"Oh, rot!" said Snoop. He crossed towards the House.

"Behold the sheep goin' to the slaughter, Franky!" said the Caterpillar, with a yawn. "I didn't know Snoop was flush with cash."

"He isn't," said Courtenay. "I've heard that his father came an awful mucker, and his people are hard up."

"Yaas. I remember that fat bounder Bunter babblin' about it, while I was tryin' to shut him up with buns," assented the Caterpillar. "That's the puzzle—how on earth is he worth Pon's while if he hasn't any cof?"

"Blow Ponsonby!"

"Certainly, Franky. Blow him as hard as you like; but it's an interestin' problem, all the same. Snoop must have come into a fortune."

Snoop entered the House, and made his way up to Ponsonby's study. He tapped at the door.

"Hallo!" came from within. "Can't let you in; we're swottin'."

Snoop chuckled. The last fellow at Highcliffe who was likely to "sport his oak" for the sake of swotting was Cecil Ponsonby, the dandy of the Fourth.

"It's me," said Snoop.

"Who may 'me' be?" drawled Ponsonby.

"Snoop, from Greyfriars."

"Oh, it's Snoop, from Greyfriars, is it? Well, run away to Greyfriars; we're muggin' up Latin."

"Mugging up bridge, more likely," said Snoop through the keyhole. "I say, Ponsonby, let me in; it's important."

"Let the bounder in, Pon," said another voice, that of Gadsby of the Fourth. "If he can make a fourth we needn't play dummy."

The key was turned, and the door opened. Three elegantly-dressed youths were in the study—Ponsonby and Gadsby and Vavasour. There was a slight haze of

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cigarette smoke in the air, and there were cards on the table.

"Trot in," said Ponsonby. And after Snoop was in the study he relocked the door. "We don't want Mobby to spot this. He's too obliging to spot us unless we fairly make him. But no good takin' chances."

"Take a hand, Snoop?" said Gadsby.

Snoop shook his head.

"It isn't that," he said. "You were speaking the other day, Ponsonby, about bets on the match next Saturday. Well, I'm your man."

"Nothin' doin'," said Ponsonby at once. "I'm not backin' the Highcliffe team. We haven't a look-in against Greyfriars, since that outsider Courtenay became skipper. He's left us out."

"Well, you never beat Greyfriars when you were skipper, that I remember," said Snoop.

Ponsonby looked unpleasant.

"Have you come here for a thick ear?" he asked.

"No, thanks. I've come to make a bet with you, if you're game."

"I tell you I'm not backin' Highcliffe. It's N.G."

"Same here," said Gadsby. "I'd back anythin' with a sportin' chance, but that's absolutely N.G. Courtenay has done a lot with the team, I admit that, but he can't put an eleven in the field to beat Greyfriars. Highcliffe won't have a look-in on Saturday. I don't say they won't put up a good fight. But they'll be licked to the wide, and there's an end."

"I'm not asking you to back Highcliffe," said Snoop coolly.

The nuts of Highcliffe stared at him.

"You don't want us to back your school, I suppose?" said Vavasour.

"Why not, if you think Greyfriars will win?"

"We'd back Greyfriars fast enough if we could find any takers," chuckled Ponsonby. "We've offered the odds up and down the Fourth and the Shell here, but there ain't any takers—no jolly fear!"

"I'm ready to take you on!"

"You!" exclaimed Ponsonby & Co., all together.

"Yes."

"What's happened to the Greyfriars team, then?" sneered Ponsonby. "Are half Wharton's men crooked?"

"Every man as fit as a fiddle," said Snoop, "and expecting to win on Saturday."

"Rats!"

"Don't you believe me?" exclaimed Snoop angrily.

"Of course I don't—not if you're willing to lay money against them," said Ponsonby. "You wouldn't, unless something had happened to muck up Wharton's team."

"Nothing's happened. You can satisfy yourselves about that. Bike over to-morrow and see them at practice."

"Certainly I should before I laid money on them," said Ponsonby, puzzled. "But if the team's all right, what do you want to bet against them for? You know jolly well that Courtenay hasn't a chance in a dozen."

"Courtenay's a good skipper, and De Courcy can play up when he likes," said Snoop. "I fancy the Highcliffe team's getting on better than you think. Anyway, money talks. I'm willing to back Highcliffe against my own school."

"And nothing's happened to Wharton's team?"

"Nothing. You can see for yourselves to-morrow, if you like, before the bets are laid."

Ponsonby & Co. stared at Snoop.

They did not understand. It was true that the junior Highcliffe team had made wonderful strides since Ponsonby had been dropped, and Frank Courtenay had become junior skipper. But a winning team is not built up in a day. It was Courtenay's great ambition to beat the Remove on the footer field. But as yet he had little chance of doing it. Cecil Ponsonby was a slacker himself, but he knew good play when he saw it. Only by the biggest stroke of luck could Highcliffe hope to pull off Saturday's match. With ordinary luck, the Greyfriars Remove must win.

The sportsmen of Highcliffe would have backed Greyfriars willingly if they could have found any takers. But they could find none—till now.

There was silence in the study for some minutes. Snoop, with his hands in his pockets, waited.

"Blessed if I can catch on!" said Ponsonby at last. "There must be some trick somewhere!"

Snoop shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want you to lay your money till you've seen Wharton's team at practice," he said. "Bike over to-morrow, and bring your cash with you. Stakes to be held by Skinner of the Remove."

"That's all right, certainly!"

"You've been offering two to one on Greyfriars, I understand, and nobody here is sporting enough to back up his own school at that figure!" said Snoop. "Well, I'm ready to do it!"

"Hard cash?" said Gadsby. "We don't bet on waste-paper, you know!"

"Hard cash!" said Snoop. "I'm in funds."

"For once!" sneered Gadsby.

"Yes, for once!" said Snoop, unmoved. "You know I'm generally hard up. I'll take you on, at two to one, as you've offered!"

"But it's a dead cert for us!" exclaimed Ponsonby.

"I don't think so!"

"If you don't think so, it shows that you don't know anything about footer!"

"Well, he doesn't, as a matter of fact!" remarked Gadsby. "Look here! We're not missing this! If Snoop means business, we're on! But money talks!"

Snoop opened his pocket-book and took out a ten-pound note. The nuts of Highcliffe stared at it. Ten-pound notes were decidedly uncommon among juniors. Even Ponsonby & Co., who were rich, seldom had tenners to show about. And Snoop was well known to be poor.

"It's a tenner, by gad!" said Ponsonby. "Been robbing a bank, Snoop?"

"It's my own!" said Snoop. "As a matter of fact, it was sent to me to buy some things I'm in need of. My allowance doesn't run in tenners, or even in quids, for that matter. But I've got it, and I'm going to flutter while I've got it. I don't often get a chance for a little flutter."

"Well, that's sportin'!" said Ponsonby, eyeing the tenner greedily. "And you'll find us sportin', too! Two to one on Greyfriars, win or lose!"

"Done!"

"Provided that they're showin' their usual form when we see them to-morrow," added Gadsby.

"That's understood! After you've seen them, come up to my study, and bring your cash with you, if you're still inclined to bet," said Snoop. "You three will have to make up twenty quid!"

"We can do that, with a bit of borrowin'," said Ponsonby. "Of course, among gentlemen an IOU is good enough?"

"Do you want to bet on my IOU, then?"

"No fear!" said Ponsonby promptly.

"And I don't want yours!" said Snoop. "I'm not takin' this trouble simply to collect waste-paper—your remark, Gaddy!"

"Fair enough," said Vavasour. "Hard cash on both sides, and there's no prospect of trouble. I can stand it." Snoop moved to the door.

"That's settled, then!" he said. "They'll be at practice after dinner to-morrow. I'll see you then."

"Right as rain!"

Sidney James Snoop left the study. He left Gadsby and Vavasour chuckling, and Ponsonby frowning thoughtfully.

"It's a regular catch!" said Gadsby. "That tenner's ours, Pon!"

"But what is he doin' it for?" exclaimed Ponsonby. "Is he really ass enough to think that Courtenay's team can beat Greyfriars?"

"He must be. Money talks, you know!"

"He's a tricky beast, though!"

"Yaas, that's so; but we shall see the Greyfriars rotters to-morrow, and we shall see whether they're in their usual form. We can inquire, too, whether any of them will be missin' on Saturday, or anythin' like that. We can make sure it's all fair and square before we put up the stakes."

Ponsonby nodded.

"I suppose it's a case of a fool and his money!" he remarked. "Snoop never has any tin, and he's gone

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wild at the idea of baggin' twenty of the best. That tenner's ours!"

And the nuts of Highcliffe sat down merrily to bridge and cigarettes, with the comfortable certainty that they would be dividing Snoop's tenner among themselves after the football match on Saturday.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Very Queer!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's Hazel!"

Bob Cherry was looking out of the window of No. 1 Study. Tea in that famous apartment was over. The winter dusk was falling on the Close as Hazeldene of the Remove came wheeling his bicycle in.

The expression on Hazel's face was not agreeable. He did not look as if he had enjoyed his afternoon out.

He disappeared round the House, on his way to the bike-shed. A few minutes later his heavy footsteps were heard in the Remove passage.

He came into No. 1 Study, frowning, and looking very tired and very muddy. Harry Wharton greeted him with a rather grim look. The Remove goal-keeper had missed the last practice before an important match, and an explanation was required.

"Well, here you are!" said Nugent.

"Yes, here I am!" growled Hazeldene. "And I want to find the chap who's given me an afternoon out for nothing! I suppose you played without me?"

"Of course, as you didn't turn up!" said Harry. "What the dickens did you stay out for?"

"I thought I should be back in time," said Hazeldene. "There was lots of time to get over to Redclyffe and back before the practice. I've been to Redclyffe."

"Well, you could have got back easily enough," said Harry. "I suppose a puncture wouldn't have kept you till this time, if you had to walk all the way home?"

"I haven't had any puncture."

"Then what the dickens—"

"That's what I want to know!" said Hazeldene. "Somebody's played a rotten joke on me! Just after dinner Quelch sent for me, and told me my father was asking for me on the telephone."

"Oh, if you've been to see your pater, that's different, of course!"

"But I haven't!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "It was a rotten practical joke of somebody! Somebody jawed to me on the telephone, and I thought it was my pater. He told me that he had had to come down to Redclyffe on business, and asked me to run over and see him. He gave his address as 10, Sussex Street. Well, I wanted to see the pater, naturally, so I buzzed off on my bike."

"Didn't you find him?"

"No, I didn't. And I didn't find any Sussex Street. I found out, in the long run, that there isn't such a street in Redclyffe at all. At least, nobody seemed to have heard of it. I thought I'd better telephone home to make sure, and I had to wait for a trunk-call. Then I found out that the pater hadn't been to Redclyffe at all."

Harry Wharton's brows contracted.

"What a rotten trick!" he exclaimed. "Who could have done it?"

"That's what I want to know!" said Hazeldene, setting his teeth. "If it was a Greyfriars chap I'll find him out, and hammer him black and blue! Might have been one of the Highcliffe rotters, though! It's just one of Ponsonby's dirty tricks! I can't make out why any silly ass should play such a game on me!"

"Blessed if I can, either!" said Bob Cherry. "Some cad might have played a trick like that to make you miss a match; but to-day it wasn't a match. I don't see that it could matter to anybody whether you turned up at practice or not. On Saturday it would be different."

"Well, on Saturday I shouldn't have stayed away," said Hazeldene. "If it had been a match I should have got back in time, and chanced it, and explained to the

pater afterwards. I wouldn't have left the team in the lurch in a match. This was just a rotten practical joke! I want to find the practical joker now!"

"I hope you'll find him!" said Harry.

"I'm going to try, anyway!"

Hazeldene left the study, growling, evidently very much out of temper. The Famous Five looked at one another very curiously.

"That's jolly queer!" said Johnny Bull abruptly. "Who the dickens could have played that rotten trick on Hazel?"

Wharton shook his head.

"I give it up," he said. "It's like Ponsonby; but it wouldn't be quite fair to put it down to him without any proof."

"He trickfully spoofed us on the telephone once before," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Let's give him a hiding, and chance it," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Bow-wow! We're playing Highcliffe on Saturday. We don't want any ragging with Highcliffe fellows just now. Besides, there's no proof."

"Well, he's a cad, anyway."

"Fathead! We're not going over to Highcliffe to make a row because Ponsonby's a cad," said Wharton, laughing. "It might have been Ponsonby; but it might have been anybody else—perhaps some chap in Friar-dale that Hazeldene's got on the wrong side of. Might even have been a Redclyffe chap; Hazel had a fight with a Redclyffe chap last term."

Meanwhile, Hazeldene was asking questions up and down the Remove passage.

The Remove fellows heard his story with surprise, and with sympathy or amusement according to the way they looked at it.

But nobody seemed to know anything about the practical joker. If it was a Remove fellow, he was keeping it carefully dark.

And there was one fellow, at least, who cast doubt upon Hazel's story. For when Harry Wharton & Co. came down into the common-room they heard loud sounds of woe, and an angry voice. Hazel had Sidney James Snoop's head under his arm, and was punching it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore this thushness?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Draw it mild, Hazel," said Harry Wharton, with a frown.

Hazeldene looked round furiously.

"The rotten cad is making out that I've been telling lies!" he exclaimed savagely.

Snoop wrenched himself away. His face was flushed and furious.

"Keep off, you rotten bully!" he yelled. "I'll call Quelchy!"

"You can call Quelchy, if you like," snorted Hazeldene. "If you call me a liar again I'll hammer you, Quelchy or no Quelchy!"

"But, dash it all, it's jolly queer, you know!" remarked Bolsover major. "You needn't glare at me, Hazel. I'll give you all the hammering you want, if you like. You can't punch me like Snoopey."

"What do you mean, you rotter?"

"I say, it's queer," said Bolsover. "You tell us somebody called you away on the telephone, and you stayed away all the afternoon looking for a street that doesn't exist. Well, if Wharton had sense enough to make me goalkeeper in the team, I shouldn't have stayed away. I know that. I can't understand why anybody should play a trick like that on you, either."

"That's what I say," said Snoop. "It's queer enough. Anybody could say that he'd been called away on the telephone."

"Two or three fellows heard Quelch call me to his study, to answer the telephone!" exclaimed Hazel fiercely.

"Oh, you had the call right enough!" said Skinner. "A pal might have called you up on the telephone."

"Quelchy wouldn't have let me talk to a pal on his telephone. You know that."

"Your pal might have used your pater's name," grinned Skinner. "That's a dodge I've used myself, when I wanted to use Quelchy's 'phone."

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"I dare say you have," said Hazel savagely. "You're mean enough to tell lies to Quelchy or anybody else."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Skinner tartly. "It's only a dodge. I shouldn't wonder if you cleared off for your own reasons, and pitched us this yarn. Keep off, you rotter!"

Skinner dodged behind the bulky form of Bolsover major.

"What utter rot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It seems to be you that's started this, Snoop. It's utterly rotten. If Hazel wanted to go out and see somebody, he would have said so."

"If he'd chucked the practice to go out playing the giddy ox, you'd have dropped him out of the team," said Snoop.

"Playing the giddy ox!" repeated Hazel. "What do you think I've been doing this afternoon, then, you worm?"

Snoop sneered.

"Well, I know you used to meet bookies, and the sporting chaps at the Cross Keys," he said.

Hazeldene flushed crimson. An old bad reputation was hard to live down.

"So you think I chucked up the footer for a reason like that, and told lies about it!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"Well, if you did it, you couldn't tell the truth about it, without being dropped out of the Form eleven," said Snoop.

Wharton caught Hazeldene by the shoulder as he was striding towards Snoop again. Hazeldene turned on him passionately.

"Do you believe that cad?" he exclaimed.

"No, I don't! I believe he's a slandering worm!" said Harry Wharton directly. "I am quite sure you wouldn't do anything of the kind, Hazel. Snoop can't help being a suspicious beast!"

"Thanks!" sneered Snoop. "I know that Hazel's been with me to meet Banks the bookie more than once last term, anyway."

"Bygones are bygones, and Hazel's done with all that. And if you had any decency, you'd have done with it, too. Let him alone, Hazel; his rotten insinuations aren't worth taking notice of."

Hazel's brow cleared a little.

"All right," he said. "But I'm not going to let him yarn like that about me. I know his reason jolly well. He's asked me often enough to keep up the old game. He can think what he likes, but he's not going to jaw like that about me."

"You'd better hold your tongue, Snoop," said Wharton curtly. "Nobody wants to hear insinuations of that sort!"

Snoop sneered, but he held his peace.

Hazel walked out of the common-room, frowning. Snoop did not need, in fact, to say any more. The suspicion had been started, and it was discussed by all the Remove. And there were a good many fellows who remarked that the telephone story was a little "thick."

When Wharton and Nugent went to their study to do their preparation, Frank Nugent looked curiously and inquiringly at his chum.

"I suppose there's nothing in it?" he said.

"I'm sure not." Wharton's brows were wrinkled. "Hazel promised me that he had chucked all that when I put him in the team."

"He's broken promises of that sort before."

"Ye-es, I know. But he promised Marjorie, too."

"I know. But he's as weak as water," said Nugent. "Any chap can lead him by the nose."

"We know he's been keeping clear of Ponsonby & Co.," said Harry. "He's quite off with those Highcliffe rotters. In fact, he's not on speaking terms with Ponsonby now. He jolly nearly got sacked over his last foolery with Ponsonby, and it fed him up, I think."

"That's so. I agree with you; only, one can't blame the fellows for not believing him. He keeps on reforming, and sliding back, and reforming again. It's a regular joke by this time."

Wharton nodded, frowning.

"Yes, I know. But I feel sure he's square this time. I've been keeping an eye on him, too. He's been going straight all this term."

"I've thought so, certainly."

"It looks to me as if Snoop has an axe to grind. He's taking up footer, and he'd like to keep goal for the Remove. Of course, if this were true about Hazel, he would be chucked out of the team. If he left us in the lurch to go out playing the giddy ox in his old style, I couldn't keep him on, though it would be a disappointment to Marjorie. Footer comes first. Snoop may be idiot enough to think that if Hazel were dropped he might get his place. Of course, he couldn't; it would be Bulstrode."

Nugent laughed.

"Not much chance for Snoopey," he said. "Bulstrode's next. And Bolsover and Ogilvy and Morgan are miles ahead of Snoop."

