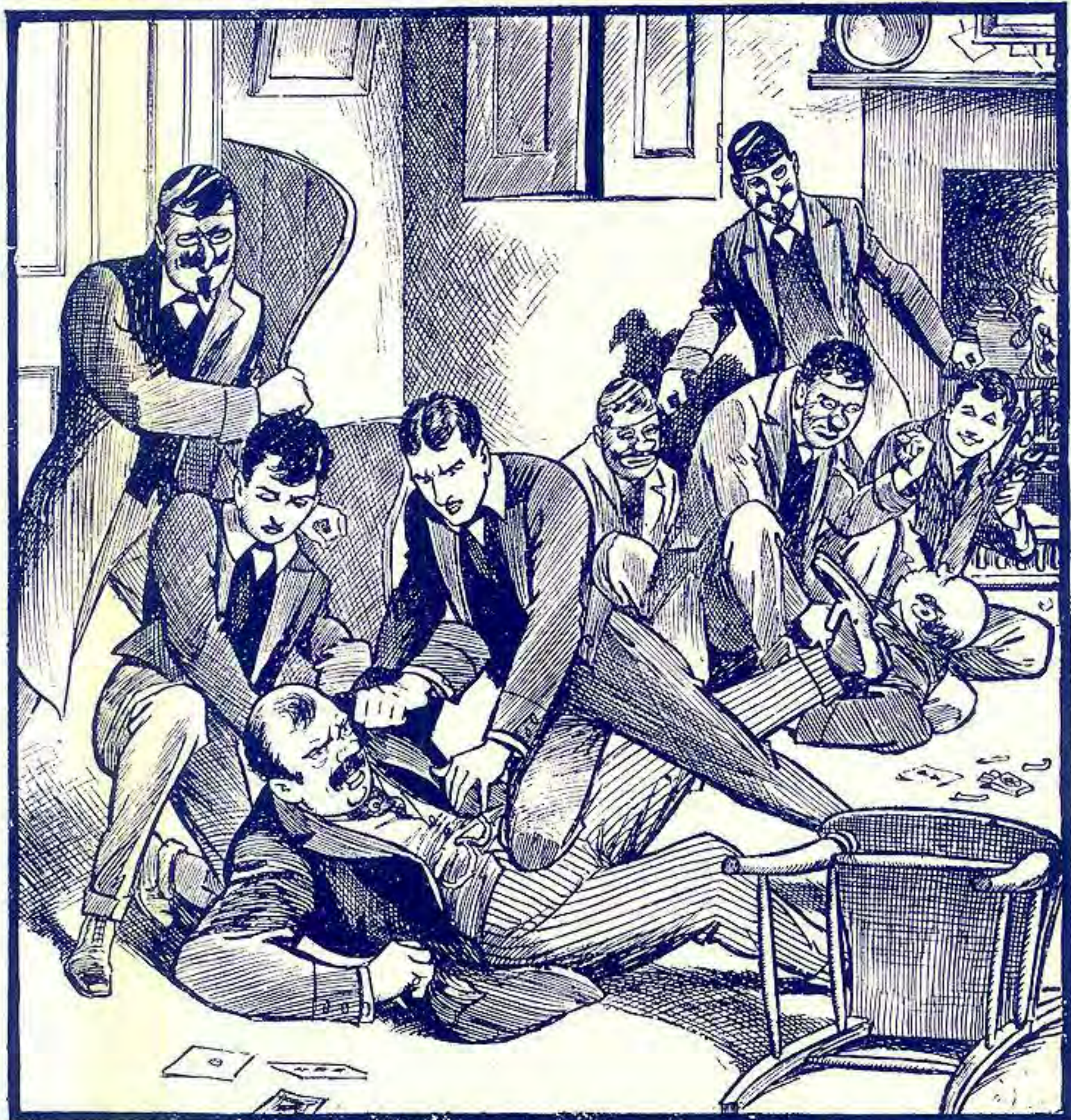


SAVING THE BOUNDER!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



HAWKE HANDLED—COBB COLLARED!

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SAVING THE BOUNDER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

"SMITHY!"

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, looked up irritably.

Skinner, his study-mate, had just come in, and Vernon-Smith was not in a mood for Skinner's company just then.

He was seated in the study armchair, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a moody frown upon his brow.

Skinner looked at him with a grin.

He thought he could guess Smithy's thoughts. Skinner had not failed to note the change that had come over the black sheep of the Remove during the last few days.

"Well?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"I've got a message for you."

"Oh, rats!"

"You're jolly polite this afternoon!" grinned Skinner.

"Look here, I don't want to hear your message!" growled the Bounder. "I can guess whom it's from, and I don't want to hear it. When you drop in at the Cross Keys, Skinner, you needn't trouble to bring me any messages from your friends there!"

"Your friends, too, Smithy!"

The Bounder made a contemptuous gesture.

"They're no friends of mine!" he said.

"Acquaintances, then," smiled Skinner—"cheery acquaintances—merry sportin' acquaintances! They're quite anxious about you, Smithy. You've given them the go-by for so long."

"It's the go-by for good, so far as that gang is concerned," said the Bounder coolly. "I've thought it over, and I'm chucking it up."

"Made up your mind about that?"

"Quite!"

"You don't feel inclined to drop in and see Jerry Hawke and Mr. Cobb this afternoon?"

"I can't! I'm playing footer!"

Skinner whistled.

"Wharton's asked me to play for the Remove," said the Bounder. "I'm playing. You can tell them that, if you like. Or you can tell them to go and eat coke! I've done with them!"

"They won't like being thrown over like that, Smithy."

"Let 'em lump it, then!"

"Perhaps they won't lump it," suggested Skinner. "They may cut up rusty."

"Oh, rats!"

"And you don't want to hear the message?"

"You can trot it out if you like!" said Vernon-Smith angrily. "But I tell you I'm done with them! And buck up! I'm expecting young Levison."

"What on earth have you got to do with that St. Jim's fag?" exclaimed Skinner, in astonishment.

"Nothing. He's coming to tell me when I can see his brother."

"Taking to visiting invalids?" sneered Skinner.

"Why not? It was partly through me

that Levison major got crocked last week. You crocked him because you'd laid bets against the St. Jim's team. It was my fault, in a way; you laid the bet with me. If you want to know, Skinner," continued the Bounder, with a bitter smile, "that's one reason why I'm chucking it up. You came near seriously injuring Levison to win your rotten bets, and it made me pretty sick of betting and the whole rotten game! I said then that I'd never touch it again, and I meant it!"

"Levison asked for it," said Skinner calmly. "When he was a Greyfriars chap he was one of us—one of the sporting fellows. If he chose to go back on his old friends he could take the consequences. Same with you, too, Smithy, if you keep up this rot! The message is from Jerry Hawke. He wants you to drop in and see him as usual this afternoon."

"Well, I won't!"

"If you don't, he's going to drop in and see you."

"What?"

The Bounder sat suddenly bolt upright in his chair.

He stared blankly at Skinner.

"Jerry Hawke coming here?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; a friendly visit."

"Oh! So that's the game, is it?"

"That's the game, it seems," said Skinner. "Hawke doesn't mean to be thrown over. He's willing to be friendly, if you are. If you throw him over, you must expect him to cut up rusty."

"Friendly!" sneered the Bounder. "You mean he wants me to put money on cards and horses for him to win. Does he want an answer from me?"

"Well, I'm going down there again on my bike," said Skinner. "I can take an answer. Better let it be a civil one." The Bounder laughed.

"Well, here's my answer! Tell Jerry Hawke he's a swindling thief, and that I have nothing to say to him! That he can do as he likes; and if I see him at Greyfriars I'll knock him down! That's all!"

"You frabjous ass!" exclaimed Skinner. "If Hawke got a message like that he would be as wild as a Hun. Don't be a fool, Smithy! You can't afford to quarrel with him!"

"I can't afford to keep friends with him," said the Bounder. "That's my message! You can take it or leave it!"

"I'll take it, if you mean it."

"Well, I mean it, every word!"

As Skinner hesitated, there came a tap at the door.

A cheery, boyish face looked in.

"Hallo, Levison minor!" said Vernon-Smith, rising.

The St. Jim's fag gave Skinner a quick look of dislike. It was to Skinner that Levison major owed his injury, which had prevented him from going home with the St. Jim's team after the football-match. Frank Levison was staying with his brother at Greyfriars till he was well enough to travel. He was happy

enough there; but he had not forgiven Skinner.

Skinner replied to his look with a sneering grin.

"If you're coming to see Ernest, Vernon-Smith—" began the fag.

"I'm coming!"

"Right-ho!"

The Bounder followed Frank Levison from the study. Skinner called after him anxiously.

"Smithy, about that message?"

"I've given you my answer!"

"You mean that?"

"Yes."

"Oh, all right! It's your funeral," said Skinner, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Vernon-Smith, without turning his head, followed the fag down the passage.

Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting near the big window at the end. The captain of the Remove gave Vernon-Smith a cheery glance.

"Kick-off in a quarter of an hour, Smithy!" he called out.

"Right! I'll be ready!"

"Pull up your socks!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin. "The Third say they are going to walk over us this afternoon."

"The walkfulness is going to be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And Nugent and Johnny Bull chuckled.

The heroes of the Remove did not take the match with the Third Form very seriously. But the Third took it very seriously indeed. Tubb & Co. of the Third lived in hopes of beating the Remove some day.

"You fellows all playing?" asked the Bounder. "We don't need much of a team to beat the Third."

"No; I'm standing out," said Harry Wharton. "Bob and Johnny, too. Squiff's skipper for to-day, and the reserves are having a look-in. The game will hardly be up to your form, Smithy, but it will be useful as practice. You haven't had too much practice lately, you know."

Vernon-Smith nodded, and passed on with Frank Levison. The Famous Five went downstairs, and sauntered away to the football-ground, where the fellows were gathering. Skinner went to his bicycle, and wheeled it out, and pedalled away to Friardale, with the Bounder's message to Mr. Jerry Hawke.

The Bounder had said that he had chucked it up, and his message to Mr. Hawke was certainly proof of it. The cool, determined Bounder of Greyfriars did nothing by halves. He had made up his mind, and had burned his boats behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Levison's Advice!

FRANK LEVISON opened the door of his brother's room.

Levison major, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, sat on a sofa under the window—a big, wide window

that gave a view of part of the quadrangle and the playing-fields.

There was already a match going on, on Big Side, between the First Eleven and a visiting team from Redclyffe. Ernest Levison was watching the game when his minor came in with Vernon-Smith.

Levison was fully dressed. He had almost recovered from his injury now, though he walked with a limp. That was not likely to leave him for a week or two.

He nodded cheerfully to the Bounder.

"Trot in, Smithy!"

The Bounder came in.

"I'll cut off now, Ernie," said Levison minor. "Tubb's asked me to play for the Third, as I'm here."

"Right-ho, Frank! I'm going to crawl down to the ground and see the game, so mind you put your beef into it."

"You bet!" said Frank brightly.

And he went, closing the door behind him, and leaving the Bounder alone with his major.

Vernon-Smith stood looking rather oddly at Levison. He was very curious about the fellow who had once belonged to Greyfriars, and had had a very shady reputation there, but who had so evidently turned over a new leaf at his new school.

"There's a chair," said Levison, with a smile.

Smithy sat down.

"You wanted to see me?" said Levison, rather curiously. "Well, here you are, and here I am. Perhaps I'd better say—"

He hesitated.

"Go ahead!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Well, if it's anything to do with Skinner's games, I may as well say at once that I'm out of all that," said Levison frankly. "I've changed a good bit since I was at Greyfriars. That's all done with now."

"So I imagined, from your being a member of the St. Jim's Eleven," said the Bounder. "Also from the way Skinner handled you!"

Levison frowned a little.

"You see, I know what went on that day," said Vernon-Smith. "Skinner thought you were still the same chap he'd known at Greyfriars, and he tried to get you to sell the St. Jim's match, and share the loot with him when he'd won his bets on Greyfriars. You refused."

"Naturally!"

"Skinner didn't think it was natural. Then came the accident on the stairs, and your knee was hurt, and you couldn't play. I knew, of course, that it was no accident."

"I knew it, too."

"Yet you didn't give Skinner away?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't care to give him away. The harm was done, anyway. I didn't come back to my old school to make a scandal in my old Form. Least said soonest mended! And, after all, St. Jim's won the match. My minor played up in my place like a Trojan. I'm not wholly sorry I was crooked, either. It's rather a pleasure to me to spend a week at Greyfriars. The Head let Frank stay with me. He seems to have made no end of friends in the Third here." Levison smiled. "They've put him in their Form team to-day."

"You think a lot of your minor?"

Vernon-Smith hardly needed to ask that question. The softening of Levison's face when he spoke of Frank was a sufficient answer before it was asked.

"Yes; he's a good little chap," said Levison lightly.

"Not much in your line, I should have thought—from his looks, and from your old record here."



The Bounder looked in on Levison! (See Chapter 2.)

"I'm following a rather different line now," said Levison, laughing. "In point of fact, Frank had a lot to do with it when he came to St. Jim's. I couldn't keep up the old game then—and I didn't want to. Fellows change."

"You seem to have changed," agreed the Bounder. "I didn't know you here, but I met you sometimes at St. Jim's, and you quite bore out what the fellows said of you here. I tried it once, but it was a failure. Mr. Quelch was down on me once, on suspicion, and I happened to be not guilty. That put my back up, and I let things slide again. It was half a reason and half an excuse. I was fed up, I dare say. But now I'm fed up again, the other way round."

"All the better for you!"

"Skinner crooked you to win his bet with me. He was a reckless scoundrel—he might have broken your neck in that tumble on the stairs. I should have felt pretty rotten about it if it had been serious. That what I was going to see you about. What you've done I can do, I suppose. When you gave your fishy pals the go-by, did you find them trouble you afterwards?"

"They hadn't any hold on me," said Levison. He looked sharply at the Bounder. "Perhaps you wouldn't find it so easy. I'm poor, chronically hard-up, and I understand you are rich. A rich bird wouldn't find it easy to get clear. You may have some difficulties ahead."

"Do you remember Jerry Hawke?"

Levison nodded.

"Yes; he was sometimes in Friardale when I was here. A rotten sort of a bookmaker—warned off the Turf, I think."

"That's the man. When I threw him over once before he had a paper of mine," said the Bounder. "A paper with my signature on it, you understand—enough to get me sacked from here, with the yarn he could have told along with it. He put a high price on that paper."

"That's the kind of man he is—black-mail! What did you do?"

"I tricked him into the vault under the old Priory, fastened him up there, and kept him there till I got my paper back."

"My hat!" exclaimed Levison.

The Bounder laughed.

"He made friends with me again lately, though. But he's got nothing with my name on it—I've been too careful this time. If he came here to yarn to the Head, he would be turned out at once—Dr. Locke wouldn't listen to a shady rascal like that. He's threatened to call on me here. I've undertaken to knock him down if he does." The Bounder set his lips. "He tried that game before, and brought me to heel—when he held my paper. He thinks it will serve his turn again. But a fellow never knows how a thing like that will turn out. What would you do in my place? You've been through it."

"Stick it out," said Levison.

"And make no terms with him?"

"Yes. If you give in once, you're done. He will keep on till you have to stick out at last. May as well first as last!"

"That's my idea," said the Bounder, with a nod. "It suits my book, too. I never could knuckle under. But there's risk, all the same. You'd do that in my place?"

"Yes," said Levison.

