

RETURN OF TOM REDWING TO GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

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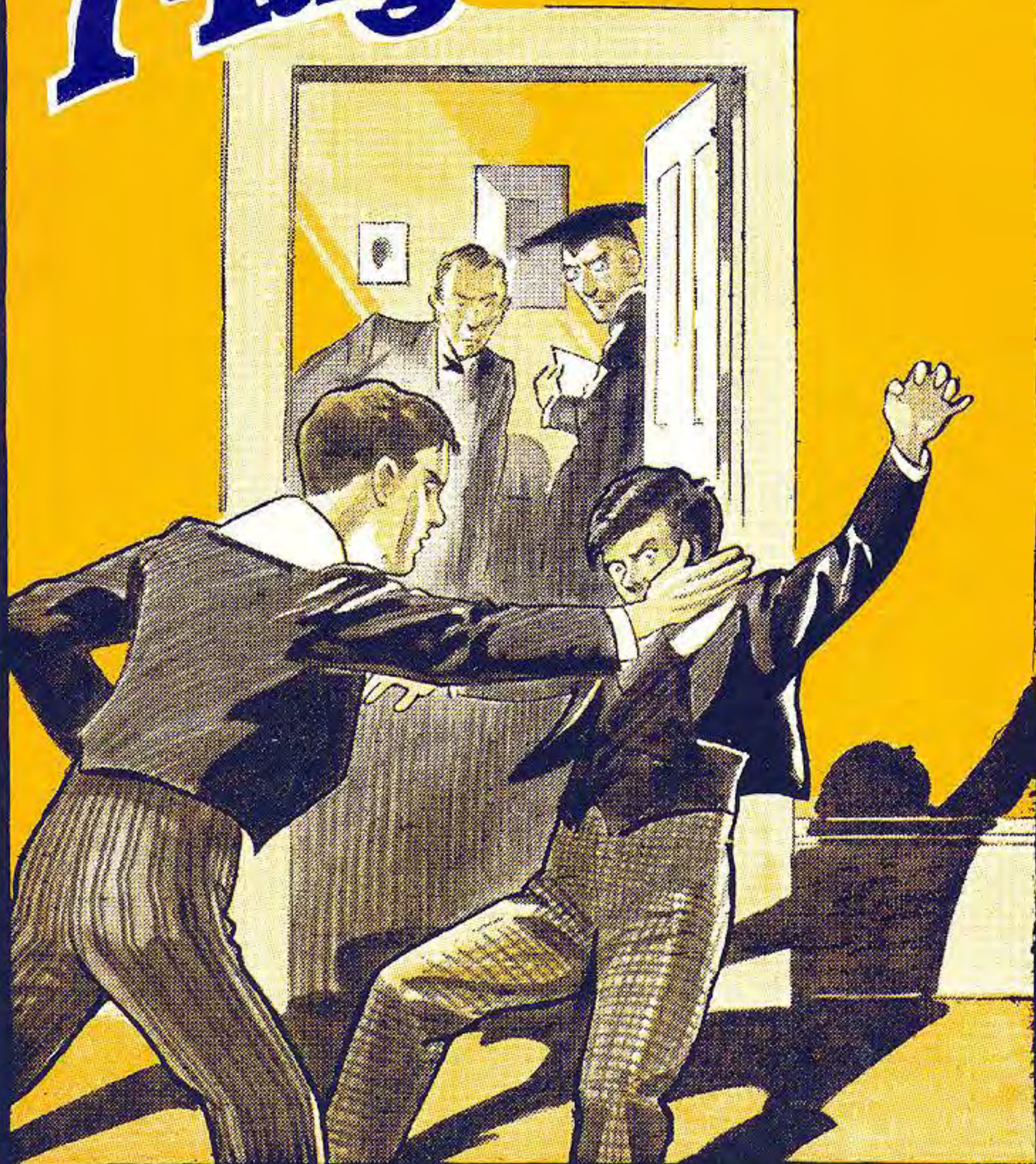
Week Ending October 29th, 1927.

The Magnet

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TOM HITS OUT!

(The hasty action which brought so much trouble upon Tom Redwing.)



This Week:

CHELSEA

the famous London Club which made a gallant but unsuccessful fight for promotion to the First Division last season.

IN the newspaper world there are men who are specialists in what are commonly called "sob" stories. The term is sufficiently expressive. It means that these men are turned out on a story over which readers can "enjoy" a good cry. Strictly speaking, a "sob" man ought to be turned out to deal with the Chelsea Football Club, because they represent one of the tragedies of football—a case indeed for tears.

Just think of them for a minute. The club was established in what can be described as a blaze of glory. For them there was no long period of probation in minor football circles; none of the "started under a lamp-post" business. At one moment there was no Chelsea Football Club: the next there was a powerful organisation, admitted to the Second Division of the League without any fuss. In fact, they found the word "Welcome" written on that mat in great letters.

Chelsea's Proper Place!

There was every reason why they should be welcomed. They had a second to none ground; even to this day Stamford Bridge, where they play, is almost a second to none place in some respects. There was a great public waiting for them in West London. The Underground Railway people were so pleased about it that they built a special station just outside the ground, with the result that even to-day Chelsea's pitch at Stamford Bridge is more accessible than any other in London.

And now for the tragedy over which you can spill tears if you feel so inclined. After getting into the First Division, after appearing in a Cup Final, Chelsea fell from the top class to the Second in 1924 and there they remain. However, wipe away those tears and let us talk of the hopes of Chelsea. They won't always stay in the Second Division. Their proper place, by right of ground, by right of patronage, is in the top class. One day they will be there again by right of conquest. That day may be sooner than some people expect. It may come at the end of the present season; it very nearly came at the end of last season.

Sometimes they call Chelsea the "Pensioners." That isn't because the men are old, but a lot of pensioners—you can see them at Chelsea's matches with their red coats almost hidden by medals—have their abode near the Chelsea ground. At other times they call Chelsea the "Blues," and sometimes they give their supporters a bad attack of the

"blues." Let us run the rule over the lads in blue.

A Wonderful Personality!

As the time when the Chelsea team rivalled the heavens for "stars" has gone, we must first deal with the acknowledged stars which remain. And one of them is "Andy" Wilson. You know most things about him, of course. He played for Scotland time after time, that was when he was at Middlesbrough. Chelsea paid five thousand pounds for him, and soon placed him at inside-left instead of centre-forward. When anybody mentions brains in football it is the same as saying Andy Wilson.

There is no tearing up and down the field for this fellow. He is the right man in the right place; kidding his opponents that he's going one way, and then going the other, not running fast, just swerving, killing the ball, and passing it with uncanny accuracy. Andy has a War relic in the shape of a useless left arm, but he is the billiards' champion of the club, the best bowls player in that part of London, and can hold his own at golf. A wonderful personality, one of the greatest in the game.

The other forwards are not so brilliant, but they get there. In the centre is James Thompson, a big, broad lad who last played with Luton—and a goalgetter if given half a chance. He didn't cost Chelsea a penny piece in transfer fee.

You should also see Chelsea's marionettes on the extreme wings: Jacky Crawford, who came from Hull, and George Pearson. Crawford is one of the smallest players in football, but also one of the cleverest. Talk about dribbling round the edge of half-a-crown, Crawford can dribble round the edge of a sixpence.

On the other wing, Pearson is a funny little fellow with very short legs, but they can move at a great speed. And to see him trapping the ball is worth going a long way. He doesn't do it in the ordinary way, he sort of jumps on top of it and catches it between his legs as it rises.

One, Albert Thain, formerly of Southall, is the inside-right. He reminds me of Euclid's description of a line—length without breadth. But he isn't as frail as he looks.

"Tony" Wilding used to be the centre-half. He is now the right-half, and the tallest fellow in the side—six feet and a bit of him there is. That's why he goes up into goal when Chelsea take a corner kick, and then he applies his head to the ball—and it's in the net. Wilding is a great footballer.

At centre-half there is Jack Townrow, who has played for England in that position because he won fame through stopping Hughie Gallacher, of Newcastle. This happened when Townrow was with the Orient. He works at his trade during the week, and works hard for Chelsea on Saturday afternoons.

An International of the Future!

When we come to the full-backs we strike a department where Chelsea have made one of the really great discoveries of recent years. That is Tom Law, who plays on the left. Last season I sat near to an English International selector at a Chelsea match. The game hadn't been going long before this fellow said to me: "That chap Law will play for England." I was sorry to have to tell him that Law could never play for England because he was born in Scotland. But I pass on the tip. Law is good enough for Scotland. Sandy of hair, and mighty strong of leg. That's Law, and when forwards run up against him they know the strength of the law.

The other right-back is George Smith, another Scot, and a neat player if you like; while a daring goalkeeper in Sam Millington keeps guard. I find I haven't mentioned Ferguson, the left-half. But he is in the side all right, and don't you forget it.

The trainer of the Pensioners is Jack Whitley, and the manager is David Calderhead, both great players in their day. Now we wait for the day when Chelsea will find the word "Welcome" waiting for them on their return to the First Division.

CHELSEA'S ELEVEN.

Left to Right: Smith, Millington, Ferguson, Pearson, Wilson, Thain, Thompson, Townrow, Wilding, Law, and Crawford.

FROM POVERTY TO RICHES! When Tom Redwing, the sailorman's son, left Greyfriars, he had to work before the mast for his bread and keep. But fortune has smiled on him and now, back at his old school again, Tom is able to hold his head as high as anybody, for he is able to pay his fees himself!



A Magnificent New Long Complete School Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, re-introducing an old favourite in Tom Redwing.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs For It!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars, and blinked round him through his big spectacles.

"Not here yet!" he remarked.

The Greyfriars Remove were all in their Form-room; but Mr. Quelch, the Form master, had not yet arrived. Evidently it was to Mr. Quelch that Bunter was alluding.

"The old scout's late," said Bob Cherry. "I saw the Head talking to him in the corridor. Let's hope he'll keep him a bit longer."

The longerfulness the betterfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "A little restfulness is grateful and comforting."

"You saw him, Cherry?" asked Bunter.

"Yes; at the corner of Head's corridor."

"What did he look like?"

"Eh?"

Bob Cherry stared at Bunter.

William George Bunter was short-sighted; but really even the Owl of the Remove should not have needed to inquire what his Form master looked like. But he blinked very seriously at Bob as he repeated his question.

"What did he look like? I want to know."

"Same as usual, fathead—like a gar-goyle," answered Bob.

"I mean, did he look good-tempered?"

"Does he ever?" asked Skinner.

"Well, even Quelch is good-tempered sometimes," said Bunter. "I want to know particularly if he's in a good temper this afternoon. It's important."

"What have you been up to?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"Eh! Nothing! But Smithy is coming back to school this afternoon. He's been away nearly half the term,

you know; but he's turning up at last. Now, Smithy's a pal of mine."

"I wonder if he knows!" murmured Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob, staring at Bunter. "I fancy Quelch is ratty with the Bounder for keeping away from school so long; but I'm blessed if I ever expected you to worry about it, Bunter."

"Eh! I'm not worrying about that," said Bunter. "What I mean is, Smithy having been away so long, and Smithy being my pal, I'd like to meet him at the station. It's Latin prose this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It depends on the sort of temper Quelch is in," went on Bunter. "If he's in one of his beastly tempers, it will be N.G., of course. Any of you fellows happen to have noticed what sort of a temper old Quelch is in?"

Bunter blinked round anxiously at the Remove fellows.

It was an important matter.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, had not yet rejoined the school after his summer holidays; and all the Remove knew that Mr. Quelch was deeply irritated thereby. It was quite probable that Smithy's reception, when he arrived, would not be very agreeable. It was probable that he would find Mr. Quelch very cross indeed. But William George Bunter was not worrying about that. The important matter was, not whether Smithy would find himself in hot water when he returned to school, but whether Billy Bunter could dodge Latin prose that afternoon. That was a matter of the very first importance.

The Removites grinned, but nobody answered Bunter's query. Apparently nobody had observed particularly what sort of a temper Mr. Quelch was in that afternoon.

"You see, after my holiday with

Smithy in the South Seas, and the frightful dangers we went through, shoulder to shoulder, and all that, I think I ought to meet him at the station and welcome him back, and so on," said Bunter. "I think Quelch ought to see that. Do you think he will see it, Wharton?"

"Probably not," answered the captain of the Remove, with a laugh.

Bunter wrinkled his fat brow anxiously.

"Even old Quelch may be decent for once," he said. "I'm going to try it on, anyhow, if he looks good-tempered. The question is, is the old brute in a good temper, or is he in one of his tantrums?"

Bunter, occupied with his own anxious thoughts, and listening to the music of his own voice, did not observe a foot-step in the passage outside.

Having his back to the passage, he naturally did not see an angular form loom up in the doorway.

So he was quite unconscious of the fact that Mr. Quelch was now just behind him, and he rattled on cheerily.

"You never know how to take old Quelch! I've known him to be as good-tempered as anything—when some chap has pulled his leg, you know, by asking him to explain some difficult passage in some rotten mouldy old classic. But as a rule he bites."

Mr. Quelch had been about to enter his Form-room.

But he did not enter.

He stood transfixed in the doorway, as if Bunter's words had had the effect of rooting him to the floor.

The expression on his face was extraordinary.

Sometimes Mr. Quelch surmised, or suspected, that fellows in the Remove did not always allude to him, among themselves, with the deep awe and respect that was due to a Form master.

Now he knew it!

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He stood rooted, gazing at Bunter's back. Bunter—naturally having no eyes in his back—was still in blissful ignorance of his danger.

"I might try that on," he said thoughtfully. "I might ask him to go through some passage in Virgil with me—that would make him smile. But then, he might do it! Can't run the risk. Pulling old Quelch's leg is a bit dangerous, at the best of times. What are you making faces at me for, Bob Cherry?"

Bob did not answer.

He was trying to warn Bunter to shut up, but the obtuse Owl of the Remove did not catch on. William George Bunter was not quick on the uptake.

The Remove fellows stood petrified.

Several of them made signs to Bunter, which the fat junior did not see or heed. He ran on regardless.

"Well, I'll ask the old blighter, anyhow. He can only say 'No,' and no harm done. If he says 'Yes,' I shall get out of Latin prose for the afternoon, and that's something. It's worth trying it on. I hope the crabby old corker will be in a good temper, that's all."

Mr. Quelch woke to life, as it were. He made a gasping sound, and strode into the Form-room and grasped Billy Bunter by the shoulder.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He spun round in alarm, and his little round eyes almost bulged through his big spectacles as he beheld Mr. Quelch.

"Now for the thunderstorm!" murmured Skinner.

"Bunter!" spluttered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir."

"How dare you?"

"It—it wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"How dare you allude to your Form master in such terms?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I didn't, sir. I mean, I—I wasn't! I—I wasn't speaking at all, sir. I—I wouldn't dream of calling you a crabby old corker, sir. I—I—I'm much too respectful to say what I think about you, sir."

"You disrespectful young rascal!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I shall cane you severely!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Bring me the cane from my desk!"

"Ow!"

Bunter brought the cane, and Mr. Quelch took a businesslike grip on it. Bunter had doubted whether Mr. Quelch would be in a good temper that afternoon. His doubts were resolved now. Mr. Quelch wasn't! There was not the shadow of a doubt that he wasn't!

"Bend over that desk, Bunter."

"Wow!"

The Remove Form-room, which had been very silent, was now full of sound. Stentor of old could hardly have put in a louder roar than Bunter's as the cane descended upon him.

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yoooooooooooooooooop!"

"Now go to your place, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter limped to his place. Latin prose commenced in the Form-room, and Billy Bunter, with a dismal fat countenance, resigned himself to his fate. It was only too clear that the Bouncer would not have the pleasure—or otherwise—of being greeted at the station by the Owl of the Remove that afternoon.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tom Redwing Loses His Temper!

"LANTHAM!" said Tom Redwing.

"Here we are again!" said the Bouncer cheerily.

The express rolled into Lantham Junction. A porter's voice was calling along the platform:

"Lantham! Change here for Courtfield and Friardale!"

Tom Redwing jumped out lightly. His sunburnt face was very bright and cheery.

Redwing, once a Greyfriars fellow, was going back to Greyfriars with his old chum. The treasure quest in the Pacific had turned out better than Tom had ventured to hope, and the sailor-man's son was now independent and able to stand his own expenses at school. It was an odd enough position for a junior schoolboy; but there it was, and Tom's heart was light when he started for the school.

The Bouncer was well pleased also; he was glad to have his chum back, but he was not glad to be returning to school. On one pretext or another, Smithy had persuaded his indulgent father to allow him to prolong the holidays, and Redwing, keen as he was to get to Greyfriars, had stayed with him as a matter of course. Four or five weeks of extra "vac" had not, however, satisfied the Bouncer, and he was not in the least anxious to resume his place in the Remove Form-room.

Smithy gave Tom a rather sarcastic glance as they stood on the Lantham platform.

"In a hurry to get to school?" he asked.

"Well, I shall be glad, you know," answered Redwing. "It still seems to me too good to be true, Smithy."

"Keen to get to irregular verbs with old Quelch?"

Redwing laughed.

"I don't know about that," he said. "But I want to see all the fellows again. Wharton and his friends have been back a good time, you know, and we've really rather overdone it, Smithy. I'm afraid Mr. Quelch won't be very pleased."

"Not exactly!" grinned the Bouncer. "I've heard that he's got a rod in pickle for me!"

"For us, you mean?"

"No; you're a new fellow, and can join when you like. But I ought to have joined up as soon as we came home from the voyage like those good, dear fellows, Wharton and his crowd. And I didn't choose to. Look here, Redwing, we're not getting in till after class!"

"I think we ought to go straight on!" said Tom, with a grave face.

"That does it! If we ought to, we won't!"

"Smithy, old chap——"

"Quelch will slam me into class the minute I put my nose into the school if he has a chance. I'm not giving him one. It's our last day of liberty; let's make the most of it!"

Redwing glanced across the line.

"The Courtfield train is in," he said.

"Let it go out again! Our things can be sent on, and we can follow—when we like——"

"But Mr. Quelch will expect——"

"Let him!"

Redwing's face grew graver. Smithy was his best chum, but the Bouncer's lawless nature was very much out of keeping with his own quiet, steady character.

"If you're in such a dashed hurry

you can go on in that train, and leave me on my own!" said the Bouncer sulkily.

"I shan't do that," said Tom quietly. "Then come on!"

Redwing, as he usually did, gave way to his friend against his own better judgment.

Having arranged for their baggage, the two juniors left the station.

"What about the pictures?" asked Smithy.

"Not on a beautiful afternoon like this, old chap."

"Right! I forgot you were an outdoor bird. No good askin' you to drop into a little place I know at Lantham for a hundred up?" asked the Bouncer banteringly.

"No!" said Tom.

"Well, any old thing will do so long as we don't get to Greyfriars before tea-time!" said Vernon-Smith. "What about a walk through the jolly old woods, and picking up a train again when we get tired—say, half-way to Courtfield?"

"I'd like that!" assented Tom.

"I thought you would. Anything perfectly innocent and harmless, with a little exertion thrown in."

Redwing made no reply to that. Returning to school seemed to have affected the Bouncer's temper a little—a temper that never was very reliable. On that day—to him a most happy one—Redwing was anxious to avoid even the slightest disagreement with his chum. Fortunately, he had patience and good temper enough for two.

The juniors walked out of Lantham and entered the long country road that led to Courtfield. A grin came over Herbert Vernon-Smith's face as he remembered how once, the previous term, he had been pursued along that road by Wingate of the Sixth on a bicycle. He told Redwing the story as they sauntered along, but Tom's face remained serious. He could not see, as the Bouncer seemed to do, anything entertaining in reckless defiance of authority.

"I hid in a tree in Lantham Chase," went on the Bouncer. "Wingate of the Sixth rooted about after me a long time and had to give it up. His face was worth watching!"

"Was it?" said Tom quietly.

