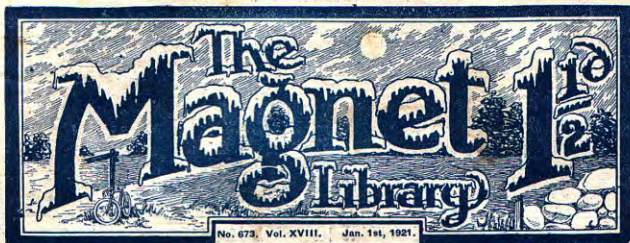


"BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY"!

GRAND SUPPLEMENT IN THIS ISSUE!



PORTRAIT OF THE EDITOR OF OUR SUPPLEMENT!

("BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY" is the funniest thing you've ever read!)



PONSONBY'S VICTIM!

BY

Frank Richards.

A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of
Harry Wharton & Co.
and Vernon-Smith, of
:: Greyfriars. ::

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sinclair from the Shoulder!

"SMITHY! Smithy, old top! I want a word with you!" Vernon-Smith, of the Greyfriars Remove, stamped short in his stride. Coming towards him, across the village street, was Cecil Ponsonby, the leader of the Highcliffe "nuts."

The Bounder—to give him the name by which he had been known in the early days—did not look best pleased at seeing Ponsonby. Time was when he and Pon had been as thick as thieves, but their ways had parted, long since, and Vernon-Smith had very little in common with the black sheep of Highcliffe.

"I'm pressed for time," said the Bounder, rather civilly. "For matter, start in half an hour."

Ponsonby nodded. "It's about the time that I want to speak to you," he said. "We'll walk on towards Greyfriars, if you like, and then you'll lose no time."

They walked on together, Ponsonby starting a keen glance at his companion.

There was a marked contrast between the two juniors.

Vernon-Smith's cheeks glowed with health; Ponsonby's features were sallow and ill-favoured.

The Bounder was looking forward eagerly to the football match that was about to take place between the Greyfriars Remove and the Highcliffe Junior Eleven.

It was a most important test than most, being the final for the Keith Junior Shield. The fixture had already been played at Highcliffe, and the match ending all square, it now had to be played at Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith was one of the "stars" of the Remove forward line, and he was looked on with great trim.

"Didn't know you were at all interested in the match," he remarked to Ponsonby. "Poker's more in your line than football."

matches. But I happen to have more than a passing interest in the present fixture. You see, I've a great deal at stake."

Vernon-Smith's lip curled contemptuously.

"You've been betting on the result?" he asked.

"Yes. Just a friendly wager, you know."

"Who with?"

"Percy Carfax. You know him?"

"Only by sight. And that's quite enough for me."

Percy Carfax was the celebrated son of a prominent landowner in the district. He was an over-dressed, dandy-looking fellow, and varied with the same brush as Ponsonby. Indeed, he and Pon had been getting very thick of late.

"Percy's one of the best," said Ponsonby. "A regular man-about-town, and he knows his way about, too. There's no flims on Percy. I ran into him this morning, and he wagered me a fiveer that Greyfriars would win the match!"

"And you clinched with it?"

"Of course!"

"Then you look like being unlucky!"

"What if you mean?"

"I mean that we're going to win!"

Ponsonby caught his companion by the arm.

"I want to make you a sporting proposition, Smithy," he said.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. He thought he could guess what was coming.

"You're one of the best men on your side," Ponsonby went on, "and without you the Remove would be all at sea."

"Well?"

"Wharton and the others are counting on you to do great things. And if you were to play below form, the odds are that the Remove would be licked."

The Bounder's eyes blazed with anger, but he kept himself under control.

"Are you suggesting that I should play below my usual standard?" he asked, with ominous quietness.

"No, dear boy. What I'm suggesting is that you don't play at all!"

Vernon-Smith fairly gasped.

"It's easily done," continued Ponsonby.

sonby. "All you've got to do is to affect a limp as soon as you get back to Greyfriars, and say that you've met with an accident. You've twisted your ankle, or something of that sort. See?"

"And then—"

"Wharton will have to play a reserve in your place. And however good that reserve might be, he won't be nearly up to your weight. Therefore, the Greyfriars team will be badly handicapped, and it'll be quite on the cards that they'll lose."

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands tightly. He knew Ponsonby for a bad and a rank outsider, yet he had not dreamed that even Pon would make such an audacious proposal.

"Of course, it's rather a big thing to ask you, because I can see that you're dead keen on playin'," said the Highcliffe junior. "But I'm not going to be mean enough to expect you to do it for us. What do you say, Smithy?"

What Vernon-Smith said was not expressed in words.

The Bounder could restrain himself no longer. Turning swiftly, he dashed his clenched fist full into Ponsonby's face.

It was a terrific drive, straight from the shoulder.

Ponsonby toppled backwards, and rolled over in the roadway.

"There's my answer!" panted the Bounder.

Pon lay in a dazed state—partly because of the blow, and partly because of the unexpectedness of it.

He had felt quite confident that the Bounder would fall in with his wishes, and he had congratulated himself that he had avoided the suggestion very tactfully. He would not have dared to put such a proposal before a fellow like Harry Wharton, or Bob Cherry, but he had regarded Vernon-Smith as a less scrupulous fellow. And it all, he reflected, hadn't the Bounder often fallen in with suggestions of this sort in the old days?

For a brief instant Vernon-Smith stood looking down at his victim. His face was pale with passion.

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"If it wasn't for the fact that I happen to be in a hurry," he said, "I'd give you the licking of your life! As it is, you can congratulate yourself that you've got off jolly lightly!"

So saying, the Bounder turned on his heel, and strode away along the frosty road.

He walked quickly, for he knew that time was precious now. The Highcliffe eleven would already be at Greyfriars, and an eager crowd of partisans would be gathered round the ropes.

By the time he had proceeded half a mile he had banished Ponsombly from his mind.

Then, chancing to look back over his shoulder, he saw a party of six cyclists bearing down upon him.

Gadsby, of Highcliffe was the leader, and Ponsombly rode on the step behind him. The other cyclists were Monson, Merton, Drury, and Vavasseur—all cronies of Ponsombly's.

Vernon-Smith looked in dismay. He could guess what had happened. Ponsombly had summoned his schoolfellows to his aid, and they meant to overtake the Greyfriars junior, and make things warm for him.

The Bounder darted a swift glance up and down the road; but, apart from the cyclists, he saw no one.

It was a critical situation. Unless help arrived, Vernon-Smith would fall into the hands of the Philistines. And they were not likely to deal leniently with him. It was more than probable that they would seek to prevent him from playing in the all-important match.

"Got him!" pointed Gadsby, as he dismounted.

"Yes, rather!"

"Collar him!" snarled Ponsombly.

The odds were six to one against him, but the Bounder did not falter.

He could not have run away, even if he had wished to do so, for the enemy surrounded him. But he resolved to put up the best fight he knew, and to do his utmost to win his freedom.

Quick as lightning, he divested himself of his coat, and threw it on to the bank. Then he assumed a fighting attitude.

"It's no use asking you to come on one at a time!" he said. "One doesn't expect fair play from a set of low-down rascals. You can come on all together; I'm quite ready for you!"

Ponsombly and Gadsby were the first to hurl themselves at the Bounder. And their action had the same effect as if they had hurled themselves at a brick wall.

Ponsombly recoiled from a smashing straight left, and for the second time that afternoon he rolled over in the roadway. He was joined an instant later by Gadsby, and the air was filled with wild lamentations.

"Ow!"

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Gorrol! me chest!"

Vernon-Smith had got off the mark in great style. But he was seriously up against it now, for the other four hemmed him in, and an unfair blow from Monson caused him to reel. But he pulled himself together, and hit out right and left.

Monson went down, and so did Drury, but by this time Ponsombly and Gadsby had managed to sort themselves out, and they attacked the Bounder from the rear, like the cowards they were.

Vernon-Smith was hurled to the ground, and he seemed to get mixed up with the back wheel of Gadsby's bicycle. The Bounder was half-stunned, but with a great effort he contrived to scramble to his feet.

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Ponsombly & Co. had anticipated no great difficulty in capturing their quarry, but they found Vernon-Smith in no undomestic mood. He fought on gamely, though it seemed that he was merely staving off the inevitable.

"If only I can only hold out till help comes!"

That was the thought which flashed through the Bounder's brain.

But there was no sign of help yet. The roadway, save for the combatants, was deserted.

And then Vernon-Smith thought of the match, and of his chums who were waiting for him on the Greyfriars football ground.

He must not leave them in the lurch. He must not fail to put in an appearance. At all costs, he must assist the Remover to victory, or he would give Ponsombly the satisfaction of winning his wager.

The thought lent zest to the Bounder's blows. At that moment he seemed to be possessed of the strength of ten.

Right and left, left and right, his fists shot out, and the Highcliffe juniors, who individually were poor fighting men, went down like ninepins.

Presently the roadway was strewn with recumbent forms.

Three of the enemy were completely horsed about, and the other three were endeavoring to rise.

Vernon-Smith did not wait until they were on their feet. He made a grab at one of the bicycles, and was soon speeding away towards Greyfriars.

After a time his pace slackened, and he realised that he was in no fit condition for a strenuous football match. He seemed to be aching all over. His face, however, was only slightly damaged, and for this he felt grateful.

When he turned in at the gates of Greyfriars he found that the Goal was deserted. Everybody had migrated to the football field, apparently.

Leaving the bicycle in the shed, Vernon-Smith hurried into the building. He was obliged to spend ten minutes in one of the bath-rooms, and another ten in changing into football garb.

As he sat in his study, large his football boots, a muffled roar came to his ears.

"They've started!" he muttered.

His limbs were aching terribly. His head seemed to be on fire. He knew that he would not be able to do himself justice on the football field, and his feelings towards Ponsombly & Co. were anything but amiable.

Still, he would do his best. The Remover had set their hearts on winning the Kent Junior Shield, and Vernon-Smith was grimly determined to do his bit. And having garbed himself for the fray, he hurried away towards the football field.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

One Goal to Nil!

"WHERRY'S SMITHY!"

Harry Wharton had asked the question a dozen times, and each time his exasperation grew.

"He went down to the village for something," said Bob Cherry, "but the silly duffer ought to have been back ages ago!"

The rival teams were in the act of lining up—the Highcliffians cheerful and confident, the Greyfriars fellows wrathful and exasperated. They could not understand why Vernon-Smith had failed to turn up.

The referee—Mr. Larry Lancelot—glanced at his watch.

"Time's up!" he said. "I'm afraid we can't wait Vernon-Smith's pleasure."

"Better field a reserve in Smith's place, Harry," suggested Frank Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"We'll play ten men until he turns up," he said.

The ball was kicked off, and the Highcliffe forwards, ably led by Frank Courtenay, swept down the field in fine style.

The Greyfriars crowd roared on anxiously, for the feet-totaled Caterpillar, streaking along the wing, eluded Peter Todd and Johnny Bull in quick succession, and then lobbed the batter across to Courtenay, who fired in a terrific drive.

Balstrode, in the Greyfriars goal, made a valiant leap at the ball, and he just managed to tip it over the bar.

"Played, Balstrode!"

"Well saved, sir!"

This was the roar that Vernon-Smith heard while he was lacing his football boots in his study.

The Highcliffe forwards continued to press, but they found Balstrode very safe.

Presently Tom Brown relieved the situation by putting the ball well up the field, and then Greyfriars had a look in.

The forward line, however, was completely disorganised by the absence of the Bounder.

Harry Wharton, from force of habit, sent a pass out to the right wing, but there was no one there to receive it, and one of the Highcliffe defenders easily cleared.

Suddenly there was a shout from the crowd.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's Smithy!"

"Back up, old man!"

Vernon-Smith came sprinting on to the field of play.

"Any score yet?" he asked of Balstrode, as he passed the goal.

The goalie replied in the negative, and Vernon-Smith ran on, and reported himself to his skipper.

"Sorry I'm late, Wharton!" he panted. "But it couldn't be helped."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"What delayed you?" he demanded.

"I had a dust-up with some Highcliffe cads on the road."

But Wharton failed to hear the Bounder's explanation, for at that moment the ball came in his direction, and he darted towards it.

Vernon-Smith took up his position at outside-right, and several of the players glared at him as he did so. They considered it unpardonable cheek on the Bounder's part to turn up after the match had started.

For a long time play was confined to midfield, and then Bob Cherry, playing at right-half, sent Vernon-Smith away.

The crowd, who had had nothing to entertain over for some time, now let themselves go.

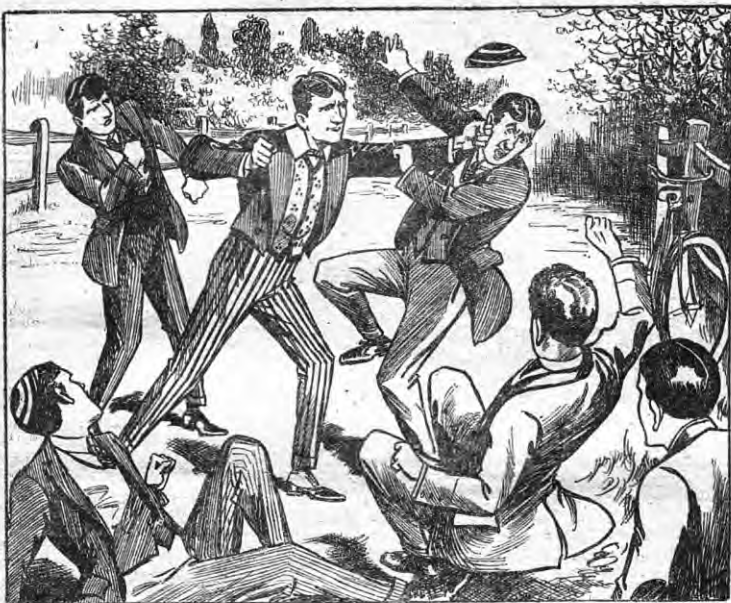
"Pile in, Smithy!"

"Run it through!"

To their dismay, however, they saw that Vernon-Smith's wonderful turn of speed was not in evidence.

"He's crawling along as if next week would do!" growled Holmover major from the touch-line. "What's the matter with the fellow?"

