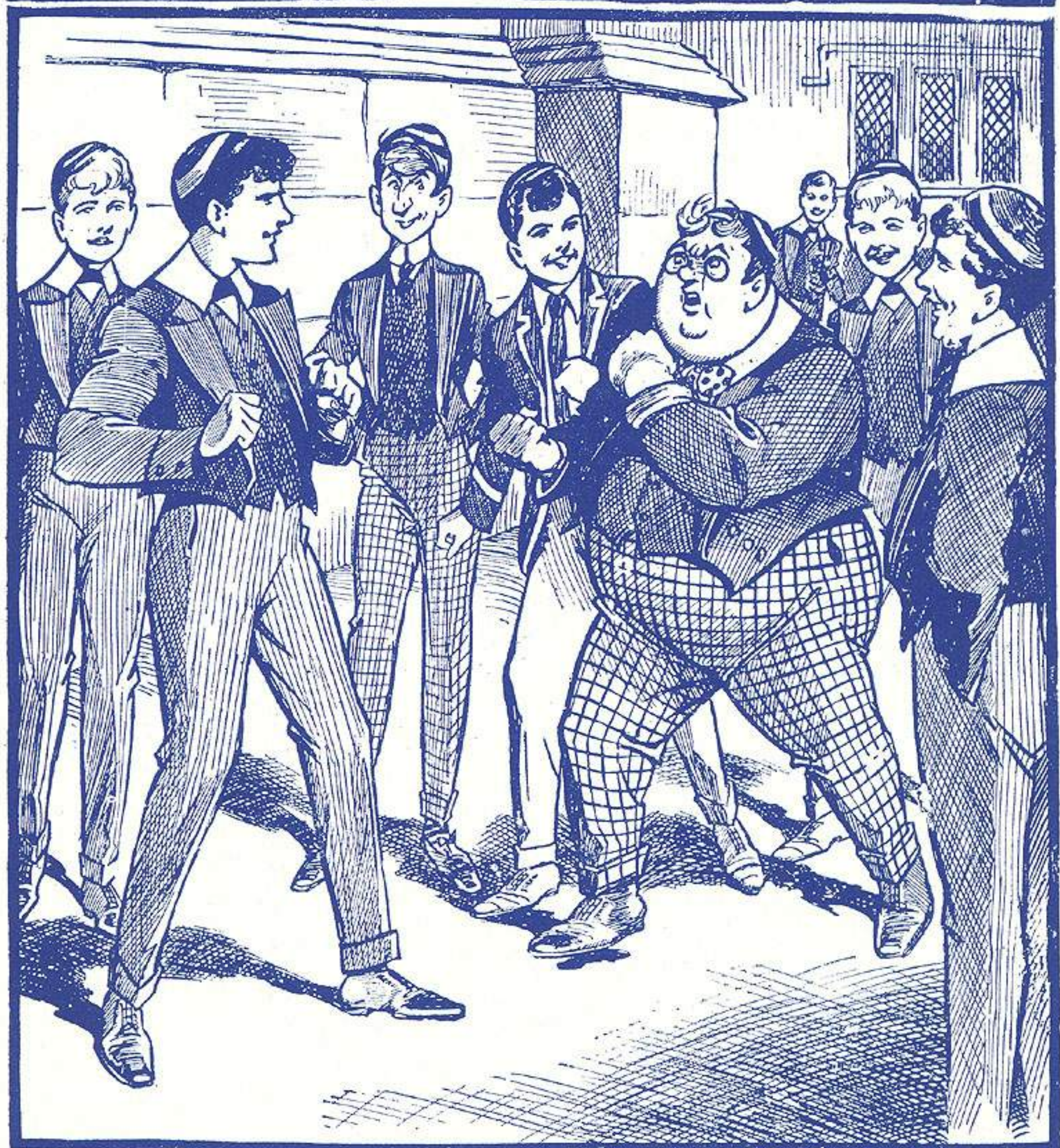



AGAINST HIS OWN SIDE!

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BUNTER IN WARLIKE MOOD!

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

AGAINST HIS OWN SIDE!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Smithy in Form!

WELL hit, Smithy!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as that shout from the cricket-ground reached the ears of the Famous Five in the quadrangle at Greysfriars. "Smithy's going it!"

Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of the Remove, were wheeling their bicycles down to the school gates. The Co. were paying a visit to Frank Courtenay at Highcliffe School that afternoon.

But they paused, and looked round towards the cricket-ground.

Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greysfriars, was at the wickets. It was not a match—only cricket practice, and the Bouncer did not always turn up for practice. But he was a first-class cricketer when he liked, and evidently he was in great form now.

Quite a little crowd had gathered round to see Vernon-Smith batting. Squiff, who was a good bowler, was giving him every kind of ball he could think of, and the Bouncer was treating them all in masterly fashion.

"Let's watch him a bit," said Bob, keenly interested. "We're in no hurry to get to Highcliffe."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton.

The machines were leaned in a cluster against one of the elms, and the chums of the Remove walked down to Little Side. The junior at the wicket saw them arrive, and he smiled slightly. Time had been when Vernon-Smith was a prominent member of the Remove Eleven. That time was no longer; but the Bouncer was not averse from showing the captain of the Remove what kind of a player he had dropped out of the Form Eleven.

Tom Brown had gone on to bowl; and the New Zealand junior could generally be relied upon to take wickets. But the Bouncer proceeded to knock Brown's bowling all over the field.

"Bravo, Smithy!"

"Well hit!"

"Good man!"

Bolsover major, Skinner, Snoop, and some more vociferated applause, chiefly for Harry Wharton's benefit. It pleased them to regard the Bouncer as an injured party, on account of his exclusion from the Form Eleven. They did not mean to leave the Remove skipper in any doubt as to their sentiments.

But Wharton did not heed them. He was watching Vernon-Smith with keen appreciation of the form he was showing. Wharton was a splendid bat himself, and a keen judge, and he realised that at his very best he had never beaten the Bouncer's present form.

Wingate of the Sixth, on his way to Big Side, had paused to look on. He called out to Tom Brown:

"Give me the ball, young 'un!"

"Here you are, Wingate!"

"You'd like to have a few from me, Vernon-Smith?" called Wingate.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!"

There was a buzz of excitement on Little Side as the big Sixth-Former went on to bowl. Wingate was captain of Greysfriars, and head of the games. He took a fatherly interest in junior cricket; but it was a rare honour and distinction for a junior bat for George Wingate to condescend to bowl for him. The on-lookers expected Smithy's wicket to go down at the first ball. But it did not. Vernon-Smith played that ball easily, and sent it whizzing away across the field.

"My hat!" said Wingate. "Field that ball, one of you kids!"

There was a rush of the juniors to field the ball for Wingate. Ogilvy tossed it back to him.

Wingate bowled again, putting all he knew into it. This time the Bouncer's wicket was quite expected to go down.

But again a gleaming bat sent the round red ball whizzing.

"Bravo, Smith!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Well hit!"

"The esteemed Smithy is in terrific form!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Terrific!" grinned Nugent. "Wingate looks surprised."

Wingate certainly did look surprised. Russell threw the ball to him, and the captain tried again. But Vernon-Smith was all there, and again the ball was sent on a journey.

"Jolly good, young 'un!" said Wingate heartily. "You'll do."

And the captain of Greysfriars went on towards Big Side.

Vernon-Smith was still batting when the Famous Five went back to their bicycles. There was a thoughtful expression about Harry Wharton's face. Bob looked at him with a smile.

"Yes, it's a pity!" he remarked.

Wharton started.

"I'm a giddy thought-reader!" grinned Bob. "You were thinking it's a pity that Smithy doesn't play for the Remove now."

"Well, I was," admitted Wharton. "I wonder——" He hesitated. "Well, he was dropped out of the team because he chucked a match away through not being fit. He plays the giddy ox—smokes and bets and rot like that. I don't like it, but it's not my business. He seems keen enough on cricket now. We don't specially want smoky bouncers in the Form team, but—but so long as Smithy keeps fit, I think he might have a chance."

"A chance to crack up in a match, and let the side down as he did before!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Wait till he learns to play the game straight."

"Well, we'll see, anyway," said Harry; and the subject dropped as the Famous Five wheeled their machines down to the gates.

A handsome, well-dressed fellow in a straw hat, with the Highcliffe badge, strolled in just as they reached the gates.

It was Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe.

The dandy of Highcliffe gave them a glance, into which he threw all the insolence of which his expression was capable—and that was a good deal.

Bob Cherry was strongly tempted to wheel his machine into the Highcliffian—but he refrained. The Greysfriars fellows were going over to Highcliffe to visit Ponsonby's cousin, Frank Courtenay, with whom they were on chummy terms. Under the circumstances, it was better to keep the peace.

"Smithy about?" asked Ponsonby, pausing.

"On the cricket-field," said Wharton shortly.

"By gad! Playin' cricket?"

"Yes."

"Must be in want of somethin' to do," yawned Ponsonby.

"Well, even a merry blade must do something now racing's been stopped for the duration of the war," said Bob Cherry. "How will you be able to live without putting a sov. on a gee-gee till the war's over, Pon? Will you join the Stop-the-War Party?"

Ponsonby walked in without replying to that question, and the five juniors mounted their machines and pedalled away up the Courtfield road.

Ponsonby sauntered down to Little Side, and joined the crowd of fellows who were looking on there. Vernon-Smith was still batting, bowler after bowler testing him in vain. Pon looked on with watchful eyes. He knew something about cricket, though, as a rule, he regarded the game as being far beneath his lofty notice.

"By gad, Smith's in toppin' form!" Ponsonby remarked to Snoop.

"Oh, yes," said Snoop indifferently. "About time he chucked it, though—I'll call him off."

Vernon-Smith left the pitch when he saw Ponsonby, and came over to the dandy of Highcliffe. There was a healthy flush in his face, and he seemed full of energy and spring.

"Come on!" said Sidney James Snoop.

The three juniors left the field.

"What about Skinner?" asked Ponsonby.

"Oh, hang Skinner!" said the Bouncer.

Skinner of the Remove watched them with sullen eyes as they went into the School House. Skinner was on bad terms with his study-mate now, and he was not to be a member of the little party in Vernon-Smith's study.

From the window of that study the Bouncer could see the cricket-ground, but he gave it only a careless glance as he sat down. Snoop locked the door, and a pack of cards was produced from a secret recess, along with a box of cigarettes. And in a few minutes the three young rascals were deep in the little game for which the dandy of Highcliffe had come over to Greysfriars.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Very New Departure!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
 Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, was on the cricket-field when the Famous Five arrived. They left their machines at the porter's lodge, and went down to the ground to meet him.

The Caterpillar, Courtenay's chum, was reclining in a long cane chair outside the pavilion, and he greeted them with a nod and a smile.

"How de do?" yawned the Caterpillar. Excuse my not risin, will you? I'm fagged out! I've been playin' cricket."

"Knocked up a couple of centuries?" asked Bob, with a smile.

De Courcy shook his head.

"I haven't been battin'."

"Bowling 'em down like skittles?" asked Bob.

"I haven't been bowlin'."

"Then you've been staggering humanity in the field?"

"No, I haven't been fieldin'."

"Then I'm blessed if I see how you've been playing cricket, if you haven't been batting, bowling, or fielding!"

"I've been coachin'."

"Coaching!" exclaimed the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Yaas. Franky's still at it! Watch him."

The juniors could see that Courtenay was imparting instruction, and not playing himself. But the fellows on the field were not members of Courtenay's eleven. The Co. knew them, of course—Gadsby, Merton, Vavasour, Drury, Monson, and several more—all of them nuts, and chums of Cecil Ponsonby.

As a rule, Courtenay was not on very good terms with the nuts of Highcliffe, and Harry Wharton & Co. were somewhat surprised.

"Those chaps taking up cricket?" asked Nugent.

"Amazin', isn't it?" said the Caterpillar. "Wonders will never cease! The merry nuts have taken it up like—like anythin' Ponsonby actually asked Franky to give 'em some coachin', and, of course, Franky said 'Yes' at once. Pon's been at practice before he went out, and his merry pale are stickin' to it like glue. Amazin'!"

"Well, it's a change for the better, instead of their hanging about, smoking cigarettes in corners," remarked Harry Wharton.

"Yaas. But it's amazin', all the same. I can't help wonderin' what Pon's up to. What is that gang takin' up cricket all of a sudden for? They've been doin' it for more than a week past."

"Good for them!"

"And Franky's made me help in the coachin'," said the Caterpillar. "I've struck now, though—weather's too warm for coachin' duffers. Hallo, here comes Franky!"

Courtenay joined the juniors outside the pavilion.

He looked very warm, but very pleased and satisfied.

"Rather a change there," remarked Wharton, with a glance towards the field.

Monson was batting to Gadsby's bowling, and both of them were showing better form than the Greyfriars fellows had seen them show before.

"Yes," said Courtenay. "Pon's taken up cricket this season, and seems to be pulling ahead with it. His pals have followed his example."

"When Pon says turn, we all turn," grinned Bob Cherry.

Courtenay laughed.

"Something like that. But I'm glad to see it. Some of them would make good



The Caterpillar feels fatigued. (See Chapter 2.)

cricketers if they took the trouble. They seem to be taking it now. You fellows mind if I keep on with them a bit?"

"Delighted!" said Harry, laughing. "It's quite an entertainment to see Gaddy & Co. playing cricket!"

Courtenay rejoined the nuts. It was half an hour later when they went in to tea in Courtenay's study.

The chums of the Remove were surprised. It was quite a novel thing to see the slackers of Highcliffe fagging at cricket practice on a warm afternoon, and with apparent earnestness.

The Caterpillar opined that Ponsonby had some little game up his sleeve, but what that little game might be was not easy to see.

Ponsonby had been junior captain of Highcliffe before Courtenay came to the school, and Highcliffe junior cricket had been, as Bob Cherry said, comic.

