

THE BOUNDER'S WAY!
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

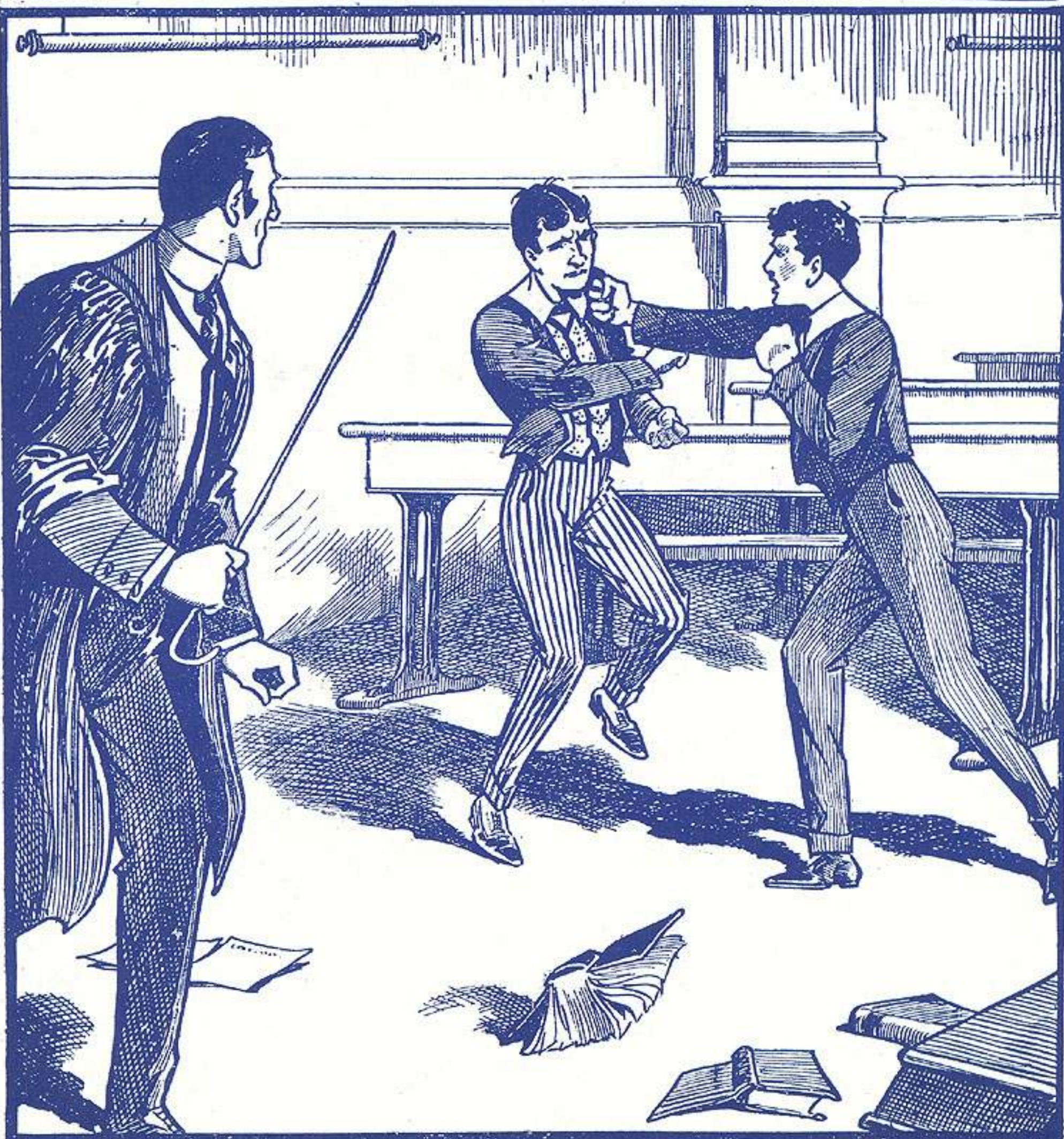


The Magnet 1st

Library



No. 490. Vol. 11.



IN DETENTION!

Copyright in the United States of America.

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

THE BOUNDER'S WAY!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Happy Afternoon!

"HE, he, he! You do look a picture, Wharton!" Thus Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

Lessons were over on Wednesday morning, and the Remove—the Lower Fourth—had come out of their Form-room.

The Famous Five of the Remove had gathered in the doorway, looking out into the sunny quadrangle.

It was a bright and sunny day in mid-summer, and as it was a half-holiday that afternoon the chums of the Remove ought, naturally, to have been looking particularly cheerful.

But they were not.

Several fellows glanced at Wharton as they passed the group, and smiled. And Billy Bunter emitted an unpleasant cackle.

Wharton frowned.

He was not looking or feeling his usual self. His handsome face was marked with the signs of battle. There was a very visible mouse under his left eye, his nose was swollen, and there was a dark bruise on his chin. Those adornments did not make for beauty or for comfort.

"Shut up, you fat bounder!" growled Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Well, Wharton does look a picture!" he insisted. "But Smithy's worse—he's still got a black eye! He, ha, he!"

"Do you want one, too?" grunted Johnny Bull.

Bunter backed away a pace or two. Most decidedly he did not want one, and Johnny looked quite ready to give him one.

"Oh, really, Bull, you know—"

"Buzz off!" said Frank Nugent.

"Make your esteemed self rare!" added Hurree Janset Ram Singh, probably meaning scarce. Inky's English was not always up to concert pitch.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, without making himself scarce. "I've got a suggestion to make! Wharton's detained this afternoon for fighting with the Bounder in the dorm—"

"Have you just found that out, fat-head?"

"Besides, he wouldn't care to go over to Cliff House with a face like that, even if Quelchy let him off," argued Bunter. "It would make the girls cackle. You can't show Marjorie a chivvy like that, Wharton!"

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Wharton.

He was only too keenly conscious of the fact that he could not let Marjorie Hazeldene see his face in its present damaged condition.

"Naturally, you chaps won't want to go without Wharton," continued Billy Bunter slowly, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big glasses. "Of course, you'll stay in. Now, what I'm going to suggest is this. Marjorie and Clara are expecting you. I'd better go instead."

"Ring off, porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You can't leave

Marjorie expecting you, you know. If I go, it will be all right. I'll go with Hazel, you know. Is it a go?"

Bob Cherry drew back his foot, and Bunter hopped out promptly on the steps.

"Look here, Cherry, you beast—"

"Travel!" roared Bob.

"Well, am I to go to Cliff House instead of you chaps?" asked Bunter. "I don't mind the trouble—not a bit. I'd do more than that to oblige old pals like you fellows. You know Marjorie will be glad to see me. She always is. You needn't glare at me, Bob Cherry! You can't expect girls to think anything about a chap with a face like yours!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Bob Cherry, in great wrath.

"Better to face the facts, you know," said Bunter calmly. "What girls admire is a chap who's good-looking and elegant—a chap with a figure—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter interrupted the fat junior.

"Well, you've got a figure, Bunter," grinned Nugent—"lots of it! How many yards round is it?"

"I'm used to this petty jealousy!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I say, you fellows, if you like to give me a message for Marjorie, you know—"

"Buzz off!"

"As a matter of absolute fact, you know, she'd rather see me than you," said Bunter confidentially. "I'm not a fellow to brag, but a cow with half an eye could see that Marjorie is rather sweet in my direction. And, I say—Yarooooop!"

Bob Cherry's boot was introduced into the conversation at that point, and the Owl of the Remove rolled off the steps and sat down.

Hazeldene of the Remove came out of the house, and paused a moment, colouring a little as he looked at the Famous Five.

"You fellows are going over to Cliff House?" he said. "Will you tell my sister I'm sorry I can't come this afternoon?"

"Oh! You're not going?" said Harry Wharton.

"No. I can't, as it happens."

"I can't go!" said Harry, knitting his brows. "These chaps will give Marjorie your message, if you really can't go, Hazel—"

"I've said I can't," said Hazel. And with that he went down the steps and walked away towards the gates.

Wharton looked at his chums.

"Well, you fellows had better cut off," he said. "I've got to go into the Form-room at two, as I'm detained."

"Oh, we could all stay in!" said Bob.

"No good doing that. You can't keep me company in the Form-room," said Harry, with a smile. "Besides, Marjorie and Clara are expecting some of us, to go on the cliffs. No good spoiling your afternoon."

Billy Bunter scrambled up.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry made a rush down the steps, and the Owl of the Remove fled.

"I shall squash that fat owl some day!" growled Bob, as he returned. "Now, to go or not to go, that's the question, as Spokeshave remarks."

"Go!" said Harry.

"Well, we may as well," said Johnny Bull. "No good hanging about the school. It's rotten hard lines—an afternoon like this! If Quelchy knew why you'd hammered Vernon-Smith he wouldn't have detained you."

"I couldn't exactly explain to him," said Harry.

"No; but it's rotten hard lines all the same! You were an ass to fight him about Hazel—the cad isn't worth it!"

Wharton did not answer.

"Look at the worm now!" continued Johnny Bull. "His sister's expecting him this afternoon, and he won't go. Where's he gone? Playing cards in the barn, with Pensonby & Co., I'll bet my hat!"

"I hope not," said Harry.

"Rats! You know it as well as I do!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He was out of bounds on Monday night, and you know what he was out of bounds for. He's on the razzle again, the silly ass! And you were ass enough to fight Smithy for taking him out! A lot of taking he wanted, I fancy!"

"Perhaps I was an ass," said Wharton. "But I'm not sorry. Hazel gets into mischief enough without Smithy helping him into more!"

"Br-r-r!" said Johnny Bull.

Johnny was a fellow of determined character himself, and anyone who had set out to lead him into shady ways would have found the task a very difficult one. He had only contempt for a weak-willed fellow who was led into evil.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry. And the juniors were silent.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, came along the passage. His severe glance rested upon the captain of the Remove.

"You will go into the Form-room now, Wharton."

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

"You will remain there till five o'clock, and employ the time in learning by heart fifty lines of the 'Æneid.'"

"Very well, sir!"

Harry Wharton nodded to his comrades, and turned his steps towards the Remove-room.

The four Removites looked rather glum as he left them. It was a glorious afternoon, and they were free till evening call-over; and they usually enjoyed a ramble over the cliffs with their girl-chums of Cliff House. But it took away a good deal of the enjoyment to start with their chum detained in the Form-room to grind over Virgil.

There was no help for it, however. They put on their straw hats and started.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Two in Trouble!

VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was in the Remove Form-room when Harry Wharton arrived there.

The Bounder did not look exactly cheerful.

He had been defeated in the fight with Wharton in the dormitory, and he was showing more signs of it than the captain of the Remove.

One of his eyes was quite black and still painful, and he had a cut lip, as well as several bruises.

Mr. Quelch had taken a very severe view of the matter. The cause of the dispute he did not know. With a few rounds with the gloves on, the Remove-master would not have interfered. But a fight with bare knuckles, followed by discoloured eyes, was quite against the rules. A fellow who carried a black eye about the school was not a pleasant object to look upon, and he was sure of punishment.

Detention for a half-holiday on a sunny day was punishment severe enough, though, as a matter of fact, the two juniors had already been caned in addition.

The Bounder looked up, with a mocking smile, as Wharton came in.

Harry, without glancing at him, went directly to his desk and sat down.

A weary afternoon was before him.

Through the big, open windows of the Form-room he could hear shouts from the cricket-field, where Greyfriars First were playing a senior team from St. Jude's. There was also a junior match between the Shell and the Upper Fourth. The Greyfriars fellows were enjoying that sunny afternoon.

Still, dull as it was in the dusky Form-room, Wharton was glad that matters were no worse.

On the following Saturday the Remove had an important cricket fixture, and if detention had fallen on that day Wharton would have been compelled to stand out of the Highcliffe match.

He opened his Virgil, and started work—not enjoyable work. The paper shortage had been felt at Greyfriars, and lines were much more sparingly inflicted than of old. Learning Virgil by heart is no doubt a very useful exercise, and one who fully appreciated the beauties of the Roman poet might have enjoyed the task. But at fifteen there is a plentiful lack of appreciation of Virgil's verses, first-rate as some of them are.

Vernon-Smith had his Virgil open, propped against a Latin grammar, and was looking at it idly.

Both the juniors were soon weary of the task.

It is easier to impress verses upon the memory by repeating them aloud, and a low, continuous mumble of two voices sounded for some time in the otherwise silent Form-room.

Vernon-Smith pitched his Virgil across the room at last.

"By gad! I'm fed-up with it!" he exclaimed.

Wharton felt the same, but he did not reply. The Bounder looked at him with an ironical grin.

"Can't you speak?" he asked.

"Yes, if you like," said Harry, laying down his book.

"A pretty pair of objects we both are!" said Vernon-Smith, rubbing his eye.

"Quite so."

"I gave you pretty nearly as good as you gave me!" sneered the Bounder. "If I hadn't had a fight with Bolsover major that same day I fancy I should have knocked you out. I wasn't fit."

"I offered to wait."

"Oh, I'm not complaining! Precious fool you were to offer!" said Vernon-Smith.

Wharton took up his book again. This kind of conversation was not much of a relief from P. Virgilius Maro.

"Oh, chuck it for a bit!" growled the Bounder. "Dashed if I haven't a jolly good mind to cut!"

"That only means detention for two half-holidays instead of one."

"I've a good mind to risk it. You wouldn't?"

"No!"

"No, of course. You're playing Courtenay's team at Highcliffe on Saturday!" sneered the Bounder. "It would rather knock that on the head if you got detained. Is Hazel playing?"

"Yes."

"I needn't ask you whether my name's down?"

"You needn't. It's not down!" said Wharton. And he went on with Virgil, mumbling aloud: "Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyri tenere coloni—"

always looking for trouble. I appealed to you to let him alone, and you said you would. If he's landed in a scrape again, it means trouble for Marjorie. He's bound to go to her with it. It was a rotten, dirty trick you played in getting him to go out of bounds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see where the laugh comes in."

"Suppose I didn't take Hazel out that night, but he took me out?" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, rot!"

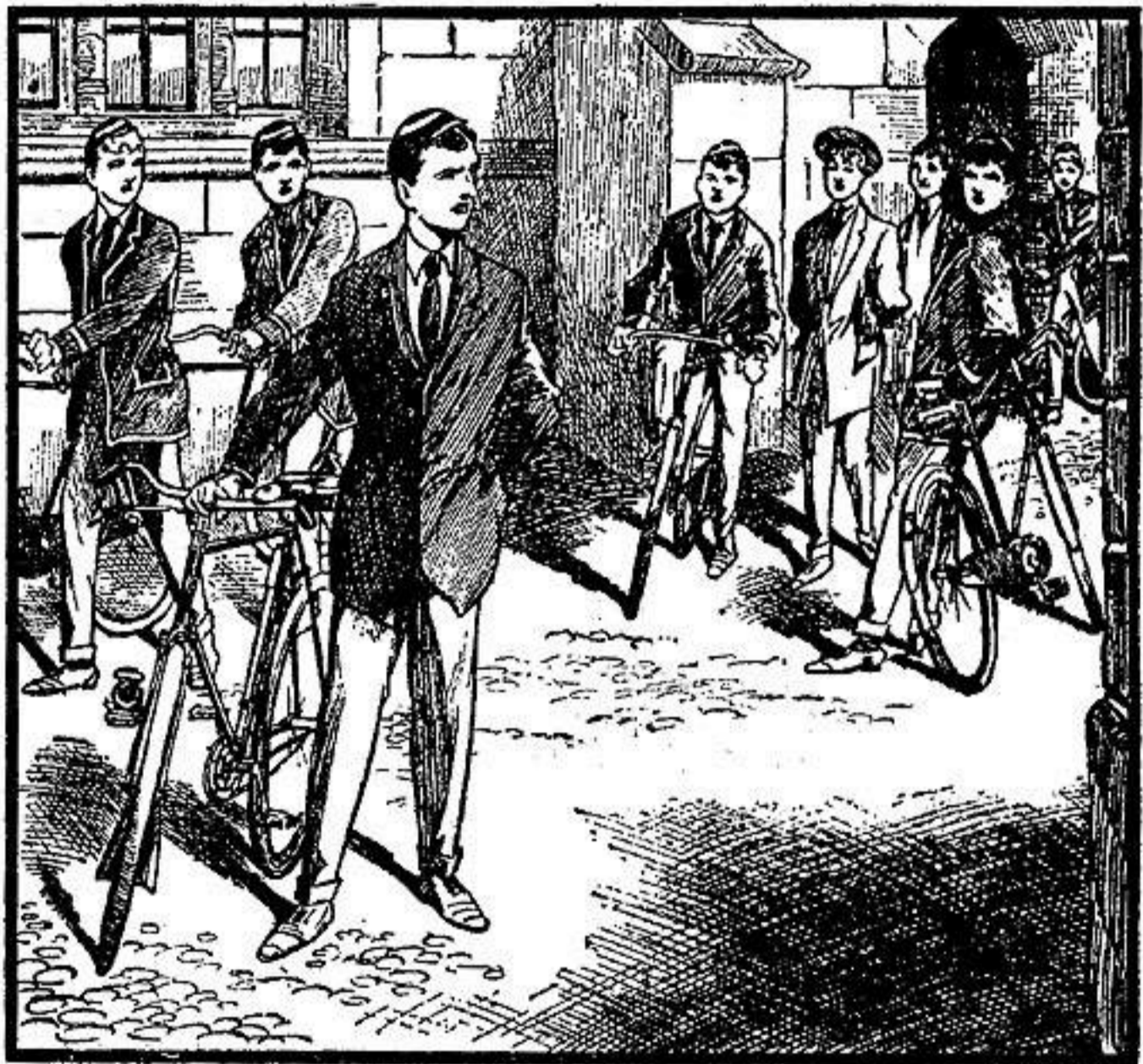
"Suppose I prevented him from going to see the seedy sportsmen at the Cross Keys, and that's why he spun you that yarn, to get you pitching into me, to pay me out for disappointing him?"