Vernon-Smith's speed had certainly suffered. His comparison with his usual pace, he was merely crawling along. One of the Highcliffe halves raced after him and dispossessed him of the ball,



Right and left, left and right Vernon-Smith's fists shot out, and the Highecliffe juniors, who individually were poor fighting men, went down like ninepins. Presently the roadway was strewn with recumbent forms. (See Chapter I.)

and the crowd groaned, while Harry Wharton bit his lip with annoyance. It was not like the Bounder, to allow himself to be robbed so easily.

A few moments later another pass came to Vernon-Smith, with precisely the same result. He was overhauled and relieved of the ball before he had taken it half a dozen yards.

Wharton had said nothing on the first occasion, for he wasn't the sort of skipper who believed in having a lot to say on the field of play. But now he could restrain himself no longer.

"Wake up, Smithy!" he exclaimed angrily. "You seem to think that we can take things easy, but let me assure you that we can't! We shall have to go all out if we want to win!"

Vernon-Smith scowled. He resented being "told off" in the hearing of the crowd. Besides, he was doing his best in the circumstances. Considering that his legs felt like leaden weights, and his head was singing, it was remarkable that he was able to play football at all!

After this Highecliffe set up a fierce bombardment. But they could not get the ball past Bulstrode, who was showing tip-top form in goal. Indeed, but for Bulstrode's display Greyfriars would have been behind at the interval.

When the whistle went for half-time Harry Wharton & Co. went up to Vernon-Smith, and told him, in blunt language what they thought of him.

"I've never seen you put up such a

putrid show, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "Why, man, you're too lazy to live! Pull yourself together next half, for goodness' sake!"

"You had a couple of lovely openings, and you muffed 'em both!" said Johnny Bull. "We shall never bag that blessed shield if you don't buck up!"

"Pile it on!" said the Bounder bitterly.

And his schoolfellows did. They gave him to understand that unless his play improved in the second half there would be trouble.

Immediately on the resumption of the game there was a dramatic sensation.

The slim, agile De Courcy—known to friends and foes alike as the Caterpillar—raced away on the Highecliffe left.

Bob Cherry saw the danger.

"Take the man, Toddy, and I'll take the ball!" he yelled out.

But, somehow, Bob and Peter Todd got in each other's way, and the Caterpillar darted between them, and made a bee-line for the goal.

About twelve yards out the Highecliffe junior paused, and steadied himself.

What followed came like a lightning flash across a summer sky.

Z-z-zip!

The ball travelled with amazing velocity into the net, Bulstrode having no chance whatever to save.

"Goal!"

The Greyfriars crowd, like the good

sportsmen they were, applauded the Caterpillar's fine solo effort. All the same, they were longing for their own players to draw level.

"Come along, you fellows!"

"Buck your ideas up!"

"You want two goals to win, remember!"

The Remove rallied desperately. They swarmed like bees round the Highecliffe goal, and Harry Wharton struck the up-right with a powerful drive.

Then Frank Nugent headed against the cross-bar when a goal seemed certain, and on the rebound the ball came to the feet of Vernon-Smith.

"Shoot, Smithy!"

And the spectators craned their heads forward with tense eagerness.

In the ordinary way the Bounder would have whipped the ball into the net before his opponents could say knife. But on this occasion he dabbled, and seemed utterly at a loss what to do. And one of the Highecliffe defenders loomed up, took the ball from Vernon-Smith's toes, and booted it clear.

The spectators were very angry now. They had tolerated Vernon-Smith's feeble display as long as they were able. But there was a limit to their patience, and they were no longer in the mood to make allowances.

There was an indignant roar from the touch-line.

"Call yourself a footballer, Smithy?"

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"You muffed an open goal!"

"You deserve to be chucked out of the team!"

"Yah!"

With pale face and gleaming eyes the Bounder strode across to that section of the crowd from which the most uncompromising remarks came.

"Look here, you cads!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "I'm doing my best, and—"

"Come away, Smith!" ordered Larry Lascelles curtly. "If you wish to have an altercation with the crowd kindly defer it until afterwards."

Vernon-Smith remained where he was, glaring at the fellows who had taunted him.

"Do you hear me, Smith?" rapped out the referee. "If you do not come away instantly I shall send you off the field!"

The Bounder wished to escape that crowning ignominy, so he turned his back on the crowd, and got on with the game.

He had been tired when the match started. He was thoroughly fagged out now. The scrap with Ponsouby & Co. on the highway had sapped all his energy. He knew that he was merely a passenger, and he knew, also, that Harry Wharton & Co. were thinking bitter thoughts concerning him.

Still Greyfriars continued to press. But there was a weak link in their armour. To all intents and purposes they had only four forwards.

Five minutes from the end and the score remained the same—one to nil in Highcliffe's favour. And then one of the visiting backs handled in the penalty area, and the Priars had a glorious opportunity to equalise the scores.

Bob Cherry took the kick, and he drove the ball towards the far corner of the net. But the goalie, by throwing himself full-length, brought off a wonderful save.

The hearts of the spectators had sunk in their boots by this time.

"It's all over, boy shouting!" said Bolsover major gloomily.

"I reckon Smithy will be nearly mobbed after the match!" said Skinner. "Seems as if he's been doing his best to let the Remove down."

With only a couple of minutes to go, Greyfriars had another gilt-edged chance of drawing level.

The Highcliffe goalie only partially stopped a stinging drive from Harry Wharton.

Vernon-Smith was standing almost on the goal line at the time, and all he had to do was to rush the leather into the net.

The Bounder made a big effort to get to the ball, but to everybody's dismay he stumbled, and fell at the crucial moment, and the Highcliffe goalie, recovering himself, pushed the ball clear.

That was the last chance that Greyfriars got. Shortly afterwards the final whistle rang out, with Highcliffe victorious by the only goal of the match.

As Vernon-Smith limped off the field with the others there was a heckle demonstration. Somebody started to hiss, and the sound was taken up on every side.

The Bounder clutched his hands, and for a moment it looked as if he would dash into the crowd, hitting out right and left. But he restrained himself, and passed on.

Harry Wharton & Co. accompanied him in grim silence. But their silence was more eloquent than words could have been.

Their feelings towards Vernon-Smith were angry and bitter. And they began to suspect that his feeble display on the

football-field had been more a matter of design than accident.

At that moment the Bounder was far and away the most unpopular fellow at Greyfriars!

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Billy Bunter's Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER, of the Remove, was busy. Moreover, he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

He was the only fellow in the whole of Greyfriars who had failed to put in an appearance on the football-ground.

The destination of the Kent Junior Shield was a matter of no moment, so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

As soon as the crowd had adjourned to the football-ground, Billy Bunter also adjourned—to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

"I'm sure I heard Nugent say that he was going to get in a special plum cake for after the match!" murmured the Owl of the Remove.

He crossed over to the cupboard, and opened it.

There, sure enough, was the plum cake in question. It was still warm, having not long emerged from Mrs. Mumble's oven.

Billy Bunter took the precaution of turning the key in the lock. Then he started operations on the cake.

Large though the cake was, it was small by comparison with Billy Bunter's appetite. In a matter of moments it was reduced to a mere handful of crumbs.

"Ripping!" he muttered. "I could do with another of these!"

He again explored the cupboard, but discovered nothing farther in the eating line, save a tin of sandwiches, which were long past the prime of life.

"I'll try Smithy's candy box!" mused the fatie junior. "He's generally got a good stock in!"

He let himself out, and darted a swift glance up and down the passage. But there was no one in sight.

A moment later Billy Bunter stood in Vernon-Smith's sumptuously-furnished study.

There were a number of delicacies in the cupboard, but they didn't remain there long. The hungry Owl of the Remove disposed of them in record time; and then he cast his eyes round the apartment, as if seeking fresh worlds to conquer.

On the Bounder's desk lay a letter. And Bunter, impelled by curiosity, picked it up.

The postmark on the letter was a local one, and the envelope had already been opened.

"Wonder who it's from?" murmured Bunter. "I'll soon see, anyhow."

He took out the half-sheet of note-paper, and unfolded it. Then he gave a start, and his little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

For the following message, written in printed capitals, greeted his gaze:

"GREYFRIARS MUST LOSE THIS AFTERNOON! IT'S UP TO YOU TO SEE THAT THEY LOSE! LET YOUR TEAM DOWN, AND IT WILL BE WELL WORTH YOUR WHILE! FAIL TO DO SO, AND THERE WILL BE TROUBLE!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Bunter. "Somebody's ordered Smithy to sell the match!"

There was no signature affixed to the

letter. But Vernon-Smith had apparently opened it, and noted its contents.

"Wonder if he's acted on this!" muttered Bunter.

He paused and listened.

Shouts of indignation came to his ears from the football-field.

"Call yourself a footballer, Smith?"

"You muffed an open goal!"

"You deserve to be chucked out of the team!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter quivered like a fat jelly-fish in his excitement.

Yes; there could be no doubt about it. Vernon-Smith was letting his side down!

Bunter had forgotten all about his tuck-hunting crusade now. He was wondering how he could turn his newly-found knowledge to good account.

For a long time he remained in deep thought, and in the Bounder's armchair. Then he rose to his feet, slipped the letter into his pocket, and made his way in the direction of the football-ground.

The Remove players were in the act of leaving the field when Billy Bunter arrived on the scene. The fat junior could tell, by their smiles and angry expressions, that they had lost the match—or, rather, that Vernon-Smith had lost it for them.

The Bounder walked apart from his fellows, and it was easy to see that he was in bad odour.

"I say, Smithy!" said Billy Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger under the Bounder's nose. "I want a word with you in private."

Vernon-Smith's reply was brief and emphatic.

"Scat!"

But Bunter declined to "scat." He looked him in the eye of the Bounder, and led him aside.

"Look here, Smithy," he said, "it'll pay you to be civil to me, you know!"

"Eh?"

"If you start being rude, I shall make things jolly unpleasant for you. You see, I happen to know all about it."

The Bounder stared blankly at Billy Bunter.

"What are you driving at, you fat chump?" he demanded.

"I know all about it," repeated Bunter impressively.

"All about what?"

"About your selling the match."

Vernon-Smith gave a jump.

"Wh-a-att?" he gasped.

They had dropped behind the others by this time, and Billy Bunter fumbled in his pocket and produced the letter which he had found on Vernon-Smith's desk.

"I've only to show this to Wharton," he said, "and you'll be fired out of the Remove team for good!"

Vernon-Smith stared at the letter in amazement. He had no difficulty in reading it, even at a distance, for the printed capitals stood out boldly.

"Where—where did you get that?" gasped the Bounder.

"I found it on your desk."

"When?"

"About half an hour ago."

"And you opened it, you fat worm?"

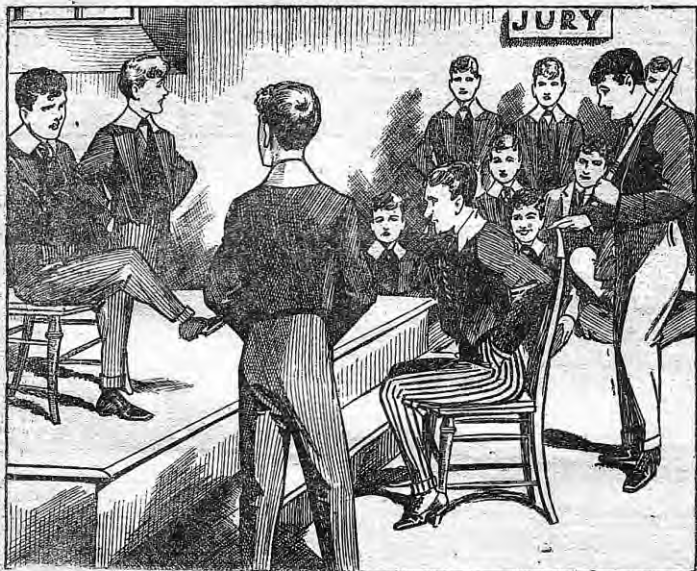
"Oh, really, Smithy! I'm not the sort of fellow to tamper with another chap's letters! Of course I didn't open it! It was already opened."

"This is the first time I've seen the thing," said Vernon-Smith. "Has it ever?"

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"No jolly fear!" he said. "You'd fear it up, and then there'd be no evidence to show that you sold the match!"

"I didn't sell the match, you drivelling fool! If you say that again, I'll pulverise you!"



The members of the jury trooped back again. There was a hush in the crowded court. "Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?" asked Mr. Justice Wharton. "Extremely guilty, my lord," replied Dick Russell. (See Chapter 4.)

Billy Bunter's eyes glittered angrily. "You'd better be careful!" he said. "One word in Wharton's ear, and—"

"Give me that letter!" "Certainly," replied Bunter, "on conditions!"

"What do you mean?" "I'll hand it over provided you make it worth my while."

"You—your blackmailing toad!" exclaimed the Bounder. And he strove to wrest the letter from Bunter's grasp.

"Help! Rescue, you fellows!" yelled the fat junior.

Harry Wharton & Co. spun round sharply. They saw that Vernon-Smith was holding Billy Bunter's wrist in a vice-like grip.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the trouble?"

"He's trying to get hold of this letter!" gasped Bunter. "Don't let him have it! He'll tear it up, and the evidence will be gone!"

"What evidence, you fat duffer!" asked Johnny Bull.

"The evidence that he sold the match!"

"My hat!" The next moment Harry Wharton was in possession of the letter. He glanced at it, and his face grew very grave.

"How did you come by this, Bunter?" he asked sternly.

"I found it in Smith's study. It was already opened, and I thought I'd better bring it along and show it to you fellows,

so that you'd know there was a traitor in the team!"

The juniors crowded round to read the letter. And there was a chorus of indignant exclamations.

"The cad!" "The awful rotter!"

"He acted on this letter!" "And sold the match!"

"Shame!" Vernon-Smith faced his accusers with flashing eyes.

"You are the cads!" he cried. "You've no right to jump to such conclusions! I haven't seen that letter until now!"

"But Bunter says it was already opened!" protested Frank Nugent.

"Bunter's a beastly little Ananias!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Harry Wharton opened the letter a second time.

"I don't know who wrote this," he said, "but it seems that you acted upon it, Smith. You played miles below form, and you made a hash of all your openings. Why, you could easily have scored a few minutes from the end! You had only to put your foot to the ball. Instead of which, you felt over—"

"Deliberately, of course!" chimed in Peter Todd.

