

THE BOUNDER'S GUEST!

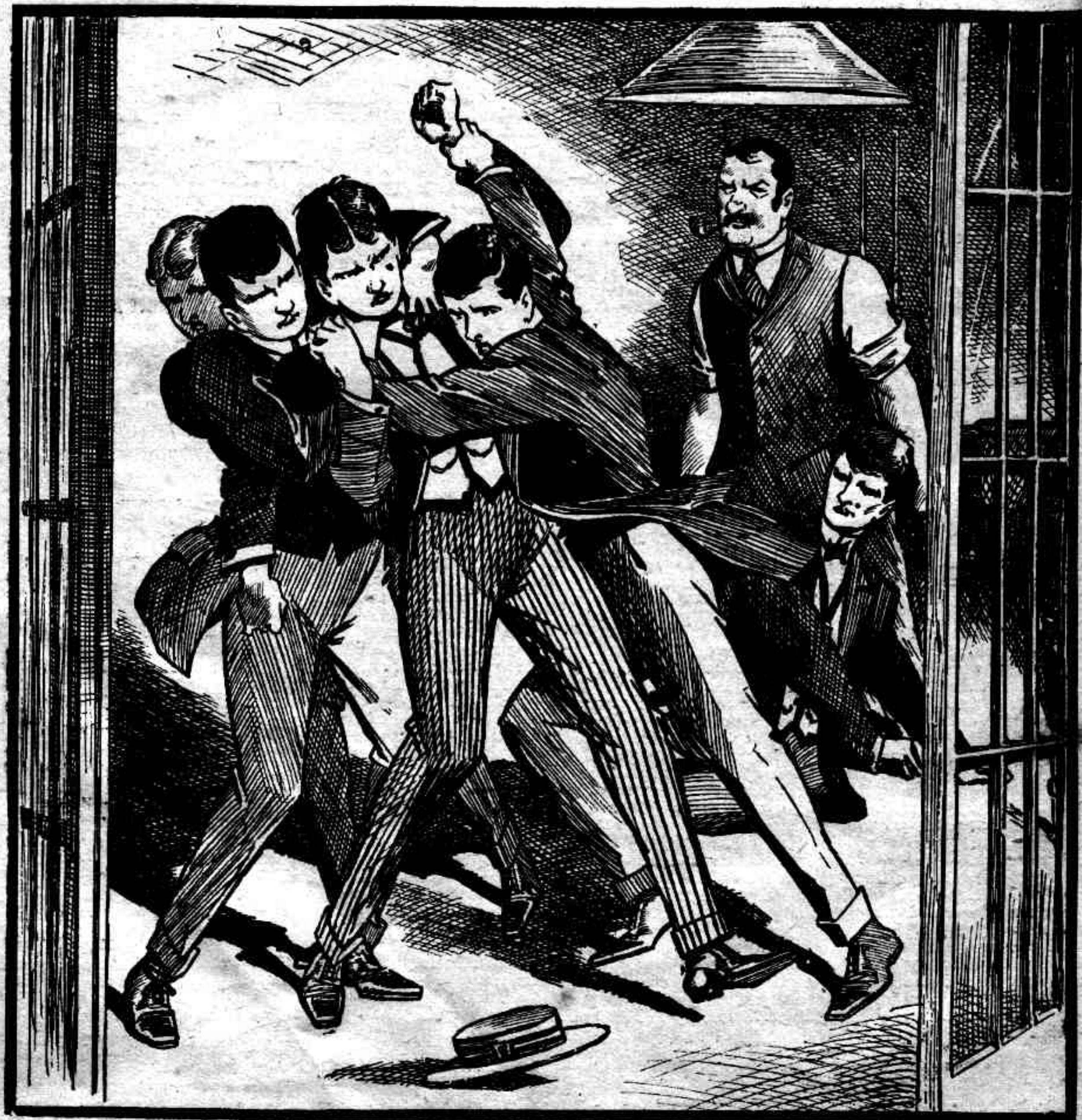
A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale of the Boys of Greyfriars.



The Magnet 1st Library

No. 453. Vol. 10.

OCTOBER 14th, 1916.



A HARD NUT TO CRACK!

(An Exciting Scene in the Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life in this issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 3d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"FISHY'S LATEST!"

By Frank Richards.

Stories concerning Fisher Tarleton Fish, the scheming Yankee junior, have always been very popular among a considerable section of our readers, and many are the requests for "another Fishy yarn!" Those who desire this will get it next week, when Fish appears in an even fishier role than ever, and sails very close indeed to the wind in his greed for money. The trouble centres round a photo of four young blackguards of the Remove smoking, which photo, in the possession of the Famous Five, becomes quite a bone of contention. Skinner, who is one of the four, takes a very bold line—for Skinner! Bunter, another of them, shuffles, lies, and flounders in his usual style. Fish is not one of the four, and might have kept out of the trouble altogether. But he does not choose that wise course. Instead, he embarks upon what seems to him not only a great scheme in itself, but likely to lead to bigger things in the future—Fish's Get-it-done Bureau! More than this it would not be well to tell here. Next week you will be able to read all about

"FISHY'S LATEST!"

OUR NOTICES.

I have been rather surprised to find how many of my readers who send along notices appear never to read my Chats at all. Several times I have pointed out the impossibility of printing any notice "in the next number," or, indeed, for some considerable time after that; yet I continue to get requests for insertion in the next number, and also grumbles about delay which has been explained over and over again as unavoidable. One reader who does read the Chats, but apparently fails to profit by them, wrote the other day to this effect: "I have just been reading what you say about the notices. But when I have sent a notice in before, it has appeared in about four weeks, and the last one I sent has been kept waiting more than six weeks. It makes me full of indignation whenever I think of it!"

This is simply silly. My young friend comes straight away from reading an explanation as to why notices are delayed, and his blood begins to boil because his particular notice has not been inserted as soon as he had hoped it might be. But what claim has he to be treated differently from other readers?

From the date of the appearance of this paragraph until the New Year I shall accept none but footer notices. These, I know, serve a useful purpose, and they give far less trouble than some other kinds. Anything else will be consigned to the wastepaper-basket without hesitation. This may seem drastic, but it is the only way of dealing with a very difficult problem. Many notices are already in hand, and will take a long time to work off; and it is simply of no use trying to squeeze a quart into a pint pot. More space cannot be given regularly, and I am really rather tired of being grumbled at by my chums, who do not appear to see that they are getting something for nothing, or to be able to discern the fact that their particular notice is naturally to me just one notice among many, not the matter of supreme importance they are inclined to think it.

FOOTER NOTICES.

I quite recognise that delay in these cases means more than in that of the notice of a reader who wants back numbers, or to correspond with someone, or to found a league; and this week I am doing my best to work off all the footer notices in hand to date. Will secretaries note that it is well to be early in the field with their notices?

OBSERVE!

No Notices Except those concerning Footer Matter received between Now and the End of the Year will be Inserted.



When the New Year comes I may be able to hit upon a scheme to deal with notices of other kinds in a somewhat different manner from the present one, which has, to speak frankly, been rendered impossible by the impatience of a considerable section of those who have benefited by it. I don't want my readers to think me unsympathetic. I am not that. But I am up against solid realities in dealing with these matters, while their conceptions of how they should be dealt with are based on more airy imaginings.

THE MERCANTILE MARINE.

I have had a good many letters lately from boys inquiring about life in the Merchant Service. Will all those interested in this subject note that a splendid series of articles concerning it is just beginning in the "Boys' Friend," which, I may add, is great value apart from these articles, with the title of

"UNDER THE RED ENSIGN!"

NOTICES.

Football.

[NOTE.—In order to get in as many notices as possible, those included have been cut down to the shortest possible limits. It should be understood that the figures in brackets always refer to age, and that "r." means "radius." Where these particulars are omitted, they were not supplied by sender of notice. All applications may be taken as for home and away matches.]

Matches Wanted By:

SPRINGFIELD UNITED F.C. (16)—4-mile r.—S. Henley, 50, Lealand Rd., Stamford Hill, N.

A Finsbury Park Team (17).—J. G. W., 97, Isledon Rd., Finsbury Park, N.

HEATON ATHLETIC F.C. (14)—4-mile r.—F. Warren, 60, Queen Anne St., Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

BOOTLE ST. MATTHEW'S F.C. (16)—4-mile r.—Chris Griffith, 21, Melling Rd., Bootle, Liverpool.

D. F. C. (16-17)—3-mile r.—James O'Connor, 38, Thompson's Rd., East Dulwich, S.E.

An Islington Team (16)—10-mile r.—F. Jones, 36, Florence St., Cross St., Upper St., Islington, N.

PARK RANGERS (14).—F. Toll, 44, Livingstone Rd., Palmers Green, N.

SOUTHEND RESERVES F.C. (14)—12-mile r. Darlington.—Percy Curnock, 92, Victoria Rd., Darlington.

Other Footer Notices.

Albert Mark, 161, Beechcroft Road, Upper Tooting, S.W., is forming a footer club, and will be glad if any reader in the neighbourhood who cares to join would write to or call upon him.

Harold Low, 76, Monega Road, Forest Gate, E., aged 14, would like to join a footer club, within four miles, as goal-keeper.

P. W. Hargrave, 20, St. Mary's Rd., Canonbury, N., wants players (15-17) for a club he is forming. Please apply by letter.

C. Rhodes, 77, Cranbrook Rd., Chiswick, W., wants to join club in W. district (14½). Plays any position.

Your Editor

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

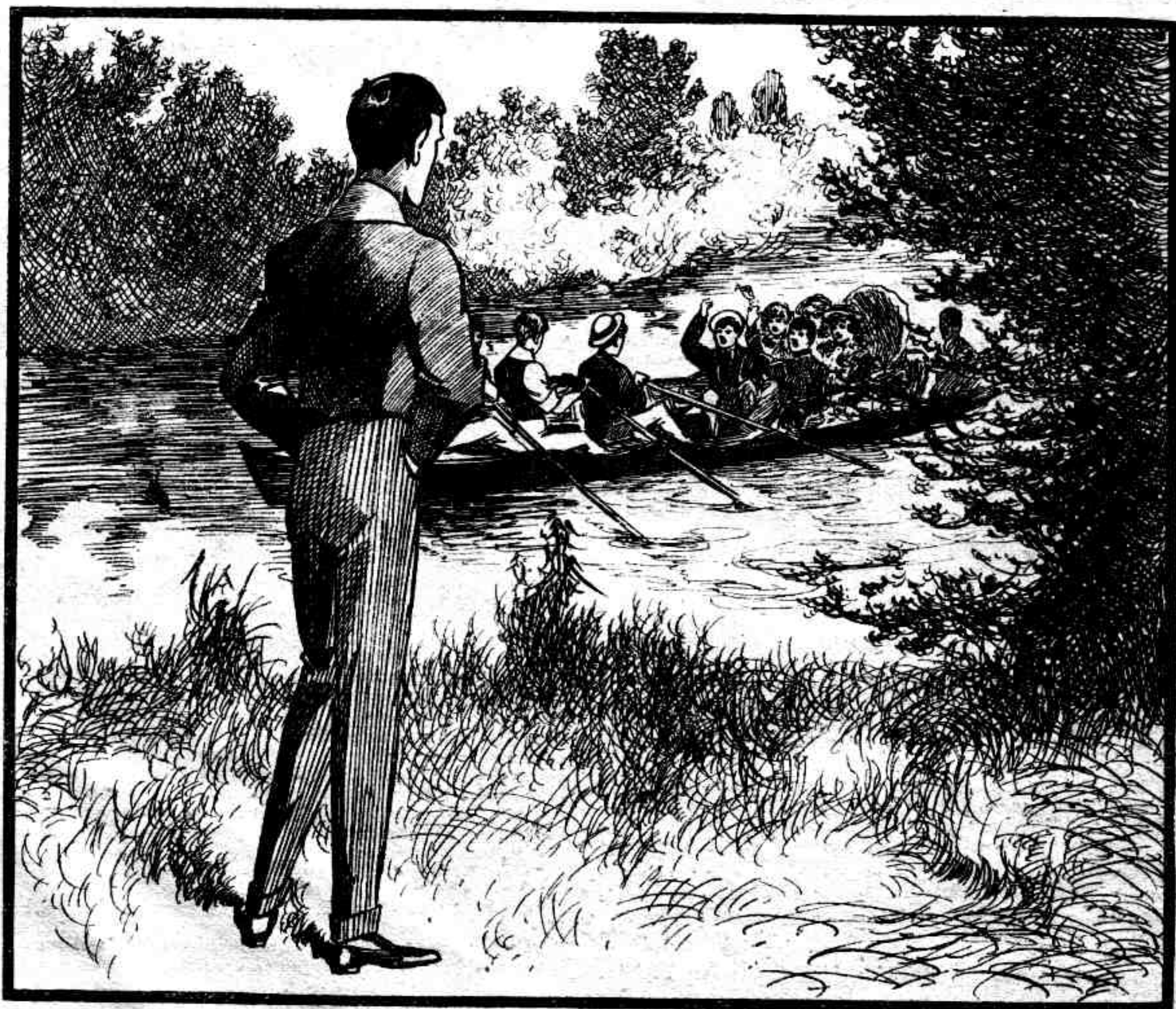


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

THE BOUNDER'S GUEST!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" A cheery voice hailed Vernon-Smith from a passing boat. It was the Greyfriars boat, and very cheery that little party looked as they glided up the river. (See Chapter 9.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Smithy's Old Pal!

"SMITHY!"

Vernon-Smith did not reply.

He was seated in the armchair in his study, with his legs stretched out, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a wrinkle of thought on his brow.

Skinner, his study-mate, had been watching him for some time with a grin, wondering what was exercising so deeply the mind of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith had forgotten Skinner's very presence.

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"Smithy!" repeated Skinner.

"Eh?" The Bounder looked up irritably as his study-mate spoke again. "What is it? Don't bother!"

"Well, you're jolly civil, I must say," remarked Skinner.

The Bounder grunted.

"What's the trouble?" asked Skinner curiously. "Have the geegees been running away with your tin?"

The Bounder's eyes glinted, but he did not answer.

"Did Banks, the bookie, owe you something when he cleared out of Friardale?" pursued Skinner.

"Oh, cheese it!"

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October 14th, 1916.

"Or have you been having bad luck at banker at the Cross Keys?"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet.

"You're fond of harping on that string, Skinner," he said quietly. "You know well enough that I've chucked that kind of thing long ago, and advised you to do the same."

Skinner closed one eye.

"You don't believe it?"

"Of course I don't," said Skinner cheerfully. "You jolly nearly got sacked, and you've been jolly careful ever since. That's all. You really can't expect to take in an old bird like me, Smithy."

"You mean I can't expect a cad and outsider like you to believe me!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Skinner, flushing. "Of course, I don't believe a yarn like that. A leopard can't change his spots, you know, even if he wanted to. You've been as glum as an owl since you had a letter this afternoon. A chap can put two and two together, you know."

"And make half a dozen of it!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Well, I've got something to think out, but it's nothing of that kind."

"Bow-wow!" said Skinner.

"You can disbelieve my word if you like——"

"Thanks! I will."

"But you won't say so," pursued the Bounder calmly. "Another word like that and you'll go out of this study on your neck!"

"You're getting touchy," grinned Skinner. "My dear chap, I'm talking to you like a pal. Why can't you confide in an old chum? What's the good of pitching a yarn to a fellow who knows you inside out?"

"That's enough!" said the Bounder, setting his teeth. He stepped to the door and threw it open. "Out you go!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Skinner. "I haven't finished my prep yet!"

"You can finish it somewhere else, then."

"Look here—— Why, you cheeky cad, leggo!" roared Skinner, as the Bounder grasped him.

Vernon-Smith's brows were knitted, and his eyes glinted under them. Since his reform the Bounder of Greyfriars had endured a great deal of chipping from his study-mate, the blackest sheep in the Greyfriars Remove. But he had a worry on his mind at the present moment, and his patience had given out.

He spun Skinner towards the doorway, the weedy slacker of the Remove resisting in vain.

"You cheeky rotter!" yelled Skinner, in fury and indignation. "Do you think you're going to chuck a chap out of his own study?"

"Yes, I rather think so," said the Bounder coolly. "Out you go, and you can come back when you've learned to keep a civil tongue in your head!"

"Leggo!" roared Skinner. "Oh, my hat! Yah!"

Bump!

Skinner sat down hard in the passage outside the study door.

A junior who had just reached the door started back just in time to escape a collision. It was Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wharton. "Trouble in the family?"

"Yow-ow!" gasped Skinner.

"Yes, we're settling a little difference," said the Bounder calmly. "Skinner thinks he won't be chucked out, and I think he will."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Skinner. "I've got to finish my prep. You've got my books in there!"

"Oh, I'll give you your books!" said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"Yoop! Yah! Ow! Stop it!" shrieked Skinner, as his books came out in a shower, and smote him right and left.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "I came here to speak to you, Smithy."

