

"STANDING BY SMITHY!" Amazing Complete Story of Schoolboy Adventure **By Frank Richards!**

The Magnet ^{2^D}





COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

ONE of the things I like best is opening letters from old readers—readers who have remained loyal to the MAGNET ever since the first issue appeared. This week has brought me two such letters from "girl" readers. I call them "girl" readers, for I am sure that anyone who can read and appreciate our splendid stories for all that time will always be young in spirit.

The first letter comes from "Sub-Rosa," of Liverpool. She has been reading boys' stories since the late nineties, and bought a copy of the first MAGNET published. Since then she has read the Old Paper regularly. Furthermore, she has also taken in our companion paper, "The Gem," since its first issue. This is certainly a record of which she can be proud.

So is the record of another friend, who signs herself "A Birmingham Reader." When a girl, she commenced to read the MAGNET regularly. She is now married, and has a son who is twelve years of age. The son reads the MAGNET also, and his mother tells me that she is still as interested in the doings of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, as she was when she was a schoolgirl.

Well, when a paper can hold its grip on its readers for such a long time, without waning in popularity, you can be sure that there's something extra-special about it. And I can assure you that I am going to do my utmost to see that the Old Paper always tops the list of boys' (and girls') periodicals for popularity!

One of the most curious things that have happened recently well deserves a paragraph in this little chat of mine. It concerns

THE CAT THAT WRECKED A WAR-SHIP!

You'd hardly think that a pet cat could cause the wreck of a war-vessel. But it happened not so very long ago. The cat was a pet aboard the British sloop Hastings, and suddenly went wild while the ship was some distance from Port Sudan. It bit and scratched several of the crew. It was suspected that the cat was mad, and to prevent any of the bitten and scratched men from developing hydrophobia, it was decided to run for port immediately, and land the men for expert medical treatment. In making for Port Sudan, the sloop ran on a shoal, sixty miles out to sea, and ultimately had to be abandoned. So the loss of the ship was directly responsible to a pet cat!

I met a fellow the other day who had just returned from Persia, and he described that country to me as

THE LAND OF BEGGAR PRINCES!

It appears that there are so many people who style themselves "princes" in Persia that any amount of the beggars in the streets call themselves "Prince" This-or-That. The reason is as follows: Persia as you know, is a very ancient country, and all the sons of the original Shahs were given the title of prince. This

title was passed down to every succeeding generation. As the old Shahs had vast numbers of sons, and these, in their turn had sons, the number of people who were allowed to call themselves princes increased tremendously. And you can easily imagine that in a few thousand years the number of princes has become so great that there are possibly as many princes in Persia as there are men without that title. In fact, ordinary civilians seem to be more rare in Persia than princes!

For those of you who like figure puzzles and tricks, here is an interesting paragraph which has been passed on to me by a Brentford reader. It concerns

THE MYSTERIOUS NUMBER 9!

First of all write down the figures:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9

Note that the figure 8 does not appear. Multiply this number by 9, and you will get 111,111,111. Now multiply the number above by any multiple of 9—for instance, 18, which is 9 multiplied by 2. The answer is 222,222,222. Multiply the same number by 27, which is 9 multiplied by 3, and the answer will be 333,333,333. Now, here comes the curious thing: Whenever you multiply the above figure by any multiple of 9, the answer is always a string of the figures by which you have first multiplied 9. For instance, if you multiply the number by 45—which is 9 by 5—the answer is a string of fives. Multiply by 63, which is seven times nine, and the answer is a string of sevens! Try it out for yourselves, chums. It's most interesting!

NOW for a further selection of THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

A Railway Station Called "Wait"! When a train draws up at the station of Pockaj, in Czechoslovakia, the porters yell out to the passengers to wait! The reason is that Pockaj is the Czechoslovakian word for "wait"!

A Man with 13 Pairs of Ribs! Most people are satisfied with 12 pairs of ribs. A baker in Auckland, New Zealand, who was X-rayed recently, was found to have 13 pairs of ribs. The extra pair of ribs has had to be removed.

Swan's Wings can Break a Man's Arm! Swans are most truculent birds, and can deliver blows of great force with their wings. Several cases are known of men's arms having been broken by a blow from a swan's wing.

A Spider that Catches Birds! The giant, poisonous bird-eating spider of Brazil catches its prey by leaping upon them from the limbs of trees, killing the birds and then eating them.

Beetles Six Inches Long! Brazil is the home of giant insects. The Titan Beetle, found there, attains a length of six inches!

Fresh Water Is Found in the Atlantic Ocean! So much water is discharged from the mighty Amazon that the fresh

water extends for nearly two hundred miles into the Atlantic. So, while surrounded by salt water, it is possible to obtain fresh water nearly two hundred miles away from land!

Those of my chums who are interested in card tricks, may also like to know the following

STRANGE FACTS ABOUT CARDS.

Did you know, for instance, that a pack of playing cards is also a calendar? Well, there are fifty-two cards in a pack—and there are fifty-two weeks in the year. There are twelve picture-cards in a pack, and twelve months in the year. There are four suits in a pack, and four seasons of the year. There are thirteen tricks in a pack, and thirteen weeks in a quarter.

Now write down the names of the cards in a pack—ace, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, jack, queen, king. The total number of letters are fifty-two—the same as the number of cards in a pack!

Furthermore, write down the names in French—as, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix, valet, reine, roi. There are fifty-two letters again—the same as in English. Strange, isn't it?

HERE'S an interesting query from F. H., of Surbiton. He asks: HOW MUCH IS A BILLION?

Actually there are two methods of stating what a billion is. In England we call a billion a million millions, but in the United States they say that a billion is only one thousand millions. In this country we have no billionaires, whereas, in America there have been several. The difference in the method of estimating the billion accounts partly for this. Another factor is that the dollar is only worth a fifth of a pound, so that a billionaire in dollars really is not quite so rich as he sounds—though rich enough to satisfy most people!

Germany counts a billion as a million millions, the same as we do in England. But there have been millions of billionaires in Germany—reckoned in German marks. Some years ago, when Germany was flooded with paper money, there was so much of it that the value of it dropped heavily. Just before the mark was stabilised, it was possible to buy eighteen billion paper marks for £1. So you could be a billionaire for little over a shilling!

I expect you are all wondering what I have in store for you next week. You'll certainly enjoy:

"SAVED FROM THE SACK!"

By Frank Richards,

which is the title of the latest yarn this popular author has written for you. Frank Richards continues to remain at the top of his form, and it is not an exaggeration to say that there is no other author of boys' stories to touch him, when it comes to giving a real, good, rattling, rousing tale of school life. Be sure, then, and enjoy reading next week's story, chums.

You'll be thrilled with the splendid chapters of "Moose Call!" too. The only fault you'll find is that there are not more chapters of this great adventure story. But I must have some space left for the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement, another interview by our clever Greyfriars Rhymeaster, and my own little chat.

Here's looking forward to next week, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

STANDING BY SMITHY!



Featuring Harry Wharton & Co., and Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Another Black Eye!

"SMITHY!"

"What—?"

"How—?"

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Smithy's got a black eye!"

The Greyfriars quadrangle was crowded with fellows, in break, in the sunny July morning. Most of them were gathered in groups, engaged in excited discussion.

One name was on almost every tongue—that of Harry Wharton.

All the school knew that Wharton of the Remove was locked in the punishment-room, waiting to be taken before the Head. Few doubted that he was going to be "sacked."

Which was more than enough to thrill Greyfriars School with excitement. Not only the Remove, but fellows of other Forms were deeply interested, even great men of the Sixth Form.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh had faces as long as fiddles. They were wondering dismally whether they would see their chum again before he left.

But even the famous Co. forgot Wharton for a moment, as Herbert Vernon-Smith appeared in the offing. Their eyes, and many other eyes, fixed on the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Hardly ten minutes ago Smithy, in the Form-room with the Remove, had presented his usual and normal aspect. Now he was displaying a prominent black eye!

Black eyes were quite uncommon at

Greyfriars School. Accidents, of course, would happen, and occasionally a fellow bagged one. Still, they were rare.

Wharton had a black eye. But everybody knew how Wharton had got it. Billy Bunter had punched him in the eye in mistake for his relative and double, Stacey of the Remove. Everybody—except Wharton—had laughed over the fat Owl's absurd blunder. But

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER!

No one realises this more than Harry Wharton, who has been pulled out of a desperate scrape by Vernon-Smith. Now comes Wharton's chance to stand by the Bounder. Does he hesitate?

Wharton's discoloured optic had been the only one in the school till now. Now Smithy was displaying one to the general gaze!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where did you pick up that eye, Smithy?"

"Is it raining black eyes?" asked Nugent.

Smithy laughed.

He did not seem at all disconcerted by the fact that he had a blackened eye. A fellow in such a state might have been expected to look annoyed, at

least. But the Bounder looked quite merry and bright.

"Does it show much?" he asked.

"Does it?" gasped Johnny Bull. "Yes, rather, it does! It do! I could see it a mile off!"

"The showfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Think Quelch will notice it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Think?" repeated Bob. "You ass, of course he will spot it at once. He could see it now from his window if he looked out."

"Good!" said the Bounder. "I'll let him see it. He made rather a fuss over Wharton's black eye. Now he can make a fuss over mine."

Smithy walked along the path under masters' windows. The study window of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was open, and the Form-master could be seen within. The Bounder walked past the open window, and the juniors stared at him in amazement.

"Well, Smithy's the man to ask for trouble!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"He seems to want Quelch to see it!" said Nugent, in wonder.

That clearly was the Bounder's desire. He stopped outside Mr. Quelch's window, and stood facing it at a little distance. Quelch had not noticed him yet, but he could not fail to do so if he glanced out.

Certainly Quelch was certain to spot that eye when he took the Remove in third school after break. He was certain to inquire the cause of such a

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disfigurement, and unless a very good explanation could be given, to administer punishment. Still, most fellows would have put off the evil hour as long as possible. Instead of which, the Bounder was deliberately drawing his Form-master's attention to that discoloured eye. And as Quelch did not lift his head from the papers that occupied him, Smithy began to whistle—loudly and shrilly. That drew Quelch's attention immediately. Fellows were not allowed to whistle under masters' windows.

Quelch glanced out.

His eyes fell on the Bounder.

Fifty fellows, at least, looked on breathlessly, as Quelch was seen to rise from his table and step to the window.

The Remove master's brow was knitted, and there was a glitter in his gimlet eyes.

Quelch was not in the best of tempers. He was naturally perturbed and peeved by the fact that a boy in his Form was to be expelled that day. Certainly he was in no humour to be lenient with any other offender in his Form.

He almost glared at the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!"

"Your eye is blackened!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you been fighting, Vernon-Smith?"

"No, sir."

"Then how," hooted Mr. Quelch, "did your eye come to be in that disgraceful state of disfigurement?"

"I did it myself, sir."

"You did it yourself?" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly. "Do you mean that you knocked your eye on something by accident?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You have not had an accident?"

"Not at all, sir."

Mr. Quelch gazed from his study window at the Bounder. A crowd of fellows, increasing in number every moment, gazed at him also. Smithy's manner was perfectly cool and calm. He answered his Form-master's questions without turning a hair. Judging by Smithy's manner, it might have been quite a common and ordinary thing for a fellow to give himself a black eye by way of adornment!

The juniors could only conclude that Smithy was deliberately pulling Quelch's leg. Quelch came to the same conclusion.

Thunder gathered in his brow.

Quelch's leg was about as safe to pull as the tail of a tiger in the jungle.

"Do you mean to say, Vernon-Smith, that you intentionally gave yourself a black eye for no reason?" he thundered.

"I had a reason, sir."

"What? What do you mean?"

"I wanted you to see it, sir."

"You—you—you wanted me to see it?" repeated Mr. Quelch, like a man in a dream.

"Yes, sir."

"This is impertinence, Vernon-Smith! This is insolence! Go up to the Form-room at once, and wait there till I come. I shall cane you severely."

"Very well, sir!"

The Bounder walked away to the door, still cool and calm. He winked at the staring crowd, as he went, with the eye that was not blackened. He went into the House, leaving a buzzing crowd behind him in the quad.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, "if ever a man asked for it, Smithy has!"

"The askfulness was terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, Smithy will get a

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fearful whopping!" grinned Billy Bunter.

"Serve him right, for cheeking Quelch like that!" growled Johnny Bull.

"But what on earth is his game?" asked Frank Nugent, perplexed. "What is Smithy up to? What has he done it for?"

But nobody could answer these questions. No doubt Herbert Vernon-Smith had a motive for his extraordinary actions. But what it was was a mystery to the other fellows. Smithy had asked for it, and there was no doubt that he would get that for which he had asked. When the bell rang for third school, the Remove headed for their Form-room—with the expectation of seeing the Bounder of Greyfriars get the licking of his life.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Prisoner in "Punny."

HARRY WHARTON moved restlessly about the narrow space of the punishment-room.

Bright as was the July sunshine streaming down on the quadrangle and the grey old buildings, that apartment was dusky.

The window was small, almost like a loophole in the thick, ancient wall, and strongly barred; outside thick ivy clustered.

On the bare floor of worn old oak planks his footsteps echoed as he paced to and fro. That was the only sound that came to his ears, for the room was far from the occupied parts of the building, at the end of a long corridor. The oaken door was locked on the outside. He was shut up alone; left to his own thoughts, which were gloomy enough.

Breakfast had been brought to him by Trotter, the page, and he had been allowed to walk out for half an hour under the eye of a prefect, Wingate of the Sixth, while the rest of the school were in Form.

Then he had been locked in again, and, though it was little more than an hour ago, it seemed to him ages since he had heard a human voice, so solitary and silent was the punishment-room.

When was the Head going to send for him?

His fate depended on the interview with Dr. Locke. Mr. Quelch had made no secret of his belief that he would be expelled from Greyfriars. All that term he had been in trouble, and this was the culmination. Several times he had narrowly escaped; this time he was not going to escape.

Yet it was difficult for him to realise that that day was almost certainly his last at the old school, that before the sun set he would be home at Wharton Lodge—to face the stern, inquiring eyes of his uncle and guardian. Was he not even to see his friends again?

He looked at his watch.

It was morning break now; the fellows would be out of the Form-rooms—his friends in the quad thinking of him, he was sure, but unable to see him, or speak to him.

He stopped his weary pacing at the little window, held on to the bars and pulled himself up a little to look out. The punishment-room looked out on the grounds at the back of the school buildings; he had a view of the kitchen gardens and old Mumble, the gardener, at work there, with a hoe in his hand, small in the distance. A glimpse of his friends would have been a comfort to him; they might have come round to look up and wave a hand, though they could not call to him. But it was prob-

able that Mr. Quelch had given them strict injunctions to keep clear.

One junior met his eyes, standing there and looking up—it was Ralph Stacey of the Remove.

Wharton's brows knitted and his eyes gleamed as he stared down at his rival and enemy.

Looking at Stacey he might almost have fancied that he was looking at his own reflection in a mirror, so strangely alike were the two, though they were only distant relatives.

But at the moment there was one marked distinction between them—the blackened eye that disfigured Harry's face.

Stacey was standing with his hands in his pockets, staring up at the little barred window, with an expression on his face that was hard to read.

The little window was open, but Wharton could not put his head out; the bars were too close for that. Probably he was invisible to the junior below, in the dusky room, but Stacey stood out clear to his eyes in the sunlight.

Another figure came in sight round the buildings—Lord Mauleverer of the Remove. Wharton's frowning face cleared as he saw Mauly.

Mauly was one of the few fellows who still stood by him; Mauly was the man to stick to a fellow who was down.

Stacey gave a little start as Mauleverer came along, sauntering with his hands in his pockets. Wharton above watched the two of them.

Mauleverer did not seem to see Stacey; he ignored his existence completely, though he came to a halt within six feet of him.

He put his head back and stared up at the window. Harry Wharton put a hand out between the bars and waved.

"Oh, you're there, Wharton, old bean!" called out Mauleverer.

"Yes, Mauly!" called back Wharton. The window was high, and he had almost to shout.

Stacey broke in.

"You'd better take care, Mauleverer! If a prefect hears you you'll get into a row for this! Speaking to a fellow in punny—"

"Mind mindin' your own bizney?" asked Lord Mauleverer politely.

"Walker of the Sixth is not far away—"

"I've asked you to mind your own bizney, Stacey! You're interruptin' me." Lord Mauleverer looked up again and called: "Wharton, old scout!"

"Yes, Mauly?"

"I've staggered round to tell you to keep your pecker up, old bean. The game's not up yet."

Wharton smiled faintly. It was like old Mauly to chance it with the prefects and come round to give him a word of encouragement.

"I've got somethin' to tell you, old thing," went on Mauleverer. "Smithy's up to somethin'."

"Smithy?" repeated Wharton.

"Yaas! The old Bounder's standin' by you, and he's got somethin' up his sleeve. I don't know what—but somethin'. So keep a stiff upper lip, old man!"

"Right-ho!" called back Wharton.

"Here comes Walker," said Stacey, with a sneer.

Evidently the shouts had been heard. Walker of the Sixth came striding up with a frown on his brow.

"What are you juniors doing here?" snapped Walker. "You jolly well know you're not allowed to speak to a man in punny! Get out of it!"

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer politely. "Anythin' to oblige, Walker." He waved his hand to the barred window and sauntered away.

Stacey followed, and then Walker. Evidently Quelch had warned the prefects to keep an eye open; otherwise, there would have been a rush to the spot in break and a crowd staring up at the window of the punishment-room.

Wharton dropped back from the barred window.

His face was less clouded now.

It had done him good to see Mauly's kind, friendly face; and Mauly's words, mysterious as they were, gave him some comfort—though he could not begin to imagine how Smithy could help him.

No doubt Smithy would if he could—all the more because he was on the bitterest terms with Stacey. But what could the Bounder do?

Wharton resumed pacing the narrow limits of the punishment-room. How long was this going to last? Whatever

unkindly, "you seem to have turned out a precious young rascal this term; but you used to be a decent kid enough, and I'm sorry to see you up for the sack. My advice to you is to make a clean breast of it to the Head and tell him nothing but the truth."

"Thank you for nothing!" retorted Wharton. "If I tell the Head anything, it will be the truth."

"You were telling a good many lies last night when you were caught out of bounds at two in the morning!" said Wingate gruffly.

"I was not out of bounds last night."

"Are you going to tell Dr. Locke that?"

"Certainly, as it's the truth!"

"Well, you're a young ass, as well as a young rascal!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Do you think the Head will

"You're sticking to that?" he demanded.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I've no choice about sticking to it, as it happens to be the truth!" he answered.

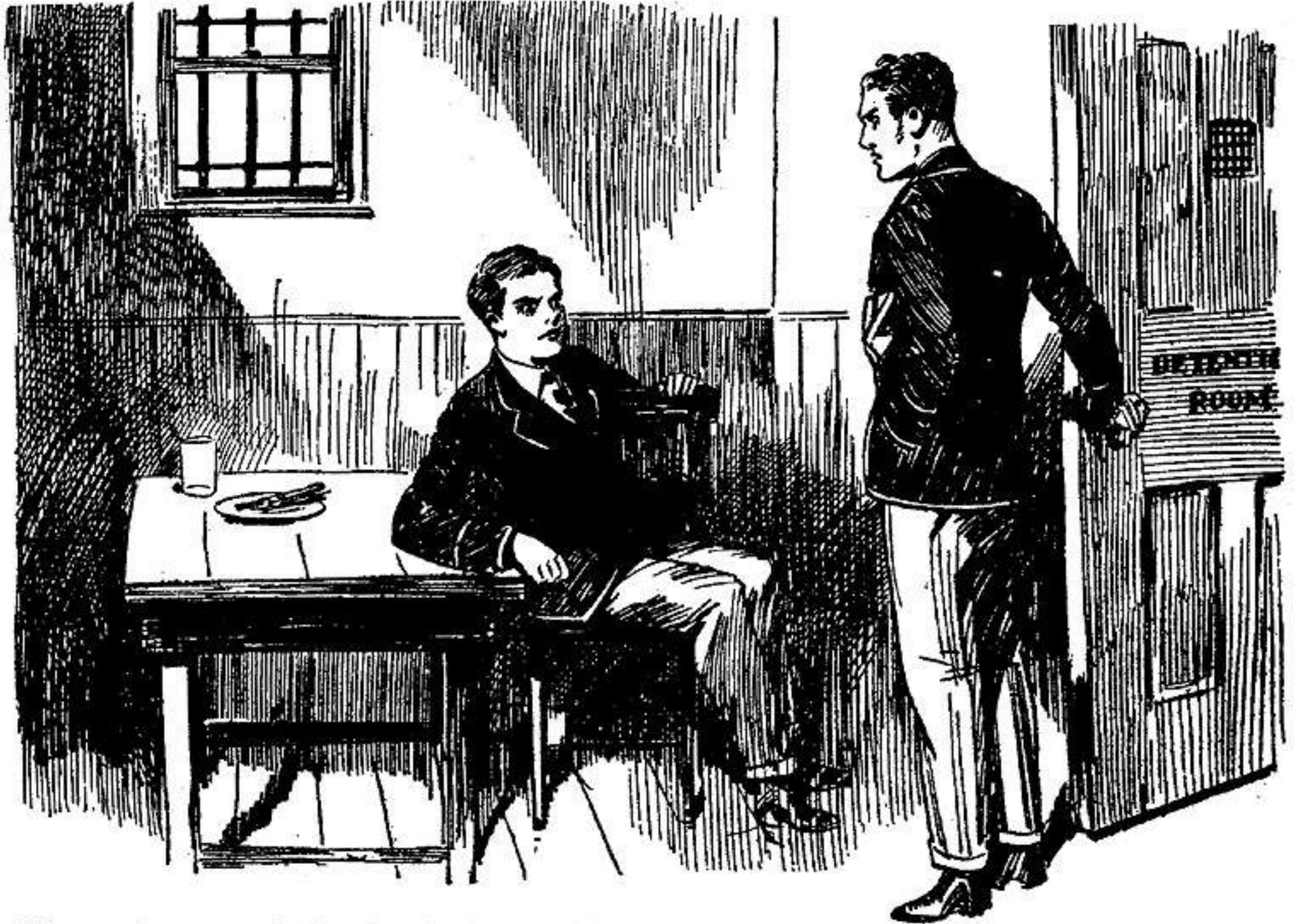
Wingate drew a deep breath.

