

C. J. F. Richard,

ARE YOU READING "MARCUS THE BRAVE!" A GRAND SERIAL OF ANCIENT ROME, INSIDE?



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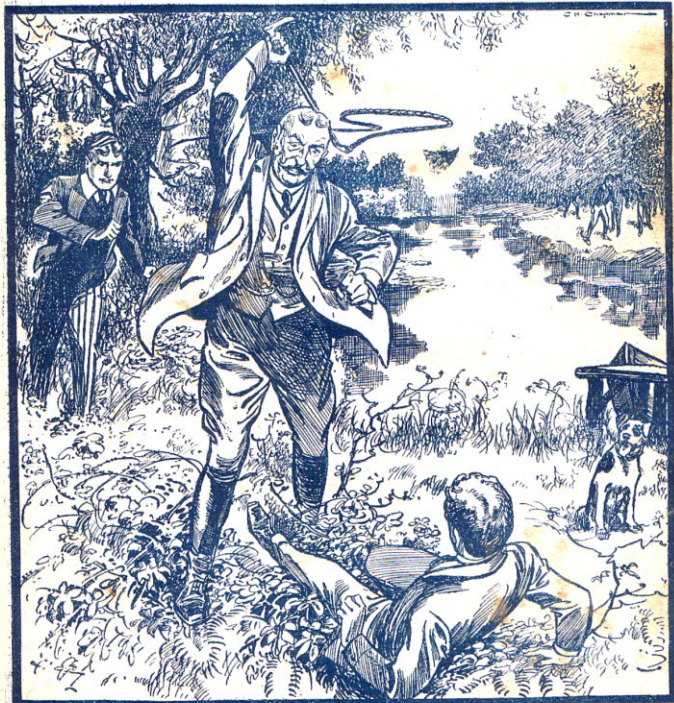
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## "SMITHY'S DEFIANCE!"

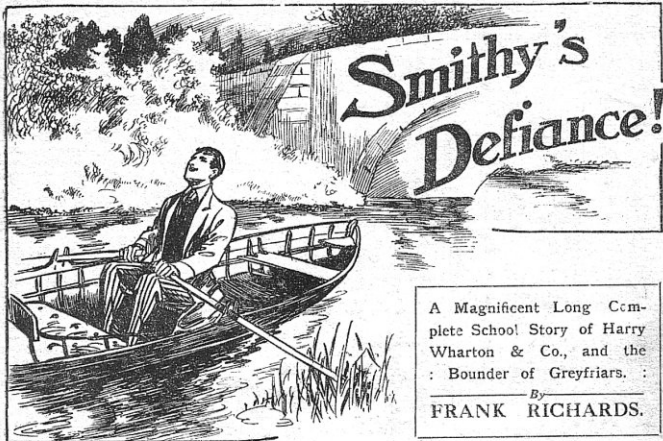
GRAND COMPLETE TALE OF THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.



### SIR HILTON POPPER IN A RAGE!

The Baronet, blind with rage, brought the whip down on Tom Redwing's helpless form with all his strength.  
(The beginning of all the trouble between Smithy and the School.)





A Magnificent Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., and the Bounder of Greyfriars.

By  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**A Bath for Bunter!**

**T**HAT might be spoof—and then again, it might not," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

The skipper of the Remove at Greyfriars was standing in Study No. 1, with a perplexed frown on his brow, and an opened letter in his hand. The letter—or rather note—had been delivered by the noon post, and bore the Highcliffe postmark. It ran as follows:

"Dear Wharton.—Could you and your chums meet me in the clearing on Popper's Island at 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, to discuss a certain matter of an important and private nature? I have chosen the island not only to ensure secrecy, but for various other reasons—reasons which I will disclose there. You need not reply to this note. If you are not on the island by 3.15, I shall know you cannot come.—Yours sincerely,  
—FRANK COURTENAY."

"It's queer—jolly queer," went on Harry Wharton slowly. "It looks like a spoof, and yet this is certainly old Courtenay's fist, or a jolly good imitation. But—"

"It's pure spoof, if you ask me," said the practical Johnny Bull. "Either it's a little joke of Courtenay's, or else it's another of Ponsouby & Co.'s dirty tricks."

"I think so, too!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, shaking his curly head. "Why should the silly ass choose up the river this time of the year—?"

"To ensure secrecy, of course," said Harry Wharton. "He knows hardly any fellows will be up the river now. In any case, I vote we risk it and go. The weather's mild, and a row up river will be a change. It'll solve the problem of what to do with ourselves this afternoon. There's no footer, and both my

bike and Inky's is in dry dock for repairs, so we can't go for a spin. We could take some grub with us, have tea on the island, and make an afternoon of it. What do you fellows say?"

"Well, now you put it like that," added Cherry, with a grin. "I also vote we go. And if it should be old Pon. & Co. up to any tricks, we'll soon put the kybosh on them! I'm just spoiling for a scrap!"

"And I'm willing," said Frank Nugent promptly.

"Samefully here," said Harree Singh, in his wonderful English. "An esteemed row would be a proper changefulness, my chums."

Johnny Bull nodded slowly.

"I'm willing enough," he said somewhat doubtfully. "But, all the same, I'm certain this is one of those Highcliffe's cad's little games. Anyway, we're not afraid of what Ponsouby can do. And the picnic idea is a jolly good one. So I also say yes."

"Then we'll do it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton briskly. "We'll get a supply of grub from the tuckshop, and hunt out the spirit-stove. Buck up!"

And so it was settled. And within ten minutes the Famous Five, armed with various packages, hurried out into the quad en route for the boathouse. As they were crossing the Close, a fat junior, who had been disconsolately contemplating a plate of stale jam-tarts in the tuckshop window, came panting after them.

"I say, you fellows—"  
"The Famous Five looked round, and groaned in chorus.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's the inevitable Bunter. Want to do a bit of carrying, Bunt?"

Bunter's face brightened, and his eyes gleamed as they fell upon the packages the juniors carried.

"With pleasure, Cherry, old man!" he said affectionately. "I hope I'm not

the fellow to shirk my share of the work—"

"Then carry that podgy carcass of yours away, and bury it!" chuckled Cherry. "It pollutes the happy noon—"

"I mean, afternoon! Scat!"  
"Yes, buzz off!" claimed in Harry Wharton. "We've no time to listen to your cackle, Billy. Travel!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, don't be mean," urged Bunter, trotting to keep pace with the juniors. "I say, I'm coming. If it's a picnic, you chaps know I'm a jolly useful chap at that sort of thing. I'll be the life and soul of the party—"

"Oh, dry up and clear, you burbling chump!" snapped Wharton impatiently.

"Come on—"  
"Half a no!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, stopping as if he had suddenly remembered something. "What about the biscuits?"

"Eh? What biscuits?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"That tin of biscuits we left on Mrs. Mimble's counter. Who feels like trotting back for 'em?"

"What the thump—"  
"I say, you fellows, I'll go," put in Billy Bunter promptly. "Leave that matter in my hands, Cherry, old man. On the counter, did you say?"

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry, with a wink at his surprised chums. "Yes, on the counter. Ask Mrs. Mimble for 'em. But buck up! We can't wait here all day."

"Rely on me!" chuckled Bunter. And he rolled away at top speed towards the tuckshop.

"Exit Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "And now let's get down to the boathouse while that fat nuisance is out of the way."

"You spoofer, Bob!" grinned Wharton. "We left no blessed biscuits on the counter!"

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"Oh, yes, we did; I noticed 'em particularly. But they're not ours, and I didn't say they were. They belong to Mrs. Mimble, I fancy it'll take Bunter dear quite half the afternoon to persuade her to give them to him, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, laughing at Bob Cherry's little dodge for getting rid of Billy Bunter, the five juniors proceeded on their way. As they came in sight of the boathouse, Johnny Bull gave an exclamation.

"Hallo! Smithy and Redwing going up river, too! Looks as if they've had a note!"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I don't think so. Reddy often rows in the winter. He'd pine away and die, I believe, if he didn't have a boat out now and again. Hallo! Smithy's calling."

"What's a helping hand, I expect," grinned Nugent. "Look how they're struggling to launch that old tub."

"If they aren't careful, the old tub'll launch them!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

The chums hurried over to where Vernon-Smith and Redwing were struggling manfully with an ancient single-sculler.

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" panted the Bounder. "This dashed tub was built before Noah's ark. We'll give you a hand with yours afterwards."

"All serene! Heave-o, my hearties!" Working with a will, the nine juniors soon had the two boats launched. After Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing had pushed off, Wharton and Cherry took up the sculls to do likewise.

But just at that moment a breathless shout was heard, and a fat, familiar figure came panting up. It was the persistent Billy Bunter. He came pounding up, puffing and blowing like old bellows.

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Here's the Bunter bird again! Must have tumbled to the wheeze. Jever got left, Bunter?"

"I say, wait for me, you beasts!" panted Bunter. "I believe you rotters were going without me! But I'm jolly well coming—"

"Your mistake—you're not!" laughed Harry Wharton, as he pushed off with a scull. "Your charming society is not—Here, keep off, you ass!"

But evidently William George had no intention of being "left." He rolled forward, and placed one foot on the side of the skiff. It was a most unfortunate move for a clumsy fellow like Bunter to make, and the result was disastrous. His weight caused the boat to rock perilously. The Owl of the Remove, instead of making a jump for it, hesitated—and was lost.

For one brief moment, like an elephant doing the splits, he wobbled 'twixt boat and shore, with an ever-widening gulf beneath him. Suddenly the inevitable happened.

There came a wild howl of terror from Bunter, and the human bridge collapsed. Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of merriment rose from the juniors, and a huge fountain of water rose from the shining Sark as the unlucky Bunter vanished beneath the surface.

He reappeared again, amid a wild swirl and thrashing of water.

"Help! Save me!" he yelled, wallowing in two feet of water. "I'm drowning! Help! Help, you unfeeling rotters! Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Considering that poor Bunter was drowning, the hilarity of the Famous THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 668.

Five was unseemly, to say the least of it.

"Hold on, Bunter!" bawled Bob Cherry. "We'll save you, old fellow."

And as Harry Wharton pulled the boat in again, Bob Cherry sprang ashore and rushed frantically into the boathouse. He reappeared again with a large-sized boathook. The business-end of this he inserted in the back of Bunter's trousers. "Lend a hand, you chaps!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Bunter's life is at stake!"

Willing hands came to Cherry's assistance, and right manfully they struggled with the boathook. Bunter was no lightweight. But fortunately the boathook—and Bunter's trousers—stood the terrific strain well.

Inch by inch the unhappy Owl was raised from the water, looking like an enormous half-drowned rat. And then quite suddenly the rescuers' strength seemed to fail them, and the unlucky Bunter soused under again.

"Keep your hearts up, gallant lads!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Bunter must be saved! What would Greyfriars be without Bunter? Up again!"

And Bunter was lifted a second time. But this time the fat junior was safely landed, and dropped in a sodden heap on the landing-stage.

"Saved!" gasped Bob Cherry fervently. "Hurrah! We've saved Bunter from a groatery wave—I mean, a watery grave. My hat! We'll get the Royal Humane Society's gold medal for this!"

"Bravo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat up, gasping and panting and spluttering, and glared round furiously at the laughing juniors.

"Gug-gug-gug! Oh—oh crumbs!" he gasped. "You—you—you murderers! villains! Oh dear! I might have drowned. Beasts!"

He staggered to his feet, and shook a fat fish at the laughing Famous Five as they tumbled aboard their boat, almost helpless with laughter.

"Yah! Rotters!" he hooted. "This is all your fault, you howling cads! Yah! Beasts!"

"Ta-ta, bluebell!" called Bob Cherry in reply. "Mind you change your wet socks, Bunter dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton bent to the sculls, and pulled up-stream after Vernon-Smith and Redwing.

For a brief moment William George Bunter blinked after them, with a ferocity that bad fair to crack his glasses, and then he rolled away, with clothes dripping and boots squeaking distally.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### An Unpleasant Incident!

"KEEP your eyes peeled for old Popper, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived at Popper's Island, warm and breathless after a long and strong pull up the Sark. They had duly overtaken Vernon-Smith and Redwing and at the latter's suggestion a strenuous race had ensued.

Redwing was the son of a sailorman, and was as much at home in a boat as out of one. But though he rowed manfully his efforts proved to be hopeless. After a few lengths ding-dong race Wharton and Cherry took the lead, and soon left the single-sculler far behind. It was Harry Wharton who uttered the warning as they jumped ashore on the island and pulled the boat up on the bank.

"Keep your eyes peeled for old Popper!" he repeated, with a sharp glance around. "You know what a fuss

the old cad kicks up if he catches anyone trespassing here. And it's out of bounds, remember."

