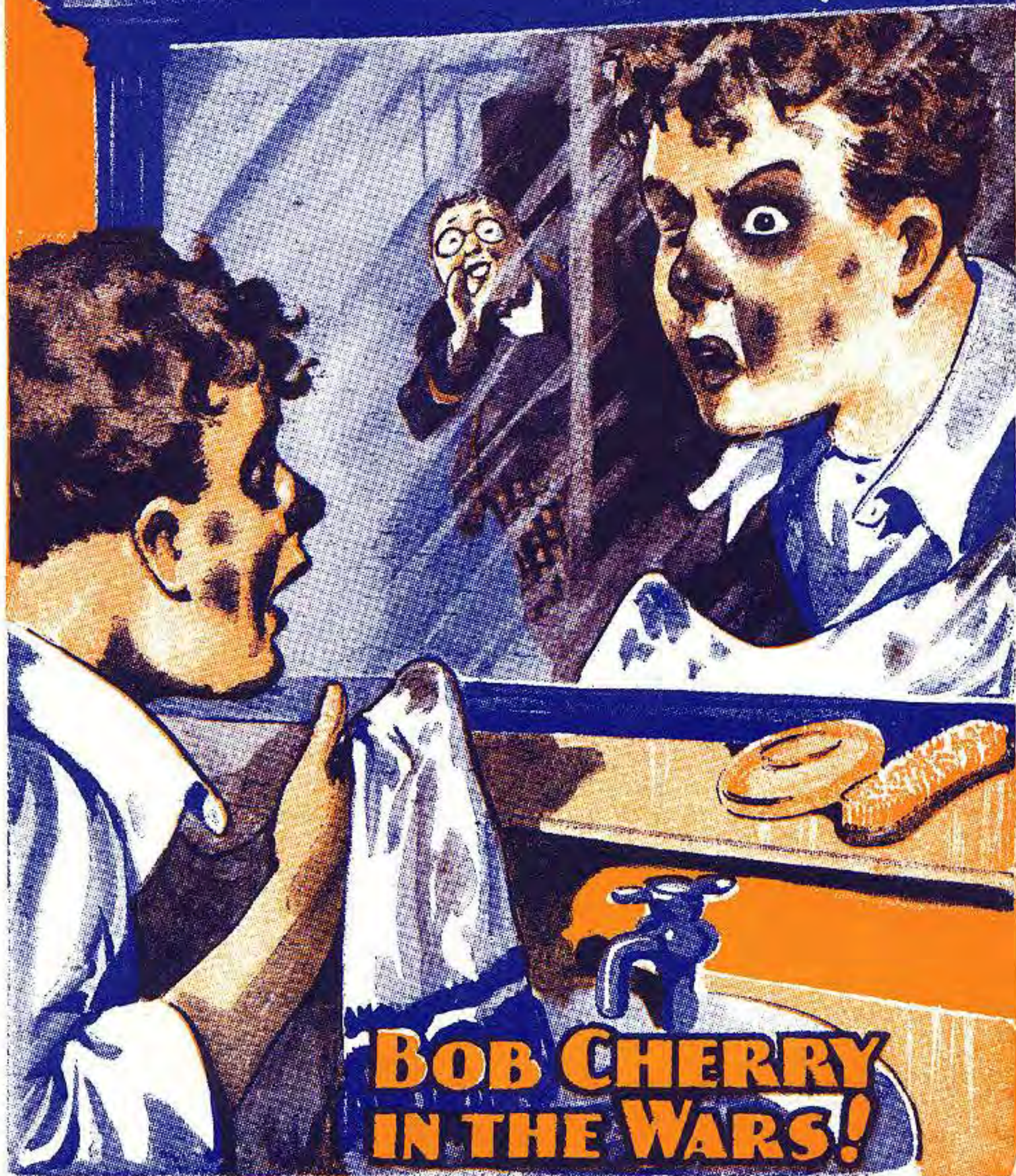


"BOB CHERRY'S BURDEN!" Super School Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet 2^d

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



YOUR EDITOR CALLING ALL READERS !



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.

HALLO, everybody! Your Editor calling! Phew, isn't it hot? I'll tell the world it is! As I sit down to write this chat the temperature is somewhere within the region of— Well, what's it matter? It may be raining by the time these words are in print!

On my way up to the office this morning, my companion and I were discussing

PLEASANT PASTIMES.

My friend informed me that his happiest moments were when pottering about in the garden. And very nice, too! The best time of the week, as far as I am concerned, is having a pow-wow with you fellows through the medium of our weekly chat. With a full page at my disposal this week, I'm able to spread myself a bit. One of my readers informed me last week that he considered the Editor's page as one of the most important features in the MAGNET. Good! All I can say to you fellows is: Fire away with your queries. Don't forget I'm here to be "shot at"—and that I like receiving letters from my chums. If you've been arguing with a pal and want a debatable point settled, I'm always ready to do what I can to help.

And when you write don't forget to let me know what you think about the Old Paper. Remember, it is your paper, and in the capacity of Editor, it is my job to make it as interesting as possible, and to see that you get the best school stories obtainable. Judging by the number of years the MAGNET has been the leading boys' paper and the many congratulatory things you say about it, I have not been unsuccessful in that. And I say, without boasting, that the jolly old MAGNET is going to continue to hold its present position as a top-notch school story paper!

ONE of the most interesting letters in my postbag this week comes from A. S. Leep, of Margate, who informs me that certain fellows seem to delight in making fun of his name. My chum is so annoyed, that he has asked me whether or no he should change his name. This particular reader goes on to say that he is far from being "a-sleep." At the age of twelve he passed a scholarship examination with flying colours and "matriculated" when he was fifteen. Well done, my Margate chum! Take my tip, and don't worry about your name. Remember the old saying: "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but names will never hurt you!" Let these fellows chip you as much as they like, chum. After all, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

every one of us gets chipped at some time or other. Smile, and the world smiles with you, even though your name may be A. S. Leep!

Next we come to letters from George Miller (Maida Vale, W.), Miss Jean Rogers (Leeds), Lewis Snell (Lincoln), and John Higginbottom (Streatham, S.W.), all of whom ask me the same question—to publish the names of the Greyfriars Sixth-Formers. They are as follows:

Wingate, George Bernard, Head Prefect and Captain of Greyfriars.

Benson, Howard.

Carne, Arthur Woodhead (prefect).

Coker, Reginald (minor).

Doone, Arthur (major).

Faulkner, Lawrence (prefect).

Gwynne, Patrick (prefect).

Hammersley, Vincent (prefect).

Loder, Gerald Assheton (prefect).

North, Tom (prefect).

Reynolds, Malcolm.

Tremaine, Charles (prefect).

Walker James (prefect).

The average age of the Sixth-Formers is 17½ years, and Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, takes the Form.

NOW for a query from Eric Coles, who has omitted to send me his address. Eric tells me that an aunt has given him a dog for a present, and he asks me to tell him something about

DOG MANAGEMENT!

Dogs that are kept as pets may be allowed the run of the house. Even if they are placed in a kennel for part of the day, they should be allowed to come indoors at night, where they are of three times the service they would be in a kennel. They should be provided with a definite sleeping place which they will quickly recognise. Care should be taken that the sleeping place is not on the ground level, where draughts are most prevalent. Baskets, or cheaper still, boxes can readily be raised out of the way of draughts. Even a chair on which an old cushion is placed will make snug and comfortable sleeping quarters. The covering of the cushion should be of some cheap and washable material. Whatever sleeping place and material are used they should be exposed to sun and air in the daytime, and it is especially desirable periodically to treat them to an insecticide, and to keep them free from dust, in which latter flea-larvæ thrive.

By way of a change, here are a few **RAPID FIRE REPLIES** to readers' queries.

J. Skinner (Broadstairs).—There were four stories in the particular series you mention. The ages of Coker, Wingate,

and Bessie Bunter are 17 years, 17 years 11 months, and 15 years respectively.

Fred. Pawson (Manchester).—If weather permits, most certainly keep your tent open during the night. Should it rain you can easily jump out of bed and close the flap.

"Magnetite" (Wolverhampton).—Back numbers of the MAGNET are not sold at so much per dozen copies. The demand is so great at times that the MAGNET is sold out soon after publication day. Sorry I cannot print your notice.

Arthur Jewell (Surrey).—Your idea of forming a MAGNET Club has been suggested before; but, gee!—think of the work it would entail. Hope by now that you are out of hospital and feeling your old self again.

HAVING got that little lot off my chest, I think I had better let you know something about next week's programme. The long story of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled:

"BARRING BOB CHERRY!"

By Frank Richards,

and it's a real "smasher." Once again honest Bob Cherry takes the leading role, a guarantee—if necessary—that the yarn will come up to your expectations. Unable to explain how he came to have a stolen banknote in his pocket, Bob Cherry is turned down by his chums. And all because a weak-kneed fellow like Hazeldene, who cannot run straight and who lacks the courage to face the music when troubles accrue from running crooked. To divulge the secret locked in his breast would put Bob on his former pedestal, but it would spell trouble for Hazeldene of the Remove and bring indelible disgrace upon his sister, Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House, for whom Bob has a very great respect. Not to save his life will Bob mention Marjorie's name in such a connection. Helping any fellow, friend or foe, out of a scrape, has always been Bob Cherry's way. But not only does Bob help the scapegrace of the Remove, he does Vernon-Smith a good turn as well. Unlike Hazel, however, Smithy believes in the old saying that one good turn deserves another, and he straightway makes it his business to pay Bob Cherry back in kind, and thereby put matters right with Bob and his former friends. What "Smithy" does and how he fares you will learn for yourselves next week. Don't miss this yarn, chums, whatever you do.

This week our Greyfriars Rhymester winds up his series of "Stately Homes of Greyfriars." Next Saturday, he commences an entirely new series of poems under the heading of "The Greyfriars Guide." This new feature is going to prove a popular one right from the kick-off and will be useful to old and new readers alike. Be sure and read Spasm No. 1 next Saturday. In addition to the foregoing there will be another chuckleful edition of "The Greyfriars Herald."

Seen this week's "Gem" yet? If you haven't, take my tip and get a copy to-day. This week's issue contains a splendid complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, as well as a sparkling fine story dealing with the early adventures of your old favourites—Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

Powerful Cover-to-Cover Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

BOB CHERRY'S BURDEN!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY? Even the sight of a stolen banknote in Marjorie Hazeldene's hand does not convince Bob Cherry that his schoolgirl chum is a thief! But can he keep silent?

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"COMING down, Bob?"

"No!"

That answer was short and sharp.

It was quite unlike Bob Cherry, the sunniest tempered fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, to snap, especially when speaking to a pal.

But he snapped now.

He did not even look round at the junior standing in the doorway of Study No. 13, as he snapped. He snapped over his shoulder.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

Prep was over in the Remove studies. Most of the Form had gone down. Bob's study mates, Mark Linley and Hurree Singh and little Wun Lung, had gone, leaving him alone in Study No. 13. But it was not unfinished prep that kept him there. He was standing at the study window, staring out into the dusk of the July evening, his hands driven deep into his pockets, when the captain of the Remove looked in.

Harry Wharton had a back view of his chum. But he did not need to see Bob's face to see that he was not in his usual good spirits and good temper. The droop of the sturdy shoulders told of despondency. And the snap of the voice told of angry irritation.

Wharton was silent for a moment or two. He was puzzled, and he was a little annoyed.

Nothing, so far as he knew, had happened that Saturday to account for this dismal and disagreeable mood, in a fellow whose spirits were generally exuberant—even a little too exuberant.

"Look here, Bob—" he said, at last.

"Oh, don't worry!"

"What the dickens is the matter with you?" exclaimed Wharton. "You came in late for call-over, looking like a bear

with a sore head. You've been as mum as an oyster ever since. I suppose you're not ass enough to be shirty because we cleared off without you this afternoon—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"We'd fixed to go for a spin, and you chucked it, at the last minute, because Marjorie Hazeldene came over to see her brother. We'd have waited—"

"I said don't be an ass!" grunted Bob Cherry, still over his shoulder, without turning his head.

"Well, if it's not that, what is it?"

"Nothing!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing's the matter?" he asked.

"No! I mean—well, no!"

"Well, if nothing's the matter, chuck up grunting and scowling, and come down to the Rag!" said Harry. "You don't want to stick in your study by yourself, scowling out of the window, if nothing's the matter."

No answer.

"You're not coming?"

"No!"

"Oh, all right!"

Wharton was turning away from the door, when Bob suddenly turned from the window.

"Is Mauleverer still in his study?" he asked.

"Mauly? No! He's gone down."

"Oh!"

Bob turned back to the window.

But in that moment Harry Wharton had had a glimpse of his face, and he was startled.

Bob's face, usually ruddier than the cherry, was pale and there was a deep line in his brow.

Harry Wharton's feeling of annoyance vanished at once, and he stepped into the study, his own face very grave.

"Look here, Bob, this won't do," he said very quietly. "What on earth's

happened to you to knock you over like that?"

"Nothing's happened to me."

"If it's bad news from home, you can tell a pal, I suppose."

"It's not."

"Then what is it?"

"Nothing."

"You haven't rowed with Hazel—"

"No!"

"You can't possibly have rowed with Marjorie—"

"Don't be a fool!"

"You're getting fearfully polite old chap. Look here, Bob, we all noticed that there was something amiss with you when you came in. A dozen fellows noticed it, for that matter."

"They might as well have minded their own business."

"If that applies to me—"

"Yes, it does."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips, hard.

He made a movement to leave the study. But he did not go. Never, since he had known the cheery Bob, had he known him like this. His own temper was rather quick on the uptake, and it was not easy to be told to mind his own business, and carry on regardless. But he was more anxious than angry—and, indeed, a little alarmed. Old Bob was evidently utterly out of sorts; and why, was a perplexing mystery.

"Well," he said at last, "if you put it like that—"

"Just like that!" grunted Bob, still over his shoulder.

"I'll clear, then."

The captain of the Remove went to the door.

But Bob Cherry turned from the window again, as he went, with a flush in his face.

"Sorry!" he mumbled. "I didn't mean to be shirty! But—well, look here,

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"I'm not feeling up to the mark. I—I—I'm a bit worried. You'd better leave me alone. It's all right!"

Harry Wharton, looking at the dark harassed face, could see only too clearly that it was not all right. It was far from all right. Bob Cherry coloured more deeply, under his eyes.

"You've had some sort of a knock, Bob, since we left you this afternoon," he said.

"Oh, no! I mean, well, yes, perhaps I have!" mumbled Bob.

"And you won't tell a chap what it is?"

"No! I mean, it's nothing. I—I—" Bob stammered. "For goodness' sake don't ask me any questions. Just leave me alone. It's nothing—I mean—well, nothing. Just leave me alone for a bit. I—I—it's all right."

Bob turned hastily back to the window. Wharton did not speak again.

He had seen the sturdy junior's lip quiver and tremble, and he realised—with amazement and something like consternation—that Bob Cherry was on the very verge of "blubbing." Bob—of all fellows!

The captain of the Remove stepped out of Study No. 13, and drew the door shut after him. He stood in the passage sorely troubled. What, in the name of wonder, could have happened to knock Bob Cherry out like that?

Johnny Bull came down the passage from Study No. 14.

"Bob gone down?" he asked.

"No!"

"Let's march him out."

"No, don't!" said Harry, and he caught Johnny's arm, and walked him down the passage to the stairs.

Johnny stared at him.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know—something!" answered Harry. "Bob's better left alone for a bit. Come on."

They joined the other members of the Co.—Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, on the Remove staircase, and the four went down to the Rag together.

Bob Cherry was left alone with his trouble—the trouble that had knocked him out like a stunning blow, and in which his chums could not help him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Beastly for Billy Bunter!

LORD MAULEVERER grinned.

His lordship seemed very bright and cheery. Which, as Billy Bunter was talking to him, was rather surprising. Generally, when he was honoured with Billy Bunter's conversation, Mauly had a tired look; and seemed to doubt whether life was worth the trouble of living, in the same universe as William George Bunter. Now, however, Mauly was uncommonly merry and bright, though Bunter had been talking to him for a good ten minutes, and was still going on.

"I've told you a dozen times, Mauly, that it's up to you!" said the fat Owl of the Remove, with a severe blink at the schoolboy earl through his big spectacles.

"Yas," assented Mauly. "More than that, old fat man. More like a hundred. But go on; tell me again."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Don't mind me!" said Lord Mauleverer. Reclining at ease in a deep armchair in the Rag, with his hands clasped behind his lazy head, Mauly gazed placidly at the fat Owl. "Keep on!"

"Look here, you beast—" roared Bunter.

"Keep on as long as you like," said

Lord Mauleverer generously—"at least, till Wharton comes down. I want to speak to him when he drops in. You'll shut up then, won't you, like a good chap?"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

Billy Bunter was a little excited. He was very wrathful. When Bunter had rolled into the Rag, after prep, Skinner and Snoop had gone through a motion of buttoning up their pockets, as if to hint that they did not consider their possessions safe in Bunter's presence.

Certainly, had their possessions been in the form of jam tarts, cream puffs, or cake, they would not have been safe with Bunter about. Nobody's possessions, in that line, were safe from Billy Bunter.

But that action on the part of Skinner and Snoop roused Bunter's deepest ire. He glared at them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Gladly he would have knocked their cheeky heads together.

Since then he had been talking to Mauleverer, but he had been interrupted several times. Bolsover major asked him whether he had changed a ten-pound note lately. Russell asked him whether he had booked a room at Borstal. Peter Todd inquired whether he expected to get off under the First Offenders' Act. Other fellows asked other similar questions, intensifying the wrath of the fat Owl.

