

OUR THOUSANDTH NUMBER NEXT WEEK!

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Week Ending April 9th, 1927.

The Magnet

LIBRARY

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EVERY MONDAY.



FORM MASTERS WILL COME ALONG AT AWKWARD MOMENTS!

Read "Condemned by the Form!" the grand school story inside.



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed: The Editor, THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NEXT WEEK'S RECORD NUMBER!

NEXT Monday the good old MAGNET celebrates its thousandth issue. Just think of it—for one thousand weeks those sterling favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., not forgetting dear old Billy Bunter, have played their respective parts, and played them right well. From number one the MAGNET "caught on" with the public. It became their "favourite paper," and it has never looked back. I do not know how my youthful chums would get on without the chums of Greyfriars to keep them company every week. If any further proof be needed that the MAGNET is indeed the centre of attraction, the proof is supplied in that cheery number "one thousand" which one will see on next Monday's cover. Isn't it just scrumptious? Doesn't it make the scoffers take a back seat, for what paper unless it has popularity behind it can endure the test of age? Over nineteen years old, and yet always new, sums up the MAGNET admirably. Remember this, boys and girls, when you bump into a non-reader. That number one thousand will give him something to think about, I'll wager. Got that? Then get ready to cheer—next Monday will soon be here!

THE DICTIONARY MERCHANT!

At a certain school in the Midlands dwells a "dictionary swallower." I'm not meaning to imply that this Johnny has a dictionary for his breakfast, dinner, and tea. Not a bit of it. But from a reader's description of this "queer fish," it appears that he cannot open his mouth without stringing long words together. Now this habit apparently annoys my correspondent, for he states that the queer fish—that's how the fellows in the neighbourhood refer to this dictionary swallower—thinks it clever to use long words where simple ones would do just as well. I rather fancy, however, that it is my correspondent's inability to understand those long words that riles him so much. But if this queer fish is really so annoying that the chaps can't "stand it much longer," try one or two things—namely, don't listen to him when he's chinwagging, or else mug up

a few long-winded sentences peppered freely with terrifically long words, and, keeping a straight face, try them out on him. I've known of more than one dictionary swallower fall a victim to this second remedy. It's worth trying, believe me!

HE SWALLOWED A FISHBONE!

"Enthusiast," of Rochester, writes and tells me that he had a very unfortunate experience last week. He swallowed a fishbone, and it stuck at the back of his throat! Nasty things, fishbones, for they will go the wrong way, no matter how careful we are. My correspondent states that he had great difficulty in getting rid of this fishbone, especially as the nearest doctor lived a mile away. And nobody at home, apparently, knew what to do. I'm not anticipating that "Enthusiast" will swallow another fishbone—that type of enthusiast is very rare, I should say—but there's no reason why he shouldn't know what to do should he be in the company of anyone unlucky enough to swallow a fishbone. This is what a little "First Aid" book recommends: "When a person has a fishbone in the throat insert the forefinger and press down upon the root of the tongue, so as to induce vomiting. If this fails let him swallow a large piece of potato or soft bread, and if these fail give him a mustard emetic."

Next Monday's Special Programme:

"PAYING THE PRICE!"

By Frank Richards.

That's the title of the story that will make history in the life of the MAGNET, for it's the thousandth yarn Mr. Richards has given us. Knowing that you can bet "Franky" has put his beef into it, I'll say no more, except that this treat for next week, of course, deals with the fall of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"THE TRAIL OF ADVENTURE!"

By Lionel Day.

There will be another instalment of this popular serial in next week's record-making number. Don't miss it!

"EVERY INCH A HERO!"

And that's the special humorous story from young Dickie Nugent. You'll enjoy it no end. And last, but not least, there's a special "extra" contribution from Frank Richards, dealing with his reminiscences since he became associated with the MAGNET. Order this bumper issue of good things now, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

"DAD READS IT NOW!"

"Laugh! I feel like bustin' when I think of it. My old dad says to me the other Wednesday: 'What the dickens is that paper you've got there? You're always reading it—lemme have a look at it!' Right in the middle of a Jack, Sam, and Pete yarn I was, too! He grabs the 'BOYS' REALM' off me, and rants on: 'You sit there chortling and chuckling like you were reading something funny! Pack it up and go out and chop some firewood for your mother!' So I goes out and chops wood. When I looked through the window, there was my dad with his nose dug right into the old 'REALM,' grinning like a two-year-old. Took it off to work with him, he did! I wondered what dad would say when he came back, and I looked at him when he came in. He was grinning, an' he says: 'That chap Pete's a regular lad—got any back numbers, son?' You could ha' knocked me down with a sledge-hammer when he said that, an' when I went up to bed, he was looking at last week's copy! Now he reads the 'REALM' regular on Wednesdays—gives me the tuppence for it, and all!"



Every
Wednesday

The Boys'
REALM
OF SPORT & ADVENTURE

Price
Twopence.

THE FALL OF THE BOUNDER! In his unreasoning feud with the new fellow in the Remove Herbert Vernon-Smith hurts himself far more than his enemy. Yet his reckless, ungovernable temper drives him on to such lengths that eventually the Bounder forfeits all the respect his Form-fellows once had for him!

Condemned by the Form!



A Grand New Long Complete Story of School Life, Featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Herbert Vernon-Smith, better known as the Bounder. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Awkward!

"It's all rot!" growled Harry Wharton.

Frank Nugent nodded.

"Utter rot!" he agreed.

"But—"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. The captain of the Remove was sitting at the table in Study No. 1, with a pencil in his hand, and a frown on his brow. There was a paper on the table before him, on it a list of names—the names of the Remove men selected for the football match with Rookwood School.

A football captain, naturally, had plenty of little worries, plenty of little difficulties to overcome. But the present little difficulty was one with which no skipper ought to have been bothered. Wharton realised that very clearly, and it did not improve his temper.

One name in the list was that of Paul Dallas, the new fellow in the Greyfriars Remove. Another name was that of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

There was the worry. Vernon-Smith, though in many respects he deserved the nickname that has been given him at Greyfriars, was a splendid footballer, and a tower of strength to the team. In a match like that with Rookwood, Wharton could not contemplate, with equanimity, leaving the Bounder out. He would almost as soon have left out Bob Cherry or Hurree Singh or Squiff. But—there was a large-sized "but."

"It's all rot!" repeated the captain of the Remove. "A fellow can row with another fellow, without letting it interfere with games."

"Of course," said Nugent. "But—"

"Smithy's fatheaded feud with the

new chap has nothing to do with football!" said Wharton irritably.

"Nothing at all. Only—"

"It's utter rot for me to have to give such a thing a thought, in fixing the team for the Rookwood match. Enough trouble, anyhow, without things like that."

"Quite. But—"

Wharton granted.

He was deeply annoyed.

He did not want to leave his best winger out of the team. The Rookwood men were hard to beat; and Wharton was very keen on beating them in the last match of the season. Vernon-Smith could help to beat them, that was certain. At the same time, the captain of the Remove wanted to play Dallas. The new junior had shown wonderful form in Soccer; he was keen as mustard, and most of the Remove footballers agreed that he was a rod in pickle for Rookwood. But—

"Smithy has said that he will not play in the same team with Dallas," said Nugent. "He stood out of the Form match for that reason. He's a hot-headed ass, but he's a man of his word. That's the position he has taken up."

"He's no right to take up any position!" growled Wharton. "He's a member of the eleven, and bound to play if wanted."

"Quite. But I'm afraid you'll have to choose between Smithy and the new chap, all the same. Smithy's got his back up."

Wharton knitted his brows.

Certainly no member of a football team had a right to get his back up, and give his captain so much trouble. But Smithy was too valuable a man to be dropped out if it could be helped. The Bounder knew his value, and was taking advantage of it. That alone was

sufficient to rouse the ire of the captain of the Remove.

"Smithy's simply playing the ox," said Wharton crossly. "I can't see any reason for his feud with Dallas, excepting that his father's adopted the kid and sent him to Greyfriars—and that's no reason at all. Smithy ought to be pleased at his father doing a kind action."

Nugent grinned.

"He doesn't seem pleased."

"He ought to be. Anyhow, it's no business of his what his pater does. It's cheek!"

"Sheer, unadulterated cheek!" assented Nugent. "Smithy has a rather bitter temper. And Dallas licking him in a scrap hasn't improved matters."

"He fairly forced Dallas into it."

"That makes it all the worse for him. Nothing would satisfy him but a fight—and he got more than he could digest."

"Still, all that has nothing to do with football."

"No. But—"

"I've got to post up the list this evening," said Wharton. "I suppose I'd better speak to Smithy first. It's utter rot!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The study door burst open, and Bob Cherry came in cheerily. "You fellows finished prep?"

"Yes. Bother prep!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Bob, with a glance at the clouded face of the captain of the Remove.

Wharton pointed to the football list.

"Want a little help?" grinned Bob.

"I can give you one tip. R. Cherry at half."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You're in, of course. It's the forwards I'm bothered about."

"That new kid, Dallas—"

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"That's the trouble. I've got him down as inside-right."

"Can't do better," said Bob. "A good man anywhere in the front line. Nothing to worry about there."

"Smithy's outside-right."

"Good!"

"Is it good?" grunted Wharton. "They're on fighting terms. Dallas is a sensible chap—I can depend on him. But Smithy—"

"Oh, Smithy will do the sensible thing," said Bob. "He won't want to scrap with Dallas while we're playing football. He can scrap in the changing-room afterwards."

"He's said that he won't play in the same team with the charity cad, as he calls him."

"Utter rot!" said Bob.

"Yes—but there it is."

"If Smithy takes that line, give him the chuck," said Bob Cherry. "Who the dounce is Smithy to lay down the law?"

"He happens to be the best winger we've got," said Wharton ruefully. "We want to wind up the season with a win."

"Dash it all, I suppose we've not got to go down on our knees to Smithy, and beg him to play?" exclaimed Bob warmly. "I'd rather be beaten by Rookwood if it comes to that. Lots of other good men in the Remove, if Smithy stands out. Russell or Ogilvy or Franky here—"

Wharton rose from the table. "We want Smithy," he said. "After all, he's no fool; he may decide to chuck his silly feud for one afternoon. Bother the fellow! I'll go along and speak to him, anyhow. If he definitely refuses to play with Dallas—"

"You won't drop Dallas?"

"No fear. Smithy's a good man, but he can't be allowed to run the show. If he won't see reason, he must stand out. But—I hope he'll see reason."

But Harry Wharton did not look very hopeful, as he went along the Remove passage to the Bounder's study. He knew only too well the arrogant temper of the Bounder of Greyfriars. But his mind was quite made up on one point—valuable man as he was, Herbert Vernon-Smith could not be allowed to dictate to his football captain. There was a limit, and that was the limit.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smithy Puts It Plain!

TOM REDWING pushed away his books, in Study No. 4, and rose from the table, and glanced at the sullen-faced fellow who was sprawling in the armchair, with his hands in his pockets.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, staring straight before him, plunged into gloomy thought, did not heed him.

Smithy's face still showed signs of his fight with Paul Dallas some time before. It had been a hard fight, and the Bounder had kept on after he knew that he was beaten. The result had been a licking such as Smithy had never received before. His punishment had been severe; but it was the defeat that rankled bitterly with Smithy. From the hour that Paul Dallas had arrived at Greyfriars, Smithy had been his enemy, and his persecution of the new boy had been incessant and ruthless, and had disgusted most of the Remove fellows.

Since his defeat, however, that persecution had had to cease. The sneers and jeers of the Bounder lost all their

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edge when he knew, and all the Remove knew that Dallas could thrash him if he liked. To jeer at a fellow, and rely at the same time on his good nature not to hit out, was rather too ridiculous. Since the fight in the paddock Vernon-Smith had not addressed a word to Dallas, though his black looks had said a great deal.

He was thinking now of his defeat, of his hatred of the fellow he could no longer persecute. Tom Redwing knew that by the expression on his face.

"What about prep, Smithy?" asked Redwing.

The Bounder did not answer.

"You've done nothing, old fellow," said Tom.

"Hang prep!"

"You don't want any trouble with Mr. Quelch, old chap," said Redwing mildly.

"Hang Quelch!"

"Well, you can't hang your Form master, you know," said Tom, with a smile. "He happens to be in authority over us. He's been down on you a lot lately, Smithy, and you can't say you haven't given him cause."

"Probably I shall give him more yet."

"What's the good, old chap?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, coming down to the Rag, as you're doing no prep?" asked Tom.

"No."

Redwing sighed.

Life in Study No. 4 had not been very merry or bright since Dallas had come to Greyfriars. From the bottom of his heart Redwing wished that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith had sent his adopted son to some other school. The hard-faced, keen-witted business man had shown much less than his customary perspicacity, in supposing that his son would welcome an adopted brother. Sullen suspicion and scorn and hatred were all that Herbert Vernon-Smith had to give to the fellow whom his father had taken from a charity school and sent to Greyfriars.

"I've had a letter from my pater," said Vernon-Smith. "Like to see it?"

"No more trouble, I hope?"

"Lots."

"Whatever you feel about Dallas, Smithy, you ought to remember that a chap should respect his father."

"I'll remember that when the pater remembers that I am his only son!" sneered Smithy. "Not till then, I wrote and asked him to take Dallas away from Greyfriars. If he wants to provide for this beggar, he can provide for him elsewhere."

"You didn't put it like that to your father?"

"Just like that."

"Well, if you've got an angry letter in reply, Smithy, you can hardly be surprised at it."

"There's the letter." The Bounder tossed it across to Redwing. "Read it. You can see that that scheming cad has got the pater right under his thumb!"

Redwing looked at the letter. Certainly, it appeared that Mr. Vernon-Smith had not been pleased by the communication he had received from his son—which was not to be wondered at:

"Dear Herbert,—I have received your letter, and thrown it into the fire. Certainly, I shall not take Paul away from Greyfriars, after he has been only a few weeks at the school. I am astonished at your impudence in asking such a thing. My old friend, Jim Dallas, was a Greyfriars man, and it was his wish that his son should go to his old school. As for charity, you are aware that I

have a sum of money in my hands belonging to Paul's father, which I am using to pay his fees at Greyfriars, at Paul's own request. Not that I should not have befriended him in any case. I had a right to expect my son to help me in paying an old debt to a friend who once helped me in a very tight corner."

"I expected you to welcome Paul at Greyfriars. The fault lies with you—in your suspicious and overbearing temper. I warn you that unless you amend very considerably, you will not find me the affectionate and indulgent parent you have found me hitherto. I will not be dictated to by my own son, a schoolboy. And I forbid you to write to me again, unless you can express yourself more respectfully."

"Your father,

"S. VERNON-SMITH."

"Not the kind of letter I used to get from the pater, what?" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"I don't see what else you could expect, Smithy. No man would let his son give him orders, and that's practically what you've tried to do. Least of all a man like your father."

"The pater and I never had any trouble till that charity cad butted in," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm turned down now for the sake of that pushing outsider."

"I don't see that."

"You wouldn't!" sneered Smithy. "You're my only chum at Greyfriars, and you take that cad's side against me, like all the rest!"

"Nothing of the kind. But—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said the Bounder rudely. "You're a good bit of a humbug, Redwing! I'm blessed if I know why I ever clummed with such a sanctimonious fellow. I dare say it was a mistake!"

Redwing shut his lips hard.

He left the study without answering. The friendship between Smithy and the scholarship junior was on very thin ice now; and Tom was very unwilling to let it come to an end. But all his patience was needed to tolerate the Bounder's sullen temper.

Vernon-Smith took a cigarette from a box in the table-drawer and lighted it. His feud with Dallas had brought out all the evil in the Bounder's character, and there was a great deal of it. It had made him unpopular in his Form; it was causing an estrangement even between him and his loyal chum. The Bounder, almost unconsciously, was slipping back into his old bad ways.

There was a knock on the study door, and Harry Wharton came in.

Vernon-Smith coloured, and threw the half-smoked cigarette into the fire.

Wharton took no heed of it, however. "Finished prep, Smithy?" he asked.

"I haven't started."

"Well, if you're busy—"

"Do I look busy?"

"Well, no," said the captain of the Remove, with a smile.

"I've cut prep."

Wharton made no remark on that. It was no business of his if the Bounder chose to seek trouble with his Form master.

"Well, I dropped in to speak about the footer," said Harry.

"Rookwood match?"

"Yes."

"I shall be in form," said the Bounder, his lip curling. "You needn't fancy that I shall crook up in the game because you've seen a cigarette in this study."



Vernon-Smith had no sooner settled down to play with Ponsonby & Co. when a sudden footstep was heard outside the shed, and a hurrying figure darkened the open doorway. "Smithy!" It was Tom Redwing, and he came towards the Bounder. Vernon-Smith stared at him, in surprise, for a moment, and then a dogged look came over his face. (See Chapter 3.)

"I've got you down as outside-right."

"All serene."

"Well, if it's all serene, good," said Wharton. "I've got Dallas down on the right-wing, too."

The Bounder sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Dallas!" he exclaimed. "That charity cad!"

"Nobody but you calls him a charity cad, Smithy; and if he lived, moved, and had his giddy being in charity, it wouldn't make any difference to his form as a footballer."

"A new kid—playing in one of the ugliest fixtures!" said Vernon-Smith. "You're doing this to get my rag out, Wharton."

"Don't be an ass, old chap! Dallas has shown wonderful form—"

"I haven't seen it."

"None so blind as those who won't see. Every other man in the Remove has seen it!"

"Rot!"

"Well, I'm not really asking for your opinion on my abilities as a footballer," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "I'm satisfied about that, and the other fellows seem satisfied. I've picked out Dallas on his form, and I think he will be a rod in pickle for Rookwood. We want to beat them when they come over—"

"You'll want a new outside-right if Dallas is playing."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"That's what I'm coming to," he said.

"I want you to do the sensible thing, Smithy. Your quarrel with Dallas doesn't concern me; what concerns me is putting a winning team in the field on Wednesday. I want you to forget all about your trouble with my inside-right so long as the game is on. That's not asking much."

"Too much, all the same!"

"What does that mean, Smithy?"

"It means that you will have to leave Dallas out if you want me in the eleven on Wednesday."

"You know that we want you—that you can't really be spared," said the captain of the Remove.

"That does it, then. Leave that cad out."

"Dallas is picked to play, and there's no question of leaving him out. It's for you to decide whether you play or not."

"With Dallas in the team?"

"Certainly."

"Not, then!" said the Bounder coolly.

"You want me to take your name out of the list?"

"Mine or Dallas—whichever you like."

"It will be yours, if you put it like that."

"Mine, then."

Wharton turned to the door. The

Bounder watched him with malevolent eyes as he went.

But at the door the captain of the Remove turned back.

"I was going to post up the list in the Rag this evening, Smithy," he said very quietly. "I'll keep it back till tomorrow, though. We don't want to lose you, and I hope you'll think better of it. You'll only have to say the word."

And with that the captain of the Remove left the study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Old Pals!

"GREYFRIARS cad!"

Vernon-Smith started.

It was the following day, and the Bounder was taking a walk by himself after classes, when the voice of Cecil Ponsonby broke on his ears.

The Bounder's face was dark with thought. In his unreasoning feud against the new fellow in the Remove, the Bounder was hurting himself more than his enemy, and he knew it, and yet his reckless, ungovernable temper drove him on. Had the captain of the Remove taken him at his word the previous evening, the Bounder would have stood by it. Yet he dearly wanted to figure in the Rookwood match. Wharton had left

the chance open, and that was a relief to Smithy; he could play now if he liked without eating humble pie. But he could not decide. He was thinking the problem out as he tramped along a field-path, when he came on the Highcliffe fellows.

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of the Highcliffe Fourth, were seated in a row on a fence smoking cigarettes. That was one of the favorite amusements of Pon & Co., when they were not under the eye of authority. But all three of them left off smoking for a moment as the Bounder came along, to address him as a Greyfriars cad. Pon & Co., of Highcliffe, were very much up against Greyfriars, though time had been when the Bounder had been chummy with the Highcliffe sportsmen.