"Well, I've given you good advice," he said. "If you won't take it, that's your look-out! Follow me to the Head now."

"I'm ready!"

And Harry Wharton followed the prefect out of the punishment-room, and down the long corridor. In silence they made their way to the Head's study.

Deep in his heart, Harry Wharton wondered whether his last hour at Greyfriars had come. Could it be possible that he was to shake the dust of the old school from his feet? It looked like it.



"I'm sorry to see you up for the sack, Wharton," said Wingate, not unkindly. "My advice to you is, to make a clean breast of it to the Head, and tell him that you were out of bounds last night." "It's a mistake!" said Wharton, coolly. "It was somebody else—somebody who has been mistaken for me before!"

was coming to him, he wished to face it and get it over.

From a distance, faintly, he heard the sound of a bell—it was the bell for third school.

The fellows would be going into the Form-rooms again now. His place in the Remove-room was vacant that day. Was it going to remain vacant?

The silence was broken at last; footsteps came along the corridor.

A key grated in the lock.

Harry Wharton faced the door as it opened. It was Wingate of the Sixth who came in. The Greyfriars captain gave the prisoner of the punishment-room a rather grim look.

"You're wanted now!" he said curtly.

"Ready!" said Harry.

Wingate scanned his face; he seemed to hesitate to speak, but he made up his mind to do so.

"Look here, kid," said Wingate not

take your word against Quelch's and Capper's and mine? All three of us saw you—"

"That's a mistake," said Wharton coolly. "You didn't see me; you saw somebody like me—and I needn't tell you his name, as you know who it is that has been mistaken for me before."

"You mean Stacey?" said Wingate.

"Well, as the fellow—whatever he was—got back to the Remove dormitory without being caught, I suppose you fancy you can make something out of a yarn like that. But you seem to forget that you have a black eye, and Stacey hasn't—and your black eye was seen."

"You couldn't have seen clearly," said Harry. "Anyhow, you made a mistake. I was fast asleep in bed till Quelch woke me up and accused me of having been out of the House."

Wingate made an angry and impatient gesture.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Row in the Remove!

"I SAY, you fellows! Quelch looks waxy!" whispered Billy Bunter. Bunter was right. Quelch did.

The Remove fellows, as they went into their Form-room for third school, easily read the expression on the speaking countenance of Henry Samuel Quelch, and realised that they had to be on their best behaviour.

Quelch, already perturbed and worried, had been still further exasperated by Smithy's black eye and his cheeky answers when questioned on the subject.

He was in no mood to be patient with the slightest infraction of discipline; even with a mere whisper in the Form-room as the fellows sat down! So Billy Bunter discovered.

The fat Owl of the Remove had certainly not intended Quelch to hear him. He forgot that Quelch's ears were almost as keen as his eyes, which had often been compared to gimlets for their sharpness.

"Bunter!" came a rumble from the Remove master.

Bunter jumped.

"Oh lor! I mean, yes, sir! I didn't speak, sir!"

"I heard you speak, Bunter!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped the fat Owl. "Not a word, sir! I never opened my lips! I only said to Skinner—"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! But—but I never said a word, sir!" gasped the dismayed Owl. "I shouldn't even think of saying you looked waxy, sir! I'm too respectful."

There was a subdued chuckle in the Remove. It died away under a glare from the gimlet eyes.

"Take two hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh scissors!"

Billy Bunter gave it up! Quelch evidently wasn't safe just then! The Owl of the Remove said no more.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on Smithy. The Bounder was already in his place when the Form came in. He sat at his desk, cool and cheerful—his black eye very much in evidence.

"Vernon-Smith!" rumbled the Remove master.

"Yes, sir!"

"Stand out before the Form."

The Bounder lounged out before the Form. All eyes were on him. His manner was perfectly cool—so very cool that it could not fail to have an irritating effect on Mr. Quelch.

A fellow who was the object of his Form-master's wrath, ought to have stepped out, if not in fear and trembling, at least very seriously and

solemnly. The Bounder, on the other hand, seemed slightly amused.

Mr. Quelch was grimly resolved to impress upon him that the matter was not amusing.

"You have a discoloured eye, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch. "Greyfriars boys are not allowed to present so disgraceful an appearance. You made impertinent answers when I questioned you as to its cause. I shall therefore not question you further, but shall immediately administer punishment."

The Remove master picked up the cane from his desk.

He pointed with it to a form.

"Bend over the end of that form, Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

"Are you going to cane me for this black eye, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith coolly.

"I am! Bend over that form at once!"

Mr. Quelch swished the cane.

Herbert Vernon-Smith seemed to hesitate for a moment or two. The Remove watched him breathlessly.

Then the Bounder obediently bent over the form.

Swish, swish, swish!

The cane rose and fell hard and fast. The swishes rang sharply through the Form-room.

Smithy was hard as nails; but he had to set his teeth to keep back a yell. Mr. Quelch was a somewhat severe gentleman, but he did not often lay it on so hard as this. Evidently he was intensely annoyed.

However, he checked himself after three swipes. He laid the cane on his desk, and the Bounder slowly rose, his lips shut hard.

"Go back to your place, Vernon-Smith!"

In silence the Bounder went back to his place. He wriggled painfully as he

sat down. His chum, Redwing, gave him a sympathetic grin. Mr. Quelch glanced over the Form. Every fellow seemed anxious not to meet his eye.

"Stacey!"

"Sir!" The head boy of the Remove rose.

"I have business with the Head!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall leave you in charge of the Form during my absence, Stacey."

"Very well, sir!"

The juniors exchanged quick glances. All the Form knew what Quelch's business with the Head was. Harry Wharton was going to be dealt with while his Form-fellows were in class.

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

"If you please, sir—"

"You need not speak, Cherry!"

"If—if Wharton is going, sir, may we see him before he goes?" asked Bob.

"You may not."

"But, sir—"

"Silence! Sit down at once, Cherry!"

Bob sat down.

"I shall be absent a short time," said Mr. Quelch, with a grim look at his Form. "If there is any disturbance in this Form-room while I am gone, I shall visit it with the most severe punishment. Stacey, you will give out the papers."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch quitted the Form-room and shut the door after him, leaving the Remove in charge of his head boy.

Stacey handed out Latin papers along the Form.

"My hat! Quelch is ratty this morning!" said Skinner. "You picked a bad day for pulling his leg, Smithy."

"Hurt, old man?" asked Peter Todd.

"Oh, no," answered the Bounder sarcastically. "I like it! I'm wriggling like this because I'm enjoying it."

"Why the dickens did you ask for it, then?" asked Hazeldene. "You seemed to be getting Quelch's rag out on purpose."

"Poor old Wharton!" said the Bounder, unheeding Hazel's question. "I suppose they've got him in the Head's study now."

"It's rotten!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jarnset Ram Singh, with a lugubrious dusky face.

"Well, dash it all, he must have expected it when he was caught out of bounds at two in the morning!" said Tom Brown.

"He wasn't!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" snapped Tom Brown. "He was seen by a prefect and two beaks! Isn't that evidence enough?"

"Not for me."

"Then you're a silly ass!"

"You fellows seem to have made up your minds that Wharton's going to be sacked!" sneered the Bounder. "He's not gone yet, and I've got an idea that he's not going."

"Don't talk so much, you fellows!" came Stacey's voice. "I don't want to be unpleasant; but Quelch has left me in charge! I shall get ragged if he comes back and hears a buzz going on."

"Oh, Quelch won't rag you!" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "Aren't you his jolly old favourite? Doesn't he make it a point to believe that Wharton does everything that you do out of bounds?"

"Chuck that, Smithy!" said Tom Brown sharply. "That chicken won't fight now. What happened last night proves plainly enough which of them goes out of bounds."

"It does!" agreed the Bounder, rising from his form. "And I'm going to put it to the Big Beak and try to make him see it."

Don't leave ME behind
when you go on
Holiday!



"HIGH JINKS AT GRIMSLADE"

When Dr. "Sammy" Sparshott gave Jim Dainty "marching orders" everyone reckoned they had seen the last of the toughest rebel in the Fourth Form. But like the proverbial bad ha'penny Jim turned up at the old school again—and that meant high jinks at Grimslade! If you are keen on good school yarns, then this is one you must not miss!

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"You're going to the Head?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

Stacey's eyes gleamed.

"You're not, Vernon-Smith!" he rapped sharply. "Quelch has left me in charge here, and no fellow can leave the Form-room. Take your place."

The Bouncer gave him a mocking look.

"Are you afraid of what I've got to say to the Head?" he asked. "Gettin' the wind up—what?"

Stacey gave him a black and bitter look.

So far as he could see, the Bouncer had nothing to say to the Head that could possibly influence the Big Beak in his decision regarding Wharton. But at the same time he was feeling inwardly uneasy.

He knew, if no one else did, that it was he who had been out of bounds the previous night, and had, by a cunning trick, landed the guilt on his double.

Discovery seemed impossible. He could discern no chink in his armour, yet he felt a thrill of deep uneasiness.

He crossed to the Form-room door, and put his back against it. As head boy, placed officially in charge by his Form-master, he had the right to keep fellows from going out of class.

"Sit down, Vernon-Smith!" he said savagely.

The Bouncer laughed.

"Do you think I'm taking orders from you, you cur?" he sneered. "Get away from that door!"

"You're not leaving this Form-room!"

"I fancy I am, and you're not stopping me!"

"I shall stop you fast enough, if you try it on!" said Stacey, between his teeth.

"Look here, Stacey, chuck it!" roared Bob Cherry angrily. "If Smithy's got something to say for Wharton—"

"Let him pass, you cheeky tick!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, jumping up from his place.

"You're not stopping him, Stacey!" Stacey's eyes blazed.

"Stand back, Vernon-Smith! I—"

The Bouncer marched straight at him, and Stacey, with blazing eyes, struck at him. Vernon-Smith returned the blow at once. He was not sorry to come to hard knocks with a fellow he disliked and despised.

In a moment they were fighting.

But the fight was swiftly interrupted. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Nugent and Hurree Singh rushed from their places. They grasped Stacey, and dragged him away from the Bouncer by main force.

"Chuck it, you cheeky cad!" growled Johnny Bull.

Stacey struggled fiercely in the grasp of the four.

"Thanks!" said the Bouncer coolly. "Keep that cad from buttin' in, you men! I'm goin'!"

Smithy walked out of the Form-room, and shut the door after him. Stacey wrenched at the hands that grasped him.

"Will you let me go?" he shouted.

"You're not going after Smithy!" said Bob. "You're not going to chip into this, Stacey!"

"I am! I—"

"You're jolly well not! Sit on him!" said Bob.

Bump!

The head boy of the Remove landed on the floor—hard! Bob Cherry sat on his chest. There was a chortle from the Remove.

"Help me, you fellows!" yelled Stacey.

Russell and Ogilvy rushed out of their places. They were Stacey's pals in Study No. 3 in the Remove, and quite ready to back him up.

But Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh barged them off. There was a wild scramble in the Remove-room. But Stacey remained where he was, with Bob Cherry sitting on his chest, pinning him down. If Herbert Vernon-Smith was able to help Harry Wharton in his extremity, Harry Wharton's double was not going to intervene.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Up for Judgment!

WINGATE tapped at the door of the Head's study.

"Here is Wharton, sir!"

"Thank you, Wingate!"

said Dr. Locke.

Wharton entered the study, and Wingate left him there. Mr. Quelch was in the study with the headmaster. He gave the junior a cold, hard, grim look, in return for which he received a glance of cool defiance that brought a glitter to his eyes.

Dr. Locke, sitting at his desk, surveyed the Removite keenly. His gaze dwelt with disapproval on Wharton's black eye. Neither did he approve of the boy's defiant glance at his Form-master.

But his face did not express the grim condemnation that was to be seen in Mr. Quelch's. Quelch, coming into daily contact with the fellow whom he now regarded as the worst boy in the Remove, had grown more and more incensed, until it was no longer easy for him to be just. The Head, who saw him seldom, had no personal irritation in the matter, and he was able to judge with more calmness, and remember that this boy had once had as good a reputation as any fellow at Greyfriars. The Head, in fact, was a man of cool and balanced judgment, as headmasters have to be, and generally are.

That either Wharton or his double, Stacey, was a "bad hat," was a certainty. All the evidence was against Wharton.

But one fact was strong in the Head's calm mind. Wharton's reputation had been good enough before Stacey came.

Last term he had been captain of the Remove, and head boy of that Form. Quelch had trusted him then.

It was, at least, a coincidence if his slipping into bad ways had taken place at the same time as the arrival of his double in the school.

The Head saw clearly that this fact weakened the evidence against him, overwhelming as it seemed to be.

Yet he had to judge by the evidence.

A headmaster could do nothing else. If Wharton was a reckless rascal, who broke bounds at night, and haunted disreputable resorts, he could not be allowed to remain at Greyfriars.

That was Quelch's fixed belief. But Dr. Locke still hoped that the junior might have something to say for himself. He had taken time to consider the matter before the boy was called into his presence for examination and judgment.

"Wharton," said the Head quietly, and not unkindly, "you know of what you are accused. Several times this term the same accusation has been made; but either it proved to be an error, or some element of doubt appeared to exist in the matter. Now it would seem that doubt no longer exists. Have you any confession to make?"

"No, sir,"

"Do you deny that you were out of the House last night at a late hour?"

"Yes, sir."

"A Remove junior was seen out of the House after midnight by Mr. Quelch, Mr. Capper, and Wingate of the Sixth Form. You are aware of that."

"I know."

"They all recognised you, Wharton. You were seen clearly in the light from an open doorway. You deny that you were seen?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Where were you at the time?"

"In bed, sir, and fast asleep."

The Head drummed on his table for a moment with his slim white fingers. Mr. Quelch compressed his lips in a tight line.

"You are not casting doubt, I presume, Wharton, on the statements made by two members of my staff, and a Sixth Form prefect?"

"Of course not, sir," said Harry. "They saw a fellow they took for me. I know that. They made a mistake."

"If a mistake was made, Wharton, there is only one other boy at Greyfriars who could possibly have been mistaken for you—your relative, Stacey, who resembles you so closely."

"That is so, sir."

"Your contention, then, is that it was Stacey who was seen?"

Wharton paused a moment.

"It's not for me to accuse anybody, sir," he answered at last. "All I can say is that it was not I."

"If it was not you, it was Stacey. Mr. Quelch has absolute confidence in Stacey."

"So he had in me last term," said Wharton bitterly. "I've done nothing that I know of to cause him to change his opinion."

"That is what we have to ascertain, Wharton," said the Head quietly. "Now you have a discoloured eye, and Stacey has none."

Wharton did not reply. That was the difficulty in his defence, and he was quite at a loss how to deal with it.

"On other occasions mistakes may have been made—and, in fact, have been made," said Dr. Locke. "But so long as your eye is blackened, Wharton, no one could possibly mistake Stacey for you."

"I—I suppose not, sir; but—"

Wharton broke off.

"But what, Wharton?"

"But they did, sir," said Harry. "They must have. They cannot have seen me out in the quad when I was asleep in bed."

"Mr. Quelch, there is no doubt that the boy seen in the quadrangle last night had a blackened eye?"

"None, sir," answered Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Capper, who was on the House steps, saw it distinctly. I saw it distinctly, looking from my window. Wingate saw it distinctly. It is perfectly true that, but for the blackened eye, we could not have said for certain whether the boy was Wharton or Stacey. But that is immaterial—since it is absolutely certain that the boy in question had a blackened eye."

"What have you to say, Wharton?"

"Only that a mistake was made, sir, and must have been made," answered Harry steadily. "If they saw the fellow plainly I can't understand it. But it was a mistake. I was not out of the House."

"Such a mistake," said the Head, "is not possible, Wharton. One person might imaginably have been mistaken, but three persons cannot have been. The boy seen in the quadrangle had a blackened eye, and

on that point I am bound to decide that no doubt whatever exists."

Wharton stood silent.

What was he to say?

The Head's words carried conviction, even to his own mind. Quelch might, possibly, have been blinded by prejudice, and fancied that he had seen what he had not seen. But Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, was a perfectly disinterested party—so was Wingate. How could Capper and Wingate have fancied that the fellow had a black eye if he hadn't?

The junior had a bewildered feeling of helplessness. He knew that he was innocent. But he was helpless.

There was a brief silence in the study.

It was broken by a tap on the door.

Dr. Locke glanced round impatiently. No interruption was wanted just then. The door opened.

It was Vernon-Smith of the Remove who appeared in the doorway. His black eye showed up very distinctly in the sunlight from the window.

Wharton stared at him.

He was surprised to see the Bounder there, and still more surprised to see him with a black eye.

Mr. Quelch started to his feet.

"Vernon-Smith, how dare you come here? How dare you leave the Form-room? Go back at once!"

"If you please, sir—" said Smithy meekly.

"Go away immediately!"

"I have something to tell the Head, sir."

"Nonsense! This is no time—"

"It's about what happened last night, sir!"

"Of that you know nothing, Vernon-Smith! You—"

"One moment, Mr. Quelch," said the Head gently. "If Vernon-Smith has anything to say regarding this matter, he had better speak."

Mr. Quelch, with compressed lips, sat down again. Dr. Locke made the Bounder a sign to come into the study, and Smithy entered and closed the door. Harry Wharton stood silent. He remembered what Mauleverer had called up to the window of the punishment-room. The Bounder had something up his sleeve!

What it was Harry could not begin to guess; but the Bounder's arrival in the study gave him a new feeling of hope!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

VERNON-SMITH'S manner was very quiet and respectful. His usual air of half-suppressed "cheek" was quite banished in the majestic presence of the headmaster. For Quelch's bitter annoyance he did not care a straw. In fact, it rather amused the reckless Bounder to get Quelch's "rag out."

Dr. Locke's gaze was on the Bounder's black eye. That discoloured eye surprised him as much as it surprised Wharton.

"I understood you to tell me, Mr. Quelch, that Wharton was the only boy in your Form with a blackened eye," said Dr. Locke.

"That was correct, sir. Vernon-Smith has only been in this disgraceful state a short time," said Mr. Quelch. "He had no discoloured eye before break this morning."

"It was not in that state last night?"

"No, sir!" said Mr. Quelch acidly.

"Moreover, the boy seen in the

quadrangle was clearly recognised, and bore no resemblance whatever to Vernon-Smith."

"Quite so!" assented the Head. "Now, Vernon-Smith, I will hear what you have to say. I warn you not to speak idly here."

"Very well, sir. There is something that I believe ought to be brought to your notice," said Vernon-Smith.

"The fellow who was seen out of bounds last night was identified by a black eye. I never believed for a moment that it was Wharton, sir—"

"Dr. Locke does not desire to hear your opinions on the subject, Vernon-Smith!" rapped the Remove master.

"Perfectly so!" said Dr. Locke.

"Unless you have some matter of fact to state, Vernon-Smith—"

"I mean, sir, that not believing that it was Wharton, I've been thinking pretty hard over the matter," said the Bounder, "and I believe that I've hit on the truth."

"Explain at once what you mean."

"I believe that the black eye was faked, sir."

"Was what?" snapped the Head.

"I mean, it was spoof—I mean, not genuine!" Smithy stammered for a moment. Fakes and spoofs were not for the Head's presence.

He went on, choosing his words a little more carefully:

"The fellow—whatever he was—was going to be spotted—I mean, he knew he would be seen! He knew that another fellow had a black eye! I believe that he faked—imitated—a black eye before he let himself be seen."

"Imitated a black eye!" repeated the Head blankly.

Quelch gave an angry snort.

But Harry Wharton's face lighted up.

His eyes gleamed.

Why hadn't he thought of that? That was what the Bounder had up his sleeve? It was like the cool, clear-headed Bounder to think that out!

"Oh, Smithy!" breathed Wharton.

"Silence, Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Vernon-Smith, how dare you come here and waste your headmaster's time with so foolish, so insensate a suggestion?"

"I don't think it's foolish, sir!" said Smithy. "We've often faked such a thing as a black eye in our amateur theatricals. It's quite easy, with a rub of charcoal—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Do you suggest that a boy, breaking bounds at night, provided himself with the materials for amateur theatricals, and had them in his pocket? Such an absurd suggestion—"

"No, sir," said Vernon-Smith.

"But a rub of black ink round the eye would produce the same effect."

"Black ink!" repeated the Head.

"Certainly sir."

"And how," rapped Mr. Quelch, "do you suggest that a boy shut out of the House at midnight was able to obtain ink for such a purpose, Vernon-Smith?"

"From a fountain-pen, sir!" answered the Bounder coolly.

"A—a—a fountain-pen?"

"Yes, sir. Lots of fellows carry fountain-pens in their pockets; and I know for a fact that Stacey does."

"How dare you mention Stacey? Dr. Locke, it is my duty to tell you that this boy, Vernon-Smith, was severely punished, only this week, for supplying a crib in class to another boy, and it was my head boy, Stacey, who inadvertently brought the matter to my notice. I cannot doubt that it

is from a feeling of revenge that he has dared—"

"One moment, Mr. Quelch! If what Vernon-Smith states is possible, we must consider it!" said Dr. Locke.

Quelch hardly suppressed a snort. He did not regard it as possible. He regarded it as another sample of the Bounder's reckless impudence. But his annoyance and impatience did not affect the Head's Olympian calm.

"We must leave no stone unturned to ascertain the truth in this unhappy matter," said Dr. Locke. "It is a certainty that the boy out of bounds was either Wharton or Stacey. If a blackened eye could be imitated, the matter falls into doubt again."

"Impossible, sir! I am assured—"

"In the first place, is it known whether the boy Stacey does, as a matter of fact, carry a fountain-pen?" said the Head calmly. "He may be sent for and questioned on that point—"

"That is unnecessary, sir; I have seen my head boy use a fountain-pen on many occasions," said Mr. Quelch acidly. "No doubt Vernon-Smith has noticed it also and has founded this absurd suggestion on the circumstance."

"Very good," said Dr. Locke. "The next question is whether the appearance of a black eye could be assumed by rubbing black ink round the eye. I have certainly never heard of such a thing—"

"Neither have I, sir."

"But we must admit that such an imposture could be effected by such a means, to some extent," said Dr. Locke. "The point is this—could you, who saw the boy clearly, be deceived by such trickery, Mr. Quelch?"