It was rather fortunate for the Remove fellows that Billy Bunter was no fighting-man. Had he been, there would have been rousing ructions in the Rag that Saturday evening.

Anyone coming into the Rag, and hearing those remarks of the Remove fellows, would have guessed that Billy Bunter was under suspicion of being in unlawful possession of a ten-pound note that did not belong to him.

And so he was—so far as, at least, half the Remove were concerned. Which was intensely infuriating to William George Bunter.

All the Remove were there except the Famous Five, who had not yet come down from the studies, and most of them were amusing themselves by chipping Bunter on the subject of that ten-pound note.

One fellow sat silent, his face hidden in a book he was not reading—Hazekdene. Hazel had looked up once, with a request to the fellows to shut up—a request that passed completely unheeded.

"Now, look here, Mauly—" Bunter was going on, when there was a shout from Skinner:

"Chorus, gentlemen!"

There was a chortle, and six or seven fellows burst into song—an ancient song that Skinner had raked up from somewhere as appropriate to the occasion.

"Have you got that ten-pound note? Do not say no, no, no!"

"It would be such a blow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar, all over the Rag.

Billy Bunter turned his eyes and his spectacles on the musical group with a deadly glare.

"Shut up!" he roared.

"Have you got that ten-pound note?" chanted Skinner.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Do not say no, no, no! It would be such a blow!" chanted Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter breathed fury. He stooped and clutched up a hassock on which Lord Mauleverer's lazy feet were resting. Up it went in Bunter's fat hand, and it was hurled at Skinner &

Co.—not with accurate aim. The intention was deadly, but the aim was not.

Missing the grinning group by about a yard, that hassock sailed on and crashed on Hazekdene, as he sat with his book, taking him quite by surprise. It landed on his head and knocked him backwards in his chair, and his book went to the floor with a crash.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Hazel leaped to his feet with a howl of rage.

It was an accident—not the sort of accident that any fellow would have liked. Hazel, probably, was in a bad temper to begin with. Anyhow, he was in an exceedingly bad temper now. He made an angry rush at the Owl of the Remove, and Bunter, in alarm, dodged round Lord Mauleverer's armchair, barely in time.

"I say, you keep off, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I meant it for Skinner! Yaroooooh! Keep off! I say, rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel rushed round the chair after him. Bunter flew and Hazel flew.

The pursuer was grabbing at the fat Owl's collar, when Lord Mauleverer stretched out a leg in the way, and Hazel stumbled over it. He gave a howl as he landed on his hands and knees.

Billy Bunter bounded out of reach, and dodged behind Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I say, Smithy, keep him off!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel staggered to his feet. He stood for a moment or two, panting and glaring.

Lord Mauleverer gave him an amiable smile.

"Keep your temper, old bean!" he said amicably. "Accidents will happen, you know. What's the good of flyin' into a temper about nothin'?"

"You fool!" panted Hazel. "I've a good mind to hook you out of that chair, and mop you all over the Rag!"

"Don't, old chap!" urged his placid lordship. "If you're spoilin' for trouble, have a row with Smithy. Smithy's always ready for a row, ain't you, Smithy?"

"Fathead!" said Vernon-Smith.

Hazel, for a moment, looked as if he would be as good as his word; but he restrained his angry temper and went back to his chair and his book.

Billy Bunter did not emerge from his refuge behind the Bounder till he was sitting down again, evidently having given up the idea of further reprisals. Then the fat Owl rolled back to Lord Mauleverer, and resumed his interrupted conversation with his lordship.

"Now, look here, Mauly, you jolly well know that it's up to you! It's all your fault that those silly idiots think I've got your beastly tenner. You'll get six if you let Quelch know that you stuck a ten-pound note in a book for a book-mark, and serve you jolly well right, too! The rotten thing is still sticking in the rotten book in the Head's study, and it's up to you to go to Quelch and say— You silly fathead, don't yawn while I'm speaking to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "I couldn't say that to my Form-master, old fat bean!"

"Yo—silly ass, I mean—"

The door of the Rag opened, and four members of the Famous Five came in.

Lord Mauleverer sat up in his armchair.

"Dry up now, Bunter! Here's Wharton, and I want to speak to him."
"Look here—" roared Bunter.
"Now, be reasonable, old fat man! You've been talking for hours," urged Mauly. "At least, it seems like hours."

"Beast!"
"Now, give your chin a rest. Wharton, old bean, stagger over here, will you? I want to give you a message for Quelch—to hand out after I'm gone."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Very Deep of Mauly!

HARRY WHARTON came across the Rag with a rather surprised expression on his face.

Other fellows looked at Mauly in surprise, also. It was nearly

than a hundred miles away, half an hour before the bed-time of his Form.

"Pulling our leg, or what?" asked Harry.

"Not at all, old bean!" Lord Mauleverer glanced at his watch. "You've come down rather late. I've only got ten minutes or so. The car will be here about nine, and I shall have to get a coat and hat and things. You see, I've got week-end leave."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Nunky phoned Quelch this evenin', and asked him specially to let me have week-end leave an' join him at merry Worthing," explained Lord Mauleverer. "Quelch doesn't know, of course, that I phoned nunky this afternoon, and asked him to do so. I thought that had better not be mentioned."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Much better not," he agreed. "Quelch might have given you an

"You ought to be jolly well kicked!" said Harry. "But carry on!"

"That blithering idiot, Bunter, got after it; I don't know why. He never can mind his own bizney!"

"That's what you call gratitude, I suppose!" said Billy Bunter bitterly. "I risked butting into Quelch's study to get that tenner out of that Annual for you out of pure friendship, not because I wanted you to lend me ten bob when you changed it—"

"Dry up, old fat man! Quelch handed the book over to the Head after Bunter went down from the dorm to burgle it—"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "It was somebody else went down from the dorm, you beast, if anybody did! I got a whopping when I tried it on in the afternoon, and I never—"

"Will anybody sit on Bunter's head



Hazeldene rushed after Bunter and was about to grab the fat junior's collar when Mauleverer stretched out a leg. Hazeldene stumbled over it, and gave a howl, as he landed on his hands and knees. "Ooooch!" Billy Bunter raced clear.

nine o'clock, and bed-time for the Remove was at nine-thirty. No junior was allowed out of the House at that hour, so Mauly's words were rather startling.

"After you're gone!" repeated Harry.

"Yaas."

"Where the dickens are you going, then, except to bed?"

"Worthing."

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove blankly.

"Potty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Wandering in your mind, Mauly?" asked Frank Nugent.

"The wanderfulness seems to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Lord Mauleverer grinned cheerfully. All the Remove fellows were staring at him now, even Hazel's sullen face looking up over his book with keen curiosity. It was undoubtedly surprising for a Lower Fourth junior to announce that he was going to a seaside resort, more

impot instead of week-end leave if he knew you'd fixed it with your uncle."

"Yaas! Never say too much—bad system!" said Mauly. "Nunky's puttin' in a week at Worthing, you see. He's sendin' the car over to fetch me this evenin'. I shall have to love and leave you in about ten minutes. But—"

"I say, Mauly, if you want a pal at Worthing—" began Billy Bunter.

"But there's still time to tell you what I've got to say, if Bunter will shut up for a minute!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"You fellows know how the matter stands," went on Lord Mauleverer. "Quelch caught me in detention with the 'Holiday Annual,' and confiscated it till the end of the term. I quite forgot that I'd marked my place with a ten-pound note; a fellow can't remember everythin'—"

and keep him quiet?" asked Lord Mauleverer plaintively.

"I tell you I never—" roared Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Well, somebody went down from the dorm after that dashed Annual, according to Quelch, and I suppose he knew what he was talkin' about," said Lord Mauleverer. "Anyhow, the dashed volume's parked in the Head's study now. And as that crass ass butted into what didn't concern him—"

"Beast!"

"The fellows think—or some of them—that he bagged the tenner—"

"You mean, we know he did!" said Skinner.

"Pretty plain!" snorted Bolsover major. "We all jolly well know that he got the tenner out of that 'Holiday Annual' the night he went down—"

"I didn't—I never—I wasn't—"

"And you'd know it, too, Mauly, I

guess," said Fisher T. Fish, "if you weren't a bonehead and the prize boob from Boobsville!"

"Do let a chap speak!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You won't hear me talkin' again till Tuesday, so you might give me a chance now! I hate to bore any fellow, but I've got to get this off my chest before I hike off to Worthing. That tenner's parked in that dashed Holiday Annual!"

"Rats!" said Skinner.

"I've asked Quelch to let me have the book back, but he only looked at me like a gargoyle! I'm not to have it till the end of the term—so that's that! Bunter ought to be booted for bargin' into another fellow's bizney, but I can't let the fellows go on thinkin' that he pinched my tenner. So Quelch has got to be told—see?"

"That's right!" said Harry, with a nod. "I really think it's up to you, Mauly. You shouldn't have been silly idiot enough to use a banknote for a book-mark!"

"I've heard that one!"

"And if you get six from Quelch, you can consider that you asked for it!" went on the captain of the Remove. "Quelch will get his rag out, that's a cert. But it's up to you. If he's told about the banknote being in the book, he will sort it out at once, and that will clear Bunter."

"Think he'll find it there?" grinned Skinner.

"Yes," snapped the captain of the Remove, "I do! Bunter went down for it that night!"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter.

"But he meant to hand it to Mauly if he got it. He never got it, or he'd have handed it over. So it's still there."

"I don't think!" said Skinner.

"You don't!" agreed Lord Mauleverer, with a nod. "You've got nothin' to do it with, have you, old top? You're goin' to tell Quelch about that jolly old bookmark on Monday, Wharton?"

"Eh?"

"That's the message," explained Mauly. "That's why I've fixed it up with nunky to get me the week-end leave—see? If I go and tell Quelch, he will get ratty on the spot, and go right off at the deep end. I wouldn't mind a jaw—I believe in lettin' beaks jaw. Any fellow ought to be willin' to let his Form-master jaw. But he would weigh in with the cane! I don't want that—see?"

"Oh!" said Harry.

"By gum!" said the Bounder. "What a jolly deep old schemer!" Smithy chuckled. "So you're goin' to be off the scene when Quelch is told?"

"That's it!" assented Lord Mauleverer. "Out of sight is out of mind—at least, out of reach! Wharton puts Quelch wise on Monday mornin'. The banknote is taken out of that 'Holiday Annual,' and that sees Bunter clear. Quelch will be shirty, but I shan't be on the spot. He may cool down by Tuesday. When I get back to Greyfriars, I hope I shall find Quelch his usual bonnie self. Anyhow, he could hardly wallop a chap after all that time! Sure to make it lines—see?"

And Lord Mauleverer smiled cheerily, evidently very satisfied with his deep-laid scheme. There was a chortle in the Rag. Really, this was unexpectedly astute on the part of old Mauly.

It was certain that Mr. Quelch would be angry when he learned, not only that a boy in his Form had ten-pound notes, but that he was so careless as to use

one of those valuable articles as a book-mark. There was little doubt that Mauly, if on the spot, would be whopped. But it was very probable indeed that, after the lapse of two days, the Remove master would consider that an impot would meet the case. He was not a man to nurse wrath and keep a rod in pickle.

"Fancy old Mauly thinking all that out!" said Skinner, chuckling. "But there's one thing you've forgotten, Mauly."

"Lots, probably," yawned Lord Mauleverer. "But what's the special one?"

"Quelch won't find that jolly old book-mark, as Bunter snaffled it when he burgled his study last Wednesday night!"

"I never!" howled Bunter.

"Skinner, old man, you've got a nasty, suspicious mind!" said Lord Mauleverer gently. "I know Bunter never snaffled that tenner, and I'm takin' all this fearful trouble to prove it. Why, old man, I know you wouldn't do such a thing yourself!"

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Skinner.

"And you're much more likely than Bunter, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky idiot!" roared Skinner.

"Hallo! That sounds like a car!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, as there was a honking from without.

Lord Mauleverer rose from his arm-chair.

"You'll put Quelch wise on Monday mornin', Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly," said Harry, laughing. "if you want me to! I shall be jolly glad to see it cleared up about that mouldy tenner!"

"Thanks, old bean! Tell Quelch I asked you to mention it. Don't mention that I asked you to leave it till I was safely off the scene, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer ambled to the door of the Rag. Five minutes later his friends were saying good-bye to him, and he stepped into the car that had arrived from Worthing.

There was a cheery grin on Mauly's good-natured face as he rolled away in the summer evening. Mauly was prepared to clear up the disagreeable doubt on the subject of that tenner, even at the cost of a licking—but he greatly preferred to clear it up without getting the licking! Now there was every prospect of clearing it up with the licking cut out. So Mauly went, cheery and satisfied with his astute scheme, little dreaming what the outcome was to be.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Burden!

BOB CHERRY came into the Remove dormitory with the rest of the Form, and his friends glanced at him. He did not meet their eyes, and did not speak. But Wharton was glad to see, at least, that Bob had pulled himself together.

Whatever was the mysterious "knock" he had received, he had had time to bide on the bullet, so to speak. His manner was very quiet and subdued, quite different from his usual cheery exuberance, but that was all. Hard as he had been hit, he was not the fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve.

There was a good deal of grinning and chuckling in the Remove over Mauly's astute scheme. Bob did not seem to observe that, but he did notice that Mauleverer did not come up with the Form.

THE BOY THEY COULDN'T TAME

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As he had stayed up in his study after prep, he knew nothing so far of Mauly's scheme or of his absence from the school. So he only supposed that Mauleverer was late coming up; and not till Wingate was about to put out the light did it occur to him that Mauly was not coming up at all.

"Where's Mauly, you fellows?" asked Bob abruptly.

"Oh, you haven't heard?" said Harry, with a laugh. "Mauly's cleared off on week-end leave—"

Bob gave a violent start.

"Not gone?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—didn't you hear the car? He went soon after nine—he's going to stay the week-end with his uncle at Worthing—"

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

Harry Wharton looked at him in sheer surprise. He remembered that Bob had mentioned Mauleverer in the study. Why Mauly's absence should come as a startling shock to Bob Cherry was quite a puzzle. But it was quite plain that it did.

"He—he—he's left the school, then?" asked Bob, compressing his lips hard.

"Yes—miles on his way by this time," answered Harry. "Did you want to see him?"

"Yes! No! I mean—I never knew he was going! What the dickens has he cleared off suddenly like that for? The silly ass is always doing something fatheaded."

"My dear chap—" exclaimed Harry in astonishment. It dawned on him that Bob's mysterious trouble had some connection with Mauleverer; and that only thickened the puzzle.

"Now, then, you're not in, Cherry!" called out Wingate of the Sixth from the door.

Bob Cherry turned in.

The prefect put out the light and went, and the door shut.

From bed to bed, after Wingate had gone, ran remarks on the subject of Lord Mauleverer, and a ripple of chuckling.

Bob did not speak, but he was soon apprised of Mauly's little scheme, and the reason why he had gone for that week-end at Worthing.

Two or three times his chums addressed him, but he did not answer, and they concluded that he had gone to sleep.

But Bob was not asleep.

He was tired. He had covered unnumbered miles that afternoon on his bicycle, and returned late for call-over. But, tired as he was, he could not sleep.

And he knew, at least he was sure, that there was another fellow in the dormitory who found it difficult to sleep—Marjorie's brother.

Long after the dormitory was silent, and the juniors deep in slumber, Bob lay wakeful, his eyes staring into the dark.

On Monday morning Harry Wharton was to tell Mr. Quelch about that "book-mark" in Mauly's "Holiday Annual," now in the headmaster's study. If the banknote were found there, it would clear Billy Bunter of the suspicion of having snaffled it. That was Mauly's kind object—but plenty of fellows in the Remove did not believe for a moment that the banknote was still there. Half the Form, at least, believed that the fat Owl's fat hands had fallen on it.

Only two fellows in the Remove knew, for a fact, that the banknote was no longer there! One was Bob Cherry, the other was Hazel—though the latter was not in the least aware that Bob knew anything at all about it.

But Bob knew—only too well!

Staring into the darkness, he seemed to see again what he had seen that afternoon—Marjorie Hazeldene, at the Head's study window, dropping that banknote out into the quad—and Hazel, with anxious, puckered face, hunting for it afterwards under the window!

Marjorie did not know—Hazel did not know—what Bob had seen! Neither of them dreamed that he had picked up the dropped banknote, before Hazel came on the spot to search for it; his one idea being to keep it safe, and to keep it secret that Marjorie's hands had ever touched it.

Little as any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove would have dreamed of it, that banknote was now in Bob Cherry's pocket; and it had to remain there till he could hand it over to the owner, Mauleverer.

What he was to say to Mauly when he handed it over, Bob did not know. He could not explain how it had come into his hands. That was impossible. But, anyhow, he had to get it to Mauly. That was why the news of Mauleverer's departure for the week-end came as a stunning shock to him.

Mauly was away from the school now; he did not even know his address at Worthing. That wretched banknote could not be handed over till he came back. It had to remain in Bob's hands for a couple of days at least—perhaps three or four.

That was an added anxiety; he was feverishly anxious to get rid of it. But worse than that was what was to happen on Monday.

Mr. Quelch, informed of the banknote's existence, would, of course, take it from the book at once; at least, he would look for it, intending to take it.

He would not find it there!

Every man in the Remove would know then that it had already been taken! It would be settled that there was a thief in the Remove.

And Bob, with his own eyes, had seen Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House School, drop it from the Head's study window—for her brother to pick up! Dr. Locke had come into the study—she had been fairly caught, with the banknote in her hand—she had had the narrowest escape from detection.

