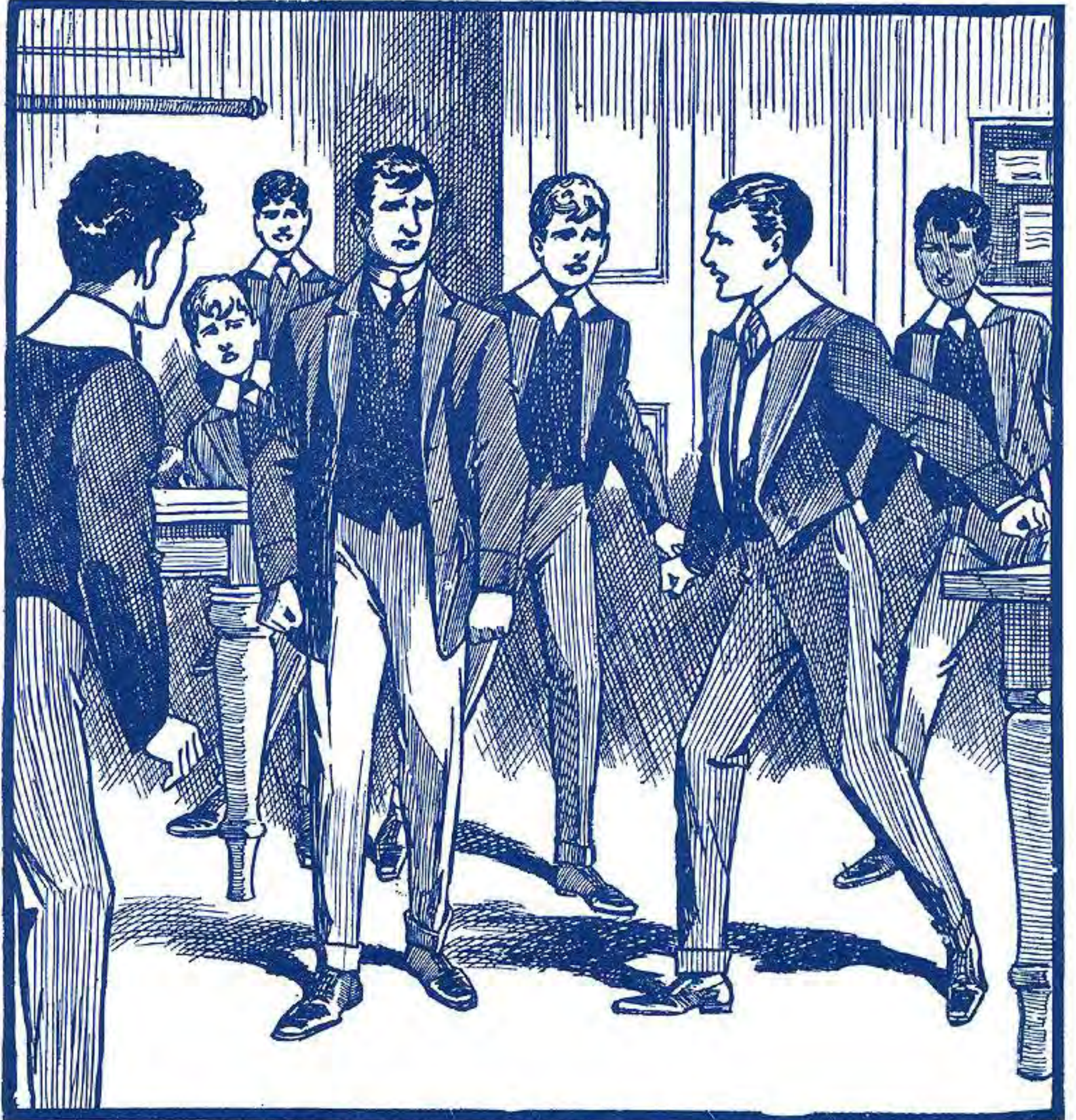
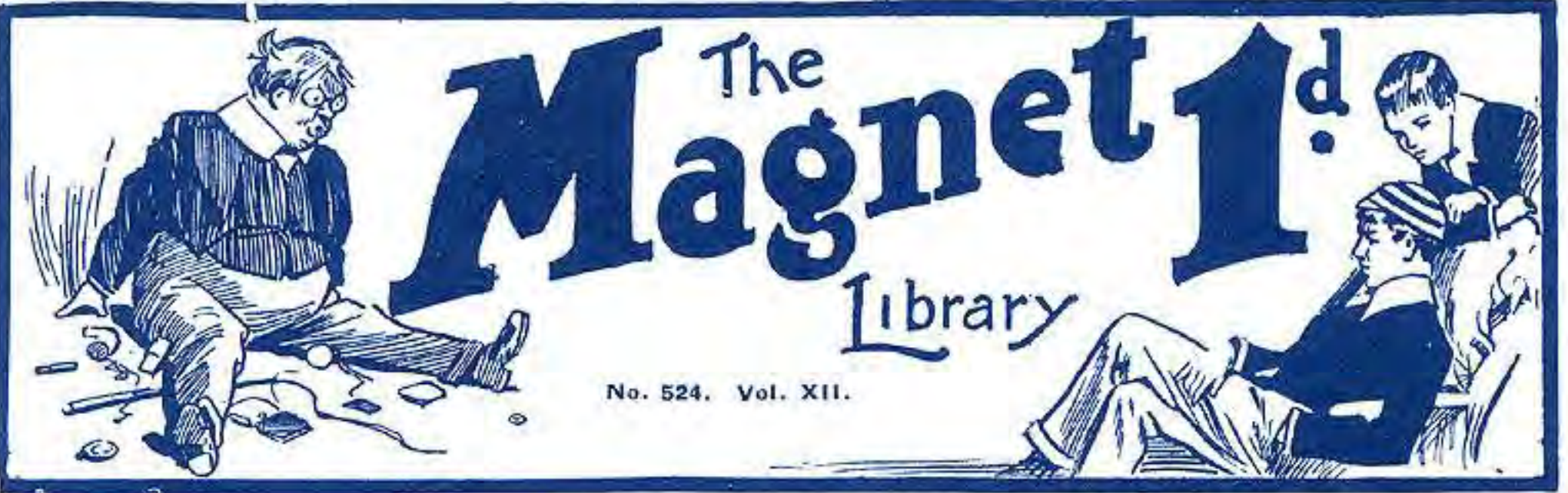


LOYAL SIR JIMMY!



MAULY WAKES UP!

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

LOYAL SIR JIMMY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Snoop, the Bully!

"STOP that, Snoop!"

It was Piet Delarey, the Remove junior from South Africa, who spoke those words; and they were spoken sharply and authoritatively.

Sidney James Snoop certainly stopped twisting the arm of little Sylvester of the Second Form; but he did not release it.

Snoop as a bully was not quite new to Greyfriars. He could not do very much in that line, for he was a funk, and but little use in a scrap. There were fags in the Third, or even in the Second, who would have stood up to Snoop with some prospect of coming out of the tussle victorious.

Certainly Tubb or Paget, Gatty or Myers, Wingate minor or Nugent minor or Bolsover minor would not have put up with bullying from Snoop.

But Roderick Sylvester, the delicately-reared son of an American millionaire, was not as those heroes. He was weak enough to be helpless in Snoop's hands. And when Snoop found anyone like that he would play the bully.

Snoop usually dropped it directly he was observed, however.

But now he did not seem inclined to drop it at once.

"It's no affair of yours, Delarey!" he said sullenly.

"But it is!" said Piet. "Sylvester happens to be a chum of mine. And if he wasn't it would be all the same! You can't be allowed to bully small kids, Snoop!"

"I'm not going to be checked by them!" snarled Snoop.

"I don't believe Sylvester checked you!"

"No, I didn't," said the Second-Former; "unless it's check to—"

"Shut up, you sneaking little rotter!"

As Snoop hissed those words he gave Sylvester's arm another cruel twist.

Delarey saw red. His temper was not of the kind that is easily held in control, though he generally managed to keep a leash on it. Snoop's holding on to the fag's arm after he had been ordered to stop had annoyed him. He had the feeling which most of the prominent members of the Remove had—that Sidney James Snoop was such a worm that he had no right to show obstinacy. It was not wholly justified; yet, seeing what Snoop was, something might be said for it.

Little Sylvester gave a moan of pain. Delarey's fist shot out, and Snoop went down with a crash.

His head struck the wall with a big thwack, and he lay where he had fallen, breathing hard, not much more than half-conscious.

Delarey looked down at him. He had not intended to hurt Snoop as much as that.

But pride forbade an apology—pride and the drawn look of pain on the fag's rather delicate face.

"Oh, I say, Delarey!" said Sylvester, in alarm.

"It's all right, kid!" replied the South African junior. "It gave him a nasty bump, I dare say; but he's not as much hurt as he makes out to be. Get up, you funk!"

And he stirred Snoop with his foot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" spoke the voice of Bob Cherry. "What's the matter here?"

Snoop gave a long and very realistic groan, and then closed his eyes, and lay quite still.

"I say, you know, Rebel—"

"You needn't accuse me of bullying, Bob," said Delarey, with his half-cynical smile. "I got badly wrong that way with you once; but you'll be just as far wrong if—"

"Oh, I know you're not bullying, fat-head!" said Bob impatiently. "And I don't doubt Snoopey deserved what he got—he mostly deserves more. But I saw you put your foot to him!"

"That was a hint to him that he'd better get up," answered Delarey.

Bob and he understood each other very well, and they had always been good friends since the fight between them which had been fixed up, but had never come off.

But Bob did not quite like this. He knelt by Snoop's side, and lifted his head. He was as much concerned for Delarey as for Snoop—perhaps more. And he felt at least as much annoyed with Snoop as with Delarey—perhaps more. But it was Snoop who was hurt.

Sidney James considered that another groan might pay better at this moment than any further attempt at appearing unconscious. So he groaned again.

"Sounds like a sick cow!" said the Rebel sarcastically.

"Shurrup!" growled Bob. "If you've really hurt him—"

"Well, I have, old scout! I gave him one under the chin, and the wall banged his head. I've noticed that when the wall bangs my head it usually hurts. I dare say it hurt Snoop. But that's all. He hasn't got concussion of the brain, or any little luxury of that sort; and if he had I ain't sure I should pity him!"

"But it would be awkward for you," replied Bob.

"Sha'n't drag you in if it is!" snapped Delarey.

"He doesn't look very pale—at least, not much more than usual—he's always a pasty-faced beast!" Bob returned, grinning.

Bob did not resent the Rebel's snappish speech, for it was Bob's way to shoulder his own responsibilities, and he knew how a fellow felt when anyone else was inclined to butt in.

"If there's a bump on his napper; it's all right," said the Africander. "When it's concussion there's a dent inside. If there's a bump there can't be a dent, too—see?"

"I never heard that before," replied Bob. "But it sounds all right. Did a doctor tell you?"

"No, I told myself. Worked it out with my brains, Bob—things you have inside your head, or don't have, as the case may be."

"There is a bump, and I don't believe Snoopey's got brains enough for concussion, anyway—though I dare say he has more than I have. Do you want to go to sanny, Snoop? Or would you like me to give you an arm to Quelch?"

Bob winked at Delarey. Snoop groaned again. He had hoped at first that there might be a row between these two. But there seemed no chance of that.

"I think Quelch ought to know," said Snoop, in a feeble and hollow voice. "I don't say so much about knocking a chap down; but to kick him when he's down—"

"You rotten liar!" snapped Delarey.

"It is a lie, Cherry," said Sylvester. "Piet didn't kick him. He only stirred him up with his toe."

"All the same, Quelch ought to know," said Bob, with another wink. "Come along, Snoopey, my hero! Of course you'll come, too, Rebel, as the accused, and the kid as witness?"

"Right-ho!" said Delarey.

"There's no need for Sylvester to come," said Snoop faintly. "I suppose Delarey's not going to deny it."

"I'm not going to deny anything that's true, Snoop!"

"Oh, Sylvester had better come along!" said Bob cheerily. "Quelch's an inquisitive old bird. He'll be sure to want to know what it was about."

"Look here, on second thoughts, I'm not going to Quelch!" whined Snoop. "It would be too much like sneaking!"

"If it's too much like sneaking for you, Snoop, it must be dead off!" said the Rebel.

Snoop scowled at him as he got up. He seemed able to stand without difficulty, and the small amount of sympathy Bob had felt melted like snow in April.

"What was he bullying you for, kid?" asked Bob, as Snoop slunk away.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Woes of a Wealthy Fag!

SYLVESTER coloured, and looked uncomfortable.

"I— Wouldn't it be sneaking to tell?" he said nervously.

"Can't see it," answered Bob. "I'm not a master, and I'm not a prefect. But don't tell me unless you want to."

"I'd rather tell Piet," the youngster said.

Bob looked rather surprised. Then he remembered that Delarey and Sylvester had been among the little band who had spent Christmas at the school. At such a time the barriers of Form division are apt to go down; and no doubt Sylvester and the Remove had got chummier than they could ever have done in term-time. Delarey, who could be as hard as nails where a rotter like Snoop was concerned, had soft places in his heart where

anyone weaker than himself was in question, Bob knew.

"Right-ho, kid!" said Bob. "The Rebel's one of the best, and I know he'll see that you have fair play!"

And he walked away.

"I hope I didn't offend him," said the fag anxiously. "I like Bob Cherry, and he's always been decent to me."

"Everybody likes Bob," answered the Rebel. "Everybody that isn't a rotter, I mean. No, he isn't offended. Is there really much to tell, kid? But it wouldn't be Snoop to bully without a purpose. Was he trying to screw something out of you?"

"Yes, he was. But I don't want to talk about it here in the passage."

And the fag looked round with rather a frightened air. It occurred to Piet Delarey, who was as keen as most fellows, that he must be afraid of someone besides Snoop.

"Come along to my study. I expect Mauly will be there; but he's most likely asleep; and, anyway, you don't mind old Mauly."

Lord Mauleverer, who had what amounted to a positive genius for slacking, lay stretched at full length on the luxurious couch in Study No. 12, which he shared with Piet Delarey and Sir Jimmy Vivian, the schoolboy baronet from the slums. He was snoozing peacefully.

Delarey grinned.

"At another time," he said, "I should shake Mauly up—on principle. It doesn't seem any real use; but we haven't quite given up hope yet. But as things are, he is welcome to snooze on." Sylvester seemed a little bit doubtful.

"Oh, if Mauly does hear, it's no odds!" said the Rebel, with a touch of impatience. "What was Snoop after, kid—cash?"

"Yes," breathed Sylvester.

"I hope you didn't let him have any? You'd never get it back!"

"No, I didn't. I—P've got to make a stand, Piet—just got to!"

"How do you mean, Rod? A stand against what?"

"It's my dad. You know he's got pots of money?"

"I know that all serene."

"Well, he says it will be mine some day. Not sure I want it. I think sometimes it's better to have enough than to have millions. Perhaps it's better to have to make it for oneself."

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right. All the same, most of us could do with a bit more than we get, if our paters could spare it," replied Piet Delarey, with something like a sigh.

"I'm to learn to take care of it, dad says," went on the American youngster. "Dad says that's only horse sense. I suppose what I've got can't be any better than donkey sense, for it's a nuisance to take care of so much. I've lots more this term than I ever had before."

"More than you can spend, I reckon."

"Oh, heaps! Besides, dad don't mean me to spend it all. He says the impulse to get rid of it in a hurry is just what sends so many millionaires' sons to the dogs."

"Dare say he's right. What else did he say?"

"That I might lend it to a friend who really needed it. Nugent minor and Gatty and Myers say they really need it; but I think it's better to stand treat to them than to let them get into debt, and I generally do when they ask me. They're all right; but Sammy Bunter takes a lot of shaking off. It seems to make him really miserable that I should have such a whack when he's always hard up."

"Sammy's a miserable little sniveller,

anyway," said Delarey. "Don't take any notice of him!"

"I don't take much. I can lick him when he goes too far. But there are chaps I can't lick, you know, Piet. And dad says he bars promise—something or other—it's not promise—though, of course, they do promise to pay back!"

