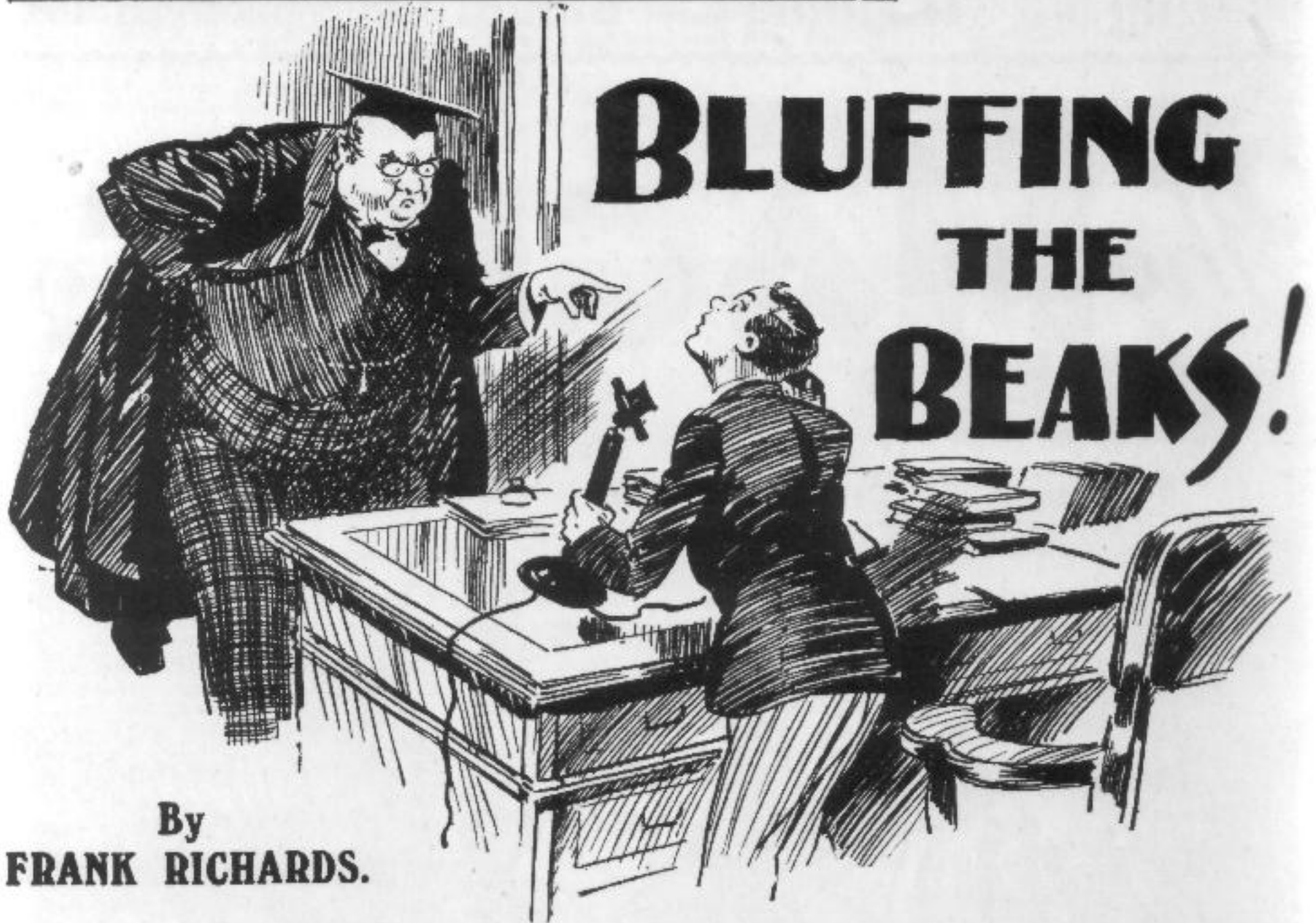


Amazing School Yarn | Thrilling 'Tee Story | Humorous Greyfriars Supplement | Inside!

The MAGNET 2^D





BLUFFING THE BEAKS!

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

Featuring the World-Wide Favourites—Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bad for the Bounder.

TAP!

The door of Study No. 4, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, opened.

Herbert Vernon-Smith did not turn his head.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was taking it easy in his study.

He was sprawling in the armchair, with his feet on another chair, and a light curl of smoke rose from a cigarette between his lips.

The cigarette, probably, was due to the fact that his study-mate, Tom Redwing, was out. When Redwing was in the study, the Bounder seldom or never smoked.

His back was to the door as he sprawled in the chair, and he did not trouble to look round. He took it for granted that it was a Remove man who had entered, and he did not care if any man in the Remove saw him smoking.

"That you, Skinner?" yawned the Bounder. "Sit down and have a cigarette, old bean."

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh, good gad!" gasped the Bounder.

He fairly jumped out of the armchair.

It was not Skinner who had entered. It was not a Remove man at all. The voice was the voice of Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove, and it resembled, at that moment, the voice of the Great Huge Bear.

Vernon-Smith spun round.

He stared at his Form master, so taken aback, that it did not occur to him, for the moment, to remove the cigarette from his mouth. It was still there, sending up a little curl of smoke, as he faced Mr. Quelch.

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"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Remove master.

Another moment, and the Bounder had snatched the cigarette from his mouth, and tossed it into the grate.

He coloured deeply.

It was seldom that the Bounder of Greyfriars was taken off his guard, and perturbed or confused. But he was almost overwhelmed with confusion now. He stared blankly at Mr. Quelch, his cheeks crimson.

"Vernon-Smith! What does this mean?"

"I—I—I——" stammered the Bounder.

"I find you smoking in your study, Vernon-Smith!"

"I—I—I——"

"I have caned you for this, Vernon-Smith, twice this term," said Mr. Quelch. "Caning, it appears, does you no good."

The Bounder recovered himself. He had been caught, and he was "for it"! He was ready to take what was coming to him, with his usual cool hardihood.

"Not a lot, sir!" he agreed.

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "What?" His brows knitted more darkly. "You are adding impertinence to your offence, Vernon-Smith."

"I was only agreeing with you, sir," said the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"I shall not cane you on this occasion, Vernon-Smith!"

"Thank you, sir; you're very good!" said the Bounder, with cool impertinence. He wondered whether he was to be reported to the Head for a flogging. If he was let off a caning, it was obvious that the punishment was going to be more, and not less, severe.

"I shall give you detention for the remaining half-holidays of the term," said Mr. Quelch. "That, perhaps, may im-

press upon your mind some respect for the rules of the school to which you belong."

"Oh!"

"You will now hand me all the cigarettes you have in your possession."

The Bounder, in silence, handed over a packet.

The lurking impertinence had faded from his face now. Mr. Quelch had "come down" unexpectedly heavy. A caning, even a flogging, the Bounder could have endured with iron fortitude. But detention on holidays was a severe blow for a fellow who figured prominently in games.

The Bounder wondered savagely what had brought Mr. Quelch to the study at that unfortunate moment. It was not Quelch's way to butt unexpectedly into a fellow's study.

With the packet of cigarettes in his hand, and a frown on his brow, the Remove master turned to the door.

He paused in the doorway.

"I came here to speak to Redwing," he said. "Kindly tell him to come to my study when he comes in, Vernon-Smith."

"Very well, sir."

The Remove master turned to go.

"If—if you please, sir——" began the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch glanced back acidly.

"Well?" he rapped.

The Bounder compressed his lips. He hated to humble himself, or to ask a favour. But he made an effort.

"If—if you'd let me off with a caning, sir——" he stammered.

"I have stated my decision, Vernon-Smith."

"It's the Highcliffe match to-morrow, sir——"

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed!" he said icily.

"Wharton will expect me to play for the Remove—"

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on the Bounder. Often had the Removites compared those eyes to gimlets, on account of their penetrating qualities. Never had they seemed so gimlet-like as now.

"You were to play cricket for Greyfriars to-morrow, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you were preparing for a strenuous game, by smoking in your study?" asked Mr. Quelch, with grim sarcasm.

Vernon-Smith was silent. There was no reply to be made to that.

"I cannot believe, in the circumstances, Vernon-Smith, that you take the cricket match with any great seriousness," said Mr. Quelch. "In any case, my decision is fixed. You are under detention for all half-holidays till the end of the term. Say no more."

Mr. Quelch rustled away.

The Bounder scowled after him. He had not had much hope in making that appeal; and now that it had failed, he was irritated with himself for having made it.

"That's that!" he grunted.

"He, he, he!"

A fat face, and a pair of large spectacles, looked in at the doorway of Study No. 4. The Bounder gave Billy Bunter a black look.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Get out!" growled Vernon-Smith. He was in no mood for William George Bunter.

"He, he, he! I say, old chap, Quelch looked in no end of a wax!" grinned Bunter. "You do ask for it, don't you, old fellow?"

"Will you get out, you fat chump?"

"Oh, really, Smithy! You'll be out of the cricket now," said Bunter cheerfully. "It won't be much loss as far as that goes. In fact, it will make room for a better man."

"You silly owl!"

"You're not the only pebble on the beach, you know, Smithy! In fact, Wharton could easily find a better man, without looking very far. I—I say, Smithy, what are you going to do with that bat?"

The Bounder did not answer that question. But an answer was not really necessary. Bunter knew, the next moment, what Smithy was going to do with the bat.

Clump!

"Yaroooooh!"

A yell floated back as Billy Bunter faded away down the Remove passage. The Bounder slammed the door, and threw himself into the armchair again. His brow was black, and his thoughts were bitter. He had asked for it; but, as is not uncommon, he was far from pleased at getting what he had asked for.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Last Straw!

"I never rains but it pours!" said Harry Wharton resignedly.

"The rainfulness," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "is perpetually accompanied by the ridiculous pourfulness."

Wharton grinned faintly.

"It's just sickening!" he said.

"That's the word!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Putrid!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, we've still got the Bounder!" remarked Frank Nugent, by way of consolation.

Wharton's clouded face cleared a little.

"Yes; thank goodness for that, and that old Smithy's at the top of his form! He was hitting away in tremendous style this afternoon! And he's a jolly good change bowler—he's come on jolly well at bowling lately. Thank goodness for the Bounder!"

"He, he, he!"

That unmusical cachinnation came from Billy Bunter, who had rolled down to Little Side. Games practice had not drawn Bunter there. Games practice, had it been a compulsory day, would have driven him off. Bunter had arrived with news.

Harry Wharton glared round at the chuckling Owl of the Remove. He saw nothing whatever in his remark to draw forth Bunter's unmusical merriment.

"You cackling ass!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up! Thank goodness," went on Wharton, "that the Bounder's all right! Now that silly ass Squiff has got crocked—"

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, the second deadliest bowler in the Remove, held up a bruised wrist.

"I didn't get that knock on purpose, old man!" he remarked.

"Well, I suppose not! But you might have left getting it till after the Highcliffe match. You could have knocked your head off on Thursday, if you'd liked. We wanted you fit to-morrow."

The Australian junior grinned. Really, he had not tumbled off his bike

Bluffing the majestic Head of Greyfriars is a highly risky procedure; but the Bounder of the Remove cheerfully tries it on and—NEARLY gets away with it!

that afternoon intentionally; but he could understand the feelings of a cricket captain who lost one of his best men the day before a big fixture.

The trouble was that Squiff was not the only good man who had to stand out.

Cricket is an uncertain game; and cricket teams are uncertain quantities. A week before, Harry Wharton had been prepared to face the wide world with the Remove Eleven. And now, as he had said, it never rains but it pours!

Squiff was crocked. Redwing, who had been coming on well, had lately given games a rest while he devoted himself to preparing for a Latin prize he was keen on bagging. Tom Brown, the New Zealander, was in sanny with a rather bad cold. Peter Todd, a good man and true, had been banged on the knee with a cricket bat at practice, and was going about with a first-class limp. Mark Linley, a trusty reserve, was home on leave from school, in far-off Lancashire. Hazeldene, who might have made a really good cricketer, had been slacking hopelessly, and was completely off colour.

Even one member of the Co.—the Famous Five themselves—was on the casualty list, Johnny Bull having a slight sprain—slight, but enough to make him useless in the Highcliffe match.

When Squiff came along to report that he had damaged his wrist in a fall from his bike, Wharton felt that it was the last straw, or almost the last.

Highcliffe were in great form; he had seen Courtenay and his men at practice, and knew that. These wretched strokes of ill-luck were not happening over at Highcliffe.

As matters stood, the Remove Eleven was likely to be rather a thing of shreds and patches.

Wharton himself was as good as ever; Bob Cherry was a mighty hitter and Hurree Janset Ram Singh a demon bowler. And the Bounder, as Wharton was thankful to remember, was at the top of his form; and when Smithy was at the top of his form he was a very good man indeed. At his best he was as good a bat as Wharton; and sometimes his bowling ran Hurree Singh's very close. With so many good men off the list Wharton was glad to think of the Bounder. It was, in fact, quite cheering to think of him.

"If I'm any good, old chap—" said Frank Nugent, with a slight grin.

Harry Wharton laughed.

One of the dearest wishes of his heart was to play his best chum in big fixtures; but Nugent, though a keen cricketer and a good man at the game, was not a man he could select for the toughest matches. And Nugent always agreed, with a cheerful face, that cricket came before friendship.

"Of course, we shall want you now, Frank," said Wharton. "In a way, I'm jolly glad. But—"

"Well, I won't let you down, if I can help it," said Nugent. "But I'm not ass enough to suppose that I'm as useful as Squiff, or Browney, or 'Toddy. Still, I'm not quite a rabbit, you know!"

"We shall have to play some rabbits, I'm afraid," said Harry. "Blow! As I said, it never rains but it pours! I shouldn't be surprised, when we go in, to hear that Smithy had fallen downstairs, or something!"

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

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We want to beat Highcliffe," said Harry. "Anyhow, we want to put up a good show. I hate taking over a poor team for those cads Ponsonby & Co. to snigger at!"

"Well we've got a few good men left," said Bob Cherry comfortingly. "You're a first-class bat, old bean—"

"Thanks!"

"Inky's a top-notch bowler—"

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

"Nugent's jolly good!" said Bob loyally.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Nugent.

"And I'm not what you'd call bad myself," said Bob modestly. "And men like young Penfold and Newland and Ogilvy and Russell can put up a fairly good game. And we've got the Bounder."

"He, he, he!"

"What does that fat idiot keep on going off like a cheap alarm-clock for?" growled Johnny Bull. "Can't somebody kick him?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Well, we've got to make the best of it," said Harry. "We'll manage to keep up our end somehow."

"I say, old chap—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you'll want another man," said Bunter. "I'm prepared to play—"

"Eh?"

"I needn't tell you what my batting's like!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"You needn't!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Something like a windmill—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And something like a monkey on a stick—"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I mean it," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the Remove cricketers through his big spectacles. "I've offered my services before, and they've been refused. Well, I offer them again."

"Declined with thanks!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, I'm making a point of this," said Bunter. "Fellows who play for the school to-morrow get off third lesson. Well, I want to get off third lesson."

"Oh, my hat! What a reason for playing Bunter!" chuckled Bob.

"Besides, you'll be lunching at Highcliffe," said Bunter. "My belief is that they will stand a good lunch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Now Smithy's out of the team, I think you ought to give me a show," said Bunter warmly. "I'm a better man than Smithy, any day; and, anyhow, I shan't get detained for smoking in the study—he, he, he!"

Harry Wharton jumped.

"What?" he ejaculated. "What do you mean, you fat ass? Smithy's not detained for to-morrow!"

"He, he, he!"

"You cackling fathead!" roared Wharton. "What do you mean?"

"Ho, he, he! Smithy's detained!" Bunter chuckled, apparently finding something entertaining in the consternation that showed in all faces. "Quelch caught him smoking in the study—"

"Rot!" snapped Bob. "Smithy wouldn't be idiot enough to smoke the day before a match. The man's practically in training—"

"Well, Quelch caught him," grinned Bunter, "and he's detained for all holidays till the end of the term."

"Impossible!" gasped Wharton.

"Don't you worry, old chap," said Bunter comfortingly. "I'll play for the Remove instead of Smithy—"

"Cheese it, you fat frump!" growled Bob. "My hat! If Smithy's really got himself detained, that tears it!"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"He couldn't be such a fool!" he said. "He couldn't be such a sweep! Bunter, you babbling bandersnatch—"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, bump him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—yaroooh—leggo—whoooooop!" roared Bunter.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat in the grass and roared.

Harry Wharton was already striding away towards the House, his brows knitted, and his eyes glinting under them. The other fellows exchanged glances and followed him, leaving William George Bunter to splutter. If Herbert Vernon-Smith really was under detention for the morrow, and one of the best men left had to be dropped out of the already depleted team, it was the last straw. If that really was the case, there was no doubt that the captain of the Remove would have something to say to the Bounder, and that it would be something decidedly emphatic!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business.

TOM REDWING threw open the door of Study No. 4 and came cheerily in. The ruddy face of the sailorman's son was cheery and bright. He gave a faint, imperceptible sniff as he entered, and as the scent of smoke caught him. But he made no remark on it. The Bounder was not smoking now. He was stretched in the armchair, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brows knitted in a black scowl. Redwing, at the first glance, could see that something

was wrong with his chum, and some of the brightness faded out of his face. He had left Smithy, an hour ago, in the best of tempers and the best of spirits, but the Bounder's temper was uncertain at the best of times, and it was evident that a change had come over him since.

"Anything up, Smithy?" asked Tom.

"Yes."

"Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Yes."

"Well, give it a name, old chap."

Grunt from the Bounder. He did not give it a name, as Redwing expressed it. He stared in scowling silence at the sailorman's son.

Redwing suppressed a sigh. A fellow who set out to chum with the Bounder of Greyfriars did not find his lines cast in pleasant places. Any friend of Smithy's would have needed a great gift of patience. Fortunately, Redwing had learned patience, in hard days before he had come to Greyfriars.

"Not my fault, I hope, whatever it is, Smithy?" he said. There seemed to be something accusing in the Bounder's scowling stare.

"Yes."

"Sorry, old man. But what have I done?" asked Redwing, surprised and disturbed.

The Bounder gave a savage grunt. Since Mr. Quelch's visit to the study, he had been thinking, and his thoughts had been black and bitter, and growing blacker and bitterer every minute. He was out of cricket—cut out of games for the rest of the term. That was bad enough—it was thoroughly rotten! But that was not all! He was letting down the team—letting down the cricket captain who relied on him. He was wanted to play at Highcliffe on the morrow—and he would have to stand out. The team had had bad luck already, and could not afford to lose another of its best men. It might easily mean all the difference between victory and defeat; and the Remove men were keen on their record in games. The Bounder had some unpleasant interviews to face.

"Quelch came up to the study for you!" the Bounder snapped. "What the thump are you greasing up to Quelch for?"

Redwing flushed.

"I didn't know Quelch had been here. I didn't see any harm, anyhow. Quelch is helping me with some extra toot, now I'm going in for the Head's Latin prize—"

"I knew it was some filthy swotting."

"Not exactly swotting, Smithy, but a fellow likes to bag a prize sometimes," said Redwing. "Why, you advised me to go in for the prize yourself, when the names were given in; you said you'd like it to come to this study."

Grunt from Smithy! That reminder only had an irritating effect on a fellow who was in a far from reasonable mood.

"A man can't bag a prize without work," went on Redwing, "and it was jolly decent of Quelch to give me some extra toot; he's a busy man, and doesn't have a lot of leisure. I suppose he had an hour or so to spare, and looked in—I'm frightfully sorry I was out."

"Oh, you haven't missed a lot!" said the Bounder sarcastically. "You're to go to his study when you come in."

"But what was the harm in Quelch coming here, Smithy?" asked Redwing. "It's not so jolly unusual for a Form master to come to a man's study. Why the dickens shouldn't he?"

"I happened to be smoking."

"Oh!"

Redwing stood silent. The Bounder chose to blame him, but really it was hard to be patient with the unreasonable fellow. The simple fact was, that Smithy should not have been smoking. If trouble had accrued, he had asked for it.

"A licking?" asked Redwing at last.

"Am I the man to whine over a lickin'?" growled the Bounder.

"Not a flogging!" exclaimed Redwing.

"I wouldn't care twopence if it was."

"Then what—"

"You can't guess?" sneered the Bounder. "You've been greasing up to Quelch the whole term, and you don't know his manners and customs yet. He knows how to take it out of a man who plays games instead of mugging up putrid Latin for a putrid prize."

"Detention?" asked Redwing.

"That's it!"

"Oh, my hat! But you're down to play at Highcliffe to-morrow, Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing in utter dismay. All his resentment of his chum's sulky temper vanished, as he realised the blow that had fallen on him.

Smithy looked at him and grinned faintly. He was in a savage, bitter temper, prepared to quarrel with friend or foe; glad of an excuse to quarrel with anybody. But the dismay and concern in Redwing's face disarmed him.

"I say, that's awfully rotten, old man," said Tom. "Rotten for Wharton, too, as he's got a weak team already."

"Bother Wharton! I'm not thinking of Wharton," growled the Bounder; a statement that was not quite correct, for it was on his conscience that he was letting his captain down.

"Can't anything be done?" said Redwing thoughtfully. "I say, old chap, if you explained to Quelch—put it nicely—" He paused. He knew how unlikely it was that the arrogant Bounder would eat "humble pie."

