

THE BIG NOISE IN BOYS' FICTION: OUR GRAND SCHOOL YARNS!

No. 1,012. Vol. XXXII.

Week Ending July 9th, 1927.

The Magnet

LIBRARY

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EVERY MONDAY.



BOWLING OUT THE EAVESDROPPER!

A favourite habit of Billy Bunter's is to listen at keyholes — but sometimes he overdoes it! — (See the grand school story in this issue.)



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.

HE'S LEFT-HANDED!

THIS week's mail includes a letter from "Worried," of Blackpool, who finds life "rather a misery" because he's left-handed. Well, well! Really, it is surprising how some sensitive people will take small, insignificant things to heart and build upon them until they assume gigantic proportions. Now, what's wrong if a fellow is left-handed, anyway? Nothing at all, of course. Yet this old MAGNET chum is frightfully upset about it. If he takes my advice he'll stop worrying his napper at once about such a trivial matter. I expect he is just as capable at work and play as the fellow who is right-handed. Besides—this may cheer him up—it is said that a left-handed chap is "born lucky." If that's the case "Worried," of Blackpool, ought to feel mighty pleased with himself.

SEASIDE FREE GIFTS!

Some of you chaps will remember that last year the MAGNET'S special representatives toured the seaside resorts on the look-out for MAGNET readers. Once a representative spotted a MAGNET chum he presented him with a packet of delicious sherbet. The scheme was a great success. Hundreds of readers wrote in to me from the seaside and said that they had received their free gift. Now this year the special representatives will be giving away FREE packets of Wrigley's Spearmint Chewing Gum! To bag one

of these gifts all you have to do is to display your copy of the MAGNET prominently, when you're on the beach, promenade, or the pier, and if our special representative is looking in your direction you'll be sure of receiving that chewing gum. Don't forget, chums.

AN OLD QUERY!

Magnetites who have already seen references in the Chat to Tom Redwing will excuse me if, once again, I assure those of my chums who have written in recently on the subject of Tom Redwing's departure from Greyfriars that it is a hundred to one on chance that Mr. Frank Richards will "bring him back again." I have posted on to Mr. Richards hundreds of letters dealing with this question, and we all know that he is the man to oblige us, especially when we want a thing a lot. So you Redwingites—pardon the term—can rest assured that, sooner or later, Tom will be in his old place at the school none the worse for his brief holiday.

Next Monday's Programme:

"SMITHY'S WAY!"

By Frank Richards.

This is another ripping story dealing with the Bounder of Greyfriars, which gives us an inside peep, as it were, at his complex character. It's surprising how many readers write up and say that although some of the Bounder's actions have been caddish in the extreme, they can't help liking him. Neither can I, for there's a heap of strength and good in old Smithy. Don't miss next week's grand yarn, chums.

"THE CURSE OF LHASA!"

Look out for another long instalment of this amazing serial in next week's issue. It's really A 1.

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

This concludes the special "pirate" series of shockers from our old friend Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form. It's a scream from beginning to end. Chin, chin, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

AN OLD-TIME ROMANCE THAT IS THRILLING THE WORLD!



Captain Jack-Highwayman!



A Tale of the Road in the days of George I., by MORTON PIKE, in the

POPULAR
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**ON SALE
TUESDAY.**

every week of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars in France; Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood in Canada; Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and Sexton Blake, Detective.

A DOG WITH A BAD NAME! Now that the Bounder has forsaken the straight and narrow path, weak-natured fellows like Hazeldene of the Remove, seen in his company, are reckoned to have been led astray by the Bounder's bad example. But the Bounder is not all bad, as this story proves.

The Bounder's Good Turn!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Bounder of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Waiting for Hazel!

"READY!" bawled Bob Cherry. The door of Study No. 2 in the Greyfriars Remove flew open with a crash. Bob Cherry's cheery, ruddy face looked in, and his powerful voice awoke every echo in the Remove passage.

"Oh! You ass!" There was one fellow in the study, which belonged to Tom Brown and Hazeldene. It was Tom Brown who was there, and he was seated at the table, with a block of impot paper before him and a pen in his hand. Tom Brown had lines to do that sunny afternoon, and he was grinding through them at a great rate, when the door burst open, and he jumped. Bob Cherry's emphatic entrance was enough to make any fellow jump.

A shower of blots scattered from Tom Brown's pen and sprinkled the sheet he had nearly covered with lines from "Virgil."

"You ass!" roared Tom Brown. "Look what you've done!"

Bob Cherry looked.

"Sorry, old bean!"

"You footling chump! That's a page to write over again!" growled Tom Brown. "What the thump do you want?"

"I've looked in for Hazel! Isn't he here?"

"Can't you see he's not here, fat-head?"

"Well, I can, now I look," said Bob cheerily. "Where is he?"

"How should I know, ass? Blow Hazel, and blow you!"

Tom Brown seemed rather cross. Perhaps that was natural in a fellow who had lines to write out on a half-holiday, and now had a good number of them to write a second time.

"We're waiting for him," said Bob.

"Wait somewhere else, then, for goodness' sake!" grunted Tom Brown. "I think you'd better write that page over for me, as you've mucked it up. Quelch mayn't notice it among the others."

"Might get you into a row if he did, though, old scout."

"I'll chance that!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I won't risk getting you into a row, old bean. I'm too fond of you."

"Fathead!"

"Besides, I'm in a hurry. We're going over to Cliff House—"

"Go, then, and don't lose any more time!"

"But we're waiting for Hazel," said Bob. "We're going to tea with Hazel's sister, so we can't very well go without Hazel. I thought he was here. Sure you don't know where he is?"

"Blow Hazel!" roared Tom Brown. "Get out, fathead, and let me get done! Do you think I want to put in a whole afternoon at this?"

"But, you see—"

Tom Brown picked up the inkpot and took aim.

Bob chuckled and retreated into the passage. He closed the door after him with a bang. Bob Cherry was in exuberant spirits that sunny afternoon, and when Bob's spirits were exuberant he generally erred on the side of emphasis.

Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting on the Remove staircase. The chums of the Remove were very nicely dressed that afternoon; even Bob had tied his necktie with unusual care. Tea with Marjorie & Co., at Cliff House School, was rather a function. It was more than time to start, for it was a good walk to Cliff House, but the Famous Five had to wait for Hazel. Hazel, being Marjorie's brother, was possibly not quite so enthusiastic as the other fellows.

"He's not in the study, you men!" called out Bob.

"Where the thump is he, then?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Goodness knows!"

"The silly ass knows it's time to start!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The knowfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Rain Singh. "But perhaps it is a case of the forgetfulness."

"Well, we can't go without him," said

Harry Wharton. "The silly ass must be somewhere! Let's root along the passage for him."

The chums of the Remove came up from the staircase. All of them were a little irritated. It was just like Hazeldene to fail to turn up at the appointed time; indeed, it would have been like him to keep the fellows waiting intentionally. Hazel was a fellow of no particular importance; in fact, such importance as he had was derived chiefly from the circumstance that he was Marjorie Hazeldene's brother. Hazel had a very considerable opinion of himself, nevertheless, and he indulged himself in a touchy sensitiveness that was rather out of place in the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

"The footling chump can't have forgotten!" said Harry Wharton. "I suppose he's not really keen on coming. But he arranged to come, and Marjorie will expect to see him. She wants him."

"No accounting for tastes," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, perhaps he seems a nicer chap to his sister than he does to us," said Nugent, laughing.

"The sisterfulness of the esteemed Hazel is his redeemful quality," remarked Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seen Hazel, Bolsover?" called out Bob Cherry, as Bolsover major came along the passage.

"No—and don't want to!"

"Seen Hazel, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter was adorning the Remove passage with his ample figure. He was grinning as he blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, and he emitted a fat chuckle as Bob addressed him.

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, fathead?" inquired Bob.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "You won't see Hazel this afternoon, you chaps—he's busy!"

"What rot!"

"You don't mean he's detained?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He, he, he! No. But he's busy!"

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chuckled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, never mind about Hazel! I'll conk it instead if you like!"

"We don't like!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The likefulness would not be terrific, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurrea Singh, "and the worthy and ridiculous Marjorie would be infuriated."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Where is he, Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently.

"Look here, I'd better come," urged Bunter. "Marjorie will be pleased—you know that. It's a bit rotten of you fellows not to want a good-looking chap in the party when you're going to Cliff House."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's not my fault if the girls take no notice of you fellows when I'm present," argued Bunter. "If a fellow happens to be attractive, it's a bit mean to be jealous about it—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Where's Hazel, you footling ass?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, he won't come!" said Bunter. "You won't get him out of Smithy's study. I keep on telling you he's busy."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"Is Hazel in Smithy's study?" he snapped.

"He, he, he!"

The Famous Five exchanged exasperated glances. If Hazel was in the study of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, on a half-holiday, they could guess that he had forgotten all about the appointment for tea at Cliff House. It was more than probable that cards and cigarettes were going in Smithy's study, such being the manners and customs of the Bounder. Wharton breathed hard.

"The silly duffer!" he muttered. "If it's that—"

"Smithy's a rotter, to drag that weak-kneed ass into his rotten games!" growled Johnny Bull. "Even a blackguard like Smithy might draw the line at that!"

"Let's root him out, anyhow," said Bob.

"Let's!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded, and the Famous Five proceeded along the Remove passage to Study No. 4, with rather grim faces.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Black Sheep!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH leaned back in the armchair in study No. 4 and blew a little cloud of smoke from his lips. He looked through a haze of cigarette-smoke at the other fellow in the study, with a cynical and rather scornful smile. Hazeldene of the Remove watched the Bounder's hard, mocking face with sullen anger and resentment.

"Why not?" he demanded, his eyes gleaming. "What the thump do you mean, Smithy? What's the game?"

"I mean what I say," answered the Bounder coolly. "I won't play cards with you, Hazel."

"Turning pi again, is that it?" sneered Hazel.

"I'm not likely to turn pi," yawned the Bounder. "But I mean what I say. Take a smoke and drop it."

Hazel eyed him savagely.

"You play nap and banker in this study with Skinner, and with Snoop and Stott, and Angel of the Fourth!" he snapped.

"Granted."

"Well, then, confound you—"

"You're not Skinner, or Snoop, or Stott, or Angel of the Fourth," drawled the Bounder. "You're your own attractive, bonny self, dear man, and I won't play cards with you."

"Afraid of losing?" sneered Hazel.

The Bounder laughed.

"Oh, you think I should want to play for paper, is that it?" exclaimed Hazel, his face flushing. "Well, I can tell you that I'm in funds. Look here!"

Hazel thrust his hand into his pocket and drew it out with a five-pound note in it. He held up the banknote for the Bounder's inspection.

"I knew you had a fiver," yawned Smithy. "You let most of the Remove know it when you're in funds, old bean. But I don't want your fiver. Put it in a safe place—or, better still, settle up some of the little accounts you owe up and down the Remove."

Hazel's eyes flashed.

"I'll ask your advice when I want it!" he growled.

The Bounder yawned again and threw away the stump of his cigarette. He glanced at his watch.

"Time I was gettin' out," he remarked.

"Look here, Smithy," said Hazel, in low, concentrated tones, "why won't you play? You've got a reason. What is it? I mean to know."

"You'll lick me if I don't tell you—what?" grinned the Bounder.

"Hang you! I can guess your reason!" exclaimed Hazel shrilly. "You think I'm not the fellow to be a sportsman! You think—"

"If you want it, you can have it," said Smithy. "Yes, I think you're no sportsman. I think you're a weak-kneed ass, with vicious tastes, and without the courage of your vices. You can't have money in your pocket without wantin' to gamble, you can't gamble without losin', and you can't lose without whinin'. Got it clear?"

Hazel gave him a bitter look.

"That's not all, you cheeky rotter! You're taking it on yourself to look after me as if I were a fellow who needed looking after. Saving me from myself, and all that pi bosh—what?"

"Better tell 'em that in the Remove," said the Bounder, laughing. "They'll rather stare at the idea of me as the protector and guide of reckless youth. You'll set the Rag in a roar with that, Hazel."

"I know it, all the same," said Hazel, between his teeth. "You've got the confounded cheek to set up to preach to me on account of my sister Marjorie. Think I don't know it?"

The Bounder coloured. If he had any such motive, he had not expected Hazel to divine it.

"What business is it of yours if I gamble?" went on Hazel shrilly. "You're a precious fellow to preach! You'd be sacked a dozen times over if the Head knew what all the fellows could tell him. If I want a little game in a study, at least I don't creep out of bounds after lights out and consort with blackguards at a pub, as you do. You were out of bounds last night, and you'd be expelled if the beaks knew. You to preach to me!"

"Why not?" said the Bounder imperturbably. "Bein' such a bad hat myself, I can speak from experience, you know. The game isn't worth the candle; that's a tip straight from the horse's mouth."

"That's my business."

"Quite—if you don't want to play the goat in my study. But I'm not takin' any."

Hazel jumped up from his chair.

"Go and eat coke, then! I can find somebody else," he snarled. "Aubrey Angel will be glad enough to give me a game if I ask him."

"Don't be a fool, Hazel. You've got about as much chance against Angel of the Fourth as a fly against a spider!"

"No bizney of yours."

Hazel turned to the door.

Herbert Vernon-Smith sat up in his chair. His look was dark and bitterly contemptuous as it dwelt on Hazel. But he called him back.

"Hold on, Hazel! If you're bent on it, I'll give you a game."

Hazeldene turned back. The angry resentment passed from his weak, good-looking face at once. He was all eagerness.

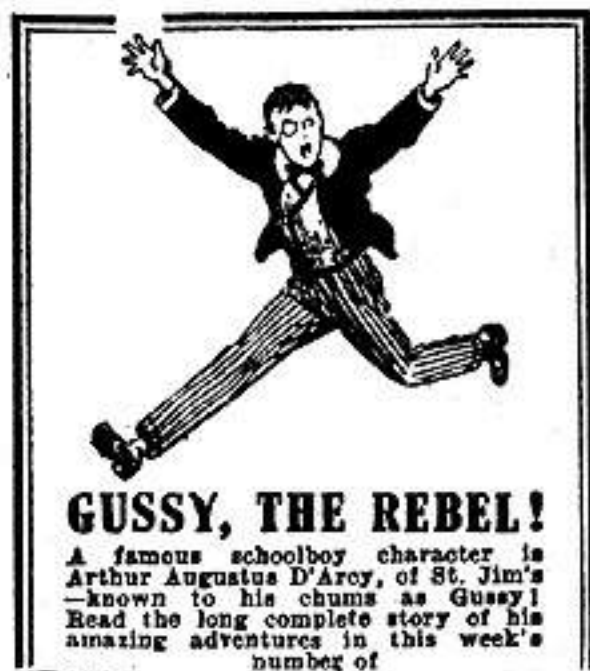
"I'd rather you than Angel, Smithy. I'm not at all sure that Angel gives a fellow a square deal. What shall it be?"

"Any old thing," drawled the Bounder. "There's a pack of cards in the chocolate box in the table drawer."

Hazeldene jerked open the table drawer. He took out the cards and shuffled them with restless fingers. The Bounder watched him curiously and contemptuously. Smithy was the blackest of black sheep at Greyfriars; his reform, which had lasted more or less all the time his chum Redwing had been at the school, was a thing of the past now. Since Redwing had gone, Smithy had fallen back into all his old blackguardly ways. But Smithy had, at least, a strong, determined character, an iron nerve, and a courage that no danger could daunt. Fellows might despise his ways, but they could scarcely despise the Bounder himself.

Hazel was a "bad hat" of quite a different calibre. A weak and vacillating fellow, he dabbled irresolutely in vicious ways, landed himself helplessly into scrapes, and then was terrified and repentant—his repentance generally lasting until the effects of his fright had worn off. He was a decent fellow enough so long as he had no money in his pockets.

His fingers were almost trembling with eagerness as he shuffled the cards. The fever of gambling was already upon him. The hard, cool-headed Bounder found it difficult to understand the irresolute weakness of such a character, but easy enough to despise it. And yet there was a gleam of kindness in his

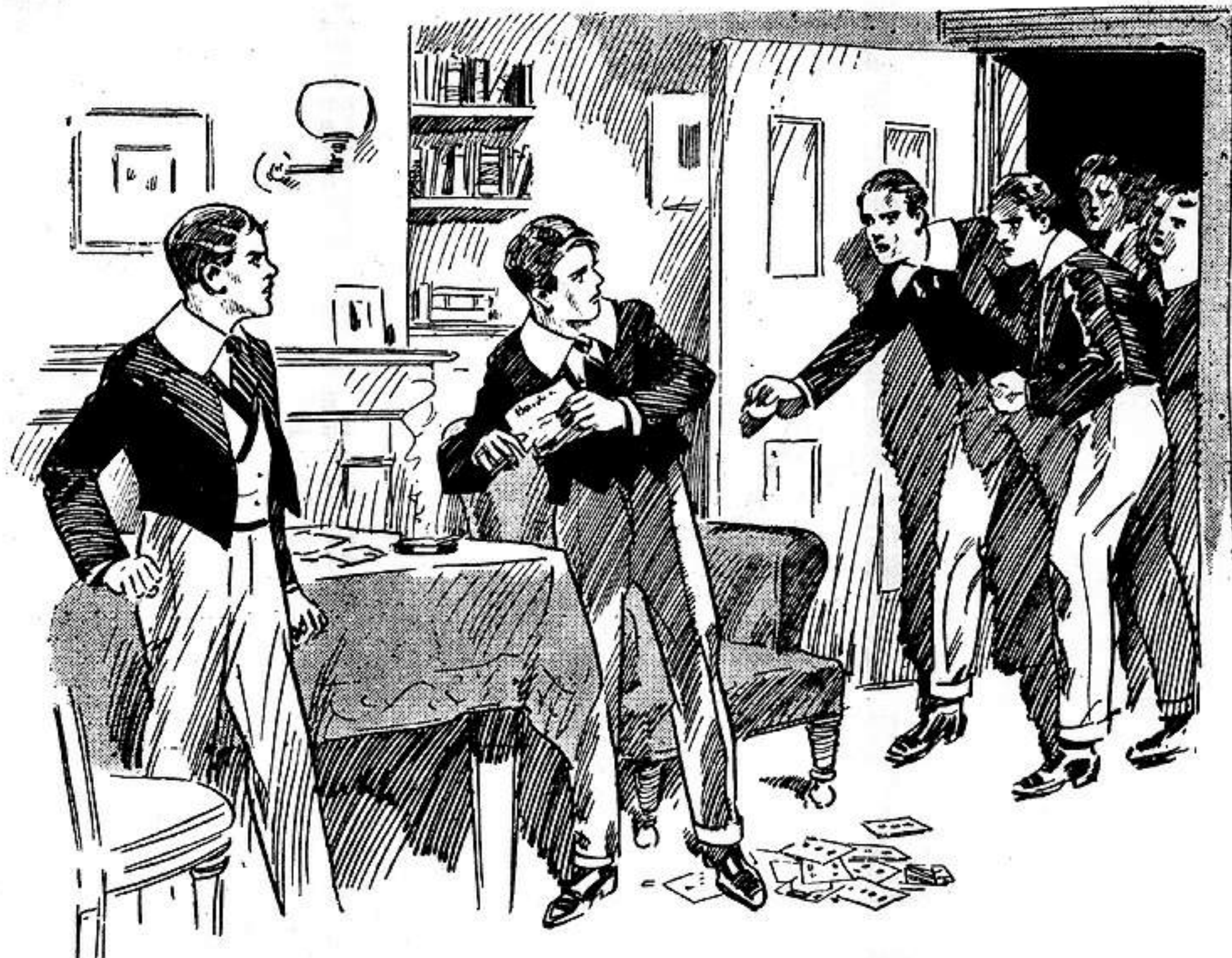


GUSSY, THE REBEL!

A famous schoolboy character is Arthur Augustus D'Aroy, of St. Jim's—known to his chums as Gussy! Read the long complete story of his amazing adventures in this week's number of

THE GEM
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On sale Wednesday, July 6th.
Make sure of a copy!



Crash! The study door opened, and the Famous Five crowded into the doorway. Harry Wharton stared into the study and his brow darkened. The haze of cigarette smoke, the cards on the table, the five-pound note clutched in Hazeldene's hand, told their own tale. Vernon-Smith stared round in dismay. (See Chapter 3.)

look. Hazel's good-looking face was very like his sister's, and the Bounder, hard and cynical as he was, thought a very great deal of Marjorie Hazeldene. For Marjorie's sake he would have been glad to keep the weak, foolish fellow straight; but it was beyond any mortal's power to keep Hazel straight when he had any money.

"Banker—what?" asked Hazel.

"If you like."

"Come on, then."

The Bounder rose from the armchair and lounged to a seat at the table. The two juniors proceeded to play, Smithy handing Hazel a handful of change for his fiver to begin with.

For ten minutes they played in silence, which was broken only by Hazel's hurried, excited breathing.

At the end of ten minutes five pounds in notes and silver had passed from Hazel to the Bounder's side of the table.

Hazel sat with a stunned look on his face.

"Finished?" asked the Bounder coolly.

"I—I've run out of cash," said Hazel huskily; "but you can take my I O U, Smithy."

"I'm not collectin' wastepaper, thanks!"

Hazel gave him a fierce look.

"I shall pay—I can raise the tin to-morrow!"

"Where?" jeered the Bounder.

"That's my business, confound you!"

"Mine, too," said Vernon-Smith, with

a laugh. "I'm not baggin' Miss Hazeldene's pocket-money, and there's nowhere else you could raise it."

"You rotter! You cheeky rotter!" hissed Hazel, his face flooded with crimson. The Bounder had read his thoughts.

Vernon-Smith rose from the table and swept the loose money into his pocket. Hazel's glance followed it almost wolfishly. Then, to Hazel's surprise, the Bounder flicked the five-pound note across the table to him.

