

HARRY WHARTON & CO., THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE SCHOOLBOYS—INSIDE!

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



The
**PRISONER
OF THE
TURRET!**



**THIS WEEK BY
TOM REDWING,
of the Remove—a fisherman's son.**

AT this time of the year our thoughts always turn towards the sea. We British are a sea-faring people; there is no town in Britain more than seventy-five miles from the sea. Contrast that with America, where you might have to travel well over 1,000 miles to the nearest seaside town. A huge number of American people live their whole lives without seeing the ocean. Doesn't that seem awful? In the summer, we all give gasps of relief and flock away from school, home, office and factory, to the place where we belong—beside the good old sea.

So the Editor thinks it appropriate to let me do the Page this week, as I have lived on and by the sea all my life. My dad is a fisherman, and my only ambition is to be the same. That sounds odd, perhaps, but all the education in the world won't get rid of my love for the sea. I couldn't bear to be far away from its monotonous old roll and crash.

But in giving you a seaside page, I must apologise. I am sorry to say it will not be a jolly, light-hearted and seaside-promenade effort. I hope I can make it interesting, but I can't make it funny. For my chief subject is—

THE DEATH OF AN OLD FRIEND.

You will agree that this is no subject for humour, but it's not so bad as it looks, for the old friend is built of wood and canvas, not flesh and blood. You will guess his name—Windjammer! It includes all sailing ships, from the perky little half-decker yacht, with its matchbox cabin, to the great four-masted grain ships. Steam, oil, and petrol have spelt their doom. And now even steam is on the decline—soon the air will displace the sea.

There are, of course, still plenty of sailing ships, but the majority of them are pleasure yachts—because sailing is the finest pleasure in the world. The old-fashioned traders are slowly dying out. I don't want to be unprogressive, but I do think it a pity. There was so much character and romance in the old ships. What more beautiful sight than their sails, brown and white, against the deep blue of the sea?

Do you know the spot called Starvation Buoys? It is in London River, opposite Woolwich, and is just a lying-up place for barges waiting to be hired. There they are, dozens of them—the good old Thames sailing barges, with their brown sails furled for the last time. They'll never be wanted again. Motor-barges do the work now.

Yes, the old traders are dying out. Seldom now can you see the old Black-wallers, with their flying white sails, or the brown-sailed wherries, or the cobbles, billy-boys, stumpies, and the other native sailers—not forgetting the stackies, with hay piled up to the masthead. Even the famous Norfolk wherries are disappearing.

Of course, we must have progress, but one can't help feeling a bit sad. The old sailing ships were the very essence of the sea; they were part of the wind and water, and their crews were real old salts, who took their weather direct from Nature itself, not from the radio. A fat lot of "gale warning" they ever needed—they could smell a storm miles away.

Well, the old order changeth, but the story of the brave old windjammers will be told wherever men go down to the sea in ships.

BELAY, ME HEARTIES!

My dad owns a fishing yawl at Hawkscliff. She is a small boat of eleven tons, cutter-rigged, with a big mainmast and a small mizzen-mast astern. She carries two jibs and a mainsail. Her mizzen-sail's about the size of a pocket-handkerchief—in fact, she was really an old sloop, but we put the mizzen-mast on her ourselves. With her build, it helps to get closer to the wind. She has a bumpkin instead of a flying jib, and she flies our own burgee, which I made myself. And I expect

quite a lot of you wonder what the dickens I'm talking about.

The trouble about ships is that you practically have to learn a new language before you can talk about them. Quite a big dictionary of sea words could be written. I can't possibly attempt the task here, but I'll expound one or two of them, for the benefit of fellows who have done no sailing.

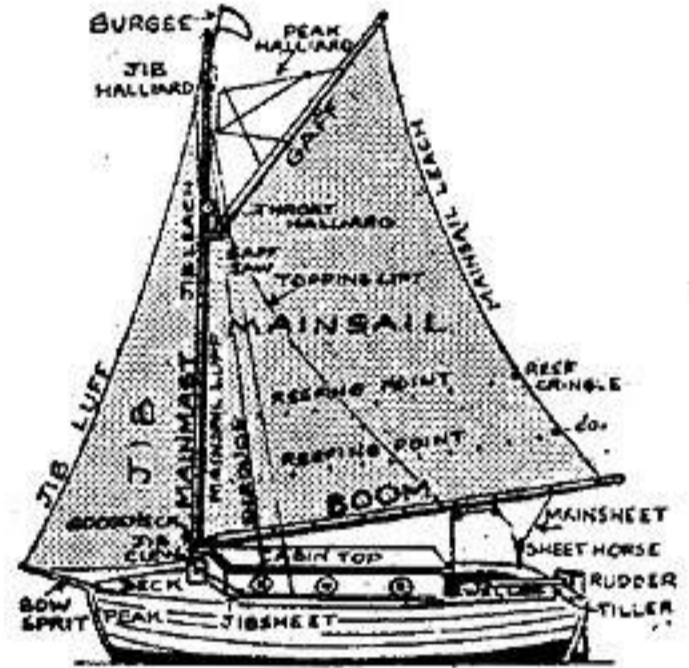
Take my first paragraph. A yawl is a fore-and-aft sailing ship with two masts—mainmast amidships, and mizzen-mast astern. (A fore-and-aft ship has sails going ALONG it, unlike the square-rigger, which has sails ACROSS the masts, from port to starboard.) Jibs are the small sails in front of the mainmast. A sloop usually has only one jib, but a cutter has two, and they may be carried either on the bowsprit at the peak, or on a flying boom. The second jib sail is known as the foresail. The burgee is the little triangular flag at the masthead.

Getting close to the wind means as near as possible to the direction from which the wind is blowing. Most fellows find it very hard to understand how a ship can actually sail AGAINST the wind. I'm afraid I can't explain without mathematics and geometry, but the secret is that the lift of the wind is of much greater force than the drag. The maximum lift is at right-angles to the direction of the wind, and by manoeuvring the sails it is possible to make the angle much narrower, though, of course, power is lost in proportion. Anyway, the result is that the ship can actually creep along up-wind, though not, of course, dead against the wind. When a ship is close-hauled, its sails are pulled just flat enough to keep the luff full of wind, and that is the nearest profitable point at which the ship will sail—though she will go still closer if you "pinch" her.

I hope every fellow who can will try sailing. A motor-boat is quite jolly—but, believe me, it's absolutely nothing compared with a sailer.

The easiest and cheapest way is to start with a sailing dinghy, which you can buy second-hand for a few pounds—but if you do this, you MUST be able to swim, for they are quite good at capsizing. Still, that's all part of the game. Or you can hire an easy 20-foot yacht very cheaply. They are either sloop-rigged or have just the one mainsail.

Reefing and gybing are the two most awkward things to learn. To reef is to shorten sail by unbacking it from the boom, rolling up the end securely, and then making fast again, with the gaff lowered to the new length of sail. It sounds fairly easy, but you nearly always have to do it when there's a squall on, or when the wind has become too strong for your full canvas, so you have to look slippy. And the easiest



thing in the world is to tear your sail if you don't reef properly.

Gybing is changing from one tack to another with the wind behind you. When you are on a port tack your sail stretches out to starboard—if you are "running before the wind" it will be right out, almost at right-angles to the ship. To sail to starboard, your boom has to swing right round and take the sail out to port. That is gybing, and a very dangerous stunt if you make a mess of it. You might snap your mast and knock your entire crew overboard—including you!

However, they're both easy with a bit of practice!

I wish I had a book, instead of a page, to write. As it is, I must belay my jawing-tackle. I have drawn you a diagram showing the chief parts of an ordinary yacht. And here's wishing you all a jolly time beside the sea—with plenty of sailing, if possible.



Tom Redwing is a scholarship boy at Greyfriars. His father, John Redwing, is a fisherman, living in a cottage at Hawkscliff, a few miles away. Tom had a very rough time from the snobs when he first came, but oddly enough he became friendly with almost the last fellow in the Remove to take to a scholarship lad—Herbert Vernon-Smith. The two are study-mates and staunch friends. Tom spends his time keeping the Bouncer out of scrapes, and often gets only black looks and hard words for his reward.

(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER)

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN NET! More than once Vernon-Smith's blackguardly tricks have landed trouble on Herbert Vernon, his rival and double. But this week the Bounder's cunning recoils on his own shoulders in a way he least expects!

The PRISONER of the TURRET!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

French Leave!

"DON'T go, Smithy!"

"Rot!"

"Better stick it out!"

"Rubbish!"

"Have a spot of sense, old chap!"

"Oh, leave me alone!" exclaimed the Bounder of Greyfriars irritably. "I'm going! Get out of the way!"

Six fellows were arguing with Herbert Vernon-Smith, all at once. Smithy was wheeling his bike out of the bike-shed, and the six had gathered in his path.

One of them was his chum, Tom Redwing. The other five were Harry Wharton & Co.

It was after class at Greyfriars. A fellow could take his bike out for a spin after class if he liked. But Smithy, as the other fellows knew, was not going out for a spin. He was going—intending not to return.

"Will you let me pass?" snapped the Bounder. "Any minute now some dashed prefect may come after me to march me in to the Head! Well, I'm not going to see the Head!"

"But—" urged Redwing.

"What's the good?" snapped Smithy. "I'm going to be sacked! Think I want to go through the ceremony? It may amuse Quelch! It doesn't amuse me."

"But—" said Harry Wharton.

"You can butt like a billy-goat after I'm gone! I tell you I'm not going through it!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I've tried to dish that cad Vernon—and it's worked out the other way, and I've got it in the neck! I'm going while the going's good—and the Head can go and eat coke, and Quelch can go and chop chips! Now let me pass."

"But—" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, shat up!"

"There's one thing you have forgotten, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull.

"What's that, fathead?"

"You're not sacked yet! While there's life there's hope! You jolly well deserve to be sacked—"

"You cheeky fool!"

By
FRANK RICHARDS

Looking through the barred shutter, Vernon-Smith watched Vernon mount his bicycle and ride slowly away down the avenue.

"But the Head may give you a chance! Why not let him?"

"The chancefulness is not terrific, Smithy," said Hurreo Jamsset Ram Singh. "But there is a spot of esteemed hope!"

Smashing Story of Schoolboy Rivalry, featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREY-FRIARS.

"Stick it, and see it through, old chap!" said Frank Nugent.

It was good advice, but it was no use to the headstrong and obstinate Bounder of Greyfriars. He was up for the sack, and he was going to clear

off without waiting for it, as a sort of last kick at authority. If he was going—as go he must—he was going of his own accord!

"If you've finished, get out of the way!" he grunted. "I'm going! If you don't shift, I'll run the jigger into you!"

Vernon-Smith shoved the bike on.

Redwing and the Famous Five stepped aside at last.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter's fat figure came rolling up. "I say, is Smithy here? Wingate's looking for him!"

The Bounder gave an angry snarl. If Wingate of the Sixth was looking for him, it meant that he was due to go to the Head's study, and he had no more time to lose if he was going.

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He pushed the bike on and put a leg over it.

"Smithy, old chap—" Tom Redwing made a last appeal.

"Good-bye, Reddy—see you again in the hols!" answered the Bounder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Wingate!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a big Sixth Form man came down to the bike-shed with long strides.

"Stop!" shouted the Greyfriars captain, as he saw Vernon-Smith with the bicycle. "Stop! You're wanted, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder looked round at him.

"Rats!" he called back. "Tell the Head, and Quelch, that I'm fed up with the pair of them, and they can go and eat coke!"

And the Bounder jumped on his machine and shot away to the gate.

"Stop!" roared Wingate.

He broke into a run.

The Bounder did not stop! He pedalled on!

Wingate cut after him at top speed. He covered the ground like a deer, Harry Wharton & Co. watching him breathlessly.

For a moment or two it seemed that the Greyfriars captain would get the Bounder. He reached the bike and grabbed. But Vernon-Smith drove desperately at the pedals, and the machine shot out of reach.

"Oh erikey!" gasped Bob Cherry as the Sixth Form man, over balancing as he missed his grasp at the bike, stumbled over, and went down with a crash.

"Oh!" gasped Wingate.

He sprawled!

The Bounder looked back and laughed! Then he shot out of the gate and vanished.

Wingate of the Sixth staggered to his feet. His knees and hands were dusty, his face red with wrath. He stood panting for a moment or two, and then came quickly back to the bike-shed.

In a few moments he dragged his machine off the stand, ran it out, and mounted. Then he shot away in his turn.

Evidently Herbert Vernon-Smith was not going to be allowed to carry on with that last act of defiance if George Wingate could stop him!

Harry Wharton & Co. ran down to the gate to watch the chase.

Far in the distance they glimpsed Vernon-Smith, going strong. Well behind him, but gaining at every turn of the pedals, rode Wingate, his big machine going like the wind.

"Wingate will get him!" muttered Redwing.

"Sure to!" said Harry Wharton.

"It's like Smithy—to play the goat right up to the last minute!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He never could toe the line like any other fellow."

Pursued and pursuer vanished down the Courtfield road, disappearing from sight.

The juniors turned back from the gate. Smithy was a good man on a bike, but no junior had a chance in a cycle race with Wingate, and they had no doubt that the Greyfriars captain would run him down and march him in. But Smithy was certain to give him all the trouble he could before that happened.

"Henry looks shirty!" murmured Bob Cherry, as they came back to the House and discerned Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove, looking out of the doorway.

"Henry" did look shirty—extremely

so! His brows were knitted, and his eyes glinted. Now that the headmaster had leisure to deal with the Bounder, Quelch was ready to take him to the majestic presence—and Smithy was not available to be taken! It was unimaginable for the headmaster to have to wait for a junior! But Dr. Locke was waiting!

"Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you know where Vernon-Smith is?"

"I—I think he's gone out on his bike!" stammered Harry.

He was not likely to tell the Remove master what he knew of the Bounder's intentions.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Vernon-Smith was expressly ordered to remain within gates, Wharton!"

"Oh! Was he, sir?"

"He was!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Upon my word! If he has gone out—Are you sure that he has gone out, Wharton?"

"I—I think so—yes, sir!"

"Upon my word!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

And looking more shirty than ever, the Remove master rustled away to the Head's study—with the unusual and extraordinary news that it was necessary to wait for a Lower Fourth junior!

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

"Poor old Smithy!" said Nugent. "If there was a chance for him, he's washed it out now! Smithy's done for! I—I wish that fellow Vernon had never come to Greyfriars!"

His friends nodded assent to that. It was the coming to the school of his relative and double, Bertie Vernon, that had caused the Bounder's downfall. And there was no doubt that if Smithy had had a lingering chance left, his own act had washed it out!

Smith was done for!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bertie Means Business!

"B ERTIE!"

"I can't go back!"

"You must!"

"I can't!"

Captain Vernon stood in the turret-room at Lantham Chase, nine or ten miles from Greyfriars School.

The window-shutters of the turret were wide open, letting in the flood of June sunshine. Far in the distance the grey old tower of Greyfriars could be glimpsed, far away over the green woods, against the blue of the summer sky.

Captain Vernon had his back to the window, his eyes glinting in his dark, sun-bronzed face, fixed on the Greyfriars junior who sat on an oak settle by the empty fireplace, pushed back against the wall.

That Greyfriars junior was so exactly like Herbert Vernon-Smith that even his uncle had once or twice mistaken the two.

In the Greyfriars Remove they were generally sorted out by a difference in garb—Bertie's clothing being much less extensive than the Bounder's, as well as quieter in appearance.

At the present moment, however, a red swelling on Bertie's nose marked a difference—the result of a hefty punch. Since Bertie's nose had been in that decorative state, no one had mistaken him for Smithy.

In expression, as well as in features, Smithy's double was now quite like

Smithy—his expression being one of dogged and sullen obstinacy.

"I can't!" he repeated stubbornly. "I ought never to have been sent to Greyfriars with that cad Smith there! It was bound to lead to trouble. Now the trouble's come—more than I can stand."

"Do you mean to say that you have left school, Bertie, without permission?"

"Yes."

"That act is more like your Cousin Smith than like you," said Captain Vernon. "I should not be surprised at it in Smith."

"I don't care!"

Captain Vernon compressed his lips. "You do not care if you knock sky-high all the plans I have formed for you, and, incidentally, ruin me!" he said quietly.

"That's rot!" burst out Bertie Vernon. "You're always talking in riddles. What does it matter whether I go to Greyfriars or to another school? I'd rather go to Redclyffe or St. Jude's—even Highcliffe. Any school but Smith's school! Why did you send me there?"

Captain Vernon did not reply to that. But his dark face was set inflexibly.

"You must go back, Bertie," he said, after another long pause.

"I can't!"

"Are you afraid to face the music—you, a Vernon?" asked the captain contemptuously. "Even Smith would not lack courage."

Bertie Vernon flushed crimson.

"It's not that. You know it isn't! I'm up for a flogging! I can't, and won't go through it! I've done nothing. Three or four times already I've been landed for what Smith has done, owing to that rotten likeness between us. It's always come out, somehow—till now. Now I'm for it!"

"I have been flogged in my time," said Captain Vernon. "I never used to wake echoes about it."

"It's not the flogging—you know it isn't. It's the injustice, and the disgrace. And there's no end to it. If I go through this, I shall have to go through it, again and again. I tell you, Smith takes advantage of the likeness to land things on me. How's a fellow to deal with that?"

"What has he done this time?"

"A rotten trick on the French master—squirting water over him in his study! The old ass thought it was I—"

Captain Vernon's face grew grimmer.

"Take care what you tell me, Bertie. Your face is disfigured; Smith's is not. No one could mistake you for one another at present."

"That's what I thought. I thought I was clear of the fellow's tricks for a time, at least. But it makes no difference. Monsieur Charpentier saw him, and fancied that he saw me."

"He could not, in the present circumstances."

"That's what he said, anyhow. It must have been Smith that did it. Nobody else could have been taken for me. I was out of the House at the time. I was called in to be found guilty of it. I dare say that little ass Mossoo was too upset to know what he saw, or never saw. Anyhow, he's got it fixed in his silly head that I did it, and he's made Quelch believe so."

Captain Vernon stood regarding him very keenly.

"Such a mistake seems impossible, even in an excited and excitable man," he said slowly.

"I'm up for a flogging. In Hall in



Almost exhausted, Vernon-Smith crouched down in the bracken, his heart throbbing. A minute later, Wingate thundered by. The Bounder breathed a sigh of relief!

the morning, before all the school—for nothing!"

"For nothing?" repeated the captain dryly.

Bertie gave his uncle a sudden look. It dawned on him that the captain doubted him.

He rose to his feet, his face flaming redder than his nose.

"Uncle, don't you believe me?" he exclaimed.

"I cannot see how the French master can have made such a mistake, when a single glance distinguishes you, at present, from your cousin," answered Captain Vernon coldly.

Bertie stood looking at him.

"That does it," he said thickly. "Quelch thought I was lying to him. I could stand that. But you—you think so. You've never known me to lie. My Cousin Smith will lie as easily as he will breathe. I've heard him telling the tale to beaks and prefects. I'd be cut in pieces sooner! You think I've come here to tell you lies—" He choked.

"No," said the captain slowly. "But I cannot understand. What you tell me is impossible, that is all."

"It's what has happened."

Captain Vernon was silent.

"That does it," repeated Bertie. "I won't go back to Greyfriars! Nothing shall drag me there! I've no claim on you. You can throw me over, if you like. If you think I'm a liar like Smith, the sooner you throw me over, the better! I won't go back to that school!"

His face set in sullen, dogged defiance.

There was a sound of a footstep below the steep, narrow stair that led up to the high turret. A wheezy voice called—that of the captain's old Army servant, who was the entire household staff at the great mansion of Latham Chase

"Are you there, sir?"

"What is it, Hunt?" rapped the captain.

"The telephone, sir—from the school. Mr. Quelch speaking."

"Oh! Say I am coming!"

Old Hunt shuffled away.

Captain Vernon turned back to his nephew.

"You seem to have cut classes this afternoon, Bertie, to come here on your bicycle," he said.

"Yes, I did."

"I suppose your Form-master guesses where you have come, as he has rung me up. I shall have to tell him that you are returning."

Bertie's lips set in a hard line.

"You can tell him what you like," he said. "I can't stop you. But I'm not going back. I won't sleep under the same roof with Smith again! I won't go through a flogging to please that plotting cad! It's a flogging this time; next time it may be the sack. If Smith gets by with this, what's going to stop him? He wanted to get rid of me; and he's right there! I ought never to have gone to his school. He came here and asked you to take me away. He would have been satisfied with that, and I should have been glad. You refused—"

"I still refuse!"

"Well, now he's taken the law into his own hands, and he's set out to make Greyfriars impossible for me. There's nothing to stop him; he's got the game in his hands. He's making use of Quelch and the Head. And even you—you take his side in this. Tell Quelch what you like! I won't go back!"

"I shall tell Mr. Quelch that you are returning this afternoon," said Captain Vernon icily.

"Do; and I will leave this house, and you will never see me again!" said Bertie, between his teeth. "You've

got some reason for landing me at Smith's school. I don't know what it is, and I can't understand it. Whatever it is, I don't care! I won't go back to Greyfriars!"

Captain Vernon did not answer that. He turned and descended the stair from the turret-room, leaving his nephew alone there.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Startling News!

MR. QUELCH sat at the telephone in his study at Greyfriars with a grim face.

He was, perhaps, feeling rather fed-up with the doubles in his Form.

Bertie Vernon, certainly, had not been to blame, for the disturbing events of that afternoon. He had been the victim of a miserable piece of trickery, which had now come to the Remove master's knowledge, and for which Herbert Vernon-Smith was to be expelled from the school.

Nevertheless, Bertie had given him plenty of trouble. He had cleared off, instead of coming in to class that afternoon, which was a proceeding calculated to rouse Quelch's deep ire.

No doubt there was excuse for him. He had been sentenced to a flogging for an offence that, as Quelch now knew, he had never committed. Still, his action was rebellious and outrageous. Now Vernon-Smith seemed to have followed his example. He was not, at all events, to be found when the Head wanted him.

Between the two of them, Mr. Quelch had more worry and trouble than he had any use for.

However, that worry and trouble would end when one of them was gone. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,637.

And Vernon-Smith was going. His latest act of defiance made no difference to that. He was going to leave Greyfriars by a morning train. That was settled definitely, whether he turned up to hear his sentence from the headmaster or not.