"Promiscuous is the word, I fancy. Your pater bars promiscuous lending—eh? Well, I think he's right. There's not so much to be said against borrowing from a chum, though that can be overdone; but the sort of rotter who sucks up to a chap to get a loan is bad enough, and the sort that bullies him to get it is worse. That was what Snoop was doing—eh?"

"Yes."

"And you stood out? Do it again, sonny, and appeal to any decent fellow who happens to be passing to back you up. He'll do it. Any of us—or Temple and that lot—even old Coker. Never mind who. I don't think we've got many bandits among us."

"I don't like telling anyone. It seems sneaky. But I couldn't lend to Snoop. It wasn't the money. But I hate Snoop. He's a cad! I don't like Bunter, or Bolsover; but they're not so bad as Snoop. I know dad would bar him."

"Strikes me dad would bar Bunter, too," said the Rebel drily.

"Well, yes. But it was only once, and I refused next time. He keeps on trying, but he doesn't get any more. I think he will be choked off soon."

"Then you're no end hopeful, young 'un! Any more besides Bunter?"

"One or two," confessed the fag, with evident unwillingness. "But nobody like Snoop."

"Couldn't very well be. There's only one Sidney James—thanks be! Has Skinner been at you?"

"No. I don't think he knows."

"Can't know if he hasn't," said the Rebel. "Don't give in to Skinner, kid! Stott?"

"Yes—once. But I didn't mean to tell you them all, Piet—only to ask advice. And I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind taking care of my money for me."

"Can't be did, Rod! I get hard up myself sometimes, and I might be tempted. Besides, that isn't what your dad meant. It's shifting the responsibility."

"I—I suppose it is, really," admitted Sylvester regretfully. "But if you're ever hard up, Piet—"

"I'm hard up now, kid; but I can't see myself borrowing your cash. It simply can't be did. I should feel a mean sweep!"

"Really, Piet? I don't see why. You said I was a chum of yours," said the small boy wistfully.

"So you are, young 'un!"

"And you said a fellow might borrow from a chum, too."

"Not when the chum's a mere infant."

"I'm nearly twelve."

"It's a great age, Rod. But I don't borrow from anyone under fourteen. A chap has to make his own rules, and that's one of mine."

"I wish you would! But if you won't—"

"I certainly won't, young fellow!"

"Well, that's all. I'm disappointed, of course!"

"I can't help that. No end obliged to you, my son; but there's a limit. That isn't quite all, though. You mentioned Bolsover. I hope that chap hasn't been on the borrowing lay. I thought better of him than that."

"He's paid it back—at least, part of it."

"How much did he borrow?"

"Five dollars—I mean, a quid."

"And how much has he paid back?"

"I—I—"

"Out with it, kid!"

"Well, a shilling, then. But he says he's going to pay the rest."

The Rebel frowned.

"Did he bully you?" he asked.

"Nun-nun-no!"

"You're not good at telling anything but the truth, so don't try it, kid!"

"Well, he didn't bully me, Piet. But—"

"Why did you let him have it? Bolsover major's no pal of yours!"

"Well, I was afraid. I suppose I'm a funk, but—"

The youngster's lips twitched. It was easy for Delarey to understand.

Percy Bolsover was the biggest fellow in the Remove, and the strongest. There were plenty of fellows in the Upper Fourth and Fifth and Shell—there might even have been one or two in the Sixth, besides Reggie Coker—for whom he carried too many guns.

The Remove had put him in his proper place. Wharton, Bob Cherry, the Bounder, Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Delarey himself, Johnny Bull, Bulstrode—any of these could probably thrash Bolsover. But there was none of them he feared. And even those who had licked him knew that he was always ready to try the issue over afresh.

Bolsover major was a hard case. He did not terrorise the Remove in these days. But it was not a thing to blame a small boy of nearly twelve for—that Bolsover should have been able to terrorise him.

Delarey had not thought he would do it, though.

"It's a bit thick," he said. "I thought better of Bolsy than that. I think I'd better talk to him."

Sylvester took alarm at once.

"I'd rather you didn't, Piet—much rather!" he said earnestly. "He'll be put out, you know. And I think he will really pay me back some day."

"Yes—about when Bunter does, I guess."

"That will be never. I don't expect it from Bunter."

"Or from Stott?"

"Well, I don't know. I suppose not."

"If you're going to pay any attention to what your dad said, my boy, you must steer clear of that set. And of Fishy. There may be one or two more, but no one else quite as bad."

"I wish—"

Sylvester paused.

"That your pater hadn't put this burden on you—eh?"

"Well, yes, I do wish that. I'd a heap sooner have a bob a week pocket-money, like some of the kids in our Form. But that wasn't what I meant. I wish you'd let me lend you some, Piet—I do so!"

"Can't be did, my son! Look here! I don't want to encourage you to depend on another chap. That wouldn't be helping your pater to make a man of you. But tip me the wink if it gets too thick to stand. And now cut!"

"Thank you ever so much, Delarey! I sha'n't forget. But I wish—"

"Ta-ta! No time for any more converse now."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Butting In!

HARDLY had the door closed behind the fag when Mauly sat up.

"Hallo, old scout! Thought you were fast asleep!" said Delarey.

"I was. I'm not now, begad! Can't you see my eyes are open?"

"Shouldn't have taken any notice of that. I believe you can snooze with them open. But you never sit up when you open."

are asleep, and not too jolly often when you're awake."

"I've been awake five minutes or more. I've been listenin', begad!"

"Oh, all serene!" replied Piet.

But Mauly saw him flush.

"You don't mind, do you, dear old boy?" he said. "I liked to hear you talk to the kid. Regular dashed Dutch uncle! An' he's a decent sort, begad!"

"Rather more than decent, I think. He'll make a fine man if he only hardens a bit. Don't do to be too soft in this world, you know, Mauly."

"Meanin' that I am, Piet?"

"Well, you are at times. But you aren't a fool."

"Tha-a-anks, dear boy! Most of the chaps think I am, begad! But I say, Piet, if you are hard up, why in the world don't you borrow a trifle from me?"

Delarey's face took on a very resolute look.

"I borrowed a fiver from you the other day, Mauly."

"So you did, old top! But a fiver ain't much, begad!"

"It's something to me. I told you then that it might be three months before I could repay you."

"Yaas. An' I said I didn't care if it was three giddy centuries!"

"I don't take gifts, Mauly!"

"No, dear boy! I've noticed you're a bit of an ass about that!"

"Put yourself in my place—if you can! You wouldn't then. For all your easy-going ways, you're proud as Lucifer!"

"So are you, Piet. An' I know I'm buttin' in. I don't want to butt in any further than need be. I'm not askin' questions—it's a fag doin' that, anyway. But if you need any of the rhino—an' whatever you may need it for—I'm not askin', begad—you can have all I've got, an' more when it comes."

Real feeling ran through Mauly's drawling speech. Delarey felt it, and his face softened. But his resolution did not.

"Can't take it, old fellow!" he said.

"You can't take it from Sylvester, because he's only a kid. That's right. I'm not blamin' you. But you can take it from me. I'm not a kid, exactly, an' I'm a chum, I think. Would you take it from Squiff or Browney? I know you think more of them than you do of me—they're so much more alive than I am—but—"

"I'm not sure, Mauly, that I think more of anyone—except my father—than I do of you! You're a lazy old slacker, but you're the best of good chums."

"Tha-a-anks, Piet, dear boy! But you haven't answered."

"I wouldn't, then, because I don't know a bit when I could pay back. And I can't see that a fellow has a right to borrow, not knowing that."

Vivian came in at this moment. Delarey gave him an irritable look. He had not wanted Sir Jimmy to hear that.

The face of the schoolboy baronet fell at once. It was quite a good-looking face, with something of the street arab's sharpness in it still, perhaps, but with better things, too.

Sir Jimmy had not yet shaken off fully all the defects of his early training—or want of training. He still dropped an aspirate now and then. But that was a very small matter; even members of Parliament have been known to drop aspirates. And there had certainly been a marked appearance in his manners since he first turned up at Greyfriars, and astonished Mauly and the Rebel by his table customs.

"I say, Piet—"

"Don't bother me just now, Jimmy boy," said Delarey, smiling, for he had

repented on the instant of his irritation. He went out.

"That's my style all over. It's me for buttin' in!" said Sir Jimmy, with a touch of bitterness.

"No, dear boy, you didn't butt in. I've just been doin' that, I fancy, begad!"

Sir Jimmy shook his head.

"You couldn't," he said. "Piet thinks a 'eap of you."

"So he does of you, old chap!"

"Different way," Sir Jimmy said, still shaking his head. "You an' 'im—"

"He, Jimmy!"

"Oh, don't bother! What does dashed grammar matter? You and he"—Sir Jimmy articulated the words very slowly and clearly—"are the same sort. I know you're a hear!"

"I'm not, Jimmy—only an ear!"

"But so might he be. He's fit for anybody's company. I've got a 'andle to my name; but what am I, after all?"

"A dashed decent chap, dear boy, an' our very good friend!"

"It's all very well, Mauly; but I ain't in the same class, an' I begin to think I never shall be. I like you. You've been a real pal to me—s'far as you knew 'ow. But we're kinder relations, an' I s'pose it was up to you. If another kid outer the gutter, same's me, turned up 'ere, same's me, I should feel as I'd got to stand by 'im, bein' his relation, same's you stood by me. Your taught me that."

Mauly shuddered at the mental picture. He did not yearn for another relative recovered from the slums of London. And yet, as he looked at the eager, bright face of Sir Jimmy, he could not help thinking that half a dozen of his sort would be a welcome exchange for Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and the rest of the cads' brigade—yes, even if the half-dozen Sir Jimmies had to be taught the very rudiments of civilised manners!

Sir Jimmy went on, keeping more to his old slipshod speech than he had done for months past.

"It was up to you, hein' my cousin. But it wasn't up to 'im. Yet Piet stood my friend from the first. 'E taught me things without sniggerin' at me—"

"I trust I didn't snigger, begad. Jimmy? I should hate to think that I sniggered," put in Mauly. "Sniggerin' at a chap for not knowin' any better when he hasn't had the chance is dead off."

"Of course you never! But it was up to you, in a way; an' it wasn't up to Piet."

"Far be it from me to make light of what Piet did, dear boy, though I know he would say it was also up to him; but after all, he did no more than Wharton an' a number of others."

"Yer a liar! I mean—oh, I beg pardon, Mauly; that slipped out! Carker's Rents, you know! We wasn't polite there! I mean, you're wrong. I'm not saying a word against Harry Wharton an' Bob Cherry an' the rest of them—they're as good as any that was ever made. But they didn't 'ave to put up with me day arter day, as Piet did. See?"

"I see, Jimmy. But I don't think it hurt Piet. I know it didn't hurt me."

"That's all very well," said Sir Jimmy shrewdly. "You didn't fancy it much, neither of you—I know that! I've seen you both lookin' kind of horrified—like as if your teeth was on edge."

"Oh, rot!" said Mauly, shifting uncomfortably.

"You're feeling like that now," said Sir Jimmy, pointing an accusing finger at him. "You real swells don't like talkin' about your feelin's, I know that. My sort don't mind so much—when we've got any, which ain't often, accordin' to some folks!"

"Rot again, begad!"

Mauly was uneasily conscious that he had been talking about his feelings only just before Sir Jimmy entered. But he knew that the shrewd youngster was quite right when he said that "his sort" did not like doing that.

"It ain't rot! I'm goin' to speak out now. There ain't anythink—not anythink in all the world—I wouldn't do for Piet! But you ain't to tell 'im I said so. Matter of fact, there ain't a lot I wouldn't do for you, Mauly. But Piet comes first. You don't mind that, do you? Not as I can help it if you do."

"I don't mind a bit, Jimmy boy," answered Mauly, in a voice that shook a little, for there was something about the intense earnestness of Sir Jimmy that gripped him. "I'm glad to hear it, begad! You can't think too much of Piet for my likin'!"

"Well, then, what's the matter with 'im now?"

Mauly shook his head.

"Don't know, Jimmy boy. Not very much, I think."

"Why was 'e talkin' about borrowin', then?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask."

"But you ought to 'ave asked, Mauly!"

"Can't agree with you, dear boy. One of the things a fellow doesn't do, begad! Buttin' in, y'know."

"I'm the sort that does the things a feller don't do," replied Sir Jimmy. "So I don't care. Was it that chap Sorrell again—you know the chap I mean, 'im wot deserted?"

"I don't know, begad! Piet hasn't mentioned his name, an' I'd clean forgotten all about him. Might be, too."

"I believe it is. Well, I've got a couple of quid. Do you think old Piet would let me lend 'im that?"

"I don't think so. But I wouldn't be sure, begad! He might not like to refuse—'fraid of hurtin' your feelin's."

"Huh! Fat lot feelin's matter! But you'd call it buttin' in?"

"Yaas, a bit. No, dashed if I would, Jimmy! I couldn't, knowin' how you feel. But you said Piet's not to be told, y'know."

"Of course 'e ain't to be told! Think I want 'im to feel a fool? It pleases a gal to be told someone loves 'er, even if 'tain't true; but it makes a feller feel a fool!"

"Oh, begad, yaas!"

"Well, I'm goin' to butt in an' offer 'im my two quid. If 'e gives me a wipe of the 'ead for cheek, it don't matter a 'eap. Where is he?"

"I fancy he went to the Common-room, dear boy."

Sir Jimmy went off. Mauly put himself back into a recumbent position, but for once did not find it easy to snooze off.

Meanwhile Piet Delarey, not to be behind his two study-mates, was doing a little butting in on his own account, though possibly he did not look upon his action in that light.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Brought to Book!

DELAREY found quite a crowd in the Common-room. But he did not mind that.

Bolsover major was not exactly a sensitive person. It was just as well to thresh this matter out before plenty of witnesses. Bolsover might have more regard to public feeling than he was at all likely to have for any appeal to his own feelings.

There was no enmity between these two. The bully of the Remove always had a kind of respectful half-liking for

any fellow who had licked him fairly and squarely. It did not amount to friendship; but as far as it went it was real enough.

It was not likely, however, to go as far as to make him take what Piet had to say to him in an amicable spirit.

"I want a word with you, Bolsover," said Piet.

"A hundred, if you like!" growled Bolsover.

"Well, it may run to that! Look here, I don't want to make a fuss about a matter that isn't exactly my affair—"

"Shouldn't, if I were you!" Bolsover growled, beginning to look hostile. "If it ain't your affair, why need you worry about it?"

"Don't!" chipped in Harold Skinner. "You're not Wharton, you know, Rebel!"

Harry Wharton flushed at that sneer, and Bob Cherry advanced his hand to within an inch or so of Skinner's rather prominent nose.

"Harold's nose is long, and Harold's nose is strong. It would be a pity to make it longer; but I'll jolly well do it if Harold ain't careful!" said Bob.

"I thought it was poetry you were lading us out," remarked Fry of the Upper Fourth. "It started in rhyme, anyway."

"No, it isn't poetry," said Bob. "But it's a fact!"

"Skinner's right. Better leave meddling to Wharton!" snorted Bolsover.

"I don't doubt Wharton could do this better than I can. But he ought not to be bothered about everything," said Delarey.

"Oh, it doesn't bother Wharton. It makes him happy!" Skinner sneered, having retreated behind Temple & Co.

"Get on with the washing, old sport!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, what I've got to say to Bolsover is that borrowing from kids in the Second is dead off," said Piet quietly.

"Oh, rather!" said Temple.

"I don't see it," put in Trevor. "Depends upon whether the kid is on to lend. We can't borrow from the Sixth, you know; they ain't exactly taking any."

"You're talking about young Sylvester, I suppose, Delarey?" said Bolsover.

"Oh, really! If it's Sylvester, I'm jolly well sure he can take care of himself!" burred Billy Bunter. "He's a rotten little miser!"

"He wouldn't cash a second postal-order for you, would he, Bunter?" said the Rebel sardonically. "Yes, I'm talking about Sylvester, Bolsover."

