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PUT TO THE TEST!



BUNTER BUNKS!

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PUT TO THE TEST!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Joy-ride!

GOOD news!" Vernon-Smith of the Remove burst into Study No. 1 with this remark just as the Famous Five were finishing tea—a frugal war-time tea.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Is the war over, Smithy? If so, break it gently, there's a good fellow. Think of our frail and delicate constitutions!"

The Bounder laughed breathlessly.

"We'll give the war the go-by this week-end!" he said. "All you fellows have got an invitation to come to my pater's place in London!"

"What?"

"It's a fact! The old man wrote to the Head and fixed it up. How he wangled it I can't think. However, ours not to reason why. The fact remains that six of us have got permission to go up to London this afternoon!"

The Famous Five evidently considered that the occasion called for deeds, not words. Bob Cherry embraced the Bounder as if he were a long-lost brother, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent shook hands vigorously across the table, and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh went through a spirited performance of the two-step.

"Isn't it great?" said Vernon-Smith. "Here, steady on, Cherry! You've transferred my necktie to my left ear!"

"My boy," said Bob Cherry, "we're proud of you! You're a credit to the family! Glad you thought of us first. The nobility and gentry always deserve more recognition than the common herd."

As a matter of fact, the Famous Five felt very bucked at the Bounder's invitation. Not so very long since he had been in direct opposition to Harry Wharton, and it was good to know that the feud was so thoroughly healed.

"Have you looked up the trains, Smithy?" asked Nugent.

The Bounder smiled blandly.

"Trains?" he said. "We've no use for 'em. The pater's car will be here at five, with a chauffeur."

"Ripping!"

"You're a sport, Smithy!"

"I say, you fellows—"

The juniors became aware, for the first time, that Billy Bunter was in the study. The Peeping Tom of the Remove had planted himself in the doorway, and had taken in the whole of the conversation; and now he had wormed his way into the room.

"No admission for prize porpoises!" growled Johnny Bull. "Outside!"

"Oh, but really, you know! I'm coming on this joy-ride—aren't I, Smithy?"

"The only joy-ride you'll get, Bunt," said Bob Cherry, "will be to travel out of this study on your neck! Heave-ho, you fellows!"

The Owl of the Remove backed away in alarm, but he was not to be turned from his purpose.

"Smithy, old fellow," he said plaintively, "don't let these bounders do me out of the trip! I know you're only allowed by the Head to take five, but somebody can drop out—Hurree Singh, for instance."

The Nabob of Bhamapur rose up in wrath.

"You ludicrous fat toad!" he exclaimed. "I will reducefully smash you to an esteemed pulp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just think, Smithy," entreated Bunter—"think what old pals we are! Think of the times I've come to your rescue with a little loan!"

"Why, you fat fibber," gasped Vernon-Smith, "you've never lent me a penny in your life!"

"Bunter's the limit!" said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know whether to hand him over to the Food Controller or shy him out into the Close!"

"You dry up, Wharton!" said Bunter loftily. "This is Smithy's affair, not yours! If he likes to invite me to come along, it's your place to take a back seat! I can come, can't I, Smithy, old pal?"

Billy Bunter's alleged "old pal" clenched and unclenched his hands, and looked daggers at the speaker. Then he suddenly burst into a laugh.

"All serene, Bunter!" he said. "I'll count you in."

"Smithy, you maniac—" began Bob Cherry in amazement.

"Shush!"

The Bounder winked solemnly at the Famous Five, and they understood that there was method in his madness.

"Oh, really, that's decent of you, old fellow!" said Billy Bunter, his countenance expanding like a full moon. "I think I'll go up to the dorm and put my Sunday togs on. Must be at one's best when dining with millionaires, you know!"

Billy Bunter spoke as if dining with millionaires was quite a common experience with him.

Blinking triumphantly through his big glasses at the Famous Five, Bunter waddled out of the study.

Instantly five juniors faced round upon Vernon-Smith.

"What's the little game?" demanded Harry Wharton. "You're not really going to let that fat worm set foot in your pater's house?"

"Not likely!" grinned the Bounder. "Bunter might be very useful as a roller to keep the tennis-courts in trim. In other respects, though, he'd be simply unbearable, so I sha'n't take him."

"But you said he could come!"

"He can come part of the way, with pleasure, but I won't guarantee he'll get more than a dozen miles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The chauffeur's an obliging sort of fellow," went on the Bounder. "I'll get him to work the oracle."

Just as five o'clock chimed out from the old clock-tower, a big, finely-upholstered Daimler swung in at the school

gates, and came to a standstill in the Close.

"Here we are!" said Vernon-Smith cheerfully. "Buck up, you fellows! Bunter's on the scene already!"

Billy Bunter rolled across the Close in all the glory of a spotless Eton suit, a top-hat—which bore a remarkable resemblance to Lord Mauleverer's—and ornate kid gloves, suspiciously like a pair belonging to Blundell of the Fifth.

Glaring pompously at the chauffeur, Bunter got in at the rear of the car, and leaned against the cushioned back, rejoicing in the knowledge that half Greyfriars had turned out to witness the strange proceedings.

"Come out of that, you fat spoofer!" roared Coker.

"Rats!"

"Where are you going?" demanded Temple of the Fourth.

"To see a millionaire friend of mine."

"Oh, my stars!"

"My hat! I hope you'll barge into a telegraph-pole!" said Bolsover major. "Blessed cheek, I call it!"

When the Famous Five arrived on the scene they found that accommodation was limited. There was room for two in front with the chauffeur, but Billy Bunter had attempted to monopolise the rear.

"Shift up to the end of the seat, Bunt, or we'll scalp you!" said Bob Cherry.

"Or use you as a foot-rest!" threatened Nugent.

Bunter was forced to make way, and then the Daimler snorted off on its homeward route. Vernon-Smith was seated in front, in close consultation with his father's chauffeur.

The big car fairly flashed through Friardale and Courtfield, and the going was excellent.

"This is top-hole!" said Billy Bunter, with relish. "Far better than a stuffy old railway-carriage! We shall be in London in less than an hour at this rate."

They were traversing a long and lonely country lane, and even as Bunter spoke the car slowed down to a standstill.

"What's up?" sang out Bob Cherry in mock alarm.

The chauffeur turned an impassive countenance to the juniors in the rear.

"Petrol run out, sir!"

"Oh, I say! What beastly luck!"

Vernon-Smith and Harry Wharton clambered out of the front of the car with very long faces.

"This has properly put the kybosh on things," said the Bounder. "It means chucking up the sponge."

"Oh, but that's all rot!" said Bunter, greatly distressed. "Surely there's a town a few miles ahead where we can get some petrol?"

The chauffeur shook his head.

"It's as scarce as sugar in these parts, sir," he said. "Young gents, I'm afraid you'll have to walk back to the school!"

Billy Bunter's voice rose in a shriek.

"Why, that's over twelve miles!"

"Can't be helped," said Harry Wharton. "Let's step it out, and we

ought to be there by locking-up time. The chauffeur must stay here until he can get help. This is a lonely road, but I should think another car ought to pass through it in a matter of a few days.

"Come on, kids!" said Nugent briskly. "Put your best foot forward!"

The juniors set off at such a terrific pace that Billy Bunter found it impossible to keep up. His fat little legs scudded along, and the perspiration poured down his flabby face; but by the time he reached the bend in the road the Famous Five were out of sight.

As a matter of fact, those cheerful youths had slipped into a copse close by, and from this point of vantage they saw the perspiring porpoise of the Remove continue his weary way towards Greyfriars, and try to catch them up.

"That's the last of our light cruiser!" chuckled the Bounder, when Bunter was out of sight. "He would insist on having a joy-ride, and he's had it. I hope all parties are satisfied."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors returned to the car, and got in. The sphinx-like chauffeur was evidently a direct descendant of the celebrated Ananias, for, instead of wringing his hands in despair, and bemoaning the absence of petrol, he put his hand upon the steering-wheel, and the Daimler bounded off the mark like a live thing.

Meanwhile, in another direction, the weary and perspiring Owl went on and on with flagging footsteps, moaning that all millionaires who owned Daimler cars ought to be drowned, and their sons flayed alive!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Dark Suspicion

MR. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH greeted the juniors cordially, and expressed the hope that they would go back to Greyfriars like giants refreshed after their week-end.

The millionaire's house and grounds were certainly very inviting, and were situated within easy reach of the West End.

"Have you made any plans for tomorrow, boys?" asked the millionaire, at length.

"None at all, pater," said Vernon-Smith. "I can see you've got something really topping to propose. Get it off your chest!"

The host smiled.

"What do you say to a day on the river?" he said. "I have a motor-boat at Richmond which hasn't been used for quite an age. We can go down as far as Maidenhead, have lunch there, and return to town in time to do a theatre. How's that?"

"Splendid!" said Harry Wharton. "It's awfully good of you, Mr. Vernon-Smith!"

"Not at all. There have been times—now happily past—when we were—well, rather at loggerheads with each other, Wharton. I want you to understand that all these unfortunate by-gones are now washed out. You must look upon me as both your friend and financier over the week-end."

The Greyfriars juniors were rather surprised at this reception. They knew Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith for an astute and hard-headed business man, and it seemed remarkable that he should unbend in this way.

The juniors retired early that night, in order to be in good trim for the morrow.

After breakfast next morning the Daimler was waiting for them in the drive, and they were soon disporting themselves on the river.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was a man who



The sympathy that counts! (See Chapter 6.)

saw that he got the best of everything. His motor-boat was the envy and admiration of all the river-folk.

The party reached Maidenhead at noon, and lunched in style at a riverside hotel.

The Bounder was in great form, and more than once he came near to ordering wines and smokes for the diners, but pulled himself up in time. He had been so accustomed, in the olden days, to going the pace, that it found it difficult to remember that his guests were of a different calibre from Skinner and Snoop and Stott.

But, although he steered clear of such luxuries as Burgundy and Pommery, the Bounder spent money like water in other directions for the entertainment of Harry Wharton & Co. Every comfort in the hotel was at the juniors' disposal.

Vernon-Smith kept up a running fire of conversation, too, and was in one of his most irrepressible moods.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, on the other hand, seemed to have lost a good deal of his gaiety. He appeared to be grappling with some mental problem as he smoked; but the juniors, thinking he was absorbed in some Stock Exchange problem, did not pay much heed to this.

"Hand over a fiver, will you, dad?" said Vernon-Smith, as the party proceeded to the theatre in the evening. "I mean to give these fellows a decent time."

Mr. Vernon-Smith took out his wallet, and extracted a crisp banknote, which he handed to his son, with a smile.

A close observer, however, would have detected something cynical in that smile, and a curious gleam in the millionaire's eyes.

Vernon-Smith paid for a box, and purchased chocolates for the party.

"Eat, drink, and be merry, kids!" he remarked to Harry Wharton & Co. "Remember, we shall be back under Quelch's gimlet eye the day after tomorrow."

"This is ripping!" said Harry Wharton, with real feeling. "But we don't want to bankrupt you, Smithy, old man!"

The Bounder leaned back against the cushions and laughed.

"Bankrupt me! Not in a thousand years! There's plenty more where this fiver came from. The pater's good for a solid million!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith, who overheard this statement, looked very grim.

A strange suspicion had crept into his mind. It had been formed during the trip on the river, and had grown stronger with each moment.

Was his son really fond of him, the millionaire wondered, or did he regard him merely in the light of a lavish provider from whom he could constantly be drawing supplies?

Mr. Vernon-Smith was growing jealous. Apart from money, the only thing of any consequence to him in life was his son's affection.

True, the Bounder had proved his loyalty to his father only a few months before, when a fierce attack had been levelled at the millionaire's honour. But it occurred to Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he sat in the box and watched the juniors enjoying themselves, that this had been only a flash in the pan, and that, generally speaking, his son was not so affectionate towards him as he should be.

Yet there was no real proof, and it was of no use taxing the Bounder. Herbert Vernon-Smith detested sentiment in any shape or form.

The millionaire had no eyes for the play that evening. He answered in monosyllables the remarks addressed to him from time to time. His wits were hard at work; and when the curtain fell for the last time he had resolved upon a plan of action.

"I know," he muttered to himself. "I'll put him to the test. I'll give him to understand that I've lost all my wealth, and that I'm as poor as a church mouse. I'll pose as a man who has come right down in the world, and spring it on him like an electric shock. If things are as I suspect, he'll rail at me for being fool enough to lose my money, and want to wash his hands of me in future. If, on the other hand, he cares for me in the way a son should, he'll face the situation, and put up a fight on my behalf. Yes, that's the surest way of finding out

the measure of his affection for me. And I'll do it! Hanged if I don't!"

Meanwhile, the Bounder, little dreaming what was passing through his father's mind, cheerfully hailed a couple of passing taxis for his guests.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Blow Falls!

WEEK-ENDS have one great drawback—they are not long enough. That was what Harry Wharton & Co. discovered. All too soon, it seemed to them, the big Daimler was taking them back to Greyfriars.

"Smithy," said Harry Wharton, as they sped through the leafy lanes, "we've had a topping time! The only thing I'm sorry about is that we can't repay you in kind. You'll take the will for the deed, won't you?"

"Of course!" said Vernon-Smith heartily.

Billy Bunter was highly indignant with the week-enders. He could see now what manner of trick had been played upon him, and he squirmed as he thought of the good things he had missed.

The following morning, however, he was able to get his own back.

It was breakfast-time, and the Owl of the Remove promptly planted himself between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry at the table.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled.

Bob Cherry spun round with a start. He looked relieved on seeing Bunter.

"Thank goodness!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't make out where that row was coming from. Thought it was my boiled egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got a bombshell for you!" said Bunter, ignoring Bob's pleasantry. "You won't get anything out of sucking up to the Bounder any more!"

"What do you mean, you fat ass?"

Bob Cherry's tone was so fierce that Mr. Quelch, at the head of the table, called sharply for silence.

Billy Bunter polished off two boiled eggs in swift succession before he took up the tale.

"The Bounder's broke!" he whispered dramatically. "Broke to the wide! He won't have a penny to call his own in future. There's one in the eye for you! You won't be so keen on sucking up to him after this!"

"You cad!" muttered Wharton indignantly.

"He's telling a whole pack of whoppers!" hissed Bob Cherry. "After brekker there's going to be a public massacre, and little bits of Bunter will be strewn all over the show."

Billy Bunter sniggered.

"You think I'm rotting," he said, "but I'll jolly soon show you!"

Fumbling in his pocket, the Owl of the Remove produced a letter which had arrived by that morning's post. It was addressed to Herbert Vernon-Smith, and, judging by sundry cuts and smears on the envelope, the contents had been tampered with.

"Oh, you rotter!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "You've been reading Smithy's private letters!"

"Well, why shouldn't I? Everybody knows we're as thick as thieves, and have no secrets from each other. I'm at perfect liberty to act as I think fit with Smithy's correspondence, and I'm sure he'd be the first to say so!"

"Just you wait——"

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "There is far too much talking at the table this morning."

"So you see," Billy Bunter went on,

ignoring the Form-master's remark, "what silly asses you are!"

"Bunter, take a hundred lines for direct disobedience!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Me, sir!" faltered the Owl of the Remove. "What have I done, sir?"