At the present moment Mr. Quelch was thinking of Bertie, not of his cousin.

Bertie, as an innocent party, had to be pardoned for his reckless action in cutting class; but he had not yet come in to hear of the discovery that had been made in his absence.

As his uncle's residence was at Lantham Chase, in the neighbourhood of the school, the Remove master surmised that the truant might have gone there, and he was now ringing up Captain Vernon to inquire.

The old soldier-servant at Lantham Chase had answered the telephone. Now Mr. Quelch was waiting for the captain to come to the instrument, and he was not waiting patiently.

However, the quiet, incisive voice of the Army man came through at last.

"Mr. Quelch—"

"Speaking!" rapped the Remove master. "I desire to know, Captain Vernon, whether you know anything of the movements of your nephew, Vernon of my form. He has absented himself from school without leave—"

"He is here."

"Vernon is at Lantham Chase?"

"Yes. He came home—"

"Will you kindly send him back to school at once, Captain Vernon? That is, of course, if you desire him to remain at Greyfriars," said Mr. Quelch, in acid tones.

"Certainly I desire him to remain at Greyfriars, and I shall bring him back to the school personally."

"Very good. I presume that Vernon has told you of certain incidents that occurred here to-day."

"He has told me that he has been sentenced to a flogging for having played a foolish trick on the French master."

"Precisely! It transpires, however, that that wretched trick was not played by Vernon, but by his relative, Vernon-Smith."

"What?"

"Cannot you hear me?"

"I can hear you, Mr. Quelch, but I cannot understand you!" rapped the Army man from the other end. "Am I to understand that my nephew has been sentenced to an unjust and undeserved punishment?"

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"The mistake was unavoidable," he said. "You are aware of the unfortunate resemblance between Vernon and his relative. It has caused many mistakes before. Monsieur Charpentier was positive that it was Vernon who assaulted him with a squirt of water in his study, and I had no choice but to act upon his positive statement."

"Such an error, sir, is inexcusable!" exclaimed Captain Vernon. "All the more so at the present moment as my nephew, owing to a disfigurement on his face, is very easily to be distinguished from his relative."

"Quite so; but—"

"I have already heard my nephew's story, sir, and it seemed so impossible to me that such a mistake can have occurred that I expressed doubt of his statement!" exclaimed Captain Vernon in tones of deep anger. "I doubted his truth, sir—"

"It is very unfortunate," said Mr. Quelch. "But the mistake, as I have said, was unavoidable, owing to a piece

of detestable trickery on the part of Vernon-Smith. This boy actually rubbed red ink on his—his nose in order to be taken for Vernon."

"Oh!"

"Vernon is, as you say, easily distinguished from his relative at present by this disfigurement. But Vernon-Smith, having successfully imitated the disfigurement, the French master, when he saw him, could not fail to be deceived."

"Good gad!"

"Fortunately the whole matter has now come to light," said Mr. Quelch. "In the circumstances, Vernon will be excused for his act in absenting himself from school this afternoon if he returns immediately."

"He shall return at once, sir. Am I authorised to tell him that his punishment is rescinded?"

"Certainly!"

"And the other boy," exclaimed Captain Vernon, with deep bitterness in his tones, "the boy who has played this dastardly trick? That utterly unscrupulous and malicious young rascal—"

"Vernon-Smith will be dealt with by his headmaster."

"I have doubted my nephew's word. I have wounded him deeply by such a doubt. He trusted that I should believe him, if no one else did, and I failed him. And such a trick may be repeated."

"No such trick will ever be repeated here, Captain Vernon. Vernon-Smith leaves the school by an early train in the morning."

"What?"

"He is expelled."

Mr. Quelch heard a sound like a gasp on the wires. That statement, which he had naturally supposed would be welcome enough to Bertie's uncle, in the circumstances, seemed to have given the Army man a shock.

"Did you—did you say expelled?" came Captain Vernon's voice, in changed, halting tones.

"I did."

"Oh!"

"That is all, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly send Vernon back at once, and so far as he is concerned the matter is at an end."

"One moment, sir—one moment! Vernon-Smith's conduct has been bad—very bad; but—but surely a less severe punishment—surely something short of expulsion from his school—"

"I fail to understand you, Captain Vernon," said the Remove master coldly. "I certainly did not expect you to express concern for Vernon-Smith."

"I cannot say that I like the boy, sir, and I condemn his conduct as thoroughly as you do; but he is a relative—my nephew's cousin—"

"That matter, sir, is now closed. Vernon-Smith cannot be permitted to remain at Greyfriars, and I am astonished that you should make the suggestion, in the circumstances. Good-bye, sir!"

"One moment! Kindly hold on!"

"Well?" rapped Mr. Quelch impatiently.

"You say that Vernon-Smith is to be expelled. He has not yet been sent away from the school?"

"He has had the audacity to go out of gates, although forbidden to do so, and has, in consequence, not yet heard the Head's decision!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "He will hear it when he returns."

"That decision may be altered, sir."

"It will not be altered, Captain Vernon. Indeed, I have a very strong suspicion that Vernon-Smith, antici-

NELSON LEE *versus* FU CHOW!



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pating his sentence, has had the audacity to leave Greyfriars—to run away from school, sir. I can hardly account for his absence in any other way."

"He must be found."

"What?"

"I—I mean——"

"Good-bye, Captain Vernon!"

"But——"

Mr. Quelch replaced the receiver. He had, in his own opinion, been long enough on the telephone, and he had no sympathy whatever with the captain's rather belated concern for Herbert Vernon-Smith.

After what had occurred, he had naturally expected the Army man to be relieved to hear that Vernon-Smith was going, thus putting an end to the possibility of any further trickery of the same kind.

He little dreamed of the state of rage and dismay into which his communication had thrown the man at Lantham Chase.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Escape!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, grinding at the pedals, looked back as he swept up the Courtfield road.

He set his teeth at the sight of the Sixth Form prefect behind him on his bicycle.

Wingate of the Sixth was in rapid pursuit and gaining hand over fist.

The Bounder drove furiously at his pedals.

He was not going to be taken back if he could help it—to receive his sentence of expulsion from the Head; to be taken to the station by a prefect; dismissed in disgrace from Greyfriars, under the eyes of the whole school.

It was the Bounder's intention to ride to Courtfield Station and take a train there. But as he spotted Wingate in pursuit he had to abandon that intention for the moment. He had no chance in a race with Wingate, and he was going to be run down less than half-way to the town if he kept on by the road.

He was hardly a dozen yards ahead of his pursuer, so much had his start been diminished, when he passed the corner of Oak Lane, and entered on the road over Courtfield Common.

From that road, he turned by a track winding across the common, swerving suddenly and shooting away.

Wingate seemed to be taken by surprise by that sudden action.

Going all out, he shot past the spot where Smithy had turned off, before he jammed on his brakes and whirled his machine round.

It was a gain of a minute or two—and Smithy was the man to make the most of it! He rode over the rough track at top speed, rocking and bumping, breathing hard through his set teeth.

The Bounder had a hope of gaining distance, and losing himself in the furze and gorse on the wide common. Later, if he succeeded in shaking off pursuit, he could double back to Courtfield and get to the station.

At a spot where gorse and bracken grew thick, the Bounder suddenly threw himself off his machine and dragged it into cover.

He crouched down over the bike, his heart beating in great throbs, the perspiration trickling down his face, almost exhausted by his fierce efforts.

A minute later he heard Wingate thunder by.

He grinned breathlessly.

The Greyfriars captain had passed

the spot where he had taken cover. He was riding on, in the direction of the river, leaving Smithy behind.

For several long minutes the Bounder lay still, getting his breath back, and listening. But he heard no sound of a cycle. Wingate was not coming back. It looked as if he had thrown the prefect off his track.

But he was cautious.

When he rose at last to his feet to take a survey, he was careful to keep in cover of a high bush of hawthorn.

He was glad of it the next moment.

In the distance, on a high ridge over the common, he spotted Wingate again.

The Greyfriars captain had come to a halt! Evidently he had discovered that the fugitive was no longer ahead of him. He was standing on the high ridge, scanning the common—looking for a cyclist!

Smithy, at that moment, was safe! But as soon as he remounted his machine, he would be spotted!

He sank into cover again, to think it out.

But it did not take him long to decide. If Wingate spotted him, he would run him down—he had to rely on strategy, not on speed.

Leaving his bicycle where it lay, the Bounder crept away through the thickets on his hands and knees.

Foot by foot he crept, till at length, at a considerable distance, he put up his head again, in cover of a bush, to look back.

Wingate was still standing on the ridge, a good deal more distant now. He was scanning the common in all directions.

Vernon-Smith dropped on hands and knees again, and crawled on. There was plenty of cover on the common, and Smithy took advantage of it. Not till he was sure that he was out of view of the watchful eyes of the Greyfriars captain, did he venture to rise to his feet and hurry on.

From that spot it was a walk of more than a mile to Courtfield. The Bounder cared nothing for that, so long as he escaped—any more than he cared what might become of the bicycle he had abandoned.

He tramped on, by footpaths over the common; grinning at the idea of Wingate still hunting for him, till he got tired of it, and returned to the school to report that Vernon-Smith was gone!

He entered Courtfield at last.

He had lost a great deal of time, and he wondered whether other prefects might have been sent to look for him, by that time. He was very wary as he walked up the High Street to the railway station.

He was going to take the first train in, careless of whither it went. All he wanted, at present, was to get away from the possibility of recapture. He was going, without being sacked—that was the only remaining consolation to his pride! It was something, to a fellow like the Bounder of Greyfriars, for his last act at the school to be a defiant flouting of authority.

He entered the station, and learned at the booking-office that a train was almost due from Lantham, going on to Canterbury. That was luck—they would not get him back if he once got as far as Canterbury.

In the excitement of making his escape, other matters had passed from his mind! Smithy did not want to leave Greyfriars—it was a crushing blow to him to leave. He hardly dared think of what his father would say when he reached home. But there was no hope—his chum, Redwing, and

Harry Wharton & Co. might think there was a lingering chance, but the Bounder knew that there was none. He had tempted Fate too often; and now the chopper had come down, and it was the finish. He had to go—and it was something to go with his ears up, defiant to the last!

But he was thinking now, not of the disaster to his school career, not of an angry and disappointed father, but of his determination to go of his own accord—at his own will and pleasure—defying headmaster and Form-master, defiant of authority, and game to the last! And he was feeling bucked at the prospect of success in that, at least, as he went on the platform—only a few minutes before the train came in from Lantham.

He gave a glance along the platform as the train rolled in and stopped! No sign of Wingate—no sign of any Greyfriars prefect or master! It was all clear now—he had only to step into the train and go.

He ran across to the train.

Several passengers were alighting. Vernon-Smith did not glance at them. He had picked an empty carriage—he had the door open, and was about to step in, when a sudden grasp fell on his shoulder from behind.

It was one of the passengers who had alighted from the train who had stepped along and grasped him.

In utter surprise, the Bounder glared round.

"Let go, you fool!" he snapped.

"What the dickens——"

He broke off, staring blankly at a dark-complexioned face he knew.

The grip on his shoulder tightened. And the Bounder, panting with rage, stared at Captain Vernon.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

BERTIE VERNON stepped from the train after his uncle.

He stared at the Bounder.

After the communication from Mr. Quelch on the telephone, Bertie had raised no further objection to returning to the school. He was going back—not to punishment, not to a flogging in Hall. Once more the Bounder's scheming had failed! But he was going reluctantly.

Apart from the presence of his relative and enemy, he liked Greyfriars—he liked most of the Remove fellows; and he was keen on cricket, and already making his mark in the junior games. But for Vernon-Smith, he would have been glad to be at Greyfriars!

But his double made all the difference! Captain Vernon had not mentioned to him what Mr. Quelch had said on the subject of the Bounder being expelled. So Bertie, as far as he knew, was going back to the school and the Form that included the fellow who was bitterly hostile to him—and from whose enmity he could not feel secure.

Again and again he had puzzled and puzzled why his uncle, kind and considerate in all else, insisted on sending him to Smithy's school, and keeping him there. He could see no reason for it—no sense in it! Now he was more perplexed than ever—and though he had agreed to return, he did so unwillingly, and with very visible signs of resentment in his look.

The uncle and nephew had taken the train at Lantham—hardly a word being spoken between them during the journey.

Why his uncle was accompanying him to the school, Bertie did not know—

unless, as he bitterly reflected, the captain could not trust to his word to go back.

The sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith on the platform at Courtfield Station surprised him. He was still more surprised when Captain Vernon strode along the train and grasped the Bounder by the shoulder as he was about to step into a carriage.

The Bounder strove to drag his shoulder free. But the Army man's grip was like steel. With a powerful jerk he drew Vernon-Smith away from the train—Bertie watching the scene in angry astonishment.

The Bounder, crimson with rage, struggled.

"You fool! You dummy! You meddling rotter! Let me go!" he panted. "What do you fancy you're up to! I shall lose my train."

"Quite!" said Captain Vernon quietly.

He drew the Bounder, savagely resisting, farther from the train.

A porter came along and slammed the door.

"Will you let me go?" shrieked the Bounder.

"No!"

"Are you mad?" Vernon-Smith was as much amazed as enraged, furious as he was at this unexpected intervention. "What are you meddling for?"

"Uncle——" exclaimed Bertie Vernon.

The captain gave him a glance.

"You need not interfere, Bertie! This boy is running away from school, and it is my duty to stop him."

"It's no business of ours, if he is!" exclaimed Vernon.

"It is my business!" said Captain Vernon coldly. "Vernon-Smith, I am going to take you with me to Greyfriars! If you resist, like the disrespectful young blackguard you are, I shall use force—as much force as may be necessary."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared the Bounder.

"Bertie, go out and engage a taxicab!" said the captain.

"But—look here——" stammered Vernon.

He was as much surprised as Smithy, and almost as angry, at the captain's unexpected action.

"Do as I bid you!" snapped the captain in a much sharper tone than he was accustomed to use to his nephew.

Bertie, with set lips, went.

The Bounder struggled and wrenched. But he had no chance of getting loose from the Army man's grasp.

Three or four passengers and porters were staring on—but there was no help for Smithy, after what the captain had said—nobody was disposed to intervene in favour of a schoolboy running away from school.

"You rotter!" The Bounder choked with rage. "Will you let me go? Listen to this, you meddling fool—I'm sacked! Do you hear that, you rotter? I'm going because I'm sacked! Now let go!"

"I am perfectly acquainted with the circumstances, Herbert Vernon-Smith," answered the captain calmly. "Your Form-master has told me on the telephone that you are to be expelled and that he suspects you of having run away from school in consequence——"

"Let me go, then!" The Bounder panted. "What the dooce does it matter to you, or that cad your nephew, whether I go now or wait till I'm bunked? Are you mad?"

"It matters a great deal! It is my intention to do what I can in your

favour to induce your headmaster to give you another chance!"

The Bounder stared at him blankly! In his utter amazement at that statement he forgot to struggle.

"You intend—what?" he gasped. "Lies—lies! You're glad to get me sacked—you and your rotten nephew! You couldn't have heard better news, either of you! Do you think I believe a word of it?"

"Probably not!" answered the captain contemptuously. "You have not a trustful nature, I think! That is my intention, all the same."

"And why?" snarled the Bounder.

"I do not choose my nephew to be the cause of Mr. Vernon-Smith's son leaving the school—if I can help it! I shall intercede in your favour—I hope successfully."

"Do you think I want favours from you? I'd be sacked a dozen times over, before I'll take anything at your hand."

"Possibly! But you will be given no choice in the matter! That is for your headmaster to decide! Will you walk with me quietly—or will you force me to drag you out of the station to the taxi?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith panted with rage. But he went quietly down the platform with the Army man.

There was no escape for him with that iron grip on his shoulder; and he could only wait and watch for an opportunity.

Captain Vernon, still grasping him, walked him out of the station.

Bertie was standing by the taxi with a sullen, lowering face.

Captain Vernon did not release the Bounder till he had stepped into the taxi; and he followed him in immediately.

"Get in, Bertie!" he rapped. His nephew seemed to be hesitating whether to follow.

Vernon compressed his lips and stepped in.

The taxi shot away down Courtfield High Street.

Herbert Vernon-Smith sat panting.

He was caught! There was little or no chance of getting away now. He was caught and he was being taken back to the school—to be sacked! His dramatic outbreak, after all, was ending in a fizzle.

His rage was too deep for words, even if he had been disposed to speak. As for what the captain had said, he did not and could not believe it.

The man was his enemy. Unless the Bounder's judgment was at fault the news of his expulsion would cause sheer satisfaction at Lantham Chase.

Even as a small boy he had known, instinctively, how this man disliked him. Perhaps he had deserved that dislike—anyhow, he knew it was a fact. And since then, since Bertie Vernon had come to his school, everything that had happened could only have made that hostility more intense. The man would be glad if he was bunked—he must be glad, if only for his nephew's sake!

But even if the man was sincere, Smithy wanted no favours from him. The sack was better than a favour from his enemy.

But he was powerless. Whatever the captain's intentions, he was taking the runaway back to Greyfriars and there was no escape.

The town was left behind, and the taxi buzzed along the open road over the common. Smithy was almost in a mood to fling the door open and make a desperate leap; but the captain was too watchful for that—ready to grasp him again at a movement.

Within a short distance of the school a cyclist was sighted—riding one machine and wheeling another.

It was Wingate of the Sixth.

The captain of Greyfriars glanced at the taxi, stared at Vernon-Smith in it, and jumped down, waving his hand to the driver.

The taxi stopped.

Captain Vernon knew the Greyfriars captain by sight. He gave him an inquiring look.

"You're taking Vernon-Smith back, sir?" asked Wingate.

"Oh! Yes; I found him at the railway station!"

"All the better for you, Vernon-Smith!" said Wingate quietly. "I found your bike after you had dodged me, and I'm taking it in——"

"Thank you for nothing!"

"I shall say nothing about the matter!" added Wingate. "You've got enough coming, from what I hear, without that! That's all."

He stepped back and the taxi went on.

A few minutes later it turned in at the gates of Greyfriars.

Old Gosling, at his lodge, touched his hat to Captain Vernon and gave the Bounder a stare.

As the taxi went on to the House, dozens of fellows stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

A fat squeak floated to his ears.

"I say, you fellows! Smithy's back! I say, Smithy's come back to be bunked!"

At the door of the House Captain Vernon stepped out; and Herbert Vernon-Smith entered the House he had never expected to enter again, with that hand of iron on his shoulder.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

"HALLO hallo, hallo!"

"Smithy!"
Harry Wharton & Co. were in Study No. 1 in the Remove when the door opened and the new junior came in.

They had been talking of Smithy—not with cheerful faces. What he had done in his bitter hostility to his relative and rival, they had to condemn—and they condemned it thoroughly enough. But they knew that they would miss the old Bounder from his accustomed place; and they could not help feeling concern for the headstrong, self-willed fellow who had landed himself in such a scrape.

Thinking of Smithy and talking of him, they took the new junior for him as Vernon entered. The red glow of his damaged nose and the black scowl that settled on his face at the mistake enlightened them the next moment.

"Oh! Vernon!" said Harry.

"So you've come back!" said Frank Nugent.

"Yes, I've come back!" said Bertie. "Not by my own wish."

"It's all cleared up now!" said Johnny Bull. "I suppose you've heard that it's been found out that Smithy——"

"If I hadn't heard, I shouldn't have come back!" grunted Vernon. "I was not going through the flogging that that plotting rascal landed me in with his rotten trickery."

The Famous Five made no reply to that! They could quite understand that Bertie Vernon was bitter enough on the subject. He could hardly be expected to be in a forgiving mood. All the same, his words jarred on them.

"But I've heard something since I



With a steel-like grip, Captain Vernon dragged Vernon-Smith away from the train. "Let me go, you meddling rotter!" panted the Bounder. "Uncle——" exclaimed Bertie Vernon. "You need not interfere, Bertie!" said the captain. "This boy is running away from school, and it is my duty to stop him!"

got in," went on Vernon, looking at them. "Some of the fellows are saying that Smith is going to be sacked for what he did."

"Quelch said so in the Form-room when it all came out!" said Harry. "I believe he's been to the Head about it since."

"It's official, then?" asked Vernon.

"I'm afraid so."

Vernon stared at him.

"Afraid so?" he repeated. "Well, perhaps you don't feel pleased about it, as I do! Perhaps you can see some good in that sweep! I can't."

"Smithy's got plenty of good in him, Vernon!" said Bob Cherry quietly. "He's a jolly good chap in his own way."

Vernon laughed scoffingly.

"You can't expect me to see it when he's tried to land me for a flogging with his dirty trickery!" he sneered. "After an experience like that you mightn't see so much good in him."

"Um!" said Bob.

"I'm glad he's going!" said Vernon. "It was rough on both of us—but you fellows know that I never wanted to keep on rowing! I only wanted to steer clear of him if he'd let me! I never wanted to come to his school—I had no choice about that. I've got to stay here, whether I like it or not—and I'm glad he's going and that there'll be an end of treachery. That's the word for it."

"I suppose that's how you'd look at it!" said Harry. "But—well, no use arguing about it; it's settled, I'm afraid! If Smithy had a chance, he's dished himself by cutting off. Wingate will get him back, I suppose——"

"He's back now," said Vernon. "He came in with me."

"With you?" repeated the captain of the Remove, staring.

"My uncle caught him at Courtfield Station and brought him back—Quelch told him over the phone that Smith was on the run! He happened to be catching the same train that we got to Courtfield in from Loutham."

"Your uncle brought him in!" said Bob. "Why?"

"Ask me another! I can't see why he couldn't let him rip!" said Vernon bitterly. "Nothing to do with him or with me that I can see. If the fellow wanted to dodge being booted out, I don't see why he shouldn't."

"Well, your uncle's a relation, of sorts, of Smithy's—I suppose that's why," said Harry. "Anyhow, I'm glad he's back—there may be a chance yet. You can't expect us to feel as you do about it, Vernon—we don't want Smithy to go!"

"I do—and I shall be glad when he's gone!" said Vernon. "If he stayed, I should make my uncle take me away somehow—and if he wouldn't, I should cut. I won't stay in the same school with Vernon-Smith after what he's done. He may not be found out next time."

