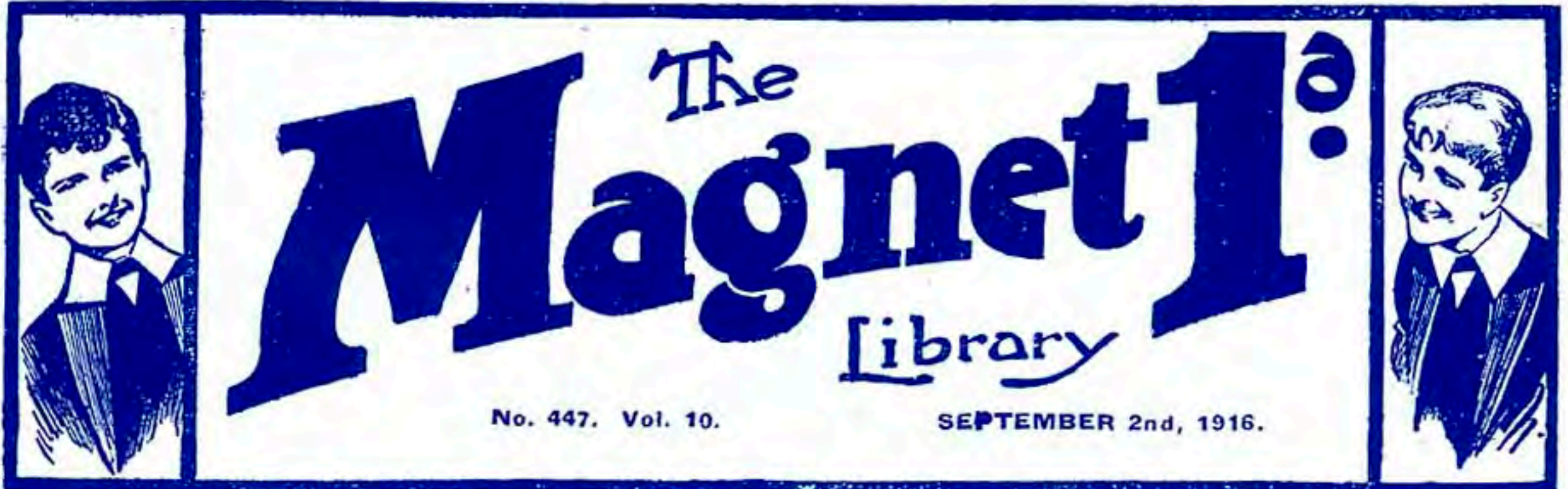


THE SENTENCE OF THE SCHOOL!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



BUNTER MAJOR AND BUNTER MINOR!

(An Extraordinary Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this Issue.)

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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," 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 GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"

By Frank Richards.

In this grand story—the last cricket yarn of the season—Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, otherwise and much more generally known as Squiff, plays the leading part. This should make the story appeal especially to our Australian readers; but Squiff is so general a favourite that a hearty welcome is certain to be given everywhere to his reappearance in the limelight. A bat belonging to the Australian junior is smashed up through a spiteful act on the part of Loder; and, fortified financially by the indemnity which Mr. Quelch forces Loder to pay, Squiff goes to Courtfield to buy a new bat. Thereof came many strange happenings, for he secures a really good willow at a bargain, and it is soon made plain that there is a mystery hanging to the bat he has bought. A certain Mr. Braxton wants it very badly indeed, and seems ready to resort to anything short of manslaughter in order to get it. His repeated attempts not only puzzle Squiff and his chums, but also make for them some very exciting times. They cannot imagine why any man should attach so much importance to the possession of a cricket-bat as does Mr. Braxton. But he makes one attempt too many, is fairly bowled out, explains the whole matter, and so puts a satisfactory end to

"THE GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"

A REQUEST FROM THE FRONT.

Private James Balls, 10474, of the Details Corps Troops, attached to the 4th Corps, Headquarters, B.E.F., France, writes me thus:

"I don't like writing begging letters, yet this must seem to be one. I and my chum would like a set of boxing-gloves, and we have found out that it is impossible to get them without paying the money down, which it is hard to do out of 3s. 7d. per fortnight. I should like to find a chum in the Old Country to send us them, and I and my chum will pay for them as soon as possible. So it will be at no loss to himself."

What do my readers think of this? I feel sure that there are many of them who will jump at the chance of helping these two fellow-readers over there in France. I don't suggest that anyone should send Private Balls the gloves and look for the money in due course, because I know a better way than that. I think we should prefer to give them—don't you? The cost will be about sixteen shillings, postage included. I am glad to start the ball rolling with a small contribution of half-a-crown. I do not want any reader to send along more than sixpence. I feel sure that within twenty-four hours of the appearance of this appeal enough will reach me to enable me to send off the gloves. Smaller sums than sixpence may be sent. All need will be acknowledged in these columns, and all in excess of the required amount will be returned at once. I have no intention of starting a regular fund, for this would entail far more work than I and my staff could possibly cope with; but if the response is bigger than is needed, I may use the surplus to meet any similar appeal reaching me between now and the time when this is published. That is, of course, if the senders have no objection to this. If any donation is intended for the original appeal only, the donor need only say so, and he or she will get it back if it is received too late.

Several readers have asked for notices, saying that they wanted to form leagues for sending comforts—other than back numbers and the like—to men at the Front. I have not inserted these notices, but have explained to the sender of each that I considered that such organisations were better in the hands of older and more responsible people. This appeal will give a chance, if but a small one, to those who were so anxious—genuinely anxious, as I believe—to do

something for the men who are fighting our battles.

Hurry up now, and send along your contribution at once, for I have greatly miscalculated the generosity of my chums if more than a single day is needed to raise the small sum asked for!



NOTICES.

Cricket and Football.

Christchurch United F.C. want matches for the coming season.—Hon. Sec., W. F. Collier, 132, Coventry Road, Ilford.

J. Brennan and E. Maguire, aged 16, and able to play in any position, want to join a footer-club within four miles of Kirkdale.—Address, 3, Ivor Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool.

Junction C.C. (15) want home or away matches within six-mile radius Clapham Junction after two o'clock Saturdays or six week-nights.—Hon. Sec., E. W. Green, 35, Warden's Road, St. John's Hill, Clapham Junction, S.W.

Ivydale F.C. (14-16) want matches for coming season, three-mile radius of Catford.—Hon. Sec., R. E. Howell, 73, Silvermere Road, Catford, S.E.

St. Jude's F.C. (15-16) want matches five-mile radius Wormwood Scrubs.—Hon. Sec., E. Webb, 47, Ilbert Street, Queen's Park, Paddington, W.

Trinity Old Boys (15) want matches for the coming season four-mile radius Tooting.—Hon. Sec., A. Buttress, 181, Lessingham Avenue, Tooting, S.W.

J. Lee, Hon. Sec. Ferndale F.C., 42, Chantrey Road, Brixton, S.W., wants to arrange good matches for his team in the South London district. Average age 16.

Moss Villa A.F.C. (average age 16) want to arrange dates for the coming season.—Hon. Sec., H. Pitt, 24, Waverley Road, Moston, Manchester.

Long Eaton junior footer team (average age 17) require matches within a seven-mile radius.—Hon. Sec., W. Watkins, 4, Chapel Street, Long Eaton, Notts.

A junior footer club in Belfast want three good players who can take any position.—Apply personally or by letter to T. Driffin, 9, Glenvale Street, Belfast.

B.R.F.C. (average age 12) require matches for the coming season in the Chatham and Rochester district.—Hon. Sec., W. Laing, 9, Bingley Road, Rochester, Kent.

T. H. Stump, 4, Upper Smith Street, Spencer Street, Goswell Road, E.C., wants to join a junior footer club within a four-mile radius of St. Paul's Cathedral. He is 16½, weighs 8st., stands 5ft. 5in., and prefers the right wing.

Park Juniors A.F.C. want matches within a six-mile radius of Cardiff.—Hon. Sec., R. David, 53, Llandaff Road, Canton, Cardiff.

B.U.F.C. (average age 17) want matches within a seven-mile radius of Marylebone.—Hon. Sec., H. Rich, 15, Melbourne Square, Brixton, S.W.

For Back Numbers, etc.

By S. C. Merton, 23, Prince Street Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa, "Gem" and "Magnet" back numbers. He is willing to give 2d. each for Nos. 1-50; 1½d. each Nos. 51-100; and 1d. each Nos. 101-300.

By J. Went, 4, Silversea Drive, Westcliff-on-Sea, Nos. 53-78, inclusive, of "Magnet."

By W. Crompton, 13, Chatham Street, Bolton, "Shunned by the Form."

R. P. Hunter, 7, Albert Street, Seabam Harbour, co. Durham, wants Nos. 366, 375, 381, and 391 of the "Magnet" and also the issue containing "The Race to the Tuckshop!"

Your Editor

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

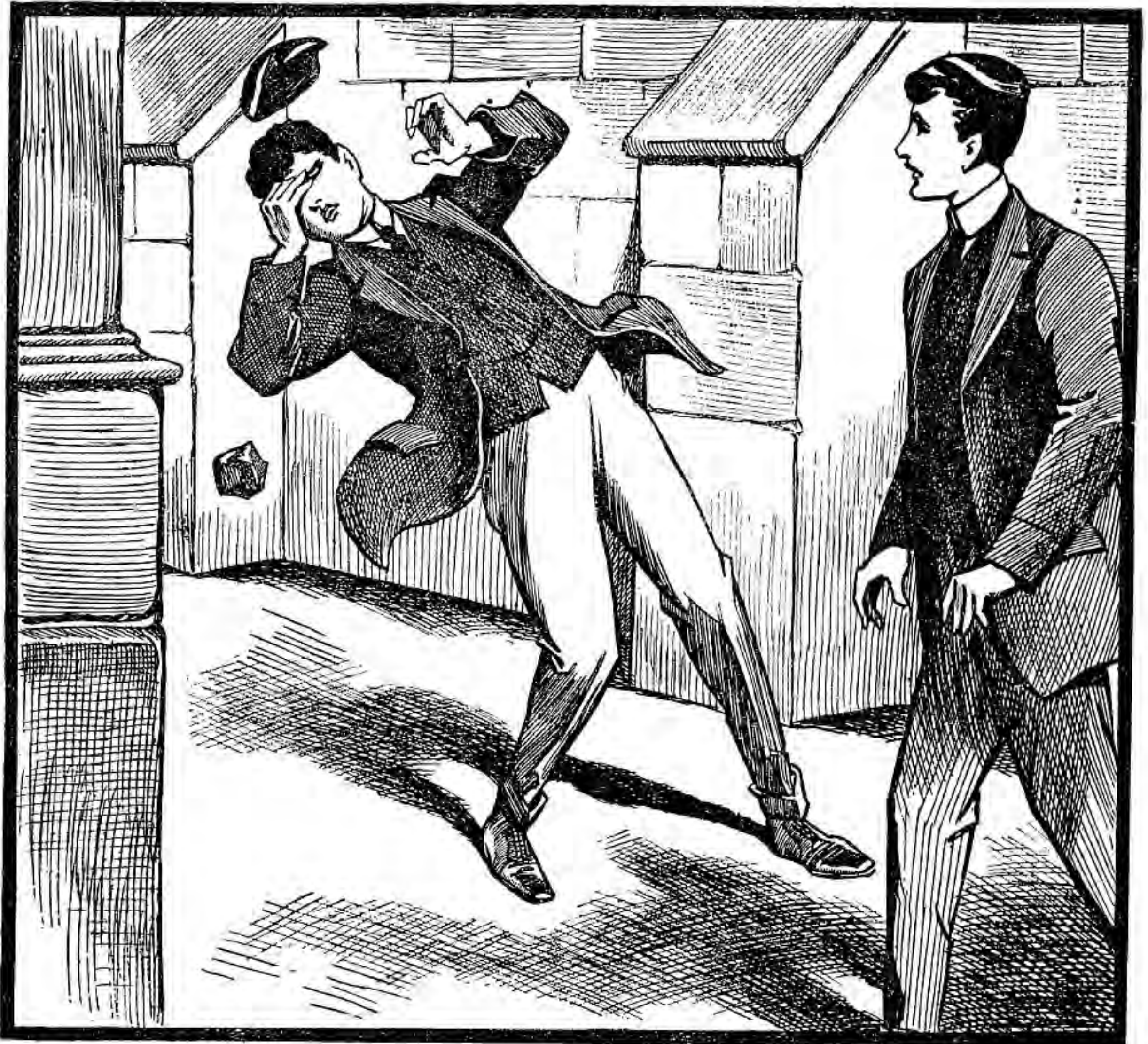


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

THE SENTENCE OF THE SCHOOL!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



There was a whiz in the air, and a great jagged stone hurled from the Cloisters struck Cecil Reginald Temple full on the forehead. He staggered. (See Chapter 5.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Corn in Egypt!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, of the Fourth Form at Greyfriars, came down the passage with a lofty stride.

His chums, Dabney and Fry of the Fourth, followed him.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were in the doorway of the School House waiting for the postman.

No. 447.

They grinned at the sight of Cecil Reginald.

Temple of the Fourth was a little bit given to swanking. Generally he walked the Close as if the earth were not quite good enough for him to tread on.

But his aristocratic nose was held a little higher than usual now.

Bob Cherry, who was always humorous, made him a deep bow, almost folding himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Hail!" said Bob solemnly.

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September 2nd, 1916.

And the chums of the Remove chimed in solemnly:
"All hail!"

The captain of the Fourth frowned.

It was true that he was a most superior person, and there was no reason why mere Remove fags should not recognise the fact and acknowledge it. But they never did recognise it, and they never did acknowledge it. Hence it was not difficult for Cecil Reginald to divine that Harry Wharton & Co. were merely improving the shining hour by pulling his superb leg.

"The hailfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his remarkable English. "Bow down, my esteemed chums! Bow down before the terrific Temple!"

"You cheeky fags!" said Temple.

"Hail!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Reginald, with a little more pink than usual in his cheeks, stepped out of the doorway, and Dabney and Fry, grinning somewhat, followed him.

"When is that dashed postman coming?" said Temple crossly.

"Can't be long now," said Fry. "The tenner's all right. Sure it's coming by this post?"

"So my aunt said."

"Good egg!" Fry rubbed his hands. "We'll help you to change it, old chap."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"By Jove, a tenner!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Temple's aunt is doing things in style. Temple, you ought to write to your aunt not to waste tenners in war-time."

Temple sniffed.

"I hope you're not going to spend it in riotous living, Temple," said Frank Nugent seriously. "If you like, I will mind it for you."

Another sniff.

"A tenner, by gum!" said Ogilvy of the Remove. "That rather knocks into the shade the postal-order I'm looking for. I'll tell you what, Temple. I'm expecting a postal-order for five bob, and you're expecting a tenner. I'll toss you which has which."

Sniff!

"That's a fair offer," grinned Bob Cherry. "I say, Temple, you'll let us feast our eyes on the tenner when it comes, won't you?"

Sniff!

"I say, you fellows, what's that about a tenner?" Billy Bunter rolled up, his eyes gleaming through his spectacles with excitement. "Who's getting a tenner?"

"Temple," said Ogilvy. "Look at him! He's a couple of inches taller than usual, and if he holds his chin much higher he'll get a crick in the neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Reginald Temple's ears were burning. He turned a freezing glare upon Dabney and Fry as he noted that they were grinning.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Ahem! Was I cackling?" murmured Dabney.

"Yes, you were!"

"Ahem!"

"If you think those fags' fooling is so jolly funny, you can stay here and enjoy it!" said Temple.

And he walked down the steps and into the quadrangle.

"Oh, I say, old chap!" said Dabney.

"Temple, old man!" said Fry appealingly.

Temple did not seem to hear. He walked away with his nose in the air. Evidently the captain of the Fourth was very much on his dignity.

Dabney and Fry looked dismayed.

All their little plans were laid for helping Temple to dispose of his tenner, in reckless disregard of war-time economy. In spite of the urgings of highly-salaried statesmen, Temple, Dabney, & Co. had intended to blue most of that tenner in great style. And now Cecil Reginald—always sensitive on the subject of his dignity—had marched off offended, and the Co. were naturally dismayed.

"Rotten luck!" said Ogilvy sympathetically. "I'll tell you what. You butter me up instead of Temple, and I'll let you have a whack in my postal-order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dabney and Fry grunted, and stalked away.

"Trouble in the family!" sighed Bob Cherry. "The great Reginald is annoyed, and the horn of plenty will not flow. This is what comes of your little jokes at the wrong time."

The Removites chuckled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the postman!" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

Mr. Boggs of Friardale was spotted in the Close.

Funds were low among the heroes of the Remove. Perhaps it was war-time economy among their people; at all events, remittances had fallen off, and there was a dearth of cash.

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The news that Ogilvy was expecting a postal-order, though only for the humble sum of five shillings, had come as a boon and a blessing. Robert Donald Ogilvy could always be depended on to whack out his supplies in the most generous manner to a hungry Remove.

The juniors fixed their eyes eagerly upon the old gentleman with the sack.

"This way, Boggy!" called out Harry Wharton. "Anything for Ogilvy?"

"Yes, Master Wharton."

"Hear, hear!"

"Donald, my son, I love you like a long-lost brother," said Bob Cherry; "and more especially as it's tea-time, and not a shot in the locker!"

Ogilvy grinned, and descended the steps.

Old Boggs handed out the letter, and the chums of the Remove gathered round Ogilvy, the only moneyed man in the crowd. The Scottish junior held up the postal-order he extracted from the letter.

Five bob!" he said.

"Hurrah!"

"Scotland for ever!"

"I say, you fellows—I say, Ogilvy. I'm expecting a postal-order!" exclaimed Bunter. "Look here! Are you quite sure that letter was addressed to you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, ass!" said Ogilvy, laughing. "And this letter is from my Uncle Macpherson."

"I've got an Uncle Macpherson, too—at least, an uncle," said Bunter. "I shouldn't wonder if it was for me all the time. You know how the Post Office has been blundering since this conscription bizney came in. I rather think that's the postal-order I've been expecting, Ogilvy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Ogilvy, "there's going to be a feed in my study, to the exact amount of five bob in coin of the realm. Every chap who's up against it is welcome to come and take his whack."

"Bravo!"

"I'm on!" said Bunter promptly. "Perhaps that may be your postal-order, after all, Ogilvy, when I come to think of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And when Mrs. Mumble at the school shop had obligingly changed Donald Ogilvy's postal-order, there was a merry tea-party in Ogilvy's study; and Billy Bunter was so busy taking the lion's share, that he quite forgot to run down Temple of the Fourth and attempt to raise a loan out of Cecil Reginald's expected tenner.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter in Trouble!

"BUNTER, you fat villain!"

Temple uttered the exclamation angrily.

It was some hours later, and the captain of the Fourth had come suddenly into his study and found Billy Bunter just leaving it. He grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar and pitched him into the study. Then he went at once to his desk.

"I haven't taken anything!" roared Bunter. "The cupboard's locked, you rotter!"

