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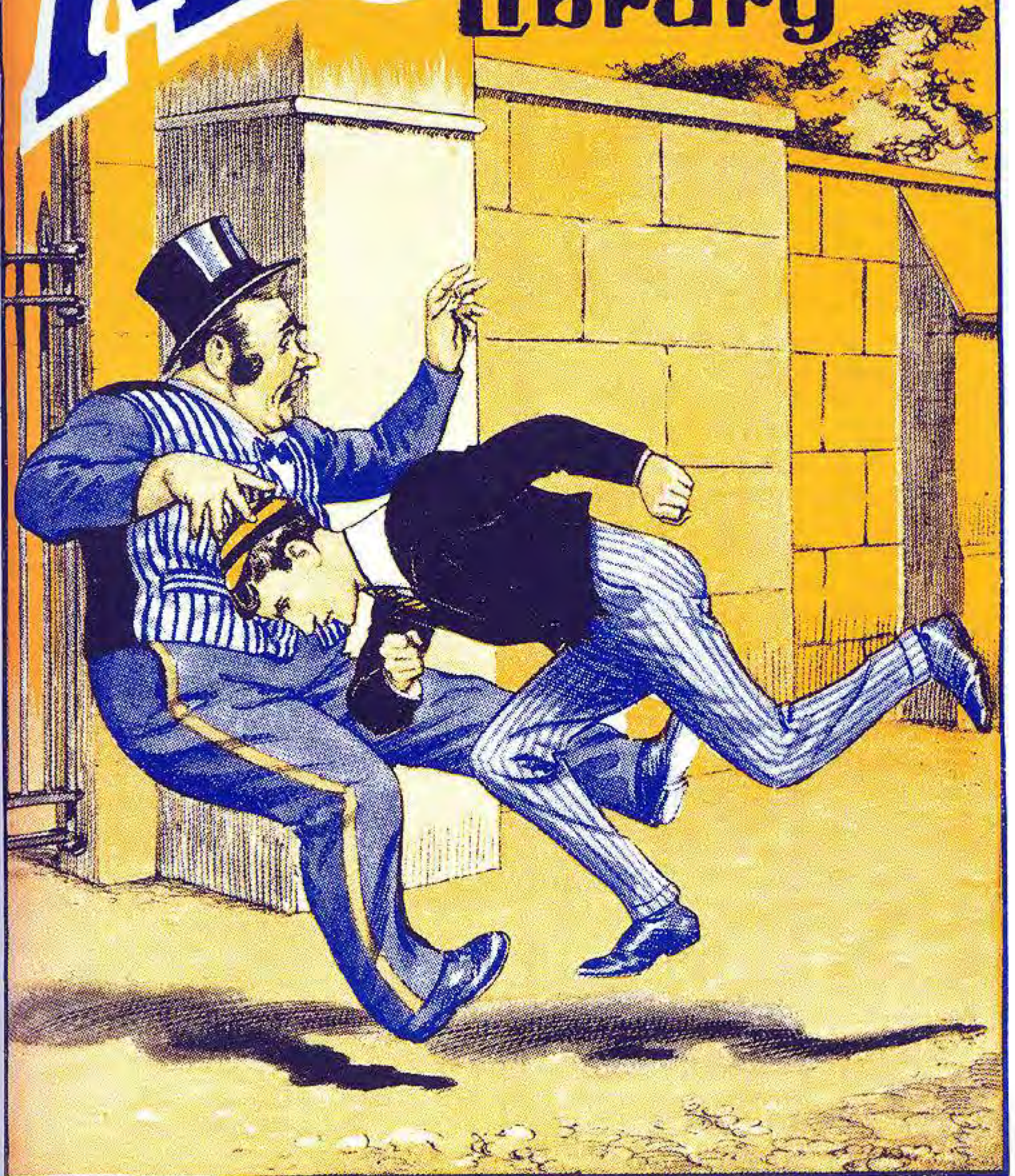
No. 372. Vol. XXX.

Week Ending October 2nd, 1926.

The Magnet 2^d

EVERY MONDAY.

Library



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"THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY."

ON Friday of this week—October 1st—two new numbers of this wonder library of school stories will appear on the bookstalls. No. 37 is an enthralling yarn of Greyfriars, featuring a new boy by the name of Langley. Right well is the story called "The Outsider of Greyfriars!" for Langley is a regular Ishmael. And yet he has some redeeming points in his make-up which interests Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove. Harry sets out to give Langley a helping hand—a task that requires great patience and self-control, for Langley acts in such a manner as to deserve a "helping boot." How Wharton progresses with his self-imposed task you will learn from this splendid book-length school yarn. Mind you read it. No. 38, the companion volume, is entitled "One of the Best!" and it deals with Grimes, the grocer's boy, coming to St. Jim's. Poor old Grimes has a pretty rough time of it, but he wins through. A good yarn, this, chums, and one you should make a point of reading. Don't forget—these two numbers of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" are on sale Friday of this week!

THE FOOTER SUPPLEMENT!

Some few weeks ago I made mention in this Chat of a number of readers who complained about our Football Supplement, and at the same time I asked you chaps to drop me a postcard stating whether you were in favour of seeing the "Greyfriars Herald" revived or letting the "Footer Supplement" continue. Up to date I have received about forty letters, wherein the writers air their views on this subject. I would like some of you other chaps to pile in with a postcard, if you don't mind. You see, the forty letters to hand show a divided front amongst Magnetites, with little advantage when a count has been taken to one side or the other.

DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS!

Does this announcement in the heavy type above make your mouth water? Well, if it does, I strongly urge you to bag a copy of this week's "Gem." In it you will find a Tuck Hamper coupon entitling the holder to try his skill at winning a delicious Tuck Hamper. Now these hampers are well worth winning, and all you have to do, once you have secured the necessary coupon is to jot down a good joke on a postcard and send it along. Easy enough, isn't it? Get a copy of our grand companion paper, the "Gem," to-day and make up your minds to enter this fascinating contest.

Next Monday's Programme!

"ASKING FOR TROUBLE!"

By Frank Richards.

Hazeldene of the Remove, the wayward young brother of Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House, figures in this story. As I know these yarns are always well received, I don't hesitate to recommend next week's real treat of a story. Mind you read it!

"THE BOY WITH A MILLION POUND SECRET!"

By David Goodwin.

There will be another ripping instalment of this amazing story, featuring the adventures of young Tommy Combar on Curlew Island. Tommy's job is a dangerous one—how dangerous he has yet to learn. But he's real grit, is Tommy, and simply revels in danger. You'll like next week's trenchant instalment, chums.

MORE MONEY PRIZES!

Watch also for the Result of "Boundaries" Competition No. 8, which will appear in next week's issue.

THE FOOTER SUPPLEMENT.

Then there's the special four-page supplement. You'll like it, you footer fans, for Sidney Puddefoot, the famous International inside-right of Blackburn Rovers, contributes a well-thought-out article dealing with the encouragement of youth in the greatest of all winter games. Order your copy early.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE TEST!—Tom Redwing, the scholarship junior, would go through fire and water to save his pal, Vernon-Smith. He even risks expulsion to save the Bounder from his own folly!

Chums— through Thick and Thin!



A Magnificent New, Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars, introducing the Bounder and his pal Tom Redwing.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Helping Hand!

"SMITHY!" Harold Skinner called out the name as Vernon-Smith came along the Remove passage at Greyfriars with a football under his arm.

The Bounder stopped.

"Well?"

"Can you spare a minute, Smithy?" asked Skinner, in a low voice.

"Just a minute," replied the Bounder tersely. "I'm already late for the footer!"

"I want to ask your advice on—about something," said Skinner; and the Bounder noticed his pale face and the unnatural glitter in his eyes.

"Get it off your chest, then!"

The cad of the Remove looked about him nervously.

"I—I—we can't talk here," he said, licking his dry lips. "Will you come up to the study?"

Vernon-Smith frowned. He was already five minutes late for footer practice, and Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, was a stickler for punctuality. Added to which the Bounder had no particular desire to waste another five minutes talking to Harold Skinner. It was on the tip of his tongue to give a refusal when he caught another glimpse of Skinner's strained features.

"Oh, all right, Skinner!" he said good-naturedly. "Lead on!"

Harold Skinner led the way into Study No. 11, and the Bounder followed him in. Snoop and Stott, Skinner's study-mates, were not in evidence.

As soon as the Bounder was inside the study Skinner crossed to the door and locked it.

"What's the game?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"It's all right, Smithy," Skinner hastened to explain. "But I don't want anyone barging in here while we are talking."

He stopped and looked at the Bounder as if he would read what was passing behind the mask of cynicism that as a general rule cloaked Vernon-Smith's features.

The Bounder seated himself on the edge of the table and waited.

"Well?" he said at length. "Get it

off your chest, Skinner! What do you want?"

"I'm in a hole!" said the cad of the Remove; and his eyes dropped before the suspicion of scorn in the Bounder's face.

"I guessed as much!" remarked Vernon-Smith, swinging his legs to and fro. "Somethin' gone wrong with the giddy gees—what? Or was Banks too clever for you at poker?"

"You needn't rub it in!" said Skinner, looking up. "It's not such a jolly long time ago since you went the pace!"

The Bounder winced.

He little liked to be reminded of his past—of the days when he had smoked cigarettes, gambled on horses, played nap and poker for high stakes. True he had done with them. He had seen the error of his ways; had realised that playing the goat could only mean one thing—the sack—and had forsaken the crooked path and reformed. His reformation had been the surprise of the Lower School; but it had lasted for all that, although Skinner & Co., his former associates, opined among themselves that Smithy's reform was bunkum.

A slight grin flickered across Skinner's face as he noted the frown that had settled on the Bounder's brow.

"You don't like to be reminded of those days, do you, Smithy?"

"Well, if that's all you want to talk to me about, Skinner," said Smithy, "I'll be going!"

"Hang on! I haven't told you about things yet. I—I'm in a hole!"

"So you said before," remarked the Bounder carelessly. "As you're so dashed clever, I should think you're quite capable of getting out of it yourself!"

"But I'm stony!" said Skinner, with an expressive gesture. "And—and Banks holds an I.O.U. of mine for eight pounds!"

Vernon-Smith whistled.

"Well, you are an ass!"

"I know that," said Skinner quietly. "But if I don't redeem that I.O.U. by Friday, Banks is coming up to the school to see the Head."

"Let him come, then!" said the Bounder. "I expect he's bluffing you, old bean!"

"I daren't defy him!" muttered the

cad of the Remove. "You see, he's already been promised payment half a dozen times. He's real waxy now. He says that if I don't square up by Friday evening he'll come along to the school on Saturday. That'll mean expulsion for me!"

"Well, you knew that before you started playing the giddy ass!" remarked the Bounder scornfully. "You are like the rest of the 'sportsmen'! You go on playing with fire until you get burnt!"

"Will—you will you lend me the eight pounds, Smithy?" asked Skinner, writhing inwardly under the lash of the Bounder's tongue.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"I haven't got eight pounds!" he replied. "And if I had, I don't think I should be inclined to give it that rotter, Banks!"

Skinner's jaw dropped. He had counted on Vernon-Smith's help; for the Bounder, son of a millionaire, was the richest junior in the Lower School.

"I was relying on you, Smithy!"

"I don't see why you should," said the Bounder. "We are not friends. You and I parted company when I chucked up playing the giddy goat! Why don't you go to Snoop and Stott?"

"They're both stony!"

"Well, so am I just now," said the Bounder. "And I sha'n't be getting another remittance from the gov'nor until next week!"

"Then I'm done!" gasped Skinner; and he sat down in the armchair and clasped his head in his hands.

The Bounder watched him, unmoved, for some seconds. He had all a strong fellow's dislike of weakness in others. He had never whimpered when a blow was about to fall. But, then, the Bounder was a vastly different character from the shrinking figure in the armchair.

Suddenly Skinner's shoulders began to heave. Then the tears began to course down his fingers.

"I'm not going through with it!" he exclaimed passionately, rising to his feet. "I'm not staying here to be sacked! If you don't help me, Smithy, I'm going to bolt! Oh, if—if only I had another chance!"

The Bounder slid from the table. The scornful smile had gone from his face.

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face now. He eyed the shrinking figure of the cad of the Remove contemptuously.

"I wonder if you would make anything of another chance?" he mused, half aloud.

"I would, really!" exclaimed Skinner. "I know I've played the fool!"

"Well, that's somethin'!"

"I realised that the other night when I came out of the Cross Keys," continued Skinner. "I nearly bumped into Quelchy. I just got back to the school in time."

The Bounder whistled.

"As near as that, eh? Well, you are a fool, Skinner! And I gave you credit once for being clever! But cut out that sob stuff and let's have the facts. You owe Banks eight quids?"

Skinner nodded, and regained some of his composure, like all weak characters, as he began to see the responsibility of his own misdeeds shifted on to someone else's shoulders.

"I lost it at poker," he said. "That rotter, Banks, was swindling! He always swindles!"

"And that's why you have played with him," said the Bounder contemptuously. "You imagined yourself capable of beating Banks at his own game, but he proved to be a bigger sharper than you are—what?"

Skinner winced, and the Bounder continued:

"But if you really mean what you say—if you will throw up this silly rot with cards and the gee-gees—I'll do what I can for you," he said.

"You're a brick, Smithy!" said Skinner hoarsely. "I do mean it! I'll start afresh. Honour bright I will!"

"Let it go at that!" said the Bounder dryly. "Don't overdo it, Skinner! This isn't the first time, remember, I've heard you say this!"

"But I do mean it!" exclaimed Skinner; and at that moment Harold Skinner undoubtedly meant what he said. "Look!"

He crossed the room and took out two boxes of cigarettes from the bookcase. Then he took a pack of playing-cards from the study table drawer.

The Bounder eyed him with interest. "What are you going to do with those things?" he asked.

"I'm going to destroy them," said Skinner, "as a proof of good faith."

Vernon-Smith stretched out a hand. "I'll take them," he said. "They'll be destroyed—I'll promise you that!"

Skinner handed over the cigarettes and the cards, and the Bounder tucked them away under his arms.

"I must be going now," he said. "Wharton will be slanging me for dodging practice!"

"You'll do what you can for me?" asked Skinner anxiously, as the Bounder moved for the door. "You said you would."

"When I say a thing I mean it!" replied Vernon-Smith shortly. "It's a tip worth remembering. Leave it to me!"

Skinner unlocked the door, and Vernon-Smith passed out, a puckered frown on his brow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's stentorian voice boomed along the passage. "Going to be all day, Smithy?"

"Sorry if I've kept you fellows waiting!" apologised the Bounder, as he walked along with Bob Cherry. "But I had a bit of business to see to. Hang on a minute!"

He darted into his study and slipped the cigarettes and the cards he had

taken from Skinner into the study table drawer. Then he rejoined Bob Cherry.

Five minutes later Vernon-Smith was on Little Side, and as he was a first-class footballer it occasioned no little surprise when on three occasions he failed to pick up a pass that a veriest novice at the game would have mastered.

"What's wrong, Smithy?" asked Wharton. "Off colour?"

The Bounder pulled himself together. He had allowed his mind to dwell too much on Harold Skinner's trouble. But had he known then the extent of the burden he had taken on to his shoulders he would doubtless have regretted his action. But no such gloomy thoughts entered his mind after Wharton had spoken to him. Skinner's debt to Banks, the bookie, was forgotten then. And the next ball that fell at his feet was dribbled a few yards up the field and passed to Bob Cherry with all the old ease and grace that had made the Bounder's reputation as a footballer.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Knows!

"THE beast!"

Billy Bunter's round little eyes fairly gleamed with indignation.

The Owl of the Remove was in the window seat by the School House steps, to all intents and purposes admiring the view of the Close beyond. As a matter of actual fact, however, Billy Bunter was watching Vernon-Smith.

"The rotter! When is he going out?"

Billy Bunter peered along the passage for the Bounder. But the passage, like the celebrated cupboard of Mother Hubbard's, was bare. Most of the Greyfriars fellows were out in the open—on the river, or the playing-fields. But Vernon-Smith, Bunter knew, was somewhere in the House. And, what was more to the point, the Bounder had a whacking plum-cake with almond icing on the top.

And the cake reposed in Vernon-Smith's study!

Bunter knew that. Indeed, there was little he did not know about the things that went on in Greyfriars. But it was little comfort to know of the existence of the cake unless Bunter could lay his fat paws on it. And a fellow couldn't help himself to another fellow's cake if the other fellow was knocking about in the vicinity of the cake. That was how Bunter wisely looked at it, and doubtless he was right from a point of view of safety first.

Really it was too bad! Bunter had specially renounced his intention of following Wibley & Co. up the river that afternoon with the faint hope of being in "at the death" when Wibley & Co. settled down to enjoy the contents of their picnic-basket—perhaps for the simple reason that Wibley had threatened the Owl of the Remove with a ducking if he had the nerve to follow them. Bunter had renounced both prospects for a better one—namely, Vernon-Smith's plum-cake.

"Ah!"

Billy Bunter uttered the ejaculation with satisfaction, for he had caught sight of Bob Cherry coming across the Close, and it was clear to the Owl of the Remove that Bob Cherry was coming in search of Vernon-Smith, who was due at Little Side for footer practice.

"Hallo, porpoise!" said Bob Cherry, as he mounted the steps. "Have you seen Smithy?"

"I think he went off with Skinner," said Bunter.

"What the thump does he want to go out with Skinner for when there's a practice on?"

"Oh, he didn't go out of gates!" said Bunter. "I expect Smithy's in his study."

Bunter wasn't quite certain on that point because a bend in the passage hid the door of the Bounder's study from view, but he knew that Skinner had stopped Vernon-Smith and walked back with him.

"The slacker!" growled Bob Cherry, and he passed on with energetic strides.

He came back along the passage a few moments later, this time accompanied by Vernon-Smith. Bunter smacked his lips in anticipation. That wonderful plum-cake with the almond icing on it was much nearer his grasp now. Smithy would be down at the practice for about half an hour—time enough to do the disappearing trick with that cake to a fellow of Bunter's gastronomic abilities.

He watched Bob Cherry and the Bounder until they were out of sight, then he rolled from the window seat in the direction of Study No. 4. Tom Redwing, the Bounder's studymate, Bunter knew, was spending the afternoon with his father down at Hawks-cliff, so the coast was clear.

Billy Bunter opened the door of Study No. 4 and rolled to the study cupboard. He tried the handle, but the door was locked.

"The suspicious beast!" he muttered. "One would think Smithy didn't trust the fellows in his Form. Low, I call it!"

The fat Owl of the Remove called it several other things as his repeated efforts to open the cupboard door met with no success. By this time perspiration was streaming down his fat face, for the afternoon was warm and muggy.

"Blow the rotten thing!" he gasped at last. "For two pins I'd smash it in with a blessed poker! But that suspicious beast Smithy might think I was trying to pinch something."

He glared savagely at the offending cupboard, and then a fat grin broke over his face.

"Fishy's the man!" he muttered.

To think was to act with Bunter—when a plum-cake with almond icing on it was at stake. Accordingly he rolled out of Study No. 4 in search of Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

Bunter found him at home in Study No. 13 sucking at a pencil. There was a worried look on Fisher T. Fish's face, and the study table was littered with sheets of paper covered with figures in the American junior's scrawling hand. The business man of the Remove was busy, being at great pains to account for a halfpenny in his accounts that had somehow or other gone astray. The loss of a halfpenny gave Fishy a pain, unto which by comparison the drawing of a tooth was a pleasure.

Billy Bunter blinked in.

"I say, Fishy—"

Fisher T. Fish looked up impatiently. "Buzz off, you fat guy!" he snorted.

"I'm busy, I guess!"

"But, I say, Fishy, old man—"

"There's the door!" snapped the business man of the Remove. "Get!"

Billy Bunter advanced farther into the study.

Fisher T. Fish, who had returned his attention to his arithmetical problem, looked up irritably.

"See hyer, you fat clam," he snorted, "if you don't get out of this study in two seconds, I guess and calculate



"Atchoooooo!" Mr. Quelch nearly jumped from the floor as that loud sneeze echoed through the study. "Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Who was that?" Involuntarily Vernon-Smith turned and plucked at the table cover, forgetful of the playing cards and cigarettes exposed to view. But he remembered them even as he recognised the fat figure crouching under the table. "Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch. (See Chapter 3.)

there'll be a dead guy knocking around here."

"But, I say, Fishy—"

The Transatlantic junior picked up an ebony ruler and waved it threateningly. Bunter eyed the ruler apprehensively, but there was one word that always conciliated Fisher Tarleton Fish. The Owl of the Remove made use of it now.

"Business—" he blurted out.

The ruler stopped waving, and Fisher T. Fish's sharp features broke into a smile.

"If you've come hyer on business, Bunter, why didn't you say so at first?"

"Really, Fishy!" protested Bunter. "You'll never make a business man if you greet all your clients like that! I want to borrow your keys."

Fisher T. Fish's face set like a hatchet at once.

"Waal, I guess that'll cost you twopence, Bunter," he remarked. "Let's see the colour of your money."

Fisher T. Fish made quite a business of lending out a bunch of assorted keys, to fellows who had mislaid theirs and who wanted to open their study doors or cupboards. Uncharitable people like Skinner & Co. hinted that the keys Fisher T. Fish loaned out at twopence an hour originally belonged to the fellows who eventually came to borrow them on those terms. But Fisher T. Fish was not moved by such remarks. He was a man of business, as he himself declared, "right from the word go."

"Pay up and look sharp!" said the Transatlantic junior, eyeing Bunter shrewdly. "If you want to borrow my

keys for an hour I guess you'll have to pony up twopence. And that's cheap, sirree! Yep!"