Courtenay's eleven was very different from what Ponsonby's eleven had been. Even now, though the nuts were evidently doing their best, they were not in form to face a Greyfriars junior team. A very indifferent team picked from the Remove would have walked over them.

With such followers as the nuts, Ponsonby could hardly have been thinking of ousting Courtenay from his place in junior cricket.

"I've asked Pon if he's trainin' his merry men to play us, and mop us off the earth," remarked the Caterpillar. "But he says he isn't. I'm hopin' that Pon will get into such toppin' form that Franky will give him my place in the eleven an' drop me out."

"Not likely!" said Courtenay laughing.

The juniors chatted cricket over tea, the Caterpillar heroically concealing the fact that cricket jaw bored him as much as football jaw or war jaw.

When the chums of Greyfriars took their leave they were surprised to see the nuts still at practice at the nets. Ponsonby was with them now—he had returned after his little game in the Bounder's study at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. paused to look on for a few minutes.

Cecil Ponsonby sighted them, and came to the edge of the ground with the ball in his hand.

"Like to sample my bowlin', Wharton?" he asked, quite civilly.

"Yes, if you like," said Harry, surprised at being addressed so civilly by the cad of Highcliffe. "Are you taking up bowling?"

"Yes, I'm givin' it a trial," said Ponsonby. "I rather fancy myself as a bowler. My conceit, you know."

Wharton laughed, and took the bat Monson handed to him. He went to the wicket, and Ponsonby went on to bowl.

Ponsonby was the least slack and incapable of all the Highcliffe nuts, and there was no doubt that he would have made a good cricketer if he had chosen to exert himself.

He seemed to be exerting himself now.

He did not succeed in taking Wharton's wicket, but his bowling was very good—much better than Harry had expected of him.

"By gum, Pon's getting on!" said Courtenay. "Wharton only just stopped the last one."

"The getonfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh. "The surprisefulness is also great!"

The Caterpillar wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"It beats me!" he remarked. "We shall see Pon givin' up smokin', and startin' tellin' the truth next, I shouldn't wonder!"

"Let Cherry try!" called out Ponsonby, when he had given Wharton an over.

"I'm your man!" said Bob.

He took Monson's bat, and faced the bowling. Monson's bat did not suit him so well as his own willow at Greyfriars; but Bob would cheerfully have undertaken to stop Pon's bowling, as a rule, with a cricket-stump. But Pon was in unexpected form.

Bob drove the first two balls hard, but the third caught him napping, and whipped his leg stump out of the ground.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob, staring at his wrecked wicket in great astonishment.

"How's that?" chortled Ponsonby.

"Out!" chorused the nuts, in great glee.

Bob Cherry handed the bat to Monson, and rejoined his chums. He was still in a state of astonishment.

"Did you see that?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"The foolfulness was terrific, my

esteemed Bob! And the seefulness is the believfulness, as the English proverb remarks."

Harry Wharton & Co. went down to their machines, and Courtenay joined the nuts on the cricket-field with De Courcy. Ponsonby & Co. had always been his enemies, but the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth was quite ready to help them in every way to play the game.

Nothing would have pleased Courtenay more than to see the nuts taking up games of a more manly kind than bridge and banker.

"Well, it beats me!" said Bob Cherry, as the five juniors pedalled home to Greyfriars under the setting sun. "Fancy those slackers piling into cricket, and fancy Pon taking my wicket! I don't think he could do it again; but he's done it!"

And the Famous Five had to come to the conclusion that Ponsonby, the smoky boulder and black sheep, really was turning over a new leaf at last!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wharton Toes the Line!

HARRY WHARTON was very thoughtful in No. 1 Study that evening.

After he had finished his prep he sat with a reflective expression on his face. Frank Nugent watched him with a somewhat droll look.

Wharton started and smiled as he caught Nugent's eyes fixed on him.

"I was thinking about the Bounder, Frank," he said.

"I knew you were," said Nugent, laughing. "And what's the result? You've been looking like a gargoyle for five minutes."

"About the Bounder, Frank." Wharton spoke slowly. "Look here, suppose I give him a chance in the Remove Eleven again? I know he failed us in a match, owing to playing the giddy ox and breaking bounds at night, and getting out of condition. I know we don't want a smoky boulder in the eleven—it doesn't reflect any credit on us. But—but—"

"But—" grinned Nugent.

"It can't be denied that he's been sticking to practice, and that he's in topping form," said Harry. "What he does isn't exactly our business, though we mayn't like it. He did turn over a new leaf once, and if he chucked up again—as he did, and took to pub-haunting on the quiet—well, we know that Quelchy was unjust to him. Quelchy didn't mean it; but there it was. Smithy was suspected of something he hadn't done, and he said he would have the game if he had the name. It was fat-headed, but there's excuses for him. He never was such a rotter as Skinner, for instance, at his very worst. I don't mean to pretend that I hold with his shady blackguardism, but it isn't my bizney to preach to him. So long as he keeps himself fit for cricket, he ought to have a look-in."

Nugent chuckled. That unusually long speech from Wharton tickled him.

"I agree," said Frank. "But it's odd to hear you finding excuses for the Bounder. You know the Head would push him out of Greyfriars if he knew what we know."

Wharton coloured.

"I don't excuse him," he said. "I only say that it isn't my business to sit in judgment on him. And—and, to be quite candid, I can't help feeling rather friendly towards him, though I don't like his ways. He's got a lot of good points."

"Right!" said Nugent. "Give him a chance in a match, then, and see how it

turns out. Don't pick out a first-rate match, in case he crocks up as he did before."

"Just what I was thinking," said Harry, relieved to find that his chum agreed with him. "I couldn't risk the Rookwood fixture, for instance, but—"

There was a thump at the door.

"Hallo! Come in!"

The door was thrown open, and Bolsover major marched into the study. He was followed by Snoop, Stott, Trevor, Billy Bunter, and one or two more fellows. Some of them were grinning, but Percy Bolsover looked very serious. Wharton and Nugent regarded them in surprise.

"Is this a merry deputation?" asked Wharton.

"That's exactly what it is," said Bolsover.

"Good! You've come to convey a vote of thanks to me from the Remove?" asked Wharton innocently. "The fellows are so thoroughly satisfied with me as Form captain, that they've deputed you to come and tell me so?"

Some of the deputation chuckled, and Bolsover major scowled.

"Nothing of the kind, Wharton. We've come to make a complaint, as members of the club."

"Hear, hear!" said the deputation.

"I say, you fellows, we're going to put it to you plain, too," said Billy Bunter, blinking severely at the chums through his big glasses. "We're not satisfied with you, I can tell you. As a member of the club—"

"Oh! You're a member of the club, Bunter," remarked Nugent.

The Owl of the Remove gave him an indignant blink.

"Oh, really, Nugent! You know I am!"

"Quite so. That reminds me," said Nugent. "You haven't paid your subscription this term, Bunter."

"Eh?"

"And you didn't pay it last term!"

"Ahem!"

"In fact, so far as I remember, you've never paid at all," continued Nugent. "As you can't play, and you don't know a cricket-ball from a Hun's head, it doesn't matter very much. Still, if you've come to settle up, I'll take the money. Wait a minute while I see exactly what's due."

And the secretary of the Remove club rose to get out his account-book.

"I—I say, I haven't come to pay any sub," stammered Bunter. "I—I'm going to settle it up in a lump, when my postal-order comes. To-morrow, I expect—or the next day at the latest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" commanded Bolsover major. "I've come here to do the talking. Look here, Wharton—"

"I'm looking!" said Harry politely.

"We're not satisfied with you."

"Sorry!"

"That's all very well. We expect a change!"

"Such as playing your noble self in the Rookwood match?" smiled Wharton.

"Sorry it can't be done, Bolsover! We're not going out gathering lickings, you know. When we do, I'll think of you at once."

There was a chortle from the deputation again, and a still more terrific scowl from the bully of the Remove.

"I haven't come here to press my own claims," snorted Bolsover. "I don't expect justice from you, Wharton."

"You get it without expecting it," smiled the captain of the Remove.

"It's about Smithy!"

"Oh, Smithy?"

"Yes," said Bolsover major emphatically, "Smithy!" We, as members of the

club, don't see having one of the best players in the Remove left out of all the matches. We don't think it fair. I've talked to you about Smithy before—"

Wharton nodded calmly.

"Yes. I remember you said something after Smithy crocked up in a match; you said you'd advise the club to scalp me if I played him again!" he remarked.

"Ahem! I—I—" stammered Bolsover, taken aback.

"You've come to repeat that remark?" asked Wharton.

"No; I—I haven't! I think Smithy ought to be played."

Wharton laughed. Smithy's late form at cricket had caused opinion to veer round in his favour in the Remove. Bolsover major had seized the opportunity. By demanding Smithy's inclusion in the Form team, he considered that he was placing Wharton in a difficult position. If he refused, he would put the Bounder in the position of an injured party, sympathised with by a good many of the Removites. If he consented, he was allowing his decision to be over-riden by Bolsover. And as the bully of the Remove wasn't making any claim for himself, he was able to pose as a quite disinterested fellow who was only anxious to see fair play.

Bolsover's little scheme was quite palpable. But it did not seem to disturb the serenity of the captain of the Remove.

"Put Smithy into a match," continued Bolsover major, as Wharton did not reply. "That's what we want!"

"That's it!" said Snoop.

"Exactly!" said Trevor. "That's only fair."

"I say, you fellows, we insist upon it!" said Billy Bunter importantly. "If you refuse, Wharton, we shall be bound to take further measures!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We demand it!" said Bolsover major.

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Nugent warmly.

"You dry up, Nugent! We're speaking to Wharton. Now, Wharton, are you going to ask Smithy to play in a match, or are you not?"

Bolsover major's tone was as unpleasant as he could make it. He expected an outburst of temper from Wharton—a haughty answer that would place Harry in the wrong in the eyes of the Form. But Wharton only smiled.

"You demand it?" he asked gently.

"Yes, we do!"

"And you won't be happy till you get it?"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass! We demand it!"

"Well, if you demand it, there's nothing for me to say, is there?" said Wharton meekly. "Gentlemen, your demand shall be complied with."

"Wha-a-at?"

Never was there such a surprised and disconcerted deputation. They stared at Wharton open-mouthed. Nugent burst into a laugh. Considering the resolution Wharton had come to a few minutes before, it did not cost him much to make that concession. But it had quite taken the wind out of the sails of Bolsover & Co.

"Didn't I speak plainly?" asked Wharton, in the same tone of very courteous politeness. "I am going to do as you demand. A demand expressed so politely, so genially, so courteously by fellows who know such a lot about cricket, couldn't possibly be refused by any cricket skipper who knew his business. Therefore, I am going to do exactly as you demand."

"Oh!" said Bolsover, quite at a loss.

And the deputation looked decidedly sheepish.

"I'll ask Smithy to-morrow to play in a match," said Wharton genially. "I'll put it to him in the politest possible way. Any more orders, gentlemen?"

"Well, if you mean that—" mumbled Bolsover.

"Certainly!"
"Then—then—of—of course, we've nothing more to say," stuttered Bolsover, wishing himself well out of the study.

"My hat! You've nothing more to say? You've generally quite a lot! Don't mind me," said Harry. "I've finished prep, and you can run on as long as you like—till bed-time, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the deputation, quite enjoying the expression on their leader's face.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. Bolsover major turned ferociously upon his followers. They backed hastily out of the study. Billy Bunter cackled, not wisely, but too well; and the angry bully of the Remove took him by the collar. Then the Owl left off cackling, and roared instead.

"Yaroo! Leggo! Leave off kicking me, you beast! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton and Nugent.

Nugent closed the door after the deputation. Billy Bunter's yells were heard for some minutes. Bolsover major had gained his point, but he did not seem to be in a good temper, and Bunter was suffering for it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Challenge!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Pon!"

It was the following day, and the Famous Five were at tea in Study No. 1 after lessons. A tap at the door was followed by the appearance of Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe in the doorway.

"Wrong study!" said Nugent. "Smithy's quarters are further up!"

"I've come to see Wharton," said Ponsonby.

"Thanks!" said Harry, with a smile. "Come in, by all means. But haven't you made a little mistake?"

"Oh, no!"
"I mean, I never play banker, and I don't even know how to play bridge," explained Wharton.

"And there ain't any cards in the study, or any smokes," grunted Johnny Bull. "We can't even give you a light for a cigarette. Try further on."

"The playfulness of this study is not terrific, my esteemed Ponsonby!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a shake of the head.

Ponsonby's lip curled. It could not be called a cordial reception; but, as the dandy of Highcliffe was on the worst of terms with the Famous Five of Greyfriars, he had no right to expect cordiality. They were surprised by his call, and they were not pleased.

But Ponsonby did not retire. He came in, and stood leaning on the mantelpiece in an elegant attitude.

"It's about the cricket, Wharton," he said.

"Oh!" said Wharton, puzzled. "I know you've taken up cricket, Ponsonby. I wish you luck."

"We used to have a fixture with Greyfriars," said Ponsonby.

"It's still going on, isn't it?"

"Well, that's the point. Since Courtenay came to Highcliffe he's ousted me from my captaincy, as you're aware—"

"I'm aware of nothing of the sort," said Wharton directly. "We dropped the fixture with Highcliffe because you and your set gave us foul play more than

once. Courtenay's become junior captain at your school because he's a cricketer and you're not. And we've revived the fixture because Courtenay plays the game and you didn't."

Ponsonby sneered.
"We needn't go into that," he said. "The fact is, I'm raising a team at Highcliffe on my own. I've got friends enough to make up a junior eleven."

"You did that once, to play our Fourth," remarked Bob Cherry. "I don't remember it was much of a success."

"Never mind that! I've come over to challenge you to a match."

"My hat!"
"If you're afraid to play on our ground, we'll come and play on yours," said Ponsonby. "I don't admit your accusation of foul play for a minute, of course; but if we play on your ground, you will have to admit it's all fair and square. Give us a vacant date, and we'll undertake to lick you!"

