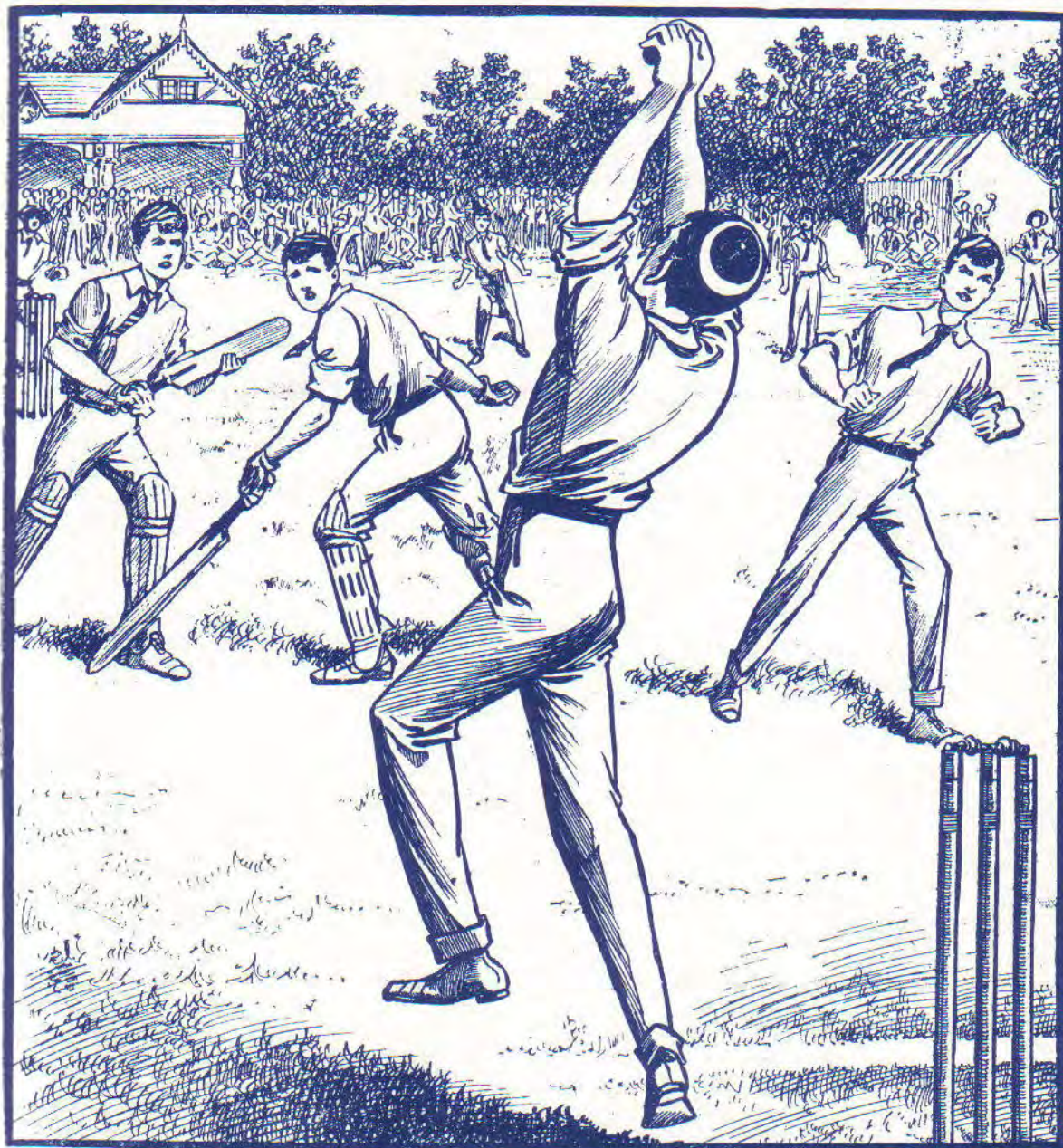


THE BOUNDER'S MATCH!



The Magnet¹ Library

No. 488, Vol. 11.



WELL CAUGHT, THE BOUNDER!

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THE BOUNDER'S MATCH!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

War!

THE Bounder of Greyfriars lounged into Harry Wharton's study in the Remove passage.

Harry Wharton & Co. were there, finishing tea, and engaged in discussion upon the important subject of cricket.

The St. Jim's match was due in a day or two, and it was an affair of the first importance—from the point of view of the Greyfriars Remove, at least.

And the fact that Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was no longer a member of the eleven, gave Wharton a good deal of food for thought. Vernon-Smith's place had to be filled; and though there were plenty of good reserves to draw upon, there was none equal to the Bounder's form when he was at his best. And to beat St. Jim's Greyfriars needed their best men in the field.

The Bounder's entrance interrupted the discussion.

The five juniors turned rather grim looks upon him. It was not long since the Bounder had been very welcome in that study; but that time was past.

"Well?" rapped out Wharton.

"Discussing the St. Jim's match?" asked the Bounder.

"Yes," said Wharton shortly.

"I suppose you'll want me on Wednesday?"

Vernon-Smith made that remark in a casual manner. It was received with a stare by Harry Wharton. Bob Cherry grinned, and Johnny Bull granted. Frank Nugent looked uncomfortable, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh fixed his dusky eyes upon the Bounder with a very curious expression.

"Well?" said Vernon-Smith pleasantly. "You don't seem to be in a hurry to answer, Wharton."

"No need for me to answer, that I know of," said Harry. "You know you won't be wanted on Wednesday."

"Why not?"

"Do you want me to go into all that?"

"May as well give your reasons, you know," remarked the Bounder. "The fellows will want to know why you're leaving out the best bat in the Lower School."

"Oh, you're not the best bat, if you come to that," said Harry. "You're a jolly good one, when you choose, that's all. There's no need to jaw about it, Smithy; you're not playing, and that's the long and the short of it!"

"You don't care to give your reasons?"

"I'll give them fast enough if you want to hear them," said Harry, reddening. "I played you in the Remove Eleven because you were a good man, and could be relied on. You'd undertaken to give up playing the giddy ox,

and I thought you were decent. You've taken up your rotten old game again, and half the time you're not fit to hold a bat. If you choose to ask for the sack, that's not my bizney; but it is my business to see that fellows who play for the Remove can be relied on. So you go out!"

"No other reasons?"

"Well, yes. You tricked Rake and Ogilvy and Bob Cherry into missing the last match, and it was too dirty a trick to be looked over. That was the finish."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "There is the door, my esteemed Smithy."

Vernon-Smith did not heed.

"I helped you beat St. Jude's, Wharton," he said.

"No good talking!" said Harry.

"You knew what to expect when you played that rotten trick. As for what the fellows will think, they'd be on the war-path if I played you after what you've done."

"To cut it short, I'm out of the Remove Eleven for good?" asked the Bounder calmly.

"So long as I'm captain, anyway."

"That mightn't be so long as you think," suggested the Bounder.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You're talking out of your hat, Smithy," said Bob Cherry. "Run along, and be a good boy!"

"I've got something more to say," said the Bounder, with an unpleasant smile. "About my playing the giddy ox, as you call it, that's not your bizney. I choose to please myself, and I don't allow anybody to dictate to me. But I'm not going to give up cricket for the season. That's asking too much!"

"We were talking when you came in, Smithy," remarked Johnny Bull, in the way of a very plain hint.

"I suggest, Wharton, that you drop the father-confessor bizney, and mind your own business generally, and leave me my place in the eleven," said the Bounder. "How does that strike you?"

"I've nothing more to say."

"Well, I have. I'm not going to be dropped out of the Remove Eleven! I'm going to play in the St. Jim's match!"

Wharton burst into a laugh, though there was little enough merriment in it. "I don't quite see how you'll fix it," he said. "You're certainly not coming over to St. Jim's with the team."

"We've been friends, in a way, for some time," said Vernon-Smith. "If I've taken up again some things I'd dropped, it was due to Quelchy. He never left off suspecting me when I was as straight as a string, and he found me guilty when I was nothing of the kind. If I'm going to have the name, I may as well have the game. That's how I

look at it. No, don't trouble to pitch me a sermon. I'm fed-up on that. Anyway, I was getting bored to extinction, and perhaps I was glad of an excuse for chucking up." He shrugged his shoulders. "But I don't choose to give up cricket. I don't choose to slink into the background. And if you're against me, Wharton, I'm against you, and I promise to give you a hot time in the Remove!"

"You can do as you like."

"And first and foremost, I'm going to play in the St. Jim's match, whether you like it or not, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!" said the Bounder, with cool defiance.

Johnny Bull rose to his feet.

"It's your study, Wharton," he said. "Shall I pitch him out?"

"Thanks, I can walk out," said the Bounder. "I've said my say, I mean business. You ought to know me well enough by this time to know that. Ta-ta!"

And the Bounder strolled out, with his hands in his pockets.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Poor old Smithy can't part with his gas," Bob remarked. "I wish he hadn't come a mucker like this. He's a good chap, in his own way."

"Quelchy was unjust to him, though he never intended it," said Nugent. "He was gated on suspicion, and he hadn't done anything. He's made up for that since, certainly."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"If he chooses to give up his rotten games, and keep straight, I'm willing to let bygones be bygones," he said. "But smoky blackguards are not wanted in the Remove Eleven. Why, if I agreed to play him on Wednesday, he might have one of his breaks on Tuesday night, and crook up on the match day. A pretty prospect for us, against a team like Merry's. It's not good enough!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Ally!

"CHEEKY young cads!" growled Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth Form.

"Oh, rather!" remarked

Dabney.

"And there's no stopping them!" granted Fry.

Temple & Co. looked irritated, and felt so. They were having tea in Cecil Reginald's study in the Fourth. And the talk had turned upon the Wednesday's fixture between the Greyfriars Remove and Tom Merry's St. Jim's team.

Cecil Reginald was wrathful. He always was wrathful when he thought or spoke on that subject.

For Cecil Reginald was captain of the Fourth; and the Upper Fourth was a

higher Form than the Remove. Hence Cecil Reginald ought to have been a much greater and more important personage than Harry Wharton.

But he wasn't! Temple, Dabney & Co. maintained and proclaimed that their eleven was the real genuine Junior Eleven of Greyfriars; all others were spurious imitations, so to speak. But although Cecil Reginald had a masterly eye to the cut of a pair of trousers or the set of a necktie, it was admitted by his best friends that what he didn't know about cricket would have filled a library.

Cecil Reginald was skipper of the Junior Eleven, in which he played Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows. When they played the Remove they walked on to the field with the airs of assured conquerors. But nearly every time they came off licked—sometimes by an innings.

The Remove could beat the Shell, and had even given a Fifth Form team a hard tussle. Indeed, some cheerful spirits among the Removeites had announced that they would take on the Sixth without the slightest hesitation.

It was rumoured in the Remove passage that Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, wouldn't play the Remove with the First Eleven because of lurking doubts as to the result.

Be that as it might, certainly the Remove cricketers were mighty men of their hands. Though not officially the School Second Eleven, they booked fixtures up and down and round about, and played home matches and away matches, and altogether put Temple into the shade, and set his aristocratic nose quite out of joint.

Temple's view was that they were cheeky fags; but Temple's view did not need to worry the Remove at all. They went cheerily on their way, just as if Cecil Reginald Temple had been a person of no importance whatever.

"It's sickenin'!" said Temple, stirring the sacccharin in his tea. Temple, who had heaps of money, could afford that expensive substitute for sugar. "People take them for the Greyfriars Second, you know, and they're nothin' of the sort. I explained that to Merry once, when he was over here to play them. I took the trouble to point out that they were only cheeky fags—a Form team of fags! He only grinned, for some reason."

"People do grin when you explain your views to them, Temple," agreed Fry, in a reflective sort of way.

Temple gave him a rather suspicious look, and went on hastily:

"I've said a lot of times that we ought to put our feet down, and set these impertinent young beggars in their place!" "You have!" said Fry feelingly. "Lots of times! Heaps of times! Hundreds of times!"

"Look here, Fry—" "All serene, old chap! Only agreeing with you!"

"But what's to be done?" said Temple. "Us!"

"If you're goin' to be funny, Fry, you babb'in' ass—"

"Not at all, dear boy! But the fact is, we shall have to let the Remove rip, because we can't stop them," yawned Fry. "What about gettin' some battin' now? It's still light enough. If you've done talkin', of course."

"I even told Merry that if he liked we'd take up the fixture," said Temple. "He made some sort of excuse."

Fry suppressed a grin.

"The fixture really belongs to us," said Temple warmly. "Merry's team is the Junior Eleven of St. Jim's, and we're the Junior Eleven of Greyfriars. The Remove are only a Form team."



Mr. Lazarus gave Vernon-Smith a gracious smile. (See Chapter 6.)

"Hear, hear!" "Well, then— Oh, come in!" snapped Temple, as there came a tap at the door.

Vernon-Smith of the Remove came in, and closed the door after him.

Temple gave him a rather sour look.

Smithy had been a prominent member of the Remove Eleven, and had helped materially in bestowing several lickings upon the Upper Fourth. And he had frequently been extremely sarcastic at the expense of Temple & Co. Smithy had a bitter tongue sometimes, and it had not spared Cecil Reginald.

There were some things about Smithy at this moment that offended the fastidious taste of Cecil Reginald.

His waistcoat was decidedly noticeable, and his tie was not quiet in its design. Since he had given up the path of reform the Bounder had dropped into many of his old loud ways.

He grinned as he caught Temple's lofty look, and nodded cheerfully.

"I don't remember invitin' you here," said Cecil Reginald distantly.

"Thanks, I found myself quite able to come without," said Vernon-Smith easily. "You see, the fact is, I've come round to your point of view on a certain subject, Temple, and I've come to tell you so."

"What the dickens are you drivin' at?"

"The Remove are playing St. Jim's on Wednesday."

"I know that."

"You've often said that it ought to be your fixture."

"So it ought."

"I quite agree with you," said the Bounder.

Temple, Dabney, and Fry stared at him. They would as soon have expected Harry Wharton himself to make that admission as the Bounder.

"You—you agree?" said Temple.

"Exactly."

"Look here, what are you drivin' at?" asked Temple suspiciously. "If you're trying to pull my leg—"

"Not at all. I've got a proposition to make," explained the Bounder. "The Remove have bagged a fixture which properly belongs to you as the Second

Eleven of Greyfriars. That's so, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's so, right enough."

"Well, why not bag it from them? I'll help."

"We tried that once before," said Fry doubtfully. "Temple worked it; but it didn't come off."

"Because Temple worked it, you see," said Vernon-Smith.

"Why, you cheeky ass—" began Temple warmly.