"That's a lie!"

The Bounder's blood was up, and he glared round at the sea of scowling faces.

On only one face did he see any suggestion of sympathy. And that was the face of Mark Lanley, the Lancashire lad.

Mark could not bring himself to believe that Vernon-Smith would be base enough to sell the match. It was the sort of thing he might have done in the old days, when he was cunning and without scruple. But now? No; surely the Bounder would never dream of such a thing!

"This is a serious business, you fellows," said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"If Smith has sold the match, as we believe, then it's up to the Form to see that he's punished."

"Yes, rather!"

"He shall have a fair trial," Wharton went on. "We'll give him every opportunity of defending himself."

"Thanks!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

And he strode on, with his hands in his pockets.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "I think Smith ought to be kicked out of the team, and a really first-class player chosen in his place—myself, frinstance!"

But the juniors were too excited to pay any heed to Bunter.

It was arranged that Vernon-Smith should be tried by jury that evening, in the junior common-room, on a charge of selling the match; and that if he failed to clear himself of that charge, he should be punished at the hands of the Form.

And the Remove, who felt very sore on the subject of the lost match, was not likely to err on the side of mercy!

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Verdict!

BOOM! The first stroke of eight sounded from the old clock-tower.

The junior common-room at Greyfriars presented an impressive appearance.

On the raised platform at one end of the room sat Harry Wharton, who was to try the case. Close at hand sat several youthful barristers.

The members of the grand jury were ranged in a row in front of the fire, roasting chestnuts, and waiting for "Mr. Justice Wharton" to set the ball rolling.

Tom Brown, the special representative of "The Greyfriars Herald," was nibbling his pencil, and, like the juryman, waiting impatiently for the proceedings to begin.

There was no "dock," but a space had been cleared in the centre of the room, and a chair had been put there to accommodate the prisoner—when he arrived. So far, there was no sign of Vernon-Smith.

Although these arrangements seemed somewhat farcical, the members were in deadly earnest. They considered that Vernon-Smith had acted abominably, and they were bent upon bringing him to justice.

Harry Wharton glanced round the crowded "court."

"Where's the prisoner?" he demanded. "In his study, I expect," said Johnny Bull, who had been appointed court constable. "Shall I go and dig him out?"

The judge nodded. "Better take Penfold with you, in case there's any resistance on Smith's part," he said.

Johnny Bull and Dick Penfold hurried away. They went along to Vernon-Smith's study, and found the Bouncer resting on the couch after his strenuous experiences.

"You're wanted in the common-room, Smith!" said Johnny Bull.

"Rats!" "I should advise you to come quietly," said Dick Penfold, in the language of the law.

"Get out! I'm too tired to be bothered by this sort of rot!"

Johnny Bull and Dick Penfold exchanged significant glances. Then they stepped towards the couch.

Vernon-Smith sprang to his feet.

"Stand back," he exclaimed, "or I'll be the worse for you!"

But the two juniors came on, and the next moment the Bouncer was fighting like a tiger.

His attack, however, was soon worn down, and Johnny Bull and Dick Penfold, panting from their exertions, each took one of Vernon-Smith's arms, and marched him away to the junior Common-room.

The Bouncer's appearance caused quite a sensation. His collar was torn, his tie was screaming loose, and his face was flushed and angry. But he offered no further resistance. He knew that it would be futile.

There was a babel of voices.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the rotter who sold the match!"

"I vote we punish him first and try him afterwards!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in the court!" roared Bolver major, the self-appointed court usher.

Vernon-Smith was dumped into the chair which had been placed in the centre of the room, and he sat glaring defiance at the judge.

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"I suppose you think this is a priceless joke, Wharton?" he snarled.

"I don't think anything of the sort," was his reply, "and neither will you by the time we've finished with you."

Mark Linley came towards the Bouncer and conversed with him in a low tone.

"Look here, Smithy," he began. "I don't believe you sold the match—"

"Then you'd better back up and change your opinion, or you'll find the whole Form against you!" said Vernon-Smith harshly.

"And what about the letter?" asked Mark Linley. "Goodness knows who sent it. I hadn't seen it until Bunter produced it."

Mark Linley asked a few more questions; and the crowd, stamping their feet with impatience, shouted to him to go back to his seat.

Then the proceedings began, and the members of the jury sat up and took notice.

Bob Cherry was the counsel for the prosecution.

"My lord and gentlemen," he began, bowing first to Harry Wharton and then to the jury, "we are here to try the prisoner on a very serious charge—that of letting his side down, and deliberately casing them to lose the match."

At this, a perfect howl of wrath arose.

"Shame!"

"Pulverise the rotter!"

"Make him run the gauntlet!"

"Give him a Form-licking!"

If all the suggestions of the crowd had been carried out, Vernon-Smith would have left the court on a stretcher.

"Silence!" shouted Bolver major.

"Give silence to the learned, silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The case for the prosecution, gentlemen," continued Bob Cherry, "is crisp, clear, and concise. A letter was found on prisoner's desk, commanding him to see that Greyfriars lost the match. Had prisoner played up like a Trojan, as he generally does, no notice would have been taken of that letter. But what did he do?"

"In the first place, he turned up late, and for all the value he was to his side he hadn't even turned up at all! From start to finish his play was positively pitiful!"

He was given several glorious openings, and he trusted the lot! What are we to deduce from that? Only one thing, gentlemen. It is as clear as daylight, even to the meanest intelligence—the speaker glanced towards Skinner and Bolver major—

that prisoner acted upon the instructions he received, and deliberately, and with malicious afterthought, let his side down. I propose, therefore, that he be sentenced to—"

There was an interruption from the judge.

"My learned friend is exceeding his duty. It is my place to sentence the prisoner, and I cannot do so unless the jury returns a verdict of 'Guilty.'"

"We'll do that right away, my lord!" said Dick Russell, who was foreman of the jury.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Half a jiffy!" said the learned judge.

"We must let the counsel for the defence have his say."

There was a hiss as Mark Linley rose in his place. But the Lancashire lad,

who was accustomed to hostile demonstrations, took no notice.

"My lord and gentlemen," he said quietly, "I submit that there isn't a tithe of evidence to show that prisoner sold the match. To begin with, he's no that sort of fellow. He'd never descend to a mean, caddish action of that description. It is true that he turned up late on the field; it is also true that he played far below form. But there was every excuse, every justification for this. On his way back from the village this afternoon, he met Ponsomby, who suggested to Smith that he should sell the match. Smith's answer to this caddish suggestion, gentlemen, was painfully emphatic. He hit out straight from the shoulder, and Ponsomby rolled in the gutter!"

Sensation in court.

"Prisoner then passed on," continued Mark Linley, "but before he got to Greyfriars he was overtaken by a party of Higheiffe cads, and he had all his work cut out to keep them at bay. When he got back to the school he was in no fit condition to play footer. Hence his feeble display."

Bob Cherry jumped to his feet.

"I suggest that my learned friend has been listening to fairy-tales!" he said. "If prisoner had been scrapping with a gang of Higheiffe fellows, his gate would be out of joint, or he'd have a black eye, or something of that sort. But look at him! Does it look as if he'd been scrapping?"

Unfortunately for the Bouncer, it didn't.

The judge turned to Mark Linley.

"Where did you get your information from?" he asked.

"From the prisoner, of course!"

Harry Wharton made a scornful gesture. It was evident that he regarded Vernon-Smith's story as a piece of fiction.

The case looked very black against the Bouncer. But the counsel for the defence was not finished yet.

"As for the letter which was found on prisoner's desk, gentlemen," he continued, "I am of the opinion that it was put in during the match by some enemy of Vernon-Smith's, who sought to get him into trouble."

A murmur of incredulity ran round the court.

"Oh, come off, Linley!"

"You're talking out of your hat!"

"As if anybody would be so stupid as to do that!"

Mark Linley faced his audience unflinchingly.

"Prisoner has given me his word of honour that he didn't see the anonymous letter until Bunter produced it, and I believe him. And now I come to another point, which absolutely disproves the idea that prisoner is guilty. Why possible motive could he have for selling the match? It isn't as if he were hired up, or driven to it by financial need. He gets more pocket-money than any other fellow in the Form, barring Lord Manglewrench. In selling the match he could only hope to make a few pounds, at most. And it wouldn't be worth while—the risk would be far too great. No, gentlemen, the prosecution has jumped, and I may say so, to the assassin and idiotic conclusion."

As I said before, there isn't a tittle of evidence—real evidence—to show that prisoner sold the match. And if you have a half-porth of common-sense between you, you will not hesitate to return a verdict of 'Not Guilty.'"

Mark Linley sat down.

Vernon-Smith shot him a grateful glance, but there was no living in the nature of applause. And Mark knew, in

(Continued on p. 9.)



BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY.

This jernal has no connexshun what-
ever with "Wharton's Weakly Weekly."

EDITED BY
William George Bunter.

No. 1.

Week Ending January 1st, 1921.



IN THE EDDITER'S
SANKTUM; or,
YOUR END TER SPEEKS!
By W. G. Bunter.

My dear Readers,—At last the grate day has dawned! At last a long-felt want has been supplied (as I always say after a good feed at the tuckshop), and "Billy Bunter's Weekly"—MY weekly—has appeared, to delight the hearts of thousands!

It was my intention to make a modest charge for each issue—a bob, or something like that—but the editor of the companion papers wouldn't here of it. "My dear Bunter," he said, "this is not to be a money-making stunt. Your paper will be priceless. It will be given away with the 'Magnet' Library, for nicks!"

With grate reluctance I had to bough my head to this decision, and, to cut a long story short, here we are!

Of course, this is not my last literary venture. I wuz run a jernal called the "Weakly Grub," but, for some reason or other, nobody would digest it! It had a sort of a two—my minor sammy and myself—and yet they say that jernalism is a paying game!

For some time I have been attached to the "Grefyfrars Herald" as sub-deputy-sub-editor. But Wharton had never about me to air my views. He has kept me in the background, and now he will pay the pennality, for I have no doubt that this write and clever little jernal of mine will sweep the "Herald" off the market! It serves Wharton rite for not knowing a good man when he saw wun!

You will doubtless wish to no, dear readers, the names of the brilliant and talented jernalists on my staff. They are as follows:

Editor	William George Bunter.
Sub-Editor	W. G. Bunter.
Sports Editor	Billy Bunter.
Fitting Editor	Bill Bunter.
Special Reporter	Bunter Major.
Office-Boy	The Owl of the Remove.
General Factotum	The Prince Porpus.

It will be noticed that I have written practically the hole of the 1st number, in order to give the paper a really good start off. On going to press, I discovered a couple of blank columns, so I about took of the 5th to fill them with his driven, Coker isn't a bad sort of fellow in his way, but he can't spell for tody!

In fewcher issues, other people will be given a look in. But I want to give the necessary ton to the 1st number by doing G myself.

Do not fail to rite and let me no, dear readers, what you think of my Weekly. And now I must finish, so I have konvident pressure on my space. (That least Bolver major is going on me!)

Yours Edditer and Chum,
BILLY BUNTER.

BUNTERISMS!

I have it on good orthority that Harry Wharton is in the sunny suffering from shock. The appearance of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" has larly boled him over! Verily, the "Grefyfrars Herald" will have to look to its fortia!

Our editor's office is No. 7 Study. Peter Todd, Aicemo, and Tom Bunter have maid objections. They say that the editor takes up too much room, which is ridiculous. As it is a slim fellow like me could get in the way!

When the proofs of this number arrived from the printers, I showed them to Quelchy, our respected Form-master, and asked him what he thort of my new venture. "There is wun grate drawback," Bunter," said he, "What's that, sir?" I inquired. And then Quelchy had the cheek to say that the spelling was all rong! Why, if I had to ask my readers to see how my spelling comes they could find in this issue, they'd be larly done!

Kiriously enuf, the printers all complained that there were a lot of spelling mistakes. "Shall I correct them, Master Bunter?" asked the foreman printer, wringing me up on the tellyfrane. "If you do," I replied, "I shall correct you—with a brick-slap!"

You jolly well leave my spelling alone! "Oh, all right!" growled the foreman. And I could here him nailing his teeth over the wires! Now that I am a real live editor, I mean to throw my wate about, and to interlopie sum much-needed reforms at Grefyfrars. In the 1st place, I shall advokate that the tuckshop be kept open day and nite, and that a sistem of credit be abont!

I shall also insist that the fellows should be fed according to there dimensions. That is to say, a skinny scarecrow like Toddly should be konv with one heling only, but a plump fellow like me should have at least 3-4-duzzens!

Yet another improvement I have in mind is the widening of all the kys. At present it is often very difficult to here what is being said in the various studies.

It's wonderful what a lot of indewense you can send when you're the editor of a grefyfraring orcan like this! "Billy Bunter's Weekly" may shape the destiny of the new world. Who knew?



EXTRAX FROM MY POST-BAGG.

By Billy Bunter.

WHARTON'S WILY WAYS.

"To the Editor,
"Billy Bunter's Weekly."
"Dear Porpus,—I have heard all about your new venture, and wish you luck with it. I've no doubt that your rag will be amusing—though not in the sense you intend it to be!"

"You seem to imagine that the 'Grefyfrars Herald' will now have to shut up shop. But let me assure you that you are right off the wicket! We do not regard your weekly as a serious rival, and we shall have no sleepless nights on account of it."

"By the way, would you mind sending us a presentation copy of your first number? We'd like to frame it as a curioity, and have it hung in our study. (Bob Cherry says it would be a good wheeze to have its editor hung as well!)—Yours."

"HARRY WHARTON."
(Just like Wharton to be larly sarcastic! The real reason why he wants a copy of our 1st number is so that he can cribb thins from it for the "Grefyfrars Herald." Nothing doing—Ed.)

BESSIE'S BRITE SUGGESTION!

"To the Editor,
"My Brother's Weekly."
"My Dear Billy,—I've herd all about your 'Weekly,' and think it's a grate aboot! "I hope your grefyfraring will reach what you are yourself—a substantial 'cliff'! If I can find time I'll contribute a 'Cliff House Kollum.' But I must leave you having a share in the property."
"Yours loving sister,
"BESSIE."