"You were talking to Wharton and Cherry."

"I merely asked one for the sugar and the other for the—the cake, sir."

"You are telling gross falsehoods!" thundered Mr. Quelch, in a voice that boomed through the hall. "There is neither cake nor sugar on the table."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Yes, there may be crumbs," said Mr. Quelch drily. "I will not dispute that point. Your lines are doubled, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter subsided after that. He was not anxious to go on writing lines for the duration of the war.

When the meal was over, and the fellows filed out of Hall, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry made a combined rush at Billy Bunter, and sent him sprawling on his back in the Close like a particularly fat species of tortoise. Then Bob Cherry sat on his chest, while Harry Wharton extracted Vernon-Smith's letter.

"Hope this fat fibber's romancing!" said Bob. "It'll be awful if anything's happened to the Bounder's pater!"

"We'll soon see," said Wharton. "Let's bump this beauty, and then go and find Smithy."

Accordingly, the two juniors bumped the Owl of the Remove thrice on the flagstones with great vigour, and set off in search of Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder was in his study. He nodded genially to his visitors.

"Come in!" he said. "Anything I can do for you?"

Harry Wharton handed over the letter.

"This has been mauled about by Bunter," he said. "I expect he knows the contents by heart."

"Never mind," said Vernon-Smith lightly. "I don't s'pose it's anything he can make a song about."

A moment later, however, the speaker's face fell, and the letter fluttered from his nerveless fingers.

"Oh, hang it all!" he exclaimed, and sank down heavily into the armchair.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry exchanged significant glances. It looked as though Billy Bunter's story was more or less true.

"What's wrong, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry at length.

The Bounder pointed to the letter.

"Read it," he said. "It's a knock-out! It's the very last thing in the world I should have thought possible!"

Bob Cherry picked up and unfolded the letter. This is what they read:

"My dear Herbert,—I scarcely know how to write this letter, knowing, as I do, that the contents will come as a great shock to you.

"I will not weary you with details. Suffice it to say that since I last saw you I have sunk from a millionaire to a pauper. The whole of my capital has gone in one gigantic venture, leaving me penniless.

"You will be able to remain at Greyfriars—for a time, at any rate—but I shall have to cut off your allowance completely. It grieves me to have to do this, because I know you always like to be of good appearance and to stand well with your schoolfellows; but there is no alternative.

"I feel very sorry indeed for you, my boy, and very worried as to your future. Roughly speaking, there are three things worth having in this world—health, money, and friends. The first

you've got, the second has disappeared, and the third will automatically disappear with it, because my experience has always been that you can't maintain friendships on an empty pocket.

"It is a very cheerless outlook for you, Herbert. I only wish I could make it brighter.

"I am moving this week to No. 10, Plummer's Court, Bermondsey. It is a terrible come-down for me, of course. But no matter. I can fight for myself.

"Believe me, your affectionate father,
"SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH."

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, on reading this decidedly dramatic epistle, were dumbfounded. They turned to the Bounder to sympathise with him, but he had covered his face in his hands, and was trembling from head to foot.

Never before had anyone seen the usually calm, unemotional Bounder give himself up to such an abandonment of distress as this.

Vernon-Smith looked up at length. His face was very white.

"Leave me alone, you fellows!" he muttered. "I'm not myself just now. This has quite bowled me over. A million pounds gone to pot! Oh, my hat! Then there's nothing for it but ruin—ruin for the pater, and ruin for me!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Down and Out!

"SWEET are the uses of adversity," was one of the quotations that cropped up during morning lessons that day.

To the Bounder, however, they were far from sweet. He had never in all his life known what it was to be poor. From earliest infancy he had been waited on hand and foot. He had come to regard pounds as most boys regard pence, and to squander money recklessly whenever it suited him, knowing there would be ample funds at his back when he wanted more.

And now—now all was changed! The horn of plenty had dried up; and at that moment the Bounder barely had five shillings to bless himself with.

It was heartbreaking! He would have to alter his whole mode of life. It was all very well for some people to say that money was the root of all evil. But a fellow was absolutely helpless without it. The study feeds, the occasional cinema, the ginger-beer and ice in the tuckshop after a hot game of cricket—all these would be denied him.

This was bad enough. But worse remained.

What of the Bounder's father? He, a man who had always looked down disdainfully upon the strugglers—who had written cheques for many thousand of pounds—seemed doomed to end his days in abject poverty.

The thought was more than the Bounder could bear. He bit his lip savagely, and answered Mr. Quelch's questions mechanically.

The Remove-master, supposing him to be unwell, did not press him for an explanation of his behaviour.

The black sheep of the Remove soon got busy. Fellows who had been great pals of the Bounder as long as his pockets were well-lined now gave him the cold shoulder, or even ventured on insulting remarks.

Billy Bunter had been at great pains to spread the contents of Mr. Vernon-Smith's letter broadcast throughout the school.

"I say, Smithy, old chap," said Skinner, going up to the Bounder in the Close, "you might lend me a fiver, there's a good fellow!"

Vernon-Smith swung round fiercely. "Sheer off!" he exclaimed.

Skinner assumed an expression of pained surprise.

"Really, you know, it's very shabby of you to treat an old pal like this, Smithy! Where are all those nice, crisp banknotes you used to light your fags with?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the little crowd which had collected on the scene.

"Might as well ask him for four-pence!" sneered Angel of the Fourth. "That's about all he's worth! How are the mighty fallen, by Jove! But yesterday he was at liberty to dip his hand into his father's goodly pile of shekels—most of 'em the outcome of dishonest dealings—"

Angel stopped short. There was an expression on the Bounder's face which he had seen before. It gave him a shivering sensation down his spine.

"Hold on, old man!" he exclaimed. "I—I didn't mean—"

The Bounder strode forward, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing.

"You made a beastly insinuation against my father!" he said thickly. "I'm not thin-skinned, as a rule, but I'm not going to stand by and hear my pater slanged by scum like you! Take that!"

The Bounder's clenched fist found a billet on the point of Angel's nose; and the cad of the Fourth reeled backwards, alighting with a terrific concussion on the flagstones.

"Any more of you got anything to say?" snapped the Bounder. "If so, now's your chance. I'll tackle you one at a time, or all together!"

There was such fire and passion in the Bounder's words that the little gang of would-be slanderers promptly dispersed. Even Bolsover, hardy fighting-man though he was, would not have cared to try conclusions with the Bounder just then. Rich or poor, millionaire's son or beggar, Vernon-Smith was a fellow to be reckoned with, for he feared no foe.

But his heart was sick as he strolled on alone. He had become so accustomed to handling money freely that the sudden lack of it was appalling. He was still dazed by his father's letter—still unable to think of a way out of the terrible tangle.

He made his way to the cricket-field, but the charms of the grand summer game were dead to him. How could he possibly play cricket with a load such as this on his mind?

Harry Wharton was wielding the willow, and he gave the fieldsmen a terrific amount of leather-hunting before Hurree Singh succeeded in wrecking his wicket. Then the captain of the Remove strolled over to where the Bounder stood.

"Look here, Smithy," he said quietly, "don't get ratty with me for making the suggestion, but we know how desperately hard up you must be. None of us are particularly flush ourselves, but by combining forces we can raise a fiver. Will you take it?"

The Bounder tried to speak, but could not. Wharton's generosity to a fellow who had once been his sworn foe caused a curious lump to rise to Vernon-Smith's throat.

"Is it a go?" asked Wharton.

The Bounder shook his head.

"I—I can't take it, Wharton," he said. "It's awfully decent of you, but I couldn't possibly accept anything from you fellows. You see, I should never get a chance of paying you back."

"We shouldn't ask for it," said Harry.

"I know that. But—well, I can't sponge on you like this, and there's an end of it."

"What shall you do for the future?"

"Blessed if I know! Penfold and some of the other chaps who aren't flush manage to keep their heads above water, so there's no reason why I shouldn't."

"Good luck!" said Harry. "You don't mean to give up without a fight, I can see."

And the captain of the Remove returned to the game.

His heart was not in it, however. Try as he would, he could not banish from his thoughts the picture of the Bounder, penniless and almost friendless, with a lonely battle to fight, and he wondered as he sifted the strange situation over and over in his mind how it was all going to end.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Victory Loan!

"CAN I count you in, Smithy?"

Three days had elapsed since the Bounder had received the fateful letter, and Harry Wharton was compiling the junior team list for the match at Rookwood on the morrow.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I'm on," he said. "The other day I couldn't have played cricket for toffee, but it's different now. To tell the truth, I shall be glad of a day in the fresh air. I've moped lately—simply moped. You can't imagine what a blow this has been to me."

"I think I can," said Wharton quietly.

"Curious how time tones down troubles," said Vernon-Smith. "Three days ago I felt—well, fairly desperate. I'd have chucked in my mit for two pins, and run away. Then the effects of the shock gradually seemed to soften, and now I feel that it only wants a rattling good game of cricket to put me in trim for the future. Silver & Co. are cheery chaps, too. They make a fellow feel at home."

Wharton nodded.

"What's more," he said, "we've got a fair damsel to keep the score for us."

"Who is it?"

"Phyllis Howell. She's travelling over with us. Jolly sporting of her; but then, she always was a brick of that sort. I should think we ought to give those Rookwood beggars a good run for their money this time. Awfully pleased you can turn out, Smithy."

The Bounder swung out of the study whistling. It was surprising how quickly he found his feet after an upheaval.

A moment later, however, the whistle died away on his lips, and he stopped short, with an exclamation of dismay.

It was all very well for him to say he would turn out against Rookwood, but what of the travelling expenses?

He hadn't a cent in the world, and the railway fare into Hampshire was no trifle.

And there would be other incidental expenses, too, in the way of refreshment. How was he to provide for them?

"After refusing Wharton's help, I can't very well go and cadge from him," he told himself. "Oh, hang! This is rotten. It means that I shall have to drop out."

At that moment the drowsy voice of Lord Mauleverer came to the Bounder's ear.

His lordship was urging Tubb of the Third to go down to the village for him.

"I've had a new ribbon put round my straw hat," he explained. "I wish you'd slip down an' get it for me, kid."

"How much is the job worth?" asked Tubb, with an eye to business.

"A bob."

"Nothing doing," said Tubb. "I'm not going to fag into Friardale and back for a miserable bob—not if I know it!"

And the fag walked away.

"Here, come back!" called Mauly, in great distress. "Of course, I was only rotti'n'. I'll give you half-a-dollar—ten bob—any old thing!"

Unfortunately for himself, Tubb failed to hear this last princely offer; but the Bounder heard it, and he stepped promptly into the breach.

"You want somebody to bring your hat up from the village?" he asked.

"Yaas, dear boy."

"What's the job worth?"

"Oh, ten bob—a quid—anythin' you like!" said his lordship vaguely.

The Bounder grinned.

"I'll do it for ten bob," he said.

He was aware that it was sheer daylight robbery to take ten shillings for a jaunt into the village, and had any other person than Mauly been concerned the Bounder wouldn't have taken it. But he knew that a ten-shilling note to Mauly was as nothing, and accordingly he struck the bargain.

The schoolboy earl opened his eyes in surprise.

"It's amazin', Vernon-Smith, to find you willin' to run errands," he said.

"Yes. There are a good many amazing things in this world," said the Bounder cheerfully. "When a fellow who's handled hundreds comes crashing down to bankruptcy, frinstance. Hand over the cash, old sport, and I'll go!"

A sympathetic light shone in Mauly's eyes.

"I'd like to make it a quid," he said.

"I dare say you would, Mauly. You're a good sort. But I'm imposing on you quite enough as it is. So-long!"

And the Bounder, rejoicing in the knowledge that he had sufficient to pay his fare on the morrow, sauntered off to the village.

The hat was duly procured, and the Bounder felt in better spirits than he had done for days.

Wharton was taking a very strong side over to Rookwood. They were aware that Jimmy Silver & Co. would put every ounce of dash into the game, and only by a supreme effort could the visitors hope to return with the spoils of victory.

Miss Phyllis Howell, whose countenance matched the morning, was waiting for the Greyfriars eleven on the platform.

"We'll regard you as our mascot, Phyllis," said Bob Cherry, raising his hat.

"Good! I hope I shall bring you luck, I'm sure!"

Rookwood were ready for the fray when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. Jimmy Silver won the toss, and took Newcome in to open the first innings with him.

It was evidently a bowler's day, for the entire Rookwood side was dismissed for a meagre 40; and the Friars, in their turn, could only muster 37. Recent rain, with hot sunshine after it, had made the turf treacherous, and the ball played all sorts of tricks.

The luncheon interval, however, seemed to act as a spur to the batsmen, for Jimmy Silver & Co. topped the hundred in their second venture, leaving the Friars to make 115 to win. Such a figure was not exactly colossal, but it was equivalent to more than 200 on a batsman's pitch.

"We'll have a good shot for it, anyway," said Harry Wharton. "Come along, Smithy!"

A spirited partnership took the Greyfriars partnership to 45 before Harry Wharton was smartly run out.

After this, however, came a spell of mischances. All the mighty men of valour were sent back to the pavilion with trifling scores to their credit.

The result of this astonishing collapse was that, when the ninth wicket fell, the Friars still required 40 runs to win.

But hope was not dead in their breasts. The Bounder had been playing splendidly, and he had a most reliable player coming in to join him in the person of Mark Linley. Harry Wharton had planned that the Lancashire junior should go in last, and put a straight bat in front of everything while the Bounder smote.

And this was precisely what Mark Linley did. Fast balls, slow balls, yorkers, and googlies, all met with the same fate. They were met with a straight bat.

In the intervals of these stubborn stone-wall tactics, in which Mark Linley took no risks, and yielded to no temptations, the Bounder fairly made the fur fly.

In due course the hundred was hoisted, and Harry Wharton & Co. cheered like madmen.

"He'll do it, bless his heart!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I've never known the Bounder in such form before! There he goes again! Bang to the boundary! Chalk it up, Miss Phyllis!"

The fair Miss Phyllis, with a strawberry ice in one hand and a pencil in the other, made the necessary entry in the scoring-book.

Jimmy Silver himself was bowling now. He didn't like the turn events had taken. It is not a comfortable feeling, after having got rid of nine men for a mere song, to find the last two obstinately sticking it out, and victory slipping away inch by inch.

Twice the Bounder's wicket was imperilled, for he was taking many risks, and a little devil within him was urging him to lash out at everything. Luck favoured him, however, and, leaping out of his crease, he slogged a ball from Silver right on to the pavilion roof, and won the match for his side.

Excitement reigned supreme. Even the ranks of Rookwood could scarce forbear to cheer.

"After that jolly competent bit of work," said Peter Todd, "we will adjourn for tea. My hat! The Bounder's a masterpiece! This was not my day out, but I don't begrudge him the kudos!"

"No fear!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy's one of the best!"

Vernon-Smith had never quite got rid of his love of the limelight, and he certainly had as much praise as his heart could desire that day.

The Bounder's life, in the present circumstances, was anything but a bed of roses, and, whatever conquests came his way, it was only fitting that he should enjoy them to the full. He would have need of all his courage, all his tenacity, all his buoyancy of spirit, in the stormy days that lay before him.

