

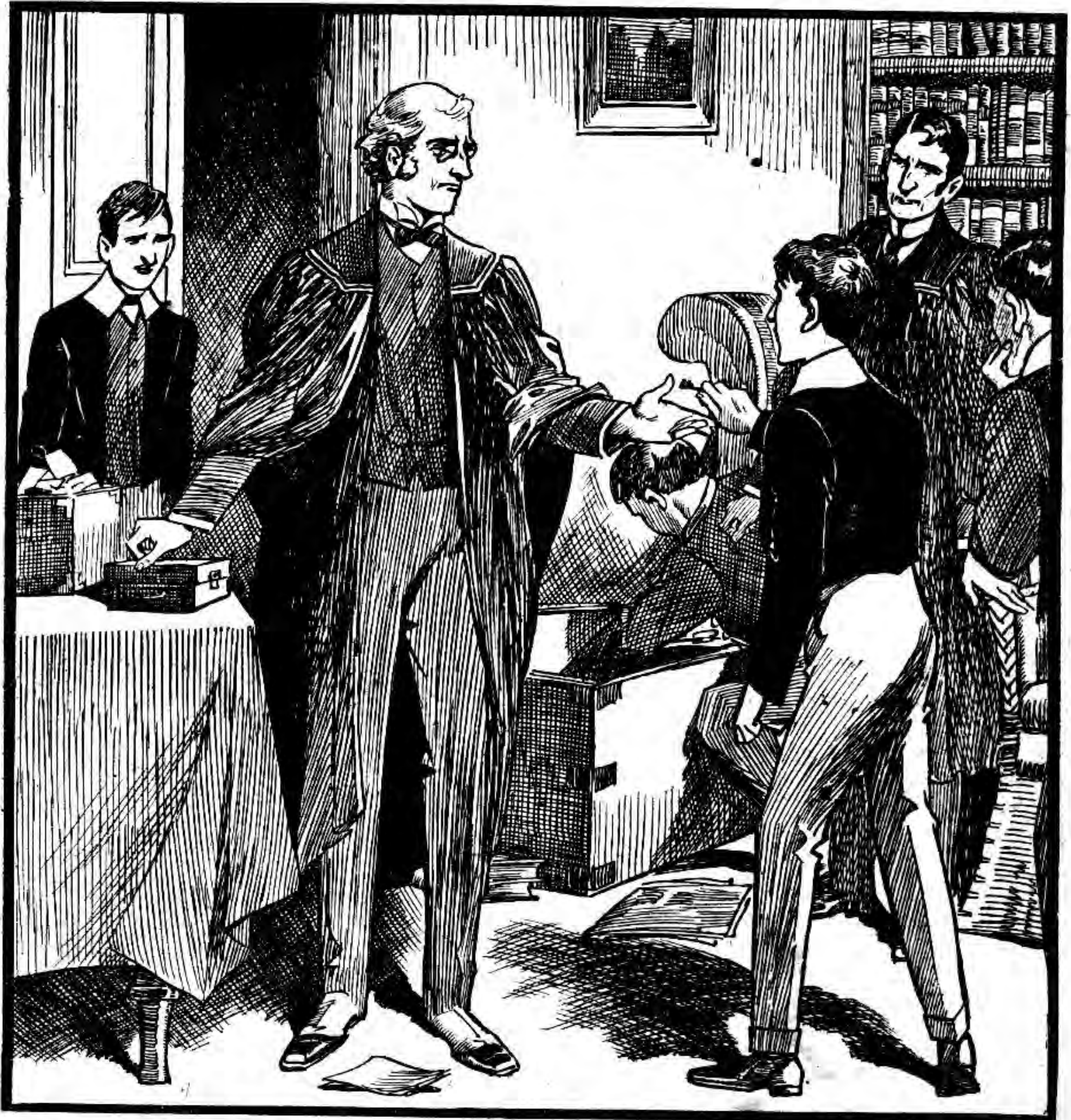


The Magnet

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STANDING BY SNOOP!



THE HEAD'S GREAT SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE!

(A dramatic scene in this week's Magnificent, Long, Complete School Story.)

8-3-19

STANDING BY SNOOP!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story of

HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.

::: By :::

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Poor Mauly!

"HAVE you fellows seen a ten-pound note anywhere?"

"What?"

"Ten-pound note," repeated Lord Mauleverer.

His lordship was looking into Study No. 1 in the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. were having tea in that famous study.

The Famous Five stared at Lord Mauleverer, who smiled at them cheerily.

"Ten-pound note!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Yaas."

"Have you lost one?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I don't know."

"I suppose you know whether you've lost a ten-pound note or not, you ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

His lordship shook his head.

"Not at all. But I may have. I know I had one, you see, because I distinctly remember taking it out of my uncle's letter, weeks ago—and I've never spent it. Therefore, I must have it still, mustn't I?"

"Fathead!" remarked Nugent.

"But I can't find it," continued his lordship. "I happen to want it now. I'm hard up, you see; and so, naturally, a ten-pound note would come in handy, and tide me over till I get some money."

His lordship evidently did not regard the ten-pound note itself as "some money."

"Then you've lost it?" asked Bob.

"I don't see how I could have. But I may have. I thought I'd mention it, you know, so that if you come across a ten-pound note you can send it along to my study. That's all."

And with a nod his lordship was about to pass on, when Bob Cherry reached out, seized his collar, and jerked him bodily into the study.

"Ow!" roared Mauleverer, as he staggered across Study No. 1 and bumped into a chair. "You silly ass! Wharrer you up to?"

Bob Cherry did not explain what he was up to. He left his lordship to guess. It really wasn't difficult to guess. Bob changed his grasp to Mauly's slim shoulders, and jammed him against the study wall.

"Now, you silly ass—" he began.

"Leggo!" exclaimed Mauleverer indignantly. "What do you mean, you silly chump? You're rumplin' my jacket!"

"I've a good mind to rumple your features!" said Bob Cherry gruffly.

"You're always losing your money."

"I'm not!" exclaimed Mauleverer.

"It's weeks since I've lost any. Besides, I suppose a chap can lose his own money if he likes."

"That's where you're wrong. A chap can't, without having his head knocked against a study wall—like that!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"And like that!"

"Ow! Help!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh rose and closed the study door. The matter was, in the eyes of the Famous Five, more serious than it seemed to Lord Mauleverer. Harry Wharton fixed a frowning glance upon his lordship as he rubbed his head and glared at Bob.

"Look here, Mauly—"

"Ow!"

"This has got to be settled!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove sharply. "It's a serious matter."

"Oh, rot! Ow! I've a jolly good mind to mop up the study with you, Bob Cherry!"

"Have you lost ten pounds, or haven't you?" demanded Wharton.

"I really don't know. You see, I had the note—I know that. I put it in my pocket—I remember distinctly. I should have put it in my pocket-book, but I'd left that somewhere. So I put it in my pocket. I'm always careful with money, you know," added Mauleverer, with a reproachful look. "Some fellows would have left it on the table or the mantelpiece. But I put it in my jacket-pocket, along with some old letters."

"And isn't it there now?"

"No."

"You've looked?"

"Yaas."

"Then what's become of it?"

"My dear man, it's no good asking me riddles. I may have taken it out along with some letters and dropped it somewhere. I may have had my pocket picked in Courtfield. I may have used the dashed thing for a pipelight without noticin' it. I often use pipelights for the gas, to save matches, you know. Some fellows are economical!" said Lord Mauleverer, with dignity.

"Jolly economical, to use a ten-pound note to light the gas, you crass idiot!" said Bob Cherry. "Economy of that sort is the way to get rich quick. I should think. How long is it since you've seen the note?"

"About three weeks. I thought of it suddenly to-day."

"And what made you think of it suddenly?"

"I found there weren't any currency notes in my pocket-book. Then I thought of the tenner, you know, and felt in my pocket for it."

"And it wasn't there?"

"No."

"Well, you howling ass," said Harry Wharton, "if I were your guardian I'd allowance you to two-and-six a week till you learned to look after your money."

"Jolly glad you ain't my guardian, then, old top. Besides, I do look after my

money. I'm inquiren' up an' down the Remove whether anybody's seen it. It's a beastly worry, but I'm doin' it."

"That means that all Greyfriars will hear of it, and the Fourth and the Shell will begin to hint that we have got a thief in our Form!" said Johnny Bull angrily. "Somebody's sure to suggest that it's been stolen."

"Oh, gad! Do you think so?"

"Yes, ass!"

"What rot! I wish I hadn't mentioned it now," said his lordship, in dismay. "This is what comes of a chap bein' careful with his money!"

There was a tap at the study door, and it opened, and Sidney James Snoop of the Remove came in.

Snoop glanced at the group of juniors round Lord Mauleverer in some surprise.

"Oh! If you're busy—" he began.

"Not at all," said Lord Mauleverer hastily. "I'm just goin'."

"You're not," said Wharton. "This matter has got to be settled first. That ten-pound note has got to be found."

"Mauly lost a tenner?" asked Snoop, with a grin.

"Yes—the ass!"

"Lucky bargee, to have tenners to lose," said Snoop. "I looked in to speak to you about the football practice, Wharton. Another time will do. But if you want a man for the scratch team in the trial match you might remember me."

"I will," said Harry Wharton, with a rather curious glance at Snoop. "So you're taking up footer seriously?"

"Why shouldn't I?" said Snoop a little sulkily.

"No reason why you shouldn't; in fact, a lot of reasons why you should," answered Wharton, with a smile. "But about that confounded banknote, Mauly. It's got to be found, and at once. You've got to find it."

"I've been inquiren' after it—"

"That's not enough! You've got to find it. You've got to search your study, and your boxes and things—everywhere, in fact, and keep on till it turns up."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

Lord Mauleverer gasped.

"My dear man! I'd rather lose the tenner—and a dozen tenners added to it!" he exclaimed.

"Possibly; but you've got to find this one before it becomes the talk of Greyfriars," answered the captain of the Remove. "I'll ask you this evening whether you've found it. If you haven't, you'll get a Form ragging."

"Oh, gad!"

"And another one to-morrow if it hasn't turned up."

"I—I say—"

"And, as a warning, to begin with, you'll get a bumping now!"

Lord Mauleverer made a bound for the doorway. He collided with Snoop, who was stepping out into the passage. There was a howl from Snoop and a gasp from his lordship.

Sidney James sat down in the passage, and Lord Mauleverer staggered back into the study, where five pairs of hands grasped him. Then his lordship was swept off his feet.

Bump!

"Oh! Ah! Ow! You rotters!"

Bump! Bump!

"Help!"

"Now go and look for the banknote, dear boy!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And if you haven't found it by to-night look out for squalls!"

"The squallfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Mauly!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yow-ow-ow! I've a jolly good mind to wallop the lot of you!" groaned his lordship. "Yow-ow-ow!"

He limped out of the study, dusty and breathless, and stumbled into Snoop, who was getting up with a very wrathful face. Snoop gave him a violent shove, and Mauleverer sat down.

"Why, you—your cheeky beast!" gasped Mauleverer. "I—I'll—"

Sidney James Snoop stalked away. Lord Mauleverer picked himself up, in a very breathless state, and glared at the grinning five in Study No. 1.

"You're a lot of rotters!" he said.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry genially.

"I'll tell you what," said Mauleverer. "I can't hunt for that banknote. You know I can't."

"Why not?"

"Too much fag."

"Give him another bump!" growled Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer backed away.

"I'll tell you what," he pleaded.

"You fellows look for the banknote. There's good chaps. You can keep it if you find it. There!"

"Collar him!"

Lord Mauleverer hastily departed. His generous offer did not tempt Study No. 1. And the slacker of the Remove drifted dismally away, with the happy prospect of searching high and low for the missing tenner, with dire punishment hanging over his devoted head if he did not find it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nice for Bunter!

"WELL?"

Bunter of the Remove snapped out that question.

For several minutes there had been a dead silence in Study No. 7.

Three juniors had finished their tea there—Bunter, Peter Todd, and Tom Dutton. And Peter Todd's keen eyes were fixed, with a very searching look, on the fat face of Bunter. For several minutes Bunter had endured that keen scrutiny in silence, growing restive under it, however, and at last he spoke:

"I want to ask you something, Billy," said Peter Todd very quietly.

Wally Bunter grinned faintly.

Keen as Peter Todd was, he had not, as yet, the remotest suspicion that his fat study-mate was not Billy Bunter at all, but cousin Wally Bunter, who resembled the great William George so remarkably in his appearance, and so little in his manners and customs.

"Well?" repeated the fat junior.

"You've heard that Mauly's lost a tenner?" said Todd.

"As he put his silly head in here ten minutes ago to tell us so I don't see how I could have failed to hear it!" answered Wally Bunter sarcastically. "I haven't caught Dutton's complaint yet."

Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, glanced up, catching his name.

"Eh?" he said. "What's that, Bunter?"

"Nothing, old scout!"

"Give me the particulars, then!" said Dutton. "What is it you're in doubt about?"

"Eh? I'm not in doubt! Oh, my hat!" said Wally. "It's all right."

"With whom?" asked Dutton.

"What?"

"Whom are you going to fight?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"If that's what you're in doubt about, better keep out of it if you can!" said Dutton. "You're not much good in a fight, Bunter, with your specs. Still, I wouldn't advise you to funk. But who is it—Skinner?"

"No!" howled Wally.

"Not Snoop?" asked Dutton. "I thought you'd been rather thick with Snoop lately."

"Oh, you ass! No, it's not."

"Stott! Stott is a bit heavy for you!" said Dutton, shaking his head. "Still, if you're really booked for it, go in and win. I'll be your second, if you like."

"I'm not going to fight anybody!" shrieked Wally Bunter.

"Eh? Then why did you say you were?"

"I didn't! Oh, dear!"

"You're getting a bigger idiot every day, Bunter!" said Dutton. "Of course there's no beer. What do you want beer for? Not to drink, I suppose?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "Give us a rest, Dutton."

"For supper?" asked Tom, with sudden interest. "Jolly good idea. But I don't see how you are going to get breast of mutton, Bunter."

"Great Scott!"

"Not! You're not! Blessed if I don't think you're going potty, and no mistake!" said Dutton, staring at him. "First you talk about fighting Stott, then you say there's no beer, and then you babble about breast of mutton. If you call that talking sense, Bunter, I don't!"

Wally Bunter let it go at that. He really did not feel equal to explaining further. Tom Dutton was a good fellow, and much liked in the Remove, but undoubtedly he was a little trying at times. Dutton, with a sniff that expressed great contempt for Bunter's intellect, left the study. The fat junior was about to follow, when Peter Todd called to him.

"I haven't finished yet, Bunter."

"When you begin wagging your chin, old top, it takes you a long time to finish. Get it over!"

"Mauly's lost a tenner."

"Bother Mauly and bother his tenner!"

"If you've got it—"

Bunter jumped.

"Got it!" he gasped.

"Well, you know what you are!" said Peter Todd, in an argumentative tone. "You always think a thing is yours if you want it. You bagged a fiver once that belonged to Wingate, and you persuaded yourself it was yours—"

"I didn't!" howled Wally.