"Come in!" said the Bounder, hurling the last book at Skinner.

Skinner yelled.

"Yarrah! You rotter! Oh, crumbs!"

Wharton stepped into the study, wondering a little. Smithy and Skinner generally pulled together pretty well, though of late there had been a marked difference in their tastes. Skinner scrambled to his feet, and shook a furious fist at the doorway. But he did not venture in again. He was no match for the athletic Bounder, and he wisely decided to keep clear of the study until that unexpected ebullition of temper had blown over. He gathered up his books, and went down the passage to Snoop's study to finish his prep.

The Bounder flushed a little as he closed the study door.

"Squat down," he said.

Wharton seated himself on the corner of the table. The Bounder dropped into the armchair again.

"About the footer?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I was going

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to see you about that. I suppose you don't want me specially to-morrow afternoon? As it's only a fag match with the Third, there isn't much to bother about."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Harry. "As a matter of fact, I'm standing out myself. Bob and Nugent and Johnny and Inky are giving it a miss, too. I was going to ask you whether you'd care to captain the Remove team."

"Well, I would, but I've got something else on for to-morrow afternoon."

"All serene! I'll ask Brown. But there was something else I was going to ask you, too," said Wharton. "If you wouldn't care for footer, would you care to join us?"

"Anything special?"

"Oh, no; only a run up the river! Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis are coming, and I thought perhaps you'd like to come along."

Vernon-Smith grunted.

"Nothing I'd like better. But I can't come."

"If you've got an engagement, of course——"

"Well, I have. Unless I could bring him, too," said the Bounder, after a pause.

"Skinner?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Rats! No!"

"If you'd like to bring a chap, of course that's all right," said Harry. "A Remove chap, I suppose?"

"Not a Greyfriars chap at all," said the Bounder.

"Oh! One of the Highcliffe fellows?"

"No, no! A Rookwood chap."

"Jimmy Silver? Is he coming over? We should all be jolly glad to see Jimmy Silver again!" said Wharton heartily. The Bounder flashed a little.

"Not Silver," he said. "I hardly know him. It's another chap. He came over with the Rookwood team the last time they came here for the cricket—Mornington."

"I noticed him," said Wharton, rather drily.

Vernon-Smith's flush deepened, and he shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"I'd better come right out with it," he said. "Mornington is a bit of a bounder. I understand that he gets on rottenly with Jimmy Silver at Rookwood."

"I'm not surprised at that. Is he a friend of yours?"

"Well, he was a friend of mine," said Vernon-Smith. "I knew him before he went to Rookwood. I've had some vacations with him. He's rolling in money, and we used to have similar tastes. I needn't beat about the bush; you know what I mean—smoking, and cards, and geegees, and the rest of it. But things are a bit different with me now, and——"

"But not with him?"

"Well, no. He's written that he's coming to see me to-morrow afternoon, and it's plain that he expects to find me the same as he knew me before; and he thinks he will have what he calls a gay time. I don't quite know what to do with him, and that's a fact. I can't tell him not to come, and I can't treat him as he expects to be treated."

"Well, no, I suppose you can't," agreed Wharton.

"I don't think he'll enjoy his visit here much," said the Bounder, rather grimly. "But he used to be a pal, and I want to treat him as well as I can. I shall have to stick to him for the afternoon. I don't know whether a picnic would be much in his line. But if you wouldn't mind my bringing him along, I'd be glad to come with you. After all, he couldn't do any harm, and with the girls there he couldn't suggest smoking or cards!"

Wharton laughed.

"Hardly!" he said.

"Well, what do you say?"

"No harm in it," said Harry. "If he cares to come, bring him by all means. It will keep him out of mischief!"

The Bounder's face cleared.

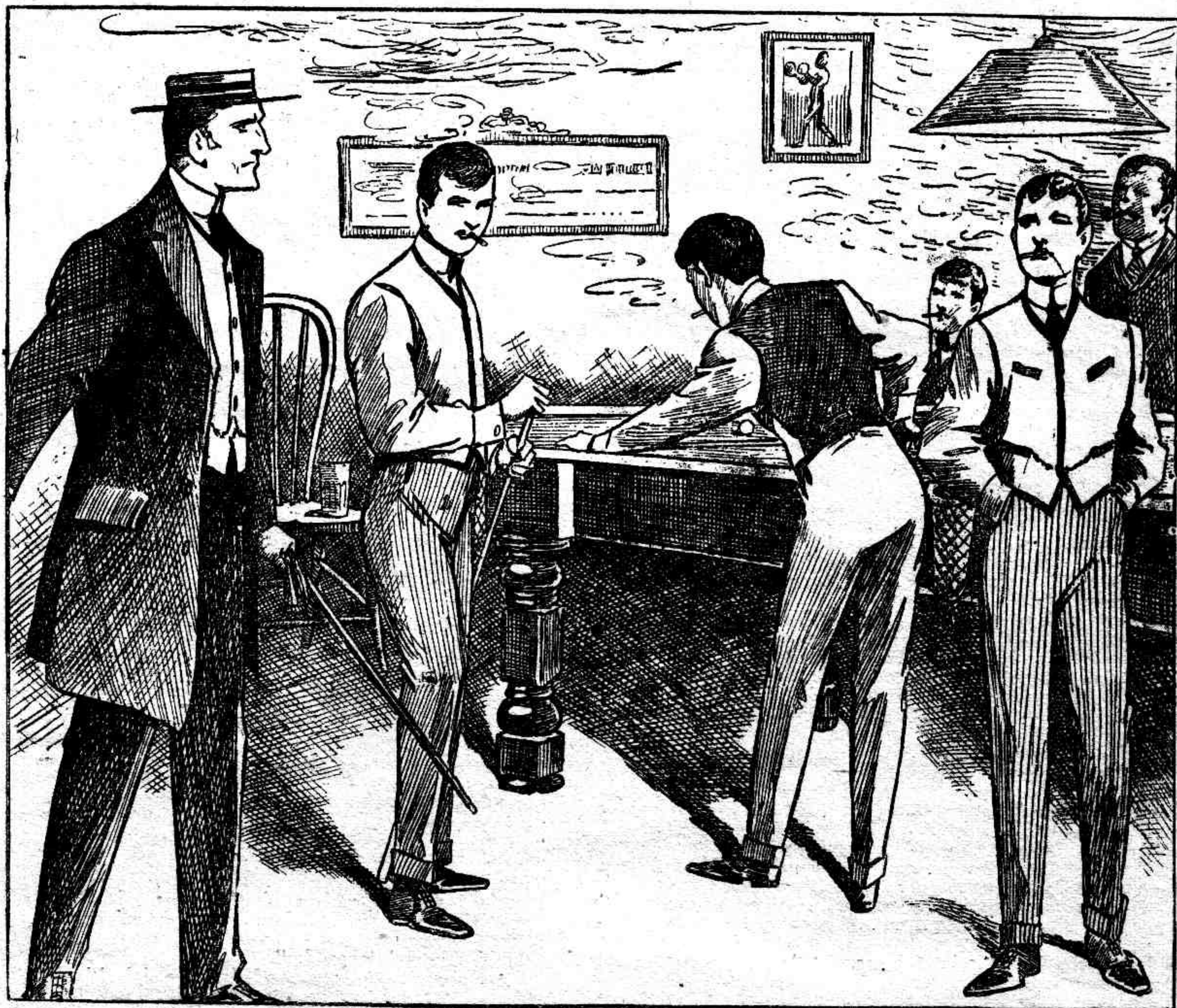
"It couldn't be better," he said. "You see, he was a pal once, and I may as well say that my father wants me to keep in with him. Mornington's people are big guns, you see. The chap simply reeks with money. I'm blessed if I know how he'll stand a quiet afternoon with schoolgirls at a picnic; but—but if you don't mind my bringing him——"

"Not at all! It's settled, then?"

"Yes; and thanks!"

Wharton nodded, and strolled out of the study. He barely remembered Mornington of Rookwood, whom he had only seen once or twice. He had a vague recollection of an expensively-dressed, somewhat supercilious, slim youth. He realised that it was awkward for Smithy for that acquaintance of his rowdy days to visit him, expecting to find him the same as of old.

The captain of the Remove was quite willing to help the Bounder in that difficult position, but he wondered a little how it would turn out.



Mornington and Gadsby were playing, and Ponsonby and Monson stood looking on, smoking cigarettes. On the floor, near the windows, a straw hat lay—a hat with the Greyfriars band! The Remove-master stepped into the room.
(See Chapter 10.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Straight from the Shoulder!

"PONSONBY, by Jove!" The Famous Five of the Remove were adorning the School House steps with their persons, and enjoying the cool of the summer evening. They were seated in a cheery row on the old stone balustrade. Billy Bunter stood on the steps, blinking at them through his big spectacles, in a somewhat wrathful mood. Billy Bunter was not included in the list for the picnic on the morrow—a circumstance that excited his indignation.

Billy Bunter explained to Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in turn, that the picnic couldn't possibly come off without him. And the Famous Five cheerily replied "Rats!" and Hurree Singh added emphatically that the ratfulness was terrific. Billy Bunter turned to Hazeldene, who was lounging in the doorway, and tried his eloquence on him. And Hazel heartlessly advised him to go and eat coke. Whereat the Owl of the Remove waxed wrathful.

"Now, look here, Hazel," he said, "I suppose you've got some brotherly feelings, haven't you? Don't you want Marjorie to enjoy the picnic? I put it to you, Hazel. Suppose Marjorie asks why I'm not there, what will you say?"

"But Marjorie won't," said Hazel. "She'll be only too jolly glad you're not there, porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! I really don't quite understand this in you! These chaps are jealous of a fellow's good looks;

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FISHY'S LATEST!"

but as Marjorie's your sister, I don't see why you should object to a good-looking chap in the party!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five in chorus.

Bunter's description of himself as a good-looking chap tickled them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ponsonby!" exclaimed Nugent at that moment, and William George Bunter was interrupted.

Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, was sauntering across the Close towards the House in his usual elegant manner.

Johnny Bull grunted. Johnny never saw the dandy of Highcliffe without wanting to bump him. Ponsonby came up the steps, and nodded affably to the somewhat grim-looking juniors.

"Lovely evening!" he remarked.

"Oh, topping!" said Wharton.

"Smithy about?"

"Indoors, I think."

"Thanks!" said Ponsonby. "Hallo, Bunter! Fatter than ever!"

"Oh, really, Ponsonby——"

"You, too, Hazel? It's a long time since we've seen you at Highcliffe!"

"It'll be a long time before you do," said Hazel.

"Too bad!" said Ponsonby calmly. It was not easy to rebuff the dandy of Highcliffe. "We've missed your fascinatin' company, Hazel. Bridge in the study doesn't seem the same without you to make a fourth!"

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

Hazeldene flushed, and did not reply. Ponsonby grinned, and went on into the House.

Johnny Bull breathed hard through his nose.

"Like that rotter's cheek to come here!" he growled. "He knows we want to punch his nose all the time!"

"Well, he hasn't come to see us," remarked Wharton. "That honour and pleasure is for Smithy. After all, we go over to Higheliffe to see Courtenay. Must keep the peace, my son!"

"He ought to be jolly well kicked, all the same!" growled Johnny Bull. "And if he turns up his nose as he comes out I shall kick him out! Chap ought to be civil if he doesn't want to be kicked!"

"I say, you fellows, I wonder what Pon wants to see the Bounder for?" chirruped Billy Bunter. "Some little game on—what? They haven't been pally for a long time. Smithy's going it again. He, he, he!"

"Oh, cheese it, you fat toad!"

"Oh, really, Bull! I'm rather too deep for Smithy, you know," said Bunter, with an air of deep wisdom. "He can't take me in, you know! Yah! Keep your silly hoof away from me, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the House. Bob Cherry had introduced a large boot into the conversation, and the Owl of the Remove departed hurriedly.

Cecil Ponsonby made his way to the Remove passage. Skinner and Snoop were chatting in the doorway of the latter's study, and they nodded to Ponsonby. They were among the few Greyfriars fellows who were on good terms with the black sheep of Higheliffe.

"Come in, Pon!" said Skinner. "You're out late!"

"I've got a pass from Mobby," said Ponsonby. "Mobby's an obliging little beast! I've come over for Smithy. Is he in his study?"

"Yes," said Skinner, scowling. "You'll find him in a ratty temper!"

"Oh! What's happened to upset his serene highness?"

"Something wrong with the geegees, I suppose!"

Ponsonby elevated his eyebrows.

"Oh, come!" he said. "I understood that Smithy had given up that kind of thing, and had gone in for a process of whitewashing to match the noble and lofty Wharton!"

Skinner and Snoop chuckled.

"So he says!" grinned Skinner. "I think I know a little better. He had a letter to-day, and he's been scowling ever since. I know that. Not a letter from home, either!"

"A letter from Rookwood, perhaps?"

"I don't know. I reckoned it was from a bookie. Whom the dickens should Smithy get a letter from at Rookwood?"

"There's an old pal of his—and mine—at Rookwood now," explained Ponsonby. "A really gilt-edged pal—Mornington!"

"I've seen him," said Skinner. "A supercilious beast! He came over here once, and played rotten cricket!"

"Yaas; I don't suppose cricket would be much in his line!" said Ponsonby, laughing. "So he struck you as supercilious, Skinny?"

"Yes, he did. I came jolly near dotting him on the nose simply for the way he looked at a fellow!" growled Skinner.

"You'll have the pleasure of seein' him to-morrow!" smiled Ponsonby. "But don't dot his nose, please; he's a pal of mine. You'll get on with him all right when you know him. If you're not booked for to-morrow afternoon you might join the merry band. Morny is comin' over for a high old time with Smithy, and he will like to see some fellows of his own tastes. That's what I've come to see Smithy about!"

Skinner whistled.

"So that's what was the matter with Smithy? I don't think you'll find him very reasonable. I've just been rowing with him. But if there's anything going on to-morrow, you can count us in!"

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop.

Ponsonby nodded, and strolled on to Vernon-Smith's study. He knocked at the door and opened it.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was at work on his preparation. He looked up in surprise at the sight of the Higheliffe junior.

"Hallo! You're out late!"

"Yaas, thanks to the obligin' Mobby," said Ponsonby.

"Are you goin' to ask a fellow to sit down, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith hesitated.

"You can sit down," he said, not very graciously.

"Thanks; I will!" said Ponsonby, seating himself, and stretching out his legs. "Hard at work—what?"

"Well, I've got my prep to do!"

"Noble youth! What an example to set to a slackin' loafer like me!" yawned Ponsonby. "Now, I've missed my prep, and I'm trustin' to Mobby's good temper in the mornin'. Good-tempered little beast, our Form-master!"

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"I'm afraid that wouldn't do for Quelchy. He's not quite so obliging as Mr. Mobbs!"

"Yaas; I understand that this is a hard-workin' school!" grinned Ponsonby. "Nothin' like us slackers at Higheliffe. Must be very gratifyin'. Somethin' attempted, somethin' done, to earn a night's repose, you know. But chuck swottin' for a few minutes, old scout, and lend us your ears!"

"Well, what is it?" asked the Bounder.

"I've had a letter from Morny."

"Mornington of Higheliffe?"

"Yaas."

"I didn't know you knew him."

"And I didn't know you knew him," smiled Ponsonby. "But it turns out that he's an old pal of yours, and you've painted the town red together lots of times—what? He tells me he's comin' to see you to-morrow."

"Yes; he's written to me."

"And asked me to give him a look in—killin' two birds with one stone, you know. He seems to be expectin' a good time."

"Oh, I shall give him a good time if I can!" said Vernon-Smith carelessly. "I've arranged something already."

"Drag to the races?" asked Ponsonby eagerly.

"Not exactly."

"One of your little parties at the Cross Keys?"

"Not at all!"

"You don't mean to say you're going to entertain a chap like Morny with a game of nap in the study?" asked Ponsonby disdainfully. "Morny will want somethin' more excitin' than that. I'm afraid his good manners wouldn't hold out."

"Nothing of the sort."

"Then what's the little game?"

"A picnic."

"A—a—a picnic!" ejaculated Ponsonby, staring at Vernon-Smith as if he could hardly believe his ears.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I suppose you're jokin'?" said Ponsonby, after a pause.

"Not in the least."

"Well, you'd better provide smokes and cham and cards at your giddy picnic, or you won't please Morny."

"There won't be any smokes or cham or cards. There's going to be some decent fellows—"

"Skinner and Snoop and—"

"Oh, no! Wharton and his friends."

"Eh?"

"And some of the Cliff House girls."

"My hat!"

Ponsonby stared blankly at the Bounder.

"And that's the kind of entertainment you've got up for Morny?" he inquired.

"That's the best I can do."

"I suppose this is some awfully deep joke?" remarked Ponsonby. "I can't see the point myself. What else are you going to do?"

"Nothing."