"But I believe Hazel's square. Anyway, I should want jolly conclusive proof against him before I rounded on him. And this is only tattle. I certainly shouldn't take any notice of it."

"Quite right!"

The chums of the Remove dismissed the matter from their minds, and settled down to their prep. But Wharton's brow remained a little wrinkled. Snoop's insinuations were dismissed from his mind; but they seemed to leave an unpleasant taste in his mouth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Loan for Bunter!

"HIGHCLIFFE cads!" said Johnny Bull, with a sniff.

Morning lessons were over the next day, and the Remove team were at practice on the football-ground, when Ponsonby & Co. sauntered in.

It was common enough for Courtenay and his friends to drop in at Greyfriars. But Ponsonby & Co. seldom came. They were still on the worst of terms with the Remove. The footballers paid them no heed.

Hazeldene was in goal, and he was in great form. There were few spectators on the field, in the bitter wind. But Snoop was there, and he joined the Highcliffians.

"Your men seem to be in pretty good form," Ponsonby remarked. "Hazeldene is toppin' in goal. Rather a change for him since last term. He won't let the ball pass him on Saturday, I fancy. Are you still of the same mind, Snoop?"

"Certainly," said Snoop. "Don't talk about it here, of course. The fellows would be ratty at a chap backing the enemy."

"Yaas, I understand that—same at Highcliffe. They wouldn't like us backing Greyfriars—though they won't back Highcliffe for love or money."

"Well, are you ready to lay your money?" asked Snoop.

"No hurry," said Ponsonby coolly. "I'm goin' to make a few inquiries first."

"Make all you like," said Snoop, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Ponsonby approached Wharton when the captain of the Remove came off the field. Wharton would have passed him without speaking, but the Highcliffe junior stopped him.

"You seem to be in great form to-day," Ponsonby remarked pleasantly.

"Same as usual," said Wharton shortly.

"Making any changes in the team for Saturday?"

"No," said Harry, in surprise.

"They're the men you're playing?"

"Yes."

"Then you look like beating Highcliffe?"

"We hope to."

"Looks to me like a dead cert," said Ponsonby. "Courtenay's team has bucked up a good bit, but they're nowhere near your form."

"Thanks!"

"Wouldn't be quite safe for a Highcliffe chap to back his own school this time—what?"

Wharton's lip curled.

"If you're looking for information because you want to make bets on the game, Ponsonby, you'd better apply to somebody else," he said abruptly, and, with the curtest of nods, he walked away.

Ponsonby smiled. He had obtained the information he wanted.

"Nice manners these Greyfriars chaps have, haven't they?" he drawled.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Looks like a dead cert for us," said Gadsby. "If Wharton plays that team, he will wipe the ground with Courtenay's lot. Snoop must be off his rocker to want to lay his money against them. We'd better nail him before he changes his mind."

"I can't help suspectin' there's a trick somewhere," said Ponsonby. "Snoop may be a fool; but I shouldn't have said he was so fatheaded as all that."

"But where can a trick come in?"

"That beats me," confessed Ponsonby.

The nuts strolled away towards the school shop. Outside that establishment a fat junior was blinking into the window through a big pair of glasses. Ponsonby tapped him on the shoulder in a very friendly way.

"Hallo, Bunter, old chap!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at him. Gadsby and Vavasour stared at their chum. Why Ponsonby was wasting politeness on Billy Bunter was a mystery to them. Bunter was surprised, too. Once, when Bunter was for a brief period in funds, he had been "old chap" to Cecil Ponsonby. But since he had returned to his usual state of impecuniosity, Ponsonby had ceased to be aware of his existence. Bunter was greatly flattered at being promoted once more to the rank of "old chap."

"Hallo, Pon!" he said cordially. "Just the fellow I wanted to see. I suppose you haven't five bob about you?"

"Certainly."

"The fact is," said Bunter, in a confidential tone, "I'm expecting a postal-order, and there's been some delay in the post."

Gadsby and Vavasour grinned. They knew all about Billy Bunter's celebrated postal-order, which was always just about to arrive, but never did arrive. But Cecil Ponsonby remained quite grave.

"That's hard cheese!" he remarked sympathetically.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I happen to be stony."

"Not really?"

"Yes, really."

"Why not write to one of your titled relations?" asked Ponsonby, gently pulling William George Bunter's fat leg. William George's leg could be pulled to any extent, without the fact dawning upon William George.

"I've done so," said Bunter. "That's the postal-order I'm expecting, as a matter of fact. But there's some delay. Lots of the postmen gone to the war, you know; I suppose that's it."

"Or perhaps the Germans have captured the General Post Office," remarked Gadsby.

"Oh, really, Gadsby—"

"Well, if a little loan would be of any use to you," remarked Ponsonby, jingling the money in his pocket.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his glasses.

"Of course, I'll let you have the postal-order immediately it comes," he said eagerly.

"Five bob, I think you said?"

"That's it."

"By the way, your footer team looks like winning on Saturday," Ponsonby remarked.

Bunter sniffed.

"Hardly!" he replied.

"You don't think so? Why not?"

"Wharton's left me out," explained Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gadsby and Vavasour.

"Left you out!" said Ponsonby, still quite gravely. "That's a mistake, of course. But, apart from that, they look like winning."

"Oh, yes; Highcliffe isn't much class at footer!" said Bunter. "Of course, they've picked up since they dropped you, Ponsonby—you don't mind me saying so? But they're hardly up to Greyfriars form."

"No changes in the team likely to take place on Saturday?"

"No fear. Wharton wouldn't be likely to leave Hazel out, if Snoop talked himself black in the face. He's Marjorie's brother, you know!" Bunter giggled.

Ponsonby started a little. He gave his comrades a quick look; and Gadsby and Vavasour understood then why he was talking so chummily to the chatterbox of the Remove. He was pumping Bunter for information.

"So there's been talk of leaving Hazeldene out?" he remarked.

"Oh, no! But I know jolly well that was Snoop's idea," said Bunter. "I know Snoop, you see. He didn't start that yarn about Hazel for nothing. Of course, I dare say it's true. I shouldn't wonder if Hazel went out on the razzle yesterday afternoon, just as Snoop says. I know he used to. And if he did, he would have to yarn about it, or Wharton would kick him out of the team like lightning. But Wharton doesn't believe a word of it."

"Oh!" said Ponsonby. The Highcliffe dandy felt that he was getting some information at last as to Snoop's real motives in offering to lay solid cash against a team that looked like winning easily. "So you think Snoop wanted to work it for Hazeldene to be dropped out?"

"It looks like it to me. He must have some reason for starting that yarn, I suppose," said Bunter. "Then Snoop's taken up footer, too—he was in goal in the practice yesterday. My belief is that he wanted to shift Hazel, and try to bag the place himself."

"Oh!" said Gadsby.

"Of course, he hasn't a dog's chance," said Bunter. "If Hazel were dropped, Bulstrode would keep goal, or Ogilvy, or Tom Brown—there's lots of fellows to take Hazel's place if he went. But Snoop was always a silly duffer."

"Snoop keep goal!" murmured Gadsby. "My only hat! With Snoop in goal for Greyfriars, and betting against his own team—my word!"

"What a lovely little game!" grinned Ponsonby. "But I know Wharton well enough to know that he'd play a kid in the Third Form rather than Snoop. I fancy everybody knows that Snoop can't play for nuts."

"That was his idea, I'll bet you," said Gadsby.

"Quite so; but it won't work."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, as the Highcliffians turned away—Ponsonby had finished with Bunter now—"I say, Pon, what about that little loan?"

"What little loan?" asked Ponsonby pleasantly.

"You were going to lend me five bob—on my postal-order, you know."

"Was I? This is the first I've heard of it."

"Why, you asked me if a little loan would be any use to me!" shouted Bunter.

"Yaas; I dare say I did," assented Ponsonby. "Would it?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, in that case, I advise you to look for some mug who'll make you a loan," said Ponsonby agreeably, and the three juniors walked away chuckling.

Billy Bunter blinked after them indignantly. He understood at last that the dandy of Highcliffe had been "pulling his leg."

"Beasts!" growled Bunter.

And he resumed his disconsolate sentry-go at the tuck-shop window.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. High Stakes!

"COME in!" said Snoop.

Snoop and Skinner were in the former's study, when a tap came at the door. Ponsonby & Co. came in.

"Made up your minds yet?" asked Snoop, with a sneering smile.

Ponsonby nodded.

"Yaas. We're takin' the bet."

"Skinner's going to hold the stakes," said Snoop. "I asked him here ready."

"I'm your man!" said Skinner. "What's the bet?"

"We're layin' two to one on Greyfriars for next Saturday," said Ponsonby.

"Quite safe to lay ten to one," chuckled Skinner. "Highcliffe hasn't a dog's chance. But you don't mean to say that Snoop is backing Highcliffe?"

"Yes," said Snoop.

Skinner stared at him blankly.

"You must be off your rocker," he exclaimed. "Highcliffe hasn't a look-in. You'll lose your money, you fathead."

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"That's Snoop's bizney," remarked Gadsby.

"But it's simply dotty," exclaimed Skinner. "Snoop, you ass—"

"Oh, cheese it," said Snoop. "You're going to hold the stakes. I think Courtenay's team have a good chance, and I'm backing it. Ponsonby offers the odds, and I'm taking them."

"Oh, I'll hold the stakes, if you like," said Skinner. "You might as well hand the money to Ponsonby now, and have done with it."

"You'll hand it to him if Greyfriars wins. You'll hand it to me if Highcliffe wins. And there's my money."

Sidney James Snoop produced the ten-pound note. Harold Skinner stared at it as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Ten pounds!" he ejaculated.

"That's my figure. Pon's got to put up twenty."

"My hat!"

"We've got the tin here," said Ponsonby. "Shell out, you fellows."

The chums of Highcliffe "shelled out." Skinner took the bank-notes like a fellow in a dream. He had often held stakes before for the young rascals, but never to such an amount as this.

"Better lock it up," said Gadsby.

"I'll lock it up in my desk at once," said Skinner, and he left the study.

"That's settled," said Ponsonby. "Ta-ta, Snoop. We'll be over here on Saturday to see the match, and we'll call for the money then."

"You'll get it if you win it," said Snoop.

"Oh, we shall win it right enough. You're not likely to get into the Greyfriars team as goalkeeper," said Ponsonby pleasantly.

And Gadsby and Vavasour laughed.

Snoop started.

"There's no talk of putting me in as goalkeeper," he said. "Of course, I should jump at the chance if I had it. But Hazel's keeping goal."

"In spite of certain yarns spread about him—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That doesn't make any difference," said Snoop. "Wharton wouldn't drop Hazeldene in a hurry. If he did, Bulstrode is reserve in his place. He's jolly nearly as good in goal as Hazel."

"He might not be available, perhaps."

"He wouldn't miss the chance for anything, if it came his way. But if he did, Wharton would play Tom Brown in goal, and put in another fellow at back. Tom Brown could beat anything that Highcliffe could do. We've got plenty of goalies in the Remove. I shouldn't have a dog's chance if I put up for it."

"Well, I know that's so," assented Ponsonby, "and that's why we've laid our money. But that's what was in your mind, all the same."

Snoop laughed.

"You're jolly suspicious," he said. "If I happened to keep goal for the Remove, I should play my very best, anyway."

"With money against the side?"

"Certainly."

"I don't think!" said Gadsby politely.

"It's because you haven't the slightest earthly chance of getting into the team, old chap, that we're betting on it," smiled Ponsonby. "Good-bye!"

The Highcliffians took their departure. Skinner came back into the study.

"Put the money safe?" asked Snoop.

"Yes, it's locked up." Skinner eyed his chum narrowly.

"Look here, Snoop, what does this mean?"

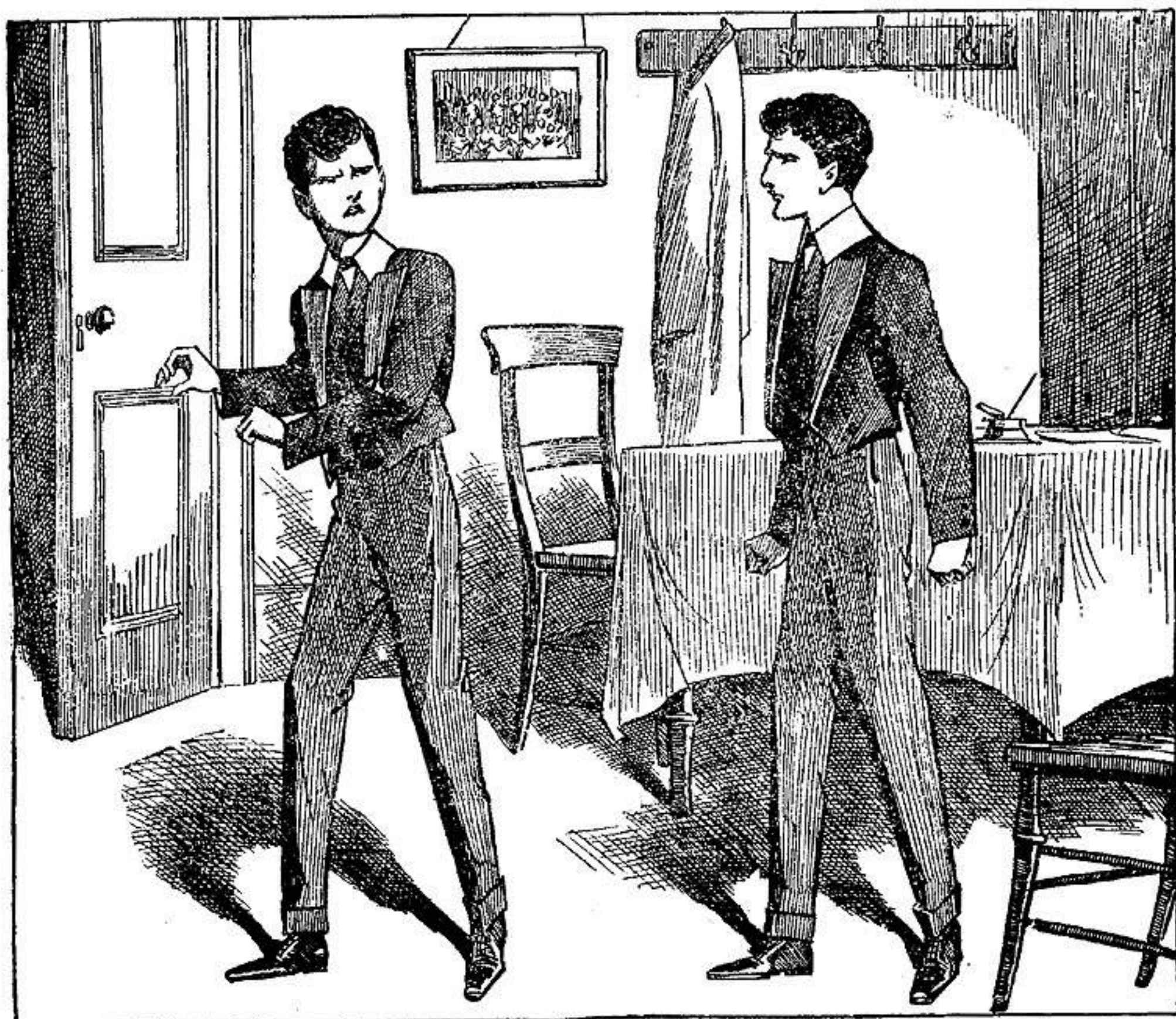
"It's a bet," said Snoop carelessly. "If I win, I'm standing you a sov. out of the stakes, Skinner, for your trouble."

"I'm on, of course," said Skinner. "But you won't win. You know it. You must know it. You can't be ass enough to think that Highcliffe will win."

Snoop laughed.

"Money talks!" he remarked.

"Ye-es, I suppose it does. I want to know what the game is," said Skinner. "I think I see light, too. I wondered why you started that yarn about Hazel. Were you dummy enough to think that Wharton would drop



Wharton sprang to his feet, his fists clenched, and his eyes gleaming. Snoop's nerve was not equal to his rascality, and he shrank back. "Keep your hands off me, Harry Wharton!" he said, between his teeth. "I swear that if you touch me, I'll go straight to Quelch with that photograph." (See Chapter 9.)

him, and born idiot enough to think that you might get the place, and let Highcliffe score?"

"I've had all that from Pon," yawned Snoop. "Chuck it, your goodness' sake. I think Highcliffe will win, and that's enough. Anyway, you stand to clear a sov. if I win, so you needn't worry."

"I don't think I shall ever get that sov., though. Highcliffe will be licked to the wide!"

Snoop shrugged his shoulders, and Skinner left the study, very much puzzled. When he had gone, Snoop sat down at the table, and took out his pocket-book. From the pocket-book he extracted a quarter-plate photograph, and sat looking at it for some minutes.

"I fancy that will work the oracle," he murmured. "Ponsonby is pretty keen, but not quite keen enough for me. It all depends on how Wharton takes it, but I think I've got him down pretty correctly. It's neck or nothing, anyway, and twenty quid is worth the risk. I fancy Hazeldene will be sorry for hammering me yesterday." Snoop's thin lips closed tightly and viciously. "Hang it, I wish it were all over. I haven't the nerve for a game like this—hang it! But—but it's a dead cert."

And Snoop repeated to himself several times, as if seeking to drive away lingering doubts in his own mind: "It's a dead cert—a dead cert! Wharton will toe the line, for Marjorie Hazeldene's sake, if I know anything of him. It's a dead cert!"

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

MR. QUELCH paused.

The Remove-master was coming down the Form-room passage, when a voice, proceeding from the deep alcove of the old window, fell upon his ears. It was the voice of Sidney James Snoop.

"Well, it's a fact! I know Hazeldene has got cigarettes in his study at this very minute."

"I don't believe it." This was Skinner's voice. "Do you mean to say you've seen them there—in Hazel's study?"

"I saw him bring the packet in."

"Well, it beats me. Wharton would be jolly down on him if he knew, with the Highcliffe match coming off the day after to-morrow. Is Hazel playing the giddy ox again as he used to, then?"

Mr. Quelch strode up to the alcove.

"Cave!" muttered Snoop.

The Form-master fixed his eyes upon the two juniors.

"I heard your words, Snoop," he said.

"I—I—" stammered Snoop.

"I could not fail to hear you, as you spoke in my hearing," said Mr. Quelch. "I am compelled to take notice of your statement, Snoop."