"On that point, sir, my answer is most emphatic!" said Mr. Quelch. "I could not possibly be deceived by such a trick."

"You saw the boy clearly?"

"Perfectly clearly, sir! The light from the doorway fell full on his face as I looked down from my window."

"If the black eye had been assumed—"

"I should have detected such an imposture at a glance, sir!"

Mr. Quelch spoke in perfectly good faith. He was absolutely certain of what he said. Not for one moment, in his firm opinion, could his eyes have been deceived by such a trick. And his positive statement naturally carried great weight with the headmaster.

"Mr. Capper and Wingate also saw the black eye, sir—"

"If you were taken in, sir, they would be taken in in the same way," murmured the Bounder meekly.

"Silence, Vernon-Smith! You have left your Form-room without permission, and come here to make a perfectly absurd and impossible suggestion, dictated by a revengeful feeling towards the best boy in my Form!"

"Oh, no, sir! I can prove what I say!" said the Bounder. "I think the Head ought to know, sir, that you have been taken in by exactly such a trick on one occasion. That shows that it was possible that it happened last night."

Mr. Quelch stared at him in dumb wrath.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head. "If that is the case, Mr. Quelch—"

"It is not the case, sir!" gasped the Remove master. "This boy is speaking untruthfully, sir! I remember no occasion on which I have been so deceived. The statement is false, sir!"

"Vernon-Smith," said the Head sternly, "how dare you!"

"I am sorry to make Mr. Quelch angry, sir," said the Bounder meekly,



"Help me, you fellows!" yelled Stacey, as he landed on the floor, hard, and Bob Cherry sat on his chest. Russell and Ogilvy, his pals, rushed to his aid. But they were quickly barged off, and Stacey remained where he was, with Bob Cherry pinning him down.

"but I hope he will let me prove what I say. On one occasion, sir, Mr. Quelch caned a boy in the Remove for having a black eye—and the black eye was not genuine, but was imitated by ink taken from a fountain-pen."

"Nothing of the kind has ever occurred, sir!" panted Mr. Quelch. "The statement is false from beginning to end."

"Mr. Quelch is not aware of his mistake, sir—but I can prove that it occurred!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You can do nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith!" almost shouted the Remove master. "It certainly never did occur!"

"One moment, Mr. Quelch!" the Head's calm voice broke in. "If such a trick was played, without our knowledge, you would naturally not remember the occurrence. The boy speaks of proof."

"Certainly, sir!" said Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton gazed at the Bounder, dumb. He had no recollection of such an occurrence in the Remove—and it could hardly have happened without coming to his hearing. Was the Bounder simply talking out of his hat?

"I will listen to you, Vernon-Smith," said the Head grimly, "and if you fail to produce the proof you speak of, you will be flogged!"

"I should expect that, sir, if I wasted your time for nothing!" said the Bounder. "But if I prove, sir, that Mr. Quelch once caned a boy in the Remove for having a black eye, when the black eye was only an imitation, will not that prove that a mistake might have been made last night—about Wharton?"

"Most assuredly!" said the Head.

"Oh, assuredly!" said Mr. Quelch, with acid bitterness. "If I have been deceived in such a manner once, certainly I might be deceived in such a manner again! I am sorry, sir, that

you give me credit for so very little penetration!"

"I have said, Mr. Quelch, that Vernon-Smith will be flogged unless he proves his statement. I am waiting for you to do so, Vernon-Smith. When did this alleged incident occur?"

"This morning, sir!" answered Smithy coolly.

"This morning!" repeated Mr. Quelch, stupefied.

"Yes, sir! This morning you caned me in the Form-room for having a black eye," said the Bounder, with icy coolness.

"What do you mean, Vernon-Smith?" exclaimed the Head angrily. "You have a black eye at this moment!"

"This is what I mean, sir!"

Vernon-Smith took a handkerchief from his pocket, unfolded it, and took a small wet sponge from it. That wet sponge he rubbed over his black eye.

Immediately the sponge became inky. Streaks of ink appeared on his cheek. He rubbed and rubbed.

The discoloration round his eye disappeared as he rubbed.

The Head, the Form-master, and Harry Wharton watched him in stupefied silence.

The eye was rubbed clean. Vernon-Smith faced the Head's petrified gaze—both his eyes perfectly normal in aspect.

The Bounder no longer had a black eye.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not the Sack!

HARRY WHARTON drew a deep, deep breath.

There was a dead silence in the Head's study.

For long, long moments a pin might have been heard to drop in that apartment.

The Head seemed petrified by what he

had beheld. Mr. Quelch gazed at the Bounder, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

Smithy's black eye had disappeared. Obviously it had been an imitation—an imposture that had deceived Mr. Quelch and all the Remove.

Mr. Quelch had caned him that morning for that black eye! He could hardly deny that he had believed it to be a genuine one. And it was not genuine! The Bounder had proved his words beyond the shadow of a doubt.

He had proved, even to Quelch's own satisfaction, that Mr. Quelch could be, and had been, deceived by an imitation black eye! And if he had been so deceived in the broad daylight of a summer's day, much more might he have been deceived at night, in a hurried view of a running junior.

The silence in the Head's study grew painful.

Quelch's face gradually reddened and reddened, till it assumed the colour of a beetroot.

Never had he been so utterly taken aback. Seldom had he been so intensely exasperated and enraged.

But the Bounder had proved his point. For the sake of proving it, he had undergone a licking in the Form-room. And he had proved it!

The Head broke the silence at last.

"Bless my soul! Is it a fact, Mr. Quelch, that you caned this boy this morning for—for having a black eye?"

Quelch gurgled. He could hardly speak.

"Yes, sir!" he gasped.

"But he has no black eye!" said the Head.

"N-n-no, sir! A—a—a trick—a disrespectful trick!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"The boy deliberately misled me into punishing him!"

"I had a reason, sir!" said the Bounder. "I meant no disrespect! I

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believed that you were tricked last night by the fellow out of bounds, and I wanted to prove that it was possible."

"You—you—"

"Really, Mr. Quelch," said the Head, with some severity, "Vernon-Smith's action may seem a little wanting in respect; but I am bound to say that he has acted very unselfishly and, indeed, generously. He has undergone a severe punishment for no purpose but to bring to light facts in favour of a boy in danger of expulsion, and in whose innocence he believes."

"Facts, sir?"

"Certainly!" said the Head. "It is now proved, beyond question, that you may be deceived by precisely such a trick as Vernon-Smith suggests took place last night."

Mr. Quelch choked.

He could not deny it.

His fixed belief was unchanged. But he had to admit that the black eye was no longer a proof that it was Wharton, and not Stacey, who had been out of bounds the night before.

There was no other proof! The whole case rested on the black eye! And it was now clear that Mr. Quelch might have been taken in by a faked black eye!

The Head drummed on the table.

This unexpected development left him at a loss. But he was glad that Vernon-Smith had intervened.

Either Harry Wharton or Ralph Stacey ought to be turfed out of the school. That was certain! But which? That was still uncertain!

If the Head decided against either of them, the chances were exactly evenly balanced, that he might be committing an injustice, and punishing one boy for the misdeeds of another!

That was a chance that no headmaster could take.

Smithy had saved Wharton from the "sack." The Head knew it, and Mr. Quelch knew it, and Harry Wharton knew it. And the Bouncer knew it—he had known that he could do it ever since hard thinking on the subject had caused the truth to dawn on his keen mind. That caning in the Form-room was the price he had had to pay for success. He did not regret it.

"Vernon-Smith," said the Head at last, "you may go back to your Form-room."

"Very well, sir!"

The Bouncer left the study. Wharton's eyes followed him gratefully as he went. Little as he liked the Bouncer's ways, he had always rather liked the Bouncer himself. But they had never been pally—they were too unlike for that. Yet Smithy had gone through a licking, only to help him out of an awful scrape! True he was glad to score over Stacey—glad, perhaps, to take a "rise" out of his Form-master. But he had saved Wharton! Already the shadow of the sack was receding into the dim distance.

"Dr. Locke—" began Mr. Quelch.

The Head made a gesture.

"We are now compelled to reconsider the matter, Mr. Quelch," he said quietly. "I understand that when you visited the Remove dormitory last night, both Wharton and Stacey were found in bed?"

"Certainly, but—"

"One of them was seen out of the House, but unfortunately was not secured—"

"It was Wharton—"

"The resemblance between the two boys makes it impossible to say which it was, Mr. Quelch, except that one of them had a black eye. To that circumstance, no weight can now be attached."

"But, sir—"

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"One of these boys, relatives, is a disgrace to the school!" said the Head. "One of them I shall most certainly expel from Greyfriars, when proof can be obtained. But I fail to see proof in this case. If you have any further facts to adduce—"

"I can only repeat, sir, what I have said already—that I have the highest opinion of Stacey, and the lowest possible opinion of Wharton. I am absolutely convinced that it was Wharton who was out of bounds."

"Your conviction naturally carries great weight with me, Mr. Quelch. But in the matter of an expulsion, absolute proof is required. One of the boys is guilty—which, remains to be discovered!"

The Head turned to Wharton:

"You have nothing more to say, Wharton?"

"No, sir, except that I am certain that Vernon-Smith has guessed exactly what happened last night!" said Harry.

"You may leave my study, Wharton! You will not, however, go to your Form-room until your Form-master gives you permission."

"Very well, sir!"

Wharton left the Head's study—leaving his Form-master with Dr. Locke. He smiled as he went down the corridor. The Head was making it as easy as he could for Quelch—but the matter was settled. There was going to be no expulsion; and he was going to resume his place in the Remove as if nothing had happened. He sauntered out into the sunny quad, his hands in his pockets, and a smile on his face.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

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

Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles.

The fat Owl, in fact, could hardly believe either the eyes or the spectacles as he stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bouncer lounged back to the Remove-room, and grinned as he went in. He was in a very cheery and satisfied mood, in spite of the lingering sting of his Form-master's cane.

To beat a "beak" in any sort of a contest, was like meat and drink to the reckless Bouncer. And he regarded Mr. Quelch as having been beaten "to a frazzle," as Fisher T. Fish would have expressed it.

There was rather an uproar going on in the Remove-room when the Bouncer came back. Stacey was still on his back on the floor, with Bob Cherry sitting on his chest to keep him there. Ogilvy and Russell had failed to rescue him, the Co. driving them off. Two or three fellows had come out of their places to lend Oggy and Russell aid in the rescue of their pal. But Lord Mauleverer and Tom Redwing promptly joined the Co.

Excitement was spreading; and it looked as if there would be a general row in the Form-room, when the Bouncer came in, and Bob allowed Stacey to rise from the floor.

The head boy of the Remove scrambled up, red and breathless, and panting with rage. Attention turned on the Bouncer at once. Billy Bunter was not the only one who exclaimed in astonishment at the sight of him.

"He ain't got a black eye now!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Smithy ain't got a black eye!"

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

"What the thump—"

"Smithy—"

"What—"

The Bouncer chuckled. He had expected to make the fellows jump when he returned to the Form-room without his black eye! And he was right—they did jump!

Having left the Remove-room with a blackened eye, the Bouncer had naturally been expected to come back in the same state. Now his right eye was as normal as the left.

Stacey gave him one quick, searching look; and his face set hard. Stacey had not known, any more than the others, that Smithy's black eye was a skilful fake. But now that he knew, his quick brain jumped to why the Bouncer had played that extraordinary trick.

Even Redwing, the Bouncer's own chum, had not known. He was as astonished as the rest of the Remove.

"Smithy!" he exclaimed. "How—"

"Surprised you?" grinned the Bouncer.

"Yes, rather! How the deuce—"

"What the thump—" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't a real black eye at all!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I say, it was spoof!"

"Jolly well done, though!" said Wibley. "It took me in!"

"Yes, it was a spoof!" grinned the Bouncer. "As I told Quelch in break, I gave myself that black eye specially to let him see it."

"But why?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Did you specially want a licking from Quelch?"

"Hardly!" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "I did it to give Wharton a leg-up! And you can take it from me, my beloved carers, that it's worked the oracle."

"Oh!" gasped Bob. He began to understand.

"I got the idea from Stacey!" added the Bouncer.

"From Stacey?" repeated several voices.

"Exactly! You see, I tumbled to it that that was how Stacey worked it last night, to make them take him for Wharton!" said the Bouncer coolly. "That's right, isn't it, Stacey?"

"It's a lie!" hissed Stacey savagely.

"I've proved to the Head and to Quelch that the beaks might have been taken in by a faked black eye! I fancy Quelch would rather have liked to give me a real one for proving it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Stacey never—" began Ogilvy.

"Never!" said Russell.

"Stacey did!" answered the Bouncer coolly. "It was Stacey out of bounds last night, and he faked a black eye, and made them think it was Wharton."

"Rubbish!" roared Ogilvy.

"Rats!" howled Russell.

"Yaas, that's how it was!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I never knew what you had up your sleeve, Smithy! But you've got it right."

"Rot!" said a dozen voices.

"Right as rain!" said several others.

"Smithy's right!" said Bob Cherry.

"Smithy's wrong!" roared Russell.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good old Smithy!"

"Shut up, Smithy!"

There was a roar of dispute in the Remove Form-room. Fellows who backed Harry Wharton had no doubt that the Bouncer was right. Fellows who backed Ralph Stacey had no doubt that he was wrong.

It was a matter of opinion; and every fellow had to settle it for himself. Bob roared above the tumult:

"But what's the verdict, Smithy? Is Wharton sacked or not?"

"No! I can't say for certain, but I'm pretty sure not. Stacey won't get by

with that this time!" said the Bounder, with a sardonic grin.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Nugent, in great relief.

"The goodfulness is terrific."

"Hurrah!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Well, I'm glad that the chap's got off the sack, if he has!" said Ogilvy. "But you're not going to make out that Stacey—"

"It was Stacey!" said the Bounder coolly.

"It wasn't—"

"It was—"

"You cheeky ass—"

"You silly fathead—"

The Form-room was in a roar. Almost every voice joined in the excited dispute—except Stacey's.

He went to his desk and sat down—silent!

He hardly knew whether he was sorry that Wharton had escaped the "sack." It was to save his own skin that he had played that treacherous trick regardless of the consequences to his relative. But no doubt it had lain on his conscience a little.

If Wharton had escaped it meant that the Head was in doubt—which in turn meant that Dr. Locke did not trust him as Mr. Quelch did. Still, his position was secure enough. It did not mean that he was suspected—only that his "double" had once more been given the benefit of a possible doubt.

Almost every fellow in the Form-room was speaking—most at the top of their voices—when the door opened and Mr. Quelch came in.

There was a rush to the desks at once.

Mr. Quelch's face was pale with anger and chagrin. He could not find fault with the headmaster's decision, since an element of doubt had been introduced into the case. But there was no doubt

in his own mind; and he had a sense of having been defeated.

Now he came back to find his Form-room in an uproar; and it was the last straw.

"What does this riot mean?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Voices were suddenly silent, but there was a scrambling and shuffling as the juniors got back to their places.

"Stacey, I left you to keep order here!"

"I did my best, sir!" said Stacey quietly.

The juniors wondered whether Quelch's wrath was going to fall on the fellow who was regarded as his favourite, but he did not address Stacey again. The gimlet eyes glittered over the Form.

"The whole Form will be detained for two hours after class to-day!" he snapped. "Now—silence!"

"If you please, sir—" said Frank Nugent.

"Silence!"

"About Wharton, sir—is he staying?"

"Take two hundred lines, Nugent!"

"But, sir—"

"Another word and I shall cane you!"

Frank sat down—silent. Evidently it was useless to ask Quelch about his chum. Still, Quelch's tart temper was a fairly clear indication that he had met with a defeat in the Head's study.

The Remove were anxious for third school to come to an end that morning. Until then they could not be certain of what had happened. Wharton had not returned to the Form-room. Was he still at Greyfriars?

But a little later there came a tap at the Form-room door, and it opened. All the Remove stared round—at Harry Wharton!

Mr. Quelch gave him a glare that the fabled basilisk might have envied.

"Please, sir," said Wharton meekly, "Dr. Locke said that I was to wait for your permission before coming into the Form-room. Will you tell me whether I am to come in?"

The Remove master breathed hard.

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell the junior to go, but he checked that angry impulse. The boy was not expelled; he had to rejoin his Form. For a moment there was silence, then Mr. Quelch barked:

"You may take your place, Wharton!"

"Yes, sir."

Wharton went to his place. Nugent gave him a delighted grin as he sat down. Third school continued in an electric atmosphere. Form and Form-master were equally relieved when it came to an end.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for It!

"I'LL chance it!" "Fathead! You won't!" Vernon-Smith grunted discontentedly.

It was Saturday afternoon. That afternoon, before tea-time, Vernon-Smith had to deliver a "book" to his Form-master.

Smithy and Bunter had been given a "book" each, one for having supplied a "crib," the other for having used it.

Both had to be delivered by Saturday.

Bunter's book, it was probable, had hardly been touched. Even a hundred lines was a task that Billy Bunter found it extremely difficult to perform. And

(Continued on next page.)

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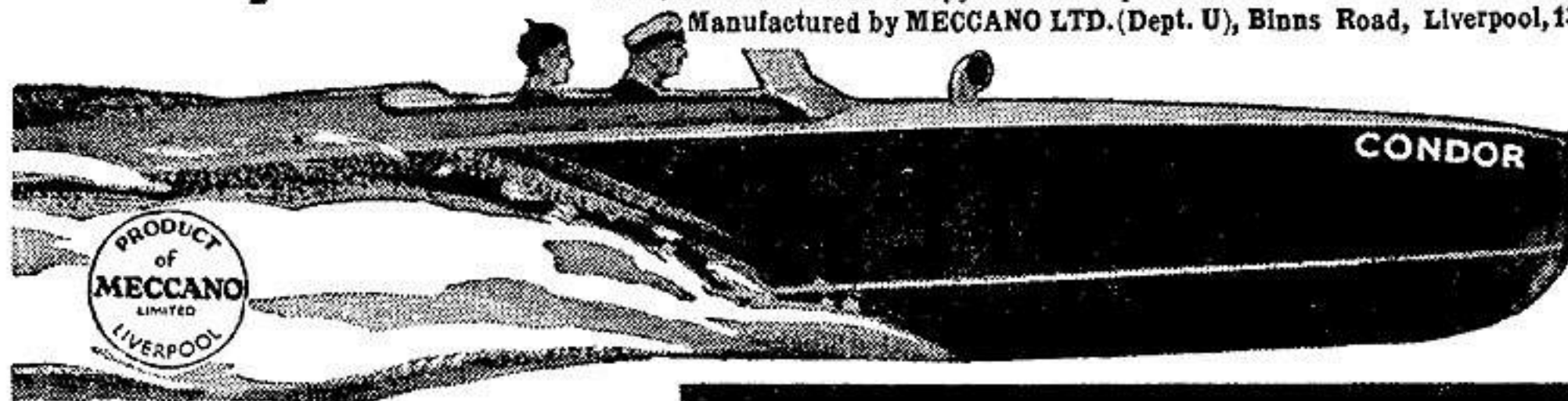
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HORNBY SPEED BOATS

in the first Book of Virgil there were seven hundred and fifty-six lines.

A book was a terrific imposition. It was possible that Quelch would go easy with Bunter if his book was not handed in on time. But it was highly improbable that he would go easy with Smithy, after the occurrences of that week.

So when the Bounder, with his usual recklessness, declared that he would chance it, six fellows told him all at once not to be a fathead.

Wharton's black eye, though not yet mended, had toned down considerably by that time. Mr. Quelch had forbidden him to go out of gates so long as it was conspicuously black. Now, however, it was a pale art shade of mixed pink and purple, and he was allowed to go out if he liked. The Famous Five had planned a bike spin for the afternoon with Redwing and Smithy. But there yet remained a hundred lines to be written of Smithy's book.

"We'll wait," said Redwing.

"Sticking indoors on a July afternoon!" growled the Bounder. "Blow Quelch and his dashed book! It's all that cad Stacey's fault, too. He gave me away to Quelch."

"The cadfulness of the esteemed Stacey is terrific!" agreed Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But the bookfulness is a bare necessity and a sine qua non. The esteemed Quelch will otherwise be infuriated."

"Blow him!" grunted Smithy.

"Be sensible, old chap!" urged Harry Wharton. "What you did for me the other day was a thoroughly decent thing. But for you, most likely I shouldn't be at Greyfriars now. But Quelch doesn't look at it like that. I'm grateful, but Quelch isn't."

"Hardly!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"He's got his back up, Smithy," said Nugent. "He's a just man, ratty as he may be, and he won't go for you for nothing. But if you give him real cause, you can't expect him to go easy."

"Not in his present jolly old temper," said Johnny Bull. "Look here, get that book done, and we'll all squat round and watch you do it."

"Come on, Smithy!"

The Bounder nodded a discontented assent. Reckless as he was, he realised that it was unwise to give his Form-master a "handle" against him at the present time.

Since the scene in the Head's study, Mr. Quelch had made no allusion to it whatever; but it was pretty certain that he had not forgotten it. He was, as Frank said, just, and would not punish any fellow without cause. But woe betide the Bounder if he gave him cause!

"Oh, come on!" growled Smithy, and the whole party adjourned to Study No. 4 in the Remove.

They passed Stacey on the stairs. He was in flannels, and had a bat under his arm.

Ogilvy and Russell were with him.

The two parties passed each other without a word. A cleavage was growing in the Remove. Wharton and Stacey "barred" one another, and the fellows who took sides in the dispute had begun to bar one another also.

It was disagreeable enough to Wharton, who liked both Oggy and Russell, and had been good friends with them before Stacey came.

Stacey's eyes gleamed at the Bounder in passing. If it was still an open question in the Remove which of the doubles was the black sheep, that was due to Smithy. And Stacey had no doubt who it was that had shut him out on his night out of bounds, and given him the narrowest escape he had had since he

had been at Greyfriars. His feelings towards the Bounder were even more bitter than towards his relative and double.

Smithy, catching his black look, laughed.

The cricketers went on down the stairs; the other fellows up. In Study No. 4, Vernon-Smith sat down to finish his stack of lines.

The other fellows waited, wisely deciding not to lose sight of the Bounder till he had finished. Wharton especially was very keen to keep him out of trouble with Quelch, if he could. He was not likely to forget the service Smithy had done him.

Smithy scribbled away savagely.