"You did, and you know you did, Billy Bunter. What's the good of telling whoppers to a fellow who knows you?"

Wally Bunter gave a snort. It was evident that he had not yet heard the whole list of his cousin Billy's sins.

"It's queer that Mauly's tenner should have vanished," said Peter. "I know he's a careless ass with money. But it's queer. If you've got it, Bunter—"

"You silly chump!"

"And if you're now going through one of your weird mental processes to persuade yourself that it's your tenner—"

"You—you—" gasped Wally.

"You'd better drop it!" said Peter

Todd calmly. "I'm only warning you for your own good, Bunter. You're too big an idiot to know right from wrong. I verily believe!"

"Rats!"

Wally Bunter rolled out of the study, and the door closed after him with a slam. There was a shout from three or four Removites in the passage.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Have you got it, Bunter?"

"Where's Mauly's banknote, Bunter?" grinned Squiff.

"Got it about you?" asked Hazeldene.

"Better shell out, Bunter!" advised Russell.

Wally Bunter glared at the juniors over Billy Bunter's spectacles in great wrath. It was really striking how everyone seemed to think of Billy Bunter at once when it was heard that something was missing. As Billy Bunter, just then, was far away at St. Jim's, it was Wally Bunter who had the benefit of the doubt, so to speak.

"You silly, cheeky asses!" said the fat junior. "You—you—"

"Haven't you got it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No!" yelled Wally.

"I've heard you talk about findings being keepings!" remarked Bolsover major, with a shake of the head.

"You haven't, you ass."

"Well, I'd advise Mauly to make a search in Bunter's pockets," said Skinner. "That's the likeliest place."

"Yes, rather!"

Wally Bunter gave an angry snort, and stalked on to Lord Mauleverer's study, No. 12 in the Remove. His lordship was there, with his study-mates, Delarey and Sir Jimmy Vivian. The latter two were grinning, apparently greatly lacking in sympathy for his unfortunate lordship, who had just been relating his tale of woe.

Lord Mauleverer glanced up in alarm as his study door flew open.

"I'm just goin' to begin!" he shouted. "Bother you, I haven't had time yet! Oh, it's you, Bunter!"

"Yes, you ass!" said Wally Bunter wrathfully. "The fellows are all hinting that I've bagged your silly banknote, Mauly!"

"By gad! Did you, Bunter?"

"Wha-at?"

"I never thought of that," said his lordship brightly. "But it would be just like you, wouldn't it, Bunter?"

"You silly ass!" roared Wally.

"If you bagged it, Bunter, you might hand it over," said his lordship. "It will save me no end of a fag. I've got to go huntin' for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vivian and Delarey.

His lordship looked at them reproachfully.

"Tain't a laughin' matter," he said.

"It's no joke to have to go around huntin' for a blessed banknote like a needle in a bundle of hay. I really hope you've got it, Bunter. If you have, shell out, there's a good chap!"

Wally Bunter brandished a fat fist under his lordship's nose. Lord Mauleverer started back.

"You crass ass!" said Bunter.

"You've got to find that banknote! If you don't find it I shall never hear the end of it! And if you haven't done it before dorm I'm going to give you a thundering good hiding in the dormitory! See?"

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Mauleverer.

"Keep that in mind, you fathead!"

"But, I say—"

Slam!

"Oh, dear!" groaned Mauleverer, as the door crashed after Bunter. "What a go! I'm goin' to get a Form raggin'."

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and a fight with Bunter, or else I've got to go round on my hands and knees lookin' for a rotten banknote! It's all somebody's fault for inventin' silly banknotes! I shouldn't have lost ten quids! I say, what's a fellow to do? What a life!"

And Lord Mauleverer groaned deeply. Life really did not seem quite worth living, in those circumstances, to his unhappy lordship.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Luck for Mauly!

"H A, ha, ha!" "Good old Mauly!" A chortling crowd had gathered, about half an hour later, before the notice-board downstairs. Upon that board was pinned a paper in the well-known handwriting of Lord Mauleverer of the Remove.

Quite a little army of fellows had gathered to read it and chuckle over it.

Lord Mauleverer had hit upon a brilliant idea for eluding the difficult task of finding the "tenner." His lordship had a very vague knowledge of the value of money, having been always well provided with that useful article; but he had a very clear realisation of the unpleasantness of exerting himself. Hence the notice on the board, which ran:

"LOST!"

A £10 Note! Number unknown.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY

that anyone finding the banknote is welcome to keep it for his trouble.

(Signed) MAULEVERER.

"Well, the thumping idiot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when his astonished gaze fell upon that very remarkable notice. "Of all the dummies——"

"The howling ass!" said Temple of the Fourth. "Fancy even an idiot like Mauly givin' away tenners!"

"Might be worth while looking for that note," remarked Fry. "Let's ask Bunter if he's seen it. I dare say he has."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "Hallo, here's Bunter! Bunter! BUNTER!"

"Hallo?" growled Wally Bunter.

"Where's Mauly's banknote?"

Wally's reply was not in words. He charged at Dabney of the Fourth, and that humorous youth went sprawling, with a loud yell.

"Anybody else got any questions to ask about Mauly's banknote?" roared Wally Bunter wrathfully.

"Why, I—I—I'll scalp the villain!" gasped Dabney. "I—I—I'll——"

"Cave!" murmured Johnny Bull. "Here's Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came along, with a severe expression on his face. The crowd before the notice-board and the loud laughter had attracted his attention, and he came along in time to see Dabney sprawling.

The Fourth-Former picked himself up hastily.

"What is all this?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply.

"Ahem! Nothing, sir!" mumbled Dabney.

"You should not indulge in horse-play in the hall!" said the Remove-master, frowning. "Bunter, I saw you——"

"It—it wasn't Bunter's fault, sir," stammered Dabney, confused but loyal. "I—I was pulling his leg, sir."

"Nonsense, Dabney! I saw you, and you were not touching Bunter at all!"

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean, I was chipping him—that is, chaffing him, sir!" gasped Dabney. "J-j-joking him, sir!"

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"That is no excuse for such extreme roughness."

"B-Bunter thought I meant it, sir. I—I didn't, of course," stammered Dabney, wishing he had not been so humorous. Somehow, all the humour seemed to depart as soon as the severe-featured Form-master took a hand in the proceedings.

"I do not understand you, Dabney. What did you say to Bunter?"

"I—I—I—— About Mauleverer's note, sir," mumbled the Fourth-Former. "Of course, I didn't really mean Bunter had it. Only fun, sir."

"Mauleverer's banknote?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"The the tenner Mauly's lost, sir!" groaned the unhappy Dabney. "There's a notice on the board about it, sir."

"Oh! That is the cause of this unseemly gathering, I suppose?" said Mr. Quelch.

He glanced over the board, and his gaze became fixed on Lord Mauleverer's remarkable notice.

The juniors watched him breathlessly.

Remove and Fourth had laughed over that notice, thinking that it was just like that ass Mauly; but Mr. Quelch plainly did not consider it a laughing matter. He frowned portentously.

"Ridiculous!" he exclaimed. "Absurd! Wharton, take down that notice!"

"Yes, sir."

The captain of the Remove took it down meekly.

"Is it a fact, Wharton, that Mauleverer has lost a ten-pound note?"

"I—I believe so, sir."

"The finder of that note will not be allowed to keep it. Mauleverer will not be permitted to act in so ridiculous a manner. I shall speak to him very severely. Tell him to come to my study at once, Wharton."

"Ye-es, sir."

Mr. Quelch rustled away, still very portentous. Harry Wharton went in search of Mauleverer.

He found that happy youth reclining on the sofa in his study. Mauly looked at peace with all the world now. But he sat up rather suddenly as the captain of the Remove came in.

"It's all right!" he said hurriedly. "The tenner's goin' to be found! Lots of fellows will be lookin' for it. There's a notice on the board."

"You crass ass!" said Harry. "Quelch's seen your fat-headed notice, and you're to go to his study at once!"

"What for?" demanded Mauleverer.

"I dare say Quelch will explain."

"Oh, dear! Is he waxy?"

"He looked it."

"Blessed if I see why. Look here, Wharton, you go and tell Quelch that I'm tired out, and takin' a rest, and can't come at present—— Yarrooh! Leggo my hair, you beast!" wailed Mauleverer.

His lordship came off the sofa rather suddenly, and landed with a bump on his expensive carpet. Harry Wharton grasped his arm, and marched him downstairs to the door of Mr. Quelch's study. Mauleverer shook a fist at him, and then tapped at the door and went in.

A good many juniors waited for him to emerge. Lord Mauleverer was five minutes in the Form-master's study, and he had a perspiring look when he came out. Evidently he had been through it, and Mr. Quelch's sharp tongue had penetrated the calm contentment of the slacker of the Remove.

"Licked?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Worse!" groaned his lordship.

"Quelch's goin' to write to my guardian about sendin' me money."

"Jolly good idea!" said Bob Cherry.

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

"It wasn't my guardian sent me the

tenner. It was my other uncle—old Braithwaite—not Sir Reginald Brooke at all. What's the good of writing to old Brooke about it, then?"

"Didn't you tell him that it was your other uncle, you ass?"

Mauleverer shook his head.

"I didn't care to argue with him, he seemed so waxy. So I gave him his head. It pays to give a Form-master his head, you know!"

"Oh, you ass!"

"Somebody's always callin' me an ass!" said his lordship pathetically. "I really don't see why. But that isn't all. Quelch says the banknote's got to be found at once, and he advises me to get all the fellows to help me look for it. I said they wouldn't take the trouble; and Quelch said no doubt they would if they knew I was goin' to have a canin' in the mornin' if the dashed thing wasn't found. That was his way of puttin' it. What a life, you know!"

"Well, we'll help you!" said Harry Wharton. "The banknote must be somewhere—in one of your own pockets, very likely——"

"Unless Bunter——" remarked Skinner.

Crash!

Skinner went down as he was charged from behind. Wally Bunter walked on, and left Skinner on his hands and knees exploring the floor with his nose.

"Why, who—what—I—I——" spluttered Skinner. "Hold that fat beast till I get at him! I—I——"

Skinner rushed up the staircase after Wally Bunter. A minute later someone rolled down from the landing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Bunter——"

But it was not Bunter. It was Skinner—and Skinner did not pursue the fat junior again. He breathed dire threats; and let it go at that.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Getting Serious!

THAT evening most of the Remove fellows were very busy. All sorts of pains and penalties hung over Lord Mauleverer's devoted head if the banknote was not found, and most of the fellows joined in the search for it. Now that the matter had been taken up officially by the master of the Remove, it became serious. It was becoming rather serious in another way, too, for quite a number of fellows took it for granted that Bunter had bagged the missing note, apparently on the principle of giving a dog a bad name and then hanging him. And as Bunter of the Remove was Wally, and not Billy, as it happened, there was trouble—sore trouble—on that subject. Which also came to the Remove-master's knowledge when he found Bunter engaged in conflict three times during the evening and learned the cause.

It was known that if the tenner did not turn up before bed-time Mr. Quelch intended to report the matter to the Head, which was more serious still. Even Lord Mauleverer realised that it was serious at the prospect of coming before the headmaster of Greyfriars.

His lordship exerted himself in an unaccustomed way that evening. He turned out his clothes—a very large wardrobe—in the hope of finding the banknote in some other pocket. His boxes and his trunks, his locker and his desks, were searched, and his study fairly ransacked from end to end. That study looked as if the Huns had been in it by the time the searchers had finished.

And the tenner remained missing!

At bed-time Mr. Quelch had to be informed that the search had been unsuccessful, and he looked very grave indeed. It was Harry Wharton who made the report, and he did not quite like the expression on Mr. Quelch's face.

"The search has been thorough, Wharton?" asked the Remove-master.

"We've searched everywhere, sir."

"Very well!" Mr. Quelch pursed his lips. "I shall report the matter to Dr. Locke. You may go, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton followed the rest of the Remove to the dormitory. There he found about half the Form "slanging" the unhappy Mauleverer. Some of the Fourth had already been too humorous on the subject of the missing banknote—Cecil Reginald Temple going through a motion of buttoning his pockets as he passed the Removites, and Fry putting his hand very carefully over his watch-pocket when a Removite came near. Lord Mauleverer listened meekly to the remarks that were showered on him, most of them very personal indeed.

"It looks now as if somebody's stolen the rotten thing!" said Bolsover major. "The Fourth are pretending to think so, anyway!"

There was only one thing that saved Mauleverer from the threatened ragging—the fact that he was booked for a caning in the morning. With that painful prospect before him, the juniors generously let him off. But they talked at him with great candour; their language, in the words of Truthful James, was "frequent and painful and free."

Wally Bunter was looking very morose, and he bore some signs of his late combats, too. He had found his cousin Billy's reputation very hard to bear; but this was the climax. And it really wasn't much use punching fellows' noses—that did not alter their opinions however it might have altered their noses.

Curiously enough, Sidney James Snoop was the only fellow who showed Bunter any sympathy. Snoop had been friendly with Bunter of late; and though Snoop's friendship, perhaps, was not worth much to anybody, it was some comfort to the fat junior to find that there was one fellow who did not take it for granted that he had been pilfering.

"What does Quelch say?" asked Bob Cherry, as Wharton came in.

"He's gone to the Head!"

"Oh, gad!" groaned Mauleverer.

"He looked jolly serious," said Harry, biting his lip. "I believe he thinks the rotten banknote has been pinched. You are a thumping ass, Mauly!"

"I've heard that before!" murmured his lordship.

"The silly ass very likely lost it out of doors, and it may never be found!" said Squiff. "That leaves us all to be suspected."

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Mauleverer. "I'm awfully sorry, you fellows! But—but I was jolly careful with that banknote, you know! I put it in my pocket for safety, when some fellows would have left it about. And I'm stony now!" added Mauly, apparently hoping to touch the hard hearts of the Remove. "I haven't more than a quid to see me through till my allowance comes!"

"Sit on him, somebody!"

"Well, if anybody in Greyfriars bagged that tenner we know who it is!" said Harold Skinner.

Wally Bunter gave him a glare.

"Who, then?" he demanded.

"Guess!" grinned Skinner.

"Look here, that's not fair, Skinner!" said Snoop, speaking up, though not very boldly. "It's not fair to chuck it at Bunter like this! We don't even know that he knew Mauly had a tenner at all!"

"Bunter knows everything!" sneered

Skinner. "He always will, so long as they make keyholes to doors!"

"Skinner!"

Wingate of the Sixth came into the dormitory with a very grave face. Harold Skinner looked round.

"All right, Wingate!" he said. "I was only saying what every chap in the Remove knows to be true!"

"I did not hear what you were saying," said the captain of Greyfriars.

"Never mind that! You are wanted in the Head's study, Skinner."

"Eh? What for?"

"You can ask the Head that!" answered Wingate drily. "Your Form-master is there. You are to go at once."

Skinner looked dismayed.

"I haven't done anything," he began. "As for that Highcliffe affair, the Head knows all about that, and he let me off!"

"Cut off!" was Wingate's reply.