"Really, Fishy!" said Bunter. "I think you ought to oblige a pal over a small thing like that, for nothing."

Fisher T. Fish replaced the keys he had taken from his pocket.

"Nothing doing, you fat clam!" he retorted. "Get out!"

Bunter's fat hand dived down into his trousers pocket, and drew to light a penny. Fisher T. Fish sniffed as he saw it.

"Make it half-price to oblige a pal, Fishy," said Bunter. "I shall only want the mouldy keys for five minutes!"

"I guess my terms are twopence an hour, you galoot!" replied Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon you can take 'em, or leave 'em."

Bunter snorted, and again his podgy hand explored the pockets of his trousers. This time a half-penny came to light. Fishy's face brightened up a trifle.

"Look here, Fishy," exclaimed Bunter, "that's all I've got. I'll give you three half-pence for the loan of your blessed keys!"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head, albeit he was considering the problem. Business was none too flourishing with him just then, and three half-pence was not to be sneezed at. The whole bunch of keys, which he had purchased from Solly Lazarus, at Courtfield, had only cost him a penny. After all, business was business.

"Look hyer, Bunter," he said, bringing to light the keys for a second time. "I guess I'll meet you. You're an old customer. I guess you can have these keys for three half-pence. That's a generous offer, I calculate. Mind, I'm not asking you what you want them for. Is it a bargain?"

Billy Bunter's mind was made up on the instant. After all, three-halfpence was a cheap price to pay for a plum cake with almond icing on it. He handed over the three-halfpence and received in exchange the bunch of rusty keys. He knew from past experience that one of them would fit the Bunder's study cupboard.

Fisher T. Fish pocketed the three-halfpence with a business-like smile and settled down to track the whereabouts of that mysterious missing halfpenny in his accounts. Meantime, Bunter rolled away in the direction of the Bunder's study.

He soon found a key to fit the cupboard lock, and at last the big plum cake was exposed to view.

The Owl of the Remove eyed it with satisfaction.

"This is prime," he muttered, as he helped himself to a generous portion. "After all, I don't suppose Smithy will mind. I'll let him have a whack of my cake when the mater sends me one."

That was a generous reflection on the part of William George Bunter, but it stood as little chance of being fulfilled as Bunter stood of ever being captain of Greyfriars. Meantime, the plum cake

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and the almond icing were rapidly disappearing into Bunter's capacious jaws.

The last piece was clasped in the Owl's fat hand. Being a last piece, he was torn between the desire of keeping it a little longer to feast his eyes on it or devouring it and feasting his inner man on it, so to speak, when the passage without echoed to the tread of feet.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped. In that awful moment, even the cake was forgotten, for Bunter realised that the Remove footballers were coming in from practice. And Vernon-Smith was sure to be among them.

"Oh, lor!"

The Owl of the Remove was tempted to make a bolt for it, but he realised that he would never be able to get clear of the study in time. He glared about him like a hunted rabbit, and his eyes finally alighted on the study table. A big, expensive-looking table cover drooped over it, its ample folds almost touching the floor.

Hurriedly slamming the cupboard door to, Bunter rolled under the table, his fat heart beating like a steam hammer. Barely had he crouched himself into as small a space as his ample circumference would allow than the door opened and Vernon-Smith came in, a football under his arm.

Flinging the ball into the corner of the study, Vernon-Smith sat down in the armchair. His thoughts turned to Skinner and his I.O.U. given to Banks the bookmaker. And, as a natural consequence, they switched from these things to the cigarettes and playing-cards he had taken from Harold Skinner.

"I'll get rid of these things now," muttered the Bounder.

He crossed to the table, quite oblivious of the fact that Billy Bunter trembled beneath it, and opened the table drawer. The two boxes of cigarettes and the playing-cards were withdrawn and placed on the table cover. For some minutes, Vernon-Smith stood staring down at them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rough on the Bounder!

TAP!

He was aroused from his reverie as a tap came at the study door. The Bounder's first thought was to shove the cards and the cigarettes into the drawer again, but he had no chance. The door opened and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, stepped into the study.

Vernon-Smith felt a horrible sensation run through him. What would his Form-master think if he saw those incriminating cards and cigarettes? But the Bounder's coolness returned on the instant. He moved forward, taking up a position in front of the table that completely screened the cards and cigarettes from view.

"Ah, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "I want a few words with you."

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder wonderingly. "Won't you sit down?"

The Form-master declined the invitation, however, and the Bounder was quick to see the serious expression on Mr. Quelch's face. He knew that look usually preceded some disturbing news.

"It has been reported to me, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch, "that a Lower School boy is in the habit of

visiting that disreputable tavern, the Cross Keys."

"Indeed, sir?"

The Form-master eyed Vernon-Smith piercingly, but he read no sign there save a slight boredom.

"I myself," continued the Form-master, "saw a junior boy leaving the precincts of that disgusting haunt the night before last, but he managed to elude me."

"Indeed, sir?" said the Bounder coolly. "And may I ask what all this has to do with me?"

Mr. Quelch coughed and paused before he replied.

"I—ahem—wanted to satisfy myself upon a certain point," he said. "I can think of no boy in the Remove being rascal enough to visit the Cross Keys. But I distinctly saw a junior boy leaving the place the night before last."

Mr. Quelch paused and noted the cynical grin that began to appear on Vernon-Smith's face, for the Bounder intuitively guessed what had brought the Remove master to his study.

"I have no wish to dig up the past, Vernon-Smith," went on Mr. Quelch kindly. "At the same time, I cannot forget that at one time in your career you were a notorious breaker of bounds, a boy with misguided principles, a boy who seemed to show an unwholesome interest in gambling and smoking—"

The Form-master paused a moment.

Vernon-Smith bit his lip and fumed inwardly. Those words of his Form-master's, innocently meant, undoubtedly, brought all the worst in him to the surface. Once again he was the hard case, the reckless Bounder, the boy who defied authority. Mr. Quelch, not knowing the workings of Vernon-Smith's complex character, went on.

"I have no wish to revive these unpleasant memories, my boy," he said, "for I believe you have proved yourself to be almost a model character since your—ahem—reform."

"Thank you, sir," said the Bounder sarcastically. "That is why you come to me now?"

The Form-master took no notice of the veiled impertinence.

"But, as a master, and as one responsible for the moral welfare of my charges," he continued, "I must ask you a straight question concerning these things, Vernon-Smith. I know you to be a lad of truthful character. That, you always were, when, doubtless, prevarication would have helped you to evade your just punishment."

"You honour me," said Vernon-Smith with a curl of the lip.

"Ahem! Vernon-Smith, tell me frankly, are you the boy I narrowly escaped detaining the other night coming from the Cross Keys?"

For a moment the Bounder was tempted to remain silent. After all, why should he be catechised like this? Was his reform only reckoned a sham in his Form-master's eyes? Did it all mean nothing? If so, far better for him to have continued on the downward path! Why should he be under this suspicion, for that's what it amounted to?

Mr. Quelch, unaware of the torrent of questions chasing their way through Vernon-Smith's brain, unaware of the old defiant character waging war with the Bounder's better self, the reformed self, waited grimly.

The Bounder looked up at last and faced his Form-master squarely. His eyes, although they gleamed rebellion, were honest and truthful. Even Mr.

Quelch had given him the benefit of that doubt. Whatever he said would be believed.

"I am not the boy, sir!"

"Thank you, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch. "Please don't misunderstand my intention in asking you such a question. Had you replied in the affirmative, I should have endeavoured to point out to you the folly of such habits without—ahem—referring the matter to Dr. Locke."

"You are very good, sir!" Sarcasm literally blazed through the Bounder's words.

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips. He realised then more fully than he had ever done before what a difficult character Vernon-Smith was to deal with.

Meantime, Billy Bunter under the table fairly quivered with excitement. His terror at being discovered by Vernon-Smith had been displaced by an interest in the proceedings going on around him. He listened with ears wide open.

"I have kept a very close eye on your progress," went on Mr. Quelch, determined not to take offence at the Bounder's insolent attitude. "I have seen you play cricket and football. I have observed your friendship with Wharton and with Redwing, and have been gratified to see so wholesome a change in you. It is my sincere wish that you shall continue on this new course, for you are a boy of great character and of much influence upon your Form fellows either for good or bad. I—"

"Atchoooooooooooooo!"

Mr. Quelch nearly jumped from the floor as that loud sneeze echoed through the study, and Vernon-Smith was no less startled. Neither of them knew at that moment that the sneeze proceeded from William George Bunter, or that that fat youth was secreted beneath the table.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Who was that?"

"Atchoooooooooooooooooooooo!"

Involuntarily Vernon-Smith turned and plucked at the table-cover, forgetful, for the moment, of the playing-cards and the box of cigarettes. But he remembered them even as he recognised the figure crouching beneath the table.

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Boy! What are you doing there?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"What?" thundered the master of the Remove. "Come out at once!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Owl of the Remove laboriously crawled out from under the table, and, seeing that the Form master's eyes were upon Bunter, Vernon-Smith quickly gathered up the ends of the table-cover in a bundle.

He heaved an inward sigh of relief as the cards and cigarettes disappeared from view, for it had been evident to him that thus far Mr. Quelch's eagle eye hadn't observed them.

But the Remove master had observed the Bounder's action in gathering up the table-cover, and he eyed the junior in some surprise as he stood there holding it before him like a sack.

"What are you doing, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch, his attention for the moment being withdrawn from Billy Bunter.

"Holding the table cover, sir."

"So I perceive," remarked Mr. Quelch dryly. "One might almost imagine that you had something to conceal from me," he added.

Vernon-Smith's face never changed its

expression, although his brain was busy trying to invent a satisfactory answer to that leading question.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Was there anything on that table cover you wished to conceal from me?" he asked grimly.

Vernon-Smith was silent.

"Come! Speak up, my boy."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders and took the plunge.

"Yes, sir," he said, biting his lip.

The Remove master's brow grew dark.

"Replace the cover on the table, Vernon-Smith," he said quietly.

The Bounder did so. The cards and the cigarettes were now exposed to view.

Billy Bunter so far forgot his own unenviable position as to let out an ejaculation of surprise as these astonishing things came to light.

"Oh, my hat!"

But Mr. Quelch turned on him sharply.

"Leave this study, Bunter!" he said grimly. "And take five hundred lines for eavesdropping."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

But he did not linger in Study No. 4. The war clouds on Quelch's brow told him plainly that there was trouble for someone.

He scuttled outside and rolled off down the passage eager to spread the news of what was happening in the Bounder's study. When he was gone Mr. Quelch turned grimly on Vernon-Smith.

"Kindly explain these things, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder faced his Form master resolutely.

"There is nothing to explain, sir."

Mr. Quelch's brow grew thunderous.

"How dare you give me that answer?" he rapped. "Those playing-cards and cigarettes belong to you, I suppose?"

"I am responsible for their presence here," said the Bounder quietly.

"Don't bandy words with me, sir!" stormed Mr. Quelch. "Those things belong either to you or your studymate, Redwing—"

"Redwing has nothing to do with them, sir," broke in the Bounder quietly. "I have said I am responsible."

"Vernon-Smith, you know playing-cards are forbidden at Greyfriars? You are well aware that smoking is forbidden, and yet I find you with these things in your possession. What have you to say in explanation?"

Vernon-Smith bit his lip. He had no explanation. He couldn't say that these things rightly belonged to Skinner, for that would be sneaking. Besides, it would be unfair to drag Skinner's name into the matter, having pledged his word to help him. And the Bounder was a fellow of his word, cost him what it might. He smiled bitterly, however, as he realised into what a mess his good nature had plunged him, and at the same time censured himself for not having destroyed those incriminating proofs of Skinner's sporty ways earlier.

"I am waiting for an answer, boy," said the Remove master sternly.

"I have no explanation to offer sir," said the Bounder, "beyond the fact that I have no use for these things; that I am not in the habit of using them."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"Do you expect me to believe that story, Vernon-Smith?" he asked coldly.

The Bounder's face grew more obstinate in its expression.

"You may please yourself about that, sir," he answered coolly.

He finished his remark with an expressive gesture, and his coolness, his impertinence, as Mr. Quelch considered it, made the Remove master clench his hands. He would have dearly liked to box the junior's ears at that moment.

"You are not telling me the truth, boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch at last. "If you are not in the habit of smoking and playing cards why are these things here?"

"I was about to destroy them," answered the Bounder, with a faint grin.

"I do not believe you."

"With all due respect, sir," said the Bounder coolly, "I must express my surprise at the swift way in which you change your mind. A few moments ago you were good enough to tell me that you considered me a truthful fellow. Now you say I am untruthful—"

"You are impertinent, Vernon-Smith!"

Again the Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

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"I am sorry if you think so, Mr. Quelch," he said. "But, really, I have nothing to gain by being untruthful. You have found these cigarettes and playing-cards here; I have admitted my responsibility. I am not trying to evade my punishment," he added, with a sneer.

"Very well, Vernon-Smith," said the Remove master grimly. "You will be punished. Follow me to my study."

The master of the Remove gathered up the cigarettes and playing-cards and strode out of the study, with rustling gown and frowning face. A group of Removites, drawn to the scene by the wild story Bunter had poured into their ears, scattered like chaff before the wind, however, as Mr. Quelch swept by. But they returned as Study No. 4 opened a second time and Vernon-Smith, a mocking grin on his face, lounged out.

"What's up, Smithy?" asked Ogilvy. The Bounder stopped.

"I'm going to be caned for being a good boy," he replied. "Quelch thinks it will do me good, you know."

He passed on down the passage at an easy pace. Suddenly he felt a touch on

his arm. It was Harold Skinner. The cad of the Remove was feeling very uneasy. He had heard the story of "Quelch's find" from Billy Bunter, and he knew that the cigarettes and the playing-cards were those the Bounder had taken from him earlier in the afternoon.

"I say, Smithy!"

The Bounder stopped.

"You didn't tell Quelch—" began Skinner anxiously.

"I did not," snapped the Bounder.

He was not in the mood then to talk to Harold Skinner, and the cad of the Remove, feeling much more relieved in his mind, faded away into the crowd of Removites.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Glimpse of the "Old" Bounder!

VERNON-SMITH tapped at the door of Mr. Quelch's study, and, without waiting for an answer, lounged in. The master of the Remove was waiting for him, cane in hand.

"I will not attempt to point out to you the error of your ways by talking to you, Vernon-Smith—"

"Thank you, sir!" grinned the Bounder. "I believe I remarked before how swiftly you change your mind."

Mr. Quelch's brow grew dark. Really this junior was incorrigible.

"Hold out your hand, boy!"

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish!

Not a sound escaped the Bounder as he received three cuts on each hand, although Mr. Quelch laid them on with excessive vigour; not a flicker of the pain he felt was registered in the Bounder's features. If anything, a scornful grin lurked round the corners of his mouth, and Mr. Quelch, irritated beyond measure by the junior's indifference, wished at that moment that he could have administered another "six."

He laid down the cane at last, breathing a trifle hard.

Vernon-Smith eyed him coolly.

"May I go now, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose.

"You may not!" he replied. "Since my faith in your reform, Vernon-Smith, seems to be misplaced, I must take steps to prevent you breaking the rules of the school. You are, until further orders, forbidden to leave the school precincts."

The Bounder's eyes blazed. Gated till further orders! Not allowed to leave the school grounds! And all for nothing! It did not take him long to see that Mr. Quelch now suspected him to be the junior whom he had seen coming from the Cross Keys. The master of the Remove hadn't said so in as many words, but his action in detaining the junior was clear enough to the shrewd-headed Bounder.

He was under suspicion.

At the thought, all the old, reckless, rebellious nature rose to the surface. His reform was regarded as a sham. It had been hard enough to live down the old life, the Bounder reflected bitterly. Many another fellow would have caved in and thrown up the sponge. But he had stuck to his guns; he had faced the sneers of his old shady associates; he had reinstated himself in the good opinions of the fellows who counted in the Remove. He had won his way to the front on the playing-fields, instead of slacking and smoking, as he had done in

the old days. And all this counted for nought.

Under suspicion!

He was the old Bounder again at that moment. The sneer on his face, the hard light in his eyes, recalled to Mr. Quelch the junior who had been the worry of his life in the old days. Hot, angry words trembled on the Bounder's lips, and they tumbled out in a biting torrent.

"You have no right to gate me!" he exclaimed passionately. "It's unfair! You infer that I was the boy you saw coming from the Cross Keys!"

Mr. Quelch's face hardened.

"To be perfectly frank, Vernon-Smith, I do. I hope I am not doing you an injustice!"

"Injustice!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "You don't know the meaning of the term!"

"Boy, how dare you speak to me like that?" thundered the master of the Remove, and, involuntarily, his hand strayed towards the cane again.

The Bounder's lip curled.

"But for the fact that you have just received a caning," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "I would impress upon you the necessity of speaking with respect to your Form master!"

"I don't care that much for your cane," replied the Bounder, snapping his fingers. "You can cane me for saying what I think, but you can't stop me thinking it!"

"Really, you are impossible!" exclaimed the master of the Remove angrily. "I shall seriously consider making a report of your conduct to Dr. Locke."

"Report, then!" exclaimed the Bounder defiantly. "I shall get justice from him!"

"Kindly leave this study, Vernon-Smith!" Mr. Quelch's voice was harsh.

At that moment the Remove master didn't trust himself; and the Bounder knew how near he was to receiving the caning of his life. But the prospect did not frighten him. In fact, it pleased him to think that afterwards he would be able to enjoy the remorse Mr. Quelch would feel when, in a calm moment, he reflected that he had exceeded his powers of administering corporal punishment.

Perhaps the Remove master read something of the thoughts that chased their way through the Bounder's brain. He pointed to the door.

"Go!"

The Bounder lingered, an irritating challenge smiling in his hard features.

"I will go," he said. "But I do not consider myself under detention! You have no right—"

"Go!" Mr. Quelch thundered the command. All his compelling character seemed to be conveyed in that word, and the Bounder felt an uneasy thrill run down his spine. It was not safe to play with Mr. Quelch any longer.

With a shrug of the shoulders the Remove turned on his heel, and lounged out of the study, shutting the door with a slam that awakened the echoes in the corridor, that made Mr. Quelch bite his lip in justifiable anger.

Vernon-Smith would answer for his insolence at a future date, and Mr. Quelch, good-hearted man as he was as a rule, rebelled at the authority which forbade him to administer more than six strokes of the cane to a recalcitrant junior. His obvious course was to report Vernon-Smith to the Head, which would mean a flogging and perhaps expulsion for the rebellious junior.

But, even in his anger Mr. Quelch was kind-hearted and considerate enough to

refrain from adopting that drastic measure. Besides, Dr. Locke was in none too good a state of health just then. He would deal with Vernon-Smith himself; he would break down that obstinate, rebellious nature—strip it of its vice, and rebuild it. Little did he think just then that he was responsible for resurrecting the old "Bounder"—that it was his injustice which had brought out the worst side of Vernon-Smith's character.

Mr. Quelch sighed as he sorted some papers on his desk, for he was a man of peace, and he knew that an unpleasant task lay before him. Vernon-Smith would have to be watched. He must be made to understand that a master's word was law, that a master must be treated with respect.

And Mr. Quelch sighed again as he realised that what appeared to be quite easy of accomplishment in theory, would doubtless turn out to be quite a different matter when applied in a practical measure to a character like Vernon-Smith.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Redwing!

"H E, he, he!"

That fat cacchination proceeded from Billy Bunter as Vernon-Smith came out of Mr. Quelch's study. Apparently the Owl of the Remove saw something to cackle at in the Bounder's strained features.

But Vernon-Smith was in no mood just then to put up with Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove's chortling died a sudden death as the Bounder knocked his head against the wall.

"Yarooooop! Owl! You rotter!" roared Bunter. "I hope Quelch laid it on hard! Groooooough!"

The Bounder swung along down the passage the object of sympathy amongst the crowd of Removites, who had heard the dreaded swishing of those six strokes from Quelch.

But Vernon-Smith heeded not his Form-fellows. His brow was black and moody as he entered Study No. 4 and slammed the door.

Tom Redwing looked up with a start. The scholarship junior had just returned from his visit to Hawkscliff, and was busy laying the table in preparation for tea. He had heard nothing of Smithy's trouble, but he saw at a glance from the Bounder's face that he had been "through it."

"What's the trouble, Smithy?" he inquired.

The Bounder did not answer. He sank into the armchair, and tried to assuage the pain in his hands by squeezing them under his armspits.

Tom Redwing's face was a picture of concern.

"You've been licked?" he said.

Vernon-Smith nodded sullenly. He was not in the mood for conversation just then, and Tom Redwing was quick to realise it. He busied himself with making tea, choosing to leave Smithy to make an explanation when it suited him.

"Tea's ready," he announced at last, cheerfully.

"Hang tea!" snapped the Bounder.

"You'll feel much better when you've got some grub inside you," went on Redwing. "Nothing like a good tuck-in to make you forget a licking, you know. Besides, I've brought back a cake from home."

But even that prospect did not entice the Bounder away from his moody silence. He just sat in the armchair scowling; fighting a battle with himself.

His study-mate watched the changing expressions in Smithy's face, and began to feel alarmed. He was reminded at once of the old Bounder—the fellow whom he had known when he had first come to Greyfriars.

The cheery face of Tom Redwing became almost as clouded as the Bounder's. Having tea in that strained atmosphere was something of an ordeal. Redwing realised that Smithy would be better left alone.

