

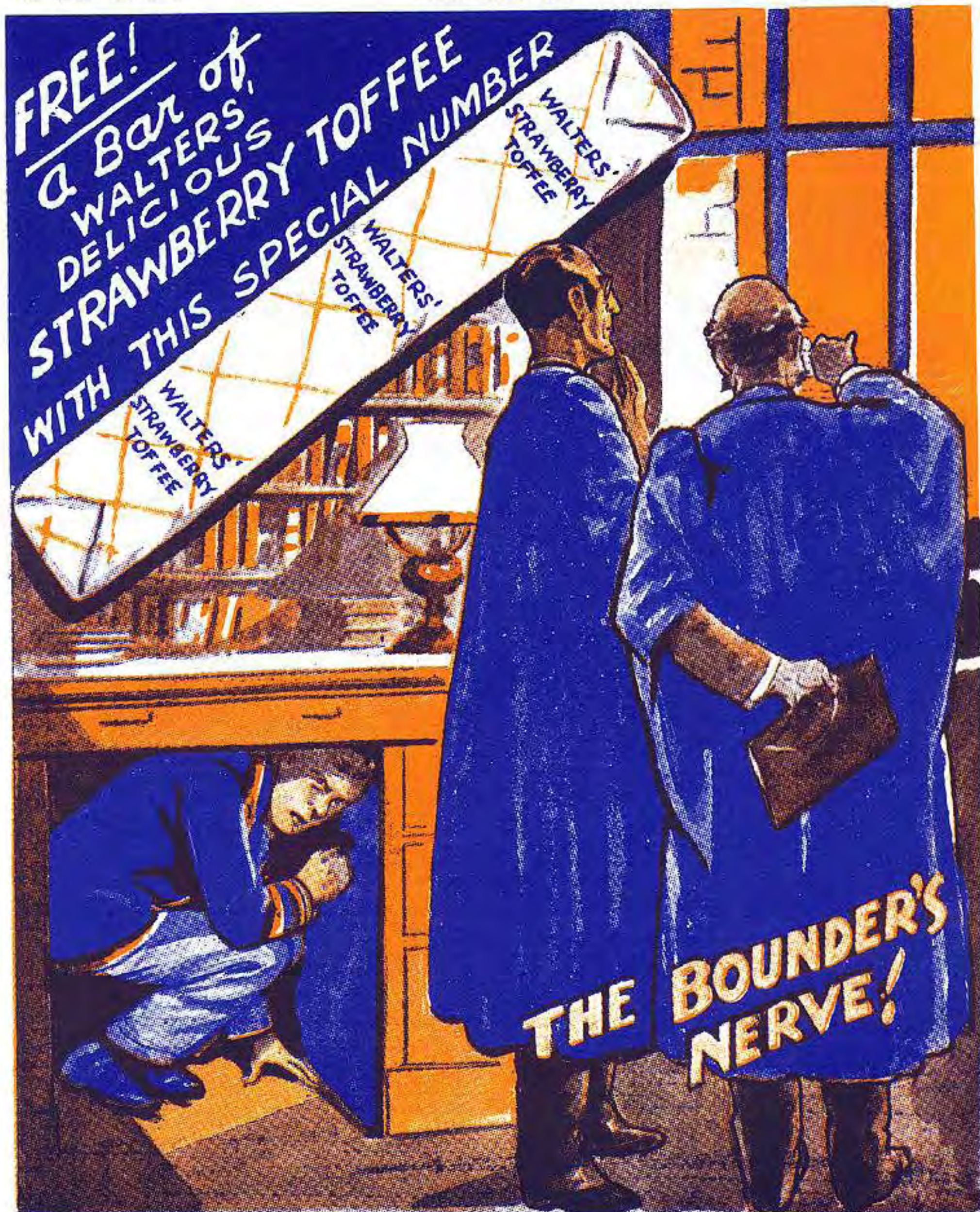
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The MAGNET^{2D}

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EVERY SATURDAY.

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THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY!

—featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Popular Chums of Greyfriars.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Chancing It!

"**C**HANCE it!" said the Bounder. "Rot!" said Harry Wharton decidedly.

"The rotfulness, my esteemed Smithy, is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, looked obstinate. A hint of opposition was always enough to make the Bounder obstinate.

He came to a halt on the towpath beside the frozen Sark. The winter dusk was falling, and the leafless woods along the river growing dim. There were five Greyfriars juniors in the party, and they were still more than a mile from the school. And, sturdy fellows as they were, they were rather tired after a long ramble.

But only Smithy thought of "chancing it" to the extent of taking a short cut across the grounds of the Three Fishers. From the point of view of Harry Wharton & Co., it was better to be late for calling-over than to enter precincts that were strictly out of bounds for all Greyfriars fellows.

The Bounder thought differently. On most subjects, as a matter of fact, he thought differently, and it was unusual for him to "go about" with Harry Wharton & Co. This term, the scape-grace of Greyfriars was on his best behaviour; but a difference of opinion was sure to crop up sooner or later.

"Why not?" he snapped.

"Lots of reasons why not!" said Frank Nugent mildly. "The place is out of bounds—"

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"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, come on!" growled Johnny Bull. "We may get in before old Gesling shuts the gates, if we put it on!"

"Not a chance!" answered Smithy.

"But we've got lots of time if we take the short cut here—it saves half the distance."

"That's so," agreed Harry Wharton.

"But—"

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"If we're late for roll, it means lines all round!" grunted the Bounder.

"Quelch has been in a rotten temper all this term. Where's the harm in cutting across the grounds? I know the way!"

"No credit to you, if you do!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't give me any pi-jaw now!" snapped Smithy. "Look here! I'm going to cut across. Are you coming or not?"

The Bounder made a step towards the high fence that bordered the towpath. His hard face was set obstinately; his mind was made up.

It was true, as Smithy said, that there was no harm in taking the short cut. But it was breaking bounds in a particularly undesirable and disreputable spot. Wharton hesitated, and Nugent and Hurree Singh looked to him for the decision. But Johnny Bull, who had a very decided will of his own, gave an emphatic snort.

"If we're spotted, will it be any use telling a tale about a short cut?" he grunted. "A fellow might get sacked for being spotted in that den! You may know your way about, Smithy—but we don't, and don't want to."

"If you're funky—" sneered the Bounder.

"Who's funky?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't row!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "We don't want to be late, Johnny, and if Smithy's going to chance it—"

"I am!" said the Bounder emphatically. And he made a jump, and caught the top of the fence with his hands.

"Oh, chance it, then!" said Nugent.

The Bounder clambered up. He sat astride the fence, and grinned down at the other fellows.

"Follow your leader!" he said.

Harry Wharton hesitated.

But it is well said that he who hesitates is lost! He stepped towards the fence, and Nugent and the Nabob of Bhanipur followed him.

Johnny Bull did not stir.

"Come on, Johnny—let's chance it!" said Harry.

"I'm going to do nothing of the kind!" answered Johnny Bull, in his slow and deliberate way. "Right's right, and wrong's wrong, and you know it as well as I do. If we didn't want to be late for call-over, we should have turned home sooner. We chanced that—and we can go on chancing it! Don't play the goat!"

"Who's a funk?" grinned the Bounder, from the top of the fence.

Johnny gave him a glare.

"We could scud across in ten minutes!" remarked Nugent.

"I'm going on!" grunted Johnny Bull. And he turned away, and tramped on by the dusky towpath. "If you've got any sense, you'll come, too!"

"Coming?" called out the Bounder.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"We're sticking to Johnny," he answered. "Look here, Smithy! Drop down and come with us. After all—"

"Rats!"

"My esteemed Smithy—" urged Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Funk!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, then!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently. "Do as you jolly well like—we're going on! Come on, you men!"

And Harry Wharton started after Johnny Bull, and his two chums took the same direction. The Bounder, sitting on the top of the fence, watched them go, with a sneering grin. They were soon out of sight in the dusk.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders, and dropped on the inner side of the fence.

At a little distance, the lighted windows of the Three Fishers gleamed; but the Bounder did not turn in that direction.

He cut across the weedy, ill-kept grounds, to reach the fence on the Courtfield road, on the other side.

As he had said, he knew the way about these forbidden precincts. Last term he had visited the place often enough—a fact that was suspected by masters and prefects at Greyfriars. This term the Bounder had turned over a new leaf, and he was sincerely anxious to keep out of trouble with the "beaks." But he was, as usual, reckless. If he was spotted, it meant serious trouble. But he was not going to be spotted.

He grinned at the idea of arriving in time, and answering "adsum" to his name when Mr. Quelch called the roll—while Harry Wharton & Co. were still tramping on their homeward way, to receive lines when they arrived late! Serve them jolly well right, was the Bounder's opinion.

He crossed the dusky grounds at a trot, and reached the other fence. It was a high fence; but he caught it with both hands, and clambered over. On the other side was the Courtfield road, and a short run to the school gates. The Bounder dropped from the fence, stumbled on the sloping, grassy bank below, and rolled down into the road.

"What—who—Vernon-Smith!" rapped out a voice, as a figure in cap and overcoat loomed in the dusk on the road.

"Oh gad!" gasped the Bounder.

He leaped to his feet. He stared in dismay at a tall Sixth Form man of Greyfriars, who was staring at him grimly.

"Wingate!" gasped the Bounder.

The captain of Greyfriars set his lips.

"You young sweep! Fairly caught this time!"

Vernon-Smith breathed hard. Was there ever such rotten luck?—he asked himself. He had "chanced" it once too often.

"I—I say, Wingate, I—" he stammered. "I—I was only taking a short cut across from the river—"

The prefect's lip curled.

"You can tell that to your Form-master, or the Head!" he answered. "Follow me to the school now!"

"I tell you—"

"That's enough!"

Wingate of the Sixth walked on towards the school. And the Bounder, with a black and sullen look on his face, followed him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Just in Time!

CLANG!

That loud clang, ringing through the wintry dusk, reached the ears of four juniors who were sprinting towards the gates of Greyfriars, while they were still at a distance.

Harry Wharton halted breathlessly.

"We're done!" he gasped.

"The donefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous Gosling has done us."

It was the clang of the closing gate. Gosling, the ancient porter of Greyfriars, was never late in performing that duty! Greyfriars fellows suspected that Gosling liked to shut the gates on the noses of fellows who were a second late. He was suspected of deriving a fiendish delight from it. Certainly, Gosling was never, never late on that duty, though on other duties he was far from punctual.

Anyhow, there it was; the gates were shut. And if Gosling reopened them to admit the late comers, he had to take their names for a report to their Form master.

"Rotten!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Wish you'd taken the short cut with Smithy now?" grinned Nugent.

"No, I don't!" growled Johnny.

"Rats!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton.

"That grinning old image Gosling doesn't know we're out, and he hasn't seen us. The bell can't have gone yet. Look here, we've time to dodge in—over the Cloister wall. Unless Johnny's

Even the punishment of expulsion does not stop Vernon-Smith from breaking bounds. He's tough, unafraid, and scornful of authority—hence his nickname of the Bounder. Yet there comes the time when even the hardy Bounder goes too far, and regrets it!

got any objection to that!" he added, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Johnny.

"I don't want to bag a hundred lines any more than you do. Dodging in over the wall is different from rooting about a pub—and it you don't understand the difference—"

"No time for jaw, if we're going to try it on!" said the captain of the Remove politely. "Come on! Smithy's in long ago, and it's time we were!"

Wharton ran back along the wall, to the point where a little dusky lane ran by the old Cloisters. There was a certain spot in the Cloister wall, well known to Greyfriars fellows, where it was easy to clamber over. One after another the four juniors clambered in, and then they out across the dusky Cloisters to the quad.

A bell was ringing now.

"Just in time!" panted Wharton.

"Put it on!"

They ran for the House. The lighted windows made the dusky quad seem darker than it really was. The running juniors did not see a fat figure in their path till they ran into it.

There was a roar!

"Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows—Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter sat down quite suddenly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow! Who's that?" roared Bunter. "Knocking a fellow over—Ow! Barging into a chap—Yow-ow! Beasts!"

"What did you bargo in the way for, you fat ass?"

"Boast! Help a fellow up!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton stooped and grasped hold of a fat ear. There was another roar as he helped Bunter up. That, apparently, was not the way in which William George Bunter wanted to be helped.

"Yaroooh! Don't pull my ear off!" roared Bunter. "Oh, you rotter! Yaroooh! M-m-m-my ear! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors ran on to the House, joining the crowd of fellows making for Big Hall. Billy Bunter rolled after them, rubbing a reddened ear and snorting.

"Hallo! I thought you fellows were out of gates!" said Skinner of the Remove, as he sighted the Co. "How did you get in?"

"The howfulness is terrific, my esteemed Skinner!" answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh blandly.

"Is Smithy in?" asked Wharton.

"Smithy—yes, I've seen him."

"Oh, good!"

"He doesn't look good!" grinned Skinner. "Scowling like a jolly old demon in a pantomime! You men been rowing with Smithy?"

"No, ass!"

"Well, something's upset his jolly old nibs! Look at him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. spotted the Bounder, who was coming into Hall with the Remove. Certainly, Smithy did not look in a good temper, though he was not exactly scowling like a demon in a pantomime, as Skinner expressed it. His face was dark and sullen; and his chum, Redwing, who was with him, had a worried look. Something, apparently, was wrong.

"You get in all right, Smithy?" Wharton asked in a whisper, as the Remove took their places in Hall.

"Oh, right as rain!" said the Bounder. "I had pleasant company home, too. You fellows missed that."

"Silence!" called out Loder of the Sixth.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, entered the Hall by the upper door to take the roll. His gimlet eyes turned on his own Form and seemed to single out the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith smiled sardonically. Evidently the prefect who had caught him had made his report, and he was to be dealt with after call-over! This was the outcome of his good resolutions for the term! He shrugged his shoulders.

The Remove master proceeded to call the names. There was one name on the roll that he did not call.

That was the name of Bob Cherry, of the Remove.

Bob was not present.

Where Bob Cherry was, was as great a mystery to Mr. Quelch as to anyone else at Greyfriars. It was a fortnight now since Bob had vanished from school—kidnapped by the unknown man who had swooped down in an aeroplane on the football field of Greyfriars.

Bob's name was still on the roll; but it was not called! All the other fellows answered to their names, except some of the great and glorious prefects of the Sixth Form who had the privilege of cutting roll if they liked. When the calling-over was finished, Walker of the Sixth came across to the Remove and called to the Bounder.

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"Vernon-Smith, you will go to your Form master's study!"

"Pleased!" drawled the Bounder.

Harry Wharton tapped the Bounder on the arm as the fellows streamed out of Hall.

"What's up, Smithy?" he asked.

"The game!" answered the Bounder flippantly.

"Oh, don't rag! What's the trouble, you ass? You got in all right—long before we did."

"Quite! Only Wingate came in with me—"

"Oh!"

"A fair cop!" drawled the Bounder. "I'm for it. Think Quelch is likely to believe that I was taking only a short cut across the Three Fishers?"

He laughed.

"Hardly! Knowing you as he does—"

"How well you put it!" grinned the Bounder. "How the thump did you get in on time? I thought you'd be yards late."

"We sprinted all the way, and got in over the Cloister wall, after the gate was shut—"

"Oh! Then I'd better not mention you in my heart-to-heart talk with dear old Quelch!" chuckled the Bounder. "Lucky you told me, or I might have called on you as witnesses to my spotless character! All serene!"

And the Bounder, with his hands in his pockets, and reckless carelessness in his face, sauntered away to his Form master's study.

father that he had been turfed out of Greyfriars.

"I was rather late getting back, sir, and I took a short cut from the river across the Three Fishers grounds," he said.

Even as he made the statement, Smithy knew how lame it sounded. Any fellow caught in questionable quarters could have made that statement, if he cared to add an untruth to his other delinquencies. And Smithy was known to have little regard for the truth in dealing with authority. Mr. Quelch's lips curled contemptuously.

"Is that all?" he snapped.

Obviously, he did not believe a word of it. Really, the Bounder hardly expected him to.

"It's the truth, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. He was thinking of his father, and he spoke with unusual earnestness. "There was no time to get back for calling-over, and I took the short cut across."

"And where, Vernon-Smith, had you been, at such a distance from the school, that you were unable to return in time for calling-over?"

"Miles and miles, sir, up and down the country," said the Bounder. "I dare say you remember, sir, that last

from calling-over," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "If there were four Remove boys with you, Vernon-Smith, they appear to have reached the school before the gates were closed, without taking a short cut across forbidden precincts."

The Bounder was silent.

"However, give me their names," added Mr. Quelch, a little less sternly. "I will question them, and if they bear out your statement that you have spent the afternoon in an unobjectionable manner, it will certainly make a difference."

Smithy did not speak.

"Can you give me the names, Vernon-Smith?" asked the Remove master, in a quiet but dangerous tone.

"I could, sir, but—"

"But what?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"The fellows I speak of were late, sir; the gates were closed when they got here, as I knew they would be—"

"No boy was absent from calling-over!" Mr. Quelch gave a little start. "Do you mean that the boys entered the school surreptitiously, in some secret manner, after the gates had been shut? Is that your meaning?"

No answer.

"I will not repeat my question, Vernon-Smith!" said the Remove master in a bitter tone. "I think you could scarcely answer it!"

"I can't answer it, sir!" said the Bounder stubbornly. "Greyfriars men don't give each other away!"

"That will do!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You have been caught frequenting a forbidden place—not for the first time!"

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Monday some fellows went down into the school vaults, and came on a man lurking there—

Mr. Quelch stared.

"What can that possibly—" he began.

"All four fellows, sir—Wharton, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh—saw the man, and recognised him as the man who kidnapped Bob Cherry."

"That statement, Vernon-Smith, has been passed on to the police, for what it is worth! It has nothing to do with the matter in hand."

"It has, sir! If they weren't mistaken, the man who kidnapped Cherry is hanging about the place still, though goodness knows why! As it was a half-holiday to-day, I had the idea of scouting round the country to see whether anything could be seen of him. If he's still about here, there was a chance of spotting him."

"Indeed!"

"We had no luck, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "I dare say it was only a wild-goose chase. But we hoped there might be something in it, and—we left it rather late before we started back."

"Then there were others with you, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Am I to understand that they broke bounds also in the same way, but that Wingate did not see them?"

"Oh, no, sir! They sprinted for it."

"No boy in the Remove was absent

Something You Can Eat and Enjoy . . .

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Before the Beak!

MR. QUELCH had an expression on his face that might have been likened to that of the fabled Gorgon, when the Bounder of Greyfriars entered his study.

The careless manner in which Smithy lounged in did not tend to pacify him. He fixed his gimlet eyes grimly on the culprit.

"Vernon-Smith! A prefect has reported you for breaking school bounds. A term ago you had a narrow escape of being sent away from Greyfriars for having entered the disreputable resort called the Three Fishers. Now it appears that you are frequenting the place—"

"Not at all, sir!" said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"You do not deny that Wingate caught you dropping over the fence as you were leaving the place?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply.

"No, sir. If you will let me explain—"

Mr. Quelch's jaw set grimly.

"If you can explain, Vernon-Smith, I shall be very glad indeed to hear your explanation before I take you to your Headmaster."

The Bounder breathed rather hard. Evidently it was not going to be a "whopping" from Mr. Quelch! He was to be taken to Dr. Locke for judgment. That, as likely as not meant the "sack."

With all his coolness and arrogance, the Bounder did not want to take the train home and explain to an angry

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On the last occasion you were warned what to expect if you transgressed again! You have told me an utterly improbable story, which, improbable as it is, I would try to believe if you were a boy I could trust! You are very well aware that I cannot trust you, and for what reasons!"

"I've told you the truth, sir!"

"That," said Mr. Quelch, "will be for your headmaster to judge! I shall take you to Dr. Locke, and place the matter in his hands!"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. He crossed to the door and opened it.

"Follow me!" he snapped.

The Bounder hesitated. He was strongly tempted to speak. After all, it meant only fines, in all probability, for Harry Wharton & Co. At the worst, it meant "six." But the expression on Mr. Quelch's face told that there was something much more serious in store for the Bounder. He was a dog with a bad name! He had been caught in the Three Fishers before! He was under the eye of suspicion! He could picture the lift of the Head's eyebrows if he told Dr. Locke that he had taken a short cut there. He could, in fact, imagine the roar of laughter that would have gone up in the Rag if he had told the Removites so! He was going up to the Chief Beak for judgment—and it looked like the finish!

