

Harry Wharton & Co. in Another Exciting School Adventure... "A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!"

The Magnet

2⁰⁰



NOT NICE for BUNTER!



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

A FRIEND of mine showed me a rather amusing trick last week, which I thought worth passing on to you. Here it is:

First of all, ask your chum if he can strike a safety match on the sole of his boot. If he tries to do it, he'll find it impossible, and will probably tell you that safety matches can only be struck on the box. Then, if you know the trick, you calmly proceed to strike as many matches as you like on the sole of your boot. This is the secret: First rub the striking side of a matchbox on the sole of your own boot. This will transfer some of the chemical to your sole, and thus make it possible for the match to be struck. There are only two small points to remember. The first is that your boot must be perfectly dry. The second is that you must strike the match on the exact part of the sole where you have previously rubbed the box.

In this chat of mine I have told you of many curious places in the world, but I don't think I have previously mentioned

THE STRANGEST RIVER IN THE WORLD,

which, like a number of other strange things, exists in America. To begin with, it flows both above and under the ground. Then—it takes some believing, but it's true—rocks actually float in it, while logs sink to the bottom! Ice has never been known to form on the surface, yet most part of the year it covers the bed of the river. The colour of the water in one place is bright yellow; in another place red; and in a third place light blue!

Now for the explanation of these strange things. The floating rocks are a kind of pumice clinkers, which are lighter than water. The logs which sink are from a particularly heavy tree, the wood of which is of a heavier specific gravity than water. The peculiar rocky formation at the bed of the river holds back the motion of the water, but makes the surface move faster. Freezing temperature is carried to the water below by air bubbles.

Where the river is yellow in colour, it is caused by glaciers which feed the stream; where it is red, it passes through red clay; and where it is blue, it is because there are deposits of copper quartz in the stream.

This river is called Bear Creek, and it is a tributary of the Columbia.

SOME time ago I told you of a singing lake. Now, from a Bridport reader, comes a paragraph concerning

A SINGING RIVER,

which, like the lake I told you about, is also in America. It is the Pascagoula river, in Mississippi, and no one has yet been able to account for the strange phenomena. At night-fall soft strains of weird music come from the river—not

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from any particular spot, but all along the stream. The music sounds as though it was being played on an Aeolian harp. It starts with a faint whisper, and then rises to loud strumming.

America certainly seems to have some curious rivers!

Who are

THE FASTEST RUNNERS IN THE WORLD?

That is the question which Tom Grant, of Harwich, asks me. The greatest runners who ever lived are the Mexican Indians. They think nothing of running all day, and can actually run down a wild horse. Though the horse can run faster than these Indians, it has not the same endurance, and begins to slacken after the first few miles. A man can run at 24 miles per hour, and keep the same pace much longer than the horse can. They are, therefore, able to overtake the wild horses, and capture them.

Many men have run over a hundred miles in a day, and a record is claimed by a Sonora Indian who ran from one town to another four hundred miles away, and then returned. He did the whole journey of 800 miles in five days!

There is a record of a horse having run for a hundred miles—but it dropped dead at the end of that distance!

Most of my readers who have visited London have seen those dapper blue-uniformed boys, with pill-box hats cocked at a rakish angle. One of my provincial readers asks me to tell him something about the work of

LONDON'S MESSENGER BOYS.

It is forty-five years ago since the London District Messenger Boys were started, and, although the service was started with only six boys, more than 22,000 of them have since been employed. Their job is to do anything they are told—and they certainly get some curious adventures. Some of them are employed to take small children to school, exercise dogs, and even to chase butterflies for infirm collectors who can't run themselves! One boy was engaged to buy toys for a foreign potentate, while another was sent all the way from London to Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Another boy escorted a dog to Constantinople—and the Sultan of Turkey was so pleased that he gave the boy a special decoration.

Yes, the London District Messengers certainly do see something of life!

NOW, in response to requests from various readers, here are a few more

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

The Street of Many Lamps! London has what is probably the most-lighted street in the world. Prince Consort Road,

running behind the Royal Albert Hall, has twice as many lamps as any other street of the same size in London!

No Sleep for 78 Years! An old man who lives in Trenton, U.S.A., has never slept in the whole of his life! Doctors from all parts of the world have examined him. He works during the day, and reads newspapers all night. He reads seven newspapers—and is then ready to begin his next day's work!

There are White Negroes! They were discovered in Manorengo, East Africa. They are afflicted with a peculiar tropical disease which causes a change of colour in the pigments of their skins. Other negroes shun them.

Iron can be Made to Float! An iron ball will float in mercury, the reason being that the specific gravity of iron is less than that of mercury.

GRAND NEWS, BOYS!

How does model-gliding appeal to you? I know you'll all want to try this latest of sports, and you're lucky, because there's a splendid model glider, made in wood, being offered free. It measures 14 inches from wing-tip to wing-tip, is fitted with a powerful sling motor and does all kinds of stunts exactly like an aeroplane. All you need do to get the glider is send two packet tops from Puffed Rice or Puffed Wheat—they both make topping breakfasts. Now turn to page 11 and find out exactly what to do to get your Glider—you'd better hurry though, because it's a real beauty and I'm thinking there'll be rather a rush on them.

I SUPPOSE most of you know that when a producer wants the cameraman to start taking a film, he says:

"SHOOT!"

But do you know that the latest cameras might make you skip hurriedly out of the way if you had one pointed at you and heard the order given to shoot? For it is impossible to tell these cameras apart from real weapons. Aeroplanes in various Air Forces are now being fitted with a new type of camera. To all intents and purposes these are guns, but when they shoot they only "shoot" pictures! In other words, they take photographs, and are used for observation purposes. Over in America they have gone one better. A policeman will suddenly whip out a revolver, point it at someone and press the trigger. But the victim is only "shot" in a photographic sense, for the "revolver" is a camouflaged camera, which takes a photograph of a suspected crook.

That's all for this week, chums. Now for next week's list of super attractions.

"STANDING BY SMITHY!"
By Frank Richards,

is another top-hole yarn of the chums of Greyfriars. Our famous school story author is at the top of his form, and he has certainly turned out a real top-notch for you next week. You'll enjoy every line of it—and your chums will, too, if you tell them to get a copy of the good old MAGNET. Thrills and chuckles alternate in this splendid story. Don't miss it.

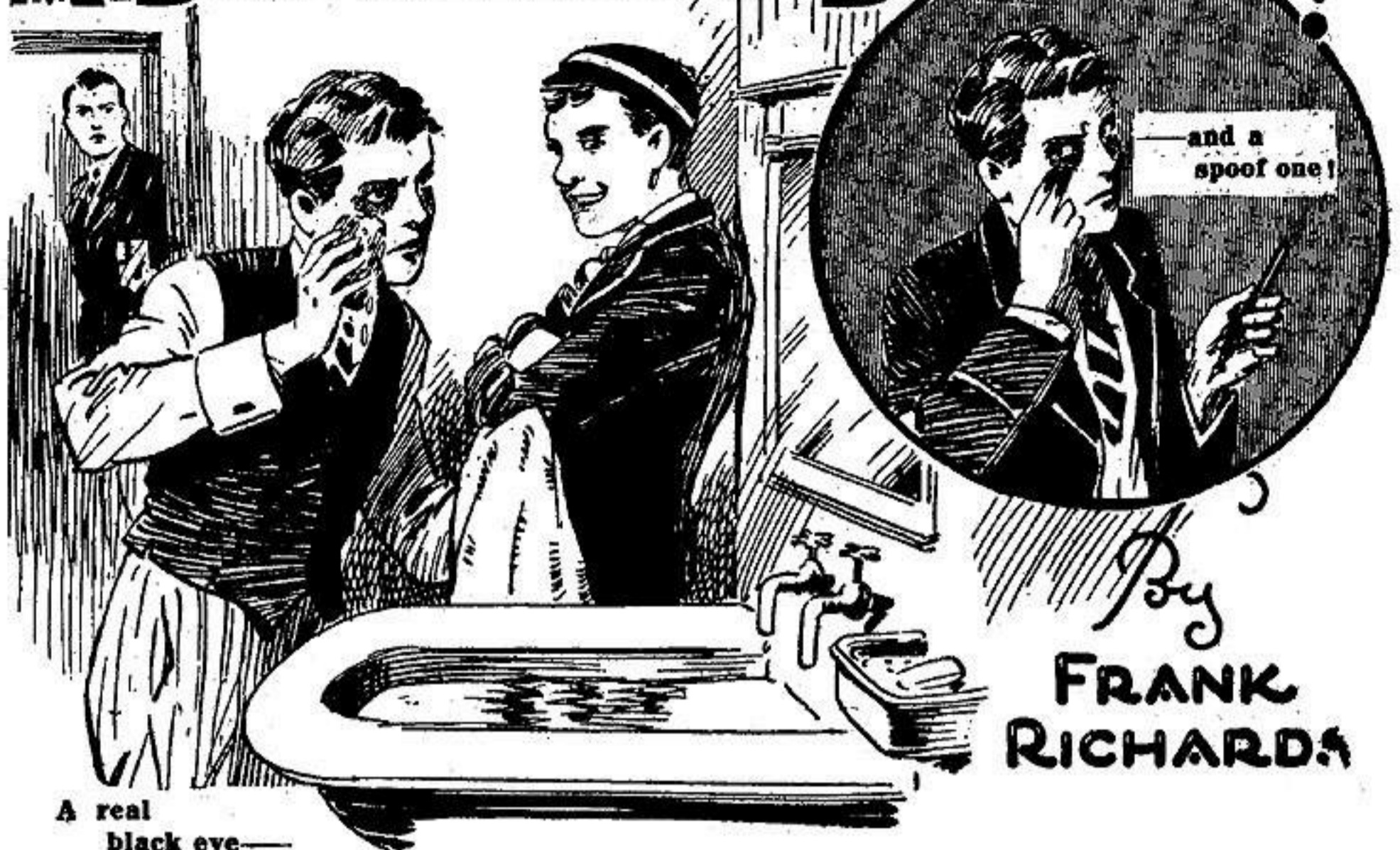
"Moose Call!" our magnificent serial, is going "great guns." Next week's chapters are packed with thrills.

The "Greyfriars Herald", another contribution by the Greyfriars Rhymester, and my own little chat complete the programme. Why not make sure of your copy of the MAGNET by going to your newsagent and ordering it in advance—that is, if you have not already done so.

All the best, chums,

YOUR EDITOR

A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!



A real black eye—

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

One in the Eye!

“CAD!”

“Eh?”

“Beast!”

“What?”

“Rotter!” roared Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton stared at the fat junior in blank surprise.

Why Billy Bunter was applying these fancy names to him, at the top of his voice, was a mystery to him.

Bunter was wrathful. That was plain! His fat face was red with wrath. His eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles. He brandished podgy fists at Wharton as he addressed him.

Wharton was standing in the doorway of Study No. 3, in the Remove, when Bunter happened.

He was speaking to Ogilvy and Russell, who were in the study. He had a letter in his hand.

That letter was from his uncle, Colonel Wharton. He had a message to pass on to his relative and “double,” Ralph Stacey.

But for that, he would certainly not have been there, for the doubles of Greyfriars barred one another. However, Wharton had to pass on the message, so he had looked into Study No. 3.

Ogilvy was telling him that Stacey had not yet come in from the cricket, when William George Bunter came rolling along from the Remove staircase. The Owl of the Remove headed directly for Study No. 3, and at the sight of Wharton in the doorway he let loose the flood of eloquence.

Which was really surprising, for Wharton was quite unconscious of having roused the ire of the fat Owl. True, he had kicked him the day before, having caught him snaffling tuck in Study No. 1. But that was twenty-four hours ago; and, besides, Bunter was used to being kicked when he was

caught at a fellow's study cupboard. That was a risk that a grub-raider had to take. It couldn't be that that stirred the deep wrath of William George Bunter. But what it was, Wharton could not begin to guess.

“Cad! Beast! Rotter!” continued Bunter. “Worm! Sneak! Outsider! Dirty tick! Yah!”

“Mad?” inquired Wharton.

“Worm!” roared Bunter.

“But what's the row?” asked the amazed Wharton.

“Toad!”

Bunter seemed to be cudgelling his

In looks, Harry Wharton and Ralph Stacey, his poor relation in the Greyfriars Remove, are as like as two peas in a pod. But the two juniors are as different in character as chalk from cheese—which is very awkward for Harry!

fat brains for a variety of uncomplimentary epithets.

Ogilvy and Russell came to the door of the study and stared at the wrathful Owl. It was quite uncommon to see Billy Bunter in such a state of infuriated excitement. Other fellows came to other doors. Peter Todd looked out of Study No. 7, Vernon-Smith out of Study No. 4, Hazeldene and Tom Brown out of Study No. 2. Bunter was getting quite an audience.

“Tick! Toad! Worm!” hooted Bunter. “I've a jolly good mind to punch you in the eye!”

Harry Wharton laughed, and backed away a step into Study No. 3. Punching,

from Bunter, was not a thing to be feared—the Owl of the Remove was no fighting man. But the fat Owl for once looked fierce and warlike, and Wharton did not want to have to damage him. So he backed away.

“What's the matter with the fat frog?” asked Ogilvy.

“Off his rocker!” suggested Russell.

Billy Bunter gave them a glare through his big spectacles.

“You shut up!” he roared. “I'm talking to that rotter—that beast—that toad—that tick—”

“But what—” gasped Wharton.

“Beast!”

“What on earth have you been doing to Bunter?” asked Smithy, from the doorway of Study No. 4.

“Nothing that I know of!” answered Harry. “Gone off his rocker, I suppose. He hadn't far to go!”

“Cad!” roared Bunter.

“Look here, you fat freak, I'm getting fed-up with this! Do you want me to bang your head on this door?” demanded Wharton.

“Greaser!” howled Bunter. “Greasy beast! Greasing up to Quelch! Yah!”

Wharton simply stared.

“Greasing” to a beak was an unpopular sort of thing at Greyfriars, as at any other school. But it was really the very last offence with which Harry Wharton could have been charged.

So far from greasing to Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, he was on the very worst of terms with Quelch that term. Quelch had turned him out of his position as head boy of the Remove, in favour of Stacey. It was fairly well known that Quelch approved of the Form “chucking” him as captain and electing Tom Brown in his place. In the Remove Form-room, Wharton was more often in trouble than even the

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Bounder, and so far from seeking to disarm Mr. Quelch by anything like greasing, he gave Quelch back all the trouble he could. So this accusation was really astonishing.

"Wandering in your mind, old fat man!" he asked, too surprised to be angry. "That is, if you've one to wander in."

"Cad!" roared Bunter, his very spectacles gleaming with rage. "You ought to be sent to Coventry by the Form! That's what you want! Greasing up to Quelch and sneaking about a fellow!"

"Sneaking!" gasped Wharton. "What do you call it, then?" bellowed Bunter. "I've had six from Quelch—six fearful whacks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came along the passage.

"You can cackle!" yelled the infuriated Owl. "I can tell you Quelch laid them on! Like beating a carpet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've got a book!" shrieked Bunter.

"A book!" exclaimed a dozen voices. A "book" was a fearful punishment. Fellows had lines often enough—a hundred, or two hundred. Only on very special and awful occasions was a fellow given a whole book to write. Any man landed with a whole book of Virgil to write out was likely to have his leisure hours taken up for quite a long time ahead.

If Bunter had a book, in addition to six on the bags, it was no wonder that Bunter was in a state of fearful excitement and wrath. Still, that did not explain why his wrath was directed towards Harry Wharton. Wharton could have had nothing to do with Quelch giving Bunter a book.

"All through that sneaking toad greasing up to Quelch, giving a man away to a beak!" raved Bunter. "Cad! Worm! Toad! Sneak! Tick! Rotter!"

"You fat chump!" roared Harry Wharton. "Chuck it! See! That's enough! If you say any more, I'll bang your silly head!"

"Beast! Rotter! Worm! Cad! Tick!"

Bunter was going strong. But Wharton had heard enough—indeed, there was hardly a fellow in the Remove who would have listened to so much without kicking Bunter from one end of the passage to the other.

He made a step out of Study No. 3, and grasped the fat Owl by the collar, with the intention of knocking his fat head on the wall, as a hint that the rest of the speech could be taken as read.

Bunter hit out. That was rather unexpected! Unprepared for a sudden punch, Wharton caught it in his right eye.

Biff!

"Ow!" gasped Wharton. He staggered back.

A punch with Billy Bunter's extensive weight behind it, was some punch! Certainly he would not have landed it had Wharton been looking for it. But Wharton had not been looking for it—and it was landed right in his eye. He staggered back, stumbled, and sat down hard and heavy in the study doorway.

Bunter blinked at him. He had knocked him down!

Knocking a fellow down was all right if the fellow stayed down. The drawback was what the fellow might do when he got up again!

Bunter realised that! Utterly scared at what he had done, the fat Owl blinked at the fallen junior for one spellbound second. Then he whirled round and ran for it.

"Ow! Oh! Ow!" Wharton clasped

a hand to his eye as he staggered up. "Oh! Ow! I'll—I'll— Stop him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removeites as Bunter flew along the passage.

"Stop him! I—I—"

Wharton staggered out into the passage, still with a hand to his eye; but Billy Bunter, to whom terror lent wings, was already going down the Remove staircase two at a time. Bunter vanished into space, and Harry Wharton was left caressing an eye which was rapidly blackening, and the other fellows yelling with laughter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Six for Smithy!

VERNON-SMITH!

"Hallo!" Smithy looked round as his name was called.

Harry Wharton, at the tap at the upper end of the Remove passage, was bathing his damaged eye.

Bunter had vanished, almost like a ghost at cock-crow; but it was the damaged eye, not Bunter, that required immediate attention. The slaying of Bunter could wait—the eye couldn't.

Wharton had a faint hope that it wasn't going to be black—but the hope was very faint! Which was fearfully disconcerting and irritating, as Colonel Wharton's letter had stated that Wharton's uncle was coming to see him at the school. Displaying a black eye to his avuncular relative was neither grateful nor comforting.

The Co. were at cricket practice, but Smithy came along to lend Wharton a hand. He drew water from the tap into a basin and found him a sponge—sympathetic, but smiling. Billy Bunter on the wild warpath was rather entertaining—to fellows who had not captured his punch in the eye! To Wharton there was nothing amusing in it.

He was going to attend to Bunter after attending to the eye—and there was no doubt that the fat Owl was going to repent him of that punch!

"What does it look like?" asked Harry, as Loder of the Sixth came up to the Remove landing and glanced along the passage.

"Behold it is black but comely!" grinned Smithy.

Then, as Loder called his name, the Bounder looked round and answered.

"Quelch wants you in his study!" snapped the prefect.

"Oh, all right!"

Smithy handed Wharton the sponge. "Not much good mopping it," he said. "You'd better ask Mrs. Kebble for a beefsteak to bung on it."

Wharton grunted. He was not disposed to wear a beefsteak on his eye if he could help it. He went on mopping it with cold water, while the Bounder went down the stairs and headed for Mr. Quelch's study.

He found the Remove-master frowning grimly.

"You sent for me, sir," murmured the Bounder meekly. He was perfectly cool, but inwardly he was wondering which of his many sins had come to the knowledge of his Form-master.

Evidently there was trouble coming—and Smithy wondered, too, whether it was due to Stacey, the new head boy of the Remove. Smithy was not on good terms with Stacey—and a head boy had a good deal of power in his hands if he chose to make himself unpleasant.

Wharton, as head boy last term, had been popular enough, treading carefully the delicate dividing line between duty

to his Form-master and loyalty to his Form. But Stacey, though so like Wharton in looks that he was often mistaken for him, was not like him in other respects. Stacey was the fellow to make his foes "sit up" if he could without being frightfully particular about the means.

Smithy at first had been on Stacey's side in the feud between the rivals of the Remove. Like the rest of the Form, he had been down on Wharton for excluding that wonderful cricketer from the Form eleven.

He had taken an active hand in helping to get Wharton turfed out of the captaincy of the Form. But he had changed over since then.

Wharton was in disgrace as a "black sheep," and Smithy knew—at least, he had no doubt—that it was Stacey who was the black sheep, cunningly contriving to land his misdeeds on his double. The Bounder rather prided himself on being a "bad hat," but trickery of that sort was far outside his limit, and now he was one of the most emphatic on Wharton's side in the feud. And he fully expected that Quelch's new head boy would give him a knock if he could. And there were many—very many—chinks in Smithy's armour.

So now, assuming his meekest and mildest expression, but alert as a cat, he waited to hear what the trouble was, Quelch's portentous frown indicating that it was something serious.

Mr. Quelch sorted over papers on his study table; apparently he was looking for one special paper.

He selected a paper, held it up to Smithy's view, and snapped:

"Is that your writing, Vernon-Smith?"

The question was rather superfluous. Quelch knew that it was Smithy's writing, or he would not have sent for Smithy. The Bounder's bold, firm hand was easily recognisable.

The paper contained a translation of a section of Suetonius, which the Remove had had in Form that afternoon.

There were fellows in the Remove, such as Billy Bunter, to whom Suetonius presented tremendous difficulties; other fellows, like Wharton, or Mark Linley, or Smithy, took it in their stride, as it were. It was not unknown for a fellow who found a task easy to lend a helping hand to a fellow who did not.

The Bounder compressed his lips.

Schoolmasters and schoolboys naturally took different views of such matters. The schoolmaster's point of view was undoubtedly right, but the schoolboy's could not be considered wholly wrong, at least by the boys themselves.