"I say, you fellows!"

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles blinked into Study No. 4. Vernon-Smith looked up from his lines with a frowning brow.

"Barge that fat idiot out!" he grunted.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Cut!" said Harry. "You're interrupting the lines, Bunter."

"That's what I want to see you fellows about," explained Bunter. "I say, I haven't finished my book for Quelch."

"Go and finish it," suggested Bob.

"Well, it's such a fearful lot!" groaned Bunter. "I've done some, and I think my friends might help me to do the rest."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Bob. "Go and ask your friends to pile in, and give us a rest."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, anyhow!" snapped the Bounder. "How do you think I can write lines, with you cackling at the door?"

"Beast!" Bunter did not buzz off. "I say, you fellows, I think you might lend a hand to finish that book. Quelch will never notice your fist. I'm willing to risk it, if you are. Toddy's done twenty for me."

"And how many have you done?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ten," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! You're for it, then."

If Bunter, during the whole week, had done only ten lines out of seven hundred and fifty-six, it certainly did not look as if he would finish the impot in time for delivery that afternoon.

"You fellows going out?" asked the fat Owl.

"Yes, fathead!"

"Well, look here, stay in instead and write my lines for me," said Bunter. "The fact is, I want to go out. Sickening, sticking in on an afternoon like this!"

The juniors gazed at Bunter. They did not reply. That cheery suggestion seemed to have taken away their breath.

"It's a beastly hot July!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "Horrible stewing in a study over lines. A shady tree is what I want. That brute Toddy cleared off after doing twenty of my lines. I told him that Quelch wouldn't notice it if he did some more. He said I wasn't going to notice him doing any more, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Selfish, I call it! He's only done twice as many as I have!" said Bunter warmly. "Look here, if you five fellows did a hundred each—that's five hundred. Redwing can do a hundred, too—that's six hundred. And Smithy can do another hundred—that's seven. That leaves fifty-six! With thirty done, I shall still have twenty-six to do. Well, look here," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity, "I'll do the twenty-six. I won't ask you fellows to do them."

"Might as well," grinned Bob.

"We're just as likely to do the whole lot, fatty. Just."

"The justfulness is terrific."

"If you fellows are going to be beastly selfish—"

"We are!" chuckled Bob. "We is!"

"Well, look here, Smithy—"

"Shut up!" snapped the busy Bounder.

"It's up to you, Smithy!" said Bunter firmly. "You got me this impot, as you know very well. It's all your fault."

Vernon-Smith looked up from his lines and stared at the fat Owl of the Remove blankly.

"You blithering ass!" he ejaculated. "How do you make that out? Stacey got you the 'book,' by giving away your crib."

"Yes, that's all very well; but who wrote out the crib for me?" said the Owl of the Remove. "You jolly well did, Smithy!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And if you hadn't, that cad Stacey couldn't have given it away to Quelch, and got me this book!" argued Bunter. "So it's all your fault, really."

Vernon-Smith gazed speechlessly at the fat Owl. The other fellows burst into a roar.

Smithy had written out a translation of a page of Suetonius, to help Bunter in class, and that crib had been gathered up with Bunter's paper owing to the fat Owl's carelessness. From Quelch's point of view Smithy had done serious wrong, and he had given them a "book" each as well as a caning. But Smithy, at least, had intended to do the lazy and obtuse Owl a good turn. This was Bunter's thanks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Redwing joined in the laugh. Smithy sat apparently petrified.

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Bunter. "You see the point, Smithy? Quelch said it was wrong to use cribs in class—he makes out that we ought to learn this awful rot. Of course, he's an ass! Still, you jolly well knew that Form-masters look at it like that. You've landed me in this. I think you ought to do the lines. What do you fellows think?" Bunter blinked round at the other fellows in the study.

But they did not tell him what they thought. They roared.

Right or wrong, it was at all events probable that Smithy would never provide Bunter with a crib in class again.

Smithy rose to his feet.

He did not speak.

He picked up the inkpot.

Swoosh!

"Yurrrggh!" spluttered Bunter, as the ink flew. It landed with a splash in his fat face.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrrggh! Oh, you beast! Urrrrggh!" Bunter staggered into the passage, streaming with ink. "Ow! Wow! Wurrgh! I'm all inky! Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beast!" Billy Bunter glared into the study, with an infuriated inky face. "Beast! Rotter! Owl!"

"The inkpot's coming next!" said Smithy taking aim.

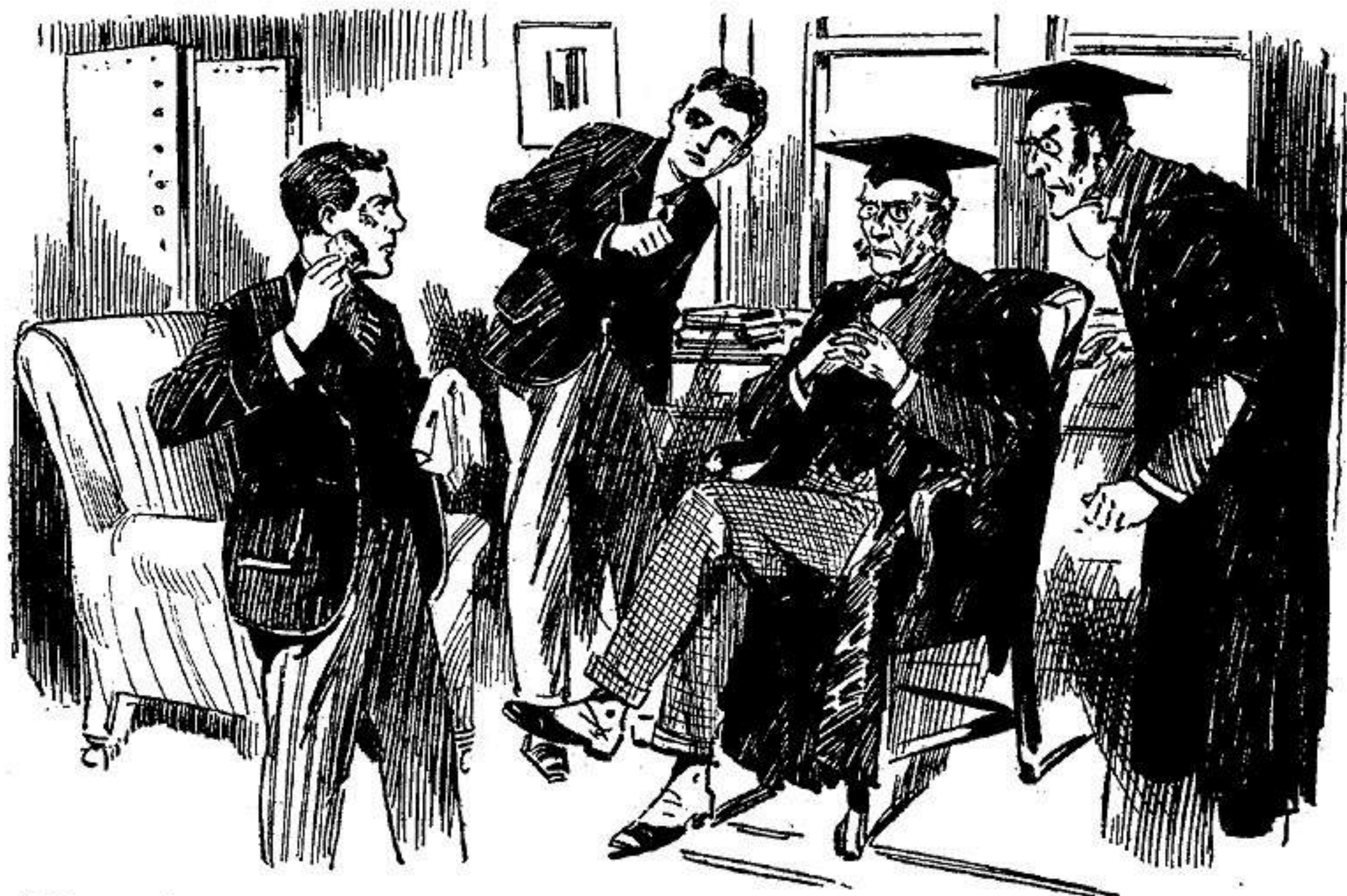
The inky face disappeared.

"Beast!" came a roar from the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith sat down to finish his lines. Bunter departed in search of a wash. He was not keen on washing; but even Bunter realised that he needed one now.

Billy Bunter was still washing off ink when the Bounder finished his "book," and the stack of lines was taken down to Quelch's study.



"If I prove, sir, that Mr. Quelch once caned a boy in the Remove for having a black eye, when the black eye was only an imitation," said Vernon-Smith, "will not that prove that a mistake might have been made about Wharton?" "Most assuredly!" said the Head. The Bounder rubbed with the sponge, and the discoloration round his eye gradually disappeared!

Mr. Quelch was out that afternoon, on a walk with Prout. Vernon-Smith placed his lines on his Form-master's table to catch his eye when he came in, and rejoined the other fellows.

A cheery party of seven wheeled out bikes, and spun away in the summer sunshine—what time Billy Bunter, at a flowing tap, was still wearily washing off ink.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

TAP! No answer. "Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter.

He tapped again at Mr. Quelch's door.

But no acidulated voice bade him come in, and the fat junior opened the door to blink into the study, and see whether Quelch was there.

Quelch was not there.

He was, as a matter of fact, several miles away at that moment, walking Mr. Prout off his podgy legs.

"Beast!" repeated Bunter.

He was annoyed. His "book" had to be handed in that afternoon, and so far only thirty lines had been written out of the seven hundred and fifty-six; twenty by Toddy, ten by Bunter.

Getting the remainder done before tea-time was an absolute impossibility, and Bunter was not the man to attempt the impossible. Bunter had set his fat wits, instead of his fat paws, to work, and he had arrived at Mr. Quelch's study with what he considered an adequate explanation.

He was prepared to state to Quelch that that impot had been written to the very last line. Unfortunately, some fellows, larking in Study No. 7, had

upset an inkpot over it. Bunter, feeling that it could not be shown up in such a state, had thrown it away, and started afresh—but had, so far, done only thirty lines!

Bunter was not sure that this would do for Quelch. It would have done for Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, but he had his doubts about Quelch, who was known to be a downy bird.

Still, even if Quelch doubted his word—and he was beast enough—he could hardly whop him, Bunter thought. A fellow had to be given the benefit of the doubt. What could Quelch do, except tell him to bring along the "book" at a later date?

Bunter hoped for the best. But he was anxious to get the painful interview over; so it was annoying to find that Quelch had gone out.

"Beast!" growled Bunter.

Gone out for one of his beastly long walks, no doubt, and expecting to find Bunter's lines done when he came in. Blow him!

The Owl of the Remove was about to pull the door shut and retreat when another idea germinated in his powerful brain.

Quelch being out, and the coast clear, there was no real reason why a fellow should not hand him something in return for giving a fellow a "book."

Bunter gave an uneasy blink up and down the passage, through his big spectacles. There was nobody in sight—nobody had seen him come to his Form-master's study. Safe as houses!

He rolled in and shut the door.

The House was very quiet. Everybody, or almost everybody, was out of doors on that glorious July afternoon. Cricket was going on on both the senior and junior grounds, and plenty of fellows had gone out on their bikes, or on the river. Nobody, certainly, was

likely to come to Quelch's study. Bunter had a free hand.

He blinked at Quelch's writing-table and the papers thereon.

"Beast!" said Bunter, once more. This time he referred to the Bounder, as he spotted Vernon-Smith's "book" lying on the table.

Smithy had done his lines and left them there for Quelch. And then he had gone out to enjoy himself, instead of lending Bunter a hand, though it was his fault that Bunter had lines at all. Bunter realised, not for the first time, that it was a selfish world—himself almost the only decent fellow in it.

However, Smithy's lines did not occupy Bunter's attention long.

He picked up Mr. Quelch's inkpot and emptied the contents into the waste-paper basket. Then he filled up the inkpot from a bottle of gum. This he thought would be quite a nice surprise for Quelch, when he dipped the pen to begin writing next time.

Bunter grinned.

On the table lay a pile of Latin proses, which Quelch had to correct for his Form. Bunter lifted that pile from the table and slid it underneath Quelch's armchair. Quelch could hunt for it when he wanted it.

Then he picked up Quelch's cane from the table. Bunter disliked that cane—all the more because he had a well-grounded apprehension that he might be destined to establish contact with it shortly. Obviously, it would be a good thing if that cane was missing when he had his interview with his Form-master. He stooped before the fireplace and poked the cane up the chimney. It disappeared.

Bunter chuckled.

By this time Bunter was warming to

(Continued on page 16.)

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STANDING BY SMITHY!



(Continued from page 13.)

his work. All was safe; there was not a sound in the House. He had done enough to make Quelch wrathful, but, like Alexander of old, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. He was going to do more than this. He was going to leave a message for Quelch to show him what fellows thought of him.

There was no danger. Capital letters would not give a clue to the writer. All he had to do was to dip a fat finger-end in ink and scrawl his message on Quelch's blotter, where it would meet his eyes as soon as he sat at the table again.

Bunter chortled.

He was about to shove a podgy forefinger in the inkpot, when he remembered that that vessel now contained only gum.

But ink was oozing out of the waste-paper-basket under the table, where he had emptied the inkpot. There was plenty of ink there.

He stooped down behind the table to dip a finger in the ink.

As he did so the door opened.

Bunter, with a fat finger in flowing ink, remained petrified. He did not rise; he did not move; he hardly breathed. The sudden opening of the door seemed to turn him to stone.

If it was Quelch—

Cold shivers ran through Bunter.

But it was not Quelch.

On his knees behind the table, he had a view of only the lower part of the door as it opened. Likewise, he had a view of only the lower part of the individual who entered.

All he could see of that individual was a pair of shoes and a pair of trousers.

That was a relief.

It was only some fellow coming to Quelch's study—some fellow who knew that Quelch was not there, for he had not tapped before opening the door. But who?

Stacey, as head boy, might have some business in his Form-master's study. Or it might be some fellow with lines to deliver, like Smithy. Or some fellow bent on a rag, like Bunter. If it was Stacey, as was most probable, Bunter certainly did not want Quelch's head boy to spot him there, considering what he had been up to. Bunter did not stir. By sheer good luck he was out of sight when the door opened, and he instantly resolved to remain out of sight if he could.

The legs came straight across to the table!

If they came round it—

But they did not come round it. The fellow, whoever he was, stopped at the table and reached across it.

Bunter heard a faint rustle of papers.

Then the legs turned, and their owner was going back to the door. Bunter, from under the table, watched the receding legs.

They vanished into the passage, and

the door closed as quickly and quietly as it had opened.

He heard no sound of receding foot-falls. The fellow, whoever he was, was going away quietly.

It was some minutes before Bunter moved. He doubted whether the mysterious visitor might not come back; also, he was too astonished to move.

The incident, really, was astonishing. Some unknown fellow had whipped into the study, lifted papers from the table, and whipped out again with them. He had been less than a minute in the room altogether. Who he was, and why he had done it, mystified Bunter.

But the fellow, whoever he was, was clearly gone; there was no sound, and the door remained shut. Bunter rose to his feet at last.

He blinked at the top of the table, wondering what it was that the unknown had taken.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

Smithy's "book" was gone. The pile of lines left there by the Bouncer had vanished. Evidently it was Smithy's impot that had been taken away.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the space where that impot had lain, his eye popping in astonishment.

Smithy could hardly have come back for his lines; he had gone out of gates with the other beasts! Besides, why should he?

But the lines were gone. Seven hundred and fifty-six lines, which Vernon-Smith had left for Quelch's inspection, had vanished.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bunter blankly.

Some fellow, of whom Bunter had only seen the legs, had lifted Smithy's lines. Legs were not easy to identify, though, from the size thereof, he was sure they were a junior's, not a senior's. It was not a prefect who had come to the study. But who? And why?

It was a mystery, and it beat Bunter. Still, it was not a matter that he need worry about. The incident astonished him, as well it might; but it also warned him that he was not so safe in the study as he had supposed. Somebody else might come.

Bunter got busy.

He was going to leave that message for Quelch—that would not take long. Then he was going to clear, without delaying to play any more tricks on his absent Form-master.

With a fat forefinger, wet with ink, he traced his inscription in large capitals on Quelch's blotter:

"BROOT."

That was enough.

That would show Quelch what fellows thought of him. Capital letters, scrawled with a finger-tip, left no clue. It did not occur to Bunter's powerful brain that the spelling might leave one!

The fat Owl rolled across to the door. He opened it a few inches and peered out through his spectacles. The coast was clear; the House still seemed deserted. Bunter rolled out of the study, shut the door, and departed. Not an eye fell on him as he went.

He grinned—a fat, satisfied grin—as he rolled out into the sunny quad.

He had an interview to come with Quelch when the Remove master came in, and he was doubtful about the outcome of that interview. But whatever he got from Quelch, he had paid him in advance. That was a consolation. Quelch would know that some fellow had called him a brute. He would not know whom. Bunter, at least, was satisfied that he wouldn't.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Just like Smithy!

MR. QUELCH jumped. Any man might have jumped.

Quelch was walking back to the school. He was on his own. Prout had conked out, so to speak, at Green Hedges, and decided to take the train back. Quelch, perhaps, was a little fatigued, and a little warm and damp, after a long walk on a hot July afternoon, but Quelch was not the man to give in. He was out for a walk—and he walked.

Prout, equally unwilling to give in, had to—he could carry his weight no farther in the summer heat. Quelch had the advantage of being bony. He was good for many miles yet. So Prout "trained," and Quelch walked. And here he was getting back to the school, and perhaps rather wishing that he had trained with Prout.

For it was hot—it was blazing—and flies were innumerable. The sight of the clock tower over the trees was a comfort to Quelch; he felt like a mariner who saw land. In sunshine and dust and flies, he plugged on down the middle of the lane—which a pedestrian really should not have done, though many pedestrians did.

Suddenly behind him came the raucous clang and buzz of a bicycle bell, rung with full force. It was a large bell; it was a raucous bell; it was a very loud bell, and it was rung with startling suddenness. It gave Quelch the impression that a bike was on the very point of crashing into his coat-tails.

He jumped.

With a bound not unlike that of a kangaroo, Quelch left the middle of the lane and landed on the grass beside the roadway, stumbled, and fell on his hands and knees.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated a voice.

It was the voice of Herbert Vernon-Smith, of Quelch's Form.

Quelch, still on hands and knees, stared round. It was the Bouncer who had so nearly run him down.

Smithy braked, and jumped off.

Farther back along the lane came a bunch of cyclists—the Famous Five and Tom Redwing. Smithy had been riding with them, but he had shot ahead like an arrow from a bow at the sight of Mr. Quelch walking in advance, and he had startled Mr. Quelch almost out of his seven senses.

Smithy, to do him justice, had not expected Quelch to bound like a kangaroo, catch his foot in a root, and come a purler. He had merely intended to startle Quelch, and make him jump—partly from a spirit of sheer mischief, partly because Quelch had given him that book, which had filled up nearly all his leisure hours that week.

But as Quelch had gone over, the Bouncer jumped down to render first-aid if required. The other fellows, coming on more slowly, saw what had happened—with grave faces. It was a thoughtless trick the Bouncer had played—and Quelch was not a safe subject for tricks.

"So sorry I startled you, sir!" said the Bouncer meekly. "Can I help you up, sir?"

Mr. Quelch set his lips in a tight line. He resumed the perpendicular, without aid from Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"No, Vernon-Smith, you need not help me!" he said. "I am in no need of your help. How dare you, Vernon-Smith, ring your bell so sharply and suddenly just behind me?"

"It's the law, sir!" said Vernon-Smith.

"What!"

"A cyclist has to ring his bell, if a man is walking ahead in the road with his back to him," explained the Bounder. "Otherwise there might be an accident."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep. He was not so totally unacquainted with the rules of the road as to need that elementary instruction from a boy in his Form.

He opened his lips—and shut them again—hard! Smithy was being cheeky, of course, though his manner was perfectly respectful! But it was not easy to call him to account for it.

He was, as he had said, bound to ring his bell as a warning to a walker ahead of him, who was so incautious as to walk in the middle of the road, regardless of traffic coming on behind.

Certainly he had not been bound to ring it so sharply and suddenly, causing the walker to jump nearly out of his skin. Still it was difficult to lay down the law as to the degree of suddenness and sharpness with which a cyclist might buzz on his bell.

The actual fact was that Smithy had checked his Form-master in a way that made it practically impossible for Quelch to give him what he deserved for so doing. Which was amusing to the Bounder, and intensely exasperating to Quelch.

Harry Wharton & Co. came up slowly. Mr. Quelch did not look at them. He gave Smithy a long, hard look.

"Vernon-Smith! I find you out of gates! I trust," said Mr. Quelch, "that you had finished your imposition before going out?"

The Bounder suppressed a grin. At that moment he was very glad that his friends had made him finish that "book" before getting on his bike. It was close on tea-time now, and if his impot had been still unfinished, Quelch would have had him.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the Bounder. "I placed it on your study table, sir! You will find it there."

Quelch breathed hard as he turned away. It would have been like Smithy to disregard his stern order to hand in that impot before tea on Saturday. Quelch could almost have wished that he had done so, so keen was he to give Smithy that for which he had asked.

Vernon-Smith rode on, and the other fellows followed. Quelch, more slowly, walked in the same direction. Vernon-Smith did not laugh till a bend of the lane hid the juniors from the Remove master's sight. Then he chuckled.

"See him jump?" he asked.

"The jumpfulness was terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You ass, Smithy!" said Redwing. "What the thump do you want to get Quelch's rag out for?"

"Better ask Quelch what he wanted to give me a 'book' for?" drawled the Bounder. "Tit-for-tat is a good game."

"Well, it's lucky you finished your 'book,'" said Harry Wharton. "You'd get toco if you hadn't."

The Bounder grinned and nodded. He was very glad that he had finished the "book." The cyclists rode on to the school, and arrived there a long way ahead of Quelch.

They were at tea in the Bounder's study by the time the Remove master reached Greyfriars.

Quelch reached the school, not in a good temper. Hot and tired and dusty, and persecuted by summer flies, he was not in the best of tempers, anyhow. The Bounder's trick had given

an edge to his temper—quite a razor edge! His eye fell on Lord Mauleverer as he walked up to the House. Mauly was leaning on an ancient elm, his hands in his pockets, looking as usual, as if he found it rather too much trouble to live.