The Famous Five, without answering that, left the study. They went down to the quad, where a crowd of Remove fellows were discussing Smithy and the surprising fact that he had come back with Vernon and his uncle.

"I say, you fellows, seen Smithy?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"No. Where is he?" asked Harry.

"Quelch's study. There's a prefect watching him to see that he don't bolt again!" grinned the Owl of the Remove. "He, he, he! You can see Smithy, scowling out of the window."

"Hasn't he gone to the Head, then?" asked Bob.

"Not yet!" said Hazeldene. "Captain Vernon and Quelch are with the Head—and they're keeping Smithy on the doormat for some reason."

"He's not sacked yet," said Skinner. "Smithy's a card—I shouldn't wonder if he sticks on, after all. He's been so jolly near it so jolly often that I shan't believe he's sacked till I see the last of him."

The Famous Five walked along to the window of Mr. Quelch's study. They were anxious for a word with the Bounder, if they could get one.

Smithy, as Bunter had said, could be seen scowling from the window.

The window was partly open, and had Smithy been left alone there was little doubt that he would have cut. But Sykes of the Sixth sat by the window—in official charge of the Bounder till he was called before the Head! Quelch was not giving him the chance to cause more trouble.

"My esteemed Smithy, the gladfulness to see you again is truly terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, as the chums of the Remove came up to the study window.

"Any chance, Smithy?" asked Harry.

"Not in the least," answered the Bounder coolly. "Quelch is with the Head now—retailing my sins. It will take him some time if he goes through the whole list. I've got to wait till the old bean's finished."

The Famous Five looked at him from the quad. Smithy was as cool as ever, and seemed unconcerned. But they could guess quite easily what was hidden under that careless air of unconcern.

"You haven't seen the Head yet?"

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"Not yet. Pleasure in store. That meddling rat, Captain Vernon, is with him now—goodness knows why! He made out, when he grabbed me at the station, that he was going to put in a word for me. I'd fling it back in his cheeky face if he did!"

"Steady on, kid!" said Sykes of the Sixth.

The Bounder gave him no heed.

"It's a lie, of course," he went on. "I don't know why he took the trouble to tell it. You can guess how much he wants me to stay on here—with his dear Bertie!"

"That's rot, Smithy, old chap!" said Bob. "If he said so, he must have meant it. After all, he's a sort of relation of yours—he can't want a relation bunked. By gum, I hope he'll get by with it! We don't want to lose you, Smithy."

"Not after what I've done?" sneered the Bounder.

"No—not even after that! Look here, Smithy, for goodness' sake don't check Quelch or the Head—make the most of it if there's the ghost of a chance!" said Bob earnestly.

"That's good advice, Vernon-Smith," said Sykes. "Now you kids cut off—you've jawed enough."

The Famous Five left the window. They left it in a more hopeful mood. They could guess, after what Smithy had said, why Captain Vernon was with the headmaster.

"Frightfully decent of him to put in a word for Smithy after what he's done!" said Nugent.

"The frightfulness is terrific!"

"Blessed if I should have expected it!" said Bob. "The jolly old captain looked to me a jolly hard nut to crack. But you never can tell. After all, the Vernons and Vernon-Smiths are relations. Smithy's never had any use for the relationship—but it may come in useful now. Oh, my hat!" he added suddenly. "Look!"

There was a sudden commotion at the study window the juniors had just left.

Perhaps Sykes' attention had wandered for a few moments.

The Famous Five stared as they saw Vernon-Smith head and shoulders out of the window.

"Smithy!" gasped Nugent.

"The mad ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

In another moment the Bounder would have dropped into the quad. But a grasp closed on him from behind.

"You young sweep!" roared Sykes as he grasped.

The Bounder struggled and kicked. But the Sixth Form prefect dragged him back by main force and pitched him back into the room.

Then the window slammed shut.

"By gum! Smithy's the man to keep on asking for it!" said Bob.

The cheeky ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Lot of good Vernon's uncle putting in a word for him, at that rate."

"Blessed if I can understand the man speaking up for Smithy!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "But—I hope he will get away with it if he does!"

All the Co. shared that hope.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Saved from the Sack!

DR. LOCKE coughed.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

Captain Vernon, seated in the Head's study, was speaking in quiet, earnest tones.

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The headmaster was very much inclined to give him a hearing. But Mr. Quelch's face was growing grimmer and grimmer.

"Possibly," said Captain Vernon, "you are surprised to hear me intervening on behalf of such a boy—"

"Most decidedly!" said Mr. Quelch. "I can see nothing in favour of Vernon-Smith. He has always been a troublesome and rebellious boy! More than once his headmaster has considered sending him away from the school. What he has done now cannot be passed over."

"I agree, fully. But—" Captain Vernon paused. "The boy is to blame—he has acted unscrupulously, unfairly—but—but there are certain considerations. It is very painful to me to think that Mr. Vernon-Smith's son should be expelled from his school as a result of my nephew having come to Greyfriars."

"I understand that, of course," agreed Mr. Quelch. "But your nephew, sir, has not been to blame in this matter."

"It was, perhaps, a mistake to send Bertie to the same school," said the captain. "If so, the mistake was mine—and it is a heavy responsibility on my shoulders for Mr. Vernon-Smith's son to be sent away in disgrace."

Dr. Locke nodded assent.

Mr. Quelch set his lips.

"The present position," said the Remove master, "is intolerable. There is a bitter hostility between the two boys, which is in itself a sufficiently unpleasant state of affairs. The resemblance between them has led to many awkward mistakes and misapprehensions. Now Vernon-Smith has deliberately taken advantage of that resemblance in order to cause an unjust punishment to fall upon the relative he dislikes. A recurrence of such an incident cannot be risked."

"That is very true!" said Dr. Locke.

"I have every hope, sir, that this lesson may not be lost on Vernon-Smith, and that there will be no such recurrence!" said the captain. "But in the event of any such recurrence, I am prepared to remove my nephew from this school and thus save Mr. Quelch any further trouble in the matter."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I am, of course, very reluctant to remove him," said Captain Vernon, "but I feel that his cousin, Vernon-Smith, has a prior right, if I may say so—he was a Greyfriars boy long before I thought of Greyfriars for my nephew."

"True!" said the Head.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith is a gentleman whom I respect very highly," went on the captain. "It would be a terrible blow for him if his son was sent home in disgrace. He would have a right to reproach me, since it was by my act, in sending my nephew here, that the disaster occurred."

"But—" said Mr. Quelch.

"That the present state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue I understand only too clearly," said the captain. "Mr. Quelch cannot be expected to tolerate it in his Form."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite so, sir! But if it is admitted that Mr. Vernon-Smith's son may be given another chance, if any further trouble should follow I will take Bertie away and place him at another school."

Dr. Locke looked at the Remove master, whose grim face relaxed a good deal.

Mr. Quelch's own private opinion was

that, in view of the hostility between the relatives and the awkward resemblance in their looks, the captain had made a mistake in sending him to Greyfriars. If the captain was prepared to set that mistake right, it altered the matter considerably.

And if the captain was prepared to go to this length in order that Mr. Vernon-Smith's son might have another chance, the Remove master could not help feeling that it was up to him to make a concession on his side.

"I shall leave the decision in Mr. Quelch's hand, as the master concerned," said the Head.

"Then I can only hope that Mr. Quelch will decide in favour of my plea," said Captain Vernon.

"In view of what you have said, sir, I feel bound to do so!" said the Remove master. "Vernon-Smith, with Dr. Locke's permission, will remain—but it is on the understanding, as stated by you, that his relative leaves in the event of further difficulties arising."

"That is perfectly understood, sir!" said the captain. "It will be a blow to me to take Bertie away from a school where he is in such excellent hands—but I feel it my duty not to allow his relative to suffer on my account. I can only thank you, Mr. Quelch. You have relieved my mind of a very great weight!"

"I am glad to have done so, sir!" said Mr. Quelch politely.

And Captain Vernon took his leave.

He left the two masters with a very agreeable impression. In the circumstances, Captain Vernon was the very last man who might have been expected to plead for leniency for Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had done so, and his relief at having gained his point was perfectly clear in his face. Both the masters could see that the decision had, as he said, taken a weight from his mind.

The Army man went back to the waiting taxi.

He found his nephew waiting for him there to say good-bye when he went.

The sullen expression was gone from Bertie's face now.

"You've seen the Head, uncle?" he asked.

"I have just left him," answered the captain.

"Then you've heard that Smith is going!"

The captain's face clouded.

"I have prevailed on the headmaster to give Vernon-Smith another chance, Bertie!" he said, in a low voice.

Bertie Vernon jumped.

"You—you have—" he stammered. "Is he to stay, after all?"

"Yes!"

"Then I am going!" said Bertie, between his teeth. "I don't care whether he stays or goes—so long as I am not under the same roof! I will not stay at Greyfriars if Smith does!"

"It will not be for long, Bertie!" said Captain Vernon. "Say no more now, my boy. There will be no more trouble with your relative. I am taking very effective measures to that end."

"I don't see—"

"It is not necessary for you to see!" answered the captain coldly. "But you can take my word that the trouble is at an end, or very nearly at an end. I ask you to be patient for a few days longer."

"A few days—" repeated Bertie. "I don't understand."

"Leave it at that! Keep clear of the fellow as much as you can—above all, avoid trouble with him—take no heed of his malice—I repeat that you will have to tolerate the fellow for only

few days longer." The captain's eyes glinted like cold steel. "What he has done has removed my last doubt—my last hesitation. The die is cast!"

Bertie Vernon looked at the hard, dark face that had set like iron. He felt something like a chill.

"I don't understand," he faltered.

"You will understand later. Leave it at that!"

Captain Vernon shook hands with his nephew and stepped into the taxi.

Bertie stood watching the cab till it was gone, and then he slowly turned back into the House.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Why?

"ADSUM!"

Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, was calling the roll in Hall.

Herbert Vernon-Smith's adsum came clearly as his name was called.

Every eye in the Remove was on him.

Fellows in other Forms craned necks to look at him.

The Bounder at that moment had the spotlight.

All through the school, it was known that Vernon-Smith of the Remove was up for the sack. He was booked for a morning train.

But he did not look like a fellow who was attending his last call-over.

He had joined up with the Remove at the last moment as they came into Hall.

He had whispered a word to Tom Redwing, that was all; but it was a word that made Redwing's face bright with relief. And the other fellows could read, in his look, that Smithy had, somehow or other, pulled through. There was a faint grin on his face as he felt himself the cynosure of all eyes.

"Is it all right, Smithy?" whispered Harry Wharton as the roll went on and Prout boomed the names.

"Right as rain!"

"You've pulled through?" whispered Bob.

"You've got it!"

"Grattors, old man!"

"The gratterfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurroo Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, ain't Smithy going to be bunked after all?" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, Vernon, ain't your cousin going to be sacked?"

Bertie did not answer the fat Owl, save with a black look.

"Silence there!" called out Wingate of the Sixth; and the buzz of whispering in the Remove died away.

When the school was dismissed, Vernon-Smith went up to the Remove studies, and a curious crowd of fellows went with him. Every fellow in the Remove wanted to know how it had happened. For, if ever a fellow had asked for the sack, Herbert Vernon-Smith had; and he himself, at all events, had not had the remotest hope of pulling through.

"How did you wangle it, Smithy?" asked Skinner on the Remove landing.

"Do tell us how you wangled it!"

"Quech found at the last minute that he couldn't part with me!" explained the Bounder. "He felt it would be too great a wrench."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So, as he put it nicely, I consented to stay!" added Smithy. "I felt that I couldn't do less."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean to say that you're getting nothing after squirting Mossoo and making out that Vernon did it?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

The Bounder flushed.

"I'm getting a flogging, if that's any satisfaction to you!" he snapped.

"You get that treat in the morning—all arrangements as per programme, except that the Head will be exercising his muscle on me instead of Vernon."

"You're gettin' off cheap, Smithy!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Think I don't know that!" grunted the Bounder. And he walked on to Study No. 4 with Redwing, and slammed the door on the buzzing crowd of juniors.

"Thank goodness it's all right, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing. "You can stand a flogging and—and—"

"And I deserve it!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, you know you do, old chap!" said Tom. "I can't make out how you came to do such a rotten thing—it's not like you. But you did it!"

"It's exactly like me," answered the Bounder coolly. "That rat Vernon had no right to barge into my school—and I was going to do my best to barge him out of it. But—"

He paused.

"Do you know how I got off, Reddy?"

"Not because Quech felt that he couldn't part with you!" said Tom, laughing.

"No! It was because that rat's uncle begged me off!"

"Captain Vernon?"

"Yes! Quech told me so!"

"By gum! He must be a jolly decent man, Smithy!" said Tom, in surprise.

"I should never have expected—"

"Neither should I!" said Vernon-Smith moodily. "I'd rather have been sacked than have asked anything at his hands. But—no good saying I'm not glad to pull through. It would have been a knock-out for my father if I'd been bunked off home in the morning. And I don't want to go, either. But—"

but I hate to be under an obligation to that man!"

"I wouldn't look at it like that, Smithy—"

"You'd like to see me turn on the gratitude stunt?" sneered Smithy.

"Well, dash it all, old man, to speak up for you after what you did to his nephew—"

"What's his game?" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "What is the man up to? I'm keen enough, but I can't get it. I knew he'd be glad to hear that I was sacked. I tell you, I know it! And yet—he put the stopper on it! What's his game, Reddy?"

Redwing stared at his chum.

"Nothing but kindness of heart, I suppose," he said.

Smithy gave a scoffing laugh.

"He looks as if he's got an extra large allowance of the milk of human kindness, doesn't he?"

"Well, no! He looks a hard nut! But what he's done he's done, and even you, Smithy, can hardly make out that he could have a bad motive for saving you from getting the sack!" exclaimed Tom warmly.

"Can't I?" sneered the Bounder. "I can—and do! I can't make out his game, but it doesn't suit him, somehow, for me to be bunked. The man's got me beat. He's as deep as a well, and I can't plumb him! Why shouldn't it suit him for me to be sacked?"

Tom Redwing compressed his lips.

He did not expect much in the way of the kinder emotions from Smithy. It was bitterly irritating to Smithy to be under an obligation to a man he disliked; and irritation was very likely to outweigh gratitude. But to suspect bad motives behind an act that was, on the face of it, kind and generous was really too much.

Tom did not speak, but the Bounder

could easily read his thoughts in his face. He laughed scoffingly again.

"You think me a suspicious, ungrateful fool, Reddy," he said. "Well, you've got it wrong—and I've got it right! That man loathes me; it would be sheer satisfaction to him to see me come a cropper. Same with his dear Bertie. He's put the stopper on it, and it beats me to know why! I'm under no obligation to a man who has butted in to suit his own game, for that's what it amounts to."

"I'm afraid you don't want to fool under an obligation, Smithy, and you're ready to fancy anything to suit," said Tom dryly. "Apart from sheer kindness, it must be absolutely indifferent to Captain Vernon whether you're turned out of Greyfriars or not."

The Bounder shook his head.

"I've got him tabbed!" he said obstinately. "I know that man like a book—but I can't make out his game! But I'll tell you this, Reddy—I shall find out some time why he barged in to-day. Now let it drop."

Redwing was glad enough to let such a subject drop.

But during prep that evening he noted that the Bounder paused in his work every now and then, his brows knitted in deep thought. He knew what was in Smithy's mind; he was trying to think out what possible motive Captain Vernon could have had—apart from the obvious one—for intervening to save him from the sack.

But if Smithy's strange suspicion were well-founded, the problem was too much for him, and he had to give it up.

When the Remove came down after prep Bertie Vernon was in the Rag when Smithy arrived there. He did not glance at his relative, but unostentatiously he left the Rag as soon as Smithy entered.

Other fellows gave Smithy very curious looks.

Many of them were glad that he was still there. But it was not easy for fellows to forget what he had done. There were a good many fellows in the Remove who were not anxious to have anything to do with Vernon-Smith—for the present, at least.

The Bounder, for the present, was unpopular. He had done a bad thing—a very bad thing—and fellows who would have been sorry to see him go could not feel very cordial. Harry Wharton & Co. had been glad enough of his escape, but they did not feel disposed, at the moment, to have much to say to him.

Smithy did not stay long in the Rag that evening. He realised that time was required to wash out the memory of what he had done, and he had to make the best of it till then. He went up to his study—pausing on the way at Study No. 1 to look in at his relative.

Bertie gave him a hard look as he opened the door.

"You can go down to the Rag," sneered Smithy. "I've quit!" He fixed his eyes sharply on Vernon's hostile face. "Do you know why your uncle got me off to-day, Bertie Vernon?"

Vernon's lip curled.

"No! I'm sorry he did."

The Bounder gave him a penetrating look.

"You're not in it?" he asked mockingly.

"In what?"

"In whatever it is that your precious uncle's got up his sleeve," said the Bounder deliberately. "I want to know why he butted in, and I'm going to find out some time. You can tell him from me that I owe him nothing; he was serving his own turn in this, though at present I can't make out how."

Bertie Vernon stared at him for a moment blankly, and then burst into a contemptuous laugh.

"Is that the Vernon-Smith brand of gratitude?" he asked.

"It's the brand of gratitude that's due to your precious uncle—and to you if you had a hand in it!" retorted Vernon-Smith.

"You can bank on it that I had no hand in it; I should have been glad to see you turned out!"

"So would Captain Vernon," said the Bounder coolly. "But he butted in, all the same, and stopped it. And you don't know why?"

"Oh, get out of my study!"

"I'm going! But tell him from me that I know that I owe him nothing; I know that it suited his game, though I don't know how!"

And with that the Bounder walked up the passage to his own study, leaving Bertie Vernon with a startled look on his face.

What the Bounder had said had brought back the captain's parting words to his mind. For two or three minutes Vernon stood with that startled, troubled look on his face; then he shook himself impatiently, as if to shake away perplexing thoughts, and went down to the Rag.

The following morning the Bounder went through his flogging, in Hall, under the eyes of all Greyfriars. Even his chum Redwing could not but think that it was what he deserved; most of the other fellows thought that it was a good deal less than he deserved.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Stump for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON held up his hand.

"Chuck it at that!" he said.

"You fool!"

"Chuck it!"

"You rotter!"

"Same old Smithy," remarked Bob Cherry. "You'll begin to make fellows sorry you weren't bunked, after all, last week, Smithy."

"You shut up!" snarled the Bounder.

"I'm talking to Wharton."

"You've finished talking to me!" said the captain of the Remove. "I'm fed up with you, Vernon-Smith! I told you, after the St. Jim's match, that you and Vernon would never play together again in the Remove team—and you won't! We've heard enough of you dropping catches for Vernon, and Vernon running you out in your innings! That sort of thing won't do at Greyfriars."

"Who wants to play in the same team with the cad? Leave him out!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "You can't give him my place."

"We want a bowler, and Vernon's a bowler! That's why he's in. And that's that!" said Harry. "Now chuck it!"

It was in break on Wednesday morning.

That afternoon the Remove were playing the Shell; a fairly strenuous match for the Removites.

Harry Wharton would have been glad enough to include both the rivals of the Remove in the team.

After his experience in the match with Tom Merry & Co., however, he did not think for a moment of doing so.

Fellows who carried a family feud into the cricket field could not figure in the same match on the same side. The captain of the Remove had made up his mind on that point irrevocably.

Vernon was a bowler; Vernon-Smith

a batsman. Both were first class—but one had to go. The Remove had good bats, but no other bowler equal to Bertie, except Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—and even the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur was not quite so good. The captain of the Remove decided the matter wholly and solely from the point of view of cricket.

Vernon was needed—Vernon-Smith could be dispensed with. That settled it. But it did not settle it to the satisfaction of the Bounder.

He was deeply enraged and exasperated.

"So it comes to this," he said between his teeth. "That cad is going to push me out of the cricket!"

"Have a little sense," said the captain of the Remove. "You'd drop catches for Vernon, the same as you did before. According to your own account, Vernon would run you out if he happened to be at the wickets with you. Is that the sort of cricket we're to put up?"

"Leave him out!"

"He's wanted."

"More than I am!" breathed the Bounder.

"More than I am myself, if you come to that!" answered Harry. "We're not strong in bowling and we're jolly lucky to have Vernon."

"That will apply to a good many matches to come, as well as the Shell to-day!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I suppose it will!" admitted Wharton. "It can't be helped, Smithy. It's more your fault than Vernon's; he was willing to keep the peace if you'd let him. But the pair of you are enough to turn a cricket captain's hair grey. When St. Jim's were here you had to be stopped from punching his face, with Tom Merry and his friends looking on. What's the good of expecting fellows to go through that sort of thing?"

"Leave him out, I say!"

"Leave out the best bowler that's ever bowled for the Remove—because you have to be stopped from punching his head in the middle of a match! Do you think it's likely?"

"I'll make the cad sorry for pushing me out of the cricket!" said Vernon-Smith, his voice trembling with passion. "I'll make my school too hot for him somehow!"

"You'd better cut that out!" said Wharton. "You just saved your bacon last time; and you owe it to that chap's uncle, too. You won't get by next time; and I can tell you this, Smithy—fellows are willing to let the matter drop, but nobody's forgotten the dirty trick you played on Vernon; and if you want to be cut by the whole Form, you're going the right way to work! Now chuck it, and give a fellow a rest!"

Vernon-Smith gave him an evil look and went into the House.

He went up to the Remove passage, and passed Bertie Vernon on the landing as he went.

Bertie did not look at him, but the Bounder's eyes fixed on his rival with deadly animosity.

"You rotter!" he breathed. "Everything's going your way just at present, but wait till my chance comes!"

He clenched his hands as he spoke.

Bertie Vernon's damaged nose had mended by this time, and presented a normal aspect. Smithy was very much inclined to plant his knuckles on it and restore it to its red and raw state.

His double did not heed him.

As Vernon-Smith stood in his way, Bertie walked round him and went down the stairs, with a cool and quiet disdain that almost caused the Bounder

to rush after him and start a scrap on the stairs.

The Bounder checked that impulse, however, and tramped up the Remove passage to his study.

Since his narrow escape from the sack, Smithy had rather let the feud drop; and Vernon, on his side, had been glad enough to avoid him and trouble with him.