"Good! I'm glad to have a tip from a chap who knows," smiled the Bounder. He glanced at the clock. "Hallo, I've got to change! So-long, old chap!"

"I'm coming 'down to see you play," said Levison. "I can limp down to Little Side. Au revoir!"

The Bounder hurried away, and Levison, getting his coat on, limped out of the room and down the stairs. Snoop of the Remove met him in the passage.

"Hallo, you about again?" he said. "Feel up to a game of banker in my study?"

"Thanks, no," said Levison drily.

"But look here—"

Levison passed on without waiting to hear. Sidney James Snoop gave him a very vicious glance as he went. Levison's reform had been a surprise, and a very exasperating surprise, to his old cronies of Greyfriars.

As Levison limped away to the football ground a fat junior joined him.

blinking at him through his big spectacles in quite an affectionate manner.

"Hallo, Levison, old chap!" said Billy Bunter. "So glad to see you about again!"

"Thanks, Bunter."

"I've missed you a lot since you left Greyfriars," said Bunter confidentially. "We were such pals."

"Were we?" said Levison.

"Yes. Don't you remember?" said the Owl of the Remove reproachfully.

"Not at all."

"Ahem! I say, Levison, this sugar-card bizney is a thumping bother, isn't it?"

"I haven't noticed that it is," said Levison. "It's necessary, I suppose, or they wouldn't do it. What does it matter?"

"Well, a certain amount of sugar is necessary for young people, especially growing people," explained Bunter, trotting on beside the St. Jim's junior. "I'm growing, you know."

"Not sideways, I hope."

Billy Bunter decided to take no notice of that remark.

"You see, I never get enough sugar," he went on. "But sugar's not necessary if you can get honey instead. Honey's better than sugar any day, and it's much nicer in the tea than sugar. It's a chap's duty to keep fit, isn't it?"

"Certainly."

"Especially in war-time," continued Bunter. "We may be wanted, you know. Some people say the war will never end at all. I'm a patriotic chap, and I'm simply determined to keep myself thoroughly fit, in case I'm wanted to fight the Germans. I'm going to do it by eating plenty of honey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter irritably, as Levison burst into a roar. "Isn't it a jolly good idea? I may have to stand up to the filthy Huns some day, and I want to be fit. Plenty of honey and jam and chocolates—that's my idea, and then I can do without sugar. But there's a bit of a difficulty, as it happens. I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Yes, I know," said Levison, with a nod.

"You—you know?" exclaimed Bunter, taken aback.

"Yes; you told me before."

"D-d-did I? When?"

"When I used to be at Greyfriars."

Billy Bunter gave Levison a glare that nearly cracked his spectacles. Levison was looking quite serious.

"I—I'm not referring to—to that postal-order," stammered Bunter. "Another postal-order I'm expecting—"

"Still expecting a postal-order?" smiled Levison. "You must have spent whole terms in a state of expectation, Bunter."

"It will come to-morrow morning at the latest," said Bunter, unheeding. "You're not leaving Greyfriars to-day, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then I can settle up to-morrow morning. I suppose you could lend me five bob till my postal-order comes?"

"Hallo, there's Frank!"

Levison hurried on.

"I say, Levison—"

"Ta-ta!"

"Beast!"

Levison grinned, and limped on to the football-ground. William George Bunter glared after him, and rolled away disconsolately in search of another victim.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Levison Takes a Hand!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were on the football-ground. Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull were not in footer garb, however. They were standing out of the match. The mighty men of the Remove were not needed to play the Third. Several other of the leading Remove players were standing out also. Only two of the Famous Five were in the eleven—Hurree Singh and Frank Nugent. The skipper was Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, of New South Wales; and the rest of the team were Hazeldene, Ogilvy, Rake, Tom Brown, Delarey, Micky Desmond, and the Bouncer. The last named arrived on the field in haste, and joined the footballers a minute or two after Levison of St. Jim's limped on.

Levison joined Wharton and Bob and Johnny Bull. They greeted him very cordially. The chums of the Remove had seen a good deal of Levison while he had been laid up at Greyfriars, and the difference between the new Levison and the old had been a constant surprise to them—though they did not remark on it. They liked the St. Jim's fellow well enough now; and Frank was a general favourite.

During that enforced stay at Greyfriars Frank attended lessons with the Third Form, in order not to lose time, and he had made great friends with Tubbs and Paget, Wingate minor, and Bolsover minor. Tubbs, the great chief of the Third, even carried friendship so far as to ask Levison minor to play for the Third—a request that Frank jumped at joyfully.

As a matter of fact, Frank was a valuable recruit in Tubbs's team. He had already shown his quality on the football-field at Greyfriars.

Levison major glanced at him with a very pleased expression. Frank looked very fit and well, and very keen, in the ranks of the Third.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Smithy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Bouncer came on the ground. "None too soon, Smithy!"

"In time is good enough," said the Bouncer. "I've changed. You fellows seen Skinner about?"

"He's gone out on his bike," said Bob. "Oh!" The Bouncer hesitated.

He was thinking that if Mr. Hawke carried out his threat of a visit while the football-match was going on he would not be free to deal with him.

Although it was pretty certain that an accusation against a Greyfriars fellow by a man of Hawke's character was not to be heeded, unless backed up by very substantial proof, the Bouncer was uneasy.

Jerry Hawke could only be coming there to show him up as a revenge for deserting the select sporting circle, or as a threat of worse to come if he did not return to it.

It might lead to a scene before the Head if the rascal carried out his intention. How that might end was a problem.

The Bouncer, in fact, knew—he had known from his old experiences—that it is easier to get into bad associations than to get out of them again. The millionaire's son was a rich pigeon for Jerry Hawke & Co., and they would not lose him if they could help it. And if Mr. Hawke had to lose him, and great possibilities of plunder along with him, he would be spiteful and revengeful, and he would make the Bouncer suffer if he could.

He would do his worst. But what would his worst amount to? It might be little—or it might be much! The way

of the transgressor is said to be hard; but the way of a fellow in Vernon-Smith's position, determined to be a transgressor no longer, was not easy.

"This way, Smithy!" called out Squiff from the field. "Waiting for you!"

Harry Wharton looked at the Bouncer in surprise. He did not understand the hesitation in his manner.

Vernon-Smith cast a hasty look toward the distant gates.

"They're waiting for you, Smithy," said Johnny Bull.

"All right!"

The Bouncer threw off his coat and muffler and went on the field. He had to chance it.

The thought had been in his mind of asking Harry Wharton & Co. to look after Mr. Hawke if he came; but he had not asked. He had a repugnance to asking help of anybody. And they were there to watch the game, not to help him out of the results of his shady escapades. So he was silent.

He joined the footballers, and Temple of the Fourth, the referee, blew the whistle. The Bouncer dismissed Jerry Hawke from his mind, as well as he could, as the game began.

"What's the matter with Smithy?" said Bob Cherry, in surprise. "He looked as if he had something on his mind."

"I thought so," said Harry. "I don't quite see what, though. He's as fit as a fiddle for the game. Look at him!"

From the start the Bouncer played up well. The Remove forwards came through the fag defence with ease, and there was an attack upon goal. Bolsover minor was in great form, in goal, however.

Bolsover major of the Remove shouted approval as the fag tossed out the ball twice in succession, and it was cleared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes your minor, Levison!" exclaimed Harry.

"Go it, Franky!"

Frank Levison had the ball, and was speeding up the field. Wingate minor and Paget kept pace. Morgan deprived Frank of the ball, but Paget sent it back to him, and Frank kicked for goal. Hazeldene, between the posts, grinned, and drove the leather away.

But it was a narrow escape. The Third were in unusual form, and their new recruit was evidently worth his place.

"This won't be a walk-over, after all," commented Bob Cherry. "With our noble selves standing out, the Third have the ghost of a chance."

"Your minor knows the game, Levison," remarked Wharton.

Levison smiled.

"He's very keen," he said.

Harry Wharton smiled, too. Praise of his minor was evidently agreeable to Levison's ears, and Harry liked him, all the better for it.

But Levison's eyes soon wandered from the game. His glance continually sought the gates in the distance. He could not see the gates from where he stood, but he was watching the drive in that direction.

Levison was thinking of the Bouncer's threatened visitor.

He was interested in Vernon-Smith and in what the Bouncer had told him. They had been very alike in their ways once, and the Bouncer was trying to follow on the new path that Levison had followed. Naturally, the St. Jim's junior wished him luck, and would have helped him if he could.

He knew it might be serious for Vernon-Smith if Mr. Hawke carried out his threat, especially while the Bouncer was busy on the field and could not deal with him. Levison had known a great deal of Mr. Hawke in his old days at Grey-

friars, and he knew that that dingy gentleman could be dangerous.

It was towards the end of the first half that Levison spotted a stout, red-faced man in the quad, and recognised Mr. Hawke. He had come!

A good many curious glances, as well as Levison's, were turned upon Mr. Jerry Hawke as he came down to the footer-ground.

Some of the fellows remembered his coming there before, and Smithy's frantic efforts to get him out of sight, at the time when the Bounder was under his thumb.

Still, the ground was open to the public when matches were being played, and Mr. Hawke had a right to walk there—as a member of the public—if he liked.

There was a rush of the Remove players, and the ball went in from Vernon-Smith's foot, and the crowd roared.

"Goal! Bravo, Smithy!"
"Bray-vo!" came a husky shout from the red-faced gentleman. "Bray-vo!" And he clapped his fat hands with reports like pistol-shots.

The Bounder looked round sharply, and his teeth came together with a click as he recognised the low-class bookmaker in the crowd. Mr. Hawke caught his eye, and lifted his bowler hat in acknowledgment.

"Bray-vo, Smithy!" he called out. "Well played, sir!"

"Great thump!" ejaculated Squiff. "Do you know that chap, Smithy?"

"He seems to know me!" said the Bounder quietly.

He walked back to his place, with that answer to the Australian junior. The sides lined up again.

Levison moved a little away from Harry Wharton & Co. Some seniors, on Big Side, were looking over towards Mr. Hawke. It was true that the public were admitted there, but Mr. Hawke was not welcome. If he was spoken to and requested to move on, he was certain to declare that he had come to see Vernon-Smith. That was what he was there for. Levison moved towards the bookmaker, and Mr. Hawke started as his eyes fell upon him.

"Master Levison!" he exclaimed.

Levison nodded.

"Ain't seed you for dog's ages, Master Levison," said Mr. Hawke affably. "You back at Greyfriars, sir?"

"No; only a visit," said Levison civilly.

Mr. Hawke winked.

"If you'd care to see some old friends durin' your visit, Master Levison, you know where to find 'em!" he said, in a hoarse whisper.

"You busy this afternoon?" asked Levison.

"I come 'ere to see a young gentleman Smith yonder."

"You can't see him now—he's playing. You remember the old barn near the spinney, Jerry?"

"Don't I?" smiled Mr. Hawke. "Many's the game we've had there, sir."

"You don't care much for watching footer—what? Not in your line. If you'd care to stroll down to the barn, I could drop in ten minutes or so later. You savvy?"

Mr. Hawke winked again.

"A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse," he said genially. "I'm your man, Master Levison. I reckon Vernon-Smith will keep. Ten minutes—what?"

"Ten minutes," said Levison.

"You'll find me there."

Mr. Hawke, willing to let the Bounder keep while there was game more profitable than revenge to be secured, walked away to the gates. He had not the slightest doubt that it was the old game that Levison wanted, and he was genially

prepared to relieve the St. Jim's junior of his spare cash at nap or banker. Levison breathed more freely when the bookmaker had gone. At all events, it was a respite for the Bounder.

The whistle went for half-time as Levison rejoined Harry Wharton & Co., and the Bounder came to the ropes.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jerry Hawke's Trump Card!

VERNON-SMITH'S face was hard and grim. He looked round for Mr. Hawke, but that gentleman had gone. Bob Cherry caught his wandering glance, and grinned.

"He's sloped, Smithy. Did he come here to see you?"

"Yes," said the Bounder quietly.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, I didn't ask him here," said Vernon-Smith, with a bitter laugh. "Those dear people don't want to be dropped; and I've dropped them. Hawke's visit is a warning that they mean to make me sit up if I keep on the present tack."

"Oh!" said Wharton, with a deep breath. "But—but if Hawke saw the Head, Smithy—"

"He means to, unless I come up to time."

"He couldn't prove anything?"

"No; but you never know how a thing like that may turn out. It will be touch-and-go." The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "But he's gone now—so he can't mean mischief to-day."

Levison looked at him, but did not speak. The whistle went in a few minutes, and the Bounder rejoined the footballers.

"My hat! The Third are playing up," said Johnny Bull, watching the game. "Your minor is good stuff, Levison."

"Yes, isn't he?" said Levison absently. He glanced up at the clock-tower. "I'll see you fellows later."

"Tired of the match?" asked Bob.

"I think I'll take a bit of a stroll."

"Will your leg stand it?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes. I'm not going far."

Levison moved away slowly, with his limping gait. The chums of the Remove looked after him, and then their eyes met, and they looked uncomfortable. They had seen Levison speaking with the bookmaker, and now he was following the man out; that was clear enough. The incident did not make a pleasant impression on the Co. But Levison's behaviour was no business of theirs, and they did not remark on it, but turned their attention to the game again.

Levison limped out of gates and down the road towards Friardale. He turned off the lane at the stile, and limped to the old barn. As he entered the deserted building a strong smell of tobacco greeted him. Mr. Hawke rose from a bench, and removed his cigar from his yellow teeth. "Ere we are again!" he said cheerfully.

"Yes, here we are!" said Levison.

"I've got the jolly boys," said Mr. Hawke apparently alluding to a pack of greasy cards which he drew from his pocket. "What's the matter with your leg, Master Levison?"

"Knee crooked," said Levison. "Fall downstairs. It's a long time since I've had the pleasure of seeing you, Jerry."

"Yes, ain't it?" said the bookmaker.

"Still the same cheery old bird you find me, and the same with you, sir—what?"

"I hope I'm just as cheery as when you knew me," said Levison, with a smile. The bookmaker was evidently quite unsuspecting on that point, and Levison did not intend to enlighten him

—yet, at all events. "How do you find things these days, Mr. Hawke? Slow, I suppose?"

Mr. Hawke grunted discontentedly.

"Slow? Slow ain't the word!" he said. "Racin' is fair knocked on the 'ead by the war. They was actually talking about stopping it entirely. Think of that!" Mr. Hawke snorted with indignation. "'Nuff to make a man a Pacifist, ain't it? Well, 'tain't so bad as that, but it's bad enough. I tell you, I've 'ad some 'ard times. Picking up half-quids where I used to pick up fivers."

Levison nodded. He could understand that, in these hard times—for the betting fraternity—Vernon-Smith was very valuable to Mr. Hawke. A schoolboy's quids came in very useful when fivers were no longer to be had, the war having almost put an end to the rascality of the Turf. He could understand how exceedingly vicious Mr. Hawke would be if the millionaire's son succeeded in getting out of his hands.

"You came up to the school to see Smithy?" he remarked.

Mr. Hawke gritted his teeth.

"That I did, Master Levison. And I'm goin' agin. Has he told you about it?"

"Yes."

"Throwin' over an old pal!" said Mr. Hawke indignantly. "Don't I pay when I lose? Can he say I don't? I was quite fond of that young gentleman. A lad arter my own 'eart, though he played me a bad trick once. But Jerry Hawke don't bear malice; 'tain't his way. When he come to his senses agin, there was I, willin' to make friends and let bygones be bygones. And now he begins agin—throwin' over his pals! 'Tain't good enough, now, is it?"