"Mauleverer!" rapped Mr. Quelch, so sharply and suddenly that it had much the same effect on Mauly as Smithy's bicycle-bell had had on Mr. Quelch. His lordship jumped.

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" he ejaculated.

"Do not slack about like that, Mauleverer!" said Mr. Quelch, with a severity largely caused by July sunshine, dust, and flies. "You are the laziest boy in the school, Mauleverer."

"Yaas, sir."

"Pull yourself together, Mauleverer."

"Yaas, sir."

Lord Mauleverer stood at attention

till his Form-master had passed on. Then he sank back lazily and gracefully into his former position.

Mr. Quelch went crossly into the House. He went to his study. It was his intention to examine the Bounder's lines immediately. If they were properly done, well and good. If they were not—

He glanced over his study table. He did not notice, immediately, that a pile of junior proses and a cane were missing. Neither did he suspect that there was gum in the inkpot. But a word in large capital letters scrawled across his blotter fairly leaped to his eye,

BROOT!

Mr. Quelch gazed at that word. He gazed at it with glittering eyes! (Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

(1)

The greatest man in Greyfriars School
(At any rate, the greatest fool),
Is Horace James, the Christian names
Of that prize fathead, Coker!
For knowledge Coker leads the field,
And if his wisdom was revealed
'Twould give a shock to Dr. Locke
Or any other joker!

(2)

The reason why he's never picked
Is not that Wingate is too strict,
No, never—this is what's amiss,
The captain's beastly jealous!
He thinks the games that Coker's played
Have put him rather in the shade,
That's why, no doubt, he leaves him
out—
So Coker likes to tell us.

(3)

I soon arrived outside his den,
And heard a row enough for ten.
Then things began! A frying-pan,
Or other like utensil,
Came hurtling through the open door
And hit my nose, I gave a roar!
My face was scarred; it shook me
hard,
And made me break my pencil!

(4)

A row of quite impressive size
Was going on before my eyes,
Those on the scene were Potter, Greene,
And Coker, full of mockery!
While Coker's fists, immense and bare,
Were punishing the empty air,
His chums, both grim, were hitting him,
And pelting him with crockery!

(5)

But Coker stopped the war himself!
He knocked a saucepan off the shelf,
It fell down clean upon his bean
And wedged upon his shoulders!
I couldn't quite hear what he said,
The saucepan jammed upon his head,
Suppressed his flow of speech, and so
Was lost to the beholders!



"Now, Coker, just a word with
you,
I've come here for an interview."
Then Coker's fist which never
missed,
Connected with my "smeller."
A million stars began to shine,
Before my eyes and weren't they
fine!
And that is what yours truly got
For helping such a feller!

(6)

At sportsmanship he's hard to beat,
No other man is in his street,
Or can display his skilful way
At footer or at cricket!
His name, of course, does not appear
In first team lists, because, I hear,
Their kind of game is simply tame
And Coker cannot stick it!

(7)

Before I went to Coker's lair
I took an extra special care
To look polite and meek and bright
(My features do me credit!)
I packed some cushions in my bags,
For Coker's very short with fags.
He'll bellow: "Seat!" and then:
"Take that!"
Before you know he's said it!



(8)

I gathered that the reason for
This sudden breaking out of war
Was Coker's aim to get a game
That day. It took the biscuit!
To figure in the cricket team,
He told his chums to help his scheme
And both resign; thus, left with nine,
George Wingate then might risk it.

(9)

I'd come to interview, not scoff,
And tried to pull the saucepan off.
I gave a heave, and I believe
I pulled his ears off also!
He gave a yell which made me wince,
I've never heard before or since
A human throat sound such a note!
To think that he should bawl so!



(10)

Evidently someone had visited his study during his absence. From the remarkable way in which the word was spelt, Mr. Quelch had no doubt as to the identity of the visitor. In his present frame of mind, what Quelch chiefly wanted was a victim. William George Bunter was fairly offering himself!

Mr. Quelch rang the bell with the intention of sending Trotter for the fat Owl. He threw a paper over the blotter; he did not want the House page to see that sample of impudence from a Remove boy to his master. Then he looked for the Bounder's lines.

The next moment he forgot Bunter.

The lines were not there!

Vernon-Smith had told him, in the lane, that he had placed them there. He had startled him, caused him to stumble and fall, and got away with his impertinence—and he had not done his lines! Quelch drew a deep, deep breath, and looked round for his cane.

As he did not think of looking up the chimney he did not find it. He was still looking for it when Trotter tapped and opened the door.

"You rang, sir?" said Trotter.

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch. "Go and tell Master Vernon-Smith to come to my study immediately."

"Yessir!"

The page departed on his errand, and Mr. Quelch resumed the quest for his cane. It would be wanted when Vernon-Smith arrived.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hand of the Enemy!

QUITE a merry party had gathered in Study No. 4 in the Remove. The Bounder's study was famous for its lavish spreads—and Smithy was doing the honours to quite a large party now.

The Famous Five were all there, and Hazeldene and Micky Desmond had dropped in. Billy Bunter would have dropped in also, but at the sight of his fat face at the door, the Bounder hurled a juicy jam tart, with deadly aim—and Bunter fled, jammy and sticky and wrathful. Nine fellows were rather a crowd in a junior study, but they were very merry and bright, and enjoying the unlimited good things, when Trotter's chubby face looked in.

"Mr. Quelch's study, sir, immejet!" said Trotter.

"Blow Quelch!" snapped the Bounder. "Go back to him, Trotty, and tell him that if it's my lines he wants, they're on his table—and if he isn't satisfied with the way they're done, he can go and eat coke!"

Trotter grinned and departed—not with the intention of taking such a message as that back to Mr. Quelch!

The Bounder gave an angry scowl.

"What the thump does Quelch want?" he snapped.

"Better go and see!" suggested Redwing.

"Your lines——" suggested Hazel.

"They're done, ass, and in his study."

Smithy gave a snort and went to the door.

"Carry on!" he said. "I shan't be long." And the tea-party carried on, while Vernon-Smith went down to his Form-master's study.

"Where are your lines, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch quietly—with a deadly quietness, as he entered.

"On your table, sir."

"You told me, out of gates, that

you had placed the lines on my table, Vernon-Smith! Are you repeating that statement now?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"You have the effrontery to say that your lines are in this study!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, angry, but as astonished as angry.

The Bounder simply stared at him. He was prepared for Quelch to find some fault with the lines, but he certainly was not prepared for this.

"I don't understand you, sir!" he answered. "The lines are here! I left them here when I went out with my friends."

"You adhere to that statement, Vernon-Smith?" Quelch's brow grew grimmer and grimmer.

"Yes, sir! Haven't you found them here?" asked the puzzled Bounder.

"I have not found them here, Vernon-Smith, for the simple reason that they are not here," said Mr. Quelch.

"But they are here, sir! I left them on the table, just where you are standing now——" The Bounder broke off. The lines were not there; he could see that.

"I will listen to no more of this, Vernon-Smith," said the Remove master, contemptuously. "If you placed the lines here, where are they now?"

"I left them there, sir!"

"You do not expect me to believe that statement, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder bit his lip, hard. It was rather unfortunate that, in dealing with "beaks," he was not particular as to the truth. In such a case, his word was not to be taken.

"If you haven't found the lines, sir, they must have been removed," he said, sullenly. "I can prove that I wrote them."

"If you have written them, Vernon-Smith, bring them to me at once."

"I left them here, sir! If they're not here now, how can I tell where they are? I can prove I wrote them—a lot of fellows were in my study when I finished them. Wharton and——"

The black look on Mr. Quelch's face stopped him.

"I have no doubt you could produce Wharton as a witness to that or anything else, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch bitterly. "No doubt he is as willing to serve your turn as you were to serve his a few days ago."

Smithy breathed hard. The mention of Wharton's name had on Mr. Quelch rather the effect of a red rag on a bull.

"But, sir, there were other fellows—they all saw——"

"I will listen to nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith! If you have, as you say, written the lines, produce them."

"I left them here——"

"You did not leave them here, Vernon-Smith, or they would be here now," said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice. "I will listen to no further falsehoods. I shall cane you for not having handed in your imposition, and you will write the whole 'book' and bring it to me next Saturday."

The Bounder stood with gleaming eyes and clenched hands. He knew that he had written the lines and left them there, though it was rather natural that Quelch did not believe so, as they were not to be found. Someone had removed them from the study, after the Bounder had gone out, and while the Remove master was absent. That was certain. Who?

One name leaped to the Bounder's mind. He had more than one enemy—he was a fellow who made foes more

easily than friends. But he had only one enemy who was capable of a deadly trick like this. It was the name of Stacey that came to him. He had scored over Stacey in the affair of Wharton—and this was Stacey's return blow.

His eyes gleamed with rage. He knew it, as certainly as if he had seen the fellow steal into the study and filch the lines. Stacey knew who had shut him out on his night out, and given him so terribly narrow an escape. He had been watching for a chance since—and he had found it.

Mr. Quelch had not found his cane. But he kept a supply of those useful and necessary articles in the cupboard under his bookcase—and he now stooped and extracted one. He selected the stoutest.

"Vernon-Smith——"

"I tell you, sir, that I put my lines on your study table, here!" said the Bounder, his voice husky with rage. "It's not my fault if a sneaking cur with a grudge against me has sneaked into the study and taken them away."

Mr. Quelch started a little.

"Vernon-Smith! You dare to suggest——"

"It's the truth!" said the Bounder savagely.

"You accuse Bunter——"

"Bunter!" Vernon-Smith stared. "I'm not speaking of Bunter, sir! Bunter hasn't been here, that I know of."

"I have reason to believe that Bunter has been in the study during my absence," said Mr. Quelch. "But I should certainly not believe——"

"Bunter wouldn't do a rotten thing like that! It wasn't Bunter—it was——" Vernon-Smith broke off in time.

He had done his lines! They had been filched from the study, to land him in a row, by his enemy—Wharton's enemy! Proving it was impossible—but he was sure of it! He would make Stacey pay for it somehow! But what was the use of accusing a fellow without an atom of evidence? Certainly Mr. Quelch was not likely to believe that Stacey had done such a thing, merely because the Bounder suspected him of it.

He stood pale with rage, his teeth set. He was going to be caned, and to have that enormous imposition to write out over again—tit for tat, from Stacey! A licking—and a whole book of Virgil!

But Mr. Quelch had paused. Certainly there was no such suspicion in his mind as in the Bounder's.

But he had no doubt that Bunter had been in the study, and it was possible that the fat and fatuous Owl had played other tricks, as well as having written "Broot" on the blotter. Mr. Quelch glanced with a keen eye on his table. Then he missed the pile of Latin "proses."

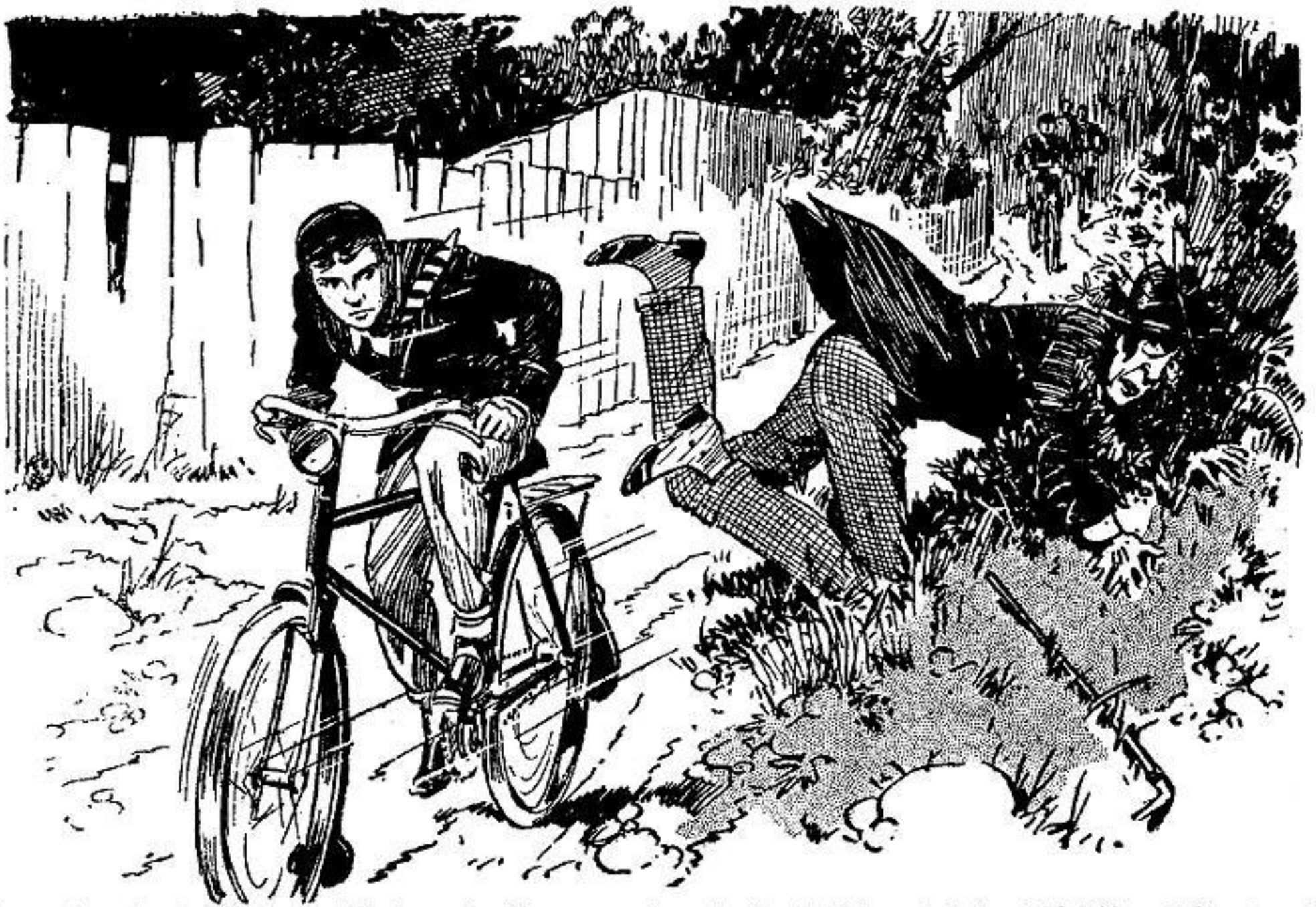
His expression changed.

He laid down the cane—rather to the Bounder's surprise.

"Vernon-Smith! Someone has been in my study—disturbing my papers! It is barely possible——" He paused. "I shall question Bunter before dealing with you. I will send for Bunter——"

Tap!

The door opened and a big pair of spectacles glimmered in. Mr. Quelch was saved the trouble of sending for Bunter; that ornament of his Form had arrived.



Ting-aling-aling! Mr. Quelch fairly jumped as the raucous clang of a bicycle bell sounded close behind him. With a bound, not unlike that of a kangaroo, he left the lane, and landed on the grass beside the roadway. "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated a voice. It was the voice of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER came gingerly and uneasily into the study. He blinked at the Bounder, and then at Mr. Quelch. Bunter had not been aware that Vernon-Smith was in the study. Having learned that Mr. Quelch had come in, the fat junior presented himself to "tell the tale" he had prepared for his Form-master.

"If you please, sir—" began Bunter.

"I was about to send for you, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"I've done my lines, sir!" said Bunter hastily.

"Indeed!"

As Bunter's fat hands were empty, that statement was surprising.

"Every line of the lot, sir!" said Bunter. "I—I've been fearfully busy, all the week, doing them, sir. I—I had to tell fellows who asked me to go for walks, and all that, that—that I couldn't come, sir, because I was so—so hard at work finishing that 'book' for you, sir—"

Bunter believed in giving a story a wealth of detail. He fancied that it made it more convincing. As a matter of fact, it had the precisely opposite effect.

"But—but some fellows got larking in my study, sir," went on Bunter, "and—and they upset the ink over the whole lot, sir! I—I threw them away—"

Bunter broke off.

Quelch's expression was far from encouraging.

Bunter had doubted whether this story would do for Quelch! Now he did not doubt any longer! He knew that it wouldn't do!

"If you have written your 'book,' Bunter—" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"Oh, yes, sir," faltered Bunter. "The whole first book of Virgil, sir—every line of the—the eight hundred and forty—"

"There are seven hundred and fifty-six lines in the first book of Virgil, Bunter."

"I—I mean the seven hundred and—and fifty-six, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I had the whole lot done, but—but they were spoiled—and—and—"

"If," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "they were spoiled by accident, Bunter, I shall certainly excuse you from writing them out over again."

Bunter brightened! Was he, after all, going to get by with it?

"Oh, thank you, sir!" he gasped.

"I—I started them again, sir, and—and I've done thirty—"

"You may bring the spoiled lines to me."

Bunter's brightness faded. That, of course, was the difficulty! Some masters, of a more trusting nature than Quelch's, would not have wanted to know so much. But this was like Quelch! It was not the first time that he had doubted Bunter's word. Ungentlemanly, Bunter thought it!

"I—I—I didn't like to show them up, sir, all—all inky!" he stammered. "So I—I threw them into—into the dustbin, sir—"

"When did you do this, Bunter?"

"Hardly an hour ago, sir!" said the fat Owl. "I—I've been busy ever since, beginning them again, sir—"

"Very good! You may go to the dustbin—"

"Eh?"

"And recover the lines—"

"Oh!"

"And bring them to me."

"Oh lor!"

"That is if you have told me the truth, Bunter."

"I—I—I forgot!" gasped Bunter. "I

—I didn't chuck them into a dustbin, sir; I burned them—"

"You burned them!" said Mr. Quelch in an awful voice.

"Yes, sir! Being all inky and—and spoiled, I—I chucked them—I mean I burned them into a dustbin—I—I mean I—I—" Bunter was getting confused under the grim stare of the gimlet-eyes.

"You need say no more, Bunter! You have not written your lines. As a punishment for your untruthfulness you will be detained on both half-holidays next week, and you will hand in the lines by Saturday."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter turned dismally to the door. With all his great faith in his powers as an Ananias, he realized that truth might sometimes have its uses.

But Mr. Quelch was not done with him yet.

"You need not go, Bunter," he said. "I have something else to say to you. You came to this study during my absence this afternoon."

"Oh, no, sir!"

Mr. Quelch removed the paper he had placed over the blotter. A word in large capitals was revealed.

BROOT!

Vernon-Smith stared at it and grinned. He had wondered how Mr. Quelch knew that Bunter had been there. Now he saw!

The Remove master tapped that remarkable word with his forefinger.

"Did you write this, Bunter?"

"Eh? No, sir! I—I haven't been in this study before!" gasped Bunter, in great alarm. "I—I shouldn't think of—of calling you a brute, sir! I'm much too respectful to tell a Form-master what I think of him, sir!"

"What!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Really and truly, sir!" gasped the
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hapless Owl. "I—I don't think you ought to think it was me, sir, just because some fellow has called you a brute, sir. I—I don't think you're a brute, sir, though you gave me a 'book'! I—I like you, sir—"

"Bunter!"

"And—and admire you, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I don't think you a crusty old fossil, like the other fellows, sir."

"You are the only boy in the Remove, Bunter, so backward in spelling. No other boy in the Form would spell in this manner."

Bunter blinked.

Why Quelch had jumped on him like this he was not able to guess. He was sure that he had left no clue behind. What did the old ass mean?

"I—I don't see, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"This word, if used at all, should be spelt b-r-u-t-e!" said Mr. Quelch in a terrifying voice.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

That had not occurred to his powerful brain.

"You wrote this, Bunter!"

"Oh, no, sir! I wasn't in the study at all! So how could I?" groaned Bunter. "Besides, it was only a j-j-joke."

"A joke!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, just a j-j-jig-joke! I—I thought you—you'd be amused, sir!" stammered Bunter.

Mr. Quelch did not look amused; he looked as if he was going to bite Bunter.

"May I go now, sir?"

"You may not go, Bunter."

"Oh lor'!"

"You were in the study during my absence, Bunter! Some papers are missing from my table!"

"I—I never touched the Latin proses, sir."

"How did you know there were Latin proses on my table, Bunter, if you have not been in the study?"

"Oh crikey! I—I didn't know, sir! As—as I didn't know, sir, I—I couldn't have touched them, could I, sir?"

"What have you done with the papers, Bunter?"

"Nothing, sir! I—I wasn't here—" groaned the wretched Owl. "Besides, I only came to tell you that I'd burned my dustbin—I mean chucked my lines—I mean—"

"If you have destroyed the Form papers, Bunter, I shall report you to your headmaster for a flogging."

"Oh crikey! They're all right, sir—quite all right! I—I shouldn't wonder if—if they're under your armchair, sir!" gasped Bunter in terror.

Mr. Quelch gave him a look; then he grasped the armchair by the back and wheeled it aside. The pile of Latin proses was revealed.

He picked them up and placed them on the table. Vernon-Smith stood a silent spectator. Bunter, it was clear, had been playing fatuous tricks in that study during the afternoon. If he had hidden one lot of papers, he might have hidden another lot. Was it, after all, Bunter, and not Stacey? The Bunder wondered.

"My cane is missing, Bunter—"

"There it is on the table, sir—"

"That is not the same cane, Bunter! The one I left on my study table is missing. What have you done with it?"

"I—I never touched it, sir. It—it might be up the chimney. But I—I don't know how it got there."

"Upon my word! Have you played any other foolish tricks in this study, Bunter, during my absence?"

"No, sir! Certainly not! I—I hope you don't think I'd put gum in your inkpot, sir! I—I never thought of such a thing!"

Mr. Quelch examined his inkpot. He breathed hard and deep.

"Now, Bunter—"

"Oh dear!"

"Have you removed any other papers beside the Form papers?"

"No, sir! Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. He was telling the truth this time. But Mr. Quelch, in the circumstances, was not prepared to place much reliance on Bunter's word.

"Vernon-Smith states that he left his lines here this afternoon, Bunter. If you concealed them as well as the Form papers—"

"Oh, no, sir! I never touched them! I don't know who took them away, sir; I only saw his legs."

"His what?"

"Legs, sir!"