"You—you're lending me this?" panted Hazel.

"I'm givin' it back to you, you putty-headed ass!" snapped the Bounder. "I've only been pullin' your silly leg! Put your fiver in your pocket, and thank your lucky stars you didn't lose it to Angel of the Fourth."

"You cheeky rotter! I won't take it!"

"You will!" sneered Smithy.

He was right. Even as he was speaking Hazel's trembling fingers closed on the rustling banknote. But there was nothing like gratitude in his look or in his breast. His face was black and bitter. Smithy had treated him like a child—affecting to play cards with him, winning his money, and giving it back to him. Certainly, he was glad to have his money back; but that contemptuous mode of treatment roused his bitterest feelings. He sat with the fiver in his hand, his eyes fixed on Smithy's sardonic face with a look of hatred.

Crash!

The study door burst open and five juniors crowded into the doorway. Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Misunderstood!

HARRY WHARTON stared into the study and his brow darkened. The haze of cigarette smoke, the cards on the table, the five-pound note clutched in Hazel's hand, told their own tale.

Vernon-Smith stared round.

For a moment he was dismayed. There was much evil in the Bounder, but in this episode, at least, the good in him had been on the surface. He had gratified Hazel's desire to gamble only to teach him a much-needed lesson and to save him from his own folly. He had earned Hazel's hatred and bitter resentment by so doing, but he had succeeded; the wretched fellow had had his lesson, and he was fed-up with card-playing for the present, at least.

It was not often that Peter Hazeldene was in possession of a five-pound note, and his narrow escape of losing the whole of it at one fell swoop sickened him of playing the "sportsman." He hated himself for taking his money back; he hated the Bounder for giving it back to him; but at least he had had

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enough of gambling. The Bounder had known him well enough to be quite sure of the result. But as the Famous Five appeared in his doorway, Smithy realised how the affair would look to them, and for a moment he was dismayed.

The next moment, however, he was smiling sarcastically. They were bound to misunderstand; but it had never been the Bounder's way to care for any other fellow's opinion.

"Ever heard of the custom of knockin' at a door before you butt into a study?" he inquired. "It's quite a good old custom."

"You dingy rotter!" growled Johnny Bull in disgust.

"Thanks, old bean!"

"Of all the rotten, rank outsiders——" said Bob Cherry.

"Here beginneth the first lesson!" yawned the Bounder.

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"We looked in here for you, Hazel," he said. "It's past time for starting, you know. You're coming?"

"Oh! I—I'd forgotten," said Hazel.

"Yes, I'm coming."

He rose from the table and shoved the banknote into his pocket. With a last black look at the unconcerned Bounder, he went out of the study.

"Come on!" said Nugent shortly. "The atmosphere of this study makes me a bit sick."

"The sickfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "But the bumpfulness of the disgusting Bounder is the proper caper before we go."

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull.

The Bounder's eyes glinted, and he reached for a heavy ebony ruler.

"Try it on," he jeered. "One at a time, if you like, and I'll fight the whole crowd one after another. If you try any ragging here, though, there will be some heads cracked."

"I don't think you'd stop us long," growled Bob Cherry. "But you're not fit for a decent fellow to touch. Let's get out of this."

The juniors followed Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton lingered behind, with a dark and thoughtful look on his face. He stepped back into Smithy's study, his eyes on the Bounder. Herbert Vernon-Smith glanced at him, mockingly and deliberately selected a cigarette from his case, and lighted it.

"Smithy!" said the captain of the Remove quietly.

"Go ahead," said the Bounder amicably. "You're rather entertainin' in your seventhly style."

"I'm not thinking of preaching at you, Smithy. It's no business of mine what you do, and you're free to disgrace yourself and your Form, if you choose. But I really did think that even you had a limit, Smithy."

"What put that idea into your head?" asked the Bounder banteringly.

"I think you might let Hazel alone," said Harry, in the same quiet tone. "There are fellows of your own kidney here, if you must play the blackguard. But Hazel isn't really a shady rotter like—like——"

"Like me?" grinned the Bounder.

"Like you, or Skinner, or Angel of the Fourth," said Harry. "He's decent enough when he's let alone. He's nobody's enemy but his own. But if you can't feel any compunction in dragging down a weak, silly fellow to your own level, at least you might think of——"

Wharton paused.

"Of his sister?" said the Bounder.

"Well, yes. He's Marjorie's brother, and she's fond of him. When he's landed in trouble, you know that he takes his

troubles to her. More than once we've put our shoulders to the wheel to drag him out of some scrape, because Marjorie was landed with it. I know that once she sold a bangle she prizes to pay some debt of that weak fool's. Somebody got it back and sent it to her—nobody knows who. It's occurred to my mind more than once that it was you."

"Likely!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, it's not likely, I suppose, but I thought of it," said Harry. "But that's neither here nor there. I believe, anyhow, that you've got a rag of decency in you, Smithy. If you have, you'll let Marjorie's brother alone."

"And if I haven't?" said the Bounder coolly.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"It's mean, and rotten, and cowardly to take advantage of a silly fellow's weakness of character," he said.

"Go it!" the Bounder chuckled. "If I'm mean, and rotten, and cowardly what's the good of askin' me to do a decent thing? It doesn't seem hopeful, does it?"

"Will you leave Hazel alone, Smithy?"

"Isn't that for Hazel to settle?" asked the Bounder. "Are you settin' up as his kind uncle, or father-confessor?"

"Will you leave him alone?" asked the captain of the Remove, raising his voice a little. He was nearly at the end of his patience.

"If I choose, yes. Not if I don't choose," said the Bounder.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"It's not much good telling you what I think of you," he said.

"No good at all, old bean."

"But you've got to chuck it," said the captain of the Remove.

"Got to?" jeered the Bounder.

"Yes, got to!" Wharton's eyes flashed. "Next time I find Hazeldene blagging with you, Vernon-Smith, look out for trouble."

"Why not this time?" said the Bounder coolly. "Bless your little heart, I thrive on trouble, and I'm always ready for it. I'd have the greatest pleasure in the world in givin' you a thick ear to take over to Cliff House with you."

Wharton's hands clenched hard and he made a step towards the Bounder. He was strongly tempted to take Vernon-Smith at his word. And good fighting-man as the Bounder was, he was no match for the captain of the Remove. He knew it, but there was only contemptuous defiance in his look as he faced Wharton with clenched hands.

But Harry controlled his temper.

"I've warned you, Smithy!" he said, and he turned to the door again.

The Bounder snapped his fingers.

"That for your warning!" he answered.

The captain of the Remove, with set lips, left the study. Vernon-Smith kicked the door shut after him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Waiting for you now, old bean!" bawled Bob Cherry from the Remove staircase.

"Ready!" said Harry.

He joined his chums and Hazel, and the six Removes went down the stairs together.

Hazel's face was dark and sullen as he wheeled out his bicycle with the chums of the Remove. It was pretty clear that he expected some remark to be made on his proceedings that afternoon, and he was prepared to be sulky and defiant. But the expected "lecture" did not come. The Famous Five made no allusion to the matter at all, and did not even rag Hazel for having kept them waiting. So his face gradually cleared, and he was quite in a good

humour by the time they reached Cliff House School.

Wharton noticed that Marjorie gave her brother a quick look when she greeted the juniors. No doubt she knew that Hazel had had a fiver from a kind uncle, and no doubt she had been uneasy, knowing what Hazel was like when he had an unusual supply of cash.

But Hazel, by that time, was cheery and chatty, having, in his volatile way, almost forgotten the unpleasant episode in Smithy's study. Marjorie was relieved, and her face grew brighter. It was a very happy tea-party at Cliff House, after all, and Hazel was as merry and bright as anyone present.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Temple Puts His Foot Down!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, the captain of the Fourth Form at Greyfriars, frowned.

He was frowning as he came into his study in the Fourth, and Dabney and Fry, his study-mates, wondered why.

Fry, in fact, wondered whether any Remove man had been telling Cecil Reginald what he thought of his cricket. That would have been a sufficient explanation of Temple's lofty frown.

"You men busy?" asked Temple.

"No? Feelin' up to a rag?"

"Oh, rather!" assented Dabney.

"Remove?" asked Fry, doubtfully.

Edward Fry was not keen on ragging the Remove under the sublime leadership of Cecil Reginald Temple. Many times Temple had declared that the Remove had to be kept in their place—what he considered their place—and had essayed to put them there. On these occasions Temple had generally collected more trouble than he was able to digest.

"A Remove man," explained Temple.

"Oh! Only one?"

"Yes; and a Fourth Form man."

Fry looked puzzled.

"We're to rag a Remove man and a Fourth Form man?" he asked.

"Just that."

"Any old thing," yawned Fry. "But who, and which, and wherefore?"

"Angel, of the Fourth, and Hazeldene, of the Remove," Temple further explained.

"The more Angel is ragged the better," agreed Fry. "But what's the matter with that nincompoop, Hazeldene?"

"He's in Angel's study now."

"Any harm in his calling on Angel?" asked Fry.

"Lots."

Cecil Reginald Temple's frown deepened. He selected a cricket stump and put it under his arm.

"Smithy, of the Remove, dropped me a hint," he said. "Blessed if I know why. He's as black a sheep as any I've seen—as shady a rotter as Angel, if you come to that. I dare say he had his reasons; I don't know what they are, and I don't care much. He asked me not to mention it, so you fellows needn't shout it out. It seems that the fool, Hazel, is in funds, and he's got a game on with Angel."

"Oh!" said Fry.

"That sort of thing isn't good enough for the Fourth," said Temple. "We've ragged Angel before for his rotten games and we're goin' to rag him again. What the rotter does is no bizney of ours, if you come to that. But gettin' a fellow from a lower Form to play cards in his study is the limit. See? After Smithy tipped me the wink I kept an eye open, and I've just seen Hazeldene mooch into

Angel's study. We're goin' to give them a call."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Edward Fry nodded.

The three Fourth-Formers left the study and proceeded along the Fourth Form passage to Aubrey Angel's quarters. Temple tapped on the door and threw it open.

Aubrey Angel gave the trio a dark look. The black sheep of the Fourth was extremely unpopular in his Form, and he had had trouble with Temple, Dabney & Co. before, more than once.

Hazeldene glanced round irritably.

It was a couple of days since the episode in the Bouncer's study. Evidently the effect of Hazel's lesson had worn off.

His money was burning a hole in his pocket, as usual; and, as usual, he was looking for trouble.

For two days Hazel had resisted temptation. That was really a record for him.

Now he was going it again—or was about to "go" it. Aubrey Angel had a pack of cards in his white, elegant hands. Hazel had not cared to ask the Bouncer to play again. Glad as he had been to recover his fiver, he felt deeply and bitterly insulted at having his money given back to him after a game, as if he were a child playing for nuts in a nursery. Certainly, if he lost the fiver in Aubrey Angel's study it was not likely to be given back.

"I don't remember askin' you men to my study," said Aubrey Angel sourly, slipping the cards out of sight.

"Do you think we'd come if you asked us?" said Temple scornfully. "We're rather particular what studies we visit."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Well, shut the door after you, then."

Temple shut the door, but remained on the inside of it, with his comrades. He slipped the cricket stump from under his arm down into his hand.

"You've come here to play cards with Angel, Hazeldene," he said.

"Mind your own business!" exclaimed Hazel fiercely.

"Bend him over!"

"Why, you cheeky cad!" roared Hazel, jumping back as Fry and Dabney advanced upon him, grinning.

Angel sprang to his feet, his eyes glittering.

"Temple, you cheeky cad, get out of my study! How dare you butt in here and bully my visitor?"

"Any objection to make?" asked Temple politely.

"Yes, you rotter! Get out!"

"Not just yet. Your turn's comin'," explained Temple. "We're dealin' with this Remove cad first. Bend him over!"

Hazel struck out savagely as Dabney and Fry collared him. Dabney gave a yell as the Remove's knuckles crashed on his nose.

The next moment Hazel was struggling fiercely in the grasp of the two Fourth-Formers.

"Buck up, Angel!" he panted.

Aubrey Angel hesitated. He was not a fighting man, if he could help it. But his own turn was coming; he knew that. And even a rat will fight in a corner. He clenched his hands and rushed to Hazel's aid.

Temple chipped in at once.

He dropped the cricket stump on the table and faced Aubrey Angel with his hands up.

"Come on, dear man!" he grinned.

Angel did not reach the struggling Hazeldene. Temple met him with left and right, and the dandy of the Fourth went spinning into a corner of the study. He crashed down there with a yelp.

Cecil Reginald Temple grinned down at him.

"Get up and have some more," he suggested.

"You rotten ruffian! Keep off!" groaned Angel.

"Man out!" chuckled Temple. "Now then, bend that Remove cad over!"

Hazel resisted fiercely. There was no help to be expected from Aubrey, who lay gasping in the corner of the study. In spite of his resistance Hazel was bent over a corner of the study table, held there in an iron grip by Dabney and Fry.

Temple picked up the stump and swished it in the air.

Whack!

There was a furious yell from Hazel as the stump came down. He turned a crimson, enraged face round at Temple.

"You rotter!" he panted. "You meddling, interfering rotter! I'll smash you for this! I'll—"

Oh! Ow! Ow!"

Whack! Whack!

Whack!

"This is a warnin' to keep clear of the Fourth when you're playin' the black-guard, dear man," said Temple amiably. "We don't like your sort in our passage. I'm makin' it a dozen."

The stump came down again.

"Help me, Angel!" yelled Hazeldene.

Angel picked himself up dizzily. His brief encounter with Temple had quite knocked all the battle out of him. He made a strategic movement towards the door, only to be headed off by Temple and a lunge of the stump. Temple locked the door and put the key in his pocket and returned cheerfully to Hazeldene.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

The hapless Remove roared and wriggled and yelled. But he could not throw off the grip of Dabney and Fry; and the stump rose and fell mercilessly. The full dozen had been administered before Hazel was released and pitched contemptuously aside.

He staggered against the wall, panting for breath, his face crimson, his eyes burning.

"Your turn, Angel!"

"You bullyin' rotters—" panted Angel.

"Bend him over!"

Angel struggled as he was grasped, but he came down on the table with a

thud. Then the stump came into play again.

Temple laid it on with vigour. Angel yelled and screamed frantically. There was a rap at the locked door.

"Hallo! What's the row here?" called out Wilkinson of the Fourth.

"Only a raggin', old scout! All serene!" called back Temple.

"Sounds as if you were killing a pig!" chuckled Wilkinson.

"We're not quite killin' one—only stumpin' him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Angel's yells rang far and wide as the stump descended again and again. Outside the study a good number of the Fourth were gathered, and the sound of laughter was heard. Evidently the Fourth-Formers were not wasting any sympathy on Aubrey.

(Continued overleaf.)

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taste the
cream'



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THE BOUNDER'S GOOD TURN!

(Continued from previous page.)

"That will do," said Temple at last, tucking the stump under his arm. "That's a tip for you, Angel! Take warnin', dear man, and chuck up your rotten games before you get sacked."

"Ow, ow, ow!" moaned Angel.

"Now kick that Remove cad out!"

Temple unlocked the door and threw it open. A dozen Fourth Form men stared curiously into the study.

"Out you go, Hazeldene!"

"You rotters!" panted Hazel. "You cads! I—I—"

He broke off, gasping, as Temple, Dabney & Co. grasped him and flung him bodily out into the passage.

"Kick him back to the Remove, you men!" exclaimed Temple.

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel staggered to his feet. He was breathless, furious, panting with rage. The grinning juniors closed in on him, and Wilkinson's boot landed, and then Scott's. Hazel realised that he had to run for it, and he ran. He went racing down the Fourth Form passage, with the Fourth-Formers after him, dribbling him like a football, amid yells of laughter.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Fight with the Fourth!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What the thump—"

"My esteemed Hazel—"

Harry Wharton & Co. were coming up to tea, and they had reached the Remove landing when Hazel came fleeing wildly across that landing, with a mob of the Fourth after him.

Hazel was rather a startling-looking object by that time. His collar and tie hung over his shoulder, his hair was wildly tousled, his jacket split, and he was smothered with dust. He staggered across the landing fairly into the arms of the Famous Five.

"Line up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Back up, you fellows!" shouted the captain of the Remove.

The Famous Five did not stop to ask questions. A Remove man was being mobbed by the Fourth, and that was enough for them.

They lined up at once, and the rush of the pursuers broke on five sturdy juniors standing shoulder to shoulder, with smiling faces and ready fists.

Hazel staggered against the wall behind the Famous Five. He was utterly spent and breathless, and could do nothing but lean on the wall and gasp. But the Famous Five did not need his assistance. Their vigorous onslaught drove the Fourth-Formers back.

"Back up, Remove!" roared Bob Cherry. "Fourth Form raid! Back up!"

"Coming!" yelled back Peter Todd from Study No. 7, and he came with a rush.

Squiff and Tom Brown, Ogilvy and Russell, were on the scene the next moment, and after them came Mark Linley and Wibley and Penfold and Newland and six more Remove men.

The rush of the Fourth was stopped, and the enemy hurled back at once. Temple, Dabney & Co. retreated into their own passage, and the Remove men followed them up.

"Come on, Remove!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Mop them up!"

"Pile in, Remove!"

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"Oh gad!" gasped Cecil Reginald Temple. "Oh, great gad! Ow! Wow!"

The rush of the Removees swept all before it. Cecil Reginald Temple crumpled up, and was strewn on the landing. The rest of the Fourth were driven back into their own passage. It was a rag of terrific dimensions.

In their own quarters the Fourth-Formers rallied; and the Removees, with the odds against them, retreated to the landing again. There they found Morgan of the Remove sitting on Cecil Reginald Temple, holding him a helpless prisoner.

"Wow, ow, ow! Leggo! Gerroff!" Temple was yelling frantically.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! A jolly old prisoner!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Bring him into our passage!"

"Yow, ow, ow!"

Three or four Removees grasped Temple of the Fourth, and he was whisked along into the Remove passage.

"Now, what was the row about, Hazel?" asked Harry Wharton.

Hazel gave Temple of the Fourth a savage look.

"Those rotters collared me and stumped me, three to one!" he panted.

"Let me get at that rotter!"

"Somebody fetch a stump!" said the captain of the Remove. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Leggo!" yelled Temple. "Rescue! Help!"

"Mustn't stump a Remove man!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Fourth Form kids mustn't be cheeky to their betters!"

"You silly owl—"

"I say, you fellows, here's a stump!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

Hazel grasped the stump from the Owl of the Remove.

"Turn him over!" he panted.

"How many did he give you?"

"A dozen!"

"Give him two dozen, then!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You rotters!" roared Temple, as he was rolled over in a favourable position for stumping.

Whack!

"Yarooooogh!"

Vernon-Smith was looking out of his study, with a sardonic grin. He called out to Temple.

"What were you stumping Hazel for, Temple?"

"Ow! For playin' cards in a Fourth Form study!" howled Temple. "You're a lot of shady blackguards in the Remove, and I've a jolly good mind to report you to a prefect! Ow!"

The stump was up again, but Wharton caught Hazel's arm before the blow could fall.

"Hold on!" he said curtly.

"Let me go, you fool!" panted Hazel.

"Hold on, I tell you!"

"I won't! I—I— Oh, you rotter!" panted Hazel, as the stump was twitched out of his hand by the Remove captain.

"Let's have this straight, Temple," said Harry Wharton. "Mean to say that Hazel was blagging in your passage?"

"Yes, you silly owl!" hooted Temple. "That's why we stumped him, and Angel, too! You ought to be sacked, the lot of you!"

"Let him go, you fellows."

Cecil Reginald Temple was released, and he staggered breathlessly to his feet.

"I say, you fellows, here they come!" squeaked Billy Bunter, and he dodged back into Study No. 7.

The Fourth had discovered that their leader was a prisoner, and they were

advancing in force to the rescue. Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "You ought to have explained before, Temple."

"Did you give me a chance, you howling ass?" yelled Temple.

"Nunno! Perhaps we didn't," confessed the captain of the Remove. "You don't deny what Temple says, Hazel?"

"Mind your own business!" snarled Hazel. "You're not my master, I suppose."

"Not at all; but we wouldn't have chipped in if we'd known," said the captain of the Remove contemptuously.

"The Fourth can rag you for that kind of thing as much as they jolly well like. I make them a present of you!"

"You cheeky rotter—"

"You're jolly handy with that stump, Hazel, when fellows are holdin' a fellow," panted Temple. "Now put up your hands."

Hazel put up his hands fast enough. The next moment he was fighting furiously with Temple.

With one accord the Fourth and the Remove made it "pax," and stood back to watch the combat.

It did not last long.

Hazel put up the best fight he could, but he was no match for the captain of the Fourth.

In a few minutes he was lying on the floor of the Remove passage, licked to the wide.

Cecil Reginald Temple, victorious, walked away with the Fourth. Hazel lay gasping and groaning on the floor.

The Removees went to their studies, leaving him there. Hazel staggered to his feet at last, and limped away to Study No. 2. Tom Brown was at tea when he came in, and he looked at Hazel with a grin.

Hazel gave him a savage look in return.

"Feeling rather hipped—what?" asked the New Zealand junior. "You're the fellow to ask for trouble, and no mistake!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Did you leave your fiver in Angel's study?" chuckled Tom.

"Find out!"

"You seem to have left your manners there, anyway."

"Shut up, you cad!" hissed Hazel.

Tom Brown half rose from the table, with a glint in his eyes. But he sat down again.

"You look as if you've had enough," he remarked. "Better not ask for any more, though, or you may get it."

And Hazel scowled in silence, while the New Zealand junior finished his tea and left the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Chips In!

"MARJORIE!"

