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A Complete School Tale. By Frank Richards.

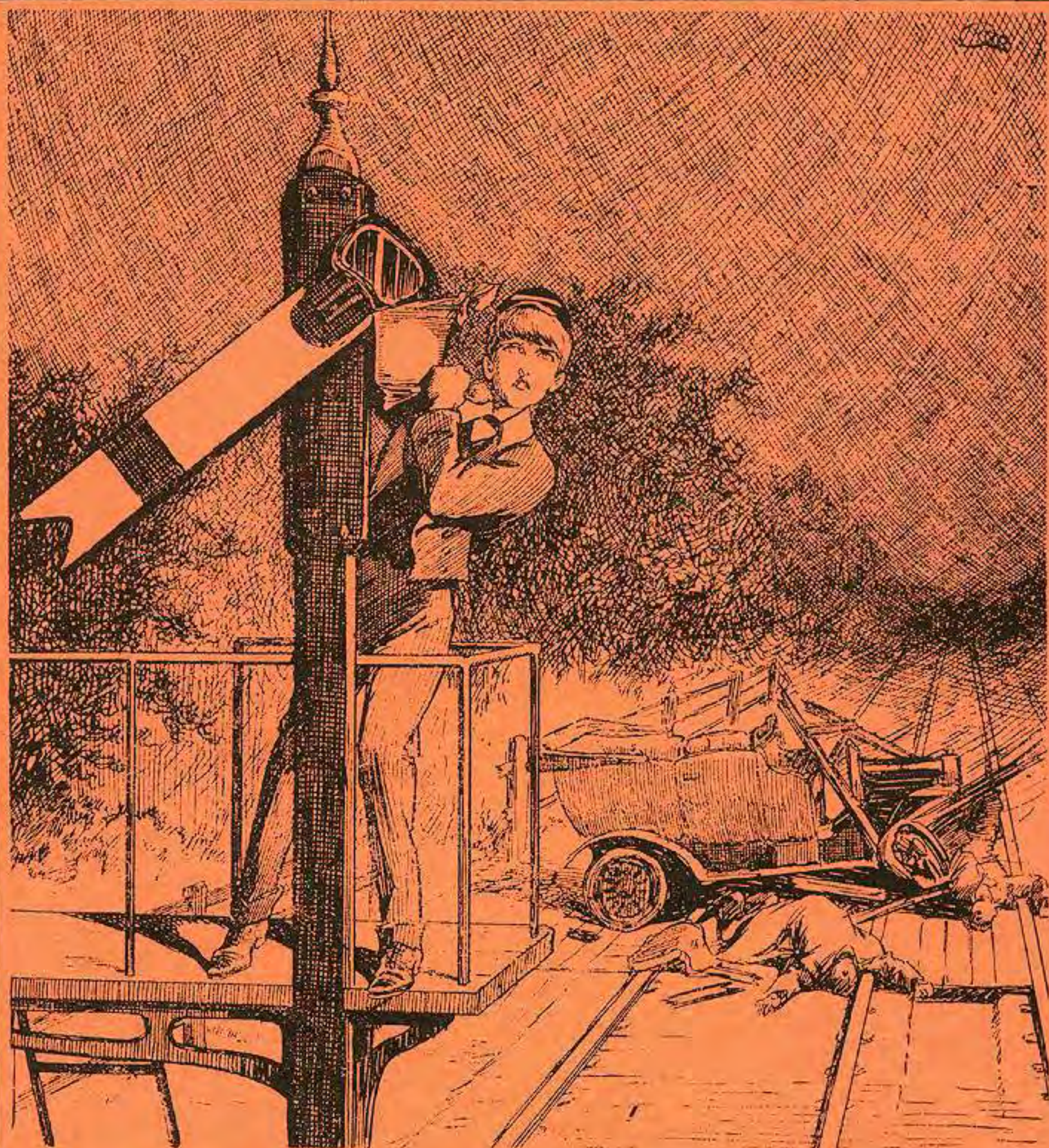
By Sidney Drew.

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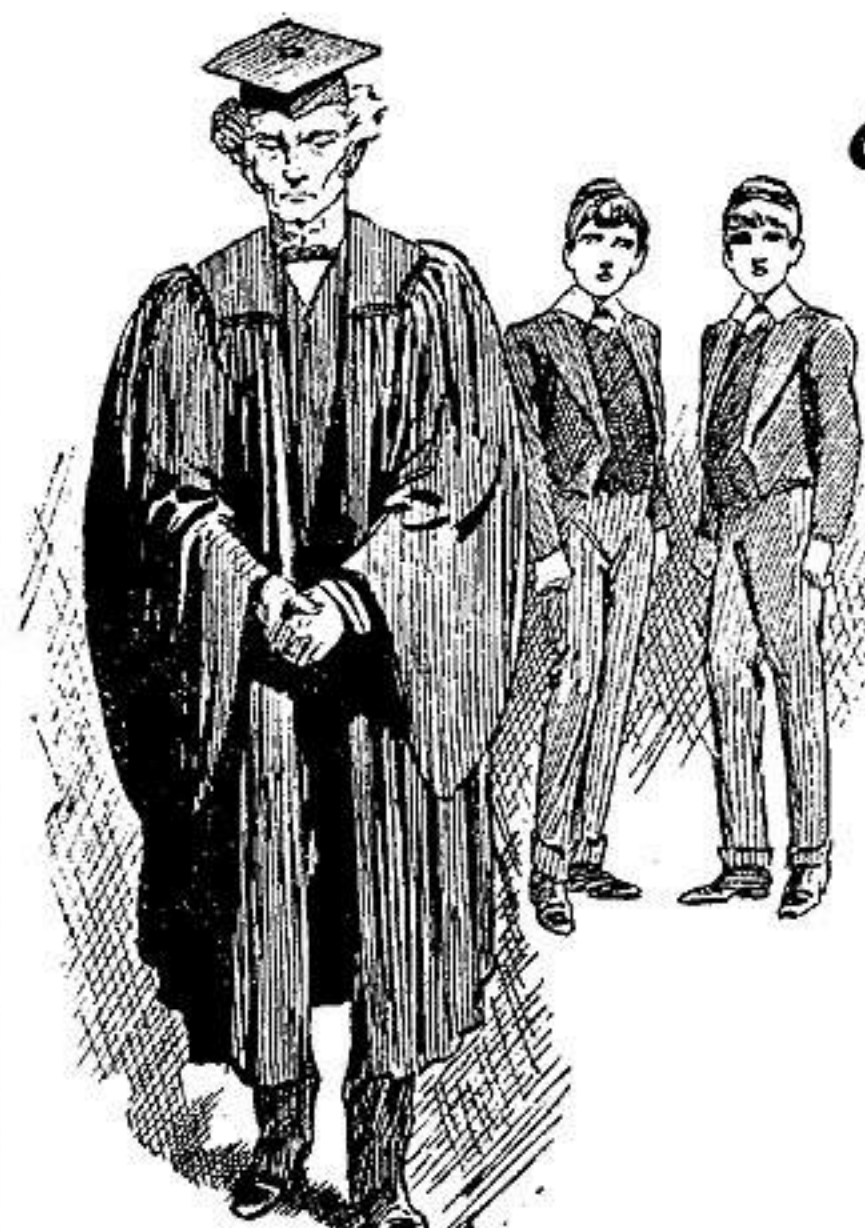
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Once Too Often.

"H E'S done it this time!"

That was the general verdict in the Greyfriars Remove.

There seemed to be no doubt about it.

The school was talking of nothing else. The Remove, especially, buzzed from end to end with it.

Fellows in the Sixth, who did not, as a rule, take much interest in Lower Fourth affairs, talked of the matter in their studies and in the passages. Even Wingate, the head prefect of Greyfriars, and captain of the school, had been heard speaking on the subject to Courtney, of the Sixth.

All the masters discussed it, from Mr. Quelch, the master of

the Remove—in whose Form Vernon-Smith was—to the Head himself.

There seemed to be but one opinion in all Greyfriars, and that was that Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, had "done it" this time.

Those who saw the Bounder brought in, with the Remove master walking on one side of him and a prefect on the other, read in Vernon-Smith's face the opinion, too, that he had done it at last. The Bounder, himself, shared the general opinion.

Remove fellows crowded round the door of the Head's study when they knew that the Bounder was there.

Interest was deep, excitement ran high.

"He's done it," said Bob Cherry, of the Remove—"he's

really done it at last! It's been a long time coming, but it's come!"

"It's come!" said Harry Wharton.

"And I'm not sorry, for one," said Frank Nugent. "The Bounder's been a disgrace to Greyfriars ever since he came here. I'm sorry to see any chap get it in the neck; but if ever a chap deserved to get it in the neck, Vernon-Smith's that chap."

And all the others said:

"What-ho!"

The Bounder's look, as he was marched into the Head's study with Mr. Quelch's hand on his arm, had been sullen and half defiant.

Truly, the Bounder had done enough, since he had been in the Remove Form at Greyfriars, to merit expulsion half a dozen times over. How the Head had stood him so long had been a mystery to all the Form.

But he could not possibly stand him any longer! It was impossible!

The Bounder had "done it" this time!

Many of the fellows had surmised that there was some secret influence at work—indeed, the Bounder himself had been heard to say, boastfully, that the Head dared not expel him; that Dr. Locke could not get rid of him if he would.

And, really, there had seemed to be some truth in it. Else, why had the Bounder, with a bad reputation from the day he arrived at Greyfriars, been suffered to remain so long in the old school?

It seemed that he had taken delight in breaking the rules, in making himself generally obnoxious, and in outraging all the traditions of the place. Yet, so far, he had not been "sacked."

But he had "done it" now!

The Head could not look over what had happened, even if he wanted to. If Vernon-Smith had been allowed to remain, the Head's own authority must have fallen into contempt.

While excited juniors clustered in the passage outside, Herbert Vernon-Smith stood in the Head's study—stood before the Head, his eyes on the carpet, his cheeks flushing and paling by turns, his hands tightly clenched.

Dr. Locke looked at him with hard eyes.

Mr. Quelch stood near the culprit, and his looks, too, were as hard as iron.

For a long time Mr. Quelch had suffered the Bounder in his Form—suffered him there impatiently, because the Head would not, or could not, rid the school of him. But Mr. Quelch felt a grim satisfaction in knowing that the end must come now. The Bounder must go!

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon the junior.

"Vernon-Smith!"

The Head's voice rapped out hard and metallic, quite different from the kindly tones the juniors were accustomed to hear from their headmaster.

Vernon-Smith did not raise his eyes.

But his lips set tighter, and a steely look came into the downcast eyes. Defiance hardened in the pale face.

"Vernon-Smith, look at me, sir!"

The Bounder raised his eyes to the doctor's face.

"Smith, you know what you have done?"

The Bounder was silent.

"You have brought nothing but disgrace to this school!" said the Head, and his voice trembled a little. "This school has never been disgraced as you have disgraced it! From the day you entered, you have never troubled to take care of your conduct; you have hardly shown the slightest regard to appearances, even. There had to be an end of this."

Still the Bounder did not speak.

"The Friardale policeman," resumed Dr. Locke, "found you the worse for drink in the village this evening—at an hour, too, when you were supposed to be within gates! You were semi-intoxicated, sir!"

Still no reply.

"Police-constable Tozer brought you here," said the Head. "You slept like a brute for hours after you were brought in."

Silence.

"What do you expect after such conduct?"

Silence.

"You cannot expect, at all events, to remain at Greyfriars," said the Head. "You know that you must leave the school. To-morrow morning, Vernon-Smith, you will be expelled—publicly—from the school you have shamed."

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"I am to go?" he said, breaking the silence at last.

"Yes."

"I am to be expelled?"

"To-morrow morning."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

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"You cannot expel me!" he said thickly. "You know you cannot! My father——"

"You need not speak of your father. I shall explain the circumstances fully to Mr. Vernon-Smith. He will see how impossible it is for you to remain at Greyfriars after what has happened."

The Bounder's lip curled in a sneer.

"He will not see anything of the sort!" he retorted.

"That will make no difference. You must go."

"I cannot go! I will not!"

"Smith!"

"You know you cannot expel me!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "My father will not allow it!"

"Do you think your father has authority here?"

"I know he has!" cried the Bounder fiercely. "You cannot blind me, Dr. Locke. You have wanted to expel me before this. If you dared not then, you dare not now. I will not leave Greyfriars!"

For a moment the Head's face was deadly white.

There came into his eyes a look which showed how hard the Bounder's words struck home.

But the Head's answer came clear and cold:

"To-morrow morning, Vernon-Smith, you leave Greyfriars, whatever may be the consequences, to myself or anyone else! I would rather resign my position here as headmaster than allow you to remain!"

"I—I——"

"Go to your study now, and remain there."

The Bounder clenched his hands.

"You dare not—you dare not!" he muttered.

"Leave my study!"

"I tell you you dare not! I——"

Dr. Locke glanced at Mr. Quelch.

"Will you kindly take that boy from my study, Mr. Quelch?" he said quietly.

"Certainly, sir."

The Remove-master's grasp fell like a grasp of iron upon the shoulder of the blackguard of the Remove.

"Come!" he said, quietly and coldly.

The Bounder made an effort to wrench himself loose. He turned a face white with anger and terror upon the Head.

"You dare not—you dare not!" he cried hoarsely.

The Head looked steadily at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Kindly take that boy away, Mr. Quelch," he said.

And, with a grasp of iron, the Remove-master led Vernon-Smith from the Head's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot.

THERE was a buzz in the passage as the Bounder of Greyfriars was led out.

He walked beside Mr. Quelch with savage, sullen face, his eyes gleaming with anger and malice.

The juniors looked at him curiously, and the Bounder returned their looks with angry defiance.

"Well, it's the order of the boot at last!" said Skinner, with a grin.

Harry Wharton frowned at him.

"Shut up!" he said. "No need to hit a chap when he's down, anyway. And you were never much better, Skinner, at any rate."

"Quite right," said Bob Cherry. "If you say another word, Skinny, I'll biff you on the boko, so look out!"

And Skinner backed away, and did not say another word.

The Bounder walked on, apparently hearing nothing.

He disappeared with Mr. Quelch at the end of the passage. Some of the fellows followed him, and saw him locked up in his study.

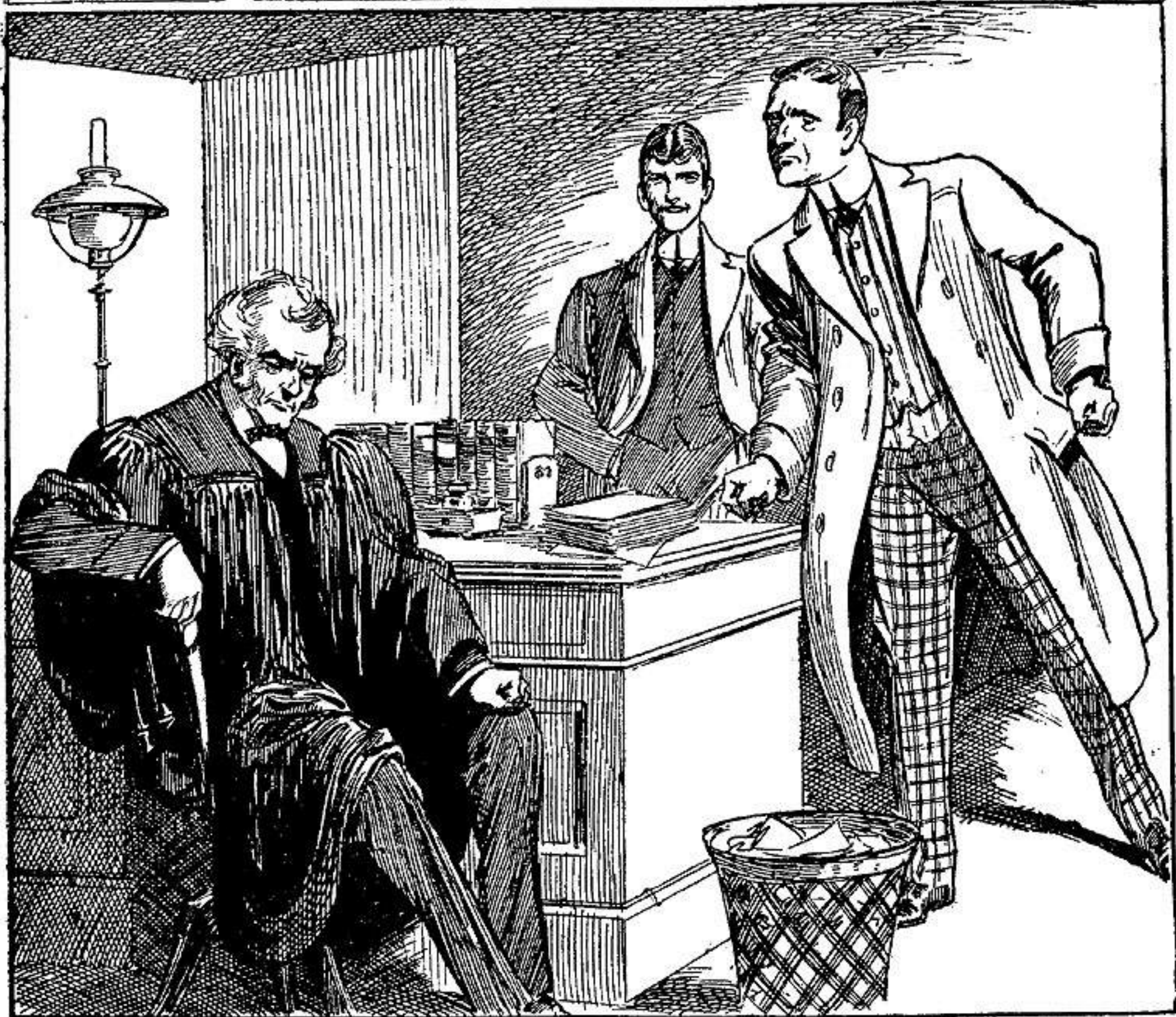
There the Bounder of Greyfriars sat alone, left to his thoughts.

The crowd of fellows broke up, eagerly discussing the occurrence. It leaked out very quickly that the Bounder was to be expelled on the following morning, and the news sent a thrill through the school. Certainly, everyone had expected it; but it was rare for anyone to be expelled from Greyfriars. Bob Cherry had been "sacked" from the old school, on suspicion of theft, but he had returned in triumph; but there was no chance of anything of that sort for the Bounder.

When the Bounder went, he would go for good—that was certain. And there was something impressive about an expulsion at all times. It meant the breaking up of an intended career; it meant disaster at the beginning of a life. The fellows felt sorry even for the Bounder.

"But it must have been all rot the Bounder used to talk, about his father having a hold over Dr. Locke!" Snoop remarked, in the junior common-room. "If there was anything in it, the Bounder couldn't be expelled now!"

"He's not gone yet, though," said Ogilvy.



"I will give you an hour," said the millionaire, unheeding. "When I return I shall want to know your final decision. If you defy me, my lawyers begin their work to-morrow morning. Take care!" Dr. Locke fell back, pale and panting, in his chair. Ruin lay before him—utter ruin—unless he complied with the cruel demand of the millionaire.

"But he's going."

"To-morrow morning," remarked Micky Desmond. "Faith, I sha'n't be sorry to see the last of him! But I feel sorry for the silly ass, all the same. It's rough on him, and rough on his people."

"His people should have been more careful with him, then," said John Bull. "That chap is the limit. He couldn't expect to keep it up for ever."

"There are some fellows he could give away, if he liked, now that he's going," Bob Cherry remarked. "And seeing that he's such a rank outsider, I shouldn't be surprised if he does."

Skinner started, and Snoop looked quite alarmed.

"Oh, I don't see that he could say anything!" Skinner exclaimed.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"I think he could. Little expeditions to the Cross Keys, little games of nap and banker," he said. "You know about them, Skinny, and so does Snoop, and so did Bulstrode. And there are fellows in higher Forms, too—Loder and Carne, of the Sixth, for instance."

"Loder's a prefect!"

"Yes, and he's been very thick with Vernon-Smith all the same. If Smithy told all he could tell, I fancy Loder wouldn't remain a prefect long, even if he stayed at Greyfriars at all."

"Look out!" muttered Tom Brown. "Here he is, Bob!"

Loder, the prefect, came into the junior-room. The expression upon Loder's face showed that he had heard what Bob Cherry had said. He strode towards the junior with a brow as black as thunder.

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"COCK OF THE WALK."

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"Were you speaking of me?" he exclaimed.

Bob backed away a little. But he did not dream of denying the truth, dangerous as Loder looked.

"Yes," he said coolly.

"You cheeky young hound!"

"Oh, draw it mild," said Bob Cherry. "I'll say it to your face, if you like. You know jolly well that you've been just as bad as Vernon-Smith—or worse, because you're older and in the Sixth, and you ought to know better."

"Hear, hear!" said Harry Wharton.

Loder gritted his teeth.

He did not reply to Bob Cherry, but went straight at him. Bob promptly dodged round the table.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed.

"Come here!" roared Loder.

Bob laughed.

"No fear!" he said.

The Sixth-Former rushed round the table after him. Bob promptly dodged again, and again the table was between them. There was a chuckle from the crowd of Removites in the common-room.

"Go it, Bob!"

"Chase him, Loder!"

Loder made another rush. But Bob was quick and nimble, and he dodged round the big table too quickly for Loder.

"Stop, you young sweep!" Loder shouted furiously.

"Rats!"

"Look here, Loder, you buzz out!" exclaimed John Bull.

"What are you doing in our quarters, anyway?"

"Oh, he's come to see if Smithy is here," grinned Ogilvy.

"He wants to ask him to keep his mouth shut."

NEXT WEEK!

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder turned almost livid with rage. As a matter of fact, Ogilvy's words struck home very hard indeed. He turned upon the Scottish junior, and caught hold of him suddenly, and began to box his ears right and left.

"Take that, you cheeky young sweep!" he panted

"Ow!" roared Ogilvy. "Yow! Help! Yah!"

Harry Wharton ran forward, his eyes blazing.

"Stop that, Loder!"

"Get back!"

"Rats! Stop it, I say!"

And as Loder did not stop it, Harry Wharton seized him by the shoulders, and dragged him off Ogilvy.

Ogilvy staggered away, gasping, his ears very red, and Loder turned upon Harry Wharton. But half a dozen Removites rushed to Harry's aid, and the Sixth-Former was hustled and bundled to the door.

He stopped in the doorway, panting with rage, and hitting out at the juniors.

"Buzz off!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"I—I—"

"Rush him!"

The juniors made a rush.