(Many thanks, Bessie! I shall be glad to konvider a "Cliff House Kollum," which shall be made for at the rate of two shennats. But I'm afraid you can't have a share in the prophets, as you suggest. You see, they will be dished out amongst the members of the staff. Hope you won't think we're cannibals.—Ed.)

QUELCHY ON THE WAR-PATH.

"To the Editor,
"Bunter's Weekly."
"Dear Bunter,—I am sorry I cannot see my way to allow you to publish my 'History of Grefyfrars' in serial form in your paper, as you suggest. You would probably pervert the spelling, and make me an object of ridicule. You might also be tempted to insert comments of your own, which would make the 'History' appear more like a comic feature than anything else."

"You also suggest that I should contribute a love romance to your columns. Any more of this impertinence, and I shall be compelled to correct you. Yours grimly,
"HORACE H. QUELCHY."

(Nuff said!—Ed.)
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HOW TO WRITE A SHORT STORY.

An Article of Grate Interest to Budding Others.

By the Editor.

It's easy enuff to write a short story—when you know how.

I think I may say without being thort boastful or komeented, that nobody is better qualified to give instructions on this subjeck than W. O. B.—my 'omered self. You see, all my life I've been a clumppyn story-teller!

If it is yore amblesum, gentle reader, to become a Wells or a Kipperling, I should advise you to study this artikle carefully.

Nothing is more traffick, to my mind, than the specklede of a yung other struggling for fame and fortune, and getting nothing for his pence, unless it's a slip of paper bearing the following words:

"The editor regrets that he cannot make use of this contribution, and he advises the writer to go and herry it!"

When I last started to write stories, I got kwite a number of these slips of isper-rejection forms. I think they are called, I spered the walls of my study with them, and made pipe-pipes for Skinner. Skinner loves a pipe, and it's nothing unusual to see him rolling along the Remove passage with a kind of lacy in his cheek.

Well, after a bit, I said to myself, "Something is rong. No editor will look at my stuff. Why is it?"

Over and over again I asked myself this quesheon. And then I set to work to find out where I was at fault.

At last I came to the konclusion that there was nothing the matter with my stories, except that they were weak in plot, and that the dialogue, grammar, spelling, and karakter-drawing were all rong.

I made up my mind to konder these faults, and to-day I am in the very front rank of others, and have no difficulty in finding a markit for my stuf.

When I used to write for the "Weekly Trash," they made me at the rate of tuppence a kollum, which, you will admit, is pretty good going.

But, to come to the point, as Quechey said when he sat on a tin-tack.

I will assume that the fello who reads these lines is wishing to make good as a short story writer. Very well. He must list of all think of a smart, novel title for his yarn.

A stale title, such as "John Jones" or "Timmerly Tobbs," is no good at all. It koveys nothing.

This is the sort of thing you want:

"Who Killed Cock Robbin?"

or, "Who Flashed Percy's Fire?"

This grips the reader's interest at wunce. He says to himself: "Ah, who done it? How did he do it? Why did he do it?" and so forth.

Having thort out a good title, you go ahead with the plot. It must be a strong, gripping plot. And you must keep the reader on the tunder-books, as luky would say, until the first chapter. Don't go and give the whole show away in Chapter 1 by saying:

"Jeremy Jagers stole into the skod tuckshop at dead of nite. When he emerged, there was a newly-made rabbit-pie tucked under his arm."

OUR WEEKLY LIMERICK.

No. 1.

A certain yung Nabob named Singh,

Plays footer for us on the wing;

Though ne'er in a flurry,

They label him "Hurrye"—

Which is a peculiar thought!

That sort of thing won't do at all. As I say, you must keep the reader on tender-hooks. Keep him in a state of breathless suspense until the end of the story, when it will come out that Jeremy Jagers didn't pinch the pie at all, but that the tuckshop dame had eaten it herself in a moment of forgetfulness.

Now, it is very important that you should start off yore story with plenty of brite, snappy dialog. Don't begin in this fashion:

"It was midnite, and the sun was high in the heavens. The wind was sobbing in the trees, the skies were weeping, and the gale was skwalling. Silence reigned as Jeremy Jagers trod towards the tuckshop—"

Of course, this descriptian reeches a high literary standard, but it won't satisfy a reader who likes thrills.

This is how yore narratiff should begin:

"He shall die!"

"At a guess?"

"Why?"

"He pinched my pie!"

A spirited opening of this sort will thrill the reader to his hart's core.

Now we come to karakter-drawing. You must tell yore readers exactly what sort of a fello Jeremy Jagers is. "A thin, weedy speeshman, with a sallow komeplexion and a face like a boot." Or, "A plump, hanson-looking chap, with fure hare, a couple of black eyes and blinning over with good-yewner."

Unless you size up yore karakter in this way, yore readers will have no interest in the story.

So much for that.

We now come to two very important things—grammar and spelling.

It's asprizing how few budding others no the raddyments of their own language. They frekwently fall into the trap of making there bery say. "I did it," instead of "I done it." "You were," instead of "You was." Of course, that sort of thing won't be tolerated by any self-respecting editor!

Spelling is no less important.

Only one fello in a dozen knows how to spell properly. I asked Wharton for the other day how many k's their word in "ekspekt," and he ansured "Nun, of course." I told him their were two, and he haried as if it was a huge joke. Pere fello! I can't help feeling sorry for him.

Fancy the editor of the "Greyfriars Herald," not being able to spell a simple word like that!

Even Dick Penfold, who is supposed to be streets above everybody else in class, can't spell to save his life. He sent me a poem for this issue.

In the 1st verse he spells "kwalities," with a "q." Did you ever hear of such a thing in all yore nateral? It's enuff to make Jack Johnson, the compiler of the English Dicksunary, turn in his grave!

I think I have now put my readers wise on the subjeck of short story writing.

But just wun more tip.

When yore story is written, mind you send it to the proper j. For instance, it's not a bit of use sending a prate story to the "Sunday Pulpit." On the other hand, it is equally foolish to send an artikle on "How to Cook a Stake" to the "Vegetarian's Guide." You will find yoreself in the soop if you do.

If yore story deals with footbawl, send it to a footbawl paper. If it's about the war, send it to the "War Cry." If it's about boxing, send it to "Punch." If it's about anything in particular, send it to the "Greyfriars Herald," bewaise they don't mind what sort of tommy-rot they publish!

I have now said enuff to put all budding and perspiring others on the road to wessess. If they follo the direksheens I have laid down in this artikle, they will soon be earning pots of munny, and I should like them to remember that my postie-order hasn't yet turned up, and if they'd care to send me a few bob in the meantime—well, they no my address!

MY FOOTBOWL KOLLUM.

By Billy Bunter.

Having kondered the weekly Krieket kollum in the "Greyfriars Herald" with Kollum in the "Remove" I am just the fello to kontribute a weekly Footbawl Kollum to my own jernal. Although I am hard from the Remove team—owing to personal jellany on Wharton's part—you can rely on me, dear readers, to konduct this kollum each week in a proper jernalistick stile. I shall state my views without fear or favor.

Having seen the Remove Eleven in aksheon, I heartily give you my opinion of the merits and failings of each player. It is painful, but true, that the findings gratefully overshado the meritts!

P. HAZELDEN.—This fello has been selekcted to keep goal for the Remove. To my mind, he would be better employed in keeping rabbits. His relijious of kollerpeping is exgretremely immonst. Whenever a shot comes his way, he either fumble it or terta tale. In a word, Hazel is a wash-out!

JOHNNY BULL.—A foot-bach. He has a hefty kick, but he always sends the ball to the rong place. Johnny isn't a bad sort of fello, but there's no blinking the fact that he can't play footbawl for toffs!

TOM BROWN.—Another foot-bach—a bigger foot than his partner. "Nail said!"

BOB CHERRY.—A bach who plays a vicious game at times; but his feet are too big, and to see him charing about yore'd mistak him for a nellyfant!

PETER TODD.—The only really good player in the side. (I feel bound to say this, bewaise Toddy's a study-mate, and he make things unpleasant for me if I kritizied his play too harshly!)

MARK LINDLEY.—Koment on this fello's play is superfluous. What can a hopeless swot do about footbawl?

H. VERNON SMITH.—Runs like a hare, but that's the only thing that can be said about him.

FRANK NUGENT.—Two letters out of his shams sum up this fello—"N.O."

HARRY WHARTON.—Kaptin and wenter-forward. Not a bad player, but a skvate peg in a round world. You see, his player's really ought to be occupied by W.G.B.I.

DICK PENFOLD.—A long-haired poet. His footbawl is a site for gods and men and littel fishes!

HURREE SINGH.—A nigger who sometimes puts a different komeplexion on a game, but whenever he's lucky enuff to get a pole, the swankwitness is terrifick!

Neckst week I shall have something more to say about our raggy-time eleven.

STUDDY LEEDERS!

CAN YOU KOOK?

Of Corse You Kanrt!

William George Bunter offers you his services. Terms moderate as follo.

Five Bobb per meal, and harf the grub.

Apply Studdy No. 7.

A KRUSHING KALLAMITY!

A Short but Novvel Novvel from the Tallented Pen of

HORACE COKER.

LARST week, finding time hang sunvhat hevvely on my hands, I hit upon a brilljant brane-wave. (As you no, my brane is the most powerful organ at Greyfriars.)

I decided to give people lessons in the difficult and danjerous art of motor-cykling.

"Tis," I reflected, "will be a ripping way of filling my time—and my pocket!"

Accordingly, I displayed the following announcement on the skool notice-board:

"NOTISS!

HORACE COKER,

The Renowned Trick-Cyklist, is willing to reseve pupils, and to instruct them in the perillus but piezzant art of motor-cykling.

Fee—a bobba a lesson!

Don't brake yore neck by trying to lern on yore own akkount. Come and konsult Coker, the eggspert, who has ridden over twenty thousand miles without loss of life or limm!"

I antispesired roping in kwite a crowd of pupils, but I was disappointed.

For a couple of days I had no pupils. And I was just beginning to despair when Skinner of the Remove came along.

"With reference to yore announcement, Coker," he said, "I should like to be tort how to ride a motor-bike. That's a topping bike you've got, and what's more, you're a topping rider! I no a cheever fellow when I see one."

"Enuff of flattery!" I said sharply. "A bobba, please!"

Grately to my surprize, Skinner handed over the coin. (I didn't diskovery till afterwards that it was a bad one.)

Well, to cut a long story short, I gave Skinner a lesson—a lesson he'll remember to his dying day!

We went miles and miles that afternoon. I ran down two chickens and a prize pig—I don't mean Billy Bunter!—We had over a duzen kollisions with cars, carts, prams, etc., and we explored at least three duck-ponds. It's a wonder we didn't finish up at the Cottage Hospital!

I found Skinner a very apt pupil. He paid close attention to everything I told him, and at the end of the afternoon he was able to ride for kwite six yards without shooting off at a tangent.

"You have made eggcellent progress," I said, when we got back to Greyfriars. "When will you take the neckest lesson?"

"I don't think I shall need any more lessons," he replied. "I'm kwite at home on your motor-bike now, old man. Can I borro it to-morro afternoon?"

"No, you can't!" I growled.

"Why not?"

"You're only a novvie yet, and I'm not going to lend my eighty-guiny bike to a duffer who duzzent no how to get out of the way of a steem-roller when he sees one coming!"

"Look hear—"

"If you care to take a fether corse of instructshun," I said, "I wite konsider the matter."

"Ratta! I tell you I'm an eggspert rider!" said Skinner. "Yore nushine will be as safe as the Bank of England in my hands."

But I wasn't having any. I didn't want my valluable motor-bike to be smashed to peeces by a klumy klown like Skinner.

The cad of the Remove walked away in high dudgeon.

I was sorry to lose my only pupil, but it couldn't be helped.

The followin afternoon a party of 5th-Formers, including myself, were standing in the skool gateway chatting to Prout, our respected Form-master. Prout is the only other person at Greyfriars who possesses a motor-bike. Of course, his bike isn't a patch on mine. I believe he picked it up cheap at a clearance sale of old iron.



"Skinner, you yote raskil!" I shouted with blanchied fists. "I'll pulverize you!"

While we were talking, Bob Cherry came dashing up. He was neerly suffereated with merriment.

"Bless my sole!" muttered Prout. "What is the matter with you, boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What has happened?"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I kwite Isle to understand the kawse of this unseemly larfer!" said Prout.

Bob Cherry controlled himself with a grate effort.

"It-'s the Skinner, sir!" he gurgled.

"He's come an awful kropper, and he looks like a 5th of November guy! You never saw such a pickcher in all yore life!"

Prout frowned.

"I am surprized that you should snigger at a skoolfello's misfortune, Cherry!" he said. "Where is Skinner now?"

"When I larst saw him, sir," said Bob Cherry, "he was in the hoarse-pond!"

"What?"

"It seems that he borrowed Coker's motor-bike without leave—"

"Grate Scott!" I eeked-laimed.

"And the bike ran away with him

down the hill, and he took a header into the pond! He's not badly damaged, sir, but I'm afraide I can't say the same for the bike!"

Krimson with rage, I strode up to Bob Cherry.

"You—you mean to say that that cheeky yung fagg has busted my bike?" I rored.

"Yes. He's smashed it beyond rekter-nition!"

"Then I'll jolly well do the same to him!" I cried savridgely. "That bike cost eighty ginnies! Just think of it! My self-starting, twin-sillinder, umpteen hoarse-power 'Whirwind'—smashed to atoms!"

"Kalm yoreself, Coker, in this kwis," said Prout. And I notissed that he was grinning, although he tried hard to keep his face strate.

"Why are you larfing, sir?" I asked irritably.

"Ahem! I-I really cannot help it, Coker! In the first place, Cherry's narratiff is highly diverting; and, sekondly, I cannot help feeling relieved to no that your motor-cykle is out of the way. It was a konstant source of danger to peddestrians, and to farmers' fowls! Ha, ha, ha! Pray excuse me! Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout seemed to think it jolly funny; but I didn't!

A few minits later a muddly and bedraggled figure came staggering in at the skool gates. Beside him he dragged what appeared to be a shapeless mass of old iron.

"Skinner, you yung raskil!" I shouted with blanchied fists. "I'll simply pulverize you for this!"

Prout was still chuckling.