"Are you making out that I bullied the kid?" snarled the burly Removite.

"Question hardly arises," said Temple.

"I consider that the way Bolsover would glare at a fag he proposed to honour by borrowin' from might be said to amount to moral, if not physical bullyin'."

"Oh, you go to Jericho!" said Bolsover politely.

"Temple's about right, though," said Johnny Bull, in his decided way. "And we all know Bolsover! If he wanted it, and couldn't get it by looking ugly, he'd go on to behaving likewise."

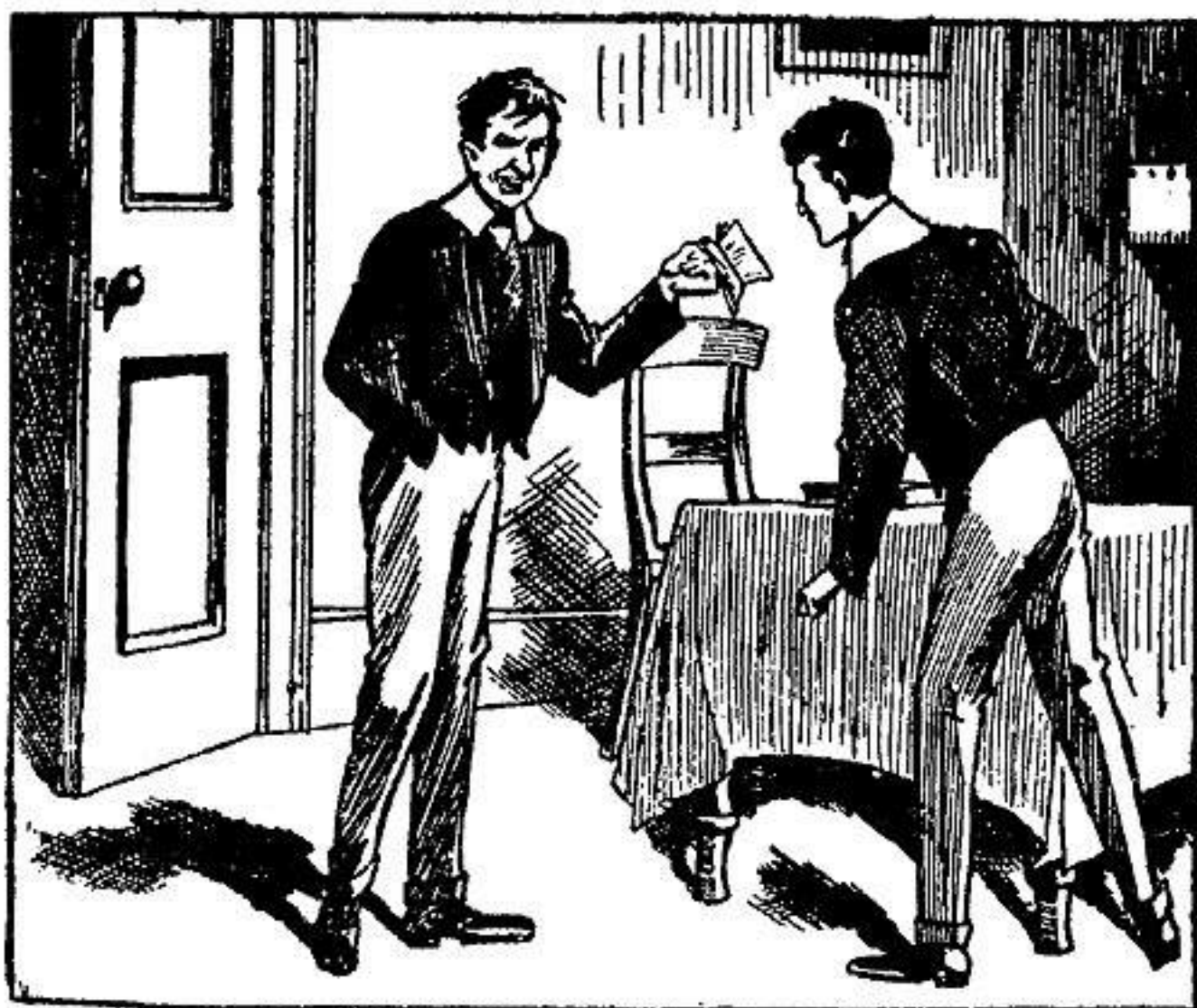
"That's my notion," Delarey said.

"I don't see it," answered Bolsover.

"I asked the kid to lend me a quid one day when I was short. He had no end of tin. Well, he lent it to me. He didn't say he had any objection; and I can't see why he need have. He'll get it back all serene. He's had part of it already."

"He's had a bob," replied Piet. "I don't know why you paid him that. It seems a pretty mingy instalment on a quid, to me!"

"What bizney is it of yours at all? Do you want to keep Sylvester as a preserve



"Look at that!" (See Chapter 8.)

for yourself?" demanded the bully fiercely.

"I haven't borrowed from him, and I'm not likely to. Keep your wool on, Bolsover!"

Stott, who had had nothing to say, made a cautious move towards the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Stott's conscience is working! He's off to cash up to Sylvester before anything more is said."

"Aren't you going, too, Skinner?" asked the Bounder.

"I haven't had any of the kid's oof!" replied Skinner promptly.

"Really? Must be an awful grief to you to know that there was a chance like that going, and you failed to take it!" giped Vernon-Smith. "Queer, too. There isn't much going on that you don't know about, as a rule!"

"Stott was another of them," Delarey said. "Skinner wasn't, so I can't see that there's anything against him, Smithy."

"Beats me why you stick up for that worm, Rebel!" said Bulstrode.

"I don't know that I do. But I reckon most of us have enough to shoulder in the way of thing's we've done, without being got at for things we might have done if we'd happened to think of them."

"Hear, hear!" said Harry Wharton. "Leave Skinner out of it!"

Skinner might or might not have been grateful for Delarey's speaking up for him. He did not dislike the Rebel as he disliked most decent fellows. But he certainly was not grateful to Wharton.

"Well, what are you going to do about it, Rebel?" rumbled Bolsover.

"I don't know that it's necessary for me to do anything, is it?" returned Piet.

"You're not going to force me to cash up at once?"

"Don't be an idiot! I can't force you to—you know that as well as I do! But I think that you'll pay the kid back pretty soon if you have a spark of decency in you. And till now I've thought you tolerably decent, though your manners aren't much in your favour."

Stott had halted at the door.

"I'm not going to swindle the kid," he said sourly. "I shall be having a re-

mittance in a few days; I'll settle up then. If anyone likes to lend me half-a-quid I'll do it now."

No one caught at this very liberal offer.

Bolsover glowered at Delarey.

"I shall pay when I jolly well choose!" he snarled.

"That's all right—as long as you choose soon," Piet answered coolly.

"And if I don't choose I sha'n't pay at all!"

"I think you will find you are making a mistake there."

"Who's going to force me to pay?"

"The Form will," said Johnny Bull. "It's a disgrace to the Remove, this sponging on infants!"

"Sponging, do you call it, Bull?" roared Bolsover.

"Sponging's what I call it, Bolsover—unless you prefer to have it called highway robbery!"

"The Form can't make me do anything I don't choose to do!"

"Bolsover is labouring under two delusions," remarked Peter Todd blandly.

"He thinks we're all deaf—and he thinks we're all incompetent duffers."

"You're a set of silly, meddling asses, anyway!"

"Go on, Bolsy!" said Squiff. "That's the style. We shall know what you think of us soon. Then we may turn in our opinions on you."

"I don't mind stating mine now," Temple said. "If we had Bolsover in the Upper Fourth—"

"He'd probably be skipper," struck in Skinner. "I don't know the chap in your Form that he can't lick, Temple!"

"I'll take on the whole giddy Form, one down, t'other come on!" hooted the burly Removite.

The slim and elegant Cecil Reginald Temple arose from his seat in languid fashion, and made as if to pull off his jacket.

"Start with me, please, Bolsover!" he said.

"Right-ho!" answered Percy Bolsover.

"Oh, cheese that!" said Wharton. "The question is not whether Bolsover can lick Temple or anyone else in the

Upper Fourth, but when he's going to settle up with Sylvester."

"There's something in that," admitted Temple. "On the whole, I think he'd better clear himself of the charge made against him before he has the dashed cheek to think of fightin' with a gentleman!"

Cecil Reginald was not given to forgetting that he was the son of a baronet. But he did not funk Bolsover. Temple might be a bit of a snob, but he certainly was not a coward.

"Charge?" hooted Bolsover. "What charge is there against me? I owe a fellow—"

"Say a kid—a mere infant," said Bob Cherry.

"I owe a fellow nineteen bob. Is that a crime? Now, then, Todd! You know a lot about that kind of thing, with your rotten law-books. Is it a crime?"

"No, Bolsover—not quite. I should say it's about ninety-five per cent. of a crime—not more," replied Peter thoughtfully.

"You're a long-nosed idiot! Look here, you fellows are making this a Form matter, I take it?"

"Yes, you can take it we are," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, then, I defy the Form to make me pay! I tell the blessed Form that I won't pay till I choose, and that if it doesn't suit me I won't pay at all! Now, what are you going to do?"

"I suppose you've enough on you to pay at this moment?" said the Bounder. It was a trap, and Bolsover fell into it.

"Yes, I have, then!" he roared.

"That's enough for me," said Herbert Vernon-Smith deliberately. "I vote we turn out your pockets, take sufficient to settle the debt, and bump you. What do you say, Temple?"

"Dashed good idea, Smithy!" was what Temple said. Cecil Reginald was quite pleased to have his opinion asked first.

"What do you say, Wharton?"

"I think it's quite a good notion, Smithy. Bolsover has no more right than anyone else to fancy he can go dead against the Form."

"Has anyone any objection?" inquired the Bounder.

"I have!" howled Bolsover.

"Oh, that's understood. Anyone else?"

No one spoke up—not even Skinner, who was Bolsover's best chum, if Bolsover could be said to have a chum.

"Some of you will get hurt!" fumed Bolsover, as they closed in upon him.

Two or three of them did. The bully's shoulder-of-mutton fist gave Dabney one in the right eye, and caused Kippe to stagger back caressing his chin. But then Bolsover found himself on his back, in no condition to attempt further resistance.

"Yooop!" he yelled. "Gerroff me, you cads! About forty to one! I suppose that's what you call pluck?"

"This is not a combat, Bolsover," said Peter Todd blandly. "It is merely an execution without legal warrant. May I trouble you to shift a little? I want to get at your right-hand trousers-pocket. If you refuse to be troubled, I shall have to ask someone else to shift you. Oh, thanks, Fry! That does the trick nicely!"

It appeared that Percy Bolsover had boasted vainly when he said that he had enough to settle his debt at once. All his pockets were examined most carefully by Peter Todd, who handed over each coin retrieved to Scott of the Upper Fourth, whom he addressed as "Mr. Receiver." The sum total amounted to six shillings and ninepence-halfpenny, including five penny stamps and a half-penny one.

cluding five penny stamps and a half-penny one.

"A dividend of thirty-three and one-third per cent. is declared upon the estate of the bankrupt Bolsover," said Peter, in his best official manner. "One-third of nineteen shillings is six-and-fourpence. Mr. Receiver will see that this sum reaches the sole—as far as known at present—debtor. The stamps will be returned to the bankrupt, as no doubt he will wish to write home about it, obtain enough to pay up his debts in full, and have the adjudication annulled. Gentlemen, the proceedings of the court are over!"

"Not yet!" said the Bounder grimly. "He hasn't been bumped."

Percy Bolsover was not often bumped. That may have been because he was not easily bumped, rather than because he did not often deserve it.

But there were plenty to put him through it now; and they did so with heartiness, Dabney and Kippe being specially zealous.

He got up in a perfect paroxysm of rage.

"I've you to thank for this!" he howled, shaking his fist in Piet Delarey's face. "But I'll pay you for it, you Boer blackguard!"

"Now, if you like," replied Piet coolly.

"No. I'll choose my own time!"

"Bolsover would naturally wish to have the annulment of the decree of bankruptcy against him announced before he fights anyone, Delarey," Peter Todd said.

What Bolsover said is better not repeated.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Missing Note!

SQUIFF and Tom Brown looked in at Study No. 12 on the Remove passage next day after morning classes.

Maully and Sir Jimmy Vivian were there. Piet Delarey was not.

"Going in for a merry spring cleaning—what?" asked Squiff, with a grin.

For the study was turned almost upside-down, and Maully sat in the arm-chair among all the muddle, like Marius among the ruins of Carthage.

Sir Jimmy was doing the work, of course. And Sir Jimmy looked worried—far more so than Maully.

"No. This silly ass has lost a ten-pound note. He's always losing them!" snapped Sir Jimmy.

"Oh, begad, Jimmy, that's too bad! Why, it's weeks an' weeks—terms an' terms, I might say—since I lost one last."

"It ain't a fortnight."

"But that one wasn't really lost, Jimmy. I found it myself."

"Couldn't have been really lost if Maully found it," said Tom Brown, with a grin. "Must have been framed and hung over the mantelpiece. I should say."

"And there was another at the beginning of the term. You know there was, you fathead!" snapped Sir Jimmy, going on with his search.

"But that was in my pocket all the time!"

"Well, this one ain't. I'm sure of that much. I've turned his pockets out. He's got a fifty and two fivers; but this is a tanner, and I saw it only yesterday."

"Yaas; but it really ain't worth all this trouble, dear boy," yawned his lazy lordship. "You chaps want Piet, I suppose?"

"We do," said Squiff. "Also your noble self. We're going to footer, and we intended to take you two along."

"Oh, begad, but you can't, you know, Squiff! I've got a job on here. You can see that for yourself!"

"I see that Vivian has," replied Squiff. "But I can't see where you come in. However, we'll leave you to your labours, if you'll only have the exceeding gracious goodness to tell us where to find Piet."

"Don't tell us in words, if it's going to fatigue you too much, old scout," said Tom Brown kindly. "Put your foot up over your head, and waggle it, if you don't know. If you do know, tell us by some simple sign where we must search."

"Which foot, dear boy?" asked Maully innocently.

"Piet's gone to Friardale," said Sir Jimmy. "I don't think he means to play footer to-day."

"Maully's infecting him," Squiff said. "This makes the third day he's cut it."

"You coming, Jimmy?" inquired Tom Brown.

"Don't you see I can't?" snapped Vivian.

"No need to bother about the blessed note, begad, Jimmy!" drawled Maully. "We shall find it sooner or later."

"You'd better!" said Squiff warningly. "You know what was promised you if you lost any more notes, my boy!"

"Oh, begad! Why can't fellows mind their own business?" moaned the noble slacker. "I hate being bumped! I can't sleep for hours after it! Just you chaps clear out, an' give Jimmy an' me a chance, an' we'll wire in lookin' for that note like anythin'!"

Sir Jimmy snorted. Squiff and Tom Brown went.

"There's something up with the Rebel again, Squiff," said Tom, as they made their way to Little Side together.

"I've noticed it myself," replied the Australian junior. "But we'd better give him his head. He doesn't like being interfered with, you know, Browney—not even when it's us."

The search continued till close on dinner-time. Sir Jimmy continued it. Maully grew tired of watching such strenuous exertion, and sought refreshment in a nap on the couch.

Sir Jimmy looked at his watch, and then went off to wash himself, a discontented look on his bright face.

When he returned, Roderick Sylvester was just coming out of No. 12.

"Want me, kid?" asked Vivian.

"No. I really wanted Delarey—at least—yes, I wanted him. But it doesn't matter. I say, Bolsover's settled up with me. He had a remittance to-day. And Stott came and paid me five bob. I don't care about the money, though; and I wish Piet hadn't said anything. Bolsover says he's going for him."

"Bolsover will get all he has any use for if he tries that game on," replied Sir Jimmy.

"But he's such a big, solid brute," said Sylvester.

"Don't you worry! Piet's licked him once, and he can lick him any time he likes. Maully still snoozing, I suppose?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I'd have brought a wet sponge from the bath-room if I'd thought of it!" growled Sir Jimmy.