"Blow old Popper!" retorted Bob Cherry. "It's public land, and the old hunk has no right to stop fellows from coming here!"

Harry Wharton nodded. Bob Cherry's words were true enough—at least, so the fellows at Greyfriars contended. In their opinion, the land was public property, and Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, had no right to claim it, or to stop fellows going there.

But as Sir Hilton never failed to report fellows caught there, it was only wise for the juniors to keep their eyes "peeled," as Harry Wharton put it.

The Famous Five soon had the packages ashore, and, keeping wary eyes open for a possible ambush, they pushed on through the bare trees towards the clearing mentioned in the note. So far nothing had been seen of any Highcliffe fellows—friendly, or otherwise—and they were beginning to think the business was, after all, only a "mare's nest." And when they arrived at the clearing a moment later, and found it deserted, Harry Wharton grinned ruefully.

"So it's only a silly practical joke after all!" he said, glancing uneasily round him. "It's well after three now, and there's nobody here. Anyway, there's no harm done, so we'll have tea. But I'm blest if I can see why—What's that?"

Harry Wharton broke off in alarm as an ironical cheer, followed by a roar of laughter, came from the river behind them.

"Oh, my hat! That's Ponsoby's voice!" gasped Johnny Bull. "The boats! Come on—quick!"

In a body the juniors crashed through the bushes to investigate, and as they reached the edge of the little wood, and glanced across the shining river, they stopped aghast.

"What the thump—" began Harry Wharton. "Oh my hat! Highcliffe rotters! They've done us, after all! They've collared our boat!"

It was true enough. The boat they had left drawn up on the bank was gone. It was tied to the stern of another boat, in which were three grinning Highcliffe juniors. They were Ponsoby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, three cads of Highcliffe School. And the unhappy Greyfriars juniors realised with dismay that the precious note they had so lightly considered was, after all, a forgery, and that they had indeed been spoofed.

When several yards out, Ponsoby, who had been lazily pulling at the sculls, ceased rowing. He turned a grinning face to the Greyfriars fellows.

"What price Greyfriars now?" he yelled triumphantly. "Marooned, by gad!"

"Oh, absolutely!" chortled Vavasour. Harry Wharton's face darkened wrathfully.

"Come back, you howling cads!" he roared. "I'll smash you, Ponsoby, if you don't bring out boat back!"

"Reward not good enough, old bean!" called Ponsoby mockingly. "Nothing doing. This is where we smile. Ha, ha!"

"Ho, ha, ha!" echoed Gadsby and Vavasour gleefully.

And, picking up the sculls again, Ponsoby dug them in, and the Highcliffe boys moved slowly up-stream towards Highcliffe. It was followed by the savage glares of the helpless Greyfriars party.

"Dished, diddled, and done!" groaned Bob Cherry, with a glance across the stretch of gleaming river. "We're fairly stranded, unless we can swim for it."



Bob Cherry reached out with the boat-hook and inserted the business end in the back of Bunter's trousers. "Lend a hand, you chaps!" Bob shouted. "Bunter's life is at stake!" Willing hands came to his assistance. (See Chapter 1.)

"The swimfulness," murmured Harree Singh, "would be coldful and terrific, my worthy chum."

A last faint yell of derisive laughter reached the juniors as the Highcliffe boat, with the empty Greyfriars craft in tow, vanished round the bend. Harry Wharton clenched his fists.

"Well, it can't be helped!" he muttered savagely. "They've fairly done us, and it serves us right for being so dashed cooksure. But we'll soon have our chance to get our own back, never fear. The best thing— Oh crumbs!"

Harry Wharton broke off and frowned. From the opposite bank of the river came a sharp, angry cry. Glancing across, they saw a well-known, tall, angular individual, waving and shouting towards the island.

"Oh crumbs!" he repeated. "It's old Popper himself! What rotten luck!"

"I bet those Highcliffe rotters did this!" muttered Bob Cherry warmly. "They've sent the old chap word. Now for trouble. He's got his riding-whip with him."

"And his dog," grinned Bob Cherry. "Luckily we're all in the same boat, so to speak. He can't get at us, and we can't get at him. Doesn't he look waxy, though?"

Sir Hilton Popper did indeed look waxy. He was brandishing his riding-whip threateningly at the juniors.

"Come 'oll my island, you young

soundrels!" he shouted. "Do you hear? By gad! I'll teach you to trespass on my property, you young puppies!"

"Bow-wow!" replied Bob Cherry disrespectfully. "Go and eat coke, old sport!"

"Eh—what?" thundered the angry baronet. "What's that? By gad! You dare to speak to me like—like—"

Sir Hilton Popper's words ceased, and he seemed to choke with rage.

"Here, easy on, Bob!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with a faint grin. "You'll give the old chap an apoplectic fit!"

"Rats!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The arrogant old lunks cannot recognise us at this distance, and it wouldn't matter if he did. I've wanted to have a chat under such circumstances as this with the old fraud for a long time."

"You— you impertinent young rascal!" roared Sir Hilton, at last. "You dare to tell me to—do— By gad! I'll have you flogged! I'll have you expelled! I know who you are—"

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Wha-a-a-at!"

The baronet fell back a step. He seemed scarcely to believe his own ears. That he, Sir Hilton Popper, Bart., county magnate, and a magistrate, should be called a liar by a schoolboy from the school of which he was a governor, quite took his breath away.

For a brief moment he stared speechlessly at the group of juniors. Then he

shook his riding-whip, and fairly danced with rage.

And it was the dancing that did it. The five juniors did not see clearly what happened, but apparently one of the angry baronet's prancing feet came down on the paw of his young terrier, for a sudden, shrill yelp rang out across the river.

It was followed almost immediately by another yelp, as the furious baronet aimed a savage kick at his dog.

Probably the dog had already been in the baronet's bad books that afternoon, and suffered for it. At all events, it was adding insult to injury for the terrier, and he retaliated by snapping at the august calf of Sir Hilton Popper.

As this was encased in thick leather gaiters, it could hardly have hurt the baronet. But it was enough just then for the enraged man; and what followed made the watching juniors furious and disgusted.

Sir Hilton Popper had long been known as a man of violent temper; but that afternoon he proved he was also a cowardly bully of the first water.

With a growl of rage, he bent, and, gripping the snapping terrier, lifted it at arm's-length. Then the riding-whip came down with great force.

Again and again the heavy whip fell, and the sound of the blows and the terrier's piteous yelps rang clearly across the water.



"Oh, the hulking brute—the rotten cur!" muttered Bob Cherry thickly.

Harry Wharton clenched his hands, and his eyes blazed.

"Stop!" he shouted fiercely. "You cowardly rotter! let that dog go!"

But the furious baronet seemed to have lost all control of himself; he did not heed, and Wharton's face flushed a dull red.

"Oh, the beastly bully!" he choked. "If we only had our boat—"

And Harry Wharton took a step forward as if he contemplated diving to the rescue, clothed as he was. But this was not necessary. From down-stream sounded the dip of blades and the rhythmic click of oars in rowlocks, and Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing swung into view.

Redwing was pulling leisurely at the sculls, but as he heard the commotion he glanced round, and his lethargy vanished. With a hurried whisper to the Bounder, he bent to the sculls, and the boat fairly jumped over the water.

Stroke after stroke he pulled through with savage energy. A few yards from the bank he stopped rowing, and threw the sculls from him. Then, as the boat buried its nose in the bank, he sprang ashore on to the towpath, and flung himself at the baronet.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Greyfriars Laughs Last!

SO engrossed was Sir Hilton in thrashing his dog that he did not until Redwing had gripped his uplifted arm did he notice the junior.

And then, as he turned, startled, he released his grip, and the animal fell to the ground and limped away along the towpath, yelping shrilly.

"You—you cad!" ground out Tom Redwing, still retaining his grip on the bully's arm. "If you weren't old enough to be my father, I'd give you a taste of that whip myself!"

"What—what— You interfering young jackanapes!" gasped Sir Hilton Popper, glaring at the junior. "Begad, I'll—!"

The baronet suddenly flung the junior from him with savage and unexpected force. Redwing staggered back a step, tripped over a trailing creeper, and fell heavily with one foot twisted beneath him.

He attempted to rise again instantly, but fell back with a muttered cry and white, set face.

And then, once again, Sir Hilton Popper proved the type of person he was. His arm went up, and, blind with rage, he brought the whip down with all his force on Tom Redwing's helpless form.

Twice the whip fell; but only twice. For at that moment Herbert Vernon-Smith came rushing up. There was a dark look on the Bounder's somewhat hard face, and his eyes were glittering as he literally hurled himself at the bully.

The impact sent Sir Hilton with a crash and a muttered imprecation backwards into a bed of brambles.

"Smithy!" muttered Tom Redwing.

The Bounder stooped, and, picking up the riding-whip, he snapped it across his knee and flung the two pieces far out over the gleaming surface of the Sark.

Then he turned to the prostrate and satiated Sir Hilton Popper.

"You blustering bully! You rank outsider!" he muttered, in disgust. "If you don't clear off at once, I'll—"

"If you don't clear off at once, I'll—"

"If you don't clear off at once, I'll—"

Sir Hilton Popper staggered to his feet, speechless with fury. He took one step towards Vernon-Smith, but as his furious gaze met the Bounder's steady, contemptuous glances he eyes fell, and, biting his grey moustache savagely, he picked up his hat.

"You—you shall suffer for this, boy!" he said thickly, glowering at the junior. "You shall suffer for this, Vernon-Smith. I will have you expelled! I will have you flogged and expelled for this outrage!"

And, turning on his heel, Sir Hilton Popper stamped away towards Greyfriars in a towering rage.

Redwing looked up at his chum uneasily.

"That's done it, Smithy!" he exclaimed quietly. "There'll be the very dickens of a shindy over this!"

The Bounder smiled cynically.

"Don't you believe it," he said. "The old ruffian knows better than to mention a word of this. Wharton and his pals were witnesses of all that happened, and he knows he acted like a blackguard. But look the pompous old rotter! You're hurt, Redwing. What's wrong?"

"Twisted my ankle a little, I think," answered Redwing, with a faint smile.

"Give me a hand, Smithy." I don't—

"Hullo, Wharton's calling us!"

"Wants us to go over there," said Vernon-Smith, a moment later. "Come on, Redwing! Let's hope we shall be in time for the picnic."

Vernon-Smith helped his crippled chum down to the boat. Tom Redwing seated himself in the stern, while the Bounder picked up the sculls, and a moment later was pulling towards the group of fellows on the island.

"My hat, Smithy, you've fairly done it now!" as Wharton's greeting as the Bounder jumped ashore.

Vernon-Smith laughed lightly as he noted the grave faces of the Famous Five.

"I only wish now," he said, "that I had given him a taste of the whip before chucking it away. The old villain got off too lightly!"

"He certainly deserved it, and more. And I'm not so sure that I wouldn't have given it him," replied Wharton quietly. "But there'll be trouble about this, Smithy. The old rotter will never rest until he's had his own back. He'll never forgive a thing like that; and he'll move heaven and earth to get you expelled."

"Let him," said the Bounder indifferently. "And blow him and all his works! And what did you want us for—to join the merry picnic party?"

"Yes, presently. But lend us your boat first, Smithy. Ponsoby and his pals have pinched ours, and we're jolly well going after 'em. It's lucky for us you came along."

And Harry Wharton related to Vernon-Smith the loss of the boat.

"I'll come with you," grinned the Bounder. "I'm just spoiling for a scrap with someone!"

"Oh, good! Three will be ample, though, to deal with those waddy rotters. You'd better be the other, Bob."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry.

Without loss of time Tom Redwing was helped ashore, and the avengers started out towards Highcliffe after Ponsoby & Co. Harry Wharton was rowing, and he made the craft fly over the water.

The Highcliffe raiders had a good start, but none of the three Greyfriars fellows had any fear of not catching them up quickly. Ponsoby was not fond of work, and it was unlikely they had got far away.

Sure enough, as they turned the bend in the river, Bob Cherry gave a triumphant exclamation:

"Highcliffe cads ahoy! Bend to it, Harry, old chap. Here's where the cinema orchestra plays martial music."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton bent his shoulders to it, and the Greyfriars craft rapidly overhauled Ponsoby & Co. Suddenly Ponsoby became aware he was pursued, and, evidently realising escape by rowing on was hopeless, he pulled madly for the bank.

Ponsoby was not an oarsman, and the weird and wonderful evolutions he performed with the sculls was a sight for gods and men and little fishes.

But it was useless. When a few yards from the bank the Greyfriars skiff ran gently alongside.

"Up guards and at 'em!" roared Bob Cherry, springing about the other boat.

"Here, dash it all; steady on, you cads!" yelled Ponsoby, jumping to his feet as the boat rocked dangerously.