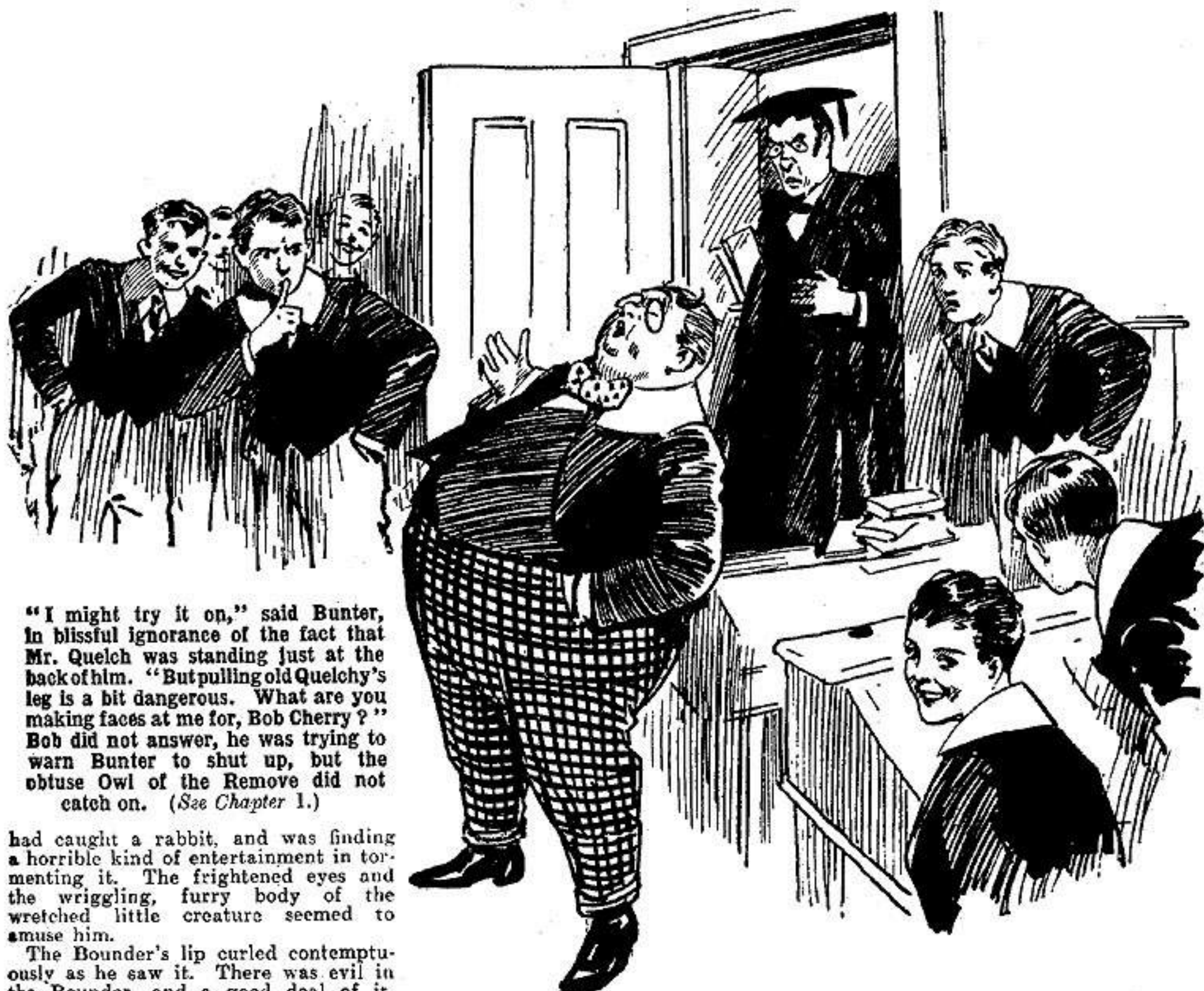
"I'll show you the place."

Redwing's face indicated clearly enough that he would have preferred to walk on to the school. But the Bouncer was in a wilful and provoking mood, and he took his chum's consent for granted, and turned into the footpath through Lantham Chase.

From the footpath Smithy turned off among the gnarled old trees, and the juniors walked on a thick carpet of fallen leaves.

"It was somewhere about here," said the Bouncer, pausing and looking round him. "Yes, there it is—— Hallo, somebody's there!"

The two juniors entered a shady glade, where their footsteps made no sound on the thick fallen leaves. A boy of about their own age was there, too busily occupied, apparently, to observe them. The Bouncer gave him a careless glance, as did Redwing; but the next moment Tom's look became fixed on him. The fellow was not prepossessing to look at; he had a hard, pallid face, with extremely sharp and shifty eyes, and thin, hard lips that made his mouth look like a gash. But it was not his looks that attracted Tom's attention; it was his occupation—a very peculiar occupation, which brought a blaze into Redwing's eyes. The fellow



"I might try it on," said Bunter, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Mr. Quelch was standing just at the back of him. "But pulling old Quelch's leg is a bit dangerous. What are you making faces at me for, Bob Cherry?" Bob did not answer, he was trying to warn Bunter to shut up, but the obtuse Owl of the Remove did not catch on. (See Chapter 1.)

had caught a rabbit, and was finding a horrible kind of entertainment in tormenting it. The frightened eyes and the wriggling, furry body of the wretched little creature seemed to amuse him.

The Bounder's lip curled contemptuously as he saw it. There was evil in the Bounder, and a good deal of it, but wanton cruelty excited only his scorn; with all his faults he was never capable of anything like that. Redwing did not content himself with a scornful look at the young rascal, however. As soon as he saw what the fellow was doing he made a stride at him and grasped him by the shoulder.

The hard-faced youth stared round at him.

"Hallo! What's this game?" he ejaculated. "Let go, confound you!"

"Let that rabbit go!" said Redwing, in a low, concentrated voice.

"Shan't!"

"Let it go, I tell you!"

"Rats!"

Smack!

Redwing's open hand came across the hard face with a smack that rang through the quiet woods like a pistol-shot.

The gash of a mouth opened to emit a fearful yell.

The young rascal staggered back and fell heavily on the fallen leaves, and the rabbit, involuntarily released, scampered away instantly into the undergrowth.

"Well hit!" chuckled the Bounder.

Redwing stood over the fellow on the ground, his fists clenched and his eyes ablaze.

"Get up, you cur!" he said between his teeth.

"Oh! Oh gad!"

"Get up! I'm going to thrash you!" shouted Redwing. "Do you hear, you dirty cad? Get up and put your hands up!"

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

All the way down from London the Bounder had been sarcastic and irritating, and Redwing had taken it all as if he had the temper of an angel; indeed, it seemed that the sailorman's son had no temper at all. The change in him was startling. His face was crimson with anger, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched furiously. The Bounder roared with laughter.

Redwing gave him an almost savage look.

"Go it!" chuckled the Bounder. "Go it, old son! Glad to see you've got some pepper in your disposition after all. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up, you cur!" repeated Redwing.

The hard-faced youth sat up in the thick leaves, his hand to his cheek, where the skin burned red from the smack.

"You—you rotter!" he gasped. "I'm not going to fight you. I'm not going to scrap with any cad that comes along!"

"You are!" said Redwing.

"Get out, hang you! Let me alone! Who the deuce are you, anyhow?"

"That doesn't matter. Get up, or I'll use my boots on you!" exclaimed Redwing fiercely.

"I won't!"

Redwing suited the action to the word. At the first drive of his boot the young rascal picked himself up.

"Now, come on, you worm!" said Tom between his teeth.

"I—I won't! I—I—"

But he had no choice in the matter, for the sailorman's son was attacking

him right and left, and he had to put up his hands.

Vernon-Smith leaned on the trunk of the old tree, with his hands in his pockets, watching the scene with a grin.

For five minutes the unknown youth—who, if the juniors had only been aware of it, was not always to remain unknown to them—had the time of his life. He fought savagely, a good deal like a wild-cat, but the sturdy sailorman's son knocked him right and left. He went down in a heap at last, and lay gasping and groaning.

"Have you had enough, you cur?" asked Redwing contemptuously.

"Ow! Yes! I'll make you pay for this! Ow!"

Redwing turned his back on him and put on his cap, and walked away with the Bounder. Vernon-Smith was still grinning, hugely entertained by the episode. A thoroughly thrashed young rascal lay groaning in the glade long after the two juniors were gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Sir Hilton!

"HUH!" It was an angry and scornful grunt, and it proceeded from a tall gentleman in shooting-clothes, who was stalking along the country road with a gun under his arm.

Tom Redwing and the Bounder were
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walking on, intending to stop at Redclyffe and take the train from there. As he walked Redwing dabbed at his face occasionally. He had knocked his unknown adversary thoroughly out, hardly heeding at the time the damages he received, but he found that he was rather damaged. His nose bled, and there were scratches on his sunburnt cheeks where the unpleasant youth on Lantham Chase had used his nails. Redwing dabbed at his injuries with a handkerchief that was considerably streaked with crimson after a time. The Bounder, perhaps by way of playing Job's comforter, told him that he looked a pretty picture for a fellow just going to school, and Redwing realised it with much discomfort.

Certainly he did not regret having thrashed the young rascal in Lantham Chase. But he did regret that he had to appear before the Head and Mr. Quelch, on his first day at Greyfriars, looking as if he had been through a prize-fight. And as the proverb states that it never rains but it pours, so it was in this case, for under the golden October sunshine on the country road the juniors came on Sir Hilton Popper, and his disgusted grunt showed that he had taken heed of them.

The tall gentleman in shooting-clothes was Sir Hilton—a great man in the county, lord of hundreds of fertile acres, which, however, the gossip of the countryside declared to be heavily mortgaged. What more nearly concerned Smithy and Redwing was the fact that Sir Hilton was a governor of Greyfriars and one of the most emphatic, if not the most important, members of the governing body of the old school.

Sir Hilton was not popular at Greyfriars. His tall and angular figure was seldom seen there unless he had some complaint to make. Fellows would cross footpaths on his land, and they would row to his island in the river—or Sir Hilton fancied that they did, which came to the same thing. Dr. Locke sighed whenever the testy old baronet was announced. Dr. Locke would rather have been headmaster of Greyfriars than Emperor of the East and West; but he realised that the headmastership had its drawbacks, with a testy, touchy, unpleasant member of the governing body living at Popper Court, only a couple of miles away.

Sir Hilton was a managing gentleman. He managed his estate with an iron hand—and heavy mortgages. He dealt with poachers so severely that any poacher in the county would have walked ten miles to do him a bad turn. He governed his servants like a little Tsar, with the result that he was constantly changing most of them, and those who remained for a lengthy time remained to cheat him. He took his duties as a governor of Greyfriars very seriously, as he took everything in connection with himself. He attended every meeting of the body, and always made his voice heard. He kept an eye on the school personally; he kept an eye on Greyfriars fellows when he met them on their walks abroad. Now he had met Smithy and Redwing, and, instead of acknowledging their respectful salute and passing on, as a less managing and fussy gentleman would have done, he halted and glared at them, and grunted emphatically:

"Fighting, what?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir," said Redwing.

"Huh!"

Sir Hilton snorted.

The baronet was in a bad temper that

afternoon, anyway. Possibly his mortgages were weighing on his lofty mind, and the difficulty he found in meeting certain interest due to a gentleman in Lantham who held the mortgages on his estate. Having nothing particular to do, Sir Hilton had gone out with a gun under his arm to kill something. Killing some inoffensive bird or beast was his great resource on dull days. But on this particular afternoon bird and beast seemed to be unusually wary. With what amounted to reckless impudence, they disliked the idea of being killed even to relieve the tedium of so important a person as Sir Hilton Popper. Altogether, the universe was not being run to the entire satisfaction of Sir Hilton, so he was naturally cross. Redwing came along in time to get the benefit of it.

"Disgraceful!" snorted Sir Hilton. "You are Greyfriars boys, and you walk about in public looking like prize-fighters! Disgraceful! By gad, what is my old school coming to? What?"

"I give that one up, sir," answered Vernon-Smith, just as if the baronet had asked him a conundrum. The Bounder, at least, was not a fellow to be scared by the black looks of a cross and meddlesome old gentleman.

"What? What?" hooted Sir Hilton. "You are impertinent, boy! You are, I think, the boy named Smith?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Then what is your name? I remember your face."

"Vernon-Smith."

"Huh! Huh! You are insolent! And you"—Sir Hilton glared at the sailorman's son—"you are called Redleaf, or Redmond, or something."

"Or something," assented Tom quietly.

"What is your name? I believe I have seen you before."

"I believe you, sir."

"Your name? I am a governor of Greyfriars, and I demand your name!"

"Redwing, sir."

"I remember now. You have been fighting, to get yourself into this state disgraceful to yourself and to your school."

"I don't think it disgraceful, sir," said Tom. "It depends on what a fellow fights about, whether fighting is disgraceful or not."

"Don't bandy words with me. I shall make it a point to report both of you to your Form master, at Greyfriars."

"Awfully kind of you to take the trouble, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "May we pass you a vote of thanks, sir?"

Sir Hilton almost gurgled with rage.

"This is not a half-holiday at your school!" he exclaimed. "Have you your Form master's leave from classes?"

"You can ask him, sir, when you report us," suggested the Bounder.

"I shall certainly report you!" gasped Sir Hilton. "Such insolence I have never experienced before. This is what comes of letting outsiders into my old school—the sons of moneylenders and common seafaring men!"

The Bounder's eyes flashed.

"That's a lie, sir!" he said, with deadly coolness.

Sir Hilton almost fell down. Never in his autocratic career had anyone dared to give him the lie. Now a junior schoolboy had dared!

It was really time for the skies to fall!

The skies did not fall—apparently being quite regardless of Sir Hilton Popper and his importance. But Sir Hilton himself nearly fell, in his amazement and wrath.

"What—what—what?" he stuttered.

"You—you—you dare to address such—such a word to me, a governor of the school?"

"Let my father alone, then," said the Bounder. "He's a better man than you will ever be, and he's got too much brains to waste his time potting about the country killing wretched little beasts with a gun."

"I am dreaming!" said Sir Hilton, addressing the universe in his amazement. "I am dreaming!"

"Come on, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing uneasily. "Sir Hilton is a governor of the school, you know; you can't slang him!"

"I'll slang any man that slangs my father," said the Bounder savagely. "As for Redwing's father being a common seafaring man," he went on, "that's true, and if you were the same, you'd be more worth your keep to the country than you are now. Confound your impudence!"

With that, the Bounder walked on with Redwing, leaving Sir Hilton Popper rooted in the road.

Long after the juniors were out of sight, the baronet still stood rooted there, so overcome with amazement that it really seemed that he never would recover from it.

A schoolboy had confounded his impudence! His—Sir Hilton Popper's, of Popper Court! Yet the stars in their courses still rolled on as if nothing out of the common had happened. There had been no perceptible shake in the solid earth under his feet. Yet surely it was enough to send a shudder through the whole of Nature when his—Sir Hilton's—impudence was confounded by a schoolboy!

"Good gad!" said Sir Hilton, finding his voice at last. "Great gad! That boy shall be expelled, flogged, thrashed—made an example of! Good gad! Flogged—thrashed—expelled! Good gad! A pretty pass things are coming to! Great gad!"

Sir Hilton stalked on, his gun unheeded under his arm, too deeply disturbed and outraged even to think of killing anything. A hard-featured youth, who was bathing a bruised face in a pond by the roadside, looked up at his heavy footsteps and grinned at the sight of Sir Hilton's thunder-clad brow. Sir Hilton, who was savagely regretting that he had not thrashed Vernon-Smith with his own lofty hand, caught that impudent grin, and stopped. He was in a boiling state, liable to boil over at any moment, and he was really yearning for a victim upon whose devoted head he could pour out the vials of his wrath. He came over to the hard-faced youth with a long stride.

"You impertinent young rascal!"

The hard-faced youth backed away. He had had enough from Tom Redwing that afternoon, and did not want any more from the incensed baronet.

"G-g-g-good-afternoon, Sir Hilton!" he gasped.

"So you know my name?"

"Yes, sir; I've seen you at my father's office, sir."

"What? What? What is your name?"

"Bright, sir!"

"And you think you can make impudent faces at me, sir, because you are the son, sir, of a scheming scoundrel who holds mortgages on my property, sir?" hooted the baronet. "That is a mistake, sir, as I shall show you."

Cuff! Cuff! Cuff!

"Yow-ow! Leave off! Yarooogh! Oh, my hat! Yarooop!"

Cuff! Cuff! Cuff!

The hard-faced youth, whose name was Bright, tore himself away and jumped

clear. His yells woke the echoes of the woods as Sir Hilton, feeling a little better, strode on, leaving him yelling.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Train!

"JUST in time!"

The two juniors jumped into a carriage at Redclyffe Railway Station, where the train from Lantham stopped half-way to Courtfield. The train was about to start when Vernon-Smith and Redwing reached it, and they bundled in, and a porter slammed the door behind them.

"Oh, sorry, sir!" exclaimed the Bounder, realising that in his haste he had trodden on the foot of a passenger already in the carriage.

"You clumsy young fool!"

The passenger did not seem pleased.

Perhaps he had a corn on the foot on which the Bounder had trodden rather heavily. He seemed hurt; and he seemed more angry than hurt.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. It had been an accident, and he had apologised for it, and if the passenger chose to cut up rusty, Smithy was not the fellow to concern himself about it. He sat down in a corner seat, giving the man no further attention.

"We were in rather a hurry, sir," said Redwing peaceably.

"That is no excuse!" snapped the passenger.

He was nursing the foot upon which the Bounder had inadvertently trodden. Obviously, there was a corn.

"I am really sorry, sir," said the Bounder, under the influence of Redwing's look at him. "I thought the carriage was empty when I jumped in."

"You young fool!"

"Oh, rats!" said Smithy.

"Cheese it, Smithy, old man!" urged Redwing. "We've woke up enough trouble for one afternoon, surely!"

"You woke it up, not I!" grinned the Bounder. "It's my turn now."

"Oh, do be quiet, old chap!"

The Bounder settled back in his seat, shrugging his shoulders again. His eyes rested curiously on the face of the passenger in the train from Lantham. There was something very familiar in the man's features. He was an elderly man, well dressed, and might have been a solicitor, or something of that sort. His features were hard, as if moulded in iron, and his mouth was a narrow slit, between thin, sour lips. Somewhere or other the Bounder had seen those hard features and that gash of a mouth.

He remembered suddenly. It was the face of the fellow whom Redwing had thrashed in Lantham Chase, that was in his memory. The likeness was so striking that there could not be any doubt that this man was a relative of that unpleasant youth—his father, in all probability.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured the Bounder.

He gave Tom a grin.

"Seen that chivvy before, old bean?" he whispered.

Tom looked puzzled.

"It seems familiar," he said. "But—I don't know—"

"It's that chap's pater, ten to one!"

"Oh!" said Tom.

He was sure of it, now that the Bounder had mentioned it. It gave him a feeling of great discomfort. Certainly, he did not repent having laid hands on the tormenter of the hapless rabbit; but it was discomfiting to find himself travelling with the father of the youth he had thrashed, and whose claw-marks he still bore on his face.

"Shall we tell him about it?" murmured the Bounder, chuckling.

"For goodness' sake, dry up, Smithy."