Marjorie, whom he had always believed incapable of a mean action or a mean thought—in whom he still believed, regardless of evidence—she had dropped that banknote into the quad; and Hazel, with a guilty, frightened face, had hunted for it there and failed to find it. She was not guilty—she couldn't be—that was a mad impossibility—but Hazel, that cur had had guilt written all over him.

What did it mean? What could it mean?

Bob's friends would not have been surprised that he had "taken the knock," if they could have known what was on his mind.

They were not going to know, of course. Not a word—not a syllable—not the remotest hint. Bob still believed in his girl chum, because he could not doubt her without doubting his own senses. But what would any other fellow think, knowing what Bob knew?

The summer dawn was creeping in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory before Bob's weary eyes closed at last.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Perplexing Request!

"DIVERS" over the following morning, Sunday walks were the order of the day.

Divinity, which the juniors called "divvers," was brief; and the

Famous Five turned out of the gates for a walk before dinner.

Lord Mauleverer, at sunny Worthing, was no doubt enjoying life on the bright seashore, in his happy, lazy way. Billy Bunter, seated on one of the old benches under the elms, was thinking of dinner, with happy and concentrated anticipation. Harry Wharton & Co., being rather more strenuous in their ways, were going to put in a long ramble. Bob Cherry, looking a little more like his old self, but still unusually quiet and subdued, went with his friends.

At the stile in Friardale Lane, Harry Wharton paused. That stile gave on a footpath leading across to Pegg, where Cliff House lay. There was a faint smile on Wharton's face, reflected on three other faces.

The previous afternoon Bob had called off a cycle spin to stay in, because Marjorie Hazeldene had come over to see her brother in the Remove. From what his friends had heard, he had not had a chance of speaking to her owing to Hazel's hostile attitude. On Sunday morning it was quite probable that the Cliff House girls would be taking a walk on the beach or the cliffs. So it occurred to the captain of the Remove that a happy chance meeting might have the effect of lifting that unusual cloud from Bob's rugged brow.

"This way!" said Harry, putting his foot on the step of the stile.

"Good egg—lots of time to walk down to the sea and back before dinner!" agreed Frank Nugent.

And Johnny Bull and the Nabob of Bhanipur nodded a cheery assent, with smiling faces.

To their surprise, Bob stepped back. For the first time he did not seem keen on a chance of seeing the Cliff House girl, his boyish devotion to whom was rather a jest among his friends.

"Come on, Bob!" said Johnny.

"I—I think I'll go on to the village," said Bob, colouring. "Don't let me stop you fellows, if you want to go down to the sea."

The four exchanged surprised glances. Johnny Bull fixed his eyes on Bob's flushed face.

"Look here, what do you mean, Bob?" demanded Johnny in his direct way. "What are you playing the giddy ox for?"

"I'd rather keep on to Friardale—"

"You wouldn't!" answered Johnny calmly. "What's the good of gammon? You haven't been rowing with Marjorie, have you?"

"Oh, chuck it!" grunted Bob. "Don't talk rot!"

"Hazel's been rather rusty lately," went on Johnny. "He's been sore because we're down on him for letting us down in the Highcliffe match. But I don't see that that need make any difference—"

"It doesn't!"

"Then what the dickens is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

With that, Bob swung on, past the stile, towards Friardale.

His chums looked at one another, and followed him. For reasons they could not begin to fathom, Bob Cherry wanted to avoid a possible meeting with their friends at Cliff House.

Johnny Bull grunted. He muttered something about "airs and graces"—with which Johnny, as a plain-dealing Yorkshire man, had little patience. The other three were perplexed.

It was impossible to suppose that Bob had had any "row" with Marjorie. Besides, he said that he hadn't. Yet clearly he did not want to see her.

It was a rather silent walk to the village. Beyond Friardale the lane turned in the direction of Pegg. And, after what had happened at the stile, the Co. were not surprised to see Bob come to a halt at that point.

"About time we got back, I think," said Bob, with a casual air that would not have deceived a child of three.

"Oh, let's!" said Johnny Bull, sarcastically. "We might meet somebody we know, and, of course, we don't want that to happen."

Bob flushed, but did not answer. He turned to walk back, and the Co. turned and walked with him. Bob's ruddy colour deepened.

"Look here, you chaps, if you'd rather keep on, keep on!" he said gruffly. "No need for me to drag you home."

"But we wouldn't rather," said Nugent cheerfully.

"The ratherfulness is not terrific, my esteemed grumpy Bob!" assured Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

They walked back through the village.

In the lane, going back to Greyfriars, Bob Cherry dropped behind with Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove was aware that he had something to say, and wondered what it was. It was several minutes before Bob got it out; and then it proved to be a subject that Harry was very far from expecting.

"That ass Mauly has asked you to speak to Quelch in the morning," said Bob at last abruptly.

"Eh? Yes! What about that?"

"Well, look here, don't!" said Bob.

The captain of the Remove could only stare at him in utterly blank astonishment. Why Bob Cherry should care a brass button, one way or the other, on a matter that did not concern him was simply bewildering.

"Mauly's a silly fathead!" mumbled Bob. "He oughtn't to have cleared off like that. If he wants Quelch to know, why the dickens couldn't he tell him?"

"Well, he wants Quelch to know, but he doesn't want six whops from Quelch's cane," said Harry, laughing. "You know how shirty Quelch was once when a fiver dropped out of Mauly's Latin grammar in class. He jawed him for a good five minutes, and gave him lines, and told him he would cane him if he ever did such a foolish, careless thing again."

"Serve him right!" grunted Bob.

"Well, yes, perhaps; but I suppose it's natural for Mauly to want to dodge a whopping, if he can," said Harry. "Six from Quelch is no joke, old chap. And he get's a week-end at Worthing thrown in."

"Quelch will jaw him when he comes back."

"Yes; but he's not likely to whop him. Things blow over, you know."

Grunt from Bob.

"Rot! If Quelch is going to be told, Mauly ought to tell him. Let it be left over till he comes back."

"That's hardly possible," said Harry, more and more puzzled. "For one thing, it's rough on Bunter, with half the Remove thinking that he pinched that tenner out of Mauly's book—"

"That serves him right! He shouldn't have meddled."

"Um! Yes; but—"

"It won't do Bunter any good if the tenner isn't found in the book, after all," grunted Bob. "You needn't worry about Bunter."

"Blessed if I understand you! The tenner will be found in the book all right, unless Bunter snaffled it that night—and I don't believe he did. You don't either, surely!" exclaimed Harry. "If it had been a cake or a jam roll, Bunter would have had it all right. But I'm sure he never—"

"Oh, don't be an ass! I know as well as you do that he never touched it, the fat chump!" growled Bob.

"Well, then, it's still in the book, in that case, and Quelch will find it there."

Bob made no answer to that.

"Look here, Bob!" Wharton went on, with growing astonishment. "What the dickens do you mean? You haven't any reason for thinking that it's gone, have you?"

Bob Cherry bit his lip hard.

"Let's keep to the point, instead of talking rot!" he said gruffly. "I don't see why Mauleverer should leave this to another chap. Let it stand over till he comes back to the school."

"But why?"

"Well, that's what I think," grunted Bob. "Why not?"

"I can't very well."

"Why can't you?"

"I told Mauly I would speak to Quelch about it to-morrow. It was as good as a promise. I can't let him down, when he's gone off, relying on me to see it through while he's away. Besides, I don't see any reason."

"Well, I do. Isn't that good enough?" grunted Bob, reddening.

"No!" Wharton shook his head.

"I can't let Mauly down, Bob. That's rot! But if there was a real reason that I could explain to him afterwards— Tell me what the reason is."

Bob Cherry did not answer that. He could not.

He could not tell Wharton that he did not want the banknote to be missed, because it was in his own pocket, and he wanted to hand it over to Mauleverer before it was looked for.

He tramped on in silence.

"Look here, Bob—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bob. "If you won't do as I say, you won't, and there's an end! Let it drop."

"I don't understand you—"

"Lots of things you don't understand. You're not fearfully bright."

Wharton could only stare at him.

Bob tramped on, and left the astonished captain of the Remove behind. He did not speak again during the walk back to the school, neither did he refer to the subject again that day.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Putting Quelch Wise!

ON Monday morning Harry Wharton stopped at his Form-master's desk when the Remove went in for first school.

Mr. Quelch gave him an inquiring glance.

It was not unusual for the head boy of the Form to have something to say to his Form-master before class. But all the Remove knew what it was this time, and they exchanged glances as they took their places in Form.

Bob Cherry's brow was dark; and, looking at Hazel, he saw that that youth's face was white, his eyes scared. Nobody else, however, observed Peter Hazeldene—all eyes were on Wharton and Mr. Quelch. And some of the juniors grinned, in anticipation of signs of wrath on the Remove master's severe countenance.

"What is it, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch kindly, as his head boy hesitated.

"Mauleverer asked me to tell you something, sir, before he went on Saturday," answered Harry, with rather a jerk.

He was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

Apart from the fact that what he had to say would irritate Mr. Quelch, which was not pleasant, he was worried at having to disregard Bob's request. That perplexing request, in which Harry could see no sense whatever, had to be disregarded. It was unreasonable; and had it been reasonable, it was impossible for Wharton to fail to do as he had promised Mauleverer. He had to get on with it, as Mauly relied upon him to do; but it was discomfiting.

"Mauleverer!" repeated Mr. Quelch, looking at him.

"Yes, sir. About that 'Holiday Annual' that was taken away from him in detention last week."

Mr. Quelch lifted his hand.

"Please do not refer to that, Wharton. Mauleverer has asked me for the return of that book, and I have refused. It is confiscated until the end of the term, as Mauleverer was told."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"I hardly understand the interest that seems to be taken in this trivial matter," said Mr. Quelch, with a snappish note in his voice. "Books have been confiscated before, on occasion, and I have not been troubled in the matter. This was an unusually serious case, Wharton. That book was actually handed in at the Form-room window to a boy in detention. And Mauleverer would have sat reading it, instead of doing his detention task, had I not intervened, and taken the volume."

"I know, sir; but—"

"I desire to hear nothing further on the subject, Wharton. Twice attempts were made to take that book from my study after it was confiscated," said Mr. Quelch, his voice rising with annoyance. "Bunter made the attempt actually under my eyes, and I caned him, and the same night some boy broke dormitory bounds and entered my study—and the fact that the volume was displaced on the shelf in the bookcase showed why he had done so. I have actually had to hand that volume over to the headmaster's keeping, lest it should be purloined surreptitiously from my study. I have really never heard of such a thing before."

Mr. Quelch's eyes were glinting. It was clear that he was getting angry, though Wharton had not yet been able to say what he had to say.

The inexplicable bother over that confiscated Annual, in fact, had annoyed Mr. Quelch very much, and the mere mention of it now had rather the effect on him of a red rag on a bull.

He waved his head boy away.

"You may go to your place, Wharton. That volume will remain where it is. Neither do I see how Mauleverer can possibly want it now, as he is away from the school at present. If you are making his request for him—"

"Oh, no, sir! Mauleverer asked me to tell you—" Wharton was beginning to wonder whether he would ever get it out, as Mr. Quelch was so completely misunderstanding him.

"You are not making the request for yourself, I presume, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You know perfectly well



As Hazeldene turned his back and began to walk away, Vernon-Smith followed him. "You can hear me alone, or you can hear me before all the Remove, just as you like," said the Bounder. "I've got to know, Hazeldene! If you pinched that tenner, it's not going to be landed on that fat fool Bunter!"

that I cannot let you have a book that has been confiscated. Vernon-Smith made the same request the other day; but I expect my head boy to be more circumspect."

"I'm not making a request, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"What? Then why do you refer to the matter at all?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch testily.

"Mauleverer asked me to tell you about something in the book, sir—something he used as a book-mark—"

"Nonsense! Of what possible consequence can Mauleverer's book-mark be?" snapped the Remove master.

"It's a banknote, sir."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Mauleverer happened to slip it into the book to mark his place, sir, when he was reading it in his study and was interrupted—"

"Upon my word!" Mr. Quelch almost snorted. "I have known Mauleverer to be guilty of such crass carelessness before, and I warned him that if it occurred again, he would be caned, if it came to my knowledge. Do you mean to say, Wharton, that Mauleverer asked you to tell me this?"

"Yes, sir! As—as there's a ten-pound note in the book—"

"A ten-pound note! Upon my word!"

"It would be better, sir, for it to be placed in safety, and—and—" stammered Harry.

"Perfectly so, Wharton! I understand now! I shall speak to Mauleverer on this subject as soon as he returns. I am glad, at least, that the foolish boy has had intelligence enough to bring the matter to my notice. A banknote for ten pounds—upon my word! I shall see to the matter immediately. Certainly the banknote must

be placed in safety at once. I suppose you are sure, Wharton, that Mauleverer is not mistaken in the matter—he is an extremely forgetful boy—"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Very well. You may go to the headmaster's study, and ask Dr. Locke—"

Mr. Quelch paused. "Dr. Locke is doubtless with the Sixth Form now. I will go myself. I leave you in charge of the Form for a few minutes, Wharton."

Mr. Quelch, evidently very much annoyed, left the Remove Form-room.

There was a buzz of voices as soon as he was gone.

"Bit of luck for Mauly that he's a hundred miles away this mornin'," chuckled the Bounder. "You can see in Quelch's eye what he would get if he were here."

"Six of the best!" said Squiff. "And serve him jolly well right for being such a howling ass!"

"Old Mauly can't help it," remarked Ogilvy. "Asses are like poets—born, not made."

"The helpfulness is not terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Perhaps the esteemed Quelch will cool down by the time the idiotic Mauly comes back."

"I say, you fellows, he won't let him have his banknote!" said Billy Bunter. "He's sure to send that back to Mauly's uncle."

"If any!" grinned Skinner.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

"What's the bettin' on the jolly old banknote bein' still in the book?" asked Smithy. He looked at Hazel. "What do you say, Hazel?"

Hazel started. The colour came and went in his face, and he gave the Bounder a black look.

"What the thump should I know

about it?" he snarled. "I shouldn't wonder if it was never in the book at all. Mauleverer's fool enough for anything."

Bob Cherry shut his lips as he heard that. That the banknote had been in Mauly's book, Hazel knew well enough.

Bob did not look at the wretched scapegrace of the Remove. He could not have looked at him without betraying the utter loathing and disgust he felt, in his looks.

"Oh, that's rot, Hazel!" said Peter Todd. "Mauly's every sort of an ass, but he knows whether he left that tenner in his 'Holiday Annual.' He remembered it, when he found he hadn't any tin, in the tuckshop on Highcliffe day."

"It's there all right," said Harry Wharton, "and, thank goodness, we're going to hear the end of it!"

"Are we?" chuckled Skinner. "I'll give any man two to one in doughnuts that Quelch doesn't find it!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" said several voices.

"You'll jolly well see!" sneered Skinner. "The chap who went down from the dorm after that banknote never left it sticking in the book."

"I say, you fellows, do you think Skinner's got it?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What?" roared Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you seem to know all about it," said Bunter, blinking at the angry Skinner through his big spectacles. "Looks to me—Yarooop! Beast! Wow!"

Billy Bunter broke off, with a howl, as a Latin grammar caught him on his fat chin.

"Chuck that, Skinner!" rapped Harry Wharton.

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The head boy was supposed to be keeping order in the Form-room during his Form-master's absence.

"I've chucked it!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Owl! Beast! I say, you fellows—"

"Everybody knows you've got it, you fat, frowsy frog!" snarled Skinner.

"I haven't!" roared Bunter. "I've never seen it, or touched it! I don't believe anybody went down from the dorm that night. If he did, it wasn't me! If it was you, Skinner—"

Skinner's hand went up, with Virgil in it. Virgil was booked to follow the Latin grammar. But Bob Cherry reached over and grabbed the volume from Harold Skinner's hand.

"Leave Bunter alone!" he snapped.

"You cheeky dummy!" howled Skinner. "Think I'm going to let the fat frog make out that I went after Mauly's tenner—"

"You're making out that Bunter did!" snapped Bob. "No worse for you than for him, that I can see."

"You know he did, you fool!"

"I know he didn't!" growled Bob. "And if you call me a fool again, Skinner, I'll bang your head on your desk, you cheeky rotter!"

"Bang his head, Bob, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I say, give him a jolly good one! Making out that I would pinch a tenner!"

"You jolly well would, if it were eatable!" said Peter Todd. "And I'm dashed if I can make out, anyhow, why you left it in the book, after going down from the dorm to get it!"

"I never went down!" yelled Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"I say, Bob, bang Toddy's head, will you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat Owl!" growled Bob. "Why the thump couldn't you mind your own bizney? Nobody would suspect you, if you hadn't gone down from the dorm that night."

"I never did!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!"

"Somebody went down!" said Vernon-Smith. "I don't believe it was Bunter, myself."

"That's rubbish, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton sharply. "Do you want to make out that we've got a thief in the Form? It was Bunter—"

"It wasn't!" shrieked Bunter.

"And he got scared, or something, and left the banknote in the book, Quelch will find it there."

"Perhaps!" sneered Skinner.

"By gum," said Johnny Bull, "I shall be glad to see Quelch turn that tenner out of Mauly's book. We shall all be suspecting one another of pinching, at this rate, if this goes on."

"Cave!" murmured Russell. "Here comes Quelch!"

There was deep silence in the Remove Form-room, as Mr. Quelch entered, with a "Holiday Annual" in his hand.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH was frowning, with knitted brows, as he went to his desk, and laid Lord Mauleverer's "Holiday Annual" thereon.