Vernon-Smith stopped, and stared at the trio. His stare was ugly and threatening, and it made the nutty Highcliffians rather sorry they had spoken. True, they were three to one—otherwise they would never have ventured to slang a hefty fellow like the Bounder. But the expression on his face made them rather doubt whether they would care to stand up to him, even three to one, if he cut up rusty.

"What's that?" snapped Smithy.

"Nothin', old bean," said Monson.

"Only a little jest."

"Pass on, friend, and all's well!" said Ponsonby, with a laugh.

The Bounder did not pass on.

He was in a savage temper, as he had often been of late. At a word he was prepared to charge the Highcliffe nuts, and knock them spinning off the fence. He was not afraid of what Pon & Co. could do afterwards. In fact, he would rather have enjoyed handling the three of them. Certainly, in a fight to a finish they would have been too many for him. But Pon & Co. were not the fellows for a fight to a finish.

It was not any fear of the trio that kept the Bounder's hands off them; he was utterly reckless of consequences, and in a mood for a quarrel. But it happened that he did not want to quarrel with Pon & Co. Since he had been falling back into his old ways, the Bounder had thought of his old Highcliffe friends more than once, and dallied with the idea of chumming up again with the black sheep of Highcliffe. The opportunity had come unexpectedly.

For a few moments the Bounder stood looking at them, and Pon & Co. looked uneasy. But his scowling face cleared.

"You fellows!" he said. "Fancy meetin' you! Got a smoke to spare?"

"Eh?"

"Gettin' deaf?"

Ponsonby laughed.

"No. But you surprise me, dear man. I thought you had thrown over all such naughty ways. What would Redwing say?"

"Isn't Redwing your dry nurse?" grinned Gadsby.

"And Wharton and his crowd," smiled Monson. "Aren't you thick with that mob now?"

"No!" snapped the Bounder.

He sat on the fence beside Ponsonby, and hooked his feet in the rail. He was glad, after all, to meet his old shady acquaintances.

"If you men want a row," he said grimly, "I'm feelin' just inclined for one, and I'll take on the three of you together with pleasure. If you'd rather be friends, I'm willing."

The Highcliffe fellows exchanged glances.

"Bury the hatchet, by all means, old acout," said Ponsonby amiably. "We

never had anythin' up against you, exceptin' your pallin' with Wharton and his crew. Help yourself, old thing." He extended a cigarette-case to the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith took a cigarette and lighted it. Again the black sheep of Highcliffe exchanged glances. They could see that there was a change in Herbert Vernon-Smith—a great change. It did not wholly surprise them. The Bounder's reform had never been in their opinion, more than skin-deep. Certainly he had slid back often enough into his old ways, at the best of times.

"Quite a pleasant meetin'," said Ponsonby, in the same amicable tone. "It's a pleasure to see you again, Smithy."

"Is it?" grunted the Bounder.

"Oh, quite! Not so friendly with the magnificent and mighty Wharton these days?"

"No."

"Glad to hear it," said Ponsonby cordially. "We don't quite love him ourselves. By the way, I heard from Skinner that you were in a terrific scrap the other day, with some new chap. You've still got a nose and an eye." Pon winked at his chums. "You licked the fellow, of course?"

"If you got the story from Skinner of the Remove, you know I didn't!" snarled the Bounder. "Don't give me any chippin', Ponsonby. I'm not in a humour for it. I was licked, and you know it."

"Queer sort of beggar, that new kid, from what Skinner says," remarked Ponsonby. "Not the kind of fellow that would be let into Highcliffe. We're rather more particular there. The Head would never have let him into the school."

"I don't see why not. He can't be very particular, if he let you fellows in," said Vernon-Smith. "That cad Dallas is the limit for Greyfriars, if you like."

Ponsonby breathed rather hard. The Bounder had a bitter tongue, and friends as well as foes received the sharp edge of it, when he was in a sullen mood.

"You like the chap?" grinned Gadsby. Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered.

"As much as a fellow can like a scheming cad who's pulled his father's leg, and got money out of him, and twisted him into sending the rotter to a fellow's school," he said.

Ponsonby grinned.

"That sounds as if you don't like him, Smithy. Is it true that he was at a charity school before he came to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, and a rotten sort of one, too."

"What on earth did your pater take him up for?"

"The fellow could take anybody in," said the Bounder bitterly. "He's got round most of the Remove chaps. He's quite popular. He's been two or three weeks at Greyfriars, that's all, and Wharton has put him in the eleven for one of our biggest fixtures. It's a thing that's never happened before."

"Wonderful footballer, what?"

"No; quite ordinary."

The Highcliffe fellows grinned. They were quite well aware that Harry Wharton would not have picked out a new fellow to play in a big match if he was "quite ordinary." The wish was father to the thought, with the Bounder. He believed more or less what he said; his usually keen, sagacious judgment was blinded by his animosity.

The Bounder, as he sat on the fence with his hands in his pockets, was jingling his money. It was quite a wealthy jingle, and seemed to indicate

that whatever Mr. Vernon-Smith's shortcomings, he was not keeping his son short of that useful article, cash! Perhaps it was the jingle of the Bounder's cash that prompted Ponsonby's next remark.

"Lots of time before lock-up," he said. "What about a little game? Like old times, what?"

"Good egg!" said Gadsby.

"I'm on, if you like," said the Bounder, though he hesitated for a moment.

Ponsonby slipped from the fence.

"This way, then," he said, with alacrity.

At the end of the fence on the field-path was a little empty shed. The Highcliffe juniors and the Bounder of Greyfriars entered it. They were reckless young rascals; but they were not quite forgetful of prudence. It was the "sack" for any Greyfriars fellow who was found gambling; and trouble, at least, for the Highcliffians. Ponsonby sat on a bench, and took a little Russian leather case from his pocket, and slipped out a pack of cards.

"Banker?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Quite like old times," said Monson. "You must drop in and see us at Highcliffe some half-holiday, Smithy."

"I will!" said the Bounder.

He took the cards and shuffled them. There was a mingling of feelings in his breast. His old blackguardly associations had their attraction. But his conscience was not quite easy. Outside the shed there was a sudden footstep, and a hurrying figure darkened the open doorway.

"Smithy!"

And Tom Redwing came in.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Redwing!

REDWING did not look at the Highcliffe fellows, who exchanged sneering grins as they saw him. He came towards the Bounder. Smithy stared at him, in surprise, for a moment, and then a dogged look came over his face.

"I didn't expect you here, Redwing," he said curtly.

"I came out to look for you," said Redwing. "I sighted you on the fence a few minutes ago. Coming back?"

"You can see I'm with these fellows," said Vernon-Smith.

"Well, it's tea-time," said Redwing. "I thought you were coming in to tea, Smithy."

"So I was; but I've changed my mind."

"Better come," urged Redwing.

The Bounder laughed scoffingly. He was not in a mood to take good advice, or any advice at all. The fact that his present conduct distressed Redwing did not worry him. It rather gave it a zest.

"That's firstly, I suppose," remarked Cecil Ponsonby. "Get on to secondly and thirdly, Redwing, if you must. We're waitin' to begin."

"Any charge for these sermons?" inquired Gadsby.

Redwing took no heed of the Highcliffe nuts. His eyes were fixed on the Bounder's dogged, mocking face.

"I wish you'd come, Smithy," he said.

"Well, I'm not coming."

"This sort of thing isn't good enough for you, old man," said Tom earnestly. "You don't want to have anything to do with these cads."

"These what?" rapped out Ponsonby. "Cads!" repeated Redwing, taking notice of Ponsonby's existence for the first time. "Rotters, if you like that better."

"You cheeky outsider—"

"That's enough, Redwing," said the Bounder curly. "If you can't stay here without insulting my friends, you'd better clear."

"They're no friends of yours, Smithy. For goodness' sake, old chap, don't play the goat," said Tom, in great distress. "What would happen if a Greyfriars prefect dropped on you now?"

"The order of the boot, I suppose."

"Well, then—"

"I can do as I please, I suppose?"

"I suppose so. But—"

"Well, let a fellow alone," snapped the Bounder. "When I want a sermon from you, I'll ask for it."

"I'm not going to give you any sermons, Smithy. But you can't expect a friend of yours to feel pleased at seeing you taking up again with these blackguards."

Ponsonby jumped off the bench. "That's the second pretty name you've given us, you outsider," he exclaimed. "Now get out of it. Do you hear?"

Redwing's eyes flashed at him. He tolerated a great deal from the Bounder; but he had no patience to waste on Cecil Ponsonby.

"I'll get out when I choose," he answered.

"You'll get out now!" roared Gadsby.

"Or we'll jolly well put you out!" said Monson. "Any objection to this mug bein' booted out, Smithy?"

"None at all," said the Bounder coolly. "You'd better go, Redwing. And the sooner the better."

"You're coming with me?"

"I've said I'm not."

Tom Redwing hesitated. His influence over the Bounder, at times very strong, faded to nothing when Smithy was in one of his evil, dogged moods. Yet it went sorely against the grain to leave his chum in the company of the young blackguards of Higheliffe. As Tom stood in doubt, Ponsonby gave him a violent shove, and he staggered towards the door.

"Outside, you preachin' cad!" said Ponsonby. "Or we— Oh! By gad!" Pon broke off with a yell, as Tom Redwing gave back a blow for the shove, and the dandy of Higheliffe went spinning across the shed.

"There's more if you want it!" snapped Redwing, his eyes blazing at the Higheliffians. "I'm not standing any cheek from you, Ponsonby!"

Ponsonby brought up against the wall of the shed, gasping for breath. His face was red with rage.

"Come on, you men!" he panted. "Kick the cad out!"

The three Higheliffians made a rush at Redwing. Tom's hands went up at once, and he faced the rush coolly. He was a match for any two of the Higheliffe cads, but there were too many for him, and fair play was a matter that Pon & Co. never troubled about. Fighting hard against the three, Tom was driven through the doorway.

"Smithy!" he panted.

He could scarcely believe that his com would refuse to come to his aid, as he fought against heavy odds. But Vernon-Smith, seated on the end of the bench, looked on without stirring, a sardonic smile on his face.

"You asked for it," he said. "You can't expect to insult fellows without

bein' called to account. You should have gone while the goin' was good."

Crash!

Tom Redwing went down heavily under the combined attack of the three Higheliffians.

He was up again in a second, his face flushed, his eyes gleaming. The three closed on him, and Gadsby went over on his back under a drive that jarred every tooth in his head. Ponsonby and Monson grasped Redwing and brought him to the ground.

"Shove him in the ditch!" panted Ponsonby.

Gadsby scrambled up and joined in again. Three pairs of hands dragged the struggling Redwing out of the shed and towards the ditch at the edge of the field.

"Smithy!" panted Redwing.

Vernon-Smith half rose, and sat down again, dogged bitterness in his face. He would not intervene.

Splash!

"That for you, you cad!" gasped Ponsonby.

Tom Redwing plunged helplessly into the wet, muddy ditch. He sprawled in muddy water and slime, and the three Higheliffians, on the bank, watched him flounder out on the other side.

"Come back and have another!" chorled Monson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Redwing gave the three a look across the ditch, and tramped away, squelching mud. It was useless to renew the unequal struggle. A taunting laugh followed him from Ponsonby & Co.

They stepped back into the shed. They had had the best of the bargain, but all three of them showed damages, and they were breathless and dusty. The Bounder eyed them

sardonically as they came in.

"Gone?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" panted Gadsby.

"Glad to go, too!"

"You giddy heroes!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, chuck it, Smithy!" growled Ponsonby, dabbing his nose with a handkerchief.

Vernon Smith stepped to the doorway. In the distance he caught sight of his chum, tramping away with squelching footsteps. There was a strange expression on the Bounder's hard face as he watched. Perhaps his conscience was stirring a little. Had Tom Redwing looked back then, the Bounder was in a mood to have joined him, regardless of the Higheliffe fellows. But Redwing did not look back. The Bounder's eyes followed him till he disappeared, and then he shrugged his shoulders and went back into the shed.

Tom Redwing tramped back to Greyfriars with bitter feelings. He had tried to save the Bounder from his own reckless folly, and he had failed. But bitterest of all, was Smithy's looking on idly while the Higheliffe fellows ragged him. That was a surprise to Redwing, and a blow to him.

"Hallo! Had an accident?" asked a good-natured voice, as Redwing came up to the school gates.

It was Paul Dallas, the new junior in the Remove. He came quickly towards Redwing as he saw him.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"Tumble in a ditch," said Tom curtly, and he passed on. It was unjust, and he knew it, but he felt that he disliked Dallas at that moment. All the trouble between him and his chum had happened since Mr. Vernon-Smith's adopted son had come to Greyfriars.

Dallas made a step to follow him in, and then paused.

Redwing went to the House, only too conscious of his muddy state, and the curious and amused glances that were cast upon him from all sides. Billy Bunter met him in the doorway, and burst into a loud chuckle.

"He, he, he! Been collecting mud?"

Tom passed him without an answer.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "Come and look at Redwing! He's been rolling in mud!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You've got a spot or two of mud on you, Redwing."

Tom gave a muddy grin.

"I've been in a ditch."

"You look it," agreed Bob. "Anybody help you in?"

"I—I met some Higheliffe fellows—"

"Pon & Co.?" asked Bob. "Just one

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of their rotten tricks. Pity there wasn't any Greyfriars chap near to lend you a hand, old bean."

Redwing made no answer to that. He did not intend to mention that there had been a Greyfriars fellow at hand; the Bouncer's disloyalty was his secret.

"Better get along to a bath-room before Quelch sees you," grinned Bob. "Oh, my hat! Here he is!"

"Redwing!" Mr. Quelch came frowning out of his study. Evidently he had seen the muddy junior from his window. "What does this mean? Why are you in this—this revolting state?"

Tom crimsoned under the mud. "I—I tumbled in a ditch, sir," he faltered.

"A fall into a ditch should not have made you so muddy as this, Redwing. You appear to have been absolutely rolling in mud."

"Ye-e-es, sir—sorry, sir!" gasped Tom.

"Your state is disgraceful—disgraceful!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Go and clean yourself at once, Redwing, and take a hundred lines."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Tom.

And he escaped up the staircase, leaving Mr. Quelch frowning, and a good many fellows grinning.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Scheme!

"GETTIN' near lock-up," Ponsonby made the remark, blowing out a little cloud of smoke from his cigarette.

The Bouncer, seated on the old bench in the shed, was idly shuffling the cards. He nodded.

"I suppose we'd better be travellin'," he assented.

Ponsonby & Co. rose, yawning, but looking very satisfied with themselves.

Whether the Bouncer had lost his old skill during his period of reform, or whether he had played carelessly, certainly the luck had run in favour of the Highcliffe nuts. They were more than pleased with the result of the meeting, and distinctly bucked at getting on the old terms with the wealthiest fellow at Greyfriars.

"See you again soon, Smithy," said Monson.

"Drop in at Highcliffe," said Gadsby.

"Jolly glad to see you there," said Ponsonby heartily. "It's a long time since you've honoured our study at Highcliffe, Smithy, old bean."

"Pleased," said the Bouncer. "If you fellows would like to do me a good turn—" He paused.

Ponsonby & Co. froze a little. They had won money from the Bouncer of Greyfriars, and they were pleased to be friendly again. But if Smithy wanted to borrow, that was quite another matter.

"Give it a name," said Ponsonby, not so heartily.

The Bouncer smiled sarcastically. It was quite easy for him to read the Highcliffe dandy's thoughts.

"That new rotter, Dallas, at Greyfriars," he said. "It's about him."

"Oh! Get on!" said Pon, quite cordial again.

"Wharton's put him in the team for the Rookwood match to-morrow," said Smithy. "I've said that I won't play in the same team with a charity cad."

"More power to your giddy elbow!" said Ponsonby. "I'd say exactly the

same, if a rotten outsider like that wedged in at Highcliffe."

Gadsby and Monson nodded assent. They quite sympathised with the Bouncer on that topic.

"Only Wharton won't drop him," said Vernon-Smith. "And I want to play in the Rookwood match. It's our last big fixture of the season, and I don't see missin' it."

"That looks a bit of a problem, then," said Ponsonby.

"There's a solution to every problem," said the Bouncer calmly. "It only needs lookin' for."

"Well, if we can help you—" said Pon, rather puzzled.

"He's a holly sort of chap," said Smithy. "He handled the all right, and I'm no infant! But three fellows could handle him."

"Oh!" ejaculated Ponsonby.

"This shed is a pretty lonely spot," said the Bouncer. "If three fellows caught Dallas strollin' around here before the match to-morrow, and set on him, he could be kept here for an hour or two—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He would put up a fight, of course. But you three could handle him. If you gave him a thumpin' good lickin', it wouldn't matter. In fact, it would be all to the good!"

Ponsonby laughed.

"You could bring Drury and Vavasour along with you," said the Bouncer. "Make assurance doubly sure, you know. The fellow's an out-and-out cad, and deserves what he gets!"

"You'd get rather a wigglin' at Greyfriars, old bean, if the fellows knew you were keepin' a man out of a football match!" grinned Monson.

"Who's to know? It would be taken just for a Highcliffe rag. You're not supposed to know anything about our matches, and you don't know that Dallas is in the team at all. Nobody will suppose that such a rag had anything to do with the football."

"That's so."

"It would be rather a lark for you men. He's a friend of Wharton's, and you don't like Wharton's friends."

"Not the least little bit!" assented Ponsonby.

"Chuck the fellow in the ditch, and rag him, and keep him in the shed for an hour or so," said Smithy. "Easy as fallin' off a form!"

"Quite!" said Ponsonby. "But surely the fellow won't be takin' a walk this way, a mile from the school, just before a football match!"

"I can fix that."

"Blessed if I see how!"

"Well, leave that to me," said the Bouncer. "If he doesn't turn up, it's off, of course. But I fancy I can make him turn up. You see, the cad's game is to pull the wool over my pater's eyes, and he would be glad to put on friendship with me; it would help him with the pater. So if I give him the glad hand to-morrow, he will welcome it. I can make him take a little walk over here by pulling his leg. He's deep enough to take in my pater, but he's not deep enough for me!"

Ponsonby whistled.

"Is it a go?" asked Vernon-Smith, rising from the bench. "Half a dozen of you will be able to handle him like a baby."

"It's a go, old bean!"

"Be about this nice secluded spot soon after two to-morrow, then. Kick-off is at three on Little Side, at Greyfriars. He will take a little walk after dinner, and he won't come back! It's rather a lark!"

"No end of a lark!" grinned Gadsby. "Rely on us, Smithy! We'll see that the cad doesn't get away!"

Vernon-Smith and the Highcliffians walked away down the field path to the road, discussing the details of the scheme as they went. They parted on the road, Ponsonby & Co. heading for Highcliffe School, and the Bouncer striding away to Greyfriars.

He was just in time before Cosling closed the gates.

As he walked to the House he came on Paul Dallas, in the company of Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The new junior was looking very bright and cheery.

Evidently he was greatly pleased at being picked out to play in the Rookwood match on the morrow. It was equally plain that he was on the friendliest terms with the footballing fraternity in the Remove—with the exception of the Bouncer.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry, as Vernon-Smith came up the path. "Seen anything of the enemy?"

The Bouncer stopped.

"What enemy?"

"The Highcliffe fellows. Redwing came in an hour ago, smothered with mud," said Bob. "They've been ragging him."

The Bouncer caught his breath for a moment.

He was too reckless to care much whether Redwing told the story of what had happened in the shed by Courtfield Common. But he realised at once that Tom had said nothing of his disloyalty.

"He looked a picture, and no mistake," said Johnny Bull. "I wish I'd been there!"

"The wisefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Redwing let them handle him?" said Smithy.

"I gather that they were three to one," said Bob. "That's Highcliffe's style!"