"You'll have us over! Yarooohoo!"

Ponsoby's words were prophetic. Bob Cherry's hard fist smote his long nose, and, losing his balance, he toppled, with a mighty splash, and still mightier yell, into the river. And a little later there were two further splashes.

As Gadsby and Vavasour jumped up to meet Vernon-Smith, Harry Wharton reached over and dug Gadsby in the chest with the blade of a scull. Gadsby staggered back, tripped over the seat, and, with a wild howl, followed his leader into the river.

At the same moment Vernon-Smith's fist took the waddy Vavasour under the chin and deposited him in the bottom of the boat.

As he lay sprawling, the Bounder, with Bob Cherry's help, picked him up by his arms and legs, and dropped the kicking and struggling junior overboard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows roared heartily as the three Highcliffe cads floundered in the shallow water, and splashed dismally to dry land. They were dripping with water, and using expressions that certainly were not taught them in the Form-room at Highcliffe.

"What price Highcliffe now?" asked Bob Cherry sweetly. "Here's where we smile, Pon, old bean. We usually have the last laugh, don't we? Smile, you fellows. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Without waiting to hear Ponsoby's remarks on that question, Bob Cherry rapidly untied the raided boat, and, giving the Highcliffe boat a shove, he sent it adrift far out into the river.

Then, followed by the furious antics of Ponsoby & Co. and with the recovered boat in tow, the Greyfriars juniors returned to the island in high feather.

They were met with a loud cheer from the juniors waiting on the island.

"Good egg! So you've been successful!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "What happened?"

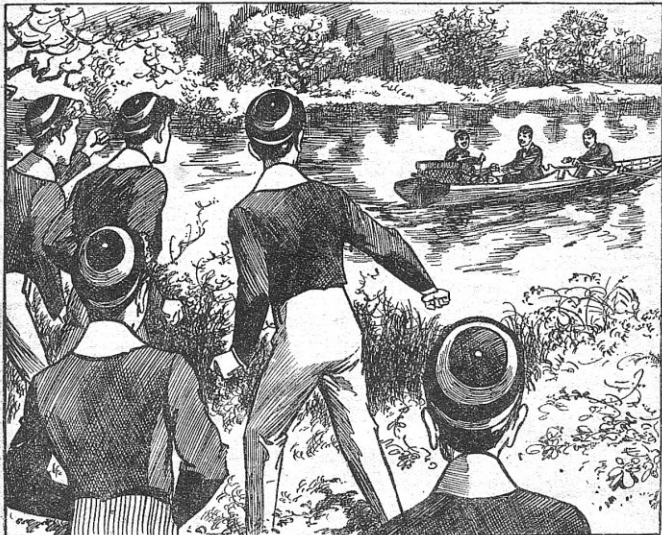
"More than successful!" laughed Harry Wharton, jumping ashore.

"We've got the boat back, and put the kybosh on Pon and his hirelings into the bargain. But I'll tell the story during tea. Everything ready?"

"The esteemed feast is worthily prepared. O worthy King!" said Hurree Singh, with a grin.

"Then come on!"

And a moment later the merry party were seated on the grass around the festive board—or, rather, newspaper. Even



In a body the juniors crashed through the undergrowth and stopped on the edge of the water. "What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Oh, my hat! Highcliff rotters! They've done us, after all! They've collared our boat!" (See Chapter 2.)

with the addition of Vernon-Smith and Redwing to the party, there was enough and to spare. And while the hungry juniors set about the good things, Harry Wharton related what had happened to Ponsonby & Co., and the laughter of the juniors rang out under the bare trees.

Only Redwing did not join in the general merriment. He sat, moody and thoughtful, scarcely eating anything.

"Why that worried brow, Reddy, old sport?" asked Bob Cherry at last. "Lost your appetite, or is your ankle giving you ginger?"

"Better take you to the sanny when we get back," put in Harry Wharton.

"My foot's hurting me a little," said Redwing. "But it isn't that. I'm thinking about old Popper."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, looking grave. "I'd forgotten all about that old rotter!"

"Blow him!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you, Redwing."

"No need to trouble about it at all, as far as I can see," said Vernon-Smith. "Take my word for it. Old Popper won't dare to bring the affair up again. He'll be only too glad to let it drop. Cheer up, Redwing, you old ass! Don't be a wet blanket!"

Tom Redwing laughed. And for the rest of the picnic brightened up a little, reassured by his chum's confident words.

But for once the Bounder was wrong.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Before the Head!

"I SAY, you fellows, what's up?" After finishing up the picnic with a ramble round the island, the juniors had pulled leisurely back to Greyfriars in the dusk of the evening. As they entered the old gateway Billy Bunter rolled breathlessly up to them.

The fat junior looked excited, and his podgy features wore a fat grin—plain indication that there was trouble in store for someone.

"I say, you fellows, what's up?" he repeated, blinking inquiringly through his short-sighted eyes at Vernon-Smith. "What have those silly asses Smithy and Redwing been up to, Wharton, old chap? Yarooop! Leggo, Wharton, you beast!"

The short-sighted Billy Bunter yelled frenziedly, as Vernon-Smith, whom he had evidently mistaken for Wharton, clutched his little snub nose and gave it a playful twist.

"So I've been up to something, like a silly ass, have I?" asked the Bounder, with interest. "What's the excitement about, Bunt, my tulip?"

Bunter rubbed his burning nose, and blinked reproachfully at the grinning Bounder.

"Oh, it's you, Smithy! I thought it was that beast Wharton—I mean, I knew, of course, it was you all the time, Smithy, old chap. I say, you know.

What have you been doing to old Popper?"

"Popper?" repeated the Bounder, with a slight start. "What—"

"I knew there was something up when the old ass came in. He was hopping mad—fairly raving!" grinned Bunter. "And I say, Smithy, you might tell a fellow. I know you've been up to something, 'cause Wingate's been asking for you ever since."

Vernon-Smith grinned faintly as he met Redwing's uneasy glance.

"So you were right, and I was wrong," he said lightly. "Old Popper looks like kicking up a fuss—what?"

"Looks like it," put in Harry Wharton, frowning. "My hat! If he does so—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, sit on that fat gramophone, someone!" snapped Wharton crossly. "I'm fed— Look out! Here's Wingate!"

Wingate came up just then, his face grave.

"Vernon-Smith, you're wanted in the Head's study at once—and you, too, Redwing!" he said curtly. "You'd better buck up!"

"Redwing's sprained his ankle rather badly, Wingate," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Hadn't he better go to the sanny?"

The captain of Greyfriars glanced sharply at Tom Redwing, who was leaning heavily on Wharton's arm. The

junior's face was white, and it was evident he was in no little pain.

"In that case—yes," replied Wingate quietly. "Some of you fellows help him there. I'll explain to the Head. Come, Vernon-Smith!"

Wingate turned away, and, with a reassuring grin at Redwing and a careless nod to the others, the Bounder followed him indoors.

As he entered the Head's study a moment later with Wingate's eyes gleamed as he noticed that Sir Hilton Popper was seated with Dr. Locke. The baronet, certainly looked, as Bunter had said, "hopping mad." He jammed his eyeglass into his fiery eye, and fixed a ferocious glare upon the Bounder—a glare which that iron-nerved youth met with a cool, steady stare.

Dr. Locke also looked anything but pleased. To tell the truth, he was weary of the pompous Sir Hilton Popper and his everlasting complaints. But Sir Hilton was a member of the governing body of Greyfriars, and he could scarcely ignore them, had he wished.

As Wingate explained Redwing's absence the Head's frown deepened, and when he turned to the Bounder after Wingate had retired, his brow was thunderous.

"Vernon-Smith," he exclaimed sternly. "I have sent for you to answer a very grave charge Sir Hilton Popper has brought against you—a charge that has amazed and disgusted me! He states you have actually made an unprovoked attack—"

"A savage and criminal assault, begad!" rumbled Sir Hilton Popper, glowering at the Bounder. "The young hooligan—"

"Pray allow me to speak, Sir Hilton!" snapped the Head tartly. "And I must add that I strongly resent such a term as 'hooligan' applied to boys of mine!"

"Huh!"

"If the boy has assaulted you as you state, Sir Hilton, then he has committed a very grave offence, and will be punished as he deserves!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Vernon-Smith, I understand that you made an unprovoked and entirely unwarranted attack upon Sir Hilton Popper this afternoon. If you have any possible explanation to offer for such disgraceful conduct, I shall be glad to hear it. Why did you attack Sir Hilton Popper?"

"Because he was behaving like a beast and a bully!" said the Bounder evenly.

"Begad!"

"Vernon-Smith!" thundered the astounded Head. "How dare you?"

"I stick to what I said, sir," muttered the Bounder doggedly. "He was beating his dog like the bullying brute he is, and Redwing stopped him, as any other decent fellow would have done. And he would have treated Redwing the same if I hadn't chipped—"

"The young scoundrel is lying!" gasped Sir Hilton. "I—I—"

"I am not lying!" retorted the Bounder coolly. "H—"

"Silence!" shouted the Head angrily. "Vernon-Smith, you are only making your position worse by this astounding insolence! How dare you make such assertions, and use such expressions to a gentleman of—"

"A true what I say, sir."

"Nonsense!" snapped the Head, calming himself with an effort. "Both Redwing and yourself appear to have acted in a reckless and ruffianly manner, Vernon-Smith."

"He was beating his dog unmercifully, sir," said the Bounder quietly. "And all Redwing did was to hold his arm and stop him. If anyone is to blame—"

"The Magnet Library.—No. 668.

The Head held up his hand with a commanding gesture.

"I will deal with Redwing's part in this disgraceful affair later," he said sternly. "I have already had the facts from Sir Hilton Popper. Sir Hilton has assured me that the dog snarped at him, and that he was only receiving an ordinary, and well-merited chastisement that day."

"Then Sir Hilton Popper was not speaking the truth, sir!"

"What?"

"This—this is too much!" stammered the baronet furiously. "The young scoundrel has concocted this account of what took place to save himself! But I demand, as a governor of this school, that he be severely punished, Dr. Locke! I demand his expulsion, or, at the very least, a public flogging! Nothing will sat—"

"You may rest assured that the boy will be adequately punished, Sir Hilton," said the Head coldly. "But—"

The Head paused and fixed a worried and perplexed gaze upon Vernon-Smith. Invariably, Dr. Locke was just and fair-minded to a degree. But it was a junior's word against Sir Hilton Popper's. The Head heartily disliked the arrogant and domineering baronet, but he could scarcely accept a junior's word before Sir Hilton Popper's eyes.

And again, in the Head's eyes, the word of Vernon-Smith was not above suspicion. Had the culprit been Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry, for instance, Dr. Locke would certainly have investigated the matter with the utmost thoroughness.

But the Bounder of Greyfriars was a curious mixture of good and bad—the good, happily, predominating. His actions on occasions in the past had been by no means above reproach. And the Head remembered this, and his decision was made accordingly.

He compressed his lips and turned to the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith," he said sternly, "did I think for one moment that your savage and inexcusable attack on the person of Sir Hilton Popper was prompted other than by honourable motives, I would expect you instantly from Greyfriars! But I believe you acted as you did believing that the dog was being ill-treated—though, even then, nothing can condone the serious extent of the assault. For that your punishment must be severe—your conduct and disrespectful expressions to Sir Hilton Popper just now alone merits that. You will be publicly flogged to-morrow morning before lessons commence! You—"

"And I," snapped the baronet instantly, "will be present to see the punishment carried out, begad!"

The Head frowned angrily.

"That will not be necessary nor desirable, Sir Hilton," he retorted with spirit.

"But I insist!" rumbled Sir Hilton Popper, his eyes gleaming. "It will be a lasting lesson to the rest of the young rascals—none of whom at any time treats me with the respect my position entitles me to. Huh!"

"Very well, Sir Hilton," said the Head quietly, after a pause. "You may go, Vernon-Smith!"

"Thank you, sir!"

The Bounder left the room. There was a bitter look on his hard face as he strode along the passage. At the corner Harry Wharton & Co. were anxiously awaiting him.

"Well, Smithy," asked Harry Wharton, glancing curiously at the junior, "what happened?"

"What I had expected," rejoined the Bounder with a sneer. "The giddy Pandrum won the day! I'm to be pub-

licly flogged in the morning for my wickedness, and dear old Popper is coming to gloat over the sordid proceedings!"

"Wh-a-a-at?"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors stared blankly at Vernon-Smith.

"But—but that's a rotten injustice!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Dash it all! Didn't you explain the whole business? Didn't you tell the Head the truth, and that we were witnesses?"

"I didn't get the chance to explain much. I fancy I upset the dear old Head's apple-cart by my gross disrespect to my elders!" observed the Bounder mockingly.