There was deep silence in the Remove. With that grim expression on Mr. Quelch's face, it was clearly no time for whispering.

All eyes were fixed on him.

He had not examined the book yet. He had brought it to the Form-room for that purpose. Quelch did not believe in

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wasting time, and valuable minutes had been lost already. He gave the Remove a glance.

"You will read over the lesson!" he said sharply.

Quelch could see that his Form were deeply interested in that "Holiday Annual." But he did not know why. He was quite unaware that Mauly's precious book-mark had been a breathless topic in the Form for days past.

The Remove gave—or appeared to give—their attention to Virgil. But there were few fellows who read much Latin during the next five minutes. They looked at their books; but every other moment lifted their eyes to look at their Form-master—turning the leaves of that "Holiday Annual," one by one, to pick up the banknote book-mark.

Opinion in the Remove was very much divided on the subject.

Skinner, who had a happy way of believing the worst of anybody, was convinced that Billy Bunter had snaffled that tenner. But better fellows than Skinner took the same view—quite a number of them. Other fellows kept an open mind on the subject—others, again, believed in Bunter; though very few indeed doubted that he was the fellow who had gone down from the dormitory one night to Quelch's study.

The Bunder had his own private opinion, which he confided to nobody. Smithy's strong suspicion was that Hazel had taken that tenner to settle a gambling debt to Bill Lodgey at the Three Fishers.

Bob Cherry knew that Bunter had not taken the tenner, and it did not occur to him that Hazel could have done so. Bob knew that Marjorie had dropped it from the Head's study window on Saturday afternoon. That miserable remembrance was in his mind as he watched Mr. Quelch.

Page after page turned; and some of the fellows were puzzled, others not at all puzzled, as Mr. Quelch failed to turn that "book-mark" out of Mauly's book. When he had turned the last page, without revealing it, there was a thrill of excitement in the Form.

Quelch had not found it!

It was not there!

Fellows who had hitherto taken Bunter's side were changing their opinion now! If the banknote were not there it had been taken. Who had taken it—who but the fatuous, fat Owl?

Bunter's jaw dropped.

Bunter was the only fellow in the Remove who could take Bunter's word! But Bunter, of course, knew that he had not taken that tenner, as he had not done so!

He had been absolutely convinced that it was still in the book; it was chiefly Bunter's unending urgings and wailings on the subject that had caused Mauly to take the step of bringing the matter out into the light. Bunter had had not the slightest doubt that the banknote would be found in the Annual as soon as it was looked for. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at Mr. Quelch as he realised that the Remove master had failed to find it.

Mr. Quelch closed the volume on his desk with an angry snap.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" stammered Harry.

"There is no banknote in this book."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. He was utterly taken aback.

He had been as convinced as Billy Bunter that it was there, and that it was only necessary to look for it to clear the fat Owl of suspicion. Mauleverer had not had a doubt on that point. But it was not there!

"Time has been wasted for nothing!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "This is very annoying, Wharton! That foolish boy Mauleverer must have been mistaken in supposing that he placed the banknote in this book."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered Wharton.

He did not think so! He was assured that it was not so! But it was not for him to contradict his Form-master.

Moreover, as the banknote evidently was not there it was rather fortunate for Mr. Quelch to take the view that it never had been there.

Otherwise he must have taken the view that it had been stolen from the book; a view taken by most of the Remove, but which they certainly did not desire their Form-master to take.

The bare idea of Greyfriars School buzzing with the report that there was a thief in the Remove was altogether too disagreeable to most of the members of that Form.

Mr. Quelch was annoyed and angry, but he was not suspicious. His view of the matter was a reasonable one. A fellow who was so utterly careless as to use a banknote for a book-mark was careless enough to place it somewhere else and forget what he had done with it. As it was not in the book, that seemed to settle the matter to Mr. Quelch.

"I do not blame you, Wharton, for having told me what Mauleverer asked you to tell me," added Mr. Quelch, more kindly. "It was your duty to do so, believing that that careless boy had left a valuable banknote in this book. But it is clear that Mauleverer was mistaken, as there is certainly no banknote in the volume. I am sorry that Mauleverer is not present at the moment." Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. "I shall certainly speak to him very severely when he returns. It appears that he has lost a banknote and does not know what has become of it—an extremely serious matter."

Mr. Quelch rose from his desk.

"We will now proceed!" he snapped.

The matter was at an end so far as Mr. Quelch was concerned.

Virgil was the order of the day in the Remove class-room, and fellows put on "con" had no leisure to think of more interesting and thrilling matters.

But it was not easy for the Remove to concentrate on Latin that morning!

Whatever Mr. Quelch thought about the matter, that banknote had been in the book, and now it was missing. There were few fellows who doubted where it was—in the possession of William George Bunter.

Two fellows knew that it was not. Hazel supposed that it must have blown away after his sister dropped it from the study window; and Bob Cherry knew that it was in his own pocket, waiting there till he could hand it over to Mauleverer!

Neither had any intention of uttering a word of what he knew.

The Remove were dismissed at last for break. And as soon as they were out of the Form-room a dozen fellows gathered round Billy Bunter and marched him away to the Rag. If Billy Bunter had that tenner, Billy Bunter had to cough it up before matters went from bad to worse; and there were not more than two or three fellows in the Form now who doubted that Billy Bunter had it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

From Bad to Worse!

BILLY BUNTER blinked in surprise as he was walked into the Rag.

Harry Wharton took one arm —Peter Todd took the other. Other

fellows gathered round. The fat Owl did not seem to guess what was wanted. He was surprised, but he rolled quite willingly into the Rag in the midst of the crowd of Removites.

Nearly all the Form followed on. Bob Cherry tramped out of the House by himself, his hands driven deep in his pockets. Hazel slipped quietly away—but not so quietly that he escaped the eye of the Bounder. Smithy strolled after Hazel in the quad. But nearly all the rest of the Remove concentrated their attention on William George Bunter.

In the Rag, with the door shut and surrounded by Removites, Billy Bunter blinked to and fro through his big spectacles.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"That's what we're going to ask you, fathead!" said Peter Todd.

"Eh? No good asking me!" said Bunter. "Wharrer you mean, Toddy?"

"Just what I say! Where is it?"

"You've got it, you fat villain!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Eh? Blessed if I make you fellows out!" said the astonished Owl. "I haven't got so much as a bullseye—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Not even an acid drop," said Bunter. "Mind, I'm quite ready to stand a feed if my postal order comes to-day! I'm expecting a postal order, as I think I mentioned to you fellows. But—"

"Is that fat idiot mad?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Wandering in his mind, if any!" remarked Skinner.

"Look here, wharrer you mean?" demanded Bunter. "If this is a feed I'm ready—but where is it? If it isn't, I want to get out—there's not too much time to get a snack in break."

"A—a—a feed!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring blankly at the fat Owl.

"Yes! If you haven't brought me here for a feed what the dickens are you up to?" asked Bunter peevishly.

"Oh crumbs!"

Some of the Remove fellows chuckled as the fat Owl blinked at them with indignant inquiry.

Bunter evidently did not know why he had been marched into the Rag. He had supposed that it meant a spread.

"You benighted fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "It's not a feed! Where's that banknote?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I've been standing up for you," said the captain of the Remove, frowning. "I couldn't believe you'd had it. But now—where is it?"

"How should I know?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. "If Mauly never stuck it in that book at all he may have it in his pocket all the time."

"He did stick it in the book, Bunter," said Tom Redwing.

"Quelch says he didn't; you heard him!" said Bunter. "Don't be an ass! I was quite surprised when he didn't find it in the book, thinking that Mauly had put it there, as he said. But Quelch says that Mauly was mistaken—you all heard him—"

"Never mind that!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Quelch doesn't know all the circumstances, and we do. Quelch doesn't know the banknote was in the book—but we know it! Now it's gone, and that means that it was taken out. You did it!"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter.

"That chicken won't fight now, you ass!" exclaimed Squiff. "Can't you see that if you don't cough it up every man in the Remove will think you've blinched it?"

"Beast!"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, don't be such a fool!" exclaimed Wharton. "You're the biggest idiot that ever was; but even you must have sense enough to know that you can't keep Mauleverer's banknote."

"Think I'd keep it if I had it?" howled Bunter indignantly. "Think I'm a thief, you rotter? Yah!"

"You fat chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "We all know you took it that night you went down from the dorm, and—"

"I never went down from the dorm!" yelled Bunter. "If anybody did it wasn't me! Perhaps it was you, Bull!"

"Me!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or it might have been Smithy—" suggested Bunter.

"Smithy!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Well, Smithy's rather a bad hat, you know," said Bunter. "He's generally got plenty of money, but he's hard up sometimes when his geegees go wrong. Might have snaffled that tenner to put on a horse."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Or Fishy—" went on Bunter. Bunter seemed full of bright suggestions that morning. "Fishy might have done it—"

"You pie-faced clam!" yelled Fisher T. Fish, in great wrath. "Say, you want me to make potato scrapings of you? I guess—"

"Well, you're a mean, stingy beast—as you jolly well know!" said Bunter warmly. "You sold me a penknife for half-a-crown, and I found afterwards that you'd given Bolsover minor of the Third threepence for it; and it wouldn't cut, and you wouldn't take it back at a shilling. And a fellow who would do that would pinch a banknote, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm going to sock that fat guy a few!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "You let a galoot get at that guy—"

Three or four fellows shoved Fisher T. Fish back, and he tottered and went over with a bump and a howl.

Nobody certainly supposed that Fishy had snaffled the missing tenner, though his cute American business methods were so near to swindling that a microscope was needed to detect the difference. But nobody had any use for Fishy's indignation. Indignation was superfluous in a fellow who sold a threepenny article for half-a-crown.

"Now, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove, "you can chuck that rot on the spot! You've got to cough up that banknote! Everybody knows that it was you went down to Quelch's study that night, because it was you went after the Annual in the afternoon and were caught at it—"

"Beast!"

"Hold on, though!" said Peter Todd. "Hold on! That isn't evidence, you know. Look here—"

"Don't you jaw, Toddy!" yapped Bolsover major. "We know it was Bunter, and he's got to cough it up. If this gets out we shall have all Greyfriars saying we've got a thief in the Form."

"Hand it over, Bunter, you ass!" said Frank Nugent. "Wharton will take charge of it till Mauly comes back."

"Do the sensible thing, Bunter, you awful ass!" urged the captain of the Remove. "Can't you see that if you stick to it, it's stealing? Haven't you really sense enough to see that?"

"Beast! Quelch says it wasn't in the book at all—"

"Artful little beast!" sneered Skinner. "He's going to make that an excuse for

keeping it, and he fancies he can get by with it."

"Yah! Rotter!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if you can't take my word—"

"Don't be a potty porpoise!"

"Beast!"

"Let a fellow speak!" exclaimed Peter Todd sharply. "Look here, I've been thinking this over. Listen to me, I tell you!"

"Well, what have you got to say?" asked Wharton impatiently. "Cut it short!"

"Just think a minute," said Peter coolly. "Bunter got after that tenner to get it for Mauly and stick him for a slice of it—"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Quelch caught him at it and whopped him. The same night somebody went down from the dorm after it—nobody knows who. So long as it was a stunt of getting it back for Mauly it was safe to put it down to Bunter. But if that tenner's been pinched there's no more evidence against Bunter than against any other man in the Form."

"We know he was after it!" sneered Skinner.

"And we know why," retorted Peter. "Bunter never made any secret that he was after it to get it back for Mauly. But if it comes to pinching, the fact that he was after it to get it back for Mauly isn't evidence against him. A chap can be a meddling ass without being a thief. I'm telling you this—if a Remove man went down in the night, intending to pinch that tenner, there's not an atom of evidence that it was Bunter."

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"Chuck it!"

But Harry Wharton was silent. He was struck by Peter's argument.

Meddling was in Bunter's line. He had meddled once, and had been supposed to have meddled again. But if there had been a theft the matter was on an absolutely different footing.

"But—" said Harry slowly.

"Well?"

"Bunter's a blithering idiot, and fool enough to do anything. But nobody's going to believe that there's a fellow in the Remove capable of planning a theft. That's rot!"

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I never went down that night!" wailed Bunter. "I never woke up—"

"Ring off!"

"You silly fathead, Toddy!" growled Bolsover major. "You're making a nice story out of it. If it was Bunter, we know that he's a benighted idiot; but if it was any other fellow, he's a thieving rascal. Which man in the Remove are you going to accuse of it, you dummy?"

"Not knowing, can't say," answered Peter. "But fair play's a jewel. Every man in the Remove knew that the banknote was there, and if a chap went down to pinch it Bunter's silly meddling the day before doesn't prove that he was the pincher. Might have been any man."

"Has Toddy got it himself?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Toddy, if you've got it, you just show it up, you beast!" yapped Bunter. "Don't you try to shove it on me!"

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the juniors.

The expression on Peter's face was worth a guinea a box. He glared at Bunter as if he could have bitten him.

"You—you—you—you fat, frowsy, frabjous, footling freak!" spluttered

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Peter. "Lot of good putting in a word for you, you blithering, bloated bloater! Go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd stalked away in great wrath, leaving the Removites yelling.

Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, do you think Toddy's got it?" he gasped. "He seems jolly shirty about something. If he's got it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! If Toddy's got it—"

"Look here, let's bump that fat chump and keep on bumping him till it drops!" suggested Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know what to think! You can cut, Bunter."

"Beast!" answered Bunter, doubtless by way of thanks; but he cut promptly enough.

The crowd of juniors left the Rag—most of them still of the opinion that Bunter had that ten-pound note, but some wondering whether there was anything in Toddy's suggestion. The affair was taking on a darker and more disagreeable turn. Evidently it could not remain where it was so long as the banknote was missing. But how it was going to end no fellow could say. So far, it had only gone from bad to worse.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Smithy is Satisfied!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH joined Hazel as the latter slouched under the elms by himself in break. Hazel gave him a black and bitter look that produced no effect whatever on the Bounder.

"A word with you, my pippin!" said Smithy quietly.

"Leave me alone!" snarled Hazel. "I've told you more than once that I want to hear nothing from you, Vernon-Smith."

"You've got to," said the Bounder coolly.

"I can please myself about that!" Hazel turned his back on Vernon-Smith and walked away.

Smithy followed him.

"You can hear me alone, or you can hear me before all the Remove, just as you like," he said. "I've got to know! If you pinched that tenner, it's not going to be landed on that fat fool Bunter!"

Hazel halted again, clenching his hands, his look showing how he longed to dash them in the Bounder's scornful face.

"Cut it short, you rotter!" he muttered.

"I'll cut it short enough. Last week you conked out in the Highcliffe match because you'd got news that some rotten horse you'd backed had let you down. You came to my study that evening and tried to stick me for ten quids to pay Bill Lodgey. The same night somebody went down from the dorm and pinched that tenner. Now that Quelch's been through the book and proved that it's missing there's no doubt on that point. Was it you?"

"You rotter!"

"I suspected it at the time," continued Vernon-Smith, "and warned you, if you'd done it, to put it back before it was too late. It's proved now that it never was put back."

Hazel was silent. He was not likely to admit that he had ever touched that

wretched banknote: still less, to reveal that he had persuaded his sister to take the risk of putting it back whence he had taken it.

She had failed, and the banknote had disappeared, and Hazel's cue was silence.

"You owed Bill Lodgey ten pounds," pursued the Bounder grimly. "You told me he had threatened to come up to the school for it if you didn't square, and that meant the sack for you. He hasn't come, and that was days ago, and you haven't paid him, unless you used that tenner to do it with! I want to know, Hazel!"

"Is it your bizney?" sneered Hazel.

"Yes!" said Vernon-Smith. "If you pinched that tenner, you're not going to land it on another fellow! You're a great hand at landing your troubles on other people—you don't care whom! Wharton's seen you through once or twice, as I know, and he was a fool for his pains! You're the kind of cur that snaps at the hand that helps you!"

Hazel's eyes burned at him.

But the Bounder went on in the same tone of cool contempt:

"I've seen you clear off on your bike for Cliff House when you've been up against it. I know why! You'd land your troubles on a girl as soon as not! A fellow who would do that would do pretty nearly anything, I think! But this is a more serious matter. It can't stop where it is. If this row goes on, it will get to the beaks sooner or later. That will mean Bunter being called on the carpet, and quite likely sacked for pinching. I should be as rotten a cur as you are if I let it go on! If you had that tenner, you've got to stand for what you did!"

Hazel did not speak.

"It boils down to this," said Smithy. "Have you paid Bill Lodgey? If you have—and you must have, to keep him quiet—how did you do it? Your sister Marjorie can't possibly have raised ten pounds for you—you'd make her if she could, but she couldn't. You've got to explain to me how you paid Bill Lodgey—if you don't want me to believe that you did it with Mauly's tenner!"

"Do you think I care what you believe?"

"Possibly not; but what I believe I shall shout out for all Greyfriars to believe, too!" said the Bounder. "If that's what you want, you can have it as soon as you like!"

Hazel's lip curled.

He was on safe ground now.

He was not likely to tell Smithy that the sharper at the Three Fishers, guessing that the banknote did not belong to him, had been afraid to touch it; that Lodgey, alarmed for himself at his dupe's act of desperation, had been willing—more than willing—to give him ample time to pay. But that was how the matter stood, and in that quarter Hazel was safe.

"Well"—the Bounder was puzzled by Hazel's sneering smile—"anything to say or not?"

"I'm not called on to explain my affairs to you, you meddling rotter!" said Hazel. "But I don't mind telling you that I haven't paid Lodgey, and he's agreed to wait."