"Shush! I'm ready to go Co. with you, if you like, and bag the fixture from the Remove," said the Bounder. "If you fellows choose to back me up, it can be worked."

"Against your own Form?"

"They've turned me out of the eleven," said the Bounder coolly. "I'm up against the top-dogs in the Remove."

"Oh, I see!"

"My idea is to dish the Remove, and bag the St. Jim's match," said Vernon-Smith. "It can be worked if you follow my lead."

"I'm not likely to follow the lead of a Remove fag!" said Cecil Reginald, with great loftiness.

"Oh, draw it mild, Temple!" said Fry at once. "If we can dish the Remove over that match it would be a regular corker! Let's hear what Smithy's got to say."

Temple sniffed. As a rule, his loftiness passed unquestioned in the Fourth Form. But Dabney and Fry were evidently keen on the possible chance of dishing the Remove. Cecil Reginald's swank was not to be allowed to interfere with that most desirable consummation.

In many little contests between the Fourth and the Remove the Bounder's keen, cool sagacity and determination had come into prominence; and Temple's chums realised that he might prove a valuable ally.

As for his action in backing them up against his own Form, they had their own opinion about that, which politeness prevented them from stating. That was Smithy's business, not theirs.

"Go ahead, Smithy!" said Fry, quite cordially.

"Look here!" said Temple. "Is the

idea to play the St. Jim's match and leave the Remove Eleven on the shelf?"

"That's it!" said Vernon-Smith, with a nod.

"You think it can be done?"

"I know it can."

"Good, then! But if the Fourth Form Eleven plays St. Jim's, you've got to remember that I'm captain of my own team," said Temple. "I'll give you a place in the eleven, of course."

The Bounder smiled.

"You'd do better to give me the captaincy," he said. "I could pull the team together, and very likely make a win of it. Still, I'm not asking for that. So long as I play for Greyfriars, the team can be captained by Tubbs of the Third for all I care!"

"That's settled then!"

Dabney and Fry did not look quite satisfied. They liked Temple as a chum, and they admired his taste in waistcoats and neckties. But they knew his shortcomings as a cricket captain were manifold.

However, it was not quite the game to ask Cecil Reginald to fall, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, from his high estate, so they let that pass. But they knew well enough that if they wanted to beat St. Jim's in the stolen match the Bounder was the skipper who might have led them to victory.

Temple read the thought in their minds easily enough, though they did not utter it, and he looked somewhat sour.

"I don't say it's not a good idea," he said. "But, before we go into details, I think it's only decent to give the Remove a chance. If they choose to do the right thing, I'd prefer that to dishing them over the match."

"You mean, if they take a back seat and follow your lead?" asked the Bounder.

"Yes. I think I ought to give them a chance."

"They've been given chances enough," said Fry. "If you jaw to them now it will only put them on their guard."

"I think it's only playing the game," said Temple obstinately. "Of course, I shan't tell them that we intend to bag their match."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Then I'll come and see you again, after Wharton's slung you out of his study," he remarked.

"You cheeky fag!" roared Temple.

The Bounder laughed, and left the study. He knew that Temple's advances to the Remove would only excite merriment among those cheeky juniors. Cecil Reginald looked sourly at his study-mates.

"I suppose you fellows agree with me?" he said.

"Oh, yes. Any old thing!" said Fry resignedly.

"If you think the Fourth Form could play a match with a Remove fag as skipper, Fry, you'd better say so!"

"Let's go and see Wharton," said Fry diplomatically.

And the chums of the Fourth went to see Wharton.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Latest!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Common-room, and headed for the Famous Five, who were chatting by the open window. Dick Rake was with them, in very cheerful spirits. Rake had been selected to fill Smithy's old place in the Remove Eleven, and, naturally, he was pleased.

The journey to St. Jim's for the match was not so simple a matter as it

had been—under War conditions. Trains were, as Hurree Singh justly remarked, terrific. It was settled that only the eleven were going, without any followers. It was not only that expenses were high, but it was a duty not to add to railway traffic if it could possibly be avoided.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Are you going to offer us your services for the St. Jim's match, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove bestowed a scornful blink on the juniors.

"I should be willing to come if my fare were paid and refreshments provided," he said. "But I know Wharton's too jolly jealous of my form to pat me in."

"It's a form anybody might be jealous of," said Harry, laughing. "For circumference, it beats mine hollow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean my form as a cricketer!" hooted Bunter. "As for my figure, I like a chap with something on his bones. You may not believe it, but Miss Clara told me at Cliff House that she'd never seen a figure like mine."

"Probably she hadn't," grinned Bob Cherry. "Not outside Barnum's anyway!"

"I don't think you ought to give way to envy like that, Bob Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"Never mind Bunter's circumference," said Frank Nugent. "Bunter will beat us all if the Huns starve us out. He could live for a whole term on his own fat, like a Polar bear hibernating."

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "I didn't come here to listen to fatheaded jokes. I came here to—"

"Nothing doing!" said the Famous Five at once, with one voice. "Wait till your postal-order comes!"

"Tain't that, you fatheads!"

"Well, we haven't got a lump of sugar we don't want—in fact, we haven't any sugar at all!" said Johnny Bull. "Buzz off!"

"Tain't that. It's about Fishy."

"Bless Fishy!"

"I'm surprised at you, Wharton! I suppose you've seen in the papers that the U.S.A. have joined the Allies?"

"Yes, I believe I've heard something of it," said Harry.

"Well, Fisher T. Fish of the Remove is a Yankee. He's the only American at Greyfriars, except Sylvester of the Third. Now that the United States are playing up so splendidly, it's up to us to recognise the fact."

"Oh, my hat! Do you want the Remove to send congratulations to President Wilson?"

"Oh, don't be funny! My idea is to get up a testimonial."

"A which?"

"A testimonial!" said Bunter firmly. "A testimonial to Fishy, as a representative of the great Republic. Fishy has his faults; but, after all, he's a good sort in his way."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, what about a testimonial?" said Bunter, in a businesslike way. "It might take the form of a gold watch, with an inscription and the date. I'm open to take subscriptions—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've got a notebook here all ready," said Bunter. "What shall I put you chaps down for?"

The Famous Five roared.

Billy Bunter's methods of raising the wind were many and various. He was a borrower of the deadliest skill. But when that resource failed, he had other devices. Sometimes it was a wounded uncle at the Front, who was in need of

parcels. Sometimes it was a brother home on leave, who required something urgently. But the idea of a testimonial to Fisher T. Fish of the Remove put the lid on, so to speak.

If Bunter had raised any funds that way, he would have intended seriously to apply them to the stated purpose. He would merely have borrowed them temporarily, to relieve his own financial embarrassment, intending to replace the cash when his long-expected postal-order arrived.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles in great indignation. He could not see where the joke came in.

"I say, you fellows, I'm quite serious," he expostulated. "Fishy represents the United States at this school. As patriotic chaps, you're bound to back me up in recognising the splendid conduct of the U.S.A. A testimonial to Fishy is the very thing!"

"N.G.," said Bob Cherry. "What's the use of it, when Mrs. Mimble isn't allowed to serve you more than a fixed amount at the school shop?"

"Well, I could go down to Uncle Clegg's—I mean, of course, I shouldn't think of spending any of the money in tuck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here. How much am I to put down your name for, Wharton?" asked Bunter, wetting the end of his pencil.

"Nix!"

"What about you, Cherry?"

"Same amount."

"You, Inky?"

"The sameness is terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "It would be unpatriotic to assistfully help you in dodging the esteemed grub rules, my worthy fat Bunter."

"You silly black ass!"

"Buzz off!" said Rake. "We're talking cricket!"

"Look here, you fellows, you might start the ball rolling!" urged Bunter. "Put down your names for something."

Bob Cherry closed one eye at his chums, and assumed a thoughtful expression.

"Well, give me the book," he said.

Bunter's fat face brightened up. "I knew you were only joking," he said. "Here you are, Bob, old chap! Put down your name and the amount—initials will do."

"Well, you must be a goat!" exclaimed Bolsover major, as Bob Cherry took the book. "You know what Bunter will do with the tin!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Now is the time for all true patriots to rally round Bunter," said Bob Cherry, with great seriousness. "I suppose it does not matter about cash down, Bunter? Suppose each fellow puts down name and amount, and the date when he can hand it out? You see, remittances don't always come to time."

Bunter nodded eagerly.

"That's all right! Mind, it's a promise if you write it down!"

"Certainly!" said Bob.

"What the merry dickens—" began Johnny Bull, puzzled, as Bob wrote in the open page of the subscription-book.

Bob passed it to him when he had finished, and Johnny Bull grinned, and also wrote. Then the book was passed round, with the pencil, and each member of the Co. made an entry, and Rake followed their example.

"I—I say, you fellows," said Bunter. "No larks, you know. You're not putting down your names for ha'pennies, or anything like that?"

"Certainly not! In each case, over a pound," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, good!"

"With the date when you're to collect it from us," said Nugent.

"Good!"

Billy Bunter's fat face was ecstatic now. Not less than a pound from six fellows meant at the very least six pounds. Billy Bunter's imagination revelled in visions of tuck which, if realised, would have entitled him to about a hundred years' imprisonment for disregarding the orders of the Food Controller. But Bunter wasn't thinking of the Food Controller just then; he was thinking of the food.

"Well, I'm blessed if I see it!" remarked Squiff. "I know I'm not handing out anything to Bunter."

"Oh, put your name down!" said Rake, passing him the book.

Sampson Quincy Iflley Field took the book, and stared at it. Then he smiled and put his name down.

"Well, you silly ass!" said Peter Todd. "You're doing it!"

"Follow my example, old chap," said Squiff.

"No jolly fear!"

"I say, Toddy, don't be mean!" urged Bunter. "Look at the splendid example these fellows are setting you!"

"Rats!"

"Play up, Toddy!" said Squiff, passing him the book. "It's up to you!"

Peter Todd took the subscription-book and the pencil, in perplexity. But the perplexity cleared from his face as he read down the list of subscriptions, with the dates when they were to be paid over. For the list ran:

R. Cherry	... £50,000.	June 31st.
H. Wharton	... 50,000.	"
F. Nugent	... 50,000.	"
J. Bull	... 50,000.	"
H. J. R. Singh	... 50,000.	"
R. Rake	... 50,000.	"
S. Q. I. Field	... 50,000.	"

And Peter Todd, entering into the little joke, grinned and wrote down, under the rest:

P. Todd	... £50,000.	June 31st.
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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

* Beyond the Dreams of Avarice!

"HALLO! What's the stunt?" Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, asked that question as he came in to the Common-room. Peter Todd passed the book on, and

as it went from hand to hand, and the fellows saw the remarkable subscription-list, they hastened to put their names down for very handsome amounts.

Certainly, Bunter's subscriptions were the largest ever raised, even in wartime—if they came to hand.

But as he had to wait until June 31st to collect them, it did not seem probable that those handsome subscriptions would ever materialise.

Billy Bunter's eyes were glistening with satisfaction behind his big spectacles.

Even stingy fellows like Skinner and Snoop were putting their names down with hearty cordiality.

The splendid way in which the great American Republic had lined up against the Hunnish barbarians certainly deserved, and received, keen appreciation all over the country, and at Greyfriars as much as anywhere else. But that Bunter's scheme for celebrating the historic event should catch on like this was really remarkable—at least, Bunter thought it was, not having yet seen the nature of the subscriptions.

"What's the stunt?" repeated Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, nothing," said Bunter hastily, in some alarm.

Fishy was a keen business youth, and

although Bunter was using his name to raise the subscription, he had a very strong objection to Fishy having a hand in it. Fishy's intervention might mean that the subscriptions would be used for the purpose designated, and not in supplying the inner Bunter with tuck.

"Why, it's all about Fishy," said Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, it—it would be better for Fishy to keep off the scene till the—the testimonial's well in hand!" stammered Bunter. "You buzz off for a bit, Fishy!"

"I guess I'm not levanting right now," said Fisher T. Fish, whose curiosity was aroused. "What's that about me?"

"I say, you fellows, keep it dark for the present—"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Fishy has a right to know all about a testimonial to himself!"

"A testimonial to me!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

"Yes, rather! Bunter's idea," said Bob Cherry blandly. "A testimonial to the esteemed Transatlantic citizen who represents the great American Republic in Greyfriars."

"By gum!" said Fisher T. Fish. "That's not a bad cinch!"

"First-rate!" said Ogilvy. "And the subscriptions are mounting up. No, don't look yet, Fishy. Let's finish the list. Here you are, Wibley!"

Fisher T. Fish smiled expansively.

"I guess I wasn't expecting any demonstration of this kind," he remarked. "Gentlemen, you do me proud!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, you fellows, it's all in my hands, you know—"

"Fishy must say the last word about that," said Wharton. "It was Bunter's idea, Fishy. Are you willing to leave the subscriptions in his hands?"

"That fat clam!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish disdainfully. "Nope! I calculate not, sir! I guess most of the durocks would stick to his paws!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Nope, you fat jay!"

"Look here, it's going to be in my hands!" roared Bunter, in alarm. "It was my idea, wasn't it, you rotters? I'm going to select the gold watch to be presented to Fishy, with an inscription."

"Fisher might prefer a motor-car, or something," said Tom Brown.

"Gee-whiz! You don't mean to say it's running up to a figure like that?"

exclaimed Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess so."

"Jerusalem! I rather reckon that fat clam won't get his fingers on it, then!"

exclaimed Fishy, with great emphasis.

"You can vamoose the ranch, Bunter."

"Look here, Fishy—"

"Absquatulate, you fat clam!"

Fisher T. Fish was as excited as Bunter now. A subscription which was running up to such a figure that a motor-car could be purchased out of it was a subscription Fishy preferred to keep under his own keen eye.

But Billy Bunter was simply quivering with alarm and indignation. Now that the subscription was a success beyond his wildest imaginations, it threatened to vanish from his gaze like a beautiful dream!

"Look here, Fishy, you keep out!" snorted Bunter.

Billy Bunter, in his alarm and excitement, shoved Fisher T. Fish towards the door. The American junior promptly shoved him back, and William George Bunter sat down heavily on the floor and roared.

"Yaroooh!"

"I guess you can sit there, you fat Hun!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Now, how's that subscription getting on?"

"Done!" said Bolsover major. "My hat! It's a splendid total! Wait a bit, and I'll tot it up, Fishy."

"Yep!"

Bolsover major totted up the subscription-list, which covered several pages in the notebook. Fourth-Formers as well as Removites had subscribed. Fisher T. Fish waited eagerly.

"Speech!" shouted Rake.