But all his bitterness had revived now. Smithy was a keen cricketer, and he was left out of the eleven because Vernon was in it.

Even Smithy admitted that the captain of the Remove could hardly be expected to play the two together after what had occurred, and might be expected to occur again. But his view was that Vernon should be left out—a view not likely to be shared by a cricket captain in need of a bowler, and with a bowler of such unusual powers at his disposal.

The fellow ought not to have been at Greyfriars at all! That was the beginning and end of the whole trouble, to the Bounder's mind. And vague schemes were reviving in his mind of getting rid of the fellow, ghastly as the failure of his last move in that direction had been.

He tramped savagely into his study, and a startled squeak greeted him as he came in, a fat figure spinning round suddenly from the study cupboard.

It was Billy Bunter—in a jammy state!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

Bunter had not expected Smithy to come up to the study in morning break. It had seemed quite a safe opportunity for sampling Smithy's jam. But even strawberry jam lost its flavour as the Owl of the Remove caught the expression on Smithy's speaking countenance.

Smithy was, in fact, in a mood to wreak his rage on somebody. Bunter was there to ask for it!

The Bounder gave him a glare, and then stepped quickly to a cupboard, to grab a cricket stump.

Billy Bunter made a wild bound for the door.

He reached the door as Smithy reached him.

A hand grasped the back of a fat neck; the other hand laid the cricket stump on, landing it on Bunter's tight trousers with a terrific whop!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Whop!

In sheer desperation, the fat Owl turned on Vernon-Smith.

Bunter was no fighting man, but he had to get away from that whopping stump.

A fat fist shot out, catching the Bounder unexpectedly under the chin.

That punch had Bunter's weight behind it. Bunter's weight was no light matter.

Smithy went over with a crash, the cricket stump flying across the study and clattering in the fender.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gave the Bounder one blink through his big spectacles. Smithy was sprawling on his back, spluttering.

Bunter had knocked him down—fairly knocked him down. But what he would do when he got up again was awful to contemplate.

Bunter did not stay to contemplate it. Bunter flew.

It was only a few moments before Vernon-Smith, crimson with fury, scrambled to his feet. But those few moments were enough for Bunter. Never had the fat Owl carried his weight along so rapidly.

When the enraged Bounder glared out of the study, Bunter had vanished.



"I think it best to take my nephew away from Greyfriars," said Captain Vernon. "As you think best, of course, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "This week——" "I have called to take him away with me now!" said the Army man.

And he stayed vanished till the Remove went in to third school.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Knows How!

"**B**EAST!" groaned Billy Bunter. But it was a silent groan. After dinner the Owl of the Remove was chiefly occupied in keeping at a safe distance from Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had dodged him after third school, he had dodged him after dinner, and his fat mind was concentrated on continuing to dodge him till Smithy recovered from the effects of that unexpected upper-cut in Study No. 4.

So Bunter, for once, was not reposing in an armchair in the Rag or haunting the school shop, as was his custom on a half-holiday.

Away from his usual haunts, the fat Owl loitered under the old Greyfriars elm, hoping to see the Bounder pass in the distance and go out for the afternoon—when the wicked would cease from troubling and the weary be at rest.

He had to keep a wary eye open for Smithy, and another wary eye open for Vernon. For, now that Vernon's nose was normal once more, the short-sighted Owl was very likely to mistake one for the other. If he came near Vernon, he might turn out to be Smithy—which would be disastrous.

One of the beasts came towards him now, and from the fact that he was walking with Tom Redwing, Bunter guessed which beast it was, and he promptly blotted himself out of sight behind a tree.

Vernon, it was certain, would not be with Redwing; he had nothing to do with his enemy's chum. So it was Smithy. For which reason Bunter hunted cover, though probably he

would have hunted it in vain had Smithy been looking for him.

As a matter of fact, Smithy was not looking for him or thinking of him. He was ready to boot Bunter all round the quad if he came on him, but he was by no means hunting the alarmed fat Owl, as Bunter supposed. Quite other matters were in Smithy's mind that sunny June afternoon.

Redwing was in flannels. He had a place in the Remove eleven; a vacant place had to be filled, and Redwing had been given his chance.

Smithy, bitterly as he felt his own exclusion, was glad that his chum was to play—it was rather his way to urge Redwing's claims, in season and out of season; and, in fact, he could guess that the captain of the Remove had stretched a point in Redwing's favour as a sort of make-weight for his own exclusion.

"It's rotten, Smithy!" Billy Bunter heard Redwing's voice as the two juniors came along. "I wish you were in the game, though if you were, I suppose I shouldn't be."

"I'm glad you're in, at any rate, old chap!"

"Some fellows wouldn't be, as it's your place I've been given."

"No," said the Bounder. "That's so, Reddy. You see, I've got my good points—one or two. I'm jolly glad you've got a show, and you know it."

"Yes, I know it, Smithy. I—I wish you'd get over that fatheaded feud with Vernon, and——"

"Likely!" The Bounder's tone became scoffing at once. "I'll get over it when the rat gets out of my school—not before! And perhaps I shall be able to help him out!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, get that rotten idea out of your head! Have you forgotten what happened only last week?" exclaimed Redwing, in alarm.

Billy Bunter quaked. The two juniors had come to a stop, and Vernon-Smith was leaning on the massive old trunk that hid Bunter.

Had he passed round the old elm, he must have seen the fat junior, and only too well Bunter knew what to expect if he did.

The dismayed fat Owl tried to suppress his breathing.

Vernon-Smith, leaning on the elm, his hands driven deep into his pockets, looked at Redwing's dismayed face as his chum stood facing him. The Bounder had a mocking look in his eyes.

"You're going to play cricket this afternoon, Reddy. I'm pushed out by that rat! Well, I may find something else to do while he's putting up his hat-tricks for the Remove!"

"If you play a mad trick like that again, Smithy, it will be the finish for you here! No amount of evidence will convince Quelch next time! Whatever's done will be put down to you! Have a little sense!"

"Think I'm a fool?" said the Bounder contemptuously. "That chicken won't fight again! I've worked that for all it's worth—and come a precious mucker, too! I'm paying a friendly call this afternoon, Reddy."

"Where, then?" asked Redwing un- easily.

"What about Lantham Chase?"

"You're going there again? Smithy, you——"

"No, I'm not going there. Dear Bertie's going there!" grinned the Bounder. "I've fooled that Army goat like that once; I'm going to fool him again! Now that Bertie's lost his red nose it's an easy game——"

"You can't fool the man like that twice, Smithy! He will spot you—and

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if he does you won't get away without a licking."

"I'll chance that."

"But why?" exclaimed Redwing, troubled and distressed. "After all, the man spoke up for you here, Smithy—he pulled you through."

"That's why!" said the Bounder mockingly. "I want to know why he pulled me through. I want to spot his game, Reddy. I want to know what he's doing at Lantham Chase, where he lives in two or three rooms out of a hundred, like a rat in a corner of a barn, and pays a big rent, that he can't afford, for it. I've known for a long time that the man's up to something, and I want to know what!"

"Even if that's so, Smithy, it's no business of yours."

"Isn't it?" jeered the Bounder. "No bizney of mine—if he didn't bargo into my affairs! Why did he send his nephew here? Why did he drag me back from Courtfield Station when I was going to clear, and the pair of them would have been done with me? Why did he pull me through with the Head? Why is he determined that at any price Bertie Vernon and I shall be at the same school—for that's what it comes to? Why?"

"I can't make it all out, Smithy. But—"

"Well, I'm going to make it out!" said the Bounder, with grim bitterness. "That man's up to some game—and that means up to some sort of foul play, and—"

"Smithy!"

"That man," went on the Bounder, "is hard as nails! He's got his soft point—he's fond of that nephew of his, and proud of him! In everything else he's just hard steel. There's precious little that he would stop at, Reddy, to suit his game, or for his nephew's advantage! And he's got it mapped out to score, somehow, by planting Bertie Vernon here, at my elbow."

"How could it possibly benefit him, or Vernon, Smithy? You're talking sheer rot!"

"I don't know—yet. But I'm going to know! Whether that rat is in the game or not I can't be sure, but the odds are that he is in it. If he is, I shall know as much as he does after a talk with the dear old captain—as Bertie?"

"You can't do it, Smithy!"

"Can't I?" jeered the Bounder.

"You can't get a man's confidence by pretending to be somebody he trusts—Smithy, you can't!"

"Not if the pair of them are in the same scheme up against me?" sneered Smithy. "Am I to leave them to carry on because I'm too jolly particular to get information in the only way possible? I'll watch it!"

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"In that case, perhaps; but it's all rot, Smithy—utter rot!"

"We shall see. I'm going to know whether it's rot or not, anyhow; and if I spot the game that rat mayn't be at Greyfriars much longer!" said the Bounder. "I may be able to put a spoke in his wheel—without getting sacked for it this time! There's something underhand going on, Reddy, and I've known that for some time. Now I'm going to know what it is! And when I know I may have the upper hand of that cad!"

"It's all rot, Smithy!"

"Leave it at that, then!" said the Bounder lightly. "I may have news for you when I come in, Reddy. I'm going, anyhow."

"I wish you wouldn't, old chap! It's not right, and—and that Army man is a dangerous man to play cheeky tricks on—"

"A dangerous man, if you like?" agreed the Bounder. "A dangerous man, up to some rotten scheme, and I'm going to spot him. There's Cherry yelling to you, Reddy. Get off to the cricket!"

"Smithy, don't go!" urged Tom Redwing earnestly. "Some harm will come of it and—"

"Rot!"

The Bounder detached himself from the elm and walked away.

Bob Cherry's voice was calling.

"Tumble up, Reddy!"

Redwing, with a clouded face, went over to join the cricketers. And Billy Bunter, at long last, was able to emerge from cover!

Smithy went into the House. Billy Bunter saw Tom Redwing pause and glance after his chum as he disappeared.

Redwing's face was dark and his heart was heavy. The obstinate Bounder had to have his own way; he was determined to ride over to Lantham Chase that afternoon, and he was going.

Tom Redwing, as he watched him out of sight, little dreamed how long it was to be before he saw Herbert Vernon-Smith again.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tipped on the Telephone!

"GUM!" said Hobson of the Shell.

He blinked at the wicket. From the Remove fellows round the field came a cheery shout.

"Well bowled!"

"Good man, Vernon!"

Hobby of the Shell was a good man with the willow. He had had a happy anticipation of knocking up numberless runs against the Remove—who, after all, were only Lower Fourth, and not in the same street with the Shell at cricket—in the opinion, at least, of all Shell fellows.

But Hobby had to think again when he opened the innings for his Form and Vernon of the Remove bowled the first over.

Hobby had three narrow escapes and no runs, and the fourth ball of the over found a chink in his armour. James Hobson gazed mournfully at a spread-eagled wicket and departed sadly.

The captain of the Shell was out for a big round O. And he warned the next man in to look out for that new Remove kid!

Next man in looked out, accordingly; but it booted him not! Carr of the Shell did not quite know how that tricky ball eluded the willow. But he knew that it did, for it levelled his

leg-stump, and he had to trail back wearily the way Hobby had gone.

"Steward, old man," said Hobson, to the third man on the list. "You've got to stop that swab!"

"Um!" was Stewart's reply.

He was going to do his best, but he was far from sure of stopping the swab! His doubts were justified, as was made plain when his middle stump was rooted out, leaving his wicket looking rather toothless.

"Bravo, Vernon!"

"Good man!"

"The jolly old hat trick!" roared Bob Cherry, waving his cap in the air. "Can that man bowl?"

"Can he?" chuckled Harry Wharton. "The carefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

If Harry Wharton had had any doubts of his wisdom in putting Vernon in and leaving Vernon-Smith out they would have been banished now.

Beginning the innings with the hat-trick was really as much as the most exacting cricket captain could have asked of any bowler. Bertie Vernon was a prize-packet for the Remove eleven; there could be no doubt about that.

Even the Bounder, perhaps, would have admitted it, had he been present to witness the hat trick. But the Bounder was far away, covering the miles to Lantham Chase on his bicycle.

There were cheery faces in the Remove field. Plenty of fellows had gathered round to watch the game, a larger crowd than usually honoured a junior match. The new Remove bowler was worth watching. Even some Fifth Form men were attracted to the junior ground.

Coker of the Fifth confided to his friends Potter and Greene that he could hardly have done better than that himself! Potter and Greene heartily agreed that Coker couldn't!

Hurree Janset Ram Singh took the next over and accounted for the wicket of Hoskins of the Shell.

Claude Hoskins knew more about music than he knew about cricket; still, he could bat. On this occasion he succeeded in knocking the ball fairly into a ready palm—that of Vernon of the Remove. And there was a roar:

"Well caught, Vernon!"

The Shell innings went on—not happily.

A stand was made a little later in the innings, and runs went up. But Hobby watched from the pavilion with a face rather like a fiddle. It was clear that that innings was not going to last anything like so long as Hobby had confidently expected. And it was equally clear that the merry men of the Remove were not going to have a high figure to beat.

The score stood at thirty when last man went in—not a third of the figure that Hobby & Co. had banked on.

And when Bertie Vernon bowled last man for a duck James Hobson felt that there were no words that could do justice to the situation.

A very cheery field came off after that innings.

Tom Redwing, who had made a good catch in the field and put in a couple of overs as a change bowler, though without capturing any wickets thereby, was looking bright and cheerful, and had, for the time, forgotten the reckless, and perhaps perilous, adventure on which his chum was engaged that afternoon. He was reminded of it by a fat voice at the pavilion.

"I say, you fellows, where's Vernon?"

"Just under your nose, old fat Owl!" answered Bob Cherry.

"I say, Vernon—
"Don't bother!" said Bertie.
"Oh, really, Vernon—"
"Scat!"

"Oh, all right, then!" grinned Bunter. "I won't tell you, then! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, what do you think Smithy is up to this afternoon?"

Tom Redwing gave a start as he heard that. He knew what Herbert Vernon-Smith was up to that afternoon, and it dawned on him now that the fat Owl of the Remove knew also.

He set his lips with vexation.

It was bad enough for the Bounder to engage in such a questionable proceeding, without having it talked of up and down the Remove. Smithy was in bad odour already, and this was likely to add to it; but if Bunter somehow had found it out, there was no bottling up Bunter.

"Smithy!" repeated Bob Cherry. "Old Smithy ragging somebody?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!" chuckled Bunter. "I'm not going to tell Vernon, as he can't be civil. He'd jolly well like to know! He, he, he!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" muttered Tom Redwing.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Redwing! You jolly well know, the same as I do! He, he, he! I say, suppose that coffee-coloured old sportsman spots him—what?"

"Will you shut up?"

"No!" retorted Bunter independently. "I jolly well won't! Why should I? If Smithy wants a fellow to keep things dark he shouldn't get after a fellow with a cricket stump!"

"What is that fat ass burbling about?" asked Bob Cherry.

"What does it matter?" said Harry Wharton. "Buzz off, Bunter! You open the innings, Bob."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Oh, ring off, Bunty, old fat bean!" said Peter Todd. "You talk too much, old porpoise! Go and burble somewhere else, there's a good barrel!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Dry up, anyhow!" said Harry.

Bertie Vernon moved across to the fat Owl. He was interested now. The mention of the coffee-coloured old sportsman put him on the scent; he could guess that that was Bunter's elegant description of the dark-complexioned captain. If Vernon-Smith was playing some trick with Captain Vernon as the intended victim the captain's nephew wanted to know.

"What is it, Bunter?" he asked quietly.

The fat Owl blinked at him.

"You can jolly well find out!" he answered. "I was going to tell you, but as you can't be civil I jolly well won't! See? I don't care if Smithy pulls the old bean's leg."

"Do you mean my uncle?" muttered Bertie.

"Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't!" retorted Bunter. "I may have heard Smithy telling a chap what he was going to do, and I may not! If you can't be civil, I certainly shan't tell you anything! I say, though, do you think the old bean would take Smithy for you, same as he did that day when Smithy took a party over to the house? He, he, he!"

Vernon's eyes glinted.

"So that's it, is it?" he muttered.

"Find out!" retorted the astute Owl. "I'm not going to tell you if you can't speak civilly to a fellow. Smithy may have gone over to Lantham Chase on his jigger, and he may not. He may be going to pull the old bean's leg like he did before, and he may not!

Find out if you want to know! See?"

Bertie Vernon had found out quite as much as he wanted to know. He turned away from Bunter with a dark brow.

His enemy was at his tricks again. It was quite likely that Captain Vernon might be taken in by such trickery. That actually had happened only two or three weeks ago, when Smithy had taken a party of fellows over to Lantham Chase, playing the part of his double and completely hoodwinking the captain, keen as he was. Now, if Bunter had it right, he was at the same impudent game again.

Bertie stood thinking it over, with a knitted brow.

If that was how Herbert Vernon-Smith was occupied it was easy enough to put paid to it now that he knew. His uncle did not know that he was playing cricket that afternoon, and would not be surprised to see him ride over on his bicycle on a half-holiday. Everything was in the Bounder's favour for the success of his trick—except the circumstance that the fat Owl had become wise to it.

Bertie left the pavilion at last and walked away to the House.

He had plenty of time on his hands; Wharton and Bob Cherry were opening the innings for the Remove, and Vernon was down last on the list; he was not likely to be wanted for a good time to come.

What Bertie wanted was a telephone. The Bounder, in his place, would have scouted to find a beak's study unoccupied, and borrowed the telephone without leave asked or given. That was not Bertie's way. But, for once, he took a leaf out of his rival's book. Mr. Quelch would have given him leave to speak home on the telephone in his study, but he did not want his Form-master to hear what he had to say. His feelings were bitter enough towards Herbert Vernon-Smith, but he did not want to be placed in the position of giving him away to a master.

It was easy enough, as several of the staff had gone out that fine afternoon, and Prout never locked his study door.

Soon after entering the House, Bertie was standing at the telephone in Mr. Prout's study and ringing up Lantham Chase.

His uncle's rather hard voice answered.

"Bertie speaking."

"Oh, what is it?" There was a sharp note in the captain's voice. "I hope you are not going to tell me of more trouble with your relative. I have asked you to be patient for a few days; that is not much to ask, I think."

"Nothing of the kind, uncle."

"Then what is it?"

"I am playing cricket this afternoon. The match won't be over much before lock-up."

"Well?"

"If you get a visitor it won't be me."

The junior heard Captain Vernon, at the other end, catch his breath. The captain's voice was strangely altered as his reply came.

"Speak plainly, Bertie! Do you mean that your relative is coming here?" The Army man's voice was low and tense.

"I can't be sure. I've had it from a silly ass of a fellow who is always gabbling some nonsense. But if he was telling the truth, Smith is going to play his rotten trick again of coming over as me and taking you in. If he does, you'll know that I'm at the school playing cricket."

"Thank you, Bertie. I shall be on

my guard. The young rascal will not deceive me again!"

Bertie rang off and left the Fifth Form master's study.

He went back to the cricket field with a rather sour smile on his face.

If the Bounder was playing that trick again he was this time playing it once too often, and Bertie had no doubt that Captain Vernon would lay his Malacca cane round the spoofer as a reward for his trickery.

It might be a lesson to him to quit borrowing a fellow's name.

Bertie Vernon went back to the cricket, satisfied with having put paid to the Bounder's game; but far—very far—from guessing what was to be the outcome, or the strange and startling change it was to make in his life at Greyfriars School.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Laying the Snare!

CAPTAIN VERNON put up the receiver at Lantham Chase.

He stood for some minutes looking out of the window of the room, across the stone terrace outside, at the green park glimmering in the June sunshine.

The expression on his face was strange.

From that window he had a partial view of the long avenue that curved through the woodlands of the Chase—the way the expected visitor would arrive.

So that insolent young cub was coming to play over again the impudent, disrespectful trick he had played before—possibly with success, if the intended victim had not been warned.

Twice at least Captain Vernon had been deluded by the resemblance between the cousins, and it was quite on the cards that he might have been deluded again. Now he knew what to expect.

It was a strange, grim expression that came over his dark-complexioned face. He moved at last and went out of the room into the flagged hall.

Only three or four rooms in all the great mansion were occupied by the present tenant of Lantham Chase. They were in the old west wing, under the tall turret that rose high over the tree-tops.

The main building and the east wing were closed and locked; garage and stables were closed and locked. The new tenant of old Squire Luscombe's mansion lived, as the Bounder had said, like a rat in a corner of a barn. For no reason that could be guessed he paid high rent and rates on an immense place for which he had no use.

The few rooms that he used opened on that little flagged hall, with the stone terrace in front, the turret-room above.

Captain Vernon went out on the terrace, and stood there for some minutes, looking towards the avenue.

But there was no sign of an arrival yet.

It was a long bike ride from Greyfriars school—eight or nine miles. Vernon-Smith had been covering those miles, on his jigger, while his double was playing cricket: but he had not yet covered the distance.

The Army man went in again, at the door from the terrace. In the flagged hall he called:

"Hunt!"

His man came from the rooms at the back.

"I am going up to the turret, Hunt!" said Captain Vernon. "If Master Bertie comes in, send him up there to me."

"Yes, sir."

Captain Vernon went up the steep, narrow stair, that led up to the high turret.

Old Hunt glanced after him, curiously, as he went: he had been struck by the strange set expression on the captain's face.

From the stair, the Army man looked back.

"Hunt!"

"Sir?"

"When the boy comes up to the turret, shut the door on the terrace, lock it, and take away the key."

Old Hunt gave a slight start. His eyes fixed on the captain's, on the turret stair, a gleam coming into them. Evidently old Hunt read something in the captain's face and the captain's words, and understood what was in his master's mind—whatever it was!

"I get you, sir!" said Hunt.

He shuffled away.

Captain Vernon went on up the steep stair, to the little landing above, and stepped into the turret-room.

It was a large and airy room, plainly, but comfortably furnished. There were dust-sheets over the furniture: the room had not been used since the captain had become the tenant of Lantham Chase. But it was kept clean and tidy as if ready for an occupant.

Two large windows, in deep embrasures in the thick old walls, gave wide views over the surrounding country. To each window, was fitted a new shutter added during the captain's tenancy.

The shutters opened inwards. Each was formed of strong wooden bars, permitting a view outside, when they were closed. But the spaces between the bars were narrow. Shut, they gave rather the impression of a prison cell. Each shutter was fitted with a patent lock, that closed with a spring, but could only be opened by a special key.