"I shouldn't let three of them duck me in a ditch!" said the Bouncer sarcastically, and he walked on.

The juniors looked after him rather curiously. It was the first time the Bouncer had been heard to speak contemptuously of his chum. But the Remove already knew that there was a rift in the lute in Study No. 4.

Vernon-Smith went into the House and up to the Remove passage. Harry Wharton was in the doorway of Study No. 1, and he gave Smithy a cheery nod. It was not much like Wharton to make concessions to an arrogant fellow; but he was very desirous of keeping on civil terms with the Bouncer if he could.

"Hallo, Smithy! I've been looking for you!" he said.

"I've been out of gates."

"That's all right. I shall have to put the football list up in the Rag this evening. I hope your name will be in it."

"You're givin' me another chance—what?" asked the Bouncer sarcastically.

"We want you to play, Smithy."

"You're one of the best, and we shall miss you if you stand out."

The Bouncer's hard face softened a little. He knew that it was not easy for a fellow like Wharton to tolerate arrogance, and he could not help being pleased, too, by the frank acknowledgment of his value to the team.

"Perhaps I was rather hasty," he admitted. "If you want to put my name in, Wharton, put it in, and rely on me."

"That's the stuff!" said the captain of the Remove cheerily. "We're going to beat Rookwood, Smithy; and I don't mind telling you that I had my doubts about it if you stood out. I'm jolly glad



"Shove him in the ditch!" panted Ponsonby. Three pairs of hands dragged the struggling Redwing out of the shed, and towards the ditch. "Smithy!" panted Redwing. But Vernon-Smith, seated on the end of the bench, dogged bitterness in his face, would not intervene to save his chum. (See Chapter 4.)

are going to line up with the Remove! Your name goes in."

Smithy went into Study No. 4.

Tom Redwing was there. There was no trace of mud about him now. His face clouded as the Bounder came in, and he did not look at his study-mate.

Smithy eyed him sardonically.

"Sulkin'?" he asked.

"No," said Tom, very quietly.

"You look it!"

Tom Redwing looked him in the eyes. "I'm fed-up, Smithy! You acted like an absolute rotter this afternoon, and I'm fed-up!"

"You should have minded your own money!"

"I shall do so, in future," said Tom. "You'll go your own way without any interference from me!"

"Good!" said the Bounder. "That's quite good news! We get regular sermons from the Head on Sunday; no need for you to hand out any!"

He threw himself into the armchair, and lighted a cigarette. Tom Redwing left the study, and the Bounder's lip curled in a sneer as he went. That ill-assorted friendship had stood many a strain, but it looked as if it had broken down at last.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Climbing Down!

"I SAY, you fellows, Smithy's in!" Billy Bunter squeaked out the news as he blinked at the football list in the Rag.

"Good man!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, what a fall was there, my

countrymen!" sighed Skinner. "After all Smithy's gas—"

"Well, we knew it was only gas!" remarked Snoop.

"Smithy would be an ass to stand out!" said Bolsover major. "I think he's done the sensible thing."

Quite a crowd of Remove fellows gathered round the football notice.

The name of "P. Dallas" was there, and it was a surprise to most of the fellows to find "H. Vernon-Smith" in the same list.

Most of the fellows were glad to see it there, however.

Skinner & Co. sneered; but Skinner & Co. mattered very little in the opinion of the Remove footballers.

Still, it was a surprise. The Bounder's wayward, arrogant temper was well-known, and his declaration that he never would play in the same team with the "charity cad" had been heard by all the Form.

Few fellows had expected to see him climb down to this extent. He had no choice in the matter, unless he was to step out of the Remove football. But the Bounder was not a fellow to consider consequences. He was much more likely to hold to his word, regardless of them.

"Well," said Skinner, "gas costs nothing. Smithy's told us all that he wouldn't be found dead in the same team with Dallas. He's said it loud and he's said it over. He's shouted it to Wharron, and he's sung it to the rest of us. Now he's swallowed it—whole! Shows his sense, I dare say; but I

didn't think Smithy was the man to eat humble pie."

"Oh, ring off, Skinner!" said Bob Cherry. "You've always got something dashed unpleasant to say! Let Smithy alone. He's playing up like a sportsman."

"The playfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Smithy has done rightfully."

"Hear, hear!" said Squiff.

"He stood out of a Form match because Dallas was in it," said Skinner. "A Form match isn't of much account. When it comes to a big fixture, Smithy climbs down."

"Well, I jolly well knew he would!" said Snoop.

"You jolly well didn't!" said Johnny Bull gruffly. "And I don't call it climbing down, to act sensibly and like a good sportsman. Smithy was hasty, and he's thought better of it. Smithy's got his faults, but he's a jolly good sportsman at bottom."

"Thanks!" drawled the Bounder's sarcastic voice behind Johnny. Smithy had come into the Rag unnoticed by the crowd at the paper.

Johnny Bull glanced round. "That you, Smithy? Congraters, old bean! We should have missed you a lot if you'd stood out."

"The lotfulness would have been terrific, my esteemed Smithy."

"We're going to beat Rookwood now," said Bob Cherry comfortably. "We've got as good a team as ever the Remove put into the field. I knew you wouldn't let us down, Smithy."

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"What price gas?" asked a voice behind the crowd of juniors, and some of the fellows laughed.

"Shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Bounder laughed lightly. He seemed in a better temper than of late, and the gibe did not seem to worry him.

"We all talk too much at times," said Smithy. "I don't mind admitting that when I let my temper run away with me Wharton would have been quite justified in dropping me out of the eleven. He hasn't done so, and I'm going to play up for all I'm worth."

"Good man!" said Harry Wharton, who had just come into the Rag. "That's the tune, Smithy! As for dropping you out of the eleven, old bean, I'd almost as soon drop myself out."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "You're treating me jolly decent," said the Bounder, with a touch of condescension. "I don't think I should have stood so much cheek if I'd been football captain, Wharton. But you're a more level-headed fellow than I am."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thanks!" he said. "Anyhow, we're all right now, and we'll make Rookwood hide their diminished heads to-morrow."

Paul Dallas, who was among the Removites, eyed Vernon-Smith rather curiously. He wondered whether he had misjudged the Bounder a little. He had seen only the worst side of Smithy so far.

Vernon-Smith turned round to Dallas. "We're together on the right wing, Dallas," he said.

"Yes," said Paul, quite surprised at the Bounder addressing any civil word to him.

"We don't like one another," went on Vernon-Smith, apparently unconscious of the astonished glances turned on him from all sides. "But that has nothin' to do with football."

"Nothing at all," agreed Paul heartily.

"All we've got to do is to pull together and play up for Greyfriars, and forget everything else," continued Vernon-Smith. "Do you agree to that?"

"Yes, rather! And I'm jolly glad to hear you say so," said Dallas.

"That's a go, then!" said Smithy, and he lounged away to an archway by the fire, leaving an astonished crowd behind him.

"Well," said Skinner, with a deep breath, "that beats it!"

"It do—it does it!" grinned Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, a licking does Smithy good!" chuckled Bunter.

"You fat octopus, a licking will do you good if you don't shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Scat!"

There was general surprise in the Rag, but among the footballing fellows there was general satisfaction. What had threatened to be a serious split in the team was over and done with now. The Bounder was better liked just then than he had been for a long time. No doubt he had a rotten temper, but he was a sportsman at heart—that was the general opinion. He had taken up an untenable position, and he had stepped down from it like a sensible fellow. The hearty approval of the best fellows in the Form more than compensated for the gibes of fellows like Skinner.

Tom Redwing had heard, with amazement, the Bounder's words to Dallas, and he came over to Smithy with a bright face. Tom was more than willing to forgive and forget all offences if his

chum's better nature had resumed sway at last.

"I say, Smithy, I'm glad!" he said.

The Bounder looked at him, with a smile. It was not wholly a pleasant smile.

"Glad of what?" he asked.

"Glad to see you play up like a real good chap—like yourself, Smithy," said Tom.

The Bounder's lip curled.

"You heard what I said to that cad?"

"I heard what you said to Dallas," answered Tom, his face clouding. "You—"

"You meant it, I suppose?"

Vernon-Smith smiled contemptuously.

"Then you were pulling his leg?"

said Redwing slowly.

"What else did you think?"

"But you're playing in the match to-morrow?"

"Certainly!"

"That's all right, then!" said Tom.

"Quite! More than you think!" said Vernon-Smith.

"There's more than one way of killing a cat, and more than one way of dealing with a pushing, inter-

loping cad! I've played into his hands so far; my rotten temper, you know!"

He sneered. "I'm keeping my temper now. It's the best way."

"But—"

"That's all!" said Vernon-Smith; and he opened a book.

Tom Redwing left him in silence.

The Bounder was playing a part, he knew that now. And he soon knew that other fellows in the Remove suspected as much. A remark of Skinner's came to his ears later.

"Smithy's up to something," Skinner was confiding to Snoop and Stott.

"I don't know what his game is, but he's got some game on. I know that look in Smithy's eye. Oil and water will mix sooner than Smithy and his giddy adopted brother. Smithy's got something up his sleeve!"

It was but seldom that Tom Redwing found himself in agreement with the cad of the Remove. But on this occasion he could not help thinking that Harold Skinner was right.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Treachery!

HARRY WHARTON glanced at the Bounder in the quad after dinner the next day with an approving glance.

Vernon-Smith had joined Dallas as the juniors went out after dinner, and was speaking to him amicably.

In the dormitory the night before he had spoken a civil word to the new fellow; at the breakfast table he had given him a nod.

After the bitter enmity that had subsisted between them, it was a very considerable change.

The enmity, at first, had been wholly on Smithy's side. But it was not to be wondered at that Dallas had soon repaid enmity and hatred with a deep dislike. Nevertheless, he was willing enough to accept the olive-branch if the Bounder offered it now.

To the Bounder, in his suspicious bitterness, it seemed that that willingness to make friends was one more example of the interloper's cunning: it suited him better to be on apparently friendly terms with the son of the man he had bamboozled. That was Smithy's view.

To the other fellows, the explanation was much less iniquitous. Dallas was a normal, healthy fellow, who had no use for a feud, and disliked being on

bad terms with anybody. He was willing to make friends because he was fed-up with a causeless enmity, which made matters uncomfortable for everybody concerned.

Certainly he did not suspect for one moment that Smithy had any axe to grind in offering him civility.

Neither did it seem to occur to the Bounder that, in the part he was now playing, he was guilty of a treachery such as he had suspected in Dallas, without proof.

Anyone who had known Smithy's secret intentions would have concluded that the Bounder, in his blind prejudice, had thrown all considerations of decency to the winds; and that conclusion would not have been far wrong.

"Smithy seems to have got over it," Harry Wharton remarked to Bob Cherry, with a nod towards the two juniors.

"I suppose it's dawned on him at last that Dallas isn't the awful character he supposed."

Bob laughed.

"Might have dawned on him sooner," he said. "It's no compliment to us for Smithy to think that we'd have made friends with a scheming rotter!"

"I'm jolly glad he's chucking it, at any rate."

"Same here," agreed Bob.

And Horree Jamset Ram Singh declared the sameness was terrific.

Smithy and Dallas were strolling along the path together towards the gates.

"Don't forget kick-off at three, you chaps!" the captain of the Remove called after them.

"Not likely!" said Paul, glancing back with a smile.

"Lots of time yet, Dallas," said the Bounder amicably.

"The Rookwood men won't be over here for nearly an hour yet. Come for a stroll—or have you still got your back up?"

Paul coloured and laughed.

"I'll come with pleasure," he answered.

"Right!"

As a matter of fact, Paul was not at all keen on a walk with the Bounder.

He was glad to be on civil terms with him, and ready to be friends; but he did not specially want Smithy's society.

But as Vernon-Smith seemed to want to bury the late unpleasantness, and to make himself agreeable, the new junior felt that it was up to him not to discourage the Bounder. If the chap was touchy, the fellow who owed so much to his father could afford to treat him with tact and tolerance.

They strolled out of the gates together and took the Courtfield road.

The Bounder chatted cheerily as they walked, seeming to have forgotten completely his feud with the new junior.

Paul was more and more surprised every minute. Smithy could make himself agreeable when he chose, and he certainly chose now. More and more it was borne in on Paul's mind that he had misjudged Mr. Vernon-Smith's son.

They turned into a field-path near the common, at the end of which stood a solitary shed. They passed the shed, and Paul noticed, without heeding, that a well-dressed fellow in a silk hat was looking out of the doorway. Paul looked at his watch.

"Better be getting back," he said.

"We don't want to be late, you know."

"There's a short cut back across the fields," said Vernon-Smith. "I know the way."

"Still, you can't be too careful," said Dallas. "I think I'd like to turn back here."

"Just as you like."

Vernon-Smith stopped.
"You'd like to be friends with me, Dallas?"
"Certainly," answered Paul. "Why not?"
"Why not?" assented the Bounder, with a mocking gleam in his eyes. "It would help you a good deal, I suppose, in pulling the wool over my pater's eyes?"

Dallas started.
"Vernon-Smith!"
"You'll be coming to my father's house for the Easter hols, I suppose?" said Vernon-Smith.

"I—I suppose so."
"And you think I shall be friendly with you there?"

"I hope so," said Dallas, very quietly. "It would be rather unpleasant for Mr. Vernon-Smith if we were ragging at his house as we've been at Greyfriars."

"You could keep away, you know," suggested the Bounder.

"I shall have to do as your father tells me, of course," Dallas drew a deep breath. "What does this mean, Vernon-Smith? Have you walked me out here to pick a quarrel with me?"

"Not at all; I'm rather particular whom I pick a quarrel with," said the Bounder. "I was letting you run on by way of amusement. I'm not going to touch you—for two reasons: you're not fit to touch, and you've licked me once and, I've no doubt, could do it again."

Dallas flushed crimson.
"Then you've been pulling my leg?" he asked, very quietly.

"I've been letting you fancy that you'd pulled my leg, you mean," said Vernon-Smith contemptuously. "You'll find me a little harder to take in than my father."

"How dare you say that I've taken your father in?"

"Haven't you?" sneered the Bounder.

Dallas breathed hard.
"You've pulled my leg," he said. "I thought you wanted to make friends, or at least stop ragging. You won't make a fool of me again. You'll keep your distance from me after this, Herbert Vernon-Smith. As for going to your father's house for the Easter holiday, I shall not do so if I can possibly help it—not if the Head will let me stay at Greyfriars over the holidays. I shall have nothing to do with you that I can help."

Vernon-Smith gave a scoffing laugh. Dallas turned his back on the Bounder and walked back the way he had come. The Bounder jumped over a stile, and took a winding path through field and wood back to the school. It was, as he had said, a short cut; but Dallas was unacquainted as yet with the country round Greyfriars, and he knew nothing of it, and certainly he did not intend to walk back with the Bounder.

There was plenty of time to get back to the school for the football match by road; Dallas had taken care of that. It did not occur to him that he might be stopped on the way. He was angry at the Bounder's duplicity, but he was far from suspecting what its real object had been.

Vernon-Smith disappeared in the fields. Dallas followed the path along the edge of the common back towards the Courtfield road. He had to pass the lonely shed again. A fellow in well-cut Etons had just ridden a bike along the grassy path, and stopped at the shed. He leaned the machine on the wall and looked in at the doorway.

Paul glanced at him carelessly as he passed.

"Just in time, Drury," said Ponsonby,

with a grin. "You nearly missed the fun!"

And Ponsonby & Co., coming out of the shed in a bunch, ran into the path and lined up in front of the Greyfriars junior.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

PAUL DALLAS halted.
Five fellows were lined up in the path before him, and he had no choice about stopping.

He had never seen the fellows before, but he guessed that they belonged to Highcliffe, and he could not fail to see that their intentions were hostile. He had heard about Redwing's ragging the previous day; he had seen Redwing come in smothered with mud. And he was on his guard at once.

Ponsonby raised his silk hat politely. Pon was always polite, and it amused him to play with his victim a little, like a cat with a mouse.

"Excuse us," he said smoothly. "Just stop a minute, will you?"

"Well, I've stopped," said Paul. "What do you want?"

Pon's courteous manner almost disarmed him. He did not know Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe yet.

"Only a word or two, dear man," said Ponsonby. "Judgin' by your cap, you're a Greyfriars cad."

"I belong to Greyfriars, if that's what you mean."

"That's it! At Highcliffe, we always speak of Greyfriars fellows as Greyfriars cads," Pon explained airily. "You see, it describes them so well."

"So exactly, you know," said Gadsby. "Absolutely!" remarked Vavasour.

Paul set his lips.

"Will you let me pass?" he inquired.

"Any hurry?" asked Ponsonby.

"Yes."

"I'm sorry for that, because we're not lettin' you pass for a little while. We want a little conversation with you."

"He doesn't drop his h's," said Monson. "Fancy that, you men! Have we got the right pig by the ear? I expected him to be dropping his h's all over the shop."

"Let's have it clear," said Ponsonby.

"We've heard that there's a new cad at Greyfriars, in the Lower Fourth. Are you the new cad?"

"I'm new at Greyfriars, if that's what you mean," said Paul quietly.

"Does your name happen to be Dallas?"

"My name is Dallas."

"Then there's no mistake," said Ponsonby. "You're the man we've wanted to meet. You see, we've heard about you, and we've never seen a charity cad before at close quarters."

Paul crimsoned.

He had heard a good deal about the Highcliffe nuts in the Remove, though he had seen nothing of them so far. Ponsonby's cool insolence fitted the description he had heard.

"You see, we were rather curious about you," explained Gadsby. "Sort of new animal, you know."

"Absolutely," said Vavasour.

"He washes," said Ponsonby, inspecting Dallas. "It's surprisin' but he washes. I suppose they made him wash after he got to Greyfriars."

"Yaas, there's a limit even for Greyfriars," said Vavasour.

"They have a wide limit, or they wouldn't let in charity cads—still, they've a limit," assented Pon.

"They've made him wash."

"Who gave him his clothes, I wonder?" said Monson.

"I dare say he will tell us. Who gave you your clothes, young Charity?" inquired Pon.

Paul Dallas looked steadily at the five Highcliffians. He was a delft and doughty fellow with his hands, as he had proved in his fight with the Bounder of Greyfriars. But he had no expectation of holding his own against odds of five to one. He was in a bad scrape, and he knew it, for it was clear that the five young rascals would soon be proceeding from words to actions. The ditch was flowing near by, and he remembered Redwing's ragging. He stepped back, his hands clenching hard.

"You haven't answered my question," said Ponsonby. "We're really interested to learn who gave you your clothes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm fed-up with this," said Dallas. "Will you get out of my way?"

"I think not," smiled Pon.

"Not quite!" chuckled Gadsby.

"Absolutely not!" chirruped Vavasour.

"We never let a Greyfriars cad off without a raggin'," said Monson.

"You're for it, dear man."

Paul did not answer. He made a sudden rush to break his way through, hitting out right and left.

There was a howl from the Highcliffians. They had intended to collar Dallas and rag him, and shut him up in the shed, according to programme. They had intended to handle him severely if he ventured to resist. But they had not the slightest expectation that he would begin the battle himself. They were quite taken by surprise by that sudden hefty rush.

Paul certainly had no suspicion that there was a scheme to keep him away from the Rookwood match. He supposed that a ragging was intended, such as Tom Redwing had been through. But he did not mean to take it if he could possibly help it. His only chance was to break through the Highcliffians and run for it.

And he did not stand on ceremony. Ponsonby received his right full on the nose, and his left crashed into Gadsby's mouth. The two nuts went down as if they had been shot.

Paul broke through and dashed on. Monson snatched at him as he passed, and got a grip on his sleeve, and dragged him round. The next moment Monson went spinning, with a howl. But that moment had been time enough for Vavasour and Drury to close in on the Greyfriars junior, and they both caught at him and held him.

Ponsonby and Gadsby jumped up, and clutched at him. Paul, resisting desperately, went to the ground, the Highcliffians sprawling over him.