And Harry Wharton & Co., realising this, went out of their way to do full honour to the fellow who had been instrumental in winning the game for Greyfriars by a single wicket.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Declined With Thanks!

WHEN the cricketers arrived on the little platform of Coombe Station they found, to their dismay, that their train was already on the move.

"Hop in!" sang out Harry Wharton. "There's not another for hours!"

In the excited rush that followed, during which angry porters shouted words of warning, and carriage doors were wrenched open without ceremony, the Bounder, with his usual foresight, saw that Phyllis Howell was bundled safely into a carriage, and then sprang nimbly in after her. As luck would have it, they were alone.

"Phew! That was a close call!" said Phyllis, laughing breathlessly.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 550.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"We dallied too long at tea," he said. "However, everybody's in, so there's no harm done."

After that the Bounder lapsed into silence.

Phyllis Howell watched him thoughtfully, and not a little anxiously. Her shrewd mind told her that there was something wrong. Not many fellows who had just covered themselves with glory on the cricket-field would have sat still in a railway-carriage for a quarter of an hour without speaking.

"Can I help you out?" said Phyllis at length.

The Bounder sat bolt upright, with a

CADET NOTES.

In the near future boys up to 17 or 18 years of age who do not belong to Cadet Corps may possibly find that steps are being taken to, more or less, compel them to take their share in the work of the Movement, and thus prepare themselves for possible eventualities in later life. Under the new Education Act, which has just passed through Parliament, certain powers are given to the Board of Education and the local education authorities to assist in the conduct and maintenance of Cadet Corps for the lads of school age, and this will give a great impetus to the Movement when it comes into operation in the course of a year or so. Besides this, there is a growing feeling amongst Members of Parliament and others that it should be made compulsory for lads between 15 and 18 years of age to attend drills, and several questions have been put in the House of Commons of late on this subject. Up to the present the Government has decided that the balance of advantages is against the enforcement of compulsion in this direction, but if the war continues this point of view may at any moment be changed, and steps may be taken to compel membership and attendance in the case of the younger lads, as is already done in the case of those over 18, who must join the Army.

We are quite sure that all our readers would prefer to join the Cadet Movement as volunteers rather than wait for any possible chance of compulsory methods being applied. There is good evidence of this in the very large numbers of those who have already responded to the invitation extended in these notes from time to time to get into touch with their local Cadet Corps, and take part in the work being done. But there is still plenty of room for more recruits, and any lad reading these notes who is not already a member of a Cadet Corps should write at once for information and particulars of the nearest unit to his address which he could join, to the Central Association Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, W.C. 2, who will be pleased to give every information, and, when desired, a letter of introduction to the officer commanding the unit so as to secure that every attention is given to the applicant when he attends to join up.

start. He had been so engrossed in his own moody reflections that he had quite forgotten the presence of Phyllis.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he stammered. "I was thinking about—"

"It must have been about something very serious," said Phyllis. "You'd been thinking for a quarter of an hour, and were still going strong. Hadn't you better unburden yourself to somebody? It's not good to nurse one's troubles. They magnify themselves, you know."

The Bounder smiled faintly.

"You wouldn't understand," he said. "Girls never do get on to a fellow's worries."

"Thank you!"

Vernon-Smith flushed.

"Sorry!" he said. "I—I didn't mean to—"

"Look here," said Phyllis, "why not make a clean breast of everything? It's by far the best plan. You can trust me, can't you?"

"Of course!"

"Very well, then. Out with it!"

"The trouble is simply this," said the Bounder. "You've heard of my pater?"

"Of course I have! He's a millionaire, isn't he?"

"He was. But he's come a fearful cropper, and lost every giddy penny he had in the world. Result, I'm broke, too. There you have the whole thing in a nutshell!"

Miss Howell looked genuinely concerned.

"Oh, I say! Is it really as bad as that?" she murmured.

The Bounder nodded.

"Every bit," he said. "My pater's had to give up his house and car, and all that sort of thing, and go into a beastly hovel!"

"And you?"

"I've lost all my allowance—every single cent—and must carry on without a stiver!"

"Poor old chap! I feel awfully sorry about it—honestly!"

Vernon-Smith had no cause to doubt the girl's sincerity. There was a trace of moisture about her eyes, which did not escape the Bounder's notice.

"I'm sorry I've bothered you with all this, Miss Phyllis," he said. "Still, you made me, you know."

"Can't I be of any use?"

"I'm afraid not. It's one of those cases where a fellow has to keep a stiff upper-lip, and hang on. But I wish I hadn't told you. It's made you look downright wretched!"

"I can't help it," said Phyllis. "It must be awful for you, after what you've been used to!"

"Oh, I shall worry through! Let's change the subject," said the Bounder, forcing a smile.

They spoke of other things for the rest of the journey; but there was a sympathetic pressure about Phyllis Howell's parting handshake which bucked the Bounder up more than any words could have done.

Two hours later, while Vernon-Smith sat in his study, recounting the events of the day, Peter Todd strolled in, and tossed a note carelessly on the table.

"This was in the rack, Smithy," he explained. "I brought it along before Bunter had a chance to meddle with it."

"Thanks!" said the Bounder.

He took up the envelope curiously. It was addressed to him in printed capitals, as if the sender wished to remain anonymous.

"What's the little game?" muttered Vernon-Smith.

He ripped open the envelope, and instantly a bundle of currency-notes fell out. There were ten, and they were for one pound each.

There was no letter of any sort enclosed—just the notes, that was all.

The Bounder stared hard at it for a full moment, and then a smile crossed his face.

"No go, Miss Phyllis!" he murmured at length. "It's very nice and generous of you, and all that, but I simply can't take it! Jove, what a stunning girl, though! I bet she had the very dickens of a job to raise this!"

He put on his cap, and sprinted down to the bicycle-shed. There would just be time to run over to Cliff House and back before locking-up.

As luck would have it, Phyllis was

standing in the gateway of Cliff House with a tennis-racket in her hand.

"Good-evening!" said the Bounder, raising his cap. "Thanks most awfully for your generosity, but I can't see my way clear to take advantage of it!"

Phyllis flushed crimson.

"How did you know?" she gasped, in dismay.

"I guessed. You weren't clever enough for me, Miss Phyllis. Here's the ten quid. I won't say it wouldn't have been a godsend to me; but as there would never be a chance to pay it back, I can't accept it. Once again, though, thanks ever so much!"

But Phyllis was not going to give way so easily.

"Don't be silly, Vernon-Smith," she said, laying a hand on his shoulder. "I'm sure this money would be useful to you, and it won't inconvenience me in the least. And as for paying it back, you could take your time over that. In fact, if you didn't pay it back at all I shouldn't be offended."

The Bounder gently shook himself free.

"It can't be done!" he said.

"Is that final?"

"Absolutely!"

Phyllis gave a sigh of resignation.

"You're not angry with me for declining your kindness?" said the Bounder.

"Not a bit. In fact—well, I feel like paying you a compliment!"

"Fire away, then!" said the Bounder cheerfully.

Phyllis Howell drew a shade closer, and looked straight into Vernon-Smith's pale, careworn face.

"I think you're a real white man!" she said.

And the Bounder rode back to Greyfriars that night feeling quite elated.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Knight of the Road!

DURING the days that followed the Bounder's mind was chiefly concerned with his father.

An ominous silence had prevailed since Mr. Vernon-Smith's letter telling of his downfall, and the Bounder began to feel very uneasy.

"I don't like it at all," he told himself. "The pater may be ill, or something. In any case, he'll want help. All his old business friends have washed their hands of him now, I expect. That's the way of the world. I wonder—I wonder if it would be any use going up to town?"

The more he thought about it the more forcibly the idea appealed to him. There was again the question of raising the money for his railway-fare; and Lord Mauleverer had no more straw hats to be fetched from the village.

He realised now what a boon and a blessing Phyllis Howell's ten pounds would have been. But he had definitely declined the sum, and he could not possibly go back to Cliff House and say he had changed his mind.

Several of the fellows would readily have lent him enough money for his immediate needs, but it would mean putting himself under an obligation to them, and he wished to avoid that.

His mind made up, the Bounder proceeded to the Head's study.

"Might I be allowed to go home for the week-end, sir?" he asked.

Dr. Locke looked surprised.

"But you were granted leave of absence quite recently!" he protested.

"Exciting things have happened since then, sir. My father's lost all his money, and has had to move into humbler quarters. He hasn't written to tell me how he's getting on, and I'm worried."

"Very well," said the Head. "You may go with pleasure, in the unfortunate circumstances. I am very sorry indeed to hear of your father's misfortune, Vernon-Smith. It is curious that he has not acquainted me personally with the facts!"

"I expect he feels too cut-up about the whole business to shout it from the housetops, sir," said the Bounder. "It isn't like losing a few pounds."

"No, no. I am sure it must be a very trying situation, my boy. But perhaps on reaching London you will find things have taken a decided turn for the better. They may be less serious than you suppose. Anyway, I sincerely hope so."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder.

He passed out into the Close, where Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were taking a twilight stroll.

"How goes the merry game, Smithy?" asked Bob.

"I'm just off to London to see the pater."

"My hat! Then you've missed the last train."

"That's no odds! I'm going on a walking tour."

"Great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton caught the Bounder by the arm.

"Look here, Smithy," he said, "don't be a rash idiot! You know very well that it's impossible to walk to London."

"Nothing's impossible," replied Vernon-Smith. "I shall roll up with the milk in the morning—if Plummer's Court boasts a milkman, that is."

Bob Cherry cast his eye skywards.

"We're in for a fine old storm," he observed. "It's coming down cats and dogs presently, and thunder and lightning, too. Don't hoof it, there's a good fellow! Leave it till the morning, and go by train. We'll manage the exes for you."

"To-morrow's Sunday. You know what Sunday trains are—about as plentiful as figs in a war-time fig-pudding. No; I prefer Shanks' ponies."

"But what about your bike?" shouted Wharton, with a sudden inspiration.

The Bounder executed a mimic waltz in the Close.

"Kick me, somebody!" he said. "I clean forgot the old jigger."

"Got any oil in your lamps?" asked Bob.

"Heaps, thanks!"

A moment later Vernon-Smith had procured his machine from the cycle-shed.

"Now we've off," he said. "Good-night, you fellows!"

"Good-night, Smithy!"

"Take care of yourself, old man," added Wharton.

"You bet!" grinned the Bounder.

And he started off on his solitary pilgrimage.

The night was very close, and there was thunder in the air. And London, like Tipperary, was a long, long way to go.

But the Bounder, nothing daunted, set his face against the impending storm and rode on at a spanking pace.

Twilight gave way to intense darkness, and then—Boom! The fierce cannonade of thunder had begun.

"It's going to take more than a thunderstorm to put me off my stroke!" muttered the Bounder, as he left the old-fashioned town of Courtfield behind him.

But he spoke too confidently. He hadn't bargained for a storm that would almost sweep him off his machine in its violence.

The thunder grew fainter, and an angry wind hurled itself across the countryside, causing tremendous havoc. The rain, too, came down in sheets. It seemed as if every sort of element was determined to get a look-in.

The Bounder stuck it for half an hour. At the end of that period he was a wreck. Drenched to the skin, sick, dizzy, and hungry, he felt incapable of travelling another yard.

Then the bicycle grated over some rough flints, and there was an ominous pop. The back tyre had literally burst from its cover.

"That's done it!" groaned the Bounder. "It means tramping it, after all!"

He hurled his useless bike into the hedge, over the dim outline of which he sighted a barn. It was a ramshackle old place, but it would at least afford him shelter and rest.

He groped his way towards it, and entered.

Just inside his foot stumbled against something—something undoubtedly human, for there came a muffled roar.

"Gerroff me chest!"

Quick as thought, the Bounder sprang back and lit a match.

The sudden glow of light revealed a hefty-looking tramp sprawled at full length on the straw.

"Get hout, drat yer!" he muttered; and then, catching a glimpse of the junior's gold watch-chain, he lurched to his feet.

"I wants that there," he said, jerking a not overclean thumb in the direction of the chain.

"Dare say you do?" said the Bounder. "Unfortunately, I want it as well. Seeing that I'm the rightful owner, I think I have the preference."

"I don't want none of yer 'igh-flown langwidge!" said the tramp. "Jest you 'and that there chain and ticker over, or you'll feel the weight o' my fist! I may say," he added warningly, "that I was a blacksmith afore I took to this game."

"Blacksmith, or blackguard?" said the Bounder. "You've been the latter all your life, I should say. I don't happen to be in fighting trim just now—the storm's knocked all the stuffing out of me—but I think I can keep my end up, all the same."

The gentleman of the road was obviously surprised. He had expected to see the Bounder give in without a murmur. He did not know that the watch was the gift of Vernon-Smith's father, and that the Bounder would have sold his life before he let it go.

"I'll learn yer!" said the tramp threateningly. "And it over, or—"

Smack!

"Oh, lummy! Where did that come from?"

Smack, smack!

"Two more in the same place!" groaned the ruffian. "Oh, my stars!"

And he sat down violently in the straw.

The Bounder made himself comfortable on the fellow's chest. He was white and panting, for the exertion had told on his already exhausted frame.

"Are you going to behave yourself?" he asked. "If you are, we'll call the matter settled. If not, you'll go out on your neck. Which is it to be?"

"I'll be as good as gold!" groaned the unhappy tramp.

"All serene!"

The Bounder rose to his feet, and made himself at home in the farther corner.

He was tired and cramped, and the rest did him good. He remained in the barn for a couple of hours, during which time the storm abated considerably.

"Jovel!" he muttered. "I could do with something to eat! Talk about a food crisis! Still, I'll see the game through now. It's not myself so much."

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that matters. It's the pater. Poor old pater!"

"I wish you'd stop jawin' about taters," said the tramp peevishly, "an' let a bloke get ter sleep!"

"Keep your wool on!" said the Bounder. "I'm just going."

And, buttoning the collar of his rain-coat, he stepped out resolutely into the night.

He had come far; but many more miles remained to be traversed ere the final goal was reached. No. 10, Plummer's Court, seemed to be in a remote world.

But the Bounder's spirit was of the stuff which endures.

He plodded on and on, though his head was throbbing and his feet were like lumps of lead.

All through the long night he pursued his lonely course, cut off from cheer and comfort.

The first grey gleams of dawn found him on the outskirts of the metropolis.

He was nearly whacked. Some food and drink would put him right, he knew; but he doubted if he could get to Plummer's Court without some sort of refreshment en route.

Tramping on through the suburbs, he quite unexpectedly—for the day was Sunday—came upon an eating-house. A pleasant odour of fried bacon was wafted to him on the morning air.

"My hat!" muttered the famished junior. "I'd give anything in the world for half-a-dollar at this moment. Why, great Scott—"

He pulled up suddenly.

On the deserted pavement, gleaning white in the rays of the sun, was a half-crown!

The Bounder swooped down upon it like a hawk, almost beside himself with joy.

That half-crown was his salvation. He passed into the eating-house, and regaled himself with eggs and bacon and cake and coffee. The proprietress, taking pity on his weary and worn-out condition, generously undercharged him, so that he had sufficient money left to indulge in the luxury of a hot bath, and a ride on a motor-bus as far as the Old Kent Road.