Harold Skinner left the dormitory very slowly, with a dismayed face. The Removites were surprised, too. If Bunter had been sent for it would not have surprised them. But Skinner—

It was past bed-time now, and the Removites were all in their dormitory, with the exception of Skinner. Something very unusual was evidently in the wind.

The juniors waited in the dormitory in a wondering mood.

Wingate went out into the passage, where he remained talking with Gwynne of the Sixth, who had seen lights-out in the Fourth Form dormitory.

The Removites spoke to one another in low tones, wondering why Skinner did not return.

Snoop and Stott were looking very uneasy.

They had been Skinner's partners in the little transaction at Highcliffe, under Skinner's lead, and if that transaction was coming up again it was likely to cause trouble for them as well as Skinner.

A step was heard in the passage at last.

There was a breathless hush in the dormitory as Mr. Quelch appeared in the doorway with a portentous air.

"Stott! Snoop!"



HIS LORDSHIP IS TIRED.

For the summons to the Head's study was manifestly in connection with the affair of the banknote. Mr. Quelch had just reported that to the Head; and his report was followed at once by that summons to Skinner. Skinner was alarmed and uneasy, and the rest of the Remove exchanged very curious looks. For Skinner's reputation was not a good one; and most of the fellows knew that he had been mixed up in a gambling transaction a week before with some of the "nuts" of Highcliffe School.

Dr. Locke had forgiven him, and instead of administering punishment had spoken to him kindly and gently—with some effect on Skinner. The cad of the Remove had certainly kept straight for a week since, and he had not had a chance of doing more, so far.

"What the thump does he want Skinner for?" murmured Bob Cherry. "Is it possible that—that—" Bob broke off.

"You needn't turn in yet," said Wingate. "It's possible some of you may be wanted."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir?"

"Follow me, please!"

With almost haggard faces the two juniors followed him.

There was no doubt left in the Removites' minds now. It was the Highcliffe business that had come up again. But what connection had that business with the missing banknote? That was the question all the fellows were asking themselves now, and their suspicions were no longer directed towards Bunter.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Snoop!

HAROLD SKINNER had presented himself in the Head's study with a troubled face and beating heart. There were too many sins upon Skinner's conscience for him to feel at his ease when summoned into the headmaster's presence. He found Mr. Quelch in the study with Dr. Locke. Both the masters looked very grave indeed.

"You sent for me, sir?" mumbled Skinner, glancing uneasily from one to the other.

"Yes, Skinner," said the Head, quietly and not unkindly. "It appears, Skinner, that a banknote belonging to a Remove boy is missing, and that it cannot be found."

Skinner crimsoned.

"I know nothing about that, sir!" he gasped. "You surely don't suspect—"

"One moment, Skinner. Last week you were before me on a very serious matter. You had made a gambling bet with a Highcliffe boy, Ponsonby, and the matter came to light."

"I—I thought that was all over, sir," muttered Skinner huskily. "You told me—"

"Quite so, Skinner. I pardoned you on promise of amendment."

"I've kept my promise, sir. I've never seen Ponsonby since; I never mean to see him again," said Skinner eagerly. "Any of the fellows will tell you that I have not been near Highcliffe."

"I trust so, Skinner. But now that money is missing I cannot help recalling your conduct. Gambling is not only wrong in itself, but it leads to worse, and when money is missing suspicion naturally fixes upon a person who is known to have gambled and lost money."

Skinner panted.

"I—I never even knew that Mauly had a banknote, sir. And—and he might have lost it anywhere. Why, he might have sent it off somewhere by post, and forgotten all about it. He's fool enough."

"I can hardly believe that, Skinner. However, you must not regard yourself as suspected. But the matter must be cleared up, if only to clear you, my boy. Have you any objection to your study and belongings being searched?"

Skinner gave a gasp of relief. In his new desire to "go straight" since the Highcliffe affair he had made a clean sweep in his study of cigarettes, playing-cards, bridge-markers, sporting-papers, and other articles he had accumulated in his career as a "blade." He had reason to be glad of it now, for it left him with nothing to fear from a search.

"No objection at all, sir!" he exclaimed eagerly.

His face had brightened up, and the Head did not fail to observe it. His expression grew more kindly.

"Very well, Skinner. I am glad to see that you appear to have a clear conscience. It is your own past conduct that compels me to take this action, as you must realise. Your study-mates, Snoop and Stott, were concerned in the Highcliffe affair, though to a lesser degree, as I understand."

"They—they found some of the money, sir," stammered Skinner. "But—"

"Quite so. Mr. Quelch, will you kindly call the two boys?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Take them to their study, please. I will follow."

The Head rang for Trotter, the page, and then proceeded to the Remove passage with Skinner and Trotter. The light was turned on in Study No. 11. In a few minutes Mr. Quelch arrived there with Snoop and Stott, both of them looking extremely scared.

Dr. Locke observed it as his glance rested keenly on them.

"You have nothing to fear, my boys," he said kindly. "A search must be made in this study, and you will kindly hand your keys to Trotter. It is owing

to your having been concerned in a gambling transaction that you are under examination; and if you are innocent, as I hope, I trust the warning will not be lost upon you. You have laid yourselves open to suspicion by your own recklessness. You must remember, my boys, that a good reputation is not a luxury; it is sometimes a necessity. Trotter!"

"Yessir?" said Trotter, with a very curious look at the three unhappy juniors.

"It is necessary for this study to be carefully searched to ascertain whether a banknote for ten pounds is concealed here. Will you oblige me by undertaking this?"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Trotter.

"Then please proceed."

Trotter proceeded at once. Skinner & Co. handed over their keys, and Skinner's desk was started with. Skinner watched it being turned out with a smiling face. He had nothing to fear, and he was thankful from the bottom of his heart that he had a clear conscience for once.

Snoop looked equally confident. His reform was of longer date than Skinner's and probably likely to be more lasting. But Stott shifted from one leg to another, and licked his lips in great uneasiness. He did not fear that a ten-pound note would be discovered among his belongings, but it was possible that other discoveries would be made.

Skinner's desk was drawn blank, and then a box belonging to him was searched. This was not locked. Then Trotter turned out the table-drawer and the drawers of the bookcase. The Head and Mr. Quelch looked on in silence. Stott's desk was searched next, and the Head's face grew very grim as a packet of cigarettes was turned out, and then a folded pink paper. Stott was crimson. But the Head made no remark at present on those discoveries.

Snoop had no desk in the study, but there was a locker where he kept his personal possessions, and this was unlocked and turned out. Among other things Trotter lifted out a small tin box, which rattled as it moved. He started, and glanced at the Head.

"That—that's my money-box!" stammered Snoop.

"Open it, Trotter."

"You have a key to it, Snoop?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Give me the key."

"I assure you, sir—"

Snoop broke off as the Head fixed his eyes upon him, and handed over the key without another word. The Head unlocked the tin box and turned back the lid.

In a dead silence he took several currency notes from the box and laid them on the table.

Skinner and Stott exchanged a startled glance.

Where had Snoop obtained that money—Snoop, known to be one of the poorest fellows in the Remove?

In a silence that was almost painful Dr. Locke counted the notes. There were seven for one pound each, and five for ten shillings. And there was nearly a pound in silver.

"Ten pounds seven shillings!" said the Head. "That is a large sum, Snoop, for a junior in the Remove to possess. Your allowance, I believe, is five shillings per week from your uncle?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Snoop. "I—"

"How, then, did you obtain this large sum?"

"I've saved it up, sir," said Snoop,

with some firmness. "I've been saving for ever so long."

"It is a large sum for you to save out of your allowance."

"I get other money sometimes, sir. My uncle sent me three pounds from Canada last Christmas, for one thing. I get tips from some relations at times."

"And you saved all the money?"

"Every shilling, sir."

"Then this money is your own, Snoop?"

"Mine, sir, certainly. It wouldn't be in my box if it wasn't."

"I hope not, Snoop. But you are aware that ten pounds is missing?"

"That's a banknote, sir. You were looking for a ten-pound note."

"A banknote may be changed, Snoop," said the Head drily. "A ten-pound note is missing, and I find you in possession of ten pounds. It is certainly a very remarkable coincidence. Were your study-mates aware that you were saving this money?"

"N-no, sir!"

Skinner and Stott shook their heads at once. Certainly they had never known that Snoop was saving money, especially such a sum. And their looks showed that they did not believe it now. Their belief was that it was not necessary to look any further for Mauleverer's missing "quids."

"You kept it secret from them, Snoop?" pursued the Head's dry voice.

"I did, sir."

"Why?"

"Because—because—" Snoop stammered.

"Because—well?"

"They'd have wanted to borrow money of me if they'd known I had it, sir," said Snoop desperately.

"Oh!"

Skinner and Stott gave their study-mate rather dark looks. Snoop was fidgeting uneasily, locking and unlocking his thin fingers.

"Skinner, I understand that Snoop found some of the money for your transaction at Highcliffe?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"How much?"

"He—he stood in for twenty-five bob, sir—I mean shillings."

"Did you have that money saved also, Snoop?"

"No, sir; I—I borrowed it of the fellows," faltered Snoop—"most of it, that is."

"We all borrowed most of the money, sir," said Skinner.

"Have you repaid that money, Snoop?"

"Part of it, sir. I still owe ten shillings."

"You borrowed twenty-five shillings among your form-fellows when you had ten pounds saved up, and locked in your box?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was not that a very curious proceeding, Snoop?"

"I don't think so, sir. I had made up my mind never to touch my savings. I—I swore I wouldn't," faltered Snoop. "They—they're for a very particular purpose, sir. I borrowed that twenty-five bob hoping to win some money—but if I lost, instead, I intended to pay it back out of my allowance. I've paid part of it already; I hope to clear it all off soon."

"For what particular purpose, Snoop, were you saving this money, which was so important that you borrowed from others instead of using your own money?"

"I—I was saving it for—for—"

"For what?"

"For—for another person, sir."

"What?" exclaimed the Head; and Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

Skinner tried to repress a grin, but he could not quite succeed. The idea of Sidney James Snoop stinting himself and saving money for the sake of another person tickled Skinner immensely. Certainly it was not what any fellow in the Remove would have expected of Snoop.

"Are you serious, Snoop?" asked the Head, at last.

"Yes, sir. It is the truth."

"And who is the person for whom, according to your statement, you are saving money?" exclaimed the Head sternly.

"My—my father, sir!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Whose Money?

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP faltered out the words.

His face was crimson, and his eyes did not meet the Head's glance. But there was some firmness in his tone. He was troubled and uneasy, but it could not be said that he looked guilty.

"Your father?" repeated the Head blankly.

"Yes, sir," the junior stammered. "You—see, sir, my father had bad luck—before he went into the Army, sir. He's been demobilised now, and—and—he's not in his old position, sir. I—I thought—"

Snoop's voice faltered, and trailed off. "If this is the truth, Snoop, your action is praiseworthy," said the Head quietly. But—

"I—I've been saving up ever since my father was taken into the Army, sir," muttered Snoop. "He's not a young man—and his business went smash when he had his bad luck. He's got nothing after leaving the Army—nothing! I—I've thought about it a lot, ever since he went into khaki, sir. My uncle in Canada pays for me here, as you know, sir, and—and he helps them at home; but he wouldn't do anything for the pater, because—because—"

Snoop's voice broke.

Dr. Locke's face softened. He knew, well enough, the miserable story of Snoop's father.

"You tell me, Snoop, that you have been saving money with a view to helping your father when he left the Army?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"And this is the money you have saved?"

"Yes, sir—all mine."

"I hope and trust, Snoop, that your statement is true," said the Head. "But—" He turned to Mr. Quelch. "Will you answer, sir, for Snoop, as a boy whose word can be absolutely relied upon?"

Mr. Quelch gave Snoop a compassionate glance.

"I cannot do so, Dr. Locke," he answered. "Of late, certainly, I believe I have seen an improvement in Snoop; but from my experience of him I cannot say that he is a truthful boy."

The Head's face hardened again.

"You hear what your Form-master says, Snoop. Your statement is a very extraordinary one; but had it been made by some boy like Cherry, for instance, or Wharton, I should have been disposed to place faith in it. If I do not believe you now, Snoop, you can only blame your own disregard of the truth, which renders your word of little value."

"I—I know!" muttered Snoop miserably. "It's my own fault. But I swear I've told you the truth, sir. That money is mine!"

"You state that you saved it to help your father when he left the Service?"

Why, then, is it still here? You say Mr. Snoop had been demobilised."

"Only a few days ago, sir. I haven't seen him yet. He stayed on for the clearing-up, I think they call it. He wasn't in a hurry to leave, as he had nothing to look forward to. But he got his discharge last week, and—and I hope to see him in a few days' time, sir—or next week, perhaps. It—it's rather awkward, because—because he doesn't care to come to Greyfriars."

Dr. Locke nodded.

He understood that well enough. There were good reasons why Mr. Snoop should not care to call at the school.

"I hope you'll believe me, sir," said Snoop. "I—I know I've done a lot of things I ought to be sorry for. But—I've been trying to do better—I have, really, sir!"

"Yet only last week, Snoop, you were concerned in a discreditable gambling transaction!" said the Head sternly.

Snoop hung his head.

"I know I was to blame," he muttered. "I was sorry afterwards. I was glad to have done with it, though I lost the money."

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

"For the present," he said, I shall take charge of this money. You must not take that to mean, Snoop, that I condemn you. Appearances are very strongly against you; but the matter will be sifted very carefully. It is possible that Mauleverer's banknote may be found—I sincerely hope so. For the present, however, this money must remain in my charge."

"I have no objection, sir."

"Very well. You boys may now go to your dormitory."

The three Removites left the study.

Skinner and Stott exchanged a grinning glance on the way to the Remove dormitory; but Snoop went with bowed head and troubled face. He did not speak to his companions.

They passed Wingate and Gwynne in the passage, and went into the dormitory. The lights were still on, and the Remove were not yet in bed.

There was a general outbreak of questioning as Skinner & Co. came in.

"What's happened, Skinner?"

"Was it you?"

Skinner sneered.

"No, it wasn't—hang you! But the Head's found out who it was."

"Who?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Snoop!"

"Snoop?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Snoop fiercely.

"It's false. The Head never said it was me. And it wasn't, anyway."

"Tell us what happened," said Harry Wharton quietly.

Skinner and Stott, both speaking together, described the scene in Study No. 11, the juniors listening breathlessly. Sidney James Snoop sat on his bed, taking his boots off, with a heavy heart. The exclamations of the Removites, when they heard of the money that had been found in Snoop's locker, showed him what the general opinion was.

Nobody had heard before of Snoop's savings; and few were inclined to believe that this money was his own. Snoop was certainly not supposed to be the kind of fellow who would stint himself for others, even for his father. The story sounded, in fact, like a lame excuse like the first wretched prevarication that had leapt into his mind when he found himself discovered. Harry Wharton & Co. were certainly not the fellows to be hard on anyone who was down; but they could not help taking that view with the rest of the Remove. Ten pounds were missing—and Snoop was suddenly found in possession of ten pounds, and all he could say was that he had saved it

in dead secret! It was, as Bolsover major remarked loudly, a little too palpable.