The next few minutes were wild and whirling ones.

Five to one, as the Highcliffians were, they did not have an easy task with the Greyfriars junior.

There were howls and yells from all of them, as Paul struggled, hitting out at every chance. Vavasour rolled away, clapping his jaw, which felt as if it was no longer there, and yelling with anguish. But four pairs of hands were still grasping Dallas, and they dragged him through the grass into the shed.

Paul was flung into the shed, and he sprawled on the floor gasping for breath, spent by the unequal struggle.

"Stick there, you charity cad!" panted Ponsonby. "By gad, I'll make you sorry for givin' us all this trouble!"

Paul sat up breathlessly.

Ponsonby & Co. gathered in a bunch inside the open doorway of the shed. They were breathless, too, and they had damaged noses to dab. The Greyfriars junior rose painfully to his feet, and leaned on the further wall of the shed, pumping in breath.

"You rotters!" he panted.
"Shut up!" snapped Ponsonby.
"Wait for what's comin' to you! You needn't ask for it!"

Paul calmed himself with an effort. There was no way out of the shed save by the narrow doorway, and it was blocked by the Highliffians. He was only too well aware that he could not beat the five of them and force a passage.

"Look here, you fellows!" he said. "I'm due at my school for a football match. Chuck this, and let me pass."

Ponsonby laughed savagely. His hands and nose were considerably damaged, and did not look very hardy some now. It was on the Bouncer's account that Pon & Co. had molested Dallas; but it was on his own account now, that they intended to rag him unmercifully, as well as keep him away from the football match at Greyfriars. Common persons could not be allowed to lay their hands on the lofty Pon with impunity.

"Be decent," said Dallas. "You don't want to make a fellow miss a football match."

"Don't we?" grinned Gadsby.

"Will you let me get out?"

"Hardly."

"I tell you the fellows will be waiting for me," said Paul. "Haven't you any decency, even you Highliffe outsiders?"

"Cheese it. You'll want your breath to howl when we begin on you," said Monson.

Paul breathed hard. The breathless Highliffians were in no hurry to begin on him; but evidently they did not intend to allow him to pass out of the shed. And the minutes were going. The Rookwood fellows would soon be at Greyfriars, if they were not there already. Paul gritted his teeth at the thought of being absent when the ball was kicked off.

"I tell you—" he began again.

"Shut up!"

Paul said no more. He gathered all his strength for a desperate rush.

"Stop him!" yelled Ponsonby.

Paul came on fiercely, his teeth set and his eyes gleaming. But the five Highliffians were too much for him. The desperate rush was stopped, and Paul Dallas went spinning back into the shed, and sprawled on the floor, every ounce of breath knocked out of his body.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Caterpillar Takes a Hand!

"SOUNDS like trouble!"

It was Rupert de Courcy, otherwise known as the Caterpillar, of the Fourth Form at Highliffe, who made that remark.

His companion, Frank Courtenay, nodded assent.

The Caterpillar and the captain of the Highliffe Fourth were sauntering along a field-path in the spring sunshine. From a shed near the path the sounds of battle came very loudly to their ears.

There was trampling and panting and yelling going on inside that lonely shed, and it was rather surprising, in that solitary spot. The Caterpillar stopped in his leisurely saunter, and a smile came over his face.

"Trouble in the happy family, Franky," he said.

"How's that?" asked Courtenay. He had stopped, too, listening to the sounds of battle, and wondering whether he had better look into the shed to see what was going on.

"Pon and Co.," said the Caterpillar.

"You think—"

"They're all out of gates this afternoon," smiled the Caterpillar. "And I believe this buildin' is a place where they sometimes congregate on a half-holiday, for such wicked proceedin's as banker and nap. Time was, dear boy, when my naughty self congregated there with them."

"Oh, rot!" said Courtenay.

"Lamentable, but true," said the Caterpillar gravely. "But it's rather new for Pon & Co. to be scrappin' in this delectable resort, I believe. Have they been swindlin' one another, and findin' one another out?"

"If it's Ponsonby and his friends there—"

"It is—it is!" said the Caterpillar. "That's Drury's bike leanin' up against the shed."

"No bizney of ours, then," said Courtenay. "Let's keep clear of that shady crew."

"Not give 'em a look-in?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Why should we?"

"Well, isn't it an opportunity to speak a word in season?" argued the Caterpillar. "You're rather good at that, Franky. Look how you saved me like a brand from the burnin'."

"Fathead!"

"They've been chisellin' one another at nap, you know!" drawled the Caterpillar. "They've fallen out over the loot! Let's look in and point the moral."

"Oh, come on!" said Courtenay.

"Just a minute while I point the moral to these misguided youths."

And the Caterpillar crossed over to the doorway of the shed, and looked in, with a cheery smile on his face.

Five Highliffe fellows were panting for breath inside the doorway; the struggle was over. In the dusky far corner of the shed another fellow lay sprawling and gasping, a fellow the Caterpillar had never seen before. But it was upon Pon & Co. that De Courcy's eyes were fixed.

"Enjoyin' your little selves?" he asked urbanely.

Pon & Co. spun round, startled.

"Oh! You!" said Gadsby.

"Little me," assented the Caterpillar. "Hearin' you scrappin' with one another, I've looked in like a good boy to point the moral."

"What do you mean, you silly chump?" growled Ponsonby. "We're not scrappin' with one another, you howlin' ass!"

"Not!" ejaculated the Caterpillar.

"No, you fathead! Buzz off!"

"Yes, get out, Caterpillar!" said Monson. "You're not wanted here!"

"Is that a hint that my company is unwelcome?" inquired the Caterpillar. "You put it so delicately."

"Oh, clear!" snapped Ponsonby.

But the Caterpillar did not clear. His glance had turned on the breathless junior who was gasping on the other side of the shed, and he had discerned a Greyfriars cap on the ground.

"Come on, Rupert!" called out Courtenay, from the path.

"You trot here, old bean!" said the Caterpillar. "These dear men have been raggin' some fellow five to one. That's the giddy history of the mystery."

"Oh!" said Frank Courtenay. And he joined his chum at the doorway of the shed, a dark look on his face.

Paul Dallas staggered to his feet.

He could see from their caps that the newcomers were Highliffe fellows, but it was fairly clear that they were no friends of Ponsonby & Co. The Caterpillar's manner, and the looks of Ponsonby & Co. showed that pretty plainly.

"You fellows—will you see fair play?" he exclaimed breathlessly. "These rotters are keeping me here, and I'm wanted in a football match at Greyfriars."

Courtenay's eyes flashed.

"You're keeping that kid away from a football match, Ponsonby?" he exclaimed.

"Nothin' of the sort. He's a new kid at Greyfriars, and I don't suppose for a minute he's playin' in matches."

"Anyhow, you've no right to keep him here."

"Haven't we?" sneered Ponsonby. "Are you makin' a new law that a man mustn't rag a Greyfriars cad?"

"Mind your own bizney, Courtenay!" said Gadsby. "Look what the rotter's done to my nose!"

"He's only a charity cad, anyhow," said Drury.

"Absolutely," said Vavasour.

"Well, charity covers a multitude of sins, doesn't it?" said the Caterpillar.

"Let the kid go."

"Rats!"

"Not as a special favour to me!" pleaded the Caterpillar.

"Oh, get out!"

"Pon refuses me a special favour, Franky," said the Caterpillar sadly. "He's goin' to give me the trouble of alterin' his features. Isn't that inconsiderate on a warm spring afternoon?"

The Highliffe nuts exchanged glances. The Caterpillar pushed back his cuffs.

"That kid, whoever he is, seems to be rather hefty," he remarked. "He has done some damage on his lonely own. Perhaps he'll do some more with our help, Franky. Do you feel like doin' any more damage, you Greyfriars man?"

Paul laughed breathlessly.

"I'm going to try," he answered. "I shan't be kept here quietly—not so long as I can hit."

"Good man!" said the Caterpillar. "I'm with you. You asked us to see fair play, and we're bound to do it, for the honour of the school we belong to. The honour of Highliffe is rather specially in our hands, as these fellows don't give a straw for it. Do you, Pon?"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Ponsonby. "You're not goin' to interfere here, De Courcy."

"Your mistake, Pon—I am. Sorry, but there you are," said the Caterpillar regretfully. "I never felt less like exertin' myself in strenuous combat, but I feel that it's up to me. Still, perhaps we can arrange the matter."

"Get out!"

"Let the kid walk off—"

"Rats!"

"Or one of you try to keep him," suggested the Caterpillar. "That will be fair play. Any man you like against the Greyfriars man, and we'll help to keep the ring. That suit you, young feller-me-lad?"

"Yes, rather!" said Paul at once. "There isn't one of them that could stop me. I'm willing to take the chance, anyhow."

"Greyfriars is willin'," said the Caterpillar. "What about Highliffe?"

"Oh, go and eat cake!"



The five Highcliffe fellows lined up in the path before Dallas, and the Greyfriars junior had no choice about stopping. Ponsonby stepped forward and raised his silk hat politely. "Excuse us," he said smoothly. "You're the man we've wanted to meet. We've never seen a charity cad before at close quarters." (See Chapter 8.)

"You turn down the offer, Pon?"
"Yes, you drawlin' idiot. Now get out!"

The Caterpillar shook his head. "We're two," he said. "Countin' the Greyfriars kid, three. Three good men against five funks is about level. You ready, Franky?"

"Yes," said Courtenay, with a laugh. "Chatge!"

Ponsonby & Co. backed away at once. The odds were still in their favour; but they knew that Courtenay was a match for any two of them, and the Caterpillar, with all his sleepy ways, was a good match for any other two. It was not good enough, in the opinion of Pon & Co. Victory was exceedingly doubtful; but severe punishment was not at all doubtful; even if they had the best of it, they knew that their damages would be extremely severe. And that was not what the nuts of Highcliffe wanted, by any means.

As the nuts backed into the shed, the Caterpillar and Courtenay followed them up steadily.

"Is this a scrap or a walkin' match, Pon?" inquired the Caterpillar in surprise.

Ponsonby did not answer, but he continued to back away with his friends. Evidently it was not going to be a scrap.

Paul Dallas picked up his cap and jammed it on his head, and crossed to the door. The way was open now.

"Thanks very much, Pon," said the Caterpillar, urbanely. "I should hate to exert myself scrappin' this nice afternoon. I'd much rather continue my walk with Franky and listen to his improvin' conversation. It's really kind and considerate of you to show the white feather like this."

Ponsonby gritted his teeth.

"Get out, you rotter!" he muttered.

"Only too glad, dear man! I'm not a particular chap, but I really object to such company. Come on, Franky! I was quite mistaken, it seems, in thinkin' that these blokes were burnin' for the fray."

The Highcliffe nuts exchanged uneasy looks.

"We're not goin' to fight you over a Greyfriars cad, Caterpillar," said Gadsby.

"Not worth it," said Drury.

"Absolutely!" assented Vavasour.

"Get out, you rotter!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Pleased! Come on, Franky!" And the Caterpillar and Courtenay followed Paul Dallas from the shed.

"Thanks very much, you fellows," said Paul quietly.

"Don't mench, dear man," said the Caterpillar gracefully. "We're not all funks and outsiders at Highcliffe, though a lot of us are. You're really booked for a football match at Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"What time do they kick off?"

"Three."

De Courcy looked at his watch.

"You'll never walk it in the time," he said.

"I shall have to run—"

"You don't want to run a mile before playin' football. Let me lend you a bike," said the Caterpillar.

Paul's face brightened.

"I say, that's awfully decent of you!" he exclaimed.

"Not at all! It's up to me, in the cirs, as a Highcliffe man," said the Caterpillar urbanely.

"But—" Paul glanced round,

puzzled. "You haven't your bike with you."

"No; I'm offerin' to lend you Drury's bike," explained the Caterpillar, with a nod towards the handsome machine leaning on the shed.

"Oh!" exclaimed Paul.

"You cheeky rotter, Caterpillar!" came an indignant howl from the shed. "You're not lendin' that Greyfriars cad my jigger?"

"Not," asked the Caterpillar.

"No, you cheeky beast!" howled Drury.

"Come out and stop me, then," suggested the Caterpillar, taking the machine from the wall. "Here you are, dear man, I'm lendin' you this bike with pleasure. You can keep it till called for."

"Look here, Caterpillar!" shrieked Drury, putting an enraged face out of the shed doorway.

"Buck up, Drury, old bean!" said the Caterpillar, as Paul wheeled the bike to the path. "You haven't much time left if you're goin' to stop me lendin' your bike to my esteemed young friend here."

"You—you—you—" gasped Drury.

Paul Dallas mounted the machine and drove at the pedals. He fairly flew down the field path towards the Courtfield road without wasting another thought on the Highcliffians.

In less than a minute he was out of sight.

"May as well resume our little stroll, Franky," said the Caterpillar. "I suppose you don't care to stop here and play banker with Pon?"

"Fathead! Come on!"

(Continued on page 17.)

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"THE SHADOW OF THE SACK!"

(Continued from previous page.)

to me, that letter to Mr. Fearless would be unposted for months and months. So the Head plunged his pen into the ink once more, and added the following:

"P.S.—I am short of stamps at the moment, so am sending this letter unstamped—a privilege which I believe is permitted to Headmasters and to Royalty."

Having sealed the letter, the Head pressed a push-button on his desk. His summons was instantly answered by Binding, the page.

"Kindly drop this letter into the pillow-box, Binding," said the Head.

Binding took the letter and hezzitated. "Which there ain't no stamp on it, sir," he said.

The Head clicked his teeth with annoyance.

"I am constantly having to correct your grammar, Binding!" he said. "It is all wrong to say 'There ain't no stamp.' You should say, 'There iss't no stamp!'"

"Well, there ain't, is there?" said Binding.

The Head frowned.

"Weather there is or ain't, Binding, is no concern of yours. Begone!"

The page-boy trotted away with the letter, leaving the Head deep in reflection.

He felt quite confident, in his own mind, that Mr. Fearless would send the sum of six pounds by return, as requested. Frank's father was as rich as Croesus, and six pounds was nothing to him. He often spent more than that on his lunch in the City.

So the Head dreamed plezzant dreams of a registered letter, containing six crisp Trezzury Notes; and he mapped out in his mind how he would spend the money—when it came!

But it never came!

Two mornings later, the Head received a painful shock. There was a letter from Mr. Fearless, but no crisp Trezzury Notes fell fluttering from the envelope.

The letter—upon which the fate and future of Frank Fearless depended—ran as follows:

"Dear Doctor Birchcraff, I am in receipt of your letter (unstamped, undated, and not properly sealed).

"I sent my son to St. Sam's on the distinct understanding that you would look after him and keep him out of mischief. For the responsibility which this involved, I paid you dubble term fees.

"If my son is allowed to get out of control—like his car seems to have done on the day he went to St. Sam's—the responsibility lies at your door. I should not dream of sending you the five pounds you had to pay the fire-brigade. And I consider you have an awful nerve to ask for six!

"You will be five pounds out of pocket over this business; but it is your own fault, and it serves you jolly well right!

"Yours trooly,

"JOHN FEARLESS."

The effect of this letter on the Head was trooly terrifying. His eyes rolled in his head; he clawed at his long beard; he leapt to his feet in a fury.

"The beast!" he cried. "The nasty, sarkastic, stingy beast! I asked for broad, and he has given me a stone! How can he eggssert me to keep an eye on his young reprobate of a son, every minnit of the day? I can't shadow the bratt like a detective. Now that his father has refused to part up with the fiveer, Fearless shall be sacked! It would be madness to keep him at the school. He has cost me five pounds already. If he stayed, goodness knows what further expense he would involve me in! He shall die!—I mean, he shall go! To-morro morning, he will look his last upon the hysterical building of St. Sam's!"

For the next half hour, the Head paced two and fro in his study like a madman.

When Mr. Lickham came along to consult him on some point, the Head relieved his feelings by hurling a paper-weight at the astonished Forn-master, who fled from the study in a pannick. And when, shortly after, Herr Guggenheimer popped his fat, red face round the door, the Head picked up an ink-squirt which he had confiscated from Jack Jolly, and gave the German master a shower-bath of blue-black ink.

Herr Guggenheimer spluttered and choked, and then ran for his life. He was convinced that the Head was clean off his rocker.

Finally, the Head sent for Frank Fearless, and for Burleigh and Tallboy, of the Sixth.

Frank's hart was beating wildly as he stepped into the Head's study. He knew that the fateful moment had arrived—that he was about to learn his fate.

Was he saved—or was it the sack?

The two prefects followed Frank in. They closed the door, and set their broad backs against it.

The Head was a little calmer now—but not much. There was malis and spite in the fierce glare he bestowed upon Frank Fearless. And Frank's hart sank; for he knew what was coming.

"Fearless!" thundered the Head. "You are doomed! Your father has failed to fork up the fiveer; so it's marching orders! Do not go on your hands and knees and plead for mercy—you will be waisting your breth and my time. 'Take him away!' added the Head, signalling to Burleigh and Tallboy. "Lock him securely in the punishment-room for the night. To-morro morning he shall shake the dust of St. Sam's from his feet!"

Frank Fearless turned to the Head with flashing eyes.

"This is unjust!" he cried, in ringing tones. "I protest—"

"Come, Fearless!" said Burleigh, not unkindly. "Sticks and stones would brake the Head's bones, but words will

never hurt him. If you rail at him, and start calling him names, it will only mean a flogging as well as the sack."

So Frank Fearless suffered himself to be led away by the two prefects.

On their way to the punishment-room, they were met by Molly Birchcraff. Her own face paled, when she saw the paller on the face of Frank Fearless.

"Why, Frank!" cried the girl. "What has happened?"

"I'm sacked, Molly!" was the bitter reply.

"Sacked?"

"Kicked out—fired—expelled—quished!"

"Oh!"

"May I say good-bye to you, Molly? I don't believe in making much adieu about nothing; but it's a fact that I'm to go. Your father has just pronounced sentence."

"My father is unkind and crool!" cried Molly, her eyes blazing. "But do not despair, Frank. I will go and plead for you—I will do my best to prevent my father doing his worst!"

Molly did not take the outstretched hand of Frank Fearless. She hurried away to the Head's study, to make an appeal on behalf of her boy chum.

But the Head, for once in a way, was not to be moved, even by the tears and protests of his daughter.

"You are waisting your breth, Molly," he said. "My mind is made up, and my decision is as irrevokable as the laws of the Swedes and Pershans. Fearless must go!"

"My hero!" wailed Molly.

"Fah! You will have forgotten all about him in a day or two. His name will be only a memory! Run away, child, and do not bother your pretty head about that reckless young reprobate."

Molly hung a look of bitter reproach at her father, and he raised his hand to parry it.

Then, with despair in her hart, Molly turned, and walked blindly from the study. Blindly she groped her way along the corridor. Blindly, she tumbled down the School House steps from top to bottom. Unsigntly, she scrambled up from the muddy puddle into which she had fallen, and blindly groped her way down to the school gates. Away, away! Stumbling and tumbling, scarcely knowing whether she was going, or what she was going to do when she got there, Molly Birchcraff disappeared down the lane—hatless, with her hair streaming in the wind.

All her thoughts were for Frank Fearless, the fellow who had so gallantly reeked her from the clutches of the gipsies.

Where was Frank now? What had they done to her hero?

Broutal hands had been laid upon him; he had been dragged away, like a condemned felon, to the dark, dreary, dismal punishment-room. And there he was to languish for the night—in the Shadow of the Sack!

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain another humorous yarn by Dicky Nugent, entitled: "EVERY INCH A HERO!" Be sure and read it.)

DO YOU KNOW THAT—?

THE total gross receipts at the Cup-ties which have been played by the Bolton Wanderers club since the War amount to nearly £140,000. This amount includes, of course, two Final Ties.

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On ten successive occasions previous to the Sixth Round of the present season, Southampton has been drawn to play at home in Cup games. Exceptional luck that.