"Well, it's a jolly shame—that's all I've got to say!" growled Johnny Bail. "Yes, rather!"

"Look here!" muttered Harry Wharton. "We're not going to allow that to happen, Smithy! We'll jolly well see the Head and tell him the truth!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "No good! You can take my word for it!" he said carelessly. "I shouldn't trouble. A lot might happen before the flogging comes off!"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Only that I intend to give old Popper a big disappointment in the morning, and save the Head a great amount of energy—that's all!"

And, smiling cynically, the Bounder strolled along the passage.

"What does he mean?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blow what he means!" muttered Harry Wharton grimly. "We're seeing the Head about this. Come on!"

"Yes, rather!"

And in a determined body the Fancus Five approached the Head's study. As they reached the door, the tall figures of Sir Hilton Popper emerged. He glared at the juniors, and strode away swishing his stick angrily.

"Come in!"

As the five juniors filed into the room, the Head eyed them curiously and grimly.

"Well, Wharton, what is it?" he inquired, testily.

"It—it's about Vernon-Smith, sir," said Harry Wharton, rendered more than a little nervous by the sudden gleam in the Head's eyes. "You—you see, sir—"

"Well, proceed, Wharton!"

"Ahem! We—that is, we think that Vernon-Smith is being unjustly treated by—"

"What!"

The Head fairly thundered out the word, and Wharton bit his lip and flushed. He had made a bad start—a shockingly bad start.

"I—mean, sir, that—that we were witnesses of what occurred this afternoon, Sir Hilton—"

"Ah! Then in that case I shall be glad to hear what you have to say, Wharton," exclaimed the Head, with dangerous calmness. "Did you see and hear all that took place, Wharton?"

"Not exactly, sir. We did not see clearly everything, and we heard very little. You see, sir, we were on the island and Sir Hilton was on the towpath across the river. But—"

"Then in that case your evidence is of no value whatsoever!" snapped the Head tartly. "Hold out your hand, Wharton!"

"Wh-a-a-at for, sir?"

"What for?" thundered the Head.

"As head boy of the Remove, Wharton, you should surely know that. The island is out of bounds. I have repeatedly pointed out that fact, and expressively forbidden any boys trespassing there under any pretext whatsoever. Now hold out your hand, Wharton!"



The next few minutes were painful ones for the heroes of the Remove. Four strokes each was their punishment, and when the Head laid down the cane at last he was breathless.

"Now go—all of you!" he panted. Harry Wharton clenched his lips tightly.

"Excuse me, sir! I must say that we think Vernon-Smith—"

"Silence, Wharton! You may go!"

"But, sir—"

"Go!"

And Harry Wharton and his chums went; it was really the best and only thing to do under the circumstances.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Bounder Retires!

"A NY of you fellows awake?" Herbert Vernon-Smith asked the question in a low voice as he sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory the following morning. It was barely light yet, and not for another hour, at least, would the rising-bell summon Greyfriars to another day's duties.

And the only answer the Bounder received to his question was the soft breathing of the sleeping Removites, and a trumpet-like snore that reverberated from the nasal organ of William George Bunter.

After waiting a moment, Vernon-Smith slipped from his bed and began to dress.

There was an air of cool resolution on the Bounder's keen features that indicated plainly that, whatever he was about to do, had already been planned in advance.

Vernon-Smith was a youth of strong will and quick decision, and, as a matter of fact, his course of action had been mapped out immediately on leaving the Head's study after receiving his sentence.

To the Bounder, an ordinary flogging was nothing; it was hard all through, and had had many such experiences during his somewhat stormy career at Greyfriars.

But the humiliation of a public flogging was a different matter to a youth of his proud and haughty nature; and a public flogging under the glowing eyes of Sir Hilton Popper he had no intention of submitting to.

Added to this, the Bounder was smarting under a strong sense of injustice. He

felt that the Head had judged and sentenced him without a fair hearing, and he was implacably determined that the flogging should not take place.

And the only way to prevent that happening was to leave Greyfriars—not for good, though. The Bounder was too fond of the old school for that. His plan was to keep away from the school until Saturday, for on that day his father was visiting Greyfriars.

Besides being a millionaire, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was a hard man—very hard. But he was not all hard, and all the tenderness of his nature was bestowed upon the Bounder. And the Bounder knew him well enough to feel confident that he would move heaven and earth to see justice done to his son—and his son's friend—Tom Redwing.

That he was running a grave risk of expulsion by such an action he was fully aware. But in his present bitter mood, the iron-nerved junior would have accepted that rather than submit to a humiliating, and, what he considered, an undeserved punishment.

After Vernon-Smith had finished dressing, he left the dormitory and proceeded along the deserted corridors to his own study.

There he got his cap and raincoat and a handbag he had packed in readiness the previous evening. Then he made his way to the lower box-room window.

It was too early yet for Gosling, the porter, to be about, and the Bounder strode boldly across the silent quad, and a moment later had scaled the school wall, and was walking briskly down Friar-dale Lane.

Presently he turned down the little lane leading to the boathouse on the banks of the Slack, and here he stopped.

The huge double doors were closed and locked, but the Bounder did not bother about them. He strolled round to the back of the building, and in a very few moments had forced an entrance by clambering through one of the dressing-room windows.

After that the rest was easy. In a couple of minutes he had the double doors wide open. Choosing one of the lighter skills, he ran it down on the trolley and launched it.

The Bounder re-entered the boathouse, and was selecting a pair of sculls from the rack, when his keen eyes fell upon a long bamboo pole, and a heap of canvas in the corner. It was the trust and sails sometimes used on the larger boats.

"My hat! Just the very thing!" he muttered. "I should be able to rig up quite a decent tent and groundsheet out of that little lot. Good egg!"

The junior carried the mast and canvas down to his boat, and left the boathouse, and soon was pulling leisurely up stream.

At the end of half an hour he pulled into the bank, and made himself comfortable on the cushions. And there he waited until his watch indicated the hour of eight o'clock. Then, jumping ashore, he set out briskly across the fields towards Friar-dale.

The village shops were just opening when he arrived there, and, entering Briggs', the grocers', he was soon giving orders on a scale that surprised the worthy tradesman exceedingly.

"Shall I send them up to the school, Master Smith?" asked Mr. Briggs, as Vernon-Smith paid the bill.

"No, thanks!" replied the Bounder briskly. "I want them sent along to the old bridge over the Sark about ten, and I'll be there to receive them. Can you do it?"

"Er—oh, yes, sir! Certainly, Master Smith!" assented the grocer, in surprise. "I'll send the boy on his bicycle with them."

Vernon-Smith nodded, and proceeded

to the local stationer's. There he purchased a couple of envelopes and writing-paper, and hastily scribbled two notes—one to Tom Redwing, and the other to Harry Wharton.

"I'll get Briggs' boy to call round at Greyfriars with these," he mused. "Poor old Redwing will be no end worried about me when he hears I'm missing—until he gets this note, at any rate. And now for Popper's Island and glorious liberty!"

The Bounder left the village, but barely had he reached the outskirts when his eyes fell upon the partly-faired of P.-c. Tozer plodding along ahead of him. The Friar-dale constable was leading, or, rather, dragging, a reluctant young terrier behind him at the end of a cord. At any other time the Bounder would have grinned at the spectacle; but now he frowned, and was about to retrace his steps when P.-c. Tozer glanced round, and touched his helmet as he recognised the junior.

"What rotten luck!" thought the Bounder. "If he's asked about me he's bound to say he's seen me. Can't be helped now, though. In any case, Popper's Island will be the last place they'll think of searching for me this time of the year."

And Vernon-Smith quickened his steps to pass the constable, when his eyes gleamed suddenly. There was something familiar about the little terrier to the Bounder.

"Morning, Tozer, old sport!" he exclaimed carelessly. "That merry sleuth-hound the latest addition to the Friar-dale Police Force?"

P.-c. Tozer winced a little. The pompous guardian of the law in Friar-dale did not like being addressed as "old sport" by a schoolboy.

"Which it ain't that, Master Smith," he grunted, stopping to mop his perspiring brow. "This 'ere dog belongs to Sir Hilton Popper—leastsays, it's got 'is name on the collar. I found 'im wanderin' about this 'ere lane late last night, and a nice state 'e were in, too, an' no mistake."

"Is that so?" murmured the Bounder, glancing with interest at the dog.

"Look at 'im!" said P.-c. Tozer indignantly, picking up the little terrier with a tenderness that surprised the junior. "Look at them there marks—summat cruel them was when I picked the little beggar up. The brute what had them marks was a regular 'Un. And I bet Sir Hilton Popper will play 'Amlet when 'e sees 'em!"

Vernon-Smith smiled at that. He fancied P.-c. Tozer was making a bloomer there.

"And, what's more," proceeded the constable darkly, "if I finds out who's done it, I'll kick up a fuss meself! I'll put the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on 'is track mighty sharp, Master Smith!"

Again Vernon-Smith smiled. It was extremely unlikely that the local police would dare to put the R.S.P.C.A. on the track of a powerful local magnate like Sir Hilton Popper, Bart., J.P.—unless under pressure from someone as powerful.

"And I suppose you're taking the poor little beggar back to Popper Court now?" asked the Bounder, with a compassionate glance at the dog.

"I am that, blow it! Though the little rascal don't seem to want to go 'ome, somehow. Nice tramp for me—I don't think!" grumbled the constable. "And nothing at the end of it, I bet—not even a drink."

The Bounder left the constable, still grumbling, and strode on with a curious



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look on his face. And it was in a very thoughtful mood that he reached the waiting boat and picked up the sculls.

Ten minutes later he reached the island, and after carrying the mast and canvas to a clearing in the trees, the Bouncer set to work making camp.

For fully an hour he worked hard, making things ship-shape; and then he boarded the boat again, and was soon pulling cheerfully towards the bridge to meet the grocer's boy with the provisions.

He was in great spirits, and he told himself, as he layed leisurely at the sculls, that he was enjoying the novel holiday, and was looking forward keenly to a couple of days camping-out.

Vernon Smith was a hardy youth, and the chance of a cold night did not worry him. But, even so, the Bouncer could not help his thoughts straying back to Greyfriars.

He was enjoying himself—yes! But how was it going to end?

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Missing!

There was no little sensation in the Remove dormitory that morning when Vernon-Smith's absence was discovered.

Late the previous evening Wingate had passed the word round that there was to be a general assembly in Big Hall at nine o'clock, and up to falling asleep the one topic of discussion in the dormitory had been the threatened public flogging of the Bouncer.

And, naturally enough, Harry Wharton's first waking thought was of the Bouncer; but as he glanced across at that junior's bed he noted, with a start of surprise, that it was unoccupied.

"My only hat, you fellows! Where's Smithy?" he ejaculated.

As the captain of the Remove asked the question, several fellows sat up, and as they blinked drowsily across at Vernon-Smith's bed there was a general exclamation of astonishment.

"Gone out for an early-morning constitutional, I expect," ventured Johnny Bull doubtfully.

"Then he's been gone a jolly long time!" exclaimed Peter Todd grimly, as he felt the sheets of the bed. "For the blessed sheets are quite cold. It's an hour at least since this bed was slept in!"

"I say, you fellows, supposing he's done a bunk?" suggested Billy Bunter, blinking over the top of his bedclothes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The idea of the hardy Bouncer bolting to escape a flogging struck the Remove juniors as very funny.

"I don't see anything to laugh at, Bunter's quite right, if you ask me," sneered Harold Skinner, sitting up in bed. "Smithy's finking the flogging, and he's bolted. I expect—Yoohoop!"

What Skinner expected was never known—though what he got just then he very plainly did not expect. It was Bob Cherry's boot, and it caught the cad of the Remove under the chin, and sent him sprawling over the side of the bed amid an avalanche of bedclothes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers roared as Skinner rolled about, struggling to free himself from the entangling sheets.

"Any more remarks of that sort to make?" inquired Bob Cherry, poisoning his other boot in readiness. "I've another boot here, Skinner!"

Skinner disengaged himself at last, and staggered to his feet, tenderly caressing his aching chin and groaning.

dismally. But he made no more remarks of that sort; he felt he had made too many already. And Bob Cherry continued his dressing with a chuckle.

But Harry Wharton's brow was clouded as the Famous Five left the dormitory together. Skinner's suggestion, or, rather, Billy Bunter's, had caused strange thoughts to enter his mind as he remembered the Bouncer's cryptic prophecy the night before.

"Blessed if I don't begin to think there's something in what Skinner says—at least, that he's bolted," he confided to his chums. "It isn't like Smithy to go out before breakfast like this."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Are you asking for a boot, too, Harry, you chump?"

Harry Wharton grinned a little.

"No; but you chaps remember what Smithy hinted at last night? He as good as said that the flogging wouldn't take place."