Wharton looked startled for a moment.

"Rot!" he said. "Hazel told me plainly—"

"And if I'd told you another story you wouldn't have believed me?"

"No."



Hazel was just wheeling his bloyele out. (See Chapter 6.)

"A blinking city there was, of blinking Tyre a blinking colony!" growled the Bounder, construing in a way Mr. Quelch certainly would not have approved. "Who wants to know all that dashed rot? That old idiot Cato, who thought Carthage ought to be destroyed, might have made better use of his time in destroying idiots who wrote blank verse about it!" The Bounder pitched his Latin grammar after Virgil. "I'm fed-up!"

He rose from his desk, and moved restlessly about the room, while the captain of the Remove continued to mumble Latin verses. He stopped before Wharton's desk at last.

"You pitched into me on Monday night because Hazel came out of the dorm with me after lights out," he said.

"That's an old story now," said Harry.

"Wasn't it rather like your check?"

"I don't think so," said Wharton quietly. "You know, as well as I do, that Hazel's as weak as water, and

"And you wouldn't now?"

"No."

"Well, I'm not going to," said the Bounder, laughing. "But your precious protegee, Hazel—do you know where he is now?"

Wharton shook his head.

"He's gone to meet Ponsonby of Highcliffe, and Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour. It's a card-party in the old barn," said the Bounder, with a sneering laugh. "I should be there, too, if I wasn't detained!"

"I dare say you would!" said Harry contemptuously.

"You turned me out of the eleven because you weren't pleased with my wicked ways," sneered Smithy. "Because a chap might be seedy after a night out—what!—and not play up to form, and because I shock you—what! Well, what about Hazel? He's doing the same."

"I've only your word for that."

"You can easy prove it, if you

choose. Are you going to turn Hazel out of the eleven?"

Harry Wharton did not answer.

"Or are you going to keep him, and chance the cricket and the Highcliffe match, because he's Marjorie's brother?"

"No. If he's not in form on Saturday, he won't be played!"

"Oh, he'll be in some kind of form! You won't have the evidence till he's made his duck. You're going slower in his case than in mine," sneered Vernon-Smith. "Oh, put that rotten Virgil down! Do you know what I've a good mind to do?"

"Well, what?" said Harry.

"Quelch's detained us both for fighting in the dorm the other night. Suppose we try it over again now?" said the Bounder, his eyes glittering.

"We won't!" said Harry. "If you want to try again, we'll try in the gym, not in the Form-room."

"Quelch would detain us both next Saturday—what!"

"He would be sure to if he found us fighting here. Don't be a silly ass!"

"Well, how would that hurt me?" said the Bounder coolly. "I'm left out of the eleven. I'm not playing against Highcliffe, anyway. Why shouldn't I make you miss the match, too?"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

The Bounder stood regarding him with mocking eyes.

There was no doubt that if Mr. Quelch—who was angry with the two juniors already—found them fighting in the Form-room during the detention the matter would be very serious.

It would probably mean a severe caning, and detention for two or three half-holidays for both of them.

The Bounder grinned at the expression that came over Harry Wharton's face.

"You wouldn't tell Quelch I began it," he chuckled. "If you did, it would only be your word against mine, dear boy, and Quelch has got to be impartial. Why shouldn't I go for you now? That means keeping you out of the Highcliffe match—just as I'm kept out!"

Wharton rose to his feet.

"Do as you like," he said quietly.

The Bounder looked at him, grinning evilly. It was evident that the temptation was very strong in his breast, but some remnant of decency held him back from carrying out the scheme. It was in his hands. A fight would certainly have brought Mr. Quelch upon the spot, and the Remove-master could not have guessed that the blame all lay with the Bounder.

"By gad, I've a good mind—" the Bounder hesitated.

Wharton looked at him steadily.

"You don't ask me to let you off?" grinned the Bounder.

"I ask nothing of you!" said Wharton contemptuously.

"You know what it means, if I choose?"

"I know you can play a dirty trick, as you've done many times before. I don't expect anything else from you!"

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

He had hesitated, but the scornful words banished the last scruple he had. He struck at Wharton savagely across the desk.

The next moment they were fighting furiously.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Comes Down Heavy!

A STEADY sound of clicking came from Mr. Quelch's study.

The Remove-master was improving the shining hour that afternoon by labouring at his voluminous

"History of Greyfriars, from the Reign of King Stephen"—a work which had filled his leisure hours for many years.

Mr. Quelch did not like being interrupted when he was labouring at great work.

He hardly noticed for some minutes a noise that proceeded from the direction of the Form-rooms.

But his busy fingers rested on the typewriter keys at last.

He listened.

After listening a moment or two he rose, with a dark frown upon his brow, picked up a cane, and left his study.

A minute more and he was looking into the Remove Form-room, with thunder in his gaze.

Loud tramping of feet, panting of breath, and heavy pommelling were on in the Form-room.

The two juniors he had left at detention tasks were evidently not devoting themselves to Latin verses. They were fighting savagely.

Mr. Quelch was amazed as well as angry. The two Removites had been detained for fighting. That they should dream of renewing the combat in the sacred precincts of the Form-room was astounding.

The Form-master strode into the room. "Boys!" he thundered. "Wharton! Vernon-Smith! Cease this instantly! Separate, do you hear me?"

The combatants separated.

They stood glaring and panting, and Mr. Quelch strode between them.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed. "How dare you fight here—or, indeed, at all! Cannot you keep your unruly tempers in check even in the Form-room?"

Neither of the juniors replied. The Bounder gave the captain of the Remove a mocking look.

"It is clear that I have not punished you with sufficient severity," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall now cane you both. You first, Wharton! As head boy of the Form, you should know better, and you are most to blame. Hold out your hand!"

In grim silence Harry Wharton endured the caning. It was severe enough—four on each hand, laid on with great vigour.

"Go to your place!" said Mr. Quelch harshly.

The captain of the Remove returned to his desk, still without a word.

"Now, Vernon-Smith—"

The swishing of the cane was heard again. The Bounder endured the castigation with stoical calm.

"You will both be detained for two half-holidays," said Mr. Quelch sternly; "and if you do not acquire a proper sense of discipline, I shall seriously consider whether to take away your holidays for the remainder of the term. As you cannot be trusted to keep the peace, you, Vernon-Smith, will go into the Upper Fourth Form-room to complete your detention."

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder.

He gave Wharton a last look, but the captain of the Remove did not meet his eyes. Then he quitted the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch followed him out, and closed the door.

The Bounder went into the Fourth Form-room rubbing his hands—which hurt considerably—but smiling.

Mr. Quelch returned to his study, and to the interrupted "History of Greyfriars," assured that he had dealt out strict and impartial justice.

In the Remove-room Wharton remained alone.

He did not settle down to his Virgil again.

He was in no mood for that. He moved restlessly about the room. The caning

had been severe, and his hands felt as if they were on fire. But that was not the worst.

The Bounder had succeeded in his cunning schemes. Mr. Quelch had played unconsciously into his hands. It had been inevitable. Wharton was detained for Saturday, now, and the Highcliffe match would have to be played without him!

It was enough to make the captain of the Remove despondent. It had been impossible to explain the facts to the Remove-master.

His pride revolted from the idea of saying that Vernon-Smith had begun it; and if the Bounder had denied it—as certainly he would have done—Mr. Quelch could not well have accepted the word of one in preference to that of the other.

The remainder of the afternoon was dreary enough to Harry Wharton. He resumed his task at last, and when five o'clock rang out, and Mr. Quelch came in, he was able to recite his lines fairly well, and was dismissed.

His chums were waiting for him at the end of the passage. They had already returned from their excursion.

Bob Cherry slipped his arm through Wharton's.

"Tea's ready," he said. "Come on—you're looking awfully down!"

"I feel rather down," said Harry.

"Yes, it was rotten," said Nugent. "Marjorie was sorry you couldn't come. But it's over."

"It's not over," said Wharton grimly. "I'm detained for Saturday as well."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Fighting with Smithy in the Form-room."

The Co. stared at him.

"Well, you must have been pretty badly in want of something to do," said Johnny Bull. "You might have known that Quelch would detain you again for that."

"I knew that, of course."

"Then what on earth did you do it for?" demanded Bull, rather tartly.

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"Can't you see? Smithy knew it too, and he planted it on me. Quelch came down on both of us."

"Oh, the deep rotter!"

"The rotterfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh diemally. "The esteemed Highcliffe match will be mucked up."

"You fellows will have to play without me," said Harry. "It can't be helped. Let's go and have tea."

The chums of the Remove proceeded to No. 1 Study in dismal humour. Once more the Bounder had been too cunning for them.

"I'll smash him!" said Bob Cherry, as he cracked his egg. "Of course, the cad did this on purpose. My hat! He is going downhill, and no mistake!"

"It's Smithy as he used to be," growled Johnny Bull. "I never thought he'd quite get down so low as that again. It's his old self. But we'll make him sorry for it!"

"Not much good," said Wharton moodily. "You can't be fighting Smithy every day. He's done me. Better let him alone, or some of you may be detained on Saturday as well. We don't want to lose the Highcliffe match if we can help it. The team will have a big fight, anyway."

"We miss Smithy from the eleven," confessed Bob Cherry; "and with you out of it, too, Harry, it won't be a walk-over for us, anyway. Courtenay and the Caterpillar are in great form."

"Quelch may relent," said Nugent hopefully. "You may get into his good graces again, and beg off for Saturday."

Wharton shook his head. That was not likely.

"Better try to think of a chap to take my place," he said. "I think Delarey will be about the best. There may be another weak place in the team, too—Hazel hasn't shown up very well lately. It looks as if our luck's out at cricket."

"Never say die!" said Bob Cherry, as cheerfully as he could. "We'll beat Highcliffe somehow."

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh remarked that the somehowfulness would be terrific. Altogether, it was not a very cheerful tea-party in Study No. 1.

The Famous Five did not see the Bounder again till they went into the Common-room in the evening.

Vernon-Smith was talking to Skinner and Bolsover major, having apparently become reconciled with the latter. He did not look at the five as they came in.

Wharton's chums restrained their natural desire to go for the plotting Bounder. He looked as if he had had enough, for one thing; but the important consideration was that they could not afford to risk being detained on Saturday.

Hazeldene was in the Common-room, and he did not look happy. He had come in just in time for calling-over, looking pale and tired. He glanced at Wharton, but dropped his eyes as he met the gaze of the captain of the Remove. To judge by appearances, Hazel had not enjoyed his afternoon with the nuts of Highcliffe, and probably by that time he wished that he had gone to Cliff House instead of joining that "little game" with Ponsonby & Co.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Money Wanted!

DURING the next day Harry Wharton gave a great deal of thought to the subject of the Highcliffe match.

It was an important fixture to the Remove, and it was Wharton's business, as cricket captain, to find a winning team. Frank Courtenay, the junior skipper of Highcliffe, had brought his team up to a high pitch, and the match would not have been an easy one in any case. Now that the Bounder no longer played for the Remove, it was more necessary than ever for the rest of the eleven to keep up to the mark. Dick Rake made a good substitute for Vernon-Smith, but he was not up to the Bounder's form at his best. Now that Wharton himself had to stand out, the prospects were not rosy.

Wharton had decided to play Delarey, the South African junior, unless, by a miraculous chance, Mr. Quelch relented and let him off for Saturday. But there was another weak spot in the team—Hazeldene.

Chiefly on Marjorie's account, Wharton had always been very patient with Hazel. But he could not risk playing a passenger in an important match on anybody's account. Hazel had neglected practice of late, and had displayed an uncertain and irritable temper when spoken to on the subject. He was not an easy fellow to deal with; but the captain of the Remove had to deal with him.

Wharton was all the more unwilling to take any step that would put Hazel off cricket, because it would be sure to throw him all the more into the arms of Skinner & Co. and the Bounder. But he had his duty to the team to consider first of all.

After morning lessons on Thursday he joined Hazel when the Remove came out of the Form-room. Marjorie's

brother was looking depressed and moody.

Wharton walked out into the quadrangle with him, Hazel only acknowledging his presence by a restive gesture.

"Time for some practice at the nets before dinner, old fellow," said Harry cheerily.

"I don't feel up to it before dinner!"

"Oh, come along! We're all going!"

"Can't you give a chap a rest?" said Hazel sulkily. "I don't believe in pegging away every spare minute."

"Well, you don't quite do that," said Harry mildly. "You never went near the nets yesterday afternoon."

"I had something else to do."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Your form's going all to pot, Hazel," he said, after a pause. "I may as well speak plainly. We sha'n't have a ripping chance on Saturday, anyway, and every fellow in the team ought to be at the top of his form. I suppose you know I'm out of it, and Bob will have to captain the eleven? I want you to do your level best when we play Highcliffe."

"If you mean you want an excuse to drop me out of the eleven, you needn't beat about the bush. I'll resign, if you like!"

"I don't mean that," said Wharton quietly. "I shall be disappointed if you resign. I want you to be in good form."

"Oh, I shall be all right!" said Hazel irritably. "The fact is, I'm not thinking of cricket just now. I'm in rather a fix."

Wharton was not surprised to hear it. He knew Hazel's fixes of old.

Hazel stopped, and looked at the captain of the Remove uneasily and anxiously.

"Look here, Wharton, I'll play up on Saturday—you can rely on me. I'll stick to practice like glue. If—if I could get this off my mind—"

"What is it?" asked Wharton.

"I—I was with Ponsonby yesterday afternoon—"

"I guessed that."

Hazel sneered.

"I don't see why you should have been thinking about it at all. Still, as you seem to take an interest in my affairs, perhaps you feel inclined to help me out of the fix I've got into. It isn't much—only a couple of quid."

"You owe it to Ponsonby?"

"Well, I want a couple of quid," said Hazel. "No need to go into details. The question is, can you lend me the money, and will you?"

"I can't—not at once, anyway. I could get it. I've some money in the bank."

"I want it to-day, or not at all."

Wharton paused.

He uttered no word of the anger that was within his breast. And he was more angry with the Bounder than with Hazel. Hazel, weak and irresolute, always followed where he was led, and Wharton had reason to believe that it was Vernon-Smith who had led him into rascally ways again.