Mr. Hawke shuffled the cards.

"You're going to show him up?" drawled Levison.

"You bet, if he don't dance to my tune! You blame me?"

Levison laughed.

"But I don't quite see the point," he remarked. "Smithy isn't likely to admit anything you say against him, is he? And if you said anything about him at Greyfriars the Head wouldn't believe it without proof."

Mr. Hawke chuckled, Levison watching him keenly the while. The fat bookmaker did not suspect for a moment that the St. Jim's junior was drawing him out simply to make him show his hand.

"You're right, Master Levison. And if you talk to Smithy agin, you can tell him I've got the proof."

"You don't mean to say you've got anything with Smithy's name on it?" exclaimed Levison, with an air of great admiration for Mr. Hawke's astuteness.

"No fear! He was too bloomin' cautious for that. He remembered last time," said Mr. Hawke regretfully. "But I was expecting something of this kind sooner or later, and I was ready for him. What do you think of a photograph?"

"By gad! You're hard to beat, Jerry!"

Another fat, complacent chuckle came from Jerry Hawke.

"It was easy enough. It only needed thinking of," he said. "I was ready for Master Smithy this time, and for his trick of throwin' over his old pals. I got the picture right enough. A pal of mine took it with a camera."

"It ought to be worth a lot to you," said Levison admiringly.

"What-ho! I'll show it you," said the flattered Mr. Hawke.

Levison looked hard at the photograph

the bookmaker held out in his red, flabby hand.

It showed Vernon-Smith of the Remove with great clearness. In the picture he was seated at a table under trees, with a hand of cards held before him and a cigarette in his mouth. Two other figures were shown at the table—two unpleasant, boozy-looking men, with cards in their hands and cigars in their mouths. On the table also showed a bottle and a soda-siphon.

"Took in the summer, in the garden of the Cross Keys," smiled Mr. Hawke. "Nothin' there to 'urt me, nor yet Mr. Cobb. But enough to get Master Cheeky Smith kicked out of his swell school—wot?"

"I should jolly well say so!" said Levison, with a deep breath. "Smithy doesn't know you've got this?"

"No fear! I had it took one arternoon, and I kept it dark, to be used if wanted," grinned Mr. Hawke. "So long as Smithy sticks to his old pals, that there photo is my private property. But if he don't toe the line, I make a present of it to his 'eadmaster. Savvy?" He chuckled. "So long as we was friends, I wouldn't worry Master Smithy with this here picture. But he's going to know about it now. I was going to show it to him this arternoon. You can tell him about it if you like."

"I will!" said Levison.

"And warn him not to try any of his old tricks," grinned Mr. Hawke. "No shuttin' a man up in a vault till he hands something over! Smithy played that on me once, and I own up he bested me. Werry resourceful young gent, Smithy! There's a copy of that photo with Mr. Cobb, to be sent on to the Head of Greyfriars if anything happens to me—ready directed and stamped, you understand, and only waiting to be dropped in the post. And there's the negative."

"I suppose you had a lot of copies taken from the negative," Levison remarked carelessly.

"Two was enough. This one, and one left with Cobb," said Mr. Hawke. "The negative's in a safe place, in case more are wanted."

"You surely don't carry it about with you?"

"No fear!" said the bookmaker emphatically. "I ain't so soft! I know Smithy! That negative's locked up in my room at the Cross Keys, safe and sound."

"You can't be too careful," smiled Levison. "But you're too old a bird to be caught, anyway, I should fancy."

"You bet, Master Levison!" The bookmaker slid the photograph back into his pocket. "You tell Master Smithy that, and tell him that if he drops in as usual this evenin' he'll find Jerry Hawke friendly, and prepared to let bygones be bygones. Nap or banker—what?"

Levison hesitated a moment.

His desire to help the Bounder out of this miserable scrape was keen; and, so far, by keeping up his old character, he had led the rascal by the nose, and Mr. Hawke did not suspect his real motives. His present game of spoof the St. Jim's junior felt to be justifiable, to baffle the cunning scheme of an unscrupulous blackmailer.

He felt that it would not do to awaken Mr. Hawke's suspicions that he was not, as the bookmaker supposed, the cool, cynical, utterly reckless young blackguard the man had known in former days.

He nodded assent.

"Banker!" he said.

And they played; and during the next half hour Mr. Hawke had the satisfac-

tion of relieving Levison of ten shillings. The St. Jim's junior could ill spare the money; but he did not grudge it.

"Not goin'?" asked Mr. Hawke affably, as Levison rose from the bench.

"I must. I shall be missed."

"You'll see me agin at Greyfriars," grinned Mr. Hawke.

Levison caught his breath.

"I'll tell you what, Jerry! Give Smithy another chance. I'll tell him of that photograph, and I'll undertake to bring him down to the Cross Keys, too. No good killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, you know. Smithy ought to be worth a good bit—to you and to me—carefully managed."

"Haw, haw, haw!" chortled Mr. Hawke. "To you as well as me, Master Levison! I savvy! Don't I remember you!" He chortled again. "Leave it at that, then. I'll be glad to see you this evening, and if Master Smithy comes along with you, why, I'm his friend same as ever."

"I'll lay you five to one he comes."

Mr. Hawke grinned and shook his head.

"You'd win," he said. "He's bound to come when he knows about the photograph. Well, good-bye till this evening, Master Levison!"

They parted, Mr. Hawke rolling away towards the Cross Keys, for liquid refreshment, and Levison took his way back to Greyfriars with a knitted and troubled brow.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Way Out!

FRANK LEVISON was waiting for his brother at the gates, in the early winter dusk. The football-match was over.

Frank looked anxious.

"You've been out a long time, Ernie!" he exclaimed, as his brother came up. "You shouldn't risk putting a strain on your leg yet!"

Levison smiled.

"I haven't been walking all the time," he said. "Only a stroll to a—a place I used to know and back. How did the match go?"

"Remove won," said Frank. "But we gave them a tussle. I think we might have beaten them but for Smithy—he's a corker! They only beat us two to one, though. The Third don't usually have so much luck as that. Wharton wanted you to go to his study for tea, if you feel up to it."

"Oh, good!"

They walked together towards the School House. Frank cast one or two rather anxious looks at his brother's thoughtful face.

"Anything wrong, Ernie?" he asked at last.

"Not a bit. I was thinking about something, that's all."

"Who was that man you spoke to on the football-ground?"

Levison started.

"Oh, you saw that?"

"I didn't notice, but I heard Skinner and Snoop talking about it—they were grinning over it." Frank coloured. "They said you used to know that beastly-looking man when you were here, Ernie. It's not true?"

"I'm afraid it is, Frank."

"Oh!"

Frank was silent for a moment or two, and then, with a red face, he blurted out:

"Skinner was saying that you spoke to him here to make an appointment, Ernie, and went out afterwards to see him."

"What a nice fellow Skinner is!" said Levison. "A dear, good, charitable fellow!"

"He's a rotter!" said Frank. "I knew he was lying, of course."

"He wasn't!" said Levison.

"Ernie!"

"Don't be a young ass, Frank! I saw that man on somebody else's account—to keep him from injuring a fellow here. I was stalling him off."

"Oh, I see!" said Frank, quite bright again. "Of course, a cad like Skinner wouldn't think of that. Here you are, Ernie. I'm going into the Form-room to tea. Tubbs got a spread."

They parted at the foot of the staircase, and Levison limped up to the Remove passage. The old, familiar surroundings appealed strongly to him. He did not hurry to Wharton's quarters. But he tapped at the door of Study No. 1 at last.

"Come in!" called out Harry Wharton.

There was a buzz of cheery voices in the study. The Famous Five were there, just finishing tea, and the Bounder of Greyfriars was with them.

"You're late," said Nugent, pulling out a chair for Levison.

"I'm sorry! I've only just seen Frank, and he told me to come here."

"All serene! We've kept your tea," said Wharton, with a smile. "You don't mind coffee instead of tea? Tea's short."

"Right as rain, and I don't take sugar," said Levison, laughing. He sat down cheerily at the table, quite conscious that Vernon-Smith's gaze was turned very curiously upon him, but taking no outward note of the fact.

There was a very pleasant chat in Study No. 1. When Levison had been a Greyfriars fellow he had had little in common with Wharton and his friends, but he seemed to have much in common with them now.

He enjoyed that visit to Study No. 1. When the Bounder left, Levison still stayed, chatting with the chums of the Remove, and he took his leave some time after the Bounder.

He left a favourable impression upon the Famous Five.

But his face was very grave as he limped along the Remove passage and tapped at the door of Vernon-Smith's study.

The Bounder called to him to come in. He was alone in the study. Skinner had proposed a game of nap there, and the Bounder's answer had been so exceedingly abrupt that his study-mate had left him in high dudgeon.

Levison came in, and closed the door after him.

Vernon-Smith motioned to a chair.

"No good offering you a smoke, I suppose?" he said.

"Thanks, no."

"You've got something to tell me?"

"That's what I've come for. You saw that waster on the football-ground, of course."

"Yes. He cleared off while I was still playing," said Vernon-Smith. "Skinner's got a yarn that you spoke to him, and made an appointment with him outside. I figured it out that you were clearing him off on my account."

"Exactly," said Levison.

"I'm much obliged, but I don't see why you should bother."

"Why shouldn't I do you a good turn?" said Levison quietly. "I owe a lot to a good turn that was done for me once by a fellow I looked on—at that time—as an enemy. If that man had hung about Greyfriars much longer there would have been a lot of talk."

"I know! But he will come back."

"I've stalled him off for to-day, at least."

"Thank you. How did you manage it?"

Levison smiled.

"He knew me when I was here—you're aware of that. He thinks I am still just as I was then. I haven't enlightened him. I kept him busy at banker in the old barn."

"My hat! I understood that banker was not in your line—now!"

"It isn't! It was the only way of fooling him, and I did it for that reason!"

"It must have cost you something," said the Bounder shrewdly.

"Never mind that. He was pretty confidential with me," said Levison.

"We used to be rather confidential, you know. I wasn't merely a pigeon to be plucked in the old days, like silly duffers of Skinner's and Snoop's kind. I drew him out to find out what cards he held against you. And it's serious."

"Go ahead!" said the Bounder coolly.

Levison explained quietly what he had learned from the bookmaker. Vernon-Smith started at the mention of the photograph, but he did not interrupt the St. Jim's junior.

"By gad, that's serious, and no mistake!" said Vernon-Smith, when Levison had finished. "I never guessed that he was playing a trick like that. I was careful never to let anything get into his hands that he could use against me. Of course, the brute foresaw that the time might come when I should get fed up with him and his shady gang. I've got too much oof for him to let me go if he can help it. It looks as if he's got me in a cleft stick. By gad! If he showed that photograph at Greyfriars—"

The Bounder whistled softly.

"Something's got to be done," said Levison. "I'm ready to help, if you will let me."

"I'll be glad—if you can help. But it seems to me that there's only one thing to be done."

"And that?"

"To toe the line," said the Bounder, with a laugh. "So long as I keep friends with him, he won't use that handle against me."

"You won't do that?"

"I may have to. I don't intend to get kicked out of Greyfriars as the price of reform. It's not good enough."

"I—I suppose it would come to that!" said Levison slowly.

"Quite certainly. I was in hot water before, and I was given a chance. If it comes out that this is what I made of my chance, I'm done for here." The Bounder's eyes glittered. "I don't mean to let it come to that. It would hit my father hard, for one thing. He happens to be the only person in the world I care much for, and I'm not going to let him be hit through me if I can help it."

Levison was silent.

"I suppose I was an ass to get into that shady rot again when I was once clear of it," said Vernon-Smith. "In fact, I know I was. I had some excuses—not that that matters much. I'd gladly get clear of it all again if I could. If I can't, it can't be helped. I shall have to play the game out!"

"I was in the same kind of thing, and I got out of it."

"You weren't a millionaire's son," said the Bounder, laughing.

Levison nodded.

"But you've got to get out of it, Smithy!" he said. "Two heads are better than one, and between us we ought to be able to dish that scoundrel."

"Too much of a problem, I think. He's got two copies of the photograph, you say, and the negative. Unless the lot can be taken from him and destroyed, he's got me under his thumb."

"It will want thinking out," confessed Levison. "I got out of him all the particulars I could. The negative's locked up in his room at the Cross Keys. He carries one photo in his pocket. The other's in an envelope in Cobb's keeping, ready addressed to your headmaster, to be posted if anything happens to Hawke—like the dodge you played on him before. He thinks he's quite safe."

"And he is quite safe," said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I'll make him sit up for it all some time, but at present he's got me by the short hairs, as Fishy says. There's nothing doing."

"Those proofs have got to be taken off him," said Levison quietly. "He's not entitled to hold them, of course—he's breaking the law by blackmailing you, only you can't appeal to the law. He might be handled, and made to give them up. You've got friends who'd help you!"

"Wharton would see me through, if he could. I know that." The Bounder's hard face softened a little. "Wharton's been a brick to me all through! His pals would take a hand, I've no doubt. I'm not going to ask them, though!"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison. "If their help would pull you through, let them help, if they're willing! Anyway, you can depend on them not to jaw. Ask them in here, spin them the yarn, and have a council of war."

The Bounder shook his head.

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

"Smithy—" he began, and paused as he saw Levison.

"Go ahead!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I—I was going—" Wharton hesitated.

"Is it about Hawke?" asked the Bounder calmly.

"Well, yes."

"Levison knows it all. You can run on."

"Oh, all right! I was going to ask you if it's all right, that's all," said Wharton.

"Of course, I know what that man came here for. Bob's made a suggestion."

"Hear, hear!" grinned the Bounder. "If Bob Cherry's brought his brain to bear on the subject it's all serene!"

"Look here, Smithy—" began Wharton hotly.

"All serene! Excuse me, I was born sneering," said the Bounder calmly.

"I'm much obliged to Cherry. What's his suggestion?"

"Well, he suggests collaring that scoundrel if he comes near Greyfriars again, and ducking him in the Sark. We'll all lend a hand. I think that would keep him off the grass," said the captain of the Remove.

"Excellent, if he hadn't any evidence to produce of the iniquity of your humble servant!" said the Bounder cynically. "As it happens, he has!"

Wharton looked dismayed.

"Smithy, you haven't been ass enough—" he exclaimed.

"Tell him, Levison!"

Wharton listened, with growing dismay in his face. It was easy to see that he was very much concerned for the black sheep of the Remove, though Vernon-Smith's own reckless folly had been the prime cause of his danger.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry at last.

"What on earth are you going to do, Smithy?"

"I'm afraid it means a wind-up for my noble projects of reform," said the Bounder coolly. "What a pity I haven't been always a stainless youth like you, Wharton, instead of trying, too late, to follow your noble example!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, Smithy! I say, this is jolly serious!"

"Yes; it's all that!"

"The scoundrel!" said Harry, between his teeth. "Anything would be justifiable to get those photographs out of his hands. But—"

"But it can't be done," said Vernon-Smith. "And if Bob Cherry's plan is carried out, Hawke will be spiteful, and send them to the Head at once."

"Yes; that certainly won't do. I never dreamed of anything like this. I—I suppose you can't quarrel with the rotter—yet," said Harry doubtfully.

"I can't. That's a cert."

"And he's only agreed to hold off if Smithy calls on him this evening," said Levison.