He crossed the study and slipped out, but Vernon-Smith hardly saw him go.

"It's unfair!" he muttered. "I won't stand it. If I'm under suspicion, I'll give Quelch some cause to justify it. This good little Georgie stuff doesn't pay!"

He remembered his promise to Skinner, and a cynical grin flickered across his face as he thought of what it had cost him. The grin deepened as he recalled his words to Skinner, asking him to "chuck up" his sporty ways.

"Not worth the candle!" he muttered, staring out of the window. "Skinner's right!"

But the Bounder knew in his heart of hearts that gambling, smoking, and generally playing the blackguard were wrong, argue as he would. He knew, too, that his old pursuits had lost their charm; that if he went back to them now his heart would not be in them. And yet his obstinacy ruled his better judgment. He was rankling under a sense of injustice at that moment. He would give Quelch something to suspect him for!

It was wrong, very wrong, and no one could know that better than Vernon-Smith himself. And yet that headstrong side of his character came uppermost, casting reason and logic to the winds.

He squared his shoulders, and picked up his cap. Quelch had said that he was not to go beyond the precincts of the school. Well, Quelch would see how much Vernon-Smith cared for his commands.

It was direct defiance of his Form master's wishes, and the Bounder revelled in it. Of the consequences he cared not a jot. At the worst, Mr. Quelch could only report him to the Head. That would mean a flogging. But the Bounder had "stood" more than one flogging in his career without a whimper. He could stand another.

He donned his cap and walked out of the study, heading for the School House steps.

Tom Redwing, from the window-seat, watched him go. He was tempted to go after Smithy and offer his company, but he realised that Smithy in his present mood was a very difficult fellow to handle. And, with a sigh, Tom Redwing returned his attention to his book.

Meanwhile, the Bounder walked down to the gates.

Gosling eyed him with disfavour.

"Which I've received instructions from Mr. Quelch that you're not to leave the school precincts until further orders!" he exclaimed. "Just you keep clear of them gates, Master Smith."

"Go and eat coke!"

Gosling thrust his ample figure in front of the Remove threateningly.

"Now horf you go!" he commanded pompously. "Wot I says is—Yoooooooop!"

Gosling had no intention of saying that, but Vernon-Smith suddenly lowered his head and butted the school-porter in the region of his ample waistcoat.

Thud!

Gosling sat down with a bump that shook every bone in his body.

"Groooooough! Which I'll report yer! Wow!"

"Report and be blown!" returned Vernon-Smith, and he calmly walked out of the gates as if it were a most ordinary thing to disobey a master's express commands and assault those to whom it was a duty to see them obeyed.

Gosling scrambled to his feet, his face purple with wrath. He shook his fist after the retreating figure of the Bounder.

"The young imp!" he roared. "Assault and battery! Which I'll report 'im!"

And, snorting in righteous wrath and indignation, the old porter took his way up to the School House to make his report.

Tom Redwing closed his book as Gosling passed him, and strolled back to Study No. 4. In the Remove passage he came upon a group of Removites who were talking, and Billy Bunter's voice was loudest amongst them.

"I heard Quelchy telling Loder that he was to see that Smithy didn't go out of gates," said Billy Bunter, with a fat grin. "Smithy's fairly in Quelchy's bad books, you know. He, he, he!"

Tom Redwing started. If that were true, Smithy must be stopped from running counter to the wishes of his Form master. The scholarship junior remembered with a pang of anxiety that he had seen the Bounder go out with his cap on. That signified his intention of going out of gates.

"Is that true, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove grinned at Redwing.

"Of course it's true. Your giddy pal has been shown up. I knew his reform was a sham, you know. He, he, he!"

"What do you mean?" asked Redwing angrily.

"Don't you know that Quelchy caught Smithy with some cigarettes and cards in his study this afternoon?" said Bolsover major.

Tom Redwing was amazed.

"But Smithy chucked up that silly rot months ago," he said. "He doesn't keep smokes and cards in his study now."

Bolsover major shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, Bunter says that Quelchy caught him with some this afternoon, and we all know Smithy got a record licking because we heard it in the passage."

Tom Redwing's face was a study. No wonder Smithy was moody, for his study-mate knew for a positive fact that the Bounder had genuinely thrown over his interest in smokes and gambling. But how came the cigarettes and the playing-cards in Study No. 4?

This was a poser for Tom Redwing.

One thing he was certain of, however, and that was Smithy's innocence in the affair, for Tom Redwing knew his study-mate better than anyone in Greyfriars.

With an ejaculation of dismay, Tom Redwing moved away from the Removites and ran for the School House steps. He must stop Vernon-Smith from making a fool of himself. But his heart was heavy as he scudded out into the quad, for he knew of what the Bounder was capable when he was in a black mood. The good work of months would be undone in an hour. And it came home to Tom Redwing with alarming force that he had seen Gosling making his way up the passage to Mr. Quelch's study. He knew what that



"You have no right to gate me!" exclaimed the Bounder passionately. "It's unfair!" Mr. Quelch's face hardened. "I hope I am not doing you an injustice, my boy—" "Injustice!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "You don't know the meaning of the term!" (See Chapter 4.)

meant. Smithy had deliberately disobeyed his Form master's orders; he had gone out of gates!

"The silly chump!" muttered Tom Redwing as he ran out into the road bordering the school wall. "There's no knowing what he'll do!"

And Tom Redwing was right, for at that moment Herbert Vernon-Smith was entering the side entrance of the Cross Keys.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"**B**LOW me tight! If it ain't Master Vernon-Smith!"

Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, card-sharper, and general hanger-on at the Cross Keys, uttered that ejaculation with considerable enthusiasm.

"Blow me tight!" he reiterated.

Mr. Banks' amazement was understandable, as he hadn't seen Vernon-Smith for months. The bookmaker had been deeply grieved to part with Vernon-Smith, for he reckoned him a pigeon worth plucking. True, the Bounder was just as astute as Banks in

the little matter of card-sharpping, although the bookmaker wouldn't have acknowledged that for a moment. In the old days the Bounder's custom had meant a considerable addition to Banks' income, for Smithy usually brought a few pals with him whom Mr. Banks and his estimable cronies delighted to "skin."

Those had been very flourishing days for Mr. Banks, and he often sighed and longed for their return.

"Blow me tight!"

The Bounder grinned, and looked about the dingy billiard-room.

"You seem pleased to see me, Banks," he remarked.

"Which I am," retorted Banks. "I was only saying to Cobb a few minutes back 'ow we had some fine times in the days when young Master Smith used to visit us. Didn't I, Cobb?"

"That you did," averred Mr. Cobb, who was the proprietor of the Cross Keys. "But ain't you running a big risk coming 'ere in the day-time, sir?" he added.

"Risk!" The Bounder's lip curled. "I never worried about risks in the old days—why should I now?"

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Mr. Banks let out a guffaw of appreciation.

"That's the talk. Just like the old days—ain't it, Cobb?"

"Just!" assented Mr. Cobb, with a sidelong wink at his rascally associate.

"Do you feel like a game of snooker, Master Smith?"

The Bounder nodded.

"Yes," he answered—and a picture of Skinner's miserable countenance came up before his vision—"I feel like a little gamble."

"My eye!" exclaimed Mr. Banks warmly. "It does me heart good to hear you talk like that. What shall it be? A shilling a point?"

"Make it two bob a point," said the Bounder carelessly.

He was a good snooker-player, and he knew he was quite capable of beating the rascally bookmaker and Mr. Cobb, for the Bounder indulged in snooker at home, and he had "come on" wonderfully since the days when he had played against the precious pair.

Banks and Cobb, naturally, were not aware of that little circumstance, and they exchanged knowing winks as they anticipated the "haul" they would pluck from this innocent pigeon.

"We're your men, Master Smith," said Banks. "Two shillings a point it is! Wot about a drink before you start?"

Vernon-Smith hesitated.

In the old days he would have replied in the affirmative without a second's delay; but something stirred within him at that moment; and, despite his avowal to give Mr. Quelch just cause to be suspicious of his reform, his reckless plunge into his old habits stopped short at drinking alcoholic liquor.

"No, not just now," he answered.

"Just as you like, of course," smiled Mr. Banks. "But you'll have a smoke?"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

He lit a cigarette the bookmaker gave him. His better self told him that he was playing the fool. But he smoked it, all the same.

The game started.

Mr. Banks' easy confidence began to wane as he saw how Vernon-Smith handled the cue, and Cobb grew quite uneasy. Two shillings a point at snooker was high play, and the rascally pair were there to make money, not to lose it. But the Greyfriars junior proved their match. He "snookered" Banks, who followed him in the play, time and time again, and the Bounder's score mounted considerably.

Banks and Cobb were frowning before the game had been in progress a quarter of an hour. Vernon-Smith was already twenty points ahead of Mr. Banks' score, which was six, whilst Mr. Cobb's score remained at the low total of three. And that meant Banks had lost, up till now, the equivalent of forty shillings, whilst Cobb saw himself owing forty-six shillings.

And this was the schoolboy innocent they had set out to "skin."

"I'm having all the luck," said the Bounder, with a laugh, as he again "snookered" Banks, making it impossible for him to play directly on to a red ball, because a "colour" ball barred his way.

"That you are!" growled Mr. Banks. "Still, your win to-day, they say, and my win to-morrow."

"Of course!" agreed Vernon-Smith. "Luck like this couldn't hold out for long."

But he knew that to-day, to-morrow, or any day he would always be a match

for either of this precious pair, so far as snooker was concerned.

And there was Skinner's I.O.U. The Bounder had set out to redeem it. He was killing two birds with one stone. Mr. Quelch would have cause to "watch" him, to detain him, and his promise to Skinner would be fulfilled.

The reckless junior never gave a thought to the consequences of his action in thus visiting a place strictly out of bounds.

He was the old Bounder—headstrong and devil-may-care.

But there was one who cared, who at that moment was seized with anxiety on his chum's behalf. And that was Tom Redwing.

The scholarship junior had raced out of the gates intent on stopping his chum from running his head into a brick wall. He felt instinctively that Smithy would make his way towards the Cross Keys, and the thought sickened him, although it spurred him on.

The Bounder must be stopped from making a fool of himself—must be stopped at all costs. Looking back, Tom Redwing had nearly cried out in his alarm at seeing Gerald Loder leave the gates of the school. It was evident that Mr. Quelch had detailed him to bring the recalcitrant junior back, and it was quite likely that the unpopular prefect would make that an excuse for visiting the Cross Keys himself—a shady pastime of Loder's unbeknown to those in authority at Greyfriars. And what if he found Smithy there?

Tom Redwing raced on, finding himself drawn like an irresistible magnet to the Cross Keys. That his chum would enter by the side gate, he was certain—certain, that was, if Smithy had any intention of visiting the place at all.

He reached the little stile that gave entrance to the footpath running alongside the inn and paused, panting for breath. His eyes looked about him for signs.

In the thin layer of mud before the stile he saw a footprint—a footprint he knew well. That it was his chum's he hadn't the slightest doubt, for the print showed the owner to be wearing certain rubbers on his shoes.

And the Bounder wore such rubbers! "The silly ass!" panted Tom Redwing. "Oh, the awful idiot! He'll get caught if I don't warn him!"

To think was to act with Tom Redwing, for he was bound by strong ties of affection to his studymate, different as they were in character and social standing.

With a hurried glance over his shoulder, Tom Redwing saw that the coast was clear. Next minute he had vaulted over the stile and was racing for the side entrance of the Cross Keys. He found his way in, although he had never visited the place before, and the first room that met his gaze was the billiards-room.

"Smithy!"

The Bounder started violently as that anguished voice burst upon his hearing, and Banks and Cobb looked at the newcomer suspiciously. They were not in a good temper, having lost between them the net sum of eight pounds ten shillings.

"Smithy!"

Redwing's voice was almost tearful.

The Bounder's face hardened.

"Why have you followed me here?" he asked harshly.

"Oh, don't be a fool, Smithy!" pleaded Redwing. "Quelch's sent Loder to bring you back. I've heard all about it. I know you've been confined to the school bounds. You must

get away from here quickly. If Loder found you here—"

He didn't finish. There was no need to. Vernon-Smith knew what it would mean if the unpopular prefect found him at the Cross Keys.

The hardness died out of his face, and a grateful expression took its place.

"But you'll be caught if you stay here, Tom," he said.

"Never mind about me," said Redwing.

And for the first time he realised his own position and what it would mean if he were discovered there.

The Bounder picked up his cap and tossed a half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

In his pocket reposed a sufficient sum of money to pay Skinner's debt. The actual settlement he would leave for Skinner to handle himself.

"See you to-night," he muttered to Banks and Cobb as he made for the doorway.

Banks and Cobb brightened considerably. They saw a chance of regaining their losses.

"Very good, Master Smith," grinned Banks. "Perhaps you'll bring your pal here with you?"

"I wouldn't be found dead in this rotten hole, or with you, either!" exclaimed Redwing fiercely. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, gambling with a schoolboy!"

"Haw, haw! Listen to 'im!" chuckled Banks. "We've heard that before, haven't we, Cobb?"

"We 'ave," agreed the proprietor of the Cross Keys.

"Come on!" gasped Tom Redwing, fearful of the delay. "Loder may get here at any moment."

The Bounder nodded. As he passed Banks he whispered something in the bookmaker's ears, and Redwing heard Skinner's name mentioned.

Next minute the two juniors were racing along the footpath to the stile. They had barely cleared it and taken cover in the trees a few yards away when they heard the tread of feet.

"Loder!" whispered Redwing, peering out from cover.

The Sixth Form prefect swung past them. The juniors waited until his footsteps died away. Then they burst from cover and walked back to Greyfriars along the towpath.

On the way Redwing pleaded with his studymate.

"It's no good your talking morals to me," said the Bounder. "It was jolly sporting of you to come and give me the tip just now. But for heaven's sake don't preach!"

"But you're heading for expulsion if you go on like this," said Redwing. "And all over a misunderstanding."

"I don't care," retorted the Bounder. "Quelch thinks I'm a blackguard, so I might just as well be one."

"That's not right, and you know it," said Redwing sharply.

The Bounder crimsoned.

"Look here, Redwing," he said. "I'm a bad lot, and my society is contaminating. I don't want you to be mixed up in my affairs. You just steer clear of me and mind your own business."

Tom Redwing coloured.

He did not know what it had cost the wrong-headed Bounder to make that remark. He did not know that Vernon-Smith was thinking solely of him in thus wishing to sever what had been perhaps one of the most notable and loyal friendships in the school.

Redwing looked at the Bounder squarely.

"Do you mean that you don't want to

be friends with me?" he asked, and his tone would have softened Vernon-Smith at any other time.

"I don't want to be friends with anyone," snapped the Bounder. "And I don't want you nosing into my affairs, or spying on me."

"Spying on you?" exclaimed Redwing, with some heat.

The Bounder nodded.

"You might have landed me in the soup altogether, coming to the Cross Keys like you did. Do you think I didn't know of a getaway if any blessed master or prefect came prowling round?"

Redwing was stung to the quick. This was indeed the old Bounder.

"If that's what you think," he said quietly, "I'm sorry I came. But you needn't worry. If you are determined to play the silly goat now that you have started again you can get on with it without my company. I—I shan't trouble you more than I can help. And—and I'll change out of the study as soon as it is convenient."

With that Redwing turned away. His heart was heavy. He could not remain friends with a fellow who persisted in playing the blackguard—with a fellow

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Downhill Path!

"WHICH you're to report to Mister Quelch the moment you get in!"

Gosling, the porter, made that remark as the Bounder sauntered in at the gates of Greyfriars half an hour later.

"And I 'opes as 'ow he gives it to you 'ot!" added the incensed porter.

The Bounder merely shrugged his shoulders. He expected another caning, and was prepared to face the music. Nothing much counted now that he was disbelieved; now that Mr. Quelch saw fit to keep him under detention, for something he hadn't done.

He walked up the School House steps. A crowd of Removites had congregated there. News of the Bounder's escapade had spread throughout the Lower School, and some were anxious to see how he would take his "medicine." But there was no sign of concern on Vernon-Smith's face as he shouldered his way through the juniors.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, tapped him on the arm.

"I'm sorry to hear you're in Quelch's bad books," he said.

could only mean one of two things—that either Tom Redwing made use of them, or else the Bounder. And Redwing was as straight as a die—everyone in the Remove knew that.

If any of the Co. had chanced to look at Harold Skinner at that moment they would doubtless have seen the answer to the puzzle. The cad of the Remove's face was white. He was in mortal fear lest Vernon-Smith should "split" on him.

But he could have saved himself that anxiety, at any rate; for the Bounder was the last person to save his face by screening himself behind another fellow.

Skinner detached himself from the crowd and followed Vernon-Smith to his study. The Bounder, by rights, should have reported to Mr. Quelch at once, but he appeared to be in no hurry. He entered Study No. 4 and sank down into the armchair. Next he stretched his feet on the mantelpiece.

Skinner looked into the study.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Come in!" said the Bounder. "I've got something to say to you."

The cad of the Remove shut the door behind him.

"I've seen Banks," drawled the Bounder.

IS YOUR NAME HERE?

RESULT OF "BOUNDARIES" COMPETITION No. 7.

The First Prize of £2 2s. 0d. for the best "last line" sent in has been awarded to:—J. Ward, 78, Short Street, Heaton Norris, Stockport,

for the following effort:—

A stalwart of Hampshire is Brown,

A batsman of skill and renown.

When the willow he wields

On England's green fields—

"His opponents 'see red' not Brown."

The six prizes of 10s. 6d. each have been awarded as follows:—

J. CHAMBERS, 56, Napier Road, Gillingham, Kent; J. L. ELLIS, Corner Cottage, Bergh-Apton, Norfolk; Miss D. GIBSON, 11, Main Street, Caldercruix, by Airdrie; H. A. Henson, 184, Clarence Road, Derby; F. B. ORCHARD, Gas Works, Brimscombe; T. WILKINSON, 65, Woodside Gardens, Tottenham, N. 17.

who didn't want him as a friend. But the parting hurt.

It hurt Vernon-Smith, too. A lump rose in his throat as he watched Redwing move away. The Bounder had made up his mind to continue on the lines he had set himself. Obstinacy ruled his better judgment. Was it worth losing the best friend he had ever had?

A sane moment, and reason argued that it wasn't. The Bounder saw light. But it came too late. His mouth framed his chum's name, his hands moved out towards him, but at that moment Redwing, with drooping head, disappeared round a bend in the tow-path. The chance had gone with him.

For some seconds Vernon-Smith stood staring into the sparkling waters of the Sark, a victim of remorse. But the mood passed, leaving the old Bounder master of the situation. He was treading a downhill path, and he knew it. He could have pulled himself up with ease. But just that wild streak in his composition forbade him—urged him to do the thing he knew to be rank bad at the core.

The reformed Bounder had disappeared entirely, and in his place stood the mocking, cynical youth who had, in the old days, occasioned his Form master and his Form fellows more trouble and anxiety than anyone else at Greyfriars.

"You can keep your sorrow for someone more deserving of it," answered the Bounder.

It was a rebuff that brought the colour to Wharton's cheeks.

"The rotter!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "If the old Bounder's come to life I hope Quelch lays it on hard!"

"Doubtless you'll get your wish!" sneered the Bounder.

"Shut up, Johnny!" said Wharton. "Smithy's not himself."

"Never known him like that," remarked Bob Cherry. "Except—except, in the old days."

"What's all the trouble about, anyway?" asked Nugent.

"The troublefulness concerns some disgusting cigarettes and playing-cards the Quelch bird foundfully found in the esteemed Bounder's study," explained Hurree Singh.

Harry Wharton looked troubled.

"I thought Smithy had chucked up playing the silly ox," he remarked.

"Remember the leopard and his spots," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Bob Cherry—uneasily, albeit. "Smithy's as straight as a die."

"That's why he keeps cigarettes and playing-cards in his study, I suppose," said Johnny Bull obstinately.

The Co. were silent. The finding of those things in the Bounder's study

"You've fixed things?" exclaimed Skinner eagerly.

The Bounder grinned.

"Yes, in a way. He's going to meet you at the stile in the wood to-morrow at three o'clock," he said. "You can settle with him then."

"But what's the good of that?" gasped Skinner wildly. "I haven't a shilling to bless myself with. I can't pay him!"

"Yes, you can!" chuckled the Bounder.

He drew his wallet from his pocket and extracted the eight pounds ten shillings he had won that afternoon.

Skinner eyed the money greedily.

"You won't be fool enough to gamble with this, I take it?" said Vernon-Smith, handing eight pounds of the money to Skinner. "You'll meet Banks to-morrow and settle. Understand?"

"You're a brick, Smithy!" exclaimed Skinner joyously. "You don't know what a weight this is off my mind! You're a real sport!"

"A real one, as you say," smiled the Bounder. "But if you'll take my tip you'll chuck up playing the silly ox. It doesn't pay."

Strange advice, coming from a fellow who had deserted the straight and narrow path, but it was typical of the Bounder.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No 972.

"But—but where did you get this money from?" asked Skinner, recalling the Bounder's words of a few hours back that he was "broke."

"From Banks and Cobb!" chuckled Smithy. "They set out to rook me, and—well, you can see how it went."

Skinner gazed at Vernon-Smith in silent admiration.

"You needn't consider it a debt, Skinner," said the Bounder at length. "I'll make a present of it to you. The odd ten shillings I'll send to the Cottage Hospital."

Skinner marvelled more.

"Well, you are a sport!" he exclaimed. "You've certainly saved me from the sack and—"

"Likely as not earned the sack myself," said the Bounder coolly. "I suppose you know that Quelch is down on me because he found your cigarettes and cards here?"