"I—I wasn't making any statement, sir. I—I was just speaking to Skinner."

"You have declared that Hazeldene, of your Form, has broken one of the strictest rules of the school," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I don't think that ought to be put on me, sir," said Snoop. "I didn't mean to sneak about anybody, sir—Hazeldene or anybody else."

"Quite so; but I am bound to investigate the matter. Are you sure that you were speaking correctly?"

"I—I don't know, sir. I wouldn't be certain, now I come to think of it."

"I trust you are not prevaricating, Snoop. I understand you desire not to sneak, as you call it, but you are bound to answer my questions truthfully."

Snoop was silent.

"However, I shall see for myself," added Mr. Quelch; and he rustled away, with a very grim brow.

Harold Skinner looked at Snoop with a curling lip. Skinner was not a particular fellow himself, but he had his limits.

"That was a dirty trick," he said bluntly.

"What was?" muttered Snoop. "I—I didn't know Quelch was coming along, of course."

"My belief is that you did, and you meant him to hear."

"Oh, rot! Why should I?"

"Because Hazeldene hammered you, I suppose. But it was rotten to give him away like that. 'Tain't playing the game."

"You're always so jolly particular about playing the game, ain't you?" sneered Snoop. "Don't talk rot to me. Hazel hammered me, and I can't stand up to him with my fists. If he will be a beastly bully, he can't expect a chap to take it smiling."

And Snoop walked away, whistling.

Mr. Quelch made his way directly to the Remove passage, and stopped at No. 2. He was frowning darkly. He tapped at the study door, and opened it. The three juniors who shared the study—Bulstrode, Tom Brown, and Hazeldene—were all there. They rose respectfully to their feet as the Form-master entered.

"I have come here to see Hazeldene," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Hazeldene, in wonder.

"Are there any cigarettes in this study?"

Hazeldene started, and Tom Brown shook his head. Bulstrode turned red.

"Not that I know of, sir," said Hazeldene uneasily.

Mr. Quelch's keen eyes were fixed upon him, and he noted at once the junior's uneasiness.

"Are you sure of that, Hazeldene?"

"I know I haven't any here, sir," said Hazeldene, more firmly.

"I have no reason to suppose that your study-mates have any," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "I am questioning you, Hazeldene."

"I have nothing of the kind, sir."

"You do not smoke?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever smoked?"

Hazeldene coloured.

"You caned me for smoking last term, sir," he said.

"Since then, no."

"Then it is not a habit of yours?"

"Certainly not!"

"I take your word, Hazeldene, but I must make quite certain. This is a serious matter. I could not help observing, Hazeldene, that you betrayed uneasiness when I addressed my question to you."

Hazeldene was silent.

"Kindly turn out your pockets," said the Form-master.

"Has somebody accused me of smoking, sir?"

"No. But I have heard a chance remark on the subject—a remark that was not intended for my ears, but which I am bound to take notice of. I must satisfy myself upon the point."

"Very well, sir," said Hazel.

Hazeldene turned out his pockets.

Nothing in the shape of cigarettes came to light. Bulstrode and Tom Brown looked on in silence.

"Is that your desk, Hazeldene?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Open it, please."

Hazel opened his desk; it was not locked. Mr. Quelch looked into it, and turned over some of the papers with his hands. The desk was somewhat untidy. Hazel's possessions were generally in an untidy state. The Form-master uttered a sudden exclamation.

"What is this?"

He held up a packet. It was open at one end, and a cigarette dropped from it as he held it up.

Hazeldene started violently.

"That! I—I don't know, sir. It—it looks like cigarettes."

"It is a packet of cigarettes!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"You ass, Hazel!" murmured Bulstrode, under his breath.

"You denied having cigarettes in your possession, Hazeldene. Yet I find them in your desk. Does anyone but yourself use this desk?"

"N-no, sir," stammered Hazel.

"Then they are yours?"

"They're not mine, sir. I—I haven't seen them before. I—I suppose somebody's put them into my desk for a lark," said Hazel desperately. "I'll swear, sir, that I never put them there. I don't smoke. Ask any of the fellows. Wharton knows. He wouldn't let me keep goal for the Remove if I smoked."

Mr. Quelch looked at him hard and long.

Hazel's face was flushed, his manner agitated.

"It is scarcely likely, Hazeldene, that any boy would have put these cigarettes into your desk for a joke," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "That is mere nonsense. I have reason to believe, too, that you were seen bringing them into this study."

"I didn't, sir. I've never seen that packet before."

"I should be sorry to think that a boy in my Form was capable of telling me a direct falsehood," said the Remove master, after a pause. "Hazeldene, I shall not punish you for this. I wish to avoid the possibility of a mistake. But you will bear in mind that I shall keep you under observation. If I find that you have deceived me, it will be the worse for you."

And Mr. Quelch quitted the study, taking the packet of cigarettes with him.

"Well, you duffer," said Tom Brown, "you ought to have known he was here to search, and you shouldn't have told that whopper, if for no other reason."

Hazel gave the New Zealand junior a fierce look.

"Do you think I was lying, then?" he exclaimed.

"Well, the cigarettes were there," said Tom.

"Somebody put them there."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bulstrode.

"Yours, most likely," said Hazeldene bitterly. "Goodness knows how they got in my desk. I dare say I shoved them in without noticing it, among some papers. That's why I felt floored when Quelch asked me if there were any in the study. I know you've got some in your desk."

"Jolly lucky he didn't look into mine," grinned Bulstrode. "Not that I'm a smoker either; I've chucked up that rot. But a chap likes a fag now and then."

"I don't smoke," said Hazel angrily. "I promised Wharton to chuck it when he gave me a place in the Form team. I promised Marjorie, too."

"You've promised a lot of things in your time," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "You're not famous for keeping promises, though."

"I've kept that one."

"It doesn't look like it."

Hazel's eyes flamed.

"If you call me a liar, you can put up your hands, you rotter!" he exclaimed, advancing upon Bulstrode.

"Shush!" said Bulstrode cheerily. "I'm not going to lick you; you know you couldn't stand up to me for three minutes. If you give me your word I'll take it."

"I do give you my word."

"Well, that settles it, then," said Bulstrode, with a smile. It was pretty evident that he doubted Hazel's word, all the same.

It was not easy for Hazel to live down his old reputation. He had reformed so often, and fallen again from

grace so often, that his reforms had become more or less of a standing joke among the fellows who knew him. The influence of his sister Marjorie was stronger than anything else in keeping him straight; but even Marjorie's influence failed sometimes. Yet it had to be admitted that Hazel's last reform seemed to be lasting. For a long time he had kept quite steady, and he had devoted himself to football in a way that earned high praise from every fellow in the Form who took an interest in the game.

"I don't want to make any capital out of this," went on Bulstrode. "As a matter of fact, I ought to be keeping goal on Saturday. If Wharton found you out he'd drop you like a hot brick, and I should play. Well, I'm not going to say a word to Wharton. Let's keep mum, all three of us. There's been enough talk about that affair of last Wednesday. If you say that some fellow has been playing a queer practical joke on you a second time, the fellows simply won't believe it."

"It's some cad who's got his knife into me, I suppose," said Hazel. "I don't see why it's being done. I've no enemy that I know of. Snoop and Skinner and Stott are rather down on me because I don't hang with them as I used to, that's all. It looks to me as if somebody is trying to drive me out of the footer."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bulstrode. "If you dropped out I should have your place. So you think I'm aiming at that?"

"I should think so if I thought you were mean enough," said Hazel. "But I know you wouldn't do anything of the kind."

"Well, nobody but myself has anything to gain by getting you into Wharton's black books."

"That's so. I can't understand it."

"If it's a trick, it will fall flat, anyway," said Tom Brown. "No need for a word to be said about Quelchy coming here at all."

Hazeldene gritted his teeth.

"I'm not going to keep it dark. I'm going to find out who planted those cigarettes in my desk. I thought at first they might be some of Bulstrode's rubbish, shifted into my desk by mistake. Now I come to think of it, I believe it's a trick, and by the same cad who telephoned to me the other day."

"Better say nothing."

"Rats! I'm going to have it out!"

Hazeldene strode from the study, and slammed the door after him. Bulstrode and the New Zealand junior looked curiously at one another.

"What do you make of that, Browney?"

Tom Brown shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know. It may be a trick. But it looks to me as if he thinks we shall talk, and he's going to brazen it out by making a fuss. I don't want to be hard on Hazel, but—well, we know he don't stick very close to the truth. If he does now, he's changed a lot."

Bulstrode grinned.

"My idea exactly."

Hazeldene strode directly down to No. 1 Study, and went in. Wharton and Nugent were there. They looked curiously at his flushed face.

"Somebody's been playing another trick on me," said Hazel.

"Hallo! What is it this time?"

"Quelchy's just found some cigarettes in my desk."

"Hazel!"

"I don't know how they got there. I never saw them before. I've kept the promise I made when I was put in the team," said Hazel fiercely. "I'm going to find the cad, and hammer him, or try to. I shouldn't be surprised if it was Snoop; it was he started a yarn about me on Wednesday."

"It's jolly odd," said Wharton.

"Don't you believe me?" shouted Hazel.

"Yes," said Harry, after a long pause. "I take your word. So far as I've been able to see, you've kept your promise."

"It's a trick to get me out of the footer, I believe," said Hazel.

"I can't see that. If we don't play you, we play Bulstrode. Bulstrode wouldn't play a mean trick like that."

"No, I know he wouldn't. I'm going to find out who it was, though!"

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ONE
PENNY.

Hazeldene proceeded to inquire up and down the Remove.

To his surprise and exasperation, his search was met with smiles and chuckles. The general opinion was that the cigarettes had been found in his desk because he kept them there. Nobody admitted that he knew anything about the matter, at all events. Hazel's old habits were well known, and he could not expect his reform to be implicitly believed in by fellows who had known him for two or three terms.

"For goodness' sake, draw it mild, Hazel!" said Bolsover major in the common-room. "There's no harm in a smoke now and then. I do it myself."

"But I don't!" said Hazel.

"Well, you did last term."

"Last term isn't this term!"

"No. This term Wharton's made you a fixture in the Form eleven, in the place of a better chap," said Bolsover major. "Cigarettes have to be kept awfully dark, or the Great Magnificent Wharton would come down heavy. Now you're a reformed character, you and Bulstrode do nearly all the goal-keeping between you for the Remove. If Wharton found you out, somebody else might get a chance."

"You, for instance!" growled Hazeldene.

"Me, for instance!" assented Bolsover major. "I can keep goal as well as you can, or Bulstrode either!"

"Does that mean that you planted those smokes in my desk, and sneaked to Quelchy?"

Bolsover major laughed.

"You can spin a yarn like that if you like," he said; "but you won't get many chaps to believe it, I fancy! Draw it mild!"

Hazeldene swung angrily away.

His search for the supposed practical joker was unavailing. The only result of it was a generally-fixed belief that he was keeping up his old bad habits in secret, and that it had come out. And as a consequence, more doubt than ever was cast on his story of the "spoof" telephone-call on Wednesday afternoon. Bolsover major was so firmly convinced on the point that he paid an immediate visit to No. 1 Study on the subject.

"Look here, Wharton!" he began, in his most aggressive tone. "You've said often enough that you won't have any gay dogs in the Form eleven. You've said that smoking spoils the wind, and mucks up a fellow's play, and you won't play smokers."

"Quite correct!" said Wharton calmly.

"Well, what about Hazel?"

"Certainly! What about him?" asked Wharton.

"It's come out that he smokes—as I jolly well knew he did all along, for that matter! It's pretty clear, too, that on Wednesday he cut the practice to go and meet some of his old bookie friends. Is that the sort of chap you want to keep goal for the Remove?"

"That's not the sort of chap," said Harry. "If Hazel were that sort of chap he would go out of the Remove team on his neck, while I'm skipper."

"Then you don't believe it?"

"No, I don't."

"Because he's Marjorie Hazeldene's brother, I suppose!" sneered Bolsover major. "You want to please Marjorie by keeping him in the team!"

Wharton rose to his feet, with a glitter in his eyes, and a flush on his cheeks.

"Will you go out of this study on your feet or on your neck, Bolsover?" he asked, very quietly.

Bolsover major decided to go upon his feet. He went, and slammed the door behind him with a resounding slam.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Talks Too Much!

HAZELDENE wheeled out his bicycle from the shed, with a shade on his brow. Bob Cherry was hurrying down to the shed.

"Starting for Cliff House?" he asked.

"Yes," said Hazel shortly. "I'm going to fetch Marjorie and Clara."

"Like a chap to come along with you?"

Hazel looked him in the face.

"Yes," he said. "If you don't believe those rotten yarns about me. If you do believe them, I don't want to speak to you, Bob Cherry. That's flat!"

"Flat enough," agreed Bob, good-humouredly. "As it happens, I don't believe a word of it, so there's no need to bite a fellow's head off!"

Hazel's brow cleared.

"Sorry!" he said. "It's getting on my nerves, that's all! Most of the fellows seem to believe that I've gone back on my word, and that I've been spoofing Wharton and the rest of you. And it's not pleasant."

Bob might have replied that Hazel's old record did not encourage fellows to put faith in him. But he did not.

"It'll blow over," he said. "Let the matter drop, and fellows will get tired of talking. Let's get off."

The two juniors rode away together for Cliff House School.

Meanwhile, there were considerable preparations going on in No. 1 Study. It was always an event of great importance when Marjorie and Clara came over to tea. Wharton and Nugent, Peter Todd and Hurree Singh, Squiff and Mark Linley were at work in the study, putting away books, and footer boots, and foils, and old books and papers, and generally giving the study a newly-swept and garnished appearance.

Billy Bunter looked in to offer a helping hand with the cooking. Bunter's postal-order had still failed to arrive, and Bunter scented a feed. He pointed out that Marjorie wouldn't care much for the tea if he wasn't present, a remark which caused him to depart hurriedly, assisted from behind by Wharton's boot. So Bunter's assistance was not available in the preparations.

But the feed was ready when Bob Cherry and Hazeldene returned with the girl-chums of Cliff House. Marjorie and Clara came in fresh and bright and smiling. Marjorie was very cheerful at tea. She was looking forward to seeing her brother play in the Highcliffe match. Hazel's waywardness had caused the kind-hearted girl many anxieties, but of late she had been relieved of uneasiness regarding him. It really seemed that the reckless junior was on the straight road at last, and was sticking to it. Hazel's last escapade had brought him within measurable distance of being expelled from Greyfriars, and the lesson seemed to be lasting.

It was quite a merry party in No. 1 Study.

There was a buzz of cheery voices in the study when the door opened, and a fat face looked in.

"Here we are again!" said Billy Bunter affably. "How do you do, Marjorie? Jolly glad to see you, Miss Clara! Sorry I'm late, you fellows! I had rather an important engagement."

The chums of the Remove glared at Bunter. Billy Bunter depended upon the presence of Marjorie and Clara to save him from being forcibly ejected.

"Make room for a chap, Bob, old man!" he said.

"Not so much of your 'Bob, old man'!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Pass the cake this way, Harry, dear boy!"

Wharton passed the cake, restraining his desire to hurl it. "Harry, dear boy!" from Bunter got on his nerves.

"You're looking fit, Hazel, old chap," remarked Bunter, as he started on the cake.

Hazeldene grunted.

"I really hope you won't crack up on Saturday," said Bunter. "If you do, I'm quite willing to take your place, so far as that goes. You fellows know how I keep goal."

"We do!" chuckled Squiff. "We does!"

"Well, I shall be in pretty good form," said Bunter.

"No cigarettes for me. He, he, he! Yow! Who's stamping on my foot? Bob Cherry, you ass——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"I wasn't going to talk about Hazel," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "I'm not the kind of chap to tell tales out of school, I suppose. I'm not going to say a word, Hazel. Rely on me."

"You can say what you like, you fat fool!" growled Hazel.

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"Oh, really, Hazel—yow-ow! Keep off my feet, you clumsy ass, Toddy!"

Marjorie's face had become very grave. Miss Clara looked steadily into her teacup.

Peter Todd rose to his feet, and took Bunter by the fat ear with a finger and thumb that closed like a vice.

"Yow-ow! Leggo, Toddy! Wharrer you at? I'm jolly well not going till I've had tea! I wasn't going to tell Marjorie about Hazel——"

The door closed on Toddy and Bunter.

There was an uncomfortable silence in the study. Miss Clara broke it.

"Jolly cold weather, isn't it?" she remarked.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry. "Jolly nearly freezing."

"Looks like snow, in fact," said Nugent.

"Oh, don't rot!" growled Hazeldene. "We may as well have this out. There's a yarn about me in the Remove, Marjorie, but it's all lies, that's all! Some cad planted smokes in my study, and Quelchy found them there. I knew nothing about it. It was a rotten trick!"

Marjorie nodded.

"I'm sure of that, Hazel," she said.

But the merry tea-party was no longer so merry. Billy Bunter's injudicious revelations had had the effect of a douche of cold water.

When Marjorie and Clara left, with Hazel and Bob as escort, the chums walked down to the gates with them. Wharton found an opportunity of speaking to Marjorie.

"Don't worry about what that fat duffer said in the study!" he muttered. "It's all serene! Hazel is as right as rain!"

Marjorie's eyes brightened.

"I think so!" she said. "I'm glad you think so, Harry! It is a shame that things should be said about him, when he's trying so hard to do his best!"

"It won't make any difference to him. You can depend upon that!"

The cyclists rode off, and Wharton and his chums returned to the School House. Harry Wharton was looking very thoughtful.

He believed in Hazel—at least, he was trying hard to believe in him. But he could not help remembering how often Hazel had promised amendment before, and how often he had been found wanting. He knew what a bitter blow it would be to Marjorie if the wayward junior fell back into the miserable blackguardism of his earlier days. Was Hazel true? It was a difficult question to answer, and though he was determined to believe in Hazel, he could not help admitting that it was more for Marjorie's sake than for Hazel's own.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Snoop Makes Terms!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP looked into No. 1 Study a little later. Harry Wharton was there, alone, writing a letter.

"Busy?" asked Snoop.

Wharton looked up.

"Not specially; I'm writing to my uncle. What is it?"

"I want to speak to you."

"If it's anything like your yarn about Hazel, you needn't take the trouble," said Harry; "I don't want to hear anything of that kind."