Of the fifteen clubs which originally entered for the Cup when it was first started, there were thirteen from London, one near Spalding, and Queen's Park made up the number. Owing to their being so far away from the other clubs Queen's Park were excused until the semi-final.

If the ball cannons off the referee and goes into the net a goal must be allowed providing that it is legitimate in every other respect. The fact that the ball hits the referee on its journey to the net doesn't affect the matter at all.

The Football Association Cup competition was instituted fifty-six years ago. Among the subscribers to the trophy, which cost £20, was the Queen's Park club, Glasgow, who sent a guinea, although their total income for that year was only six pounds.

Condemned by the Form!



(Continued from page 13.)

Ponsonby & Co. proceeded to slang the two juniors as they started to walk. But they did not proceed to anything more emphatic than slanging. And the Caterpillar cheerfully left them to it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH strolled into the changing-room, where most of the Remove footballers were gathered.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Smithy!" said Bob Cherry.

The Bounder smiled sarcastically.

He guessed easily enough that his absence with Paul Dallas had been a topic among the Remove fellows.

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a cheery nod.

"Rookwood will be along soon," he remarked. "Feeling fit, Smithy?"

"Fit as a fiddle! Redwing about?" asked the Bounder carelessly.

"Redwing! He's gone home for the afternoon," said Bob. "His father's back from sea, you know, and Reddy's gone up to Hawkscliff to see him."

The Bounder compressed his lips a little.

The fact that Redwing had not mentioned his plans for the afternoon showed how deep the division had already become between the two chums of Study No. 4. The Bounder was disappointed, too, because it had been in his mind that Redwing might be picked to replace the missing inside right. Redwing was a good man, and a valuable reserve, but he was nowhere near Paul Dallas' present form, as everyone but the Bounder acknowledged, including Tom himself. But Vernon-Smith refused to see what was plain to everyone else; and indeed, he found some excuse, in his own mind, for the scheme he had concerted with Ponsonby & Co. in the belief that Dallas had been given a place to which Redwing was more entitled.

"Where's Dallas?" asked Wharton, a few minutes later.

"Dallas?" repeated Smithy. "Hasn't he come in?"

"Well, you ought to know, as he went out of gates with you," said the captain of the Remove, with a rather sharp look.

"I don't know."

"Didn't you come back together?" asked Harry.

"No," said the Bounder briefly.

"More trouble?" sighed Skinner, who was lounging in the doorway of the changing-room.

"Dash it all, Smithy, you haven't been rowing with Dallas again, have you?" exclaimed Johnny Bull testily.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"My fault, I suppose?" he sneered. "You don't ask me if Dallas has been rowing with me?"

"The chap hasn't rowed with anybody since he's been at Greyfriars of his own accord," said Johnny Bull. "I never saw a more peaceable fellow."

Wharton's face clouded.

"I thought you were getting on better with the new chap, Smithy," he said.

"Well, I had a try," said the Bounder calmly. "But there was nothing in it. Oil and water won't mix."

"Where is Dallas now?" asked Wharton abruptly.

"Oh, we haven't been scrapping," said the Bounder, laughing. "We had a little argument whether Dallas should butt into my house for the Easter holidays. We walked back different ways."

"It's time he was here."

"Well, I took the short cut," said Vernon-Smith. "He came back, I believe, by the path on the common and the Courtfield road. I suppose he's not ass enough to lose his way on a high road."

"Lots of time yet," said Bob Cherry. "The Rookwood men won't be along just yet."

Harry Wharton nodded, but he was not pleased. Just before an important football match he did not want a member of his team to be wandering about out of gates. It was annoying, too, to find that he had been mistaken, and that the Bounder's feud with the new fellow was as keen as ever. He doubted very much whether the Bounder had been sincere in his attempt to make friends with his adopted brother.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into the changing-room through his big spectacles. Bunter was full of news.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Has your postal-order come, Bunt?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! That chap, Dallas! He, he, he!"

"What are you he-he-he-he about?"

"You should see his nose!" chortled Bunter.

"What's the matter with his nose, fathead?"

"He, he, he! What isn't the matter with it?" chuckled the Owl of the Remove. "Looks like a squashed raspberry. He, he, he!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, who was removing his collar and tie preparatory to changing for football, spun round towards the Owl of the Remove, with a startled face.

"What's that?" he almost panted.

How could Bunter have seen Dallas? At that moment, Dallas should have been a prisoner in the shed on the field-path near Courtfield Common, watched by the Highcliffe fellows.

"He, he, he! Did you scrap with him, Smithy?" chortled Bunter.

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Has Dallas been in the wars, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"You should see him! Looks as if he's been under a lawnmower," chuckled Bunter.

"Look here, Smithy—" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

The Bounder did not heed him. He strode across to Bunter, and grasped the fat junior by the collar, and shook him. In his rage and dismay he had completely lost control of his temper.

"You babblin' fool—"

"Yarook!"

"What do you mean?" roared Vernon-Smith.

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Tell me what you mean, you fat

idiot, or I'll shake you to a jelly," shouted Vernon-Smith.

"Grooogh!"

Bunter wriggled wildly in the Bounder's savage grip.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! Wharrer you mean? Make him leggo, you fellows," spluttered Bunter.

Bob Cherry strode across and grasped the Bounder's arm. Bunter was released.

"What the thump's the matter with you, Smithy?" exclaimed Bob. "What are you pitching into Bunter for?"

The Bounder panted.

"He's lying—pulling my leg! I—"

The Bounder broke off sharply. Angry and excited as he was, he realised that he was saying too much. It was his cue to affect to know nothing of Paul Dallas' movements since he had parted with him on Courtfield Common.

"Blessed if I know what you are driving at," said Bob. "Keep your temper, old bean."

"Grooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Keep that wild beast off a chap, I believe he's been scrapping with Dallas. Dallas has been scrapping with somebody—anyhow. Grooogh! He shows it all over his face."

"Not with Smithy, or Smithy's jolly old chivvy would show it, too," remarked Squill.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Paul Dallas entered the changing-room.

Vernon-Smith gave him one look, and turned away. He could scarcely control his rage and disappointment. Somehow or other, Dallas had slipped through the fingers of the Highcliffe fellows. He looked as if he had been severely in the wars; but it was incredible that, heftily as he was, he had succeeded in handling five fellows at once. Something, evidently, had gone wrong with the scheme. Yet the state he was in showed that Ponsonby & Co. had assailed him. It was an exasperating puzzle to the Bounder; but one thing was clear—Dallas was there, and Dallas was going to play in the Rookwood match.

All eyes were turned on Paul.

His nose was red and swollen, there was a dark shadow under one of his eyes, and his lip was cut. His clothes were smothered with dirt. Obviously, he had been through a severe struggle.

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Dallas panted.

"I'm in time!" he asked.

"Lots of time!" The Rookwood men may be here any minute, though," said Harry. "You look as if you've been through it."

"I have been through it," said Paul. "I was collared by a mob of Highcliffe chaps near Courtfield Common. They pitched me into an old shed there, and kept me there."

"Pon again!" said Bob Cherry. "We shall really have to get on the giddy war-path and give Pon a lesson, if he keeps on like this."

"But you got away all right?" said Harry.

"I shouldn't have, only two fellows came along, and they lent me a hand," said Paul.

"Greyfriars men?"

"No; Highcliffe. Two jolly decent chaps," said Paul. "I daresay you know them—one of them had a nickname, a rather queer name—"

"The Caterpillar?"

"That's it!"

"But what on earth were they keeping you in the shed for?" asked Tom.

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ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2!

Brown. "Just for the pleasure of your company?"

"It was a rag, I suppose," said Paul. "I told them I was due here for a football match, but it made no difference. I put up the best fight I could, but they were too many for me. If those two chaps hadn't come along, I should be there still. I should have been too late back anyhow, but one of them had a bike, and the Caterpillar told me to take it. I've never ridden faster in my life. There's a Highcliff bike at Gosling's Lodge now waiting to be called for."

And Paul began bathing his nose. It needed it.

Wharton knitted his brows. "The rotten cads," he said. "Just one of Pon's tricks. Lucky you got away."

"The luckfulness was terrific!" "We'll jolly well take a little walk next half-holiday, and look for Pon," said Bob. "Pon's got to have a lesson."

"Yes, rather." Vernon-Smith stood silent, his face white with rage. He understood now how it was that Paul had returned in time for the match. His scheme had been cunningly laid; but he had not allowed for chance, and chance had defeated him.

"Feeling fit for footer, after your scrap?" asked Wharton.

"You bet! I'm all right."

"Good man!"

Vernon-Smith went to the door. Bob Cherry called after him, little dreaming of the thoughts in the Bounder's mind, and the feelings in his breast.

"Time to change, Smithy, old bean." The Bounder did not seem to hear. He left the changing-room, and hurried away.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Resolve!

JIMMY SILVER & CO., of Rookwood, arrived bright and cheery. Round Little Side a good many Remove fellows had gathered, to watch the last big match of the season. Among the Remove footballers, Paul Dallas looked very fit, in spite of the damages to his face. Harry Wharton, chatting with Jimmy Silver, did not notice, for the moment, that the Bounder was not present. But his attention was very soon drawn to the fact. Potter, of the Fifth, had come along to referee, and all was ready for the match—excepting the Bounder. It was not like Vernon-Smith to be late for a football match, and Wharton was a little puzzled when he noted that his outside-right had not yet appeared.

"Where's Smithy?" he called out. "He hasn't come down yet," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose he's still changing."

"Cut across and tell him to buck up." "Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry sprinted to the changing-room.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he bawled into the doorway. "Get a move on, Smithy! Waiting for you!"

Then he discovered that Vernon-Smith was not there.

Bob stared round the changing-room; it was empty. Vernon-Smith had not changed with the other fellows; and if he had changed since, it was odd that he had not gone down to the ground. Bob was quite puzzled.

He came out of the changing-room again, and sighted Bunter, and called to him.

"Seen Smithy?"

"Gone up to his study," said Bunter. Bob's eyes opened wide.

"What the merry thump has he gone up to his study for?" he exclaimed.

"Had he changed?"

"No!"

"Well, my hat!"

Bob's long legs fairly flew as he negotiated the passages and the stairs. He came along the Remove passage as if he were on the cinder-path, and burst open the door of Study No. 4.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was there.

He was still in Etons, and he was sprawling in the armchair, smoking a cigarette.

Bob stared at him blankly.

"Smithy!" he stuttered.

The Bounder's brow was black. He glanced at Bob through a haze of cigarette smoke.

"Well?" he said coolly.

"Have you forgotten that we're playing Rookwood this afternoon?" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "What the thump's this game, Smithy? You haven't even changed, and the Rookwood men are waiting!"

"Dear me!"

"Well, are you coming?" hooted Bob.

The Bounder rose, and threw the half-smoked cigarette away. He yawned lazily.

"Waitin' for me?" he asked.

"Yes, you thumping ass!"

"Is it three?"

"It's some minutes past three. Dash it all, Smithy, it's pretty cool to keep a football match waiting while you loaf in your study smoking a filthy cigarette!"

"Is it?" drawled the Bounder.

Bob Cherry suppressed his feelings. He had come there to fetch Vernon-Smith, not to mop up the study with him. But never had he felt more disposed to mop up a study with any fellow.

"Are you going to hurry?" he demanded. "I tell you we're keeping the Rookwood men hanging about waiting."

"Sorry!" smiled the Bounder. "Cut off and tell Wharton to give me five minutes."

"You can change in less than five minutes. You ought to have been changed long ago."

"You can give Wharton my message, or not, just as you please," said Vernon-Smith. "He will have to give me the five minutes, anyhow."

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Who's waitin' time now?" asked the Bounder.

Again Bob Cherry suppressed his feelings.

"I'll tell Wharton!" he snapped; and he hurried away from the study, and back to the football field.

The Bounder smiled sardonically.

He had not been merely loafing in the study, as Bob supposed. He had been thinking—hard.

The failure of his scheme to keep Dallas away from Little Side that day had been a bitter blow to the Bounder. He had said—and he had meant—that he never would play in the same team with the "interloper." His scheme, had it succeeded, would have saved him from eating his words; but the scheme had failed; Paul Dallas was now on Little Side with the rest of the Remove eleven.

The Remove had chosen to take the fellow up, regardless of the Bounder; Wharton had chosen to play him in the football match, again with a complete disregard of the Bounder's feelings on the subject. All that was left for Vernon-Smith was to eat his words, and

help to make Paul's first match for the school a victory! The Bounder was bitterly, savagely determined that he would do nothing of the kind.

It would have been bad enough, if he had resigned his place in the team at the last moment. But Vernon-Smith's intentions were worse than that. All that was evil in his nature was in the ascendant now. A Greyfriars victory was nothing to him, in comparison with his malice and his hatred of the interloper.

He longed from the bottom of his heart for a Greyfriars defeat. He did not intend to play in the match—but he intended to leave his football captain till the latest possible moment in the belief that he was going to play. At the last moment the Remove's outside-right would not be there. At the very last moment Wharton would have to pick up a new man—and on a fine half-holiday a good many of the Remove would be out of gates. Smithy was giving them all the time he could to be at a distance. Rodwing was up at Hawkecliff; Penfold had gone home to Friardale; Russell and Ogilvy had gone out on their bicycles; Hazeldene to see his sister at Cliff House. The Bounder had made a few inquiries, and knew how matters stood. Wharton would not only lose his best winger, but he would have to replace him with a very second-rate man.

From Smithy's point of view, that was all to the good. A defeat in the last big match of the season would punish the football captain, and all the Remove, for backing up the interloper.

As for the consequences of letting down the team at the last moment, Vernon-Smith gave them no thought. When the evil in his nature was in the ascendant, he was reckless of consequences. Anyhow, the football was nearly over; and after the Easter holidays, when the cricket began, the matter would have blown over.

After Bob Cherry had gone, the Bounder left the study.

But he did not go to the changing-room.

He put on his hat and left the House, taking care to keep out of sight as he went out of gates.

On the Friardale road, ten minutes later, he came on Skinner and Snoop and Stott, loafing idly as usual on a half-holiday.

They stared at him.

"Not in the match, Smithy?" exclaimed Skinner.

The Bounder's lip curled.

"They've got such a jolly good new recruit that they won't want me," he answered. "Dallas can play for two."

Skinner whistled.

"He's so jolly good, you know, that he can take the right wing all to himself," said the Bounder sardonically. "You fellows feel inclined for a little run up to the Three Fishers?"

"The chaps will be awfully wild, Smithy," said Snoop.

"Will they?" said the Bounder carelessly.

"You'll get a ragging, very likely," said Stott.

"Dear me!"

"It's rather thick, you know."

"Is it?" sneered the Bounder. "Thanks for your opinion, Stott. You're such a good, dutiful chap yourself, always playing the game!"

Stott flushed.

"I wouldn't let the side down if I were in the team," he said.

"Shut up, Stott, old man!" said Skinner. "Let's get along to the Three



All eyes were turned on Paul Dallas as he entered the changing-room. His nose was red and swollen, one eye was black, and his lip was cut. His clothes were smothered with dirt, and it was obvious that he had been through a severe struggle. Dallas panted. "I'm in time?" he asked. "I—I was collared by a mob of Highcliffe chaps who pitched me into an old shed and kept me there!" (See Chapter 10.)

Fishers and have a good time. I don't blame you, Smithy. Come on!"

And Skinner smiled as the party started up the river for the Three Fishers. What the Bounder had done placed an impassable gulf between him and Harry Wharton & Co., and Skinner realised that more clearly than the Bounder did. There would be trouble now—bitter trouble; and Skinner thrived on trouble—for others. So Harold Skinner, at least, was quite satisfied with the happenings of that eventful afternoon.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Left in the Lurch!

HARRY WHARTON glanced up at the clock-tower and frowned with impatience.

It was well past the time fixed for kick-off; and the footballers were waiting—waiting for Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, were rather surprised, but very polite. Jimmy nodded cheerily when Wharton explained that one of his men was delayed. Potter of the Fifth grunted. Potter of the Fifth was kindly acting as referee; and a Fifth Form man was much too great a man to be kept hanging about by fags. Wharton was impatient and getting angry; his followers were perplexed and irritated. Why did not the Bounder come? More than the five minutes he had stipulated for had elapsed, and still he did not put in an appearance.

"He said he was coming, Bob?" asked Wharton, after speaking to the Rookwood skipper.

"He told me to ask you to give him five minutes," said Bob. "I suppose that meant that he was coming. Anyhow, he's playing, I suppose."

"It's seven minutes now," said Johnny Bull, with a snort. "He's keeping us waiting to pull our leg."

"That's a fool trick for anybody to play!" said Squiff. "Something's keeping him."

"What's keeping him, then?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"We can't keep Rookwood hanging about," said Wharton, biting his lip. "I'll go and see what's the matter."

The captain of the Remove hurried off the football ground.

His temper was rising fast.

There was no conceivable reason why the Bounder should not have been on Little Side by that time. It really looked as if he was intentionally keeping the footballers hanging on to await his pleasure, doubtless as a result of his resentment of Dallas' presence in the team. If it was that, the Bounder had trouble to expect from his skipper. Smithy was a valued man in the eleven, but Wharton was not the kind of football captain to be treated in such a way.

Still, it was barely possible that something had happened to keep Smithy from joining the footballers, and Wharton controlled his annoyance, giving the Bounder the benefit of the doubt.

He did not find Vernon-Smith in the changing-room. But he found Smithy's football rig there, lying where he had

left it when Paul Dallas arrived. The Bounder had not changed yet.

Wharton set his lips, and hurried to Vernon-Smith's study. The room was empty.

Harry went downstairs again, his face pale with anger.

If the Bounder was still in the House there was no telling where he was. All the fellows were out of doors; even Bunter had gone out. There was no Remove man about of whom the captain of the Form could inquire.

Wharton stopped in the doorway, quite nonplussed.

The thought came into his mind that the Bounder had gone out of gates, leaving the team in the lurch, at the last moment and without warning. But it seemed incredible that even the reckless Bounder could have acted in such a way. Certainly, he had declared loudly that he would never play in the same team with that "charity" fellow. But, all that "gas" had been taken back, and almost forgotten by the other fellows. Was it, after all, not wholly gas? Had the Bounder gone?

Wharton's eyes flashed as he realised the possibility of it.

He went out into the quad at last, and hurried down to Gosling's lodge. If the Bounder had gone out, it was probable that the school porter had noticed him.

"Has Vernon-Smith gone out, do you know, Gosling?" asked the captain of the Remove, looking in at the porter's open door.

"Which he have, Master Wharton."

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"You saw him go out?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I see him," assented Gosling.

"When did he go?"

"About ten minutes ago, sir."

"Oh, all right!"

Harry Wharton turned away with a throb of anger at his heart. If Smithy had gone out ten minutes ago, he must have gone immediately after Bob Cherry had left him.

No message—not a word to the football captain who was waiting for him to join up! He had let the team down without a hint of his intentions. Indeed, it was easy enough to see now that he had done it intentionally in the way that would prove most awkward for the Remove footballers.

Wharton hurried back to the football field.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where is he?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Gone out!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

"Gone out?" repeated several voices blankly.

"Out of gates, do you mean?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"Great Scott!"

"He's left us in the lurch—let us down, without a word!" said Wharton, his voice quivering with anger. "I fancy he had this in his mind all along—he never meant to play in the same team with Dallas!"

"The cheeky rotter!" bawled Johnny Bull. "Why, we'll rag him bald-headed for playing such a trick!"

"Of all the thumping nerve—" said Squiff.

Paul Dallas did not speak. But there was a troubled look on his face. He had no doubt of what the Bounder had done; and other thoughts, too, were working in his mind. Smithy had never intended to play if the interloper played, yet he had turned up for the match, and had been starting to change when Paul got back to Greyfriars after escaping from the Highcliffians.