On the occasion when Smithy, playing the part of his cousin, had brought a surprise party to Lantham Chase, they had visited the turret-room: and the Bounder and Harry Wharton & Co. had been rather puzzled by those shutters.

Why the captain had had them fitted to the windows of the old turret-room was difficult to guess.

The Famous Five, certainly, had not given much thought to the matter, as they were not specially concerned about Captain Vernon's business. But the Bounder had. He had been perplexed, and vaguely suspicious; though his suspicions had not taken any definite shape.

But his distrust of the cold, dark, hard-faced Army man was so deep that anything a little out of the common was enough to make Smithy suspicious. And there was no doubt that there were a good many things out of the common at Lantham Chase—the shutters in the turret, with their patent locks, most perplexing of all.

These shutters were wide open now. The captain glanced from the window that overlooked the avenue. No one was to be seen there so far.

His next proceedings were strange enough. He removed the dust-covers from the furniture and the bed in the corner. It looked as if he was making the turret-room ready for occupation. He rolled them in a bundle, and threw the bundle into a cupboard.

Then he took up his post at the window again, leaning on the stone em-

brasure, and watching the avenue with intent eyes.

He had yet some time to wait. But, at length, a cyclist came into sight, pedalling up the avenue towards the house.

The captain watched him with intent eyes.

Even the man who knew Bertie Vernon so well, the man who had taken his father's place, could not have told, at the distance, whether the junior on the bicycle was Bertie Vernon or Herbert Vernon-Smith.

As he watched the cyclist draw nearer, an expression of doubt came over the Army man's face.

If Bertie was playing cricket at Greyfriars; this was Vernon-Smith. But he did not look like Vernon-Smith, by his garb.

Smithy's clothes were always expensive, but not, perhaps, in the best of taste. The school rules on the subject kept him within bounds; but he generally stretched those rules as far as he could. He had taste for colour, and he liked fancy waistcoats. He was, perhaps, a little loud. Bertie was quite the reverse.

The cyclist wore a quiet dark suit. There was nothing about him to leap to the eye—as only too often there was about Smithy.

The captain watched him dubiously. Had Bertie come, after all?

Then a bitter sarcastic smile crossed his lips! He remembered what had happened on the day of the surprise party. On that occasion, the astute Bounder had borrowed Vernon's clothes, Vernon having changed to go to a matinee at the Courtfield theatre.

No doubt he had played a similar trick again. That dark suit looked like Bertie's Sunday suit. Easy enough for an unscrupulous trickster to get it out of his box in the Remove dormitory—if Bertie was playing cricket! That garb was a part of the fellow's trickery!

The captain's lips set in a hard line. He stepped back from the window, closed the shutter, and snapped the lock shut. He crossed to the other window, and locked that shutter also.

The room was still light, the bright June sunlight streaming in between the wooden bars. But there was now no escape from the turret-room, save by way of the narrow door.

Captain Vernon seated himself on a settee by the side of the doorway. He sat there and waited.

A few minutes later there was a sound of footsteps and voices below.

"Is my uncle in, Hunt?"

It would have been difficult to say whether that voice was Vernon's or Vernon-Smith's. In every tone they were alike. But the captain's ears were suspiciously intent now: perhaps he detected a difference.

"In the turret, sir!" came old Hunt's answer. "The master said you were to go up, if you came this afternoon, Master Bertie."

"Right—ho!"

There was a step on the turret stair. The Bounder of Greyfriars was coming—he little knew to what!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Trap!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was perfectly cool, as he came up the turret stair.

He had little, or rather no fear, of detection.

Twice the captain had taken him for

his nephew: why should he not take him for his nephew again, when he came in his nephew's name.

Smithy had left nothing to chance. He had taken Vernon's dark suit from Vernon's box in the dormitory, and dressed in it. He had a straw hat with Vernon's name in it. Very carefully he had excluded everything distinctive from his attire, in the way of expensive pins or sleeve-links. In his present outfit any Greyfriars man, even the Remove master himself, would doubtless have taken him for Bertie Vernon. Why should not the captain? Of Billy Dunter's babble, and of the telephone call from the school, the Bounder, of course, knew nothing.

Not for a moment did it cross his mind that anyone but Tom Redwing knew of his intention: least of all that the man at Lantham Chase had been warned, and put on his guard.

Keen as he was, wary as he was, the Bounder of Greyfriars was walking into the snare with his eyes shut.

He suspected the Army man—he distrusted him—he was sure, in his own mind, that the man was up to something, and that it was something hostile to himself. On that point he had no doubt. It seemed to him likely, if not certain, that Bertie knew all about it. If so, all he had to do was to pump the Army man—who, thinking that he was speaking to Bertie, would speak freely. That was Smithy's astute scheme.

His manner was perfectly cool and easy as he walked into the turret-room.

As the captain was seated on the settee by the wall, at the side of the doorway, he passed him without for the moment seeing him.

Glancing round, he saw him.

He had taken off his straw hat as he came in. As if by chance, he held it with the crown towards himself, so that the captain, looking at him, could hardly fail to notice the name "H. Vernon" inside. The Bounder was too keen to neglect a single detail that would help on his imposture.

"Oh, here you are, uncle!" he said. "I thought I'd run over, as it's a half-holiday at the school."

Captain Vernon nodded without rising.

"Sit down, Bertie!" he said, waving his hand towards the oak settee by the fireplace. "I'm glad you've come! As it happens, it suits me particularly to see you this afternoon."

"Then I'm glad I came over."

The Bounder lounged across to the settee, and sat down on it, his back to the wall. He glanced rather curiously at the closed shutters.

Why they were closed on a bright summer's day he could not know, but he was glad of it; the closed shutters subdued the bright light, and made it less likely than ever that the captain would detect that the visitor was not his nephew.

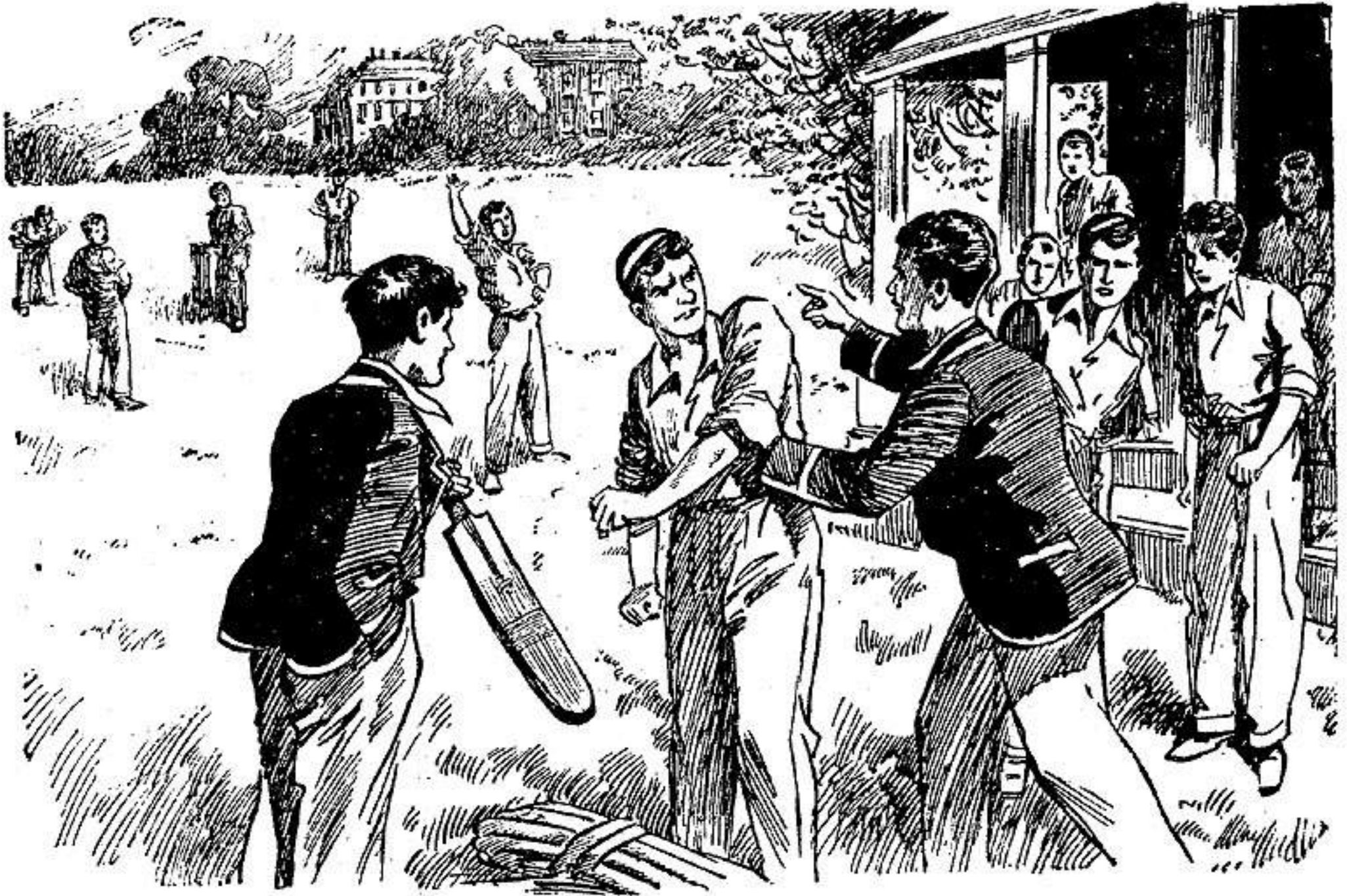
"No more trouble with your cousin Smith, I hope?" drawled the Army man, his eyes resting on the schoolboy facing him across the turret-room.

Smithy's eyes glinted for a second.

The Vernons, among themselves, always referred to him as "Smith," not as Vernon-Smith. It was a trifling thing, but it roused deep bitterness in the Bounder. It was part and parcel of what he called the "Vernon swank."

But Smithy was not the fellow to betray himself! He answered exactly as Bertie Vernon might have done.

"No—the rotter seems to be behaving himself, after the lesson he had last week. He gave me a message for you, uncle."



"Why the thump did you wander off?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, angrily and impatiently. "The field's waiting, you fathead!" "Yes, but——" stammered Vernon. "Quelch sent for me——" "Bother Quelch!" hooted the Greyfriars skipper. "Get out to your wicket!"

"Indeed! What is the message?"

"That he owes you nothing for getting him off with the Head! That it suited your game, somehow; he doesn't know how."

Smithy was rather glad to get that off his chest as he was fairly certain that Bertie had never passed on that message! He wanted the Army man to know.

Captain Vernon started a little.

"So that is Smith's view, is it?" he said.

"That's what he said!"

"A very keen young rascal!" said Captain Vernon. "Very keen indeed! Too keen for his own good, perhaps."

From below a sound came—that of a closing door.

Old Hunt had shut the door on the terrace. It seemed to Smithy that he caught another, and fainter sound, that followed—the click of a key! Why had the man locked that door?

Up to that moment the Bounder had been full of cool confidence.

But that sound from below struck him strangely.

Once before, in that room with the captain, he had felt a strange eerie premonition of peril—a feeling he could hardly understand. On that occasion, his chum Redwing had been waiting for him on the terrace. Now he was here alone!

Smithy had a nerve of iron! But there was something bodeful in that sound of the closing and locking door below. The feeling in his breast, vague as it was, was strong.

Yet what had he to fear?

If the man found him out, he could hardly expect to get away without a thrashing for his imposture. There was nothing to be afraid of in that—he had known that risk, and faced it care-

lessly. That mattered nothing! What else?

Yet he rose to his feet, his heart beating strangely.

The door below was locked—why? The shutters of the turret-room were closed and locked—there was no way out, save by the door, by which the Army man sat. And, as Smithy rose, the captain rose also, and stood in the doorway, almost filling the narrow space.

Strangely, eerily, the feeling came over Smithy of being like a rat in a trap!

The captain was smiling—a strange smile!

The silence lasted less than a minute—but it seemed ages long to the Bounder of Greyfriars. Danger—unforeseen, undreamt of danger, was in the air! His brain rejected the idea—but all his nerves, all his instincts, told him so. Smithy would have given much, at that moment, never to have entered the turret-room of Lantham Chase.

The captain broke the silence.

"You still wish to leave Greyfriars?" he asked.

Smithy felt a sense of relief at the question. The captain was speaking to him as Bertie—he suspected nothing!

"Oh! Yes!" he answered. "I've had enough of—of Smith!"

"You shall have your way!" said Captain Vernon. "You leave the school to-day."

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

If the man meant that—if Bertie was leaving Greyfriars—that was all he wanted! But what did that strange smile on the man's face mean?

"You would rather stay here than return to the school?" went on Captain Vernon.

"Oh, yes, rather!" answered Smithy, as he had no doubt that Bertie Vernon would have answered.

"It is settled, then!" said the Army man. "You remain! Do you care for this as your room here?"

"Yes; best room in the place, I think!" said Smithy.

"That also is settled, then!" said Captain Vernon. "I have every hope that you will find this room comfortable, and that you will not change your mind when it is too late, and desire to return to the school. Remain!"

He stepped back from the doorway to the landing.

The door snapped shut.

Herbert Vernon-Smith stood as if transfixed.

For a long moment his brain was in a whirl. A lock had snapped fast as the door shut. He was locked in the turret-room. The window shutters were closed and locked! He was a prisoner.

He stood without motion, without sound! A prisoner! That presentiment of danger had not been unfounded. A prisoner! But what did it—what could it mean? Was the man out of his senses? If not, what did it mean?

He panted.

He knew now—he did not need telling—that the man had not been deceived—he had known who the visitor was when the Bounder entered. He had not, for a moment, taken him for Bertie—he had known! The Bounder realised, in dizzy bewilderment, why the door below had been closed and locked—it was in case he had contrived to dodge out of the turret-room before the door shut on him! It was all cut and dried, then!

But what did it mean?

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Was this some sort of grotesque punishment that the man was inflicting on him for his attempt at imposture? Or what?

The Bounder of Greyfriars stirred at last.

He crossed to the door and struck on it with his clenched fist. The only ears to hear were those of the captain and his servant; and old Hunt, plainly, was in this! But he struck, and struck, and struck again on the hard oak, a strange fear mingling with his rage.

But there came no answer to his knocking! The sound echoed down the turret stair, but if it reached any ears, they gave no heed.

The Bounder desisted at last. He threw himself on the oak settee, panting—bewildered—enraged—to wait!

For what?

He did not know!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Very Sudden!

"CAPTAIN VERNON, sir!"

Mr. Quelch rose politely to his feet.

He had heard a car drive up to the House, and a minute later Trotter announced the caller.

Callers—especially in the shape of parents or relatives of his boys—were not particularly welcome to the Remove master, but they were one of the inflictions that a schoolmaster had to endure.

Quelch smiled as politely as he could as he shook hands with Captain Vernon.

Then he waved the captain to a chair. Surreptitiously, as it were, his eye wandered to the clock. Quelch had plenty of occupations for his scanty leisure hours, and he nourished an inward hope that the visitor was not going to stay long.

"I am sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Quelch, and I fear that I am taking up your time!" said Captain Vernon.

"Not at all, sir!" answered Mr. Quelch, with more politeness than veracity.

"I will be brief, sir! I have reflected a good deal on the late occurrences here and the possibility of a recurrence of the trouble, and have decided to remove my nephew from Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows slightly.

That decision was, in his opinion, a wise one. But it seemed to him to have come rather suddenly.

"Perhaps I should mention, Captain Vernon, that there has, so far, been no recurrence of that trouble!" he said.

"The possibility always exists, sir!" said the captain. "I realise now that it was injudicious to place my nephew at his cousin's school."

"Perhaps you are right, sir!" said the Remove master. "I shall be sorry to lose Vernon, who is in most respects one of the best boys in my Form; but I have little doubt that he will be happier elsewhere in the somewhat peculiar circumstances."

"And the other boy, also!" said the captain dryly.

"No doubt!" assented Mr. Quelch. "Certainly many difficulties have arisen from two boys, so strangely alike, being in the same Form in the same school—and this has been very much accentuated by their mutual hostility."

"You have had undue trouble in this matter, sir, which is not fair to you," said Captain Vernon. "The mistake

was mine. And now that I have fully considered the matter, I feel sure that it will be best for all parties for my nephew to be placed at another school."

"No doubt," said Mr. Quelch, inwardly somewhat relieved to hear the captain's decision. "If Vernon leaves at the end of the term—"

"The decision having been taken, sir, there is no occasion for delay, which may perhaps lead to some unfortunate occurrence," said the captain. "I think it best to take my nephew away at once."

"As you think best, of course, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "This week—"

"This afternoon," interjected the captain.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

It was wise for Vernon to go to another school—he conceded that. It was wise not to delay in carrying out a judicious decision. But this really was altogether too sudden and surprising.

"This afternoon," repeated the Remove master.

"In fact, I have called for him to take him away," said Captain Vernon.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips a little.

"So very sudden an action, sir," he said. "Really, sir, it is hardly customary—"

"Quite so," said the captain. "I must apologise for any inconvenience caused. But the fact is that I have no time at my disposal. I have an opportunity now, sir, of doing some useful work in connection with the training of the new Militia, and if this materialises, it will take up my whole time. I desire to see my nephew settled in his new school before I leave for my new duties. The time at my disposal is very brief."

"In that case, sir, I quite understand," said Mr. Quelch cordially. "The matter is, of course, easily arranged."

"No doubt you will explain the circumstances to the headmaster at your leisure, sir," said the captain. "In the meantime, if you will send for my nephew—"

"I believe that he is playing cricket at the present moment," said Mr. Quelch. "My Form is engaged in a cricket match with another Form. If you desire to call him away from the game—"

"I am afraid that I have no alternative, sir."

"Very well. In that case, I will send for him," said Mr. Quelch.

Trotter was summoned again, and dispatched to call Vernon of the Remove to the House.

Bertie arrived in a few minutes. The Remove innings was still going on, and last man in had not yet been called. But as the call might come at any moment now, he was reluctant to leave the pavilion. However, as his Form-master had sent for him, there was no choice about that, and he came.

He gave his uncle an inquiring glance as he entered, and then looked at Mr. Quelch.

"Vernon, your uncle has decided to take you away from this school," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bertie.

His face did not brighten, welcome as the news was. He was thinking chiefly of cricket at the moment. The Shell innings had been a triumph for the new bowler. He was looking forward to another when Hobson & Co. took their second knock, which would not be long now.

"I shall be sorry to lose you, Vernon," said the Remove master graciously,

"but I am bound to say that I think the decision a wise one, in view of all the circumstances. Please go and pack your box—"

"Pack my box!" repeated Bertie. "I'm playing cricket, sir." He stared rather blankly at his Form-master.

"Captain Vernon desires you to leave with him this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch.

"There is no time to lose, Bertie, owing to a change of circumstances," said Captain Vernon. "I am sorry to interrupt your game, but there is no choice in the matter."

"But I'm due to bat in a few minutes," exclaimed Bertie, in dismay. "And they want me to bowl in the next innings. They're relying on me—"

"I am sorry; but I'm afraid it cannot be helped."

"But—" stammered Bertie.

"We are wasting Mr. Quelch's time," said Captain Vernon, rising. "Go at once and pack your box, Bertie! You will leave with me in the car that is waiting."

"But—"

"Please lose no time!" snapped the captain. "There are more important matters to be considered than a cricket match, and time presses. Go and pack your box at once!"

"Good-bye, Vernon!" said Mr. Quelch kindly. "I have no doubt that you will be happier in another school, my boy."

The Remove master shook hands with the junior, and Bertie, with a dark brow, left the study, leaving the captain to take his leave of Mr. Quelch.

But he did not go immediately to pack his box as bidden. He hurried out of the House, and cut back to the cricket field.

His captain, at least, had to be told that he was leaving in the middle of the match.

Captain Vernon returned to the car to wait for him; but he had to wait rather longer than he had anticipated, much as time pressed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Left in the Lurch!

"WHARTON—"

"Get on!"

"But—"

"You fathead, the field's waiting!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, angrily and impatiently. "Why the thump did you wander off? You knew you were wanted!"

"Yes; but," stammered Vernon, "Quelch sent for me."

"Bother Quelch! Why the thump did he send for a man in the middle of a cricket match?" grunted the captain of the Remove. "Well, you had to go, I suppose, but now you're back, get on. Do you want to keep the Shell standing about till calling-over?"

"I—"

"Will you get out to your wicket?" hooted Wharton. "Get your pads on, you fathead, and get a move on!"

Wharton was not in the best of tempers. Man in had been called, and man in was not to be seen. Keeping the field waiting for a batsman who ought to have been on the spot, and ready, was irritating. Now that Bertie had come back, he seemed disposed to talk rather than to get going, which, was really too much for a cricket captain's patience.

"But—" gasped Vernon.

"Shut up, and get out to your wicket!"

Bertie hesitated a moment; then he

buckled on his pads, took his bat, and went.

He was deeply and intensely annoyed by being called away in the middle of a game—and he did not see the necessity for haste and hurry.

There was a large spot of the Bounder's dogged obstinacy in his relative. His innings was not likely to last long; but, long or short, the captain could wait till it was through.

Redwing was at the other end, waiting. He had been waiting some minutes, and Hobson & Co. in the field were yawning.

However, the last man had arrived at last, and he stood up to Stewart's bowling for the Shell.

Nobody expected much of Vernon's batting, though great things were expected of his bowling in the Shell's second knock. Still, every run counted, and the Remove, who had sixty to their tally, could do with a few more.

With Bertie to bowl again, and if he showed the same form as before, there was a healthy chance that the Remove might not have to bat a second time, and the prospect of beating the Shell by an innings was exhilarating to the Lower Fourth.

Vernon scored a 2, another 2, and then a single, which brought Tom Redwing to the batting end.

That, as it proved, was the finish, for Hobby, in the field, caught Redwing off the next ball, and Vernon had the satisfaction of being not out, though only for 5.

But he had rather a disagreeable interview before him with the captain of the Remove. Short as his innings had been, he had no doubt that Captain Vernon was getting impatient by that time, and he certainly could not think of staying on to bowl in the Shell innings.

To leave the team in the lurch was unpleasant enough, and the fact that he had no choice in the matter made it no more pleasant.