Skinner shifted his feet uncomfortably.

"I—I'm sorry about that," he said.

"So was I at first," chuckled the Bounder. "But I've got over it. You see, Quelch thinks now that I'm the fellow he nearly caught coming away from the Cross Keys the other night."

Skinner whistled.

"So that's why he's detained you?"

"Exactly!" nodded Vernon-Smith, with a cynical smile. "So you see, Skinner, the path of virtue is not all beer and skittles. I think the crooked path suits me better, but it certainly doesn't suit you. Take my tip, old chap, and pack it up!"

Harold Skinner eyed Vernon-Smith in surprise.

"Well, you are a corker!" he exclaimed at length. "You tell me to chuck up playing the silly ass, and yet you've just started again yourself."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"It suits me," he said, with a grin.

"I was cut out for it. But it's no good to you; you're not clever enough at the game. You haven't enough nerve."

On reflection Skinner admitted that the Bounder was right. Certainly he hadn't enough nerve to keep Mr. Quelch waiting as Vernon-Smith was now doing; equally certainly he hadn't enough nerve to defy his Form master to the extent of going out of gates against the express commands, and following up that offence by visiting a place like the Cross Keys in broad daylight.

He shivered at the thought. Something in Skinner stirred him to do his best by the Bounder, the fellow who had helped him out of a scrape at the expense of getting into one himself.

"I say, Smithy," he said at last, "I shouldn't keep Quelch waiting if I were you. Gosling is bound to report that you came in half an hour ago. Quelch will be ratty."

"Let him!" smiled the Bounder. "If he wants me he can jolly well come for me! This is my leisure time, and I can do what I like. If Quelch sees fit to detain me for nothing, that's his lookout!"

They were brave words; but even as he uttered them Vernon-Smith knew them to be wrong. He knew that his duty was to report to his Form master. He realised, too, that Mr. Quelch would be in a royal rage at this fresh flouting of his orders. Let Mr. Quelch be in a royal rage. If he wanted Vernon-Smith, let him come to the study for him.

Skinner felt uneasy. He expected Mr. Quelch to come rustling along the passage at any moment. And Skinner didn't want to be within reach of his Form master's anger when he did come.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 972.

"I—I think I'll be going," he said lamely. "You are a real brick to help me out over this, Smithy!" he added, in a burst of good feeling. "I'll not forget it!"

"Please do!" replied the Bounder easily.

Skinner departed.

Hardly had the door closed upon him when there came the tread of feet in the passage—the well-known tread of Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove.

The door was swung open, and Mr. Quelch, cane in hand, appeared on the threshold.

His eyes were blazing with anger as he noted the figure in the chair, as he saw that Vernon-Smith made no attempt to take his feet from the mantelpiece.

"Boy!" he thundered. "Wretched boy! Stand up! How dare you remain in that lounging attitude when your Form master is present!"

"I'm sorry you don't like it!" sneered Vernon-Smith, moving his feet from the mantelpiece and taking his time about rising from the chair. "I feel a bit tired, you know."

There was a titter from several of the juniors who were behind Mr. Quelch in the passage. The Bounder in this mood was entertaining.

Mr. Quelch's lips came together grimly.

"Wretched boy!" he exclaimed sternly. "You have deliberately flouted my authority in going out of gates this afternoon. Now you have the unparalleled impudence to bandy words with me. I'll have you know, sir, that my orders are to be obeyed."

"You had no right to keep me within gates!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Enough!" hooted the Form master.

"Touch your toes!"

"Oh, anything for a quiet life," drawled the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch's face went the colour of a beetroot. He was aware that several Removites had overheard that insolent remark.

"Touch your toes!" he thundered.

Vernon-Smith adopted the required position.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Six strokes of the cane descended on Vernon-Smith's trousers with all the strength of which Mr. Quelch was capable. But his victim never murmured. The juniors in the passage marvelled at his pluck, for six strokes were equal to a Head's flogging.

Vernon-Smith straightened himself. His face was white and drawn, for he was hurt—more hurt than he had ever been in his life. But his eyes glittered savagely. It looked as if he contemplated snatching the cane out of his Form master's hands and giving him a taste of his own medicine.

"I hope that will be a lesson to you, wretched boy," said Mr. Quelch. "My orders are that you remain within school bounds, you understand?"

"I don't recognise your right to impose those orders!" came Vernon-Smith's heated reply.

"Very well," said the Remove master grimly. "I shall take steps to see them enforced. Were it not the fact that the Head is in bad health just now, I would ask him to deal with you. And you know what that would mean, Vernon-Smith?"

"I don't care!"

"You will be made to care, Vernon-Smith. You will follow me to the punishment-room."

"I won't!" Vernon-Smith's answer sent a thrill through the listening juniors in the passage.

"Wh-a-at?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I won't!" repeated Vernon-Smith defiantly.

That was too much for Mr. Quelch. To be defied by a junior who had just received a thrashing called for drastic action. And the master of the Remove angered beyond measure, reached out and caught the Bounder by the collar.

Swish! Swish!

The cane descended on Vernon-Smith's shoulders with stinging force. Next moment the obstinate Bounder found himself being propelled through the door of his study, and along the passage.

The juniors parted a way for Mr. Quelch and his charge.

Swish!

The Bounder tried to resist, but all he got for his pains was another stinging lash from the cane. With Mr. Quelch's grip on his collar he was thrust along the Remove like a Second Form fag.

Still with one hand on Vernon-Smith's collar, Mr. Quelch unlocked the door of the punishment-room.

A second or so later the door closed; but on the inside of it leaned Vernon-Smith, his body aching with the severe castigation he had undergone; his rebellious spirit still unquenched.

He heard the key turn in the lock.

"You tyrant!" he exclaimed, white with rage.

But Mr. Quelch had had enough of talking to his unruly charge. He considered that a night in the punishment-room would cure Vernon-Smith of his obstinacy. But in that, as he usually was when dealing with Vernon-Smith, Mr. Quelch was wrong.

The Bounder heard the Form master's feet retreat along the passage. He heard the door at the end of the landing being closed. Then silence.

He looked about him. The punishment-room was nothing more or less than an attic. The sole appointments were a bed, a table and a chair. Across the dormer window were three transverse bars, which were intended to prevent any reckless prisoner from attempting to climb out of the window and down the ivy-clad wall.

The Bounder remembered how, on a former occasion, Billy Bunter had inhabited the punishment-room, and how he had succeeded in turning the tables on Mr. Quelch by locking him in. Dearly would the Bounder have liked to turn the tables on Mr. Quelch, but that was out of the question; Mr. Quelch was a wily bird and not likely to be caught in the same snare twice.

The Bounder strode across to the window and thrust his head between the bars. It was a good drop to the quad below and he smiled grimly as he measured the distance below with his eye.

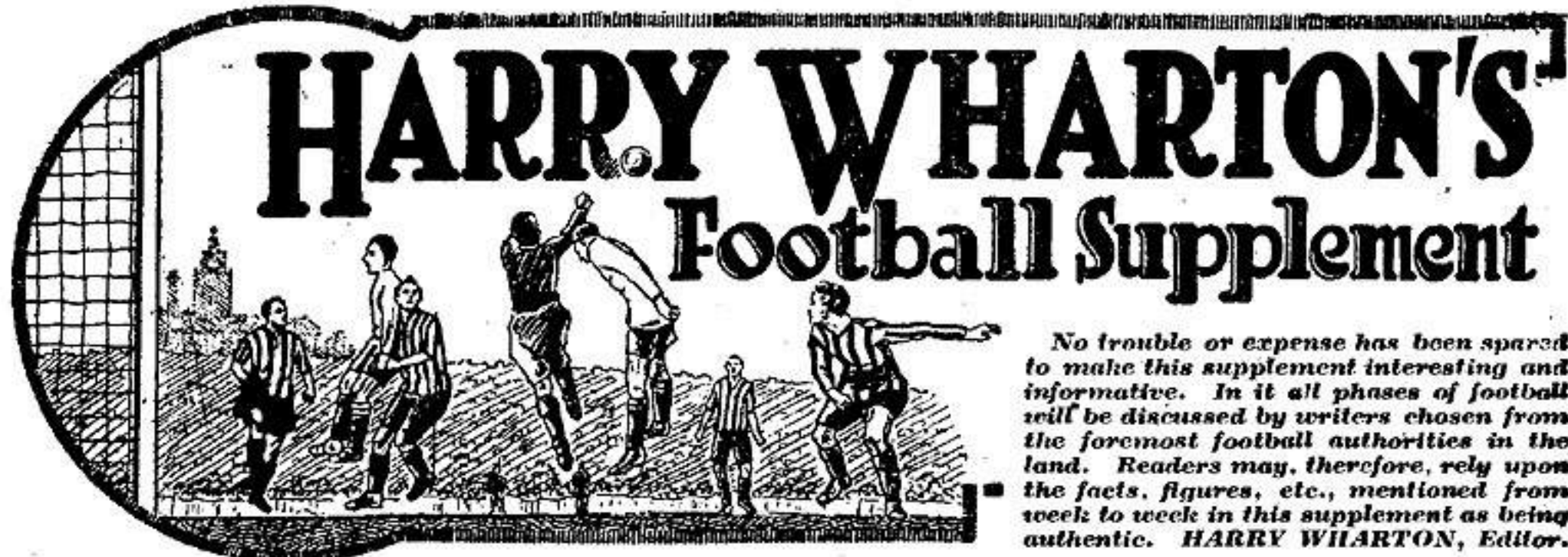
His one thought was to get out of his prison. What he would do when he had done that he didn't know. It was getting near bed time. Already the school was wrapped in the evening shadows and from the little window the Bounder could see the sunset.

But try as he might, Vernon-Smith could make no impression on those solid iron bars; they were firmly embedded in the mortar on either side of the window.

He gave up the attempt at last, and panting, sank upon the bed. With the solitude a certain amount of common sense returned to him.

He asked himself what did he hope to gain by trying the patience of his Form master at every turn. It was folly. True, his Form master believed that he had forsaken the straight and narrow path; that he smoked and

(Continued on page 17.)



No. 5. Vol. 3 (New Series).

Week Ending October 2nd, 1926.

This Week's Big Games!

IN every week's programme of big matches there is plenty of fascination; games which for one reason or another make a special appeal. The games conjure up memories, too, and in this feature I am going to tell you week by week, some of the interesting things about the matches of the week-end. As the players have now got through the first month, and may be said to have settled down more or less, it should be easier for supporters to make up their minds as to the likely result.

One of the most interesting First Division games on the list for next Saturday in the First Division is West Bromwich Albion v. West Ham United—the two "Wests" in the section. Strangely, for many years past the Albion have been at their very best against clubs from London, and last season they fairly rubbed it into West Ham in the corresponding match by seven goals to one. Stanley Davies got three goals, and the Hammers have a lot to wipe off the slate. Whether they will do it this week-end is another proposition.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE!

The match above all others which I should like to see is the meeting between Manchester United and Aston Villa. This looks like a real classic encounter, and it can be taken for granted that Frank Barson, the Manchester United skipper, will be specially keen to see his side through to victory. At one time Barson was a Villa player. Indeed, in the first normal season after the War, Barson may be said to have done more than any other player to save the Villa from descending to the Second Division. Midway through that season the Villa were in queer street. Then they got Barson from Barnsley, and he immediately made such a world of difference to the side that they began to rise in the League table, and in that season the Villa also won the Cup.

TOMMY FILLS THE GAP.

If Tommy Clay is in the Tottenham Hotspur team he will certainly conjure up memories when his side turns out at Bury on Saturday. Clay, as you know, is a right full-back, but some years back he had a strange experience at Bury. On the morning of the match the 'Spurs goalkeeper was taken ill, and there was no time to get a new goalkeeper from London. So the side had to be re-shuffled, and Clay went into goal for a whole match for the first and only time in his career. It was a bit of an ordeal, as Clay has confessed to me, but he came out of it well.

SPONGING THE SLATE!

Turning to the Second Division, Darlington will no doubt be duly thankful to get their match against Swansea Town at Swansea off their chest for this game involves the Northerners in a terrible railway journey—easily the longest on their card. The Northerners won't mind though if they come back with the points from the rather peculiar Swansea ground, where the Arsenal fell in the Cup last season. Another very interesting Second Division match is Chelsea v. Preston North End, for here are two clubs which have both been in the First Division since the War, and who are hoping to get back to the top class at the end of this season. The "proud Prestonians" have a bit to wipe off the slate against Chelsea, for a year ago the Pensioners won by five goals to nothing.

GOALKICKS!

A CENTRE-HALF of a certain First Division club uses a lot of scent before he goes on the field to play. What opposing centre-forwards are trying to make out is whether he puts this scent on because he likes it or whether he does it to put them off their game.

There is never any serious objection to a big football match being played on a hot day because there are always plenty of "fans."

Everton have a new stand which, being an exact copy of the one on the famous Rugby ground is called "Twickenham." This stand is provided with tip-up chairs and plenty of leg room. We are not sure whether the man in front of a spectator who gets wildly excited will really appreciate this "plenty of leg room." He will probably think the name of the stand should be "Kickenham."

In the words of Mr. Wall, Secretary of the Football Association, "ground difficulties are experienced in all parts of the country as open spaces which would be suitable for football are required for houses." But surely if building houses interferes with football we must give up building.

The Arsenal look upon Dartford, the Kent League club, as a "nursery" for the supply of good young players. But surely as it is expert "Gunners" the club is looking for, they ought to have a barracks, not a nursery.

Several football clubs now insist on their players having a round or two of golf as a means of keeping fit. Several members of my staff say that they wouldn't mind being "made" to play golf every morning in the week and most afternoons as well.

Years ago there was a Sheffield United goalkeeper named William Foulke who used to "keep" for them when he weighed twenty-two stone. That was the only reason why the onlookers used to call him "Baby" Foulke—some baby!

Hartlepool United have two players on the books of the same name, George Waite, but the side has not yet been labelled the "Wait and see" team.

The name of Thirlaway, the Birmingham winger, has been changed by the supporters of the club to "Whirlaway." The new name is an improvement seeing that flying down the wing is his favourite pastime.

In the Southern Third Division the defenders of Watford will no doubt keep a careful eye on Martin, the centre-forward of Aberdare, for in the corresponding match last season, this player scored five goals with his own trusty feet, and Watford went under by eight goals to one.

Southend United have signed on Leslie Cionshaw for this season as a professional, and he thus becomes the first "pro" the Club have had for many years born at Southend. This represents a very correct policy at Southend of catching their own "shrimps."



W. T. ROBERTS, of Preston North End, as seen by Jimmy Seed, of the 'Spurs.

PLAYING UP to the CENTRE!

Right and Wrong Ways of Helping the Leader of the Attack.

By **HUGH FERGUSON**

(Cardiff City's record fee man.)

SO far as the English football clubs are concerned, there is what might be called an acute centre-forward problem. I am myself one of several centre-forwards who left Scotland for England in the course of last season, and the keen competition for leaders of the attack which is still being continued demonstrates that, for some reason or other, managers find it more difficult to fill this particular berth than any other on the field. I am not suggesting here that the centre-forward problem is an entirely new one. Activity in the transfer market so far as centre-forwards are concerned has been most marked ever since I began to take a real interest in big football. The point about the centre-forward problem at the moment, however, is that it does not seem to have got much nearer a solution from the change in the offside rule.

JUDGED AS A GOAL-SCORER.

It has often struck me that the centre-forward of to-day is judged from an angle different from that of any other player. Often there is left with me the impression that the average man in the crowd judges a centre-forward almost solely by the number of goals he scores. There seems to be a wide-spread notion that the centre-forward is the man who should put the ball into the net, and that the centre-forward who does not do this regularly, who is not always threatening to break records in the net-finding line, is apt to be dubbed a failure. He may swing the ball out to the wings quite nicely, he may make short passes and create openings for his inside man, but if he does not get goals himself there is a tendency to wonder whether he is earning his corn.

THE REAL WORK.

To my mind, the fact that there is such an impression is closely associated with the centre-forward problem as a whole, and my view is that English clubs will not find the solution of the problem until they throw overboard this notion that the centre-forward is merely a sort of official goal-scorer. My view of the centre-forward's game is that he is the leader of the forwards—the man who should hold the line together, keep his wings employed, and so on. By the natural order of things he should be able to get a fair proportion of goals, because he is in the centre of the shooting area, but it is unfair to judge the centre-forward solely by the position he occupies in those lists of goal-scorers which are repeatedly published in the newspapers.

ONE LINE, FIVE GOAL-SCORERS!

If you look round at the successful teams of recent seasons you will find that the clubs which have got the most goals are those which have not subscribed to the view of the centre-forward as the official goal-scorer. Take the experience of Sheffield United last season as an outstanding example. They scored more goals than any other club in the League. Their centre-forward

got the greatest number, of course, but so much help did he receive from the other members of the line that if you will look up the record you will find that no fewer than five Sheffield United forwards got into double figures as goal-scorers last season, while Tunstall, the outside left, scored twenty goals in League matches. There is a very close connection between this idea that the centre-forward should get all the goals and the subject I am supposed to be tackling—the sort of help which the centre-forward needs.

TOO MUCH ATTENTION.

It is a very real help to the centre-forward if there are other fellows in the line with a reputation for being deadly shots, because those fellows are more than likely to draw the defenders away from the centre-forward. This is a very real help to the man in the middle. If the centre-forward in any side is expected to get all the goals his opponents will very quickly see to it that he doesn't get them. Centre half-backs who stick to centre-forwards closer than a brother are not unknown, and the forwards who continually play up to the centre-forward in spite of the fact that he is "smothered" by opponents, are neither helping the side nor the centre-forward. If the centre-forward is to get the goals there must be men on either side of him who are clever enough to draw the opposition away from the man in the middle.



Jimmy Seed gives us an impression of HUGH FERGUSON, of Cardiff City.

WHERE WING MEN FAIL.

One of the things which I like about English football is that, generally speaking, the game is kept more open than in Scotland, and the more open the play the greater the number of chances which should come to the centre-forward, theoretically. A long pass out to the wing from the half-back, and a quick return to the middle from that wing man should provide the centre-forward with chances of slipping through, especially now, when the fear of off-side is less prevalent. Speaking as a centre-forward, I am not a lover of the wing man who hugs the line all the time and hangs on to the ball until he reaches a position within a yard or two of the corner-flag. In the time which the wing man has taken to get to the corner-flag the opposing defenders have been concentrating, and when the ball does come across the chances are that the centre-forward finds the way to the goal most effectively barred.

"DIDDLING" EVERYBODY

Many young lads, coming into the game as wing men, yield to the temptation to show how clever they can be by beating two or three opponents and sometimes beating the same opponent twice. This style of play is not, in my view, a paying game, and it doesn't help the centre-forward in his business of getting goals. Much the same may be said of the ultra-clever inside man. It is all very well for a player to be so clever as to be able to bamboozle the opposition, but there is also a risk of bamboozling his own colleagues as well. Only the other day a certain centre-forward was complaining to me most acutely about his inside men. He had very clever fellows on each side of him, but, as he put it to me, "they are so jolly clever that when they get the ball I haven't the faintest idea where to go in order to be in a good position to receive the pass. The worst of it is," added this centre-forward, "that they do the clever stuff every time, whereas an occasional first-time pass would be much more helpful to me and much more worrying to the opposition." That is sound argument.

THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.

Especially in the new game which is now played following on the change in the off-side rule does there come opportunities for making the quick pass down the middle of the field. The centre-forward can now stay nearer to his opponent's goal than was formerly the case, and if the opposing centre-half wanders far from the centre-forward, there is probably a gap down the middle of the field through which the centre can dash before the backs are able to close on him. The only thing to remember in connection with this quick-pass through, is not to do it every time. The virtue of every movement, practically speaking, is the element of surprise which it contains. It is no use passing the ball to the centre-forward if the opposing centre-half is "sitting on his heels," as the expressive phrase has it. To pass to the centre-forward in those circumstances is not playing up to him at all, but merely playing into the hands of the opposition. It is the man who now "works" the ball himself, and who anon slips it into the middle first time who is really playing up to the centre-forward in a manner likely to bring the best results.

WHY SCOTS LEAVE HOME!

Some little known reasons for the rush to England.

Contributed by **HUGH GALLACHER.**

(The famous Scottish International centre-forward of Newcastle United.)

THERE is little necessity for me to say that one of the big talking points of football during the last season or two has been the number of Scottish footballers who have joined English clubs. My own name is included in the long list of men who have gained some sort of fame in Scotland, and who during last season were tempted to throw in their lot with clubs in England. These migrations have been followed by much discussion as to the why and wherefore. How is it that Scottish footballers come south so frequently?

SCOTLAND NOT UNDULY WORRIED.

I see it has been suggested that Scottish football itself cannot afford these migrations; that the standard of play north of the Border must be lower owing to the passing of some of the best-known players to English clubs. There was even a hint some little time back that Scotland would take some sort of action in the near future to prevent this sort of thing going on. Frankly, I don't believe Scotland will do anything of the sort. In the first place, you must remember that no Scottish footballer can join an English club unless he has the permission of his masters in Scotland. Clearly, then, it is not the case that Scottish footballers are lured from their clubs against the will of the clubs.

PRODUCING THE "RABBITS."