Like a giant refreshed, he stepped off the 'bus, and plunged into the heart of Bermondsey.

He passed through a labyrinth of side

streets, and finally the words "Plummer's Court" greeted his gaze.

"At last!" he muttered. "Ye gods! I wouldn't go through last night's experience again for the fortunes of all the Rothschilds and Vanderbilts in the world!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No. 10, Plummer's Court!

MR. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH had played his cards well.

In reality, he was still living at his London mansion, and still speculating with marked success on the Stock Exchange. But occasionally he paid visits to the shum which he pretended was his new abode, in order to see if any of his son's letters had arrived for him there.

Luckily for his scheme, he was at Plummer's Court on the morning of the Bounder's appearance in town.

Glancing from one of the broken windows, and wondering how on earth it was possible for people to live in such a place, he espied his son coming round a corner.

"Herbert!" gasped the millionaire.

It was well for him that he was a man of action. It would not have done for the Bounder to have seen him in his morning-coat and spotless trousers.

Quick as thought, the millionaire dived into an adjoining room, where a suit of shabby coster's clothes were slung over a chair.

He made a quick change, and then scrambled downstairs to answer his son's knock on the door.

When Vernon-Smith stood face to face with his father he was staggered. The millionaire was no longer recognisable as the spruce and neatly-dressed man about town. He was a creature of shreds and patches.

"Oh, dad!" said the Bounder, gulping something down.

"Herbert, my boy, what brings you here?"

"I've come from Greyfriars—mainly on foot—because I was worried about you, pater!" blurted out the Bounder. "I thought you might be ill, or short of food, or something like that!"

The millionaire looked startled.

"Do you seriously mean to tell me that you have practically walked all the way from Greyfriars?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Through last night's great storm?"

"Yes."

"But why did you do such a mad thing?"

"There was no alternative. I had no money."

For a brief moment Mr. Vernon-Smith's conscience reproved him.

What need had he to doubt his son's loyalty, when the Bounder had tramped all through the tempestuous night fearing for his father's health and safety?

The millionaire was almost tempted to abandon the deception at once, and tell his son everything. But his suspicions were not yet wholly swept away, and he fought down the inclination.

"Come in, Herbert," he said. "I'm afraid you won't go into raptures over Plummer's Court. It's all right for people who have known nothing better, but to the man who has been brought up in the lap of luxury it's an inferno!"

The Bounder shuddered as he passed up the rickety stairs. A horrible reek of fried fish came up from below, and a shrill voice was proclaiming what would happen if somebody were the only girl in the world.

"What a hole!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You're right, my boy. It's the sort of place where people perish unknown in top attics. Ugh!"

"Can't you really get into something better, dad?" asked the Bounder, greatly distressed. "Surely some of your old business friends would help you?"

"A wider experience of the world, my boy, will teach you that when a man's down his former friends have no use for him."

The Bounder sighed.

"Can't you get employment of some sort?" he said desperately. "A secretary's job, or something like that? You'd have to pocket your pride, dad, I know, and it'd be a rotten business; but when the wolf's at the door, these things must be faced."

"I'll think about it," said the millionaire. "My appearance will be against me, though," he added, glancing ruefully at the coster's suit, which would have disgraced a scarecrow.

"What about your old togs?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I—I've pawned 'em, in order to pay the rent of this place."

There was a long pause.

"Are you very cut up on my account, Herbert?" asked the millionaire, at length.

"Oh, dad, you know I am!"

The Bounder stepped forward, with outstretched hands. There were tears in his eyes.

"This shall not last long!" he went on passionately. "I'll work—I'll work my fingers to the bone, if need be—to see that you are made comfortable. Give me permission to leave Greyfriars, and I'll start the breadwinning game right away! Whatever happens, you shall not starve!"

"Thank you for those words," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, rather huskily.

Once again a voice stirred his conscience.

"You've tested him enough," it said. "What further proof can you want of his devotion?"

But the millionaire hesitated; and he who hesitates is lost.

"How are you going to get back to Greyfriars?" he inquired, at length.

"Walk!" said the Bounder briefly.

"You'll do nothing of the sort. I still have a little money about me, and I must



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positively insist upon your taking ten shillings to get back with. I will hear no argument. You simply must take it."

The Bounder would never forget that week-end in London to his dying day.

The depressing atmosphere, the raucous street-cries, the never-ending jangle of barrel-organs, got on his nerves; and the contrast between wealth and poverty, luxury and hardship, was never so strongly brought home to him as then.

But his eyes were bright with resolution when he parted from his father early next morning.

This state of affairs should not continue long, he told himself.

He was young, he had ability, the world was before him; and if he could not raise sufficient money somehow to pull his father out of the rut, he was nothing but a fool and a weakling.

"Buck up, pater!" he said. "I'll get you out of this frightful hole, by hook or crook. It would drive me mad to think that you were doomed to lasting imprisonment in this place. Will you trust me? Will you rely on me to do as I say?"

"I will, Herbert. And if I get a taste of the old life again I shall appreciate it far more than I did. We never enjoy the sunshine of life unless we have lived in the shadows. Good-bye, my boy, and Heaven bless you for your kindness!"

Words such as these were strange, coming from the cold and calculating financier. Tears had not dimmed those eyes for many a year; yet Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he watched the lithe, athletic figure of the Bounder vanish round the street corner, was caught up on a wave of genuine emotion, and rejoiced in the knowledge that his suspicions of his son seemed to be without foundation.

He was sorry, too, that he had ever practised the deception; but the veil would soon be lifted, and the Bounder should know the truth.

An hour later Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, no longer in coster's garb, but one of the smartest-looking men on the London Stock Exchange, was discussing over the telephone the advantages of making further deals in Canadian Pacific.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Some Person Unknown!

VERNON-SMITH was the guest of Study No. 1 that afternoon.

The Famous Five had stood loyally by the Bounder. And they would have shown their help in a much more practical way if only Vernon-Smith had permitted it.

"Now, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, "we're simply dying to hear your adventures! Chuck 'em off your chest, my son. Did you get to London all right?"

"Yes. Small thanks to the bike, though."

And then the Bounder proceeded to describe the puncture, the passage-at-arms with the tramp, the long and weary walk to London, and, finally, what he had seen when he got there.

Harry Wharton & Co. listened with silent sympathy.

"I shall be leaving shortly," said Vernon-Smith.

The juniors looked startled.

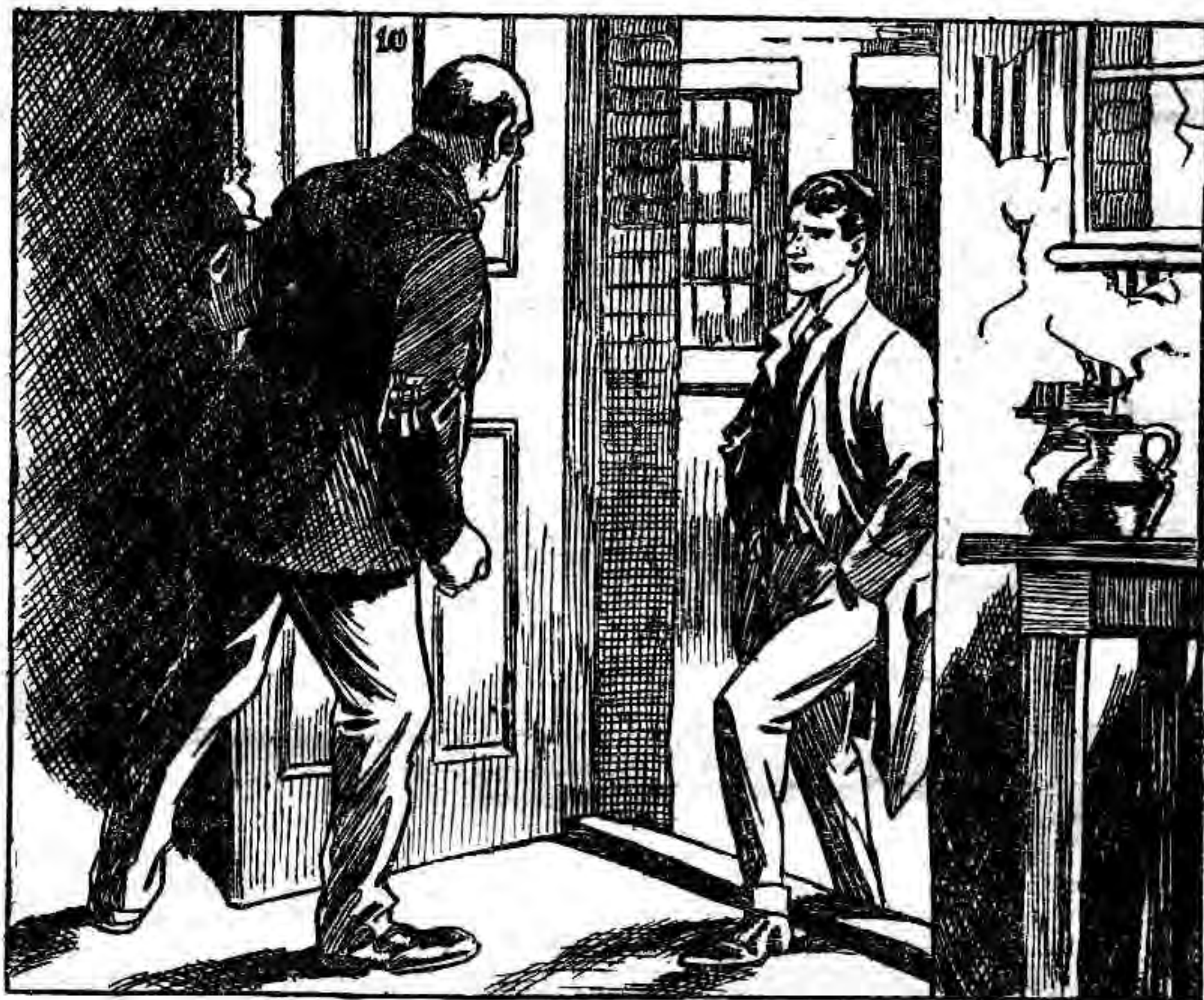
"What do you mean, Smithy?" gasped Nugent.

"Simply that I shall have to get out of this place, and start fighting for a fortune."

Harry Wharton looked grave.

"I shouldn't make a rash plunge, if I were you," he said. "Fighting for fortunes isn't a very profitable sort of game these days."

"Oh, I know what I'm up against, if that's what you mean. But, hang it all, if every man thought fortune-making was



The Bounder meets his father! (See Chapter 8.)

impossible there wouldn't be any millionaires! After all, why shouldn't I go in and win? I'm sound in wind and limb, and I'm not afraid of work."

"But wherefore this thushness?" asked Bob Cherry.

"It's the pater. I sha'n't sit still under this any longer. It makes me writhe to think of his being stuck in that hideous show, without fresh air and food and clothes. And then, who's going to pay for my education? I can't stick here for the duration of war on charity."

"Rats!" said Johnny Bull. "My advice to you, Smithy, is to hold on and hold out. Don't chuck up the sponge until you know for certain it's all up."

There was a good deal in what Johnny Bull said, and the Bounder knew it; but his mind was made up. He would not let the grass grow under his feet.

While at Greyfriars he could do nothing for his father. Once he could get his teeth into some profitable work, however, things would be different. The war had left many gaps to be filled—and profitable gaps, too—and Vernon-Smith resolved to make the venture. He could but try, anyway; and if he failed, he would at least have the satisfaction of failing in a high cause.

"I'll chance it," he said, half to himself. "I can do no good hanging on here. And if I ask the Head's permission to go, he'll refuse it; so there's nothing for it but to take French leave."

Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders.

"You know your own business best, Smithy," he said. "All the same, I don't think it's a good move. Why not go and have a heart-to-heart talk with Mauly? I'm sure he'd be jolly glad to tide you over. He'd hand out a good round sum without a murmur. Sooner or later the opportunity would come for you to pay it back, and all parties would be satisfied."

The Bounder shook his head.

"I'm not going to sponge on Mauly," he said. "It wouldn't be altogether fair, especially as I might not be able to pay him back for donkeys' years!"

"Then you're going to vamoose in the stilly night?" said Nugent.

"Yes."

"Well, good luck to you, Smithy! It's

a rotten bizney. Makes us feel as if we were standing idly on a river-bank and watching another chap drown."

"You've been awfully decent to me, anyway," said the Bounder warmly. "Whatever happens to me in the future, I sha'n't forget that. I'll be going now, I think, to pack up a bit."

And the Bounder went along to his own study.

Not without a pang would he be able to leave the old school within whose walls he had passed through such experiences. Not without a pang would he be able to bid farewell to his school-fellows, some of whom he had not realised his affection for until now.

But it was no use staying on in an atmosphere of doubt and unrest. There were many fellows, he reflected, who had never even had the advantages of a good education, but had been thrown on the world at a tender age to fight for their living.

The Bounder looked to have aged considerably as he sank into his armchair. He had never come up against the hard facts of life so forcibly as now, and the strain was telling on him. And though he was not faint-hearted, he knew that fellows of fifteen didn't make fortunes in a day.

"I shall have all my work cut out," he muttered. "Still, it's worth it, for the pater's sake."

And then, glancing round the room which he thought he was soon to leave for ever, he espied on the table a note addressed to himself.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Not Phyllis Howell this time, surely!"

Once again help was being showered upon the Bounder in his misfortune. But this time the sum was of almost alarming proportions. It consisted of ten fivers.

"Fifty quid!" gasped the Bounder. "My word! Things are getting interesting."

As he spoke a slip of paper fluttered from the envelope on to the table. It bore the words:

"This will keep you going for a time. Be sensible, and accept it, with the heartfelt good wishes of the sender."

Vernon-Smith sank back into the arm-chair, and cudgelled his brains in thought.

Who was the anonymous donor?

He came to the conclusion that it was not Phyllis Howell.

After his refusal of one loan, it was not likely that Phyllis would make another; nor was it likely that she was in a position to raise fifty pounds.

Now that he came to think of it, the Bounder realised that there were very few fellows at Greyfriars who could have contributed such a sum.

He made a mental list of the wealthy ones, and ran through them. Finally, he decided that from one person, and one alone, could such a sum emanate.

Lord Mauleverer!

He recalled his conversation with Mauly just before the match with Rookwood. The schoolboy earl had been genuinely distressed at his condition, and had hinted how much he would like to help him.

Yes, it must be Mauly! There was no other.

The Bounder gathered up the notes, and proceeded to Lord Mauleverer's study. In the face of this new happening he had almost forgotten that he had been on the verge of running away from Greyfriars.

Mauly lay at full length on the couch, and blinked drowsily at the intruder.

"Go away, my dear fellow!" he said plaintively. "I don't want to be disturbed."

"I don't suppose you do!" said the Bounder. "You'd like me to pocket the money and say nothing. You're a jolly good sort, Mauly, as I told you before, but I'm not going to let you do this."

Lord Mauleverer roused himself from the couch with an effort.

"Are you potty, begad?" he asked.

"No, you duffer!"

"You've been out in the sun, then. That's the only explanation of your extraordinary behaviour, begad!"