"It's rather important." Snoop came into the study and closed the door behind him. "You'd better hear me, I think."

"You can run on," said Harry, laying down his pen.

"I've just seen Bunter. It seems that the fat duffer put his foot in it, repeating to Marjorie what the fellows are saying about her brother."

"What you started about him, you mean," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

"I suppose Miss Hazeldene was rather hurt by it."

"She would have been if she'd believed anything of the kind," said Harry. "But she didn't."

"If it should come out that it was true, and that Hazel was a regular blackguard like he used to be, it would be rather painful for her."

"I suppose so. She's fond of Hazel," said Wharton, puzzled. "What are you driving at, Snoop? I suppose you're not thinking of carrying your yarns to Cliff House, are you?"

"I don't think it's quite fair to put it down as my yarn," said Snoop. "I only said what I thought. Skinner thinks the same, so does Stott, and a lot of the fellows: Bolsover major, too. Bolsover says that you only stand up for Hazel because of his sister."

"Bolsover had better repeat that to me, and I'll answer him quick enough. And I don't want to hear it second-hand from you, Snoop," said Wharton bluntly. "Look here, if you've anything to say to me, will you come to the point?"

"I'm coming to it. You've got Hazel in goal for the match on Saturday. Well, you know I'm not such a jolly bad goalkeeper. I want you to give me a chance for Saturday."

"You?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. Why not?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"There are a lot of reasons why not," he said. "No need to go into all of them—life's too short!"

"I played up pretty well on Wednesday."

"Better than anybody expected," assented Wharton; "and if you want to take up footer seriously, we'll give you all the help we can. You can rely on that. But you must be dotty to think you could be put into the Form team at a minute's notice. Hazel's goalkeeper, and he's quite satisfactory. You're not a patch on him."

"Suppose you found that he cut the practice yesterday to meet Banks, the bookmaker, and then came home and lied about it?"

"I've told you I don't want to hear your slanders, Snoop."

"Suppose I can prove it?"

"You can't."

"I can!" said Snoop quietly.

Wharton made an angry gesture.

"If you could prove that, Hazel wouldn't stay in the team, of course. I know a footer captain's duty, I suppose. But even so, Bulstrode would take his place. Bulstrode is as good as Hazel, and we play him as often as Hazel. And if Bulstrode wasn't available, Ogilvy comes next, and then Bolsover major. We're not hard up for goalkeepers."

"You mean that you wouldn't play me anyway?"

"Exactly."

Snoop drew a deep breath.

"Well, I want to play," he said.

"It's rather a new taste on your part," said Harry. "I'm willing to believe you. But I'm not likely to put you in over the heads of half a dozen fellows who can keep goal better than you can. If I made up a team on those lines, I shouldn't be football captain in the Remove for long. I should get the boot, and I should deserve it."

Wharton spoke as patiently as he could. He was utterly surprised. It seemed incredible that the slacker and waster of the Remove should suppose, for one moment, that he could be given a place in the team merely for the asking.

Snoop was silent for some moments. It was clear that he had something more to say; but, apparently, he found difficulty in saying it. Harry Wharton took up his pen again. He did not see that there was anything more to be said.

"I haven't finished yet," said Snoop. "Isn't it your duty, as footer captain, to hear about Hazel? He cut the practice to go and meet a bookie. He's quite as likely to do the same on Saturday, and leave you in the lurch over the match."

Wharton jabbed his pen savagely into the inkpot.

"If you've got proofs of what you say, I'm bound to hear them!" he exclaimed. "But I warn you that if you give me your tattle over again, without proof, I shall pitch you out of the study, Snoop! I'm fed-up with it!"

"Agreed!" said Snoop calmly. "If I don't prove what I say, you can pitch me out. I can't stand up to a fellow like you, and you can bully me, I suppose."

Wharton flushed angrily.

"I don't want to bully you, you know that. But I'm not going to hear a chap slandering a pal."

"If I prove what I say, is it slander?"

"Well, no. Trot out your precious proofs, if you've got any. You may as well bear in mind, all the same, that if Hazel goes, Bulstrode takes his place."

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ONE
PENNY.

"We'll come to that later. About Hazel now. On Wednesday afternoon, Hazel had a telephone-call, and went out on his bike. He came back with a yarn about being spoofed. Well, he may have gone to Redclyffe, to keep up appearances in case of inquiry—I don't know. But I know that he met Banks, the bookmaker, and had a long jaw with him, in his old style."

"And how do you know?"

"I saw them together in the spinney."

Wharton burst into a scornful laugh.

"And do you think I should take your word against Hazel's? And if you saw them, why didn't you say so before, instead of hinting and insinuating?"

"I don't expect you to take my word against Hazel's. Not that his word is worth much, for that matter. I borrowed Penfold's camera yesterday, to go out to take some snaps. When I saw those two together, I snapped them."

Wharton started.

"You photographed Hazel and Banks together?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"Because I hadn't developed the photograph or taken a print. I've done both this afternoon."

Wharton looked hard at the cad of the Remove.

"You've got a print of that snap?"

"Here it is."

"Hold on," said Wharton. "I don't trust you, Snoop. May as well have that out plain. I know you're up against Hazel because he's dropped out of your precious sporting set. I warn you that it's no good trying to spoof me with an old photograph. I know as well as you do that Hazel used to meet Banks last term. That's ancient history now."

"Last term the weather was a bit different from this term," said Snoop. "This photograph shows the spinney with a pile of snow—taken yesterday. I suppose you know that there wasn't snow in the spinney last term?"

"That's so," admitted Wharton.

Snoop laid the photographic print on the table. Wharton took it up, and examined it closely.

It represented the old spinney, half a mile from Greyfriars. The trees were bare and leafless, and among the trunks the snow was piled in drifts. There were two figures in the picture—one, a fat and beefy-looking man, with a cigar in his mouth, and a bowler hat tilted rakishly on his head, easily recognisable as Mr. Banks, the bookmaker; the other was Hazeldene of the Remove. The photograph was a little smudgy in places, but the two figures came out very distinctly.

Harry Wharton looked long and hard at the photograph. Snoop watched his face.

Wharton was not well up in photography, but he had heard of such things as "faked" photographs, and he examined the print very attentively. But it was evidently a winter scene—the clear branches and twigs of the frozen trees stood out against a steely sky, the snow was piled in drifts. That there had been no snow in the spinney the previous term, Wharton knew. And then there had been leaves on the trees, while in the picture the trees were stripped bare.

Indeed, the more closely he examined it, the more clearly he could see that the scene was a recent one. The wood-cutters had been at work in the spinney, and the clearance they had made was clearly shown—bare alleys in the trees, and piles of stripped trunks waiting removal. And Wharton knew that it was scarcely a week since the wood-cutters had started there.

The captain of the Remove was grimly silent.

He had believed in Hazel. But that photograph of the spinney had evidently been taken within the last few days.

And in the foreground of the picture the figures of Hazeldene and Mr. Banks came out very clearly.

It was Snoop who broke the silence.

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"Well?" he said.

Wharton laid down the print quietly.

"That's proof!" he said. "I admit it. Hazel lied!"

"You needn't look so shocked about it," said Snoop satirically. "He's lied to you before. He's lied to everybody he knows."

Wharton was silent.

It was true enough.

The wretched black sheep of the Remove, when his folly had plunged him into difficulties, had lied often enough. He had made promises and broken them. He had always intended to keep them, certainly. But after a certain period of reform, he had always fallen back again into the old ways, when the effect of his lesson had worn off.

It had happened once more, that was all. It had happened four or five times before. Now it had happened again.

It was really not surprising; it might have been expected, in fact. That nature was too weak and wayward to run straight for long. Hazel's intentions had been good enough; his intentions were always good. He had slipped back into his old ways; and, for very shame's sake, he had sought to deceive his friends on the subject. That was all that Wharton could think.

Hazel would have to leave the team; that could not be helped. But Wharton inwardly resolved that Marjorie should not know the reason. That bitter discovery should be kept from her, at all events.

"You're going to drop Hazel?" asked Snoop.

"He can't stay in the team after this, of course!" muttered Wharton. "He might play us the same trick again on Saturday."

"And you'll put me in?"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Wharton.

"You won't?"

"Of course I won't. I

think you must be mad to ask it. And the sooner you leave this study, the better I'll be pleased," growled Wharton. "You've proved this against Hazel. But it was a mean trick to spy on him and take that photograph, all the same. And I don't want to have anything to say to you."

"Very well," Snoop rose to his feet, and took up the photograph. "Miss Hazeldene will be interested in this."

Wharton started as if he had been stung.

"Do you mean to say you'd be utter cad enough to show that photograph to Miss Hazeldene?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—if you don't put me in the team on Saturday."

It was out now!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Upper Hand!

HARRY WHARTON stared blankly at Snoop.

It was some time before he could realise fully what the words of the cad of the Remove implied.

"You'll show that photograph to Miss Hazeldene, unless I put you in the Form team," Wharton repeated slowly.

"Yes."

"So that's your game?"

Sidney James Snoop nodded coolly.

"Yes, that's my game, Harry Wharton."

Wharton sprang to his feet, his fists clenched, and his eyes gleaming. Snoop's nerve was not equal to his rascality, and he shrank back.

"Keep your hands off me, Harry Wharton!" he said, between his teeth. "I swear that if you touch me I'll go straight to Quelch with that photograph!"

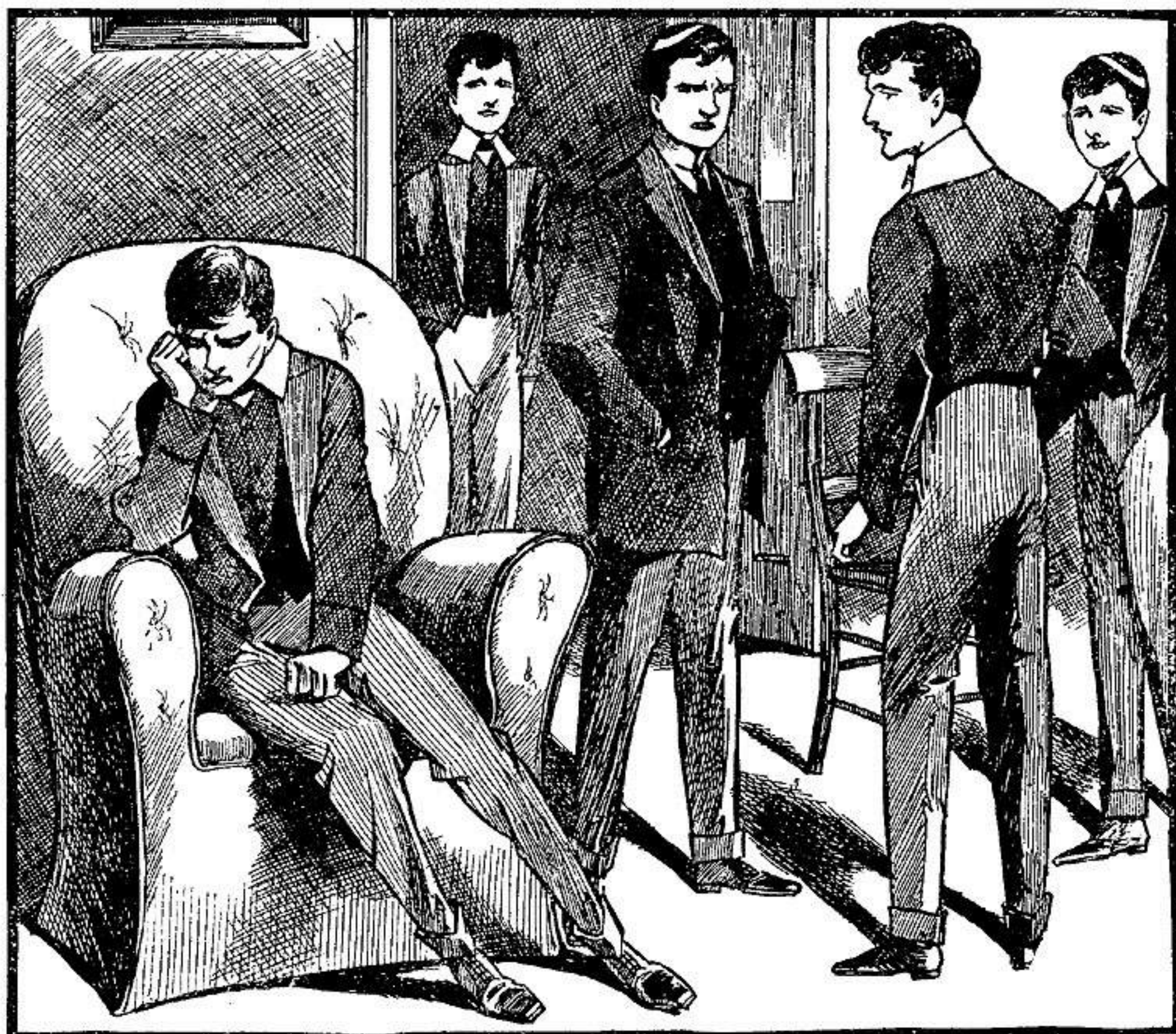
Wharton's arm fell to his side.

"You'd be cad enough for that?" he said.

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Snoop sank into a chair, pale as a sheet and trembling. Wharton gave him a glance of contempt. "Let the rotten cad alone," he said. "He isn't worth ragging. Send him to Coventry—that's the proper thing for him. He isn't fit to touch." (See Chapter 12.)

Snoop shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"I don't say I like doing this," he said, in a soft voice. "But I've got no choice. I want a place in the team. I'm willing to put in practice, and slog at the game as hard as you like. I shall do you credit on Saturday. It's not a hard match. I wouldn't ask for a place in the eleven to play St. Jim's or Rookwood. But it's only Highcliffe. You could beat Highcliffe with a second-rate goalkeeper. Your team is miles ahead of Courtenay's team, in any case. Even if I play a weak game, you're safe for a win. And I shall do my best. The Highcliffe team are a scratch lot; Courtenay's the only good man they've got. We shall beat them."

"And what's to prevent me from throwing this photograph into the fire, and you into the passage?" Wharton asked.

"Common sense," said Snoop coolly. "I can take as many prints as I like from the negative."

"And suppose I hammer you till you hand over the negative?" said Wharton, between his teeth.

"I'm prepared for that. The negative isn't in my hands now."

"Where is it?"

"I don't mind telling you," said Snoop, smiling. "It's in Mr. Quelch's study."

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"You—you've shown it to him already?"

"No fear! It's in an envelope, and I've asked him to mind it for me. He knows I had a tenner sent me to buy some things, and he thinks it's the tenner he's taking care of for me. He's locked the envelope in his desk. It depends on you whether I ask him to open it."

"You know that if Quelch saw that photograph it would be the sack for Hazel?"

"I know that, of course."

"You have dealings with Banks yourself."

Snoop laughed.

"I don't let myself be photographed talking to him, at all events," he said. "You can tell Quelch that yarn, if you like, and I shall deny it. You can't hurt me with Quelch."

"I know you'd roll out any number of lies that suited you," said Wharton contemptuously.

"Why not, after Hazel's example?" sneered Snoop. "As for Hazel, I don't care one way or the other. He's gone back on his old pals, and he hammered me yesterday. But, so far as I'm concerned, he can run on. Hazel's only a pawn in the game. It's because you don't want him to be sacked that I'm talking to you now."

"And why should I care?"

"Because you know what Miss Hazeldene would feel like if her brother were kicked out of Greyfriars in disgrace."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"You don't even want Miss Hazeldene to see that photograph," continued Snoop. "You'd give jolly nearly anything to keep it from her. You know that. Well, if it would hurt her so much to find out that Hazel has broken all his promises, and gone back to his boozy pals, how would she like him to be bundled neck and crop out of the school?"

"And you're cad enough to trade on that?"

"I've got to. You won't give me a chance in the footer unless I do. You've said yourself that I ought to take up footer, and that you'd help me. I'm only asking for a chance in a third-rate match. It isn't so very much."

Wharton regarded the cad of the Remove in wonder. Snoop's ambition was creditable enough, so far as that went. He wanted to take his place in the Form games, to take his place among more decent fellows on an equal footing. There was no fault to be found with his object; only with the base means by which he sought to accomplish it.

Harry was far from dreaming of the underlying motive. Of Snoop's big bet with Ponsonby & Co. he had not the slightest knowledge, or the faintest suspicion.

It was not likely to occur to his honourable mind that Snoop wanted to keep goal in the Highcliffe match with the deliberate intention of allowing the opposing side to score.

As matters stood, the Highcliffe side had a sporting chance; but that chance was very slim. But with Snoop in the Greyfriars goal, the match would be a "dead cert" for Highcliffe. Every shot at the net would be allowed to pass, and with the Remove goalkeeper playing their game for them, the Highcliffians would have to fumble very badly to lose.

But that, naturally, did not occur to Wharton at all. If he had suspected anything of the sort, Snoop's weedy person would not have been safe in his presence.

Wharton tried to think the matter out. Snoop's thin, vindictive face showed that he was in deadly earnest. Unless he was given a place in the team for the Highcliffe match, he would carry out his threat. That, at least, would gratify his long-standing animosity against Hazeldene.

What would happen then?

If Mr. Quelch's eyes once fell upon that photograph, he would take it to the Head. Hazel would be sent for and questioned. The whole miserable business would come out then. Not only the present escapade, but the past would come to light. More than once before, Hazel had evaded discovery only by the narrowest of chances. But a rigid inquiry by the Head would bring everything to light. There would be little doubt about that. And the present delinquency was more than sufficient to ruin Hazel. He would be expelled from Greyfriars.

Wharton had to admit that he deserved it. But that was not the chief point. The blow to Marjorie would be bitter. After all the anxieties her scapegrace brother had caused her, he had seemed to be going straight at last. And this blow would fall suddenly, like a bolt from the blue.

And it was his hand that would deal the blow.

He—and he alone—could save Hazel from the consequences of his conduct, and could ward off that bitter blow from the kind and affectionate girl.

It was in his hands—if he paid Snoop's price of blackmail. To submit to the dictation of the cad of the Remove was bitter enough, but his own feelings Wharton would cast aside without thought. But his duty as football captain was clear. Snoop had no right to the place he asked for in the team—there were half-a-dozen better fellows ready to take Hazel's place. What would the fellows say if he put Snoop in? What would they have a right to say?