Loder hit out frantically, but he could not stand that rush, and he was hurled bodily into the passage, and came down with a heavy bump upon the linoleum.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded in the doorway, yelling with laughter. Loder was the only prefect at Greyfriars whom they would have ventured to lay hands upon; but Loder had never succeeded in getting himself respected by the juniors. They knew him too well.

He rolled in the passage, gasping for breath.

"Buzz off, Loder."

Loder sprang up, and charged back at the crowd in the doorway. But he might as well have charged at the wall.

They met him in firm array, and he was hurled back into the passage, and sprawled along the floor. There was a fresh shout of laughter from the Remove.

Carne, of the Sixth, came hurrying along the passage. Carne was looking very troubled and disturbed.

"Have you found him?" he exclaimed.

"Ow!"

Carne stared at Loder in astonishment.

"What on earth—"

"It's those young villains."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the "young villains."

Carne made an angry gesture.

"I think you must be mad to get into a row with juniors just now," he muttered. "For goodness' sake come along, if Smith isn't there."

"I don't know where he is," said Loder sullenly, as he picked himself up, giving the juniors furious looks.

"Then let's find him."

"Oh, all right!"

The two seniors went down the passage together, followed by a mocking hoot from the Removites. The juniors were all laughing as they turned back into the common-room. They felt that they had scored over the unpopular prefect that time, at all events.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry ejaculated. "I never saw two fellows in such a state of blue funk. They know that Smithy is going to be sacked, and they're afraid that he'll give them away now that he's got nothing to lose."

"Poor brutes!" said Frank Nugent. "I can understand their frame of mind, and I shouldn't like it myself! I wonder if Smithy will give them away?"

"I wonder?"

"I hardly think so," Harry Wharton said slowly. "It would be rotten mean."

"Well, the Bounder is rotten mean."

"Yes, I know he is; but every chap has his limit."

Ten minutes later Billy Bunter came grinning into the common-room. He blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Try next door! This isn't a loan office!"

Bunter blinked indignantly at Bob Cherry.

"I wasn't going to borrow your rotten money, Bob Cherry."

"I know you weren't; but I expect you were going to try," said Bob Cherry serenely.

"I say, you fellows, I've seen Loder."

"So have we."

"I mean, he's up in the Remove passage," grinned Bunter.

"My hat! What's he doing there?"

"He's there with Carne—talking to Vernon-Smith through his keyhole," chuckled Billy Bunter. "I never saw a chap in such a blue funk! Ha, ha, ha!"

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Blue Funk.

VERNON-SMITH was in his study.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was pacing the room like a wild animal in a cage.

His state of mind was not enviable.

From the first day of his coming to Greyfriars, the new boy had earned the title of "The Bounder," and certainly there was never a more perfect and complete specimen of the bounder than Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Even the black sheep of the school—and there were some—were not quite so black as the Bounder—his recklessness startled even reckless fellows in the Sixth, and he had made even Loder stare sometimes.

The Bounder had known what he was about, or he thought so.

The nature of his father's hold over the Head of Greyfriars he did not know; but he knew that that hold existed. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the Cotton King and millionaire, had told him so, and the boy had never doubted it.

And his career at Greyfriars had been enough to prove to him, and to others, that there was some secret influence at work.

The Head could not expel him!

Vernon-Smith had known that, and had always taken the fullest advantage of it. He had never had a thought of treating generously the man who was under his father's thumb. He had used his liberty to the utmost. The Head had had to close his eyes to many things; the masters had come to understand that in many respects Vernon-Smith was to be considered as a privileged person.

The Bounder had swanked to his heart's content, and his recklessness had grown more pronounced all the time.

He had not reflected that the time might come when the Head could not, if he would, allow his career to continue unchecked.

And he had passed the limit at last!

Yet it was hard for him to realise that it was over—that he could no longer do as he liked—that he was to leave Greyfriars—leave it in disgrace, with a stain on his name, and the shame of an expulsion hanging over him.

Surely it was only a threat—surely the Head would not dare!

Surely not!

The Bounder repeated that to himself a score of times as he paced the study feverishly; but he felt in his heart a chilling doubt. He remembered the cold, hard look upon Dr. Locke's face in the study—the look of a man who had been driven to a resolve, and who was determined to brave everything now!

It was the look of a man who would not retreat. The Bounder knew it, and he felt a chill of apprehension.

For if he were expelled, any vengeance his father might take upon the Head would not benefit him. With the fact known that he had been expelled from Greyfriars for being intoxicated, he would find it very difficult to gain admission to any decent public school.

It would be a heavy blow for him; and now, too late, the Bounder repented that he had gone so far! But his repentance was only for the consequences of his misdeeds.

But surely the Head would not dare!

Tap!

Vernon-Smith started as he heard the knock at his study door. His face brightened up, and his eyes gleamed. It was a message from the Head, of course, to tell him that, after all, Dr. Locke had reconsidered his decision; he was to have one more chance. At the mere thought of it, the cowed look left the Bounder, and the old swank returned to his manner.

He crossed to the door.

"Hallo!" he called out. "Who's that?"

"It's I—Loder!"

The Bounder grinned. The Head, of course, had chosen a prefect to bring him the message, or perhaps Loder was merely to convey him to the Head's study, to hear it from Dr. Locke's own lips.

"Well, what do you want?" asked the Bounder airily.

"Only a word with you."

"The key's on the outside," said Vernon-Smith. "Old Quelch locked me in. Of course, I knew that it wouldn't last long."

"The key's not in the lock."

"Then how are you going to get in?"

"I can't get in. I can speak to you through the keyhole, though," said Loder hurriedly. "Bend down so that I sha'n't have to shout."

The Bounder felt a chill of doubt. Wasn't it a message from the Head, after all? He bent down, his ear to the keyhole.

"What is it?" he asked sharply. "Haven't you come from Dr. Locke?"

"From the doctor! No."
"Then what do you want?" demanded Vernon-Smith savagely.

"Just a word. Carne's here, too. Look here," said Loder hurriedly, through the keyhole, "I hear you're going to be sacked from the school to-morrow morning. Smithy."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Yes, if the Head dares!" he said.

"Why shouldn't he dare?"

"He's under my father's thumb, and he dare not!" said the Bounder, though in his heart there was a sinking that belied his words.

"I've heard that before," said Loder roughly. "It doesn't look to me as if there's anything in it. How could the Head be under your father's thumb, anyway?"

"I don't know, but he is."

"Well, it seems pretty certain that he's got his ears up, in spite of it—all the school's saying that you're going to get the order of the boot in the morning," said Loder. "I hope you will be able to make terms; but if you can't—"

"Well, what then?"

"Mum's the word!"

"What are you driving at?" asked the Bounder irritably.

"Tell me what you mean, or buzz off and don't bother."

"I mean that—that there are some little things there's no need to mention—things that have happened, you know," said Loder hurriedly through the keyhole. "I introduced you at the Cross Keys. I did it in a friendly way; but it would make trouble for me here if you were to blab. It won't help you to hurt me, so—"

The Bounder laughed savagely.

"Oh, that's what you want, is it? You're afraid that I'm going to give you away when I'm sacked."

"It won't do you any good—"

"I know it won't! If it would, I'd give you away in two seconds," said the Bounder. "But you can set your mind at rest. I'm not going to say a word."

Loder's deep breath of relief could be heard in the study. A weight seemed to have been taken off the rascally prefect's mind.

"Thank you, Smithy! I felt that you would be decent—I knew you'd play the game—only—"

"Only you don't know anything of the sort!" said the Bounder presently. "You were in a blue funk."

"Well, it's all right now."

"Yes. Leave me alone."

Loder was quite willing to do that. He walked away with Carne, both of them looking very much relieved and comforted. The Bounder resumed his angry pacing of the study. His brief hope had been destroyed, and he was in a savage humour.

Knock!

It was a timid knock at the door again. The Bounder paused. This time he hardly hoped it was a message from the Head.

"Who's there?" he rapped out acidly.

"It's I."

It was Hazeldene's voice—Hazeldene of the Remove.

Hazel had been very "thick" with the Bounder in many of his escapades, though of late, under Harry Wharton's influence, he had been trying to give the black sheep of the Remove a wide berth.

The Bounder burst into a scoffing laugh. He could guess why Hazeldene had come to the study. He was on the same errand as the two Sixth-Formers.

"Well, what do you want, Hazel?" he asked. "Are you in a blue funk, too—afraid I shall give you away to the Head because I'm going to be sacked?"

"You won't, will you, Smithy?"

Hazeldene's voice was husky as it came in low tones through the keyhole. He was evidently in a state of nerves.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked the Bounder coolly. To his peculiar temperament there was a certain kind of enjoyment in tormenting the timid junior—such an enjoyment as a cat finds in playing with a mouse.

"Smithy, don't be a cad! I—I'm not thinking only of myself, but—but my people, and my sister," groaned Hazeldene. "It would be an awful blow for Marjorie if I were sacked—and I should be if the Head knew everything! You won't tell, Smithy?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said the Bounder roughly. "Of course I won't tell! What sort of a cad do you think I am?"

"Oh, thanks, thanks! Of course, I knew—"

"Of course, you didn't! Get off, do!"

"I—I say, Smithy—"

"Buzz off, I tell you! You've nothing more to ask, have you?"

"No," said Hazeldene. "Only—only if I could do anything for you, Smithy. I'm sorry it's come to this. Can I do anything?"

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"COOK OF THE WALK."

A Long Complete School Tale, by FRANK RICHARDS.

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ONE
PENNY.

The Bounder paused. He had not expected that.

"Well, that's decent of you!" he said at last. "You're not such an utter rotter as Loder, anyway. He was only thinking of his own skin. No, there's nothing you can do, Hazel old man. And you can rely on me to keep mum. About the tin you owe me, that's all right. I never expected it back, as a matter of fact; and I make you a present of it."

"You're awfully good, Smithy—"

"Oh, rats!"

Hazeldene left the study door, and Vernon-Smith threw himself into a chair. With his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a gloomy frown upon his brow, the Bounder of Greyfriars remained thinking—thinking, and cursing the stupidity which had led him into this scrape, from which there seemed to be, after all, no escape.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Raiders.

THE Remove went up to bed that night in a state of suppressed excitement. The Bounder went up with them; he had been released from his study at bedtime. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came to see lights out in the Remove dormitory, and he gave the Bounder a very peculiar look.

Vernon-Smith did not appear to see it. He did not seem to be disturbed. He had himself in good control now, and he allowed his features to express nothing. There was no doubt that the Bounder had "grit." Whatever happened to him, he had the courage to face it without flinching outwardly.

"It's really true?" asked Bulstrode, as he sat on the bed next to the Bounder's and kicked his boots off.

Vernon-Smith looked at him.

"What's really true?" he asked.

"That you're to be sacked in the morning."

The Bounder sneered.

"So the Head says."

"He means bizney, I suppose?" asked the captain of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"We shall see," he replied.

"Faith, and I think it's right enough!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, and you've passed the limit this time, Smithy darling! What did you expect?"

The Bounder did not reply. He was undressing himself calmly and sedately.

"The beggar has nerve!" Bob Cherry remarked to Harry Wharton. "Precious few fellows would be so cool with expulsion hanging over their heads."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes. He must have some hope still, Bob."

"Look here, Smithy," exclaimed Trevor curiously, "is there anything in it—in that yarn of yours, you know, that your father has influence enough to prevent your being sacked?"

"You'll see to-morrow."

"I don't see how he could," said Russell. "I suppose the Head doesn't owe him money, does he?"

"I don't know."

"And I suppose he hasn't committed any crime, that your governor could blackmail him for?" grinned Nugent.

"How do you know?"

"Why, you don't mean to say that he has?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"I don't mean to say anything," said Vernon-Smith.

And he turned into bed.

Billy Bunter rolled up to the Bounder's bed. The fat junior blinked eagerly at Vernon-Smith's sullen face through his big glasses.

"I say, Smithy," he whispered. "I—I say, you know, I've got something to say to you. I suppose, now you're going to get the order of the boot—"

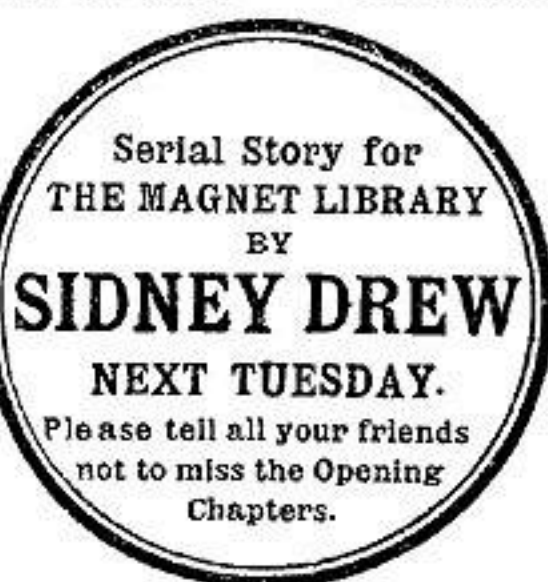
"Oh, shut up!"

"I—I mean, now you're going to be sacked, you know, I—I suppose you wouldn't mind doing me a little favour before you go?" said Bunter. "It would be a sort of pleasant recollection for you, you know. The fact is I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow afternoon—so it won't come till after you're gone. Do you think you could advance me a pound on it? I'd send you the money by post afterwards."

Biff!

The Bounder's arm swept out of his bed, with a pillow in the hand. The pillow caught Billy Bunter under the chin, and the Owl of the Remove was hurled over like a ninepin. He fell with a bump on the floor.

"Ow!" he roared. "Oh! Yah! Beast!"



NEXT WEEK!

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE."
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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat up and blinked dazedly at Vernon-Smith. The latter had settled down in bed again.

"Ow! Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, you rotters! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removees.

"Gerrooh! I'm hurt! I'm jolly glad that beast is going to be sacked! He's a disgrace to the school, anyway! Yow!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yow! I sha'n't shut up! The cad ought to have been kicked out long ago! Ow!"

Bob Cherry's finger and thumb closed upon Bunter's fat ear like a vice. The Owl of the Remove gave a wail of anguish.

"Y-o-o-o-o-o-o-ow!"

"Are you going to shut up?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly. Bunter blinked at him.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

And he did.

Wingate came in again and turned the lights out. The Remove were all in bed, but they showed no signs of going to sleep yet. As soon as the door had closed behind the captain of Greyfriars Bulstrode's voice was heard.

"There's one thing you fellows seem to have forgotten," he remarked.

"What's that?" Bob Cherry asked.

"We were going to raid the Upper Fourth dorm, to-night. Temple, Dabney & Co. are expecting us."

Harry Wharton whistled softly.

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten that!" he exclaimed. "This affair has put everything else out of my mind. The Fourth will say we've funked it if we don't go."

"Oh, let 'em say so!" said Nugent. "Leave it till to-morrow night."

"Just as you like. What do you fellows say?"

"Leave it over," said Bulstrode.

"Good!"

Under the circumstances the juniors felt that the pillow-fight would be out of place. No one cared specially for Vernon-Smith, certainly. But he was in low water just now, and most of the fellows felt that he ought to receive some consideration.

One by one the Remove dropped off to sleep.

But if the Remove decided to drop the intended pillow-fight for the night, the same thought was not in the minds of the Upper Fourth. Ten o'clock had struck from the clock-tower when there was a sound in the dormitory passage. The door of the Remove dormitory was cautiously opened.

Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth, looked cautiously in. Behind him were Dabney and Fry, and behind them a crowd of Fourth Form fellows. Most of them were armed with pillows and stuffed stockings, and they were evidently on the war-path. Temple grinned in the dusk as he looked into the dormitory.

"They're all asleep!" he murmured.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"The young asses have forgotten that there was a raid on to-night. As the mountain won't come to Mahomet, it's necessary for Mahomet to go to the mountain—eh?"

"Oh, rather!"

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled.

They filed silently into the sleeping-dormitory.

"Quiet, there!" said Temple, in subdued tones. "Get the door closed before we begin. We don't want to alarm the house and have any giddy prefects buzzing in."

"What-ho!" said Fry.

He closed the door softly when the last of the raiders was inside the dormitory. From the Remove beds came a sound of steady breathing; from Billy Bunter's a deep, musical snore.

"When I give the word——" began Temple.

He paused as he heard someone move.

The Bounder of Greyfriars sat up in bed. Vernon-Smith had not slept.

He blinked at the dim forms moving in the darkness of the dormitory.

"Look out!" he shouted suddenly.

There was a general gasp from the startled raiders.

"Oh, there's one beast awake!" exclaimed Scott. "Go for them!"

The Bounder sprang out of bed.

"Wake up!" he shouted. "It's the Fourth!"

In a moment the Remove were wide awake.

"Go for 'em!" yelled Temple.

"Oh, rather!"

And the Fourth-Formers rushed to the attack; and the Removees, as they tumbled hastily out of bed, were swept to right and left by swiping pillows and bolsters.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Cad!

"BUCK up, Remove!"

Harry Wharton shouted out the words as he sprang out of bed. The next moment he rolled over, with a bolster curling round his neck.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go for 'em!"

"Give 'em socks!"

The Remove tried to "buck up." But they really had no chance. They rolled over under the smiting pillows, and the Fourth-Formers yelled and laughed as they smote them.

It was a triumph for Temple, Dabney & Co.

Vernon-Smith had been swept over in the rush of the invaders, and he lay on the floor dazed, with several of the Fourth treading on him as they came on. He scrambled to his feet at last, red with rage.

The Removees, roughly handled as they were, took the thing like sportsmen, but there was nothing of the sportsman about Vernon-Smith.

He panted as he looked about him for some weapon. His eyes were gleaming with spite.

He had a bump on his head, and his brain was swimming from the swipe of the pillows.

There was a cricket-bat in the corner near his bed, and he ran to it and caught it up.

Fry caught sight of him, and gave a yell of warning.

"Look out, you fellows!"

Vernon-Smith rushed straight at them, hitting out with the bat. It was a reckless thing to do; but when Vernon-Smith's temper was roused he did not care how much he hurt anybody.

Temple gave a fearful yell as he received a crack from the bat, and he sat on the floor with a bump; and then Fry, dodging a savage swipe, fell over him.

"Look out!" shrieked Temple.

The Fourth-Formers scattered from before the Bounder. They did not care to face a weapon like that, wielded by reckless hands.

"Buck up, Remove!" shouted Bob Cherry. Bob had a bolster in his hands now, and was using it with great effect.

The sudden retreat of the Fourth-Formers gave the Remove a chance. They bucked up, and gathered together to face the enemy. Temple, Dabney & Co. were crowding towards the door, Temple holding his hand to his shoulder, where the bat had smitten him.

"Kick them out!" shouted Nugent.

"Hurrah! Give them socks!"

"Cads!" yelled Fry. "Play the game! Do you call it fair play to use a cricket-bat in a pillow fight?"

Wharton paused in his rush.

"Eh? Who's using a cricket-bat?"

"One of you, anyway," yelled Temple, red with anger. "I've had a whack from it, and it's nearly busted a bone, I think. Yah! Cads!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "Stop, you fellows! If any chap here is using a bat, I'll squash him."

"It's the Bounder!" shouted John Bull.

"My hat!"

"Stop him!"

The pillow fight ceased. Somebody had lighted a bicycle lantern, and the dormitory was dimly illumined. In the glimmer of light the Bounder could be seen with the bat in his hands, and a sullen scowl upon his face.

Harry Wharton gave him a savage look.

"Vernon-Smith! You cad! Do you mean to say that you've been using a bat in a pillow fight?" he exclaimed.

The Bounder gritted his teeth. He did not answer; but there was no need of an answer. The bat in his hands was evidence enough.

"I know I've had a whack from it," grunted Temple. "Look here!"

He pulled open the neck of his pyjama jacket, and showed the shoulder, already growing black with a big bruise.

Harry Wharton frowned darkly.

"The cowardly hound!" he exclaimed.

"If that's the way you chaps in the Remove are going to fight——" began Fry.

Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove, interrupted him.

"It's not," he said. "There's no chap here excepting Vernon-Smith who would do it. Even Snoop wouldn't."

"Look here——" began Snoop.

Bulstrode swung towards the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Put that bat down!" he exclaimed.

The Bounder glared at him, and his hands closed more tightly upon the cane handle of the bat.

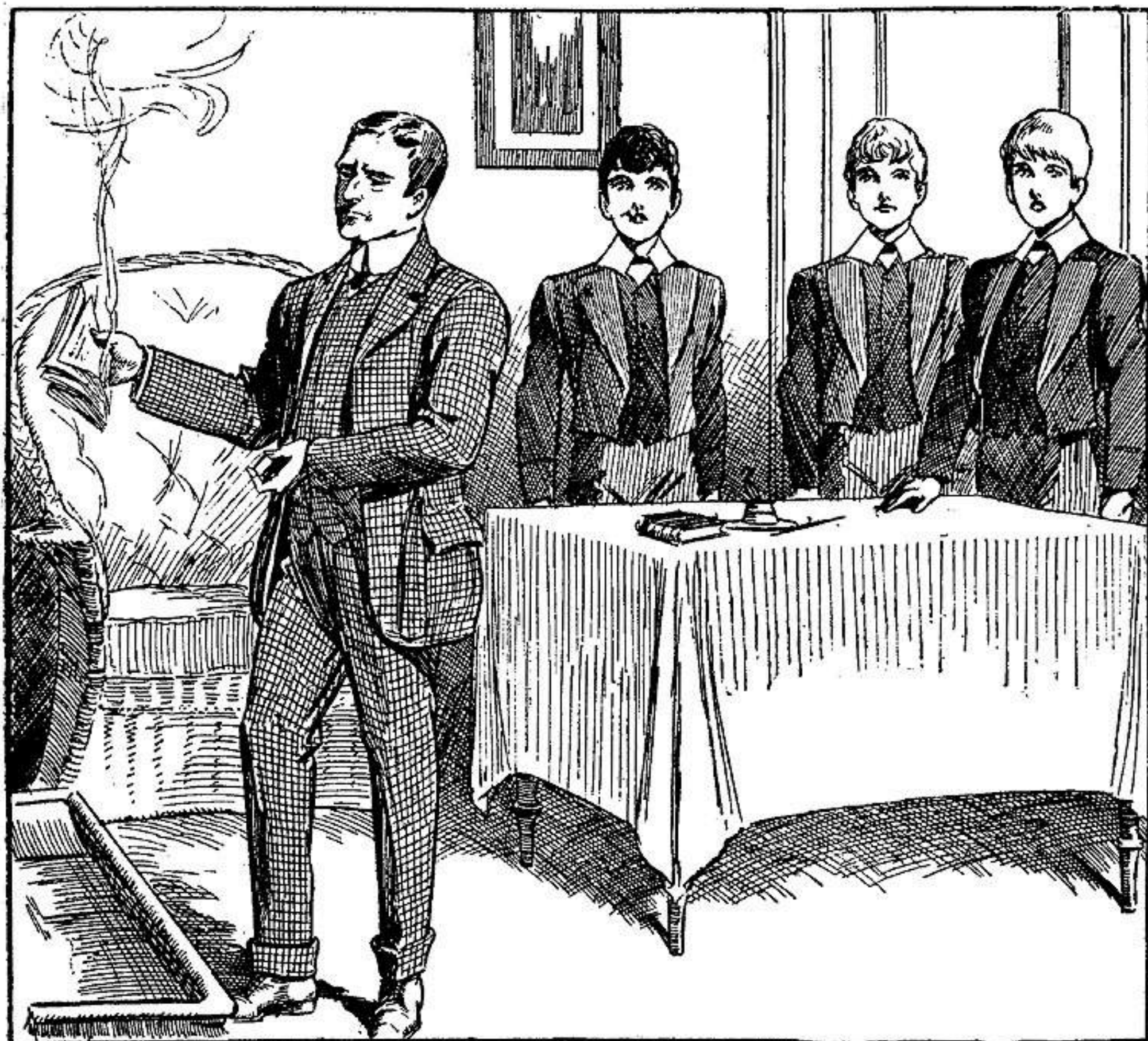
"Put it down. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

"Well, put it down."