Temple turned from his desk with a gleam in his eyes.

"You fat rotter!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth angrily. "Where's the banknote I left in my desk?"

"The—the banknote?"

"Yes, you young rascal! Give it to me instantly, or——"

"But I haven't seen it!" gasped Bunter. "I haven't—really, Temple! I—I— Oh, oh!"

Temple had seized him by the collar, and was shaking him violently.

"Now, listen to me!" said Temple sternly. "Only you have been in the room besides myself. An hour ago I left the banknote inside my desk. Nobody could have taken it but you! I don't want to be hard on you. Give it back to me, and I'll let you off with a thrashing! Where is it?"

"I haven't taken it, Temple! I swear I haven't, and——"

"Very well, then!" said Temple savagely. He had quite lost his temper by this time. "You shall have the thrashing first!"

"Oh, don't!" yelled Bunter, squirming in anticipation.

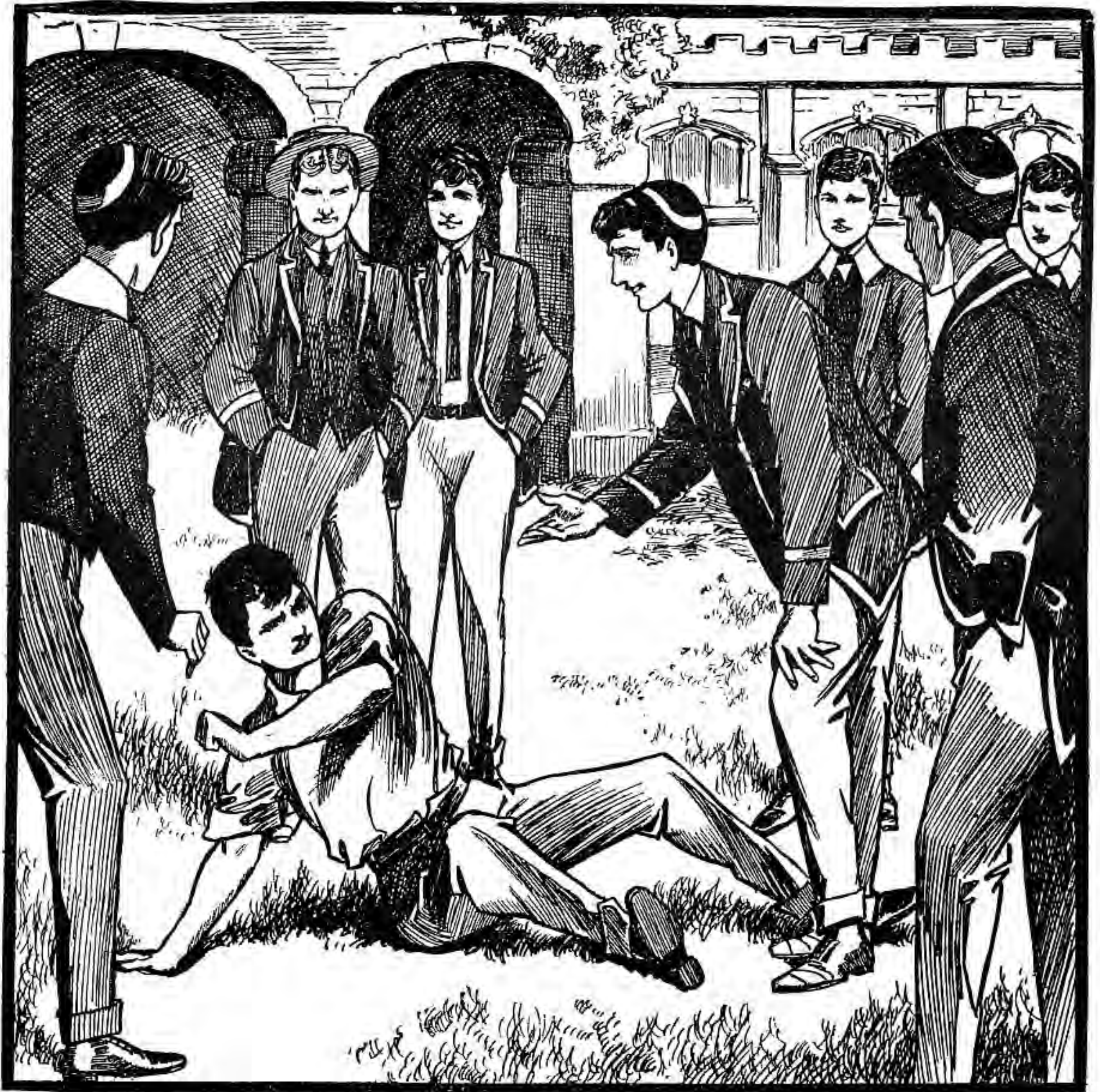
"I haven't— Oh, oh!"

The bat came down with a sounding thwack.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

Bunter yelled and struggled and kicked out, and his boot caught the captain of the Fourth on the shin. Temple gave a cry of pain. The pain gave the finishing touch to his fury. He thrashed the Owl with a savage energy he would never have shown had he been cooler.

DELICIOUS TUCK-HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND." 1^d



"You won't take my fist?" said Temple. "Very well! I only wanted to show that there was no malice on my side." (See Chapter 5.)

Billy Bunter's yells changed to wails and sobs. But Temple, blind with rage, continued to lay on the blows. Suddenly the door of the study opened, and a face looked in.

"I say, Temple, what on earth's the matter—killing somebody?"

It was Ogilvy of the Remove. Temple turned a flushed face towards him.

"This fat rascal has stolen some money from my desk, and refuses to give it back to me!" he exclaimed heatedly.

"Bunter has? I should never have thought that of him. But, I say, old fellow"—Ogilvy stepped into the study—"you'd better draw it mild, you know. If he's a thief, he ought to be punished, of course; but you don't want to half-kill him!"

It had already dawned upon Temple that he had gone too far; but he was the last person in the world to admit himself in the wrong. He suffered a little from swelled head, and he was not disposed to take criticism from anybody.

"I'm quite capable of looking after my own affairs, thank you, Ogilvy!" he snapped.

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Ogilvy bit his lip.

"I don't want to interfere," he said. "I spoke more for your own sake than for Bunter's. You'll be sorry for this when you're cool."

"I'm the best judge of that; and the fat rascal hasn't had half enough!"

Temple raised the bat.

"Hang it, Temple, you're not going to hit him again?"

"I'm going to paste him until he gives up what he's stolen!" replied Temple viciously. "And I don't want any meddling from you, Ogilvy!"

"I haven't stolen anything!" wailed Billy Bunter. "I never saw the banknote at all! I haven't—"

"Hold your tongue, and stop your lies!" said Temple. "Now, are you going to tell me where it is, or shall I give you some more of the same medicine?"

"I can't tell you when I don't know!"

"Obstinate pig!"

Temple threw up the bat, and, catching the contemptuous disapproval in Ogilvy's look, brought it down with extra

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"

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force upon the unhappy Owl. Billy Bunter yelled and wriggled.

Up went the bat again, and the next moment it was twisted from Temple's hand and tossed into a corner of the room. The captain of the Fourth stared at Ogilvy in speechless rage.

"You sha'n't ill-use the fat ass any more!" exclaimed Ogilvy determinedly. "Even if he's a thief you've no right to torture him; and you haven't proved it, anyway!"

"You dare to interfere?" panted the captain of the Fourth.

"Yes, I do; and you'll be glad of it when you're cool!" Ogilvy jerked Bunter off the table. "Cut for it, porpoise!"

Bunter needed no second bidding. He darted out of the door, and fairly flew along the corridor.

Temple hardly noticed him go; his rage was all directed against Ogilvy now.

Temple found his voice at last.

"You confounded meddler! How dare you interfere with me! By Jove, for two pins I'd chuck you head first out of the room!"

Ogilvy's eyes gleamed a little; but he answered with perfect calmness and good temper.

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Temple. You were going too far. Bunter was white as chalk. And the way he stuck it out makes it look to me as if he was telling the truth. You may have mislaid your money somewhere; you can't deny that you're careless in money matters. You lost some of the cricket subscriptions once!"

Temple ground his teeth. He had certainly jumped hastily to the conclusion that Bunter was guilty, but he was not disposed to retract; and, in fact, all that Ogilvy said only made him the more angry and obstinate.

"I've had enough of your insolence!" he hissed. "And I'll make you pay for your meddling! I'll teach you manners!"

Then, as Ogilvy, with a disdainful smile, turned towards the door the captain of the Fourth completely lost control of himself, and aimed a fierce blow full at his face. Ogilvy put aside the hasty blow with ease.

"If you want a row over this matter, Temple, you won't find me shirking it!" he said quietly. "But we'll leave it till you're cool!"

And he strode from the study, leaving the captain of the Fourth red with rage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Backing Up Bunter!

"HALLO, Don, old son! What are you looking so glum about?"

Donald Ogilvy was in his study. A fair-haired lad had just entered, and Ogilvy looked up with a nod and a smile. Dick Russell and Ogilvy were great chums.

"Was I looking glum?" he queried. "I was thinking."

"Well, don't think if it doesn't agree with you," advised Russell, taking a seat on the corner of the table. "Anything the matter?"

"Well, yes—a little."

"You're coming down to cricket, I suppose? Come on, and get it off your chest as we go along!"

"I can't come just yet, Dick; I'm waiting for somebody."

"Oh, are you? Then perhaps I'm in the way?"

"Not at all! It's only Bunter; and, in fact, you may as well hear what he's got to say."

Ogilvy related the scene in Temple's study, and Russell whistled expressively.

"It was like you to take the fat ass's part," he remarked. "But it won't do, you know. Bunter is an unreliable rotter—always doing something!"

"Temple was wild. It's a beastly unpleasant business altogether," said Ogilvy.

Russell nodded.

"You're right. But what is Bunter coming here for?"

"The fact is, I believe he is innocent. If he had had the banknote, I believe he would have given it up rather than be pestered by Temple as he was. I can't help thinking that Temple has made a big mistake, and, if so, somebody ought to stand up for that fat boulder and see that he gets justice."

"Behold the champion of the oppressed!" chuckled Russell. "But you're right, old son—right all the way! I dare say you'll get the truth out of Bunter. Hallo! Here he is!"

There was a tap at the half-open door, and Bunter came in. The Owl was walking rather painfully, and his face was still very white, and bore the stain of recent tears. He looked doubtfully at Russell.

"You asked me to come here, Ogilvy," he said.

"Right, porpoise! You can sit down!"

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"I'd—I'd rather stand, thank you, Ogilvy!" stammered Bunter.

Ogilvy smiled slightly.

"Very well, Billy; please your-self. Now, I want to know the truth about this banknote business. Did you steal it?"

"No, Ogilvy, I didn't," said Bunter earnestly. "I didn't know anything about it. I never went to his desk. I—I only went to the cupboard."

"But the note's missing, right enough, or Temple wouldn't say so," said Ogilvy, eyeing the Owl keenly. "Have you any idea what could have become of it? We know Temple had it this afternoon."

Bunter shook his head.

"No, I don't. Temple says it was in his desk."

"You can't think of anybody who might have taken it?"

Bunter shook his head hopelessly.

"You were in Temple's study to-day?"

"Yes."

"And you swear that you don't know anything about the banknote?"

"Yes, Ogilvy. I'm not a thief!"

"I don't believe you are, Billy; though until the note turns up it will be hard to prove that," said Ogilvy musingly.

"Still, I believe you, and I'll do the best I can for you. You had better keep out of Temple's way as much as possible for the present. Now clear!"

And the Owl retired, a good deal comforted by the assurance that somebody at least believed in him.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Ogilvy, looking at his chum.

"I'm inclined to think as you do—that Bunter is innocent," replied Russell. "But I don't see how it's to be proved. The banknote's missing, and Bunter had been in the study, and Temple believes him guilty. It looks black."

Ogilvy nodded, and glanced towards the door. A member of the Fourth had just stopped, and was looking in. It was Dabney.

"Come in, Dabney!"

"I've got a message for you, Ogilvy," said Dabney, rather awkwardly, coming into the room. "It's about the affair over Bunter."

"A message from Temple?"

"Yes."

"Get it off your chest!" said Russell.

"Temple has talked it over with us," said Dabney. "He intends to give you a chance to apologise."

"Really?" said Ogilvy.

"Yes. If you like to say you're sorry you interfered, and promise to keep off the grass in the future, the matter can end there."

Ogilvy shook his head.

"I'm not sorry I interfered. I'll say I'm sorry the whole thing occurred."

"That won't do."

"Well, that's all."

"Very well; then you'll have to fight Temple."

"I'm ready!"

"As I shall be his second, I can make the arrangements now," said Dabney. "What time and place will suit you?"

"Anywhere you like, and the sooner the better."

"Will you come down to the old Cloisters in half an hour from now, and bring your second?"

"Certainly!"

"Then that's about all," said Dabney. "It's best to go through with it at once. I'll tell Temple."

And, with a nod, he quitted the study.

"Good!" exclaimed Russell. "So Temple's out for scalps, is he? Well, you can give him as good as he sends, Don, and knock some of the conceit out of him!"

"I don't know whether I can do it," said Ogilvy frankly, "but I shall have a jolly good try!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Dog with a Bad Name!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with you, Bunter?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Loder been licking you?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Yow! No."

"Then what's the rumpus?"

"It's that beast Temple! Yow-ow! He licked me with a bat! I—I can't sit down!" said Billy Bunter pathetically.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Have you been scoffing his tommy?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hallo! Who's been walloping my porpoise?" asked Peter Todd, coming into the Common-room.

"Yow-wow! Temple!"

"Been after his banknote?" said Peter. "I heard he had one this afternoon."

"Look here, Toddy——"

"Well, what did he wallop you for?" asked Harry Wharton.

"If it was for nothing, we'll scrag Temple. He can't wallop Remove chaps. Though you don't do the Remove much credit, you fat bouncer!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Collaring the grub, of course!" said Squiff. "He's always at it. I spotted him at my study cupboard yesterday, and booted him out!"

"I didn't!" howled Bunter indignantly. "I never touched Temple's grub. The cupboard was locked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Temple found you there burgling, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry. "If he did, you wanted a licking, and it serves you right!"

Bunter groaned.

"The beast met me as I was coming away. I—I was going to ask Fishy if he could lend me a key. I—I mean—— Of course, I wouldn't touch Temple's grub, anyway. Then the beast said I'd taken his banknote!"

"You've stolen Temple's banknote!" exclaimed Todd, aghast.

"No, I haven't!" roared Bunter. "Temple said I had, but I hadn't!"

The Removites looked hard at Bunter. Well enough they knew, by old experience, what exceedingly confused notions William George Bunter had on the subject of meum and tuum. Bunter generally fancied a thing was his if he wanted it. He was always prepared to borrow anybody's tuck without permission; though, to do him justice, he fully intended to indemnify the sufferers out of his celebrated postal-order—when it came.

"Look here, Temple wouldn't have thought you had taken his banknote without some reason," said the captain of the Remove abruptly. "You were in his study?"

"Yes; but——"

"Well, it looks jolly bad, that's all."

"You see, we know you, Bunter," said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"If you had it, you young ass, you'd better take it back at once!" said Peter Todd. "You ought to know you can't change it. The number will be known."

"I haven't had it!" shrieked Bunter.

"You're always scoffing fellows' grub!" said Dick Rake.

"Grub ain't banknotes, you fathead!"

"Well, no," admitted Rake. "But——"

"For goodness' sake, own up if you've had it, and get it taken back to Temple, Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I tell you I haven't seen it!" yelled Bunter indignantly.

"Well, you're such a Prussian, you know!"

"I say, you fellows, you might take a fellow's word," said Billy Bunter pathetically. "Ogilvy believes me, and he's a jolly keen Scotch chap. He stopped Temple lamming me."

"But Ogilvy can't know anything about it," said Nugent.

"He can take a fellow's word!" said Bunter loftily.

"Silly ass if he takes yours!" remarked Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Why don't you own up, fathead, and take it back?" said Skinner. "That's the best thing you can do."

"I haven't had it!"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter blinked furiously at the doubting Thomases of the Remove, and rolled out of the Common-room. There was no sympathy for him there. He found Ogilvy and Russell in the passage, proceeding towards the door.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Scat!" said Russell.

The two Removites walked out, and Bunter blinked after them dolorously. Billy Bunter was feeling very down. It was not only the licking he had had, though that was severe. But he realised that his bad reputation was clinging to him, and that there was little chance of any of the Remove believing in his innocence. He was, in fact, a dog with a bad name.

"I say, Smithy——" he began, as he met the Bouncer in the passage.

The Bouncer grinned, made a motion as if buttoning his pockets, and walked on.

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

He rolled on disconsolately. Bolsover major was chatting with Bulstrode in the doorway, and both of them waved Bunter back as he came up.

"Buzz off!" said Bulstrode. "You can't have my watch!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Hop it!" said Bolsover major. "I'm not going to keep my hands in my pockets, and it's jolly nearly necessary when you're around! Go and pilfer in the Fourth if you want to pilfer!"

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"I tell you I haven't——"

"Rats!"

"Temple's a lying beast——"

"Not such a lying beast as you are," said Bolsover major.

"Now, if you want to be kicked along the passage——"

Billy Bunter did not want to be kicked along the passage, so he departed hastily.

A fat fag, very like William George—in fact, a smaller edition of him—met him at the corner, and beckoned to him.

It was Sammy Bunter of the Second Form, Billy Bunter's minor.

"Hold on, Billy!" whispered Sammy mysteriously.

Bunter halted.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Halves!" said Sammy.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him, not understanding for a moment. Sammy blinked back through his glasses eagerly.

"What do you mean, you young idiot?" growled Bunter.

"Halves!"

"Halves what?"

"I'll keep it dark. The banknote!" whispered Sammy.

"The—the banknote?"

"Temple's banknote, you know."

Billy Bunter stared at the fat young rascal speechlessly for a moment. Even his own minor believed that he had taken Cecil Reginald Temple's banknote, though the honourable Sammy's only idea was to have a whack in the plunder.

"Halves—that's only fair!" said Sammy.

"You fat little beast!" hissed Bunter. "I haven't touched it!"

Sammy winked one eye at his enraged major.

"Gammon!" he said.

"Don't you believe me?" howled Bunter.

"No jolly fear! Yaroooh!" roared Bunter minor, as his major rushed at him. "Yaroooh! Leggo! Keep off! Yooop! Yah!"

Sammy fled, with Billy in hot pursuit, kicking as he ran, and the yelling fag disappeared down the passage, Bunter panting after him.

Bunter minor took refuge in the Second Form-room, and the sight of Dicky Nugent and Gatty and Myers, ready for war, caused the Owl of the Remove to give up the pursuit and beat a strategic retreat. The chastisement of the iniquitous Sammy had afforded Billy Bunter some solace. But as he went down the passage there was a howl from Tubb of the Third.

"Stop, thief!"