The Bounder stirred impatiently.

"Don't try to bluff me, Mauly!" he said. "You know jolly well that this fifty quid, which I found on my study table, came from you. Deny it if you can!"

"I do deny it—most emphatically!" said Mauly. "D'ye think I spend my time wanderin' about in other people's studies an' scatterin' banknotes on their tables? It would be too much fag."

"Then it wasn't you?"

"Of course not, dear boy! You must be dreamin'."

"It's strange!" said Vernon-Smith. "Somebody's tried to play the Good Samaritan by leaving fifty quid on my table. If it wasn't you, then who in thunder was it? You're the only fellow at Greyfriars who's got all that money."

"My dear, good chap," said Mauly, "I can't answer conundrums, an' I'm not goin' to try. All I know is that I'm not guilty. Honest Injun!"

With a puzzled expression on his face, the Bounder turned to go.

"One minute," drawled Mauly. "I should like to make a suggestion to you."

"Pile in!"

"Instead of creatin' a disturbance by askin' every fellow you meet if he's sent you fifty quid, why not hang on to it an' say nothin'? That's the best plan. Otherwise, you're merely makin' yourself a public nuisance!"

After a moment's hesitation the Bounder brought his fist down with a sounding thump on the table.

"You're right, Mauly!" he said. "For once in a way you've spoken words of wisdom." "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—"

Snore!

His lordship, wearied by the effort of

so lengthy a conversation, had sunk back on the couch in a state of placid repose. He continued to snore gently, and the Bounder, smiling to himself, turned on his heel and walked away.

He had made up his mind on two points; firstly, that he would not leave Greyfriars; and secondly, that he would let the mysterious donor of the fifty pounds have his own way.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Reckless Plunge!

THE Bounder's first impulse on leaving Mauly's study was to despatch the fifty pounds to his father without delay. On second thoughts, however, he refrained.

After all, what was fifty pounds to a man who had juggled with thousands? It would relieve the immediate pressure, no doubt; but, big sum though it was in a schoolboy's eyes, it would not be of much material use in the case of Vernon-Smith's father.

"If only I could make it multiply!" sighed the Bounder. "If it was five hundred, now, everything in the garden would be lovely. I oughtn't to look a gift horse in the mouth, I know, but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed a cheery voice in the doorway. "Not gone yet, Smithy?"

The Bounder smiled as Bob Cherry came in.

"No," he said. "Another chapter's been added to the adventure since I last saw you. Somebody's made me a present of fifty quid!"

"Great Scott! That's stunnin' news, if you like. I hope you're not going to insist on handing it back?"

"I can't, for the simple reason that I don't know who it came from."

"Have you asked Mauly?" said Bob, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes. It's not his doing, though."

"It's a bit of a poser," said Bob. "Still, I'm awfully glad, and so will the others be when I tell 'em. Good luck!"

And Bob Cherry sauntered out of the study humming a tune. There was a break in the clouds at last, and it looked as if a brighter day were dawning for the Bounder.

The latter went for a stroll along the river-bank in the cool of the evening to think matters over.

He was still undecided how to act with regard to the fifty pounds. If only he could multiply it in some way it would be ripping.

The old gambling fever returned to him with renewed force. He became conscious of a mad longing to go and risk the money in the hope of winning more.

He was wrestling with the desire when suddenly he felt a hand clapped on his shoulder, and spun round with a start.

"Why, my hat! Jimmy Dale!"

The Bounder's face lit up with pleasure. Jimmy Dale was a cute-looking youngster, and an old friend of the Vernon-Smith family; and he had been born and bred to the Turf. What Jimmy Dale didn't know about "dead certs" and "sure snips" wasn't worth knowing.

"Fancy runnin' into you!" said Jimmy. "There's a race-meetin' at Courtfield Park on Saturday. The war hasn't quite stamped out the old game, you see. An' I'm down here to pick up some tips. Done anythin' good lately?"

"I've given it the go-by," said the Bounder. "Done no betting for weeks and weeks, in fact."

"My aunt! Then you must make up for lost time."

"A little way farther down," said the Bounder, "there's a pub, called the Feathers, with a garden overlooking the

river. Let's squat down and have a jaw over a glass of dry ginger. I want to ask you something awfully badly, Jimmy."

Master James Dale, despite his tender years, ordered a liquid which certainly bore no resemblance to dry ginger, and this inspired him to talk. In fact, the Bounder had all his work cut out to get a word in edgeways.

"Look here, Jimmy," he broke out at length, "I'm on the get-rich-quick tack just now. I want to convert a matter of fifty quid into hundreds."

"Then you can't do better," said Jimmy Dale, nearly upsetting his glass in his enthusiasm, "than put your money on Irish Pride for the three o'clock race. Believe me, my boy, she's a dead cert, though the fact isn't generally known. The price will be good, too—twenty to one, I should say. The public are rather in the dark about the form of Irish Pride, but Jimmy Dale's not. Take my tip, old man, and back her!"

"No bunkum?" said the Bounder.

"Bunkum! Why, man, I'm giving you the best piece of advice you ever had in your life! Don't you dare to cast it back in my teeth as bunkum!"

Jimmy Dale was getting quite dramatic.

"It means everything to me, you see," said Vernon-Smith. "I don't take much interest in racing these days, but from what I saw of the list of runners for the three o'clock race Crusader seemed to have the rosiest chances."

Jimmy Dale nodded.

"The beast you mention," he said, "will probably double up early in the race. Crusader's been boomed a lot in the papers, I grant you, but there's nothing like getting your information direct from the stable. Plank fifty quid on Irish Pride, my boy, and the game's yours. I know what I'm talking about, and I wouldn't go out of my way to give such a good tip to anyone unless he happened to be an old and tried pal."

"I'll do it!" muttered the Bounder between his teeth. "It's all or nothing. Either I make a pile or lose every giddy farthing! Are you backing Irish Pride yourself, Jimmy?"

"You bet!"

"Good enough. You're too downy a bird to put your money on anything that isn't a dead cert."

Jimmy Dale smiled broadly at the compliment.

"Are you coming over to see the race?" he asked.

The Bounder reflected.

"I think I can wangle it," he said, after a pause. "It'll be a Saturday, and most of the fellows will be playing cricket. Will you take the money and put it on for me?"

"Pleasure, dear boy!"

The die was cast now, with a vengeance. His father's fate, and his own as well, hung in the balance, the Bounder told himself.

If Irish Pride outran the others, the night of misery and suspense would merge into a morning of radiant happiness.

But if Irish Pride lost—

That was a possibility which the Bounder preferred to leave out of his calculations.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Saving the Situation!

M R. QUELCH found Vernon-Smith a very trying pupil during the next few days.

The Bounder could concentrate on nothing. His mind was in a fever of excitement; and the day of the

race, though in reality very near, seemed an age in coming round.

"Are you turning out for us against the Fourth on Saturday, Smithy?" inquired Harry Wharton. "After your Rookwood innings, you ought to be in great form."

"Thanks!" said the Bounder. "I'd prefer to be left out, though. The fact is, I've got a pressing appointment. You can lick the Fourth without my help, too. Temple & Co. don't amount to much."

"I'd rather you played, all the same," said Harry. "Can't you postpone the appointment?"

"Not for all the cricket-matches that ever were!"

"All serene, then. I'll bring in Micky Desmond. He's been doing star turns at the nets lately."

And thus it was arranged.

Then, after a succession of sleepless night and a period of almost intolerable suspense the Bounder found himself on the way to the racecourse.

The biggest gamble of his career was to be enacted now. All his little flutters in the past—and their name was legion—seemed to pale into complete insignificance before this all-important event.

Vernon-Smith found the course well packed.

The Bounder witnessed the first three races without interest. Up to now he had seen no sign of Jimmy Dale.

But he knew his man. When Jimmy Dale undertook a transaction he always saw it through. If Irish Pride won, the Bounder would get his money.

How glorious it would be! Already he had outlined in his mind the sort of wire he would send to his father at No. 10, Plummer's Court, bidding him be of good cheer, and have no fears for the future.

Ding-dong! Ding-a-ding-dong!

The bells were sounding for the three o'clock race.

Vernon-Smith suddenly felt as limp as a rag. Every vestige of colour had left his face, and he was trembling from head to foot with excitement.

A few brief moments and the issue would be decided. But to the Bounder it seemed an eternity before the runners got into line.

Ah! They were off now!

He could distinguish the white-and-green colours of Irish Pride quite distinctly. She certainly seemed a fine horse, for almost immediately she established a goodly lead.

That lead was maintained for three-parts of the course; and then another animal, which had been cantering modestly in the rear, was seen to make a terrific burst.

"Oh, hang!" muttered the Bounder.

He knew that horse. It was Crusader, which had a reputation for making brilliant spurts when considered to be out of the running.

A closer scrutiny of the course showed that Irish Pride had flagged considerably. Her jockey made frantic efforts to infuse new life into her as she neared the post, but the effort came too late.

The Bounder had proved himself a better judge of horses than Jimmy Dale, for it was Crusader's race!

She flashed past the post in fine style, winning handsomely by a good three lengths.

The Bounder's hand went instinctively to his forehead. He was stunned. The huge sum of money, which he had almost come to regard as already won, had been wrested from his eager grasp.

His father must struggle on in a life of poverty. The Bounder felt quite incapable of making further efforts to save him. He had lost faith in everything.

A few minutes later, when he had braced himself up sufficiently to reconcile himself to the blow, he stumbled from the course.

"It's all up!" he exclaimed aloud, forgetful of the fact that he was passing through throngs of people. "It's ruin to the pater now—absolute black ruin!"

"I don't think so," interposed a quiet voice. "How came you here, Herbert?"

The Bounder jumped. His eyes were nearly starting from his head.

"Pater!" was all he could say.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was no longer in rough and rumpled coster's garb. His clothes were speckless, his boots were shining, his gold tiepin gleamed in the light of the sun.

And beside him, looking as cosy and comfortable as ever, stood the Daimler car.

The Bounder couldn't understand it at all. He had schooled himself to surprises; but this sudden encounter with his father was certainly the limit!

"You appear to be all at sea, Herbert!" said the millionaire. "An explanation is due from me, and you shall have it. But, first of all, what were you doing here?"

"I'd put fifty quid on a horse, dad!"

"What ever for?"

"In the hope of getting you out of your rotten position!"

"Was that your sole object?"

"Of course it was! I've chucked all that sort of thing!"

Visibly moved, Mr. Vernon-Smith gripped his son by the hand.

He needed no further proof now. There was no sacrifice his son had not been prepared to make on his behalf. His sole concern had been for his father.

"I've done you a rank injustice, Herbert!" he said. "Hop into the car, my boy, and we'll have tea in some quiet place where we shall not be disturbed. I have a long story to tell you. It starts from the day when you and your friends came to spend the week-end with me in London."

Greatly wondering, the Bounder got in, and the car glided off through the horde of noisy bookmakers.

Exactly what he was going to hear the Bounder didn't know, but something seemed to whisper to him that the clouds had rolled by at last, and that all was right with the world.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Lifting the Veil!

MR. SAMUEL VERNON SMITH was not usually given to making frank confessions. He was, as a rule, a juggler with words, and generally contrived to evade the point.

But on this occasion he let himself go, and told the Bounder everything.

"I deceived you all along the line," he said. "It must have been a sort of devil that put the suspicion into my head, and I couldn't rid myself of it. I doubted your loyalty and sincerity. I mistrusted you as no father has a right to mistrust his son. Past acts of devotion on your part were forgotten. And then I figured out a scheme whereby I could test you. I posed as a pauper; and you must admit I played my cards exceedingly well. I didn't mean to drop the deception for some weeks yet, but Fate has intervened."

To all this, and much more, the Bounder listened in silent amazement.

"Have I your forgiveness, my boy?" asked the millionaire at length.

"Of course, pater! I can't help feeling a bit reproachful with you for having

doubted me. But this is the last time, I take it?"

Mr. Vernon-Smith nodded eagerly.

"Yes, yes!" he said. "I shall nurse no silly suspicion after this!"

"There's just one thing that puzzles me," said the Bounder, with a laugh. He could afford to laugh now. "Somebody at the school made me an anonymous present of fifty quid—the fifty quid I put on Irish Pride. I'd give the world to know who the kid was!"

"It wasn't a kid at all," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "It was a man. In fact, it was me!"

"You!"

"Yes. I couldn't bear the thought of your going on day after day, week after week, without cash. So I put the fifty pounds in an envelope, with your name on the outside, and enclosed it in a letter to Harry Wharton, asking him to put it on your study table when nobody was about, and urging him not to divulge where it came from. Of course, he didn't know there was fifty pounds inside, or he might have put in a bit of shrewd thinking, and my deception would have come to light before this."

"You're jolly deep, dad, and no mistake!" said the Bounder admiringly.

The millionaire set down his teacup and lit a cigar.

"I think we understand each other better now, Herbert," he said quietly. "There was something lacking before. After this, though, things will be different. I must be getting back to town now, I think. There are several important matters to attend to—the giving up of the tenancy of No. 10, Plummer's Court, for one. Good-bye, my boy! You've blewed the fifty pounds I sent you, but your motives were good, so I'll replace the amount here and now."

And the millionaire did so, much to the Bounder's gratification.

Then the father and son shook hands and went their ways.

And the heart of each was happy, for mutual sympathy and understanding had taken the place of doubt and mistrust.

When Vernon-Smith strolled in at the gates of Greyfriars, an hour later, he encountered Bolsover, Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, who were standing in the gateway.

They did not speak, but after he had passed them they suddenly burst into uproarious song:

"When I get some money
I'll be in the Upper Ten.
When I get some money—
When, when, when, when, when!"

The Bounder swung round with a smile.

"You mean that for me?" he asked.

"Ye-e-es!" stammered Skinner, a trifle taken aback at the Bounder's pleasantry.

"Well, you're right off the wicket! I'm quite flush, as it happens. My ship's come home!"

And the Bounder flourished a bundle of banknotes before the astonished gaze of his tormentors.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Bolsover. "So you've been spoofing us all the time, Smithy?"

Skinner dropped his sneering smile at once, and sidled up to the Bounder.

"Of course, we've only been rotting, Smithy!" he said. "Although you might not have known it, we stood by you through thick and thin, and backed you up when practically all the Remove was against you! There's loyalty for you, if you like! Coming along to the tuckshop?"

"Certainly!" said the Bounder.

Nudging each other in great expectation, Skinner & Co. followed Vernon-Smith across the Close and into the little shop.

"Mine's a ginger-pop and half a dozen whipped-cream walnuts!" said Skinner.

"Mine's a yard of chewing-gum!" boomed Bolsover.

"A tin of fairy-cakes for me!" said Stott, taking courage.

"Trot out some custard and fruit for this child, Mrs. Mimble!" added Snoop.

"Good!" said the Bounder. "Have you fellows finished?"

"Quite!"

"Then I'll order mine. Lemon-squash, please, ma'am!"

Mrs. Mimble bustled about, and speedily served the little party.

Vernon-Smith got rid of his lemon-squash in one non-stop journey, paid for it, and walked out of the shop.

"There's still time," he murmured, half to himself, "for a smack at the nets before sunset."

"Here, I say—" called Bolsover.