"It was very thoughtless of you, Skinner," he said, "to destroy Coker's property in this way—very thoughtless indeed! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner blinked at Prout with watery eyes.

"This isn't Coker's property, sir!" he stammered, indicating the battered bike. "It's yours!"

"What!"

"I—I meant to borro Coker's motor-bike, sir, and I borrowed yours by mistake!"

Prout stopped larfing very suddenly. He looked as if he was going to have an appleplectick fit.

"You—you depraved yung raskil!" he spluttered. "You—you have wantonly destroyed the dearest treasure of my life! Follo me at wunce to my study!"

And Prout strode away with a brow like thunder, while Skinner follied with the reclage.

As for me, I was simply konvulsed with merriment. And I called to mind the old proverb: "He who larfs larst larfs lougest!"

THE END.

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MY DIARY FOR THE WEEK.



By Lord Mauleverer.

MONDAY.—Woke up. (Rather an unusual proceeding, hegd!) Fearfully cold weather; frost on the window-pane. Decided to stay in bed until the broker-gone went. For one morning only, you know. Mustn't make a practice of this sort of thing! Crawled downstairs at length, and found the bacon cold, and Queeley very heated! He gave me a hundred lines. I must try and make a start on them to-morrow. "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow," as the proverb says.

TUESDAY.—Dreamed I was at the North Pole. Awoke suddenly to find Bob Cherry squeezing an icy sponge over my classic features. Oooohoo! Bitterly cold morning; decided to have another forty winks. Bob Cherry ordered otherwise. Meant to make a start with my impot to-day, but fell asleep while I was thinking about it. Must make a point of tackling it to-morrow, or Queeley will be furious!

WEDNESDAY.—"Oh, it's nice to get up in the morning; but it's nice to stay in bed. And it's awful when, without warning, a basket descends on your head!" Bob Cherry again! I feel stronger now, A. Suffered a good deal from insomnia to-day. Couldn't sleep, except at odd intervals. Fully intended to make a start with my impot, but decided it was too much for me.

THURSDAY.—Overdressed, and crawled downstairs just as morning lessons were beginning. Queeley went for me halfdressed. Gave me a fearful jawing, and wound up by asking me for my impot. Told him I hadn't made a start yet, but hung on to it as soon as weather, wind, and tide permitted.

FRIDAY.—Overdressed again, but managed to scramble down to broker in the nick of time. "Where is your impotition, Mauleverer?" barked Queeley. "I—I really haven't had time to get down to it yet, sir," I replied. "If it is not in my hands by nine o'clock to-morrow morning," said Queeley, "there will be trouble." Resolved to tackle impot without delay. Went to my study after brekker, and wrote four lines, then dropped into a doze. Wrote four more lines in the afternoon, and yet another four in the evening, and went to bed in a state of physical exhaustion!

SATURDAY.—I had fully intended overnight to be up with the lark, so that I could finish my impot. But my strenuous exertions of the previous day had worn me out, and instead of getting up with the lark, I got up with the sparrows. At nine o'clock Queeley sent for me. "I want to see your impotition, Mauleverer!" he said. "Where is it?" "It's still in the stocks, sir," I answered. "That's where you deserve to be!" retorted Queeley. "Do you mean to say you have not completed the impotition I gave you nearly a week ago?" "Nunno, sir, I—I've been too tired." Then I will endeavor to restore you to an animated condition!" said the sarcastic beast. Then the sword of Damocles—in other words, Queeley's pointer—fell; and I am compelled to write these lines in a standing-up attitude. Such is life!

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OUR HART-TO-HART TALKS.

Konducted by
"UNCLE BILL."

(All readers who are in trouble of any sort, either through their own fault or through the fault of circumstances, are requested to send full details to the editor of this paper. Contributions should be marked "Uncle Bill," and a remittance of sixpence should be enclosed.)

"SORDIDFUL SMITH?" (Study No. 6.)—I deeply sympathize with you, my chum, in the loss of your current cake. You say it was on your study table at four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, and that at two minutes past four it was gone. It's a mystery to me how it vanished, but I can only conclude that it did the cake-walk! Your suggestion that it was taken by some thieving reptile?—Alas, I was in Frith's hat at the time! I have (lost) of a little verse which may console you, in some measure, for the loss of your cake. Hear it is (the verse, not the cake!):

"Old Martha Hubbard, she went to the cupboard
To get her pore dog a bone;

But when she got there the cupboard was bare,
And so the pore dog had nuff!"

"HARTBROKEN HORACE" (Fifth Form) rimes in the following strain: "Dear Uncle Bill,—Can you tell me, through the medium of your paper, how I can become fairly good-looking, so as to attract the members of the fair sex? At present I am painfully aware that my face resembles a habited, and the other day some one referred to it as a landscape! What I want to no is, how can I develop manly features, and become sort after by the young ladies at Cliff House?"

Alas, my boy HORACE! I fear it will be impossible for you to improve your nether appearance. Can the thing-maybe change his skin, or the leopard his spots? You mite try a thick moustache, and wearing with sand-paper, and see if that has any effect. It may possibly remove the sharp corners. But you can never hope to be anything like as good-looking as your Uncle Bill. Sun are born beautiful, men achieve beauty, and others have beauty thrust upon them. But I fear, Horace, that you don't come in either of these categories. But remember, my chum, that there is such a thing as beauty of soul, as well as beauty of face and figure; and if you have a beautiful soul, why, nothing else matters! You should commit the following lines to memory:

"I care not if this face of mine
Be neither fair nor splendid;
My sole is beautiful and fine
(For I've just had it mended)"

"R. DUFF" (Remove Form)—I am very grieved to hear that you are on the rocks in other words, stoney. But I fear you will get no help from this. You see, pore Uncle Bill is in the same boat himself! I would willingly lend you my hand if I had it, but my tided relations leave me alone nowadays. Wish they'd leave me "n-ben" instead! In my stoney periods (which are fairly frequent) I often find grute consolation in these touching lines:

"Mary had a little lam,
Its fleece was white as snow;
And every where that Mary went
That lam was sure to go!"

STOP PRESS.

HAVE A LOOK AT THE CHAT
PAGE AND TALK WHAT TALK
PENNED AFTER "B. B. W." HAS
GONE TO PRESS.

OUR AGGERNY KOILUM.



PAKE MILLIN.—What have I done that you should shut me out? Please meet me Wednesday evening at six, by the style in Frith's Lane, and let me take you to the pictures. If you don't turn up, I shall perish of a broken heart. HORACE C.

CLAUDE HOSKINS.—Come back to your heartbroken and grief-stricken study-mate. So sorry I kicked you out last night, but your sonata in E flat got on my nerves so much that I wasn't responsible for my actions. Come back—come back! I've had the piano stored away in one of the lumber-rooms—ditto your violin and cornet. Do not stay away any longer from your sorrowing BOBBY.

ADVERTISER.—A young nobleman, would be glad to hear of a job (Government office preferred). Guaranteed to sleep peacefully all day, and not disturb anybody. Will accept a four-figure salary; won't look at anything less. Smartly dressed, charming manner and appearance, and delightfully drowsy. Insists upon getting work where there isn't any to do. Too much fond to state further particulars about pedigree and abilities. Apply **LOD LODE MAULEVERER**, "Stankersville," Remove Passage, Gryffins.

MONEY LENT! ONE PENNY TO FIVE BOB! On note of hand only. No awkward business as to applicant's private life and habits. No silly references required. Strictest secrecy guaranteed. Loans have already been made to the Editor of this paper, who promises to refund when his postal-order arrives. If you want to set yourself up in business, or purchase a house, or a Ford car, do not hesitate to leap at this generous offer. No dealings with minors.—**THE FISHY FINANCIAL COMPANY**, Study No. 14.

BOLSOVER MAJOR.—Will meet you in the gym on Saturday afternoon, as arranged. You are requested to provide your own ambulance.—**BOB CHERRY**.

FAG wanted immediately. Advertiser simply dylan for a smoke!—Apply **GERALD LODER**, Sixth Form Passage.

MISSING! A pair of football boots (size ten) from my study. If the fellow who bought them will report to me, he will be the owner of something to his disadvantage!—**GEORGE WINGATE**.

THOUSANDS ARE STARVING IN TIMBUCTOO! All contributions in the shape of grub (pastries preferred) will be gladly welcomed. They should be forwarded without delay to Box B.B., office of this paper.

HAIR permanently removed from face by safe and simple method. Come and be shaved by Fisher T. Fish, the barbarous barber! No blunt penknives used. No lifelong disfigurement caused.—**THE GREYFRIARS TOILET SALOON**, Study No. 14.

PONSONBY'S VICTIM!

(Continued from page 8.)

his heart, that he had been fighting a hopeless battle.

The judge then summed up, and not by any stretch of imagination could it be said that his summing-up was favourable to the prisoner. He warned the jury that they were not to let so much store by the story of the prisoner's march with the Highlifebluffs. They could see for themselves that his face was undamaged. They could see, also, that prisoner had played far below his usual form, and had missed chances which even a child would have turned to account.

Then there was the letter which had been found on prisoner's desk. The judge attached great importance to that, and he said that the jury dared not leave it out of their calculations.

"Of course," Wharton concluded, "if there's an atom of doubt in your minds as to prisoner's guilt, it's up to you to bring in a verdict of 'Not Guilty.' If, on the other hand, you are satisfied that the chain of evidence is complete, then—well, you know your duty. You will retire, gentlemen, and consider your verdict."

The members of the jury trooped out into the passage.

Within two minutes they were back again. Evidently they had had no difficulty in arriving to a unanimous decision. There was a hush in the crowded court.

"Do you find the prisoner guilty or not, guilty?" asked the judge.

"Extremely guilty, my lord!" said Dick Russell.

"And you've no desire to recommend him to mercy, on the grounds of his youthfulness, or insanity, or anything like that?"

"None whatever, my lord!"

"Very well! You can carry on roasting your chestnuts!"

"We'd prefer to roast the prisoner, my lord!" said Dick Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The judge addressed himself to Vernon-Smith.

"You have heard the jury's verdict?"

"I'm not deaf!" growled the Bounder.

"You have been found guilty of the most caddish conduct! And you are hereby sentenced to run the gauntlet, and to be expelled from the Remove footer eleven!"

"It's not fair!" exclaimed Mark Linsley, with a burst of passion. "He's done nothing to deserve this! You're fools—fools, I tell you!"

But the Lancashire lad's voice was drowned by the commotion which followed.

Everybody seemed to be hunting for weapons of some description. Many of the fellows were knotting their handkerchiefs; others were knotting dusters, or beating round for cricket-stumps. Bolsover major armed himself with the mappole, and Skinner was unfastening a length of window-cord.

"Line up!" commanded Wharton tersely.

And the Removees ranged themselves in double file along the centre of the court.

Vernon-Smith's face was pale, but he made no attempt to escape.

"Now, Smith!" rapped out the captain of the Remove.

The Bounder was forced to run through the lines, and as he did so a series of heavy blows descended upon him.

He had commenced his run with an air of defiance and bravado; but a

moment later he was stumbling forward with his hands pressed to his face.

The junior were hitting harder than they thought, and by the time he reached the end of the line, the Bounder was in sore straits. He suddenly fell forward, and landed on the floor in a huddled heap.

"Make him run back! Make him run back!" urged several voices.

"No, no!" cried Mark Linsley sharply. "He's had enough!"

"He's shamming!" roared Bolsover major.

"We'll keep it up until he howls for mercy!" said Skinner.

Skinner himself was howling for mercy the next moment, for Mark Linsley dealt him a back-handed blow which made his teeth rattle.

"Dry up, you cad!" he exclaimed angrily.

He then went forward and assisted the Bounder to rise.

Vernon-Smith was utterly dazed. He felt as if an earthquake had happened.

"I fancy he's had enough!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"No, no!"

"Give him some more!"

"He sold the match!"

"He lost us the shield!"

But Wharton's words prevailed, and Vernon-Smith was allowed to limp away to his own quarters.

In the doorway of the Common-room, he paused and surveyed the hostile crowd.

"You fellows will be sorry for this, some day!" he muttered.

"Rats!"

"Cads!"

"Traitor!"

"Get out!"

And with clenched hands and gleaming eyes, the Bounder went along to his study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Voice of the Tempter!

"WHAT'S the use of going straight!"

During the days that followed, Vernon-Smith asked himself that question a score of times.

He was in an unenviable plight. He was banished from the football team, and shunned by the Form. He was an outcast and a pariah. What, then, was the use of continuing to play with a straight bat?

Wherever he went, he encountered black looks.

Prior to the match with Highlifebluffs, he had been one of the most popular fellows in the Form. But all that was changed now. He was regarded as a rank outsider; he was shunned on every side.

The Bounder's heart grew bitter as he reflected on the unfairness of it all. He had done nothing whatever to merit such treatment. It was unjust—monstrously unjust—that he should be shunned and derided like this.

There had been no order sending him to Coventry; yet hardly anybody would speak to him. For the Remove still felt very sore on the subject of the "sold" match.

After several days of almost unbearable wretchedness, Vernon-Smith felt the desire to return to his old study routine. He fought against the impulse at first, but gradually it mastered him. He felt that he must have something to interest him, or he would go mad.

On the next half-holiday, he was taking a solitary stroll, when he encountered Ponsonby, of Highlifebluffs.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands, remembering Ponsonby's caddishness of a few days before.

To his surprise, however, Pon was quite friendly.

"Hello, old top!" he said genially.

The Bounder made no reply.

"Still rattly about what happened the other day?" asked Pon. "I'm sorry I tried to square you to sell the match—honest Injun, I am! Don't know what I could have been thinkin' about to suggest such a thing!"

Vernon-Smith went up close to Ponsonby, and looked him steadily in the eyes.

"Did you put a letter on the desk in my study on the afternoon of the match?" he demanded.

"Eh? Of course not! What sort of a letter?"

"An anonymous letter, ordering me to let the Remove down?"

"I know nothin' about it, dear boy," said the Highlifebluffs junior. "You say word, I don't!"

"I want you to give me your word of honour on that point."

"Certainly! I give you my word of honour that I didn't put a letter on your desk on the afternoon of the match!"

Vernon-Smith was satisfied with this assurance. He did not guess that Ponsonby had told a half-lie, yet such was the case.

True, Pon had not put the anonymous letter on the Bounder's desk. But he had caused it to be put there, Skinner of the Remove having acted as his agent.

