

"PLAYING FOR HIS COLOURS."

A STORY OF SCHOOL LIFE.

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CHAPTER II.

"WHO'S GOT IT?"



"LUCKY shave that!" exclaimed Prior next morning, just as he and Tubbs were going up to school. "There's a hole in my trousers pocket, and that half-sov. my pater gave me for the 'teapot' was just off on its own account."

"Where's your purse?"

"Don't know; no time to look for it now. Never mind; it will be all right here on the corner of my desk. Nobody will bag it."

So saying, out he went with Tubbs up to school.

They had a good morning's work, and at midday Tubbs returned to the study to fetch a pair of Fives' gloves, while Prior was kept back by the Doctor for a few minutes.

On his way from school the collector for the testimonial overtook him, and asked if he could pay up his promised ten shillings then.

"Come up to my study, and you shall have it," was the reply.

"Well, that's a rum go!" panted Prior, who had lost his breath in running upstairs. "I left the half-sov. on the corner of my desk—just there," indicating the spot with his finger, "and now it's gone."

"Who has been in?"

"No one that I know of, except Tubbs. He came for his Fives' gloves while I was with the Doctor I believe." "Well, I suppose Tubbs hasn't got it?"

"No; I would as soon suspect myself as him."

"That's pretty strong. I do wish he would give up that fool's habit of betting; he's such an idiot over it, too. He knows absolutely nothing about horses, and one fellow gets another to stuff him up with some nonsense just to diddle him out of his money."

"Young jackass!" replied Prior. "I've

talked to him till I'm sick of it; but now he knows very plainly that if I catch him, or any one else, at it, even if it be our worthy and noble chief Mortimer, I shall report it. Yes, I will, if I get flayed alive for it. It's a mean and detestable habit; and once let it get a hold of the younger fellows here, and there's no knowing the consequences. But, all the same, Tubbs didn't take my ten shillings; and, what's more, I really haven't the face to send to my Dad for another, so unless it should turn up I must drop out of the list."

"Let's go and ask Tubbs if he saw it when he came up for his gloves."

Off the two started for the courts; and as there were several sets of them in opposite directions, they naturally went to the wrong ones first, and it was nearly dinner-time when they found him.

They agreed not to speak in the presence of any one else, as the more widely the matter got known the less chance of getting back the money.

When the game was over, and the three other players had gone off in another direction, Prior asked Tubbs where he had found his Fives' gloves.

"On the cupboard at the back of the door," was the reply.

"Did you happen to go near my desk or to look at it?"

"What are you driving at, Prior?"

"Why, my half-sov. has gone, and I want to know whether it was taken while we were in school, or after you had fetched the gloves."

"Oh, I see," said Tubbs, with a momentary confusion, arising from a thought about another ten shillings that he might or might not get. "Oh, I see. No; I didn't go near the desk; I wasn't in the room five seconds. I'm afraid I cannot throw any light on it."

"It's a horrid nuisance, for I really can't get any more; and I don't want to do less than I have promised."

"I thought you pitched into me for not liking to do less than other boys," said Tubbs maliciously.

"Not quite the same thing after all, is it? You said you would give ten shillings or nothing. I had already put my name down for ten shillings."