"I have told you to follow me, Vernon-Smith!" snapped Mr. Quelch, from the doorway.

"Very well, sir!"

The Bounder's mind was made up. As he had said, Greyfriars men did not give one another away. Whatever was coming to him, he was not going to break that unwritten law.

He followed his Form-master from the study.

Dozens of eyes fell on him as he followed in the wake of Mr. Quelch, heading for the study of Dr. Locke.

"What's up, Smithy?" whispered Skinner, as he passed. "Trouble?"

"Gallons of it!" drawled the Bounder.

"Not the push?" asked Hazeldene.

"Looks like it!"

Tom Redwing hurried up.

"Smithy—" he exclaimed.

Mr. Quelch glanced round.

"Vernon-Smith!" he barked.

The Bounder gave his chum a nod, and walked on after the Remove master. A crowd of fellows were left in excited discussion behind him. Word passed from mouth to mouth that the Bounder

had a cake!" said Bunter. "Still, as you've got one, I'll have a slice! I say, you fellows, Smithy's for it!"

"Smithy!" repeated Frank Nugent.

"Up before the Head!" said Bunter cheerfully, helping himself to cake. "I say, you fellows, I saw him come in with Wingate some time before call-over, and I wondered what was up. I asked him, but he only called me names—you know what a bad-tempered beast he is! Looks like the sack this time for Smithy! I say, this is jolly good cake!"

"Well, he can't say he hasn't asked for it!" growled Johnny Bull. "Don't bag all the cake, you guzzling gorgon!"

"Oh, really, Bull!"

"Has Quelch taken him to the Head,

Johnny. "That means a big inpot all round. Nice for you, too, as head boy of the Form!"

Wharton coloured with vexation.

As captain of the Remove and trusted head boy he was rather expected to set an example of law-abiding rectitude—certainly not to set an example of disregarding strict rules of the school.

There was—from the schoolboy point of view, at least—no harm in a fellow late for lock-up dodging in over the school wall to escape the consequences of cutting call-over.

But the point of view of a "beak" was very different. Wharton was extremely unwilling for that little escapade to come to his Form-master's knowledge.

It was irritating enough, too, for had



As Vernon-Smith was about to drop from the fence, there came the sound of approaching footsteps, and a figure in cap and overcoat loomed in the dusk on the road. "What—who—Vernon-Smith!" rapped out a voice. "You young sweep! Fairly caught this time!" It was the stern voice of George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

was "up before the Beak," and that it was the "push" at last—which did not surprise the Remove fellows! What surprised them was that it had not happened before!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Own Up!

"I SAY, you fellows!" grinned Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked into Study No. 1 through his big spectacles. Four juniors were there, tucking into a large cake by way of tea. The chums of the Remove had been too busy that afternoon to remember tea, but they realised now that they were very hungry.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "how did you learnfully know that we had a cake?"

"Oh, really, Inky, I never knew you

Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, with a worried look.

"Yes; just seen him. Wingate caught him up to something, you bet," said Bunter. "He was bound to be nailed sooner or later, the way he keeps on asking for it! If he's sacked, I think I shall change into his study! I fancy I can stand that chap Redwing better than I can stand Toddy in Study No. 7. Toddy's mean! There was hardly anything for tea this afternoon—"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Wharton. "Look here, you men, if Quelch has taken Smithy to the Beak, it means that he doesn't believe his tale of a short cut. But we can prove it for him."

"He's asked for it!" growled Johnny Bull. "We should be in the same boat if we'd gone with him, and I told you so."

"Yes; but—"

"Are we going to tell Quelch that we sneaked in over the Cloister wall after the gates were shut?" demanded

the Bounder done as the other fellows had done, there would have been no trouble at all. But the obstinate, self-willed fellow had persisted in having his own way, and this was the result.

"Didn't I warn him?" growled Johnny Bull, in a voice like that of the Great Huge Bear. "You fellows heard me! If I hadn't fairly dragged you away you'd have been in the soup along with that shady sweep. He's asked for it, and he can take it, and be blowed to him!"

"That's so, of course," agreed Harry; "but—"

"It may be the push for him!" said Nugent uneasily.

"It wouldn't be, if he hadn't been playing the goat for whole terms, and feeding the beaks up to their back teeth!" snorted Johnny.

"That's so, too," said Harry; "but—"

"Oh, rot!" said Johnny Bull.

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"Well, I suppose you're right," said Wharton slowly. "The silly, obstinate ass barged into trouble, and very nearly dragged us into it, too. But I'm going to put in a word for him, and chance it. It's rather thick, but—"

"Rot!" booted Johnny.

"I'm coming with you, Harry!" said Frank Nugent.

"The comefulness of my esteemed self is also preposterous!" murmured Ilurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"After all, Smithy gave up his afternoon helping us root about for that blighter," said Harry. "He suggested it and was keen on it. Of course, there wasn't a chance, and nothing came of it; but—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"Oh, come on," said Harry. "No need to mention that Johnny was with us. Three of us are enough to take lines and lickings—"

"Don't be a silly ass, if you can help it," snorted Johnny Bull. "If you're going to make a fool of yourself, I'm going to make a fool of myself along with you. Let's all be silly fools together."

Harry Wharton laughed. Johnny's bark was always worse than his bite.

"Well, come on, then," he said.

And the four juniors left the study, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them through his big spectacles.

"Mad!" said Bunter.

The cake had been left unfinished. The fellows seemed to have forgotten the cake. Unless that was insanity, Bunter could not account for it. Still, the cake did not remain unfinished. Billy Bunter saw to that! It was finished to the last crumb and the last

plum before the chums of the Remove reached Dr. Locke's study.

Not in a happy mood, Harry Wharton & Co. arrived at that dreaded apartment. There was a murmur of a voice within, as the captain of the Remove tapped on the door and opened it.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing before the Head's writing-table. Mr. Quelch stood aside, looking more like a gorgon than ever. Dr. Locke was speaking, but he broke off with a frown as the four juniors entered.

"What does this mean?" asked the Head. "Mr. Quelch, why have these boys of your Form come here? Are they concerned in this matter?"

"Not that I am aware of, sir," answered the Remove-master, with a grim frown at the four. "Go away at once! How dare you interrupt your headmaster?"

The Bounder glanced at them, and his face perceptibly brightened. He, at least, guessed why the four had come.

"We've something to say, sir," said Harry. "We were with Vernon-Smith this afternoon, sir."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Indeed!" said the Head. "In that case you may speak. Am I to understand that you have been out of school bounds with this boy?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Harry hastily. "We had an idea that we might see something of that villain who kidnapped Bob Cherry, sir, as he has been seen in this neighbourhood only a couple of days ago. Smithy—I mean Vernon-Smith—was with us all the time, and—and we've come to tell you that it was true that he took a short cut across the Three Fishers grounds to get back for call-over, sir."

"Indeed!" repeated the Head.

"We should have chanced it, too, sir."

only Bull persuaded us not to," added Harry.

"Bull appears to be a more sensible lad than his friends," said the Head dryly. "Were these boys absent from calling-over, Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir."

"It appears, then, that you reached the school in time, Wharton. Why could not Vernon-Smith also have done so?"

"We—we didn't reach the school in time, sir!" said Harry, with a crimson face. "We ran all the way but we were late. We—we got in over the Cloister wall, and were just in time for the bell."

"Indeed!" said the Head, for the third time.

There was a pause.

"Mr. Quelch!" The Head spoke at last. "Do you accept the statement made by these boys of your Form?"

"Fully, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, though he bit his lip with annoyance as he spoke.

"We are bound to believe, then, that Vernon-Smith committed this thoughtless and reckless action, not with bad intentions," said the Head mildly. "I am very glad to believe it. But for the evidence of these boys, Vernon-Smith, I should have sent you away from the school. But I shall certainly not punish you so severely for a reckless action as for a bad action."

"Thank you, sir!" murmured the Bounder.

"These boys, Mr. Quelch, I leave to you, as their Form-master," said the Head. "Vernon-Smith I shall deal with myself!"

"Very well, sir!"

"Vernon-Smith, I shall cane you severely, and you will be gated for four half-holidays," said Dr. Locke.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"For taking a short cut, sir?" he asked, with a touch of his old insolence.

Dr. Locke knitted his brows.

"For reckless defiance of the laws of your school, Vernon-Smith! And if you add another word of impertinence I will expel you."

The Bounder was silent, his eyes glinting. Harry Wharton & Co. followed Mr. Quelch from the study and the sound of a swishing cane followed them as they went. Judging by the sound, the Head was laying it on with unusual vigour. Which, in the opinion of the four juniors, was exactly what was good for the Bounder, and they had little sympathy to waste on him. They needed, in fact, their sympathy for their unfortunate selves. Quelch's look, as he marched them off to his study, was not encouraging.

The gimlet eyes gleamed at them as they stood in an unhappy row before their Form-master.

"I am surprised at this, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "From you, as head boy of my Form, I expected better things! Surreptitious conduct—"

"I—I never meant—" stammered Harry.

"You need say no more! I shall cane you, Wharton, and the others will take two hundred lines each!" Mr. Quelch picked up his cane. "Bend over that chair, Wharton!"

In silence the captain of the Remove took his "six." In silence he left the study with his friends when it was over. In silence the hapless four returned to the Remove passage. Billy Bunter greeted them there with an uneasy blink.

"I—I say, you fellows, your cake's gone! It was the cat! I—I saw Mrs. Kebble's cat— Yaroooooh!"

Bunter was left sitting in the passage and roaring, as the juniors passed on. They went into Study No. 1, Harry

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Wharton remaining in the doorway. Tom Redwing came up to him with an anxious face.

"Smithy—" he began.
"Oh, don't worry!" said Wharton sarcastically. "Smithy's all right; it's not the sack this time. Four silly asses have made idiots of themselves and seen him through. Three of us have got impots, and I've had a licking, because Smithy had to have his own way, and we had to see that he didn't get the result. And I'm waiting here for him to come up when the Head's done with him, and I'm jolly well going to punch his cheeky nose through the back of his silly head."

"Hear, hear!" growled Johnny Bull from the study.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!" It was some minutes later that Herbert Vernon-Smith came up. But when Harry Wharton's eyes turned on him, all his belligerent intentions faded away.

The Bounder's face was pale and his eyes burning. Evidently he had been through it very severely in the Head's study, and even the exasperated Co. admitted that he looked as if he had had enough—and, indeed, a little over.

Harry Wharton gave him one look, and turned into Study No. 1 without a word. The Bounder, with set lips, tramped on to Study No. 4 and slammed the door, with a slam that rang the length of the Remove passage.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Voice of the Kidnapper!

"BOB'S pater!" said Harry Wharton.

It was the following day, after class. Some of the Remove were punting a footer about, when a rather stout gentleman with a bronzed face appeared in the offing, swinging towards the House with a military stride. From a distance Harry Wharton & Co. "capped" Major Cherry, and they watched him disappear into the House.

"News of Bob, perhaps," said Frank Nugent hopefully.

"The newfulness of the ridiculous Bob would be a boonful blessing," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Pass that ball!" shouted the Bounder.

"Bother the ball!" grunted Johnny Bull; and the four chums walked off towards the House.

The bare possibility of news of their missing chum was enough to draw their attention from all lesser matters. Not that they had much hope; for had the old major had any news, it was fairly certain that he would have called to them as he passed. The major, as they knew, was staying at Wapshot Camp, a few miles from Greyfriars, where he had business with the flying men. It was rumoured in the school that Bob's father had designed some new "gadget" that was being tried out at Wapshot—in great secrecy, and with every precaution against the secret leaking out.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter met the Co. as they came in. "Old Cherry's barged in, and he's gone to see Quelch. Bit of an old bargee, isn't he?"

"What do you mean, ass?"
"Well, I asked him after Bob, and he glared at me," said Bunter. "Just glared at a fellow. Rotten manners! I merely asked whether he supposed that Bob was still alive."

"You blithering idiot!"
"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose a fellow can ask a civil question? Instead of answering civilly he just glared at

if I'd annoyed him somehow. Snorted, and stalked past a chap. Frightful old bargee—what?"

"Did he kick you?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Eh? No!"
"That was rather a mistake. I'll set it right."

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter; and he fled.

The chums of the Remove waited at the corner of Masters' Passage. They wanted to see the major before he left.

RHYMES OF THE REMOVE.

No. 2.



In this new weekly feature our versatile Greyfriars Rhymester gives you pen portraits of the leading lights at Greyfriars. This week's poem deals with Percy Bolsover, the bully of the Remove.

I'm monarch of all I survey!
My will there is none to dispute!
I see that I get my own way,
I am such a hard-fisted brute!
The fags all go pallid and quake
When my beetle-crushers they hear.
I take 'em and shake 'em
And jolly near break 'em,
By Jingo, I make 'em all fear!

My two leg-of-muttonish fists
I flourish beneath a fag's nose,
And then if the youngster persists,
Why, knees over nostrils he goes!
I once fought a basher named Tubb
(A lout, I believe, in the Third).
He found I could butter
Him into the gutter
Before he could utter a word.

I pick many quarrels, I know,
I pick the right fellows for strife.
No chap more than four feet or so
Is ever in fear of his life!
But give me an undersized fag
Of four or five stone in his shoes,
And Jove! You will never
See fighting more clever;
I'll give him whatever I choose.

I keep the Removes in fits,
And make them do all that I say.
Whenever I order them, it's
As well if they jump to obey!
And bruisers like Bunter and Snoop
I tackle with ardour and glee;
But fellows of muscle
Like Cherry and Russell
Need not fear a tussle from me.

By nature I'm modest and meek,
That fact may be well understood,
When I lay a chap up for a week,
It's all for the fellow's own good!
It hurts me much more than the fags.
It grieves me immensely. And how I
Find a chap stacking
And give him a whacking,
But sorrow is racking my brow!

I'm Percy the Pugilist's Pride
And none dares to question the fact.
The weaklings I've beat to the wide,
And cripples I've always attacked.
Come forth all ye halt and ye blind!
Surge forward ye crippled and lame!
I'll meet you and beat you,
I'll eat and defeat you,
And, infants, I'll treat you the same!

A little later Mr. Quelch's study door opened, and he glanced out. He beckoned to the juniors as he sighted them. They came along to the study.

"Major Cherry would like to speak to you," said the Remove master; and the juniors entered.

The old major's rather plump and ruddy face was very grave, and there seemed to be new and deeper lines on it. The juniors did not need telling that he was feeling deeply the mysterious disappearance of his son, though he was not a man to let his feelings be seen, if he could help it. He shook hands with his son's friends very cordially, without a sign of the glare he had bestowed on the fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"Your Form-master has told me that you have seen the man who kidnapped my son," he said abruptly. "I have come over to see you about it. It is so very extraordinary." His keen eyes scanned the juniors.

"We were not mistaken, sir," said Harry.

"You are sure of that?"
"Quite! You see, we saw the man quite plainly, when he dropped in the aeroplane that day," said Harry. "He was rather an unusual-looking man with a thick beard, and a long, jutting nose, and he wore glasses."

"Mr. Quelch tells me that it was in the vaults below this school that you saw him."

"Yes, sir. One of the fellows—Bunter—had gone down, and we went to look for him and hook him out. The man was there."

"If there is no mistake, it is amazing," said the major. "It seems almost incredible that he should revisit this quarter. And what possible object can he have had in entering the school vaults?"

"I can't imagine, sir. But we're sure of him."

"The surefulness is terrific."

"This information has, of course, been passed on to the police," said Mr. Quelch. "Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, has already made a thorough search of the vaults, and of the old passage that leads to the priory in Friar-dale Wood. He has made no discovery of any kind, however."

Buzzzzz!

It was the telephone bell in the study.

"Pray excuse me a moment!" added the Remove master; and he crossed to the instrument, and took up the receiver.

A sharp, harsh voice, rather like the bark of a dog, came through, so sharply and clearly that it was heard in the study as well as by the Remove master at the receiver.

"Is that Greyfriars?"

"Yes. Mr. Quelch speaking."

"Major Cherry is there?"

"What? Yes."

"Please call him to the telephone."

Nemo speaking."

"Nemo!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

Major Cherry uttered a startled exclamation.

"Nemo! That is the name, or rather the pretended name, of the rascal who attacked me on the railway, whose description tallies with that of the villain who kidnapped my son. Is it possible that—"

Mr. Quelch, in great astonishment, handed the receiver to the major. The juniors stood silent, amazed. That Bob's kidnapper was, or had been recently, in the vicinity, they knew, as they had certainly spotted him in the vaults below Greyfriars School. But

that he should venture to telephone to the school was amazing. And how could he know that Major Cherry was there?

"Major Cherry speaking!" the old soldier rapped into the transmitter. "Who are you?"

"Nemo!"

"The rascally kidnapper——"

"Exactly!"

The barking voice was audible to all in the study. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances in silence.

"You—you dare to—to speak to me!" gurgled the major. "What have you to say, you scoundrel? Where is my son?"

"Where you will never find him without my assistance, my good sir!" came the barking voice. "That assistance I am prepared to offer."

"Good gad!"

"In return for a certain packet of papers. You understand me?" There was a mocking note in the harsh voice. "I asked you for that packet in the train, and, owing to the intervention of a meddling young rascal, I failed. I had to leap from the train, as you will remember. But I had my plans already laid. I failed with you, but not with your son."

Major Cherry looked as if he were about to choke over the telephone.

"I have given you ample time to search for your son, and to realise that you can never find him," went on the barking voice. "Now it is time to talk business. Are you ready to come to terms?"

"Terms!" spluttered the major.

"Precisely! You have invented a new gadget. Your experiments at Cherry Place have not been quite so unobserved as you fancied."

"You spying scoundrel——"

"All is fair in war, my dear major. And the next war is not so far off as many people imagine. You are not a man to whom one can offer money, or the matter would be simple——"

"By gad, I should hope not!" gasped Major Cherry.

"But to save your son——"

"You rascal!"

"Your son is a prisoner. For the present he is safe, cared for, well fed, and has lost nothing but his liberty. But my patience is not inexhaustible. If you desire to see him again, you will be well advised to come to terms. I cannot be burdened with a permanent prisoner. Your secret in exchange for your son—what do you say?"

"I would not answer you in words, if I could reach you with my hands!" gasped the major. "My secret, as you call it, belongs to my country, not to me, and, not to save my son, not to save my life, would I hand it over to a scoundrel! So that—that was your object in kidnapping my boy?"

"You might have guessed it. He is a fine lad, and, strange as it may seem to you, I have taken quite a liking to him, and am sorry to keep him imprisoned. But he will never see the light of day again until you have come to my terms. What is your answer?"

"Scoundrel!"

"Take your time, sir! You will hear from me again in another week or so. I am in no hurry."

Major Cherry stood staring at the telephone. "Nemo" at the other end had rung off. Slowly the major replaced the receiver on the hooks.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Luck!

"YOU silly ass!" growled Tom Redwing.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I've been a silly ass!" he said. "And a lot of good it's done me! Ever since the term started I've been a silly ass! Toeing the line and saying 'Please, sir!' and 'Oh, sir!' and 'Yes, sir!' and 'No, sir!' as if I'd taken a leaf out of Wharton's book! And I'm fed-up."

Redwing grunted.

"What's the good?" demanded the Bounder savagely. "I'm a dog with a bad name! Whatever I do, the beaks are down on me! I had the biggest whopping of the term yesterday, and for what? Because I took a short cut——"

"You jolly well know——"

"I jolly well know that if any other fellow in the Remove had done it the Head wouldn't have laid it on like that!" said Smithy bitterly. "I've got to answer for what I did last term."

"You can't expect the Head to trust you with your record, Smithy! It takes time to live it down."

"I'm done with it, anyhow."

"You landed all those fellows in a row with your foolery," said Tom, "and though you only took a short cut across the Three Fishers, nobody in the Remove will believe that you didn't stop to speak to some outsider there. Anyhow, you knew you had to keep clear of the place. Why shouldn't you toe the line, like any other chap?"