"Phew!" said Bob.
Wharton regarded the dandy of Highcliffe curiously. He thought he could guess now why the nuts of Highcliffe had been piling into cricket of late. Ponsonby entertained the ambition of wiping out old defeats on the cricket-ground.

The idea made him smile.
Ponsonby & Co. at the very best were not likely to make much of a show against even a second-rate Remove team.

But Wharton had to admit that Pon's ambition was a creditable one, and a good deal more sporting than most of Pon's ambitions.

The Highcliffe junior looked at him inquiringly. He was waiting for his answer.

"Well?" he said at last.
"It's rather a surprising offer," said Wharton slowly. "Our regular fixture is with Courtenay's eleven. We can't do anything that would look like disregarding Courtenay. I don't know whether that's your object—it's better to speak out plain, you know. But if we took your team as a Highcliffe junior eleven, it would be treating Courtenay badly. We can't do that."

"I don't mean that. The match won't count as a school match at all. Simply a friendly match between your eleven and mine—a trial of strength, you know. We sha'n't call ourselves Highcliffe Junior Eleven, and Courtenay's position won't be affected at all."

Ponsonby spoke quite frankly, as it seemed. But Wharton knew too well the duplicity of the dandy of Highcliffe. He could not help suspecting that somehow Cecil Ponsonby was scheming to undermine his cousin's position. Otherwise, the offer was merely a sporting offer, and Pon was not generally very sporting.

"That sounds all right," said Harry, after a pause. "Do you mind if I speak to Courtenay, and ask him whether he's any objection?"

"Why should he have?"

"No reason at all, if it's all fair and square."

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders. Wharton did not mince his words.

"Speak to him if you like," he said. "Courtenay won't object. I've mentioned my idea to him, and he said nothing."

"Then it's a go," said Wharton. "We've got a vacant date on Saturday. That suit you?"

"First-rate!"

"And you'll play on the Greyfriars ground?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, yes!"

"Done, then!" said Harry.

"We'll be over here at half-past two, if that suits you, Wharton?"

"Quite!"

"By the way," added Ponsonby casually, "I may be playing a chap who doesn't belong to Highcliffe. No objection to that? You see, Courtenay's got most of the cricketing fellows in his eleven, and they're playing on Saturday, and I may be short of a man."

Wharton gave him a quick, keen look. Pon had almost lulled his suspicions to sleep; but they revived again now in full force. A very expressive grunt came from Johnny Bull. He was suspicious, and he did not take the trouble to conceal the fact.

"Look here, Ponsonby," said Harry candidly. "I dare say that's all right, but in one of our old matches you spun the same yarn, and then you planted a grown-up man on us as a member of your eleven. That won't do. If you're playing tricks—"

"Nothin' of the sort. Chap under sixteen," said Ponsonby.

"Not a Highcliffe fellow?"

"No. A chap from another school, who's willing to help us if we're short of a man. Same age as myself, within a month or two."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Harry, ashamed of his momentary suspicion. "If he's about the average age, there's no objection, of course, and you needn't really have mentioned it. You can play anybody you like, of course."

"Well, I thought I'd have everything fixed fair and square," said Ponsonby, with an air of great frankness. "No good having complaints afterwards."

"That's all right. It's a go!"

"All serene, then."

Ponsonby gave the chums of the Remove a careless nod, and left the study. He left them somewhat surprised.

"New line for Pon," remarked Nugent. "He seems to be growing quite sporting in his old age."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"There's a trick about it somewhere," he said.

"The trickfulness is painful enough, my esteemed chum," remarked Hurreo Singh. "The excellent and disgusting Ponsonby knows some player who is a terrific corker, and he wants to plant him on us in an august match. That is his esteemed little game!"

"I think that's it," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "Pon's come across some chap who's a bit out of the common at cricket, and he thinks that, with his help he can beat the Remove. We can expect to find at least one good player in Pon's team, and Pon is making his gang of seedy slackers play up to back up his wonderful recruit. But I don't think a one-man team will walk over us, even if his merry recruit is a Jessop and Grace and Hayward rolled into one."

"That's it, right enough," said Bob Cherry. "Pon must be a duffer to think he can pull off a match on those lines! But that's the game, right enough. Well, it won't hurt us to take Pon down a peg on Saturday."

"But who's the recruit?" said Nugent. "One of the Redclyffe chaps, perhaps. They've got some good cricketers."

"Might be a Courtfield chap—Dick Trumper, perhaps," said Harry. "Whoever he is, I fancy he will find his match at Greyfriars."

"Hear, hear!"

The Co. were quite agreed on that point. Pon's scheme, now that they had guessed it, only seemed amusing to the heroes of the Remove.

"And I'll speak to the Bounder now," said Harry, rising. "I was going to ask him to play in a match, and this will be a good opportunity. We sha'n't risk

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much, even if Smithy crocks up, as he did before."

"Good idea!"

Harry Wharton went along to Vernon-Smith's study. He tapped, and opened the door, and then he stopped, coughing.

Ponsonby was in the study with the Bounder. Both of them were smoking cigarettes, and Ponsonby was shuffling a pack of cards. The dandy of Highcliffe had come over to see Wharton; but evidently he was killing two birds with one stone. Vernon-Smith's study had more attractions for him than Wharton's.

The Bounder looked round and grinned as he saw the involuntary expression on Wharton's face.

"Trot in!" he said.

"Yes, do!" said Ponsonby. "I think you mentioned that you don't play bridge. We'll give you some tips, dear boy. Skinner will come up and make a fourth."

Skinner was not in the study. He was at daggers drawn with his study-mate now, and was seldom there when the Bounder was there.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Pon!" said Vernon-Smith, frowning a little. "Do you want anything, Wharton?"

"I came to speak to you," said Harry. "It'll do later. I'll look in presently, Smithy."

And he retired, and closed the door, and a chuckle from Cecil Ponsonby followed him. Wharton went back towards his own study, his brow clouded. He knew Smithy's ways, but the scene in the study had struck him painfully, all the same. Blackguard as the Bounder was, somehow Wharton could not help feeling something like regard for him—the Bounder had his good qualities. His bitter quarrel with Harold Skinner was due to his frustrating one of Skinner's malicious schemes, of which Vivian of the Remove was to have been the victim. Wharton would have given a good deal to see Herbert Vernon-Smith get rid of that kink in his character which seemed ineradicable. He thought, too, of the risk the Bounder was running.

It only needed the glance of a master or a prefect into No. 4 Study for Vernon-Smith to be landed into very serious trouble—a flogging at least, and probably expulsion from the school.

True, there was little danger of it. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was not given to "nosing." But it might happen. And all the more because he trusted his boys, the Remove-master would have been incensed at this betrayal of his trust.

But Wharton reflected, as he had reflected before, that it was none of his business; and he walked back to his study. He had just stopped at the door of No. 1, to go in, when he heard Skinner's voice from the direction of the staircase. He was evidently speaking to Mr. Quelch in the passage below.

"If you wouldn't mind, sir, stepping up to my study for a minute—"

Wharton started violently.

He did not open the study door. He stood rooted where he was. Well he knew that Skinner must know what was going on in the Bounder's study. Till his quarrel with the Bounder, Skinner had always made one of the card-playing party.

"What is it, Skinner?" It was Mr. Quelch's voice, from the passage below the staircase.

"There's a smell about the room, sir," went on Skinner's silky tones. "I fancy it must be something wrong with the drains, sir."

"That does not seem possible, Skinner. However, I will certainly look into it, and you did quite right to speak to me."

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I will come up with you as soon as I have placed these books in my study."

"Thank you, sir!"

Harry Wharton's heart thumped, and he drew a quick, hard breath.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

WHARTON stood quite still. In a few minutes Mr. Quelch was coming upstairs to visit Vernon-Smith's study!

Wharton knew what he would find there.

An atmosphere thick with smoke, at least, even if the occupants had time to hide the cards and the money. It meant for Herbert Vernon-Smith complete exposure of the shady habits he had so carefully hidden from the knowledge of the school authorities.

Wharton understood Skinner's trick. Even the cad of the Remove did not dare to sneak about his study-mate. His life would not have been worth living at Greyfriars if he had laid information against the Bounder.

But, in pretended ignorance of what was going on in the study, Skinner was to take the Form-master there on a flimsy excuse. That was Skinner's cunning scheme. If Mr. Quelch found the Bounder out, it would be by accident—Skinner could not be accused of treachery. A fellow who noticed a bad smell in his study acted quite rightly in informing his Form-master. Probably Skinner, who was astuteness itself, had arranged something or other to provide a bad smell in the room in order to make his case good. Vernon-Smith was to be found out—by accident!

Wharton set his lips hard.

The Bounder's present occupation was rotten enough. He deserved to be found out and punished. It was not Wharton's business to stand between a blackguard and his punishment.

But the captain of the Remove hardly hesitated. He could not pass on unheeding while the fellow who had been his friend, however much to blame, was discovered breaking the laws of the school and taken to the Head for judgment.

Wharton turned and ran back to No. 4 Study. He panted with impatience as he found the door locked. Smithy had locked it after him.

He bent down to the keyhole.

"Smithy!" He tapped, and spoke in a shrill whisper. "Let me in! For goodness' sake, open the door!"

"Hallo!" came in startled tones from Vernon-Smith within.

The door was unlocked at once.

Ponsonby looked round from his chair, with a cigarette between his lips. There were cards on the table, and little piles of money.

"Changed your mind, and come back to take a hand?" yawned Ponsonby.

Wharton did not heed.

"Smithy, get that stuff out of sight—quick!"

"What's the matter?" The Bounder was quite cool.

"Quelch's just coming up."

"Coming here?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

Vernon-Smith gave Wharton one look; that was all. He was surprised enough that Wharton had taken the trouble to warn him; he knew well enough Wharton's opinion of his conduct.

But the Bounder lost no time. Neither did Ponsonby. Pon was a favoured youth at Highcliffe; but he did not want a report of his rascally conduct to be sent to Dr. Voysey.

Almost in the twinkling of an eye the

cards were whisked off the table, and the Bounder shoved them inside the chimney. The box of cigarettes followed, and the money vanished into pockets. Ponsonby opened the window wide, and waved a newspaper to help clear off the smoke.

Wharton stood in the doorway, breathing hard.

He was not at all sure that he was doing right; but he knew he wanted the Bounder to escape detection. From the distance he could catch the clear, metallic tones of the Remove-master's voice as he came up.

"Now, Skinner!"

"Quick!" breathed Wharton.

"Dash the smoke!" muttered Ponsonby. "It won't clear! The nosy beast will smell it! Dash the smoke!"

Vernon-Smith was fumbling in a cabinet. He turned, with a large bottle of eau-de-Cologne in his hand.

Crash!

The bottle broke on the floor. That bottle of eau-de-Cologne had cost the Bounder fifteen shillings. He did not think of that, or care for it. Money was little to the millionaire's son.

The study was instantly filled with a strong, pungent smell.

"By gad!" Ponsonby burst into a breathless chuckle. "You're a deep card, Smithy, by gad!"

Wharton was stepping back into the passage, but the Highcliffe junior caught his shoulder. He spun the Removeite into the study before Harry knew what he intended.

"Stay here!" murmured Ponsonby. "You'll help to see us through, dear boy—your spotless reputation, you know!"

Wharton gave him a fierce look, but it was too late to retreat now. Mr. Quelch's steps could be heard in the passage.

Harry Wharton dropped into the armchair. He had to see it through, and for the Bounder's sake he was not sorry Ponsonby had pulled him into the study. Harry Wharton was not likely to be suspected of smoking and gambling; Ponsonby's sneering words were well-founded, as far as that went.

Ponsonby lounged on the window-seat, cool and careless. The Bounder, equally cool, sat on the corner of the table, swinging his legs. The door was still open. The smoke had been driven off, but its scent would have remained to betray the smokers—but for the Bounder's astute device. Now the study was impregnated with the strong scent of eau-de-Cologne, and the odour of the cigarettes could not be detected by the keenest nose.

"Well, you are clumsy, Pon!" The Bounder spoke in a cool, drawling tone as he heard Mr. Quelch outside. "You've smashed it now!"

"Awfully sorry, Smithy!" said Ponsonby, taking his cue at once from the Bounder. "The bottle's gone, by gad! Cost you much?"

"Fifteen bob!"

"Oh, my hat! You've spent fifteen bob on eau-de-Cologne in war-time!"

"Well, that's the figure."

"Serves you right to have it smashed, then, dear boy. I was goin' to offer to pay for it, an' now I won't," said Ponsonby, laughing. "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir! I didn't see you!"

Ponsonby jumped up very respectfully as Mr. Quelch stepped into the study.

Wharton rose from the armchair, his heart beating, and the Bounder slipped off the table. They all stood to attention.

Mr. Quelch gave the juniors a glance in which there was nothing severe.

"You appear to have had an accident," he said.

"My fault, sir!" said Ponsonby. "I

didn't see the bottle on the table, and my elbow knocked it off."

The dandy of Highcliffe lied with the ease that comes of long practice.

Skinner was looking into the study behind Mr. Quelch.

Skinner's face was quite extraordinary in its expression at that moment.

He had expected to catch the Bounder napping. But he realised at once that, somehow, Vernon-Smith had been put on his guard, and had prepared for the Form-master's visit. Skinner's little scheme had gone awry. Mr. Quelch suspected nothing. There was nothing to excite his suspicions.

"Come in, Skinner!" he said.

"Yee-e-ees, sir!" mumbled Skinner.

He almost limped into the study after Mr. Quelch. His eyes gleamed evilly for a moment at Harry Wharton; he guessed from whom the Bounder had received his timely warning.

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed, too, as they dwelt on Skinner. He also understood.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Does Not Score!

HARRY WHARTON stood silent. His presence in the study and his silence backed up the elaborate humbug of Ponsonby and the Bounder; but he could not help that. He had not had time to reflect; and, upon the whole, he was not sorry that he had chipped in. And Skinner's venomous look made him more satisfied than he would otherwise have been. It was something to have frustrated the intended treachery of the cad of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch, little dreaming of the thoughts in the minds of the juniors, looked at Skinner inquiringly.