Billy Bunter groaned as he rolled away. Guilty or not, he was being punished; and he sincerely wished he had not been a dog with such a bad name!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Fight!

OGILVY and Russell arrived on the scene of the fight promptly to time. They found Cecil Reginald Temple already there, however, with Dabney and Fry and Scott of the Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple was ready for business, and looking as lofty as ever. With all his swanking ways, Temple had plenty of pluck, and he did not regard it as a very difficult task to lick a Removite. And Temple was still very angry. His banknote—his celebrated tenner—was gone, and Ogilvy had interfered between him and the supposed thief. He intended to give the Removite the licking of his life.

He had little doubt—or, rather, none at all—of being able to do it. He was older and bigger than Ogilvy, and had the advantage physically. But Ogilvy was as hard as nails, and full of pluck and determination. If he was licked, it was certain that he would not be licked easily.

The two had had the gloves on together more than once in the gym, and so far as skill went there seemed little to choose between them.

Temple gave Russell and Ogilvy a curt nod, which was returned by one equally curt. Dabney, who was there as second, made an attempt at peacemaking. He was a peaceful fellow himself, and liked to see cordial faces round him.

"I say, you fellows, must this thing go on?" he exclaimed. "Why not——?"

"I'm perfectly willing to accept Ogilvy's apology," replied Cecil Reginald Temple loftily.

"I'm not willing to offer one, however," retorted Ogilvy. "You used Bunter brutally. You accused him of theft without the slightest proof, and I say that I believe in his innocence; and, as a matter of fact, you owe him an apology."

Cecil Reginald Temple laughed.

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"Yes; I fancy I see myself apologising to Bunter!" he said. "The fat rascal had the banknote right enough, and I'll make him disgorge it yet. But, anyway, you shoved yourself in where you were not wanted, and you've got to be set down. So let's get on without more talking."

The preparations for the contest were soon made. The two juniors faced each other, and Fry took out his watch to keep time.

Ogilvy held out his hand in the time-honoured manner of the ring, and Temple gave it a hasty touch. Then the fight commenced.

Both were cool and steady and determined. Both were cautious at the start, but they soon began to warm to the work.

Temple's fist got home first with a sounding thump upon Ogilvy's jaw, and the latter staggered a little; but as the Fourth-Former rushed in to improve his advantage, Ogilvy let out his left and caught him under the chin.

Temple was fairly stopped, and they sparred harmlessly till the call of time.

The second round was hotter, both receiving heavy punishment; and when Fry called "Time!" again, Temple's lip was bleeding, and Ogilvy's left eye was closing itself. Russell made a knee for his principal, and sponged his bruised and heated face.

"You must get closer to him, old boy," he said. "The brute has a longer reach than you have, and he guards himself awfully well. I didn't think he had so much stuff in him before. You must get close to him, and hit hard. He'll hit you, anyway."

Ogilvy grinned.

"All right, Dick; I'll do my best."

And in the third round he followed his chum's advice. Temple attacked vigorously, and Ogilvy gave ground a little at first; then, countering a heavy drive, he rushed in, and found his chance of doing some in-fighting.

He had got in some beautiful half-arm hits before Temple could break away, and then the captain of the Fourth was looking and feeling decidedly groggy, and Ogilvy followed him up with a ceaseless attack.

Temple's guard was now faulty, and most of Ogilvy's blows got home, and at last a tremendous right-hander on the jaw sent Temple flying into his second's arms.

But for the call of time it is probable that Temple would have had to cry off in that round; but "Time!" saved him, and he sank, breathless and gasping, on his second's ready knee. Dick Russell patted Ogilvy on the back.

"Keep that up, Don, and you'll do!" he exclaimed.

"He won't give me another chance," replied Ogilvy, with a shake of the head.

Dabney had some advice to give his principal.

"Keep him off!" he said. "No more in-fighting, you know, or you're licked, and may as well throw up the sponge at once. If you can keep him at arm's-length you've got him."

"I know that," said Temple. "He won't get at me like that again. I've had a lesson."

He was grimly determined as he faced Ogilvy again. He had had terrible punishment, but it seemed only to spur him on.

At it they went again hammer and tongs; but though that round and the next it could be seen that Ogilvy was steadily getting the worst of it. He was unable to close, and Temple's longer reach told heavily.

"You'll go on, Don?" asked Russell dubiously, after the fifth round.

Ogilvy had sunk upon his knee, almost dazed.

"Yes."

"You're not fit."

"I'm not licked yet!"

And Ogilvy toed the mark again with resolute courage. He was realising that his chance of victory was gone; but he was game to the last. He had not sought this fight, but now that he was in it he would fight on till he dropped.

The anticipation of triumph was gleaming in Cecil Reginald's eyes.

In the third round he had been very near to defeat, but since then all had gone in his favour, and he was certain of victory now. And he pressed his attack as Ogilvy gave more and more ground. Just before the call of "Time!" Ogilvy went heavily to grass. Russell picked him up.

With a grave and concerned face Russell sponged his chum's heated features.

"You can't go on!" he whispered.

"I shall go on!"

When Ogilvy spoke in that tone Dick knew that it was of no use to argue, and so wisely held his peace. But he knew that his chum had no chance of success now, and could only add to the severity of his punishment. But, after all, as Russell noted with satisfaction, the captain of the Fourth was

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getting almost as much punishment. Even if he won, he would have cause to remember the fight.

The spectators looked on grimly as the seventh round commenced. It was only a question of time now, and it did not look as if Ogilvy could last out the round.

But he did. Twice he went to grass, and twice he jumped up again and went on.

As Fry was about to call "Time!" for the eighth round Temple made a step forward.

"I'm quite willing to let this end here, without a finish, if Ogilvy cares to apologise," he said.

"I have said that I won't!" gasped Ogilvy. "You acted like a beastly bully, and I did quite right to stop you. And I would do so again!"

"Very well; we'll finish, then!"

"Time!"

The fighting was now in Temple's hands. Ogilvy had made a gallant struggle, but he was defeated. Temple's advantage in age and size was not great, but it was sufficient to weigh down the balance.

The round was the last. Temple drove Ogilvy back with heavy blows, his opponent's guard failing, and hardly a tap being delivered in return.

Suddenly, with a swift upper-cut, the captain of the Fourth sent his adversary fairly flying. Ogilvy crashed down, and lay dazed, half stunned. Russell knelt beside him, and raised his head and bathed his forehead in cool water. He did not rise at the call of "Time!" and Fry put away his watch.

Cecil Temple, standing rather unsteadily on his feet, donned his vest and jacket with his second's assistance. He glanced at Ogilvy, who was beginning to recover from that last terrible knock-down blow. There was a struggle in the mind of the captain of the Fourth, but generous feelings conquered, and he crossed over to Ogilvy and held out his hand.

Ogilvy put his hands behind him.

There was a loud murmur of disapproval from all on the spot, mingled with surprise. It was not like Ogilvy to refuse his adversary's hand; he was usually the most generous of fellows. But, as a matter of fact, the bitterness of defeat was very bitter indeed to Ogilvy just then. Added to that, he was dazed and confused, and hardly himself.

"You won't take my fist?" said Temple. "Very well; I only wanted to show that there's no malice on my side whatever there may be on yours."

"You've licked me," said Ogilvy, in a gasping voice. "But I'll take you on again as soon as I get over this! When I've licked you I'll take your fist, but not before!"

Temple smiled derisively, and put his hands in his pockets and walked away, followed by his friends. Russell remained to help the defeated champion back to the school.

Temple paused to look at his face in a pocket-mirror, and he started at the sight he beheld.

"Scott!" he exclaimed. "I do look a picture! I shall have to take care that none of the masters see me like this. I'll have to dodge up to the dorm somehow."

He succeeded in getting to his quarters unseen, and for a considerable time he laboured at removing the traces of the fight, with a good deal of success, though, of course, there were some marks that could not be removed.

When he had finished, Temple presented a far more respectable appearance; but he was still anxious to keep out of sight of the masters as long as possible. If the story leaked out, unpleasant consequences might follow.

"How do you feel now?" asked Dabney, unable to restrain a grin as he surveyed the features of his chum.

"Rotten!" said Temple frankly. "Ogilvy is a slogger, and no mistake!"

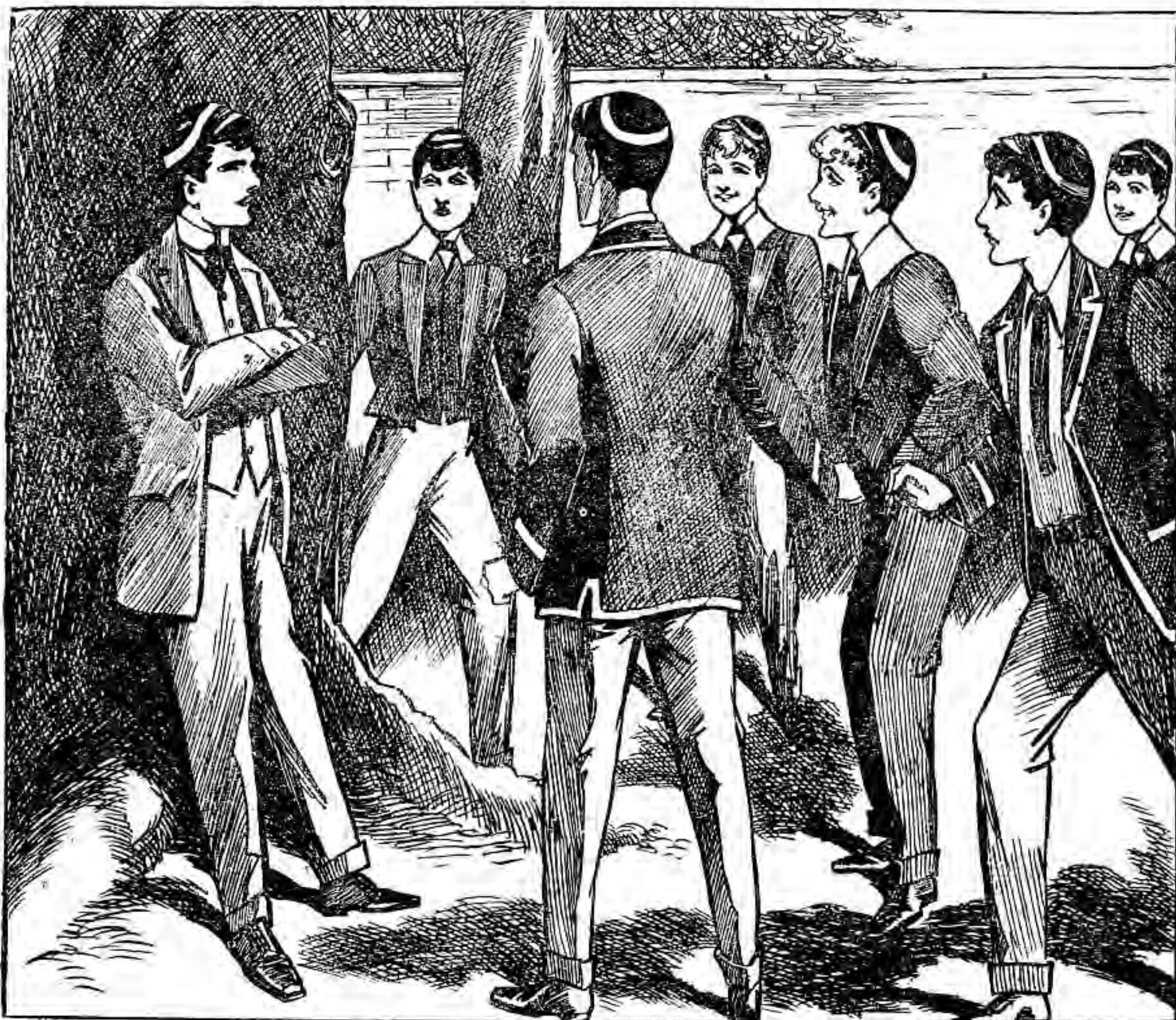
"He put up a good fight. I'm surprised at his refusing to shake hands over it. It isn't like him to bear malice," said Dabney. "I dare say he'll come round all right to-morrow, though."

"More likely he's planning how to get even with me," said Temple carelessly. "I hate a chap who can't take a fair and square licking. He couldn't pretend that I was crowing over him. I didn't want to quarrel with him at all. It was all through his own meddling. I say, I don't want to be seen to-night if I can help it," he went on. "Come for a stroll in the Close. It'll freshen me up a bit, and keep me out of sight."

It had been dark some time now. The two Fourth-Formers strolled out into the Close, cool and sweet in the evening. It was deserted, and they strolled on, talking mainly of cricket, towards the Cloisters.

The Cloisters were a relic of the ancient religious establishment which had once occupied the site of Greyfriars School. On summer days they afforded a deliciously cool retreat, but at this time of the night, of course, they were solitary.

Temple and Dabney passed them more than once. The cool night air was refreshing to Temple's bruised face and aching head, and he was already feeling better.



"I warn you not to speak to Ogilvy again!" said Temple. "Do you hear? This is your last chance!" Stony silence from Russell. (See Chapter 10.)

"I feel better now," remarked Temple. "I——"

He broke off abruptly.

Dabney looked at him.

"What's the matter?"

Temple was staring at the gloomy Cloisters.

"I thought I saw something move there. Hallo, hallo! Anybody there? Oh!"

There was a whiz in the air, and a great jagged stone, hurled from the dark Cloisters, struck Cecil Temple full on the forehead. He staggered, and fell upon his face.

Dabney, with a cry of horror, threw himself down beside his chum, shouting for help. He lifted Temple's head, and again cried out with horror. Temple's face was like chalk, and streaked with blood from a ragged cut on the forehead. A second or two later Temple's eyes opened, and he groaned.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Blow!

OGILVY, as well as the captain of the Fourth, had spent some time in removing the traces of the fight, but with much less success than Temple. In the last two rounds his punishment had been terrible, and he was still dazed and shaky when he came into the school in the evening dusk, and Russell helped him to his study. There Russell did all he could for his chum; and it was a good deal. But Ogilvy's face was a mass of bruises and cuts, and his head was aching horribly.

He tried to smile as he looked in the glass.

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"It will be better to-morrow," said Dick consolingly. "I wish you hadn't stuck it out those last two rounds. There's no sense in following up a losing game, you know. Better get to bed now, and not show up downstairs again till morning."

Ogilvy shook his head.

"I couldn't sleep," he said. "I've had a shaking-up, and my nerves are all in a jangle!"

He threw up the window and looked out into the shadowy Close, and frowned slightly as he saw Temple and Dabney pass in the light of a window below. Dick followed his glance, and he looked rather uneasily at Ogilvy.

"I say, old chap," he said hesitatingly, "I—I wish——"

He paused.

"Well?" said Ogilvy.

"Well, I'd like you not to have such bitter feelings towards Temple. It wasn't your style to refuse to shake hands with him."

Ogilvy's eyes contracted.

"I stopped him in the act of beastly bullying!" he said, between his teeth. "He was acting like a brute, and I stopped him, and he had the cheek to ask me to apologise. Now he's licked me—licked me fairly, I own. But, after all, he had the advantage. I'm set down before all the Form. You're wrong if you think I bear him malice. It isn't that. But I shall tackle him again, and I will lick him, if I've got it in me! Then it will be time to talk about shaking hands over the matter."

Russell was silent. He had not expected the defeat to rankle so deeply with one usually so frank and good-natured as Ogilvy. But it was clear that his chum had taken it very

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much to heart, and nothing he could say would be of any use.

"I think I'll go for a stroll in the Cloisters," said Ogilvy restlessly. "My head aches fearfully, and seems as if it's on fire."

"You're not thinking of—"

Russell hesitated.

"Thinking of what?"

"Nothing; only Temple just went in that direction."

Ogilvy made an irritable gesture.

"You don't think I'm going to row with him again to-night, do you?" he exclaimed. "What rot, Dick! I think we've both had enough for one time!"

"I suppose so; but you seem so queer to-night, so different from usual."

"It's all right, old chap. The air will do me good. I think I'll go alone."

Russell's face was sad and serious as he watched his chum go. He had never seen Don Ogilvy in quite this mood before, and it seemed to him that ill would come of it.

Ogilvy breathed more easily in the dark, quiet Cloisters. He was glad to be alone for a time. He had had, as he said, a terrible shaking-up, and he wanted to get calm again. He pressed his burning forehead against the cool stone of a column, and felt an indescribable relief.

The quiet Cloisters, trodden centuries ago by generations of peaceful monks, had a calmness, a repose, all their own. Ogilvy felt its influence stealing over him; his heart and his head throbbed less wildly; the bitterness began to die in his breast, and his true, generous nature to assert itself. He had done wrong in refusing to take Temple's hand; he realised that now he was calm. Temple had been in the wrong—flagrantly in the wrong, yet his action after the fight had not been tainted by any of his usual overbearing manner. It had been a generous act, and it was Ogilvy who had failed in generosity. Ogilvy felt his cheek colour now as he thought of it.

The sound of Temple's voice broke upon his meditations. He was passing the Cloisters with Dabney, and talking cricket. Moved by an impulse, Ogilvy made a step to leave the Cloisters and meet his enemy, with a vague thought of reconciliation in his mind. And as he made that step he heard Temple's voice call, and then the cry of agony, the heavy fall, and the crash of the stone upon the ground.

For a moment Ogilvy stood petrified, and Dabney's cry rang in his ears. He was about to rush out when he caught sight of a dim figure slinking past him, and sprang forward and grasped it by the shoulder.

This, undoubtedly, was the form Temple had caught a glimpse of before he called out; this was the one who had struck down the captain of the Fourth. There was a terrified gasp as Ogilvy seized the slinking form. The junior uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"Bunter!"

"Is it you, Ogilvy?"

The Owl fell upon his knees, shuddering with fear.

"Did you see— Oh, don't tell—don't tell! For mercy's sake, don't tell!"

Ogilvy glanced towards the spot where Temple had fallen. There was already a crowd round the captain of the Fourth; he was not needed there. He gripped the shivering Owl and dragged him up, and drew him away further into the shadows of the Cloisters.

"Did you throw a stone, Bunter?"

"No—yes, I did, then!"

"Why did you do it?"

"You know how he beat me," quavered Bunter. "He accused me of thieving, and I never saw his banknote. The chaps are all calling me a thief. Half the Remove won't speak to me, and they lock up their desks now. And I never stole the banknote. He beat me like a dog. Why shouldn't I get my own back on him? You won't tell, Ogilvy?"

Ogilvy hesitated. The Owl had suffered enough at Temple's hands—too much; and cruel as his act of revenge was, it was not fair to forget the provocation he had received. To betray him would be to expose him to fresh and more severe punishment, and he had already, in all conscience, been punished sufficiently. And, besides, he was so scared at Ogilvy's discovery of him, so overwhelmed with terror at the thought of being given up to punishment, that Ogilvy was really afraid of what might happen if he betrayed the wretched Owl. Bunter was on the verge of hysterics now, and Ogilvy had no desire to see him in a fit.