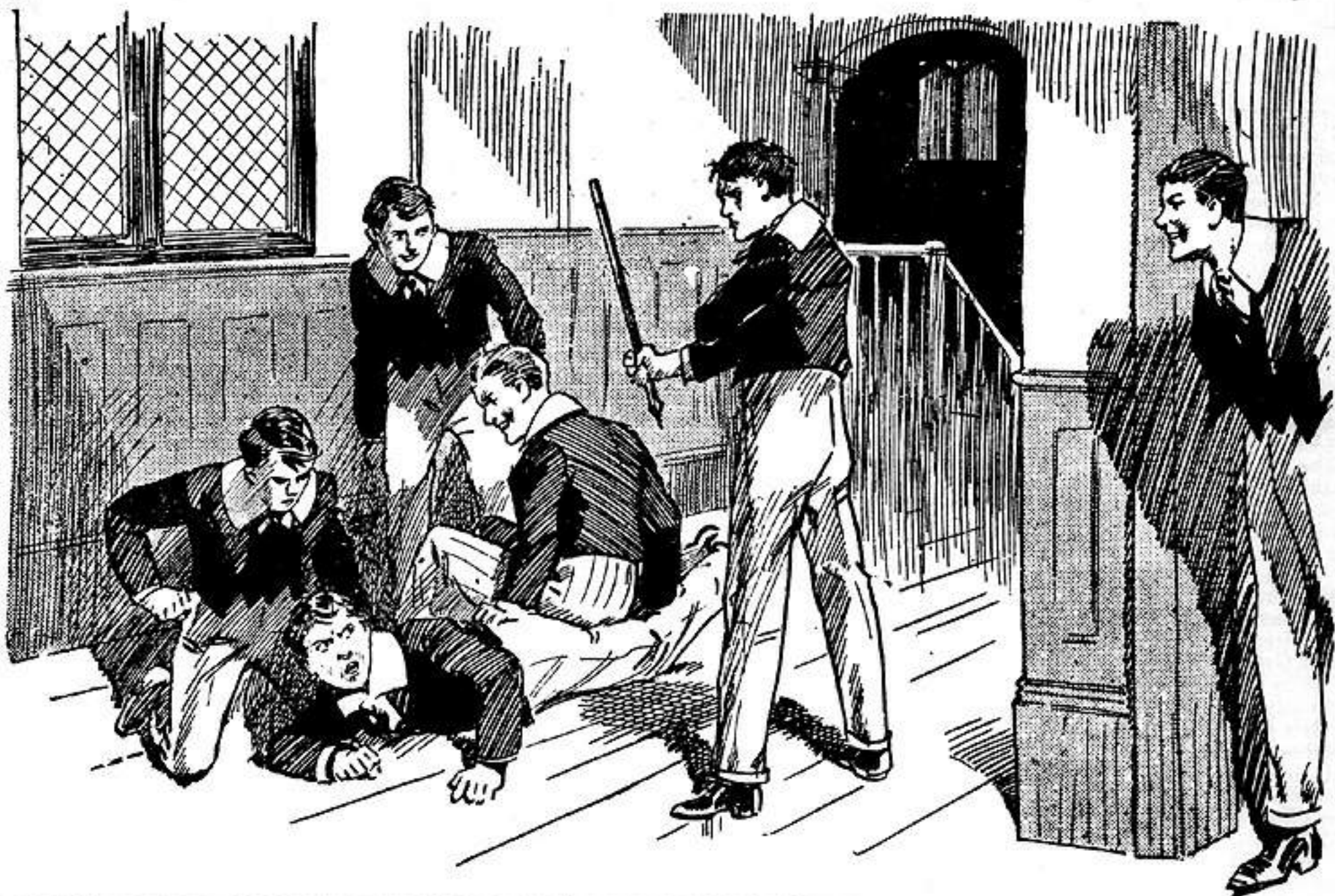
Herbert Vernon-Smith glanced round.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the Bounder had gone out of gates with Skinner of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at games practice that afternoon; but Smithy had nothing to do with the Form games these days, and Skinner had never had anything to do with them.

The two black sheep of the Remove had sat down in the grass on Courtfield Common, screened from the road by a hawthorn hedge, and were smoking cigarettes, when Hazeldene's voice came to their ears.

Through an opening of the hedge Smithy caught sight of Hazel. He had stopped and lifted his cap as he spoke his sister's name. Evidently he had just met Marjorie. Smithy could not



"Yaroooh!" wailed Temple, as Hazeldene brought the stump into play. Vernon-Smith, looking out of his study with a sardonic grin, called out to Temple: "What were you stumping Hazel for?" "Ow! For playin' cards in a Fourth-Form study!" howled Temple. "You're a lot of shady blackguards in the Remove, and I've a jolly good mind to report you to a prefect! Ow!" (See Chapter 5.)

see her, but he heard the sound of a bicycle and heard the girl alight.

He could see Hazel's face, and could see that it did not wear a pleased expression. Apparently he was not gratified by that chance encounter with the girl of Cliff House School. Smithy heard Marjorie's voice the next moment.

"It's Hazel, Clara."

"Are you stopping, Marjorie?" asked Clara.

"Yes, dear."

Miss Clara Trevlyn alighted, also.

Vernon-Smith removed the cigarette from his mouth and dropped it into the grass.

Skinner grinned.

The hedge hid the two young rascals from the road, and it was unlikely that the Cliff House girls would look through the hedge and see them. If they did, Skinner did not mind being seen with a cigarette in his mouth. The Bounder apparently did.

Skinner was about to make some sarcastic remark, when the Bounder made him a fierce sign to be silent. Harold Skinner shrugged his shoulders and held his tongue.

"Don't stop for me," Hazeldene was saying. "Taking a spin somewhere?"

"That's it, kid," said Miss Clara.

"You're not in a hurry, Hazel?" asked Marjorie.

"Well, I'm going somewhere."

"Let's walk a little way, and wheel the bikes," said Marjorie.

"Well, I'm going over to Highcliffe," said Hazel. "It's a bit of a walk, and I want to see a chap there. I'd better get along."

Again Skinner grinned. He could guess the name of the chap Hazel wanted to see at Highcliffe. His fiver

was still burning a hole in his pocket, after two narrow escapes. He was going to see Ponsonby of the Highcliffe Fourth. Smithy did not grin; he scowled.

Marjorie was silent for a moment or two. Her voice had changed a little when she spoke again. Meanwhile, Hazel was standing red and uneasy, evidently anxious to be off.

"Very well, I won't delay you, Hazel."

"See you later, old girl."

Hazel raised his cap again, and, with a relieved look, went on his way. He did not glance back once at the two schoolgirls standing by their machines at the roadside, though his sister's eyes followed him thoughtfully.

"Come on, Marjorie," rapped out Miss Clara. "We're picking up Barbara and Mabel in Friardale, you know."

"Ye-e-es, Clara."

Sniff from Miss Clara.

"Bothering about that young sweep," she said. "What a duffer you are, Marjorie!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"Is he worth bothering about?" demanded Miss Clara.

"I think so, dear."

"Well, I don't," said Miss Trevlyn emphatically. "If he were my brother, I'd box his ears!"

"My dear Clara—"

"I'd smack him hard!" further declared Miss Clara. "Why don't you ask Bob Cherry to give him a thrashing? Bob would, if you asked him nicely."

"You are a silly girl, Clara," said Marjorie stiffly. "Let's go on."

The whir of the bicycles was heard, and the Bounder had a glimpse of the

two girls as they rode away. Miss Clara was looking rather cross. She never made any secret of the fact that she had very little patience with her chum's brother. Marjorie's face was clouded. It had been bright enough when she met Hazel; but it was not the first time, by many a one, that Hazel had brought a cloud to his sister's face.

Skinner gave a sneering grin.

"She knows that nincompoop is going looking for trouble, Smithy," he remarked. "It's a standin' joke about Hazel, the way he hunts for trouble when he's got any money, and weeps briny tears of repentance as soon as it's all gone. I suppose his sister can't see the joke."

"The miserable specimen!" muttered the Bounder.

"Worm!" agreed Skinner. "I can stand a fellow bein' pi if he's pi all the time. But pi-stuff in fits and starts is too thick."

"He's goin' over to see Ponsonby," said Smithy.

Skinner chuckled.

"Yes, rather! He's not likely to be callin' on Courtenay, or the Caterpillar. He wants a little game. Nobody to get after him and rag, if he plays the goat at Highcliffe. Ponsonby will oblige him. Hazel's fiver won't last him long after he gets into Pon's study, among that merry crowd."

"The sooner it's gone the better," grunted the Bounder.

"Quite—for him! It's rather amusin' to watch him," yawned Skinner, taking out a fresh cigarette. "After it's gone, he may chuck up playin' the goat, or he may try borrowin' money right and left, to win it back again. Accordin' to how the spirit moves him."

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Sometimes it takes him one way, and sometimes the other. He will stick Marjorie for her pocket-money, if she has any. I've known him do that more than once. What a fool she must be to care twopence about him!"

The Bouncer did not answer. "Havin' another smoke, old bean?" asked Skinner.

"No; let's get along."
"Let me finish this fag first."
"Finish it if you like. I'm goin' back to the school," said the Bouncer curtly.

"What the thump for?" demanded Skinner. "Haven't we come out for the afternoon?"

"I've changed my mind."
"Well, I'm not comin' back yet," said Skinner sulkily.

"Please yourself."
The Bouncer rose from the grass and walked away, leaving Skinner smoking and scowling. He called after the Bouncer as Vernon-Smith went out into the road.

"Hold on, Smithy!"
Vernon-Smith glanced back.

"What is it?" he asked.
"Better think twice before you show up at Greyfriars," grinned Skinner.

"Why?" snapped the Bouncer impatiently.
"It's compulsory games this afternoon, old bean. We've dodged it; but if you butt in before lock-up you'll get roped in. His Magnificence Wharton won't let you off if he spots you!"

"Rot!"
"Well, I'm not chancing it, anyhow."

The Bouncer did not answer that. He walked away in the direction of Greyfriars, giving Harold Skinner no further heed. He had not forgotten that it was compulsory games practice that afternoon, but he hardly gave the matter a thought. He had his own reasons for returning to the school then—reasons which Skinner could not guess. Skinner, indeed, was considerably puzzled by the Bouncer's sudden departure. The two juniors had intended to remain out of gates till lock-up, and Skinner realised that it was what he had overheard between Marjorie and her brother that had caused Smithy's sudden change of plan; but he could not even begin to guess why.

Vernon-Smith hurried along the road. It was a hot afternoon, and there was little shade on the dusty high-road. But the Bouncer walked very swiftly, and in ten minutes he was entering the school gates. Without slackening his pace, he crossed the old quad towards the House.

"Vernon-Smith!"
Wingate of the Sixth spotted him and called to him. The Bouncer looked round impatiently.

"Yes, Wingate?"
"Why aren't you at games practice?"
The Bouncer compressed his lips. Harry Wharton, as captain of the Form, was bound to see that the fellows turned up at the nets on compulsory days. Undoubtedly, Wharton was closing one eye, as it were, in dealing with the Bouncer. Strictly speaking, he should have noted Smithy's absence, and reported it to Wingate, as head of the games. But Wharton was trying to keep out of a row with the Bouncer as well as he could; and he had the excuse, at least, that Smithy was not really a slacker—only a rebel against authority.

Smithy did not answer the question of the captain of the school. He had, in fact, no answer to make. He could not tell Wingate of the Sixth that he

had cut games practice because he jolly well chose to do so, though it was on the tip of his tongue. But Smithy did not want to "bend over," so he did not make that answer.

"Slacking—what?" said Wingate, with a frown. "Get down to Little Side at once."

"I suppose I can go in and change?" said the Bouncer.

"Yes—and be sharp about it! I shall keep an eye open for you."

Vernon-Smith went on into the House. But he did not proceed to change. He went into Masters' Passage, and stopped at Mr. Quelch's study. He knew that the Remove master was gone out for the afternoon. Smithy opened the study door and entered, closing the door behind him. He crossed to the telephone, picked up the receiver, and gave a number. And the number he gave was a Highcliffe School number.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Reception!

RUPERT DE COURCY, otherwise the Caterpillar, came up to the Fourth Form passage at Highcliffe School and tapped at the door of Cecil Ponsonby's study.

The door was locked, and there was the sound of a hurried movement in the study as the Caterpillar tapped.

Then Pon's voice called out:

"Who's there?"
"Little me!"

"That silly ass De Courcy!" came Gadsby's voice.

The Caterpillar smiled.
"Right as rain, Gaddy!" he answered.
"No need to shove the cards in the coal-locker, or the smokes up the chimney! It's not Mobby!"

"What the thump do you want?" growled Ponsonby.

"Nothin'."

"Take it and go, then!"

"You don't want to hear Mobby's message?" asked the Caterpillar.

"You silly chump! Is it a message from Mr. Mobbs?"

"Just that."

"Cough it up, then, you howlin' ass!"

"Certainly, dear man," drawled the Caterpillar. "Mr. Mobbs asked me to tell you that somebody's asked for you on his phone. Dear old Mobbs says that you can take the call. Nice of him, isn't it? Obligin' little beast—what?"

There was a laugh in the study.

"I'll come," said Ponsonby. The study door opened. "Did he say who had asked for me?"

"Greyfriars man," yawned the Caterpillar. "Fellow named Vernon-Smith wants to say somethin' important about the cricket."

Ponsonby stared.

"Cricket?" he repeated.

"I fancy that was a little spoof for Mobby's benefit," grinned the Caterpillar.

"Smithy could hardly tell Mobby that he wanted to talk gee-gees with you over the phone. There's a limit to what even Mobby will stand."

Ponsonby laughed.

"Right—ho—I'll go!"

And Ponsonby went down the stairs and presented himself at his Form-master's study.

Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Highcliffe Fourth, gave him a nod and a smile. Pon was a favourite of Mr. Mobbs'. Among Pon's lofty connections, titles were as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa. Mr. Mobbs had been a tuft-hunter at Oxford, and he had not

changed since he had become a Form master at Highcliffe.

"A young friend of yours at Greyfriars wishes to speak to you, Ponsonby," he said graciously. "A matter concerning games. You may take the call."

"Thank you, sir!" said Ponsonby. "You're very kind, sir."

"Not at all, my dear boy!" said Mr. Mobbs, as he rustled out of the study, leaving his dear Ponsonby in possession of the room and the phone.

Ponsonby picked up the receiver.

"Hallo! That you, Smithy?"

"Yes, old bean."

"What's the news?"

"I told Mobby cricket!" chuckled the Bouncer.

"That will do for Mobby. But what is it, old scout? Comin' over here for a little game?"

"Can't this afternoon. I want you to do me a little favour."

"Dear old thing, the money market's so tight that a fellow hardly knows where to turn for a pound note."

"It isn't that, ass!"

"Oh! All serene! Give it a name."

"There's a Greyfriars chap I want you to meet," said the Bouncer. "I suppose you're not too busy for a rag?"

"No fear! Go ahead!"

"You'll pick him up somewhere on the road between Greyfriars and Highcliffe—probably somewhere near your school. He's alone. Three or four of you walk out and meet him."

"And—"

"Rag him."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Ponsonby.

"Wharton, I suppose?"

"No; Hazeldene."

"That spooney! What on earth has Hazel done to you? What do you want us to rag him for? You could break that spooney with your little finger!"

"I know that; but I've a reason. I don't want to row with him, but I want him put through it. No objection, I suppose?"

"Not the slightest," said Ponsonby, laughing. "Always ready to rag a Greyfriars cad—'Hem! Excuse me! We'll walk out and meet him, and strew the hungry churchyard with his bones!'"

"I don't want him hurt, you know. Just collar him at sight, bump him, and pitch him into a ditch, or somethin' of that sort."

"I'm your man."

"Better take him by surprise. He's been pickin' up in the fistical line lately, and you don't want a swollen nose or a black eye. The fellow's not worth fightin'. Watch for him and rush him, and put him through it. You'll do it?"

"Glad to!"

"Thanks!"

The Bouncer, in Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars, rang off. Ponsonby put up Mr. Mobbs' receiver and strolled out of the study. Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour looked at him inquiringly when he came back to his own quarters.

"Somethin' amusin'?" asked Gadsby.

Ponsonby laughed.

"Yes, a little. Get your hats. We're going for a walk."

"What about the game?"

"We can finish that afterwards. We're goin' to rag a Greyfriars cad."

Vavasour looked a little alarmed.

"Look here, Pon, I don't want a row with those Remove cads. That ruffian Cherry hits like the kick of a mule. Wash it out."

"It's not that mob," said Ponsonby.

"It's that soft noodle Hazel, and Smithy's got it up against him for some reason. He wants us to rag the cad, and I don't see why we shouldn't to

oblige Smithy. It will be pie to us—the fellow's no warrior."

"Oh, Hazel! That's all right!"

Ponsonby & Co. walked out of the House and left the school with smiling faces. They were quite keen on ragging any Greyfriars fellow who came their way, so long as the said ragging did not mean much damage to their noble selves. They would have preferred to rag Harry Wharton & Co., but that would have meant so very much damage—not to the Famous Five—that the Highcliffes nuts would have thought twice about it, if not three or four times. But Hazel was, as Pon had said, "pie" to them. With the exception of two or three fellows of their own tastes, such as Vernon-Smith and Skinner, they were up against all Greyfriars.

"It's jolly queer, Smithy askin' us to rag a Greyfriars man," Gadsby remarked as they walked down the road towards Courtfield Common. "I've heard that he's on fightin' terms with most of his Form now; but it's queer all the same. The others would be down on him if they knew."

"Well, we're not going to tell them," said Ponsonby.

"What can he have up against Hazel, too?" said Gadsby, puzzled. "The fellow's a nobody—just a nincompoop. I believe Smithy's rather friendly to his sister, too."

"What does it matter?" said Monson. "It will be a lark. It will make Wharton's crew wild if Hazel goes back ragged."

"Absolutely," said Vavasour.

"Oh, that's all right," agreed Gadsby. "I'm keen enough. Only I don't catch on."

Ponsonby stopped at a shady spot by the roadside. He had spotted a figure in the distance coming on towards Highcliffe.

"That's Hazel, I fancy," he said. "Keep doggo here, and rush him when

I give the word. Don't give him a chance to bunk."

"No fear!" grinned Ponsonby's comrades.

And they leaned on the trees in the shade, and watched the road as the distant pedestrian drew nearer.

They soon ascertained that it was Hazeldene of the Greyfriars Remove. He came on at a good pace, and did not glance into the trees by the roadside as he passed.

Ponsonby waited till he was abreast of the ambush, and then gave the signal to his companions.

"Go it!"

With a sudden rush the four Highcliffians came out of the trees into the road.

They were upon Hazel in a twinkling. He turned at the sound of the rushing footsteps, and the next second he was in the grasp of the Highcliffians.

Bump!

Hazel went into the dust with a crush.

"Oh!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!"

"Greyfriars cad!"

Hazel, grasped again by the raggers, struggled furiously. Ponsonby & Co., with loud laughter, rolled him over and over in the dust towards the ditch on the other side of the road.

"You fools!" shrieked Hazel. "You dummies! I—"

"Roll him over!"

"Pitch him in!"

"I tell you—" raved Hazel.

"Greyfriars cad!"

Crash! Splash!

Hazel went hurtling into the ditch. Ponsonby & Co. stood on the bank and roared with laughter as he struggled frantically in a foot of water and mud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel rolled in mud and ooze and green slime, smothered from head to foot. He had not had a chance to explain, and Pon & Co. had not the

slightest suspicion that he had been on his way to Highcliffe to call on them as a fellow-sportsman. Had Pon & Co. been aware of that, their treatment of Hazel would have been very different. But they had not the faintest idea of that, or of how the Bounder had pulled their leg.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffians.

Hazel struggled frantically out of the ditch. His friendly intentions towards the Highcliffe sportsmen were forgotten now; he was boiling with rage, and only thinking of vengeance.

"Hook it!" chuckled Ponsonby. "The fellow's a bit too filthy to touch again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel scrambled out, with blazing eyes. He would have rushed at the raggers recklessly, heedless of the odds, if they had lingered. Pon & Co. were not afraid of his fists, but they were afraid of the mud and slime he had collected in the ditch. Still yelling with laughter, they trooped off towards Highcliffe.

Hazel stood in the road and panted.

He was soaked with muddy water, covered with mud, with green ooze draped over him; an object of horror to himself. He spat out mud and water, and panted for breath.

Ponsonby & Co. disappeared in the distance, still laughing. Hazel, with feelings too deep for words, proceeded to scrape himself as clean as he could with bunches of grass, and at last, with burning eyes and furious face, he tramped back towards Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes a Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

On that fine afternoon, when all the Greyfriars fellows were out in the open air, William George Bunter was indoors.

Even Bunter did not want to be indoors on that splendid July afternoon. Even the fat slacker of the Remove would have gone out had the matter been left to his choice.

But it was compulsory games practice that afternoon.

So Bunter had pleaded illness. He had, so he declared to the captain of the Remove, a fearful pain. It was an awful, devastating pain, resembling burning daggers and red-hot needles, and it totally incapacitated Bunter for games practice. As William George Bunter, at the nets, was only a nuisance to himself and everybody else, the captain of the Remove had lent a perhaps too credulous ear to his tale of suffering. Bunter was let off games practice.

Certainly, all his agonising pains vanished as soon as the other fellows had gone down to Little Side. The drawback was that, as Bunter was too terribly ill to totter down to the cricket ground, he could not very well "mooch" in the quad, or go for a walk, or loaf about the school shop. Some beast of a prefect would be bound to ask him why he wasn't at games practice, and in the quad or the lanes or the tuckshop Bunter could not very well explain that he was excused by his Form captain because he was too ill to leave his study. Such an explanation, Bunter could not help feeling, would have sounded improbable.