"I'll fetch one, if you like."

Little Sylvester's responsibilities in the way of money had not made him indifferent to japes. He trotted off.

Sir Jimmy looked doubtfully after him. He would not have admitted it for a good deal, but Sir Jimmy was jealous.

Delarey's friendship for Maully did not trouble him. He had grown used to it, and it seemed quite natural. He did not mind Squiff and Tom Brown, either.

They spent a good deal of time in No. 12, and were, to some extent, members of the family.

But Sir Jimmy could not quite see why Delarey should worry about a mere kid in the Second, like Sylvester.

That did not mean that he disliked the youngster, however.

The fag came back with a dripping sponge.

He closed the door behind him. The ears of Sir Jimmy were more than commonly keen. Directly the door had shut to he heard footsteps along the passage stop at it.

"Gimnie 'old of that!" he said.

To Sylvester's amazement, he squeezed all the water out of the sponge at once.

Then he poured half a hottle of ink into a saucer, and dipped the sponge in it.

"I say, though, you're not going to wake him with ink, are you?" asked the fag. "I shouldn't do that, Vivian. It's a bit too thick!"

"Shurrup!" snapped Sir Jimmy.

He stole on tiptoes to the door, the sponge dripping black drops on the expensive carpet.

The door came open with a suddenness that took the fellow outside most completely by surprise. He fell forward, and Sir Jimmy dashed the sponge down on the back of his head, and squeezed it hard.

"Got you, Bunter, you cad!" he cried. "Why—Oh, crumbs! 'Tain't Bunter at all. It's that rotter Snoop!"

"You guttersnipe! You low cad!" yelled Snoop. "What did you do that for? You knew very well I wasn't Bunter, you beastly street arab!"

Sir Jimmy contemplated him calmly. "I can see now that you ain't," he said. "Uglier, but not so fat. But Bunter ain't the only chap who can listen at keyholes."

"No, he's not. I dare say you wouldn't be above that sort of thing yourself, you low-down—"

"Go easy, Snoop! I ain't much of a fightin'-man, maybe, but I can lick you!"

"Try it, that's all!"

Sidney James Snoop, with his hair and face and collar all liberally dosed with ink, really seemed inclined to try it. He put up his fists.

But discretion prevailed. The dinner-bell sounded at that moment, and Snoop made an excuse to draw back.

"I'll see you later on!" he snarled.

"What's the matter, Jimmy, dear boy?" asked the voice of Mauly from within. "Sounds like someone bein' unpleasant—doooid unpleasant, begad!"

"Oh, it's only Snoop being himself!" replied Vivian. "It's jolly hard to satisfy some people! I gave him what I meant for you—well, more or less, anyway. You're a pal of mine. Snoop ain't. But he doesn't seem a bit grateful."

With a sigh, Mauly arose and moved to the door. The bell had disturbed his dreams.

He looked down at the black sponge Sir Jimmy held. He looked at the retreating Snoop, who showed signs of having been in contact with it.

"Meant it for me, did you, Jimmy?" he said. "You're presumin' on what you wrongfully take to be my laziness, young fellah! If I'd got that you'd have just had the best hidin' of your life!"

"There was only water in it for you," explained Sylvester. "The ink was for Snoop."

"Dry up, kid!" said Sir Jimmy. "Wish you would give me a hidin', Mauly—or try to. I don't believe you could do it. But you're too jolly lazy and slack to try!"

"Wrong, dear boy! Some day you'll

see me really roused. When I'm really roused, you know, I'm rather a terrible fellah, begad! But I should be dashed sorry to have to hurt you."

"Should you be dashed sorry to be late for dinner?" inquired Sir Jimmy, with a cheerful grin.

Sylvester had already cut off.

"Yaas—I mean, no. What's the odds? Better not to be, p'raps, all things considered. Masters are such troublesome folk. They ask a heap of silly questions, which bore me horribly!"

"Well, you will be late if you don't bunk. I shall, anyway. Can't go in with my hands like this."

"Have you found that dashed note, Jimmy?"

"No, I haven't. After dinner you may look for it yourself, cocky!"

Sir Jimmy found Snoop industriously laving his head. Snoop did not speak; he only scowled. Sir Jimmy shrilly whistled "Keep the Home Fires Burning!" as he attended to his hands. He felt more cheerful after that little incident.

He was ready before Snoop had half-finished. But, in any case, he did not yearn for Snoop's company to Hall. He slipped into his place with only a word of reproof for his lateness from Mr. Quelch.

Snoop did not hurry, even after he had gone. Snoop was bound to be late, any way; and an excuse that would carry off a delay of five minutes would be good enough for one of fifteen.

There was something Snoop wanted to do. He had gone to No. 12 to do it, and had listened outside to make sure that apartment was unoccupied, as the silence within had led him to suppose.

Now he slunk off there again.

He had a bunch of twelve or more small keys, and he found one among them which would open Piet Delarey's desk. He put something inside. But when he had done that he could not lock the desk again. The key was not a perfect fit; it had forced the wards, but would not work the reverse way.

That did not suit Snoop at all.

He glanced round. His eyes fell upon a jacket hanging against the wall. A marked handkerchief in one pocket proved it to be Delarey's.

In another pocket was something that made Snoop's eyes gleam. He took it out. It was a leather pocket-book, which had evidently seen a fair amount of service.

He opened it without hesitation. With everybody at dinner, he felt quite safe.

Then he gave a gasp of astonishment as his eyes fell upon something inside.

He had been going to insert the thing he held in his hand. But he paused now, taking thought.

What he had seen in Piet's pocket-book complicated matters considerably.

For the moment it was as though the bottom was knocked completely out of his plan.

But as he made his way to Hall, carefully stowing away the flimsy paper he had been going to leave in Delarey's desk, a new idea came to him.

"Crikey! It may work, after all!" he muttered. "And there ain't a scrap of risk in it for me. There was in the other dodge. But I must think this over before I make a move."

Arrived in Hall, he told Mr. Quelch that he had had an accident with some ink, and had thus been delayed. Sir Jimmy grinned as he saw Snoop stand there so demurely, with eyes cast down, and tell the truth—or part of it—because for once the truth did as well as a lie.

But Sir Jimmy would not have grinned had he guessed what was in the scheming brain behind those modestly-lowered eyelids!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Laying the Train!

SKINNER looked in at Study No. 11, where he was a frequent visitor.

"I say, you fellows, I think you played it rather low down on me!" he said, in a grumbling tone.

Snoop and Stott were surprised.

It was not at all out of their way to "play it low down" on someone or anyone. And—in spite of the grossly untrue adage as to honour among thieves—they were quite capable of "playing it low down" on Skinner if it chanced to suit their book.

But they were not conscious of having done so.

"What's the matter with you now, Skinner?" asked Stott.

"This Sylvester bizney. I'd no idea that the kid was rolling in it like that. I thought, for a giddy millionaire, his pater kept him rather short."

"Well, I don't see what change you'd have got out of knowing," observed Stott.

"You made your market of it, old sport!"

"Rats! I borrowed a measly half-quid, and had no end of bother to get that. And I've paid it back."

"You've what?"

Harold Skinner looked as if he could not believe his ears.

Stott grinned. But it was not a very cheery grin.

"I've paid it back. I'm not pretending that I can stand up to Delarey. Bolsy may be able to; but I'm not so blessed sure of that. He was licked when they fought before. I sha'n't put my money on Percy, anyhow."

"You were an idiot to cash up! It isn't as though that kid would miss the money. His pater's as rich as merry old Croesus."

"That wasn't what I thought about," admitted Stott. "If he did miss it—well, that would have been more his trouble than mine, wouldn't it? But I'm not risking anything with the Rebel. I'd sooner have a row with Wharton or Cherry or Squiff or Toddy—almost any of the crowd but Smithy. The beastly Boer—"

"Oh, chuck that!" snapped Skinner.

"Don't you know Skinner's rather partial to the Rebel?" sneered Snoop.

"I'd forgotten, if I ever knew. He doesn't seem over an' above partial to Skinner, I must say."

Skinner's sallow face flushed.

"He's always civil to me, and that's more than some of them are!" he said.

"I'm hanged if it's much to be grateful for, though!" replied Stott.

"Who says I'm grateful, you fat-headed ass?" snarled Skinner. "But when a chap's decent to me, I hope I can be decent to him."

"Oh!" said Stott.

He had never before had any idea that Harold Skinner guided his actions in accordance with a rule of that kind. And he did not believe it now.

"You think Delarey has a soft spot for you, Skinner," said Snoop. "I don't fancy it goes far, myself. I know he stood up for you once against Bolsover. But then, he ain't exactly fond of Percy."

"He's got nothing against Bolsover—not in an ordinary way," replied Skinner.

"The Rebel's drawn the wool nicely over Skinner's eyes, hasn't he, Stott?" said Snoop.

Stott nodded, and turned to the fireplace. He did not find the conversation particularly interesting. Cashing up to Sylvester had brought Stott into financial low water, and he was regretting that he had done it.

"That's rot!" Skinner said sharply. "We're not pals; there's no pretence of that. But he's one of the few fellows here I'd do a good turn to—if it happened to come my way and wasn't too much fag—and I know he wouldn't kick at doing me a good turn. That's all."

"You needn't bother about having missed a chance with that Second Form kid," said Snoop. "Ask your friend Delarey to lend you a trifle!"

"He might want it back!" glibed Stott, without turning his head.

"Well, Sylvester seems to have had his back!" remarked Skinner.

To anyone who did not know these three well it might not have appeared that there was anything for Stott to object to in that remark.

But he did not seem to like it.

"Rats to you!" he growled.

"Delarey hasn't a lot of oof to spare," said Skinner.

"He has some, I suppose. If Squiff or that boulder Brown asked him for a loan he wouldn't say no."

"I suppose not," said Skinner.

"I don't mind betting you a quid to a crown that he won't lend you a quid, however much you press him to," Snoop said.

He made a very fairly successful attempt to seem indifferent, and as if merely arguing for argument's sake. After all, this dodge was not vital to his plot. But if Skinner fell into the trap it would help it.

"Take him on, Skinney!" urged Stott. "If you win, you're two quid in; if you lose, you're only a dollar out."

"I don't see how you make it two quid," said Skinner.

"Oh, I suppose you mean you'd pay the Rebel back?"

"Of course I should!"

"Well, yes, I fancy you would. He'd see to it your did. If he takes so much trouble to get in Sylvester's accounts, he'd naturally be pretty sharp about his own."

"You mean it, Snoop?" asked Skinner.

"I mean it all serene."

"Show us your quid!"

"I can show you something more than that," answered Snoop.

Stott turned. He was really interested now.

Snoop produced from a waistcoat-pocket a doubled-up slip of flimsy paper. He unfolded it, and displayed to the dazzled eyes of his two pals a ten-pound note!

"No good asking me to lend you anything, Skinney," he said hastily. "Nearly all of this is to go for a very special purpose. But you can see I've got the quid to pay with if I lose."

"I say, Snoopey, how would a little game of banker go?" asked Stott eagerly. His heavy face lighted up. There were not many things William Stott cared about; but he had the gambling fever.

"Not at all," replied Snoop. "I'm not going to risk this! I know just about how you fellows stand—stony, or jolly near it! Waste-paper's a good price now, but I'm not collecting it!"

"There's a good deal of the born hog about you!" said Stott sulkily.

"Ask the Rebel in the Common-room, when there are plenty of fellows there," said Snoop.

"Why?" demanded Skinner, eyeing Sidney James with some suspicion—which was by no means unjustified.

"Well, if he really does feel at all chummy, he can't well refuse you before a crowd, can he?"

"You want me to win, don't you, Snoop?" sneered Skinner.

He thought that what Snoop really

wanted was to see him snubbed by Delarey in public.

But that was not Snoop's game. His game was far deeper. Skinner—the wily and astute Skinner—was a mere pawn in it; though Skinner did not suspect that. His brains were better than Snoop's, but possibly not so much better as he thought them.

"Oh, no. Only I think that's a fair test," Snoop said.

"All right; I'll do it," answered Skinner.

Snoop had begun to lay the train for the explosion that he hoped would lift Piet Delarey sky-high. He had changed his original plan in consequence of what he had seen in No. 12.

The change meant taking more chances in one sense; fewer in another. The plot might more easily go wrong, but if it went wrong there would be less danger of detection and exposure for Sidney James Snoop; in fact, he could see no danger at all now.

He might have felt differently about it if he had heard Harold Skinner's muttered words when he left the study.

"Where did he get that note? Not honestly, I guess. Lucky I've got a good memory for figures, but I don't trust it too far. I'll put that number down now. It isn't a bad notion to have the whip-hand of a rotter like Snoop!"

Eat less Bread

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sylvester's Confession!

"SO that's an American millionaire, is it?" said Dick Russell to Donald Ogilvy, as they saw before them on the road to Friar-dale the figures of a tall, gaunt man, and a slim youngster of twelve or so.

"Eh? Oh, is that Sylvester's pater? I heard he'd come along, and was taking the kid off for a few days. Over here on no end important business, they say. Well, millionaires have their uses when there's a big war on, and as far as I can make out the American sort have shown up a bit better than ours this side."

Ogilvy, who had six brothers in khaki, was never tired of talking about the war. As a rule, his chum Russell listened patiently enough. But just now Dick Russell, himself none too well off, felt more interested in the subject of Sylvester's "dad" than in that of the war.

"Looks very much like any other chap," he said.

"Well, chump, how would you expect him to look?" returned Ogilvy. "He may have gold-stopped teeth—most Americans have. But he isn't likely to have his nose plastered over with gold-leaf just to advertise that he can roll in it if he wants to."

"Ass! I like the look of him better than I did the look of Fishy's father."

"Well, if Fishy had had any sort of a decent father I suppose he'd have been different from what he is. And Sylvester's quite a nice kid, so you'd expect his

father to be a better sort than Hiram K. Fish. I say, Ronald's been having a hot time of it in Palestine, Dick. Those beggars of Turks may be getting fed up. I dunno. But, anyway, they can still put up a hot fight. You listen to this."

Ogilvy proceeded to read Dick Russell extracts from a letter from the Ogilvy representative on the Palestine front.

No more was said about the Sylvesters, father and son, and when once they had rounded a bend, and were out of sight, both the Removites forgot them. Ogilvy talked about his clan of fighting brothers, and speculated as to whether the war was going to last long enough to give him a chance; and Russell listened, and caught the thrill of his chum's enthusiasm, for there was good combative stuff in Dick Russell.

Meanwhile, there was talk between father and son as they walked to Friar-dale Station. Nothing of the plutocrat betrayed itself in this millionaire. He was quietly dressed, and he seemed quite content to walk, having learned that the only vehicle available was an exceedingly musty old fly, which Sylvester junior spoke of in terms of contempt.

"You've settled down all right now, Rod?" said Mr. Sylvester.

"Oh, rather, dad! I did almost from the first. But I like it even better now."

"Boys all right to you?"

"Oh, yes. Most of them are no end decent."

"Not much bullying—that sort of thing—eh?"

"Oh, hardly any, dad. You see, the fellows themselves stop most of that."

"Police themselves—eh? I take it you mean prefects?"

"No. It's the other chaps—younger than the prefects. There are a few fellows in the Remove who would bully, but Wharton—he's skipper, you know—but, of course, you know all about Wharton and those fellows, but you don't know Delarey."

"Who's he? One of the bullies—eh?"

"Crumbs, no! I think he's the nicest chap of the lot. He was one of those who stayed here at Christmas, you know, and they were all all right to me, but Delarey was specially all right."

"Young Fish was one of them, wasn't he? Hiram K.'s son."

"Yes; but I didn't see so much of him."

"Just as well, too, sonny, if he's anything like Hiram K."

"Then I should think he's very like him, dad," answered the youngster. And the man smiled.

The character of Fisher Tarleton Fish had no very high testimonial in that innocent speech.

"This Delarey—a South African, I reckon?"

"Yes. His mother was an English lady, though. They call him the Rebel, because when he first came he owned that his father had fought against the British, and they thought he meant at the start of the war. I suppose they'd forgotten the other one. But Piet's father is fighting on our side now. It is our side, isn't it, dad?"