"I won't!"

The juniors gathered round angrily. The pillow fight had



The papers burned close down to the millionaire's fingers, and then he tossed them into the grate, where they burned out. A little heap of ashes alone remained of the documents that had held the Head of Greyfriars in thrall.

stopped by common consent. The anger of the Remove was all directed against the Bounder now, and not against the raiders.

Several of the Removeites came quickly towards Vernon-Smith. The Bounder swung the cricket-bat into the air.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed menacingly.

And they stepped back, in spite of themselves. A cricket-bat can be a deadly weapon, and the Bounder looked as if he did not care what he did.

Bulstrode clenched his hands. As captain of the Remove, it was his place to take the lead, and he was ready to take it.

"You're going to put that bat down," he exclaimed.

"Rats!"

"And you're going to have a licking for using it, too," said the captain of the Remove. "Now, then, down with it!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Bulstrode wasted no more time in words. He rushed straight at the Bounder. Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered, and he swiped right at Bulstrode with the bat.

Whiz!

A pillow hurtled through the air, and caught the Bounder on the side of the head, and he reeled sideways, and the bat swept the empty air.

"Good shot, Franky!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Before the Bounder could recover himself, Bulstrode was upon him. The cricket-bat was wrenched from his hands, and Bulstrode's powerful grasp closed upon him.

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"COOK OF THE WALK."

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"Now, then, you cad!"

The Bounder struggled violently, but he had no chance against the burly Removeite.

"Got him!" said John Bull. "Now, I think he ought to be put through it, if only to show the Fourth that we don't approve of rotten tricks like that."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hear-fulness is terrific, as Hurree Singh used to say," grinned Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me go!" hissed the Bounder.

"I'll let you go," said Bulstrode, "but you're going to stand up to me and take a licking for your caddishness."

"Look here—"

"Put up your hands."

Vernon-Smith was encircled by a ring of juniors, and there was no escape for him. He had to put up his hands, and Bulstrode advanced upon him with his fists up. The Fourth-Formers were looking on. Temple made a sudden movement forward.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "So far as we're concerned, let the matter drop."

"Can't be did," said Bulstrode. "I'm going to make an example of him."

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, I think he deserves it, if anybody ever did," said Temple. "But he's going to be expelled in the morning."

NEXT WEEK!

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE."
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you know, and it's rather rotten licking him first, under the circumstances."

Bulstrode paused.

"Well, I'd forgotten that," he admitted.

"Let him go," said Temple. "He's leaving Greyfriars to-morrow, anyway."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

The Remove captain dropped his hands.

"You can get back to bed, Smith," he said. "You owe it to Temple, not to me, that you're not licked to the wide. If you weren't going to-morrow, I'd pulverise you."

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up, and get to bed."

And Vernon-Smith thought he had better. He turned sullenly into bed without another word.

"I think we'd better be off," said Temple. "I'm going to rub my shoulder with Elliman's. That chap's a dangerous beast, and he oughtn't to be allowed anywhere but in a reformatory, and that's too good for him. We've licked you, anyway."

"Rats!" replied the Removites, with one voice.

And the Fourth Form crowded out, satisfied that they had licked the Remove, and leaving the Remove satisfied that they hadn't.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance.

VERNON-SMITH had had a certain amount of sympathy in his downfall, but the latest exhibition of his caddishness had deprived him of that. When the Remove turned out on the following morning, no one took the trouble to address a remark to him. Even Billy Bunter did not speak to him, doubtless because he no longer had any hope that the Bounder would cash a postal-order in advance. The Remove were "fed up" with the blackguard of the Form. It seemed as if there would be no end of his caddishness, and they were glad that he was to go.

But there were no taunts. Bunter and a few others would have jeered him, but Harry Wharton soon put a stop to that.

The Remove simply wanted him to go; that was all. The Bounder understood it, and his heart was full of malice and chagrin.

He still hoped that the doctor would change his mind, that the fear of Vernon-Smith senior would overrule his decision.

But as the time fixed for the expulsion drew nearer, that hope faded more and more in the Bounder's breast.

He realised that the Head was in earnest.

After prayers, the boys had orders to assemble in Big Hall for the expulsion. Before the time came, however, the Bounder came to the door of the Head's study. Dr. Locke was alone there, and the Bounder came in without knocking.

The Head started and looked at him.

"Vernon-Smith, how dare you!"

The Bounder set his teeth.

"I want to speak to you, Dr. Locke," he said insolently.

"Leave my study at once!"

"Not till I've said what I came to say. You are going to expel me from Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"You've fully decided on that, sir?"

"Fully."

"You know that my father will take my side."

"It is a matter of indifference to me."

The Bounder sneered.

"If it's a matter of indifference, sir, I can't understand why I haven't been sacked before," he exclaimed. "I know that Mr. Quelch has complained about me, and it's common knowledge that you would have been glad to get rid of me."

The Head changed colour.

"That is no matter for boast, Vernon-Smith," he exclaimed.

"I'm not boasting, sir—I'm mentioning the fact. You'd have been glad to get rid of me before I'd been here a week."

"It is perfectly true. You are not the kind of boy any headmaster would wish to keep in his school, Smith."

"Then why didn't you do it, sir?"

The Head was silent.

"I take it that my father wouldn't have it," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "The pater has told me so himself. You couldn't do it."

"And believing that I could not expel you, Smith, you took the meanest and most ungenerous advantage of my position."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"It's everyone for himself in this world, sir," he said; "but I'm willing to admit that I've gone too far, and to promise that it sha'n't occur again."

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"It's too late, Smith. I cannot pardon you this last wicked

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freak. The reputation of the school would suffer too much, and I have to consider my duty as headmaster. I would rather send in my resignation to the governors of Greyfriars than allow you to remain in my school."

"You will have to deal with my pater, then, sir."

"I am prepared to do that. I trust your father will receive my explanation in a reasonable spirit. If not, I cannot help it. In any case, you shall not remain at Greyfriars."

"But—"

"Leave my study now, Smith."

"Very well, sir; but if I go—"

"Go, I tell you!"

The Bounder quitted the study, biting his lips. He had gone too far; as the juniors had been saying the day before, he had "done it" this time.

If the Head was prepared to lose his position at Greyfriars rather than allow him to remain in the school, all was over. His father, probably, could do no worse than deprive the Head of the position he had held for so many years with respect and honour.

"Oh!" muttered the Bounder. "Oh, I've been a fool—and it's too late now! But—but what a mad old duffer to risk so much just to sack me! The old duffer—the old duffer! He doesn't even seem to think of his wife and children."

At that thought a new idea came into Vernon-Smith's mind. He hurried out into the old Close, and crossed to the gate of the Head's private garden. He knew that the Head's elder daughter, Miss Rosie, was generally in the garden early in the morning, and Vernon-Smith wanted to see her.

As he looked over the gate he caught sight of the graceful form of the young girl. He could not open the gate as it was locked, but he climbed over it, and the noise he made caused Miss Rosie to turn her head.

She looked at the Bounder of Greyfriars in surprise. The expression upon her face showed that she had heard of the sentence passed upon him. The Bounder raised his cap as he came up the garden path.

"Excuse me, Miss Locke," he exclaimed. "I wanted to speak to you particularly."

"Juniors are not allowed in this garden," said Miss Rosie rather severely.

Vernon-Smith smiled sneeringly.

"Well, I sha'n't be a junior here in an hour's time if the programme is carried out," he exclaimed. "I'm going to be sacked."

"I had heard of it," said Miss Rosie quietly. "I am sorry."

"Sorry I'm going?" exclaimed the Bounder, in astonishment.

"Sorry you have deserved it, I mean."

The Bounder laughed mockingly.

"I'm not the only chap here who's deserved it, if I've deserved it at all," he exclaimed. "I've been found out, that's all. There are plenty of other fellows in the same boat, and I could give them away if I liked."

"I'm sorry for that, too."

"You have need to be sorry for someone else," said the Bounder. "That's why I've come here to speak to you."

Miss Rosie looked at him with wide eyes.

"I don't understand you," she said.

"Then I'll explain. I dare say you've heard about me—a good many people keep their tongues quite busy on my account," said the Bounder unpleasantly. "They call me the Bounder of Greyfriars. I'm the black sheep—the blackguard—the fellow who's held up as a bad example to all the nice, goodey boys. Haven't you ever wondered why the Head hasn't sacked me before?"

"My father is too kind-hearted. I suppose."

Another unpleasant laugh from the Bounder.

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"His kind heart isn't going to be given any show to-day, anyway," he said. "No, Miss Locke, it wasn't his kind heart. He dared not do it."

"You are speaking nonsense."

"Not at all, and I'll prove it," said the Bounder. "The Head couldn't sack me, because my father had a hold over him—exactly what it is I don't know, but he has it, and the Head has had to knuckle under."

Miss Rosie's lip curled.

"You don't believe me?" asked the Bounder.

"No, certainly not!"

"The Head has as good as admitted it to me, and my father told me it was the case in plain English."

"Nonsense!"

"That's why the Head hasn't sacked me before," said Vernon-Smith doggedly. "If you won't believe it, you won't, but it's true."

"If it were the case, my father could not expel you to-day any more than previously, I suppose?"

"He's made up his mind to risk everything. He told me he'd rather lose his post here than allow me to remain. I'm speaking to you, Miss Rosie, because I know you've got a great deal of influence over him. I believe you could make him do almost anything. Look here. If I go, he goes!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's true. If I am sacked, he gets the push—I mean, he'll be kicked out after me, and perhaps worse than that, too. If I stay, it's all serene. I suppose you don't want to leave Greyfriars—you don't want to have your father looking for a new appointment in his old age?"

"You had better go," said Miss Rosie quietly. "I cannot listen to this."

"Better hear me out," said the Bounder threateningly. "I tell you that unless the Head changes his mind this morning he is ruined—ruined more than I am by being expelled."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Rosie again.

"It's true. You can save him."

"I! How?"

"By persuading him to do the sensible thing," said the Bounder eagerly. "You could easily talk him over if you liked. Persuade him to give me one more chance. I'll be more careful in the future after this."

"More careful of your conduct or more careful not to be discovered?" asked the girl, with a scornful curl of the lip.

"That doesn't matter. I'll be more careful. But if I go your father is ruined—I give you my word about that."

"The word of the Bounder of Greyfriars?" asked Miss Rosie scornfully.

Vernon-Smith flushed.

"It's true," he said.

"I do not believe it. I do not believe for a single moment that your father has any hold over mine, or that my father would yield to him to the extent of neglecting his duty if he had. I believe you are telling untruths," said Miss Rosie, in exceedingly plain English. "Now kindly go away."

The Bounder drew a deep, hissing breath.

"Then you won't interfere?"

"No."

"You can save your father—"

"Please go."

"Oh, you are a fool—women are all fools!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "You will be sorry when the time comes to leave Greyfriars. You can ride the high horse now, but you will change your tune then."

The girl coloured with anger. She raised her hand, and pointed to the gate into the Close.

"If you do not go I shall call someone to remove you," she said.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms. He felt helpless and baffled under the young girl's scornful, clear eyes. He had no reply ready, and with a muttered word, which it was just as well that Miss Rosie did not hear, he turned and tramped back to the gate.

His last chance had failed him!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sacked!

THERE was a hush in Big Hall.

The whole school was assembled there—assembled for a scene that was, fortunately, rare at Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith was to be expelled in public—publicly "sacked" from the school he had brought disgrace upon.

It was an impressive scene.

The Forms were ranked in order, and the prefects walked up and down to keep them so, but it was not really needed. The boys were too excited and impressed to think of anything but the business that was coming.

Vernon-Smith was to be expelled!

It had come at last!

He had deserved it a score of times. He had risked it

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half as often. He had boasted that he could not be expelled—that the Head dared not send him away.

And this was the end of it!

He was to go!

The boys all looked at him curiously as he stood alone, prominent in the scene.

The Bounder stood erect, his head thrown back in defiance. Bad as he was to the very core, the Bounder was game to the last.

There were whispers in the ranks of the Remove, the Form that had the doubtful honour of claiming the Bounder as a member.

"He's got pluck, anyway," Frank Nugent murmured.

"Heaps of it," said Harry Wharton. "You can't help admiring the beggar in a way. But he is such an unspeakable rotter!"

"I guess he's got sand," said Fisher T. Fish, the American youth. "He can stand up to the rack and take his fodder like a little man—some!"

"Can't help feeling sorry for the poor beast," said Bob Cherry. "I've been through this, and I know what it's like."

Some of the Removites chuckled. Bob Cherry had been expelled on a false charge, and in the anger of righteous indignation he had refused to go, and had had to be carried out by force. It was very like Bob Cherry. But the Bounder did not cut the same figure. The Bounder had the consciousness that he fully deserved all that was meted out to him, and more. What troubled him was not that he could not get justice, but that he did get it.

The Head entered by the door at the upper end of the hall. His face was very quiet, pale, and composed. It was easy for the juniors to see, in spite of his composure, that this was an ordeal to him as well as to the boy who was to be expelled.

Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered as they fell upon the Head.

Perhaps he still entertained an elusive hope that his sentence was to be rescinded; that at the last moment the Head would allow him to stay. If so, it was soon destroyed.

The Head's deep voice rolled through the Hall.

He did not say much, but what he said was impressive. The boys listened in deep and silent respect, with the exception of Vernon-Smith. There was a sneer upon the lips of the Bounder.

"Boys, you all know why you have been called here! A boy—a junior belonging to the Lower Fourth Form, has disgraced himself, his Form, and his School, in a way that cannot be pardoned. He cannot remain at Greyfriars to be allowed to taint other boys with his own wickedness. He must go, and I hope that the lesson will impress itself upon his mind, and teach him to take greater care in his new surroundings, wherever they may be. Vernon-Smith, stand forward!"

The Bounder lounged forward.

There was an exaggerated and insolent carelessness in his manner that brought a gleam of anger to many eyes.

The Head did not appear to notice it.

His steady gaze was fastened upon the Bounder, a steady look that had the effect of quieting the insolent junior, in spite of himself.

Vernon-Smith shifted very uneasily under the Head's gaze, and finally allowed his own glance to fall.

"Vernon-Smith, you have been discovered in a state of semi-intoxication, in the public street, and brought back to the school by a policeman! This is the culminating disgrace of a disgraceful career. You have never done right since you came here. You have taken, apparently, a perverse pleasure in doing wrong. Vernon-Smith, you are expelled from this school!"

There was a murmur.

The Bounder raised his head, but he did not speak.

"For your conduct you deserve that a flogging should precede the expulsion," went on the Head. "But I omit that. It is sufficient that you do not disgrace Greyfriars with your presence any longer. You will leave Friardale by the ten o'clock train this morning. You may go."

The Bounder did not move.

Wingate of the Sixth touched him on the shoulder.

"Get out!" he murmured.

"One moment," said the Bounder. He turned to the Head.

"So I am to go, sir?"

"You have heard me say so."

"Very well. I shall return."

A loud murmur from the boys.

They were trembling with excitement now. What was the Bounder about to say? Were they to hear the secret at last? The colour wavered in the Head's face—what little colour there was.

"I shall come back, sir," said Vernon-Smith, in calm deliberate tones. "I am going now, but I shall come back, with my father. That's all, sir."

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"Quite enough, too, you young sweep," said Wingate, roughly, grasping the junior by the shoulder. "Get out before I sling you out."

"You can take your paws off me," said the Bounder insolently. "I'm going."

"Go at once."

The Head had turned away. The Bounder hesitated. A torrent of words came to his lips, but he had no chance to utter them.

The captain of Greyfriars grasped him hard, and swung him away towards the door. With a swing of his arm, he sent the Bounder spinning.

"Get out!" he said angrily.

Vernon-Smith reeled away, and righted himself with an effort. He looked back at Wingate savagely.

"I'll make you sorry for that!" he muttered.

The Greyfriars captain made a movement towards him, and the Bounder hurried towards the door.

The crowd watched him go, in silence. In the doorway the Bounder paused, and turned back, and looked into the crowded hall with a sneer upon his face.

"I shall come back!" he said.

Then he was gone!

The school broke up, the boys dispersing to their different Form-rooms. But for some time it is to be feared that very little attention was given to lessons.

The fellows were all discussing the expulsion of Vernon-Smith, and his threat that he would come back. Would he come back? The Bounder was so false that one could believe nothing that he said, but many of the fellows recalled that he never made a threat that he did not fulfil.

"He will come back," Ogilvy said.

And many others thought the same. There was a general movement of interest in the Remove class-room that morning, when a sound of wheels was heard in the Close.

Mr. Quelch's back being turned, one or two venturesome youths stood up, and looked out of the window.

They saw a trap driving away, with Vernon-Smith and his box in it. Vernon-Smith turned at the gates, and took a last look back at the school, and scowled. Then he disappeared.

The Bounder was gone!

But in many hearts there was a feeling, almost a conviction, that they would see him again; that Greyfriars had not yet done with the Bounder.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Something for Bunter.

N OBODY seemed to miss the Bounder!

He had entered very little into the life of the Form—he had entered little into the school sports. He had found friends outside the school, and if he had made any within the walls of Greyfriars, it was only because a fellow was bound to speak to somebody. He did not leave a vacant place that could not be filled.

Mr. Quelch was not sorry to lose a troublesome and careless pupil. The other fellows did not even notice that he was not in class. On the cricket-field he was not missed, for he had seldom been seen there. True, the Bounder could play cricket, and good cricket, when he chose. But he very seldom chose.

At the nets, in the gym., on the river—nowhere was he likely to be missed. No cosy study tea-table would miss him.

In a few hours' time, when the excitement of the expulsion had worn off, nobody seemed really to remember that there had been such a fellow as Herbert Vernon-Smith at the school at all.

There was one thing only that made fellows remember him—it was his threat that he would return! There was some curiosity on that point, and that was all.

If anyone felt emotion at all at his going, it was felt by Loder, and the emotion was relief, not regret. It certainly was a weight off the rascally prefect's mind to see the last of the junior who could have betrayed him if he had liked.

Loder looked out of the Sixth-Form window when the trap drove away, and he clapped Carne on the shoulder with much satisfaction.

"He's gone!" he said.

"Of course he's gone," said Carne. "Fellows do go when they're sacked, don't they?"

"But that yarn of his—"

"Oh, I knew that was rot all along. Didn't you?"

"No," said Loder, "I didn't! And I don't believe it's rot now. I only hope he won't come back, that's all."

"Oh, he won't come back."

"I hope not."

Loder looked much more cheerful that day, and some of the Remove, who had their eyes upon him, noticed it. They grinned over it among themselves. They knew the cause of the prefect's relief.

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READ the splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "THE SECRET OF THE SEA," in this week's GEM Library. Price 1d.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and the Remove were playing the Upper Fourth, and cricket soon banished from all minds any thought of the Bounder.

After dinner the juniors went down to the cricket ground. Billy Bunter rolled after the chums of the Remove, and twitched Harry Wharton by the sleeve. Wharton looked down at him impatiently. He could not stand Bunter. For a very long time Harry Wharton & Co. had been patient with him; but Bunter had reached the limit. After a long career of semi-dishonesty, he had been actually caught pilfering from a coat in the cricket pavilion. The fellows did not take it so seriously in Bunter's case as in the case of another. It was agreed that the fat junior was too stupid to realise fully what he was doing. But he was flogged by the Head, and very nearly expelled, and he was most unmercifully ragged and cut by the fellows. But Bunter was living that down, as he had lived down other things.

"Buzz off!" said Harry briefly. "Do keep your paws off me, Bunter."

"I—I—it's important," said Bunter breathlessly. A run of six yards made the Owl of the Remove breathless. "It's about the Bounder."

"Oh, hang the Bounder!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"What about him?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Didn't he cash that postal-order for you, after all—that postal-order that never comes off?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's worse than that! Of course, I suppose it's my own fault for having been of a kind and guileless nature."

"My hat!"

"Oh, really—"

"Kind and guileless!" roared Bob Cherry. "My solitary pink hat! Guileless—Bunter—Bunter—kind! Bunt, old man, why are you so steep?"

"Look here, you beast—"

"Guileless!" moaned Nugent. "Fancy Bunter in that role! Guileless! My word! Kind! My aunt! Kind and guileless! Oh, my only uncle!"

"Beast!"

"You shouldn't pile it on so thick, Bunt," said John Bull. "Why can't you draw it mild?"

"I guess it would want some swallowing, Bunter," said Fisher T. Fish, shaking a bony finger at the fat junior. "Give us straight goods, sonny."

"Look here!" roared Bunter. "I'll tell you how it is, you cackling rotters! Vernon-Smith has gone off—"

"Yes, we're coming!" called out Harry Wharton, in answer to a hail from the pitch. "We're being bothered by an idiot—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off, Bunter, old man! Shut up, you know!"

"Vernon-Smith has gone off, owing me money."

"What!" yelled the juniors.

They had to stop and stare at Bunter. They couldn't help it. They had never expected that, even from Ananias Junior.

"Owing you money!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Money!" said Nugent! Money owing you. Money! My hat!"

"Well, of all the whoppers—"

"Of all the lies!"

"I say, you fellows, it's quite right, you know," said Bunter. "It's owing to my guileless nature. You know how I trust people. Being so truthful myself—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Being so truthful myself, I naturally believe chaps. Vernon-Smith swore with tears in his eyes that he would pay up before he went, but he didn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter, a fellow going off and leaving me unpaid. He owes me about two pounds!"