"That's not bad, old bean," said Harry Wharton, when Vernon came off. "It's not your batting we're writing home about. Feel like putting up a couple of hat-tricks when Hobby & Co. go in again?"

"Mixture same as before," said Bob Cherry, with a cheery grin. "You're the goods to-day, Vernon!"

Vernon coloured awkwardly.

"I'm awfully sorry, you men," he said; "I've got to go."

"What?"

"Which?"

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Go where, and why?"

"I'm leaving Greyfriars."

The Remove cricketers simply stared at Bertie Vernon.

"Leaving Greyfriars," repeated Wharton. "Not in the middle of a cricket match, I suppose?"

"Don't be an ass, Vernon!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Mad?" inquired Peter Todd pleasantly.

Vernon's face was crimson with vexation and discomfort.

"It can't be helped!" he said. "It's not my fault! My uncle has called for me and he's waiting for me now! I'm supposed to be packing my box this very minute! I can't stay for the finish."

"What utter rot!" said Frank Nugent.

"Is nunky off his rocker, by any chance?" asked Squiff. "Cut off and tell him to go to sleep and dream again and then come back."

"I've got to go!"

"You've got to go!" repeated Harry

Wharton. "Look here, Vernon, this is too thick! If you couldn't play the match through what the dickens do you mean by letting me put you in the eleven at all?"

"I never knew——"

"Mean to say nunky has popped in like a bolt from the blue all of a sudden to take you away at a minute's notice?" hooted Bob Cherry.

"Yes!"

"Well, my only hat!"

"But he can't do such a thing!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily. "Why the dickens can't you play out the match and go afterwards?"

"Well, I can't!"

"That's rot! I'd better speak to your uncle—where is he?" exclaimed Harry. "He can't want you to let fellows down like this!"

"You can come with me, if you like—I've got to go!" said Vernon. "I'm sorry—I never knew anything about it till Quelch sent for me——"

"Well, it's jolly queer, and it seems awful rot to me! I'll put it to Captain Vernon, anyhow!" said Harry.

He left the pavilion with Vernon, leaving the rest of the cricketers in a buzz of surprise and dismay.

That glorious prospect of beating the Shell with an innings to spare was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream, if they lost the new bowler. And it was hard enough to understand why, even if a fellow had to leave his school at brief notice, he had to leave so hurriedly that he could not stay for the finish of a cricket match.

Captain Vernon was standing by the car at the door of the House. He raised his eyebrows as the two juniors in flannels came up! No doubt he had supposed that Bertie was packing his box all that time!

"Bertie!" he rapped sharply. "Why are you not ready? I told you I am pressed for time."

"Vernon is playing cricket for us, sir," said Harry Wharton as civilly as he could. "You're not going to take him away in the middle of a match?"

"I am sorry that I have no choice! Bertie, go into the House at once and pack your box! I cannot wait."

Bertie gave Harry Wharton a look and, breathing hard, went into the House without a word.

Captain Vernon, obviously, was impatient and annoyed. But as his nephew disappeared he turned to Wharton with an effort at politeness.

"I am sorry, my boy!" he said. "I quite understand that it is awkward—but owing to certain circumstances delay is impossible. I have really not a minute to spare."

"Vernon's wanted to bowl," said Harry quietly. "He's played for his bowling. I don't suppose the Shell innings will last an hour—the rate their wickets went down in the first knock."

"I cannot wait!"

"Vernon could cut our last innings, if we have to bat again! His wicket's not worth a lot. But surely you can let him stay on an hour or so to let him bowl——"

"I cannot!"

Wharton set his lips.

"It's for you to say, I suppose!" he said tartly. "But it's rather rotten on Vernon to make him let fellows down."

"Unfortunately, it cannot be helped!" said Captain Vernon. "I am sorry; but there is nothing more to be said."

"Very well!"

Harry Wharton turned and walked away.

The whole team gave him inquiring

looks as he came back to the pavilion alone.

"Where's Vernon?" asked Bob.

"Gone?" remarked Squiff.

"Going!" answered Harry. "That uncle of his is a hard nut to crack! We've got to do without him—play a substitute in the field, I suppose!"

"But why——" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, the dear man didn't trouble to explain why—only that he was pressed for time!" answered Wharton sarcastically. "Must be fearfully pressed for time, I think, if he has to hook the chap out of his school at a minute's notice like this! No good blaming Vernon—he can't help it—he's sore enough about it. But—I left Smithy out because he was in the team, and now——"

Wharton broke off with that; his feelings really were too deep for words.

The Remove wanted a bowler more than they wanted a batsman; but if the bowler was, after all, unavailable, Smithy's batting would have come in extremely useful. But it was too late to think of that now.

Captain Vernon and his nephew were rolling away from Greyfriars in the car when the Shell opened their second innings. And Hobby & Co. found immediate relief in the absence of the demon bowler.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was as good as ever; out there was no other bowler in the Remove who was a patch on Vernon.

Wickets went down and runs went up; and Hobby grinned happily over forty of his own before the Nabob of Bhanipur got him!

The Shell innings ended for eighty; and the Remove, instead of that innings to spare, had a tussle ahead of them; and when they batted again after tea, prospects were extremely uncertain. And Harry Wharton, thinking of Smithy, who might have been at the wickets, was glad, at least, to reflect that now that Vernon was gone the Bounder would always be available. But that, though a consolation for the future, was no present help for the cricketers who had been left in the lurch.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

BERTIE VERNON sat in the window-seat in the room under the high turret of Lantham Chase, his eyes fixed on the dark, inflexible face of the Army man.

The room was very silent.

There was a feeling of expectation, not unmingled with alarm, in the schoolboy's heart.

During the run in the car from Greyfriars School to Lantham Chase the captain had not spoken a single word.

What was in his mind the boy could not guess.

Something had happened—he could guess that; some strange change of circumstances, he could not guess what. His uncle, who had been inflexibly determined to keep him at Vernon-Smith's school had suddenly changed his intentions—so suddenly that he had been, as it were, whisked away before he could fairly realise that he was leaving Greyfriars.

He was glad, on the whole, to leave—to get away from his double and his perpetual plotting enmity. But in other ways he was not glad—least of all, to be dragged off in the middle of a cricket match, leaving his captain and

fellow-cricketers in the lurch. His face had been dark with resentment all the way home.

But that had passed now! He knew, he felt, that he was going to hear some momentous announcement; he could not guess what; but as the captain paced the room in prolonged silence, a feeling of apprehension grew in his breast. He forgot all now, but the strange, inscrutable look on the dark face—a look that caused him uneasiness and alarm.

The captain came to a stop at last and stood like a ramrod facing his nephew in the window-seat.

"You wanted to leave Greyfriars?" he asked abruptly.

"Not the way I've left it!" said Bertie.

"And not if Vernon-Smith left?"

"No! Except for him, I'm getting on all right there—I like most of the fellows—I pull well with Quelch—I've got a good place in the cricket! It would be ripping, if Smith hadn't spoiled it all."

"You'd like to go back, if he left?"

"Yes!" said Bertie at once.

"He has left."

Bertie half-rose in his astonishment. "Vernon-Smith has left?" he exclaimed.

"Yes!"

"I've heard nothing of it."

"You've heard now!"

"But—I can't understand!" exclaimed Vernon. "If Smith has left, there's no reason why I should leave! Yet you've taken me away."

"You're going back!"

"I—I am going back!" repeated Bertie dazedly. "I can't go back now you've told Quelch I'm taken away! You can't play fast and loose like that!"

Captain Vernon did not reply for some moments.

His voice came at last, low and clear.

"The time has come to explain, Bertie. Everything now has worked out as I have planned—as I planned when I sent you to Vernon-Smith's school. You wondered why I sent you there?"

"Yes; why?"

"I shall tell you—now! Now that Vernon-Smith has left! You need not waste any consideration on him; he is your enemy, and a malicious and unscrupulous enemy." The captain's lips hardened. "You have had narrow escapes of disgraceful punishment—caused by whom?"

"Smith!"

"A few days ago I doubted your word when you told me of his latest malicious trick—the first time that distrust has ever come between us. Who caused that?"

"Smith!" said Bertie between his teeth.

"And now," said the captain in a low, distinct tone, "the time has come for that young rascal to pay Scot and lot! The plan I have formed, which I am now carrying out, has been long in my mind; yet I can say, with a clear conscience, that I would have abandoned it if the boy had been worthy of consideration—if he had been anything but the malicious young rascal he is! If he had given you one friendly word at the school—if he had refrained once from malicious enmity! Has he done so?"

"No!"

"No!" said the captain grimly. "Now he can take what is coming to him! He is the millionaire's son, with everything at his command—you are the nephew of a poor relation; a poor relation yourself! Has he ever restrained a single gibe on that score?"

"Never!"

"Now there is going to be a change,"

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said the captain. "You are going to be the millionaire's son, Bertie—"

"What?"

"And Herbert Vernon-Smith the poor relation."

Bertie Vernon gazed at him.

He had never quite understood his uncle—the dark, silent, inscrutable man. He had trusted him, he had had a real affection for the man who had taken his dead father's place, who, he knew, had pinched and scraped for him and never given a thought to himself in comparison. But he had never understood him. What was passing in the man's mind now was utterly mystifying to him.

Smithy had suspected that Bertie knew the captain's game, whatever it was. But that suspicion had been wide of the mark. Bertie Vernon had often been puzzled and perplexed; but he had known nothing, and he had never dreamed of guessing. Even now he did not guess; the captain's words wore a riddle to him.

He gazed at the man in stupefied silence.

"You do not understand yet?"

"No!" muttered Vernon.

"It is simple—when you understand! You are going back to Greyfriars—not in your own name."

"Not in my own name!" repeated Bertie mechanically.

"In the name of Vernon-Smith!"

"In—in the name of Vernon-Smith!" said Bertie dazedly. "Uncle, have you gone mad, or what?"

"Vernon-Smith has left. No one knows so far—no one will know! He is safe and well—but he will not be seen at Greyfriars again! You need waste no consideration on an unscrupulous enemy. He came here this afternoon to deceive me as he has deceived me before. His bicycle is here; you will ride back to Greyfriars on his bicycle."

Bertie Vernon sat dumb.

"You will ride back," continued the captain, "as Herbert Vernon-Smith! You will dress as he has dressed. I have made provision for that; the clothes are lying ready in your old room, Bertie."

The schoolboy did not speak.

He could only gaze at the dark, saturnine man, with something like horror in his face, as the man's meaning slowly filtered into his dazed mind.

"No one will know—no one can possibly suspect," went on the low, distinct voice. "You will return to Greyfriars as Herbert Vernon-Smith; you will be taken without question as Herbert Vernon-Smith. You may rely upon it that Smith will never put in an appearance to deny it. Your name is Herbert Vernon—you will add the Smith, little as you like it! An inheritance of millions is worth it."

Bertie did not speak—he could not.

"Vernon-Smith is safe and well cared for," said the captain grimly. "Nothing will happen to him except that he will not return to Greyfriars. He chose to come here, calling himself my nephew. He will take the consequences of his own act. With all his cunning, he has played completely into my hands. He is thrown aside." The captain made a gesture of contempt. "You take his place."

"Uncle!"

"You take his place," repeated the captain, "and when the time comes you will make a better and more worthy use of the Vernon-Smith millions than that young blackguard would ever have done."

"You're mad!" muttered Vernon huskily. "Are you mad, or am I dreaming this?"

"I am not mad, and you are not

dreaming," answered the captain composedly. "I have said nothing to you till the time was ripe! It was better for you to know nothing. Now the time has come to act."

"You—you've planned this?" Vernon panted. "You've planned all this—that was why you took Lantham Chase?"

"That was why."

"That was why you sent me to Greyfriars?"

"Exactly!"

"To—to get Smith out of the way some time, so—so that I could take his place, his name, his inheritance?"

"His place, his name, his inheritance!" The captain repeated the words, with a nod at each word. "Quite!"

"Oh, you're mad!" panted Bertie. "Do you think I will do it? Never—never—never!"

"You are mistaken," said Captain Vernon quietly. "You will listen to me, Bertie, and you will see—"

"I will not do it!"

"You will!" said Captain Vernon grimly.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Casting of the Die!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stood in the turret-room, his face pressed to the bars of the window shutters, peering out into the red June sunset.

It was, as his watch told him, drawing near time for lock-up at Greyfriars School. And he was still a prisoner in that high, solitary room at Lantham Chase.

He had beaten on the door; he had shouted; and, tired of that, he had paced the room, rather like an animal in a cage. No voice had answered him; no footsteps had sounded on the turret stair.

It was in vain that the Bounder of Greyfriars tried to understand what it meant. But in his rage and exasperation there was a chill of dread in his heart.

He tried to think that locking him in the room was a grim sort of punishment for his trickery, that the captain would return to release him. But one long hour crawled by after another—and no one came!

The man could not intend to keep him there—how could he? And yet—

That turret-room had been prepared for a prisoner! The locked shutters on the old windows told as much!

That very thought had crossed the Bounder's mind when he had seen the room, weeks ago, in company with Harry Wharton & Co. But it seemed so impossible an idea that he had dismissed it.

But now—

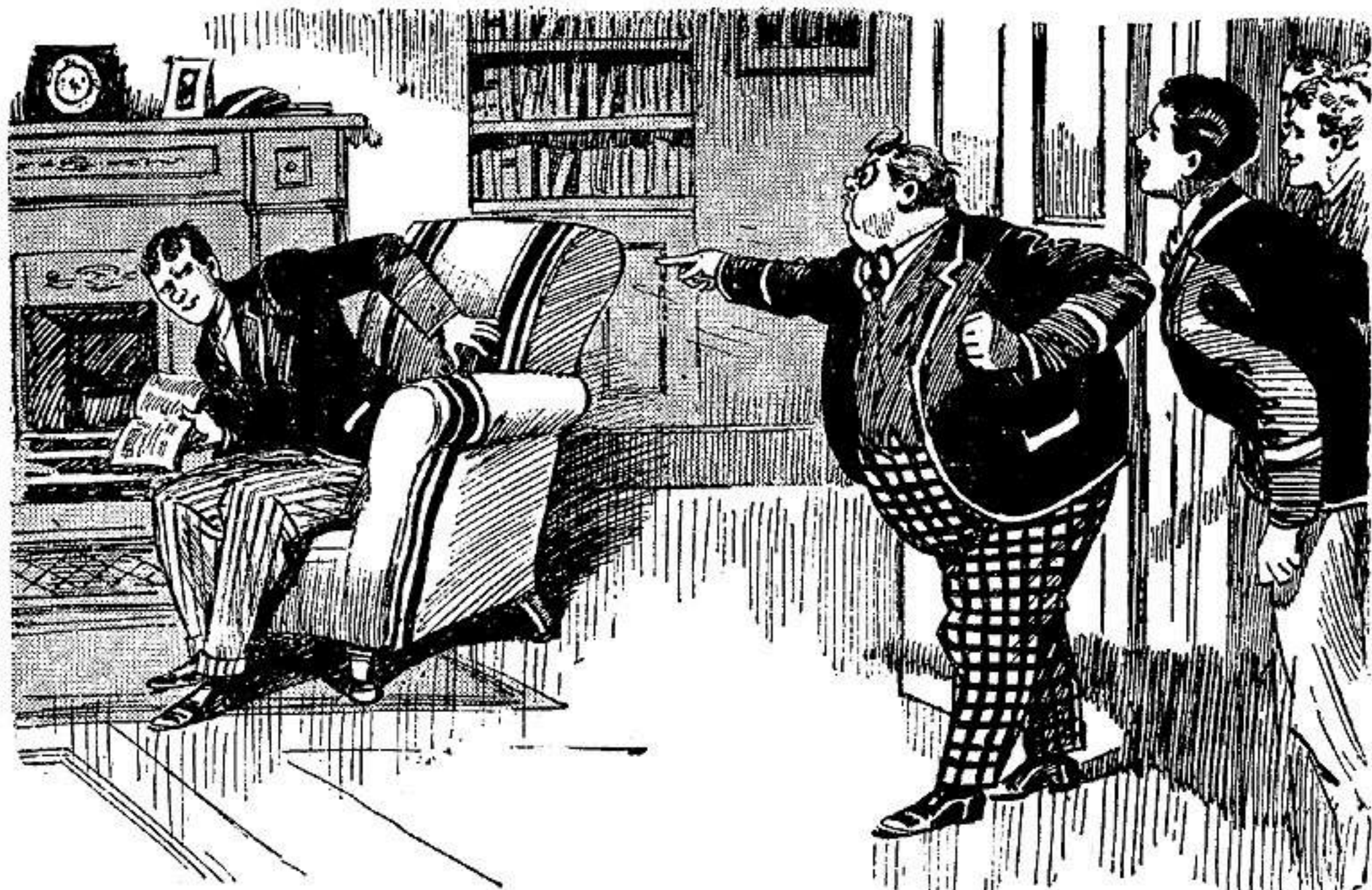
The walls below the windows were high and sheer. But he would have tried his luck at clambering down had the way been open! The locked shutters barred the way. Why had they ever been fitted to the old turret-room, unless to keep a prisoner secure there? Was he the prisoner for whom that high, lonely room had been destined?

It seemed impossible. And yet—the dread of it was sinking into the Bounder's heart.

Was the man mad? Did he think that he could keep him a prisoner there? The idea was fantastic! And why—even if he fancied he could—why?

But he could not. Smithy was glad to remember that he had told Tom Redwing his plans before he left the school. But for that no one would have known that he was coming to Lantham Chase that day.

Redwing knew, and if he did not



Billy Bunter hurled open the study door with a crash. "Funk!" he roared at the junior seated in the armchair. "You can't crawl out of this! You're going to be whopped! I've knocked you down once!"

return to Greyfriars at calling-over Tom would know where he was! The man could not keep him there—if he were fool enough, mad enough, to suppose that he could!

Looking through the barred shutter, Vernon-Smith could see the leafy avenue that wound away through the green woods of the Chase. He could see his own bicycle, which he had left there, leaning on a tree. The distance was considerable—a voice could not have carried. But he could see. His bike still stood where he had left it hours ago.

His eyes fixed on it with longing. What a fool he had been to come—to throw himself into that man's hands! Yet who could have foreseen this—who could have dreamed of it?

The man must release him; he could not intend to keep him there! Yet, only too plainly now, that room had been planned and prepared for a prisoner!

Smithy gave a start as a figure below came into his sight.

His eyes glinted at it. He knew who it was—Bertie Vernon! So Bertie was at Lantham Chase that afternoon—the cricket must have been over early! Perhaps his wonderful bowling had put all the Shell wickets down in next to no time, the Bounder reflected with savage, sarcastic bitterness.

Anyhow, there he was. He had come out of the building below and was walking towards the avenue, his back to the turret; but the Bounder knew him at a glance.

Something struck him as he watched Vernon. There was an unusual droop in the fellow's head; he walked slowly, as if uncertainly. His aspect was that of a fellow who had had a stunning blow of some kind, from which he had not yet wholly recovered.

The Bounder noted it, with a sneer. He had no sympathy to waste on his

enemy. Perhaps the fellow had had bad news at home—learned, perhaps, that his poverty-stricken uncle, who had taken a big place he could not afford, was going to be sold up. It was easy, at all events to see that the fellow had had a knock.

Twice, thrice the Bounder saw him hesitate and stop, as if to turn back. Then slowly he went on again.

It was not like Vernon to be uncertain, undecided. His character was as decisive as the Bounder's own. Smithy could not help wondering what it was that could have happened to throw the usually cool-headed and self-possessed fellow off his balance like this.

Vernon, with all his pauses, went on, and reached the avenue at last. He stood close by Smithy's bike, looking at it.

Did he know that Smithy was there? Did he know the fantastic trick that the Army man had played on him?

It seemed that he did, for he suddenly turned his head and fixed his eyes on the shuttered turret window.

He could not see Smithy at that window through the thick bars. But Smithy could see him clearly enough, and read the expression on his face.

That face was pale. There was a deep line in the brow. Vernon stood motionless, with his eyes fixed on the turret.

Did he know that Smithy was there? The Bounder could not feel sure of that. He turned away at last, and, to Smithy's angry amazement, pulled the bicycle away from the tree and mounted it.

He was going back to the school, apparently, on that bike. If he did not know that Smithy was there, he did not, perhaps, know that it was Smithy's bike. But he must know that it was not his own.

But he mounted it, and rode slowly down the avenue

And as he sat in the saddle, in the full

bright sunlight, the Bounder noticed something that had only vaguely struck him before. Vernon was not dressed as usual.

Instead of his customary quiet, dark clothes, he wore clothes that were remarkably like the Bounder's own—trousers with a very prominent stripe that was repeated in the jacket, and a waistcoat in which crimson predominated. Those clothes would have drawn a second glance from the Remove master, and very probably a word of rebuke. They were too conspicuous for any fellow in the Remove except the dressy Bounder.

Bertie Vernon was the very last fellow at Greyfriars whom Smithy would have expected to follow his example in such matters.

Any fellow seeing Vernon now would have said at once that he was Herbert Vernon-Smith. It was chiefly by a distinction in their clothes that they were known from one another, and Vernon's present garb was the Bounder's all over—even a little more pronounced than usual.

Smithy could only stare.

Bertie pedalled slowly. He remained for some minutes in the Bounder's sight before the trees along the avenue finally hid him.

He was gone—back to Greyfriars, the Bounder supposed. He had taken Smithy's bike; Vernon-Smith would have to go back by train. Smithy mentally resolved to punch his face for his check when he saw him again. The fellow had no right to take his bike.

Was he up to some trick? the Bounder wondered.

Smithy had borrowed his clothes, to pass himself off as Bertie. It looked as if Bertie had somehow obtained clothes like the Bounder's with a similar object in view. But he had no

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purpose to serve by such a trick, so far as Smithy could see.

He was gone. He had only time to ride back to the school before lock-up. Smithy would be late—he little guessed how late. How long was that fool of a captain going to leave him locked up here? He had missed his tea, and he was hungry. He was going to be late for calling-over. He crossed to the door again, and hammered on it once more with his fist.

This time, to his relief, he heard a sound outside.

A small panel in the door slid back. The door remained shut and locked, but Vernon-Smith could see through the open panel in the oak to the landing and the turret stair outside.