"It is, my son—it is, 'for all we have and are,' as one of their English poets says. We're in it now, and bound to see it through, and I'm glad of it, for one. But I'm glad, too, that my boy still remembers he's American."

"I shouldn't be likely to forget that, dad!" And the boy drew his slight form up proudly. "But—well, I didn't feel very happy about it at one time."

"Lots more of us had the same complaint, Rod. But never mind that now. We'll have more yarns about the war. How's the financial question stand?"

"Oh, I've got plenty. But you mean have I been keeping up my end?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Not very well at first, but not so very badly, I think, for a kid, you know. Some of the fellows—bigger than me—did bother me, and I let one or two of them have some! But I had to kick."

"Young Fish one of them?"

"Oh, no! Fishy doesn't often borrow; he lends. Only he wants five per cent. per week, and the fellows think that's rather a lot. I reckon it is, too, dad, isn't it?"

"Two hundred and sixty per cent. per annum! It certainly is some money!" murmured the millionaire. "You haven't tried—"

"Not likely! I don't want interest. But I did lend some to fellows I didn't like, because—well, because they bothered me for it, and I got fed up. And then Piet—Delarey, I mean—took it in hand."

"What, the money?"

"No. I—I'm afraid I did ask him to take care of it, but he said that wasn't what you meant—that I'd got to go on doing it myself."

"He was quite right. When I come back with you I want to meet young Delarey, Rod. Just freeze on to that."

"But he did more than that. He made the fellows who had borrowed from me pay up, and he stopped one who was bullying me for it—knocked him down when he wouldn't let go of my arm."

"Sounds like quite a hefty young Afrikaner!"

"He's all that," said Roderick, his face shining.

"So you've got most of the money in hand?"

"Well, no, dad. I've stood treat in our Form a good deal, and—I don't know whether you'll like this—I've used some in a way I'd rather not tell you about."

"Nothing underhand, Rod, I'm sure?"

"No, dad. It was secret, but it wasn't underhand."

"Do you think I'd approve if I knew?"

"Yes; I'm sure you would if you knew all about it. But I don't want to tell you, all the same."

"I'll ask no more, sonny. I trust you. You talk straight, and you look straight, and it's my opinion Greyfriars is quite a good place for a small American, taking it on the whole."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

What Sir Jimmy Saw!

"HALLO! What have you got there, Snoop?"

It was Sir Jimmy Vivian who spoke, coming along the Remove passage.

Sidney James Snoop had just stooped to pick up something from the floor. No one who saw him could possibly have guessed that he had dropped that pocket-book a moment before.

There was every sign of surprise in his face as he turned.

But that was not wholly acting. It had been a real surprise to Snoop to recognise Sir Jimmy's voice. He had heard footsteps before he saw anyone, and had felt sure they were the footsteps of Treluce.

Treluce was the sort of fellow Snoop wanted as a witness to his pretended finding of the pocket-book, which he had sneaked from Study No. 12 two or three minutes earlier. Elliott or Trevor would have served his purpose—or Bolsover major, for that matter. Not Skinner or Stott—they knew Snoop too well!

Bolsover knew him pretty well, too; but it was easy to gull Bolsover. Trevor, Treluce, and Elliott, without being thorough-paced rotters, were more or less members of the malcontent brigade. They were not fond of the Famous Five, or of any of their friends, and they were



The lost found! (See Chapter 12.)

the kind who spread rumours on any slight foundation.

But it was none of these. It was Sir Jimmy Vivian, with whom Snoop was on the worst of terms.

"It's a pocket-book that somebody's dropped," said Snoop.

"Well, I reckon you'd better come along with me and hand it over to somebody who can be trusted," answered Sir Jimmy, who was painfully outspoken at times.

"Do you mean that I'm not?" snarled Snoop.

"You jolly well know you're not! I believe you'd pick pockets if you had a chance to do it safely!"

That was going pretty far. But there was excuse for it in what the rotters of the Remove had done—or tried to do—to the schoolboy baronet in the past. Some of their tricks had been every bit as mean as picking pockets.

"You're an impudent little cad, Vivian—"

"I ain't so little but what I can give you a wipe of the ear-ole!" retorted Sir Jimmy, going back to the speech of Carker's Rents in his wrath. "But I'll take that thing. I b'lieve it's Piet's."

"I don't see how you can know whose it is! I've seen a dozen pocket-books like that one!"

"Did you get much out of them?" glibed Sir Jimmy.

"Look here, Vivian, Stott hasn't missed a tenner lately!"

"I should say not! Stott never 'ad a tenner to lose! Wotcher mean, anyway?"

"Mauly has tenners to lose, and I hear he's lost one!"

Sir Jimmy's hands clenched. For a few seconds anger almost choked him. Then he burst out:

"D'ye mean to make pretence as you think I took it, you 'owling cad? 'Cos it would be a pretence—you know better! I didn't 'ave much of a chanst till I come 'ere; but I ain't done nothink 'ere that any feller need be ashamed of!"

"You don't seem to have made the most of your chances now," sneered Snoop. "You talk like any guttersnipe. But I didn't mean to make out that you bagged Mauly's tenners. What I meant

was that the chap who shares my study hasn't lost anything, but one of those you dig with has. That's all. You needn't put the cap on unless it fits you!"

"One of the chaps in our study may lose more, you rotter, if I don't keep my blessed eye on that pocket-book!" snapped Sir Jimmy, with an ugly gleam in both his "blessed eyes." "And I don't see 'ow you know about Mauly's lost tenner unless you've been listenin', you cad!"

"I have been listening—but only to ordinary talk that was no secret," Snoop answered coolly. "Fellows will talk, you know!"

And fellows would listen—some fellows! Snoop knew that, and Sir Jimmy knew it. But neither knew that just round the corner near which they stood lurked Billy Bunter, his face screwed up into an expression of intense interest, his ears strained to let no word escape him.

"And over that pocket-book!" rapped out Sir Jimmy.

"If it's Delarey's—but I've no proof of that at present—I think it would be better if I handed it over to him."

"Right-ho! Come along and 'and it over!"

"I'm going to make sure it is his first. If I don't, and it happens to belong to someone else, I may get into trouble for giving it to the wrong chap."

"You sneerin' 'ound!" breathed Sir Jimmy. "As if Piet—"

"I'm not saying anything at all against Delarey, though the fellow's no friend of mine. But I mean to make myself safe," said Snoop.

"You can look inside as long as you do it while I'm 'ere," replied Sir Jimmy.

"Come into my study, then."

"Whaffor?"

"I'm not going to be seen opening another chap's pocket-book in the passage! I've got a character to lose, if you haven't, Vivian!"

"My 'at! You've got a charikter to lose!" gasped Sir Jimmy. "Why, it would pay you to shell out 'eavy to any one as would take your blessed charikter away an' bury it! But I'll come. I

needn't stay long, an' I dare say a few seconds in there won't poison me."

They passed in. The door had hardly closed when the fat form of Bunter navigated the corner, and the fat right ear of Bunter was applied to the keyhole of No. 11.

"There's no name in it," said Snoop.

"There's initials, though—'P. D.,' wrote faint in ink on the leather," answered Sir Jimmy. "That's good enough!"

"Where? I can't see them!"

Bunter heard that. But he was mystified as to what happened next.

Snoop opened the flap at the side of the pocket-book, and revealed a ten-pound note!

It was not the note he had shown Skinner and Stott, for that was still in his pocket. But the note in his pocket would have been where this one now was but for his change of plan. And that change of plan had only been made when he had visited No. 12 while the other fellows were at dinner the day before.

Sir Jimmy staggered, and his face went white.

On the evil countenance of Snoop there was a gloating grin.

"Look at that!" he said.

"Well, what about it?" retorted Sir Jimmy, pulling himself together. "I s'pose Delarey's got as good a right to have a tenner as another chap, ain't he?"

"I don't say he hasn't!" muttered Snoop. "But it's queer—it's dashed queer! I don't know that I've a right to hand this back to the fellow without—while Mauly's tenner— Oh, hang it all, I don't want to chuck mud at an enemy; but you must see for yourself how it is, Vivian!"

But Sir Jimmy could not quite see how it was. He was shaken, but he was not so easily to be convinced that the chum he held dearer than all was a thief.

Mauly had lost a tenner—there was a tenner in Piet's pocket-book; but Piet had more than once lately admitted being hard up. It was all utterly puzzling!

Could it be possible that Snoop— But, for all his dislike and suspicion of the fellow, Sir Jimmy did his best to dismiss that thought at once. It was scarcely a definite thought, indeed, for he could not at the moment see any way in which Snoop could have worked this thing, even if he had wanted to.

"I don't see that there's anythink at all in it!" muttered Sir Jimmy. "That's Piet's money, I know!"

"Oh, if you know, then that's all right!" said Snoop. And his face seemed to clear.

It is not likely that Sir Jimmy Vivian had come to Greyfriars with any very high regard for the truth. But during his few months there he had learned many things. He could not tell a lie now without feeling uncomfortable. Perhaps his natural talents in that direction had been inferior to those of Snoop and Skinner.

"I don't mean that I knew 'e 'ad it," he admitted. "On'y that I know it's all right."

"Oh, that don't help us much! What are we to do?"

"Put the thing in the jacket that generally hangs up in our study," said Sir Jimmy. "E'll think 'e left it there."

"But that doesn't settle things, you know."

"There isn't anythink needs settlin', that I see. That's Piet's own money!"

Snoop appeared to give that suggestion careful thoughts. Outside, Bunter strained his ears to catch more.

"I'll do that," said Snoop, at the end of a long pause, during which Sir Jimmy's white face began to resume its
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normal colour. "But only on one condition."

"What's that?"

"If there's trouble—if I call upon you to say what you saw—you must tell the truth, and back me up!"

"I ain't a liar, like you, Snoop!"

"If you won't promise—"

"I'll promise all right."

"Take your oath on it!"

"I take my oath—there!"

"Then you can put this thing in the jacket yourself. Do what you like with it! I'm no friend of Delarey's, and I'm no friend of yours. I don't want to be mixed up in the affair at all. I wash my hands of it!"

Sir Jimmy made a move towards the door, clutching the pocket-book. Bunter bolted.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Loan to Skinner!

"I T'S a jolly queer thing," said Bunter mysteriously.

About half the Remove had gathered together in the Common-room after tea. The Famous Five were there, and Bolsover major and Ogilvy, and Russell and Kipps and Wibley and Mark Linley and Snoop and Stott. But among the absentees were the Three Colonials—as the Form often called Squiff, Tom Brown, and Delarey—Mauly, Sir Jimmy Vivian, Peter Todd, the Bounder, and Skinner.

"Shut up!" snapped Wibley. "I'm talking about the next play for the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, and I'm not going to be interrupted by Owl-hoots!"

"Hoot-toot!" remarked Bob Cherry, grinning.

"That's Scotch," said Frank Nugent. "The owl language is 'Tu-whit-tu-whit-tu-whoo!'"

"It's not Scotch," retorted Ogilvy. "And nobody but an ignorant ass says 'Scotch!'"

"There must be lots of ignorant asses in pubs and other places where they sing—I mean sip," Bob said.

"Well, it's a very likely place for finding them," Wharton put in. "What ought we to say, Ogilvy? We're willing to have it your way."

"Scots, or Scottish," answered the junior from the Highlands.

"Oh, really, you chaps! You can't listen to me when I've something important and interesting to tell you, and yet you'll stand there and listen to Ogilvy's piffle!" complained Bunter.

"My what?" roared the sturdy Scot.

"They're not going to listen to Ogilvy, and they're not going to listen to you, fatty!" howled Wibley. "I tell you I'm talking!"

"Glad you mentioned it," remarked Johnny Bull. "If you hadn't we might have thought you were yelling."

"The yellfulness of the ludicrous and honourable Wibley is—"

"Shocking!" said Bob Cherry gravely. Everybody looked surprised.

"I was about to observefully remark—"

"It's all right," said Bob. "Try a change! 'Shocking' is as good a word as 'terrific' any day. And when I looked at old 'terrific' last it seemed to me he was coming through at the toes."

"Really, Bob Cherry, you do talk rot! I was going to tell you about the Rebel—"

At this moment Piet Delarey came in, with Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith.

"What's that about the Rebel?" asked Peter. "You were saying, Bunt—"

"Oh, nothing at all!" said Bunter, looking confused. "Only that—that—that—Delarey's a jolly clever chap, you know!"

Before Piet could say anything Skinner entered, and marched up to him. Stott nudged Snoop.

Behind Skinner there had entered Vivian and Newland.

"I say, Delarey—"

Piet turned, wondering what Skinner wanted. It sounded as though he wanted something.

"Well, Skinney, what is it?" asked the South African junior.

His tone was not unfriendly. He did not much like Skinner; but once or twice he had thought he saw better things in him than most people saw. And Harold Skinner took some little trouble to keep on his right side.

"I'm jolly hard up, and you're about the only chap I can think of who would be likely to lend me a quid," Skinner said, in quite a natural and easy way. "The rest either haven't got it, or else won't believe I'd pay it back."

"Knowing you," murmured the Bounder.

"I'm sorry, Skinner. 'I'd lend it you if I could. But I simply haven't got it. I'm jolly hard up myself."

Snoop looked across at Vivian. The schoolboy baronet was staring at Delarey in a curious, fixed way. There was real trouble in his face. Snoop grinned as he saw it.

Quite accidentally, he seemed to have killed two birds with one stone. He hated Jimmy Vivian as much as he did Piet Delarey. Already he had hit Vivian hard; and now he would soon be hitting Delarey.

Bunter was also looking at the Afrikaner. But Snoop did not observe that.

"Oh, all right! I suppose you're the same as the rest—can't trust a fellow!" said Skinner, glaring at Snoop.

"It isn't that, Skinner. I'd trust you. I don't go so much by what other people think as you seem to fancy," said Piet quietly. "But I simply haven't the chink—upon my honour, I haven't!"

"There's a nicer testimonial than you are at all likely to get from anyone else here, Skinner," said the Bounder, in his most sardonic tones. "Delarey would lend it to you if he had it. I have it; but I won't lend it to you. I've had some, you see. Mauly—"

"Yes, it's jolly queer about Mauly, ain't it?" struck in the shrill notes of William George Bunter's voice. "At least, not so much about Mauly. He's lost a ten-pound note, you know. But it's queerer—"

"Who says Mauly's lost a tenner?" yelled Bob Cherry. "Where is the slack old duffer? He's got to be bumped if he's lost any more notes, you know. He was promised that."

"Is it true, Delarey?" asked Harry Wharton.

"May have mislaid it," said Piet. "But Jimmy's looked everywhere."

"So you couldn't find it, Vivian? Did Mauly help you to look?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"Of course he didn't! Mauly had to have his morning nap, or his afternoon nap, or his evening snooze," said Peter Todd. "And why should Mauly be bothered looking for a single note when he could get 'em to paper the walls of his study with for asking? All the same, I quite agree that he must be bumped. It is our duty to bump, and bump we will!"

Jimmy Vivian had been in no hurry to answer Frank Nugent's queries. It was not much in Jimmy's way to look disconcerted and troubled; and several who noticed his face just then wondered what was amiss.

He faltered in his answer, too.

"I—I—no, Mauly didn't really help," he said. "And—no, I couldn't find it."

Every eye in the room was on him now. It may be too much to say that anyone actually suspected him; but all thought his manner queer.

"But he knows—"

"Oh, shut up, tubby! You will keep shoving your silly oar in," said Bob Cherry irritably. "If it's to make out that you're innocent, all I have to say is that you're only calling attention to yourself. You've made some silly mistakes about other people's property before now!"

"We call them mistakes," said the Bounder.

"It's polite; but I don't know whether it's the right word," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, very well—very well! Have it your own way—go suspecting me, if you like! I'm clear, anyway—"

"Pleasant change for you. But nothing much to brag about," said Delarey. "Will it alarm you at all if I say that I have the number of that note, Bunter?"