Certain it was that if a fellow like Bunter copied a paper lent him by a cleverer-fellow he was not likely to learn much—and it was a Form-master's business to see that he did learn.

On the other hand, there was something good-natured in helping a lame dog over a stile; and quite a lot of fellows regarded the tongue of Cicero and Horace as "tosh" that they had to cram in somehow, much against the grain.

Smithy had scribbled that paper and passed it along the desks from a variety of motives.

It was partly good-nature; partly, perhaps, a desire to show off his cleverness; and partly, it was certain, a desire to score off Quelch under that gentleman's nose.

Quelch's gimlet-eye missed little that went on in his Form-room. It was risky to play tricks under that gimlet-eye. And the risk appealed to the reckless Bounder. It showed the other fellows what a devil of a fellow he was.

But that surreptitious aid to knowledge was not expected to meet official eyes. How it had got into Quelch's hands was a mystery.

Still, there it was, and the Bounder was spotted!

What howling ass of a fellow could have let that paper hang about to be found? That benighted idiot Bunter, of course! That was the kind of idiot he was! Several fellows in the Remove had benefited from that paper passed along the desks—Skinner, who was lazy, Snoop, who was obtuse, and Bunter, who was lazier and more obtuse than both of them put together. That ass Bunter—

"That is my writing, sir," said Vernon-Smith calmly.

At the end of the hour the Remove

"Do you deny that you passed it to another boy to copy?"

The Bounder was silent. He had, unfortunately, very little scruple in dealing with a beak, but he realised that Quelch knew.

"Bunter's translation is word for word the same as this, which you call a rough draft," said Mr. Quelch. "Even two or three mistakes, which you have evidently introduced by intention, as they do not occur in your own paper, have been reproduced by Bunter."

The Bounder suppressed a grin. A paper copied by Bunter had to have a few errors in it, or it would certainly have excited suspicion.

"But for Bunter's carelessness," continued Mr. Quelch, "I should never have

he was not supposed to give a fellow away to a beak. Wharton, as head boy, would have got rid of that paper and told the Bounder afterwards not to play such tricks again in the Form-room. That would have been all right! Stacey preferred to let Quelch get hold of the crib.

"Have you anything to say, Vernon-Smith?" Quelch's sharp voice interrupted the Bounder's angry reflections.

"Nothing, sir!" said Smithy. "I helped Bunter because he would have been bottled. That's all!"

"I have already dealt with Bunter," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I have caned Bunter severely and given him a book. I shall deal with you in precisely the same way, Vernon-Smith."

"Very well, sir!"



Harry Wharton grasped Billy Bunter, with the intention of knocking his fat head on the wall. Before he could do so, however, the Owl of the Remove hit out. Unprepared for the sudden punch, Wharton caught it in his right eye. Biff! "Ow!" he gasped, staggering backwards.

papers had been collected by the head boy. But that scribbled sheet ought to have found a safe resting-place in the pocket of the fellow who had used it last. Evidently it hadn't. Had that fathead Bunter left it on his desk? Could Quelch prove that it had been passed along the Form at all? Smithy wondered.

"You wrote out this paper, Vernon-Smith, to assist another boy to deceive his Form-master by pretending that he had done work which he had not done!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured the Bounder. Quelch, of course, would put it like that!

"Your own paper, Vernon-Smith, was quite good."

"Thank you, sir," said Smithy demurely.

"Apparently you had time in the hour to write the paper twice."

"The fact is, sir, that's a rough draft," said the Bounder calmly. "I knocked that off, and then did my paper."

known of this. This paper was collected with the other papers, Vernon-Smith—Bunter having forgotten to conceal it, as no doubt you intended him to do."

The Bounder breathed hard.

That put the lid on!

That unspeakable idiot, Bunter, having copied out the "aid to knowledge," had not had sense enough to shove it in his pocket, but had left it to be collected with his own paper by the head boy when he came round.

Stacey had gathered it in with the rest.

Had he noticed it?

Of course he had!

And instead of keeping it dark, he had passed it on to Quelch with the other papers—to astonish that gentleman when he went through the pile in his study after class.

Smithy gritted his teeth.

He owed this to Stacey!

A head boy, certainly, was not supposed to connive at "cribbing," but

There was nothing to be said. Smithy had broken a strict rule—and a necessary and salutary rule. He had to take what was coming to him.

He took it quietly.

Bunter, when he had taken his six, had roused all the echoes of Masters' Passage! Vernon-Smith did not utter a sound—though every stroke in the six was a swipe!

His face was a little pale after the infliction, and his lips hard set. But the Bounder was tough. Not a murmur came from him.

"I shall expect the book next Saturday, Vernon-Smith!" said the Remove master. "You may go."

Vernon-Smith went.

He breathed hard as he went.

He was not resentful towards Quelch. Quelch had done his duty—the Bounder knew that well enough! But Stacey—the head boy of the Remove was going to pay for this if Herbert Vernon-Smith could make him!

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Whose Eye?

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
 "Put it on!"
 "Go it, Bunter!"
 "Put it on fully, my esteemed fat Bunter!"

The Co. were coming away from the cricket when they sighted Bunter. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh and Johnny Bull greeted him all at once, laughing as they did so. It was uncommon to see Billy Bunter, who generally resembled the tortoise, understudying the hare.

Bunter was going strong. His fat face was red and perspiring. His hair was ruffled. His spectacles had slid, unheeded, down his fat little nose. He ran as if he fancied that he was up for the school hundred yards! He burst out of the House like a pip from an orange, and flew.

Obviously Bunter could not be doing this for exercise. He needed, but did not like, exercise.

Only a fierce pursuit could account for the amazing speed that Bunter was putting on.

But, looking past him as he flew towards them, the chums of the Remove could see no sign of pursuit.

They expected to see Coker of the Fifth, or Bolsover major, or some other heavy-handed fellow in chase. But there was nobody.

The guilty flee when no man pursueth! So, it seemed, it was with Bunter. Anyhow, he was fleeing in desperate haste. He panted, he puffed, he gasped, and he flew.

"Hold on, fatty!" roared Bob Cherry. "You'll burst at this rate!"

"The burstfulness will be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Urrgh!" gasped Bunter. He was winded. He came to a stop as he recognised the famous Co. "I say, you fellows—gurrgh!"

"Coker after you?" asked Bob, laughing. "Have you been pinching a cake from Coker's study again?"

"Urrgh! No! Wurrgh!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, stand by me! You're not afraid of that cad Stacey."

"Not a lot!" assented Bob. "But what—"

"You haven't been rowing with Stacey?" asked Frank Nugent, in astonishment. The chums of the Remove had just left Stacey at junior nets, where he had been for some time past—ever since class, in fact. And the fleeing Owl had just emerged from the House. Whoever might, or might not, be after him, it certainly could not be Stacey.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bunter. The toad—the cur—the rotter—"

"What has Stacey done?" asked Johnny Bull, in wonder.

"The beast! The sneak! The worm!" gasped Bunter.

"But what—"

"I say, you fellows, keep him off! I say, you stick to a pal, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not afraid of him, of course—"

"No, you look as if you're not afraid!" said Bob Cherry gravely. "Bursting with pluck, as usual! You look it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Bunter blinked round anxiously. "I say, is he coming?"

"Nowhere near!" said Bob reassuringly. "Not even in sight! Stacey's not after you, old fat bean—not in the offing at all."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I hit him in the eye—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Knocked him down—"

"Great pip!"

"I fancy he'll have a black eye—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I—I—I wasn't running away from him, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not afraid of the cad! But—but—"

"Is that fat idiot dreaming, or what?" asked Johnny Bull, in amazement.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

The four juniors gazed at Bunter in utter wonder. They could not begin to make head or tail of his extraordinary statements.

"When did you hit Stacey in the eye?" demanded Bob.

"A few minutes ago—"

"Mad!" said Johnny Bull.

Really it looked like it! Bunter was evidently in earnest. But as the juniors had left Stacey at the cricket nets only a few minutes ago, it was certain that his statement was unfounded. Whomsoever he had hit in the eye, it was not Stacey.

"The rotter sneaked to Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "You know that foul translation we had to do in class this afternoon—"

"It didn't worry you much," said Nugent. "I saw you copying out a paper some fellow passed along. Lucky for you Quelch didn't spot it."

"You see, I left Smithy's tip on my desk," gasped Bunter. "When Stacey came round for the paper he collected it with my translation."

"You blithering idiot!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, he wouldn't give it to Quelch," said Bob. "That would be rather thick."

"But he did!" howled Bunter. "The beast passed it on along with all the papers, and Quelch found it among them and sent for me."

"Phew!"

"He made out that I had copied the tip, because my paper was word for word with it, you know—"

"So you did copy it, you fat slacker."

"Beast! Made out that I was cribbing, you know—"

"Well, it was cribbing."

"Yah! He gave me six and a book!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob.

"Poor old Smithy, too!" said Frank Nugent. "If Quelch has got hold of that tip, he will know Smithy's fist. It means a fearful row for Smithy."

"You fat ass!" said Johnny Bull. "You've got Smithy into a row with your fatheadedness."

"Eh! Oh! Yes, I suppose so! Bunter, evidently, had not thought, so far, about the probable result to the Bounder. "Yes, it's rotten for Smithy, too. I dare say he will get it hot! I hope he will take it out of that cur Stacey. Giving a man away to a beak, you know—the sneak, the toad, the cur, the rat, the rotter— Well, I've jolly well punched him in the eye. I hope he'll have a black eye! I say, you fellows, you're sure he isn't coming?" Bunter blinked round anxiously. "He looked fearfully wild when I knocked him down—"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Johnny Bull. "You never knocked Stacey down, you fat duffer!"

"Didn't I?" gasped Bunter. "I can tell you I jolly well did! Hit him right

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in the eye and knocked him in his study."

"When?" shrieked Bob.

"Not ten minutes ago. You see, I was wild after Quelch had whopped me and given me a book!" gasped the fat Owl. "As soon as I got away from Quelch I went straight up to Stacey's study—"

"But he wasn't in his study!"

"He was! He was there with Ogilvy and Russell!"

"He wasn't!" howled Bob. "He was at the cricket—"

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "How could I have hit him in the eye if he wasn't there?"

"You didn't—"

"I tell you I did!" raved Bunter. "I hit him right in the eye and knocked him down in his own study. I—I didn't stop to see him get up."

"My only hat!" said Bob blankly. "The fat chump seems to believe that he has hit somebody in the eye!"

"Stacey—"

"You benighted bandersnatch, Stacey's at the nets!" roared Bob. "We've only just left him there."

"Rot! He was in his study—"

"Holy smoke!" gasped Nugent. "Can that blithering idiot have taken Wharton for Stacey?"

"You silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "Wharton wouldn't be in Stacey's study, would he? He bars Stacey, and never goes to his study."

"Well, no, but—"

"It was Stacey!"

"It wasn't!"

"It was!" yelled Bunter. "I tell you, I went straight up to his study, and found him there with Ogilvy and Russell, and—"

The chums of the Remove gazed at Bunter.

Wharton and Stacey had been mistaken for one another more than once. The short-sighted Owl of the Remove was more likely to make such a mistake than anyone else. Certainly, if he had found Wharton in Stacey's study—a room he never entered—there was some excuse for the error. Nobody in the Remove would have expected to find Harry Wharton in Study No. 3.

Yet it certainly was not Stacey whom Bunter had punched in the eye, if he had punched anybody.

"Oh, come on!" gasped Bob. "Let's go in and see what that dangerous maniac has been up to, anyhow."

"I say, you fellows—"

But the Co. did not heed Bunter further. They ran for the House, anxious to know what had happened. If one of the "doubles" of the Remove had been punched in the eye, it was not Stacey.

They raced up the Remove staircase.

They burst into Study No. 1.

There they gazed at what met their eyes—and gasped!

Harry Wharton, seated at the study table, was bending over a bowl of water, bathing a black eye!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter All Over!

RALPH STACEY strolled into the school shop.

The new fellow in the Remove looked very handsome and fit in his flannels, with a flush in his cheeks after practice at the nets. Two or three Remove fellows came in with him—Squiff and Newland and Wibley. Stacey was popular in his Form—more popular than ever since the day he had played cricket for the First Eleven and helped Greyfriars to beat Highcliffe First.

Fellows liked to be seen with the wonderful cricketer, who, though in the Lower Fourth, could play the heads off many in the Fifth and Sixth. Squiff had suggested ginger-pop after the practice, and they came into the school shop for the same, and as they came in there was a startled squeak.

Billy Bunter was there!

Bunter had found Lord Mauleverer in the school shop. His lordship was slowly travelling through an ice. Bunter was travelling fast through several, at his lordship's expense.

Bunter's chief object at the present moment was to keep out of the way of the fellow he had punched in the eye!

As he sat eating ices, he kept his eyes and his spectacles on the door. If his hapless victim looked in, the fat Owl was prepared to dodge.

Bunter was still under the impression that it was Stacey whom he had punched in the eye. Had he not gone direct to Stacey's study to find him, and found him there?

Naturally it never occurred to his fat brain that Wharton, for once and for a special reason, had entered the study which he was never known to enter. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that the resemblance between the Greyfriars "doubles" had caused Bunter to make a mistake—to "slang" Wharton instead of Stacey, and finally to land that unlucky punch in his eye. So far, Bunter had no idea that a mistake had occurred—it was no use the Co. telling him he hadn't punched Stacey, when he knew he had!

At the sight of Quelch's head boy coming into the tuckshop, Bunter jumped, with a startled squeak. Whether it was Wharton or Stacey he did not know for a moment. In flannels they looked even more alike than in their school clothes.

But the fat Owl was relieved the next moment.

There was no sign of damage on the face of the newcomer. And the fellow Bunter had punched in the eye must, he knew, be damaged. His belief was that he had blacked that eye! Blacked or not, it was certain that there was damage done! This fellow was not damaged. So Bunter concluded that it was Wharton!

Stacey and his friends glanced at him as he half rose—and then sat down again, relieved. So did Lord Mauleverer.

"Anythin' the matter, old fat top?" yawned Mauly.

"No—all right!" said Bunter. "I thought for a minute it might be that beast Stacey coming in."

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. And five or six fellows in the school shop chuckled.

Like as the doubles of the Remove were to one another, and often as mistakes had been made for that reason, most of the Remove fellows picked them out easily enough. Indeed, so did Bunter, as a rule; but in taking Wharton for Stacey that afternoon he had been misled by seeing him in Stacey's study—and now, taking Stacey for Wharton, he was equally misled by his belief that Stacey had a damaged eye! Stacey laughed.

"You fat owl!" he remarked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fellows in the tuckshop. As Stacey was hardly six feet from Bunter, it was entertaining to see even the short-sighted Owl of the Remove mistaking his identity.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter, puzzled. "I say, Wharton, old chap—"

"That's Stacey, old fat bean!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Mauly!" said Bunter peevishly. "Think you can pull my leg like that?"

"Oh gad!" said Mauly.

"I say, Wharton," went on Bunter, blinking at Stacey through his big spectacles—"I say, old fellow, you never finished thrashing that cad Stacey, owing to old Quelch barging in that time. I say, I wish you'd jolly well thrash the sneaking worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. Stacey himself laughed.

"Oh, shut up cackling!" howled Bunter. "'Tain't a laughing matter, I can tell you. That cur Stacey's got me six from Quelch and a book! I shouldn't wonder if Smithy gets the same, owing to that sneaking worm Stacey!"

"You fat idiot!" said Stacey.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I'm not Wharton, you blithering fathead! And if you want me to slip that ice down the back of your neck, you've only to go on calling me names!" growled Stacey.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you I'm not Wharton!" exclaimed Harry Wharton's double angrily. "Shut up!"

"Blessed if I see why you're trying to pull my leg, Wharton," said the fat Owl of the Remove. "I know you're Wharton, of course, because I dotted Stacey in the eye, and your eye's all right."

Stacey jumped.

"You whatted?" he gasped.

"Well, look what the rotter did!" said Bunter warmly. "I left Smithy's tip on Suetonius on my desk, and that cur Stacey collected it with the papers and passed it on to Quelch. You'd never have played a dirty trick like that, Wharton, when you were head boy."

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

Stacey coloured a little.

He was not, perhaps, quite satisfied with himself for that action, though he had not been able to resist the temptation to land the Bounder into trouble with Quelch. Towards Bunter he was utterly indifferent; certainly he had not done it on Bunter's account.

"I don't know what you're driving at, you fat duffer," said Stacey, as many eyes turned on him, some in surprise, some in disapproval.

"Smithy passed me a paper to copy in class, and I forgot to get it out of sight. That worm Stacey collected it along with my paper," explained Bunter. "I've been up before Quelch for it."

"Dash it all old man—" began Squiff.

"If there was another paper on Bunter's desk I never noticed it," said Stacey. "I don't count the Form papers."

"Not you—Stacey," said Bunter.

"It was Stacey—"

"Idiot!"

"It was that cur—that worm—that toad—that rank outsider—Stacey, old chap!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I jolly well punched him in the eye for it!" went on the fat Owl. "I went up to his study and told him what I thought of it, and hit him in the eye—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I—I say, Wharton, if the brute gets after me, I expect you as a pal to stand by me, you know!" said Bunter, blinking anxiously at THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,430.

Stacey. "You don't like that sneaking cur Stacey any more than I do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"That sneaking, wormish, crawling toad—" went on Bunter.

He was interrupted.

Stacey made a stride towards him and grabbed him by the collar. Bunter's fifth ice was before him—he was about to begin on it. But the fat Owl never began on that ice! Stacey grabbed it up with his left hand:

"Here, I say, Wharton—" howled Bunter.

Stacey, with a black brow, dropped the ice down the inside of Bunter's collar. There was a fearful howl from Bunter as it slid down his back.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrgh! Oh crikey! Wharton, you beast—you're a worse beast than that beast Stacey—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woor-roooogh! Urrgh!"

Bunter wriggled horribly, with the clammy ice sliding down his back.

Stacey slammed him back into his seat, and walked out of the tuck-shop. He left Bunter squealing, and the rest of the fellows roaring.

"Ow! Wow! Groogh!" gurgled Bunter. "Oh, the beast! The awful rotter! I'm all clammy down the back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—Ow! I say, what did Wharton pitch into me for?" gasped Bunter. "He doesn't mind a fellow calling Stacey names—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass!" roared Squiff. "It wasn't Wharton—it was Stacey."

"Groogh! How could it be Stacey when he hasn't a black eye—and I gave Stacey a black eye—Ooogh!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "You pernicious porpoise! What on earth have you been doin'? That was Stacey—"

"Rot!"

"Honest Injun, old fat man!" said Mauly.

Bunter blinked at him. "Honest Injun" from Mauly meant that it was so. And the howls of merriment from every fellow in the school shop had an enlightening effect on Billy Bunter. It began to dawn upon his fat brain that there was a mistake somewhere.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "If—if that was Stacey—"

"It was, ass!"

"Then—then whose eye have I blacked?" gasped Bunter.

There was a yell of merriment. That question did not really need an answer. There was only one fellow at Greyfriars who could have been mistaken for Stacey!

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, d-d-do you think I—I've given Wharton a black eye?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

There was a rush from the tuck-shop. Every fellow wanted to see Wharton—especially his eye! Billy Bunter blinked after them as they went in horror and dismay.

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter.

That was all he could say.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Wants to Know!

THE Remove roared over it. All Greyfriars School chuckled over it.

Skinner declared that it was the jest of the term; and most fellows agreed with Skinner that it was so.

When the next day Harry Wharton was seen with a black eye, that black eye was the cynosure of all other eyes!

Even the Co could not help smiling. The thing was so absurd, so ridiculous, that it struck everybody as excessively comic—except, naturally, Wharton himself.

The possessor of the black eye did not see the joke!

But Wharton was about the only fellow at Greyfriars who didn't!

His resemblance to his "double" had caused all sorts of mistakes since Stacey had come to Greyfriars that term. On the first night of the term Coker of the Fifth had mistaken the new boy for Wharton, and whopped him.

On another occasion Pon & Co., of Highcliffe, had made the same mistake and ragged him. Such mistakes had caused merriment—but this was the limit!

More serious mistakes had been made, too—as when Stacey had been spotted out of bounds and had contrived to prove an "alibi," with the inevitable result that it was believed that it was Wharton who was the black sheep in the Remove flock.

All through that troubled term Harry Wharton had been in the wars, in one way or another, owing to that unfortunate resemblance between him and his relative.

But this put the lid on!

Why Billy Bunter had slanged him, called him a long list of fancy names, and accused him of "greasing," Wharton did not know—or care! But a fellow had to care when he was landed with a black eye!

The wretched Owl was sorry enough for the mistake—when he learned that he had made it! But that did not cure the eye!

Thrashing Bunter would not have cured it, either; and Wharton refrained from giving the fat Owl what he deserved, in view of the mistake! Bunter, indeed, had reason to be glad that he had blacked the wrong fellow's eye! Stacey, it was certain, would not have let him off lightly.

Stacey found the incident extremely amusing. But he was not alone in that—every other fellow found it amusing.

Greyfriars fellows were not supposed to be adorned with black eyes. In the Form-room, in the morning, Wharton was called to account by Mr. Quelch.

"You have been fighting, Wharton!" said the Remove-master, with a grim look at the junior, who, last term, had been his trusted head boy.

His look and tone implied that nothing from Wharton surprised him this term. He was down on the supposed black sheep with a heavy down.

"No, sir," answered Harry quietly.