"Oh, but that's rot, Harry!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Smithy's as hard as nails, and wouldn't bolt for twenty floggings. He's keeping out of the way, if you ask me. He finks meeting the curious stare of the fellows. I bet he doesn't turn up at breakfast, either!"

And in that, at least, Frank Nugent was correct. When the Remove trooped in to breakfast that morning, Vernon-Smith's place was vacant. Mr. Quelch frowned as he noted the Bouncer's absence.

"Where is Vernon-Smith?" he demanded quickly. "Wharton, do you know why Vernon-Smith is absent?"

"No, sir," answered the captain of the Remove, standing up. "But—but—"

"Well, Wharton?"

"He—he seems to have disappeared, sir," stammered Wharton slowly.

"What?"

"When we turned out this morning his bed was empty, sir," said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch looked grave.

"Bless my soul, Wharton! Why did

you not report this earlier?" he ejaculated. "Inquiries must be made for the boy without delay. Kindly keep order until my return, Wharton."

And the Remove-master rustled away from the table frowning ominously, and leaving the juniors in a buzz of excitement. And when he returned five minutes later, his lips were tightly compressed.

"Boys, you will proceed to your Form-room, as usual, when the bell for classes rings!" he snapped. "The general assembly ordered last night will not take place—for the present, at any rate."

With that, Mr. Quelch seated himself at the head of the table, and breakfast proceeded without further incident.

"Poor old Smithy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the juniors streamed out into the Close. "Where the dickens can the fellow be? I'm jolly glad the flogging's off, but he'll only get it all the hotter when he does turn up."

"I'm afraid so," muttered Harry Wharton. "It's just like Smithy, though, clearing off like this. But he's only making matters worse for himself. It's rotten! But perhaps he'll turn up in time for classes!"

The juniors were still gloomily discussing the affair when the bell for classes rang. Many fellows like Harry Wharton half-expected to find the Bouncer seated calmly in the Form-room. But in that they were disappointed. When the Remove trooped in, the places of both Redwing and Vernon-Smith were vacant.

Lessons were a farce—and a very painful farce for the juniors that morning. The juniors were excited and inattentive, and Mr. Quelch was worried and irritable—a combination of circumstances that resulted in a plentiful crop of lines and canings for the juniors.

"What a morning!" gasped Harry Wharton, as the juniors trooped out at last. "Thank goodness it's over! Wonder if anything's been heard of Smithy?"

"There's Bunter over by the gates. We'll ask him," grinned Bob Cherry. "If anyone knows anything, it will be he." And, lifting up his voice, Bob Cherry sent a stentorian hail across the Close. "Bunter! Bunter!"

It was a shout that could have been heard in Friarshade, but apparently Billy Bunter did not hear it—or did not wish to hear it. He rolled across the Close and disappeared indoors with suspicious haste.

"Doesn't wish to meet us for some reason or other," muttered Harry Wharton, puzzled. "Did you notice how excited he looked?"

"I noticed he'd got a letter in his fat fist," said Bob Cherry with a chuckle. "Perhaps his postal-order's come at last, and he's afraid we'll insist on his stumping up what he owes us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five strolled about the close until the dinner-bell went. As they trooped indoors they met Bunter emerging from Study No. 7. The fat Removeite had a letter in his hand, and there was a guilty expression on his fat face as he blinked apprehensively at the juniors.

"I say, Wharton, old fellow!" he began nervously.

"Hallo, hallo! Don't say your postal order's come at last, Bunter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't see why you should be always sneering about my remittances!" said Bunter, with lofty dignity. "As it happens, though, this particular letter isn't mine. It belongs to Wharton. I was just—"

"Then hand it over, you fat frog!" snorted Wharton, taking the letter from the fat junior. "I believe you've been

## LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



### NOVEMBER.

22nd Monday	- - -	4.31 p.m.
23rd Tuesday	- - -	4.30 "
24th Wednesday	- - -	4.29 "
25th Thursday	- - -	4.28 "
26th Friday	- - -	4.27 "
27th Saturday	- - -	4.26 "
28th Sunday	- - -	4.25 "



The Bounder's fist shot out and smote Skinner's prominent nose. Skinner collapsed in a yelling heap on top of Bunter, and the pair rolled over among the undergrowth. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy aho!" A moment later the Famous Five burst into the clearing. (See Chapter 7.)

meddling again. If— Yes, I thought as much! This letter's been opened, you prying rotter!"

"H has it really?" gasped Billy Bunter, blinking uneasily at Wharton. "Just what I thought, though, when that village cad handed it to me at the gates, you know. Awfully low and dishonourable chaps these—"

"Why, you fat bounder!" roared Harry Wharton. "You've opened the dashed thing yourself, you mean. Collar the rotter!"

But evidently Billy Bunter had anticipated trouble. Even as Johnny Bull grabbed at him, the Owl dodged desperately and scuttled along the passage at top speed.

"That fat thief ought to be kicked out of Greyfriars!" grunted Wharton. "Never mind! I don't suppose it's anything important. My hat! It's from Smithy!"

"Great Scott!"

The others crowded round Harry Wharton excitedly as he drew out the folded envelope addressed to Tom Redwing, and a note addressed to himself. The latter was brief—in fact, it was merely a couple of lines asking Harry Wharton to deliver the enclosed letter to Tom Redwing in the sanny, and to keep mum about it.

"Well, that doesn't tell us much, anyway!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Only we know that Smithy is still in the neighbourhood."

"A good job it doesn't, since Bunter's been meddling with it," said Harry Wharton, as he closely examined the

envelope of Redwing's letter. "And I hope this letter to Redwing doesn't, either, for if I'm not mistaken, it's been tampered with, too."

"My hat, yes!"

"Anyway, I'll get Quelch's permission to visit Redwing and take it over to him after dinner," said Harry Wharton, slipping the letter into his pocket. "He'll let me see him, I expect."

The five juniors went in to dinner, and immediately afterwards Harry Wharton proceeded to Mr. Quelch's study. As he expected, the Remove-master readily got him the necessary permission, and the junior walked across to the sanatorium.

He found Redwing sitting up in bed reading.

"Hallo, Redwing, old scout! How's the foot?" asked Wharton cheerily.

"Bit better to-day—though it's rather a bad sprain, and the doc says I've to lie up for another couple of days, at least. Rotten luck!" smiled Redwing.

"Beastly!" agreed Wharton. "I say, Redwing, I've got a letter here for you: it's from Smithy. I suppose you've heard he's missing?"

Tom Redwing nodded, and his brow clouded as he took the letter from Wharton with an eager hand.

"Yes; Quelch came over this morning and told me. Wanted to know if I could tell him where he was."

Harry Wharton waited as Redwing read the letter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Redwing suddenly, in alarm, handing the missive

to Wharton. "Read it, Wharton! Old Smithy has a nerve, and no mistake!"

Wharton took it, and as his eyes scanned the writing, he frowned and gave a startled exclamation. It ran:

"Dear Redwing,—Just to ease your mind a bit, old chap. I wasn't going to be bogged for what I did, so I've retired from Greyfriars for a bit. I'm playing the Robinson Crusoe stunt on Popper's Island, up the river. Only till Saturday, though. My pater comes then, as you know, and I mean to nab him before he gets to Greyfriars, and put our case before him. He'll back us up, I know, when he knows the facts. If your foot's better before then, try to slip up here to see me. If you can smuggle a couple of blankets up here, so much the better! No need to worry about me. I'm O.K.—SMITHY."

"Great Scott!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Well, the silly ass! He'll get sacked for this, Redwing!"

"I'm afraid so!" muttered Redwing. "I wish it had been me instead of him. It was through me he got into the mess—he only came to my rescue."

"And it was through us that the whole trouble started," said Harry Wharton gloomily. "If we hadn't checked the old rotter this wouldn't have happened. I wish we could do something. But the Head won't listen to us!"

"That's the trouble. I only wish I could slip up to see the silly ass. But my dashed foot won't hold me. I suppose you wouldn't care to go, Wharton?"

"Like a shot!" said Wharton. "Smithy knows he can trust us. We'll try to persuade him to chuck up this mad scheme and come back!"

"You'll never do that," rejoined Redwing. "Smithy is as stubborn as a mule in things like this. But you could get to know what he wants me for, and take him some blankets."

"Right-ho!" agreed Harry Wharton. "I'll tell Cherry and the others. If we start early we ought to get back before dark."

And after chatting a few minutes longer Wharton left the sanny. As he walked across the Close his brow was clouded. As far as he could see, Smithy's scheme was hopelessly futile. He utterly failed to see how the Bounder's father could possibly help matters.

And another matter worried the junior jockey. If Billy Bunter had read that letter to Redwing, then he knew the Bounder's whereabouts, and it wouldn't be long before all Greyfriars knew it also.

The bell for afternoon classes had gone, and Wharton proceeded to the Form-room, where he found the Remore quietly waiting Mr. Quetch's arrival. Wharton gave a deep sigh of relief. He had expected to find the Form seething with excitement and buzzing with the news of Vernon-Smith's whereabouts. But nothing untoward appeared to have happened. A glance at Bunter showed that youth seated in his place, with a knitted brow, and staring through his big glasses into vacancy, as though his thoughts were miles away. And Wharton decided that Billy Bunter could not have read the letter, after all.

But Harry Wharton was mistaken. Bunter had!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### An Unlucky Alliance!

"I SAY, Skinner, old chap—"

Billy Bunter stopped Skinner just coming out of Study No. 2 immediately after tea that evening. There was a mysterious and knowing expression on the fat youth's face that would perhaps have aroused Harold Skinner's interest at once had he noticed it.

"Get out of the way, Bunter!" was Skinner's kindly greeting. "I'm lending you nothing, you fat frog!"

"Oh, really Skinner, I was just coming to see you—"

"Well, now you've seen me, get back to your kennel," remarked Skinner pleasantly. "Take your fat carcass out of the way, Bunter!"

"But—but, I say, it's important!" urged Bunter, blinking earnestly at Skinner. "It's something you'll be jolly glad to hear, Skinner. It's about—"

"A postal-order which you say you expect to get and really don't," sneered Skinner. "And a loan you hope to get from me now, and thumpin' well won't. Now seat, or—"

"But—but, look here!" gasped Bunter desperately. "Look here, Skinner! It's about Smithy—"

"Oh!"

Skinner gave the Owl of the Remore a searching glance at that. If it was something about the Bounder, then he certainly would be very glad to hear it.

"Well, let's hear it, then, Billy," he said, quite cordially.

"Good!" grinned Bunter, blinking through his big glasses cautiously. "But not here, old chap. Come along to my study. Old Toddy and Dutton have gone to see Wharton about footer, or some

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such rot. We can discuss the matter safely there. He, he, he!"

"Certainly, old chap!" said Skinner promptly.

And he followed Billy Bunter as that worthy rolled away along the passage and into Study No. 7. Skinner grinned as Bunter carefully closed the door after them.

"Must be something jolly mysterious for you to take such precautions, Billy," he said casually. "And now, what about Smithy?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You'd think it jolly important if I told you, Skinner. What would you say if I told you I'd found out where that beast Smithy is, Skinner?"

"I'd say you were a jolly smart chap, Bunter—regular Sexton Blake, in fact," said Skinner smoothly.

Bunter nodded, and purred like a well-fed cat. He liked flattery, and he preferred it in huge chunks.

"I'm all that, I'll admit," he said modestly. "But, I say, Skinner, you're not very fond of old Smithy, are you? I saw him dot you on the nose yesterday. He, he, he! How would you like to know where he's hiding, Skinner?"

Skinner's eyes glistened.

"I should!" he said through his teeth. "I should very much like to know that, Bunter!"

"Then come up the river with me to-night, and I'll show you," said Bunter promptly. "I'm going to visit Smithy. I want to discuss a little business with him."

Skinner started.

"So Smithy's hiding up the river, is he?" he asked, with a stare.

"Eh? How did you know that, Skinner?" ejaculated Bunter.

"You fat chump!" grinned Skinner. "But, look here, Bunter, old fellow! What's the use of fagging up the river to show me, when you can tell me where the cad is?"

"No fear!" said Bunter, with a fat chuckle. "I know what a moum rotter you are, Skinner. If I told you Smithy was camping out on Popper's Island, you jolly well wouldn't trouble to go and look for yourself. I'm too jolly sharp for you, Skinner! But we're wasting time! Are you coming, or not?"

Skinner's eyes were glittering now. He had already learned Bunter's little secret—though the obtuse Owl was far from realising that fact. But was it the truth, or only another of Bunter's mare's-nests? He could guess what Bunter's business with Smithy was. It was probably—mere than probably—to negotiate loans with Smithy—under pressure. And he had a fairly clear idea why Bunter wanted him to come. The fat and clumsy Owl did not like work, and he had as much idea of managing a boat as a hippopotamus would have. And he wanted him—Skinner—to come in the capacity of boatman.