Thinking the matter over, I have an idea that when we say—and think—that Scotland cannot afford to do without the players who have come South in the last year or two we are rather flattering ourselves unduly. Believe me, the managers of the Scottish clubs usually have one eye on a successor to a player they are prepared to transfer. The minute a star goes a youngster who costs nothing is usually stuck in his place, and so seldom are these Scottish managers wrong in their judgment that the clubs beyond the border don't harbour their regrets for long. No, the Scottish managers, as they strike me, are very much like the conjurer. They turn to you and show you the hat which has nothing in it. Then from that self-same hat they proceed to bring forth rough diamonds of footballers—youngsters, who, with just a little bit of polishing, have a habit of turning out even better than their predecessors. It is just as well that it should be so, or some of us would get a very bad attack of swelled head.

THE "SILVER" LINING.

Taking it for granted then that Scottish clubs are prepared to part with their players only when it pleases them to do so, we can add that there is a very good reason why the Scottish clubs listen to the managers of the English organisations. The reason is that Scottish clubs like the money. I am not now indulging in a cheap joke of the sort which is usually made at the expense of my countrymen. I am stating facts, and it is a fact that many of the leading clubs in Scotland would

find it extremely difficult to carry on were it not for the money which they receive for players they themselves have brought out. The gates beyond the Border are not, on the average, anything like so big as those in England. At least, that is how it has struck me since I joined Newcastle United.

THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE.

As for the reasons why the players themselves are so willing, generally speaking, to make the journey to England to play for English clubs, these are many and various. In the first



H. GALLACHER
(Newcastle United).

place, I think there is in us, as a race, something of the spirit of adventure—a craving for new experiences which demands satisfaction. To many of us England represents an adventure—a gamble, if you like to put it that way—which has an irresistible appeal. I confess that, primarily, I wanted to come to England to see what English football was like; to prove for myself whether I could adapt myself to English conditions, or—if you prefer it put in another way—to satisfy my own vanity that I was a good player for the English game. Having been candid to that extent, it is not for me to declare whether I am satisfied with the answer.

A BIRD IN THE HAND.

I mentioned about the financial side of these migrations from Scotland, and, so far as the clubs which do the selling are concerned. There is now the personal side of the financial question, and once more let me insist that I am not being funny. But it is obvious that the footballer who goes into the game to earn a living must ever be on the watch to make the most of his opportunities. I have said that attendances

in Scotland are not so big as in England, generally speaking, and this means that the Scottish clubs are not always able to offer the same financial inducements as are the English clubs. Benefits are given in Scotland, to quote one side of the case, but they are not of the same scale, generally speaking, as the benefits given to players who have gone through the necessary qualification period with English clubs. Then, of course, there is the share of the transfer fee, and here I may remind my readers of the old proverb that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

COMPLETING ONE'S EDUCATION.

Most Scottish footballers are rather anxious to take a turn in England, too, on account of the stories which are told in Scotland about English football. Yarns continue to reach Scotland that the game in England is different, and on top of those yarns there is a generally accepted opinion that the footballer who has had experience in both countries comes nearest to being the complete footballer. I think there is something in this story, too. The game in England is different; you have speeded it up considerably. It demands quicker thought and quicker action, and my own impression since I joined Newcastle United is that I am at a new school learning new lessons. I hope that I shall prove able to pick up those lessons and emerge the complete footballer.

AN EYE ON THE FUTURE.

We also remember, those of us who are tempted to travel to England, that the life of a footballer is short; that there is the future to be considered. I am, I hope, too far away from the end of my active career for it to be necessary for me to think about it seriously, but it follows that the wider a man's experience the better fitted is he for the problem and the struggle which may come in later years. Without going into details, I may just mention one direction in which wider experience must tell—when the player comes to look for a manager's job. The managers' jobs are what can rightly be called the plums of football, in the financial sense.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME.

Perhaps it will be said that right through these notes I have harped rather a lot on the financial side of this question of why Scots leave home. Well, there is no getting away from the financial side of the life of the professional footballer. We are in the game because we like it, and the chances of any fellow getting to the top of the tree who does not love football for the game's sake, are absolutely nil. But we simply have to consider the financial side of it. We give all our time and attention to the game, and for the years when we are in it the game is, so far as the majority of the players are concerned, our sole means of getting our bread-and-butter. Hence, I think that we are entitled to do the best we can for ourselves. After all, there is no necessity for English people to grumble because Scots leave home. There are not enough footballers of the right stamp to go round the English clubs, and the game in England is surely better because of the part which the imported Scots play in it.

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On Trek With a Manager!

By
"PAUL PRY."

OLD players are usually very keen to pick up a manager's job when they come to the end of their career on the active list. And I don't blame them, because, in the money sense, the fellow who gets the manager's job in a leading club has secured perhaps the juiciest plum in football. The usual rate of pay is about £750 a year, or £15 a week, roughly, but some of the leading clubs pay much more than that. I know one manager who gets £1,200 a year, with an additional bonus of £250 if his club finishes the season in the first four in the League table, and a bonus of £500 if his club wins the championship.

LEAVING NOTHING TO CHANCE!

This looks like big money, but let me add that the manager who gets together a successful team certainly earns as much as he is paid. It is a worrying job, and no mistake. The manager of a big club usually has a little office of his own, and here he can be seen at work very early most mornings, for he usually has a big batch of correspondence. I have been in a manager's office when he has had fifty letters in one morning from young players who are all convinced that they are budding Merediths. All these lads want trials, but the manager simply can't accommodate them. Yet he has to do his best to make sure that no really promising lad goes without a trial of some sort.

Tricks of the Trade!

A new series of articles telling you how the experts do their jobs.

No.5. ARTHUR DORRELL, the Aston Villa and International Outside-Left.

THE outside-left of Aston Villa is named Arthur Reginald Dorrell. There doesn't seem to be anything in that name to suggest a reason why he should always be referred to as "Dick" Dorrell, but such is the fact. After all, the footballer who hasn't got a pet name hasn't won much popularity, and Dick Dorrell is certainly popular in Birmingham, where the Villa play. He is also popular elsewhere, though on other grounds they don't quite like the tricks he gets up to and which so often leave full backs and half-backs wondering what he will do next.

A PRETTY PAIR!

It is rather difficult to make up one's mind as to whether Dorrell is fortunate or unfortunate in having such a famous partner as Billy Walker. The unfortunate part about this association is that the man in the street is apt to think that Walker is doing all the good things and making it easy for Dorrell to carry on. On the other hand, if Dorrell doesn't always get the credit which he really earns, he is fortunate in possessing a partner who gives him plenty of opportunities for using his skill and showing his tricks. Between

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THE "SPOTTER."

Then there are letters in plenty from the manager's agents, who are scattered all over England, Scotland, and Ireland. It is obvious that no manager can hope to see all the good young players who are appearing in obscure clubs up and down the country, so he employs scores and scores of "spotters." According to the rules, these spotters cannot be paid a salary, but as they work very hard it must be assumed that they get money from somewhere. The arrangement usually is a bonus for the spotter if a player he recommends is signed on. The proper organisation of these spotters is a job in itself, and the

more efficient the manager's agents the more likely is he to get the proper material.

20,000 MILES—ONE PLAYER!

Because the managers must have these agents, and because they must follow up the recommendations, the manager of any big club will spend much of his winter travelling in railway trains. I know a manager of a London club who travelled over twenty thousand miles last season—and he only signed on one new player.

When the manager goes on trek he tells nobody, save his directors and the club secretary, where he is going. Sometimes the managers even consider it necessary to disguise themselves while they watch some player who has been highly recommended. If a manager advertised his destination when he went to look at a player he would probably find that half a dozen other managers had been there before him.

A FULL-TIME JOB!

Back at his office, the manager has other duties to which he must attend. He receives daily reports from the trainer as to how this or that player is doing his work, and sometimes the player has to go on the "carpet." Then he will have a conference with his team about their tactics in general, and

when he has a spare moment he will go out on to the field to give a lesson to this or that man as to how he should play. So altogether it is

not to be wondered at that the average football manager invariably goes to bed late and gets up early. And even when he gets to sleep he probably does a lot of dreaming about his team.

A CLEVER DODGE!

A favourite trick of his is to stop dead, and leave the back running on. Indeed, we can say of him that this trick gives the impression that he is fitted with very effective four-wheel brakes. Walker is fully alive to this trick, and when Dorrell does it you can immediately see the complete understanding which exists between the pair. "Dick" pulls up, and the back has to pull up, too, of course—as quickly as he can. As soon as the back pulls up Walker dashes forward, and Dorrell sends the ball through for his partner to pick up in his stride and probably go on to score a goal. I don't know how many times this Villa pair have brought about the downfall of an opponent's goal by this dodge, but I have seen them do it a score of times, at least.

PLACING THE CORNER KICK!

Another very clever trick of this pair is to interchange positions, Dorrell going inside while Walker veers outwards towards the touch-line. And occasionally this outside-left varies his passing game by cutting in and having a pop at goal on his own account. The Villa make perhaps more complete use of corner-kicks than any other team in England, and obviously this must partly be due to the efficient manner in which Dick Dorrell gets the ball across from the flag. Although he is an outside-left, he usually takes his corners with the right foot, and I think most of my readers would find this the best scheme. These corners are dropped over to a position where the inside-right would usually be.



A. DORRELL (Aston Villa).

Walker and Dorrell there is the perfect understanding which makes them very nearly, if not quite, the most effective pair in the land.

DUAL CONTROL!

Now, funnily enough, Dorrell's father used to play at inside-left, and "Dick" himself occupied that berth in his early days. Naturally, the father taught him some of his tricks, too, but his development has been due mainly to the elaborate coaching system which they have at Villa Park. When Dorrell first played in the Aston Villa reserve team he was little more than a sprinter. Now he is the complete footballer, with his pace well under control, and the ball well under control, too, as he hops along with it at top speed.



(Continued from page 12.)

perhaps broke bounds as he had done in the days gone by. But he had a certain amount of reason for thinking so, the Bouncer realised that. And then, in an overwhelming torrent spoke the voice of the tempter. Why should he be under this suspicion? What had he done to deserve it? Why should he bow down to the wishes of a man who deliberately misunderstood him? Why should he live a decent life when there were pleasure and adventure awaiting him who stepped off the beaten track? And the risk—the spice of life. Why should he give that up? It certainly hadn't paid him to do so!

And as he brooded over his wrongs, and his fancied wrongs, the Bouncer grew more resolute to turn back to his old ways. The die was cast now. He had renounced the one thing he cared for most at Greyfriars—Tom Redwing's friendship. There was nothing to hold on to now. His self analysis was bitter and exacting, but it moved in the wrong channels, and served only to strengthen his misguided resolve.

Long after Greyfriars had retired to slumber Vernon-Smith sat there, his face in his hands, brooding. But sleep claimed him at last.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Redwing, Too!

TOM REDWING stirred in his sleep and awoke. A beam of moonlight played through the window of the Remove dormitory bringing home to the scholarship junior with full force a sight of the empty bed of his one time chum, and all what it meant.

At the top of the building, in the tiny punishment-room, Vernon-Smith was a prisoner. He would be feeling lonely and miserable, perhaps more miserable and lonely than Tom Redwing felt.

Perhaps he, too, found sleep an impossibility—Redwing hoped that he did. He was not to know that the Bouncer had hardened his heart; that his friendship for Redwing was dead.

"I ought to have stood by him," muttered Redwing miserably. "I ought not to have taken notice of what he said. It's just like Smithy to say things he did, so as to make me quarrel with him."

And in that Redwing was not far from the truth.

"He's got one of his old lapses," went on the scholarship junior. "And he didn't want to drag me into his affairs, so he quarrelled with me. I can see that now. But why is he so bitter? Where did those cigarettes and playing cards come from?"

Redwing asked himself the question time and time again. He knew that they had come into Smithy's possession somehow by accident. But he could find no solution. For hours he tossed in his bed, unable to court sleep and unwilling to court it.

Boom!

The hour of midnight struck eerily

through the open dormitory window, and as the last note died away Redwing heard someone talking.

"I ought to own up! I'm a cad to let another chap suffer—"

The voice came distinctly through the quietness of the night and Redwing recognised it as Skinner's.

The cad of the Remove was talking in his sleep.

"They're not his cigarettes—I tell you they're mine!"

Redwing heard no more, except the sound of Skinner tossing in his sleep. But he had heard enough to tell him the starting point of the little drama that had engulfed him and his chum.

"Skinner," he muttered to himself. "So the cigarettes and cards were his. I knew they weren't Smithy's. Poor old Smithy."

Redwing could reconstruct most things now. He could understand the Bouncer's feelings, he could understand his bitterness. Mr. Quelch had come down on him heavy for something he was innocent of. Redwing, knowing the Bouncer so well, realised what a blow it must have meant to his pride.

"I must do something before it's too late!" Tom Redwing came to a decision at last. "I must stop old Smithy from making a fool of himself."

There was a smile on Redwing's lips as he dropped off to sleep. In the morning he would speak to Skinner, would speak to Smithy.

But the smile would have faded could he have visualised in advance how both these juniors would receive him.

It hardly seemed to him a few minutes that he had been asleep when the bell sent its clanging note through the dormitory.

In ones and twos the Removites turned out.

"I wonder how old Smithy slept?" said Wharton as he dressed himself.

"Oh, he'd sleep anywhere!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, a night in the punishment-room would soon put me to rights if I fell foul of old Quelch!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin. "I can't stand my own company."

"It's pretty rotten," said Wharton, who had sampled more than one night in the punishment-room some time ago. "Smithy's a silly ass to back up against Quelch like that. He's asking for the sack."

"And he'll get it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "A chap can't expect to play the dingy rotter and not get old Quelch's back up when he's caught. There's a limit."

The Co. dropped the subject after that; they were of divided opinion, and it would only bring discord among them to discuss it further.

At the breakfast-table Vernon-Smith's vacant seat was very noticeable, likewise the "war-clouds" on Mr. Quelch's brow. As a result, the Remove were exemplary in their behaviour.

As the bell for first lesson rang the door of the punishment-room opened, and Wingate of the Sixth emerged with Vernon-Smith. The captain of the school had been sent by Mr. Quelch to bring the delinquent junior to the Form-room for lessons.

The Bouncer's face was still sullen and strained, and Wingate felt some compassion for him.

"I don't know what all the trouble's about, Vernon-Smith," he said. "But if you'll take my tip you won't back up against your Form-master. It's like

running your head against a brick wall."

"I'll ask for your advice when I want it!" snapped Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"By gad, for two pins I'd lick you myself!" said Wingate grimly. "If that's the kind of mood you're in, my son, I can see you're booked for trouble."

He marched the Bouncer into the Remove form-room, and left him with Mr. Quelch.

The Form master's eyes glinted as he noted the sullen, obstinate expression on Vernon-Smith's face. But he was a just man, and he merely instructed the junior to go to his place.

The Bouncer did as he was told, sweeping a pile of books from Snoop's desk to the floor as he passed along the gangway, whether by accident or design he alone knew.

Mr. Quelch's face hardened, but he said nothing, and lessons proceeded in a somewhat electrical atmosphere.

Tom Redwing tried to catch the Bouncer's eyes, but it was not until third lesson that they came face to face.

Tom smiled—a radiant, friendly smile.

He received in exchange a morose, sullen glance that was like a douche of cold water over him. The Bouncer was unapproachable. But Redwing had set himself a task, and he meant to tackle it. He tried again.

"I say, Smithy," he said during break. "I say, old chap—"

But the Bouncer turned abruptly on his heel, and strode off in the opposite direction.

Redwing bit his lip.

When the Remove were dismissed that morning Mr. Quelch called to Vernon-Smith to remain in his place.

"I hope you are in a better frame of mind this morning," he said to the Bouncer.

The junior said nothing.

"I shall not resort to locking you in the punishment-room again," went on the Remove master, determined not to see offence in Vernon-Smith's dumb insolence. "But if there is any more insubordination I shall be compelled to place the matter before Dr. Locke. You may go."

The Bouncer turned on his heel, and slouched out of the Form-room. At the door he met Redwing, who had waited for him.

"Smithy—"

"Will you leave me alone?" snapped the Bouncer savagely. "We're friends no longer."

"But I know now about the cigarettes and—"

"Mind your own business, and don't interfere!" interrupted Vernon Smith.

With that he pushed his way past the scholarship junior, and walked out into the Close.

Redwing bit his lip and strolled down the Remove passage, looking for Skinner. He found him alone in Study No. 11, counting some currency notes.

The cad of the Remove started guiltily as Redwing looked in and thrust the notes back into his pocket.

"What do you want?"

"I want a few words with you," said Redwing quietly. "Without beating about the bush, I happen to know that the cigarettes and playing-cards that were found in Smithy's study belonged rightly to you."

Skinner's face crimsoned, but he said nothing.

"It's through Quelch finding those rotten things that the whole trouble's

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started with poor old Smithy," continued Redwing quietly. "I think it's up to you to put things straight."

Skinner sneered.

"I think you're barking up a wrong tree," he said. "I know nothing about the cigarettes found in your study."

But his words carried no conviction.

"You're a bigger cad than I thought you were!" exclaimed Redwing, with lashing scorn. "Only a rotter would let an innocent fellow suffer to save his own skin!"

Skinner shifted uneasily in his chair. Redwing's words stirred up the thoughts that had chased themselves through his brain while he had slept. He knew that the "decent" thing was to go and own up to Mr. Quelch that the cigarettes and the playing-cards were his; to put the Remove master wise to the fact that he had misjudged Vernon-Smith; that he was guilty of injustice in confining the Bounder's movements to the precincts of the school.

Any decent fellow would have done the right thing, but Skinner was not a decent fellow, and he knew it.

"For two pins I'd go and tell Quelch the facts myself," said Redwing, breaking the silence.

"Go, and be hanged! I shall deny it—and Smithy will, too!"

Redwing turned on his heel and went out. He realised, with a sinking of the heart, that Skinner was not the fellow to do the honourable thing. And, meantime, the Bounder was plunging down the hill to expulsion.

"I must do something!" muttered Redwing miserably. "Smithy has made up his mind to kick over the traces. I must stop him!"

For half an hour or more Redwing taxed his brain, and then, of a sudden, a wild idea came to him. It was dangerous—very dangerous. But in that danger lay, what Redwing considered, its hope of success. He turned it over in his mind, and overcame his natural repugnance to putting it in operation.

"By gad, I'll do it!" he told himself. "It's risky, but it's worth while trying!"

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and the Remove football eleven were due to play an away match at St. Jim's.

After dinner the Bounder strolled over to Harry Wharton & Co.

"I suppose you'll want me this afternoon for the match?" he said.

Harry Wharton felt uncomfortable. Smithy was one of the best forwards in the Remove eleven, and a strong team would be needed if Greyfriars were to beat St. Jim's. But the captain of the Remove could hardly include the Bounder in his team when Mr. Quelch had gated him.

"We'd like to have you no end," said Wharton awkwardly. "But hang it, Smithy, you know jolly well that you're gated. I can't include you in the team, knowing that. Quelch would be down on me like a ton of bricks."

The Bounder's lip curled in a scornful sneer.

"So you're afraid of the Quelch bird. Well, I'm not. He's no right to gate me. I'm going out of gates this afternoon, and I'm going to play for the Remove."

Wharton's face set grimly.

"You're not," he said. "I'm going to fill your place with Redwing."

"With Redwing?"

"Yes."

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The Bounder clenched his fists. So it had come to this—that his chum was to be given his place in the eleven. Unreasoning anger took possession of the Bounder.

"Redwing won't play for you this afternoon," he said. "I'll see to that."

"Look here, Smithy," chimed in Johnny Bull. "You think too mighty much of yourself. Just ring off and give your mouth a rest."

"You cheeky rotter—"

"Well, I'm not a smoky rotter, anyway!" retorted Johnny Bull.

The Bounder looked as if he were going to spring on Johnny Bull, but he controlled himself. It came home to him then how much he had fallen in the estimation of Harry Wharton & Co. They actually believed him guilty of petty blackguardism. It was the last straw. He would do something to earn it.

With glittering eyes, he moved away from the Famous Five, and strolled out into the quad. He paced to and fro under the elms, a prey to bitter thoughts.

In the meantime, Wharton was looking for Redwing. He found him in Study No. 4.

Redwing started guiltily as Wharton & Co. came in. The room was full of the scent of tobacco, and Wharton sniffed the air and glanced at Redwing sharply.

"Have you, too, taken to smoking?" he asked.

Redwing hung his head.

"It seems to be catching," remarked Johnny Bull. "Look! The rotter's got the fag behind his back!"

Redwing's face crimsoned, and, with a gesture of disgust, he threw the half-burnt cigarette he had been concealing behind his back into the firegrate.

Wharton's face expressed the surprise he felt.

"I say, Redwing, old chap," he said earnestly, "for Heaven's sake chuck that silly rot! I thought you were strong-minded enough to leave that game to other silly idiots."

"Will you mind your own business?" said Redwing. "I don't see what it's got to do with you!"

Wharton frowned.

"It's got a thumping lot to do with me!" he retorted hotly. "Apart from being captain of the Remove and responsible, more or less, for putting a stop to fellows playing the giddy ox, it's my duty as footer captain to see that my men keep fit!"

Redwing bit his lip.

"I came here," continued Wharton, "to ask you to play for us this afternoon against St. Jim's, in Smithy's place—"

"I wouldn't take Smithy's place," interrupted Redwing.

"You wouldn't have the chance to now," concluded Wharton. "Come on, you chaps. This atmosphere nearly makes me choke!"

The Famous Five withdrew, slamming the door behind them, and Redwing sank into the armchair.

"It's the only way!" he muttered. "I hate the business! But if Smithy sees me playing the silly goat he'll pull himself up. He'll blame himself for setting me a bad example."