"Your eye is discoloured, Wharton!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"Yet you tell me that you have not been fighting!"

"No, sir!"

"Then what has caused this disgraceful disfigurement, Wharton?"

"An accident, sir."

Mr. Quelch's lip curled.

"You will explain the nature of the accident, Wharton, which has caused you to look a disgrace to the Form!" he said acidly.

"A fellow knocked me in the eye by mistake, sir."

Mr. Quelch glanced over the Form. The Remove sat silent; but there were half-suppressed grins on most faces. Only Bunter did not grin. He was afraid of being spotted as the author of that black eye.

The Remove master pursed his lips. In the case of almost any other fellow he would have let the matter drop at that point. But his feelings towards Wharton were very acid these days.

"I fail to understand you, Wharton!" he rapped. "I hope that you are telling me the truth."

"You know I am, sir!" answered Wharton coolly.

That answer brought anxious looks to the faces of his friends.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered.

"No impertinence, Wharton! Last term I should have taken your word without question; this term I am sorry to say that I can do nothing of the kind. If you have not been fighting—"

"I have said that I have not!" answered Wharton sullenly. "A fellow knocked me in the eye by mistake!"

"His name?"

Wharton did not answer. Thunder gathered in Mr. Quelch's brow. Peter Todd gave Bunter a nudge.

"Wharton," thundered Mr. Quelch, "unless you give me the boy's name immediately, I shall conclude that you have been fighting, and that you have answered me untruthfully."

Wharton said no word.

"If you please, sir!" Tom Brown, the new captain of the Remove, spoke up. "A lot of us saw it happen, and it's just as Wharton says."

"You need not speak, Brown!"

"Oh! Very well, sir!"

"Wharton—"

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Billy Bunter, suddenly interrupting his Form-master. Toddy, having nudged him in vain, as a hint that it was time to speak, proceeded to pinch him. It was a rather severe pinch, and, though Bunter did not speak, he roared.

Quelch's gimlet-eye gleamed round at him.

"Bunter! How dare you! What—"

"Ow! Leave off pinching me, you beast!" yelled Bunter.

"What!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter—"

"Ow! I—I mean—it—it wasn't me!" howled Bunter. "I didn't, sir—I mean I wasn't—that is, I never—"

"What do you mean, Bunter?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! Nothing, sir! Wow! If you pinch me again, Toddy, you beast—wow! I mean, it was quite an accident, sir! I never meant to black Wharton's eye—"

Mr. Quelch jumped in his astonishment.

"What! It was you, Bunter!" he exclaimed. "It was you gave Wharton that discoloured eye, Bunter!"

"Oh! No! I mean yes, sir! That is, certainly not!" gasped Bunter. "I mean I took him for another chap, sir! It was all a mistake! I mean to say, I—I never did it at all! Never touched him! Did I, Harry, old chap!"



"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Billy Bunter, as Todd proceeded to pinch his fat leg. "It was quite an accident, sir! I never meant to black Wharton's eye——" "What!" gasped Mr. Quelch, in astonishment. "You gave Wharton that discoloured eye?" "Oh, n-no!" stammered Bunter. "I mean, yes! I mean to say, I—I never did it at all!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove. "Bunter," hooted Mr. Quelch, "am I to understand that you struck Wharton——?"

"Oh! No, sir! I—I punched him——" stammered Bunter, "I—I—oh lor! It—it was all a mistake—— Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch glanced at Stacey! He understood.

"You utterly absurd boy, Bunter! You struck one boy in mistake for another——"

"You see, sir, they're so much alike," groaned Bunter, "and the silly ass was in the other beast's study, and how was a fellow to know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it was all Wharton's fault really, sir—he might have known that I took him for Stacey when I called him a cad and a sneak and a worm and a toad," gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir! I say, sir——"

Quelch glared at Bunter. Then he stared at Wharton's black eye! Then to Billy Bunter's infinite relief, his grim, stern face relaxed.

The Remove master did not smile! But the relaxation of his stern visage almost amounted to a smile.

Even Henry Samuel Quelch seemed to see a comic side in Bunter's extraordinary mistake, and in one fellow getting a decorated eye that was intended for another fellow.

"Very well!" he said at last. "As the matter appears to have been accidental, Wharton, I shall say no more about it."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wharton sarcastically.

"But you will realise, Wharton,

that with your eye in that shocking state, you cannot be allowed to go out of gates! You will remain within gates until your eye presents a normal appearance."

Wharton made no reply to that. It was rather hard to be "gated" because an obtuse fathhead had bunged him in the eye in mistake for another fellow. But he certainly did not want to take that eye out of gates for the entertainment of the general population. It was causing quite enough amusement within gates!

The matter was dropped, much to Bunter's relief. But when the Remove went out in break, it seemed to Wharton that all the school came along to look at his black eye. He was almost glad to get back into the Form-room again for third school.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

STACEY smiled.

Harry Wharton frowned. Another day had passed, and the decorative eye was as conspicuous as ever—indeed rather more so as it was changing colour a little, and the black was shot with shades of green and purple.

No fellow liked to look like a battered prizefighter. And a bruised eye was painful and uncomfortable, too. As a jest, the affair had died a natural death by that time; the fellows were used to Wharton's black eye. Stacey, however, smiled as he glanced at it, perhaps because he knew that a smile would have an irritating effect.

He was in his study when Wharton

looked in after class. Wharton frowned and compressed his lips, but otherwise took no notice of the smile. He had not come to Study No. 3 to row with Stacey.

But never had he disliked the fellow more.

After the day when Stacey had played for the First Eleven, and glorified his Form by playing a great game with the big men of the Fifth and Sixth, Wharton had felt his hostility relax, and had even wondered whether it would be possible to make friends with Stacey—as his uncle keenly desired him to do.

He had made it a point to be civil to the fellow, and Stacey, on his side, had been civil also, and for a few days it had lasted.

But it was scarcely possible to avoid bitterness. Wharton was in disgrace in his Form because he was supposed to have done things that his double had done—and it was clear that Stacey had not the slightest intention of making any move to set that matter right.

Now came the affair of the black eye!

Certainly, Stacey was not responsible for Bunter's idiotic blundering. But it was his action that had caused the fat and fatuous Owl to go on the war-path. And there was Smithy, too! Smithy had a "book" to write, and he had had a whopping. Wharton was not particularly pally with the Bounder, but he felt that he had had hard measure. He had no doubt, in fact, that Stacey had jumped at the chance of paying off an old score against Smithy, taking advantage of his posi-

tion as head boy to do so. How could one be friendly with such a fellow?

"Want anything?" asked Stacey with a yawn. He smiled again. "You're not safe in this study, if Bunter goes on the war-path again. Rather lucky that you dropped in the other day, wasn't it?"

"Lucky!" repeated Wharton.

"Well, I might have had that eye!" said Stacey, laughing. "I'd rather you had it! By the way, what did you come in that time for? I've wondered."

"For the same reason that I've come now!" answered Harry curtly. "I came to tell you something in a letter I had from my uncle on Monday."

"Anything concerning me?"

"Naturally, or I shouldn't come to tell you."

"Then I think you needn't have left it till Wednesday to tell me."

"I came here on Monday afternoon, and then that fool Bunter—"

"And you've been feeling sore ever since?" grinned Stacey. "Hardly my fault that you bagged that eye, was it?"

"We needn't go into that!" said Wharton dryly. "I shouldn't have come here now, if I could have helped it."

"I know that!" answered Stacey coolly. "But if you've got any messages for me from the old bean, cough it up, and you can clear as soon as you like."

"From whom?"

"The old bean!" said Stacey. "The jolly old fossil, if you like that better."

Wharton breathed hard. Stacey's manner of referring to Colonel Wharton was carelessly disrespectful. It was the old Colonel who had taken him off the hands of his shiftless, impecunious father and sent him to Greyfriars. But gratitude did not seem to be strongly developed in Ralph Stacey. He looked on the old Colonel as a stuffy old fossil, and did not think of concealing his opinion from the Colonel's nephew.

"My uncle's coming to Greyfriars!" said Harry abruptly.

"What a bore!" sighed Stacey.

"You needn't see him unless you choose!" said Harry sarcastically. "He seems to think that you'd like to see him, but there's nothing to prevent you from telling him the truth, if you like."

Stacey laughed.

"Likely—when he's paying my fees here, and I've nowhere but Wharton Lodge to go for the holidays!" he said. "If he's coming, I've got to see him, I suppose. He told you to tell me?"

"Yes."

"Well, when is the calamity happening?" yawned Stacey. "It's one of the things a fellow has to stand. I shall have to give him some soft sawder in return for what he does for me; he expects that, and I suppose he has a right to it. When is he coming?"

"This afternoon, as it's a half-holiday."

Stacey started.

"This afternoon! Look here, why the dickens couldn't you tell me before?" he exclaimed irritably. "I've got something on this afternoon."

"If it's cricket, my uncle will be glad enough to see you at it—he's jolly keen on it—"

"It's not cricket!" snapped Stacey. "I was going out!"

Wharton's lip curled with contempt.

"The Three Fishers, or the Cross Keys?" he snapped. "Or banker with Pon & Co., of Highcliffe?"

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"No bizney of yours."

"You must be a mad fool, Stacey, to run these risks. You can't always get by with landing it on me. Loder of the Sixth found you out, though he's got his own reasons for keeping his mouth shut. But—"

"Have you come here to give me a sermon?"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"No! I suppose you can't help being a rotter," he said. "But you'd better cut it out for this afternoon. My uncle will expect to see you when he comes. But please yourself, of course."

"You ought to have told me before," said Stacey savagely. "How can I wash out an engagement at a minute's notice?"

"Ask Quelch to lend you his telephone!" said Wharton, with cool scorn. "He trusts you as his trusty head boy. You can phone your sporting friends at the Cross Keys."

Stacey stared at him angrily for a moment; then he burst into a laugh.

"By gum, that's a tip!" he said.

"Thanks!"

Wharton stepped back to the door. He had spoken in scornful sarcasm, certainly not intending to give Stacey a "tip."

"That's all!" he snapped. "My uncle's coming by the half-past three train at Courtfield. Please yourself what you do."

"I intend to!" said Stacey coolly.

Wharton left the study. He wondered how it could ever have crossed his mind for a moment to make friends with such a fellow. He went up the Remove passage to look in at Bob Cherry's study, No. 13.

The door of Study No. 4 was open as he passed, and the sound of voices came from within. An argument seemed to be proceeding between Smithy and his chum, Tom Redwing.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Redwing. "I tell you—"

"Chuck it, old bean!" drawled the Bounder. "I'm goin'."

"You've got your book to write for Quelch!"

"Quelch can wait!"

"Look here, Smithy, let's go on the river—"

"Rats!"

"If you can't be decent—"

"A fellow must have a free kick every now and then, old bean!"

"Look here—"

Harry Wharton put his head in at the study doorway. What he had heard was a fairly clear indication that the Bounder was going on one of his shady excursions that afternoon. Redwing was arguing with him—as usual, in vain.

"Better not tell all Greyfriars, you fellows," said Harry. "If a prefect came up and heard all that, he might want to know more."

The Bounder laughed.

"Quite!" he agreed. "Shut up, Reddy! I haven't a double in the Remove to land it on, if I get spotted."

Wharton went on up the passage. But he paused; and as the Bounder came out of Study No. 4, he turned back to speak to him.

"Hold on a minute, Smithy," he said, in a low voice. "Look here, old chap. I suppose it's no use my talking to you, when Redwing can't make you see sense, but—"

"But you're going to do it all the same?" grinned Smithy.

"Well, yes! I hate to see you playing a rotten game, and running such risks, too—like—"

Wharton stopped.

"Like your jolly old relation Stacey?"

"Yes," said Harry. "What's the good, Smithy? You've kept pretty

straight all this term. What's the good of breaking out now?"

The Bounder gave him a curious look. "That's jolly good advice, from a fellow that Quelch believes ought to be sacked!" he remarked.

"Never mind what Quelch believes! You know the facts, if Quelch doesn't, or doesn't choose to."

"I'll tell you something that I haven't told old Reddy!" said Vernon-Smith quietly. "I'm going into some shady company this afternoon, but it's not because I want to play the goat."

"Then why on earth—"

The Bounder's face hardened, and a glitter came into his eyes.

"I'm going to get some information," he said. "I know as well as you do what sort of a blighter Quelch's precious head boy is. Most of the fellows seem to think he can do no wrong, because he's played for the First Eleven. You're in disgrace with the beaks, and I jolly well know who ought to be. Quelch is going to know, too."

Wharton gave a start.

"Smithy! I—I suppose you can find out about Stacey, easily enough, as you know that gang of rotters at the Three Fishers. But—but, Smithy, old man, you can't give a fellow away."

"Didn't he give me away?" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"Well, yes; but—"

"Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!" said Vernon-Smith; and he walked away to the stairs, whistling.

Wharton stood looking after him. He knew the Bounder's system of ethics. Smithy would play fair if the other fellow played fair. If the other fellow played foul, he would play foul. That system was not good enough for Harry Wharton; but it was good enough for Smithy, and it was not much use arguing with him. It had been a bad day for Ralph Stacey when he made an enemy of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Called Away!

"TELEGRAM for somebody!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at the nets when Trotter, the House page, came along with a buff envelope in his hand.

In that bright summer weather, most of the fellows were merry and bright; but Harry Wharton was not feeling happy that afternoon.

In the first place he had a black eye for his uncle to see when he came, and that was far from agreeable. In the second place, the interview with his uncle was likely to be a very disagreeable one.

Colonel Wharton had not stated why he was coming; but Wharton had little doubt on the subject. His half-term's report could not have been of a complimentary nature.

Generally Wharton's school reports were good; he was no slacker in class, any more than at games.

But that term he had not done well. The sense of injustice, and undeserved distrust and censure, had had a rather natural result. In the Form-room he had thought more of showing Quelch that he didn't care a straw for him, and his opinion, than of absorbing instruction.

Neither was that all. Quelch, in the firm belief that he was going to the bad, could hardly have kept that belief a secret from his uncle and guardian.

Wharton had a "pi-jaw" to expect.

No schoolboy was ever known to like a pi-jaw! But in this case it was particularly discomfiting—for Harry

Wharton could only defend himself by accusing Ralph Stacey.

Accusing Stacey of being the "black sheep" was not agreeable in itself, and was, moreover, useless.

One of the "doubles" of the Remove was a rank rotter, that was fairly clear to everybody. But Quelch was satisfied that it was not Stacey.

Was Colonel Wharton likely to believe otherwise than as Quelch believed? What was the use of accusing Stacey, without an atom of evidence? Which of the doubles it was who had been seen out of bounds, and in disreputable company, was a matter of opinion. As the fellow had not been caught, there was no proof. Until he was caught, there could not be proof.

Wharton's own friends believed in him. But they were outnumbered by the fellows who took Stacey's side. Quelch's opinion as Form-master carried great weight; and he had made his opinion plain enough by turning Wharton out of the position of head boy and putting Stacey in.

What was Colonel Wharton going to think?

Harry looked forward to the coming visit with deep uneasiness and repugnance.

He would have done almost anything to escape it. It was useless—it was going to be unpleasant—it might cause a breach between him and the uncle who had been like a father to him and for whom he had a deep respect and affection. As Trotter came down to the field with the telegram in his hand, and Wharton glanced at him, he hoped that it was a wire from his uncle to say that the visit was cancelled. It would have been an immense relief.

"Master Wharton!" called out Trotter.

"It's for you, Harry," said Nugent.

Wharton nodded, and ran towards the page, his face brighter! If only it meant that his uncle was not, after all, coming!

Trotter handed him the envelope. It had already been slit open.

"Mr. Quelch opened it, sir!" said Trotter. "Then he says, says he, take it to Master Wharton, he says."

"That's all right, thanks!" said Harry.

But he set his lips bitterly. Quelch, naturally, exercised supervision over the correspondence of his Form. But he might, at least, have let a fellow open his own telegram, Wharton considered. He wondered savagely whether Quelch suspected him of getting wires from bookmakers!

"And Mr. Quelch says you 'ave leave to go, sir!" added Trotter. "He tells me to tell you so, sir."

Wharton nodded, and Trotter went back to the House. He unfolded the telegram and read it. It was not what he had hoped to see, however. It did not cancel the colonel's visit.

It was marked as handed in at Wapshot, which was several miles from the school. It ran:

"Delays here. May not be able to reach Greyfriars. Come over as soon as you can. Wapshot Hotel.

"JAMES WHARTON."

Wharton's face clouded

Attached as he was to his uncle, and glad as he always was to see him, he would have been glad to wash out the visit that day.

Instead of improving matters, however, that telegram made them rather worse. If he had to see his uncle, Wharton would rather have seen him in the school than have displayed his black eye in public at an hotel.

However, it could not be helped.

He was "gated" so long as that black eye lasted, but Quelch had let him off, so that he could go to Wapshot to see his uncle.

He looked up at the clock tower. It was three o'clock. He could get over to Wapshot in half an hour on his bicycle.

"What's the jolly old news?" asked Bob.

Wharton handed him the telegram.

"Wasn't he coming down by train to Courtfield?" asked Bob.

"So he told me in his letter, but that was some days ago. I suppose he has come in the car, as he's at Wapshot," said Harry. "He has some old Army friends in the camp there—may be seeing them at the same time." He passed his hand over his discoloured eye. "Bother that fool Bunter!"

"Better get off!" said Nugent. "Is Stacey going, too?"

"Stacey!" Wharton knitted his brows. "Yes, I suppose so. He said in his letter that he wanted to see both of us. I suppose he must mean Stacey to go with me. I'd better tell him."

Leaving his friends at the cricket, Wharton went to the House. He looked for Stacey and found him in the Rag.

Stacey was standing at the open window, looking out into the quadrangle, when Wharton came in, the telegram in his hand. He glanced round at his relative and rival with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes.

"That from Colonel Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes."

(Continued on next page.)

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"Not coming?" asked Stacey.

"Better read it."

Stacey read it.

"What the thump is he delayed at Wapshot for?" he asked. "He can't be there for the races, I suppose."

"Don't be a silly ass!" snapped Wharton. "I don't suppose he even knows the races are on at Wapshot. He has friends in the camp there."

"Oh, yes, I remember—old military johnnies he knew in the War," yawned Stacey. "Must have come down by car, then! I suppose I'd better stick in gates, in case he comes on to the school. He doesn't say definitely."

"Aren't you coming to Wapshot?"

"Anxious for my company?" sneered Stacey.

"Not in the least; but he must mean you to come, as well as me."

Stacey looked at the telegram again.

"He doesn't mention me," he said.

"But he must mean—"

"I don't see that. If he wanted me he would say so, I suppose. If he doesn't want me I'm not going to barge in."

"Well, I told you what he said in his letter. He was coming down to see both of us."

"May have forgotten me since then," sneered Stacey. "Anyhow, I'm not going to fag over to Wapshot to be asked what the dooce I came for when I get there. Rubbish! If he wanted me he would mention me!"

"You're not coming?"

"No."

"Please yourself."

Wharton left the Rag at once. He was by no means displeased to lose Stacey's company. It was for Stacey to decide whether he came or not; and Wharton certainly was relieved that he had decided not.

He went down to the bike-shed for his machine. From the window of the Rag Stacey watched him leave the House and kept his eyes on him till he was out of sight.

There was a bitter, ironical grin on Stacey's handsome face—much less like Wharton's when it had such an expression on it.

Evidently Stacey derived some mocking amusement from Wharton's journey to Wapshot—though why, it would have puzzled anyone to say. Anyone, that is, who did not know that Stacey's disreputable acquaintance, Mr. Soapy Sanders, had dispatched a telegram for him that afternoon from Wapshot, signing the same with the name of James Wharton!

But Stacey was the only fellow at Greyfriars who knew that, and he was not likely to mention it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise!

COLONEL WHARTON shook hands with Mr. Quelch, who, while he greeted the old military gentleman with politeness and respect, wondered.

Hardly an hour after the telegram from Wapshot, the colonel arrived in a taxi from Courtfield. Which was surprising in a steady and methodical gentleman like James Wharton, not at all given to chopping and changing.

Trotter showed him to Quelch's study. There was a somewhat grim expression on the bronzed old face. This visit was no pleasure to Colonel Wharton. Bad reports of his nephew during the term had disturbed and troubled him greatly, and he had been only a little solaced by equally good

reports that had reached him regarding Stacey.

He sat down, and Mr. Quelch politely put his own affairs aside. But the colonel was not there to occupy a busy man's time. The interview was agreeable to neither, and there was little to add to what Mr. Quelch had already told the colonel by letter.

"I had better see my nephew at once," said Colonel Wharton. "I cannot understand the change that seems to have taken place in him this term. A talk with him—"

Mr. Quelch wondered still more.

"Will you wait for him?" he asked.

"Wait for him?" repeated the colonel.

"Surely, he has not gone out, when he has had several days' notice of my coming!"

"But your telegram, sir—"

"My what?"

"Your telegram—"

"I do not understand you, Mr. Quelch. I have sent no telegram."

Mr. Quelch almost jumped.

"You did not send a telegram from Wapshot?" he exclaimed.

"Good gad! I have not been at Wapshot. I have not seen the place for months! What do you mean, Mr. Quelch?"

"Upon my word!" said the Remove master. "This is extraordinary! Wharton has, I believe, gone to Wapshot. At all events, I gave him leave to do so in answer to your telegram—"

"I sent no telegram!"