"I'll come, Bunter," said Skinner at last, with gleaming eyes. "But, mark my words, if you're spoofing me, I'll smash you to a jelly!"

Bunter grinned. And a few minutes later the precious couple were hurrying towards the boathouse. Skinner had wanted to let Stott and Snoop into it, but Bunter would have none of it. He only wanted one boatman—not three. But he did not tell Skinner that.

And within ten minutes the pair were afloat and on their way to Popper's Island.

Skinner was not an accomplished oarsman—not by a long way. His style of rowing was neither elegant nor forceful. But he got the boat along somehow, though both he and Bunter looked re-

markably like wet rags when Popper's Island hove in sight.

"Now, what's the programme, you fat frog?" gasped Skinner irritably. "Going to drowning your blackmailing stunt on him suddenly, or break it gently?"

"Oh, really, Skinner!" said Billy Bunter with outraged dignity. "I think that a rotten thing to say. I hope I'm not the sort of fellow to blackmail anyone, much less a pal. I may possibly refer to a loan during our discussion, or I may not. Anyway, you leave the matter of our conversation in my hands, Skinner."

Skinner chuckled softly and resumed rowing. When a few yards from the island he stopped his efforts to dig up the bed of the river and glanced over his shoulder.

"Doesn't seem to be anyone on the dashed island!" he grunted suspiciously. "By gad, if you've been spoofin' me, you—"

"I say, you know, I'll fetch him out!" grinned Bunter. "When he knows we've bowled him out he'll jolly well soon show himself! Watch me, I say, Smithy, you'd better come out! We know you're there!"

But though Bunter awakened the echoes of the wooded island with his throaty squeak, and Skinner joined in and made it a sort of duet, only the echoes answered them.

"Better pull in, Skinner!" grunted Billy Bunter warmly. "He's hiding somewhere. Come on! We'll soon root him out! He won't dare to turn rusty. The beast knows we've got him."

Skinner did not feel so certain about that. He knew the Bounder's uncertain temper only too well. But he followed the bold Bunter, nevertheless, as he rolled out of the boat and climbed up the slope. With Skinner stumbling behind, and glancing nervously about him, the Owl rolled on confidently through the belt of trees and thickets.

And then Billy Bunter stopped suddenly, with a gasp of alarm. From behind them came the sharp snap of breaking twigs, and this was followed by a cool, familiar voice.

"Hallo, you fellows!"

The two explorers jumped and spun on their heels.

It was Vernon-Smith. The Bounder's face was cool and smiling, but William George Bunter quite failed to see the hard glitter in his eyes. He was too startled to notice that.

"I—I say, Smithy, fa-fancy meeting you here!" he gasped.

"Yes; just fancy!" smiled the Bounder.

Billy Bunter hesitated. Since reading that letter from Smithy to Redwing the fat junior's mind had been engaged unconsciously upon the problem of how to make the most of his knowledge. And in case that afternoon he had thought out his plan of action. He had intended to point out to the Bounder that he was "bowled out," afterwards leading up gently to the question of loans. And if the loans did not materialise, then he would point out clearly to Vernon-Smith that he felt it his duty to return to Greyfriars and report to the authorities the runaway's whereabouts.

But somehow, now he was face to face with the bland and smiling Bounder, his fertile brain would not work, and he was forced to come to the financial question much sooner than he had intended.

"I—I say, Smithy," he began somewhat nervously, "you're bowled out, you know!"

"Am I?" queried the Bounder lightly.

"Yes; you jolly well know you are!" said Bunter warmly. "But, of course, I wouldn't dream of splitting on a pal.





they'll miss your boat at the bathhouse. They'll guess the rest."

"They're not likely to miss the boat—it's winter, remember. And as for sleeping and grub—come and see the camp!"

And Vernon-Smith led the way through the thickets to the little clearing where he had rigged up his temporary tent with the mast and sails.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, gazing at the scene. "You're cozy enough here, and no mistake. You have a nerve, Smithy! We were wondering how the thump you could exist here. We were thinking of bringing some grub!"

"I've got plenty, thanks, and I can easily slip over to Friardale for more when I want it. Luckily I'm in funds."

"Then we'll be going!" said Harry Wharton, glancing at his watch. "We'll have to row like the dickens to get in before dark. We'll come again to-morrow if possible, Smithy, and let you have any news."

Vernon-Smith nodded with a sombre brow, and a few minutes later the Famous Five had left the tent, and were pulling away towards Greyfriars. None of the five juniors was feeling very cheerful. They thought that the reckless Bouncer was courting certain expulsion by his conduct; and for all his faults they felt that neither the Remove, nor, indeed, Greyfriars, could afford to lose the Bouncer.

As they feared, the juniors arrived at the school late for call-over. As they entered the School House, they met Peter Todd.

"You chaps got back, then?" he remarked, eyeing them curiously. "I say, Wharton, old Quelch's asking for you."

Wharton gave a start and exchanged glances with his chums. He concluded at once that either Bunter or Skinner had betrayed the Bouncer after all. But when he entered the Remove-master's study a moment later, he got a surprise.

"Ah, Wharton," began Mr. Quelch gravely. "I have been waiting for you. I understand you were a witness of what happened up the river between Vernon-Smith, Redwing, and Sir Hilton Popper, yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then will you kindly give me a full and clear account of what took place? You need not fear speaking, Wharton. It is for the benefit of the two boys involved that I wish to thoroughly investigate the matter."

Wharton's brow cleared at once.

"Certainly, sir," he replied quietly. "There is nothing that either Redwing or Vernon-Smith did that I would wish to keep back."

And forthwith Harry Wharton related the story—and, needless to say, he did not spare Sir Hilton Popper in the least. And when he had finished at last, Mr. Quelch's lips were tightly compressed.

"Very well, Wharton. Your story coincides exactly with Redwing's own story."

"If you would care to ask Cherry, Nugent, Bull, or Singh, they will tell you the same story, sir," said Wharton.

"That is not necessary," said Mr. Quelch. "I am glad to say that I have never had cause to doubt any statement you have made to me, Wharton. Sir Hilton Popper, however, told a very different story, and, like Dr. Locke, I believed that Redwing and Vernon-Smith had been guilty of a disgraceful act of hoodlaming. But the account you and Redwing have given me of the affair has placed an entirely different complexion on their conduct."

"Oh, sir!"

"I am thankful now," went on the Remove-master, "that I have learned—"

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what I believe to be the truth of the matter, or a grave injustice might have taken place. A few minutes ago I paid a visit to Redwing in the sanatorium. Quite by accident I noticed a vivid mark on the boy's wrist—a mark that could only have been caused by a violent blow by a whip, or some such instrument. Quite casually I inquired how he had come by such an injury, and he informed me that whilst lying helpless on the ground Sir Hilton Popper struck him with his riding-whip, and, in attempting to guard the blow, Redwing received it on his wrist."

Mr. Quelch paused, but Harry Wharton remained silent.

"I then demanded further particulars, and Redwing gave them to me, and assured me that Vernon-Smith only interfered to save him from further chastisement. I feel very strongly on this matter, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch warmly, "and I intend to bring what I have learned to the notice of Dr. Locke in the morning. In view of Vernon-Smith's absence, I cannot promise that both the boys concerned will escape severe punishment, but I will do my best to get them dealt with as leniently as possible. That is all, Wharton. You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

And Harry Wharton went, his face bright and hopeful.

"Good old Quelch!" he murmured, as he walked down the passage. "He's a brick, and no mistake! I know he detests that old hunk, Popper, as much as we do, and, if I'm not mistaken, we sha'n't lose old Smithy after all."

But that remained to be seen.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### The Bouncer Shows His Hand!

"H ALLO! Sounds like someone calling!"

Vernon-Smith sat up suddenly, as he muttered that remark, and listened intently.

It was early the next morning on Popper's Island. The Bouncer had just finished his breakfast of potted lobster, bread-and-butter, marmalade, and coffee. He was reclining at ease on the soft grass under the trees in the clearing, and his brow was sombre.

With suitable companions, camping out in the summer is an ideal way of spending a holiday. But when one is alone on a tiny island, with nothing to occupy one's time but a first-class worry, it is liable to become more than monotonous. At all events, the Bouncer was finding it so, and he was already "fed up," and longing to be back at Greyfriars.

"My hat!" muttered the Bouncer, after a moment's listening. "Sounds like someone calling my name, too! And, if I'm not mistaken, it's the cheery tinkle of Sir Hilton Popper!"

Not a little startled and puzzled, the Bouncer sprang to his feet, and pushed his way through the trees. The voice had sounded from across the river, and a moment later the junior was peering from the shelter of a screen of foliage across to the opposite bank.

As he expected, his eyes beheld the tall, gaunt figure of Sir Hilton Popper standing on the tow-path. The baronet was staring towards the island, and, even as the Bouncer took up his position, his sharp voice rapped across the water.

"Smith! Vernon-Smith! Boy! Do you hear me?" he shouted.

The Bouncer frowned blackly.

"This is interesting!" he muttered bitterly. "The old cad can't have seen me, and yet he seems to know I'm here."

So Bunter or Skinner, or both of them, must have given me away, after all. I think I see the game. Skinner dare not split at Greyfriars, so the cunning cad has sent a message to old Popper."

And Vernon-Smith clenched his fists at the thought. He felt bitter against Harry Wharton and his chums for their interference the previous night. He might have known, and they might have foreseen, that the crafty Skinner would find out some other method of giving him away than openly exposing him at Greyfriars.

"Do you hear me? I know you're there, Vernon-Smith! Show yourself at once!" came the baronet's angry voice again.

The Bouncer grinned a little. It wasn't likely he would do that.

And then quite suddenly his eyes gleamed, as a thought entered his mind—a thought that had worried him more than a little during the last day and night. Why wait for his father to come? Why not fight his own battles? In any case, the game was up, and he was tired of it.

The Bouncer made his mind up in a moment. After that, his brain worked quickly. One of his father's business maxims was "Be bold!" and he was determined to adopt that maxim now. With a half-formed plan in his mind, the Bouncer moved through the trees to where he had hidden the boat beneath the overhanging branches of a tree by the water's edge. And a moment later he was pulling across to the astounded Sir Hilton Popper.

"Ah! So you are there! So that telephone message was not a hoax!" he snarped the baronet, eyeing the junior with a gloating satisfaction. "So this is where you are hiding, my fine fellow! It is like your confounded impudence, boy!"

The Bouncer did not speak. He ran the skiff into the bank, and sprang ashore. Sir Hilton Popper fell back a step, and eyed him through his eyeglass with more than a trace of uneasiness. Like all bullies, Sir Hilton Popper was a coward, and the Bouncer laughed as he read that fact in the baronet's eyes.

"Good-morning, Sir Hilton!" he remarked coolly. "What a happy meeting!"

The baronet seemed to choke with rage.

"This—this insolence will not help you, my boy!" he spluttered. "This will mean expulsion for you, my fine fellow! Your headmaster is fully acquainted with your whereabouts. I may tell you that immediately on receiving the information that you would be found here, I sent a message to Dr. Locke to that effect. And now perhaps you will tell me why you had the astounding impudence to hide—to trespass, begad!—on my island after what has happened!"

"Certainly!" exclaimed the Bouncer calmly. "I wanted to keep out of the way for a couple of days until my father came. You know my father, Sir Hilton, I believe?"

"Huh! And what, pray, has your father to do with me?" snorted Sir Hilton Popper.

"As little to do with you as possible. I believe," retorted the Bouncer, with a slight smile. "But after Saturday I think he will have a great deal to do with you!"

"Wha-what do you mean, boy?" demanded the baronet.

"Simply this," said Vernon-Smith evenly. "As you yourself state, you are going to insist on my expulsion. Do you think for one moment that my father is the kind of man to allow me to be expelled from a school like Greyfriars

without thoroughly investigating the cause and circumstances of that explosion? I think not. You will not be dealing with a schoolboy then, Sir Hilton; you will be dealing with a hard and ruthless business man—a man as powerful—if not more powerful—than yourself!"

"Nonsense—utter nonsense!" muttered the baronet hoarsely. "I refuse to listen to your insults, boy! I refuse to handy words—"

"Wait, Sir Hilton," murmured the Bounder, with a slight smile. "I happen to know that your dog was found wandering about Friarideale yesterday morning by the police. The poor brute was afraid to go home, I suppose. It might interest you to know, Sir Hilton, that the police are very anxious to discover the ruffian who had ill-treated your dog. They are keen to put the R.S.P.C.A. on his track."