Old Hunt stood on the landing.

He had a tray in his hands, with food and drink on it. The Bounder stared at it blankly.

"You old fool! Is that for me?" he snarled.

"Yessir!"

"Throw it away, and open this door! What are you keeping me here for?" yelled the Bounder. "I've got to get back to the school for calling-over; I shall be late already! Unlock this door, you old ruffian!"

"Agin orders, Master Bertie."

"You doddering old fool! I'm not your precious Master Bertie!" howled the Bounder. "I'm Vernon-Smith, as you know very well! Your precious Master Bertie has just cleared off on my bike, confound his check!"

"You says you was Master Bertie, sir, when you come 'ere," said old Hunt. "It ain't for the likes of me to doubt a young gentleman's word!"

"You know I'm Vernon-Smith!" roared the Bounder. "If you don't, ask that saffron-coloured captain! He will tell you!"

"You take in this 'ere tray, sir, and not so much lip!" said old Hunt stolidly.

"I don't want it, you old fool!"

"You will afore morning."

"Morning!" repeated Vernon-Smith.

"You mad old goat! Do you fancy you're going to keep me here all night?"

"Master's orders is that Master Bertie is to stay 'ere for the present, sir. That's all."

"I'm not Master Bertie!" shrieked the Bounder.

"You says you was, sir, and that's good enough for me! Will you take in this 'ere tray? You'll want it afore morning."

The Bounder, panting with rage, thrust his arm through the panel, and his clenched fist struck the tray from old Hunt's hands. It went with a crash of smashing crockery to the landing.

"Now let me out, you old ruffian!" roared the Bounder.

Old Hunt stared at him and at the wreck on the floor. Then he snapped shut the panel.

Vernon-Smith beat savagely on the door. But there came no answer, and the panel did not open again.

He desisted at last from sheer weariness, and paced the room like a caged animal, while the sun went down over the woods of Lantham Chase and darkness deepened in the lonely turret-room.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Other Self!

"I SAY, you fellows, just tell me—"

"One run——" answered Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"And a wicket——"

"What?"

"We never wanted Vernon's wicket, after all——"

"What are you talking about?" howled Bunter.

"Weren't you asking about the match?" inquired Bob. "We beat the Shell, after all——"

"Blow the Shell!"

"But it was a near thing——"

"Look here——"

"We'd have licked them by an innings if Vernon had stayed to bowl——"

"Blow Vernon!"

"And we'd have had wickets in hand

if Smithy had been batting," continued Bob. "As it was, we pulled through, and——"

"You silly ass! Will you tell me——"

"Ain't I telling you?"

"I'm not asking you about the cricket, you fathead!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Then you ought to be!" said Bob. "I'll tell you, all the same. We——"

"Oh, shut up!" howled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, tell me——"

"Bob's telling you!" said Harry Wharton laughing.

"Tel! me which beast that is!" howled Bunter; and he pointed a fat finger at a junior coming towards the House. "Is it Vernon or Vernon-Smith? If it's Smithy, I don't want to see the brute! He's wild because I knocked him down in his study to-day, and——"

"Better cut, then!" said Frank Nugent. "As Vernon's left the school, we're not likely to see him here again. And, anyhow, Vernon wouldn't be found dead in those trousers!"

"Or that waistcoat!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Is it Smithy?" gasped Bunter.

"Of course it is, fathead!"

Billy Bunter waited for no more. He bolted into the House.

Billy Bunter did not want to see Smithy—very much indeed he didn't; not, at all events, till Smithy had recovered from that incident in Study No. 4.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad after the cricket match. It was just on lock-up. That Form match had, after all, ended in a win for the Remove, though by a narrow margin. So that was satisfactory; and the satisfactory result was due to the good start they had had owing to Vernon's bowling in the Shell's first knock.

Had Vernon stayed on, the Shell would not merely have been defeated—they would have been washed right out of existence. All the Removites were sure of that. They had lost that golden opportunity of beating Hobson & Co. by an innings—likewise they had lost that wonderful bowler for future matches. Vernon's sudden departure from the school was rather a blow, so far as the cricket was concerned.

Still, the endless rows between the doubles of the Remove would be at an end now, which was so much to the good; and Smithy would take his old place, and his batting was worth a good deal to the team, though not so much as Bertie's bowling. It was going to be good news for Smithy, at least—Harry Wharton & Co. had no doubt about that.

And here was Smithy! At all events, they had no doubt that here was Smithy, as the junior came slowly towards them in the quad.

Bertie Vernon, having left Greyfriars, there could never be a mistake on that subject again!

Moreover, the fellow was dressed quite unlike Bertie's style—his garb was a little loud, even for the Bounder.

The Famous Five looked at him rather curiously.

They had not noticed Smithy in those clothes before—so it looked as if he had been to his tailor's that afternoon. That did not seem to bear out the tale that Bunter had told of the Bounder having gone over to Lantham Chase to pull the leg of Captain Vernon.

The junior's face was dark and clouded. That did not surprise the chums of the Remove. They all knew how savagely the Bounder had resented being left out of the eleven that day in favour of his rival. They did not

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expect him to be in a good temper when they saw him again.

"Smithy's still shirty!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"The news he's going to hear will cure all that!" he remarked. "I fancy he will be doing a song and dance when he hears that Vernon has left."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up now?" ejaculated Bob.

Tom Redwing was in the quad and he cut across to meet the junior as he came towards the House.

The Bounder—if it was the Bounder—halted, and a red flush came into his face. Seeing Redwing seemed to disconcert him.

After a momentary pause he changed his direction, so as to avoid Redwing, and then walked on more quickly.

"Smithy!" called out Tom.

The junior did not seem to hear. He walked on rapidly, and left Tom Redwing staring, with flushed cheeks.

"Another row on!" grunted Johnny Bull. "If he hasn't got Vernon to row with, he's going to row with his pal! Smithy's the man for rows, ain't he?"

"The rowfulness seems to be terrific!" murmured Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "But what is the absurd matterfulness?"

"Oh, when Smithy's in a bait he will take it out of the nearest man!" growled Johnny. "Blessed if I know how Reddy stands him!"

The junior, coming on towards the House, passed quite near the Famous Five. He glanced at them, but did not speak or approach them—and went on to the doorway.

Near that doorway Wingate of the Sixth was standing, talking to Sykes.

Wingate glanced at the junior, frowned, and beckoned to him to stop.

"Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

"Yes, Wingate!"

"What are you doing in that waistcoat?"

A dozen fellows heard the question and grinned. That waistcoat, chiefly crimson, had caught many eyes. It was very distinctive, even for Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Fancy waistcoats were a Sixth Form privilege; but it was not the first time that the Bounder of Greyfriars had been called to order for assuming a Sixth Form priv in such matters.

The junior flushed deeply.

"Cut in and change it at once," said Wingate, "and if I see you in it again you'll get six!"

"Yes, Wingate," said the wearer of the distinctive waistcoat, in a low voice. And he went quickly into the House.

A few minutes later the bell rang for calling-over. The waistcoat was no longer in evidence when its wearer joined the Remove going into Hall.

Billy Bunter was last man in for calling-over in the Remove. Bunter was still carefully dodging the Bounder.

He eyed the junior, who was taken by everyone about him for Herbert Vernon-Smith, uneasily through his big spectacles as Prout called the names.

In Hall, of course, he was safe from the Bounder's boot; but he had deep apprehensions of what might happen when he left Hall.

But Smithy did not even glance at him.

Bertie Vernon knew nothing of the episode in Study No. 4, or of Billy Bunter's apprehensions founded on it.

He was quite unaware that the fat Owl was regarding him with uneasy wrathfulness.

His indifference puzzled, as well as relieved, the Owl of the Remove. Bunter had expected at least a black look when the Bounder's eyes fell on him. Now the fellow seemed to have forgotten his fat existence.

"I say, you fellows," whispered Bunter, "you stick to me if that beast gets after me after Hall!"

"Fathead!"

"He was fearfully wild when I knocked him down!" mumbled Bunter. "He made out that I was after his jam—you know what a suspicious beast Smithy is. I knocked the cad down, you know—"

"Knock him down again if he gets after you!" suggested Bob Cherry. "We'll all stand round and cheer."

And there was a chuckle in the Remove.

Bob's advice did not seem to comfort Bunter. Certainly, he had knocked the Bounder down once, by a happy chance! But he did not seem to feel equal to repeating that performance.

After calling-over, however, "Smithy" went up at once to the studies, still forgetful of the fat Owl.

Bunter blinked after him in perplexity as he went.

"I say, you fellows, think Smithy's forgotten that I knocked him down to-day?" he asked.

"Sort of thing Smithy would forget, isn't it?" grinned Bob.

"Well, no; but—"

"Perhaps you only dreamed that you knocked him down!" suggested Bob.

"I jolly well did, you know—got him right under the chin and spun him over! He went down wallop in his study!"

Bob chuckled.

"Well, if he did, you'd better get ready to go down wallop, too, old fat man. But Smithy doesn't look very dangerous. Perhaps the jam got into your head and you dreamed it."

"Blessed if I can make him out!" said the fat Owl. "Perhaps he thinks I'd knock him down again if he got shirty—that may be it! Think Smithy's funking me, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of Smithy funking the egregious fat Owl made the Remove fellows yell. But it seemed probable to Bunter. He had knocked Smithy down—there was no doubt about that! Smithy was letting the matter drop! And if that was not a case of funk William George Bunter did not know what it was!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy in his Study!

BERTIE VERNON went into Study No. 4 in the Remove and threw the door shut.

Study No. 4 was his now.

He had shared Study No. 1 with Wharton and Nugent in his own name. As Herbert Vernon-Smith he had to share Study No. 4 with Tom Redwing.

He stood in the study looking about him.

It was not yet time for prep, and he hoped that Redwing would not come up till prep. After having been cut in the quad, Tom was not likely to be keen on his company.

It had been easy.

The captain had told him that it would be perfectly easy, and it was!

All he had to do was to slip into the Bounder's empty place.

Easy as it was, simple as it was, absolutely certain of success as it was, his heart had been beating fast when, after putting up Smithy's bike, he came to the House under the eyes of dozens of fellows who knew both the doubles well.

There had been no suspicion. There could be none. Bertie Vernon had left—all Greyfriars knew that he was gone. Vernon-Smith was expected back, and he had come back! There was nothing to choose between them in looks—and in clothes the Bounder had been deliberately imitated, overdoing it a little, perhaps.

But even that incident of Wingate and the waistcoat helped on the deception. Such an incident was not uncommon in the Bounder's career. Everybody knew that Bertie would not be found dead in one of his relative's waistcoats.

Amazing as that deception was, it was easy—very easy! There was no effort to make—it was automatically a success.

If Vernon had a doubt, it was in Redwing's direction—the fellow who knew Smithy best, the only fellow who really liked him, and who shared the same study. He had to be careful with Redwing. Yet even in that direction there was no real danger.

There was no danger at all, so long as the genuine Smithy did not come on the scene.

And the Army man at Lantham Chase was taking care of that.

But the schoolboy's face was dark.

He was not sure that he was glad of this success—that he would not have been better pleased had the deception been discovered on the spot.

His conscience was not at ease.

He had heard that amazing scheme at first with indignation. But that had passed. He was accustomed to submitting his own judgment to that of the captain. He owed everything to Captain Vernon; he was grateful and he was affectionate towards the captain, at least.

Hard as he was—hard as steel to all others—the captain had been more than kind to him—he had pinched and scraped; he had never given himself a thought, where the boy's advantage was concerned. Only too well, Bertie knew the many sacrifices he had made, and knew that there were many more of which he was not aware. He had been left a penniless orphan as a small boy, and Captain Vernon had taken his father's place. How could he deny, and defy, the man who had done so much for him—who, even in this, was thinking only of him, not in the least of himself?

He had given in!

He had given in against his will, but he had given in! Captain Vernon had had his way!

It was, perhaps, natural that Vernon should not think with much consideration of the fellow he had displaced.

Vernon-Smith was his enemy—and he had been an unscrupulous enemy. Very nearly, he had succeeded in driving him from the school by a miserable trick.

Had matters been on their old footing, Smithy would still have been his enemy—still striving by every unscrupulous means to drive him away from Greyfriars. Let him take what he had given!

That argument did not quite satisfy

Bertie's conscience—but it deadened self-reproach.

And it was a fact that in Vernon, as in Vernon-Smith, there was a lawless strain—a liking for desperate and risky adventures. That part of his character Vernon had kept in control—while Smithy had let it rip. Now, for once, he was following Smithy's example.

He could imagine the Bounder in his place. Would Smithy have hesitated? He did not think so.

And yet—

He could not stand against the man who had done everything for him. He cared nothing for the fellow who was his enemy. And yet—

Well, the die was cast now!

There was no going back. He had put his hand to the plough, and he had to go on! And the hard obstinacy which he shared with his relative helped to steel him to carry on.

He was Vernon-Smith now! He hated the name; but he was Vernon-Smith, and he was going to stay Vernon-Smith. He was going to play the game out. And his lip curled sarcastically at the thought that his Form-master would indubitably notice an improvement in Vernon-Smith's character. He could not—and he would not—be the rowdy bad hat that his cousin had been.

There would be no cigarettes in the study—no sneaking into the back gate of the Cross Keys or over the fence of the Three Fishers on half-holidays—no breaking out at night—no backing of horses with Bill Lodgey or Joe Banks. He had a bad reputation to live down.

There was a bang at the study door, and Skinner strolled in.

He gave the junior in the study a nod.

"Got a smoke, Smithy?" he asked.

Vernon's eyes glistened for a moment. More than anything else about the Bounder, he disliked that spot of dingy blackguardism. It irked him deeply to be taken for the fellow he was impersonating.

But he realised that too sudden a change was hardly judicious in the strange circumstances.

"Help yourself," he said curtly.

He did not, as a matter of fact, know where Smithy kept his smokes.

Harold Skinner, however, did, and he pulled open the table drawer. He lifted out what looked like a Latin grammar, and Vernon stared at it.

That Latin grammar was, however, deceptive. It was, in fact, a box concealed in the covers of a Latin grammar. The top cover opened like a lid, and revealed a plentiful supply of cigarettes.

Unless unduly suspicious, a master or a prefect might have looked into that table drawer and never dreamed that a box of cigarettes lay there.

Skinner helped himself to a smoke.

"Having one?" he asked.

"Not now!"

"I say, I suppose you've heard that Vernon's gone," said Skinner, as he lighted the cigarette.

"I noticed he wasn't at calling-over."

"The old bean called for him this afternoon, and hooked him off all of a sudden! In the middle of a cricket match, I've heard—they wanted him to go on taking wickets, and the old bean hooked him off!" grinned Skinner. "They'd have done better with you in the team, after all, Smithy!"

Vernon looked at him curiously. Skinner, often the Bounder's companion in shady adventures in which Redwing disdained to take part, knew

Smithy as well as any fellow could know another; but he had not the faintest, remotest suspicion that it was not Smithy to whom he was speaking.

"So he's gone for good!" said Vernon composedly.

"Yes. Bit of luck for you!"

"Quite!" assented Vernon.

"Jolly sudden, wasn't it?" grinned Skinner. "I wonder why the old bean hooked him off suddenly like that? Might have fancied that something would happen again, now that dear Bertie's boko is mended and you look as alike as two peas again!"

"Perhaps!"

"Can't say I'm sorry he's gone—stuck-up cad, if you ask me!" said Skinner. "Perhaps the old bean couldn't pay the fees here—you've said often enough that he couldn't afford it! Remember that day you hiked a crowd of us over to Lantham Chase, and they couldn't scrounge a tea for the distinguished visitors? Must be frightfully hard-up!"

"I've got some work to do," said Vernon abruptly, restraining a desire to knock Skinner across the study. "Get out now, will you?"

"You working!" grinned Skinner. "Taking a leaf out of your cousin's book? I say, are you on Blue Barney?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You thought he was sure to win at Wapshot," said Skinner. "If you're putting a quid on him, I'll follow suit with the humble half-crown. What do you think?"

Vernon breathed rather hard. The Bounder's double had a good deal of this sort of thing to expect, he realised, before he could venture to make a clean cut.

"Look here, I've some work to do, and no time to jaw now," he said. "Clear off, there's a good chap!"

"Oh, all right!" yawned Skinner. "Mind if I take a few smokes? We've quite run out in my study."

"Take the lot, if you like," said Vernon irritably, "and the box, too! I want to get rid of it."

Skinner stared at him.

"Mean that?" he asked.

"Yes. Take it and cut!"

Vernon sorted out Latin books from the shelf, as a hint that he was going to work.

Skinner gave him another stare, and then walked off with the box of cigarettes under his arm.

There was soon quite a thick atmosphere in Study No. 11—Skinner's study.

The Bounder's double sat down to the books—but not to work. He was still staring at them with a furrowed thoughtful brow, when Tom Redwing came into the study to prep.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Alike, but Unlike!

"WHAT'S up, Smithy?"

Tom Redwing spoke very quietly.

Smithy, it seemed, did not intend to speak. He had started work the minute Redwing was in the study. His eyes were on his books.

Vernon, in the thrill of excitement at the part he was playing, at the risks he was running, hardly knew whether he was ashamed of it or not. But he knew that he did not want to meet the clear honest eyes of the seilorman's son, who was the Bounder's chum.

He did not look up.

Redwing, across the study table, watched him, puzzled and troubled. He did not suspect the imposture—no such thought crossed his mind. So amazing, so unheard-of a scheme, as for one fellow in the Greyfriars. Remove to impersonate another, was not likely to be easily suspected.

Yet Redwing had a vague sense of a difference somehow. And that incident in the quad troubled his mind. Something was up with Smithy—that, at least, was clear to him.

"Nothing," answered Vernon, in a stifled voice.

"Why did you cut me in the quad? A dozen fellows saw you—"

"I didn't mean to. Don't be an ass!"

"Well, I suppose it was only temper, but I wish you'd draw the line a bit, Smithy. You needn't be shirty about the cricket now, at any rate. I suppose you know Vernon's gone?"

"Yes."

"Did you see his uncle?"

"His uncle?"

"I suppose you went over to Lantham Chase, as you told me you were going to do. Was there a row?"

"Oh!" Vernon caught his breath. "No."

"That fat ass Bunter got wind of it somehow," said Redwing. "He came down to the pavilion between the innings and jawed it to Vernon. He must have heard you speaking to me, I suppose. Vernon cleared off afterwards, and I wondered whether he had some idea of putting his uncle wise. I was afraid there might be a row."

"That's all right."

Redwing set his lips a little.

"If you'd rather not tell me, I'm not curious," he said quietly. "I've been rather anxious about what might have happened, that's all. That Army man at Lantham Chase is not the sort of man to trifle with."

"Hardly!" said Vernon.

He seemed disinclined to go on with the talk, and Redwing eyed him. He had expected the Bounder to be full of it when he came in—especially if he had, as he had hoped, discovered what was Captain Vernon's mysterious game.

"Look here, Smithy, what's up?" he demanded abruptly.

"I've told you—nothing."

"I can see that something's happened," said Tom. "There's some sort of a change in you since I saw you last. I can't quite make it out, but there it is. Something's happened; I know that."

Vernon breathed hard and kept his eyes on his books—or, rather, Smithy's books. Smithy's books were his now.

"Does it mean that you found out what you went there to find out?" asked Tom. "I can't believe that there was anything in what you suspected. But if there was, what came of it?"

Vernon's heart beat faster.

What had the Bounder suspected? What had he said to Redwing before he went on that fatal ride to Lantham Chase?

But he kept cool. A sense of danger in the air made him very wary—as it would have made the Bounder.

"Let's see, what was it I said exactly?" he asked in a careless drawl. He was anxious to know what the Bounder had said, and whether it spelled danger for him.

"You said that Captain Vernon was up to some game; that he had some object in putting his nephew in your school and landing you together; and

that that was why he got you off the sack last week. Surely, you haven't forgotten, Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing in astonishment.

So that was it!

"You fancied that Vernon might know what it was, and that by impersonating him with his uncle you might find it out. Well, did you?"

So that was what the Bounder had paid that visit to Lantham Chase for. He made no bones about impersonating Vernon when it suited him to do so. Why should Vernon make any about returning the compliment?

"I'm sure you were mistaken," went on Redwing. "I can't see how the captain can have any turn to serve by anything of the kind. I think he made a mistake in sending Vernon to Greyfriars, and it looks as if he thinks so himself now as he's taken him away. I don't see how he can have had any but a kind motive for getting you off the sack."

Vernon did not answer.

"But if you've found out anything different, what is it?" asked Redwing. "I don't understand you, Smithy. I believe it was all moonshine. And if that's what you've found out, can't you own up to it?"

Vernon laughed.

"Yes, it was all moonshine, and I own up to it," he said. "Now let's get on with prep."

"And there was no row?"

"Oh, no!"

"You saw Captain Vernon?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen him!"

"He hadn't left to come here when you got to Lantham Chase, then? He must have left pretty soon after you got there; from the time he got here," said Tom, more and more perplexed by his chum's curt replies. "Where have you been all the time since, Smithy?"

"I've had a spin on the jigger."

"Did you get that clobber at Lantham?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

Tom Redwing relapsed into silence, still looking at his chum across the table.

Vernon went on with prep. He affected not to be aware of that steady gaze. But he knew that it was upon him—puzzled, perplexed. His heart was beating uncomfortably.

Tom Redwing did not suspect—he could not. But he was conscious of a subtle alteration that troubled his mind.

It was some minutes before Redwing spoke again.

"I don't get you, Smithy. You're keeping back something, I can see that plainly enough. I don't want to know if you'd rather not tell me, but—"

"Well, what?"

"If it's something serious you can trust me, Smithy. If you've got anything on your mind you can surely trust me; we've been pals long enough."

"What niter rot! What could I have on my mind?"

"I don't know. There's something."

"Rot!"

"That means that you'd rather chuck the subject?"

"Well, yes."

"Leave it at that, then," said Tom Redwing; and no more was said.

Prep in Study No. 4 went on after that with hardly a word spoken.

When it was over Tom Redwing left the study in silence; his face was grave and a little troubled.

Through thick and thin he had always been the Bounder's loyal chum, and the frequent rows in Study No. 4
(Continued on page 28.)



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.

"**W**EEP, and the world weeps with you; laugh, and you're put in a home."