"It was signed with your name, sir," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "I opened it personally. In the circumstances I have explained to you I consider it necessary to keep some observation—"

"Quite so. But I repeat that I have not been at Wapshot, and that I have sent no telegram!" said the colonel gruffly. "If anyone has sent a telegram in my name it's an impudent imposture."

"I fail to understand it at all," said Mr. Quelch. "I will inquire whether your nephew has gone."

He rang for Trotter. The page was sent to ascertain whether Wharton and Stacey were still in the school.

Colonel Wharton tugged at his grizzled moustache. He was astonished, and intensely irritated.

"Can I see the telegram?" he rapped.

"It is in Wharton's hands. I sent it to him. Naturally, I had not the remotest suspicion that it did not come from you, as it was addressed to your nephew and signed with your name."

"It is some ridiculous hoax!" growled the colonel. "Some trick—some practical joke! I came down by train, as I told Harry in my letter that I should do. If the boys have gone over to Wapshot I cannot see them. I must go by the five-thirty."

Mr. Quelch set his lips. Who had dispatched that telegram? Someone at Wapshot—a distant place. And why? The Remove master thought that he saw light.

"Your nephew, of course, knew of your intended visit to-day, Colonel Wharton?"

"I wrote to him several days ago on the subject, Mr. Quelch."

"Have you any reason to suppose that he desired to avoid the interview?"

The colonel pursed his lips.

"Probably he did not look forward to it," he grunted. "He must have known that I was coming in reference to the bad reports you have made of him."

"Quite so! And he is not here to see you?" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"That is hardly his fault, sir, if he has been hoaxed by some rascally practical joker with a false telegram."

"That telegram, sir, arrived so very conveniently to save Wharton from a disagreeable interview—from being called to account, in fact, by his guardian—"

Colonel Wharton started.

"You do not imagine, sir, that Harry himself sent the telegram!" he exclaimed.

"Himself, no; but he could certainly have contrived it easily enough," said Mr. Quelch. "There has been ample time since class for a boy to cycle over to Wapshot—moreover, I have only too much reason to believe that your nephew, sir, has disreputable acquaintances outside the school—"

"Good gad!" said the colonel.

"Wapshot is out of bounds, except by special leave," added Mr. Quelch. "Races are held there, and when the races are on, the neighbourhood swarms with the dregs of humanity. In the belief that you were waiting there for the boy, I gave him leave to go." Mr. Quelch bit his lip hard. "I only hope that it may not prove that he has tricked me into giving him leave to visit the races."

"Good gad!" repeated the colonel.

He sat silent, his brow wrinkled and grim. Who had sent that telegram? Who had any motive for playing such a trick—except Wharton himself, to escape seeing the guardian who had come to inquire into his conduct that term?

"If he has gone out of the school specially to avoid me—" breathed the colonel.

There was a tap at the door, and Trotter looked in.

"Master Wharton has gone out on his bicycle, sir," said Trotter. "But Master Stacey is in the House."

"Tell him to come here!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yessir!"

"Then Stacey did not go with Harry!" said the colonel. "It would have been natural for both of them to go, if the telegram was believed to be genuine."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Quelch dryly.

There was a tap at the door, and Stacey entered the study.

Colonel Wharton rose and shook hands with him.

"I am glad to see you, Ralph!" he said. "I have heard very good reports of you from your Form-master."

"Mr. Quelch is very kind, sir!" said Stacey meekly.

"Did Wharton show you a telegram, Stacey?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a very genial glance at his head boy.

"Yes, sir!" said Stacey. "He suggested that I should go to Wapshot with him."

"But you did not go?" asked the colonel.

"No, sir, as I was not mentioned in the wire. I thought, from the way it was worded that only Harry was wanted."

Mr. Quelch gave an audible grunt.

"I have no doubt that the telegram was intended to give Stacey that impression, Colonel Wharton," he said. "I remember that there was no allusion to him in it."

"Ralph," said the colonel abruptly, "had you any idea that that telegram was a hoax?"

Stacey raised his eyebrows.

"A hoax, sir! I don't understand!"

"I never sent it!" rapped the colonel. "I have not been at Wapshot! It has been sent in my name by some unknown person. You had no idea of this!"

"None, sir! I thought it was odd that I was not mentioned, as I supposed you would like to see me, but I never thought—"

"Naturally, you would not!" assented



"Listen to me, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "I am giving you an opportunity to confess. If you deny knowledge of this telegram——" "Of course I do!" panted Wharton. "Then, in that case, it will be placed in the hands of the police for inquiry," resumed the Form-master. "It is a punishable offence to send a telegram in another's name!"

the colonel. "Mr. Quelch, I will take up no more of your time. Ralph, come with me!"

Mr. Quelch was not sorry to get back to his own occupations. But he sat for some minutes with a knitted, thoughtful brow before he took up his pen again.

Who had sent that false telegram? Who could have caused it to be sent but the junior who had done wrong, who was in danger of expulsion, who dreaded the interview with a justly incensed guardian? Very little doubt remained in Mr. Quelch's mind on the matter.

Perhaps there was little doubt in Colonel Wharton's as he went out of the study with Stacey.

Certainly he was deeply perturbed and irritated. He had made a long journey specially to see his nephew—and his nephew was absent, and he could not see him.

He walked in the quad with Stacey. Stacey's manner was respectfully attentive to his elderly relative.

Certainly no one would have guessed from his manner that he regarded that elderly relative as a bore and an "old fossil."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Wharton's jolly old nunks!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Four juniors, coming away from the cricket field, capped the colonel as they passed.

Colonel Wharton gave them a kind nod. They were heading for the tuckshop, for refreshing ginger-beer, after slogging a ball about in the hot sunshine.

"Then he came, after all!" said Frank Nugent, puzzled. "Harry must have missed him at Wapshot——"

"Looks like it!"

"That's jolly queer!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The queerfulness is terrific!"

Colonel Wharton, apparently dismissing Harry from his mind, talked to Stacey about his school life. He could not suppress a sigh over the contrast between this boy and his nephew.

Wharton under suspicion and the shadow of disgrace—Stacey well up in class, great at games, high in his Form-master's opinion! And Stacey was there, respectfully attentive; and Harry, to all appearance, had played a miserable trick to get away and avoid seeing him!

The colonel was quite unaware that the young rascal by his side had a very clear idea of his thoughts. Certainly it never crossed his mind that Ralph Stacey designed to cut his relative out at home as he had out him out at school. He had no suspicion of the rancorous enmity of the rival and poor relation of his nephew.

When the time came at last for the colonel to go for his train, Harry had not returned. Unwillingly and very unamiably the colonel put off his departure for a later train.

But it booted not. At a quarter past six Harry had not returned, and the colonel had left himself barely time to catch the six-thirty. He stepped into his taxi with deep feelings.

But, angry as he was, he said a very kind good-bye to Stacey.

The schemer of the Remove watched the taxi roll out of the gateway. There was a cynical smile on his face, but a lingering cloud on his brow.

Stacey was hard and unscrupulous; but he had a conscience, and it troubled him a little. But it did not trouble him sufficiently to make him change his plans or his intentions.

Wharton had everything—he had nothing! It was worth while to stifle his conscience a little, he told himself, for the prospect of becoming heir of Wharton Lodge—of changing places

with his rival, and leaving Wharton as the "poor relation." He shrugged his shoulders and went into the House.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Who?

"WHARTON!"

"Adsum!"

Prout, master of the Fifth, was calling the roll

in Hall.

Mr. Quelch was present, and he glanced at Wharton, as that junior answered to his name. Wharton had returned in time for calling-over—but only just! He had squeezed in last in Hall.

He looked tired and far from happy. It had been a worrying afternoon to him. He had arrived at Wapshot and called for his uncle at the hotel. There he had found nobody expecting him, and he could only conclude that he was to wait till his uncle came. He waited—not comfortably, as his black eye drew many amused glances in his direction.

He was utterly puzzled and perplexed by the fact that his uncle did not appear at all. Apparently the colonel had changed his plans without giving his nephew a hint of it. Wharton waited till there was only time to get back to school for calling-over, and then he cycled back to Greyfriars, puzzled and worried and irritated. So far he had not the faintest idea that his uncle had been at Greyfriars that afternoon.

That, however, he learned from his friends while Prout was calling the names.

"You missed your uncle at Wapshot!" Frank Nugent whispered. "How on earth did it happen?"

(Continued on page 16.)

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A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!



(Continued from page 13.)

"How do you know?" asked Harry, in surprise. "Yes, I missed him—he never came. Goodness knows why!"

"He's been here——"

"Here!" exclaimed Wharton, almost stupefied.

"Yes, we saw him with Stacey——"

"He came to Greyfriars!" stuttered Wharton.

"Yes, he jolly well did!"

"Blessed if I can understand it, then! I've been waiting for him at Wapshot all the afternoon. Sure he came?"

"We saw him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Then it beats me hollow," said Wharton blankly.

Wingate of the Sixth spoke to Wharton as the fellows went out of Hall after calling-over.

"Quelch's study!" he said curtly.

"All right, Wingate."

Wharton went to his Form-master's study. He wondered rather wearily whether this summons meant more trouble. Tired and worried, he was in no mood for more injustice from Quelch. And Quelch's look as he came in told that there was trouble looming ahead.

"Wharton," said the Remove master grimly, "give me the telegram you received this afternoon."

The junior fumbled in a pocket and drew out a crumpled telegram. He laid it on the master's table.

"Now, Wharton, I recommend you to make a full confession."

"What is it now, sir?" asked Harry, with a bitter emphasis on the "now."

Mr. Quelch tapped the telegram with his forefinger.

"That is a false telegram, Wharton! I fear that you know it without my telling you."

Wharton stared at him.

"I know nothing of the kind," he retorted. "And I don't know what you mean, sir! That telegram came from my uncle."

"Colonel Wharton has been here, and he informed me that he has not been at Wapshot at all, and certainly sent you no telegram."

Wharton could only stare. He felt as if his head was turning round.

"Colonel Wharton," resumed the Remove master, "was very disappointed and, I fear, angry at not seeing you. He can scarcely believe anything but that you deliberately avoided the interview, Wharton."

"I had to go to Wapshot," stammered Wharton. "I can't understand it! Do you mean that that telegram is a hoax?"

"It is a false telegram! If you have anything to confess——"

"What can I have to confess?" said Harry, in sheer wonder. "If some rotten practical joker has made a fool of me it's not my fault, is it? You saw the telegram before I did, and you believed it genuine."

"I certainly did!" said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, I will speak plainly! If you arranged with some friend or acquaintance to send this telegram as

a pretext for avoiding seeing your uncle to-day——"

"What utter rot!"

"Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"You have no right to suppose such a thing for one moment!" panted Wharton, with flashing eyes.

"Listen to me, Wharton!" said the Remove master in a grinding voice. "I am giving you an opportunity to confess. But if you deny knowledge of this telegram——"

"Of course I do."

"In that case, it will be placed in the hands of the police for inquiry. It is a punishable offence to send a telegram in another's name, as you must be aware. Do you understand me boy? Once the matter is out of my hands it must take its course."

Wharton clenched his hands.

"Let it take its course! I'd be jolly glad to find out the cur who sent that wire and pulled my leg! Of course I would."

Mr. Quelch regarded him dubiously. If this angry indignation was assumed, the boy was a good actor. Was it possible, after all, that the affair was simply a senseless practical joke and that Wharton had no knowledge of it? Mr. Quelch's prejudice against that member of his Form was deep and strong, but he desired to be just.

"Very well, Wharton," he said quietly, "if you persist that you have nothing to tell me——"

"Nothing!"

"Then I shall send this telegram to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield," said Mr. Quelch. He watched the junior closely as he spoke, but only anger and indignation were to be read in Wharton's face.

"You may go!" he added.

Wharton left the study with crimson cheeks and glinting eyes. His look drew a good many eyes on him when he went into the Rag. The Remove fellows were used to seeing Wharton in trouble this term, and they could see that there was more trouble now.

"What did Quelch want?" asked Frank Nugent quietly, as Harry joined the Co.

Wharton explained.

There was blank amazement in the faces of his friends as he did so.

"Who on earth can have played such a rotten trick?" asked Bob.

"Quelch thinks I did—to get out of seeing my uncle!" said Harry bitterly. "Of course, I didn't want to see him, as he came down to row me—but the idea of playing a rotten-trick like that——"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "Does your uncle think so, too?"

"I suppose he does—Quelch would put it into his head!" said Wharton savagely. "I'll write to him at once, but—— He must have been fearfully annoyed not finding me here, and—and what does it look like? I don't know what he'll believe."

The Co. were silent.

"But who——" said Bob at last.

Wharton opened his lips, but closed them again. The name of Stacey was on his tongue; but he would not utter it. Someone had played a rascally trick, which, as he knew only too well, had made his uncle angry with him and caused him to look like a cunning trickster. What could it be but his enemy—the fellow who hardly made a secret of the fact that he had set out to oust him at Wharton Lodge?

But it was useless, as well as unjustifiable, to utter a suspicion that had no atom of proof. Wharton realised, too, that his dislike and suspicion of Stacey might easily lead him into errors. He said nothing. But Frank guessed his thought, and said quietly:

"Stacey was in gates all the afternoon, Harry! He's been nowhere near Wapshot—and the wire came from there."

"Somebody was put up to it, of course," said Harry. "The fellow wouldn't be fool enough to send it personally—he might be identified afterwards. There's bound to be an inquiry. Stacey has friends outside the school who would do that for him, or any other rotten thing, for a tip."

"You mean that he fixed it up yesterday——"

"Well, no; he never knew till to-day that my uncle was coming," confessed Wharton. "I was going to tell him on Monday, when that fool Bunter barged in and made an ass of himself when I was in Stacey's study. So, as it happens, I never told him till after dinner to-day."

"Then that clears Stacey—we all know that he hasn't been out of gates this afternoon," said Frank. "He's seen nobody outside the school."

Wharton nodded slowly.

"I can't imagine who else would play such a rotten trick," he said. "But I don't want to do the fellow an injustice. Who the dickens can it have been?"

But to that the Co. could make no answer. It had to remain a mystery.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

What Smithy Knew!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was smiling over his prep in Study No. 4 that evening.

The Bounder of Greyfriars seemed to be in high good humour.

Redwing noticed it, but made no remark on it.

He knew that Smithy had spent that half-holiday out of school bounds, among his shady acquaintances outside Greyfriars.

It worried him, because all that term the reckless Bounder had been keeping straight, and Redwing had hoped that the change in him would prove permanent. Now, it seemed, he had broken out again. But it was not Reddy's business to preach to his chum, and he said nothing.

When prep was over he rose from the study table.

"Coming down, Smithy?" he asked.

"I've got my book for Quelch to do, old man!" answered Vernon-Smith. "The dear old bean wants it by Saturday, you know."

"I'll stay here, then——"

"Don't!" said the Bounder. "Trot along, old bean! Tell Wharton that I'd like to speak to him, will you?"

"Right!"

Redwing left the study.

The Bounder did not seem to be bothering about his "book" for Quelch when his chum was gone. He walked about the study with his hands in his pockets and a sardonic grin on his face. He was waiting for Harry Wharton, and he did not have to wait long. A few minutes later Wharton looked into Study No. 4.

"Reddy says you want to speak to me, Smithy!"

"Yes; trot in, and shut the door."

Wharton came in and closed the door. He was a little surprised and not wholly pleased. It was clear that the Bounder had something to say which was not to reach other ears. Wharton, black sheep as he was supposed to be, was not keen on hearing confidences from the scape-grace of the Remove.

"Well, what is it, Smithy?" he asked, rather restively.

"Squat down."

Wharton took a seat on the corner of the study table. The Bouncer stood leaning on the mantelpiece, his hands in his pockets, looking at him.

"I told you what I had on this afternoon, Wharton!" he began. "I've been pretty busy, and I've had some luck."

Wharton frowned a little. "Look here, Smithy, I don't want to know about it!" he said. "I dare say you're justified in getting back on Stacey—from your own point of view, at least. But—"

"Mind lettin' a fellow speak?" asked Vernon-Smith sarcastically.

"Oh, get on!" "I've heard all about that telegram," said the Bouncer. "It's been talked up and down the Remove, as I dare say you know. Some of the fellows think you fixed it up to get clear of your nunky."

"Quelch thinks so, too!" said Wharton, his lip curling. "Let them think what they like."

"I've made two or three calls this afternoon," went on Smithy. "The first was at that jolly old resort, the Three Fishers. I was talking to Banks there, when he was called to the phone."

"I'm really not interested, Smithy." "You will be!" said the Bouncer coolly. "After Banks was through on the phone he spoke to a man named Sanders—a beery blighter who hangs about the place—"

"I've heard of him! Hazel had some trouble with him last term. But—"

Wharton looked more and more restive. "You see, I was waiting for Banks to finish a hundred up on the billiard-table," said Smithy coolly. "Don't make faces at me, old bean—I'm really goin' to interest you. I caught a few words between Banks and Sanders—without, of course, takin' any interest at the time. But one of the words was Wapshot."

"What the dickens—"

"And Sanders cleared off at once on a bike."

Wharton stared at the Bouncer. "Are you talking riddles?" he asked. "I'll elucidate the riddle for you!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "I took no notice of the thing at the time, and never gave it another thought—till after I heard the fellows talking about that spoof telegram you got this afternoon. Then I put two and two together."

"I don't see—"

"I'll put it in words of one syllable suitable to your intellect. Banks gets a phone-call. He sends Sanders hiking off to Wapshot. You get a spoof telegram from Wapshot! See it now?"

Wharton jumped off the table. "Smithy!"

"Stacey, I hear, hasn't been out of gates!" sneered the Bouncer. "But has he been on the phone? What?"

Wharton caught his breath. He remembered his own sarcastic suggestion to Stacey in Study No. 3.

"The cur!" he muttered. "Oh, the cur! I thought of him at once, but it seemed that he couldn't have fixed it!"

"There's no proof that he did!" grinned the Bouncer. "The dear boy doesn't leave a trail behind him. But Quelch was with the Head this afternoon, and I've not the slightest doubt that Stacey used his phone. Have you?"

"No!" said Wharton, with a deep breath.

"Another thing. Pon & Co. came along from Highcliffe later, and they expected to see Stacey there. I got that from Pon! But he got it from

Banks that Stacey wasn't coming. How—unless Stacey phoned?"

Wharton nodded. "I thought you were off with those Highcliffe cads," he said.

"So I was, but I specially made friends with them again this afternoon," said the Bouncer coolly. "Banks was as close as an oyster—I fancy he's been making a good thing out of your giddy relation, and he's keeping his secrets—even from an old pal like me!" The Bouncer grinned. "But Pon didn't mind talkin'—Pon's a talkative chap! I went back to Highcliffe with him and his friends and we had tea in his study—tea and bridge—"

"Exactly!" The Bouncer smiled a deadly smile. "Havin' been disappointed this afternoon, the dear boy can't wait till next half-holiday to have his little fling—besides, there's cricket on Saturday, and he'll be wanted! So he's breakin' bounds to-night."

"And if he was seen it would be put down to me!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth.

"He won't get away with that this time! Even a blind Owl like Bunter could tell you apart now—with that jolly old black eye of yours."

Harry Wharton laughed. "Yes, so long as this eye lasts, Stacey can't trade on being my double," he

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS



Having received more kicks than ha'pence during his job of interviewing Greyfriars celebrities, our clever rhymester finds a real pleasure in featuring **BOB CHERRY**, the sunny-tempered junior of the Remove.



(1)

I find this week I've got to speak
To one who's bright and merry;
When dismal chumps are in the dumps
They need a dose of Cherry;
His cheerful face about the place
Is like a daily sunbeam,
I'd walk a mile to see his smile,
His eyes with heaps of fun beam!

(2)

He's not content with merriment
When everything's in clover,
He's just like this when life's amiss
And murky clouds roll over.
We all can cheer when skies are clear
And summer suns are glowing,
But Bob keeps on when summer's gone
And winter winds are blowing.

(3)

The Famous Five with him contrive
To be acknowledged leaders,
And Bob's the key of every spree
Which so delight our readers.
Who gives a yell at rising-bell
That wakes us to our senses?
Why, Bob, of course—until he's hoarse,
And blow the consequences.

(4)

So when I spied on Little Side
My victim playing cricket,
I made a trip to second slip
And joined him near the wicket.
The batsman, Kipps, preferred the slips
When he the bat was wielding,
And that's why Bob was on the job,
He's pretty hot at fielding.

(5)

"Keep off the grass, you silly ass!"
Was Cherry's genial greeting,
"I must get through this interview,"
I answered, not retreating.
"So tell me now exactly how
You play the game of cricket!"
He paused to stop a wide long hop
That somehow missed the wicket.

(6)

"Well, first of all, I field the ball
Like this," he said—and got it!
"I throw it back and land it—smack!
On the silly ass who shot it!"
Kipps gave a howl and bellowed "Foul!"
Said Cherry, broadly grinning:
"We gets 'em out or lays 'em out,
And thus make sure of winning!"

(7)



The bowler, Brown, next ball sent down,
A fast one on the off!
Kipps made a tip to second slip,
Where I'd begun to scoff!
"No chap at all could miss that ball,
Why, even my poor granny—"
Then Kipps' shot rose and hit my nose!
I woke up in the sanny!



Wharton made a gesture of repugnance.

"And Pon talked!" said Smithy. "Talked quite a lot! I may have led him to believe that I knew more than I did!" He chuckled. "Anyhow, he talked! Guess the message he got from Banks?"