And that showed to what extent Redwing felt for his chum. It was an idea that had struck him after hours of think-

ing. He must become a "blade," he must go the whole hog in the hope of making Smithy see what a fool's game it was.

It was a risky expedient, but Redwing little counted the risk. He had just smoked his first cigarette when Wharton & Co. had surprised him. The unpleasant taste of the tobacco lingered in his mouth, his nostrils.

"Ugh!" He grimaced, and fanned the air with a newspaper. "If old Smithy knew!"

He smiled—a trifle wistfully.

Smithy at that moment was coming along the Remove passage with scowling brow. Burning anger and animosity filled his heart. He flung open the door of Study No. 4, and stood on the threshold.

"You rotter!" he exclaimed. "I hear you're going to play in my place this afternoon!"

Redwing was startled by the vehemence of his chum. He shook his head.

"I'm not playing in your place, Smithy," he said. "I wouldn't if I had the chance!"

"What do you mean, if you had the chance?" sneered the Bounder.

"Exactly what I say!" retorted Redwing. "Wharton doesn't want a smoky rotter in his team."

"Eh?"

Redwing grinned, and pulled a packet of cigarettes from his pocket.

"I thought I'd have a smoke, you know, and—and Wharton and his crowd caught me at it."

"Wha-a-at?" The Bounder was thunderstruck. "Y-you were smoking?"

"Yes," grinned Redwing.

And he pulled out a box of matches and lit up a cigarette.

The Bounder stared at his former chum in incredulous amazement. He watched him splutter and cough as he drew the cigarette alight with as much amazement as if he were looking at the eighth wonder of the world.

"Grooogh!" spluttered Redwing, as a draught of smoke went down his throat. "Oooooooooogh!"

Cough, cough!

"Well, my only sainted aunt!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"I know now why you like playing the fool," said Redwing. "If it's all as good as smoking I'm going in for it myself."

"You fool!"

The Bounder's eyes blazed. Had it come to this? Was this the result of his contaminating influence over Tom Redwing?

With a bound Vernon-Smith leapt across the room. Next minute he had snatched the cigarette from Redwing's lips.

"Oh, you fool!" he exclaimed. "Heavens, man, you're the last chap on earth I thought would go in for this kind of thing!"

Forgotten for the nonce was their quarrel. In his concern for his former chum the Bounder had forgotten their split.

He pitched the cigarette into the coal-box by the hearth, and glared at Redwing with eyes that nearly popped out of their sockets.

"Heavens, I would never have believed it!" he said, and there was enough misery in his voice to bring a lump to Redwing's throat.

His chum did care—he had always known that. But it was now Redwing's turn to harden his heart if he were to drag Smithy back from the downward path. He must tread it himself a bit

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"Smithy!" The Bounder started violently as that anguished voice burst upon his hearing, and Banks and Cobb looked at the newcomer suspiciously. "Smithy!" Redwing's voice was almost tearful, as he plucked his chum by the arm. The Bounder's face hardened. "Why have you followed me here?" he asked harshly. (See Chapter 6.)

further—dangerous though the experiment was.

He leapt from the armchair, in well-assumed anger.

"Mind your own confounded business!" he snapped. "If I choose to smoke that's my affair! We're not friends now—you said so yourself this morning!"

The Bounder recoiled as if he had been stung.

"Mind my own business!" he faltered.

"That's what I said!" exclaimed Redwing fiercely. "If I choose to smoke that's my affair. If I choose to play cards with Banks & Co. that's my business, too! Don't chip in—anyway, you're no plaster saint!"

Every word stung the Bounder like a whip.

"You play cards with Banks——" he began.

"And what if I do?" Redwing snapped back at him. "I can break bounds as easy as you can! I'll show you to-night!"

And with that he flung out of the study.

"Good heavens!" muttered the Bounder, quite overcome by what he had seen and heard. "To think that old Tom should be such a fool!"

Loder the prefect was detailed to keep an eye on Vernon-Smith that afternoon, but he might have saved himself the trouble. For the moment all the wind had been taken out of the Bounder's sails. He certainly had no desire to go out of gates—in that Redwing had played his cards well.

For the remainder of the afternoon Vernon-Smith sat in his study fighting another battle—his time it was for his

chum—the chum whom he thought had followed his bad example. Who already smoked, and who talked so glibly of gambling and breaking bounds; who was heading for expulsion.

It did the Bounder good to forget his own grievances, as Redwing had guessed it would. But it wrung his heart, for all that.

And that evening as he saw how Wharton & Co. cut Redwing direct, his heart smote him. It was through him that this had come about. He was to blame.

Skinner found Vernon-Smith in this mood.

"I say, Smithy, it's all right," he said. "I've got my I O U from Banks. I'm going to chuck up playing the goat from now on. It doesn't pay—Why, what's the matter with you?"

The Bounder's face had changed colour; he looked haggard and drawn.

"Oh, I'm all right!" he answered. "Just felt a bit giddy, you know. Don't worry now, there's a good fellow!"

Skinner walked on.

"What a world this is!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "Here's one of the biggest cads in the school telling me that he's chucking up playing the silly goat. And there's the best pal a fellow ever had just starting on the downward path. And—and I'm responsible in both cases."

Something like a sob escaped him. Tough though the Bounder was, he was not made of iron.

"Redwing must be stopped from making a fool of himself—somehow!"

And when the Remove went up to bed that night those words kept repeating themselves like a hammer on an anvil in the Bounder's brain:

"Redwing must be stopped from making a fool of himself—somehow!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Turning Point!

GREYFRIARS lay still and silent under the stars.

In the Remove two juniors were awake, each a victim of his own thoughts.

Eleven o'clock boomed out from the old school tower, and as the last reverberations died away, Redwing threw off the bedclothes. He was fully dressed—a circumstance the watchful Bounder had overlooked in his decision to stop Redwing from making a fool of himself.

In the old days such a thing could not have happened, for Redwing's bed was next to Vernon-Smith's. But since the "split," and perhaps to suit his plans, Redwing had moved his bed to the other end of the dormitory. In the darkness there he had managed to redress himself, unbeknown to the Bounder, whom he knew to be waiting for some movement from him.

The scholarship junior tiptoed out of the dormitory.

"You fool!"

Redwing heard Smithy's whispered voice as he halted on the landing in the gloom outside the dormitory. Next minute the Bounder, clad in his pyjamas, was at his side.

"Let go!" said Redwing fiercely as the Bounder gripped him by the arm.

"Where are you going?"

"To have some sport," answered Redwing. "Let me go, hang you!"

He wrenched his arm away and leapt for the door of the box-room. Vernon Smith was but a couple of seconds after him, but he was too late, for all that. The door was slammed quietly in his

face; and he heard the sound of the key grating on the wards of the lock.

"Don't go, you fool!" hissed Vernon-Smith. "It's too risky. You'll get caught!"

"What do I care?" came Redwing's reply through the stout panels. "Good-night!"

Shivering in the cold air, the Bounder heard the window of the box-room being raised. He knew what that meant: Redwing was leaving the school in the same way that he himself had done many a time and oft—via the leads.

The Bounder gritted his teeth. He had set himself the task of preventing Redwing from breaking bounds; and this was the result!

"The fool!"

That ejaculation came in tense, whispered tones from Vernon-Smith as he suddenly saw the shadows cast by a light flickering up the wall from below. To his alert ears now came the sound of moving feet. Perhaps it was a master on the prowl? Perhaps it was Mr. Quelch himself coming to see that Vernon-Smith was in his bed? After all, he was a Removite "under suspicion."

The thought turned Vernon-Smith sick with dread for the welfare of his absent chum.

Next moment the Bounder had scuttled back into the Remove dormitory and softly closed the door. He rushed over to Redwing's bed and was busy there almost until the time the footsteps came on a level with the landing.

Then, breathing hard, he tumbled into his own bed and drew the bed-clothes about him. He had done his best for his chum. In Redwing's bed reposed a "faked" figure, made out of a bolster and Redwing's pyjama jacket—the bedclothes drawn up so that the figure was almost concealed from view.

The footsteps halted at the door of the Remove dormitory; the Bounder through half-closed lids could see the beams of light penetrating the interstices of the door and the framework.

The door opened, and a figure in a dressing-gown came in.

It was Mr. Quelch.

The master of the Remove was carrying a pocket-torch which he masked with his hand, doubtless with the idea of keeping its rays from the faces of the sleeping juniors. He only looked at one bed and this time he withdrew his hand from the bulbous head of the torch, allowing the light to play upon the junior occupying the bed.

That junior was Herbert Vernon-Smith!

The Bounder "felt" the light upon him, but his features gave no sign of the knowledge. To all intents and purposes, he was sound asleep.

"Ah!" the Form-master ejaculated in a gratified tone. "He is sound asleep."

And with a softening of his gimlet features, Mr. Quelch quietly withdrew.

The Bounder heard the soft pad of his slippered feet descending the staircase; and then, when all was silent, again he sat bolt upright.

"Phew!" he muttered. "That was a narrow escape. That ass Redwing doesn't know how lucky he's been."

But the "ass" did, for Redwing was in the locked box-room. He had no intention of breaking bounds once he had managed to get on the right side of the box-room door. He knew that if he lifted the creaking window-sash, the Bounder would naturally draw the conclusion that he had dropped, via the leads, to the quad below, which was

exactly what the Bounder had imagined. But Redwing had felt a thrill pluck his heart when he heard those slippered feet coming up the staircase; he knew the measured tread to be that of Mr. Quelch. He saw the light, too, and shuddered to think what the consequences would be if Mr. Quelch found his bed vacant.

But Mr. Quelch was hardly in the Remove dormitory two minutes, and, straining his ears, Redwing had heard no sound of conversation. Then came the return of those slippered feet, and Redwing knew at once that all was well for Mr. Quelch was humming to himself as he descended the staircase, proof positive that he was in a good humour.

It had been a narrow escape, for all that, and Redwing heaved a sigh of relief when the footsteps had died away into the night. He seated himself on a trunk and waited. His plan demanded that he should remain there at least two hours—sufficient time for "a blade" and a "sport" to lose his money to Messrs. Banks and Cobb. And he knew for a certainty that the Bounder would remain awake awaiting his return.

Redwing smiled in the darkness. Never in his life before had he had recourse to trickery, in which category he placed his present conduct. And yet, if it saved a fellow from himself, did the end justify the means? He told himself it did.

Those two hours seemed to drag by on leaden wings, and more than once Redwing, the "breaker of bounds," found himself nodding off to sleep. But at last the clock chimed the hour of one a.m.

"Now for it!" he muttered.

He closed the creaking window. The wakeful Bounder in the Remove dormitory heard it plainly enough, even as it was intended he should.

He sat up in bed.

In the quiet stillness of the night the click of the lock in the box-room door came plainly to his ears. Followed the pad of feet and the Remove dormitory door had swung open noiselessly.

A figure came into the shadowed room, and the Bounder knew full well that it was Tom Redwing.

He slipped from his bed and walked over to him.

"Tom—Tom! You're all right?" he asked anxiously. "You didn't get caught?"

"No!" came Redwing's sullen answer. "What's it got to do with you, anyway?"

"You played with those sharpers at the Cross Keys?" was the Bounder's next whisper.

Redwing hung his head.

The Bounder felt a thrill of compassion run through his hard nature.

"And they cleaned you out?"

"I'm broke," muttered Redwing, truthfully enough, for he was. "Haven't got a penny. But I'll have some by to-morrow night."

"You fool!" hissed the Bounder. "Can't you see it's a mug's game? It's not worth the candle."

"Will you mind your own business," snapped Redwing, "and leave me alone."

Again, practically the same words as the Bounder himself had used earlier on. And they stung home. More than ever was Vernon-Smith resolved to stop Redwing from continuing this fool-hardiness. Of his own folly he gave not a thought then, for the Bounder was at his best when he was thinking of others.

And his mind now centred wholly on saving Redwing.

He watched the junior turn in, heard the growl he gave as he spotted the "dummy" figure in the shape of the bolster, but the Bounder felt no anger that his good-natured act should be so ungraciously received.

Redwing turned in.

"Good-night, old chap!" said the Bounder softly.

Silence.

With tight lips the Bounder returned to his own bed. It seemed to him that it was going to be a doubly difficult task to restore the old terms of friendship and save Redwing from making a fool of himself.

But the Bounder never shrank from the task he had set himself. All his animosity against Mr. Quelch had evaporated; that was a trivial matter compared with the welfare of the best chum that had ever breathed.

He turned in and was soon sleeping soundly; at the far end of the dormitory Redwing also slept soundly. There was a smile on his face now in sleep that would have done the Bounder good to see. It breathed the spirit of friendliness.

But the time was not yet ripe for the Bounder to grasp again the hand of friendship he had once rejected so lightly.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Speaks Out!

"THIS is prime!"

Billy Bunter stood before the cupboard in Study No. 11, eyeing with great satisfaction a tempting array of tuck Sidney James Snoop had laid in. It was not often that Snoop was so generous as to expend the whole of a remittance on a feed, but he considered this a special occasion.

Snoop and Stott, his study-mate, had hailed with delight Vernon-Smith's return to the fold. The Bounder, on these terms, was a fellow decidedly worth cultivating. With that thought uppermost, Sidney James Snoop had "blued" the remittance he had received that day from his uncle in America on a first-class feed. The Bounder was to be asked to that feed, and Sidney James and Stott had sauntered off to look for him.

And the moment they had vacated Study No. 11 Billy Bunter had rolled in. He had witnessed Snoop's extensive purchasing of the good things Mrs. Mumble had to offer in her little shop with covetous eyes. He had heard, too, that Snoop intended to invite the Bounder to tea that afternoon. And this killing of the fatted calf, as it were, did not find favour in Billy Bunter's eyes, for the simple reason that he had not been asked to the feed. In fact, when Bunter had reminded Snoop of their "old friendship," and followed it up with a remark that he would honour the company at the festive board with his fascinating society, Sidney James Snoop had not only denied his friendship for Bunter, but had proved same by bestowing a liberal number of kicks upon him.

Bunter had thereupon decided that a fellow who so easily renounced a bosom friend like William George Bunter required a lesson. It was not right that he should gorge these dainties from the tuckshop when an "old pal" was fading away from lack of nourishment.

The cupboard door had opened easily enough. Indeed, Bunter was agreeably surprised to discover that Snoop hadn't locked it.

"I'll just take my whack," reflected Bunter, with watering mouth. "After all, it's no more than a friend should do. Just my whack!"

Bunter's whack, incidentally, knew no limits, as many a Greyfriars junior had discovered to his cost. He started on the cream-buns, and they rapidly disappeared between his rapacious jaws, although he had promised himself to leave Snoop and Stott their "whack."

Having whetted his appetite, so to speak, the Owl of the Remove proceeded to satisfy it to the full, and Snoop's tuck began to disappear at an alarming rate.

"Mean, I call it," muttered Bunter between mouthfuls. "Snoop will be jolly sorry he didn't ask me to his rotten feed."

Undoubtedly, Snoop would have been. At the table he could at least have put a "brake" on Bunter's gastronomic feats, but it was too late for that now: The plum-cake had disappeared—only a few crumbs were left to tell the tale—the jam-sponge had followed suit.

And now Bunter was starting on the pork-pie. It was a delicious pie, and Bunter's fat face was shiny as he swallowed the last mouthful. One of Snoop's ginger-beers helped it down.

The chocolate biscuits came next, and they were followed by half a dozen jam-tarts. Bunter had left the tarts till last.

He sniffed disapprovingly at the remains of that feed. The only things left were a pot of jam, a tin of sardines, and a jar of honey.

"Not much of a feed, after all," he muttered. "Really wasn't worth coming to. I—Hullo! What's this?"

His sticky fingers had come in contact with a piece of pasteboard. It was a playing-card—or, rather, the odd card which is found in every pack and is known as the Joker.

Bunter turned it over in his hand, and then pitched it back amongst the rubbish on the bottom shelf of the cupboard with a grunt, his interest at the time being devoted solely to things edible.

For some minutes he stood staring at the jar of jam and the tin of sardines.

"Might as well take them," he reflected. "They'll do for a snack before tea."

With that generous reflection he gathered up the jam and the sardines and rolled out of the study. What Snoop would think when he returned and found his cupboard as empty as the celebrated Mother Hubbard's, Bunter did not stop to consider.

With his stolen provender Bunter made his way to Study No. 7. En route he had to pass Study No. 4, and from within he could hear the sound of voices. He recognised one of them as Snoop's, and Bunter thereafter moved at an increased speed.

It was as well he did, for Snoop and Stott were in a bad temper. The former had knocked at the door of Study No. 4 and entered. Stott followed him in.

The two cads found Vernon-Smith and Redwing in the study.

"Oh, my hat!"

Snoop's ejaculation was echoed by Stott, for the room was full of smoke, and Redwing, in the armchair, was puffing away at a cigarette with evident enjoyment. At least, his face expressed as much; but, as a matter of fact, Redwing was near to the point of being sick.

Ever since his escapade of the night before Vernon-Smith had "kept an eye" on his former chum. In class that morning Mr. Quelch was agreeably surprised to find that the Bounder had "toned down." No longer did he see

the cynical smile—no longer did Vernon-Smith answer with impertinence. And the master of the Remove was glad.

Snoop and Stott imagined that this was a clever piece of acting on the Bounder's part to allay suspicion. But they did not know the full circumstances—they did not know that the sight of Redwing fast shaping into a fellow such as either of them were, had been enough to pull Vernon-Smith up from his folly.

"Well, this is an agreeable discovery," said Snoop as he shut the door.

"Rather!" grinned Stott. "I didn't know Redwing was such a dark horse." Vernon-Smith scowled.

"What do you want?" he asked gruffly.

"We came to ask you to tea," said Snoop. "I've got in a whacking feed, Smithy. Won't you come along? It'll be just like old times."

"And Redwing can come, too," put in Stott.

"That's a good idea," agreed Snoop. "We can have a game of poker, or something, after tea, and some smokes. Quite like old times!"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Stott. "Skinner won't be there, though."

"Oh, blow Skinner!" snapped Snoop. "I don't know what's come over the silly idiot. He's turning into a good little Georgie."

Vernon-Smith winced. He hated to be reminded of how a cad was reforming himself into being a decent fellow, whilst another decent fellow was rapidly developing into what Skinner had been—what Stott and Snoop were.

"You can get out!" snapped the Bounder suddenly, as he came to the end of his train of thought.

Snoop and Stott jumped. "Eh?"

"Get out of this study!" exclaimed the Bounder, jumping to his feet. "You're not fit to mix with decent fellows."

"Decent fellows!" sneered Snoop. "Do you call yourself decent, Smithy? Do you call Redwing decent? I always knew he was a sham!"

The Bounder's fists clenched. "Get out of here!" he repeated. "I wouldn't come to your rotten feed if you paid me."

Redwing, from the chair, knew that his scheme was complete—knew that it had

borne fruit, and rejoiced inwardly. He threw the half-smoked cigarette away, promising himself that it would be the last one he ever smoked while he was a schoolboy.

"If you'll take any advice from me," said the Bounder in more mollified tones, "you'll pack up playing the goat, Snoop. And you, too, Stott; you're like a sheep, you follow blindly. The game's not worth the candle. Chuck up smokes and gambling, and go in for footer."

"Footer!" jeered Snoop. "Oh, my hat!"

"Come on Snoopey," muttered Stott. "We'd better get out."

There was nothing for it but to get out, as Stott had said. Evidently there was nothing doing so far as the Bounder was concerned. And, with a black brow, Snoop departed, followed by Stott.

When the door had closed upon them, Vernon-Smith walked over to Redwing and stood staring down at him in the chair.

"Tom," he said at length, "you've got to stop this tomfoolery! You've got to drop it—you hear?"

"Why should I?"

"Because I say so," went on the Bounder. "Because you know yourself that it's wrong."

Redwing laughed. "You should be the last fellow to preach," he said. "I can recall the time when I said much the same thing to you. Did it make any difference?"

The Bounder's face softened. "It did and it didn't," he answered.

"But I was a fool then. I was bitter against Quelch. I—I thought it was clever to back up against him. I thought that being a decent fellow didn't count for anything once you had earned a bad name. But I see differently now."

"You do?"

Redwing's "sporty" character had dropped from him as he heard the Bounder speak thus. No longer now to act. It was the old Redwing, the large-hearted chum the Bounder had known a few days earlier that looked into Vernon-Smith's face.

"Of course I do," answered Vernon-Smith. "And—and I'll tell you how it came home to me—that is, if you are interested."

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"I am interested."

The Bounder's hands went out and gripped Redwing by the shoulders.

"It was because I saw you playing the goat," he said softly. "It nearly made me mad. I blamed myself. I still blame myself. A fellow can't always see his own faults in their proper perspective, but when he sees some sort of reflection of them in a chum he understands. I would sooner cut off my right hand than see you take up this rotten game!"

"Then—then you still consider yourself my chum?"

It was the final test.

The Bounder's hands gripped deep into Redwing's shoulders, hurting him, but he didn't mind. At that moment he was seeing the real character he had loved as a staunch chum.

"Of course I do!" The Bounder's voice was husky. "Whether you want me or not."

It was a come-down for the lofty pride of Vernon-Smith, but it showed him white all through, and Redwing's lips trembled.

"There's my fist on it," added the Bounder.

No more was spoken just then. The hands of the two principals in this little drama met in a firm grip.

Redwing's task was done.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Does the Decent Thing!

"BUNTER!"

Sidney James Snoop roared the name in a frenzy. He was standing before the cupboard in his study—the cupboard which only half an hour previously had contained that whacking feed.