"After you told me he was coming up to the school, and you were scared out of your wits?"

"Yes, after that," said Hazel coolly.

The Bounder stood silent, watching him. He did not believe Hazel's statement, but he was puzzled by the junior's obvious assurance.

"I'm not taking your word!" he said at last. "Look here, Hazel, I shall put it to Lodgey! I can get the truth out of him."

Hazel shrugged his shoulders.

"You can ask him, if you like! If he tells you I've paid him, I shall be glad to hear it. I don't remember doing it."

"Very well." Smithy compressed his lips. "I shall get him on the phone after third school; I can manage that all right. If he says you haven't squared, that settles it, of course. But I don't believe you!"

"Suit yourself!" sneered Hazel; and he turned and walked away, and this time the Bounder did not follow him.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was puzzled when he went in to third school with the rest of the Remove. His suspicion of Hazel was strong, and it amounted almost to a certainty, since it had been demonstrated that the banknote was missing. But if it was true that the wretched scapegrace had not paid his gambling debt, that seemed to settle it.

Several times during third school he glanced at Hazel. The fellow looked moody and dispirited; natural enough, if he still had that disgraceful debt and its dangers on his mind. But he was taking no notice of Smithy, and certainly seemed to have no uneasiness in that direction.

More and more puzzled, the Bounder was keen to put the matter to the test. If his suspicion was unfounded, that let Hazel out, so far as Smithy was concerned. But he was going to know.

After third school the Bounder loitered in the vicinity of Masters' Passage till he ascertained that Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form master, was out of the House. Then he cut into Prout's study, and called up a certain number on the telephone.

Smithy, probably, was the only fellow at Greyfriars with nerve enough to speak on the telephone to a disreputable resort out of school bounds. But Smithy had nerve enough for anything. Mr. Prout, rolling majestically in the quad, little dreamed what was occurring in his study.

Five minutes later the Bounder left the study and the House. He looked in the quad for Hazel.

"You win!" he said laconically.

Hazel scowled at him, and the Bounder laughed.

"I've had a word with Lodgey," explained Vernon-Smith. "He says you haven't squared, and he's letting it stand over. He gave me a message for you—you're not to worry about it, and not to make a fool of yourself, whatever he may happen to mean by that. I dare say you know."

Hazel knew only too well.

"That's that!" said the Bounder. "It looked jolly fishy, and you couldn't expect me to stand quiet while you landed it on another chap if you'd done it, Hazel. And you're that sort; you'd do anything when you get scared! But—"

"You know now that I haven't paid Lodgey!" sneered Hazel. "Don't you suspect me of snaffling the tenner to blow on jam tarts and ginger-beer?"

The Bounder laughed again.

"No. Blessed if I understand a man like Bill Lodgey goin' easy with you like this! He's not in the welshin' business for his health! But there it is—and that's that!"

The Bounder was satisfied. He left Hazel without another word, and the scapegrace was conscious of relief. Only the Bounder suspected him, or, indeed, thought of connecting him with the matter at all, and now the Bounder was satisfied. He was safe—from all but his own conscience.

Unfortunately for Hazel, his conscience, which was not strong enough to keep him from wrongdoing, was too



"The measly pincher!" said Bolsover major. "Bump him!" Bob Cherry strode across the room and intervened just in time. He grabbed Bolsover with one hand, Skinner with the other, and jerked them forcibly away from Bunter. "You're not touching Bunter!" he said curtly.

strong to leave him in peace after he had done wrong. He was safe—but he was the most utterly wretched fellow within the walls of Greyfriars School.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Alibi for Bunter!

"TODDY, old man—"

"Oh, scat!" growled Peter Todd.

There was a lack of harmony in Study No. 7 in the Remove at tea-time. Peter Todd, Tom Dutton, and Billy Bunter were at tea in that apartment.

Billy Bunter's fat brow was puckered with worry, though he was not too worried to scoff, as usual, the lion's share of the foodstuffs. Peter Todd looked very grim. He did not like a member of that study being under suspicion, and he was far from being certain in his own mind on the subject. Tom Dutton was as serene as usual; Dutton, being deaf, had not yet heard of the topic that was thrilling the Remove. It was rather difficult to tell Tom without telling the world, and nobody wanted the affair to spread over the school.

Less than ever did the Remove fellows want it to spread, since Toddy, with his bright legal mind, had put his view at the meeting in the Rag. That view—that every fellow in the Form was equally under suspicion—was extremely unpopular in the Remove, but it was a view likely to be taken by other fellows outside the Form and by beaks if they came to inquire into the matter. So the less that was said about the troublesome affair the better, in the opinion of all the Lower Fourth.

Bunter, meanwhile, was generally supposed to be in possession of that

miserable banknote. All day long fellows had asked him when he was going to cough it up. Several fellows had booted him, as a strong hint that it was time the coughing-up process started. All this, of course, was extremely disagreeable to Bunter.

Having scoffed all that was scoffable, and blinked round the table in vain for something more to scoff, Billy Bunter began to talk. Bunter was under a deep sense of injury. He was suspected; that was rotten. He was booted; that was worse still. And before his eyes and his spectacles stretched an endless prospect of suspicions and bootings, which was rottenest of all.

"I think," said Bunter, with dignity, "that a fellow's pal might stand by a fellow! Look at all I've done for you, Toddy!"

"Ass!" growled Toddy. "Shut up—unless you're going to tell me what you've done with that putrid banknote. Have you got it?"

"I was just going to ask you if you had, old chap."

Peter Todd breathed hard and deep.

"I mean, from what you said in the Rag, it looks a bit suspicious," explained Bunter. "Still, if you say you haven't got it, I'll take your word, old fellow. I expect you to take mine, too. But if you've got it—what are you looking for, Peter?"

"A cricket stump!" hissed Peter.

"It's on the shelf! Never mind that! Look here, Peter, if you've got it, you'll have to give it to Mauly when he comes back. I mean to say, you can't possibly bag it, you know, being Mauly's. At the same time, Mauly, getting his ten-pound note back when everybody thinks it's gone for good, ought to play up. A study spread wouldn't come to a lot, out of ten pounds—"

Peter Todd gazed at his fat study-mate.

If ever a fellow asked for the cricket stump, hard and heavy, Bunter was asking for it. At the same time, it was difficult to suppose, in view of his remarks, that he was the fellow who had the temer.

"I mean to say," went on Bunter, "I think that it's up to Mauly, to make some acknowledgment, if he gets his tenner back. If I'd got it for him, I was going to ask him to lend me ten bob, to tide me over till my postal-order comes. I thought that fair! Well, if you've got it—"

"You—you—you think it's possible that I've got it?" breathed Peter Todd.

"Well, look at what you said yourself," argued Bunter. "Any fellow in the Remove might have had it—you said so. You were the only fellow who thought of looking at it like that, too! Of course, I don't think a pal of mine would pinch. I believe you're honest, Peter."

"You bib-bub-bob-believe I'm honest!" gasped Peter.

"Yes, old chap! I'm sure—practically certain—that you're honest," said Bunter, reassuringly. "Still, your father's a solicitor, and you've got an uncle a barrister—you can't deny that!"

Peter could only gasp.

"So if you've got it"—went on the fat Owl, cheerily.

Peter Todd rose from the table. He felt that it was time to get the cricket stump off the shelf.

"But if you haven't—" added Bunter.

"If!" gurgled Peter.

"Then goodness knows who has!" said Bunter. "The fellows seem absolutely determined to put it down to me. Bolsover major kicked me to-day."

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BOB CHERRY'S BURDEN!



(Continued from page 13.)

So did Russell. And Bull! And two or three other fellows."

"Has anybody whacked you?"

"Eh, no!"

"Time somebody did, then," said Peter.

"Oh, really, Toddy! I say, put that stump down—what are you messing about with that stump for?" said Bunter, irritably. "I say, Todd, you make out that you know a lot about the law. Well, I suppose you know all about an alibi."

"A which?" exclaimed Peter.

"An alibi!" said Bunter. "It's a legal phrase, you know, meaning that when you were in one place, you prove that you were in another, so as to prove that you never did whatever you may have done, see?"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Peter, almost overcome by that legal definition of an alibi.

"Well, that's what I've been thinking of," pursued the fat Owl, blinking seriously at Toddy. "Being fast asleep all that night, you know, I never went down to Quelch's study. If I prove that I was in the dorm all night, that proves an alibi, see? All I need is a witness."

"What the thump—"

"Suppose a fellow woke up several times that night, Peter, and saw me in bed every time—"

"In the dark?"

"Oh! Well, suppose he heard me? All the fellows make out that I snore," said Bunter. "I don't really—I stayed awake one night, to listen if I did, and I jolly well didn't! But the fellows make out that I do, so that's all right. Suppose a fellow woke up several times, and every time he heard me snoring—"

"No fellow did, or he'd have mentioned it before now."

"Yes, but you can say you did!" explained Bunter. "That comes to the same thing doesn't it?"

"Oh, crumbs! Does it?"

"Well, as far as I can see, it does! You were rather sleepless that night—you can say you had a tooth-ache or something—and you kept on waking up, and every time you woke up, you saw me snoring—I mean, you heard me in bed—that is, I mean, you heard me snoring. That will prove an alibi, see?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter.

"I'll do the same for you, any time," said Bunter. "I'd stretch a point, for a pal, though I'm a bit more particular in such things than most fellows. And as you're going to be a lawyer when you grow up, Peter, you'll have to get used to telling whoppers. The sooner you begin, really, the better you'll be at it, when you come to doing it professionally. See?"

Peter Todd did not state whether he "saw". The urge to use the cricket stump became irresistible; and he got going.

Whop!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, bounding. You mad ass, wharrer you up to?"

Whop!

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"Yoo-hooooop!"

Whop!

"Ow! Wow! Boast! Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter bolted for the door. For some reason—Bunter did not know why!—Peter was shirty—uncommonly shirty. The fat junior, forgetting all about that bright idea of proving an alibi with Peter's assistance, dodged out of study No. 7, in wild haste.

Whop!

The stump caught him again, as he dodged.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter flew.

Peter jumped after him, and landed one more, as he fled.

Whop!

"Whooooop!"

Bunter did the passage at record speed. He did not stop till he had placed the passage and the staircase between him and Peter.

Why Peter had got excited like this, Bunter did not know; but he sagely decided to give Peter a wide offing till he was calmer.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH glanced into Study No. 1—where the Famous Five were gathered to tea.

There was a cheery chat going on in the study. The juniors were discussing the cricket match with Rookwood, which was coming along at an early date; a matter of keen interest to all of them.

That topic had the effect of banishing for the moment, at least, dark and troubling thoughts from Bob Cherry's mind; and his face had its old cheery look—rather to the relief of his chums. What had put Bob into such dismal dumps, the last few days, they had no idea—but they were glad to see him cheerful again.

Cricket "jaw" broke off, however, as the Bounder looked in.

The chums of the Remove gave him inquiring looks.

"Trot in!" said Harry Wharton, wondering what the Bounder wanted.

Smithy had not been specially friendly with the Famous Five that term, and seldom dropped into that study.

"Talking cricket?" asked Smithy as he came in. "I suppose we can take it as settled that Marjorie Hazeldene's brother doesn't play at Rookwood."

Harry Wharton frowned. It was like Smithy to put it in that unpleasant way; as if Hazel's relationship to Marjorie constituted his single claim to a place in the eleven captained by Harry Wharton.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, Smithy!" exclaimed Bob. "Can't you ever open your mouth without a rotten snecr?"

The Bounder looked at him. It was not like Bob to rap out so sharply, even when a fellow asked for it.

"Hoity-toity!" said Vernon-Smith. "You—"

"Hazeldene won't be in the team, Smithy!" said the captain of the Remove, interrupting the Bounder. "After the way he let us down with Highcliffe, he's not to be trusted. Anyhow, he only played because Toddy was crooked—and Toddy will be all right for Rookwood."

"Glad to hear it," said the Bounder, with a rather hostile look at Bob. "Anyhow, I didn't come here to talk cricket. I want to know what's going to be done about that fool Mauly's banknote."

Bob Cherry's face clouded again at once. That reminder brought back to him all he had forgotten, or had been trying to forget, for the last half-hour. But he did not speak. He left the table, and lounged over to the window.

"Blessed if I know," said Harry. "Something ought to be done, if Bunter's really got that rotten tenner. Toddy seems to think he hasn't. Mauly was sure that he hadn't! I thought he hadn't, till it turned out that it was missing. Now I don't know what to think."

"It can't stick where it is—we shall have it all over the school before long."

"I know! If you've got anything to suggest, you've only got to cough it up. I'll be glad of a tip."

"You're bound to act as captain of the Form. If we get the facts, I don't see shutting it out to all Greyfriars that there's a thief in the Remove," said the Bounder. "We can deal with the man ourselves, if we get him."

Wharton looked dubious.

"I don't know about that," he said. "Anyhow, we haven't got him yet. Most of the fellows think it was Bunter. He's such a blithering idiot that he might keep the tenner back without understanding that he was pinching it if he did."

"Even Bunter isn't such a fool as that."

"Well, perhaps not; but otherwise it means a theft, and nobody wants to think that," said Harry.

"It's no good blinking at plain facts, that I know of. That tenner was pinched out of Mauly's book while it was in Quelch's study. Nobody could have got at it after it went to the Head. It was taken that night a fellow went down to Quelch's study. Bunter or not, it was a Remove man. Bunter or not, the fellow who went for it intended to pinch it. What's the good of pretending not to see what's as plain as daylight?"

The juniors were silent. The Bounder put the case in his clear, incisive way, and there could be little doubt that he was right. Shrinking from unpleasant things was, after all, no use. Facts were facts. At the same time nobody was pleased to have such a disagreeable fact made so clear.

"I don't believe it was Bunter," went on Smithy. "Now I've thought it over I can see a lot of evidence that it wasn't. And this is a matter of evidence, not of what we choose to think."

"I know that," said Harry. "What's the evidence for Bunter, then? I'll be jolly glad to hear it!"

"It would never have been proved that the note was missing if Quelch hadn't been put wise," said Vernon-Smith. "Why was he put wise?"

"You know that. Mauly believed the banknote was still in the book, and wanted the rotten affair cleared up by showing that it was there."

"And who kept on worrying and ragging Mauly to have Quelch put wise, and make him examine that 'Holiday Annual'?"

Wharton started a little.

"Bunter!" he answered.

"Exactly!" The Bounder nodded. "Now, Bunter's a fool, but is he fool enough to rag Mauly into taking a step that would prove the banknote to be missing, if he had it all the time? Why should he?"

"By gum, Smithy's right!" said Johnny Bull slowly. "If Bunter had it he would have been the last chap to want it shown to be missing. So long as the book wasn't searched, he could always make out that it was there."

"That's right," agreed Frank Nugent.

"Mauly only did it because that fat chump kept on at him. Why should he, if he had it?"

"Glad you can see sense," remarked the Bounder, with a slight sneer. "If Bunter had it he would be jolly anxious for that book never to be searched for it. It's through Bunter that it's proved to be really missing. If there's anything in evidence, that's evidence that Bunter, at least, believed that the tenner was still in the book."

Harry Wharton nodded. "Looks like it," he assented. "There's no doubt that Bunter was fearfully keen to have that book examined, anyhow. He seems to have believed that that would clear him."

"And it does—to anybody who can see sense," said Vernon-Smith. "Take it that a fellow pinched that tenner. What would be his best guess? To prevent, if he could, the tenner being missed. He would try to put a stop to setting Quelch on the trail, if he could. He would make out as hard as he could that the banknote was still where Mauly left it, and would take jolly good care not to take any step to prove otherwise."

"You ought to be a detective, Smithy!" said Nugent, with a grin.

"Anything further, Smithy?" asked Wharton. He could see that the Bounder had not finished yet.

"Yes. If we can spot any man who opposed putting Quelch wise, we've got a clue. Do you know of any man who advised Mauly not to speak out?"

Harry Wharton started.

"You can see what I'm getting at?" said the Bounder quietly. "There's a thief in the Form, and that thief would stop inquiry, if he could. He would keep Mauly quiet if he could, so that it would never be known for a fact that the tenner was actually missing. If any man in the Remove advised Mauly to keep quiet about it, we've got the man."

"Nobody did, that I know of," said Harry slowly.

"Never heard of it," said Nugent.

"We can ask Mauly when he comes back to-morrow," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "Smithy's pretty keen, you fellows. If any chap tried to keep Mauly quiet about it we'll jolly well make him say why."

"Mauly seems to have made up his mind on Saturday, and fixed up that week-end with his uncle at the same time," said Vernon-Smith. "Nobody really knew that he had decided to have it all out, till he told us in the Rag that evening."

He paused a moment.

"Everybody knew that he was thinkin' it over, and the blighter we want might have advised him against it," he went on. "We can't fix that till Mauly comes back. But on Saturday evening he left it in your hands, Wharton. The blighter knew then that he had made up his mind, and had no more chance with Mauly. Taking it that that was his game, he might have tried his luck with you."

"With me?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, as it was in your hands. Did any man in the Remove advise you not to do it?"

Wharton did not speak.

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. "I can't imagine any chap suggesting to Wharton that he should let Mauly down, after he'd promised to see the thing done. But if any chap did, his motive was pretty plain. Did anybody, Wharton?"

Still the captain of the Remove did not speak. The red was creeping into his cheeks, and his heart beating uncomfortably. Why had Bob Cherry

made that perplexing request on Sunday?

Bob, staring from the study window, did not seem to hear what was being said. He gave no sign, at all events.