In the gloom of the Cloisters Billy Bunter blinked at Ogilvy, his eyes almost starting through his spectacles.

The wretched Owl of the Remove had acted without thinking, as he usually did, in hurling that stone from the Cloisters at Temple of the Fourth. He was smarting from

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his licking, and the jeers of the Removites had exasperated him.

In all the Remove there was hardly a fellow, excepting Ogilvy, who believed that he had not taken Cecil Reginald Temple's "tenner."

The glances of contempt, the jeers and sneers, had had their natural effect upon Bunter.

But the miserable Owl had not intended to hurt the captain of the Fourth so seriously.

Short-sighted as he was, he had hurled the stone from close range, and with greater force than he had calculated upon.

He had intended to give Temple a hard knock upon his chest, not on his face; but his faulty sight had caused the catastrophe.

He was shaking like a jelly now, utterly terrified at the thought of the punishment that would fall upon him if he were discovered.

He had caught a glimpse of Temple's white face, with the splash of red on the forehead, and he was almost overcome with horror and fear.

He clutched Ogilvy by the arm.

"Keep it dark!" he gasped. "I—I say, Ogilvy, I—I really didn't mean to hurt him much. As—as a matter of fact, I didn't intend to hit him with the stone at all, you know—only just to—scare him."

"Don't tell lies!" muttered the Scottish junior angrily.

"Oh, really, Ogilvy! I—I only meant to give him a tap!" groaned Bunter. "Now he—he's hurt, and—and they'll think I did it on purpose. Look here, don't be a sneak! Quelch will have me flogged! I—I say, you know, you can't sneak about a chap, Ogilvy."

Ogilvy set his lips hard.

There was a glimmering of lights, and a murmur of voices came from the end of the Cloisters. The Scottish junior had little time to make up his mind.

He made it up quickly.

To Bunter's intense relief, Ogilvy released him.

"Cut it!" said Ogilvy briefly.

"You—you won't give me away, Ogilvy?"

"No!"

Bunter panted with relief.

"Honour bright?" he gasped.

"Honour bright! Now clear!"

William George Bunter did not need any further bidding. He darted away, and disappeared in a second.

Ogilvy remained in gloomy thought.

It was the knowledge of the injuries Billy Bunter had sustained at Cecil Temple's hands that had induced him to make that promise to the Owl of the Remove. But he was doubtful now whether he had done quite right, and the doubt troubled him.

Two or three juniors came running through the Cloisters. One of them held a bicycle-lantern in his hand.

They were evidently in search of Temple's assailant.

The juniors stopped, amazed, as the lantern-light gleamed upon the pale, troubled face of Robert Donald Ogilvy of the Remove.

"Ogilvy!"

"Well?" muttered Ogilvy.

"Ogilvy! So it was you!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

"O GILVY!"

"You!"

Dabney and Fry uttered the words in tones of amazement, mingled with contempt and disgust.

Ogilvy started violently.

For the first time he realised what he had done in allowing Billy Bunter to escape discovery.

That he himself could ever be suspected of such a cowardly action had never crossed the mind of the Scottish junior.

But he realised now that he had laid himself open to suspicion.

Bunter was gone, and no one but Ogilvy had seen the Owl of the Remove there at all. Dabney and Fry and the rest stared at Ogilvy accusingly, and the Scottish junior flushed with anger.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to accuse me of pitching that stone at Temple?"

Dabney shrugged his shoulders.

"You fool!" broke out Ogilvy savagely and indignantly.

"Are you dotty?"

"No, I'm not dotty," said Dabney quietly. "I think the thing's pretty clear. The stone was flung from the Cloisters; and when we search we find you here, and nobody else."

"I—I—"

"Well, if you didn't fling the stone, who did?"

Ogilvy hesitated.

His flush deepened under the keen glances cast upon him. He could have answered the question, and cleared himself easily enough.

He had only to utter a word.

But his promise, his word of honour, held him silent. He realised keenly enough now how reckless that promise had been. But it had been given, and his word must not be broken.

His compassion for the wretched Owl of the Remove had got him into an awkward scrape. But his lips were sealed.

It was too late to think of that now. Whatever happened, he had to keep his word to the wretched junior skulking away in the darkness.

His hesitation did not escape the eyes of the Fourth-Formers. Several of the Remove had joined the searchers, and they, too, looked at Ogilvy very curiously, and with suspicion in their glances.

The juniors exchanged glances, and each read the opinion of the rest. Not a fellow there but believed Ogilvy guilty.

He realised it, and his face became paler.

"You don't answer," said Dabney, at last.

"I—I haven't anything to say!"

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith of the Remove. "Did you chuck that stone at Temple, or didn't you?"

"I did not!"

"Then who did?"

Silence.

"If you didn't fling it, Ogilvy, you must have seen who did," said Peter Todd quietly. "For goodness' sake, tell us who it was!"

No reply.

"He can't answer," said Dabney, with a curl of the lip. "Of course he can't! He knows well enough that he did it!"

"I didn't! I—!" Ogilvy broke off again. What could he say?

"Well?" said Fry.

"Nothing."

"You've nothing to say," said Dabney contemptuously, "and yet you expect us to believe that you didn't chuck the stone?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't believe you, for one!"

"Or I, for another!" said Fry.

"Dash it all, Ogilvy, why can't you speak out?" exclaimed Bolsover major. "You know what it looks like."

"You ought to be willing to take my word—at least the chaps in my own Form," said Ogilvy, in a quiet voice. "You ought to know that I wouldn't have done a rotten, cowardly thing like that."

"Then who did?" demanded Scott.

"You must have seen the chap, if anybody else was in the Cloisters at all," said Bolsover major. "You were on the spot!"

"What's the good of talking to him?" said Dabney impatiently. "It's plain enough. Somebody threw the stone from the Cloisters, and we find Ogilvy here, and he's got nothing to say. There's no use talking—we all know how to believe our eyes, I suppose?"

"It's plain enough," said Skinner.

"Yes, it's plain enough," broke in a weak halting voice, as Cecil Reginald Temple came on the scene.

There was a crowd in the Cloisters by this time, and every head was turned as the captain of the Fourth came up.

Cecil Temple was deadly pale, and there were smears of blood upon his colourless face. The cut in his forehead had been bound up with a handkerchief. He leaned heavily upon Dabney's arm as he walked.

Ogilvy looked at Temple. There were two or three lanterns now, and plenty of light upon the scene. The captain of the Fourth returned Ogilvy's look, and his eyes were glittering beneath the stained bandage.

"So that was your revenge?" he said. "You refused to take my hand after the fight, and no wonder, when you had this in your mind! I don't think any decent fellow will ever offer you his hand again!"

Ogilvy winced.

"So you believe I did it?" he asked, in a low voice.

Temple gave a sneering laugh.

"Do you want me to believe that you didn't?"

"Yes."

"You must give me something a little less steep. I know you did it! You—you cur, you might have killed me! I shall bear this scar for months. But I'd rather be in my shoes than yours!"

He turned on his heel and walked away. The other fellows followed. Only Fry lingered behind for a moment.

"I say, Ogilvy!"

Ogilvy, whose eyes had been fixed moodily on the ground, looked up wearily.

"Yes? What is it?"

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EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"I hate to think that you did this beastly thing——"

"I didn't do it!"

"But can't you give some explanation? If only you explain——"

Ogilvy shook his head.

"I've nothing to say."

Fry walked away without another word. Ogilvy drew a sharp breath. He saw that Fry believed him guilty.

He remained alone in the dark Cloisters. What was he to do? He tried to think. How could he clear himself of this terrible charge? Without betraying Bunter, it was impossible. He could not break his word. He must face it out. But what would that mean? The juniors believed him guilty. They would certainly take some action. They would keep the matter, if possible, from the knowledge of the masters. But they would know how to punish him. If he were not ragged, the least he could expect was that he would be sent to Coventry by the whole school.

He quitted the Cloisters, and walked slowly to the School House. He entered his own study, and found Russell there.

Russell had been deep in a Latin imposition for the last hour, and so he had only just heard of the happening in the Cloisters. His face was deeply concerned. Ogilvy threw himself into a chair in an attitude of the deepest dejection. He looked up gloomily enough at his chum.

"So you think me guilty, too, Dick?" he said bitterly, as he caught the expression on Russell's face. "You've joined all the rest against me?"

For the moment, indeed, Russell's belief in his chum had wavered. Ogilvy's strange mood that evening, his bitterness against Temple, and his going to the Cloisters, after seeing Temple go in that direction, had all recurred to Russell's mind with strong significance.

And Russell's heart had sunk as he heard from Dabney the account of how Ogilvy had been found alone in the Cloisters after the flinging of the stone, and how he had refused to give any explanation. Was it possible, Russell had wondered, that Ogilvy had allowed his bitterness against Temple to lead him to commit so dastardly a deed of vengeance?

But it was only for a moment that the doubt crept into his mind. He was too loyal to his chum to allow it to remain there. In spite of himself, however, the doubt had entered his breast again for a moment as he saw Ogilvy's look of utter dejection. He coloured at his chum's bitter words.

"No, I don't believe anything against you, Don," he said quietly. "I know that you couldn't do such a thing. I know that you didn't do it!"

Ogilvy brightened a little.

"You mean that, Dick?"

"Of course I mean it!" said Russell. "I don't even ask you to tell me that you were not guilty!"

"I didn't fling the stone, Dick. I'd have cut off my right hand sooner than do such a beastly, cowardly thing!"

"I know, old fellow. But who did fling it?"

Ogilvy was silent.

"You must have seen him, Don; you were close upon the spot. At least, you must have seen or heard something. There's no reason for keeping it quiet, is there?"

"I have nothing to say about it."

"Not even to me?"

"Not even to you."

Russell was silent. It was a hard test to his belief in his chum, a very hard test, but his loyalty stood the strain.

"I don't understand you, Don," he said, after a pause.

"I believe in you, of course; but you can't expect the other fellows to do so. Temple has been badly hurt. There will be some yarn to satisfy the masters, to prevent an inquiry, of course; but the chaps will take the matter into their own hands. It's simply your word against a lot of evidence. The other fellows, naturally, haven't the faith in you that I have. I don't want to press advice upon you, old chap, but I think you ought to speak out!"

Ogilvy nodded. Russell's reasoning was perfectly logical, his advice sound; but he did not know the circumstances. Ogilvy could not speak out.

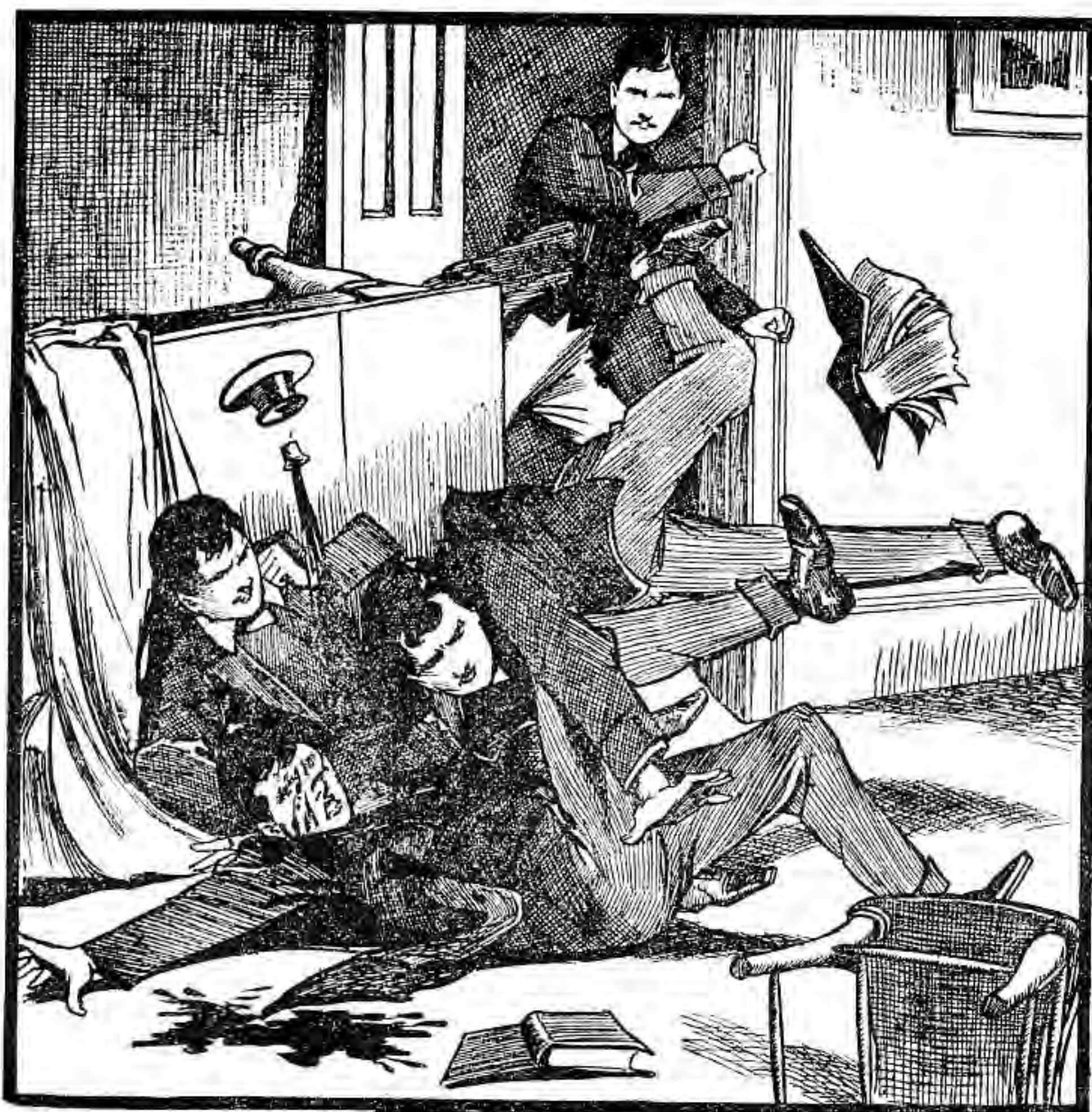
"Nobody was anxious to believe you guilty," went on Russell. "Even Temple would have taken your word. But they all know that if you were not the guilty party you must have seen him. Maybe you saw him and didn't feel

ANSWERS

NEXT
MONDAY—

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The study table capsized. Temple fell, and Fry sprawled over him. An open inkpot slid from the table and alighted upon Fry's nose. (See Chapter 12.)

sure of him in the dark, and don't like to make an accusation on suspicion," he added, as a new thought struck him. "Is that it? If so, you've only got to say so!"

Ogilvy shook his head.

Russell was silent. He could not in the least understand his chum's reticence, but he foresaw what it would result in.

Ogilvy rose with a gesture of weariness.

"It's no use, Dick. I've got a reason for not speaking out—a good reason. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. Whatever the chaps choose to do, I shall have to face the music. But I don't want to drag you into it!"

"You've no choice in the matter," said Russell, with a smile. "I shall stand by you, whether you want me to or not!"

"But if they send me to Coventry?"

"They can send me, too!"

Ogilvy made a restless gesture.

"Look here, Russell, it won't do! I can see what's coming, and you'd better take my tip and let me alone!"

Russell laughed.

"I'm sticking to you," he said. "And—"

Russell was interrupted by a knock at the door. It opened, and Squiff of the Remove came in. Sampson Quincy Ifley Field's face was very grave.

"I'm sorry about this, Ogilvy," he said.

Ogilvy nodded.

"Nobody in the Remove likes to believe that you did such a rotten thing!" said Squiff. "But—but—"

Ogilvy smiled bitterly.

"But you believe I did it all the same," he said.

Squiff looked uncomfortable.

"The fellows want an explanation," he said. "It's pretty clear that if you didn't do it you know who did. Will you explain?"

"No."

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"Why not?"

"That's my business!"

The Australian junior flushed a little.

"Well, it's not only your business, it's the business of the whole Form," he said tartly.

"Chuckling that stone at Temple was a dirty, cowardly, Hunnish trick that a Prussian might be ashamed of!"

"I know it was."

"Well, then, you'll have to prove that you didn't do it—"

"I can't!"

"Then you know what to expect from the Remove!"

"I can't help it!"

Squiff looked at him curiously.

"You're wanted in the Rag," he said.

"The Form are going to ask you questions. I think you'll admit that we have a right to be satisfied?"

"I've got nothing to say, and I sha'n't come!"

"Better come," said Squiff. "You can't treat the Remove like that. Everybody wants to give you fair play; and if you give a decent explanation, that's all we want. Otherwise, I tell you plainly you'll be sent to Coventry!"

And the Australian junior quitted the study.

Dick Russell looked uneasily at his Scottish chum.

"Better come to the Rag, Don," he said.

"What's the good?" said Ogilvy moodily.

"Well, the fellows will come and fetch you if you don't, and you may as well walk as be carried," suggested Russell.

Ogilvy smiled faintly.

"All serene; I'll go!"

The chums of the Remove left the study. Billy Bunter was in the passage, and he gave Ogilvy an almost agonised blink. Ogilvy passed him without a word.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Sentenced!

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

"Trot in, Ogilvy!" said Harry Wharton.

The tone of the captain of the Remove was cordial enough. Harry Wharton had always liked Ogilvy, and he found it hard to believe that the Scot had been guilty of the cowardly attack upon Temple of the Fourth.

It was by Wharton's direction that the Form meeting had been called in the Rag, with the idea of clearing Ogilvy from suspicion in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

Ogilvy's face was pale and quiet as he came in with Dick Russell.

He had a hard ordeal before him, but he had to go through with it.

He understood Wharton's friendly intention, though he realised that the captain of the Remove would change as soon as he learned that no explanation was to be forthcoming.

"Gentlemen!" said Bob Cherry, in his stentorian tones. "Order! Order!"

"The orderfulness is terrific," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Silence for the chair!" said Squiff.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Wharton. "Ogilvy's been accused by the Fourth-Form bounders of biffing Temple on the napper with a stone. Now, we all know Ogilvy, and we know he isn't the chap to do anything of the kind!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why can't he explain, then?" said Bolsover major.

"I'm coming to that. Somebody biffed Temple on the napper, and Ogilvy was found under suspicious circumstances. But I feel pretty sure that Ogilvy didn't do it. I've called a Form meeting to hear him explain exactly how the matter was. That's fair play!"

"The fairplayfulness is terrific."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ogilvy is going to clear himself before the Form, and then we'll put it to Temple & Co.," continued Wharton. "If they don't choose to be convinced by plain evidence, we'll mop up the floor with them, and convince them that way."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, Ogilvy, trot forward. You do the questioning, Toddy, as you're a lawyer, and mind you bring it out clear."

"Right-ho!" said Peter Todd.

Peter, as the son of a solicitor, was supposed to have an extensive and peculiar knowledge of law. Certainly he had in his study tremendous legal volumes which made other fellows' heads ache merely to look at them.