"Hear, hear! Speech, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish was nothing loth. He jumped upon a chair, very willing to address the meeting before the presentation was made.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, it does me proud to observe the estimation in which I am held—perhaps not undeservedly—by my Form—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess I've often told you, gentlemen, that when the great American Eagle began to scream there would be trouble for the measly Huns. You've been going for them year after year, and they've smiled. But wait till the Yewnited States get to work, gentlemen! You watch out! The Yewnited States are going to mop them up, sir, and strew them in small pieces from one end of Yurrupe to the other. When the American Eagle begins to scream, gentlemen, it's time for you to watch out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It may take us weeks—" continued Fisher T. Fish.

"Not merely a day or two?" asked Bob Cherry, in a disappointed tone.

"Weeks, perhaps months; but the Yewnited States, gentlemen, will get there. They will get there every time. And the day will come, gentlemen, when the Stars and Stripes will float over the gilded spires of Potsdam to the tune of 'Yankee Doodle!'"

"Bravo!"

"As for the submarines, we shall squash them instanter!"

"Good!"

"If it's necessary to invent anything for the purpose, a man will be told off to invent it at once—"

"Oh!"

"And that galoot, gents, will do it. The Kaiser may as well consider his submarines are at the bottom of the sea. They're practically there now that the eagle has begun to scream!"

"Bravo!"

"Gentlemen, it does me proud to accept this hearty testimonial as a token of fellowship and hands across the sea!" concluded Fisher T. Fish, amid cheers.

And Fishy reached out for the subscription-list, which Bolsover major handed to him. Billy Bunter made a jump at it, but fell over Bob Cherry's foot—definitely interposed—and sat down again with a roar.

Fisher T. Fish took the list, and his eager eye scanned the total at the bottom of the last column.

Then he almost fell off the chair.

For the total—undoubtedly a very handsome one—exceeded by far the total of the Victory War Loan. The sum was:

"TOTAL: £100,648,875,009,357."

Any fellow presented with a testimonial to the value of over one hundred trillions sterling might have been expected to be pleased. Somehow, Fisher T. Fish did not look pleased. Perhaps the date—June 31st—when that vast sum was to be handed over detracted from its value.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Temple Tries It On!

FISHY did not speak for some moments. In the silence of expectation, the voice of William George Bunter was heard:

"Yah! That's mine! Hand it over, you rotter!"

Then Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Gents, I guess that lets me out!" he remarked. "I calculate I've been left. I guess I sha'n't come round on that date collecting this cash!"

"You jolly well won't!" roared Bunter indignantly. "I'm going to do that, Fishy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish nodded agreeably.

"Your win, Bunter, I guess," he said. "You'd like me to hand over this hyer subscription-list to you?"

"Yes," grinned Bunter.

"You'll deal with it, raise the cash on it, and expend it to the best advantage?"

"Of—of course."

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

The Owl of the Remove had not yet seen the list.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "Do you think I shall spend any of the money on tuck, you suspicious rotters?"

"I'm jolly sure you won't!" grinned Skinner. "Not that cash!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, somewhat taken aback by this unexpected testimony. "Well, if Skinner trusts me, I should think you fellows can—a suspicious beast like Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Fishy's doing the right and proper thing in handing over that subscription-list for me to collect. It's—ahem!—just what I should have expected of Fishy. Hand it over, Fishy!"

"Hyer you are!"

Fisher T. Fish tossed the book over to Bunter, and strolled out of the Common-room.

William George Bunter's fat fingers closed eagerly on the notebook. The juniors watched him, grinning. Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at the list of names with enormous sums of money attached, dumbfounded.

"Wharton, £50,000; Skinner, £177,965; Ogilvy, £160,000! I say, you fellows, what does this mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the merry subscription, my fat tulip!" chortled Peter Todd.

"But—but Ogilvy ain't got a hundred and sixty thousand pounds!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Not quite," said Ogilvy, with a chuckle. "But I'll find it if you ask me for it on the proper date!"

"Date? What date? June 31st? Yah, you rotters, there's only thirty days in June!" roared Bunter, understanding at last why Fisher T. Fish had yielded that precious subscription-list to him so tamely.

"Go hon!"

"Not really!"

"You—you—you rotters!" yelled Bunter. "You—you've only been pulling my leg all the time, you beasts!"

"Just found it out?" grinned Hazel-dene.

"I refuse to take any subscriptions from you now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter bestowed upon the hilarious juniors a glare which nearly cracked his spectacles. Then he rolled out of the Common-room, realising sadly that a testimonial to the Greyfriars representative of the great American Republic was not destined, after all, to bring any grist to his mill.

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The juniors were still chuckling over Bunter's subscription-list when Temple, Dabney, and Fry came into the Common-room.

Temple looked quite portentous, and Fry and Dabney looked as serious as they could.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Wherefore that knitted brow, oh Cecil Reginald? Wherefore that stern and disdainful glance, oh king?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snapped Temple.

"Not at all. I leave that to you," said Bob. "You're ever so much better in the part!"

"I've come here to see you, Wharton!"

Wharton smiled, and struck the best attitude known to the Remove Dramatic Society, his head well back, his chest expanded, right leg forward, and left hand on his breast. Temple blinked at him.

"What's that game?" he demanded.

"Gaze your fill," said Wharton affably. "If you've come here to see me, go ahead. No charge. Feast your eyes!"

"You cheeky fag! If you want a thick ear—" roared Temple.

Dabney pulled him by the arm, and whispered in his ear, and the great Cecil Reginald controlled himself with an effort.

"Look here, Wharton, it's about the cricket!"

"You're going to speak about cricket?"

"Yes," frowned Temple.

"My hat! You've heard of the game?" asked Wharton.

"What!"

"But if you've heard of it, why don't you play it?" continued the captain of the Remove. "It's quite an interesting game when you come to know it. I've often seen you chaps monkeying about with a bat and ball, and wondered why you didn't set to and play cricket!"

Again Cecil Reginald Temple was on the verge of an explosion; but he held himself nobly in check.

"About the St. Jim's match," he said. "That's a fixture that ought not to belong to a fag Form team. You know it!"

"What's the good of telling me, then, if I know it? Are you a perambulating encyclopædia of superfluous knowledge?" asked Wharton.

"You—you—I mean I'm going to ask you to do the proper thing, and hand that fixture over to the Second Eleven of Greyfriars!"

"Oh, my hat! But we're the Second Eleven!" said Bob Cherry.

"You're not!" hooted Temple.

"You're a mere Form team—a fag team! You're nobody—less than nobody! We're the Second Eleven. Now, I want to know if you're going to do the right thing!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And that is—"

"Stick to our fixture," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "My dear man, if the St. Jim's match were played on the cinema, your team would be first-rate. It would make the audience simply scream. But, you see—"

"I should be willing to play some of the Remove," said Temple, suppressing his wrath with another great effort. "I could find room, I dare say, for three Remove players—perhaps four."

"Could you find room for eleven?"

"Eh? How many?"

"Eleven. If you could put in eleven Remove chaps, we might consider the proposition. Not otherwise."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Temple, quite losing his temper at last. "What you want is a thick nose, and you're going to get it!"

And he rushed at the captain of the Remove.

Then, as one man, the Famous Five closed round Temple, Dabney, and Fry, and before they knew what was happening they were strewn about the passage outside.

They picked themselves up rather dizzily.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fry.

Five grinning faces looked at them from the Common-room doorway. Temple & Co. felt too dusty and dishevelled to continue the argument. They limped away to their study in the Fourth. Temple's generous offer had not been accepted—and the matter was settled. If, by the cunning of the Bounder, the match could be bagged from the Remove, the Fourth Form of Greyfriars were going to bag it!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Wants to know!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. put in most of their spare time at cricket practice the next day.

The St. Jim's match was to come off on Wednesday; and that match was a tough proposition.

Wharton was still regretting, in a way, that he could not play Vernon-Smith. But he never thought for a moment of changing his mind upon that point.

The Bounder had forfeited the esteem of his former comrades. He had gone back to the rascally old ways that had first earned him his nickname; and unless he made a new start he had nothing to expect of Wharton.

Apart from his blackguardism, which made decent fellows unwilling to have too much to do with him, there was the still more important fact that he could not be relied upon to keep fit for the game. Already the Remove had lost one match through the Bounder failing them, owing to his reckless escapades and the consequent seediness. Wharton was not likely to risk another defeat for the same reason, and the members of the team would have talked pretty plainly to him if he had.

But that point of view the Bounder could not, or would not, see. According to his own view, he was the injured party, and was entitled to get his own back by any means that came to hand. And the Bounder had never been too scrupulous in the means he chose to effect any purpose.

Vernon-Smith did not join his Form fellows at practice, and some of the Removees were surprised to see him at the nets with Temple, Dabney & Co.

He was in good form, too. He was batting in a way that the Fourth Form bowlers found above their mark. That was no guarantee, however, of the form he would be in on the morrow. It would be quite like the Bounder to have a night out before a match, and rise in the morning with dull eyes and aching head.

"Smithy's given us the go-by," Mark Linley remarked, when the Remove fellows came away from the nets. "He can't be going to play for the Fourth, surely?"

"Might be," said Wharton. "I shouldn't be sorry. If they want him, they're welcome to him. All to the good, in fact. It would make our next match with them a bit more of a tussle. Smithy could play all their heads off if he liked!"

"He seems in ripping good form," said Bob Cherry, with a backward glance at the Bounder, who was bowling to Temple now. "My hat! There goes Temple's wicket. Cecil Reginald doesn't look too well pleased."

"It's a pity," said Nugent, with a glance at Wharton. "A dashed pity!" "That he can't play for us?" said Harry. "I know it is. But it can't be helped; and Dicky Rake is a good man, anyhow."

The Bounder remained chatting with the Fourth Form fellows for some time after the practice was over, and they sauntered down to the gates of Greyfriars. He seemed in high good humour.

As a matter of fact, the peculiar game he was playing was quite in accordance with the Bounder's instincts and tastes; and now that his old rivalry with Harry Wharton & Co. was removed he felt a good deal of the old keen excitement, which was like wine to him.

He whistled as he strode away along the white road to Courtfield.

"Hold on, Smithy!" Skinner of the Remove was hurrying after him.

The Bounder frowned, and did not slacken his pace. Skinner hastened his steps, and overtook him.

"Going to see Ponsonby at Highcliffs?"

"No."

"Whither bound, then?"

"Courtfield."

"Anything on?" asked Skinner curiously. "If you were going over to Highcliff, I'd come with you."

"Well, I'm not."

"Keeping secrets from your old pals?" grinned Skinner. "Dash it all, you can trust me, Smithy."

"About as far as I can see you," said the Bounder drily.

"Oh, come off it! What's the game?"

The Bounder walked on in silence. Skinner walked on, too. Courtfield came in sight, and Skinner was still with him.

Skinner's curiosity was aroused.

He had been on much more intimate terms with the Bounder since the latter's fall from grace; in fact, it was, as Skinner said, like the old times—the merry old times. And Skinner was keen to back up Smithy in any move against the Famous Five. Indeed, he seemed more keen about that than Smithy himself was. The Bounder was against Wharton, as he had said; but hitherto he had turned a deaf ear to the urgings of Skinner, Snoop, and Stott that he should have a go for the captaincy of the Form. That honour did not seem to attract him as of old.

"Going back?" he asked, as they came nearer to the town.

"Don't you want me?" asked Skinner.

"Not particularly."

"Look here, what's the game? We're pals, ain't we?" said Skinner. "I've offered to back you up for all I'm worth if you have a go at the captaincy. I don't see why we shouldn't get Wharton out."

The Bounder shook his head.

"You'd like to be captain of the Remove?" urged Skinner.

"In a way, yes."

"Then why not try for it?"

Vernon-Smith smiled sarcastically.

"You wouldn't understand my reason, Skinner."

"Why shouldn't I?" said Skinner tartly.

"What's the reason, anyway?"

"Wharton's a better Form captain than I should make. It's better all round, for the Remove, for Wharton to have it."

The Bounder had said that Skinner would not understand his motive. He was right. Skinner stared at him blankly.

"A fat lot you care about that!" he said at last.

"Thanks!"

"Look here, Smithy, you're not serious?"

"Sober as a judge."

"But you're up against Wharton?" exclaimed the puzzled and exasperated cad of the Remove.

"Quite so. But there are limits—for the present, at least. I told you you wouldn't understand," said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"I suppose you're pulling my leg somehow," said Skinner. "Do you mean to say that you're going to lie down and let that crowd walk over you?"

The Bounder laughed.

"You'll see—if you like to come into Lazarus' with me," he said.

"What on earth are you going to Lazarus' for?" asked Skinner.

"You'll see if you come."

"Oh, I'll come!"

The two juniors reached Mr. Lazarus' shop in the High Street.

It was a corner shop, with one department devoted to the business signified by three golden balls, and the other to second-hand articles.

It was the latter the juniors entered.

Mr. Lazarus was behind the counter, and he gave Vernon-Smith a gracious smile. Mr. Lazarus had a good deal of respect for the son of Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier.

"May I use the telephone for a trunk call, Mr. Lazarus?"

"Certainly, Mister Smith!"

"Oh, it's the 'phone!" said the mystified Skinner.

"Exactly!"

Mr. Lazarus was accustomed to oblige his customers with the use of his telephone—for a consideration. The Remove fellows sometimes helped themselves to Mr. Quelch's instrument; but that was not always possible, and then Mr. Lazarus came in useful.

The old gentleman showed the two juniors into the stuffy little parlour behind the shop, and left them there.

Vernon-Smith took up the receiver, applied for a trunk call, gave the number, and put up the receiver again.

He stretched himself in a horsehair chair, and yawned. Skinner had heard the number, and he stared at his companion curiously.

"That's a St. Jim's number," he said.

"Quite so."

"You're going to speak to St. Jim's?"

"Yes. To Merry."

"About the match to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"But you're not in the team now."

"Not now," smiled the Bounder.

"But perhaps I shall be to-morrow, dear boy."

"Blessed if I understand you!"

The Bounder laughed, and took a pink paper from his pocket to wile away the time of waiting. He was conning over a list of horses, preparatory to backing his fancy for a race when he met Mr. Jerry Hawke, the bookmaker, again.

Skinner drummed his heels on the floor impatiently. He did not enjoy the wait in the stuffy little room; but he was too curious to know what the Bounder had to say to Tom Merry to think of leaving him.

The telephone-bell rang at last, and the Bounder went to the instrument. Skinner was quite on the alert now.

"I'm through," said the Bounder, with a smile to Skinner. "There's another receiver here. You can hear if you like."

Skinner picked up the second receiver, and put it to his ear.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that St. Jim's?"