"Morny will be ratty."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here, Smithy," said Ponsonby, "you know jolly well what Morny's comin' for. He wants a good time, and expects to get it, safe out of sight of Rookwood. He expects you to play up. You can keep all your rot for Greyfriars—Morny doesn't want any of it. Now, I'll tell you what. If you're afraid to go it a bit here, you can bring him over to Higheliffe. We'll be glad to see him."

"I dare say! Bridge in the study would be a profitable game, with a silly ass reeking with money like Morny!"

"Between ourselves, Smithy, Morny hasn't more sense than he can get on with. Money talks, you know. Morny's comin' to see you. We're ready to help you give him a good time. If he leaves some of his superfluous fivers behind him, it won't hurt Morny, and it will do us good. I've had a jaw with Vavasour and Monson and Gaddy. We're willing to go halves with you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you cackling at?" demanded Ponsonby, considerably ruffled.

"My dear chap, you've come to the wrong shop," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm not going to play cards with Mornington. I'm not going to win his money. Hang his money! If he hasn't sense enough to look after it, he can pay a visit to Higheliffe some time, and you can welsh him; but I'm not going to have a hand in the welshing."

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Ponsonby. "The silly ass is a vicious little beast, and you know it, and he chucks his money right and left, swankin'. Ten to one he'll come here in a whackin' motor-car that'll cost him fifteen quid for the run! Why shouldn't we agree together to make hay while the sun shines? The fact is, we've had rotten luck lately,

and we could do with a supply of cash. Morny is comin' along like corn in Egypt!"

"Wait till he visits you," grinned the Bounder. "With the ripping attractions you can offer him, he'll come fast enough. But this time he's my guest, and he's going to have a quiet and enjoyable little picnic——"

"Morny will never stand it."

"That's his look-out."

Ponsonby sneered.

"Oh, come out into the open!" he exclaimed. "You want to keep Morny and his money all to yourself to-morrow afternoon. That's the long and the short of it. You don't want us to have our whack."

"We used to be friends, Pon," said the Bounder quietly. "Don't make me lay hands on you. You'd better clear before you say anything more."

Ponsonby rose to his feet. His face was dark with anger. Mornington's visit was an excellent opportunity for replenishing an exhausted exchequer, and it had seemed like a windfall to Ponsonby. And he had not the slightest doubt that the Bounder's refusal to enter into his scheme was dictated solely by a desire to be alone in looting the black sheep of Rookwood.

"Well, I'm going," he said. "So you're not even askin' us over to see Morny to-morrow?"

"No. You'd be rather out of place at a picnic."

"Oh, don't give me that yarn again!" exclaimed Ponsonby savagely. "A fellow like you ought to be jolly glad to get into decent company, I should say!"

"Should you?" said the Bounder, very quietly, though his eyes glittered.

"Yes," said Ponsonby fiercely. "Morny's only makin' use of you, and you know it. He's my pal, but he's only makin' use of you. What are you, by gad? An outsider, and a dashed nobody; the son of a rotten moneylender——"

Ponsonby got no further. The Bounder was on his feet with a spring like a tiger, and his fist lashed out and caught Ponsonby fairly on the mouth.

The dandy of Highcliffe uttered a yell, and spun over and crashed on the floor.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Sees It All!

PONSONBY of Highcliffe lay on his back on the thick carpet blinking up at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith stood over him, his fists clenched, his eyes gleaming.

Ponsonby panted for breath.

"You—you rotter! You——"

"Do you want some more?" asked the Bounder through his teeth. "You've only got to mention my father again if you do!"

Ponsonby sat up, dabbing at his mouth. A crimson stream ran from one corner of it. The Bounder had hit hard.

His eyes glittered at Vernon-Smith like a snake's.

The Bounder stepped back.

"Have you got anything more to say?" he asked.

"Nothin'," said Ponsonby quietly; "only that I'll make you repent this, you cad!"

The Greyfriars junior laughed scornfully.

"If you're not satisfied, there's the gym close handy, and I'm ready," he said—"with or without gloves, as you choose."

Ponsonby picked himself up, dabbing at his mouth with a cambric handkerchief. It was evident that he did not intend to accept the challenge. The Bounder of Greyfriars was a little too tough for the Highcliffe dandy to tackle, if he could help it.

"I warned you," said Vernon-Smith. "I told you you'd better clear. You can call me what you like, Pon—I've been your pal, and you couldn't call me anything I should be more ashamed of than that—but you can leave my pater alone! Moneylender or not, some of your noble relations have been glad enough to fawn on him for his money. Your noble pater would walk a hundred miles to get on the board of one of his companies, and you know it. You'd better get out!"

"Oh, I'm goin'," said Ponsonby. "I came over here to make you a fair offer. You want to keep the loot in your own hands. But I'll make you remember that blow, Herbert Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders as Ponsonby left the study. The hard, cool-headed Bounder was not afraid of Ponsonby's threats. He had always despised the dandy of Highcliffe, even when they had been friends.

Ponsonby went a little unsteadily down the Remove passage, and found himself regarded curiously by Skinner and Snoop. They had heard angry voices and a heavy fall in the Bounder's study, and guessed what had happened. They grinned as they saw Ponsonby's handkerchief to his mouth.

"Trouble in the family—what?" asked Skinner.

The Highcliffe junior walked on without replying, and went

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ONE
PENNY.

downstairs. His face was white and set as he left the School House.

Harry Wharton & Co. were still on the steps, and they glanced at him curiously. Ponsonby did not look at them. He strode away to the gates, and disappeared. Bob Cherry whistled.

"Looks as if Pon hasn't enjoyed his visit," he remarked.

"The joyfulness has not been terrific!" observed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Pon has been up against something."

"Smithy's fist, I should say," grinned Bob. "His jaw looked like it."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You know all about it, of course, fatty?"

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Smithy's been hammering Pon," he said. "Pon called his father a moneylender. I say, you fellows, is Smithy's father a moneylender?"

"He's a financier," said Wharton curtly.

"Same thing, I suppose? He, he, he! Smithy cut up rusty. I happened to be passing his study, you know——"

"And happened to glue your fat ear to the keyhole, you fat worm!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Nothing of the sort! I happened to hear a few words by chance! I say, you fellows, is Mornington coming to the picnic?"

"Yes!" growled Wharton.

"If you're going to have a little flutter, I'll come," said Bunter. "I'm rather a dab at banker and nap!"

"What!"

"Of course, you can rely on me to keep it dark. I'm rather a blade, you know! I know how to go the pace!"

"The—the what?"

"The pace, you know," said Bunter fatuously. "Jolly deep of you, pretending you're going for a picnic with the Cliff House girls, when you're going on the razzle!"

"You fat idiot!" howled Bob Cherry. "What have you got in your silly napper now?"

Bunter winked at him.

"You can't take me in!" he chuckled. "I'm rather a downy bird! He, he, he! Pon knows the whole game. He cut up rusty because Smithy wouldn't agree to his going snacks in looting that Rookwood idiot! Smithy wants to keep Morny to himself. But I tell you what, you fellows, I'm going to have a whack!"

The Famous Five glared at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had contrived to hear most of what had passed in Vernon-Smith's study—Bunter had a perfect genius for hearing things that were not intended for his fat ears. And he hadn't the slightest doubt that Pon's view was correct—that Smithy wanted to keep the plucking of that rich pigeon to himself.

"You can count me in," went on Billy Bunter determinedly. "Any game you like—bridge, nap, or banker! I'm a dab at all of them! I'm willing to go equal whacks in what we get out of Morny! I can't say fairer than that."

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Mind, I'm coming!" said Bunter. "You needn't be afraid I shall want to play for I O U's! I'm expecting a postal-order first post in the morning. I fully expect to be in funds. If my postal-order doesn't happen to arrive, I can borrow a little from Mauly, or you fellows can lend me some tin. Anyway, I'm going to have a hand in the game!"

"You fat rascal!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Mind, if you dodge me to-morrow afternoon I shall have to consider very seriously whether to tell Wingate."

"Tell Wingate!" gasped Wharton. "Tell Wingate what?"

"About you fellows and Smithy taking Mornington up the river to gamble!"

"Great Scott!"

"Not that I object to a little flutter myself—I'm rather a blade, and a bit goey, as you know! But I warn you that I'm on in this scene, and that if you try to leave me out there'll be trouble! Pon's out of it, but I'm jolly well going to be in it, I can tell you!"

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And Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five with a very determined air.

It took the Co. some minutes to realise what Bunter was driving at. Bob Cherry rose from the stone balustrade with a look on his face which would have alarmed the Owl of the Remove if he had not been too short-sighted to observe it.

"Hold on a minute, Bob!" said Wharton quietly. "Bunter, you unspeakable idiot, what do you mean? Do you think Smithy is bringing his Rookwood friend with us to-morrow for what you call a flutter?"

Bunter bestowed a fat wink on the captain of the Remove.

"Pon thinks so," he said.

"Pon would, I suppose!" said Wharton contemptuously. "I suppose that's what Smithy punched him for, the cad! You're not worth punching, Bunter! I think a jolly good bumping will about meet your case."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. in chorus.

"Here, I say, you fellows— Leggo!" roared Bunter, as the Famous Five collared him. "I really meant to say— Yaroooh! If you bump me I'll tell Quelch—I will, really—and he'll stop your little game! Yow! Ow! Wooop!"

Bump!

"Yaroooop!"

The Famous Five strolled into the house, leaving Billy Bunter seated on the ground roaring.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Wants to Know!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had left their preparation a little late, and it was getting on to bed-time when they came down to the junior Common-room.

As the five chums strolled in together they could not help observing that something unusual was on.

Bolsover major and Skinner and Snoop were talking and grinning together, and they glanced in a very significant way at the five. Ogilvy and Russell and Micky Desmond, Wibley and Rake and Bulstrode all looked at them very curiously. Mark Linley was frowning. Even Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove, raised his head from a cushion and glanced at them.

It was easy for the chums of the Remove to see that they had been the subject of discussion before their entrance.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Go on with it! We're interested. What is it, Bolsover?"

There was a laugh.

"Bunter's been talking rot, as usual," said Squiff.

Billy Bunter blinked round apprehensively.

The Owl of the Remove, still quite convinced of the shady character of that little excursion of the morrow, fully intended to join it, and help in relieving Mornington of Rookwood of his superfluous cash. For that reason it behoved Bunter to keep the matter a dead secret, prefects and masters at Greyfriars having quite another way of looking at the performance of the bold blade.

Bunter intended to keep it dark; but, as usual, his tongue had been too much for him. He had confided to several fellows dark hints to the effect that he knew what he knew—that some chaps weren't exactly what they pretended to be—that he, William George Bunter, could surprise everybody if he liked—that some fellows who turned up their noses at a chap might be sacked before they knew where they were—until at last some of the juniors, getting curious, pumped the whole story out of him.

Skinner & Co. were very glad to hear it, though they did not quite believe it. Anything up against the famous Co. was pleasant to their ears.

Harry Wharton looked at the crowd of fellows, some of whom were grinning, while others looked unusually serious. Then he shrugged his shoulders. He did not care very much for the tattle of the Common-room.

"Time to finish that game of chess before bed, Franky," he said.

"Right-ho!" said Nugent, and he pulled out the chess-box.

Vernon-Smith came in, and significant looks were bent upon him also. The Bounder observed it at once.

"Anything on?" he asked, looking round, and addressing no one in particular.

"Well, you ought to know," grinned Skinner.

"He, he, he!" came from Snoop.

"I recommend you chaps to take Bunter by the ears and rub his nose in the cinders," said Squiff.

"Oh, really, Squiff," said Bunter, backing away. "I haven't been saying anything. I haven't mentioned Wharton's name. Besides, I told you about him in confidence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"You didn't tell me anything, you fat toad!" growled Squiff. "You told those gaping idiots!"

"Thanks!" sneered Skinner.

"Not at all! You're welcome to my opinion of you!"

"Oh, I smell a mouse!" said Bob Cherry. "So you've been spinning that yarn over again, Bunt?"

"Ahem! I really haven't said anything," stammered Bunter. "I wouldn't think of giving you away, Bob, old chap. Why shouldn't you have a bit of a flutter to-morrow? I don't blame you. I'm rather goey myself. Besides, I'm coming."

"You silly ass!" roared Bob. "There's nothing to give away!"

"Of course—of course!" said Bunter soothingly. "Nothing at all! Keep it dark, old fellow. I'll help you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry turned a flushed face to the grinning juniors.

"That silly owl has an idea in his wooden head that we're going out to play the giddy goat to-morrow," he said. "As a matter of fact, we're going on a picnic. I suppose I needn't tell anybody here that Bunter is making a fool of himself, as usual?"

"Of course not!" said Mark Linley.

"Nice little innocent picnic," grinned Skinner, "with Smithy. We know the nice, innocent picnics Smithy is fond of. And Mornington of Rookwood, too! Quite an innocent dove. Chap named Leggett, at Rookwood, told me all about Mornington. Quite a dove—spotless and untarnished!"

"Mornington is coming because he'll be here on a visit," said Vernon-Smith. "Do you mean to imply that there's going to be any shady business, Skinner?"

"Not at all," said Skinner politely. "I wouldn't dream of it. Mornington is going to drink ginger-beer—nothing stronger! He's going to eat strawberries and cream and enjoy himself; a regular Pleasant Saturday Afternoon, in fact! It's so exactly in Mornington's line—and yours, Smithy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what I say is that it ought to be stopped," said Bolsover major. "I don't see any harm in a cigarette now and then, but a regular orgy like this—well, I call it shady!"

"What would Quelch say?" giggled Snoop.

Bob Cherry set his teeth.

"Bunter isn't worth licking," he said. "But I'm ready to lick any chap who says that he believes Bunter's yarn!"

"Same here!" said Vernon-Smith.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"I don't say I believe it," said Bolsover major, rather taken aback. "But there's no smoke without fire. Bunter's got hold of something, anyway, and you fellows are bound to explain."

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Then I take it as true," said the bully of the Remove; "and my opinion is that you ought to be stopped. Getting a chap here and playing cards with him— Yaroooh!"

Bob Cherry's knuckles interrupted Bolsover's remarks, and the next moment they were fighting. But two or three blows had hardly been struck when a thunderous voice was heard in the doorway.

"Stop that instantly!"

"Oh, my hat! Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked sternly at the combatants as they separated. They drew apart, flushed and angry.

"I heard what you said, Bolsover," said the Remove-master icily. "What did you mean?"

"Oh, n-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Bolsover. Bolsover major was a bully, but he was not a sneak.

"That will not do, Bolsover. You spoke of someone getting a boy here to play cards. I must have an explanation." Bolsover major stood silent.

Mr. Quelch's eyes passed him and rested on Harry Wharton, who was standing by the chess-table, biting his lip with annoyance.

"Wharton, as head boy in the Form, I call on you to explain this to me."

"It's only rot, sir!" said Harry. "Bunter has been spinning a silly yarn."

"Come here, Bunter!"

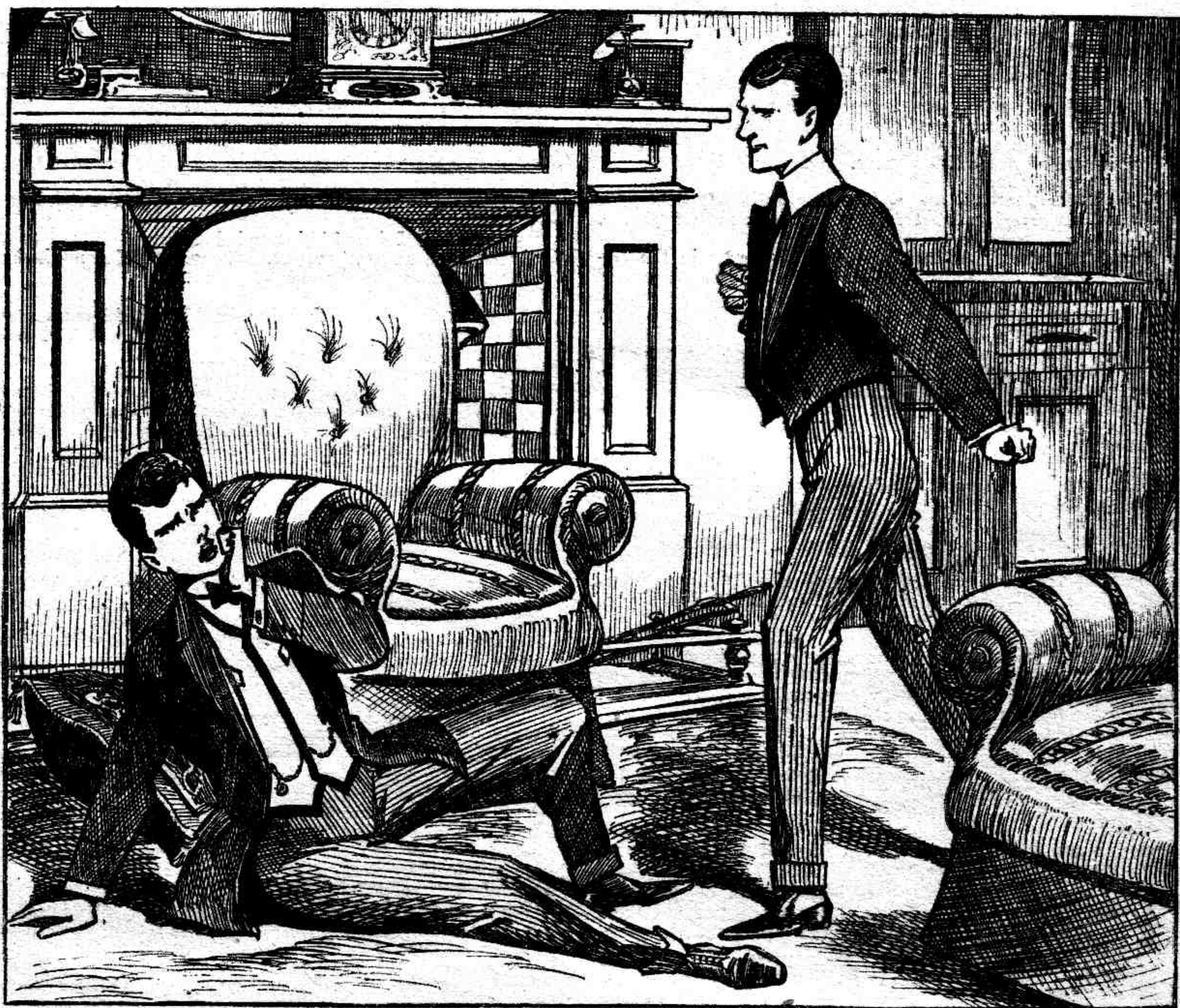
Billy Bunter unwillingly came forward. Mr. Quelch's eyes rested on him like gimlets.