"Oh, rot!" "I'll tell you, then! Stacey was going to join that crew this afternoon, but somethin' kept him in—"

"My uncle's visit, of course." "Quite! But the jolly old meetin' is only postponed! Pon & Co. are gettin' out to-night and meetin' Stacey."

"The rotten rascal!" said Harry. "Quelch's head boy—breaking out after lights out!"

remarked. "It makes it all the more risky for him."

"Little enough risk from Quelch—he trusts the dear boy! But a lot of risk from a fellow he peached on to the beak!" said Vernon-Smith. "Stacey is goin' out of bounds to-night to meet the festive Pon and his crew and paint the town red! And—Quelch is goin' to know!"

"You can't do it, Smithy! I know the cur gave you away over that translation you did for Bunter, but you can't do it!" Wharton spoke earnestly. "The fellow is a rank rotter—he ought to be kicked out of the school! But—it's sneaking, Smithy! You can't tell Quelch!"

"Who's talkin' about telling Quelch?"

"Oh! I thought——"

"Sneakin's not in my line! I'm sayin' nothin' to Quelch, or anybody else. But I'm goin' to land my fish—without sneakin'. I'll tell you how if you care to take a hand in the game. Will you?"

Wharton shook his head.

"You won't?"

"No!"

"You fool!" said the Bounder, with bitter contempt. "That's cur's dished you with Quelch; he's got you into a row with your uncle; he's landed you jolly near the sack! He's a snake-in-the-grass, and I'm offering you a chance to draw his fangs, and you won't do it, on a point of honour."

"I can't, Smithy, and you can't, either!"

"Can't I?" said the Bounder grimly. "You'll see."

"It's not good enough, Smithy. It's good enough for him, but not good enough for you!" said Wharton earnestly. "Don't drop down to his level, old chap. You can't give a man away."

"I know that! There's a limit—even for me!" Vernon-Smith sneered. "But I can fix him to give himself away."

"I don't see how you'll do that."

"I'll tell you—if you join up."

"No!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "Leave it at that, then. But"—Smithy's eyes gleamed—"I've been speaking to you in confidence. Not a word outside this study of what I've told you."

"Of course not! But——"

"Nuff said!" interrupted the Bounder. "Like to lend me a hand with my book for Quelch? He won't spot fifty lines among nearly eight hundred."

"Oh, all right!"

Wharton did not see Stacey again till the Remove went to their dormitory. He was chatting with Ogilvy and Russell when the juniors turned in. His manner was carelessly cheerful as usual; there was certainly nothing to indicate that he was planning a wild and reckless escapade whilst Greyfriars slept that night. Wharton wondered whether the Bounder was mistaken. And, deeply as he disliked his unscrupulous enemy, he hoped that the Bounder was!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

THE half-hour chimed from the clock-tower.

Silence and slumber reigned in the Greyfriars dormitories.

But the chime reached wakeful ears in the Remove dormitory.

Ralph Stacey sat up in bed.

He listened quietly for a full minute. Then he slipped out and began to dress himself rapidly in the dark.

In the silence of the night, there was a sound of steady breathing from many sleepers, and a deep snore from Billy Bunter.

Bed-time for the Remove was half-past nine, and before ten the last fellow was usually fast asleep. At half-past ten there were not likely to be open eyes.

Stacey had no doubt that the whole Form was deep in slumber. But he was cautious. He made hardly a sound as he dressed, and slipped on rubber-soled shoes.

Then, stooping over his bed, he arranged pillows and blankets and a

rug under the coverlet, to give it the appearance of containing a sleeper.

The work was carefully done. Stacey's bed looked as if he was still in it.

Unless a close examination was made he had nothing to fear, even in the unlikely case of a visit to the dormitory. Stacey was the last fellow Quelch would have suspected of being absent, had he made a round that night. Anyone looking in and switching on the light, would have been satisfied that every bed in the dormitory contained a sleeper.

There was hardly a sound as the door opened and closed again—after Stacey. He was gone.

Neither was there any sound for a full five minutes after he had gone. Then another fellow sat up in bed.

Vernon-Smith was grinning in the darkness.

Had he not purposely stayed awake he certainly would not have been awakened by any sound that Stacey had made. But the Bounder had not closed his eyes since turning in.

He had known what to expect—and he had waited and watched for it. Now he slipped out of bed and drew on trousers and slippers.

Again the dormitory door opened and closed softly.

On tiptoe the Bounder trod away.

Stacey was gone—he would not be back for a couple of hours in all probability, perhaps longer. Smithy had plenty of time.

He had little doubt of the way the breaker of bounds had gone. Many a time Smithy had used the window of the Remove box-room for the same purpose. He trod softly down the stairs to the Remove passage.

All was in darkness.

Below there were lighted studies and passages—some of the masters were up, and some of the Sixth had not yet turned in. But in the junior quarters all was dark and silent.

The Bounder groped his way along the Remove passage, nothing doubting that Stacey had trod that way ahead of him ten minutes ago. He had given the fellow plenty of time to get clear, before following him.

He reached the Remove box-room at the end of the passage, and stopped outside it to listen. All was silent.

He pushed open the door and entered the box-room.

Softly he crossed to the little window which looked out on flat leads, from which descent to the ground was easy—as the Bounder had ample reason to know.

The window was shut. But it was unfastened, and the lower sash was an inch up. That was how the Bounder had been accustomed to leave it when he had used that window to break bounds last term.

That was the way Stacey had gone.

Had he used any other means of egress the Bounder was prepared to search for it and find it; he had plenty of time. But that was the easiest and safest way out of the House, and that was the way Stacey had gone.

Silently Vernon-Smith pushed the sash down, completely closing it. Then he fastened the catch.

Stacey, on his return, would find the window impassable. He would be shut out of the House! And Mr. Quelch's dutiful head boy could explain that to Mr. Quelch, the best he could, when he was caught.

There was no mercy for him from the Bounder. He had given Smithy away, and now he was going to give himself away. He could take what was coming to him. A head boy who was so exceedingly dutiful that he had to hand

over a "crib" to a Form-master and get another fellow a whopping and a "book," should have been too dutiful to break bounds after lights out.

Having carefully secured the window Smithy left the box-room. But he was not finished yet. He was giving his enemy no chance.

He transferred the key to the outside of the box-room door, and turned it. If, by luck, Stacey succeeded in getting in at the window, he would find the door locked against him. Smithy was not the fellow to do things by halves.

The Bounder's work was done now. He tiptoed back to the Remove dormitory.

All was silent there.

With a grin on his face the Bounder turned in. As he lay he pictured Stacey—stealing back after his "night out"—finding himself shut out of the House. The Bounder had no pity for him. The fellow—a worse fellow than himself—had the best reputation in the Form—his whole life was a lie and a deceit. Let him take what was coming to him. The Bounder's eyes closed at last—and he slept.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Face at the Window!

STACEY caught his breath.

Midnight had chimed when he left his Highcliffe friends and scuttled back by dark ways to his school.

Now, at half-past twelve, he was standing on the leads outside the window of the Remove box-room, his hand on the sash.

And the sash did not rise.

Up to that moment Stacey had been cool and careless. His escapade did not lie on his conscience, nor the deceit it involved.

There was the slight excuse for him that in his wandering life with his shiftless father, before Colonel Wharton had taken him up, he had been accustomed to keeping all sorts of hours, and mixing in all sorts of doubtful company. The change from such a shiftless life, had made the restrictions of a decent school seem unendurable to him.

But he was well aware of the consequences of discovery. Breaking out at night meant expulsion at Greyfriars or any other school. All the more because Quelch had trusted him he would have no mercy on the young rascal who had betrayed his trust.

And the window was shut.

He had left it unfastened and an inch ajar. Now it was shut—and he could not doubt that it was fastened within. Whoever had shut it would have secured the catch.

He breathed hard, his heart beating unpleasantly.

At that hour the last light was out in the school; the latest master had long gone to bed. Not a glimmer of a single light came from the great pile of the school buildings.

That at least was a momentary relief. No one was staying up for the breaker of bounds—there would have been a lighted window in that case.

Some beak making a late round had found the window unfastened, and concluded that a careless servant had left it so. That seemed likely. Or a servant might possibly have come to the box-room for something and noticed that the window was ajar.

It was plain, at least, that it was not known that a Greyfriars fellow was out of the House. If that had been known a beak would have been sitting up for him, and he would have seen a light.

So far he was not discovered.



Stacey put both hands to the sash and pushed up, softly and carefully. Suddenly, he became conscious of something glimmering in the darkness just inside the window. A thrill of utter terror ran through him, as he realised what it was. It was the face of Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth I

He had time to think—and to act! And after the first dismaying shock he was his cool self again. He had to get out of this somehow. No good getting the wind up. He had to save himself.

He opened a pocket-knife and inserted the strongest blade under the sash. He soon satisfied himself that the catch was fastened; the sash did not stir a fraction of an inch.

Withdrawing the blade he inserted it between the sashes.

It was not easy work; but he was cool and patient, and he got the blade through at last. Then he proceeded to press it against the catch.

Snap!

It was not the catch that opened. It was the blade of the pocket-knife that snapped off short.

He gritted his teeth.

But there was a second blade to the knife. Quietly, patiently, he did his work over again. This time he was more careful. With a slow and steady pressure he felt the window-catch moving.

It was slow, difficult work. His fingers ached from it. But he kept steadily on.

Snap!

This time it was the catch. It shot back under the pressure, and the window was unfastened.

He panted with relief.

To force up the sash was now only the task of a few minutes. The way was open, and he crawled in at the window.

He was in the House.

Quietly he shut and fastened the window after him, and crossed to the door. He was utterly unprepared for what came next.

The door did not open.

Puzzled and alarmed, he pulled hard at the handle.

The door remained immovable.

"Good gad!" breathed Stacey.

He felt for the key. It was not there. The door was locked, and the key was on the other side. Whoever had fastened the window had locked the door after him when he left the box-room.

That discovery was overwhelming.

Stacey sat down weakly on Lord Mauleverer's big trunk, and for several minutes he remained there, motionless, very near despair. His heart was almost sick within him.

One!—boomed out from the clock-tower. He had been back half an hour—and this was the end. He could not get out of the box-room. He might as well have remained out of the House. If he was found there in the morning, it was the same thing as being found out of doors. All his trouble had gone for nothing. He was no nearer safety than when he had started.

He pulled himself together at last.

He had to get out of this fearful scrape somehow. He was shut out, and his game at Greyfriars was up, unless he could get in. Three or four times his resemblance to Harry Wharton had saved him—throwing suspicion on Wharton. But it could not help him now. If he was found out of the House after midnight, even Mr. Quelch could have no doubt which of the doubles of the Remove was the black sheep. He had to get in.

He reopened the window, and climbed out on the leads, closing down the sash after him. From the leads he dropped to the ground. Some other way in had to be found.

But how—and where?

He was determined not to give in unless he was absolutely beaten; and he was not beaten yet. But his heart was sinking.

The school was locked up for the night. No door could have been left unfastened; no downstairs window could be unsecured. Only if some fellow had

gone out of bounds and left a window ajar—

At that thought Stacey cut round the House to the door of the Sixth Form lobby. He had heard of certain manners and customs of Loder and Carne of the Sixth. If one of the senior sportsmen happened to be out—

But the lobby door was locked; the lobby window fastened. If a Sixth Form sportsman had gone out he had a key, and had locked the lobby door after him. There was nothing doing.

Stacey stood and looked up at the great facade of the House in the glimmering summer starlight. A good many windows were open at the top; but only upstairs windows.

What was he to do?

Knock, and be let in, or wait out of doors till the House opened in the morning. In either case discovery and the sack! He gritted his teeth. He would get in somehow—at any risk. Even if he gave the alarm getting in, it was no worse for him—if he was to be caught, anyhow. No risk was too great for the hapless breaker of bounds, and his nerve and courage were, at least, equal to any emergency.

One of the master's rooms had a little balcony outside the window. Stacey remembered having heard that it was Capper's bed-room. He remembered too, having heard that Mr. Capper was great on mountaineering in the holidays, and rather a fresh-air fiend. If his window was open—if a fellow could climb to the balcony—the balcony made it easy to get in at the window, at any rate.

The idea of passing through a room in which a Form-master was sleeping, was enough to shake any nerve. But Stacey was desperate now.

He had to get in, or face expulsion on the morrow. He could find no chance

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but this—if it was a chance. Whether the Fourth Form master was a sound sleeper or not, he did not know. He hoped that Capper was. Quelch, he knew, was a light sleeper; but luckily Quelch's quarters were at some little distance.

A rain-pipe, half-hidden in thick tendrils of ivy, ran close by the balcony. Stacey made up his mind to it. He grasped the rain-pipe and climbed.

It was not an easy climb. The pipe was thick, and gave him a hold, and the ivy helped. But it was hard and difficult work, and only a fellow strong and fit and determined could have dragged himself up to the height. But Stacey succeeded at last; grasped the little iron rail of the balcony, and clambered on to it.

There was a thud. A flower-pot, knocked by his foot in the dark, fell and cracked.

He crouched in the shadow, holding his breath. The window, as he had hoped, was open at the top, a foot or more. That made entrance fairly easy. But it also made the passage of sound easy. Had Capper awakened? The flower-pot, falling and cracking, had made quite a noise in the deep silence of the summer night.

For long, tense minutes Stacey remained crouched, silent, listening. But he heard nothing.

Surely Capper had not awakened! He approached the window at last. As the top sash was lowered, the lower sash, of course, was not fastened. It was simply a matter of pushing it up; easy from inside; not very difficult from outside.

Stacey put both hands to it, and pushed up, softly and carefully. He was close to the glass.

He could not see into the dark room within. But he became conscious of something glimmering in the darkness.

Something that was whiter than the surrounding gloom glimmered just inside the window. It was not a foot from him, with the pane of glass between. And it was—

A thrill of utter terror ran through him as he realised what it was. It was a face!

A face, looking at him!

As he stood outside the window pressing up the sash, Mr. Capper stood inside the window, staring at him in almost stupefied astonishment.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hunted!

CAPPER, master of the Fourth, had never been so astonished in his life.

At nearly half-past one Capper naturally had been sleeping. He had been awakened by a noise. He fancied that it was a noise from the direction of the window.

Capper sat up in bed, and looked at the window. It was uncurtained and open at the top for ventilation. Capper was not thinking of burglars. He was wondering whether it was the House dame's cat among his flower-pots. But as he gazed he had a glimpse of a moving shadow against the starlight. It vanished in a second; but it was not the shadow of a cat.

The Fourth Form master slipped out of bed, and crossed to the window. He was not exactly alarmed; but he naturally wanted to know the meaning of this mysterious occurrence.

Close to the glass he peered out. He could see nothing at first. Then he detected a fallen flower-pot. He did not detect a crouching figure at the side of the window, blotted against the wall. But he saw the cracked flower-pot.

It was not the wind that had knocked it over. The July night was warm and still. There was no wind.

Mr. Capper was thinking out this problem when a figure appeared outside the glass. He gaped.

His first thought was that an enterprising burglar was using his window as a way in. The second glance, however, showed him, from the size of the figure outside, that it was a boy's.

Then he understood. Some young rascal had been out of bounds, and had been unable to get

back into the House. Obviously it must be a Greyfriars boy who was there on his balcony trying to get in.

Mr. Capper stood staring. The boy was striving to push up the lower sash. Who was it? Obviously a junior boy from the height. Capper could not make out the face distinctly. But what he saw of it seemed familiar.

But a cap was pulled down low over it, the peak shading it. He could not have identified the boy, though he was quite certain he knew him by sight.

He waited. Let the young rascal open the window and step in. Then the hand of authority would drop on his shoulder. The lower sash was rising to the steady, cautious upward pressure from without.

Suddenly that pressure ceased. The sash ceased to move. Mr. Capper saw the figure give a sudden, violent start, and back away from the glass.

He realised that the boy must have glimpsed his face through the pane. The young rascal had taken the alarm!

Instantly the Fourth Form master grasped the sash, to push it up from within. Already with lightning swiftness the boy outside was leaping for the iron rail of the balcony. He had to be secured.

Up went the sash with a bang, and Mr. Capper plunged out. But the junior was already off the balcony, clinging to the rain-pipe, and slipping down it with reckless speed.

The ivy sagged and rustled as he went. Capper leaning over the rail, grabbed at him and missed him by a yard as he flew.

"Stop!" panted Mr. Capper. "Stop! Do you hear?"

The fleeing junior slithered fast, and dropped to the ground. There he vanished in shadow.

Mr. Capper stared down after him. He did not think of following him by way of the rain-pipe. Capper was rather elderly—long past the age for such acrobatic stunts.

"The young rascal!" gasped Mr. Capper.

He stepped back into his room, and switched on the light. Then he hurriedly threw on his clothes. A Greyfriars boy was out of the House—in the middle of the night! That boy had to be secured. Whether it was a boy of his own Form or not, Mr. Capper did not know—but it seemed probable that it was a Fourth Form fellow, as he had chosen the Fourth Form beak's window as his way in: There were one or two fellows in the Fourth on whom Capper had a doubtful eye—Aubrey Angel for one, Kenney for another. Anyhow, he was certain it was a junior—Fourth or Remove or Shell—or possibly some well-grown fag in the Third.

Mr. Capper considered his plan of campaign while he dressed.

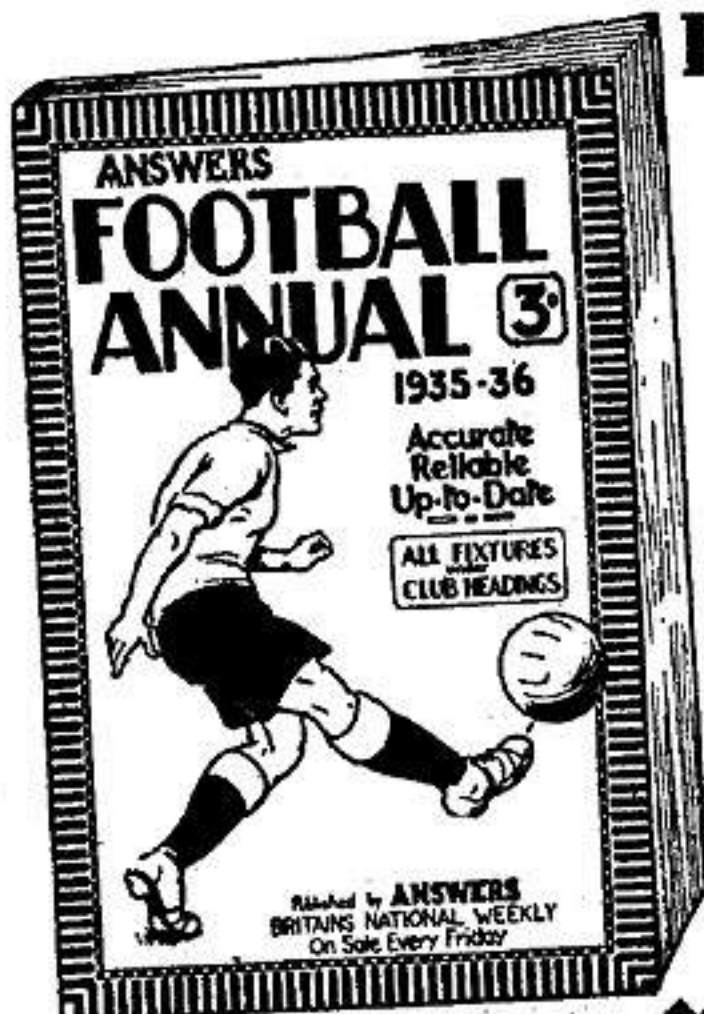
To make a round of the junior dormitories, switching on the lights and awakening the whole Lower School at this hour of the night, was hardly to be thought of. That means of identifying the breaker of bounds was a very last resource.

To leave him, unpursued, out of the House, was not to be thought of, either. He would get in before rising-bell by some means or other—his attempt at Capper's window showed that he was both resourceful and desperate. Once he got back to bed, he was safe from discovery.

He had to be found. Mr. Capper went downstairs. He switched on the light in the Sixth Form passage, and tapped at Wingate's door and opened it.

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"Wingate!"

There was a movement.

"Wingate!" repeated Mr. Capper.

"Hallo!" came a surprised and sleepy voice. "What the thump—"

The Greyfriars captain sat up in bed and stared blankly at Mr. Capper, as the Form-master came in and turned on his light.

"Mr. Capper!" ejaculated Wingate.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Wingate," said Mr. Capper, blinking at the astonished Sixth Former. "A boy is out of the House—"

"A boy—out of the House!" stuttered Wingate. He looked at his watch. It was turned half-past one.

"A junior boy," said Mr. Capper. "He attempted to gain admittance by means of my bed-room window—"

"Great Scott!"

"Will you get up, Wingate, and call some of the other prefects?" said Mr. Capper. "The boy must be found and brought in at once."

"Certainly, sir."

"I will wait for you at the door." Mr. Capper retired. He switched on lights and removed bolt and chain from the big door of the House.

In a few minutes he was joined there by four sleepy and astonished prefects—Wingate, Gwynne, Sykes, and Walker. The Sixth Form men were half-dressed, and did not look good-tempered.

"Who was it, sir?" asked Gwynne.

"I did not recognise the boy at my window, Gwynne, I could only see that he was a junior," said Mr. Capper. "Please search for him—probably you will find him in a few minutes. I will remain at the door and watch."

Four Sixth Form men went into the quadrangle.