"No, it wouldn't, then! And it wouldn't surprise me if it was found out that you had the number—and the rest of the note as well! Yah!"

Bunter had rolled very near the door before he ventured to make that speech. He dodged out now.

Delarey did not pursue. The face showed no sign that he attached any importance to what the Owl had said. Sir Jimmy would have sworn that it expressed nothing but what it seemed to—that Piet Delarey was as straight and as honourable as any fellow at Greyfriars—that he was incapable of treachery or meanness!

But it was queer!

He had told Skinner, on his honour, that he had not a sovereign; and Sir Jimmy knew that he had ten pounds! He could not have parted with it; he had not even gone to the jacket in which the pocket-book was.

And he had had no need to lie like that. He could have refused Skinner the loan. It was impossible that he should care much about Skinner. Yet he had lied—on his honour—rather than offend him!

Sir Jimmy's world seemed crumbling into ashes around him. If Piet was such a rotter as that, then nothing was worth while!

The youngster from the slums had taken Delarey as his model and exemplar. He had looked up to him almost with worship. Mauly was a good sort, but not to be compared with Delarey in the eyes of Sir Jimmy. Wharton, generous and straight as a die—breezy, good-tempered Squiff—gay-hearted Bob Cherry—the crafty Bounder, who had done him a rare good turn once—down-right Johnny Bull—Tom Brown, Frank Nugent, Inky, Mark Linley, Peter Todd—good fellows all, they were, and Sir Jimmy liked and respected them all, though he might not make much show of respect outwardly.

Good fellows all—and there were others—but none to compare with Piet!

And now it was as though his idol had been shattered completely. If Sir Jimmy had been less loyal, his affection would have been killed there and then.

It was not. If he could have ceased to care he would have been less badly hurt.

There was Delarey, looking the same as ever. He was the same, in a queer way—the same, and yet different. His kindness to Sir Jimmy must have been real. Everything about him could not be false. And it was for that the waif of past days had come to care so much for him. That was still left; and because of it Sir Jimmy was loyal still.

But how much had gone!

"You've the number, Delarey?" said the Bounder.

Some of them left off looking at Sir Jimmy, and he was glad of it. If that had gone on he might have betrayed Piet.

"Yes. When Mauly had his last big remittance I took them down. Squiff and Browney were there at the time."

"Well, that gives a better chance of getting it back, anyway," said Wharton.

"A bit," replied Delarey, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But that sort of thing's more useful when you can make it public. It isn't a great safeguard in a case like this where, if there's talk, there will no end of a row, and so the whole bizney has a chance of being smothered up."

Had he been banking on that? Jimmy wondered.

No one seemed to be looking at the miserable junior now. He stole softly out of the room, and only Snoop noticed his departure.

"Somebody had better cut off and fetch Mauly," said Harry Wharton. "He's a slack chump, and he will have to be bumped now!"

"The note might be found between now and to-morrow morning, you mean, and then Mauly will get off his bumping?" said Bob. "Quite right to think of that! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell him he's wanted, but I won't guarantee his coming," said Delarey. "I'm going up now."

"Bring the old slacker down!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Don't know that I'm coming down."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for the Remove!

DELAREY went. A buzz of excited voices sounded in the Common-room.

Bunter and Vivian had both gone. Snoop was the only fellow there who could throw any light upon the mystery.

And Snoop hesitated. He knew that Vivian would not speak out of his own accord. He was not even sure that Sir Jimmy would redeem his promise to speak out if he was called upon.

It might be safer to say nothing—to trust to the chapter of accidents. The note in Delarey's pocket-book would very likely never be found if he kept silence; but, on the other hand, he himself would be safe.

Would he, though? Skinner and Stott had seen the note he had; and if either of them said a word the fellows would be far readier to suspect him of theft than to suspect Delarey. He did not credit the Afrikaner's statement that he had taken the number; that might be true, but Snoop, always ready to lie himself, did not think it was. But if it was—well, even then he was safe enough from the babbling tongues of those two. No one could find the note where he had hidden it.

It was best to speak out, he thought. To plot so elaborately, and then to leave things to chance, would be absurd. And to keep silence now meant to be faced with the risk of blackmail by his dear chums in the near future.

Just as he had made up his mind Bunter came in again.

The Owl gave a long look round. He could not see the Rebel; but the crowd was bigger than ever now, and he stood there blinking about for him. Bunter had a strong preference for telling his story in the Rebel's absence.

"Look here, you fellows—"

Snoop's high-pitched voice sounded above the hum. He wanted to get ahead of Bunter.

"Oh, really, Snoopey, if you haven't

told them yet it looks to me as if you didn't mean to but for me forcing your hand! Where's the Rebel? Has he gone to fetch his pocket-book? I hope some-one's gone with him if he has."

"What in the world do you mean, you fat ass?" snapped the Bounder.

"Oh, you dry up, Smithy!" said the Owl. "You don't know everything!"

"You do, tubby, of course!" put in Bob Cherry.

"I know something, anyway—something about the Rebel, and—"

"If you do know, it's only because you listened at my study door, you sneaking fat cad!" said Snoop hotly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob. "Bunty and Snoop both know something! Is this a competition for the Ananias Stakes?"

"If they're going to say anything against Delarey, all I have to say—and I don't mind making it clear in advance—is that I shall want a lot more evidence than Snoop's word, or Bunter's, before I believe it," said Harry Wharton deliberately.

"Hear, hear, Wharton!" growled Johnny Bull.

"My sentiments exactly!" said Peter Todd.

"Same here!" came from the Bounder. A good many others evidently agreed with them.

But not all agreed. Bolsover major was one who did not. The burly Removite was never too slow to lend ear to a story which reflected upon another fellow; and just now he was up against the Afrikaner.

"That's all very well," he said. "I don't take much notice what Bunter says. He's a liar. But Snoop—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are we going to be told that Snoop ain't? It will strain my believery a bit, Bolsey!"

"Snoop is a liar. But he's a rotten funk, too—"

"While Bunter's a hero, of course!" put in the Bounder.

"Nothing of the sort! He's as big a funk as Snoop. He couldn't be bigger! But Snoop ain't such a fool as the porpoise. If Snoop is going to say anything about anyone, he has some proof, I guess. He wouldn't dare to try it on without!"

There was some reason in that. Skinner, eyeing Snoop in a very curious way, said:

"Yes; I think Snoop ought to speak out. I've my reasons for thinking he has something to tell."

Snoop did not like that. Stott was grinning. What did those two think? It had been a mistake to show them that note, especially if Delarey really had taken down the number of it.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I can tell as much as Snoopey. I heard all that he and Vivian said in No. 11, while I was tying my bootlace, which happened to come undone in the pass—"

"I vote that the bootlace and everything connected with it be ruled out of the evidence," said Mark Linley, interrupting Bunter. "We've had a good deal too much of Bunter's bootlace!"

"Hear, hear!" cried a score of voices.

"Will you let me speak?" said Snoop.

"I didn't mean to say anything, and I'm not making any charges now. But I think I'm bound to tell what I know. I picked up a pocket-book in the passage a few hours ago. Vivian saw me. He said he thought it was Delarey's. But he didn't seem sure, so I looked inside. He was there, too. Well, there was a tenner inside!"

Snoop paused. Every face was turned towards him now. A thrill of excitement ran through the crowd. Temple & Co.,

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entering at that moment, saw at once that something out of the ordinary was up.

"I'm making no charge against Delarey," went on Snoop. "A chap may have a tenner without there being any real cause for suspicion in it."

"Depends upon the chap!" said Skinner meaningly.

But Snoop would not look at Skinner. "But Mauly's lost a tenner, and a chap in his study has one. And that same chap told Skinner, on his honour, not twenty minutes ago, that he hadn't a quid! All I can say is that it looks worse than suspicious!"

Many were of Bolsover's way of thinking. If Snoop's story were true, there was certainly something for the Rebel to explain. Even the Famous Five and their circle felt that.

"Where's Vivian?" asked Mark Linley. "If what Snoop says is true—"

"The kid looked jolly qucer when something was said a little while ago," remarked Elliott. "I should think everyone noticed it, for everyone was staring at him. But he seems to have slunk out now. Hallo! Here's Mauly!"

"Yaas! I'm here!" said Mauly. "Seems to me that a lot of dashed silly fuss is bein' made about a mere trifle, begad! The note will turn up all right-ho! An', even it doesn't, what's the odds?"

"You're an ass, Mauly!" snapped Harry Wharton. "It isn't so much your losing the chink that matters. But when one of your silly notes goes there's bound to be trouble about it. And now—"

"Where's young Vivian?" demanded Bolsover, breaking in on Harry ruthlessly. "We've got to hear—"

"Eh?" said Mauleverer, as if he had not heard aright. "Begad, Bolsy, if you're meanin' to infer that Jimmy—"

"I'm not inferring anything, you slackin' chump!" roared the bully. "But Vivian's wanted. Another chap's name has been brought into this bizney, and Vivian must give evidence, whether he likes it or not!"

Mauly looked round him in a puzzled way. But his brains worked as well as most at a pinch, and something in Harry Wharton's face flashed a message to him.

Instantly Mauly was changed. The slackness fell from him. He drew himself up haughtily, and his voice rang as he asked Bolsover:

"Another chap, you say—who?"

"Delarey!" snapped Bolsover.

"You say that?" hissed Mauly, clenching his hands and stepping towards the burly bully.

"I don't say absolutely that it's so. I only say that it looks so. Yes, I do, though, I say more than that! I believe it was Delarey!"

"You believe that Delarey is a thief, begad, Bolsover?"

"Yes, I do! Don't glare at me, you silly fool! I could lick you with one hand tied behind me!"

"You are a liar, a braggart, an' the most absolute howlin' ass in creation!" retorted Mauly.

His lazy lordship was transformed. Slim though he was, and looking slimmer beside the burly Bolsover, one might have thought him the fighting-man all over then. He was obviously ready to back his words to the last ounce of his strength.

"My hat! Who'd have thought he had it in him?" murmured Bob Cherry.

Bolsover's face was furious; but he did not lift his heavy hand. He had no doubt that he could lick Mauly, but he had no yearning to be forced to do it.

"Here's Squiff and Browney," said Frank Nugent.

"My word! Mauly on the war-path!" exclaimed Squiff.

"This rotten cad says he believes Piet Delarey is a thief, Squiff!" said Mauly, almost choking with indignation.

Squiff's reply was characteristic. There was no better-tempered fellow at Greyfriars than Sampson Field, but when he was roused he did not potter about.

He stepped straight up to Bolsover, and caught him a ringing slap of the face.

"Good for you, Squiff!" cried Tom Brown. "If anyone else backs up Bolsover, let him stand out, and I'll give him the same!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sir Jimmy Missing!

"I SAY, though, it would be just as well to hear what it's all about first, you fellows!" growled Johnny Bull.

Squiff and Bolsover faced one another. The bully had not struck back. His face had gone white, save where the red mark of Squiff's hand showed. But he held himself in. A reckoning would come later.

Tom Brown crossed over to Johnny Bull.

"You're an old pal, Johnny," he said, "but if—"

"Oh, you silly fathead, can't a fellow say a reasonable thing without you wanting to slog him for it? I no more believe that the Rebel's a thief than I believe you are. You can hit me for that, if you like! But it's no use being in such a rotten hurry!"

"Johnny's right," said Harry Wharton. "It's a yarn of Snoop's, and he says Vivian can prove it. Bunter's mixed up in it somehow."

"Bunter!" said the New Zealander, with infinite contempt.

"Snoop!" said Squiff, with scorn as deep.

"But Vivian's another matter," went on Wharton, who seemed fully to understand how the other two felt about any story based on the testimony of William George Bunter and Sidney James Snoop, and to sympathise with their feeling. "We know Vivian is no end fond of the Rebel. If he says that he saw what Snoop says he saw, there's nothing for it but to ask Delarey to explain. You'll all see that, I'm sure."

"I see no necessity for a straight chap to be bothered to deny lies told by Snoop and Bunter!" snapped Tom Brown.

"Hear, hear!" said Squiff heartily.

"Right, begad, Browney!" chimed in Lord Mauleverer.

"But Vivian—"

"Oh, go and find Sir Jimmy, Tom," said Squiff, as if wearied. "Don't bother to fetch Piet, though. We'll keep up his end for him."

"If Jimmy denies it, begad—and Jimmy will deny it, I'm sure—that settles it!" said Mauly.

"Oh, does it?" ejaculated Snoop.

"Of course it doesn't! Snoopey will have to explain further. I fancy there are two or three things Snoopey might explain," said Skinner significantly.

Snoop felt dread creeping over him. Skinner's tone was hostile. Skinner might yet wreck the whole plot.

There was Stott, too; but he would take his cue from Skinner. It was scarcely in Stott's line to decide anything for himself.

A strained silence fell upon the Common-room. It was the voice of Temple, from near the door, that broke it. Quite a cluster of the Upper Fourth had gathered there. They seemed to be pro-Delareyites to a man. None of them had anything against Piet, while some of the Remove had.

"Here's Delarey," said Temple.

"Good man! I was sure he'd come the moment he heard about it; an' it's the right thing for him to do, too."

Piet smiled. He did not look in the least alarmed; but, though he smiled in friendly fashion at Temple, he looked angry.

"Where's Vivian?" demanded a score of voices.

"Can't find him anywhere," answered Tom Brown. "But here's the man who really matters."

"Tell your yarn again, Snoopey," sneered Skinner.

"No; I'll tell Delarey," said Harry Wharton.

And in a few words he did so.

"I needn't say we don't believe that there's anything in it, Piet," he said quietly. "But Snoop sticks to the yarn, and we're bound to thresh it out."

"Thanks, Wharton! I don't know that I can clear it up. But here's the number of the lost note, together with the other numbers I took down at the time. I'll hand the paper to you, Smithy. Anybody who likes can go and fetch the pocket-book from the jacket in my study. I haven't used the thing since quite two months ago, as I happened to have a new one as a Christmas present. If there's a tenner in it I shall be surprised—I won't say agreeably, for I know it isn't mine. I haven't had as much in a lump to call my own since I came here. But how it got there is a thing I can't explain, and sha'n't try to!"

The Rebel seemed as cool as ever. If he were a scoundrelly thief, he must also be a fellow of nerve far beyond the ordinary.

"I'll go for the pocket-book, begad!" said Mauly.

"Another shock for us!" murmured Peter Todd. "Fancy old Mauly offering to go on an errand!"

Snoop looked far more disquieted than Delarey during the brief absence of Wharton.

And no wonder! Skinner had stepped up to the Bouncer.

"Will you let me see the numbers of those notes, Smithy?" he asked.

"What for?"

"Oh, nothing much! I'd like to see them, that's all."

"Well, you won't! I don't know what wangle you are up to; but I know you—that's enough for me!"

Skinner did not argue the matter. He had not made up his mind what his course should be. But if he spared Snoop it would not be for Snoop's sake.

Mauly returned with the pocket-book.

"Give it to Wharton," said Delarey.

"No; I'd rather not," said Harry, flushing.

"Smithy, then."

"You're not on your trial in my eyes, Delarey," said the Bouncer.

"Nor in mine," Peter Todd said, as Mauly handed the book to him. "But there's no use in wasting time. Here goes!"

He opened the book amid a sudden silence. Heads were craned forward to see.

"There's a tenner here!" said Peter, and his voice shook.

"What's the number?" rapped out Vernon-Smith.

"Two threes, two fours, a seven, and an eight."

"Right-ho! No. 334478; but the tenner on this list is No. 407655!"

Snoop saw Skinner glance at a paper taken from his pocket. The sight made his blood run cold, for he knew now that he was at Skinner's mercy. Till then he had hoped that Skinner had no note of the number. Certainly he had not taken one at the moment of seeing it.

"It's a most complete mystery to me," said Delarey. "That note is not mine,

and I haven't the ghost of an idea how it ever came there. Perhaps Snoop can explain?"

He swung round on the plotter. Snoop managed with difficulty to disguise the funk he felt.

"I can't," he said sullenly. "I've told all I know; and I said from the first that I wasn't telling it out of any spite against you."