"Kindly acquaint me with the matter, Bunter!"

"I—I—I—I don't really know anything about it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "And—and I can't very well sneak about those chaps, sir. Besides, Wharton would go for me afterwards if I gave him away."

"Oh, you fat idiot!" murmured Bolsover major.

"Silence, Bolsover! Bunter, am I to understand that you accuse Wharton?"



The Bounder's fist lashed out and caught Ponsonby fairly on the mouth. The dandy of Higheliffe uttered a yell, and spun over and crashed on the floor. (See Chapter 2.)

"Not at all, sir," said Bunter promptly. "I'm sure Wharton wouldn't do anything of the sort. That—that's what I really said to Bolsover, only he misunderstood me. Bolsover's rather a fool, sir!"

Some of the juniors grinned, and Bolsover major scowled. Mr. Quelch's expression did not relax.

"Kindly tell me exactly what you said to Bolsover, Bunter."

"I—I said it was a lovely evening, sir!" said Bunter feebly.

"What!"

"I—I mean, I told him that—that Wharton was going on a picnic, sir; and—and that I was going, sir; and—and that there wouldn't be any card-playing, because I disapprove of that kind of thing, owing to my high moral views, sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, is there the slightest foundation for this supposition on Bunter's part?"

"Not the slightest, sir," said Harry. "He has been listening at a keyhole, and misunderstood what he heard."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"That is satisfactory," said Mr. Quelch. "I have too high an opinion of you, Wharton, to think that you would lend yourself to anything of the kind. You are an extremely foolish boy, Bunter, and too willing to believe evil."

"Oh, really, sir," mumbled Bunter, "taint my fault if Mornington is a bit goey—I—I mean——"

"Who is Mornington?"

"A friend of mine at Rookwood School, sir," said Vernon.

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Smith. "He is coming to see me to-morrow afternoon, and we're going on a picnic with Wharton."

"There is no harm in that," said Mr. Quelch, looking puzzled. "I fail to see why Bunter should have such a ridiculous suspicion in his mind. You are an utterly stupid boy, Bunter, and I have noticed your eavesdropping proclivities before. I have a great mind to cane you. You will take a hundred lines!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And let there be no more quarrelling here," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "Bolsover and Cherry will take two hundred lines each!"

And Mr. Quelch walked away frowning.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

VERNON-SMITH drew a deep breath of relief as the Remove-master departed.

He had been on tenterhooks lest the story of Ponsonby's visit should come out, with a description of the black sheep of Rookwood which would have made Mr. Quelch consider that Mornington was not a fit person to visit Greyfriars. He could see that Bunter had overheard his interview with Cecil Ponsonby. Fortunately, the matter had dropped without those details coming to light, though Vernon-Smith did not fail to observe that the Form-master gave him a very keen glance as he went. The Bounder's old reputation had not been forgotten yet.

Billy Bunter smirked at the Famous Five cheerily when the

Form-master had gone, apparently oblivious of their wrathful looks.

"I say, you fellows, that's all right," he remarked. "I didn't give you away, you know."

"You fat idiot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Well, I think you might be decently grateful to a chap for keeping your shady secrets for you!" he exclaimed. "It isn't every chap who'd have stood by you as I've done—considering that I'm shocked, too!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry picked up a cushion, and Billy Bunter executed a strategic retreat from the Common-room just in time.

Bunter's "latest" did not find many believers in the Remove; but it caused a considerable amount of comment, and Skinner & Co. naturally made the most of it. Even fellows who knew the Famous Five well wondered a little whether there was anything in it.

Harry Wharton was frowning when the Remove marched off to their dormitory. He was deeply exasperated, and inclined to give the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars the licking of his life. But he refrained from that. Wingate saw lights out for the Remove. After Wingate had gone, Billy Bunter's voice was heard.

"I say, Wharton!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Wharton.

"What time are you starting to-morrow?"

"Find out!"

"If that means that you don't want me, Wharton—"

"Go to sleep, you fat porker!"

"You're jolly well not going to keep Mornington to yourself. Mauly will lend me a quid to start with, won't you, Mauly?"

"Begad, no!" said Lord Maulever.

"Besides, I shall have a postal-order in the morning," said Bunter. "Anyway, I could play on I O U's. I suppose you know my I O U's are all right, don't you, Wharton? Yaroooh! What beast threw that boot at me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did," said Wharton in sulphurous tones. "If you open your silly mouth again you'll get the other!"

"Oh, really, Harry— Yoop!" yelled Bunter.

Clump, crash!

"Yaroooh! You rotter, I refuse to speak to you again. And you can look out for squalls! I shall tell Quelchy to-morrow— Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bob Cherry had jumped out of bed. His pillow rose and fell, and Billy Bunter yelled and squirmed under terrific swipes. Bob returned to bed breathing hard, and the voice of the Owl of the Remove was silent at last.

When the Remove turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning it was easy to see that the matter had not been forgotten.

The Famous Five's picnic of that afternoon was an object of interest to the whole Form.

During morning lessons there was some giggling in the class owing to Skinner exercising his artistic talents by drawing little sketches of the Famous Five, with cigarettes in their mouths and champagne-glasses in their hands. Skinner's sketches circulated among the Remove, causing much merriment, till several fellows received lines for giggling, and then there was great gravity.

After lessons Bulstrode joined Wharton as they came out of the Form-room. Bulstrode looked very thoughtful, and his manner was hesitating.

"Do you mind my giving you a tip?" he asked

"Not at all," said Harry in surprise. "Go ahead! Anything about the team?"

"Oh, no! Of course, I don't believe that rot of Bunter's. But—but if there's anything in it, you'd better keep your eyes open."

"Eh?"

"Quelchy isn't saying anything, but he's as keen as a knife. He will keep his peepers open this afternoon. If there's anything going on, he will spot it as sure as a gun. That's all."

Bulstrode walked away, leaving Wharton staring after him blankly. The captain of the Remove did not look at all grateful for George Bulstrode's tip. It was meant in a friendly spirit, certainly. But that did not make it very palatable.

"The silly ass!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row, old scout?"

"That ass Bulstrode!" said Wharton wrathfully. "He's just warned me that we'd better mind our p's and q's this afternoon, as Quelchy will be on the look-out after what Bunter has been saying."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it isn't a joke," said Wharton gruffly. "I've a jolly

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good mind to squash that fat rotter for starting a yarn like that!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"We'd better take half the Remove with us, and show 'em that it's only a picnic," he said. "If we don't, they'll be expecting us to come home squiffy."

"Oh, blow the Remove!" growled Wharton.

During dinner there were whispered remarks at the Remove table, and Wharton noticed that some other fellows looked over at him from other tables. The rumour of the Famous Five's reckless proceedings had reached other Forms. Like a snowball rolling down hill, it grew as it progressed. After dinner Coker of the Fifth tapped Wharton on the shoulder in the passage.

"What's this I hear?" demanded Coker.

"Blessed if I know!" snapped Wharton. "You might hear anything with those long ears of yours!"

Coker of the Fifth frowned.

"You'd better be careful, Wharton. Mind, if I come across you playing the giddy ox, I shall come down heavy. I don't approve of that kind of thing among juniors."

"You silly ass!" shouted Wharton, exasperated.

Coker shook his head with portentous solemnity, and strode away. Wharton almost stamped out into the quadrangle. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth greeted him with a snigger.

"Got 'em about you?" asked Temple.

"Eh? Got what?"

"The smokes," said Cecil Reginald Temple sweetly. And the Fourth-Formers cackled in merry chorus.

Wharton glared at them.

"You howling asses—"

"Don't let Quelchy see 'em," said Fry, in a deep whisper. "Keep it dark, you know! And mind—mind you come home sober!"

Wharton clenched his hands, and Temple & Co. walked away chuckling. When the Famous Five were packing the lunch-baskets in No. 1 Study, several fellows came along to see the packing done.

"You're leaving out the champagne-bottles!" called out Skinner, and there was a loud laugh.

Bob Cherry rushed out of the study, and Skinner fled. Bolsover major looked in a few minutes later.

"Mind where you put the smokes," he said. "Quelchy may look into those baskets before you get them clear— Yaroooh! Yoop! Yah!"

Bolsover major fled, hotly pursued by Johnny Bull with a lunging cricket-bat.

Johnny Bull came back to the study breathing hard.

"Keep smiling!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The fellows will have their little joke, you know. Nobody really believes it!"

"The next chap who comes here will get it in the neck, all the same!" growled Johnny Bull.

And he took a businesslike grip on the cricket-bat.

There were footsteps in the passage a few minutes later, and Johnny's eyes gleamed. Peter Todd looked into the study with a grin.

"Smithy here?" he exclaimed. "I say— Yah! Oh! You howling maniac, keep that bat away! Wharrer you at?" roared Peter.

Johnny Bull did not explain. He lunged away with the bat, and Peter Todd hopped and dodged frantically.

"You howling ass!" he roared. "What's the game? Leave off, you dummy! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on, Johnny!" gasped Bob Cherry, dragging Johnny Bull back. "Hold on! Perhaps Toddy came here for something—"

"You howling asses!" roared Toddy. "I came here to tell Smithy that Mornington had arrived—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Sorry!"

"You dangerous idiot—"

"I thought—"

"You howling dummy, you can't think!" snorted Peter Todd. "Go and eat coke!"

And Peter stamped away.

"I'll go down and see Mornington!" grinned Vernon-Smith. And he left the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mornington Arrives!

MORNINGTON of Rookwood had arrived.

A big motor-car was snorting outside the School House, and a crowd of curious fellows had gathered to look at it, and at the visitor who came in it.

A junior schoolboy who paid visits in a thousand-guinea motor-car was naturally an object of some interest.

Mornington glanced carelessly at the Greyfriars fellows as he stepped from the car.

He was a slim youth, very elegantly dressed. His face would have been handsome but for the cold, supercilious, almost sneering expression that marked it. As Bolsover major growled to Skinner, "The cheeky rotter looked as if the earth wasn't quite good enough for him to walk on." Mornington's cold, disparaging glance made more than one of the fellows feel inclined to bump him on the spot. But Billy Bunter hustled up to his lordship with an effusive smile and an outstretched fat hand.

"How do you do, dear boy?" said Bunter affably.

Mornington stared at him.

He did not appear to see Bunter's fat hand.

"You remember me?" said Bunter, a little dismayed.

"Not in the least."

"I came over to Rookwood, you know——"

"Oh, by gad! You're the fat cad who robbed my study cupboard!" said Mornington contemptuously.

Billy Bunter reddened.

"Oh, really, Morny——"

"Please get out of the way," said Mornington coldly; and he walked past Bunter into the House.

Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles. Bunter was not thin-skinned—a rhinoceros was thinner-skinned than Bunter. But even Bunter could not feel exactly flattered by Mornington's manner.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bunter.

Vernon-Smith came downstairs, and met Mornington in the hall. The Rookwood junior shook hands with him.

"Glad to see you!" said the Bounder, not quite veraciously, perhaps. "Did you come in that car?"

He glanced through the open doorway at the big car.

"Yaas; that's my car."

"Had your lunch?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"Come up to the study," said the Bounder, and Mornington accompanied him to the Remove passage.

The Bounder was feeling a little uncertain. Exactly how Mornington would accept the prospect for the afternoon he did not know. It was certain that the Rookwood dandy would be disappointed and annoyed.

Mornington glanced round the Bounder's study with some approval. The room was very handsomely furnished—the millionaire's son could afford anything he liked. Mornington sank down in a very comfortable armchair, and took out a silver cigarette-case. He extended it to the Bounder, who coloured and shook his head.

Mornington stared at him as he lighted his own cigarette.

"You won't smoke?" he asked.

"No, thanks."

"No objection to my smokin', I suppose?" asked Mornington, with an inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh, no!"

"Thanks." Mornington blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Well, what's the programme for the afternoon, Smithy? I've got over early. The car's at your service if you're goin' anywhere."

Vernon-Smith shifted uncomfortably.

"What would you like to do?" he asked.

"Oh, anythin'. I've been bored to tears at Rookwood," said Mornington. "I should have had a better time if I'd gone to Highcliffe. My guardian wouldn't hear of Highcliffe. He's got a prejudice against the place for some reason."

The Bounder smiled.

"I dare say he's got good reasons," he said. "You wouldn't learn much at Highcliffe, for instance."

"What the dickens does that matter? I don't want to learn anythin'."

"Well, Sir Rupert Staepoole might take a different view," said the Bounder, laughing.

"I could have got on all right with old Pon—much better than I'm gettin' on at Rookwood. Is Pon here?"

"Ahem! No."

"I told him I was coming here to-day, an' asked him to come over."

"We've had a bit of a row—Pon and I."

"Oh, by gad! Does that mean that I'm not goin' to see any of the Highcliffe chaps this afternoon?"

"Well, yes."

"Well, what's on?" asked Mornington. "I suppose we're not goin' to sit in this study all the afternoon admirin' one another—what?"

"We've got something on," said Vernon-Smith. "A little party of some friends of mine——"

"Oh, good! Anybody I know?"

"Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Bull, Hazel——"

"I don't know them. Ain't they those cricketin' cads who played Jimmy Silver's lot?"

"Yes."

"Not much in my line," said Mornington, with a stare. "From what I've seen of 'em, I shouldn't think they had much life in them. Are we all goin' somewhere?"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Yes, that's it. Up the river."

"Not rowin'!" ejaculated Mornington.

"Well, you needn't row. They'll be glad to do the rowing."

"But what are we goin' to do up the river? Is it a champagne party?"

"Good heavens, no! A picnic."

"A what?"

"A picnic."

"I suppose you're jokin', Smithy? You're not askin' me to join a schoolboy picnic?"

"Why not?" said the bounder. "It's lovely weather, and there'll be some girls coming, too."

"What rot!"

"Ahem!"

"You don't mean schoolgirls, surely?"

"Well, yes," said Smithy. "Some of the Cliff House girls. They—they're really nice."

"Nice!" ejaculated Mornington contemptuously.

"Yes."

"Look here, Smithy! If you're funning, chuck it! I haven't come here to eat current buns with a gang of silly schoolgirls. What are we goin' to do?"

"You don't like the idea?"

"No, I don't, if you're serious. What's come over you?" exclaimed Mornington irritably. "You used to play the game."

"I dare say I've changed a bit since we used to be together," said the Bounder. "I can't help that."

"You don't mean to say you've turned goody-goody?" exclaimed Mornington, in disgust.

"I hope not. But—but to be quite candid, cards and smokes are out of the picture now. I don't do that sort of thing."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! I haven't come over here to be made a fool of!" Mornington frowned angrily. "If you're pulling my leg, chuck it! I'm not goin' on a silly picnic with silly schoolgirls, that's flat. We're goin' round the town if we go anywhere. If you're afraid of the beaks, we can get ten miles from home in the car."

"Wharton and the rest are expecting to join in the picnic——"

"Wharton and the rest can go and eat coke! I'm not goin'! You can go if you like, of course!" said Mornington, with a sneer.