"Look here, Hazel!" he exclaimed at last. "I won't say anything about your playing the fool. But will this see you clear?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You'll be able to settle up with that Highcliffe cad, and have done with him, if I stand you two quid?"

Hazel coloured uncomfortably.

"It will see me clear," he said.

"And that will be the end of it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll do it," said Harry, making up his mind. "I don't think you're so

much to blame, as it happens. Smithy got you into it—"

"You needn't put it on Smithy," muttered Hazel. "He had nothing to do with my meeting Ponsonby."

"He took you down to the Cross Keys on Monday night," said Wharton, frowning. "That was the beginning!"

"Oh, leave Smithy out of it!" said Hazel. "I suppose I'm not a blessed baby, to be led by the nose by another fellow, am I?"

"A good deal like that, anyway," said Wharton. "If I didn't think so, I certainly shouldn't lend you money to pay a gambling debt."

"You needn't lend it to me!" said Hazel sullenly. "I dare say Smithy would, if I asked him."

"I'll find it, somehow," said Wharton, without heeding that remark. "You can send it to Ponsonby by post, I suppose."

"No, I can't! I'll bike over after lessons!" muttered Hazel uneasily. "It's all right! Pon won't play for I O U's!" he added, with an uneasy laugh.

"Then how do you come to owe him money at all?"

"I—I mean—"

Hazel broke off. "Look here, Wharton, if you choose to lend me the money I'll be obliged; but I'm not going to be catechised like a silly kid. I'm old enough to look after myself, I suppose?"

Wharton gave him a grim look.

But the harassed expression on Hazel's face moved him a little, in spite of his exasperation. If a loan of two pounds would enable the wretched junior to get clear of Ponsonby & Co. it was worth it—though the date of repayment was decidedly uncertain. There were already several old loans between him and Harry which Hazel had forgotten completely, as it seemed.

"I'll manage it," said Harry. "I'll let you have it after lessons, Hazel!"

"Thanks!" said Hazel, brightening up. "I dare say I can settle quite soon. I say, let's get down to the cricket now that's off my mind!"

"Right-ho!"

Hazel joined the Famous Five on the cricket-ground, and seemed in excellent spirits all at once. He played up pretty well, though his late want of practice had told on him. Wharton was glad to see him bright and cheerful, however, and not sorry that he was helping him out of his fix.

After lessons that day the captain of the Remove proceeded to raise the required two pounds. He collected it in half-sovereigns here and there, to be repaid by a withdrawal of the sum from his account in the Post Office Savings Bank. It was not a small sum for a junior to give away, and as for repayment, that was worse than doubtful. But Harry Wharton did not grudge it.

Hazel's eyes glistened when Harry put the currency notes into his hand.

"Buzz off, settle up, and come to my study to tea," said Wharton. "We'll wait tea for you, Hazel."

Hazel coloured crimson.

"Oh, don't wait!" he said. "I—I might be late. I—I think I shall have a spin on my bike—"

"But—"

"I may drop in at Cliff House," said Hazel. "Marjorie expected to see me yesterday, you know!"

"Oh, all serene!"

Hazel thrust the currency notes into his pocket, and hurried away to the bicycle-shed. He seemed to be in remarkable haste for a fellow who was only going to pay a debt. He wheeled his machine down to the gates, where

Vernon-Smith was lounging with his hands in his pockets.

The Bounder gave him an ironical look. Hazel would have passed him without speaking, but Vernon-Smith addressed him cheerily.

"Buzzing off to Highcliffe?" he asked.

"Yes," said Hazel shortly.

"What luck did you have yesterday?"

"Rotten!"

The Bounder laughed.

"And now you're going for some more?" he said.

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, don't be ratty," said the Bounder amicably. "I don't owe you a grudge for the rotten trick you played me the other night—"

"You played me a rotten trick first," said Hazel sullenly.

"Keeping you away from the Cross Keys!" grinned the Bounder. "Locking you in the wood-shed when you wanted to go on the razzle! Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel gave him a savage look.

"Well, you paid for it," he said, between his teeth. "You knew I couldn't lick you—but I knew Wharton could, and he did."

"Because you lied to him," said the Bounder pleasantly. "It was deep—awfully deep—I never thought you'd have the brains for such a trick." He glanced round as the Famous Five came down to the gates, wheeling their machines. "Hallo! You're going to have company. Ta-ta!"

And the Bounder strolled away, whistling.

"Hold on, Hazel!" called out Wharton.

Hazel stared at him.

"What is it—what—"

"We're going over to Highcliffe, too," said Bob Cherry. "Race you there, if you like."

Hazel changed colour.

"You're going to Highcliffe!" he exclaimed, so savagely that the chums of the Remove stared at him in astonishment.

"Yes," said Wharton. "We'll ride over together, Hazel. We're going to give Courtenay a look-in."

"You've only just thought of going," said Hazel with a sneer.

Wharton gazed at him, not understanding his anger and bitterness.

"Yes. Bob just proposed to run over and see them at cricket practice," he said. "We shall see what form they're in for Saturday. Why not?"

"You mean you're coming over to spy on me!" exclaimed Hazel passionately.

Wharton started.

"Spy on you! Are you mad?"

"What are you driving at, you fool?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

Hazel did not answer.

With a sulky, sullen face, he jumped on his machine and pedalled away up the Courtfield Road, leaving the Famous Five standing by their machines exchanging looks of amazement.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Visit to Highcliffe!

"WELL, my hat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "What does that mean, Harry?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Blessed if I know! I thought the silly ass would be glad of your company."

Johnny Bull gave a snort.

"It's plain enough. It's one of their precious little games in Ponsonby's study. That's what he's going for."

"It isn't that," said Harry. "Hazel isn't going over to gamble. He's going to pay a debt."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 490.

"How do you know, fathead?"

"Well, he told me so."

Johnny Bull gave another snort, which expressed eloquently how much faith he placed in Hazel's assurance.

"Well, are we going?" asked Bob Cherry. "I want to see what shape the Highcliffe chaps are in for Saturday."

"I'm going," said Johnny Bull grimly. "Hazel's sulky looks doesn't matter twopence to me."

Wharton hesitated.

"If he thinks—" he began.

"What the merry thunder does it matter what he thinks?" demanded Johnny Bull. "For goodness' sake get on your jigger and let's start! I'm going, anyway."

And Johnny Bull put his leg over his machine and started.

"Oh, come on!" said Bob.

Wharton still hesitated, but his comrades pedalled after Johnny Bull, and he followed them.

Hazel's outburst had astonished him, but, as he thought the matter over, an explanation occurred to his mind. He could not help thinking that Johnny Bull had hit the right nail on the head, and that it was a little game in Cecil Ponsonby's study that drew Hazel to Highcliffe. He remembered Hazel's inadvertent admission that Pon refused to play for I O U's. Had the wretched "sportsman" lost his cash the day before and raised a fresh supply from Wharton by a lie? It looked only too much like it.

It was not pleasant for Wharton to reflect that, instead of helping Hazel to get clear of Ponsonby & Co., he had helped him with capital to try his luck again.

His brow was dark as he rode on.

Hazel came in sight as the five juniors rode through Courtfield. They overtook him on the Highcliffe road beyond the town.

He gave them a sullen glance as they came up, and did not speak.

The Famous Five did not slacken speed to keep him company. They shot ahead, leaving Hazel still pedalling on behind.

He was not in sight when they arrived at Highcliffe.

Courtenay of the Fourth was on the cricket-ground, at practice in the golden summer evening, and Harry Wharton & Co., leaving their machines at the porter's lodge, walked down to Little Side to join him. Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson were sauntering in the quadrangle, chatting and yawning, and they gave the Greyfriars juniors supercilious smiles. Ponsonby, with a wink to his companions, stopped to speak.

"Hazel come over with you, Wharton?" he asked.

"Not with us," said Wharton shortly.

"But he is comin'?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good! We've been expecting the dear boy," said Ponsonby agreeably. "Awf'ly goey chap, Hazel—what?"

"Regular sport, and no mistake!" grinned Gadsby. "We're waitin' for him."

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on without replying. But Ponsonby had confirmed the suspicion in Wharton's mind. It was not to pay a debt that Peter Hazeldene was cycling over to Highcliffe School.

Courtenay of the Fourth was at the wicket when the chums of the Remove arrived on the cricket-ground, but he gave them a nod and a smile. The Caterpillar was bowling, and he was bowling remarkably well. De Courcy was generally considered a slacker, but Frank Courtenay had succeeded in making a cricketer of him.

Ponsonby & Co. were ignoring the

cricket. Those elegant nuts were not much good at the game, and they had no chance of getting into the junior eleven—if they would have cared to do so. Nap and bridge and cigarettes were more in their line than the great summer game.

The Caterpillar left off bowling, tossing the ball to Smithson, as he spotted the Greyfriars party. He came off the pitch and joined them.

"Jolly glad to see you," he said affably. "Franky would have kept me bowlin' till the cows come home. Frightfully fatigued. I'm nearly droppin'."

"You don't look it," said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

The Caterpillar sighed.

"Appearances are deceivin', dear boy. I am really in the last stage of giddy exhaustion. There's Franky glarin' at me now because I've chucked it. You fellows are my excuse—I'm bein' polite to visitors."

"Don't chuck it on our account though."

"Oh, I'm only makin' you an excuse," said the Caterpillar calmly. "Franky can't rag me for bein' polite to visitors. How are you fellows gettin' on? Lookin' forward to staggerin' humanity on Saturday—what? Look out for me! I've been developin' a late cut that will make you open your eyes."

Courtenay came away from the wicket. He greeted Harry Wharton & Co. warmly. He was always glad to see his friends from Greyfriars.

"You fellows seem to be in great form," Wharton remarked.

"Yes; we're getting ready for you on Saturday," said Courtenay, with a smile. "It will be a tussle, anyway."

"For us especially," grunted Bob. "Wharton's detained for Saturday."

"What rotten luck!" Courtenay was sympathetic. Wharton's detention on the match-day increased his chances of a win, but he did not look at it in that light. "I'm sorry."

"Hard cheese," agreed the Caterpillar. "I'll tell you what, Franky. If Wharton's standin' out, you ought to leave out your best man—ahem!—to level things up. I don't mind bein' made the sacrifice. I don't, really!"

"Fathead!" was Courtenay's reply.

The two cricketers returned to the nets, Harry Wharton & Co. watching them. The Highcliffe team were all there, and they were certainly in good form. The Greyfriars fellows could see that Saturday's match would be a hard one, and that they would miss their skipper sorely. Bob Cherry suggested a deputation to Mr. Quelch to beg Wharton off detention; but the prospect did not seem very hopeful.

While they were watching the cricket Hazel came in at the gate, and joined Ponsonby & Co. in the quad. They went into the House together.

Hazel did not come out.

It was half an hour later when Courtenay gave up and joined the Greyfriars fellows again.

"You'll stay to tea—a war tea?" he asked.

"Oh, do!" said the Caterpillar. "No sugar, of course; and luckily we don't need potatoes for tea. Trot in!"

The Famous Five accompanied them to Study No. 3 in the Fourth. They passed Ponsonby's study, and Pon's voice could be heard through the door as they passed.

"Your deal, Hazel!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

But he gave no other sign of having heard, and they went on to Courtenay's study to a sugarless tea.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie's Money!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had a very cheerful tea in Courtenay's study. Short commons did not trouble them much, and they were already accustomed to missing sugar. Wharton's thoughts wandered once or twice to Ponsonby's study, where Hazel was enjoying—or the reverse—a little game on the two pounds he had extracted from the captain of the Remove.

The black sheep's mean dodge had startled Wharton. That Hazel was weak and wayward he knew only too well; but direct falsehood from him was not what he had expected. It was unpleasant to reflect that he had provided money for gambling purposes—and two pounds, too, was not a sum he could afford to regard with indifference. He was not blessed with wealth like the Bounder or Lord Mauleverer. To devote money to getting Hazel out of the hands of the nutty sportsmen of Highcliffe was one matter—but to provide it to enable him to tempt Fortune again was quite another. He was feeling deeply annoyed and exasperated, though he strove to banish the thought from his mind while he was in Courtenay's study.

When the Greyfriars juniors took their leave, Courtenay and De Courcy walked down to the gates with them. They found Hazel just wheeling his bike out. Hazel was looking white and harassed, and he hardly looked at them. He started first, by himself, but the Famous Five soon overtook him on the road.

While his comrades rode on, Harry Wharton slacked down to keep pace with Hazeldene, and rode beside him.

Hazel gave him a surly look.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"To speak to you," said Harry.

Hazel sneered bitterly.

"You've found out what you came for!" he said.

"I came over to see Courtenay, and to see the form his men were in," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Well, you've found me out, anyway!"

"I couldn't very well help it, Hazel."

The junior glanced at him in surprise. He had expected bitter words of contempt and reproach.

"I—I—" Hazel stammered, his conscience troubling him. "Look here, Wharton, I may as well own up! I never owed Pon anything. He won't take my I O U's. I wanted some tin for a fresh start, and I knew you wouldn't lend it me if you knew—"

"I certainly shouldn't!"

"Well, I had to have it. I wanted to try again. I intended to settle up with you this evening, and I'm going to."

"Oh! You've been lucky?"

"N-n-ot exactly!" Hazel's lip quivered. "I—I had rotten luck. They cleaned me out again!"

"Perhaps that's better luck than winning, in the long run," said Harry, with a smile. "Never mind the two quids, Hazel. Let that go! Look here, that kind of thing isn't good enough for you. Cricket's a bit better than nap or banker, any day. Chuck it up, and don't think anything more about it."

Hazel was silent as he rode on.

This kindness from the fellow he had deceived so grossly touched him, and he felt repentant and remorseful.

"I've got to settle up," he said at last. "You're not going to lose the money. I'm not a swindler!"

"Well, let it wait," said Harry. "I can settle with the fellows I borrowed from as soon as I get the tin from the bank."

Hazel shook his head obstinately.

"I'm going to settle," he said.

"But you haven't the tin," said Wharton, perplexed.

"I can get it."

Wharton frowned.

"Wouldn't you rather owe it to me than to the Bounder?" he said.

"I'm not thinking of Smithy."

"Oh!"

Hazel gave him a nod as they reached a turning, and swerved into another road. Wharton rode on after his friends, putting on speed to overtake them.

The lane Hazel had taken led to Cliff House School.

The captain of the Remove knew now where Hazel intended to raise the money. Marjorie was to find it for him!

His brows were knitted as he pedalled on.

It was impossible for him to interfere, but he was bitterly angry. Hazel was determined that he would not remain in debt to Wharton. His touchy pride did not allow that. His pride did not, however, prevent him from passing on his troubles from his own shoulders to Marjorie's.

Wharton overtook the Co., and they came up to Greyfriars together. When the juniors went into Hall for calling-over, Hazeldene was not with them. He came in at the last moment, just in time to answer his name, however, looking flushed and breathless.

After calling-over, he tapped Wharton on the shoulder in the passage. The captain of the Remove looked at him rather grimly. He did not want Marjorie Hazeldene's money.

However, he followed Hazel into the window-recess, where they could speak without being overheard.

"I can square up now," said Hazel, flushing. "Can you—can you change a five-pound note?"

"A fiver!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. Nothing wonderful in my having a fiver, I suppose," said Hazeldene irritably. "My people aren't so well off as yours, but we're not beggars!"

"Look here, Hazel," said Wharton plainly, "I may as well speak out! I've told you you needn't trouble about the money. Let it stand over."

"I don't choose to. I'm not going to remain under an obligation to you, if that's what you mean."

"You should have thought of that before you diddle me into lending you the money, then!"

Hazel's eyes gleamed. He was in a state of nerves after the unhealthy excitement of the gamble in Pon's study, and in a mood to quarrel with friend or foe.

"I thought I should win," he said. "I intended to settle with you directly. I came away from Highcliffe. I had bad luck. But I haven't asked you to wait long. I've got the money, and I'm going to pay up."

"Well, I can't change a fiver, anyway," said Wharton shortly.

"I'll get it changed, then."