"Yes." It was the voice of Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Who is speaking?"

"Greyfriars School. I apologise for troubling you; but I want to speak to

Merry very specially about the match to-morrow, if you don't mind—"

"Oh, that's all right!" came Kildare's cordial voice, in reply. "Hold on a minute, kid, and I'll call him here!"

"Thanks!"

"The 'phone's in the prefects' room at St. Jim's, you see," the Bounder explained. "They were bound to let me speak to Merry."

Skinner nodded, and kept his ear glued to the receiver.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Scheme!

"HALLO!" It was Tom Merry's clear voice, recognisable even at the distance.

"That you, Tom Merry?"

"Yes. That you, Wharton?"

"No; Vernon-Smith. Don't you know my voice?"

"Yes, I do now. Go ahead!"

The Bounder smiled slightly. Tom Merry knew him as a prominent member of the Greyfriars Junior Eleven, and expected to see him with the rest on the morrow at St. Jim's. Of the trouble that had arisen in the Greyfriars Remove in respect to the Bounder, Tom Merry, of course, knew nothing.

"About the match to-morrow," said the Bounder. "We're coming over by the early train, as usual; you'll expect us in the morning?"

"Oh, yes!"

"The trains are a bit uncertain here now, though—war-time, you know. If we should come by the next train, you'll know it's not our fault."

"Right as rain!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "I know how it is. We'll expect you as soon as we see you."

"That's right. We shouldn't be more than an hour later than usual, anyway; but we thought you might as well know."

"Yes, thanks!"

"By the way, there have been some changes in the team," said the Bounder. "You won't see Wharton to-morrow."

"Not ill, I hope?"

"Well, not exactly ill, but not up to form for giving St. Jim's a licking. It's considered, on the whole, best for him to keep indoors a bit. It will be a big disappointment to him, of course."

"Yes. I'm really sorry. Anybody else staying behind?"

"Yes; and I think you ought to know that it's a rather older team you'll be playing," said Vernon-Smith, while Skinner fairly blinked at him in dumb amazement. "There will be a lot of the Fourth in it; a bit older team than the one you played last. You don't mind that?"

"Not at all. We're Fourth and Shell ourselves in the Junior Eleven, you know," said Tom Merry. "You can bring anybody you like under the Fifth. We draw the line at seniors, you know."

"Nothing above the Fourth," said Vernon-Smith. "As a matter of absolute fact, the new recruits are not up to Remove form, but it can't be helped. You wouldn't like us to bring the flu over."

"My hat! No. The other chaps down with influenza? That's bad!"

"Oh!" murmured Skinner.

"Nothing serious," said the Bounder, with perfect calmness. "But, under the circumstances, cricket isn't exactly the thing for them. Don't think we're bringing you any germs, you know."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Of course, a chap with the flu here is isolated at once, and there's no danger of another chap carrying it about."

"I know that, of course. Same here."

"If any of them can come, of course they will come," continued Vernon-Smith.

Smith. "But it's barely possible that I may be the only Remove chap in the team. It depends on what can be done to-morrow. I though I'd best let you know."

"Thanks!"

"All right at St. Jim's?"

"Oh, yes; right as rain!"

"Good! Good-bye, then!"

"Good-bye, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith rang off. He replaced the receiver on the hooks.

Skinner, utterly dumbfounded, stood with the other receiver to his ear as if it were glued there.

"Coming?" yawned Vernon-Smith.

Skinner jammed down the receiver at last.

"Well, my only summer hat!" he ejaculated.

He followed Vernon-Smith through the shop like a fellow in a dream. The Bouncer settled with Mr. Lazarus, and the two juniors left the shop, and started for Greyfriars.

"What the merry thunder does it all mean?" exclaimed Skinner at last.

"What were you telling Tom Merry that pack of lies for?"

"Lies!" repeated the Bouncer, raising his eyebrows. "Have I told him any lies?"

"You told him Wharton's team is down with the flu—"

"Nothing of the sort. He may have gathered that from what I said. But I certainly did not tell him so."

"Well, I don't see how he can avoid thinking so, anyway. What's that rot about the Fourth playing them to-morrow?"

"That's the little game," said the Bouncer calmly. "You understand that you're not to breathe a word about it, Skinner?"

"Of course; rely on me. But—"

"If you care to risk it with Quelch, and cut to-morrow, I'll find you a place in the team," said the Bouncer coolly. "You're not much of a cricketer, but you're as good as Temple, any day."

"Not good enough," said Skinner. "I'd like to come; but I'm not taking chances with Quelch."

"You can please yourself," said the Bouncer, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"But—but Wharton's going over to St. Jim's to-morrow, isn't he?" asked the astonished Skinner. "He thinks he is, anyway."

"There's many a slip between cup and lip, you know. I've no doubt Wharton's crowd will start to catch the ten o'clock train for Rylcombe."

"Well, they'll catch it, won't they?"

"No. They'll catch nothing. They'll be caught!"

Skinner stopped dead, and stared in the Bouncer's smiling, sarcastic face.

"Wha-a-at's going to happen to-morrow?" he asked.

"Of course, a fellow can't be sure," drawled the Bouncer, "but my impression is that Wharton and his team are going to disappear somewhere between Greyfriars and Friardale Station, and that another eleven is going over to St. Jim's instead."

Skinner gasped. The Bouncer's last words had taken his breath away.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Looks In!

"COME in, Smithy!" Dabney and Fry were very cordial as the Bouncer of Greyfriars presented himself in the study. Cecil Reginald Temple did not look quite so cordial.

Cecil Reginald had to admit that the Bouncer was a very useful ally. With

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the Bouncer's aid, it seemed probable that the Remove would be dished for once in a way. And, without that aid, certainly Cecil Reginald Temple could never have dished the heroes of the Lower Fourth. But there were drawbacks even to prospective success. Temple could not help feeling that he was taking a back seat, and that the cool, masterful Bouncer was stepping into his shoes, and a back seat was not the kind of seat Temple regarded as suitable for his lofty self.

The Bouncer noted Temple's restive expression with an inward smile.

But Dabney and Fry did not share Temple's feelings. In fact, their opinion was that their chum might as well reserve his loftiness for another and more suitable occasion.

"How did you get on?" asked Fry, with keen interest.

"First-rate!" The Bouncer grinned. "Tom Merry will expect a team to-morrow mostly made up of the Fourth."

"Good egg!"

"And he didn't smell a rat?" asked Dabney.

"No fear! He knows me as a member of the regular eleven, so naturally he took it all as gospel."

"Good enough," said Fry.

"Well, good enough in a way," said Temple grudgingly. "But I'm blessed if I half like the idea of going over as a sort of substitute team. I want to play St. Jim's as Greyfriars Second Eleven, not as a cheap imitation of the Remove."

"May be able to fix it up as a regular fixture afterwards," suggested the Bouncer. "This is only by way of a beginning."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Temple.

"At all events, you bag the fixture, and the Remove are left out in the cold."

"And it's generally us that get left out in the cold," remarked Fry.

Temple sniffed. He took this as a reflection on his leadership—as no doubt it was.

"Look here, Fry—"

"Well, it's a fact, isn't it?" said Fry. "But never mind that. We play St. Jim's to-morrow, and the Remove will get the push out of it. That's good enough for me."

"You've seen Capper, Temple?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Capper was the master of the Upper Fourth.

"Yes; I've been to him. Capper is a good-natured Johnny," said Temple, condescending to smile. "When I explained to him that the Remove were prevented from fulfilling a cricket engagement, and that a member of their team had asked us to take it up, it was all right. We've got leave to-morrow morning to start early for the match—the whole team."

"Oh, good!"

"Capper couldn't well refuse," remarked Dabney. "Mr. Quelch gives the Remove a free day for the St. Jim's match, and Capper couldn't do less for us. Of course, if he'd refused, we'd have taken French leave, and chanced it."

"You'll have to do that, Smithy," said Fry, with a curious look at the Bouncer.

"As you're not now a member of the Remove Eleven, you won't be given Wednesday morning off. Wharton will only ask leave for the members of his team."

The Bouncer nodded.

"I'm going to cut," he said. "It won't amount to much—the afternoon's a holiday, anyway—it's only taking the morning; besides, I may be able to fix it with Quelch. Never mind me. It's all serene for you fellows. You leave here immediately after breakfast, and wait at the place we've agreed on close by Friardale Lane. I shall come along

with Wharton's crowd—seeing them off at the station."

"There'll be eleven of them," said Temple doubtfully. "We shall be eleven. I've asked Capper for the full number—and you'll make twelve. Wharton's crowd will be certain to put up a fight."

"Twelve against eleven!" said Dabney dubiously. "Of course, we can lick them—ahem!—but I don't know about collar-ing the whole crowd, Smithy."

"Smithy's got something else up his sleeve," said Fry. "Go it, Smithy!"

"There will be more help," explained the Bouncer. "I've asked some friends of mine to lend a hand."

"But they can't get leave from morning lessons," said Temple.

"They're not Greyfriars fellows."

Temple's brows contracted.

"Look here, Smithy, you've got such jolly queer friends outside the school!" he exclaimed. "I heard about that trick you played on Bob Cherry and Ogilvy last week. You got two or three hooligans to keep them out of a cricket-match. I hope you haven't been getting a gang of hooligans to chip in this time."

The Bouncer smiled unpleasantly.

"What kind of fellows did you expect me to get for such a job?" he inquired sarcastically. "Law-abiding citizens, or county magnates?"

Dabney and Fry chuckled, but Temple looked very dissatisfied.

"We don't want to be mixed up with a lot of hooligans," he said. "It's a jape on the Remove, so far; we don't want to turn it into a pot-house brawl."

"Oh, leave it to Smithy!" said Fry. "There's no other way. Capper wouldn't give leave to all the Fourth—especially if we told him what it was for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't like the idea!" said Temple obstinately.

Vernon-Smith's eyes glistened for a moment. But he had to be diplomatic with Temple. He could not make use of the sublime Cecil Reginald without considering his sensitive feelings very carefully. For the triumph of the Fourth over the Remove the Bouncer did not, of course, care a straw. It was his own success in defeating Wharton that he cared about. But for that purpose Temple was a tool not to be dispensed with.

"Well, if you don't like the idea, we'll let it drop," he said indifferently. "It's easy enough to tell Capper that you're not going, after all."

Temple's face fell a little; he did not want that. Dabney and Fry looked at him very expressively.

"Well—" began Temple slowly.

"As for the fellows I've asked to help, they won't do any harm. They're chaps who work along the river, and they'll be glad of the half-quid each I've promised them," said the Bouncer. "You won't be called on to stump up."

"I don't care about that. But—" Temple hesitated. "Those rough bouncers who hang about the Cross Keys, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't like it!"

The Bouncer rose.

"All serene. It's all off!" he said, moving towards the door.

"Hold on!" said Fry quietly. "It's not all off. Stay where you are, Smithy. Temple doesn't mean that. He wouldn't like us to go without him, and that's what it would come to."

Temple appeared to swallow something with great difficulty. His objections seemed likely to deprive him of what leadership he had left.

"I don't say I refuse," he said. "If Smithy's made arrangements—"

"All cut and dried," said Vernon-Smith.

"Then it can't be helped. I'm agreeable."

"Good, then!" said Vernon-Smith. "Those fellows won't hurt the Remove kids. It's all right. You see, somebody must look after them while we are gone to St. Jim's."

"Yes, that's so. I hadn't thought of that. Where are they going to be held?"

"A cheery little cruise on a barge," said the Bounder, with a grin. "I don't see why they shouldn't enjoy it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple laughed as well as Dabney and Fry. Harry Wharton & Co. certainly were not looking forward to cruising on a barge on the day of the St. Jim's match.

"Hold on!" said the Bounder suddenly.

With a sudden glint in his eyes he whirled round to the door. He flung it open, and a fat junior tumbled headlong into the study.

"Bunter!" yelled Fry.

"He's heard!"

The Bounder looked down at the Owl of the Remove, with a savage fury in his face that startled the Fourth-Formers.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Subscriptions at Last!

"BUNTER!"

Billy Bunter set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at the Bounder with a terrified blink.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I've not heard anything," he stuttered—"not a word, you know. I—I wouldn't think of listening. I—I came here for subscriptions to my testimonial fund—Ow!"

Bunter had shed a notebook and a pencil as he tumbled into the study.

The Owl of the Remove had evidently come to Temple's study on a forlorn hope. Temple had plenty of money, and doubtless Bunter did not see why he should not have some of it.

In his usual way, he had listened, as soon as he found that talk was going on, and it was easy to see that he was in possession of the whole scheme.

The Bounder was pale with rage.

Most of the details of the scheme were known to the chatterbox of the Remove. Temple, Dabney, and Fry looked hopeless as well as furious. They thought that the game was up.

Vernon-Smith grasped Bunter by the collar and dragged him to his feet.

"Yow-ow!" howled Bunter. "Leggo, you beast! I haven't heard a word, and I'm not going to tell Wharton that you're going to kidnap him, same as you did Ogilvy and Bob Cherry—Yaroooh! Don't shake me like that, you rotter! If you make my—yow!—glasses fall off—groogh!—and they get b-b-broken—yow!—you'll have to pay for them! Yooop!"

"It's all up!" said Temple. "That fat fool will never keep his silly tongue quiet!"

The Bounder released Bunter. There was not much use in shaking the fat Removeite, though it was some solace.

Billy Bunter gasped for breath.

"You keep your paws off!" he said indignantly. "You touch me again, Smithy, and I'll go straight to Wharton!"

"You fat rotter!"

"You spying cad!"

"If you accuse me of listening, Fry, I shall feel bound to acquaint Wharton with the whole matter at once!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I heard what you fellows were saying by chance—pure chance! If you're civil, I might be disposed to stand by you. Wharton has treated me badly—in fact, ungratefully. He has refused to play me against St. Jim's, though I've offered my services

twice. Serve him right to lose the match, then; and, of course, it'll be lost if you play in it, Temple, won't it?"

Temple only replied to that engaging remark with a Hunnish look.

"But I'll tell you what," continued Bunter, with more confidence, as he realised that he held the upper-hand. "As I heard you by—by accident, I feel bound not to repeat what I've heard. I'm an honourable chap, you know. But, of course, I expect friendly treatment in this study!"

Temple & Co. did not look very friendly.

"I came here about the Fishy testimonial," said Bunter, quite cheerfully now. "I was going to ask you fellows to put your names down. Of course, none of the money comes to me; I'm entirely disinterested in the matter. I'm sure you will want to testify your appreciation of the splendid action of the United States by joining in this testimonial to Fishy. How much can I put you down for, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith shut his teeth hard. He

"Good for you, Smithy! I won't forget!"