The Bounder coloured uncomfortably. Mornington was his guest, and had to be treated as a guest. And Samuel Vernon-Smith, the Bounder's father, had particularly impressed upon his son to keep on chummy terms with Mornington. The Bounder's nature was rather hard and cynical, but he had a real affection for his somewhat loud and assertive pater, and he would not willingly have displeased him. Mr. Vernon-Smith had always indulged his son in every way, and had never disapproved of the Bounder's wildest escapades in his reckless days. The Bounder realised, rather miserably, that his father would not have disapproved if he had thrown all his good resolutions to the winds and joined Mornington in any reckless black-guardism that afternoon. Mr. Vernon-Smith was not a man of sensitive feelings, and, having made more money than he knew what to do with, he was anxious for his son to mix with what he called the "nobs." Mornington was undoubtedly a "nob," and as such was to be cultivated. Between Mr. Vernon-Smith's ideas and those of his son there was a wide difference, but the Bounder, with all his faults, was a dutiful son. He would willingly have done anything he could to please his father.

He sat in rather troubled thought, while Mornington smoked a second cigarette, and looked at him with a sarcastic sneer. The study became hazy with smoke.

"Well," said Mornington at last, in a sarcastic tone, "is this a Quaker meetin'? If you've nothin' to propose for the afternoon, Smithy, you'd better leave it in my hands."

"Anything you like, of course," said the Bounder.

"We've got the car here. It won't take an hour for a run down to the races. We can pick up Pon and Gaddy by the way, an' make a party of it."

"I've quarrelled with Pon."

"Oh, rot! Make it up again!"

"And—and I can't go to the races," said the Bounder, with an effort. "Dash it all, Morny! I'm not a particular chap, but you know it's disgraceful to have racing and betting, and all that, while the war's going on."

"What blinkin' rot! Blow the war!"

"Oh, cheese that!" said the Bounder sharply. "There's fellows here who've had relations killed at the Front."

"For goodness' sake, don't begin to preach, Smithy! It doesn't suit you! What are you playin' this fool's game for?"



The lunch-basket smote the Owl of the Remove, and he sat down on the grass with a roar. "Yaroooh! I say, Bob, old chap— Cherry, you beast! Yow-ow-ow—" (See Chapter 7.)

exclaimed Mornington savagely. "I've come a thumpin' long way to see you, and you propose a dashed picnic with schoolgirls, and a sermon chacked in! It's not good enough! I tell you—"

There was a knock at the door, and Bob Cherry's cheery face looked in.

"You fellows ready?" he asked. "Mornington, I suppose? How do you do? We're all ready to start for the picnic. Hazel's gone over to Cliff House for Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis."

Mornington gave a sniff.

"We're not comin'!" he said.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Room for Bunter!

BOB CHERRY looked at Mornington, and then at the Bounder. He did not appear to notice the smoke in the study. Bob had an idea of what the Bounder's Rookwood friend was like, and he felt it judicious not to be too observant.

The Bounder was flushed and uncomfortable.

"You're not coming, Smithy?" asked Bob.

"Well, Mornington doesn't seem to care about it," said Vernon-Smith. "Tell Wharton we sha'n't be coming, will you? I'm sorry!"

"Oh, all serene!" said Bob. "It rests with you, of course. Mornington's more than welcome to come, though, if he cares to."

"Thank you, I shouldn't care to!" said Mornington.

Bob's eyes gleamed for a moment. But he did not want to add to the Bounder's discomfort. He nodded quietly.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Good-bye, Smithy!"

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And he left the study and rejoined his chums, who had finished their preparations in Study No. 1.

"Where's Smithy?" asked Wharton.

"Not coming," said Bob grimly. "His pal from Rookwood doesn't care for picnics. Smithy's staying out."

Wharton looked concerned for a moment. He knew how relieved the Bounder had been at the idea of making Mornington a member of the picnic party. It would have kept him out of mischief in the afternoon. But the dandy of Rookwood was evidently not taking any.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Harry. "I suppose Smithy must look after his guest, and if Mornington doesn't want to come, that settles it. I can't say I'm sorry, so far as that Rookwood chap is concerned. Let's get off."

The Famous Five went down the stairs. They looked on at the footer-ground as they went. The Remove eleven and the Third Form team were already at play, the Remove reserves giving the fags footer quite as good as they could deal with. Tom Brown's team was already two goals up. The Famous Five, carrying the lunch-baskets, started for the gates, and at the gates they found William George Bunter on the watch.

"Here I am!" he said cheerily.

"And here you'll stay!" growled Bob.

"I suppose that's because my postal-order hasn't come!" growled Bunter. "If you can't rely on my I O U's, Bob Cherry—"

"Oh, bump the fat idiot!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter dodged.

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know! I—I say, shall I carry one of those baskets for you?"

The Famous Five started down the road, and turned into the fields to reach the towing-path. Billy Bunter toddled after them. Bunter was determined not to miss that glorious opportunity—as he considered it—of shining as a bold, bad blade.

"I say, you fellows, is Smithy coming later with Mornington?" he asked. "Why haven't you started together—eh?"

No reply.

"Dodging Quelchy—what?" asked Bunter, with a fat grin. "He, he, he! Jolly deep wheeze, I must say! And to tell the fellows that Hazel's gone over for Marjorie—he, he, he! Jolly deep!"

"Will you cut off?" roared Bob Cherry. "Hazel has gone over for Marjorie."

"He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry swung up the lunch-basket he carried and rushed at Bunter. If Bunter had joined the party to secure a whack in the picnic it would have been exasperating enough. But his joining it because he believed the juniors were going out "blagging" was a little too much.

The lunch-basket smote the Owl of the Remove, and he sat down in the grass with a roar.

"Yaroooh! I say, Bob, old chap— Cherry, you beast! Yow-ow-ow—"

Smite, smite, smite!

"Here, mind that basket!" shouted Nugent. "You'll bust all the cake!"

"Yaroo! Help!
Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Billy Bunter wriggled away from the smiting lunch-basket, and jumped up and ran. Bob Cherry breathlessly shook his disengaged fist after him.

Bunter halted at a safe distance, and shook back a very fat fist.

"Yah! Rotters! Blackguards! Beasts! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to come now!"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned and walked on, leaving Bunter shaking his fist. The Owl of the Remove discontentedly turned back to Greyfriars. He was not to have an opportunity of looting Mornington at nap or banker, after all. He arrived at Greyfriars in a state of breathless wrath and indignation.

"Hallo, Tubby!" said Bolsover major, who was lounging in the gateway with Skinner. "Haven't you joined the merry blackguards?"

"I've refused to join them!" panted Bunter.

"Ha, ha! You mean they kicked you out?"

"Oh, really, Bolsover

"You talk too much," grinned Skinner. "They don't want a tattling tell-tale with them on an occasion like this, you know."

"I should have kept it dark, of course," said Bunter. "I'm rather a dog myself—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major. "Rather a pig, you mean!"

"Of course, I can't approve of such goings-on," said Bunter. "I feel that they ought to be stopped. Would you chaps advise a chap to tell Quelch?"

"I'd advise you not to be a rotten sneak!" growled Bolsover major.

"Of course, you're not such a high-minded chap as I am, Bolsover—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I mean— Yah! Keep your boots away from me, you beast!"

Billy Bunter fled. The fat junior made his way up to the Remove passage in the hope of catching Vernon-Smith and Mornington. He found the Bounder alone in his study, looking thoughtful and worried.

"Hallo! Where's Morny?" asked Bunter, blinking round the study.

"Gone down to telephone," growled the Bounder. "What the dickens does it matter to you, Tubby?"

"The fact is, I'm joining Wharton's little party this afternoon, Smithy. He suggested that I should come along with you and Morny."

The Bounder grinned. As he and Mornington were not to join Wharton's party, the Prussianism was a little too palpable.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said. "Get out!"

"If you mean that you don't want my company, Smithy—"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean."

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"I say, you fellows——" "Ponsonby!" exclaimed Nugent at that moment, and William George Bunter was interrupted. Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highelife, was sauntering across the Close towards the House in his usual elegant manner. (See Chapter 2.)

"Under the circumstances, Smithy, I may feel it my duty to inform Mr. Quelch of your shady proceedings——"

Bunter got no further; he had to dodge into the passage to escape a whizzing cushion.

There was an angry exclamation as he plumped into an elegant junior who was about to enter.

"You clumsy duffer!"

"Ow! I—I say, sorry, Morny! Oh, you beast!"

Mornington pushed him off roughly, and Bunter staggered against the wall. The Rookwood junior went into the study, and Bunter scowled after him and drifted away.

It was evident that there was nothing doing that afternoon, and Billy Bunter considered very seriously whether he was not bound, as a really high-minded chap, to acquaint Mr. Quelch with the whole affair.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Morny Takes the Lead!

"COME on, Smithy!" said Mornington.

The Bounder eyed him dubiously. Mornington had said that he wanted to use the telephone, and Wingate of the Sixth had given him permission to use the instrument in the prefects' room. Whom Mornington wanted to 'phone to the Bounder did not know, and he did not ask. But he wondered.

"The car's waitin'," went on Mornington. "I suppose we're not stickin' in here all day? If you won't arrange anythin', you can leave it to me—what?"

"All serene," said Vernon-Smith.

They put on their coats and descended to the big car. Some envious glances were cast after the Bounder as he stepped in. Skinner and Snoop were at hand, trying to catch his eye, but they did not catch it. Skinner would have forgiven the little scrap in the study the previous day with a whole heart for the sake of an afternoon out in Mornington's whacking car. But the Bounder seemed unconscious of his existence, and Mornington did not even look at him. The car glided out of the gates. From his study window Mr. Quelch glanced after it, with disapproval in his glance. Mr. Quelch did not approve of the expenditure of money in reckless extravagance in war-time. Mornington's big car would have been much more usefully employed in Red Cross work. But the Rookwooder's doings were not his business, and Mr. Quelch only frowned.

The car turned into the road to Courtfield. Vernon-Smith was quite willing to take a motor run that afternoon, but he did not think that Mornington would be satisfied with so harmless a way of spending his time. He knew that the Rookwood fellow had some plan in his mind, and he wondered what it was. Mornington was the guest, but he had coolly assumed the upper hand. It was only too easy to see his fixed belief that the Bounder was honoured by his friendship. It was not quite in accordance with Vernon-Smith's ideas of his own importance to be relegated to second place; but he was unusually patient. He did not want to quarrel with his guest, for he did not want to disappoint his father by breaking with Mornington if he could help it.

The car buzzed on rapidly through Courtfield, and buzzed along the Highcliffe road. It slowed down near the gates of Highcliffe. The chauffeur clearly had his instructions.

"What are we stopping for?" asked the Bounder, knitting his brows as he caught sight of three elegantly-dressed fellows waiting in the road. They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of the Highcliffe Fourth.

"Pickin' up some friends here," said Mornington calmly.

"Dash it all, Morny, you don't mean the Highcliffe fellows?"

"Yaas, I do."

"I told you I'd rowed with Ponsonby!" exclaimed the Bounder, his brow growing very dark. "I punched him in my study yesterday."

Mornington shrugged his slim shoulders.

"I've advised you to make it up again," he said. "What's the good of rowin'?"

"Was it Ponsonby you telephoned to?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, understanding at last.

"Yaas. I told him we wanted him this afternoon, and that you were willin' to look over any little disagreement if he was. He was quite willin'. So there you are!"

"You might have asked me first whether I was willing."

"Took it for granted, dear boy."

"Like your confounded cheek, I must say!" broke out the Bounder angrily. "I don't want to meet Ponsonby."

"Keep your wool on, dear boy! Pon's prepared to be quite friendly. Let bygones be bygones, you know."

The car stopped by the roadside, and Ponsonby & Co. raised their hats politely. There was a dark-blue mark on Ponsonby's mouth, but his manner was polite and urbane. If the Highcliffe dandy bore malice for the blow Vernon-Smith had given him he did not show it. Pon could disguise his

feelings admirably when he chose. He nodded to Vernon-Smith as if they had parted last on the best of terms.

"Jump in!" said Mornington.

The three Highcliffians stepped into the car, and it glided on.

"What a merry meetin'!" said Ponsonby amiably. "Such a pleasure to see you, Morny! How have you been gettin' on at Rookwood?"

"Rotten!" said Mornington. "I'd rather be at Highcliffe."

"By gad, I wish you were!" said Ponsonby cordially. "You must really ask your guardian to send you to us next term. All Highcliffe would welcome you with open arms."

"Yes, by gad!" said Monson.

"What's the merry game?" asked Gadsby. "What a stunnin' car, by Jove! We could get down to the races in this!"

"That's what I was thinkin' of."

"Rippin'!" said Monson heartily. "What do you think, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith's brows were knitted.

"I think you'd better let me step out if you're going to the races," he said.

"Oh, rot! You can't desert your guest like that!" said Ponsonby, with an evil smile. "You're in for it now, Smithy! Buck up! We're fairly on the war-path now, you know!"

"Smithy would rather be picnicking with schoolgirls!" sneered Mornington.

His words brought a picture to Vernon-Smith's mind—of cheery, frank faces; of merry voices and laughter; of Marjorie's kind smile and Phyllis' bright eyes. It contrasted with the dingy blackguardism which the Highcliffe nuts regarded as "rippin'."

Mornington's remark was quite correct. Smithy would have given a good deal to be with the picnic party instead of in the hooting, buzzing car with that crowd of young rascals. The change in the Bounder had gone deep. The Highcliffe fellows watched his clouded face with mocking smiles.

"But Smithy's stickin' to me!" said Mornington, with a laugh. "Smithy's been listenin' to sermons or somethin', and turnin' over a new leaf. He's beginnin' to talk like Jimmy Silver at Rookwood. I'm goin' to bring Smithy back to the right path. He's goin' to have a gay time this afternoon, whether he likes it or not!"

"I'm not going to the races!" said Vernon-Smith grimly. "I don't want to preach to you chaps, and I'll join in anything you like, but I won't go to the races. That's flat! I've promised not to, for one thing!"

"That's all right; I release you from the promise!" grinned Mornington. "Leave it to me, dear boy!"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet.

"If you're going to the races, I'm going out of this car!" he said. "I dare say you'll enjoy yourselves better without me. I should be rather a wet blanket, anyway!"

"Well, you would!" sneered Ponsonby. "Let him get out, Morny! We mustn't shock Smithy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington shook his head. He was in an obstinate mood.

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13

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you rotten outsider! You'll do as you're wanted to do, and don't put on airs in dealin' with a gentleman, you rotten young moneylender!"

"Hear, hear!" chirruped Ponsonby in delight.

Vernon-Smith was pale now.

"You'd better let me pass, Morny!" he said. "I'm done with you, anyway!"

"You'll stay where you are!" said Mornington. "Do you think I'm goin' to stand your sermonisin' an' your dashed airs—what? Done with me, by gad! Your pater would be glad to hear that, considerin' how he fawns and licks a chap's feet, hopin' to lend me money at cent. per cent. one of these days!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ponsonby & Co.

"That touches you, does it?" grinned Mornington, as Vernon-Smith's face quivered. "Done with me, by gad! When I'm done with you, Smith, I'll chuck you over as I would any other cad I've used and done with! But don't talk about bein' done with me, you rotten outsider!"

"You drunken fool!" said Vernon-Smith, in tones of concentrated rage. "Will you get aside and let me pass?"

Mornington blinked at him. His head was swimming with the wine he had drunk, and all the evil and bitterness in his nature had come to the surface. The marker looked on in alarm.

"~~Men~~ gentlemen, gentlemen!" he murmured.

"Hold your tongue!" roared Mornington.

The marker backed away.

"Now, drink up, Smith, you white-livered cad!" said Mornington, dashing wine into a glass. "There you are! Drink up, and be a man!"

"Oh, don't be a silly fool!" said Vernon-Smith bitterly. "And when you're finished here, don't come back to Greyfriars. If you ever put your foot in my quarters again I'll kick you out!"

He strode towards the French windows. Mornington, his face red with rage, made a spring after him, and struck out savagely.

"Take that, you cad!"

Vernon-Smith received the blow on the side of the head, and it made him reel. He spun round as if electrified. The next moment his fist was dashed into Mornington's face, and the Rookwood junior sprawled on the floor.

The Bounder's eyes blazed down at him. Vernon-Smith's patience was at an end. He stood over the sprawling fellow menacingly.

"Now get up and take your medicine!" he exclaimed. "You boozy cad! I'm fed-up with you!"

Mornington dragged himself to a sitting posture, with the help of the leg of the billiard-table. He blinked at the Bounder, with rage and deadly hate in his eyes.

"An' that's the moneylender's son I've taken up—the rotten outsider I've been fool enough to talk to!" he stuttered. "Pon—Gaddy—Monson—chuck that cad out! Chuck him out, I say, or I'll never speak to you again!"

"We'll chuck him out fast enough!" grinned Ponsonby. "Come on, you fellows!"

The Bounder faced them with gleaming eyes.