"Now, what is the smell in the study you complain of, Skinner?" he asked.

Vernon-Smith smiled.

"Does Skinner complain of a smell in the study, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Vernon-Smith. It is necessary for the matter to be looked into. Have you noticed it?"

"No, sir!"

"Where is it precisely, Skinner?"

Skinner pulled himself together. His scheme had failed, and now he had to go through the comedy he had arranged, though its object was defeated.

"In—in the corner, sir," he stammered. "I—I think there's something wrong with—with the drains!"

"Which corner?" rapped out the Remove-master.

Skinner pointed to a corner, and the Remove-master scanned it and sniffed.

"There is some powder spilt here," he said. "Dear me! It is carbide, I think—carbide of calcium, such as you use in bicycle-lamps. You are very foolish, Skinner! The smell you complain of proceeds from that carbide, which has been carelessly upset!" said Mr. Quelch crossly.

"Oh, sir!"

It was not news to Skinner. He had spilt the carbide of calcium there in order to give colour to his story. Skinner would not have minded the Form-master's annoyance much if Mr. Quelch had caught Vernon-Smith smoking and gambling with Ponsonby.

"You have wasted my time, Skinner," went on Mr. Quelch very sharply. "You will kindly be more careful before you make another complaint to me."

"Ye-es, sir!"

"I'd noticed the smell of carbide, now I think of it," said the Bounder casually. "You remember, Skinner, I spoke to you about spilling it there?"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You actually spilled the carbide yourself, and

complained to me about a smell in the study, Skinner, without thinking of it?"

"I—I——"

Mr. Quelch's brow grew very grim. He had had some experience of Skinner's humorous proclivities. He was suspicious now—of Skinner.

"I cannot credit you, Skinner, with being so stupid as you pretend!" he rapped out. "It appears to me that this is a piece of impertinent pleasantry on your part. You have deliberately caused me to come here for nothing!"

"Oh, sir! I——"

"It is what you call a practical joke, I presume," said Mr. Quelch, with a gleam in his eyes. "Your Form-master, Skinner, is not a proper subject for humour of that kind."

"I—I didn't! I—I——" stuttered the unhappy Skinner.

"I will give you the benefit of the doubt, Skinner. If I were sure that you had intended to be guilty of impertinence I should cane you severely. As it is, I shall give you five hundred lines for wasting my time. I shall expect those lines on Saturday, Skinner."

And Mr. Quelch rustled away.

"Five hundred lines!" murmured the Bounder. "Was it worth it, Skinner?" He laughed. "Don't be in a hurry to go, Skinny! Are you hurrying away to hide your blushes?"

"I don't know what you mean," muttered Skinner.

"Awfully deep of you!" said the Bounder reflectively. "I was nearly caught out that time, Skinner. And all because I chipped in to spoil your rotten trick on Jimmy Vivian—what?"

"I—I don't understand you. I did not know you were at home—or Ponsonby, here."

"Liar!" said the Bounder calmly. "You needn't mind owning up, you sneaking cad! I'm not going to touch you. You've been kind enough to put me on my guard, and I shall have an eye open for you after this, Skinner. Now, get out of my study before I pitch you out!"

Skinner was glad enough to go.

The Bounder turned to Wharton, who was following. The expression on his face was very cordial.

"You've saved me from fairly getting it in the neck, Wharton!" he said. "I should have been spotted, and no mistake!"

"I'm not sorry," said Harry. "But—but I wish it hadn't happened. It's a rotten game you're playing, Smithy, and I oughtn't to have chipped in, I think."

Ponsonby gave a chuckle.

"You belong to the conscientious objectors—what?" he asked. "Queer lot of consciences there are about these days!"

Wharton did not answer the cad of Highcliffe. He was not there to bandy words with Ponsonby.

"I'm much obliged to you, Wharton!" said Vernon-Smith. "You've done me a good turn, and I sha'n't forget it. I never thought Skinner would go quite so far as sneaking to Quelch. It's pretty clear that's what he did, though he hadn't the nerve to do it openly. We'll get outside, I think, Pon. The old barn would be a safer place after this."

"Right you are!"

"You—you're going on with your game?" exclaimed Wharton.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?" he asked.

Wharton left the study without replying. Ponsonby laughed lightly as the Bounder extracted the cards and cigarettes from the recess of the chimney and concealed them in his jacket.

"Queer fish, Wharton!" the Highcliffe junior remarked. "Isn't he generally down on gay dogs, Smithy?"

"Always."

"Yet he took the trouble to come and tip you the wink!"

"He's a good sort."

"I dare say!" Ponsonby yawned. "Not the sort I should care to have much to do with, though. A bit of a bore—what?"

"Oh, rats! Let's get off!"

And they got off.

Harry Wharton had gone back to No. 1 Study.

"You've had a long jaw with Smithy?" said Bob Cherry, as he came in. "Is he playing on Saturday?"

"I haven't asked him yet."

Wharton explained what had happened in Vernon-Smith's study, and Bob whistled.

"Narrow shave for Smithy!" he remarked.

"Better have let him take his chance," grunted Johnny Bull. "Are you setting up as kind uncle to every dashed black-guard in Greyfriars?"

"I didn't want to see him nailed," said Wharton colouring. "I dare say I was wrong."

"No dare saying about it; you were!" said Bull tersely.

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent. "It looks to me as if Skinner was trying to get Smithy caught out; and that was rotten enough. I'm glad he was stopped."

Hurree Singh nodded assent.

"The gladfulness is terrific!" he observed. "I should be sorrowful to behold the esteemed and rascally Smithy kickfully booted out of the honourable school. We should miss his handsome and ludicrous countenance."

"The missfulness would be terrific!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Johnny Bull, in his stolid way, "I think——"

"You think it's time we got down to the nets?" interrupted Bob. "Quite right, Johnny—let's get going."

"I think——"

"Exactly! Come on!"

And Bob dragged Johnny Bull away before he could state his thoughts further; and the Famous Five went off to cricket and forgot all about the incident.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Luck For Bolsover!

BOLSOVER MAJOR gave the captain of the Remove a surly look when the Famous Five came into the Common-room together that evening. Wharton had not yet had an opportunity of speaking to Vernon-Smith on the subject of the match. But the Bounder was present now, and the opportunity had come. Bolsover major started towards Wharton to broach the subject, but Wharton passed him, and went over to Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder of Greyfriars looked up with a smile.

"Hallo! You were going to say something or other," he remarked. "What is it, Wharton?"

"We're playing a scratch team from Highcliffe on Saturday," said Harry.

The Bounder nodded.

"You knew?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes."

"I suppose Ponsonby told you," assented Wharton. "Well, would you care to play for the Remove?"

"My hat!"

The Bounder looked surprised.

"Hallo! Is there a Highcliffe match on Saturday?" exclaimed Squiff. "This is the first I've heard of it."

"Same here," said Hazeldene.

"Not a regular match," said Wharton. "Ponsonby's raising a team among

his friends, and he's challenged us. I don't see any reason for saying no. I'm going to speak to Courtenay first, but that's only a matter of form. The match will be played."

"A team of the merry nuts?" asked Tom Brown.

"That's it."

"My word! You may as well play Bunter and Skinner and Fishy! They'll be good enough for that lot," said the New Zealander junior.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't suppose we shall have to fight very hard," he said. "But we can't be careless, as it seems that Pon has dug up some wonderful player somewhere, and he is going to spring him on us. But, what do you say, Smithy? If you'd care to play on Saturday, there's a place in the team for you."

The Bounder coloured.

"I never expected this," he said. "Wasn't it said, not so long ago, that I wasn't to play for Greyfriars again?"

"It jolly well was!" said Johnny Bull.

"If I were skipper, you wouldn't play again till you give up smoking and card-sharpping!"

"How kind of you to mention it!" yawned the Bounder. "Have they made you skipper, then?"

"No!" grunted Johnny.

"Then your remarks on the subject are a little superfluous, aren't they?" suggested the Bounder genially.

Some of the juniors laughed, and Johnny Bull looked thoughtfully at the Bounder. He was debating in his mind whether to punch Vernon-Smith's head or not.

Fortunately, he contented himself with a disdainful grunt.

"Well—well, what do you say, Smithy?" asked Wharton rather hastily. "It's quite right what you say—I wasn't going to play you again until—until—"

"Until I mended my ways?" smiled the Bounder.

"Well, yes. And I don't say I'd play you in a first-rate match, either, so long as you go on as you're going now. But I'd like you to have a chance again, and there's a place for you in the team if you'd like it, against Ponsonby's lot on Saturday."

"I'd like it," said the Bounder. "But—"

"Well, play, then."

"I can't, as it happens."

Wharton frowned a little.

"If you don't want to, it's all serene," he said rather gruffly. "You cut up rusty enough when you were first left out of the team."

"The rustfulness was terrific, my worthy Smithy!"

"I'd like to play, but I can't," said Vernon-Smith. "I—I've got arrangements made for Saturday afternoon." He looked troubled. "If I'd had the faintest idea you'd ask me to play, I'd have made quite different arrangements—quite different. But there you are! I've given my word now—"

"Important engagement at a pub!" grinned Peter Todd. "Which pub, Smithy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing of the kind!" snapped the Bounder. "I'm not going out on the razzle, if that's what you mean, Toddy, you ass!"

"Well, all right," said Harry, turning away. "It's for you to settle, Smithy."

Vernon-Smith nodded, and the matter dropped. He went on playing chess with Delarey, the South African, but there was a troubled expression on his face. Piet Delarey watched him with rather an amused look.

"That's the third time you've moved

your king into check," he remarked, after a time.

"Oh!" said Vernon-Smith absently.

"Why don't you play on Saturday if you want to? That's what you're thinking about. Give up your silly engagement," said Delarey.

"I can't!"

"Then chuck it out of your mind, and stop putting your king in check."

Vernon-Smith grinned, and devoted his attention to the game.

Meanwhile, Bolsover major was thinking. He had heard Wharton make his offer to the Bounder, and heard it refused. Knowing nothing of Wharton's real motives for approaching Smithy, the bully of the Remove had no doubt that Harry had been driven into making that offer by the deputation to his study the previous day. It entered Percy Bolsover's somewhat dense head that if Wharton could be driven into playing one fellow he could be driven into playing another. Having thought that out to his satisfaction, he approached the captain of the Remove with his most truculent air.

"You're not playing Smithy after all!" he said abruptly.

Wharton shook his head.

"No! Any more orders?" he asked with great meekness.

"Orders!" ejaculated Squiff.

"Yes. Bolsover ordered me to ask Smithy to play," explained Wharton.

Sampson Field stared at him for a moment, and then grinned. He knew how likely Wharton would be to obey Bolsover major's orders. But Bolsover didn't; and he went on, in a dictatorial tone:

"The fact is, Wharton, it's about time I had a show."

"Oh!"

"And I'd like to play on Saturday."

"Is that an order?" asked Harry.

"Well, I want to play, and if I don't have a place in the team I may as well say there will be trouble," said Bolsover, scarcely believing in his own success. He had never dreamed that the cricket captain of the Remove would allow himself to be bullied in this way.

"Trouble!" said Harry reflectively. "I'm sure I don't want any trouble, Bolsover."

"Play me on Saturday, then."

"Right!"

"You—you mean it?" almost stammered Bolsover.

"Certainly. If you insist, there's nothing else for me to do, is there?" The captain of the Remove took a slip of paper from his pocket, and wrote Bolsover's name on the list it contained. "There you are! Satisfied?"

"Yes, that's all right," said Bolsover major, still astounded at his success. "We'll beat Highcliffe," he added more amiably.

"I hope so."

Bolsover major marched off in great triumph. Harry Wharton's chums were regarding him with peculiar looks.

"Would you mind explaining what all that means?" asked Johnny Bull, at last.

"Certainly. We're going to play a team of howling asses, and it's only fair to have a howling ass or two in our team," said Harry cheerfully. "Bolsover's entitled to a turn when he can be played without risk to the side. There's no risk in this case, so he's gonig to be allowed to distinguish himself by scoring a duck's egg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He thinks he's bullied you into it," said Squiff.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I know that. Let him think so."

"You don't mind?" asked Bulstrode.

"Why should I?"

Bulstrode grinned.

"Well, he will try to bully his way into the team for a really important match, that's all, after this," he said.

"Then he will meet with a surprise," said Harry, laughing. "I would nearly as soon play Bunter as Bolsover in an important match."

"Oh, really, Wharton!" said Billy Bunter, coming up just then. "I was just going to offer for the match."

"Too late!" said Wharton. "I'm only going to play one howling ass, Bunt, and the place is filled."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You let Bolsover bully you into it!" sneered Bunter.

Harry Wharton made a motion with his boot, and the Owl of the Remove rolled hastily away. But that Bolsover major believed he had bullied his way into the team was pretty clear from his vaunting manner that evening, and Skinner and Snoop and some others bestowed mocking looks upon Wharton—which the captain of the Remove did not heed in the slightest degree.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER was wearing a very thoughtful look the next day.

Bunter was thinking, in fact.

It was quite an unusual exercise for Bunter. Several times during morning lessons that dark shade of thought on his fat face alternated with a cunning grin. Whatever it was that Bunter was thinking, it seemed to afford him considerable satisfaction.

Mr. Quelch was not pleased. Having spoken to Bunter twice without getting a reply, he applied a pointer to Bunter's fat knuckles, and elicited a loud yelp from the Owl of the Remove.

"You are not paying attention to your lessons, Bunter."

"Yow-ow! Yes, I am, sir! I—I heard all you were saying, sir."

"Indeed! What was I saying, Bunter?"

"You—you were talking about—about—"

"About what?"

"Ponsonby, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean cricket—"

"Bunter!"

"I—I mean Wharton—that is to say, Bolsover—I mean—" The Owl was getting confused.