"For his father, you know!" grinned Stott, when the story had been told. "To give his pater a leg-up after he was demobilised. Rather rich that—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from Skinner.

Snoop looked up, with a haggard face. "It's true!" he said.

"Draw it mild, old infant," said Treluce. "Give us an easier one."

"I guess that's too thin, Snoopey," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "Don't pile on the agony, you know."

Snoop looked round at the sceptical faces miserably.

"He was standing up for Bunter, too!" said Skinner. "I wondered at hearing Snoop say a good word for anybody. But even Snoop didn't want to be down on Bunter when he knew he had the money himself all the time."

Wally Bunter started as he heard that. It was possible enough—quite possible, that it had been a sense of guilt that made Snoop put in a feeble word for the accused Bunter. But, after all, whatever his motive, he had stood by Bunter. The fat junior knitted his brows very thoughtfully. Snoop had stood by him. He felt that it was up to him to stand by Snoop—at least until his guilt was proved. Nobody could be expected to stand by a thief; but no one, on the other hand, was guilty till he was proved guilty. And, at all events, Snoop's guilt was not yet proved.

Wingate looked in at the doorway.

"Turn in, sharp!" he rapped out.

The discussion had to cease. Snoop looked at Harry Wharton several times, but failed to catch his eye. He realised that Wharton was intentionally avoiding his glance, and his heart sank.

He turned in with the rest, and Wingate put out the lights and left. Then the talk began again, from bed to bed.

Snoop did not speak. He heard the candid discussion, and heard his guilt taken for granted by most of the fellows, with a miserable sickness at his heart.

The talk ceased at last, and the juniors dropped to sleep one after another; but it was long before sleep visited the eyes of Sidney James Snoop. Midnight had tolled out before his eyelids at last closed in slumber.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had sombre faces the next day. A cloud had fallen upon the Remove, and the affair of the missing note made everyone feel uncomfortable.

Snoop was pale and troubled that morning; but probably the most miserable fellow in the Form was Lord Mauleverer. It was his banknote, and his carelessness with it, that had caused all the trouble. Even if Snoop had stolen it, the theft could not have taken place if Mauleverer had been more careful with his money. Opportunity had made the thief, if thief there was.

Not that his lordship admitted that he had been careless. He said to his study-mates, Delarey and Vivian, almost with tears in his eyes, that he had been unusually careful with that banknote. He had put it in his pocket, and left it there, and what more could a fellow do? True, he had forgotten it afterwards; but that wasn't his fault. He wasn't a dashed memory specialist, he explained pathetically. Fellows had no right to go nosing in his pockets, had they? And whoever had bagged that banknote had bagged it from his pocket evidently.

"Unless you dropped it in the passage," said Sir Jimmy Vivian, with a grunt.

"Yaas, there's that!" agreed his lordship.

"Or chucked it round in the quad when you took something else out of your silly pocket," said Delarey.

"Yaas, there's that!"

Lord Mauleverer wrinkled his brows with a troublous look.

"I can't see I'm to blame exactly," he said. "Fellows have no right to bag other fellows' banknotes, you know. But if a chap's weak-minded one ought not to put temptation in his way. That's where it comes in. I suppose a chap who steals can't be quite firm in the napper. If Snoop bagged that note, it's simply horrid, you know, and I wish old Braithwaite hadn't sent it to me. It makes me feel beastly."

Mauleverer looked at his friends for sympathy. But they only grunted.

"But I don't believe Snoop did!" added his lordship. "It's all rot. He says he saved up that money. Now, I can never save money; but some chaps can—I've known it to happen. Why not Snoop? Besides, his pater's going to be mobilised, or demobilised, or somethin', and it seems that he's hard up. Why, it's the most natural thing in the world for Snoop to save up his money to help his pater. Any fellow would."

"It doesn't seem much like Snoop, as we know him."

"But perhaps we don't know him so jolly well," said his lordship. "You know what Tennyson says—or was it Browning, or Kipling, or somebody?—'There are more things in heaven and earth—'

"Shakespeare, fathead!"

"Well, I don't care who said it, but what he said was, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' So very likely there's more in Snoop than we think—what? He may be no end of a splendid chap in some ways, only we haven't happened to notice it!" said Mauleverer triumphantly.

To which Vivian and Delarey replied: "Ass!"

"Somebody's always callin' me an ass!" said his lordship plaintively.

If Lord Mauleverer regarded Snoop as probably guiltless, his opinion was not widely shared in the Remove.

Averted looks on all sides showed the unhappy junior what most of the fellows thought.

What steps the Head was taking in the matter was known. In the meantime, the money taken from Snoop's box remained in his charge, and the suspected junior was left to his usual avocations. He went into the Form-room as usual in the morning. Mr. Quelch's manner to him was precisely as usual. The Form-master's own opinion was kept to himself. But Snoop understood what the Remove were thinking, and he sat pale and harassed during lessons.

When the Remove came out of the Form-room, Snoop approached his study-mates timidly. He was not on good terms with them, though that was hardly his own fault. It was his attempt to do better than he had done in the past that had caused a rift in the lute. He would have been glad of their support now; but Skinner and Stott were not the fellows to stand by anybody who was down, even if they believed in him—and they did not believe in Snoop.

"I suppose you fellows think—" began Snoop, hesitating.

Skinner interrupted him.

"We don't think—we know!" he answered. And Stott nodded assent.

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"Every penny of that money was mine!" said Snoop.

"Oh, don't pile it on!"

"I saved it—"

"Out of the change of Mauly's tenner!" grinned Stott.

"I never touched Mauly's tenner. I never knew that he had one."

"You ought to be in the Diplomatic Service, old nut," said Skinner admiringly. "Your talents as an Ananias are wasted here."

"You don't believe me?"

"You didn't expect us to, surely?"

"Well, I suppose not. It's true, all the same!"

"Tell that to the marines!" suggested Skinner.

Sidney James Snoop walked away, leaving his study-mates grinning. Their opinion was that Snoop had been clean bowled out, and they did not see why he should take the trouble to lie about it.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quadrangle when Snoop came out, and the troubled junior glanced towards them, and, after some hesitation, approached them. Johnny Bull saw him coming, and murmured something, and the Famous Five strolled away.

Snoop stopped dead, his cheeks crimsoning.

But after a moment he hurried after the chums of the Remove, and called to them.

"Wharton!"

Harry Wharton's brow clouded, but he stopped, and his companions followed his

example. They all looked very uncomfortable.

"Well, what is it, Snoop?" asked Harry shortly.

"You think I'm a thief!" muttered Snoop, eyeing them half-sulkily and half-appealingly.

Wharton made a movement of discomfort.

"I hope not," he said.

"But you think so, all the same!" said Snoop bitterly.

"Well, what is a fellow to think?" exclaimed Johnny Bull, as the captain of the Remove remained silent. "Ten pounds are missing. Ten quids are found in your box. You can't account for it being there, excepting by a yarn that nobody who knows you would believe for a minute."

"Every word I told the Head was true!" muttered Snoop.

"Well, I don't say it wasn't," answered Johnny. "I only say it's remarkably thick."

"The thickfulness is really terrific, my esteemed Snoop!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I should have thought you fellows would understand," said Snoop in a low voice. "You know how my father was fixed. Wharton helped him when he tried to get into the Army after he came out of—of—of—prison." Snoop choked over that word. "While the war was on it was all right, but afterwards, now he's got his discharge, there's nothing before him. His business went smash. His old friends in the City wouldn't have anything to do with him after his coming such a cropper. He's got to begin life afresh, and he's not a young man; and at his age the trenches have told on him, too. I've been thinking about it a lot since—"

He paused.

"I—I suppose so," said Harry. "But—but—"

"But what?"

"Well, when your father wanted help you weren't so jolly keen to stand by him when it was risky. It was left to the Bounder and me to help him. Now you want us to believe—"

Snoop winced.

"I—I know! I can't expect you to believe me, I suppose. I ought to have stood by him then, and—and I was afraid. But since he was in the Army—I suppose you wouldn't understand. But—but when I thought of him out there, facing death, it made a lot of difference. But you wouldn't understand, I suppose," muttered Snoop.

"I think I do understand that," said Harry, more cordially. "I hope it's as you say, Snoop; and it would have been decent of you to save up your money to help him if he was on the rocks after his discharge, only—only—"

"Only I'm not the fellow you'd expect to make any sacrifices for another, even his father?"

"Well, you can't blame me for thinking like that, Snoop. If I'm wrong, it's your own fault."

"I know it is," said Snoop wearily. "Do you think I don't know that? I know it's no good talking. I've no right to expect anybody to believe in me. But it comes rather hard, when I was making a fresh start, to be downed like this when I've done nothing wrong. If I hadn't cared about my father I should have blued my money as usual, and then this wouldn't have happened."

"Dash it all, that is hard lines if—it's true!" muttered Bob Cherry. "I say, Snoopey, we're not down on you. Don't run away with that idea. The Head will settle what the facts are, and—it's up to everybody to keep an open mind till then."

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"That's right enough," said Johnny Bull, with a nod.

"Suppose it had been Squiff or Tom Brown instead of me?" said Snoop.

"What would you have thought then?"

"We'd have taken his word like a shot, of course," said Harry. "But—but look here, Snoop, I don't want to rub it in, but could a fellow take your word against what looks like good evidence? I know it's a rotten thing to say, but you've always been so—so—well, you haven't always told the truth, have you?"

"No," muttered Snoop.

He turned with that, and walked away, his head drooping. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another glumly.

"Blessed if I don't believe he's telling the truth this time!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I hope he is," said Harry; "and I think we might treat him as usual, at least until the affair's settled. It's always time to come down heavy when there's no further doubt, and I suppose there is some doubt in this case."

And the Co. agreed to that.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Snoop's Way!

SNOOP came in to dinner by himself, with lowered eyes and a harassed brow. He found a good deal of room left on either side of him at the dinner-table, and he winced as he noticed it. But, to the surprise of the Removites, Bunter moved out of the place he had dropped into and went to sit beside Snoop.

Snoop gave the fat junior a bitter look as he sat down.

"Aren't you afraid of having your pockets picked?" he asked, in a tone full of miserable bitterness.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" answered Wally Bunter cheerfully.

Snoop made a very poor dinner. After dinner he went out by himself, but he was not alone for long. Wally Bunter rolled out after him, and joined him in the quadrangle.

"Feeling down, old top?" he asked.

"Yes," said Snoop shortly.

"Keep a stiff upper-lip. Troubles were only made to be faced, you know," said the fat junior encouragingly.

Snoop stopped short, and stared at him.

"Does that mean that you're not down on me?" he asked.

"Why should I be down on you?"

"Everybody else is."

"Not at all. Mauly isn't, for instance."

"The fool!" muttered Snoop. "If he wasn't such a silly idiot this wouldn't have happened."

"Silly idiots are born, not made," answered Wally Bunter philosophically. "We have to stand 'em, like other troubles. Anyway, I'm standing by you, old gun, for what that's worth."

Snoop smiled faintly.

The Owl of the Remove was certainly not the champion he would have chosen. Bunter's support was not likely to be of much value to anybody. But it was some comfort to have even Bunter's support.

He was surprised, too, for certainly he would not have expected Billy Bunter to back up a lost cause. The Owl of the Remove in the role of champion of the distressed was something new. Wally read his thought in his face, and grinned. He was quite conscious that he was not acting up to his borrowed character, but that could not be helped.

"What are you going to do?" asked the fat junior suddenly.

"Do!" repeated Snoop.

"Yes. You didn't bag Mauly's tenner, did you?"

"No!" growled Snoop.

"And the money in your study was your own?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's got to be proved," said Wally Bunter briskly. "The fellows were making out first that I'd had Mauly's tenner because my cousin—ahem!—I—I mean—Hum!"

"Your cousin?" repeated Snoop. "Your cousin at St. Jim's, do you mean? What has he to do with it?"

"Hem! Nothing, of—of course. Just a slip of the tongue," said Wally Bunter hastily, his fat cheeks reddening. "I meant to say, the fellows jumped to the conclusion that it was I who'd pinched Mauly's tenner, and you spoke up for me. Well, one good turn deserves another. If you had it you're an awful rotter, Snoop, and I'd be down on you as soon as anybody. But, as I say, it's got to be proved. I believe you're innocent, but that isn't enough. Everybody's got to be made to see it. See?"

Snoop glanced round to make sure that there was no one within hearing, and sank his voice still lower as he went on:

"Suppose some fellow had known that—that I had that money saved in my box—"

"But no one did," said Wally. "You never told anybody."

"Suppose I had told somebody, and he came forward now to say that he knew the money was there—"

"That would help you out, I should think."

"Well, couldn't you do it?" muttered Snoop.

Wally Bunter jumped.

"I?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you. I know your word isn't worth much more than mine, for that matter—"

"Oh, isn't it?" exclaimed the fat junior warmly.

"You know it isn't!" muttered Snoop irritably. "But—but it would help, at least. You come forward and say that you knew about the money—that you'd known all along I was saving it—"



MAKING BUNTER WAXY.

"There's nothing I can do," said Snoop hopelessly. "I've just got to wait for the chopper to come down, that's all."

"Fathead!" said Wally. "That's the worst thing you can do. For instance, if you didn't nail Mauly's tenner and change it, that tenner is still lying around somewhere, isn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"It's got to be found, then."

Snoop shrugged his shoulders despondently.

"It's been hunted for high and low," he said. "The silly fool may have lost it out of doors, or may have had his pocket picked. It doesn't seem to be anywhere in Greyfriars. I—I say"—Snoop coloured and hesitated—"if you really mean it, Bunter, and—and you want to help me—"

"Honest Injun!"

"There's a way," muttered Snoop, sinking his voice. "Suppose—suppose some—"

"Well," said Wally, watching him curiously over Billy Bunter's spectacles—"go on, my son!"

"But I didn't know!" said Wally, staring at him blankly.

"That doesn't make any difference. You can say you did."

"Well, my hat! You awful rotter!" exclaimed Wally. "You—you toad! You want me to tell lies—"

Wally breathed hard through his fat little nose.

"You blessed worm!" he said, in disgust. "You're asking me to tell blank lies—to bear false witness—"

"New to you, I suppose?" said Snoop, with a sneer. "You're the biggest liar at Greyfriars, anyhow, Billy Bunter. I don't see that one more would hurt you much. I—I'll stand you a quid out of the money when I get it back."

Wally Bunter looked at him, and for a moment his fat fists clenched. But he restrained himself, and turned on his heel.

"Bunter!"

The fat junior did not answer. He walked quickly away, and Snoop was left alone, with a blacker cloud on his face than before.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. made it a point to speak a cheery word or two to Snoop as the Remove went to the Form-room that afternoon. Following the example of the leaders of the Form, some of the other fellows showed Snoop some civility. The outcast seemed hardly to notice it. He was plunged into deep despondency, and he went into the Form-room with a black and sulky brow. Wally Bunter glanced at him, but that was all; and Snoop did not meet his eyes.

During the afternoon the fat junior was not thinking wholly of his lessons; in fact, Mr. Quelch found him more like the old Billy Bunter than usual that day. Wally was thinking of the wretched Snoop.