"His legs!" repeated Mr. Quelch almost dazedly.

"And his feet, sir!" added Bunter, willing to tell all he knew. "And—and his trousers, sir!"

The Bunder gave a start. Mr. Quelch had a bewildered look.

"I wouldn't have touched a fellow's lines, sir!" protested Bunter. "I wouldn't get a fellow into a row, sir! I never touched Smithy's lines."

"Do you mean to say that you saw Vernon-Smith's lines here, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, sir! They were on the table before the fellow took them."

"Who?" almost shouted Mr. Quelch.

"I—I don't know, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was hiding behind the table, sir, when he came in, and I kept out of sight, as I didn't want to be seen, sir, so—I only saw his legs, sir, and—and his feet—"

"Do you mean to say, Bunter, that someone entered the study while you were here and took away Vernon-Smith's imposition?"

"Yes, sir!"

The Bunder's eyes glittered. Bunter was telling the truth now, he could see that. And, though Bunter did not know who the mysterious visitor was, the Bunder did—at least, he was sure that he did.

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet-eyes on the unhappy Owl's face.

To disentangle the truth from the falsehoods in Bunter's statements was a task almost beyond his powers. It was Bunter's way to say the first thing that came into his fat head, without considering whether it was true or not. But one thing seemed clear—whether Bunter, or someone else, had played tricks with those lines, they had been there, and Bunter had seen them there. And that was enough to see the Bunder clear.

The Remove master drew a deep breath.

"You concealed the Form papers under the armchair, Bunter. If you have also concealed Vernon-Smith's lines somewhere in this study—"

"Oh dear! I never touched them, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I wouldn't! I don't know who pinched them, sir; I—I only saw his legs—"

"Such a statement is incredible, Bunter! I cannot believe that any boy came to this study and took away lines left by another boy."

"But—but he did, sir!" gasped Bunter. "The lines ain't here now, are they, sir? You can look all over the study."

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane.

"Vernon-Smith, although it is impossible to believe a word uttered by this stupid and untruthful boy, it certainly does appear that he saw your lines in this study when he was here, and I am bound, therefore, to accept your statement that you placed them here. Whether they were removed by Bunter or another boy, it seems impossible to ascertain, as no reliance whatever can be placed on Bunter's statements—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence, Bunter! I shall accept your word, Vernon-Smith, that you wrote the lines, and placed them here. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bunder. He went to the door.

"M-m-may I go, too, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"You may not, Bunter. I am going to cane you, with the utmost severity,

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The GEM

for having played foolish and disrespectful pranks in my study."

"Oh crikey! I say, sir, I—I never did—"

"Silence!"

"It—it's a mistake, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never came here at all, sir! I—I was out of gates at the time I came to this study, sir—I—I mean, at the time I didn't come—"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Say no more, Bunter! Bend over that chair!"

The Bounder as he went down the passage heard fearful sounds of woe. The swishing of the cane was emphatic; and louder still rang the yells of Billy Bunter, rousing the echoes of Greyfriars. It was likely to be a long, long time before the Owl of the Remove played any more pranks in his Form-master's study.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Bunter!

RALPH STACEY was leaning on the balustrade of the Remove landing when the Bounder came up.

Smithy, as he saw him, smiled grimly. He knew why Stacey was waiting there—to see him as he came back after his interview with Quelch after a "whopping." The fellow who had abstracted his lines from Quelch's study could have no doubt that he had been caned, and given the "book" to write out over again, which, undoubtedly, would have happened, but for Billy Bunter. Surprise dawned in Stacey's face as he watched the Bounder come up the Remove staircase. Vernon-Smith did not look like a fellow fresh from a severe whipping.

"Sold again!" remarked the Bounder lightly; and he laughed.

Stacey stared at him.

"I don't quite catch on," he drawled.

"I'll explain. I haven't been caned, and I haven't been given my lines over again. Quelch knows that they were pinched from his study."

"Pinched from his study," repeated Stacey. "Did you have the nerve to spin such a yarn as that to Quelch?"

"I did."

"Did he believe it?" asked Stacey sarcastically.

"He did."

"He must be growing credulous in his old age if he did."

"You see, the fellow was seen," said the Bounder. "There happened to be a witness in the offing who saw him pinch the lines, and he's told Quelch. You should have been a bit more careful, Stacey."

Stacey started violently. With all his nerve that unexpected news startled him out of his cool assurance.

The Bounder laughed mockingly.

"So I've got off," he said. "It's up to you now, Stacey. You can explain to Quelch what you did with the lines."

He went on up the passage to his study.

Stacey stared after him, the colour fading from his cheeks. Could he have been seen? He had been absolutely certain that there was no one about when he played that miserable trick. Yet it was clear that the Bounder had not found trouble in Quelch's study. If Quelch knew—

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as Smithy came into Study No. 4. "Here we are again, old bean! Not a licking this time?"

"Jolly near it!" said the Bounder, laughing.

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Bob. "What did Quelch want?"

The Bounder explained.

"Jolly lucky that fat ass was there," said Harry Wharton, when he had finished. "I can guess, I think, who pinched the lines."

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

"My hat!" said Frank Nugent. "If Bunter could have identified him, Stacey's game would have been up. I'll bet it was Stacey!"

"Nobody else," said the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I've just told him he was seen. I haven't mentioned that only his legs were seen by a fat idiot hiding under a table. I think he fancies, just at present, that Quelch knows; and I don't envy him his feelings."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The awful rotter!" muttered Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" came a wild wail from the Remove passage.

Billy Bunter was coming along, preceded by sounds of lamentation.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob. "Sounds as if he's had it hot."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Listen to my tale of woe," said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow! Ow! Wow! Oh lor'! Oh crikey! Wow!"

Evidently Bunter had had it hot and strong. The tea-party looked out of the study.

Bunter was coming up the passage, bent almost double. He seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, you fellows—Wow!" moaned Bunter. "I say, that beast, Quelch—Wow! That awful brute, Quelch—Yow-ow! I say, I don't believe I've got any skin left! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Well, you seem to have asked for it, old fat bean," said Johnny Bull, apparently in the role of Job's comforter.

"Ow! I never did anything!" groaned Bunter. "At least, Quelch never knew I'd done anything. Ow! He jumped on me for nothing! Wow! Just guessed it was me, you know! Ow! Call that justice? Wooogh! I told him I never went to his study at all. Urrrh! He refused to take my word! Wow-wow! Quelch is no gentleman! Groogh!"

"Had your tea, Bunter?" asked the Bounder.

"Eh! No! Wow!"

"We've got rather a spread—"

"Oh, good! Wow! I'll come to tea if you like, Smithy. Ow! Wow!"

"Trot in, old fat man!" grinned the Bounder. "Lots and lots!"

Bunter blinked at him in surprise. He had already looked in on that spread once, and had been greeted by a jam tart squashing over his fat features.

"I say, no larks!" he said doubtfully.

The Bounder chuckled.

"You fat ass! You got me out of a whopping by telling Quelch you saw my lines pinched from his study."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Did I? Oh, yes, of course! That—that's why I told Quelch, Smithy, old chap. I—I came to his study specially to tell him, to—to get you out of a whopping, old fellow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" hooted Bunter. "I've had a fearful licking all through going to Quelch to tell him about Smithy's lines being pinched. I hadn't forgotten all about it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle! Quelch gave me six—like beating carpet! I shan't be able to sit down for weeks and weeks! Wow!"

"Roll in, old bargel!" said the Bounder; and Billy Bunter rolled in. His fat, woeful visage brightened a little at the sight of the good things on the table. "Here's a chair, Bunter."

"I—I'd rather stand—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! I'll have some of that ham, and those poached eggs, and—Wow! I can tell you fellows I've got a fearful pain, and some of that cold chicken—May as well give me the—wow!—whole chicken. I can manage it. Wow! Some of those sosses, too. Wow!"

Billy Bunter took his fodder standing, like a horse.

And he took it in large quantities. His licking did not seem to have affected his appetite. His "ows" and "wows" died away; his jaws were too busy for yowing and wowing. Fortunately the supply of tuck was ample—ample enough even for Bunter. And the fat and suffering Owl travelled through it, and was comforted.

After the rest of the tea-party were gone Bunter was still going strong. Bunter was not the man to leave anything on the table.

Meanwhile, Stacey was in a most unenviable frame of mind.

What the Bounder had told him had left him in uneasy expectation of a summons to his Form-master's study.

That summons did not come. But it was not till after tea, when he heard Bunter telling the tale to a crowd of fellows in the Rag, that his mind was relieved.

It was known that the lines had been pinched; but the identity of the "pincher" was not known. Harry Wharton & Co. had no doubt about it, but that counted for nothing.

Most of the fellows sympathised with Bunter over the record whopping he had received from Quelch. Stacey wished that Quelch had laid it on harder.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Takes Steps!

YOU come, too!"

"Fathead!"

"May as well have the game as the name!" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, rot!" snapped Wharton.

The Bounder laughed, and Harry Wharton frowned.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and a cricket match was on between Remove and Shell.

Wharton was watching the start with a rather clouded brow when the Bounder joined him. Stacey had opened the innings for the Remove, with Tom Brown at the other end. Stacey, as usual, was in great form, and plenty of fellows had gathered to see him knock the Shell bowling all over the field.

Last term Wharton would have been captaining the Remove. This term Tom Brown was skipper—and Wharton was not now in the team. All the Co. were playing for the Remove, and he was left on his own.

"Why aren't you playing cricket, Smithy?" asked Harry.

"Why aren't you?" grinned Smithy.

"That's different! I'd rather stand out, with Stacey in the team! And Brownie isn't so keen on playing me as he was before!" Wharton's lip curled. "He's not keen on a fellow in the eleven who's been up for the sack! No good blaming him—his isn't the only leg that Stacey has pulled. But you—"

"I've got something else on," drawled the Bounder. "Look here,

you're a dog with a bad name here. There's a glove-fight on at the Three Fishers—

"Oh, chuck it!"

"I'm goin'—"

"More fool you!"

"Better fun than hangin' about with your hands in your pockets," sneered the Bounder.

"Rats!"

"All serene—please yourself!"

The Bounder walked away, whistling, leaving Wharton with a darker brow than before.

Since Smithy had stood by him and pulled him out of a scrape, Wharton had felt more than usually friendly towards the Bounder. It worried him to think of Smithy getting out of school bounds, mixing with a swarm of riff-raff at a disreputable resort, and running the risk of being "bunked" from the school.

It was not much use to argue with the Bounder. When the kink of black-guardism in him was uppermost he went on his own reckless way, regardless of risks.

At any other time, probably, Wharton would have let him go and dismissed the matter from his mind as no concern of his. But he was grateful for what Smithy had done for him, and concerned for the scapegrace. He left the cricket field and followed him.

Vernon-Smith grinned as Wharton rejoined him.

"Coming, after all?" he asked.

"No, ass!" said Harry. "I'll walk a bit of the way."

"And give me a sermon as you go?" chuckled Smithy.

Wharton made no answer to that. Certainly he intended to dissuade the Bounder if he could, whether Smithy called it a "sermon" or not.

They walked down to the river together. On the way they passed Mr. Quelch, whose glance turned on them for a moment. They capped their Form-master respectfully, and Quelch barely acknowledged the salute. Neither of the two was in his good books.

On the towpath the Bounder glanced back. Quelch was out of sight, however, and he turned up the river in the direction of the Three Fishers.

Wharton walked by his side.

"What about getting a boat out, Smithy?" he suggested.

The Bounder chuckled.

"My dear man, I'm glad of your company, whether you come all the way or not," he answered. "But I'm goin' to the Three Fishers to see the glove-fight. And—if you don't mind my mentionin' it—I've no use for pi-jaw! I get enough of that from Redwing."

Wharton came to a halt.

"Well, you're a silly ass!" he said.

"Thanks—you're another!" said the Bounder imperturbably, and he walked on.

He disappeared up the river, and Wharton turned back.

He was not in a happy mood that afternoon.

With all his friends engaged in the cricket he was rather at a loose end. He would have been glad of the Bounder's company—though certainly not at the Three Fishers.

He walked slowly back to the school, and went up to his study to sort out the "Holiday Annual."

With the book under his arm, he left the House again.

He strolled along by the wall of the Head's garden, and selected a shady spot.

Sitting on the wall, with his back to the trunk of an ancient beech that grew close within, shaded by the wide

branches, he opened the book on his knees, and was soon deep in the contents.

An hour passed very pleasantly.

"Wharton!"

He suddenly ceased to peruse the contents of the "Holiday Annual," enthralling as they were.

It was the Head's voice in the garden behind him.

For a moment he fancied that Dr. Locke, walking in his garden, had spotted him sitting on the wall, and he glanced round quickly.

But the thick trunk of the beech was behind him, and he could not be seen from the garden. Yet it was certain that the Head had spoken his name.

"Yes, Wharton!" came another voice.

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch.

Then he understood.

Dr. Locke was walking in his garden, as he very often did in the afternoon before tea. Mr. Quelch was there with him. And the junior sitting on the wall with the book on his knees was the subject of their discussion.

Wharton's lip curled bitterly.

"But, Mr. Quelch—" The Head was speaking again.

"The boy is not in the school, sir! More than an hour ago I saw him going out with another Remove boy—Vernon-Smith! He had not returned."

Wharton grinned.

Apparently his Form-master had been looking for him—doubtful about how he might be engaged on a half-holiday!

In the secluded spot he had chosen for the perusal of the "Holiday Annual" Wharton had escaped the gimlet eyes—and had, indeed, remained quite unaware, till this moment, that the gimlet eyes were looking for him at all!

"But on a half-holiday, Mr. Quelch, he—"

"I do not trust the boy, sir! I have very grave suspicions of Vernon-Smith, as you are aware—but with regard to Wharton I consider it a matter not of suspicion but of certainty."

"It appears to be certain, Mr. Quelch, that either Wharton or Stacey—"

"Wharton, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"That, to my mind, is a certain fact, though he has taken unscrupulous advantage of his resemblance to his relative to cast some shadow of doubt on the matter."

Wharton set his lips hard. The exact reverse was the case, though Mr. Quelch was unaware of it.

"But now, sir," went on Mr. Quelch, "Stacey is playing cricket under the eyes of half the school. If Wharton should be seen out of bounds it will be impossible for him to carry out any further deception."

"That is true, Mr. Quelch! If you have reason to suppose—"

"I think I have reason, sir! I actually saw Wharton and Vernon-Smith going in the direction of the Three Fishers."

"A walk up the river—"

"Neither has returned, sir! And I understand that there is a special attraction at that disagreeable resort this afternoon—some sort of a pugilistic contest on which bets are made."

"Mr. Quelch!"

"I have very little doubt, sir, that both those boys—the two worst boys in my Form—are there," said Mr. Quelch. "If any doubt has hitherto existed, sir, as to the identity of the delinquent in my Form it may be settled now beyond dispute—if Wharton is found out of school bounds while Stacey is playing cricket on the junior ground."

"Undoubtedly! It is a matter for investigation, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head. "What steps do you propose to take?"

"I have already taken steps, sir!"

Harry Wharton had been considering whether he should slip quietly from the wall or whether he should make his presence known—to the confusion of the Form-master who suspected him.

But at those words he sat very still. He remembered Smithy!

Wharton certainly was not at the Three Fishers, as Quelch suspected. But Smithy was! If Quelch had already taken steps—

"I have requested Wingate of the Sixth Form to look into the matter, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He is already on his way, with Gwynne and Sykes."

"But you have surely not instructed Greyfriars prefects to enter such a place, Mr. Quelch—"

"Certainly not, sir! There are two exits to the place, one on the towpath, the other in Oak Lane, by Courtfield Common. Both will be watched."

"Very good, sir," said the Head. "If the boys are there, undoubtedly they will be detected as they leave. But I trust—"

Wharton slipped down quietly from the wall.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Taking the Risk!

"STACEY!"

"Well bowled!"

"Bravo!"

Harry Wharton heard the shout from a distance, but did not glance round. The Shell were batting now, and Stacey was bowling—taking wickets, as usual. Wharton, heedless of cricket, hurried away to the biko-shed.

In the Head's garden the two masters were still discussing him! Little enough he cared for that. He was thinking of Smithy.

Smithy had pulled him out of a desperate scrape—they had never been pals, but Smithy had stood by him like a real pal when his own friends had been unable to help him. And Smithy's number was up—unless he could be warned in time.

Wharton had not thought the matter out. His impulse was to stand by Smithy, as Smithy had stood by him.

He did not begin to think, until he had wheeled his bike out, and was riding away from the school.

The three prefects had started; very likely they were already on the spot. He did not know. How was he to warn Smithy?

He had to find him before he left—he would be caught when he left. That meant going into the place—with three Sixth Form men on the watch!

Wharton set his lips.

If he was spotted there!

It meant the finish for him at Greyfriars if he was!

One of the doubles of the Remove was a breaker of bounds, a black sheep, a pub-haunting "rotter." Mr. Quelch had made up his mind who it was—the Head, with judicial calm, kept an open mind on the subject.

But, as he had heard Quelch say, there could be no doubt in the matter, if Wharton was caught out of bounds, while Stacey was playing cricket at Greyfriars.

That would settle the matter beyond dispute!

He would have to pay, not only for what he was doing now, which was serious enough, but for all that his double had done during that troubled term; would be scapegoat for all his double's sins!



"I can prove I wrote the lines," said Vernon-Smith. "A lot of fellows were in my study when I finished them. Wharton and——" "I have no doubt that you could produce Wharton as a witness," said Mr. Quelch, bitterly. "No doubt he is as willing to serve your turn, as you were to serve his a few days ago!"

That was what he had to risk!

It was no wonder that Wharton slowed down, and that he hesitated, as these thoughts crowded into his mind.

Smithy had saved him; but then he was innocent of the charge against him—and the Bounder knew it!

But what was he going to do? He was going—if he could—to save a black sheep, a fellow who plunged into reckless blackguardism, regardless of the consequences.

Smithy had known the risk he was taking, and carelessly disregarded it! He jolly well deserved to be sacked, if ever a fellow did!

The chances were all against his getting through. The chances were ten to one, at least, that, instead of saving Smithy, he would be caught along with him—expelled along with him!

Even if Smithy was given another chance, let off with a flogging, there would be no other chance for Wharton himself—his last escape had been narrow enough, and this time there would be no escape!

All that his rival had done that term would be put down to him—it would be settled beyond the shadow of a doubt that he, and not Stacey, was the black sheep of the Form, if he was caught at the Three Fishers that afternoon! And that ass, that blackguard, Smithy, had asked for it, and deserved what was coming to him!

But back into Wharton's mind came that scene in the Head's study—

He had been up for the sack, and there had seemed no loophole—when Smithy had barged in.

He had to save Smithy, if he could. One good turn deserved another—and he had to face the risk. He would have liked to punch the reckless fellow's head—hard—but he had to save him—if he could! The question was whether he could! His bike whizzed along the towpath.

But at a distance from the riverside inn, he jumped off and put the machine out of sight in the thickets. He had seen nothing of the prefects, so far; but one of them at least would be on the towpath, keeping an eye on the gate of the inn.

He went forward on foot, keeping under the trees that bordered the towpath. He stopped suddenly at the sight of a Greyfriars cap in the distance ahead.

Keeping in cover, with beating heart, he watched.

It was Gwynne of the Sixth, leaning on a tree, with his hands in his pockets. From where he stood the prefect had a view of the inn gate and the whole length of the fence.

Wharton backed away.

To approach the gate was impossible; but he had had an idea of clambering over the fence. He saw now that that was impossible.

He returned to his bicycle, remounted it, and rode away swiftly by a footpath through the wood.

A quarter of an hour later he emerged into Oak Lane, which ran along one side of Courtfield Common.

On that lane the back fence of the Three Fishers was a good hundred yards in length, overtopped by trees and hawthorns. Leaving his bike among the trees by the footpath, Wharton went out into the lane on foot.

He climbed a tree on the edge of the common and scanned the leafy lane. The back gate of the inn was wide open, and two or three people were passing in and out.

Of Wingate and Sykes he could see nothing. Yet, as Gwynne was alone on the side towards the towpath, he could not doubt that they were here somewhere.

Suddenly the two of them came into view.

They were sauntering down the lane, patrolling the Three Fishers' fence from one end to the other.

Wharton was glad that he was out of sight, in the branches of the oak he had climbed. Wingate and Sykes, pacing down the lane, passed under the branches.

Wingate's voice floated up to him: "Bother the young rascal! Precious waste of time!"

"Dingy little rotter!" said Sykes. "The sooner he's sacked, the better!"

Wingate gave a grunt. "They had him the other night, but the Head seemed to think there was a doubt. All rot!"

"Utter rot!"

The great men of the Sixth were evidently irritated and annoyed. Great men like Wingate and Sykes had plenty to do, without patrolling the borders of a disreputable resort, on the watch for a shady young rascal who had gone out of bounds.

They turned back and paced the lane again. Prefects had their duty to do, and Wingate and Sykes were doing theirs—not in a good temper!

Wharton waited till they were at a distance. Their backs were to him when he dropped from the oak, cut across the lane to the high fence and reached it.

He made a desperate bound, caught the top of the fence, and clambered over. Had either of the prefects looked round at that moment he must have been spotted.

He dropped within, breathless, and stood quite still, listening. He would not have been surprised to hear hurried footsteps approaching the spot along the lane and a voice calling to him. But he heard nothing; he had not been seen.

Leaving the fence, he threaded his way through the ill-kept grounds, and

in a few moments found himself in the midst of a crowd.

From the talk about him, he gathered that the glove-fight was over, and a good many of the patrons of the Three Fishers were already heading for the gates. Where was Smithy? Where, in that disreputable crowd, was he to find the Bounder?

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH shoved his hands deep into his pockets and tramped away from the old Army hut, in which the glove-fight had taken place, with a scowling brow.

The Bounder was in an extremely bad temper. He had backed the wrong man, and had to hand over a fiver to the smiling Mr. Banks, who had taken his bet; he had been standing in a hot, stuffy atmosphere; in a company for the most part unwashed; he was tired and dissatisfied, and more than a little ashamed of himself.

Altogether, he was in one of his worst tempers, as he stopped under a tree to light a cigarette, and—as usual when he was in a bad temper—ready to quarrel with anyone at a word.