"What about our tuck?" yelled Skinner.

"It's no concern of mine," said the Bounder pleasantly. "If you choose to defy the Food Controller's rules it's your funeral. I made no mention of treating. Good-bye!"

And the Bounder went on his way, leaving wild confusion and consternation behind him.

Mrs. Mimble insisted upon prompt pay-

ment, and Skinner & Co. laid down the money with a very bad grace.

Two hours later, when the Famous Five came in from cricket, the Bounder entertained them with a full history of what had happened.

"Bravo, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry.

"I don't agree with the plunge," remarked Harry Wharton. "But—"

"All is of the wellfulness that is of the well-endfulness!" purred Inky.

And Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull said: "Hear, hear!"

(DON'T MISS "COKER'S CAM PAIGN!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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

A REAL REHEARSAL!

By FRANK NUGENT.

"YOU are not going to be much in this, Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "but you can have a small part, if you like."

William George Bunter blinked at us as he stood framed in the study doorway. We had not, as a matter of fact, wanted the help of the porpoise at all. Bunter is of no use for anything but shifting grub.

"I heard what you fellows were saying, anyhow," chuckled the Owl of the Remove. "You are going to get up a brigade of fireguards."

Bunter was a bit wide of the mark. Wharton began to explain the situation. It was not a thing we wanted talked about yet.

If Bunter had not been tying up his boot-lace at the door just then we should have been saved no end of trouble; but Bunter knew, and so he had to be let into it.

"We are giving a rehearsal," said Wharton. "It's like this," said Bob Cherry. "Greyfriars wants a fire brigade."

"Whaffor?" asked Bunter.

"To put the fire out, dummy!"

"But there isn't any fire," said Bunter.

"There might be, and we are going to be ready in case there is. As you have heard the secret, we don't mind letting you come in. We are giving a show so as to be prepared."

"Oh, really! That's a good notion. And a feed afterwards, of course?" said Bunter, looking eager.

"I don't think—not in war-time," replied Bob Cherry. "This is serious, and we are only letting you in so that you shouldn't blab."

"Oh, really, I am simply disgusted with you chaps!" said Bunter. "You talk as though I was dying to be in the beastly thing. I ain't, and you needn't think it. But I consider it my duty to tell Mr. Quelch what you are up to. I am certain he would disapprove. A fire brigade only makes a nasty wet mess for someone to clear up."

Saying that, the porpoise actually swung round, and his little fat legs were carrying him out of the study.

"Collar him!" yelled Bob.

Bunter was deep. He ought to be employed as a strategist by the War Office. It did not take much to collar him. We had to promise him a feed if he would keep dark. Bunter came round. He said that he had always felt a fire brigade was the thing Greyfriars needed.

"Quelch's away this evening," said Bob, "and we are giving a demonstration in fire drill before his study window. You can be the chap we rescue."

Bunter agreed. We did not want him, but it had to be.

Bob had bagged a fair length of hose-

pipe from the shed where the gardener keeps his tools. Bunter did not take much interest in this part of the proceedings. It looked too much like work for the Owl's taste.

"How soon are you going to rescue me?" he asked, blinking at the arrangements we were making.

We began to feel annoyed.

"You buzz off and wait in Quelch's study!" growled Johnny Bull. "You won't have long to wait."

Bunter just grinned. Waiting suited him better than working. He took our word for it that Quelch was out, and he sidled off. A few moments later we saw his fat face beaming upon us as we made ready in the dusk below. Bob Cherry was very thorough. He had clapped on a helmet which had once adorned the thick head of a German. Major Cherry had sent the souvenir to Bob. We others had no Teuton headgear, but we had a couple of funny-looking oddments from the second-hand shop in the village, including helmets which in their early youth had belonged to the police. Bob Cherry had a belt and a whistle, to say nothing of the ladder which the chaps who come to trim the ivy use.

"We'll just fix the hose on to the stand-pipe," said Bob, "so as to give reality to the thing."

We did not know why it was Bunter bobbed back from the window at that moment. The reason was that the door behind him opened suddenly, and Mr. Prout walked majestically in.

He failed to perceive Bunter.

"Not here," he muttered. "No matter, I will wait."

Bunter trembled. He would have bolted if he had dared, for, of course, he had no right to be in Quelch's study.

"I will have a quiet smoke," murmured Mr. Prout, and he lighted a big cigar.

Billy Bunter blinked at him from the dusky corner where he had taken refuge.

Mr. Prout stretched himself luxuriously in the easy-chair midway between the door and the open window. He puffed at his cigar with enjoyment. It was a good cigar, and Mr. Prout was tired. Little did he realise that he was unconsciously aiding in a scene which would be ever memorable in the history of Greyfriars!

Mr. Prout had had quite a tiring day. The cigar was pleasant, and it wooed him to slumber. His head fell back, and the cigar fell from his hand to alight on the evening paper, which had been wafted from the table to the carpet.

Bunter moved forward resolutely, intending to give the alarm to those outside. But, like Wolseley at Khartoum, he was too late. By the time he reached the window the cigar had got to work, had set the evening

paper on fire, and had reached the curtains swaying in the breeze.

Bunter opened his mouth to shout, but as he dashed to the window he stumbled, and came down right on top of Mr. Prout.

"What's— Oh, help!" shrieked Mr. Prout, seeing the flaming curtains, and struggling to escape from the grasp of Bunter.

"Oh, we shall be burnt alive!" burred Bunter, clinging desperately to Mr. Prout.

"Nonsense, Bunter! Release my legs! Here, help, someone!"

Bunter hung on in terror. As the ivy clings affectionately to the oak, so did Bunter entwine himself about the portly person of Mr. Prout. The curtains were burning furiously, and the wastepaper-basket had now caught alight.

II.

"MY hat! There's a real fire!" shouted Bob Cherry, as he bolted up the ladder, gripping the nozzle of the hose in his right hand, while Harry and Johnny and Inky and I followed him. "I do believe that ass Bunter has set the place alight!"

There ought to have been light enough to show Mr. Prout, but it seemed there was not. At the moment Bob Cherry popped his head in and turned on the water he only saw Bunter, who appeared to be wrestling with himself on the floor.

Swish, swish!

The hose did quite effective work. The fire was put out in a moment.

"Help! Oh, garoogh!" came from Mr. Prout, as a rush of water caught him amidships, sending him reeling back against the wall.

"It's all right, Bunter!" sang out Bob. "We'll save you! No need to set alight to the place, though, you fathead!"

"I didn't!" shouted Bunter, frantically dodging the water. "It's Prout, and—"

"Bunter!"

Mr. Prout was soaked and sopping, but he did his best to be dignified.

"Yes, sir?" said Bunter.

"What does this mean? Why are you here? Cherry, turn off that water at once!"

We all clambered in after Bob. It was clear enough that the rehearsal was a success—from our point of view.

Mr. Prout was paddling about in the water, which lapped round the room and was running into the corridor, and the more he paddled the angrier he seemed to get.

"Turn off that water!" he thundered.

But the tap had got jammed.

"I can't, sir!" Bob said desperately. He stooped down, the nozzle under his arm, as he tried to switch off the stream.

Swish! Swoomp! The rush was worse than

ever, and Mr. Prout got it in the chest. He seemed to be just about to say something, but he never said it. He went down like a ninepin, and lay there waving his arms and legs like—oh, like anything!

"Good gracious! Bless my soul! I'm choking!" he gasped.

We managed to lug him up. Old Prout is no light-weight. But he did not thank us. The water was still pouring out, as if it meant to make a clean sweep of Quelch's study while it was about it.

"Turn off that water!" roared Mr. Prout.

It was not Bob's fault. Bob was doing his best. But the tap was too much for him.

There was Prout stammering and trying to say a lot of things, and there was Bunter splashing round like a young hippopotamus. Bob laboured frantically; but the rush of water up the hose made it twist about in his hand, and when it escaped it simply swirled round, sweeping the place fore and aft, like swabbing decks in the morning.

"Whoof!" gasped Bunter.

"Help!" gasped Mr. Prout.

I thought Bob was getting the thing under control at last; but it eluded him again, and Mr. Prout stretched himself once more on the floor, muttering wild words.

"Gurrrg!" he moaned, as he scrambled to his feet.

Slosh! Swish! Slosh!

The nozzle had him well in the eye that time, and he sat down in the soaked arm-chair, with the water murmuring round him like a lake.

Bob really meant well. He didn't know how, that was all. He swung the nozzle round to the window. There came a startled cry at the door, and a curious sucking sound as someone tried to push the door inwards.

"Dear me! Bless my soul! What is the meaning of this?"

It was Mr. Quelch. He waded in, looked round, and got the benefit of Bob's attempt to divert the stream of water to the window.

In his surprise he staggered, and came down with quite a splash. We roared; we couldn't help it. We had all got it, more or less, and now Quelch was in for it.

He seemed quite annoyed. Obviously, he failed to see the joke.

"What do you mean by this?" he thundered, glaring at us all.

"It was a fire, sir," said Bunter meekly.

"A fire? Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Quelch. He tried hard to look dignified, like Mr. Prout. But it isn't easy for a master when his trousers are swathed round his legs and all his togs are oozing water.

By this time Bob had the stream directed out of window, and the quad was getting cleaned no end.

"Yes, sir, it was a fire," said Bunter.

"A fire? Where?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" said Mr. Prout, as he sat and shivered in the chair.

"It's quite right, sir," said Bunter nobly. "I saw Mr. Prout set a light to your study, and Cherry was there with his fire brigade, and I gave the alarm."

Bob turned, and met the stony stare of Mr. Quelch. Bob's German helmet was on the side of his head, and he looked game for anything. Mr. Quelch retreated as Bob stepped into the middle of the room.

"I absolutely decline to believe this absurd story!" cried Mr. Quelch. "This is simply a piece of wicked mischief on the part of you boys."

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" sneezed the miserable Mr. Prout.

"Mr. Prout, can you explain this miserable affair?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" replied Mr. Prout.

"There was a fire, right enough, sir," said Bob Cherry.

We all backed him up, and then Bunter took up the running again.

"It was a jolly serious fire, sir," he said. "It was Mr. Prout, sir. He came in and smoked a cigar, sir, and went to sleep, and dropped it, and the paper caught fire, and then the curtain."

"Atishoo!" came from Mr. Prout.

"What were you doing here, Bunter?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"I just looked in, sir, to see if I could save anything. That's the truth, sir, really, sir."

Mr. Quelch was in no mood for trifling; but facts are facts, and Bunter's story was as near the truth as could be expected in the circumstances.

"It's exactly as I say, sir," said Bunter earnestly. "I thought you might be in terrible danger, sir, the moment I smelt the smoke, and I—I risked my life to save you! At least, I meant to. It would have been the death of a hero, sir, if I'd done it!"

Mr. Quelch splashed across to the bell and rang it. He had heard enough, so it seemed. Mr. Prout continued to sneeze. It was all he could do.

"The fire brigade can go," said Mr. Quelch, without looking at us.

We thought it just as well not to stop for our salvage fees. Bob Cherry reached the ladder first. Bunter tried to anticipate him, but got a shove which nearly gave him another bath.

There was really nothing much the matter with our rehearsal. We didn't mind getting wet, if Quelch and Prouty did. And Bunter really played up quite well—for Bunter!

And, of course, he had his feed.

THE END.

AN EYE ON MR. SELBY!

By TOM MERRY.

I.
"UNDAH the new Man-Powah Bill, deah boys—"

Gussy uttered these preliminary words to get our attention.

'Twas a dismal failure. Gussy could wait—the "Weekly" couldn't. And the busy gulls of Lowther, Manners, and myself scratched on heedlessly.

The celebrated monocle began to glimmer forebodingly.

"I wepeat, that undah the new Man-Powah Bill, the age limit has been waised to fiftay."

Dead silence.

Suddenly Monty jumped to his feet, staggered a few paces, and collapsed against the wall.

Gussy jumped also.

"Bai Jove! What evah is the mattah, Lowthah?"

"What—what is the new age limit, did you say?" asked Monty feebly.

"Fiftay, deah boy. But—"

Monty heaved a huge sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness! I thought you said sixty! I breathe freely."

He returned to his seat at the table, and went on scribbling furiously.

Gussy jammed his monocle tighter into his eye, and stared at our tame humorist.

"I fail to see, Lowthah, how you would be affected if the age limit was waised to sixtay!"

Monty grunted.

"You talk a jolly sight too much, Gustavus! Travel!"

"That," said Arthur Augustus stiffly, "is not a remark that one gentleman should address to another!"

Monty grunted again.

"Who said I was addressing a gentleman?"

"Bai Jove!"

Gussy was at a loss. When it comes to a long-winded jawbone solo, Gussy stands fast; but at repartees there's no one to match Montague. Gussy gave it up.

"Undah the new Man-Powah Bill—" he struck up again.

"Finished!" exclaimed Monty, flinging down his pen. "The 'Comic Column's' ready for the 'Weekly,' you chaps!"

"Blow the 'Comic Column'!"

"Ygas, wathah! Blow the 'Comic Column'!"

"Listen to this! 'Funny Excuses of Fred the Food-hog—'"

"Bust Fred the Food-hog!"

"Undah the new Man-Powah Bill—"

"Now," says the magistrate, "what is your excuse for being in possession of half a hundredweight of tobacco?"

"The age limit bein' waised to fiftay," roared Arthur Augustus, "Mr. Selbay—"

"You see, your worship," says Fred, "I wanted tobacco horse—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And why," says the magistrate, "was all that tea found hoarded on your premises?" "Because," says Fred, "there can be no patriotism without 't'—"

"Ring off, Lowther!" we roared, in one great voice.

Gussy's spechifying we could just stand; but we weren't going to stand Lowther's puns sprung upon us at the same time.

He glowered upon us, but subsided.

"Get on with the age limit bisney, Gussy," I grunted, "and then leave us to finish the 'Weekly' in peace!"

"Well, deah boys, as it has been waised to fiftay, all chaps up to fiftay come within its scope."

A general grunt greeted this sapient piece of reasoning.

"If you've come here to tell us that—"

"Pway do not flustah me with undue huwwyin'! Selbay is one of the persons whom that Bill affects. I do not say that the country has been weduced to takin' Selbay; but there is at least the possibility that he may be wanted. You chaps may have noticed how queah he's been looking all to-day."

"He generally does look queer," remarked Manners.

"He looks dwcadfully uneasy—I may say, shiftay," said Gussy mysteriously. "There is such a thing as a guiltay conscience, deah boys."

"What are you driving at, ass?"

"Think what a howwid stigma would be on the wecords of the school if a master beah were convicted of bein' a—a desertah! A humowist is quite had enough," said Gussy, staring fixedly at Lowther; "but I considah a desertah to be even worse."

"You utter chump!" exclaimed Monty.

"Do you mean that you think Selby is going to bunk?" I demanded.

"If not, deah boys, why does he look so—so ghoulish?"

"The weather is dull and raw," remarked Lowther, glancing out of the window.

Gussy turned his eyeglass upon him in surprise.

"The weather is beside the question, Lowther!"

"It is also gusty and inclined to rain."