"You can't do that, Smithy."

"Can't I?" said the Bounder grimly. "Don't be an ass! I've got to!"

Wharton was silent, utterly dismayed. It looked as if the Bounder, after his long run of luck, was landed at last—unless he chose to make friendly terms with the Friardale sharper.

That the Bounder would certainly do, rather than face disgrace and expulsion. Yet his desire for reform was keen—all the keener, perhaps, because of the opposition of his old associates. Truly, if he wanted to see those sporting gentlemen in their true colours, he saw them now.

The Bounder was anxious and impatient to shake off all connection with the dingy gang. And it looked as if he could not do it. And if that impulse to reform was nipped in the bud, what prospect was before him save that of going from bad to worse?

"That brute's teeth have got to be drawn somehow," said Harry Wharton at last. "You can depend on us to help you, Smithy, if there's anything doing."

"Thanks! I'm afraid there's nothing doing." The Bounder grinned. "Would you advise me to refuse to see him to-night, and chance it?"

"I think I should," said Wharton, after a pause.

"Well, I sha'n't take your advice, then," said Vernon-Smith, laughing. "I'm not keen to be called up before the cheery old Head, and sacked as a transgressor and a contaminator of youth. After all, what does it matter?"

"It matters a lot, Smithy."

"Well, suppose it does. I can't help myself!" said the Bounder irritably. "Here's Levison, as keen as a razor, and he can't see a way out."

"I'm trying to think of a way out," said Levison. He rose from the chair.

"I'll see you again later, Smithy."

"When you've thought of a way?" asked the Bounder, laughing.

"Yes."

"Best of luck, old scout!"

Levison left the study, his brows wrinkled in thought.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Going Through It!

TUBB of the Third Form put his shock head into Vernon-Smith's study later in the evening. Smithy and Skinner were doing their prep.

"Wanted!" grunted Tubb.

The Bounder looked up.

"Who's wanted?"

"You are. Mr. Quelch's study."

Vernon-Smith drew a deep breath. His nerve was good, but the colour failed in his cheeks for a moment. Skinner gave him a half-mocking, half-commiserating look.

"It's come at last!" he said. "You were a fool to send that message by me, Smithy! The man was frightfully wild when he got it!"

Vernon-Smith did not heed him. Tubb was turning away, very surly at being THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 511.

called upon to fag at messages in the Remove passage.

"Hold on, Tubb!" said the Bouncer quietly. "Do you know what Quelch wants me for?"

"Licking, very likely," said Tubb cheerfully.

"Is anybody with him?"

"Not when he called me to his door."

"Oh, good!"

"The telephone-bell had rung," said Tubb. "I noticed the receiver was still off. Somebody's called him up about you, I suppose."

"You don't know who?"

Tubb grinned.

"I didn't ask Quelch! Go and ask him yourself, fathead! And tell him next time he wants you to find somebody else to carry his blessed messages!"

And Tubb tramped away down the passage.

Vernon-Smith stood quite still for some moments. Skinner was looking dark and anxious.

"You've got to go, Smithy," he muttered. "If—if Hawke's rung Quelch up about you, better be on your guard. You were a fool to quarrel with him. Very likely he'd ring up. He wouldn't care to face Quelch or the Head. Put a good face on it, and deny the whole thing."

The Bouncer did not answer.

"And—and mind you don't mention me!" said Skinner. "It won't do you any good to get me landed, too!"

The Bouncer smiled bitterly as he quitted the study. Skinner was only anxious about his own precious skin.

With outward coolness, but with a beating heart, Vernon-Smith took his way to his Form-master's study. Had Hawke, exasperated by his message, betrayed him, without waiting to give him the chance of making his peace that evening? Vernon-Smith had fully intended to placate the rascal by visiting him after lights-out; but probably Mr. Hawke had expected him during the early evening. The Bouncer felt that everything was upon the cast of a die. But his manner was calm and self-possessed as he entered Mr. Quelch's study.

He noticed that the receiver was off the telephone. The Remove-master's brows were knitted a little.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Vernon-Smith respectfully.

"Yes. Someone has called you on my telephone."

The junior drew a deep breath. It was not so bad as he had feared. Yet who could have called him, excepting Jerry Hawke? His father sometimes rung him up from London, certainly, and on such occasions Mr. Quelch had allowed the use of his telephone. But it was not likely to be his father so late in the evening.

Mr. Quelch was eyeing him somewhat sharply.

"You may answer the call," continued the Form-master.

"Is it my father, sir?"

"No; it is not Mr. Vernon-Smith. It was a man's voice, and he said he was a friend of yours, that is all. It is very unusual, Vernon-Smith, for a junior to be rung up in this way, especially late in the evening. You may take the call, but I shall remain present."

"Certainly, sir!"

"You have no objection to my hearing your words on the telephone, Vernon-Smith?"

"Why should I have, sir?" said the Bouncer, with an air of mild surprise.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch drily. "I will remain. You may take the receiver."

"Thank you, sir!"

Vernon-Smith crossed quietly to the telephone, his Form-master's eyes fol-

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lowing him. Not by the quiver of a muscle did the junior betray the tumult in his breast.

Mr. Quelch was not exactly suspicious. But he was evidently ready to be suspicious. He had heard coarse, boozy tones on the telephone, and the whole affair was unusual and surprising. Mr. Quelch had not forgotten the Bouncer's old record.

He did not want to be suspicious, or hard on the junior. But he did not want to be deceived or fooled, and he did not intend to be.

Vernon-Smith took up the receiver with a steady hand, and placed it to his ear. If it was Jerry Hawke at the other end, it would not be easy to carry on a talk without apprising Mr. Quelch of the true state of affairs. And he did not dare to affect ignorance of the man and ring off. The proofs in Mr. Hawke's hands made that impossible. If it was Hawke, he had to be kept in a good humour.

Vernon-Smith had been in many tight places during his peculiar career, but never in quite so tight a place as this.

"Hallo!" he said into the transmitter.

"I am here—Vernon-Smith! Is it to me you want to speak?"

"You bet!" came the beery tones of Jerry Hawke.

Vernon-Smith's lips tightened.

"I don't recognise your voice," he said, for Mr. Quelch's benefit. "Please speak a little louder."

From the junior's monosyllabic answers he could learn nothing. His eyes were on Vernon-Smith's face; but that face was calm and indifferent, and told him nothing at all.

"You're a cool hand, Smithy!" went on the beery voice. "You're a lad arter my own heart, you are. You're a real sport. Dash my buttons, I don't want to 'urt you! I'm a pal if you're a pal. Ain't that fair?"

"Quite."

"Then we're still pals, Smithy?"

"Certainly."

"Good enough. When are you comin' to see me?"

"What?" said the Bouncer, as if not catching the words.

Another chuckle.

"I savvy, Smith! I'll word it different, so that you can answer with the old sport 'earing you. Ha, ha! Are you coming to see me to-night?"

"Yes."

"Can I rely on you?"

"Certainly."

"Right—you are, Smithy! Let Master Levison come with you. I'll be glad to see him; an' I arranged it with him to-day."

"Just so."

"You'll find me nice and friendly, Master Smithy. No ill will, you know. And them photographs; Levison's told you—"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, them photographs won't get showed up so long as we're friends."

"I understand."

"Ain't the old sport getting curious?"

"I think so."

"Well, as you're so friendly, Smithy, I'm sorry I rung up. But arter Skinner's message, you see, and you not dropping in this evening—"

"Yes, yes! I understand. It's all right!"

"I'll give you a tip, Smithy! Say something to put the old joeser off his guard, and let him speak into the phone and I'll play up. Savvy?"

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch had risen to his feet, and Vernon-Smith, without looking at him, knew that he was growing very suspicious. The Bouncer went on into the transmitter without a change of tone:

"Look here, my man, I'm tired of this! I gave you a sovereign because you told me you were an old soldier down on your luck. But you never gave me any proof of it, and I've got no more money to give away. If your case is genuine, you can come up to Greyfriars, and I'll speak to the Head about you. To be quite candid, I don't know whether your name's Brown or not, or whether you've been in the Army. The Head will help you get your rights if you're genuine. That's all I've got to say to you."

There was an explosive chuckle on the telephone.

Mr. Hawke was in high good-humour now, having fully gained his point. And he quite admired the Bouncer's cool quickness in taking his tip.

Mr. Quelch's expression changed as he heard the junior's last words. The Bouncer made a motion to hang up the receiver, but the Remove-master took it from his hand.

"Pray allow me to speak to the man, Vernon-Smith."

"Certainly, sir!" said the Bouncer, stepping back.

He was quite cool. He knew that he could rely now upon Jerry Hawke to "play up." Having brought his victim to heel, the sharper had no motive or desire to betray him. The telephone-call had been a threat which had fulfilled its purpose.

"Are you there?" the deep voice of

There was another chuckle.

Mr. Quelch was growing a little restive.

*Eat less
Bread*

the Remove-master asked through the transmitter.

"Yes, sir!" came Mr. Hawke's civil reply.

"Your name is Brown?"

"Yes, sir! I'm an old soldier, sir."

"Why have you rung up Master Vernon-Smith?"

"The young gent was kind enough to help me, sir. Bein' 'ard up, and not getting my pension as I ought, I thought he might 'elp me again. No offence, sir!"

"Not at all!" said Mr. Quelch, quite reassured now. "If your claim is genuine, Mr. Brown, you need only call here, and you will find friends who will see that you get your rights. You have perhaps neglected to take some necessary step to secure your pension, and it can easily be set right."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

And Mr. Hawke rang off, restraining his next chuckle till he had done so. Mr. Quelch hooked on the receiver, and gave Vernon-Smith a kind glance.

"I am very glad to see, Vernon-Smith, that you have acted generously towards an old soldier. You should be careful, however, as there are very many impostors, and this man does not inspire me with very much confidence. If his case is genuine, he will certainly call here. You may go!"

Vernon-Smith left the study. He had escaped that danger by a total surrender to the sharper, but the narrowness of his escape made him almost giddy, now that the strain was over.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Levison's Plan!

HARRY WHARTON met the Bounder in the passage, and stopped with a sharp exclamation.

"Smithy, what's happened?"

The Bounder's face was pale, and the perspiration broke in large drops on his forehead. His eyes had a restive, hunted look. He stared at Wharton for a moment without replying.

The captain of the Remove touched him on the arm. He felt a little alarmed.

"Smithy, old chap—"

The Bounder forced a laugh.

"It's all right!" he said. "I've been through it, that's all. He drew a hard breath. "If my nerve had given in it would have been all U P."

"But what—"

"A pleasant experience!" The Bounder sunk his voice. "Fancy having a talk with Jerry Hawke on Quelch's telephone, with Quelch listening to every word I said!"

"Great Scott!" said Wharton, aghast.

"Oh, I put it through all right," said the Bounder carelessly. He was recovering now from the hard strain. "It's all serene—by knuckling under. I've got to see Hawke to-night, after lights-out. He expected me during the evening. But it's all serene—if I go to-night."

"And you're going?"

"Yes—to-night, and a good many more nights, I expect," said the Bounder, with cool recklessness. "It's no good, Wharton; the game's up! I was a fool to think I could get clear of it all! I'm not going to try again! That telephone-call has finished it!"

"But—"

"I tell you I'm done! If I didn't go, Hawke would ring up Quelch in the morning, and talk to him instead of me. I wouldn't care a rap if it was only his word! Quelch wouldn't listen to that. But he's got proofs—he was cute enough to get them when I was off my guard! That finishes it!"

"Levison's just asked me to bring you to his room, Smithy," said Harry quietly. "He's got something to say to you."

"It's no use!" said the Bounder wearily. "I tell you the game's up! Tell Levison I'm much obliged, and he needn't bother about it any more. After all, it doesn't matter."

"It does matter," said Harry Wharton, catching the Bounder's arm as he was turning away. "Levison's got some plan, and he's as keen as mustard. We may be able to get you out of this."

"Oh, rot!"

"Come and see Levison, anyway."

"I tell you it's no good!" The Bounder breathed hard. "I've just been through it, and I've had enough. There's a limit."

"Come and see Levison, all the same!"

Wharton drew the Bounder away, and Vernon-Smith, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, went with him.

Frank let them into Levison's room, and left them with his brother. Levison was on the sofa, his injured leg resting on a cushion. He glanced at the Bounder's moody face.

"Anything fresh?" he asked.

risky bizney," he said. "I'm ready to take my share of the risk, and I suppose you are?"

"Of course! Hang the risk!"

"We may want help. It's a question whether other fellows will take the risk of helping." And Levison's eyes rested upon the captain of the Remove.

"You can count me in," said Harry Wharton steadily. "I'm with Smithy in this, through thick and thin."

"Good man! And—"

"And the others, if they're wanted, too. They will be glad to help."

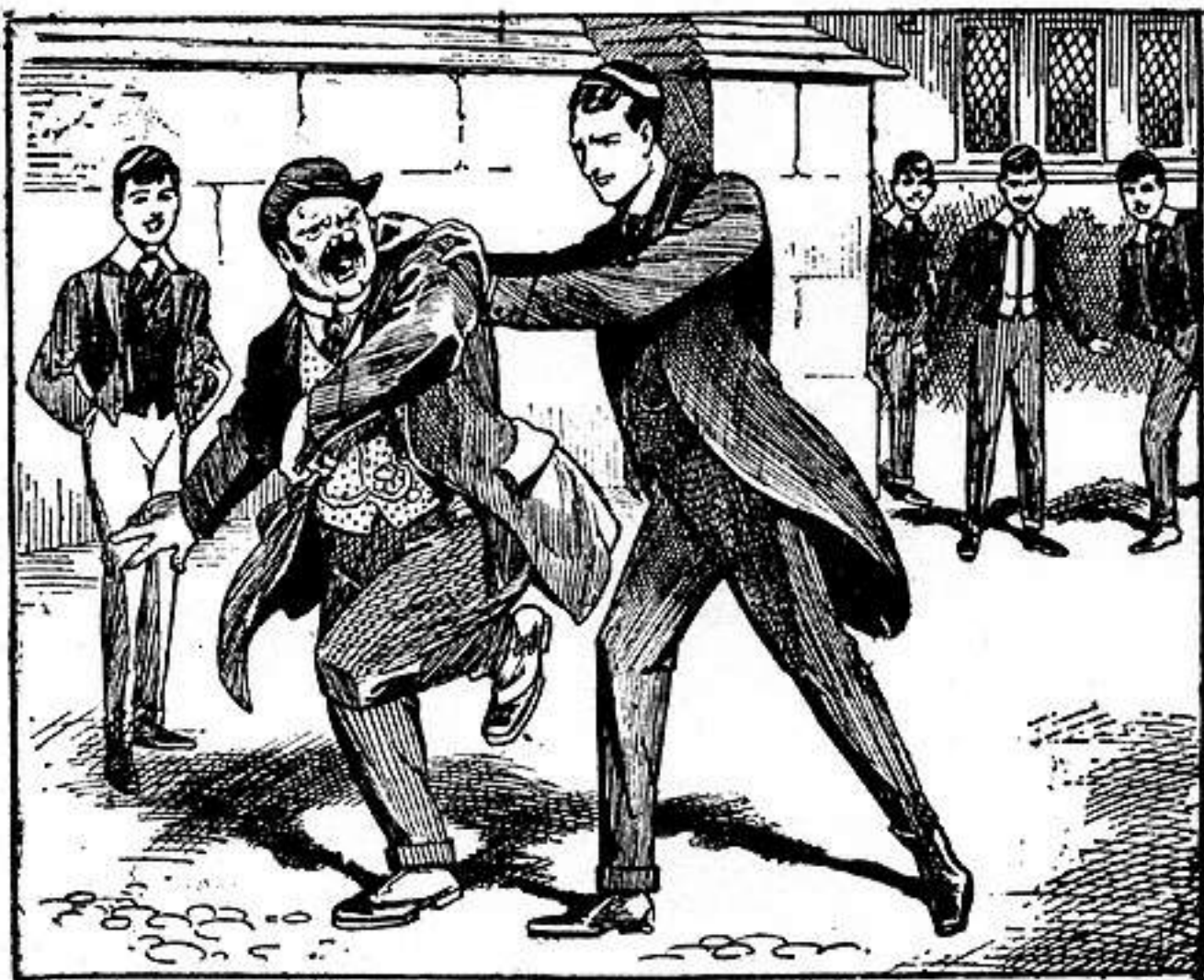
"I don't see why they should," grunted the Bounder.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Well, they will," he said. "Dash it all, Smithy, we're not going to see a Greyfriars chap dished by a scoundrel like that, if there weren't any other reasons! If there's anything in Levison's plan, we're ready. Levison's going to take the risk, and he doesn't even belong to Greyfriars."