"Come on!" he said, between his teeth.

The three Highcliffians came on; and, with a rush, Vernon-Smith was borne towards the French windows. But he was hitting out savagely, and Ponsonby went down, and then Gadsby, and Monson followed them. In the doorway the Bounder glared at them.

"Help them, you fool!" shouted Mornington to the marker. "A quid for you if you chuck him out!"

Ponsonby & Co. scrambled up, furious. They rushed on Vernon-Smith again, and the beery marker went to their aid. The odds were too great, and the Bounder was hurled out on the lawn. Ponsonby & Co. stood in the French windows jeering, as he picked himself up breathlessly. The Bounder gave them one look, and turned away—breathless, hatless, and savage. He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and strode away on the towing-path.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

A cheery voice hailed him from a passing boat. The Bounder started, and looked up. It was the Greyfriars boat. Wharton and Bob Cherry and Nugent were rowing, Hurree

Singh was steering, and Johnny Bull and Hazel were seated with Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis. Very cheery that little party looked as they glided up the river. It was a curious contrast to the scene the Bounder had just left.

"Hallo!" he called back.

Wharton drew in his oar, and stood up.

"On your own?" he asked.

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith grimly.

"Like to come along?"

"Yes, if you'll have me."

"What-ho! Pull in, you fellows!"

The boat glided to the bank. Vernon-Smith stepped into it.

"Where's your hat?" asked Bob.

"Left it somewhere," said Vernon-Smith. "Never mind that. Not worth going back for."

"You can come under my parasol if you like," said Miss Clara generously.

"Thanks awfully!"

And the Bounder's face was quite contented as the boat glided on. He did not envy Mornington and Ponsonby and Monson and Gaddy their glorious afternoon out.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Mornington's Revenge!

"ROTTER!"

Billy Bunter had lounged down to Little Side, where Tom Brown's team were playing the Third. The Owl of the Remove blinked on discontentedly. Billy Bunter blinked at the footer without much interest in it. Bunter was "stony," as usual. He thought of the supposed party up the river, and of the rich youth of Rookwood being relieved of his superabundant cash, and he felt furious.

Bunter hadn't the slightest doubt that the picnickers at that very minute were fleecing Mornington; and here was he, excluded from that profitable business, hanging about a blessed footer-field! No wonder Bunter was exasperated.

He rolled away discontentedly at last, turning over in his mind whether he should really show up those reckless youths who were breaking all the laws of the school—as he supposed. He felt that it would serve them right for leaving him out. He felt that they deserved it—and, indeed, that it was his duty. But he knew how the other fellows would look on it if he sneaked to the Form-master, and the thought of a dormitory ragging gave him pause.

Temple, Dabney, & Co. were sauntering elegantly in the quadrangle, and Billy Bunter joined them. Cecil Reginald Temple had lots of money, and Billy Bunter would have accepted a loan from a Prussian when he was hard up. The Fourth-Formers grinned at him.

"Haven't you joined the merry blades?" asked Temple.

"Aren't you one of the gay dogs, Bunt?"

"I've declined to do anything of the sort, Temple. A fellow must have a little principle!" said Bunter loftily.

"Yes, you've got a little—a very little," smiled Temple; "so little that it can't be seen with the naked eye—what?"

"I—I say, Cecil, old chap—"

"What?" growled Temple.

"I'm expecting a postal-order this afternoon—"

"Good-bye!" said Temple. And Dabney and Fry chuckled.

"I'm stony!" said Bunter pathetically. "Those rotters have left me out, too, or I should have had lots of tin this afternoon. That as Morny is rolling in oof. They're getting it out of him, you know!"

"Rot!" said Temple.

"Oh, it's a fact! I've a jolly good mind to let Quelch know!" said Bunter savagely. "Smith and Morny have gone in the car to join them, you know, and they're going to gamble, and clean Morny out. That's what Pon came to see Smithy about yesterday. It's all spoof about the picnic. It's a sporting party really, and—"

"Shurrup!" whispered Temple hurriedly, as Mr. Quelch came out of the School House.

But Billy Bunter did not see Mr. Quelch, and he rattled on:

"They're playing bridge or nap at this very minute—Smithy and Wharton and the rest—and winning Mornington's money—"

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter spun round like a teetotum.

"Ye-es, sir?"

"What were you saying, Bunter?"

"Nun-nun-nothing, sir."

Temple & Co. exchanged glances, and strolled away. Billy Bunter would gladly have strolled away, too; but the gimlet eyes of the Remove-master fixed him to the spot.



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"I heard your words, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "You were repeating your statement of yesterday with regard to Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and the boy who has come here from Rookwood. I can hardly believe that you have founded so serious an accusation upon nothing at all. Kindly tell me all details of the matter."

Billy Bunter stammered helplessly. It was useless for the Owl of the Remove to attempt to fence with Mr. Quelch, and in a few minutes the whole story had come out—of what he had overheard between Ponsonby and Vernon-Smith, of the character of Mornington, and his belief that the picnic was a mere blind to cover the real occupation of the Removites. Mr. Quelch extracted the very last crumb of information from the stammering Owl, his brow growing darker and darker the while.

"I think you are mistaken, Bunter," he said at last. "You are a stupid and suspicious boy, and too ready to believe evil. It appears, too, that you were willing to join this party, in spite of the way you describe it."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I refused. I—I'm too high-minded—"

"You need not attempt to deceive me, Bunter. It is clear that, believing your Form-fellows to be engaged in an act of rascality, you wished to join them in it. Whether they are guilty or not, you are guilty in intention. You will go into the Form-room, and write out Virgil till half-past six. Unless I find at least three hundred lines written by the time I return, Bunter, I shall cane you! Go!"

Billy Bunter almost limped off. He had given away the supposed sportsmen now with a vengeance; and the reward of virtue was detention and lines. Bunter felt that there really was no encouragement for a high-minded chap at Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch remained for some moments in thought. He could hardly credit Bunter's extraordinary story; but it was evidently his duty to look very closely into the matter. Harry Wharton & Co. he could scarcely suspect, but the Bounder's old reputation was fresh in his mind. Where were the juniors now? According to Bunter, the sporting party had gone up the river to gamble. After considering the matter for some time, Mr. Quelch walked out of gates, and took the towing-path, and strode away up the river.

His brows were knitted as he strode on.

If the Bounder of Greyfriars had deceived him, if the unreformed black sheep of the Remove had led others, of better character, into his wild ways, his punishment would be short and sharp.

The Form-master hoped to find the picnic party, and to see with his own eyes whether there was truth in the story.

But there was no sign of the picnickers in the green woods by the river as he strode on. But as he reached the Three Fishers he paused. He knew the reputation of that delectable spot, he knew that Vernon-Smith had visited the place in earlier days, when the reckless junior had come near being expelled from the school. And as he looked across the gardens of the inn he started. In the yard further back a big motor-car was standing. At the first glance Mr. Quelch recognised the big car in which Mornington had arrived at Greyfriars.

The Remove-master's brow darkened grimly.

He had seen Mornington and Vernon-Smith start in that car. And there was the car in the yard of the Three Fishers. He required little further proof.

He entered the gardens. The French windows of the billiard-room were wide open, and he paused there to look in.

There was a clicking of billiard balls, and then Ponsonby's voice:

"Potted, by gum! Well done, Morny!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes took in the scene.

Mornington and Gadsby of Highcliffe were playing. Ponsonby and Monson stood looking on, smoking cigarettes. On a side table were bottles and glasses and cigars. The flushed faces of the reckless young rascals showed that they had been drinking, Mornington especially. On the floor, near the windows, a straw hat lay—a hat with the Greyfriars band! Vernon-Smith was not visible.

The Remove master stepped into the room.

Ponsonby & Co. looked round quickly. Mornington stared at the grave Form-master.

"The table's engaged!" he said impudently.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I have not come here to play billiards," he said. "I am a master at Greyfriars. You, I understand, are Mornington, of Rookwood? I think you know me, Ponsonby?"

"Yes, sir," said Ponsonby, wondering whether this meant a report at Highcliffe, and some hard lying for himself to get out of the scrape.

"You are not under my control," said the Remove-master. "I will pass no opinion upon this scene. But I understand that a Greyfriars boy is here."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Gadsby.

Mr. Quelch picked up the straw hat.

"Is this Vernon-Smith's hat?" he asked. "I can see that it belongs to a Greyfriars boy."

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ONE
PENNY.

Mornington's eyes glittered. He passed his hand over the mark on his face where the Bounder's knuckles had struck hard.

"Well, there's no gettin' out of it," he remarked, with a laugh. "It's a fair catch for Smithy this time. Yace, that's his headgear."

Ponsonby caught his eye. It was Ponsonby's opportunity, too.

"That is Smith's hat," he said.

"Where is Vernon-Smith?"

"Gone into the gardens to sleep it off," said Mornington coolly. "His head wouldn't stand so much as he mopped up. I warned him to go easy on the cham. Didn't I, Pon?"

"You did," said Ponsonby. "So did I. But Smithy's his own master. It's not our fault if he chose to get beastly drunk."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"Do you mean to tell me that Vernon-Smith is under the influence of liquor?" he asked.

Mornington laughed.

"Look at me!" he said. "Smithy was fightin' drunk. He went for the lot of us. He punched the marker. Didn't he, marker?"

"That he did, sir!" said the beery marker, rubbing his nose. "Never saw a young gent so wild."

"Where is he now?" asked Mr. Quelch quietly.

"Sleepin' it off, I should say," grinned Mornington. "You'll find him stretched out in the garden, unless he's been run in for bein' drunk an' disorderly. Your shot, Gaddy."

"I hope, sir, that you won't mention this at Highcliffe," said Ponsonby very respectfully. "We are simply here for a harmless game of billiards. It wasn't our fault that Vernon-Smith insisted upon ordering liquor, and kicked up a row."

"I shall certainly acquaint your Form-master, Ponsonby, with the fact that I have found you here."

Ponsonby concealed a grin. Mr. Mobbs, his Form-master, was not likely to believe ill of that well-connected young gentleman. So long as Mr. Quelch did not go to Dr. Voysey about it, Pon was content.

"I must ask you one more question. Were there any other Greyfriars boys with you here?"

"No, sir."

"An' Smithy won't be with us again, either," said Mornington. "I don't mind a chap goin' it a bit; but gettin' fightin' drunk an' cuttin' up rusty is a bit too thick. I'm done with the low cad!"

"Mornington, you will kindly understand that you are forbidden to visit Greyfriars again!"

Mr. Quelch turned and left the billiard-room. Mornington looked after him with a grin, and winked at the Highcliffians.

"I fancy that cad Smith will be sorry for himself by the time that grim old gorgon is through with him," he remarked. "He may be sorry for punchin' the noses of his betters, by gad! Your shot, Gaddy."

"I—I say, it was rather thick, you know," muttered Gadsby. "That means the sack for Smithy!"

"Exactly! Nothin' could have happened better! Your shot, I tell you!"

Mr. Quelch did not find Vernon-Smith in the inn gardens. He left the Three Fishers with a thunderous brow, and returned to Greyfriars. The storm was ready to burst upon the unfortunate Bounder when he returned—unsuspecting.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Sudden Blow!

"WHAT a ripping afternoon!"

It was the Bounder who spoke.

The picnickers were camped under the shady trees by the shining river a mile above the Three Fishers. The sun was sinking now, and the river rolled crimson in the sunset. It was time to return.

The Bounder had enjoyed his afternoon, after all. Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis had been very kind to him. Harry Wharton & Co. were always cheery companions. The juniors did not know what had become of his guest from Rookwood, and they did not ask. They could easily guess that the Bounder had become fed-up with the young rascal, and parted company with him. And the fact that Smithy had joined them, batless, with several bruises on his face, pointed to a row. But it was not their business. They were glad enough to have the Bounder with them, even Marjorie. There had been a time when Marjorie disliked the Bounder, and suspected him; his influence over

her brother had been evil then. But she knew that that was changed now, and that it was Vernon-Smith's influence that helped to keep Hazel to the straight path.

Bob Cherry was packing the baskets. Phyllis was helping him, and gently restraining him from packing the cake and the spirit-stove together. Harry Wharton and the Bouncer walked down to the boat to push it off.

"A ripping afternoon!" repeated Vernon-Smith. "It was real luck you fellows sighted me on the bank just then. I suppose you know I'd been in the pub, Wharton?"

They were out of hearing of the others now.

"Well, I concluded so," said Harry guardedly.

"Morny had picked up Ponsonby and Monson and Gaddy, and they insisted on going there. We had a row there," explained the Bouncer quietly. "I'm off with Morny—for good. It'll be rather a disappointment to the pater, but it can't be helped. I don't think he'll show up at Greyfriars again. The rotten young blackguard was squiffy—and there was a row. I was glad to get clear of them."

"That's how you lost your hat?" said Wharton, with a smile.

"Yes. They piled in on me, and chucked me out. The marker helped them. I couldn't quite handle five of them," said the Bouncer, laughing. "But Morny will carry a fat nose home to Rookwood with him in his tremendous car. Rather a painful end to a friendly visit, but—but I hadn't any choice. You can guess what that cad is like when he's squiffy—what his manners are like. I wish now I'd given him another one or two!"

The Bouncer's face was grim for a moment.

"But it's all over now," he said, his face clearing—"it's over and done with. I'm glad of it."

The boat was pushed out, and the picnickers embarked. Three of the juniors and Miss Phyllis rowed the boat down the river to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. landed with the Cliff House girls to walk home with them, and the Bouncer and Hazel rowed the boat in. The Co. disappeared with Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis. Vernon-Smith and Hazel put up the boat, and walked to the school. Hazel eyed the Bouncer curiously.

"What was it like, with Morny and the rest?" he asked.

The Bouncer grinned. Hazel, with all his resolutions of reform, had always a secret hankering after his old ways; his character lacked the strength of the Bouncer's, and he could not quite throw the past behind him as Vernon-Smith had done.

"Rotten!" said the Bouncer. "Booze, smoke, billiards, and bad manners."

"I suppose you had a high old time?"

"I had a row with the whole lot of them, and got chucked out."

Hazel laughed.

"Well, a picnic was better than that," he said. "I should have thought you'd keep in with a chap like Mornington. He's rolling in money, I hear."

"He won't come to Greyfriars again!"

"Oh!" said Hazel.

The Bouncer smiled grimly. He could see that Hazel had hoped to make the acquaintance of the black sheep of Rookwood.

They parted in the quadrangle, and the Bouncer went to his study. The footer match was over, and the footballers had come in.

"How did you get on?" asked the Bouncer, as he met Tom Brown in the passage.

"Lemme see. We licked the Third by ten goals or so," said the New Zealand junior, laughing. "Turbb & Co. weren't quite up to our form. Have you seen Quelch?"

"Quelch?" said the Bouncer, in surprise. "No. Why?"

Tom Brown eyed him oddly.

"Then you'd better go to him. Wingate said you're to go to Quelch's study as soon as you came in."

"What on earth for?"

"I'm afraid it's a row," said Tom. "Look here, Smithy, I don't believe a word of that silly yarn of Bunter's; but Quelch's been pumping him, and if there's anything in it, you'd better be on your guard."

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders.

"There's nothing in it," he said.

"Good!" said Tom Brown, relieved. "I was sure of it. But I saw Quelch when he came in, and he looked like thunder. You've not been anywhere that you can't explain to him?"

"Oh!" said the Bouncer slowly.

"Anyway, you'd better cut off."

Vernon-Smith went downstairs again very slowly. Wingate of the Sixth spotted him in the hall, and called to him:

"You're wanted, Vernon-Smith—Mr. Quelch's study!"

"All serene!" said the Bouncer.

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He noticed that the captain of Greyfriars eyed him very narrowly. His heart beat a little as he tapped at the Remove master's door.

"Come in!"

Vernon-Smith entered the study.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. The expression on his face showed Vernon-Smith that there was trouble to come.

A straw hat lay on the table. The Bouncer stared at it recognising his own hat. How had it come there?

"Vernon-Smith"—Mr. Quelch's voice was very deep—"that is your hat, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"I picked it up in the billiard-room at the Three Fishers Inn."

The Bouncer started.

"You left it there, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Bouncer.

"Indeed? You will now come with me to the Head, Vernon-Smith."

The Bouncer drew a deep breath. His heart thumped hard.

"One moment, sir!" he exclaimed. "Will you tell me what I am to come to the Head for?"

"I will tell you," said the Remove-master grimly. "You are to come to Dr. Locke to receive your sentence of expulsion from Greyfriars!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Condemned!

VERNON-SMITH stood quite still.

Mr. Quelch's reply was unexpected, and it took the usually cool and collected Bouncer quite aback.

"Expulsion!" he exclaimed at last.

"Yes. Come!"

Vernon-Smith pulled himself together.

"May I ask what I am to be expelled for?" he said, with a touch of his old sarcastic manner. "I have been out of bounds, and I admit it. Fellows are not usually expelled, I believe, for going out of bounds."