Bunter made elaborate entries in the subscription-list. He was doing everything in order. In the obtuse depths of his fat mind, Bunter regarded his testimonial fund as quite a legitimate enterprise.

He gave the four juniors an affable nod when he had finished.

"Ta-ta, dear boys!" he said, and rolled out of the study.

Vernon-Smith closed the door after him.

"Well, you must be an ass, Smithy!" said Dabney. "What are you going to give him another five bob to-morrow for, when it's all over?"

"So that he will keep his fat tongue quiet till it is all over," said the Bounder. "Oh!"

"When the fat fool feels inclined to babble, he will think of that five bob coming, and keep his mouth shut. I think it's all safe," said the Bounder.

And with a careless nod to the Fourth-Formers he left the study.



The Captured Eleven! (See Chapter 11.)

knew that he had to buy Bunter off. His only doubt was whether Bunter would chatter after he was bought off.

"Five bob," he said.

"Good! Money down?"

The Bounder laid five shillings on the table. Billy Bunter turned his big spectacles on Temple & Co.

"Now, you fellows, roll up, now that Smithy's shown you a good example!" he said encouragingly. "It's a worthy object, you know!"

"Half-a-crown," said Temple, with an effort.

Dabney and Fry silently laid a shilling each on the table, with looks that were more eloquent than words.

Bunter's fat fingers gathered up the contributions.

"Good!" he remarked. "Much obliged! Though, of course, this isn't for me; it's for the patriotic testimonial!"

"I'm getting another remittance to-morrow, Bunter," remarked the Bounder casually. "Come to me to-morrow evening, and I'll stand another five!"

Billy Bunter had proceeded immediately to No. 1 Study, where Wharton and Nugent were at work on their prep.

Wharton pointed to the door with his pen.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps you'd like to see my subscription-list?" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Raised another trillion?" asked Nugent, laughing.

"That was a rotten joke, Nugent! I've raised nine-and-six so far!"

"My hat! Got it about you?"

The Owl of the Remove proudly displayed the nine shillings and sixpence he had gathered in Temple's study. Wharton and Nugent stared at it in amazement.

"What howling ass gave you that?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I've got four names down—Temple, Dabney, Fry, and Smithy!"

"Great pip!"

"Would you fellows care to add your names?" asked Bunter. "Now they've started the ball rolling, you know—"

"I'll start you rolling if you don't let me get on with my prep!"

"I say, you fellows, if you made a really handsome subscription to the testimonial I might make it worth your while," said Bunter cautiously. "I may know something, and I may not!"

"Eh?"

"A fellow might have heard a fellow talking, and he might not," said Bunter mysteriously.

"Is that a riddle?"

"No, it isn't, you ass! Look here! Suppose you put your names down for a pound each—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, say ten bob each," urged Bunter. "If you paid up, I should feel it my duty to give you a tip, perhaps!"

"Keep your tips!" said Wharton, laughing.

"Perhaps you don't want to play St. Jim's to-morrow?" said Bunter.

"Eh? What?"

"A fellow knows what he knows," said Bunter, with a wise shake of the head.

"Now, are you going to make it ten bob each?"

"I'm going to make it a boot," said Nugent, getting up.

Billy Bunter did not wait for the boot. He departed from No. 1 Study in a great hurry.

"What was the fat duffer burbling about, Harry?" asked Nugent, looking at his chum.

"Blessed if I know! Off his rocker, perhaps!"

And the chums of the Remove went on with their work.

In the Remove dormitory that night Billy Bunter was wearing a very knowing look. He bestowed a series of significant winks and nods upon the Bounder, who did not appear to observe them. Billy Bunter was simply bursting with his secret, and probably only the prospect of the Bounder's second contribution on the morrow kept it from flowing from his lips. Vernon-Smith had calculated well on that point.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Blow Falls!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were very cheery the next morning.

Wednesday was always a half-holiday for the members of the eleven.

It was a bright, sunny morning, with the promise of an ideal day for cricket.

While the other fellows were preparing for morning's lessons as usual, the Remove Eleven were thinking of cricket on Little Side at St. Jim's.

So were Temple, Dabney & Co., as a matter of fact.

But on that morning of all mornings Harry Wharton & Co. had no attention to bestow on their old rivals of the Fourth Form.

The cricketers of the Remove attended first lesson, and then they were free for the day.

Temple had obtained permission from his Form-master for the Fourth Form team to leave immediately after breakfast.

Mr. Capper, when he gave that permission, certainly did not suspect for a moment that the match his boys were to play in place of the Remove team was bagged without the knowledge of the Remove.

If the Fourth Form master had guessed that little circumstance, his permission would certainly have been withdrawn. But, naturally, he had no suspicion.

While the rest of Greyfriars went into the Form-rooms, Temple, Dabney & Co.

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sauntered out of the school gates with their bags.

Harry Wharton & Co. came out after first lessons, and if they thought about the Fourth at all they supposed that they were still in their Form-room as usual. Probably they did not think about them at all.

Vernon-Smith left the Form-room with the team.

Mr. Quelch had given him permission to accompany the eleven to St. Jim's, as he was usually a playing member. The Remove-master, in fact, was very kind to the Bounder of late. He had wondered sometimes whether he had been a little hard on Vernon-Smith, whose conduct of late had been quite exemplary—outwardly, at least. He was glad to give him leave for so harmless an excursion as that of accompanying a cricket eleven as a reserve.

Had the permission not been obtained overnight, Vernon-Smith would certainly have taken French leave, and gone with Temple & Co. The certainty of punishment afterwards would not have deterred him in the least.

Mr. Quelch's kindness was opportune; but it made no impression on the Bounder. It only afforded him cynical amusement to reflect that he had been punished when he was not guilty, and that he was treated with kindness when he had sunk into more than all his old blackguardism.

Harry Wharton & Co. were considerably surprised when Vernon-Smith left the Form-room with them.

"You've got leave?" Squiff asked him, as they went down the passage.

"Oh, yes! Quelch's given me leave to come as a reserve," said the Bounder calmly.

"But you're not a reserve!" said Wharton abruptly.

"Quite so. But that was good enough for Quelch."

"Are you coming to St. Jim's?" asked Hazeldene.

"Why not?"

"Well, as you're not playing, it's unnecessary travelling," remarked Tom Brown. "That's barred in war-time, you know!"

"Thanks for the information."

The New Zealand junior frowned; but he said no more. The Bounder was evidently in one of his sardonic humours.

The cricketers walked out of gates, the Bounder with them. The addition to the party was not very welcome. Under the circumstances, as the Bounder had been recently booted out of the team, it was not the best taste on his part. But he did not seem to see it; and they were civil, anyway.

The eleven consisted of Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Squiff, Tom Brown, Mark Linley, Peter Todd, Rake, and Hazeldene. It was a good eleven, and perhaps only the inclusion of the Bounder could have made it stronger. In the cheery morning sunshine the juniors tramped along the leafy lane towards Friardale, in good time to catch the ten o'clock local train.

The Bounder sauntered on with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his face.

His eyes glinted a little as the party drew near the dip in the road where big trees overshadowed the lane from side to side.

If Temple & Co. and his other assistants had carried out his instructions, the ambush was there.

As the cricketers walked down the slope under the shadow of the trees Vernon-Smith gave a short, sharp whistle.

"What the dick—"

"Smithy—"

That sudden signal had surprised and startled the Removites.

But they quickly discovered the cause. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Look out!"

Ahead of the party, eleven fellows had suddenly rushed into the road. They were Temple and his merry men.

They blocked the way of the Remove cricketers, grinning.

"Well, what does this game mean?" demanded Wharton. "What are you fellows doing out of your Form-room?"

"We're doing you!" Fry explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple came forward loftily. He raised a commanding hand.

"You kids can go back to Greyfriars!" he said.

"What!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The whatfulness is terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Singh. "Is the esteemed Temple off his august rocker?"

"We are going to play the St. Jim's match," said Temple coolly. "You kids are superfluous. You can cut!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Look here, Temple, we've got a train to catch, and we've no time to mop up the road with you now," said Wharton impatiently. "Get out of the way!"

"Line up!" said Temple.

"Oh, rush them!" said Bob Cherry. "It won't take us long to dust up the road with them."

There was another sharp whistle from the Bounder as he ran to join the Fourth-Formers.

From the thickets by the road, behind the Remove party, half a dozen burly fellows emerged, with grinning faces.

They were not, as the aristocratic Temple had feared, exactly hooligans. They were rough fellows who sometimes worked on the barges on the Sark. They generally congregated at the Cross Keys; and the Bounder had easily engaged them for what they regarded as a rough practical joke, through his bookmaking friend, Mr. Jerry Hawke, whose headquarters were at that establishment.

The Removites stared at them. It was only too evident that they meant mischief.

"This is the Bounder's doing!" muttered Bob.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"Vernon-Smith, is this some of your trickery?" he exclaimed.

The Bounder, who had now joined Temple & Co., looked back at his old comrades with a grin.

"Right on the wicket!" he said coolly. "I think I mentioned to you, Wharton, that I should play in the St. Jim's match. You remember!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you fellows are going for a cruise on a barge to-day," said the Bounder. "These chaps will take you there. You can go quietly, or you can be taken by force. There's a short cut to the river through the wood from here, and you won't be seen. Are you going quietly?"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him dumbfounded.

They knew the Bounder. They knew how he had employed two or three roughs to keep Bob Cherry and Ogilvy out of a match at Greyfriars the week before. But that even the Bounder should think of such a scheme as kidnapping the whole Remove Eleven took their breath away.

There was a silence for a full minute.

"Go quietly!" said Wharton, at last.

"I think you must be out of your senses, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You can take your choice, of course," he said. "But you've got to make up your minds; we don't want anybody to come along and interfere." "Oh, rather!" chortled Dabney. "You cur!" shouted Johnny Bull furiously. "You're backing up against your own Form, are you?" "Certainly!" "Rush them!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Come on!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

And the Remove Eleven rushed on, to break their way through the Fourth-Formers barring the road.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Amalekites.

"STOP them!"

The Bounder's voice rang out, sharp and clear.

In a moment more Removeites and Fourth-Formers were mixed up in a wild and whirling scrap.

Cricket-bags on both sides were used as weapons, and yells and shouts rang out, and heavy tumbles occurred.

Had the two parties been left to themselves, the Fourth-Formers would certainly have been scattered, and Harry Wharton & Co. would have passed triumphantly on their way.

But Vernon-Smith had been very well aware of that when he laid his plans. The matter was not to be decided by the juniors alone.

The half-dozen brawny river-men came rushing on, and they hurled themselves into the scrap with cheery enjoyment.

The odds were hopelessly against the Remove then.

Man for man, schoolboys had, naturally, little chance against the big river-men. Each of the big, rough fellows seized one of them, who became at once a helpless prisoner.

That left only five of the Remove to deal with Temple & Co. and the Bounder, and the result was a foregone conclusion.

Struggling fiercely, the Remove cricketers were rushed out of the lane into the wood.

The Bounder was anxious to get them out of sight as quickly as possible.

Already a market-cart had appeared in the distance.

Still struggling, Harry Wharton & Co. were dragged and hustled a hundred yards into the wood. There they stopped.

Heedless of their furious expostulations, the grinning Temple went from one to another with a cord in his hand, and the cord was attached to the wrist of each of them in turn. After that resistance was no longer possible.

"I think that finishes you!" remarked Temple.

"Oh, you rotter!"

Harry Wharton panted. His face was crimson, his collar torn, his cap gone. He had put up a gallant though a losing fight.

This stroke on the part of the Fourth was very near the limit; but, after all, it was in the game, to some extent. The two Forms were old rivals. But the conduct of the Bounder, a Removeite himself, was black treachery. The feelings of the kidnapped cricketers towards their Form-fellow were Hunnish.

Their remarks—all emphatic—did not seem to trouble the Bounder, however.

"You'll get them along to the barge, Mick," he said. "Don't take them out of the wood till you get to the towing-path, of course."

"Yee, Master Smith," said Mick, grinning.

"Let us go, you ruffian!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Better take it quietly," smiled Temple. "This is just such a game as

you might have played on us, you know."

"But—but that rotter—"

"I warned you, you know!" smiled Vernon-Smith.

"You'll suffer for this, you cad!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps," said the Bounder, unmoved. "Just at present I'm going to play cricket." He looked at his watch. "We've lost the ten train, Temple. Never mind; I warned Merry we might have to come by the next."

"You—you—you warned Tom Merry?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Oh, yes. It's all out and dried, you know," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "You're not expected at St. Jim's. We are."

"You plotting cad!"

"Thanks! Come on, you fellows!"

The Bounder nodded to the captured juniors, with a cheery smile that made them grit their teeth, and walked away. Temple & Co. followed him in great spirits.

They disappeared through the trees.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left in the hands of the river-men, and, as their wrists were all fastened to a long cord, there was no possibility of disputing what was to be done with them.

"I suppose you men know that you can be locked up for this?" said Harry, suppressing his anger with an effort, and speaking quietly.

The rough gentleman whom the Bounder had addressed as "Mick" grinned.

"Only a practical joke of the young gent, sir," he said. "No 'arm intended. You are coming on a cruise; you'll enjoy it. Anyway, you're coming! If there's any trouble, Master Smith will see us through. He's a gentleman, he is, and werry free-anded with his money. Kim on!"

It was not possible for the Remove cricketers to raise any objection.

In a disconsolate file they were marched through the dusky depths of the wood out on to the lonely river-side.

A barge was moored there.

The juniors were taken upon the barge, and the river-men pushed off, and the clumsy craft dropped down the river.

It was moored again near the island in the widest part of the lower reaches of the river.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "This is a go! The Bounder has done us in the eye this time!"

Bob was trying to take it good-humouredly; but it was not easy.

"Let him wait till we see him again!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"Are those rotters going to keep us here all day, then?" asked Mark Linley.

"Looks like it."

"Oh, my hat!"

That was evidently the intention of Mick & Co. They lounged about the empty barge, smoking and playing cards to while away the time. And the Remove cricketers idled away the sunny hours with feelings that can be imagined, knowing that while they chafed in captivity the Bounder and his new comrades were arriving at St. Jim's to play the match with Tom Merry & Co.—and very likely to lose it for Greyfriars.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The St. Jim's Match!

"B A! Jove! Heah you are, deah boys!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. greeted the Greyfriars cricketers warmly as they arrived on the St. Jim's ground.

Tom Merry was a little surprised to note the extensive changes in the team since he had last seen it.

There was only one member whom he could recall having seen play for the Greyfriars junior side before—Herbert Vernon-Smith. Most of the other fellows were strangers to him, though he remembered having exchanged words with Temple and Fry and one or two more at Greyfriars.