The Bounder's keen eyes were fixed on Wharton's face. It was easy for him to read that the captain of the Remove was startled and confused.

"Cough it up!" he said grimly. "Who was it, Wharton?"

"What do you mean, Smithy?" muttered Harry.

"I mean what I say. I can see perfectly plainly in your face that some Remove man has been trying to get you to let Mauly down. That man wanted to stop a search for the banknote, and you know why."

"Don't be a fool!"

"Oh, draw it mild, old man!" exclaimed Johnny Bull warmly. "Smithy's talking horse sense. If any chap advised you not to speak out to Quelch, it's plain enough why."

"The plainfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wharton," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a puzzled look at Wharton's flushed face.

"Anyhow, give the chap's name, and we'll ask him why," sneered the Bounder. "So far as I can see, any man in the Remove can have had only one motive for wanting to stop Quelch looking for that banknote—he knew it was missing, and wanted to keep that dark. That means that he had it."

"Oh, rot and rubbish!" snapped Wharton.

"Dash it all, that's reasonable enough, Harry!" said Nugent, in surprise. "I can't see any other motive the chap can have had. It looks jolly suspicious to me, at any rate."

Wharton gave his chum a strange look.

No other member of the Co. had heard Bob make that strange request on Sunday morning. He had fallen behind with Wharton so that the others should not hear. Not for a second did it occur to them that the name Wharton refused to give was Bob's. He wondered what they would have thought had he given it.

"Are you going to tell us?" asked the Bounder sharply, with mingled impatience and annoyance.

Wharton did not answer.

"You admit that some fellow advised you, or asked you, not to put it up to Quelch to look for that banknote?" demanded the Bounder.

Still no answer.

"Silence is an admission," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "You won't give that chap's name? A friend of yours, I suppose. Well, you can keep it dark if you like, Harry Wharton, but take this from me—that friend of yours, whoever he is, has got Mauly's tenner in his pocket, and you know it as well as I do."

With that, the Bounder stalked out of the study.

Wharton's eyes flashed after him as he went. But he did not speak, and there was a deep and uncomfortable silence in the study when Smithy had gone.

Johnny Bull and Nugent and the nabob looked at Harry in surprise and a little irritation. His silence was a complete puzzle to them.

"You can't keep it dark, Wharton!" said Johnny Bull, at last. "Smithy's on the track—that's quite plain. If you keep it dark it looks as if you believe you know who the thief was—just as Smithy says."

"Oh, don't be a fathead!" snapped Harry.

Johnny Bull shrugged his broad shoulders and rose from the table.

"That's what I think," he said. "It's what Nugent thinks, too, and Inky. You're playing the ox. Don't you want the thief shown up?"

"For goodness' sake give a fellow a rest! Smithy's a fool, and you're another!" said Harry. "That's all I've got to say about it."

"Enough, too!" said Johnny, and he walked out of the study.

Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh exchanged a glance and followed him.

When they were gone, Harry Wharton carefully shut the door and turned to the silent junior at the window.

"Bob!"

Bob Cherry turned round.

"You heard what was said, Bob?"

"I'm not deaf."

"Why did you ask me—what you asked me on Sunday morning? You said you had a reason. What was the reason?"

Wharton's face was pale now. Bob's was crimson. But he did not speak. There was a deep, still silence in the study for a long minute.

"Bob, old man"—Wharton's voice trembled a little—"don't be a fool! This isn't a time to get your back up, or to make a mystification. You heard what your own pals said—not knowing they were speaking of you."

Bob stood looking at him in silence.

"They think—every fellow who hears about it will think—that the chap who asked me not to speak to Quelch knew that the banknote was missing, and wanted to keep it dark. How could you have known?"

Silence.

"I never thought of it at the time, of course. But it—it's clear now. What was your reason for asking what you did, Bob? Tell me now!"

Bob's face grew redder, but he did not answer.

"You won't tell me?" asked Harry. He waited for the answer that did not come. "Then you knew that that banknote was missing, Bob. How did you know?"

Grim silence.

"You didn't believe that Bunter had it?"

Bob shook his head.

"You knew it was missing?"

No sign from Bob.

"You wanted to keep that dark?"

Silence.

"Why?"

Still silence.

The crimson faded out of Bob Cherry's face, leaving him pale as his chum. They looked at one another.

"If you think I'm a thief," said Bob, at last, "you needn't speak to me again."

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"That's all."

"I don't think so. I can't. But—" Harry Wharton's voice faltered. "For the love of Mike, Bob, how did you know that the banknote was missing? And why did you want to keep it dark?"

Bob, looking at him, hardly saw him for the moment. What he saw was a graceful, girlish form at the Head's study window—a slim hand dropping the stolen banknote from the window. He choked. Even if his own pals thought the worst of him, not to save his good name, not to save his life, not to save a thousand lives, would he utter a word. The colour drained from his face, leaving him haggard. He drew a deep, deep breath, and crossed to the door.

Wharton watched him in silence. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

Without a word Bob Cherry opened the door, and went out of the study.

The captain of the Remove was left alone there, standing with a stunned look on his face.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Row in the Rag!

"STOP that!"

Bob Cherry rapped out the words as he came into the Rag. Half a dozen Remove fellows were there—gathered round Billy Bunter. The fat Owl of the Remove was yelping dismally.

Bolsover major, Skinner, and Snoop had hold of him. Stott and Fisher T. Fish were looking on, grinning. Bolsover major was speaking in his most bullying tone when Bob looked in.

"Last time of asking, Bunter. Shell out that tenner, or we'll jolly well bump it out of you! Now, then!"

"I tell you I haven't!" wailed Bunter.

"You measly pincher! Bump him!"

Bob Cherry strode across the room, and intervened just in time. He grabbed Bolsover with one hand, Skinner with the other, and jerked them forcibly away from Bunter. Snoop let go of his own accord, backing away.

"I—I say, keep those beasts off, Bob, old chap!" gasped Bunter, greatly relieved. "You know I haven't got that beastly tenner, don't you, old fellow?"

"Yes," said Bob. "Let Bunter alone, you fellows."

"Look here—" began Skinner angrily.

"Mind your own business," roared Bolsover, in great wrath, "and keep your paws off of me—see? We're going to take it out of that fat rotter!"

"You're not!" said Bob curtly.

"Are you backing up that pincher?" sneered Snoop.

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "I never had it! I shouldn't wonder if you had it, Snoop, you cad! Just like you!"

Sidney James Snoop made a step towards Bunter.

Bob pushed him back, unceremoniously, and so roughly that the weedy Snoop nearly fell over.

"Hands off, Bunter!" growled Bob.

"You cheeky tick!" exclaimed Skinner.

"I guess—" began Fisher T. Fish.

"Look here, Cherry—" said Stott.

"Bunter never had that rotten banknote," said Bob quietly. "You've no right to say he had! You're not going to touch him!"

"And how do you know?" sneered Skinner.

"Well, I do know!"

"Cherry knows me!" gasped Bunter.

"He knows I wouldn't, don't you, Bob, old chap? Have I ever touched anything that wasn't mine?"

"Why, you fat pincher," hooted Bolsover major, "a fellow can't leave a cake in his study without you pinching it."

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"He's got it, and he's going to shell it out!" said the bully of the Remove determinedly. "We're not going to have this all over Greyfriars, and fellows turning up their noses at the Remove! Shell it out, Bunter, or we'll bump you till it drops out of your pockets!"

"Beast!"

Bolsover major made a forward movement.

Bob Cherry stood like a rock in his way, with the fat Owl shrinking behind him.

"Hands off!" said Bob.

"Will you get out of the way, Cherry?" roared Bolsover.

"No!"

"We'll shift you fast enough, if you don't!"

"Get on with it, then!"

"Back up, you fellows!" said Bolsover. "We'll chuck him out on his neck and then get on with Bunter!"

Bolsover advanced to the attack readily enough. Stott followed him up, but Skinner, and Snoop, and Fisher T. Fish made no movement.

Ragging Bunter was one thing; scrapping with the heftiest fighting man in the Remove was quite another.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Skinner. "We can get Bunter any time."

"Back up, you rotten funk!" snorted Bolsover.

And he hurled himself at Bob Cherry, hitting out right and left, to punch him out of the way. Stott came on with him.

Bob Cherry's hands were up, and his eyes glinting over them. Knowing what he knew, he was bound to take Bunter's side in the matter; and to see the fat Owl ragged on account of that wretched banknote, which was in his own pocket, was impossible.

He met Bolsover major with left and right. The burly bully of the Remove staggered back, and gave Bob a moment's leisure to deal with Stott. A jolt on the chin sent Frederick Stott spinning, to fall on his back on the floor of the Rag. He crashed there, and spluttered.

Bolsover major was coming on again the next second. His face was red with rage. Percy Bolsover was, from his own point of view, in the right, though he cared little for the rights and wrongs of any matter when his surly temper was roused. He was always ready for a row, at all events.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter, as the two juniors closed in fierce strife. "I—I say, go it, Bob! Punch him!"

Bob was going it. The worry on his mind, and especially the recent scene in Study No. 1 frayed his nerves a little, and his good temper and cheery good-nature seemed to have deserted him. He had trouble enough on hand, without Bolsover major's overbearing bullying thrown in. It was, perhaps, rather a relief to him to get into action. Certainly he got into extremely vigorous action. Burly and beefy as he was, Bolsover major was knocked to and fro, and driven back under a shower of crashing blows.

The other fellows looked on in silence. It was not surprising to see a fellow like Bob take the part of the helpless fat Owl, and protect him from a ragging. But they were surprised by the set, savage expression on Bob Cherry's face.

Bolsover major put up a fierce fight. He was strong and muscular, and he had plenty of pluck. But he did not seem to have a chance from the start. Twice he went down, under drives that made Skinner & Co. almost cringe to see them. But he jumped up and came on again as fiercely as ever.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing came into the Rag. They stared at the scene in astonishment.

"You'll have the prefects here if you kick up that row!" said the Bounder. And Redwing hastily shut the door.

"What the dickens is the row about?"

"Cherry's backing up that podgy

pincher!" said Skinner. "He doesn't want us to get that banknote off him."

"You mean that you've been ragging Bunter, and Cherry stopped you?" asked Redwing, with a curl of the lip. "I'd have done the same."

"Rats to you!" retorted Skinner. "Look here, Smithy, lend a hand, and we'll chuck that hooligan out and make Bunter shell out."

The Bounder laughed.

"Bunter's not the man!" he said. "You can leave Bunter alone. Wharton knows who the man is if he liked to give his name."

"What rot!" said Skinner, staring. "How could Wharton know—unless it's Bunter, as we all jolly well know it is!"

"He does know—you can ask him!" said the Bounder. "It's some pal of his. He wants to keep it dark for that reason."

"Straight?" asked Skinner, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Quite!"

"What rot are you talking, Smithy?" exclaimed Redwing sharply.

"Straight goods, old man! You can ask Wharton."

"By gum, I'll jolly well ask him!" exclaimed Skinner.

Crash!

Bolsover major went down for the third time with a terrific crash that made the floor ring. This time he did not get up again.

He lay on his back, gasping and panting and beaten to the wide.

Bob Cherry panted for breath and dabbed a trickle of crimson from his nose. The Bounder looked at him curiously and keenly and with a rather strange expression in his eyes.

Bob did not heed him. He looked at Bolsover and waited a few moments. But the fight was over; the bully of the Remove had had enough and could not go on. Bob tramped across to the door and left the Rag—Billy Bunter scuttling after him. The Bounder's curious stare followed him.

Snoop and Skinner helped Bolsover major to his feet.

The Bounder moved away to the window, whistling softly. Redwing eyed him. Smithy's eyes met his chum's.

"Wharton knows the man!" he murmured.

"Rot!"

"It's a friend of his—"

"Rubbish!"

"Cherry's a friend of his—"

"Smithy!"

"And standing up for Bunter like that—"

"He's just the fellow to do it! I'd have done it—"

"There's more to it than that, Reddy!" said the Bounder coolly. "I remember now, in the study, when I put it to Wharton he never said a word; standing staring out of the window with his back to us. But—" The Bounder whistled. "Cherry, of all fellows! It seems impossible!"

"You utter fool!" said Redwing more angrily than he had ever spoken to his chum before. "You're mad to think of such a rotten thing. Just mad! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Smithy, for letting such a rotten thought come into your mind at all!"

The Bounder laughed—and did not answer.

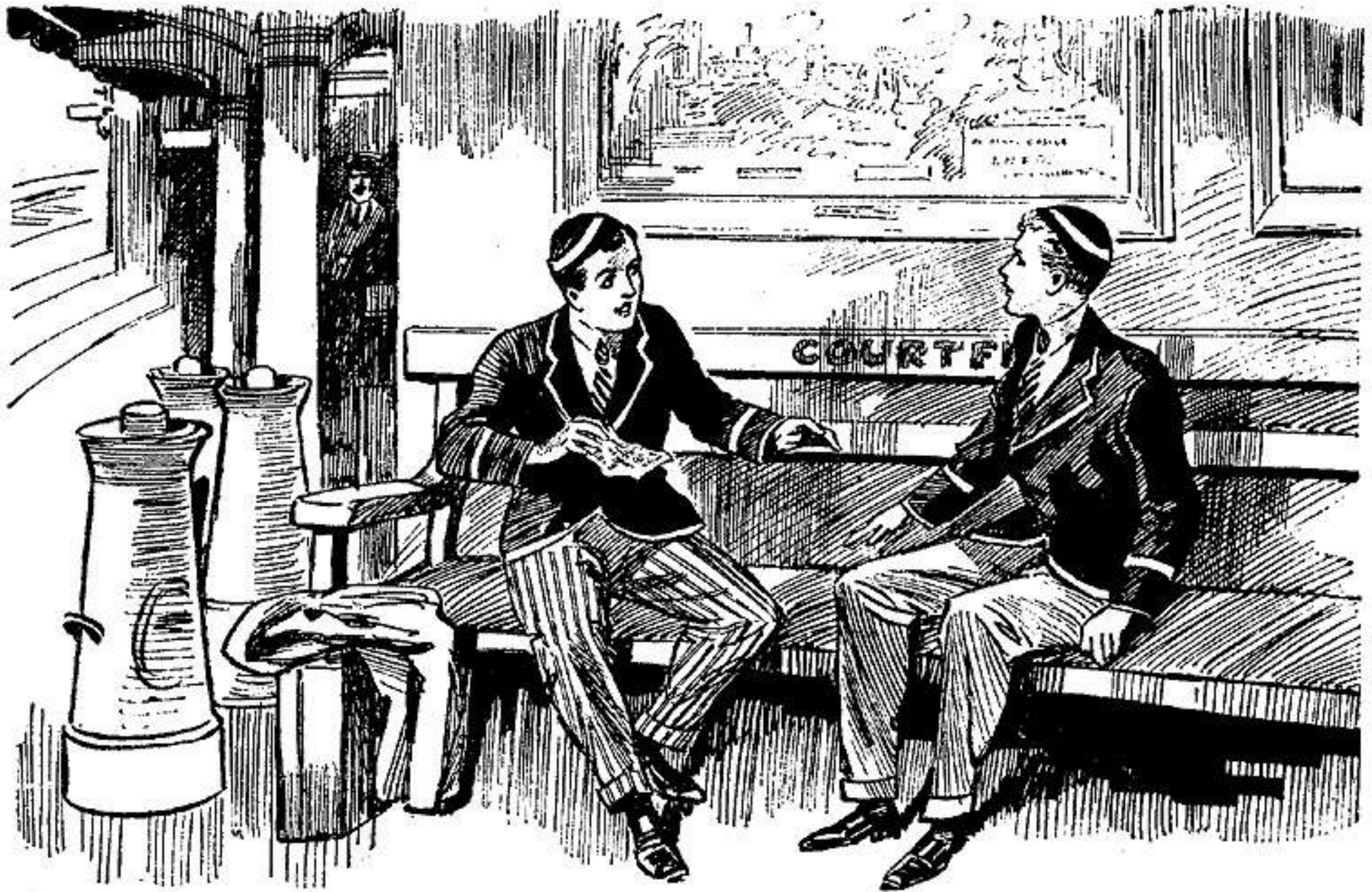
THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants to Know!

"SCRAP?" asked Johnny Bull.

It was rather a superfluous question.

Bob Cherry was bathing a damaged face at the sink at the end of



"Here's your tenner!" said Bob Cherry. "Wha-a-at!" Lord Mauleverer almost jumped off the bench in astonishment as Bob Cherry handed him the crumpled banknote. "Put it in your pocket, Mauly," muttered Bob. "I can't tell you how I got hold of it!"

the Remove passage when Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came along. It was only too clear that he had been scrapping. Damages were prominent—though less so than with Bolsover major.

"The scrappfulness seems to have been terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob lifted a streaming face, dabbing his damaged nose with a sponge.

"Yes!" he answered briefly.

"Who's the happy man?" asked Johnny.

"That lout Bolsover!"

"I hope you walloped him!" said Johnny cordially.

"I think so!" said Bob rather grimly. "He's got more than this, bother the silly fathead! Where's that dashed towel?"

The nabob handed him a towel, and he towelled his streaming face. His nose was red and raw, and one of his eyes persisted in winking.

"Sorry we missed it," said Johnny. "But what was it about?"

"They were ragging that fat idiot Bunter," grunted Bob, "about that rotten banknote of Mauly's."

"Oh, that!" said Johnny. "Well, that's Wharton's fault! He could jolly well point out the right man if he liked."

"Wharton knows no more about it than you do!" said Bob gruffly.