"I've tried that! Nothing doing!" The Bounder's lip curled bitterly. "The old blighter's got me by the short hairs. He knows I don't care a straw for a licking, or a Head's flogging, either. But he knows it will hit me hard to be cut out of games. He's got me there."

"That's not fair to Quelch, Smithy! He would be sorry to keep any fellow out of games. You must have made him wild, to come down on you like that."

"Oh, let's be fair to Quelch!" said the Bounder satirically. "Never mind about bein' fair to me, or to the eleven—let's be fair to Quelch!"

He sat upright, and his jaw squared.

"I tell you the old blighter has picked on this chance to dish me. And I tell you I'm not going to stand it! I'm going to play cricket at Highcliffe to-morrow, and Quelch can go and eat coke."

"Don't be mad, old man! The men who go over to Highcliffe are let off third school, as well as the half-holiday. If you could break detention in the afternoon, you couldn't cut third school in the morning."

"Couldn't I?" sneered the Bounder. "You'll jolly well see."

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, think of what you're doing! Quelch is the man to come after you and yank you away by the collar, if you defied him like that!" exclaimed Redwing.

"I know that! I shall have to manage somehow! I'm playing cricket at Highcliffe to-morrow," said the

Bounder positively. "Quelch can take it out of me in lickings if he likes. He's not going to butt into games."

"Smithy, old man—" "Oh, can it!" interrupted the Bounder savagely. "I've told you you're to go to Quelch's study—go and grease up to the man, and mug up your putrid Latin! So long as you get the Head's prize you needn't worry, need you? Games don't matter to a sap!"

Redwing gave him a long look and turned to the door. He left the study without another word. He did not want to quarrel with Smithy if he could help it; and silence, at present, was golden.

The Bounder scowled after him as he went, and threw himself back in the chair. That he had been unfair and unjust to his best chum, he was quite well aware, but he was not in a repentant mood. All the bitterness in Smithy's nature—and there was plenty of it—was roused now, and anyone who uttered

a word in defence of Quelch, had only savage words to expect from the Bounder. And the Bounder had made up his mind—the outcome of his black reflections was that he was going to play cricket at Highcliffe on Wednesday. Quelch or no Quelch, he was going over with the Remove Eleven to play Courtenay & Co. But even the reckless Herbert Vernon-Smith realised that it was a serious matter to set up in defiance of all authority, and he was doubtful whether he would "get away with it," and doubtful of the consequences if he did get away with it.

There was a footstep in the Remove passage. Harry Wharton looked into the study, and the expression on his face showed that he had heard. The Bounder gave him a sarcastic grin.

"Hallo, trot in," he said. "What's the news?"

"Squiff's crooked," said Harry. "He had to fall off his jigger. That's another man out of the eleven."

"Phew!" "I've heard from Bunter—"

"Bunter! What have you heard from Bunter?" yawned the Bounder. "You must have a lot of time on your hands, if you can find time to listen to Bunter's tattle."

Wharton coloured angrily.

"I hope it's only tattle," he said. "According to Bunter, you've got detention for to-morrow, and I shall have to leave you out of the match at Highcliffe. If it's only that fat fool's gammon, I'll jolly well kick him; but for goodness' sake, Smithy, tell me at once how it stands."

"Better kick him," yawned the Bounder.

"Then there's nothing in it!" exclaimed Wharton in great relief. "Thank goodness for that! The fat chump! I knew, of course, that you

wouldn't be fool enough to get detention when you know we're relying on you. You're all right for Highcliffe to-morrow?"

"Right as rain!"

"Good!" Wharton's face brightened. "We may pull the game off yet, though we shall have to go all out. I'm relying on you, then."

"I'm not going to let you down."

"Good man! Sorry I took any notice of that fat dummy's cackle; but you can understand that I was uneasy—"

"Oh, quite!" drawled the Bounder.

Wharton, with a cheery nod, left the study. His mind was relieved. The Bounder was left with a grim brow.

He was booked now!

If he had been uncertain before, he had left himself no loophole now. After what he had said, he either had to turn up at Highcliffe for the cricket, or eat his words—which the Bounder did not

prep when they met Billy Bunter in the Remove passage. Bunter rolled up to them—and received what was coming to him. Wharton had told his chums that he had seen Smithy, and that there was nothing in it—the Bounder was still in the team for Highcliffe. From which the chums of the Remove concluded, as a matter of course, that Bunter's story of the detention was one more of his "yarns." Billy Bunter liked to retail startling news; and when there was no news going, he had a way of manufacturing it. That did not matter much, as a rule, but on the present occasion it did matter, a great deal. A kicking was due to Bunter, in the opinion of the Famous Five—and he received what was due.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.



"That you, Skinner?" yawned Vernon-Smith. "Sit down and have a cigarette, old bean." "Vernon-Smith!" The Bounder almost jumped out of his chair at the sound of Mr. Quelch's voice.

think for a moment of doing. He was under detention, and it was certain that Mr. Quelch would not rescind that detention; so the matter was now a contest between the reckless junior and his Form master, and the Bounder turned his thoughts to ways and means!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Secret!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Kick him!" "Ow! You beasts!" roared Billy Bunter in great indignation. "Wow! Wharrer you kicking a man for? Wow!" "Give him another!" "The kickfulness is the proper caper." "Go it!" The Famous Five were coming up to

"Keep off, you beasts! Wharrer you up to? Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"One more!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Yaroooooh!" "What's the row, you men?" asked Tom Redwing, coming along from the Remove staircase.

"Only kicking Bunter," said Bob. "He asked for it, you know! The fat villain's got a yarn that Smithy's detained for to-morrow, and almost made us believe it. Bunter's got to learn to keep his funny stories for less serious matters."

"Ow! You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Smithy is detained! I heard Quelch tell him so! Ow!"

"Still sticking to it?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Give him another."

"I tell you Quelch caught him

smoking in his study, and I heard him say— Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fled into Study No. 7, barely escaping several lunging boots. Tom Redwing stared at the Famous Five. Redwing, at least, knew that the fat Owl's report was well-founded.

"The potty porpoise!" said Harry Wharton. "I came in to rag Smithy baldheaded, after what that pernicious piffler told me. Smithy detained, you know—with the team already at sixes and sevens."

"But—" began Redwing.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Harry. "I've asked Smithy."

"You—you've asked Smithy?" stammered Redwing.

"Yes, I asked him at once. It's all serene."

"But—but—did Smithy tell you he wasn't detained for to-morrow?" exclaimed Redwing blankly.

"He told me I could rely on him for Highcliffe, which comes to the same thing."

"Oh!" said Redwing.

He said no more, but walked on rather quickly to Study No. 4.

Harry Wharton & Co. went to their various studies for prep in a cheery humour. Matters were not so bright as usual for the Remove cricketers; but so far as the Bounder was concerned, at least, it had only been a false alarm. At all events, that was their present belief.

Redwing's face was grave as he went into his study. That his chum was planning to break detention on the morrow he knew already; but it did not seem to him that Smithy had any chance of pulling it off. Obviously he was keeping it dark that he was under detention. Wharton, keen as he was

not to lose one of his best men, would never have dreamed of allowing him to go with the team, if he had known the facts. Smithy might set up in defiance of all authority; but the captain of the Remove was not likely to follow such an example, or to believe for a moment that it could be successful.

Smithy was lounging in the armchair as Redwing came into Study No. 4; it was time for prep, but the Bounder was giving that no heed. Redwing took out his books, and sat at the table and began to work. The Bounder sat where he was in deep thought, and Tom could guess what his thoughts were. He broke the silence at last.

"What about prep, Smithy?"

The Bounder laughed.

"Other things to think of, old bean."

"It may mean a row in the morning."

"Naturally."

Redwing laid down his pen.

"Look here, Smithy! The fellows don't know you're detained to-morrow—it's not fair not to tell them. Wharton's got time now to pick out the best man available in your place, if you let him know at once. It's not fair to leave it to the last minute."

"Dear me!" said the Bounder.

"There's another thing—the men in the team have to be let off third school. Wharton will have to ask Quelch for leave for the man he picks out. He can't do that at the last minute."

"You're rather keen on seeing another man in my place?" said the Bounder banteringly.

"You know I'm not; but it can't be helped. You haven't one chance in a hundred of dodging Quelch to-morrow and getting away."

"Think not?"

"If you did, Quelch would either

come after you, or send a prefect to fetch you back. If you're missing in third school he will act at once!" exclaimed Redwing. "He will know where you're gone."

"Yes; Quelch is bright enough to guess that," assented the Bounder.

"Well, then, think of Wharton's position!" exclaimed Redwing hotly. "You'll be yanked away from Highcliffe—"

"Possibly. Two reserve men are going over with the team; Wharton will have a man on the spot if I get yanked away. But perhaps I shan't get yanked!" said the Bounder coolly.

Redwing set his lips.

"You'll put Wharton in a rotten position. He'll be counting on you till the last moment, and then he'll have to take another man into the team. It's not treating him fairly."

The Bounder smiled sarcastically.

"You think I ought to tell Wharton at once, and let him put another man's name in the list to-night?"

"Certainly I do."

"Whose name?" asked the Bounder.

"That's for Wharton to decide."

"Oh! You haven't suggested a name?"

"Of course I haven't! What do you mean?"

"Well, as you seem so jolly keen on squeezing me out of the team I fancied you might have suggested a name—your own, for instance."

Redwing looked at him, his cheeks burning, for a long moment, and then dropped his eyes to his work again.

Nothing more was said. Redwing worked through his prep, the Bounder lounging idly in the armchair. Not a word was spoken in the study till prep was over, and Redwing rose from the table.

Then, as he was moving towards the door in silence, the Bounder spoke in a low, bitter tone.

"I'm keeping it dark that I'm under detention, Redwing! You know that! You can have your own opinion about it. I don't care two straws! But you're not going to give me away."

Redwing drew a deep breath.

"Wharton has a right to know!" he said slowly.

"Are you going to tell him?"

"You ought to tell him, Smithy."

"Never mind that! Are you going to tell him?" The Bounder rose from the chair his eyes gleaming at his study-mate.

"Smithy, old man—"

"Are you going to tell him?"

"No!" said Redwing at last. "I shan't say a word! But—"

"That's enough."

"But I hope you'll think better of it, Smithy, and let him know in time," said Redwing.

"That's my business!"

Redwing left the study without speaking again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

MR. PROUT started.

Mr. Prout stared.

Mr. Prout snorted!

What the majestic eyes of Prout beheld was enough, more than enough, to make any Form master start, stare, and snort.

Prout had rolled out of Common-room, not in the best of tempers. Masters' Common-room, in point of fact, was not really conducive to good temper.

Especially towards the end of term tempers were liable to be short in Common-room. The way Prout laid down the law in Common-room often made other members of the staff restive.



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Prout was a plump and good-natured gentleman. He had vast stores of experience and knowledge which he was willing—too willing—to place at the disposal of his colleagues. He would advise Hacker about the Shell, and Capper about the Fourth, and Wiggins about the Third, and Twigg about the Second. He would give Monsieur Charpentier tips about ways and means to stop ragging in the French classes. He would give Lascelles fatherly counsel about the management of the mathematical sets. Even Mr. Flatt, the music master, who did not live in the school, was not safe from Prout's stores of knowledge and experience. Even the Head sometimes had to give Prout a cool, steady gaze, to ward him off, as it were. Even Quelch, who had a way of fixing a freezing stare from a pair of gimlet eyes on Prout when he weighed in with advice about the Remove, could not wholly escape from it.

On the present occasion possibly Quelch's temper was wearing thin towards the end of term, as Form masters' tempers were liable to do. Possibly he was still irritated from his interview with the Bounder, whose cool "cheek" often got Quelch's "rag" out. Anyhow, instead of merely freezing Prout with a pair of gimlet eyes, on this occasion Quelch informed him, in acid tones, that he felt himself quite capable of managing his Form; but that in case of losing faith in his own capacity for management, he would come to Prout for advice, which he did not desire to receive until then!

This was quite unpleasant.

Prout rolled away offended.

Quelch went to his study with his lips compressed.

These little breezes were not uncommon in Common-room, where, according to some of the fellows, the masters cackled like a lot of old hens, and got on one another's nerves, and were only restrained by a sense of propriety from talking to one another as fellows talked in the Forms. Had Quelch been a Remove boy instead of Remove master there was little doubt that he would have called Prout a fathead. Had Prout been a Fifth-Former instead of Fifth Form master it was probable that he might have kicked Quelch!

These little relaxations, of course, were quite impossible for members of the staff. So, according to some disrespectful fellows, they took it out in nagging!

Prout, therefore, was cross when he arrived at his study door. He could not help feeling that Quelch was ungrateful, and wanting in proper respect to a senior master. He was far from satisfied with the way Quelch conducted the Remove, and he saw no prospect of improvement so long as Quelch was so extremely and absurdly touchy about advice from older and wiser heads.

And then, arriving at his study, opening the door, and switching on the light, Prout started, stared, and snorted, as already stated. There was a telephone in Prout's study, and standing at the telephone, in the very act of putting the receiver back on the hooks after calling, was a Remove boy!

Prout sometimes allowed Fifth Form men, as a great favour, to use that phone. This, however, did not account for the extent of the telephone bills that came in. Prout often had a suspicion that unauthorised persons used his phone. That suspicion was now verified.

Had the delinquent been a Fifth Form man no doubt Prout would have delivered a little homily and dismissed the matter, and the delinquent. He would

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have told the Fifth Form man that there was no need to use that phone surreptitiously, all that was needed was to ask leave from a master whose pleasure, indeed, whose pride it was, to be a friend to his boys.

But the delinquent was not a Fifth Form man. It was a Remove boy—a young rascal of the Lower Fourth, a member of Quelch's Form—Quelch, who had told Prout that he did not need advice about conducting his Form!

With that acid remark of Quelch's fresh in his ears, Prout came on a Remove using his phone surreptitiously.

It was too much! Having started, stared, and snorted, Prout proceeded to boom.

"Boy!"

His portly, fruity voice rolled through the study.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured the Bounder.

He whirled round from the telephone.

He stared at Prout.

Smithy had ascertained that Prout was in Common-room. He knew that when Prout's chin was going he was generally safe for some time to come. He had slipped into Prout's study to phone, and phoned in the dark. In another minute he would have been gone. But owing to the disturbance of Prout's majestic nervous system by Quelch's acid remarks that required minute was not granted to the Bounder. Prout was there! The switching on of the electric light revealed him at the telephone, just putting back the receiver.

He was thankful that Prout had not arrived earlier.

Prout looked wrathful now. What he would have looked like had he known that the Bounder had been telephoning to a sporting acquaintance at the Cross Keys in Friardale did not bear thinking of. The Bounder was deeply thankful that his chat with Mr. Hawke had finished before the arrival of Prout.

"Boy!" boomed Prout. "What are you doing here?"

Really the question was superfluous. It was perfectly obvious what the Bounder was doing there.

"Sorry, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "I—I came here to—to ask your permission to use the phone, sir, and—and as you were not here—"

"I do not believe for one moment, Vernon-Smith, that it was your intention to ask permission to use my telephone!" boomed Prout.

"Oh, sir!" said the Bounder deprecatingly.

"And to whom, sir, are you telephoning at this hour? It is nine o'clock, sir—nearly nine o'clock! To whom have you been telephoning at such an hour?"

"The fact is, sir, I haven't telephoned," said the Bounder calmly. "I was going to ring up a friend at Highcliffe, but the number was engaged."

"Come with me, sir!" boomed Prout.

"I—I apologise, sir!" said the Bounder.

He did not want to be taken to Quelch, which was Prout's intention. The Bounder had his own reasons—good reasons—for desiring Mr. Quelch not to know that he had been on the telephone that evening. Certainly Mr. Quelch was not likely to guess that the Bounder had been arranging with the obliging Mr. Hawke to make a trip to London and dispatch a telegram from a London office in the morning. Most certainly Mr. Quelch was not likely to guess that. Still, when one was dealing with a downy bird like Quelch, the less one let him know the better.

"You apologise!" boomed Prout. "You shall apologise, sir, in the presence of your Form master! Come."

"If you'd be so kind, sir, as not to mention the matter to Mr. Quelch!" said Smith, with unaccustomed humility.

Now, as a matter of fact, Prout was a kind-hearted gentleman. He prided himself on being friendly with his boys, who, no doubt in gratitude, called him "Old Pompous."

But the milk of human kindness had soured in Prout, just now. Quelch's acidity had soured it. He had offered Quelch friendly, and much-needed advice on the subject of the Remove. He had been snubbed. Now he found one of Quelch's boys using his phone without leave—a most disorderly, disrespectful, unscrupulous action. This would be rather a "facer" for Quelch.

So Prout was not to be denied. He dropped a portly hand on the Bounder's shoulder, and whisked him across the study to the door.

"Come!" he boomed.

The Bounder's eyes glinted.

"Look here, Mr. Prout—"

"Silence! Come."

Prout marched the hapless Bounder away. He marched him to Mr. Quelch's study; tapped at the door, opened it, and marched him in.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

"What—" he began.

His eye glinted for a moment at the Bounder. Then it fixed coldly, questioningly on Prout. He could see that it was a complaint—a serious complaint. He hoped, from the bottom of his heart, that it was some groundless complaint which he could treat with contempt—more or less civil contempt. He was quite prepared to back up a boy of his Form, in dealing with an interfering master of another Form.

But he had doubts. If it had been Wharton, or Bob Cherry, or Linley, or

Mauleverer, or almost any fellow in the Remove, it might have been all right. But the cheeky, reckless, impudent Bounder was very likely to blame. In which case, it was very awkward for Quelch, after his late acid remarks to Prout. However, he hoped for the best.

"This boy," said Mr. Prout, in his booming, fruity voice, "this boy—Vernon-Smith, sir—of your Form—this member, sir, of the Remove—"

"Well?" Quelch shot the word out like a bullet, cutting short the wordy Prout.

Prout snorted.

"I report this boy to you, sir, for entering my study surreptitiously, and using my telephone without leave."

"Oh!"

It was not a groundless complaint, as Quelch had feared that it wouldn't be! The matter was serious. Prout was in the right to report such a happening. Prout had a grievance.

"Far be it from me," resumed Prout, "to obtrude advice upon a colleague—a colleague to whom advice, however well-meant, is unacceptable. Far be it from me to point out—"

Far as it was from Prout, there was no doubt that he was going to do it. But Quelch interrupted.

"Vernon-Smith! You have entered Mr. Prout's study?"

"Yes, sir."

"And used his telephone without permission?"

"I was interrupted, sir."

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane.

"Bend over that chair, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder, setting his lips, bent over.

Prout coughed.

"This boy's conduct," he said, "explains certain remarks I made to you in Common-room, my dear Quelch, with regard to the deplorable result of relaxation of discipline in a junior Form—"

"You will oblige me, Prout, by not repeating those remarks, which interested me very little at the time, and do not interest me at all at the present moment," said Quelch.

"Oh!" said Prout. "Indeed, Mr. Quelch!"

"Yes," said Quelch. "Indeed, Mr. Prout!"

"I will retire, sir!" boomed Prout. "I leave this delinquent—this unruly member of an unruly Form, in your hands, sir. I have no more to say, sir."

Prout retired, with Olympian wrath in his brow. Mr. Quelch swished the cane, his lips setting in a hard, bitter line.

Whack, whack, whack!

The Bounder breathed hard. He had angered his Form master already that day, and any fellow who bagged a master's phone without leave was due for a licking. But he was getting it hot and strong chiefly on Prout's account, he knew that. The fussy, interfering master of the Fifth had got Quelch's back up, and Quelch was taking it out of Smithy.

Whack, whack, whack!

It was a full six; and every one was a stinger. Even after the six had been delivered, Henry Samuel Quelch showed some lingering desire to go on with it. However, he restrained that desire, and laid down the cane.

"You may go, Vernon-Smith," he said harshly.

And the Bounder gave him a black look, and went.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,222.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Smithy's Little Scheme!

"HARRY, old chap—"
"Br-r-r-r-r!"
"Now, look here, old fellow," said Billy Bunter persuasively, "have a little sense! Speak to Quelch before class, or it will be too late."

"Fathead!"

It was the following morning, and the Remove were gathering at the door of their Form-room.

For the members of the cricketing party, who were booked for Highcliffe that day, there were only first and second lesson to be gone through; their school day ended at break. The rest of the Form had to go in for third school as usual; but the cricketers would be at Highcliffe at the time. That, to Billy Bunter's mind, was a powerful reason why he should go over to Highcliffe with the cricketers.

As a cricketer, perhaps, he was not of high value. But that was not the important point. The important point was that the cricketers escaped third school. And it was all the more important, because third lesson dealt with Latin grammar; and if there was anything Bunter hated more than English grammar, it was Latin grammar.

"You'll have to speak to Quelch before class, if I'm coming over to Highcliffe with you, old chap!" urged Bunter.

"That's all right; you're not coming."

"Look here, old chap," said Bunter, "I'm entitled to a place in the team, on my merits, as you know. But I'll let you off that. Take me over as a reserve."

"We're taking two extra men, fat-head, and that's the limit."

"Quelch might stretch a point, if you tell him what a jolly valuable man I am—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, as Smithy isn't playing—"

"Ass!"

"You see, Smithy being detained, you'll want another man—Wow! If you kick me again, you beast, I'll—Yow! Wow-ow!"