The new junior could not help putting two and two together. It was the Bounder's pretence of making friends that had taken him out for that walk by Courtfield common, where the Highcliff gang were waiting. And Paul could not help guessing that Vernon-Smith had deliberately arranged the matter with Ponsonby & Co., and led him into a trap. Every circumstance pointed to it.

He said nothing, however. It was certainly in his own mind; but he had no proof of it. Neither was he desirous of further embittering the footballers against the deserter. They were angry enough already, without any knowledge of the Bounder's treachery.

Wharton was looking over the Remove fellows who had gathered to see the match.

"If Redwing was here—" he said.

"He's gone home to Hawkscliff."

"Anyhow, we've got Penfold."

"Pen's gone home for the afternoon," said Bob lugubriously.

"Hazelene—"

"Hazel's over at Cliff House," said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. The Bounder's desertion could not have taken place at a more awkward moment.

"Where's Ogilvy?" he asked. "Call Ogilvy, somebody!"

Ogilvy was not in the crowd, neither was his chum Russell. Bolsover major called out the information that he had

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seen them wheeling out their bikes an hour ago.

"It never rains but it pours!" said Bob Cherry dismally.

Frank Nugent was watching his chum's face, without speaking. Frank was keen enough to play in the Rookwood match, if there had been a place for him; but Frank, though a good, fast forward, was not up to the weight of the Rookwooders. But it was a case of any port in a storm now, and Harry Wharton turned to his best chum:

"Franky, old chap—"

"Shall I change?" asked Nugent.

"As fast as you can, old fellow!"

"Two ticks!" said Nugent. And he darted away.

"Jolly glad to have old Nugent in the team!" said Bob. "But—"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Same here! But— Well, it can't be helped! By Joseph, though, I'll make that cad Vernon-Smith sorry for letting us down like this!"

Wharton crossed over to the Rookwooders and explained to Jimmy Silver: "One of my men's missing." He did not explain that the man had deserted; there was no need to tell anyone that outside the Remove. "I'm putting in another man. A couple of minutes now—"

"All serene!" said Jimmy Silver.

Wharton, with a flushed face, went back to his men. Some of the Rookwooders exchanged rather droll looks.

"Man missing!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell, of Rookwood. "If I were football skipper here, that man would be missing for good from my team!"

"There's something up," murmured Jimmy Silver. "No business of ours—we make it a point not to notice anything!"

"Oh, yes, rather!" grinned Lovell.

And the Rookwooders were very careful not to notice anything outwardly, at least. But, really, they could not help observing that the Greyfriars footballers were looking more disposed to lynch somebody than to play soccer.

Every member of the Remove Eleven was almost seething with rage, yearning to be within hitting distance of the faithless forward who had let them down at the last minute.

"The dirty trickster!" said Johnny Bull, between his teeth. "An hour ago Wharton could have bagged Redwing or Penfold, and it wouldn't have mattered so much. Smithy left it late, so that we couldn't get a good man!"

"Looks like it," said Peter Todd; "and it looks—"

He stopped. But Dallas, glancing at him, read the thought in his mind. Paul realised that he was not the only fellow who had guessed what Smithy's scheme really had been, in the light of Smithy's desertion of the team.

The Bounder was, in fact, giving himself away, though in his hot-headed recklessness he had not reflected upon it. All the fellows knew that he had intended to play—up to the moment when he learned that Paul had escaped from the Highcliff gang. They could scarcely fail to guess, therefore, that Paul's escape had disconcerted his plans—which could only mean that he had known of what was to happen to the new junior when he left him on Courtfield common.

"The awful cad!" said Bob Cherry, who was red with anger. "I suppose he never meant to play all along."

"He jolly well did!" said Johnny Bull. "He was changing for the match when Bunter came in and told us about Dallas."

"That's why he got his rag out with Bunter," said Peter, with a nod. "He didn't expect Dallas back."

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Fatehead!" growled Johnny Bull. "Isn't it perfectly plain that it was Smithy fixed it up with Pon and his gang to nobble Dallas?"

"What?" roared Bob.

"The plainfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, nodding his dusky head. "That is why the esteemed and villainous Smithy took the ridiculous Dallas out walkfully."

Bob's rugged face crimsoned.

"Why, if—if—that's true—" he gasped.

"It's true enough!" growled Johnny Bull—"and just one of Smithy's tricks when he's got his rag out. He never expected Dallas to turn up to play."

"We—we—we'll rag him! We'll scalp him—"

"It looks like it," said Tom Brown. "It's like Smithy! You fellows remember he joined that Highcliff mob once to muck up a Remove match with Courtfield when he was at loggerheads with the Form. It's just one of his old games!"

"Here comes Nugent."

Frank Nugent came up.

"Ready!" he said breathlessly.

And at long last the two skippers tossed for ends, and the footballers went into the field.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Playing to Win!

POTTER of the Fifth blew the whistle.

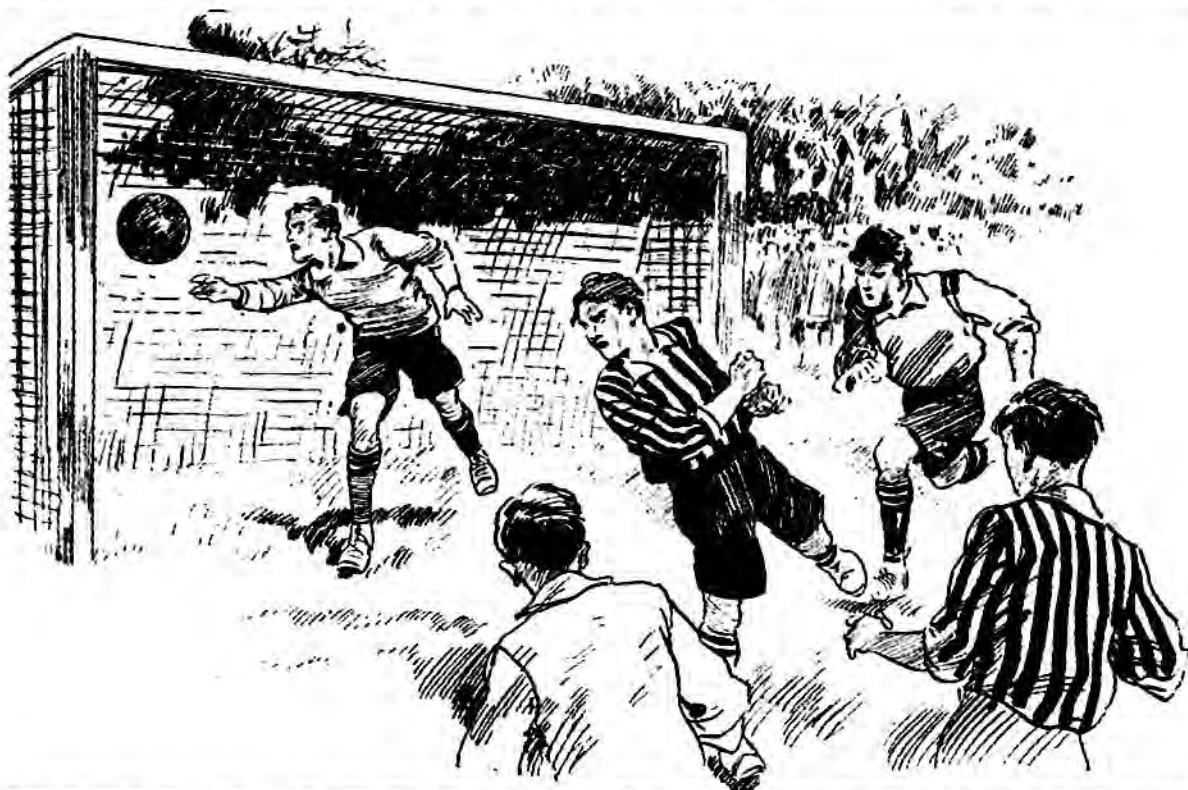
Potter was looking cross. He had been kept hanging about for twenty minutes, which was not what a Fifth Form man had a right to expect when he condescended to referee in a junior match. He was not so cross as the Remove footballers, however. Keen as they were on the Rookwood match, the Removites would have preferred to be dealing with Herbert Vernon-Smith at that moment.

The delay, the irritation, and resentment, and the change in the front line at the last moment all combined to put the Remove men off their form, and Rookwood looked like getting away with it from the start. And Frank Nugent, keen and good man as he was, was nowhere near the Bounder's form. With all his faults, Vernon-Smith was a first-class footballer, and as the captain of the Remove had admitted, he would almost as soon have left himself out as Smithy. There was no help for it, and the Removites could only do their best in adverse circumstances, but at first it was a very poor best.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in fine form. They came through the home defence time and again; and but for the splendid defence of Squiff, in goal, a startling score would have piled up in the first half. But Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, fortunately, was at the top of his form, and he realised how much depended on him, and put all he knew into the defence of his citadel. And what the Australian junior did not know about his work was not worth knowing.

So, in spite of a series of brilliant attacks that looked like materialising every time, the Rookwooders did not score as they anticipated.

Squiff's magnificent defence gave the team time to pull themselves together and settle down to business. Smithy and his trickery were dismissed from their minds, anger and irritation were forgotten, and the Removites thought



Paul Dallas moved like lightning, and before the Rookwood goalkeeper knew what was happening, his head met the ball and shot it back like a pip from an orange. There was a roar. "Goal!" Rawson's fingers had missed the leather by inches, and it was safe in the net. (See Chapter 13.)

only of the game. And, though Nugent was nothing like Smithy's form, he was playing up well, and Wharton made the agreeable discovery that Paul Dallas, who had been detailed to play at outside-right, was even better than he had expected. Before the first half was over it was clear in Wharton's mind that if he had to choose between the two, Dallas was more valuable in the side than Herbert Vernon-Smith. And in the circumstances that was a considerable solace.

The ball went in once for Rookwood in the first half, though it had looked like going in half a dozen times at least. Towards the end of the half the Remove men had pulled themselves together to such an extent that the visitors had a good deal of defending to do, and Squiff, in goal, was given a much-needed rest.

When the whistle went for half time Rookwood were still one up, against nil; but the hopes of the home team had risen. In spite of everything, the game was by no means lost, and they were hoping for a win.

"We're holding them, anyhow," Bob Cherry remarked, as he sucked a lemon. "They had us at the start, but we're holding them all right. Squiff old man, you're a giddy miracle!"

"It's Squiff's game if we pull it off," assented Harry Wharton; "and we've got to pull it off, you fellows. When that rotter Smithy comes in he's got to hear that we beat Rookwood."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We are going to win hands up!"

"Hands down, winhead!" chuckled Bob.

"My esteemed Bob—"

"Never mind, so long as we win,"

said Nugent. "We've got to win, if we burst a boiler, if only on account of that cad Smithy!"

"Still fit, Dallas?" asked the captain of the Remove, with a smile.

"Fit as a fiddle!"

"You're doing jolly well, kid! Hallo! There's the whistle!"

The sides lined up again, and the Remove re-started in a grim and determined mood. There was no doubt in their minds that the desorter hoped and expected to hear that Greyfriars had been beaten; and that was a strong incentive to the Remove footballers to play their hardest.

Jimmy Silver & Co. found that they had to work harder in the second half than in the first.

Squiff was not nearly so busy; but Rawson of Rookwood, in the visitors' goal, was given a great deal of work to do.

But the Rookwooders were all good men, and all keen, and it was a long time before Greyfriars equalised. But they did equalise at last, the ball going in from Harry Wharton's foot.

"A draw, at least!" murmured Bob Cherry, when the sides lined up again, rather breathless after a gruelling struggle.

Rookwood attacked hotly. There were only ten minutes more to go, and Jimmy Silver & Co. played hard and fast, anxious for that one more goal that was needed. Squiff was busy again, and the home citadel had several narrow escapes. But the Australian junior put paid to all the attacks when they reached him, and Johnny Bull cleared to midfield at last. In the Greyfriars crowd many eyes were turned on the clock tower now.

"Three minutes to go!" said Bolsover major. "Looks like a draw."

"Anybody's game?" agreed Wibley.

"Play up, Remove!"

"Good man, Dallas!"

"Shoot!" roared Bolsover major.

"Why don't you shoot? Sho-oo or!"

But the new winger knew better than Bolsover. He was getting through the Rookwood defence, with the ball at his feet, like a knife through cheese. But the Rookwood backs were at him, and Harry Wharton, with a sharp spurt, was ready to take a pass. Dallas centred neatly as he was rushed down, and Wharton ran the ball on and kicked for goal. Paul was up again in a second, in time to see the leather fisted out by Rawson. The new winger seemed to move like lightning. Before the Rookwood goalkeeper knew what was happening Dallas' head met the ball and shot it back like a pip from an orange.

There was a roar from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Goal!"

"Oh, good man! Goal! Goal! Goal!"

Rawson's fingers had missed the leather by inches, and it was safe in the net.

Wharton clapped the new winger on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he gasped.

Dallas panted and rubbed his head, his face flushed and bright. He had been lucky, but there was more good play than luck in the winning goal. A deafening roar rose from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Good man, Dallas!"

"Bravo!"

"Goal! Goal!"

The whistle was almost drowned. The game was over, and Paul Dallas had notched the winning goal in the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 990.

Remove's last big match of the season. Bob Cherry thumped him on the back as the players went off. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh told him gleefully that it was terrific. Never had a football victory given the Remove such satisfaction; and for the time, at least, Paul Dallas was the hero of the Remove.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Facing the Music!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH sauntered into the Rag with his hands in his pockets.

The Bounder had returned to the school, with Skinner & Co., just in time for lock-up. They were well aware that a storm was ready to break on the Bounder, and they had no desire whatever to share it with him. The Bounder did not heed. He heard a buzz of voices in the Rag, and walked into that apartment with perfect coolness.

"I say, you fellows, here's Smithy!" squeaked Billy Bunter, in great excitement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the cad!"

"Here's the rotter!"

And there was a loud hiss.

The Bounder's face twitched for a moment. He had never been popular in his Form, but he had been respected a good deal; and he was keen on popularity. He knew what to expect, after what he had done; but it was a blow to him to realise how utterly and hopelessly he had thrown away his place in the Remove.

But the next moment his face was hard and indifferent. He glanced round sardonically.

"Rookwood gone?" he drawled.

"Long ago," said Tom Redwing.

Redwing's face was deeply troubled. He had returned from Hawksell to find the whole Form discussing Vernon-Smith, with every epithet of scorn and contumely they could think of. And Tom, when he learned what his chum had done, could not find a word to say in his defence.

"You beat them, I hope?"

The Bounder's tone was jeering.

"We beat them!" said Harry Wharton.

Vernon-Smith started. Certainly he had not expected to hear that. It was another blow to his pride. He had not been missed from the team so severely as he had expected.

"You beat Rookwood?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

"Oh, I knew you had a wonderful new recruit, and wouldn't miss me!" said Vernon-Smith, with bitter banter. "I suppose the charity cad covered himself with glory!"

"Dallas kicked the winning goal!" said Nugent.

Vernon-Smith bit his lip till it almost bled.

"Is that the truth?" he almost snarled.

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"It's the truth!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "It was touch-and-go, but Dallas pulled it off."

The Bounder stood silent. His bitter glance travelled to Paul Dallas, who was standing by the fire, not looking at him.

"And now you've come back, Vernon-Smith," said the captain of the Remove in the same quiet tone, "you're expected to explain yourself."

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

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"What is there to explain?" he inquired.

"You let us down at the last minute, after telling us to rely on you."

"I did," assented the Bounder calmly. The Removeites stared at him.

"Oh! You admit?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Why not?"

"More than that—"

the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, there's more, is there?" said the Bounder. "Get it off your chest, by all means. I find you rather amusing."

"Dallas was nobbled by a gang of Highlife cads, and very nearly kept out of the football match. You'd have played if he hadn't turned up?"

"That's so."

"Most of us think that you knew that Dallas was nobbled, and that that's why you got him out of gates before the match."

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"What do you say to that?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Nothing! I don't condescend to answer an accusation from a charity cad!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Dallas hasn't accused you," said Wharton quietly. "Dallas hasn't said a word on the subject that I've heard."

"Oh!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith, quite taken aback.

He had taken it for granted that the accusation had come from Dallas.

"Whether Dallas thinks so or not, I don't even know," continued the captain of the Remove. "He hasn't said so, at all events. We're quite capable of putting two and two together, without the assistance of a new kid. You said that you'd never play in the same team with Dallas, but you were going to play in the Rookwood match. You knew that he was being kept away. You had fixed it up with the Highlife cads."

The Bounder did not answer.

"When he came back, you changed your mind and stood out of the team. It's plain enough that you never expected him back."

Vernon-Smith was still silent.

He had expected to be called upon to answer for deserting the team; but he had not expected this. But he realised that his own conduct had made it clear enough. He was breathing very hard now.

"Do you admit it?"

"I admit nothing. You can think what you like," said Vernon-Smith at last.

"Do you deny it?"

The Bounder set his lips. He would not deny what all the fellows knew to be the truth. That was a sacrifice of his pride that he could never make.

"We want your answer," said the captain of the Remove.

"You can wait! Go and eat cake!"

"That's to be taken as an admission."

"Take it as you like," said the Bounder indifferently. And he turned to walk out of the Rag.

A dozen fellows interposed at once. Johnny Bull slammed the door shut.

"You're not going yet," said Wharton. "This matter has got to be thrashed out, Vernon-Smith. You're known to have played a dirty trick on your team; you're more than suspected of having played a still dirtier trick on another member of the eleven. You can't carry off that kind of thing with a high hand."

The Bounder's eyes glinted at the circle of grim faces. He burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Oh, cut it short!" he exclaimed.

"Is it a ragging? Come to the point,

I know you're all down on me—that cad Dallas has twisted you round his fingers, as he's twisted others. I owe it all to him—and it's a debt I mean to pay!"

Paul Dallas looked round at Vernon-Smith. His face was cold and contemptuous.

"I've said nothing against you, Vernon-Smith," he said quietly. "But I will say now that I believe you put up the Highlife chaps to collar me and keep me in the shed at Courtfield, to miss the match. I believe you put on friendship just to trick me there, and I think you're to the rottenest, falsest outsider I've ever heard of. I've tried to be friends with you; but I wouldn't be friends with you now at any price. You make me sick!"

The Bounder's face quivered. Perhaps, as he read the honest scorn and indignation in Paul's face, it came into his mind that he had misjudged the lad his father had adopted. But, if so, the impression was but for a moment. The Bounder's hatred was too deeply rooted for anything to change it now.

"Is that all?" he snarled. "Have you finished?"

"Rag him!" roared Bolsover major.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands hard.

There was a forward movement of the Removeites. The Bounder looked like a tiger at bay as he stood in the midst of the crowd, savage, defiant, with glinting eyes.

"Say the word, Wharton," said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton hesitated.

It had been agreed in the Remove, without a dissentient voice, that the Bounder should receive the ragging of his life. But now that the moment had come, the captain of the Remove hesitated.

He shook his head.

"Cut out the ragging," he said.

"Rot!" roared Bolsover major. "Rag him!"

"The ragfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Wharton."

"Cut it out," said Harry quietly.

"Every fellow knows what to think of him now. After what he's done, he will never play for Greyfriars again. No decent fellow, I suppose, will ever have much to say to him after this. Let the rotter go. He's not worth touching—he's not fit to touch!"

Rather reluctantly the Remove fellows took their cue from the captain of the Form. They drew back from the Bounder, and he was left alone. Herbert Vernon-Smith drew a panting breath. That contemptuous dismissal was more bitter to him than a ragging could have been.

He looked round him.

There was dislike and contempt in every face he could see. Redwing had turned away his head. For a moment the Bounder stood silent, his face pale; then he strode to the door. A hiss followed him as he left the Rag, and that was all. What he thought, what he felt, the Removeites could not know, but so long as he remained in their sight he carried his head high. Condemned by all who knew him, little better now than an outcast in his Form, the Bounder of Greyfriars was game to the last!

THE END.