Only the crumbs were left now—and Snoop's rage.

"I'll scalp him!"

"The fat rotter!" growled Scott. He was not so indignant as his study-mate, for the simple reason that he hadn't spent a penny on that feed. His annoyance, such as it was, sprang from the fact that he had been deprived of a free feed by Bunter.

That Bunter was the raider, there was no doubt in Snoop's mind—no possible doubt—for the Owl's fat finger-marks were everywhere in evidence.

"I'll skin him!" roared Snoop.

He caught up the poker and dashed from the study.

It was unfortunate for Bunter that he should emerge from Study No. 7 at the moment Snoop passed it; but there it was.

"Oh crumbs!"

Snoop's heated face and the poker sent cold shivers down Bunter's spine.

"You fat pilferer——" began Snoop, making a lunge with the poker.

But Bunter didn't wait to hear what Sidney James Snoop had to say. His one idea just then was to put as much distance between himself and that poker as was possible.

"Ow! Keep off, you beast!"

Bunter rolled off down the passage at a speed that would have done credit to a marathon runner. Hard on his heels flew Snoop.

An open door at the end of the passage seemed to offer Bunter shelter. He flew into the room and slammed the door, too frightened to realise that he had sought sanctuary in Mr. Quelch's sacred apartment.

But Snoop knew, and he waited outside.

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He had seen Mr. Quelch go out for the afternoon, and Snoop could afford to wait. But Bunter did not know of that little circumstance. In his fat terror he imagined every step passing down the passage to belong to Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crumbs!"

The Owl of the Remove gazed about him wildly. Some thought of hiding under his Form master's desk flew into his mind. He rolled towards it. On the desk were orderly piles of paper, but Bunter did not notice these things. What he did see, however, was the pack of playing-cards and the cigarettes Mr. Quelch had found in Vernon-Smith's study. It was upon the playing-cards that Bunter's fat mind dwelt, and the sight of them sharpened his fat wits. He picked them up and looked at the pattern on the backs of them. Then he chuckled.

"He, he, he!"

The pattern on the cards Mr. Quelch had found in the Bounder's study was identical with the pattern on the joker Bunter had seen in Snoop's study a short time since. It set a new train of thought running in the Owl's podgy brain.

He knew that Snoop and Stott played cards; he knew that Vernon-Smith had ceased playing the silly goat. And yet the incriminating cards had been found in Vernon-Smith's study. Bunter remembered, too, that the Bounder had declared that he had no use for such things—that, indeed, he never used them.

"Snoop or Stott planted them on Smithy," muttered Bunter, "for some reason or other, and Smithy got the blame! What would the fellows say if they knew that?"

Bunter was not prompted to utter such thoughts from any feeling of generosity. It mattered little to him what happened to Vernon-Smith, for the Bounder had banged his head on the wall. But what did matter was the fact that Snoop waited outside Mr. Quelch's study with a poker in his hand!

"I'll show the rotter up!" declared Bunter virtuously. "If he touches me I'll make it hot for him!"

In this valiant mood, Bunter opened the door of Mr. Quelch's study. A few yards away Snoop was patiently waiting, still with the poker in his hand. He grinned as Bunter's head came into view, quite expecting to see it withdrawn the next moment.

But nothing of the kind happened.

To Snoop's amazement, Bunter rolled out of the study straight towards him.

"Come here, you fat rotter!" roared the warlike Snoop.

"I'm coming quickly enough!" hooted Bunter. "But you can keep your hands off me, Snoop, or I'll make it hot for you!"

Snoop's eyes opened wide in his astonishment.

"I know now about the fags and the cards found in Smithy's study," went on Bunter. "Just like you, Snoop, to let another fellow get it in the neck while you escaped scot-free!"

"What on earth are you burbling about?"

"I know what I know," said Bunter oracularly. "You touch me and I'll tell the fellows! I'll tell Quelch! I'll tell the Head!"

Snoop's face was a study. He had no idea of what the fat junior was talking about, except that it might be a wheeze to escape Snoop's avowed intentions of slaughtering Bunter.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "That makes you sit up, doesn't it?"

"Why, you——"

Snoop's anger returned in full force. He made a sudden lunge at Bunter with the poker.

"Yarooooop! Keep off!" howled Bunter. "I'll tell—— Yarooooooh!"

The poker lunged again.

"Whoop!"

And Bunter fairly flew for the Common-room.

After him went Snoop, getting in an occasional swipe with the poker, each of which drew a further roar from Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's stentorian voice rang out as Bunter came charging in at the door of the Common-room. "In training for the marathon, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop him!" roared Bunter, taking refuge behind the Famous Five. "He's a cad! Don't let him get at me! Wow! I'll tell Quelch about the cards and the smokes he found in Smithy's study!"

"I'll splifficate him!" roared Snoop.

"Hold on a minute," said Wharton quietly. "What's all this about Smithy's study, Snoop?"

"It's Bunter's silly rot!" said Snoop. "He thinks the cards and the smokes old Quelch found belonged to me!"

"So they do!" hooted Bunter. "I can prove it!"

"He's talking out of the back of his head!" snorted Snoop. "I'm going to slaughter him for pinching my tuck!"

"That can wait," said Bob Cherry. "Let's hear what Bunter's got to say first."

And Bunter told his story to a very amazed audience.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Snoop, but that junior was quite unperturbed.

"Let's get along to your study, Snoop," said Wharton. "We'll have a look at this joker."

The Famous Five, with Snoop and Bunter between them, headed for Study No. 11. Bunter made straight for the cupboard. He produced the card which he had come across during his raid upon Snoop's tuck and held it up for inspection.

"There!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

"That doesn't belong to me!" said Snoop. "That's Skinner's. He's got a pack like that!"

Bunter's face fell, but the Famous Five did not take much notice of Bunter. They were more than interested now to interview Harold Skinner. They surged out of the study, leaving Bunter alone with Snoop and his wrath. A few howls floated out after them; evidently Snoop was busy with the poker.

Skinner was found in the close, under the elms. He looked alarmed as Harry Wharton & Co. drew near.

"We're looking for you, Skinner," began Wharton.

"Well, you've found me," said the cad of the Remove. "What do you want?"

Wharton produced the joker. At sight of it Skinner's face turned pale.

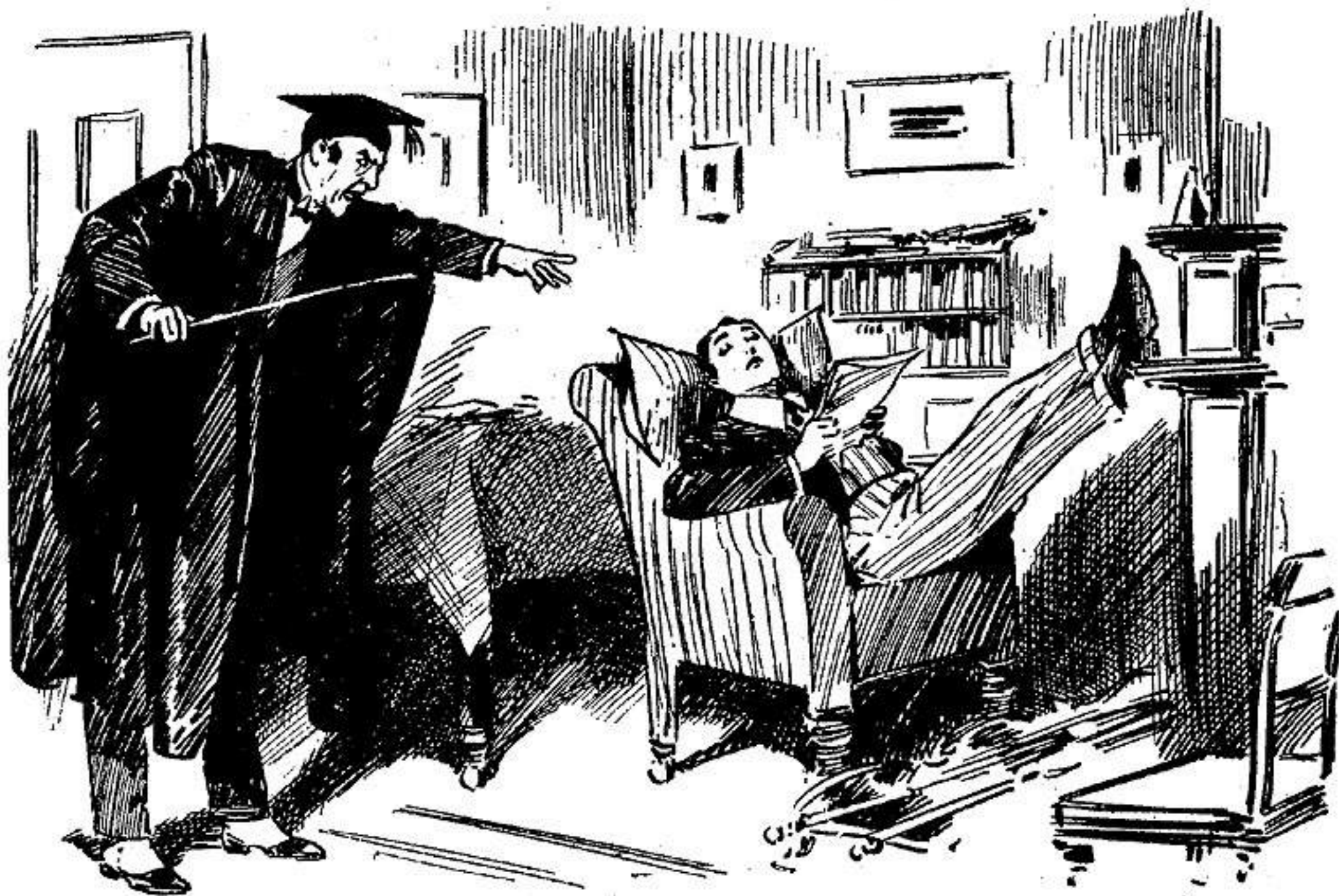
"Does this belong to you?" asked the captain of the Remove grimly.

Skinner saw that it was hopeless to deny it. It would be so easy to prove that it was his.

"What if it does?" he said defiantly.

"Then where's the rest of the pack?"

"I—I gave them to Smithy," said Skinner suddenly. "I've chucked up gambling and— and Smithy took those



The door of Study No. 4 was flung open and Mr. Quelch, cane in hand, appeared on the threshold. His eyes blazed with anger as he saw the figure in the chair. "Boy!" thundered the Remove master. "Wretched boy! How dare you remain in that lounging attitude when your Form master is present?" "I'm sorry you don't like it," sneered the Bounder. (See Chapter 7.)

cards to destroy them himself. It wasn't my fault Quelch found him with them."

Harry Wharton started. He could see light now. If the Bounder for some reason or other had offered to destroy those cards he was not the kind of fellow to say that they were Skinner's when Mr. Quelch had found them in his possession.

And from that task Vernon-Smith had set himself had sprung all the trouble—a trouble that now dragged Redwing, a decent fellow, into the shady circle, as Harry Wharton had seen for himself.

"Why, you rotter," began Johnny Bull. "Do you mean to say that you saw old Smithy take your punishment and a good lot more, whilst you sneaked around in the background?"

Skinner's eyes dropped.

"I was a cad to do that," he admitted and the Famous Five marvelled at the new Skinner that stood exposed. "I know I ought to have spoken up and—told Quelch. But I can't! I can't!"

Harry Wharton's hand dropped lightly on Skinner's shoulder.

"If you take my tip, you will, Skinner, old man. You surely won't let another chap suffer for what you've done? If it hadn't been for the smokes and things old Smithy wouldn't have kicked over the traces again. It's up to you to put him right with Quelch."

But Johnny Bull was less patient with Skinner than Harry Wharton was.

"You'll jolly well be made to do the decent thing if you won't do it off your own bat," he snorted. "There'll be a Form meeting on the subject—and you know what will follow that."

Skinner shuddered.

He knew well enough what would follow.

But the new Skinner came to his aid. His head went up, his eyes were steady as he faced Wharton & Co.

"I'll go and speak to Quelch to-night," he said. "It wasn't the caning that I funk. But—but you see Quelch nearly caught me coming from the Cross Keys. And if he—he asked me about that I should give myself away. I don't want to be expelled."

"I understand," said Wharton gravely. "And I'm glad you're going to do the decent thing. I can see now why Quelch gated poor old Smithy. He thought he was the junior who had been visiting the Cross Keys."

"Poor old Smithy!" said large-hearted Bob Cherry. "He's straight as a die, after all, if people will only believe in him."

"I'll put him right with Quelch," said Skinner. "I've been thinking about it a lot just recently. Old Smithy did me a jolly good turn—practically saved me from the sack. It's up to me to do the square thing by him."

And Skinner meant what he said.

An hour afterwards Vernon-Smith was summoned to Mr. Quelch's study. He entered the apartment wondering whether Mr. Quelch was going to "come down" on him for something else he hadn't done, and was prepared in advance to keep a check on his headstrong temperament.

But there was a pleasant surprise in store for the Bounder.

"Ah, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "I have—ahem!—just heard from Skinner the true story of

the cigarettes and the cards I found in your study."

The Bounder started.

"It transpires that you were acting in good faith when you took those things from Skinner and declared your intention of destroying them yourself. Skinner has confessed to me—everything. It was a noble sacrifice on your part, my boy, to take the blame of the affair upon yourself, and I am sincerely sorry that I should be the one to stir up that past which you had so safely overridden. I realise now that I was a trifle hasty and unjust in imposing those restrictions upon your movements which at the time I thought necessary. But we all are prone to make mistakes, my lad, and I am deeply sorry."

The Bounder's face cleared.

"It was my own fault, sir, to a great extent," he answered. "If it hadn't been for my beastly temper—" He paused. "I—I deserved what I got! But if you still believe in me—"

"I do, my boy," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "Some time ago you will remember I said that you were a boy of great character, capable of exerting much influence over your Form fellows either for good or bad. I still think so, with perhaps one amendment; and that is your influence is for the good. Keep it like that, my boy."

They shook hands. A new understanding had been born between them—one of mutual admiration and respect.

Vernon-Smith felt that he was treading on air when he left his Form master's room, and he sought out Tom Redwing to tell him the news.

Redwing was with the Famous Five (Continued on page 28.)

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BRAVO, THE NAVY! Chuffer Foss has set his mind on earning the twenty pounds' reward offered for the capture of his cousin Tommy Comber, but he finds that his reward takes the form of something jolly unpleasant when he starts to slang the Navy!

The Boy with the Million-Pound Secret!

DAVID GOODWIN'S
MASTERPIECE!



Anxious Moments!

"**A**Y, ay, sir!" said Dan cheerfully, starting up his engine and steering towards the black vessel. Tommy was standing up in the bows, his heart beating violently. "What d'you want of us? We're busy!"

"So am I!" rapped out the torpedo-boat's commander. "I'm going to see if Comber, the kid convict, is aboard you, so look lively, my young shaver! Lay along the quarter here."

"What, Comber from the Billy Rough Un?" exclaimed Dan. "Why, I'm after him meself!"

Dan had certainly been after Tommy all the evening, and he was after him now, for he sat ten feet behind him.

"Och begorra!" exclaimed Tommy. "there's a whole boiling of the bhoys chasin' after him now, over beyant there, an' we moight ha' caught him if ye hadn't stopped us, sorr!"

"Moight you indeed, Mither Mulligan?" said the officer dryly, and the bluejackets at the gun began to laugh. "Here's another injustice to poor old Oireland! Step up on deck here while I have a look at you. Prize-money's scarce in the Navy since the War, and I can smell twenty pounds coming along for my crew."

The motor-boat laid herself alongside the torpedo-boat's iron skin, and was instantly caught by the bows with a boat-hook and made fast. Tommy hoisted himself on to the low deck, feeling like a condemned prisoner stepping on to the hangman's platform. He found himself facing a crew of big, silent bluejackets and a jolly-looking young sub-lieutenant with a keen blue eye, who didn't seem very much older than Tommy himself.

"Now," said the sub-lieutenant, flashing an electric torch full on Dan's face and holding it steady, "you first. What's your name?"

"Dan Bennett, sir."

"If you thought up that name on the spur of the moment, it's pretty good!" said the young officer. "By Jove, I think you're the goods! You've a look about you of the chap they're after!"

Tommy was amazed and scared. Were they going to take Dan for himself? It was true that Dan, though rather bigger, was not unlike what Tommy used to be. They were much the same type. Dan said nothing what-

ever. The officer pulled a photograph out of his pocket and looked at it carefully, and again at Dan.

"No, go. You pass, after all," he said. "Too wide in the mouth, and too many freckles. All right. Now the other kid."

He turned his torch on Tommy and scanned his face with sharp, observant eyes that seemed to look through Tommy, who felt his flesh creeping. It seemed to him that this young naval officer could penetrate his skin and detect the disguise which that brilliantly clever surgeon, Dr. O'Hara, had made of his features and the altered colour of his hair. For some moments the sub-lieutenant was silent, staring at him as though he were some strange fish pulled out of the river.

"Rum looking cove!" said the young officer at last. "Who are you?"

"Pat Roche, yer hanner!" said Tommy.

"Roach, is it? You look more like a pike. Where do you come from?"

"The City o' Dublin, begob!" said Tommy. "And a moighty foine city, tu!"

"Pass, Paddy Roche, an' all's well!" chuckled the sub-lieutenant. "Nothing doing. You're no more like Comber than you're like Mary Pickford!"

"An' plaized I am to hear yer hanner say so!" exclaimed Tommy. "I wouldn't want to be like a dhirty spalpeen of a runaway convict, would I? Sure, if anybody told me I was like this Comber I'd belt him across the nose! Whirroo!"

"Erin go bragh! Up the rebels," grinned the young officer. "'Tis a broth of a bhoys you are, Paddy. What were you doing in that boat?"

"Sure there's a crowd o' chaps chasin' Comber round Northfleet way, an' they say he's taken to the water," said Tommy, "so we thought we moight as well take a hand. Me frind Dan here owns the motor-boat, an' he's like to get his hands on Comber. Am I spakin' the truth, Danny?"

"Sure. The cold truth," said Dan feelingly. "I'd like to get hold of him now, and wipe him across the mouth for all the trouble he's given me. We don't look like makin' a profit after all. Are you satisfied, sir?"

"I'm more than satisfied," said the young officer cheerfully, "and I apologise to you two chaps. Duty's duty, and I'd

have put Comber in irons if I'd caught him; but I'm glad you aren't him!" he added, turning to Tommy.

"Glad?" exclaimed Tommy. "Phwat for?"

"Bless you, I don't want to catch the kid!" said the officer. "The way he flummoxed that flat-footed mob of gobbies on the Bellerophon was the limit. They were twenty to one against him, and he got to windward of the lot. He's had a good run for his money, and he's a sportsman."

"Well, this beats the band!" said Tommy.

"And what's more," added the young sub-lieutenant, "I read the story of his trial in the papers. The jury were a lot of mud-heads. I wouldn't have condemned a dog on such evidence! It's my belief that kid is innocent, and no more did the job than me."

"Well, now, I've thought the same meself," said Tommy, scratching his head in bewilderment. "But it seems the judge didn't think so, sorr. An' twenty pounds is worth earnin', your hanner."

"Ah, they're a fat-headed crew, these landlubbers," said the torpedo-boat's commander. "If Comber had been tried by a naval court-martial, they'd have acquitted him an' given him back his sword. And that's that. Carry on there, coxswain! Take charge! Head her in towards the south short, and prepare to anchor."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Chuffer Challenges the Navy!

"**W**E'LL be getting away, sir, if you've done with us," said Dan.

"Oh, there's no hurry," said the officer, leading the boys willy-nilly into the little steel chart-house on deck, and switching a light on. "You'll never catch that kid in a month of Sundays, even supposing he's within fifty miles of us—which most likely he's not. There's no trustin' these reports. You can get away as soon as we've dropped the hook: but you've got to see there's no ill-feeling—you are my guests, you know."

He took a bottle out of a stand and poured something into three little glasses. "Tee-tee, are you? So'm I practically, but there's no dodging this. Stand up! Here's luck to the Navy!"

"The Navy!" said Tom heartily.

It was wine of some sort, very mild and rather sweet; in fact, it was the stuff called Marsala, which midshipmen drink in gun-rooms. He didn't like it much, but he was proud to drink for the first time in his life the health of the King's Fleet; especially as he had just successfully bluffed a live naval officer, which is a thing very few people can ever boast of doing.

"Good luck to you both!" said the sub-lieutenant. "If I were you I should chuck chasing that kid. There was some sort of a hunt goin' on ashore just now, I know—we got a glimpse of it with the searchlight, but too far off to see what was doing, so we just kept a sharp look-out on the water. I'll bet that mob won't get any closer to the kid Comber than you have."

"I'll bet me Sunday boots they don't, sorr," grinned Tommy.

"You've a precious runny voice for an Irishman," said the officer suddenly.

This was true. When Tommy was coming aboard the torpedo-boat he had hurriedly slipped into his mouth a little tablet from a bottle which Dr. O'Hara had given him when he was at Lagden. These tablets, as soon as they were sucked, relaxed the throat and disguised Tommy's voice, making it so much deeper that it was not recognisable by anybody who knew him. O'Hara gave them to him as a safeguard, and Tommy had used them once before.

"Tis a bit hoarse always, sorr," he said, "and I've a cowl'd in me head."

"Cold in the head don't hurt anyone—as long as he don't get cold feet," said the officer, stepping out on deck. "Bear that in mind, Paddy—the chap who gets cold feet is lost. In a tight place, keep your head cool and your feet warm, an' let the other fellow get the wind-up—then you've got him on toast."