Snoop's base suggestion had disgusted him, and made his belief in the unhappy fellow's innocence waver. But the more he reflected the more he was inclined to back up the outcast after all. A nature like Snoop's could not change in a day. Cornered, his old instinct led him to lying as a means of escape; he had never had much regard for the truth, and reform could not come all at once. Wally felt as much pity as contempt for the wretched junior when he thought over the matter, and he resolved not to desert him. Probably it had taken Snoop longer to repent of having discarded his only friend by his tortuous ways.

After lessons Wally Bunter joined him in the passage, receiving a sulky stare from Snoop. They went into the quadrangle without speaking.

"Now," said Wally, when they were out of hearing of the rest, "let's see what's to be done, Snoop."

"I will—" began Snoop eagerly.

"I won't tell any lies for you," said Wally bluntly. "Don't mention that again. My hat! Aren't you fed up with lying by this time? If you weren't such a thumping fibber the Head might take your word about that money in your box. If you're going to prove that you're honest you can only do it by being honest—see?"

"Satan rebuking sin!" sneered Sidney James. "I suppose you've told about a thousand times as many whoppers as I have."

"Never mind that; I'm not telling them now, at all events. You wouldn't think I'd told any if you knew—"

"If I knew what?"

"Nothing. Look here, Snoop, Mauly's note has got to be found. It all hinges on that."

"It can't be found!"

"It's got to be found, and we've got to find it!" said Wally Bunter determinedly. "The Head doesn't feel quite certain yet, I know—"

"How do you know that?" asked Snoop, more hopefully.

"Because there's been another search while we've been in the Form-room today. Gosling and Trotter have been turning out Mauleverer's study, and his things in the dormitory. They've been looking for the banknote, of course. The Head won't settle with you till there's no chance left of the banknote turning up after all."

"But they haven't found it!" said Snoop helplessly.

"Well, no; we should have heard, I suppose."

"That means that it's not in Greyfriars, then!"

Wally knitted his fat brow.

"Well, it looks like that!" he admitted reluctantly.

"If it's not in Greyfriars how can we find it?" pursued Snoop.

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"We've got to, somehow. First we'll see Mauly. Then—"

"Snoop!" Wingate came out of the School House. "Snoop! You're wanted in the Head's study!"

Snoop turned livid.

"It's the chopper!" he muttered huskily. "I—I'm going to be expelled now. I know it would come!"

"Back up!" said Wally, taking his arm. "Look here, I'll come in with you, Snoopey."

Snoop's knees were knocking together. Innocent or guilty, the unhappy fellow lacked the nerve to face the music.

"Go in at once, Snoop," said Wingate, with a compassionate look at Snoop's white face.

"Yes, Wingate."

Snoop almost tottered towards the House.

"Pull yourself together, kid," said Wally Bunter. "I'm coming with you." He kept hold of Snoop's arm. "Dash it all, Snoop, don't show the white feather like this—you're a soldier's son! Your father's stood up to something worse than the Head in a wax."

That reminder had its effect on Snoop. He made an attempt to control his agitation.

"You—you can't come in with me!" he muttered, as they approached the door of Dr. Locke's study. "The Head didn't send for you!"

"I'm going to back you up, old infant!"

Wally tapped firmly at the door. Snoop made no further objection; he was glad—more than glad—to have a friend to stand by him in the dreaded interview.

"Come in!" said the Head's deep voice.

The two juniors entered the study together. Dr. Locke's glance rested on Wally.

"I did not send for you, Bunter."

"If you please, sir, I've come with Snoop," said Wally respectfully. "I'm his pal, and I believe in him."

That was a slight exaggeration. Wally was not exactly a "pal" of Snoop's. But he was feeling quite pally just then, from the feeling that his loyal support was badly needed.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Probably it came as a surprise to him that anyone still believed in Snoop. But he was certainly not displeased.

"You may remain if Snoop wishes it," he said.

"Yes, please, sir," mumbled Snoop.

"Very well! I have sent for you, Snoop, to tell you that a most rigorous search has been made for Mauleverer's banknote. It has not been found, and the conclusion is irresistible that it has been stolen."

"Mayn't it have been stolen out of doors, sir?" asked Wally, as Snoop's lips moved without a word coming forth.

"That is what I am coming to," said the Head quietly. "Heaven forbid that any boy in this school should be condemned unless the evidence was absolutely clear. The note can, and will, be traced. Snoop, I am about to command Mauleverer to write to his uncle to ascertain the number of the note. If it has been stolen it has undoubtedly been passed by this time—most certainly if the money found in your study was not your own. You understand what this implies?"

Snoop did not speak.

"Only the police can trace a stolen note," said the Head. "And the matter once placed in the hands of the police cannot be withdrawn. If the changing of the note is traced to you, Snoop, the law will have to take its course; I shall be powerless to intervene. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Snoop.

"I have therefore sent for you, Snoop, to ask you whether you have any confession to make before this final and irrevocable step is taken?"

Snoop shook his head.

"Reflect, my boy," said the Head, not unkindly. "If you have been guilty of this base action I shall expel you from Greyfriars, and leave your own people to take any measures that seem proper to them in your regard. My responsibility will end there. The matter is quite different when it is officially taken up by the police authorities. It will not then be simply a question of your being expelled from this school, but of answering for what you have done before a magistrate. If you purloined Mauleverer's banknote and changed it, that act will certainly be traced to you. This is your last chance, therefore, of avoiding the most dire consequences of your act. Have you any confession to make?"

"No, sir," said Snoop, in an almost inaudible voice.

"I hope and trust, Snoop, that you are innocent; and if you are innocent you have nothing whatever to fear. The banknote will be traced, beyond doubt; and it will certainly be ascertained whether it was changed, in the first place, by a schoolboy."

"And—and suppose it isn't traced, sir!" gasped Snoop.

The Head pursed his lips.

"In that case the matter will remain in doubt, and I must consider what steps to take. But I am assured that the note will be traced. For the last time, Snoop, have you anything to tell me?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"Very well! You may go! Bunter, tell Mauleverer to come here at once!"

"Yes, sir."

The two juniors quitted the study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Mauly has a Brain-wave!

HALLO hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry stopped as he came along the passage and found Wally Bunter and Snoop waiting at the corner. Bob looked at them curiously.

"You've been to the Head, Snoop?" he asked.

Snoop nodded.

"I hope it's not—not—" Bob hesitated.

"No, it isn't!" answered Snoop, with a bitter smile. "I'm not sacked yet. The Head's sent for Mauleverer, to make him write for the number of the note. It's going to be sent to the police."

Bob's face became very grave.

"That means—" he began.

"It means that if the note was stolen the thief will be found out," said Snoop.

"That will be all right for me."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"That doesn't worry me!" said Snoop, his thin lip curling. "What worries me is that the note may never be found at all! The thief may have hidden it away till he thought it quite safe to pass it—if it was stolen at all. But it's more likely that that fool Mauly lost it, and it may never turn up. The police can't do anything unless it's passed; and even then they mayn't be able to trace it."

"That leaves the whole thing in doubt," said Bob, knitting his brows.

"Unless it's proved, the Head can't turn me out," said Snoop. "I suppose I shall have to leave all the same, though. I can't stay here with every fellow looking on me as a thief. Pleasant news for my father, now he's home from the Army, isn't it?"

"I'm sorry!" said Bob, sincerely.

enough. "And—and I believe you, Snoop. I couldn't quite think that you'd stolen that blessed tenner."

"Thanks!" said Snoop. "That won't alter the opinion of all the rest, though."

"I suppose it wouldn't," assented Bob. "I've a jolly good mind to scrag Mauly for having a tenner at all! Nobody else has any tenners, bless him!" And Bob Cherry walked on, looking very thoughtful.

Snoop looked down the corridor towards the Head's study. Lord Mauleverer was there with the Head. The study door opened, and his lordship came out with a worried brow.

He came along the corridor moodily, and was stopped by Bunter's fat hand on his arm.

"Hallo, old top!" said Mauleverer feebly.

"Well?" rapped out Wally.

"The Head's told me to write to Uncle Braithwaite to find out the number of the note at once!" groaned Mauleverer. "I don't want to, you know! I'd rather let the whole dashed thing drop. I don't believe it has been stolen at all—certainly not at Greyfriars."

"We're going to find it," said the fat junior.

"I wish you would!" groaned Mauleverer. "I shall get a corkin' lecture from old Braithwaite if I write to him!"

"We can't find it, Bunter, you ass!" said Snoop peevishly.

"Got to, old infant! Come along with me, Mauly!"

"Where?" asked his lordship apprehensively. "I say, Bunter, sorry; but I'm really stony unless that tenner turns up!"

"You silly ass!" roared the fat junior. "Do you think I want to borrow money of you?"

"Don't you?" asked Lord Mauleverer innocently.

"No!" howled Wally.

"Oh, all right! My mistake! I thought you did!"

"You—you fathead! Shut up, and come along!"

Lord Mauleverer meekly accompanied the two juniors to the Remove passage to his own study. There he sank down in an armchair with a tired look. The affair of the missing banknote was getting on Mauly's nerves; especially the "jaw" he was getting from all sides on account of it. Few fellows believed in Snoop's innocence, but all agreed that Mauly was as much to blame as anybody, and they "jawed" him accordingly. It was not the first time his careless lordship had lost a banknote, and there had been trouble about it.

"I say, old chaps, go easy!" pleaded Mauleverer, as he sat down. "Don't pile it on too thick!"

"Don't pile what on?" asked Wally.

"Aren't you goin' to jaw me?"

"No, you ass!"

"Oh, good! I thought you were! But if you don't want to borrow any tin, and you don't want to jaw, what the merry dickens do you want?"

"I want to find that ten-pound note!" said Wally. "I'm going to do it, too!"

Lord Mauleverer groaned.

"If it hasn't been stolen it hasn't been passed!" said Wally Bunter. "That makes it safe that the police won't trace it. And Snoop's left under the suspicion. He can't stay at Greyfriars unless it's cleared up. You see how important it is, Mauly?"

"Yaas!" mumbled Mauly. "I don't see what you're chippin' in for, though, Bunter!"

"I'm chipping it to help Snoop because I believe in him."

"But what for? It ain't like you!"

"Isn't it?" howled the fat junior.

"Not a bit! I've never noticed you extendin' a helpin' hand to anybody down on his luck before, old scout! Is it a new game?"

"You—you ass!"

"Look here, Bunter! If you're after that tenner with the idea of baggin' it if you find it—"

"What?" shrieked Wally.

"If that's the game, you can go and eat coke!" said Mauleverer, with a shake of the head. "That would only make matters worse!"

Wally Bunter glared at him.

"Do you think I'd keep the note if I found it?" he gasped.

"I don't know, I'm sure; but it would be like you, wouldn't it? You'd make out somehow that it was yours, or some thin'!"

The fat junior controlled his wrath. Under the belief that he was speaking to Billy Bunter, Mauleverer was not so far wrong. Wally remembered that, and it helped him to keep patient, though Snoop was regarding him rather uneasily now. Sidney James was not at all of a trustful disposition; and he knew Billy Bunter, though he did not know Wally.

"Well, you can put that out of your silly head, Mauly!" said Wally. "I'm taking this up to help Snoop out, and we're going to look for the note together. You are going to help us!"

"I'll do anything I can!" said his lordship dismally. "It's all the fault of the chap who invented banknotes! I'd like to punch his head!"

"Never mind him now! You've got to search your memory, and make out exactly what you did with that tenner. I'm going to question you like a lawyer."

"Oh, gad!"

"You had it three weeks ago?"

"Yaas."

"You put it in your jacket pocket?"

"Yaas."

"And forgot it?"

"Yaas."

"What made you think of it again?"

"I ran out of money. I was goin' to write to old Brooke—that's one of my uncles—and I remembered my other uncle had sent me a tenner—old Braithwaite, you know! Not exactly my uncle, either—aunt's hubby, you know. My Aunt Gloriana married old Braithwaite, and that's how he became my uncle, you see!" explained Mauleverer.

"Bother your Aunt Gloriana!" said Wally crossly. "I'm not asking about your uncles and aunts and second-cousins and things! When you remembered your tenner, what did you do?"

"I thought it was rippin'! It saved me the trouble of writin' to old Brooke and askin' him for money. I thought it did, at least. I felt in my pocket for it."

"And it wasn't there?"

"No."

"What did you think had become of it?"

"Well, I thought it must be somewhere else, as it wasn't there."

"You mean you thought you'd lost it?"

"No, I didn't. I thought I might have. But I don't see how it could be lost out of an inside pocket."

"If it wasn't lost it was taken."

"Yaas. I suppose so."

"Have you searched your jacket-pockets?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"And all your dashed jackets—I believe you've got about a hundred."

"Only six, dear boy, and they're all searched. Gosling's been at my things, rumplin' all my glad rags with his blessed paws to-day," said Mauleverer glumly. "Might have changed a jacket

and forgotten it, but the lot have been searched."

Wally paused.

"Then you're certain that there isn't a hole in the lining, or anything of that kind, it might have fallen through?"

"Yaas. I don't have holes in my knin', old top."

Another pause. Snoop had brightened up a little during that business-like questioning, which was so unlike Billy Bunter's obtuse manners and customs. He had hoped that Wally might extract some useful information. But his face fell again now.

But the fat junior was not finished yet. Wally's active brain worked very differently from that of his cousin William George.

"Was there anything else in the same pocket?" he asked.

"Yaas; some old letters. Uncle Braithwaite's letter, for one—the one that came along with the tenner."

"Have you got those old letters now?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Look and see."

Lord Mauleverer turned out his inside pocket. There was nothing in it but a tailor's bill—unpaid.

"Not here," he said.

"Then several old letters that were in the same pocket have gone as well as the banknotes?" said Wally crisply.

"Yaas, I—I suppose so," said Mauleverer, perplexed. "That's jolly odd, you know. A pickpocket wouldn't want three or four old letters; and I couldn't very well have dropped the lot without noticin' some of them, could I? I remember there was a letter from Aunt Gloriana, too. I kept it in my pocket to answer it, though I never did, somehow."

"I think we're getting at something at last," said Wally quietly. "That isn't the same jacket you were wearing when you put the tenner in your pocket?"

"Possibly. But they've all been searched for the tenner. I've been through every dashed one myself."

"Have you found the letters in any of them?"

"No."

"Then they're actually missing as well as the banknote?"

"Yaas, it appears so."

"Now, listen to me, ass!" said Wally sternly.

"I'm listenin', old top," said his lordship, sinking back in the armchair with a look of exhaustion. "I think I'm standin' this rather well. Go on."

"Have you any other jackets besides those in the school?"

"Eh?"

"Have you given an old one away, for instance?"

"No."

"Not to a beggar, or anything?"

"Never thought a beggar would like an Eton jacket, old scout. I've never seen a beggar in one, that I remember."

"Have you got one soiled or damaged, and chucked it away?"

"I wouldn't chuck one away, my boy; that would be waste," said Lord Mauleverer severely. "I'm an economical chap. I've studied economy durin' the war, an' I'm never goin' to give it up now. Economy is a blessin', and—"

"Never mind that, fathead! Think this out, if you've got brains enough—have you, for any reason whatever, left a jacket outside the school in the last three weeks?"