"I'll speak out," said Harry, compressing his lips. "I won't take it, Hazel! You are forcing me to put it plain. I don't want your sister's money, and I won't touch it!"

Hazel's face flamed.

"What business is it of yours where I got the tin?" he demanded angrily.

"None, as long as you don't want me to handle it. But I won't handle it, and that's the long and the short of it!"

And Wharton turned on his heel and walked away. He nearly ran into the Bounder, who was looking at the two from the hall. Hazel stared after him with bitter rage and animosity in his face.

Vernon-Smith, with a grin, joined him in the window-recess.

"More trouble in the family?" he smiled.

"The cheeky cad!" said Hazel, between his teeth, grinding out the words. "He won't take the money I owe him—"

"You owe Wharton money!" ejaculated the Bounder.

"He lent it to me this afternoon." Hazel was so full of rage and bitterness that he hardly knew or cared whom he was speaking to, so long as he unburdened himself of his wrongs. "The rotter! He wants to keep me under his thumb—to keep me owing money! Hang his rotten two quids!"

The Bounder smiled. He knew precisely how much faith to place in that. But Hazel, in his mood of irritable indignation, was amusing to the cynical Bounder, and he drew him out.

"My hat! Wharton lent you tin to play with Ponsonby again?" he said. "Blessed if I ever thought he'd be so good-natured! I should have expected a sermon instead of a loan."

"He did not know, of course. He thought I was going to pay a debt. Now, he won't let me settle up." Hazel panted. "I'll make him take it, the cad!"

"Dashed queer!" said the Bounder. "Is he rolling in money, that he wants to give it away?"

"He's taking a rotten advantage of me!" muttered Hazel. "My sister's lent me a fiver, and he's guessed it, and he's making that the excuse. What does it matter to him, I'd like to know?"

The excited junior did not observe the smile of contempt on the Bounder's face. Vernon-Smith understood.

That five-pound note represented poor Marjorie's savings. Doubtless the girl had changed many little sums into that banknote in order to keep it with more security, and to be less tempted to spend it.

Hazel had certainly told her nothing of his dealings with Ponsonby & Co. He was hard up, and Marjorie had handed him her little savings—perhaps with a sigh, but ungrudgingly. Probably she had not even asked what the money was wanted for; if she had, doubtless Hazel had evaded the query, if not actually lied.

He owed Wharton two pounds, but he had taken the whole five-pound note. Did he intend to return the three pounds to Marjorie? That question did not need an answer. The remaining three pounds would be used for another plunge, and would follow the rest.

Hazeldene fumbled in his pocket.

"Will you change this note for me, Smithy? You've got plenty of money. I can't make him change it, but I can make him take the money I owe him. I'll throw it into his face if he won't take it!"

"Certainly!" said the Bounder.

He opened his pocket-book, and carelessly flicked out five one-pound notes. He put the fivers into their place.

"Thanks!" muttered Hazel.

He hurried away in search of Wharton, the Bounder looking after him with a cynical smile on his lips. Harry Wharton had gone to his study for prep, and Hazel hurried upstairs.

He found Wharton and Nugent at work in No. 1 Study. Both of them looked up as he threw the door open without knocking.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Nugent.

Hazel strode in.

"There's your money, Wharton!" he exclaimed.

He pitched two pound notes upon the study table.

Then he swung round and strode out, slamming the door after him.

Frank Nugent stared at his chum in blank astonishment.

"Well, that's a new way to pay old debts!" he remarked. "What on earth's the matter with that silly ass now?"

Wharton picked up the currency notes, his fingers trembling with anger.

"I lent it to Hazel to-day," he said. "I thought it was to pay a debt: but you know what he was doing at Highcliffe while we were there."

Nugent whistled. "No need for him to settle up in this dramatic style, that I can see," he remarked.

"I'd refused to take the money."

"Eh? What on earth for?"

"It's not his—it's Marjorie's!" said Wharton savagely. "I don't want to take Marjorie's money."

"Oh!" said Nugent slowly. "I see. But you'll have to take it, old scout—you can't ram it down his neck."

Wharton nodded, and slipped the currency notes into his pocket-book. He went on with his prep with a dark brow.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Game!

SKINNER and the Bounder were working at their prep when Hazel came into their study late in the evening.

Skinner gave him a cordial nod, and Vernon-Smith a cool stare.

"Still busy?" asked Hazel uneasily.

"Nearly finished," yawned Skinner. "I'm not over-working myself. I shall get through with a crib."

The Bounder did not speak.

Hazel hesitated, but he did not go. He waited while the two juniors finished their work. Skinner rose and yawned, and took a box of cigarettes out of a secret recess.

"Smoke?" he queried.

"Thanks!"

The Bounder smiled mockingly as Hazel lighted the cigarette. Skinner finished his smoke, and left the study, leaving the two together. Vernon-Smith rose as if to follow him.

"Don't go for a minute, Smithy," said Hazel.

"What the dickens do you want?" asked the Bounder. "I suppose you've not dropped in as a friend, after the rotten trick you played me only last Monday? I've been in two minds whether to hammer you to a jelly for it."

Hazel laughed uncomfortably.

"No need for us to be enemies," he said. "You played a trick on me, and I gave you a Roland for an Oliver. Let bygones be bygones! No reason why we shouldn't be friends. Marjorie asked after you to-day."

The Bounder laughed.

Hazel evidently had an axe to grind, and he had no scruple about using his sister's name to put the Bounder into a good humour.

"Very kind of her," said Vernon-Smith. "Anything else?"

"Well, if you want to be on bad terms—" said Hazel flushing.

"I don't! I don't care a rap either way!"

"Look here, we used to be friends, and have some good times together!" said Hazel.

"What do you want?" asked the Bounder abruptly. "Come, out with it!"

Hazel smiled awkwardly.

"What do you say to a little game now?" he said at last. "I'm in funds—I've got three quids. I'll play you any game you like. There's half an hour before bed-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder's sharp laugh rang through the study.

Hazel had money in his pocket again—the remainder of Marjorie's five-pound note. It was too late to think of seeking Ponsonby & Co. again, so he had come to the Bounder's study with the gambling fever in his veins.

The treacherous trick he had played upon Vernon-Smith only a few days before did not weigh with him—he was only thinking of the glimmering cards.

He looked at the Bounder savagely as he laughed.

"I don't see anything to cackle at!" he said angrily. "If you don't care for a game, you needn't play. You used to be keen enough at one time."

"You've got three quids, and you want me to win it?" grinned the Bounder.

"I can take my chance. I'm a better player than I used to be, too. Perhaps you're afraid I shall win your money?" sneered Hazel.

"Ha, ha! No. I'm afraid I shall win yours."

"That's my business, isn't it?" exclaimed Hazel. "Are you going to start sermons, like Wharton—you?"

"Well, it would be something like Satan rebuking sin, wouldn't it?" smiled the Bounder. "Well, I won't gamble with you, but I'll give you some advice!"

"Keep it till I ask for it!"

"Not at all. You've got three pounds left out of Marjorie's five. Keep it in your pocket, and give it back to her to-morrow."

"Confound your cheek! Are you going to meddle in my private affairs, like Wharton?" Hazel's face blazed with weak anger. "I'm fed-up with this! I dare say I can get a game with Snoop or Skinner."

He moved to the door.

"Hold on!" said the Bounder quietly. "If you're set on it, I'll play you."

Hazel turned back at once.

"Good man! Where are the cards?"

He was trembling with eagerness now.

"Lock the door!" said Vernon-Smith.

The key turned.

Vernon-Smith produced the cards, and the two juniors sat down to the table. The Bounder's hard face wore a cynical grin.

Even if he had not been a better player than Hazel, he was bound to win, for he was cool and clear-headed, while his adversary was excited, eager, greedy.

They played, and the play lasted just a quarter of an hour. By that time Hazel's three pounds lay on Vernon-Smith's side of the table.

The wretched junior looked after the money he had lost with haggard eyes. Vernon-Smith shuffled the cards.

"Going on?" he smiled.

"You'll take an I O U?" hesitated Hazel.

"Ha, ha! What is it worth?"

Hazel was sullenly silent.

"Any old thing," said the Bounder, with a touch of good-nature. "Give me your I O U for three quid. Take it back and try again."

"You're a good fellow, Smithy!"

"One of the best," grinned the Bounder. "Go it!"

Hazel's I O U—worth exactly the value of the paper it was written upon, and no more—was passed across the table, and Vernon-Smith handed back the money. They played again—more heavily—the defeated gamester eagerly seeking to snatch success by larger stakes. Seven minutes sufficed for the money to cross over to Vernon-Smith's side of the table again.

Hazel gave a suppressed groan.

"I have such rotten luck!" he muttered.

"You've not the head for this," said the Bounder. "It's a mug's game, anyway; but if you can't keep as cool as ice, it's simply throwing money away. You seem to think you can make bad cards win by putting heavy stakes on them."

Hazel's face was white and miserable.

The Bounder easily read his thoughts. He had hoped to make up the five pounds again, and repay Marjorie for the note. Instead of that he had lost his three pounds, and owed Vernon-Smith three more in addition.

The Bounder glanced at his watch.

"Five minutes to bed-time," he yawned. "Quite an amusing time! You don't look as if you've enjoyed yourself, Hazel."

Hazel muttered something indistinctly.

The Bounder rose from the table, twisted up the I O U, and lighted a cigarette with it. Hazel watched that proceeding in amazement.

"Time we ambled off to the dorm," remarked Vernon-Smith, as he put the cards away, and slipped his money into his pocket. "Take up your tin."

He pushed the three currency notes across the table to Hazel.

"My—my tin?" muttered Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha! Yes, it's yours."

"You've won it."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "I was only pulling your leg. Take it up!"

Hazel's hand reached out to the currency notes, but he drew it back.

"It's yours," he muttered. "I'm not going to be treated like a kid! I should have kept your money if I'd won it!"

"You had about as much chance of winning my money as the Kaiser has of winning the war," said the Bounder contemptuously. "If I could lose to a silly ass like you, Hazel, I should chuck up cards for good!"

"You cheeky rotter!"

The Bounder laughed, and unlocked the door.

Hazel rose to his feet, his eyes fixed greedily on the money. Vernon-Smith had destroyed the I O U—that claim certainly never would be presented. Hazel's hesitation ended at last. He picked up the currency notes and placed them in his pocket.

"I shall settle for this, Smithy," he muttered uneasily. "That makes six quid I owe you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder left the study, still laughing.

Hazel followed him with a moody brow. He had been treated generously, but like a foolish child. The Bounder had known that he would win, that he must win, and he had played to keep Hazel from gambling with Skinner or Snoop, who certainly would not have returned the winnings.

But there was only sullen resentment in Hazel's breast. He knew that Vernon-Smith, like Wharton, would not take Marjorie's money; and that, in Hazel's view, was an impertinent interference with his private concerns.

In the Remove dormitory, Vernon-Smith turned in without another glance at Hazeldene. Wharton glanced at him, however, noting his pale and harassed face, but he did not speak.

After the rest had gone to sleep Hazel remained awake. Owing to the Bounder's action, he had three pounds in his pocket, and the feverish dream of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat was still in his mind. The Bounder was awake, too, and he smiled cynically in the darkness when he heard Hazel creep out of his bed.

The sound of a softly-closing door followed.

The Bounder was asleep when Hazel

returned, hours later. But when the Remove turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning, he glanced at Hazel and grinned. The wretched junior was showing very visible signs of a night out, and his depressed look showed that the currency notes had stayed at the Cross Keys!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Wharton!

"CALL that cricket!" snorted Bolsover major.

The Remove Eleven were at practice after lessons, and Hazeldene had turned up with the rest.

Hazel had been quite out of sorts that day.

Mr. Quech had noted it in the Form-room, and Hazel had pleaded a headache.

After lessons Hazel had come down to cricket practice unwillingly.

He was making a rotten show, and

must be made as strong as possible. I'd rather you played."

Hazel shrugged his shoulders.

"I mean that," said Wharton quietly.

"It will be a disappointment to Marjorie. She's keen on your cricket. But it can't be helped!"

"Oh, that will do!" said Hazel. "I'm out of the team. I suppose another fellow has asked for my place, and any excuse is better than none!"

"That isn't so, and you know it. You're utterly seedy to-day, and I'm not ass enough not to see the reason," said Harry. "You were out of bounds last night. I've seen you like this before."

"Father confessor again!" sneered Hazel.

"That's all I've got to say," said Wharton.

And he moved away.

"Hold on," said Hazel. "I've got something to say, too." He hesitated. "I—I paid up the two quid I owed you yesterday."

"Well?"

began again last Monday, when Vernon-Smith took you down to the Cross Keys with him. You had given it up, and he started you again, the cad!"

"Will you give me the money?"

"Not to gamble with," said Harry.

"Then you were lying when you said you didn't want it?" said Hazel, with a bitter sneer.

Wharton stopped dead.

"Don't go too far, Hazel!" he said, in a low voice. "You know what I did to Vernon-Smith for taking you to the Cross Keys? You're asking for some of the same for yourself!"

Hazel burst into a shrill laugh.

"So you are going to bully me?" he exclaimed. "Well, come on, then—I'm ready for you! You'll find that bullying won't do any more good than sermonising. I shall go my own way all the same!"

"I'm not going to touch you," said Harry, putting his hands into his pockets. "You'd better give me a wide berth, that's all!"

"And you're going to keep the money?"

"Yes."

"Then you were lying!"

Wharton's eyes glinted. It was only the fact that Hazel was Marjorie's brother which saved him at that moment from a taste of what the Bounder had received in the Remove dormitory.

"You can't keep your nose out of my affairs," went on Hazel savagely. "You must meddle, of course, and generally put your foot in it. You've done that already. I'll show you how much your meddling is worth! It will do you good. You fought Vernon-Smith in the dorm last Monday night for taking me to the Cross Keys. You fool!" His voice expressed bitter contempt and mockery. "I never went to the Cross Keys that night at all."

Wharton started.

"You told me——" he exclaimed.

"I was fooling you," said Hazel with sneering coolness. "Smithy never went there with me at all—I never went! He came out with me, and tricked me into the wood-shed, and locked me in."

"What!"

"He kept me locked in the wood-shed till after midnight," went on Hazel, watching with bitter satisfaction the dismay on Wharton's face. "He only let me out when it was too late to go. Then we came back to the dormitory. We hadn't been even as far as the school wall."

Wharton panted.

"You told me——" he exclaimed.

"Yes. I wanted you to hammer Smithy, to punish him for meddling with me!" said Hazel mockingly. "I knew you'd believe anything against him. He locked me in to keep me away from Cobb & Co. that night, the cheeky cad! I pitched you a yarn in the dormitory to make you hammer him for it—I knew you'd meddle. And you did it."

Wharton's face was a study.