Tom's opinion, as he glanced over the new team, was that it was not up to the mark of the old Remove team. There was a suspicion of swank about Temple & Co., as if they thought a good deal of themselves; but they did not look much like first-rate cricketers.

"How's Wharton?" asked Blake, of the St. Jim's Fourth.

"Sorry he couldn't come," said Vernon-Smith calmly. "We thought it better not, under the circs. But we've brought over a pretty good team. Temple's skipper."

"Sorry we couldn't catch the early train, Merry," said Cecil Reginald blandly. "War-time, you know. Ahem!"

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "Lots of time for the game, anyway. We're all ready!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Temple won the toss, and elected to bat first. The Bounder touched him on the arm.

"Let me open the innings with you, old scout," he murmured.

Cecil Reginald gave him a lofty gaze.

The Bounder had been useful—very useful—Cecil Reginald did not deny that. But his usefulness had now come to an end, in Cecil Reginald's opinion. It was time to mark the distinction between a Fourth-Former and a mere Remove fag.

"Couldn't think of it, Smithy," he said calmly. "You'll go in with me, Fry."

"Right-ho!" said Fry.

"Where do I come in?" asked the Bounder sullenly.

"Last man, dear boy."

And Temple went on to the field with Fry, leaving the Bounder gritting his teeth.

Vernon-Smith watched the opening of the innings with a moody brow.

He had given so much thought and care to the success of his plot that he had little to give to the match itself. But his school was something in his eyes. He wanted to win that match for Greyfriars.

It would be a dramatic climax to the curious game he had played, too, if he could bring off a win. But he knew he was the only class player in the team, and that the game depended chiefly on him.

He was at the top of his form, in the mood for a great game, and sure he would do well. But Temple was skipper—he had had to agree to that. And if Temple had had his way, it looked as if the Bounder would be "not out" at the end of each innings, with little chance to score.

Tom Merry & Co. had gone into the field, and Fatty Wynn bowled the first over.

The Bounder's forebodings were very quickly justified.

Fatty Wynn was observed to grin as he glanced along the pitch. He had taken the measure of Cecil Reginald Temple without even seeing him bat. The fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's took a little run, and the ball came down like a bullet from a rifle. And Cecil Reginald, who was going to swipe the ball into the middle of next week, or the whole length of the calendar, found his handsome and expensive bat swiping the air, what time the ball knocked his middle stump out of the ground.

Temple looked rather pink as he carried out his handsome bat, and Dabney went in to take his place.

The Bounder gave him a bitter look. "Can't you give a man who can bat a chance, you silly ass?" he snarled. "Oh, shut up!" snapped Temple.

He was not in a humour to listen to the Bounder's criticism.

Dabney's luck was little better than Temple's. He had only scored two runs before his wicket was spread-eagled.

Wilkinson was next man in, and he lived through the over. But the St. Jim's field was smiling.

Tom Merry & Co. had expected a tough match with Harry Wharton's eleven. It was clear by this time that the match was to be the reverse of tough.

Vernon-Smith understood their suppressed amusement, and his look grew darker and darker.

He thought of the cricketers cooped up on the barge a great distance away, idling and fuming and vowing vengeance. Was the game he had played worth the candle, after all?

As he saw the Greyfriars wickets going down in swift succession, the Bounder would, perhaps, have undone his work if he could.

But it was too late to think of that! Six wickets were down for eight runs when he spoke to Temple again. Temple had called Scott of the Fourth.

"Will you give me my chance now?" demanded Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "Do you want the St. Jim's fellows to laugh us to death?"

Temple gave him a supercilious look, but did not deign to reply.

It was Cecil Reginald's turn now, and the masterful ways of the Bounder were to be repaid with interest.

"Get on, Scott!" he said.

But Scott, who was a level-headed youth from over the Border, halted.

"Let Smithy go in," he said. "Dash it all, Temple! What's the good of pretending that we've got a bat like Smithy?"

Temple stared at him, unable to reply for a moment. Before he could speak the Bounder, taking Scott at his word, walked out.

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Temple.

"Who's captain of this team, Jim Scott?"

"Have we come here to collect duck's eggs?" asked Scott, by way of reply.

And Scott turned his back on the great Cecil Reginald, which was certainly not the proper way to treat a cricket captain, but was perhaps excusable under the circumstances.

Scott was a good bat himself, of the stonewall variety, and he knew Smithy's form. And he wanted to win that match, even if Temple's swank had to be cut down a little for the purpose.

The St. Jim's bowlers had got a little careless. But Vernon-Smith at the wickets soon woke them up.

Blake was bowling, and when the Bounder had taken a 2 and a 4, and another 4, Blake stood to attention with a vengeance.

He was dealing with a batsman of a very different type from those that had gone before.

The display thus far had been ludicrous. But Vernon-Smith made a mighty change. When he was at his best, he was very good indeed; and he was at his very best now.

There was a dream at the back of his mind of pulling that match out of the fire by his own efforts, if only the egregious Temple could be driven to give him the chance.

"Bai Jove! That chap can bat!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as the ball went to the boundary.

"A bit different from those slackers," remarked Figgins. "The only good man in the bunch, I should say."

Even Fatty Wynn, the champion junior

bowler of St. Jim's, tried his hand against the Bounder in vain.

The Bounder seemed unbeatable.

Had his partners at the wickets been able to keep up an end for him, he might have realised his dream of pulling the game out of the fire. But that was very doubtful. He could not have all the batting, and the other wickets were tumbling fast.

Scott was last man in, and by that time the score was 60, of which close on 50 had been scored by the Bounder.

"Good man!" said Scott, as he passed him at the wicket.

"Keep an end up for me," said the Bounder. "You can stonewall. You're about the only chap in your blessed Form who can handle a bat! For goodness' sake keep an end up, and give me a chance!"

Such a request to Temple would have met with a stare of supercilious disdain. But Scott of the Fourth was wiser in his generation.

"Rely on me!" he said cheerily.

And the Bounder hoped again.

Scott did not try to hit out, he did not seek to play to the gallery. He knew what he could do, and he knew what he couldn't do—and he wisely decided to attempt what he could do. His business was to keep his end up, so that the Bounder could make the running, and he did it manfully.

He opposed to the varied attack a steady, stonewall defence, only stealing a run here and there to give Vernon-Smith the bowling.

The Bounder was doing most of the hitting, and he was doing it in great style.

St. Jim's were getting tired of leather-hunting. There was a buzz of applause from the Saints round the field when the Bounder topped the century. And when he was caught at last by Figgins, Greyfriars total stood at 120, and the Bounder had contributed 105 to that total. It was, as Monty Lowther of St. Jim's remarked, a "one-man business."

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Triumph!

VERNON-SMITH had played hard, but he looked almost as fresh as paint as he came off.

Temple gave him an ungracious stare. He was glad to see the score jump up. But Temple was realising that there was not much triumph for him in this match, if all the running was made by the only Removee included in the team. It was a triumph for the Bounder. But where did Cecil Reginald come in?

Echo answered, "Where?"

St. Jim's batted, and the interval for lunch occurred in the middle of the innings.

After lunch batting was resumed, and St. Jim's ran up the score pretty rapidly. The Bounder was in the field, and he was not asked to bowl. He chafed with impatience as he watched the score piling up from the feeble bowling of the nuts of the Fourth. His chance came in the field, however, and he caught both Tom Merry and Figgins before either fairly got going. And a smart throw-in by him cost Arthur Augustus D'Arcy his wicket.

Again that level-headed young gentleman, Scott, came to the rescue of the team. Temple had given him the ball, and he tossed it to the Bounder.

"Catch!"

Vernon-Smith caught it, and went on to bowl.

"Scott, you ass, you're the bowler!"

exclaimed the exasperated Cecil Reginald.

"I'm jolly well not!" said Scott coolly.

And he went to cover-point.

And Temple said no more. Even

Dabney and Fry, his faithful chums, were beginning to get exasperated with him, and there was danger of a mutiny in the team if Temple did not draw in his horns. So he drew them in.

It was chiefly as a batsman that the Bounder shone, but he had always been a good and reliable bowler. But just now he beat all his previous records.

The St. Jim's crowd, always prompt to recognise good play, for or against themselves, loudly cheered the hat-trick in that over, which cost Blake and Talbot and Noble their wickets.

After that even Temple could not refuse to give the Bounder his full share of the bowling.

If he had not done so, it was an interesting question how many centuries would have been scored on the home side. As it was, the innings ended with 130 runs for St. Jim's.

The Bounder was elated now.

His luck had served him, though it was less luck in reality than skill and hard play. Now that Temple was fairly muzzled, so to speak, he had his chance, and he was still thinking of a win.

When Greyfriars batted for the second time, Vernon-Smith went in to open the innings as a matter of course. Temple opened his mouth to speak, but caught half a dozen glares from his followers, and closed it again. He accompanied the Bounder to the wickets, and gloriously scored two. Then Fry joined Vernon-Smith.

After that came a kind of procession, which made the St. Jim's crowd smile exultantly.

Batsman after batsman came and went, contributing at the most 2 or 3, while the Bounder stayed on, not to be shifted by all that Tom Merry & Co. could do.

His score was running up, and the Saints cheered him as if he were one of their own champions.

Scott was last man in, as before, and again he adopted patient, stonewall tactics, and left the run-getting to the Bounder.

It looked like another century for Vernon-Smith. His score crept up—80, 85, 86, 90, 94, 97, 98, and a loud cheer rang out for the Greyfriars junior as he topped the hundred.

Scott was out to a catch by Figgins next ball. Second innings was worth 112 to Greyfriars, and the Bounder had made 100 of them.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked to his comrades. "If they had a few more like that, dear boys, we should have to hide our diminished nappers, you know. That chap ought to be playin' for his county, bai Jove!"

There was something of swank in the Bounder's manner as he sauntered off—first in and not out in that innings. The Bounder had reason to be pleased with himself. He had scored a century in each innings—a rare feat in schoolboy cricket, a feat never accomplished before by any Greyfriars fellow! True, St. Jim's were ahead on the first innings, and fully expected to win outright. But there was still the Bounder's bowling to deal with.

When Tom Merry and Figgins opened the second innings for St. Jim's the Bounder took the ball for the first over. It was on Temple's lips to tell him to give it up, but he did not. Even Cecil Reginald had recognised now that the slender chance of a win for the side depended upon the Bounder; and though such a win would not reflect much glory on the Fourth, it was better than a defeat.

The Bounder was still in great form. His previous effort did not seem to have tired him. His bowling was as good as Fatty Wynn's had been. There were no more hat-tricks, but the bowling was deadly, and wickets tumbled to the

Bounder. With the rest of the bowling the batsmen dealt pretty easily.

The sun was sinking in the west, but there was plenty of time to finish. A good many of the players showed signs of fatigue, but the Bounder seemed as fresh as ever. A thicker crowd was gathering round the field. The news of that somewhat curious match had spread. A team that had only one good man in it, but was nevertheless holding its own on the St. Jim's ground, was a sight not often seen there. It was really Vernon-Smith v. St. Jim's!

According to all probabilities, Tom Merry & Co. ought to have walked over the visitors. But there is no game so full of glorious uncertainties as cricket.

Tom Merry had the bad luck to be run out through a blunder of his partner, and that was probably the deciding factor in the game.

The score stood at 90 when last man in was called.

St. Jim's wanted 13 to win, and Redfern and Noble—good men both—were at the wickets. Fry was bowling. There were two more balls left to the over, and Redfern knocked away each of them for 4. Ninety-eight! Then the Bounder took the ball again, for what both sides realised must be the last over. It was the Bounder against Noble.

Again Temple nearly interposed. The great idea was in his head that he, on his own, would finish that match victoriously by lowering Noble's wicket. Not that he could or would have done it. But he was quite ignorant of that important fact. But as he made a move to take the ball, Scott shoved him—which was most disrespectful. And Fry whispered, "Don't be an ass!" And Wilkinson glared at him as if he would bite him. And Cecil Reginald fell back into the field, and stayed there.

All eyes were on the Bounder as he bowled.

Noble, the Cornstalk, was looking out. He knew what depended on that over. And there was a cheer as he drove the first ball for 2!

"Well hit!"

"Bravo, Kangaroo!"

Three to win! And the ball was coming down. Smack! The batsmen were running. But the nimble bowler had given a sudden leap, and there was another smack, and Vernon-Smith held up the ball!

"How's that?"

"Caught and bowled!" roared Scott.

"Bravo, Smithy!"

"Hurrah!" roared the whole field.

There was not much need to ask how it was. It was out! Kangaroo gave a rueful grin.

Tom Merry clapped the Bounder on the shoulder as they came off.

"You've beaten us!" he said. "My hat! I never saw such a game! Congratulations!"

"Yaas, wathah! Congwats, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You've beaten us by two, bai Jove! Who'd have thought it?"

And the St. Jim's fellows made much of Vernon-Smith over a late tea after the match.

At tea Cecil Reginald Temple recovered his good-humour, and expanded somewhat. After all, he was skipper of a victorious team. The bagged match had been a win. And when the Greyfriars team were in the train speeding homeward, the lofty Cecil Reginald condescended to remark:

"You're a good all-round cricketer, Vernon-Smith—jolly good for a fag, by Jove! We'll let you play for the Fourth again!"

Whereat the Bounder grinned.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Called To Account!

"HE, he, he! Here they come!" Billy Bunter chortled as eleven tired, cross, and moody-looking fellows walked into the junior Common-room at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come home at last.

They had spent the day on the barge. They had been landed just in time to walk home to Greyfriars by dark.

They were not in good tempers when they arrived. That was not surprising under the circumstances.

"Hallo! You look a scraggy crowd!" said Bolsover major. "How did it go?"

"He, he, he! They haven't been to St. Jim's!" chortled Bunter. "Smithy's been to St. Jim's with the Fourth! He, he, he!"

"So you knew all about it, you fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter jumped back.

"Nunno! Not at all! I—I don't know anything about you, you know. I—I never heard them talking about it, and—and they didn't ask me to keep it dark, and—and that isn't why they subscribed to the testimonial—Yaroooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the floor and roared.

"But what does it all mean?" exclaimed Ogilvy. "Haven't you been to St. Jim's?"

Harry Wharton explained. To his surprise and exasperation there was a roar of laughter in the Common-room—especially from the Fourth Form fellows there.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bolsover major, wiping his eyes. "You precious muffs! Barging on the river all day! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see that it's a laughing matter—"

"You wouldn't!" chuckled Micky Desmond. "But baded it is! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It means a match chucked away for Greyfriars!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Phew! If they've lost the match, we'll scrag Smithy!"