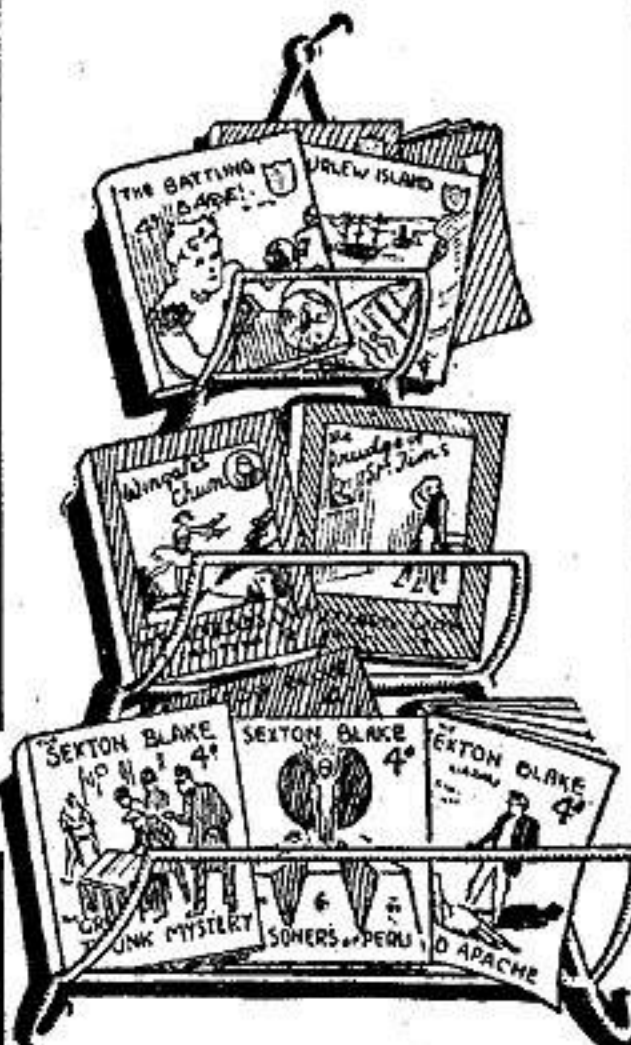
"We could handle him if we got his rag out."

"Shut up, old chap!"

The Bounder laughed and relapsed into silence. The train ran on swiftly through the autumnal countryside, the sour-faced gentleman burying himself behind a newspaper in his corner of the carriage and taking no further notice of the juniors.

"Courtfield!" yawned the Bounder at last.

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The train stopped, and the juniors alighted, the sour-faced gentleman following them a moment later from the carriage. Evidently he also was travelling only as far as Courtfield.

On the platform he gave them an inimical glance, which Redwing affected not to notice, but which the Bounder answered by a sargastic grin.

"Come on, Smithy!" said Redwing hastily.

He hurried his chum along the platform.

"Taking the local to Friardale, or walkin'?" asked the Bounder.

"I'd rather walk, if you would."

"Done, then."

They left the station. Their fellow-traveller was leaving also, and outside he held up an umbrella as a sign to a taxi. The juniors were paying him no special heed, but his voice, though not deep, was sharp, clear, and incisive, and they heard him speaking to the taxi-driver:

"Greyfriars School."

The Bounder glanced round at the man then.

The sour-faced gentleman was evidently bound for Greyfriars, which was rather interesting, as they were going to the school themselves.

"Yes, sir."

"What is the fare?"

"Six shillings, sir."

"You mean four?"

The taximan gave him a look.

"Keep an eye on the clock, sir!" he said, with sarcasm. "Keep a-watching of it all the way!"

"I shall observe the taximeter, and I shall observe that you take the shortest route!" said the acid gentleman. "I am well acquainted with the road, though it is a quarter of a century since I have travelled it. Kindly lose no time!"

He stepped into the taxi.

The driver grunted, jammed down his flag, grunted again, and started.

The taxi buzzed away down Courtfield High Street, the Bounder staring after it.

"So that old bird is goin' to our school!" he remarked.

"Looks like it," agreed Tom, without much interest.

"An Old Boy, perhaps," said Vernon-Smith. "Twenty-five years since he travelled on this road. He must have a good memory if he remembers it so jolly well. He can't remember the new road that was made only a few years ago, and I'll bet you ten to one that that taxi-chap won't take that road! He will go round the old road and make it six bob—what?"

Tom smiled.

"Not an Old Boy, either," went on the Bounder. "He doesn't look like a Public school man. I wonder what he was doing at Greyfriars twenty-five years ago?"

Redwing did not make any suggestion. His interest in the sour-faced gentleman was of the very slightest.

"Not a master," said Smithy. "He's got the cut of some sort of a legal johnny. Notice that?"

"Can't say I did."

"Sort of sharp, nousey old bird," said the Bounder. "Well, come on, and we may see him again at the school! I hope the Head hasn't been getting into any trouble while we've been away!"

"What?" exclaimed Tom.

"That's the sort of johnny who calls to serve a writ."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Redwing laughed, and the

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Bounder chuckled at his own idea. The two juniors walked cheerily along the road to Greyfriars, the new road across Courtfield common, which was the shortest way.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

A bunch of cyclists, coming out into the road from a lane, slackened down, and jumped off their machines.

"Here, you are again!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Here we are again!" said the Bounder, with a cheery grin at the Famous Five of the Remove.

"Glad to see you back!" said Nugent.

"Thanks! Glad to see you fellows again!" said the Bounder cordially.

"And here's old Reddy, a Greyfriars man again!"

"The gladfulness to welcome the esteemed Redwing to Greyfriars is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Picking up trouble on your way here, old bean?" asked Johnny Bull, with a smile at Redwing's marked face.

"Not my fault, really," said Tom.

"I'm sure of that."

"Don't you believe him!" grinned the Bounder. "He pitched into a chap he had never seen before, and who never spoke a word to him."

"Gammon!" said Wharton.

Redwing coloured.

"It's true!" he said. "But——"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "Is bad temper catching? Have you caught it from Smithy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you ass——" began Vernon-Smith.

"I—I really wasn't to blame, you fellows," said Redwing uncomfortably. "The fellow I pitched into was a beast!"

"Must have been, if you pitched into him," said Bob. "You never pitch into anybody."

"We expected you fellows along earlier," said Wharton. "I fancy Quelch did, too."

"I'm sure he did," said the Bounder coolly. "We timed ourselves to get in after class. At least, I did, and Redwing followed my lead."

"That was rather fatheaded, old chap," said the captain of the Remove gravely. "Quelch is a bit ratty at your keeping away so long, anyhow. It would have been a bit more sensible to turn up early."

"That's why I decided not to."

"Oh!"

"Well, here you are again, anyhow!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Let's walk the jiggers the rest of the way, you fellows."

"Right!"

And the Famous Five, wheeling their machines, walked the remainder of the way to the school with the two late-comers. They chatted merrily as they walked. Redwing was happy to find himself with his friends again; and the Bounder was pleased at having, as he regarded it, scored over Mr. Quelch. It was a cheery party that arrived at the gates of the school.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not Wanted at Greyfriars!

DR. LOCKE, the headmaster of Greyfriars, looked uncomfortable.

He felt uncomfortable.

The situation was embarrassing.

There was a visitor in Dr. Locke's study, the hard-featured, sour-faced

man who had travelled to Courtfield in the same carriage with Vernon-Smith and Redwing.

The Head had coughed with discomfort when a card was brought in to him, bearing the name of Mr. Esau Bright.

Obviously, he knew that name, and was not pleased to see it on the card. But he had given directions for the caller to be shown in.

The sour-faced gentleman—looking sourer than ever—sat bolt upright in his chair facing the Head of Greyfriars, his hands resting on the knob of the umbrella upright between his knees.

He was not really a pleasant gentleman to look at; and he was the very last man in the world at whom Dr. Locke desired to look.

But there he was!

"Really, my dear sir——" the Head murmured.

"I have called to discuss the matter of my son entering this school," said Mr. Bright, in his cold, sharp, metallic voice.

"That matter, sir, is already settled."

"I think not," said Mr. Bright.

"Really, my dear sir, this—this call is—is quite—quite unnecessary, and—and, in fact, extremely unpleasant for both sides," said Dr. Locke. "I have already informed you that your son—hem!—cannot, for various reasons, be entered at this school. I am sorry; but my decision is taken!"

Mr. Bright's vice-like jaw set a little more like an iron vice.

He looked as if he possessed about ten times the force of character of the headmaster of Greyfriars, as doubtless he did. But there was a quiet firmness about the old scholastic gentleman, nevertheless. Certainly he was not to be bullied in his own study.

"There are other schools!" the Head suggested vaguely.

"I do not desire to send my son to another school. I desire to send him to Greyfriars."

Each word came sharply from Mr. Bright's lips, as if he bit it off as he uttered it.

"Surely, sir, discussion is useless," said the Head mildly.

"Not at all. Your refusal to take my son into this school is, in my opinion, a reflection upon him and upon me."

"No reflection is intended."

"Intended or not, it is there. You have never even seen the boy, yet you put this slight upon him."

"No slight is intended."

"I have a right to know, sir, for what reason you refuse to take in my son," said Mr. Bright steadily. "It is not, I presume, a question of the fees. I am prepared to satisfy you fully as to my financial position, if any doubt has crossed your mind."

"Nothing of the sort."

"You can have no personal prejudice against a lad whom you have never seen."

"Certainly not."

"I am aware that a headmaster of a school like Greyfriars must use a certain discretion with regard to the parents of his boys. Am I to understand that there is anything in my own character or reputation that does not meet with your approval?"

Dr. Locke coughed with discomfort. This sort of a discussion was gall and wormwood to him. But Mr. Bright was a determined gentleman.

"I am by profession a solicitor," said Mr. Bright. "The law defines the position of a solicitor as that of a gentleman, as no doubt you are aware. I am not in legal practice now, as I

made a fortune during my long residence abroad, which is about to be added to by an unexpected inheritance which has fallen to me since my return to this country. My bankers will answer for my position."

"Really, sir——"

"I reside at Lantham, and my home is open to inspection," said Mr. Bright coldly. "I have nothing to conceal."

"I have no right—no desire—to learn these details, Mr. Bright."

"You have a right to know the circumstances of any man whose son is to enter your school."

"But your son is not to enter this school, Mr. Bright. I have already communicated to you my decision in that matter."

"I am waiting to hear the reasons for that decision. Probably they may be removed by a little frank discussion."

"Impossible."

"State them, at all events," said Mr. Bright.

"I should greatly prefer to let the subject drop."

"I think, sir, that I have a right to know for what reason you are slighting a respectable gentleman and his son."

"If you insist, sir——"

"I insist."

"Very well, then, Mr. Bright," said the Head. "I will tell you. When I heard from you I looked into the matter, as is my custom. I learned that, though you had only recently returned to England from abroad, you were already engaged in business in Lantham——"

He paused.

"Is Greyfriars School run on the same lines as that well-known boat club, which will not admit any members who have been engaged in business?" asked Mr. Bright sardonically.

"No such foolish or snobbish idea ever entered my mind!" exclaimed the Head warmly. "There are many sons of business men at Greyfriars, and two of my best boys are the sons of working-men. I am referring to the nature of the business you carry on at Lantham."

Mr. Bright's shifty eyes narrowed.

"A business in real estate and mortgages," he said.

"Unless you are much belied, sir, you carry on the business of a money-lender," said the Head.

"Loans, certainly, are a part of my business. Banks also make loans to their clients, but you would not, I presume, refuse a banker's son on those grounds."

"There is a difference, sir," said the Head.

"Granted. But the difference is not great. And my son, a boy of fifteen, is scarcely responsible. I am not seeking to enter Greyfriars School myself," said Mr. Bright grimly. "My boy, Edgar, has nothing to do with business matters; knows nothing of them."

"No doubt. But——"

"You have not stated all your reasons, sir."

"No. I should have hesitated, sir, to take in the son of a moneylender," said the Head, "but for the boy's own sake I should doubtless have decided in his favour. But—you force me to speak plainly, sir—I cannot take a boy of bad character, whose father is occupied in a doubtful business, into this school to associate with the other boys. This is not a day school, in which boys are still under continual home influence. It is a boarding-school, and they receive their influence from their surroundings. One bad character may do an immense amount of harm."



The fellow had caught a rabbit, and was finding a horrible kind of entertainment in tormenting it, when Redwing made a stride at him. The hard-faced youth stared round at him. "Hallo, what's the game?" he ejaculated. "Let that rabbit go!" said Redwing, in a low concentrated voice. "Let it go, I tell you!" (See Chapter 2.)

"We are getting to the point, I think," said Mr. Bright icily. "You have some prejudice against my boy, whom you have never seen. I have a right to know what it is, and have no doubt that I can explain it away."

"It is against my will, sir, that I speak in a detrimental sense of your son in your presence. You force me to do so."

"I am not thin-skinned," said Mr. Bright. "Pray proceed."

"Very well, sir," said the Head, with a ring of sharpness in his voice. "Your son, Edgar, has appeared before the magistrates at Lantham, charged with cruelty to animals. His conduct in that respect was so bad that, had he been older, he would probably have been sent to prison. As it was, he was dismissed with a severe caution. The matter was recent, and was fully reported in the local paper. Such a boy, sir, is not fit to enter this school. You have forced me to tell you so, sir."

"And that is all?" asked Mr. Bright.

"That is enough, I think."

"The matter was a trifling one, and greatly exaggerated, owing to the fussy interference of a hostile neighbour."

"That was not the opinion of the magistrate who cautioned your son," said the Head dryly.

"Moreover, I punished my son most severely after the proceedings to which you allude, and he promised complete amendment, a promise which I am satisfied he will keep."

"I trust that your confidence is well-founded, sir; I hope so from the bottom of my heart. But I cannot take such a boy into this school."

There was a long pause.

Dr. Locke shifted uneasily, yearning for his unwelcome visitor to go. Mr. Bright seemed in no hurry to do so.

"My son must go to school," he remarked.

"There are suitable schools, designed to correct the faults of a vicious character," said Dr. Locke. "Greyfriars is not one of them."

"In short, you will hear nothing in my son's favour?" said Mr. Bright. "You must be aware that there are other schools, on a higher standing than Greyfriars, to which he would be readily admitted."

"I acknowledge the existence of no school of a higher standing than Greyfriars in the kingdom!" said Dr. Locke. "but if such is your opinion there is nothing to prevent you from sending your son to such a school."

"It is my particular desire that he should enter Greyfriars, chiefly on account of old associations, sir."

"If you were an old boy of this school, sir, I could understand that. But such is not the case."

"Many years ago, sir, before you were headmaster here, my association with Greyfriars was close," said Mr. Bright. "My lifelong friend was a master in this school; Mr. Thorpe, once master of the Lower Fourth Form here. Mr. Thorpe was a Greyfriars master,

sir, and his opinion of me was somewhat higher than your own, since he made a will in my favour, under which I inherit the fortune he received from his father. For the sake of my old friend, now dead, I desire my son to enter the school where he was once a master."

"I am aware of these circumstances, sir," said the Head uncomfortably. "I have also been told, by Mr. Thorpe's natural heir, that there was a later will cancelling the early one, which cannot, however, be found."

"An absurd statement, sir, made by a man who does not desire to restore the property he wrongfully holds," said Mr. Bright coldly. "Such a statement is useless in law."

"It is immaterial to the matter under discussion, sir," said Dr. Locke. "I am sorry, as I have said, but I cannot change my decision regarding your son. Is there any need, sir, to prolong this interview, which must be as disagreeable to you as to me?"

Mr. Bright rose from his chair.

"Perhaps the Board of Governors may take a different view when I place the matter before them," he said acidly. The Head stared.

"The governors of Greyfriars, sir, leave such matters absolutely in my hands," he said icily.

"Possibly an exception may be made in this instance," said Mr. Bright grimly. "I wish you a very good-afternoon, sir!"

Dr. Locke stared at the door after it had closed behind Mr. Esau Bright. He was almost dumbfounded, and his cheeks were crimson with anger.

"Upon my word!" he gasped. The Head was still in a state of indignant agitation when Mr. Quelch came in to see him. The Remove master was looking rather grim; he had come to inform the Head that Herbert Vernon-Smith had not yet arrived. But he forgot the Bounder as he glanced at the Head's indignant face.

"Mr. Quelch," said the Head, in a gasping voice, "perhaps you saw that—that gentleman who has just left me? A Mr. Bright of Lantham."

"I saw him leave, sir," said Mr. Quelch in wonder.

"He has had the audacity to threaten me, Mr. Quelch."

"Dr. Locke—" "The audacity, sir, to tell me that he will appeal to the governing board against my decision not to take his son into this school," said the Head. "Such—such impudence, Mr. Quelch—"

"The governors will not be likely to take much heed of such impertinence, I think, sir," said the Remove master.

"Scarcely! But the impertinence! The insolence! Bless my soul!"

And Mr. Quelch had to listen, for at least ten minutes, to the Head's opinion of the audacious Mr. Bright before he could get to the subject of the Bounder.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Talk on the Telephone!

"THAT'S the jolly old scout!" Herbert Vernon-Smith made that remark as he arrived at the gates of Greyfriars with the Remove fellows. A taxi was rolling away from the school, and in the taxi sat the sour-faced gentleman, looking sourer than ever, his gash-like mouth shut like a vice.

The taxi buzzed away down the road towards Courtfield and disappeared.

"Who's the merchant?" asked Bob Cherry. "Never seen him before, that I know of."

"Looks a tough customer," said Frank Nugent.

"I fancy, from his beautiful features, that he's the pater of the chap Redwing walloped at Lantham," said Smithy, with a laugh. "Nice lad. We found him tormenting a rabbit, and Reddy got his rag out."

"If that was the whyfulness of the scrap, the esteemed Redwing deserves a ridiculous smack on the back," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"The fellow was a brute!" said Tom. "I don't think I was wrong to punch him. But I'm sorry to take in a chivvy like this to the Head, on my first day here."

"Now for Quelch," yawned the Bounder. "We've put off the evil hour as long as possible, but there's always Quelch at the finish. Come on, and get it over, Reddy."

Harry Wharton & Co. wheeled their machines away, and the Bounder and Redwing walked to the House, exchanging greetings with a good many fellows in the quad as they went.

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter greeted the late-comers in the doorway of the house.

"So you're back, Smithy."

"Not at all," answered Vernon-Smith gravely.

"Eh?"

"If I'm in the football this season I shall be forward."

"I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean, roll away, fatty. Come on, Redwing!" And the Bounder twirled the Owl of the Remove aside and went into the House with his chum.

Billy Bunter blinked after him wrathfully through his big spectacles.

"Yah! You're for it!" he hooted. "I can tell you that Quelch is in a jolly bad temper to-day. He was a regular demon in the Form-room this afternoon. You're for it! I'm jolly glad!"

Thus followed by Bunter's kind wishes, the two late-comers arrived at Mr. Quelch's study.

Vernon-Smith tapped at the door and opened it.

"The old bird's flown," he remarked. Mr. Quelch was not in the study.

"Better wait here for him, I suppose," said Redwing uneasily. "I really wish we'd got in earlier, Smithy. He must have expected us."

"Blessed are those who don't expect—they never get disappointed," yawned the Bounder. "I suppose we'd better wait. But I want my tea—it's past tea-time."

"Never mind tea now."

"But I do mind." The Bounder glanced along the passage and caught sight of Peter Todd of the Remove. "Hallo, Toddy! Know where Quelch is?"

"Just gone to the Head's study," answered Peter.

"Go and tell him we want him."

Peter Todd chuckled and strolled away. He was not likely to take that message to the Remove master in the Head's study.

"Let's wait, Smithy," said Redwing. "I'm afraid Mr. Quelch will be angry, anyhow; we've given him cause."

"Bother him!" answered Vernon-Smith.

But he entered the study, shutting the door after him, and sat down in Mr. Quelch's armchair.

"Smithy!" murmured Redwing.

"Dear man, I shall jump up like a jack-in-the-box as soon as I hear Quelch's fairy footsteps."

Buzzzzzzzz!

It was the telephone bell.

Vernon-Smith glanced round at the instrument.

"That's a call for Quelch," he said. "I'd better take it for him, as he's not here."

"Let it alone, for goodness' sake!"

"And leave the man at the other end swearing because he can't get through?" asked the Bounder.

"Well, tell him to hang on while you call Mr. Quelch, then," said Redwing, as the Bounder lifted the receiver from the hooks.

"Dear old bean, I wouldn't dare to interrupt Quelch when he's confabbing with my respected headmaster. Let 'em jaw in peace. I dare say I can deal with this johnny. I dare say it's the vicar. If it is, I'll tell him Quelch can't come to the phone, because he's been run in for being drunk and disorderly!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing, aghast.