"I'll remember that, sir," said Dan. "I reckon the Navy ought to know all about gettin' folk on toast. And now, by your leave, we'll be pushing off."

"Wait till I've dropped my hook, then you can get into your boat," said the sub-lieutenant. "Time's up, and my patrol is finished; my orders are to anchor here for the night."

The torpedo-boat had crossed the river while they were in the chart-house; the officer took charge while she slowed up, head to tide, and anchored. Dan grew anxious when he saw that she was now close in on the Kentish side, not far away from Northfleet Point.

"Let's slip away quick," he whispered to Tommy; and they were both bidding their host a hurried farewell when the sound of oars was heard, and a voice hailed excitedly:

"Torpedo-boat ahoy!"

"Ay, ay!" said the young commander.

A big, heavy rowing-boat loomed up out of the gloom, with six or seven men in her.

"Have you got him, sir? We saw him first."

"Saw who first?" replied the officer.

"Young Comber. You've got his motor-boat—you must ha' got him, too."

"My aunt!" whispered Tommy. "It's Chuffer—joined up with the lot that's after me."

"Keep back an' sit tight," said Dan under his breath.

"I have the honour to inform you, gentlemen," said the officer sarcastically, "as you seem interested in Comber, that he was not on board the motor-boat."

"What?" cried Chuffer Foss, who was standing up in the bows of the craft as it approached. "Why, I jolly well know he was on board; I saw the boat pick him up. You've been fooled! By gosh, there's dirty work here!"

"Dirty work?" said the young officer indignantly. "You big, swivel-eyed son of a mud-hopper, do you know you are talking to an officer of the King's Navy?"

Chuffer danced on the floor-boards in his rage and excitement.

"I can't help who you are! You've got 'em both aboard—there's Dan Bennett standin' up there beside you as large as life, and he's Comber's pal, an' lives at Gravesend. Everybody knows that!" shrieked Chuffer.

"That's right, sir!" chorused the men in the boat.

The young officer turned quietly to Dan.

"Are you Comber's pal?" he said. "You told me you were hunting him."

"Correct, sir," said Dan calmly. "I was his pal before he went to prison. And I've been hunting him all night. Why not? He's worth twenty quid, isn't he? And he'll be copped, anyhow. Chuffer Foss, there, is a bit jealous."

"Who are you?" said the sub-lieutenant to Chuffer. "Do you know Comber by sight?"

"By gum, I ought to!" shouted Chuffer. "I'm his cousin, Benjamin Foss. And he ain't going to get away with it! That's him over by the funnel—I'd know him in the dark!"

"Oh! You're the jolly old cousin who was a witness against him at the trial, eh? I remember your name," said the officer. "And this is Dan Bennett, also a witness. He admits it. Very well, we'll settle this. Step forward here, Paddy Roche! Stand to attention!"

Tommy walked forward and halted as Chuffer sprang on board. The officer turned his torch full on Tommy's face.

"Is this your man or not?"

Chuffer's jaw waggled, and his eyes

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

TOMMY COMBER, sentenced to three years' detention aboard the reformatory ship *Bellerophon* for being concerned in the murder of his uncle.

JOSEPH COMBER, a clever chemist, inventor of a powerful high explosive named *Comberite*.

CHUFFER FOSS, Tommy's cousin, a ne'er-do-well, whose false evidence did much to prejudice the innocent Tommy's chances of acquittal.

DR. SHANE O'HARA, a skilful surgeon, who shelters the fugitive from the *Bellerophon*, and fakes his features so that Tommy's own pal,

DAN BENNETT, doesn't recognise him until Tommy makes known his identity.

MERTON HAYNES, a friend of O'Hara's.

In return for the service O'Hara has rendered him Tommy—who knows the secret of *Comberite*—is asked to make this valuable explosive for the doctor and his friend, Tommy himself to take a third share in the partnership. Tommy agrees to the proposal. He meets Dan—who, incidentally, thinks O'Hara and his friend a pair of rogues—and asks him to join him in preparing *Comberite* on Curlew Island, which formerly belonged to Joseph Comber. Dan jumps at the chance. Anxious to meet Chuffer Foss face to face, for he thinks that his cousin had a hand in Joseph Comber's death, Tommy journeys to Gravesend. He meets Chuffer, but only avoids capture by the skin of his teeth. In his flight Tommy bumps into Dan in his motor-boat. The two are making a good getaway when suddenly a torpedo-boat looms up in the darkness and a stern voice commands them to *heave-to!*

(Now read on.)

bulged out of his head as he stared at the dark face and hooked nose and the eyes that blinked at him fiercely in the circle of the light. He seemed unable to find his tongue.

"Shpake up, ye slab-faced omad-haun!" said Tommy. "An' if ye've the cheek to call Paddy Roche a runaway convict, I'll belt the nose av ye through yer black hair, bogob! Not but what Comber is likely a better man than you, an' if iver I meet him I'll tell him so!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Chuffer.

"Is this your cousin?" thundered the sub-lieutenant. "Yes or no?"

"N-n-n-no!" said Chuffer hopelessly.

"That ain't Comber!" chimed in a chorus of disgusted voices from the boat. "Nothin' like him!"

"And I'll lay ye tin shillin's to a pinny, Misther Foss," said Tommy scornfully, "that I'll catch Comber before you do!"

Chuffer turned away.

"There's something fishy here, all the same!" he growled.

"There's something very fishy here," said the young officer. "And it's yourself! Coxswain!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the coxswain, grinning.

"Chuck this fellow back into his boat, an' give him six with a rope's-end first, to teach him not to bluff the Navy!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the coxswain gleefully, and gripped Chuffer by the back of the collar.

The brawny seaman hauled Chuffer's big bulk across his knee as easily as if he had been a small puppy, despite his struggles, and snatched up the end of the rope that hung from the davits.

Whiz! Biff! Whack!

Chuffer yelled and roared as the rope's-end smote him lustily across the tightness of his trousers. When he had had six of the best he was pitched among his companions in the boat, which was pushed off, and went spinning away on the ebb tide, while Chuffer's curses arose on the night air. There was a regular riot, for his crew seemed to be all fighting among themselves.

"If you're not out of sight in three minutes, my merry kid-hunters," said the officer cheerfully, "I'll turn the gun on you! By Jericho, I'd like to see the fellow who can bluff me!"

A Strange Lodging!

Tommy was leaning up against the funnel and laughing until his ribs nearly gave way. The tears were running down Dan's face, and the boat's crew were all guffawing; they had not had such a night for years. Chuffer Foss' companions got out their oars and pulled away out of sight with all possible speed.

The young officer said nothing. He was smiling to himself, as if over a little joke of his own. Then he turned to the boys.

"I fancy you chaps' would like to shove off now?" he said.

"If it's all the same to you, sir," said Dan, wiping his eyes.

"Pull your boat up, then," said the sub-lieutenant, and at the same time he gave his coxswain and crew a job which took them up into the bows. When they were out of hearing he joined the boys, who had pulled their boat close up to the stern, and were getting into her.

"Good-night, Dan Bennett, if that's your name," he said, and held out his hand to Tommy. "So-long, Misther

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Paddy Roche, from Dublin!" There was a queer twinkle in his eye. "Did you ever hear of the Irishman's parrot?"

"What was that, sorr?" asked Tommy innocently.

"It didn't talk much, but it was a beggar to think," chuckled the young officer under his breath. "D'you know what I'm thinking now?" he added, and dropped his hand on Tommy's shoulder. "Why, that maybe I could lay my hand on Tom Comber yet."

For a moment Tommy was paralysed. "Now shove off quick, before I make up my mind about it," said the young officer, with a wink. "No one likes making mistakes."

"Good-night, sorr!" said Tommy. The motor-boat's engine started, and away they buzzed into the darkness.

For some time neither of them said a word. They had been laughing a minute before, but now they felt rather queer.

"Gosh, that was a narrow shave!" muttered Dan.

"Maybe it ain't so easy to bluff the Navy after all," said Tommy dubiously. "He got closer to it than I like. But he doesn't know, for he jolly well can't know! And he's glad of it. He's no fool, either. By crumbs, Dan, next to you that's the clinkiest good chap I ever struck!"

"You played up well," said Dan, "but you've had better luck than you deserve. You ought to be locked up on the Billy Rough Un twice over, by rights. Nobody but a blithering young madman would have meddled with Chuffer at all."

"It was worth it," said Tommy. "Another minute with Chuffer up there on the hill an' I'd have had the truth out of him. I'd got him scared stiff. That's where the bad luck was—getting interrupted like that."

He told Dan all that had happened in the chalk pit.

"Well, I never did think Chuffer killed poor old Nunks," said Dan.

"No," replied Tommy grimly. "Maybe not. But he was in it. He knows who did. That's what I'm going to find out."

"Not from Chuffer."

"No, I've done with Chuffer now. I

can't go near him again. But don't be downhearted, Dan. Can't you see what a topping good night's work we've made of it? It's safe for you and me to pal up now. Chuffer's seen us both together, and whoever he takes me for he's giddy well sure I'm not Tom Comber. He's said so in front of witnesses. This job has made it all right for us. Chuffer's fixed. To say nothing of the sport it's been!"

"Yes, I ain't saying but what I've enjoyed it," said Dan, grinning. "As far as sport goes, it was all right, but don't forget the fox that's hunted too often gets his back broken by the hounds at last. It's got a bit too hot for comfort once or twice, and now what? You ought to get out of this neighbourhood for a bit an' let the scent cool down."

"I'm bound to go to London, anyway. There's things I must do there. I don't think you'd better come with me, Dan. We oughtn't to be seen together in London as well as on Curlew Island. It'll be all right when we're alone there."

"I ain't keen on London myself just now," said Dan. "Suppose I take a look round Curlew Island on my own an' let you know what's doing there before you come down. I might find out something well worth knowing."

"Good scheme! Shove it along!" said Tommy. "Be careful and don't let O'Hara get wise to you. If he does say you're a pal of mine. But I reckon you won't get foul of him. Where can I get a word to you if I want you?"

"Write or telegraph to Post Office, Southend," said Dan. "I'll get it all right. I'll land you now, an' you'll have to get to London as best you can."

He ran straight up river for a couple of miles and landed Tommy on the north shore, where the two chums, who had stood by each other through so many dangers, parted hurriedly but affectionately. Not being French or Italian they did not kiss one another good-bye. On the contrary, each called the other by an insulting name and advised him not to be a bigger fool than necessary in the meantime, or to make a worse mess of things than he could help. That done, they punched each other in the chest, shook hands, and Dan buzzed away down the silent river, alone.

Tommy struck inland, and a short walk brought him to Rainham Station, where, by good luck, he had only to wait ten minutes for the last quick train to town. He had lost all count of time, and was surprised to find it was not yet eleven o'clock. At Fenchurch Street Station he took the Tube across London to Waterloo, where he asked his way to Stroud Street, the address of the lodgings that Dr. O'Hara had given him. He was not very keen on going there, especially at that time of night, but decided it was the only thing to do.

No. 120 was a small and dirty little house, exactly like scores of others in a dark, silent street near the station. Big Ben was striking midnight when Tommy knocked at the door, wondering if he was likely to make anybody hear, for the house was in darkness. But he had hardly rapped when the door opened an inch or two and a pair of bright, beady eyes peered at him through the chink.

"I'm Pat Roche," said Tommy.

It was odd how natural it was to him to call himself Pat Roche, for since O'Hara had disguised him he was Pat

Roche to the life, and at these times he thought of himself by that name. "What's in a name?" as Shakespeare says. A good deal, when it means three years in prison.

A skinny figure beckoned him in, the door opened, and closed quickly behind him. Tommy found himself in a dim-lit passage, facing a withered old man with a wiry grey beard, and eyes that reminded Tommy of an owl's. He was dressed in rusty black.

"I expected you this mornin'," the man said wheezily.

"Couldn't get here before," said Tommy. "Sorry to knock you up, guv'nor."

"You didn't knock me up," chuckled the old man. "I was waitin' for you. I knew you'd come. Want any supper?"

"It's a bit late to bother you," said Tommy apologetically, for he was raging with hunger. "But if there's a chunk of bread an' cheese handy—"

"Come in here," said the man, and led him into a cosy sitting-room, which, though no light showed outside in the street, was well lit up and looked home-like. The table was spread with a clean cloth, the silver and knives looked new; there was a noble-looking ham, a well-browned cold chicken, new bread, and fresh butter; a fruit pie with cream, and a jug of lemonade.

"I knew you'd want supper," chuckled his host. "Ring the bell when you've done." And he disappeared silently.

Tommy made the chicken look silly, and left a large hole in the ham. The fruit pie was superb, and the cream luscious. It was wonderful to find such things in a house that looked so poor and squalid outside. Tommy heaved a great sigh of relief, and undid a button of his waistcoat.

Mr. Isaac Drinkwater, which was the name of the queer-looking lodging-house keeper, came in.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked, rubbing his hands. "Or is there anything else you would like?"

"I'm full up," said Tommy gratefully. "That was a top-hole feed. Must have got a first-class cook here. But it looks jolly expensive. What have I got to pay for my board and lodging?"

The old man smiled and made a queer little gesture with his open hands.

"Nothing!" he said. "Everything is paid for you up to Tuesday morning."

Tommy turned and stared at him.

"Who by?" he said sharply. "Who's paying for me? Don't say you don't know, for I can see you do. Who is it?"

"When you are as old as me," said the man, his shining eyes fixed on Tommy, "you will know better than to want to know everything. I never ask questions, and so I am told no lies."

"Aren't you?" said Tommy. "Then you're lucky. I find I get told a lot of lies whether I ask for 'em or not. I'll go to bed, if it's all the same to you."

"This way," said Mr. Drinkwater, and, taking a candle, he took Tommy to the top of the house, where, right at the back and overlooking a little stone yard with broken bottles on the walls, he found himself in a well-furnished bedroom, with a feather bed on a spring mattress and clean, white, expensive sheets. Here the old man left him and shuffled downstairs noiselessly, wheezing and coughing like an elderly pug.

"It's a queer house this!" said Tommy to himself as he undressed. "But, by gum, O'Hara does know how to make a chap comfortable! Suppose his idea is

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The brawny seaman hauled Chuffer's big bulk across his knee as easily as if he had been a small puppy, despite his struggles, and snatched up the rope's-end. Whiz! Biff! Whack! Chuffer yelled and roared lustily as the rope's-end smote him. (See page 25.)

that I sha'n't run away from the grub; but there's something more in it than that. Wonder who lives here besides that old chap with the fluffy chin? Must be somebody. I hope they understand I can take care of myself if there's trouble."

He found a suit of new pink silk pyjamas laid out for him on the bed. Tommy had never seen anything like them. He inspected them, with a grin of contempt. However, he put them on and found them uncommonly comfortable. Dog-tired, he tumbled into the luxurious bed and fell asleep.

He slept heavily, but fitfully, and twice he dreamed that Dr. O'Hara's dark eyes behind the black-rimmed spectacles were staring down at him out of the darkness.

The Man with the Bald Eyebrows!

TOMMY did not wake till eight, when he found Mr. Drinkwater at his bedside with a cup of tea. It was quite like old times in O'Hara's lonely house in Essex, when, as an invalid prisoner, Tommy had lived on the fat of the land and was waited on hand and foot. He dressed and went down to the parlour, where he found a registered letter just arrived by post, addressed to "Mr. P. Roche."

He opened it and found banknotes in it for fifty pounds.

It was the money he had sent away yesterday. It had come back to him—a reminder that he belonged to O'Hara and Haynes, and was bound to them tight.

"I'll keep it," said Tommy, stowing it away carefully. "It's part of the bargain, an' I'll give Dan his money back. Fifty quid to the good. An' now we'll make a day of it!"

There was a piping hot breakfast ready for him—soft-rope bloaters, liver and bacon, and strawberry jam. It was a good beginning to the day. While eating it he read a notice in the paper to the effect that the runaway boy convict, Thomas Comber, had been heard of in the neighbourhood of Gravesend during the night, and that the news of his capture was hourly expected.

Tommy chuckled as he spread a fresh dollop of jam and butter on his bread. Reading that paragraph made him enjoy his breakfast all the more.

When he had finished he put on his hat and told Mr. Drinkwater that he probably wouldn't be back till late that night.

The old man said nothing, but gave him a latchkey to the front door so that he could get in whenever he wanted to.

Tommy strode away down Stroud Street, feeling good. He was not only safe, he told himself, but absolutely free. He could go wherever he chose, and no one would know where he went, or what he did.

Stroud Street was nearly as quiet by day as by night, for along its whole length Tommy only passed one man, who was standing by a pillar-box lighting a cigarette. He glanced up as Tommy went by. He was a very ordinary, respectably dressed man; and Tommy, getting that momentary glimpse of his face, noticed that he had almost bald eyebrows.

There was nothing extraordinary in that; but somehow he was curiously like one of the petty-officers on the Bellerophon, who also had no eyebrows. He was certainly not the same man, but he was like him, and that curious resemblance fixed him in Tommy's mind; otherwise, he would not have noticed him at all. Tommy did not know how

lucky it was that he did notice him, and that he remembered him afterwards.

Being bent on having a good time, Tommy decided to get business over first. There were several things he would want at Curlew Island, for the making of Comberite, which he had not put on the list, or told O'Hara anything about. There is no sense in telling everything, especially about a secret worth millions. So he went to a manufacturing chemist in the Borough, and made several purchases there, paying for them and leaving them to be called for later.

When he left the shop he noticed, some way off and mingling with the crowd in the street, a face that his keen eyes recognised at once.

It was the man with the bald eyebrows!

"No error about it," said Tommy to himself. "That chap's following me. There's trouble coming."

He went on his way, quite unconcerned, but he kept a sharp look-out without appearing to do so. The man was certainly shadowing him. And he was doing it well, too, for he kept out of sight most of the time; he was no amateur at the game. During the next two hours Tommy lost sight of him altogether; he began to wonder whether he had made a mistake, and if seeing the man twice was only an accident after all. Tommy made several purchases, and then stood himself a slap-up lunch at one o'clock; he was feeling easier in his mind now, and while lunching, he looked through a newspaper and mapped out his programme of entertainment for the afternoon.

He was a gentleman at large, rolling

(Continued overleaf.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 972.

CHUMS—THROUGH THICK AND THIN!

(Continued from page 23.)

in the Common room and the Boulder joined them.

"For heaven's sake drop that silly smoking," Wharton was saying as Vernon-Smith approached.

"I have!" exclaimed Redwing, colouring a deep crimson. "I'm through with it and all the other shady games. They're not worth the candle."

It was typical of Redwing's generosity and modesty that he refrained from explaining the true facts of the case. Not even the Boulder knew that Redwing had descended into blackguardism simply to pull him out of it. It was a page of his life that Redwing wished to blot out for ever and by mutual consent he and Vernon-Smith never referred to it.

"I'm sorry I was a pig to you," said Johnny Bull, going up to the Boulder. "Here's my hand on it!"

The Boulder took that fist and shook it, as he did with the rest of the Co.

"Oh, I deserved all I got," he said. "I was a fool—nothing more or less!"

"But a generous fool!"

The group of Removites turned as that voice fell on their ears. They saw Harold Skinner. The one-time cad of the Remove was a different fellow. His eyes were bright; his conscience was easy. And Mr. Quelch had been lenient with him. He had merely listened to Skinner's full confession and had advised him to "play the game." No caning, no lecture—no shadow of expulsion. No wonder Skinner felt grateful.

It was doubtful, however, how long he would tread the straight and narrow path, for his was not a strong nature like the Boulder's. But if good wishes counted for anything his reform was a certainty, as all the decent fellows in the Remove wished him well.

That evening Redwing's bed was moved back to its accustomed place—next to that of Herbert Vernon-Smith's. Mr. Quelch himself saw lights out, and his "good-night" echoed pleasantly in the Remove dormitory.

Slumber had descended on the Removites with but two exceptions.

The Boulder stirred in his bed.

"You awake, Tom?" he called softly.

"Yes," came Redwing's voice.

"I've been thinking," went on Smithy.

"So have I—"

"What a good thing it is to have a real pal," concluded the Boulder.

"Exactly what I've been thinking, too!"

"Good-night, Tom!"

"Good-night, Smithy," replied Redwing softly.

There was a happy and contented smile on his face as he slept, and its counterpart was to be seen on Vernon-Smith's face as the moonbeams danced their shadows over him.

THE END.

(Now look out for "Asking For Trouble!"—next week's dramatic long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order your MAGNET early, chums!)

THE BOY WITH THE MILLION-POUND SECRET!

(Continued from previous page.)

in money, and could do as he liked. There were theatres, movies, exhibitions, boxing-matches, and all the fun of London to choose from. There was a big footer match at Stamford Bridge; he decided to see that first.

He made his way to the Chelsea Football Ground, took one of the best seats, and settled down to enjoy himself.

He couldn't fix his attention on the game. He was wishing Dan was with him and wondering what Dan was doing at Curlew Island. It was no fun by himself. He was also wondering what was going to happen to himself. The finish of the game carried him away for a while and made him excited. He forgot everything else. He joined the crowds that were streaming out through the gates. When out in the street, he threaded his way slowly in and out among the people. And again, he caught sight of the man with the bald eyebrows.

Who was he, and why was he shadowing Tom? Did he belong to the police—or was he some sinister ally of O'Hara's?

(It was a thrilling moment for Tommy and he realised full well the necessity of keeping his wits about him. One slip would be fatal! Look out for next week's powerful instalment of this great serial. It's absolutely packed with exciting situations.)

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