"Weally, Lowther! If this is a continuation of Fwed the Food-hog's excuses for twangswessing the gwub wules—"

"It isn't, ass! This dismal weather upsets most chaps; and if they've hearts like hay-seeds they knuckle under to it, and go about looking like boiled owls."

Gussy shook his head seriously.

"I'm afraid I cannot cweddit that theory, deah boy—not in Selbay's case, at any wate. It is the waising of the age limit that twoubles him."

"Doubtless it has a deal to do with it, certainly."

"I believe," said Gussy, lowering his voice, "that he means to bolt to-night!"

"Ass!"

Gustavus heeded not the polite epithet, but lowered his voice still more.

"Studay No. 6 has formed a tempowawy society called the Selbay Watch. We are goin' to take it in turns to sit up an hour duwing the night and keep watch on the quad fwom the dormitoway window."

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say that Blake has any faith in this rot?" I exclaimed.

"It is not wot, Tom Mewwy! Blake was quite agweecable to all my plans. I spoke to the chaps in the studay whilst they were at pweap for fully thwee-quarters of an hour—"

"Oh!"

That explained it! I can well understand a chap agreeing to anything that would stop the discourse of Arthur Augustus.

"We want volunteeahs, you see. If only four of us keep watch, it means losing a couple of hours' sleep apiece, which isn't good for a chap."

"You'll find no volunteers here for a potty game like that," said Manners. "Hunt round the Fourth; they may be asses enough. In fact, four of them are!"

"You are insultin', Mannahs! I have consulted most of the fellows in my Form, but they do not appeal to be taken with the ideah. A pwopphet is nevah honahed in his own Form—I mean, country."

"Better seek some other country, old son," we grinned. "Fraid you won't find many takers in this one!"

Gussy moved towards the door disconsolately, but stopped in the act of opening

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 550.

it, and gazed fixedly at us—at Monty most especially.

"This," he said very deliberately, "is a most serious matter. And I warn you that if you attempt to practice any pranks upon the Selby Watch you will receive the most fearful thrashing of your lives!"

With which awful words he departed.

II.

MONTY plunged into a deep brown study on Gussy's departure, and remained thus until I had finished the editorial bizney in the "Weekly."

I carefully wiped my pen on the "Funny Excuses of Fred the Food-hog," and then glanced at him. His hands were thrust deep into his trousers-pockets, and his moody brow betokened that great mental feats were being performed behind it.

"Thinking of joining the Selby Watch, Monty?" I asked.

"Of course, he's a Special," said Monty suddenly.

"Who, Gussy?"

"Eh? No, ass! Old Selby. By Jove, I see the way to having those Fourth Form bounders on a piece of string!"

"How?" I asked.

"Simply," said Monty cheerfully, "by telling Selby that Gussy has warned us we are in danger of getting a fearful thrashing apiece."

Manners and I called him a blithering ass. But when he explained a little more clearly, we thought there was something in the idea.

Between eleven and twelve that night, when most of the school was wrapped in slumber, and the Selby Watch was pursuing its silent vigil in the Fourth Form dorm, Monty, Manners, and I rolled out of bed.

Our objective was the Head's study.

Something most unaccountable had gone wrong with the lock earlier in the evening, and Dr. Holmes had been unable to lock it before retiring to his house, Monty may not have had anything to do with it, or he may. Anyway, he said nothing to the Head about it.

And now, picking up the telephone-receiver, he gave Mr. Selby's number. Since air-raids came into fashion Mr. Selby has been connected with the Exchange.

There was some delay, evidently, whilst Selby roused himself and tumbled out of bed. Then a harsh voice called:

"Hallo!"

In hollow, sepulchral tones Monty asked:

"Is that you, Mr. Selby?"

"Yes, yes! Who is that?"

"This is—"

And he uttered a name, which, if it were Lowther, must have been pronounced in Russian or Choctaw.

"The warning has been given, Mr. Selby!" said Monty, his tones increasing in hollowness and sepulchralness.

"Oh, dear! Has it indeed?"

"It has. I don't suppose anything will come of it. Still, Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom are here."

"I will join you at the station immediately!"

And something very like "Confound it!" reached Monty's ear before the master jammed down the receiver. The duties of a Special don't agree with Selby a bit, but he has to put up some show of patriotism.

"I almost believe," remarked Monty thoughtfully, "that Selby has got hold of an idea that a Gotha raid is expected."

"Go hon!"

"In which case," continued our prize humorist, "he'll want to pass along the passages, which are dark, and out of the school door, which is bolted on the inside. Hadn't we better oblige the pleasant old gentleman by lighting a gas-jet or two and unbolting the door? You see," he explained, "as he thinks the other St. Jim's Specials are already at the station he will naturally expect the door to be unbolted. And a few glimmers of gas will aid the delusion."

Seeing the force of this we left the Head's room and groped our way down. And when these final arrangements were completed we scurried back to the dorm.

The rest of the little bizney could now safely be left in the hands of the Selby Watch.

III.

IDARE say, if Selby were called upon to go, he would step into line with the best. He'd grouse a great deal, of course, and wouldn't be a bit keen; but I'm pretty well convinced he wouldn't desert. Jack Blake was much of the same opinion, as he stood by the dormitory window taking his turn in the Selby Watch.

The Selby Watch, by the way, had had no further volunteers.

A great, yellow moon hung over the woods, and the whole deserted prospect made Blake unutterably sleepy.

Suddenly he saw a figure step out across the quad.

Old Selby! Blake rubbed his eyes hard, and looked again.

Selby it was, right enough. He turned off among the elms, evidently making for the gate in the wall, of which masters and prefects have each a special key.

Blake roused the rest of the Selby Watch in an instant.

"What did I say?" demanded Gus triumphantly. "Didn't—"

"I—I can't take it in!" said Blake. "But quick! We mustn't lose him!"

They hurried out of the School House and reached the little wooden gate. Selby had locked it behind him. They helped each other over the wall, and set off along the road to Rylcombe at a trot. A dim figure showed ahead.

Selby spun round as he heard footsteps pattering behind him, and stared at the four in astonishment.

Blake & Co. did not hesitate. The Third Form master's little game seemed pretty clear. They gripped him unceremoniously.

"You—you young scoundrels!" exclaimed Mr. Selby. "Do you know who I am? Release me!"

Gussy had prepared a long, stern speech for the occasion, and, wagging a reproving finger at the master, began

"Mr. Selbay, pause! Pause and reflect!"

"You impudent young puppy!"

"The honah of the school, Mr. Selbay, is at stake! Not in the whole history of St. Jim's can we record be twiced of anyone deserting in his country in time of need!"

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered. He began to see what was behind the assault.

"So you imagine," he said very icily, "that I am deserting?"

The Selby Watch wavered not in its purpose. Firmly it stood its ground.

"Having just received notice of the air-raid warning from Rylcombe police-station—"

"Oh!" gasped the four.

"I am therefore unable to pursue the matter here. Mr. Railton, however, is at the station, I have been informed. You will accompany me thither, and I will place you in his hands."

The Selby Watch followed Mr. Selby with thumbs down.

But at the station things looked brighter, and they regarded the master with renewed distrust.

"There ain't been any warning given!" said the bobby-in-charge.

"But—but you rang me up on the telephone!"

"We've rung up nobody!" was the gruff response.

And there was an end of it.

"This is a trick—a trick on the part of you young villains!" fumed Mr. Selby. "You will present yourselves in Dr. Holmes' study to-morrow after breakfast! We will thrash this matter out!"

"All right, sir!" growled Blake, still suspicious.

Shortly after brekker next morning we—the Terrible Three—made straight for the Head's study, where Selby and his Watch already were.

We had realised from the beginning that the wheeze must wind up with a licking, and we didn't for a moment intend to let it fall upon the shoulders of Blake & Co.

We entered the study at a very critical moment.

"Good-morning, sir!"

This from Montague. The Head did not return his greeting.

"Do you know anything about this matter, Lowther?" he demanded, glancing rather sharply at Monty.

"Yes, sir," he answered meekly. "It's all a mistake. 'It was I—ahem!—who rang up Mr. Selby on the telephone.'"

"Oh!" There was something rather grim

and foreboding about that "Oh!" "And why did you ring up Mr. Selby, Lowther?"

"You see, sir, D'Arcy came into our study yesterday, and threatened to give us a fearful thrashing all round. And then, sir," he went on quickly, the Head's look not being very encouraging at this seeming irrelevancy, "on the 'phone I told Mr. Selby that we had had the warning. I said nothing that wasn't strictly true, sir."

Mr. Selby looked quite ferocious.

"You young li—!" He changed a strong expression into a splutter. "You—if you it was—said that Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom were already at the station!"

"Not at all. I said they were here. I was speaking from here."

Mr. Selby choked.

We rather expected the Head to place a handkerchief before his face to hide a smile.

He didn't. Very carefully he selected a cane, and issued a request that Lowther might hold out his hand. This request he repeated five times in number, and then turned to Manners and me.

The Selby Watch got off lightly with lines.

But it hadn't been a bad sort of jape, and we bore no one any ill-will. Indeed, we wished Mr. Selby "Good-day!" in the quad shortly afterwards, but he did not reciprocate.

The Selby Watch also were a little disagreeable at first, but after a scrap or two pax was made, and we've lived happily ever since!

THE END.

—:o:—

JUST LIKE GRUNDY!

By Monty Lowther.

THE St. Jim's Cadets were on parade, and very smart they looked, too, despite the fact that I wasn't parading. I had sprained my ankle, and was on sick leave in consequence.

Mr. Railton was away, and Kildare had been left in charge for the time being. He had fallen the company in in column of sections, if you know what that means. I don't suppose you do, so I'll explain. It simply means that the sections had fallen in one behind the other, the distance between them being equal to their own frontage in line. Grundy was in command of the leading section, and was bawling at the men in the approved Grundonian style.

"Now, then, D'Arcy minor, stop that talking, can't you?"

"Look here, young Manners—"

"Stop it!"

Just then the Head strode on to the ground.

"Just a minute, Kildare," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you be good enough to come to my study?"

"Certainly, sir. I'll just give a few instructions first, if you don't mind. Shall you want me long?"

"Oh, no; only a few minutes. You are at liberty to give your instructions."

Kildare turned and looked for Talbot, who is the platoon sergeant. But Talbot was apparently numbered among the absentees.

"Grundy!" said Kildare.

George Alfred beamed. He thought he was going to be asked to take command.

"Get a list of the absentees while I'm away, will you? Call the parade to attention first."

And Kildare followed the Head from the ground.

Grundy strutted out importantly.

"Parade!" he bawled. "Parade—shun!"

Everyone sprang to the regulation position.

"Stop that talking, D'Arcy major!"

"Weally, Gwunday, I was—"

"Yes, I know you were, and you'd better shut up!"

Jack Blake gave his chum a friendly dig in the ribs.

"Ahem! Kildare has asked me to get a list of the absentees—"

"Go hon!" said someone.

"Any more talking, and you'll all stay another half-hour!" bawled Grundy.

"Stop that talking, Kerruish!" said Blake sternly. "You're annoying Corporal Grundy."

"Now, I want all the absentees. Fall out, the absentees!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Just then Kildare came back, and order was restored. He got the list himself.

Grundy has never been able to see the joke, though. Do you?

CARDEW'S BET!

By SIDNEY CLIVE.

CARDEW, Levison, and I were sitting in our study in the Fourth Form passage, when suddenly a yell of laughter awoke the echoes, and caused me to look up in surprise. Levison did the same.

Cardew was reading the current issue of "Chuckles"; Levison was doing his prep, and I was busy making sketches of Lathom, from various points of view. I rather fancy myself as a caricaturist.

Evidently "Chuckles" had caused Cardew's sudden spasm of mirth.

"Well," I said, "what is it?"

"Eh?" he said, as if only half hearing.

"Wherefore that cackle?"

"Something funny?" asked Levison curiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Speak, or we'll jolly well ram your silly fat head against the wall and knock some sense into it!" I bawled.

"Oh," he drawled leisurely, "somethin' here."

"Go hon!"

"Yaas. I'm goin' to see Racke."

"Oh, you're going to see Racke?" said Levison.

"Yaas."

And with that he walked out of the study.

Cardew is a very queer card, and sometimes we can hardly understand him. He is really a white man, though at times anyone who didn't know him well might have serious doubts. Luckily, we know him.

Levison looked at me, and I looked at him.

"Well?" said he.

"Well?" I replied, somewhat lamely.

"Looks as if Cardew has something up his sleeve," he added.

"I suppose so," I said thoughtfully.

"You never know what that ass will do next."

"Hand me that copy of 'Chuckles,' old man."

"He's taken it with him."

"Oh!"

We gave it up as a puzzle. Cardew is a bit of a puzzle at times.

Meanwhile, Cardew strolled along the passage towards Racke's study. Racke is by no means a favourite at St. Jim's. For many reasons he is decidedly unpopular, and he deserves it. As a general rule Cardew does not pine for the society of "the festive Aubrey," as he sarcastically calls him.

Now, however, he seemed desirous of his company.

"Come in!" bawled Racke, in response to Cardew's knock.

Cardew entered.

"Well?" growled Racke.

"Howdodo, Racke?" said Cardew, smiling sweetly.

"What do you want?"

"Only your ever-pleasant society, old bean!"

"Oh, get out! Do you think I don't know you're rottin'?"

"Really I am not," protested Cardew.

"Oh, rats! What do you want, anyway?"

"Have you got a copy of the 'Pink Un' to spare?"

"What do you want a copy of the 'Pink Un' for? Fishin'?"

"No, I'm not fishin', deah boy. I know you have a copy, so that would really be a waste of time."

Aubrey Racke looked at him suspiciously.

"Well, what do you want with it? Takin' up bettin' again?"

"Well, y'know, a fellah must do somethin'," drawled Cardew.

"Oh, rather!" grinned Racke. He was pleased to welcome Cardew back again among the blades.

"I'm willin' for a little flutter," said Racke. "But there's nothin' to bet on; no races just now."

"Tell you what," said Cardew, as if a new idea had struck him. "I'll bet you a fiver that I get Crooke's coat, vest, and shirt off in the Common-room in under a quarter of an hour."

Again Racke looked at him.

"You've got something up your sleeve," he said sharply.

"My dear man, how on earth can I have? I haven't seen Crooke all the afternoon; he's been out, as you know."

"I suppose you'll lick him until he takes it off?" sneered Racke.

"Rats!" replied Cardew serenely. "I'll get

Clive to hold the stakes, and he's the only one to be told."

"Good! I'll take you on, then," replied Racke, grinning. "Get Clive."

Cardew came back to our study and fetched me.

"Well," I inquired, when I arrived, "what's up?"

"We want you to hold the stakes," explained Cardew. "I've bet Racke a fiver that I'll get Crooke's coat, vest, and shirt off him in the Common-room in under a quarter of an hour."

"Eh?" I gasped in astonishment.

"That's it, and we want you to hold the stakes," added Racke.

"You ass!" I said hotly. "Do you expect me to take part in your rotten gambling?"

"For the sake of fair play, old bean. Besides, it's not like a wicked horse-race, y'know."

After a good deal of persuasion I gave in, and consented to hold the two fivers.

"Racke must stay in his study all the time. Can't risk havin' him tell Crooke what's in the wind," said Cardew.