"Why should I?"

"Yes or no!" roared Wally.

"Of course not," said his lordship plaintively. "I suppose you don't think

I'd go anywhere and come home in my shirt-sleeves, do you? Why, I didn't even throw away the one that Skinner spilt tar on the other week. I wouldn't."

The next moment his lordship sat bolt upright in his chair, his expression suddenly changing.

"Oh, gad!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"What's the matter now?"

Lord Mauleverer started to his feet.

"Courtfield—tailor—jacket—oh, gad!" he stuttered incoherently. "Oh, my only hat! I wonder—"

To the amazement of Bunter and Snoop, Lord Mauleverer made a rush for the door. Wally made a grab at him, too late. His lordship bolted into the passage.

"Mauly!" roared Wally, dashing out of the study after him.

"Can't stop!" gasped his lordship over his shoulder. "May be too late!"

"Stop!"

Mauleverer ran on, and went down the staircase three at a time. Wally ran in pursuit as far as the landing, in time to see his slim lordship whisk out of the doorway below.

"Has he gone mad?" exclaimed Snoop, overtaking the fat junior on the landing.

"Looks like it!" granted Wally. "I'm after him, anyway."

He ran down the stairs and out into the quad. Mauleverer had disappeared; but in a few minutes he came into sight again, wheeling his bicycle in great haste to the gates. Wally Bunter dashed in pursuit, but Mauleverer jumped on the bike at once, and spun out at the gateway.

"Stop!" yelled Wally.

"Can't, old top!"

And the slacker of the Remove pedalled away towards Courtfield at a great rate, looking, for once in his lazy life, like anything but a slacker.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

"OH dear!" Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting in the hall, waiting for call-over, when that exhausted gasp reached their ears. Lord Mauleverer came limping into the House, breathing hard. He sank on a seat near the door, and blinked pathetically at the Famous Five.

"Done in!" he said.

"Been walking all the way across the quad?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Yaas, and more. I've biked to Courtfield and back."

"And didn't have to come home on an ambulance?"

"You can be as funny as you like, but I'm fairly knocked out. I've made record speed, fairly pumpin' along all the time. Spinnin' like a dashed top, you know!" gasped Mauleverer.

"Lots of time for call-over yet," said Wharton. "What was the hurry?"

"Well, I thought I'd better hurry back with the banknote."

"What?"

"Banknote."

"You've found the tenner?" yelled Nugent.

"Yaas."

"Then—then Snoop—"

"My dear infant, I told you all along that Snoop hadn't touched it, but everybody said I was an ass. I don't believe I am an ass, you know," said Lord Mauleverer. "Lots of fellows say so, I know."

Harry Wharton grasped his exhausted lordship by the shoulder and shook him.

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"Mauly, you crass idiot——"

"Yow-ow!"

"Have you got the banknote?"

"Don't I keep on tellin' you I have?"

"Let us see it," said Bob.

"Certainly, old top!"

Lord Mauleverer ran his hands through his pockets with a worried look.

"Oh, gad! I hope I haven't lost it again!" he gasped.

"If you have, we'll boil you in oil!" exclaimed Wharton. "You dangerous lunatic, shell out that banknote at once!"

"It's not here! Oh, I remember now! I tucked it into my waistcoat-pocket for safety!" gasped Mauleverer. "I'm rather a careful chap with money, you know."

"Shell out, fathead!"

Lord Mauleverer held out a rustling, crisp slip of paper. It was a Bank of England note for ten pounds. There was no mistake about that. The little scene in the hall was attracting attention, and Remove fellows were gathering round. There was a general exclamation at the sight of the ten-pound note.

"Is that the same note?" demanded Bolsover major.

"Yaas. I had only one, you know."

"And you've found it?" said Skinner.

"Looks like it, dear infant."

"Where did you find it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"At my tailor's, of course."

"Your tailor's!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yaas."

"And how came it there?" shouted Bob.

"Simple enough," answered Lord Mauleverer calmly. "It was all Skinner's fault. I hope Skinner will be sorry for the harm he's done."

"How the thump was it my fault?" demanded Skinner.

"You tarred my jacket—you know you did!" said Mauleverer severely. "You spilt tar over the back, in the High Street at Courtfield, the week before last. Some johnnies mendin' the road had a tar-bucket, and you deliberately bunged some of the tar on my back. I'd have jolly well thrashed you if I hadn't been too tired!"

"I don't see what that had to do with the banknote," said Wharton.

"You don't see everythin', dear boy. It was like this. There was I, in Courtfield, with a tarry jacket, smellin' no end of tar, you know. Some fellows think me an ass, but I'm all right in an emergency, I can tell you. I rose to the occasion," said Lord Mauleverer loftily. "I remembered at once that my tailor man was makin' me a new jacket, and I had called to be fitted a few days before. So it flashed into my brain to call for the new jacket, to come back to Greyfriars in. Every fellow wouldn't have thought of that on the spot. I did!"

"What a brain-wave!" said Squiff.

"So I called on the tailor man, and got my new jacket," said Lord Mauleverer. "Naturally, I left the tarry one there. I was to call for it another time, but the fact is I forgot all about it. Tailor man had it wrapped up ready for me, but I hadn't called. Well, Bunter was sayin' somethin' to me in my study some time ago—to-day, you know—and it put it into my head all of a sudden. It was really a brain-wave. I'm rather quick at thinkin'——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I said to myself at once, suppose that jacket that Skinner tarred—he quite spoiled it, you know—tar all over the back, and——"

"Get on, ass!"

"Well, I said to myself, suppose that jacket was the one that had the tenner in the pocket! There it was, lying

wrapped up at the tailor's all the time, with the tenner. So I rushed off to Courtfield to catch the tailor man before he closed. It was an exhaustin' rush——"

"Oh, you ass!"

"But I felt it was up to me, considerin' everythin'. I got the parcel in the tailor's shop, yanked it open, and found the letters and things and the banknote. And that proved, you know, that the jacket I was wearin' the day Skinner tarred me was the one I was wearin' the day I got uncle Braithwaite's letter, an' put it in my pocket. You fellows can see that it was all Skinner's fault, can't you? If he hadn't played that rotten trick——"

"You thumping ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You couldn't think of all that before?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"You see, it didn't come into my mind till Bunter was speakin' to me," he said. "Then I had a brain-wave, you know. But it was all Skinner's fault. Of course, you fellows can see that."

"You'd better go to the Head at once——"

"Give a chap time to get his breath first. I'm simply exhausted, you know. Yarooch!" roared Lord Mauleverer, as Wharton grasped him by the collar and jerked him to his feet. "Leggo! Oh, gad!"

"Come along to the Head's study, you ass!"

"I'm comin'!" wailed Lord Mauleverer. "Leggo! Hallo, Snoopey!" Snoop came downstairs with Wally Bunter, drawn to the spot by the crowd and the buzz of voices. "It's all right, Snoopey, old top! You didn't steal the banknote!"

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, it wasn't stolen at all. I've cleared the whole thing up," said Mauleverer. "I might have done it sooner, only I've been so ragged and jawed and bothered, you know! But I've done it. I'm taking the banknote to the Head now. All serene, old tulip!"

Lord Mauleverer marched off to the Head's study, banknote in hand, leaving Sidney James Snoop looking dazed.

"Well, my hat!" said Wally Bunter.

Harry Wharton clapped Snoop cordially on the shoulder.

"It's all serene, old man!" he said. "The banknote's found. It seems that it was Bunter made that utter ass think of it. The fathead changed his jacket at his tailor's the day Skinner tarred him, and he suddenly remembered it when Bunter was asking him questions, it seems——"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Wally. "That's why the idiot bolted. And—and he's found the note?"

"He's just taken it to the Head."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh!" gasped Snoop. "Then—then you fellows will believe now?"

"Of course we do!" said Bob Cherry. "And you can go and ask the Head for your money back, too. We know it's yours now."

"The knowfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Snoop!"

"I—I'm glad!" panted Snoop. "I—I suppose I owe it to Bunter, really. I owe it all to you, Bunter. You've done it!"

Wally grinned good-humouredly.

"Well, I helped," he said. "I thought Mauly had gone off his dot, but it seems he had only come to his senses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head will jaw him!" said Ogilvy.

"And serve him jolly well right!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Hear, hear!"

Lord Mauleverer looked quite worn when he came out of the Head's study.

He certainly looked as if he had been "jawed."

"I—I say, I've had an awful wiggin'!" he said dismally. "The Head seems to think that I've been to blame somehow—"

"Not really?" said Nugent, with deep sarcasm.

"Yaas, I don't know why, but he does. As if I'm to blame, you know! How could I help Skinner tarrin' my jacket? I called him names for doin' it. What could a fellow do more than that? I've got lines and detention!" said his lordship, with a groan. "I think Skinner ought to do the lines. I hope you see that, Skinner?"

"Catch me!" grinned Skinner.

"By the way, the Head wants to see Snoop!" added Mauleverer, as if by an afterthought. "I nearly forgot that. You're to go in, Snoop!"

Sidney James Snoop walked away cheerily to the Head's study. He could hold up his head now, and look anyone in the face.

Dr. Locke greeted him with a very kindly glance. There was a little pile of money on the table before him—ten pounds seven shillings. Snoop's eyes wandered to it.

"That is your money, Snoop. Take it up."

"Thank you, sir?"

"Mauleverer's banknote has been found, and it is clear, Snoop, that the money found in your box is your own. I congratulate you, Snoop, on your name being cleared in this complete way. But you must bear in mind, my boy, that you would not have fallen under suspicion but for two circumstances—that you had been concerned in gambling transactions, and that you were known to be sometimes untruthful. This should be a warning to you, Snoop."

"Yes, sir," said Snoop humbly.

"It goes without saying," continued the Head, "that I now place full reliance on the statements you made to me. You have saved this money, evidently by great care and self-denial, considering your circumstances, in order to assist your father?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Snoop.

"That is very right, and very loyal and praiseworthy," said the Head. "It has raised you very much in my estimation, my boy!"

And, to Snoop's surprise, the Head shook hands with him, and dismissed him very kindly indeed.

Snoop's face was very bright as he came down the corridor. Skinner and Stott gave him rather sulky looks, but he did not heed them. Harry Wharton

& Co. were waiting at the end of the passage.

"Youth," said Bob Cherry gravely, "the fatted calf is slain, and the festive halls of Study No. 1 flow with milk and honey, not to mention sardines! Will you honour us by coming to tea?"

Snoop laughed.

"Certainly, as soon as I've locked up my money."

"We'll see you safe home with it," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "Bunter will want you to cash postal-orders for him if he sees it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sidney James' savings were safely locked up, and he accompanied the Famous Five to Study No. 1. In the doorway he paused.

"If—if you don't mind—" he began hesitatingly.

"Go it, old top!"

"Do you mind if I bring Bunter?"

"Bring him and welcome!"

Wally Bunter accepted the cheery invitation as willingly as Snoop, and the two strangely-assorted friends were guests of honour in Study No. 1 that evening.

(DON'T MISS "WALLY'S WHEEZE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)



SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Frankingham, which has been burned down. Goggs, the real leader of the four, ventriloquist, ju-jitsu expert, and all-round sportsman, looks particularly simple, and has before this played upon that simplicity to take in others. Blount, Trickett, and Waters, his chums, agree to help him in spoofing the Rylcombe fellows; and the campaign begins when Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and the two Woottons meet the new boys at the station. On the way to the school Goggs mystifies these four by his ventriloquism.

The four new boys are taken to see the Head, and on their way back are ambushed by Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe, three fellows of a very different sort from Gordon Gay & Co. But they get no change out of the Frankingham quartet. Goggs again uses his ventriloquial powers to take them in. The four are assigned together to Study No. 3, and are also told that they will share Dormitory 29 with Larking, Carpenter, Snipe, Tadpole—who imagines himself an artist of great ability—and Weird, who talks in rhyme. Goggs borrows crocks for tea from Tadpole and Weird.

(Now read on.)

Study No. 3.

"YOU wangled the crocks and things without inviting those specimens along, then?" said Bags, as they helped Goggs to unload.

"My friend Tadpole had already had tea, as had his friend Weird," replied Goggs. "What is wangling, my dear Bagshaw? If it is anything like angling I should be pleased to learn how to do it. Angling always strikes me as quite interesting for the worm and the fish, though rather dull for the person at the other end of the rod."

"When you want teaching anything about wangling I'll look out for someone who's better up in the subject than I am," said Bags. "I can't teach you anything about it."

"Indeed? But there was positively no deception in this case. Tadpole and Weird had already had their tea."

"And they didn't catch at the chance of another?" asked Wagtail, in surprise. "Well, Weird's the name for both of them, if you ask me!"

"I did not press them greatly, my dear Waters. I remarked that I saw they had finished, and suggested that it would be a kindly action to lend us the necessary utensils. Tadpole agreed readily. Weird, a less friendly person, was rather rude. He was rude in rhyme, too. I do not like people to be rude in rhyme, do you, my dear playmates?"

"What did he say?" inquired Tricks, grinning.

"I can only recall the tenor of his remarks. When I quote poetry, even the most inferior poetry, I always like to be correct to a word," answered Goggs primly. "But he rhymed my name with 'hogs,' which I consider neither kind nor in good taste, and he made 'Blount' rhyme with 'no account'—a slang term which is, I believe, rather contemptuous."

"Well, what happened to him?" Wagtail demanded. "Cut it short!"

"I am not at all sure that he correctly apprehends even now what happened to him," Goggs said. "I think he is under a false impression that the floor rose up and hit him. When I left he was sitting on the carpet taking a phrenological interest in his own head, which, like my friend Tadpole's, would be the better for a visit to the barber."

"Taking a whither?" asked Wagtail, looking round from the fire, on which he was placing the kettle.

"Goggles means feeling his bumps, fat-head!" growled Bags.

"Why doesn't the chump say what he means?"

"My dear Waters, I always endeavour to do so. I fear that your intelligence hardly fits you for our society at present. In consideration of your usefulness in the domestic department, however, and in the hope that you will, in course of time, develop the rudiments of a brain, we will not cast you out."

Wagtail sniffed, and Bags and Tricks chuckled. They never tired of the little snubs which Goggs found himself obliged to hand out to Waters now and then.

Tea passed without interruption, and they had got so late with it that by the time they had finished and cleared up the hour of prep had arrived.

Three of them had to devote considerable attention to prep. The books in use at Rylcombe were not quite the same as those which they had had at Frankingham, and they wanted to give Mr. Adams a decent impression at the outset, so they took more than usual pains.

The fellow who had finished first, by at least half an hour, was Goggs.

As he put his books neatly away Wagtail grunted:

"You can't have finished. I haven't half done yet."

"Nobody will expect much from a person with a face like mine," murmured Goggs, as he faded out of the door.

"Shilly ass! He'll let us down," grumbled Wagtail.

"No jolly fear! If he's called up for construe he'll do any part of the blessed passage without turning a hair, chump!" said Bags.