This is the whimsical complaint of Jack Hobart, of Clacton.

"Everywhere I go," writes Jack, "I meet fellows with hang-dog expressions and sullen, ratty-like frowns. They look as if they've swallowed their back teeth, or something. They make no attempt to be bright and cheerful. If you talk to them, they just grunt. If you slap them on the back in a playful manner, they bark at you like an unmuzzled bull-pup. I never saw such a set of moping, moony fellows in my life. And they call this 'Sunny Clacton'!"

Well, Jack, it is some years since I was in Clacton, so I am unable to confirm your remarks regarding the youthful inhabitants of that famous seaside resort. I rather fancy, however, that your summing-up errs a little on the side of severity; but if it is indeed true that Clacton boys never smile, then I am sorry for Clacton; for a cheery and sunny temperament is one of the most valuable assets in life.

There are times, of course, when you find it hard to be cheerful. The world seems upside-down. Another member of the family gets down to "brekker" before you and scoffs all the jam. The eggs are hard-boiled, the tea cold. You go to school, where nothing seems to go right. You play cricket, and muff unlimited catches. You go to a cinema, and find that they're showing a film you've seen somewhere before.

Oh, yes, I know it's often hard to smile! But as a certain poet hath it:

"When the road seems long and dreary, and you're sick and stale and weary,

And you're sighing for the things that are sublime;

Don't go flying in a paddy, but be up and doing, laddie,

And you'll find you're on the target every time!"

Long faces are an abomination. We don't want them in this country. A certain amount of depression was, a few months ago, unavoidable; but with the sun shining brightly now, there's no excuse for it. No boy has a right to be continually giving way to the "blues"; and I sympathise with my Clacton chum if, as he asserts, his fellow-townsmen are a "set of moping, moony fellows."

I shall have to persuade Mr. Frank Richards to send Billy Bunter up to Clacton. Perhaps his amazing and amusing antics might cheer the inhabitants up a bit!

CONGRATULATIONS FROM BIRMINGHAM!

The following is a letter I have received from two of my girl chums:

"Dear Mr. Editor,—Having just finished this week's MAGNET, we really must take the opportunity of congratulating you upon your absolutely splendid stories. Though we are two girls, we appreciate the MAGNET as much as any boy, and always shall do.

"We have the MAGNET delivered every Saturday without fail, and think it is by far the best way, as there is such a great demand for it that you are never sure of getting your copy. Therefore, Mr. Editor, we will just let you know that even when we are grandmothers—if ever—we shall always encourage the younger people to read the good old MAGNET.

"Two enthusiastic readers,
"BESS AND JESS."

I am really grateful to my two Birmingham girl chums for that splendid letter. It cheers me up tremendously to know that I have such loyal supporters. I am always delighted to have such letters from my readers, for, of course, the best reward one can have for one's work is to know that it is appreciated.

I guess the above will give you something to think about, what? I know what you are thinking about at the moment, and that is: "What has the MAGNET in store for next week?"

Something good, you may be sure. First of all, there is:

"A DOUBLE IN TROUBLE!"

By Frank Richards,

the next yarn in our grand series featuring Bertie Vernon.

At Greyfriars, in the guise and name of his cousin, Vernon-Smith, Vernon is bound to find himself in some very awkward situations, as you will learn when you read this exciting yarn. You'll vote it the best in the series, believe me. Latest information about what's happening at Greyfriars will be found in the interesting edition of the "Greyfriars Herald," while "My Page" will be taken over by Vernon-Smith—incidentally, he wrote the copy a week or two back. Sounds good, chums, doesn't it? And it is good, too, believe me.

Take my tip, chum, pay a visit to your newsagent right now, and ask him to reserve a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET for you. He'll be pleased to do it.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,637.

had never made any difference for long. But now there was some sort of a change, and it distressed Redwing to realise it; but he knew, though he could not understand why, that he did not like Smithy as he always had liked him.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Warpath!

BILLY BUNTER stood on the Remove landing, and round him a number of Remove fellows had gathered with grinning faces. Bunter was not grinning.

Bunter's fat face was serious—indeed, it was fierce.

Fellows who had been going down after prep lingered on the landing.

Bunter was the cause. Bunter had the house, as it were.

Bunter was on the warpath.

"I'll show him!" said Bunter, blinking round at a score of grinning faces.

"You wait!"

"Waiting, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'll show the lot of you!" said Bunter. "Think I'm afraid of that swab Smithy?"

"Just a few!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Well, you wait!" said Bunter.

"What's he sticking in his study for? Redwing's gone down; they always go down together! What's Smithy sticking in the study for? Don't I jolly well know?"

Bunter knew—at least, he was sure that he knew.

Smithy was in a funk.

All that dodging that the fat Owl had put in since the episode in Study No. 4 that morning had been a sheer waste—as Bunter now knew!

He need not have dodged at all—Smithy being so funky. Evidently—to Bunter—that knock-down blow in the doorway of Smithy's study in break that morning had done the trick, though Bunter had not guessed it at the time. Smithy had the wind-up! That knock-out jolt had done it!

When there was no danger Bunter was as bold as a lion. If a fellow was afraid of Bunter, Bunter was not afraid of that fellow.

So Bunter now was going to show all the Remove who was who and what was what—and the Remove seemed quite eager to be shown.

Bunter on the warpath was an entertaining Bunter.

"Rotten funk, you know!" went on the fat Owl. "Sticking in his study because he's afraid to show up! I'll show him! He laid into me with a cricket stump, and I knocked him down! That did it! Well, I'll jolly well knock him down again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smithy's all gas!" declared Bunter.

"Just gas! Knock the fellow down, and he knows where he gets off, all right! Well, I knocked him down!"

"What a forcocious porpoise!" said Bob.

"Well, you watch!" said Bunter. "Look here, I'm not going to stick here for ever, while that rotten funk skulks in his study! One of you fellows go and call him! Tell him he's got to have it, and he may as well get it over."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I'll call him!" he agreed. "You fellows see that Bunter doesn't disappear while I'm gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob tramped up the Remove passage to Study No. 4.

To the general surprise, Billy Bunter made no attempt to disappear while he was gone! The fat Owl, apparently, was prepared to abide the fray!

Bob pitched open the door of Study No. 4!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared.

"You're wanted, Smithy!"

"What do you want, fathead?"

"Bunter wants you!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Shut that door—I'm reading!"

"Aren't you coming down, Smithy?"

"No!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bob shut the door, and tramped back to the landing.

Why Smithy chose to remain in his study, instead of coming down, he did not know—though he did not attribute it to terror of Billy Bunter! Certainly he was not likely to guess that the Bounder's double wanted to get a little more used to the new and strange situation before he mingled with the Removites more than he could help.

"Well, where's Smithy?" hooted Bunter.

Perhaps, had Smithy come back with Bob, Bunter's valour might have petered out! But Bob came back alone.

"Smithy's reading in his study, and he ain't coming down!" said Bob.

"I'll have him out!" said Bunter.

It was quite unusual for the Bounder to stay in his study after prep, especially for reading! Really, it looked as if he had some special motive for not leaving his study!

Bunter had no doubt about that motive! If Bunter had required anything to spur him on, this plain and unmistakable proof that Smithy was fanking in his study would have done it.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" squeaked the valorous fat Owl. "You come and watch me handle Smithy!"

The fat Owl rolled up the Remove passage!

After him marched the whole crowd—frightfully keen to see Bunter handle Smithy!

Bunter turned the door handle of Study No. 4 and hurled the door open with a crash!

The junior seated in the armchair stared round.

"Funk!" roared Bunter.

Vernon stared at him blankly.

"You mad grampus, blow away!" he snapped. "Shut that door!"

"You can't crawl out of it!" grinned Bunter. "Get your pecker up! You're going to be whopped! I've knocked you down once—"

"Have you?" ejaculated Vernon.

"Mad?"

"I say, you fellows, hear him! He jolly well knows that I knocked him down, in this study, in break this morning! Yah! Funk! Stand up to it! Do you want me to yank you out of that armchair?" roared Bunter ferociously. "You got it coming, you swab! Making out that a fellow was after your jam, and laying into him with a cricket stump! I'll show you! Yah! Funk!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Have him out!"

Bunter, thus encouraged, carried on!

He rolled into Study No. 4, rolled across to the junior in the armchair,

and grabbed at him, to hook him out!

A terrific thrashing was the next item on the programme!

Rather unfortunately for Bunter, there was a change in the programme at that stage of the proceedings!

The junior in the armchair rose to his feet as Bunter grabbed, and grabbed back.

The fat Owl whirled in a powerful grasp.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He whirled round! A boot was planted on his tight trousers!

Bunter flew through the doorway, and crashed into the yelling crowd outside.

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat! Go for him, Bunter! Knock him down again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows, let a fellow pass!" yelled Bunter. "I say, keep that beast off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let a fellow pass?" shrieked Bunter. The fat Owl realised, too late for comfort, that whatever was the matter with Smithy, it was not funk!

"I say, you fellows—gerrout of the way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon slammed the door of Study No. 4.

Billy Bunter was not thinking of opening it again! Bunter was doing the Remove passage at about 50 m.p.h.—leaving the Removites rocking with laughter.

THE END.

(Special for next week: "A DOUBLE IN TROUBLE!"—Don't miss it, chums!)

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LED UP THE GARDEN!

Bright and Breezy Story of Jack Jolly & Co., the Schoolboys of St. Sam's:

"How do I look?" Dr. Alfred Birchmall grinned cheerfully, as he asked that question.

The revered and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's was standing in a field beside the glistening River Ripple. He presented a very comical site, being dressed in a frowsty frock coat, a pair of trowis that were patched and torn, and a tattered old topper.

Standing before him was a crafty-looking, black-wiskered gentleman, who stepped back a pace at the question and eyed the Head through his smoked glasses with a keen and critical eye.

"Absolutely topping!" he leered at last. "If this disguise duzzent delude young Fearless and his friends into thinking you're a scarecrow, then my name's not Honest Joe Goodman!"

The condiment brought a smirk of satisfaction to the Head's face.

"Glad you like it!" he grinned. "Without boasting, Mr. Goodman, I think I can safely say that there isn't an amateur detective anywhere who is such a dab at disguising as I am. You can take it from me that when Fearless and his friends come here fishing this afternoon, they will never dream that I am anything but a scarecrow. I shall be able to listen-in to their conversation in complete safety—and it's ten to one in doughnuts I shall learn where Fearless has hidden his father's secret documents!"

"I jolly well hoap so, anyway," said Mr. Goodman, with a frightful skowl. "Those papers, as you know, have got to be recovered, on the—er—express commands of his—shem—respected father, without young Fearless knowing anything about it. If you succeed in learning where they are hidden you will earn yourself the useful sum of one ginny—which in these days is not to be sneezed at!"

The Head coughed. "The munny side of it duzzent interest me in the least, of course," he said loftily. "I intend to solve this mystery purely in order to prove what a ripping slooth I am. You had better buzz off now," he added, with a furtive look over his shoulder. "I fancy I hear footprints approaching."

"All serene!" said Mr. Goodman, with a sly wink. "I will hop back to St. Sam's and wait for you in the garden. Au revoir!"

Mr. Goodman sneaked off, chuckling evilly, and Dr. Birchmall shot out his arms and pretended to be a scarecrow.

The Head thought he was being awfully clever in adopting this ruse. The moment he heard that Jack Jolly & Co. intended spending this half-holiday fishing, he had had the brilliant brain-wave of disguising himself as a scarecrow and listening-in to them. He felt absolutely positive they could never suspect him.

But he had not reckoned on the grate intelligence of the keen-eyed heroes of the Fourth. Jack Jolly & Co. were just in time to spot him putting on the scarecrow pose; and the meaning of it struck Fearless and Jolly at once.

"My hat! The Head's up to his

detective stunts again, you chaps!"

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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HEAD APPROVES GREY-FRIARS PAGEANT PLAN!

Rehearsals Start This Week.

A committee of four—Wibley, Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Linley—visited Mr. Quelch to ask if something could be done about staging a Greyfriars Pageant.

Mr. Quelch, who was busy at his typewriter tapping out the latest chapter of his monumental "History of Greyfriars," did not greet them enthusiastically.

"I am rather busy," he said. "Unless it is something very important, I should prefer you to leave it till—"

"Oh, it's very important, sir," said Wibley. "I'm sure when you hear it you'll think so, too."

"Well, what is it?" "We—er—we were thinking—that is to say, we wondered if you—I mean, the Head, sir, and the school generally—"

Mr. Quelch drummed impatiently on his desk.

"You are not making yourself extremely clear, Wibley. Please give me some idea of the subject you wish to discuss."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Wibley. "It's the Greyfriars Pageant."

"What!" "The Greyfriars Pageant, sir," said Wibley, gaining his courage at last. "Follows dressing up in old-fashioned costumes and staging one or two scenes from the history of the school, and all that sort of thing. We've thought out the idea, and we'd like the—er—the powers—that-be to take it up, sir."

The deputation watched Mr. Quelch rather dubiously. Now that Wibley had let the cat out of the bag, they had a sudden feeling that it was a potty idea, and that the beak would turn it down, and turn them out in a brace of shakes.

They were agreeably surprised when he rose to his feet with the light of good old enthusiasm shining in his face.

"Bless my soul! An extraordinarily good idea! I wonder nobody ever thought of it before!"

"Just what we said ourselves, sir!" smiled Wibley. "We've drawn up a plan here, if you'd like to see it. Only a rough-and-ready sketch, of course—"

"Pray let me see it, Wibley."

Wibley handed over the neatly written manuscript he had brought with him, and Mr. Quelch ran a practised eye over the same.

"Excellent work indeed, Wibley!" he remarked, after an interval. "You have here the basis for a really fine pageant. I shall see Dr. Locke this afternoon and ascertain his views on the subject."

Mr. Quelch was as good as his word. He took Wibley's MS. along to the Head and remained closeted with him for an hour. The result was very gratifying to the committee. When Mr. Quelch emerged at last, it was to announce that the scheme had been officially approved, and he himself given the post of organiser.

He promptly co-opted the Remove quartet as committee-men and has since added Mr. Lascelles and a number of seniors to their ranks. The preparatory work is now in full swing, and rehearsals actually start this week.

Prout Didn't Feel "Aim"-iable!

Coker's plea, when accused of shooting young Tubbs' catapult, was that he aimed at achieving popularity with the fags.

Mr. Prout's complaint was that he aimed at Mr. Prout's car—and hit it!

bit of eaves-

posing as a scarecrow and sternly repressed his feelings accordingly.

Jack Jolly & Co. were in no hurry to go, and the Head had a long wait before he was freed from his guise as a scarecrow. But at last the chums of the Fourth departed with the duzzent or so finny spessimens they had landed, and the Head's long ordeal ended.

As soon as they were out of site, he galloped back to St. Sam's by a different route and made his way at top speed to his private garden.

The sinister figger of Honest Joe Goodman was there to greet him, and that shifty gentleman farly gloated when he heard the news.

"Fancy the young raskal thinking of such a hiding-place!" he leered. "Well, well!"

"Let us get bizzy," said Dr. Birchmall. "I propose that I lower you down the well in a bucket and you have a squint round at the bottom to see if you can find the secret papers. This way!"

A minnit later, Mr. Goodman was descending into the dark and dismal depths of the well, while Dr. Birchmall turned the winch at the top.

Now and again the Head paused and craned his ostrich-like neck over the side to see how his colleague was progressing; and very soon this proved his undoing. Suddenly, he leaned over too far and lost his balance.

The next moment he pitched over the side and vanished into the well!

There was a fearful crash and a series of fiendish yells, as he broke his fall on Mr. Goodman. An instant later the two old fogeys were whizzing down to the bottom in a bucket!

It was lucky for them that four cheery Fourth-Formers were hiding behind a lorrel bush near by. Jack Jolly & Co. were on the spot in a jiffy. Nearly busting their sides with laughter, they manned the winch and hauled up the two bedraggled creatures who looked more like drowned rats than successful slooths!

They simply blinked when they reckonsised their rescuers.

"Jolly! Fearless! Merry! Bright!" gasped Dr. Birchmall. "What do you think you're doing of, trespassing in my private garden?"

"Recovering from the strain of rescuing you from the well, at the present moment, sir!" answered Jolly with a cheery larf. "Did you find anything valuable at the bottom, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Merry and Bright and Fearless.

A garstly paller spread over Mr. Goodman's fetchers at that yell of larfter, while Dr. Birchmall turned the culler of a ripe tomato. In a flash, the pair of plotters realised that they had been led up the garden—that they were the viktimis of a schoolboy hoaks!

"You—you cheeky young whelps!" roared Dr. Birchmall. "You knew all the time!"

"Go hon, sir!"

"How ever did you guess?!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You talked about the papers being down the well for my bennyfit—knowing full well they were never there at all! You—"

Words failed the Head. He made a rush.

Covered as he was with slime and wetness, he was at all a plezzant object to meet at close quarters. Jack Jolly & Co. decided that their best move was to run for it.

They scamper away as fast as their legs would carry them and soon outdistanced Dr. Birchmall. And the Head gave it up and made tracks for the nearest bath—leaving Honest Joe Goodman to return to the inn where he was staying at Muggleton, farly nashing his teeth at the way in which he and his partner had been led up the garden!

(More laughs—"Dr. Birchmall's Discovery!"—the hilarious sequel to this story in next week's number!)

HARRY WHARTON IN THE CHAIR

Temple of the Fourth has written us a letter for publication, which I should love to publish—if I had the necessary space. Unfortunately, it runs to four foolscap sheets, so I'm afraid that publication is impossible.

I can, however, find room for a brief reference to Temple's complaint. Boiled down, what it amounts to is that Cecil Reginald considers that horsemanship ought to take the place of Latin as the principal subject taught at Greyfriars!

His complaint is summed up at the end of his letter, where he remarks elegantly: "Latin makes a fellow a beastly bore, don't you think? Whereas horsemanship makes a fellow a gentleman—what?"

Well, I'm not so sure about it, Temple, old man. I know several Latin swots who are by no means beastly bores—Mark Linley and Dick Penfold in the Remove, for instance. Then on the other hand, I know one or two exceptionally good horsemen at Greyfriars who don't fit in with my idea of a gentleman.

Then again, there are fellows who are good riders and Latin swots simultaneously.

Taking it all round, I can't say I agree with Temple's brainwave. I should certainly prefer riding-school as an alternative to grinding away in the Form-room; but I think that horsemanship is essentially a subject for a chap's leisure time.

Sorry, and all that Temple, dear man, but my frank opinion, I'm afraid, is that you're talking out of the back of your aristocratic neck. WHAT? HARRY WHARTON.

FISHY'S FATH IN FORTUNE-TELLING GIPSY!

By TOM BROWN

Do you believe in gipsy fortune-tellers?

Not many of us do, I'll bet. The same goes for Greyfriars. Only a very small minority of credulous Removites, anyway, have any faith in Romany seers.

This being the case, you could have knocked me down with a feather when Fisher T. Fish, all fellows, started arguing their case in the Rag the other evening.

"I guess it ain't hokum—no, sir!" he declared. "I say some of them gipsy dames sure wise to a thing or two and the same!"

"Bosh!" was the verdict of most of Fishy's hearers. At which Fishy's hatchet face melted and creased up into an imperturbable grin.

"That's what you think!" he yapped. "Seems believing, and if any of you disbelieving guys like to interview the gal you'll find in Friardale Lane tomorrow afternoon, you'll maybe change your minds—just a few!"

It was unnecessary for Fishy to say more, anyway. What he had said already was quite sufficient to excite curiosity to a considerable scale.

For a keen Atlantic go-getter of his calibre to confess to a belief in the supernatural gifts of a gipsy fortune-teller was most Remove men as simply remarkable.

What had converted Fish to this amazing belief? Had he, in a moment of mental aberration, crossed the gipsy's palm with a silver shilling and been overwhelmed by what she had told him in return?

In view of the well-known fact that parting with a penny is like having a tooth out to Fish, it seemed most unlikely. But he appeared to be no other possible solution to it.

afternoon. It was my good fortune to be the first to spot the gipsy coming out of the woods.

"Like to tell my fortune, mother?" I asked.

The gipsy woman, whose face was almost entirely hidden by voluminous scarves and coloured cloths, hobbled forward, chuckling.

"I'll say I would!" she said, in a strange, high-pitched voice. "If the young guy—gent, I mean—will cross old Gipsy Kate's mitt—palm, that is—with a couple dimes—"

"I should say, a shilling—I guess I'll spill plenty!"

I looked at the old crone. There was something hauntingly familiar about that voice—even about those words. What was it?

Whatever it was, I risked a bob and crossed Gipsy Kate's palm. She promptly rattled off a whole lot of information about me—information which was uncannily accurate, coming from a gipsy who had presumably never been near Greyfriars!

"I guess your name's Tom Brown. Right in once, huh! Whoopie! You come from that joint up the lane—Greyfriars School, I reckon. Your hang-out's Study No. 2, Remove Passage. Oh, boy, am I the goods? The big shot in your joint's a guy called Doc Locke."

"Amazing!" I breathed. "It's—"

it's awe-inspiring! But what about the future?"

"Say, that's easy! Round about tea-time, I guess you'll have tea. Then you'll turn up for calling-over, and after that I reckon you'll be settling down to do your prop. Now I guess you'd best mosey along now. Time's money, and I gotta hunch hyer's some more customers. So-long, bo—I mean, young gentleman!"

And Gipsy Kate pushed her bony hand on my face as a polite gesture of dismissal and turned to the oncoming crowd.

Well, that's all I can tell you about it—except that I saw Fishy tramping up to the School House from the gates later in the afternoon, scowling furiously and trailing a bundle of old rags and coloured cloths behind him.

"I saw your gipsy, old chap," I hastened to tell him. "Absolutely marvellous, she was—especially her accent! I don't wonder now that you had such faith in her!"

"Aw, baloney!" was Fishy's reply to that. "I guess you're all a lot of slabsided jays, and that goes for you, too, even though you didn't join in the scragging. If you want your shilling back, Russell's got it—the pesky galoot wouldn't even let me get away with that! I'll say this: dump surely does put years on me!"

And Fish tramped into the House, snorting.

From which I gathered that he himself had quite lost faith in his gipsy fortune-teller!