The Bounder sneered, but did not answer. Probably Smithy's new stunt of reform was already wearing rather thin. Possibly he was half-consciously glad of an excuse for throwing it over.

There was no doubt that he was in a bitter and resentful mood, and that his licking in the Head's study had, for the present, at least, turned back the new leaf he had been turning over.

"For goodness' sake," went on Tom earnestly, "have a little sense, Smithy! If you really mean to do the decent thing, Quelch will come to see it at last, and so will the Head! But——"

"But I don't!" said the Bounder coolly. "I'm fed-up! I get it in the neck whether I kick over the traces or not; and a fellow may as well have the game as the name! And you can jaw till you're black in the face—but I'm going to give Ponsonby a ring at Highcliffe and fix it up for to-night."

"You silly ass! It's simply asking for it."

"I get it whether I ask for it or not!" sneered the Bounder. "Why not ask?"

"If Quelch catches you at his phone——"

The Bounder laughed.

"I shan't risk that! I might borrow Prout's, or the Head's!"

"You may get spotted from the other end——"

Herbert Vernon-Smith laughed again.

"No fear! Pon's beak lets him use the phone just as he likes! Snobby Mobby wouldn't catch Pon out if he could help it! I wish we had a beak like Mobbs!"

"I'm jolly glad we haven't," said Redwing dryly. "Look here, Smithy, you——"

"Rats!"

Vernon-Smith put an end to the discussion by walking out of the study—leaving his chum angry and worried. Little enough the Bounder, in his present mood, cared about that. On the lower staircase he encountered Billy Bunter, and stopped to speak. Bunter, who had time to mind everybody's

business but his own, was a usual source of information.

"Know whether the Head's in his study, Bunter?"

"Quelch's!" answered Bunter, who knew, as usual. "I saw him go there—that old bargee Major Cherry has been here——"

Smithy did not stop to hear any more of Bunter's news. If the Head had gone to see Mr. Quelch in his study, that was good enough for him. He cut on and turned into Head's corridor. He walked down that corridor and tapped at the Head's study door. He had a pretext ready if the Head happened to be there. But there was no answer to the tap, and the Bounder coolly opened the door and walked in.

He shut the door after him and stepped quickly across to the Head's telephone. Probably the Bounder was the only fellow at Greyfriars School who would have ventured to borrow the Chief Beak's telephone without leave. And even the Bounder, iron-nerved as he was, was in a hurry to get through and be gone. He picked up the receiver and gave the number of Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. The thin, acid voice of that gentleman came through.

"Mr. Mobbs——" said the Bounder, making his voice husky as he spoke. He did not want Pon's Form-master to recognise it.

"Mr. Mobbs speaking——"

"Can I speak to Master Cecil Ponsonby, of your Form, sir? It is a message from his uncle."

"Oh! Certainly!" The acid voice was quite genial. Pon's uncle was a nobleman; and Mr. Mobbs adored nobleman. "I will send for him at once."

"Thank you, sir!"

The Bounder smiled. With all his nerve, he waited uneasily. If the Head came back——

But he had to take the risk of that! He had to wait only a few minutes before Ponsonby's voice came through. Mr. Mobbs, at Highcliffe, had lost no time in obliging the nephew of a nobleman!

"Hallo!"

"That you, Pon!" asked the Bounder, in his natural voice.

"Oh gum! That you, Smithy?"

"Mobbs there?"

"No fear—the old bean always leaves me alone to take a call! What's up, Smithy?"

"I shall be—to-night! Three Fishers at half-past ten! Are you on?"

"My dear man, I'll jump there with both feet! Gaddy and Monson, too. We were thinking of a little fun after lights out."

"Done, then! Ta-ta!"

The Bounder rang off. He grinned sardonically as he turned away from the telephone. In that study, the day before, Dr. Locke had caned him severely for having taken a short cut across the grounds of the Three Fishers. What would the Head have said—and done—had he known that the Bounder had used his telephone to fix up an appointment after lights out at that delectable resort? It was quite an amusing thought to the scapegrace of Greyfriars, and he grinned.

The next moment the grin was wiped off his face like chalk from a blackboard with a duster! There were steps in the corridor outside, and a murmur of voices.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed the Bounder.

He was fairly caught.

The Head was coming back—and not coming alone! And he was almost at the door.



"Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows—yaroooh!" yelled Bunter, as he sat down quite suddenly. "Yow-ow-ow! Who's that knocking a fellow over? Beast! Help me up!" Harry Wharton stooped and grasped hold of a fat ear. There was another roar. "Yaroooh! Don't pull my ear off!" roared Bunter.

The Bouncer shot a desperate glance towards the window. But there was no time.

Even as he stood there, like a trapped animal, his heart thumping, there was a touch on the doorhandle outside.

Vernon-Smith made a dive under the Head's writing-table.

It was a large table, and it concealed him, unless the Head stooped and looked under it—which he was not likely to do.

He was barely out of sight when the door opened and Dr. Locke came in, and a rustling gown followed him in—some other master. The door closed. Under the table, the Bouncer was as still as a mouse. They had come to stay, apparently—most likely it was Quelch with the Head; the Remove master often came there for a "jaw" with his chief. With all his nerve, the Bouncer turned quite cold at the thought of Quelch's gimlet-eye spotting him there. He hardly breathed.

"A fine day for the time of year, Quelch!" The Head's pleasant voice was speaking as he crossed to the window and stood looking out into the quad. So it was Quelch!

"Quite, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "almost a touch of spring already."

Dr. Locke stood looking from the window. His eyes were fixed on a man with a stocky figure and light-blue eyes, who had come in at the gates and was speaking to Gosling, the porter. A slight shade crossed the Head's kind old face.

"Is not that Mr. Kranz, Quelch?" he asked.

Mr. Quelch joined him at the window.

"That is Mr. Kranz, sir!" he assented.

"Apparently he is calling here," said the Head slowly. "I—I suppose that it is natural, as he is, I believe, staying in the neighbourhood, that he should desire to revisit his old school. But—"

The Head paused.

"After all, sir, he is an Old Boy of Greyfriars," said Mr. Quelch, "and he very kindly gave me a lift in his plane the day I came back, when the railway was blocked—"

"Oh, quite!" said the Head. "But—"

He paused again.

"It was before your time, my dear Quelch, that Franz Kranz was here—very many years ago," he said slowly.

"I understand that he is now in a very good position, and leads a respected life. One should not, I suppose, remember the faults of youth against a man, after so many years. But—"

"I have already gathered, sir, that you do not like this Old Boy," said Mr. Quelch, with a faint smile.

"Perhaps I should overcome the feeling, Quelch. But—certainly he was one of the worst boys in the school at that time."

"He was expelled?"

"No; but he had to leave," said Dr. Locke. "I should certainly have expelled him, but he was allowed to leave without a public disgrace. He was, to speak plainly, a thorough young rascal. Quelch, but so wily that he completely deceived me, and I had made him a prefect when he was in the Sixth Form. There have been reckless scapegraces here since his time, but—"

The Head little dreamed that one of them was hidden under his table at that moment, and was grinning at the remark!

"But Kranz was not merely a scapegrace—he was a rascal!" went on the Head. "The truth was discovered, and he had to go. Not only breaking bounds after lights out, and such things, but he carried on his rascalities under my very eyes, almost, making use of the vaults below the school. Other boys were led into it, and they gathered in the vaults, where smoking and gambling

went on. On one occasion suspicion was aroused, and a search was made; but Kranz and his friends escaped detection—how, is still a mystery to me; but I believe that, in rambling about the vaults, he had discovered some of the secrets of this old place—some secret passage, or cell, where he remained hidden for a time. He denied it when I questioned him afterwards, but his word was worth nothing."

"I wonder, sir, that he has the audacity to visit the school as an Old Boy, knowing what you must think of him."

"He never lacked audacity," said the Head. "But possibly—possibly he has changed—I certainly hope so! I cannot have a good opinion of him, and I would rather not see him, but—but I suppose—"

"He is coming towards the House, sir," said the Remove master. "If you would prefer me to see him—"

The Head was evidently relieved.

"I should be glad, Mr. Quelch. In fact, I have some business on hand. I have promised Mrs. Locke to give her my opinion on a new drawing-room carpet. I should really be in my house at this moment—"

"Pray leave Mr. Kranz to me then, sir," said the Remove master, with a smile. "I will tell Trotter to show him in to my study, and explain that you are engaged."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Quelch."

The two masters left the study—Mr. Quelch to head for his own, and Dr. Locke to walk down the corridor to the green baize door that led into his own house. Under the table the Bouncer almost gasped with relief. He had heard what was certainly not intended for any Greyfriars boy's ears, and he knew more about that "Old Boy" with

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the foreign name than any other Greyfriars fellow knew. But at the moment he was feeling quite grateful towards the one-time blackguard of Greyfriars. The Bounder was not likely to condemn very heartily a man whose tastes at school had been so like his own. And the arrival of Franz Kranz at that particular time had saved him from his predicament. He had no doubt that the two masters had come to the study for a "jaw," and that it was the unwelcome sight of Franz Kranz that had caused the Head to remember that important matter of the drawing-room carpet!

The Bounder grinned as he emerged from his hiding-place.

He gave a glance from the window, and glimpsed the stocky figure and hard-featured, clean-shaven face of Franz Kranz.

"Thanks, old bean!" murmured the Bounder, with a cheery nod towards the stocky figure as it passed.

Then he cut across to the door, opened it, and peered out. The two masters were gone—the coast was clear. Vernon-Smith lost no time in getting away, and he was grinning cheerily when he came back to the Remove passage. The Bounder's luck, which was a proverb in the Remove, had seen him through once more.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

After Lights Out!

HARRY WHARTON awoke suddenly. His eyes opened in the darkness of the Remove dormitory, and he blinked round him sleepily.

There was a murmur of voices, speaking in low tones, though it was long past "lights out." From farther along the dormitory came the deep snore of Billy Bunter.

"You silly fool, Smithy!"

It was Tom Redwing's voice, in an angry whisper.

Wharton sat up, knitting his brows.

Dim wintry starlight fell in at the high windows. Dimly he made out a figure standing by Vernon-Smith's bed. Redwing, in the next, was sitting up, and the captain of the Remove had a glimpse of his face.

"You're going, then?"

"Didn't I tell you so?" sneered the Bounder.

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, think a bit!" said Redwing. "After what happened yesterday—"

"That's why!"

"If you're missed—"

"Do you think Quelch will come rooting up here?"

"I shouldn't wonder. I know he's got an eye on you."

"Well, if you think that, you can fix up a dummy in my bed after I'm gone!" jeered the Bounder. "I haven't time, or I shall be late meeting Pon & Co. where I'm going."

"Look here—"

"No good talkin', Reddy. Do you think I'd let Pon fancy that I'd got funky and chucked it? Go to sleep."

"You silly ass!" broke in Harry Wharton.

The Bounder started, and spun round towards him.

"Oh, you're awake, are you?" he said.

"Yes!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "And I've a jolly good mind to turn out and jam you back into your bed again, you shady sweep!"

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Vernon-Smith laughed.

"You can try it on, if you like, Wharton! I'd as soon give you a thick ear as not."

"You cheeky rotter—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Who's that jawing?" came Peter Todd's sleepy voice. "Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

"What's on?" came a yawn from Bolsover major.

"Oh, my hat! The whole happy family wakin' up!" said the Bounder. "Are you turnin' out to see me off?"

"Breakin' bounds, Smithy?" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "Good gad, you're the man to ask for it! Didn't the Head give you enough yesterday?"

"Too much!" answered the Bounder. "Like to come on a little run, Mauly? I'd be glad of your company."

"Thanks, no!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Too jolly excitin' for me. If you take my advice, you'll turn in, old bean."

"That's good advice, Mauly—and I never take good advice! Try me with

BALHAM BAGS A BONZA POCKET WALLET!

Here's a Greyfriars limerick which has been sent in by: F. Tagg, of 6, Lammermoor Road, Balham, S.W.12, who is now the owner of one of our topping leather pocket wallets:

Horace Coker was standing a
spread,
And fat Bunter by instinct was led
To the scene of the treat
But was knocked off his feet
And kicked back to his study half-
dead!

There's a chance for all of
you to win one of these useful
prizes. Address your efforts to:
"Limericks and Jokes" Editor,
c/o the MAGNET, 5, Carmelite
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bad, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"Look here, Smithy—" began Wharton.

"Oh, shut up!"

The Bounder had finished dressing. He slipped away to the door, and it was heard to open and shut softly. The scapegrace of Greyfriars was gone.

"Silly ass!" remarked Peter Todd.

"Silly sweep!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The sweepfulness of the esteemed Smithy is terrific and execrable," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Quite a number of the Remove fellows were awake now.

"It's the jolly old sack for him if he's spotted," said Bolsover major. "But Smithy's always getting near it, and he never goes over the edge. Silly ass, all the same."

There was a sound of some fellow turning out of bed.

It was Tom Redwing.

Tom was so angry with his chum that he could have punched his head hard. At the same time, he was very anxious for him not to get "landed." With his usual recklessness, the Bounder had left his bed with the bedclothes turned back, and had any suspicious "beak" or prefect glanced in, turning on the light, a single glance would have revealed his absence. Tom Redwing proceeded to make a "dummy" in the bed with the bolster and a rug and a

coat, and covered it up, to give the bed the appearance of containing a sleeper like the rest.

"The silly sweep's not worth the trouble, Reddy!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"He's my pal, old chap!" said Tom quietly.

He went back to bed, and the juniors settled down to sleep again. But it was not easy for Redwing to sleep. That kink of blackguardism in his chum worried and distressed him, and still more keenly he felt the danger that Smithy was so carelessly incurring.

Any fellow breaking out at night was liable to the "sack"—and for the Bounder, above all, there would be no mercy.

Tom was half-asleep, more than an hour later, when the dormitory door quietly opened. He was broad awake on the instant.

A light flashed into the long, dark room.

Redwing's heart beat fast.

He knew that it was a beak—undoubtedly Mr. Quelch. If he suspected that the Bounder was gone, the dummy in Smithy's bed would not prevent discovery. If it was only a cursory inspection, Redwing's precaution would be effectual. Tom made no sound or movement, but his heart was beating very painfully.

"Anyone missing, sir?" He heard the voice of Wingate of the Sixth in low tones from outside the door.

"Apparently not." Mr. Quelch, holding up the lamp, was glancing up and down the dormitory. "All my boys are here, Wingate."

Mr. Quelch had not switched on the light. He did not wish to disturb the juniors at that hour—nearly half-past eleven. From where he stood he could scan all the beds in the dormitory.

"Then it's all right, sir!" said Wingate.

"Quite—I am glad to say!"

The light disappeared, and the door closed again.

Redwing panted with relief.

"Close shave for that silly ass!" came a whispering voice from Wharton's bed, and Redwing started.

"Oh, you heard—"

"Yes! Something's set the beaks on the prowl," said Harry. "Luckily, they don't suspect Smithy specially—or Quelch would have come in!"

"Thank goodness he didn't!" breathed Tom. "I wonder what's set them on the go?"

"Other sweeps here as well as Smithy—Loder of the Sixth, perhaps, or Hilton of the Fifth—up to something. Smithy's safe this time—he's always in luck."

Wharton laid his head on his pillow again. Redwing, relieved in his mind, was able to sleep at last.

But he would not have slept so peacefully had he been able to hear what Mr. Quelch and the head prefect were saying as they went down the stairs.

"I thought I'd better mention the matter, sir—"

"Quite so, Wingate!"

"It's very odd that the lobby window was unfastened. Still, I dare say it was left so by accident."

"You have secured it, Wingate?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt the window was left unfastened by chance, as you say; but, on the other hand, if any Greyfriars boy of any form should be out of bounds he will be unable to enter the House when he returns now, and his discovery will be a certainty. We can leave it at that. I am

very glad that, at all events, it cannot be a boy in my Form."

"Then I shall go to bed, sir."

"Quite so! Good-night, Wingate!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Tom Redwing certainly would not have fallen so easily asleep had he been aware that the window by which Smithy had left the House, and which he had left unfastened for his return, was now looked on the inside. There was a startling surprise awaiting the Bounder when he came back.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH caught his breath.

For a moment his heart stood still.

His face paled in the glimmer of the stars.

Midnight had tolled out from the clock tower. All Greyfriars School was dark and silent. The latest light had long been turned out. Not a glimmer came from any of the many windows.

That suited the Bounder; he did not want anyone to be up when he came prowling home after midnight from his forbidden excursion. But—

The little window in the lobby at the end of the Sixth Form passage was fast! Carefully the Bounder had closed it after him when he got out—leaving the catch, of course, unfastened inside. Now it was fastened. At first he had fancied—or hoped—that the window might have jammed. But he knew that it was not so. It was fastened on the inside, and he was shut out.

Shut out—at midnight!

He stood very still, staring at the shut window. The catch was not one that could possibly be opened from outside. He knew that. He was shut out till morning, unless he could find some other way in. And he knew how unlikely that was.

"Fool!" whispered the Bounder.

He had "asked for it" often enough. Now he had asked for it once too often! He stepped back and glanced along the many-windowed facade of the great building. There was not a single light. He had not been missed yet; if Quelch knew that he was out, Quelch would sit up for his return. Some over-dutiful prefect or master, making his rounds late, had found that window unfastened and secured it, not knowing that a Greyfriars fellow was out—or, at all events, knowing that if a fellow was out, he could not now get in.

He could only gain admission by knocking at the door. The Bounder grinned a sour, mocking grin at that thought. He could picture Quelch's face if he was knocked up in the middle of the night to admit a member of his Form who had been out on the "razzle." But the alternative was to wait till morning—and inevitable discovery then.

For some minutes the Bounder stood there. He had not been missed, he was sure of that; there would have been a light in Quelch's window. Had Quelch missed a member of his Form, certainly he would not have gone to bed, leaving him out of doors. It was not so bad as that yet. If he could find a way into the House—

Vernon-Smith knew that the game was up at long last. But he was not the fellow to give in so long as there was the ghost of a chance.

He crept round the House, and up over the leads to the Remove box-room window. Sometimes that window was used by breakers of bounds; Smithy had

used it himself sometimes. If, by happy chance, some other "giddy goat" was out, and had left that window unfastened—

But it was too much to hope for. He tried the window and found it fast. With an angry grunt, the Bounder slipped back to the ground again.

For the next half-hour he was busy—rooting about the building, in the desperate hope of discovering some door or window unsecured. There was nothing in it, and he knew it, but he would not leave a chance untried.

He stopped at last, standing in the shadow of a wall, and put in some hard thinking. There was no way in—and the game was up. It was a cold, clear, bitter winter's night, and it was useless to stay out in the cold till morning. Discovery, and expulsion to follow, were certain now, and he might as well make up his mind to it.

The thought of his father came into his mind, and gave him a sickness at his heart. His father, over-indulgent in many ways, had been alarmed by his last narrow escape of the sack, and had warned him to be careful that term. This was how he had heeded the warning! His father would never forgive him if he was sent home in disgrace. He had told him so—and he was a man of his word. The Bounder gritted his teeth. He was not sacked yet—and he was not going to be if he could help it! Somehow—

He started as a strange thought flashed into his mind. The tunnel from the old priory in Friardale Wood—

"By gum!" breathed the Bounder.

There had been a lot of talk lately about the school vaults, owing to the strange adventure of Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co there. Billy Bunter, with a fatuous scheme for playing a trick on his Form-master, had bagged the key of the vaults and gone down, intending to find his way to the panel in the oak walls of Quelch's study, and "squirt" Quelch as he sat there. That scheme, like most of Bunter's schemes, had not come off; and the Bounder, like the rest of the Remove, had roared over it. But now the recollection came back into his mind, like a gleam of light where all was dark.

Any fellow who had the nerve to negotiate a long underground passage could get into the school vaults. The door of the vaults was kept locked, the key in Quelch's study. But that panel in that very study. Everybody knew it was there; lots of fellows had seen it. But could a fellow open it? Could a fellow even find it?