"Well, I dare say he will. But where's he off to?"

"I dunno, as Old Bill says. Trust him to take care of himself—and us!"

"Thought we were supposed to be taking care of him!"

"If you thought that you're as big an ass as any chap here, and that's saying quite a heap," said Tricks.

"Oh, well! What I meant was that that's what they think."

"You've a muddled mind, my son," said Bags gravely.

Wagtail had also a curious mind. When Goggs returned he questioned him as to where he had been.

His questions were evaded, or swamped by a torrent of eloquence. Bags and Tricks asked no questions. They knew by something they had read in Goggs's face that he was feeling satisfied.

And when Johnny Goggs felt satisfied it often happened that before very long someone else had cause to feel acutely dissatisfied. It would probably be an enemy. Goggs did not always disdain a jape upon a chum; but he kept his special japes for those with whom he was at odds.

Half an hour in the Common-room, where Goggs submitted with complete meekness to a good deal of verbal hailing—though when the baiters came to think it over afterwards some of them rather suspected that the meek one had not had wholly the worst of the deal—was followed by supper in Hall, and then came bed-time.

Dormitory No. 29.

As they trooped up to the dormitories Wagtail observed that Lark & Co. were exchanging meaning grins.

Tadpole beamed upon Goggs, in whom he fancied he saw a congenial spirit. Jasper Weird, on the other hand, glared. The tame poet had not yet quite recovered the shock of having been put upon the floor by the apparently meek and mild new boy. Like Carpenter and Larking, too, he could not understand how it had been done.

Wagtail nudged Bags, and nodded towards the enemy.

"Do you suppose you're the only chap who's got eyes?" came Blount's fierce whisper. "Dry up, and look as soft as the Goggs-bird! Whatever's on, it's safe to bet that he knows all about it, and he never misses anything, so you may be sure that if a duffer like you has twigged those bounders chortling, he's twigged, too."

"I should think it's you who ought to dry up!" answered Waters. "I never said a giddy word; I only gave you a nudge."

There was a certain amount of reason in this reply, as Bags saw. Snipe had cast a suspicious glance at the two. Larking & Co. were prepared to admit that Blount seemed pretty fly and wideawake. They would have been surprised to learn that Bertram Bagshaw Blount, though there was no lack of self-confidence in him, regarded the simple-looking Goggs as being far more fly and wideawake than himself.

"Hallo, Weird! Made up any rhymes about these new chaps yet?" asked Carpenter.

Jasper Weird grinned with pleasure. It was not often that his rhymes were in demand.

"To Rylcombe came a silly ass,

Whose face would frighten any lass!"

he chanted in sing-song tones.

"Go on!" said Snipe encouragingly.

Weird had paused because he could not quite remember how the next line went. Some of Jasper's impromptu verses were very carefully thought out beforehand, though he did not admit that.

But, though Weird paused, the sing-song chant was carried on, and it sounded exactly like Weird.

"Ay, any maiden whom he neared

Recoiled with horror from this Weird!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Bags and Tricks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chimed in Wagtail, tumbling a second later than they to the fact that Goggs had kindly helped out the halting poet.

But Jasper Weird stood with open mouth, and for a moment Carpenter and Larking and Snipe were too astonished to laugh.

As for Tadpole, he did not appear to

have heard. He had begun to undress in a state of abstraction, his mighty brain busy with matters outside the limited ken of anyone else in Dormitory 29.

"I—I—I—"

Thus gasped Jasper Weird. Then he pulled himself together, and said, with all the dignity he could muster:

"I beg most earnestly to state

Those lines I do repudiate.

My reference was to this chap Goggs,

Whose face reminds me of a frog's."

He paused again. But what seemed his voice went on, though four there knew that it was not his voice.

"And yet his face is handsomer far

Than Carpy's, Snipe's, and Larking's are!"

"My hat! You'll get it in the neck if we have any more of your rot, you drivelling idiot!" hooted Larking.

Jasper looked about him in dismay. He could not understand why anyone should imagine that the second voice was his. It did not sound to him at all like his. No one knows quite what his own voice sounds like.

But to everyone else the voice was as much the voice of Weird as that which now said:

"Restrain your temper, my good friend;

This thing I cannot comprehend."

He paused again. He could have expressed himself more clearly in plain prose. But it was a point of honour with Weird always to talk in rhyme.

No one knew that he had paused—at least, Larking & Co. did not know; and Bags, Tricks, and Wagtail could only guess by the different tenor of the rhymes.

Goggs went on:

"But this I know—that you and Snipe

And Carpy are for hanging ripe!"

"Oh, are we?" roared Carpenter.

And he made a rush at Weird.

The tame poet dodged behind Bags, who was beginning to undress.

Goggs had already begun. But he was disrobing in a very slow and methodical fashion, folding up carefully each garment as he took it off. Tricks and Wagtail had got as far as their collars; but Carpenter, Larking, and Snipe had not yet made a start.

"Chuck it, Carpenter! There's some mystery here!" gasped Weird, shocked for once out of the rhyming habit. "I never said any of that rot—at least, I only said—"

"Get out of the way, Blount!" cried Carpenter angrily.

"Don't see why I should," replied Bags coolly. "This is my bed, I think, and the next is Trickett's. The space between them can't be in your part of the dorm."

And he continued to shelter the cowering rhymester.

"Do you not consider that the notion of having our names above our beds is quite a good one, my dear Bagshaw?" remarked Goggs, speaking as though he had neither eyes nor ears for the wrath of Carpenter or the fear of Weird. "So useful to prevent mistakes by the absent-minded, you know. And I must admit that I am rather an absent-minded person, so that I can appreciate it."

"A bullying ruffian like Carpenter

Heaven will ne'er with crown and harp enter.

The autocratic voice of Larking

Reminds me of a puppy barking.

"Twere a good deed would someone wipe

Clean off the earth that creature Snipe!"

Even to Goggs' own chums those absurd rhymes seemed to come from Weird. There had been so perceptible a pause between Goggs' mild remark about his own absent-mindedness and the recommencement of the sing-song chant. But Bags & Co. knew that Goggs must have delivered those lines.

"I didn't!" howled Weird. "I never said a blessed word!"

"Let me get at him!" roared Carpenter.

"Get out of my way, and I'll attend to the sweep!" hooted Larking. "If you're afraid of Blount I'm not!"

"I'm not afraid of Blount, you silly fat-head! Clear out, Blount! No need for you to be dragged into this, is there?"

"Not that I know of, Carpenter. But you'll find I shall have to be dragged out

of it before you can get at Weird! And I may take a little shifting."

"Come on, Snipe!" called Larking.

"We'll soon shift him!"

But Cornelius Snipe was in no hurry to respond to that call. Cornelius never was in a hurry for anything that promised hard knocks.

Blount did not call upon his chums to rally to him. He knew that there was no need to call. He went on undressing, and so did they. But none of the four took his disrobing to a point likely to interfere with his freedom of action. When they got to braces they stopped.

Carpenter and Larking stood and glared. Jasper Weird kept behind Bags in the narrow space between the two beds. Snipe took a step or two forward, and then halted. Bags did not look in the least alarmed. Tricks and Wagtail grinned. The face of Goggs was quite impassive.

It was Tadpole who broke the brief silence.

"Dear me!" he said. "What is all this trouble about? Is anyone quarrelling? If so, I should desire to point out that the dormitory is really not the most fitting place for the settlement of disputes, and—"

"What's the row here?" sounded the cheery voice of Gordon Gay from the door. "Of course, it's no bizney of mine; but you fellows might go a bit easy with the new chaps the first night."

"It's all serene, thanks, Gay," said Bags. "We'll see that they don't bully us too much. There are four of us, you know—well, three and a half, anyway, allowing for poor old Goggles' helplessness."

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't fancy that they'll get much change out of you," replied Gay. "But Delamere will be along in about half a jiffy to put out lights, and he doesn't stand any nonsense."

That reminder had its effect upon Carpenter and Larking. As Gordon Gay disappeared they wandered moodily to their beds, and began to undress in haste.

"It is really a very good notion," said Goggs, gazing at the little card with his name upon it which had been fastened above his bed. "So useful to prevent mistakes—so very useful!"

"What's that tame idiot burbling about?" asked Carpenter resentfully.

"Oh, he can't help burbling!" growled Larking. "I say, Carp—"

The rest of his speech was whispered in Carpenter's ear. It was to the effect that possibly Goggs might not think so much of the labelling device in a few minutes.

Carpenter chortled. He passed the news on to Snipe, who grinned maliciously.

"Hallo! Not in bed yet?" spoke Delamere, captain of Rylcombe, tall and stalwart and handsome. "You'll have to hurry up. Another twenty seconds and out goes the light! Weird, you young donkey, you've hardly begun to undress yet!"

"I have been most remiss, I fear.

I beg your pardon, Delamere!"

murmured the rhymester.

"No need to do that. The light's going out. Good-night, all of you! And no japes on the new fellows, mind!"

The light went out, and the door closed behind Delamere's retreating form with a slight slam.

Tadpole and Goggs were the only fellows in bed, and Goggs had only got in just as the light went out.

Wagtail was next.

"Yoop! Oh, crumbs! Some silly ass has put a brush in my bed, and I came slap down on the bristles!" he howled.

Bags and Tricks immediately felt in their beds, but found nothing there. They got in.

"Wait till the Goggs ass gets in!" whispered Larking to Carpenter.

As he spoke he pulled down the clothes of his own bed in the darkness and jumped in.

"Yaroooooh! Oh, dash it! Yoop! Yow-w-w-w! I'll have someone's life for this!" he roared, as he scrambled out in hot haste.

Carpenter struck a match and lighted a candle-end.

"Why, you're dripping wet!" he said. "Ha, ha!"

"Wet? Of course I'm wet, you fathead! You'd be wet if—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bags and Tricks and Wagtail.

"He, he, he!" chortled Snipe and Weird.

Tadpole and Goggs made no sound. Tadpole

was thinking of other things, and the meek face of Goggs wore an expression of patient amazement.

"Who did this?" hooted Larking.

The others—all but Tadpole and Goggs—were out of their beds now and crowding around the bed of Larking to see what had been done there.

A depression had been made in the middle of the bed, and into this depression a basin full of water had been neatly placed. Around it were grouped brushes and bootjacks.

There must have been quite a lump before the clothes were turned down, for the Rylcombe fellows were not treated to feather beds. But Larking had not noticed the lump. He had been otherwise engaged.

He stood now with soaked pyjamas and lowering face. He had plopped right into the basin, and there was now very little water left in it. What was not in his pyjamas had gone to soak the bed.

"I know!" he howled. And he made a rush at Goggs' bed.

But before he could get there Bags had grabbed him by the shoulders.

"Easy does it!" he said. "What makes you think it was Goggles?"

Goggs sat up.

"Does he really think that it was I, my dear Bagshaw?" he asked, in tones of expostulation. "I beg that you will reason with him on the utter absurdity of such a suspicion! My dear grandmother—"

"If you don't leave go of me, Blount, I'll give—"

"Go ahead, then! I'm not leaving go," replied Bags cheerfully.

"Larking must be jolly soft to think poor old Goggles had the brains and the nerve for a jape like that!" said Tricks.

"Rather!" agreed Wagtail.

"Who did it if he didn't?" hooted Larking.

"I put the blessed things in his bed—not the basin, though; only a wet sponge or two. If he didn't put them in mine one of you rotters must have done it, that's all!"

"Are you not mistaken, Larking? I assure you that my bed is not in the least damp," said Goggs.

Larking glared at him. But Goggs looked so very innocent that Larking began to believe that one of the other three had upset his genial plan for the greater comfort of Goggs.

"You can let go, Blount!" he growled. "I sha'n't do anything till to-morrow."

"Better, old scout!" said Bags, loosing his hold. "You'll want that bed to-night, and something will have to be done to it before you can sleep in it, I should say."

"That's my bizney!" snorted Larking. "Come out of that, Weird!"

"Here, I say, that's not fair!" said Wagtail indignantly.

"Against such treatment I protest; I cannot brook so wet a rest!"

mumbled Jasper.

"Brook isn't exactly the word, it's more like a giddy swamp!" said Tricks, inspecting the bed of Larking critically.

Carpenter was also inspecting it with care.

"I say, Lark," he said, "these beds have been changed! This one has clean sheets."

"We all had clean sheets a day or two ago," remarked Snipe.

"A day or two ago isn't to-day, chump! This sheet isn't creased a bit! You can always tell. It belonged to one of the new chaps' beds."

"Dear me! I sincerely trust that you do not mind my having your bedclothes, Larking? for it would almost seem that I must have them," said Goggs apologetically.

"Not mind? You bet I do mind, though!" snapped Larking. "Come out of it!"

"Do you really consider that I should give up these bedclothes, which are dry, and at least fairly clean, and take the wet ones from Larking's bed, Bagshaw?" asked Goggs. "I will be guided by your wishes in the matter, my dear fellow."

"I'll punch your fat head if you're mug enough to do anything of the sort!" growled Bags.

"Then I regret that I cannot oblige you, Larking, much as I might wish to do so were the circumstances otherwise," said Goggs blandly. "Do you know, I do not like having my fat head punched? I find it painful."

Larking looked at Carpenter and Snipe. But it was plain that he could not count upon their backing. It was also plain that any attempt to turn out Jasper Weird would bring him up against the new fellows, though he could not for the life of him see why they should champion Jasper's cause.

He turned away sullenly, got out fresh

pyjamas, and did what he could to make his soaked bed habitable.

It was long before he could sleep, though only for half an hour or so was he bothered by chuckles of amusement from the other beds.

As for Goggs, he slept like a top—the sleep of innocence, perhaps, but scarcely the sleep of such complete innocence and simplicity as Rylcombe imagined in him.

Next Morning.

LARKING looked very disgruntled in the morning, but he seemed to have made up his mind that it was of little use trying to get even with Bags & Co. at once.

He was far from feeling sure who had changed the bedclothes and mattress. On the whole, he thought Bags the likeliest to have done it, and dismissed contemptuously the notion that it could have been done by such an utter imbecile as Goggs.

How it had been done puzzled him.

It also puzzled Waters.

But Bags and Trick were in no doubt.

"Of course, nothing the Johnny-bird does is really surprising," remarked Waters before breakfast in the quad.

Goggs was not with the three at the moment. He was cultivating the acquaintance of Tadpole.

"Nothing," agreed Bags. "Right for once, Wagtail!"

"But it licks me how he worked that jape off on Larking last night."

"Doesn't take much to lick you, old top," said Tricks, gazing up thoughtfully at a sky of cloudless blue.

"Oh, you chaps think you're so dashed smart!" Wagtail said, rather huffily.

"We don't make the bloomer of thinking you so, though," said Bags.

"I suppose that was why he went out during prep," went on Waters.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Bags, grinning.

"And very likely he watched Larking on the job, and changed the bed and things as soon as his back was turned," Waters continued.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tricks, also grinning.

"But why didn't the image tell us?"

"No use spoiling a good jape like that. Besides, we didn't need telling—Tricks and I. We aren't so jolly dull and slow as you are chappie!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Wagtail.