So Bunter was confined to the House. After a nap in the armchair in Study No. 7, Bunter tired of the study, and wandered downstairs. He blinked into the quad, but did not venture out; he

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spotted Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth on the horizon, and jerked back his head at once. Time hung rather heavy on his hands till the fellows should come in to tea—though anything, of course, was better than the exertion of games practice.

Bunter loafed about the deserted passages, read the notices on the board, and yawned, and found it quite monotonous till the Bouncer came into the House. As Herbert Vernon-Smith headed at once for Masters' passage, Bunter's curiosity was aroused. A junior had no business in Masters' passage on a half-holiday, especially when his Form master was gone out for the afternoon. Bunter rolled after the Bouncer, and from the corner of the corridor, saw him pass quickly into Mr. Quelch's study and shut the door.

Then Bunter grinned a fat grin.

The Bouncer, of course, was taking advantage of his Form master's absence to play some jape in his study. Bunter had no doubt about that.

The Owl of the Remove had not the slightest objection to japes on Mr. Quelch. So long as some other fellow took the risk, Bunter highly approved of such things. He rolled along to Mr. Quelch's study, to watch the Bouncer's proceedings through the keyhole. It was quite a welcome relief to the monotony of an afternoon of idle slacking.

Bunter blinked through the keyhole, but he did not have the pleasure of seeing Smithy ragging Mr. Quelch's books, or upsetting his papers. He only saw Smithy standing at the telephone.

Bunter ceased to grin, and grunted with disappointment. Evidently the Bouncer was not there for a rag, but simply to borrow his Form master's telephone while he was out. But the Owl of the Remove did not roll away. His besetting sin was inquisitiveness. What Smithy had to say on the telephone was no concern of Bunter's; and, all the more for that reason, Bunter wanted to hear what Smithy had to say.

He changed the eye at the keyhole for a fat ear, and listened instead of watching.

He whistled softly, as he heard Smithy on the phone.

Of what Ponsonby said at the other end, of course, Bunter heard nothing. But he heard all Smithy's half of the talk, and it was enough to tell him the whole story.

"My hat!" murmured Bunter.

The Bouncer was looked on in the Remove as a good deal of an outsider. But even Bunter was surprised at what he heard now. Rows and raggings were incessant between the Remove fellows and Ponsonby's set at Highcliffe. The Bouncer was on friendly terms with that set. But it was amazing for even the Bouncer to be backing up Ponsonby & Co. against his own school—actually betraying a Greyfriars man into the hands of the enemy. Bunter was not a particular fellow, but he felt that it was the limit.

So keenly interested was Bunter that his fat ear was still glued to the door when the Bouncer finished telephoning and left the study hurriedly.

The door opened so suddenly that Bunter almost pitched into the room.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Vernon-Smith stared at him.

"You fat rascal!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You've been listening, you fat scoundrel!" panted the Bouncer.

Bunter backed away. The expression

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on Vernon-Smith's face rather alarmed him.

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I haven't heard a word!" he gasped. "Not a syllable! Not a whisper, old chap! I didn't know you were telephoning at all!"

The Bouncer strode at him, with a savage look.

Bunter dodged across the passage.

"Keep off, you beast! Look here! I'll jolly well tell the fellows that you've been setting Pon on to a Remove man—Yarooooooh!"

Bunter broke off with a roar as the angry Bouncer grasped his collar.

Bang!

There was another roar as Bunter's bullet head smote the wall with a resounding bang.

"Yooooop!"

The fat junior staggered away, and sat down with a bump, as the Bouncer flung him savagely aside.

Vernon-Smith strode away, with a black brow. Billy Bunter picked himself up dizzily.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Grooogh!" he spluttered. "Beast! Ow! Grooogh!"

Mr. Prout looked out of his study farther up the passage. The crash of William George Bunter had startled him out of an afternoon's nap.

"Bunter!" he hooted.

"Ow! Wow! Yes, sir! Ow!"

"How dare you make a disturbance in this passage!" roared Mr. Prout. "How dare you, I say!"

"Ow! I—I— Wow!" gasped Bunter.

"I shall report this to your Form master! Go!"

"Oh lor!"

Billy Bunter went. He scuttled away as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. It was Bunter's ill-luck that Wingate of the Sixth was just coming into the House. Wingate came in frowning. He had told the Bouncer to change at once and join the cricketers, and the Bouncer had gone into the House and had not reappeared. Wingate was coming in to look for him when Bunter dawned on the horizon.

"Bunter!" rapped out the Greyfriars captain.

"Oh dear! Yes, Wingate!" gasped Bunter.

"Why aren't you at games practice?"

"Oh dear!"

That was the question Bunter had dreaded to hear if he showed his fat person in public before tea-time. All through Smithy, he had to hear it now—and answer it.

"Well?" rapped out Wingate.

"I—I—I—"

"Frowsting, what?" snapped the prefect.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "I'm jolly keen on games practice, Wingate. Awfully keen. Only I'm ill—"

"What?"

"Wharton's let me off, because I'm ill," gasped Bunter. "I've got a fearful pain like a red-hot dagger. I can't move—"

"Can't move?" repeated Wingate, staring at him. As he had just seen Bunter bolting out of Masters' passage like a fat rabbit, the statement was really unconvincing.

"I—I mean—I can't get out of my study—that is to say, I can't—can't—can't play cricket, you know, owing to this fearful pain. It's like a burning dagger," said Bunter pathetically.

"I'm awfully sorry I'm ill, Wingate, as I'm—I'm so keen on games, you know."

"And Wharton let you off for that, did he?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter. "Being frightfully ill you know—"

"I shall speak to Wharton. You're the second slacker I've spotted dodging games practice this afternoon. I give you three minutes to change."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

"I'm going down to Little Side in a few minutes. If I don't find you there, look out for the ashplant."

"I—I'm really too ill, Wingate!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Wow! Leggo my collar! Wharrer you up to?"

Shake, shake!

"Feeling better now?" asked Wingate genially.

"Yaroooh! No. Worse!"

Shake, shake!

"Better now?"

"Yow-ow-ow! No!" shrieked Bunter, shaking like a fat jelly in the sinewy grasp of the Sixth-Former. "Yow-ow-ow!"

"Not better yet?"

"Ow! Wow! No!"

Shake, shake!

"Gerrrooogh!" spluttered Bunter. It dawned upon his fat brain that he was going to be shaken till he was well. Evidently it was time for him to recover. "Ow! I say, Wingate—grooogh—I'm better! I'm well—quite well! I—I—I'm right as rain! Yaroooh!"

Wingate grinned, gave him another shake, and released him.

"Now you're well, Bunter, get into flannels and cut down to Little Side. Sharp's the word!"

"Oh dear!"

And the Owl of the Remove rolled dismally away, and changed for cricket, and rolled down to Little Side in the lowest of spirits. Wingate of the Sixth proceeded to look for Vernon-Smith. But he did not find him. And ten minutes later the Greyfriars captain walked down to Little Side with a deep frown on his brow.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Waxy!

HARRY WHARTON was looking ruddy and cheery, when the captain of Greyfriars arrived on the junior cricket ground.

Most of the Remove were there, though there were some absentees. Even Billy Bunter had turned up—late—after being excused for illness! All the Famous Five were present, and all their friends. At the sight of the stalwart figure of George Wingate striding on the ground, the captain of the Remove supposed that he was coming to superintend the practice; but as Wingate came nearer, he could read trouble in the Sixth-Former's face.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, Wingate."

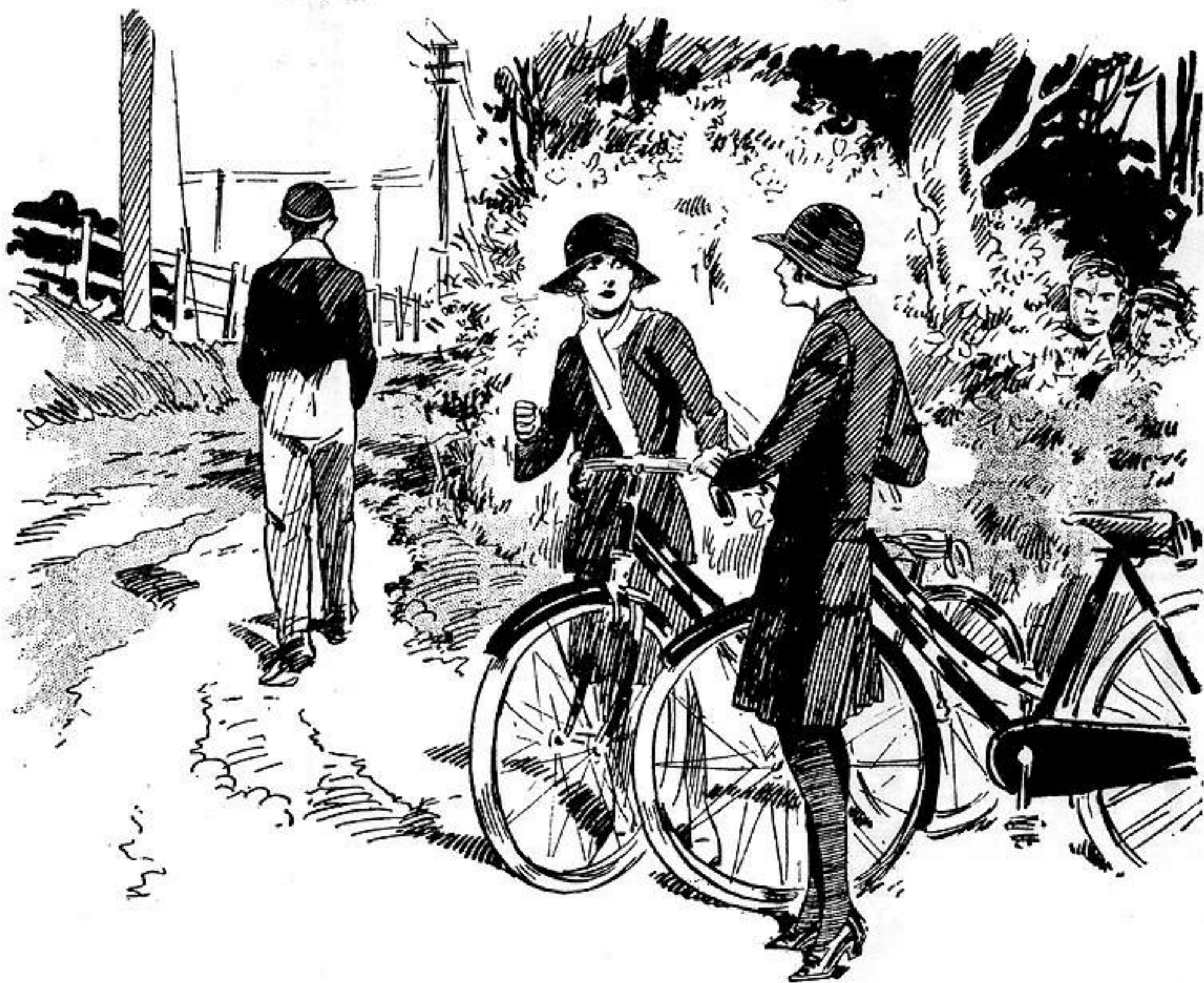
Harry Wharton wondered what the trouble was. He had a rather guilty feeling that he had been a little too easy with the slackers of the Form, and that the Head of the Games had seen some of them slacking about when they ought to have been at the nets. Wharton was not really slack in such matters, but like all characters who are really fitted to wield authority, he disliked exercising it if he could help it. Fellows like Billy Bunter delighted in giving orders; Wharton never gave an order if it could be helped. No doubt the slackers and "frowsters" of the Form sometimes took advantage of that trait in his character.

"This is a compulsory day for games practice, I believe," grunted Wingate.

"Yes," said Harry.

"Are all the Remove here?"

"Hem! No."



Hazeldene went on his way without glancing back once at the two schoolgirls standing by their machines at the roadside. "Well I never," said Miss Trevlyn, emphatically. "If he were my brother, I'd box his ears." "Oh, you're a silly girl, Clara," said Marjorie Hazeldene, stiffly. "Let's go on." Vernon-Smith and Skinner listened from behind the hedge. (See Chapter 6.)

The cricketers looked on in silence. Old Wingate was in a wax, that was clear to all eyes, and Wharton was "for it." Some of the Remove fellows were glad just then that they were not Form captain.

"I've just found that fat young sweep Bunter frowsting in the House and sent him down," said Wingate. "It seems that you let him off."

"Well, he pleaded sick," said Harry. "And you didn't know he was pulling your leg?"

"Well, he's not much use here, Wingate."

"Whether he's any use in the cricket doesn't matter—cricket is useful to him. It does him more good than frowsting in the House."

"I—I know! I'll lick him next time instead of letting him off."

"Where's Vernon-Smith?" Wharton coloured.

"Gone out of gates, I think."

"Did you let him off?"

"N-no."

"Were you going to report him to me?"

Wharton was silent.

"He's not out of gates," went on Wingate. "He came in, and I told him to turn up. He's disappeared since; he's not here?"

"No."

"I'll deal with him," Wingate's

sharp glance roved over the cricketers.

"Where's Skinner?"

"Not here," said Harry.

"That's three. Where's Hazeldene?"

"I let him off."

"That's four. What did you let Hazeldene off for?"

"He was going over to Cliff House."

"That's not a reason."

"His sister's at Cliff House, Wingate," ventured Bob Cherry.

"If Hazeldene wants to call at his sister's school, he can do so on a day when games practice isn't compulsory," snapped the Greyfriars captain. "You can shut up, Cherry."

"Hem! Yes, Wingate."

"Any more missing?" snapped Wingate.

Harry Wharton, very red and uncomfortable, glanced round. He was not quite sure, as Wingate could see. Fortunately, no more black sheep were missing from the flock.

"All here," said Harry.

"Very well. You ought not to have let off Bunter; and you ought not to have let off Hazeldene. You ought to have reported Skinner and Vernon-Smith to me as Head of the Games, if they absented themselves without leave."

"I—I know! But—it's right about Skinner, but Smithy isn't a slacker,"

said Harry. "He's anything but a slacker."

"Are you making new rules on your own?"

"Nunno!" stammered Wharton.

"Then don't talk nonsense. You've not done your duty as captain of the Remove, Wharton."

Wharton was silent. It was true enough, and the reproof was justified. He had been careless, at least.

"This won't do, and you know it won't!" grunted Wingate. "If you're not prepared to do the duties of a Form captain, Wharton, nobody's preventing you from resigning. You'll have to resign if you don't do better. That's enough for the present."

And Wingate of the Sixth stalked away, still frowning.

There was silence on Little Side after he was gone. Bob Cherry broke it, with a faint grin.

"Old Wingate's in a royal wax."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"The waxfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Begad, I'm glad I turned up, dear man," yawned Lord Maulverer. "I

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(Continued from page 13.)

was goin' to ask you to let me off because I was so tired. Glad I didn't."

"I don't see what Wingate wanted to butt in for," grunted Snoop. "Like his cheek, I think."

"Oh, rats," said Harry. "He's right enough, and I'm in the wrong. But he's extra waxy because Smithy seems to have cheeked him."

"The Bounder's asking for trouble again," grinned Bolsover major. "You're rather an ass, Wharton. I jolly well know that Hazel hasn't gone over to Cliff House. Rather steep to tell Wingate that. Suppose he finds out that you were stuffing him."

Wharton crimsoned.

"What do you mean, Bolsover? Hazel asked me to let him off to go and see his sister at Cliff House. He said it was important."

"Does his sister live at Highcliffe?" chuckled Bolsover.

"What the thump do you mean?"

"I jolly well know that Hazel started for Highcliffe, anyhow."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bob.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"I don't believe it," he said. "He may have gone round by Courtfield Common on his bike, and you fancied he was going to Highcliffe."

"He wasn't on his bike."

"Well, he told me he was going to Cliff House, and I believed him, and believe him now," snapped the captain of the Remove.

"None so blind as those who won't see," grinned Snoop. "Has Skinner gone to Cliff House, too?"

"Hang Skinner."

"Oh, keep your wool on," jeered Bolsover major. "You've been jolly slack, Wharton, and you've got jawed for it by the captain of the school, but you can't take it out of us, see?"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Get on with the cricket," he said.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter," snapped Harry.

"But, I say, let a fellow speak," howled Bunter. "Wingate's gone now, and he's not likely to come back. Can I clear off?"

"What?" hooted Wharton.

"I'm ill, you know," urged Bunter. "I've got a fearful pain. That beast Wingate shook me, you know, when I told him I had a pain like a burning dagger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I call it heartless," said Bunter hotly. "I'm ill—I told you I was ill. Wharton. I suppose you can take a fellow's word. Wingate won't come back again; and if he does, it won't hurt you to have another jaw. Don't be selfish. Can I go?"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Wharton, I tell you I've got a fearful pain—"

"I'll give you another," said Bob Cherry, lifting his bat.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, kick him, somebody!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as two or three of the cricketers obliged at once.

"Kick him till he's well!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper."

"Yooop! Gerraway! I'm well!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm quite well! Keep off! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter, having had a second wonderful recovery that afternoon, joined in the games practice, and was not allowed to crawl away till tea-time.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bend Over!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH came in about two seconds before lock-up, and Gosling, who was already at the gates with his keys, gave him an expressive look.

"Not this time, old bean," said the Bounder lightly.

And he walked on to the House, leaving Gosling grunting. Skinner met him as he came into the House, with a dismal countenance.

"I say, Smithy, we're for it," mumbled Skinner.

The Bounder smiled sarcastically. He knew that he was for it, after his deliberate defiance of Wingate's order to go down to games practice. But he had the hardihood to face the music when his rebellious insubordination landed him in trouble. He knew that he had to take "six" in the captain's study, and he cared little. Skinner was made of very different stuff. He had cut games practice, relying on his Form captain's carelessness or good-nature not to report him. And he was nailed, and he did not like it.

"Reported?" asked Smithy.

"Either that, or else Wingate spotted that I was out," groaned Skinner. "I dare say Wharton told him. He's that sort of a rotter!"

"Horrid rotter to do his duty!" agreed the Bounder. "You'd never be guilty of anythin' of the sort, would you, old bean?"

Harold Skinner scowled savagely.

"Well, you're for it, too!" he snapped. "So's that fozzling cad Hazel. We're all up after roll."

"I dare say we shall survive it," sneered the Bounder. "They can't scare me, at all events."

"You may like the ashplant," growled Skinner.

The Bounder laughed.

"Not at all; but I hope I can stand it without shivering in my shoes. Let's go in to roll."

The Greyfriars fellows were heading for Big Hall for roll-call. In the corridor Harry Wharton came up to the Bounder. His face was clouded.

"You're to report in Wingate's study after roll, Smithy," he said.

"I guessed that."

"You've got me into a thumping row, cutting games practice," said the captain of the Remove. "Wingate came down to Little Side and put me through it."

"It isn't all honey bein' Form captain," grinned the Bounder. "You have to take the rough with the smooth."

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"There's not going to be any more of it," he said quietly.

"Not?" queried the Bounder.

"No. I've been too easy-going, and Wingate was quite right to slang me, so far as that goes. But it's not pleasant; and I don't want to go through it again. Don't cut games practice any more."

"I shall suit myself about that."

Wharton breathed hard.

"You won't suit yourself, Smithy; you'll play up like the other fellows. Next Wednesday you'll be on Little Side."

The Bounder smiled mockingly.

"Next Wednesday I shall be where I choose," he answered. "It won't be on Little Side, either."

"Oh cheese it, Smithy!" broke in Bob Cherry. "What's the good of talking out of your silly hat?"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Wharton may be a little tin god to you," he said contemptuously. "He's nothing of the sort to me. I've said that I shall not turn up for games practice on Wednesday, and I won't! And your jolly old Form captain can put that in his pipe and smoke it!"

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed, and he clenched his hands. His temper had been sorely ruffled that afternoon; a slanging was no more agreeable because it was more or less deserved. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith who was the cause of it; and his present insolence, in addition, was very hard to bear.

The Bounder did not recede a step; he watched the captain of the Form with a mocking, malicious smile. He was not at all averse from a fight in the corridor leading to Big Hall, where a master might come along at any moment, or the Head himself. The Bounder was utterly reckless. There was a kink in his nature which made him rebellious to all authority, even that of his headmaster.

But Wharton restrained his anger.

"Leave it till Wednesday, then," he said very quietly. "I don't mean to row with you over silly gas, Vernon-Smith."

And the captain of the Remove turned away, and went into Hall with his friends.

The Bounder laughed aloud, and strolled carelessly after him. There were two uneasy faces in the Remove at call-over—Hazel's and Skinner's. But the Bounder, who had much more severity to expect than either of them, was cool and careless. After roll, the three juniors went along together to the Sixth Form passage for Wingate's study.

The captain of the school had a cane on his table when the three culprits presented themselves.

"You three cut games practice this afternoon!" he said.

"I had leave from my Form captain, Wingate," muttered Hazel.

"I know that; Wharton told me."

"Well, then?" Hazel grew bolder. The blame was Wharton's, not his, if anyone was to blame; and the captain of the school could hardly swish him for another's fault. "I'm entitled to take leave when it's given."

"Quite!" said Wingate. "Wharton gave you leave to go over to Cliff House to see your sister there. You shouldn't have asked him; but the blame is Wharton's for letting you off without a good reason. If it was a matter of importance, as you seem to have made Wharton believe, that alters the case. Was it a matter of importance?"

Skinner and Vernon-Smith watched Hazel rather curiously. He knew nothing of the fact that they had seen him on his way to Highcliffe.

That the two black sheep had been smoking behind the hawthorn hedge, on the Courtfield road, when he had met his sister and Clara there, Hazel had not the faintest idea.

"Why, yes," said Hazel slowly. "I—I wanted to see Marjorie about—about the next holidays—"

Hazel, like most weak characters, dropped into falsehood easily enough when he was in a difficulty. But he did not like lying, and he flushed uncomfortably as he spoke.