Billy Bunter dodged away.

"You silly ass!" he hooted. "If you don't believe that Smithy's detained, ask Quelch."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Form-room. Evidently he was not getting out of third school that morning by going over to Highcliffe with the cricketers.

"The fat ass!" said Bob Cherry. "What is he sticking to that fatheaded yarn for? I suppose Smithy knows whether he's detained or not."

"Well, he ought to," said Wharton, laughing.

Tom Redwing coloured uncomfortably as he heard. But he said nothing. If the Bounder chose to deceive the fellows on that point, it was awkward for Redwing, but he could not give his friend away. He knew that Smithy had some scheme in mind for getting away that day, and playing cricket in spite of detention. He did not believe for a moment that it could be successful; and so far as he could see, it could only lead to the Remove captain being let down at the last moment. That was disconcerting enough; yet he felt that he could not speak. Redwing was not feeling happy that bright and sunny July morning.

The Bounder strolled to the Form-room door, with his hands in his

pockets, and a cheery grin on his face. Certainly he did not look like a fellow who was under detention, and booked for a dismal afternoon in the Form-room instead of playing in a cricket match. He came swinging up the passage as if he had not a care in the world.

Some of the fellows knew that he had had "six" the previous evening, but the Bounder had evidently recovered from that. Six from Quelch was not a light matter, but the Bounder was tough.

"Feeling fit, old bean?" asked Wharton.

"Fit as a fiddle."

"That ass Bunter keeps on making out that you're under detention," said Frank Nugent.

The Bounder laughed.

He met Redwing's eyes and laughed again.

"You're not coming over with the team, Reddy?" he asked airily.

"No!" said Tom curtly.

"Trot over in the afternoon, then, and see us knockin' spots off Highcliffe," said the Bounder. "Give sappin' a miss for once."

Redwing made no reply.

He had not the slightest doubt that if the Bounder slipped away in break with the Remove Eleven, he would be fetched ingloriously back, either by a Sixth Form prefect, or by his Form master. Smithy, at all events, would not be "knocking spots" off Highcliffe that day.

Yet he could see that the Bounder was confident. What scheme was in his mind Redwing could not imagine; but whatever it was, the Bounder seemed to be counting on success.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Quelch!" murmured Bob Cherry, and the juniors went into the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch gave the Bounder a glance, with a glint in his eyes. But the Bounder, for once, did not meet his eyes with an air of half-suppressed impudence. He did not want to get Quelch's rag out that morning. He was called on to construe, and though he had utterly neglected prep the previous evening, his con was very good. Never had the Bounder been so well-behaved in class as he was that morning, and perhaps Mr. Quelch was a little mollified. Certainly it did not cross his mind for a single moment that that unruly member of his Form was planning to defy his authority and cut detention—as he might have suspected had the Bounder been in his usual mood. Smithy was, in point of fact, pulling his Form master's leg to lull any possible suspicion, and he was succeeding.

Second lesson was drawing to a close when there came a tap at the Form-room door and Trotter presented himself.

Mr. Quelch glanced sharply round at the House page. He did not like interruptions during class.

"The 'Ead wishes to see you, sir, in break!" said Trotter.

"Very well!"

Ten minutes later the Remove were dismissed for break. Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded at once to get ready for the trip over to Highcliffe. Tom Redwing joined Vernon-Smith as he left the Form-room.

"It's not too late yet, Smithy," he said, in a low voice. "I—I hope you're not going to play the goat, after all, old fellow?"

"Not at all, I'm goin' to play cricket."

"Then—you're sticking to it?"

"Ain't I a fellow of my word?"

"Smithy, old man, Quelch will be frightfully wild when he finds out. It may mean the sack."

"He may not find out—unless you feel

your duty, as a sap and a greaser, to tell him."

"Don't talk rot, Smithy! I shan't say a word, and nobody else will, but he's bound to find out. If you're missing in third school he will know where you're gone."

"Possibly not!" yawned the Bounder. "He may fancy that I've gone home for the day!"

Redwing stared.

"How could he fancy so, Smithy? What do you mean?"

"Well, he might!" grinned the Bounder. "Suppose the Head had a telegram from my father this morning—"

"Wh-a-at?"

"Asking leave for me to go home for the day—"

"But—but—"

"He could hardly refuse, could he?"

grinned the Bounder. "And if I start for the railway station to go home, how's Quelch going to know that I head for Highcliffe instead?"

"But—but—your father wouldn't play such a trick—you couldn't ask him—besides, you can't get at him to ask—"

"There are ways and means!" drawled the Bounder. "I got six last night for using Prout's phone. Guess whom I was phoning to?"

"Smithy! I know your father's indulgent—but—but he couldn't—he wouldn't—it's not possible that he would help you in playing a disrespectful trick on your Form master—"

"I know that, ass! I phoned to Jerry Hawke at the Cross Keys," said the Bounder coolly. "He took the first train for London this morning and sent the wire."

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing.

"Obligin' sort of sweep, isn't he?" grinned the Bounder. "I'm makin' it worth his while, of course."

"Smithy!" Redwing looked absolutely aghast. "You—you can't do such a thing. Spoofing the Head—and Quelch—and—and—Smithy, if it came out—"

"How's it goin' to come out?"

Redwing was silent.

The very daring of the scheme made it likely to be successful. Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, was certainly not likely to suspect that a telegram signed by Samuel Vernon-Smith had been sent utterly unknown to that gentleman. Quelch was a "downy bird," but he could scarcely surmise that such a telegram had been concocted by a junior in his Form, or that a junior in his Form had a confederate ready to his hand to make a journey to London to dispatch the "spoo" wire. The telegram would be taken at face value; the Bounder would be given leave to go home.

"But—but—" stammered Redwing.

"Didn't you hear Trotter's message?" grinned the Bounder. "The Beak wants to see Quelch in break. What does he want to see him for?"

"You mean—he's had the telegram?"

"Just that!"

"Oh, Smithy!"

"Oh, Smithy!" mimicked the Bounder. "Shocked, ain't you? Go and give me away to Quelch, then! Grease up to the old blighter by givin' a pal away! It will get you into his good books for the rest of the term!"

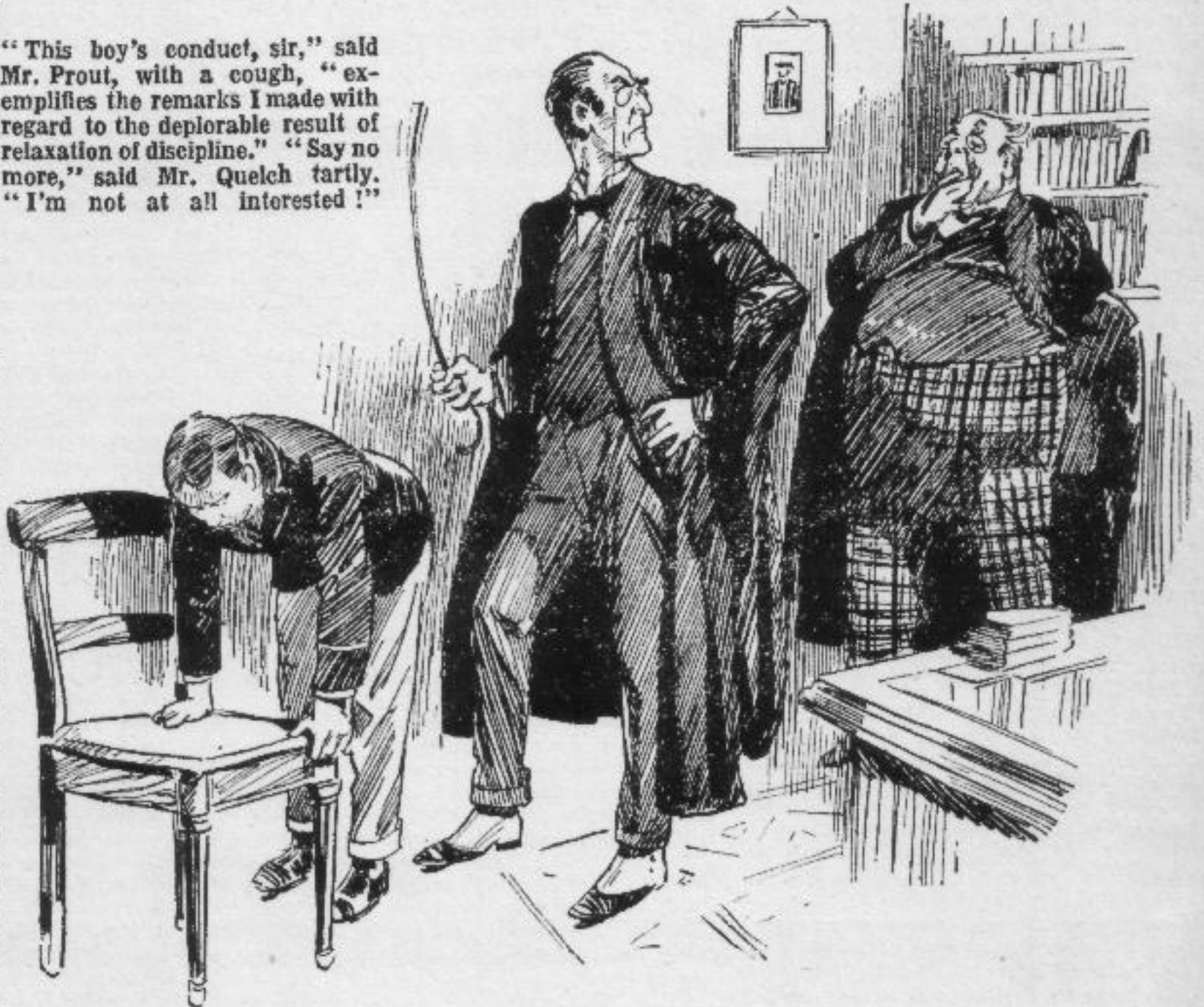
Redwing's lip quivered.

"You've no right to talk like that, Smithy! You know I wouldn't give you away, or you wouldn't have told me!"

"Quite!" chuckled the Bounder.

"But you shouldn't have told me! It's put me in a rotten position. You're

"This boy's conduct, sir," said Mr. Prout, with a cough, "exemplifies the remarks I made with regard to the deplorable result of relaxation of discipline." "Say no more," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "I'm not at all interested!"



fooling Quelch and deceiving the Head. You're making me a party to it!"

"Exactly! It's rather amusin'," said Vernon-Smith, "I like to see your face when you're shocked, old bean. It's entertainin'."

"If Wharton knew—"

"Are you goin' to tell him?"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Redwing. "I'm getting fed-up with your gibes, Smithy. You may get away with this rotten trick, but it's almost bound to come out afterwards. If you play a good game at Highcliffe fellows will be talking about it. It's practically impossible to keep it dark afterwards that you played in the match."

The Bounder snapped his fingers.

"That for afterwards!" he said. "I've said that I'm goin' to play at Highcliffe, an' I'm a man of my word. Afterwards doesn't matter!" He gave his chum a dark look. "So you call it a rotten trick?"

"Yes, I can't call it anything else!"

"Keep your opinion to yourself, then. Quelch has a down on me, and he's

set out to keep me out of games. I'm usin' any weapon that comes to my hand."

"Quelch hasn't a down on you," said Tom quietly, "and I know jolly well that he would be sorry to keep you out of games. You can't expect him to believe that you're keen on games when he finds you smoking just before a match."

"I've had that from Quelch already! Don't give me the old fool's sermons at second-hand."

"Quelch might have let you off if you'd gone the right way to work. Wharton would have put it to him if you'd told Wharton the truth. He would take Wharton's word that you're needed in the match—you can't expect him to take yours. The fact is that you prefer to play foolhardy tricks and—"

"Sorry I can't wait for you to get to

seventhly!" said the Bounder. "I've got to speak to Wharton!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

The Bounder turned his back on Redwing and walked away. Tom breathed hard. He made a step to follow his wayward chum, but desisted. There was no chance of turning the Bounder from his purpose, he knew that, and it was futile to quarrel with him. But his face was clouded, and his heart was heavy. Any fellow who palled with Smithy had a thorny path to tread, and Tom was finding it uncommonly thorny at the present moment. But deeper than his resentment of the Bounder's gibes, deeper than his disgust at the deception, was his dread of the result. The very audacity of the scheme seemed to promise success, but there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. The Bounder did not fear for himself, but his chum feared for him.

Without another glance at Redwing, the Bounder went to look for Wharton. He found him packing his cricket bag.

"You men are goin' over in the brake," said Smithy. "I'll leave my things with you, Wharton. You don't mind if I bike it?"

"Not at all, but why—?"

"Well, I'd rather bike it. All the same to you?"

"Oh, quite!"

The Bounder left him, and a couple of minutes later ran into Trotter. Trotter had a message for him. He was to go to his Form master's study at once. And the Bounder, with a smile on his face, headed for Mr. Quelch's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Getting Away With It!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH was frowning.

He was deeply annoyed.

His looks showed as much as the Bounder presented himself in the study. His gimlet-eyes almost bored into Vernon-Smith.

It was intensely annoying. Vernon-Smith, for offence given, had been sentenced to detention for the remaining half-holidays of the term. To-day was the first of the half-holidays, and Mr. Quelch, much against his will, had to give the Bounder leave, not only for the afternoon, but for third school in the morning as well.

There was no choice in the matter.

Mr. Quelch had gone to see the Head, as requested, and had been shown the telegram received by Dr. Locke.

That telegram was signed "Samuel Vernon-Smith." It was marked as having been handed in at the London post office near Mr. Vernon-Smith's town residence.

It stated the request of Mr. Vernon-Smith that his son should be given leave to go home for the day, adding that it was "important."

Such a request from a parent, of course, was not to be disregarded. The Head saw no reason for thinking of disregarding it. If Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier, wanted his son at Greyfriars to go home for the day, for some special and important reason, the headmaster saw no cause for refusing such leave. He merely mentioned the matter to Mr. Quelch, as the junior's Form master, and left it to him to tell the junior.

But it was bitterly annoying to Henry Samuel Quelch. That unruly member of his Form was under detention, and Mr. Quelch had to excuse him from detention on the very first day that it fell due, owing to this disconcerting request from the boy's parent.

Herbert Vernon-Smith read his Form master's thoughts easily enough. But his manner was innocently and respectfully inquiring.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I sent for you, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch, slowly and reluctantly. "Dr. Locke has received a telegram from your father."

The Bounder started—quite an artistic start.

"Nothing wrong at home, sir, I hope?" he exclaimed.

"Not that I am aware of, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, I thought my father might be ill, or something—"

"Nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith. Your father desires you to go home for the day."

"Does he, sir?"

"Although you are under detention, Vernon-Smith, I cannot see my way to refusing your father's request."

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"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder demurely.

"You therefore have leave for the day, to go home," said Mr. Quelch. "Your father, of course, knows nothing about your detention, and as to-day is a half-holiday he naturally supposes you to be at liberty in the afternoon—as you would have been, Vernon-Smith, but for your own bad conduct. His request, therefore, amounts to desiring you to be excused from third school this morning, and I have decided to accede to it. If you lose no time you will catch the 11.10 train at Courtfield."

"I can do it on my bicycle, sir, and leave my machine at the station," said Vernon-Smith. "Thank you, sir!"

"You need not thank me, Vernon-Smith. It is only because it is scarcely possible to refuse a parent's request that you are allowed to go," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You deserve no concession whatever on your own account. You may go."

The Bounder went.

His face was serious and respectful till he was out of the study. A derisive grin dawned on it as he went down the passage.

Mr. Quelch was left with pursed lips and a frowning brow.

His annoyance was deep, and there was a sort of lingering suspicious uneasiness at the back of his mind. But that uneasy suspiciousness did not take any definite form, and the Remove master dismissed the matter from his mind at last.

Meanwhile, the Remove cricketers were rolling away in their brake for Highcliffe.

Some of the fellows gathered to see them off, not yet being due in the Form-room for third school. Among them Billy Bunter cast a last reproachful blink at the cricketers, who seemed to care absolutely nothing for the serious fact that Bunter was booked for third school if he did not go over to Highcliffe as a cricketer.

"I say, you fellows!" called out Bunter.

"Bow-wow, old fat man!"

"But I say, Wharton, if you cut in and asked Quelch, even now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"Good-bye, old fat frump!"

"I say, you fellows, I told you Smithy wouldn't be coming," said Bunter. "I told you he was detained, you know. You're jolly well going without him, after all. I'm quite willing to come instead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where is Smithy?" asked Penfold, glancing round. "He's not here, Wharton."

"He's coming over on his bike," answered Harry. "I don't know why, but he told me so."

"Yah! He isn't coming!" yelled Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you that Smithy's detained—"

"Fathead!"

The brake rolled off, and Billy Bunter gave a snort. There was nothing but third school left for Bunter—Latin grammar, with—as Bunter strongly suspected—deponent verbs. No wonder the fat junior's face was morose as he rolled back to the House. Deponent verbs on a sunny July morning, when a fellow might have been sitting under a shady tree eating cherries! It was undoubtedly very thick—and Bunter felt justly indignant.

He drew comfort from the sight of the Bounder emerging from the House. Bunter knew, if nobody else did, that the Bounder was under detention, and in his morose humour he found consolation

in seeing another fellow in the "soup" as well as his fat self.

"I say, Smithy, Wharton still thinks you're going over to Highcliffe to play cricket?" grinned Bunter.

The Bounder grinned too.

"Does he?" he remarked.

"Yes. He, he, he! I say, what have you been pulling his leg for? You'll leave him in rather a hole at Highcliffe! Of course, it serves the beast right. I offered to play in your place—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Coming along to the tuckshop, old chap?" asked Bunter. "Mrs. Mimble has some new cream puffs—I say, it's my treat, you know! You lend me a couple of bob—I say, Smithy, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you."

The Bounder did walk away—at a rapid pace. Bunter blinked after him, and rolled away in search of another victim. There was still time before third school to sample Mrs. Mimble's fresh supply of cream puffs—if a fellow could be found to advance something on the postal order that Bunter was expecting. So he naturally forgot Smithy.

Redwing, however, had not forgotten him. The sailorman's son looked into the bike-shed as Vernon-Smith was taking his machine from the stand. His face was very serious.

The Bounder gave him a grinning glance.

"It's worked!" he said.

"You're going—"

"Home!" said Smithy airily. "Sudden telegram from the pater calling me home for the day. Heading for Courtfield railway station, top speed."

"You mean you've stuffed Quelch to that extent?" asked Tom Redwing quietly.

"Exactly."

"And you're going—"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "It's frightfully risky, Smithy. It may mean the sack if Quelch gets on to it," said Redwing earnestly.

"Go hon!"

"I wish you'd chuck it, old man, even at the last minute."

"Am I the man to chuck it, at the last minute?" The Bounder laughed lightly. "Sorry I can't stop to jaw, Reddy. You know how I love your bright and improvin' conversation; but I mustn't be too far behind the brake. Come over this afternoon and see me knockin' up runs."

The Bounder wheeled his machine out. Redwing watched him mount and pedal away in the direction of Courtfield.

He stood with a sombre brow, watching the Bounder as he disappeared in the distance, riding swiftly.

Little as he approved of the Bounder's methods, he hoped from the bottom of his heart that Smithy would "get away" with it.

The consequences of failure would be too serious.

Success seemed likely enough. The Bounder seemed to have left no point unguarded. The false telegram, evidently, had deluded the Head and the Remove master; they believed that Vernon-Smith had gone home for the day. He had been too cautious to depart in the brake with the cricketers; and he was not going to rejoin them till he was far out of sight of Greyfriars. It really looked as if the audacious Bounder would carry it through—unless something unexpected happened.

But Redwing was feeling uneasy and apprehensive.

The bell for third school called him

(Continued on page 12.)



"Old Player" gives you some interesting facts and figures about A. P. Freeman, the great Kent and England bowler.

The Long and Short of It!

THERE is a huge amount of romance in the careers of cricketers, and perhaps the most romantic of all is that associated with little "Tich" Freeman, the most deadly bowler in England, no matter what sort of wicket he is performing on.

My first meeting with Tich came about in an extraordinary way. About thirty years ago I was walking through a street in Leyton when a composition ball came from over the wall of a near-by school and hit me in the neighbourhood of my chest.

Then two boys came flying out of the gate, one a tall youth with a bat in his hand, and the other a diminutive youngster. I guessed that they were the batsman and bowler associated with my being struck, but somehow my wrath disappeared, for these were young players of the game I loved. The big boy was Jack Russell, who has since done wonderful things for Essex and England, and the small one was his cousin, Tich Freeman. And it was on the bare, hard playground of the school that they both learnt how to play cricket, for they boasted no cricket or football club at that seat of learning.

One evening, some three or four years later, I met the two boys on the Essex County ground, at Leyton, where, although in ordinary attire, they were bowling at the nets. It was impossible to mistake them, for the comparison in their heights gave them a somewhat grotesque appearance. I watched young Freeman bowl, and it was soon obvious to me that he ought to become a fine cricketer, the only handicap being his lack of inches.

He told me he was then working in a small newsagent's and tobacconist's shop, delivering newspapers in the early morning and doing odd jobs during the day; all his evenings being spent on the county ground, where the staff of professional bowlers was small and members were glad to get somebody to bowl to them. It was during this period that Tich cultivated the leg break.

Eight Wickets for Nineteen Runs!