Frank Monk and Carboy sauntered up.

"Which of you fellows got home on Larking like that last night?" asked Monk.

"You'd be surprised if you heard it was Goggs, I suppose," said Bags.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Monk and Gay.

Carboy, who had seen less of Goggs, looked curiously at Bags.

"Was it, then?" he asked slowly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gay and Monk.

They were quite sure that Johnny Goggs was incapable of "getting home on Larking" so effectively.

"Oh, you chaps may grin!" said Carboy snappishly. "My belief is that these bouncers have something up their giddy sleeves!"

"About poor old Goggles?" asked Tricks sweetly.

"Ha, ha! Look at the image over there now, yarning to Tadpole!" said Gordon Gay.

"Don't they look a giddy pair!" Frank Monk said.

"They don't look a bit giddy to me," remarked Bags. "Very sober and sedate—talking big words to one another like frabjous little Dr. Johnsons. Our Johnny-bird can sling 'em. He'd as soon say parallel-grammatic paralleliped as look at you!"

"What is a—er—parallel-what-is-it, chump?" said Carboy.

"Blessed if I know! Inquire at the shop over the way," answered Bags, nodding towards Goggs, who passed arm-in-arm with Tadpole at that moment.

"There goes the brekker-bell!" said Carboy.

"Sit next to him at table, and he'll explain that, and lots more," Tricks said.

"He's nuts on explaining things."

"No, thanks!" snapped Carboy. "I take mine without any dictionary in it."

Any suspicions that Carboy had had that Goggs was not quite what he seemed were effectually lulled. Yet Goggs' chums had not denied that Goggs was responsible for Larking's set-back. As for Weird and his rhymes, no one outside Dormitory 29 had heard anything about them. Larking & Co. still fancied that the rhymester had been guilty of rudeness to Larking & Co.

At breakfast Goggs sat between Bags and Tadpole. The latter youth found his new friend so much to his taste that he fairly clung to him.

What Goggs thought of Tadpole was another matter. But it was not entirely for the fun he got out of him that he sought his society. Bags and Tricks were sure of that. There was a vein of almost quixotic generosity in the amazing Goggs. He was very apt to take up the cause of anyone who seemed to him to be playing the uncomfortable role of under-dog; and there were times when Tadpole did not exactly find life at Rylcombe entirely congenial. Already the four new boys could guess that, though Goggs was the only one of them to whom it would likely to seem a matter of any importance.

Opposite Goggs sat Snipe, with Carpenter on one side of him and Larking on the other.

It was about half-way through the meal that someone's boot struck the left shin of Goggs with painful force.

He looked up, to see a malicious grin on the face of Snipe.

"Excuse me," he said mildly, "but did you kick me?"

"Kick you? No!" said Snipe. "I stretched my legs. Now you mention it, I believe one of my feet did find something in the way. But it didn't feel human."

"You thought it a leg of the table, possibly?" returned Goggs. "If that was the case, you have my pardon this time. But I shall be glad if you will avoid such mistakes in future."

"What shall you do if I can't avoid them?" demanded Snipe, with a sly, sidelong look at Bags, and at Tricks and Wagtail beyond him.

Snipe imagined Goggs to be altogether too timid to stand up for himself. But he did not know when any one of the other three—or all three of them—might take up the cudgels for their queer chum.

"I must say, Snipe, that you show an extremely unpleasant disposition," remarked Tadpole. "You have, on more than one occasion, kicked my shins under the table, and I cannot recall that you have ever apologised for the accident—if it were an accident, as to which I have grave doubts. I consider it in very bad form indeed to play similar tricks on one who is practically a stranger in our midst."

"Oh, do you?" sneered Snipe, with an ugly leer.

Bags and Tricks and Wagtail all appeared to be devoting all their attention to their plates. Larking and Carpenter were grinning. No one else had tumbled to the fact that there was anything going on.

Next moment Goggs gave a stifled exclamation of pain. Snipe's foot had found the same place as before. That fact alone would have made the hack more painful. But it was also much harder.

"Oh, hang it! You shouldn't stick your spindleshanks out so far!" said Snipe.

"I can hardly regard that as an adequate apology, Snipe, especially as at the moment my legs were well under me," answered Goggs.

He stooped to rub the injured leg.

His chums still gave no sign of interest.

Larking and Carpenter grinned more broadly. Carker and Lacy, close by, now became aware that something was going on, and they also grinned. Carker was as complete an outsider as Snipe, and Lacy, though he prided himself on his aristocratic breeding, was little better.

"It wasn't an apology," said Snipe. "I don't apologise to new idiots!"

"That," said Goggs, "is rude!"

"It is worse than rude!" said Tadpole indignantly. "It is really abominable! I—Yow-oww-w!"

Tadpole's shin had got it this time, and Tadpole had sprung to his feet with an ear-splitting yell.

"Tadpole!" snapped Mr. Adams, seated at the head of the table.

"Sir?" quavered Tadpole. "Ow-w-w! That hurt!"

"Why did you spring from your seat in that manner and make that absurd noise?" demanded the master.

"I—I—I could not help doing so, sir," replied Tadpole.

"That is not an explanation!"

"I—I—Oh, really, sir—"

Tadpole's difficulty was, of course, that he could not explain without sneaking. All things considered, it would not have been very flagrant sneaking, for that savage hack from Snipe had obviously been no accident.

and he deserved punishment for it—punishment which Tadpole himself was incompetent to give.

But as he paused, uncertain what to say, another voice struck in, and to all there it sounded like the voice of Snipe.

To all but Snipe himself, that is. He failed to recognise his own squeak.

"If you please, sir—"

"You silly fathead, Snipe!" hissed Larking. "Don't go and own up! Taddy daren't split. We'll skin him alive if he does!"

"Think I'm such an idiot?" replied Snipe.

"What do you want, Snipe? Are you not aware that I was addressing Tadpole? Unless you desire to explain the cause of his exclamation—I observe that you are sitting opposite to him, and it is not impossible that you—"

"It's nothing of that sort, sir. I only wanted to speak to you about the sugar."

"You utter ass, Snipey!" breathed Carpenter.

Snipe stared in bewilderment. He had heard those words, but quite certainly he had not spoken them, and he could not understand how anyone could fancy that he had.

"About the sugar, Snipe? What can you mean?" snapped the master.

"I— Oh, really, sir, I—"

Snipe stopped, fairly gasping for words.

But Snipe's voice appeared to go on. It went on with no more pause than there had been in Snipe's own broken utterances.

"I don't consider that we are fairly treated about the sugar, sir!"

"You absolute idiot!" muttered Larking.

Five minutes earlier, before he had begun his gentle tricks at the expense of Goggs and Tadpole, Snipe had been grumbling about the sugar. He liked plenty of it in his coffee, and he had said that there ought to be an inquiry into what was done with the rations, seeing that there was plainly only one lump per cup allowed.

Goggs had heard that, and was turning it to his own ends now. The others seated near had also heard, of course. It was unlike Snipe to speak out so boldly to anyone. But, naturally, everyone who heard, except Goggs and his chums, believed that it was he who spoke.

"You do not consider that— Oh, what on earth can be your meaning, Snipe?" thundered the master. "If your complaint is warranted—though that I do not for a moment credit—the making it to me is ridiculous! Surely you know that I have no more to do with such matters than you have?"

"I—I never said—"

Snipe hoggled again, and his pause gave the ventriloquist another chance.

"That you had, sir. But I'm in your Form, sir, and I think that you might take some interest in such an important matter when it concerns a member of your Form. I need a good deal of sugar, sir; and—and, in short, sir, I have very strong views upon the subject, and I feel it my duty to express them!"

If Mr. Adams had not been so angry he might have seen that Snipe could not possibly have made that speech. But neither he nor anyone else not in the secret noticed that, during the time which it took, Snipe's lower jaw hung in such a position as to make speech out of the question for him.

Bags and Tricks both observed that fact. But it was easier for them to see it than for others, since others had no doubt that Snipe was speaking. And Wagtail, who had tumbled to it that it was Goggs in the main, was not even now quite sure what came from Snipe and what from Goggs, and did not think of looking at the ugly mouth of the supposed grumbler.

Mr. Adams rose to his feet.

"If you have any complaint about table matters to make, Snipe, you can make it to the Head, and he will doubtless consider it, if it be justified, though that I do not believe," he said severely. "For your astounding impertinence in addressing me on such a subject, in such a manner, and at such a time, I will deal with you immediately after breakfast! You will have the goodness to wait upon me in my study at the close of the meal."

With that the master of the Fourth whisked out of the room, with swishing gown and darkened brow.

"You silly ass, Snipe!" said Gordon Gay, leaning forward in his place further up the table. "You must know jolly well that half a pound of sugar a week—"

"I never said a word about sugar!" snarled Snipe.

Everyone near stared at him,

"Oh, come off it!" said Carpenter. "We know that you never were particular about the truth. But what's the giddy use of lying like that?"

"I'm not lying, you idiot!"

"But you were grousing about it only a few minutes before you made an ass of yourself by whining to Adams," Larking said.

"I never whined to Adams, you chuckle-headed lunatic! It beats me how anyone could suppose that was my voice. It wasn't a scrap like it, I know that. It wasn't like a human voice at all, come to that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, there!" called Mr. Barnes, the Fifth Form-master from the next table.

Nearly everyone had joined in that burst of laughter. It really was funny to hear Snipe saying that his own voice—and only Snipe and four others knew that it was not Snipe's voice—was like nothing human.

"You'd better tell Adams that yarn," said Frank Monk grimly.

"If you want a double dose, that is," added Wootton minor.

"I'm going to tell him!" snapped Snipe.

"If you do not cease that tumult I will send you all to the Head!" said Mr. Barnes angrily.

A Dog with a Bad Name.

DELAMERE, captain of Rylecombe, tapped Snipe on the shoulder as the fellows filed out from Hall.

"Let me know whether Adams gives you what you asked for, Snipe!" he said grimly.

Snipe stopped, not because he wanted to, but because he had to. Those behind him stopped also, and among them were the four new boys.

"What do you mean?" asked Snipe, half-whining, half-defiant.

"If you don't get the cane from Adams you'll get the ashplant from me!" said the skipper. "This is a decent school, and we don't accuse the people who run it of sneaking rations. That kind of thing is dead off among folks who know what's the thing and what isn't."

"No harm in seeing that I get the sugar I'm entitled to, is there?"

The words came from Goggs, but Delamere never doubted that Snipe had spoken them.

He seized Snipe by the ear.

"Varoooh! Leggo!"

It was not Goggs this time.

"You impudent young scoundrel!" breathed Delamere. "If you're such a hopeless cad that you—"

"I never said a word about sugar, you idiot! It's someone else playing tricks. Can't you tell that it's not my voice, or anything a bit like it?"

Snipe paused, and Goggs took up the speech.

"Besides, if I did, what's it to do with you, anyway? If you fancy going short of sugar in your coffee that's no reason at all why other chaps should, is it?"

"Snipe's potty!" said Carpenter.

"Clane off his crumpet!" agreed Nicky O'Donnell.

"Stark raving mad!" Wootton major said.

"You silly fools; it's not me!" hooted Snipe.

"Do you not think an inquiry into his mental condition would be only fair?" asked Goggs meekly. "I do not desire to thrust myself forward, but it does occur to me that if he is punished for what he cannot help those who are concerned in his punishment may afterwards feel very uncomfortable in mind about it."

Delamere turned upon Goggs.

"You're one of the new kids, aren't you?" he said.

"I am a—er—new boy, certainly," replied Goggs politely.

"Well, I don't see what you're butting in for. But have you any reason for supposing Snipe to be really potty?"

"Only that he suffers from spasmodic movements of the limbs," said Goggs.

"You're a liar!" howled Snipe.

"You're talking Greek!" snapped Delamere.

But it was not Greek to Snipe. He knew very well what Goggs meant—the sly backs under the table.

"I fear that I cannot explain more clearly," Goggs replied. "But I have grounds for my statement, I assure you."

Delamere gave Snipe a vigorous push.

"Clear off to Adams!" he said. "I think he can be trusted to see that you get your deserts! I've had my eye on you for some

time, Snipe. You're an ill-conditioned rotter, and no credit to your Form or your school!" Snipe had to go.

There was little enough chance that Mr. Adams would forget the appointment he had made. It was not Mr. Adams' way to forget such things. But even had Snipe risked that there would have been Delamere to reckon with; and on the whole there was not much to choose between the Fourth Form-master and the captain of the school.

So Snipe went.

In the quad the Fourth, awaiting the bell for morning classes, talked over the matter.

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"WALLY'S WHEEZE!"

By Frank Richards.

Loaded down as he had been by his cousin Billy's bad reputation, Wally Bunter, while still believed to be Billy, has yet made for himself a place at Greyfriars that Billy never achieved. Fellows wonder how Bunter can have improved so much—not only at footer, but in manners and in morals.

As yet there is no general suspicion of the truth. But one Removite at least has a notion of it. That one is Sidney James Snoop.

A few weeks ago you read how Snoop stood by Wally in rather a tight corner. His support did not involve any heroism on his part; if it had he might not have given it. But he did give it, and partly on that account, partly because he has a good deal of sympathy for the black sheep's desire to pull straight, Wally cherishes a really friendly feeling towards Snoop. He showed that in the matter of Mauly's missing banknote, recounted in this week's fine yarn; and he shows it again in next week's story.

Snoop resolves to do a very foolish thing, and asks Wally for advice in the matter. What he really wants is not advice at all, but agreement. But Wally does not agree. He thinks out a scheme to protect Snoop from the consequences of his folly. What that scheme was I am not going to tell you, except to say that William Wibley comes into it. In the course of the arguments between Wally and Snoop the latter lets fall a hint or two that he knows more than other people about the former; and it seems pretty clear that he has guessed the secret, though he may not be absolutely sure that his guess is correct.

BILLY BUNTER IN THE "GEM."

Billy Bunter's absence from Greyfriars should not mean to any of you even a partial and temporary loss of him. If you are not reading the "Gem" stories, which tell of his doings at St. Jim's, you are missing some of the best and most amusing school yarns ever published anywhere. You know Bunter—the St. Jim's fellows don't—at least, they do not know him as you do. Some of them are aware of Billy Bunter's ventriloquial talent; but they believe Billy to be his cousin, and they have no reason to suppose Wally to have the ventriloquial gift. This gives the Owl his chance, and in the number of the "Gem" out on Wednesday you will find a splendid story of his mystification of St. Jim's, under the title of

"THE HAUNTED SCHOOL!"

THE "PENNY POPULAR."

The reissue of this tipping paper has been a most complete success. We hoped well of it, but it is doing even better than we hoped. Ever so many would-be readers have written to say that they were unable to get copies of the first number. Some of them had ordered copies, and yet failed, in spite of a big reprint which we made. I have lots of sympathy for these, but not a great deal for those who expected to get it without placing an order. If you want it you must really let your newsagent know in advance. And you do want it, you know—if you don't, it only shows that you don't know a good thing when you hear about it. I will not say "see it," because it is very difficult to see it unless you place an order.

YOUR EDITOR

8-3-10