"Pile it on!"

"Why don't you make it two hundred, Bunt?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was thinking that you fellows might be inclined to help me out under the circumstances," Bunter explained. "I'm short—"

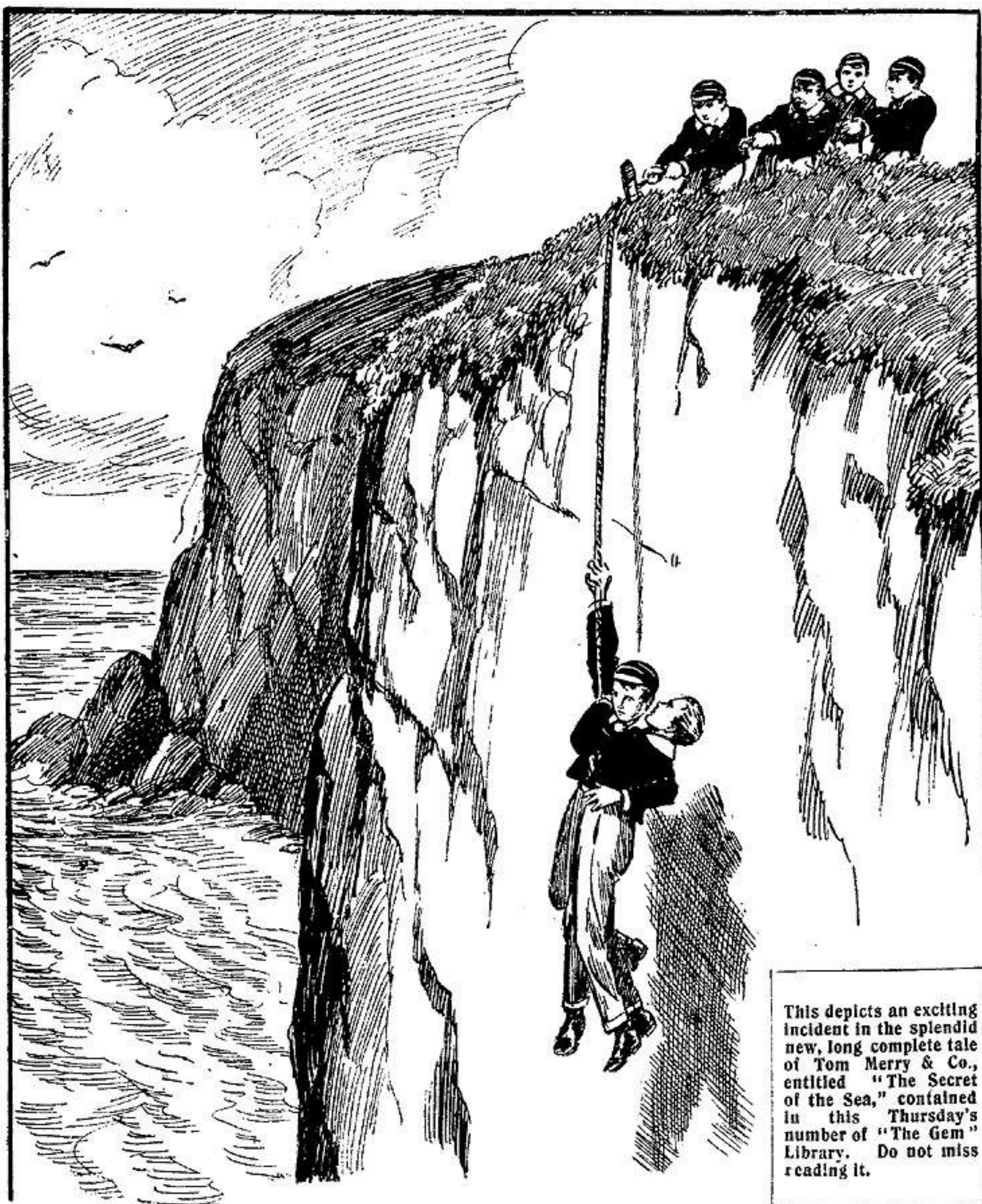
"And fat," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass! I'm short of money, and—"

"Of brains," suggested Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't cackle like that while I'm talking. I'm short of money, and I've some accounts to meet. Mrs. Mumble is very pressing over a little matter of sixteen shillings. She's a most unbusinesslike woman, and doesn't understand anything about a credit system. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, too, and I simply must raise the wind. Vernon-Smith's going off like this without paying me, leaves me in a hole. You fellows see how it is, don't you?"



This depicts an exciting incident in the splendid new, long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Secret of the Sea," contained in this Thursday's number of "The Gem" Library. Do not miss reading it.

"Yes," said Harry. "You never had two pounds to lend to Vernon-Smith, and he never needed to borrow money. And you wouldn't have lent it, in any case. We see exactly how it is, Bunter—you're lying, as usual."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"And you won't get anything out of me," said Wharton, "so you can ring off the whoppers and buzz."

"I say, you fellows, I'm putting it quite straight. I've been done, and I think you might lend me a few bob till I can get the money from Smithy."

"I'll lend you a thick ear if you don't leave off telling lies!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Do you think you'll

ever get us to believe that you've ever lent anybody anything, you fat bounder? You wouldn't lend your own brother a postage-stamp—not a used one, I know!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

The Removites had reached the cricket-field by this time. But Billy Bunter was not so easily disposed of. He jerked at Harry Wharton's sleeve again.

"I say, Wharton, you know, under the circumstances—"

"Let go!"

"I've been done, you know, owing to being kind-hearted

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and unsuspecting, and I think you fellows might stand me something!"

"We can't stand you at any price, Bunter."

"You might give me something to—"

"Now you're talking!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll give you something, as far as that goes. Lend a hand, you chaps!"

"Here, I say, leggo!"

But the juniors had already grasped the Owl of the Remove.

"You asked for it," grinned Bob Cherry, "now you're going to get it! Bump him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow—ow! Yaroo!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter's solid weight went down upon the ground with a solid bump. The fat junior roared and wriggled.

"Yaroo! Beasts! Ow!"

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We've given you something. Do you want any more?"

"Yow!"

"You can have another if you like."

"Yowp! Keep off! Yah!"

The juniors walked away laughing, leaving Billy Bunter sitting in the grass. He did not follow them any further. He blinked after them through his big spectacles, and growled—"Beasts!"—which did not trouble the chums of the Remove in the least.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Telegram for the Head.

"HALLO—hallo—hallo!"

It was the Remove innings, and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, both being out, had strolled off the cricket-field. As they sauntered across the green Close, on the shady side, they caught sight of the telegraph-boy from Friardale crossing to the School House.

"Telegram!" said Nugent.

"And Bob Cherry said 'Hallo—hallo—hallo!' in a very significant way. His chum looked at him inquiringly.

"Do you think it's for you?" he asked.

Bob shook his head.

"No, I don't."

"Then what are you excited about?"

"I think it's for the Head."

Frank Nugent started.

"Oh! From Smithy senior!"

"I think so."

"We'll ask the boy."

The two juniors intercepted the telegraph-lad before he reached the house. He stopped as they came up.

"Telegram?" asked Frank.

"Yes, sir."

"For whom?"

"Dr. Locke, sir."

"Oh! Take it, then."

The telegraph-lad went into the house, and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent exchanged glances. Bob's surmise had been correct—in one respect at least. The telegram was for the Head. Whether it was from Vernon-Smith's father, of course, the juniors could not tell; but they had a shrewd suspicion that it was.

"By Jove, I'd like to know what's in that wire!" Nugent exclaimed.

"Yes, rather! But it really isn't our bizney," Bob remarked, that reflection occurring to him rather late. "Let's buzz."

They passed near the Head's window, and they glanced up at it almost unconsciously. The Head was standing in his study, near the window, and they saw him quite plainly. The lattice stood wide open to let in the summer breeze.

Dr. Locke had the telegram in his hand, and he was standing in a fixed attitude, and his face was as pale as chalk.

The juniors dropped their eyes at once, and hurried on. Neither spoke till they were at a distance from the house.

"I—I wish we hadn't seen him," muttered Frank uneasily.

Bob Cherry nodded. He shared his chum's feeling.

"I wish we hadn't," he said. "He looked awfully cut up, and he had the telegram in his hand. It must have been from Smith pere."

"I should say so."

"Then there's something in what the Bounder said, and he may be coming back!"

"Worse luck for Greyfriars!"

"Yes, rather!"

The two juniors returned to the cricket-field in rather subdued spirits. Dr. Locke was very much liked and

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respected by all his boys, and the thought that he was under the thumb of a loud, hard man—business-like Vernon-Smith's father—was troublesome to the chums of the Remove. They did not believe, for a moment, that the Head could have done anything wrong to place himself in the man's power. But he might easily have done something careless or ill-judged, which might have placed him legally in the hands of the millionaire. The circumstances the juniors could not imagine, but something of the sort was quite possible. They knew very well that Dr. Locke was a mere child in business matters, and that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, helped him very considerably in the management of the school, so far as the business part of the matter was concerned.

"The poor old chap would be a mere baby in dealing with a man like old Smithy," said Frank Nugent miserably. "He might have got into some stocks and shares dealings with a man like that, and of course, if he did he would be skinned all along the line. Men like old Smith ought to be kept chained up."

"They jolly well ought!" Bob Cherry agreed. "I know lots of trouble can come of signing your name on a bit of paper, and the Head would do a thing like that. Why, a kid in the Third Form can take him in."

"I know jolly well he hasn't done anything shady, to give that cad a hold over him, anyway!" Nugent said.

"I'm jolly sure of that, Franky!"

The two juniors could not help thinking about what they had seen, and it was like a cloud over them. To help the Doctor was, of course, out of the question. He would certainly have been angry if he had known that they knew anything or thought anything about the matter at all.

Had they seen the Doctor further, they would have felt more concerned about the matter still, for the Doctor had had a heavy blow.

He had opened the telegram carelessly enough, to see if it required a reply, while Trotter waited. The page stood waiting while the Head read the message; and even Trotter could not help seeing the effect it had upon the Head.

The message was brief.

"Dr. Locke, Greyfriars College.—I am bringing my son back. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH."

That was all.

But it was certainly very much to the point.

"No reply, Trotter," said the Head, in a stifled voice.

"Yes, sir," said Trotter.

He went out and closed the door. The Head stood by the open window, the telegram grasped in his hand, his face white, his eyes wide and staring.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was bringing his son back!

That was his answer to the "sack" for Vernon-Smith.

He had determined to flout the Head's authority in his own school, in the most open and callous way; he was bringing his son back, before the eyes of all Greyfriars, to be reinstated!

That was what it meant.

The Head groaned.

The telegram fluttered from his hand to the floor, and he sank into his chair. His elbows dropped upon his desk, his face fell into his hands.

"Oh, what am I to do?"

The words were muttered through his fingers. He did not hear a tap at the door; he did not hear the door open; he did not see a startled face look in.

"Father!"

Miss Rosie ran in quickly. The Head started up. He raised his face from his hands—his face, white, worn, almost haggard.

"Rosie, dear! I—"

"I knocked," said Rosie. "Oh, father! I looked in to see if you were here! Tea is ready! Father, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, dear—I—I mean, nothing that you would understand," said the Head, fondly smoothing the girl's soft, brown hair. "It is really nothing."

Miss Rosie's eye fell upon the telegram on the floor. She could not help catching its meaning. It lay face upwards almost under her eyes.

"Father!"

The Head's glance followed hers. His face flushed.

"Well, it's true, Rosie."

"That man has a hold over you, father, as the boy said!"

"He said? Who said?"

"Vernon-Smith. He told me so in the garden this morning, father, and asked me to intercede for him—to save you."

"The young scoundrel! I did not know this."

"I refused to listen to him. Father, is it true, then?"

The Head looked her steadily in the eyes.
"There is something in it, Rosie. But you know your father well enough to know that there is no stain upon him—that it is nothing of that sort."

The girl clung round his neck.

"I know—I know, father dear! But—but what then?"

"That man can ruin me if he likes," said the Head, in a low voice. "Rosie, he can do it—and he will! Unless—"

"Unless what, papa?"

"Unless I take his son back into Greyfriars."

"And you cannot do that father."

"How can I?" groaned the Head. "If there were some chance of the boy repenting, of his trying to be more decent, then I could. But a more hardened and unrepentant young blackguard I never saw! I cannot allow such a boy to stay at the school."

Miss Rosie nodded.

"You are quite right, father."

"But—but it means you will have to know soon, Rosie dear, if it happens, so I may as well tell you—it means ruin!"

"Let it!" said the girl quietly. "You have done no wrong; but you cannot act against your conscience now from fear of what Mr. Vernon-Smith may do. Let him do his worst!"

"My dear girl! I know you would say so!" whispered the Head.

And a new and stronger look came into the kind, irresolute old face. At that moment, at least, the Head was strong to do his duty.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Well, if you don't want to hear the news—"

"We're fed up with your news!" said Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a dig in the ribs with his cricket-bat. "Buzz!"

"Ow!"

The cricketers were coming off the field in the sunset, ready for tea. Bunter met them as they came off with a most important expression on his face.

The fat junior was really bursting with news, but Bunter never could get anybody to listen to his news. That was because he frequently invented it, and even when he told the truth, nobody believed him. And it happened that he sometimes did tell the truth; the most unexpected things happen at times, as Nugent remarked on the subject.

"Look here," said Bunter, rolling after the juniors. "You can listen or not, as you like, but it's jolly interesting. I think the Remove ought to turn up."

"Turn up what—trumps?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! I think we ought to turn up at the gates in a crowd when they come and give them a howl."

"Well, if you want to give them a howl, you can give 'em the song you gave us at the last Form concert," said Bob Cherry. "I never heard an awfuller howl than that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I sincerely think that we ought to turn up and let the rotters know what we think of them."

"What rotters?"

"Those blessed Smiths!"

"Eh?" said Smith minor, of the Remove, catching Bunter by the collar and shaking him. "Eh? Who's a rotter—eh?"

"Ow! Yow! Don't shake me like that—ow!—or you'll make my glasses fall off yow!—and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them! Yaroo!"

"Who's a rotter?" demanded Smith minor.

"Yow! I didn't say Smith—I didn't mean Smith! I mean—I was speaking of the Vernon-Smiths! Yow!"

"Oh!" said Smith minor, releasing Bunter. "You should make yourself a little more clear, then."

"Croo!" Bunter rubbed the back of his neck. "As it was a mistake on your part, Billy Smith, I'll let you off, as you didn't mean to hurt me—"

"But I did," said Smith minor.

"Ahem! I was speaking of the Vernon-Smiths," said Bunter hurriedly. "They're coming."

"So's Christmas!" said Morgan.

"I mean, they're coming this afternoon."

"Rats!"

"They are—it's true! Old Smith—ahem!—I mean, old Vernon-Smith is bringing young Smith—I mean young Vernon-Smith back."

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you it's true!" howled Bunter, exasperated, as most untruthful persons are, by having the truth doubted when he did state it. "They're coming!"

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"COCK OF THE WALK."

A Long Complete School Tale, by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT

EVERY
TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE
PENNY.

"How do you know?" asked Harry Wharton suspiciously. "The Head had a telegram this afternoon."

"Well, that much is true," said Bob Cherry. "I saw the boy bringing in the telegram. But the Head has had telegrams before, without the Smith family arriving afterwards."

"Yes, but the telegram was from old Smith—I mean Vernon-Smith."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I know it was."

"Even if it was, it might only have been a receipt," said Nugent, with a grin. "Old Smith, as you so elegantly call him, would naturally acknowledge the arrival of his precious son."

"But it wasn't that. He said he was coming back."

"You couldn't possibly know," said Harry.

"I guess the guy is talking out of his hat," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter snorted.

"I've seen the telegram."

"The Head showed it to you, I suppose?" said Bulstrode, with a grin.

"Well, not exactly," stammered Bunter. "I—I happened to see the Head leave his study with Miss Rosie, you see—she came to fetch him in to tea. I thought the telegram might be left in there—"

"Well, you cad—"

"I—I looked in, and there it was on the floor. Of course, I read it quite by accident. I'm not the chap to read a man's correspondence, I hope. But I happened—"

"Oh, cheese that!"

"I happened to read it, and it said that Vernon-Smith's governor was bringing him back this afternoon."

The chums of the Remove walked on in silence. They thought it very probable indeed, but their disgust with Bunter for the way he had gained the information knew no bounds. The curious thing was that Bunter seemed quite unaware that he had done anything especially mean.

"I say, you fellows, it's a fact—honour bright," said Bunter.

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"A lot you know about honour bright, you spying cad," he said. "Get away, or I shall thump you!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The thumpfulness will be terrific, as Inky used to say, if you don't buzz off!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, clenching his hand.

And Bunter "buzzed" off.

But his news caused a great deal of excitement in the Remove. It really seemed as if Vernon-Smith intended to carry out his threat that he was coming back to Greyfriars.

He was coming back, and his father was coming with him—Samuel Vernon-Smith, the cotton king and millionaire, the man who was supposed to have a hold over the Head of Greyfriars—he was coming with his hopeful son.

If he came, surely it would only be for one reason—to put a turn on the screw, and force the Head to receive back his son into the school.

"It looks rotten!" Nugent remarked.

"I don't know," said Harry thoughtfully. "He might be simply coming to remonstrate with the Head, and to beg of him, as a favour, to give the Bounder another chance."

"Quite possible," said John Bull.

Bob Cherry was silent. He remembered the look on the Head's face as he held the telegram in his hand by the study window, and he did not agree with Wharton's theory. Mr. Vernon-Smith was coming as an enemy, not as a suppliant—Bob Cherry felt sure of that.

All the fellows agreed to rag Bunter for his news, and the fat junior was shoved and snapped at till he wished he had never set his round little eyes upon the telegram in the Head's study. But, at the same time, his suggestion was acted upon. Now that the fellows did know, they were keen to see the Vernon-Smiths as soon as they arrived, and a crowd began to gather at the school gates.

Harry Wharton & Co. were there, and a score more fellows. Bulstrode came down and joined them. The Remove captain had a rug on his arm and a bag in his hand. He was leaving Greyfriars for a few days for a change of air.

Bulstrode had been very much off colour for the past week or two. The fate of his younger brother hung very heavily upon his mind. He had been away once, and had returned, but somehow he did not seem to be able to fall into the old ways at once, and the Head had willingly acceded to a request of Bulstrode's uncle that the lad should go and spend a few days with him at the seaside.

Bulstrode stopped and touched Wharton on the shoulder at the gate.

"Hallo! Off?" asked Harry.

WEEK!

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE."
A Wonderful New Serial Story, by SIDNEY DREW.

"Yes. But I want to speak to you before I go. It's about Smith."

"Go ahead!"

"It looks to me as if the Head's going to be done, and the rotter's coming back," said Bulstrode. "I think that if he's brought back against the Head's wish, the Remove ought to be made too hot to hold him. If he won't go at the Head's wish, he ought to be made to go at his own."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I agree with you," he said. "We'll rag him bald-headed if he shoves himself back into the Remove against the Head's desire—if we know it. But, of course, if the Head chooses to let him come back—"

"He's not likely to do that."

"No, I suppose not."

"If I were still here, I'd see that the rotter was made glad to go," said Bulstrode, with a frown. "But I shall be away, and I leave it to you chaps. I don't claim to be a specially high-faluting chap, but I think it's only decent to stand by the Head."

"Quite right! And we'll see to it."

"Good!" said Bulstrode. "Good-bye!"

He shook hands with Wharton and went up the road. There was a hoot and a whirr from a big motor-car as it came whirling from the direction of the village. Bulstrode stood aside in a cloud of dust to let it pass.

The motor rushed up to the gates of Greyfriars. There it slackened down as it turned in at the gates.

Behind the chauffeur two well-known forms were seated, and the juniors uttered a general exclamation as they saw them:

"Vernon-Smith!"

"And his pater!"

"They've come!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Back Again!

"THEY'VE COME!"

The word ran through Greyfriars at once.

The Vernon-Smiths had arrived!

Mr. Vernon-Smith sat very upright in his gorgeous car—the car that had cost him fifteen hundred guineas. The millionaire's square, fat face was stern and lowering under the gleaming silk hat. His son sat by his side, his face twisted into a mocking, sneering smile.

Vernon-Smith was back again!

And it was easy to see by his look as he sat in the car that he expected triumph, and that he was enjoying it in anticipation.

From the juniors rose a shout:

"The Bounder!"

"He's come back!"

"Rotter!"

"Get out!"

"No cads wanted here!"

"Outside!"

Vernon-Smith looked round at the angry, jeering crowd of juniors with the same mocking smile on his lips.

The more they did not want him to come back, the more he enjoyed his power of forcing himself upon them.

He caught Harry Wharton's eye, and called out to him:

"I'm here again, you see!"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Yes, I see," he replied—

"I see! But if you force yourself here, Vernon-Smith, where you're not wanted, you'll be sorry!"

"We shall see!"

The car glided on to the School House, up the drive. Bob Cherry waved his hand to the excited crowd.

"Give 'em a Remove yell!" he shouted.

And from fifty throats it burst:

"Yah!"

Vernon-Smith laughed aloud. The Remove yell did not scare him, and the general dislike and anger only amused him. His father was frowning darkly, but Herbert Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Yah!" yelled the Remove.

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The car stopped.

Mr. Vernon-Smith and his son alighted, and strode into the house. The juniors gathered in a crowd round the car. Some of them followed the two visitors into the house. Dr. Locke looked out of his study window in time to see father and son leaving the car, and his face went a shade paler.

The juniors caught sight of him at the window.

"There's the Head!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Give him a cheer!" said John Bull. "Let him know that we back him up, anyway!"

"Good egg!"

Whether the backing up from the Lower Fourth was likely to please the Head, or to do him any good, in any case, the juniors did not stop to think. They felt like cheering the Head, and they cheered him.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The Head looked astonished at first, and then he smiled. He understood that the Remove wished to convey that they approved of the expulsion of Vernon-Smith; and although he probably thought it was like their "cheek," as they would have expressed it themselves, he was pleased. He little guessed how much they knew; it did not even occur to him that Vernon-Smith had boasted of his supposed power in the Form-room.

But at that moment, when he felt so much against him, it was very pleasant to the Head to feel that he was liked, that he was popular—even the approval of junior school-boys was something to a man who was about to face disaster and downfall. If he had to go, there were some who would miss him, and remember him with kindness, at all events; he would not fall unmourned.

He turned from his window, as there came a knock at his door. Trotter was showing in his visitors. Mr. Vernon-Smith strode into the room with aggressiveness oozing out, as it were, at every pore of his skin. Vernon-Smith followed him, with the same unpleasant smile upon his sallow face.