"Those—those fools would not dare to—"

"I know what you are about to say, Sir Hilton. You are a magistrate and landowner, and a terrific panjandrum. The local police are as much under your thumb as the rest of the people round here. But there were six witnesses of the affair, Sir Hilton, and even the local police dare not screen you if this business was brought into the open, and you know it!"

Apparently Sir Hilton Popper did know it. His face paled, and he glowered with frightened eyes at the cool, monochalant junior.

He found his voice at last.

"You have spoken utter, arrant nonsense, boy!" he ground out at last.

"But—but if this became public—"

"It would make you the scorn and laughing-stock of the county!" finished the Bounder cheerfully.

"Hah!"

There was a long silence. The baronet seemed to be thinking hard, and his face was working strangely.

"Listen, my boy!" he muttered at last. "While I do not admit for one moment your ridiculous and absurd assertions, I—I would rather this matter did not become public. I—I think, for the sake of the school's good name, that—that the matter should be allowed to drop. But—but what is your object, boy, in this—in this insolence and your empty threats?"

"Simply this, Sir Hilton. The assurance that my pal Redwing is not punished for what he did to you, sir. For myself, I do not expect to escape punishment. But I don't want to be expelled, and I don't intend to be flogged."

"Very well, then, boy," said Sir Hilton Popper, savagely. "I will see your headmaster. I will allow the matter to drop, Vernon-Smith."

And Sir Hilton Popper turned and strode back through the woods, gnawing his bristly moustache with helpless and futile rage.

"Well, my only Sunday topper!" ejaculated the Bounder, when the baronet's stamping footsteps had died away. "Who would have thought he would cave in like that? I've hit a bull's-eye this time, and no mistake! And—and—well, my hat!"

The Bounder seemed to be staggered by the sudden collapse of the baronet's front, so to speak. He had been half-serious, half-bluffing in his remarks. But he had never dreamed that the arrogant Sir Hilton Popper would take them with such deadly seriousness, nor climb down so meekly.

Smiling grimly, the Bounder was turning to regain the skiff, when he paused. From downstream came the

sudden click and swish of oars, and a boat came flashing in the morning sunlight round the bend. There were two seniors in it—Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth. Evidently they did not see the junior standing in the shade of the trees bordering the towpath, for the boat touched the island, and jumping ashore, Wingate and Gwynne disappeared among the trees.

"That settles it!" murmured the Bounder. "They're after me, without a doubt. Well, if I'm to go back, I'll go myself. I'm hanged if I'm going to be dragged back! Here goes!"

And, without another glance at the island or the waiting boat, the Bounder set off through the woods en route for Greyfriars.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### All Serene!

"WELL, my hat! Looks as if the old rotter is in earnest about it. He's not lost much time, anyway!"

Vernon-Smith arrived back at Greyfriars just in time to see a large car stop outside the gates, and the tall, angular figure of Sir Hilton Popper alight from it.

Without a glance at the junior approaching along the lane, he turned and strode towards the Head's private entrance.

"Better keep out of the way until he's gone," went on the Bounder.

"Wonder what's going to happen now?" And, strolling across the Close, Vernon-Smith entered the hallway of the schoolhouse and stopped there, intending to wait until Sir Hilton Popper had departed before reporting to the Head.

Morning lessons were in full swing, and the passages were deserted. As the Bounder stood there, however, a junior came along from the direction of the Head's study. It was Harry Wharton. He gave a start as he caught sight of the Bounder.

"You, Smithy?" he ejaculated. "What the thump are you doing stranding there? So old Wingate's brought you back all right?"

"Not a bit of it," said the Bounder grimly. "I've repented of my wickedness and come back on my own to face the music, old sport! I expect it'll be a full-blown brass band, too!"

"On the contrary," said Harry Wharton with a smile, "I fancy you won't find it much more than an expiring squeak, old chap. Anyway, it won't be a flogging or expulsion, Smithy."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this. The Head's been holding a fresh inquiry into the whole business up to a minute ago. It's old Quelch's doing," said Harry Wharton.

And he told the astonished and relieved Vernon-Smith of the Remove-master's visit to Redwing in the sunny, and of his own interview with Mr. Quelch and also the Head.

"But but you don't mean to say we're going to get off scot-free?" gasped the Bounder.

"I don't know about that," said Harry Wharton doubtfully. "I fancy you would, though, if it wasn't for old Popper. The old cad will fight hard to get you severely punished, and the Head cannot very well defy a governor of the school. He's with the Head now."

"I know. That's why I'm waiting here," said the Bounder. "But don't worry about old Popper, Wharton. I've already talked him round, I fancy. But I'll tell you about that later on, for if I'm not mistaken, there he goes."

As Vernon-Smith spoke the Head's study door opened, and Sir Hilton Popper emerged and strode away along the passage.

"Now for the lion's den," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "Bye-bye, Wharton!"

"Good luck, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

A moment later Vernon-Smith was knocking at the Head's door.

"Come in!"

It was Dr. Locke's deep voice. The junior pushed open the door and entered with outward calmness, but his heart was beating faster than usual. As the Head's glance fell upon the Bounder, his face grew grim.

"Bless my soul! So you have returned, Vernon-Smith?" he exclaimed. "Did you not see Wingate?"

"Yes, sir. But I decided to come myself."

For quite a minute the Head gazed thoughtfully at the junior without speaking.

"I hardly know what to say to you or how to deal with you, Vernon-Smith," he said, in a quiet voice at last. "But for the exceptional circumstances of the case, I should certainly expel you for your action in defying me by absenting yourself in such an extraordinary manner from Greyfriars. But though that action alone merits severe punishment, I cannot help but feel glad that by so doing you prevented what I now clearly perceive would have been an act of injustice to yourself and possibly to Redwing."

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"Since you were before me last, Vernon-Smith, I have thoroughly investigated the facts of what took place on Wednesday," went on the Head slowly. "In addition to this, I have just had a visit from Sir Hilton Popper himself, who, for some extraordinary reason, has completely altered his attitude towards yourself and Redwing. He has assured me that he now sees and regrets that possibly he was treating his dog with undue severity, and he does not wish either Redwing or yourself to be punished."

"Oh, sir!"

"I have discussed the matter at length with Mr. Quelch," proceeded the Head, "and have decided, under the exceptional circumstances, that to punish Redwing or yourself in regard to the affair of Sir Hilton Popper would be neither desirable nor just. But—the Head's voice took on a stern note—"I cannot overlook the fact that you defied your headmaster, and caused a great amount of worry and trouble to all concerned by absenting yourself from school for a whole day and night. Fortunately, I did not move to the extent of acquainting your father with—"

"I—I am sorry, sir!" muttered the Bounder sincerely.

"I am glad to hear that you are sorry, Vernon-Smith," said the Head quietly. "And—and I will not punish you, after all. You may go, my boy!"

And the Bounder went.

Vernon-Smith had another interview after morning lessons. It was with Billy Bunter and Harold Skinner, concerning a telephone message sent to Sir Hilton Popper at Popper Court that morning.

And both Skinner and Bunter had good cause for that day and several days after to regret they had meddled in the affairs of the Greyfriars truants.

### THE END.

(Another grand story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "DUPING THE DUFFER!" Make sure of ordering your copy EARLY!)

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MARCUS.



# MARCUS THE BRAVE

A THRILLING STORY  
DEALING WITH NERO, AND HIS GLADIATORS.  
BY FAMOUS VICTOR NELSON.



EUNICE.

## THREADS OF THE STORY.

**M**ARCUS, a gladiator of Ancient Rome, returns from a voyage during which he captures Strongbow, a notorious pirate. As his reward from Nero, the emperor, Marcus claims the hand of Eunice, a Christian slave-girl. Nero, however, spurs him, the girl having been condemned to death in the arena, with many other Christians. Marcus, in his rage, denounces the emperor, who has him thrown into prison with his faithful friend, Leo. The latter escapes, and makes his way safely through the city. He falls in with a troupe of acrobats, whose valuable assistance leads to the rescue of Marcus and Eunice. He reveals to his friend his daring enterprise.

(Now read on.)

## Marcus' Ruse—Tricked.

"**W**HAT are you wearing this uniform, Leo?" Marcus queried. "The disguise I can understand; but—" Leo laughed.

"It was necessary, that I might enter the theatre from the rear, and, with the acrobats, gain the staircase leading to the roof and the dome above the platform," he said. "You will have noticed they are garbed in the tight-fitting clothes they wear for their performances in public. We took in the soldiers we passed completely.

"I assumed the swaggering air of what I appear to be—a Sicambrian guard, and, with my lance held before me, led them past the soldiers guarding the entrance to the theatre some time before the performance commenced.—I showed them the staircase to the roof, which verily I myself was puzzled to find for a time, and ascended it with them. The pretorians who saw took it for granted that the acrobats were going to give a performance for which it was necessary that they should climb to the dome. Well"—he chuckled again—"they did give a performance, which I warrant surprised everyone, including the bull-necked ape, Nero himself!"

"I owe you not only my own life, but a life that to me is even more precious, Leo," Marcus said huskily. "I cannot find words to thank you. Shall I ever be able to repay you, I wonder?"

"Stay your silly tongue!" Leo advised, with a rudeness privileged by long-standing friendship. "You would have done the same for me had our positions been reversed! We near the Suburra," he went on, "and there—"

He was interrupted by Furnius, who at that moment pressed forward his horse and galloped along by his side.

"Hark!" the acrobat cried, holding up his hand.

Leo and Marcus strained their ears, and simultaneously they heard sounds that caused their eyes to meet significantly.

From no great distance away in the rear sounded the thunder of many swiftly-moving hoofs.

"The soldiers from the barracks! They have found out the way we have taken, and are hot on our tracks!" Leo said, through his teeth. "Ride for your lives!"

There could be little doubt that what Leo said was true.

A large body of the pretorian soldiers who had been called out from the barracks near the theatre had succeeded in

learning the direction the fugitives had taken, and were now almost upon their heels.

As he uttered his plea for haste, Leo spurred his tiring horse into a recovered effort, riding with his knees and hands. He shot past the others, though it was only to urge them on.

Holding the unconscious Eunice more firmly in his one free arm, Marcus also galloped on his steed. The acrobats followed the example of the two young gladiators, and in a matter of seconds they were all tearing along at a break-neck pace, riding deeper and deeper into the Suburra.

But, rids as they would, the sounds of pursuit still rang in their ears, and despair gripped at the heart of Marcus as he thought of the girl.

Had their escape been all for naught? Was it only temporary freedom that would end in their being dragged back into the power of the arch-tyrant and murderer who would again devise some terrible death for the beautiful British slave whom he—Marcus—loved?

With a silent prayer to the gods of good fortune, Marcus pressed his lips to her cold forehead, and, setting his teeth, he pressed onwards.

Was there no way of tricking the soldiers, and throwing them off in the darkness? At all costs, Eunice must be saved from falling into their cruel hands, yet how—how?

There seemed not the ghost of a chance of bringing this about. Just as they could hear the hoof-beats of the pursuers as they thundered over the ground in the rear, so must the leading pretorians be able to catch the sounds made by the feet of their animals.

Again, even if they could outdistance them for the time being—a thing that was next to impossible on their wearying mounts—there would be those who would tell the pretorians the way they had gone.

In spite of the attraction the drama that had been played in Rome had held out to all classes, ever and again, they passed men and women, who stared after them, surprised at their pace. Once they lost them, the soldiers would question the passers-by, who, even if they wanted to keep silent, would be terrified into speaking by the pretorians' swords and lances.

As he rode, occasionally finding people scuttling out of the path of his horse, Marcus was using his brain with lightning-like rapidity.

His ears told him that, slowly but surely, the pretorians were gaining upon him and his companions, and it would not

be long ere the pursuers drew so near that they would be able to sight them through the gloom.

Round a corner, into a network of slums and alleyways swung Leo and Furnius, who were leading. The others swept on after them.

They were flying along at a racing pace, but it could not be kept up for long. Their horses were lathered with foam and beginning to blow sobbingly. Capture was inevitable unless some strategy could be devised and carried out.

Desperately, Marcus racked his brains for a ruse. The dread that Eunice would again be taken prisoner and sacrificed at the altar of Nero's inhuman cruelty sharpened his wits, and suddenly an idea flashed into his mind.

He quickened the pace of his flagging horse, although it was already sweating and panting and ready to drop. He swung along beside Spartacus and quickly voiced his plan.

From Spartacus it was passed to his brother Mark, from Mark to Horace, and so on, until the eight riders were all aware of the desperate thing that Marcus contemplated.

Round another corner they sped, with Leo's horse slipping on the stones of the road and almost coming down.

The street was full of some of the worst rabble of the Suburra, many of whom had just quitted the wine-shops, and had taken far more than was good for them.