"If Snoop had a tenner he wouldn't use it to make trouble for anyone like that," said the Bouncer slowly. "Snoop's anything but straight, and he's a spiteful rotter, but he's too mean for that. He might lose the note through trying it!"

It was rather a brutal speech. But the Bouncer was not in the way of mincing his words; and, after all, Snoop deserved no mercy, though the speaker knew nothing of his last offence.

The great majority felt sure that, whatever might have happened, Delarey had not stolen Mauly's note. But when an idea once took root in the slow mind of Percy Bolsover it was very hard to dislodge it.

"I can't quite see that this clears it up myself," said Bolsover sulkily. "There's the note—a note, anyway. How do we know it ain't Mauly's? We've no one's word but Delarey's that those are the real numbers. If a fellow would steal, he might fake them in advance!"

"You utter cad!" roared Squiff.

But Bolsover's argument was not so far out. If Skinner or Snoop had stood in the Rebel's place, no one would have thought it strange.

It shook more than one there. But they were only shaken, not convinced. Delarey's coolness had its own effect. It might be the coolness of a clever criminal; but that theory was opposed to all that Greyfriars knew of the South African junior.

"I'll meet you to-morrow morning, Bolsover!" said Squiff, as the Common-room began to empty. It was time for prep—rather past time, indeed.

"That's for me!" said Delarey quickly.

"No, old chap! You've got pals, you know," Squiff replied. "It's me or Browney, and I was first!"

"They say Mauly was first," said Tom Brown, smiling.

"Oh, begad, yaas! But I don't mind. Fightin's a bit of a fag, though I'm ready if wanted. Wonder where the dooce young Vivian is?"

"We shall find him in No. 12, old top," said Piet.

But Sir Jimmy was not in No. 12, and he did not appear there.

When prep was over an exhaustive search was made for him. Nowhere was he to be found. It was Tom Brown who discovered that his overcoat and cap had gone, and that he had taken a few of his things from the dormitory.

Then it became plain what had happened.

Sir Jimmy had bolted!

Fellows looked at one another now, and said that there could be no doubt as to who was the thief. Vivian must have yielded to a sudden temptation. Why, having stolen the note, he should have put it where it was found, was a mystery. But it must have been he who stole it. Even the Famous Five, who liked him, believed that.

But three fellows doubted — Piet Delarey, Sampson Field, and Tom Brown.

And one was certain of Sir Jimmy's innocence. That one was Herbert Lord Mauleverer.

"I can't explain, begad!" he said. "An' I can't tell you why Jimmy went—not yet, anyway. No; he didn't tell me he was goin'—he didn't tell me anythin'. But I know!"

Mr. Quelch and the Head were told,

and search was made at once. In Friardale and in Courtfield inquiries were carried out most thoroughly. But no trace of Sir Jimmy could be found.

He had gone out from among them into the darkness of the night, and the darkness had swallowed him up.

Well, if he was a thief it mattered little; and most people thought him a thief. But Mauly knew better. He remembered what Sir Jimmy had said, and he knew that Sir Jimmy had sacrificed himself to clear Piet Delarey—whether believing Piet guilty or not he was in doubt. And because of that doubt he would not tell his chums.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Cleared Up!

"OH, I say, Delarey, I don't expect you'll ever forgive me!"

It was Sylvester of the Second who spoke, entering No. 12 without any rap at the door.

Piet looked up. He had been sitting in deep thought—thought about Sir Jimmy. Four days had passed since the schoolboy baronet's disappearance, and no news had come—no word from him, none about him. It was enough to worry the two who cared most about the cheery, loyal little chap. It kept Mauly awake, and it was making Delarey look positively haggard.

For he had begun to suspect the truth now, and the truth was almost unbearable.

As for Sylvester, who had been away with his father during these last few days, Piet had almost forgotten the youngster's existence.

"My hat! What have you been doing, Rod?" he asked, with a wry smile.

"I—I put that note in your pocket-book!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I put it there! I can see now what an ass I was; but I never thought it could turn out like this, and you be accused—"

"What on earth made you do it?"

"You wouldn't let me lend you anything, and you owned you were frightfully hard up. And I knew that dad wouldn't mind me giving it to a chum, and you've been so jolly good to me, Piet, that I reckon you are my best chum, if I am only a kid. But I've told dad now, and he said it was all wrong. You were welcome to it, all serene, but he missed his guess if you'd be willing to take it."

"Well, you didn't get the streak of lunacy in you from your pater, Rod—I'm glad to know that," said Delarey quietly.

"My good kid, you have let yourself in for a fine thing, and me, too! You'll have to explain the whole thing, and we shall both look pretty asses! Don't know that I've been specially kind to you before; but you may expect me to bully you like anything after this!"

"I don't mind much about the explanation, Piet; and I know you don't mean what you say. I don't mind anything if you're not cross, and I don't believe you are, really."

"Not on my own account. I can stand it," Piet said. "But it's rough on Vivian."

"But what has he to do with it? They say he stole Mauly's—"

"He didn't, then! I never believed he did; and a quarter of an hour ago Mauly found that note behind the mirror. Can't think what possessed the ass to put it there; and he'd never have found it if the thing hadn't tumbled down and smashed."

"But—Sir Jimmy—"

"He ran away so that the fellows should believe he'd done what I was accused of. He didn't know how easily I could clear myself. Probably he thought

I was guilty. Why, what's the game, Rod? You look—"

"I know where he is, Piet—I know where he is!" cried little Sylvester, almost delirious with excitement.

It was the slightest of chances that had led to the detection of Sir Jimmy's place of refuge. The train which brought Sylvester back to Friardale had been pulled up by signals close to a big munitions works situated by the line. And, looking out of the window, the fag had seen someone so extraordinarily like Vivian that he had shouted in surprise. When the train went on he told himself that it could only have been a wonderful accidental resemblance. But the story of Sir Jimmy's flight made it clear that it was more than that.

"Have you told anyone else, Rod?" asked Delarey.

"No. I didn't want to give him away. I like Vivian!"

"Well, don't say anything. Talk as much as you like about Mauly's finding his note—but all the school knows that by this time. But don't say anything about Sir Jimmy till—well, till you see him again! And then there'll be no need."

"Are you going to fetch him back, Piet?" asked the fag eagerly.

"Rather! What do you think, my son? It's a halfer to-day. I'll look the trains up at once. Cut, now! I say, no more presents, though!"

"Not likely, Piet! I've learned better."

And the fag scuttled off.

That afternoon the three Colonials and Mauly travelled together to the munition works at Kennerley, and found there one "S. James," earning quite good wages in a boy's job, as he admitted afterwards. He kicked at the idea of going back at first, but they would take no denial, and Delarey saw the manager, and explained the position to him, after which S. James was told that he was dismissed—though with a good character.

Sir Jimmy wouldn't talk much on the way back, and any reference to the sacrifice he had made for Piet plainly angered him. So they did not rub it in. Sir Jimmy might have been foolish and hasty, but he had shown loyalty of the most sterling quality, and none of the three would ever forget.

"Do you know anything about a bank-note for ten pounds, No. 407655, Snoop?" asked Harold Skinner mockingly.

Snoop turned pale, and trembled like one in an ague.

"You can't prove anything!" he whined.

"Can't I? I think I can, if I like. But I'm not inclined to. I'm desperately hard-up, though, and you've had a remittance this morning, I hear. I suppose you can lend me a quid?"

Snoop lent, with a very ill grace. It was not really a loan, and he knew it. It was simply blackmail.

"You bungled that bizney frightfully," sneered Skinner. "Don't you see, you idiot, that the only note you could use to make sure of trapping him was just the one you were fool enough to show me and Stott? If the Rebel couldn't explain the other someone could."

"He told you, on his honour—"

"Oh, that was why you worked off the bet dodge on me, was it? My hat, Snoop, I'll make you sit up for that!"

And for once, no doubt, Skinner meant to keep his word!

(Don't miss "SKINNER, THE SPY!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE INDISCRETION OF THE MAJOR.

By MARK LINLEY.

I.

BY gad! What a chance!" Major Cherry stopped, his eyes glistening.

The plump, genial major was at Greyfriars, visiting the old school during a short leave from the Front.

He had come chiefly to see his son, Bob Cherry of the Remove. But as an Old Boy, every grey old stone of Greyfriars was dear to him, and full of interest for him.

In Study No. 1 the Famous Five of the Remove were preparing a "spread" in honour of the distinguished visitor, as plentiful as the "grub rules" permitted.

And the major was taking a walk about the school on his own, visiting the old places known to him in his far-off boyhood, and feeling a boy again as he did so.

There was thick snow on the ground in the Head's garden, where the major was pacing now. An old incident—forty years old—came into the gallant major's mind as he walked there; how a certain reckless fag of the Third Form had taken cover in that same garden, and kneaded a big snowball there, and hurled that snowball over the same old gate, and knocked off the cap of an unpopular Form-master. That reckless fag of the Third was now a major in the British Army, and he was chuckling softly over the remembrance of his old boyish exploit when Mr. Quelch appeared in the distance.

Mr. Quelch was walking along with his hands behind him, his eyes on the ground, in a mood of deep thought. His way lay past the gate of the Head's garden. Mr. Quelch was doubtless reflecting upon the valuable literary work that occupied most of his spare time. Certainly he was blind and deaf to his surroundings.

And, as the major's twinkling eyes fell upon him, the major was assailed by a terrible temptation.

His stroll round the old school had brought back the past so vividly to his mind that he was feeling a schoolboy again. Like most Army men, he had remained young in spirit, while the passing years had thinned his hair and enlarged his circumference. For the moment, Major Cherry was Cherry of the Third once more; and the temptation to catch the unsuspecting master with a snowball was simply irresistible.

He resisted it.

But, in spite of himself, he stooped, and his brown old hand gathered up snow furtively, while his eyes watched the thoughtful Form-master pacing past the gate.

Unseeing, Mr. Quelch passed the gate, and his back was to the major. Major Cherry rose upright, the snowball in his hand. He cast a quick, guilty glance round. No one was in sight.

Then the temptation became too strong. Whiz!

Before he fairly realised what he was doing, the major's strong arm shot out, and the snowball flew.

The moment it had left his hand he stood petrified with the consciousness of what he had done.

Before it reached its mark, the awful seriousness of his action was only too clear to his mind, and—like a schoolboy more than ever—he turned and raced up the garden to escape observation.

Crash!

"Oh!" He heard it as he ran—and he heard a soft plump as Mr. Quelch, taken utterly by surprise, sat down in the quad.

"Oh, gad!" gasped the dismayed major as he ran.

He fairly bolted through the trees. Bump!

There was a collision as he ran into a junior who was entering the garden by the upper gate.

"Oh! Ah!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, dad!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staggering back from the collision. "I came to fetch you—tea's ready!"

"Oh, by gad!"

"Anything up?" exclaimed Bob, in wonder. The sight of his father, a plump and semi-bald officer in khaki, racing up the garden like a fag, had fairly dazed Bob Cherry.

The major's sun-tanned face was crimson. "Bob," he stuttered, "you—you saw—"

"Eh? Saw what, dad?"

"Nothing!" stammered the major.

"D-d-d-don't mention that I've been in the garden, Bob! I—I—"

Without any further explanation, the major strode on through the gateway, and disappeared, striding so fast that he was almost running.

Bob Cherry stood rooted in the snow, staring after him.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bob.

He was too astounded to move. And as he stood there came a sound of hasty footsteps in the garden, and an angry voice.

"So it was you, Cherry!"

Bob spun round.

Mr. Quelch was whisking up the garden, bare-headed, smothered with snow, and with a face like a particularly savage Hun.

His glance was like that of a basilisk as it fixed upon Bob's surprised and startled face.

"You, Cherry! You have dared—"

choked Mr. Quelch.

"I, sir?" stammered Bob.

"Yes, you!"

"Wh-a-at have I done, sir?" babbled Cherry helplessly.

"You have knocked me down with a snowball—me, your Form-master!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You have dared, Cherry, to commit an assault upon the person of a master. You have knocked off my cap, and caused me to fall down!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bob.

"Was it not you, Cherry?"

"I—I—I—"

"No one else is in the garden—the snowball came from the garden, and I came to find out the delinquent—I might say the criminal—as soon as I could recover my breath. I find you here! Do you deny, Cherry, that you hurled that snowball at me?" thundered the Remove-master.

Bob Cherry only gasped.

He recalled the figure of the old major, bolting from the garden like a frightened fag, running into him without seeing him—and he understood! His father had snowballed Mr. Quelch!

It was incredible—but it was evidently the case! No wonder the major had told him not to mention that he had been in the garden.

Bob stood dumb.

Not for worlds, not for whole solar systems, would he have betrayed that extraordinary indiscretion of the gallant old major.

How Major Cherry had come to do it was an amazing mystery. But certainly he could not let Mr. Quelch know that he had done it! A major, just home from the Front, snowballing a grave Form-master like a cheeky fag! In spite of his dismay, Bob could not quite keep a grin back from his face.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fairly blazed.

"So you are laughing over your impertinence—you unexampled insolence, Cherry!" he exclaimed.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Come with me, you wicked, disrespectful, ruffianly boy! I shall report you to the Head for a flogging!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Come!"

"I—I—I—"

"I have asked you, Cherry, whether you threw the snowball. If you deny it, I will investigate further! Answer me!"

"I—I'm very sorry, sir!" stammered Bob.

He did not want Mr. Quelch to investigate further. Even at the cost of a flogging, he

wanted to keep it dark that the major had been in the garden.

"You admit it, then?" thundered the Remove-master.

"I think it must have been a sudden impulse, sir!" faltered Bob, quite truthfully, but very diplomatically.

"Come with me!"

A grip of iron dropped on Bob's shoulder, and he was marched away.

II.

MAJOR CHERRY dropped into a walk as he came in sight of the School House, and endeavoured to collect himself as he marched on.

He had escaped discovery, and that was a great relief to him.

His sunburnt cheeks glowed at the bare idea of his indiscretion becoming known.

"By gad!" he murmured, a dozen times. "What did I do it for? How did I come to do it? Oh, gad! Oh, dear!"

At least, it was a dead secret that he had done it; there was comfort in that.

He was looking quite his usual self as he entered the School House—the grave, middle-aged major. Nobody looking at him could possibly have guessed that that grave, bronzed, military gentleman had just been guilty of a prank only suited to a reckless fag.

Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting in the hall to escort him in state to Study No. 1, where the festive board was spread—some-what thinly.

"Tea ready—what?" said the major genially.

"Yes, sir! Where's Bob?"

"Bob? Oh, Bob! Isn't he coming?" asked Major Cherry.

Wharton looked out of the doorway.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated suddenly.

"What's the row?" asked Nugent.

"Bob's in a row!"

Mr. Quelch was marching Bob Cherry rapidly to the School House, with a grip on his shoulder.

The major stepped back to the doorway and looked out.

"By gad! Bob seems to be in trouble!" he muttered, tugging at his grey moustache.

Mr. Quelch started a little at the sight of the major as he marched the delinquent in.

He released Bob's shoulder, but his frown did not relax.

"I trust my son has not—ahem!—been guilty of any fault, Mr. Quelch?" said the major, with concern.

The Remove-master breathed hard through his nose.

"I am sorry to say, Major Cherry, that he has been guilty of a very serious fault. I am extremely sorry that this should have occurred while you are here, sir. But I have no resource but to report Cherry to the head-master for severe punishment."

"I—I'm ready, sir!" said Bob hastily.

"Take me to the Head, sir!"

"Kindly be silent, Cherry! Your father is speaking!"

"If—if you wouldn't mind getting it over, sir—"

"Silence!"

"May I ask what the boy has done, sir?" inquired the major, with an inward sinking of the heart.

"You are entitled to know, Major Cherry. He has had the audacity—the unparalleled audacity—to hurl a snowball at me, his Form-master!"

"Oh, gad!"

The major gasped.

"My cap, sir, was knocked off, and I fell in the snow!" spluttered Mr. Quelch. "Such an outrage is unheard-of at Greyfriars—unprecedented!"