"Of course they've lost it!" snapped Wharton savagely. "What kind of cricket do those howling asses play?"

"The lickfulness will be terrific!"

"And we'll scalp the lot of them, and Smithy, too!" growled Squiff.

The disappointed cricketers crowded away for their tea, which they badly needed. They had had only a few sandwiches on the barge during the day. After tea they came down in grim humour, to wait for the party to return from St. Jim's.

A crowd had gathered in the dusky quadrangle to greet the returning team. Nobody expected to hear of a win, and it was agreed that the whole party should be ragged most thoroughly if they had lost. As for the Bounder, boiling in oil was considered too good for him—at least, by the Remove Eleven.

"Here they are!" roared Bob Cherry at last.

The heroes of the Fourth had returned. They marched into the quadrangle with lofty looks, and were immediately surrounded by an excited crowd.

"How's it gone?" shouted Bolsover major.

Temple smiled loftily.

"Oh, we beat them, of course!" he replied airily.

"Beat them!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You beat St. Jim's! Gammon!"

"Fact, dear boys," drawled Temple.

"Beat them by two runs! Close thing, but we brought it off!"

"Great Scott!"

"You know you've got to answer for this, Vernon-Smith?" said Harry

Wharton, very quietly, but in an ominous tone.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm ready," he said coolly.

"Is it a fact that you've won the match? I can't understand it."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"It's a fact!" he said. "Temple is a giddy victor—a conquering hero! Aren't you, Temple?"

Temple looked uncomfortable.

"Oh, rot!" he snapped.

"We beat them," said Scott. "Better leave us that fixture next time, Wharton!"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Dabney.

"Only you'd better lend us the Bounder," added the candid Scott.

"Smithy scored a century in each innings—"

"Oh!"

"By gad!"

"And took most of the wickets."

"My hat!"

"Otherwise, the glory is ours," concluded Scott drily.

"Well, it was a Remove win, after all!" said Bob Cherry, somewhat comforted.

"Bravo, the Bounder!" chirruped Skinner.

Wharton's eyes were fixed on Vernon-Smith's face. He was glad it was a win, and he was glad that it was a Remove win who had made it a win. But the trick Vernon-Smith had played on the Remove Eleven was not to be pardoned.

"Anything more to say?" asked the Bounder, with a sneering smile.

"Yes. You played a low trick on us. You risked losing an important match for the Form! You're a treacherous hound!" exclaimed Wharton, his anger breaking out. "You've got to answer for it! And you've got to answer to me—when and where you like!"

"Any hurry?" yawned the Bounder. "I've had rather a tiring day. I haven't been taking it easy on a barge, you know!"

There was a chuckle from some of the Remove fellows.

"When you like!" said Wharton shortly.

"Saturday, then," smiled the Bounder.

"Hallo, Bunter, I owe you five bob!"

And the Bounder, cool as ever, walked into the School House.

Vernon-Smith was the cynosure of all eyes in the Lower School that evening. Few were found to defend what he had done, and yet his condemnation was only half-hearted—he had done it with so much coolness, courage, and determination. And he had won a match for Greyfriars practically on his own. In spite of all, the Bounder was a good deal of a hero in the eyes of the juniors, and many wished him well in the coming encounter with the captain of the Remove.

**Don't Miss
"THE LAST
STRAW!"**

**Next Monday's Grand
Story of Harry Whar-
ton & Co.,**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 488.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 24.—PETER HAZELDENE.

There is not a great deal to be said in praise of Hazeldene. He means well generally, but with frequent lapses; but he does not mean it hard enough.

Again and again he has repented, and started in afresh; and again and again the first touch of temptation has been too much for him. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation." But for some people temptation is no such bad thing. By resisting it they win to stronger manhood.

For such as Hazel that prayer is very necessary. For them the sheltered ways of life are fittest. For them to be tried is to be found wanting. Upon them is the curse of Reuben: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." And yet—who knows?—it may be that only through many temptations and many falls will come their tempering into the steel of manhood. And, in any case, there is not in this world of ours any such thing as an absolutely safe way, so that the Hazels among us are always in peril.

Some of you have read about the remittance men in the Colonies—fellows sent out there because they have done no good at home, and seem likely never to do any. Their people allow them so much money, payable at stated intervals, and that is the one thing they live for, and the chief thing that hinders them from living a man's life.

Peter Hazeldene is the very type of a remittance man.

He is likeable enough. There is in him now and then something of the charm of his gentle sister Marjorie. When he is on his good behaviour he seems quite the right sort. He is a clever bookkeeper, and quite a useful cricketer, and that helps to keep him in a set which will not accept Skinner and Stott and Snoop among them.

His fits of repentance and his periods of straight-going are generally coincident with times when money is not too plentiful with him. His remorse is more than half self-pity. But put money in his pocket, and he ceases to pity himself, or to be grateful to those who have again and again helped him out of difficulties. In the quaint old Scriptural words, "His horn is exalted," and he feels himself as good as anyone else, and a bit better!

But that is only until the money has taken unto itself wings and flown—till Ponsonby or some other rascal has secured it. Then Hazel looks round for help, and it is usually Harry Wharton who gives it.

That it is not entirely for the wayward junior's own sake may be frankly admitted. It is chiefly for Marjorie's, and that is the best excuse for what would otherwise be merely folly. It would be better for Hazel in the long run, perhaps, to leave him to sink or swim without help. Only, the chances are heavy that he would sink, and that would be a terrible grief to his sister!

But Marjorie has never been willing that others should take upon their shoulders the burden of her brother's faults. More than once she has interposed to save from disaster one of her scapegoats. Hazel himself is not of the stuff which cannot bear to see another suffer in his place. It would hurt him; but he would bear it somehow—very easily, after the first wrench. Do you remember when Vernon-Smith was under sentence of expulsion, and Hazel came to the door of the punishment-room to make sure of what? That the fellow under sentence did not mean to give him away! Skinner himself could hardly have been more callous.

When Harry Wharton first came to Greyfriars Hazeldene was at his worst. He had made a bad name for himself, and he was taking it very much as a matter of course. Yet there was something more than a spark of spirit in him, as he showed in the matter of the locket containing a portrait of his sister, which led to the first fight between Wharton—taking Hazel's side, though he had had grave cause to dislike and despise him—and Bulstrode.

He showed up well in a smaller matter when chipped by the cads about his inclusion in the cricket team to please Marjorie, as they held. He did not want his place on such terms, he said. But he should have understood that he did not get it on such



Peter Hazeldene

terms. Yet the feeling for his sister that he showed then and at other times must be put to his credit. When discussion arose in the Remove eight, owing to the stories spread as to Wharton's meeting Marjorie, and carrying on a correspondence with her on the sly, Hazel was quick to resent the affair on his sister's account; but he learned from her that all the secrecy between her and Harry was owing to his own sins, and for once he was thoroughly repentant. He helped the eight to beat the Upper Fourth boat in the second race, too.

In his unregenerate days as the Bounder, Herbert Vernon-Smith did Hazel harm. Not so much as he was inclined to reproach himself for later—Hazel was no sweet, innocent youth when he came under the Bounder's influence. But it was under that influence that he became more deeply smitten with the gambling craze than ever, and it was through gambling that he went near to making an end of himself during a holiday in Switzerland. Wharton saved him then. When, on a later occasion, he came very near indeed to a nasty cropper in France, it was Vernon-Smith who pulled him out of the hole, and to that incident dates back the friendship between the Bounder and Marjorie, who can never forget what he did for Hazel.

But Marjorie never knew who it was that returned the Indian bangle which she lent her brother to pawn with Fish, in order that he might have money to pay off a debt that was driving him almost to distraction—any more than she knew how miserably Hazel deceived her over the whole affair. It was the Bounder who sent back the bangle.

The Caterpillar—Rupert De Courcy, of Highcliffe—saved Hazel's bacon on another occasion, though he had to drop a good deal of money to do it. Johnny Bull, on his way back to Greyfriars, let off the journey to the ends of the earth that had been planned for him, sent Wharton two fivers. Hazel—well, Hazel took them—let us put it thus charitably! And he lost them to Pon; but the Caterpillar got them back, and Hazel helped to set himself straight with the other fellows by the aid he gave Wharton in his rescue of Johnny Bull from the waves.

For the fellow is not without physical pluck. It is moral courage he lacks. His weakness is such that, as the author of the stories says somewhere, he is like a chameleon, an animal which takes its colour from its surroundings. With the cads, he is apt to behave like a cad; in good company his best comes out.

In the powerful stories now running he is not seen at his best by any means. The spitefulness that is in him stands revealed. His is not the kind of nature to work out patiently an elaborate revenge, but it is the kind to find some temporary joy in setting by the ears fellows who have offended him.

Some of you say you don't like Coker. Personally, I don't like Hazel. I prefer something more decided—for good or for ill!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"THE LAST STRAW!"

By Frank Richards.

The Bounder of Greyfriars as a fighting-man is the central figure of next week's fine story. Vernon-Smith has taken a licking at the hands of Bob Cherry. Now, because of the stolen match, he is booked to fight Harry Wharton. Wharton does not feel keen on the fight; he cannot forget the friendship of the past. The Bounder not only does not want to fight Wharton, but does not mean to if it can be avoided. But in the long run he is forced into it, after meeting both Johnny Bull and Bolsover major—neither an opponent easy to deal with! It is through Hazeldene that matters come to a climax at last, and everybody will be interested to read how the wayward, shiftless wastrel of the Remove, showing up at his worst, embroiled two fellows each worth a hundred of him!

THE FOOD QUESTION.

I have had a number of letters about this, most of them appearing to refer to passages in the stories—to the Greyfriars rationing, that is. A collier reader is rather worth with me, and wants to know how I think I should like the 4lb. of bread and 2½lb. of meat per week if I were really working. And a country reader says the scale is absurd for fellows who work out in the open air.

Well, I am working—working as hard, I believe, as the great majority of my readers. The theory that brain-work is easier and less exhausting than manual labour is one only maintained by people who know nothing about brain-work—and are never likely to!

But—and it's a big "but"—the brain-worker certainly does not require as much food as the manual worker, and for him to eat as much would be foolish and injurious.

I have said that I can easily keep within the rations. I should not absolutely starve on half of them, in fact.

But I should not call anyone greedy because, having worked all day on a farm, in a factory, down a mine, he wanted three or four times what suffices me. He probably needs it.

The Food Controller has now stated that he never meant the rations to apply to such cases. And, of course, they cannot apply where bread is the staple food, as it is in so many cottages.

What seems to be needed is that those who can do with less than the rations should—that those who need and must have more should avoid all waste, and try to do with a little less than usual—and that all of us should pull together, not making unnecessary comparisons, or trying to set class against class, to keep the flag flying, and beat the Huns who are trying to starve us out!

Chew your food well. Don't let it go down until it slips down of itself. Hungry people are too apt to bolt their victuals. By chewing well you can get more satisfaction, more flavour, more nourishment, out of a smaller quantity. I know, for I have tried it, and am still doing it!

A GREAT STORY!

Have you got your copy of "After Lights Out" yet? If not, you would do well to hurry up, for Mr. Martin Clifford's latest book will very soon be out of print. And you really cannot afford to miss it. Few better stories of school life have ever been published. It is high praise, I know, to compare it with "The Boy Without a Name," "School and Sport," and "Rivals and Chums," but it really ranks with them.

Your Editor

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Masters and Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, escape from the clutches of Faik, a rascally adventurer who is in pursuit of a secret treasure in the African wilds. Faik is working in collusion with Jasper Orme, Bob's cousin, at Cape Town. The two lads are captured by the natives of the Inrobi tribe, who also surround Faik's party. Faik has done the chief of the tribe a bad turn in the old days, and tries to place the guilt on Bob; but, thanks to a Scotchman named MacGregor, and a friendly native—Mendi—he fails in his plot. Bob is acclaimed chief of the tribe, then push on after the treasure, but are waylaid by Mopo and a strong force. Mopo, who is Bob's deadly rival, is beaten off, with his braves, and Galza, a messenger from the Inrobi, comes to their camp.

He brings tidings of Mopo, who is in pursuit. The companions elude Mopo by diving into the lake, and they find a wonderful underground country, inhabited by a tribe of weird people unlike the human race. These strangers they overcome, secure the gold, and then, after amazing adventures, find themselves back in the world they had quitted. Mopo and Faik, with a strong party, are on their tracks.

(Now read on.)

Divided Enemies.

As Bob jumped off the raft to the rescue Mendi tripped and fell. The two scoundrels pursuing him were only a few yards behind. It looked as if they must reach him first.

But Bob sped over the ground at terrific speed, without a thought of the danger to himself. As one of the scoundrels raised his rifle to club the poor black boy, who lay prostrate and helpless, Bob dashed full-tilt against him.

The impetus of the charge sent the villain reeling back, and the rifle clattered to the stones. But the lad could not keep his feet. He swung round, staggered, and fell. As he scrambled up the other ruffian closed with him.

Now, fighting for his own life as Bob was, yet he did not forget Mendi. He tried to break away, but could not release that iron grip. He saw the first scoundrel stoop and pick up the rifle again. He knew that without some extraordinary intervention Mendi's doom was sealed.

But a rifle-shot rang out, and with a yell of agony and fury the ruffian reeled, and again his rifle fell from his grasp. Then Ted closed with Bob's assailant.

The two lads fought desperately. For either of them single-handed the powerful villain was more than a match; but both were tough, their muscles splendidly developed by months of an arduous life. They pulled him down, and Ted tightened strong fingers about his throat.

"Look after Mendi!" he cried. "I can hold this fellow now!"

Bob rose and glanced back. The wounded bully was still full of fight. His face was twisted by pain, and his eyes were gleaming with baffled fury. His right arm hung limp, but with his left hand he had picked up the rifle, and was on the track of Mendi, who, too injured to rise, crawled along the ground. Bob went after him.

With a snarl, the scoundrel turned. Bob went at him again, and clutched the hand holding the rifle. After a sharp tussle he wrested it free, and, jumping back, he raised it to his shoulder.

"Stand back, or I fire!" he thundered. "Ted, let that fellow go, and come back to me! I've got them covered, and you can help Mendi along. Ah, that you, MacGregor? We're more than a match for them now!"

The old Scot had come up as fast as he could. He was carrying the one rifle.

"Bravo! Ye did that fine, Bob!" he said. "I thought for a few moments that naething could have ye; but I saw my chance, and I

managed to wing that cur. They've both trekked here with your cousin from Cape Town, I expect, and a nice ruffraff he's got around him! Stand where ye are, ye loons! Dinna attempt to rise! I kenned fine what your game would be!"