Ogilvy looked worried. He knew how the questioning must result, and that this friendly device to clear him would only lead to fixing more firmly upon him the suspicion of guilt. There was only one way in which he could clear himself—by breaking his promise to Bunter. And that was not to be thought of for a moment.

Nearly all the Remove were present; even Lord Mauleverer having come in. Billy Bunter was conspicuous by his absence, however. The Owl of the Remove generally made himself as prominent as possible; but he had his own good reasons for staying away from the especial Form-meeting. But nobody had a thought to waste upon William George Bunter just then.

Peter Todd signed to Ogilvy to come forward, and all eyes were fixed upon the Scottish junior.

"The accused will now answer the questions put to him," said Peter. "In the first place, what were you doing in the Cloisters at all after dark?"

"I went there for a stroll."

"Rather a queer place for a stroll after dark!" sneered Skinner.

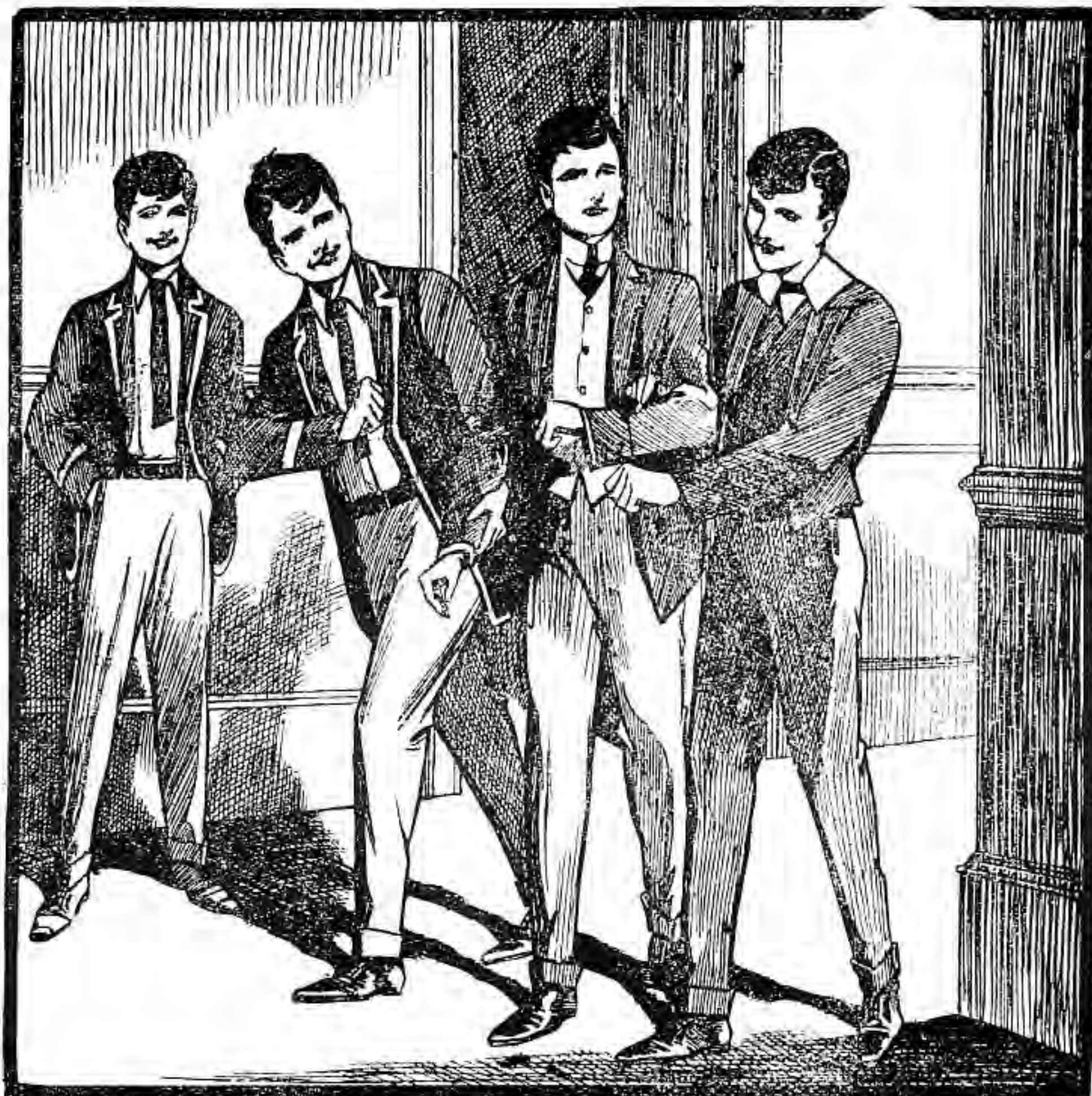
"Shut up, Skinner!"

"My head was aching, and I wanted some fresh air and quiet," said Ogilvy. "I'd been fighting Temple, and got licked, if you want to know."

"We've heard all about your fighting Temple," said Peter. "I'm surprised at a Remove chap letting himself get licked by a Fourth-Former. But let that pass. You had no intention of going for Temple when you went there?"

"Certainly not!"

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Wharton linked arms with Ogilvy. Russell took his other arm, and he was marched away in triumph. (See Chapter 13.)

"You didn't even know Temple was strolling about there?" Ogilvy flushed.

"Yes; I had seen him from my study window."

"Oh! Did you go there because of that?"

"No. I forgot all about him till I happened to hear his voice."

"When you were in the Cloisters?"

"Yes."

"That was before he was biffed?"

"Yes."

"Near enough to hear his voice," commented Skinner, "and he denies that he saw who biffed him!"

"I've not denied anything of the sort," said Ogilvy. "I said that I've nothing to say about it, and I haven't."

"You deny having biffed Temple on his high-class napper?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yes."

"But you were quite near him when it happened?"

"I suppose so."

"Then you must have seen who did it?"

No answer.

"That's the chief question," said the schoolboy lawyer. "Did you, or did you not, see who banged that stone at Temple's napper?"

Silence.

"Prisoner at the bar declines to answer," grinned Snoop. "He might as well own up, for that matter."

"Shut up, Snoop!"

Dick Rake tapped Ogilvy on the arm.

"Speak up, you ass!" he said. "If you saw the chap, tell us so!"

"I've got nothing to say," said Ogilvy quietly.

"Did you, or did you not, see the chap who biffed Temple with a stone?" demanded Peter Todd.

Grim silence! Ogilvy's cheeks burned under the glances fixed on him. But his lips were set hard. Surprise at first, and then condemnation and contempt, showed in all the faces round him.

"You refuse to answer?" asked Peter Todd at last, his own expression altering.

"Yes."

"Why do you refuse to answer?"

No reply.

"Ogilvy, old chap," said Harry Wharton anxiously, "speak up! You know what we must all think if you don't!"

"I've got nothing to say."

"Speak upfully," urged Hurree Singh. "Tell us the wholeful truth, and nothingfully but the esteemed truth."

Ogilvy smiled faintly, but he did not speak.

"One question more," said Peter Todd. "Are you shielding some other chap from the punishment he deserves for biffing Temple with the stone? Are you silly ass enough to be doing that?"

No answer.

"More likely trying to make out that he's shielding somebody else!" sneered Snoop. "Likely story!"

There was a pause. Ogilvy broke it.

"Well, have you finished?" he asked.

"Yes, if you won't answer," said Peter Todd. "I suppose you know what you are driving us to believe?"

"Then I'll go, if you've finished."

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "I called this meeting believing that you were innocent, Ogilvy, and to help you to prove it."

"I know. I'm grateful. But—"

"But, as it happens, it's proved that you are guilty, instead of innocent," said the captain of the Remove, "and you can hear your sentence before you go. That's all!"

Ogilvy squared his shoulders.

"I'm ready!" he said simply.

"Go it, Toddy!"

Peter Todd fixed his eyes upon Ogilvy.

"For the last time, Ogilvy, have you anything to say?" he asked.

Ogilvy shook his head.

"Very well. Gentlemen of the Remove, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" howled the Remove as with one voice.

"You hear that, Ogilvy?"

"Yes."

"Nothing to say now?"

"Nothing!"

"Then I leave it to the captain of the Form to pass sentence," said Peter Todd, stepping back.

"Coventry!" said Harry Wharton briefly. "Ogilvy, on his own showing, is guilty of a rotten, Hunnish trick, and he's sent to Coventry by all the Lower School!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!" broke out Dick Russell hotly. "It's a rotten shame—"

"Do you know anything about what happened in the Cloisters, Russell?"

"No; but—"

"Then you know what we know, that Ogilvy's guilty—"

"I know he's innocent!"

"How do you know that?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Because he's my pal," said Russell simply.

There was a laugh from some of the fellows.

"Silly ass!" growled Bolsover major.

"His being your pal isn't evidence, Russell," said Peter Todd, with a grin. "But you can believe in him if you like, and more power to your elbow, old chap! The rest of us know what to think."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Ogilvy's sent to Coventry!" said Wharton. "The Remove won't speak to him, and I think the other Form won't. That's all. And I must say that I don't think any chap ever better deserved to be sent to Coventry!"

"Hear, hear!"

Ogilvy turned and walked out of the Rag with his chum. Russell was the only fellow who held to him now. The two juniors disappeared, and the meeting broke up fully satisfied that justice had been done.

In their study Russell and Ogilvy looked at one another grimly.

"Well," said Ogilvy at last, "I've got it!"

Russell nodded.

"You'd better leave me alone, Dick. You'll have the whole Form down on you, too."

"Rats!" said Russell.

And no more was said on that subject!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Sent to Coventry!

THE next morning Ogilvy could plainly discern the change in the manner of his Form-fellows towards him. No one addressed a voluntary remark to him, and if he spoke he was not answered. It was clear that nobody in the Remove wanted to have anything to do with him.

Cecil Temple did not appear in class that day. The injury inflicted by the stone had been serious—far more serious than the revengeful Owl had anticipated when he hurled it. A doctor had come to Greyfriars to see it, and he had recommended a few days' quiet. The junior's injury was, of course, the theme of some discussion amongst the masters. Temple's explanation that he had knocked his head against a stone was true, but the Head was pretty certain that it was not the whole truth.

But Dr. Locke was a judicious master, and he knew when not to inquire too closely into things. It was pretty clear that he would get nothing out of Temple, and he did not wish to drive the boy into prevarication by indiscreet questioning. So he dismissed the matter, and excused Temple from class-work for that day.

In the new atmosphere of chilliness Ogilvy passed the day, quite the most miserable boy at Greyfriars, but keeping up a brave face. He did not intend to let the others know how deeply their conduct wounded him.

After school there was a meeting of the Fourth Form; but

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Ogilvy knew nothing about it, as he kept to his own quarters when he was not in class. He was trying to fix his attention upon a Latin exercise when Russell came in, looking very serious.

"I'm afraid you're in for it, Ogilvy!" he remarked. "There's been a jaw in Temple's study, and they're coming here to interview you."

Ogilvy pushed his books away.

"Let them come," he said quietly.

They were not long in coming. There was a knock at the door, and Temple came in, followed by Dabney, Fry, and several of the Fourth.

Ogilvy looked at them calmly.

"Hallo! What do you fellows want?"

"They want a bigger room than this, I guess," said Russell. "I'm glad there's no more of you," he added, as the last member of the deputation filed in. "There's not enough chairs to go round; but two of you can sit on the table, and one on the window-sill, and the rest of you will have to sit on each other's knees."

"Hang your jokes!" said Temple savagely. "We've come here on business!"

"Get it off your chest, then, fathead!"

The captain of the Fourth turned to Ogilvy, who was silent, waiting composedly for what was coming. He had risen to his feet, his face a trifle pale, but quite calm.

"We've had a consultation, Ogilvy," said Temple, "and we've come to a decision. We have come here representing the whole Form."

Ogilvy nodded.

"It's pretty clear," went on Temple, "that you threw the stone from the Cloisters last night; but we're anxious to give you any chance we can to clear yourself. Last night you refused to explain yourself. Here's the case in a nutshell. If you didn't fling the stone, you must have seen who did. We've given you a whole day to think over the matter, and make up your mind about it. Have you decided to speak out?"

"No."

"You have nothing to say?"

"Nothing, except that I did not fling the stone!"

"Did you see anybody else in the Cloisters?"

Ogilvy was silent, as he had been the night before.

"You refuse to answer that question?"

Still no reply.

"Very well," said Temple, raising his voice a little. "The only possible conclusion we can come to is that you didn't see anybody there. There was nobody else there, and you threw the stone!"

"I did not!"

"You've been given a chance to clear yourself, and you can't do it," Temple looked round. "I think it's clear enough now that he is guilty."

"It was clear enough all along," said Dabney.

And the others nodded assent.

"Very well. The verdict of the Fourth is that you be sent to Coventry! It was a dirty, Hunnish trick, and if it came to the Head's ears you would be expelled—you know that jolly well. We are going to keep the masters out of it. But no decent fellow at Greyfriars will ever speak to you again as long as you stay here, and if you've got any decency left in you, you'll contrive to leave at the end of the term. That's all. You're sent to Coventry, and any fellow found speaking to you will be dealt with in the same manner."

"My hat!" exclaimed Russell. "You had better start dealing with me on the spot, then!"

Temple looked at him angrily.

"Do you mean to say that you're going to stick to Ogilvy, after what he's done?"

"He hasn't done anything that I know of, except spoil the beauty of some of your features!"

Temple scowled.

"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed. "Anyone found keeping up any sort of communication with Ogilvy will be sent to Coventry along with him."

"There will be two of us, at any rate," said Russell, "and I hope we shall be able to survive the loss of your conversation. After all, I've sometimes found you just a little bit of a bore!"

Some of the deputation were grinning, and even over Ogilvy's worried face a smile crept. Cecil Temple turned angrily to the door.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"Remember," he exclaimed, "Ogilvy's barred; but we'll give you the evening to think over your position, Russell!"

"Thank you for nothing!"

Cecil Temple left the study, followed by the others. Russell remained alone with his chum. Ogilvy's elbows dropped on the table, his face in his hands. He would not show his weakness before those who had condemned him, but he felt his position keenly.

"Buck up, old fellow!" said Russell consolingly. "I fancy the chaps will come round in time. This will blow over, like everything else, if you wait long enough."

Ogilvy raised his head. His face was very pale.

"It won't, Dick! They believe me guilty, and if I were so they'd be right in sending me to Coventry. Do you think I'd speak to a fellow who was guilty of such a dirty trick? They're in the right; only they might have taken my word!"

"Well, you couldn't expect them to understand why you wouldn't speak out. Don, when you wouldn't even tell them the reason!" said Russell. "The only explanation is that you're shielding someone, and why you should do it is a mystery."

"But I don't want to drag you into this, Dick," said Ogilvy abruptly. "They meant what they said. I'm barred, and if you stick to me, you will be barred too! I don't want that. You'd better give me a wide berth. I'd rather."

Russell shook his head.

"We've settled all that," he said. "Rats!"

And that was the only answer he would give to Ogilvy; and Ogilvy was glad enough in his heart to feel that he had one friend left.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Shoulder to Shoulder!

SENT to Coventry!

Ogilvy knew well enough what it meant, and yet at first he hardly realised how serious it was, and what a terrible punishment it might be. It was difficult, too, to fall into the new state of things at the start. Quite unconsciously, forgetting his position for the moment, he would address a casual remark to someone, and would be recalled to a sense of his position by a cool stare or an insulting smile.

Fellows to whom he spoke would stare at him, and turn away, or sit and look unconscious of his very existence. At first the hot blood would leap to Ogilvy's face, and passionate anger would flame up in his heart, and he had hard work to keep his hands off his insulters.

But he could not fight the whole school; and if he could have done so, that would only have made matters worse, so he exercised continual self-restraint. Anger and resentment were useless, and he learned to take his punishment calmly.

The sentence of the school was carried out relentlessly. No one spoke to Ogilvy, no one answered him if he spoke. Everybody seemed to be quite unaware of his presence in the school. He was absolutely ignored, and might have ceased to exist, so far as his Form-fellows were concerned.

It need not be said what a consolation Russell's friendship was to him at this trying time. Russell was his only companion, the only one with whom he could exchange a word. But the juniors were not slow in visiting punishment upon the head of the one person who had defied and disregarded their decree.

The time of grace had expired, but it made no difference to Dick Russell. He went on his way with perfect nonchalance and good humour, and evidently had no intention of abandoning his chum.

Twice during the day he was warned, and each time he laughed lightly, apparently considering the matter as a joke, and the wrath of the juniors rose to boiling-point.

After school Temple, with Bolsover major and several other fellows, spotted him in the Close, and ran him down. Temple's face was very grim. He intended this to be the last warning—Russell's last chance. If he refused, he would be sent to Coventry without further grace.

"Russell!"

Dick walked on, apparently not hearing.

"Russell! Can't you hear me?"

Still Russell did not look at Temple. He appeared to be quite unconscious of the proximity of the juniors.

Temple caught him by the arm and stopped him. Dick stared at him.

"I want a word with you, Russell!"

Russell still stared, but did not speak. Temple was puzzled.

"What the dickens is the matter with you?" he exclaimed.



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"Are you deaf and dumb? Speak, can't you, you silly cuckoo!"

Russell grinned, but made no reply.

"I warn you not to speak to Ogilvy again!" exclaimed Temple. "Do you hear? This is your last chance. Do you intend to go on chumming with that fellow?"

Stony silence from Russell.

"He's off his chump!" said Bolsover major.

Russell made a motion to depart, still not having opened his lips. The juniors, thoroughly exasperated, seized him and ran him up against a tree, and held him there. Dick wriggled, but he could not escape.

"Now explain yourself!" said Temple. "What do you mean by playing the fool in this fashion, you howling lunatic?"

"Well, if you must know," said Russell, breaking silence at last, "I've sent you to Coventry!"

"What?"

"I've sent the whole school to Coventry," said Russell coolly, "and I intend to keep you there until you do Ogilvy justice—see? Now sheer off! You're in Coventry, and I don't want to speak to any of you. You're barred!"

He wriggled loose from the astonished juniors, and walked away. The juniors could not help grinning at the idea of one fellow sending the whole school to Coventry. But they soon saw that Russell meant it.

One or two more attempts were made to make him see reason, but he replied to expostulations only with a cool stare, without appearing to hear anything that was addressed to him.

And after that he was allowed to go his own way; but the sentence was enforced as rigorously in his case as in Ogilvy's, and, though he did not show it, he was made to feel deeply the cost of his allegiance to his chum. Still, he did not regret the course he had chosen to follow.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

A WEEK passed. The sentence of Coventry was still rigidly enforced, and the juniors showed no sign of receding from the attitude they had taken up. The story was over nearly all the school, and no one was inclined to dispute the justice of the sentence. So that, even had Ogilvy felt inclined to put his pride in his pocket and find friends in the Third, he would have found himself equally barred there. But he did not think of it. He had accepted his fate, and he accepted it with a quiet dignity that impressed his Form-fellows in spite of themselves.