"The holidays are a good way off yet," said Wingate dryly. "Put it plain. You pulled Wharton's leg to get off games practice."

"Well, he gave me leave," muttered Hazel sullenly. "No harm in taking leave when it's given."

"But a great deal of harm in deceiving a fellow and taking advantage of his good-nature," snapped Wingate. "As likely as not you never went over to Cliff House at all. It was just a yarn you gave Wharton, what?"

Hazel's flush deepened.

"I—I was going," he stammered. "But—but I was ragged by some Highcliffe cads. They shoved me in a ditch, and I came back."

"Where did that happen?"

"On the Courtfield road," stammered Hazel.

"That's the opposite direction from Cliff House."

"I—I was taking a stroll round—"

"You were going to Cliff House, and you started by walking in the opposite direction," said Wingate grimly. "Own up that you slacked off games practice, and told your Form captain a lie as an excuse!"

Hazel was silent.

"Anything more to say?"

"No!" muttered Hazel.

"Bend over that chair!"

Swish!

It was not a very severe cut, but it drew a loud yell from Hazel. He never could stand punishment.

"Now you, Skinner—"

"I own up," said Skinner. "I cut games practice because it was a hot afternoon, and I felt lazy."

Wingate stared at him.

"Well, that's frank, at all events," he said. "I'm glad to get the truth, anyhow. You will write out a hundred lines, Skinner; and if it happens again, look out for a licking."

"Yes, Wingate!" said Skinner meekly.

It was not often that Harold Skinner told the truth, but he knew when it was judicious to do so.

"And now you, Vernon-Smith," said Wingate, his brow darkening again. "you cut games practice, and cleared off somewhere after I had spotted you, and told you to go down to Little Side."

"Yes," said the Bounder.

"You did not go down to the cricket?"

"No."

"Where did you go?"

"I went out by a back door," said the Bounder lazily.

"Because you knew I was looking for you?"

"Yes."

Hazel and Skinner stared at the Bounder. Probably he was the only fellow in the Lower School at Greyfriars who had the nerve to talk to the captain of the school like this.

"You directly disobeyed my order?"

"Yes."

"I think you'll be sorry for it," said Wingate grimly. "You've been giving a lot of trouble lately, Vernon-Smith, and you seem to have set up as a sort of rebellion in your Form. I don't think you'll find it pay in the long run. Bend over that chair!"

"Anythin' to oblige."

The cane rose and fell with heavy swishes. Hazel and Skinner looked on, almost shuddering. Neither of them could have stood that castigation without yelling wildly.

Not a sound came from the Bounder.

His hard face whitened a little; his teeth were set, and his eyes glinted savagely. But he uttered no cry.

Six strokes descended on him, and then Wingate stopped. An unwritten law limited the number of strokes inflicted by a prefect to six. But six were enough—more than enough—for any ordinary fellow. The Bounder was pale when he rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Now cut!" said the captain of Greyfriars.

The three juniors left the study.

"Rotten injustice!" muttered Hazel, in the passage. "I had leave—"

"Oh, don't whine!" said Skinner contemptuously. "What you've had was a joke to what Smithy's had. How do you feel, Smithy?"

For once, Skinner was almost sympathetic to his friend.

Vernon-Smith made no answer. He walked away slowly, with a white, set face; and the fellows who saw him going to his study could see that Smithy had been through it. Skinner followed him to the study; but a savage look from the Bounder drove him away again, and he went along to Snoop's study to do prep. Herbert Vernon-Smith was left alone.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not the Upper Hand!

"ALL in the dark, what?" asked Billy Bunter.

There was no answer from Study No. 4.

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway in surprise.

He knew that the Bounder was there, and he had expected to find Vernon-Smith at a late tea, or at prep.

But the light was not on; and through the shadows, Bunter could see Vernon-Smith's eyes glinting.

But the Owl of the Remove, remembering that Smithy had been up before the head prefect, grinned. No doubt the Bounder was feeling disinclined for either prep or tea, at present.

It was probable that he was just as disinclined for company, especially Bunter's company. But that was a matter of no moment. Bunter rolled into the study.

"Shall I put the light on, Smithy?"

"No," muttered the Bounder.

"Had your tea out?"

"Yes."

"I was going to ask you to a spread in my study, Smithy."

"Get out, you fat fool!"

"Hem! I'll put the light on for you, old chap!"

Bunter put on the light. He blinked at the Bounder rather curiously. Vernon-Smith was standing, leaning against the mantelpiece. Doubtless the armchair did not tempt him, after what he had been through in the Greyfriars captain's study. His face was pale, his eyes glinted with a threatening light at Bunter. The Bounder only wanted to be left alone, till he recovered from that hefty "six." Hard as he was—hard as

nails all through—the Bounder was feeling it.

But Bunter was not to be denied. It was not at all uncommon for Billy Bunter to understudy the fools who rush in where angels fear to tread.

"You've had it bad, Smithy?" he said, with a lurking grin.

No answer.

"What you want, old fellow, is a supper to set you up," said Bunter. "I say, I believe Mrs. Mumble would let me have the stuff, if I asked her. I can get out of the House all right."

The Bounder's eyes burned at him, but he did not speak. He was disinclined for even so much exertion as was required to kick the fat junior out of the room.

"Well, what about it, old chap?" asked Bunter briskly.

"Get out!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You fat fool! Leave me alone!"

Bunter blinked at him. Of course, the fellow was feeling ratty, after a prefect's licking. But he couldn't cheek Bunter—considering what Bunter knew! The Owl of the Remove was quite indignant.

"The fact is, Smithy, what you did this afternoon was the limit," said Bunter. "I suppose you don't expect me to keep it dark."

The Bounder started a little. He had not forgotten that Bunter had overheard his talk on the telephone, but other matters had driven it from his mind.

"Setting the Highcliffe cads on a Greyfriars man!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "I saw Hazel when he came in—he'd been ragged to the wide. He was in an awful temper, too. He doesn't seem to know that you set that gang on him—yet!"

The Bounder did not speak; but his eyes burned. The obtuse Owl of the Remove, sure that he held the whip-hand now, did not heed the danger-signals.

"What would the fellows say, Smithy? They don't like you chumming with those Highcliffe cads. They haven't forgotten how you got Pon and his mob to keep a Remove man away from a match last term. Suppose all the fellows knew you phoned up Pon & Co. and set them on to a Remove chap, to rag him! What?"

The Bounder eyed him, without speaking.

Bunter rattled on.

"You're in the Form's bad books already, Smithy. I fancy that would be the finish, what? You can't expect me to keep it dark. It's really the limit. I'm bound to say that I'm disgusted at you. Betraying a Greyfriars man to the enemy! Pah!"

Bunter sniffed scornfully.

"Will you get out, Bunter?" said the Bounder, in a low voice.

"No, I won't! Who the thump are you to give orders?" sneered Bunter. "You'd better mind your p's and q's, Smithy, if you don't want a Form ragging. I hold you in the hollow of my hand!" added Bunter dramatically, holding up a fat paw to give point to his remarks. "See?"

The Bounder's quietness and silence puzzled the fat junior. He could not see that Smithy, at that moment, was a good deal like a tiger crouching for a spring.

"I came here as a friend," went on Bunter, with dignity. "You're a rank outsider, Smithy—an awful rotter. You'll admit that. Still, if you treat a fellow as a pal, a fellow's bound to treat you as a pal. See? Now, what about a supper in the study?"

Bunter paused for a reply; but paused in vain.

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ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2:

"As it happens," he resumed, "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, Smithy. I dare say you heard me mention that I was expecting a postal-order. Well, it hasn't come."

Bunter blinked at the white, furious face.

"I suppose you could lend me ten bob till it comes, Smithy."

"Have you finished?"

"Eh?"

"Better get out while you're safe."

"Oh, come off!" snapped Bunter. "I don't want any cheek from you, Smithy. I want you to understand, first of all, that I'm not taking any lip. See? A fellow who's sold out a chap in his own Form to the enemy can't put on lift with me. Just understand that at the start. Now—"

The Bounder stirred at that.

He made a stride towards Bunter, and the fat junior, realising his danger, broke off suddenly and jumped to the door.

He jumped too late.

The Bounder's savage grip was on him and Bunter yelled with apprehension. With his free hand the Bounder caught up a long ebony ruler from the table. Bunter was swung over, helpless in Smithy's strong hands, and the ruler rose and fell with terrific swipes.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Leggo! Leave off! Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter frantically. "Help! Rescue! Yaroooooh!"

Crash!

Bunter went spinning through the doorway and landed in the passage in a yelling heap.

The Bounder slammed the door after him.

William George Bunter had come to Smithy's study, with the conviction in his fat mind that he had the upper hand. He realised that there had been an error of judgment somewhere as he limped painfully and dolorously away.

Vernon-Smith, in the study, leaned on the mantelpiece again. His face was dark and bitter. He knew that the Owl of the Remove would tattle, and he knew that there was trouble to follow. Nothing would have induced him to bow his pride to the extent of making terms with the fat and fatuous Owl. But there was trouble to come, and he knew it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Facing the Music!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry was coming along the Remove passage for a chat in No. 1, after prep, when Hazeldene almost rushed into him.

Bob stopped in astonishment.

Hazel's face was white and furious; his eyes blazed with rage. Seldom or never had Bob seen him so enraged. It was not uncommon for Hazel's weak, passionate nature to blaze out into fury, with or without cause. But there was evidently something very unusual the matter now.

"Hold on, old bean!" exclaimed Bob, catching Hazel by the shoulder as he was rushing past.

"Let me go, you fool!"

"Eh?"

"Hands off, you dummy!" yelled Hazel.

"But what's the row?" asked Bob, heedless of those epithets. "What on earth's happened?"

"That cad, Smithy!" Hazel choked. "That cur—that traitor—Let me go, I tell you! I'm going to smash him!"

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He dragged himself fiercely from Bob's restraining hand.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob, as Hazel rushed on furiously to the Bounder's study and hurled the door wide open.

"What the thump is the row?" asked Peter Todd, looking out of No. 7.

"Goodness knows! Hazel says he's going to smash Smithy. Rather a hefty job for him!" grinned Bob. "He's got his rag out over something."

"He generally has," grunted Peter.

"Better come along and help me pick up the pieces," said Bob. "Hazel will want helping home after the smashing's over. I don't really think Smithy will be the smashed party."

Bob and Toddy followed Hazel to the Bounder's study. Three or four other fellows gathered round curiously. Among them was Billy Bunter, with his grinning, fat face.

The Bounder's door had crashed open, knocking over a chair. Hazel fairly bounded into the study. Vernon-Smith, still leaning on the corner of the mantelpiece, eyed him coolly. The enraged junior rushed up to him and shook his fist almost in Smithy's face. The Bounder did not stir an inch, but his voice came cold and cutting:

"Keep your distance, you fool!"

"You cur!" shouted Hazel.

"I've kicked one cheeky cad out of my study," said the Bounder icily. "So you want to go the same way?"

"You rotter! You cur! You scoundrel!" yelled Hazel. "Put up your hands, you hound! I'm going to smash you!"

Vernon-Smith had no choice about putting up his hands, for Hazel struck furiously at his face as he spoke.

The blow was knocked aside with a sharp rap on Hazel's wrist that drew a gasping cry of pain from him. But he hurled himself at the Bounder, and in a second they were fighting.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

Hazel was no match for the iron-limbed Bounder. In his cooler moments he knew that well enough. But he was blazing with rage now, and he neither thought nor cared about it. He attacked Vernon-Smith so furiously that Smithy had to give ground a little. Two or three savage blows came home, and the Bounder's eyes glinted. But he contented himself with stalling off the furious attack, and did not hit out till Hazel, pressing him harder and harder, fairly forced him to do so. Then the Bounder's right flashed out, and Hazel went towards the door, head over heels, almost. He crashed down on the carpet with a grunt.

By that time there was a surging mob of Remove fellows round the study doorway. Hazel on the warpath to this extent was a surprise to the Remove.

He lay dizzy and panting on the floor for some moments, and Harry Wharton came quickly into the study.

"What the thump is this about?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask Hazel," he answered.

"Hazel, old man—"

The panting junior staggered to his feet. He was trembling from head to foot with excitement and rage. That one knock-out drive had taught him how totally incapable he was of handling the Bounder. But he was coming on again passionately when the captain of the Remove interposed.

"Hold on, Hazel! What on earth—"

"Let me get at that cur!" shouted Hazel.

"But what's the trouble?"

Hazel panted.

"That cur—Vernon-Smith! I've been

ragged by the Highcliffe cads this afternoon. Four of them set on me, and ragged me, and ducked me in a filthy ditch—"

"Well, that's nothing to do with Smithy," said Wharton.

"He set them on me!" shrieked Hazel.

"Rot!"

"He did! He did! He daren't deny it!"

"Piffle!" said Bob Cherry. "We know that Smithy is friendly with that gang of outsiders, but he wouldn't do a thing like that. Why should he, if you come to that?"

"Yes, can it," said Ogilvy. "You're always going off at the deep end about something, Hazel. Don't be a fool."

"He did!" shrieked Hazel. "Bunter knows!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "Mean to say that you've let that fat fibber pull your silly leg?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"I tell you he did!" raved Hazel.

"Bunter heard him. He rang up Highcliffe on the phone and put Ponsonby up to it. Bunter heard him."

The Bounder did not speak. A sardonic smile flickered over his hard face, and that was all.

"I don't believe it," said Harry Wharton sharply. "Smithy wouldn't do anything of the kind."

"Wouldn't he?" yelled Hazel.

"Didn't he get the Highcliffe cads to mob Dallas last term?"

"That was a different matter. Rotten enough, I know, but—"

"Smithy had a feud with that chap, Dallas, when he was here," said Bob Cherry. "But you've been friends. Why, only the other day you were in this study, card-playing—"

"I tell you he did! Bunter heard him—"

"Rubbish!" said the captain of the Remove tersely. "It's one of Bunter's fathomed yarns, and you've had your leg pulled. You fat bounder, what have you been spinning Hazel this yarn for?"

"Tain't a yarn," roared Bunter indignantly. "I heard Smithy at Quelch's phone this afternoon. It was all through him that Wingate spotted me. I shouldn't have been there, only I—"

"Only you were spying on Smithy!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Let him tell you what he heard," panted Hazel. "Never mind whether he was spying or not. Let him tell you."

"Cough it up, Bunter!" said Peter Todd.

Bunter spluttered out what he had overheard at Mr. Quelch's door. Hazel, obviously, believed every word of it. But every other face was doubtful.

"Gammon!" said Frank Nugent.

"Terrific gammonfulness!" concurred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"And you believed that rotten, silly yarn, Hazel?" demanded the captain of the Remove contemptuously.

"Yes; and I believe it now."

"Then you're a fool!"

Hazel pointed a shaking finger at the Bounder.

"He daren't deny it!" he said, in a choking voice. "Ask him! He dare not!"

"Smithy's only got to deny it, and every fellow here will take his word, and so will you, when you're cool," said Harry.

He turned to the Bounder. He was feeling anything but friendly towards Herbert Vernon-Smith; the rebel of the Remove had caused him enough trouble that day, and had followed it up with insolent defiance that was very hard



Ponsonby & Co. rolled Hazeldene over and over in the dust, towards the ditch. "You fools!" shrieked Hazeldene. "You dummies! I'll—" "Pitch him in, the Greyfriars cad!" Crash! Splash! Hazeldene went hurtling into the ditch. Ponsonby & Co. stood on the bank and roared with laughter, as he struggled frantically in mud and ooze, and green slime. (See Chapter 7.)

for Wharton to bear with patience. But fair play was fair play, and Harry did not think for a moment of believing such an accusation, founded upon no better evidence than an eavesdropper's.

"Say the word, Smithy," said Wharton. "Nobody here believes it. You've only got to deny it."

The Bounder did not answer.

In his warfare with masters and prefects the Bounder was absolutely unscrupulous; but with fellows of his own Form the matter was different. His pride and arrogance would never have allowed him to shelter himself behind a lie in dealing with Remove fellows.

"He dare not deny it!" panted Hazel.

The Bounder laughed contemptuously.

"I don't choose to," he answered.

"You can deny it if it isn't true, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry.

"Quite."

"What? You don't mean—"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You see, it's true," he drawled.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Remove Ragging!

THERE was a sudden silence in the study and, in the crowded passage outside. Almost all the Remove were on the spot now. The uproar had drawn even Lord Mauleverer from his study. Skinner, however, generally to the fore when trouble was toward, was not on the scene. As the Bounder's pal, Skinner might have been expected to line up at once when Smithy was in a row with the rest of the Form. For that very

reason Harold Skinner was sedulously sticking to his prep in Snoop's study. Skinner was not the kind of fellow to hunt for a front seat in the hour of danger. Certainly he knew that nearly all the Form were thronging round the Bounder's study, and he had no doubt it meant a Form ragging. Skinner was prepared to offer his condolences afterwards.

The sudden silence lasted several moments. The Bounder's answer almost stupefied the Remove fellows.

They knew Smithy, they knew his arrogant nature, and they knew that he would not skulk behind a falsehood. But nobody excepting the hot-headed Hazel had believed the story for a moment.

"True?" stuttered Bob Cherry, at last.

"Quite."

"I say, you fellows, I told you so!" squeaked Bunter. "I tell you I heard him on Quelch's phone, talking to Ponsonby at Highcliffe—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

Hazel's eyes blazed at Smithy.

"You rotter! You cur! You know I can't handle you, or you'd never have dared play such a dirty trick on a fellow. But I'm going to try—"

"Keep back, Hazel," said Harry Wharton quietly. "If this is true, it's a matter for the whole Form to deal with."

Hazel hesitated a moment and then stepped back, with a bitter look at the Bounder.

"Let's have this plain, Vernon-Smith," said the captain of the Remove, in the same quiet tone. "You admit that you telephoned to Ponsonby, at

Highcliffe, and set him to rag a Greyfriars man?"

"Admitted."

"So you're backing up those Highcliffe cads against your own school?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, no! But circumstances alter cases," drawled the Bounder. "Anythin' more to ask? Bunter seems to have given most of the details. I asked Pon to lay for Hazel and rag him. I asked it as a favour. Pon's an obligin' chap. He did it. Pon & Co. never have any objection to a raggin', if they're three or four to one, and the one isn't much class as a fightin' man. Pon fell to it at once. He simply ate it, in fact."

Some of the juniors grinned.

"Hazel walked into their hands, and they seemed to have ragged him in good style," went on Vernon-Smith. "That's about all."

"You betrayed a Greyfriars man into their hands," said Wharton. "That's what it comes to."

The Bounder seemed to reflect. All eyes were curiously on him.

"I suppose it looks like that," he admitted.

"You don't mean to say that Ponsonby would have got after Hazel, if you hadn't tipped him on the phone?"

"I'm sure not. He knew nothing about Hazel till I rang him up on Mobbs' phone."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"And that's what you were at this afternoon, when you cut games practice?" he said.

"Just that."

"And do you think you'll get off THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,012.

scot-free, when you own up to having handed over a Greyfriars man to the enemy?" roared Johnny Bull.

The Bounder laughed scornfully.

"Hazel can call me to account, if he likes."

"Hazel's not up to your weight, or you'd never have done it," said Johnny Bull. "You'll get a ragging from the Form."

"The rotten hound admits it!" said Hazel thickly. "I can tell you, I had a frightful ragging from those Highcliffe cads. They were jolly glad to get a Remove man alone. I never had a chance. I was rolled in mud and slime and my clothes spoiled. I got back to Greyfriars more dead than alive. That rotter's got to pay for it!"

"He will pay for it," said Harry Wharton, his brow dark with anger. "It's the limit. I'd never have dreamed that even Smithy could be guilty of dirty treachery like that."

The Bounder winced a little.

But he did not speak.

He had only to speak—he knew that. If the Famous Five had known that Hazel was going to Highcliffe to gamble with Ponsonby, and that the Bounder had taken that method of stopping him, their sympathy with the wretched scapegrace would have died a very sudden death. There were few of the fellows who would not have approved of that method, or almost any other, of keeping the wretched Hazel from his blackguardly pursuits, which were liable at any moment to land him in irretrievable disaster. Not that the Bounder cared a straw about Hazel personally. It was for Marjorie's sake—to save Marjorie from the distress which her foolish brother's shady scrapes brought upon her that the Bounder had chipped in. But not to save his life would he have said so.

He knew that he was "for it" now, and his face hardened. He was looked on as a traitor to his school. All the juniors knew was that he had given the enemy a tip how and where to catch a Greyfriars man at a disadvantage, and it was no wonder that every face was angry and vengeful. It was the limit, and a long way beyond the limit. There was a general movement of the Removites into Smithy's study.

"Anything more to say, Vernon-Smith, before you go through it?" asked the captain of the Remove grimly.

The Bounder yawned.

"Dear man, your company and your conversation both bore me. I've got nothin' more to say, exceptin' that I'd like to see your back."

Wharton glanced round, with a glint in his eyes.

"You fellows, you've heard that blackguard admit what he's done. He put a Greyfriars man into the enemy's hands—a fellow, too, that he's been on friendly terms with. He doesn't care for that, so long as he backs up those Highcliffe cads against his own school. What's the verdict?"

"Rag him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Give him beans!"

The Bounder was still smiling, but his hands were clenched hard and his eyes gleamed like steel.

"Wade in!" he said coolly.

"Collar the cad!"

There was a fierce rush at the Bounder.

Bob Cherry staggered back, and Johnny Bull dropped on the floor, under the Bounder's fierce blows. But the next moment he was in the grasp of many hands and swept off his feet.

What followed was wildly exciting.

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It was a Form ragging, and a Form ragging was a severe punishment. It was more severe than usual in this case.