Trotter went out quietly and closed the door. Dr. Locke was left with his visitors. He bowed to Mr. Vernon-Smith, without extending his hand. The millionaire did not even return his bow.

He came to business at once. His voice was loud and threatening from the start. Mr. Vernon-Smith was a hard-fisted man of business, and he had often found it pay to carry matters through with a loud voice and a high hand. And when he was dealing with a quiet, scholarly man, easily flurried, Mr. Vernon-Smith was more than ever inclined to sound the loud timbrel, as it were.

Anyone studying Mr. Vernon-Smith's square and florid face would have said that the millionaire was not without good qualities—that he could be good-natured, and even generous, when he was rubbed down the right way. But in a business deal Mr. Vernon-Smith was as hard as iron.

"You had my telegram, Dr. Locke?"

That was the visitor's first remark, fired off like a shell.

Dr. Locke bowed again.

"Well, you expected me, then?" said the millionaire grimly.

"Yes. Pray take a seat!"

"Thank you; I prefer to stand! I have come here to talk business, Dr. Locke!"

"Very well."

"You have expelled my son from your school!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith, his voice rising into a higher key with anger and indignation.

It always made Mr. Vernon-Smith indignant if anything was done that displeased him. To the mighty millionaire it really seemed as if mere common mortals must bow down and worship at his golden feet.

The Head bowed again.

"You must take him back, sir!"

"I cannot take him back!"

"You must!"

Dr. Locke did not reply. His face was pale, but set hard, and there was a gleam in his eyes that was seldom there.

It dawned upon the blustering millionaire that in this quiet, scholarly man, slight as he looked, there was a power

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The Remove rolled over under the smiting pillows, and the Fourth Formers yelled and laughed as they smote them. (See page 6.)

of resistance that many a more powerfully-built man might have envied. There was a courage—the courage of a high sense of honour—in the Head of Greyfriars that most of Mr. Vernon-Smith's City acquaintances would have marvelled at, if they could have understood it.

"You have expelled him!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, a little more quietly. "What was your reason for so doing?"

"I explained it all in my letter to you. I presume that your son delivered the letter entrusted to his hands?"

"He did!"

"Then you have my explanation. Your son has been guilty of disgraceful conduct ever since he has been at this school," said the Head. "I have borne too much from him. I have accused myself of injustice, because I have shut my eyes to what I should have expelled any other boy for. I have hoped that he would reform, but he has never shown any sign of that. The cup is full now; he cannot stay at the school he is disgracing!"

"What has he done?"

"Smoked, drunk, and gambled! And he has been flogged for those offences," said the Head. "But the flogging was of no use, and I could not expel him. Now at last he passes the furthest limit—he was found in a state of semi-intoxication, helpless to get home, and was brought here by a policeman."

"Boys will be boys!"

"I have no objection to boys being boys!" said the Head drily. "What I object to is their being brutes and black-

guards, and I cannot allow it at Greyfriars! I have to consider my duty to the other boys and their parents."

"Come, come!" said the millionaire, more placably. "I dare say Herbert has been a little reckless—"

"He has been an utter, incurable, unmitigated blackguard from the first day he came to the school!" said the Head steadily.

Mr. Vernon-Smith made an impatient gesture. That flattering description of his son did not seem to move him at all. Perhaps he knew what to expect of the Bounder.

"Look here, sir," said the millionaire, "boys will be reckless, especially when they have rich fathers. I dare say Herbert is no worse than a good many other boys in this very school."

"If I discovered any other boy of the same sort, I should expel him instantly, without giving him the chances I have given your son!"

"When Herbert came here, I asked you to make some exception in his favour—"

"I have done more than was consistent with my duty, sir! I can do no more!"

"I cannot have him expelled from school," said the millionaire abruptly. "Man, I could buy up this school—lock, stock, and barrel—and never miss the money!"

The Head smiled faintly.

"Possibly, if Greyfriars were for sale, which, fortunately, it is not!" he replied. "It is not a question of money in any way."

"Say the word, and I am willing to pay double—treble fees!"

The Head made a gesture.

"Five hundred pounds a year with the boy would not induce me to take him back. It is not as if he had shown any sign of reform. He has been incorrigible from the beginning!"

"He is willing to promise to be more careful——"

"Do you mean that he is sorry for his misconduct?"

"Well, yes."

"Does he look sorry?" asked the Head, raising his hand and pointing to the son of the millionaire.

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced at his son, and caught the insolent, impertinent grin on his face, and coughed a little. Certainly, Herbert would have struck no one at that moment as looking repentant.

"Ahem!" said the millionaire. "At all events, he will be more careful! Come, Dr. Locke, look at this as a matter of business!"

"I am looking at it as a matter of honour!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith looked quite tired. It was evident that he was quite unaccustomed to men who looked at matters in that way.

"Let us be serious!" he said. "I want my son educated at this school. I know he is a little wild, and that is why I have chosen Greyfriars—because you are headmaster! I should have preferred to send him to Eton or Winchester, but at Eton and Winchester he——"

"He would have been expelled in his first week!" said the Head bitterly.

"Naturally, I expected some consideration at your hands, when you are receiving so much at mine!" said the millionaire tartly. "You cannot expect things all your own way—in this world, I believe, a man never expects to get something for nothing—at all events, I never expect it myself. I have allowed a certain matter to stand over—you have put up with a few little escapades on the part of my son! It's fair to both—a fair business deal!"

"I have my duty to the other boys to consider. That boy's presence in the school is a contamination!"

"There is no need to be offensive!" said the millionaire, frowning.

"I am speaking the bare truth! He has carefully avoided the better boys—those whose society might have improved him—and he has chummed with the worst, and made them worse! He has formed low acquaintances outside the school—he has broken bounds at night to visit them!"

"My dear sir, in my schooldays I have done the same——"

The Head's lip curled.

"I am sorry to hear it!" he said. "At all events, though I do not presume to judge your conduct, sir, I cannot allow such proceedings at Greyfriars!"

"Whether you allow them or not, they will go on all the same, as they do at all public schools!" said the millionaire sharply. "All you can do is to come down heavy on those who are found out."

"That, at all events, I can do!"

"I hoped to find you in a more reasonable humour," said the millionaire, menace creeping into his voice again. "I say that if it is a question of money, you can make any demand you like."

"Money does not enter into the question at all!"

"I cannot have my son sent forth with a stain on his name, at the beginning of his career!" said the millionaire abruptly. "That must be rectified, Dr. Locke!"

"I am sorry!"

"Very well, take him back into the school——"

"Impossible!"

The millionaire's hand clenched hard, and a steely glitter came into the eyes, deep-set under his rough brows.

"Not impossible," he said. "Possible—and it must be done!"

The Head's glance met his bravely.

"Impossible!" he repeated. "And it cannot be done!"

And then there was a pause.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Between Duty and Disgrace.

DR. LOCKE stood silent and very erect.

Mr. Vernon-Smith seemed at a loss for a moment or two. Something of the triumphant grin faded from the face of the Bounder. Some slight doubt was creeping into his mind as to whether even his father would be able to overcome the Head's resolution.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's face was growing from red to purple with anger. He was unaccustomed to opposition. In the City the word of Samuel Vernon-Smith was law; and to be defied by a schoolmaster was a little too much for him. If he had had no hold upon the Head of Greyfriars he would have been bitterly mortified and exasperated. But he had a

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hold—an irresistible power in his hands, by which he could humble and crush this quiet, pale, steady man into the dust if he chose. How dared the man defy him! The millionaire was amazed and angry.

"Very well!" he broke out at last. "It is impossible—is it?"

"Quite impossible!"

"Understand this—if my son goes, you go!"

Dr. Locke bowed his head.

"I am prepared for that," he said.

"You—you are prepared?"

"Yes."

Again the millionaire seemed confounded. The man who had everything to lose was defying him—and without bluster—with only that quiet and steady fortitude which the loud-voiced millionaire did not understand.

"Listen to me!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, in concentrated tones of anger. "You know that you are in my power! I can call upon you at any moment to pay me five thousand pounds."

The Bounder started a little. He was learning something now; and he listened with all his ears. He had not been in his father's confidence on this subject before.

"I know it," said the Head.

"Can you pay it?"

"No."

"Can you pay even a tenth part of it?"

"No."

"Then if I make my demand——"

"I am ruined."

"You are ruined!" repeated the millionaire, with satisfaction. "Exactly so! You are under my thumb, sir—however much you may wriggle, you are under my thumb, to be crushed into the dust whenever I choose to put the pressure on."

"You need not dwell upon it," said the Head of Greyfriars, with quiet bitterness. "I understand my position only too well."

"And you—in that position—venture to defy me—me?"

"I venture to do my duty, regardless of the consequences."

"Oh, don't talk stuff to me!" said the millionaire roughly. "I think you must be mad—simply mad!"

The Head did not reply.

"I hold your bill, bearing your signature," said the millionaire tersely. "I can call upon you at any moment to pay five thousand pounds—even more than that, with the further accumulation of interest. You are not in a position to pay your just debts——"

The Doctor raised his hand.

"Don't call it a just debt," he said. "That is a mockery. It is not a just debt—it is the extortionate claim of a wicked, unscrupulous moneylender."

Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled ironically.

"You have to pay what you agreed to pay when you contracted the loan, I suppose?" he said.

The Head suppressed a groan.

"I know it! But when I went to the Confidential Loan Agency, I did not know that that was merely a cloak for Samuel Vernon-Smith—that the man who was called the Cotton King was in reality chief of a firm of moneylenders, and that he would swindle me in an unscrupulous and indefensible manner!"

"Swindle!" said the millionaire threateningly.

"Yes, swindle!" said the Head. "You cannot frighten me by raising your voice, sir. I am at your mercy; but you cannot silence my tongue. You have swindled me. When my little girl was stolen from me I spent all I had in searching for her—searching in vain. The expenses still ran on; they increased; I could not meet them, and I contracted a loan. That loan I could have repaid on fair terms—terms such as I imagined I was getting. I was in a good position—my salary was liberal—I required ready money; but I intended to apportion a certain part of my salary to pay off the loan. But I did not know the wiles of the moneylending fraternity then."

The millionaire smiled grimly.

"You are wiser now," he remarked.

"Yes," said the Head. "I am wiser now. My little girl was not found; though, thanks to Providence, she has since been restored to me. I was one thousand pounds in debt; and that was the amount your firm lent me. I know I have paid it back twice over—and with it twice the interest you

ANSWERS

led me to suppose I should be expected to pay. And now I owe you a huge sum still."

"Exactly!"

"You have bled me dry. I have been unable to save and pay you off, for you have taken all I had. I am still in your debt, and you can ruin me when you choose. But do not call it a just debt. My just debt has been paid twice over, and the just interest has been paid ten times over."

"You knew what you were signing, I suppose?"

"No, I did not; I am not accustomed to your business ways," said the Head, with a smile of bitterness. "I have the misfortune to be a gentleman. I knew there were conditions—I read your papers—but they were worded too cunningly for a mere scholar. I found too late that if the interest was not paid promptly the whole amount became due at once; and you purposely led me to believe the interest could be paid in at my convenience. I have since discovered that it is a common trick with your people. I was careless perhaps—that was all—but you—"

The Head paused.

"Well?" said the millionaire mockingly. "And I?"

"I need not say anything on that subject. You probably know my opinion of your conduct; but, in any case, recriminations are useless."

"Quite so! When a man of your age signs a document he is supposed to know what it contains and what it binds him to."

"Very few of the moneylenders' victims know as much, I believe."

"That is their look-out," said the millionaire callously. "I have not piled up three million pounds by looking after other people, sir."

"I quite believe you."

"To come to business. You can call it a just debt or an unjust debt, it comes to the same thing as far as the law is concerned. I hold you in the hollow of my hand," said the millionaire, stretching out a fat hand in illustration.

"I know it."

"If you dispute the claim of the Confidential Loan Agency, the courts are open to you—"

"You know that my action would be useless, and that merely bringing it, and making the matter public, would be ruin to a man in my position."

The millionaire smiled.

"I know it perfectly well; and so I am the more amazed at your absurd audacity in defying a man who can crush you like a worm."

"I have said all that I have to say; there is nothing more to be said," replied Dr. Locke, crossing to his desk. "You can do as you please. Whatever the law allows you to do you may do. I ask nothing at your hands."

The millionaire clenched his hand.

"I will crush you," he said. "You will do as I demand, or you will fall—and never rise again! I will claim what is due—the claim will be enforced. You will be driven from Greyfriars; your wife and family will be driven from their roof. Are you mad enough to face that?"

The Head sank into his chair. It seemed as if his resolution was breaking up.

Mr. Vernon-Smith saw his advantage, and he pursued it.

"You will lose your position here; and, under such circumstances, you cannot hope to gain another! Even a low-paid tutorship will be beyond your reach. You will be reduced to living on your relations—if they will support you. Your daughters will have to go out from their home to earn their bread. You have nothing. You cannot meet a quarter of my claim. Yet you refuse to do a simple thing."

"I cannot do it."

"You can—and you must!"

"I will not!"

The millionaire's face was growing purple again. He strode towards the Head of Greyfriars, his eyes gleaming with anger.

"You must—and you shall!"

"Leave my study!" said the Head. "I will not be spoken to in this manner so long as I am master here—and I am master, for the present at least!"

The millionaire gritted his teeth.

"You will not be master here for long!" he said savagely. "You understand? You take my son back—you reinstate him at Greyfriars—or I will ruin you—I will drive you and your family into the streets—to beggary!"

"Enough!" said the Head faintly. "I know what to expect; but you cannot alter my resolution."

The millionaire laughed angrily.

"We shall see! I will give you time to think it over—I will give you an hour."

"I do not need it—"

"I will give you an hour," repeated the millionaire, unheeding. "I will take a run in the car for that length of time, and when I return I shall want to know your final decision. If you defy me, I return to London, I take my son

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with me, and my lawyers begin their work to-morrow morning. Take care!"

And the millionaire strode from the room, followed by his son.

Dr. Locke fell back, pale and panting, in his chair.

Ruin lay before him—utter ruin—unless he complied with the demand of the millionaire. Small wonder that the unhappy man felt doubt and hesitation creep into his heart after all his firmness in the presence of his tyrant.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Danger.

BOB CHERRY was standing in the doorway of the School House as the millionaire and his son came out. The black anger in Mr. Vernon-Smith's face was proof enough that he had not had his way, and the insolent smile on the Bounder's face was less marked.

Bob Cherry called out to the juniors outside:

"Here they come!"

"Give 'em a groan!" said Frank Nugent.

And the juniors gave the Vernon-Smiths a most emphatic groan as they stepped into the waiting car.

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced round him angrily. The Bounder's sneer intensified.

"They're going!" exclaimed Ogilvy, as father and son sat in the cushioned seat.

"Good!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good riddance!"

The Bounder cast a glance of defiance round at the crowd.

"I'm coming back!" he said.

"You've said that before," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Drive on," said the millionaire roughly to the chauffeur.

The car glided to the gates. A crowd of fellows followed it as far, hooting. They did not feel any delicacy about letting the Vernon-Smiths know Greyfriars opinion of them.

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Bounder!"

"Good riddance!"

"Yah!"

Vernon-Smith ground his teeth. His father gave him a sharp look, as the car glided up the road in the gathering dusk of evening.

"You don't seem to be very popular here, Herbert!" he exclaimed.

The Bounder looked sullen.

"They're all against me now, of course," he said. "There were a jolly good many ready enough to spend my money, and smoke my cigarettes, before I was sacked. I'll go back, if only to spite the rotters."

The millionaire nodded.

"That's the right spirit, my boy. Never give in. Whenever you're hit, hit back harder. People learn to leave you alone."

"That's what I'll do," grinned the Bounder. "And we'll make Dr. Locke eat dirt, between us, pater."

"Yes. But look here, don't go too far again," said his father. "If we get over this, the Head may get his back up another time, and a new Head to Greyfriars would spoil the whole thing. I want you to have your fling, Herbert, my boy, but remember that a fellow who is expelled from school has a stain upon his name that it's difficult to live down. For one thing, nobody would ever really know what you were expelled for, and kind friends would be always willing to put the worst possible construction upon it. Bear that in mind, and don't run this risk a second time."

The boy nodded impatiently.

"It's all right, dad. I shall be more careful after this, you may be sure. The question now is, whether I get back to Greyfriars at all, not what I do when I get there."

"You will get back, or he will suffer," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "But it will be all right—it must be all right. He will never be such a fool, when I can break him between my finger and thumb if I choose."

And the millionaire snapped his fingers.

Bob Cherry looked after the disappearing car of the millionaire, and turned back to his companions with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Blessed if I make that out," he said.

"What can't you make out, Bob?"

"They're not gone."

"Not gone! They've vanished, anyway," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess they've vamoosed the ranch, sonny!"

"They've gone in the direction of Courtfield, not to

Friardale," said Bob quietly. "They are not gone back to London."

"Quite true," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "And if they were going to London, they'd go straight back, I should think, as it's a jolly long way, and it's getting dark already."

"Then they're not gone for good," said John Bull.

"That's it."

"May be going to put up at Courtfield," Frank Nugent suggested. "You might see something of them, Bob, as you're going down to Courtfield to see Solly Lazarus."

Bob Cherry nodded.

The juniors returned into the Close, discussing the matter. Whether the Vernon-Smiths were gone for good or not was a question of the deepest interest to them. Upon that depended whether the Head had won or lost in his conflict with the millionaire.

The look of Samuel Vernon-Smith, as he departed in his car, was that of an angry man, but not of a defeated man; the juniors could not help noticing that.

And the Bounder did not look as if he were beating a final retreat.

As a matter of fact, the Bounder was more doubtful on the subject than his father was. Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith might snap his fingers, but if the Head were obstinate, the boy had to leave Greyfriars. And if his father ruined the Head afterwards, that would not help him in any way, or open the doors of any other public school to him.

"It will be all right, Herbert!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith, noticing the shadow on his son's face as they whizzed through the dusky lanes. "It's all right, my boy. I tell you the man will give in when he feels the turn of the screw."

"Oh, I dare say," said the Bounder. "Anyway, we shall see in an hour's time. Where are we going now?"

"To Courtfield. We can get some dinner there," said the millionaire. "There is one decent hotel."

"Good!"

The car stopped outside the Courtfield Arms. The millionaire was received with great respect by the fat, chubby landlord. Quite a respectable dinner was laid out before Mr. Vernon-Smith, and he ordered champagne, of which Herbert partook as well as his father. Mr. Vernon-Smith did not deny his son these little luxuries. The Bounder grew more confident and easy in his mind under the influence of the potent wine.

His tongue was loosened, and he talked freely, and his father chuckled over more than one story of blackguardly escapades at Greyfriars, of card parties after lights out, and excursions out of bounds to the races. The millionaire seemed to regard these little adventures as extremely creditable to his son. Certainly they showed keenness and fertility of resource, and as for higher qualities, it appeared that the Cotton King attached very little importance to them.

The millionaire looked at his watch at last.

"Time for us to be getting back, Herbert," he said. "We've been over an hour, as a matter of fact."

"Let him wait," said the Bounder.

The millionaire laughed.

"Certainly! Let him wait, by all means; but I have to get back to London to-night. Come down to the car."

The Bounder walked a little unsteadily as he went out of the hotel. His father placed him in the car, and they glided away into the darkness of the country lanes towards Greyfriars.

"Quicker!" the millionaire signalled to the chauffeur. "I'm in a hurry," he added. "Make her rip!"

"Good!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "The road's clear enough here. Let her rip."

The big car tore along. As a matter of fact, while the millionaire and his son were drinking champagne above stairs, the chauffeur had been following their example with whisky-and-water below, and he was a little dizzy. He obeyed the millionaire's order to the full, and the car simply flew. There was a sudden shout from Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he caught sight of a light gleaming in the middle of the road.

"Stop, you idiot!"

But it was too late to stop! There was a level crossing ahead of the car, and the gates were closed on the road for a train to pass through.

The light, gleaming through the dusk, and the signal further back, should have warned the chauffeur if he had been coming on at a more cautious speed; but he had rounded a bend at top speed, and the light of the level crossing had appeared too suddenly to be of any use as a warning.

The car rushed madly on.

The chauffeur made a mad leap into the hedge, and went rolling over into a dry ditch, and the next instant the car struck the gates, and crashed through them.

Crash, crash, crash!

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THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Nick of Time

"LOOK!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Poor old chap!"

"It's rotten!" said John Bull.

The Head of Greyfriars was walking in the Close. His eyes were bent upon the ground, and he did not see the juniors.

He was buried deep in thought.

And the expression of his face showed that his thoughts were gloomy enough. There was a deep wrinkle between his eyes, and his forehead was darkly lined.

"Poor old chap!"

"Looks like a man who's got it in the neck," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose, after all, he has had to knuckle under, and the Smith beast is coming back."

"It can't be; he wouldn't do it."

"Looks like it to me."

"Don't let him see us watching him," said Harry Wharton hastily. "He doesn't know we know a word about it. What a ripping simple old chap he is."

"Yes, rather."

"I guess he ain't much use in a tussle with a guy like old Vernon-Smith," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "He's bound to get frozen out, and left every time."

"I'd rather be in his shoes than in the millionaire's, all the same."

"Oh, I guess so."

The hour rang out from the clock-tower, and Bob Cherry turned towards the house.

"It's time I got over to Courtfield," he said. "I shall catch Lazarus at home, after he leaves the printer's office."

And Bob Cherry nodded to the other fellows, and went down to the gates. He walked quickly through the dusky lane in the direction of Courtfield. Bob had a pass from Wingate to go down to Courtfield to see Solly Lazarus, of Courtfield County Council School. Lazarus was secretary of the Courtfield cricket-club, and Bob had to see him about a forthcoming match. The junior looked out for the Vernon-Smith motor-car as he went, wondering whether the millionaire was still in the neighbourhood, or whether he had taken another route to London.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The blessed gates are closed!" Bob Cherry exclaimed, as he came in sight of the level crossing.

A light gleamed in the middle of the road.

From the dusky distance over the trees came the sound of an echoing whistle, announcing the approach of a train.

Bob Cherry reached the gates, and stopped.

As he did so, looking across the level crossing, two great eyes of light came whizzing out of the blackness beyond.

The junior gave a jump.

A big car was tearing right upon the closed gates from the direction of Courtfield, and even as Bob Cherry opened his mouth to shout, the crash came!

Crash!

Crash!

"Good heavens!"

Bob Cherry uttered a cry of horror.

The wooden gate was smashed in by the shock, and the car came reeling drunkenly on the lines, and collapsed there.

There was a cry from the smashed car.

Two forms hurtled out of it, and sprawled on the railway lines, and lay there, dazed or stunned.