"That's rot!" said Johnny. "After what Smithy said in the study—"

"Smithy's a fool!"

"That's rot, too!" said Johnny calmly. "Smithy's no fool. He's the keenest man in the Form. And what he said was right enough. Wharton's as good as admitted that some chap asked him to keep it dark from Quelch. The chap who asked him is the chap who's got the banknote."

Bob Cherry laughed, not pleasantly.

"Don't you think so?" demanded Johnny.

"Oh, you can do the thinking!" grunted Bob. "You've got the brains for it."

"My esteemed Bob—" murmured the nabob gently.

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Bob.

The Nabob of Bhanipur was silent, his dark eyes fixed curiously on Bob's flushed face.

Johnny Bull gave an angry grunt.

"If that scrap's put you into that sort of a temper we'd better leave you alone till you get over it," he said.

"Much better!" answered Bob.

Johnny gave him a look and walked down the passage.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh lingered a moment, and then followed him.

Bob towelled his face dry, with a gloomy brow, and replaced his collar and tie. He looked into the glass, and frowned at the damaged reflection. It had been a strenuous scrap, and he was feeling the reaction after it. He was sorry that he had snapped at his friends, but he could not help it. The weight on his mind was more than a fellow could bear with patience.

He was fastening his tie, when a fat figure rolled up the passage.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles and grinned.

"You look a picture, old chap!" he remarked agreeably. "I say, Quelch will spot that nose! He, he, he!"

Bob gave him a dark look. This apparently was Bunter's agreeable method of expressing gratitude to his champion.

"But I say, old fellow, I wanted to speak to you," said Billy Bunter, with a cautious blink along the passage and lowering his voice.

"Don't!" snapped Bob.

"Well, it's rather important," said Bunter in the same cautious tone.

"Mind, I'm not the man to give you away."

Bob gave a violent start. It was impossible that Bunter knew anything of his dismal secret. But the spying and prying of the fat Owl was well known in the Remove. If he had found out something—The bare thought made Bob feel almost dizzy. Marjorie's name bandied up and down Greyfriars in connection with such a thing—

"What do you mean, you fat fool?" muttered Bob. "Tell me what you mean, you idiot, before I bang your silly head on the wall!"

Bunter backed away a little.

"I say, it's all right, old chap!" he breathed. "I'm not giving you away! Am I the chap to give a pal away? I ask you."

"Will you tell me what you mean?" hissed Bob. "Were you spying and prying on Saturday?"

He broke off. Bunter, so far as he knew, had been nowhere near the Head's study window on Saturday. But a dread was in his heart that the fat Owl might have seen something.

"Saturday?" repeated Bunter. "Was it on Saturday? I remember you stayed in when Marjorie Hazeldene came over and Hazel wouldn't let you speak to her. He, he, he! I saw you go out in a rotten temper afterwards. I say, did you do it on Saturday?"

Bob stared at him. The fat Owl's words showed that he knew nothing. That was an immense relief. But what Bunter was driving at was a mystery to Bob—and an irritating mystery.

"I rather thought it was Toddy once," went on Bunter. "What he said in the Rag this morning, you know! I thought it looked a bit suspicious! But if it were you, Cherry—"

Bob stood dumb.

"Mind, I'm not giving you away!" THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

continued Bunter. "I wouldn't! Of course, you can't keep it! I said that to Toddy, and I say it to you. If you're thinking of keeping it you'd better wash that right out. But if Mauly gets it back I think a study spread—"

"Are you mad?" gasped Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, don't gammon!" said Bunter. "You said to Skinner that you knew I hadn't got it! Well, I haven't, of course, but I can't see how you can be so jolly certain unless you've got it yourself."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"If you've got it," said Bunter, "I'm not going to give you away! My idea is this: Mauly will be back to-morrow, and we hand him the banknote—we can say we found it, or something—of course, you don't want to tell Mauly you pinched it, and you can rely on me not to tell him. You can make up some yarn—I leave that to you. Mauly's a fool and he will swallow anything. Anyhow, you hand him the tenner—I insist on that! You simply can't keep it! Then we put it up to Mauly that, getting his tenner back, it's up to him to stand a pretty decent spread to the fellows who got it back for him! You see the point? We go to Mauly and say—Ow! Wow! Leggo, you beast! Yaroooooop!"

Bob Cherry had listened to Bunter, so far, like a fellow in a trance. Now he grabbed him by the neck, and banged his head on the passage wall.

Bang, bang, bang!

Frantic yells pealed from Bunter, awakening every echo of the Remove passage. Bunter did not know why, but Bob had got excited, just like Toddy. Only this was worse than the cricket stump.

Bang, bang!

"Yaroooo! Help! Leggo! Leave off! Oh, crikey!" roared Bunter, struggling wildly. "Ow! Beast! Yaroooooop!"

He wrenched his fat neck loose, and started down the passage at a run. After him went Bob Cherry, letting out one foot after another, dribbling the fat Owl along the passage. Bunter leaped and hopped and bounded—at every leap, and hop, and bound, letting out a fearful yell.

A dozen fellows stared out of the studies.

"Bob!" exclaimed Mark Linley.

"What—"

"What's that game?"

"What the thump—"

Bob Cherry did not heed. He dribbled the yelling fat Owl the length of the passage and Bunter went rolling down the Remove staircase, still yelling.

It was probable that if Billy Bunter fell into the hands of the raggers again, he would not find a champion in Bob Cherry!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Name!

"WHO'S the man?"

Five or six voices asked that question when Harry Wharton & Co. came into the Rag after prep that evening.

Bob Cherry did not come with his friends. Bob had a hundred lines to write—the result of Mr. Quelch having observed the damaged state of his features. Bolsover major had the same, but was not bothering about them at present. Bob, perhaps, was glad of an excuse for remaining in his study, and avoiding the crowd downstairs. Anyhow, he stayed in Study No. 13, grinding out lines.

Four members of the famous Co. came
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in together—and a sort of volley greeted the captain of the Remove.

The Bounder was there with a sardonic grin on his face. Billy Bunter was there—no longer the object of Skinner & Co.'s attention. Skinner & Co. had found new game!

All the Remove, by this time, knew what the Bounder knew—or fancied he knew. Smithy, believing that he was on the right track, was not likely to keep his belief a secret. And if there was anything in his theory, all the Removites wanted to know.

Certainly, the way Smithy put it, sounded reasonable enough. Billy Bunter had been anxious to have that "Holiday Annual" searched for the bank-note—which was something like evidence that he believed it to be still there. Some other fellow—at present unknown—had wanted to prevent a search of the Annual—why?

Smithy thought that there was only one answer to that question—and plenty of fellows agreed with him.

So, since the Bounder had been talking, suspicion had veered away from Bunter, much to the fat Owl's relief, and centred on the unknown fellow who had asked Wharton not to carry out his compact with Mauleverer. Everybody wanted to know who that fellow was.

Harry Wharton glanced round, surprised for the moment. Then he understood, and set his lips. Every fellow in the Rag was looking at him.

"Cough it up!" said Bolsover major, rubbing a darkened eye as he spoke. "We all know that you know the man, Wharton."

Wharton gave the Bounder a dark look—receiving a mocking grin in response. But he did not speak.

"Let's have this clear, Wharton," said Peter Todd, eyeing the captain of the Remove very curiously. "Smithy says some chap asked you not to put it up to Quelch to look into that dashed Annual—"

"I'm not interested in any rot that Smithy may choose to talk," answered Wharton, curtly.

"Well, if it's rot, you've only got to say so. Did any fellow ask you, or not?"

No answer.

"You can say yes or no, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"I don't want to jaw about it."

"That's hardly good enough!" said Peter.

"It will have to be!"

"His lordly magnificence mustn't be questioned, like a common mortal," said Skinner. "I'm surprised at your nerve, Toddy."

Some of the fellows laughed.

But there were a good many serious faces. Wharton's refusal to answer meant only one thing, it was as good as an answer in the affirmative. Certainly he would have answered "No" had it been possible to do so. Silence came to the same thing as answering "Yes."

Wharton realised that himself. But there was no help for it—he could not say a word that would turn suspicion on Bob Cherry.

"You won't say either yes or no, Wharton?" asked Squiff.

"I've said I'm not going to jaw about it."

"That means yes, of course," said the Australian junior. "Don't be an ass, old chap. Somebody asked you to keep it dark. Who was it?"

"Who's the man, Wharton?"

"Name!" chuckled Skinner.

Wharton's face was red with discomfort. He did not speak—and his silence puzzled and irritated his own friends, as well as the other fellows. Nugent and Johnny Bull and the nabob could see

no reason whatever why he should not give the name.

"For goodness' sake, Wharton, don't play the goat!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Can't you see that every man here thinks that you know who the pincher is, and that you're protecting him?"

"That's pretty clear," grinned Skinner.

"We've got this far," said Peter Todd, summing up with a judicial air. "Some man asked Wharton to let Mauly down. That's as good as admitted. That chap didn't want it to come out that the bank-note was missing. That means that he knew it was missing. That, again, means that he had it. And as Wharton won't mention his name, it's clear that Wharton believes that he had it, and doesn't want to land him."

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Harry, angrily. "I don't believe anything of the sort."

"Why don't you give his name?"

The captain of the Remove breathed hard.

"I'll tell you why," he said, after a pause. "If I mentioned a name, every silly fool here would jump to it that that chap had the bank-note. I know he hadn't. So I'm saying nothing."

"So we're all silly fools, are we?" roared Bolsover major.

"You are, at any rate!" retorted the captain of the Remove. "Only a few hours ago you were ragging Bunter—now you're howling after another fellow."

"We're after the right man this time," said Skinner.

"You'd better give the name, Wharton," said Peter Todd, very quietly. "We can ask the chap ourselves what his game was. I suppose it was a Remove man?"

"You can suppose what you like."

"It was a Remove man," said the Bounder. "If it was a fellow in another form, we should have heard his name before this. Wharton wouldn't be screening him unless he was a pal."

"Right on the wicket!" said Tom Brown. "You hear that, Wharton?"

"Nice for us," murmured Frank Nugent.

"The niceness is terrific."

"Cough it up!" grinned Skinner.

"We want that name, Wharton!"

Wharton looked at him.

"Suppose I gave your name?" he asked.

Skinner jumped.

"Mine!" he ejaculated. "I never asked you—never spoke to you—what the dickens do you mean?"

"I say, you fellows, if it was Skinner, make him hand it over," squeaked Billy Bunter. "I thought all along it was Skinner—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you rotter!" gasped Skinner, in mingled rage and terror. "You know jolly well that I never—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Was it Skinner?" exclaimed Bolsover major. "By gum, I should be really be surprised. Look here, you cough up that name, Wharton."

"Suppose I cough up yours?" asked Wharton.

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Bolsover.

"Or yours, Smithy?" went on the captain of the Remove, looking mockingly at the Bounder. "How would you like that?"

The Bounder gave him a black look.

"I say, you fellows, if it was Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Wharton, you can stop talking rot!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "You jolly well know that it's up to you to give the name."

"If you're fearfully keen on it, Toddy—"

"I am!" said Peter with emphasis.

"Then shall I give yours?"

"Why, you silly ass—" yelled Peter.

"I say, you fellows, I thought it was Toddy. You remember what he said in this very room this morning. And he went for me with a cricket stump when I asked him if he'd got the bank-note—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't give the name, Wharton?" asked Russell.

"I'll give yours if you like."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Will you tell us that fellow's name, Wharton?" shouted five or six fellows.

"No," answered the captain of the Remove, "I won't! Smithy seems keen on playing the detective, and he can get on with it—and be blowed to him! That's all I've got to say on the subject."

"I'll get on with it, then," said the Bounder, setting his lips; "and it mayn't take me very long to spot the man, either. The chap I've got my eye on isn't much of a hand at keeping a secret."

Harry Wharton caught his breath. He knew from that the direction the Bounder's suspicions had taken, and that Vernon-Smith was on the right track. But he shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the Rag, leaving an excited buzz of discussion going on as he went.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Thunderbolt!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry looked up from his lines: a three fellows stopped at the door of Study No. 13; his voice lacked its usual cheery ring as he greeted his friends.

"Done those rotten lines?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Not quite."

"Well, buck up! We want you."

"Anything on?" asked Bob. He rose from the study table. "I'll leave them if you like. Bother them, anyhow! What's up?"

"Come with us," said Frank Nugent.

A little puzzled, Bob left the study and accompanied his friends down the Remove passage. They stopped at the door of Study No. 1, and Bob followed the others in.

Harry Wharton was in his study. He preferred to keep clear of the Rag that evening. He sat in the armchair, with a "Modern Boy's Annual" to keep him company, but he was not reading with much attention.

He laid down the book as the Co. came in.

"Finished your lines, Bob?" he asked.

"No; these fellows barged in and walked me along here," answered Bob.

"Blessed if I know why!"

"I'll tell you why—and Wharton at the same time," said Johnny Bull. "We want you to back us up in talking sense to the silly, obstinate ass!"

"That my description?" asked Harry.

"Yes, that's it."

"Thanks!" said Harry dryly.

"My esteemed and absurd Wharton, you must listen to the combined voices of your ridiculous pals," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But what the thump—" asked Bob. He did not catch on yet.

Wharton had caught on, however. He rose to his feet.

"Chuck it!" he said.

"We're not going to chuck it!" said

(Continued on next page.)

The STately HOMES of GREYFRIARS

THE STATION HOUSE

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



(1)

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now,
The Greyfriars Rhymester's had his little reign.

With perspiration dripping from his brow,
And wild, poetic fancies in his brain (P),
He writes the final "Homes of Greyfriars" ditty,

And sends it to the Ed. in London city;

But, he expects, although it is a pity,

He'll soon be back to worry you again!

(2)

Now when you hear the thud of mighty feet,
Each one a little bigger than a barge,

It's either P.-c. Tozer on his beat,

Or else a mammoth elephant at large!

And evil-doers tremble in their shoes,

When Tozer stands before them and accuses.

They shiver as his clammy eye peruses

The full and fearful details of the charge!

(4)

Don't call his house a cottage; you must mind

That it's the "station," with a dismal cell

Where sad, repentant bad-lads are confined

When they have drunk not wisely but too well!

They look out of the window, very pensive,

And think out names, exceedingly offensive,

To call Policeman Tozer, whose intensive

Regard for duty makes their passions swell.

(6)

The "station" is a small thatch-roofed affair,

With roses growing round the prison door.

It's easy to escape when you are there,

But Tozer only brings you back once more.

Then off you go, escorted by the copper,

To interview the Beak, Sir Hilton Popper;

And then it's ten to one you come a cropper;

Sir Hilton's strict, as you have heard before.

(3)

His bottle-nose is coloured rather red,
(He says) through long exposure to the sun;

Though some sarcastic villagers have said

This reason may not be the only one!

In Friardale he's a most familiar figure.

He weighs a ton, and still he's growing bigger;

But, none the less, he blods along with vigour

When constabulary duty's to be done.

(5)

While Tozer digs his garden at his ease,
His window opens and a head peeps out.

"I've seen your kind a-crawlin' out o' cheese!"

The prisoner tells him, with indignant shout.

"Wot price policemen? Only three a farden!"

Come 'ere, George Tozer—come and beg my pardon!"

But Tozer goes on gummy with his garden

And does not even throw a brussels sprout!

(7)

Long may old Tozer plod about the place
In grim, majestic and flat-footed style!

Long may we see his good old ugly face,

And greet his heavy glances with a smile—

Until I'm taken into that inviting

And pleasant house, and hear his voice reciting:

"Your words will now be taken down in writing,

And may be used agen you at the trial!"

NEW and ORIGINAL—The GREYFRIARS GUIDE—By The GREYFRIARS RHYMESTER—STARTS NEXT WEEK!

Johnny Bull in his stolid way. "I don't know why you're playing the fool, Wharton, and putting all the fellows' backs up for nothing. But you've got to stop it."

"Do have a little sense, Harry!" urged Nugent. "You can't keep this up with all the Form against you."

"What the dickens has Wharton done?" asked Bob.

"You'd know if you'd been in the Rag," said Johnny. "Everybody knows now that some chap asked Wharton to steer Quelch clear of that mouldy book of Mauly's, and everybody knows why. The fellows naturally want to know who the chap was."

"Oh!" gasped Bob. He understood now.

"That chap, whoever he was, had the banknote," said Johnny Bull. "That's as clear as daylight now. Wharton thinks so—"

"I don't!" rapped Wharton.

"Then why are you screening the fellow?" demanded Johnny.

"Do you think I'd screen a thief?" snapped Harry.

"That's what you're doing! The chap, whoever he is, can be asked to explain himself. He had a reason for asking you what he did. He can say what it was. If it's all fair and square there's no harm done. I can't imagine any reason he can have had, unless it's what Smithy thinks."

"If the chap's got nothing to hide, Harry, why the dickens should you keep his name a secret?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I answered that in the Rag," said Harry quietly. "I don't want a lot of silly fools to get after the wrong man."

"You don't think that chap was the pincher?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"No."

"Then why do you think he wanted you to prevent the book being searched for the banknote?"

"I don't know."

"Do you think that's good enough?" growled Johnny.

"I think it will have to be."

There was an angry silence in the study. Johnny Bull was exasperated, Nugent annoyed, and even the placid nabob looked irritated.

Bob Cherry looked from one to the other. He understood now why he had been brought to the study. It was to back up his friends in extracting that name from the captain of the Remove—his own name!