His chief trouble was that Russell shared his exclusion. But Russell was obstinate, and Ogilvy had given up arguing with him. And, indeed, it was only with half a heart that he had urged his chum to fall into line with the rest of the Form, and leave him to go his way alone. He hardly liked to think of how dreary the days would have been if Dick had deserted him like all the rest.

Meanwhile, Dick's brain was busy. He did not believe for a moment that Ogilvy was guilty of the outrage, and he tried to think out who it could possibly have been. Someone had flung the stone—someone belonging to Greyfriars. Who was it?

Russell thought over every member of his own Form, and he could not think of one who could be supposed to have a strong spite against Cecil Reginald Temple.

Russell puzzled over it, determined to find the solution of the mystery. Ogilvy was shielding someone, and Russell meant to find out who that someone was, and set his chum right before the school.

It was useless to question Ogilvy; useless, if he made a discovery, even to ask Ogilvy to confirm it. His chum evidently had some reason for not speaking, whatever it was. But Russell resolved to find out the truth without his assistance.

And one day a sudden gleam of light came in the darkness. Russell was coming out of the gym when Billy Bunter bolted right into him, sending him staggering. Half a dozen fags were racing at his heels, and shouting:

"Stop, thief!"

Russell staggered against the doorpost, gasping, most of the wind knocked out of him by the shock, but he managed to grasp the Owl of the Remove.

The pursuers melted away into thin air. The captive was wriggling in Russell's grasp, but he did not let go.

"You fat rotter!" said Russell, recognising Bunter and shaking him. "Can't you look where you are going? What were you bolting like that for?"

Billy Bunter gasped.

"There, I'm not going to hurt you, though you deserve a

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sound whacking with a fives bat for running into such an important personage as Richard Russell, Esquire!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "They call me a thief, and they haven't given me a minute's peace since Temple accused me of stealing his banknote!"

"That's hard lines on you, if you didn't steal it!" said Dick, looking curiously at the Owl of the Remove.

"I didn't steal it! I never saw it! Temple must have lost it somewhere. He's always losing things. But he's given me the name of a thief, and the fellows call after me. I won't stand it! It's all Temple's fault. I hate him! He's a beast! I wish——"

He stopped suddenly.

Russell gave vent to a low, expressive whistle. All the week he had been asking himself: Who could have had a motive strong enough to incite him to that outrage? Who at Greyfriars hated Temple enough to do him such an injury in so cowardly a manner? He wondered now that he had not thought of Bunter.

His grasp tightened upon the Owl's collar.

"So you hate Temple, do you, Bunter?" he said quietly.

Billy Bunter gave him a frightened look.

"I—Nun—no, not exactly!" he stammered.

"Was that why you flung the stone from the Cloisters that night?"

Billy Bunter shivered.

"I didn't!"

"You are lying, Bunter! You did!"

"I didn't! If Ogilvy says I did, he's telling lies!" blurted out Bunter desperately. "And I'll say so before everybody!"

"Ogilvy hasn't said a word, Billy. He's shielding you. I don't know why. But don't you think you're a mean rotter to let him suffer, instead of speaking out?"

Billy Bunter had recovered some of his nerve. If Ogilvy had not spoken, Dick could only be guessing, and whatever he guessed, he could prove nothing.

"I don't know anything about it!" said Bunter. "You've no right to accuse me. I don't know anything at all about it. And—and please let me go, Russell. You're in Coventry, and I mustn't speak to you!"

Russell, with a grim laugh, released him.

"You won't make a clean breast of it?" he asked. "Mind, I am going into the matter, and I'll find out the truth by hook or by crook. Now's your chance to do the decent thing before you're forced to."

"I don't know anything about it!"

"Bunter!"

It was Bolsover's voice. Bunter started as if he had trodden on a snake, and darted away. Russell strolled away in deep thought. He had not the least doubt that he had hit on the solution of the mystery. He thought he could understand Ogilvy's reason now for shielding the author of the outrage. He had probably given Bunter a hasty promise, and was bound by it. Russell was sure that he was right, but how was he to prove it? There was the difficulty.

It was useless to appeal to the Owl's better feelings. Bunter was too thoroughly afraid of punishment ever to speak out.

Russell was puzzled. He had thought at first that it was only necessary to discover the culprit; but now that he had, to his own satisfaction at least, ascertained who was the guilty party, the task of clearing Ogilvy seemed as hard as ever.

"I'll speak to Temple," was Russell's final decision. "He can't refuse to listen, Coventry or no Coventry; and if he does, I'll punch his head, and that will be some satisfaction, at all events!"

And, having made up his mind, he waited until Cecil Temple went to his study, and then followed him there. He tapped at the door and went in, and the captain of the Fourth fixed a glare upon him which did not abash him in the least.

"I want to speak to you," said Russell cheerfully. "It's no good glaring at me, for I'm a hardened sinner and don't care a scrap. You can keep your dignity to terrify the fags with. It won't have a bit of effect upon me, my son. So sit down and listen, like a good boy!"

"You confounded cheeky kid!" roared Temple, forgetting the "Coventry" in his anger. "Get out of my study before I chuck you out!"

Russell coolly locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Temple sprang forward, but Dick laughed in his face.

"Now, dear boy, I haven't come here simply for the pleasure of a talk with you," he said in his cheery way. "I want to talk business. I've found out who flung that stone!"

Cecil stared.

"What are you talking about?"

"Are you deaf?" asked Dick pleasantly. "I spoke plainly enough. I've found out who it was flung that stone at you from the Cloisters a week ago!"

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"It was Ogilvy!"

"Not a bit of it. I told you so all along, but you were too fatheaded to believe me!"

Temple gritted his teeth.

"If you've really got an accusation to make against anybody, I suppose I must listen to you," he said. "Get on!"

"Now we're coming to business. It was Bunter!"

The captain of the Fourth gave a start.

"That fat owl!"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it! He'd never dare!"

"Well, of course, he never expected to be found out," said Russell. "It was a mere chance that Ogilvy strolled into the Cloisters and saw him."

"Did Ogilvy tell you this?"

"Not a word! I imagine the fat rotter must have begged himself off, and got Ogilvy into promising to keep it dark. You see, you had punished Bunter for what he hadn't done, so it was only fair that he shouldn't be punished for what he had done."

"If Ogilvy didn't say so, how do you know? Has Bunter confessed?"

"No; but he will if he's questioned. I suppose you want to have the truth out, don't you?"

"Of course I do!"

"Then you must get it out of Bunter. No, I don't mean with a bat—that's more likely to fetch out a fresh crop of lies!"

"What do you want me to do, then?" asked the captain of the Fourth. "Mind, I don't believe for a moment that he would dare to do such a thing."

"Have him in and question him."

"A lot of good that would be! If he were really guilty he would be afraid to say so."

"Not if you promise him that he sha'n't be punished in any case."

"I'm likely to do that!" sneered Temple.

"It's the only way to get at the truth. You can't expect him to confess, and have his hide tanned for his truthfulness, can you?"

Cecil Temple laughed.

"I suppose not. But I'd tan his hide till he couldn't squirm if I thought that he had really flung that stone at me! Look at the mark on my forehead. Do you think I'd let the fat brute off after that? That is, if I thought he had done it. But I don't believe so. I've been very lenient with him. Most fellows would have had him up before the Head for stealing a ten-pound note, and got him kicked out of the school. I've given him a chance to bring the money back. He ought to be grateful."

Russell laughed.

"I fancy it's little gratitude you can expect from him! You've branded him as a thief, and thrashed him. And you didn't stop for proof before you did all that. I believe he was innocent."

Temple yawned.

"Your beliefs don't interest me. And it occurs to me that you are in Coventry, Russell. Will you kindly unlock my study door and get on the other side of it? Otherwise, I shall be under the painful necessity of dropping you out of the window!"

"You refuse to do as I ask?"

"Yes, decidedly. If Bunter did what you accuse him of, I'd never agree to let him off the punishment. But I don't believe it for one moment."

"Obstinate pig!" said Russell.

Temple shrugged his shoulders and pointed expressively to the door. Russell unlocked and threw it open. His anger had been rising during the interview, and he was quite ready for an outburst; but he controlled himself.

It was Temple, unluckily, who brought the vials of Dick's wrath down upon himself by his next words. Had he remained silent, Dick would have gone quietly away.

"You'll have to think of a bit better yarn than this if you want us to believe it," he said contemptuously. "I can quite understand that you're getting tired of being in Coventry, but you can't crawl out by accusing Bunter. You had your chance given you, but you preferred to stick to a cad—"

Russell's wrath boiled over. He swung back from the door, and caught the captain of the Fourth full across the mouth with his open hand.

Temple staggered back.

"That's for your lies!" said Russell savagely. "And I'll do the same to anybody who calls my chum a cad—yes, if I have to fight the whole school!"

"By Jove, I'll make you sorry for that!"

Temple sprang forward, and the next moment the two were struggling.

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ONE
PENNY.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

DICK RUSSELL was spoiling for a fight. The last week had tried his temper sorely. Now Temple's contemptuous disbelief in his assertion, and his refusal to put it to the only possible test of truth, had exasperated him to fighting pitch. His temper was bubbling over, and it was really a relief to him to come to blows.

Temple was equally enraged, but he was not in equal condition for a conflict. Although a week had elapsed, the injury to his head was still painful; and that, added to the effects of his slogging match with Ogilvy, caused him to be a good deal run down, and far less fit than usual. So that instead of hurling his obnoxious visitor forth into the corridor as he had intended, he found himself stopped and held fast, and Russell forced him back heavily against the table.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Temple.

"Hallo! What's up here?"

Dabney and Fry had entered the study. Seeing the state of affairs, they seized Russell and dragged him away.

Temple stood leaning on the table, breathing hard.

"You cad!" he gasped. "If I was fit I'd give you the hiding of your life! As it is, it will keep! Chuck him out, you fellows!"

"Chuck me out!" roared Russell, now thoroughly roused. "My hat! I'd like to see you do it, you rotters!"

"Then you shall have the pleasure of seeing it!" grinned Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Out with him!" roared Temple.

Russell was shoved roughly through the doorway. But the moment their hands were off him he returned to the charge. He was quite wild now, and fairly on the war-path.

A drive in the chest made Dabney sit down suddenly, with a gasp, and a tap on the nose sent Fry staggering against Temple, who clutched at the table to save himself. The study table wasn't built to stand the weight of two sturdy juniors, and, as a natural result, it capsized, and Temple fell, and Fry sprawled over him.

There were books and papers on the table, which were scattered far and wide, and, unfortunately, an open inkpot, which slid from the overturning table and alighted upon Temple's nose.

Fry gave a howl as the ink splashed out over his face, transforming him with startling suddenness into a very good imitation of a nigger-minstrel.

Russell, looking at the collapse from the door, burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! I hope you'll sort yourselves out all right. Ta-ta!"

And he walked out, and banged the door behind him.

"Get off my chest, can't you, Fry?" growled Temple.

"What did you want to fall against me for, you duffer?"

Fry was trying to wipe the ink out of his eyes.

"Who are you calling a duffer?" he exclaimed. "If this is the thanks I get for helping you, you won't find me in a hurry to do it again! What the dickens do you mean by having such a beastly gammy table in your study?"

"Oh, shut up, you two!" said Dabney impatiently. "Don't you begin to row. I think we've had enough rows lately." Then he grinned as he looked at Fry. "Christopher Columbus, old fellow, you do look a giddy sight!"

"I'll break that boulder's neck for him!" said Fry crossly. "But it's all Temple's fault. What did he want to pull the table over for?"

"Do you think I did it on purpose?" snapped Temple. "Look at my papers, smeared all over with ink! Oh, I'll massacre that fathead when I get near him again! Go and get yourself clean, Fry; and for goodness' sake don't talk rot!"

And Fry, in a frightfully bad temper, quitted the study and made a bee-line for a bath-room to clean himself, sustaining a running fire of chaff from all he passed en route, and disdaining to reply to anxious inquiries as to whether he designed starting in business as a nigger-minstrel.

Dabney helped Temple to put his study to rights. Things were in a fearful litter, for the drawer of the table had fallen out when it went over, and all sorts of nicknacks were scattered about the floor, along with the books and papers and spilled ink. Temple and Dabney gathered them up and sorted them out.

"What did Russell come here for?" asked Dabney. "He had no business to come, when he's in Coventry. What did he want?"

"He told a cock-and-bull story about having found out who chucked that stone at me!" said Temple snappishly. "He's

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"THE GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"

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getting sick of Coventry, and wanted a row, I suppose. That's about the truth of it."

Dabney looked up, interested.

"He accuses somebody of having done it?" he asked.

"Yes; he accuses Bunter!"

"What's his reason?"

"He says Bunter did it because I was down on him for stealing the banknote out of my desk. I was really lenient to the fat ass!"

"You were, if he was guilty. I suppose there's no doubt that he really did take the banknote?"

"Of course there isn't!" said Temple irritably. "He had it, right enough."

"Because, if he was innocent," said Dabney slowly, "he's been ragged as a thief, you know, and that would make him spiteful. If he was guilty, he might be glad to get off cheap; but if he was innocent—well, if he was innocent, he would be wild, and he might get into a state of mind to do a thing like that."

"Well, he wasn't innocent!" growled Temple. "And now let's let the subject drop, for I'm sick to death of it!"

Dabney made no reply to this not over-polite remark, but went on gathering up the things scattered on the carpet. Suddenly he gave an exclamation.

"Well, you are a careless chap, Cecil!" he said. "Do you always use banknotes for bookmarks?"

He picked up a little leather-bound account-book which had fallen from the drawer, and lay half-open on the carpet. A folded banknote lay half out of it.

Temple stared at him.

"What are you talking about, Dab?"

"Look here!" said Dabney, holding up the book, with the crisp note sticking between the leaves. "I must say it's beastly careless, Cecil; and if you were so careless with this note you may have been with the other. I shouldn't wonder if you have shoved it somewhere and forgotten about it, and that Bunter never took it at all!"

Cecil Reginald's face was wearing a decidedly worried look.

"Is that a banknote?" he faltered.

"Can't you see for yourself?"

"Yes. Is it a tenner?"

"Yes."

"The fact is, Dab, I—I had only one tenner. If that's it, it's the one I—I thought Bunter had taken. Oh, hang it, what a beastly mess!"

Dabney whistled expressively.

"Well, you have put your foot in it this time, and no mistake, old man!" he said, by way of consolation.

Temple took the book from his hand.

"I remember now," he said. "You know, I keep account of the cricket subscriptions in this book. I had the subscriptions in that day, and then the banknote came in a letter from my aunt. I meant to put it in my desk. I—I thought I had done so. I remember now I was called suddenly away."

Dabney looked at him grimly.

"And, as a matter of fact," he said coldly, "you must have folded up the note in that account-book and put it away without noticing it."

"I was in a hurry."

"Yes; and you were in a thundering hurry to brand another chap as a thief!" said Dabney. "Hang it all, it was beastly!"

"You needn't rub it in," faltered Temple. "I feel bad enough about it."

"But stay a minute," added Dabney. "Let's make sure about it. It isn't possible, I suppose, for Bunter to have slipped the banknote into that account-book on the sly, is it?"

Temple shook his head.

"No. I keep it in that drawer, and the drawer's always locked. I had just unlocked it to take something out when Russell came in and started rowing."

"He had reason to row with you, as it turns out," said Dabney. "To be plain, then, you put the banknote away yourself, and missed it afterwards, and didn't know what you had done with it, and jumped to the conclusion that Bunter had stolen it. And the poor ass was telling the truth all the time when he said that he didn't know anything about it!"

Temple hung his head.

"I suppose he was," he confessed. "I'm awfully sorry about it, and I'll make it up to him somehow."

"The first thing to do is to tell the true story in public, and clear him of the suspicion of being a thief," said Dabney. "That for a start. It will make you look a fool, and a hasty, hot-headed duffer; but so you are!"

"Pile it on!" said the captain of the Fourth, with unusual

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meekness. "I know I've made an ass of myself, and I deserve it all. Say what you like!"

"Well, I dare say you feel pretty rotten about it without my rubbing it in. Perhaps I've said enough. But justice will have to be done. And there's that other affair. It seems to me likely enough that Russell was quite right, as the matter turns out, and that it was Bunter who threw the stone from the Cloisters."

Temple nodded.

Since the discovery of his blunder, which had had such serious consequences, he was in a chastened mood, and more inclined than usual to take advice from others.

"The question is, how to get the truth out of Bunter," said Dabney thoughtfully.

"Russell suggested a way," said Temple. "He said Bunter would tell the truth if I promised not to punish him, in any case."

"You refused?"

"Well, yes; but the case is altered now. I own I did Bunter a wrong, and—and if he chucked the stone at me he was a little beast; but I had no right to complain. After what we've just found out, it would be a bit thick to punish him for—for anything."

"That's true enough."

"So there's no harm in trying that plan, and putting the matter to the test," said Temple. "What do you think?"

"I think you're quite right. And if we find that Ogilvy was innocent—"

Temple coloured.

"It will be jolly awkward, after sending him to Coventry," he said. "But we want to get at the truth, anyway. If he's innocent, we shall have to beg his pardon all round, that's all, and I'll be the first to do it. I think we'd better have him in when we question Bunter," he added, after a pause. "I—I haven't much doubt now how it will turn out. Will you ask him to step over, Dab, while I call Bunter?"

Dabney nodded, and left the study.

Temple's face wore a far from gratified expression. He had always been masterful and overbearing, and it was not pleasant to him to have to own himself flagrantly in the wrong, and to eat humble pie. But at bottom his nature was generous. His faults lay mostly on the surface, with a good, sound British heart underneath; and, having made up his mind to do what was right, he did not hesitate for a moment to carry it through.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Brought to Light!

"WHAT the dickens—"

Ogilvy stared at his chum as he came into the study. Dick Russell was looking red and dusty and flustered, but he was grinning.

"A row in the Remove?" asked Ogilvy anxiously.

Russell shook his head.

"No. A row in the Fourth," he said cheerily. "I got fed up with Temple, and we had a dust-up."

Ogilvy smiled.

"I'm getting fed-up, too," he remarked. "It looks as if the Coventry's going to last. I can't blame the fellows. Wharton gave me every chance—I must admit that."

"Only you were an ass!" grunted Russell.

"Perhaps. But I wish you weren't in for it, too, Dick!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I—I'm thinking of asking my people to take me away from Greyfriars at the end of the term," said Ogilvy, colouring.

"Rats!" repeated Russell emphatically. "The fellows will come round when the truth comes out."

"When!" said Ogilvy, with a sigh.

He thought there was little chance of the Owl of the Remove ever owning-up to the truth. Billy Bunter had too tender a regard for his own skin.

"Sooner than you think, perhaps," grinned Russell. "I haven't been letting the grass grow under my feet. As a matter of fact, Don, you can't blame the fellows for being down on you."

"I don't," said Ogilvy.

"The Remove will come round when they know the facts; and as for the Fourth and the Third and the Shell, they can go and eat coke," said Russell. "And I'm on the track, my son!"