(Now look out for the next magnificent yarn in this "request" series, entitled: "Paying The Price!" It is one of the finest stories Frank Richards has written and will help in making our thousandth number an issue never to be forgotten.)

BEATEN ON THE POST! A feeble, aged old lady stands between Black Michael and his greed of gold and position; he would not scruple to put her out of the way, for he is as cruel as he is cunning. Yet, when his sinister plans are all but complete, comes Jack Horner, a youngster of fourteen, to set his rascally scheming awry!

The TRAIL of ADVENTURE!

by
Lionel Day



A Powerful and Dramatic Story of Mystery and Intrigue.

Black Michael Speaks Out!

"**A**LL right, Squall, we'll see what it is," Jack exclaimed.

He walked round the bend. When he had turned the corner he saw that the woods ended some hundred yards away and that beyond this was a small creeper-covered house, standing in a beautiful garden. So much he had discovered, when something in the more immediate foreground, attracted his attention. It was the figure of an old lady—incredibly old she seemed to be—who was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree. Round her shoulders was pinned a thick white shawl, and her bony fingers glittered with rings.

For a moment Jack hesitated, recalling the warning to trespassers that he had seen; and then, something helpless in the old lady's pose, made him pluck up courage and advance towards her.

She sat there breathing very heavily, now and again making ineffectual efforts to reach and pick up something that lay on the grass just beyond her reach. As Jack approached, he saw that this something was an ivory-handled ebony stick. As soon as he had made this discovery, he hurried forward and picked up the stick.

"Is this what you want, ma'am?" he inquired politely.

The old lady sat bolt upright on the stump, staring at him with faded blue eyes.

"You're late, Richard, aren't you?" she said, in an unsteady voice.

Jack could only stare back at her in surprise. Then it dawned upon him that she must have mistaken him for somebody else.

"My name's Jack, ma'am!" he exclaimed; and then, thinking that perhaps explanations were necessary, he added, "I'm the boy aboard the canal boat the Emerald."

"We're moored just at the end of the park and I thought I'd come for a walk through the woods. I hope you don't mind, ma'am!"

The old lady's face underwent a

curious change. The look of recognition passed from her eyes.

"I—I thought you were somebody else," she stammered. "I forget things. I am getting very old."

Jack felt immensely sorry for her. She was obviously a lady, and, judged by the rings on her fingers, immensely rich, and her feebleness struck Jack as pathetic. How much better, he thought, to be young and strong like he was, earning five shillings a week, with old Bill Bowker on the Emerald.

"Do you live here? I mean, is this great place yours, ma'am?"

"It used to be, my dear; but I don't live in the big house any more. That's my house—the Dower House they call it."

She pointed to the creeper-covered house that Jack had already seen.

"I came for a walk, as I often do, and I must have gone further than I really ought to have done. I had to sit down, and I dropped my stick; I

couldn't pick it up again, and without my stick, my dear, I find it very hard to get about. I ought to be getting back, too, because I have a visitor at nine. Do you know what the time is?"

It had been just after eight when Jack had left the Emerald, so he calculated it must be somewhere about half-past now.

"May I help you, ma'am? If you would take my arm—"

She smiled at him—a very sweet, pathetic smile.

"Thank you, my dear, I should be very grateful."

Jack took her hands in his and very gently helped her to her feet. He could feel her trembling as he did so. Then he gave the stick into her hand and tucked her left arm under his right.

"I'll go very slowly," he said gallantly, "and if you're feeling tired, you must sit down again."

Again she gave him that strange, sweeping glance of half-puzzled recognition.

"You're very like somebody I used to know, my dear! But he's gone and can never come back. And I'm all alone. Oh, my dear, pray that you may not live to my age and see all those you love vanish from the earth."

"Aren't you happy then, ma'am?" inquired Jack.

She gave a curious little laugh.

"I'm not going to tell all my sorrows to my gallant squire. You're young, and you're right to be happy, my dear. What a lovely dog that is of yours?"

If the old lady had wished to divert the conversation from the subject of herself, she could have hit upon no better topic. Jack instantly began to tell her about Squall—how he had rescued him as a puppy from the hands of a circus man who was going to drown him—how he was three-fourths wolf and quite the dearest and most wonderful animal that the world had ever known.

The old lady gave his arm an affectionate squeeze.

"He knows how you're praising him," she laughed. "Look at him!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

JACK HORNER, a youngster of fourteen orphaned by the War, flees from Dane's Farm, owing to the brutal treatment of his rascally uncle and guardian.

GEORGE PARKER, Squall, Jack's faithful wolf-dog goes with him. Unknown to himself, Jack is heir to a title and estate, and in consequence of this he is relentlessly pursued by

BLACK MICHAEL, a sinister individual, who will automatically inherit the title and estates should Jack Horner die. Jack reaches the London Docks, where he finds a new home with

BILL BOWKER, skipper of the monkey-boat Emerald, whose timely intervention saves Jack from a horrible fate at the hands of his enemy.

A few days elapse, however, and the Emerald is at her moorings, when Jack spies Black Michael about to enter Weald Manor, a large house which, according to Bill Bowker, has been untenanted for some considerable time. Thinking that here is perhaps the chance of learning something about his mysterious enemy, Jack, with his faithful Squall at his side, is following stealthily in Black Michael's wake, when the wolf-dog draws back cautiously, warning Jack that there is something interesting ahead.

(Not read on.)

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Squall was, indeed, walking along with a very self-conscious air, something almost like a grin wrinkling the corners of his jaws.

"He knows everything I say to him, ma'am!" Jack exclaimed proudly.

They had now reached the edge of the garden; and Jack, opening a small iron gate, led the old lady up a trim, gravelled path. In front of the house there was a veranda on which were placed two or three comfortable chairs.

"If you will take me there, my dear, I'll sit down. I like to be in the open air as much as possible. And then I must make you some return for all your kindness."

Jack replied stoutly that he wanted no return, but when he had seen the old lady comfortably installed in one of the chairs and a maid had appeared, he so far went back on this resolve as to consent to go into the house to partake of some refreshment.

"Mary, you will please see that this young gentleman has some cake and fruit and a glass of the cowslip wine. He is a very gallant, well-behaved lad, and I am greatly indebted to him for his care of me. And, Mary, when that gentleman calls I'll see him here. Run along now, Mary, my dear, and please accept my best thanks for all your kind attentions to an old lady."

Jack was conducted into the most beautiful room he had ever seen in his life. It was bigger even than the great kitchen at Dane's Farm and it was furnished with a luxury he had never thought possible. There were great silver bowls on the tables filled with flowers and Jack's feet sank in the deep pile of the carpets; wonderful pictures adorned the walls. It seemed to him amazing that Mary, the maid, could walk about such a place with an air of complete unconcern.

"You're a very nice-looking boy," Mary exclaimed, bending over Jack and kissing the back of his neck, "and her ladyship's proper pleased with you. I suppose that great dog of yours won't bite me?"

"He would never bite anybody so kind," exclaimed Jack flushing.

Mary laughed.

"My! But don't you know how to say the proper things," she said. "I'll give you another kiss for that afterwards; but you must have your cake and fruit and your glass of wine first."

Jack presently found himself all alone in the great room with a slice of the most delicious cake he had ever eaten in his life in front of him, and some rich dark grapes and some magnificent peaches. He shared some of the cake with Squall, who had no interest in the fruit.

It was altogether such a delightful experience that he was in no hurry to bring it to an end. He was just thinking what a story he would have to tell Mr. and Mrs. Bowker when he got back to the cabin of the Emerald, when he heard footsteps on the gravel outside, and then a man's voice on the veranda. Instantly, he was on his feet, his heart beating wildly. The next moment he was just in time to grab Squall by the collar.

"Down Squall!" he whispered. "Down!"

The wolf-dog, too, had recognised that voice. It was Black Michael's.

"Well, your ladyship, here I am as you requested. I hope I find you in a more reasonable mood than when we met last."

Jack listened with all his ears. The old lady was speaking now:

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"If it is unreasonable for me to continue opposing your inheritance to the title and the property, then I'm afraid you'll find me in the same mood as you did last time. I am still determined to look after the interests of my son, Richard."

Black Michael gave an odd laugh.

"You were so concerned for the interests of your son, Richard, that you turned him out of his home and never made any attempt to see him until it was too late. He has been dead these ten years now and he has left no children behind him."

"I won't believe that! And it isn't true that I turned Richard out of the house. It was his father, God forgive him, and he was punished by the death of our other son, John! As long as I've power to prevent it, I'll never let you step into the title and the property, until I know for certain that poor Richard left no one behind him."

The old lady spoke with curious energy. Again Jack heard Black Michael laugh.

"My dear madam, you speak as if I were concerned to rob anyone of their rights? I have been at some pains to investigate the career of your son Richard. He married a girl of the class among whom he worked in 1911. A son was born in 1912. The father died in 1916—the mother a few months later. The boy, too, is dead."

"What proof have you of that? I won't believe it!"

"The proof lies in the fact that you have advertised and made inquiries and no one has produced the boy. Does your ladyship really imagine that, with so much at stake, someone would not come forward and produce the child?"

Jack heard that murmur of voices from the veranda, but without comprehending a word of what was said. His heart was pounding painfully against his ribs. Black Michael was there, and it was dangerous. He must get away, or he would be discovered. If he went out of the door by which he had entered the house he must pass the veranda and be seen. He must find some other exit.

Filled with a kind of panic, he walked cautiously to the door of the dining-room, and, opening it, passed into the hall beyond. Through the open front door Black Michael's voice was clearer now, and the sound of it spurred him to flight. He crept down the hall, opened at random a green baize door, darted down a passage beyond, and found himself presently in a yard. In another moment he had slipped through a gate, forced his way through a shrubbery, and had gained the grass road that led through the woods.

It was not until he had reached the bend that that feeling of panic left him. Seating himself on the trunk, where he had met the old lady, he mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

He was behaving very absurdly, he told himself. He had left the Emerald that evening with the avowed intention of stalking Black Michael and discovering, if he could, the sinister secret which had inspired all those outrageous attempts upon his life and liberty. And here he had had a golden opportunity and missed it.

He tried to recall something of that conversation he had overheard, but his mind was in such a jumble that he could remember nothing except the old lady's indignation and the hard, sneering sounds of Black Michael's voice. He had behaved like a fool.

It had always been Jack's habit from his earliest days to force himself to do anything he funk—~~to~~ to walk across the

mountains in the dark when he was frightened—to stand up to his Uncle Parker about his education when he knew he was risking a thrashing for his daring. And now that habit held. As he had certainly funk~~ed~~ remaining in Black Michael's neighbourhood while he was talking to the kindly old lady, so he must now, as a matter of honour, not return to the Emerald till he had carried out his original plan.

Every moment it was growing darker now. In the shadow of the trees it was beginning to be difficult to distinguish anything even a few yards away, and in the stillness of the night the occasional hooting of an owl made the place very eerie. It almost seemed as if the great trees were gathering around Jack to listen to his thoughts. He clenched his fists tightly. He mustn't funk.

He rose, and looked back towards the Dower House.

From where he stood he could keep observation on anyone leaving the garden. If Black Michael left by the same way he had come he could not fail to see him. And then the rather unpleasant reflection occurred to Jack that if he remained where he was Black Michael could not fail to see him.

Motioning to Squall, Jack slipped behind the nearest tree, and began to work his way slowly and cautiously through the woods. It would be best, he decided, to lie concealed on the edge of the park. By that means he could keep observation on Black Michael if he returned from the Dower House by the same route as he had come.

Treachery!

HE had nearly reached the confines of the wood when he saw Squall, who was stalking a few feet ahead of him, suddenly halt and bristle. Jack leaned forward swiftly, and caught him by the collar. What was the dog pointing at? He peered into the obscurity beyond, crouching down behind a thick laurel-bush. There was something there. He felt his skin prickle up, and the hair on his head show a tendency to stand erect. Dimly against the background of the sky he discerned what looked like a spectre.

In that light it seemed dead white, and it was standing perfectly motionless. As Jack stared at it with horror-stricken eyes, he saw it move its head. And then his heart gave a leap as two almond eyes and a blank, expressionless face were turned in his direction. It was the Chinaman, Brilliant Sing, whom he had last seen in that den of infamy in Limehouse.

Before the boy's mind there rose up again a vision of that tumbledown building on the banks of the Thames—the chute—the twisted passages—the eerie room with the grotesque idol standing in the centre—and the impassive figure of Brilliant Sing watching at the spy-hole. The man's presence there clearly could forebode no good. Something was afoot—something that he must discover.

But for the moment all thought of his future actions was swamped in very panic at the thought that Brilliant Sing had seen him. He lay quite still, holding on to Squall's collar, every muscle rigid. Those almond eyes seemed to be staring direct at his hiding-place, and then the head was turned, and he knew that he had not been discovered.

Jack lay full length on the ground, taking every advantage possible of the cover that the laurel bushes might afford him. Then ten minutes—a quarter of an hour went by, and deeper and deeper grew the darkness, until the silk-clad



Jack's heart gave a leap as two almond eyes and a blank expressionless face were turned in his direction. It was the Chinaman, Brilliant Sing, whom he had last seen in Limehouse. "Quiet, Squall!" Jack whispered, holding the dog firmly by its collar. (See page 24.)

figure of Brilliant Sing became like a great blur against the night sky.

How long would he have to lie there, Jack wondered. Every nerve and muscle of his body seemed to be aching from the rigidity in which he held himself. Then he heard the crackle of a twig and footsteps cautiously passing among the trees.

"You there, Brilliant Sing?"

Black Michael's whispered voice broke the silence of the night.

Jack saw Brilliant Sing bow from the hips, making a gesture with his hands.

"Me told to wait here. Me wait!"

"It's just as well you did, or you know what would have happened to you, don't you, you yellow-skinned Chink?" Brilliant Sing bowed again impassively.

"What the master says, me do."

"Because you know what would happen to you if you didn't!" Black Michael retorted sneeringly. "Remember, Brilliant Sing, there's several little affairs taken place at your Limehouse den which the police would be very glad to hear about. Quite apart from the dope business—for which you might get five years—there's the men who have gone into your place and have never come out again, whose bodies have been found awash on the tide. Remember, I've only got to speak the word, and you'll never be able to return to China and be buried with your ancestors."

"Me know, master," the Chinaman replied submissively. "Me do whatever you tell me to do."

"That being clearly understood, we'll get down to business. I've just been to see her ladyship. She still refuses to withdraw her opposition to my inheritance of the estates and the title. While she holds out, the only chance of my establishing my claim is through the law courts, and for reasons which you can probably guess, I have no desire to

seek that publicity. But her ladyship is very old, Brilliant Sing, so old that if she were to join her ancestors to-night, no one would be at all surprised—especially if there were no marks."

Jack felt a cold thrill of horror pass through his veins. This was murder that Black Michael was plotting.

"Me understand, master. Me hold my finger here—one, two, three—and she go quick. No palaver afterwards, no talky talky."

There was silence for a moment, as if Black Michael were digesting this information. Then he spoke again, and there was a strain of uneasiness in his voice.

"I know nothing about that, Brilliant Sing. I want to know nothing. But you must remember that a Chink like you will be a regular landmark in a place like this."

"No one sees me. Me do whatever has to be done one time, and then go quick back in motor-car."

"Where did you leave the car? Is Curly driving?"

"Yes; Curly waiting at the end of a lane, over there. He wait very much, till I come, and then he drive quick!"

Now, Jack could faintly discern Black Michael's face as he drew closer to the Chinaman.

"Listen to me, Brilliant Sing. I know nothing about your Oriental methods. I have nothing to do with this affair. Her ladyship is very fond of the fresh air. She hates to sit in the house. She likes to recline on the veranda in the darkness until it is time to go to bed."

The Chinaman nodded comprehendingly.

"The servants' quarters are at the back of the house, and they never come unless they are summoned. Her ladyship objects to the lights being turned on until she is ready for bed."

"She sleepy well to-night," the Chinaman replied.

"I hope her ladyship will sleep well. I must be going now, Brilliant Sing. There will be no need for you to report to me, you understand. I want no message. I shall know to-morrow whether or not you are really anxious to return to your ancestors in China."

The Chinaman bowed low; there was a crackling of twigs, followed by the sound of Black Michael's footsteps crossing the grass. Then stillness descended upon the scene again. Jack Horner lay there, biting his lip, a very horror in his heart, his eyes fixed upon the figure of Brilliant Sing. For a time that seemed to the boy an eternity the Oriental stood there, like one of his native images, immovable, almost as if he had taken root. Then abruptly his tall, erect figure seemed to relax. He bent down, and, like some shadow, disappeared among the trees.

So skilfully did he walk that no noise marked his passage. It was only by turning cautiously that Jack was just in time to see the Chinaman flit, like some ghostly phantom, among the trees. He was going to put into execution the murderous plot that he had hatched with Black Michael.

Now, for the first time, Jack regretted that he had not taken Bill Bowker into his confidence. There would have been something very comforting in the presence of the big, burly skipper of the Emerald. As it was he was all alone—a mere boy of fourteen—and depending upon him was the life of the kindly old lady whose hospitality he had enjoyed. Arrayed against him was a man tremendously powerful, and swayed by no sense of pity or kindness—a Chinese fiend, implacable, merciless, driven on by the

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strange power that Black Michael exercised over him.

Jack found himself shivering, as if with the cold. He thought with passionate longing of the cosy cabin on board the Emerald, where Mrs. Bowker would be at that very moment making the evening brew of cocoa. With all his heart he wished he was there. It seemed to him that he had undertaken a task beyond his strength. But he mustn't turn back. At all costs he must try and save that kindly old lady from the clutches of Brilliant Sing.

But how was he to do it? He might warn the servants; but to do that he must gain the house and cross the very path that Brilliant Sing was following. The Chinaman would see him, and there would be only one victim the more. Access to the house was obviously impossible. He might make a detour through the park and find the police, but he abandoned that plan almost as soon as he had thought of it, remembering that he knew nothing about the neighbourhood, and that Brilliant Sing would in all probability have carried out his crime before the authorities had been warned.

What was he to do, then? As he frantically debated that question Jack felt something warm and rough touch his cheek. It was Squall licking his face, as if to call attention to the fact that he was there, and more than anxious to do what he could to help his master. Jack choked back the little sob of relief that rose in his throat. Of course, there was Squall, his friend, who could be counted upon to deal with Brilliant Sing, provided the other had no time to use the long, glittering knife that Jack knew, from his adventure in the opium den, the Chinaman kept concealed in his silken robe.

Suddenly it dawned upon Jack exactly what tactics he must pursue. Squall must not be launched to attack Brilliant Sing until the very last moment, when the Chinaman would be so occupied in the carrying out of his crime that he would not even suspect the presence of the dog. When the alarm was given, the Chinaman's first thought would be to make good his escape to where Curly was waiting with the car. To be caught would be fatal alike to him and to his employer. He would think of nothing else but of getting away. Jack decided.

But the first thing was to stalk the Chinaman, to keep him under observation, to wait for the exact moment to put his plan into execution. He rose cautiously, and slipped from tree to tree, stopping at each to crouch down and peer from behind the trunk into the obscurity beyond. But it was not until he reached the edge of the grassy track that he caught sight of Sing.

He was wondering what could have become of the Chinaman—was, indeed, torturing himself with the thought that perhaps he was being too cautious, and had waited too long—when he saw Brilliant Sing slip like a shadow across the track and vanish almost instantly in the darkness of the hedge that surrounded the garden. Jack lay still and watched that spot where the Chinaman had disappeared until his eyes ached. A quarter of an hour went by, and then his patience was rewarded.

Squall to the Rescue!

SOMETHING was moving along the hedge—moving inch by inch, making no sound. Jack followed that dim outline with his eyes. Now it had gained the little iron gate that gave admittance to the garden. For the fraction of a second a portion of the Chinaman's head was visible against the faint bars of light that filtered through the open ironwork of the gate. Then it disappeared.