THE tobacconist's shop and the county ground combination went on for four years, during which period Tich played in two Essex club and ground matches.

In one he kept wicket and in the other he bowled, taking three wickets for two runs. He wanted to become a professional, but Essex didn't want him. Then somebody offered him a job as under-groundsman with the Upper Tooting (Surrey) Club. This was in 1908, or when Freeman was nineteen years of age, and he retained that position until the end of 1911.

But Tich had made up his mind to perfect his bowling and have another shot at getting into the Essex Eleven. In 1909 England was visited by a South African cricket team, and Freeman went to see them on the occasion of their playing against Essex, at Leyton. He got there early, and stood behind the nets while they practised before the match began. And then he was startled by the wonderful "googly" bowling of Mr. R. O. Schwarz, who was about the first to take up that particular style of delivery.

Young Freeman had mastered the leg break, but the "googly" was a revelation to him, and thereupon he approached Schwarz and asked him if he would explain just how it was done. R. O. Schwarz was one of the finest gentlemen in the land, and he did everything possible to impart his own knowledge to this youth, who was a stranger to him. "But at first you will be lucky to keep the ball in the net," said the South African. "You must practise

for months before you can bowl it." Tich persevered with the "googly" when alone with the members of the club in the practice nets, and in his own back garden; but it was two years before he had sufficient confidence in himself to try it in a match.

This match, Upper Tooting v. Charlton Park, was played June, 1911, and those who participated in it had no idea of its importance in the whole history of cricket. First of all, Upper Tooting won the toss, and, being one man short, Tich Freeman was told that he would have to play instead of acting as umpire. The whole side was out for 185, Freeman scoring 57. Then Charlton Park proceeded to make runs fairly easily, and the scoreboard read 60 for one wicket when Freeman was told to have a turn with the ball.

He commenced to bowl ordinary off-breaks for four overs, and then his captain told him to try his "googlies." It was a great ordeal, because until that moment he had only bowled them in the nets. To make a long story short, Charlton Park was all out for under a hundred, Freeman taking 8 wickets for 19 runs.

Hard and Constant Practice!

SOME six or seven days later Essex and Kent were opposed to one another at Leyton, and Tich went over to the match. Immediately he entered the ground he met Mr. Borrodale, the secretary, who suggested that when the cricket season was over he should write an application to the committee for employment on the Essex staff. But Tich was taking no chances, and when the following season came round he was a member of the Kent bowling staff at Tonbridge.

I saw him play in some of the Kent Second Eleven matches in 1912 and 1913, and he put up some wonderful performances. But it always seemed to me that the authorities were afraid to play him in the First Eleven because of his lack of height. However, in 1914 he took his place in the side, his first county match being v. Warwickshire. I went to see that game, and shall never forget the look of consternation on the faces of the batsmen as they, one after another, were fooled by the "googly." I remember Freeman's figures in the first innings; they were 7 wickets for 25 runs.

What Tich has since done in the world of first class cricket is known throughout the length and breadth of the land. I have known the most wonderful bowlers look "sick" when their side has lost the toss and they have had to go out and bowl on a beautiful plumb wicket. They have appreciated the fact that plumb wickets were made for batsmen, not bowlers.

Yet Freeman can go out and bowl on the finest "plate-glass" wicket with almost as much success as will attend his efforts on one of the "glue-pot" variety. Probably the chief factor in his success must be attributed to the years of hard and constant practice which he put in with the one fixed determination of keeping an accurate length. It doesn't matter whether he is bowling the off-break, the leg-break, or the "googly," he just tosses the ball up into the air with the knowledge that it is going to pitch on the right spot. Of course, he now and then might err.

A day or two ago I asked Tich Freeman to tell me what he considered to be the greatest aid to a professional cricketer. "Perseverance, combined with a happy disposition," was his prompt reply. And then he went on: "Batsmen and bowlers are like boxers—once they become bad-tempered they are defeated. This applies to bowlers in particular."

BLUFFING THE BEAKS!

(Continued from page 10.)

to the Form-room, and he joined the rest of the Remove and went in.

Billy Bunter blinked round to see whether the Bounder was in class. His little round eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles as he noted that Smithy was not there.

"I say, you fellows, Smithy's cut!" whispered Bunter to the juniors near him. "I say, there'll be a row when Quelch misses him!"

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, you wait and see!" grinned Bunter.

But the Removites did not "see." Mr. Quelch was certainly aware that Vernon-Smith was not in Form; but he made no remark on the subject. Mr. Quelch was under the impression that Herbert Vernon-Smith was in the London express, speeding away from Courtfield. What he would have thought—and done—had he been aware that Smithy, in those very moments, was arriving at Highcliffe with the cricketers was unimaginable. Fortunately, Mr. Quelch did not know that.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match!

"**W**E bat!" said Harry Wharton. He glanced round. "Smithy!"

"Here!"

"You open the innings with Bob. Give us a good start, old man," said the captain of the Remove.

"Rely on me!"

The Bounder finished buckling his pads. He swung his bat as he went out to the wickets with Bob Cherry.

Never had the Bounder of Greyfriars felt in better form.

The fact that he was at Highcliffe without leave—that he had fooled his headmaster and his Form master—that there was a lingering peril that he might be "spotted" and marched off the field by the heavy hand of authority, had an exhilarating effect on the Bounder's peculiar nature.

There was a lawless strain in Smithy; he loved excitement, he liked to do unusual and daring things; the sense of adventure and danger was like wine to him.

There might be—it was very probable that there would be—trouble to follow his escapade; but that did not weigh a straw's weight on the Bounder's mind. It rather added to the zest of the adventure.

Not a Greyfriars fellow on the ground knew the true circumstances. Wharton, as head boy of the Remove, could not have allowed Smithy to play had he known that Smithy was there in defiance of authority. That added to the Bounder's secret amusement.

Certainly it would be disastrous enough, for the Bounder and for the side, if, by some untoward chance, Mr. Quelch discovered how matters stood. In such a case it was certain that the Remove master would take instant measures to bring the rebel to book. It was quite on the cards that a prefect might arrive from Greyfriars to take the Bounder away, regardless of the game.

Mr. Quelch was quite certain not to consider the cricket match, in comparison with the enforcement of authority and discipline. But that possibility only gave a thrill to the reckless Bounder's excitement.

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That Smithy could not have been spared from the team was soon evident, from his play. The Bounder was not always at top notch; he was a rather uncertain player; but when he was good, he was very, very good. At the top of his form he had few equals, and no superiors, in the Lower School at Greyfriars. And he was at the top of his form now.

"That's a good man, old bean!" the Caterpillar said to Courtenay, the junior captain of Highcliffe, after he had bowled an over that left Smithy untouched, with ten runs to the good. "That's a jolly good man!"

"Topping!" agreed Courtenay.

"I thought I could bowl," said the Caterpillar plaintively. "But that man Smith has got me beat!"

Harry Wharton, from the pavilion, looked on at the Bounder's innings with a bright face.

Matters were beginning well, at all events. The "tail" of the innings was not likely to produce much in the way of runs; but a good beginning meant a great deal to an innings. The Bounder's example was encouraging to the second-rate players who were to follow.

But the Highcliffe bowling was good and the fielding efficient. Bob Cherry was caught out by the Caterpillar, with twelve to his credit. Frank Nugent went on in his place.

Then the captain of the Remove looked a little anxious. He was very keen for his best chum to do well in the match, especially as Nugent would not have been playing had Toddy, or Squiff, or Tom Brown, or Johnny Bull been available.

Nugent, too, was keen to do his captain credit. He was a good cricketer, in his own way; but he was not equal to the Caterpillar's tricky bowling. Nugent's first over was his last, and it gave him only two runs.

He made rather a grimace as he came back with his bat.

"Sorry, old man!" he said.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"All serene! Smithy's making the running," he said. "I've never seen Smithy in such topping form. I shouldn't be surprised if he's not-out."

The captain of the Remove went in next to join the Bounder. Wharton was in good form, and he played hard. The runs went up; and Wharton, who was rather accustomed to taking the spotlight, as it were, when he was batting for Greyfriars, made the discovery that he was now playing second fiddle to the Bounder. That discovery did not worry him in the very least; he was only too glad of it. Good as the beginning was, he was haunted by the knowledge of what was probable when such good bowling dealt with the tail of the innings; and he was elated to find the Bounder in such form as to put his own game in the shade.

The captain of the Remove went down to a deadly ball from the Caterpillar, after adding twenty. Hurree Janset Ram Singh went in to join the Bounder.

Inky shone as a bowler; but he was a reliable bat and he played to keep the innings alive for Smithy. Smithy was making the running; and the dusky nabob was well content to let him do it. He played an exceedingly cautious game, stealing a run now and then to give the Bounder as much of the bowling as he could.

That was an unselfish game of which the Bounder himself, perhaps, would not have been capable had the situation been reversed; Smithy was rather given to thinking more of himself than of the

side. It worked admirably now. For many overs the dusky junior backed up Smithy's play, and there was no doubt that Smithy's play was magnificent.

"It's Smithy's day!" said Bob Cherry.

"What-ho!" said Wharton.

"He's a good man sometimes, but I've never seen him as good as this," said Nugent. "Thank goodness! We want every run we can get!"

"Smithy will be not-out," said Harry. "He's fairly glued to his wicket! Highcliffe can't touch him—even the Caterpillar."

"Bravo!"

"Well hit!"

"Good old Smithy!"

The white-clad figures were crossing the pitch like lightning. The ball came in—too late.

"Sixty for Smithy!" said Wharton gleefully. "My hat! If Smithy makes his century we're going to pull this off!"

"He will, if the other fellows let him," said Bob. "But when Inky goes there isn't much to follow!"

"Thanks!" said Dick Penfold, with a grin.

"Facts are facts, old chap!" said Bob. "If we only had Squiff here, or Brownie, or Toddy, or Johnny—"

"You've got me!" remarked Wibley, rather tartly.

William Wibley rather fancied himself as a cricketer.

"We have!" agreed Bob. "Alas!"

"Fathead!" said Wibley.

"There goes Inky!" said Monty Newland.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was out at last, caught by Courtenay. He had added but few runs to the score; but the Bounder had added many, and Wharton gave him a clap on the shoulder as he came back to the pavilion.

"Good man, Inky!"

"The goodfulness was not terrific, my ridiculous chum!" said the nabob. "But the worthy excellence of the absurd Bounder is preposterous!"

"Next man in, Wib!"

William Wibley went on, resolved to show the Remove men that he could play cricket. Unfortunately, the Highcliffe bowler did not give him a chance to show them. The first ball knocked out Wibley's middle stump, and he came off looking very blue.

It was the "tail" of the innings now, and Highcliffe made hay of it. Penfold and Newland and the rest did their best; but their best was of no use against Highcliffe. After a splendid start the innings collapsed hopelessly—wicket after wicket going down in procession. As Bob had remarked, the Bounder would have made his century, if the other fellows had let him; but they did not.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was "not-out," with sixty-five runs to his credit. The total for the innings was 110, which was good enough; but without the Bounder it was obvious that the score would have left Greyfriars nowhere. Morgan was last man in. And Smithy gave him a scowl when his wicket went down, and gave him another scowl at the pavilion. Smithy had been very keen on making a century, which he certainly could have done had the innings been kept alive.

"Tip-top, old man!" said Harry Wharton. "If we save this match, it's you that's saved it for us."

The Bounder granted.

"Not much chance, with a string of duds at the other end," he growled. "If there'd been one good man—"

"My esteemed Smithy—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I could have made it a century," grunted the Bounder. "It's rotten for a fellow's game to be spoiled by a lot of fozzling fumlbers."

"Of course, it's your game, and nobody else's," remarked Wibley tartly. "Smithy first, and all the rest also rans."

"Peace, my infants—peace!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "You've played a jolly good game, Smithy; but don't swank, old bean!"

"I tell you I could have—" "You've told us once," said Newland mildly.

"Don't sing it over again," suggested Wibley.

The "tail" of the innings did not seem gratified by the Bounder's remarks. The Bounder was still frowning when the visitors joined the Highcliffe fellows at lunch.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Redwing!

MR. QUELCH smiled. He had been extremely irritated that day. But a schoolmaster's life has its compensations.

It was a half-holiday, and Henry Samuel Quelch, probably, was as glad to be done with his Form, as his Form were to be done with him. Lunch, and a walk under the elms in the quad, had restored Mr. Quelch to a more placid mood, though at the back of his mind the thought of the Bounder still lingered with a faint sense of irritation. Now, however, sitting in his study, with Tom Redwing on the other side of the table, Mr. Quelch smiled, and it was a smile of genuine geniality.

Redwing, certainly, was no "swot" or "sap" or "smug." He was keen on cricket, and never spent an hour indoors if he could get out of doors. But he had a taste for study. He liked to master difficult things. And he had been accustomed to work hard all his young life at whatever he did. Having entered for a prize Redwing was working steadily for it, leaving other matters over till he had done the job in hand.

That afternoon Mr. Quelch was giving him an extra hour of Latin, which was very kind of Quelch, but an act of kindness that would have been received with horror and dismay by nine-tenths of his Form. All the Remove had to learn Latin. And in all the Remove there were perhaps only five or six fellows who took some real interest in that classic tongue.

Redwing was one of them, and, though undoubtedly he would rather have been sailing a boat up to Hawkscliff than digging into Horace in his Form master's study, he was doing his present job well and conscientiously. Hence Quelch's genial smile.

Q. Horatius Flaccus was, of course, miles above the average Removite. Few Removites would have believed

that Horace was worth digging into, even if they could have done the digging. So it was a sheer pleasure to Mr. Quelch to find a junior boy showing actual appreciation of his favourite ancient author. He smiled genially, and gave Redwing his very best assistance with his work.

He was, in fact, not at all pleased when Trotter came along to request him to step to the Head's study, although he knew that an agreeable chat with his chief awaited him there. However, he rose to obey the summons.

"I shall return shortly, Redwing," he said.

came the throaty voice. "Mr. Vernon-Smith speaking."

Redwing stood quite still, the receiver in his hand. By what rotten ill-luck was Mr. Vernon-Smith ringing up his son's Form master?

"Are you there?" came the throaty voice. "Eh—what? Mr. Quelch?"

"Redwing speaking, sir," said Tom, into the transmitter. "Mr. Quelch has left the study. Will you hold on while I call him?"

"Redwing! My son's friend?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. You may take my message, Redwing, as you happen to



"Coming along to the tuckshop, old chap?" asked Bunter. "It's my treat, you know! You lend me a couple of bob—" The Bounder heeded him not and passed on.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch left the study, and Redwing, remaining at his Form master's table, went on with his work.

It was difficult work for a junior; but there was a pleasure in mastering difficulties. And Redwing was glad to have his mind busily occupied to keep his thoughts off the reckless Bounder, and the fear of what would follow Smithy's escapade.

Ten minutes after Mr. Quelch had left the study the telephone bell rang. Redwing crossed over to the instrument and took off the receiver, to tell the caller to hold on while he informed Mr. Quelch.

But as the voice came through Redwing jumped. He knew that voice—the deep, throaty, important voice of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, millionaire and financier, and father of Smithy of the Remove.

His heart gave a throb.

"Mr. Quelch! Is that Mr. Quelch?"

be there. I was ringing up Mr. Quelch to ask him to speak to my son. I have business at no great distance from Greyfriars to-day, and I am taking the opportunity to call and see Herbert, I am speaking from Lantham."

"Oh!" gasped Redwing.

"No doubt he may be going out as it is a half-holiday, I believe, at the school. Tell him I am coming."

There was a whir on the line. Mr. Vernon-Smith had rung off. Mr. Vernon-Smith was a busy gentleman, accustomed to rapid action. And although he was a millionaire he did not want to pay unnecessarily for "another three minutes."

Redwing stood with the receiver in his hand.

He replaced it at last, and turned away from the instrument.

His brain was almost in a whirl.

The Bounder had laid his scheme that

(Continued on page 16.)

WANTED!

Books on Gangsters, Racketeers, Hijackers and Gun Molls. I feel I'm getting behind the times. Send any quantity to G. Loder, Sixth Form.

Greyfriars

No. 54.

LAUGH AND

FACE THE WORLD WITH CONFIDENCE

Tears Shed at Sensational Lecture

LATEST FROM THE STATES



Fish, on Self-Defence! Fisher T. Fish, who'd hustle a mile rather than get mixed up in a scrap, lecturing on SELF-DEFENCE! It was farcical—fantastic; but as it was up on the notice-board in black-and-

white, there was no getting away from it, and we all went along to the Rag to hear what he had to say. Crowds flocked along to listen to the most surprising lecture of the term.

Prompt to the minute Fish got up on his hind legs. "Now, folks," he began, in the approved American fashion.

"Gentlemen, you mean!" corrected Peter Todd.

"Listen, folks."

"GENTLEMEN!" insisted the crowd, taking up the point.

"Gentlemen, then, if you must have it!" snorted Fish. "Time's money, an' I prefer 'folks'; but have it your own way! I guess you all wanna know about self-defence. Horn in on this, then, an' get the real dope; right down through the ages, man has been looking for an infallible means of self-defence. Now I'll let you into the big secret: what man has been looking for right down through the ages, I've got on me to-night!"

Skinner, who had been reading a series of crime stories, chipped in here with the suggestion:

"A bullet-proof waistcoat!"

"Wrong in once!" said Fish, blandly. "I ask you, folks, what use would a bullet-proof waistcoat be if you were attacked by a tiger or a ferocious wolf?"

"Yes, but we shan't be!"

"You never know!" Fish said, with a shake of his head. "Plenty of wild beasts about, apart from tigers and wolves, anyway. Bolsover, for instance!"

"WHAT!" came an infuriated bellow from Bolsover.

Next moment, the great fighting hero of the Remove was leaping on to the rostrum.

We quite anticipated the meeting coming to an abrupt end, with Fish being flung through one of the windows. But, to our great surprise, nothing of the kind happened.

Instead, Fish carelessly pointed a fountain-pen at Bolsover, apparently indicating the door.

"Beat it!" he snapped.

What happened after that made us rub our eyes. Bolsover halted, buried his head in his hands and burst into tears. Without attempting to attack Fishy he then jumped down from the rostrum and staggered out of the room, crying bitterly!

A gasp went up from the audience. Had the age of miracles suddenly returned? There seemed no other explanation.

"I guess you begin to understand now, folks, that I ain't just talking out of my neck!" grinned Fish. "Hear me holler! Knowing what I know, I guess I fear no foe in shining armour. Anyone else like a try?"

"What about you, Bull?" asked the self-defence expert, persuasively. "I guess you've got a face fit to scare the life out of most people; more like a hot-dog than a face!"

"Why, you silly ass," roared Johnny Bull.

He jumped up with the evident intention of mopping up the floor with the audacious lecturer. Fish calmly pointed a fountain-pen at him.

"Beat it!" he snapped, for the second time.

And a moment later, Johnny Bull also burst into a flood of tears and staggered out of the room!

"'Easy' ain't the word, you see, folks!" said Fish, genially. "Now, let's get to business. I'll let you into my big secret, so you can defend yourself just the same as me. What I'm selling—"

"Oh, you're selling something, then?"

"Well, I guess I didn't come hyer for the benefit of my health!" grinned the lecturer. "Let me show you what did the trick, folks. This is it!"

He held up the fountain-pen.

"Mean to say that fountain-pen made 'em blub?" yelled someone, derisively.

Fish nodded calmly.

"Jest that! Folks, let me introduce you to the latest from the States: the tear-gas fountain-pen!"

"Yo gods!"

"Face the world with confidence!" said Fish, enthusiastically. "With this little article in your hand, you can meet Carnera on level terms; and the price of the article is two dollars! Hyer, what in thunder—"

Apparently the Remove had heard quite enough of the latest from the States. They rose in their might and fell upon Fish.

He was overcome—eventually. But he managed to inflict plenty of damage first. Tears were running down the sides of the rostrum and forming in pools on the floor before the finish!

The lecture was abandoned and mops and pails brought in to clear up the mess.

We fancy the last has now been heard at Greyfriars of Fish's remarkable tear-gas fountain-pen!

HIKERS TALK

Alonzo's

FEED DECLINE

The spectacle of Bunter, sitting behind Alonzo Todd with a weighty hamper on his shoulder, attracted some attention in the quad recently.

"What's on?" Lonzy was asked.

"Feed?"

"That is the colloquial expression for it!" beamed our tame hiker cheerfully. "I have just returned from a hiking club, you see. Bunter is my only member. The club is now beginning its hiking expedition. We shall hike ten miles, then partake of a meal contained in the hamper."

"Good idea. We'll all go with you then!"

"Beasts! Keep 'em off, Toddy!" advised the member of the club.

"Really, Bunter! New members are welcome; come with pleasure."

Roughly a score of recruits followed. The ten-mile walk was a success, of course, but by the



SOMETHING LIKE CRICKET

But Not Quite

NEW STYLE BY KIPPS

A remarkable display of cricket was given at the nets yesterday during midday break by Messrs. Kipps and Squiff. Crowds were attracted by the extraordinary antics of both Kipps at the wicket and Squiff, who was bowling. The latter seemed to be bowling with the violence of an earthquake and a hurricane rolled into one, while Kipps was batting sideways, backwards, and even standing on his head!

So terrific was the speed of the game that the ball could not be seen except when Squiff leaped and caught it in mid-air or dived and stopped it on the ground level.