"You seem pretty down in the mouth about something, dear boy!" said Ponsonby.

They walked on side by side, and Vernon-Smith explained what had happened—how the incriminating letter had been found, and how he had been punished and shunned by the Form.

"An' they're chucking you out of the team—what?" said Ponsonby.

"Yes!"

"Well, it's a shame—a (hemperia' shame!"

"I'm fed up to the teeth with the whole business!" said the Bounder.

Ponsonby nodded sympathetically.

"I can understand your feelin's, dear boy. I know what Wharton & Co. are. Why not wash your hands of the whole miserable crew?"

"That's just what I was thinking."

Ponsonby's eyes gleamed with an eager light.

"If you're shut off from sport at Greyfriars, you must get your sport outside," he said.

"By joinin' the Society of Good Sports, of which I am proud to be a member!"

"You mean that mob you mentioned the other day?"

"It ain't a mob. It's a select, exclusive gatherin' of young gentlemen," said Pon.

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"I've heard of these select societies before," he said. "Their meeting-places are little better than gambling-dens."

"Well, I'll admit we go in for little flutters now an' again. We didn't join the society for the sake of playin' ludo, or snakes-an'-ladders. We're out for real good sport!"

The Bounder was interested, in spite of his cynicism.

"Who are the members?" he asked.

"There's Percy Carfax—I think I mentioned him before—an' there's Dervley-Brooke—Sir Hilton Popper's nephew, you know—an' there's the Honourable Freddie Stacey. Those three are the shinin' lights of the concern; an' every other member has some connection, either close or remote, to the aristocracy. As I say, it's a select society."

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Fellows whose pators have to work for their livin' are not admitted. I wish you'd join us, Smithy! You're just the sort we want to keep the concern alive. I could easily nominate you, an' get you elected. Now, dear boy, what about it?"

"Before I agree to join," said the Bouncer, "I should like to attend one of the meetings—just to see what it's like, you know!"

"All serene! We meet in Courtfield (three nights a week, an' to-night there'll be great doin' at Mr. Beverley-Brooke's birthday. Will you come along, at eleven o'clock? Of course, it'll mean breakin' bounds!"

"Whereabouts do you meet?"

"The club-room's on the first floor, at 99, High Street."

For some moments Vernon-Smith was silent. He seemed to be wrestling with a problem.

"And then, little realising what it would mean to him afterwards, he made his final decision."

"I'll be there!" he said.

"Oh, good!"

"Ponsonby was rubbing his hands and chuckling."

It seemed almost too good to be true that Vernon-Smith, after sailing a straight course for so long, was to return to his old ways—to the ways which had earned him the nickname of the Bouncer. Ponsonby had often schemed to bring this about; and at last he had succeeded. He had exercised his influence for evil, and Vernon-Smith was about to undo all the good work of months. He was going to show that his reformation, instead of being permanent and sincere, was merely a flash-in-the-pan.

"You won't regret this, dear boy," said Ponsonby. "You'll have a top time, as a member of the Good Sports. As I said, there'll be great doin' to-night. You won't fail to turn up, will you?"

"I never fail to keep my word," answered Vernon-Smith.

And there the conversation ended.

"That night, when his schoolfellows were asleep, Vernon-Smith slipped out of bed and put on his clothes."

Half-hour after ten had just elapsed, and it was necessary for the Bouncer to go warily, for the masters had not yet retired for the night.

Fortune favoured the lawbreaker. He descended the stairs, and made his exit by means of the box-room window.

It was a dark, moonless night, and the wind whistled round the turrets and towers of Greyfriars, and shook the leafless branches of the old elms.

True to his promise, Vernon-Smith arrived at 99, High Street, Courtfield, just as the neighbouring clocks were chiming eleven.

Evidently the majority of the "good sports" had already arrived, for from the club-room on the first floor came the raucous sound of singing.

"Here's a health to all good lasses, Merrily, merrily drain your glasses, Let the bumper toast go round!"

An expression of revulsion came over the Bouncer's face, and he was half inclined to turn away.

At that moment, however, Cecil Ponsonby arrived on the scene.

"That you, Smithy?"

"Yes."

"Glad to see you've wangled it all right. I was afraid the benks might have been prowl'n' around at Greyfriars. This way—follow your leader!"

And Ponsonby entered the building.

Vernon-Smith followed. They proceeded along a narrow passage, and

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mounted a dark staircase. A moment later they were in the club-room.

The Bouncer took stock of his surroundings with interest.

There were seven or eight young fellows, present at the cream of the aristocracy, as they styled themselves. Vernon-Smith singled out Beverley-Brooke at once, and also Percy Carfax. And Ponsonby promptly introduced him to the others.

"This is Vernon-Smith, gentlemen—a prospective member of the society."

"Good!" said Beverley-Brooke. "Have you made inquiries as to his pedigree, Pon?"

"His father's a giddy millionaire," said Ponsonby impressively.

After which, the "good sports" promptly took Vernon-Smith to their hearts.

The table had been laid for dinner—a banquet in Beverley-Brooke's honour.

Vernon-Smith heard the popping of cork, and he saw the Honourable Freddie Stacey engaged in the congenial task of opening champagne bottles. But he made up his mind that he would do nothing to drink, and when Stacey endeavoured to fill his glass he clapped his hand over it.

"No, thanks," he said quietly.

Stacey stared at the Bouncer in astonishment.

"Not a disciple of Pastyfoot, are you?" he asked.

"No; but I'm not drinking anything, thanks—unless you've a dry ginger in the place."

"Dry ginger!" spluttered Percy Carfax, collecting the remark. "Pon my soul, that's the richest joke I've heard for a long time! Here's a prospective member of the Society of Good Sports askin' for a dry ginger! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you don't keep any on the premises, it doesn't matter," said Vernon-Smith.

"My dear fellow," said Beverley-Brooke, "what do you take us for? This is a club-room, not a mineral-water factory!"

"Don't be a dashed fool, dear boy!" drawled Ponsonby. "A glass of fizz won't hurt you."

"I've already declined," answered Vernon-Smith curtly, "and that's good enough."

One of his objects in coming to this place was to win money at cards. And he knew that he could not hope to do so unless he kept a clear head. It was all very well for fellows like Beverley-Brooke, who were several years his senior, to imbibe champagne; but the Bouncer preferred to leave it alone. And he laid his own way eventually, though he came in for a good deal of chipping.

The banquet was a rowdy affair, and Vernon-Smith was not sorry when it was over.

Cigarettes were handed round, and the Greyfriars junior found himself in the company of Beverley-Brooke, Carfax, and Stacey.

A pack of cards was produced, and it was arranged to play nap for shilling points.

At the other end of the table, the remainder of the "good sports" already had the cards in action.

Vernon-Smith played with his customary coolness, and he began to congratulate himself that he was in for a good thing. For the other three appeared to be playing recklessly, and they talked loudly all the time.

The Bouncer's luck was in, but not for long. The pile of silver pieces which he had won began to melt away, and presently he found himself putting his hand in his pocket.

Damn. Fortune had smiled on him at first, but she was frowning now, and her frown showed no sign of relaxing.

At the end of an hour's play, Vernon Smith was cleaned out. The others urged him to play on, agreeing to accept his 10 U's; but the Bouncer rose to his feet.

"I've had enough for to-night," he said. "I'll take my revenge another time."

"You're not goin', surely!" exclaimed Beverley-Brooke.

"Yes."

"But the night's young yet!"

"I'm not keen on an all-night sitting," said the Bouncer. "I must be getting along. Goodnight, all!"

And, despite the protestations of the "good sports," he moved to the door. Before he actually went, however, they exacted from him a promise to attend the next meeting.

Vernon-Smith's thoughts, as he tramped back to Greyfriars in the darkness, were the reverse of pleasant.

He had lost heavily at cards, and he was under the necessity of applying to his father for extra money. He knew he would get it; but he knew, also, that his father's suspicion would be aroused.

The voice of conscience, too, reproached him as he tramped along.

"You're a fool!" it said. "Just because you've been wronged by your schoolfellows, is it any reason why you should play fast and loose and go to the dogs? Pull yourself together, and have nothing more to do with that precious society!"

But the voice of conscience, insistent though it was, did not prevail.

The Bouncer had taken the plunge, and he had no intention of turning back.

How was it all going to end?

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Dormitory Fight!

VERNON-SMITH'S absence from the Remove dormitory was soon discovered. And it came about in this wise.

Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth had planned a raid on the Remove, that night, and just before eleven o'clock they had invaded the dormitory, and laid about them right lustily with pillows and bolsters.

Harry Wharton & Co. were taken completely by surprise, but they were soon out of bed and putting up a stout resistance.

The din became so great that it came to the ears of Mr. Quitch, who hurried to the Remove dormitory, in his dressing-gown, to investigate.

A scout had been stationed on the landing, and, on hearing footsteps approaching, he shouted:

"Cave!"

Instantly the Fourth-Formers, with the exception of Temple, scuttled away to their own quarters.

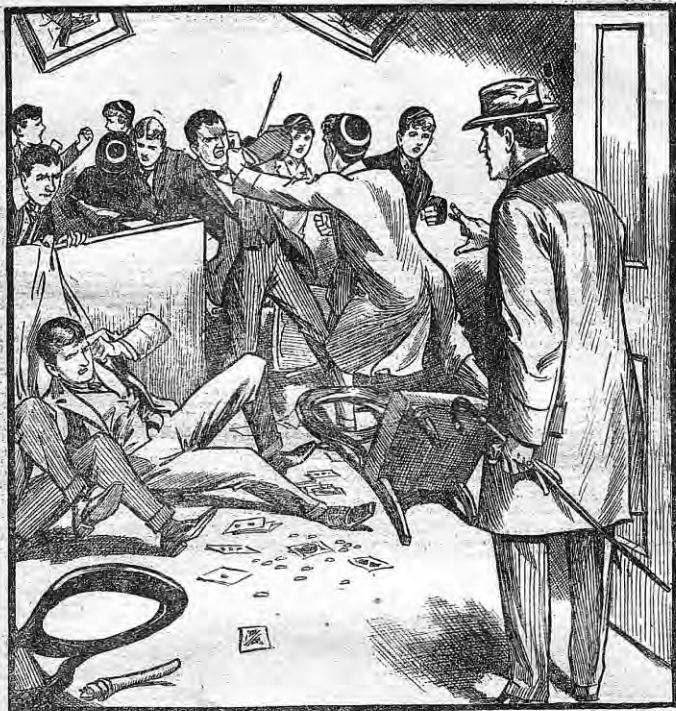
Temple was pinned to the floor by a number of Removites, and he was unable to get away in time. So he scrambled into Vernon Smith's crumpled bed, and trusted to luck that Mr. Quitch wouldn't recognise him.

When the Remove-master stepped into the dormitory, and flashed on his electric torch, he saw that every bed was occupied, and he little dreamed that anyone had broken bounds.

"My boys," he exclaimed sternly, "I heard sounds of a disturbance here!"

Silence, save for the booming snore of Boomer Major.

"Are you awake, my boys?" demanded Mr. Quitch.



There was a gasp from the Greyfriars juniors as a young man entered the room. It was Larry Lascelles, the maths. master. "What does this mean?" he demanded sternly, his eyes falling on the piles of scattered playing-cards and money. (See Chapter 7.)

Still silence.

"Bless my soul! I must have been mistaken!" muttered the Form-master. "Everything appears to be in order!"

And he withdrew.

When Mr. Quelch's retreating footsteps had died away, Temple got up and went back to his own dormitory.

"That was a jolly close shave, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "Lucky for Temple that Smith's bed happened to be empty."

"By the way, where's Smith got to?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He's out of bounds, you bet," said Skinner. "More than likely he's gone back to his old games again."

The Bounder's absence excited a good deal of comment. And the juniors decided to remain awake until he came in.

It was well past midnight when there

was the sound of a stealthy movement in the dormitory.

"That you, Smith?"

Harry Wharton's voice rang sharply through the gloom.

"Yes," replied the Bounder.

"Where have you been?"

"Mind your own biznecy!"

"It's my business, as skipper of the Form, to put my foot down on this sort of thing! You've broken bounds!"

"Well?"

"And I mean to know what you've been up to!"

Vernon-Smith crossed over to his bed, and started to undress.

"I'm waiting, Smith!" said Wharton.

"Oh, shut up! You make me tired!"

There were murmurs of indignation from several beds.

"Don't let the cheeky bounder speak

to you like that, Harry!" said Bob Cherry.

"No fear!" said Nugent. "What's he mean by coming in at this time of night? You've a right to know, Harry, and if I were you I should insist on dragging the facts out of Smith."

Harry Wharton stepped out of bed, and lighted a candle. Then he stepped towards Vernon-Smith.

"You're going to tell where you've been!" he said grimly.

"Rate!"

"You seem to be doing your level best to bring disgrace on the Form. First you descend to the rotten, low-down trick of selling a match, and now—"

Wharton did not finish the sentence.

The memory of what he had suffered at the hands of his schoolfellows, coupled with his ill-fortune at the gaming-tables,

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goaded Vernon-Smith to fury. He shot out his fist, and Harry Wharton measured his length on the floor. The coward he had been holding was knocked out of his hand and extinguished; but others were swiftly lit up by the excited Removetees, who sat up in bed to witness the developments.

Harry Wharton, no less angry than the Bounder, sprang to his feet, and the next moment the two juniors, who had been such bitter rivals in the past, were fighting like tigers.

"Pile in, Wharton!"

"Teach the cad a lesson!"

"Pulverise him!"

The captain of the Remove received encouragement from all sides. Vernon-Smith received none.

Not that the Bounder needed any incentive. He fought with a savage recklessness which made Wharton yield ground.

But Vernon-Smith's attack was too fierce to last. He expended his energy in wild rushes, and Wharton bided his time. Then, seeing an opening, he dashed in, and beat a tattoo on his opponent's ribs.

There was a chorus of approval from the onlookers.

"That's the way, Wharton!"

"You've got him weighed up!"

"Stick to it!"

Vernon-Smith was retreating now, and he was paying the penalty for having ignored his defence. His face was deathly pale, and his breath came and went in great gasps.

Wharton had subdued his man, and he was now driving home his advantage. A smashing blow in the chest, and a half-grain jolt to the jaw, caused the Bounder to stagger.