"I don't see why he should, either."

"Leave that out, then," said Levison.



Wingate deals with Mr. Hawke! (See Chapter 10.)

"Yes; the finish!" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"What is it, then?"

The Bounder snapped out an explanation. Levison took no notice of his surly manner. He could make allowances for the fellow who was tried beyond the limit of his patience and endurance.

"My word!" said the St. Jim's junior.

"The scoundrel! But I've thought it out, Smithy, and I think we can dish the villain."

"There's nothing to be done, unless those photographs can be got away from him, and the negative, too," said Vernon-Smith savagely. "You know that's not possible, Levison!"

"I think it's possible."

Levison spoke very quietly, but there was a ring of confidence in his tone. The Bounder's expression changed.

"Go ahead!" he said. "No harm in hearing your idea, anyway. Goodness knows I'd be glad to get shut of that lot, especially as they've cut up rusty like this. It would be ripping to dish Jerry Hawke at the finish!"

Levison nodded.

"I'd better say at once that it's a

"We're going to do it, and that's the point, Smithy. Now for the little game. It came vaguely into my head when I was talking to that rascal this afternoon, but I hadn't got it quite clear. I've thought it out. Hawke expects you to-night, and me with you."

"That's so."

"We're going to his room at the Cross Keys. He's still got his old room, I suppose. I used to sneak in there by the veranda at the back."

"And I, many a time and oft," said the Bounder, with a sour smile. "I don't see what that's got—"

"I'm trying to explain. You and I visit him, by way of the veranda, in the usual way. We shall be alone in that room with Hawke."

"Well?"

"The other fellows, if they care to help us, will be on the veranda outside," continued Levison. "They can put on Guy Fawkes masks there, so that Hawke won't see their faces when they come in, if they like. They'll come in when we call them in."

"Well?" said the Bounder again.

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"Hawke's got one photo about him, and the negative looked up in his room. I think Hawke can be persuaded into giving them to us."

"Phew!" said Wharton.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Just the kind of trick he's on his guard against!" he said. "There's the other photo, sealed up and addressed to Dr. Locke, in Cobb's charge. Cobb will keep it in his quarters downstairs somewhere—no idea where. Five minutes after we'd left that letter would be posted. You'd forgotten that."

"I hadn't forgotten that. I'm in Hawke's confidence at present. He thinks I'm after your money in the same way that he is. Cobb knows me—or, rather, thinks he knows me. He remembers me, at least. Before I give myself away I think I can trick Cobb into bringing that sealed letter to Hawke's room."

"Oh!"

"There he will be dealt with. But you and I can't deal with two grown men, especially as I'm a bit crooked. Five other fellows that would do it with us, though—"

The Bounder whistled.

His eyes were glittering now. It was a reckless scheme that just appealed to Vernon-Smith's reckless nature. Wharton's face was very grave.

"What do you say, Wharton?" asked the St. Jim's junior. "Is it justifiable to handle a blackmailer who's breaking the law?"

"Quite!" said Harry.

"You fellows will run risks in getting into such a place—out of bounds, too—at night! But you can cover your faces, and Hawke won't know you from Adam. Not that he could hurt you if he did. A man of that character wouldn't even be listened to by Dr. Locke, unless he had the most indisputable proofs—and the proofs are just what we are going to take from him!"

"Even if the whole story came out, the Head wouldn't blame us so much as he'd blame me now if Hawke gave me away!" grinned the Bounder. "It would be a proof that I was trying to get clear of that gang, and that's what I couldn't prove if it came to a show-up now. Of course, there's no reason why Wharton and the rest should run the risk, though."

"There is!" said Harry. "It's rather a hot scheme, I must say; but I don't see any other way, and it's a chance, at least. I'm game!"

"And three or four others?" asked Levison.

"I'll answer for them."

"Is it a go, then?"

"It's a go!"

"Done!" said the Bounder.

Harry Wharton, ten minutes later, called his chums into Study No. 1. Nugent and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, heard what he had to tell them with great astonishment.

"I don't want you fellows to be dragged into this," concluded Wharton. "I'm going to help, anyway. You fellows must suit yourselves."

"Rats!" said Nugent. "I'm with you, of course!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh. "My respectable self will take a hand gamefully."

"I'm on!" said Bob Cherry.

Only Johnny Bull was silent. He was thinking it out in his quiet, deliberate way. His chums regarded him rather anxiously.

"Well, Johnny?" said Wharton at last.

"Yes, I'm on!" said Johnny Bull, with a nod. "I think Smithy's had a lesson, and means to run straight. Otherwise, I

wouldn't bother my head about him for a minute. But I think so, and I'm on!"

And so it was settled. And there were six members of the Remove, and a guest at Greyfriars, who looked forward to the night with much suppressed excitement.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

After Lights-out!

WINGATE of the Sixth put the lights out in the Remove dormitory without observing that there was anything unusual on.

Indeed, outside the Famous Five the Remove fellows did not suspect that anything unusual was on the cards for that night.

Harry Wharton & Co. kept their counsel very carefully.

Willing as they were to help the Bounder out of his scrape, and give him a new chance for the future, they realised very clearly the peril that was involved in the undertaking.

To break school bounds at night was serious enough in itself; but to do so for the purpose of visiting such a resort as the Cross Keys was unpardonable.

A flogging, at the very least, would be the result in case of discovery, and there was a good risk of still more serious punishment.

And it was right enough, too. They knew that. It happened that they were acting with good motives, but the rule itself was good and necessary.

But it was clearly necessary for the secret to be well kept, and so no word was breathed even to quite trustworthy fellows like Squiff and Mark Linley and Peter Todd. The fewer that knew about it the better.

As for Levison, he did not come under the same head. As a guest at Greyfriars he was not exactly amenable to the school discipline, though, of course, he was expected to conform to it. Certainly Dr. Locke would have sent the St. Jim's junior away instantly if he had found him resorting to the Cross Keys public-house, with a letter to his own headmaster informing him of the circumstances. Levison ran as much risk as the rest.

The Bounder was very quiet and thoughtful when he turned in, and he did not sleep. The knowledge that he was involving other fellows in his own shady risks made him ill at ease.

He would never have asked them. But they had not waited to be asked. But deeply, bitterly, he regretted the reckless folly which had led to such a situation. He had always said to himself that, if trouble came, he had the nerve to face the music, and that was true. But now trouble had come it was not he alone who had to face the music, and in case of disaster the innocent would suffer with the guilty.

The Bounder's thoughts, as he lay sleepless, were not pleasant ones, but they helped him to learn a stern lesson, and strengthened his resolve for the future.

The last voice was silent in the Remove dormitory when ten o'clock came. But the Co. did not yet move. Not till half-past ten did Harry Wharton stir quietly from his bed.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered.

"I am!" said the Bounder grimly.

"The wakefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Johnny Bull had dropped off. Harry Wharton awakened them quietly.

The six juniors dressed noiselessly in the dark.

They left the dormitory without a sound. In the box-room at the end of the passage a shadow moved in the darkness.

"You here?" muttered Wharton.

"I'm here!" came Levison's whisper.

The St. Jim's fellow had stolen silently from his room. He knew his way of old. "Good! Let's get out!"

The window was silently opened. The juniors dropped softly upon the leads. Wharton lingered a moment behind the others to close the window, leaving it unfastened, of course.

A grey mist had rolled up from the sea, and the quadrangle was dim. It was easy enough for the juniors to reach the school wall unseen, even if anyone had been on the watch. A few minutes more and they were in the road.

"Trot!" said Bob Cherry. "It's jolly cold!"

"The coldfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shiver.

They broke into a run. It was hard for Levison, but he said nothing.

At the sound of a footstep on the road they drew into the trees, and allowed the pedestrian to pass. It was not yet eleven when they came to the Cross Keys.

The inn was dark and silent, only a few gleams of light escaping from shuttered windows.

Like shadows in the mist the seven juniors glided down the narrow lane beside the inn. They paused there, in the clinging mist.

Levison spoke in a whisper.

"You've got the masks, you fellows?"

"Yes."

"Good! You understand? After we're in you get quietly on the veranda, outside Hawke's window. It's a French window, and I'll see that it's left unfastened. When we want you, you'll be ready."

"The readyfulness will be—"

"Terrific!" murmured Bob.

"We'll call out 'Play up!' when you're to come in."

"Right!" said Harry.

"Don't get on the veranda till the door's closed."

"Right-ho!"

"Come on, Smithy!"

The Bounder hesitated a moment.

"Look here, you fellows, I don't like this a bit," he muttered. "You're running a lot of risk, and there's no reason why you should—"

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Rather late to talk about that," he said. "Get on! It's a bit cold here!"

"Go ahead, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "We're in for it now, and we certainly don't intend to back out!"

The Bounder was about to speak again, but he closed his lips, and followed Levison into the dim, misty garden. Levison and Vernon-Smith mounted the creaky wooden steps to the veranda, upon which Mr. Hawke's room opened. Smithy tapped twice at the door.

It was opened from within, and a glimmer of light fell yellow on the mist. Mr. Hawke's squat form appeared in sight. He grinned as he saw his visitors.

"Come in, my hearties!" said Mr. Hawke genially.

The two juniors entered, and the door closed.

Harry Wharton & Co. allowed a few minutes to elapse, and then crept softly across the dim garden to the steps. On tiptoe they mounted to the veranda. From the curtained windows only a few pale gleams of light escaped. Other windows looked on the veranda, but all were thickly curtained. In the darkness and mist the juniors stood silent; and as they waited they placed the Guy Fawkes masks on their faces. When they appeared on the scene Mr. Hawke and Mr. Cobb would not have

the least idea of who Smithy's helpers were; which was all to the good.

There was a murmur of voices within, though they did not catch the words. They waited, with grim patience, for the call from Levison of St. Jim's.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

"Play Up!"

JERRY HAWKE grinned a fat, satisfied grin as his two visitors came into the room, and the door closed behind them.

The Bounder had been brought to heel! His presence in the Cross Keys at that hour seemed proof enough of that.

Mr. Hawke turned the key in the lock.

Then he crossed to the fire, and stood before it with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, smiling.

"Locked the door?" asked Levison.

"Oh, yes!"

"Can't be too careful about that," said Levison, with an anxious look. And he felt the key in the lock carefully.

"Locked all right!" said Mr. Hawke reassuringly.

Levison released the key, with a nod. He had fumbled with the lock of the French window, as if to ascertain that it was securely fastened. As a matter of fact, he had turned back the key in doing so, and the door was now unlocked; but Mr. Hawke, naturally, never thought of suspecting that.

"By gum!" said Mr. Hawke genially, as Levison came towards the fire. "This 'ere is like old times, Master Levison!"

"The merry old times!" said Vernon-Smith.

"The jolly old times!" said Levison. Mr. Hawke laughed.

He sat at the table, and took up the pack of cards. He was quite ready for business.

"The old sport was satisfied about that telephone-call, Smithy?" he remarked, with a chuckle.

"Oh, rather!" said the Bounder. "It was quite a joke. Hawke, old sport, do you feel inclined to play for high stakes?"

"Any old thing!"

"You've got two photographs and a negative which are rather valuable to me."

"Haw, haw!"

"Put them on the game, and I'll lay ten pounds against them."

Mr. Hawke smiled deprecatingly.

"Don't mention it, Master Smithy! Them photographs are a dead secret between ourselves. Nobody ain't going to see them, so long as we're friends—and why shouldn't we remain friends?"

Vernon-Smith understood.

It was the iron hand in the velvet glove. Mr. Hawke was quite prepared to be friendly; but it was understood that he held the upper hand all the time, if his valuable friendship was rejected.

The Bounder sat down without pursuing the subject. He had given the blackmailer a chance, and Hawke had not cared to take it. The next step would be a more drastic one.

"Nap?" said Levison.

"Anything you like!"

Levison's attention appeared to be all on his cards. But quietly, keenly, he was observing the room. The negative of the photograph was locked up in that room somewhere; he knew that.

There was a strong, old-fashioned oaken desk in one corner of Mr. Hawke's little parlour. Levison observed it, and, having observed it, did not glance at it again. He thought he knew where the negative was now.

"Mr. Cobb's still up, I suppose?"

Levison remarked, after a few rounds with the cards.

"You bet! The 'ouse is closed, of course—them silly new regulations," said Mr. Hawke. "I've told Mr. Cobb you're 'ere, Master Levison, and he'd like to see you agin. He remembers you, of course."

"Let's have him up, to take a hand," said Levison. "It may be my last chance of seeing him; I leave Greyfriars in a day or two. Don't you trouble—I'll call him."

"You know your way about 'ere, Master Levison!" chuckled Hawke.

Levison laughed.

"You bet! Keep on the game!"

"Your deal, Hawke," said the Bounder, showing signs of impatience—not that he cared a rap about the game. But it was his cue to keep Mr. Hawke busy while Levison went to see the landlord of the Cross Keys.

Mr. Hawke was more than willing to keep on with the game. He was already winning, and quite easily.

Levison strolled carelessly from the room, and descended the short stair to the bar-parlour. As Mr. Hawke had remarked, he knew his way about the place. He found the fat and shiny Mr. Cobb in the parlour, and the landlord of the Cross Keys greeted him very genially. From an adjoining apartment came a musical clink of washing glasses.

"Quite a stranger, Master Levison!" said Mr. Cobb genially. "Sit down, air, and 'elp yourself to the smokes."

"Mr. Hawke's waiting for you, Cobby," said the junior. "Smithy's there!"

Mr. Cobb winked.

"You've got that letter?" continued Levison, returning the wink.

"Jerry's letter?"

"Yes; the one addressed to the Head of Greyfriars. He wants you to show it to Smithy—without letting him snatch it, you know! Careful!"

The fat innkeeper chuckled.

"What-ho!" he said. "I'll be careful enough. Don't Smithy believe it?"

"Well, seeing is believing," smiled Levison. "If Smithy sees that letter all ready addressed to his headmaster, and knowing what's in it—"

"I fancy Master Smithy won't want it posted—what?" grinned Mr. Cobb.

"I should say not! Don't give him a chance to snatch it, though," added Levison impressively.

"You trust me!" said Mr. Cobb.