The Bounder grinned as he put the receiver to his ear. He was in a mood for any reckless trick, and Redwing watched him with deep uneasiness. But Smithy started as a deep, growling voice came through. He put his hand over the transmitter and turned his head towards Redwing.

"Guess who it is!" he breathed.

"Nothing to do with us."

"That's where you make a jolly old error; it's old Popper!"

"Oh!"

"Ringing up Quelch to tell him what bad boys we are!" chortled the Bounder. "How lucky I'm here to take the call."

He removed his hand from the transmitter and put his mouth to it.

"Hallo! Who's speakin'?"

"Sir Hilton Popper speaking from Popper Court," came the deep voice.

"Mr. Quelch, I presume?"

"Did you say Hopper?"

"Popper, sir, Popper! Are you deaf?"

"Flopper?" asked the Bounder calmly. "I fear, sir, that I am acquainted with no one of the name of Flopper."

"Popper!" shrieked the baronet, at Popper Court. "Sir Hilton Popper, a governor, sir, of Greyfriars School!"

"Did you say fool?"

"What—what—"

"If so, no doubt you were speaking of yourself?"

"Great gad! Is that Mr. Quelch?" hooted the baronet. "What do you mean, sir? What does this tomfoolery mean, sir? What—"

"Keep cool, old bean," said the Bounder.

"What?"

"Cool!" said Vernon-Smith calmly.

"Great gad! Mr. Quelch, are you mad, sir? Is that Mr. Quelch? Good gad! I have rung you up, sir, to complain about two impudent young scoundrels in your Form at Greyfriars. A boy named Smith and a boy named Redwing. Two young ruffians, sir! Do you hear me?"

"Sing it over again to me."

"What—what?"

"You're no end entertaining, old bean!"

"Good gad! That cannot be Mr. Quelch speaking," hooted the baronet. "Who is speaking? Is it some school-boy playing a trick? What is my old school coming to, by gad? Call Mr. Quelch to the telephone at once. Do you hear?"

"Mr. Quelch can't come at present, old scout. He's in another study, and there's a Locke in the way."

"A lock! Do you mean he is locked in a study?"

"It's an old Locke, but it's keeping him in the study," answered the Bounder.

"Great gad! This is how my old school is managed in these days, is it? A Form master locked in a study! Good gad! Who is speaking?"

"Little me."

"And who are you?"

"John James Hezekiah Zachariah Peter Henry Brown."

"What—what—what name did you say?"

"John James Hezekiah Zachariah Peter Henry Brown."

"Is that some joke?" roared Sir Hilton.

"Just that! You've got it! What a brain!"

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing.

He could not help laughing, but he was getting alarmed.

"A joke—a trick, on a Form master's telephone, while the Form master is locked in a study! That is the way Greyfriars is managed in these days! Great gad! I shall call personally about this matter. I shall call at Greyfriars to-morrow."

"Would you mind putting on a mask when you come, sir?"

"Eh?"

"Or a fire-screen, or somethin'?"

"What?"

"Your features, you know, sir. Anybody seein' them suddenly might have a very painful shock—might die of it!"

There was a sort of whirr on the line. Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, had evidently rung off emphatically.

The Bounder chuckled and put up the receiver.

"How lucky I was here to take the call!" he remarked.

"Oh, Smithy!"

"Think there will be a row?"

"I don't think, I know."

"Well, the old bird doesn't know my voice on the phone; and if we get out, instead of waiting here for Quelch, who's to know that we ever were in the study?" asked the Bounder. "I think, like Sam Weller's pater, that the best thing we can do is to prove an alibi. Come on!"

The Bounder opened the study door, and was about to step into the passage, when he stopped, just in time to avoid stepping into Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch.

"So you have arrived!" said Mr. Quelch at last, harshly.

"Yes, sir," said Smithy.

"From what Mr. Vernon-Smith stated in his letter, you were expected early in the afternoon."

"Is that the case, sir?"

"That is the case, Vernon-Smith."

"I am sorry we are late, sir," broke in Tom Redwing. "We have been to blame, but I hope you will excuse us."

Mr. Quelch's stern face relaxed a little.

"As a matter of fact, Redwing, I do not suppose that you have been to blame," he answered. "I have very little doubt that you would have arrived at the specified time had you travelled alone."

Tom coloured painfully. It was true enough; but he would rather have received a severe punishment than have appeared to be putting the blame on his chum.

"I was quite as much to blame as Vernon-Smith, sir!" he exclaimed hurriedly. "We've both been to blame."

"I don't see that," said the Bounder. "We've got here before lock-up. We were rather delayed."

"In what way were you delayed, Vernon-Smith?"

"We walked from Lantham to Redclyffe, sir."

"And why did you not travel all the way by train, as you should have done?"

"It was such a lovely day, sir, and it's a long train journey from London; and I wanted to see something of the English countryside, sir, after being abroad for so long," said the Bounder demurely.

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"That is very little excuse, Vernon-Smith. You returned from your holiday abroad at least a fortnight ago. Wharton and his friends, who were with you, rejoined the school after a few days. There was no reason why you should not have done the same."

"I left that to my father's judgment, sir," said the Bounder, with great meekness. "I felt that it would be improper for me to set my judgment up against my father's."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. The sentiment expressed by Vernon-Smith was unexceptionable, and all the more annoying for that reason. Assuredly Mr. Quelch would have been the last man in the world to encourage any fellow to set himself up against his parent's judgment.

"My opinion, Vernon-Smith, is that you prevailed upon your father to ask the Head for a further extension of your leave," he snapped.

"Indeed, sir!"

"I will not discuss the matter with you," said Mr. Quelch. "I will speak only of what has happened to-day. You have deliberately stayed out of school till close upon lock-up without leave. Judging by Redwing's appearance, you have not been peaceably occupied."

Redwing flushed again.

"You have been fighting, Redwing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your appearance told me so. Instead of arriving here as you should have done, you have been wandering about the countryside getting into quarrels. If I did not believe that you have acted under Vernon-Smith's influence I should be very angry with you, Redwing."

"Vernon-Smith had nothing to do with my getting into a scrap, sir—I—I mean a fight—nothing whatever."

"You have been fighting with one of the Highcliffe boys, no doubt?"

"No, sir."

"With whom, then?" snapped the Remove master.

"A stranger, sir," stammered Tom.

"What! His name?"

"I don't know his name, sir. I'd never seen him before."

"You have been fighting with a stranger whose name you do not know, and whom you had never seen before," said Mr. Quelch, as if he could hardly believe his ears. "Do you mean that some person attacked you?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"He did not attack you?"

"No, sir," muttered Tom.

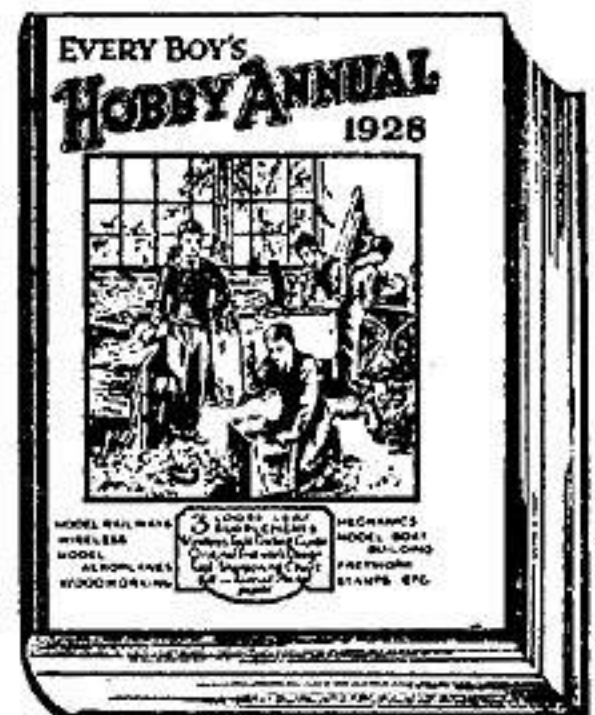
"Then you attacked him?"

"Yes, sir. I—"

"I am disappointed in you, Redwing—I am deeply disappointed in you," said

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It was too late to retreat. The Bounder stepped back into the study.

"Waiting for you, sir," he said meekly. "As you didn't come, sir, I thought of leaving."

Mr. Quelch did not answer. He came into the study, closed the door behind him, and stood looking at the two juniors with a grim face.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Waxes Wroth!

MR. QUELCH eyed the two for some moments without speaking. His look fully bore out Bunter's description. There was no doubt that the Remove master was in a bad temper. Tom Redwing was extremely uncomfortable; but the Bounder had quite a cheery expression on his face, not in the least disturbed by his Form master's anger. Indeed, it was easy enough for Tom to guess that Smithy rather enjoyed getting Quelch's "rag" out.

the Remove master; and indeed there was much more disappointment than anger in his tone to Tom.

"I can explain, sir—" began Vernon-Smith.

The Form master made a gesture.

"I desire to hear nothing from you, Vernon-Smith. I have heard sufficient impertinence from you."

"But, sir—"

"Enough! You have evidently not changed your lawless ways, Vernon-Smith, and I fear that your reckless example has corrupted a boy who had a very excellent character when he was at this school. I was glad, Redwing, very pleased indeed, to receive you into my Form, but you have disappointed me. I shall not punish either of you on your first day here; but I warn you both to be very careful. You may go!"

"I am sorry, sir—" faltered Redwing.

"I have said that you may go," interrupted Mr. Quelch icily.

"Very well, sir."

The juniors left the study. The Bounder grinned in the passage, but Tom Redwing's face was distressed. He had never received anything but kindness from Mr. Quelch, and it troubled him deeply to appear ungrateful and inconsiderate in his Form master's eyes.

"The old scout had his rag out," grinned Smithy. "Lucky he never knew anything about the telephone call, what?"

"It's rather rotten, Smithy."

"Oh, rats!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith strolled along to the Rag for a talk with the other fellows, feeling quite satisfied with his proceedings that day. Tom Redwing went up to Study No. 4 in the Remove. It was his friendship with the Bounder that had been the chief attraction to him in his dream of coming back to the school, and that friendship was as strong as ever, but it was evidently going to make his path as thorny as of old.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

On the Football Field!

HARRY WHARTON tapped Vernon-Smith cheerfully on the arm when the Remove came out of class the following morning.

"What about footer?" he asked.

The Bounder nodded and smiled.

It was Wednesday, a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and games practice was the order of the day for the Remove that afternoon.

The previous term there had been trouble between the Bounder and the captain of his Form. But that had been washed out, as it were; since then, they had had a long vacation in company, and had sailed in the South Seas in Smithy's father's yacht. They had been through peril and adventure together among the islands of the Pacific; and though they had not, perhaps, pulled together remarkably well, at least they had been on friendly terms, and both had been anxious to forget the old trouble. In the summer term the Bounder had been practically "chucked out" of Remove cricket; but now that he was back again at Greyfriars, the captain of the Remove obviously wanted to make it clear that that did not apply to the football.

Vernon-Smith was more than ready to let bygones be bygones, so far as the captain of his Form was concerned. The Bounder had not changed in the least. He had returned to Greyfriars with the intention of being a thorn in the side of authority, as he had always been—of ragging his Form master, and winning the admiration of thoughtless fellows as a "rebel," a fellow who did not care a straw for masters or prefects, or even for the majestic Head himself.

But the Bounder had realised long ago that if he was to be a rebel against authority, it was only prudent to make friends instead of foes in his own Form. For that reason he had resolved to keep in with Harry Wharton & Co. this term. Moreover, he had felt deeply his exclusion from the Form games, and he wanted to play football for the Remove. He was a first-class winger, and it was one way of keeping himself in the limelight that he loved.

To do him justice, however, he had better motives also. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the Famous Five in the perils of the Pacific had made a difference to him. So far as his sardonic nature would allow him, he wanted to be friendly with the chums of the Remove.

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So he was glad, for all reasons, when the captain of the Form made the first overture, and his answer was cordial and sincere.

"I've been looking forward to it," he said. "Is it games practice this afternoon?"

"Yes. You're coming along?"

"You bet!"

It was Wharton's duty, as captain of the Form, to round the fellows up for games practice on compulsory days, and in point of fact, the Bounder had no choice about "coming along." It was on this subject that there had been sore trouble the previous term. But Wharton was extremely anxious not to exercise authority in the Bounder's direction, and Smithy could appreciate that.

"The fact is, I'm jolly keen," he said. "We had some trouble last term, and I don't pretend that I wasn't to blame. I was! But if you want me for footer this term, rely on me to play up."

"That's the style!" said Harry. "Of course we want you. We should not like to lose our best winger. It's the match with St. Jim's next week, and you can't miss that."

"Wha-t-ho!" said Vernon-Smith heartily. "Catch me missing it if I can help it!"

"Good man!"

And the captain of the Remove left him, feeling, and looking, pleased. In football, and in other things, matters were likely to go much better that term if the old trouble with the Bounder was at an end.

Skinner of the Remove met the Bounder on his way to the changing-room that afternoon.

"Turning up for practice?" he asked.

"Isn't it compulsory to-day?"

"That didn't worry you last term," sneered Skinner. "So you've knuckled under after all, and you're going to toe the line this term, and bow down before his Magnificence!"

The Bounder looked at him and laughed. When he had chosen to quarrel with the captain of the Remove, it had been easy for the mischief-maker of the Form to egg him on. When he did not choose, he was impervious to Skinner's machinations. He laughed aloud at the bare idea of a fellow like Skinner thinking of influencing him to such an extent.

"Cut it out, old bean," he said good-humouredly. "If you want to pull somebody's leg, pull somebody else's. I'm good friends with Wharton this term."

"How long will that last?" sneered Skinner.

"As long as I choose, anyhow; not as long as you choose!" retorted the Bounder, and he walked into the changing-room, and left Skinner biting his lip.

"Smithy's going to be a good boy this term," Skinner told his pals, Snoop and Stott, with a sneer. "That seafaring cad, Redwing, has got him under his thumb. He will be turning pi next."

"Oh, my hat!" said Stott, and Snoop chuckled at the idea of the Bounder of Greyfriars turning "pi."

"Quelch's down on him," remarked Snoop. "He was as grim as a gorgon to both of them in class this morning. You noticed that."

"Yes." Skinner had noticed that with satisfaction. "It's pretty sickening that seafaring cad coming back here. It seems that he's got money of his own now. I wonder where he found it, and whose it was?"

At which Snoop and Stott chortled.

The three slackers turned up for games practice with the rest of the Remove.

They had nourished a hope of the Bounder setting himself up against the captain of the Form, and they were prepared to back him up if it gave them a chance of slacking. But it was evident now that there was nothing doing in that line.

Of all the Remove, Billy Bunter was the only fellow who obtained exemption. Bunter explained that he was suffering severely from the effects of the licking he had had in the Form-room the previous day. As Bunter was useless to himself and everybody else on the football field, he was let off.

"You can loaf about, you fat slacker!" was the gracious manner in which the captain of the Remove let him off.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Of course, I'm jolly keen on footer," said Bunter. "But, after all, I never get a chance in a game. You can't deny that you are going to leave me out of the St. Jim's match next week."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It's not a laughing matter, leaving out the best man in the Remove from sheer jealousy of his form," said Bunter warmly.

"You fat chump!"

"Beast!"

"Perhaps you'd better come along, after all," said Harry. "You may have developed wonderful powers at Soccer, and if so, I'd like to see them."

"Another time," said Bunter hastily. "I'm ill—I mean, suffering—suffering severely from that awful licking! I say, you get off, Wharton—you'll be late, and the captain of the form oughtn't to be late for games practice—it's setting a bad example to the Form."

Wharton chuckled.

"I'll stand you a feed after the practice," added Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton departed at once; he did not want to hear any more about the postal order that Bunter was expecting.

And William George Bunter had the pleasure, such as it was, of loafing about with his hands in his pockets, while the other fellows were getting healthy exercise; only taking care to keep out of sight of Sixth-form prefects, who might have inquired why he was not on Little Side.

Harry Wharton arrived cheerily on the junior ground. Tom Redwing came along with the Bounder, his sun-burnt face very bright.

Redwing had not failed to observe, that morning in class, that Mr. Quelch now included him in the "down" he had on the Bounder. It troubled him a little; but he had been quiet and attentive, and he hoped that the Form master's irritation would pass. Certainly he had not come to Greyfriars to join in the Bounder's rebelliousness, and in his wild escapades—indeed, he nourished a hope of influencing Smithy into a more reputable line of conduct. He had been a little worried, too, by the knowledge that Sir Hilton Popper was coming up to the school with a complaint. But the baronet had not put in an appearance that morning, and Redwing hoped that his unreasonable wrath had cooled, and that he would not come. Now that he was on the footer field with the rest of the Remove, Tom dismissed all troubles and worries from his mind. He had realised his old dream; his strange inheritance from his uncle—"Black Peter"—had made him a Greyfriars man again, and almost all the

Remove were glad to see him in their ranks once more. He had too much cause for satisfaction to allow small troubles to linger in his mind.

Bob Cherry clapped him on the back, as he came on the field, looking very fit and cheery in football shirt and shorts.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are again, old bean!"

"Here I am again!" said Redwing, smiling.

"The pleasurefulness of beholding your ridiculous countenance among us again is really terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"My own pleasurefulness is equally terrific, old chap," said Tom, with a laugh.

"Chuck out the old pill," said Bob.

"This is a bit of a change from the South Seas, Reddy! Isn't it ripping to feel a real north wind again?"

"Topping!" said Tom.

"They can keep their summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea, as the jolly old poet puts it," said Bob. "Give me a climate with a bite in it! Hallo, hallo, hallo, you fellows ready?"

And Bob's foot smote the "pill" and the juniors plunged into football. Harry Wharton & Co. would not willingly have missed their trip to the Pacific, under the golden sun and among the glowing colours of the South. But they were glad to be back, all the same, in the old island which, as Bob declared, was worth all the enchanted isles of the Pacific rolled into one.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not Wanted!

"I SAY, you fellows!" No one heeded Bunter.

Football practice was going on, on Little Side, and nobody, naturally, had eyes or ears for the fat junior who arrived breathlessly, in a state of great excitement.

Nobody, indeed, could have expected to see Bunter there. Little Side, on practice days, was a spot that the Owl of the Remove liked to avoid when he could. On this occasion he could; as the captain of the Form had let him off. Yet here he was!

"I say, you fellows!" he bawled.

No reply.

"Old Popper's come!" bawled Bunter. Tom Redwing caught the name, and glanced round.

"Old Popper's come, and he's on the war-path!" shouted Bunter. "Simply raging! You should have seen his chivvy! He's after Smithy! I heard him tell Mr. Quelch! I say, Smithy, you're for it."

"Shut up, you fat ass!" called back the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I say, Smithy, they're sending a prefect to fetch you!" yelled Bunter. "You're to be taken to the Head! Redwing, too! He, he, he!"

Bunter, apparently, found something entertaining in the circumstance that Smithy and Redwing were to be taken before the Head.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! here comes Wingate!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Wingate of the Sixth was striding down from the direction of the House. He headed straight for the junior football ground, and it could be seen that the expression on his face was very serious.

"Wharton!" called out the captain of Greyfriars.

"Yes, Wingate?"

The practice stopped now. No one

to take you to the Head," said Wingate, without heeding the other juniors. "Is the old bean waxy?" asked the Bounder coolly.

Wingate looked at him.

"That's not the way to speak of a governor of Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith," he rapped out. "Get along!"

"Any old thing!" yawned the Bounder. "Come on, Reddy; and don't look as if you were goin' to be hanged. You're not, you know."

Wingate marched the two juniors off the field, leaving the rest of the footballers in a state of curiosity and excitement.

"Smithy's landed in trouble already," remarked Peter Todd. "What a chap he is for hunting trouble!"

Harry Wharton frowned.



"Wh-wh-what?" stammered Sir Hilton Popper. "You—you—you dare to give me the lie—me, a governor of the school!" "Let my father alone, then," said Vernon-Smith. "He's a better man than you will ever be, and he's got too much brains to waste his time killing wretched little beasts with a gun!"