It was a clear, bright summer's night: the sky sparkling with stars, and a crescent of moon showing over the clock-tower. There was plenty of light for a search, so far as that went: but if the young rascal had taken cover in some secluded corner, it was not so probable as Mr. Capper supposed, that the prefects would find him in a few minutes.

Mr. Capper stood in the doorway, watchful.

It was quite likely that, when the hunters roused their game, the young rascal might attempt to dodge into the House—and Mr. Capper was there to see that he did not do so undetected.

Wary and watchful, Capper stood in the doorway, looking out into the bright starlight, while the prefects hunted for the breaker of bounds. He heard a shout:

"Look!"

"Bag him!"

"After him!"

There was a rapid patter of running feet.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Desperate Device!

STACEY ran desperately. He was quite desperate now. After escaping from Mr. Capper's balcony, he had taken cover under the black shadow of an elm, and tried to think out another move.

But the outlook was hopeless.

He was known to be out of the House, whether they knew who he was or not. There was no way in—and he would be searched for. He stood breathing in gulps, his heart beating almost to suffocation.

He saw lights flash on in windows. He saw the great door swing open, and light stream out into the quad. He saw four stalwart Sixth Formers leave the House:

For a second, he hoped that there might be a chance of dodging in, while

they were on the search. Then he saw that Capper was standing in the doorway—evidently on the watch for such a move.

He hugged the black shadow of the elm and tried to still his breathing. The game was up—up at last! He had chanced it once too often, and now he was done for! Still he would not give in! There was too much at stake to abandon hope so long as the faintest gleam of hope remained. Sacked from Greyfriars—the door of Wharton Lodge closed against him! Not till a hand was on his shoulder, would he give up hope.

The prefects separated to search. It was Wingate who spotted a shadowy figure under a shadowy tree—and then Stacey was running, with the Sixth Form men in pursuit.

As he ran he came out clearly into the starlight, and they saw him—all of them, clearly. But they saw only his back. Even so, the figure seemed familiar to their eyes.

"Stop!" roared Wingate.

Stacey was not likely to stop! He flew!

"I believe I know that kid!" panted the Greyfriars captain. "It's not one of Capper's mob—"

"One of Quelch's!" said Gwynne.

"I believe so! If we lose him, we'll go up to the Remove dormitory, and see whether Wharton's in bed!" growled Wingate.

The running figure vanished in the shadow of the school chapel. The prefects panted on.

But Stacey was gone.

They hunted round the chapel for him, tempers growing sharper and sharper as they hunted.

Stacey had left them at a distance. Keeping in what cover he could, after dropping the pursuit for the moment, he wound his way back towards the House. He stopped to get his breath under a dark elm. His heart was beating in great throbs.

Was there a chance yet?

Capper was at the door. But if there was a chance of getting back to Capper's balcony, climbing the rain-pipe again—Had he time?

That hope was quickly dashed. Capper had come out on the House steps, and from where he stood, he could see his bed-room balcony and the rain-pipe beside it. He would have spotted a climber, instantly.

A shout came across the quad:

"See him?"

"No!"

"He's doubled back!"

"Oh, come on!"

They were coming back towards the House. Stacey gritted his teeth. He could not keep this up long.

A window was thrown up. A surprised and frowning face looked down from Mr. Quelch's room. The Remove master had awakened.

"What is all this? What is going on? What—"

Quelch's voice came clearly to Stacey.

Mr. Capper blinked up.

"Is that you, Quelch? A junior boy is out of the House—the prefects are searching for him—"

"Goodness gracious! One of your boys, Capper?"

"More probably one of yours, Quelch!" snapped back Mr. Capper. Quelch sniffed and stared from the window.

Stacey could have groaned aloud in sheer misery. The game was up—hopelessly up! At this rate, the whole House would soon be awake. Masters would be coming down—his own Form-master among them!

In sheer desperation he fixed his eyes on Capper. Under the elm, a dozen

yards from the Fourth Form master, he was invisible to Capper, but Capper stood out clear against the light from the doorway.

Was there a chance?

If he dodged Capper and got in—if he up-ended the Fourth Form master and eluded his grasp—was there not a chance? He would be seen—seen clearly in the light—but if he eluded capture, would not his likeness to Wharton save him, as it had saved him before? Would not everyone believe that it was Harry Wharton who had been chased in the quad—if only he succeeded in getting back to the Remove dormitory uncaptured?

To the consequences to Wharton he gave not a single thought; he was only thinking of saving himself if he could.

Then like a flash came the remembrance—nobody could take him for Harry Wharton now. That chicken would not fight again. Wharton had a black eye; one glance would be enough.

Stacey groaned.

He heard the calling voices of the prefects. They had not found him yet—but they would find him. It was a matter of minutes. And when he ran again in the open bright starlight he would be run down. He had dodged them once; they would not let him dodge them again. He groaned aloud in his despair and misery.

No chance—no chance! He had laughed over Billy Bunter's idiotic blunder and Wharton's black eye; but, except for that—

His thoughts raced.

At the end of his resources, came another flashing thought. It was born of utter desperation.

He groped in his pocket with a trembling hand and took out a fountain-pen; he unscrewed it and dripped ink from it to his finger.

He rubbed the inky finger round his right eye.

If he was seen now—

His eyes glittered.

There had been an element of doubt on previous occasions when he had been taken for Wharton, but there would be no doubt now if he was seen with a black eye. Only one of the doubles had a black eye. And the ink rubbed round his eye gave him precisely the aspect of a fellow whose eye was blackened.

He screwed up the fountain-pen and slipped it into his pocket. If only he got past Capper uncaught!

If he was grabbed and held, the game was up; if he got by, he was safe. He had to take the chance.

"This way!" came Wingate's shout.

Had he seen him?

Stacey hesitated no more.

Leaving the cover of the elm, he raced towards the House steps, right at the astonished Mr. Capper.

Capper, standing on the steps, stared at him face to face as he came.

He knew him now—or thought he did. What he saw was a fellow who was exactly like Harry Wharton in form and feature, and who had apparently a black eye.

Wharton's black eye had been seen by every other eye at Greyfriars. He was the only fellow in the school who had one; such adornments were rather rare at Greyfriars. Capper, staring, panted:

"Stop, Wharton—stop!"

From Quelch's window above came a roar; he had seen, too.

"Wharton!"

From the starry quad came a yell:

"There he is!"

"After him!"

"Stop him, sir!"

Stacey rushed up the steps. Mr.

Capper grabbed at him and caught him by the collar.

Up went Stacey's arm, striking aside the grasp of the Fourth Form master. Capper gave a startled gasp and lost his hold.

Stacey was past him the next second, tearing madly into the House. Capper was left spluttering.

"Wharton! Boy! Goodness gracious! Boy!"

Stacey raced up the stairs.

He heard a sound from the direction of the masters' rooms. Was Quelch coming?

But he was in the dormitory passage—racing. He reached the Remove door, slipped in, and closed the door softly behind him.

His heart beat like a hammer. They knew it was a Remove man—believed it was Wharton—they would come. If he was found out of bed—

The dormitory was silent; all were sleeping. Stacey was cool again—he had to keep cool. Silently, but swiftly, he reached his bed. Never had he stripped off his clothes so swiftly. There was no sound round him, save the steady breathing of sleepers and the snore of Billy Bunter. But at every moment he dreaded to hear footsteps coming up the passage.

He whipped the dummy from his bed. The Bouncer, who had been awake when he left, was fast asleep now. All were asleep. The calling voices in the quad did not reach the dormitories, and no fellow was likely to be awake at nearly two in the morning.

Stacey dipped a handkerchief into the jug on his washstand and rubbed the eye he had inked. He listened intently, but as yet there were no footsteps. But they would come.

He rubbed his eye clean.

The damp and inky handkerchief was twisted and shoved into a pocket. He slipped into bed. Footsteps were coming up the passage now.

He laid his head on the pillow and closed his eyes; and his eyes were closed as if in slumber as the door opened and the light was switched on in the Remove dormitory.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"WHARTON!"
Harry Wharton stirred in his slumber.

"Wharton!"

He opened his eyes sleepily. The cold, hard, contemptuous voice of his Form-master came to him, but he was not sure, half-awake, that he was not dreaming.

"You need not affect slumber, Wharton. You cannot, I presume, hope to deceive me now!"

Wharton sat up in bed.

He rubbed his eyes and blinked at Mr. Quelch standing by his bedside. The light was on in the Remove dormitory. What time it was Wharton did not know; but he knew that it must be very late.

Quelch stood by the bedside, Capper just inside the doorway, Wingate of the Sixth at the door; the other prefects had gone back to bed.

Three pairs of eyes were fixed on Harry as he sat up, still half-asleep, and blinking in the light. His blackened eye showed up prominently.

Nobody else had awakened so far. Stacey, motionless in bed, seemed as sound asleep as the rest.

"Wharton!" came Quelch's deep voice.

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Harry made an effort and pulled himself together, banishing the drowsy mists of sleep. He could not begin to understand what all this meant.

It flashed into his mind that a Remove man might have been caught out of bounds; he remembered what the Bouncer had told him of Stacey. He did not know whether Stacey had gone out or not, but this midnight visit from the beaks looked as if somebody had. But that was no reason why Quelch should awaken him. If they were after Stacey—

"What is it, sir?" asked Harry. "Has anything happened?"

The cold contempt in his Form-master's face stung him like the lash of a whip. He was wide awake now.

A flush came into his face and a glint into his eyes. What was he supposed to have done?

"You need not affect ignorance, Wharton!" Quelch's tones were cutting. "You were seen out of the House—"

"Out of the House!" repeated Harry. "Rubbish! I haven't been out of bed! I've been fast asleep—"

"I will not listen to falsehoods, Wharton!" interrupted Mr. Quelch icily.

Several other fellows had awakened now at the sound of voices. Frank Nugent sat up in the next bed.

The Bouncer sat up staring and grinning. Stacey had been snuffed—that was the Bouncer's first thought.

Then, as he saw that attention was concentrated on Wharton, he simply stared. Had the fools seen Stacey and taken him for Wharton, as they had done before? How could they when Wharton had a black eye and Stacey hadn't? If they had seen a fellow close enough to recognise him they must have seen whether he had a black eye or not.

The Bouncer had counted it a certainty this time that Stacey could not derive any advantage from his likeness to Wharton. Then what had happened?

More and more fellows awoke. They listened in amazement to the cold, hard voice of Mr. Quelch.

"You have been out of bounds, Wharton, at this hour of the night!"

"I have not!"

"You were seen—not only by me from my window, but by Mr. Capper!"

Harry Wharton broke into an angry laugh.

"You've seen somebody, sir, I've no doubt! You did not see me, as I have not been out of bed."

He guessed now! Stacey had broken out, as the Bouncer had declared that he intended to do. And they believed—as usual—that it was Stacey's double who was the culprit.

Wharton, for the moment, was sardonically amused. Was there not, as it happened, due to Billy Bunter, so marked a distinction between him and his double, that deception was impossible?

Quelch glared at him.

"Do you think this a laughing matter, Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry coolly, "I do! You've seen somebody you have taken for me—you've done the same thing before! But I suppose that the fellow you've seen out of the House didn't have a black eye!"

"What?"

"You can see that my eye is black, I suppose, sir!" said Harry. "It's plain enough to be seen, I think."

He looked at Quelch mockingly. The Bouncer grinned.

If they had seen Stacey, and taken him for Wharton, they must have forgotten that black eye! They had to remember it now.

But Mr. Quelch did not look confused and disconcerted, as Wharton fully expected. His glare grew sterner.

"I hardly understand you, Wharton! What do you mean?"

"I should think my meaning was clear enough," retorted Wharton. "I've got a black eye—nobody else at Greyfriars has. If you've seen any fellow out of the House, you can pick from all the school, but you can't pick on me."

Many glances turned on Stacey's bed. There was no movement there. Was he there and asleep—or was that figure of a sleeper a carefully contrived dummy? The Bouncer believed the latter.

He had shut Stacey out of the House, and he did not see how the fellow could have got in. No doubt he had been spotted, in trying to get in somehow. But Smithy was ignorant as yet that he had got in.

"Is this sheer impudence, or what?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Frank Nugent broke in.

"It's plain enough, sir! Wharton has not been out of the House—"

"Have you been awake, Nugent?"

"No, sir."

"Then you can know nothing about the matter. Be silent."

"I know that Wharton hasn't been out of bounds," exclaimed Frank hotly, "and if a fellow's been seen, it's easy enough to prove. If you saw a fellow and recognised him, you must have seen his black eye if he had one."

"I did, Nugent!" said Mr. Quelch icily.

"What?" gasped Frank.

Wharton stared, stupefied.

"You saw a fellow with a black eye out of the House!" he stuttered.

"I did, Wharton!"

Wharton panted.

"You did not!" he shouted.

"Wharton!"

"I say you did not!" Wharton's face was crimson, his eyes blazing. "I say you did not, and I will appeal to the Head! You shall not shield your favourite by putting it on to me, Mr. Quelch."

"What!" gasped the Remove master.

"What did you dare to say, Wharton?"

"I said what you know to be true!" shouted Wharton, utterly reckless now.

"You've seen Stacey out of bounds, and you are pretending to think that it was I—and you know it was not."

Mr. Quelch stood thunderstruck. There was a murmur from bed to bed along the dormitory. Never had the Removites heard their Form-master addressed in this fashion before. But Wharton was past caring what he said.

Quelch had been mistaken before! He could not have been mistaken this time! How could he have been? What could Wharton think, except that his Form-master was determined to save his favourite at all costs? It was a wild and unjust suspicion, but to the angry and indignant junior it seemed a certain truth at the moment.

"Good heavens!" breathed Mr. Quelch. "This boy's insolence and depravity seem to pass all bounds! Wharton, such unscrupulous falsehoods—"

"It's the truth, and you know it!" roared Wharton. "And the Head will see that justice is done."

"The Head certainly will see that justice is done!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "You will receive stern justice, Wharton—you need have no doubt of that."

"That's all I want!" retorted Wharton. "You've seen Stacey out of bounds before, and fancied that you



As Stacey rushed up the steps, Mr. Capper grabbed at him. Up went Stacey's arm, striking aside the grasp of the Fourth Form master. Capper gave a startled gasp, and lost his hold, and the next second the junior was past him, tearing madly into the House!

saw me. This time you know it wasn't!"

"Is the boy out of his senses?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, almost as bewildered as angry. "If it is possible, Wharton, that you dare to cast doubt on your Form-master's word, you were seen by others as well as myself. Mr. Capper saw you face to face."

"Certainly I did!" said the Fourth Form master.

Wharton looked at him.

"You, sir! You saw a fellow out of the House—"

"Certainly!" snapped Mr. Capper.

"A fellow like me—"

"I saw you!"

"Did the fellow you saw have a black eye?" hissed Wharton.

"Yes!"

"I saw you, too, Wharton!" said Wingate, quietly, from the door. "I saw you as you ran at Mr. Capper. I saw that your eye was black in the light from the doorway. What's the use of all this?"

Wharton gazed at him dumbfounded.

If they had seen a junior with a black eye they had seen him! He wondered whether this was a nightmare. If Quelch was trying to shield his favourite, Capper certainly was not, nor Wingate! What did it—what could it all mean?

A dead silence followed.

It was broken by the Bounder. This new development had taken Vernon-Smith entirely by surprise. How could they fancy a fellow had a black eye when he hadn't? Had Stacey got into a row during his night out, and by some amazing chance come back with a black eye? The Bounder, at all events, would not remain silent while Wharton was condemned.

He stepped from his bed, "Mr. Quelch—"

"You need not speak, Vernon-Smith!" snapped the Remove master.

"I've got something to say, sir!" answered the Bounder coolly. "Wharton's not going to get it in the neck for Stacey this time. You're going to know who was out of the House!"

He stepped quickly to Stacey's bed, grasped the bedclothes, and whipped them off. He had no doubt that a dummy would be revealed in the bed.

The next moment he staggered back in helpless astonishment. There was no dummy in the bed. Ralph Stacey sat up, rubbed his eyes, and yawned.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Condemned!

STACEY sat and stared round him.

His look was that of a fellow suddenly awakened, who did not understand what was going on.

Vernon-Smith stared at him like a fellow in a dream.

Stacey was there!

If he had been out he had got back! There he was! Smithy felt as if his head was turning round. Had he made an egregious mistake, and watched the wrong fellow in the dark breaking bounds? He had been certain, he had taken it for granted, that it was Stacey who had left the dormitory at half-past ten. Was it, after all, Wharton that he had shut out?

His bed was some distance from Stacey's—and the dormitory had been very dark. He might have made such a mistake—if it was not, after all, Stacey who had gone. But—

The Bounder stood bewildered.

Stacey was there—and a fellow like Stacey, but with a black eye, had been

seen out of the House by two masters and a prefect! The Bounder stared at Stacey—almost gibbered at him in his amazement. Mr. Quelch's voice came sharply and angrily.

"Vernon-Smith! Go back to bed at once! How dare you intervene in this matter?"

"I—I thought—" The Bounder stammered helplessly.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" asked Stacey meekly.

"Yes, Stacey; something is very much the matter," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry to say that your relative has been discovered in the very act of disgracing himself and the school, and that he will be taken to the headmaster in the morning for sentence. But you, my dear boy, must not consider his disgrace as reflecting on you. You are in no way answerable for the misdoings of your relative."

Stacey winced; he had a conscience of sorts.

The colour came into his cheeks, and he sat silent. Ogilvy's voice was heard.

"You silly ass, Smithy! Did you think it was Stacey?"

"Fathead!" said Russell.

A resonant snore, which had been going on all this time, ceased. Billy Bunter had awakened, last of the Remove. He sat up and blinked, and squeaked in alarm:

"I say, you fellows, what's up? I say, is it burglars? I say, is the House on fire? Help!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say—help!" yelled Bunter. "I say, somebody go and call Quelch! I'll bet that old ass is fast asleep, with the House on fire—"

"Bunter!" came a startling voice.

"Oh lor! I—I didn't see you, sir—oh crikey!"

"Be silent, you foolish boy!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter realised that the House was not on fire. He groped for his spectacles, jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at the scene in great astonishment.

Mr. Quelch turned back to Wharton.

Harry was silent, dazed. His outbreak of fierce anger had passed, leaving him in a state of hopeless bewilderment. He was condemned—he knew that; and condemned, as it seemed, on indisputable evidence. Somehow or other his double had "wangled" this—but how, he could not begin to guess. His chums were looking at him—in silence. They simply did not know what to think.

"Wharton!" came Quelch's hard voice.

Wharton looked at him. He did not speak. What could he say?

"On previous occasions," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "some shadow of a doubt might have existed, owing to your resemblance to another boy in this Form. You have been given the benefit of that doubt, such as it was. On the present occasion no shadow of doubt exists. You cannot pretend that it was Stacey out of the House when your blackened eye was seen by three different persons. Leave your bed and dress yourself."

Wharton found his voice.

"I've not been out, sir——"

"Silence! Dress yourself at once," said the Remove master harshly. "You will be taken to the punishment-room for the remainder of the night. I shall not trust you, Wharton. Wingate, will you kindly call Trotter, and ask him to prepare the room?"

"Yes, sir."

Wingate went down the passage. Mr. Capper, after a last curious look at Wharton, followed.

Harry dressed himself quickly.

Mr. Quelch waited.

His face was as hard as if moulded in iron. Every fellow, looking at him, knew that the culprit had no mercy to expect. Wharton was to be locked in "punny" for the night—to be taken thence before the Head in the morning—and sacked. Most likely the Remove fellows were seeing him for the last time! Frank Nugent's face was white. He did not know what to believe, but his heart ached for his chum.

"Follow me, Wharton!"

"Very well, sir."

Wharton glanced at the pale, troubled faces of his friends.

"You fellows——" he began.

"You need say nothing to the other boys, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch harshly.

"I will speak to them before I go, sir," answered Harry, "and you shall not stop me!"

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. He made a grasp at Wharton's shoulder, and the junior sprang back and eluded him.

"Harry!" panted Nugent.

"You fellows, it looks as if I'm going to be sacked! That cur Stacey has got away with it this time—how, I don't know!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"He's done me this time—done me to the wide!" said Wharton steadily. "I don't know how he's worked it, but he has."

He turned his eyes on Stacey.

"You rotter!" he said. "You've got away with it somehow, but I'd rather be in my place than yours. And you'll be found out some day—you won't have a double to land it on when I'm gone. You——"

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"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch made another grasp and caught him by the shoulder. Wharton was almost dragged to the door.

"Cheerio, Wharton!" called out Lord Mauleverer. "You've got friends here who stick to you, old bean!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes flashed round at him.

"Mauleverer!"

"Yaas, sir?"

"Take five hundred lines!"

"Yaas! Thank you, sir!"

The light was turned off—the door shut! Wharton was gone! The Remove were left to go to sleep again—if they could. But it was long before even Billy Bunter's eyes closed again.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up for the Sack

"WHARTON——"
"In punny——"
"Sacked——"

"Going to be sacked——"

"Well, I've seen it coming, for one."

"Same here!"

It was all over the school in the morning. Every fellow, from the head of the Sixth down to the smallest and inkiest fag, talked about it.

Many were the comments—most of them unfavourable to the hapless junior locked in the punishment-room.

Which of the "doubles" of the Remove was the black sheep had been a disputed point. But how could it be disputed now?

A majority had backed Stacey, influenced by Mr. Quelch's opinion and by Stacey's wonderful exploits as a cricketer. But fellows who had clung to their faith in Wharton had to doubt now. When a fellow was actually spotted, how could there be further dispute?