"Not that it would matter much, cause any number of copies could be took from the negative, and Jerry's got that safe!"

Levison nodded.

Mr. Cobb unlocked a drawer, and took out a large, thick envelope, addressed in a crabbed hand to Dr. Locke at Greyfriars School.

Levison's heart beat faster as he saw it.

When Mr. Cobb had taken that letter into Hawke's room, both copies of the negative and the negative itself would be in the one room. And then it would be time to act!

Levison's heart throbbed with suppressed excitement, but he did not allow his face to betray it.

To the two sharpers he appeared to be still the young-rascal they had known in his old days at Greyfriars; and they did not doubt for a moment that he was hand-in-glove with them to keep Vernon-Smith in the toils. Levison had hinted to Mr. Hawke that he was after a whack in Vernon-Smith's money, and Jerry Hawke did not think of doubting it. It was the kind of thing he could most easily understand and appreciate.

Mr. Cobb, with the letter in his hand,

ascended the stairs to Jerry Hawke's room, and Levison followed him in.

The Bounder glanced round, and a glitter came into his eyes, at the sight of the letter in the fat innkeeper's hand.

Levison closed the door of the room, and kept close to it. The time was at hand now.

"Evening, Mr. Smith!" said Cobb, with a grin. "'Ere's the letter, Jerry!"

Hawke looked up in surprise.

"The letter? What's that for? That's not wanted here, Cobb!"

"Eh? Master Levison said—"

Click!

Levison locked the door behind him. He jerked out the key, and slipped it into his pocket.

Hawke and Cobb stared at him blankly.

"What the—" began Jerry Hawke, with vague uneasiness.

The Bounder rose to his feet and joined Levison.

Mr. Hawke was also on his feet now.

"What's the game?" he rapped out. Cobb stood staring blankly at the two juniors. He did not understand.

"The game," repeated Levison, with a smile—"the game's up, Jerry!"

"What?"

"Smithy wants that letter, and the photo you have in your pocket, and the negative that's locked up in this room!"

said Levison, with slow, distinctness. "Hand them over, and we'll be going!"

Jerry Hawke burst into a raucous laugh.

"Catch me!" he said. "I ask you agin—what's the game? You been trying to fool me, Master Levison?"

"Yes, trying—and succeeding!" said Levison coolly. "I'm on Smithy's side, to help him get clear of you, Mr. Hawke!"

The expression that came over the bookmaker's coarse, red face made Vernon-Smith grin. Never had a man looked more taken aback than Jerry Hawke did at that moment.

"You young 'ound!" gasped the bookmaker, at last.

"Thanks! Now, will you hand over the goods—"

"Will I?" said Jerry Hawke savagely.

"No, I won't! Now, unlock that door, you young villain, and then get out of my room!"

"If you don't hand them over, we shall take them!" said Levison quietly.

"Haw, haw!"

Mr. Cobb joined in Jerry Hawke's chortle. It did not seem likely that the two juniors could use force against the two men.

"You're a precious young rascal, Master Levison," said Mr. Cobb.

"You've took me in, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll keep you 'ere till the mornin', and then let you out, and you can explain at the school 'ow you came to stay out all night if you like!"

"That's it!" said Hawke viciously.

"Smithy, too! And when he turns up at school in the mornin' he'll find the postman deliverin' that there letter!"

"You won't hand over what we want?" asked the Bounder.

"No, you young fool!"

"Then we shall take them! Play up!" shouted the Bounder.

The door on the veranda was flung open at the call, and five coated, masked figures rushed in.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

JERRY HAWKE and his confederate stood nerveless for a moment.

The surprise was complete.

And the hideous faces of the five new-comers startled them, as well as the

sudden irruption into the room through a door Hawke had supposed to be locked.

"Oly 'orors!" gasped Jerry Hawke. "What—what—"

"Eavens!" stuttered Cobb.

The Guy Fawkes masks looked terrifying enough, coming in suddenly from the misty night. But in a moment they recognised them for what they were, and understood that they were not dreadful visions conjured up by deep potations.

One of the masks stopped to close the veranda door and lock it and take out the key.

Then the five, with Smithy and Levison, surrounded the two startled and dismayed sharpers.

"Quite a little surprise—what?" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, gum!" mumbled Jerry Hawke.

"You get out of my 'ouse!" blustered Mr. Cobb, recovering himself a little. "You get out! You 'ear me? Burgling a respectable man's 'ouse! I'll 'ave the law on yer!"

"Blackmail isn't a legal business, dear boy," said the Bounder. "The less you have to do with the law, Cobb, the better for you!"

"You young 'ound!"

"Better language, please!" said the Bounder sharply. "Now, then, give me that letter!"

Mr. Cobb clutched the letter tight, and put his hand behind him.

"You ain't 'aving that!"

"I'll take it fast enough!"

"Ands off!" shouted Mr. Cobb, as the Bounder rushed on him. "Bill! Bill!"

Bill was apparently the potman below, whom Levison had heard washing glasses in the bar.

But Bill was not there, and there was a locked door in the way if he came. The Bounder rushed upon Cobb while he was still calling, and two of the masked juniors joined him.

The innkeeper struck out savagely, but he was not much use again three sturdy Greyfriars fellows.

He went to the floor with a crash, and the Bounder's knee was planted on his chest, pinning him there. One of the others grasped his wrists, and another his hair.

Jerry Hawke made a spring at the fender, and grasped the poker. He was too alarmed and enraged to care what damage he did, if he had a chance.

But there was no chance for him.

Three masked juniors were upon him as he stooped and reached for the poker. He went with a crash into the fender.

A gurgling howl came from Mr. Hawke as he crashed down. There were some hot cinders in the fender, and they were not agreeable to fall upon.

"Ow, ow, yow! 'Elp!"

"Got him!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!"

"You don't seem to want my help," smiled Levison, limping forward to lend a hand.

"All serene!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Get him out of the fender—we don't want to toast him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jerry Hawke was rolled out of the fender on his back onto the hearthrug. He gasped spasmodically for breath.

Mr. Cobb was still struggling. But he could not yell for Bill again. Nugent had jammed the pack of cards into his mouth, and Mr. Cobb was chewing them frantically.

Johnny Bull planted a heavy knee on Mr. Hawke's chest. The bookmaker glared up at his hideously-masked face.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

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"Quiet!" said Johnny Bull. "Shove something in his mouth, you fellows!"

Mr. Hawke opened his mouth to yell, and a box of cigarettes was jammed into it. He spluttered instead.

"Looks like a win for us!" smiled the Bounder. Vernon-Smith was enjoying the situation now.

"The winfulness is great!"

"Will you give me that letter, Cobb?"

Mr. Cobb was no longer in a condition to resist. Vernon-Smith took the letter from his hand.

He opened the envelope, while the other fellows held Cobb down.

There was no letter within—simply a copy of the photograph which showed Smithy gambling and smoking at the table under the trees.

Vernon-Smith crossed to the fire, and dropped the envelope and the photograph into the glowing embers. They were consumed in a moment.

"That's one!" said the Bounder.

"We've done with Cobb. Sit on him!"

"Groogh!" came faintly from Cobb.

Two juniors, grinning under their masks, sat on the landlord of the Cross Keys, and kept him helpless on the floor. He ceased to struggle, as his head was crashed on the floor as a warning.

Mr. Cobb was dead in the next act, so to speak. Levison & Co. gave their attention to Jerry Hawke.

The Bounder looked down grimly on Mr. Hawke, as he spat out crumpled cigarettes.

"You've got a photograph about you that I want, Jerry Hawke," said Vernon-Smith quietly.

"Groogh!"

"Give it to me! Let his hand loose!"

Mr. Hawke made use of his freed hand to shake a furious fist at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Will you give it to me, Hawke?"

"Groogh! No!" gasped the sharper.

"I'll make you suffer for this 'ere! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

The Bounder picked up the poker, and thrust it between the bars of the grate. Jerry Hawke's eyes dilated as he watched that action.

"What's that for?" asked Nugent.

"To persuade Hawke to give me the photograph."

"Why not take it?"

"I'm not going through the rotter's pockets. He can give it to me, unless he likes a red-hot poker."

"I—I say—" began Wharton.

"This is business, not a game!" said the Bounder icily. "Hawke is trying to blackmail me. He could get penal servitude for it, if I cared to show him up."

"You don't dare!" sneered Hawke.

"Precisely," the Bounder assented coolly. "It wouldn't do! But I do dare to give you the red-hot poker unless you hand over the photograph!"

"You—you—"

"Nuff said!" Vernon-Smith drew the glowing poker from the fire, and Jerry Hawke twisted and wriggled in fearful apprehension as the heated metal approached his face. "Now, then, you scoundrel!"

"Keep him off!" moaned the sharper, in an agony of fear.

"Do as you're told, then," said Levison. "The game's up, you can see that; and you ought to be glad to keep out of prison. You've played a scoundrelly game, and you've failed. It's time to toe the line!"

"I—I—I—I—"

"Will you give me the photograph?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No!" panted the sharper.

He shrieked the next moment, as the red-hot iron lightly touched his arm. It was the lightest of touches; but it was

enough for Jerry Hawke. He was not of the stuff of which the noble army of martyrs were made.

"Ands off! I'll do it!" he howled.

"Sharp, then!"

The bookmaker groped in his pocket, and flung the photograph at the Greyfriars junior. Vernon-Smith picked it up, examined it attentively, and then thrust it into the fire.

"Both gone!" said Levison, with a smile. "Now for the negative!"

"Let me go!" spluttered Jerry Hawke. "I tell you, I'll 'ave the law of you for this 'ere!"

"Where is the negative, Hawke?"

"Find out!"

"In that desk, I think," said Levison.

"Hawke's got the key to it. Take him to the desk. He's got to give it to us; we don't want to take it."

"Always keep on the right side," smiled the Bounder, heating the poker again. "Take him to the desk."

Jerry Hawke was dragged to his feet, and whirled to the corner where the desk stood. He began to struggle, but the grip on him was too strong. He stood before the desk, panting. The fat, unfit slacker, bloated with drink, was not in a condition for a tussle against heavy odds.

"Open the desk!" said Levison.

"I won't!" hissed Hawke.

Mr. Cobb, with two juniors sitting on him, watched the scene helplessly. He did not dare to shout for Bill again; and Bill, if he had come, could not have got in. It would have been worse for Bill if he had. Levison & Co. had the upper hand, and the game was up.

The Bounder drew the poker from the fire again, and approached. Mr. Hawke did not wait for a touch this time.

With a husky curse, he drew a key from his pocket and unlocked the desk.

"Hand out the negative!" said the Bounder grimly.

"Take it, hang you!"

"Hand it out!"

Another curse, and Mr. Hawke handed out the negative. It was a film negative, and very clear.

Vernon-Smith held it up to the light, and examined it minutely, and satisfied himself that it was the negative he wanted.

"All right?" asked Levison.

"Right as rain!"

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath.

The Bounder crossed to the fire, thrust the film into the embers, and stirred it there with the poker. It frizzled up, and disappeared from existence. Vernon-Smith dropped the poker into the fender.

"Our game!" he said lightly.

"Let those scoundrels go!" said Harry Wharton. "They're getting off cheaply."

"The bumpfulness would be the proper caper, my esteemed chums!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "It may be a lesson to them, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ands off!" spluttered Mr. Hawke furiously, maddened at the bare idea of being bumped like a mere schoolboy. "I'll—I'll— Yaroo!"

Bump!

Mr. Hawke sat down with a terrific concussion. He rolled over and gasped.

Mr. Cobb gave an anticipatory howl, as the merry juniors seized him. He howled again more emphatically as he was bumped on the floor and rolled over.

"Cut!" said Levison.

The juniors, grinning, crowded out of the veranda. Levison threw the keys back into the room. Mr. Cobb groped for the room doorkey, threw open the door, and yelled for Bill.

By that time the juniors were speed-

ing through the misty garden. They came out into the lane, but did not stop. Without a halt they kept on the way to Greyfriars. Their work was done, and the sooner they were back in the school the better.

Twenty minutes later they were climbing silently into the box-room. Harry Wharton closed the window and fastened it.

"All serene!" he whispered. "My hat! We shall be sleepy in the morning! Shove those masks into the box."

"The sleepiness will be terrific, my esteemed chum; but the satisfactfulness for the good deed will also be great!"

There was a soft chuckle, and the juniors tiptoed away to their dormitory. Levison whispered good-night, and moved cautiously to his room. Five minutes more and the adventurers were in bed.

Levison was down late the next morning.

Harry Wharton & Co., who hadn't the privilege of being down late, were early as usual; and they were somewhat heavy in the Form-room that morning.

But they were in a very satisfied mood.

The blackmailer's teeth had been drawn, thanks to Levison's daring scheme. The St. Jim's junior had saved Vernon-Smith; and the future was clear. Mr. Hawke could do as he liked now. He had no proofs.

That morning, after lessons, they saw Mr. Hawke again; the bookmaker came in at the gates, with a surly, savage face. He had come to do his worst—such as it

was. He was shown in to the Head; and five minutes later he was shown out again. The Bouncer was not even sent for. Dr. Locke, after one glance at the sullen, coarse, boozy face, had declined to listen to a word against a Greyfriars boy from such a character, unless proof was instantly forthcoming.

Proof Mr. Hawke did not possess, and could not produce. And the Head concluded, very naturally, that his visit was the result of spite, caused by Vernon-Smith's refusal to have anything to do with him—as was indeed the case.

Mr. Hawke had the pleasure of hearing the Head's opinion of him and his manners and customs—not a flattering opinion. Then he was shown out; and as he began cursing savagely, Wingate of the Sixth stepped in and took him by the collar, and helped him away. Mr. Hawke, squirming and snarling in the muscular grasp of the captain of Greyfriars, was marched down to the gates, and a heavy boot helped him into the road. And he did not return.

Vernon-Smith watched the scene with perfect coolness. He had been prepared for a scene in the Head's study, but there was no scene. The Head dismissed Mr. Hawke and his unproven assertions with utter contempt. On his own showing, the rascal had come there from motives of revenge, because Vernon-Smith would have nothing more to do with him. So even if Dr. Locke had placed any faith in his assertion, the Bouncer would have emerged from the test very well. But, as a matter of fact, the Head felt nothing but contempt and disgust for the man,

and dismissed the whole matter with scorn.

Vernon-Smith wore a cheery look that day. And on Saturday, when the Remove played St. Jude's, Smithy was in his old place in the eleven, and he played up in great style. Levison and his minor were leaving Greyfriars that afternoon, and after the match Harry Wharton & Co., and the Bouncer, went along to the station to see them off.

Vernon-Smith gripped Levison's hand when they parted.

"I sha'n't forget!" he said.

"All serene!" said Levison, with a smile. "I'm glad I was able to help."

"I sha'n't forget!" the Bouncer repeated. "The other fellows helped, but it was you did it! And if ever I can do you a good turn, you've only got to ask. You won't find me backward. The time may come, you know."

"I'll remember!" said Levison.

"Good-bye, old chap!"

"Good-bye!"

"The good-byefulness is terrific, my esteemed Levison!"

"Good-bye, Franky!"

The train steamed out, and Levison waved his hand from the window, and Frank flourished his cap. Harry Wharton & Co. were not likely soon to forget Levison's visit to his old school, and how he had succeeded in Saving the Bouncer.

(DON'T MISS "THE MISSING SKIPPER!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

EDITORIAL CHAT.

For Next Monday:

"THE MISSING SKIPPER!"