"Look out!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Look out! The train's coming."

He leaped upon the lines.

In the distance the whistle sounded again.

The signal was down, and the green light was showing, and the engine-driver had been too far off to hear the crash on the gates, and it was too dark for him to have seen anything.

He was obeying the signal, and coming right on. Already the whirr of the train could be heard.

Bob Cherry stood paralysed with horror for a moment.

The broken car was blocking the line. The Vernon-Smiths, father and son, were stretched there, helpless to move. In half a minute would happen a horrible tragedy.

Bob's mind worked rapidly.

He sprang towards the signal, and climbed upwards with frantic speed.

Crash—crash!

The glass was broken, and the light showed white instead of green. Bob Cherry dragged off his red muffler and stretched it before the light.

The light gleamed out red through the night.

It was the work of seconds, but it seemed like centuries to Bob Cherry as he clung there, wondering with quaking heart whether the engine-driver would see the change of the light in time—whether he would understand it.

The whistle again—loud and raucous.

Whirr—whirr—whirr!

Clank!

The train was slackening.

The engine-driver understood—he was cramming on his brakes—but yet would he be in time? The train was terribly close.

Bob Cherry clung on, and felt his heart beating like a hammer. Had he been in time to save the wrecked motorist on the line?

His heart thumped and thumped.

Whirr!

Clatter!

Clank-ank-ank!

The train clattered and clanked to a standstill.

Within six feet of the wrecked car the engine stopped at last. There was a shout on the line—a buzz of voices.

Bob Cherry looked down.

The train was at a standstill. The engine-driver and the fireman had jumped down; several passengers were out on the line. The signalman was dashing up from his box.

Bob Cherry's head swam.

It was over, and for a moment he almost fainted, but the necessity of keeping his hold held him together, and he clung on.

Slowly and cautiously he began to descend.

The signalman clapped him on the shoulder as he reached the ground. The man's face was as white as chalk.

"Heaven bless you, lad!" he exclaimed. "You have saved their lives!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet.

The stout man had not been hurt by his fall, but he was terribly shaken, and his nerves were in rags.

"What—what—what," he stammered—"what is it? Oh! That rascally chauffeur! He was drunk! I'll discharge him! Good heavens! Herbert!"

Vernon-Smith sat up and groaned.

The millionaire staggered towards him. There was no doubt that Samuel Vernon-Smith, hard-fisted man as he was, had a very real regard for his worthless son.

"Herbert! Are you hurt?"

The Bounder groaned again.

There was blood upon his face from a cut in his forehead, but otherwise, except for a shaking, he was not hurt.

He rose, with his father's assistance, reeling drunkenly.

"Herbert, my lad—"

"I'm all right," muttered the Bounder; "only knocked up a bit. I'm all right. How are you, pater?"

"All serene!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith gazed round dazedly at the train, the broken gates, the smashed car, the engine-driver, and the gathering crowd of passengers.

"What—what—I—I heard the train coming," he stammered. "How—how did you see us in time to stop, driver?"

The engine-driver pointed to Bob Cherry.

"That lad did it," he said.

Mr. Vernon-Smith looked at the Greyfriars junior.

"You stopped the train?" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"I've seen you before, my lad."

"I belong to Greyfriars."

"It's Bob Cherry of the Remove," muttered the Bounder.

"But—but how did he stop the train? I don't understand."

"I climbed up and changed the light," said Bob. "It was nothing, only I happened to think of it. I had a red muffler on, luckily—that was all."

"By Christopher," said Mr. Vernon-Smith—"by Christopher, you are a sharp lad to think of such a thing, and to do it! You've saved our lives. We should have been cut to pieces, both of us."

The Bounder shuddered.

He had plenty of nerve as a rule, but his narrow escape from death had shaken him utterly.

"Good heavens!" he muttered.

The signalman had gone back to his box to telegraph along the line. The chauffeur reappeared, and with the engine-driver and the fireman began to drag the wrecked car from the line to allow the train to pass.

Mr. Vernon-Smith stepped from the railway-track. He dropped his hand upon Bob Cherry's shoulder.

"Bob Cherry—that's your name, I think—"

"Yes," said Bob drily.

"You've saved my life."

"I know I have."

"And my son's, too."

"Yes."

The millionaire looked at him sharply.

"You don't seem specially pleased at having done it, my lad," he exclaimed. "What is the matter with you? You ought to be very proud of yourself."

Bob Cherry gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"I suppose I ought," he said.

"You've saved two lives."

"Yes."

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ONE
PENNY.

"And a service to a man like me, lad, means something," said the millionaire impressively.

"Does it?"

"I'm a man who can reward a service," said the millionaire. "You've saved my life and my son's life. Name your own reward."

Bob Cherry was silent.

The millionaire looked at him, and clapped him on the shoulder again. There was a heartiness in Mr. Vernon-Smith's manner now which was strangely in contrast with his usual hard-fisted cynicism.

"I mean what I say, lad," he exclaimed. "Samuel Vernon-Smith, the Cotton King, is a man of his word. Name your own reward."

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Solly Lazarus Gives Some Good Advice.

BOB CHERRY looked at the millionaire, and his lip curled a little.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was a man who lived, thought, and dreamt in money, and he did not imagine that his offer of a reward could come offensively to the lad who had saved his life.

Bob Cherry had done him a service—the greatest service that could have been done—and the millionaire wanted to show his gratitude, and his thoughts all ran on one line—money.

"Why don't you speak, Cherry?"

Bob grinned.

"I haven't anything to say, sir. I don't want any reward."

"Nonsense!"

"It's the fact, sir."

"Nonsense!" repeated the millionaire roughly. "You have done me a service, and I'm not the man to let it pass unacknowledged. It would weigh on my mind if I did. I prefer to be quits."

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't take anything from you. I don't want anything. To tell the truth, sir," said Bob Cherry, with the candour that belonged to his nature. "I shouldn't care to take anything from you, anyhow, at any time."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith sharply. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, after you've treated our headmaster as you have," said Bob Cherry. "You've been rotten mean, and so has the Bounder, and the less I have to say to either of you the better I shall like it."

"That is a matter you have nothing to do with, my lad."

"I know that, but I feel on the matter, all the same, although I have nothing to do with it. Good-evening, sir!"

"Stop a minute!"

Bob Cherry paused.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to square this account," said the millionaire. "I don't want to remain under an unpaid obligation to anybody."

Bob laughed.

"I'm afraid it can't be helped in this case, sir," he said.

"The only way you can get out of my debt is by getting under the train when it starts again, and I suppose you don't want to do that."

"No," said the millionaire, with a slight smile, "I don't. I want to reward you for what you have done."

"I don't want a reward."

"If I insist—"

"That won't make any difference."

The millionaire paused. He was evidently taken aback, and regarded Bob Cherry as something quite new in his experience.

"Very well," he exclaimed at last. "But remember what I have said, my lad. I owe you a debt, and I want to pay it. Come to me as soon as you like, or at any time, and ask me for a reward, and you shall have it."

"I'm not likely to do it, sir."

"If you do you will get it, that is all."

"Very well, sir," said Bob Cherry. "Good-evening!"

And the junior picked his way across the level crossing, and walked on to Courtfield. The millionaire and his son, after seeing the damaged car taken from the line, and leaving instructions with the chauffeur, walked towards Greyfriars, the Bounder limping rather painfully.

Bob Cherry strode on to Courtfield with his long strides. He was late now for his appointment with Solly Lazarus, and he hurried on his way. Solly lived in a small house on the outskirts of Courtfield, near the County Council school which he attended. It was after school hours that Solly did his work in the printer's office. Bob found the Courtfield lad at home, and Solly greeted him with a cheerful grin.

"You're late," he said, as he showed Bob into his little room.

Bob sat down, breathing hard.

"I've hurried," he said. "There's been an accident—motor-car bashed into a level crossing."

Solly nodded.

"I saw a car leave Courtfield at top speed a little while ago," he remarked. "I dare say it was the same car. It had one of your fellows in it—the chap you call the Bounder."

"That's it," said Bob Cherry.

"Anybody hurt?"

"No, luckily; the train was stopped in time."

Bob Cherry explained what had happened, and Solly Lazarus listened curiously, his black eyes gleaming as he listened. Solly was a curious lad. Lad as he was, he was old in keen knowledge of business, and he had the clearest head in Courtfield School. There was endless rivalry between Greyfriars and the County Council School fellows; when they were not meeting in cricket matches, they frequently met in fistical encounters, and it was generally Solly who devised plans for discomfiting the Greyfriars juniors.

Solly was a lad with many gifts. He was keen and deep, and he was also a good cricketer and footballer, and a first-class boxer. The Greyfriars fellows found him their most dangerous opponent, and yet they all liked him, all the same. There was something one could not help liking about Solly Lazarus.

"Has the Bounder gone, then?" Solly asked.

"What do you know about that?"

Solly laughed.

"I heard from one of your fellows that he was to be expelled to-day, dear boy."

"Yes, he went, but his father's brought him back again; and from the direction they were going in, I suppose they're going to Greyfriars now," Bob remarked. "They'll have to walk, anyway."

Solly's eyes glimmered.

"I've heard Vernon-Smith speaking about that," he said thoughtfully. "I've heard him thwanking that the Head couldn't expel him if he liked."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"So you've heard that, too, have you?" he said. "The cad might have had the decency to keep his jaw on the subject inside Greyfriars. But it was just like the Bounder; he'd tell the whole county."

"Lookth as if there's thumthing in it, dear boy, if his pater's brought him back," Lazarus suggested.

"Yes," said Bob.

"It's rather rough on your headmaster to have to take him back if he dothn't want to," lisped Solly.

"It's rotten!" Then Bob Cherry burst out. He explained to the listening lad all that had happened at Greyfriars that day. It was a relief to Bob Cherry to talk about it, and "slang" the Vernon-Smiths, father and son.

Solly Lazarus grinned as he listened. Bob Cherry certainly had a fine flow of language when he once started.

"My only Uncle Tham!" exclaimed Solly, when Bob paused for breath. "I don't think I should care to be the Bounder, and come back, if you all feel like that about it, you know."

Bob gritted his teeth.

"We'll give him a jolly warm time if he does come back, that's all," he said.

"It will make the Head look an awful ath to have the fellow forced back on him," said Solly thoughtfully. "Your Head is a dethent old boy, too. I have thpoken to him theveral times, and I like the old chap very much. He must be under the thumb of the Bounder's pater."

"He is, that's plain enough," said Bob Cherry gloomily. "I suppose it's money. I know the Head's never done anything wrong, but old Smithy has a hold of some sort over him. There are rumours that old Smithy is mixed up in a money-lending business, and it may be something of that sort. I don't know."

"Thuppose he could be persuaded to let the Head off?"

Bob Cherry snorted.

"Might as well try and persuade a cat to let a mouse go, I think," he said.

"But you have thaved his life."

"I know I have, and I'm half sorry for it, too," said Bob Cherry. "If the cads had been run over, they couldn't have bothered the Head any more."

"And you thay Mr. Thmith offered you a reward?"

Another snort from Bob Cherry.

"Yes," he said. "That was like him—he wanted to cram some of his beastly money on me. Of course, I wouldn't touch it. He said I could have any reward I liked. Pah!"

Solly grinned.

"Hold him to it," he said.

"What?"

"Make him keep his word."

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"You ass! I don't want any of his rotten money."

"I wasn't thinking of his money, dear boy."

"What then?"

"His hold over Dr. Locke."

"What?"

"Thuppose," said Solly cautiously—"thuppose you tell him that on conthideration you will accept his promise—you will name your own reward."

"But I won't. I—"

"Wait a minute! And the reward you want is—"

"Well?"

"That he shall give up his hold on Dr. Locke."

Bob Cherry jumped.

The thought had never entered his mind, but now that the keen-witted Jewish lad suggested it, Bob wondered that he had never thought of it. Vernon-Smith senior might be over-bearing, hard-fisted, blatant, but he was a man of his word. Bob Cherry felt that instinctively. He had meant all that he said as he stood by the level crossing, and if Bob Cherry named his reward—

Bob almost gasped at the idea.

"My hat! Solly, you bounder, you ought to be a giddy lawyer! My hat! Thanks, old man; I'll try it, anyway. It can't do any harm. How did you come to think of it?"

The Hebrew lad chuckled.

"I thought of it at onth, dear boy," he said. "If you like my advice—"

Bob Cherry clapped him on the back till he yelled.

"Like it?" shouted Bob. "It's first chop!"

"Ow!"

"It's worth six-and-eight, or six pounds eight, it's worth a guinea a box!" exclaimed Bob Cherry jubilantly. "I believe old Smithy will play the game—he'll keep his word. If he does, it's all serene for the Head. Hurrah!"

Bob was snatching up his cap.

"I—I say, Solly, will you lend me your jigger, and will you let our business stand over till to-morrow? I must buzz off. I want to get back to Greyfriars before old Smithy goes."

"With pleasure, dear boy!" purred Solly Lazarus.

In three minutes Bob Cherry was mounted upon Solly Lazarus's bicycle, and whizzing away towards Greyfriars as fast as he could whiz.

Bob Cherry had scorched before, but he had never scorched as he scorched now. Every second was precious. He was going to Greyfriars to save the Head.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Surrender!

M R. VERNON-SMITH and his son arrived at the gates of the school, and the millionaire rang the bell. Gosling let them in, and he stared at them in considerable surprise. They had departed in a fifteen hundred guinea motor-car; they came back on foot, looking torn and dusty and limping.

"I 'ope nothing as 'appened, sir," said Gosling.

Mr. Vernon-Smith sniffed.

"My car has been wrecked," he said. "I shall want some conveyance to go to the station, after I have seen Dr. Locke. See to it."

He dropped a half-sovereign into the school porter's hand.

"Yes, sir," said Gosling; "yes, sir! Suttingly, sir! Wot I says is this 'ere, sir; I'll do anything, sir, and wot I says is—"

But the millionaire did not wait to hear what Gosling had to say. He walked on to the School House with his son.

"I say, you fellows," sang out Billy Bunter at the door of the common-room, "they're coming back!"

And the juniors crowded out to see them come in.

Mr. Vernon-Smith walked in with his head erect, the Bounder with his nose in the air, and his eyes gleaming defiance at the black looks of the juniors.

"Where's the giddy motor-car?" exclaimed John Bull, looking out of the doorway. "Have they come back on foot?"

"Looks like an accident," said Harry Wharton. "The Bounder had a cut on his forehead, and dust all over his clothes."

"I guess there's been a smash-up, some," observed Fisher T. Fish. "The old file had his coat cut, and his trousers were muddy. It will be all the worse for the Head; he looks very edgewise."

The millionaire and his son had been shown into Dr. Locke's study.

The Head of Greyfriars was there.

Dr. Locke was alone, sitting at his desk, with a pen and papers before him; but he was not working. The sheets on his desk related to the edition of *Æschylus* which the good old doctor was preparing, and which was to astonish the scholastic world some day, if it was ever finished. But

even into that darling work the Head could not put his thoughts now. The sword of Damocles was hanging over him; at a word from the millionaire it would fall.

He looked up wearily as the millionaire entered. Vernon-Smith followed his father in, with an insolent grin upon his face.

Dr. Locke pushed his papers away.

"Well?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Well?" said the Head dully.

The millionaire glanced at his watch.

"I gave you an hour to think the matter out," he said.

"It is an hour and a half now. I have been delayed on the road by an accident; my car has been smashed up. You have had time to think, sir?"

The doctor nodded.

"Yes," he said quietly.

"I hope you have come to a sensible decision."

"I hope so," said the Head.

"You are going to take my son back?"

"No."

The millionaire started.

"No?" he repeated.

"That is what I said."

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

The grin faded from Vernon-Smith's face. A dark, savage look came over the hard features of the millionaire.

"You have determined to defy me, then?" he exclaimed.

"You are as helplessly in my power as a snail under a wheel, and you mean to defy what I can do?"

The doctor nodded again, without speaking. His voice seemed to have failed him. He had the courage to do what was right, but the kind old face was pale and haggard, and his lips were trembling. But he did not retreat.

"I can sell you up," said the millionaire slowly, enunciating every word clearly, as if it were a bullet at an enemy. "I can sell you up, lock, stock, and barrel. I can drive you and your family out into the streets. I can make your name known as that of a defaulting debtor. You will suffer such disgrace as you can never hope to recover from."

The Head groaned.

"I know it."

"And you will brave all that rather than gratify me in this matter?"

"Rather than do what I know to be wrong—rather than submit to be dictated to in my own school," said the Head.

"I have some feeling, I have some pride, and I have some sense of duty. I do not expect you to understand."

"Oh, you are mad!" said the millionaire contemptuously.

"I suppose I must seem so to you; but I am resolved."

The millionaire set his teeth.

"Then look out for trouble," he said. "I will disgrace and ruin you; you are a lost man. Take care, that is all!"

"I suppose," said the Head, in a low voice—"I—I suppose it is useless to make an appeal to you—to tell you that I have a wife—that I have two young girls to provide for—that it will benefit you nothing to ruin them and me?"

The millionaire laughed harshly.

"I am thinking of my son," he said. "Let him return to Greyfriars, and all will be well. Drive him away, and take the consequences."

"He cannot return."

"Then ask for nothing at my hands—nothing but what the law will give you," said the millionaire. "We are finished here! Come, Herbert."

There was a hurried knock at the study door, and it was flung open.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Names his Reward.

"LOOK out!"

"What is it?"

"Bob Cherry—off his rocker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It really looked as if Bob Cherry was, as Frank Nugent elegantly expressed it, off his "rocker."

He came up the drive on Solly Lazarus's bicycle at a tearing speed, and stopped outside the School House, and jumped off, letting the machine clang away against the steps.

Up the steps came Bob at a rush, his face red and wildly excited.

"Look out!"

"Stop him!"

Harry Wharton and John Bull crossed their arms before Bob, and brought him to a sudden halt in the passage.

"Hold on, Bob!"

"What's the row?"

Bob Cherry gasped.

"Let me go!"

"But what—"

"I'm in a hurry!"

"Well, you look in a hurry," agreed Wharton. "But what's the hurry about, and where are you going? What's happened?"

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ONE
PENNY.

Bob Cherry grasped him by the arm, compressing his grip with unconscious force as he gasped out a question.

"Smith—old Smithy!"

"What about him?"

"Is he here?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the Head's study."

"Good! He's not gone yet, then?"

"Not yet. But—"

"Let me go—quick!"

"But where are you going?" demanded John Bull.

"Head's study!" jerked out Bob.

"You can't rush in there like a runaway locomotive!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Pull yourself together, you ass! What's happened?"

"Come on!" gasped Bob. "I've got to catch the Smith bouncer before he goes!"

"What for?"

"You'll see. Come on."

Bob rushed on to the Head's study, dragging Harry and John Bull with him. They arrived at the Head's door together, and Bob knocked, and rushed in, the two juniors still clinging to him.

Vernon-Smith, father and son, looked round in surprise. The doctor started to his feet. All eyes were fixed upon the wildly-excited face of Bob Cherry.

"Cherry! What does this mean?" began the Head.

Bob gasped for breath.

"Please excuse me, sir. I—I've come here to help you, sir. Mr. Vernon-Smith—"

The millionaire looked at him.

"Hallo! It's the boy who changed the signal, and stopped the train," he said. "Have you changed your mind, and come for the reward, after all?"

"Yes," panted Bob.

Mr. Vernon-Smith laughed. He flattered himself that he knew human nature, and his knowledge of what he considered human nature had taught him that all motives were base ones, and that every man and boy in the kingdom had his price. That was Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's amiable view of human nature.

He had been surprised at Bob Cherry's refusal of a reward; he was not in the least surprised at his changing his mind about it. But, as a matter of fact, he was as far as ever from understanding the hero of the Remove.

"I thought you would change your mind, my lad," he said. "Well, you'll find me a man of my word. Name your own reward."

"I—I do not understand this," said the Head, in amazement.

Mr. Vernon-Smith explained.

"My car ran into a level crossing, and this lad stopped the train, and saved my life, and my son's life," he said. "I've promised him any reward he likes to name—anything in reason, of course."

"I—I did not know—"

The Bouncer of Greyfriars smiled in a sneering way. He fully expected Bob Cherry to make some extravagant demand upon the generosity of the millionaire. Bob Cherry's haste was evidently for the purpose of seeing the millionaire again before he left Greyfriars.

"Well," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, "my business here is done, and I'm going; but I shall be glad to settle with you before I go, my lad. You want a reward. What do you want?"

"I—I—"

"A new bicycle?" smiled Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"No, no!"

"A motor-bike?"

"Oh, no!"

"Fifty pounds in the savings bank?"

"No, no, no!"

"Come, then, what is it?" asked the millionaire, taking a cheque-book from the pocket of his frock-coat. "Name the figure!"

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"I—I don't want any money, sir," panted Bob.

"Not money!"

"No, sir."

"Very well!" The millionaire replaced the cheque-book. "What is it, then? You want me to use my influence for you in some way?"

"I want you to do me a favour, sir."

"Name it."

"You will do it?"

"Yes, anything I can do—in reason, of course."

"You can easily do it, it won't cost you anything, and it will be a decent thing to do—a nice thing for you to think of afterwards, sir."

The millionaire smiled.

"Very well, name it."

Bob collected himself with an effort. Much depended now on what he said to the millionaire. Mr. Vernon-Smith evidently had not the slightest suspicion of what was coming.

"You—you have brought your son back to this school, sir," said Bob.

"Well?"

"Dr. Locke won't let him stay here?"

"No," said the millionaire, frowning. "But what has that to do with you?"

"We know about it, sir—we know you have the power of injuring the Head if you like. I don't know how—"

"Cherry—" began the Head.

"I can ruin him, and I shall!" said the millionaire coldly.

"I have never allowed myself to be defeated yet, without crushing the man who did it. That's my way. I've made three millions that way. You boys can know it—you'd know it in a few days, anyway. Dr. Locke has to pay three thousand pounds this week, when he doesn't possess so many hundreds, or he's a ruined man."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

Dr. Locke was deadly pale.

"You need not have said that before the boys, sir," he said, with a scornful glance at the millionaire. "But you boys have no right here. Cherry—"

"Excuse me, sir. Do forgive me, but—but I can help you, sir."

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"You cannot help me, Cherry! What are you thinking of? Now you know it, I need not disguise it—I shall have to leave Greyfriars. I am in that man's clutches in the way he states. Morally, I owe him nothing—legally, he can ruin me—and he will do it! My lads, I hope you will think as well as you can of your headmaster when he is gone."

"Oh, sir!" said John Bull.

"I—I can help you, sir! Mr. Vernon-Smith, you have promised me a reward for saving your life—for saving your son's life. You mean that I can ask you what I like, and you will grant it?"