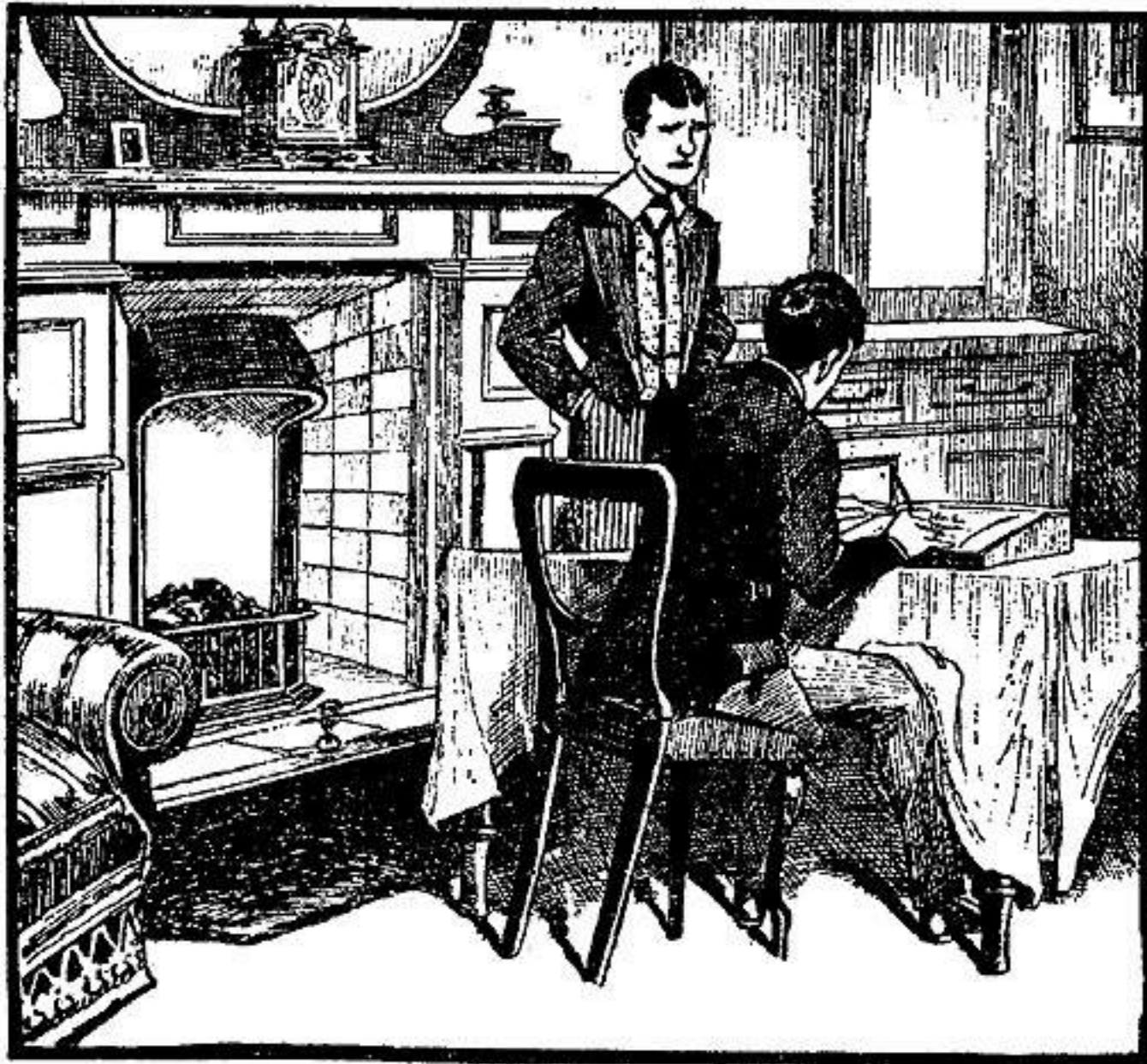
"You unspeakable cad!" he gasped at last. "You lied to me—you made me believe that Smithy had tempted you into going to that den——"

"Why couldn't you mind your own business?" sneered Hazel. "Meddling never does any good!"

"And I—I licked him!" muttered Wharton. "And—and all the time he was only trying, the same as I was, to keep you from making a fool of yourself! Oh, you rotten worm!"

"You may let me alone in the future," said Hazel. "I've not asked for your protection, hang you! And it's only gas, anyway—you don't live up to it! You're keeping my money now, after saying that you didn't want it——"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 490.



"Write as I dictate!" said Vernon-Smith. (See Chapter 10.)

Bolsover major's contemptuous remark was quite justified.

Hazel batted like a specially clumsy fag of the Second Form, and failed to deal with even the easiest bowling.

He was evidently quite off form, and the morrow was the day of the Highcliffe match. Wharton, unwilling as he was to drop Marjorie's brother out of the team, had no choice in the matter. It was impossible to play Hazel against Highcliffe on Saturday.

When the cricketers came off the field, he joined Hazel. The latter gave him a defiant glance, guessing what was coming.

"You'll have to stand out to-morrow, Hazel," said Harry.

"I knew that was coming!"

"Well, you don't think you're fit to play, do you?" asked the captain of the Remove, with determined good-humour.

"I don't care a twopenny rap whether I play or not," said Hazel sullenly. "Leave me out if you like!"

"Well, I must," said Harry. "I've got to stand out myself, and the team

"You—you didn't want to take the money." Hazel's face was crimson now. "You—you said——"

"That's so."

"Well, as—as you didn't want to take it, you can hand it back to me," said Hazel, his eyes dropping before Wharton's.

The captain of the Remove understood. His eyes flashed.

"You mean that you lost the rest of the fiver last night, and you want the two pounds to gamble with again?" he exclaimed.

"That's not your business. You said you didn't want to take the money," said Hazel sullenly. "If you don't want it, give it to me; I'm in need of it."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"This is Vernon-Smith's doing," he muttered.

"Oh, get off that!" exclaimed Hazel irritably. "Do you think I'm a baby, led by the nose by any fellow who chooses to take the trouble?"

"Yes; that's what you are," said Wharton angrily. "All this foolery

Wharton took out the two currency notes and threw them on the ground.

"There's the money," he said. "Don't speak to me again, you worm! You're not fit to speak to a German!"

He turned his back on Hazel and strode away. The black sheep of the Remove laughed sneeringly, and picked up the notes. Five minutes later he was wheeling out his bicycle, en route for Highcliffe and Cecil Ponsonby's study.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Amende Honorable!

"SMITHY!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars was in his study.

He was amusing himself in rather an odd way. He was seated at his table dealing cards to himself.

As a matter of fact, the Bounder was practising dealing from the bottom of the pack. That kind of skill was very useful to a fellow who joined in the sportive circle at the Cross Keys. Jerry Hawke and his sporting friends had various ways of aiding Fortune when that fickle goddess prove inconstant, and it amused the Bounder to play them at their own game.

He slid the cards into his pocket as the door opened.

Wharton came in breathlessly, fresh from the scene with Hazeldene in the quadrangle. The Bounder regarded him in surprise.

"Hallo! Looking for another scrap?" he asked unpleasantly. "I'm your man! Gloves or not? Just as you like!"

Wharton did not heed.

"I've come to ask your pardon," he said.

The Bounder whistled.

"My hat! Because I slogged you in the Form-room and got you detained for Saturday?" he asked.

"Hazel's told me what really happened on Monday night, Smithy."

"By gad! Has he?"

"He lied to me when he came back to the dorm," said Harry, his face crimson.

"I believed him—"

"Lied like a Prussian," agreed the Bounder. "He woko you up specially to tell you lies and make us fight. And you walked into the merry little trap like a born fool!"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

The Bounder laughed.

"Would you have believed me?"

"Well, no," confessed Wharton.

"Then what was the good of telling you?" grinned the Bounder. "Besides, I didn't choose to."

"I'm sorry I was taken in," said Harry. "As for the fight, you gave me jolly nearly as good as I gave you, and, if you'd been in better condition, it might have ended the other way round."

"Quite possible."

"I never dreamed that Hazel would fall as low as that! I sha'n't be taken in by him again," said Wharton. "I can't blame myself very much for being fooled, as it looked—well, it looked as if it was true, and you didn't say a word to contradict the rotter. But I'm sorry. I owe you an apology, and I've come here to make it."

The Bounder looked at him curiously. Wharton's handsome face was flushed and very earnest. He had come there to make what amends he could at the earliest possible moment. Something of the hardness faded out of the Bounder's face.

"All serene!" he said lightly. "I wonder Hazel told you about it, though. Well, it can't be helped now—but I don't

mind saying I'm sorry I went for you in the Form-room on Wednesday. It was a rotten trick."

"Never mind that—I can understand how you were feeling," said Wharton.

"I—I never suspected that you—you were trying to keep that silly fool straight, just as I was. Not much use either of us trying, as a matter of fact. When the fit's on him there's no stopping him!"

"I didn't care a copper about him," said the Bounder coolly. "The sooner he comes a mucker and gets sacked from the school the better. It's because—"

He paused.

"I know," said Harry. "Because of Marjorie."

"Well, yes. He gives her trouble enough without getting sacked," said Vernon-Smith. "She's duffer enough to care whether he's sacked or not—and one can't help liking her the better for it. But it wasn't much use—he's bound to go his own way. It means the boot for him sooner or later."

He burst into a laugh.

"You're surprised at my trying to keep that fool out of what I get into myself," he said.

"It is odd," said Harry. "You can see it's bad for him—why don't you chuck it up for yourself?"

"Because I'm built that way—and I'm not a weak fool like Hazel. They don't skin me at Highcliffe—I skin them!"

The Bounder laughed. "Pon & Co. were very glad to welcome me back into the fold—but 'they've paid pretty dearly for it. Do you mind if I get on with my game?"

The cards came out again.

"I shouldn't think there was much entertainment in that," said Harry.

"What's the good of dealing yourself cards?"

"Lots! Did you see how I was dealing them?"

"The usual way, I suppose."

"Not quite. Look here, let me deal you a hand—only a game, you know."

The Bounder dealt two hands, face down, after shuffling the pack.

"I suppose you think those two hands are as good as one another?" he asked.

"I suppose so," said Harry.

"I'll lay you five pounds to five bob my hand beats yours."

Wharton shook his head.

"Oh, only a game," said the Bounder laughing. "Look here!"

He turned up the cards, and showed king, queen, jack, ten, and nine in his own hand, and an assortment of low cards in the hand dealt to Wharton.

"I should have won, you see," he remarked.

"Is that a card trick?" asked Harry.

"Ha, ha! Yes, in a way. It's what is commonly called cheating at cards," chuckled the Bounder.

"Oh!"

"I keep that kind of gift for the merry sports at the Cross Keys," explained Vernon-Smith. "They generally plant marked cards on a chap, and there are precious few marks I don't know, or spot in a few minutes. They never suspect a schoolboy of playing them at their own game. It's very entertaining. Fancy a Greyfriars chap cleaning out Jerry Hawke at a game with his own marked cards!"

Wharton's face was very grave.

"Shocked you—what?" grinned the Bounder. "My dear man, you shouldn't come to this study; it's bad for your morals."

"It's rotten, Smithy!" said Wharton, in a low voice. "You're lowering yourself to the level of these cheating rascals. It's horrible! I wish you could see it as I do, and keep clear of it!"

"I shall never see things quite as you

do," said Vernon-Smith. He put the cards into a drawer, and rose, yawning. "If you fellows have done with the pitch, I'll go and get some cricket practice."

"No reason why you shouldn't practice with us," said Harry. "Look here, Smithy! I suppose we can't be friends, but—but I don't want to be enemies. I did you a big injustice, though, goodness knows, I never meant to, and if you like to take my fist, there it is!"

He held out his hand.

Vernon-Smith gave him one look, and took his hand lightly.

"All serene!" he said. "We're going our different ways, but we can do that without snarling at one another."

Wharton's brow was very thoughtful when he left the Bounder's study. In spite of Vernon-Smith's dingy black-guardism, in spite of his many reckless rascalities, Wharton could not get rid of his feeling of friendship for him. He wondered whether the blackguard of the Remove would ever find the right path again? One thing was certain—if he strove for it, he would find ready and cordial help from Harry Wharton.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Pleasures of Going the Pace!

"WELL, you were an ass!"

That was Johnny Bull's candid comment when

Wharton explained the matter to his chums at tea-time. It was only fair that the fellows should know that Vernon-Smith had been innocent in the affair for which they had condemned him.

"The assfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is too late to withdraw the esteemed black eye you gave Smithy."

"Well, he gave me nearly as bad," said Wharton. "I couldn't help being taken in by Hazel, could I?"

"Well, no," agreed Bob Cherry. "Still, it was rotten to hammer Smithy for nothing. Hazel is an awful cad, and no mistake!"

"The thrashfulness would be the proper caper."

Wharton shook his head.

"I'm not going to touch him," he said quietly. "He can't stand up to me, for one thing. But it's rotten. It's really due to Hazel that I'm detained for to-morrow afternoon. A chap can hardly blame Vernon-Smith for feeling ratty, though he might have shown it in a different way."

"What about asking Quelchy to let you off to-morrow?" asked Nugent.

"N.G."

"Bless Hazel!" grunted Bob Cherry. "He ought to have a jolly good licking! And I'd give him one, only—only I don't want Marjorie to see him with a black eye, and know I gave it to him. Br-r-r-r!"

Wharton noticed that Hazel was present in good time for evening call-over. He was looking moody, as was usual with him of late. It was not difficult to guess that his latest visit to Highcliffe had not been prosperous.

He looked, in fact, so seedy and depressed, that it was hard to feel angry with him.

Several times in the Common-room he glanced at Wharton as if inclined to speak, but the captain of the Remove avoided his glances.

Later, when Wharton went to his study, Hazel followed him.

Wharton showed impatience as the wretched junior came into his study.

"I suppose you're surprised to see me here?" said Hazel, forcing a grin.

"I'm not surprised at anything you do!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "What do you want? You don't expect me to be friendly, I suppose, after what you told me this afternoon?"

"I've been an utter fool!" muttered Hazel shamefacedly. "I can see it now. I've had rotten luck at Highcliffe, too!"

"Do you expect sympathy from me on that score?"

"No," said Hazel, laughing uneasily. "But—but I'm sorry, and—and if there's a chance for me in the team, I shall be all right to-morrow—"

He paused.

Wharton gave an impatient laugh.

He understood easily enough. As usual, the weak-natured fellow's outbreak had been followed by repentance. He had lost all his money—the money he had obtained from Marjorie and from Wharton. There were no other resources, and the merry blade business had to be given up perforce. So it was time for repentance and reform; and he was duly repenting, and was prepared for reform. Wharton laughed—he could not help it. There was an element of the comic in Hazel's backslidings and repentances.

"It's a bit too late to talk about the match," said Harry. "You're in rotten form, and I can't play you to-morrow. If you like to stick to practice, you may have a chance next week."

"I'm going to stick to it," said Hazel. "I wish I'd done so all along. It's a silly mug's game, playing the giddy ox, as I've done. I haven't the head for it as Smithy has."

"It's a mug's game, right enough!" grunted Wharton. "You usually see that, I think, when you come to the end of your money."

Hazel flushed.

"You needn't rub that in!" he muttered. "I—I wouldn't mind so much about my own money, but—but—" he broke off. "Well, it can't be helped. I suppose it wouldn't be any use asking you to lend me five pounds?"

"Not in the least!" said Wharton.

"I—I don't mean for gambling—"

Wharton's lip curled.

"So you said before, and the two quid I borrowed for you went straight to Ponsonby!"

"I've admitted I was playing the fool. But—but I want five pounds for something else," said Hazel wretchedly.

"Oh, I know what you want it for! You've spent all Marjorie's money, as well as your own. And you want that, and if you got it, you'd go over to Highcliffe to-morrow and gamble it away in Ponsonby's study!" said Wharton contemptuously.

"I—I wouldn't!"

"You don't expect me to believe that, I suppose?"

Hazel's lip quivered. Wharton had been so patient with him hitherto that he had not expected a rough rebuff. He seemed quite unconscious of having given serious offence.

"Even if you kept your word, which isn't likely, I can't let you have the money," went on Wharton. "You've had two pounds from me, and I'm not made of money. Marjorie wouldn't like to take it from me, if she knew, and that's what it comes to. If you offered her the five pounds, and she knew it was mine, she would refuse it, and you know it!"

"I—I shouldn't tell her that. I—I'd settle up later—perhaps quite soon!" muttered Hazel.

"When you'd won some money from Ponsonby or Jerry Hawke?" asked Wharton sarcastically.

Hazel did not answer. He left the

study with hanging head. Wharton made an impatient gesture. Hazel looked so down that, in spite of himself, he felt some compassion for the miserable fellow. But five pounds was not a sum easy for a junior to obtain, and to raise it somehow, and trust it into Hazel's hands after his previous deception, would have been simply folly. Only a fellow like Hazel would have thought of asking such a thing.

In the passage Hazeldene hesitated for some minutes, and then made his way slowly to Vernon-Smith's study.

He found only Skinner there.

"Hallo! Trot in!" said Skinner affably. "Have a smoke?"

"N-no."

"Had too many at Highcliffe?" grinned Skinner. "What sort of luck did you get? Been spoiling the Egyptians?"

"I'm stony."

"You generally are, after going on the merry razzle," chuckled Skinner. "You were born to be a lame duck, Hazel."