By Frank Richards.

It is not often that we have a story dealing chiefly with the giants of the Sixth Form; and if we had them frequently I think readers would get tired of them. But once in a way is good, and next week you will find Wingate and Loder playing the chief parts in the drama. Wingate mysteriously disappears. He is searched for far and wide, but not found. Then a fresh election for the captaincy becomes necessary, and— But I am not going to tell you any more now!

A CHORUS OF PRAISE.

Everybody seems to have enjoyed most thoroughly the series of five stories beginning with "Judge Jeffreys" and ending with "Victory!" which lately appeared. Some enthusiastic readers insist that the future stories should all be up to their level.

I am not going to promise anything of the sort. My own opinion is that it simply can't be done. Clever as Mr. Richards is, he cannot always be on his top note. He never writes a bad story, but some of the yarns will necessarily be better than others.

Then, too, a barring-out is perhaps the most telling of all possible incidents in school fiction. There is fine scope in it for humour and for excitement. But there would be precious little thrill about a barring-out if it were continually happening. Variety is what matters.

As to what constitutes a ripping good story—here opinions differ. Now and then there is practical unanimity, as in this case; but in a general way the yarn which seems to one reader top-hole may seem to another below the average, just because its plot or subject does not appeal to him, or because the most prominent characters in it are not among his special favourites. I can chuckle even now over the stories which tell of Alonzo's early

days at Greyfriars. They seem to me full of humour, with just the needed touch of pathos—the pathos of an earnest, good-hearted, well-meaning fellow trying to be good to everyone, and only getting into trouble because of his blunders.

Well, those stories were not by any means so generally popular as I should have expected. I was not in charge of the MAGNET at the time, but I happen to know what high hopes the then Editor had of them. But many readers did not like them a bit. They despised Alonzo, and were not keen on reading about him. In my own time I have had one or two disappointments of that sort—not very serious ones, but tending to show me that you must never be too sure. Nevertheless, I felt quite sure about the barring-out series!

OUR GREAT CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

This will bear the date of December 8th, and will, of course, be out on the third day of the month. The "Gem" issue of last week pleased you all, I am sure. I hope and believe that the Christmas Number of this paper will delight you quite as much. The price will be

TWOPENCE

—as is usual in the case of our special issues. Among the contents will be

"THE GREYFRIARS CHRISTMAS PARTY"

—in which Mr. Frank Richards tells of how Squiff and Tom Brown and others spent Christmas at the school, under the charge of Mr. Prout; how Bunter—but I really must not give away what Bunter did; how Kangaroo and Dane and Koumi Rao and Buck Finn, of St. Jim's, came along as guests; of the fun they had, and the exciting things that happened.

After the first few chapters of this story Harry Wharton & Co.—except for Inky—drop out. But I know you will not want to

miss Harry's Christmas, so I have asked Mr. Richards to do a short story about what happened at Wharton Lodge. This will form a sort of supplement to the longer story, and I know it will be appreciated.

Then I have a short story from your old friend Mr. Sidney Drew, who has never been surpassed for the adventure serial with lots of fun in it. Do you remember "Mysteria" and "Beyond the Eternal Ice," "Lion versus Bear," "Through Trackless Tibet," and other fine serials Mr. Drew wrote years ago? Some of you do, I know, for you have been asking for more lately. And I have talked the matter over with Mr. Drew, and perhaps it is not so unlikely that you will get more as I thought it was.

You remember Ferrers Lord and Rupert Thurston, Ching Lung and Gan Waga, Prout and Maddock and Barry O'Rooney? You will meet some of them again in

"TAKING COVER"

—the fine story which Mr. Drew has done for our Christmas issue. And I won't say but what you may have further opportunities of improving your acquaintance with them. Personally, I remember Ching Lung ever since he was one of "The Boys of Barrowby"; and the story of his doings has always interested me.

Then there will be a MAGNET "Who's Who" on the same lines as that which appeared last week in the "Gem." Anything else? Do you want more than sixpennyworth for twopence, my friends? But if there is room for more there will be more; I promise you that. Not a column will be wasted!

Your Editor

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE GREYFRIARS SCHEMERS!

By TOM BROWN.

I.

Billy Bunter's Wheeze!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were seated in their study at Greyfriars, having tea.

"You fellows heard the latest?" asked Wharton, as he poured himself out a cup of tea.

"Peace declared?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Fathead!" exclaimed Wharton.

"What's happened, then?" asked Nugent.

"Nothing's happened so far," said Harry Wharton. "But something's going to happen!"

"Go hon!"

"Yes," went on the captain of the Remove. "I've just had it from Quelch. To-morrow afternoon two new kids are coming to Greyfriars."

"Don't want 'em!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, we've got to have them," said Wharton. "They're only coming here for a week, though, but Quelch wants us to take a fatherly interest in them, and—"

"That's easily done," said Nugent. "Who are they, and what are they?"

"Something quite out of the ordinary," explained Wharton, helping himself to another slice of war bread. "Their names are Bisha Kan and Nisha Kan."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking up in surprise. "This ain't a zoological gardens! Where the dickens are they coming from?"

"Dunno, exactly," replied Wharton. "Quelch told me that their guv'nor, who's an Eastern potentate of some sort, is staying in England for a time, wants his dear little offspring to spend a few days at an English public school."

"Plenty of other schools in England," said Bob Cherry, who was not feeling at all anxious to see Bisha and Nisha.

"Couldn't tell Quelch that," said Wharton.

"No, I suppose not."

"They're coming to Greyfriars," continued the captain of the Remove, "and Quelch wants us to look after them, show them all the sights—in fact, I've got to chaperon them all over the giddy place!"

"Better pass the job over to Inky," suggested Nugent.

"I should be graciously pleased to look afterfully our esteemed and ludicrous visitors," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Wharton shook his head.

"You're a good old sort, Inky," he said, "but it can't be did. Quelch's orders that we've all got to look after them, so it's not fair to chuck the job on you."

"True, O, King!" said Nugent.

"When are they coming?" asked Bob Cherry.

"To-morrow afternoon," said Wharton. "We'd better give them a decent welcome. Don't want them to go away with the idea that Greyfriars is a rotten sort of place, and all that."

"S'pose not," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, we shall have to get a decent spread," said Wharton; "at any rate, as good as funds and grub rules will allow. Must give the strangers within the gates some sort of welcome, you know."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry. "Do what you like. Suppose they'll bring their own sugar. Can't give up my allowance!"

"No jolly fear!" remarked Nugent.

"We'll manage somehow," said Wharton. "You see—Hullo! What's that blessed row outside?"

The captain of the Remove jumped up from his chair, and leaped towards the door.

He turned the handle quickly, and pulled the door open. Next instant, a bulky form was precipitated into the room—the form of

William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter floundered on the floor like a landed fish.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter, by gum!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Spying again!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. Bunter blinked at Bob Cherry through his enormous glasses.

"Oh, really, Cherry," he said, "I don't know why you jump to conclusions! I was just passing your door when I accidentally slipped, and—"

"Rats!" said Bob, with a sniff.

"I say—"

"You were listening at the keyhole, you spying young hound!"

"Really, I—"

"Oh, stop lying," snapped Bob, "and hop it quick!"

Bunter scrambled slowly to his feet.

"Certainly, Cherry," he said. "I will go as soon as I can, but really I haven't much strength in these days. What with the grub restrictions, and war worry, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What war worry have you got, porpoise?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Lots!" replied the Owl of the Remove. "Here am I in a state of starvation, and those beastly Huns are sinking food ships as fast as they can. It's awful, and ought not to be allowed. Somebody ought to put a stop to it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove chums. Bunter blinked at the laughing juniors.

"Oh, really, you fellows, I fail to see—"

"Yes, porpoise," said Bob Cherry, rising from his chair, "there are many things you fail to see!"

Bunter's eyes wandered towards a couple of cakes which were lying on the table, and he moved a step forward.

"Can you see those cakes?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Cherry, they're—"

"Yes, they're all right—where they are," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I wasn't going to ask for them, but—"

"All the same if you did!" said Bob firmly.

"But you can see them, can't you?"

"Yes!"

Bob Cherry stood between the table and the fat junior.

"Now, I wonder whether you can see my boot?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"Can you see it?"

"Yes, but—"

Bob Cherry drew his foot back.

"Well, he said determinedly, "unless you're out of the room before I count three, you're jolly well going to feel it!"

"Oh, really Cherry!" said Bunter, edging away. Bob Cherry's boots were of a large size, and the fat junior had no desire to come into contact with them.

"One—" counted Bob Cherry.

"I say, Cherry, if I go quietly, can I have—"

"Two—"

"One of those cakes?"

"Three!"

"Can I— Ow! Yow! Yarooogh!"

Bunter's voice rose crescendo as Bob Cherry's boot came into play.

"Hop it!" exclaimed Bob.

"But really— Ow! Yow-ow! Stop it, Cherry, you beast!"

But Bob Cherry did not stop it.

He rained kick after kick on Bunter's ponderous form, and finished up by propelling the fat junior through the doorway of the study.

Bunter crashed to the floor with a thud.

"Cherry, you beast!" he roared, as he groped for his spectacles.

No reply.

"Cherry, do you hear?"

But Bob Cherry did not hear. The door of Study No. 1, was closed, and locked, too; and Bunter's words were wasted on the air.

"Beasts!" muttered Bunter spitefully. "I'll make them sit up for this, hanged if I won't! I'll— Ow! Yow! Leggo, my ear, Bulstrode!"

"Shut up, fathead!" said a voice in the fat junior's ears. "It's Skinner!"

"Oh, really, Skinner, I don't know why you wanted to come upon me so slyly!"

"Rats!" snapped Skinner, releasing his hold on Bunter's ear.

"If you had come along a minute earlier you might have trodden on my spectacles, and then you would have had to pay for them!" said Bunter.

"Who knocked 'em off?"

"Those beasts in Study No. 1," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"But I'll make them sit up for it!" growled the fat junior. "I'll make them wish they hadn't treated me so roughly. They want to give the strangers a good welcome, do they? Well, they—"

"Hullo! What's the wheeze?" asked Skinner, pricking up his ears.

"Nothing," said Bunter, turning up his nose. "You're not in this, you— Oh, yes, I think perhaps you'd better come in!"

"Come in to what?"

"The scheme I've got for paying out those rotters in there," said Bunter; and he pointed towards Study No. 1.

"Depends upon what the scheme is," said Skinner guardedly.

"Oh, there's nothing really risky in it!" said Bunter. "It's only a wheeze—in fact, it'll turn out to be a huge joke. Come along to my study, and I'll tell you all about it."

Bunter led the way to Study No. 7. His study-mates were out, so Bunter entered, and sat down in a chair by the fire.

"Tell us the wheeze," said Skinner.

Bunter told him, and Skinner listened intently.

"You see," said Bunter at length, "we shall get a good feed for nothing, and those chaps in Study No. 1 will look jolly sick when the real niggers turn up, and there's no grub left for them to eat."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Skinner.

It was evident that Bunter's scheme appealed to the cad of Greyfriars.

II.

Not to Bunter's Liking.

THE next afternoon—a half-holiday at Greyfriars—found Bunter and Skinner very busy.

Peter Todd and Dutton were out for the afternoon, and Bunter had no difficulty in keeping prying eyes away from the study.

Had Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry happened to look into the study about half an hour after dinner they would have received a great surprise. For Bunter's face had undergone a complete change.

Bunter's face was seldom too clean, but at that moment it was black—jet-black.

The fat junior held a large burnt cork in his hand, and he continued to give his face a dab here and there.

"I think that'll do," he said at length, as he surveyed himself in the looking-glass.

"What about your hands?" asked Skinner, whose face, under the influence of a burnt cork, was slowly taking on the same hue as Bunter's.

"Oh, I forgot!" said Bunter, rubbing away at his hands. "We don't want those beasts to see through our disguise."

"No jolly fear!" said Skinner.

"Good job I managed to bone those wigs," said Bunter, placing a curly wig on his head.

"My knowledge of the East has stood me in

good stead for once. Those Eastern johnnies all have curly hair."

"I'm not so sure," said Skinner doubtfully. "I believe it's only African niggers who—"

"Look here!" said Bunter. "If you want to find fault—"

"Not at all," said Skinner. "But I was only wondering."

"Well, stop wondering, then, and get on with it!" snapped Bunter.

In another five minutes two of the queerest niggers imaginable stood in Study No. 7. Their hands and faces were jet-black, and on their heads were mops of thick, curly black hair.

It would have puzzled anybody to name the country from which they hailed, but at least they looked anything but English.

"What time are those Eastern kids supposed to arrive?" asked Skinner.

"Five o'clock," said Bunter. "I heard Wharton tell Cherry so this morning."

"Oh, good! We'd better get there about four, then."

"Yes," Bunter pulled out his watch. "It's half-past three now. We'll wait another half an hour, and then we'll trot along."

"Right-ho!"

The two schemers waited anxiously for the half-hour to pass.

At length four o'clock chimed out from the old tower at Greyfriars, and Bunter jumped to his feet.

"Come along!" he said.

"I say," said Skinner, "you'd better take your glasses off, you know! It won't do—"

"Oh, won't it?" snapped Bunter abruptly.

"How do you think I shall be able to see the grub if I take my glasses off?"

"But—"

"B-r-r-r!" growled Bunter. "I suppose foreign chaps can wear glasses, can't they?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, come along, then!" commanded Bunter. "And mind you don't forget to talk like a nigger!"

Skinner followed the fat junior out of the study. Somehow or other Skinner was not quite so keen on the wheeze now. He felt confident enough of himself, but not about Bunter.

But Bunter's blind self-conceit prevented him from having any doubts as to the success of his scheme.

The fat junior ambled along the passage, and poked his head inside Study No. 1. It was empty.

Bunter grunted.

"Beasts!" he exclaimed. "I thought somehow they wouldn't—"

The fat junior broke off abruptly as the sound of footsteps became audible in the passage.

The next moment young Tubb of the Third came along.

He started back in amazement at sight of the two "niggers."

"My aunt!" he gasped.

"Come here!" snapped Bunter authoritatively.

The fag recovered from his initial shock, and stepped forward.

"What the dickens are you chaps doing here?" he asked.

"We've come to see Wharton," explained Bunter. "And if you don't buck up and fetch him, young Tubb, you'll get a thick ear!"

"Hallo! Who told you my name was Tubb?" asked the fag, in surprise.

"I—I— Oh, I'm a thought-reader, you know!" said Bunter haltingly.

"Oh!" gasped Tubb.

"Buck up," snapped Bunter, "unless you want me to slay you alive! We Eastern chaps don't think twice about killing anybody!"

"Phew!" gasped the fag. And he took to his heels in search of Harry Wharton & Co.

Bunter and Skinner entered Study No. 1, and sat down in the easy-chairs.

"What did you want to call that kid by his name for?" asked Skinner.

"What's that matter?" snapped Bunter.

"Can't I say what I like? This is my wheeze, so just you shut up!"

"But—"

"Be quiet, can't you? Here they come!"

Skinner subsided as the sound of rushing feet could be heard in the passage.

Next moment the Famous Five came rushing into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Who the—why the— My word!"

Bob Cherry staggered backwards in surprise, as the two "niggers" jumped to their feet and salaamed awkwardly.

"Bery pleased to meet you," said the fat junior, holding out his hand.

Bob Cherry gripped it, and as he drew his hand away he happened to glance at it. It was black!