A man was picked aside by the horse of Chilo. He kicked himself up quickly, and tried to slash at Marcus with a knife as the gladiator came dashing after his companions; but the young Roman's steed was past him long before he made the lunge, and the fellow had to content himself with shrieking abuse after the riders.

Men and women, who had been forced to scuttle out of the road, joined in, until there was a positive babel of sound welling up in the narrow street.

Again the mob had to part and scatter before the pursuing soldiers as they, in their turn, thundered into the thoroughfare. But the gleaming swords they carried, their fierce mien, and shining armour called for more respect.

An officer pulled up his horse and leaped forward.

His hand darted down, and gripped a woman's arm by the hair.

"We give chase to certain criminals, who are mounted, wench!" he said. "Hath seen them pass this way?"

"Yes, master, only a moment since," the woman answered, with the servility of terror. "Hasten, and you will come up with them!"



With a mighty spring, Marcus leapt at the pretorian, winding his arms about the fellow's middle, and bringing him toppling from his horse. The animal reared and lashed out as the gladiator and soldier fell to the ground. (See this page.)

"Ay, their horses looked tired, master," agreed a man who was standing near. "Ride quickly, and you must overtake them!"

The pretorian officer released the frightened woman, and galloped off after his men, who must have been quite eighty or ninety in number.

Some dozen other soldiers, who had reined in and remained by their officer with their swords held significantly in their hands, in case the mob dared to interfere with him, spurred on their animals, and raced after him.

Meanwhile, Marcus and the others had thudded into a more deserted part of the Suburra and they were about to put their plan for tricking the soldiery into execution.

Into a narrow byway the eight of them galloped, Marcus still holding the unconscious Eunice before him upon his horse.

"Now!" Marcus shouted, as they reached the darkest part of the street and found no one about.

Following the example Marcus set them, the seven others reined in their weary horses. They swung from the backs of the animals almost as one man.

Marcus drew his sword, and with the flat of it struck his horse a sharp blow across its flank.

With a startled whinny, it threw up its head and galloped off into the darkness. Almost simultaneously, Leo and the acrobats goaded their steeds into dashing away in a similar manner.

Already they could hear the rattle of hoofs away at the mouth of the thorough-

fare, and knew that the pretorians were hot on their tracks.

Marcus hoisted Eunice over his shoulder and hurried into the dark mouth of a passage that ran between two buildings on the left-hand side of the street. The others came after him, and they all crouched down in the gloom.

Nearer and nearer draw the sounds of pursuit, until the beat of the hoofs had become a deafening tattoo. Trembling with suppressed excitement, Marcus and his comrades waited, every nerve in their bodies strung up to concert-pitch with the tension of suspense.

Would the soldiers be taken in by the ruse? Would they race after the riderless horses, whose hoof-beats the foremost of them must be able to hear? Or would they guess by some means what had happened, and scour the street and its various alleys?

Ah! The leaders of the pursuers were at hand—now they were level with the alleyway and dashing past.

The gladiators and the acrobats scarcely dared to breathe as they crouched in the shadows against the wall of the passage. Would they be visible if any of the soldiers chanced to glance into the alley? Leo wondered.

He set his teeth, and prepared to spring up and fight—in other words, to sell his life dearly; for unless the horde of soldiers had instructions to take them alive, he and his companions would stand no chance against their overwhelming numbers.

The fugitives were all dressed in white

robes, and Leo felt fairly certain that, however closely they crouched against the wall and were enveloped by its shadows, it would be possible for them to be glimpsed should one of the passing riders glance their way.

Soldier after soldier flashed past the mouth of the passage, however, and there came no cry from their ranks to show that the fugitives had been sighted, until—

The rearward of the pretorians was thundering by, and now it seemed that all had passed. Marcus, Leo, and the others leapt up, knowing that it would be only the matter of minutes ere the leading soldiers came up with the riderless horses, and realised how they had been duped.

As they rose, they heard a gasp from the direction of the roadway. A man, whose horse had flagged, and who had been riding at some distance behind the others, had pulled up, and was sitting upon his panting steed, staring at them in amazement.

Like lightning, Marcus thrust Eunice into the arms of Furnius, and leapt from the alley. The pretorian swung round his horse, and tried to dash off after the other soldiers, with the object of bringing them back. But he was just too late.

With a mighty spring, Marcus leapt up at him, winding his arms about the fellow's middle, and bringing him toppling from his horse.

The animal reared, and lashed out with its heels as the gladiator and the soldier fell in a confused heap to the





# SPORT TOPICS.

A Splendid Series of Interesting and Chatty Articles, dealing with every kind of Sport. - - - By SPECTATOR.

It is rather unfortunate that these sport topics have to be written so long in advance, but still I hope they keep their interest, and that readers of the MAGNET Library will appreciate them, and will remember that anything they wish to know I will endeavour to answer to the best of my ability.

## FOOTBALL.

'Spurs again! Chelsea were made to look quite a third-rate team against these giants for the second week in succession, and I am sure that at Stamford Bridge there must be much weeping and gnashing of teeth going on at present. There is something very radically wrong with the Pensioners' team, and the sooner this is rectified the better it will be for them. To see them figuring in the Second Division next season is unthinkable!

The following results of the encounters between the 'Spurs and Chelsea may be interesting. Chelsea's goal figures I quote first:

1909-10.	1912-13.	1913-14.	1914-15.	1920-21.
At Chelsea.	2-1	1-0	1-3	1-1
At Tot'n'm.	1-2	0-1	2-1	1-1
				0-5

Excluding this season's matches, there has been little to choose between them—each claiming three victories and two drawn games, whilst the 'Spurs scored 10 goals to Chelsea's 9, and so gained a bare majority of 1 goal.

The great Northern duels between Newcastle United and Sunderland ended in a "double" for the United. The Magpies are proving their worth this season, and many a club in the First Division will, I am thinking, knuckle down to them ere long.

It is surprising how well amateur clubs fight the professionals when they do happen to meet. An instance of this was shown in the first round for the London Charity Cup of a few weeks back.

Iford gave Chelsea quite a warm time at Stamford Bridge, and the game ended with the Pensioners gaining the verdict by a very narrow margin of 2-1. This was not a victory over which Chelsea could be pleased, for, playing their full team, with the exception of Wilding, who received an injury whilst playing against the 'Spurs, they met a very moderate team in Iford. Yet the amateurs played a game worthy of the highest praise, and, honestly speaking, they deserved to pull off the match.

For Iford, their captain and centre-half, F. J. C. Blake, played an excellent game, and so did A. Wilkinson in goal; whilst F. G. Gathercole was responsible for netting the side's goal.

Although beaten by 4-1, Barking put up a splendid fight against the 'Spurs, and therefore must receive a word of praise from lovers of good, clean football.

Good luck and every success to these amateur sportsmen!

Another surprise in this competition

was the defeat of Fulham at the hands of the Crystal Palace. I can well remember these same two clubs meeting last season in the semi-final, when the game ended in the victory of the Palace.

The prestige of the Second Division is in jeopardy when Third Division clubs dispose of their members in this way, but one or the other must win, and, on each of the occasions referred to, the better team won.

Whilst talking football, I must mention how pleased I am to see such interest being taken over this game by the school-boys throughout our country. Often on a Saturday morning I take a stroll through the many parks, commons, and recreation grounds which are so numerous in and around London, and spend a pleasant hour and a half watching the boys playing the game. Summing up on their play as a whole, it is extremely good for such youngsters, and with plenty of good practice many of these should come up to the professional standard as the years roll by. Then, if they are desirous of becoming members of the big clubs, they have the experience, and that is everything.

## BOXING.

Georges Carpentier, the heavy-weight champion of Europe, defeated "Bartling" Levinsky in four rounds at Jersey City, U.S.A. Such was the verdict of the recent match between these two men.

The popular Frenchman, in his usual way, rushed his opponent directly the bell sounded for the first round, and Levinsky had all his work cut out to dodge and avoid being knocked out in the manner in which Carpentier so easily accounted for Joe Beckett and Billy Wells, our champion and ex-champion respectively.

The second round saw Levinsky twice on the boards for a count of eight, and it is a marvel how he lasted until the bell. However, in the fourth round Georges had measured the American's length, and, crowding him on to the ropes, he sent him down and out with smashing blows to the jaw.

Summing up on this fight, there is little doubt but that the better man won. Carpentier was too fast for Levinsky, who never got over the first rush. There could only be one result after that.

Now we await eagerly the match which is to take place—Carpentier against Jack Dempsey—for the heavy-weight championship of the world. It would be hard to prophesy the ending of such a fight. Carpentier must get off the mark with his usual rush if he is to be victor. Dempsey has proved his staying-powers, and, with his punch, was betide Georges if he is not slippy! That the Frenchman will win I sincerely hope. He is a boxer that everyone must admire. So sportsmanlike, plucky, and chivalrous!

In a minor bout, Ted (Kid) Lewis defeated Marcel Thomas, of France, in a six-rounds contest.

Taney Lee, of Scotland, did not succeed in his "come-back" fight at the National Sporting Club, where he met Mike Honeyman, of London, for the feather-weight championship of Great Britain and the Lonsdale Belt over twenty rounds.

Nevertheless, for a man of thirty-nine years of age Lee showed wonderful pluck, and his skill at in-fighting was truly remarkable. The contest went to nineteen rounds, and although the boxing was not over-exciting, it was indeed strenuous. If Lee had only managed to last the full time, I think he would have gained the referee's decision on points, for without a doubt they were all his in the first dozen rounds. Honeyman seemed well aware of the fact that to win he must put his man down, and he did. Youth was served yet again.

Both men did well, Lee deserving much credit, especially on account of his age, whilst Mike Honeyman boxed much better than he has ever done before, and should certainly go far in the world of boxers.

Another interesting contest of fifteen rounds—middle-weight—was also staged. Jerry Shea, of Newport, the Welsh International Rugby football player, meeting Shoeing-Smith Fred Davis, of the 4th Dragoon Guards—both Welshmen. Shea won on points, although he was sent to the boards three times in the last round.

## ATHLETICS.

Hannes Kolehmainen, the Finn who won the Marathon Race at the Olympic Games last August at Tammerfors, Finland, covered 25 kilometres (15 miles 940 yards) in 1 hour 25 minutes 29.6 seconds, which is a world's record for this distance.

There were nineteen starters for the South London Harriers' 5 miles novices' cross-country race, and the winner was K. Trew. Time, 31 minutes 44 seconds.

J. H. Dickinson (Clifton and Jesus) won the Oxford University hare and hounds seniors' cross-country race of about 7½ miles in 45 minutes 13 seconds.

H. B. S. Rhodes (the winner of the Stock Exchange walk to Brighton this year) won the Blackheath Harriers' walking race from Chislehurst to Blackheath for the "Johnson" bowl in 1 hour 3 minutes 25 seconds. A. C. Edwards, the cross-country runner, was second.

Finchley Harriers (open) 3 miles road handicap was won by V. W. Vincent, Hampstead Harriers (1 minute 5 seconds), 14 minutes 34 seconds. Vincent, who has only been racing a year, is still in his 'teens. The (open) team race was won by Woodford Green A. C.

(Another of these chatty articles next week.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 663.

**BILLY BUNTER—FORM-MASTER!**

A Screamingly Funny Set of Comic Pictures, drawn by J. MacWilson.



1. "Yum, yum," munched Form-master Bunter, as he surveyed the luscious and nutritious grub on his study table. "Off in the Remove Form at Greyfriars I used to know the pangs of hunger, but now, thank goodness, I can afford a slap-up spread for my birthday!"



2. Meanwhile, the young rascals of his peered in at the open window, green with envy. Then in blew Wriggles minor. "Please, sir, you're wanted on the 'phone," he wuffed. "I think it's your rich uncle, sir." "Oh, bother!" granted Bunter.



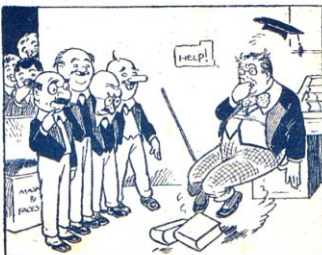
3. But no sooner did he leave the study than those naughty nippers descended like an avalanche on the merry old grub. "Tec-hee! What a chance!" they chortled. "Fill your faces, lads!"



4. Then our frazzled old Form-master returned, and the tuck-raiders made a hasty dive out of it. "My hat!" gasped Billy Bunter. "There's nothing left but a wish-bone—they've boned the rest!"



5. Then, like a hippo on the war-path, the great W. G. B. followed the young scamps to the Form-room, where he armed himself with a useful ashplant. "It's no good trying to hide," he said.



6. But when the ladlets looked round Billy Bunter got the shock of his life! You see, each of those canny lads wore a handsome mask. "What the-thump!" gasped Bunter. And before he could recover the lads vamoosed again!