He had covered the further ruffian, who had now risen, and was rubbing his throat and gasping. Bob kept a bead on the other. They stood sulkily, dazed that they should have been worsted by two lads and an old man, their evil hearts seething.

Ted had run back and helped Mendi to rise. With Ted's assistance the black boy limped towards the raft, and Bob and MacGregor followed, walking backwards a few paces at a time, and keeping the bullies at bay. Mendi lay down on the raft, and Bob and MacGregor stepped on to it.

"Now shove off, Ted!" MacGregor ordered. "Bob and I will let those curs see that we dinna intend they shall get awa' yet. That's right, Bob, keep your man marked down! We'll need all the time we can get here, and if they got to Orme they would bring the whole crew down on us!"

The raft glided out into the river, and Bob and the old Scot stood vigilant. The scoundrels did not stir for a full couple of minutes. Then they both turned and dashed for the brushwood.

MacGregor chuckled.

"One of them has got something to remember his villainy by, anyhow," he remarked. "By the time Orme comes along we'll be beyond the far bend, and he won't be able to overtake us on foot. We're safe from them for the present. And now, Mendi, hoo are ye feeling?"

"His ankle is badly strained, but I don't think any bone is broken," said Ted, who had been examining the injured limb.

"Me verra well," the black boy bravely replied to MacGregor. "Me soon all right."

"How did you get hurt?" Bob asked.

"Fleeing from those two jacksals," Mendi replied. "For, master, I had tracked down the whitefaces, and done all as you had bid, and I knew not that the bushes were hiding two such evil ones. And lo! as I was hastening, they jumped upon me, and I ran faster even than they. But my foot caught in the long grass, and I was thrown. And when I stood upright, I found that no more could I run, and thus they came nearer. And then I cried aloud that you might be warned, and also with hope that I might be saved. But you, my master, heard me, and therefore I am here!"

His eyes shone with gratitude.

"And was it not you, Mendi, who saved our lives last night? We do not forget," Bob said. "But there is much we would like to know about these whitefaces you saw together!"

"And of that I can tell, oh master!" the black boy replied. "There are many of them, all armed and fierce of aspect, and there is one who seems their chief, with the neck of a bull and a foot like unto the pad of an elephant!"

"That's Jasper Orme," Bob murmured. "And, Mendi, what did you hear?"

"Their mouths were pouring out talk, master, and their tongues were bitter," Mendi replied. "For they had come a far way, and at the end they had lost what they sought!"

The Britishers exchanged questioning glances.

"What were they seeking?" Bob asked.

"My master knows," the black boy answered. "For are they not thieves, and did not they come from afar that they might seize what you suffered so much to gain?"

"The treasure!" Ted rasped. "It's been taken from the cache, and yet not by them! Can Mopo have been cute enough to make off with it?"

"I dinna think that's the explanation," MacGregor remarked.

"Nor do I," Bob agreed. "Tell us, Mendi, did you see Faik with those evil ones?"

"Him of the fish eyes and the monkey walk?" Mendi asked. "Nay, master, 'twas

of him they were talking with faces of fury. And their chief vowed vengeance, and cracked a whip, and urged them to yoke and pursue. And of a truth the fish-eyed one will need to cover the ground swiftly if he would escape, for the rage of those black hearts is great indeed!"

Ted began to laugh.

"Faik couldn't play straight with anyone," he said. "He's done Orme out of his share, after putting him to the expense of fitting out an expedition to rob us. But he can't have got off with all that gold alone!"

"Probably he's with Mopo," MacGregor suggested.

Bob had fallen into deep thought.

"Looking at the business from every side, it doesn't seem that our chances are as bad as I had feared," he said. "If Orme and his gang had got the gold they would have started at once for Cape Town, and for three of us, with only one rifle, to recover it from a large, well-armed party would have been a tough job!"

"Yes. Instead of that, Orme will now follow up Faik," Ted added. "Our game is to go for Faik, get the gold, and then try to give Orme the slip!"

"And, meantime, they're all our enemies, and however much they may hate one another, they'll join together against us," MacGregor said. "I agree that things might be waur, but they're none too cheerful as they are. And now that we've got away from Orme, we're moving straight up the river towards Mopo, who has a pretty warm welcome awaiting us if he gets an opening!"

"Then what do you think we should do?" Ted asked.

"We canna land in the daylight," MacGregor said. "Before we went far we wad find Mopo watching us from the bank. But I won't be sorry if I see that!"

"Why?"

"It will explain a good deal, to my way of thinking. Faik won't be with him, for, of course, Faik is in terror of Orme, who is only a few miles behind and coming up fast. So Faik will have cleared out with the gold. Mopo has plenty of men, and can lend him enough to carry it. If Mopo is by the river, then take it from me that is what has chanced."

"Then we'll go after Faik," Bob said.

"Yes. We'll land at nightfall, try to slip past Mopo, and get on Faik's track. Meantime, Orme will come after Mopo, thinking Faik is with him. Mopo will try to lure Orme along day after day on a false scent, to give Faik time to get well away. When Orme finds how he has been fooled, he will turn and start after Faik. By then, I hope, we, too, may be a long distance from here."

"And we'll have the treasure again," Ted said, his eyes shining.

"Well, that's what we hope," MacGregor assented. "But never count your chickens before they're hatched, my lad. And there's one thing to remember. Whether we stand to lose the gold or not, we must wait for Galza."

"I had forgotten that," Ted said, and he looked a trifle crestfallen. "What do you think has happened to him?"

MacGregor smiled.

"Galza hama come to grief," he replied. "He's working for us night and day, and he'll turn up with good news sooner or later. And before we're out of this we'll need him, I'm much inclined to think. Now, let us have some grub. There's nothing for us to do at present except let the raft float along."

They ate a hearty meal, and by the time it was finished they had come to a bend in the river.

There was no sign of Mopo. It looked as if their plan would work out.

On Faik's Track.

Three miles farther on, and on the far side of the river, there was a small inlet hidden by a thick growth of bushes on either side

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IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 15.)

and on Bob's suggestion the raft was paddled in there. Thus hidden from view, they were able to rest until nightfall.

During the day they kept a constant observation on the opposite side, but did not see anyone. As Mendi could not walk, it was arranged that he should paddle the three Britishers across, and then return with the raft to the inlet, where he could rest until summoned.

A couple of hours after sunset they landed, taking with them the rifle, a good supply of ammunition, and enough provisions to last for three or four days.

Their plan was to push across the plain, travelling all night, to a mountain some twelve miles distant. From there they hoped to get an open view of the level country around. Orme, with his waggon-team, could not keep in hiding. They would see him sooner or later, and then, moving abreast with him, they expected to get in touch with Mopo. After that they would have to act according to the emergencies of the moment.

It was a fine, starlight night when they landed, but fortunately the moon had not yet risen. They went straight across the plain, chancing their luck that they would not be seen, for they had no means of knowing where their enemies had camped.

Nothing happened to cause alarm, and in due course they reached the foot of the mountain. It was higher than they had anticipated, and the ascent was very steep. MacGregor was much exhausted before they reached the crest, but they all managed to get there before daybreak.

Bob kept watch whilst the others slept, and, sitting down, he waited for the first hint of daylight. It came at last, and as the sun rose he looked keenly for any sign of Orme. He could see the country for miles on every side. The river seemed to be flowing very near the foot of the mountain. Nowhere could he detect an enemy.

But he was neither surprised nor disappointed. Orme and his confederates would have breakfast, and would have to round up and inspan the oxen before starting on the day's trek. Noon might come before they emerged into view.

Bob awoke his companions after they had had four hours' rest, and they all took a meal. By this time the sunshine was growing very strong, and the welcome warmth was a luxury after the cold wind that had swept across the mountain during the night.

Ted was the first to notice Orme's caravan debouching from behind a nullah on to the plain. He called to the others to observe it.

There were altogether twenty men three driving the waggon-team, and the others walking on either side. Some dozen carried rifles, and Orme was the only one on horseback, and he kept cantering on ahead and searching the country on either side.

At once the three Britishers made preparations to leave. They began to collect their ammunition and stores.

"It seems plain that he means to follow the course of the river," Bob remarked. "So would it not be best if we made for that hill over there?"

"We cannot do better," MacGregor agreed. "By the time we get there he'll be still coming on, for he'll have to make a half-circle with the team, unless he tires the bullocks before nightfall. He won't be such a fool as to do that, for when they're dead-beat he'll have to stop till morning. Come along!"

They tramped down the mountain-side and got to the plain. The old Scotchman stepped out sturdily. Sleep and a good meal had restored his energy, and they covered the distance at a steady pace. Ascending the hill by the side farthest from the river, they observed strict caution as they came near the summit.

Bob crawled on ahead for the last hundred yards, and the others could see that he had discovered much of interest. Lying down, he looked back, and waved his hat to them to hurry on.

Ted drew a deep breath as he peeped over the top. Orme was about two miles behind. Mopo and his warriors were gathered along the river about four miles from Orme. No doubt Mopo had scouts out, and was waiting for Orme to see him before he went further in his scheme of keeping him by the river-

bank whilst Faik got away with the treasure.

And Faik? They saw him, too. He had come well inland, and was sweeping round toward the south.

Ted chuckled.

"It's all stretched out before us just like a panorama," he said. "You were right, Mr. MacGregor. And we can see the three-cornered game that is being played by these scoundrels. Looks to me as if Faik can be tripped up easily enough."

"He's got seven of Mopo's men with him," Bob remarked; "and they're going very slow."

"That's where he's handicapped," MacGregor said. "Every one of them is carrying a verri heavy burden. No doubt he's driving them as hard as he dare, but one white bully can't go too far with seven black boys. If they dropped the treasure and cleared off he would be stranded."

"Our difficulty will be to head him off, I suppose?" Ted suggested. "When we get down to the plain again we'll lose sight of him."

"I've been thinking about that," Bob replied. "But he's on a bit of a rise just now, and there are a couple of trees there. I vote that we make as hard as we can for that spot. I expect we'll see the trees when we come down from here. And then we'll be on his tracks, and can follow him up, and it won't matter whether he goes to right or left."

"You've got a good headpiece, lad," MacGregor said, with approval. "But I hope he won't keep on marching all night, for as it is we have leeway to make up, and I'm not as brisk as I once was. But I'll stick this job out, anyhow."

They started again, and in due course arrived at the trees Bob had indicated. There they had no trouble in picking up Faik's spoor. The ground was rather soft, and the black boys had marched in open order; their footprints were plainly discernible. Here they took another meal, and rested for a couple of hours.

Bob and Ted could, of course, have pushed on without delay, but of set purpose they halted that they were a bit fatigued, and would like to lie under the shade of the trees until the cool of the evening. The old Scotchman fell asleep shortly after he lay down, and they smiled as he closed his eyes.

"He's a grand old sport!" Ted whispered. "He's game for anything. I believe that sooner than disappoint us he would keep on going until he dropped."

"If we do get back the gold and land it safely in Cape Town, and our fortunes are made, it will be owing to him," Bob answered. "It was a lucky day we came across him fishing outside the Inrobi village. Do you remember? How amazed we were! And how much has happened since then!"

"Ay, I never fancied what lay ahead!" Ted said. "And the pluck of him to come with us, when he knew the danger and we didn't! And it's my belief, Bob, that it wasn't altogether just for his own sake that he took that risk. I'm sure he was thinking of us."

Bob nodded his head in assent.

"I've often thought that, too," he agreed. "He's a splendid old chap, and we'll never forget the part he's played. And what amuses me is that he often keeps something up his sleeve. He doesn't always tell us all he knows or hopes."

"When there's danger that he knows of from former experience, he doesn't speak about it until it has to be faced," Ted said. "I've noticed that three or four times. And he's been puzzling me a bit of late, Bob, just on that account."

"Bob looked at his chum and laughed.

"Is it Galza you have in your mind?" he asked.

"You've hit the nail on the head," Ted chuckled. "You remember how he told Galza to clear out a couple of days ago, when Mopo caught us? And he has mentioned Galza off and on since then. Now, why did he send Galza away?"

"I'd like to know," Bob replied, laughing again. "The only hint he has given was when he said that Galza will turn up with good news for us sooner or later. But it's no use trying to guess. Time will show what is in his mind. And now he's beginning to stir. Don't let him see we've been talking about him."

In another few minutes they were on the march again. They walked till nightfall prevented them from following the spoor, and then, not knowing how far Faik might be ahead, they kept very quiet. At dawn next morning they were ready to push on.

By arrangement, Bob went first. He followed the spoor without difficulty and with great caution. In three hours he came to the spot where Faik and his party had camped, and he hurried back to tell his companions.

"The fire was still burning; there was every indication that Faik had but recently left the camp. They pressed on, and shortly after noon Bob hurried back again.

"We've come up with them!" he said. "They're having their midday meal. The black boys are lying about, and Faik is sitting alone."

MacGregor stroked his beard.

"Take us along where we can get a good look at them," he suggested. "This seems to me to be a good opportunity for tackling them."

Very slowly and cautiously they advanced, and presently Bob, in silence, pointed ahead as they came to the edge of some brushwood. The black boys were dozing. Faik, lanky and sour-faced, sat in a drooping position, as if overcome by the heat. He was about fifty yards away.

"I think we ought to be able to rush him," Bob said.

"That's the game," MacGregor replied. "He's got a rifle, I see. It's lying alongside the boulder he's sitting on. He maunna have time to use that. Ye'll have to stalk him."

"But I've got a rifle, too, and I could bowl him over if he tried any tricks," Bob replied.

"He might get his shot in first; and, anyhow, I want your rifle; that's where I'll come in useful," the old Scotsman said. "Do ye lads creep forward and attack him again. You are well able to get him down. Then I'll keep the black boys off. It's just possible they might go to his assistance, but if I fire a shot they'll scoot on the instant. And once you have seized Faik it won't be long before I am by your side."

"All right, Bob agreed. "Are you ready, Ted?"

Ted's face was twitching with excitement. He nodded, and then dropped to the ground. Bob handed the rifle to MacGregor, and followed. Together the two lads crept forward, and MacGregor watched them in breathless suspense. If Faik turned his head he would see them, and he would be able to defend himself.

Very cautiously the lads advanced. They had got half-way when one of the black boys sat up, stretched his arms, and then lay down again. On and on they went until they were only fifteen yards from Faik.

Then they arose. As they did so MacGregor heard the clink of a stone which one of them must have kicked. On the instant Faik looked round. He saw them, and gave a yell. Then together they dashed at him.

He seized his rifle, but had no time to bring it to his shoulder.

(Next week's issue will contain another splendid instalment of this exciting story.)

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