Bob Cherry's mind worked very quickly at that moment. He had recovered from his surprise at meeting the two niggers, and the black on his hand astounded him for the moment.

The next instant he saw through it all, and, like Brer Rabbit, he decided to lie low and say nothing—at any rate, for a little while.

The other juniors shook hands with the niggers, and they also noticed the black on their hands. They were about to remark the curious fact, when they caught Bob Cherry's eye, which bade them keep silent.

"I suppose you're Nisha Khan?" said Bob, pointing towards Billy Bunter.

"Oh, yes! My name's Nisha Khan," replied the fat junior.

"Jolly good name, too!" went on Bob Cherry. "Your mother got any more at home with names like that?"

"Oh, really, Ch—I mean, no!" faltered the fat junior.

"Then who's this johnnie over here?" asked Bob, indicating Skinner.

Bunter blinked round him.

"Oh, I forgot about him!" he said.

"Jolly rotten memory you've got, then," said Bob, keeping a straight face.

"Yes, I have!" snapped Bunter. "It's due to not getting enough to eat, you know. You see, I'm a fat chap, and I need a lot to eat."

"H'm!" muttered Bob Cherry. "That's jolly funny! We've got a chap just like you here."

Bunter shifted uneasily.

"That so?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry. "He's a beastly fat pig, too. He'd eat from morning to night if we'd let him. He's a rotten cad, and—"

"Oh, really, Cherry, you beast, I—er—quite so! Go on!"

"How did you know my name was Cherry?" asked Bob, with feigned surprise.

Bunter nodded knowingly.

"Ah!" he said. "You English kids ain't half up to snuff. I'm a thought-reader, I am. I surprised one of your kids named Tubb by telling him his name."

"You're jolly clever!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I am that," said Bunter, gaining confidence. "I can tell you all your names. That chap over there with the pug nose is Bull, and that cross-eyed swab there is Nugent, and that knock-kneed chap by the door is Wharton!"

"The esteemed Nisha Khan is too amazing for words," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, I forgot, you!" said the fat junior. "Your name's Hurree Singh."

"Remarkable!" said Bob Cherry. "You'll have to tell us how you do it after tea. I suppose you're feeling a bit peckish?"

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry did not remark that he thought "What-ho!" a peculiar word for an Eastern junior to use. He winked at Harry Wharton, and made for the door of the study.

"You chaps put the cloth on the table," he said. "I'll get the grub."

Harry Wharton and Nugent got out the cloth, and placed it on the table. Then Johnny Bull put out the requisite number of cups and saucers and plates.

Bob Cherry returned with several parcels under his arms. He placed them on a chair, and then commenced to put the contents on the table.

In less than two minutes the fare was spread, and it consisted of a plateful of cakes, five in number, a large quantity of carrots, some onions, and at least a dozen raw potatoes.

Billy Bunter gasped.

"Come on, Nisha Khan!" said Bob politely.

"And you, too, Bisha. You must excuse us for keeping you waiting, but—"

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"You needn't protest because it's a good spread," said Bob Cherry, helping Bunter towards a chair. "We do things in style here, you know."

"Cherry, you—"

"Sit down, old fellow!" said Nugent. "Have a good tuck-in! We always like our visitors to enjoy themselves, you know."

"Take a seat, Nisha, old sport!" said Bob unrelentingly. "Pass the cakes, Wharton, old son. Perhaps Nisha would like one."

"I should, bery much!" said the fat junior, endeavouring to make the best of things.

Harry Wharton passed the cakes round. At least, he passed them to Bob Cherry,

Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, and then took one himself.

Then the plate was empty.

"I'm awfully sorry, Nisha, old scout!" said Wharton apologetically. "But they won't go round. Perhaps you'd like to start on carrots? They're simply ripping carrots! Here you are; take one!"

"I—er—the fact is, I—er—Wharton, you beast!" exclaimed the fat junior. "You know I don't eat carrots!"

"Go hor!" said Wharton, with a grin. "I thought all donkeys did. Never mind. Have an onion. They're spiffing onions, really!"

"No, thanks! I—"

"Perhaps Bisha Khan would like one?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, yes!" said Wharton. "I forgot all about our dear friend Bisha. Why, you're not eating anything, old scout! Have an onion. They're topping onions, and—"

"No—er—thanks!" faltered Bisha Khan.

"I've got an awful attack of toothache. I think I'll go and get something for it."

Bisha Khan attempted to make for the door, but Nugent pulled him back.

"Onions are ripping for the toothache," he said. "Get rid of it in next to no time. Come on; try one as a sample. I guarantee—"

"No, thanks! It's too bad for that."

"But, Skinner, old son—"

Bob Cherry looked up in surprise.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know you were a thought-reader, Wharton!"

"Didn't you?" said the captain of the Remove. "I'm a regular dab at the game! I knew that chap was named Skinner when I first looked at him. And this fat rotter here is named Bunter!"

Bunter almost fell off his chair at the shock of exposure.

"Oh, really—" he began, and then he made a bee-line for the door. Skinner did likewise.

"Belt 'em!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, picking up a handful of potatoes and hurling them at the departing schemers. The rest followed suit.

Very few of the missiles missed their mark, and as the Famous Five followed the schemers down the passage Bunter and Skinner experienced many hard knocks.

By the time they got out of range they were feeling sore all over—in mind as well as body. Everything had not turned out as well as had been expected by the Greyfriars Schemers!

A little later the real visitors arrived, and were given a hearty welcome. They stayed at the school for just on a fortnight, and the Famous Five found them to be really good fellows. Bisha and Nisha Khan took their departure with feelings of deep regret, but nevertheless they went away with high opinions of Greyfriars and the Greyfriars fellows.

THE END.

—:O:—

BILLY BUNTER.

ADAPTED FROM LONGFELLOW'S
"FRIAR LUBIN."

By FRANK NUGENT.

Buzzing off on others' bikes,
Smashing mudguard, brake, and bell
Heedless what another likes—
Billy Bunter does it well!
But to keep his hands from stealing—
Though he's told that he will rue it—
That calls for some decent feeling—
Billy Bunter cannot do it!

Sneaking into fellows' studies,
When there's no one there to tell,
Pinching tarts and other goodies—
Billy Bunter does it well!
But to stop from being greedy—
Though he's oft warned to eschew it,
'Cause it makes him fat and seedy—
Billy Bunter cannot do it!

Rivalling old Ananias,
Telling lies that make one yell—
'Gainst the truth he has a bias—
Billy Bunter does it well!
Once or twice he's chucked it—nearly—
Seeing truth—conforming to it;
But he finds it costs too dearly—
Billy Bunter cannot do it!

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 47.—Mr. LAWRENCE LASCELLES.

"LARRY," the Greyfriars fellows called him; and it is still as Larry that they talk of him when the conversation turns upon what is being done at the Front, where Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, late mathematical master at the old school, is doing a man's work as Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles.

It was as "Larry Lynx" that he fought in the ring—an unusual but not unique adventure for a Varsity man. The profession of pugilist does not combine well with that of schoolmaster. Mr. Lascelles knew that. But he had excellent reason for what he did; and the fact that the Head of Greyfriars quite approved of his line of action is strong proof that it was justified.

He has dropped out of the stories of late, naturally. These are yarns of school life, not of happenings on the Western Front. But he will return when the war is over, and we shall all be glad to meet him again.

For Lascelles is a man—the kind of man a healthy and high-spirited boy is certain to admire. He talks as straight as he hits; and he knows how to practise both justice and mercy. You cannot take liberties with Larry. But he will not be too severe upon the fellow who is down, although it may be that fellow's own fault.

He reminds one somewhat of Mr. Railton of St. Jim's. The two men have a great deal in common, though they are quite distinct one from another as drawn by their creators. Mr. Railton is somewhat older, somewhat more serious, perhaps, and he has bigger responsibilities. But he and Mr. Lascelles look at things in very much the same way; and it is a way quite different from that of Mr. Selby, say, or of Mr. Prout, or of Mr. Ratcliff, or of Mr. Quelch, though all these four differ one from another. One would say that "Larry" and "Railton" still keep alive in them more of the spirit of the boy, and that this makes them more sympathetic and tolerant than any one of the other four—though Mr. Quelch, for all his iron rule, is not by any means lacking in sympathy. Only, one thinks, Mr. Quelch could never have been a boy of the Bob Cherry or Tom Merry type, and Mr. Railton and Mr. Lascelles may have been—probably were.

Skinner came athwart the bows of Mr. Lascelles as soon as the new master arrived at Greyfriars. Fish is constantly on the make; but his swindles are more or less business—lots of people are practising them and keeping out of gaol. Skinner's dodges for his own advantage are more risky and less tradesmanlike; he is a blackmailer born. He tried to blackmail the mathematical master; but it was no go.

The Famous Five had their suspicions as to the identity of Lawrence Lascelles and Larry Lynx. Mauly had taken them over in a motor-car to Chilford, where Lynx was fighting Tom Tutton. When the new master turned up, the only difference between him and Lynx seemed to be that Lascelles wore a moustache which had not adorned the face



of the pugilist. Bunter heard them talking it over, and told Skinner. These two attempted to make sure that the moustache was false. If they could only get into the master's bed-room—he would not wear it while asleep, of course—the trick was done, and his secret was at their mercy. But the Famous Five frustrated the attempt. They liked "Larry" from the first.

Skinner had not done. There was to be another fight at Chilford, and he got over there on Coker's motor-bike, which Coker did not know he was lending. He had the audacity to tackle Mr. Lascelles, but got no change out of him. Then he got Larry's rascally opponent, Tutton, who did not know how to take a licking like a man, to come over to Greyfriars; and in the Head's presence—Bob Cherry was lucky enough to be there and to see—Larry thrashed Tutton without the gloves. Then Dr. Locke heard the whole story, and knew why Lascelles had gone in for the Ring, and was satisfied, on condition that there should be no more public boxing. Skinner was not so well satisfied, of course.

An old associate of Larry's—one Sawyer, a big and Herculean trainer—came along; trying to persuade the young master back to the old game. He took the refusal very hard. He tried to kidnap Larry—and got Loder instead. Loder was not a substitute of whom any use could be made—you don't catch Loder fighting if he can well get out of it. Now Wingate or Coker—but it was Loder

that time. And the second time Sawyer & Co. got Lascelles; but the Famous Five were on the track, and rescued him. Sawyer meant to keep him a prisoner till he consented to fight, but Sawyer had his trouble for his pains. Mr. Lascelles bore no malice—Sawyer had his good points, if his methods did err on the arbitrary side.

But there was another fight, after all. Skinner saw what seemed to him a rare chance to get even. He had gone on hating Lascelles, you may be sure. It is Skinner's way. But the liquid glue in the bed-trick was stopped by Wharton, and Skinner got a licking. Then Skinner was caught in Mr. Lascelles' bed-room by the master himself, and, after having been well smacked, was reported to Mr. Quelch. So when the genial Harold discovered that Larry Lynx was fighting at Luxford he let the Head know. But the Head knew already; the fight was for a war fund, and he had consented to it. The Head wanted to know other things, though; and the upshot was by no means agreeable to Skinner.

There came a time when every young and able-bodied man who could be spared was wanted for the great work against the Huns. Greyfriars marvelled much that Lascelles did not volunteer. He was just the man for soldiering, it seemed. In the Remove opinions were divided; most thought he should go, however, and many better fellows than Skinner joined that thorough-paced young blackguard in doing all they knew how to make his life a misery to him. Then the truth came out, and some of them felt utterly shamed when they heard of the domestic reasons which had held him back. These were overcome by the kindness of the Head, whose feeling towards the stalwart young master was fatherly. The invalid sister became a member of Dr. Locke's household, and Larry went light-hearted to the wars.

We have seen him back once, on brief leave from the Front. The story was entitled "For D'Arcy's Sake," and it told how Arthur Augustus and his visitors—including a number of the Greyfriars fellow—wanted to fix up a cricket-match with Lord Conway and his guests, men from the trenches; how an audacious plan was concocted to kidnap Larry and maroon him on an island in the river until he agreed, and consented to use his influence with the rest to induce them to; how he was thus treated, and escaped by swimming, and turned up in the nick of time to deal with the scoundrelly "Captain" Punter, who had been playing upon D'Arcy's credulity, and had taken them all in more or less; and how he dealt with that land-shark, and played in the match afterwards, and looked over the impudent attack on himself, like the good fellow and big-hearted gentleman he is. It was done in holiday-time, you see, and done to Lieutenant Lascelles, a fellow-guest. If it had been at Greyfriars, and the victim had been Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, mathematical master, there must have been punishment, of course.

Yes, we shall be glad to see Larry back!

NOTICES.

FOOTBALL.

Matches Wanted By:

SOUTHFIELDS JUNIORS.—A. Holloway, 127, Lavenham Road, Southfields, S.W. 18.
WEST MARYLEBONE.—15½—5 mile radius.—W. Clark, 27, Clipstone Street, London, W. 1.
EDWARD ROVERS.—16—8 mile radius.—L. Marks, 13, Edwards Road, Mile End, E. 13.
AVENUE.—A. Copp, 48, Kyrle Road, Clapham Common, S.W. 11.
WANDSWORTH COMMON ATHLETIC.—17.—A. Ralph, 30, Bennerley Road, Wandsworth Common, S.W. 11.
NORLAND RANGERS.—11-13—2 mile radius of

Shepherd's Bush.—C. S. Gowing Lee, 18, Norland Gardens, Notting Hill, W. 11.
HAYWARD'S ATHLETIC.—15-18—6 mile radius of Blackfriars.—R. C. Hook, 137, Commercial Road, Peckham, S.E. 15.
DAYBROOK INSTITUTION.—16½—after Christmas—8 mile radius.—J. Marshall, Gedling Road, Arnold, Nottingham.
ST. PAUL'S.—16½—5 mile radius.—R. J. Morrison, 68, Rhodeswell Road, Mile End, E. 14.
QUEEN'S UNITED.—16—3 mile radius.—Hon. Sec., 43, Lynedock Street, Kingsland Road, N. 1.
BARNBURY BOYS' CLUB.—17—own ground.—C. Ruscoff, 19, Rodney Street, Barnbury, N. 1.
ALMA VILLA.—15-17.—W. Schofield, 76, Cranbrook Street, Old Ford Road, Victoria Park, E. 2.
ST. AUGUSTINE'S.—16½—7 mile radius.—L. Pearson, 18, Ripley Road, Belvedere, Kent.
AMERSHAM UNITED.—15.—G. H. Gilman, 83, Amersham Vale, New Cross, S.E. 14.

Other Footer Notices.

More players wanted for Lancashire Saints Juniors.—Apply P. Mitchell, 148, Pocketnook Street, St. Helens, or W. Lomax, 19, Fleet Lane, St. Helens.
D. Cardno, 15, wants to join a club playing on Thursdays.—Address, St. Andrew's House Club, 31A, Mortimer Street, W.
Players Wanted.—St. Paul's United.—16-17.—Apply by letter or personally to W. Brown, 34, Rousell Street, St. Paul's Road, Bow, E.
S. Blanks, 10, Porson Street, Lewisham, S.E., age 15, would be glad to join a Lewisham club as right-half.
W. Fitzpatrick, 32A, Brereton Road, N. 17, would like to join a club in his neighbourhood—any position bar goal.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED.

By V. Hayhow, 30, Dudley Street, Haberfield, Sydney, Australia.—Numbers before 400 in which Bunter or Fish figures prominently.