Bob's eyes involuntarily met his father's.

"Does—does the boy admit it?" stuttered the major.

"Yes."

"I—I didn't deny it," said Bob hastily.

"That comes to the same thing, I presume?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Bob was silent. It did not come to the same thing at all, but he was far from desiring to point that out.

Major Cherry stood tugging at his moustache.

"Mr. Quelch," he gasped at last. "I—I think I can let some light in on this matter."

"You, sir?"

"I was in the Head's garden a few minutes ago. I—I think you said it happened in the Head's garden?"

"I did not say so, but it was the case."

"I—I was there, Mr. Quelch, and—and saw the whole incident."

"Indeed!"

"And—and the person who threw the snowball, sir, was not my son," said the major.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch in astonishment. "You surprise me very much, Major Cherry. Your evidence, of course, is unquestionable. But why did not the boy deny it if he is not guilty?"

"I—I fear that my son, with a mistaken sense of chivalry, refrained from denying it, sir, with the intention of screening the really guilty party."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. "Is that the case, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Bob.

"You acted very wrongly, then, Cherry."

"Yes, sir."

"I shall have to search further for the culprit, then!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"Do you know him by name, major?"

"I—I certainly do."

"Please tell me the name, then."

Major Cherry hesitated.

"I—I shall be pleased to do so, Mr. Quelch," he said haltingly. "I—I would rather speak in the privacy of your own study, however."

"Certainly! Please come this way."

Mr. Quelch politely showed the major into his study, followed him in, and closed the door.

Major Cherry clicked his heels together, and stood in a state of hapless misery. The changes in the expression on his sun-tanned face astonished the Form-master.

"If you have any objection to telling me the name, Major Cherry, of course I withdraw my request," said Mr. Quelch.

"N-n-o. But—"

"Yes?"

"I—I really do not quite know how to acquaint you with the facts, sir!" stammered the major.

"Really, Major Cherry—"

"The—the fact is, it was not a Greyfriars boy at all—"

"Indeed! Some impertinent trespasser?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply.

"N-n-not exactly."

"But you know the name of the ruffian?"

"The—the what?"

"The ruffian, sir."

"Oh, dear! The—the fact is," groaned the major, "it wasn't exactly a ruffian. It was an Old Boy of Greyfriars—"

"What?"

"Who—who was thinking of his schooldays forty years ago, and—and forgot that he was no longer a Third-Form fag!" gasped the major, crimson as a beetroot now under the

Form-master's gimlet eyes. The unhappy major was feeling exactly like a fag called up for judgment. He would hardly have been surprised if Mr. Quelch had ordered him to hold out his hand. "It—it was a sudden temptation, sir, and—and inexcusable—quite inexcusable. However, if you require the name of the delinquent, sir, I will give it to you."

Mr. Quelch gave him one look.

"Upon the whole, Major Cherry, I think the matter had better be allowed to drop," he said drily. "Please do not trouble further."

He held the door open.

Major Cherry crept out like a cowed fag. He was intensely glad when he had escaped from the Remove-master's stern eyes.

III.

FIVE preternaturally grave faces greeted Major Cherry in Study No. 1 when he arrived there gasping.

Their gravity relieved him.

Tea in Study No. 1 passed off quite cheerfully after all.

It was not till the major was gone that the Famous Five gave vent to the merriment that bubbled within them.

Then they roared, and howled, and roared again.

Fellows came along the Remove passage to demand what the row was about, and what was the merry joke. But the Co. did not explain. In Study No. 1 the secret was buried deep of the Indiscretion of the Major.

THE END.

GREYFRIARS AT THE FRONT!

XI.—Extracts from Correspondence. :: By Peter Hazeldene.

I.

British Army Headquarters,
December 1st, 1917.

To Officer Commanding 1st Royal Bangbacks.
I am commanded to inquire from you a detailed statement of the exact movements of Private William George Bunter, of your regiment, on the 22nd ultimo. This return should be rendered as quickly as possible, as it is urgently required.

(Sd.) H. M. GOODENOUGH
(Colonel).

II.

2nd Lieutenant Wingate.

I believe that the man in question—Private Bunter—is in your charge. Please cause him to forward the details required as soon as possible. I don't want any delay, as this may mean some decoration for him.

(Sd.) G. R. SLOGGITT
(O.C. 1st Royal Bangbacks).

III.

Officer Commanding 1st Royal Bangbacks.

I enclose herewith a statement from Private Bunter. It appears that he has been responsible for a very brave act. I trust that he will meet with the recognition he deserves.

(Sd.) G. WINGATE
(2nd Lieutenant).

(Enclosure.)

Sir,—I have to report that on the day in question I was alone in the trenches when a tremendous lot of Hunns came charging over. I was the only support of the line, but I was red. I met them with bombs and scattered them first, then jumped over the trench and bayoneted them until none of them was left.

I did not report this earlier because I did not wish to blow my own trumpet.

I shall be pleased to keep open a dait to receive the Victoria Cross.

(Sd.) WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER
(Private, 1st Royal Bangbacks).

IV.

Colonel Goodenough,

British Army Headquarters.

The report is forwarded herewith. I was not aware that any attacks were made on our trenches on the day in question, as it was raining very hard all the time. But Private Bunter seems to have been quite a hero.

(Sd.) G. R. SLOGGITT
(O.C. 1st Royal Bangbacks).

V.

British Army Headquarters.

Officer Commanding 1st Royal Bangbacks.

The report re Bunter has been handed to the Victualling Department, as it was from this quarter that I received the request to ascertain his movements.

It is definitely known that no trench raids were carried out on your sector by the Germans on the day in question. Bunter must therefore have been mistaken.

(Sd.) H. M. GOODENOUGH
(Colonel).

VI.

Officer Commanding 1st Royal Bangbacks.

I have to forward herewith a further report from Bunter. He appears to have remembered something else.

(Sd.) G. WINGATE
(2nd Lieutenant).

(Enclosure.)

Sir,—Since last writing you I have remembered more details of my life with the fifty Hunns.

I no that I killed forty-seven of them, and the other duzen retired in great confusion, taking their ded with them.

Please let me no when I am going to get the Victoria Cross.

(Sd.) WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER
(Private, 1st Royal Bangbacks).

VII.

2nd Lieutenant Wingate.

In reply to your last letter, it has been definitely ascertained from Headquarters that no attack took place on the trench in which Bunter was stationed on the day in question. This man seems either to be an unprincipled liar or suffering from the effects of liquor.

Should any further reports be received from him, he had better be detained, and sent to hospital for brain test.

The report was required to ascertain whether he was in the trench from which 10 pots of jam are missing—and this he has admitted. Will you please acquaint him that jam, raspberry, pots, 10, has been charged to his account?

(Sd.) G. R. SLOGGITT
(O.C. 1st Royal Bangbacks).

NOT SO CLEVER AFTER ALL!

By Frank Nugent.

Loder stopped outside a door in the Fourth Form corridor. Voices could be heard within; Loder listened with a grin. "Your deal, Wharton!" "Right-ho, Bob! I'm a new hand at the job!" "Pass those cigarettes, old chap! Rather good, this game of nap!" "Just a sec. I want a drink—This champagne is great, I think!" Loder gasped, as well he might. Fellows flocked from left and right. Loder frowned, and muttered "Clear! Wharton and the rest will hear! Keep them there; don't make a row. I'll buzz off to Quelch now!" All those fellows' bolts are shot; I shall nab the merry lot!" Loder went. He soon came back, bringing Quelch on the track! "Listen here, sir!" Loder cried. "Wharton's crowd are all inside! Wharton's ringleader, that's plain. Listen! There they go again!" "Have another peg, old man?" "Cover that, Bob, if you can!" "Bless my soul! Can it be true? Wharton! Cherry! Is that you?" Mr. Quelch flung wide the door, then he nearly toppled over. Void, the study was, and bare; Not a living soul was there! Then we heard a "He, he, he!" Mr. Quelch spun round, to see Bunter chuckling like a hen! Mr. Quelch remembered then. "Ah!" he said. "I think I see! This is—er—a jape on me! Follow!" Bunter had to go. Quelch's rather wide, you know!

Bunter's made a new resolve—
No more wheezes to evolve!

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT!

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any news-pender to get it from

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
111, Rue Reamur,
PARIS.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 60.—Mr. MOBBS.

MR. MOBBS is the master of the Highlife Fourth Form, and, as such, has not a very great deal to do with the Greyfriars juniors—for which the Greyfriars juniors have cause to be thankful!

For Mr. Albert Hicks Mobbs is by no means a pleasant person, and it would be hard to find anything good to say about him.

He is a snob, a tuft-hunter, a petty tyrant, and dishonest. Not dishonest in the sense that he will steal—he has no special temptation to do that—but dishonest in his dealings as between the fellows he toadies to and those he dislikes. He has no sense of fair play at all, and fair play is at the root of honesty.

Ponsonby and Vavasour and Gadsby, and the rest of the "highly connected" nuts, may do pretty well what they please without being interfered with by "Mobby," as they call him. He may now and then give them lines; but he never expects those lines to be done, and the nuts do not disappoint his expectations. He winks at their gambling, so long as it is not too open and unashamed. He makes no effort to stop them from smoking. He regards all their nutty ways as pardonable in sprigs of the aristocracy. Mobby would give a good deal even to be kicked by a duke!

The Caterpillar is no longer a member of the society of nuts. For good and all he has done with Pon and the myrmidons of Pon. But, though no one despises Mobby more than the Caterpillar does, and no one takes less trouble to disguise his feelings, the master of the Fourth looks up to Rupert de Courfey with awe. Why, he may be an earl some day! To think of it gives Mobby a delightful thrill.

But to the fellows who are not "highly connected"—sons of struggling professional men, maybe, or of successful business men who have not yet been turned into titled personages—Mr. Mobbs is severe. He gives Smithson and Benson and Yates and the rest of them the canings that Pon & Co. do not get. It is quite nice for Pon & Co., and Mr. Mobbs may be able to balance up in his conscience—if any—to his own satisfaction. But it really is a little bit rough on the bigger and better half of the Fourth.

It is likely that Mr. Mobbs dislikes Frank Courtenay almost as much as Ponsonby does. His feelings may lack some of the depth which that of Frank's scheming cousin has, but it lacks none of the mean spite. Even before Courtenay came to Highlife—as Arthur Clare—Mobby was ready to object to him. He told Pon that a scholarship boy was coming, a low fellow who had been to a Council School. And the nuts went to Mobby, and wanted him to go to the Head and protest. But Mobby was not on. He is no hero; and, though Dr. Voysey, the Head of Highlife, is a slack and self-indulgent man, Mr. Mobbs is afraid of him. So Mr. Mobbs counselled the nuts that they should

treat the new boy with "the contempt he deserved." For himself, he intended to treat him with "justice—bare justice." As Mr. Mobbs has never had any notion of the meaning of justice, Clare's chances looked small. It was something far short of bare justice to talk about a fellow deserving contempt because he had been at a Council School.

There is no need to tell over again the story of Courtenay's struggles. Mr. Mobbs was against him from the first, and did all in his power to make him feel anything but at home at Highlife. He did what was in him to prejudice Major Courtenay—who had then no suspicion that the boy talked about was his own long-lost son—against Clare. He described him as unfit to associate with the



other juniors. Anything more grossly untrue could not have been spoken; and, fortunately, the major was not the man to let a lying tongue set him against the boy who had saved his life.

It was little wonder that when Ponsonby's foul plot seemed to have succeeded, and Courtenay was sentenced to expulsion, the boy should turn fiercely upon Mr. Mobbs. "Don't come with me, or I shall do you a mischief!" he said fiercely when the snobbish master wanted to see him out of the gates. And the coward blenched from Courtenay's clenched fists and blazing eyes, but followed him to the gates in vile enjoyment of his trouble.

When Mr. Mobbs has a warm and unpleasant time of it one feels an unholy

inclination to chortle. He had such a time when Squiff, then a new boy at Greyfriars, and unknown to Highlife, transferred himself for a brief space to the other school, threw in his lot with Smithson & Co.—this was before the days of Frank Courtenay—bucked hard against Pon and the rest of the nuts, and actually caned Mr. Mobbs! Squiff was sacked for that; but a sacking from Highlife did not worry Squiff.

Then there was Wibley's first audacious impersonation of Mr. Mobbs. The second impersonation was even more audacious; but we will not go too closely into that, for it was not so big a success as the first. By the loyal aid of others Wibley was saved; but it looked very much at one time as though he were booked for the greatest of trouble. He and his fellow-plotters had not counted on Wibley-Mobbs meeting the real Mobbs in the wood, you see.

But when the first spoof was practised Highlife knew less about Wibley. Pon & Co., however, had not let lack of acquaintance stand in the way of their ragging him when they chanced to catch him alone. And when Wib, in the guise of the Fourth Form-master, took Highlife in most completely, he did not forget to get his own back on Pon & Co. While Mr. Mobbs, kidnapped by the supposed ruffians of the "Black Gang," was imprisoned under the Priory ruins, Wibley got him into temporary bad odour with his nutty pupils by what looked like a change of face as curious as it was thorough. The nuts thought Mobby must have gone mad when he dealt out canings and lines with a liberal hand to them, and was quite civil to such nonentities as the other section of the Form. Well, Mr. Mobbs was not far from madness when the meddling of Bunter brought him release. Wib had to do a very hasty exit when that happened; but Courtenay and the Caterpillar saved him from capture, though they had known nothing about the plot till after Wib had put off his Mobby disguise and had calmly taken up his quarters in their study. Harry Wharton & Co. were coming to tea; and they came, and the amateur actor left with them unsuspected.

More than once has Mr. Mobbs taken complaints to the Head of Greyfriars. Dr. Locke has no liking for him; but there have been times when he could not help acting on the information laid. On the whole, however, the master of the Highlife Fourth has got small change out of the Greyfriars Head; and among the other masters at the older school he certainly has no friends.

Nobody really likes him, not even the highly-connected youths to whom he toadies, and of whose high principles and tender sensitiveness he is always so assured. He backs them up, right or wrong—they are seldom right—and gets for it all—what? The half-promise of an invitation at some future time to some swell house—their contempt—and the reputation of being "a worm." Which reputation he thoroughly deserves!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"SKINNER, THE SPY!"

By Frank Richards.

Some of our readers profess to be able to see a lot of good in Skinner. He will reform some day, they are sure.

Personally, I don't a bit believe it. Skinner is not wholly bad. From the story this week it may be gathered that he does not actually hate everybody. He has a kind of liking for Delarey. He once showed some manhood when he and Bolsover major were in danger together. And he jumped in to Bob Cherry's rescue when Bob, through an accident, might have drowned. He was grateful to the Bounder for a very little time; but what came of his resolve for amendment then? He is not wholly bad; but the good in him

is little more than a few streaks of grey in a mass of black.

In next week's story you will find him up to his old tricks. No man of German nationality is very popular in England to-day; but if there is such a thing as a harmless German, surely Herr Gans—the Gander, as Greyfriars irreverently calls him—might rank as such. There is no reason at all to believe the Gander a spy; but Skinner, who has always disliked him, chooses to think him one, and sets to work to spy on him—with a surprising and dramatic result not at all pleasant to Skinner!

THANKS!

Thanks to the readers, one and all, who were so generous as to send me subscriptions for the funds for providing a couple of footballs for some of our fine fellows languishing in captivity in Hunland. With the contributions I collected here, and a few more shillings from my own pocket—which I can assure you I did not grudge—the amount was sufficient to let the prisoners have two first-

class balls; and as I specially asked that no one should send more than 6d., I think the result very satisfactory. I do not often levy a tax of this sort on your good nature, but it pleases me to know that I can count upon you at need—and I have that knowledge.

NOTICES.

Back Numbers Wanted.

By W. Grey, c/o 10, London Road, Bognor—Nos. 1-50 of "Gem" and MAGNET; also "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out."

By Wm McLaughlan, 23, Whitehill Road, Burnbank, by Hamilton, Lanark—Nos. 375-400 of both MAGNET and "Gem," at 3d. each

Your Editor