"So you were thinking about cricket, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I was thinking about—about—about vulgar fractions, sir, and—-and geography, sir—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

Swish!

Billy Bunter had something else to think about after that. He squeezed a fat hand under a fat arm, and grunted. But when the pain had worn off he was seen to be grinning again, over the mysterious thoughts that were working in his fat mind.

When the Remove were dismissed, Bob Cherry clapped the fat junior on the shoulder in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed.

"Yaroo!"

"Why, what are you yelling about?" demanded Bob.

"You silly ass, you've nearly busted my shoulder! Yow-ow!"

"Pooh! I'll give you one on the other shoulder, and set it right—"

Bunter dodged.

"Yaroo! Keep off!"

"Well, let's have the result," said Bob. "You've been thinking like a house on fire all the morning. What dodge have

you thought of for getting round the food regulations, you oyster?"

"Rats!" said Bunter. "Where's Wharton? I've got a bone to pick with Wharton."

"He's gone out into the quad," grinned Bob.

"Dodging me, perhaps?"

"D-d-dodging you?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him loftily.

"Yes, very likely. I can tell you, Bob Cherry, that I'm not going to stand any nonsense from Wharton!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter rolled out into the quadrangle after the captain of the Remove, and Bob followed, in blank astonishment. That Bunter was on the war-path, with such exceedingly dangerous game to be run down, seemed utterly impossible. But it certainly looked like it.

Billy Bunter found the captain of the Remove in the quad. He announced his arrival by bestowing upon him a dig in the ribs.

"I've got a bone to pick with you, Wharton!" he said, blinking at the junior severely.

"Well, keep your paws away!" growled Wharton.

"None of your cheek!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm not standing any rot from you, Harry Wharton, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton and his companions stared blankly at Bunter. This was quite a new line for the Owl of the Remove to take.

"Are you off your silly rocker?" demanded Wharton.

"Shut up!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"I said shut up, and I mean shut up!" said Bunter truculently. "I've stood all the cheek from you that I intend to stand, Harry Wharton. Now, about the cricket."

"Kik-kik-cricket?" stuttered Wharton.

"Yes, the cricket! Don't stutter at me. About the cricket," said Bunter, swelling with importance. "As a member of the Remove club, I expect a show sometimes in the matches."

"You want to pay your sub?" asked Nugent.

"Never mind that now, Nugent. I suppose you're not going to put a sporting matter on a basis of dirty money?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I intend to settle up all over-due subs out of my postal-order, too—"

"Which is also a little over-due!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Hurree Singh remarked that the over-duefulness was terrific. But Bunter did not heed them. His big glasses were fixed upon Wharton's astonished face.

"As a start, I'm going to play in the Highcliffe match," said Bunter. "You understand that, Wharton?"

"Eh? No, I can't say I quite understand that, Bunter."

"You'd better understand it, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Worse for me?" repeated Harry dazedly.

"Yes. Don't you understand plain English, you chump? Mind, I insist upon playing in that match!"

"You—you insist?"

"Certainly! I'm going to play as well as Bolsover."

"Bolsover!" repeated Harry. "Oh, I see!"

He saw at last. His chums saw, too. The mention of Bolsover's name had enlightened them.

That was the subject and also the outcome of Bunter's deep cogitations that morning.

Bolsover major having bullied his way into the eleven, as he fondly believed, the Owl of the Remove was bent upon following his example.

Having made the startling discovery, as he supposed, that Wharton was so hopeless a funk that he had allowed the Remove bully to dictate to him in cricket matters, Bunter was emboldened to tackle the captain of the Form in the same way.

Billy Bunter was not blessed with a very large allowance of brains. The line he was taking was a sufficient proof of that.

Harry Wharton simply blinked at him.

It was evident what was in Bunter's mind, but it was hard to realise that this fat, unwieldy bouncer was trying to bully him. Bunter as a bully was something new.

Wharton had made his concession to Bolsover in a humorous spirit, caring nothing at all what opinion the burly

"You'd better not!" said Bunter, quite grimly. "I don't want to have to handle you, Wharton!"

"Handle me?" yelled Wharton.

"Yes. I'm a peaceable chap, so long as I get my way. I only want it distinctly understood that I stand none of your cheek!"

"And if I refuse you are going to handle me?" ejaculated Wharton.

"You bet! And in a way you won't like, too!"

Harry Wharton smiled. Evidently he had decided not to be angry. It would have been rather absurd to get angry with Bunter.

"Well, as it stands at that, you'd better begin the handling," he suggested.

"Eh?"

"Because I refuse, you know."

"You—you refuse?"

"Oh, yes."

"You refuse to play me?" shouted Bunter.



A Surprise for the Remove! (See Chapter 10.)

Removee formed as to his motives. Bolsover major could think what he liked—and apparently Bunter was assuming the same privilege.

Wharton hardly knew whether to be angry, or to burst into a laugh. Bob Cherry was in no doubt, however, for he burst into a terrific roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Bunter!" gasped Nugent.

"The Bunterfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Singh. "He has come to quell the esteemed Wharton with the terror of his ludicrous eye!"

Bunter gave them a haughty blink. His fat hand was raised commandingly to the captain of the Remove. Bunter did not see anything humorous in the situation.

"You understand, Wharton?" he rapped out.

"Yes!" gasped Harry. "I do—now."

"I'm playing in the match," said Bunter. "I shall expect to open the innings. Always best to open the innings with a really good bat. It encourages the others."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Well, is it settled?" demanded Bunter threateningly.

"Not quite! Let me see. You demand a place in the eleven to-morrow?"

"That's it! Same as Bolsover!"

"Ha, ha! And if I refuse!"

"Quite so!"

"You're asking for a licking, Wharton!"

"Waiting for it, in fact," assented Harry. "Why don't you begin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'll hold your jacket, Bunter, and we'll all lend a hand to carry your body in afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at them, and blinked at Wharton. For a moment he hesitated. Then it came into his fat mind that Wharton was bluffing, and concealing his fears. Certainly, if that was the case, he was concealing them very successfully.

The fat junior pushed back his cuffs. He hoped that this proceeding would lead to a more open display of funk on Wharton's part, which he would have found very encouraging. His thoughts could easily be read in his fat face, and the captain of the Remove humoured him. He made a quick step backward, as if to avoid the coming attack.

That was all Bunter needed. He came on, brandishing his fat fists. The sight of Harry Wharton backing away, and Bunter rolling after him, brought Remove fellows to the spot from far and near.

"What's the name of that game?" demanded Peter Todd, mystified.

"Don't you interfere, Toddy! I'm going to lick Wharton."

"To—to whatter?" ejaculated Peter.

"Lick that blessed funk!" said Bunter.

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stand your ground, Wharton!" rapped out Bunter. "I can't keep on following you. I'm short of breath!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you silly asses! Now, then! I've got you!"

And Billy Bunter rushed right at the captain of the Remove.

To his astonishment, he was caught in Wharton's powerful arms, swept off his feet, and sat down on the ground with a bump. He sat there and blinked and gasped, not knowing how he had got there.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Come on!" grinned Wharton. "I'll sit you down a bit harder next time, Billy!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the circle of yelling juniors, and the truth dawned on his mind. He realized that the captain of the Remove was not, after all, quaking with terror at his attack.

"Come on, Bunter! I'll stand you on your head next," said Wharton, laughing. "You fat duffer! If I hit you, you would burst!"

"Yow-ow! Lend me a hand up, Toddy, you grinning beast! You know I'm short of breath!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd dragged the fat junior to his feet. Billy Bunter squirmed round the lanky Peter as Wharton made a step towards him.

"Yaroooh! Keep off, you rotter! I've done with you! Keep him off, Peter!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the fight hasn't come off yet," grinned Peter. "You keep on, my fat pippin, now you're on the war-path!" And he swung Bunter towards Wharton.

"Now then, pile in!"

"Go it, Bunter!" yelled the juniors. But Bunter was no longer inclined to go it. He twisted out of Peter's grasp, and fled.

"Come back!" roared Peter.

But Bunter did not come back. He disappeared into the School House at record speed, followed by a howl of laughter. It was Bunter's first and last attempt to follow the great example of Bolsover major.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Asks For It!

VERNON-SMITH came out by himself after dinner on Saturday, and walked into the quad with his hands driven deep into his pockets. There was a wrinkle in his brow, and his expression was troubled and dissatisfied.

The Bounder of Greyfriars did not seem at peace with himself.

Harry Wharton joined him in the quad, already in flannels.

"Not gone yet?" he remarked.

"Eh? Gone where?"

"Weren't you going out this afternoon?"

"No; I'm not going out," said the Bounder.

"Oh!" Wharton paused. "If that engagement you spoke of is off, Smithy, the offer still holds good, you know. I'd be glad to play you this afternoon, if you wanted."

"I should like to; but it can't be

done. If I were in your team——" The Bounder burst into a laugh. "It can't be done, Wharton. By the way, I hear that you are giving some of the duffers a chance in the Remove team to-day. I shouldn't leave too much to chance, if I were you."

"Well, Ponsonby's team doesn't amount to much," said Harry. "I know how the nuts play cricket. I've spoken to Courtenay about it, and it seems that not one of his men is playing for Ponsonby. They're a very scratch crowd."

"They'll have one good man, I understand."

"Yes; a player Pon has picked up somewhere to spring on us," said Wharton, laughing. "But a one-man team won't be very dangerous."

"He's a good man!"

"Oh, you know him?" asked Harry, with interest.

"Yes," said the Bounder, eyeing the captain of the Remove rather oddly. "I know him well enough. And some of the Highcliffe chaps have been hard at practice. Pon would give one of his ears to beat your team, and with this new recruit to help him he may be able to do it. That's why he proposed the match. You've beaten Courtenay's team, and if Pon could beat you, he would sing hymns of triumph all over Highcliffe!"

"Let him—if he beats us! Is that his queer idea—to take Courtenay down a peg by beating a team Courtenay couldn't beat?"

"That's it, as well as the satisfaction of walking over the Remove for once in a way."

"He's welcome to that satisfaction, if he can get it. Still, I shall be careful to put a good team in the field in case of accidents."

"I hear that you're playing Stott and Fish——"

"That isn't so."

"Some of the fellows think Bolsover bullied his way into the team."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I thought I'd give you the tip," said Vernon-Smith. "The match won't be a walk-over, or anything like it, as I happen to know. If you play a gang of duds, you will score a licking!"

"Thanks," said Harry. "I sha'n't do that! Bolsover's the only dud in the team, and I think he's good enough to play against Ponsonby's lot."

The Bounder nodded, and walked off. Harry Wharton joined his chums, who were heading for the cricket-ground. The Famous Five were not all playing that afternoon, but they were all going to be present. Bolsover major, in flannels, was lounging near the pavilion with Stott and Fisher T. Fish. He came towards Wharton as the five came up.

Bolsover's manner was aggressive. Convinced that the captain of the Remove had been bullied into making concessions, Bolsover did not know where to stop. Stott and Fish, who shared his belief, had been working on Bolsover, flattering the bully of the Remove with a view to getting into the team by his influence. They were both the poorest kind of cricketers, but they had a desire to swank about playing for the Form. And Bolsover, judiciously buttered up, had undertaken to see that they had a chance that afternoon.

"I suppose you've got the eleven complete, Wharton?" he began.

"Naturally, as the other team will be here in half an hour," said Harry.

"No need, really, for first-class players, to meet a scrubby lot like Ponsonby's gang," said Bolsover casually.

"No. That's why I'm giving you a chance!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Bolsover gruffly. "Look here, I think Stott and

Fishy might have a chance this afternoon!"

"Can't be done!"

Bolsover major's manner became more aggressive. Wharton, who understood at a glance what was coming, stood very quietly, but his eyes were beginning to gleam.

"The fact is, I've promised them," said Bolsover.

"You've promised them places in the eleven?"

"Well, to see what can be done. I think they might play!"

"I don't!"

"I guess I shall knock spots off'n the Highcliffe galoots, Wharton," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "You play me, and you'll see things hum!"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, I'm going to play," said Stott. "I can beat any Highcliffe rotter, I know that, especially Ponsonby's lot! Bolsover's promised me!"

"It amounts to that," said Bolsover major. "You two fellows can get into your things. You're playing for the Remove!"

"Have you been made cricket captain, Bolsover, without my happening to notice it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Enough jaw!" was Bolsover's reply. "They're playing! Better leave out Rake and Ogilvy!"

"They're not playing!" said Harry.

Bolsover's square jaw looked squarer than ever. He came closer to Wharton, with truculent aggression written all over his face.

"And you're not playing, either!" added Wharton.

"What?"

Wharton looked round.

"Desmond, get into your flannels, will you?" he said. "I want another man!"

"Sure, I'm yere man!" said Micky Desmond cheerfully. "And, sure, I'd recommend ye to rub that checky baste's nose in the grass!"

"You're leaving me out?" roared Bolsover major, as if unable to believe his ears.

Wharton nodded coolly.

"Yes. You don't seem to understand the etiquette of the cricket-field, Bolsover. It isn't the thing for a member of a team to bully his skipper. I may give you a chance later. But you don't play in this match!"

There was an irrepressible chuckle from the Removes standing round. It was only too clear that the bully of the Remove had bitten off more than he could masticate.

Stott and Fish exchanged a dismayed glance as they saw their calculations suddenly knocked on the head in this way. Bolsover major seemed rooted to the ground.

"I suppose you're joking?" he jerked out at last.

"Not at all!"

"You're turning me out of the team?" bellowed Bolsover, his harsh face growing crimson with anger.

"Yes."

"I suppose you know that I'm going to thrash you?"

"Not exactly."

"Put up your hands, you rotten funk!" shouted Bolsover major, his savage temper quite carrying him away.

And he rushed at Wharton, hitting out fiercely, without giving him much time to put up his hands.

But Wharton was swift enough.

His hands went up like lightning, and he met the heavy rush steadily. The captain of the Remove was in the pink of condition that afternoon, and at the top of his form. Bolsover major was not long in discovering it.