The applause was loud and long. Everybody was agreeably surprised, for Kipps had never before been regarded as much of a

last match of the season. Fortunately, a surprising discovery was made before any step had been taken.

While their performance had been going on, a gentleman with a moving-camera had been standing at the back of the nets, taking a film for a local topical magazine.

The film was afterwards exhibited at the Courtfield Cinema in slow-motion. A secret was then out. Squiff and Kipps had not used the ball at all! Squiff had pretended to bowl, and Kipps had pretended to bat, a gadget fixed to his hand making the "click" that is the hall-mark of genuineness to the stunt.

batsman, Squiff had claims to play as a bowler.

The generation was that ought to be added in the team for

Herald

Edited by
**HARRY
WHARTON,**
F.G.R.



LET ME STRAIGHTEN YOUR NOSE!

My 2-Ton Nasal Compressor and Expander will give you just the nose you've been longing for all these years! Also useful as a shield, when scrapping. Wear it in the Form-room and see what the Beak says! Think of it, boys! YOU can have a Roman, Grecian or any other kind of nose for the asking! Send P.O. 2/6 deposit, and describe your case. I'll do the rest!—A. TRELUCE, Nasal Twister, Study No. 9, Remove Passage.

GROW FAT.

July 18th, 1931.

FORN STRIKERS

Lawful Outing

WITHOUT THANKS

of the hamper, the feed would be ample compensation.

Alonzo's Hiking Club reached its destination at last. It was a moor, about five miles from anywhere.

"Here we are, my dear friends!" said Alonzo. "Pray open the hamper, Bunter!"

Bunter needed no second bidding. He wrenched the top off the hamper. Then he staggered back, with an agonised gasp.

"Books!" he said, faintly.

"Just so!" beamed Alonzo. "I have brought along five hundred books on 'Vegetarianism for Hikers.' Kindly distribute them among the members for themselves and their friends!"

"But where's the feed?" shrieked Skinner.

"Underneath the books, my dear Skinner!"

Bunter leaped back again, with renewed hope in his eyes. He dragged out books by the hundred and flung them disdainfully aside. Then, when he came to the tuck, he jumped.

"Is—is this the feed?" he stammered.

"That is it, Bunter!"

"But all I can see is raw carrots!" howled Bunter. "Raw carrots and dog-biscuits!"

"Pardon me, Bunter, but there is also a supply of grass-seed!"

"G-g-grass-seed?"

Alonzo nodded.

"Just so. Those three species of food contain between them all the nourishment needed by hikers. It says so in the book!"

To Alonzo's surprise, the entire hiking party fell upon him and smote him good and hard. Furthermore, under forcible persuasion they made their host eat a copy of "Vegetarianism for Hikers." Feeling somewhat consoled the hikers then proceeded to go home.

Bunter arrived later in an ambulance, ravenously gnawing the remains of his boots.

CHIMNEY-SITTER AT GREYFRIARS

Wun Lung's Peculiar Protest

ALL THROUGH BUNTER

Considerable excitement was caused in the quad one morning last week when Wun Lung was seen to be sitting unconcernedly on one of the chimney-tops. The "Greyfriars Herald" reporter, ever ready to risk life and limb for news, climbed up as far as he dared and proceeded to interview the chimney-sitter from a perilous perch on a roof-gully.

"Why are you doing it?" he yelled.

"No savvy!" was Wun Lung's response, in the picturesque language of his kind.

"Well, what the thump do you think you're doing, anyway?"

"Me sittee on chimney-pot!"

"I can see that, fathead! But why?"

Wun Lung hesitated for a moment. Then he replied:

"Me tellee. Me makee big plotest!"

"Making a protest, eh? Funny sort of protest it seems!"

"Custom of Wun Lung's countlee!" explained Wun Lung.

"Someone makes big mistake; someone else sittee on chimney till mistake put light!"

"Who the dickens has made a mistake, then?"

"Mistel Quelch!" replied Wun Lung.

"Ol' Quelch, he tinkee Wun Lung call him velly silly man. Allee time, Buntel play ventiloquial tliek. Ol' Quelch no savvy; so he flog Wun Lung. Now, me plotest!"

"My hat! And how long do you intend to stay on that chimney?"

"Stayee hele always! Stayee till Mistel Quelch findee out mistake!"

"Great pip! Well, I hope it keeps fine for you!"

And the "Greyfriars Herald" reporter, having lost his hold on the guttering, made a rapid descent through the air into the quad, being fortunately caught in a tarpaulin sheet which

some juniors had thoughtfully provided underneath.

As he stood upright again, Mr. Quelch, followed by a large crowd, came out of the House.

"Ridiculous!" snapped the Remove beak, hardly able to believe his eyes. "The kitchens are smothered in soot and breakfast is spoiled!"

A moan of anguish burst from Bunter at that distressing news.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "Look here, sir, I think I can tell you how to get Wun Lung down again. If—if I do so, sir, will you promise not to punish me?"

Mr. Quelch fairly blinked.

"Certainly I will promise that, Bunter. I should not dream of punishing you for giving me such useful information!"

"Well, sir, all you've got to do is, apologise to Wun Lung!"

"Apologise?"

"Yes, sir; you see, he's sitting up there because you caned him for calling you names. But as a matter of fact, it wasn't Wun Lung!"

"Then—then, who was it, Bunter?"

"Me, sir!"

We yelled. We couldn't help it; Quelch's face was irresistible!

Quelch, of course, didn't yell. Instead, he sent for Gosling and a ladder. Up went Gosling with a message, and shortly afterwards Wun Lung abandoned his lofty perch and joined the crowd in the quad. Quelch duly put matters right with the Chinese and the affair was over.

Naturally, he kept his word with Bunter. But there's a steely glitter in his eye whenever he looks at the Owl of the Remove. Most of us wouldn't change places with Bunter just now for quite a lot of money!



A CRICKETER'S DIARY

By W. G. Bunter

(Note by Bunter: Don't believe a word of this, you fellows! It's a blayiant forjery!)

MONDAY.—Asked Wharton if he'd resine and hand over the job of cricket captain to me. Told me to go and eat eoke, but found I couldn't mastikate it. Wharton's a jellus beast!

TUESDAY.—Rolled up to kompulsory praktiss. Allowed lanky to bowl me out three times in suxxession to give him a bit of encurragement, then the rest of the jellus beasts made me retire!

WEDNESDAY.—Had a feed in Wharton's study while the

beast was down at the trial game. Went down afterwards with carriekteristic fair play with the idea that if he offered me the kaptainey, I'd repay him for the feed. But he didn't; so I shan't. Yah!

THURSDAY.—Held a meeting in the Form-room on the subject "Why I Should Lead the Cricket Team." Something must have gone wrong with the publissity; nobody turned up.

FRIDAY.—Gave Wharton his last chance. He meerly larfed, so I waded in and gave him a terrifick thrashing. At least, that's what I ought to have done; but I always was

soft-hearted and I couldn't bring myself to do it. So I borrowed half-a-krown from him and let him off.

SATURDAY.—Wharton's lot beat Rookwood by 54 runs. If I'd been captain, it would have been 154. Pointed this out to Wharton, but he left me and I somehow foun! myself sitting on the floor. Decided to chuck cricket till the beasts become less jellus of my jeenius with the willow!

REFINED YOUTH WANTED

To share hohday with another. Aristocrat preferred, but others considered. Must be wealthy. All expenses paid—by applicant. Apply early and avoid the rush. S. SNOOP, Remcve Passage.

WHILE ON HOLIDAY—

Don't forget the poor, unhappy savages of the Ballybunkun Islands, who are in dire need of trousers and tooth-paste! Gifts of goods or cash equally welcomed by ALONZO TODD, Study No. 7.



(Continued from page 15.)

day with great cunning. He fancied that he was guarded at all points; but the unexpected had happened.

It was not, as a matter of fact, unusual for Mr. Vernon Smith to make a sudden and brief visit to Greyfriars to see his son. It was as likely to happen that day as any other day. If the Bounder had thought of that, he had had to take the chance. Probably he had not thought of it.

If Quelch had been in the study, and had taken that call, he would have known all, at once.

Smithy was supposed to have gone home to see his father, in response to a telegram from home. And here was his father, obviously in ignorance of it, telephoning that he was coming to the school to see Herbert.

Redwing could imagine the effect that telephone call would have produced on the Remove master. He would have known instantly that he had been deceived and deluded—that the telegram was a "fake," and he would guess, of course, where the Bounder really was.

Fortunately, he had not taken the call. And as Mr. Vernon-Smith had said distinctly that Redwing could take the message, as his son's friend, there could be no need to report the call to the Remove master.

That, at least, would give Smithy a respite.

But the millionaire was coming! As soon as he arrived at the school Mr. Quelch would know the facts.

Redwing had forgotten Horace now—forgotten everything but the danger of his chum. He had disapproved of Smithy's scheme; he had come near to quarrelling with his chum over it. But now that that scheme was knocked into pieces, now that Smithy was in danger of being called to account, Tom's only thought was to shield him, if he could.

What could he do?

He did not know what to do. He only knew that, if he could, he was going to save Smithy from the consequences of his reckless rashness.

At any moment now Mr. Quelch might return to the study. As he remembered that Redwing crossed quickly to the door.

He was free to do as he liked on a half-holiday. Mr. Quelch might think him ungrateful, neglectful; he had to chance that. He left the study and hurried away, anxious to be clear of the house before the Remove master saw him again. He had to be at liberty to help Smithy out of his scrape, if he could; and he certainly could not explain that to Mr. Quelch.

He took his cap, and walked down to the gates. There was a vague plan in his mind of meeting the millionaire before he arrived at the school and, somehow, keeping him away from Greyfriars. That, it was clear, was the only possible means of preventing the discovery of the Bounder's duplicity.

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Certainly, he could not tell the millionaire the facts; indulgent parent as Mr. Vernon-Smith was, he could hardly have given his support to his son's defiance of all authority in the school. How he was to handle the Bounder's father, if he met him, Redwing had not had time to think—but evidently the first thing was to get in touch with him, and stop him on his way to the school.

A quarter of an hour after Redwing had hurried out of the gates, Mr. Quelch came back to his study.

He entered with a benevolent smile. "Well, Redwing—" he began genially.

Then he stopped, and stared.

The study was empty. Redwing was gone.

The benevolent smile faded from the face of Henry Samuel Quelch. It was replaced by a very grim expression.

The boy was gone! Certainly he was free to go, if he liked. But this, then, was how much he really cared for the kind assistance he was receiving from his Form master; this was his gratitude for the giving up of an hour of Mr. Quelch's scanty leisure! He had not even waited for Mr. Quelch to come back to the study—not even waited to make an excuse!

Mr. Quelch's brow was grim as he sat down to correct papers for his Form. He was disappointed in Redwing; and he was deeply displeased. He felt that he would have to reconsider his opinion of Redwing. Such thoughtless frivolity—such neglect—such ingratitude!

Poor Tom had realised dimly what his Form master would—and must—think of his conduct. But there was no help for it, if he was to save his chum from the consequences of his reckless folly.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on a Bike!

BILLY BUNTER blinked over the machines in the bike-shed with a morose blink.

Most Greyfriars fellows were feeling merry and bright that sunny July afternoon. William George Bunter was feeling neither merry nor bright.

He was at a loose end.

A crowd of Remove men had gone over to Highcliffe after dinner, to see how the cricketers were getting on. Billy Bunter did not care two straws how the cricketers were getting on, and was not at all inclined to go over to Highcliffe and ascertain their progress.

Bunter's postal order, long expected, had not arrived. With most of the fellows out of gates, there was no prospect of raising a little loan to tide him over till tea-time. Between dinner and tea stretched a hungry desert.

Bunter had lines to do; but he did not want to get them done. He preferred to take the very remote chance that Quelch might forget to ask for them.

With time on his hands, and nothing to eat, the Owl of the Remove had decided to take a little spin on a bike. His own bike was in its customary state of dilapidation; and many fellows had taken their machines out to ride over to Highcliffe. Still, there were several to choose from.

After due consideration, Billy Bunter selected Harry Wharton's machine. It was quite a good machine, and it was in excellent condition, and

as clean as a new pin—a state that was not likely to last long after Bunter had borrowed it.

Bunter wheeled it out. That excellent machine had one drawback—the saddle was uncomfortably high for Bunter. When he was mounted, his fat little legs were likely to have some difficulty in negotiating the pedals. There were tools in the toolbag; and Bunter could have put down the saddle to its lowest extent, which would have made things better. But Bunter was disinclined to fuss about with tools. Exertion in any shape or form never had appealed to Bunter.

Like many lazy people, Bunter would take more trouble to dodge work than would have been required to get the work done.

He clambered on the jigger, and started. The pedals came round, and Bunter plunged at them with his toes. Really, it was not comfortable. A few minutes with the tools would have saved a lot of trouble.

However, the Owl of the Remove got along somehow. When he turned out of the high road into Oak Lane his troubles were over—for a time, at least—for that lane ran downhill for a mile, and he had only to free-wheel. Billy Bunter sailed cheerfully round the corner, without ringing his bell or looking where he was going, as was his happy custom. And a portly gentleman, who was strolling along the shady lane, had the shock of his life.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

He brushed past Prout, sending him flying. The Fifth Form master bumped into the roadway, gasping.

"Bunter! Bunter! Stop at once! Bunter!"

Bunter sailed on.

"Boy!" hooted Prout.

But Billy Bunter was whizzing downhill, and he whizzed on his way. Perhaps he did not hear. At all events, he did not heed.

"Scandalous!" ejaculated Prout. "Quelch's boys are really—really—really—"

Prout, unable to find a word to do justice to Quelch's boys, finished with a snort, and got to his feet.

Bunter was out of sight in a few moments.

It was quite easy going downhill, and Bunter rather enjoyed the spin. From the end of the lane, when he reached it, he shot out into the Lantham road, like a fat bullet.

Shooting out of a tree-shaded lane into the middle of a high road much frequented by motor-cars, was rather a dangerous game, if Bunter had stopped to think. He shot out without stopping to think. Thinking, after all, was not much in William George Bunter's line.

A handsome Rolls car was coming down the Lantham road at a good pace, as Bunter shot out of the lane.

The driver turned quite pale as the fat cyclist rushed right into his way.

The car fairly spun round to avoid Bunter, skidded, and clambered at the high green bank beside the road.

"Good gad!" came a startled howl from within the car, as a rather plump gentleman rolled over.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

His eyes almost started through his spectacles.

The car had missed him by inches. It had hit the bank, and evidently hit trouble. Billy Bunter swerved round the rear of the car, and kept on as fast as he could pedal.

As likely as not, the motorist would make out that it was his fault, Bunter considered; and the less he had to say to that motorist the better Bunter liked it.

Without a glance back, the fat junior sailed on, his only idea being to put as great a distance as possible between himself and that damaged car in the shortest possible space of time.

The chauffeur had shut off the engine and got down. The plump gentleman in the car picked himself up, picked up a damaged silk hat, and stepped out.

Had Bunter been still on the spot, Bunter would have recognised that plump, important gentleman as Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, pater of Smithy, of the Remove. But Bunter was getting away from the spot as fast as Wharton's bike would carry him.

"Good gad!" repeated Mr. Vernon-Smith, very red and very flustered, and very angry. "Good gad! That reckless young idiot! Good gad! Is the damage serious, Stimson?"

"I'm afraid so, sir," said the chauffeur ruefully.

Mr. Vernon-Smith snorted angrily.

There was no doubt that the crash into the bank had damaged the car, and that Mr. Vernon-Smith could not continue his journey. As a matter of fact, Mr. Vernon-Smith was rather fortunate not to have been damaged himself. But he was not thinking of that. He was stranded at least two miles, by road, from Greyfriars, and that was enough to occupy Mr. Vernon-Smith's mind.

He glared round for the offending cyclist; but the offending cyclist was fading away over the horizon.

The millionaire snorted again.

A brief examination showed that the car could not proceed. Mr. Vernon-Smith had to walk the rest of the way. Mr. Vernon-Smith's time was of value—great value—and he did not like walking. He snorted for a third time.

Snorting, however, though expressive of Mr. Vernon-Smith's feelings, did not get him any "farrarder." The car was out of action, and that was that! Stimson was left to get it towed, somehow, into Courtfield, and Mr. Vernon-Smith started to walk to the school.

Two miles by road did not tempt Mr. Vernon-Smith on a hot July afternoon. He was tempted to take a short cut. He had a vague remembrance of the oak-shaded lane into which he turned, and felt certain that it led towards Greyfriars, more or less. So it did; but at a certain point in that lane another lane branched off, and Mr. Vernon-Smith breathed hard and deep as he made the interesting discovery that there was no vestige of a signpost.

High green banks, topped by hawthorn hedges and trees, were grateful and comforting to look upon; but they prevented a pedestrian from taking a wide view of the landscape. In whichever direction Mr. Vernon-Smith looked he saw only green banks and hawthorns and trees. Overhead was a beautiful blue sky, dotted with fleecy white clouds. In the distance were green downs dotted with sheep.

Even the fat City gentleman realised that it was all very nice to look at. But the City gentleman, who could sway international finance with a nod of his head, stood at the cross-roads quite helpless, and he fairly gasped with relief at the sight of a portly figure rolling majestically towards him. He recognised a Greyfriars master. Mr. Prout was certainly not so nice to look at as the other objects that surrounded the City gentleman, but he was more

welcome to Mr. Vernon-Smith's eyes than the greenest of downs or the bluest of skies.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Vernon-Smith!" Prout was pleasant and gracious. "Taking a country ramble this delightful afternoon, what? After all, there is nothing like walking."

Snort!

"You are enjoying this delightful weather?" said Mr. Prout.

Snort!

SEND IN A GREYFRIARS LIMERICK and WIN A WALLET! G. R. Davies, of 46, Tynypwll Road, Whitchurch, Glamorgan, has sent in the following winning effort, illustrated by our artist.



Old Gosling's a crusty old crump,



Who seems to do nothing but "grump."



He really enjoys



Reporting late boys,



But a tip makes him act like a trump

POST YOUR LIMERICK TO-NIGHT!

Mr. Vernon-Smith fanned a glistening, warm face with a silk hat.

"Can you direct me to the school, Mr. Prout?" he asked. "My car has met with an accident, and I have to walk. I should never have believed that there were so many insects in existence as I have met with during the past quarter of an hour."

Mr. Prout smiled.

"Keep straight on, sir, and in ten minutes you will reach the Courtfield road, and then Greyfriars is—"

"Thank you!"

"In this delightful weather the beauties of Nature—" recommenced Prout.

But Mr. Vernon-Smith was already striding on his way. He was a busy gentleman, and had no time for the beauties of Nature.

It was Mr. Prout's turn to snort.

He resumed his leisurely saunter; while Mr. Vernon-Smith strode off in the opposite direction, and breathed freely, once more, when he reached the high road and got out of the scent of the hawthorn into the smell of petrol from passing cars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Redwing's Luck!

TOM REDWING gave a start, and almost gasped with relief. His face lighted up, at the sight of a plump gentleman, down whose ruddy, plump face the perspiration was rolling from under the brim of a shiny silk hat. It was not always a pleasure to Redwing to meet his chum's father; Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was a rather overpowering gentleman. But he was deeply glad and relieved to see him now.

It was sheer luck.

Tom had hurried out of the school with a vague idea in his mind of meeting the millionaire on his way to Greyfriars, and somehow keeping him away from the school. It was the only way he could hope to get the Bounder out of his scrape.

But unless he was favoured by fortune, he knew, as soon as he had time to reflect, that there was little chance of success. The millionaire had telephoned from Lantham, which was nine or ten miles from Greyfriars. No doubt he had business there, as he sometimes had, and had found that he had a little time to spare to call in at the school and see his son.

It was probable that he would take the express from Lantham to Courtfield, and a taxi to the school. If so, Tom had only to wait at the railway station at Courtfield, and meet him there.

But it was possible, on the other hand, that the millionaire had his car at Lantham, in which case he was certain to come by road.

In that case, Redwing had no hope, for there was a choice of roads from Lantham to the school, and he could not guess which one Mr. Vernon-Smith would take.

To wait for him at the gates of Greyfriars was futile. If Mr. Vernon-Smith was seen at Greyfriars the game was up for the Bounder.

There was only one thing that Redwing could do—and he did it. He lost no time in getting to Courtfield, and he was waiting in the station when the train came in from Lantham.

He hoped fervently that Mr. Vernon-Smith would come by train. But by that train, at all events, he did not arrive; and Tom waited, with a heavy heart, for the next.

The next train from Lantham disgorged a good many passengers; but Mr. Vernon-Smith was not among them.

It was useless to wait longer. If the millionaire had been coming by train he would have arrived by this time, and Tom could only conclude that he had his car at Lantham, and had come over in it.

If so, he was at Greyfriars already, and there was nothing more to be done.

Tom Redwing walked back across the common towards Greyfriars with a clouded face and a heavy heart.

He had done all he could, and it amounted to—nothing! Had Mr. Vernon-Smith travelled by train all might have been well. It had been an even chance, and the chance had failed.

No doubt he had arrived at the school already by road, which Tom had had no chance of preventing, even if he had known that the millionaire was in his car.

Redwing was thinking dismally of what must have followed his arrival, the astonishment of Mr. Quelch, swiftly changing to blackest wrath, when he learned of the trick that had been played on him.