"Yes, lad."

"I ask you to let the Head off."

"What!"

"You say he owes you money?"

"I have his signature for three thousand pounds," said the millionaire, taking a paper from his pocket—a roll of papers, that crisped and rustled in his hand. "These papers go to my lawyer to-morrow morning, and the action begins. What of it?"

"Those papers—they represent what the Head is liable for, sir?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Burn them."

"What!"

"You said I could name my own reward, sir," said Bob Cherry steadily. "That's what I claim—burn those papers, and let Dr. Locke alone. Make him free of your claims upon him. That's what I ask."

"What!"

"I've named my reward, sir. And—and you said that you were a man of your word!"

The papers crackled in the millionaire's hand as he tightened his grip upon them. There was a long, tense pause in the Head's study.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Vernon-Smith Keeps his Word.

BOB CHERRY was still gasping for breath. The scorch from Courtfield to Greyfriars had pretty well pumped him out. The millionaire stood with the papers crisping in his hand. He seemed at a loss for words.

A very spiteful look came over the Bounder's face. He knew that his father prided himself upon being a man of his word, and he felt in his heart, already, that his revenge upon the Head of Greyfriars was to be lost.

It was Mr. Vernon-Smith who broke the silence at last. There was a gleam of anger in his eyes; he felt himself caught.

"Look here, my lad, you are joking, of course," he began.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"I'm quite serious," he said.

Harry Wharton nudged him in the ribs.

"Good for you, Bob!" he said. "Good for you! Stick to it! It's the only chance for the Head!"

"What-ho!" murmured John Bull. "Stick to it!"

"I'll give you a hundred pounds!" said the millionaire.

"I don't want it, sir."

"Five hundred pounds."

"No, sir."

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READ the splendid tale of "THE SECRET OF THE SEA," in this week's GEM Library. Price 1d.

"Now, look here, lad, what does it matter to you if anything happens to your headmaster?" demanded the millionaire impatiently. "He's no relation of yours, is he?"

"No, sir."

"Then how is it your business at all?"

"We all like and respect the Head, sir," said Bob, in his frank way. "He's been a kind friend to all of us. We worry him sometimes, and we get lickings; but that doesn't make any difference. There's hardly a chap at Greyfriars who wouldn't do anything for the Head."

Dr. Locke's lips moved, but he could not speak. His kind old face was working with emotion.

"Stuff!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

Bob's glance never wavered.

"You've promised, sir, and you say you're a man of your word," he said steadily. "If you are a man of your word you cannot break your promise. You promised that I should name my own reward for saving your life, and I've named it. Release the Head from all his obligations to you."

"But—"

"That's what I want, sir."

"You get nothing for yourself, you young fool!"

"I want nothing for myself."

The millionaire muttered something between his teeth. But his expression was changed. Perhaps the sight of boyish, thoughtless generosity had a softening effect upon his hard nature.

It was something new in his experience, certainly, but he could not doubt the genuineness of it now.

He hesitated.

"It's rotten nonsense!" said the Bounder, in his sneering tones. "Don't take any notice of him, father!"

"Hold your tongue, Herbert!"

The Bounder bit his lip.

Mr. Vernon-Smith fixed his eyes upon Bob Cherry's face. The junior met his gaze calmly and steadily, never wavering.

"You refuse five hundred pounds?" said the millionaire.

"Yes, sir."

"You ask nothing for yourself?"

"Nothing."

"You want me to release your headmaster from his debt to me—and nothing more?"

"Nothing more, sir."

"Then kindly explain to me how you score if I accede to this," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "What I mean is where do you come in?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I don't come in at all, sir, and I don't want to score," he said; "I only want to help Dr. Locke, if he'll excuse me for interfering. I know it's cheek on my part, in a way, but we should all feel awfully rotten about it if he left Greyfriars. That's where we score."

The millionaire nodded slowly.

"I haven't come across many lads of your kind, and no men at all like that," he said. "I like you, my lad. You are a fine fellow. I'm a man of my word, and I'll keep my promise. I wish you had asked me for anything else. But there you are! Can someone give me a match?"

Harry Wharton eagerly took a box of wax vestas from his pocket and opened it and handed it to the millionaire. Mr. Vernon-Smith selected a match and struck it. The flame flared up.

"Father—" Vernon-Smith began.

"Silence, Herbert!"

"But—"

"Hold your tongue!"

The millionaire held the papers over the flame of the match. They caught fire, and began to burn. The Head watched him in stony silence, as if hardly able to understand what was passing.

The papers burned close down to the millionaire's fingers, and then he tossed them into the grate.

There they lay and burned out.

A little heap of ashes alone remained of the documents that had held the Head of Greyfriars in thrall.

Dr. Locke drew a deep breath.

He was a free man now!

The shadow that had lain upon him—the weight that had been upon his mind—had been lifted for ever.

He was free!

Mr. Vernon-Smith gave him a peculiar look. He pointed to the heap of ashes in the grate.

"There lies your debt," he said. "You owe me nothing! You are free. You owe that to this lad. That is all. Good-bye!"

The Head started.

"Hold!" he said.

Dr. Locke crossed over to where Bob Cherry stood and held out his hand.

Chan-So sent the half-drawn dagger back into its sheath with a crash.

"Good!" he said, with a cruel laugh. "He was a great traitor and a great wizard; but he could not bring the dead to life. Bah, I do not believe it! You cannot do it, mad-man!"

"I can," said Man-Hoo quietly, "and you shall see!"

He flung the dark cloak over his head. Then he dashed it off, and cried in ringing tones:

"Behold the dead!"

Chan-So uttered a shriek of fear. The transformation was so sudden and amazing that the rest looked on trembling and dazed. Before them, dressed in his princely robes, flashing with jewels, stood Ching-Lung. Then he strode forward, and pointed a revolver at Chan-So's breast. The usurper cowered before him.

"The dead has come to life, brother!" he said sternly. "Do not stir or speak, for I never miss. Guard the door, Sin-Tuan, and cut down the man who tries to pass. Who is on my side?"

How Ching-Lung Kidnapped his Brother from the Rebel Camp—Ching-Lung Reveals his Prisoner.

A tense, dramatic silence came. Chan-So, with the gleaming revolver covering his heart, was white as chalk. The others stared transfixed at the boyish prince like men who are gazing at a spectre risen from the grave. Sin-Tuan trembled as he drew his weapons.

Clear and distinct Ching-Lung cried again:

"Who is on my side now? Fling down your weapons, gentlemen. You are surrounded!"

Half a dozen swords clattered at his feet.

"Gentlemen," Ching-Lung said drily, "you have been asleep, and we have trapped you. Yang has outflanked you with ten thousand men, and Yes-Kiang, with another ten thousand, is before you. I do not wish to be harsh or cruel, for what you have done you have done in ignorance. But Yang will show no mercy if you fall into his hands. Even though I am his prince, and he is my slave, I hardly think my influence is strong enough to save you. You must submit to be bound and gagged. Cover them, Sin-Tuan."

No one doubted that he was speaking anything but truth. Every instant they expected to hear the thunder of Yang's guns from the north, and the rattle of Yes-Kiang's rifles from beyond the river. Ching-Lung was playing for a high stake—for his life. He took out a scrap of paper, and, laying it on his knee, scrawled a message with his left. All the time his levelled revolver never wavered, and his flashing eyes were fixed on his brother's face.

"Sign that, Chan-So."

The usurper obeyed, his hand shaking. It was an order dismissing the guard. Ching-Lung tossed it over to Sin-Tuan.

"Take that to the officer in command," he said, "and tell him his services are not needed for an hour. His Highness has decided to roam through the camp in disguise, and learn with his own ears what his slaves think of the war. You, Sin-Tuan, and Li-Yat, I must trouble you for your clothes."

One by one the chiefs were tied up, ankle and wrist, and gagged with their own scarves. They squatted in a circle on the ground, watching Ching-Lung with rolling eyes. He removed the jewel from his cap, and flung Li-Yat's cloak over his shoulders.

"Not a bad night's work, Sin-Tuan," he said, with a smile. "If we finish as we have begun, it will make your fortune. Borrow a cloak for my beloved brother. Are you ready, Chan-So? You are going to take a little stroll with us. Take his arm, Sin-Tuan, and I will walk behind, and at the slightest sign of treachery, he dies! Good-night, gentlemen!"

He bowed mockingly round him. Sin-Tuan's nerve had come back. He was a powerful lad, equal to half a dozen like Chan-So, and he seized the false prince's arm in an iron grip. Ching-Lung's heart bounded exultingly as he followed them out, and felt the fresh air blowing on his cheeks. Chan-So walked with an unsteady step, almost fainting with fear.

It maddened him to see his men round the blazing fires, to hear their murmurs and laughter. One cry for help would bring a hundred of them to the rescue. But they would rescue nothing but his corpse—he had read that in Ching-Lung's eyes. He knew he had been hoaxed now. Yang's army had not outflanked them; Yes-Kiang had not massed his troops at the ford. He bit his lips till the blood came, and groaned aloud.

"My poor brother seems unhappy," said Ching-Lung icily. "Perhaps a lead pill might do him good. Keep your head down, Chan-So, if you please. It might be awkward for you if you were recognised. To the left."

Sin-Tuan turned his head in surprise.

"Then your Highness does not intend to cross by the ford?"

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"No," answered Ching-Lung; "it's too risky. Mandarin Kennedy is certain to have pushed snipers out after the row those horses made. Ten to one they'd shoot us by mistake. You can swim, I suppose?"

Sin-Tuan nodded silently. Nearly all Chinamen are expert swimmers. Chan-So's pace slackened until he felt the pressure of Ching-Lung's revolver muzzle against his spine. He hurried on then, but he was as pale as a corpse. A few soldiers recognised and saluted Sin-Tuan, but otherwise no attention was paid to them. Chan-So's army was a mere mob and rabble who had no discipline and took no precautions.

They emerged from the camp at last, and the light of the fires grew fainter. Then Ching-Lung sat down on the wet grass and laughed aloud.

"Oh, Sin-Tuan," he gasped, "I'll make a little king of you for this! You've saved your head, and made your peace with Yang. Stay here, and if my dear brother appears at all tired of your company, leave him, but knock him on the head first. I don't fancy a swim—it's too cold. There ought to be plenty of boats somewhere. Be gentle with the poor child, and don't forget that the butt-end of a revolver makes little noise, and is a wonderful cure for home-sickness. Guard him well, Sin-Tuan."

"If he attempts to escape, he dies!" said Sin-Tuan.

Ching-Lung ran on at a tireless trot, searching in vain for what he wanted. Then he dropped like a shadow into the grass. He heard a dip of oars. A large, flat-bottomed boat was moving across the stream, pulled by vigorous arms. He strained his eyes and held his breath. A dozen dark forms sprang out, and he heard a gruff order given in bad Chinese.

"Kennedy, by Jove!" said Ching-Lung. "Hi, Kennedy!"

In a moment he was among them.

"Bedad," gasped the astonished Irishman, "it's Ching-Lung! Where in the name o' howly Cleopatra did yez sphring from at all?"

"You mean what in the name of howly Julius Cæsar are you doing here? Have you any orders?"

"Well, yez sees," said Kennedy, "as a matther o' fact, I ain't. We found this ould tub, and, begorrah, it was too cowl'd entirely lyin' over there and freezin', and so I thought I'd sthroll acrost and have a squint round. Oh, Moses, and I thought yez was safe and snug in bed! Shure, I didn't mane to sthay foive minutes, and it's meself that knows yez are a gentleman, and that yez'll not tell ould Yang about it and get a pore, motherless bhoy into hot wather!"

"It was a foolish thing to do," said Ching-Lung, "and it might have been a serious thing if the outposts had been attacked during your absence. Wait here for me. I have a prisoner. By the way, have you a cigarette?"

Kennedy had, and Ching-Lung lighted it at a dark-lantern carried by one of the men. The Irishman felt rather nervous.

"Yez won't go back on me, yer Highness," he pleaded. "Yang's a howly terror to face av a man does a little bit ethra."

"No, I'll keep it to myself," said Ching-Lung gravely; "but when you are told where to place your outposts, you should not have attempted to cross the river. As a matter of fact, your disobedience has done me a great service. Here, take this."

He slipped a magnificent diamond-ring from his finger, and tossed it into Kennedy's hand. Then, swiftly retracing his steps, he hastened along the bank. In spite of the intense darkness, he knew exactly where he had left Sin-Tuan and his prisoner.

They crossed the river, and, much to his disgust, Kennedy was sharply ordered back to his dreary outpost duty. He longed to be present at Ching-Lung's triumphant entry into Kwai-hai, but Ching-Lung said no; and, when he cared to be so, the Chinese boy could be as hard as adamant. But as he lay on the grass, already white with hoar-frost, the Irishman found some consolation in puffing his cigarette into a glow, and admiring the glorious sparkling of the ring the prince had given him.

But Ching-Lung had no intention of creating an uproar. He borrowed two of Kennedy's troopers to escort the prisoner, and walked behind, chatting with Sin-Tuan.

They reached the gate, gave the password, and were admitted. They made their way to the palace, where the sentries on guard salaamed to the ground at the sight of their prince. In response to Ching-Lung's orders, the lamps were lighted in the council chamber, and the prisoner was taken there, guarded by two soldiers. Ching-Lung drew a tall Chinese screen across the corner of the room, hiding the prisoner, the warders, and Sin-Tuan. Then he sent for Prout.

The steersman came, rubbing his eyes, and growling under his breath. He had only just left the ramparts, and he was sleepy and bad-tempered.

"Me velly sofly to rouse you, Thomas," said Ching-Lung, "but howee Mr. Thulston?"

"Pretty well, I reckon," growled the steersman, "and fast asleep. Gosh, I wish I was!"

His eyes brightened, however, at the sight of a bottle of rum, which appeared mysteriously in Ching-Lung's hand.

"You justee havee a dlink of dis," said the Chinese boy, "and den tellee Mr. Loid, Yang, and Yes-Kiang--no, not Yes-Kiang, he velly sick--dat I wantee dem at once. I lettee you off duty to-morrow, and you havee a good lest. Here's a lily plesent."

It was another ring, set with three superb diamonds. Prout stammered out his thanks, or tried to, but Ching-Lung waved him away.

When the amazed and delighted steersman had taken his departure, Ching-Lung produced an envelope, and, placing a third ring in it, wrote across the envelope: "Too mi dear frend Ben Maddok, as a toking of his steam. With luv, Ching-Lung." A servant was despatched to convey the gift to the bo'sun, and Ching-Lung was chuckling softly to himself when Ferrers Lord entered, and they were soon deep in conversation. All at once Ching-Lung laid his fingers on his lips.

"Hush!" he said, springing to his feet. "Here comes Yang!"

General Yang entered, and bowed gravely. Ching-Lung just as gravely nodded, and pointed to the cushions.

"I fear I owe you an apology, gentlemen," he said, "for disturbing you at such an hour. I have just returned from the rebel camp."

"From the rebel camp?"

Both men stared at him half incredulously.

"Yes, from the rebel camp. I have inspected it, examined their guns and equipment, and estimated their numbers. I have learned, too, that they are half-hearted and undisciplined, though strong in numbers. Chan-So is no favourite, and I think he rules with a tyrant's hand. What would happen if they lost Chan-So?"

"If," said Ferrers Lord, with a laugh—"you may well say 'if,' prince."

"I asked a question, Lord," said Ching-Lung roughly.

General Yang thoughtfully rubbed his chin.

"I will answer your Highness," he said, "though I cannot understand why you ask such a question. There is no strong man among the rebels, and they are madly jealous of each other. If they lost Chan-So, most of the rebels would go back to their homes, though some, no doubt, would form themselves into guerilla bands to loot and pillage. That would leave the Russians without allies, and we should be able to face them with some hope of success."

"And drive them back?"

"Yes," said Yang, laying his hand on his dagger, "drive them back or die! My one wish is to meet them face to face. Grant me that wish, and I wish no more."

"It is granted!" cried Ching-Lung. "There stands Chan-So!"

With a crash, the great screen fell. Startled, amazed, Ferrers Lord and General Yang leapt to their feet. Across the fallen screen, standing between two soldiers with fixed bayonets, his wrists shackled, his face grey with terror, was the boyish figure of the usurper Chan-So!

General Yang's words concerning the future of the rebel army were at first far from prophetic. The kidnapping of Chan-So seemed to goad them to madness, and at dawn Kwai-hal was assaulted in force. Two hours later, baffled, beaten, and dejected, the rebels retreated across the river, hotly assailed by Yang's cavalry. It was a crushing defeat, and the defenders were jubilant, especially Prout, Kennedy, and Maddock.

Ching-Lung Makes Amends—Prince Scaroff Visits the Enemy's Camp—Ned Horton Creates a Surprise.

Three days passed, and Yang's scouts kept the general well posted as to the doings of the Russian forces. They had suddenly checked their rapid advance, and taken up a strong position in a low chain of hills forty miles to the north of Kwai-hal. Their inactivity puzzled General Yang, Yes-Kiang, and Ferrers Lord. At first they were inclined to put it down to the defeat of Chan-So's army, and the capture of the usurper. Then came the news that Great Britain and Germany had come to an agreement over the Chinese question. The news delighted them.

"A strong move at last," said Ferrers Lord; "but what the upshot of it will be I cannot tell. With England and Germany determined, Russia will have to be cautious, or she will get herself into hot water. What do you think, Yang?"

The crafty old Chinaman shook his head.

"Russia is playing a deep game," he answered—"the game she has been playing for years. Just because there have been a few miserable raids on her frontier, she has made it an excuse to forward tens of thousands of men. For years her agents have been fostering discontent in China. She pretends she wants peace, but it is only to gain

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ONE
PENNY.

time. Only a crushing defeat that will utterly shatter her power will keep her back. I know Russia too well."

Matters were going well in Kwai-hal. Rupert Thurston was up and about, though still pale and weak. Every day hundreds of rebels came in to take the oath of allegiance to Ching-Lung, and they brought in waggon-loads of provisions and fodder. It was a busy time for all, but the work was almost done. Kwai-hal was almost impregnable.

The Irishman became a full-blown captain, and Prout, who was a mandarin already, was gazetted as first lieutenant. Maddock became a sergeant, with the promise of a commission if he proved worthy of it.

Chan-So, a prisoner, occupied two of the most luxurious rooms the palace could offer. He was closely guarded night and day. Yang clamoured for his head, but both Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung stood firm. They would have no bloodshed. The best of everything was supplied to the prisoner. He had all save liberty.

While Chan-So languished in captivity, Prout and Kennedy were enjoying life. It was a bright, cheerful morning, and the sunshine fell warmly on the ramparts, where the lazy Chinese gunners were sitting about in little groups, smoking and chatting.

It was pay-day, too, and Kennedy, to his amaze and delight, had drawn his full amount as a captain in active service.

"Ching-Lung's a raal broth of a boy, Tom!" he said to Prout, as he jingled the taels in his pocket. "He's a jooil of jooils!"

The steersman didn't deny it, for he was quite of the same opinion. He leant over the parapet, puffing at his pipe, and looked keenly across the river and the flat plains beyond. His eye caught a sudden flash of quivering white. Kennedy saw it, too.

"Great Scott, Mike! What d'yer make out o' that?"

"Bedad," said Captain Kennedy, "'ave yez never seen a helio afore?"

"Course I have, silly; but who on earth 'ud helio that way? There she goes agen! Where's the twinkler, Mike?"

The only "twinkler," or field heliograph, Yang's army possessed was in stores. Lieutenant Prout, who had great difficulty to keep his sword from getting between his legs, despatched the news to the palace, and ordered two men to fetch the "twinkler." Ferrers Lord arrived with the heliograph. It was a clumsy, old-fashioned thing with a telescope attached, and not one of the compact little instruments now in use. The glittering disc was flashing brightly.

"British," said the millionaire at once, "and the international code. Work back the answers, Prout, as I give them."

"Are you there?" asked the twinkling disc. "Do you want to keep me here all day?"

"Who are you?"

"Messenger from the Russian Army. White flag. May we come forward?"

"Yes; halt at the river. Will send escort to blindfold you."

"All right!"

The flashing light vanished, and through his field-glasses the millionaire could see the figures of three mounted men advancing slowly towards the river. Six soldiers stepped out at the word of command, and Ferrers Lord ordered Kennedy to take charge of them, and to bring the blindfolded messengers to the palace. He mounted his horse and galloped away; but as he drew rein outside the palace, where Eric was drilling a squad of Chinese urchins, to the huge delight of the grim old General Yang, Ferrers Lord courteously saluted both the young soldier and the veteran.

"By the way, general," he said, "the Russians are sending us a message, and we shall need you."

Yang nodded, and walked beside his horse. Ching-Lung was sent for, but the prince could not be found. One of the sentries said that he had gone into the town an hour before with Sergeant Maddock and Yes-Kiang.

"I presume we can do without him," said Ferrers Lord. "I'm quite impatient to know what this new move is all about."

The two men made their way to the council-chamber. Armed soldiers stood round the walls, for in a land like China, where assassination is an everyday matter, it was necessary to take every precaution. At the door the messengers were carefully searched for hidden weapons. Blindfolded, they were marched in.

They were all finely-built men, dressed in the handsome uniforms of the Russian Imperial Guard. They stood with heads erect. One of them carried a white flag.

"Take off the handkerchiefs, Kennedy," said the millionaire, "and let us have a look at our uninvited guests."

"I think I can do that for myself, Ferrers Lord," said a deep, mellow voice.

The man in the centre tore away the handkerchief that hid the upper portion of his face. The millionaire hissed a name through his clenched teeth:

"Michael Scaroff!"

The foes were face to face, and Ferrers' blood boiled in his veins like molten fire. Scaroff here—here in Kwai-hai! The millionaire had only to fire one shot from the little revolver hidden in his sleeve to lay the murderer dead at his feet, and bring the grim vendetta to a tragic end. But no. The tiny scrap of white rag the Russian carried guarded him as securely as a plate of three-inch metal. It was a flag of truce, giving him the right to come and go, free and unharmed.

"Then you know this man?" said Yang, in mild surprise.

"Know him—yes! Would to Heaven I had never known him!"

Scaroff, cool and calm, pulled at his moustache, and laughed mockingly.

"You don't give me much of a welcome, my dear Ferrers Lord," he drawled. "In fact you look quite vicious. I presume nothing keeps you from flying at my throat except this bit of bunting—eh?"

"You presume correctly. What is your business here?"

The Russian lighted a cigarette, and unbuttoned a sleeve that kept his false arm in position across his breast.

"You perhaps know," he drawled, "that my country has agreed to the terms laid down by Great Britain and China."

"I do!"