His heavy drives were knocked aside, and a fist that seemed like iron was

planted fairly on his square jaw, and Bolsover major went down like an ox.

He dropped on his back in the grass, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've woke up the wrong passenger, Bolsover!"

"Oh! Ow! Ah!"

"I guess I'm levanting out of this," murmured Fisher T. Fish; and he beat a strategic retreat.

Stott followed him. They did not want their turn to come next. Their estimate of the Remove captain had plainly turned out to be an ill-founded one.

But Bolsover major had plenty of pluck, and still more obstinacy. He scrambled to his feet, and came on again. Harry Wharton met him steadily and grimly.

The captain of the Remove was exasperated, and he hit his hardest. But Bolsover was a hard hitter, too, and Wharton's handsome face soon showed signs of punishment.

The cricketers gathered round, looking on. Some of them were frowning. A fight of this kind was hardly suitable preparation for a cricket-match. But Wharton had had no choice in the matter.

"By gad! What a merry entertainment!" drawled a cool voice. "Two to one on Bolsover, in quids! Any takers?"

It was Cecil Ponsonby's voice. The Highcliffians had arrived!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Surprises the Natives!

PONSONBY & CO. looked on with great amusement. Harry Wharton and Bolsover major were fighting furiously, and certainly it was hardly the way a visiting team should have been greeted. And Pon & Co. noted every one of Bolsover's heavy drives with satisfaction.

Every one of them meant a better chance for Pon & Co in the match, for the captain of the Remove could scarcely play in his usual form after that slogging mill.

But the fight did not last long.

Bolsover major went down for the fourth time, and this time he stayed there. He was quite done.

Skinner helped him away. Harry Wharton, panting for breath, turned a flushed face towards the Highcliffe cricketers.

His colour deepened as he caught Ponsonby's supercilious look. He was bitterly angry with himself and with Bolsover, and ashamed of the way the Highcliffians had found him occupied on their arrival. Yet he was hardly to blame in the matter—unless it was for having allowed Bolsover to presume, in the first place, that he could be bullied and dictated to.

"Don't mind us!" drawled Ponsonby. "We don't mind waitin' a bit, do we, you fellows?"

"Not a bit!" said Gadsby. "Any more fightin' goin' on before we get to cricket?"

And the nuts grinned.

"No," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We won't keep you waiting more than a few minutes, Ponsonby!"

"Oh, don't mench!"

Harry Wharton hurried into the pavilion. His face badly needed bathing. The nuts of Highcliffe grinned among themselves. They did not seem to think any assumption of politeness was required while they were on the Greyfriars ground.

Bob Cherry joined his chum in the pavilion, where he was towelling his face. "How do you feel?" he asked.

"Pretty rotten!" said Harry.

"Bolsover's a tough customer!"

"No black eyes," said Bob. "That's lucky. Bolsover will have one, I think. It's rotten unlucky; it's put you off your form!"

"I'm afraid it has," said Wharton ruefully. "I've got an ache all over. I feel like a punch-ball!"

Bob hesitated.

He knew that Wharton could not be in condition for good cricket. After a slogging fight with the muscular bully of the Remove, that was out of the question. And Bob did not like the idea of running risks with the match. It would be too insufferable if Ponsonby & Co. were to beat the Remove.

Harry Wharton guessed his thoughts, and nodded.

"You're right, Bob!"

"Well, I was thinking——"

"I'd better stand out," said Harry slowly. "The fact is, I'm pretty nearly as knocked out as Bolsover. My left eye wants to shut up. After all, it won't matter; we can beat Ponsonby!"

"We don't want to risk too much. Those cads would crow no end if they managed to pull it off!" said Bob.

"That's so. Tell Johnny he's to play after all. And—and I'll ask Squiff to skipper the team!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob hurried out, and Johnny Bull was quickly in his flannels. Sampson Quincy Iffley Field was quite prepared to take on the captaincy. The Remove Eleven now consisted of Squiff, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Hazeldene, Rake, Micky Desmond, Ogilvy, Peter Todd, Tom Brown, and Penfold.

It was not by any means the best team the Remove could have raised, but it was a very good one, the chief loss being that of Wharton as skipper. Nobody in the Remove doubted that the team as it stood could walk over anything that Ponsonby & Co. could put in the field.

Harry Wharton came out into view again, looking somewhat red and tired. The fight had told upon him, fit as he was.

He affected not to notice Ponsonby's mocking look. He looked over the Highcliffe team rather curiously. He remembered Ponsonby's boasted recruit, and was interested to see him.

But that recruit did not seem to be present.

There were a dozen fellows in the Highcliffe party, but only ten of them were in flannels.

Wharton knew them all—at least, by sight—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, Drury, Merton, Tunstall, Vavasour, and the rest of the nutty crowd.

"Your men all here?" he asked Ponsonby.

"Oh, yaas! Extra man joinin' us here," explained Ponsonby, and for some reason the Highcliffe nuts grinned at that remark.

"He doesn't seem to have turned up yet."

"Oh, he's here somewhere!"

"He's here, right enough," smiled Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Well, we're nearly ready," said Wharton, not understanding the merriment, and not particularly pleased by it.

"Your men ready, Squiff?"

The Australian junior nodded.

"Certainly!"

"You're not playin', Wharton?" asked Ponsonby.

"No. Field's skipper this afternoon."

"Feelin' rather too used up?" grinned Monson.

"Yes," said Wharton shortly. The grinning Highcliffians were having an irritating effect upon him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the Bounder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith came down to the field.

To the surprise of the juniors he was in flannels, and carried a bat under his arm.

"Is Smithy playing, after all?" asked Nugent, in surprise. Nugent had stood out of the eleven to make room for Ogilvy.

"Not that I know of," said Wharton, puzzled. "I asked him again to-day, and he said no. Toddy was going to make room for him if he played. But that's for Squiff to settle now," added Harry.

The Australian junior shook his head.

"I'm not turning out a man at the last minute to make room for Smithy or anybody else," he said. "Not if I act on my own judgment. But I'll do as you like, Wharton. I don't want to give myself airs because I'm captain just for the afternoon."

"Not at all," said Harry. "If Smithy's changed his mind, he's changed it too late!"

"That's what I think," agreed Squiff. The Bounder gave them a cool nod as he arrived.

All eyes were fastened upon him. Why he was in flannels and carrying a bat was a mystery.

"Oh, here you are, Smithy, dear boy!" drawled Ponsonby.

"Here I am," said the Bounder.

"Feelin' fit—what?"

"Fit as a fiddle!"

"That's good!"

"What's the game, Smithy?" exclaimed Squiff. "I suppose you know a man can't be turned out at the last minute to make room for you?"

"Of course not!" said the Bounder, with a smile. "I haven't come to play for Greyfriars."

"What the dickens are you in flannels for, then?"

"Oh, I'm playing!"

"Have you gone off your dot?" exclaimed the astonished Squiff. "How are you playing, when you're not playing for Greyfriars?"

The Bounder's answer was like a bomb-shell.

"I'm playing for Highcliffe!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Recruit!

HARRY WHARTON started violently.

There was a buzz of surprise among the cricketers.

"Highcliffe!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Highcliffe!" exclaimed Wharton.

The Bounder nodded. He seemed to be enjoying the sensation he had caused.

"Yes," he said coolly. "I'm Ponsonby's new recruit, you know."

"Ponsonby's new recruit!" repeated Squiff.

"That's it!"

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips as he understood. It was Vernon-Smith of the Remove, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who was the mysterious recruit Cecil Ponsonby had planned to spring upon the Remove Eleven.

There were grim looks among the juniors.

On a former occasion the Bounder had played against his school, when he was out of favour with the Remove.

But this time it was too thick, as Johnny Bull grunted in Bob Cherry's ear.

Ponsonby & Co. were not sporting rivals of the Remove. They were foes, whose enmity had never stopped short of any meanness or unfairness. It was no credit to any Remove fellow to be found

in their ranks, and no credit to the Remove. The Bounder was one of the best cricketers in the Form, and his cricket skill was to be used against his Form now. And the secrecy of the whole business was not pleasing. This was why the Bounder had been so hard at practice lately—with the object of helping Ponsonby & Co. to beat his own comrades!

A sneer came on the Bounder's face as he caught the grim disapproval of the looks bent upon him.

"Surprised you—what?" he asked.

"Well, we oughtn't to be surprised at anything you do!" said Squiff drily.

"No objection, I suppose?" said Ponsonby blandly. "I asked Wharton specially whether there was any objection. That's arranged."

"Oh, none at all!" said Squiff. "You're welcome to your recruit!"

"I don't see what you've got to complain of," said Vernon-Smith, his eyes glinting. "I've been booted out of the Remove Eleven; and I suppose I'm not expected to give up cricket for good because my own Form doesn't want me? Ponsonby asked me to play for his team, and I said I would. Nothing to grouse about in that, so far as I can see."

"I asked you to play in this match," said Wharton.

"That was after I'd arranged with Ponsonby." The Bounder grinned. "I couldn't play on both sides at once, could I?"

"I—I suppose not."

"If I'd had any idea you were going to ask me to play I shouldn't have fixed it up with Ponsonby, of course. But I didn't know that."

"No need to keep it so dark, that I can see!" said Wharton tartly.

"Ponsonby asked me not to mention it till the match came off."

"Why not?" smiled Ponsonby. "You're not entitled to ask questions about my team, Wharton. And I had a suspicion—a slight suspicion, you know—that you wouldn't have taken on the match if you'd known."

And the Highcliffians chuckled.

"Let's get to business!" said Squiff abruptly.

He tossed with Ponsonby, and the Highcliffe skipper won. Ponsonby elected to bat, and he went on to open the innings with the Bounder.

Squiff led his merry men into the field.

Wharton remained by the pavilion, looking on. His brow was clouded. He had a feeling of having been tricked. It was the old, tortuous nature of the Bounder displaying itself again.

There was no harm in a fellow playing against his school in ordinary circumstances, of course! Had a visiting team been short of a man, for instance, Wharton would have lent a Greyfriars player. But in this case the circumstances were different.

He knew that the Bounder, excluded from the Remove Eleven, had the design of inflicting a defeat upon them, partly from sardonic humour, partly to show all the Remove that they could not afford to leave him out. He believed that Smithy would not have acted as he had done if he could have foreseen that the Remove captain meant to ask him to play for the Form again. But the trick was there, all the same, and the cool conceit of the Bounder in thinking that he, single-handed, would be so dangerous to his old team, was irritating.

But there was something in it, too. There was no doubt that Smithy was first-class, and that he had left no stone unturned to get into his topmost form for this trial. If he succeeded, Wharton's old enemies would have gained their point—of defeating the Remove

team, which Frank Courtenay had failed to do at the last attempt. And Wharton, knowing nothing of Smithy's intentions, had not troubled to play his best team. There were many weak spots now. Yet again he remembered that only that day the Bounder had warned him not to leave too much to chance.

"Rather rotten of Smithy, I think!" Frank Nugent remarked, after a long silence. "I suppose the idea is to take us down off the perch, if he can? I don't see that we've asked for it."

"It's Smithy all over," said Harry, compressing his lips. "But I don't think he will have much success, all the same. I'm glad Johnny's playing, instead of that duffer Bolsover—that's all to the good. But if I'd known this, I'd have been more careful with the team. We can't afford to be licked by those swanking cads. If it were Courtenay and his men, it wouldn't matter."

"There he goes!" said Nugent.

The Bounder was getting the bowling from Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The dusky nabob was the champion bowler of the Remove, and Squiff had put him on to lower Vernon-Smith's wicket with all speed. But that wicket was not easily to be lowered, even by the redoubtable Inky.

There was no doubt that the Bounder was in tremendous form. The dusky nabob's bowling was knocked all over the field, and the fieldsmen had plenty of chasing to do after the ball. The over gave Vernon-Smith 12 runs. And when Ponsonby, at the other end, received the next over from Tom Brown, he dealt with it in a way that showed he was fairly on his mettle.

The New Zealand junior expected to see Pon's bails flying at once. But they did not fly, and Pon took 2, and 2, and 3, and then the Bounder finished the batting for the over with a 4.

Squiff & Co. settled down to work now. The match was not to be a walk-over, though it was only against the nuts of Highcliffe. The nuts, it was plain, were in unexpected form, and the Bounder was a tower of strength to the side. And the Remove players knew that they had all their work cut out that afternoon.

Ponsonby had rattled up 20 when he was clean bowled by Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The Bounder was still going strong. Gadsby was in next, and he lived through three overs, and fell, and Vavasour followed with a duck's egg. Wickets were falling faster now. But Drury knocked up 10 runs, and Monson 15.

All the time the Bounder was scoring. His score was 50 by that time, and the total over 100. The Remove bowlers tried their skill on their Form-fellow in vain—the Bounder was too well set. But the tail of the innings "petered out" faster, and the total was at 120 when Merton's wicket—the last—fell, leaving the Bounder of Greyfriars not out, with 60 runs to his credit.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Ponsonby's Win!

THE fieldsmen came off looking somewhat red with their exertions. They had been given plenty of leather-hunting.

The Bounder sauntered away from the wicket, a cool smile on his lips.

He had taken precisely half the Highcliffe score of runs—sixty off his own bat, and against bowlers like Hurree Singh and Tom Brown that was a feat. And the nuts of Highcliffe had done uncommonly well—for them—to take the other sixty among them.

Squiff gave Harry Wharton a comical

grin, as he fanned himself with his straw hat.

"Not such a merry walk-over!" he remarked. "Hundred-and-twenty—three times what I expected of that crowd."

"It's Smithy's game, so far as they're concerned," said Harry.

"We shall have to pull up our socks as it's a single-innings match," remarked Bob Cherry. "We don't always get a hundred-and-twenty in an innings."

"The don'tfulness is terrific!"

"Why didn't you down Smithy's wicket, Inky, you ass?"

The nabob grinned a rueful grin.