And then, as he came past the end of Oak Lane, Redwing, in astonishment, sighted the millionaire.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, looking very hot, and far from happy, rolled out of the lane, and took the direction of Greyfriars.

Redwing stared at him blankly.

The last thing he would have expected would have been to see Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith on foot. He could not possibly have walked from Lantham—half the distance would have knocked the fat City gentleman into a cocked hat. But there he was, plump and perspiring, on foot; and Redwing, in great relief, broke into a run to catch him up. Something evidently had happened—something which Redwing did not know, but which he could only regard, in the circumstances, as fortunate. As a matter of fact, it was Bunter on a bike that had happened.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith!"

The plump gentleman stopped, and turned. Redwing raised his cap.

"Oh! You!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "How do you do, Redwing? Is my son at the school?"

"I—I've been at Courtfield station, sir!" panted Tom. "I thought you might come by train—"

"I came in my car! A silly, foolish, thick-headed, crass ass of a cyclist got in the way! I have walked miles."

"Oh! I'm sorry, sir!" said Redwing. "I—I was coming back from the station when I saw you, and—"

"You went to the station to meet me there?"

"Yes, sir."

"I hardly see why," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, staring at him.

"Smithy—I mean, Herbert—isn't at the school this afternoon, sir—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"You rang off so suddenly, sir—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "As you took the call, you could have told me that my son was not at the school. Why did you not do so?"

Redwing could not explain that he had been so utterly knocked over by that sudden and startling telephone call that he had not had time to think before the millionaire rang off. And certainly Mr. Vernon-Smith had rung off very promptly.

"Where is my son?" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith, very much annoyed.

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"At Highcliffe, sir."

"Highcliffe! What is he doing at Highcliffe?"

"Playing in a cricket match, sir. They left long before you phoned," explained Redwing. "But—but—"

"But what?" rapped Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Smithy would be awfully bucked to see you, sir, if you—if you'd go over to Highcliffe," said Redwing desperately. "He's playing in the match—he's a man that—that couldn't be left out. I—I thought perhaps you'd like to see him playing for the school, sir—it's not far to Highcliffe—"

"Um!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I have lost a great deal of time—and I shall have to take the train back to Lantham, as my car is in need of repair—"

"You can get a taxi at Courtfield, sir, and then it's only a few minutes to Highcliffe—"

"Courtfield? We are far away from Courtfield—"

"It isn't much farther to walk into Courtfield from here, sir, than to walk on to Greyfriars."

"Um!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith again.

"Of course, Smithy had no idea you were coming, sir—"

"I had no idea myself, till after lunch to-day. Well, if Herbert is at Highcliffe, playing cricket, I may as well see him there—I shall have time to catch my train at Courtfield afterwards."

"Lots of time, sir!" said Redwing eagerly.

His eyes danced.

If Mr. Vernon-Smith headed for Highcliffe, instead of Greyfriars, and went direct from Highcliffe to the station, the situation was saved, so far as Redwing could see. He would not appear at Greyfriars at all, and Mr. Quelch need never know that he had ever intended to visit the school.

"I can show you some short cuts across the common, sir, to get into Courtfield," said Redwing eagerly. "Smithy will be no end bucked if he finds you looking in at Highcliffe."

Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled.

"Well, in the circumstances, I cannot do better," he said. "It is useless to go on to Greyfriars, if my son is not there, and I certainly wish to see Herbert, after coming so far. Show me the way, my boy."

"This way, sir!"

Redwing's face was bright now. He led Mr. Vernon-Smith by a short cut across the common which saved some distance, and they arrived at last in the town. Every step farther away from Greyfriars lightened Tom's heart, though Mr. Vernon-Smith was very far from guessing his thoughts.

In Courtfield, a taxi was quickly picked up. Mr. Vernon-Smith graciously offered Redwing a seat, and they buzzed away to Highcliffe.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Danger Averted!

"SMITHY! Good old Smithy!" It was the last over in the Highcliffe innings.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was bowling for Greyfriars, and the fall of the Highcliffe wicket followed.

The Bounder grinned cheerily as his comrades shouted.

Smithy had proved that he could bowl as well as bat. Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the demon bowler of the Remove, had not been better than Smithy that day. Four wickets had

fallen to Herbert Vernon-Smith, and among them was Courtenay's own. The elated Bounder was in great spirits. So were the rest of the Remove team, for the game that had looked so doubtful in prospect, now looked something like a certain win. Highcliffe were all down for 90, leaving Greyfriars 20 runs ahead on the first innings.

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a clap on the shoulder as the field came off.

"Good man, Smithy!" he said. "You're giving them beans, old fellow! We're going to pull this off."

"Looks like it!" agreed Smithy.

"Good old Smithy! Bravo!" came a roar round the field. There were a good many Remove men on the ground by this time, and the Bounder's name was on every tongue.

The cheering was like wine to the Bounder. Herbert Vernon-Smith dearly loved the limelight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Johnny!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Seen the score, old bean?"

Johnny Bull nodded and grinned.

"Ripping," he said. "Smithy's done jolly well."

"The jolly-wellfulness of the absurd Smithy is terrific," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Wish I could have played," said Johnny Bull. "But Smithy seems to be doing two men's work for us. By the way, Smithy, I saw your pater—"

"What?" ejaculated the Bounder.

"Your pater—"

"You silly idiot, what do you mean?" broke out Vernon-Smith.

Johnny Bull stared at him. The other fellows stared. That angry outburst from Smithy took them all by surprise.

"I mean what I say, not that it matters, so far as I can see!" said Johnny Bull curtly. "I saw your pater as I came over on my bike, and I thought I'd mention it—"

The Bounder recovered himself.

In the excitement of the game, in his elation at hearing the shouts and cheers of the Greyfriars crowd, he had almost forgotten Mr. Quelch, and the fact that he was at Highcliffe without leave.

He was taken utterly aback by the mention of his pater. If Mr. Vernon-Smith had made one of his sudden unannounced visits to the school, all the fat was in the fire.

"My father—at Greyfriars?" asked the Bounder, trying to speak coolly.

Johnny Bull turned away without answering. He was not pleased by the Bounder's reception of the news he had brought.

Smithy caught him by the arm.

"Look here, Bull—"

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Johnny. "I thought you'd like to know your father was coming, but if you can't be civil—"

"Sorry!" said the Bounder with an effort. "I—I wasn't expecting my pater at Greyfriars, and—and I was startled. You saw him at the school?"

"No."

"Where did you see him, then?"

"In a taxi-cab."

"Going to Greyfriars?" asked the Bounder anxiously. The swift thought was in his mind that it might be possible somehow to steer his father clear of Greyfriars yet.

"No," grunted Johnny Bull. "I passed a taxi on my bike, this side of Courtfield, coming in this direction. Your father was in it, with Redwing."

"With Redwing!" exclaimed the Bounder in astonishment. "Coming here?"

"I suppose he was coming here. The taxi was held up by a market cart blocking the road, and I passed it," said Johnny Bull. "I supposed that Redwing was bringing your pater over here for the match, and I thought you'd like to know he was coming—"

"Yes, yes! Had he been to Greyfriars?"

"Not that I know of."

"But—but he must have gone to the school for me—he doesn't know anything about my being at Highcliffe to-day!" muttered the Bounder. "Can't you say for certain whether he's been to Greyfriars?"

"I didn't see him there, anyhow."

"What does it matter, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton, surprised by the black look on the Bounder's face.

"It matters a lot!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"I don't see—"

"Well, it does!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes your pater, Smithy!" called out Bob Cherry.

The Bounder, with beating heart, hurried to meet his father, who was walking down to the cricket field with Redwing.

All his elation was gone now.

If his father had seen Mr. Quelch, the game was up, and even the indulgent Mr. Vernon-Smith could hardly fail to be angry; indeed, it was more likely than not that he was there to order his son's return to Greyfriars immediately. Mr. Quelch, it was certain, would insist on the Bounder's immediate return if he learned where he was.

But the expression on the millionaire's face reassured Smithy, as he hurried up to his father.

There was no sign of anger there; no sign that anything was amiss. Apparently he had not seen Mr. Quelch.

The millionaire greeted his son with his usual affection. He had heard, in the distance, the sound of cheering, coupled with his son's name, and had been greatly pleased thereby.

"How did you know I was here, dad?" asked Smithy. "Did Quelch tell you?" he added, with a grin at Redwing.

"Redwing told me," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. He explained briefly. "It was fortunate I met Redwing, or I should have missed you altogether, Herbert."

"Jolly fortunate!" grinned the Bounder.

Redwing smiled faintly. It was more fortunate, in the circumstances, than Mr. Vernon-Smith dreamed.

Mr. Vernon-Smith looked at his watch.

"I can stay only half an hour," he said. "I've kept the taxi waiting—I mustn't lose my train back to Lantham. Shall I see you playing, Herbert?"

"Yes, rather! I'm opening the second innings for Greyfriars when we bat again," said Smithy. "Come along, father—I'll find you a chair at the



The car fairly spun round to avoid Bunter, skidded, and clambered up the high green bank beside the road. "Good gad!" came a startled howl from inside the car. "That reckless young idiot—Bunter!"

pavilion. It's ripping for you to come."

Mr. Vernon-Smith sank gladly into a chair. He bestowed a genial nod on Harry Wharton & Co. He discerned that the Greyfriars fellows were making much of his son; and that was a passport to the millionaire's good graces.

Harry Wharton came to speak to him, and the Bounder stepped aside with Tom Redwing. What Mr. Vernon-Smith did not know about cricket would have filled large volumes; but he was interested in the game in which his son was distinguishing himself, and he listened keenly to details that he only half understood from the captain of the Remove.

Meanwhile, the Bounder was speaking in a low voice to Redwing.

"You've saved my jolly old bacon, Redwing," he said. There was a grateful note in his hard voice.

"Thank goodness!" said Tom.

"If Quelch had taken that call—" The Bounder whistled. "And if the pater had butted in at Greyfriars—" He whistled again.

Redwing's face was very serious.

"I did all I could, Smithy. It may not come out now."

"No reason why it should come out," said the Bounder. "You've stood by me like a brick, Reddy. After I'd been ratty and rotten, too—"

"That's nothing!"

"Well, you're used to my rotten temper, aren't you, old chap?" said the Bounder remorsefully. "I'm sorry, Reddy—sorry for all the rotten things I've said! It was splendid of you to

play up like this—splendid! Not a fellow in a hundred would have done it!"

"Oh, rot!" said Tom, with a smile.

"Quelch will be shirty about you clearing off as you did—"

"That couldn't be helped," said Tom, his face clouding again. "So long as you get through—"

"Oh, I shall get through all right! My hat, though! I've had a narrow escape!" grinned the Bounder. "If Quelch had seen my pater he would have tumbled at once, of course. Thank goodness you barred him off from Greyfriars, Reddy! It's all serene now."

Redwing made no reply to that. He did not share in the least his chum's taste for kicking against all authority. But it was useless to speak of that to Smithy; on that subject they could never see eye to eye. The sailorman's son could only hope that that day's escapade would never become known to Mr. Quelch. He had stood by his chum, who was in the wrong, against his Form master, who was in the right; and though he would have done the same again, it was not a pleasant reflection.

The Bounder gave him a friendly smile, and went back to his father.

Tom Redwing joined the crowd of Greyfriars fellows who had come over to see the game. He was troubled and uneasy, dissatisfied with what he had done, yet feeling that he could have done nothing else. But when the Greyfriars second innings started, he forgot

his worries in watching his chum at the wickets.

Vernon-Smith opened the innings for Greyfriars, with Bob Cherry at the other end, and he quickly showed that he was still at the top of his form.

Loud cheers from the Greyfriars fellows greeted every hit by the Bounder, and Redwing's voice was as loud as any. Vernon-Smith, as he wielded the willow, forgot everything but cricket; and Redwing, watching him with delighted eyes, forgot, too. And Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith smiled a smile of fat satisfaction as the shouts rang over the Highcliffe ground:

"Well hit!"

"Bravo, Smithy!"

"Good old Smithy!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Game!

THE Bounder was still going strong when Mr. Vernon-Smith, after an anxious glance at his watch, walked away to his taxi.

Tom Redwing was relieved to see the millionaire depart, and to know that he was going direct back to Lantham. That danger had been averted; and Tom wondered whether the Bounder's usual luck would hold good, and he would get through this reckless escapade scathless. There was, at least, a good chance of it now; and Redwing hoped for the best.

Meanwhile, he watched his chum's innings, with a bright face, glad to see Smithy doing so well for his side, and finding in it, perhaps, some sort of justification for the Bounder's reckless insubordination.

There was no doubt that Greyfriars would have met crushing defeat at Highcliffe that day had Smithy remained behind under detention. He was a tower of strength to his side; all the more because the team had lost so many of its best men.

On his day Smithy was a tremendous cricketer; and to-day was evidently his day. Even in bowling, he had equalled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; and in batting he had done very much better than

Wharton or Bob Cherry. It was a consolation, at least, that the rebel of the Remove had not entered upon that lawless escapade for nothing; at least, he was winning the game for his side.

Smithy's face was flushed, his eyes sparkling; he was enjoying himself to the uttermost. He had played hard, but he still seemed fresh. The Highcliffe bowlers exerted themselves in vain on his wicket. The Caterpillar tried every trick he knew, and Smithy put paid to all of them. He did not give a chance in the field. The Highcliffe fielding was good but it was not good enough to catch the Bounder out.

Men came and went; but the Bounder remained where he was. It looked as if he might be "not out" in the second innings, as in the first. His score was piling up; he was hoping for the century this time.

Smithy loved the limelight; and he was getting it in full measure now. Cheers and hand-clapping greeted his hard hitting. He seemed to be taking chances, yet every chance favoured him; neither the bowling nor the fielding seemed of any use against him.

"Isn't he a prize-packet?" Wharton was almost chuckling with satisfaction, though he was out himself for only ten runs in the second innings. "Isn't he a coughdrop, Redwing?"

"He's in splendid form!" said Tom.

"Lucky he's here, what?" said the captain of the Remove. "That fat ass, Bunter, was making out yesterday that Smithy was detained—"

"Oh!" said Redwing.

"If he had been, it would have been all up with us. But the old Bounder isn't such an ass as that. He knew he was wanted here."

Redwing was silent. Wharton was on friendly terms with the Bounder, but they were far from chummy; but the captain of the Remove spoke now as if Smithy had been a lifelong pal. Redwing wondered what he would have thought had he known the facts. Certainly, Tom was not likely to tell him.

"Smithy won't be out, you men," said Bob Cherry. "Even the Caterpillar can't touch him, though he bowls uncommonly well. He got my wicket, bless him! He won't get Smithy's."



"The Hero of Clavering"

Sensation! A Police Inspector at Clavering! Asking for a boy called Tom, with fair hair and blue eyes! It must be Tom Merry! Where was he at half-past ten last night? The dark finger of suspicion points at the boy who is standing as a candidate for the captaincy of the

Lower school! His enemies rejoice! His friends are bewildered! What is the mystery of "The Hero of Clavering"? Get this ripping Long Complete School Yarn To-day. It tells you the fascinating story of the early school days of Tom Merry and his chums!

"He won't!" agreed Wharton.

"Never!" said Johnny Bull.

"The neverfulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Smithy is a ridiculous fixture!"

"There he goes again—bet you that's four!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Smithy!"

It was meat and drink to the Bounder. A triumph like this was worth anything that might follow, in Smithy's opinion, at least. He was playing the game of his life, and he knew it. Seldom or never had he shown such form before; and that match was likely to be long remembered.

But the hoped-for century did not accrue. Highcliffe could not damage the Bounder; but they dealt faithfully with the "tail" of the innings. Once more the innings closed with a "procession." But this time the Bounder had taken eighty off his own bat; and when Greyfriars were all down for 125 he came off looking elated.

"The game's ours," he told the captain of the Remove, and Harry Wharton nodded cheerfully.

"Highcliffe want 146 to win," said Frank Nugent. "They'll never get them."

"Not in their jolly old lifetimes!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

The Greyfriars second innings was followed by tea; after which Highcliffe batted again. Courtenay, perhaps, still nourished a hope of pulling off the match; but, if so, the hope must have been faint. Highcliffe had too much leeway to make up.

What hope he had reached vanishing-point when the Bounder took his wicket in the second over, and followed up that feat by taking two more in succession.

The Greyfriars fellows roared their appreciation of the hat-trick.

Highcliffe wanted 145 to tie, 146 to win, when they went in to bat. The most optimistic Highcliffian did not expect to get them after Courtenay's wicket went down. As a matter of fact, the innings ended quite early, with a total of only 70.

Harry Wharton's face was very bright. With a depleted team he had scarcely ventured to look for a win at Highcliffe that day, and Greyfriars had won by the wide margin of 75 runs. It was more than enough to make the captain of the Remove feel bucked.

"It's Smithy's game, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry. "The game of your life, Smithy."

"Well, we've licked them!" said the Bounder. "It's worth a row!"

"A row?" repeated Bob

The Bounder laughed.

"Now it's over, I'd better tell you men," he said.

"What have you got to tell us?" asked Bob, mystified.

"Bunter told you yesterday that I was under detention to-day," said the Bounder quietly.

"I remember," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Lucky it was only the fat duffer's gammon."

"It wasn't!" said Vernon-Smith.

"What?"

"I've cut detention."

"Smithy!"

"Couldn't be helped if I was not to let you down in this game. I suppose I've been of some use here!" added the Bounder with a touch of arrogance.

Wharton's face was very grave.

"You've won the game for us," he said. "But—I couldn't have played you if I'd known, and you know it."

"Yes; that's why I left you in the

dark," drawled the Bounder. "I'm only telling you now, because the less that's said about it the better. I'd rather Quelch didn't know that I'd been here to-day."

"He's almost bound to know," exclaimed Nugent, aghast. "Fellows will be talking about the match—especially about the game you've put up—"

"The talkfulness will be terrific."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "I've got to chance that, of course. But the less said, the better. If there's a row I can stand it; and I don't care, after pulling the game out of the fire. But there's no need for you men to shout out in Quelch's hearing that I was here."

Harry Wharton bit his lip hard.

There were hot words on his tongue, but he kept them back. He did not want to quarrel with the Bounder, who had undoubtedly turned a defeat into a victory by his magnificent play for Greyfriars. But the Bounder's reckless proceedings placed all the cricketers in an awkward position.

"I can't make this out, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove slowly. "Quelch can't know you're here, if you're under detention, or he would have sent a prefect after you. You know Quelchy."

"He doesn't."

"Well, even if you were able to cut detention in the afternoon, how the thump did you cut third lesson this morning? Quelch must have missed you from the Form-room."

"Oh, I managed it," said the Bounder carelessly. "No need to go into details. I pulled the old sport's leg."

Wharton breathed rather hard.

"You must have spoofed him somehow," he said.

"I did."

"Well, look here—"

"What?" asked the Bounder mockingly.

Wharton checked himself again.

"Well, it's done now," he said. "No good talking! Least said, soonest mended, now it's done."

"Sorry I came?" grinned the Bounder. "Did you want Highcliffe to wipe you off the field?"

"Swank!" grunted Wibley.

"Swank or not, you'd have been jolly well mopped up if I hadn't chanced it, and you jolly well know it!" retorted the Bounder.

"Nobody's denying that," said Wharton quietly. "I'm glad you came, so far as the cricket is concerned. But—you ought not to have done it, and you know that as well as I can tell you."

"Don't trouble to tell me, then!" suggested the Bounder.

And he walked away whistling.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Makes a Discovery!

THE beauties of Nature—
It was Prout's rich, rolling voice in Masters' Common-room.

Mr. Quelch, coming along to the door of that apartment, heard that fruity voice and paused. He was not in the best of tempers, and was quite disinclined for Prout's eloquence on the subject of the beauties of Nature, or any other subject.

Redwing's conduct that afternoon had irritated the Remove master. It had pained him more than it had irritated him. It was still in his mind, when he came along to the Common-room. Prout's voice, which seldom ceased, except when Prout was asleep, did not please his ears. However, he went on into the Common-room with a far from

cordial expression on his face. Prout, unheeding his entrance, rolled on.

"It is inexplicable to my mind how anyone, even one accustomed wholly to city ways, can take a walk in the delightful rural solitudes, in this delightful summer weather, without feeling at least some appreciation of the beauties of Nature."

There were half a dozen masters in Common-room, listening to Prout. They did not particularly want to listen to him. But they had no choice, unless they walked out. Prout's conversation was like those uplifting talks on the wireless, which nobody wants to listen to, but which everybody has to listen to.

Evidently Prout, during his walk abroad that afternoon, had encountered someone who showed no appreciation of the beauties of Nature, and he was going to tell his long-suffering colleagues all about it. His colleagues could only hope that Prout would cut it short.

"But who—" murmured little Mr. Wiggins. Perhaps he wanted to know, or perhaps he wanted to buck Prout up and get it over.

"I met Mr. Vernon-Smith," said Prout. "You are acquainted with the name, of course—that of a very great man in financial affairs—a prince of finance, in fact. He has a son in your Form, Quelch."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

He was taking some interest in Prout's talk now. Prout stated that he had met the Bounder's father. That was very curious, to say the least.