The silence was long in No. 1 Study. It was broken at last by the opening of the door. Snoop hastily slipped the photograph into his pocket. Frank Nugent came in, and he glanced at the two in some surprise.

"Finished your letter, Harry?"

"My—my letter! No."

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"We've been talking footer," said Snoop calmly. "Wharton's thinking of giving me a chance in the team this week."

"Bosh!" said Nugent.

"Isn't it so, Wharton?"

Wharton's eyes gleamed. The time had come for his answer now, and it could not be delayed. He opened his lips to utter a fierce denial, but he closed them again. A vision was before his eyes—a wretched, shrinking junior shivering under the stern eyes of the Head, and a pale, stricken girlish face! After all, was Snoop's price so high that it could not be paid?

"I—I'm thinking of it, Frank," Wharton stammered at last, without meeting his chum's eyes. "Come down to the practice to-morrow, Snoop, and we'll see."

"Right-ho!" said Snoop.

He quitted the study. Nugent eyed his chum in blank wonder.

"You're thinking of playing that waster?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Frank."

"What on earth for?"

Wharton did not reply.

"And whose place is he going to take?" demanded Nugent warmly. "What decent chap is going to be booted out to make room for that waster?"

"Hazel's going out."

"My hat!"

"It's true about Hazel, Frank. Snoop's proved it."

"Oh!" said Nugent. "Has he? But even if Hazel goes, there's Bulstrode, or half-a-dozen more better than that mucker."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"I'd better tell you, Frank. But it's got to be kept dark. I wouldn't have Marjorie know for a dozen football matches."

He explained quietly.

"The rotten worm!" said Nugent, clenching his hands. "The unspeakable cad. And he's doing all that simply to get into the team for once?"

"Yes. Of course, I shall make him hand over the prints and the negative before the match, if he played; that's understood. But to make him do that, I shall have to give him my word to play him. What would you do, Frank?"

Nugent was silent for some moments.

"Well, it isn't risking the match," he said. "We shall beat Highcliffe anyway. It's hard on Bulstrode; he's keen to play. I think I'd ask Bulstrode privately to take a back seat—he's a good-natured chap—and—and play Snoop. But what an awful rotter!"

"I don't know what I ought to do. But—but you know what Marjorie would feel like if Hazel were sacked!"

"I know. Play the cad for once—it won't hurt us. We shall beat Highcliffe."

Wharton nodded.

The next morning, there was a slight change in the Remove football list, posted up on the school notice-board. A name had been crossed out—that of Hazeldene—and another written in its place—S. J. Snoop!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Change in the Team!

"SNOOP!"

"Rot!"

"I say, you fellows, this is rotten, you know. If Hazel's dropped, I ought to have the place, you know."

"But what's Hazel dropped for?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Hallo, here's Hazel. Seen the giddy news, Hazel?"

There was excitement in the Remove after lessons that Friday morning. A crowd of the juniors had gathered round the notice-board.

Hazel came up in some surprise as his name was called.

"What's the news?" he asked.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Look on the board."

Hazeldene looked on the board, and started violently.

"My name's taken out!"

"And Snoop's put in!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Now, I ask you fellows, can Snoop keep goal as well as I can?"

"Of course he can't!" said Skinner. "There's some mistake."

"Snoop! Snoop! Where's Snoop? Snoop, you fathead, what's your name doing on the football list?"

Snoop grinned.

"Wharton's giving me a chance," he said. "It's time, I should say. I don't often get a look-in, in the footer."

"You can't keep goal!" roared Bolsover major. "You—you can't keep white mice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to try," said Snoop. "Why shouldn't I have a chance? Besides, it's only Highcliffe. I don't say I could keep goal against St. Jim's, but I can beat anything that Highcliffe chaps can do."

"Something in that," said Rake. "But——"

"What about Bulstrode? Bulstrode's the man, if Hazel's out," said Ogilvy. "Does Bulstrode know?"

"Yes, he does," said Bulstrode, joining the excited group. "It's all right, so far as I'm concerned. Wharton consulted me."

"And you're willing to stand out to let that slacker in?"

"Well, Wharton said he'd like to give him a chance for this once, and that he had his reasons," said Bulstrode. "I think it's rot myself. But Wharton's skipper. He could do as he likes without asking me; and it was decent of him to ask me. I don't mind standing out."

"But I do!" shouted Bolsover.

"Well, you wouldn't be in anyway," said Snoop. "Bulstrode's standing back to give me a chance. It's Bulstrode's place."

"It's my place!" exclaimed Hazel fiercely. "What am I dropped for?"

"Well, you ought to know that best," grinned Snoop. "I dare say your captain will explain if you ask him."

"I'm going to ask him. I'm not going to stand this."

"It does seem rather rotten," said Ogilvy. "Fair play's a jewel. Hazel's a good goal, and he's stuck to the practice like glue—excepting Wednesday."

"Wednesday did it, perhaps," said Snoop.

"Wharton told me he didn't believe your lies, Snoop," said Hazel savagely. "It isn't that. I'm going to find out what it is. Where's Wharton?"

Harry Wharton & Co. had gone out into the quadrangle. Hazeldene, excited and angry, rushed out after them, and half the Remove rushed after him. The whole Form was surprised. Skinner remained behind with Snoop.

"How the merry thunder did you work that, Snoopey?" he asked.

"I didn't work it. Wharton offered me the place."

Skinner closed one eye significantly.

"How could I work it?" said Snoop.

"Blessed if I know. But you've worked it, and you knew yesterday that you could work it," said Skinner.

"That's the history of the giddy mystery. I thought you were barmy when you laid ten quid against the Remove with Ponsonby."

"Hush!"

"Oh, I'm not going to give you away," chuckled Skinner. "We're pals, ain't we? But my hat! Won't Ponsonby rage when he sees you between the posts?"

"Let him!"

"Oh, let him, by all means!" Skinner chortled. "Pon will be fairly done in the eye. Fancy dishing Pon like that—Pon, who prides himself on his cuteness. I'm not going to say a word, of course, but I think I ought to have two quid out of that twenty, Snoop."

"Done!" said Snoop. "If Highcliffe wins, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not much doubt about that now. But you'd better keep it fearfully dark. The fellows would lynch you if they knew."

"Of course, I shall play my very hardest!" said Snoop.

"Of course you will," chuckled Skinner. "I don't think!"

Skinner strolled out into the quadrangle, still chuckling. How on earth Snoop had "worked" it, he could not guess. But he felt a great admiration for his chum's astuteness. Skinner was a pretty thorough rascal himself, but he had to admit that Sidney James Snoop could give him points in that line, and beat him hollow.

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ONE
PENNY.

In the quadrangle Hazeldene had found the Famous Five, chatting under the elms. He strode up to them with a frowning brow and gleaming eyes.

"What does this mean, Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"The change in the team, do you mean?"

"You know I do."

"Yes, I know you do," assented Wharton quietly. "It means that you are left out, Hazel. You can see that for yourself, I suppose."

"And why?" demanded Hazel violently.

"You know the reason well enough. I haven't any desire to state it before a crowd of fellows."

"Let's have it out!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Hazel's a right to know."

"And I mean to know!" shouted Hazel. "If it's because of Snoop's slanders——"

"It isn't," said Harry.

"Then what's the reason?"

"The reason is, that you left us in the lurch on Wednesday, and you're as likely as not to do the same again on Saturday. The reason is that we don't want smokers and betting blackguards in the Form eleven."

Hazel staggered.

"So you believe that yarn?"

"Yes."

"You said yesterday that you didn't."

"I've had proof since then."

"Proof!" shouted Hazel. "I can prove that I was at Redclyffe. I telephoned home to my people from there. You can write to my father and ask. You can go to Redclyffe Post Office with me, and see if they don't recognise me as the chap who used the telephone on Wednesday."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You may have gone to Redclyffe, for all I know. But that wasn't why you cleared off. What's the good of talking; you know all about it."

"Yes, I know; you want an excuse for dropping me out of the team, and you're not decent enough to say so!" shouted Hazel. "You've got hold of this as a rotten excuse."

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"You know that's not true, Hazel."

"Well, what's the precious proof you're talking about? Let's have that out, and I'll knock it on the head."

"Dash it all, it's only fair to let Hazel know!" said Rake.

"Hazel know," said Wharton quietly. "If he wants it out in public he can have it, of course. He cut the practice on Wednesday to meet a bookmaker in Friardale spinney."

"It's a lie!" shouted Hazel.

"A fellow saw them together there," said Wharton.

"He's a liar, whoever he is!"

"And photographed them talking," said Harry.

"My hat!"

"It's a lie—it's a lie!" yelled Hazel. "Where's the photograph?"

Wharton felt in his pocket. He had asked Snoop for the photograph, in case Hazel should demand an explanation.

There was a buzz from the crowd of juniors as the photograph was held up. It was proof positive to all eyes.

Hazel stared at it, dumbfounded.

"It's a fake!" he gasped at last. "I—I wasn't there. Who took it?"

"Snoop!"

"Snoop, of course. It's part and parcel of his dodge to get my place in the team," said Hazel bitterly. "So that's why you've given him my place, because he's lied about me and slandered me."

"Never mind why I've given him the place. That's not your business. Does any fellow here doubt that Hazel was in the spinney on Wednesday?" asked Wharton, looking round.

"It's plain enough," said Bob Cherry. "For goodness' sake, chuck it, Hazel. It's no good piling on whoppers."

"It's a lie! Give me that photograph!"

Wharton handed over the photograph. He expected

Hazel to tear it up. But Hazel slipped it into his pocket.

"You'd better keep that dark," said Harry. "You know what it would mean for you if it were seen."

"Yes, I know," said Hazel, with a sneer. "I know more now than I did. I know who sent me that spoof telephone call on Wednesday, and I know who planted cigarettes in my desk, and sneaked to Quelch about it. Snoop all the time. He wanted my place in the team, and you've given it to him—a reward for lying, I suppose. Well, the matter's not going to rest here."

"You'd better let it rest," said Squiff. "Dash it all, you can't brazen it out, Hazel. And if there's too much jaw about it, it may get to somebody who would come down on you like a ton of coke."

"Where are you going?" exclaimed Wharton, as Hazeldene strode away fiercely towards the gates.

Hazel looked back for a moment.

"I'm going to the only friend I've got—one who won't be down on me because a rotter has told lies!" he exclaimed. "I don't know how Snoop has worked this, but it's a rotten trick. I can't make it out, but Marjorie may be able to, and I'm going to ask her. She's got more sense in her little finger than all you silly fools put together."

Hazel strode away. Wharton did not speak. Hazel was going to show the photograph to Marjorie himself. What did it mean? Was it possible that there was a doubt in the matter, after all? But the photograph was conclusive. Hazel had lied before, and this was only an attempt to brazen it out. But Marjorie would know now; that could not be helped.

"I wanted to keep it from her," muttered Wharton at last miserably.

Bob Cherry looked grim.

"It's rotten of Hazel to tell her. She may believe him, and think we've been rough on the rotter."

"She can't believe him."

Harry Wharton & Co. went down to the footer practice in a glum mood. Snoop joined them there. Snoop's name was on the list, but the place was not yet promised to him. But Snoop played a remarkably well, and Wharton was relieved when he noted it; it did not look as if the Remove side would be let down if Snoop kept goal against Highcliffe. Skinner looked on, chuckling. How ever well Snoop played up in practice, Skinner knew how he intended to play when the Highcliffe forwards were shooting for goal. But that was a dead secret.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie Takes a Hand!

HAZELDENE came in late for dinner, and Mr. Quelch spoke to him sharply as he took his place at the Remove table. Hazel was very quiet during the meal, and when it was over he went out by himself, avoiding Harry Wharton & Co. They were glad enough to be avoided. The discovery of Hazel's perfidy was a shock to them, and the less he had to say to them the better they were pleased. It was not pleasant to hear Marjorie's brother piling lie on lie, for that was the only way they could regard Hazel's passionate denials.

Snoop's inclusion in the Remove team was taken for granted now. It was agreed on all hands that Hazel ought to be left out; indeed, some of the fellows suggested sending him to Coventry. Bulstrode was the fellow most entitled to grumble at Snoop's good luck, and Bulstrode was taking it good-naturedly. He had been surprised when Wharton asked his consent, but he had agreed, though he stated plainly that he did not believe Snoop would be any good in goal.

Hazel received many curious glances during afternoon lessons, but he did not seem to note it. He appeared to be plunged in dejection. After lessons he "mooched" out in the dusky quadrangle by himself, without a word to anyone. The passionate anger he had shown at first had disappeared. Doubtless reflection had shown him that he had no right to complain if his word was not taken, considering the number of times his word had proved worthless. A deep despondency had taken the place of his angry resentment.

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Harry Wharton was in the common-room after lessons, when Trotter, the page, came to call him with the news that a visitor had come for him.

"In the visitors'-room, Master Wharton," added Trotter.

Wharton made his way to the visitors'-room in some surprise. He was not expecting a visitor. He started as he recognised Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Marjorie!" he exclaimed.

The girl coloured as she rose to meet him.

"You did not expect to see me, Harry?"

"We're always glad to see you, you know," said Harry, colouring, too. "I—I suppose—you know—" He broke off awkwardly. He knew that Marjorie must have come because of what Hazel had told her.

"Hazel came over to Cliff House to-day," said Marjorie quietly. "He told me all about it, Harry, and gave me the photograph. I have it here."

"I'm sorry, Marjorie. I intended you never to hear of it. We shouldn't have said a word," said Wharton, in distress.

"I know. But I am glad Hazel told me. He has denied that this is true, Harry." Her lip quivered a little. "You don't believe him?"

"I—I can't! There's proof, you see. I did believe in him. I've tried to. But—but he has done this before. It's only the old story over again. It was rotten of him to bring you into it!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Hazel told me, because he always tells me things," said Marjorie. "I'm the only one who really trusts him. I know he has many faults; I know he has done wrong before, and that you have helped to save him from the consequences. But this time I think he hasn't had justice."

"Marjorie!"

"I don't mean that you have been unjust, Harry; you couldn't think I meant that!" exclaimed the girl hurriedly. "I think you have been deceived. Hazel denies having seen that man Banks this term at all, and having been anywhere near the spinney on Wednesday. I believe him. He was afraid I should hear the story, and believe it; and so he told me at once. And—and he thought I might be able to help him—poor Hazel! He is upset, of course, at being thought so badly of, when he has been trying his hardest to do right."

"But—but—" Wharton hardly knew what to say. He would have given worlds to be able to tell Marjorie that he had faith in Hazel. But he could not.

"You believe this against him, Harry?"

"I've got no choice about that."

"That is why he is turned out of the eleven?"

"Yes."

"Yet you have put Snoop in. Wasn't Snoop one of Hazel's friends at—at that time, when Hazel was foolish and reckless?"

"Yes. He was worse than Hazel any time." Wharton paused. He had turned out Hazel to put in a worse fellow, on his own statement. What was Marjorie to think of that? "I—I can't quite explain, Marjorie. But—but I had to put Snoop in. I didn't want to, really."

Marjorie's clear eyes looked at him steadily.

"Of course, it isn't for me to give any opinion about your football matters," she said, with a faint smile. "I know you won't think me interfering, Harry. If you had been led into doing Hazel an injustice, you would be only too glad to set it right."

"Of course. But—"

"Then you will listen to me patiently?"

"Of course I will, Marjorie," said Harry, a little reproachfully. "This has hurt us as well as you. I took Hazel's part at once when the story was started. But after proof was given, there was only one thing to do."

"Will you tell me why you put Snoop in the team?"

Wharton moved uneasily.

"Hazel thinks Snoop has plotted somehow to get his place. Doesn't it really look a little like it, Harry? Everything against Hazel depends on Snoop; nobody else has had anything to say."

"But there's the photograph," said Wharton.

"Won't you tell me what I asked you, Harry?"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"I didn't want to tell you a word about it, Marjorie."

But Hazel's done that; you may as well know the rest. Snoop claimed Hazel's place in the team—to keep silent. Otherwise, that photograph would have been shown to our Form-master. Hazel would have been sacked."

"Harry, you—you did this to save Hazel, then?"

"Yes."

"I might have known that your motive was kind and good," said Marjorie softly. "Hazel did not know that."

"He might have guessed," said Harry. "He knows Snoop better than I do."

"But Snoop must be very wicked to make such terms, Harry."

"He's a thumping rascal!"

"If he is wicked enough for that, isn't he wicked enough to trump up this story against Hazel?"

"Do you think I haven't thought of that, Marjorie? I wouldn't take Snoop's word against a German. He proved it with the photograph."

"If my brother was not in the spinney on Wednesday, the photograph can't be genuine, Harry."

"But it is genuine, Marjorie, and so Hazel was there."

"I believe him. I know"—Marjorie crimsoned—"I know Hazel has not always been truthful. But this time— Oh, I know—I know he is telling the truth, Harry!"

Wharton was silent. He had not expected even Marjorie's loyalty to her brother to go to this length. She believed him yet. What could Wharton say?

"It all depends, then, on whether this photograph is genuine," said the girl, after a pause.

"Yes," Wharton smiled slightly. "That's so."

"I don't know much about photographing," said Marjorie. "Do you?"

"A little. I can take and develop them, that's all. But—but I could tell a faked photograph, Marjorie. That isn't faked. I thought Snoop might be dodging with an old photo. But you can see that that picture of the spinney was taken within the last few days."

"Yes—yes; yet I am sure it is not genuine, for it cannot be genuine if Hazel is telling the truth."

Wharton had no reply to make to that.

"There is a boy in the Remove who is very clever with photographs," said Marjorie—"Penfold. He might be able to tell us."

"I don't think there's anything to tell, Marjorie. But I'll call Penfold, if you like. It was his camera Snoop used for this picture."

"Call him, if you don't mind."

Wharton nodded, and went out. He returned in a few minutes with Dick Penfold. The scholarship junior greeted Marjorie very cordially.

"Anything I can do, Miss Hazeldene?"

"Can you tell me whether this photograph is genuine?" asked Marjorie.

"It looks all right."

"But examine it."

Penfold took the print, and went to the window with it. He was feeling decidedly ill at ease. He understood what Marjorie wanted him to say, and he did not like to disappoint her hopes. But he could only tell the facts.

He made a close examination of the print in the light. He had seen the photograph before, when it was shown in the quadrangle, but had only had a passing glance at it. Now he examined it minutely, in every detail.