Even to the Bounder, desperate as he now was, it seemed a desperate resource. But the alternative was to stand before the headmaster and hear the sentence of expulsion, and then travel home to face an angry and exasperated father. Mr. Vernon-Smith had told him coldly and coolly that if he was expelled from Greyfriars he would disinherit him. That was what the Bounder was risking by his reckless folly. Any chance—

His mind was soon made up.

He was outside the school walls in a few minutes and going down Friardale Lane at a trot.

He turned from the lane at the foot-path through the wood, still keeping on the trot.

From the foot-path he turned among the trees, and headed for the old priory ruins.

The silence, the solitude, of the frosty wood at midnight, had no effect on the iron nerves of the Bounder. He was only too glad that no one was likely to be about to see him.

He reached the old ruins at last, dim masses of moss-grown masonry in the glimmer of the wintry starlight. He picked his way through broken walls and cracked flagstones and brambles heaped with snow, to the arched opening where the entrance to the priory vaults lay.

He knew the way well enough, and he was soon under the arch, and flashing on the light of his pocket-torch to pick out the stone that covered the top of the steps leading downward.

It was a large and heavy flagstone, with a rusty iron ring set in it. From below only a strong man could have lifted it. Even from above, grasping the ring, strength was needed to shift the stone.

Setting down the torch, the Bounder grasped the iron ring with both hands, and tugged, exerting all his strength. The perspiration poured down his face, cold as it was; but the heavy stone moved at last and tilted up on its side.

He sat on it, panting for a few minutes, to recover his strength and his breath.

Then, taking up his torch, he stepped through into the cavity, and descended the narrow stone steps.

The stone was left open—he could hardly have closed it, neither did he think of doing so. If he failed to get into Greyfriars by that underground route, he had to return.

Light in hand, the Bounder hurried along the series of vaults, and reached the opening of the tunnel that led to the school.

For more than half a mile that stone-walled, dark, dank passage ran, under the earth, black as midnight, the air heavy, the walls crawling with damp. It had been boarded up where the Bounder stood; but some of the boards were missing, and he stepped through and started along the tunnel.

His torch was a tiny one, made to be carried in the waistcoat pocket; but it gave enough light for his purpose. The tiny beam flickered on the damp flags as he went and crawling things scuttled out of his way. Nothing of that kind affected the Bounder's nerves in the least. He was only worried by the doubt whether, at the end of his dismal journey, he would be able to find that panel in Mr. Quelch's study wall, or to open it if he found it!

Steadily he tramped on.

He reached the end of the tunnel at last, and stepped into a vault—one of the many vaults that honeycombed the earth under what had been, in ancient days, the monastery of Grey Friars. He knew his way well enough—he had been in the vaults many times. From where he stood his way lay through an extensive series of vaults, from many of which passages and tunnels opened, leading no one knew where.

One of the passages if he could find

(Continued on next page.)

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it, led to the spiral stair in the thickness of the ancient stone wall, behind the oak wainscot of Mr. Quelch's study. He was going to find it, if he could.

Suddenly he stopped and instantly shut off his light. For from the darkness came a flash of another light, and the Bouncer, with a startled thrill at his heart, realised that he was not alone in the dim, shadowy vaults under Greyfriars School!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Exit!

"**W**HAT the thump—" breathed the Bouncer inaudibly.

He was utterly amazed.

It was one o'clock in the morning, and there was someone with a light in the school vaults! What—who—could it be?

He stood still, his heart beating, watching. Whoever it was, could have no right there—could have no good object. Was it some midnight thief seeking a surreptitious entrance into the building for purposes of robbery? The Bouncer realised very clearly that it might be dangerous for him to be seen there by the unknown with the light. And he wondered, with a thumping heart, whether his own light had been seen before he so swiftly shut it off.

But it seemed not. His own pocket-torch gave a tiny beam hardly penetrating the darkness. It was a much more powerful light that he could see, moving at a distance.

He waited, standing quite still, watching like a cat, and wondering. Who and what could it be?

Back into his mind came the strange adventure of Harry Wharton & Co. a few days since. They had come on a man rooting about the vaults, in the afternoon—a man they had recognised as the kidnapper of their chum. Could it be the same man again?

Having been spotted by the school-boys in the daytime there, had he left his next visit till midnight, when it was certain that nobody belonging to the school would be on the spot?

Likely enough—if he had any object in visiting the vaults. But what object could he possibly have?

Still, it was certain that someone was there, the kidnapper or not; and the Bouncer almost forgot his own position in his curiosity.

The light had emerged into the vault from a stone-walled passage, crossing the Bouncer's line of vision. But now it turned in his direction.

For a second he believed that he had been discovered! But swiftly came the realisation that the strange man's path lay past the spot where he stood—he was making for the outlet in the old priory.

Cloaked in darkness, Smithy was safe enough—until the moving light came close! And he did not wait for it to fall on him.

Silently, taking the greatest care to make no sound he groped away in the darkness, till he was crouching behind the buttress of the vault. That was all the cover that was available.

The man, if he came on would pass within ten or twelve feet of him, and if he looked round and turned the light on the Bouncer he was certain to see him. But, unless he suspected that someone was there there was no reason why he should do so. So far, at all events, he was not glancing round—he

came on steadily, holding the light before him.

The Bouncer almost held his breath as the footsteps came to his ears, closer and closer.

Behind the light he could see only a moving shadow—and as the man came nearer he did not venture to look at all, lest the beam of the lamp should fall upon his face and betray him.

But, crouching back in the deepest extremity of the buttress, he knew that he would see the man as he passed—his profile, at least—and his eyes were watchful.

If it was the kidnapper he would know him. For there was little or no doubt that the kidnapper was the same man who had attacked Major Cherry in the train, when Smithy had chipped in and helped; the description was the same—a bearded man, with a jutting nose. On the day of the kidnapping Smithy had had only a distant and cursory glimpse of the man from the sky, but in the train he had seen him closely enough—he would know him again.

He held his breath, as the man carrying the light came through the arched opening from the next vault.

Obviously, he did not suspect that anyone was there, for he looked neither to the right nor to the left.

He passed about ten feet from the junior crouching by the buttress, and his own light was on his face.

The Bouncer's heart throbbed.

OVERSEAS READERS PLEASE NOTE!

Readers living overseas and in the Irish Free State will appreciate the difficulties of supplying them with gifts of toffee. But in this issue an alternative gift scheme has been arranged for their benefit.

It was a bearded face, with a jutting nose, and glasses under a peaked cap. It was the man of the train—the kidnapper of Bob Cherry!

The beard was false, he knew that—Major Cherry had snatched a false beard from the man in the train, in the struggle. Some unknown identity was hidden under that disguise.

The figure passed on, heading down the vaults towards the tunnel by which the Bouncer had come.

Once more the Bouncer's luck had stood him in good stead. Ten minutes earlier the man with the jutting nose would have met him in the narrow tunnel, where there was no chance of escaping observation.

What might have happened then Smithy did not like to think!

The footsteps died away; the light became a pinpoint in the vista of vaults; it vanished down the dark tunnel.

Vernon-Smith breathed more freely.

The man was gone.

He whistled softly under his breath.

The man was gone—by the tunnel! That meant that he would emerge into the old priory—closing the stone after him!

From below Smithy could never raise it, and that meant that his retreat was cut off now! He could not go back the way he had come, it he failed to get into the school from the vaults! It was neck or nothing now!

For several long minutes the Bouncer

waited, in unbroken darkness, till he was sure that the unknown was at a safe distance, and gone for good. Then he turned on his tiny beam of light, and resumed his way.

He passed the end of the stone passage from which the man with the light had emerged. Anxious as he was to get away, he was intensely curious to discover, if he could, what the unknown man had been there for; and he turned into the passage to explore it.

But there was nothing to discover.

It was a "blind alley," the passage ending in a wall of solid stone. The Bouncer scanned the solid walls, with puckered brows and puzzled eyes. There was no way onward, and it was an utter mystery why the man, or any man, should have been there at all.

He retraced his steps, and returned to the vaults. Later on, there would be plenty of time to think the matter out—and make further investigation. That he had already resolved to do. But at present, what he had to think of was finding that panel into Quelch's study, and getting back to the Remove dormitory.

He reached the steps that led up into the school, but did not mount them. He knew that the massive door at the top was kept locked. There was no hope of escape that way.

He had to find the spiral stair in the thick old wall that led up to Quelch's study. Like many other fellows, he had gone down to see it, when it had been discovered a long time since. It was not easy to find it again; but the Bouncer was cool and determined, and he picked his way steadily by vaults and passages, till at length he found what he sought. With a feeling of deep relief he clambered up the almost endless steps, winding round and round the spiral.

The blackness was like pitch; the little beam from his torch hardly seemed to pierce it. He was tired, sleepy, utterly weary. But he climbed on and on, till at length he stood at the top of the spiral stair. It ended in a stone wall, and in the stone was a large gap, where one of the blocks had either been left out of the construction, or moved afterwards. He darted the light into the gap, and his fingers groped over ancient oak that covered it.

"Good luck!" breathed the Bouncer, in intense relief.

He knew that he had found what he wanted—this was the secret panel, and on the other side was Mr. Quelch's study. Eagerly he groped over it for the spring that opened it. He found it, and pressed; but the panel did not move.

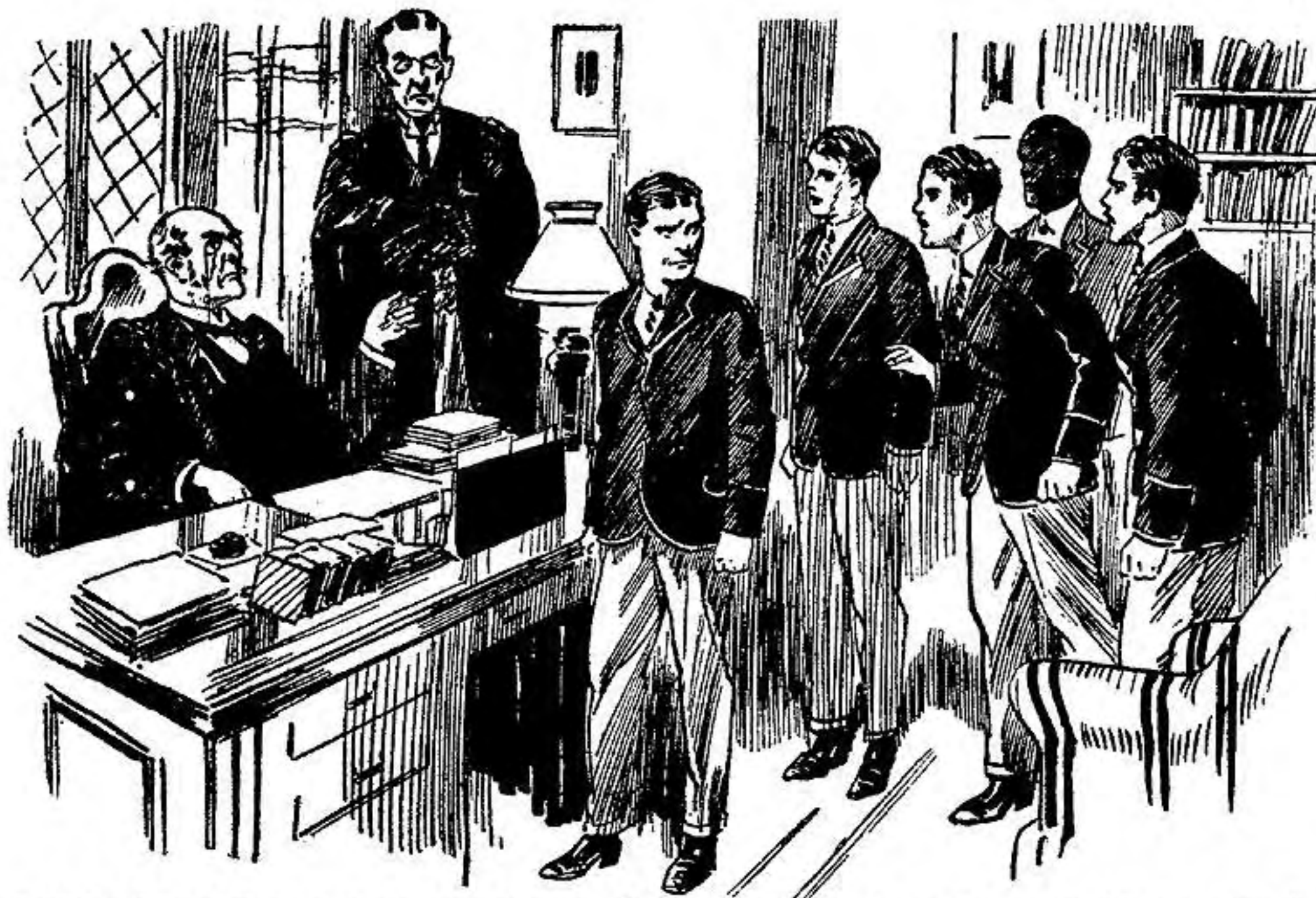
His heart jumped.

Was the rusty old spring out of order? Or—slowly it dawned on him—the panel had been screwed secure.

Now that he knew, he wondered that he had not surmised as much before. Obviously enough—now that he thought of it—Mr. Quelch was not likely to have left that secret way into his study unsecured. Probably it had been screwed down within a day or two of its discovery. Anyhow, it was fast now—as safe and strong as the stone wall round it.

Herbert Vernon-Smith desisted at last. He knew that he could not move the panel. He had found the way in—but there was no entrance! He was no better off than when he had stood outside the window of the Sixth Form lobby. His retreat was cut off, if he had thought of retracing the weary way to the old priory in the wood. But he did not think of that—it was futile!

There was no way into Greyfriars! The game was up! With a black, bitter



"Mr. Quelch," said the Head, "why have these boys of your Form come here? Are they concerned in this matter?"
 "We've something to say," said Wharton. "We were with Vernon-Smith this afternoon, sir. We had an idea that we might see something of that villain who kidnapped Bob Cherry. Vernon-Smith took a short cut across the Three Fishers grounds to get back for call-over, sir."

brow, the Bounder realised that the game was up—hopelessly up; that he could do nothing—nothing but wait till the school awakened in the morning, and then knock on the door of the vaults to be let out.

And that was the finish!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who Knocks?

"IMPOSSIBLE!" said Mr. Prout.

"Absurd!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Ridiculous!" said Mr. Capper.

"You can 'ear it all over the 'ouse, sir!" said Trotter.

"Imagination!" said Mr. Prout.

The three masters were walking in the quad before prayers. Trotter, the House page, came up with an astonished and alarmed expression on his face, and surprising news.

"But Mary and Jane and me all 'eard it, sir," said Trotter, "and it's going on now, sir! Knocking like anything!"

"How could anyone be in the vaults?" said Prout, the master of the Fifth.

"The key is in your keeping, Quelch?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Quelch.

"If the bloke 'ad the key, sir, he wouldn't be knocking!" suggested Trotter.

"Absurd!" said Prout.

"Perhaps we had better go and ascertain," said Quelch.

"You'll soon 'ear it, sir!" said Trotter.

Certainly it seemed impossible to the Greyfriars masters that anyone could be in the school vaults, knocking on the door to be let out.

Still, as Trotter positively stated that several pairs of ears had heard the knocking, obviously the matter had to be investigated.

The rising-bell had ceased to clang, but all the fellows were not down from the dormitories yet. Many of them were not likely to appear till the chapel bell began to ring.

But some were down—among them, some of the Remove. Tom Redwing had a pale and troubled face. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very serious. The Remove had awakened that morning to find Vernon-Smith's bed occupied only by the dummy Redwing had placed in it. The Bounder had not returned—evidently he had had a night out.

The fellows knew, of course, that even the reckless Bounder could not have intended that. They knew that he must have been shut out, and they could picture him prowling round the buildings in the hours of darkness, seeking an entrance, and not finding one. All the Remove knew that it was the finish for Smithy—his phenomenal run of luck had failed him at last!

The sound of the knocking, from the corridor that led to the oaken door of the vaults, was audible as soon as the three masters entered the House. It was faint in the distance, but unmistakable.

Some of the juniors were listening to it. They had ascertained that the sound came from the direction of the vaults; but it did not occur to them, for the moment, that it might be caused by the missing Bounder.

"Dear me," said Prout, "I can certainly hear something."

"It certainly seems to proceed from the direction of the vaults!" remarked Mr. Capper.

"It is very extraordinary," said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, kindly go to my study and fetch the large iron key on the rack behind my desk."

"Yes, sir!"

The captain of the Remove hurried away, and returned with the key to the vaults. Taking it, Mr. Quelch whisked into the corridor, followed by Prout and Capper. Two or three Sixth Form prefects followed them, and behind came some of the juniors, curious to see what was up.

Knock, knock, knock!

The sound was clear and distinct enough now. Obviously someone was on the stair that led down to the vaults, and he was knocking on the other side of the massive, oaken, iron-barred door.

Mr. Quelch inserted the long iron key into the massive, ancient lock. Prout touched him on the arm.

"One moment, my dear Quelch! We do not know who may be there—some extraneous person undoubtedly. Let us be on our guard—"

"Some tramp, perhaps," suggested Mr. Capper. "Obviously it cannot be any person belonging to the school. Some ruffian, perhaps, who has entered the vaults for some purpose of robbery, and cannot find the way out."

"It is possible!" assented the Remove master.

Knock, knock, knock, knock!

"Wingate, Gwynne, Loder, Walker, Sykes—kindly stand here," said Mr. Quelch. Five big Sixth Form men stood ready to deal with the unknown person in the vaults, when the door was opened, if he required dealing with.

Then Mr. Quelch turned back the creaking key.

The door opened.

Every eye was fixed on the figure that emerged. And it was difficult for the owners of those eyes to believe their evidence.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

For the figure that emerged was that of Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove!

He was pale with cold, grimy from the vaults, but quite cool. Indeed, in spite of what he knew must follow, it was like the Bounder to enjoy the extraordinary sensation caused by his unexpected appearance.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him as if he had been the ghost of a Removite.

"Vernon-Smith!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir!" said Smithy.

"A—a—a Greyfriars boy!" stuttered Mr. Prout. "A—a—a boy of your Form, Quelch! A—a—a Remove boy!"

"Amazing!" said Mr. Capper.

"Is—is—is that Vernon-Smith?" stammered Wingate of the Sixth. "My hat! It's Vernon-Smith!"

"But the door was locked!" said Mr. Prout, in bewilderment. "How did this boy get into the vaults when the door was locked?"

"Amazing!" repeated Mr. Capper.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on the Bounder. Never had those gimlet eyes gleamed so like cold steel.

Quelch was quicker on the uptake than Prout or Capper. Also, he knew the Bounder. It did not take him many moments to realise what this meant.

"Vernon-Smith, you entered the school vaults from some spot outside the walls of Greyfriars!" he said, in a voice like a very sharp knife.

It was not much use to deny it.

"Yes, sir," said Smithy quietly.

"You did so, no doubt, hoping to find some way into the school from the vaults?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were absent from your dormitory last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was you that left unfastened the window in the Sixth Form lobby, which Wingate found and secured?"

The Bounder's eyes for an instant glittered at the captain of Greyfriars. But he answered quietly:

"Yes, sir."

"You found yourself shut out of the school, and attempted to enter by way of the vaults?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad, Vernon-Smith, that you are frank, though certainly your usual resource of falsehood would not serve you in this instance," said the Remove master, in icy, cutting tones. "You are aware, of course, that you will be expelled from Greyfriars as soon as this matter is placed before your headmaster."

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder, as quietly as before.

"For the present," said Mr. Quelch, "you may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the Bounder went.

"Smithy," almost groaned Redwing, as his chum passed him—"Smithy, old chap, what—what are you going to do now?"

"Get a hot bath," answered the

Bounder coolly. "I can tell you I need one. Sticky sort of show, those old vaults."

And he walked on, whistling.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

For It!

"I SAY, you fellows! Smithy's for it this time!"

Billy Bunter stated that opinion, from which there were no dissentients.

Every man in the Remove knew that Smithy was "for it" this time.

"A night out!" said Skinner, with a whistle. "It's the limit, even for the jolly old Bounder."

"He never meant to stay out, fat-head!" said Frank Nugent. "He was shut out."

"But he did!" said Skinner.

"Fancy walking right into Quelch's claws like that!" said Bolsover major.