"Good!"

"Polish him off, Wharton!"

The polishing-off process didn't take long.

Wharton put all his strength into a smashing straight left, and Vernon-Smith went sprawling across his bed-linked to the widge!

"Telephone for the ambulance, somebody!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder made a game effort to rise, but it was only to sink back again. That last powerful blow had knocked all the stuffing out of him.

Harry Wharton went back to bed without a word. It was not his way to gloat over a vanquished foe. He decided to ask no more questions concerning the Bounder's movements; at the same time, he resolved to keep an eye on him in future, and to nip in the bud any further attempt on Vernon-Smith's part to break the rules.

As for the Bounder, he undressed by slow stages, and crawled into bed.

Seldom had his thoughts been so black and bitter as at that moment.

He was more than ever determined to pay no heed to the voice of conscience, and to go the pace. His school-fellows voted him a rank outsider. Very well; he would endeavour to live up to it, rather live down to his reputation. He had gone straight for a long spell, and it had profited him nothing. He would now travel by crooked ways, as in the past.

Vernon-Smith didn't believe in half-measures. He was thorough in everything that he undertook. And he would play the crooked game with the same thoroughness that he had played the straight one.

With this resolve rooted in his mind, he lay awake through the long hours.

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staring into the darkness which encompassed him.

He had decided to take the downward path. But had he known what the upshot of his decision would be, not a single step on that downward path would have been taken!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bowled Out!

TWO mornings later, there were a couple of letters in the post-rack for Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder took them along to his study, and there, away from prying eyes, he read the communications. The first was a letter from his father, enclosing a substantial remittance, but pointing out that it was to be wisely spent, as no further allowance would be made that term.

"Jolly decent of the pater to stump up!" muttered the Bounder, slipping the letter into his pocket. "He didn't ask any awkward questions, either. Still, his eye's put his hand in his pocket any more this term."

The second note was from Ponsonby, reminding Vernon-Smith that the Society of Good Sports were holding another meeting that evening.

"Don't fail to turn up, dear boy," the letter concluded. "You're bound to get your revenge to-night. Sorry you had such heavily luck last time."

Vernon-Smith fed Ponsonby's letter to the flames of his study fire. He did not care to leave such a document lying about.

All through the day, he found himself eagerly looking forward to nightfall. He wanted to retrieve his fallen fortunes, and he felt ashamed of having been beaten by such empty-headed aristocrats as Beverley-Brooke and Percy Carfax.

"To-night," he reflected, "it'll be my turn to snide!"

Vernon-Smith was afraid that a watch would be kept on him that night. But after lights-out Harry Wharton & Co. appeared to drop off to sleep.

Shortly before eleven o'clock, he slipped noiselessly out of bed.

"Anybody awake?" he asked.

There was no response.

The Bounder concluded that the coast was clear. He dressed rapidly in the darkness, and tiptoed out of the dormitory and down the stairs.

As on the previous occasion, he made his exit without mishap. And soon he was striding across the fields to Court-field.

There had been a heavy fall of snow that afternoon, and the going was difficult.

Several times the junior stumbled, and once he was nearly precipitated into a deep ditch. But he emerged, eventually, into the darkened streets of Courtfield, and made his way to No. 99, High Street.

He found the same company assembled as on the previous occasion, and the "good sports" gave him a hail-fellow-well-met reception.

"Home you'll have better luck to-night, dear boy," said Ponsonby.

"I hope so, too," said the Bounder.

"You had atrocious luck before," said Beverley-Brooke. "You were cleaned right out, if I remember. Are you in funds again?"

"I shouldn't be here if I wasn't," was the reply.

Percy Carfax gave a sigh.

"With a pater was a millionaire!" he said. "Not that he isn't well off. He's made quite a pile, but he's so beastly close with it, confound him!"

"Time we got to business, gentlemen!" piped the Honourable Freddie Stacey.

There was no banqueting that evening. Cigarettes were lighted, and the cards were produced right away.

"Shall we play for half-crown points?" inquired Beverley-Brooke. "Anything less unlikes it rather tame."

"I don't know about that," said Vernon-Smith. "It's possible to win—or lose—quite a pile when playing for shilling points."

"Still, we want the affair to be as exciting as possible!" urged Beverley-Brooke.

"Go ahead, then!"

From the outset, the Bounder met with disaster. Nothing went right for him.

The Honourable Freddie Stacey seemed to be in similar straits. But Beverley-Brooke and Percy Carfax were making money hand-over-past.

Vernon-Smith watched them closely, half-suspecting that everything was not above-board. But he detected nothing in the nature of cheating. The cards were not dealt, and everything seemed fair of square.

At the end of ten minutes, the Bounder was looking rather alarmed. At the end of half an hour, he was in despair.

Dame Fortune's frown was blacker than ever this evening, and Vernon-Smith's resources were rapidly diminishing.

"Still, he played on, hoping against hope, that his luck would change."

At the other end of the table, Cecil Ponsonby was grinning with satisfaction. Evidently he was reaping the good fortune which was denied the Bounder.

Boom!

It was the first stroke of midnight. And before the clock had finished striking, Vernon-Smith was on his feet. His face was haggard in the gaslight.

"I can't go on!" he muttered. "I'm cleaned out!"

"Hard cheese!" said Beverley-Brooke, with a show of sympathy. "It would care to play on, we're quite within! I am—"

The speaker broke off abruptly. There were sounds of a scuffle on the ground floor.

"Hallo! What's goin' on?" ejaculated Ponsonby.

He stepped out on to the landing, and looked over the banisters. It was impossible to see anything, but he fancied he heard Harry Wharton's voice. And he heard Bill Jones—the man whom the good sports engaged to guard the place—protesting wildly.

"You can't go up, young gentles! You can't, I tell yer! Which it's a private gatherin'!"

Bump!

Jenkins was evidently bowled over, and then footsteps were heard ascending the stairs.

Ponsonby darted back into the club-room. There was an expression of alarm on his face.

"What's goin' on?" asked Beverley-Brooke.

"There's a gang of Greyfriars bounders on the way up!"

"Great pop. Still, we're not afraid of a handful of kids!"

"There's no knowing how many they are," said Ponsonby. "Best to quit anyway. Come on!"

Ponsonby knew of an exit at the back, and he hurried towards it. Several of the "good sports" followed; but Vernon-Smith did not budge. He remained in the room with Beverley-Brooke, Carfax, and Stacey.

A moment later the Famous Fife of the Remove came into the room.

Vernon-Smith's absence from the dormitory had been discovered, and Harry Wharton & Co. had set out to find him and bring him back. They had been doubtful as to whether they would succeed, but on passing through Courtfield High Street, they had seen lights gleaming from an upper window, and had heard the voices of the gamblers. Whereupon they had forced an entry into the building.

Harry Wharton was the first to enter the club-room, and he met Vernon-Smith face to face.

"So you're here?" he said. "I guessed you were up to this sort of game!"

"It's a more honourable game than spying, anyway!" retorted the Bouncer.

The words stung Wharton to the quick. "I've every right to spy, as you call it!" he said. "I mean to make you toe the line, Smith! I don't know who your companions are, and I don't care; but I mean to sweep this precious society out of existence!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

And the other members of the Famous Five advanced into the room with grim faces.

Beverley-Brooke sprang to his feet. His eyes were blazing angrily.

"Hang you!" he snarled. "What do you mean by interfering like this? Go your own way, and we'll go ours!"

"Oh, we'll go soon enough!" said Johnny Bull. "But we've a little job to do first."

"Ph?"

"We're going to wreck this place!"

"You—you cheeky cad!" spluttered Beverley-Brooke. "Do you want to be pitched down the stairs?"

"It would take more than a weedy specimen like you to do it!" said Johnny Bull. "Now, you fellows, pile in! It won't take us long to smash up the happy home!"

The "good sports" had some elaborate furniture in their club-room, and they lined up in order to protect it from the invaders.

Vernon-Smith lined up with them, and soon a wild and whirling battle was in progress.

It didn't take the Famous Five long to get the upper hand.

Bob Cherry's list found a billet on Beverley-Brooke's aristocratic nose, and there was a crash, as the recipient of the blow went sprawling in the fireplace. The next instant, Percy Carfax rolled over on the top of him.

Vernon-Smith and the Hon. Freddie Stacey remained on their feet, but not for long.

Stacey was felled by a terrific "pile-driver" from Hurroo Singh, and the Bouncer, although he fought on gamely for a minute or two, was soon overpowered.

Johnny Bull armed himself with the poker, and proceeded to lay about him. The furniture suffered considerably in this process.

Other implements were found, and the work of destruction was soon in full swing.

The din was appalling. It arrested the attention of a young man who happened to be passing in the street below, and caused him to come up and investigate.

There was a startled gasp from the Greyfriars juniors as the young man entered. For he was Mr. Larry Lascelles, the mathematics master!

Johnny Bull suspended operations with the poker, and the others also paused. They blinked at the intruder in uncertainty and dismay.

Vernon-Smith, who had the most cause for alarm, didn't turn a hair. But he

knew that the game was up—that the unexpected arrival of Larry Lascelles spelt his ruin.

The mathematics master took in the scene at a glance.

The "good sports," now thoroughly alarmed, were cowering against the wall. Playing-cards and silver pieces, were strewn about the table and the floor. Most of the furniture in the room lay battered and broken.

"What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Lascelles sternly.

There was no response.

"Come, Wharton! You are the senior boy here. I am waiting for your explanation!"

The captain of the Remove was covered with confusion.

"I—I—" he stammered.

Vernon-Smith came forward. He was white to the lips, but there was a defiant gleam in his eyes.

"I'll save him the trouble of sneaking, sir," he said. "These fellows came here to take me back to the school."

"Am I to understand, Smith, that you broke bounds in order to visit this place?"

The Bouncer nodded.

"And for what purpose did you come here?"

Vernon-Smith indicated the scattered cards and silver with a wave of his hand. They speak for themselves, sir," he said.

"You have been gambling?"

"Yes."

For a moment there was a painful silence.

"And who are these individuals?" inquired Mr. Lascelles at length, nodding towards the "good sports."

"I'm Beverley-Brooke," said the owner of that name. "This is Percy Carfax, and this is the Honourable Freddie Stacey. And who might you be?" he concluded insolently.

"You will find out who I am anon!"

said Mr. Lascelles grimly. "I am slightly acquainted with your parents and guardians, and I shall make it my business to give them a detailed report of this disgraceful affair."

"Report, and be hanged!" snarled Beverley-Brooke, trying hard to assume an air of indifference.

"Be careful!" warned Mr. Lascelles. "You do not wish me to chastise you, I presume? But I shall certainly do so if you address me again in that disrespectful manner."

Beverley-Brooke was silent.

Mr. Lascelles turned to Harry Wharton.

"I take it that Smith's statements are correct—that he came here to gamble, and that you followed him with the intention of taking him back to the school?"

"Quite correct, sir!"

The young mathematics master looked distressed as well as angry.

"I thought you had abandoned this sort of vice and folly long ago, Smith!" he said. "Still, perhaps I ought not to be surprised at this fresh outbreak. It is a well-known truism that the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. You will accompany me back to Greyfriars!"

It was a very grim and gloomy procession that made its way back to the school.

The Bouncer walked in front with Mr. Lascelles, and the Famous Five followed behind.

Late though the hour was, the Head had not yet retired. And Mr. Lascelles, ordering Harry Wharton & Co. to return to their dormitory, took Vernon-Smith into the presence of Dr. Locke.

The Head was astonished to receive visitors at such an unusual hour, and his

astonishment gave place to sternness as he listened to Mr. Lascelles' story.

"What have you to say, Smith?" he asked frigidly, when the mathematics master had finished.

"Nothing, sir."

"You have nothing to say in defence or extenuation of your conduct?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Very well. Take him to the detention-room, Lascelles. I shall have no alternative but to publicly expel him in the morning."

Mr. Lascelles turned to the door.

"Come, Smith!" he said.

The Bouncer followed without a word. A few moments later he found himself locked in the place of detention—alone with his thoughts.

In his cold and cheerless prison, he ruminated on the past—and the future. He did not whine, or rail at Fate, that matters should have come to this pass. He realised that he had only himself to blame. His conscience had warned him against the step he was taking, and he had ignored it. He had acted against his better judgment, and now he was to pay the penalty. There was neither light nor warmth in the detention-room. Neither was there any hope in the heart of the imprisoned junior.

Vernon-Smith seated himself on the bed, fully dressed, and listened to the wind which whailed without. And he wondered vaguely what the future held in store for him.

Altogether, the outlook was gloomy in the extreme for the rash and reckless junior who at that moment sat beneath the dark shadow of expulsion!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Bouncer Bolts!

"I CAN'T stick it—I simply can't! I must get out of this place somehow!"

Vernon-Smith made that declaration as he paced to and fro in the detention-room.

His actions were like those of a caged animal. His eyes were gleaming, and he glanced wildly around him, as if seeking some way of escape.

His surroundings were dark and dismal and cheerless. But no more so than his thoughts.

Over and over again he pictured to himself the scene in Big Hall next morning, when his name would be struck off the school register, and he would be cast out in disgrace.

Presently he halted, and seated himself on the bed once more. And again he brooded on all the events which had led up to this climax.

What a fool he had been!

His life had been colossal. Just because he had been wronged by his school-fellows—just because the affair of the football-match had ruffled in his mind—he had plunged into his old ways, and mixed with low society.

Had he been justified?

Of course he hadn't! He was a fool—an avowed fool—over to have taken such a step. He ought to have waited patiently until it was proved that he had not sold the match. He ought to have carried on in a manly, straightforward way, until his honour was vindicated. Instead of which, he had sunk as low as it was possible for any fellow to sink. He had gone the pace; he had played fast and loose; he had paid up heed to the warning voice of conscience.

And now he must pay the penalty!

What would his father say when he knew?

The Bouncer conjured up visions of

parental wrath, and he shivered. For he knew his father to be a merciless man on occasions of this sort.

"I can't go home!" he muttered. "That's out of the question. What's more, I can't stay penned up in this place for hours. I should go off my dot! Besides, there's the morning. I couldn't bear to see Wharton and his se' glouting because I was being kicked out!"