(See Chapter 3.)

had heeded Billy Bunter; but the captain of the school, of course, had to be heeded.

"Send Vernon-Smith and Redwing off. They are wanted."

"Right-ho!"

The two juniors named came off the ground.

"No trouble, I hope?" asked Harry.

"Looks like it," answered Wingate gruffly. "Sir Hilton Popper has called to see the Head, and it seems that these two fellows insulted him yesterday."

"Oh, old Popper!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He's always grouching about something or other."

"The grousefulness of the ridiculous Popper is generally terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You two fellows get changed; I'm

"Well, you know old Popper," he said. "Last term he was complaining about us—"

"Which shows what an unreasonable old gent he is!" grinned Bob. "Where could you find nicer chaps than us?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smithy's lost no time in getting his rag out," said Squiff. "He must have met him, coming back to school yesterday."

"Do you know anything about it, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, rather," answered Bunter promptly.

As a matter of fact, all Bunter knew was that Sir Hilton Popper had arrived, had demanded to see the Head, and had spoken to Mr. Quelch, mentioning the names of two members of

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(Continued from page 13.)

his Form as offenders. But Bunter was not the fellow to admit that he did not know all about everything. What he did not know he was always prepared to invent.

"Well, what's the trouble, then?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Old Popper's in a terrific bate," said Bunter impressively. "Roaring like a lion—"

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, what was he roaring about?" asked Harry impatiently. "What has Smithy done, or what is he supposed to have done?"

"From what I gather," said Bunter importantly, "Smithy met him on the way here yesterday, and insulted him. Old Popper gave him a lick with his stick, and Smithy hit him in the eye—"

"What?" roared the juniors.

"Right in the eye—the right eye," said Bunter impressively. "The one where he keeps his monocle, you know. The eye is quite black."

"Smithy hit a governor of the school in the eye!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Blacked his eye!" said Bunter cheerily. "I noticed that his nose was swollen, too. Smithy must have hit him twice."

"You frabjous fibber—"

"Didn't he knock out any of his teeth?" asked Hazeldene sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, he did," hooted Bunter; "at least, I noticed that old Popper had two front teeth missing, and he had them all right last term."

"You fearful fabricator!" said Peter Todd. "You don't know anything about it at all."

"Oh, really, Toddy!"

"The fat idiot is making it all up," said Bob. "Kick him off the field!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaroooooooh!"

Billy Bunter was ready to continue his thrilling story indefinitely, and in a few minutes would probably have reduced Sir Hilton Popper to a mere crippled wreck. But two or three football boots, applied to his fat person, interrupted him, and Bunter departed, yelling.

Games practice was resumed on Little Side, though a good many of the fellows were thinking more about the two delinquents taken before the Head than about Soccer. It was not a light matter to be specially fetched by a prefect into the headmaster's presence. Harry Wharton & Co. hoped to see the two juniors return to Little Side—but they did not return; and games practice finished without them.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Before the Beak!

DR. LOCKE was looking sombre and serious, when Vernon-Smith and Redwing, having changed hurriedly out of their footer rig, were taken to his study by Wingate, and left there. The Head was not alone; THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,028.

Mr. Quelch was in the study, with Sir Hilton Popper. Mr. Quelch looked grim; and Sir Hilton, who never looked good-tempered at the best of times, looked particularly disagreeable now. His eyes glinted under his knitted, shaggy, grey brows at the sight of the two culprits. Sir Hilton certainly showed none of the signs of damage that Bunter had described to the footballers; but he looked angry, and as if, like the ancient prophet, he considered that he did very well to be angry.

"I have sent for you, Vernon-Smith and Redwing, to answer a very serious charge made against you by Sir Hilton Popper, who, as you know, is a member of the governing board of this school," said the Head.

"Indeed, sir!" said the Bounder, with the utmost calmness. "I hope, sir, that Sir Hilton has nothing to complain of concerning us."

"What—what?" broke in the baronet. "You impudent young rascal—"

"Better language, please, sir!" said Smithy.

"What—what?"

"Silence, Vernon-Smith!" said the Head sternly.

"Certainly, sir," said the Bounder meekly. "If you order me to submit to abuse from this man, I shall obey you, of course."

The Head coughed, and Mr. Quelch had quite a queer expression on his face. Sir Hilton seemed on the verge of apoplexy.

"This man!" he repeated. "Is the young scoundrel speaking of a governor of the school as 'this man'? Great gad!"

"Sir Hilton Popper," said the Head, with dignity, "I must request you to moderate your expressions."

"Sir!"

"No boy is called upon to listen to such epithets in silence!" said the Head. "You are putting a very severe strain upon Vernon-Smith's respect and obedience."

Sir Hilton seemed to be choking.

But the Head's quiet dignity had an effect upon him. Doubtless, he realised that he could not storm in the headmaster's study at Greyfriars as he did amongst his fawning dependents at Popper Court.

"Sir Hilton tells me," resumed the Head, while the indignant baronet spluttered into silence, "that he met you two boys on your way to the school yesterday."

"That is correct, sir," said Vernon-Smith.

"He noted that one of you bore the signs of fighting, and stopped to speak to you."

"Yes, sir."

"And stated that he would report you to your Form master, as was quite consistent with his right and duty as a governor of the school."

"Mr. Quelch is not blind, sir," said Smithy.

"What?"

"He was quite able to see that Redwing had been fighting, as soon as he saw him, without Sir Hilton pointing it out."

Mr. Quelch almost smiled. He was incensed with the Bounder; but he was greatly annoyed by Sir Hilton's interference, as indeed was the Head. That over-dutiful and over-zealous governor was not popular with the Head and the Staff any more than he was with the Greyfriars fellows.

The Head coughed uncomfortably.

"That is not a proper remark for you to make, Vernon-Smith. But apart from the question of Redwing having been quarrelling and fighting, a matter which is in Mr. Quelch's province to deal with, it seems that when Sir Hilton

spoke to you, you insulted him most grossly, and Redwing abetted you."

"Redwing did nothing but answer Sir Hilton's questions, sir. He would have stopped me from speaking as I did, if he could have."

"That is true!" said Tom Redwing quickly. "But at the same time, Dr. Locke, I approved of every word Vernon-Smith spoke, and should have said the same myself had not Sir Hilton been a governor of Greyfriars."

"You hear this, sir?" choked the baronet. "You hear this?"

"I hear it," said the Head quietly. "You admit, then, Vernon-Smith, that you gave Sir Hilton the lie."

"Yes, sir."

"Called me a liar, by gad!" spluttered the baronet. "Things are coming to a pretty pass when a junior schoolboy gives the lie to a governor of the school. The boy must be expelled, and the other young rascal soundly flogged."

"May I defend myself, sir?" asked the Bounder meekly.

"I am prepared to hear anything you have to say, Vernon-Smith."

"I gave Sir Hilton the lie, sir, because he told a lie," said the Bounder coolly. "What else was I to do, sir? I am willing to learn."

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Sir Hilton spoke of my father, and Redwing's father, disrespectfully," said the Bounder.

"Disrespectfully!" repeated Sir Hilton, in a dazed tone. "Good gad!"

"He called my father a moneylender," said Smithy. "That was a lie. I told him it was a lie. I will tell him the same again, if he dares to insult my father in my presence."

The Bounder's eyes flashed, and his voice rang out.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

He was quite at a loss.

"Surely," said Mr. Quelch, in a very quiet but penetrating voice—"surely, Sir Hilton, you did not so far forget yourself as to speak in such terms of a lad's father in the lad's presence?"

"I—I certainly made some reference to the sons of moneylenders and seafaring men being sent to my old school!" stuttered the baronet. "I regard it as derogatory to Greyfriars, sir!"

Dr. Locke compressed his lips.

"This alters the case completely," he said. "I should have a very poor opinion of a boy who would listen patiently to insulting references to his father. Vernon-Smith should not have spoken as he did, but in view of the provocation—"

"Provocation, sir!" gasped Sir Hilton. "Great gad!"

"Vernon-Smith and Redwing, you may leave my study!" said the Head.

"Thank you, sir!"

"Kindly wait in my study," said Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir."

The two juniors departed. Sir Hilton Popper seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes as the door closed behind them.

"Am I to understand, Dr. Locke, that these boys are not to be punished?" he exclaimed in a gasping voice.

"You are to understand, sir, that you have made it impossible for me to punish them," said the Head.

"I demand that Vernon-Smith be expelled from Greyfriars, and the boy Redwing flogged!" gurgled Sir Hilton.

"I can concede neither demand," said the Head. "You compel me, sir, to pass over an act of disrespect to a governor of the school. By speaking of the boys' parents as you did, you placed yourself in the wrong, and me

in a very painful and awkward position. I could scarcely tell Mr. Vernon-Smith that I am expelling his son for repelling an insult directed at him."

"An insult, sir! The fellow is a moneylender, or something of the sort—a financier or stockbroker, at least."

"If he were actually a moneylender it would make no difference. His son would not be bound to hear him spoken of disrespectfully," said the Head. "The less said about the matter, in my opinion, the better."

"You will not expel that boy?"

"Certainly not!" said the Head tartly.

Sir Hilton rose to his feet. He was almost trembling with rage.

"More will be heard of this, sir. I have never approved of such persons being admitted to my old school. I have always strongly disapproved of it. This boy Smith, the son of some shady financier; the boy Redwing, a common sailorman's son; and, by gad, I have heard that there is a boy here whose father is the village cobbler at Friar-dale!"

"A very honest and worthy man, sir," said Dr. Locke.

"Honest! Worthy! So is my valet, sir!" hooted Sir Hilton. "So is my butler! So is my gamekeeper! That is not enough, sir, for my old school."

"If honesty and worth were not good enough for Greyfriars, sir, I should be very sorry to be the headmaster of this school. We had better not pursue this discussion," said the Head coldly.

"More will be heard of it, sir. I shall take the first opportunity of bringing up the whole matter before the Board of Governors at the next meeting."

"You will do as you think best, sir."

"This school, sir, is going to the dogs!" hooted the baronet. "If I have any influence with the governors, sir, a change will be made—a drastic change! Such boys as Smith and Redwing will be sent away, sir! Such boys as cobbler's sons, sir, will not be allowed to remain here! I shall urge the matter upon the governing board most emphatically!"

Dr. Locke touched the bell, and Trotter appeared at the door.

"Good-afternoon, Sir Hilton!" said the Head.

Sir Hilton gazed at him. He was dismissed. He was to be shown out. Like a man in a dream he stalked out of the Head's study.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, when the stormy gentleman was gone. "Bless my soul! I trust—I sincerely trust—that Sir Hilton will not call again very soon. I am most disturbed. Mr. Quelch, I will leave it to you to deal with those two boys as you think proper. So far as I am concerned the matter is at an end."

And Mr. Quelch proceeded to his own study to deal with Tom Redwing and the Bouncer as he thought proper.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Paying the Piper!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH hummed a tune as he waited in the Remove master's study.

Tom Redwing's face was grave. The rebel of the Remove was enjoying the whole affair, but he had the enjoyment all to himself. But the Bouncer assumed a serious expression as Mr. Quelch came in.

"Dr. Locke has left this matter in my hands," said the Remove master quietly. "I will pass no opinion,

Vernon-Smith, upon your reply to Sir Hilton Popper. But the whole disagreeable incident has been caused by your own headstrong wilfulness and disobedience."

"Indeed, sir!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Had you proceeded direct to the school yesterday, as you were in duty bound to do, you would never have met Sir Hilton, and the incident could not have occurred," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Had not Redwing become engaged in some disgraceful affair of fisticuffs, Sir Hilton would have taken no notice of you."

He paused.

"Another matter was mentioned by Sir Hilton when he called," went on Mr. Quelch. "It seems that he attempted to telephone to me yesterday when I was not here to take the call. He was, however, answered on the telephone by someone whom he supposes to have been a schoolboy playing a trick. This seems to have happened at the time that you two juniors were awaiting me in this study."

"Did it, sir?" murmured the Bouncer.

"Whoever answered Sir Hilton gave him the impression that I was locked in a study, apparently having made some absurd pun on the headmaster's name," said Mr. Quelch. "Everything that was said to Sir Hilton on the telephone was disrespectful and jeering. One of you two boys must have taken his call."

No answer.

"Such a trick, Vernon-Smith, is more in keeping with your character than Redwing's, I think."

Silence.

"If I must conclude that you were both equally guilty, I must deal out the same punishment to both," said Mr. Quelch, taking up his cane.

"It was I, sir," said the Bouncer at once. "Redwing had nothing whatever to do with it."

"I was here," said Tom stubbornly.

"We were here together—"

Mr. Quelch silenced him with a gesture.

"I have no doubt that you were the guilty party in this instance, Vernon-Smith. You will not pretend, I suppose, that you jeered at Sir Hilton on the telephone because of some remark made by him? Any remark he may have made on the telephone must have been addressed to me."

"It's a fair catch, sir," said the Bouncer coolly. "I'm not asking you to let me off for that, sir."

"Certainly it would be useless to ask. Bend over that chair!"

With iron stoicism the Bouncer received "six." It was a severe six. But not a sound came from his lips, though his hard face was a little pale, and he was breathing hard when the castigation was over.

"You may go, Vernon-Smith."

The Bouncer left the study quietly enough. Even his hardy and reckless spirit was a little subdued by the caning.

Redwing was waiting for his turn. But Mr. Quelch laid the cane down on the table.

"I shall not cane you, Redwing," said the Remove master. "I am convinced that you had nothing to do with Vernon-Smith's reckless impertinence on the telephone. I will only tell you that you have disappointed and grieved me."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Redwing, flushing painfully.

"I wish I could believe that," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You have been very much to blame, Redwing."

Vernon-Smith has always been a reckless and headstrong boy, and I know what to expect from him. But I had every right to expect something better from you."

Redwing's face was crimson with discomfort. Between his loyalty to his chum, and his desire to stand well with a Form master who had always been kindness itself to him, he was in a difficult position, and there seemed no help for it.

"Sir Hilton's resentment may cause more trouble than you can be aware of," went on Mr. Quelch, "and it is quite certain that the incident would never have occurred had he not found you appearing in public in a disgraceful state—a state which he very properly regarded as reflecting discredit upon the school to which he once belonged, and of which he is a governor. It seems that you have grown quarrelsome and addicted to fighting. On your own confession you attacked a stranger who had given you no offence. I am surprised and shocked. You have caused the whole of this unpleasant and distressing episode, Redwing, apparently because you could not take a walk abroad without becoming engaged in a disgraceful disturbance. I am ashamed of you."

He made a gesture towards the door.

"You may go. I trust to see an improvement in you, Redwing; but, at the same time, I tell you plainly that if you are resolved to imitate the reckless insubordination of Vernon-Smith, I shall have to consult with the Head whether you can be allowed to remain at Greyfriars."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Tom.

"I had hoped," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "that your influence would help to draw Vernon-Smith into better ways. At one time your influence over him was undoubtedly good. Now it appears that you are the worse of the two. It was you, not he, who entered into a disgraceful conflict with a perfect stranger on the Lantham road yesterday. I warn you, Redwing, to take heed in time. You may go!"

With a troubled face, Tom Redwing left his Form master's study.

Vernon-Smith was waiting for him at the corner of the passage.

"Licked?" he asked.

"No."

"Only a jaw?"

"Yes."

"Lucky bargee!" said the Bouncer, with an expressive wriggle.

Something like bitterness came into Redwing's face for a moment.

"I'd rather have had your licking, Smithy, than have been talked to as Mr. Quelch talked to me," he said.

"More fool you!" answered the Bouncer, with a shrug of the shoulders; and he walked away to the changing-room, where the Remove fellows were now coming in after the games practice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Did the beak bite, Smithy?"

"My dear man, the beak was the nicest old bird you ever heard of," answered the Bouncer.

"What did he want you for, then?" asked Skinner.

"Merely a pleasant little chat."

"Gammon!"

"Not in trouble?" asked Wharton.

"Not with the Head! Quite a nice old scout. Quelch seemed annoyed because I slanged old Popper on his phone yesterday. He wanted to give me six. I let him," said the Bouncer negligently. "I find it pays to give a Form master his head."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shan't be sacked before the St. Jim's match next week," added the Bounder. "I'll make a point of that, honour bright."

And the Bounder strolled out of the changing-room, leaving the fellows laughing.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Humble Plea for Sir Hilton!

"M R. BRIGHT—"

"What?"

"—desires to see you, sir."

"Huh!"

The butler of Popper Court did not allow his plump, well-fed face to express any of his thoughts in the presence of his master. But his eyes were stealthily on Sir Hilton Popper. It was Sir Hilton's fond belief that his little difficulties in the matter of mortgages were quite unknown to anyone at Popper Court excepting himself. He would have been surprised to learn how much the butler knew, and how much the head footman knew, and how much the second footman knew, and how much the cook and the housemaids surmised, and how much the game-keepers guessed. He would have been astonished to learn that James confided to his friends at the Peal of Bells that the old blazer was head over ears in debt, that Thomas hinted mysteriously at the post office that a crash might come any day up at the Court.

That butlers and footmen, and housemaids and parlourmaids and between-maids could think, or did think, probably never occurred to Sir Hilton Popper. That they should have the audacity to think about his lordly self and his lofty affairs in a derogatory manner certainly never possibly could have occurred to him. These worthy—or unworthy—creatures had been designed by Nature to minister unto him, and all their thoughts were—or should have been—confined to their task of ministering unto him or of keeping themselves in a state of preparedness to minister unto him.

But between what Sir Hilton thought and what was actually the case, there was a great gulf fixed.

The butler knew all about Mr. Bright, of Lantham, and knew why the thunder-cloud overspread Sir Hilton's brow at the mention of the name. He had a shrewd idea that although Sir Hilton would gladly have given orders for Mr. Bright to be thrust with indignity from his doors, he dared not refuse him admittance to his lofty presence. He even wondered whether this visit of Mr. Bright, of Lantham, meant that it was the "finish." If it meant the finish, the butler had a deadly determination that his wages, rather in arrear, should be paid right up to date before the "final." But in case it was not the finish yet, the plump gentleman still preserved his air of deferential respect; it was not time for him to administer a kick until his master was actually down.

"Admit him!" said Sir Hilton Popper, after a long, long pause.

The butler glided away.

A few minutes later the thin, hard-faced gentleman from Lantham was shown into Sir Hilton's library. He was not alone. The unpleasant youth whom Redwing had thrashed in Lantham Chase, and whom Sir Hilton himself had cuffed on the Lantham road, followed him in. Mr. Bright was serious and grave, but on the hard face of Master Edgar Bright lurked a slight

sneering grin. Master Edgar, in spite of his father's statements to the head-master of Greyfriars, knew a good deal of his parent's business affairs, taking, indeed, a keen interest in them, finding such things to his peculiar taste. The great building of Popper Court, the great hall with its armour, and trophies, and antlers, the imposing butler and the massive footman, had a daunting effect on Master Edgar; but he found support in the knowledge that his father could sell up the "whole show" if he liked.

The imperious tyrant of the Court was, in his eyes, little better than an insolvent debtor; a man who had had a magnificent fortune and had lacked the common sense to take care of it; a man who was idiot enough to give up to pheasants and partridges great tracts of land which might have produced enough to pay his debts had he had as much business ability as the village grocer. The loftiness of Sir Hilton, in the circumstances, did not impress Master Edgar so much as it entertained him.

The baronet did not heed the unpleasant youth; probably he had forgotten having cuffed him a few days before. Master Edgar had not forgotten; he never forgot incidents of that kind.

Sir Hilton fixed his eyes, glinting, on Mr. Bright.

The Lantham gentleman's manner was respectful and civil, but only too well Sir Hilton knew that the iron hand was hidden in the glove of velvet.

He knew that he was practically at the man's mercy, that he had to be civil to him. But it was not easy to restrain his arrogance towards a man he despised. His look was involuntarily contemptuous and disdainful, and he did not ask Mr. Bright to be seated. He greeted him with a single snapped monosyllable.