Marjorie watched him with tense eyes. She believed that the photograph was somehow "faked." Wharton did not believe anything of the kind; he had gone into that. He could not reproach himself with any excessive faith in Sidney James Snoop.

Penfold uttered a sudden, startled exclamation.

"My only hat!"

Marjorie caught her breath.

"Pen! What is it?"

"Oh, the clever beast!" ejaculated Penfold.

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Harry.

"What do you mean?"

Penfold's reply consisted of only one word: "Faked!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Foiled at the Finish!

"**F**AKED!"

Wharton almost shouted the word.

Marjorie gave a little cry.

"I was sure of it!"

"Faked!" repeated Wharton. "Pen, it can't be! I

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ONE
PENNY.

tell you, I've examined it. How the dickens can you say it's faked?"

"I didn't see it at first," said Pen quietly. "It's done very cleverly. Snoop's had a lot of practice, I should say. I knew he was pretty good; he's used my camera a lot. He was in the dark-room a long time yesterday. I thought at the time he was taking lots of trouble developing. This is what he was at. He had my camera again yesterday, too. Oh, the clever rotter!"

"That's all very well," said Harry. "But it's got to be made clear, Pen. If you're right, I'm jolly glad. But—"

"Oh, I can prove it easily enough!" said Pen, with a smile. "Any good photographer could spot it. You believed that this was taken on Wednesday in the spinney."

"It was taken within the last few days in the spinney, anyway," said Harry. "It was taken since the wood-cutters were at work there."

"True!"

"Well, doesn't that settle it?" exclaimed Wharton warmly.

"Not at all. This is a picture of the spinney taken lately, quite correct. But the figures in the picture were not taken the same day."

"What!" shouted Wharton.

"The two figures—Banks and Hazel—have been taken from another photograph," said Pen. "Or, I should say, from two different photographs. This picture is a compound of three different negatives."

"Great Scott!"

"There's a lot of tricks in photography," said Pen. "A chap who really knows the game can work it. For instance, you see comic photos sometimes, of a man with a donkey's head, or a donkey with a man's head. It's a dodge of combining two negatives, and taking a fresh photograph from them. Snoop took the spinney all right; he's used that as a background. It was easy enough for him to get a snap of Hazel, and another snap of Banks. Well, he's worked them together, photographing them over and over again till he got the right effect. There's lots of ways of working that. I could produce a photograph of you with Miss Hazeldene's head on your shoulders, with a couple of negatives to work with."

"Could you, by Jove!"

"Quite easily," said Pen.

"But—but that's all very well," said Wharton. "But it's a question of proof, you know, Pen."

"The proof's here, in the photograph, if you examine it closely."

"I've done that."

"Do it again, then. You, too, Miss Marjorie. Look where the light falls on Banks' shoulders. Got that?"

"Yes," said Marjorie breathlessly, while Wharton nodded.

"Then look at this shadow in the trees. Banks had the light on his right when his picture was taken. But under the tree there the shadow falls to the right."

"Then—then the light was on the left where that shadow fell," said Harry.

"Exactly. Light can't fall from two different directions at once. Then look at the picture of poor old Hazel. He's standing in a line with that tree with the patch of shadow—see?"

"Yes, yes."

"Yet he casts no shadow."

"Oh!"

"If Hazel and the tree were taken at the same time, in the same light, Hazel would cast a shadow as well as the tree."

"Oh, of course he would," stammered Wharton. "I was an idiot not to see it. But that bit of shadow is so small among the trees—"

"Quite so. I didn't spot it at first," said Pen. "If the rotter hadn't been awfully careful there would be bigger things than that to notice. But he's done the work jolly well. If Miss Hazeldene hadn't made me examine it so closely I should never have noticed anything. But now you see it, it's clear enough. The photograph is faked from beginning to end."

Wharton drew a deep, deep breath.

He could hardly blame himself for having been deceived. He had suspected that Snoop might attempt to "spoof" him with an old photograph. But that trick of combining results from several negatives had never entered his mind. Even now it was difficult to believe that Snoop could have been skilful enough, and base enough, to play such a cunning trick. But there was the proof in his hand.

But for Marjorie's strong faith in her brother, the wrong would have been done, and Hazel, perhaps, driven back into his old bad courses in his misery and discouragement.

Marjorie's eyes were dancing. Her faith in Hazel had been vindicated. She had saved him.

"Harry, you believe Hazel now?"

"Of course," said Wharton. "It was jolly lucky Hazel told you, after all, Marjorie. Jolly lucky you thought of asking Pen. Pen, old chap, I don't know how to tell you how much obliged I am."

"I'm jolly glad to bowl the cad out," said Pen. "It was a dirty trick. He's made all the fellows down on Hazel for this."

"They'll know the truth soon," said Harry. "Thanks awfully, old fellow."

And Marjorie pressed Pen's hand, and thanked him, too, with tears in her eyes. Pen quitted the room, greatly elated.

"I'm awfully sorry, Marjorie," said Wharton, colouring. "I—I was taken in. But so were all the fellows who saw the photograph—even Pen at first."

"You can't be blamed, Harry. It's Hazel's fault you hadn't more faith in him, I suppose. If it had been Cherry or Nugent——"

"Well, that would have been different; but Hazel, you see—— But I'm sorry—more sorry than I can say. I'll set it right, anyway. As for Snoop——" Wharton's brow darkened, and a glitter came into his eyes that boded ill for the cad of the Remove.

Marjorie laid a hand timidly on his arm.

"Don't, Harry! Snoop has been very wicked, but—but now you know the truth, don't punish him. He will be punished enough, I should think, when this comes out. He will be despised."

"But the rotter ought to be hammered black and blue!" exclaimed Wharton. "Why, he was threatening to show this to Quelch, and get Hazel sacked——"

"But don't do what you are thinking of, Harry. Not—not that I want to give you advice."

"I'll do anything you say, Marjorie—anything you like, after being such an ass," said Harry. "Never mind Snoop. But don't worry about poor old Hazel any more; it's all right now."

"Then I will go," said Marjorie, with a bright smile.

"No, don't come with me; go and tell Hazel about it."

"Very well."

When Marjorie Hazeldene was gone, Harry Wharton returned to the common-room, the photograph in his hand, and his brows knitted. His expression drew a good many eyes upon him as he entered.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Wherefore this lofty frown, O king?"

"Hazel!"

Hazeldene looked round sullenly from the fire.

"What do you want, confound you?"

"I beg your pardon, Hazel."

"What!"

"You're in the team on Saturday, if you choose. I ask your pardon. I've been taken in by a rotten swindler, and I've found out the truth."

There was a buzz of amazement in the common-room. Hazel started to his feet, his face flushing and paling in turns.

"Don't go, Snoop!" rapped out Wharton. The cad of the Remove was sidling to the door. "Stop him!"

Bob Cherry stopped Sidney James fast enough. He grabbed him by the collar, and jerked him bodily into the middle of the room.

"Look here, what's this yarn you're spinning us?" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Are you taking Hazel up again? Well, I object to Hazel in the Form team."

"You can go and eat coke!" said Wharton. "It isn't your business. Look at this photograph, you fellows."

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Snoop says he took it on Wednesday afternoon, having spotted Hazel and Banks together in the spinney. Well, he didn't do anything of the sort."

"I did!" panted Snoop.

"It's faked," went on Wharton. "Pen will tell you. Tell them, Pen."

"Faked!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes, faked, and Pen can prove it!"

"It's a lie!" yelled Snoop furiously. "Let me go, Bob Cherry, you hound!"

"Not just yet," said Bob, tightening his grip on Snoop's collar. "Go it, Pen. Tell us all about it."

Pen came forward. The Removites surrounded him in an eager crowd as he explained, and pointed out the details in the photograph which proved his assertion beyond all possible doubt.

Snoop's face was deadly pale.

His house of cards was tumbling down about his ears; his carefully-laid scheme was going wrong at the last moment, when success was fairly within his grasp, as carefully-laid schemes often do.

He had not had a single lingering doubt in his mind. Wharton had been deceived by the faked photograph; the whole Form had seen it, and had been deceived, too. How had it come to light at the last moment like this?

The glances of scorn and contempt, the bitter words, on all sides, did not touch Snoop very closely. The scorn of his Form-fellows was not his heaviest punishment. He was thinking of the Highcliffe match on the morrow, when he would not, after all, keep goal for the Remove, when he would not be able to let down the side as he had planned!

His money—all he had—was staked on the game—on Highcliffe. And Highcliffe would be hopelessly beaten!

Snoop groaned aloud as he realised it. He had calculated upon influencing Wharton, through his regard for Marjorie; and he had been right—in that he had succeeded. There had been no flaw in his scheme.

Yet it had fallen to pieces on the eve of complete success!

"Well, of all the miserable curs!" said Squiff, in measured tones. "Snoop, you ought to be suffocated! What did you do it for?"

"To get Hazel's place in the team, of course," snorted Bolsover major. "But Wharton shouldn't have given him the place, all the same."

"I'll tell you now why I did it," said Harry. "Snoop threatened to take this photograph to Quelch. I did it to save Hazel."

"To—to save me!" stammered Hazel.

"Blackmail!" said Squiff. "Snoop's improving. The best thing we can do is to take this to Quelch, and let him know. A worm like that ought to be kicked out of the school!"

Snoop's teeth chattered.

"I—I—I"—he licked his dry lips—"I—I'm sorry! I—I never meant—I—I——"

His voice died away.

"Give him a Form ragging, at all events," said Bolsover major. "We shall all know what to think of him after this. So it was Snoop telephoned to Hazel, to get him out of the school, so that he could play this trick with a faked photograph."

"And Snoop put the cigarettes in his desk—to get Hazel under suspicion, so that we should swallow this more easily," said Nugent. "The precious villain!"

"Rag him!"

Snoop sank into a chair, pale as a sheet, and trembling. Wharton gave him a glance of contempt.

"Let the rotten cad alone," he said. "He isn't worth ragging. Send him to Coventry; that's the proper thing for him. He isn't fit to touch!"

Snoop staggered from the room, followed by scornful hisses. Hazeldene was surrounded by his friends, congratulating him, and asking his pardon. Hazel's face was very bright.

"It's all serene," he said. "I was a bit knocked over, but—but I don't bear any malice. You were taken in, and it's my own fault. Snoop couldn't have spun that yarn about me if I hadn't been a silly ass last term! But thank goodness it's come out! I'd like to know how you spotted it, Wharton."

"I didn't spot it, I'm sorry to say," said Harry. "It was Marjorie. But for her I shouldn't have found it out."

"Three cheers for Marjorie!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Who says women oughtn't to have votes now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On the ball!"

There was a crowd round the Remove ground on the following afternoon, to watch the Highcliffe match.

Hazeldene was in the Remove goal, looking his very best. All the team were in great form. Nearly all the Remove were looking on, and Marjorie and Miss Clara had come over from Cliff House. The match was in progress when Ponsonby and Gadsby and Vavasour strolled in. They joined Snoop, who was looking on with a pale face and wretched eyes, hoping against hope, as it were, that by some freak of fortune Greyfriars might yet lose the match.

Snoop was standing by himself; no one in the Remove cared to be near him. He was "in Coventry." Ponsonby tapped him genially on the shoulder.

"How's the game so far, Snoopey?"

Snoop did not reply; he could not. The game was two up for the Remove so far. Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar were playing a great game, but the rest of the team were nowhere up to the Remove form. Shots at goal there were in plenty, but Hazeldene was all there. Had Snoop been in goal, certainly, half a dozen of those shots would have landed in the net. But Hazel did not let a single one pass him. Never had he been in such form!

At half-time, the Remove were still two up to nil. In the second half, Courtenay and his team played harder than ever. A shot from Courtenay beat Hazel at last. But it was the only time Highcliffe got through.

Another goal from Wharton's foot was added to the Greyfriars score. When the whistle went, the Remove finished three to one.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Better luck next time, old fellow," said Wharton, as he came off the field with Courtenay, and Courtenay nodded and smiled.

Ponsonby tapped Snoop on the shoulder.

"Settlin' time," he remarked.

Snoop gave him a ghastly look, and went unsteadily away. Ponsonby & Co. joined Skinner, and went with him to his study. There Snoop's tenner was handed over, and the nuts of Highcliffe departed in great satisfaction.

"Blessed if I quite catch on to Snoop's game," Ponsonby remarked, as they sauntered homeward. "I fancy he had some scheme of gettin' in as goalkeeper, you know, and lettin' Courtenay win. But he must have been a duffer to think of a game like that. He hadn't any chance."

Ponsonby did not guess how great a chance Snoop had had, and how near he had come to "bagging" the Highcliffe stakes. But a miss was as good as a mile, and Ponsonby & Co. walked home in great spirits.

The Remove had won; and Hazel, in goal, had contributed very materially to the victory. He was congratulated on all sides. There was rejoicing in the Remove, and high jinks in the Remove passage, after the match, and quite a celebration in No. 1 Study. And none of the merry juniors had a thought to waste upon the miserable schemer who sat alone in his study, alone with dark and miserable thoughts—the schemer who had failed so utterly after having held, for a brief time, the upper hand.

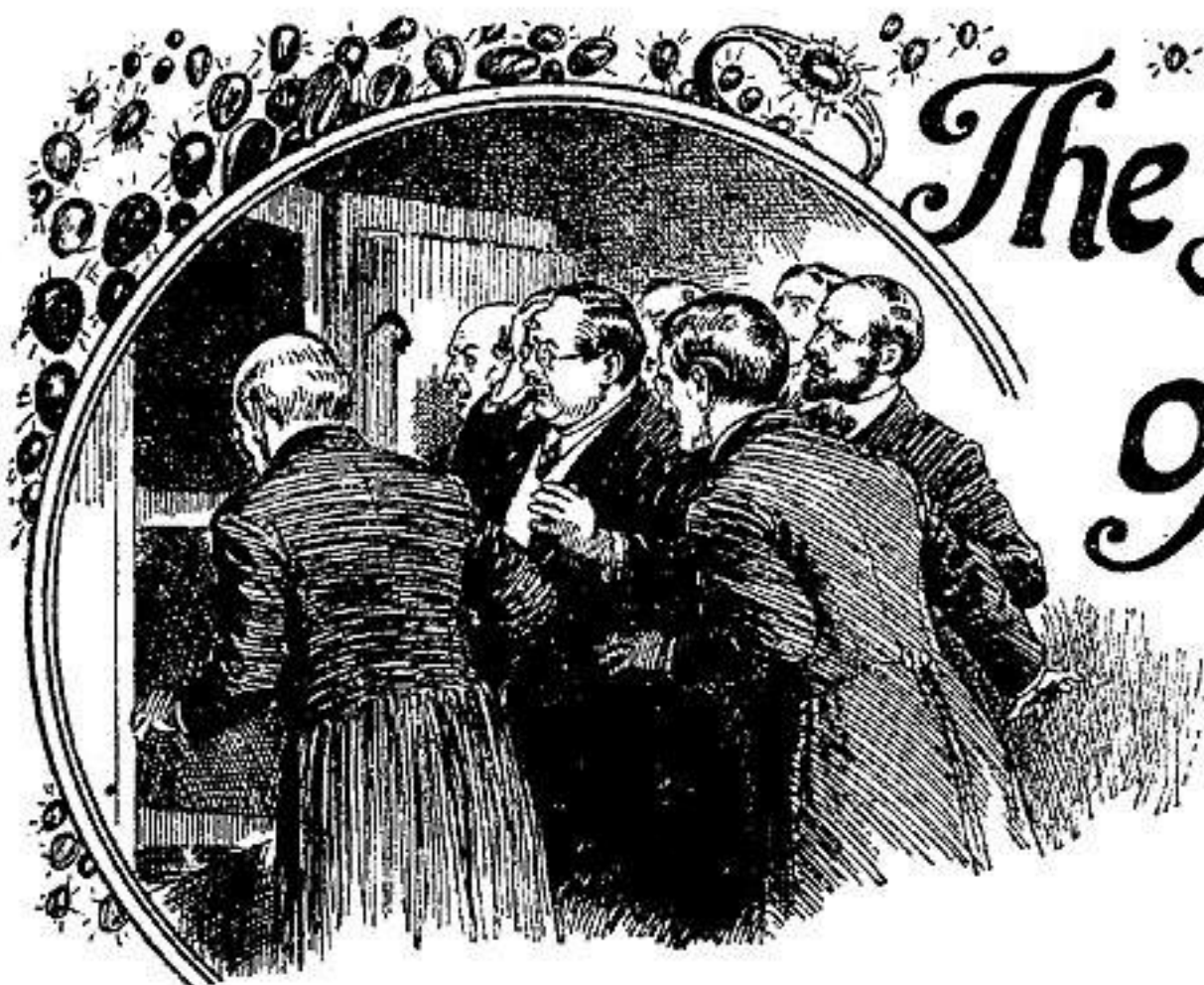
THE END.

(Do not miss "THE SCHOOLBOY SPECULATOR," next week's grand story of the chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)



TEDDY BAXTER.

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The Rubies of Sheba.

- - By - -

EDWIN WOOTON

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF A GREAT NEW SERIAL STORY OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

MR. DELAVILLE, formerly chief cashier at the GREAT SOUTHERN BANK, is under suspicion owing to the fact that the RUBIES OF SHEBA, gems of immense value, which were placed in the bank's keeping, are missing.

TOM HERWARD, a junior clerk at the bank—to whom, with his sister Dora, Delaville is acting as guardian—determines to sift the matter out to save his guardian from disgrace.

He discovers that PETER SULLOWBY, previously employed as porter at the bank, really stole the gems; but Sullowby, after a confession of his crime, is afflicted with paralysis, and loses his power of speech.

The rubies cannot be found, and it is discovered that they have again been stolen by a man named Mr. Bare, who hides them in a house which he intends to purchase.

Having tracked down Bare, Tom accompanies him to the house to recover the gems. They find the dead body of Mr. Forbes, a builder's foreman, but the jewels are again missing.

Mr. Bare is then set by Tom to watch the neighbourhood, and one night he detects Mr. Scathel, a builder's clerk, coming down the stairs of a partially-constructed house with the box of rubies.

Mr. Scathel drops one of the rubies, and strikes a match to look for it.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Zeppelin Raid and Its Result.

Scathel held the burning match close to the stairs, moving it here and there, until suddenly he extended his free hand, and picked up a small glittering object. This was on the landing. Then the match burnt his finger, and he threw it down, but in the moment of doing so his eyes, by its passing light, fell upon Bare.