"I want somebody to lend me five quid," said Hazel. "I suppose it's no good asking you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

Hazel gave him a savage glare.

"What are you cackling at, confound you?"

"Ha, ha! Your little joke!" yelled Skinner. "I didn't know you could be so funny. You should put that in the 'Herald'!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Skinner, still chortling, strolled out of the study. Hazel sat on the corner of the table to wait for the Bounder to come in. It was some time before Vernon-Smith came to his study, and he stared at Hazel when he found him there.

"Hallo! Been enjoying yourself?" he asked genially.

"No, I haven't!" growled Hazel. "I—I suppose you'll only cackle at me, but—but I want to borrow some money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got heaps of money, Smithy." "And enough sense to look after it," agreed the Bounder.

"I knew it would be no good," muttered Hazel. "But—but goodness knows what I'm going to do!"

Vernon-Smith looked at him curiously. There was a break in Hazel's voice, and his lips were quivering. He looked as if almost on the verge of an hysterical breakdown. It was not surprising, after his peculiar experiences of the past week.

"In a fix—what?" asked the Bounder good-humouredly.

"I—I owe somebody five quid," said Hazel huskily.

"Your sister, you mean?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, Miss Hazeldene couldn't have expected to see the money again when she lent it to you. She knows you!"

Hazel winced.

"You don't understand, Smithy. I—I promised to return the fiver on Saturday—to-morrow. I—I thought—I hoped I should have some luck. I've been a silly fool!"

"Has that just dawned upon you?"

"Marjorie's saved up that money for a long time," went on Hazel wretchedly. "She's got some bills to pay with it. She's always careful with money. I—I told her it was only a temporary affair. I—I thought it was, you know. She—she's expecting that fiver to-morrow."

"It won't be a surprise to her when it doesn't turn up!" sneered the Bounder.

"Perhaps it won't; but I—I say, Smithy, you offered to lend me some tin the other day—"

The Bounder's look was so full of bitter scorn that Hazel stopped, his voice trailing away miserably.

"What would your sister think if she knew you were asking me for money to send to her?" said Vernon-Smith contemptuously. "I think that it would make even Marjorie fed-up with you and your ways! I don't think she would forgive that."

Hazel did not answer. He dropped into a chair, and his face fell into his hands. He was in a state of nervous tension, and his self-control had given way at last.

The Bounder's lip curled as he looked at him. He could not understand weakness of this sort, and he had little compassion for it.

"For goodness' sake don't make a scene in my study!" he snapped. "What do you play the fool for if you haven't nerve enough to stand the racket? You used to whine that I'd led you into it—you can't say that now. You went out looking for trouble, and found it. Wasn't it what you wanted?"

Hazel did not speak.

"I've got your sister's fiver in my pocket," went on Vernon-Smith. "You've spent the money. Do you want me to give you the fiver for nothing?"

Hazel rose to his feet, catching his breath, and moved to the door. The mocking glance of the Bounder followed him.

"Hold on!" he said suddenly.

Hazel looked back hopelessly.

"Sit down!" snapped the Bounder.

He pushed Hazel into a chair at the table.

"Take that pen!"

Hazel took the pen mechanically.

"Now write as I dictate," said Vernon-Smith. "Dear Marjorie,—I enclose your five-pound note, which I find I do not need, after all."

Hazel looked up at him blankly. The Bounder made a gesture, and he wrote as dictated.

"Now address the envelope."

Hazel obeyed.

Vernon-Smith folded the letter, and slipped it into the envelope. Then he opened his pocket-book, took out the five-pound note, slipped it into the letter, and sealed the envelope carefully.

Hazel watched him dumbly.

"That ought to be registered!" growled the Bounder. "But it's too late for that. There's still time for the collection, though."

"Smithy, I—I—"

"Well?"

"It—it's awfully good of you! I—I—"

"You needn't trouble about thanking me!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "If you want to know, I intended to return Marjorie the banknote all along, and that's why I changed it for you. It's quite easy to foresee the end of your exploits as a merry blade. I knew it would come to this in a few days at the most. No time for jaw now—the letter's got to go to-night."

Hazel held out his hand for the letter, and the Bounder laughed.

"I'll post it," he said.

"You—you think—" muttered Hazel, crimsoning.

"I don't think anything; but I know I'm not taking any chances with a fishy spoofer like you!" said Vernon-Smith coolly. And he left the study with the letter in his hand.

Two minutes later it was dropped into the school letter-box.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Plays Up!

VERNON-SMITH wore a thoughtful look the next morning.

He was thinking as he sat in class, though it was not his lessons that gave him so much food for thought.

Hazeldene, as several fellows noted, was looking quite bright and cheerful.

The repayment of his debt to Marjorie had lifted a weight from his mind, and he had already forgotten the bitter words with which the Bounder had accompanied the gift.

Hazel's fresh essay as a merry blade was ended; and Tom Brown and Bulstrode, his study-mates, had seen with astonishment Hazel burning a sporting paper and several packets of cigarettes in the study grate. Evidently Hazel was on the correct tack once more. He had learned his lesson, and it was likely to last him for some time.

Certainly he had to consider now that he was indebted to the Bounder for five pounds, and to Wharton for two; but, as neither intended to ask for the money, that little matter could be dismissed from his mind, and Hazel dismissed it quite cheerfully.

So that morning he was, as Bob Cherry remarked, merry and bright, and looked as if he hadn't a trouble in the world.

When the Remove was dismissed that morning Vernon-Smith turned back, and went to the Form-master's desk.

Mr. Quelch gave him an inquiring look. The rest of the Remove filed out, leaving the Bounder alone with the Form-master.

"Can I speak to you for a moment, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith respectfully.

"Certainly, my boy."

"I have a confession to make, sir."

"Indeed?" Mr. Quelch looked very sharply at the Bounder. "What is it, Vernon-Smith? You may proceed!"

"Last Wednesday, sir, you found Wharton and me fighting in this room during detention—"

"That matter is closed, Vernon-Smith."

"Wharton was detained for two half-holidays in consequence, sir—"

"Yes, yes!"

"I want to explain that Wharton was not to blame, sir," went on Vernon-Smith calmly.

"Indeed?"

"He was unwilling to fight during detention, sir, but I forced him to."

Mr. Quelch's brow darkened as he listened to that peculiar confession.

"And what was your motive, Vernon-Smith, for acting in that discreditable manner?" he exclaimed.

"I was left out of the cricket team, and I wanted to spoil Wharton's chance to-day," said the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"I knew you would detain us both if you found us fighting here, sir," said the Bounder. "That is why I did it."

"And why are you telling me this now, Vernon-Smith?" said the Remove-master, staring at the junior blankly.

"Because I'm sorry I played a rotten trick like that, and I should like justice to be done, sir."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"You mean to say, Vernon-Smith, that by deliberate trickery you caused me to commit an act of injustice?" he exclaimed.

"Exactly, sir."

There was a short silence. Mr. Quelch's expression showed that he hardly knew what to make of the junior standing quietly before him. The Bounder of Greyfriars was not cast in a common mould, and he did not quite fit, as it were, into the Remove-master's experience of boyhood.

"I shall repair that act of injustice," said the Form-master, at last. "I shall release Wharton from detention. But I hardly know how to deal with you, Vernon-Smith! If this had come to my knowledge by any other means I should have reported you to the Head for a

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 490.

flogging. As you have confessed of your own free will, however, I do not care to take that step. Your detention will, therefore, be doubled. I am glad that you have had the honesty to own up in this matter. Have you anything more to tell me?"

"No, sir."

"Very well! You may go."

And the Bounder went.

Harry Wharton & Co. had gone down to Little Side for a quarter of an hour at the nets before dinner. Wharton was still anxious about the team that was to meet Highcliffe that afternoon.

Hazeldene joined the cricketers at practice.

His late troubles seemed to have passed away like a cloud dispelled by sunshine, and he seemed very fit. Wharton, with a new idea in his mind, set him to bat against Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the champion bowler of the Remove. The batsman did remarkably well.

"This is rather a change since yesterday, Hazel," Wharton said, when he came off the pitch.

"I think I'm in pretty good form," said Hazel.

"You seem to be," Wharton hesitated.

"I'm ready, if you'd like to give me a chance," said Hazel, colouring. "I'd like to play. Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis are coming over to Highcliffe to see the match, and—and—"

Wharton did not speak for a moment.

"All that rot's over," added Hazel hastily, evidently alluding to his late exploits as a blade. "I've chucked that. I've had enough—more than enough. I've got clear of it all, by good luck—and—and I've returned Marjorie her five—the same five, too."

"You have!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"Smithy gave it back to me," said Hazel, a little unsteadily. "Of course, I shall settle up with him later. That can wait, though—Smithy isn't in want of money. It—it was posted last night."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"It's all over," repeated Hazeldene.

"I've had a rotten time for a week past—worry all the time." His face clouded for a moment. The remembrance of the razzle he had indulged in was not pleasant. "I'd like to stick to cricket now, if you'll give me a chance."

"Done!" said Harry. "You seem all right to-day, anyway, and I haven't filled your place yet—I was going to decide that to-day. You'll play."

"Right-ho!" said Hazel cheerfully.

Wharton let it go at that. Hazel was so unconscious of having given offence, and so cheerful and bright now, that it was scarcely possible to feel animosity towards him. For Marjorie's sake Wharton was glad that the breach could be healed. Healed it was—and the new state of affairs was likely to last as long as Hazel's repentance—though how long that would be was a question to which the captain of the Remove did not attempt to find an answer.

There was a joyful surprise waiting for the Famous Five when they went in to dinner. When the juniors took their places at the Remove table, Mr. Quelch addressed the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I have been informed by Vernon-Smith that he was wholly to blame for the discreditable scene in the Form-room on the occasion of your detention last Wednesday."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton, in utter astonishment.

"In the circumstances you are released from detention, and I am sorry that

Vernon-Smith's deception caused me to act with unintentional injustice."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" stammered Wharton.

He sat down in great amazement.

Bob Cherry very nearly uttered a war-whop of satisfaction. When the Remove came out after dinner, Bob seized the captain of the Remove and waltzed him round the hall in great exuberance.

"Hurrah!" he chortled. "We're going to beat Highcliffe after all! Hurrah!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton jerked himself away from the exuberant Bob.

"Smithy!" he exclaimed.

The Bounder grinned.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he queried.

"It is ripping of you," said Wharton gratefully. "Ripping! I—I suppose you've got it a bit thicker for owning up?"

"Four detention half-holidays instead of two," said the Bounder. "Never mind—I can stand it. I'm not specially anxious to take walks abroad and show off this black eye."

"It was jolly decent of you!" said Harry. "I wish you would come over to Highcliffe this afternoon."

"If I did I should offer Pon two to one on Greyfriars," grinned the Bounder. "It's all serene—Quelch's going out this afternoon, and Skinner and Snoop are coming into the Form-room for a little game while he's gone. I'd prefer cricket, but dear old Quelch knows best."

And the Bounder nodded, and walked away with a smile on his face.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. arrived at Highcliffe in good time that afternoon. They were in great spirits. Owing to the Bounder's confession, Harry Wharton was there to captain the team, and his presence made all the difference. Bob Cherry, who had been going to act as skipper in his place, was not in the least disappointed at falling from his high estate—quite the reverse.

"So you've turned up, after all?" said Courtenay, as he shook hands with Wharton. "Not detained?"

"No, that's all right," said Harry.

"Let off at the last minute almost."

"Congratulations!" yawned the Caterpillar. "I suppose you regard that as good luck. Now, if my Form-master would detain me this afternoon I'd write a poem to his honour. But I've got to slave at cricket. It will be your fault, Franky, if I have to be carried in after the match."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"They" were Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis, and Bob rushed off to greet them, and conduct them to seats outside the pavilion. Marjorie's face brightened as her brother joined her. Hazel's careless and contented look showed that all was well with him.

"You had my letter this morning, Marjorie?" he asked in a low voice.

The girl nodded.

"It was all right?"

"Yes, Hazel. You didn't need it after all, then?"

"N-n-ot exactly!" said Hazel, colouring. "Sorry I bothered you about it. I sha'n't want it now."

"And the difficulty you spoke of—"

"Oh, that's all over."

"I'm so glad," said Marjorie softly.

The three Cliff House girls had the pleasure of watching an unusually good

match. Greyfriars batted first, and though the honours fell to Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Squiff, Hazel knocked up ten runs for his side, which was not a bad score against the Highcliffe bowling. The innings ended for eighty-five, and when Highcliffe went in they reached eighty. The Caterpillar in that innings did not look much like a slacker, and his score was only second to Frank Courtenay's.

Ponsonby & Co. lounged on the field for some time, looking on, when Greyfriars batted a second time. The nuts of Highcliffe wore supercilious looks. While Hazel was waiting for the call to the wickets Ponsonby joined him.

"Bit slow this," he remarked.
"I don't find it so," said Hazel coolly.
Ponsonby gave him a sharp look from under his brows.
"Come along to my study while you're waitin'?" he suggested.

Hazel shook his head.
"Well, give us a look-in after the match," said Ponsonby. "Always ready to give you your revenge, you know."

"Thanks, but I won't come."

And Hazel joined Marjorie and Clara. Ponsonby, giving him a far from pleasant look, walked away with his nutty friends. Ponsonby & Co. did not honour the cricket match with their presence any further. Bridge in the study claimed their attention.

Greyfriars were all down for ninety in the second innings. The Highcliffians made a hard struggle for runs when they went in again. But Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was in his best bowling form, and Hazel, by a good catch, got rid of Frank Courtenay.

The Caterpillar and Smithson held out till near the finish, and brought the score up to eighty-five. The Caterpillar was in great form, but Smithson fell to Hurree Singh's bowling, and Rupert De Courcy left the wickets—not out.

"By gad, you've beaten us!" yawned the Caterpillar, when the cricketers came off. "Awfully bad luck! Who says ginger-pop?"

Greyfriars Remove had won the

match by ten runs—much to their satisfaction.

And while the Greyfriars cricketers were at Highcliffe, the Bounder of Greyfriars was in the Form-room, in the precious company of Skinner and Snoop, enjoying his detention—more or less—with the aid of the game of banker. Skinner and Snoop were gone before Mr. Quelch came in, however, and the Remove-master found Vernon-Smith patiently at work when he looked in to dismiss him. He thought of the merry cricketers at Highcliffe, and he thought of the dingy amusement with which he had relieved the tedium of detention, and his lip curled. He asked himself again, as he had asked himself more than once of late, whether the game was worth the candle. And he hardly knew what to answer to that question.

(Don't miss "SIR JIMMY'S PAL!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 26.—FRANK COURTENAY:

FRANK COURTENAY does not belong to Greyfriars, of course; but one feels sure that no reader interested in this series of articles would feel satisfied if he and the Caterpillar and Ponsonby were left outside it. All three have played considerable parts in many a Greyfriars yarn, and in our affections Courtenay and his chum almost rival Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, while Ponsonby is, in a sense, a more satisfactory villain than Skinner.

It is doubtful whether Mr. Frank Richards ever wrote a better story than "The Boy Without a Name." He himself is inclined to think it his best, one learns. And, indeed, it is wholly admirable. There is plenty of incident in it, there are surprises, and there is a good deal of excellent character-drawing. When one has read it one knows thoroughly not only the hero, but also his chum, Rupert de Courcy, with his laziness concealing brains and pluck and strength, or half-concealing them; Ponsonby, the aristocratic scoundrel, with his contempt for anything plebeian in the way of manners, and his readiness to play such dirty tricks as no decent fellow of the class he despises would dream of; his satellites, Gadsby and Vava-sour, and the rest; Smithson, the right sort, but not strong enough to assert himself alone, and the other fellows of his type; the snobbish little Mr. Mobbs, toadying to Pon & Co.—one knows them all! They stand out alive, touched by the magic wand of genius; and when "Rivals and Chums" came along we hailed its appearance with delight, and were not disappointed.

One would be inclined to set down Frank Courtenay as almost an ideal hero.