"Well?"

"Pray excuse this intrusion, Sir Hilton," said Mr. Bright smoothly.

"That is the word, sir," said the baronet. "This is an intrusion. What do you want?"

"No doubt my call may save you the trouble of calling at my office in Lantham to-morrow, Sir Hilton."

HE DOESN'T CARE IF IT SNOWS!



This happy "snap" shows M. Parmentier, of 52, Colombarie, St. Helier, Jersey, reading his "Mavnet."

"It was not my intention to call at your office to-morrow, Mr. Bright."

"You are aware that a certain payment—"

"You are aware that I have told you that it is not convenient to me to make the payment you speak of at so early a date."

Mr. Bright very nearly smiled, and his hopeful son winked at a carved figure on the great chimney. Sir Hilton really seemed to believe that if a matter was not to his convenience there was an end of it.

"My solicitor will speak to you if you are desirous of discussing the matter, sir," added Sir Hilton, as a clincher. "To me, such a discussion is altogether too distasteful."

"Edgar, you will take a seat at the window yonder," said Mr. Bright.

Edgar made a grimace; he did not want to be sent out of hearing. But he obeyed at once. The cold, unemotional moneylender of Lantham was not a man to be disobeyed or disregarded.

Master Edgar being out of hearing, Mr. Bright—without being asked—drew a chair nearer to the baronet and sat down. Sir Hilton's eyes glinted, and he opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. Esau Bright was not a man to sit down in his presence, in Sir Hilton's opinion, any more than his butler or his footman. Mr. Bright, who was able to follow without the slightest difficulty the arrogant thoughts in the dull, obtuse brain of the man before him, smiled. He had held greater men than Sir Hilton Popper under his thumb.

"Now, Sir Hilton, it is far from being my desire to cause you any inconvenience," he said. "I am prepared to arrange an extension of time on the most liberal terms."

"It is with my solicitor that you must discuss this matter, sir," said Sir Hilton.

"I prefer to discuss it with you."

"What? What?"

"And speaking as a friend, I advise you, Sir Hilton, to discuss it in an amicable manner," said Mr. Bright calmly. "I repeat, that I am prepared to act generously. But as one service deserves another, I must ask you to render me a slight service in return."

Sir Hilton gazed at him.

"My solicitor—" he repeated feebly.

"Is your solicitor, sir, placed in funds to meet the sum due to me over your signature?"

"At present, no. But—"

"Then I decline to see your solicitor. I am not in business, as the Americans say, for my health. Unless we come to an amicable arrangement here and now, the mortgages will be foreclosed, and I shall not wait, sir, one single instant beyond the exact time specified by the letter of the contract."

Sir Hilton gasped.

Having contributed that gasp to the discussion, he remained silent. Willingly he would have ordered Esau Bright to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. But a good many centuries had passed since the time when a great landowner could treat an importunate creditor in that drastic manner. In the degenerate days upon which he had fallen, the lord of Popper Court could only toe the line like a common mortal.

"It is in your power, sir," resumed Mr. Bright, "to render me a service—a small matter to you, costing you nothing, but a rather important matter to me. In return for this service, I will see your solicitor and grant an extension of three months without additional interest."

"Explain yourself," gasped Sir Hilton. There was no arrogance in his manner now. The cold, deadly calmness of Esau Bright had brought a sense of reality to him through the mists of pride and self-esteem. He was in the power of this icicle of a man through his own obtuse folly, and Mr. Bright was likely to show him as much mercy as the baronet showed to a wretched furry denizen of his woods when he was out with his gun. A tyrant is naturally a craven at the bottom of his heart, and Sir Hilton, with the overwhelming realisation that he had met his master, was subdued.

"I can explain myself in a few words," said Mr. Bright. "You are a member of the governing board of Greyfriars School, Sir Hilton."

The baronet stared at him.

"What has Greyfriars School to do with you?" he ejaculated.

on Mr. Bright calmly, "in entering my son at any great public school in the land. For reasons of my own I have chosen Greyfriars. The Head's refusal has greatly disappointed me. I hope that you may be able to overcome his decision—for my sake, sir, and my son's sake—and your own."

Sir Hilton winced under the threat perceptible in the last words.

"I can do nothing," he said, after a pause. "Dr. Locke must have had some reason—"

"A mere prejudice, founded partly upon my profession and partly upon a trifling indiscretion of my son's. If my boy is strongly recommended by a governor of the school, Dr. Locke is practically bound to withdraw his refusal. You will have the kindness to recommend Edgar and to undertake to answer for him in every way—"

believed every word he had said to Dr. Locke, dull and snobbish as his beliefs were. And now—

He really believed that his old school was degraded by the admission of the sons of financiers and seafaring men and cobblers, as he had put it to the Head. Now he was asked—rather ordered—to press upon an unwilling headmaster the admission of the son of a money-lender—the doubtfully reputable son of a man of shady antecedents. All his principles rose up in arms against the suggestion. And yet he knew all the time that he was going to do it simply because he dared not refuse.

The silence in the dusky old library of Popper Court was long and painful, broken only by the crackling of the wood fire on the hearth.

Mr. Bright looked at his watch.

This was more impudence, in Sir



"Oh! Sorry, sir!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, realising that in his haste he had trodden on the foot of a passenger already in the carriage. "You clumsy young fool!" The passenger did not seem pleased. Perhaps he had a corn on which the Bounder had trodden rather heavily.

(See Chapter 4.)

"A great deal, as it happens. I desire to enter my son there," Mr. Bright made a gesture towards the discontented youth watching them from the distant window.

Sir Hilton's lip curled.

"There should be no great difficulty about that, sir. All sorts of rank outsiders are now admitted to my old school—sons of moneylenders, seafaring men, and cobblers. Your son may very well pass with the rest."

"Dr. Locke has refused him admittance to the school."

"I should hardly have supposed so," said Sir Hilton satirically. "But if such is the case, the matter is closed, for the headmaster is allowed unlimited discretion in such matters."

"A strong representation from a member of the governing board might cause him to alter his views, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sir Hilton.

"I should have no difficulty," went

"I know nothing of the boy," muttered Sir Hilton.

"I must ask you to accept my assurance, as his father, that he is suitable in every way to enter Greyfriars," said Mr. Bright coldly.

"But the Head—"

"It would be impossible for the Head to refuse him, answered for by a governor of the school."

Sir Hilton Popper was silent, his features twitching. If there was anything the old tyrant had close at heart, it was the well-being of his old school. His pride in Greyfriars was arrogant, unreasonable, snobbish, but so far as his limited intelligence went, he acted for the good of the school. He would have ruined Greyfriars had he been able to govern it unchecked; but he would have ruined it with the best intentions. Knowingly to give it a push on the downward path was a thing of which Sir Hilton was incapable—if he could have helped it. He had meant and

Hilton's opinion. It was for him to end an interview, not a person of this description. Nobody's time but his own was of any value. But this new sample of impudence he had to swallow with the rest.

For a moment there floated before his mind the enticing thought of ordering his servants to fling Mr. Bright and his hopeful son out of doors. It was only for a moment. Humiliating as this interview was, it was not so humiliating as the presence of the bailiffs in Popper Court, which would inevitably have followed.

Having looked at his watch expressively, Mr. Bright looked at the baronet still more expressively.

"May I take it that your answer is favourable, Sir Hilton?" he inquired.

Sir Hilton cleared his throat.

"After all, why should not your son take his place with the tag-rag and bob-tail now at my old school?" he muttered.

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as if with some miserable attempt at self-justification.

"Your words are scarcely courteous, sir," said Mr. Bright calmly. "I will, however, pass over that. May I understand that you will meet my wishes?"

"I will speak to Dr. Locke," said the baronet, with an effort.

"Very good."

"More, I cannot promise."

Mr. Bright's eyes narrowed.

"Very good," he repeated. "The matter of the sum now due on the mortgages may remain in abeyance until you have seen Dr. Locke."

"And the renewal—"

"Will take effect when my son is at Greyfriars; not before, and not otherwise."

Sir Hilton breathed hard.

Mr. Bright rose from his chair.

"I have the honour to bid you good-afternoon, Sir Hilton. Come, Edgar."

Sir Hilton, left alone in the library, sat for a long time with a stunned expression on his face. His lofty will had been disregarded, his lordly pride had been humbled, under his own roof; and, worse than that, he had received orders from a mere knave that he dared not disobey. It was a most discomfiting state of affairs for the autocrat of many broad acres. He stirred at last and strode forth, and found what comfort he could in storming at his keepers—a mere crumb of comfort, but all he had in the distressing circumstances.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Six for Somebody!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the Rag in a state of great excitement.

"I say, you fellows; he's come again."

"He—who—which?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"Old Popper."

"My only hat! Is old Popper goin' to live at Greyfriars?" said the Bounder.

"Old Popper popped in again?" asked Bob.

"The popfulness of the esteemed Popper is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"What have you been doing now, Smithy?" grinned Bunter.

"Nothing, fathead."

"You, then, Redwing?"

"Nothing, ass!" said Redwing.

"Well, somebody's for it!" said Bunter. "Somebody's always for it when old Popper rolls in!"

"Where is he?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I saw Trotter taking him to the Head's study. The beak isn't there, though; he's in Masters' room, jawing. Old Popper will have to wait! I fancy he doesn't like waiting! He, he, he! I say, Wharton, very likely you're the fellow he's after!"

"And why, ass?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"You came over his footpath yesterday. I heard you tell Squiff."

"It isn't his footpath, fathead! It's a public footpath!"

"He thinks it's his, and he's kicked up a shindy about it before!" grinned Bunter. "It's six for you, Wharton! Quelchy will lay it on extra hard, because he hates old Popper coming here complaining! He, he, he!"

"Perhaps you're going to be the happy victim, Bunter!" suggested Peter Todd.

Bunter stopped cackling all of a sudden.

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"Me!" he ejaculated. "Oh, really, Toddy!"

Six for any other fellow had a certain element of the comic, in Bunter's view. Six for Bunter himself was a very different proposition. The matter became serious at once.

Peter Todd bestowed a wink on the other fellows unseen by the Owl of the Remove.

"You're the man, old fat bean!" he said decidedly.

"Look here, Toddy, you beast," exclaimed Bunter uneasily, "how could old Popper be after me? I've done nothing!"

"Nobody ever does anything when old Popper complains! It's well known that we're all as innocent as lambs!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You remember what you said about old Popper when he was here a few days ago," went on Peter seriously.

"You said he had a black eye and a tooth missing, and all sorts of things!"

"I heard you, Bunter!" said Bob, gravely entering into the joke.

"We all heard him!" concurred Nugent.

"But—but I said that to you fellows on the football ground!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "Old Popper never heard me. He couldn't have; he was with the Head!"

"Suppose he's been told—suppose a little bird told him?" said Peter. "Looks to me as if something's come to his ears, anyhow. He's here again, and nobody has done anything this time except you!"

"Not much doubt about it, in my opinion!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "Bunter's for it!"

"You see, you made out that the old fellow had been knocked about in a fight—black eye and missing tooth and all that!" said Squiff. "He was bound to be frightfully offended if he heard of it!"

"Sure thing!" said Johnny Bull.

William George Bunter looked deeply alarmed. Every face round him was serious now, as if the Remove fellows were mourning over Bunter's obvious and sad fate.

"But he couldn't have heard of what I said!" muttered the Owl of the Remove feebly. "Besides, I never said it!"



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"What!"

"You fellows were all there, and you can witness that I never said anything of the kind, you know!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"If—if I have to go to the Head, you come with me, Wharton! The Head's bound to take your word, as captain of the Form!"

"Great pip!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Peter Todd sorrowfully. "As you said yourself, Quelchy is sure to lay it on extra hard, because he doesn't like old Popper coming here complaining!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Put some exercise-books in your bags when you go to the beak!" suggested Hazeldene.

"Oh dear! I—I say, you fellows, do you really think that old Popper has heard about what I said?"

"Well, look at it for yourself!" said Peter argumentatively. "Nobody's done anything but you, yet here's old Popper on the warpath again! Doesn't it speak for itself?"

"And if we're called as witnesses," said Bob Cherry sorrowfully, "what can we say? We're bound to tell the truth! Let's see, you fellows, what was it exactly that Bunter said about old Popper? Let's have it exact; we shall have to repeat it word for word!"

"I—I never said anything!" gasped Bunter. "I never said he had a black nose and an eye missing—I mean, a black eye and a swollen tooth—I mean, a swollen nose! I never said anything—in fact, I wasn't there at the time! I shall tell the Head so! He ought to take a fellow's word—a fellow like me, I mean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All very well for you to cackle!" roared Bunter. "I never said anything about old Popper! And, besides, I said it all in confidence—strict confidence! If somebody's repeated what I said, he's made it all up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter.

The fat junior rolled out of the Rag in a state of great alarm.

"Dear old Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Six for somebody doesn't seem half so funny to him now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is old Popper really after anybody this time. I wonder?" yawned the Bounder.

"Not likely! Just a jaw with the Head; he's always butting in to jaw," said Peter. "Bunter's so bucked at the idea of somebody getting six that he jumps to conclusions!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the fellows in the Rag were chuckling; but William George Bunter was feeling in anything but a hilarious mood as he rolled away. He was deeply alarmed. Really, it was unlikely that Sir Hilton Popper had heard anything of Bunter's fatuous remarks on Little Side a few days ago. But it was quite certain that, if he had heard of them, he would be greatly incensed thereby. Bunter quaked at the possibility. Already he seemed to feel the Form master's cane whacking on his tight trousers.

Bunter rolled away to the corridor outside Masters' Common-room, by which the Head would pass when he went to his study to see his caller. If Sir Hilton was going to complain of him, it seemed to Bunter rather a masterly move to get in his defence first. Possibly he had heard of the couplet which combines the wisdom of two great poets:

"Thrice-armed is he that hath his quarrel just;

But four times he that gets his blow in fust!"

Bunter was only in time. Word had been taken to the Head that his distinguished visitor was waiting in the study, and he came out of Masters' room, having cut short his talk with the staff—perhaps to the regret of the staff, and perhaps not.

Dr. Locke was frowning.

He had hoped not to see Sir Hilton again for a considerable time, at least, and that hope was proving ill-founded. Possibly this visit meant that the irascible old gentleman was already stirring up trouble for him with the governing body. For the governing body the Head had, of course, a great respect; but, like all headmasters, the less he saw and heard of them the better he was pleased.

He was not in the mood to be very patient with a grubby junior of the Lower Fourth who butted unexpectedly into his way.

"Please, sir—" squeaked Bunter.

The Head gestured him aside.

Bunter did not heed the gesture. The matter was too important for that.

"Sir Hilton Popper, sir—" he gasped.

"What do you mean?" snapped the Head.

"He—he—he—"

"What?"

"He—he—he's come, sir!" stuttered Bunter. "I never did anything of the sort, sir!"

The Head gazed at him.

"Do you mean that you presume that Sir Hilton Popper has called here to lay some complaint against you, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir! I never did it!"

"You never did what?"

"I—I mean, I never said it!"

"What?"

"It was all a mistake, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never mentioned Sir Hilton in speaking to the other fellows. Whoever repeated my words made up the whole thing from beginning to end."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"I never said he had a black eye, sir—"

"A—a—a black eye?"

"Or a nose—I mean, a tooth missing, sir—"

"Upon my word!" said Dr. Locke.

"The fellows who heard me will say the same, sir. They all heard every word I said, sir, and if you ask them they'll tell you that I never even opened my mouth."

"Goodness gracious!" said the Head.

"I—I thought I'd explain that it was all a mistake, sir, before—before you saw old Popper—"

"Whom?" thundered the Head.

"I—I mean Sir Hilton Popper, sir!" gasped Bunter. "You—you can tell him, sir, that it's a mistake. I wasn't speaking to him at all, and all that I said was in strict confidence, sir, and I never uttered a syllable, sir—not a single syllable."

Dr. Locke breathed hard and deep.

"Is it possible, Bunter, that you are so stupid, so utterly obtuse, as to suppose that Sir Hilton Popper has called here on account of some foolish remarks you may have made to the other juniors and which could not possibly have reached his ears?"

Bunter jumped.

"Oh dear! Those beasts were pulling my leg—"

"Sir Hilton Popper's visit can have nothing whatever to do with you or your foolish remarks, Bunter."

GUY FAWKES DAY AT GREYFRIARS!

There's only one Guy Fawkes Day a year, but they try to make the most of it at Greyfriars.

The "glorious Fifth" promises to be a very glorious Fifth as the result of a wheeze put forward by Bob Cherry, of the big feet and the sunny disposition. But a new chap pops up at Greyfriars—by name Edgar Bright. What he's particularly bright at is sneaking, eavesdropping, and torturing harmless animals.

And this newcomer succeeds in spoiling Bob Cherry's wheeze. His triumph is short-lived, however, and

Edgar Bright is one who is not at all pleased to remember the Fifth of November! Mind you read



"A GREAT FIFTH AT GREYFRIARS!"

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"Oh, thank you, sir! M-m-may I go now?" gasped Bunter.

"One moment," said the Head grimly.

"On your own confession, you have made disrespectful remarks concerning a governor of the school. I am bound to take notice of it, since you have brought the matter to my attention."

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"You will go to your Form master now—"

"Oh!"

"And request him, from me, to cane you for impertinence—"

"Wow!"

"I shall speak to Mr. Quelch later, and if I find that you have not carried my message you will be flogged."

"Yow!"

The Head rustled on, leaving Billy Bunter rooted to the floor. It was a limp and crushed Bunter that dragged himself unwillingly into Mr. Quelch's study a little later to deliver the Head's message. The Rag was at a considerable distance from the Remove master's study; but the fellows in the Rag heard sounds of woe from afar. On such occasions Bunter's voice was wont to carry to a great distance.

"That sounds like Bunter!" remarked Peter Todd. "If it's six, I wonder how funny he thinks it is now. But what on earth has Bunter been doing?"

A few minutes later the Owl of the Remove limped into the Rag. He looked as if he found life not worth living—as indeed he did not, just then.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bagging trouble, old fat bean?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Six!" groaned Bunter.

"What on earth for?" asked Harry Wharton. "What on earth have you done since you were here ten minutes ago?"

"Yow-ow! You beast, Toddy!" groaned Bunter. "Old Popper isn't here after me at all! Ow-ow-ow! The Head said so, when I explained to him. Ow-ow-ow! He's a beast! He seemed to think that I'd been saying something about old Popper, just because I said I hadn't! Ow! He sent me to Quelch—ow!—I got six! Wow! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter. "You told the Head—"

"I thought I'd explain before he saw old Popper—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Peter.

"Yow-ow! I've got six—"

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

"Beasts!"

"It was six for somebody, after all!" chortled the Bounder. "Bunter was the somebody! Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rag was in a roar. Bunter could see absolutely nothing of a hilarious nature in the episode. But he was the only fellow who couldn't. Peter Todd told him, with tears in his eyes, that he had brought down the house; but that was no comfort to Bunter. The whole Rag roared; what time William George Bunter groaned dismally, and wished that the "six for somebody" had been six for somebody else.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good News for Mr. Bright!

"PRAY be seated, Sir Hilton."

The Head's manner was coldly courteous.

Sir Hilton's menace, for it was nothing less, of calling him to account before the Board of Governors, rankled in the Head's mind. He was not pleased to see his visitor, and he could scarcely affect to be; and his old-world courtesy was put to a severe strain in dealing with the irascible gentleman.

But the baronet was in a rather changed mood now.

His manner was hesitating; quite a new thing in Sir Hilton Popper. He could not help remembering that the views he had expressed in his last interview with Dr. Locke were greatly at variance with what he was now about to say to the Head.

He coughed uncomfortably.

The Head waited in some surprise. He had expected Sir Hilton to begin in his usual dictatorial manner. But there was nothing dictatorial about the master of Popper Court now.

"Er—I have called in reference to—a certain matter—" Sir Hilton was almost mumbling.

"No further complaints of my boys, I trust?" asked the Head, with a faint touch of sarcasm.