"Ah!"

With this involuntary cry, Scathel sprang to the head of the lower stairs. The other, alert for any movement, was upon him. The clerk staggered back, dragged by Bare's arms.

"Now, what's the little game, matey?"

Bare had his prisoner against the wall, thrust there anyhow, as a child might be thrust.

"You move, an' I'll choke you!" the workman continued. "Where's them stones?"

"You!"

Scathel uttered the solitary word, then gripped his captor's arms, forced them up and their owner back. Bare staggered, and staggered yet again. Now, having wrenched his arms free, he grasped Scathel round the waist, but in the next instant he was stumbling forward, then stumbling backward, until the wall gave Scathel a support.

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Hither and thither they rolled, half falling, yet never quite down, and neither of them daring to let go his hold. It was the strength of the ox pitted against that of the boar. The one irresistible, and the other turning its enemy's mighty pulls and heaves against itself.

By pure accident, but as if intentionally, they came against the balustrade. It cracked, yielded, snapped, and the two were rolling over in their descent to the passage of the ground floor.

A flying figure passed down the stairway, the light of a constable's lantern flashed momentarily upon the dark mass on the passage floor, and at that instant there came a noise resembling the report of a gun, but louder, a crashing down of slates and plaster, and from above there shot up a flame lofty as a church spire.

"Merciful heavens!"

The cry came from the policeman, he who had followed Scathel and been spying on his movements. Now he tore pantingly into the road. From far and near came the report of guns. Against the background of clouded sky stood out the figure of a Zeppelin, bathed in searchlight, and about it there played a thousand fiery stars as the shells of the anti-aircraft guns burst.

"Lively!"

It was Tom who spoke. He had been wanting a word with Bare, and had come here on the chance of seeing him.

"There's been murder in there!" panted the constable. "I see one of 'em—there's two—takin' somethin' out o' the cistern, an' puttin' it back again, an' I went an' put my 'and in to see what it was. A brass-bound box it was, an' by the time I'd found it the chap 'ad moved down the stairs. An' then I 'eard a noise, an' there was two of 'em a-fightin'."

"In the cistern!" Tom had no thought for anything save the box. "We must get it!" he cried. "It is the Byzantine ruby box."

"I see 'im 'andlin' a red stone!"

Tom made a rush to the house, but a loud crash from above told him that he was confronted by the impossible. The roof had fallen in; the entire upper part of the house was a furnace.

"The men!" he said. "We must get them out!"

When the policeman's lantern threw its light within the passage Jim Bare was rising slowly to his feet.

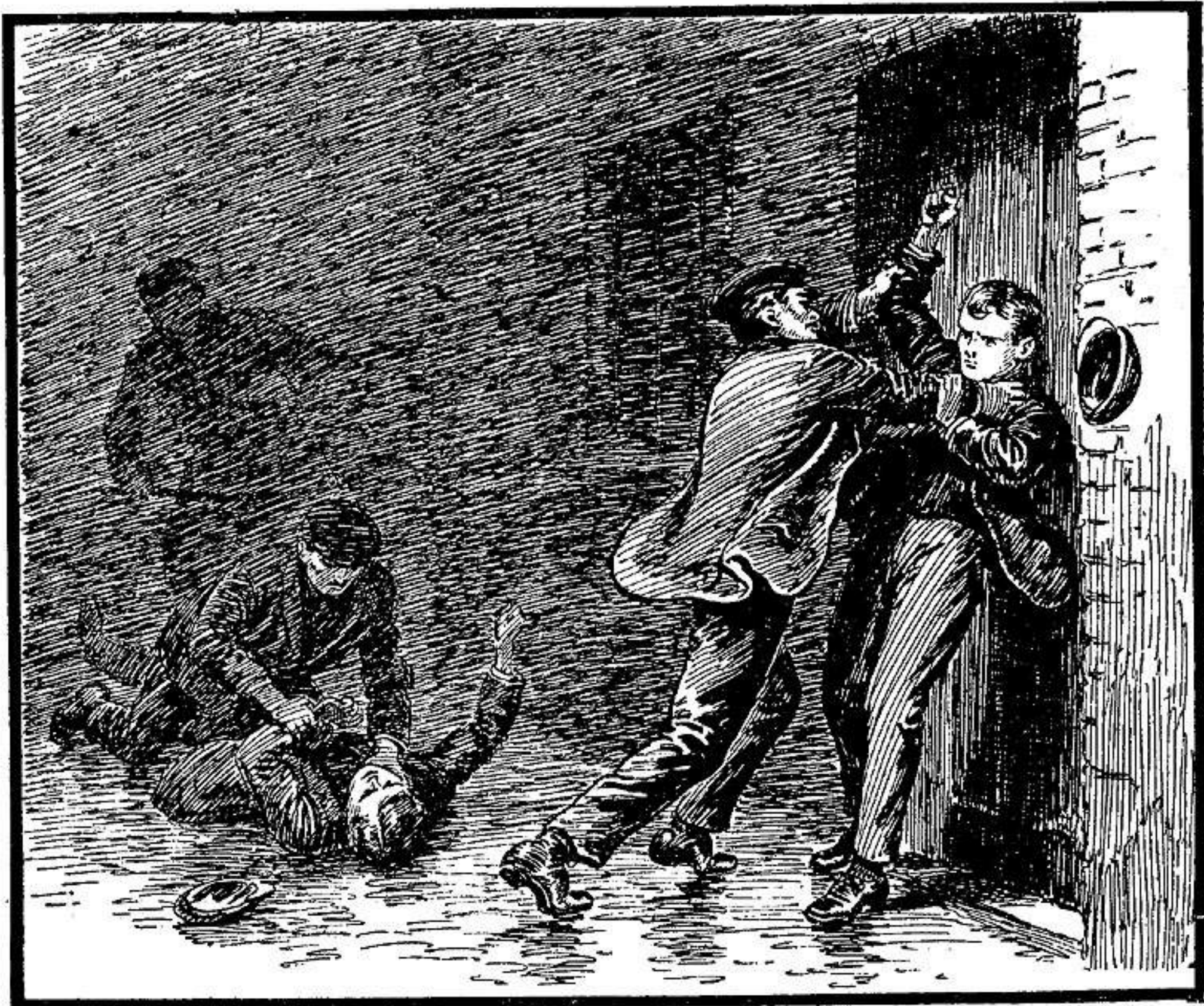
"E's got the rubies!" Bare said hoarsely, pointing at Scathel.

Tom motioned him to silence, and stooped over the other figure. Scathel's face was turgid and sweat-covered; his teeth were clenched, and in his eyes was a stare of horror.

"Forbes! I killed him! The cistern—box!" came from his lips faintly. Then there was silence.

The light in the heavens faded. The booming of bombs and of cannon passed to stillness, but the house blazed on—

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What followed was like a confused nightmare. The man seized Will, and was pushing him against a door. Tom was struck down. Someone was kneeling on him. (See page 24.)

blazed defiantly; and Tom, as he stood with folded arms, felt his spirits sink to zero, for somewhere in this furnace were matchless gems worth the fortune of a prince!

Light Upon the Gloom.

During many days Tom had kept his movements from the knowledge of Mr. Delaville. He had pictured to himself again and again what a glorious triumph it would be when he placed the box before his guardian, and so gave into his hands the means of setting right one of the wrongs that had wrecked his life. Truly, he had laboured in vain. All the fruits of his skill and energy had become, literally, mere ashes.

He poured out his tale to his astonished guardian and sister. Will Sallowby came into the room as he was speaking, but Tom was too engrossed with his tragedy to notice him.

"Never mind, my boy. You have done your best," said Mr. Delaville kindly, when Tom had concluded.

"Cheer up, old chap! We shall make things hum yet!" added Will.

Tom turned his face on the latter half indignantly.

"You're a nice specimen to offer comfort," he said—"a very nice specimen! You've not been showing any more interest in the case than if you'd lost a bad halfpenny."

"Quite sure?" asked Will.

"You haven't done anything to show the contrary."

"Quite sure of that?"

"Well, what?"

"Your hand is played out; now comes my turn. I've a good lot to say. Do you care to listen?"

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"Oh, get it off your chest! You can't bring the rubies back."

"Perhaps I can show you how to get others."

"Sing your song, and then give us silence. Don't look hurt. I feel ratty."

"To begin at the beginning," said Will. "I began a day or two back to wonder why the syndicate called itself 'Byzantine.' Of course, I knew that Byzantine meant something coming from Byzantium--the old name for Constantinople; but that didn't explain much. I had met the American member once or twice in my City tramps, and the day before yesterday I touched my hat to him, got into a chat on the excuse of looking for a job, and, finding him fairly amiable, I put the question pat, 'Why the term Byzantine?'"

"Oh," he answered, without hesitation, 'don't you know? Our syndicate was formed to dredge in the east of the Mediterranean. There are many legends of treasure-ships wrecked there, and they proved to be so far true that we fished up an old coffer containing those rubies, and one or two other things. Undoubtedly they had come from Byzantium.'

"He seemed to be so impressive on this point, that it set me thinking."

"I suppose you chartered a boat, sir?" I said.

"Oh, no; bought one--an old tub called the Mayfly. She's down in the New Docks," he answered; and with this he went off.

"Well, not having anything very important on hand, I made my way down to the 'New,' and, after fossicking round a bit, I came across the Mayfly. She had just been bought,

I was told, by a Dutch firm for the oyster trade. I don't know much about ships, but I should judge her to be a poor sort of tramp-steamer, of course.

"She was in the dry dock, being touched up.

"Two old sailors were close to where I stood, and were criticising her build.

"What d'ye think of her, mate?" one asked me.

"Oh," I answered, "I suppose she's good enough for the work she's done—dredging in the Mediterranean."

"Dredging in a road puddle!" said the man. "D'ye see what is a-stickin' out of her there? That's a bit of a sword-fish. D'ye see what's wedged in there? That's a bit o' white coral. She ain't done no Mediterranean work!"

"Well, I came back home, thinking a lot. I wondered whether there was any clue to the mystery left where that box had been hidden. At first I saw nothing; then among the shavings I saw a bit of brass, and that—or, rather, the shape of it—told me that the box fastenings had been ripped open there. I suppose the thief wasn't for taking away a box of useless rubbish. And so I had another search, and that led to my finding this."

Here Will produced a piece of what looked like stone, about twelve inches long, very irregularly rounded, and about three inches across at its thickest part.

"I let it fall, and in getting down to the floor I trod on it. To my astonishment, although it cracked, it bent. Now, rock won't bend, so I carefully filed through the rock where the crack was, and very soon I had come on metal—soft metal. I filed all round this, and the rock came into halves. Inside was a piece of parchment, covered with queer-looking letters. 'This may tell a story,' I said to myself. So I popped the parchment back in its place, fastened the pieces of rock with a little cement, and made up my mind to bring it to Mr. Delaville, and there it is, sir."

The late cashier took the object into his hands and carefully scrutinised it.

"The outside is made up of the shells of wormlike crustaceans," he said. Then, having broken it where joined, he added: "Yes, here they are, layer on layer. What is this beneath them? Once it was wax, I suspect. And this?—lead. That is it, Will. The original article was a tube of lead, evidently intended to be kept unopened for an indefinite time. To guard the lead against corrosive action it was cased in wax. The tube fell into the water, and became cased, as you see it. Now for the secret of the parchment."

With this Mr. Delaville spread out a small, crackling sheet, and pored over it.

"I thought of going into the Church when I was your age, boys," he said, "and so I turned my attention to Hebrew. This is Hebrew, but it puzzles me. One moment!" The speaker went to a bookcase and took down an old volume of his schooldays. It was a Hebrew dictionary. "Ah, now I have it!" he exclaimed, after looking up two words. "Great Scott! Will Sallowby, what have you found? No. Wait! Yes, that is right! Give me pencil and paper, someone!"

"What is it, sir?" broke in Tom.

"Listen!" And Mr. Delaville read:

"In the region of Nero the accursed, we—being a few of those who escaped his hand—and Christians resident in Rome did journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and, with certain of our brethren there, we did take and secrete the great treasure which Sheba's queen laid at the feet of Solomon, and we took ship for some haven of the south where we might hide the treasure, and live in peace until the danger was past.

"Now, the winds were contrary, and during many days we were tossed to and fro, and our leader said to us: 'Let us make a record, and seal it up, and, peradventure, if the ship be lost, the record may be found in the ages to come, and they who find will know that we were not thieves, but custodians of the treasures of Israel. There is land in sight, and we have journeyed far, and are weak and wearied, and the rising storm threatens death.'"

"And that is all?" asked Tom.

"All!" The words came gravely from Delaville. "My boy, it is an epic poem! A secret of the ages has been disclosed!"

"But it doesn't help us to remedy the bank smash!" retorted Tom.

"Where that tube came from there may be other gems," said Will.

"But where did it come from? That's the point."

Mr. Delaville shrugged his shoulders, and turned the parchment over. Then his eyes gleamed. Taking a strong reading-glass, he peered through it at what appeared only the cracks and stains due to age. Finally he broke out excitedly:

"There is something here, scrawled in Latin. It is an account of the ship's course. It reads: 'Thirty and seven times the sun has risen, and thirty and six times has it set since we lost sight of the coast of Spain, for twenty days

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and nights being driven south as a bird is driven, and for sixteen days and nights passing eastward, rudderless. The land before us has been in our sight these two days ago. It rises like a tower against the heavens, and the light upon it is azure, and purple, and amber.'"

"Very poetical, but not practically helpful," commented Tom.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Delaville, "although this is rather an early stage to give an opinion, that the information is very practical indeed, for it gives us a broad idea of the island's situation. The ship went down the African coast, swept round the Cape, and was driven eastwards. Seventeen days would bring it somewhere here."

Mr. Delaville placed his finger on a spot of a large world-map hanging on the wall.

"Well, sir, there's nothing marked there, anyway," objected Tom.

"We must leave the matter open for an hour or two," said Mr. Delaville, as he put on his hat. "I am running round to the library to look up some maps and charts."

When he returned he drew a rough outline on a half-sheet of paper, and handed it to Will.

"There," he said, "that is what I gathered from a description in the encyclopædia to be the shape of a rather likely place. It is called Desolate Island. One half is covered by mountainous, volcanic rock, described as unscalable; the other half is inhabited by a race of savages. If you observe the form of this peak you will confess that it is at least one that is unique. It lifts itself to the clouds. I think we might do worse than try the place."

"But surely, sir," Will objected, "the syndicate people will know all about it, and they themselves will have found all there is to find!"

Mr. Delaville gave the other a shrewd look.

"I am not so sure of that," he commented. "You see, it's like this. I know a thing or two about some members of the syndicate, and can state positively that they are pearl-dealers. I have no doubt whatever that the Mayfly was pearling when this find was fished up quite accidentally.

"Now, if tradition is in any way to be relied on, the treasure that Sheba's queen brought to Solomon consisted not only of rubies, but sapphires and emeralds. And I think there is quite a possibility that some of it was salvaged, and taken ashore.

"These savages may be descended from the shipwrecked Christians; on the other hand, the entire theory may be wrong, and the original box have drifted for scores of miles. Anyway, these rubies that you, Tom, have salvaged will bring us enough money to make the venture. I will put the entire matter before Sir Samuel, and be guided by him. We owe the syndicate nothing."

An Assisted Passage.

Two days later, as Tom and Will were engaged in fixing up an addition to the latter's gym, Mr. Delaville came to the door.

"It's all right," he said briskly, "I've seen Sir Samuel, and, although he hasn't much faith in the scheme, he is willing to be responsible for a couple of thousands; so all we have to do is to plan out the details of our expedition. I think it will be best to put Mr. Sallowby in some nursing-home. Dora can go to one of her aunts, and that will leave us without anything to think of other than the business in hand."

"I suppose Sir Samuel can be trusted not to jabber?" said Tom.

He did not like the idea of confiding their secret even to the managing director of the late bank.

Mr. Delaville frowned.

"Oh, Sir Samuel is right enough," he answered. "But to tell the truth, something happened for which I am rather sorry. As I quitted Sir Samuel's presence, I passed through an ante-room, and in this I saw that blessed American. I don't know how much he had heard, but that he had heard something I am sure. However, we will get off as soon as possible. By the way, Tom, I wish you or your chum, or both of you, would run down to Deptford with a note to a man there. Sir Samuel gave me the address. He is a ships'-chandler, and will provision the craft in no time."

"But you haven't a boat yet," objected Tom.

"Sir Samuel has promised to let me have the Fortune. It's only an eight-hundred-ton tramp, but it will serve our purpose," returned Mr. Delaville.

"Come on, Will," said Tom, making for the door.

Deptford is never one of the most inviting spots. On the afternoon when it was visited by Tom and Will it had become soaked with drizzle, splashed with mud, dismal, with a lowering fog. There was nothing in the atmosphere, or the shops, or the people to cheer one.



By pure accident, but as if intentionally, they came against the balustrade. It cracked, yielded, snapped, and the two men were rolling over in their descent to the ground floor. (See page 22.)

"Oh, let us get out of it!" said Will impatiently. "Even an adventure with a pickpocket would be better than nothing!"

"Don't look round suddenly," said Tom. "About fifty yards behind is a man carrying an empty basket. He has been behind us during the past ten minutes. When we have crossed the road he has crossed it. He is shadowing us!"

Half a minute later, as the two turned into a narrow lane between dead walls, there broke from Will's lips an exclamation. A man, clad as a waterside labourer, was grasping with one hand a thin, frail-looking lad of about fifteen, while with the other hand, which held a piece of rope, he struck him over the shoulders.

"You coward!" exclaimed Will, and, with the words, seized the rope. "What do you mean by it?"

What followed was like a confused nightmare. Half a dozen things happened at once. It was as if something had been arranged, and was now being put into action even to the smallest detail. There came a loud whistle from the end of the lane. The man quitted his grasp of the lad and seized Will, and was pushing him against a door.

The door swung open, and Will found himself in a sort of garage. Tom had been struck down. Someone was kneeling on him, and pressing a hand over his mouth. Will was being half-smothered beneath a heavy coat. The chums struggled, but they were in powerful hands, and when presently they had been bundled into an old four-wheeler, they found they had been gagged.

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Then came something against which they struggled in vain. A rag soaked with chloroform was held over the face of each, and, while half insensible, some of their outer clothing was removed, and rough sea-garments were substituted, with, a couple of greasy caps.