He is not so faultlessly perfect that he ever loses our sympathy. He is quite human. But he is a veritable Admirable Crichton, good at everything; and he can even preach a little bit without our feeling inclined to resent it. He does preach to the Caterpillar, though the style is not the style of a sermon, and he does it with good effect.

Those chapters in "The Boy Without a Name" in which the gradual ripening of the friendship between these two is told are really great. At first the aristocratic, slacking Caterpillar's taking-up of the boy from a Council school, who has come to Highcliffe on a scholarship, seems very much of a whim. Perhaps the Caterpillar himself does not realise that it is much more. Certainly Courtenay—called Arthur Clare then—does not feel sure of it; and there goes on in him something of a struggle against his growing affection for the dandy who has drifted idly on the tide with Pon & Co. until his coming.

He makes it plain to De Courcy that he has no notion of being patronised. But the Caterpillar has no notion of patronising him. From the first he sees—though he may not admit it to himself from the first—that there is the stuff of leadership in the new fellow.



Frank Courtenay

Himself too lazy to lead, he is not too proud to follow.

Most of you know the story—how Pon & Co., with Mr. Mobbs, hotly resented the fact that a mere scholarship boy was coming to Highcliffe; how the nuts misdirected him on his arrival, so that he reached Greyfriars believing it to be Highcliffe; how he chummed up with Harry Wharton & Co. before he had found out the deceit; how he turned up late at his rightful destination, and was taken to task by Mr. Mobbs; how he was ragged by the nuts in the dormitory; how the Caterpillar unexpectedly chipped in on his side; how Ponsonby went down, thoroughly beaten by the new-comer; how the Caterpillar asked him to share the study which he and Gadsby occupied; how Gadsby, not liking it, was induced by the Caterpillar's manoeuvring to go; how Smithson & Co., who had been looked down upon and tyrannised over by the nuts, began to take heart of grace; how Monson major of the Sixth came along to point out to them the error of their ways; how the new boy stood up to Monson major, and beat him in fair fight; and how thereafter Monson major was taught a lesson that bullying does not always pay.

Then comes the more serious part of the story, and we read how the blackguardly plot against Courtenay was laid by Ponsonby, and how he was convicted on what looked like indisputable evidence of drunkenness; how even then the Caterpillar stood by his chum; and how the arrival of Major Courtenay, and the disclosure of the fact that "Arthur Clare" was really Frank Courtenay, led to a much more searching inquiry, out of which Frank emerged cleared.

Cleared—and Ponsonby's cousin—the son of

the man whose money Cecil Ponsonby had hoped to inherit! Pon might shake hands and pretend to bury all bitter feeling, but it was not in Pon to do it. Thenceforward he was his cousin's bitter enemy, ready to try any villainy against him!

In "Rivals and Chums" the Caterpillar's is really a bigger part than Courtenay's, and there will be more to be said of that story when one deals with Rupert de Courcy. But how splendidly Frank shows up in the later chapters, when, hurt as he is by his chum's apparent defection to the Ponsonby camp, he goes over to Courtfield to warn him of the raid upon the gambling-den, and to share his peril if he cannot save him. There is the real stuff of true friendship here; and it is all so well and yet so simply told that it leaves upon one's memory an impression very hard to efface.

The friendship between the two Highcliffe chums and the Famous Five of Greyfriars is deep and strong, too. Pon & Co. are the enemies of Harry Wharton and his circle, as they are of Courtenay and—in a different way—of De Courcy; but it does not need a common enemy to draw together fellows so well-fitted for friendship as these. Courtenay and De Courcy, when they come to Greyfriars, are honoured guests, and yet two of the crowd, with big parts to play, are they also in that capital story, "The House on the Heath," which formed the last Christmas Number of this paper. You will all remember how they were imprisoned by the German officer—who had escaped from prison—and his rascally confederate, and how Billy Bunter shared their captivity, and how they got out at length.

It was not surprising that, when once the more decent section of the Highcliffe Fourth had got the upper hand, Courtenay should be made captain of the Form in place of Pon, while that aristocratic swindler became leader of the opposition.

But all Pon's scheming is not likely to depose Courtenay. The nuts are in a minority, and the fellows over whom they formerly rode roughshod represent the Form. Pon & Co. represent nothing but themselves.

Many an attempt have the nuts made to take down their rivals, and at times they have had some slight measure of success; but it has never lasted. Once, indeed, it did look as though they had managed to sow dissension between Courtenay and their Greyfriars chums; but the cloud blew over.

With all his apparent laziness, the Caterpillar is a very keen individual. Frank may be ready to believe in Pon's hypocritical pretences at being more friendly; the Caterpillar regards Pon as a "most interesting specimen," but knows him too well to have the faintest expectation of seeing any good come out of him!

One does not like the Caterpillar the less for his lack of faith; yet one likes Courtenay the more for his superabundance of it. In that nature, fitting so well his name, there is no room for suspicion until it is forced upon him, and even then he struggles against it. In generosity like this there is real greatness, for not one in ten thousand of us can forgive thus fully and freely.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No 490.

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Masters and Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, escape from the clutches of Faik, a rascally adventurer who is in pursuit of a secret treasure in the African wilds. Faik is working in collusion with Jasper Orme, Bob's cousin, at Cape Town. The two lads are captured by the natives of the Inrobi tribe, who also surround Faik's party. Faik has done the chief of the tribe a bad turn in the old days, and tries to place the guilt on Bob; but, thanks to a Scotchman named MacGregor, and a friendly native—Mendi—he fails in his plot. Bob is acclaimed chief on the death of Kazna, the former leader. The comrades save Faik from the vengeance of the tribe, then push on after the treasure, but are waylaid by Mopo and a strong force. Mopo, who is Bob's deadly rival, is beaten off, with his braves, and Galza, a messenger from the Inrobi, comes to their camp.

He brings tidings of Mopo, who is in pursuit. The companions elude Mopo by diving into the lake, and they find a wonderful underground country, inhabited by a tribe of weird people unlike the human race. These strangers they overcome, secure the gold, and then, after amazing adventures, find themselves back in the world they had quitted. Mopo, Faik, and also Orme, Bob Masters' cousin, with a strong party, are on their tracks.

(Now read on.)

The Only Way.

Ted took very steady aim. He selected one man, and at the third shot managed to disable him. He could not distinguish Orme. His next shot wounded a second, and the others dropped down. But soon Orme sprang up, and gave the word for a rush. As his men rose, Ted brought down a third. Orme hurriedly went to ground again.

Meanwhile, MacGregor had been drawing a bead on the waggon, and before long the men there crawled under the wheels for safety.

"I've got my lot quiet, I think," Ted said; and he looked back again to see how Bob was getting on. He gave a joyful cry.

"Bob is coming back!" he shouted. "Mopo has joined his crowd, and they are all squatting on the ground. Hurrah! Bob has won!"

MacGregor wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"It's been the worst few minutes o' my life," he said. "Now that it's over I feel quite shaken. I couldn't go through it again for all the world has to gie!"

They lay watching their enemies on either side. Orme and his gang were trying to make cover for themselves from any stones within reach. It was clear they had no intention of advancing, and very probably they were afraid to risk retiring. At intervals of a couple of minutes or so Ted fired, to remind them that he was wide awake and watching.

Now Bob reappeared.

"Eh, mon, but you've proved the courage I always knew was in ye!" MacGregor began. "Shake hands on it! But for your nerve we wad all be wiped out ere noo! Doubtless ye heard us peppering at Orme? He was minded to rush us."

"Yes, and your firing helped me a bit, too," Bob said, as he sat down. "It did a good deal to knock sense into Mopo."

"What happened?" Ted asked eagerly.

Bob looked a trifle disconcerted, but he quickly pulled himself together.

"Mopo has agreed not to attack," he began. "He says he will take the word of a white man."

"And I suppose you promised to get things straightened out for him?"

"Yes," Bob said slowly.

"What else was settled?" MacGregor asked, eyeing the lad keenly.

"He gives us until the moon rises to-night; that will be at about ten o'clock. If Kampa doesn't come by then the truce between us is at an end."

"And are we to stay here till ten? Orme will be on us long ere that," the old Scot returned.

"No. We are to leave here."

"And where are we to go?"

Bob rubbed his chin. It was evident he still had something to tell which was not altogether agreeable.

"It's this way," he said. "Mopo is a cute beast, and, of course, I couldn't absolutely prove that Kampa was coming. He was inclined to believe me. Still, these savages are very suspicious, you know."

"Humph!" MacGregor grunted. "Now, there's just one thing I would like to know, my lad, without any more beating about the bush. What are you keeping back?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not much, really. All will come right," he answered. "But there's a lot to be done. We've got to carry the gold, and there's Faik lying there, and we must—"

"What's the trouble? It's something about yourself?" MacGregor persisted.

"It's not, really," Bob said doggedly. "It doesn't amount to anything. But Mopo won't take any risks, he said. And he's not so easy to bargain with as you might think. Now, Ted, don't you start talking again!" For Ted had stood up, and was walking towards him. "An hour back you made an awful fuss, you know, about my going down to Mopo, and all came right. And—"

"You're going down again!" Ted gasped.

"That's it! And what about it?" Bob retorted. "I'm stopping with Mopo till Kampa arrives. That's all."

"And Mopo has given us till the moon rises, and if Kampa is not here by then—"

"He's sure to be here!"

Ted wrung his hands.

"You're not going!" he exclaimed. "This means that you are to be a hostage, and if Kampa is late Mopo takes it out of you."

"There was no other way to fix it up," Bob replied. "If I didn't agree, Mopo had me in his power there and then, hadn't he? And at the worst it was better for me to get till moonlight than to be wiped out on the spot. We haven't time for talking. I gave him a promise that I would be back with him in half an hour; and, of course, I stick to the promise. That puts a stopper on any objection. For you wouldn't have me go back on my word, would you?"

Ted stood silent. There was nothing he could say.

MacGregor spoke.

"I had hoped all that business was over," he sighed. "We may as well know the worst at once and act accordingly. Galza, are you certain that the great Kampa will come with the night? Thou hast heard what the young white chief hath spoken."

The native's face was anxious and thoughtful.

"I have heard, oh master," he replied. "There is a great water to ford, and that will take time. And Kampa does not know that the peril is so nigh."

"Thou canst find him?" MacGregor asked.

"Ay, master."

"Then take him this message—that if he is not here with his warriors by the rising of the moon, the young white chief will be slain. I suppose Mopo will let him go, Bob?"

Bob pointed to a wood three miles away.

"You two are to go there," he said. "And you can start at any time." He looked uncomfortable again. "There is just one thing more," he continued. "I had to promise that if Kampa did not come in time you fellows would not seek to rescue me."

Ted sprang up in a fury.

"That's going too far!" he shouted. "Won't I just wipe out as many as I can?"

"Then I'll have to tell Mopo what you

mean to do, and take the risk when I get down to him now," Bob replied.

Ted was choking. He turned away, and a sharp sob came from his throat. Bob stepped quickly to his side.

"Don't worry, old chap," he pleaded. "Our luck has never quite deserted us."

And, deeply moved, he hurried down the hill.

Missing!

During the time in which this had been taking place the villain Faik lay scowling, with his arms still bound. Triumph gleamed in his fishy eyes when he heard of the advance of Mopo; but he shivered when he learned that Orme also was approaching. For he knew he could hope for but scant mercy at Orme's hands.

Ted chanced to glance in his direction, and strode towards him.

"You cur! It is through you Bob is in danger; all we have gone through is due to you!" he said fiercely. "I've a good mind to leave you here for Orme to deal with. But you can be of use, and I won't spare you. Get up, and I'll load you like a pack-horse with the gold, and if you turn sulky we'll just whack you along!"

Faik stumbled to his feet. Ted strapped a couple of bags on his back. MacGregor joined him.

"Ye had better stay here, my lad, for the present, and fire a shot off and on at Orme to keep him away whilst we are retreating," he said. "Galza can carry another load, and I'll manage one, too. Galza can come back again, and you can help me with the balance."

"If only we had Mendi here!" Ted remarked.

"Ay! He wad be very useful. He's on the raft still, I expect, waiting to hear from us," the old Scot sighed. "His ankle is well enough by this time to enable him to get along, I'm thinking, and he wad be wondering what has happened. But there's no use in idle regrets; we maun do the best we can."

With Galza and Faik, he left the hill. The savages, grouped together in the plain, laughed when they saw the villain bowed down under his heavy load. Bob waved his hand to MacGregor. The lad was seated apart, and a few yards from him stood Mopo, leaning on his cherished axe.

As they tramped towards the wood they heard Ted firing from time to time. The wood, they found, was small, and surrounded by a natural ditch. Galza hurried back. It seemed impossible to tire him. He made two more journeys, carrying the ammunition and provisions, and on the third Ted accompanied him.

The day was drawing to a close now. They took a meal. Galza sped away to hurry along Kampa and his following, and the Scot and the Irish lad waited for the dark. Suspense increased as the shadows deepened. Ted had a foreboding that Bob was doomed. At last he could not conceal it any longer.

"Will Mopo stick to his agreement?" he asked.

MacGregor did not answer at once. Perhaps he, too, had the same doubt.

"These savages are honourable in their way, and Mopo stands to lose if he doesna," he replied. "And I dinna think he has any personal grudge against Bob. He is only angry because the tribe made Bob their chief. And for that there is an excuse, for if Bob had not turned up Mopo was by right the next to rule."

"Mopo hasn't shown much honour so far!" Ted said, with a touch of bitterness.

"Na, na! But self-interest may make him keep to his word."

They sat silent again. Not a sound came to them.

(Continued on page 15.)

"I wonder what Orme is doing?" the lad remarked, after a long pause.

"Likely he is waiting for nightfall to attack the hill, where he thinks we still are," MacGregor suggested. "And, in that case, it won't be long before he makes a move."

A slight wind began to rustle the leaves over their heads. The sun had gone in a great blaze of bright colours. Swiftly they had shaded away, and in a few minutes the sky had turned a dusky grey. The grey deepened, and became black. Every minute the darkness grew more impenetrable.

Ted started, and jumped up.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

MacGregor put a hand to his ear and listened.

"I heard naething," he replied.

"It was like the crack of a whip," Ted said.

"Ah! Then Orme has got under way!"

"But it didn't come from the far side of the hill," Ted replied. "It sounded more to the left, as if Orme was coming round the side. Ah! There it is again!"

MacGregor got up.

"Ay, I heard that, and I'm afraid ye're richt," he said. "But why should Orme have changed his route? What could have happened to make him haul off from attacking us?"

"What if he knows that we have left the hill?"

"You mean—"

"May not Mopo have sent someone to tell him?"

"In that case Mopo would have broken his bargain, and Bob would be free of his promise," MacGregor said, his voice very stern. "But we must first make certain."

"I'm sure I'm richt!" Ted insisted. "And the cur has got Bob. Is there nothing we can do?"

"Some time maun pass yet before the moon rises, and until then—"

He stopped. A bullet had sung over their heads.

"Orme knows we're here. He's going to attack!" Ted gasped. "Shall we stay on or clear out?"

"We'll haul him back for a bit, and then sheer off for a few hundred yards," MacGregor replied. "If we keep moving, he winna be able to spot us."

They went to a corner of the wood. Again a bullet whistled overhead, and Ted fired in return. The crack of the whip was not repeated. Evidently the waggon had been brought to a standstill. But after another five minutes another shot came from a different direction.

"They've separated, and are trying to surround the wood and get us into a trap," Ted said.

"Ay, that's the game!" the old Scot replied. "But we winna be fooled so easily, and we've plenty of time yet. It's only a very lucky shot that could find its mark in such darkness as this, and the party is so sma' that there must be a big space between each twa men, if they're tryin' to surround us."

From another direction came another bullet. Ted and MacGregor now began firing on every side, as if scared, and trying to beat off the attack on all sides. Orme's fusillade became more brisk. Evidently his gang thought their tactics had been discovered.

"They'll push on fast noo, and try to close round," MacGregor said. "So we'll just clear out. And we'll keep together. If we come on a couple, then we're a match for them."

"And Faik?"

"Let him do what he can to save himself."