The Co. remained loyal. They could not and would not believe that Harry Wharton had deluded them. It was as Bob Cherry said, all rot; and Hurree Janset Ram Singh declared emphatically that the rotfulness was terrific. But even the faith of his best friends was put to a severe strain. For the evidence was irrefragable.

The Bounder, was puzzled and troubled. The Co. were deeply worried, though determined not to doubt their chum. In all the Remove only one fellow was serenely unshaken. That was Lord Mauleverer. Mauly had no use for evidence. Mauly did not undertake to explain the matter. He was not good at riddles. But no amount of evidence was going to convince him that a fellow he trusted was unworthy of his trust. He knew that Wharton was all right—and he said so.

"Don't you men worry!" Mauly told the Co. after breakfast in the morning. "The Head can't sack a man for what he hasn't done."

"But they've proved it!" said Bob Cherry dismally. "I—I jolly well know it isn't true, and can't be—but they've got proof all the same."

"The evidence is terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh, with a doleful shake of his dusky head.

"Evidence," said Lord Mauleverer oracularly, "is all rot! If I ever become a judge——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If I ever become a judge," said Mauly calmly "I shan't listen to any evidence! Look at the evidence in this jolly old case—absolute proof that poor old Wharton was out of the House, when we jolly well know that

he was in bed and fast asleep. Evidence is all bunk!"

"I hope the Head will think so!" said Johnny Bull, with a dismal grin.

"The Head's a downy old bird!" said Lord Mauleverer confidently. "He won't sack a man for nothing! Depend on it!"

The Co. could only hope that Mauly was right. But they could not help fearing that the Head would attach rather more importance to evidence than his lordship did.

There was a buzz in Hall at breakfast. "Sackings" were extremely rare at Greyfriars—hardly a fellow remembered one. Fellows had come near it, sometimes—indeed, it was often wondered how the Bounder and Price of the Fifth eluded it. But it seldom happened—and now it was going to happen! Wharton's friends might hope; but they knew that the hope was faint—very faint!

"Caught in the act!" Skinner remarked to a crowd of fellows. "His uncle being a governor of the school won't make any difference—Wharton's going to get it in the neck. I can't say I'm surprised! I always fancied that chap was a bit of a humbug!"

Nobody knew, so far, whether it was to be a public expulsion or not. Some of the fellows, perhaps, would have preferred the excitement of one. But when Greyfriars went in to first school, it was known that Wharton was still locked in "punny," and had not yet been up to the Head. Fellows peered round corners, to see the Head on his way to the Sixth Form Room that morning.

Those who saw him reported that the Big Beak was looking very solemn. Quelch, no doubt, had already made his report to the Head, though the culprit had not been taken up for judgment yet.

There was a vacant place in the Remove-room that morning.

And four faces, at least, were woefully dismal.

The Co. were wondering miserably whether they would see their chum again before he left. For, in spite of Mauly's cheery assurances, they had hardly any doubt that he was leaving.

Mr. Quelch was very grim, and a little perturbed that morning. An expulsion in his Form could be pleasing to no Form-master. And he had not forgotten that the condemned junior had once been his trusted head boy, and that he had hoped great things from him. It was a blow to Mr. Quelch, little as Wharton guessed it.

In class that morning Herbert Vernon-Smith glanced many times at the calm, sedate face of Stacey. The fellow looked grave, as was natural when his relative was going to be sacked. There was nothing else to be read in his face.

How had he worked it?

That was the question the Bounder asked himself.

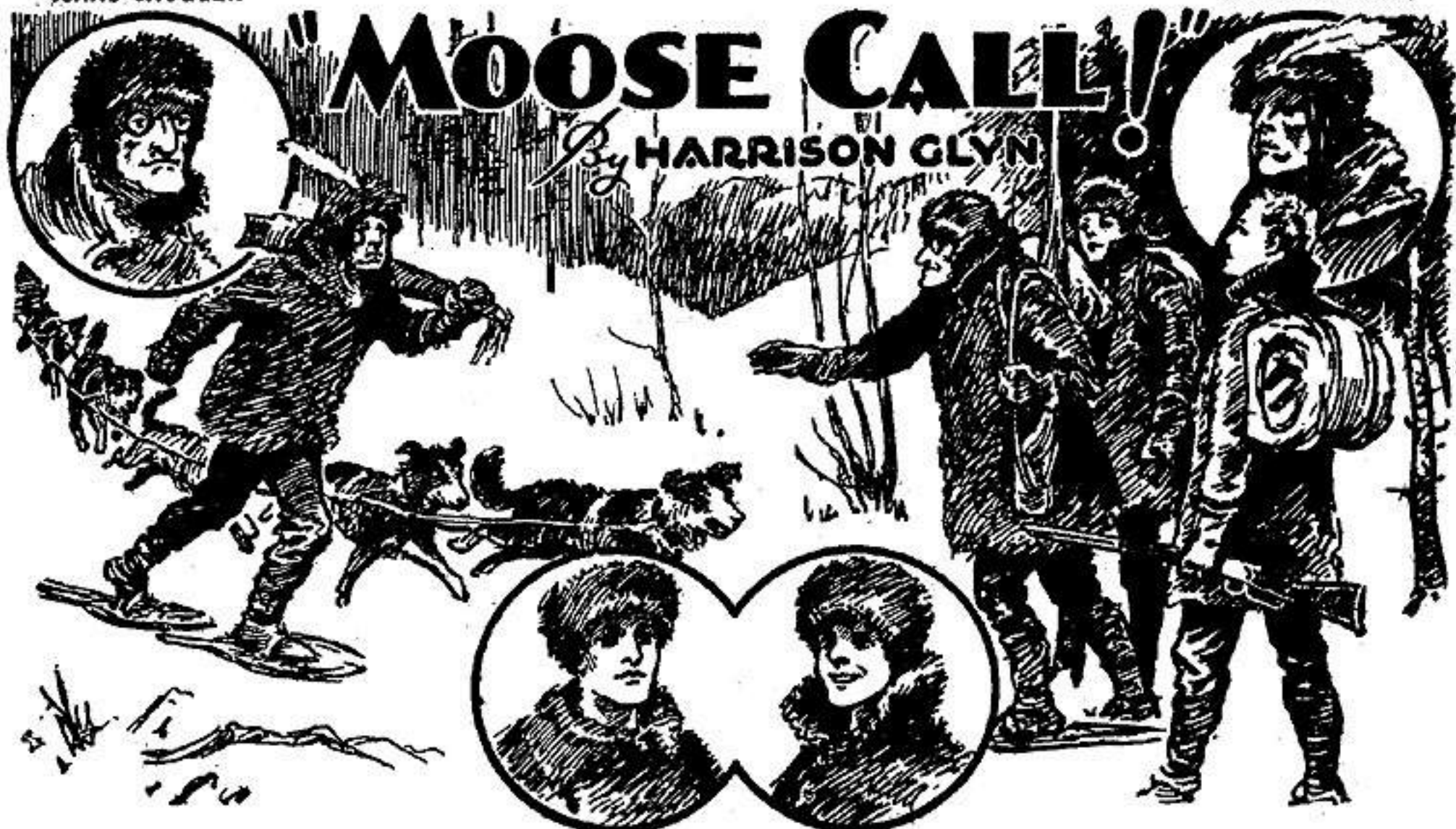
For, in Smithy's mind, reflection had banished doubts. He had made no mistake in the dark—it was Stacey, not Wharton, who had got out of the House, and whom he had shut out. It was Stacey who had been seen and chased in the quad—and they had fancied the black eye! Or——

Smithy's mind followed a new train of thought. He gave no attention whatever to Mr. Quelch in class. Twice he was called to order—then

(Continued on page 28.)

ISAAC SNUGGER

MOUNTAIN LION



SELWYN and COLIN

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Learning that their Uncle Amyas, a gold prospector, has been murdered in Canada, Selwyn Gore and his brother, Colin, set out for Moose Call, determined to settle accounts with the murderers. En route, the boys meet Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian and friend of Amyas Gore, who leads them to the Great Chief's Head, in the Sunrise Mountains, where they discover the murdered man's claim. Leaving the Indian to keep watch, Selwyn and Colin make for the homeward trail to register the claim. They are ambushed, however, by a gang of toughs led by Majoe and Musty, who have already registered the claim, but do not know its whereabouts. Majoe threatens to throw Colin over the mountainside unless the boys divulge the whereabouts of the claim. Colin is defiant, but Selwyn gives way. "Wait," he says, "and I'll show you the way!"

(Now read on.)

Selwyn Has a Plan!

"**W**AIT?" stormed Majoe. "Why wait?"

"Well," answered Selwyn, smiling in spite of the grimness of the ordeal, "we've got some climbing to do. Unless we have something to eat we'll be too weak to climb. It would be no good your trying to find the place without us."

Majoe eyed Selwyn suspiciously, but gave the order.

"Give 'em something to eat!" he said.

The food was rough—hard biscuit, dry bread, and water. As he ate, Selwyn's brain began to clear, and a problem which had seemed impossible of solution a few short minutes before became crystal clear.

With a bit of luck they could get the better of Majoe and his murderous gang. They might find the gold, but then—

Colin had edged close to Selwyn. He looked inquiringly at his brother. He had never known Sel to sell a pal, lose

a game through faint-heartedness, betray a secret, or show funk. Of course, Sel had promised to show Majoe and his murderers the Amyas Gore claim to save his life, but Colin wondered whether he would fulfil that promise.

"Don't forget they mean to kill us whether we show them the way to the claim or not, Sel," said Colin.

Selwyn nodded, and his blue eyes shone as he looked at his brother.

"I know they do—but they may not," he answered. "We've got to show them the slide hole, Col; but I'm going to make my last bargain when we get up there."

"But—" Colin wanted to ask a lot more questions, but refrained, for the gang were hovering near, waiting impatiently for them to finish eating.

"Get outside that grub," said Majoe impatiently, "for we want to start!"

Selwyn finished eating, and then rose. He turned to Colin with an encouraging smile.

"Stick it, Col!" he said. "And keep close by me in the climb. I want you next to me when we reach the slide hole."

Majoe, however, noticed them whispering.

"Keep them Britishers apart!" he rapped out. "They're planning something. Bring the big un over byar. Now, kid, get busy, and show us where this claim is!"

Selwyn, who was feeling much stronger and better, at once took command.

"There's only one way to the claim, and once you get in, there's only one way out. You'd never find the way in unless we showed you."

"If you're tricking us," threatened Majoe, "it's the last thing you'll ever do! Lead on!"

"Bring everything you've got, then, as you'll have to return by another route. Pick up your packs and guns and keep your hands free, because it's a stiff climb."

"You're tellin' us!" sneered Musty.

"I should hate to tell you anything, you poisonous rat!" answered Selwyn.

"Now, if you're all ready, follow me!"

Selwyn led the way farther up the trail, conscious that he was covered from behind. Colin, too, had a gun trained on him. At the foot of the rock up which Mountain Lion had swarmed to show the two brothers the slide hole, Selwyn halted.

"We've got to get up there!" he said. "Colin, show the way."

"Wait!" snapped Majoe. "I'll go first!"

"Oh, you can go first if you like," said Selwyn impatiently, "but you'll never find the way!"

"I'll go second, then," snapped Majoe, "and if the kid plays any tricks I'll pump lead into him!"

"Up you go, then, Col, if you think you can manage it," said Selwyn.

The gang were staring up doubtfully at the steep face of the cliff. They could see no foothold, very little to cling to. But it was the dull, even tone of the rock which gave that impression, as Selwyn knew.

Colin remembered the climb as clearly as if he had only just accomplished it. He gained the first toe-hold, groped with his hands, gripped, and then pulled himself upwards. Again he felt for foothold, found it, and climbed. He was spreadeagled against the rock face in the same way that Mountain Lion had been on the night of the stampede.

Majoe followed him, encumbered by the pack on his back and the rifle and guns he carried. He made much slower progress, Colin getting to the narrow ledge above far in advance of him.

After Majoe, came Selwyn, climbing easily, his eyes shining brightly. Selwyn's heart was beating rapidly, for his plan was taking shape. It was a great plan, if only he could manage it.

Colin was in front and the gang were all trailing up behind. Two of them had slipped down and bruised themselves at the first attempt, and were cursing loudly from the level below. Musty came next to Selwyn. He did not intend to let the boy out of his

sight, and his evil face registered doubt and suspicion.

As soon as Colin was able to stand erect on the narrow ledge which ran past the slide hole, he paused and turned round.

One false step and he would go hurtling over the edge to the hard rock below, which would mean broken limbs if not certain death.

Majoe gained the ledge, gripped it with his dirty hands, and peered along the narrow, irregular pathway doubtfully.

"Heck!" he snorted. "Are we expected to go along thar?"

"Please yourself," answered Selwyn, from behind him. "But you want us to show you the way to the claim. This is it. Go back if you don't like it."

Majoe hauled himself up higher, found the ledge with his knee, and gropingly scrambled to his feet. He was so big that it was difficult for him to maintain his balance on the narrow ledge, and the sweat was pouring down his grimy face. Fear shone in his dark eyes. It was plain to see that he did not like it.

"What now?" he asked.

"Better let me come by and go on with my brother Colin," said Selwyn.

But Majoe demurred, his crafty eyes glinting cunningly.

"No!" he snarled. "You two go separate!"

"All right! O.K., Colin," said Selwyn. "Carry on."

Colin advanced cautiously, feeling every step, and mounted up the rising track to the place where the slide hole was bored through the cliff face.

He reached it at last.

"Here we are!" he said cheerily.

"Here we are, where, an' what?" growled Majoe, as he laboured up behind.

He had been obliged to slip his gun back into its holster, and he was not at all pleased with things. He glanced round at the toughs coming gingerly on, their packs sticking out behind, shuffling their feet along sideways. One man's hat blew off, and he cursed as it went soaring away on the wind. Certainly Majoe was not pleased with the way things were going.

"Move along a bit, Col, and let Majoe get a look in," said Selwyn.

Colin obediently made room.

John Majoe was immediately in front of the slide hole, and here the path was not only wider, but was protected by a stone edging which rose a foot or two above the track. When it rained the water gushed along the track and poured down through the slide hole, gradually deepening and widening the channel in the arena below as it had been doing for ages.

"Do you see that hole?" said Selwyn, pointing, while Majoe bent to look. "Well, that's the way to the claim. You slide down the tackle you want to take with you, and then slide down after it. It's like a shoot, and you come right out into a wide arena which is chockful of gold."

Majoe looked down into the hole, then set back his head.

"Do you expect me to believe that?" he asked, laughing derisively. "I see the little game. You want me and the boys to go slidin' down thar to our deaths. Oh, no, we're too old to be caught in that little net!"

The moment Selwyn had hoped for had arrived.

"Then let me and my brother slide

down first and show the way," he said. "And you and the others can follow."

Selwyn spoke as if it were a matter of little consequence. But Majoe was all suspicion.

"Not likely," he jeered. "Let you two Britishers fool us like that? Nothing doing! You show the way, and I'll hold your brother hostage. And if thar's any trickery, out goes his light like a snuffed candle!"

The trouble was that Majoe stood between the two brothers, otherwise all Selwyn had to do was shout to Colin to follow and slide down through the hole. If they were quick about it they could race to the waterfall, and perhaps even gain the way out before the gang spotted them. Everything was in their favour. They carried no packs, no guns. But Selwyn had to give Colin his chance.

"Rubbish!" he said. "I told you that we can't come back this way. If you want to reach the claim you've all got to slide through this hole. What does it matter how we go? We'll show you the way."

But Majoe was stubborn, suspicious, he did not believe. Whipping out his gun, he held it threateningly, and turned to leer at Colin.

"No," he said, "I'm keeping this kid hyar by me. You can go through that hole if you like; and you've got to go and shout to me all clear before I go bumpin' down into trouble I don't know. I might go slidin' to my death down thar."

Selwyn sighed wearily.

"If that was the case we'd have to slide to our death, wouldn't we, if we went first?" he said.

"I don't want any argument. You slide, and we'll see what happens."

"Bump 'em off and have done with it, Jack!" bellowed Musty, who was growing tired of clinging to the narrow trail like a mountain goat.

Majoe turned his six-gun on Selwyn. "Show us the way to the claim!" he roared.

Braced to action, and having thought it out, Selwyn suddenly stormed into battle. Transferring his weight from his right foot to his left, he hit Majoe under the chin with every ounce of strength he had in him.

The blow was unexpected, and Blackbeard reeled over.

Before he could recover his balance, however, Selwyn gave him another and deciding punch that hurled him backwards over the brink. As he disappeared, with a shriek of dismay, Majoe's gun went off, the bullet flying skyward as his body hurtled to the rocky place forty feet below.

It was now or never.

"Come on, Col!" cried Selwyn, as he dropped down and slid his feet into the slide hole.

Musty fired at him even as he dropped, the bullet whistling over Selwyn's head. The next second Selwyn was in the hole and sliding from view.

Colin saw that gun in Musty's hands, and, with a leap, got in front of the hole, dropped, and slid after Selwyn, the second shot roaring out as he vanished.

Musty came on, to bend and stare down into the hole. The entrance was polished by countless rainstorms and many centuries of melting snows. Musty gazed through the opening unbelievably. As he strained his ears to listen he thought he could hear the happy, triumphant shouts of the boys somewhere on the other side of the rocky wall through which the hole was

bored. For half a minute he crouched there, hesitating.

Then he pushed his gun into its case and began to slip off rifle and pack.

"The claim must be somewhar!" he snorted. "Why not hyar? The kids knew the hole. And Mountain Lion must hev showed it to 'em. Off with your packs, boys, and take care of your guns. We can't help Majoe now. But you an' me mean to git them boys and wash that gold."

So saying, he slid his pack down through the hole, and then, dropping down feet-first, edged himself into the hole, holding on to his Winchester.

"Here she goes!" he roared, and next moment slid from view like a toboggan along an icy slide.

A Dash for Safety!

SELWYN slid down through the hole with feet spread wide and the welts of his shoes gripping the smooth, worn rock.

His progress was swift, yet controlled, and, having been down the slide before, he landed on his feet when the run hurled him out, kept his balance, and ran down the boulder-strewn slope to the level ground below. There he turned and watched for his brother.

Colin shot into view a few seconds later, stumbled as he landed, regained his feet, and then came leaping down to Selwyn. His eyes were shining, his face was flushed with excitement, and he was breathing quickly.

"Thanks, Sel, old sport!" he gasped. "That was a near thing. I thought it was all over with us when those brutes threatened to hang me over the cliff. Crumbs! When you said at first that you'd show those villains the way here I thought you were going to sell the party, old chap."

"The plan came to me in a flash," answered Selwyn. "But let's hide quick, for the whole lot of them will come crashing through in a minute."

Selwyn's keen eyes espied a jutting wall of rock about a hundred yards away. It lay in the direction of the waterfall which marked the only way out of the amphitheatre.

"This way!" he yelled, as he darted for cover with Colin at his heels.

The two brothers darted behind the rocky wall and crouched there, scarcely daring to peep out.

Colin grinned happily.

"If we have to go out now it won't be so bad," he said, "because you fairly settled with John Majoe."

Selwyn nodded, then wheeled round suddenly.

"Look!" he cried. "They're coming!"

Colin crouched and peeped out from behind the rock. He saw Musty Wilmot, who had just come down the slide, bounce on his beam end with feet flying upwards, then try to rise, only to entangle his rifle between his legs and come down a purler which left him breathless.

As Musty staggered, cursing, down to the level ground below, another of the rascals came sliding into view. It was the fellow called Slick. He bumped upon the rocks, turned over, and then scrambled up, gripping his Winchester.

A pack hurtled through the slide hole on to the rocks, rolled over, and was retrieved by Slick. A miner's cradle followed. Then came a pick, a shovel, another pack, a second cradle, and some bundles of stores and other things in swift succession.

After these had been gathered and removed another of the gang came down the shoot. He was followed at irregular intervals by the rest, and, to the brothers' surprise, the last but one of the gang to arrive was—their enemy, John Majoe!

Majoe brought his rifle with him and limped painfully down to where Musty, jaws agape and eyes staring, waited.

Majoe glared at him, and, setting his hand to a gun-butt, barked out so loudly that the boys could hear every word:

"Thought I was done in, didn't yer, Musty? Thought that was good for you, thinkin' you could steal my share of the gold. But I'm hyar! And I ain't hurt, barrin' a scratch or two!"

"I saw you fall, Jack," answered Musty, "but I never thought nothing. We'd got to go after the Britishers. We were hangin' on to that ledge like flies. Goin' back to help you didn't look so easy."

"Waal, I landed light, bounced off the rock on to some scree, and that broke my tumble. Slid down to the track with a scraped knee, an' a scratched face, and that's all."

Majoe glared around the amphitheatre, somewhat surprised to see the mountain stream running through it, and then scanned every near-by place for a sight of the two brothers.

"Them Britishers kem through hyar, didn't they?" he bawled. "Waal, then, whar are they?"

Musty fingered his guns to make sure they were O.K., took a peep at his Winchester, and then peered along the uneven wall of rock behind which Selwyn and Colin had hidden.

"Don't you worry, boss," he said viciously, "them boys said thar wuz no way out of here. We'll get 'em. They can't be far away. I kem through right on their tails, and they wasn't in sight when I bounced on to the rock."