"What the dickens did he mooch into the vaults at all for?"

"I say, you fellows, if he'd had any sense, he'd have got in through that panel in Quelch's study," remarked Billy Bunter. "That's where I was going to squirt Quelch, you know."

"I fancy that was what he was thinking of," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose he found it wouldn't open."

"What a sell!" grinned Skinner.

"Poor old Smithy!" said Peter Todd. "He's a frightful sweep, I suppose; but I'm sorry he's got to go."

"The sorrowfulness is terrific!"

"Well, nobody can say that he hasn't asked for it often enough," said Skinner.

"A night out—only the day after he was whopped for barging into the Three Fishers!"

"He was really only taking a short cut that time," said Harry.

Skinner winked.

"Perhaps the beak believed that," he remarked. "Perhaps he'll believe that Smithy was taking a short cut through the vaults last night?"

Some of the juniors grinned.

"Well, it's not a laughing matter," said Squiff. "It's the long jump for Smithy. But why didn't he go out again the way he came in, when he found that he couldn't get into the House? Must have been pretty rotten waiting for morning in the vaults."

"Yes, that's odd," said Harry. "He must have got in by way of that tunnel from the old priory. He could have got out again, I suppose."

"I say, you fellows, there's the brekker bell! I wonder if they'll let Smithy have any brekker?"

"Poor old Reddy's taking it badly," murmured Nugent, as the juniors went towards the House at the sound of the bell.

Wharton glanced at Redwing. His face was pale and troubled. There was no doubt that he was feeling deeply his chum's utter disaster.

"Where's Smithy now?" asked Johnny Bull.

"My hat! There he is!" exclaimed Wharton.

The Bounder, cool as ever, whatever his inward feelings were like, joined the Removites as they went in to breakfast. He had bathed and changed, and looked his usual well-dressed and natty self. His manner, certainly, was not that of a fellow over whom the shadow of the "sack" impended. Yet no one knew better than Smithy that he had thrown away his last chance. His luck had always been wonderful, but it could not save him now. But his cool self-possession did not surprise the Re-

movites. The Bounder was the fellow to take what was coming to him without flinching. When he went he would go with a stiff upper lip.

He was allowed to take his place with the Form for breakfast. Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table, took absolutely no notice of him. But for the rest he was the cynosure of all eyes.

Everybody knew that he was going before the Head presently to be "sacked." There was not the slightest doubt on that point.

It was very rarely that a fellow was expelled from Greyfriars. The expulsion of the Bounder was going to be the sensation of the term.

Even the prefects at the high table looked round curiously at Smithy. Fifth Form fellows stared at him. The Shell and the Fourth stared at him. Fags of the Third and Second continually turned their heads to gaze at him. If Smithy wanted the limelight, he had it now.

He ate his breakfast with a good appetite.

Redwing, at his side, was silent, pale, worried, miserable. On their looks any one might have supposed that it was Redwing who was going up before the beak to get the "chopper."

After breakfast Mr. Quelch appeared to become suddenly aware of the Bounder's existence.

"Vernon-Smith!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir."

"You will now go and pack your box. When the bell rings for first school, you will go to Dr. Locke's study."

"Very well, sir."

Some of the fellows rather expected Smithy to "cheek" Quelch, now that all hope was gone, and he was going to be turned out.

Rather to their surprise, and perhaps to Mr. Quelch's, his manner to his Form-master was perfectly respectful.

Did he think that there was still a chance for him, some of the juniors wondered. Everybody knew that there was none.

Quiet and calm the Bounder went out with the Remove.

"I'll help you pack, Smithy," said Redwing, in a low voice.

"No hurry, old bean."

"Quelch said—"

"Dear old Quelch!" murmured the Bounder. "He's not wastin' any time, is he? I'm to pack my box, even before I'm sacked. Looks as if Quelch thinks he's backin' a winner."

"Of course, he's seen the Head already, and knows—"

"I say, Smithy!" Billy Bunter rolled up, blinking at the Bounder through his big spectacles. "I say, old chap, awfully sorry you're sacked, and all that. But I say, look here! You won't have time for a leaving sale! He, he, he! But can I have your study armchair?"

"What-a-at!"

"Well, it's a decent chair, and Toddy makes out that the one in Study No. 7 is his, you know, because he bought it," said Bunter. "I'll give you anything you like to ask, old chap, in the circumstances. That is, I'll send it on. I happen to be short of cash just at the moment."

"You fat Owl, buzz off!" growled Redwing.

"You shut up, Redwing; I'm talking to Smithy! I say, old chap, I'm expecting a postal order shortly, and, as you're sacked—"

"Kick him, Reddy!"

"Yaroooh!" Bunter beat a prompt retreat. "Yah! Beast! Jolly glad you're sacked, and I jolly well wish Redwing was sacked, too! Yah!"

And with that cheery valediction the Owl of the Remove disappeared.

The Bounder laughed, and walked into the quad with his hands in his pockets. Harry Wharton came up.

"Awfully sorry, Smithy!" he said.

"Thanks! Pity you didn't jam me back into my bed last night, after all—what?" grinned the Bounder.

"Sorry, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull. "You've jolly well begged for it, but I'm sorry you've got it."

"The sorrowfulness is preposterous, my esteemed and absurd Smithy," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"My hat! I seem to be gettin' quite popular now I'm supposed to be goin'," remarked the Bounder.

"Supposed!" repeated Wharton.

"Well, I'm not gone yet!"

And the Bounder walked on with Redwing, leaving the chums of the Remove staring. Tom gave his chum a look.

"You don't think there's a chance yet, Smithy?" he asked.

Smithy's face became very grave.

"There's a ghost of a chance, Tom!" he said. "Just the grisly spectre of one."

"I—I hope so!" Redwing looked very doubtful. "I can't see—you see, old chap, you're fairly caught this time and—"

"I know that! But—"

"But what?" asked Redwing, perplexed.

"Bob Cherry hasn't been found yet!"

Redwing almost jumped. Much as he liked Bob Cherry, and deeply concerned as he felt about the junior who had vanished from school, he had quite forgotten Bob for the moment, in the disaster that had fallen on his own chum. And he could not begin to guess what connection there could be, between the kidnapped schoolboy and the Bounder's disaster.

"Bob Cherry!" he repeated blankly.

"Exactly!"

"I know he hasn't been found! But what—"

"Suppose I found him?"

"Suppose you found him!" repeated

Redwing, like a fellow in a dream.

"Are you wandering in your mind, Smithy? How could you find a fellow who was carried off in an aeroplane, and may be hundreds, or thousands, of miles away? Smithy—"

"Suppose I found him!" repeated the Bounder. "Don't you think that would be a sort of makeweight? Could the Head sack a man who solved the jolly old mystery that's worrying him and turnin' his hair grey, and who restored the missin' man to the arms of his sorrowin' parents? What?"

"I—I—I dare say not! No! I—I suppose he couldn't! I don't know!"

(Continued on next page.)



Each week our Soccer expert, "Linesman," is "on parade" ready to dispose of perplexing problems sent in by MAGNET readers. Write to him, c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and watch for his reply in this weekly feature.

FAR TOO RISKY!

FROM time to time in this game of football we get surprises, and sometimes we are wrong in jumping to conclusions. I have to start with that sort of text this week because of a letter I have received from a London reader. He attended a League match, so he says, on the ground of a certain club not long ago, and as all boys like to do, he bought a programme.

It so happened that this particular club was playing a Cup-tie away from home the following Saturday, and included in the programme was a paragraph giving all the details of the arrangements for a replay if necessary—the date, the time of kick-off, and the arrangements for the purchase of tickets, etc. Now it so happened that the particular Cup-tie to which reference was made was drawn, and the arrangements for the replay were duly carried out.

This combination of circumstances made my friend suspicious and tempted him to jump to conclusions. "How did the club know," he asks, "that the Cup-tie would be drawn?"

The answer is a very simple one. The club did not know that the Cup-tie would be drawn, and it was just a coincidence that it was so. The arrangements made for a replay were just in case.

I know that some people are suspicious when they see a Cup-tie between two teams which don't look equal and in a drawn game. They seem to think that the draw was arranged in order that more money could be divided between the clubs as the result of the replay. I can assure these people—and also my suspicious correspondent—that these drawn Cup-ties are not arranged. The proceeding is far too risky. Let us suppose—and it is only a supposition—that the officials of the two clubs, plus the players, agreed to play a drawn Cup-tie. Everybody is supposed to be in the arrangement. The game is coming to an end, and the scores

are level. Suddenly a member of one side breaks through and scores a goal which gives his team the victory. There could be no complaints from anybody about his doing that, because everybody concerned would be afraid to admit that they had been parties to an arranged draw.

No; every Cup-tie is an honest to goodness struggle for the mastery. The professional player does not want to take two bites at a cherry if one will suffice, especially as a drawn Cup-tie merely means an additional mid-week game for which he gets nothing extra.

WORKING OUT GOAL AVERAGES!

ANOTHER correspondent notes that occasionally a professional footballer is suspended for a period, and he wants to know exactly what this suspension means to the player. In theory, at any rate, it is a serious matter for a footballer to be suspended by the authorities, because he is not allowed to receive from his club during the term of suspension any wages at all.

By way of example, here is a player in receipt of eight pounds per week from his club. He is suspended for a month. Such a suspension means that he is really fined thirty-two pounds—that is eight pounds per week for four weeks.

I have said that the fine is theoretical, because it is the custom among the players of many clubs to make a weekly collection among themselves for a player colleague of theirs who is under suspension.

A MAGNET friend of mine, who is obviously a supporter of Brentford, is a bit upset because of what he thinks was an injustice done to the "Bees" one week-end not long ago. Brentford and Preston North End were level on points, and had played the same number of matches, but Preston were placed above Brentford

in the League table despite the fact—according to my friend—that Brentford had a better goal average.

I am sorry, my friend, but your arithmetic was wrong. Preston had scored 40 goals and had been debited with 31 goals. On the same day, Brentford had scored 49 goals, and their goals against numbered 38. Now, if you will divide the goals for by the goals against in these two totals, you will find that Preston's average was 1.29 and Brentford's 1.28. To all my readers who are interested I may add that this is the way goal averages are worked out—dividing the goals for by the goals against.

WEE SCOTTIES!

THEY come from all over the place, these football questions, but I don't mind. From Glasgow, I get a question concerning the make-up of the Scottish team against England in the International match of 1931. Here it is: Thomson (Celtic); Blair (Clyde); Nibloe (Kilmarnock); McNab (Dundee); Meiklejohn (Rangers); Miller (St. Mirren); Archibald (Rangers); Stevenson (Motherwell); McGroarty (Celtic); McPhail (Rangers), and Morton (Rangers). A glance through the clubs with which these players were associated will show that this was one of the seasons when, for their match against England, Scotland relied on players entirely associated with Scottish clubs. There were no Anglo-Scots in the side at all, and Scotland won by two goals to nothing.

I would not say, however, that this was the best Scottish International team I have seen. The best exhibition of classical football I have seen by a Scottish forward line was the one which played at Wembley in 1928, and which consisted of Jackson, Dunn, Gallacher, James, and Morton.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about that forward line, which managed to score five goals as the outcome of brilliant football, was that it was the smallest which has ever represented any team in an International match.

Only Jackson was of average height. The remainder of the forwards were all on the small side, and I wouldn't like to tell you how many of them had been turned down in their young days, because they were too small.

A short answer to L. R., of Plaistow, London. If the ball strikes the corner-flag and comes back into play, it is neither a corner-kick nor a throw-in. The ball remains in play.

"LINESMAN."

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But—but what do you mean? What do—"

"It's the ghost of a chance."

"But—"

"Vernon-Smith!" The sharp voice of the Remove master cut through the frosty air. "Go to the dormitory at once and pack your box. Remain there till the bell rings!"

"Very well, sir!"

The Bouncer went obediently into the House. Redwing stared after him in sheer wonder. He knew now what the scapegrace's careful respect to Queloh meant—he was not going to spoil his chance, if there was a chance—even a ghost of one! But what could he have meant? Redwing was still trying to puzzle it out, when the bell rang for first school, and he had to join the Remove going into the Form-room—where the Bouncer's place was empty, and remained empty!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Franz Kranz!

MR. FRANZ KRANZ, Old Boy of Greyfriars School, was breakfasting in his rooms at the Courtfield Hotel. It was rather a late hour in the morning for breakfast, but Mr. Kranz had risen rather late.

The Old Boy of Greyfriars, who was reputed a rich man, had the best suite of rooms at the best hotel in Courtfield, and was treated with great respect by the staff. He had his own car at the hotel, his own private plane at the local aero club's grounds. Now he sat at breakfast, his table by a window of a handsome room that looked over a well-kept garden behind the hotel, stretching away to the open expanse of Courtfield Common, and the river beyond.

From the french windows, steps led down into the garden, enabling Mr. Kranz to take a quiet stroll there when he liked, and to come and go, if he liked, without the whole hotel being aware of his movements. His own "man," Bane, waited on him, a sleek, smooth-shaven man with silent footsteps. And as there came a tap at the door of Mr. Kranz's handsome private sitting-room, Bane went to see what was wanted, and came back with a rather curious expression on his sleek face.

"A schoolboy, sir—a young gentleman from Greyfriars School, requests permission to speak to you."

Franz Kranz raised his eyebrows.

"Name?"

"Master Vernon-Smith, sir!"

Mr. Kranz sat silent for a moment or two balancing his egg-spoon. Then he gave a nod.

"Show him in!" he said.

Bane went to the door. Herbert Vernon-Smith was shown into the room. Kranz's keen, light-blue eyes were fixed on him searchingly as he came across the apartment towards the table at the window.

The Bouncer of Greyfriars had his hat in his hand, and his manner was quiet and respectful. But he was quite cool and composed.

"Good-morning, Master Vernon-Smith," said Kranz, with a faint smile. "Is it a holiday at your school to-day?"

"Not at all, sir!"

"Then you have leave from class?"

"Rather a long leave. I'm afraid, Mr. Kranz," said the Bouncer. "May I speak to you in private, sir?"

"Why?"

The Bouncer paused for a moment. "I've come here, sir, to ask a favour of you. I think you will help me. In the first place, I suppose I may take it

that you, as an Old Boy of Greyfriars, feel some concern in what has happened there recently."

"But what has happened?" asked Kranz.

"I am speaking of the kidnapping of a Greyfriars fellow—Bob Cherry, of my Form, the Remove."

Franz Kranz's eyes fixed on the Bouncer as if glued to his face. The man Bane gave the slightest possible start, and moved softly away; the Bouncer, who was paying him no attention, never dreaming of noting the fact that Bane silently placed himself between the unexpected visitor and the door!

"I remember," said Kranz, in a slightly changed voice. "According to what I have heard, the boy Cherry was kidnapped on the football field by some unknown man who came down in a plane."

"That's it, sir!" said Smithy.

"And you think I am interested in the matter?"

"I suppose you naturally would be, sir, to some extent, as an Old Boy of the school. But there are other reasons why I think so."

"Ah!" said Franz Kranz, in a very smooth voice. "What are the other reasons, my young friend?"

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"You have dropped in at the school several times lately, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "I fancied that you called to inquire whether anything had been heard of Bob Cherry. I mean, as you have never turned up at Greyfriars before, I supposed you had some object in dropping in of late, and it was natural that you should be interested in what had happened."

Kranz smiled.

"No doubt," he said. "As a matter of fact, I have met, several times, the missing boy's father, Major Cherry, and have a great respect for him. You are quite right in thinking that I feel some concern for the boy. I have the keenest desire to hear news of him. Is there any news?"

"None, so far, sir. But I've a hope of—"

"A hope of getting news of him?"

"Yes," said Smithy.

"And you have come to speak to me about it?"

"That's it."

"But why?"

"Because I think you may be able to help."

"To help—in what way?"

"In finding Bob."

Kranz made a slight movement. He was a man of considerable self-command, but it was clear that he was

startled. Bane was now standing at the door leaning his back on it. But his master did not glance at him.

"If I could help, Master Vernon-Smith, nothing would delight me more," said Franz Kranz. "But you surprise me! In what possible way could I help?"

"That's what I want to explain to you, sir, if you'll give me a few minutes of your time!" said the Bouncer.

Kranz gave him a long, searching look. Then he glanced at his man.

"You may leave us, Bane," he said.

The man silently left the apartment and closed the door behind him. Mr. Kranz rose from the table, dropped into an armchair by the window, and took a cigar from his case. He sat with his back to the window, and signed to the Bouncer to sit down facing him—the wintry sunlight falling full on Smithy's face.

Franz Kranz lighted his cigar.

"You may go on, Master Vernon-Smith!" he said. "You interest me extremely. I am quite eager to hear you."

"I'm glad of that, sir! I'll speak out!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm sacked—that is, I'm going to be sacked; but I'm trying to get out of it."

"That is frank, at all events! What have you been doing?"

"Breaking bounds after lights out!" said Smithy coolly.

"You young rascal!" said Kranz, with a laugh.

"You'll make allowances for me, sir," said Smithy. "I believe you kicked over the traces more than a little when you were at the school years ago."

"And how did you learn that, Master Vernon-Smith?"

"I heard some talk between the Head and my Form-master. I'm not an eaves-dropper." The Bouncer coloured a little. "But I was keeping doggo, because I'd been using the Head's telephone, and came near being nailed in his study. That's how it was."

"I see! And you heard my former headmaster refer to some painful episodes of old times," drawled Mr. Kranz—"which, of course, you told your friends in the Remove?"

"I'm not a babbling ass, sir! It was no bizney of mine, and I never said a word on the subject to any fellow."

"That was judicious!" said Mr. Kranz. "Naturally, an Old Boy, with an affection for his old school, would not like to hear old tales raked up."

"Still, sir, havin' been through trouble at school yourself, you might be willin' to help a fellow who's got landed in rather the same way."

"You have plenty of nerve!" remarked Mr. Kranz. "I have no influence whatever with your headmaster, even if I were disposed to use it on your behalf, Master Vernon-Smith."

"That's not it, sir. I've got a chance—a ghost of a chance. The Head couldn't, in common decency, kick me out of Greyfriars if I got Bob Cherry back from the kidnapper. And I think I've got a chance of doing it, and I think you can help me. Will you?"

"I quite fail to catch your drift! Cherry was taken away in an aeroplane, which has never been traced. From all appearance, he has been taken across the sea. At all events, it appears to be established that he was taken to a great distance—"

"And brought back again, perhaps," said the Bouncer quietly.

"Brought back again? In the plane?"

"Not in the plane."

"By some other means? But why?"

"Well, think it over, sir," said the Bouncer. "What is the place where



In the tunnel, Vernon-Smith stood fully revealed in the light of both lamps, converging on him. He saw the sour grin that came over the bearded face of the kidnapper and his eyes gleamed with desperation. He realised that his only chance was to get past the rascal and make all speed for the door of the school vaults!

people would be least likely to look for a kidnapped Greyfriars fellow?"

"I cannot imagine."

"Well, I can," said the Bounder. "Something that happened last night put it into my head, and I thought it out; I had plenty of time for thinking! I can name the place where they'd be least likely to look for a kidnapped Greyfriars fellow—and where I firmly believe that Bob Cherry is hidden at this very minute."

"And where is that?"

"Greyfriars School!" said the Bounder.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Chance!

"GREYFRIARS SCHOOL!"

Mr. Kranz fairly barked out the words.

He half-rose from his chair. Ash from his cigar dropped, unheeded, on his well-cut trousers.

The Bounder smiled. He had expected to surprise Mr. Kranz with that statement and there was no doubt that he had succeeded. The light blue eyes were almost bulging from the hard, dark face.

"If you'll let me explain, sir—" said Smithy.

"Certainly!" Mr. Kranz was calm again in a moment. He sat down again, brushed the cigar-ash from his trousers, and blew out a little cloud of smoke. "If you are not talking at random—"

"That's not one of my many faults, sir," said the Bounder coolly. "I've thought the thing out, and I'll tell you my reasons."

"Go on, please!"

"Last Monday a fat ass named Bunter went barging down into the vaults to play a silly trick. Some fellows went down after him to hook him out, and dropped on a man there. They recognised him as the kidnapper."