Vernon-Smith, white with rage, resisted all the time; even when his breath was gone, his strength spent, he still resisted.

But his resistance availed him nothing.

For ten minutes there was something like pandemonium in Study No. 4 in the Remove.

Then the Removites left him, and Vernon-Smith, sprawling on the floor, gasping and panting, watched them as they went with eyes that gleamed like a snake's.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Is Highly Amused!

HAROLD SKINNER strolled along the Remove passage to Study No. 4, and hesitated a few moments before he entered. Skinner had done his prep very comfortably in Snoop's study while the row was on; he waited till it was well over before he came to Study No. 4. There was a slight smile on his face, but he was feeling rather uneasy. Certainly, Skinner could not have helped the Bounder much in his extremity, and it was very unlikely that the Bounder had expected him to help—or thought of him at all.

Still, even Skinner realised that it was not precisely a pal's duty to remain at a distance and turn a deaf ear while a fellow was getting the ragging of his life. A ragging, in Harold Skinner's opinion, was what the arrogant Bounder wanted, and Skinner charitably hoped that it would do him good. But he was a little uneasy as to how Smithy would take his desertion.

He opened the door of Study No. 4 at last and looked in—prepared to pass on hurriedly down the passage if the Bounder showed signs of cutting up rusty.

Vernon-Smith was there, sprawling in the armchair. He looked spent, and was breathing fast. His collar and tie were gone, his clothes dusty, his hair like a mop. He looked as if he had been through a thorough ragging, and Skinner allowed himself a smile as he gazed at him.

The Bounder did not stir.

Skinner coughed.

"Been through it, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith looked up as he spoke.

He nodded.

"Form ragging?"

"Yes."

"What was it all about?"

The Bounder did not trouble to answer.

"You've got a lot of fellows' backs up, old chap," said Skinner. "But this is rather thick. I haven't heard—"

"I know that; you've been keeping off the scene," said the Bounder jeeringly. "You might as well have looked on. Did you think I should expect you to lend a hand?"

"The fact is, you seemed so ratty that I went to Snoop's study for my prep, so I never knew—"

"Cut it out!"

"Well, you look a bit of a wreck," said Skinner. "Not much good my chippin' in, if I'd been here, if it was a Form ragging. But they didn't give you this for cutting games practice and cheeking Wharton, surely?"

"Of course not, you fool!"

"Then what was it?"

"Find out!"

"Anything a chap can do?"

"Only leave me alone."

Skinner shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the study again. The Removites were gone down to the Rag, and Skinner went downstairs. It was not surprising to him that the Bounder had had a Form ragging, but he was rather curious to learn the cause.

There was some excitement in the Rag when Skinner came into that apartment. Many of the fellows were discussing the ragging of the Bounder and his black treachery, as they regarded it. The suggestion had been mooted of barring the traitor for the rest of the term, and it caught on. Certainly, few of the Greyfriars fellows were disposed to speak again to the man who had betrayed a schoolfellow into the hands of the enemy.

"What's the merry rumpus about?" asked Skinner, coming up to the group where the Famous Five stood.

Three or four voices explained at once. Skinner's eyes opened wide as he listened.

"Well, my only hat!" he ejaculated. "So that's why Smithy chucked me this afternoon and came back? And you've ragged him for that?"

"Yes!" snapped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"What the thump are you cackling at?" demanded Bob Cherry angrily. "It's not a laughing matter, Skinner."

"Isn't it?" chuckled Skinner. "My mistake—I thought it was. Ha, ha, ha!" Skinner roared again.

Wharton gave him a dark look.

"Vernon-Smith's going to be barred, Skinner," he said curtly. "He will be sent to Coventry for the rest of the term. Any fellow speaking to him will be barred along with him."

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner.

"You can dig in my study, like you used to, Skinner," said Stott. "It's too thick, you know. Smithy was always a bad egg—but turning out a rotten traitor to his own school—pah!"

"But didn't he tell you—" began Skinner.

"He owned up, if that's what you mean!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "You'd better take Stott's offer, Skinner; you'll be barred along with the Bounder if you stick to him."

"Catch Skinner sticking to a sinking ship!" said Bolsover major.

"Smithy's my pal," said Skinner.

"And he stands jolly good feeds in his study, and never asks you to stand your whack!" sneered Bolsover.

"Well, you'll have to give Smithy's feeds the go-by for the rest of the term, Skinner, unless you want to be barred, too," said Peter Todd.

Skinner grinned.

"You mean to say that Smithy never told you why he did it?" he asked.

"He did it because he's a sneaking traitor, thick with those Highcliffe cads, and backing them up against Greyfriars," growled Bolsover major.

"Rot! I suppose he was too jolly proud to explain—that's the Bounder all over," said Skinner. "All the same, a Form ragging is no joke. But it's Smithy all over."

"What do you mean?" grunted the captain of the Remove. "What could he explain? We know what he did."

"But you don't know why he did it," grinned Skinner. "I fancy you wouldn't have ragged him if you'd known. Do you know why Hazel was going to Highcliffe?"

"What the thump do you mean?" snapped Wharton. "Hazel was nowhere near Highcliffe. He was going to Cliff House."



The Bounder's door crashed open, and Hazeldene fairly bundled into the study. Vernon-Smith, still leaning on the corner of the mantelpiece, eyed him coolly. The enraged Hazel rushed up to him, and shook his fist almost in Smithy's face. The Bounder did not stir an inch, but his voice came cold and cutting. "Keep your distance, you fool!" (See Chapter 12.)

"Dear man," grinned Skinner, "that was a little spoof to get off games practice. He was going to Highcliffe."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Wharton. "I take Hazel's word about that, not yours, Skinner."

"Perhaps you'd take Marjorie Hazeldene's word," sneered Skinner. "She met him on the road over Courtfield Common this afternoon, and Hazel told her he couldn't come with her because he was going to Highcliffe, and he was in a hurry."

Wharton started.

"How do you know all that?"

"Because Smithy and I were having a little smoke behind the hedge and heard them," said Skinner coolly. "Hazel's sister knew that he was going on the razzle—I suppose she knows he's got a fiver. Ha, ha, ha! She tried to make him chuck it and walk along with her and Clara, but Hazel told her it was pressing, or something of the sort—he had to see a man at Highcliffe. You can guess the name of the man."

Skinner chuckled again.

"Ponsonby, do you mean?" exclaimed Wharton blankly.

"Well, he wasn't going to see Courtenay, or any of the pi crowd, for a little game!" chortled Skinner.

"Where did you see him—if you saw him?"

"On the Courtfield Common road, heading for Highcliffe. We knew what he was going over there for," grinned Skinner. "I couldn't understand why the Bounder chucked me immediately afterwards. I reminded him that it was games practice, and warned him not to come back to the school. I know now why he came back. Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner chortled. The affair to him seemed exquisitely entertaining. It did not strike the Famous Five in that light, however. They were exchanging very startled looks.

"If Hazel was on the road over Courtfield Common, he wasn't going to Cliff House," said Bob Cherry slowly. "It's the opposite direction."

"Just what Wingate told him when he made him bend over," grinned Skinner. "He can't stuff old Wingate so easily as he can Wharton."

Wharton set his lips.

He was beginning to see more clearly now.

"Oh, you fellows are too funny to live," said Skinner, wiping his eyes. "I wondered why the Bounder cut back to school in such a hurry, but it's plain enough now. Blessed if I see how it's any bizney of his. Fancy the Bounder playing Good Angel!" Skinner roared.

"Of course, it was on account of

Marjorie Hazeldene; she looked awfully worried when her fathead brother persisted in going on to Highcliffe. Smithy must be soft in that direction. Fancy, the Bounder!" Skinner almost wept with merriment. "And you fellows rag him for stopping Marjorie's brother from playing the giddy ox with Pon! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" said Bob Cherry savagely. "If we've been made fools of, it's not a laughing matter. Not that I believe it."

"Smithy's a card, a deep card," said Skinner. "He knew that Hazel was going to call on Pon and get into a little gamble, so he telephoned first, and put Pon up to ragging him. Fancy Pon's feelings if he ever finds out that Hazel was comin' to see him with a fiver in his pocket! Smithy never told Pon that on the phone! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I jolly well knew he was going over to Highcliffe," said Bolsover major. "I told you so, Wharton. You didn't believe it."

"I don't believe it now," snapped Harry. "I can't believe that Hazel told me a rotten lie to get off games practice."

"Ask Wingate," chuckled Skinner. "He owned up to Wingate when we were up for a licking."

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"I can't question a Sixth Form prefect, and you know it."

"You can ask Marjorie Hazeldene—you'll see her to-morrow—if you like. Ask Clara Trevlyn; she was there."

Wharton's brow was deeply knitted.

"Why, it's the same game Smithy played a few days ago," chortled Skinner. "I happen to know that he tipped Temple of the Fourth the wink, when Hazel went to Aubrey Angel's study to play banker. Ha, ha, ha! You fellows ain't the only guardian angels in the Remove. Smithy's settin' up in competition. He's goin' to keep Marjorie's brother from gamblin' and gettin' sacked, and stickin' Marjorie for money to pay his debts." Skinner chuckled explosively. "Why, if Hazel had got as far as Highcliffe this afternoon, he would have dropped his fiver there; and if they'd let him play for paper, he would have come back owin' money, and tryin' to borrow up and down the Remove, and bikin' over to Cliff House to-morrow to clear Marjorie out. Don't you know his style?"

"By gad!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Anyhow, I'm going to speak to Hazel now. Where is he?"

"Not here," said Bob, glancing round.

"In the study, I think," said Tom Brown.

Harry Wharton left the Rag at once. He had said that he did not believe Skinner, and he did not believe him; but in the depths of his heart he felt somehow that it was true. Skinner's cynical amusement was a proof, in its way. Skinner was surprised enough to find the Bounder in the role of guardian angel, keeping a reckless scapegrace out of trouble. It surprised him and entertained him; but what entertained him most was the fact that Harry Wharton & Co. had been down on him for it. The Bounder had chipped in to prevent Marjorie's brother plunging into reckless blackguardism, and the Famous Five had ragged him. That was the cream of the joke, from Skinner's point of view.

The Rag was in a buzz as Wharton went out. Few fellows, now that they had heard it from Skinner, doubted what the real state of affairs was, and there was no more talk of "barring" the Bounder. Wharton, with a dark face and a troubled mind, hurried up to the Remove passage.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bitter Blood!

"HAZEL!"

Harry Wharton spoke in as friendly a tone as he could.

It was not easy to speak in a friendly way with such a conviction as was forcing itself into his mind. Neither did Hazeldene's look or manner encourage cordiality. The scapegrace of the Remove stared sullenly at Wharton as he came into the study. Hazel was feeling savage and morose and depressed, and, of course, quarrelsome. Everything had gone wrong that afternoon. He had not had his gamble with Ponsonby & Co.; he had had a savage ragging, and after that occurrence he could hardly call on Ponsonby as a friend. Highcliffe was barred off from him, for the present, at least.

He was on fighting terms with the Bounder, even if the Bounder would have taken him seriously as a "sportsman." He had to keep away from Angel's study; he did not want another

thrashing from Temple of the Fourth. Altogether, matters looked very dismal for a "sportsman" whose money was burning a hole in his pocket. Added to that, he was humiliated by his hopeless failure to handle the Bounder, and the fact that Vernon-Smith had had a Form ragging was only a partial solace.

He was in a bitter mood, ready to quarrel with friend or enemy, as his look showed.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked ungraciously.

"You told me you were going over to Cliff House to see Marjorie when you were let off games practice this afternoon."

"Oh, let's hear the end of that!" grunted Hazeldene. "I've had enough about that from Wingate."

"Skinner says he saw you on Court-field common—"

"I didn't see Skinner. He may have seen me."

"Did you go to Cliff House, Hazel?"

"No, I didn't."

"I mean did you mean to go, or were you only pulling my leg?"

Hazel's face flamed with anger.

"I tell you I've had that from Wingate of the Sixth!" he exclaimed.

"Can't you give a fellow a rest? Have you come here to tell me to bend over, like a prefect?"

Wharton controlled his rising anger.

"I only want to know the facts," he said. "I'm bound to know them. I understood that Smithy tipped the Highcliffe cads where to find you—somewhere near Cliff House, or between here and there, I took for granted. Was it near Highcliffe?"

"Yes, it was!" snarled Hazel. "I'm not going to tell you lies as I did to Wingate. Do you think you can frighten me?"

"Were you going to Highcliffe at the time?"

"Yes, I was."

"To see Ponsonby?"

"Why shouldn't I, if I choose?"

"You were going to gamble with Ponsonby?"

Hazel's lip curled.

"So you've come here to give me pi-jaw, have you?" he sneered. "Well, I don't want any. Mind your own business!"

"Then it's true that Smithy put up Pon and his mob to rag you, only to keep you from gambling with them?" said the captain of the Remove in a low voice.

"The meddling cad!" said Hazel between his teeth. "I fancied that was it."

Wharton breathed hard.

"You knew when you let us rag him for it?"

"I didn't know," said Hazel sullenly. "I thought it very likely. He couldn't have had any other reason that I know of."

"You cur!" broke out Wharton fiercely. "If we'd known we'd never have laid a finger on Smithy. I'd have done the same thing myself if I could have, to keep you from playing the low blackguard and letting down your school."

"I dare say you would!" sneered Hazel. "I've told you more than once that I'm fed up with your meddling in my affairs. I tell you so again. Mind your own business!"

"Oh, you rotter!" breathed Wharton, clenching his hands.

"Mind your own business!" sneered Hazel. "You only make a fool of yourself when you meddle. You were slanging Smithy the other day because you found me in his study with the cards. I don't suppose he explained to you—

and I'm not going to. But I can tell you that you made a fool of yourself. Leave a fellow alone. Who are you to dictate to me? And now get out of my study; I'm fed up with you!"

"You cur!"

Wharton made a stride at him. Hazel sprang to his feet, his insolence changing to alarm. But the captain of the Remove controlled his temper. He turned and left the study, much to Hazel's relief, though he forced a sneering laugh as Wharton went, and kicked the study door shut after him.

Harry Wharton stood in the Remove passage, his face dark and his thoughts bitter. He understood the whole affair now, and it was not pleasant knowledge. He moved at last and went along to Study No. 4 and tapped at the door.

There was no answer from within. Wharton opened the door and stepped into the study.

Vernon-Smith, still in the armchair as Skinner had left him, did not move; only his eyes turned on the captain of the Remove, with a deadly glint in them.

"Smithy!"

"Get out!"

"I haven't come for a row, Smithy." Wharton's tone was conciliatory. "I must say what I've come to say."

"I don't want to hear it! Get out!"

"Skinner's told us about what happened this afternoon. We know now how the matter stood, Smithy. If we'd known before you'd never have had that ragging."

The Bounder's lip curled.

"Skinner might have minded his own business. Besides, what could he tell you? Some yarn, most likely!"

Wharton shook his head.

"I know the truth now," he said quietly. "I know what you did, and why you did it. If you'd told us—"

"You would have kindly let me off, what?" sneered the Bounder. "Thank you for nothing! You'll never find me in the happy circle of toadies begging for your good graces."

"I've come here to say I'm sorry, Smithy," said Wharton, with an effort.

"Nobody asked you to come; but I've asked you to go. Isn't a fellow's study his own?"

"I've said what I came to say," said the captain of the Remove. "If you'd explained—"

"Oh, cut it out!" The Bounder rose to his feet and stood a little unsteadily, his eyes gleaming at the captain of the Remove. "You seem to have found out somehow that you've misjudged me, and you're sorry! Keep your sorrow! You'll want it for yourself when I've done with you. Keep your humbug for those who believe in it—and leave me alone!"

"Smithy!"

"Get out!" shouted the Bounder.

He made a step towards the captain of the Remove, his hands clenched, his eyes blazing. Harry Wharton gave him one quiet look and walked out of the study, and the door was slammed savagely after him as he went.

THE END.

(There will be another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's bumper number of the MAGNET, entitled: "Smithy's Way!" It's the real goods, chums, so make sure of reading it by ordering your copy well in advance.)

A DANGEROUS VENTURE! Somewhere in Lhasa dwells the all-powerful Kang Pu, whose word is life and death to the terrified inhabitants of Tibet. Who Kang Pu is actually, nobody knows! Yet Ferrers Locke is determined to identify him, and bring him to book. To Lhasa, then, Locke accordingly goes, regardless of the manifold dangers that await him at every twist and turn in the trail!

THE CURSE OF LHASA!



A grand story of mystery and intrigue, featuring **FERRERS LOCKE**, the Famous Detective, and his plucky boy assistant, **JACK DRAKE**.

The Escape!

FERRERS LOCKE and Jack were released from the racks and jerked to their feet. Their guards closed in on them, and they were taken from the torture-chamber to the cell which they had previously occupied.

Reaching the cell, their hands and feet were tied anew with leather thongs, gags were thrust into their mouths, then the door was banged shut, the bolts shot home, and they were left in inky darkness.

Their plight was as hopeless as it well could be. But Ferrers Locke and Jack were not the type to give up hope while life yet remained.

For an hour or more the silence in the cell was unbroken. Ferrers Locke was working determinedly with tongue and teeth to loosen the gag. At times his efforts seemed as though they must be doomed to failure, then would come a slight easing of the gag, and he would renew his efforts with grim determination. And at last he managed to eject the rolled up piece of cloth—of which the gag was formed—from his mouth.

Then inch by inch he writhed along the floor of the cell till he reached in the darkness the bound form of Jack. He spoke a few whispered words, then commenced to tug with his teeth at the thongs around the boy's wrists.

Another hour passed, but at the end of that time Jack's hands were free. It was the work of a few minutes to untie the thongs about his ankles and then release Ferrers Locke. This done, they sat with their backs against the wall of the cell and discussed in whispers a plan of campaign.

"They will be coming for us any time," said Ferrers Locke, "and once back in the torture-chamber there will be no chance of escape! It is just possible that Kala Dului may send for us. He most certainly will not wish us to

die of starvation. If food is brought to us it will obviously not be brought by more than two men—three at the outside. If we can overpower them, then we have a chance!"

"Suppose we overpower these men—what'll we do, then, guv'nor?"

"We can decide nothing, Jack! We must just act as circumstances direct. In any case, whoever opens that door is going to get a shock. We will endeavour to light our way out somehow."

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Prompted by the murderous activities of the all-powerful

KANG PU, the self-styled Chosen of Buddha and fanatic who, to satisfy his own monstrous ambitions, would set the whole world ablaze with war,

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous Baker Street detective, accompanied by his plucky young assistant,

JACK DRAKE, leaves England for Tibet, determined to discover the fate of an expedition led by

MAJOR BEVERLEY, which is believed to have fallen into Kang Pu's clutches. At the outset of their journey Locke and Drake come up against

KALA DULUI, a priest and one of the zealous agents of Kang Pu. But they manage to give him the slip. Then, led by a

TOMO, an outcast, the train arrive eventually at the Seven Monasteries. In one of these Locke and Drake find Kala Dului exhorting a number of the priests of Buddha to prepare for war. Locke exposes the trickery Kala Dului has employed, and in consequence of this, both he and Drake are made prisoners and escorted to the Chamber of Death on the Karo la. Here they are pinioned by their ankles, and wrists to a rack. Locke suffers fiendish tortures in stoical silence, and Kala Dului is about to brand him with a red-hot iron, when he is informed that a messenger from holy Lhasa desires an audience with him.

"Preserve these dogs for me," he says, turning to the red-robed torturers, "and I will deal with them later!"

(Now read on.)

Even if we are cut down it will be a better death than that which Kala Dului has in store for us!"

"And if we do get clear away, guv'nor?" questioned Jack, refusing to admit to himself the enormous odds against such a thing happening.

"Then we will push on towards Lhasa!" replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "There can be no turning back, even should we wish it. I gave my word to Lamonte when he was dying. Apart from that, I do not intend to return from Tibet whilst this sinister Kang Pu lives! I am going after him, Jack, and am going to get him, unless death intervenes!"

Long hours dragged past, and no one came. They had no means of telling whether daylight had merged into night. The darkness in the cell was intense, and not a sound drifted to them through the thick walls.

It seemed ages before there came faintly to their ears the shuffle of feet descending the winding stone stairs to their cell.

"Steady, boy!" whispered Ferrers Locke. "It is our last chance! In case anything should go amiss—"

His hand groped in the darkness for that of Jack's. They exchanged a firm, quick shake, then tensed into immobility.

A key grated in the lock and the door swung slowly open. A black-robed monk stood on the threshold, a lantern in his hand. Treading at his heels came another, bearing in his hands two bowls of steaming stew.

The monk raised the lantern above his head and peered into the cell. He seemed to sense that something was amiss. But by the flickering light of the lantern he saw the prisoners sitting motionless on the floor, their backs against the wall, and leather thongs seemingly about their ankles. Their gags also seemed to be

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in place, and their hands were behind their backs, tied undoubtedly.

With a gesture he motioned the monk with the food to step forward into the cell. The latter obeyed. He shuffled forward, and stooped down to place one of the steaming bowls by the side of Jack.

Then things happened with indescribable swiftness. Jack's hands closed on the monk's throat, stifling the cry of alarm which sprang to his lips. At the same instant Ferrers Locke hurled himself forward. His arms closed about the knees of the monk with the lantern, and with a quick heave he threw the man over his shoulder. It was perfect ju-jitsu, and the monk crashed face downwards to the stone floor. The lantern burst into flames as it clattered to the ground. Ferrers Locke snapped shut the door of the cell to prevent any further noise being heard by a guard, or wandering monk, at the top of the staircase. Then he turned his attention to Jack. The boy was struggling on the floor with his antagonist. The other monk lay silent and motionless, stunned by the force of his fall. The flames of the crude oil from the broken lamp were spreading slowly over the floor. Ferrers Locke paused a moment to pull the unconscious man clear of the fire, then dived to Jack's assistance. The monk struggled desperately. Once he opened his mouth to yell an alarm, but Ferrers Locke stifled the cry with a forcible hand.