Ogilvy started.

"Look here, Dick, I don't want you to—to—"

"Bow-wow! I know who it was biffed Temple with the stone."

"Dick!"

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"And there's going to be another Form meeting, and Toddy can question him, and worm the truth out of him—"

Dabney put his head into the study, and interrupted him.

Russell glared at the Fourth-Former.

"What do you want, blow you? Have you forgotten that I've sent you and the whole silly crowd to Coventry?" he demanded.

Dabney grinned.

"You're wanted in Temple's study, both of you," he said.

"Does he want to be mopped up again?" asked Russell sarcastically.

"Look here—"

"Tell Temple to go and eat coke! You can go and eat coke along with him. And now, don't jaw to me. Clear off!" said Russell gruffly.

Dabney did not clear off.

"You don't understand," he said patiently. "Temple's going to take your advice about Bunter."

"Oh!" said Russell.

"Bunter!" repeated Ogilvy, with a start.

"Yes. I'm going to call Wharton, too. He'd better be present. Come along, and don't play the giddy ox! It looks to me as if things are going to be cleared up now," said Dabney.

Ogilvy drew a deep breath.

"I'll come," he said quietly.

Dabney hurried down the passage, and looked in at No. 1 Study.

"Will you come along to Temple's study, Wharton?" he asked.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"What's it about?" he asked.

"About Ogilvy. It looks as if he's going to be cleared."

"Blessed if I see—" began Harry.

"You'll see if you come."

"Oh, all right!" said the captain of the Remove. "I'll be jolly glad if that's the case, anyway!"

He followed Dabney from the study. Russell and Ogilvy joined them in the passage. They looked rather grimly at Wharton. But the three Removites, without a word, followed Dabney, and Billy Bunter was routed out of his study. The Owl of the Remove looked considerably alarmed.

"I say, you fellows, what's the row?" he exclaimed.

"Look here—"

"You're wanted!" said Dabney briefly.

"Oh, really, Dabney—"

Dabney, without wasting further words, took Bunter's arm and marched him off, and Wharton and Russell and Ogilvy followed. The five juniors entered Cecil Reginald Temple's study together. The Owl of the Remove was evidently in a state of considerable trepidation.

Temple's brows contracted just a little at sight of Russell; but he remembered that he owed the discovery of the truth about the banknote to the scene Dick Russell had made in his quarters. He nodded to the Removites.

"Come in!" he said. "Come in, Bunter!"

The Owl looked very nervously at the captain of the Fourth as he entered.

"What do you want, Temple?" Ogilvy asked abruptly. "Have you forgotten I've been sent to Coventry through you?"

Temple flushed.

"There's been a discovery made," he said awkwardly. "and there's got to be an explanation. I'll be glad if you'll sit down!"

"Thank you, I'll stand!" said Ogilvy coolly.

Temple bit his lip, and turned to Billy Bunter.

"Bunter," he said, with an effort, "I've found the banknote."

Bunter started.

"You've found the banknote?"

"Yes."

"The one you said I had stolen?"

"Yes."

"Oh, really! Then you'd better tell the Remove so, and perhaps they'll stop calling me a thief!" said Bunter savagely.

"I'll tell the whole school so, Bunter," said Temple. He went on, with an obvious effort: "Bunter, I—I beg your pardon!"

Billy Bunter could scarcely believe his ears. The captain of the Fourth was apologising to him! Billy Bunter swelled visibly.

"Granted!" he said loftily. "Tell all the fellows, Temple, and—and I'll overlook it!"

Temple seemed to gulp something down, and Russell burst into an audible chuckle. But Temple took no notice of the Owl's impertinence.

"I'll set you right with your Form, Bunter," he went on. "But don't go yet. There's another matter I want to speak to you about before these chaps."

Bunter turned pale. His look at once sought Ogilvy's face, as if to ask whether the junior had betrayed him.

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"Wh-what is it, Temple?" stammered the Owl of the Remove.

"First of all, I assure you that I am not going to hurt you."

Bunter brightened up considerably.

"Yes, Temple?"

"However you answer my questions, you have nothing to fear. I licked you for taking the note from my desk when you hadn't taken it. I was to blame, and I've owned up. If there's anything I can do, I'm ready to do it. Bear that in mind, Bunter, and tell me the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Do you know who flung the stone at me from the Cloisters?"

Temple's tone was grave.

Bunter looked helplessly from Temple to Ogilvy; but the latter kept his eyes steadily down, and would not meet Bunter's gaze. The Owl's glance wandered back to Temple. Once he opened his lips, but no word came forth.

Temple broke the silence.

"I have said that I sha'n't hit you, Bunter. I only want the truth. If you did it, you can speak out. There's nothing to be afraid of, I give you my word!"

"I was sorry afterwards that I did it," stammered Billy Bunter. "But—but you hurt me, and I was sore, and—and the chaps were calling me a thief! And—and I didn't mean to hurt you so much—I didn't really. I just meant to—to get a bit of my own back, and—and I—I—"

His voice trailed off.

"So you did it?" said Temple, drawing a deep breath. He turned to Ogilvy. "Will you tell us now why you kept silent about it, Ogilvy? You must have seen him!"

Ogilvy nodded.

"He begged hard to be let off," he said. "He'd been licked too much already, even if he'd taken the tenner, which I didn't believe for a moment; and, as it happens, he hadn't taken it. It was a beastly thing he did in the Cloisters, but—but I couldn't give him away. That's all!"

"You ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You might have known you'd be suspected yourself!"

"I didn't think of that. But I don't know that it would have made any difference if I had!"

"You can buzz off, Bunter!" said Temple shortly.

There was still a throbbing pain in Cecil Reginald's forehead where the stone had struck him, and only his promise kept him from bestowing the licking of his life upon the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter "buzzed off" gladly enough.

He went to announce to the Remove the fact that his innocence was proved, and to refer the Removites loftily to Cecil Reginald Temple for confirmation.

After Bunter had left the study, Temple turned awkwardly to Ogilvy.

"I—I'm sorry I suspected you, Ogilvy," he said. "I couldn't very well do anything else. Wharton will agree to that!"

Wharton nodded.

"We all thought the same," he said. "Nobody thought of Bunter. I don't see how we could help thinking as we did!"

"It's all right," said Ogilvy. "I haven't complained. I don't blame the fellows for the line they took, considering the circumstances. It was dashed unpleasant for me, that's all!"

"Well, I'm sorry," said Temple, "and there's my fist on it!"

Ogilvy took it cheerily enough.

"All serene," he said. "I wouldn't take your fist once, after our scrap, and I was wrong, and sorry for it afterwards. I've had a jolly unpleasant time, but it's all over, and by-gones are by-gones!"

"Hooray!" said Russell.

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton heartily. "And now let's go and tell all the fellows. The Remove will be glad to hear it!"

Wharton linked arms with Ogilvy as they left the study. Russell took the other arm, and Ogilvy was marched away in triumph. The two juniors marched him into the Common-room, where Bunter was surrounded by a crowd listening to his explanations.

The Removites stared at Wharton and Ogilvy, evidently now on the best of terms.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "What price Coventry?"

"That's over," said Wharton. "It's come out! Has Bunter told you—"

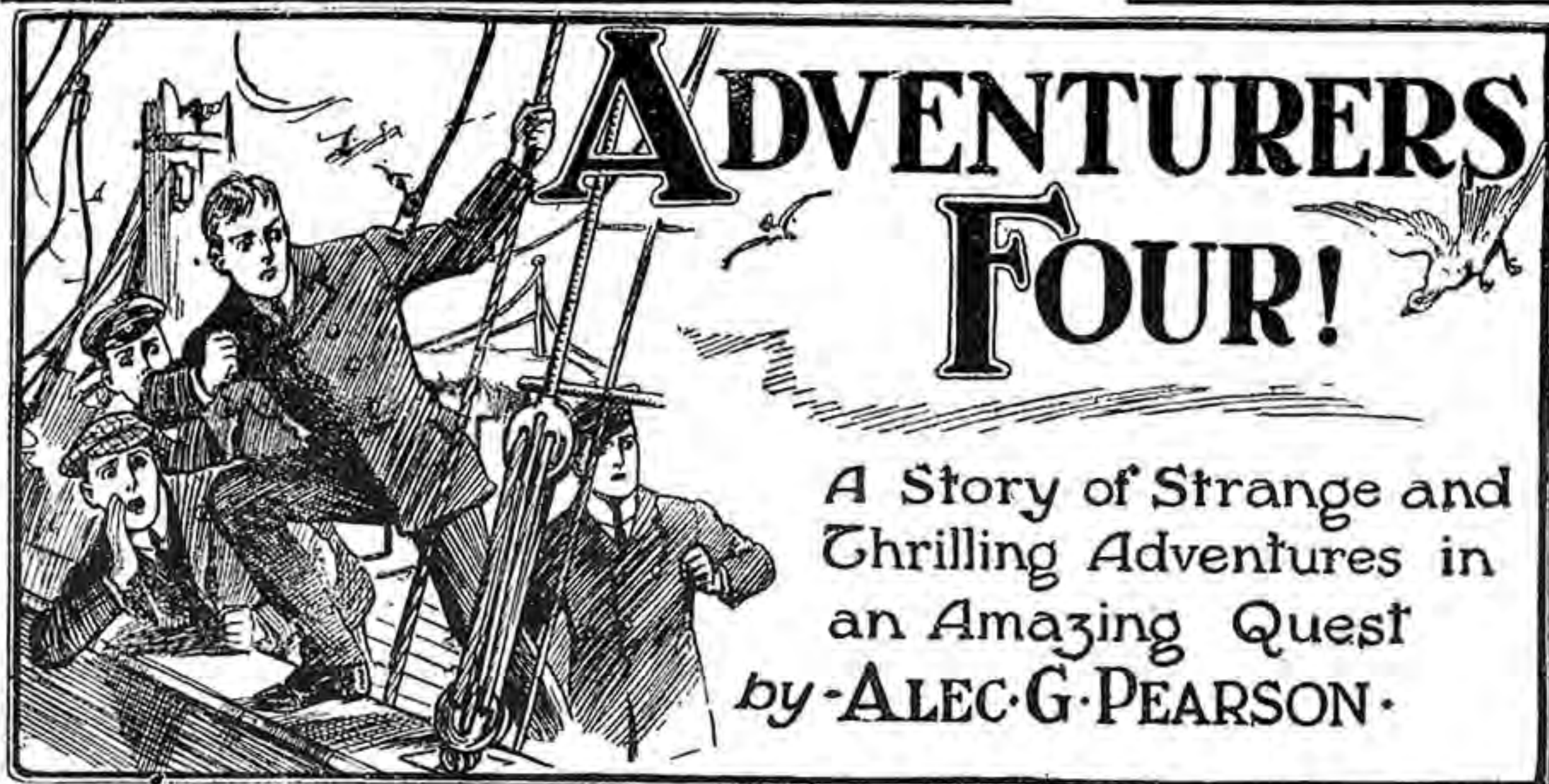
"Bunter's told us that Temple's found his giddy tenner,"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"

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

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story. **START TO-DAY!****PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS BRIEFLY TOLD.**

Hal Mackenzie receives a mysterious message urging him to come out to the Southern Andes and learn the secret of the Tower of the Golden Star. He sets out, accompanied by his chums, Jim Holdsworth, Bob Sigsbee, and Pat O'Hara.

After an adventurous journey they arrive at the Black Sentinel—a rock cut in the figure of a huge man. Later they reach the Valley of the Shadows, of which Aymara, the daughter of a native chief, has told them. Here they are captured by half-breeds, but through a terrific explosion which occurs in a wooden shed when Bob fires at the leader, Captain Garotte, many of the half-breeds are killed, and the adventurers escape.

A further day's journey brings them within sight of the Golden Star. Close by they encounter a shrunken and wizened old witch who calls herself Yarola, the Priestess of the Star.

She leads them into the Tower of the Golden Star—which is surrounded by a moat—by means of a secret underground passage. They are struck with amazement by the wonderful golden light which fills the place, and before they have time to look round the massive doors close, and they are prisoners.

They are unable to find any means of exit, and commence tapping the floor and walls with their rifles, to see if any part rings hollow, when the light is suddenly extinguished.

Then they hear foot-steps approaching, and stand ready with their weapons.

(Now read on.)

A Strange Meeting.

Then all at once the mysterious light gleamed out again, and when their eyes became accustomed to the brightness, they saw an opening in the wall like a doorway and framed within it a man. He was staring at them with even more surprise than they were regarding him, and yet he was a strange and striking figure enough.

Tall and sinewy, keen-eyed, but with a sallow face, as of one who is not often in the sunlight, he stood leaning on the haft of a great battle-axe. His clothing consisted simply of a jaguar skin, fastened over one shoulder and secured at his waist by a knotted rope.

He was a fine specimen of manhood, and but for the sallowness of his complexion might have stood as a model for one of the fighting men of the North when Europe was but half civilised. But in no sense was he a savage.

It was he who broke the spell of silence, and his words fairly made them gasp with astonishment.

"White men!" he exclaimed. "Gad! I never expected to see anyone of my own colour in this tower. Are you prisoners, or—" He was staring fixedly at Hal. "I say," he broke off, "is your name Harold Mackenzie?"

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"It is, sure enough," replied Hal. "And you—why, you must be Martin Travers!"

"No one else," replied the man in the jaguar skin; "and it's over a year since I've heard my own name spoken, either by friend or foe."

Then the two old friends, who had had some adventures together in Morocco, when Hal was only seventeen, gripped hands in the good old British fashion. There was no fuss, no excited exclamations, for they had both been up against so many surprises in their time that one more dramatic episode made little difference. Then Hal introduced his comrades.

"When we started away from England," said Jim, "we hardly dared to hope that we should find you alive, Mr. Travers. The very last words in your letter—"

"What! Did that letter reach you?" exclaimed Martin Travers. "It is little short of marvellous that it should have done so. As a matter of fact, I had almost forgotten that I had written it."

"It was that which brought us out here," said Hal Mackenzie.

"You four," said Martin Travers, "or were there others with you at the beginning?"

"No one else," replied Hal; "though we've met one good friend on the way. Well, two, in fact."

"Then you've had more than ordinary luck to be all alive now," declared Travers. "But how did you gain an entrance to the tower? I heard some queer tapping sounds up here, and I thought it was the old priestess, Yarola, at some of her tricks, so I slipped up to see."

"It was that old crone who led us here," explained Hal, "showing us the way by the secret tunnel under the moat. But when we were inside she trapped us by closing the gates, which we can't open."

"Yes; that is the sort of thing she would do. More victims, she would reckon, for the strange gods she worships."

"Ain't it possible to open these gates from the inside?" asked Sigsbee.

"Quite possible," Travers assured him; "but you might search for a year without discovering the secret."

"Do you know it?"

"Yes. Found it out by accident."

"Then I wonder you haven't cleared from this blamed tower long ago. It ain't the sort of country residence a man 'ud yearn to live in alone for a long spell."

"Well, you see, I'm not quite tired of my life yet," replied Travers. "I'm able to get out of the tower, but I'm not able to get out of the ravine. Nor are you. There is but one exit, and that is through the narrow mouth by which you entered. And that is guarded night and day by the breeds."

"We saw nothing of them, and were not interfered with."

"You would not be. They let you walk into the trap, but if you attempted to leave you would be shot down with those metal barbs of theirs without getting a chance

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to strike a blow in your own defence—that is, unless they could manage to capture you, for they much prefer to torture their enemies to killing them outright."

"Oh, they're pleasant gentlemen!" said O'Hara. "Tis ourselves had a fight wid thim in the Valley av the Shadows, and by good luck, and the help av something what exploded, we bate thim to a whisper."

"You'd get a better show in the valley," replied Travers, "as there isn't much cover for them there. But in the ravine there are a thousand hiding-places, and the most you would see of them would be an occasional hand or arm."

"Then do you mean to say," exclaimed Jim, "that we shall all have to remain imprisoned in this tower for an indefinite time? Where is the food to come from? We should die of starvation—"

"Do I look as if I was starved?" interrupted Martin Travers, with a smile. "At all events, I am still alive, and I've been in the tower for nearly twelve months. But I've a lot of queer things to tell you, and you've a lot to tell me. We'll do the talking down below. Ready for a move? Through this opening, and down those steps."

One by one they descended a flight of stone steps, Travers going last. He pressed a spring, and a great oblong of stone swung noiselessly back into its place, closing the opening behind them.

A Strange Story!

When they reached the bottom of the steps Travers took the lead, and they followed him along a short passage into a fairly large chamber, illuminated by the same sort of mysterious light as had excited their wonder up in the courtyard. Exclamations of surprise broke from their lips as they gazed about them. The chamber was quite comfortably furnished, though the articles of furniture were unlike anything of the description they had ever set eyes on before.

Stools, double-sided chairs, with curved seats and no backs, a low table shaped like a crescent moon, and a couch, with legs and feet shaped like the legs and feet of a grotesque animal, all made of some dark, hard wood, wonderfully carved, were arranged here and there about the room. They were evidently of great age.

Some skins were piled on the couch, and other skins were on the floor. There were gold and silver ornaments here and there, a goblet of wrought gold and two silver-handled knives on the table. On the walls were hung some weapons, and noticeable among them were two curved swords and a battle-axe similar to the one Travers carried.

"What do you think of my den?" he asked.

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "It reminds me of a picture I once saw of a room of ancient Babylon—not but what the picture must have been pure guesswork. Did you find all these things here?"

"I collected what I wanted from various chambers in the tower," replied Travers. "There's plenty more stuff where all this came from."

"Say, I guess there's some big pots in New York City would give a small fortune for a room full of this furniture!"

"I shall be glad to sell it to any 'big pot' who is able to send and fetch it away," replied Travers drily.

"What beats me," said Jim, "is that you—who have been living alone for so long—should be able to carry on a conversation as easily as though you had been surrounded by English-speaking people all the time. I should have half forgotten how to string words together—stumbled in my talk, you know."

"That's what I was afraid of," replied Travers; "so I hit on the plan of talking aloud for an hour or so every day, holding conversations with imaginary persons."

"Tis meself would soon have got tired av thim sort av conversations," observed O'Hara, "wid no one to talk back at me."

"What puzzles me more than anything," said Hal, "is this mysterious light, from no visible source. It is just as though the sunlight had got into the place, while the sun still remained invisible."

"That," replied Travers, "is one part of the secret which I learnt while shut up in this tower—the least part of it, I may say."

"Which, you said in your letter, would astound the world if made known."

"Exactly! And I didn't exaggerate when I wrote those words," said Travers. "And it was the possibility of learning it yourselves," he added with a smile, "which induced you to embark on this adventure, for you could hardly have expected to find me alive."

"It provided a definite end to be attained," admitted Hal; "though, as a matter of fact, we were getting so fed-up with the settled life of a civilised country that the prospect of any sort of wild adventure appealed to us."