Not that Harry Wharton & Co. were likely to plead. But Vernon-Smith was in an overwrought state of mind just then, and he imagined that everybody was his enemy.

He rose from the bed, and resumed his pacing to and fro.

"I'll bolt!" he muttered. "I won't give them the satisfaction of seeing me checked out! The school will assemble in Big Hall in the morning to witness a public expulsion—and the bird will have flown!"

And the Bounder laughed mirthlessly. The laugh sounded weird and uncanny in the darkness of the detention-room.

Boom!

The condemned junior gave a start.

What was that?

Then he realised that the school clock had just struck one.

"Time I got a move on!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

Having formed his decision—that he would run away rather than wait for the scene in Big Hall—the Bounder began to debate how he could put it into effect.

The door of the detention-room had been locked and bolted by Larry Lascelles. There was no escape that way.

The window?

Yes, that was his only chance! But the window was a considerable height from the ground, and to attempt to descend by means of the rain-pipe would be perilous in the extreme.

The Bounder was in a reckless and devil-may-care mood. All the same, he was not anxious to break his neck.

He peered around his prison, and then an idea occurred to him.

There were a couple of sheets on the bed, and a couple more had been placed in reserve on the locker.

By tearing the sheets into strips, Vernon-Smith would be able to fashion an improvised rope.

It would not be a very strong rope, but in the absence of anything more substantial it would have to do.

The Bounder judged that everybody had long since retired for the night, and he was soon busy.

The task was a fairly difficult one. For it was intensely dark, and he had no light of any description.

At the end of twenty minutes, however, he had accomplished his object.

He securely fastened one end of the rope to the bedpost, and the remainder he lowered from the window.

The dangling rope of sheets fluttered in the night breeze.

Vernon-Smith leaned through the window, and peered over the edge of the outer sill.

He could not tell whether his rope reached the ground or no. However, he knew it could not be far short.

"Now for it!" he muttered.

The junior had set himself a desperate task.

The rope of sheets seemed terribly flimsy, and it should become severed during his descent; he would be dashed on to the flagstones of the Close—that would mean death or dismemberment.

But the Bounder didn't give himself time to think of these morbid possibilities.

As he lowered himself, hand under hand, he grazed his knuckles against the wall until they bled. But he scarcely noticed the pain. He was intent upon reaching terra firma.

The rope of sheets was strained almost to breaking-point. But it held together, and the Bounder drew a deep, almost sobbing breath of relief as his feet touched the ground.

He was free!

His plans for the future were hazy in the extreme.

There were several things he had decided not to do. For instance, he would not go home to his father. Neither would he remain in the vicinity of Greyfriars.

But these negative decisions did not help him much.

Where was he to go?

What was he to do?

He was not penniless. He had thought that the "good sports" had relieved him of all his money. Subsequently, however, he had come across a five-pound note, which had somehow slipped beneath the lining of his wallet. But five pounds would not last long.

He paused for a few moments, in a state of irresolution. Then he cautiously made his way towards the box-room window, and clambered through into the school building.

All was still and silent—and in darkness.

The Bounder groped his way to the Remove passage, and entered his study. He switched on the light, and glanced round the apartment.

Everything was as usual.

Standing in the corner was his favourite cricket-bat, with which he had scored a century for the Remove last season.

"I shan't use it again!" muttered the junior, with a sigh.

Vernon-Smith was not sentimental, as a rule. In fact, he secured the sentimental type of fellow.

And yet, as he surveyed his bat, old memories surged up in his mind—fond memories of the green turf and the flannelled schoolboy figures; and a mist swam before his eyes.

Presently he patted himself together.

"This won't do," he exclaimed. "I must get a grip on myself, and forget all these sort of things!"

But it wasn't easy to forget. All around him were numerous reminders of a happy past. A football, a pair of boxing-gloves, photographs of his chums—all these things conspired to remind him of what had gone before.

Then he realised that he was in danger.

Although he surmised that everybody had gone to bed, it was just possible that one of the masters might be patrolling the premises. And if the light in his study was "spotted," his scheme of running away would be nipped in the bud.

He must not linger. Every moment was precious.

On the door-peg his greatcoat hung. He put it on, and then proceeded to rummage in his most treasured possessions.

After which, he donned his school cap and took a last look round the study.

A wistful expression came over the Bounder's face, and again a mist rose before his eyes.

Then he gave a shrug, as if impatient of his own weakness; and, switching off the light, he stepped out into the passage.

A few moments later he was out in the night air again.

There was a biting wind, and a sharp frost was setting in. There was no moon to light the runaway's course.

As he crossed the Close, Vernon-Smith fancied he heard the sound of a footstep.

Instinctively, he quickened his pace, and he lost no time in scaling the school wall.

The Bounder's lithe, athletic form was soon swallowed up in the darkness of the lane.

He walked swiftly until he came to the cross-roads. Here he paused.

"Dashed if I know which way to take!" he muttered. "Still, one road's as good as another, I suppose."

And, with no definite destination in his mind, the runaway struck off along the shore road, which led to the fishing-village of Peeg.

He had taken the plunge. He had made good his escape.

Would his action prove to be for better or worse?

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Trail!

"HALLO!" What's that, I wonder?

Mr. Larry Lascelles, the young mathematics master, stopped short in the Close.

He was making a final tour of inspection before turning in, when he saw something white dangling from one of the upper windows, and swaying in the breeze.

Accordingly he made his way towards it.

Presently he stopped short in blank amazement.

For the fluttering object he had seen was a rope of knotted sheets.

He could not understand at first how it came to be there. And then it dawned upon him that Vernon-Smith must have employed it as a means of escape.

Mr. Lascelles hurried into the building and made his way to the detention-room.

The gloomy apartment was empty.

Vernon-Smith had vanished.

"The reckless young rascal!" muttered Mr. Lascelles. "Fancy escaping by a frail rope of sheets! Why, he might have broken his neck!"

After a moment's reflection he quitted the dreary detention-room.

"I will ascertain if Dr. Locke is still up," he murmured.

The Head was in the act of putting away his papers, prior to retiring for the night, when there was a knock on the door of his study.

Dr. Locke gave a start. He had been sitting up far into the night, writing and studying, and he wondered who could be calling on him at this hour.

"Come in!" he said. "Oh, it is you, Lascelles! I thought you had retired long since! Is—is anything amiss?"

The young master nodded.

"Vernon-Smith has escaped, sir," he said quietly.

"What?"

"By means of a rope of sheets, he lowered himself from the window of the detention-room."

"Bless my soul!"

"He cannot have had much of a start, sir. And if rough-parties are sent out immediately, I think it will be a fairly simple matter to find him and bring him back."

The Head looked grim.

"He must certainly be brought back

without delay, Lascelles. He has sought to escape the shame of a public expulsion, but he shall not escape! His misdeemeanours shall be brought home to him!"

"Shall I arrange about the search-parties, sir?"

"Yes, yes. I leave everything in your hands. As you say, the misguided young rascal cannot have had much of a start, and I have no doubt that he will soon be overtaken."

"You may rely on me to leave no stone unturned, sir," said Mr. Lascelles.

And he hurried away.

It was to Wingate's bed-room that he went.

The captain of Greyfriars was sound asleep, and he had to be vigorously shaken before he opened his eyes.

Larry Lascelles performed the shaking with great thoroughness, and Wingate started up in bed.

"Who—what—?" he gasped.

Mr. Lascelles switched on the electric light, and the drowsy Sixth-Former blinked at him in astonishment.

"Oh, it's you, sir! Is anything the matter?"

"Yes. Vernon-Smith, who was confined to the detention-room, pending a public expulsion, has run away!"

"My hat!"

"He must be brought back at once," said Mr. Lascelles. "It isn't a pleasant sort of night for tracking runaways. I'm afraid. But I have promised Dr. Locke that every effort shall be made to find the misguided young rascal. I want you to organise a search-party of prefects, Wingate. And if you think it necessary, an additional search-party, consisting of juniors, can be formed. I leave this to your discretion."

"This is news to me, sir," said Wingate, getting out of bed—the fact that Smith was under sentence of expulsion, I mean. What had he been up to?"

"He was discovered to-night at a gambling-den in Courtfield."

"Great Scott! I thought the kid had reformed!"

"Evidently his reformation was only of a temporary nature," said Mr. Lascelles dryly.

"He's been going straight for a long time, sir."

"Well, he's broken out again to-night. It only bears out the truth of the old saying that the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots."

"The mad young idiot!" growled Wingate, as he dressed. "He has a topping future before him, if only he played with a straight bat. Now he's been and spoilt everything!"

"Including your beauty-sleep," said Mr. Lascelles, with a smile. "I rely upon you, Wingate, to do your utmost to find the young rascal, and bring him back. He cannot have had more than half an hour's start. Will you report developments to me on your return? I shall be in my study."

"Very well, sir."

Wingate lost no time. Having dressed, he roused Faulkner and Gwynne and Hammersley, of the Sixth. And the comments of that trio, when they heard what had happened, were more emphatic than polite.

The seniors didn't relish quitting their snug beds to go on what might prove to be a wild-goose chase.

"Confound the silly young idiot!" growled Gwynne. "What did he want to sleep off for at an unearthly hour like this? Why couldn't he have left it till the morning?"

"I vote we let him rip!" said Faulkner.

"Rot!" said Wingate. "The kid's got to be found, and brought back. Lascelles says I can form another search-party, of juniors. What do you fellows think?"

"I think it would simplify matters," said Hammersley.

"Same here," said Gwynne.

"Right! While you fellows are getting your tops on, I'll nip along to the Remove dormitory and rout out Wharton and a few others."

Wingate found the Famous Five of the Remove awake—which was not surprising, for Harry Wharton & Co. had had an adventurous night. They had been engaged in a fierce fight with the "good sports" at Courtfield; they had witnessed the bowling-out of the Bomber; and altogether they had plenty to talk about.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as Wingate came into the dormitory. "Anything wrong, Wingate?"

"The captain of Greyfriars explained the situation in a few terse sentences, and the Famous Five were soon scrambling into their clothes."

"Fancy the Bomber bolting!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"I'm not surprised," said Harry Wharton. "I couldn't see him sticking in the detention-room all night. If there were any possible loopholes of escape, trust the Bomber to have found it! Still, we shall have all our work out, out to find him. He's a cute customer."

The Famous Five entered into the search with far greater zest than the seniors.

The juniors regarded it as a great adventure. The Sixth-Formers looked upon it as a beastly nuisance.

A few moments later the whole of the party set out together.

At the cross-roads they separated by mutual consent, the seniors taking the Courtfield road, and the juniors the road to Boggs.

Darkness lay like a pall over the surrounding countryside.

The Famous Five could scarcely see a hand's turn. They tramped out of the unknown into the unknown, and more than once one of them stumbled in a rut, or blundered into the frosty bank which skirted the road.

But they did not falter nor think of turning back. They had pledged themselves to do all in their power to find the runaway, and no thought of failure entered their minds.

Would they succeed in tracking down Vernon-Smith? Or would they return to Greyfriars empty-handed?

The Bomber's fate was in the lap of the gods, and it would be shortly decided one way or the other!

THE END.

(See My Chat for Next Week's Programme. ED.)

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

Address all your letters to: The Editor, MAGNET LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

For Next Monday:

In the next issue of THE MAGNET LIBRARY, there will be another grand, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, entitled:

"THE RUNAWAY'S RETURN!"

By Frank Richards.

In this story we find that Horbert Vernon-Smith, the runaway of Grey-

friars, adopts a strange role. He is well-known as a footballer, and his prowess at the vector sport is put to a test, which ultimately lands him in a very awkward position. However, Vernon-Smith goes through everything in his usual courageous manner, and in the end finds that the world is not such a bad place after all. As the story of

"THE RUNAWAY'S RETURN!"

is a sequel to this week's story, I feel sure you will thoroughly enjoy it.

AN AMAZING AFFAIR!

There is no other way of describing the fracas which occurred in my office this week. As you know, Billy Bunter has been working out the ideas for his "Weekly" in my office, and I have put up with him for some time, because I know that his efforts as a "journalist" will lead to endless fun for my readers.

But a very handsome, sturdy junior from Greyfriars put in an appearance during the week, and I had no difficulty in recognising Harry Wharton. And Harry Wharton was angry—in fact, he was positively ferocious!

"Where's Billy, sir?" he asked quickly.

"Here I am, Wharton, old man!" said Billy, looking up from his desk, which stood in a far corner of my office.

"Good!" said Wharton. "I'll give you 'Weekly', you damn!"

"Not so fast," I said quietly.

And I slipped in between Billy and Harry, and, perforce, the latter had to stop.

"What's the matter, Harry?" I asked.

Harry sank into my armchair, and glared at me as if I was his worst enemy instead of his oldest friend.

"Matter, sir?" he repeated. "My hat! That fat-bounder has brought out a 'Weekly' in opposition to the 'Greyfriars Herald', and the rabbit can't even spell!"

"Oh, I say, Wharton—" began Billy.

But Harry flung a dictionary at him, and Billy, very wisely, lapsed into silence.

"And we're not going to have it, sir," went on Harry. "That's that! If the fat chump could edit something decent, we wouldn't mind! But as he wants to ridicule the whole of the giddy Remove, he's up against it! So I came to tell you, sir, that the 'Greyfriars Herald' is coming into the MAGNET next week, and all the other fellows are hard at work now!"

I hesitated, because Billy Bunter looked very much as if he was in for a bit of the most violent type.

However, after a long argument, I have at last managed to impress upon Billy that perhaps my chums would rather have the "Greyfriars Herald" than "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

"I'll give way this time, sir," he said to me, "but I'm going to have a column in the 'Herald'!"

"I'm agreeable to that," said Harry instantly.

So that is how the matter stands, my chums. Harry Wharton is editing a special supplement for next week's MAGNET, and it will be headed:

"THE 'GREYFRIARS' HERALD!"

You'll find it in the centre of the paper, and I'm sure Harry will turn out something really grand. But, although the sturdy Remove captain thinks that Billy Bunter's paper is "dead," I'm not quite so sure!

Billy Bunter will have something to say before very long—you mark my words!

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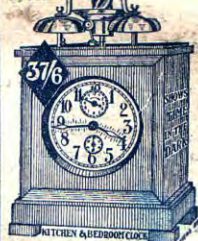
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