"I have heard this already from Mr. Quelch."

"You haven't heard the rest, sir. Last night I was in the vaults—"

Mr. Kranz started.

"Last night?" he repeated.

"Yes, after midnight."

"How—and why?"

"I'd been out of bounds, and was locked out. I tried to get in by way of the tunnel from the old priory in Friar-dale Wood." Mr. Kranz was staring blankly at the Bounder. "I very nearly ran into the same man—"

"Thousand thunders!" ejaculated Mr. Kranz.

"Luckily, I spotted the light he carried and got out of sight. He passed me—"

"The kidnapper?"

"Yes; false beard and long nose, and all—no mistake about it. It was the man Wharton and his friends saw there days ago in the day-time. You can bet I kept doggo till he was clear!"

"Yes; I can fancy that!" assented Mr. Kranz.

"After that I tried to get in by a panel that opens into my Form-master's study; but it was screwed up, so it was N.G.," went on the Bounder. "I had to wait for morning, and hammer at the door of the vaults to be let out. It was a fair catch—and I'm ordered to show up before the Head and be sacked! But, as I've said, I had a lot of time last night to do some thinkin'."

"And the result?" asked Mr. Kranz, with a smile.

"Look at it, sir! The first idea was that the kidnapper had cleared off, hundreds of miles away, with Bob. The use of a plane looked like it. But mayn't it have been just meant to look like it when it wasn't so?"

"You are a keen lad, Master Vernon-Smith! It is possible."

"It's come out since that the man—Nemo he calls himself—wants to get some flying gadget off Major Cherry;

that's why he's kidnapped Bob. Well, if he's going to make a trade with the major, he has got to stay in this country to do it, and it's known that he's staying. Isn't he likely to keep his prisoner within his own reach to keep an eye on him?"

"Quite likely."

"He was seen a few days ago in the vaults under Greyfriars. That's a cert. Whatever he was up to there, it might have been supposed that, having been seen and nearly collared, he had cleared off for good. But he hasn't, as I proved last night. Instead of having cleared off, he has visited the school vaults by night instead of day."

"And so—"

"Why?" asked the Bounder. "I was puzzled—fairly bothered—but the idea came to me at last. He must have some motive. There's nothing in the vaults to make anybody want to root about in them. If he had been there only once, it might be that he was planning some mischief, and had been scared off by being discovered there. But he was only scared into coming by night instead of by day. He's got some motive for visiting the place regularly—a man who's got a prisoner on his hands, to keep in a secret place. What does it look like, sir?"

"Well, what does it look like?" asked Mr. Kranz, smiling.

"It looks to me, sir, as if the man Nemo knows some secret place in the vaults—there's plenty of them, that's well known—and he keeps Bob Cherry there," said the Bounder.

"Oh!"

"It's the last place in the world—Greyfriars—where anybody would think of looking for a kidnapped Greyfriars chap. If the man has a prisoner in some secret den there, that accounts for his coming and going. How else can it be accounted for?"

"Something in that!" assented Mr. Kranz. "You have told this, of course, to your headmaster?"

"I haven't seen the Head yet. When I see him, it's to get the sack!" said Smithy.

"Whom have you told, then?"

"Nobody, so far, but you, sir."

The light blue eyes glistened for a moment.

"But why come to me? The police, surely—"

"If you can't help me, sir, I shall go to the police station and tell Inspector Grimes of what I saw last night," said the Bounder. "I fancy he will come to the same conclusion, when he hears that the kidnapper has been seen in the same place a second time, and at night."

"Probably."

"But Mr. Grimes can't help me personally," explained the Bounder. "If I've got to go, I shall do all I can for Bob Cherry before I quit. But I don't want to go! And if I can turn up at the school with Bob, it will save my bacon, I'm convinced of that."

"It is likely enough. But what puzzles me is why you fancy that I can help you in the matter," said Franz Kranz.

"If it's as I believe, sir, Bob Cherry is shut up in some den under the school that's generally unknown. You may know of it."

"I?" ejaculated Franz.

"I've mentioned that I heard a talk between the Head and Quelch, sir! The Head was saying that you used—if you don't mind my speaking of it—to play the goat in the vaults, and that once when you were looked for there you escaped discovery—"

"Dr. Locke has a good memory!"

"I hope you have, too, sir! He said that he thought, at the time, that you had found out some of the secrets of the place—though you never admitted it."

"I—I see!"

"That's what I've been banking on," said the Bounder eagerly. "If you know of any secret vault or cell under Greyfriars, it may be—most likely is—the very place where that villain has parked Bob Cherry! Mr. Kranz, will you help me, if you can, to get him out and save me at the school!"

Mr. Kranz smoked his cigar in silence for a minute or two.

The Bounder of Greyfriars watched him eagerly.

This was his last chance—his only chance; the "ghost of a chance," as he had expressed it to Redwing.

The Bounder believed that he was on the right track! He believed that the Courtheld inspector would come to the same conclusion if he heard what Smithy had to tell. Smithy, to do him justice, was keen enough to help Bob, for his own sake. But he was thinking first of himself. If it was he, Herbert Vernon-Smith, who saved the kidnapped Greyfriars junior and brought him back to the light of day, he was saved—his headmaster could not possibly expel him after such an exploit. He would be bound to give the scapegrace another chance!

From what the Head himself had said, in Smithy's hearing, Franz Kranz knew some of the secrets of the old vaults. All depended on what Mr. Kranz knew—and whether he would place his knowledge at the Bounder's service. And a man who had to leave the school for "playing the goat" might be expected to have some sympathy for a fellow in the same predicament! This was the Bounder's last chance—a slim one perhaps, but all he had! It was no wonder that he watched Mr. Franz

Kranz's face eagerly, while that Old Boy of Greyfriars smoked in silence.

Mr. Kranz broke his silence at last.

"I think," he said slowly, "that there may be something in what you say, Master Vernon-Smith! I am certainly willing to help you out of your scrape if I can. I should be delighted if I were the means of helping the lad to his freedom. And it is true that I know of the existence of a secret vault under the school—at least, I knew of it twenty years ago, and I think I could find it again."

The Bounder's eyes danced.

"Oh!" he gasped. "If you'll stand by me, sir—I knew you'd be keen to help poor old Bob out of that scoundrel's hands, any fellow would—"

"Very keen indeed!" said Franz Kranz, with a smile. "I conclude, from what you tell me, that you are out of school without leave?"

"I cut, instead of going to the Head! But—if I could go back with old Bob along with me—"

"Let us hope that you will be able to do so, Master Vernon-Smith! Certainly my help shall not be lacking. At the same time, I cannot appear to be acting in approval of what really amounts to an act of rebellion. We must not be seen together, until you have made your peace with your headmaster," said Mr. Kranz.

"I quite understand that, sir."

"How do you propose to enter the vaults to make the search you suggest with my help?"

"Easy enough, by the tunnel from the old priory, as I did last night."

"Very good! Then suppose you proceed to the place and wait for me in the tunnel. I have some matters to attend to—but I will join you as speedily as possible."

"Oh, good, sir!"

"In the meantime, not a word to anyone," said Mr. Kranz. "You do not want a crowd on the scene, I take it?"

"Not a syllable, sir!"

"Very well, then—wait for me in the tunnel, and when I join you, I will be your guide."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir," said the Bounder gratefully.

"It is not necessary! I am only too glad of the slightest chance of helping a boy kidnapped from my old school."

Mr. Kranz rose, and shook hands very cordially with the Bounder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith left the Courtheld Hotel, looking as if he were walking on air!

After he was gone, an inner door of the room opened and Bane came in. Mr. Kranz looked at him.

"You heard?" he asked.

"Every word!" answered Bane.

"That bright and very keen-witted lad is walking to Friarsdale Wood," said Mr. Kranz carelessly. "It is a distance of some miles. It will take him some time, Bane."

"A car, by a different road, will beat him to it easily!" said Bane.

"You read my thoughts, Bane! Get the car out at once!"

Bane grinned, and hurried away. Mr. Franz Kranz threw away the stump of his cigar, picked up an attache-case, and followed his man.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"I SAY, you fellows! Something's up!"

"Smithy's up to something!" grinned Skinner.

"Giving a last kick!" said Peter Todd.

Something, it was clear to all the Remove, was "up." First lesson had been on its way in the Form-room when Trotter tapped at the door and gave a message to Mr. Quelch, unheard by the juniors.

Quelch's countenance was immediately seen to assume the aspect of a very severe thunderstorm; and he hurriedly followed the page from the Form-room.

The Remove were left to themselves.

They remained left to themselves while the minutes ticked away. It looked as if Henry Samuel Quelch, for once, had forgotten his Form and his duties as their Form-master.

"Good old Smithy!" grinned Skinner. "He was bound to give them all the trouble he could! I wonder what's his game?"

"Silly ass!" commented Haseldene. "He's got to go—why can't he go quietly?"

"Catch Smithy!" grinned Skinner. "He wants to leave the fellows something to talk about when he's gone."

The Remove fellows sat in their places and listened. They had no doubt that it was on Smithy's account that their Form-master had been called away. But it was a little difficult to guess why. Quelch's help was not required in "sacking" the Bounder.

There were footsteps in the passage at last, and the buzz of voices died away as Quelch swept in—more like a thunderstorm than ever.

"Redwing!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom.

"Have you any knowledge of Vernon-Smith's present whereabouts?"

Redwing stared.

"I thought he went to the dormitory, sir, to pack his box."

"I understand that you were his closest friend here, Redwing. Has he told you anything of his intentions?"

"No, sir! He said he hoped there was a chance that he might not be expelled—"

Snort from Mr. Quelch! That snort indicated how very faint was the Bounder's hope, so far as his Form-master was concerned.

"Did he tell you that he intended to leave the school without having seen his headmaster?" barked Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir; I had no idea of such a thing."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Skinner.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes swept over the class.

"Wharton! Have you any knowledge of where Vernon-Smith has gone?"

"None, sir!" answered Harry.

"Can any boy present tell me anything?" snapped the Remove master.

No boy present could! There was silence, and having waited in vain for an answer, Mr. Quelch swept out of the Form room again, evidently very much perturbed. Skinner whistled.

"So that's it!" he said. "The Bounder's bunked on his own, without waitin' to be sacked! Trust the old Bounder to wind up with a dramatic stunt!"

"Just like Smithy!" agreed Squiff.

"Fancy the beak's face, waitin' for him in his study, and the Bounder never turnin' up!" chuckled Skinner. "Good old Smithy! Game to the finish!"

Mr. Quelch did not come back to the Form-room again. Wingate of the Sixth came to take charge of the Remove during his absence. There was a chorus of questions as the prefect came in.

"Where's Smithy, Wingate?"

"Has he gone?"

"Isn't he back in the House?"

"Is he sacked?"

"Nobody knows where the young sweep is!" grunted Wingate. "And I (Continued on page 22.)"

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haven't come here to jaw! Get on with it!"

The Removites got on with it; but Wingate had a rather inattentive class during the lesson. In second lesson Mr. Quelch returned—and he had an attentive class in spite of the Form's keen interest in the Bounder's proceedings. The expression on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance warned the Remove to be good!

It was a great relief when the Form was dismissed in break. They crowded out, anxious for news of the Bounder, extremely curious to know what had happened.

Vernon-Smith was no longer in the school. He had not seen the Head, and had not, therefore, received the official sentence of the "sack." That much was known; but the rest was surmise.

He had not packed his box—he seemed to have taken nothing with him but his hat and overcoat. Apparently he had walked quietly out of the school on his own, instead of going to the Head's study as bidden.

Whether he had gone home, without waiting to be sacked—or whether he had taken himself off for a ramble, nobody knew. It was exactly in keeping with the Bounder's character to give as much trouble as he could now that he had nothing more to lose; and the juniors had no doubt that his object was to exasperate the "beaks" as much as possible.

Redwing did not share that opinion, for he knew that Smithy still entertained some hope of pulling through. But that only made him more puzzled than the other fellows. If Smithy hoped to dodge the "sack," this was not the way to set to work. Quelch was plainly in one of his most severe tantrums, and the Head could not fail to be annoyed and angry.

It seemed to Redwing that Smithy was deliberately washing out what slight hope might have remained by his present conduct. When he turned up again, if he did turn up, the storm would break on him; while, if he had gone home, it was certain that he would not be allowed to return. Redwing was perplexed and anxious.

In third school that morning Mr. Quelch looked grimmer than ever. His temper was decidedly snappish. Lord Mauleverer received a hundred lines for yawning; Bolsover major as many for dropping a book; Billy Bunter a rap on his fat knuckles for whispering. It was very clear that Vernon-Smith's peculiar proceedings had put Mr. Quelch into a smouldering, sulphurous state.

The Remove were very glad to be dismissed that morning.

Still there was no news of the scapegrace of Greyfriars. It was shortly before dinner that there was news—from Billy Bunter! That fat youth rolled up to a group of fellows in the quad, with his little round eyes gleaming with excitement behind his big round spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Smithy—"

"What about Smithy?" asked a dozen voices.

"He hasn't gone home!"

"How do you know, fathead?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I happened to hear Quelch on the phone!" grinned Bunter. "Of course, I wasn't listening—"

"Of course not" agreed Skinner. "You hear things without listening. It's the size of your ears that does it."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

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"But what's the news?" demanded Peter Todd. "Shut up, Skinner!"

"You see, I saw Quelch speaking to the Head, and the Head said he had better inquire, and Quelch went to his study. Happening to go in the same direction a minute afterwards—"

"By sheer chance?" grinned Skinner.

"Yes, sheer chance," agreed Bunter.

"I happened to stop to tie my shoelace just outside Quelch's door, and heard him on the phone. I happened to be stooping down near the keyhole, pulling up my sock, you know—"

"As well as tying your shoelace?"

"I mean, tying my sock—that is, my shoelace. Well, Quelch was on the phone to old Smith. I couldn't hear what old Smith said at the other end, but I heard Quelch barking. He asked if young Smith had come home, and I heard him say 'He has certainly left the school. Possibly he is on his way, then.' That shows that Smithy hasn't gone home. I didn't hear any more, as old Prout came along the passage, and I had to clear. Just like old Prout to make out that a fellow was listening, you know—"

"So Smithy hasn't gone home!" said Skinner, with a whistle. "He's had time to get home twice since he cleared. I wonder—"

"I say, you fellows, do you think he has run away to become a pirate?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I don't believe he would dare to go home," said Skinner. "There was no end of trouble with his pater over his last narrow squeak, and the old Obadiah has his back up with the young Obadiah."

"Where else could he go?" said Harry Wharton.

"The wherefulness is terrific."

"Might have gone off on his own," said Skinner. "It would be like the Bounder. He's always had nerve."

"Anyhow, he's finished here," said Squiff.

"No doubt about that! Rather sorry, too," said Skinner. "He was a card, the old Bounder was! We shall miss him."

The "sack" for a Greyfriars fellow would have been a sensation. But the cool walking-off of that fellow, before the Head could hand out the "sack" was a still greater sensation. It quite washed out the kidnapping of Bob Cherry as a topic. The name of Smithy was on every lip; and all through that day, when one Greyfriars man came across another, he would ask:

"Heard anything of Smithy?"

But nobody had heard anything of Smithy!

He was no longer at the school! He had not gone home! The only conclusion was that he had cleared off on his own—which was an idea rather in keeping with his reckless character. But what had really happened to Herbert Vernon-Smith no one at Greyfriars School was likely to guess!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

THE Bounder swung cheerily along in the bright frosty morning.

It was a long walk from Courtfield to Friardale, and by a direct route it would have taken Smithy past the school. He was careful, therefore, to follow footpaths and fieldpaths that kept him safely out of sight of Greyfriars. What steps the Head might

take when he was missed, Smithy did not know; but, if he was looked for, he did not mean to be found—until he had carried out his purpose. And he arrived, at length in the old priory in Friardale Wood, without having seen anything of anyone belonging to the school. He was whistling a tune as he strolled into the old ruins.

No one was likely to spot him there. In the winter-time it was one of the loneliest places in the neighbourhood.

The Bounder had a great belief in his own luck. He had pulled through so many scrapes that his belief in it was justified. And it seemed to him that his luck was true to him once more.

A combination of circumstances had made it, unexpectedly, possible for him to put his finger on the clue to a mystery that baffled, not only the school authorities, but the police as well. He firmly believed that he had solved the mystery of Bob Cherry's disappearance. Luck had helped him there—luck helped him again in getting the assistance of Mr. Franz Kranz, without whom he could have done nothing.

It was sheer luck that Mr. Kranz was staying in the vicinity of the school, just when the Bounder wanted his help—luck again that he had been willing to help a lame dog over a stile.

At least, so it seemed to the Bounder, and he had hardly a doubt that he would pull through once more. Certainly, if he turned up at Greyfriars School, taking Bob Cherry back with him, the "sack" was hardly possible as a reward! Whether they liked it or not, the Head and Quelch would be simply forced to give him another chance.

With a cheery grin on his face, Smithy strolled across the ruins to the entrance of the priory vaults. The place was a little more cheerful, in the wintry sunshine, than it had looked on his midnight visit. But it was cold and lonely and gloomy, and far from inviting. Little cared the Bounder for that! He bent over the ringed stone and tugged it up and turned on his pocket-torch and descended. He was still whistling as he went along the vaults to the tunnel, leaving the stone open for Mr. Kranz when he came.

But his whistle died away when he reached the tunnel. It was unlikely—very unlikely—that the man with the jutting nose was there in the daytime. The fact that the Bounder had spotted him there at midnight showed that he made his mysterious visits after dark. Still, a fellow could not be too careful; and if, by some remote chance, the rascal was hanging about the place, Vernon-Smith did not want to run into him—alone!

With that idea in his wary mind, the Bounder shut off the light of his torch and ceased to make a sound. It was unpleasant enough, waiting there in black darkness, but he did not suppose that Franz Kranz would be long after him. Anyhow, Kranz had told him to wait in the tunnel—and that he did.

A heavy, thudding sound came echoing along the vaults. He started as he heard it. He knew that it was caused by the closing of the ringed stone by which he had entered.

"What the dickens——" muttered the Bounder.

If it was Kranz coming, there seemed no reason why he should close the stone after him. Was it Kranz?

The thought of the man with the jutting nose was in his mind. There was a chance—a remote chance, at least—that he might be prowling about the place, unlikely as it seemed.



"I say, you fellows, the old bean's in a frightful rage! He-he-he!" Billy Bunter's voice floated into Dr. Locke's room, and the Head started, and coloured. Mr. Vernon-Smith, who had been talking to Dr. Locke, gave an angry snort, and strode to the window. The next moment a large hand reached down and smote a fat ear. "Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Oh, erikely!"

Smithy listened intently.

A light gleamed along the vaults. A man was coming towards him, carrying an electric lamp. Was it Kranz?

The Bouncer's heart beat rather unpleasantly.

Surely it could only be Kranz, coming to join him there as arranged. He watched the approaching light.

Not till it was quite near was he able to make out the figure behind it. Then his heart gave a jump.

It was not Kranz! It was not the kidnapper! It was a man whose face was entirely covered by a black mask, and whose figure was hidden by a long, dark coat to his heels.

"By gum!" breathed the Bouncer.

Obviously, that masked man could not be the Old Boy of Greyfriars who was coming to his aid. It could only be a confederate of the kidnapper—or, at least, someone who had good reason for hiding his identity. Vernon-Smith set his teeth.

He moved away silently up the tunnel. That was his only way of avoiding the man behind him.

Silently, but swiftly, the Bouncer ran up the tunnel, the light following him as he went.

Once he reached the school vaults there were plenty of nooks where he could take cover.

But suddenly he halted, panting.

Another light gleamed in front of him in the tunnel, and he was not half-way to the school vaults yet.

His retreat in either direction was cut off.

Smithy's heart thumped.

It could hardly be Kranz ahead of him—Kranz had said that he would follow! It was the kidnapper! Who else could it be?

He stood with clenched hands, breathing hard.

If these men were enemies—which he could hardly doubt—he was fairly caught! One was before him, the other behind him, in the narrow tunnel, and the slimy stone walls offered no hiding-place for a rat.

Did they know he was there? How could they? They could have learned nothing from Kranz—and only Kranz knew!