Within a few minutes the man was gagged and bound. The flames were slowly dying down, and by the eerie, dancing light Ferrers Locke and Jack gagged and bound the other monk, who was by this time showing signs of returning consciousness.

Working rapidly they then divested the monks of their hoods and robes. Ferrers Locke appropriated the heavy bunch of keys which hung at the girdle of the monk whom he had tackled. By the time they themselves had donned the robes the flames had died away, and the cell was once again in total darkness.

Propping the two bound and gagged monks against the wall, Ferrers Locke groped his way to the door.

"Keep your hood drawn well over your face, Jack," he murmured; "and follow my lead if emergency arises!"

With that they stepped quietly out of the cell, and Ferrers Locke shot home the bolts and locked the door behind him.

Side by side Ferrers Locke and Jack passed up the staircase. At the head stood a monk leaning on a long, two-edged sword. Jack's heart beat rapidly as they approached. Could they pass the man without rousing suspicions?

"You do not return with your lantern!" growled the monk, as they reached the top of the staircase.

"Nay, 'tis a poor thing and lights our steps but ill," replied Ferrers Locke, from under his hood. "It failed us, and I left it down there in the passageway!"

"And left the dogs their bowls!" growled the fellow, as Ferrers Locke and Jack made as though to pass on.

"Of a surety! Are not the orders that the smell of the food be allowed to assail the nostrils of the hungry dogs and whet their appetites, but not a morsel be allowed to pass their lips!"

The guard laughed harshly and stood aside to let them pass. Then he started forward and peered at Jack.

"It seems you have grown shorter, brother," he began, "than when you passed—"

That was as far as he got. Ferrers Locke's fist shot out and took the fellow flush on the point. There was all the detective's strength behind the blow, and it was perfectly timed. The guard spun round and crashed backwards down the staircase. His sword fell from his hand, and, darting forward, Jack retrieved it.

"Quick! We have not a moment to lose!" snapped Ferrers Locke.

They were in the hall which led to the massive main door. It was deserted, but at any moment some prowling, inquisitive monk might come on the scene. Treading silently and swiftly Jack and Ferrers Locke approached the door. Then from some cubby-hole in the shadows shuffled the grotesque and hideous dwarf which they had seen that morning. He squinted at Ferrers Locke and Jack through bloodshot eyes. "Whence go ye?" he demanded harshly.

He was, without doubt, the custodian of the door. Ferrers Locke knew how strict were the rules which governed the goings and comings of the monks of the Tibetan lamaseries and monasteries. Even could he and Jack pass muster before this malformed bundle of suspicion, they would have need of some plausible excuse for stealing out into the night as had obviously been their intention.

"Whence go ye?"

The dwarf's voice was sharp with suspicion. Ferrers Locke's eyes dwelt for a moment on the massive key which swung from a chain round the creature's neck.

"We go out into the night!" he snapped.

At the same instant he snatched the sword from Jack's hand and brought the point against the dwarf's chest.

"Unlock that door, or I will pin you to it!" he said; and there was a grim determination in his voice which brought a look of horror to the dwarf's evil eyes.

He stared at Ferrers Locke, and slowly the look of horror gave place to one of sheer amazement.

"Ye!" he mouthed. "Ye—"

"Yes, we!" said Ferrers Locke sharply. "Two desperate men, between whom and liberty stands that door! Open instantly, or this sword shall let the life blood out of ye!"

Fearfully, the dwarf shuffled backwards towards the door. His claw-like hand fumbled at the massive key which dangled by its metal chain. The point of the two-edged sword never left his chest. Now and again he ventured a glance into the shadows beyond Ferrers Locke and Jack, and more than once he made a throaty noise, the prelude of a shout of alarm. But the shout was never uttered, for the sword pressed closer and closer against him, and he knew that did he but shout then it would be his death cry.

He reached the door and slowly took the chain from about his neck.

"Hurry!"

Ferrers Locke's voice was grim. Voices were approaching from some passageway leading off the main hall. The dwarf slipped the key into the lock. Jack pulled back massive bolts which screeched and groaned in their sockets. The voices were coming nearer. The dwarf cast a sidelong glance at the detective, and fumbled clumsily with the key. Impatiently, Ferrers Locke thrust him aside. His hand gripped the key, and at the same instant there came a yell from half a dozen throats.

Screaming and shouting, the dwarf dropped to his hands and scuttled away.

"The infidels are escaping!" he

shrieked. "The dogs, the accursed of Lhasa!"

From down the hall there came a rush of black-robed figures. Escape at the moment was impossible, for they would have poured through the open doorway and pulled Jack and Ferrers Locke down outside.

"Behind me, Jack, for your life!" snapped Ferrers Locke; then, with the sword in his hands, he turned and confronted the oncoming monks.

"Back!" he cried. "I shall slay the first man that approaches!"

The monks, a dozen or more, came to a halt. Then, from the top of the staircase leading upwards from the hall, came the screaming voice of Kala Dului.

"At them! Seize them, ye cowardly priests! They must not escape!"

The Fight in the Hall!

"LISTEN to me, Kala Dului!" cried Ferrers Locke. "I will slay any man who attempts to prevent my going! I give you fair warning, and if you set your priests on me, then their blood will be on your head!"

"At him!" screamed Kala Dului. "Tear him down!"

Two monks, more bold than the others, and armed with swords, dashed forward. Ferrers Locke whirled the great two-edged sword, and with a howl one monk retreated, his arm laid open to the bone. Four more sprang forward, but the whirling, gleaming blade kept them at bay.

Slashing, hewing, cutting, Ferrers Locke fought desperately to keep them from getting to close quarters. More than once he felt his blade bite deep, and more than once a black-robed figure swayed from the melee and slithered to the floor.

Ferrers Locke was not going to be captured alive. He was determined that neither Jack nor he should be taken again to that torture chamber. More and more black-clad monks poured in on him, but his great slashing sword wrought havoc amongst them.

"Call off your priests, Kala Dului!" he cried, when there came a lull; but Kala Dului, in the background, snarled in reply. Not his the body that might feel the bite of that red blade; not his, but only that of a miserable priest.

"The door is open!" muttered Jack, who had succeeded in turning the key in the lock. "Can we slip out and bang it shut?"

But before the detective could answer, the black-robed ones were on him again. One great, gaunt priest led the charge, a two-edged sword as big as Ferrers Locke's in his hands. His companions had perforce to fall back to give him room to bring his weapon into play. He swung viciously at the detective's head, but Ferrers Locke side-stepped and the sword whistled past, missing his shoulder by a hair's breadth. As though with one accord, the monks drew back to watch their leader hew down the infidel. The silence was unbroken, save for the crash and clash of steel on steel and the heavy breathing of the contestants. Once the monk slipped, his foot having found but treacherous hold in a pool of blood. For an instant Ferrers Locke had the man at his mercy, but stayed his hand.

"The dog weakens!" came a triumphant shout from Kala Dului, for thus to him had appeared that act.

Gathering himself together, the monk launched himself at Ferrers Locke with renewed energy. His blade whirled here and there, but he could not get in the skull-splitting blow for which he was striving. Ferrers Locke was tiring.



Behind the armed monk, forming a barrier across the road, were a number of soldiers clad in mail. "Who are ye that travel thus by night?" challenged the monk. "We are three peasants from beyond Gyantse, and we travel on pilgrimage to holy Lhasa," whined Ferrers Locke. (See page 27.)

His arm muscles were aching intolerably, and he knew he could not keep going much longer. But neither he nor Jack must be taken alive. That thought kept pounding in his brain, and nerved him to fresh endeavours.

Then came disaster. In parrying a savage downward slash he loosened, for a second, his firm grip on his sword. The point dropped to the floor, and, with a yell of triumph, the monk sprang in to finish the fight. He raised the sword above his head, gripping the hilt with both hands. Ferrers Locke sensed his danger instinctively. He threw himself to one side. The gleaming blade whistled downwards, but such was the force with which the monk had struck that he was carried forward by the impetus, and the blade bit deep into the woodwork of the door. Before he could recover himself and wrench the blade loose, Ferrers Locke had his sword at the monk's throat.

"Back!" he rapped, and, with the fear of death in his eyes, the monk backed away. "Drop that sword!"

The monk's nerveless hands unclenched on the sword-hilt, and such was the force with which he had struck that the great sword remained firmly embedded in the door. Jack whipped the sword out, and stood ready to help the detective repel any further attack.

Step by step the monk retreated, then suddenly Ferrers Locke sprang backwards to the door.

"Outside, Jack!" he snapped, and Jack released the catch. The great door swung open. Before the monks could realise what was happening the man and boy had slipped out into the darkness.

With a howl the monks hurled themselves forward. But Ferrers Locke had chosen the psychological moment. Dismayed by the defeat of their leader,

hesitating as to who should be the first to charge again that desperate, slashing, hacking infidel, the monks had paused. And it was that pause which had afforded the detective the one moment in which escape might be made.

In their haste to open the door they hustled and jostled each other, their very eagerness defeating its own ends. But at length they wrenched the door open and poured out in pursuit.

They stood irresolute, not knowing which direction the fugitives had taken. Kala Dului rushed forward, clenched fists raised above his head.

"Dogs," he screamed, "ye have let the cursed infidels slip through thy fingers! Comb the hills, for if they be not found by morning, then Kang Pu will visit on thy heads the tortures which were to be theirs!"

An Old Acquaintance!

ONCE through the door, Ferrers Locke paused but an instant to swing it shut; then he and Jack doubled round to the rear of the building. They held their swords in their hands, ready for any attack. By the time the monks had procured lanterns and formed themselves into search-parties, the detective and the boy were far down the mountain-side, groping their way through a medley of rocks and boulders.

Eventually they emerged on the road which led downwards from the Karo la. From this point they made good progress. Far up on the mountain-side bobbed the lanterns of their pursuers.

"We've got a good start!" said Ferrers Locke grimly. "We've got to keep going till dawn!"

He was utterly weary with the fight and with the strain of events. But not

yet had reaction set in. It would be fatal to linger in the vicinity of the Karo la, and Ferrers Locke and Jack knew that should Kala Dului capture them a second time, then he would see to it that they did not slip through his fingers again.

All night they travelled, walking steadily. More than once the distant clatter of hoofs sent them diving to cover amongst the boulders which fringed the road. They lay doggo on these occasions, whilst small parties of monks mounted on mules swept past.

"They go to spread the alarm!" said Ferrers Locke. "When daylight comes the road to Lhasa will be a deathtrap for you and I!"

"And yet I suppose we've got to stick to the road in order to reach Lhasa?" said Jack, with a wry grin.

"Yes. We will lie up in the day-time and travel at night!" replied the detective. "We must win through at all costs!"

But both knew in their hearts the enormous odds against their ever reaching Lhasa. Yet there was no thought of turning back. Somewhere ahead, on the outskirts of Lhasa, lay the grim Salai Monastery, the seat of Kang Pu.

With the coming of the dawn they quitted the road and sought cover in a boulder-strewn valley. They slept in turns, and the day passed uneventfully. The country was sparsely populated, and to search for two men amongst its wild and rugged surface was a well-nigh hopeless task.

"They know that we will have to take to the road sooner or later," Ferrers Locke explained to Jack, "and it is on the road that our danger will lie!"

When darkness fell they made their way to the road, and progressed warily along its rough, uneven surface. Once

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they made a detour to avoid a picket-fire, and again when Ferrers Locke's alert ears caught the murmur of voices ahead in the darkness. The road was guarded, but it became apparent to the detective that the guarding was more of a precautionary measure than aught else. And in this surmise he was correct, for Kala Dului had been tempted to dismiss as ridiculous the idea that the hunted men would still push on towards Lhasa.

Nightfall of the second day found them close to the Palti Lake, along the shores of which wound the road to Lhasa. They were ravenously hungry, having eaten but scantily of some edible but tough roots which they had found growing near the long-dried water-course of a valley. They had walked for an hour or more when a bend in the road brought into view a large, glowing fire around which were seated a score or more of blanketed forms.

Ferrers Locke and Jack wormed their way closer, and from behind a tuft of sparse grass studied the encampment.

"Pilgrims!" whispered the detective. "You can see the circle of praying-flags stuck in the ground around the fire!"

"I wonder if they've been warned to keep a look-out for us?" replied Jack.

"Probably! However, we must have food, and also I wish to find out how the road is guarded. These men are always overawed by the garb of a monk, and bluff may carry us through!"

Both Ferrers Locke and Jack still wore the robes and hoods which they had taken from the monks in the cell. At their sides, from improvised girdles of torn cloth, dangled the swords which they had taken with them in their flight. Underneath their robes was the garb with which they had been provided by the Tomo.

"What if these men have been told to keep a look-out for two priests, doubtlessly armed?" questioned Jack.

"They will, obviously, scarcely know how to act," replied the detective. "Suppose they have been so warned. Well, we stalk boldly into their camp. We may be the men for whom they are on the look-out, or we may not. How are they to tell? Even if they have been given a description of our features they will have to be extremely sure of their ground before they dare lay a finger on us. To lay forcible hands on two holy Lamas is a crime punishable by death. If they suspect us at all they will probably despatch a messenger to the nearest picket, or guard, with word of our presence."

"And even then they would have to be pretty sure we were the wanted men, I suppose," said Jack. "Because if we did happen to turn out genuine Lamas they would be punished for ever entertaining suspicions."

"Exactly! A bold game will, maybe, see us through. Hunted fugitives would be unlikely to walk into an encampment. Also, as I say, the garb of a Lama commands awe and respect amongst these ignorant, down-trodden peasants. Keep your hand near the hilt of your sword and your eyes open!"

Ferrers Locke rose to his feet, and, with Jack by his side, stalked into the firelight of the camp. The men squatting around the fire rose to their feet at sight of the two black-robed figures.

"Whence journey ye?" demanded Ferrers Locke harshly.

"We journey to Lhasa, master," mumbled one of the men, a squat, surly-faced fellow.

"From whence come ye?"

"From the borders of Bhutan, master."

"Hast seen aught of two hunted dogs who have escaped from the edifice of the Karo la?"

"No, master. We have seen naught of them on the road. Ye are not the first that have questioned us concerning them."

Ferrers Locke laughed harshly.

"Nay, and not the last, I vow! They will not escape. But guarding this road to holy Lhasa is weary work. Make room by your fire that my brother and I may warm our bodies, and bring food that we may eat."

He pushed his way roughly past the man, and squatted in front of the fire. Jack followed his lead, giving one of the pilgrims such a hearty push out of the way that he sent the fellow reeling. For thus did holy Lamas partake of hospitality.

Roasted yak flesh and bread was brought. Ferrers Locke and Jack ate with relish, but masked their enjoyment of the food behind an air of distaste at such coarse food.

From the corners of his eye Ferrers Locke saw the squat, surly-faced fellow conferring in murmurs with some of the men. More than once they shot glances at the detective and the boy—glances of suspicion and perplexity.

And as he watched Ferrers Locke saw one man drift away from the group, to be lost in the shadows outside the light of the fire. He ate on steadily, giving no sign that he had noticed anything. But he realised that to delay at the camp might well prove fatal. It was some minutes later that he rose to his feet, and, drawing his robe about him, beckoned to the surly-faced fellow, who was obviously leader of the party of pilgrims.

"Now take heed, ye dog, and all ye that journey from the borders of Bhutan!" he said. "We have warmed our bodies at thy fire and partaken of thy foul viands. That holy Lamas should sojourn with such filth as ye is an honour that ye scarce had thought would come thy way!"

He paused, and the leader bowed his head in humble assent.

"But further are ye to be honoured, ye whining curs, for my brother and I repair with haste on business which is not for ears such as thine. Fetch, then, two of thy mules which my eyes have seen tethered away back in the shadows!"

The leader hesitated, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. From under lowered lids his cunning eyes flitted here and there. He was in a quandary. He had, as Ferrers Locke had seen, despatched a man to consult with a picket which they had passed earlier in the day. He was in no way sure of these two holy Lamas. They answered the description he had of the fugitives. But were not the hatchet-faced ones all alike? If they were not fugitives, but genuine holy Lamas riding on matters of import, it was like to cost him his head should he churlishly refuse them mounts. The servants of Buddha took what they wanted, and did not brook opposition.

"Why dost thou hesitate, thou dog?" thundered Ferrers Locke.

He strode forward with fist upraised, and the leader cowered away. Then from out of the shadows where the mules were tethered shuffled a heavily-blanketed form. There was something in the man's gait that seemed vaguely

familiar to Jack. The man came forward into the glow of the fire. Jack's heart missed a beat. It was the Tomo from whom they had parted at the Seven Monasteries.

Ferrers Locke recognised the man at the same moment, and instinctively his hand moved to the hilt of his sword. The Tomo came on, his ugly face inscrutable. He stared at Ferrers Locke and then at Jack. Then his voice mumbled up from his throat.

"I tend the mules, O masters—the mules of these unworthy dogs!"

In that moment Jack felt a certain admiration of the outcast. The man's attitude was one of servility, and not one which he would have used to two runaway priests, as he thought them to be. In fact, it was more than probable that he knew them to be the fugitives who had escaped from the Karo la. Whether he associated the two priests, whom he had accompanied from Patong to the Seven Monasteries, with the two men for whom the priests of Tibet were now searching was, however, a matter for conjecture. Suffice it was that he seemed to have no intention of betraying them to the leader of the pilgrims. Instead, turning to the latter, he growled:

"Dost want us all to lose our heads, you stupid pig? Dost want the curses of the Abbot of Patong poured upon you, in that you refused to aid two priests of his? You are a fool!"

The leader cringed.

"Master," he whimpered to Ferrers Locke, "one thousand pardons! I did but pause, for we are poor and mules cannot be bought for little!"

He grunted an order and two mules were untethered and led forward. Ferrers Locke and Jack mounted to the saddles.

"Now hark, ye dog!" said the detective. "It is no wish of ours to deprive ye of your measly mounts. Your mule tender rides with us and he will return the beasts to ye!"

The Tomo looked at him, then nodded and shuffled away. Within a few minutes he joined Ferrers Locke and Jack, mounted on a vicious-looking mule. Wheeling their mounts towards the road, Ferrers Locke beckoned the leader towards him.

"If anyone questions ye as to our going," he said cryptically, "they will find the answer with Kala Dului, of the Patong Lamastery!"

He jerked his mount into action and, with Jack and the Tomo, was soon lost in the darkness which shrouded the road to Lhasa.

An Ally!

FOR some minutes they jogged along in silence, then Ferrers Locke wheeled his mount from the road, and reined in under the cover of some bushes. Jack and the Tomo followed suit. The latter leant forward in his saddle, peering into the detective's face.

"Now read for me this riddle, ye runaway priests," he said, in a hoarse chuckle. "What do ye here?"

"Why did you not tell those pilgrims that we were but runaway priests?" asked Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Have I not told ye that I hate the hatchet-faced ones?" replied the Tomo. "And why should I help them to hunt their prey? I thought ye had met death in the Seven Monasteries, when ye did not return!"

"We were near to death," replied the detective. "But we escaped, and now journey to Lhasa!"

"Dost know the roads are guarded well, and that the hatchet-faced ones lurk in wait for two cursed infidels, who have defiled their holy shrines?"

The Tomo paused, then continued:

"Now, by the beardless Buddha, I'll take a vow that ye are those two. Again I say, read me this riddle, for I have not played ye false, and I hate the black-robed ones who slew my son!"

There was something in the outcast's voice which spoke of his sincerity more than mere words could ever have done. Shiftless, cunning, he might be, but his hatred of the priests of Buddha was a very real thing. Ferrers Locke knew in that moment that the man's feelings had, indeed, become an obsession with him, and did not extend only to the priests of Patong and Kanjut Lamaseries. And with the realisation came an intuition to tell something of their mission.

"My friend," he said gently, "no run-away priests are we, nor one-time servants of Buddha. Mayhap you have heard of the white race which rules in British Bhutan, beyond the frontiers of your country. We are of that race, and in a monastery near Lhasa, we seek some countrymen of ours who are held prisoners by the black-robed ones!"

The Tomo grasped him by the arm.

"White men?" he muttered quickly. "White men, ye say, prisoners of the hatchet-faced ones?"

There was suppressed excitement in his tones, which caused Ferrers Locke to demand sharply:

"Yes, white men! What know ye of that?"

"Four white men rode through the Chumbi Valley a long time ago. And the hatchet-faced ones of Patong and Kanjut, smiled inside their hoods, but spoke those white men fair. I saw the white men pass, but I knew what they did not know, the treachery in the hearts of the black-robed ones. They rode to Lhasa, to bring trade and caravans from beyond the frontier, so the peoples of the Chumbi Valley said! Are those the ones you mean?"

"Without doubt, they are!" replied the detective.

The Tomo nodded.

"I saw them pass!" he mumbled. "I saw them pass! But I knew they rode to their death!"

"We go to see if they are dead," said Ferrers Locke, "and if they are, then we shall bring punishment to the black-robed one who slew them!"

The Tomo chuckled.

"When ye did not return from the Seven Monasteries," he said, "I went on to Gyantse with the coming of the day. There I sold my ponies and fell in with those dogs of pilgrims. I had a mind to see Lhasa, for there is little to attract a man back to a country where he is an outcast. I hired myself to tend their mules. But on the road we heard a strange story of two defilers and infidels, who had withstood the whole might of the hatchet-faced ones, in the Chamber of Death on the Karo la. I laughed softly to myself, for it was good hearing, for I say again, I hate those cursed priests of Buddha!"