"Then I must congratulate you on your Intelligence Department," sneered the Russian, "for, though I am in direct communication with St. Petersburg, I only heard it two days ago. This means that I must march my army back across the frontier for a time."

"Well, have you anything else to say? Your news is rather stale, prince!"

Scaroff did not stir. He calmly opened his jewelled cigarette-case, and shook out a cigarette. Yang, whose knowledge of English was imperfect, watched their faces stolidly.

"You are a brave man, Lord," drawled the Russian. "Though I hate you, I must give you your due. Do you know what has happened to your boat, the Lord of the Deep?"

"No, I do not."

"Then I'll tell you. I have her boxed up in the river thirty miles from here, with a sandbank above, and a row of mines below. She can't stir up or down unless we have a flood. Give me your word to hand over Ching-Lung, or I'll have her torpedoed this very night. She's at my mercy."

Ferrers Lord staggered, and caught at the table.

"Proofs!" he gasped. "Give me proofs!"

"You shall have them. One of my men will accompany messengers you care to send, and they can see for themselves. I'll stay until they return. We lured your fool of a captain into the river, slipped past him, and laid the mines. The Lord of the Deep is trapped."

"You lie, Scaroff!" cried a deep voice from the doorway.

"Your own vessel is trapped, not ours!"

Ned Horton, the burly captain of the Lord of the Deep, stood there, and behind him was Ching-Lung.

Ching-Lung Gives Michael Scaroff his Life, and Mike

Kennedy Is sent on a Dangerous Errand.

"You lie!" cried Ned Horton again. "I tell you that I have your boat, the Tsaritsa, at my mercy."

Scaroff paled a little, and stared at the diver's burly figure like a man who sees a spectre. Ferrers Lord laughed softly and grimly, but evinced no surprise.

"I tell you," sneered the Russian, pointing to Horton, "that man lies! My boat is safe."

"Yes, prince, safe in my power. The Destroyer is behind her, and the Lord of the Deep in front."

With a cry that was like the hiss of a snake, Scaroff sprang to the door, followed by the two Russian officers. No one barred their way. There was a rattle of hoofs, and the three men galloped past the window. At the gate, Scaroff turned and shook his clenched fist defiantly.

"Well, said Ching-Lung slowly, "I think we have made a mess of it in letting him go!"

"Not at all," answered the millionaire. "I have laid my plans. Send half a dozen of your best scouts to follow them. Give Kennedy the command, and tell him his commission depends upon this day's work. Be quick!"

Ching-Lung dashed out. When he returned, Ferrers Lord was pacing the room, his hands clasped behind him.

"You have done brilliantly, Horton," he said—"splendidly."

"It was a fluke, sir—and a lucky one. According to the orders you left, sir, I waited for the Destroyer at Lin-su, and

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we made our plans. Scaroff's boat was close at my heels all the time. I kept my lights full on night and day, making them believe I had no suspicion that I was being followed. It was arranged when I entered the river that I was to have eight hours' start of the Destroyer, which gave the Tsaritsa plenty of time to slip in after me. Then I ran myself purposely aground, and while the fools were laying torpedoes below me, the Destroyer did the same for them. That's the story, sir."

Ching-Lung executed a little step-dance of delight.

"Ned," he chuckled, "you're a wonder! I'll make you a mandarin for this, sonny!"

Ferrers Lord sat down again, and keenly examined the chart the diver had laid before him. It showed three miles of the river-bed and the position of the boats. The Lord of the Deep lay on the edge of a sandbank, her nose pointed down the river towards Scaroff's line of submerged torpedoes. Tsaritsa came next, her way cut off by a second line of mines placed across the stream by the watchful Destroyer. She was snared like a rabbit in a net.

"A pretty little affair, and cleverly planned," said Ferrers Lord. "We seem to have the boat, but that does not mean that we have Michael Scaroff. He will not abandon the boat without a fight, I am certain."

"But how can he fight? It will be hopeless."

"Wait!" said the millionaire gravely. "We shall see. Come, prince, I want you!"

They crossed to the window, talking in whispers. Outside in the courtyard Kennedy had drawn up his six chosen scouts, each man mounted on a tough little pony. The Irishman examined each animal critically, running his skilled hand over their sturdy limbs. Prout stood beside him, taking down heliograph messages which were being flashed from the ramparts, where keen eyes were watching Scaroff and his comrades.

"Kennedy!"

Baby Mike looked up and saluted as the millionaire's voice reached him.

"Yes, sir."

"You had better ride my mare Flashlight. You know your orders?"

"Yes, sir."

Kennedy flushed with pleasure. The mare was as fast as the wind. He had no ordinary duty to perform. His orders were to hang close behind the crafty Russian, and watch him like a cat watching a mouse. Ferrers Lord was confident that Scaroff would not abandon his boat without some vigorous effort.

"What's the news, Tom?"

"They're just fording the river," answered the steersman.

"You'll have ter wait a bit yet."

Kennedy absolutely trembled with impatience, eager to be away. Suddenly the millionaire entered the courtyard.

"Kennedy," he said, speaking in a low tone, "I am sending you on a dangerous mission. I am more than suspicious of Scaroff, and I want to trap him. He only made the last portion of the journey alone, I am certain, and most likely he has several hundred men hidden in the hills. If this is so, all depends on you. He will bring up his men at dark, and gallop them along the river, in hopes of taking my boat unprepared and blowing her up. Ride like the wind with the news, and fire a few rockets. Good-bye, my lad, and luck go with you! Take care of Flashlight."

Kennedy blushed proudly as Ferrers Lord extended his hand. Ching-Lung and Prout raised a cheer, and Ned Horton shouted a "God-speed!" from the window.

The Ambush Is Prepared—Under the River—The Mines—A Perilous Task.

"Halt!"

Ferrers Lord raised his hand, and, like some machine, his troop of picked riders reined up. The storm had passed away, and a few stars twinkled in the evening sky. On the river, tugging at their ropes, lay two wide, flat-bottomed boats, and near them a tug, with smoke rising from its funnel, was tossing and snorting. The millionaire turned to General Yang.

"Will thirty men be enough for you with one Maxim, general?"

"Plenty!" answered the Chinaman, his eyes flashing. "We shall hide in the wood, and when Scaroff has gone by, we'll make for the road. If he asks for war, by the bones of my father, he shall have it!"

"Good!" said Ferrers Lord. "If all goes well, we'll drive them towards you like grouse. If they ask for quarter, give it, and remember that Scaroff belongs to me should he fall into your hands."

"As you wish," growled the Chinaman; "but not as I wish. I will not forget."

Thirty horses were embarked on one of the boats, and poled across the river. The little troop rode away, and vanished into a dark wood. Ferrers Lord had no use for horses now, so the remainder, tied head and tail, were galloped back to Kwai-hal. The millionaire's force numbered seventy men, with two Maxims. Ben Maddock was second in command.

They had ample time to spare, now that it had been decided to go by water. The stranded submarine boat lay about twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles down the river, and the windings of the stream would add another mile or so to the distance.

Scaroff had the advantage, for the route across country was much shorter, but the little, tireless tug, with the current in its favour, could travel at twice the speed of his horsemen.

The men clambered into the barge, and Maddock and the millionaire entered the tug. Shore cables were cast off, and the screw beat the water. Maddock gave a shout as a dull report came echoing over the marshes.

"There goes the twelve-pounder, sir," he said. "Ching-Lung and Kennedy have carried out their part of the programme, and are safe, sir."

Ferrers Lord nodded as he lighted a cigar. Ned Horton flung an armful of logs into the furnace.

"I knew they'd come through all right," he said, the red glow of the fire on his face. "Trust Ching to come out trumps!"

The millionaire laughed, and drew on his gloves. The evening was chilly, and a mist was rising from the river after the deluge of rain.

The tug, drawing the barge behind it, churned merrily along, its funnel spitting out clouds of sparks. Darkness was falling swiftly. Horton tossed the little log overboard, and it ticked and squeaked as it registered the speed.

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

The river had fallen rapidly during the week, leaving her almost high and dry. She lay on an even keel, her conning-tower ablaze with light, and her manholes open. Armed sentries surrounded her, and they saluted their chief.

"Diving-suits!" said the millionaire, as he mounted the ladder.

He hurried down to the saloon, glanced quickly round, took a pair of wire-nippers from a drawer, and then went to the engine-room. Everything was spick-and-span, and the great machinery shone like silver. The paintwork was spotless, and every inch of brass gleamed brightly. He was satisfied.

The sandbank split the river into two streams, which met below in a boiling whirlpool. Ferrers Lord flashed the searchlight upon the pool, and shook his head.

"We could not stand against that, Horton; but we must go and inspect those mines."

"It would be safe enough with ropes, sir."

"Yes; that's not a bad idea. Take the suits down to the water's edge."

Four men helped them to dress, and ropes were passed round their waists. Then they entered the water till it was gurgling above their helmets.

Suddenly the millionaire stumbled against something, and his lamp flashed out. It was an iron bar, as thick as a man's thumb, vanishing into the darkness above. He sank down on his knees, and raked at the gravel. A thread of insulated wire ran along the iron bar.

Ferrers Lord paused, and stared upwards; then he set to work again, but very cautiously, lifting the pebbles and stones

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE!"

By **SIDNEY DREW.**
New
Serial
Story.

The opening chapters will appear in next Tuesday's number of The "Magnet" Library. Will regular readers kindly draw their special friends' attention to this, and ask them to order a copy of The "MAGNET" Library in advance. Usual Price—One Penny.

"Quicker!" said the millionaire. "You take the tiller, Horton. You know the channel better than Maddock."

"Very good, sir," answered the diver. "I think it would be wise to tell the men to lie down, sir, and get their rifles ready."

Ferrers Lord tossed the glowing end of his cigar into the river, and glanced at his watch. The mist was thickening rapidly. Suddenly the diver called to Maddock for half-speed, and swung the lantern above his head. A bright flash of light answered the signal.

"There she is, sir!" said the diver.

He put the tiller over, and the launch shot towards the inner bank, and turned her nose up-stream. The great barge, crowded with men, swept past on the current, veered round, and the tow-rope tightened with a snap, bringing her up. It was so neatly and so smartly done that Ferrers Lord clapped the diver on the shoulder.

"A pretty bit of work, Horton, in a stream like this! I never saw anything better."

The searchlight of the stranded submarine vessel flashed on them. Two men, carrying cables, sprang into the water, and, splashing to the bank, made the barge fast. The millionaire gave his orders quickly. Half the men, under Maddock, dragged the Maxim up the steep bank, and hid themselves in the thick undergrowth. The rest crossed to the other side of the river, and took cover there on either side of a steep ravine that led down to the sandbank. The tug made five journeys before all were landed.

All was ready.

"Now, Horton," said the millionaire, "as we can spare an hour, we'll go on board the Lord of the Deep, and see what can be done."

They waded across the shallows to where the vessel lay.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 181.

"COCK OF THE WALK."

A Long Complete School Tale, by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT WEEK!

"BEYOND THE ETERNAL ICE,"
A Wonderful New Serial Story, by SIDNEY DREW.

one by one. Below the layer of gravel was a massive wedge of lead, and beside that, anchored by a chain, a round piece of metal three feet in diameter—a bomb.

He rose, and moved to the left, darting the rays of the lamp before him. Less than a fathom away was a second perpendicular bar of iron, with the deadly wire running down it into the river-bed, and beyond that, at equal distances, a dozen more. To the right it was the same.

The river had been cleverly mined, and mined in a method he had never seen before. Though the darkness hid the arrangement above him, he guessed what it was. The perpendicular bars were attached to parallel bars which extended the whole width of the river.

To the foot of each perpendicular bar a bomb was attached, and a single touch would set the electric apparatus on board the Tsaritsa at work. In fact, the river was covered with an iron grating—a grating of death.

"They must be raving mad!" muttered the millionaire, "unless the upper bar is sunk at least six feet below the surface, a floating log or a dead sheep might have caused the explosion. Bah! To work!"

He scrawled a few lines on the slate, and held the message up. Horton read:

"You must go back, for I am going to cut the wires, and it is terribly risky. Make my rope fast, and tell all to abandon the Lord of the Deep. There may be an accident. Go!"

The diver hesitated, drawing in his breath. He saw the millionaire's hand clench threateningly upon the axe he carried. Horton turned slowly round, and tugged at the rope. Strong hands began to haul it in. He looked back reluctantly. The millionaire was standing like some strange river-monster leaning on the axe.

Ferrers Lord waited. His iron nerves were proof against all emotion. He took the wire-cutters from his belt as calmly as if he were about to open a bottle of champagne.

It was a slow and difficult task; but it was accomplished at last. When the last wire was cut, disconnecting the last bomb, the millionaire laughed.

"We have your boat, Prince Michael," he muttered, "and unless I'm very much mistaken, we'll net you, too!"

Then, turning, he seized the rope, and began to pull himself up-stream, hand-over-hand. As he emerged from the water, numbed and cold, a figure ran to meet him, uttering a shout of joy. It was Ned Horton, who had worked the rope alone.

The Alarm—"Surrender, Scaroff!"—In the Whirlpool— How the Russian Died.

Ned Horton did not speak a word as he helped the millionaire to remove the diving-suit. He expected a stiff reprimand for disobeying orders in remaining on the sandbank after being commanded to leave it. The millionaire underwent the operation in sullen silence. Then he said suddenly:

"Horton, have you ever felt afraid?"

"Yes, sir, dozens of times, and I'm not ashamed to own it."

"Then I must confess I was frightened just now—for the first time in my life, I think. It was an ugly business cutting those wires. I must have a brandy-and-soda. Get me one, please. Wait, I'll come with you."

They went into the saloon of the Lord of the Deep, and switched on the lights. The diver took a decanter of brandy from the spirit-stand, and produced a glass and a syphon of soda-water.

"You'd better have one, too," said Ferrers Lord, with a laugh. "I'll give a toast, and a good one. Success to the Lion, and down with the Bear."

The upraised glass fell from his hand and was shattered to fragments, and fifty rifles crashed out their death-song.

The fatal hour had come.

In an instant Ferrers Lord snatched up a rifle and sprang into the conning-tower, followed by the diver. The sound of firing came from Yang's ambush. Scaroff must have ridden hard, for he was well ahead of the millionaire's calculation. Evidently in the darkness his troopers had stumbled into the wood, for they could see the flashing of guns, and hear wild shouts above the deadly rattle.

"They must cross the stream now!" cried the millionaire triumphantly. "There goes the Maxim!"

The long, spiteful rattle of the machine-gun deadened the noise of rifles. In the gloom Scaroff tried in vain to rally his dismayed horsemen. They were no cowards, but the suddenness and unexpectedness of the attack threw them into a panic. They could not see; they did not know the ground or the strength of the foe. Had the gloom been less intense they might have been killed to a man, but Yang's soldiers were shooting by sound more than sight.

Scaroff quivered with rage. Every plan of vengeance so carefully built had crumbled away. He knew that he had been outwitted, and that the jaws of a deadly trap were closing upon him. But he was a brave man in spite of all his villainies—as brave as a lion. Cursing and shrieking out orders, he galloped in among his panic-stricken troopers, heedless of the whistling bullets, and laid about him lustily with the flat of his sword.

"Make for the river, you fools!" he roared. "Do you all want to be shot down like rats?"

His voice rallied them, and they thundered down the slope, men falling from their saddles at every stride. Suddenly a blinding flash of light gleamed in their eyes, flickered, and died out. It came from the conning-tower of the Lord of the Deep, and signalled the "Cease fire!"

to General Yang. Dazzled, the frightened horses stumbled and clattered down the steep incline.

A volley of bitter curses broke from Scaroff's lips, for all at once, as if at the touch of a magician's wand, the mist rolled away, and they saw the gleaming water at their feet.

Rifle in hand, his black eyes gleaming, Ferrers Lord stepped out upon the deck of the stranded vessel. Like a human torrent, the horses came plunging down the slope. The millionaire waited, a smile on his lips.

"Now, Horton!" he cried.

Again the light flashed out, and stabbed across the stream, glaring white on swimming horses and terrified riders.

"A megaphone, Horton. Keep the searchlight on them."

The diver dashed out with the speaking-trumpet, and Ferrers Lord put it to his lips. His voice rang high above the roar of the waters.

"Surrender, Scaroff! I have you ambushed on both sides! I promise to let your men go free!"

The Russian was in front, his great black horse swimming like an otter. In the light of the conning-tower he could clearly see the figure of the man he hated. The sight maddened him. With an oath he wrenched at the bridle and turned his horse's head half down-stream. The swift current swept man and beast swiftly onward.

"And what will you do with me?"

Ferrers Lord just caught the words above the roaring of the torrent.

"I'll give you a fair trial, Scaroff—a trial for your life! Wait, I'll throw you a rope!"

"Take that for your trial!"

The swimming horse, held tight in the grip of the current, was hurried past the boat, and Ferrers Lord stooped to catch up a rope. That movement saved his life. Something gleamed wickedly in the Russian's hand, and two revolver-shots rang out, both bullets hissing over the millionaire's head. Before the millionaire could seize his rifle, the mist had closed, and horse and rider were tossing in the whirlpool below, lost to sight.

Ferrers Lord caught his breath and bowed his head.

"Nemesis!" he said dreamily. "We cannot fight against Fate. Come, let us go back to Kwai-hai."

A group of horsemen rode along the edge of the cliffs, and drew rein to watch the busy scene below. The sandbank where the Lord of the Deep lay was alive with toiling men, working with spade and pick. Every moment wasted now made the task of getting the vessel afloat more difficult, for the river was falling rapidly.

But Ferrers Lord was not a man of delays. A great dry channel was being dug, and the vessel had been lifted by jacks. In a few hours all would be ready, the channel flooded, and the boat afloat again.

"A busy scene, prince!" said the millionaire.

"Far too busy for my taste," answered Ching-Lung. "The harder they work, the sooner I shall lose you all."

Followed by Prout and Horton, they turned their horses, and cautiously descended to the sandbank. Guns had been posted on the cliffs, and at night great lights ceaselessly searched the black pool, lest the hidden Tsaritsa should suddenly appear on the surface, and shell the stranded boat.

Ching-Lung and the millionaire went into the saloon, and lighted cigars.

"I suppose," said the prince, "you mean to make an attempt to capture the Tsaritsa to-day?"

Ferrers Lord nodded.

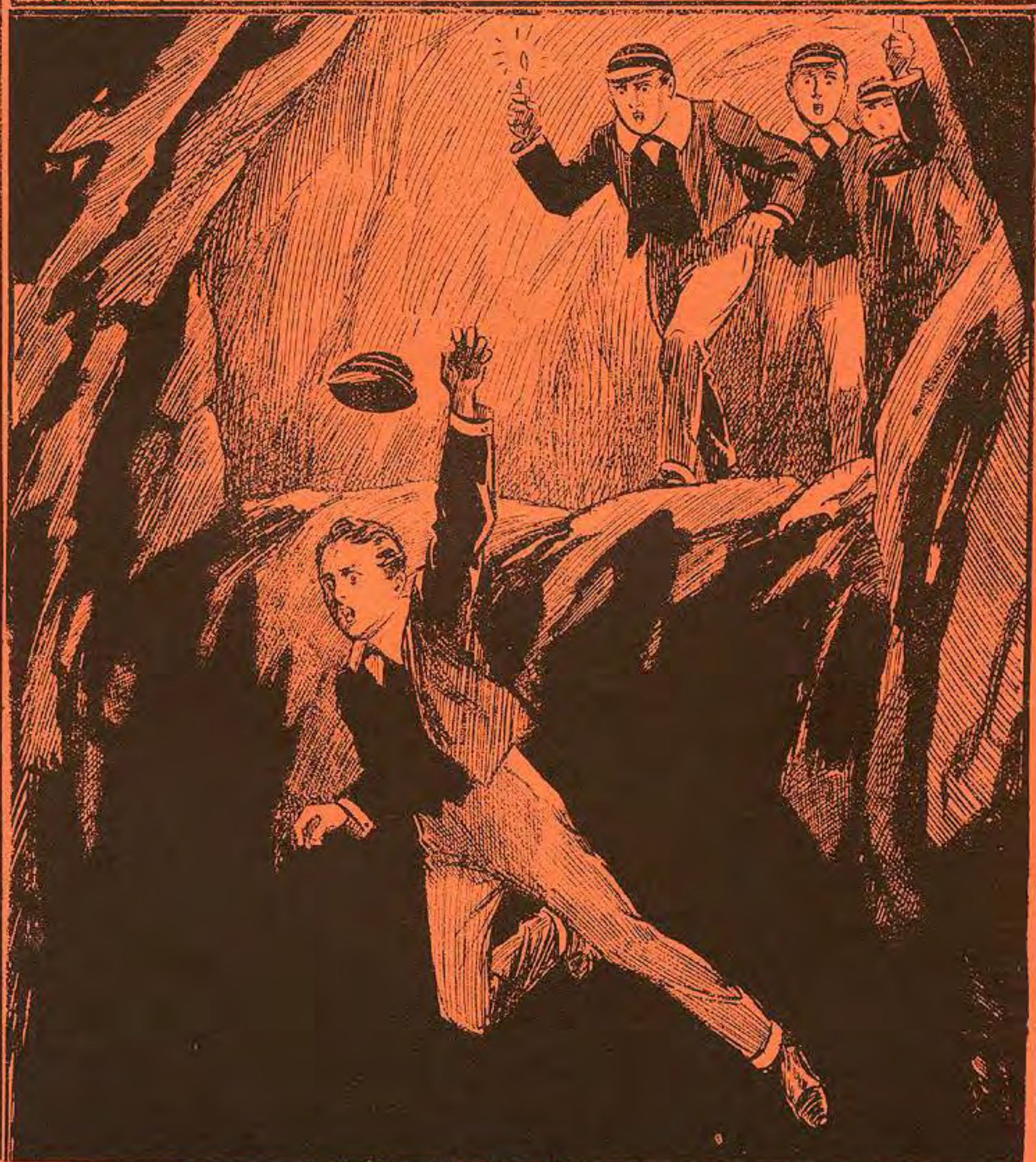
(This story, which has had such a popular run, will be concluded in next Tuesday's number of The "Magnet" Library, when the opening chapters of Sidney Drew's amazing adventure story, "Beyond the Eternal Ice," will appear. Ask your friends to buy next week's special number of The "Magnet" Library.



A new boy comes into the Remove Form at Greyfriars who, besides possessing more than ordinary physical strength, has a cruel fondness for bullying the juniors weaker than himself. He is unconquerable, and even Bulstrode and Harry Wharton are unable to defeat him in a gloved fight. However, aid comes from an unexpected quarter, and "The Cock of the Walk" is eventually driven into submission.

The Editor

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