Whether they knew or not, they would soon know, for the two lights were steadily approaching him from opposite directions.

He clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms! He was trapped, and he knew it, though he did not know how. The man behind him must have been in cover, watching him arrive at the priory, following him down. The other man was already in the tunnel, waiting for him. How could they have known that he would be there? They must have known!

Footsteps were audible behind him, before him. He stood still, white and desperate. It was useless to stir; he could only wait—only hope that Kranz might come in time to help him.

The light behind him gleamed past on the man in front. The Bouncer saw the dark coat with the turned-up collar, the peaked cap, the beard, the jutting nose! It was the man he had watched the night before—the man who had attacked Major Cherry in the train—the man who had kidnapped Bob in the aeroplane! A glance was enough.

In the tunnel the Bouncer stood fully revealed in the light of both lamps converging on him. He saw the sour grin that came over the bearded face of the kidnapper. The man showed no sign of surprise at seeing him there—he knew that he was there, and was looking for him. The Bouncer's eyes gleamed with desperation. If he could get past the

rascal, reach the school vaults, hammer at the door, as he had hammered at it early that morning—it was his only chance, and he made a sudden, desperate rush. The man with the jutting nose halted as he came. With the lamp in his left hand, he jerked out an automatic with his right.

"Stop!" he grated.

But the Bouncer was desperate. He rushed on.

The man with the jutting nose did not fire, as he half expected. He stood coolly waiting till the Bouncer reached him, and then struck out with the barrel of the pistol.

Vernon-Smith staggered back from the ruthless blow. Before he could recover himself, the man behind was upon him, and had grasped him.

Dizzy from the crack on his head from the pistol barrel, the Bouncer still struggled savagely, fiercely, desperately.

What they intended to do with him he could not guess—but he feared! With all his strength, he struggled.

But, strong as he was, desperate as he was, he crumpled up in the grasp of two strong men. He went down crashing on the slimy flags, his hands were dragged behind him, and a cord was knotted round his wrists. Evidently they had come prepared for this.

"Get up!" snapped the man with the jutting nose, in a harsh voice.

Smithy staggered to his feet.

With his hands bound, he could make no further resistance. But there was a faint hope in his heart that Kranz might be within hearing by that time, and he shouted for help.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Silence, you young fool!" growled the man with the jutting nose. "Do you fancy that anyone will hear you in these depths?"

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"Help!"

Only the echo of the Bounder's desperate shout answered him. There was no one to help.

"Bring him along!"

The man with the jutting nose turned and walked back the way he had come, towards the Greyfriars vaults. The masked man grasped the Bounder's arm and forced him to follow.

Vernon-Smith stumbled on.

Where were they taking him? What did they intend? They dared not let him go, that was a certainty. This was the end of his "luck"; the scheme that was to have saved him from the "sack" had landed him in the hands of the kidnapper of Bob Cherry—and already he guessed what was intended. With an iron grasp on his arm, the Bounder was led on, till the school vaults were reached. The man with the jutting nose led the way into the stone passage with no outlet, from which Vernon-Smith had seen him emerge the night before. Was that where the secret vault lay—the secret of which Franz Kranz knew, as well as these crooks?

The man with the jutting nose stopped at the end of the "blind alley." His hand passed over the solid blocks of stone.

A great stone rolled out of place. It revealed a low doorway, from the other side of which light shone. The hidden vault behind the secret door was lighted!

There was a startled exclamation within.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The Bounder knew that voice! He knew that he had been right—and that Bob Cherry was a prisoner beneath Greyfriars School itself! But he knew it too late! A rough shove sent him staggering into the secret vault, and he stumbled over and fell—and the great stone thudded into its place behind him, cutting off all escape and all hope of escape!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Smithy?

"I SAY, you fellows, it's old Smith!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Thus disrespectfully did William George Bunter allude to Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, millionaire financier.

Plenty of fellows, as well as Bunter, were interested in the stout gentleman who sat in the magnificent Rolls car, turning in at the gates of Greyfriars.

It was Saturday afternoon, and as there had been no news of Smithy since he had vanished on Friday morning, some of the fellows had rather expected his father to appear on the scene before this. Here he was at last—sitting bolt upright in his expensive car, with a heavy frown on his plump face.

"It's Smithy's pater!" remarked Harry Wharton, as he raised his cap to the millionaire.

"That means that Smithy hasn't gone home!" said Frank Nugent. "Where on earth can he have gone?"

"The wherefulness is terrific."

"It's jolly serious, if that reckless ass has cleared off on his own," said Johnny Bull. "I should have thought his pater would barge in before this."

"He couldn't," remarked Skinner, with a grin. "The Stock Exchange is closed on Saturday afternoons—that's why he's here to-day." He chuckled. "He's cut out his afternoon's gold, to

come here about Smithy. Looks as if it's annoyed him."

The most casual glance would have detected the fact that Mr. Vernon-Smith was in a very bad temper. Evidently he did not mind revealing that fact to the wide world! When he alighted from the big car, he cast a frowning glance round him, stared at Harry Wharton, and beckoned to him. The captain of the Remove came up quickly.

"Is my son here?" rapped Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"No, sir."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Nobody seems to know, sir."

"The young rascal!" snorted Mr. Vernon-Smith, and he fairly stamped into the House, and Trotter looked quite nervous as he showed him to the Head's study. Mr. Quelch encountered him on the way, with a polite if frigid bow, and the millionaire halted and stared at him.

"Mr. Quelch, you are my son's Form-master here?"

"Quite—"

"Where is he?"

"He has absented himself—"

"Are boys in this school permitted to absent themselves at their own will and

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pleasure, sir?" hooted Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Certainly not!" snapped the Remove-master. "But—"

"Then why is he not here? I have been informed, sir, that my son was to be expelled from this school! If that was the case, he should have been sent home! He has not been sent home!"

"In the circumstances—"

"He has not been sent home; he is not here! Where is he?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith in a voice that half Greyfriars could hear.

Mr. Quelch coloured with vexation.

"As the boy chose to leave the school without permission—" he began.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Wha-a-at?" It was the first time that anyone had told Mr. Quelch to his face that his remarks were nonsense! Fellows in the Remove might have thought so sometimes. But they had never told Quelch so. Quelch simply blinked at the irate gentleman from the City. "Wha-a-at did you say, sir?" he gasped.

"I said nonsense!" hooted Mr. Vernon-Smith. "And when I say nonsense, I mean exactly what I say—nonsense, sir!"

And the stout gentleman tramped on after the scared Trotter, leaving Mr.

Quelch rooted to the floor, gazing after him.

"Frightful old bargee!" murmured Gwynne of the Sixth to Wingate, and the Greyfriars captain nodded.

Quite regardless of the opinion of Greyfriars men, and whether they looked on him as a "bargee" or not, Mr. Vernon-Smith tramped on to the Head's study, where Dr. Locke was awaiting him.

Groups of fellows in the quad regarded the window of that study with interested and curious eyes. It was a fine afternoon, and the study window was open. Billy Bunter and Skinner and one or two other fellows edged along the ivied wall in the hope of hearing what went on within. Other fellows contented themselves with staring at the window from a respectful distance. But it was not, as a matter of fact, necessary for a fellow to get very near the window to hear what Mr. Vernon-Smith said in the study. Mr. Vernon-Smith had many qualities, but reticence was not numbered among them. When he was angry he raised his voice considerably.

Dr. Locke greeted him with his usual old-world courtesy—at all events, he began to do so. But he was interrupted. Possibly, as Skinner suggested, Mr. Vernon-Smith had timed his call for an afternoon when the Stock Exchange was closed. Still, his time was far too valuable to be wasted.

"I have called for my son, sir!" he said.

"Precisely," agreed the Head. "Pray be seated—"

"There is no need to protract this interview, sir! You have decided to expel my son from this school. You have given me your reasons in a letter, which I have read carefully. I am not here to dispute the matter, sir. I acknowledge that on a previous occasion you dealt leniently with my son and gave him another chance, of which he has not availed himself. He will have cause to repent it. But—"

"My dear sir—"

"But, sir, my son has not arrived home! I do not dispute your right to send him home for what appears to have been a serious infraction of the rules of the school. But if you send my son away from Greyfriars, sir, I expect him home! I do not expect him to be allowed to wander at large in the world, sir! I am here to take him away; my car is waiting!"

"Quite so. But—"

"Very well, sir—hand over my son, and I will relieve you of his presence, and of my own at the same time! No doubt your time is valuable, sir. Mine certainly is! Produce my son!"

"My dear, dear sir—" gasped the Head.

"I have asked you, sir, to produce my son!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I am waiting, sir!"

Standing firmly on his plump legs, glaring at the Head, the millionaire waited—really as if he expected the headmaster to produce Smithy on the spot, like a conjurer producing a rabbit out of a hat!

"Really, sir, as your son is not here, I can scarcely produce him!" said the Head tartly.

"Where is he?"

"I am not aware—"

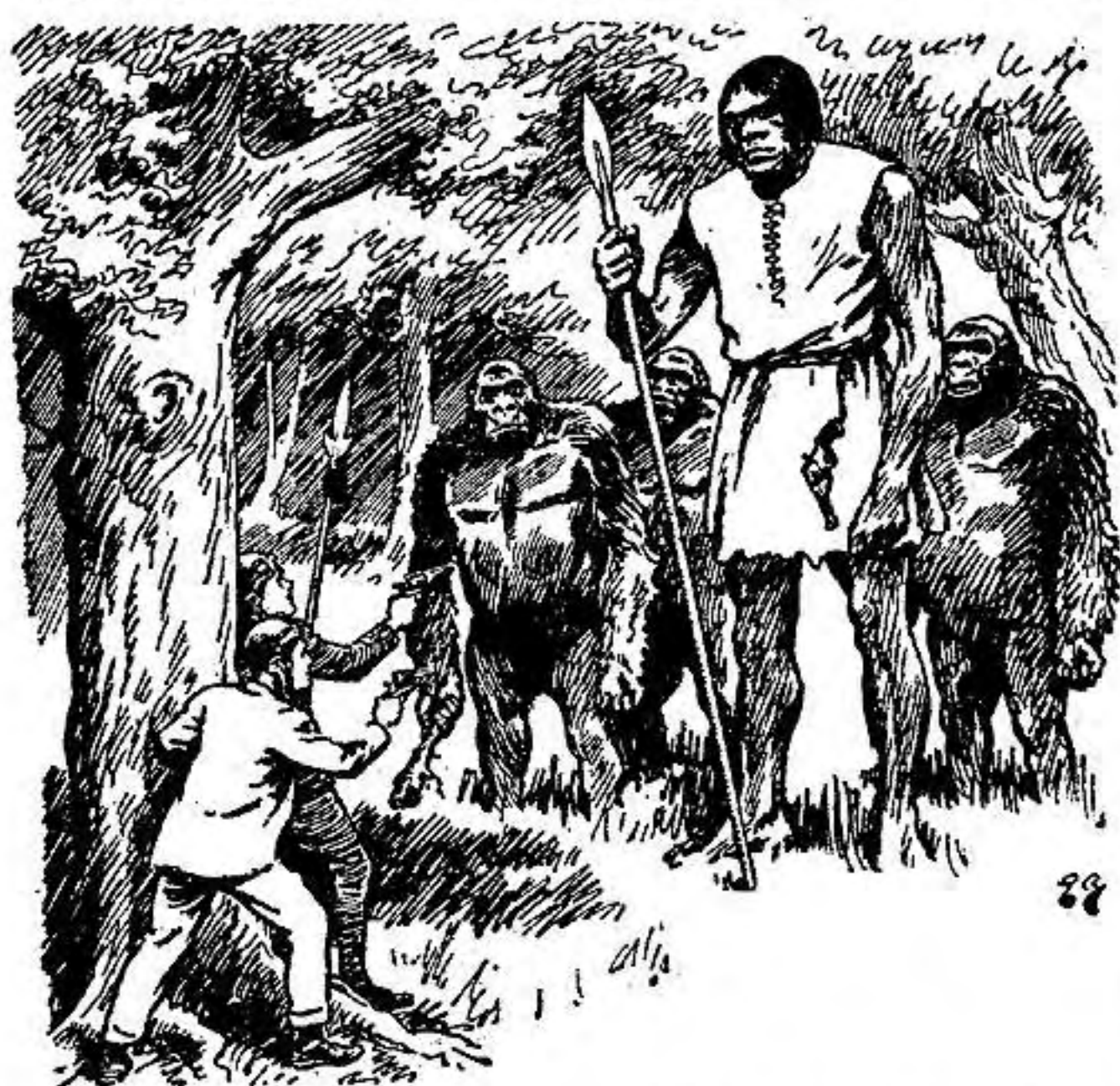
"Let us have this plainly, sir!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith in a voice that was heard near and far. "My son is here in your charge! He remains in your charge until he returns to mine! Is that so, or is it not so?"

"Undoubtedly! But—"

(Continued on page 28.)

WHEN the GREAT APES CAME!

By STUART MARTIN.



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

GERRY LAMBERT and BILLY MURCHIE, two young airmen, are brought down in the African jungle by an army of apes—led by Big Ling, a giant 'ape-man'—reared to crush civilisation by a renegade called Stein. Gerry escapes, but Billy is forced to lead an expedition to England which spreads devastation in all directions. Gerry and Billy, in company with Commander Walsh, of the R.A.F., prove of great assistance to the British forces who bomb the enemy with gas shells. Stein retaliates by manufacturing a special chemical to destroy the civilian population. His vile plan recoils on his own head, however, for he is burnt to death by his own secret chemical!

(Now read on.)

A Daring Scheme!

"IS there no sign of the Master?" Big Ling raised his eyes as he asked the question. Around him sat more than a score of his ape-men, only a few of them without wounds and scars of the battle of Salisbury.

Ling himself had wounds to show, but in his eyes there was a fire that burned strangely.

An ape-man rose to his feet, holding out a sheet of newspaper.

"King, there is no Master now!"

It was the Watcher who spoke. His words caused a gasp to come from the others, who stared at him.

From outside came the faint sounds of the throbbing life of London's river, the occasional hooting of a tug's siren. These leaders of the gorilla armies were now gathered in hiding, in one of their lairs which Stein had provided. It was one of the disused warehouses that rear their gaunt frames beside the Thames, an old wharf warehouse.

Ling had come here after the battle, and his men had followed. In the large floors above were gorillas, those which had been able to make the trail.

It had been a weary toil to get to this headquarters, but it had been done under cover of night, after the battle which had raged night and day. Hundreds of gorillas had been killed, and hundreds of troops had met their death in that English countryside.

The coming of Stein's forces had taken the troops unaware in the rear, and Big Ling had fought a retreating fight until he and his apes had gained wooded land. There they had hidden, scattering; and their trail to London had been marked by raids and killings.

When the Watcher made his announcement at the council meeting in that bare warehouse, every eye turned on him. He produced the sheet of paper and held it up. It was the front page of a London newspaper.

"Those of us who can read this language a little," said the Watcher solemnly, "may see how the Master died. He was killed by the boy called Gerry—"

"It is a lie!" roared Ling, snatching the paper and looking at the big type. "It is a lie! The Master cannot die."

But there, in big type, it was stated how Stein had died, scorched by his own chemicals, with which he had intended to kill the people of England.

"If it is a lie," said the Watcher

gently, "why is not the Master here? Three days have come and gone—"

"Where did you get this?"

"I found it by the side of this warehouse when I went out at your orders, Ling, to scout."

The effect of the news made Ling grind his teeth. He did not notice that the Watcher had not called him by the name of "king." His mind was too busy to observe the change in address.

"Very well," he said, in a growl, "even if it is true, the Master has left his plans. We will carry them out."

He raised his head again, scanning every face there, searching for something he could not name. It was confidence he sought, the knowledge that he was now the only leader, the king to whom these ape-men must look for guidance and triumph.

He rose and strode over to the dusty windows of the warehouse that overlooked the river. Drawing a hand across the glass, he peered out. There was little traffic, but over on the opposite bank he saw a ship being loaded.

"You see that?" said Ling, in a low tone. "That is the ship we must take. We leave this place to-night."

He came back and sat down, scanning his maps closely. No one spoke. Everyone was hanging on his words. Suddenly he raised his head.

"There is a traitor among us," he announced.

Still no one spoke.

"There is a traitor," Ling repeated. "Else how could the Master have been followed?"

A low growl escaped the others; but mingled with the growl he detected signs of unrest.

"Tree Climber was a rebel," he went on, "and I would have killed him had he not been killed by the enemy. He was too ambitious. But there is another among us. Who caused the Master to be followed? His mission was a secret between him and me."

Ling's eyes glowed as he looked around. The ape-men lowered their gaze under that scrutiny.

"How can there be a traitor?" muttered one. "Are we not all marked with the fight?"

"There is a traitor," continued Ling. "I have proof."

He let his eyes fall on the Watcher, who still stood before him.

The Watcher did not flinch.

"Give us the proof," he said.

"It is here," said Ling quickly. "The enemy have secured one of the magic tubes that the Master carried with him. They have found out the Master's poison."

"May that tube not have been in the car the Master drove?"

"Others were, but that one could not have been. They chased him to get those tubes. They knew his intention. It states so in this sheet of

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,356.

paper. Yet only the Master and I knew of them."

The growling continued. The mind of Ling was showing its superiority over their reasoning powers. Once more he spoke.

"And, more, I have here a tube or two the Master gave me. He told me to take five. I took five. I have but four now. One was stolen from me during the battle. Watcher, did you see anyone take a tube from me when I fought?"

"How could I, Ling?" said the Watcher. "I was not always near you."

"Not always; but you were near me when I battled with the gorilla that spoiled my aim at that boy. When I fell I had the tubes. When I rose after killing the gorilla, I had one less."

"Did you drop it?"

"No. A hand touched me as I struggled. I felt the hand probe into my garment. Then it was withdrawn. Thus I know someone took that tube."

"Did you not see who took it, Ling?"

"No, but I felt the hand. It was not a puny man's hand. It was a hand like mine. Have you such a tube, Watcher?"

The Watcher raised his arms above his head slowly.

"Search!" he cried.

"It could not have been you, Watcher, since you ask me to search. But who was it?"

The ape-men rose as one, lifting their hands like the Watcher.

"Search!" they cried.

Ling bounded to his feet, waving them aside. He was satisfied for the

time being, but he was still suspicious.

"What does it matter?" he growled. "I have others. And all of you must fight or die. Let us fight. Listen to my plans!"

It was a daring scheme. As soon as darkness came they were to capture the ship that lay across the river. They would board it and take it down to the sea. There they would sail up the coast and land again. They would join the gorillas, who were still fighting in the north of England. While the ship was being taken, Ling himself would stay in London.

"Alone?" cried the Watcher.

"Yes, alone," answered Ling. "Unless you are not afraid to partner me, Watcher. We shall find work to do. When we return, the ship will be ready and we will sail away."

"But we have nobody to sail such a ship, Ling."

"Fool!" roared Ling. "Were other ships not captured in this way? Were not our gorillas taken from this city in like manner and sent northward and across to the land of France? The same method will be used."

The answer quietened the ape-men; but one of them spoke after a silence:

"King, are we not princes?"

"What do you mean?"

"Was it not agreed that when you were king we should be princes?"

"Well?"

"You are king?"

"Who says I am not?"

"Then we are princes now."

"Very well."

"Is it not time that we apportioned out the land of the princes?"

Ling's eyes became grave for a

flash. He saw the hidden meaning in the words. He was called king, but they were not yet called princes. They were asking for the freedom of action which princes enjoy. They were wanting loot; something to call their own. The smouldering unrest which he had sensed was showing itself.

"After the next fight," he said slyly, "we shall share out the land."

They acclaimed the words, but they went further. They began to stake their claims, until Ling thundered his orders. He had to keep them busy, or he would lose his grip on them.

"It is dark," he said. "To our work! Watcher, will you come?"

"Yes," replied the Watcher.

They stole out of the warehouse, leaving the others with instructions. Into the street Ling and the Watcher dropped from the loading door. They were in a lane that led to the water on one side and to the city on the other. Ling unstrapped his club and held it by his side. The Watcher had a similar weapon. Ling also had his tubes of death, and in his left hand he carried a net bag filled with bombs.