"You seem jolly certain of winnin'!" snarled Racke. "It's none so easy a job to get a fellow to take off his coat and things in the Common-room."

Cardew merely grinned.

We left No. 7, and locked Racke in.

"Hi!" he called through the keyhole, as we were leaving the passage.

"Hallo! There's the dear Aubrey's delightful voice! Let us hearken, Clive, deah boy."

We stepped back.

"Don't forget the terms, Clive. A quarter of an hour after he first sees Crooke in the Common-room!" Racke bawled.

"All right!" I grunted. "Keep your silly wool on!"

I wasn't keen on the bizney. Bets aren't in my line. But Racke might have known I should see fair play.

"Dear Aubrey will lose his fiver, I fear," sighed Cardew.

"Why are you so dead sure of winning?" I asked.

"Oh, never mind, old scout! You'll see later."

In silence we entered the Common-room.

"There's Crooke!" I said.

Crooke was lounging in an armchair, talking to Mellish.

"Hallo, Merry!" called Cardew cheerily.

"Hallo!"

Cardew made such a noise with his "Hallo!" that everyone looked round at him.

"I say, Clive," he drawled, "fancy a chap at a public school like St. Jim's havin' a tattooed chest!"

I stared at him.

"Rotten, ain't it? Like any low sailorman."

I thought it about time Cardew got to the point, and looked significantly at my watch.

"Bai Jove, deah boy! Do you weally mean to say there is a fellah heah with a tattooed chest?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in astonishment.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask Crooke!" he said.

Everyone looked astonished, and everyone looked at Crooke.

No one was more astonished than Crooke himself.

"Of course, he never strips for ducker in our presence," explained Cardew, "so no one sees it."

"Bai Jove! Cwooke, is that true?"

"No, you dummy!" howled Crooke.

"Weally, Cwooke, you might at least be civil!"

"That rotter's makin' it up!" shrieked the indignant Crooke.

"Own up!" said Cardew gravely.

"It's a rotten lie!" shouted Crooke wrathfully.

"Oh, Crooke!"

"I am surprised at you, Crooke!"

"Sure, an' I never thought it av ye entirely!"

Shell and Fourth alike joined in the chorus.

"You—you rotters!"

"I bet you a quid you have!" said Cardew.

"You ass, I tell you I haven't!"

"Prove it, then! That's all I ask. An' win a quid by provin' it," said Cardew, in an off-hand way.

"Yaas, wathah! You've only got to pwoove it, Cwooke!"

"You must strip to the waist, y'know," said Cardew.

Crooke brightened up. He knew he had no tattoo-marks on his chest, and he was surprised that Cardew should feel so certain. Stripping to the waist in the Common-room was rather an unusual proceeding, but there was nothing in it to mind particularly. And it was a dead-easy way to earn a quid.

For a brief second he hesitated. Then his mind was made up.

"Right-ho!" he said. "If you're idiot enough to throw away a quid it's not my funeral. I think you're a silly ass, all the same!"

Everyone was interested, but I was the only one who could really enjoy the joke.

Crooke was leisurely in his undressing, but he was stripped well within the allotted time.

"Well?" he sneered, showing a chest that certainly had no tattoo-marks on it.

Cardew made no reply. He merely grinned, and handed Crooke a "Bradbury." Then he turned to me, and said:

"Racke's down a fiver on this, I rather fancy, Clive, old top!"

"Just a sec, you fellows," I said. "Let me explain this wangle."

"Bai Jove! It wants some explainin', weally!"

"Now, then, Clive!"

"Well, Cardew bet Racke a fiver that he'd have Crooke stripped to the waist in the Common-room in under fifteen minutes, and, as you all see, he's done it!"

"My hat! The deep beggar!"

"Crumbs, the boulder!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head wisely.

"I weally don't know that I can allow it, deah boys. You see—"

"Scat!" replied Cardew rudely.

"You're all witnesses to the fact that Cardew had Crooke stripped to the waist in under fifteen minutes!" I said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes!"

Everyone agreed.

"No wonder you could afford a quid!" sneered Crooke.

"Run up and let Racke out, Levison, will you?" I asked.

"Levison brought down Racke."

"Well?" sneered that worthy.

"You've lost," I said. And I explained how he had lost.

Then I handed the two fivers to Cardew. The things Racke said would scoreh the paper if any attempt were made to print them.

We didn't give away the fact that Cardew had cribbed the wheeze out of "Chuckles." Only Levison and I knew that. The other chaps thought Cardew no end brainy to have thought it out. But some of them didn't much fancy the betting bizney in the Common-room.

Well, Cardew has ways of his own. But, as I said before, he's really a white man.

THE END.

NOTICES.

CRICKET.

Matches Wanted, Etc.

MONTROSE ATHLETIC wants home and away matches—16.—J. Garbutt, 206, Kennington Park Road, S.E. 11.

GROVE C.C. wants matches for August—16—6 miles.—H. Edwards, 6, Eden Road, Waltham-stow, E. 17.

E. Tomlin, 17, Mimosa Street, Fulham, S.W. 6, wants four players—13-14.

G. Salmon, 94, Roscher Street, Stratford, E. 15, wants to join a club—15—near Stratford.

Leslie Bouldstridge, 89, Kelvin Road, London, N. 5, wants to join a club near Islington—16—Saturday afternoons only.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED BY—

Miss F. Wall, 30, Lorne Avenue, Montreal, Canada. — "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "Hero of the Hour," "Catching the Cracksman." Double price offered.

A. Thompson, 20, Altofts Terrace, Beeston Hill, Leeds.—"Nelson Lee Library," "Circle of Terror." Also MAGNETS, 400-450. Write stating price.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 86.—Mr. BENJAMIN TODD.

LAST week Coker's Aunt Judy was dealt with. And Aunt Judy, naturally, reminded one of the Todds' Uncle Benjy. The Gallery would be as incomplete without him as without her. The people at home count for a good deal, though they may not appear often in the stories. There are Harry Wharton's uncle and aunt, and Johnny Bull's uncle and aunt, and the father and mother of Frank and Dicky Nugent, and Rob Cherry's gallant sire, and Mark Linley's folk, and Dick Russell's father, and Mauly's uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke—we have met them all; and more besides. But I doubt whether we have heard quite as much about any of them as we have about Uncle Benjy.

He is so very often quoted by Alonzo, you see. Peter, one fears, regards him with distinctly less reverence than does Alonzo. To Peter he is a decent old buffer—not half a bad sort. To Alonzo he is more like an inspired prophet.

"My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted!" says Alonzo.

"Blow Uncle Benjy! Fry Uncle Benjy!" says Peter.

Possibly, Uncle Benjamin is not quite so easily shocked or disgusted as Alonzo imagines. Possibly, Uncle Benjamin realises that all boys are not absolute George Washingtons; that all boys are not the very pink of politeness; that guile lurks in some boys' minds; that bullying is not unknown at schools; and that you really cannot expect every fellow to be an Alonzo Todd. It is saying nothing against Alonzo—who is really one of the best in his own way—to suggest that it might not be quite a good thing if every fellow were.

The picture of Uncle Benjamin which hangs in Alonzo's mind, so to speak, is not a strikingly accurate portrait. We discovered that when uncle came to Greyfriars on a visit.

Alonzo told some of the others that they might have heard him speak of his Uncle Benjamin. They had!

Alonzo brought Mr. Todd along to Study No. 1 when he turned up. Peter was not then at Greyfriars. Uncle Benjamin proved to be a little fat old gentleman, with an excessively red and jolly face, and beaming eyes that were very like his nephew's. The Famous Five made him welcome. They had not exactly wanted him, but it was only decent to be civil to him. Uncle Benjamin had a notion that his nephew Alonzo was a bold, daring young rascal. The Famous Five hadn't any such notion; but they were too polite to contradict Mr. Todd. Uncle Benjamin promised them that they should see him run and box and play cricket.

Well, Uncle Benjy did run and box and play cricket—after a fashion. It cannot be said that Greyfriars learned anything from him in any of those branches of sport. At cricket he damaged Bunter and Tom Brown, and the rest did not appear to have any zest for facing his deadly bowling. He was bowled first ball by Inky, and in playing at his second ball smashed a stump in halves. He had the gloves on with Harry Wharton, and Uncle Benjy and Alonzo were alike greatly pleased with the show uncle put up. No one else admired it immensely, though all found it funny. He ran better than he played cricket or boxed; but he was helped by a bull to display his running powers. He took Mr. Quelch's place as master of the Remove, but it cannot be said that the Remove learned much from him. Uncle Benjy may have been a good Latinist in his youth; but, if so, he must also be set down as a good forgetter. There are fellows in the Remove who don't know a lot of Latin; but it is doubtful whether even Bunter knows less than Mr. Benjamin Todd.

Then Uncle Benjamin went. But he soon came back. A cruel blow from Bulstrode knocked out poor Lonzy completely, and he had to be taken to the sanatorium in real danger. Bulstrode would have been sacked for a certainty had not both Alonzo and Uncle Benjamin begged mercy for him. Uncle stayed at Greyfriars until Alonzo was fit to be taken away; and before he went he stood a first-class feed to the whole Form. That he went with the blessings of the Remove, and with the reputation of being a really good sort, though nearly as big a duffer as Lonzy, hardly needs to be said.

When Uncle Benjamin visited Greyfriars again Peter Todd had joined Alonzo there. Now, Uncle Benjamin is much more Alonzo's

uncle than he is Peter's, that is plain. There is the same degree of relationship in each case, of course; but Alonzo is very much more after uncle's heart than the japing Peter, with his shrewdness and his sarcasm and his capability. There is nothing of the duffer about Peter Todd.

Uncle Benjamin was going to Switzerland, and he had planned to take either Lonzy or Peter with him. He had not made up his mind which it should be.

Peter helped him to make it up. Peter would have liked no end to go to Switzerland, and could have put up with Uncle Benjy as a travelling-companion, though he would not have appreciated his company as Alonzo was sure to do. But Peter knew that Lonzo badly needed that holiday, and he meant to make sure that his cousin got it.

He went to work in ways quite his own. Peter Todd is somewhere near the limit in cool audacity when he chooses to jape. He decorated the study for uncle's coming; but the decorations did not please uncle. In addition to being very painty and whitewashy, the study was adorned with a gross caricature of uncle, with a bottle labelled "Whisky" sticking out of his pocket. Both nephews got into uncle's black books for that, and Alonzo took refuge in a water-butt from the devastating



wrath of uncle. Peter did not. Peter proceeded to dress himself up in uncle's evening-clothes, and to sing at an entertainment in the Rag a song having evident reference to his uncle's supposed—but quite imaginary—drinking habits. Uncle whacked Peter for that, and one cannot deny that Peter deserved the whacking. There were other things—among them a trick with the electric bell in uncle's dressing-room, and sticky stuff in uncle's slippers, and golf in the dormitory with uncle's golf balls and clubs, with resultant damage to lots of things. Peter really seemed to have gone mad. But there was method in his madness, as the other fellows learned later. For dear old uncle was so furious with Peter that he was almost tempted to renounce him altogether. Peter did not go mad, but he did not go to Switzerland with uncle. Alonzo went.

And then Peter had to go and fetch his uncle and cousin back. They got hung up in Switzerland owing to the outbreak of war, and Peter was in great trouble about it. He went without leave, and the Bounder went with him. Colonel Wharton happened to visit Greyfriars, and he took Harry along with him to the Continent when he departed. Peter and the Bounder saw something of the Great War, if only on its fringes. They saw things that, as long as they live, they will never forget. Then they joined up with Wharton, when all were in danger of their lives; and eventually they found Uncle Benjamin and Alonzo, and got them safely away.

It need hardly be said that uncle forgave his erring nephew after that. Perhaps the trip to Switzerland failed to do Alonzo quite as much good as Peter had hoped; but that was not his fault, nor the fault of that good old buffer, Uncle Benjamin!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"COKER'S CAMPAIGN!"

By Frank Richards.

This week's story is very much on the serious side, though it has its lighter interludes. Next week's is of quite a different type. The very name of Coker in the title will suggest that. When the great Horace takes the centre of the stage, it is almost invariably in a roaring farce—though the great Horace does not realise that fact. Coker playing Hamlet would be funnier than George Robey or Wilkie Bard; but Coker would never guess it—his comparison would be with Irving, or Garrick, or any present-day great actor who plays Hamlet. I don't happen to know of one, so I cannot name him.

In fact, Coker rather wants to play Hamlet at Greyfriars—if one is justified in looking upon the captain of the school as the chief character in the school drama. He is not to us, of course. Harry Wharton or Billy Bunter matters more to the stories than George Wingate. But to Greyfriars Wingate is the more important.

Coker would like to be captain. He has had a trial in that role, and has proven himself incapable of filling it satisfactorily—which is a very mild way of indicating that he made a complete mess of it. He would be glad to try again. As that is out of the question, he starts a campaign against Wingate. He will not acknowledge the skipper's authority. And he tells Wingate so most plainly. There is no double-dealing about Coker.

What comes of it you will read next week.

LIST OF GREYFRIARS STORIES IN "THE MAGNET" (continued).

- 501.—"Judge Jeffreys."
- 502.—"Getting Out of Hand."
- 503.—"The Greyfriars Inquisition."
- 504.—"The Barring-Out at Greyfriars."
- 505.—"Victory!"
- 506.—"Rivals of the Chase."
- 507.—"Ponsonby's Pal."
- 508.—"Coker the Rebel."
- 509.—"A Gentleman Ranker."
- 510.—"An Old Boy at Greyfriars."
- 511.—"Saving the Bounder."
- 512.—"The Missing Skipper."
- 513.—"The Greyfriars Christmas-Party."
- 514.—"Four From the East."
- 515.—"Flap's Brother."
- 516.—"Looking After Inky."
- 517.—"In Another's Place."
- 518.—"Clavering of the Remove."
- 519.—"The Whip-Hand."
- 520.—"A Very Gallant Gentleman."
- 521.—"Danger Ahead!"
- 522.—"Tom Redwing's Resolve."
- 523.—"Hunting for Treasure."
- 524.—"Loyal Sir Jimmy."
- 525.—"Skinner the Spy."
- 526.—"Bunter's Latest."
- 527.—"A Bird of Passage."
- 528.—"Coker the Joker."
- 529.—"The Fighting Fifth."
- 530.—"Tom Redwing's Chance."
- 531.—"Tom Redwing—Hero!"
- 532.—"Bunter to the Rescue."
- 533.—"Tom Redwing's Win."
- 534.—"Saved From Shame."
- 535.—"A Soldier's Son."
- 536.—"The Man From the Somme."
- 537.—"His Father's Son."
- 538.—"Billy Bunter's Birthright."
- 539.—"Bolsover's Way."
- 540.—"Napoleon of Greyfriars."
- 541.—"William the Good!"
- 542.—"Bolsover's Enemy."
- 543.—"Tom Redwing's Father."
- 544.—"William the Warlike."
- 545.—"The Shylock of the Second."
- 546.—"Angel of the Fourth."
- 547.—"Kicking Over the Traces."
- 548.—"Sir Jimmy's Enemy."
- 549.—"The Second Form Mystery."

Your Editor