"The spiritfulness was willing, but the esteemed bowling was not up to sample," he explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did my esteemed best, my worthy chums. But we shall walk out ahead-fully with the batfulness."

"I say, you fellows, perhaps you wish you'd played me now, after all!" chortled Billy Bunter. "I fancy I'd have taken Smithy's wicket."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You can't play cricket, you know. You muffed a lot of catches."

"What!" roared Bob.

"That last ball from the Bounder, for instance," said Bunter, with an air of great wisdom. "You let it pass—"

"You howling ass, it didn't go within a dozen yards of me!"

"I'd have stopped it," said Bunter.

"You—you— Well, stop that!" said Bob, lunging out with his bat.

Billy Bunter gave a terrific whoop as he stopped it, and retired from the scene, relieving the cricketers of any further criticism.

Squiff and Tom Brown opened the innings for Greyfriars. The two Colonials dealt well with the bowling, which was shared among Ponsonby, Monson, and Gadsby at first. The Bounder, in the field, looked on with a sarcastic smile. Pon would have been glad to give the Bounder the cold shoulder in the game, if he could have done without him. Perhaps for a moment he hoped to finish without him, and make a real Highcliffe victory of it. If so, he soon changed his mind. Squiff and the New Zealander knocked up thirty runs between them before a wicket fell, and then it fell to a catch at point by Vernon-Smith.

After that Smithy was given a good share of the bowling, and he showed that his late assiduous practice had improved his form. His long innings did not seem to have tired him in the least. He was as fresh as paint. His bowling was a surprise to the Remove fellows looking on. He had caught Squiff, and he bowled Tom Brown in the next over. Bob Cherry took the bowling from him next, and began to make the running, with Penfold at the other end. When Ponsonby bowled again, the score moved up, but a smart throw-in by the Bounder knocked Pen's wicket over.

Ponsonby, having come to his senses, as it were, now gave the Bounder just as much of the bowling as the rules of the game allowed, and he had reason to be thankful for it. Ogilvy, Rake, and Micky Desmond faced the Bounder in turn, and three successive balls sent them bootless home. The Highcliffe fieldsmen chattered with glee over the hat trick, and even the Greyfriars crowd gave the Bounder a cheer.

Harry Wharton looked on, far from happy.

The runs were coming very slowly now. Six wickets were down for forty-six runs, and at that rate the Remove's prospects were gloomy. It was Smithy's unexpected form as a bowler that gave

the trouble. The Highcliffe bowlers and fieldsmen could not have shifted the batsmen in a week. But, with the assistance of the Bounder, that rotten team seemed likely to walk over the Remove.

Wharton's hands fairly itched to grasp his bat and take his place at the wicket. But he was out of the team, and he was not fit for a hard match in any case. He could only look on and hope for the best.

But his exasperation was keen.

Had he known of Smithy's intention he could have played a team that would have beaten the visitors, for all Smithy could do—he could have avoided the scrap with Bolsover till after the match, and played himself—and he knew he could deal with Smithy's best bowling. Every circumstance seemed to have conspired to make Vernon-Smith's scheme a success—owing to the secrecy in which it had been wrapped till the very last moment!

Bob Cherry was still batting, and Johnny Bull had joined him. Johnny was a renowned stonewaller, and the Bounder's bowling had no more effect on his wicket than hail on a window. Bob made the running when Gadsby bowled again, and between them the runs crept up.

It was Ponsonby who caught Johnny Bull at last, when the figures stood at seventy. Hazeldene went in to face Smithy's bowling—and fall after taking a couple of runs.

Peter Todd was next man in, and matters looked up again with the lanky Peter at the wicket. Wharton's face lightened when the score turned the hundred. But Bob Cherry had run his course—he was caught in the next over; Gadsby distinguishing himself for once.

"Last man in, Inky!" said Harry.

"Ready?"

"The readiness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

"Do your best, old chap—don't let them beat us!"

The nabob nodded.

"The beatfulness will be great," he replied cheerfully. "The batfulness is not so good as the bowlfulness of my noble self, but the stitch in time goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says."

And the olive-skinned junior went in to do or die.

"Stick it out, Inky!" said Peter Todd, as the Nabob of Bhanipur passed him.

"The stickoutfulness will be terrific, my worthy Todd," the nabob assured him.

"Twenty to get, only one wicket to fall!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We've had rotten luck all round, Harry; but, as it stands, we're going to be beaten—by the Bounder!"

"It was a rotten trick!" said Harry, knitting his brows. "If I'd known, we shouldn't have been caught napping. I knew the form Smithy was in."

"Just one of Smithy's little jokes!"

"Inky's going it!" remarked Nugent.

The nabob was doing his best. He knew how much depended on him. His forte was bowling; but he was a reliable batsman, and his object was to give Peter Todd the bowling as much as possible. Peter was in fine form, and he knocked up runs at a great rate. There was a cheer from the Greyfriars crowd when the score jumped to 116.

"Four to tie!" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his hands. "We'll do it yet!"

Wharton did not reply. His eyes were on the Bounder, who had gone on to bowl the last over—everyone knew it would be the last over.

Inky met the first ball with a drive that was worth two. Ponsonby fielded the ball, and gave Vernon-Smith a very expressive look along with it.

"Two more wanted—three to win!" muttered Bob, all eyes on the game.

The ball went down again like a bullet, and was stopped dead. Again it was stopped, without result. Then it whizzed down a fourth time, and this time it eluded the gleaming willow. There was a smack!

"How's that?"

"Out!"

The dusky nabob gave his wicket a mournful glance.

"The outfulness is terrific!" he remarked, and the wicket-keeper grinned and acknowledged that it was.

And Hurree Janset Ram Singh departed mournfully.

"My esteemed Wharton, I have done bestfully!" he murmured. "But the luckfulness was not great!"

"All serene, Inky!"

Ponsonby strolled off the field with his grinning and satisfied followers. He was in high feather! He had beaten the Remove—by the aid of a Remove recruit, certainly. Still, his team had beaten them. That was a happy item of news for Ponsonby & Co. to take back to Highcliffe.

"I fancy we win—what?" yawned Ponsonby. "The old order changeth, givin' place to the new—what? Our game, dear boys!"

"Naturally!" smiled Gadsby. "If these fellows don't mind my mentionin' it, I think that what they need is practice, an' some good coachin'. If they'd care to look in at Highcliffe any half-holiday, we'd give 'em some coachin'—the real thing!"

"Certainly!" said Ponsonby generously.

The Remove cricketers restrained their feelings as they heard those remarks. But they were glad when Ponsonby & Co. took their departure. The Highcliffe crowd went, with lofty air and swanking manner, looking as if they were on the point of touching the stars with their sublime heads.

They had beaten Greyfriars Remove!

It was all very well for the Remove fellows to say that their team hadn't been at full strength—that a Removeite had done most of the work for Highcliffe—they could say anything they liked, but they could not unsay the fact that Ponsonby's nutty eleven had won the match. For it had! And in that fact the nuts of Highcliffe rejoiced without limit.

The Bounder of Greyfriars had played a great game that afternoon. But that evening he did not find himself popular. There were strained relations between the Bounder and the Famous Five—the chums of the Remove could not all at once get over what they regarded as a scurvy trick. Perhaps the Bounder was not wholly satisfied with himself. But, if so, he gave no sign—and he met the disapproving looks with only a cynical smile or a shrug of the shoulders.

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

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"A LESSON FOR SKINNER!"

By Frank Richards.

Time and again requests for the reform of Skinner have been made. Personally, I have little sympathy with them. I have never been able to see anything in Skinner which suggests that, at best, he would ever make a really decent fellow. He is spiteful and cunning; his humour is of the unpleasant sort, which sees nothing funny in what does not hurt someone else; and, although he has bucked up now and then, he is essentially a funk.

In this story he tries to take revenge upon Vernon-Smith. It is a case of "diamond cut diamond," for the Bounder is every whit as crafty as Harold Skinner, though infinitely superior to him in manhood. The Bounder gets the best of the deal, and the result is that Skinner goes through an experience that causes him to see matters in a new light.

He says he is going straight in future. Let us see whether he will. I don't think so; but I may be wrong.

DISAPPOINTED!

A reader protests indignantly against the relapse of the Bounder. If it does not soon stop, he says, he will chuck the paper.

This is not very reasonable. An author

cannot be dictated to by his readers as to what he shall do with the characters his genius has created.

But it shows very clearly how much alive those characters are to the thousands who read about them every week. Now, I will make a confession. When I read the story entitled "The Fall of the Bounder" I felt a keen sense of loss and disappointment. It was as though I had seen the relapse into evil ways of a living friend. Vernon-Smith is one of my favourites in the MAGNET stories. I should find it hard to say whether I liked him or capable, clever Peter Todd or sunny Bob Cherry best. And, in saying this, I don't at all mean that I am not fond of Wharton, too; and sturdy Johnny Bull and loyal Inky and the japing Squiff—oh, and plenty of others! But I think those three come first in my esteem.

I did not like it a bit. But it was a rare good story. And it was human nature.

Just so would a fellow like the Bounder act in such circumstances, for he is no plaster saint. The influence of his early days cannot be eradicated entirely. A spoiled boy, with a foolishly doting, purse-proud father, he had gone pretty far towards being ruined before coming to Greyfriars, and what happened to him there pulled him up. The impatience of control, the longing after forbidden things, are still there. He has fought hard; for the time it seemed that he had conquered.

I feel sure that in the end he will conquer, though the way may be hard.

He is not the Bounder of old. Mr. Richards may tell us so, but he means the assertion to be taken with qualifications. Just as crafty, just as self-willed, just as unscrupu-

lous as ever at times, is Herbert Vernon-Smith. But with all this there is a difference, and that difference shows again and again, in small ways and in great. His extreme dislike to the idea of fighting Wharton is one way. Anyone else—Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Bolsover major—but not, if it can be avoided, Harry Wharton!

And at last he had to fight Wharton, but it was through the strong pressure of another loyalty. For Marjorie's sake he tries to influence for good the weak and wayward Hazel, and through that he makes combat with Wharton inevitable. Then, when it seems that all his nature has turned to gall and bitterness, the old strain of generosity crops up again, and he sets his enemy free for the Highcliffe match by a confession that must have been very trying to his pride.

He will not attempt to snatch the captaincy from Wharton. Skinner cannot understand that. But Skinner would not! What does Skinner care for the welfare of the Form or of Greyfriars? The Bounder does care, though he may deny it.

Trust the Bounder—and Mr. Richards—and tell your friends about these fine stories, so that they may read them. Explain to them a little of what has gone before, and so arouse their interest, for if you feel the situation interesting, they will; you may be sure of that. For my own part, I welcome the day that brings me another Bounder story to read.

The fame of the MAGNET is already great in the land. If you will only let your chums know about these yarns it will become greater yet!

YOUR EDITOR,
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 493.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 29.—RUPERT DE COURCY.

IT is doubtful whether there is a more essentially attractive figure among all those which through the Greyfriars stories than that of the Caterpillar.

He is a thoroughly good fellow; but so are many of the others. None of them all is uninteresting, but perhaps he is the most interesting of all because of the strange contradictions in him. At times he may seem soft in his good-nature—almost as soft as Mauly—but under the softness there is iron. His laziness is not a mere pose, for there is in him a disinclination to active exertion which needs something to counteract it.

But when once he is roused to action the seeming sluggard becomes a thing of steel and whipcord, able to do better than most in whatever he tries to do. Smithson and Yates and Benson and the Wilkinsons may do their utmost, may labour hard at any sport, but the Caterpillar, with far less practice, with infinitely less trouble, can out-distance any of them, and is second only to his chum, Frank Courtenay. And sometimes one wonders whether, if he chose, he might not be first. One thing is certain—he never will choose.

It is difficult to imagine anything coming between those two now; impossible to picture Rupert de Courcy striving in aught but friendly rivalry with the fellow whose friendship has been the making of him.

For when Frank Courtenay—then known as Arthur Clare—came to Highcliff the Caterpillar was one of the Ponsonby crowd. With them, rather than of them, it is true. He disliked many of their ways, but he was too slack to protest. He gambled and smoked, cared not a rap for games, evaded learning any more than the minimum—and, under the snobbish little toady, Mr. Mobbs, that minimum was very small in the case of scions of the aristocracy like De Courcy and Ponsonby—and generally was on the way to grow up a waster. Not an aristocratic cad like Pon; that was not in him. He has always regarded Pon with something like contemptuous admiration—as a very complete scoundrel. That the Caterpillar could never have become. But, lacking Courtenay's influence, he might well have grown up a fellow of no use to himself or to anyone else, if of no positive harm.

The story of how the friendship between those two grew is very charmingly told in that great story, "The Boy Without a Name." Some of you have read it many times; it is one of those stories to which one goes back with ever new delight. We see the Caterpillar, in his lazy, elegant manner, chipping in to prevent Pon and his satellites having their way with the new fellow. We see him watching Courtenay thrash Pon, and smiling as he lies propped up on his elbow



in bed. We read of his first advances to Courtenay, made in a way the new boy finds it very hard to understand, for to him it seems that De Courcy is patronising, which the Caterpillar has really no intention of being. But his ironical speech, with its slightly acid and wholly drawing tone, is the sort of thing that Arthur Clare had never before encountered. He learns to understand it better in time.

And then we see Courtenay, in no priggish way, influencing his chum, making him see that it is worth while both to work and to play—and not in the least worth while to play in the sense in which Pon & Co. use the word.

It is hard work to De Courcy. It would be harder still, but that he turns it into a joke by his pretence that it is "all Franky's doing," that he is merely "a brand plucked from the burnin'," that "the stern morality of the workin' classes" has acted upon him. There is just such an amount of truth in all this as serves to make the joke worth keeping up.