"Smithy!" He stared round as his name was called breathlessly. He stared blankly at the Greyfriars junior, who hurried towards him.

For a moment he fancied that it was Stacey. Stacey he might have expected to meet in such a place. But he knew the next moment that it was Harry Wharton.

He laughed over the cigarette. "So you came, after all!" he sneered. "After all your pi-jaw, you came along. Did you have anything on the scrap?"

"You silly ass!" panted Wharton. "Do you think I came here to watch a prize-fight and make filthy bets?"

"Didn't you?" Wharton's eyes flashed at him. "You cheeky fool!" he exclaimed. "Oh, cut it out!" said the Bounder. "You're here, anyhow, and you didn't come in for a glass of ginger-pop, I suppose?"

"I came for you. I——" The Bounder scowled savagely. "Let me alone, you fool!" he snarled. "I've told you I don't want your dashed sermons. Can't you mind your own bizney? How many times do you want telling?"

"I tell you——" "Oh, shut up!" "Will you listen to me, you sulky fool?" exclaimed Wharton. "I've come here to warn you——"

"That's enough!" The Bounder walked on.

Wharton grabbed his arm, and forcibly dragged him to a halt.

"Listen to me, you idiot!" he said between his teeth. "I was a fool to come here! You jolly well ought to be sacked! But—Gwynne's waiting for you on the towpath!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Now do you understand?" said Harry savagely. "The gate's watched—and you've only got to walk out to have a prefect's hand dropped on your shoulder! Now keep on if you like!"

He released the Bounder's arm.

But Vernon-Smith did not keep on. He threw away his cigarette, and stood staring at Harry blankly.

"A prefect—on the towpath?"

"Yes."

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"Oh gad! Do they know?" The Bounder drew a deep, deep breath.

"Oh, my hat! Have I played the goat once too often? Just on the holidays, too—to get the boot! Look here! Cough it up! Do they know I'm here?"

"They don't know—but Quelch suspects!" answered Harry. "Gwynne's on the towpath watching for you—and me!"

"You?" repeated the Bounder. Wharton gave an angry laugh.

"Yes—the old ass fancies we're here together!"

"So we are!" grinned Smithy.

"Oh, don't be an ass! This isn't a laughing matter for me," said Harry savagely. "All that Stacey's ever done will be put down to me, without a doubt, if I'm spotted here. But—I couldn't let them snaffle you—after what you did for me!"

"Oh!" said the Bounder. His expression changed. "You're sure——"

"Do you think I'd be here if I wasn't?" snapped Wharton. "I heard Quelch speaking to the Head. Thank goodness I found you! I've been looking for you a quarter of an hour or more. We've got to get out of this—if we can!"

"There's a gate on Oak Lane," said Smithy. "We——"

"And Wingate and Sykes watching it!"

"Phew!" The Bounder whistled softly. "They didn't spot you getting here? How did you manage it?"

Wharton explained, and the Bounder listened attentively. His evil temper and irritation had passed now. He was keenly alive to his danger.

"All serene if we get out!" he said. "But——"

"We've got to somehow," said Harry. "Come on! There's no chance by the towpath; but we may be able to dodge out where I got in. We've got to chance it, anyhow!"

Most of the crowd had cleared off by this time. The two juniors made their way through the weedy shrubberies, and reached the high fence that bordered Oak Lane—taking care to keep away from the path that led down to the open gate.

On the other side of that fence, as Wharton knew, Wingate and Sykes were patrolling, with an eye on the gate. The two juniors stopped close by the fence.

Vernon-Smith applied his eye to a chink and peered into the lane. He caught his breath at the sight of two stalwart Greyfriars Sixth Formers passing.

Wingate and Sykes were not ten feet from him, but the solid timber of the fence was between, save for the chink through which the Bounder was peering.

"Did you see?" muttered Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed the Bounder.

"They've just passed." He grinned.

"They're walking up and down outside the gate! If I'd gone out by the gate——"

"Thank goodness, you didn't!"

"I should have—if you hadn't barged in! Walked right into their hands, by gum! I never dreamed——"

Harry Wharton jumped, caught the top of the fence, and looked over. Wingate and Sykes had passed on and were at a little distance; he had a clear back view of both of them.

"Quick, Smithy, before they turn! Drop in the ditch outside—it's dry! Quick!"

"Go it!"

The chance had to be taken. Wharton swung himself swiftly over the top of the fence and dropped.

Outside the fence a shallow ditch lay between the fence and the road. It was

dry in the summer heat, and tangled with ferns and bracken.

Wharton dropped into the ferns and bracken and stayed there. There was a bump at his side as the Bounder dropped.

"Keep low!" breathed Wharton.

"You bet!"

The Bounder's eyes were glittering with excitement. The sense of danger appealed to his reckless nature.

"We'll beat them yet!" he breathed.

"Keep low, old bean, while I take a peep!"

"Careful! If they spot you now——"

"Leave it to me!"

Keeping carefully in cover of a patch of furze on the edge of the ditch, the Bounder lifted his head cautiously and peered out into the lane. He popped down again the next second.

"They've turned!" he breathed.

Wharton's heart thumped painfully. The two juniors were on the right side of the fence now; but if they were spotted in the ditch, it came to the same thing. And Wingate and Sykes were walking back.

Deep in the ferns and bracken, heedless of stinging nettles, the two juniors crouched low. If either of the prefects came to the edge of the ditch, he could not fail to spot them; but from the middle of the lane they could not be seen.

They waited with throbbing hearts as the footsteps of the patrolling prefects drew nearer, and passed. A shadow fell across them for a moment. Then the footsteps passed on.

A minute later they were coming back again. Once more a shadow fell across the crouching figures in the ditch. Then the footsteps receded up the lane.

The Bounder peered out again.

"Now!" he breathed.

Wharton looked. Once more Wingate and Sykes were at a little distance, their backs turned.

Swift as arrows from the bow, the two juniors leaped out of the ditch and cut across the lane. Almost in a twinkling they plunged into the hawthorns on the edge of the common.

Wharton panted, almost giddy with the relief.

The Bounder chuckled.

"All safe now!" he murmured. "Plenty of cover here. But duck low. We're well out of that, old man!"

Wharton nodded, without speaking. Keeping their heads low, they threaded their way among the hawthorns till they were at a safe distance.

"Coming on to Courtfield?" asked the Bounder. "I'm going to the pictures! And I've been there all the afternoon if anybody wants to know!"

He chuckled.

Wharton shook his head.

"I left my bike on the Popper Court footpath," he said. "I'll get back."

"See you later, then!"

The Bounder walked on to Courtfield, whistling. Harry Wharton went back for his bike, mounted, and rode back to Greyfriars. He was in a thoughtful mood; but he smiled as he thought of Wingate, Sykes, and Gwynne, still watching the exits from the Three Fishers, and wondered whether they would keep it up till calling-over.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old fat bean?"

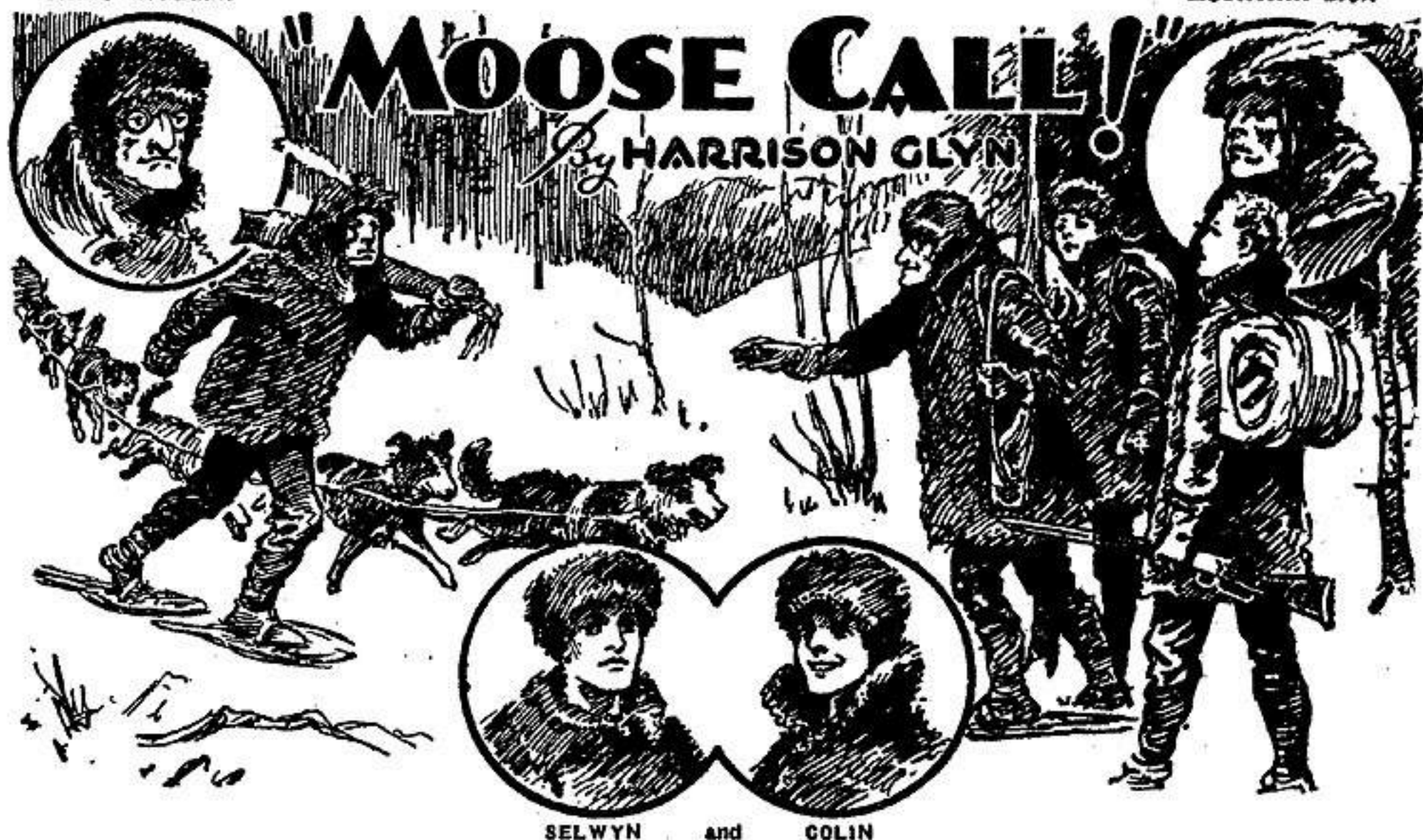
"Oh lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter.

He blinked dismally at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. Bunter had been in detention that afternoon, grinding away at his book for Quelch.

(Continued on page 28.)

ISAAC SNUGGER

MOUNTAIN LION



SELWYN and COLIN

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Selwyn Gore and his brother, Colin, set out for Moose Call to avenge the murder of their Uncle Amyas, a gold prospector. En route they meet Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian and friend of Amyas Gore, who leads them to a great, natural amphitheatre behind the Great Chief's Head in the Sunrise Mountains, where they discover the murdered man's claim. Leaving the Indian to keep watch, Selwyn and Colin make for the homeward trail to register the claim. They are ambushed by a gang of toughs led by Majoe and Musty, who have already registered the claim, but do not know its whereabouts. The two Britishers succeed in turning the tables on the gang, one of whom, in his eagerness to "get them," slips on the treacherous rocks and goes crashing down into a water-fall below.

Now read on.)

Trapped!

As the burly rascal hurtled downwards he seemed to realise his doom, and his shrill, strangled cry startled Selwyn, who was climbing desperately after Colin down the treacherous trail.

The brothers stopped and turned. They were just in time to see the bearded ruffian sweep down into the fall, and go with it tumbling to the deep, full basin more than thirty feet below. His hands, his bearded head, and his feet showed above the glassy surface of the fall, and his eyes were wide and white with horror as he plunged.

Splash!

He hit the foaming surface of the basin with a shock that hurled a fountain of water high and wide, and then he vanished in the pool.

Staring with horror, Selwyn knelt upon the stony track and looked down. He saw the black body come up and go under again; saw an arm thrown out, with fingers spread; saw the bearded head show once, with mouth wide open,

and then go down beneath the bubbling surface.

Before Selwyn could control himself sufficiently to resume his downward climb, the huge body of the man floated to the rim of the basin, was held for a moment against it whilst the water gathered force behind, and then over it plunged, to go bouncing and tumbling along the rocky channel with the waters of the fall bubbling about it.

"The man was mad, Sel," gasped Colin, looking a trifle scared, "thinking he could jump down the fall like that!"

"Let's be thankful he was," returned Selwyn. "If he could have got down he might have killed us both. Served him right. That's one of Majoe's murderers finished with, thank goodness!"

He turned, moved out nearer to the edge of the fall, and glanced upward. He could see nobody. Either their pursuers had abandoned the chase, or had felt sure the bearded ruffian would get them.

They descended the treacherous, rocky way at their ease, which was just as well, for a single slip would have meant a tumble into the fall and death as certain as that which had overtaken their enemy.

The ledge upon which they were stranded stood high above the fall. It was narrow, slippery from drying water-weed, for lately it had been under the rushing tide. Sometimes, at a step, a rock would slip away from under their feet and go hurtling down into the fall.

Presently, where the track flattened out a little, and the channel widened, they saw that the fall broke away left and right round a huge, rounded rock, which split it in two. The waterway on the far side was much more open than the one on their side, which turned sharply left to follow the course of the torrent.

Colin's face lengthened in dismay as he recognised the place.

"Sel, we've come the wrong way!" he cried. "We ought to have kept right where we waded across the stream. Somehow I felt we were wrong."

Selwyn stared gloomily across the fall.

"It was my fault," he said. "I thought the trail went to the right, too."

But it was the absence of running water there that tricked me. I knew we had waded at that point. But, of course, Col; the snow must have nearly all melted, and that arm of it dried up."

"Shall we go back?" asked Colin, staring up at the dark masses of mountain rock above them.

"I don't know whether we could manage it. It wasn't easy to climb down. That's why I knew we were on the wrong trail. And Majoe and his men may be waiting up there for us."

Majoe and his men! They weighed the balance down in favour of going on.

"Let's stick it, Colin. And if we find the track leads nowhere, or is too dangerous, we can wait a bit before we climb back to meet the proper trail."

"Right-ho!"

Colin gave his belt a hitch one hole tighter. He was so hungry he could almost have chewed granite and liked it. But he did not grumble, for it would not have helped. The boys had no weapons, and no food. They had lost their packs. And one thing was certain, if they could not find the way down the Sunrise Mountains to the pleasant mesas far below, where Mountain Lion might be waiting for them, they would die in their tracks and leave their bones for the vultures to pick clean and the sun to bleach.

They had been climbing down for perhaps a full half-hour since the bearded villain had made his death dive down the fall, and they had not gone very far at that, because the way was so steep and difficult, when Colin suddenly turned round, his eyes dancing and his face radiant.

"Sel, I reckon it's a good thing we didn't keep to Mountain Lion's trail."

"Why do you say that?" argued Selwyn.

"Because if any of those villains saw which way we turned, they're bound to follow that trail. At least, we haven't shown them the way out."

"We have," answered Selwyn, "if this rocky track leads us safely down the mountains. And that is what's worrying me."

After another half-hour's treacherous

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downward climb they were confronted by a solid wall of unclimbable rock ahead. Here a narrow stony pathway led left. Rubbish and dried grass and twigs, borne by the wind from anywhere, almost blocked out the sky above. The path twisted and turned, and they moved along it cautiously. The sound of falling water died to a smothered roar. But after a while it grew louder again, and then louder still.

Presently, to their blank amazement, they moved right to the edge of the racing torrent, to find it bubbling over a rocky bed, to vanish through a tunnel in the very side of the mountain.

The tunnel was shaped like a rounded arch, and was about thirty feet wide and twenty feet high. Along the bed of the channel, worn deep by the rain and melted snows of centuries, the torrent raced. Its foam-topped waves showed white at the mouth, but grew grey and dull farther in the tunnel, until finally they were swallowed up by the pitch-blackness of the hole.

The track they had so laboriously followed ended upon the very brink of the fall and close to the tunnel. It looked impossible for them to go on, and the prospect of that steep and exhausting and perilous climb back filled them with dismay.

"We're trapped, Col!" said Selwyn ruefully. "It's impossible to go on."

The Treasure Cave!

SELWYN and Colin sat down, glad of the rest, and the former took off his boots and plunged his feet ankle deep in the icy water so as to ease the ache of the bruises caused by the thongs with which Majoe and his bullies had bound him.

The brothers then moved farther along the edge of the torrent and, leaning over, drank their fill.

It was an evil, dark, and sombre place they had found, for it was shut in on all sides, while walls of dark, frowning rock towered high above them. It was cold, too.

Presently, they strolled as close as they could to the mouth of the tunnel and, peering into its depths, made a discovery.

The marks of high water had been cut deep in the side of the tunnel a full ten feet above the present bubbling flood. The solid rock bed of the stream shallowed at the sides, where it was comparatively flat.

"I wonder whether we could walk along it," said Selwyn, after his brother had pointed out these peculiarities of the tunnel.

"Don't think it would be wise to try, Sel. Look how dark it is. We might wade in safely for a certain distance, but soon we wouldn't be able to see. And what then?"

But Selwyn felt obstinate about it.

"The water must come out somewhere, Col," he said. "The tunnel may not extend very far into the mountain. I don't think water could ever bore a hole through the very heart of the solid rock."

"All right," said Colin, "let's wade in a bit and see."

He had tied his boots together by their laces and hung them about his neck. Selwyn had done the same.

Very carefully, Colin stepped down into the water, and, keeping to the shallows, crept onward into the tunnel.

The roar of the rushing water almost deafened the two boys. Little by little, Colin waded on until the daylight had

almost gone and the grey about them turned to dense black ahead. The bed of the tunnel dropped away in a gentle slope and, so far, was in no sense dangerous.

But when they entered the darkness and tried to catch a glimmer of light ahead they were met by a wall of pitch blackness. To go any farther seemed to smack of crazy madness.

"We must go back, Col," said Selwyn. "We'd better sleep near the mouth of the tunnel and climb back up the trail at daybreak in the hope that we can get safely down on the other side of the fall while Majoe and his ruffians are asleep."

"Right-ho!" agreed Colin, as he felt the water deepen beneath his outstretched foot. "But before we go, just hold my hand, Sel, for there seems to be a drop in the tunnel just ahead. Grip on tight, old son."

Selwyn secured a firm grip on his brother's hand and held it like a vice, as Colin very cautiously felt the deepening water in front of him.

"The water seems to have hollowed out quite a deepish pool here, Sel," said Colin. "It comes nearly up to the knee, I think. But it may shallow again just beyond. I wonder where the deuce the tunnel leads to? There's a thunderous noise of water on ahead. I wish we had a torch so that we could throw a light."

Colin led the way through the shallow pool and climbed out on the other side. Here the going was firm and good again, and the water only a few inches deep. Selwyn was holding his brother's hand quite lightly now. But of a sudden, and without warning, Colin slipped and, as he fell, Selwyn tightened his hold.

Colin splashed down into the swiftly flowing mountain stream and, as it bore him away flat, Selwyn, torn forward by the weight and tug of body and tide, plunged headlong after him.

The two boys were swept into the blackness at an incredible speed. Each struggled for himself. Both of them were good swimmers. With heads out of the bubbling water, and arms steadying their rush, they floated on the tearing flood.

"It's good-bye this time, Sel," said Colin, his voice ringing like a trumpet in the vaulted tunnel.

"Hope not," gasped Selwyn.

Borne round the windings of the tunnel, they found themselves moving faster and faster as the bed of the stream dropped steeply down. Water splashed over their heads. The channel was narrow and deep now. It was impossible to talk. They were tossed about like corks, and could hear the roar of a fall somewhere ahead of them, in the darkness.

Selwyn held his breath as the water thundered over him. When they came to that fall, over they would go.

In that moment, when he came so near to drowning, Selwyn did not find all his past life come up in review before him as people say it does. Instead, he found himself thinking vaguely about Colin, praying that his brother might escape.

A moment later, the fall took him and swept him deep down into a whirling pool, out of which he was presently swept, gasping and half-drowned.

He found himself floating upon a smoothly flowing tide and instinctively struck out, swimming vigorously. Six big, bold strokes he took, and then his

hand struck sandy bottom, and his knee hit against a rock.

Instantly, he crouched in the shallow water, and then staggered up and out, to fling himself down upon a dry, sandy bed.

It was a miracle.

"Colin!" he shouted. "Co-l-in—Co-l-in!"

The vaulted place in which he found himself echoed back at him. Then a glad cry answered him:

"Are you there, Sel?"

Before the echoes died, Selwyn strode in the direction of the voice, his arms stretched out before him. Presently they touched a shaggy head.

"Col—it's you! Then we're both alive. I say—that's—something of a miracle."

"Sel!" gasped Colin. "I thought we were done for, when I slipped. But—I've lost my boots, Sel."

Colin was slightly hysterical through the blessed relief of their escape after the shock of their immersion. And Selwyn, with all his nerve, was little better.

The boys clung fast to each other for a full minute, and then, feeling the dry sandy floor at their feet, sat themselves down cross-legged in the darkness to try to figure things out.

It was plain from the noisy echoes which rang, even when they whispered, that they were within a vaulted place or cave of some considerable size. The mountain stream, which fell down the cliff face into the pool and broke into two currents just below it, evidently branched away and came through the tunnel to a hidden fall over which it raced on its course through this cave.

As they sat side by side in the cold depths of the mountain cavern Selwyn became conscious of a faint greyness ahead of him, but far away. He pointed it out to Colin, and as their eyes grew accustomed to it they found themselves able to see the glimmer of the rushing water, and even made out the rocky wall beyond the stream.

Nearby objects began gradually to take shape. The roof of the cave was lost in blackness, but the stretch of sand and powdered rockdust on which they had been thrown swept flat and grey about them.

Some dark objects, close at hand, attracted Colin's attention. He picked them up.

"My boots, or else yours, Sel!" he cried joyfully.

Selwyn joined him, and they began slowly to pace along the sand, moving in the direction of the distant light. Suddenly they espied something dark and round, heaped or huddled upon the floor of the cave. They moved quickly towards it, stooped to see, and then drew swiftly back. For the object that lay huddled there was the body of a man, his face buried in the silt, and one arm thrust dramatically out.