"It seems that Mr. Vernon-Smith's car broke down and he had to walk to the school," resumed Prout. "I had the pleasure of directing him on his way, which he had lost. I have a great respect for Mr. Vernon-Smith—a very great respect. But so total a lack of appreciation of the beauties of Nature—"

"You met Mr. Vernon-Smith near Greyfriars?" asked Mr. Quelch, ruthlessly interrupting the flow of Prout's eloquence.

"Yes; in a lane near Courtfield Common, which is called, I think, Oak Lane," answered Prout.

"Was he alone?"

"He was alone, Quelch!" answered Mr. Prout, staring. The question rather surprised him.

"I mean his son was not with him?"

"No. I gathered," said Prout, "that he was coming to Greyfriars to see his son. Certainly he asked to be directed to the school, and I see no other reason—"

"It is very singular," said Mr. Quelch, pursing his lips.

"Very singular indeed, that he should take absolutely no interest in the beauties of Nature—"

"I mean, I have seen nothing of him; he does not appear to have arrived at the school," said Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" said Prout. "He can hardly have lost his way a second time, after I gave him the most explicit directions."

"If he has," said Wiggins, "he must be still wandering in those delightful rural solitudes you spoke of, Prout—"

"An opportunity for him to learn to appreciate the beauties of Nature," remarked Mr. Hacker.

Some of the masters laughed.

Mr. Quelch left the Common-room. Prout was still going on, but his conversation had lost its interest for the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch was thinking—hard!

There was a deep line in his brow; a glint in his eyes. So far as he knew, a

telegram from Mr. Vernon-Smith had called his son home. It was incredible that Mr. Vernon-Smith could be visiting the school during his son's absence. If Prout had met the millionaire on his way to Greyfriars to visit his son, the telegram of the morning, obviously, could not have come from Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The father might have brought the son back to the school; but Prout had stated that Mr. Vernon-Smith was alone; so it was not that. Moreover, he had not arrived at Greyfriars, though he had asked Prout the way to the school. Something had caused him to change his purpose.

It was all very perplexing; but from the perplexities it seemed to Mr. Quelch that one fact stood out clear; that the telegram of the morning had not and could not have come from Mr. Vernon-Smith, if the millionaire had indeed been met by Prout on his way to the school.

The Remove master's face hardened. He had felt a twinge of uneasy doubt at the time—a vague doubt which had worried him a little, but which he had dismissed.

Now it recurred with full force.

A "fake" telegram—

The gimlet-eyes glinted. If the boy had dared—if he could have dared—

Quelch remembered the incident of the previous evening; of the Bounder caught by Prout using the Fifth Form master's telephone. To whom had the rebel of the Remove been phoning? To a confederate, some associate outside the school, who for a bribe would be willing to dispatch a telegram in the name of the junior's father?

It was growing clear to his mind. Mr. Quelch had only needed a clue, and that clue had been furnished, unconsciously, by Prout.

Yet he could not quite understand.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, it was certain, had not arrived at Greyfriars that afternoon. What had stopped him on the way, after he had left Prout, heading for the school? If the Bounder had been guilty of deception it could only have been for one purpose—to join the cricketers at Highcliffe in spite of his Form master's prohibition.

He therefore could not have met his father on the way and turned him back. Indeed, he must have been in complete ignorance of his father's intention to come, if the telegram was a "fake" inspired by Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch reflected, his face growing harder and harder. He was not sure yet—he saw the Bounder's scheme as through a glass darkly. But he was going to be sure.

If the rebel of his Form was at Highcliffe, all this time, playing cricket, regardless of detentions, laughing in his sleeve at the Form master he had deluded and fooled—Mr. Quelch felt a throb of bitter anger. But he had to be sure before he gave his anger rein. Mr. Quelch was a just gentleman.

He stepped to the telephone at last, and asked for a trunk call. The number he gave was that of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's private residence. There, the facts could be learned.

When he was "through," it was Mr. Vernon-Smith's butler who answered. Mr. Vernon-Smith was not at home, and Master Herbert had certainly not been home that day.

Mr. Quelch put up the receiver.

The Bounder had not been home. He knew that now. The telegram, supposed to be from his father asking the

Head for leave for him to go home, could have been only a "fake."

Mr. Quelch looked at his watch. It was close on time for last call-over; any minute now the cricketers would be back from Highcliffe. Had this knowledge come to him earlier in the day, undoubtedly Mr. Quelch would have gone over to Highcliffe to fetch the truant back, or sent a prefect to fetch him. It was bitterly exasperating that he had learned it too late.

The Bounder had carried out his purpose, and but for the chance of Prout's talk in Common-room, the Remove master would never have known that he had been at Highcliffe at all—the young rascal would have defied authority with impunity, and laughed in his sleeve.

It was Mr. Quelch's duty to call roll that evening in Hall, and his feelings were deep when he went into Hall.

His gimlet eyes glittered over the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. had returned; they were all in their places. And Herbert Vernon-Smith was there also.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on the Bounder.

He looked calm and unconcerned, as usual; certainly not like a fellow with any doubt or disquietude on his mind.

But Mr. Quelch knew him well enough to know that that meant nothing. The Bounder was the fellow to look cool and unconcerned, if he was up for the "sack."

"Quelch's got his eye on you, Smithy!" whispered Billy Bunter. "I say, you're for it, you know."

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Smithy! I say, Quelch never said anything when you cut third school," said Bunter. "I suppose he was saving it up till you got in, what?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Well, he looks jolly ratty now!" grinned Bunter. "I know that gleam in his eye! He, he, he!"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

Mr. Quelch was calling the roll. Herbert Vernon-Smith answered "adsum" to his name with cheerful coolness. Tom Redwing, watching the grim face of his Form master, had a deep misgiving. The Bounder's scheme seemed to have worked like a charm, and Redwing's intervention had saved him when the unexpected happened. Unless Mr. Quelch heard talk among the cricketers, it seemed unlikely that he would learn that the Bounder had been at Highcliffe. And little as most of the cricketers approved of Smithy's trickery, they were sure to take care not to betray him. Yet Redwing, as he looked at Mr. Quelch, had a feeling that the Remove master knew.

A Sixth Form prefect called to Vernon-Smith, when the school was dismissed after roll-call.

"Vernon-Smith! You are to go to your Form master's study."

The Bounder started a little. But he answered calmly:

"Very well, Gwynne."

Redwing touched his arm in the passage.

"Quelch knows, Smithy!" he said, in a low voice.

"What rot!" said the Bounder lightly.

"Believe me, old chap—"

"Bosh!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, take care—don't try to stuff him—don't make matters worse!" urged Redwing.

"Make a clean breast of it, if—"

"Rats!"

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The Bounder lounged away to his Form master's study with his hands in his pockets.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Chopper Comes Down!

"VERNON-SMITH!"

"Yes, sir!"

If the Bounder felt an inward tremor, under the penetrating gaze of the gimlet-eyes fixed on his face, he did not reveal it. He was perfectly cool and self-possessed.

Quelch couldn't know—he was assured that Quelch couldn't know. Anyhow, he was ready to brazen it out, to the last ditch.

"I require an account of your proceedings to-day, Vernon-Smith," said the Remove master icily.

The junior raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Certainly, sir. I caught my train—"

"You caught your train?" repeated Mr. Quelch. Perhaps he had hoped that the delinquent would make a frank confession, rather than seek to cover up his escapade with a screen of falsehoods. If so, he did not know the Bounder. Among the other fellows in his Form, Smithy was straight; but he had a system of belief that masters were fair game; and he was quite unscrupulous in dealing with them. His view was, that it was up to the beaks to catch him out if they could.

"Yes, sir; and I had a very pleasant day at home," said the Bounder calmly. "My father was at leisure, and he very kindly took me to the Zoo."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep.

"I had better tell you at once, Vernon-Smith, before you prevaricate further, that I am already aware that you have not been home to-day," he said.

The Bounder undoubtedly felt a tremor then. But he gave no sign of it.

"Really, sir—" he protested.

"I have telephoned to your home," said Mr. Quelch.

"Indeed, sir!"

"I received information that you had not been there all day."

"That is quite correct, sir," said the Bounder calmly. "I went to my father's office in the City to see him. We lunched and tea'd out together."

"Do you dare to affirm, Vernon-Smith, that you have been with your father this afternoon?"

"Certainly, sir."

"In London!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Naturally, sir."

"You are unaware, Vernon-Smith, that your father has been in the vicinity of Greyfriars this afternoon, and that Mr. Prout met him only a mile from the school."

The Bounder fairly jumped.

"Your father," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "was on his way to Greyfriars, apparently to visit you. Obviously, therefore, it was not he who dispatched the telegram to the Head this morning. Why he has not arrived here I do not know; but he was speaking to Mr. Prout little more than a mile from Greyfriars at the time when, according to your statement, you were with him in London."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the Bounder involuntarily.

He realised that the game was up now! That old ass Prout—

"You had better tell me the truth, Vernon-Smith. I have no doubt where you have been this afternoon, and a

question to Wharton will settle the matter. Have you been at Highcliffe?"

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

If Mr. Quelch questioned the cricketers, obviously there was only one reply they could make. It could not possibly be concealed that the Bounder had played in the match at Highcliffe if Quelch once started asking questions.

"I have been at Highcliffe, sir!" answered the Bounder; and he was still cool, though he knew what must be coming. He had gambled high, and he had lost. The chopper was coming down with a vengeance. He had known that it must be so if fortune failed him; and the Bounder was not the fellow to crumple up when the blow fell.

"The telegram received by the Head this morning did not come from your father?" said Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir."

"It was, therefore, sent by some person in association with you to deceive your headmaster."

"It's not much use to deny that now, sir," said Herbert Vernon-Smith coolly. "I tipped a man to take a trip to town and send it."

"No doubt that was why you used Mr. Prout's telephone last night, Vernon-Smith."

"No doubt, sir!" assented the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed. Even at this crisis the Bounder's manner was one of scarcely veiled impertinence.

"I will not ask you to whom you telephoned, Vernon-Smith. I have little doubt, or rather none, that you would make a false answer," said the Remove master bitterly. "You played this trick, deceiving me, and deceiving your headmaster in order to escape detention."

"Yes, sir."

"You have deceived me many times, Vernon-Smith! But I should not have supposed that you would venture to practise a deception on your headmaster."

"There was no alternative, sir," said the Bounder calmly. "I had to play in the Highcliffe match. The team was weak, and a good man could not be spared from it. I couldn't let my captain down."

"Impudent as your words are, Vernon-Smith, I could take such an excuse into consideration if I believed you," said Mr. Quelch. "But I cannot believe that you regarded this cricket match or your duty to your captain as important when you were found smoking the day before it was played. You did not care enough about your duty as a member of the team to give up foolish and vicious conduct, and to avoid detention."

The Bounder made no rejoinder to that. He had to admit that Quelch had him there, as he would have expressed it.

"I can only believe," went on the Remove master, "that you were very little concerned about your duty to your cricket captain, and that this lawless defiance of authority was due to reckless insubordination and brazen hardihood."

The Bounder smiled faintly. As a matter of fact, the Remove master had hit the right nail on the head. Certainly Smithy had been keen about the match, and very unwilling to let the team down, still more unwilling to face the unpopularity that would have followed had he failed his side owing to having been caught smoking like a silly fag. But it was the lawless kink in his nature that had dictated the scheme that had so very nearly been a success.

"You know, of course, what



"I've been to the Head," drawled Vernon-Smith, "and I'm afraid I'm goin' to deal you chaps a rather severe blow. I've been sacked!"

follow this!" said Mr. Quelch, after a pause.

"I can guess, sir."

"A defiance of my own authority I might have dealt with, but a deliberate deception of your headmaster is a different and much more serious matter. I can only take you to Dr. Locke and place the matter in his hands."

The Bounder stood very still.

He had enjoyed the escapade; the day had been a happy one to him. He loved taking a risk, and getting away with it. But he knew what must follow now, and he wondered, rather too late, whether the game was worth the candle. He had chanced it many times, and always his luck had held good. In the Remove his luck was held to be phenomenal. It had failed him at long last, and he had to take his gruel.

Mr. Quelch rose.

"I'd like you to believe, sir, that I really was keen about the cricket," said the Bounder quietly, "and if you ask Wharton he will tell you that I saved the match."

"I do not regard that as an excuse, Vernon-Smith, even if I could take your word. I hold out no hope whatever that Dr. Locke will take a lenient view. I am sorry—you have many good qualities, and but for the lawless strain in your nature you might have done your school credit. But the limit has been reached, and you must leave Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith. You will now come with me to your headmaster."

Leave Greyfriars!

The words gave the Bounder a chill. He had risked it, and known that he was risking it. But now it had come it hit him hard.

But he was not the fellow to weaken. If he had to go he would go with his

head up. Never had the Bounder of Greyfriars looked so self-possessed, so cool and unconcerned, as he looked now, following his Form master to the Head's study to receive the sentence of expulsion from the school.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

The Reckoning.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter fairly yelled.

His fat face was pink with excitement as he burst into the Rag. His little round eyes fairly shone behind his big spectacles.

"I say!" gasped Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old news?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"Smithy!"

Tom Redwing made a stride towards the fat junior. His face was pale.

"What about Smithy?" he snapped.

"Up before the Beak!" gasped Bunter. "Quelch's taken him to the Head—I jolly well knew he was on his track! I knew—"

Harry Wharton whistled softly. He had wondered whether it would come out, and considered it very probable that it would. Evidently it had!

"I say, you fellows, do you think it will be a flogging or the sack?" gasped Bunter. "Cutting class, you know, and dodging detention?"

"There's more to it than that!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy must have spooferd Quelch, somehow, to cut third school. You know anything about it, Redwing?"

Redwing did not answer. He was utterly dismayed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry,

All eyes turned on the door, as the Bounder of Greyfriars came in. He lounged into the Rag with his hands in his pockets, whistling. He raised his eyebrows slightly as he met the general stare.

Certainly, he did not look like a fellow who had been "sacked." But the Bounder was the man to carry the thing off in style.

"Smithy, old man!" gasped Redwing.

"You've been to the Head?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I've had that pleasure," he assented. "Quelch made a point of it, and I hardly cared to refuse."

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Wharton.

The juniors hung on Vernon-Smith's reply.

"I'm afraid I'm goin' to deal you chaps a rather severe blow," said the Bounder regretfully. "You're goin' to lose me."

"I say, you fellows, I knew he was sacked!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Smithy, old man!" Redwing's voice was unsteady. "Smithy! Is it the sack?"

"Just that!"

"Oh!" muttered Redwing.

He looked as if he had received a blow. The reckless grin on the Bounder's face faded a little as he looked at his chum.

"Sorry, old bean!" he said. "I almost wish I'd taken your tip now. That's the worst of good advice—a fellow never follows it."

"But — but — but—" stammered Wharton. "You haven't been sacked"

(Continued on page 28.)

BANDITS OF THE LINE!



THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Following a series of train hold-ups by a band of armed criminals, the railway chiefs engage Ferrers Locke to elucidate the mystery. In company with Jack Drake, his boy assistant, the famous detective is exploring the country surrounding Wytling, Essex, the scene of the latest ambush, when he sees a negro thrown to his death from the top of an old tower. Locke and Drake rush to the scene, but the black man's assailant eludes them by leaping from the tower—a moment before it is blown sky high—and swimming away in the gloom. Convinced that the man is in league with the train bandits, Locke tracks him to a near-by inn, where he overhears his quarry arrange with a confederate to leave that night at ten. "I've got an idea," says Locke, addressing Drake. "We'll daub the roof of their car with luminous paint and follow them by air."

(Now read on.)

Trailed by Air!

"**T**HERE they go, gov'nor!" In a plane circling high above the Black Swan Inn, Jack Drake flung a pointing arm downwards over the open side of the passenger's seat.

A moving spot of ghostly light could be seen moving far beneath them, turning out of the inn yard into the village street behind a pair of blazing headlamps. Faint though it was, and far below, the roof of the car that had brought Dr. Lash and his companion to the inn, and was now bearing them away to their unknown destination, could be made out plainly in the darkness of the night from the circling plane.

Drake had done his job well. He had painted the roof of the car liberally with luminous paint; and though its ghostly light was invisible to anyone on the ground, the glow of it was clear to those above it. Ferrers Locke, glancing down from the pilot's seat, nodded, with a grim chuckle, and brought the big machine circling round to follow the car that was now speeding out of the village far beneath.

The Baker Street detective had had no

difficulty in obtaining a plane from the near-by aerodrome. He had purposely chosen a large machine, since it could fly comparatively slowly. As it was, they would have to waste time in circling now and then to avoid drawing ahead of their quarry on the road.

That the men in the car would even notice them, high above their heads, was utterly unlikely.

The car below had turned northwards outside the village. Almost at once, it became mixed up with some other cars at a closed level-crossing. But after Locke and Drake had seen a train snake by beneath, and the group of cars got going again, it was simple enough for them to pick out their quarry, with its luminous roof reflecting like moonlight through the dark.

Their quarry was marked beyond possibility of doubt!

"Now we're off!" chuckled Drake, as the car on the road beneath sped away along the broad arterial road leading northwards. "Wonder where they're heading for?"

There came back to him, as he stared down, the strange words of the dying negro: "The house of the clenched hand!"

Ferrers Locke's boy assistant remembered the torn fragment of a sheet of notepaper he and Locke had found at the top of the tower, with the single word "Moon" written upon it, and the embossed crest of a red clenched hand.

In the room at the inn, Lash and his companion had talked in low tones most of the time, so that Ferrers Locke had been unable to hear very much of their conversation, except when actually in the room; and then, of course, they had been guarded in their talk. The detective had heard no mention of anything likely to assist him in solving the problem of the clenched hand, or the word Moon.

What either stood for was still a

mystery to both Locke and Jack Drake. As he peered down, the wind racing past his flying-helmet, Drake wondered. What could the negro's words have meant?

"The house of the clenched hand!" he muttered. "Sounds rum!"

Well, he told himself, they were hot on the trail now!

The plane droned on, leisurely following the marked car that was racing through the dark countryside below, its vivid headlamps blazing through the gloom, like toy lamps to the watching eyes of Jack Drake, in the sky above. Mile after mile—like a vulture following above a dying man, as Locke remarked with grim humour.

An hour passed, and another, with the car still racing northwards through the dark countryside beneath.

It was past midnight before they came to the end of that strange trail.

Jack, watching tirelessly, saw the car beneath swing aside abruptly, and trace a peculiar curving course at a slow pace. For some moments he was puzzled. Then he realised that the car was passing along some winding drive. He saw it turn sharply and vanish—evidently into a garage or some other building, as he realised instantly.

Dr. Lash and his companion had arrived at their destination at last!

Drake leaned forward, shouting into Locke's ear. The Baker Street detective brought the plane round in a sweeping curve, diving earthwards.

It was not likely to be easy landing in the dark. But Ferrers Locke was an expert pilot, and by the dim starlight he had already selected a landing-place—a stretch of dark, level fields half a mile ahead. As they dived towards them, the two passed low over the black roofs of a big house standing among dark trees—the house, evidently, to which Dr. Lash had driven through the night from far-off Essex.

Where they were now Locke and Drake

knew not. They had come a hundred miles at least since leaving the inn in the little Essex village.

Scarcely fifteen minutes later, the detective and his assistant were standing in the road opposite the gateway of the big, lonely house to which their quarry had come. The house itself, set far back from the road, was hidden among the trees that rose darkly beyond the closed iron gates.

"This is the place all right, guv'nor," muttered Jack, peering at the high gateway. "And—my giddy aunt! Look!"

The youngster was staring wide-eyed at the tall pillars flanking the gateway. In the dim light, the carved stones surmounting each pillar could be seen. One had been broken, so that nothing but the jagged wrist was left. But the other was plain to be seen, carved in crumbling red stone—a great clenched hand.

Ferrers Locke drew a hissing breath between his teeth.

"By thunder!" he whispered. "The house of the clenched hand!"

Discovered!

THE house of which the dying negro had spoken!

Jack Drake stared at the great carved hand, dim in the gloom, with startled eyes. There was something strangely sinister about the sight of it, connecting it as they did with that tragedy of the marshes.

"The house of the clenched hand!" echoed Jack. There was a tremor of excitement in his voice. "This is it, guv'nor—no giddy doubt about it!"

Ferrers Locke nodded. His eyes were gleaming.

"Yes—and we're going to find out what lies beyond those gates, young 'un!"

The gates themselves proved to be locked. But aided by some ivy growing against one of the high, flanking walls Jack Drake and Ferrers Locke had little difficulty in gaining the top of the wall and dropping to earth on the farther side. They had left their flying coats and helmets in the aeroplane in the neighbouring fields. Five minutes later they were crouching among the trees at the edge of a wide lawn, peering through the gloom towards the dark shape of a big old mansion.

It was a forbidding-looking pile, strangely eerie and sinister to Jack Drake's eyes in the heavy white mist that was rising from the dank old lawns around it. There was no light to be seen at any of the windows—no sign of life or occupation.

"Ugh!" muttered Drake, with a sudden shiver. "It's a creepy sort of dump, isn't it, guv'nor? Looks just as if there wasn't anyone at home, too. If we hadn't seen that car come here, and knew that—"

The youngster broke off sharply, his muttered words unfinished.

Cutting the brooding silence with startling abruptness, a muffled scream had come faintly to their ears from somewhere within the dark old house. Shrill and terror-stricken, it wavered horribly for a moment or two, then died away as suddenly as it had come, leaving Drake and the Baker Street detective staring at one another, with startled faces.