"Prevarication will not help you, Vernon-Smith. I am well acquainted with all that happened at that disreputable public-house this afternoon."

"I don't see how you can be, sir; but if that is so, you must know that I have done nothing to be sacked for."

"Do not bandy words with me!" exclaimed the Remove-master angrily. "I have been deceived in you, Vernon-Smith. I have believed in your promises of reform, and you have deceived me. I repeat that I am aware of your occupations this afternoon, and I have acquainted Dr. Locke with them."

"It is true that I went to the Three Fishers," said Vernon-Smith. "I played a game of billiards there. It was out of bounds, I know. But—but I had a visitor to entertain, and he practically dragged me there. There is no harm in a game of billiards that I know of. I play billiards at home."

"I play billiards myself!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "You know very well that I am not alluding to a harmless game of skill. Do you expect me to believe that you played billiards at that low haunt merely as a game of skill?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not believe you. I repeat, Vernon-Smith, that prevarication comes too late. You have been guilty of an orgy worthy only of a public-house loafer. The school might have been disgraced by a boy belonging to it being taken up by the police. That risk shall not be run again."

"The police!" stammered Vernon-Smith. "I don't understand—"

"Suppose a police-constable had seen you the worse for liquor?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You were cunning enough, apparently, to keep out of sight until you recovered from your disgusting potations."

"You think that I was drinking at the Three Fishers?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"I know you were!"

"I can prove that I was not!"

"Indeed! If you have anything to say in your defence, I shall be glad to hear it. Proceed! What proof do you speak of?"

"I was not alone there. Four other fellows were there."

"I am aware of that—a Rookwood boy and three Highcliffe boys. You need not be afraid of mentioning their names. I saw them."

"Very well, sir; I call them as witnesses that I touched nothing—that I did not smoke, did not drink, and refused to stake anything on the game."

Mr. Quelch smiled sarcastically.

"If you had had time to arrange a story with your rascally associates, Vernon-Smith, I have no doubt you would have

succeeded in deceiving me again," he said. "But that is now out of the question. You say that you will call Ponsonby and Mornington as witnesses in your defence?"

"Certainly! They know what happened."

"You do not seem to understand that I have already questioned them, and that it is from them I have obtained the information I am acting upon."

"From—from them?"

"From them!" said Mr. Quelch. "You call their evidence—well, their evidence is that you were in a state of disgusting intoxication, and that, under the influence of liquor, you assaulted them and the marker. The marker bore evidence to the same effect."

Vernon-Smith staggered.

"They—they said that?" he panted.

"They did."

"It was a lie!" shouted the Bounder. "They lied——"

Mr. Quelch made a gesture.

"That is enough, Vernon-Smith! Only a moment ago you were willing to call them as witnesses."

"I—I did not know——"

"You did not know that they had told me the truth! I understand perfectly. You supposed that they would speak falsely to clear you. Unfortunately for you, they blurted out the whole story. Indeed, Mornington—depraved rascal as he is—was himself disgusted with your conduct."

"I—I—I——"

"The traces on your face, Vernon-Smith, bear out the story. You have been fighting—fighting with the friend who came to visit you here. After that, do you dare to tell me that you were not intoxicated?"

"I—I—— He lied—he lied!"

"Why should he lie—your own friend, who made a long journey this afternoon to visit you, and whom you received as a friend?" said the Remove-master coldly. "You had better be silent, Vernon-Smith! Your deception is completely discovered, and falsehoods will not serve you. Follow me!"

The Remove-master strode from the room, and Vernon-Smith followed him like a fellow in a dream.

The usually cool and clear-headed Bounder was utterly overcome.

That Mornington and Ponsonby would be revengeful he might have guessed; that their revenge would take the form of this base accusation he had never dreamed.

And how was he to rebut it?

His own friends, his own companions, had bore false testimony against him—but how could the Form-master guess that it was false? To Mr. Quelch it seemed that the young rascals, caught in their rascality, had blurted out the truth; he was far from plumbing the depth of Mornington's baseness. To his mind it was clear that only chance had prevented him from finding Vernon-Smith at the inn, indulging in a brutal orgy; only the chance that he had been overcome by liquor, had quarrelled and fought with his associates, and gone. He was not likely to take the Bounder's word against overwhelming evidence.

There was a buzz from the fellows who saw Vernon-Smith following the Remove-master down the passage. Mr. Quelch's stern brow, and the Bounder's white face, told their own story.

Bolsover major whistled as they disappeared into the Head's study.

"Poor old Smithy!" he said. "That yarn was true, then? The game's up!"

Skinner grinned.

"It's the sack for Smithy!" he remarked. "He's bowled out at last! Well, I never believed his humbug from the first. I told him so! He was jolly deep, but it was bound to come out in the long run."

"That rotter Bunter must have given him away, after all!" growled Bolsover. "Where's Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"You fat rotter, you sneaked about Smithy!" roared Bolsover major.

"I—I didn't, you know! Quelch screwed it out of me, you know!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "Here, I say—hands off, you know! Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter was rushed into the Common-room, where he enjoyed the pleasures of the frog's-march. Whatever Vernon-Smith had done, the juniors had only one opinion about the sneak who had given him away. Whether the Owl of the Remove had sneaked intentionally or not, he had to pay for it; and during the next ten minutes Billy Bunter suffered for his sins. He was feeling as if life was not worth living when the angry Removites had finished with him.

Meanwhile, Vernon-Smith was before the Head. Dr. Locke's usually kind face was cold and stern.

"Mr. Quelch has acquainted me with the whole matter, Vernon-Smith," he said. "You are aware, of course, that there is only one course for me to take."

The Bounder panted.

"It's not true, sir! They lied—Mornington—Ponsonby——"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

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NEXT MONDAY—**"FISHY'S LATEST!"**

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ONE
PENNY.

"You do not deny that you went to that low haunt with them, Vernon-Smith?"

"No. But——"

"That is sufficient. You were with them there, on your own showing. It is merely absurd to suggest that your friends and companions in rascality have turned upon you for no reason."

"They had a reason. I quarrelled with them."

"I am aware of that; it is part of their story. You need say no more. To-morrow morning you will leave Greyfriars. I shall write to your father to-night. I am sorry, Vernon-Smith, because I really believe that you have made some attempts to reform yourself. But Greyfriars is no place for you. I have to consider the other boys under my charge. You may go!"

"But I—I——"

"You may go!" said the Head sternly.

And Vernon-Smith went, dazed and in despair. He shut himself up in his study, locking the door against the inquisitive fellows who would have seen him. So this was the end, he reflected bitterly. If he had joined in Mornington's black-guardism with his whole heart—if he had gone to the races, if he had come back to Greyfriars with lies on his lips—all would have gone well. He had kept his promises—he had resisted temptation—and this was the end!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton to the Rescue!

"H ALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from Cliff House. As they came into the Common-room they could see that something very unusual was on. The expulsion of Vernon-Smith was being discussed in hushed tones.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Mark Linley.

"Heard what?" asked Wharton.

"Smithy's sacked!"

"Smithy—sacked! What the merry thunder——"

"He's bowled out," said Skinner. "I always told him it would come. He punched my nose yesterday for telling him. But I knew it would."

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't my fault! Quelch squeezed it out of me——"

"Shut up, you fat sneak!" roared Bolsover major.

"But what's happened?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, bewildered. "What's Smithy sacked for? What has he done?"

"He's been on the razzle," grinned Snoop. "Don't you fellows know? Weren't you with him? He, he, he!"

"We were with him," said Nugent. "He came to the picnic——"

"He, he, he!"

"You'd better go and tell the Head it was a picnic," grinned Skinner. "He'll believe you—I don't think!"

"Where's Smithy now?" asked Wharton quietly.

"Locked in his study."

Wharton ran out of the Common-room, and up to the Remove passage. He tapped at the Bounder's door.

"Let me in, Smithy!"

The Bounder opened the door. Wharton entered hurriedly.

"Smithy! I've just heard——"

Vernon-Smith laughed—a laugh of bitter irony.

"Yes, I'm sacked!" he said. "Morny has done it; he couldn't take that punch in the face quietly. Quelch went to the Three Fishers, and they stuffed him up—and I'm sacked! Morny, and Pon, and the rest. I told you how it was, but they've made Quelch believe I was squiffy—fighting drunk, you know. He found my hat there, and that clinched it. I'm sacked! It's the finish for me here; and the finish for the fool game I've been playing lately. I've had enough of it!" He ground his teeth. "I'm a dog with a bad name, you know; and, by gad, I'll live up to the bad name when I leave here! If I'm to be condemned, there shall be something to condemn me for——"

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "Let's have it clear. Do you mean that those cads turned on you, and accused you——"

"Of course! I might have guessed it, too. It was their chance, when Quelch dropped in after I was gone. Very deep of Morny, wasn't it?" sneered the Bounder. "His noble nose had been punched, so he gets me disgraced and sacked in return—and Quelch serves his turn—very deep indeed!"

"They told Quelch you were intoxicated when you left the Three Fishers?"

"Yes. And Quelch believes it, and the Head——"

"Then the game isn't up yet!" said Harry. "Keep your head, old chap, and don't get wild. I'm on in this scene!"

Before the Bouncer could reply Wharton was speeding downstairs. He arrived, breathless, at the Head's door, knocked, and opened it. Mr. Quelch was with the doctor, and both of them looked severely at the captain of the Remove as he burst into the study.

"Wharton!" rapped out the Head.

"Excuse me, sir!" panted Wharton. "I've got to tell you about Smithy."

"You need tell me nothing, Wharton! Everything is known about that unfortunate boy."

"But he is innocent, sir."

"Wharton!"

"And I can prove it!"

Wharton almost shouted the words.

"Really, Wharton—"

"I can prove it, sir," said Harry, more calmly. "You must hear me, sir—"

"I shall certainly be glad to hear anything in that wretched boy's favour, Wharton. What do you know about the matter?"

Harry Wharton hurriedly explained—how the Bouncer had felt Lord Mornington's visit; how relieved he had been at the idea of bringing the Rookwood blackguard to the picnic to keep him out of mischief; Ponsonby's rascally proposal to fleece the reckless young rascal; and Vernon-Smith's angry answer to it. He spoke breathlessly, the two masters listening with quiet attention.

"Bunter listened, and heard some of it, and misunderstood, and spread a silly yarn," went on Harry. "There was nothing in it. Smithy would have come with us, but Mornington refused. It's true that Smithy went to that place, but he never wanted to. I suppose he felt he had to give way a bit as Mornington was his guest. But he quarrelled with them."

"You tell us nothing we do not know already, or very little, Wharton."

"But that isn't all, sir. Mornington told you that Smithy was under the influence of liquor when he left the inn—"

"Undoubtedly."

"And I can prove he wasn't!" exclaimed Wharton triumphantly.

"What do you mean?"

"Because we met him as he came away, sir, and he joined

our party, and came to the picnic after all," said Harry. "Smithy was with us almost all the afternoon. He was only with those cads just so long as it took us to pull up the river as far as the Three Fishers. We spotted him on the towing-path and took him on board, and he came to the picnic. He hadn't been drinking, or anything of the sort. He quarrelled with them, and they pitched him out because he wouldn't join in their silly rot. All the fellows will tell you, sir. Nugent and Bob, and Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis were there, too, sir. They'll tell you. You don't think we'd have had Smithy with us, with Marjorie, if he had been drinking, sir?"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"This certainly does let in a new light on the matter," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "At what time did Vernon-Smith join your party, Wharton?"

"About half-past three, sir."

"And he was quite himself? He had not been indulging in liquor?"

"Nothing of the kind, sir! It was because he wouldn't play their silly game that they set on him and pitched him out. He told me so at the time. There was nothing wrong with him at all. We can all bear witness."

"Is it possible," said the Head slowly, "that those wicked young rascals could have given false testimony against Vernon-Smith because he acted in an upright manner?"

"It certainly appears so," said Mr. Quelch, with a troubled look. "Wharton's evidence is conclusive."

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Vernon-Smith has come very near suffering a great injustice," he said. "It should be a lesson to him to avoid bad companions, however upright his own intentions may be. Wharton, you have done quite right in coming to me. I thank you! Send Vernon-Smith to me. You may tell him that his sentence is rescinded. He will be punished for breaking bounds. He must expect that."

Harry Wharton ran from the study in great delight. He burst merrily into Vernon-Smith's room.

"All serene!" he gasped.

The Bouncer stared.

"What do you mean? What—"

"You're cleared! Don't you understand? Come along to the Head!"

And the Bouncer, his face lighting up, followed the captain of the Remove to the Head's study.

Vernon-Smith had reason to bless the occasion of that little picnic up the river. But for that Mornington's revengeful scheme would certainly have been a success.

But Harry Wharton & Co's evidence was more than enough to clear the Bouncer, and he received only a severe lecture on keeping bad company, and a hundred lines for breaking bounds. As for the bad company, Vernon-Smith was not likely to keep any more of it. There was little likelihood that Greyfriars would see anything more of the Bouncer's Guest.

THE END.

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

BRIEF NOTICES

To Readers of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY.

Correspondence, Leagues, Etc.

Miss Grace Gooch, c.o. Mrs. Scarbrough, 104, Bright Street, Holderness Road, Hull, would like to correspond with a sailor lad of about 16.

H. Wade, 7, Butts Grove, Armley, Leeds, has started an amateur journal, and would be glad to hear from readers interested. Stamped and addressed envelopes, please.

T. P., 14, Cardross Street, Hammersmith, London, W., wants to correspond with Australian or Canadian boy readers for the exchange of picture postcards.

Sea-Scout Andrew Kershaw wishes to thank all the readers who wrote to him and sent him papers. He hopes to answer them all in due course.

H. E. Grainger, 72, Prestbury Road, Macclesfield, wants more members for his Imperial Correspondence Club, also someone to act as secretary, and someone else as editor.

C. Lowe, 344, City Road, Park, Sheffield, wants more members for his "Gem" and "Magnet" Social League, which includes stamps and correspondence exchanges.

(Readers will find a further List of Notices on cover, page ii.)



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

The Opening Chapters of Our Great New School Serial.

THE FOURTH FORM
AT FRANKLINGHAM.

By Richard Randolph.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT TOLD HOW

two new boys appeared at Franklingham School on the same day. They travelled by the same train, but not together. One of the two was JOHNNY GOGGS, of whom it may be said that he was by no means so big a fool as he looked. Goggs is a junior. The other fellow—CONRAD HARDING CARDENDEN—is a senior, and the cousin of HARRY GRANVILLE, the popular captain of the school. But the cousins are not friends, and Cardenden's coming bodes no good to Granville. Goggs is annoyed by the rudeness of a porter at the station, and of AMINADAB JARKER, a cab-driver, and when Goggs is treated rudely he does not forget it. He plays a trick on Jarker, who has to race in pursuit of his horse and cab. Witnesses to this trick are three Fourth-Formers—BLOUNT, known as Bags; TRICKETT, otherwise Tricks; and WATERS, or the Wagtail. Two of the three rather take to the new boy from the first, in spite of his eccentric appearance and his prim manner of speech. But Waters does not. Goggs teaches him a lesson in politeness, and the four move off to see what may chance to the unfortunate Jarker.

(Now read on.)

Ancient Enemies.

The four caught Jarker before Jarker caught his horse. To say that Aminadab was in a raging temper is to describe all too mildly his frantic state.

It seemed that he could scarcely become madder. But he did so when, rounding a bend, he perceived his horse, with P. C. Buswell's hands upon its reins.

He vented his feelings in language even more painful and frequent and free than previous samples.

"Look here, Aminadab Jarker," said the constable solemnly, "if you go on talkin' in that there fashion, I'll 'ave another charge agin you besides the charge of leavin' a 'oss unattended, and lettin' of it run away in consecens! An' our Bench—they're mortal down on bad langwidge! A quid an' costs is the least as you may reckon on!"

"I'm afraid that the policeman does not like Mr. Abimelech—no Aminadab Jarker," said Goggs softly. "He would appear to be a policeman possessing judgment."

"Langwidge!" roared Jarker. "An' 'oo could 'elp it? An' 'oo says as I left a 'oss unattended? You got to prove that, Mr. Police-constable Buswell, that's wot you've got to do!"

Buswell turned to Johnny Goggs before replying to Jarker. The constable had only one friend in Franklingham. She was the cook at Grayson's House. For the rest, they did not like Buswell.

"Don't you let me 'ave none of your imperence, young

man!" said Buswell severely. "'Oo are you to be a-sayin' of 'oo are my friends or contrary-like? If I was you, I should go about with my 'ead in a bag, I should, just to 'ide that face!"

"I'm afraid I was wrong. The policeman would appear to be a person of no judgment!" remarked Goggs sadly.

"And if I were you, Constable Buswell, I should seriously meditate the advisability of having my head cut off! You would present a better appearance without it, and, as it seems to be void of brains, you would not suffer from any loss in that respect!"