Selwyn knew, before he lifted and turned the body over, who the man was.

"It's that yellow-bearded rascal, who was hard on our trail, Col!" he gasped, in awe.

"Dead!" said Colin, in a whisper.

"No doubt about that."

Selwyn pulled a gun out of the left-hand holster attached to the belt the dead man wore, while Colin found the gun with which the fellow had fired at them still clenched tightly in his right hand. With difficulty he tore it away.

The boys then searched the dead man's pockets and brought to light a

pipe, a tobacco-pouch, a box of sodden matches, and, most useful of all, an electric torch.

Mechanically Selwyn switched it on, and instantly a broad, far-reaching beam of light lit up the cave, silvering everything with the radius of its rays.

Selwyn laughed joyfully.

"It's one of the new waterproof type, Col," he said. "You could steep it in a bucket of water for twenty-four hours and it would work just the same afterwards. We're in luck!"

The boys stuck the torch in the sand and then discussed the situation.

"What now?" asked Colin.

"Let's try to get out of this place," said Selwyn. "Just see how far this sandbank stretches. I wonder whether that light we saw in the distance shows the way out?"

They walked that way, and the grey light seemed stronger when they switched off the light of the torch. But it was deepening, fading. It would seem as if the day was closing in, in which case they would have to remain in the cave until the dawn broke.

Selwyn swept the broad disc of light about and saw that the sand was composed of minute particles of rock, borne down by the stream from the tops of the mountains. Suddenly, as he looked about him, he uttered a triumphant shout and pointed.

"Look, Col!" he gasped. "Look!"

Colin looked in the direction indicated and saw that the sandy floor was studded with nuggets of pure gold, ranging in size from a peanut to larger than a turkey's egg, which shone and glimmered in the blinding light. The mountain waterfall had borne them to a treasure cave!

Mountain Lion to the Rescue!

CLOSER investigation by the two boys proved that their first impression was correct. The sandy floor of the mountain cave was studded with gold.

They knelt, in the light of the torch, and picked the flecks of gold from the sand, cramming their pockets with it, and picking up small nuggets and adding them to the store.

I was not until they were conscious of the dragging weight of the precious metal that Selwyn suddenly sat back on his heels, looked at Colin, and laughed grimly.

"What mugs we are, Col," he said, "wasting our time like this. We'll have plenty of time to loot the gold—if we ever get out of this mess. And I'd give the whole lot of it for some food."

Food! The mere thought of it set stabbing pangs of hunger loose, and Colin tightened his sodden leather belt two holes. The brothers had nothing to eat.

Selwyn switched off the light, and they crouched in the darkness, peering along the flowing stream in search of the gleam of daylight which had shown in the far distance. But it was no longer to be seen. Even when their eyes grew accustomed to the dark they failed to find it. The day had waned.

"The best thing we can do now is sleep, Col," said Selwyn.

Using the torch again, he found a high, dry place, which was sheltered from the wind which blew through the cave, and there they stretched themselves out, turned off the light, and shut their eyes.

For some minutes they moved uncomfortably, kept awake by their bruised and aching limbs and the grip of their sodden clothes. But gradually



"Ugh!" grunted the Redskin, as he flourished his deadly sharpened tomahawk, one blow of which would split Selwyn's skull in two.

the pain eased, their bodies became piping hot, and at last they fell fast asleep.

When they awoke, cramped and chilled, they saw the distant hole showing brightly at the end of the flowing stream. A dim light filled the cave, enabling them to see quite plainly.

"Let's see where the stream leads to," said Selwyn. "We might manage to go back, at a pinch, but I'd rather go on—if we can."

Following the line of the swift-flowing stream, they found that it narrowed presently and rushed through a lofty tunnel to the disc of daylight that showed blindingly in the distance.

Here, as he flashed the light of the torch about, Selwyn saw that the high-water mark was many feet up the rocky wall. The melting snows of the Sunrise Mountains were giving out, and there was no great depth of water here.

This time Selwyn led the way, treading cautiously, supporting himself at danger point by gripping hold of the spurs of rock which jutted from the tunnel wall. Colin crept after him, keeping near, ready to grip hold of Sel, should he make a false step and fall.

In the rocky tunnel the roar of the rushing water was deafening, the high walls acting as sounding boards, and in the distance the roar of a fall added to the noise.

In places the tunnel broadened out, and the water shallowed to less than knee-high depth, enabling the boys to wade quickly and surely.

When the mouth of the mountain tunnel was not more than forty yards away from them Selwyn stopped.

"What are we going to find when we get to the open, Col?" he asked. "If the water goes sheer down in a straight fall and there's no handhold or foothold on the rock, we'll have to go back again."

"Mind the rush of water doesn't carry you over the edge, Sel," warned Colin.

But as he went on, the water continuing to shallow, Selwyn knew there was no danger of that. The swollen mountain torrents of years had widened the tunnel into a funnel-like mouth, and here the water rolled smoothly, like glass, over the rim, splashing down upon jagged points of rock thirty to forty feet below.

There was not enough water, now, to cover the full width of the mouth, and so Selwyn and Colin stepped cautiously over the dry rock bed until at last they reached the open, when for safety they went down upon their hands and knees to peer about them.

The rugged splendour of the scene made them gasp, and they were perched so high upon the steep mountain-side that their heads grew dizzy. To the left of them, white-capped peaks were partly veiled by billowing clouds, and close at hand, a narrow rocky ledge led away from the mouth of the fall. The ledge was a full eight feet wide, and on all fours Selwyn crept along it till he came upon a small plateau.

From this point he could see the water gushing down the mountain until it reached a pool, two thousand feet or more below.

Out of this pool it ran again, to break up into rills which raced down to the distant foothills.

On the other hand, a deep ravine, which looked as if it had been hewn by a mighty giant out of the solid mountain, dropped sheer to dark depths that they could not see.

"We can't go down the fall, Col," said Selwyn. "And we'd dive to death if we tried to descend the ravine. If we don't want to go back through the tunnel the only other way is up the mountain-side."

Colin swept the dangerous steep side

the mountain wall above him with critical eyes. In the exposed places the rocks had been polished by wind and rain and burnished by the winter frosts. Growing in the hollows were mosses and mountain lichen. The way looked dangerous. They had neither rope nor alpinestock, and their riding-boots were void of nails.

Could they manage it?
The sight of some wind-blown and sparse bushes nestling in holes in the rock decided Selwyn.

"Guess their roots will have dug in deep, and they'll afford a hold," he said, pointing. "And look up there! There's a solid ledge, and if you follow it along to the left it seems to extend farther than we can see. Looks as if it might run for miles, and the going would be good and safe there. It's not so far up, either. Two or three hundred feet."

"More," said Colin calculatively. "It's a good six hundred feet up to that ledge, Sel. And I doubt if we can make it. It's the last few feet that matter. See! The rock goes steeply up. I doubt if we'd be able to reach up to the rim at the finish, Sel."

"Well, if we stay here we shall soon starve to death. If we go back through the tunnel I question whether we'd be able to pass the depths where you fell into the water, Col. But if we could make that plateau we might easily be able to climb down to the foothills."

"O.K.!" said Colin. "And down there Mountain Lion is sure to be waiting for us."

Without any further delay the two boys began the upward climb.

It was desperate work, with death waiting for the slightest slip. There were moments when Selwyn, in the lead, felt his polished boot soles slide from the smooth face of a stone on which he had trod, and he hung on desperately with both hands till he could find foothold again and drag himself breathlessly upward.

Sometimes a point of rock on which he set his weight broke away and bounded down the side of the mountain, leaving him hanging perilously.

But his hands were like iron, his muscles like tempered steel, his lungs as strong and sound as a blacksmith's bellows, his eyes as keen as a hawk's, and his brain as clear as crystal.

He had seen and suffered so much lately that the peril of this climb had not the power to unnerve him. Once he laughed where he hung over a sheer death drop of several thousand feet and swung his legs in glee.

"We're nearly up, Col," he laughed. "Follow me. I won't lead you wrong. But we've got to work over to the right there, for it's the only place I

can see where we can reach up and grip the edge of the plateau."

"O.K.!" said Colin again, moving to the left after Selwyn, and finding the sound foothold and handhold Selwyn had tested for him.

It was the last fifty feet of the desperate climb which proved the most dangerous, for the way steepened. Sometimes the rock jutted out like a ceiling overhead, and they had to go down again before resuming the upward climb.

As if he meant it to be do or die, now or never, Selwyn took risks for the first time, no longer testing foothold before he thrust his weight downward, reaching up with eager hands for a grip on the cliff above.

Fortune favoured him. Unerringly, he made his way to perhaps the only spot in view from which he would be able to reach the edge of the ridge and draw himself easily up and over it.

The edge was not nine feet above him now; he climbed up higher, gripped the rim, and turned to smile encouragingly down at Colin.

"We're home, Col!" he shouted. Home!"

Then he saw the smile fade on his brother's face, and a grim look of horror shine in his widening eyes. Colin was staring upward, mouth wide open, frozen to the rock face to which he clung, unable to cry out a warning.

Swiftly Selwyn turned his head and glanced upward.

As he did so he saw the plumed head of a Red Indian swing into view above him. The black eyes were burning, the face was hideously disfigured with ghastly war paint, the gash of a mouth spread in a frightening grin that showed two rows of white teeth.

A red hand closed on Selwyn's right wrist like a vice, and held him there.

"Ugh!" grunted the Redskin, as he flourished his deadly sharpened tomahawk, one blow of which would split Selwyn's skull in two.

Colin screamed in horror.

"Don't hit him, Indian!" he shouted.

Selwyn's eyes bored into the black orbs of the Redskin, and the face began to take shape. He recognised the savage, despite the grotesque war-paint he had smeared upon his yellow skin.

"Mountain Lion!" he gasped.

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian again, and, letting his tomahawk fall to the ground, he gripped Selwyn by both wrists, hauled him safely over the brink and threw him sprawling in safety on the ledge.

(Look out for another feast of thrills in next week's chapters of this popular adventure story.)

STANDING BY SMITHY!

(Continued from page 24.)

Judging by the expression on his fat face, he had not been enjoying life.

The Form match was over. The Remove had not had to bat a second time, and Stacey's bowling had demolished the Shell wickets at a great rate. It was over in time for tea, and the Co. found Harry Wharton waiting for them at the pavilion when they came off the field. Billy Bunter met them as they came towards the House—with a lugubrious visage that might have touched a heart of stone.

"I say, you fellows, I've had a putrid time!" groaned Bunter. "If you fellows had done those lines for me, as I asked you—"

"Shut up, you fat duffer!" breathed Bob Cherry, as Mr. Quelch came out of the House.

Bunter shut up.
Mr. Quelch came to a dead stop.

"Wharton!"
"Yes, sir!"
"Where have you been this afternoon?"

"Up to four o'clock, sir, I was sitting on the wall of the Head's garden, reading the 'Holiday Annual'!" said Harry calmly.

"Wha-a-t?"
"Then, as I heard you and the Head speaking in the garden, sir, I thought I'd better go—especially as you were speaking of me, sir—"

"You—you heard?"
Mr. Quelch fairly stammered. If Wharton had heard him speaking to Dr. Locke in the Head's garden, obviously he had not been out of bounds. Three prefects were watching the Three Fishers for nothing!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Ah! I—I—I see! Quite!"

He walked on hurriedly.
"Did Quelch fancy you'd been up to something this afternoon while we were at the cricket?" asked Bob Cherry, mystified.

"I think he did. Quelch has such a lot of fancies, you know! But never mind Quelch and his jolly old fancies! What about tea?"

"Yes, rather!" said Billy Bunter. "Never mind Quelch! He's an old ass, anyhow! Let's have tea, you fellows!"
And they had tea.

THE END.

(Billy Bunter and the chums of Greyfriars appear in another grand yarn next week, entitled: "SAVED FROM THE SACK!" Make sure of your copy of the MAGNET by placing an order with your newsagent RIGHT NOW!)

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THE WORST CHAP at ST. SAM'S!

By DICKY NUGENT

"Bright!"
"Hallo!"
Dr. Birchmell, the revered and majestic head-master of St. Sam's, fairly jumped as he stared across the dining-hall at Bright of the Fourth. He could hardly believe his ears!

"W-w-what did you say?" he stuttered.
"I said 'Hallo!'" drawled Bright, with studied insouciance. "Anything wrong with that?"

A buzz of eggshells went round the hall, while at the same time there was an electric silence in which you could have heard a pin drop. The Head's skollary fizz was simply terrifying to behold. Listening flashed from his eyes.

"You—you impudent young rascal!" he thundered. "How dare you talk to me so disrespectful? Why, I'll slatter you! I'll—"

"Is that all you were going to say?" yawned Bright.

The skool fairly gasped. Dr. Birchmell pointed a trembling fourfinger to the door.

"No, it isn't!" he roared. "I was going to tick you off for not washing your face properly before coming in to dinner; but I won't trouble about that now. Leave the table at once and go to your Form-room. You are detained for the afternoon—and you won't have a scrap of dinner, either!"

"That's good!" grinned Bright, with a despairing glance at the steaming dishes on the tables. "I never did like tripe and onions!"

"Go!" hooted the Head.

And Bright went—leaving the dining-hall in a regular uproar!

The question everybody was asking now was: what would Bright do next? Whatever it was, there would be little surprise over it, for in the space of a few days Bright had become the very worst chap at St. Sam's!

The cause of this amazing change in Bill Bright was a frame-up of which he had been the victim. On circumstantial evidence he had been convicted of card-playing and blagging, when he had really been trying to save his minor from the klutches of Snarlor & Co. Smarting under this act of injustice, he had made up his mind to become in grim earnest the cadd and rotter the Head thought him to be. And this was the result!

As soon as dinner was over, Jack Jolly called Merry on one side. The kaplin of the Fourth had a thoughtful look on his handsome dial.

"Merry, old chap, I think we ought to warn Bright not to break detention," he said. "I happen to know he intended playing billiards at the Jolly Sailor at Muggleton this afternoon, and if he tries to keep that appointment there'll be the very dickens to pay. I vote we warn him. He's a cadd and a rotter and he duzzent deserve it, but we'll do it for old times' sake."

"All serene!" agreed Merry, and the two pals trotted along to the Form-room.

Bright didn't seem a bit grateful for their visit. He greeted them with a sneering, leering smile when they walked in; and when he heard Jack Jolly's warning he merely laughed sardonically.

"Thanks for nothing!" he said. "You needn't worry your fat. I can look after myself."

"Let's leave this dingy blaggard, Jolly," eggshelled Merry, "and get down to cricket!"

Jack Jolly nodded grimly, and the two kitted the Form-room.

A few minnits later the figger of a junior mite have been seen climbing out of the Form-room window. As a matter of fact, it was seen. Toadey minor, of the Fourth, spotted Bright's move as he was strolling across the quad. And, needles to say, he went straight to the Head.

"Please, sir," he whined, "I just noticed Bright making for gates, and it made me wonder whether you'd given him a pass-out or not."

Dr. Birchmell's eyes gleamed.

"My hat! That yung rascal is fairly asking for it—begging and praying for it, in fact!" he eggshelled. "I certainly never gave him permission to go out. Have you any idea where he may be going, Toadey?"

THE NEW Greyfriars Herald

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.



July 20th, 1935.

"Please, sir, there's a rumour about that he's going to play billiards at the Jolly Sailor!"

The Head held up his hands in utter horror. "The Jolly Sailor! That low hawnt!" he cried.

"Why, it's the vilest den in Muggleton—a place I wouldn't be seen in for worlds! I will go there at once and investigate!"

And the Head, pawing only to pocket the bag of toffy he had been eating, rushed from his study in pursuit.

The news of what had happened soon spread through St. Sam's, and the general opinion was that Bill Bright was properly for it at last. Cricket was abandoned in the prevailing eggshelling, and an eggshelling crowd quickly gathered at the gates in the hope of witnessing the last act of the drama.

While they waited the Head's long, spidery legs were carrying him to the Jolly Sailor at top speed.

Arriving at the inn, he marched boldly in and sought out the billiard room.

He had fully eggshelled to catch Bright red-handed. But a disappointment awaited him. The only occupants were the innkeeper himself and a rather weird-looking gentleman with smoked glasses and a long mistosh. Of the St. Sam's junior there wasn't a sign.

"Anything we can do for you, old covey?" asked the innkeeper.

"Yes, you can tell me whether or not a St. Sam's junior has been here this afternoon," answered Dr. Birchmell. "He was about the hite of this gentleman here."

And the Head, with his usual stately, old-world politeness, jerked his thumb in the direction of the man with the smoked glasses. The latter laughed.

"I'm the only person of this hite that has been here this afternoon," he remarked. "So if you're looking for another you'll have to look elsewhere or wait till he arrives."

"Why not wait 'ere, old covey?" leered the innkeeper. "Pr'aps you'd like a game of billiards with this other jent to while away the time?"

Dr. Birchmell hesitated.

"Ahem! It's rather against my principals to play billiards in a low tavern with a stranger," he murmured. "Still, it's a game I always enjoy. If you like, I'll play you two hundred up!"

"Done!" cried the gentleman with the smoked glasses, who seemed very pleased over something.

"Let's start at once!"

And the Head, taking his cue, took his cue—and

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soon the room was echoing to the merry clicking of billiard balls!

After winning three games tight off the reel, Dr. Birchmell was in grate spirits.

"It's good to know the old hand hasn't lost its cunning," he chuckled. "But I'm afraid I must be getting back to St. Sam's now."

"Let me walk along with you," grinned the gentleman with the glasses. "I'm going that way myself."

And so it was that the crowd that still waited at the gates eggshelling to see the Head leading Bright back by the ear saw him returning arm-in-arm with a gentleman with smoked glasses and a long mistosh!

It was a strange site. But the crowd would have seen an even stranger site had they followed the short gentleman down the road after he left the Head.

For the moment he got out of the he climbed up the skool wall, dropped down into the quad, and dashed across like lightning to the side entrance to the Skool House.

Inside he raced along to the Fourth Form-room. There he tore off his glasses and false mistosh and put them into a cupboard belonging to the Fourth Form Stage Society. And then he calmly sat down at Bright's desk and started swotting as though he had been there all the afternoon.

Dr. Birchmell's billiard-playing friend had been Bright of the Fourth all the time!

The Head was greatly surprised to see Bright when he looked in.

"Then, you're here!" he eggshelled. "Toadey told me you were at Muggleton!"

"What a funny idea for Toadey to get hold of!" grinned Bright. "Is my detention over, sir?"

"Yes, Bright. But before you do anything else, send Toadey to my study. I have something to say to him—and I shall say it with a birch rod!"

"All serene, sir!" grinned Bright, as he went out to find Toadey minor.

And it wasn't long before the creeping, cringing crawler was yelling with aggerment the Head's birch dusted his trows.

By the time the Head had finished with him, Toadey minor was feeling very, very indeed that he had matched his wits against those of the Worst Chap at St. Sam's!

(Don't miss the next yarn in this staggering series whatever you do!—ED.)

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CURING COKER'S CLOBBER COMPLEX

By DICK RAKE

A lot of old jossers have been writing to the papers lately saying schoolboys nowadays are too untidy in their dress. Coker has been reading what they've had to say. Coker has taken it up. Until yesterday Coker looked like developing what doctors call a "complex" about it—in other words, going potty about it!

But happily something happened yesterday to put a stop to Coker's Clobber Complex!

What happened was a result of a little lecture Coker gave us.

He stopped while he was on his way to the bathing pool and told us just what he thought about our dress. He said our collars were dirty, our ties

frowsty, our bags an utter disgrace, our shoes indescribable, and our blazers not fit for the adornment of the meanest scarecrow. He told us we looked like a lot of barbarians and that our appearance brought shame on the name of the old school.

Finally, he ordered us to go and clean ourselves up a bit and change into something decent.

Brown and Bulstrode, who were with me, listened to the end, then made a move forward to slay Coker. I stopped them.

"You shouldn't get annoyed with a chap for wanting the school turned out smartly," I said.

"Coker's right. We don't pay enough attention to our clobber. We're not clobber-conscious."

"Potty?" queried Bulstrode.

"Not a bit. I just agree with Coker, that's all. I think something ought to be done about it. I think we ought to wake up Greyfriars to the need for good taste in dress."

"Then I'll explain."

When I did so, Bulstrode and Brown smiled, too. We were all smiling as we went into a neighbouring field, stripped a scarecrow of its clothes and took them down to the bathing pool.

But the smiles we smiled then were nothing compared with the smiles we smiled later on, when Coker returned from his dip to find his own clothes mysteriously vanished and an unspeakable collection of rags and tatters just as mysteriously in their place!

Coker's return to the school, wearing the scarecrow's garments was the best thing that's happened this term bar none!

From start to finish it was one long scream. They're still laughing about it in the School House as we go to press!

"Yes, it's going to be a long, long time before Coker lectures the Remove on dress again!"

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"If you imagine you're pulling Coker's leg, you can stop right now, for he's out of hearing distance already," snorted Tom Brown, pointing to Coker's retreating figure. "Blessed if I follow your drift, anyway."

"It was just a little idea I had for making Greyfriars chaps think more about dress," I smiled. "A sort of object-lesson in how not to dress, if you follow me."

"We don't."

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Upper Fourth Cricket is Improving

Says H. VERNON-SMITH

You fellows who treat Upper Fourth cricket as a joke should stop it. Upper Fourth cricket is improving wonderfully!

I've been watching them once or twice lately, and I must say I'm surprised at the progress they're making. To begin with, Temple's efficiency as a batsman has gone up a hundred per cent. Last season he was almost invariably bowled out first ball. This year it takes two balls to achieve the same result. It can hardly be denied that this is a remarkable improvement.

The old taunt about the Fourth fielders being "butter-fingers" no longer applies at all. Last year, admittedly, it was deserved, for the fielders never seemed able to hold more than one catch out of six. But this year, so great is their improvement that they can hold one out of five!

Where the Fourth have improved out of all recognition, however, is in their bowling. Why, at one time it was a well-known fact that the Fourth bowlers were scored off to the extent of an average of thirty runs a wicket. This season that average has been reduced to 27!

So taking it all round, Fourth cricket, as I tell you, can no longer be treated as a joke. We've got to face up to the fact that it's undergoing a profound change for the better.

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