"No, no! Nothing of the kind, sir," said Sir Hilton hastily.

"I am glad of that."

"The fact is—" Sir Hilton paused again.

The Head waited, more and more surprised.

"The fact is, I fear that I expressed myself somewhat hastily, perhaps somewhat inconsiderately, when last I had the pleasure of seeing you Dr. Locke!" gulped Sir Hilton.

The headmaster of Greyfriars thawed very much. If Sir Hilton was there to apologise for his bad manners, that altered the case.

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir," said Dr. Locke very cordially. "I admit that I was—well, a little offended. However, I was sure—hem!—that on thinking calmly over the matter, you would realise—hem!—"

"Quite so—quite so. The views I expressed were, perhaps, somewhat old-fashioned, out-of-date in these days of democracy and Socialism and Bolshevism," said Sir Hilton bitterly. "In these days the rankest outsider may talk sheer impudence to a gentleman under his own roof without being thrown from the door. Huh! However, let us come to the point. I am here to speak on behalf of a—a—a gentleman who desires to place his son in this school."

"Very good," said the Head. "The matter may, of course, be taken for granted; any boy recommended by a governor of the school is admitted to it as a matter of course."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Dr. Locke," said Sir Hilton, relieved. "I understand that you felt some slight prejudice on the subject of the boy in question—"

"That can scarcely be the case, sir," said the Head in surprise, "as I have never heard of him till this moment."

"Hem! Hem! The boy's name is Bright."

"Bright!" repeated the Head.

"He is the son of a—a—a gentleman who is, I believe, in a—hem!—wealthy position. A resident of Lantham."

The Head's face hardened.

"Are you alluding to Mr. Esau Bright, the moneylender?" he asked.

"I—I believe Mr. Bright does some business in—in loans and—and mortgages, and—and so on," said Sir Hilton. "By actual profession, however, he is, or was, a solicitor. A solicitor's son must be considered—hem!—respectable. A solicitor is a gentleman—a sort of gentleman! Great gad! In these days every Tom, Dick, and Harry calls himself a gentleman. You have no objection, you have told me, to the sons of seafaring men and—and cobblers."

"I have a very serious objection to a boy of bad character, the son of a moneylender," said the Head severely.

"Hem! Hem! After all, the boy is scarcely responsible for his father's profession—what, what?"

"I should be the very last. I hope, to think of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children," said the Head warmly. "There are also, I have been told, moneylenders who are honourable and reputable men, but Mr. Bright is not, I fear, one of that kind. The boy himself is objectionable; that is why I

have refused to take him into Greyfriars."

"I have seen the boy—he appears quite—quite an ordinary lad—"

"From what I have ascertained by inquiry, Sir Hilton, he appears to be far from an ordinary lad. An ordinary lad does not find amusement in tormenting animals," said the Head. "Only a boy of a peculiar and perverted nature could indulge himself in senseless cruelty, sir."

Sir Hilton almost writhed with discomfort.

So far from wishing to see Master Edgar Bright admitted to his old school, he would have been glad to send that unpleasant youth to a reformatory, and his father to prison. But his own wishes counted for nothing; he was under the thumb of the moneylender. And the man who had hectored all his life was under the painful necessity of submitting to bullying in his turn.

"And I must say, sir," went on the Head, with warmth, "that, considering the views you expressed in this very room only a few days ago, I am very much surprised to hear you recommending a moneylender's son as a Greyfriars boy. You raised objections to Vernon-Smith as the son of a financier; to Redwing, as the son of a brave and honest seafaring man who risked his life a hundred times for his country in the War; to Penfold, as the son of a cobbler who has been a pattern of honesty and worth to his whole village during a long and respected life. And now—"

"I—I have already stated that I have had to modify my views—I mean, that I have modified them," said Sir Hilton. "I have no doubt that whatever has been said against this man Bright's son was—was exaggerated—some trifling indiscretion has been made too much of. Appearances may have been against the lad. Dr. Locke, I desire to urge you, as a personal favour to myself, to accept this boy at Greyfriars."

"If it is really your opinion, sir, that the boy has been to some extent the victim of misjudgment, that alters the case, of course," said the Head.

"Yes, yes. I have no—no doubt—"

"The Governing Board leave such matters entirely in my hands. But I should not, of course, think of refusing a boy who is vouched for personally by a member of the Board."

"Very good!" gasped Sir Hilton. "Besides, in three months' time—I mean, if the boy turns out unsatisfactory, a term at Greyfriars will do him no harm—you will be at liberty to dismiss him from the school. The faults in his character, if any, may be corrected by severity—probably a few floggings might be to his benefit. Indeed, that, I think, is very probably the case. Give the boy a trial for one term; that is all I ask, sir."

"I certainly do not feel that I can refuse, when you put it in that manner, Sir Hilton," said the Head.

"Thank you, sir! I—I am obliged," said Sir Hilton. "I may take it, then, that Mr. Bright will receive a favourable reply from you?"

"Certainly; I shall inform him that his son, being vouched for by a member of the school, I am prepared to admit him if he still desires to send the boy to Greyfriars."

"Very good, sir—very good! That is all," said Sir Hilton, rising. "I am very much obliged to you, Dr. Locke. I—I take a certain interest in the boy, and desire to see him given a chance. No doubt the discipline of Greyfriars



"Sir Hilton Popper speaking," came the deep voice over the wires, "a governor, sir, of Greyfriars School." "Did you say fool?" asked Vernon-Smith, calmly—

will correct any faults you may find in him."

"No doubt," assented the Head.

Sir Hilton, after a few more words, took his leave; and the Head accompanied him to his car. The baronet, in his present apologetic mood, had a placating effect upon the unsuspicious old gentleman, and Dr. Locke was now cordial as well as courteous. Certainly, the Head of Greyfriars had not the remotest suspicion of Sir Hilton's real motives, or that the lord of Popper Court was acting under duress.

After Sir Hilton was gone the Head wrote a letter to Mr. Bright, at Lantham—a letter which made a gash of a mouth curve in a triumphant smile.

"You will be going to Greyfriars, Edgar," Mr. Bright told his son.

Edgar did not seem to be overwhelmed with pleasure at the news.

"I'd rather go to Harrow," he said sulkily.

"Possibly!" assented his father. "But you will go to Greyfriars."

Edgar watched his worthy parent with his shifty eyes.

"Look here, father——"

"Well?"

"Why are you so keen to get me into Greyfriars?"

"I have reasons."

"All this fuss about Greyfriars, when I could get into a more toney school easily enough," said Edgar. "If you want me at a school near home, there's Highcliffe—I'd rather go to Highcliffe. I know some fellows there that I could get on with."

"I have reasons for sending you to Greyfriars," said Mr. Bright. "My old friend, Mr. Thorpe, was once a master at that school."

"The man who left you twenty thousand pounds?" said Edgar.

"Precisely."

"But what difference does that make? He's dead long ago."

Mr. Bright eyed his son carefully.

"Now that it is certain that you will enter Greyfriars, Edgar, it is time to tell you. You will carry out a certain task for me, which can only be carried out by someone living inside the school. Somewhere at Greyfriars, in some hidden nook or cranny, there exists a later will made by Mr. Thorpe—and if it is found by anyone else, it will cost me twenty thousand pounds. Now do you understand?"

Master Edgar whistled, and then grinned.

"And I'm to find it?"

"If it is to be found—yes."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" Master Edgar whistled again. "I understand now, father—rely on me."

Had Dr. Locke been able to hear that talk in the mansion at Lantham, certainly, no recommendation from a governor, or a whole board of governors, would have secured Edgar Bright's admission to Greyfriars. Fortunately for the precious pair, Dr. Locke could not hear.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Redwing!

"THAT cad!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!

Which?"

"What is he doing here, I wonder?" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

Bob Cherry followed his glance. Bob was strolling in the quad after class with Redwing, when the sailorman's

son suddenly stopped and fixed his eyes upon a youth who was sauntering about with his hands in his pockets staring at the school buildings.

"Know the kid?" asked Bob.

"It's the fellow I had a row with in Lantham Chase the other day," replied Tom.

"Oh!" said Bob, eyeing the stranger with renewed interest. He noted, not with pleasure, the hard features, the shifty eyes, and the gash-like mouth of Master Edgar Bright, which looked as if Nature had designed it for biting hard.

Bright, glancing round him carelessly, spotted Redwing, and started a little. He stared at Tom, and then came towards him.

"So you're here," he said.

"I belong to Greyfriars," answered Tom contemptuously. "But I don't see what you are doing here."

Bright sneered.

"I'm here because I'm going to belong to Greyfriars," he answered. "I'm hanging about now while my father's talking to some blinking Form master, making some blinking arrangements about a rotten entrance exam. I never knew you belonged to this school."

"You know it now," said Tom, turning away.

"Yes, and I'm glad of it," said Bright maliciously. "I'll find an opportunity of making you sorry that you laid hands on me, you rotter. I shall be at Greyfriars next week, and I'll make it a point to make you sorry for yourself."

Redwing laughed scornfully.

"You're welcome to try," he answered. "I've licked you once, and I'll lick you again fast enough if you ask for it. And if you play any of your dirty tricks here, you cur, you'll wish you'd never come to Greyfriars—you won't find many of your sort here."

"Easy does it, old fellow," murmured Bob Cherry. "It isn't like you to be down on a new kid, Reddy."

"That fellow makes me sick!" muttered Redwing.

A flush came into Bright's pallid, unhealthy cheeks, and a glitter into his shifty eyes. He gave one sharp glance round him, and then, without a hint of a warning, struck Tom Redwing in the face.

As Tom staggered from the unexpected blow, Bright darted into the House, and scuttled into Masters' passage, where his father was in conversation with Mr. Quelch in the Remove master's study.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Reddy——"

Redwing, without heeding Bob, ran into the House. The best-tempered fellow in the Remove was white with rage. His hand dropped on Edgar Bright's shoulder as Bright reached Mr. Quelch's door.

The young rascal gave a howl of apprehension.

"Let me go! Let me——"

"You cur!" said Redwing, between his teeth, and his open hand rang on Bright's face with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Oh!" yelled Bright.



"Great gad! Is that Mr. Quelch?" hooted the baronet. "What do you mean, sir? What does this tomfoolery mean, sir? What?"

He tore open the Remove master's door and bundled into the study. Mr. Bright glanced round, and Mr. Quelch started to his feet in angry astonishment.

"What——" he exclaimed.

He broke off as he saw Tom Redwing's flushed and angry face in the passage behind Bright.

"Redwing!" he thundered.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" stammered Tom, his face crimson.

"What does this mean, Redwing? How dare you? Have you lost your senses? You have attacked this boy—pursued him to my very study——"

"It's the second time," howled Bright. "He attacked me the other day in Lantham Chase, sir—I never said a word to him."

"What! What! Is this the boy you attacked, on your own confession, in Lantham Chase a few days ago, Redwing?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, covered with confusion.

"And you have attacked him again, now that he has called at the school with his father? Are you out of your senses? Bright, pass me that cane from my table."

"Yes, sir," said Bright.

The Remove master grasped the cane. "Mr. Bright, I must apologise for this," he gasped. "This boy Redwing, who belongs to my Form, shall be punished in your presence. Redwing, bend over that chair."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, in a low voice.

He had placed himself hopelessly in the wrong, and it was useless to attempt to justify himself—not that the angry Form master would have listened to a word Tom bent over the chair, and the cane rang hard.

Mr. Bright looked on with calm approval; his son with a lurking, malicious grin. Mr. Quelch was breathing hard when he finished. He pointed to the door with the cane.

"Go, Redwing! Not a word! You are a young ruffian, sir, and a disgrace to your Form! Go!"

Without a word Tom Redwing went.

THE END.

(Now look out for "A Great Fifth at Greyfriars!"—next week's extra special Guy Fawkes' story, dealing with Harry Wharton & Co.)

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BIG BLUFF! Clever as the disguise is that "Uncle Dave" adopts, it doesn't deceive Sergeant Curtis of the North-West Mounted Police. But if the disguise fails, "Uncle Dave's" big bluff doesn't, and once more Sergeant Curtis has the thankless task of rounding up a man wanted on a charge of theft!

GOLD FOR THE GETTING!



By STANTON HOPE.

A Story of a Thrilling Gold Rush to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Morgan Makes an Offer!

"FAITH! Now, if you haven't forgotten the mince-pies, Jack! Put them on the stove at once, me bhoys, or shure 'tis having the hot mince-pies cold we'll be!"

Terry was doing his best to help Jack in the Wigwam with the preparations for dinner. It was noon on Christmas Day, and the place was filled with the grateful smell of cooking from the stove.

Some nice bits of beef were frying in a pan to the curling, of little blue wisps of smoke and spluttering fat. The "murphies" were boiling merrily, and the water in a large saucepan bubbled round two hefty tins of pork and beans.

The pinewood table had been scoured clean, and a neat array of enamelled plates, forks, knives, spoons, and mugs had been set out upon it. There were boxes of dates, too, and figs, crystallized fruits, muscatels and almonds, and broken pieces of chocolate. A bottle of limejuice formed the centre decoration.

By noon the boys were only just brightening from a visit to poor Uncle Dave in the local gaol. Their brave old pard had forced a gaiety he had been far from feeling. He had tried to cheer them up by talking about the gold-mine, and afterwards had mentioned that an old friend, Mr. Lloyd Dunbar, a Canadian Government assayer, had arrived in the city. He had asked Mr. Dunbar to call on the boys and arrange to make an assay of the gold.

For all Uncle Dave's brave talk, it had wrung the boys' hearts—that visit to him, with the unfeeling bars forming a silent barrier of steel between them.

They ate their home-cooked dinner, but only felt more acutely the absence of Uncle Dave. Afterwards they rested

awhile, then donned their fur caps, coats, and snowboots, and staggered forth into the icy coldness of the Great Outdoors.

Skookum, who had eaten far too much for any husky dog, remained asleep in the snow at the back of the shack.

Dawson was given over to revelry again, but they made no calls, and returned with the purple dusk, both feeling the better for their outing, and ready to tackle another meal.

They lighted the lamp, and were doing odd jobs in the shack, when a loud barking from Skookum outside startled them.

"Hallo! A visitor!" exclaimed Jack. "I wonder if it's that assayer whom Uncle Dave spoke about?"

He removed the chain and opened the door, and saw that three men were halted a short distance from the cabin—Bull Morgan, Lefty Simons, and a squat, pock-marked Indian.

Barely had he time to glimpse them than Skookum bounded over the snow, like a great grey wolf, full at the trio.

"Yow!" bellowed Morgan, in deadly fear. "Call him off!"

"Skookum! Skookum!" roared Jack. "Lie down, lad!"

For once Skookum turned a deaf ear to his master's voice. Even quicker than most dogs, he was inclined to take a violent dislike to certain human beings. Perhaps some faint memory of Morgan and Simons stirred in his doggy mind; but, whatever his reason, he was determined to disperse these men, whom he regarded as enemies.

Bull Morgan stood rooted to the spot, but Lefty Simons bounded backwards, caught his foot against some pieces of cordwood half-buried in the snow, and rolled head-over-heels. The Indian gave a guttural grunt, and snatched a keen-bladed hunting-knife from his belt.

"For the love of Mike," bellowed Jack, "don't you strike that dog!"

"Mo killum!" snarled the Redskin.

The astute Skookum, however, saw the flash of that steel blade, and nimbly leaped aside to avoid the slashing knife-thrust. Then he launched his ninety pounds of muscle full at Bull Morgan, secured a grip on his fur coat with his great fangs, and half ripped it from his back.

"Jumpin' mackinaw!" shrieked Morgan. "Take him away! Kill the brute! Ow! Yow-wow!"

By some means he dragged a Colt revolver, fitted with a silencer, from his pocket.

P-f-ffff! With a flash of flame the revolver spat an ounce of lead into the night, knocking Lefty Simons' fur cap clean off his head.

"Why, y' crazy great skate," hooted Simons, "take that!"

Morgan's pard had snatched up a lump of cordwood out of the snow, and, instead of striking the husky as he had intended, he brought it down with a mighty thwack across Morgan's shoulders.

"Ooch!" bellowed the arch-villain.

Grunting with satisfaction, Lefty took another aim, this time at the great dog which was swinging round Morgan's body clinging by his fangs. He took an aim at the animal's head, but before the blow could fall, something, which felt like a piece of brick, caught him a crack on the side of the jaw. It was Jack's hardwood fist, and Lefty dived into the snow for the second time that night.

"Hit him again, me bhoys!" yelled Terry gleefully. "Is the foight free for all? Then, 'tis meself that's—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind, you chump!" panted Jack. "Beat it back for the shack, and, here, take Skookum with you!"

By dint of threats Jack made the

wolf-dog release his hold on Morgan and accompany Terry back to the Wigwam.

The Indian stepped stealthily toward Jack, the hunting-knife in his hand, and seeking a signal from one of the white men for him to strike.

Sensing the danger, Jack spun round in the snow, and as his eye met the Red Man's, the fellow cringed back, and replaced the knife in his belt.

"I'll have the law on you for this, you cub!" quavered Morgan, who had not yet got over his scare. "My best fur coat, too—that'll cost you a tidy wad!"

Simons rose shakily to his feet.

"Let's beat him up, Bull," he suggested, looking daggers at Jack. "If you and the Injun will help, I'll—"

"No, you won't," Jack said calmly; "though I don't mind the odds being three against two! Just half a second while I call Skookum out!"

"No, no!" yelled Morgan, "I dare say I can get this coat mended all right without much trouble. As a matter of fact, me and Lefty came to make a friendly li'l call on you. Can we come indoors for a while?"

Jack hesitated, and then nodded toward the shanty. Apart from the hospitality even an enemy might expect at this season of the year, he was curious to know exactly the object of the three in coming.

First of all, Skookum was made to go round the back of the shack, and then Morgan, Simons, and their Indian pal entered the place, and vigorously kicked the snow from their big feet all over the clean matting.

The cosy warmth and the odour of food soon put the visitors in cheerful mood, in spite of their painful welcome.

"Come, me lads," cried Bull Morgan boisterously, "let's see a little o' the real Christmas spirit!"

"Shure, we haven't a bottle in the place," Terry answered. "Bedad, a strong cup of coffee would do you more good!"

Bull Morgan gave a laugh, and gazed curiously about him.

"Say, the kids have got some mighty good eats!" he ejaculated. "I dare say, Lefty, as they'll be inviting us in a minute or two to stop and have a snack with 'em."

But Jack's patience was almost exhausted. He could raise little feeling of good will toward these crooks, one of whom had been instrumental in putting Uncle Dave in gaol.

"Perhaps, Morgan," he said, in an icy tone, "you'll state what's brought you here and then leave us to get on with our grub. I suppose the visit isn't merely for the pleasure of having our company?"

Bull Morgan eyed the freshly-laid table, and stuffed a handful of muscatels and almonds into his mouth.

"We've come here both on pleasure and business," he mumbled. "Business first, howsomever. Mebbe you've heard, boy, that me and Lefty are running a sports club. Waal, we've promoted a boxin' night, and we noticed that you hadn't put your name down for it."

"My hat!" gasped Jack. "If nerve counts for anything in running a boxing gala, your giddy show ought to be the talk of the Yukon! D'you think after all the dirty tricks you've played on us, that we're going to join in your crooked show?"

Bull Morgan swallowed heavily.

"This ain't crooked!" he answered. "The boxin' show is going to be run on the level."

"By a couple o' fellows who are on the square," added Lefty Simons.

Both boys laughed mirthlessly.

"Yet you lied to the police about that Bear's Claw you'd got," Jack returned hotly. "You know jolly well that you had that nugget, and most likely you or Simons robbed my uncle of it in 'Friseo. Then Simons squealed to the police about our pard."

Lefty Simons reached for the salted almonds.

"I only did my duty!" he murmured.

"You beastly hypocrite!" cried Jack angrily. "It's you who ought to be in the calaboose—and you know it!"

The lash of his words roused Simons to his first show of anger, but Bull Morgan hastily poured oil on the troubled waters.