"Good lord, guv'nor!" breathed Drake. His face was oddly white. It took a good deal to worry Jack Drake, but that note of terror in the scream they had heard had somehow unnerved him for the moment. "What the dickens—"

Crouching in the deep shadow of the trees at the edge of the misty lawn, Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant peered towards the unlighted house intently. But there was no repetition of that scream. The silence that had followed it was like a pall.

"What's that?" muttered the criminologist suddenly.

A faint sound had come to his straining ears, like the metallic rattle of a chain. It seemed to come from somewhere round the corner of the building. A moment later Ferrers Locke fancied he could make out a dim movement in the shadow of the wall ahead of them.

"Didn't see anything, guv'nor," breathed Jack.

"Perhaps it was my imagination," said the detective softly, with a shrug. "Pretty easy to imagine things in this light! The coast seems clear now, anyway. Come on, young 'un, this is where we investigate."

He stole forward on to the grass, his boy assistant at his side. Silent as two shadows they crept towards the dark house.

In the gloom they both failed to see a thin wire stretched ankle-high above the lawn. It was Jack, slightly ahead, who came upon it first. He tripped, with a gasp, and all but fell.

"Look out!" he ejaculated in a hissing whisper. But already it was too late.

From somewhere within the house they both heard at that moment the shrill clanging of an alarm-bell. Their

Famous detective trails train bandits through the darkest of nights—by means of luminous paint!

presence was betrayed, and in what seemed a few seconds only, as they stood in startled consternation, from the roof of the shadowy old building a dazzling beam of light leapt out through the dark.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Drake.

Sweeping across the lawn, the vivid beam of the searchlight mounted on the roof came swinging towards them. The alarm-bell had evidently warned someone posted as sentry on the roof. It seemed that the inhabitants of the house to which they had trailed the mysterious Dr. Lash through the night were prepared for unwelcome visitors.

In another instant the blazing white beam from the searchlight had picked them out. It wavered to a standstill, lighting them up mercilessly as they stood staring up at it.

Phut, phut!

With a soft, sinister sound two bullets came thudding into the grass behind them.

Whoever was on the roof working the searchlight was firing at them with a weapon that was fitted with a silencer. Picked out as they were by the vivid ray of blinding light, they made comparatively easy targets, though the first two bullets had missed their mark.

From somewhere in the house they heard now above the clanging of the alarm faint shouts. A light sprang up in one of the upper windows.

Before the man with the searchlight could fire again, however, Ferrers Locke had whipped out his own automatic with a lightning movement of his hand. He aimed upwards along that slanting beam of white light and pressed the trigger.

There was a splintering crash, and the searchlight went out abruptly.

On the instant Jack Drake sprang aside and heard a bullet strike the grass where he had been standing. The detective had fired in the nick of time.

A deathly silence followed. It was broken by a queer, animal-like snarl from somewhere in the shadow of the house and the noisy rattle of a chain. Drake swung round, and a breathless cry broke from him.

A huge, dim shape was coming towards them over the grass with two eyes flickering evilly from its unseen face. Dark though it was, there was just enough light for Drake to make out what it was that was coming towards them.

Ferrers Locke, too, had seen it—and the detective knew now that he had not been mistaken, after all, when he had fancied he had made out a shadowy movement by the corner of the house before they had started to cross the lawn.

The unsuspected watcher on the roof with his searchlight was not the only precaution which the occupants of this strange house had taken against unwanted visitors, it seemed.

Coming towards them through the gloom, dragging its long chain behind it, was the huge, hairy shape of a great ape.

"Run!" cried the Baker Street detective. "Run for your life!"

The House of Terror!

ALREADY Jack Drake had turned to race towards the trees.

That the gorilla was fastened by a length of chain to some point behind it was clear. But how long that chain was they could not know.

If once the gorilla reached them—

Drake, forcing his almost numbed limbs to act—for a moment or two he had seemed frozen to the spot with horror—tore over the grass. Behind him he could hear the bounding feet of the snarling monster, still unchecked by the dragging chain.

For the Baker Street detective to have halted in order to fire might have spelt disaster. In the dim light his chances of killing the creature at first shot were terribly slim. And if he missed—

But the problem was suddenly decided for him.

Jack missed his footing on the wet grass when he had only gone a few yards. Locke heard him fall—heard the youngster's choking cry. A sudden icy hand seemed to grip his heart as he halted and swung round.

In the misty starlight the detective saw the youngster struggling up. But already the gorilla was almost on him.

A stab of flame bit the gloom from the snub nose of the criminologist's automatic.

There was a snarl of pain and fury from the great ape. It staggered in strangely human fashion—Locke's bullet had taken it in the chest. But, though it was wounded, the beast was anything but put out of action.

Eyes blazing, snarling with a fiendish ferocity, its long, hairy arms outstretched, it made another dive for Jack Drake.

The creature was almost at the end of its tether. The chain that fastened it to the wall of the house was at full length now, swishing over the top of the grass. But it could reach Jack even yet, as the youngster scrambled to his feet.

Ferrers Locke pressed the trigger again.

It was an unlucky shot. The bullet grazed the brute's hairy flank, but it went on to strike a link in the chain that held it.

Whether the bullet severed the link clean, or simply weakened it so that the gorilla could snap it as it dragged upon it, Locke never knew. But the next moment, as the ape turned snarlingly towards him, forgetting Drake for the moment as it seemed to recognise Locke as its chief enemy, the chain broke!

The huge brute, maddened by its wounds, was free.

Jack Drake, on his feet again, saw what had happened, and saw the gorilla leap towards Ferrers Locke, the length of broken chain swinging behind it. The youngster's heart almost stopped beating, and a scream of terror—not for himself, but for his beloved gov'nor—burst from his ashen lips.

Drake did not know what Locke had just realised—that his automatic had jammed, and he could not fire again!

Even in that moment, when a dreadful death stared Ferrers Locke in the face, the detective did not lose his head. He had still a few seconds in which to act, and he did not waste a fraction of one of them. Before the huge ape could seize him in its clawing hands—hands strong enough to tear a man limb from limb—Locke had snatched off his jacket and flung it into the hairy face.

Blinded for a moment, the gorilla tore at the jacket, dragging it from its head. Already the Baker Street detective was turning to race towards the house with his boy assistant—they both realised that it was their one chance now. Even though the house was filled with enemies, better to take that risk than stay in the open, where the great ape had them at its mercy!

The animal darted in pursuit. But the swinging length of chain that hung from the thick collar round its neck, curled round its legs, and brought it tumbling to earth on all fours. It snarled angrily, tearing at the chain. But the moments of delay had been enough for Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. They reached a pair of tall french windows opening on to the lawn in a few more moments, and there was a crash of glass as the detective shattered it with a blow of his useless automatic.

The two leapt through into the house. And behind them, over the grass, came the gorilla!

A chink of light across the room showed them where a door stood, evidently opening on to a lighted hall beyond. They raced across to it, and Drake dragged it open. They leapt through into the hall just as the gorilla came crashing through the shattered window in pursuit of them.

Locke slammed the door upon it. They heard the crash of furniture as the animal came pounding across the room, snarling and raging. The door shook from a terrific blow.

And then a sound from behind Locke and Drake caused them to turn swiftly.

A man had appeared from a room on the other side of the hall. It was the man they had seen at the Black Swan Inn, at Wytting; the man whose name they knew to be Tallon.

There was a levelled automatic in his hand. But, as Ferrers Locke swung round, he half lowered it in a stupefied way, staring at the detective as though he had seen a ghost.

That he knew who Ferrers Locke was,

was clear. There were many men in England—and in many other corners of the world, for that matter—who knew Locke by sight well enough, even though they had never perhaps actually seen him. Locke's portrait appeared too often in the papers for the wizard detective to go unrecognised by the average crook. It was a disadvantage, but one which the criminologist was unable to prevent.

"Locke!" cried Tallon hoarsely.

It was not surprising that the scoundrel was amazed to find who the midnight visitors to the house were! He had been assured only that night that Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were both dead.

Locke nodded coolly.

"Thought I was dead, eh? Sorry to disappoint you."

With a choking curse, Tallon levelled the automatic at the detective's heart.

"Thunder!" he cried thickly. "I don't know how you got here, but you'll never leave here alive!"

Ferrers Locke laughed coolly.

"You'd better look out for your own skin, Tallon! You'll need that gun for other game. Your little pet is free, Tallon."

Even as he spoke, another deafening crash echoed through the hall, as the raging beast within the room behind Locke and Jack Drake, tore at the closed door. The panels shook, and a sudden, long, splintered slit appeared in one of them. A hairy arm was forced through, groping and clutching.

At sight of it, Tallon's jaw dropped in an odd way. His big face went as grey as putty. He gaped at the twisting, hairy arm as though he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"The ape!" he stammered. "My heavens, it's loose! It's coming—"

The next moment the door of the room behind Ferrers Locke and Jack burst open.

The gorilla came thrusting its way into the hall, glaring round with blood-shot eyes, its great arms hanging crooked at its sides. A thin, dark trickle of blood on its matted chest showed where Locke's bullet had struck.

Locke and Jack turned and raced away down the hall. Unarmed, their one hope lay in flight from the great beast. But Tallon seemed rooted to the spot, sick with terror. His jaw hung open as he stared dumbly at the hairy shape that was already swinging towards him.

His automatic spoke once. But the bullet flew past the gorilla's head and embedded itself in the wall. And the next moment the great ape was on him.

At the end of the hall Jack Drake turned as he heard the scream that came from Tallon then.

Sick with horror, the youngster saw the gorilla tearing at Tallon's struggling form like a furious child breaking up a toy. Again Tallon screamed, writhing helplessly in that colossal grip. Then his scream snapped off, and his head sagged sideways horribly. The gorilla, with a twist of its clawing hands, had found a victim.

From the top of the stairs that led down into the hall there came a sudden, breathless shout.

A man had appeared there, staring down into the hall with eyes aghast—a small, wiry figure with an olive complexion, who looked like an Italian. The ape saw him, and, dropping Tal-

lon's inert form, sprang for the stairs. For the moment it seemed to have forgotten Jack Drake and Ferrers Locke. It went leaping up the stairs, smashing the banister-rail as it went. The little, swarthy figure at the turn of the stairs, turned, with a gasping cry, and vanished, the gorilla after him, snarling horribly.

Drake leaned against the wall, dazed with horror. Tallon's end had been dreadful to watch. But Locke seized the youngster's arm.

"Quick!" he panted. "The beast will come back—"

The detective raced towards Tallon's crumpled form, and snatched up the dead man's automatic.

From somewhere above them there came a ghastly scream, that broke off short, as Tallon's had done.

"It's got that other man!" cried Jack hoarsely.

Locke was hastily examining Tallon's gun. There were still five cartridges in it. He turned towards the stairs, gazing up.

They heard the snarling of the gorilla on the landing above, heard a heavy thud, and the rattle of the beast's severed chain. A hairy arm appeared round the banisters.

"It's coming, gov'nor!" panted Jack.

The lumbering, snarling shape came into full view, glaring down at them with malevolent eyes. There was blood on its huge paws.

It stood for a moment or two at the top of the stairs, swaying slowly, showing its bared fangs. It was clear that it was hurt—Locke's first bullet had failed to kill it, but it was undoubtedly troubling the gorilla. Deliberately the detective raised his new weapon, and pressed the trigger.

The ape had prepared to spring down the stairs towards him. But the bullet took it in the head before it could make its leap. It staggered, clutching the air, and a queer whine burst from its slaving lips. Then, twisting as it fell, it toppled forwards and came crashing down the stairs. The huge form struck the banisters, and smashed through them like so much cardboard. With a deafening crash it dropped into the hall in a twisted heap. It writhed for a few moments, then slowly stiffened.

"Thank Heaven!" said Locke quietly.

A deathly silence followed.

Jack stared round. He had expected to hear shouts and running feet. But there was not a sound in the house.

Even if the little, swarthy figure they had seen on the stairs had been the same man who had shot at them from the roof, before Locke had doused the searchlight, they knew that he and Tallon had not been the sole occupants of the building.

Dr. Lash had come there with the man named Tallon, they were convinced. Yet there was no sign of him. It was as though they were alone in the house with the two dead men.

Locke turned towards Tallon's crumpled form, and covered the face. He glanced at Jack.

"We'd better explore, young 'un. If Lash is still in this house—well, I'd like to see him!"

"Surely there's someone else, too, gov'nor?" breathed Jack. "Remember that scream we heard? That must have been someone—"

Locke nodded. With the automatic held ready in his hand, he turned to

the nearest of the half-dozen doors opening into the big hall, and pushed it open. A bare, unfurnished room met his eyes as he switched on the electric light.

One after another they looked into the big rooms. All were dark and bare, with shuttered windows, until they came to the last at the far end of the hall. An exclamation broke from Ferrers Locke as he stared in.

The room was lighted—a large, comfortable room, with an expensive carpet on the floor, and handsome furniture. A long desk stood in the centre of the room with a swivel chair. On the desk stood a four-foot-long model of an express locomotive. On the walls were framed pictures of other railway engines, and opposite the desk, occupying almost the whole of one wall, was a great map of the railway systems of England and Scotland.

"My hat, gov'nor, this looks interesting!" ejaculated Jack Drake excitedly, as he stared round the room. "Whoever this room belongs to is jolly interested in railways, at any rate! These railway bandits—"

Jack's sentence went unfinished.

He and Locke had stepped well into the room by now, and it was from somewhere half-behind them that they heard a soft, unexpected sound. They both swung round, and Jack gave a gasp to see that a big square panel of the wall had slid back, revealing a black opening.

Framed in the opening was the figure of a man, staring at them in dumb astonishment. His face seemed vaguely familiar to Jack, and in a sudden flash the youngster realised why.

It was the man whose mask he had torn away when struggling with the railway bandits on the line, during the attack on the wrecked Night Scotsman. Though he had caught but a glimpse of the evil face on that occasion, Jack recognised it now without a shadow of doubt.

Already Locke's automatic was covering the man's heart.

Recovering from his dazed astonishment, the scoundrel made a movement as if to leap back into the dark opening behind him. But instantly Locke barked out a grim command.

"Stay where you are! And put up your hands!"

The man obeyed, raising his arms slowly above his head.

Locke's eyes were gleaming.

The detective understood now how it was that the other occupants of this mysterious house had failed to hear the sounds from above. He could make out now the head of a shadowy stairway leading downwards within the secret chamber revealed by the opened panel. Evidently the rest of the gang who used the building were down in some secret room under the house, in a place where sounds from above did not penetrate.

Who else was down there, he could not know. Dr. Lash, for one, it seemed certain. But Locke meant to find out!

"Make a sound and you're a dead man," he said softly. "Come out of there."

The trapped scoundrel stepped into the room. His eyes were glittering with fury and consternation. At a word from Locke, Jack Drake hastily collected a couple of ornamental cords that had held back the window curtains, and

bound the prisoner's arms behind him as he lowered them at Locke's command.

"Tie him in that chair!" snapped Locke. "And gag him!"

It was the work of a minute for Drake to carry out the instructions. The man did not dare attempt to resist. Bound and gagged, he sat glaring with bitter rage at Ferrers Locke and the youngster.

"Now to see what's going on down here," muttered Locke, turning towards the dark opening in the wall. "Quietly does it, young 'un!"

Followed by the glittering eyes of their captive, the detective and Jack Drake stepped noiselessly through the secret opening, and crept down the shadowy stairway beyond—whither?

The Harwich Express!

THE secret stairs led down to a high-vaulted passage, dimly lit by a few tiny electric light bulbs set in the stone roof. In the shadowy recesses of the walls a number of doors were set.

"Look, gov'nor!" breathed Drake, as they stood at the foot of the stairs, peering ahead. "There's someone in there, all right!"

The youngster was pointing to one of the doors near them. A light was streaming out from beneath it into the dim light of the passage.

Locke nodded, and stole silently towards it, Jack at his heels.

A big, old-fashioned keyhole was set in the heavy, arched door. Locke stooped, peering into the lighted room beyond.

(Continued on next page.)

"Fine Score that!"

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A large stone chamber met his gaze, with long tables crossing the floor.

A man was at work within Locke's range of vision. It was an elderly man in a skull-cap, with bowed shoulders, and eyes deep-set under an astonishingly high forehead. He was stooping over a complicated apparatus, his long fingers working busily.

A movement from somewhere in the laboratory told Locke that the man in the black skull-cap was not alone.

He drew back from the keyhole, and Jack Drake peered in, with excitedly gleaming eyes.

That they had discovered the place where the railway bandits manufactured their mysterious apparatus, with which they seemed able to stop trains at will, the youngster felt convinced. He straightened himself, and turned an excited face to Ferrers Locke.

He was about to whisper eagerly to the detective. But Locke suddenly held up his hand to silence him, the Baker Street detective listening, with turned head.

From one of the rooms farther along the passage, the faint sound of voices could be heard, muffled by a closed door.

Locke beckoned to his boy assistant, and they stole on down the passage towards the sound, halting outside the deeply recessed doorway from which the voices seemed to come.

They could hear them plainly as they crouched in the shadows with straining ears. A voice which they recognised as that of Dr. Lash was speaking.

"The bullion arrives at Plymouth on the Sylvania. She's supposed to dock at five in the afternoon. The gold will be sent off to London straight away on a special bullion train. There will be police on the train, of course, but that won't worry us."

"Where do we stop the train?"

It was another voice speaking now.

"Here!" came the answer, as if Dr. Lash were pointing to a map. "That stretch of line is lonely enough, in the heart of Exmoor. There'll be two million pounds' worth of gold on that bullion train, my friends. And it is going to be ours!"

Again they heard his gleeful cackle of laughter.

"That's settled then!" his voice went on.

There was a pause as he apparently glanced at a clock or watch.

"I wonder how Schlee is getting on to-night? In less than an hour now they're due to bring off the hold-up of that train outside Harwich. I'm anxious to get Schlee's report about that."

"There's no danger, is there?" asked one of the other occupants of the room.

"No danger!" answered Lash. "But I've had information, as you know, that those Dutch diamond merchants will be on board with hundreds of thousands' worth of uncut jewels. That's why I planned to attack that train."

"Moon did well to get that old machine working again in time for to-night!" came another voice. "I thought to-night's hold-up would be impossible when that machine at the tower was blown up—"

"And Ferrers Locke with it!" cackled Lash. "Oh, that was good work! Locke would have been a dangerous man to fight. But he's out of the way now, and that young whelp, his assistant! I thought, too, at first, that to-night's business would have to be given up," he added purringly. "But Moon worked well!"

"Who the dickens is this chap Moon?" wondered Jack to himself.

He remembered that Moon was the name scrawled on the scrap of paper they had found in the tower where they had been face to face with Lash—the man who thought them dead.

Locke's hand grasped the youngster's shoulder, drawing him from the door, hurrying him back towards the stairs.

"By Jove, Jack, we've learnt something!" whispered the detective as they stole noiselessly towards the twisting staircase. "That was a conference of the chief of the railway bandits—no doubt about it! We've learnt all about their next two big coups! The looting of that bullion train that's carrying the gold to London from the liner Sylvania next week, when the ship arrives at Plymouth from France—and to-night's attack on the London-Harwich train! In less than an hour, Jack—"

"What on earth can we do about it, gov'nor?" gasped Jack. "Less than an hour! Isn't it too late for us to do anything?"

"Rather not!" snapped Ferrers Locke. "We've got that aeroplane! We can travel fast in that! Come on!"

(Ferrers Locke has certainly gleaned some useful information. Will he succeed in bringing the villainous train-bandits to book? Look out for a feast of thrills next week, chums!)

BLUFFING THE BEAKS!

(Continued from page 25.)

for cutting class and breaking detention, Smithy! That's steep!"

"There were other items in the jolly old indictment!" yawned the Bounder. "I had to fake a telegram to get off, you see—"

"Oh!"

"Merely pullin' the Head's leg to make him hop as required," explained the Bounder airily. "But the old bird, it seems, hates hoppin to suit the arrangements of a junior. He called it an unscrupulous deception."

"What do you call it yourself?" asked Johnny Bull.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "If it had only been Quelch I might have got off with a floggin'," he went on. "But pullin' the Head's majestic old leg was the limit, it seems. It seems that that jolly old leg is a very special leg, and mustn't be pulled at any price. I've gone over the limit, and the Chief Beak is fed-up with me. Quelch seems to share the feelin'. I don't believe he will shed a single tear when I go."

"When are you going?" asked Harry.

"To-morrow! That means no prep to-night—there are consolations, after all, you see! You'll want a new man in the team for the next fixture, Wharton. I dare say Bunter will offer his services."

"I say, you fellows—"

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them after brekker in the mornin'," drawled the Bounder. "While you're goin' into Form I shall be goin' on my travels. I shall take a last walk round after brekker to see the dear old familiar haunts of innocent boyhood, the ivied walls, the grey old chapel, the playing-fields where the mimic battles of boyhood were lost and won—in fact, the whole jolly pathetic bag of tricks! Now I'm going to pack."

The Bounder whistled a tune as he walked out of the Rag.

(Vernon-Smith's fairly asked for expulsion this time, hasn't he? But Greyfriars has not said good-bye to the Bounder yet! Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's fine yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.—"THE IMPOSSIBLE SCHOOLBOY!"—it's a top notcher!)

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