"Waal, hunt 'em out!" shouted Majoe. "An' the moment you spot 'em, shoot! Don't give 'em a chance. Reckon they ain't fooled us this time. This must be Amyas Gore's claim right enough. We'll bump them Britishers off and then get the gold."

The men were about to scatter for the search when one of them, happening to look down, caught the gleam of bright golden specks shining in the ground about them. Dropping on to his knees, he began to scrape at the soil, turning it over and eyeing it almost unbelievably.

The others, seeing what he was at, hesitated, dangling their guns.

"Gold!" bellowed the man excitedly. "Gold! Gold worth millions! We're rich for life! Gold! Gold!"

The rest of the toughs glared at him for a moment incredulously, then one of them, in his greedy panic, smote the gold-finder under the jaw, hurled him away, and, kneeling on the damp soil, began to gather up the particles. The rest of the gang dropped their guns. All thought of pursuing Selwyn and Colin was forgotten.

The man who had been floored pulled out a revolver, but another knocked his gun up as he pulled the trigger.

Musty tore down on them.

"You crazy loonies," he shouted. "The gold will keep. There's enough for all. We've got to find them Britishers. Can't have them carrying around no fairy tales."

Majoe came up, his lined and dirty face scratched and bleeding where he had scraped it on the scree in his fall. He had lost his hat and his matted hair tumbled about his face and ears in tangled disorder. His lips were pulled down in a devilish grimace.

"I'll fire on the first one of you that



Selwyn's fist shot out suddenly, catching Blackbeard under the chin and sending him hurtling backwards over the brink!

won't obey orders!" he yelled. "Who's boss hyar? Tell me that?"

The gold-seekers stopped their scrapping at the soil and peered up at their leader sulkily. Majoe had always dominated them, and they were still afraid of him.

"Nose them Britishers out and shoot at sight," he ordered.

At that very moment, Musty, who had walked on a little way, saw Selwyn and Colin running close in to the wall of rock towards a place where the stream ran rippling over the edge.

In a second he had his rifle pressed against his shoulder, and—braang!—a bullet whistled close by Selwyn's ear.

"There they go!" bawled Majoe. "Train your guns on 'em! After 'em! Shoot 'em down! They can't get away! We've got 'em!"

Selwyn and Colin had hoped to be able to reach the treacherous winding rocky pathway leading down to the falls before the gang spotted them. But the luck didn't hold. Revolvers cracked, and rifles rang, and then, with loud oaths and wild shouts, the eight men came racing after them, Musty keeping discreetly to the rear, Majoe running last because he had been lamed in his tumble.

"Beat them to it, Col!" shouted Selwyn, as he dodged behind his younger brother, seeking to protect him from the bullets. "It isn't far to the way down. If we can only reach shelter before they reach the top of the fall, we may be able to get away."

"But we'll be showing them the way out, Sel," replied Colin, as he quickened his stride.

"Doesn't matter. Once we can get down the mountains we'll soon get in touch with Mountain Lion. If we can only trap Majoe and his brutes up here—"

Bullets whistled past the heads of the boys, hit the ground close by, and chipped fragments from the rocks. But they ran on and outdistanced the

heavily built and clumsily clothed toughs.

Selwyn uttered a shout of joy as he saw the way turn round the rocky cliff and lead steeply down to the fall.

"Go it, Col!" he urged.

Colin saw the promise of shelter and sprinted. He slithered pantingly from view of the pursuers, and in a moment Selwyn was behind him.

"Grand!" said Selwyn, his eyes shining hopefully as he saw the trail leading steeply down.

A Near Thing!

MOUNTAIN LION had shown the two brothers the way out of the amphitheatre.

Selwyn thought he could remember every point of the route, while Colin had no doubt about it.

But when they had descended about eighty feet, the mountain torrent, which was running with nothing like the speed and volume it had attained when last they had seen it, ran shallowly and smoothly over a worn rim of rock and plashed into a basin below.

As he came to the spot, Colin hesitated.

"Which way do we go, Sel?" he asked. "I think Mountain Lion turned to the right here."

Selwyn joined his brother and looked warily at the fall.

"I almost think you're right, Col," he returned. "But if you remember we splashed through the water here."

"Of course we did," rejoined Colin. "And yet I could have bet we went to the right. Don't you remember, some distance lower down, the fall breaks up, turning right and left? We took the right-hand path down."

But the two boys could not see the division of the fall. Below, where the water tumbled into the natural basin, it poured smoothly out and went roaring musically down the mountainside.

"You stay here, Col," said Selwyn. "I'll go down and look, and then I'll sing out which is the right way."

Just as he was about to move, however, a shout from higher up the fall told him they had been seen. The next moment a bullet ruffled his hair as a revolver-shot rang echoing up above.

Turning, Selwyn saw one of the men standing right out in the fall, poised on a spur of rock, aiming deliberately at him and his brother as they made big stationary targets down below. It was no time for hesitation, no time for them to go exploring. They must act, and quickly.

Remembering that Mountain Lion had led them through a splash just about here, Selwyn led the way through the smooth fast-flowing water that raced over the rim of polished stone.

The ice-cold mountain water reached half-way up to his knee, and twice he lost his balance and might have gone hurtling to his death, had not Colin steadied him with a touch from behind.

The man above saw that the boys must soon escape him, for where the boulder-strewn and jagged track led down on the left they would soon gain shelter. He fired three more shots in swift succession, and then came leaping down the fall. Here rocks, jutting out above the cataract of water that tumbled frothing down. Some were round, some were pointed, while others were flat or ragged, and whereas, when Selwyn and Colin had first seen them, they had been covered by the thunder of water from the melting snows, they now stood out bold and clear, forming steps, from one to another of which the bearded villain came leaping down.

Gaining a firm foothold on a square, flat rock, and gaining a better view of Selwyn from there, he took steady aim and fired again.

Selwyn threw Colin aside and dodged! But the bullet tore his coat, and he felt blood trickling warmly from a wound.

Moving his arm, he found that no bones had been shattered, and he scarcely felt the sting of the slight flesh wound.

The man let out a yell of disappointment as he saw the boys spring away again.

"Stop!" he yelled. "Come back!" Selwyn turned and peered up at the burly rascal. He must have weighed thirteen stones at least. His clothes were worn and dirty, his riding boots caked with mud. His shapeless, weather-stained hat was pulled down over a mat of shaggy, uncombed hair, and his face of copper brown made a deep contrast to his tawny, bleached beard. He stood balanced upon his heavy, nail-studded soles, and below him the steps of rock ran down to the rim over which the water rolled smoothly to the pool.

To all appearance these rocky steps promised firm foothold. Some of them were six feet square, the smallest two or three feet. By leaping down them, the bearded villain judged he must soon get level with the boys. No doubt he meant to follow them down the rocky trail. If once he got close, he would scarcely be likely to miss shooting them.

"Why not stay and take what's comin' to you!" he roared. "Want me to plug you from behind?"

Selwyn laughed back at him.

"Bah!" he shouted. "You couldn't hit a haystack!"

That did it! With an oath, the man leapt down to a rock six feet below him, steadied himself, sprang to another boulder three or four feet away, and then to a third right down in the middle of the fall, a large, flat-topped rock which divided the rushing waters.

He did not take the same care when he landed on this latter boulder. Its dark, greeny-black, dull surface was deceptive. The weed on it was dry on top, but moist and slimy underneath. He did not land upon it square, but with his feet a trifle in front of his body. In a flash his heels slipped from under him, he bumped down upon the treacherous boulder, and slid off it, clutching vainly at the stone as his body hurtled into the fall!

(Watch out for further exciting chapters of this popular adventure story in next week's MAGNET, chums!)

A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!

(Continued from page 24.)

he was given lines! He paid no heed.

When the Remove were dismissed in break the Bounder went out with the rest, his mind made up. He followed Stacey and faced him in the quad, under the star of a crowd of fellows. Smithy had something to say that he wanted other fellows to hear.

"Wharton's not gone yet, Stacey!" said Vernon-Smith.

Stacey looked at him.

"No?" he said.

"No! And," went on Vernon-Smith deliberately, "he's not going!"

"Glad to hear it, if it's true!" said Stacey, unmoved.

"And I'll tell you why he's not going!" said the Bounder. "He's not going—because I know who was out of bounds last night—I know who shoved some black on his eye to make it look like Wharton's black eye—and I'm going to prove it!"

Stacey's heart stood still for a moment.

"Do you fancy—"

"I don't fancy—I know!" said Smithy grimly. "And what I know I'm going to prove. Wharton's not going, Stacey—or if he goes he will come back! But when you pack your box you'll pack it for good!"

And the Bounder swung round on his heel and walked away. He left the other fellows in a buzz—Stacey silent as stone. What was the Bounder going to do? What could he do?

It was said of old that great is truth, and it must prevail! And the schemer of the Remove, outwardly so successful, felt with a shudder that it was true!

THE END.

(Next week's story of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled: "STANDING BY SMITHY!" and is undoubtedly the best in the series. Make sure of next Saturday's MAGNET, by ordering it from your newsagent to-day!)

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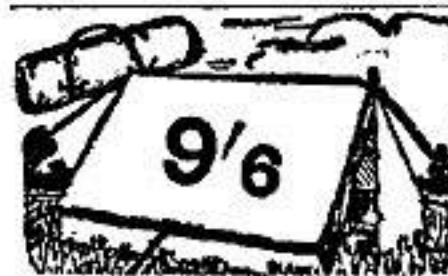
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CAUGHT NAPPING!

By DICKY NUGENT

"I'm afraid I won't be able to play cricket this afternoon."

Jack Jolly, of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, stared agast at Bright.

The Fourth were dew to play St. Bill's on Little Side in five minnits and St. Bill's were looked on as the tuffest proposition of the term. Yet here was Bill Bright, one of the best players in the Form, calmly saying he wasn't going to play!

"Why, you must be potty!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Why won't you be able to play, prey?"

Bright larfed—a pekuliar, merthless larf.

"Can't tell you," he said. "I've got my reason for not playing; but it's a privit and confidenshal one!"

The kaptin of the Fourth turned as red as a pony.

"This is a new stunt, isn't it—keeping things back from your pals?" he eride. "I suppose you're not going out blagging with Snarler & Co. by any chance? Well, if you won't play, you won't. I'll get Wealking to fill the vakancy and hoap for the best."

With that, Jack Jolly stamped out of the study, slamming the door after him with a slam that echoed through the House like a thunderclap.

Bill Bright winced, as he sank weerily back into a chair. It was pretty tuff, he reflected, to be on bad terms with Jack Jolly after all these years of frendship. But it couldn't be helped. He had a task to perform that afternoon that was much more important than a meer cricket-match; and perform it he would, though every one of his old pals turned their backs on him in konsekwench!

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!

It was the old skool clock, booming out the hour of three—which meant that the right time was bout five-past-two. Bright jumped to his feet.

"Twenty-past-two I herd Snarler say they'd begin their—game of nap in Muggleton Woods!" he muttered. "I shall be just in time!"

Putting on his cap, Bright went out. But if you've jumped to the conclusion that he was going out to play nap with Snarler in the woods, deer reader, you're grately mistaken. His object was quite a different one!

The fakt was that Bill Bright was going to Muggleton Woods for the eggpress purpose of saving his minor, Bertie Bright, from going to the dogs!

For some time Bright major had known that his minor was playing the giddy ox with Snarler & Co. of the Fourth, but this was the first chance he had had of stepping in at the right moment and putting an end to the alliance!

There was a grim smile on his face as he walked out of the gateway and turned his footsteps in the direction of Muggleton Woods. He knew what he was going to do. He would catch Snarler & Co. in the act of playing nap with his yung brother, then thrash them till they promised sollemly never to lead Bright minor astray again! That was Bright's programme, and he fully meant to carry it out—or be carried out himself!

In a matter of minnits, Bright found the sheltered glade in the woods where Snarler and Craven and Bounder minor—the three worst fellows in the Fourth at St. Sam's—were playing nap. His face darkened as he reckernised the fourth member of the party. As he had eggpected, it was his yung brother!

Bright stepped boldly into the midst of the gambollers—and as he did so, there was a yell of alarm from Snarler & Co. One glance at the newcomer was suffishant to toll the cadds of the Fourth that Bright meant bizzness!

"What do you want?" snarled Snarler, jumping to his feet.

"You, to start with!" retorted Bill Bright. "Take that!"

Bang!



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His clenched fist landed on Snarler's nose with a deffening crash, and Snarler, yelling with aggerny, shot back into a bed of stinging nettles.

"And now you take this!" added Bright, turning to Craven and Bounder minor.

He gave them a cupple of terribul blows to the chin and ear respectively, and Bounder minor and Craven crashed to the ground, moaning feebly.

Bright looked round for his minor. And then he got an uneggpected shock.

Standing in the place preeviously occupied by Bright minor, who had now fled, was a majestick figger in cap and gown whose appearance made Bright farely jump. It was Dr. Birchmall, the headmaster of St. Sam's!

"The—the Head!" gasped Bright.

Dr. Birchmall stared at him sternly.

"Yes, Bright, it's me," he said, with his usual faultless grammer. "What, mite I ask, is the meaning of this?"

He pointed to the cards and the coins. Bright started violently. Surely, he thought, it wasn't possibul for the Head to suspect him of being a blade?

"I—I—I—" he stuttered.

"Is it—can it be possibul that you are the leader of this wretched crew of gambollers and that I have caught you napping?" thundered the Head. "It looks very much like it to me! Well, Snarler, what is it?"



Snarler scrambled out of the stinging-nettle bed, wearing a very cunning look on his dial. He had suddenly seen a way of getting his own back on Bright.

"If you please, sir, it wasn't our fault—meaning me and Bounder and Craven!" he wined. "It was Bright who taught us to play nap and rooked us of all our munny! Wasn't it, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" corussed Bounder minor and Craven, eagerly.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Drifting down the River Sark in a punt with the Cliff House Girls, and listening to Lord Maulverer's portable radio set, the Famous Five picked up a rival station in the shape of Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe. When Pon. ventured a cheeky remark, though, Bob Cherry reached out with a paddle and "flattened" Pon's straw boater. Ponsonby was "out out" favour!

The Head eyed Bright grimly. "So that's it, is it?" he eride. "Not content with being depraved yourself, Bright, you have to make these innersent youths equaly depraved! I'll make you rew this, bust me if I won't! Come! We will return to the skool at once!"

"But, sir—"

"Don't argew the toss, Bright!" snapped the Head. And Bright gave it up as hoapless and made a move. Snarler & Co., grinning all over their dials, fell in behind, and Dr. Birchmall, after swiftly scooping up the scattered coins left in the grass by the blades and transferring them to his trowsis pocket, brought up the rear. In this order they reached St. Sam's.

When they arrived at St. Sam's, the first thing they notissed was the Fourth Form cricket team standing at the gates, waving farewell to the St. Bill's sharabang. Dr. Birchmall pawsed to ask the reason for this early depart.

"Did something go wrong with the match, Jolly?" he inquired.

Jack Jolly's eyes turned skornfully on Bright.

"Yes, sir, something did!" he said. "Owing to Bright leaving us in the lurch, our team lost hart and got scuttled out twice over without scoring a single run. We lost a two-innings match, by two solid innings—solely becawse Bright refused to play!"

The Head's brow grew simply thunderous.

"My hat! What a rank outsider he is!" he eride. "Do you know how I found 'im filling in the time he should have spent play'g cricket?"

"Give it up, sir!"

"Brawling and fighting with these here juniors over a game of penny nap!"

"Shame!" yelled the Fourth, feebly.

"Shame" is right! It's simply scandalous!" snorted the Head. Turning feerely to Bright, he said: "Bright! You have brought dishonour on your skool. You have been a cadd and a rotter. For that you must pay the penalty. I am not going to eggspel you. But I am going to punish you in a way that will hurt you even more. Take fifty lines!"

Bright boughed. He had turned deadly pail, but there was a smile on his face—a bitter, mocking, sinnical, sneering smile.

"All serene!" he drawled, as the Head stalked off. "When would you like them—next week, or when you get 'em?"

"Grate pip!" gasped the lissenin' juniors.

Forchuntly the Head failed to hear the question. But the Fourth herd it and realised

(Continued at foot of next column.)

NEVER TAKE CONJURERS PICNICKING

Says WILLIAM WIBLEY

Last Wednesday I ran a picnis and included Kipps, the Remove conjurer, among the party. Believe me, kids, it's the last time I shall make THAT mistake!

From the time we started out till the time we sat down to grub, Kipps insisted on making himself a complete and general nuisance. He made most of our luggage disappear in instalments and caused hours of delay one way

and another. Of course, everything he had made to disappear turned up again in the most unlikely places.

When we sat down to tea and Kipps started playing ducks and drakes with the tuck, I came to the conclusion the joke had gone far enough.

"Look here, Kipps," I said. "If you're so jolly anxious to do your conjuring stuff,

you'd better make a proper turn of it and have done with it. Why not get up on your hind legs and give a ten-minutes show while we're scoffing tea?"

No sooner had Kipps begun, than a couple of Sir Hilton Popper's gamekeepers appeared in the offing. And no sooner had they appeared, than Kipps produced a couple of live rabbits from an empty tuck-hamper!

The result was inevitable. The gamekeepers tried to arrest the lot of us; there was a dust-up, followed by a hurried flight; and finally Sir Hilton raged up to the school, demanding floggings all round!

Fortunately, Kipps was able to prove that the rabbits were tame ones and his own property and there was no further trouble.

Chiefly, however, I am against the scheme because an open-air gym is quite unnecessary. From my point of view it is just another example of the modern craze for making everything too set, and rigid. Why on earth should we want swings and switchbacks and treadmills and trapezes to develop our muscles while we are in the open air? Walking and running and cricketing and swimming are surely sufficient!

No, Bull; I'm not very keen on seeing an open-air gym, added to the outdoor attractions at Greyfriars. And perhaps, if you reconsider it long enough, you'll come to the same conclusion yourself!

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As an advocate at Remove "mock trials," Peter Todd invariably succeeds in sweeping the jury off its feet. When Bunter commissioned Toddy to defend him against a charge of purloining a pie, Toddy was hard put to it to get his client acquitted. That he did so, was a tribute to his eloquence—not to Bunter's innocence, which was open to doubt!



Fisher T. Fish purchased a crystal, and professing to tell fortunes, did a roaring trade for a while. But when he told Bolsover major that he would have a pleasant surprise on the day Bolsover collected a record licking from Mr. Queleh, it was "crystal" clear to Bolsover that Fishy was a spoofer. Fishy was soon "roaring"—though trade wasn't!

Cecil Reginald Temple was very eager to lick his Upper Fourth "sight" into shape this term, and beat Harry Wharton & Co. He talked proudly of his crew beforehand. But, judging by the agonised expressions on their faces during the race, they could have done with the breath expended on boasting. Remove won by two lengths!

The old Priory, situated in Eriardale Woods not far from the school, is one of the "show places" of Greyfriars. When it was whispered that there was buried treasure in the subterranean passage between the Priory and the school, Skinner & Co. organised a search-party. They were badly scared when Bunter dislodged a stone, and all but shut them in!

MYSTERY OF ICE-CREAM BOAT

By BOB CHERRY

There's something frightfully mysterious about the ice-cream vendor who has suddenly appeared amongst Greyfriars river-craft on "halfers." Everybody remarks about it as soon as they see him. There's something familiar about him, somehow—a haunting likeness to someone. Yet at the same time he looks quite unlike anyone you ever saw outside a nightmare!

He wears a long beard, does this strange cove in the ice-cream boat, but that's not the feature that's familiar. What do seem familiar are the hatchet face, tight lips and shifty eyes—though why, it's hard to say.

He's certainly business from the word "Go!" There's not a boat on the river between Popper's Island and Pegg Bay that the old ice-cream man misses. That seems familiar, too, in a vague way. Who and what he is, no one can say. We don't even know his nationality. He speaks a queer dialect of his own. Something like this:

"I'll tell the pop-eyed world this ice cream's one grand sweet song of a wow! Yes, siree!"

Another clue to his identity is the initials on the suitcase that's always lying at the bottom of his boat. They are "F. T. F."

One of these days some amateur Sherlock Holmes is going to get busy and find out who the chap really is.

In the meantime, he remains an intriguing mystery!

OPEN-AIR GYMS NOT WANTED

Maintains

Mr. "LARRY" LASCELLES

Wharton has asked me to tell you what I think of Bull's suggestion that an open-air gymnasium be set up at Greyfriars. Well, I'm afraid I cannot support it.

I have seen open-air gyms, of the type Bull describes in one or two country houses in England and in the grounds of big hotels in various parts of the world. They are great fun at first. But the fascination about them doesn't last, and once the novelty has worn off there seems nothing in them. Bull, in his enthusiasm, says he would be a frequent patron; but if we started an open-air gym, at Greyfriars, I think he would soon tire of it.

That is one of my reasons for opposing the idea. Another is that an open-air gym, would inevitably attract youngsters out for a lark rather than genuine sportsmen. The place would tend, I think, to become a paradise for noisy fags—and that would lead to its being regarded as a sort of plague spot by everyone else.

Chiefly, however, I am against the scheme because an open-air gym is quite unnecessary. From my point of view it is just another example of the modern craze for making everything too set, and rigid. Why on earth should we want swings and switchbacks and treadmills and trapezes to develop our muscles while we are in the open air? Walking and running and cricketing and swimming are surely sufficient!

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For Sale

One Quart of Rat Poison and Six Slabs of Charcoal.

My fag says: it's tea and toast, but I don't believe him!—J. WALKER, Sixth Form Passage.