The voice seemed to Bags to break in upon Goggs' mild remark. And it was the voice of Mr. Grayson, who was known to consider Buswell a lazy humbug, and had more than once told him so frankly.

Yes, it was certainly Mr. Grayson's voice, or so much like it that no one there could tell the difference, and it seemed to come from behind Buswell.

Yet the road behind Buswell was empty.

It was Goggs—it must be Goggs, despite any apparent evidence to the contrary. But Bags, who alone felt sure of this, could not understand it. He did not know that the Housemaster and this new boy had ever met.

Jarker did not mind whence the voice came, or whose voice it was.

It said rude things to his foeman, and that was good enough for Aminadab.

"Qui' ri'!" he howled. "Gawspel truth, if ever I 'eerd it! Look better without your 'ead, you would, Police-constable Buswell! I've often thought that myself, though I didn't like for to say it, me bein' only a 'ard-workin' cabman, an' you a 'igh-an'-mighty police-officer!"

Buswell glared at the boys, evidently suspecting them.

"What are you young gents a-gettin' at?" he growled.

"Nothing at all, Bussy dear!" answered Tricks. "We only came along to see the show."

"What show? Don't you come your riddles over me!"

"'Tisn't a riddle. He means the touching meeting between you and your dear friend Jarker," explained Blount.

"Then 'e's a imperent—Hi, there! Whoa! Stop! Whoa! Stop that 'oss of yours, Jarker!"

On the face of it, there seemed no special reason why the old horse should have started off so suddenly. But Blount noticed that Goggs was standing quite close to it, and held that a suspicious circumstance.

Jarker and Buswell both clutched at the reins.

Both missed. They missed because their heads came into collision.

Jarker's battered old bowler-hat tumbled to earth, and a big dent appeared in Buswell's helmet.

"What did you do that for, you bugly old lump of wickedness?" demanded Buswell.

"Me? Well, if that ain't a oner! What did you want to go a-yellin' to me to stop the 'oss for, an' then meddle in the job yourself, Police-constable Buswell—not to call you nothink worse nor that? An' it wouldn't be easy, neither!"

"The 'oss was in my charge. I'd arrested of 'im for bein' unattended, and—"

A sharp, angry bark cut short Buswell's speech.

The constable's red face went suddenly pale, and he staggered, clutching at Jarker.

Blount and Tricks grinned. Even Wagtail's sulky countenance took on a smile. Goggs looked absurdly innocent. He could hardly have known what the other three knew well—that no one around Franklingham more hated and feared dogs in general, and one dog in particular, than P.-c. Buswell.

"It's that there Scamp!" bleated the constable. "I'd know 'is bark amongst a thousand! For mercy's sake, call 'im off, young gents—call 'im off!"

Once upon a time Scamp, Mr. Grayson's bulldog, had taken a large piece of stout cloth from the seat of Buswell's trousers, and Buswell had gone in fear and trembling of him ever since.

"Scamp—Scamp! Here, boy!"

The voice seemed further away. The dog was not visible at all. But the old horse had pulled up again, and now a bark came—or seemed to come—from inside the cab.

"Keep your hugly, fat 'and orf me, you bluebottle!" snarled Jarker.

"Bluebottle, am I? Take that, you old brazen image!"

Buswell struck hard at Mr. Jarker.

"That is a most improper proceeding, constable!" said Goggs, in his meekest, mildest, most precise tones. "And remember that you are doing it before witnesses!"

A renewed burst of angry barking cut him short, or seemed to.

Buswell glared round in terror, his eyes almost starting from his head.

He expected to see Scamp close behind him.

Scamp was not there. But the constable's diverted attention gave Jarker a first-class chance, and Jarker took it.

He flung his arms around Buswell's neck, and tugged him downwards. Then Buswell started in to hug Jarker. They fell, and rolled in the dust together.

Buswell was the younger and stronger man, but the barking made a big handicap for him. His attention was distracted between Jarker and the dog, whereas Jarker gave his sole and undivided attention to his enemy.

They began to roll. The road, running through a flat, low-lying stretch of country, was banked up above the level of the fields on either side, and the grass at each edge sloped down pretty steeply to a wide, black ditch.

The two combatants forgot all about that ditch, and the spectators did not warn them.

Buswell could not see now. Jarker's arm hugged his head to Jarker's breast, and he was completely blindfolded.

"Tell you what, Tricks," said Blount, "if you were to stoop down and bite old Bussy, he'd be dead sure to think it was Scamp, and—"

"Bite himself yourself, Bags! I'm no cannibal!"

Then, his approach unobserved by anyone, Scamp himself trotted up.

He sniffed at Buswell, wrinkling up his nose as bulldogs do. At that moment Jarker shifted his arm lower. The two were now within a yard of the ditch.

Buswell saw Scamp. He fairly howled with fear. One desperate lurch he gave, and he and Jarker, locked in one another's arms, plunged into the ditch together.

"What does this mean?" demanded a stern voice.

Blount, Trickett, and Waters faced round in a trice.

This time it was really Mr. Grayson who had spoken.

"Witchery About."

Jarker appeared out of the black water of the ditch.

"It's them boys' fault, sir," he bawled—"leastways, partly theirs an' partly Police-constable Buswell's, which 'adn't no right, properly speakin', to be nothink of the sort, 'avin' no more regard for lor nor horder than what you 'ave, sir! Get under, will you, you murderin' bobby?"

All the time he held forth thus Jarker was doing his level best to keep his enemy's head under water.

He may not have meant to drown the policeman, but it really looked uncommonly like it.

But now Buswell got his head up.

When he saw Scamp he seemed more than half-minded to duck it under again, though.

"Keep that there dog orf, sir! Keep 'im orf, or there'll be 'orrible things done! It's 'im wot's at the bottom of it all, if you arsk me!"

"I don't ask you, you idiot!" snapped Mr. Grayson. "It's a manifest lie to say that my dog had anything to do with

your absurd plight. Except to trespassers—trespassers, mark you, Buswell—he is as harmless as a lamb."

Old Scamp wagged himself, and licked his lips, and looked up into his master's face as though he understood every word spoken.

"Why don't you come out of that ditch, you absurd fellows?" asked the Housemaster.

Then he turned on the boys, and they saw the signs of storm.

"Are you suddenly stricken dumb?" he roared. "Why don't you answer me? What does all this mean?"

"Please sir, we haven't had a chance to answer yet," replied Tricks.

"I think you will admit the justice of that, sir," Goggs said meekly. "We are quite ready to explain, as far as we are able to do so. But it would have been very impolite on our part to interrupt you."

"Ah, you are the new boy!" said Mr. Grayson. "I remember you now."

Some of the anger had died out of his face. Bags said afterwards that the absurd look of Goggs had made him feel better-tempered. Wagtail's reply was that no master could want that sort of thing in his House.

But the bulldog seemed to like him, and Mr. Grayson was wont to say that Scamp never made a mistake about people. Scamp came and sniffed, and then reared up and put his dusty paws on the new boy's waistcoat. He fairly wriggled with pleasure when Goggs pulled his ears and stroked his wide forehead.

"Yes, sir, if you please," answered Goggs, more meekly than ever.

"Let me see—your name's Goggs, isn't it?"

Jarker and Buswell were crawling out now. The cabby swore under his breath; the bobby kept his eye on Scamp. He was ready to flounder into the ditch again and duck his head under the black water if the dog had shown the smallest sign of hostility.

But Scamp paid no attention to Buswell. He was gazing up into Goggs' queer face as if he fairly loved it.

"Yes, sir. Johnny Goggs, sir."

"Tut, tut! We'll drop the Johnny. It's quite unnecessary."

"It is what my dear grandmother always calls me, sir."

"But I'm not your grandmother, my boy!"

Then the Housemaster turned away to hide his laughter. He had taken one glance at Jarker and Buswell.

Goggs was funny, but those two licked him hands down. Streaming from head to foot with the black ooze, they looked a pretty pair.

"Look 'ere, sir, wot I wants is justice!" roared Jarker.

Buswell did not appear to want that. His one desire seemed to be to clear out of Scamp's neighbourhood.

But Mr. Grayson stopped his game.

"Wait, constable!" he said sharply.

Scamp lowered his feet from Goggs' waistcoat, planted them wide apart, and growled.

P.-c. Buswell needed no further hint. He waited obediently.

"It's that there murderin' dog, sir!" he said. "If you'd only 'old 'im—"

"The dog won't hurt you. What does all this mean? No, don't both speak at once! I'll have your versions separately."

Mr. Grayson had a brother on the local Bench, a fact which was not without its effect upon the constable.

Perhaps it was out of politeness that neither Jarker nor Buswell spoke for at least twenty seconds. Each seemed to be waiting for the other to begin.

But when Jarker's voice was heard the words it spoke surprised everybody.

"All I 'ave to say, sir, is as 'ow it wasn't in no way whatsoever the young gents' fault!"

The trio stared in amaze. Never before had they known Jarker fail to catch at the chance of getting any fellow into a row.

But their wonder was as nothing to that of Aminadah Jarker. Over his face there came a look of the blankest dismay.

Then Bags tumbled to it, and thenceforth he kept one eye upon Goggs' lips. But he could not see them move.

"That's a lie, Police-constable Buswell—a right-down thumpin' lie—that's what it is!" roared Jarker.

He thought it must have been Buswell who had spoken, though the voice had not sounded like the policeman's, and though everybody had looked at him. But he knew that he had not uttered those foolish words.

"I never spoke a word, you red-nosed old fraud!" shouted Buswell.

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Jarker?" demanded

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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MAGNET, Oct. 14th, 1916.

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINCHAM.

(Continued from page 20.)

Mr. Grayson. "It really looks like it. Buswell, for once, speaks the truth. It was you who said——"

"Me? Then I am mad, sir, or else everybody else is! I swear——"

"You've done enough swearin', I reckon, Jarker. I shall 'ave to report to my supervisor the langwidge——"

"Oh, lor! There's witchery about, that's what there is, an' no bloomin' horror!"

Buswell had recognised his own voice, or what seemed his own voice, and had broken in upon it. But to everybody except Goggs and Blount it seemed as though he had merely broken off in one speech to start another in a slightly raised tone. Goggs knew better, and this time Blount was quite sure. He had seen the new boy pull himself up, as it were, the instant Buswell began to speak.

Mr. Grayson got impatient. Probably he saw that even if he did succeed in getting an account of the trouble out of the two victims, it would be a matter outside his jurisdiction. He swung round on the three boys.

"Blount, were you in any way responsible for the plight of these two men?"

"No, sir," answered Bags, quite truly.

"Trickett, were you?"

"No, sir. It was very funny, but it wasn't mine."

That was just like Trickett's cheek, but Mr. Grayson let it pass.

"Were you, Waters?"

"No, sir. Of course I wasn't!"

Mr. Grayson looked at Goggs. No new-born babe could have appeared more innocent than Johnny. He was a new boy, too. It seemed absurd to ask him.

He was not asked. Bags fancied he looked a trifle relieved at escaping the question, but was sure, somehow, that he would have answered it truthfully had it been put.

"I will have a talk with you on the way back, Goggs," said Mr. Grayson, but his tone gave no reason to suppose that the talk would refer to the great contest of Jarker v. Buswell.

The three fell behind. The House-master and the new boy walked on side by side, with old Scamp padding behind them in the dust. Bags and his chums could hear questions about Latin and mathematics, and so on, being asked and answered. They soon lost interest in that sort of thing.

"What a make he is!" said Wagtail scornfully.

"Oh, I'm not so sure," answered Tricks. "To tell you the truth, I rather take to the beggar. He's a rum 'un to look at, but I don't fancy he's quite so meek and mild as he makes out."

"I reckon he's all serene," Bags said. "You chaps haven't tumbled yet to something that I've found out."

Jarker drove past, dripping mud and water. He shook his whip at them, and yelled something that didn't sound too polite.

He had got some distance ahead, when Goggs said:

"Oh, if you please, sir, I haven't paid the poor man. May I run after him?"

Bags chuckled. Suspecting what he did, he liked the pitying epithet bestowed upon Aminadab.

"Certainly!" answered Mr. Grayson.

Goggs ran.

His running was a revelation. Blount no longer wondered how he had outpaced Jarker's poor old horse. There seemed "witchery" in it, as Buswell had said.

He fairly skimmed over the ground.

Mr. Grayson slackened a moment, and let the three juniors catch him up.

"Blount," he said, "I really think our House may have rather more than a look-in for the junior quarter-mile after all."

The Franklingham sports had been postponed owing to an epidemic of mumps. Holding them in the Christmas term was unusual, but better than missing them altogether.

"Entries close to-morrow, sir," said Blount.

"See to it that he enters, then. It would be a pity to miss such a chance for the House. And no doubt his grandmother would be very pleased if he happened to win."

"He'll win, sir, if he can stay the quarter," Bags answered. "As for his grandmother, I don't believe he's got one."

"It is quite possible that he may have, Blount, seeing that he must have had two—or, rather, that two ladies' names would occupy the positions allotted to relatives in that degree in his family tree. And why should he talk of her if she does not exist?"

"Don't know, sir. I fancy there are lots of things we don't know about Goggs yet. He isn't such an ass—I mean, he isn't as soft as he looks."

"He can run, at least. I think he could give you twenty-five yards in the quarter. That should bring him in ahead

of Allardyce, who is the favourite for that event, I believe."

Bags was a sportsman. He knew that he had no chance of beating Allardyce of Hayter's House, and he was glad to think that Grayson's had found someone who might do so.

"I suppose he'll have to be in our study, sir? All the others are full up."

"Yes. I take it you have no objection?"

"Not a bit! We shall be glad to have the beg—I mean, the fellow."

"Speak for yourself!" growled Wagtail, too low for the master to hear.

Goggs came back. He wasn't in the least blown.

"I say, Goggs, you can run a bit!" said Tricks.

"Yes, I believe that I can. Most people can if they try, I suppose."

"Ah, but not like you!"

Mr. Grayson left them at the gates.

"Look here, Goggles," said Bags. "I want to know something."

Goggs put his head on one side, folded his hands, and looked meeker and sillier than ever.

"Ask, Bagwigs,—Shawbert, I mean—and I will answer—unless I object."

"Why did you leave the cab and get on ahead of old Jarker?"

"It really seemed to me, Wigshaw, that the cab's rate of progression left something to be desired. A porter—another rude person, by the way—had told me of a short cut. From the top of the hill above the station I could see the short cut. I perceived no reason why I should inform Mr. Jarker that I was leaving his cab. That is all."

"Half a mo! There's the brook in the way. There's no plank across now, and if you go down to the bridge it makes the short cut a jolly long one!"

"The brook? Oh, yes! I remember jumping some sort of a brook."

"Rats!" said Wagtail rudely. "You never jumped that brook! There aren't half a dozen fellows here who could."

"You are very rude indeed, Waters, and I decline to argue with you. If there was no other fellow here who could jump the brook, it would not necessarily follow that I could not."

Wagtail sniffed. But Bags and Tricks believed. If Goggs could jump as well as he could run, it was easy to believe.

"Now, another, Goggles. How did you manage all that with old Jarker and the dear bobby?"

"I fear that I do not follow you, Bagwigs, and hesitate to reply for fear of misleading. 'All that' is a wide phrase."

"See here, are you a giddy ventriloquist, or aren't you?"

"I am not giddy, Wigbert. I have made some slight attempts at ventriloquism."

"Blount!"

Bags whipped round. It was Mr. Grayson's voice. But the House-master was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh, you bounder! That was you!" cried Bags, and grabbed Goggs by the biceps.

If Wagtail had been grabbed like that he would have sung out. Goggs did not even seem to feel it; and Blount noticed that his biceps, though not huge, were iron-hard when he flexed them.

"There's witchery about," said Bags. "Buswell's quite right."

Ambitious New Fellows.

Wagtail grumbled at the addition of Goggs to the trio in No. 11 Study, but he knew that there was no help for it. His suggestion that some other junior should be asked to join them and Goggs "shoved off on to another den" met with no encouragement from either Bags or Tricks.

"What you can see in the image I can't make out!" he growled.

After dinner, remembering what Mr. Grayson had said, Blount took Goggs off to interview Parker, secretary to the games committee, who had charge of the sports entries.

"This is Goggs—a new chap," said Bags. "He wants to enter for one or two events."

"How do you do?" asked Goggs, holding out his hand. "I am very pleased to meet you. By the way, Bigbags, you did not mention your friend's name."

Blount had not considered it necessary. Seniors did not want formal introductions to juniors.

"It wouldn't be much use, if your memory for names is so weak as it seems," said Parker, who was a good-tempered personage.

"Ah! My silly mistake! I shall really have to call you Bags in future, Blount."

"Best way, I reckon," answered Bags.

"Can you run?" asked Parker, scanning Goggs' lean frame, and trying to conceal a smile as he noted his meek, goggled countenance.

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET Library. Order your copy in advance.)