"Well, now ye know our mission," said Ferrers Locke, "and ye know also how short will be our shrift should we be captured. Can you procure for us, from that pilgrim camp, some other clothes than these? Then you will leave us to go our way, for it is not right that ye should risk death on our behalf!"

Although Ferrers Locke had made plain a certain part of his mission, he had told the Tomo nothing which could make their plight more parlous. He was a reader of men, and he knew that never would this embittered outcast tell the black-robed priests of Buddha, anything which he had learnt that night.

"It is easy for me to get ye some other garb," said the Tomo, "and for myself I will don the hood and robe that ye wear." He laughed softly, then continued: "For a good trick is it that I travel in the cursed garb of a servant of Buddha. The whining dogs will never take me for aught but one of themselves!"

"But it is not necessary that you travel with us," persisted Ferrers Locke. "We tread the path of death, and we tread it alone. I but brought you from the camp to acquaint you with our needs. That leader was suspicious, and I could not linger there."

"I travel with ye," grunted the Tomo, "for ye are men after my own heart. Ye hate these hatchet-faced ones, who have treachery in their black hearts, and I hate them as well. And if we are slain, then it will be in fair fight, and that is better than to be dragged before the altar of that cursed god and slain by some whining, shaven priest to the glory of Buddha!"

He spread out a hand with a gesture.

"Ye know that my death is but a matter of time. I am cursed of Buddha, as was my family. I come and I go, but the priests of Patong will slay me some day, when Buddha desires another sacrifice. And in Lhasa can I not help ye? If we are not hindered we will reach Lhasa within a few days, and I know where we can go to earth and prepare in secret to steal from the black-robed ones the white men whom I saw pass through the Chumbi Valley."

Ferrers Locke was silent for a moment. The aid of this man would be invaluable, and it was necessary to leave no stone unturned in the rescue of Major Beverley. True, the Tomo was inspired by hate alone, but to spurn his offer might easily be the means of directing that hate towards Ferrers Locke and Jack.

The detective nodded.

"Very well," he said. "Ye ride with us."

The Holy River!

THE Tomo slid from his saddle and moved silently away into the darkness. Within ten minutes he was back with a bundle of miscellaneous clothing.

"The holy pilgrims," he said, with a sneer, "are like to be fighting amongst themselves. They exchange hot words. Some are saying ye are holy Lamas, whilst others say ye are the two for whom the priests of Buddha seek."

The clothing he had brought was dirty and tattered, the garb of the peasant class. How he had got it he did not say. Ferrers Locke and Jack slipped off their robes and hoods and pulled the ragged pantaloons and blouses over their other clothing. By dint of much effort Ferrers Locke persuaded the Tomo to refrain from donning the vestments of a priest of Buddha. They hid the swords and robes under the bushes. The detective was loth to part with the weapons, but peasants do not travel in Tibet with two-edged swords slung from their saddles.

"Now, listen!" said Ferrers Locke, when they were mounted and ready to move out on to the road. "We are three peasants, who travel to Lhasa from

beyond Gyantse. We will ride boldly, and by day. The priests are searching for two armed monks, or, failing that, two herders of asses. Three peasants, such as we, riding in care-free style, should pass muster. If any challenge us, then we must all tell the same story. Now forward, and may we win safely through!"

They jerked their mounts into action, and, reaching the road, turned the mules' heads towards Lhasa. For a mile they travelled without incident, then there loomed up out of the darkness an armed monk. Behind him, forming a barrier across the road, were half a dozen soldiers, in mail.

"Who are ye that travel thus by night?" challenged the monk.

"We are three peasants from beyond Gyantse, and we travel on pilgrimage to holy Lhasa," whined Ferrers Locke.

The monk uncovered a lighted lantern and, holding it up, he scanned the faces and accoutrements of the three. Ferrers Locke, in turn, scanned the man's face, but there was nothing familiar in it. He was a hook-nosed fellow, obviously pressed into service from some adjacent lamasery.

"Why travel ye by night, ye dogs?" he growled.

"The roads are guarded, master," whined Ferrers Locke. "Ay, from here to Karo la. Progress is slow, and we travel as best we can. We have journeyed far, and our eyes are hungry for a sight of holy Lhasa!"

"Hast heard aught of news along the road?" demanded the monk.

"Naught, master. The faithful servants of Buddha keep watch, and all are questioned. But who are ye that we should be told that all is toward?"

The monk grunted. Turning away, he lowered his lantern and growled a word to the soldiers. They parted, and Ferrers Locke and his companions rode through the passage afforded them.

More than once throughout the night they were challenged, but their garb and whining speech won them passage. They did not pause with the dawn, but pressed on, for they did not know what might be happening behind them. Active suspicions might have been aroused by their visit to the pilgrim camp.

They left the shores of Palti Lake, the road winding upwards from the village of Tamalung towards the Khamba Pass. A sudden turn in the path brought the Tomo to a halt. Reining in his mule, he pointed towards the north-east.

"There, far in the distance, O white men," he said, "flows the Kyi Chu, the holy river of Lhasa!"

Jack felt a strange emotion as he sat in his saddle and gazed across fold upon fold of bleak, barren hills, interspersed with green and verdant valleys. This then, was the country so jealously guarded from the eyes of the white races.

To the north-east was the great Tsangpo River, into which flowed the Kyi Chu. And beyond, hidden in some mist-ridden valley, lay Yahdok Lake, its rugged grandeur merging into dark and sinister valleys, the depths of which were never warmed by the golden rays of the sun.

From the Kamba Pass the road led downwards into a beautiful fertile valley, and there they made camp that night. Before they turned in, the Tomo told them a strange story, and Jack knew that the man was convinced of the truth of the words he spoke.

"Along the banks of the great Tsangpo," he said, "near where it loses itself in a hole in the ground, there dwell a people who live on the

flesh of monkeys and reptiles. They have horns growing on their heads as have animals, and flee from the approach of all strangers. They care naught for Buddha nor his priests, for they dwell too far distant. Some day, maybe, I will seek them out, and with them plot to raid some lamasery and slay the hatchet-faced ones we find therein!"

The trio were up and moving before the dawn, and made good progress to Chakam, three miles above where the spot where the Kyi Chu flows into the Tsangpo. Here they were rigorously questioned by a picket of monks and soldiers, but their guises carried them through. They crossed the river in an old Tibetan ferry-boat, large enough to have carried a hundred men. Huge horses' heads were carved on the prow of the craft, which was an unwieldy, barge-like thing.

The road then wound through sand dunes covered with artemesia scrub and finally emerged on to a precipitous cliff which fringed the Kyi Chu. The holy river was almost as broad as the Thames, and of a wonderful clearness. Hoopoes, ravens, and magpies were flying about in great numbers, and the vegetation was almost tropical.

Dusk was falling when they halted on the outskirts of Toilung. The Tomo went in search of food, and after they had eaten, he turned to Ferrers Locke and Jack.

"Come!" he said. Obediently they rose to their feet. The Tomo led the way to the summit of a small hillock. The sun was setting in a bank of cloud. Then suddenly the rays shone through. The Tomo raised his hand and pointed.

Ahead of them, a few miles away,

glistened a great golden dome, rearing itself from the centre of a valley.

"Tis the Potala of holy Lhasa, where dwells the Dalai Lama, ruler of Tibet!"

The words fell tonelessly from the Tomo's lips. Jack's hands clenched and the blood tingled in his veins.

Lhasa!

They could not see the city, hidden in the valley, but, all being well, they would ride in on the morrow. And somewhere between them and Lhasa, was situated the Salai Monastery under the walls of which Major Beverley had camped with the remnants of his ill-fated expedition.

They had reached their goal almost, Jack and Ferrers Locke. But by far the most difficult part of their task still lay before them. Still, it was something to have progressed so far and yet be whole in body.

They returned to their camp, and Ferrers Locke and Jack talked long into the night, discussing their plan of campaign. It was decided to push on into Lhasa, find some hovel there where they could lie low and mature plans for obtaining entry into the Salai Monastery.

In the early morning they were in the saddle. From Toilung the road gradually became nothing more nor less than an embankment across a marsh. Jack judged the distance to the city to be about seven miles from Toilung. They saw myriads of wonderfully-coloured butterflies and dragonflies flitting over the rushes of the marshy pasture lands through which they passed. They reached the Chagpo Ri, the rugged cliffs which guard holy Lhasa from the eyes of approaching travellers. Ascending the cliffs, leaving their mules tethered

at the foot of the slope, they obtained their first view of the city.

Then, indeed, was it forced in on Jack why Lhasa was called the Hidden City. The Chagpo Ri, up which they had climbed, was a rocky wall. A chasm, not more than thirty yards wide, separated it from the Potala rock. This rock formed yet another screen to shield Lhasa from the eyes of the world. And beyond the Potala rock stretched a rising sweep of sand dunes, the last barrier of all. For beyond the dunes were the huddled roofs of Lhasa, above which towered the dome of the Jokhang Cathedral.

Ferrers Locke touched Jack quietly on the arm.

"No doubt it was here that Major Beverley and his companions stood the night they looked on Lhasa!" he said. "And that building over there will be the monastery of Salai!"

Jack looked in the direction indicated. Built on solid rock, under the shadow of the Chagpo Ri, about half a mile to their left, stood a large monastery. The walls were black with the wind of the ages, and it stood grim, sinister, and silent.

"And they may be there now," said Jack tensely. "If only we could get some word to them—to let them know that two fellow-countrymen are near! It's—it's horrible to think that they may be rotting in some dungeon—"

"We must bide our time and work with patience," said Ferrers Locke gently. "Our chances of success depend on the care and caution with which we act. But success will be ours I feel sure!"

(Now look out for next week's thrilling instalment of this amazing serial, *chuma*.)

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A "Highbrow" critic wrote to Dicky Nugent the other day and was "lowbrow" enough to say that he couldn't "write for toffee!" Dicky—he's in the Second Form at Greyfriars, you know—retaliated by saying that his correspondent couldn't spell for "toffy" anyway! You regular readers will appreciate both sides of the argument!

I.
A rollicking band of pirates we,
Sing, me lads, yo-ho!
The savagest crew that sails the sea,
Sing, me lads, yo-ho!
A band of blundering buccaniers
That everybody funks and fears;
As plundering rogues we have no
Piers!
Sing, me lads, yo-ho!"

D. R. BIRCHEMALL shuddered.
Down in the waste of the pirate
gally, the Red Rover, the head-
master of St. Sam's was a help-
less prisoner.
With the Head were Jack Jolly,
Merry and Bright, and Frank Fearless,
the heroes of the Fourth.

The little party had been picked up
in mid-Channel during a fishing trip
and taken on board the Red Rover.
And now, as they sat huddled together
in the waste, listening to Captain Blood
and his cut-throat crew howling their
sea-chanty, the Head and the juniors
wondered what was to be their fate.
Jack Jolly & Co. were laughing and
joking between themselves; for it was
their way to laugh and joke, even in the
face of dire and deadly danger. They
were, boys of the bulldog breed, full of
courage in any crisis. They were cool
and calm as they lay there, waiting to
be collected and possibly thrown to the
shark.

But the Head, although of the stuff
of which Nerocs are made, was, like
most cool men, an awful coward at
heart. He cowered in the ship's waste,
shaking and quaking in every limb.
"Here's a pretty kettle of fish, my
boys!" he groaned. "Raney falling into
the clutches of pirates! I thought the
breed was eggshells. But it seems they
are still very much alive. What do
you think the skoundrels will do to us?"
"They are blundering dogs, sir!"
said Jack Jolly, with a sly wink at his
chums. "We can egg-spect no mercy at
their hands. It's more than likely we
shall be made to walk the plank!"
"Yaroooo!" yelled the Head, in
mortel terror.
He had horrid visions of being blind-
folded by the bold, bad buccaniers, and
then tottering along the plank, off the
edge of which he would tumble into the
jaws of the ravenous shark which lurked
in the blue waters below.

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Six feet in stature, he stood as still as
a statue, scowling fiercely at the Head
and the juniors from beneath a bunch of
shaggy eyebrows.

Captain Blood wore a velvet cloak and
knee-breaches and a plumed three-
cornered hat; and a glittering jeweled
dagger was sticking in his waste.

Jack Jolly & Co. met the pirate's
glance boldly, giving back glare for
glare. But the Head, who had the wind
up dreadfully, promptly flung himself at
Captain Blood's feet, where he squirmed
and grovelled in abject terror, gratefully
to the juniors' disgust.

"Merry!" yelled the Head. "I don't
mind what you do to these boys, but
deal mercifully with me, captain! Don't
throw me to the shark! Don't make me
walk the dreaded plank! Pip-pip-please
don't!"

"Get up, you dog!"

Captain Blood assisted the Head to
rise by digging him in the ribs with his
sea-boots. With a yelp of anguish, the
Head resumed the perpendicular.

"I have decided," said the pirate
pirate, "to give my gallant crew a
little entertainment. They have been
having rather a dull time lately. I pro-
pose to make you walk the plank in
their presence!"

"No, no!"

"No, no, no!"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Spare me!" shrieked the Head
wildly. "Already, in his imagination, he
could feel the sharp fangs of the shark
tearing him from him."

Captain Blood laughed—a sinister,
mirthless laugh, which froze the blood in
the Head's veins and sent cold shivers
down his spine.

"I will spare you, dog, on one con-
dition."

"Name it, captain!" cried the Head
eagerly.

"My condition is," said Captain
Blood, "that you join my little band
of pirates, and devote the rest of your
days to plunder and pillage. If you will
consent to become a pirate, hear and
now, I will spare your worthless life. If
you refuse—"

Captain Blood jerked his thumb towards
the plank, which a number of beely
ruffians were already placing in position.
"If you refuse, the shark shall have a
nice supper of schoolmaster!" said Cap-
tain Blood sardonically.

All eyes were upon the Head. The
choice had been offered him; and Jack
Jolly & Co. knew full well which course
the Head, as a man of honour, would
take. Better death than dishonour!

He was to die a thousand deaths
than to forsake the path of
rectitude and become a cold-
blooded, dastardly pirate!

"You have my answer!"
cried the Head.

And the juniors expected to
see him walk towards the plank
and resign himself to his fate.

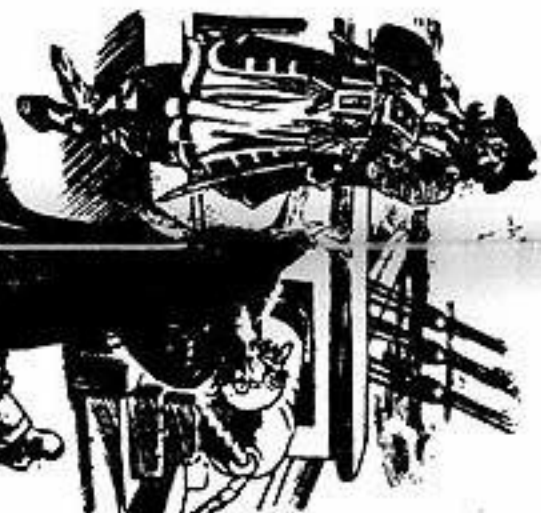
But, no! The treacherous old
scamp started to peel off his
coat.

"Fetch me a suit of pirates'
clothes, captain!" he called.

"Honour! I am a bold, hard
buccanier! I have thrown in
my lot with the Brethren of the
Coast!"

"Shame!"

It was an angry cry from the
juniors.



"Merry!" yelled the Head, "I don't mind what you do to these boys, but deal mercifully with me, captain! Don't throw me to the shark! Don't make me walk the dreaded plank! Pip-pip-please don't!"

The Head laughed.

"I would rather forfeit my honour
and self-respect than my life, any day
of the week!" he said. "I have turned
pirate; and you boys will be well ad-
vised to follow suit!"

"Never!" cried the juniors, in a de-
termined chorus.

"Ho-ho!" roared Captain Blood.
"We'll soon see about that! A taste of
the cater-nine-tails will make you pipe
to another tune, my infants!"

And he gave orders for a ship's flog-
ging to be carried out forthwith.

Jack Jolly was promptly seized by a
couple of skoundrels and dragged to the
mast, despite his fierce struggles. And
Captain Blood, that swaggering swash-
buckler, looked on with a mocking leer.

A member of the crew handed him the
cater-nine-tails, and he peeled off his
velvet cloak and prepared to deliver the
first crool stroke.

II.

"CAPTAIN BLOOD! Stop!"

A grotesque-looking figger
came dashing on to the deck.
It was the Head, though he
was no longer reckonsable as the
stayed and skollery headmaster of
St. Sam's. He was garbed in the
gawdy costume of a pirate. Save for
his long beard, he looked no different
from the other members of that
savagely cut-throat crew.

"Stop!" cried Dr. Pirate Birchmall.
And Captain Blood swung round, the
cater-nine-tails clutched in his hand.

"I will listen to no appeals on behalf
of these young rascals!" he said fiercely.
"They have refused to join my crew,
and they must take the consequences!"

"I was not going to appeal for them,"
said the Head. "I was going to suggest
that you let me be the executioner."

You see, I've had more experience
than you, Captain Blood, in that line."

Captain Blood grinned, and surren-
dered the cater-nine-tails to the Head.

"Go ahead!" he said. "When your
arm aches, I'll relieve you."

The Head swung the cater-nine-tails
over his shoulder, and caught Captain
Blood a terrific crack in the face.

"Yaroooo!"

The pirate chief danced with anguish.
Livid wheels appeared on his cheeks.

"You—your clumsy handiwork!"
roared Captain Blood. "Spit my
timbers! You shall answer for this!"

"You should have got out of the way,
fatted!" snorted the Head. "How
was I to know you were standing behind
me?"

Instantly Captain Blood wrapped out
his orders.

"Clear the decks for action! Mount
the guns! Belay there, you lubbers!
Shake a leg! Pull up your socks! Pre-
pare to pump a broadside into yonder
galleon!"

"You are going to fight her, cap-
tain?" cried the Head.

"I," I," growled Captain Blood im-
patiently. "Release that you're a
whelp!" He pointed to Jack Jolly.

"Every man and boy must bare a hand
in this engagement."

All was haste and bustle aboard the
Red Rover. The buccaniers worked
furiously to prepare for the combat.

Barrels of gunpowder were rolled on to
the deck, and crammed into the guns.

Pistols were primed; cutlasses were
sharpened; short-handled axes and stout
clubs were brought into use.

The Head, even in his wildest dreams,
had never anticipated taking part in a
sea-fight. But now that his chance was
come, he was more eggshelled than any of
the pirates. He drew his cutlass, and
whirled it above his head, and danced
a war-dance on the deck, roaring
lustily:

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo-ho! And a bottle of rum!"

"My only aunt!" gasped Jack Jolly,
who had now rejoined his chums. "Who
would have thought the Head was such
a blundering old buff?" He's simply
spoiling for the scrap!"

Meanwhile, the Red Rover crept
closer and closer to her prey. And the
gunners were waiting for Captain
Blood's orders to discharge a broadside.

The Spaniards had plenty of guns on
board, but they were too paralysed by
terror to fire them. The sight of the
Red Rover, with the Jolly Roger flying
aloft, had put the wind up them in a
grate gust. They had heard of Captain
Blood and his barbarous ways, and they
fell into a panic.

"Open fire!"

The order was issued at last, and the
gunners, busy with flint and steel,
touched off the powder.

Bang! Boom!

It was a deafening broadside, and Jack
Jolly & Co. were hurled to the deck by
the force of the explosion. The Head,
too, lost his balance, and very nearly
impaled himself on his own cutlass.

For a moment, a thick haze hung over
the sea. When it lifted, the Spaniards
galleon was seen to be in a bad way.
Her sails had been shot away by that
powerful broadside, and her decks were
strewn with dead and dying.

thrilling affray. They noticed that the
Head was always in the thick of the
fight, doing grate execution with his cut-
lass. He singled out the Spaniards cap-
tain, and ran him through; he accounted
for a dozen members of the crew; and
nearly sliced off the head of Captain
Blood, who managed to jump clear in
the nick of time.

"On the ball!" yelled the Head, dash-
ing anew into the fray. "No quarter
for these Spanish dogs! Not half!"

The slawter was truly terrible.

Rivers of red blood flowed over the decks
of the galleon. Duzens of Spaniards,
including their skipper, would sail the
seas no more. And the few who sur-
vived were trust up together and made
prisoners.

"Ha, ha!" cried the Head, mopping
his inspiring brow. "That was a good
scrap while it lasted. And now for the
jolly old treasure!"

So saying, he dashed down into the
hold, with Captain Blood and the pirates
at his heels. And there they came upon
the treasure—helfy chests, full of new
minted gold! They plunged their blud-
stained hands up in handfuls, and let it
they raised it up in handfuls, and let it



The Head swung the cater-nine-
tails over his shoulder, and caught
Captain Blood a terrific crack in the
face. "Yaroooo!" yelled the pirate
chief, dancing with anguish.

showed back into the coulters; they
laughed hysterically at one another.

"Rich as last!" cried the Head.
"Rich beyond the dreams of avarice!
When I get back to St. Sam's, I shall be
able to pay off all my debts, and have a
hansom sum left over!"

"You are forgetting, my friend,"
chimed in Captain Blood. "You will
never see the whitewashed shores of
England again. You are now a pirate,
pledged to devote the rest of your days
to plunder and pillage. And, in view
of the gallantry you have displayed
against the Spaniards, I propose to
make you my second in command."

"Thanks awfully!" beamed the Head.

And then the treasure was taken
aboard the Red Rover, and Captain
Blood was in such a good fowmer that
he refrained from punishing Jack Jolly
& Co.

The Spaniards galleon, robbed of its
treasure, was left to sink, and the pirate
vessel sailed, merrily away in quest of
further adventures.

THE END.

(The first story in this splendid pirate
series, "By Luck and Pluck!" is a red
thriller. Don't miss it, chums, whatever
you do.)
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