"I can understand that," replied Travers, "for I've felt that way myself. Still, I was once up against a fairly exciting adventure in good old London. You can meet

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adventures anywhere. And now, as I'm curious to hear yours, you may as well start on the yarn at once. But I'm forgetting! You may not have had anything to eat this morning."

"Thanks! We had breakfast just after daybreak, so we can last for another hour, by which time my yarn of our doings ought to be finished."

"Fire away, then!" said Travers.

But quite two hours elapsed before Hal concluded the account of their adventures, and then he had only given a brief sketch of the things which had befallen them, a more detailed account of the various incidents being reserved for another time.

"You've had a rough time," exclaimed Travers, when he had finished, "and plenty of excitement, which is a compensation for dangers and hardships! Most fellows would consider they had gone through enough to last them for the rest of their lives, but you're not that sort. And you've something more to go through, for we are not out of the wood yet—or, I ought to say, not out of the tower."

"You're thinking, thin, we'll be able to get out, sorr?" said O'Hara.

"I'm making arrangements to quit myself," answered Travers, laughing, "and you all can lend me very considerable assistance. But I'll explain all that afterwards. We'll have some dinner now."

From a recess he produced a cold roast goose, some dried antelope meat, bananas, and some bread made of cooked plantains, which were afterwards dried and powdered.

"You will have to wash it down with plain water," said Travers, "as I have neither tea nor coffee, and I made no discovery of a store of wine in the place. Indeed, wine made in the days of the Incas would scarcely be drinkable now."

The meal was served on silver platters of quaint design, at which Sigsbee laughingly remarked that he "Sure felt as if he was sitting at a banquet given by an Amerurican Silver King."

"But what gets me," he added, "is how you manage to lay in your store of goods, seein' you ain't got the run of the country."

"I can slip out of the tower occasionally," he explained, "up to the back end of the ravine, and there I can get plenty of bananas and plantains. Wild geese, ducks, and other wild birds come along nearly every evening, but a mountain goat, or an antelope, I don't often bag. The walls of rock, as you have seen, rise sheer for hundreds of feet, the lowest being at the head of the ravine, and they are a couple of hundred feet in height."

"But there's a spring of water at one point, which falls over in a small cascade, and now and again animals come to drink at it. When one of them comes to the edge of the precipice while I'm on watch, I shoot it, and it tumbles down into the gully. The flesh gets a bit bruised by the fall, but that serves to make it tender. It's all right for a stew, anyway."

"What do you kill them with?" asked Jim.

"The same sort of weapon that the breeds use," replied Travers. "Those that fire the metal barbs. I've several of them, and a good store of ammunition. Of course, I run some risk every time I quit the tower, if I only go away a few yards, for that old witch, Yarola, is as alert as a cat, even when she appears to be sound asleep. If she sees me on the move, she signals to her friends, the breeds, at once."

"I wonder they haven't rushed the tower before now," said Jim.

"They fear to," declared Travers. "They're superstitious, and to them it's a place of mystery and terror. You see, the amazing secret of the place, which I have found out, is to them simply a vague and dreadful power wielded by wizards or demons. Their chief, the arch-scoundrel who calls himself Captain Garotte, may really know the truth, but he keeps it to himself, so that he can have a firm hold on his followers, who regard him as a sort of magician."

"They seem to have a similar idea with regard to you," said Jim, "for the old priestess referred to a 'white wizard' who was shut up in the tower, so she must have meant you."

Martin Travers laughed softly.

"I've given them a few surprises," he said, "and it's quite likely that the ruck of them look upon me as some sort of a magician. In that big fight, which was just coming off when I wrote that letter to you—it seems an age ago now—I finally drove them off by means of an explosive similar to that which you had an experience of in the Valley of the Shadows."

"Bedad, that was a surprise to us as well as to the breeds!" exclaimed O'Hara.

"I dare say," replied Travers. "Well, there were two hundred of the breeds, and only two of us in the tower—a half-breed Indian being my companion. I had saved his life."

and, for a wonder, he was grateful. Moreover, he hated Captain Garotte very bitterly, so he joined forces with me. We held our enemies at bay for some hours, and then, at the right moment, I fired the explosive, and destroyed one third of their number. The rest fled in terror, and Garotte was unable to rally them. Since that day they have never dared to make an open attack on me. But I am only safe while I am in the tower. I entrusted the letter to the half-breed Indian, and he got away with it."

"The old sailor who eventually delivered the letter," said Hal, "told us that he had found the silver hand—in which it was enclosed—clutched tightly in the grasp of a dead half-breed. The man had been stabbed. The old sailor said he had come upon the body at night on a quay at Valparaiso."

"A victim to Garotte's vengeance," said Travers. "But to go on with my yarn. You may be sure that the idea of making an escape from this place was never out of my mind for long, but the ravine was—and is—so closely guarded that it seemed hopeless I should succeed. Then one day I got a hint from Yarola, and from that I developed a plan which I resolved to put into practice. At first it hardly looked practicable, but anything was better than doing nothing."

"What! A hint from the old priestess!" exclaimed Jim.

"It was given unintentionally," replied Travers. "The old crone comes occasionally into the tower, and although she is an evil old woman, I never discouraged her visits, for she's fond of hearing herself talk, and I was able now and then to get news of the movements of the breeds. Of course, I never trusted her, and I have never let her see anything of the work that I have been carrying on for months."

"One afternoon I was standing by the edge of the subterranean pool—which I will show you presently—when I suddenly found her at my side. 'Ah, white man,' she croaked mockingly, 'if you could fashion a boat which would swim under the water, you would be able to make your escape!' I asked her how that would be possible. 'If you watch,' she replied, 'you will notice sometimes that the water of this pool moves. It swirls round and round. That is because it is one outlet for a river which runs beneath the mountains, and it comes out, many miles from here, on a great plain.' How do you know? I asked her. 'I have seen what I have seen,' she answered. And that was all I could get out of her. But I believed she had spoken the truth about that underground river, for I had once, years ago, heard a queer story about it from an explorer, who, however, knew nothing about the Tower of the Star."

"A submarine boat!" said Jim. "While she was about it she might as well have suggested that you should build an aeroplane and fly away. It would have been as easy."

"You are wrong," Travers quietly replied. "For the submarine boat is nearly built!"

A Grip of Steel!

"Say, we've had so many surprises sprung on us this trip," exclaimed Sigsbee, "that we're gettin' kind of used to them. But, in a way, this is most the biggest. You've nearly built a submarine boat!"

"Alone!" Jim Holdsworth ejaculated.

"I didn't ask Yarola to help me," replied Travers, with a laugh, "and there was no one else."

"Where did you find the materials?" asked Hal.

"There's plenty of wood in the tower," replied Travers, "and a fair amount of metal. It has been a long job, for I've been nine months at work on it. You see, I had to make most of my own tools, hammer out metal bolts, and a score of other things, which an ordinary boat-builder wouldn't have to do. But, come along, and look at my handiwork, then you can judge for yourselves."

He led the way out of the chamber in which they had had their dinner, through another vault-like room, and down a long flight of steps into a wide corridor.

"What a place!" exclaimed Hal.

"Ay, those Incas knew how to build!" said Travers. "I don't know how many hundreds of years old this tower is, but it's as firm now as on the day it was completed. There are numbers of passages and rooms above ground and below."

"And everywhere this wonderful light."

"Which I can turn off at will. Flush with the wall there are scores of wire ends which give off the light, but it is so equally diffused that you can't detect where it comes from. The wires lead down to a mine, which contains the material that is the source of the power."

"And that is—"

"The secret which you are about to learn," said Travers. "I can't rightly call it my discovery, as it was discovered by the Incas centuries before I was born. Here we are, at the pool."

They had been following the corridor, which was shaped like

an S, while they were talking, and at the far end of it they emerged into a great natural cavern, almost circular in form, and low-roofed. The greater part was occupied by a pool of still water, a platform of rock, several feet in width, running round it. On the opposite side there was the opening of another corridor or tunnel. And moored at the platform close to them was a boat about twenty feet in length, with a beam of six feet. It roughly resembled the hull of an ordinary submarine boat, but without the conning-tower.

"What do you think of her?" asked Travers. And he listened to their ejaculations of wonder, and the praise of his skill and patience, with very evident pleasure.

They climbed down through the manhole to the cabin, and found there was a fair amount of room even for five persons.

"It's lucky I made her this size," said Travers, "for I certainly didn't expect I should be carrying any passengers. With your help I shall be able to finish her in a week."

She was fitted with a two-bladed propeller, and a small engine of simple but peculiar construction. Hal examined the engine curiously.

"I've never seen an engine like this before," he said.

"What drives it? It doesn't appear to be suitable for steam."

"It isn't," replied Travers. "It is my own invention, after repeated experiments. An engineer would have devised something better, but it will serve its purpose. As to the power which will drive it"—he glanced round at them, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes—"well, now you are going to learn the great secret."

You may be sure they were all attention at this. In breathless silence they listened to what he had to tell them.

"Down beneath another underground chamber," he began, "there is the shaft of a mine. That mine contains a substance, a kind of soft metal, dark grey in colour, which, so far as I can make out, is a combination of stored electricity and something which resembles radium, but which is not radium. That's as near as I can get to it. I call it the Nameless Force. Scientists may tell what it is, and give it a name, if ever we get any samples of the stuff home to England. I am no scientist, but I know what it can do."

He flung his arms wide.

"In all the world," he said, "there is nothing like it that has yet been discovered. It produces, without the aid of machinery, all this light which you have admired so much; it is a high explosive, under certain conditions, as you had proof in the valley; it can take the place of cordite, or gun-powder in guns and rifles—for the breeds use it in their weapons—and it will provide the driving power for our submarine boat. There is scarcely any waste. I mean, it doesn't burn away like coal or wood, for, according to my calculations, one pound of it would develop enough force to drive this boat a hundred miles, at an average speed of ten knots. Still, I don't ask you to pin too much faith on calculations."

"It's meself that's no good at figures!" interjected O'Hara.

"Think of the vast possibilities," continued Travers. "Put a certain amount on a war-vessel—say a destroyer or a submarine to begin with—with properly-fitted engines. The vessel would be propelled at a greater speed than any other vessel afloat, she would be lighted far more effectively than with electricity alone, torpedoes could be fired with it, and it might also be used in the smaller guns. That much I am certain of. What I am not certain of is the full measure of the power of this amazing mineral. As owners of this mine, we could all become millionaires, if we were in want of money, which we are not. For if the British Government took the matter up, troops would soon be sent to clear the breeds out of the country."

"It is your mine," said Jim, "by right of discovery. We have no share in it."

"It belongs to us all equally," replied Travers. "I must insist on that arrangement."

"Have you been down into the mine?" asked Hal.

"Yes, several times," replied Travers.

"Does there seem to be a good supply of the stuff?"

"Hundreds of tons of it, I should think. And you must remember that it would require no more than a hundred-weight to take a big passenger liner four or five times across the Atlantic, and provide all her lighting arrangements. You know the great secret now. I name it as the most wonderful discovery since the creation of the world, and it is for our country only. No other nation shall ever learn the secret. If we are lucky enough to reach old England with our samples, we will lay the matter before the British Government, and if they refuse to have anything to do with it, I will come back here and destroy the mine. Or, in case of my illness or death, one of you must undertake the task. We must have an arrangement to that effect. That is my fixed determination."

(Continued on page iv of cover.)



PRIVATE J. DEAR,
Coldstream Guards.



A. SMITH,
Bath.



"A TRUE READER,"
Staffordshire.



RAY DEXTER,
Australia.



JOE DUNGLISON,
Australia.



ARCHIE GABBRAITH,
Glasgow.



"A LOYAL READER,"
Isle of Wight.



"A KEEN
SUPPORTER."



PRIVATE FRED AKED,
R.A.M.C.



L.-CPL. E. ATTEWELL,
Leicester Regt.



H. T. THOMAS,
Bridgend.



M. EVANS,
Abertysswg.



G. WILLIAMS,
Devonport.



PRIVATE MACKAY,
Queen's Own Cameron
Highlanders.



ALEX. A. ALAM,
Australia.



TOM JENNINGS,
Botton.



F. ROE,
Northampton.



"A YOUNG READER,"
Fifeshire.



"A YORKSHIRE
READER."



A. E. HART,
London, S.E.



F. DICKSON,
Dundee.



R. C. WHANT,
Colchester.



"CHARLIE,"
Bournemouth.



T. ROBERTSON,
Leith.



W. BENTHAM,
Bradford.



HENRY W. TATE,
"A Magnetite."



H. DARBY,
Birmingham.

ADVENTURERS FOUR.

(Continued from page 20.)

"It is in your power to destroy it, then?" said Hal.

"I have everything prepared," replied Travers. "In five minutes from now I could destroy the mine utterly, and the tower with it."

"And the method?"

"For the present that must remain my secret," said Travers.

So at last the object of their perilous quest was attained—the double object, for they had found Martin Travers, and they had learned the secret, which had been guarded throughout the centuries by the Tower of the Golden Star.

But their adventures were by no means ended, for they had yet to get away from the tower, and the voyage through the underground river in the submarine boat was likely to give them a fresh and unknown lot of dangers to encounter.

They had a heap of things to discuss, and still more to think about, for it was not easy to grasp all at once what the great secret meant not only to them, but perhaps to the whole world. It might, for instance, cause a revolution in warfare both on sea and land, if the new and terrible power could accomplish all that Travers claimed for it. And he was not given to exaggeration.

And, although they knew it not—for news of the outside world had not reached them since they quitted the last outpost of civilisation—the war-clouds were already darkening over Europe.

"Well, I guess we can't talk things over, and discuss plans, and all that kind of racket, now!" exclaimed Sigsbee; "because I, for one, haven't got all that Martin Travers has told us properly sorted out in my brain yet. Let's wait till to-morrow for the big pow-wow, and in the meantime have a look round this cavern. Where does that passage lead to, mister?"

He pointed to the narrow tunnel at the opposite side of the pool.

"It's a way out," replied Travers. "At the end of it there is a lever fixed against the wall. By pulling that lever a stone overhead is moved, leaving an opening big enough for a man to get through. I always go out that way in my expeditions after game."

"Then I guess I'll go and have a look out," said Sigsbee, "just to see what the butt-end of the ravine is like."

He walked round the platform of rock and entered the passage, the others remaining by the pool, as the waters were showing signs of disturbance, and beginning to swirl round slowly.

The passage was about twenty-five yards in length, terminating abruptly in a wall of rock. Fixed in this rock wall there was a metal lever.

Sigsbee pulled on it, and heard a grating sound above his head. Looking up, he saw an opening about four feet in width, the stone which had blocked it having swung aside. Daylight streamed down, and through the aperture the sky was visible.

"Those old-time galoots seemed fond of these sliding-stone fixin's!" he muttered.

There was a slight projection from the side of the tunnel about two feet above the ground, and, stepping on this, he reached up and gripped the edges of the opening. Then he pulled himself up until his body was half through.

He fancied that he heard a slight movement behind him, but before he could turn his head something gripped him round the body, just below the shoulder-blades. It was like a band of steel, and it held his arms fast to his sides.

"Help, here!" he shouted, with all the strength of his lungs. "Treachery!"

Then a cloth was thrust over his face, stifling his voice, and he was pulled up through the opening by his unseen captors.

His comrades heard his shout, and rushed along the passage, but by the time they reached the end Sigsbee had disappeared. They looked at each other in blank dismay.

"The breeds have got him!" said Travers.

"That's bad, begorra!" said O'Hara, with a face of blank dismay. "Shure, 'twas too much of a hurry he was in, entirely!"

"Confound it all!" muttered Hal.

"Yes, they've got him all right," said Travers. "I've never known them keep watch against that opening before—in fact, I wasn't at all certain that they knew of its existence! Yet it could hardly have been chance that some of them were just on the spot when the big stone swung aside. Yes; they must have been on the watch, hoping to capture me, for the moment Sigsbee's head and shoulders showed they grabbed him."

"Then 'tis ourselves must rescue him from the yellow-bided bastes!" exclaimed O'Hara.

And with that he started to climb through the aperture himself. Travers pulled him back.

"You won't rescue him that way!" he said. "Only one man at a time can get through that hole, and while in the act of climbing through he is practically helpless. There are probably a score of breeds, at least, lurking near, and it would be easy enough for them to kill each man as he appeared."

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Hal. "We're not going to let our comrade be carried off by those fiends without making some effort to save him!"

Travers pulled the lever, and the big stone swung back into its place, closing the opening.

"Trust to me," he replied. "Nothing will be gained by rashness."

Which was true enough. Though that one of the most reckless of men should counsel caution seemed strange, for he had rashly exposed his own life many times, as the mere fact of his having penetrated to that wild region alone was ample proof. But then he had only his own life to consider. Now it was different. The life of another man mainly depended on his coolness and judgment; for he knew more of the habits and methods of the treacherous breeds than the others could possibly know.

"But they'll kill him before we can do anything!" exclaimed Jim, who, like the Irishman, was anxious to dash off to Sigsbee's rescue at once.

"That's not their method," replied Travers. "They are never in a hurry to kill a captive. They like to torture him first. And, for some reason—some superstition or other—they always wait until midnight before starting to torture a prisoner."

"And by that time——"

"Before that time," interrupted Travers, "we shall be ready to strike a blow on our comrade's behalf. And, believe me"—his eyes gleamed suddenly with a terrible fierceness—"the blow will get home! I have a score with those breeds which is, as yet, unpaid. But I always pay in full!"

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY Order your copy in advance.)

THE SENTENCE OF THE SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 17.)

said Bob Cherry. "The careless ass ought to be scragged! Still, it serves Bunter right for going to his study after the grub!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"It was Bunter biffed the stone at Temple!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, crumbs! Bunter!"

"Yes."

"Why, you fat villain——" howled Peter Todd.

"I—I say, you fellows, it—it was an accident, you know!"

"It's all serene!" said Wharton. "It was a rotten, Prussian thing to do; but Temple has licked Bunter for stealing the banknote, which was in his study all the time, and not stolen at all. The matter's dropped. Bunter can't help being a Hunnish beast, and there was some excuse for him, too——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Ogilvy was ass enough to promise him not to give him away," said Wharton. "We all owe Ogilvy an apology!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The apology is terrific!"

"Sorry, old chap!"

"Your own fault, you know," said Johnny Bull. "Still, sorry!"

Ogilvy laughed.

"It's all serene!"

Billy Bunter scudded away to Temple's study. The captain of the Fourth glared at him, as his big spectacles glimmered in at the doorway.

"I say, Temple——"

"Scat!"

"I've come to make a suggestion to you," said Bunter, with dignity. "You've found out that you've made a lot of rotten mistakes, and you've found the tenner. The least you can do now is to stand a feed in the Rag!"

Temple stared at him, and then burst into a laugh.

"Done!" he said.

And a goodly portion of the "tenner" was generously expended by Cecil Reginald, and the spread in the Rag was quite a record; and the guest of honour was Ogilvy of the Remove, who had so lately been sent to Coventry by Sentence of the School!

THE END.

(Do not miss "THE GREAT BAT MYSTERY!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