Jolted, jarred, knowing they were being carried, dumped down, and then thrust roughly into some corner, the boys were yet helpless. As in a dream they heard voices, and jeering laughter. The gags had been removed, and they tried to cry out, but their voices came weakly, and were drowned by what seemed a very babel and uproar. Each felt his head aching intensely; then came nausea, and, finally, sleep, from which they were roused by vigorous kicking.

Tom came to his senses believing himself in a dream. He found himself being pulled to his feet, and gripped by the coat-collar, and pushed by a knuckly hand along wooden boards that seemed to turn every way at once. Then his blurred vision took in the details of a ship's deck, and, beyond the ship, the heaving sea.

"Stowaways, cap!" said a hoarse voice behind him. "Feund 'em 'id be'ind a pile o' cargo. Intoxicated, both on 'em!"

"We're not!" cried Tom.

"Well, you don't look quite a tectotaller, and you don't give one the impression of being a saloon-passenger!" commented another voice, with good-humoured sarcasm; and Tom, blinking up, found himself looking into a grim yet not unkindly face, surmounted by a cap with a gold band.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. WANT EVERY 'MAGNET' READER TO BUY THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF 'THE GREYFRIARS HERALD,' 10.

"We were set upon and gagged, and then I don't know what was done with us," explained Tom.

"Were they gagged?" asked the man with the cap.

"Not a bit of it, sir. They was snorin' away, drunk an' 'appy. 'Ere's the other of 'em!"—indicating Will, who seemed too dazed to speak at all.

"See here, my lads," said the man with the cap, "I don't know how you came on board. If you have a grievance you'll have to settle it when you get back to England. You're at sea now, and whether you've been on the spree, or have fallen foul of an enemy, your best course is to take things as they are. My name is Boyton, and I'm master of this ship, which is the Nancy. We have one destination only, and we're not stopping to transfer you to any other craft. Get to work, and be civil. Your luck might be worse."

"Very well, sir," returned Tom quietly.

"What's your name?" asked the captain, addressing Tom.

"Hereward—Tom Hereward."

"Very well, Hereward. The steward is short-handed, and you'll find the work light. He turned to Will. "And your name?"

"Oh, Sallowby," answered Will.

"Then, O'Sallowby, you can see the engineer, and tell him you're a present from me."

"But my name's not O'Sallowby, sir."

The captain looked at Will solemnly, and shook his head.

Then he turned and strode off under the conviction that Will had been very drunk indeed, and was not sober yet.

Why had this outrage been perpetrated? That was the one question which gripped Tom's mind as he followed a sailor to the quarters of the steward. Had he and his chum fallen victims to a common crimp eager to get a fee for supplying hands to sea-going vessels? If so, Captain Boyton must know this to be the case. But it was quite impossible to look into his honest sailor's face and believe him capable of such an un-English act as conniving at the practical slavery of two compatriots.

Had Will and himself any enemies? Doubtless they had made more than one in connection with their recent adventures in search of the gems. But of what possible advantage to such enemies could be this forcible sea trip?

Tom found himself at home in his new duties. He had been a very enthusiastic scout, and was proud of his culinary triumphs. The ship was certainly short of hands, and the steward, whose name was Martin, acted also as cook. Tom washed and peeled potatoes and cleaned up, and did a hundred and one things in a manner that won his chief's approval.

"For a landlubber, you're not such an idiot as you might be!" Martin condescended to say. "And by way of reward for workin' decently, you can do a little more. Wash your hands, scrape some of that smut off your nose, and carry these luxuries to the saloon."

Tom went forward, tray in hand, and entered what might have been more modestly and correctly styled the ship's cabin. And then, even as his eyes took in the features of the two men seated at the table, the first glimpse of the truth broke on his mental vision, for the second of the two men was the American member of the syndicate who had called at the bank on that morning when a vain search had been made for the box of gems.

Tom observed that Captain Boyton was looking flushed and angry, and that the American was pale. Evidently they had disagreed upon some subject.

"Oh, fix it up how you choose, but I'm sick of it!" came from the captain warmly.

Some instincts told Tom to keep secret his recognition of the American. He—Tom—carried out his duties in silence. He knew that, whatever might eventuate, it would be impossible for him to exact justice while on board. He was on the defensive, and wanted to see Will and discuss matters with him.

To his astonishment, the American forced his hand.

"So, my lad, we meet again, do we?" he drawled nasally. "Well, it's a bit rough on you, but if people will try to jump other men's claims, they can't complain if they're kicked."

Tom did not answer. Boyton was watching him intently, and Tom felt that the captain knew something of the truth, and was on his side.

The American went on:

"My name is Cyril P. Blake, and, as you probably are aware, I had a share—and that a considerable one—in the Byzantine Syndicate. Now, my lad, there's been too much

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mystery about that business to let me sleep at night. A plain burglary is one thing, but a burglary with secrets and mysteries tied on to it like bits of paper to one end of a kite is more'n I can stand.

"You all thought yourselves very clever, but there wasn't a single move I didn't spot from the time that Bare sold that ruby. Oh, I know it all! Even that poor fellow Scathel was in my employ. Turned traitor, he did, and tried to pinch the gems. What do you think of it, Mr. Tom Hereward—eh?"

"We were trying to find the gems for the benefit of the bank!" broke out Tom.

"Benefit of fiddlesticks! But I won't quarrel with you on that score or any other score. I'll show you just where your working for the benefit of the bank became a downright attempt at common thieving. Whose gems were in that box? Ours! Has the bank been made to pay for 'em? Yes. Accounts are cleared, you would say? Not so. What else was in the box? A piece of stuff looking like rock. Whose was that? Ours. Had the bank bought it? No. Was it included in the list of contents? No. Has its value been paid? No. Had it a value? We didn't know. You found that it had, and promptly arranged to jump our claim. That's why you're here. Now do you understand?"

Tom, all his reserve thrown to the winds, faced the speaker fearlessly.

"I understand what you say and imply," he returned. "But to my mind the question of right and wrong is an open one. The piece of rock was valueless—unless and until its secret was known. You knew nothing of this. We found out. You can have the rock, but you have no claim on our knowledge."

Captain Boyton banged the table.

"He's got you there, Mr. Blake!" he said heartily.

"You wait," returned the American. "It strikes me I've got him. Anyway, my lad, you're here, and this ship is bound for the island. Another fact is that I've gleaned pretty well all you found out, thanks to the nice, clear way in which your late boss, old Delaville, explained things to Sir Samuel. So it comes to this—you can be either with me or against me. I had you brought here on the chance of your being of use. What I say of you applies equally to your chum. If you become allies you take your shares. If you don't you remain with Admiral Slushy, and get nix."

"The syndicate is running this trip, then, I suppose?" queried Tom, his brain working rapidly.

"Syndicate be hanged! I'm running it, chartered the ship, and am paying all expenses."

"But if the piece of rock belongs to the syndicate—" began Tom.

Boyton laughed loudly.

"He's got you again, Blake," he said.

The American looked nettled.

"See here, sonny," he went on, "I'm offering to play fair. Chip in with me, and tell me all you know, and you may get rich. In this game there's no question of real ownership—that I admit. On any agreed deal I'm square, and don't forget it. Boyton here is taking one share, the crew another, I take three shares, and I'll give you two, and your guardian one. That makes eight. What do you say?"

Tom held out his hand.

"I agree, sir," he returned. And the pledge was confirmed by Blake's hearty grip.

"I suppose you'll be messing with the captain and myself now?" Blake asked, just as Tom was quitting the cabin.

Tom looked at Boyton for an answer.

"Do you mind, and will your chum mind, letting things go on as they are?" asked the captain.

"Not a bit, sir, if you think it better."

"Well, I do," returned Boyton thoughtfully. "You see, the crew and mates know nothing about the syndicate or the bank. Mr. Blake tells me that you were put on board by a couple of crimps, who are now on shore. The belief is that you are stowaways, and if you come to our mess a whole lot of explanation will be necessary."

"Still, I shall want a real long talk with you," put in Blake.

Tom nodded, and returned to the pantry.

It was not until the day's work had been finished and the two lads had come on the fore-deck to get a breath of air, that they met and spoke. Without any preamble Tom told of all that had passed in the cabin.

(Another long instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy early.)

WATCH "THE BOYS' FRIEND" FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY ANNOUNCEMENT! SOMETHING STUPENDOUS COMING!

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MAGNET, January 1st, 1915.

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS:

"THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

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

For Next Monday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SPECULATOR!"

By Frank Richards.

Among all the famous "Fishy" yarns, none will take so prominent a place as next Monday's grand, long, complete story of Greyfriars, in which Fishy's twisted code of honour again lands him in serious trouble. The Yankee junior hopes, by establishing a Sock Trust at Greyfriars, to exploit the war to line his own pockets; but his schoolfellows cannot see eye to eye with him in his unscrupulous designs, and Fisher Tarleton Fish speedily finds himself in that cold and uncomfortable place known as Coventry. Moreover, he comes within an ace of getting the "sack," and in the long run

"THE SCHOOLBOY SPECULATOR"

is brought to realise that it is bad policy to introduce the methods of the Chicago wheat-pit at Greyfriars.

AN EAST LONDONER'S SPLENDID LETTER.

From my voluminous post-bag I have this week selected the following letter for publication:

"11, Desford Road, Canning Town,
London, E.

"Dear Editor,—Never having written you before, I must do so now in order to compliment you upon the splendid story by Mr. Frank Richards, entitled 'The Remove Eleven on Tour.' From start to finish the story was excellent, with never a dull or badly-composed line. I pride myself on being a judge of your papers, for still in my mind are such great triumphs of literature as 'Driven to the Wall,' 'The Parting of the Ways,' 'Sportsmen All,' and 'Schoolboys Never Shall Be Slaves.'

"The characters which appear in the 'Magnet' are finely drawn, and include such natures as we meet in everyday life. I was, though, disagreeably surprised to find that certain issues of your paper contained disgusting and insulting letters, the object of which was to sling mud at a journal which is well known to, and appreciated by, every decent fellow in the kingdom. Take no notice of such letters. Let the grouse do their worst, and remember that if you had an office next door to each mud-slinger you would receive precious little mud from him, especially if your office had a fighting editor. Don't waste space printing mud-splashes! Fill up the paper with the best.

"And now, dear Editor, I hope you will allow me to offer a wee bit of criticism. At times there is a tendency to introduce too much slang into the stories. Slang lowers a fellow, and also lowers a paper; and public-school boys, as a rule, have a good command of King's English. The same remark applies to the 'Gem,' and I trust that the slang will, in a measure, diminish in future.

"You can rely upon me to back up the 'Greyfriars Herald' might and main. Perhaps you may find room to print a portion of this letter; but, anyhow, I close now, with best wishes to you and your hardworking staff, from your sincere reader,

SIDNEY G."

Many thanks for a most frank and interesting letter, Sidney G. You will see that I have carried out your suggestion concerning the growlers. What a splendid thing it would be if the latter could be exported to Germany! They possess distinct Hunnish tendencies, and could go on saying "Gott strafe this" or "Gott strafe that" ad lib.

Your comments on slang open up a very important point. I quite agree with you that it would do the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' Libraries no harm to drop a good deal of superfluous expressions; at the same time, I cannot see that the slang

used by Messrs. Richards and Clifford is in any way lowering. It may be a trifle overdone, but it is by no means vulgar; and it is an error to imagine that public-school boys seldom or never resort to slang.

At my own school, I remember, the headmaster once offered a prize to the boy who compiled the longest list of slang expressions in current use, and the winner got together considerably over one hundred! I will certainly ask our famous authors to moderate their transports a little, but to cut down slang to any great extent would be detrimental to the success of the stories.



READERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(Issued by the Editor free of charge.)

Will Miss Ivy Hewitt, of London, who kindly sent books to Company Quartermaster-Sergeant Cave, of the 7th Leicester Regiment, please communicate with him again, as her letter has been accidentally destroyed? (I might here mention that over one thousand books were received in response to my soldier-friend's appeal.)

The following "lonely soldiers" will be pleased to hear from fellow-readers of the "Magnet" Library: Private Max Farleigh, 77, Water Street, Carmarthen, South Wales; Rifleman W. A. Miles, No. 4853, "C" Company, No. 11 Platoon, 17th County of London Regiment, British Expeditionary Force, France; Private E. H. Ree, No. 10479, "C" Company, 6th (Service) Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, British Expeditionary Force, France.

B. Reesdale c/o the Post Office, Day Street, Old Swan, Liverpool, is desirous of forming a readers' club in that city.

A North London Football Club requires home and away matches. Average age, 14½. Apply personally or write to J. Dewell, 54, Buttersland Street, Hoxton, London, N.

Old Lodge United (average age 16) are open to arrange fixtures at home or away within a three-mile radius of Belfast. Apply to Jack Duffy, 35, Hartley Street, Belfast.

The 1st Johnstone Troop (20th Renfrewshire) Boy Scouts desire football fixtures—at home or away. Average age, 14½. Apply, Jack Kirkwood, Lilybank House, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland.

Away matches wanted for Saturday afternoons within a four-mile radius of the Elephant and Castle. Average age, 15½. Apply, Arthur Spire, 24, Kempstead Road, Albany Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

H. S. I.—Another story featuring Dick Russell will appear in the near future.

"A Cheerful Cripple."—Many thanks for your letter. I sincerely hope the companion papers will always be a source of amusement and entertainment to you.

Private T. Alker, 24707, 3rd South Wales Borderers, 2nd Western General Hospital, Alma Park, Levenshulme, Manchester, would be very pleased to receive from readers spare copies of the companion papers.

"A Boy Chum" (Mansfield).—Copies of "School and Sport" and "The Boy Without a Name" are still obtainable from this office, at fourpence per copy, which includes postage.

(Continued on page iv. cover.)

Your Editor



KENNETH BRIGHTOFF,
Willesdon.



S. NESBITT,
Belfast.



ERIC GOFF,
Dublin.



FREDERICK JONES,
Belfast.



J. SCOTT,
Liverpool.



MISS MAIDIE TUCKER,
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O. HOLMES, Hull.



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thorpes Troop of Sea
Scouts, and two girl
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PTE. SIMON GRAY,
Serving in France.



PTE. CHARLES PAYNE,
4th Australian Brigade.

A SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO READERS OF THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

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Shoals of letters have reached my sanctum recently in praise of our wonderful little companion paper, the "GREYFRIARS HERALD." It is quite impossible to acknowledge such communications in full, so I have decided to devote this page to the publication of their names and towns only. Nevertheless, I thank one and all with all my heart for their loyal and unwavering support.—THE EDITOR.

A. G. J. D. (Margate).  
 "A Magnetite" (Southampton).  
 Ardith, Maurice (London, W.).  
 "A Loyal Jewish Reader."  
 "A Brother Scot" (Aberdeen).  
 "A Contented Reader" (Liverpool).  
 "Arabic" (Grangemouth).  
 "A Greyfriars Reader" (Glasgow).  
 A. C. (Stratford).  
 "Anon" (Richmond).  
 "A Staunch Magnetite" (Bristol).  
 "A Loyal Magnetite" (Loughborough).  
 A. G. S. (Brockley).  
 "A Constant Reader" (Clapton).  
 "A Margate Reader."

Bradbee, Miss L.  
 Bowman, Joe (Carlisle).  
 Black, S. (Belfast).  
 "Bob."  
 Bromwin, W.  
 Bridger, L. W.  
 Broom, Arthur C. (Sheffield).

Craig, R. (Wallsend-on-Tyne).  
 "Contented" (Edinburgh).  
 Cousins, Alfred.  
 Collins, W. E.  
 Cullis, S. V.

Dunn, Frank (Manchester).

E. L. (Rotherham).  
 "Eddie."  
 Evans, B. (Pulham).  
 E. C. and Chums (Dalston).  
 "Eleanor" (Sydenham).

"Funny" (Heaton Moor).

Geary, E. W. (Croydon).  
 Grundy, Miss E.  
 Graham, Tom G.  
 Gutteridge, Ronald.

Hobbs, Ady.  
 Hamson, W. R.  
 Howe, Percy.  
 Hughes, Jack (Belfast).  
 Harrington, W.  
 "Hurree Singh" (Sunderland).  
 Hamper, F.  
 Hunt, F.

"Isle of Wight Enthusiast."

J. C. W. (Dundee).  
 Jones, K. A. (Southport).  
 Jowett, Harry (Hull).  
 J. K. P. (Liverpool).

Langton, Ernest (Battersea).  
 Lewis, Gilbert.  
 "Louis."

Mason, J. C.  
 Mair, Jenny A. (Aberfoyle).  
 "Mac" (Ilkeston).  
 Middleton, William.  
 Montague, F. (Camden Town).  
 McGandy, W. (Londonderry).  
 M. E. H. (Manchester).

Norman, Harold.

Ordidge, Alfred (Glasgow).  
 "Old Boy" (Canterbury).

Partridge, Victor (Clacton).  
 Perry, W. (New Southgate).  
 Paget, John E.  
 "Pom Pom" (Shoeburyness).

Q. E. D. (Manchester).

Robertson, John (Manchester).  
 R. E. C. (Wandsworth).

Stanley, Albert (Godmanchester).  
 Stokes, Driver J. (R.F.A.).  
 Scott, W.  
 Scragg, J.  
 Suttle, Winnie.  
 Sleigh, D.  
 Swire, E.  
 Swancott, W.  
 Storey, C. E.  
 Stove, B. C.  
 Smith, Lilian.  
 "Silver Spur" (Marsden).  
 S. H.  
 Smith, A.  
 Shattock, T.

"Tommy" (Glasgow).  
 "Trumpeter" (R.F.A.).  
 "The Great Unknown" (Edinburgh).  
 Tarling, George.  
 Thomas, G. (Cardiff).  
 "Tuckles."  
 "True Blue" (Goodwick).  
 Turley, Doree (Maidstone).  
 "Two Country Girls" (Chesterfield).  
 "Typist" (London, N.W.).  
 Tucker, William.  
 T. W. P. (St. Leonards).

Underwood, Leonard (Wellingborough).

W. S. (Kensington).  
 Webb, W.  
 Whitehead, William.  
 Wolstensoft, J. (Moston).  
 Wilson, William (Manchester).  
 Wilder, T. (Northfleet).  
 W. J. H.  
 "Wellingburian."  
 West, Harry.  
 Webster, J. (Bermondsey).