Was the man going to open the gate and risk being seen entering the garden, Jack wondered.

A moment later, and the youngster had an answer to that question. He saw the gate swing back, without sound, and without any visible agency. It stood open now. He watched with all his eyes. It seemed to him that some monstrous snake was worming its way through that open gate and proceeding at an incredible speed. The next second it had disappeared. Brilliant Sing was in the garden of the Dower House, on the veranda of which sat the kindly old lady, dreaming her sad dreams in the darkness.

Jack Horner rose to his feet. There was no need for further concealment, as long as he was in the woods. The thick hedge that fringed the garden hid him from view. He ran at the top of his speed up the grassy track. Only when he neared the gate did he halt, and, flinging himself on his hands and knees, begin to crawl to the gate through which Brilliant Sing had disappeared. With Squall imitating his every movement Jack wormed his way along the ground until he could look into the garden.

The sight that he saw was more than his already strained nerves could stand. There, on the veranda, staring sadly into the darkness, was the old lady, with her wrinkled, pathetic face; and there, creeping along the hedgeside, slitting from one flower-bed to another, like some monstrous serpent, was Brilliant Sing.

It was clear to Jack the course the Chinaman intended to follow. Beyond the flower-beds there were some laurel-bushes which can in a line to the end of the veranda. In their shadow, the Chinaman would be able to gain the veranda, and, climbing over the balustrade, approach the old lady from behind. Even as Jack watched him,

Brilliant Sing disappeared into the obscurity of the laurel-bushes.

For a moment Jack was tempted to enter the garden, but his caution asserted itself in time. The Chinaman would be keeping observation, not only on the old lady, but on the garden, and if he were seen, Jack would certainly meet his own end. He lay, therefore, on the path at the gate, holding Squall back. Once the Chinaman entered the veranda, Jack could watch him without being seen.

The silence of night descended upon the scene. Nothing moved. Tranquility seemed to reign supreme. Then Jack heard a faint sigh. The old lady had moved in her chair, and, reaching out a hand, touched the electric bell that hung by a wire from the roof of the veranda. Light footsteps came from the house, and Mary appeared.

"Did your ladyship ring?" she inquired.

"Yes, Mary. You might bring me a glass of water, will you, please?"

Mary vanished, to reappear again with the glass of water on a salver.

"Thank you," the old lady remarked. "And, Mary, you might come and call me again in half an hour, will you? The night is so pleasant, I shall sit here a little longer."

"Very well, my lady."

Brilliant Sing must have overheard that conversation, Jack reflected. In all innocence, the old lady had given her lurking enemy the very information he wanted. He had half an hour in which to accomplish his fell purpose and escape. If he acted at once he would be miles on his road back to London before Mary returned and his crime was discovered. Jack felt every nerve of his body grow tense as he realised that the great moment was approaching.

The old lady drank some of the water, and then placed the tumbler on the table by her side again. Again that pathetic sigh escaped from her lips, as if the night awoke in her mind nothing but the unhappiest memories. Of what sad past was she thinking, Jack wondered. She was so lonely. She was too old, as she had told him; she had outlived all those who had been dear to her—

Jack abandoned these reflections abruptly. With a little catch of his throat, he saw at last what he had been waiting to see. At the far end of the veranda that grey shadow had appeared. Brilliant Sing, his body bent, his hands stretched out, his pigtail making a dark line upon his bowed back, was creeping along the edge of the house. Jack estimated the distance from the gate to the veranda. He must give Squall just time to get there and no more. He wormed his way a few feet into the garden, holding the wolf-dog by the collar.

"Look, Squall—look!" he whispered. "You've got to pull him down and hold him!"

There was no need to tell Squall more. That he, too, had seen that grey, evil shadow slipping along the veranda was proved by the sudden stiffening of the animal's stretched body and his violent straining at his collar. Nearer and nearer crept Brilliant Sing to the chair on which the old lady sat, unconscious of the terrible danger that threatened her. Now, when he was only three yards away, his movements became even more cautious. He crouched his body

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still further. He seemed to be deciding exactly where and how he should place that fatal clasp upon his victim's throat. Now he was moving again, his hands held out. He was right behind the chair—

Without a word Jack released his hold of Squall's collar, and in a flash the great wolf-dog was speeding noiselessly across the garden. Jack had gauged with absolute accuracy the exact moment at which to release that living missile. Even as Brilliant Sing's hands were stretched out to take the death-clasp upon the old lady's throat the wolf-dog, as noiseless as a shot from an airgun, rushed across the garden, leapt the balustrade of the veranda, and, falling with his whole weight upon the Chinaman, brought him to the ground.

Jack, who had watched the scene with his two fingers between his lips ready to give the signal, whistled shrilly. He was determined to give Brilliant Sing no time in which to use that knife which he knew he kept hidden among his silken robes. At that sound Squall sprang back from his victim, wheeled about on his hind legs, and, clearing the balustrade, was once more streaking across the garden to his master's side.

Jack felt an almost uncontrollable desire to cheer. His plan had succeeded completely. The old lady, staggered by the noise and confusion behind her, had risen and was ringing the electric

bell. Brilliant Sing, who had had no time to use his knife on Squall, now realised that his murderous attack had failed, and thought only of flight

Jack saw him spring to his feet, and, with his body crouched so low that his forehead seemed hardly more than two feet from the ground, slip noiselessly, along the side of the house. Before his intended victim could turn to see what was the cause of the confusion that had so startled her—before the servants summoned by that frantic ringing of the bell raced to the spot—the Chinaman had been swallowed up in the shadow of the laurel-bushes.

Jack lay with Squall by his side, a feeling of triumph in his heart. He had foiled Black Michael's murderous plot; he had saved that kindly old lady from a terrible death. He felt very much of a hero. He forgot all the panic-stricken terrors that had possessed him. He felt at that moment that he was a match for Black Michael, Brilliant Sing, and the rest of the gang. He rose erect.

And as he did so he released his hold of Squall's collar. The dog sprang to his feet, and gave a little gasping whimper. Jack, turning to see what was the matter, saw, to his amazement, that the great wolf-dog seemed to be hanging suspended between heaven and earth.

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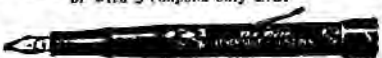
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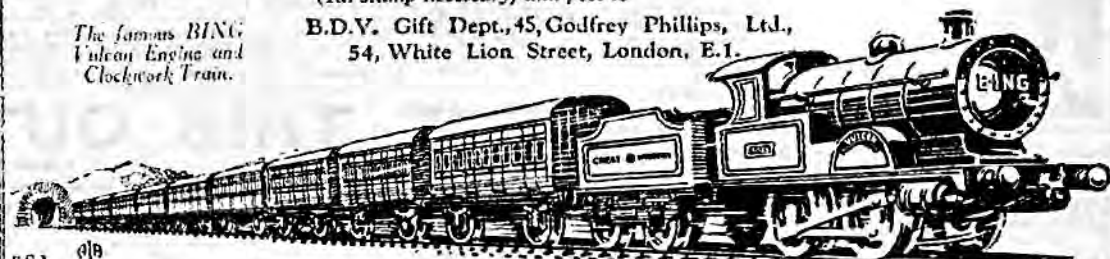
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"You sent for me, sir?"

Frank Fearless, the scapegrace of St. Sam's, marched boldly into the Head's study. His trousers had been harricaded with a stout piece of cardboard, in anticipation of a flogging.

The Head swung round in his revolving chair. His brow was like thunder, and lightning seemed to flash from his eyes as they glittered savagely at Frank Fearless.

"Miserable boy!" rumbled the Head. "Your conscience must be pricking you in about a dozen places!"

"It isn't, sir," said Frank cheerily. "Then my birch-rod will shortly do no!" growled the Head. "It is my intention to flog you with the utmost severity; and then—unless certain conditions are agreed upon by your father—you shall be given the Order of the Boot, or, as the vulgar would say, the sack!"

Frank Fearless turned pale. He was not much troubled by the thought of a flogging. The stout piece of cardboard, severely wedged into his trousers, would stand him in good stead. But the possibility that he might be sacked from the school came as a cold dowel to him. For Frank was very happy at St. Sam's. He had clumped up with Jack Jolly & Co., the heroes of the Fourth; and he had struck up a warm friendship with Molly Birchmell, the Head's charming daughter. He had got into mischief a good deal, and been given lots of impôts; but, on the whole, the lines had fallen unto him in pleasant places.

"Ha!" said the Head. "You tremble and turn pale, I perceive! My words have touched you on the raw."

"I can face a flogging, sir," said Frank Fearless. "I'm prepared to take as many strokes of the birch as you care to hand out—either all at once, or on the installment system. But don't sack me, sir—anything but that! After all, what have I done to warrant the sack?"

"What have you done?" gasped the Head. "Why, a complete catalog of your offences would take weeks to compile! You have behaved abominably! You have ridden raffish through the school regulations, and every law and canon of decent conduct! Do you want me to remind you of your transgressions, Fearless?"

The junior sighed.

"To kick off with," said the Head, "there was the occasion when you first came to St. Sam's. I was compelled by



Frank Fearless suffered himself to be led away to the punishment-room by two prefects.

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sorkinances to travel in your car—or rather, in the trailer at the back. You egged the speed limit in a most reckless manner, with the result that I was chucked out, and left for dead, as it were. When you discovered that you had—or mislaid your passenger, you did not even have the grace to come back and pick me up."

"Gilly!" murmured Frank Fearless, bowing his head.

"I was about to flog you for that offence," the Head went on, "when my daughter Molly rushed in, and saved you from the vilest of my wrath. The next morning, I discovered that you had turned all your pettiness in my garden—your goat, your rabbits, and your white mice. They gobbled up all my greenstuff, which I had been in the habit of making into salads and selling to the masters, as a sort of side-line to my duties as headmaster."

"Gilly!" murmured Frank Fearless again. "For that outrage," said the Head, "I was about to wallop you black and blue, when my daughter, who was consigned in the nibbler in this study, again came to your rescue. Just before

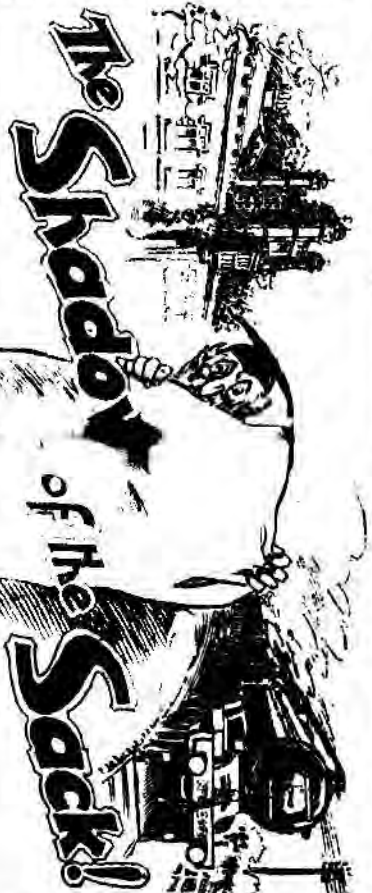


Dr. Birchmell relieved his feelings by hurling a paper-weight at Mr. Liochman and—

you had saved her from the clutches of a gang of gipsies, she felt foolishly sorry-mental about you, and looked upon you as her hero. She made me promise not to flog you; and, being under her thumb to a certain extent, I had to give her the required undertaking."

Frank Fearless gave a fluttering sigh. He was thinking of Miss Molly now, and of the big debt of gratitude he owed to the Head's daughter.

"And now," to crown everything," said the Head, "you have thrown the school into a state of uproar, by raising a fire alarm when there was no fire! It appears that your pet parrot had escaped, and taken refuge on the top of the tower; and as there were no ladders available, you had the ordinariness to call out the fire brigade, and get them to recover your parrot."



"Gilly again!" said Frank Fearless, with a sigh. "This is your growing enormity!" he said. "In other words, now you've been and gone and done it! I was held responsible for the fire brigade being called on a frivolous errand, and I was fined five pounds!"

Frank Fearless looked sepiated. "I'm sorry to hear that, sir," he said. "But still, a five-pound fine to a man in your position."

"Nothing!" roared the Head. "It was all the money I had in the world! It represented my entire life savings. Parting with that five was like having all my teeth extracted at the same time! I am now going to write to your father, Fearless, asking him to make good the money. If he does so, a severe flogging will be your lot. But should he refuse to refund the five, then you will be sacked from St. Sam's forthwith and instant! Is that clear?"

"And now," said the head, selecting his crooked-looking birchrod, "are there any more crimes you have committed of which I have no recollection? Speak up, Fearless! Confession is good for the soul."

"But very bad for the body, sir!" said Frank, blinking at the Head's birch. "I—Id rather keep mum about my misdeeds, if you don't mind."

"Very well!" said the Head grimly. He walked to the door and locked it. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, he started to pile up furniture against it, until he had formed a formidable barricade. "Now, you best," he cried, spinning round upon the junior, "you shall not escape this time! My daughter may have your acquiescence for mercy, but she will not be able to raise a finger to help you. Get across that chair!"

Frank Fearless obeyed. The Head moistened the palms of his hands with his tongue, and then rubbed them briskly together. Then he took a firm grasp of the birch, and swung it back over his shoulder, and brought it down with terrific vim.

The dust rose in a cloud from Frank Fearless' trousers, but he was not conscious of any pain, for the stout piece of cardboard was his shield and buckler. In order to ally suspicion, however, he thought he had better exaggerate his lungs.

"Go, wretched boy! I will write to your father for that five pounds, and upon his answer your fate depends. Unless he forks up by return of post you will be sacked from the school! Now buzz off!"

Frank Fearless had not suffered so much as a twinge, but the cardboard in his trousers had been ripped into shreds. Still, he felt the Head should suspect, he moaned and groaned in a most harrowing way, and crawled out of the study on all fours, like a whipped cur.

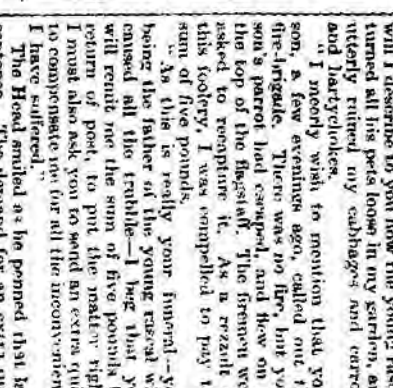
Out in the corridor Miss Molly stretched out her hands to assist him, with a world of sympathy in her eyes.

"My hero! My poor, battered hero!" she cried. And then Frank Fearless gave her a sly wink, and she understood. She accompanied Frank into the quad, and when they were out of sight of the Head's study they parted hastily.

But they soon became serious again when Frank Fearless told Molly of the Head's intentions.

"If my father dares pay the Head that five," said Frank, "it will be the sack—with and sure!"

"Oh, Frank!" Molly's voice trembled, and her face was full of pity.



"I'll learn you, you young rascal!" —whack! "I'll make up for lost time!" —whack! "My daughter begged you out on two occasions, but it is beyond her power to—whack, whack, whack—help you now. During this enjoyable ten minutes—enjoyable to myself, at all events—I hope you will ponder the old saying that the way of the transgressor is—whack—hard and painful!" Whack, whack, whack! "Few! This is warm work!"

The Head paused, and took a long pull of lime-juice from the bottle on the mantelpiece. Then he returned to the hammer.

By this time the yells of Frank Fearless had been heard far and near. They brought several scared juniors scurrying to the post. They also brought Molly Birchmell.

Molly rapped on the door of her father's study.

"Pop!" she cried, in startled tones. "Pop yourself, my dear!" panted the Head. "I'm busy!"

"I believe you are flogging my hero!" cried Molly indignantly.

"Right on the wricket, Molly!" chuckled the Head. "Even heroes are subject to discipline, my dear, like everyone else. A little whacking now and then, is essential to the character, isn't it?"

Molly Birchmell tiptoed at the handle of the door, but it refused to budge.

"Stop, Pop!" she cried, her voice strangled with sobs, as another heart-rending yell rang out from Frank Fearless. "I decide to stop until I feel whacked myself!" was the Head's reply.

Molly hurried her slender body upon the door.

"Oh, you are great, Pop! I've a great mind to report this to the S.P.C.A.!"

The Head halted.

Crooky to this particular sort of animal, my dear, is more than justified!" said. "I will just give him another luzzon, for I am somewhat spent of strength."

The flogging was over at last, and the Head retrieved the quarry from the door—or at least, he thought he had.

Frank Fearless.

whole of the letter would have to be nice and polite, or the Head would spoil his chance of getting the five out of Mr. Fearless.

"It grieves me beyond measure," wrote on the letter, "to say that your son is a very naughty boy. Not wishing to hurt your feelings, I will refrain from telling you, in this letter, exactly what I think about him; but in all my seventy-five years' experience as a Headmaster I have never met a more reckless young rascal, a more hardened young rascal, or a boy with such marked criminal tendencies."

That was putting it very mildly, the Head reflected. His private opinion of Frank Fearless went much farther than that, and would certainly have given Mr. Fearless a heart-attack, had it been written down. But the Head was careful to keep his tongue in his cheek, as it were.

"I will not weary you with a recital of your son's long chapter of misdeeds since he came to my school," the letter continued. "I will not tell you how he forced me to travel in his trailer, and wilfully upset me, leaving me sprawling in the roadway, at the mercy of my rescuers who happened to come along. Nor will I describe to you how the young rascal turned all his pettiness in my garden, and utterly ruined my cabbage and carrots and hazylovers."

"I merely wish to mention that your son, a few evenings ago, called out the fire-frigate. There was no fire, but your son's parrot had escaped, and flew on to the top of the flagstaff. The firemen were asked to recapture it. As a result of this foolery, I was compelled to pay the sum of five pounds."

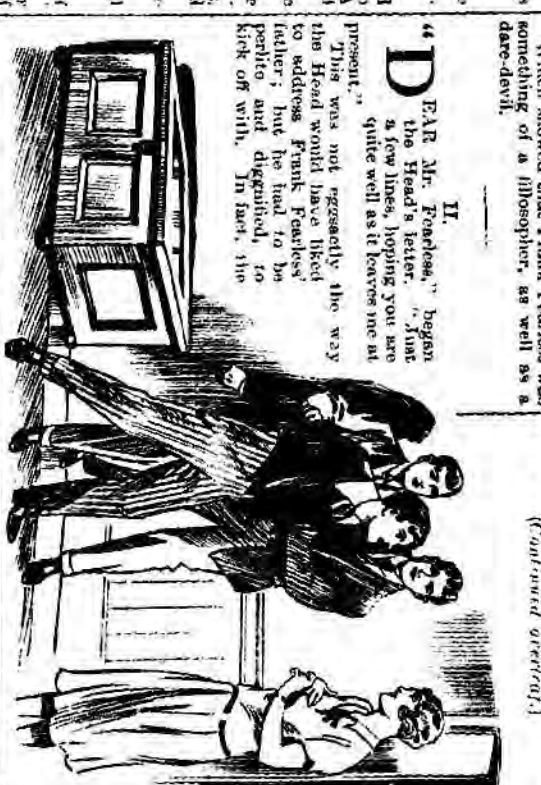
As this is really your funeral—you being the father of the young rascal who caused all the trouble—be that that you will return me the sum of five pounds by return of post, to put the matter right. I must also ask you to send an extra quid, to compensate me for all the inconvenience I have suffered."

The Head smiled as he penned that last sentence. The demand for an extra quid was quite a happy inspiration.

The letter ended just as formally as it began.

"Now I must close with love to all—Yours truly, Alf Birchmell."

The Head was about to fold and seal the letter, when he suddenly remembered that he was out of stamps. And if he waited until he was in a position to buy (continued overleaf)



"Why, Frank!" cried Molly Birchmell. "What has happened?" "I'm sacked, Molly!" replied Frank Fearless bitterly. "Kicked out—sacked—expelled—fined!"

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