They stood in the shadow of the warehouse for some time before they crept up towards the thoroughfare along which buses passed.

"What is it to be, Ling?"

"Listen!"

Above the city aeroplanes droned. Round the corner they saw cavalry going westward.

Ling was smiling strangely, and pointed to the cavalry.

"I sent them in that direction," he explained. "I want you to be with me in the raid to-night, Watcher."

"How did you send them, Ling?"

"I and the Master had our plans. He had messages written, which we hung round the necks of gorillas and sent them out here and there. They were killed, but the messages which the Master wrote were found. These messages were false ones. I sent two gorillas out yesterday. While these horsemen think we are going to attack one part of the city, we shall attack another."

"You mean you and I?"

Ling nodded cunningly. They stood in the shadow until the way was clear; then across street after street they leaped, hiding at intervals, until they were in a narrow lane facing St. Paul's.

"Wait," said Ling.

He scrambled up the side of the building where they stood. When he returned, after a time, he bore an enormous coil of electric cable.

"If you had become afraid, Watcher," he said sneeringly, "I would have bombed you. I was watching you."

Although Ling had worked quickly, he had been seen. Already telephone messages had been sent, and troops were converging on the spot. The first inkling Ling and the Watcher had of this was a rifle shot

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in good time, Chums.

that crashed against the building where they stood.

Ling dashed into the open, dragging the Watcher and his coil of cable.

They cleared the railings around St. Paul's with a bound, and began to climb the edifice. As there was

very little footing at the rear, they ran round to the front of the building. Up the pillars Ling went, the Watcher following.

Had he hesitated, the troops would have been upon them. As it was, the soldiers were at some distance.

Horses clattered in the distance, but in the gloom the two ape-men could not be seen.

(Be sure and read the concluding chapters of this powerful yarn in next week's bumper free gift issue of the MAGNET.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WELL, chums, I need hardly ask if you've sampled the bar of Walters' Strawberry-Flavoured Toffee which was presented free with this issue! It was prime, wasn't it? And you'll say the same about

OUR FOURTH SPLENDID FREE GIFT

which will accompany next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET. Do you remember the old catch-phrase: "Have a banana?" Well, I'm going to alter it to: "Have a banana-flavoured bar of toffee!" And there's no leg pull about it, either! It's real toffee, scrumptious toffee, and personally I like the banana-flavoured toffee the best of all.

ORDER NOW!

I am expecting the biggest rush ever for next Saturday's MAGNET in which will be given FREE a bar of delicious banana-flavoured toffee. Be sure, then, to follow my oft-given advice and order your copy in good time!

Now for some special news! As you all know, my one great aim has been and always will be to give my myriad chums the best reading matter it is possible to obtain. Thus I count it as a feather in my cap to have persuaded Hedley Scott, who has written so many successes for the MAGNET, to step into the breach once again! Hedley Scott is never happier, so one of his friends told me, than when he's writing for the "Old Paper." Letters continue to arrive from readers asking for more yarns like "The Toughest Team in the League," "The Langdale Wanderers," "Nobby, the Shooting Star!" and numerous other masterpieces from this famous author's pen. Well, Hedley Scott is now concentrating on a thrilling yarn of sport and detective adventure featuring Ferrers Locke, the greatest detective of all time! Keep a sharp look-out, then, for the opening chapters of this stirring yarn which will appear in the MAGNET a fortnight from now! Meanwhile, you can spread the news far and wide among your chums and tell them that Saturday, February 24th, will be another red-letter day in the history of the MAGNET.

A WALTHAMSTOW reader writes to ask me if it is true that Chinese people eat such things as rats, and so on. They certainly do! And what's more

CHINESE LIKE CHOWS!

Chow dogs, I mean! It's a fact that chow dogs, some of them weighing as much as fifty pounds, are used as food in China. Another favourite Chinese delicacy are eggs that have been buried in the ground for 150 years! Sharks' fins also form "tit-bits" for the Chinese, to say nothing of birds' nests. The latter are

made into soup, which has quite a delicious taste. I know, because I've sampled some! As a matter of fact, the Chinese are not the only people who eat sharks. This might take a bit of swallowing, but it's true:

BRITISHERS EAT SHARKS!

You might even have eaten some yourself without knowing it! There are many varieties of sharks, and the variety which is found around the coasts of the British Isles is known as the common or picked dog-fish. That is its proper name, but in many localities it is called by different names, and is sold in the shops under these other names. It is not bad eating, and does not look like a shark—especially when the head is cut off. These fish are generally only a foot or two in length, but the biggest shark—the kind whose fins the Chinese eat—attains a length of 40 feet. The most voracious sharks in the world are the hammer-heads, so called because their heads bear a remarkable resemblance to a double-headed hammer. This is the species that chiefly attacks men.

HERE is a query which comes from John Warren, of Birmingham. John wants to know something concerning

THE MOST MYSTERIOUS ISLAND IN THE WORLD.

In the Pacific Ocean, two thousand miles from the coast of Chile, lies Easter Island—the island that has puzzled the whole of mankind. There are over 600 gigantic stone statues on this island, each of them from 30 to 70 feet in height, and some of them weighing up to 280 tons. They are estimated to be from 2,000 to 5,000 years old, and what no one can discover is how they got there, and who carved them.

Furthermore, there are two hundred ancient tombs on the island, some of them 300 feet in length. Whose tombs are they? No one knows. It is suggested, however, that at one time there was a vast continent in the Pacific which sank beneath the sea. Easter Island, which contains the crater of an extinct volcano, is supposed to have been the highest part of this continent, and the only part which did not sink beneath the sea. At the present time there are two hundred Kanakas and only one white man living on the island, which belongs to Chile.

Here is a further selection of

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE,

in response to a number of queries from various readers:

The Man Who Liked Prison! When the

New York Was Sold for a Pound! The earliest Dutch settlers bought the island of Manhattan, upon which New York now stands, for the equivalent of £1, from a local Indian chief. The island is now probably the most valuable piece of land in the whole world!

Snakes are Sacred in Zululand. The Zulus believe that snakes have the souls of dead people. Therefore, they will never kill or harm them.

The Legless Man Who Walks! An American whose legs have been cut off at the knees, walked on the stumps for a distance of 600 miles!

There's Hair! A Russian at the court of Ivan the Terrible owned a beard that was 5 ft. 2 in. in length. But an American beat this record with a beard that touched the floor when he stood on a chair!

A Man with Two Hearts! A native of Naples was born with two hearts. He sold his body to an English medical society for over £16,000!

I think that's enough to be going on with for the time being.

JACK CARTER, of Yarmouth, asks the following question:

WHY IS THE PLANET MARS RED IN COLOUR?

The reason given by scientists is that the surface of Mars is largely composed of deserts which have an ochre hue. But some parts of Mars have a bluish-green colour which varies with the seasons, thus seeming to show that there is a great deal of vegetation also. The polar regions of Mars are white in colour, showing that there is snowfall there the same as on the earth. These things show that life could exist upon Mars.

The lines which are to be seen traversing the surface of Mars are generally termed canals, and it is held by some people that these canals show that Mars is inhabited, and that the canals were made to bring the melted snow of the Polar regions down to the desert portions of the planet. But, of course, no one knows for certain whether Mars is inhabited or not.

Now for next week's "Super Productions"—as the cinema people say.

"THE VANISHED SCHOOLBOYS!" By Frank Richards,

is undoubtedly a "super" story, and one that you won't want to put down until you've read every word of it. You'll chuckle with delight at the amusing scrapes which Billy Bunter—and some of the other characters—get into. Bunter, of course, makes some of his usual blunders and as a result—but wait until you read the yarn. It's a winner, I can tell you!

As you will have gathered, our serial "When the Great Apes Came," comes to a close next week, but you can bank on a feast of thrills, nevertheless.

The "Greyfriars Herald" and the shorter features will appear as usual, and I will do my best to answer a number of readers' queries which, for lack of space I have been compelled to hold over this week.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Very well! I am here to take him away! Produce him!"

Dr. Locke fairly gasped. Mr. Vernon-Smith rather took his breath away. There was a pause—during which a fat cackinnation floated into the room from under the window.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, the old bean's in a frightful rage! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter certainly did not mean that remark to be heard in the study. But it was heard! Dr. Locke started and coloured. Mr. Vernon-Smith gave an angry snort and strode to the window.

He glared out—and a grinning, fat face suddenly ceased to grin at the sight of him.

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Billy Bunter, as a large hand reached down and smote a fat ear.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey! Yow-ow-ow!" Bunter jumped away just in time to escape another smack.

Slam!

The window closed with a terrific concussion. Mr. Vernon-Smith swung round to the Head again.

"I have said, sir, that I am waiting!" he snorted. "Am I to understand, sir, that, after informing me that my son was expelled from this school, you decline to hand him over to his parent?"

"Certainly not!" gasped the Head.

"Then produce him, sir!"

"Pray listen to me, Mr. Vernon-Smith! Your son was directed to come to my study yesterday morning to receive his sentence of expulsion. Instead of that, he surreptitiously left the school—"

Snort!

"I am greatly surprised and dismayed to hear that he has not reached home," said the Head. "No doubt he will arrive—"

Tap! It was a knock at the Head's door. The door opened, and Tom Redwing of the Remove stepped in. Mr. Vernon-Smith gave him a stare, the Head a frown.

"Redwing, you should not come here now!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Go away at once—"

"Let the boy speak!" boomed Mr. Vernon-Smith. "This boy Redwing was my son's close friend; he may know something of him."

Nothing would have pleased the Head better than for the Bounder to have put

in an appearance, so that he could depart from Greyfriars with his father.

"I don't know where Smithy is now, sir," said Redwing. "But—"

"But what?" barked Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"He spoke to me for a few minutes yesterday morning," said Tom. "He had to go and pack his box, so there was time for only a few words. I think I ought to tell you what he said, sir, now that he can't be found."

"Certainly!" said Dr. Locke. "Did he acquaint you with his intention of running away from school, Redwing?"

"No, sir; and I am quite sure that he never intended anything of the kind," said Redwing earnestly. "I fear very much, sir, that something must have happened to him."

"What!" exclaimed the Head.

"Nonsense!" grunted Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Tell me what my son said to you."

"He said, sir, that he hoped that Dr. Locke would give him another chance if he succeeded in finding Bob Cherry and bringing him back to the school."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head blankly.

"Bob Cherry! Who—what—is that the name of the boy who, I have heard, was kidnapped here some time ago?" barked Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Yes, I remember! What could my son possibly know about a boy who disappeared from the school weeks ago, Redwing?"

"I don't know, sir. Everybody believes that Bob is hundreds of miles away, as he was carried off in an aeroplane. I don't understand what Smithy was driving at. But I'm sure of this, sir—he had found out something, or suspected something, and he really hoped that he might be able to find Bob, and that it would cause Dr. Locke to give him another chance if he did. I'm absolutely certain, sir, that when Smithy left the school yesterday morning, it was in the belief that he might be able to find Bob and bring him back to Greyfriars."

The Head and Mr. Vernon-Smith stared blankly at Tom Redwing. Neither spoke, and Tom went on earnestly:

"I'm certain, sir, that that's why he went. He hoped to pull through here if he found Bob. And—and I'm awfully afraid that something must have happened to him; he may have fallen into some danger in looking for Bob Cherry, and—"

The Head's face expressed only astonishment. But Mr. Vernon-Smith looked very keenly and searchingly at Redwing. He knew his son's chum well, and knew that he was not a fellow to

speak idly. There was no doubt that the millionaire was deeply and intensely angry with his son for coming such a "mucker" at his school. But the possibility of danger to him had a calming effect on his wrath. He turned sharply to the Head:

"Nothing has been learned of the boy Cherry, sir?"

"Nothing as yet."

"My son appears to have thought—"

"Your son must have spoken idly, if Redwing remembers him correctly. There is no reason whatever to suppose—"

"One word, sir! Had my son, as he suggested to Redwing, succeeded in bringing the kidnapped boy back, was his hope justified that you would have rescinded his sentence and given him another chance here?"

"I—I—I presume that—that in such circumstances—doubtless— But it is useless to discuss that, as it is impossible. You may leave my study, Redwing!"

Tom Redwing quietly left the study. The Head glanced at the clock. At the same moment Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced at his watch.

"It is useless for me to wait, sir, as you cannot produce my son," said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Quite!" agreed the Head. "Doubtless, when you return home, you will find him there. I certainly hope so!"

"I hope so also! But if I do not, I shall conclude that there is something in what the boy Redwing has told us, and that my son may have fallen foul of a kidnapping gang. In that case, sir, you will see me here again very shortly."

And Mr. Vernon-Smith tramped out of the study, leaving the Head quite dismayed by the prospect.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched the millionaire's car roll away from Greyfriars. Mr. Vernon-Smith was gone—without his son!

Where was Smithy?

That question could be answered no more than the question—where was Bob Cherry? But in Tom Redwing's mind, at least, was a growing conviction that the answer to both questions was the same.

THE END.

(Now look out for: "THE VANISHED SCHOOLBOYS!" the fourth grand story in this splendid series which will appear in next week's FREE GIFT ISSUE of the MAGNET. Avoid the rush by ordering your copy in good time!)



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10-2-34

NICE QUIET LAD—
Required to play the gramophone at my party next Saturday evening. Write, stating qualifications and payment wanted. No replies will be sent to applicants who claim to have broken all "records" at their last job!—
H. VERNON-SMITH, c/o GREY-FRIARS HERALD.

MY WORST AND BEST EXPERIENCE

By Lord Mauleverer
I suppose you all think I'm going to mainly efforts to attain the true happiness of manual labour. But they simply wouldn't let me attain it! By the time I crawled back into bed the bitterness of defeat was firmly installed in the depths of the heart. All I had done was to convince the faithful old retainers that there were bats in my belfry. The joys of hard work were evidently not for me!
It had been my very worst experience.
My best experience happened at the beginning of one of the hols last year, when a perambulating pumpkin named Bunter threatened to blight my life by accepting a non-existent invitation to stay with me at Mauleverer Towers!
In vain, I pointed out to the amiable old parson that I was going home for a rest cure, that there would be nothing and nobody for him to do, and that crowds of other chappies were more deserving of his company than I.
Bunter had made up his mind to come, and that seemed an end to the matter!
I can assure you, old pals, the prospect was the opposite of pleasing. Bunter is amusing and all that, and I welcome him, when there are plenty of other chappies about on whom he can inflict his delightful conversation. But the mere thought of Bunter on his lonely own sent icy shivers down my normally warmish spinal column, and the more I considered the hols that loomed ahead, the more agitated I grew.
Then breaking-up day came. And Bunter, for reasons into which I have never inquired, didn't turn up, after all! The joy—the relief—the warm, palpitating reaction! Begad, they were such as I have never known before! Without a word of a lie, dear friends, that was the best experience of my life!
(Good old Mauly! And now look out, next week, for a bright and breezy contribution from our old chum, Tom Redwing!—Ed.)

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

Some fellows are serprized because the Third keep on moaning and groaning about being forced to fog; but it duzzent surprize me in the least.
As the old proverb remark: EVERY CROWD HAS A WILL FOR WHINING!
"Cutting" Remark
Cecil Reginald Temple made a fearful mess of his first attempt at shaving, cutting his face in several places.
We don't suppose you'll notice much difference, though. Temple always did have an awful "check," anyway!

FLOODLIT BIKE-RACE IN DORM

Disaster Crowns Record Run
One of the most exciting forms of indoor sport ever introduced to Greyfriars made its first bow to the Remove in the dormitory last Tuesday evening, when Harold Skinner promoted a cycle-race meeting on a track consisting of the aisle between the two rows of beds!
To mark the occasion, Skinner had put up a solid iron cup for presentation to the champion rider of the evening. His liberality was well rewarded, for the spectators were treated to a thrilling evening's entertainment!
On two jiggers which had been smuggled in for the purpose before bedtime, the Remove's finest cyclists rode off their heats in a thoroughly business-like fashion. Some quite remarkable speeds were recorded. Bolsover, on one occasion, doing the length of the dorm in three seconds!
Unfortunately, this competitor used more footwork than brainwork, and in the second stage of the competition collided with a locker and was thrown over the handlebars.
The State of Bhamapur is after eating Bunter's chief fabulously rich, and when Hurriet interest is sleeping. He even went Singh comes to rule over it, he sleep on Speech Day—and will have absolute power. "Inky" Lartied a school governor in the makes no bones about obeying middle of a speech with a deep, perfects like Wingate, though!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Peter Todd has taken up short-hand, and can already do sixty words a minute. Today finds it a great help with the copious notes he has to make in his legal studies.
George Bulstrode has a taste for Polar exploration, and says he hopes some day to reach both the North and South Poles. He is known to be an extremely determined fellow!

HIGHBROWS PREFER CHINESE MUSIC

"Barbaric Beauty!"—says Rake
Rake then led the way to Wm Lung's study in the Remove passage.
Outside, he paused, and remarked: "In the music to which you will now listen, you will detect the inexplicable weird and haunting mystery of the Orient. Every chord is full of a strange, barbaric beauty. Every note—but how can words describe it? Come! You will hear for yourself!"
He walked into Study No. 13 and asked Wm Lung to play us a Chinese tune.
Wm Lung, quite happy to oblige, produced an old salomon-tin and a coconut shell, hit them hard and often with a couple of dessert spoons, and yelled "Ai - ai - ai - ai!" in a strangled voice. What's more, he kept it up for half an hour.
"Beautiful, wasn't it?" asked Rake, afterwards, in a voice choked with emotion. But our Musio Correspondent was too overcome to reply. Words completely failed him!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Mr. From, sailed forth to pay a visit to his old school, and was easily flattered, and "funky" follows like Snoop pretend friend in return for his favours. Snoop's friendship is not worth much, however!
Like most bullies, Percy Bolsover is easily flattered, and "funky" follows like Snoop pretend friend in return for his favours. Snoop's friendship is not worth much, however!

SARK MONSTER ON LAND

Fags in Frenzied Flight
The mystery of the Sark Monster took a dramatic turn this week. Hitherto, eye-witnesses have gone further than to describe it as a large, scaly, greenish creature, in the persons of George Tubb and Jack Wingate, now claim to have seen it crawling out of its natural element on to dry land!
Our reporter, interviewing the youngsters soon after their return to Greyfriars, managed to piece together their somewhat disjointed story and eventually arrived at the following result:
Tubb and Wingate minor were strolling along the towpath near the boat-house, indulging in acrimonious argument as to who was the best footballer in the school. Tubb favoured North, and Wingate minor his major, and their difference of opinion became so acute that they at last threw off their jackets and started planting knuckles in each other's eyes.
Scarcely had they warmed up to the scrap, however, when a sudden commotion in the water caused them both to drop their fists and look towards the water. What they saw fairly made them gasp!
Struggling through the reeds at the side of the Sark towards the sloping bank was an eerie creature which they both knew at once to be the Monster!
It is rather difficult to reconstruct a picture of the monster for our readers' benefit, as the two witnesses vary considerably in their respective accounts of it.
Tubb says that it had about fifty legs and several eyes and an enormous tail.
Wingate minor says that it had no legs at all, only one eye, and a large number of tails.
Their estimates of its length are equally at variance. Tubb says it was somewhere between forty and four hundred feet long, and Wingate says it was only one yard long.
Q: Why did the jam roll?
A: Because it saw the apple turn over.

Think So Now, Fishy?

Borrowing Fisher T. Fish's brand-new all-steel ice-racers without the owner's permission, Bunter ventured out on the frozen Sark last week. In the space of one jiffy, he had collided with a fallen tree-trunk and ruined his borrowed footwear completely.
Yet in the past fishy has always called Bunter a "cheap skate!"
He's Asking For It!
The housebreaker who robbed the Hoard of £20 in notes last week has just been arrested. He says he'll refund the money in full if only they'll give him time.
We suggest that they give him six months!

HUSH-HUSH CONCERT
Artists wanted for midnight Hush-Hush Concert (date not yet fixed). Singers, musicians, and talkers barred—jugglers, conjurers, trapeze performers, etc., welcome, but must guarantee a hundred per cent. silent show.—Apply, WILLIAM WIBLEY, Remove Dormitory.