Then the horrible plot against Courtenay, and the Caterpillar's discovery of the real depth of his feelings. Many who read the story must have had big lumps in their throats when they reached the end of Chapter 33, and conjured up in their own minds the picture of the Caterpillar, "the slacker and dandy of the Fourth, with his face buried in his hands, sobbing as if his heart would break." And later, when Frank learns that his chum has watched by his bed all

night while he lay in slumber that was drugged, and seemed drunken—

"Was this the cool, careless, often insolent Caterpillar—this loyal pal who had watched him through the weary night, who was standing by him in his misfortune and disgrace—him, the nameless schoolboy, the penniless scholarship 'boulder'?"

Little wonder that such love as David felt for Jonathan should be in the heart of Frank Courtenay for Rupert de Courcy!

Frank Courtenay believes that Ponsonby is not all bad, and dreams vainly that, through the Caterpillar's influence, he may yet become a decent fellow. De Courcy does not believe anything of the sort, but he is willing to try. Something he guesses of what the result may be—not all, or he might have refused. But who knows? The Caterpillar is not easy to read. He might have gone on, although he had foreseen that Pon would drag him back into the mire of gambling. And he will not tell Courtenay; there is in him what he recognises as an unreasonable resentment with his chum for throwing him again into the arms of the nuts.

Pon plots to let down Courtenay badly under the cloak of reconciliation, and succeeds in his aim. But he has the Caterpillar to reckon with thereafter. They fight, and in the third round the dandified slacker, who had never been looked upon as a fighting-man, puts paid to the account of Cecil Ponsonby. But that is not the end. Pon seeks revenge through the gambling craze which he has helped to reawaken in the fellow he now hates, and, but for Frank Courtenay, Pon must have triumphed.

For his chum's sake Courtenay risks everything, and drags him out of the snare set for him. And for once in his life, at least, the Caterpillar is really humble when he promises Frank that it shall never happen again.

"It's all over for good. You can take even a dashed blackguard's word for that!" he says to Frank. Frank replies: "You won't be sorry for making that promise, Caterpillar." And, with a touch of the half-acid irony that is his, De Courcy says: "I don't know, Franky, blessed if I do! But I mean it, every word!"

Ever since then the Caterpillar has watched Cecil Ponsonby more closely than ever, and has often foiled his plots. An instance that occurs readily is that of Mauleverer's detective, who was really Pon in disguise, seeking the ruin of Courtenay. But De Courcy tumbled, and Pon failed. The Caterpillar is a pessimist as far as Pon is concerned. He always expects the worst from him. Some day he may be disappointed. But that day is not yet!

AN EXTRACT FROM "THE FIRST FORM FIASCO."

[EDITORIAL NOTE.—The success of the "Herald" has inspired more than one Form to launch forth a paper, and a periodical has lately blown in under the title of "The First Form Fiasco."

Some of the contributors have evidently old-fashioned "penny-a-line" notions—though we doubt whether the pennies will be forthcoming. Here is the "Fiasco's" great super-serial.—H. W.]

DICK DASH;

or, The Boy Who Defied His Master!

Jointly written for "The First Form Fiasco" by S. Smirk and D. Dibb, of the First Form.

Dick Dash was sitting on a seat with his feet on a desk, and his hands in his pockets, and a pipe in his mouth, and a frown on his brow.

The Form-master came in through the door, and sat down and looked up and roared: "Come out, Dash!"

"I won't!"
 "You will!"
 "I won't!"
 "You will!"
 "I won't!"
 The master stood up on his feet.
 "I say you will!"
 "I say I won't!"
 "I say you will!"
 "I say I won't!"
 The master approached him ferociously, and grasped him by the ear.
 "You'll do as I tell you!"
 "I sha'n't!"
 "You shall!"
 "I sha'n't!"
 "You shall!"
 "I sha'n't!"
 "You shall!"
 Dick jerked his head away, and made for the door.
 "I'm off out!"
 "You aren't!"
 "I am!"
 "You aren't!"
 "I am!"
 "You aren't!"

"I am!"
 "You aren't!"
 The master reached out his hand and tried to stop him, and Dick clenched his fist and lifted it up, and drew it back, and thrust it forward.
 "Take that!"
 "Yaroo!"
 "And that!"
 "Yaroo!"
 "And that!"
 "Yaroo!"
 "And that!"
 "Yaroo!"
 "And that!"
 "Yaroo!"

A step was heard in the passage, and the door-knob turned, and the door opened, and the Head entered!

(To be continued next week.)

Unluckily, the joint authors of this work of genius had fifteen copies of the paper jammed down each of their necks by their furious fellow-fags, and Messrs. Smirk and Dibb contumaciously refused to write the second instalment. Therefore, the story cannot be continued—not next week, and not ever!—H. W.]



MISS MARY FISHER,
Cwmbwria.



MISS EVELYN RILEY,
Deal.



MISS DOLLY HEAPS,
Liverpool.



MRS. T. W. SENIOR,
Batley.



MISS THELMA RICKABY,
Australia.



MISS ALICE LUCAS,
Manchester.



A STAUNCH GIRL
CHUM.



MISS ENID THOMPSON,
Australia.



MISS DOROTHY H.
BOWMAN.



"KITTY OF
STREATHAM."



MISS EDNA WILLIAMS,
Chatham.



"MICK,"
Birmingham.



MISS EUNICE BLANCHARD,
Ulceby, Lines.



MISS KATE MULREADY,
Soho.



MISS G. D. BARTON,
Hockley.



A KEEN LADY
READER.



MISS JESSIE CARRING-
TON, N.S. Wales.



MISS ADA JOSLIN,
Stanmore.



ELSIE S.,
Gateshead.



A GATESHEAD GIRL
READER.



MISS LILY SLADE,
Swindon.



A HOVE GIRL
READER.



MISS CLARA BURGHOUS,
West Hartlepool.



ANOTHER HOVE
READER.



MISS MULREADY,
Soho.



MISS RUTH HARRIS,
Edmonton, Canada.



MISS GLADYS ASPINALL,
Wigan.



MISS MAGGIE LEWIS,
Cwmbwria.



MISS KATE MEIKLE,
Glasgow.

AFTER THE EXAM.

[Wharton says he has some hesitation about publishing these beautiful bloomers. He would like to have their authenticity guaranteed. Seems to me Wharton wants too much. You cannot expect the masters from whose waste-paper baskets these pearls of price were retrieved to say anything about it. Mr. P—t probably is not specially proud—of course, I mean proud—of C—r, or Mr. Q—h of B—r and others. And you cannot expect the perpetrators to own up. On the other hand, you need not believe their denials unless you choose. I know what to do about that. I have assured Wharton that I have seen everything which follows in black and white. He says that he has, too; but only in my handwriting. I have offered to borrow Mr. Quelch's typewriter and copy them out, but he says that would prove nothing. However, they are going in, on the understanding that all thick ears, etc., in connection with them are to be delivered at Study No. 7, Remove Passage, and at no other study whatever. Bunter will sit at the receipt of custom—unless he shows a low-minded suspicion when requested to do so. I have tried to make Dutton comprehend, but he says he does not care for beers anyway, and, if he did, he would not want them thick. Alonzo is as innocent as a potato of any offence in the matter. Any budding Herlock Sholmes who now thinks that these hints and the initials appended enable him to spot the person responsible is hereby warned that the aforesaid person has a strong belief in reciprocity—in the matter of thick ears especially.—P. T.]

A triangle is a three-sided square. (P. B., Remove.)

The Vikings were people who drank a particular kind of cocoa, hence their name. (C. R. T., 4th.)

Dr. Watts was a great dog-fancier. He was also an eminent beekeeper. In his spare time he wrote hymns. (H. S., Remove.)

The Cortes was a Spanish Parliament, which afterwards went to Mexico and conquered the inhabitants, who were ruled by a king named Monte Carlo. (J. W., 6th.)

Titus Oates was a friend of St. Paul. His chief work was the Great Fire of London. (D. N., 2nd.)

Titus Oates introduced into this country the serial which bears his name. Ben Jonson said that it was the food of horses in England and asses in Scotland. (G. G., 2nd.)

Titus Oates was a Bible character, originally called Timothy. (S. B., 2nd.)

The Statue of Mortmain was put up to prevent a man from making wills after his death. (W. S., Remove.)

Homer was born in seven cities. He afterwards wrote two very long poems in Greek all about the Siege of Troy and other things much better forgotten. The only quotation from him which comes to my mind at the moment is:

"Arma virumque cauo, Trojae qui primus ab oris."

As this is in Latin, not in Greek, it is probably a translation. (W. G., 5th.)

What Tyler was the man who shot William Rufus. He also had a cat, and became Lord Mayor of London after the king's death. The proverb "What-ho!" is supposed to be derived from him. (S. J. S., Remove.)

Christopher Columbus discovered Ameriker, and was the first to make a noise about it. The kontinent had bene preverly discovered by several people, including the Vikings and George Washington, but they kept it dark—hence the term "Dark Kontinent." (H. C., 5th.)

Christopher Columbus is given the credit of discovering America, but it was John D. Rockefeller who made most money there. (F. T. F., Remove.)

The Antilles are in the oshun somewear. They are so kalled on akount of there shaip, wich coresponds ruffly to there naim. (W. G. B., Remove.)

The Gulf Stream is another name for the Panorama Canal. (W. G. B., Remove.)

Mandalay is a kwite fictishus town, supposed to be in Asia, but recly invented by a man named Kipling, who rites for the "Times" and other papers. He also rote the

"Lay of the Lost Minstrel," in wich okkur the wel-known lines about Chester charging and on, Stanley, on. But he is not Poit Lawreat, as mite be suposed by the ignerant. (H. C., 5th.)

Mesopotamia used to be the Garden of Eden, but is now quite otherwise. (P. B., Remove.)

A sine is the straight line running parallel with the curve of an arc. (B. C., Remove.)

A point is that which has position but not length, breadth, or thickness; but when it is a bayonet point it is painful, especially when its position changes, going through from front to back, or vice versa in the case of a Hun running away. (H. S., Remove.)

The best way to explain the statement that even if parallel lines be continued to infinity they will never meet is to say that the closer they get together the further they are apart. (E. F., 4th.)

The difference between arithmetic, algebra, and Euclid is one of comparison. Arithmetic is nasty, algebra nastier, and Euclid nastiest. (R. D. O., Remove.)

John Milton was the famus awhor of "We are 7" and other grate epik pomes. (W. G. B., Remove.)

An epic poem is one which starts in the middle, goes nowhere, and finishes up anyhow. Fortunately, paper is so short that they are not much written nowadays. (M. D., Remove.)

If you can understand everything in a poem it is not an epic, but some other kind. But most poems seem to me to be epics. (P. B., Remove.)

Geography and geology are really Greek words. But gee-gee is English and gee-whizz American. (D. N., 2nd.)

The right bank of a river is the one on your right hand and the left bank the one on your left. (S. T., 3rd.)

The naims of the Kings of Isral and Jewdah are to be found in the Books of Kings and Kronikles. Awi I kan remember are Solomon, who was suposed to be verry wise, but had two many wives; David, who killed a gyant, and Jehew, who drove fewrusly; and Jehosapat, who jumped. (W. G. B., Remove.)

The profits wear major and minor, so there must haf bean too of them—at leest. As usualy hapens, minor was the best. (S. D., 2nd.)

China is the greatest country in the world. It used to have an Emperor, who was told what to do by Li Hung Chang. It is now ruled by a President, who takes his orders from the Commander-in-Chief. (W. L., Remove.)

A neutral country is one that dare not come into the war. (F. T. F., Remove.)

A neutral country is one that has not yet quite made up its mind to declare war on Germany. (G. P., 5th.)

A neutral country is one with which Germany is at war, but it is not at war with Germany. It will soon be a rara avis, which means a very seldom thing. (R. R., Remove.)

The chief states of Germany are desperation, ferocity, and being humbugged by the Kaiser and Hindenburg. Also going short of food. (C. R. T., 4th.)

I cannot remember who it was that continually said "Delenda est Carthago." But it was Mr. Asquith whose motto was "Wait and see." (J. B., Remove.)

Potatoes were introduced by Sir Walter

Raleigh and temporarily abolished by Lord Devonport. Growing them is now the national sport. (H. S., Remove.)

The gratest King of France was undowtedly the wun who wanted evry man to have a chicken in the pot. King Alfred also burnt the cakes, wich shoes he was interested in cooking, but not enuff. Put the bigest eeler was a Roman emperor naimed Gorgius, or sumthing els wich I kannot remember. (W. G. B., Remove.)

Wen the bergers of Kally kaim befor King Edward with ropes around there necks it was the polight French way of saing "You be hanged!" (H. C., 5th.)

The United States, Great Britain, Australia, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, India, and all the British Colonies and Dependencies, France and all her Colonies, Russia, Italy, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro, Rumania, Portugal, Japan, Cuba, and Panama are now at war with the Central Powers and their allies. Brazil and China are expected in almost at once. Among those which have severed relations, but have not yet declared war, are Bolivia, Liberia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, San Domingo, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. Some of these are black and some yellow, but they don't li'e the German colours all the same. Among those who may be expected in very shortly, now that they have been given a lead, are Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Persia, Afghanistan, Abyssinia, Greece—which is half in, and the best half—Paraguay, and San Salvador; but Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela may be considered doubtful. (F. T. F., Remove.)

[F—y says he ought to have had full marks for this answer. Certainly, it reveals a knowledge of geography with which one would hardly have credited F—y. But the question asked was about the order in which the belligerents became such, with approximate dates; and F—y seems to have answered it on the lines of the young divinity student who had crammed up the list of the Kings of Israel and Judah because he felt sure his paper would ask for that list. It did not; but it asked which were the major and which were the minor prophets. And his reply was: "Let us not make invidious distinctions between these excellent men, but let us rather proceed to give a table of the Kings of Israel and Judah." Now, if B—r— But never mind that!—P. T.]

NOTICES.

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More members wanted for club. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.—W. H. Simpson, 8, Oakwell Terrace, Middlesbro'.

Will any readers in this country who want to correspond with fellow-readers abroad write, with stamped and addressed envelope, to J. C. Oliphant, 5, Walter Street, Nottingham?

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