They fired another round each, and then left the wood at the corner nearest to Bob. Having gone a short distance, they lay down under a tree. Orme's party kept up the firing. From Mopo's camp not a sound came.

After half an hour, when the firing had died away, they suddenly heard a great cheer coming from the wood.

"They've got the gold!" Ted muttered. "They've found it, and that's why they're yelling."

"And much good may it do them!" MacGregor chuckled. "Do ye think they can ever get far with it? Like as not they'll run into Kampa any minute now; and, in any case, we have only to gie him the tip, and he'll run them down wherever they trek. No, it's not about that I'm troubling."

He had been watching the sky. A silver light was rising where he gazed. Brighter and brighter it grew. Of a sudden they

heard the beating of a drum. It was repeated twice.

Then from afar came a wild war-cry. Hoarse yells followed, and rifle-shots.

"Kampa at last!" MacGregor cried. "Galza has found him, and he has come across Orme's waggon."

There was no mistaking the war-cry. The rifles cracked, but evidently the Inrobi warriors were not dismayed. They swept into the fray, heedless of the white men's bullets, and their courage and their axes and their numbers made victory certain.

Louder and louder grew the din, whilst Ted and the old Scot, their eyes shining, listened. The help they had needed, that they had waited for with such anxious hearts, had come. Bob was safe!

The fight grew more and more desperate. The firing increased, as though those defending the waggon were being terribly driven. Sometimes it slowed down, only to swell again; sometimes the war-cries rang like a challenge, sometimes they died out abruptly.

And as a triumphant cheer rang forth, repeated again and again, MacGregor spoke.

"That's done it!" he said. "They've got the waggon! Orme had not the pluck to join up with his confederates. Had he done so the Inrobi might have been beaten off by their rifle-fire. He thought only of his own skin, like the cur he is, and before long he'll pay for his cowardice."

Now Ted jumped up.

"The moon!" he cried. "There it is!"

"And Kampa has come with it!" MacGregor said.

"No; he is not here yet. The fight has delayed him. And Bob—Bob—"

"But Mopo kens o' the fight, too," the old Scotchman urged. "He knows now for certain that what Bob told him is true. And he knows, too, that if he lays a hand on Bob—"

"But the drums? I was going to speak about it when I heard the Inrobi war-cry, and I forgot. Bob is not safe. What does the beating of that drum mean?"

He had become terribly agitated. MacGregor, too, stood up.

"It's a' richt—it maun be a' richt!" he urged. "But, if you like, we will go to Mopo."

"Oh, let's go!" Ted cried. And he dashed away.

The old Scotchman moved after him as fast as he could. They had to cover a couple of miles or so. Knowing how quickly Ted could run, MacGregor calculated when he would reach the camp, and as the minutes went by, and he did not hear a sound, he slowed down. And behind him he heard the Inrobi chanting songs of victory as they marched from the scene of the fight.

On and on he went, and at last he began to fear he must have lost his way. He was very tired; his footsteps were stumbling. He trod on something soft, and tripped and fell. Getting up, he looked down. He had fallen across a human body.

With heart beating fast, he bent over it.

It was Ted!

Reeling back, he put his hand to his head and looked around.

There lay another body!

"Mendi!" he gasped. "He followed us, and met with this!"

He staggered. But he looked around again.

"Bob! Bob! Where are you?" he cried.

And then, by the flattening of the grass and by the ashes of fires, he saw that he was in what had been Mopo's camp.

Mopo and his followers had crept away.

And Bob! Where was Bob?

Heartbroken, the old man flung up his hands.

"Bob! Bob!" he wailed again.

Justice for Faik!

MacGregor staggered in dazed bewilderment. Seldom had he received a worse shock. Pulling himself together by a great effort, he went back to Ted. He had only glanced at him for a moment. What would he find on closer inspection?

Ted lay on his back, his arms stretched out on either side. His face looked ghastly in the moonlight. The old man knelt down and placed a hand on his heart.

It still beat. There was a gash across his forehead, but no other sign of violence. From him MacGregor went to Mendi. He, too, was unconscious.

Kampa and his braves were advancing, singing their songs of triumph. There, out on the wind-swept plain, the old Scotchman

stood dazed and helpless. The three men who had journeyed so far with him might all die; he could not be certain, indeed, that Bob was still alive. It was a terrible blow. The Inrobi warriors, coming up, found him drooping, almost done.

At first they broke into a great cheer. He had lived with them for years, aided them often by his wise counsel, shared their simple joys and sorrows, won their respect and regard. They crowded round him. But a cry made them turn. Ted and Mendi had been discovered.

Kampa pressed his way forward.

"Oh, great Barelegs, wisest of the white-faces, we rejoice that once again we see you!" he said. "But what meaneth all this? For lo! the young white chief is not with you, and his friend is surely death-stricken; and Mendi, too, looks near his end. Who hath done this?"

MacGregor pointed across the plain.

"I dinna ken for sure, but Mopo was here, and the young white chief was with him, and noo both are gane," he replied.

"This is the work of Mopo!" Kampa cried. "And bitter shall be his punishment. Much have we done to-night, nor shall we now tarry. My warriors shall follow Mopo and exact the penalty!"

Galza hurried up.

"Mendi hath spoken, and there is much that he would say," he began.

They moved to where the black boy was lying. He was still very weak, but his eyes shone feverishly. He smiled when he saw MacGregor.

"Oh, Barelegs, why didst thou wander so far and leave me on the raft when danger was afoot and I could have helped?" he asked reproachfully. "For was not my place by the young white chief, and have I ever deserted him?"

"But, Mendi, ye were weak and in pain; no' fit to walk," MacGregor replied. "We wad have warned ye had it been possible. But we juist had e'en to keep moving."

"'Tis as I thought, and yet was my heart sore and troubled," Mendi replied. "But now I have peace, for now I see thee again. Nor will it be long before I meet the young white chief, for this he has told me."

"When did he tell you that?" MacGregor asked quickly.

"Before these jackals brought me low."

"You saw him to-night?"

"Of a truth I did. Nor was I surprised for I had followed his trail. There were signs and portents all the way. For sometimes, keeping close to Mopo, I saw him make all spur, and sometimes he tarried, and I knew whither he was bound to work the evil in his heart, and how at times he thought all was as he wished, and how again fear gripped him. Thus did I judge. And thus, watching closely, did I see the meeting between Mopo and the traitor whom the white one with the fish eyes had sent back, and creeping close, did I listen and learn."

"And what did you hear?"

"I heard the plot. That another evil whiteface was coming from the south, and that Mopo was to come in from the north, so that the young white chief and ye who are his friends might be trapped. But my leg was still weak, nor could I keep pace with Mopo longer, and therefore to-day I was still far away when I heard the iron tubes speaking thunder, and I knew that ye were fighting for life."

"That was when we were on yonder hill," MacGregor explained.

"And I came on, my heart much troubled," Mendi continued. "And the thunder ceased, and I did not know what had befallen, and night closed around. And as I drew nigh to this place I saw the young white chief being led away; and his face was pale, but he was calm and brave as ever. And with him were some few, and behind came Mopo with others. And as I stopped, spellbound, he saw me, for the moon was shining full on me as on him, and he called, and this is what he said."

All listened eagerly.

"Have no fear for me, Mendi, but hasten on!" he shouted. "And look that you be fleet, for Mopo is nigh behind me. And go to my friends and warn them, and tell them that Mopo, hearing the great Kampa and his warriors fighting, was full of fear lest they might fall upon him; and therefore, breaking his word, is he taking me with him that he may hold me for a hostage. But let them not yield, but fight on!"

"And as he spoke he was hurried past, and some rushed at me. But, forgetting my

(Continued on page 16.)

IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 15.)

pains, I ran swiftly, and eluded all," Mendi continued. "And I had come where you found me when I met with others, and they smote me heavily, and I saw red thunderbolts, and I fell, nor do I remember more until this."

"Thou hast done well, Mendi, and all thou hast braved for the young white chief will not be forgotten to thee when once again we are in our homes," Kampa said. "But the time for talk is not yet. We must pursue them."

He turned to give the summons, but at that moment half a dozen of the warriors were seen dragging a man towards the crowd. The man was Faik!

"They hae found Faik!" MacGregor murmured.

At once Kampa strode forward. Faik's teeth were chattering with terror and his face was green.

"And who is this?" Kampa demanded sternly. "I have seen his face before. Oh, Barelegs, is he known to you?"

For an instant MacGregor did not move.

"I know him, Kampa," he said. "Much hath been forgiven him, but so black is his heart that the more he hath been pardoned the worse hath he done. He is of my race, and we deal justice among ourselves, asking no aid from others. Ay, we maistly reckon to do that same, and until now I would hae pleaded that he might hae been left to me. But the time for that hath past."

Faik gave an agonising shriek. He struggled to fling himself at MacGregor's feet.

"Mercy! Mercy!" he wailed. "I repent! I am sorry for everything I have done. Oh, do not leave me to be tortured and slain by these savages!"

But he was held so firmly that he could not break away. His eyes began to roll, his mouth to slobber, MacGregor's face grew every moment darker.

"And Bob," he asked—"the lad who never did you any harm? Will he ever see the sunlight again? Is it just that he should die, and that ye who brought this on him should live? How did you treat him from the start? Ye joined that villain Orme in a cowardly plot to get him on the veldt and then make sure that he should never return. Ye sought to flog him as if he was a dog. When he left you you followed, seeking still to destroy him. He saved your life at the Inrobi village, and let ye go free. Still you followed him. Ye stood in with Mopo, and sent to Cape Town for Orme that he might help to destroy him. Ye stole the fortune we had secured with such great hardship. And now, at the finish, ye sent again to Mopo, that between him and Orme the lad might die!"

"I am sorry!" Faik shrieked. "Deal with me yourself, but do not hand me over to these savages!"

"Ye are their captive, no' mine," MacGregor replied coldly. "Is Bob to be dealt with by black men, an' ye no'? Who are ye, that your fate should be better than his? If he dies, his death will be on your head. Kampa, thou hast heard all. What sayest thou?"

Kampa nodded.

"There is naught too bad for him, and it is fit that we should judge him, for has he not worked wrong upon us?" he answered. "For if, through him, our young chief is injured, is not that an injury to us? And if he slays our chief, where is it written in our laws that we should not take his life? Much have I heard from thee now, oh, Barelegs, of which I did not know, and all I have heard has sent my old blood tingling as in my youth. By us he shall be judged, and at once!"

Faik, almost bereft of consciousness, slipped down beneath his captors. They had to drag him up; and hold him thus, for his legs were hanging loosely. His mouth opened and shut; he struggled hard to speak. His eyes were fixed in pitiful pleading on MacGregor. At last his voice came.

"I can save young Bob Musters!" he spluttered. "There is much that I can tell. Orme had me in his power, and drove me to this. He is the real enemy, as I can prove."

"You can save Bob?" MacGregor asked.

"Yea; and I alone can save him. If

Kampa gets attacking Mopo, then on that instant young Musters will be slain."

"And how can ye save the lad?"

"Mopo will not touch him if I order otherwise. If you let me go to Mopo all will come right."

"Ye never kept your word yet, and what reason have I to believe ye now?" MacGregor asked. "This is just a trick to escape. D'ye think that I am such a fool as to let ye slip away?"

"Then do you come with me!" the wretched man replied.

"And Kampa?"

"He and his lot can come, too, so long as they don't attack; and on the way I can tell you why Orme from the first intended mischief to young Musters."

MacGregor felt a hand on his shoulder. Turning, he saw Ted. The latter was still very pale and much shaken. Only his eagerness kept him on his feet.

"Try him, Mr. MacGregor!" he urged. "There may be something in what he says; I feel almost sure there is. Bob has often spoken to me about Orme, and was always puzzled to know why that villain had a deep-laid plot ready for his destruction as soon as he landed in Cape Town. And if we don't act quickly and with caution we may never see Bob again."

MacGregor stood in thought for a few seconds.

"And what says Kampa?" he then asked.

The old medicine-man smiled.

"It will be as the great Barelegs chooses," he replied. "For what matters if the axe does not fall for a few hours? There will be the more time to sharpen it. And yonder evil whiteface cannot escape us."

"Then, Faik, we consent," MacGregor said. "Ye know what ye hae undertaken, and your promise must be carried out. If you fall you die. Keep him well guarded, Kampa. And now, let us make our preparations!"

By Kampa's orders Faik was led away, closely guarded, a pitiable object in very truth, whilst Kampa began to address his braves.

"How are you feeling, my lad?" the old Scotsman asked of Ted.

"Uncommon dizzy, and knocked out generally," Ted replied. "But I'll be right enough soon. I blundered into this. I didn't know I had got to Mopo's camp, and was running along still, when three of his scoundrels came on me suddenly. I was short of breath, and not able to put up much of a fight. They got on to me again, and one hit at me with his axe. Fortunately, I was able to dodge, and he partly missed his stroke. But it was enough to knock me out, and I fancy he thought he had finished me!"

"It's lucky he did, or he might have struck again," MacGregor said. "Do ye think you will be able to gang with us?"

"Rather!" the plucky lad asserted quickly. "It's not likely I'm going to stay behind with Bob in danger! I'll get along all right, and I hope they'll make a start soon!"

"Then there's another matter," MacGregor remarked. "That cur Orme and his gang have gone off with the treasure. We must collar them, too! But here is Kampa. Kampa, there is something of which we would talk!"

"My braves are ready to follow after Mopo," the old medicine-man said.

"Tis well," MacGregor answered. "But there is another also who must not escape our vengeance. I speak of the evil paleface whose waggon you destroyed!"

"We fought as the Inrobi over fight against the iron tubes there, and of the waggon naught remains now but burnt sticks," Kampa said. "We spared the bullocks, for they will be of use to us!"

(Next week's issue will contain another splendid instalment of this exciting story.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"SIR JIMMY'S PAL!"

By Frank Richards.

More than a few requests for further stories about Sir Jimmy Vivian, the good hearted little schoolboy baronet reared in the slums, have come to hand. Next week's story is about Sir Jimmy, and it shows what a thoroughly decent and loyal fellow he is with all his surface faults of manner. Recall how his friend the "Spadger" comes to see him at Greyfriars—how Skinner plots—of the part played by the Bouncer—and of the way in which Mauleverer and the Famous Five stand by Sir Jimmy. You will like it, or I am no judge of what you like!

INTERESTING COMMENTS.

I clip the paragraphs which follow from a recent issue of the "Daily Express." I think they will interest my readers, although the MAGNET and "Gem" are certainly not "bloods," and the writer seems to have acquired considerable misinformation as to the price of boys' papers. I don't know one at twopence—as yet. It may come, thought!

"Cradle of Heroism."

"Do not grow indignant when you see an errand-boy with his eyes glued to a penny dreadful! The penny dreadful, or 'blood,' usually costs twopence, and its dreadfulness is really quite imaginary. Schoolmasters and police-court magistrates and other people with didactic minds have only ill to speak of the 'blood,' which they say is responsible for 83.5 per cent. of the crime of juveniles in the British Isles, the cinema being the cause of the remainder. This is nonsense. The inspiration of the penny dreadful is romance—cheap romance, it is true, but still romance—and deeds of derring-do are its leading features.

"The late Grant Allen declared that the 'Family Herald' love-story stimulated romance in dull hearts and determined young women only to marry for love. Love marriages were, in his opinion, essential to the well-being of the race, and the novelette was thus a public benefactor. Similarly with the 'blood.' We have seen in the heroism of our battlefield the result of the love of courage and adventure it engenders and keeps alive."

QUITE RIGHT!

There can be no doubt that reading of plucky and straightforward fellows—and the heroes of boys' stories are always that nowadays—helps to quicken the love of courage and other manly virtues. But the old names, "penny dreadful" and "blood," are out of date—at any rate, as far as our papers are concerned. The people who talk of the harm done by boys' papers are talking without knowledge or judgment, that's all!

Your Editor

NOTICE. In future we shall only print the actual number of copies of the MAGNET ordered through Newsagents. Unless you order your copy in advance, disappointment is certain.

ORDER FORM.

To Mr. Newsagent.

Please keep for me each week until further notice a copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY.

(Signed)