"Come, call a truce, kid," he pleaded. "Somehow it don't seem right for fellers to bear a grudge to-day. But heck! I haven't yet given you boys a knock-down to our intelligent pard the Injun. Hi, Spotty-Face!"

The unpleasant, pock-marked Indian who had been leaning against the door-frame, sullenly chewing tobacco, shuffled forward.

"His real name's Lone Bear," said Bull Morgan, "and he's got the reputation up hyer o' being a pretty useful mixer. He fights in the light-weight class, and the trouble's been to get ony-one o' his weight to match against him."

"Phwat price Yap Hemmens?" inquired Terry. "That fellow might have won the light-weight championship o' the U.S. if he hadn't come up here gold-grubbing."

"Hemmens won't be fit to fight," replied Morgan. "So it occurred to me that you, young Orchard, might like to take on the Injun. I'll allow in spite of all y' goldurn cheek, ye're a cracker-jack mixer and ought to take this Injun lad the distance, which would be ten rounds. There'll be fifty dollars to the winner or a prize o' that value—not bad, heh, for a couple o' novices? Now jest let me put y' name down to meet the Injun—unless o' course, ye're skeered."

"Scared!" hooted Terry. "Jack's not scared of him, nor of you neither! But 'tis only wishing me left arm was

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INTRODUCTION.

JACK ORCHARD arrives in San Francisco only to find that his uncle—

DAVE ORCHARD, is missing, having apparently absconded with a bag of gold entrusted to him. Later Jack falls in with—

TERRY O'HARA, a cheery Irish boy, and

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector. The trio join forces in a gold rush to the Yukon and are lucky enough to make a good strike. At intervals the three partners have trouble with Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, a pair of shady camp followers and, on one occasion, Jack sees suspended round the neck of Morgan a nugget of gold—shaped like a bear's claw—that Dave Orchard is supposed to have stolen. As Jack and his partners are making the journey to Dawson—where they intend to deposit their gold in the bank, they are attacked by wolves and Terry is badly mauled. The wolves are driven off, however, and then Jack gets the shock of his life, for Sergeant Curtis and a party of Mounted Police suddenly appear on the scene and arrest Clem Hardy as Dave Orchard—the man who is wanted for theft. There is no mistake—Clem Hardy is Jack's uncle all right, and Jack decides on the spot to go all out to clear his uncle's name. While Terry is convalescing, Jack buys and furnishes a shack called the Wigwam, in the cellar of which he comes across a secret tunnel.

(Now read on.)

better so that I could have the pleasure of a fight wid him meself."

At that moment, Jack noticed that Lone Bear, who had edged across the room, was running a hand through the pocket of Terry's second-best coat.

"Look here, you keep out of this, Terry," he said severely. "This scrap was offered to me." He turned to Morgan. "I'll take the Indian on," he stated. "And now kindly take him out of here, for he'll find nothing to lift from any of our clothes."

Bull Morgan turned sharply toward Lone Bear.

"Behave yourself, Spotty-Face," he grunted. "Remember you ain't now in the wigwams o' your tribe, but in the company o' honest white men." He turned again to Jack: "I'll send ye along full particulars about the date and place o' the boxing meeting in the course o' a few days. Meantime, get ye'self in training, for I guess ye'll find the young Injun a hard nut to crack. Now what about asking us to a bite o' grub afore we go?"

But the boys had seen quite enough of Morgan & Co.

"Nothing doing," said Jack shortly. "Besides, we may be having a call from the Government assayer."

"D'ye mean Mister Lloyd Dunbar?" queried Morgan. "Say, he's a fellow worth the knowing. Someone pointed him out to me yesterday from the distance—a shortish man with giglamps. I don't know the gon'leman, but I'd like to. Lefty, we'll wait and see if he rolls along."

"Sure thing," agreed Simons. "Gosh, that fried steak looks good!"

He grabbed a cloth and took hold of the pan in which the steak was warming. Unluckily, in his clumsiness, he upset some of the hot fat over one of his feet so that some of it penetrated between his thick grey sock and snow-boot.

"Ooch! Yow-wow!"

Yelping lustily, he let the pan and steak drop to the matting, and grasping his foot with both hands, did a wild war-dance round the shack.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Morgan. "Sure that's funny, that is!"

He laughed so much that out of sheer weakness he dropped back on to what looked like an inviting seat behind him. Actually it was the big tin bath with its wooden cover neatly hidden by gay cretonne. And as Bull Morgan sank back upon it, the wood splintered under his weight and, with a great splash, he sat in eighteen inches of icy water.

"Whooh! Jumpin' Mackinaw! Help me out!"

The sudden change in his tone made Jack and Terry roar with mirth. Even the pock-marked Indian permitted himself a grave smile, and Lefty Simons cheered up wonderfully when he saw what had happened to Bull.

The fury of Morgan was terrible as he came out of the bath, and snatching up a chair, he was about to make a clean sweep of the carefully-laid table, when the door was slowly opened.

Startled, all looked across the shack and saw framed in the doorway the figure of a man.

The Man Who Came Back!

THE stranger wore a heavy blue woollen coat and trousers tucked into his snow-boots, and a cap with flaps loosely hanging over his ears. His face was clean-shaven and the mouth curiously drawn

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up on one side, and he was wearing a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles which weirdly magnified his eyes.

"A new parlour game, my friend?" he inquired of Morgan. His voice was low and hoarse as though he were suffering from some throat trouble.

Slowly Bull Morgan lowered the chair.

"Jest a li'l quiet fun, stranger!" he grunted. Then, twisting his coarse features into a grin, he said: "Guess you're the Canadian Government assayer, Mister Lloyd Dunbar, heh?"

The visitor ignored him.

"I've come on behalf of Dave Orchard to see his nephew, Jack, and young Terry O'Hara," he said, addressing the chums. "I presume you are the boys. And these men—they are guests of yours?"

"Hardly, sor," answered Terry, "but we invited them to go."

"You don't exactly desire their presence, then?" murmured the other.

"Er—not exactly!" agreed Jack.

The visitor stood slightly outside the door and to one side, as though to allow Morgan and his cronies to pass out.

"Say, look hyer, Mister Dunbar," began Morgan, "we ain't going home yet. We're taking grub with these lads, and sure we'd like to have a talk with ye."

"That's so," agreed Simons. "I guess we're staying."

"I guess you're not," answered the newcomer quietly.

Both his hands, which were encased in fur mitts, rose to the level of his chest, and Morgan gave a sudden exclamation of alarm. For he found himself looking into a grim, unwavering cylinder of iron which protruded from above those heavy furs!

"Gee! Don't shoot!" he begged. "We've no objection to going, have we, Lefty?"

"N-n-none!" stuttered Simons.

Neither, it seemed, had Lone Bear. So, in single file, the three shuffled out of the cabin while the stranger drew back to let them pass into the Yukon night.

Very sheepishly Morgan, Simons, and the Indian staggered through the snow to Dawson, occasionally looking back and muttering among themselves.

"Now, come right in, sir!" cried Jack. "It's a great relief to get rid of those fellows."

For a minute or two the visitor remained motionless inside the cabin, watching the receding figures of Morgan and his friends. Then he kicked the snow from his feet and entered the cabin, and Terry shut the door after him.

"It's a treat to have you here, sir!" exclaimed Jack. "We heard about you from Uncle Dave when we visited him in—Dawson this morning."

Terry began to laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "Shure 'twas funny the way you put the breeze up ould Morgan and Simons wid that gun of yours!"

"A better joke even than that, my boy," came the answer. And, to the astonishment of Jack and Terry, their guest laid his "gun" down on the table. It was but a nine-inch length of iron piping.

Both boys grinned with appreciation.

"That's a good one, sor!" cried Terry. "Shure you bluffed the spalpeens foine! Now won't you take off your coat and hat, Mister Dunbar, and got your legs well under the table?"

"Thank you, my boy!"

The visitor looked towards the door and the window covered with the heavy blind, then took off his fur mitts, together with his heavy blue cap and horn-rimmed spectacles, and turned towards the oil-lamp again.

"Jack! Terry!" he said, in a voice which had lost its hoarseness. "Don't you know me?"

Both boys stared hard at the sound of that familiar voice, and in spite of the clean-shaven face, recognised none other than Uncle Dave himself.

"Uncle!" cried Jack, starting forward in wild excitement. "You're free?"

"'Tis our ould pard himself back again!" whooped Terry. "Hiven be praised!"

"Hush, boys—hush!" adjured Uncle Dave. "As you may imagine, because of my disguise, my gaolers didn't give me permission to attend here."

The joy faded out of the chums' faces.

"You—you mean, uncle," muttered Jack, "that you've escaped?"

Dave Orchard nodded.

"That's the long and short of it," he said. "A warder failed to close properly the door of my cell, and I managed to get it open again. Luck was with me, and I got to a woodshed in the prison yard, where I lay low for a few minutes until the coast was clear. Then I climbed a wall to freedom."

"But your clothes?" cried Terry.

"I broke into a store in Dawson for these, and the gig-lamps, too," replied Uncle Dave. "Exchange is no robbery, they say, and, anyhow, I can one day square the matter with the store-keeper. It wasn't a bad rig-out as it happened, for it seemed to make Bull Morgan mistake me for the Government assayer."

"We're jolly pleased to see you again, Uncle Dave," said Jack, still bewildered by what had occurred. "But isn't it awfully risky for you to be here? When Sergeant Curtis and a posse get on your track, they'll come to this cabin first as sure as eggs."

"No doubt of it, my boy," answered Uncle Dave gravely. "Though I knew the risk I simply couldn't leave Dawson without seeing you and Terry again. Good heavens, there's Skookum barking! Surely Curtis can't have got on my trail so early?"

Hastily Uncle Dave put on his cap and the horn-rimmed spectacles, while Jack partly drew aside the heavy blind and looked out into the night.

The aurora borealis, or the Northern Lights, were beginning to shimmer in the sky, and in the flickering light cast upon the snow Jack could see the forms of two or three men plodding towards the Wigwam. He turned sharply back to the room and faced the fugitive.

"Mounties, by the cut of their jib!" he exclaimed.

"Then, boys, I must beat it!" cried their old pard in a hoarse tone. "P'r'aps I can pull the bluff on Curtis like I did on Bull Morgan, though it's not so likely."

"Wait!" panted Jack, gripping his arm. "If you go out of that door you'll be bagged for a cert. You've got to hide right here. Terry, give me a hand to shift this table."

Unheeding of Uncle Dave's protest that there was no place of concealment in the shack, the two boys shifted the table and dragged up the matting.

"A trapdoor!" exclaimed Uncle Dave, amazed.

Jack pulled it open and pointed down the few rough wooden steps which led below.

"There's a tunnel which leads from this shack to the root cellar, uncle," he whispered. "Get down into it, and stay there until we give you the tip to come out. If Sergeant Curtis and his men call here you can trust Terry and me to get rid of them."

From outside the Wigwam rose the savage snarls of Skookum, mingled with the bull voice of Sergeant Curtis loudly demanding the presence of the shack's occupants.

The row speeded. Uncle Dave's descent into the secret tunnel, and quickly Jack and Terry replaced the trapdoor, dragged the matting back over it, and put the festive table back in the centre of the room.

"Hallo, there!" roared the voice of Sergeant Curtis from some short distance from the shack. "Call off this husky of yours, my lads, or he'll be getting a bullet from a carbine through his brain!"

"Begorra!" muttered Terry. "'Tis in a bad temper he is!"

Opening the door of the cabin, Jack peered out into the white Yukon night. Sergeant Curtis, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, had halted about thirty yards from the Wigwam, his carbine levelled at the vulpine head of Skookum, who stood with bristling fur and bared teeth before him. Two other armed Mounties were positioned at either side of the cabin, and others were at the back of the building.

The famous man-trackers of the northland had lost little time in getting on the scent, and the Wigwam was surrounded!

The Get-Away!

"SKOOKUM!" cried Jack. "Pack up that snarling and lie down!"

The husky hesitated, then reluctantly turned his back on Sergeant Curtis, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and returned to the shallow trench he had dug himself in the snow.

"Now, my lad," said the sergeant, without preamble, "where's that uncle of yours?"

"My uncle!" exclaimed Jack. "Surely no one ought to know better where my uncle is than you!"

The Mounty gritted his teeth.

"Don't try to bluff me, boy!" he snapped. "You know well enough your uncle escaped from Dawson Gaol this evening. Now it happens I met some visitors of yours—those skates, Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons and an Indian pard of theirs. They mentioned when I questioned them that they hadn't seen your uncle, but that Lloyd Dunbar, the Government assayer, was up at your shanty. Well, Mr. Dunbar is spending the evening with friends in Mount Street, for I saw him just before I came along here. So I've a mighty good notion that the man Bull Morgan saw was your uncle in disguise."

"Bedad, 'tis better than Sexton Blake ye are, sergeant!" cried Terry admiringly. "But 'tis no visitors at all at all we've got in the cabin."

Sergeant Curtis and his men examined the place and the root cellar.

"Huh!" grunted the sergeant. "I admire you boys for not wanting to give your old pard away. As a police



As Bull Morgan sank back on what looked like an inviting seat the wood splintered under his weight and, with a great splash, he sat in eighteen inches of icy water. "Whooh! Jumpin' Mackinaw!" he gasped. "Help me out!" (See page 25).

officer, though, it's my duty to warn you that if you've sheltered this fugitive from justice, you yourselves will be liable to answer to the law for it." Then, facing Jack, he demanded bluntly: "Which way did your uncle go when he left this cabin?"

"Finding that out, sergeant," he answered quietly, "will be your own particular job to-night."

Shrugging his shoulders, Sergeant Curtis summoned his men.

"He must have hit the trail," he growled. "Some of you make for Bear Creek camp, and others for Silver Landing. He couldn't have made for anywhere much farther distant without provisions or dogs."

He himself took leave of the boys without showing further rancour, and accompanied the second party.

The Northern Lights were growing brighter in the sky, scintillating in long shafts of blue and green flame to an apex in the night sky. They flickered fantastically upon the snowy landscape and the receding figures of the police.

"My hat, I'm almost frozen!" Jack exclaimed. "Now, come on, Terry, let's get back into the warm."

They waited the best part of a quarter of an hour, and looked out again to make sure that all the Mounties were out of sight. Satisfied, they thrust the table to one side, drew back the matting, and opened the trap-door beneath.

"Uncle Dave! Uncle Dave!" breathed Jack excitedly.

"My boys," came the voice of the fugitive from the dark tunnel below, "it's safe for me to come up?"

"All serene," answered Jack. "The coast's clear now, uncle!"

He and his chum helped Uncle Dave through the hole in the floor and put the room in order again. Then, while they dished up a meal, they told of the

call made by Sergeant Curtis and how he and his men had set out again on the frozen trail to make investigations at Bear Creek Camp and Silver Landing.

"Expecting to find me frozen stiff on the way," chuckled Uncle Dave. "I'm sorry for Curtis, boys, but necessity knows no law. In gaol I shouldn't have had a dog's chance of proving my innocence; if I can only keep my liberty I may one day catch out Morgan and Simons and get proof of their hand in the theft of Simpson's gold."

"The sergeant's a white man," said Jack, "but, by Jingo, he won't easily be thrown off the trail."

His uncle shook his head.

"The Mounties never are, Jack," he said. "Curtis would go plumb to the North Pole to get me if he'd got evidence I was there. I've known one of the breed to trek a couple of thousand miles with a dog team and take an Indian murderer single-handed out of the camp of his tribe. Now, after a bite with you I'll light out for a settlement of Indians who've got no love for the police. There I'll stay in their tepees until the worst of the hue and cry has died down."

During their meal Jack again had a look outside, but no one was in sight. Skookum, however, seized the chance of leaping into the cabin, and no one had the heart to turn him out again.

At last, the meal ended, Uncle Dave put some tinned provisions, together with some heavy woollen socks and other articles, into a knapsack and took farewell of his young hosts. Jack and Terry put on their fur caps and coats and went outside the shack with him, leaving Skookum still enjoying a doggy dream before the warm stove.

Closing the cabin door, they stood for a fleeting moment or two taking farewell of their old pard in the silent Yukon night, aflame with the glory

of the aurora borealis. Then Uncle Dave turned his back upon the cabin's warmth and plodded out upon the ice-trail to the northward.

Both boys felt a lump in their throats at this parting with their old pard, whom they had grown to love and respect, and who now was a hunted fugitive from justice.

For once they were even heedless of the glory of the Northern Lights which set the heavens aflame. From the snowline to high overhead the stars were obliterated by serpentine bands of shimmering light, ranging from delicate pink to orange, palest yellow, and apple-green. And through them quivered a myriad flashing blue light-shafts, like the glistening spears of a great phantom army. The play of the lights on the trodden snow seemed unworldly as a fairy phantasy, and Uncle Dave, a receding shade of an unreal dream.

Then, as silently the chums watched their pard leaving them, a stalwart figure emerged from behind a pile of snow-covered cardwood, and a voice cut the eerie silence of the wonder-night like the crack of doom.

"Halt, Dave Orchard! Another step and I fire!"

Clear-cut in the electric glow of the Northern Lights was Sergeant Curtis of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, his carbine unslung and the muzzle aligned on Uncle Dave's body.

"Hiven help us!" gulped Terry. "The spalpeen's got to windward of us, me bhoy!"

He started forward with clenched fists, as though to tackle the police officer, but Jack, knowing the game was up, begged him not to interfere.

"Steady, Terry," he implored. "We can't do any good. The sergeant pulled a good bluff on us," he added bitterly.

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J. Stanton Hope

(Continued from previous page.)

An expression of keen satisfaction was upon the tanned countenance of Sergeant Curtis as he moved forward towards the escaped prisoner.

"It occurred to me there was some other hiding-place around here," he remarked pleasantly, "so I made it my business to come back and lie in wait awhile. Glad you weren't too long in showing up, Orchard, for a cold wind's beginning to spring up with these lights."

Uncle Dave held his hands just above his shoulders and calmly faced his captor.

"A bit unfortunate that Skookum, the husky, wasn't left outside the shack, it seems," he remarked. "Still, I've had

a real good dinner, which I didn't get in gaol, so I mustn't grouse!"

His eyes grew wide-eyed and staring. They appeared to be fixed on something near the log cabin, which was some distance behind the officer's back.

"No! No!" he shrieked suddenly. "Not that! Don't set that husky at him!"

The sergeant glanced round in a flash to meet the danger, but saw only the two boys standing silently together, and no dog. And at the precise moment of his glance backward, Uncle Dave's fists dropped heavily on the barrel of the carbine, knocking it downward toward the snow.

"Arrah!" cried Terry. "Good for you, Uncle Dave!"

Quick as a flash, Uncle Dave got in a left hook to the sergeant's chin, and the police officer went down like a pole-axed steer.

"A lucky blow!" he panted, and unhitched the cartridge-belt from the sergeant's body and picked up the carbine.

"Take care of him, boys," he adjured, then plodded swiftly through the snow in the opposite direction from festive Dawson.

In poignant silence the boys watched him go, then turned to attend to Sergeant Curtis.

"I'll soon bring him round," muttered Jack. "I'll stuff some icicles down his neck."

"Shure, don't be in such a hurry, me bhoys!" remarked Terry. "Give our ould pard a chance to leg it a mile or two."

So they dragged the unconscious police officer into the wigwam, and after a judicious interval, slipped icicles down his back.

These had a remarkable effect in bringing him round, but a further application failed to cool his temper.

"You grinning young jackanapes!" he bellowed. "It won't surprise me if you find yourselves in a calaboose for this night's work. Harboring an escaped prisoner is a serious offence, and, by heck, you'll hear more of it!"

But, careless of consequences, the chums rejoiced openly in Uncle Dave's slick getaway.

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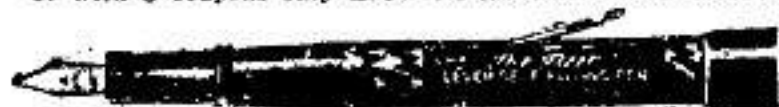
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