"This won't do, Harry!" said Nugent at last. "You're screening somebody. Goodness knows why! But everybody knows that the chap must be a pal of yours, or you'd speak out. The fellows will soon be thinking that it was one of us—"

"They're thinking that already!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The thoughtfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wharton," murmured the nabob. "The unpleasantness of the position is preposterous."

Wharton was silent. He could see that as clearly as his friends did, but he could not speak out. It had not even occurred to them that the name was that of "one of us," as Nugent put it.

"Well, this can't go on," said Johnny Bull at last. "We've always backed you up, Wharton, but we can't back you up in playing the goat like this. If you won't listen to your friends—"

"You don't understand—"

"I know that! We want to understand! We've all come here to put it to you—the four of us."

Wharton smiled faintly. The three

did not seem to have noticed that Bob had not joined his voice to the rest.

"Look here, are you going to speak out?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"No!"

Johnny breathed hard and deep.

"Well, if you choose to be an obstinate fool and set all the Form suspecting your friends of pinching you can carry on, I suppose," he said. "We can't stop you. But I'll take jolly good care to keep my distance from you so long as this lasts. I'm not going to have fellows saying I'm the pal you suspect of pinching and are trying to screen."

"Please yourself!" said Wharton tartly.

"I mean to!"

Johnny Bull tramped to the door.

Bob Cherry cleared his throat; he broke his silence at last.

"Hold on, Bull!" he said in a low voice.

Johnny turned back.

"Well, what?" he grunted.

"I can tell you—"

"Shut up, Bob!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hastily. "Don't be a fathead!"

Bob shook his head.

"I can't let this go on," he said. "They've got to know, and they can please themselves about telling the rest. Goodness knows I never dreamed this would come of it when I asked you what I did!"

Three fellows jumped as if moved by the same spring; they stared at Bob Cherry incredulously.

"Bob!" breathed Nugent.

"My esteemed Bob—"

"You!" said Johnny Bull dazedly.

"Mad?"

Bob's face crimsoned.

"Me!" he said. "I asked Wharton on Sunday morning not to speak, to Quelch. That's why he hasn't given the name."

"You!" repeated Johnny Bull. "You silly idiot, why did you ask him anything of the kind, then?"

"You can guess that one!" said Bob. "Wharton knows though he won't believe it. He doesn't think I pinched that rotten banknote. I hope you fellows won't, either. But now it's come out that it's missing, Wharton knows why I asked him what I did."

"You knew that it was missing?" muttered Nugent.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"How did you know?"

"Never mind that."

"Never mind that!" repeated Johnny Bull. "Do you think we can help minding it?"

"I—I suppose not!"

Johnny Bull breathed hard.

"This is a bit of a shock," he said slowly. "We've been saying all along that the fellow who asked Wharton that, was the fellow who had the banknote in his pocket. Have you got that banknote in your pocket, Bob Cherry?"

"Don't be a fool, Johnny!" said Nugent.

"You've been saying so, as well as I. Frank! I want Bob to answer that question," said Johnny Bull stolidly.

Bob did not speak.

"Will you answer 'No'?" asked Johnny grimly.

No reply.

"Will you answer 'yes'?"

Silence.

"That does it!" said Johnny Bull. "Sorry I've been badgering you, Wharton. I never dreamed that it was Cherry you were screening, of course. I'd as soon have believed that the banknote was in my pocket, as in his. I'm saying nothing about this—if that banknote's given back to Mauleverer. But

I've got no use for a fellow who's got other fellows' money in his pockets."

With that, Johnny Bull walked to the door again.

Bob made a movement.

"Don't go!" he said. "I'll go!"

And he went.

The door closed on Bob Cherry. And four members of the Co. were left, looking at one another in grim and miserable silence—and feeling as if a thunderbolt had fallen upon them.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Tip!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH smiled—a sarcastic smile.

It was in break, the following morning, and the Bounder's eyes were on the Famous Five.

They came out with the rest of the Form—but in the quad one of them left the others and walked away by himself.

That one was Bob Cherry.

Unaware, or regardless, of the Bounder's stare, Bob tramped away, his hands driven deep into his pockets.

Harry Wharton made a movement as if to follow him. Frank Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh seemed to hesitate. But Johnny Bull stood like a rock; and the three, finally, remained with him.

That little scene lasted only a matter of seconds, and few noticed it. But the Bounder lost nothing of it; and Tom Redwing, who was with him, watched it also, in uncomfortable silence. Smithy gave his chum a mocking look.

"Wharton's told his friends," he said.

"He's told them what?" grunted Tom.

"The name of the chap who asked him to keep it dark."

"Oh, rot!"

"He wouldn't tell us in the Rag!" grinned the Bounder. "But he's told the happy family circle—at least, they've got hold of it. What was I saying to you yesterday, Reddy, after that scrap in the Rag?"

"Some silly rot!" grunted Redwing.

The Bounder laughed.

"Silly rot or not, it's good enough for Cherry's pals," he said. "They're turning him down. Why, do you think?"

Redwing did not answer. He knew what the Bounder suspected; and this looked as if Smithy was right.

"That fellow—of all fellows!" said Smithy. "I'd as soon have thought of you, Reddy, or myself! I'd have trusted Bob Cherry with the keys of a bank!"

"So would I—and would still!" said Redwing. "I don't like the look of it, Smithy. But I can tell you this—you're wrong—utterly wrong!"

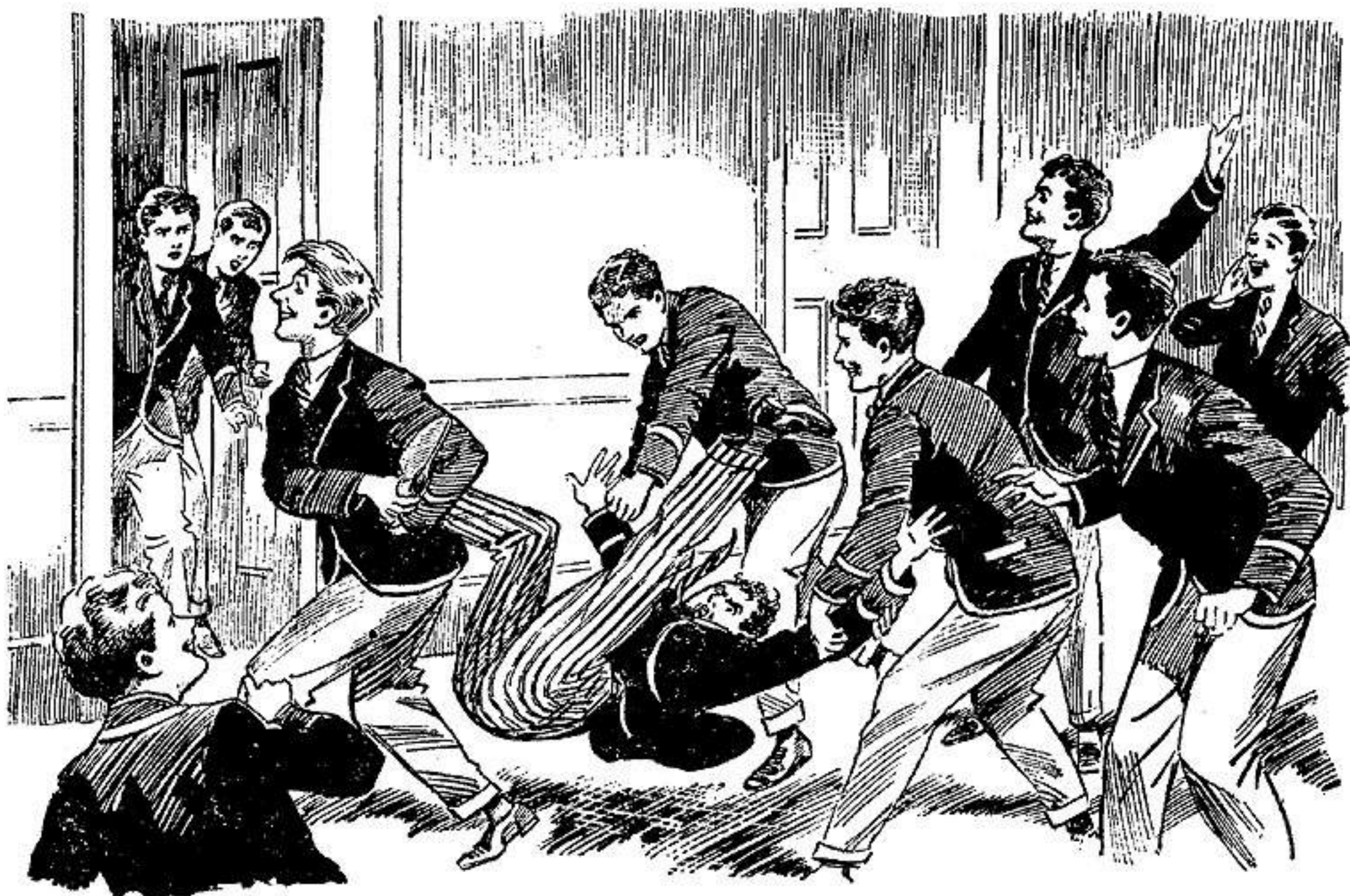
"You're an ass, old chap!" said the Bounder. "You know, as well as I do that Cherry's got that banknote in his pocket. He was the man who went down from the dorm that night, and bagged it out of Quelch's study. Every man in the Remove knew that it was there—and one man saw a chance of making ten quid easily! What?"

Tom shook his head.

"I can't see Cherry doing that!" he said.

"Well, I can't, either!" confessed the Bounder. "It beats me! Some chap went down for it, and it wasn't Bunter—and it wasn't, as it turns out, another sportsman I had my eye on. Cherry doesn't seem to fit into that sort of a picture at all. But he's got it!"

"For the love of Mike, Smithy, don't



Lord Mauleverer was whirled out into the passage, breathless, in the midst of a mob of juniors. Bump, bump, bump!—he went, past study after study. "What's the row?" exclaimed Wharton, as he and Nugent looked out of Study No. 1. "Oh! Ow! Good gad!" spluttered Mauly. "Lend me a hand, old chap! Ooooh!"

breathe a word of that to anyone else. You're wrong, I tell you!"

"I'm not goin' to say a word—but I'm right!" answered the Bounder coolly. "But what could have made him do it, Reddy?"

"He never did it!"

"Fathead!" said the Bounder lightly.

He left his chum, walking away slowly, a frown of deep thought on his brow, and his eyes on Bob Cherry. Smithy had no doubt—but he was deeply perplexed. Bob, as he had said, did not fit into the picture of a midnight theft. He kept his eyes curiously on the moody junior, strolling aimlessly under the old elms.

Another Remove fellow was there—Hazeldene.

Hazel's occupation was an odd one. He was moving about under the elms, every now and then bending his head and scanning shady corners, as if in search of something.

Vernon-Smith, glancing at him, supposed that he had dropped a letter, or something of the sort, and was looking for it. But he was struck by Bob's look at Hazel.

Bob, of course, knew what Hazel was looking for.

Days had passed since the wretched scapegrace had hunted under the Head's window for the banknote that was not there. Several times since then Bob had noticed him loafing about, peering into all sorts of corners.

Hazel could only believe that that Bank of England note had blown away, and was still lying about in some obscure corner. He still entertained a lingering hope of spotting it.

Bob's eyes fixed on him, with such a look of loathing and scorn, that the Bounder started as he saw it.

Hazel did not observe him. With a

harassed brow, he went on peering in his furtive way.

Bob Cherry turned away in another direction, obviously to avoid going near Marjorie's brother. He almost walked into the Bounder.

Smithy gave him a grin and a nod—neither of them acknowledged. Bob was in no mood for company, especially Smithy's. But, as he swung on, the Bounder walked by his side, and spoke. "Mauly's coming back to-day!" he remarked.

"I know that!"

"He's comin' back for dinner."

"Is he?" said Bob indifferently.

"Twelve-fifteen at Courtfield, I believe," drawled the Bounder. "And we get out of class before twelve this mornin'."

"What about it?" Bob's tone was about as dry and discouraging as any fellow's tone could be. But the Bounder did not seem to notice it.

"I mean, a chap could cut out on his bike, and meet Mauly at the station, before he hopped into a taxi!" drawled Smithy.

"I suppose he could! What about it?" rapped Bob irritably. "What the dickens are you talking about, Smithy?"

"Well, suppose a fellow wanted to see Mauleverer before he trickled in at Greyfriars?" said Smithy. "He could manage it by cutting out on his bike. See?"

"Well?"

"Quech will be jumping on Mauly about the banknote pretty soon after he trickles in—don't you think so?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Well, if Mauly had it in his pocket when he got in, it might save a lot of bother," said Smithy, in the same casual tone.

Bob Cherry stopped dead, his eyes fixing on Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"What do you mean by that, Smithy?" he asked, with a tremor in his voice, in spite of himself.

"Don't I speak plain? There's some chap in the Form who's got Mauly's tenner in his pocket—nobody seems to know who, so far!" said Smithy carelessly. "He can't keep it, after all this bother, now it's known to be missin'. He might even be some chap who's sorry that he did such a mad thing, and would be glad to get clear of it all, by handin' it back."

Bob did not speak. His heart beat painfully, and the colour wavered in his ruddy face. Smithy spoke with an elaborately casual air, but it was scarcely possible to mistake his drift.

"That chap," went on Smithy, watching the pigeons in the quad, and carefully not looking at Bob, "would do a sensible thing if he got at Mauly before he tottered in at Greyfriars, and gave him his tenner back. Might spin some sort of yarn to account for havin' it—or just ask Mauly to keep quiet and give him a chance! If I knew who the fellow was, I should certainly advise him to do it. It's his best guess. What?"

Bob stood dumb.

"But I'm borin' you, old bean," said the Bounder lightly, and, with a nod, he walked away, and rejoined Tom Redwing, at a distance.

Bob stood as if rooted to the earth.

Smithy knew!

He knew that he had the banknote, and was advising him to give it back to the owner while there was yet time. Evidently that "tip" was meant good-naturedly, though the Bounder was not always good-natured.

The bell rang, and Bob followed the Remove in for third school. In that "school," Mr. Quech had fault to find with Bob Cherry several times. *The* MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

Remove master had seldom had so inattentive a pupil.

Immediately the Form were dismissed Bob hurried away from the House.

The Bounder watched him go, with a faint smile on his face. He saw that Bob headed for the bike-shed, and did not need telling why. His tip was taken. Smithy could hardly have needed more proof than that, and yet he was still perplexed. Bob Cherry was the man, and yet, somehow, he still did not seem to fit into the picture.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mauly!

LORD MAULEVERER stepped from the train at Courfield Station, with a cheery look on his face.

His lordship had had quite a pleasant week-end at Worthing. He had no doubt that the captain of the Remove had carried out his compact, and that the "book-mark" had been found in the "Holiday Annual," and was safe in Mr. Quelch's keeping, and that, in consequence, all unpleasant talk of "pinching" was at an end.

Quelch, he hoped, would have recovered from his first annoyance, and would be disposed to take a lenient view of the matter. "Six" from Quelch's cane would be an extremely disagreeable greeting when he arrived at the school. But ten to one it would be only lines or a detention. His cheery lordship hoped for the best, as he always did. He was almost sure that his masterly scheme had worked, and that Quelch's wrath, given the necessary time, had cooled.

As he walked down the platform, with his suitcase in his hand, Mauly's face lit up with a smile at the sight of Bob Cherry.

Bob was standing on the platform, evidently waiting for him. Mauleverer gave him a friendly nod.

"Lookin' for me, old bean?" he asked.

"Yes. I came to meet your train, Mauly!" muttered Bob.

"Jolly kind of you! Awfully glad to see you!" said his lordship. "Quelch can't be fearfully shirty—what—if he's given you leave to hike along and meet my train?"

"He hasn't."

"Oh!" Mauleverer's face became a little grave. "Glad as ever to see you, old top; but naughty boys shouldn't break bounds!"

"Never mind that."

"I don't, but Quelch might! Come out and help me find a taxi."

"I've got my bike outside. I came on it. Don't clear off for a minute, Mauly. I want to speak to you first."

"All serene! Let's sit down, then."

Mauleverer deposited his suitcase by a platform seat and sat down. Bob sat by his side, his rugged face red and troubled.

How he was going to explain to Mauleverer, he did not know. He had to give him the banknote. He would have handed it to him on Saturday but for Mauly's week-end stunt. But he had not known then what he could say, and he did not know now.

He opened his lips, and closed them again. A minute passed, and then another.

Mauleverer looked at him in growing surprise.

"Didn't you say you wanted to speak to me?" he asked at last.

"Yes!" muttered Bob.

"Well, I wouldn't hurry you for anything, old bean, but I'm supposed to get in to tiffin, and so are you. Why not cough it up?"

"I—I'm going to, but—"

"Is Quelch shirty?" asked Mauleverer anxiously. "Have you come along to warn me to pack before I see the dear old bean? Six of the best—what?"

"No, no!"

"Bet you he was waxy when he fished that tenner out of my 'Holiday Annual'!" grinned Mauly. "Bank on that! But he's had time to cool down—that was the idea, you know. Go easy with 'em, and they don't bite—what?"

Bob gulped.

"He never found the tenner, Mauly."

"Eh—didn't Wharton tell him?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, didn't he look through the Annual?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And never found it?" asked Mauleverer blankly. "Is jolly old Quelch losin' his eyesight, or what? He's always had the eye of a giddy hawk! Mean to say he rooted through that dashed book, and never found it?"

"It wasn't there, Mauly."

"It was!" said Mauly.

"It wasn't, old chap!" mumbled Bob.

"Rot!" said Mauleverer decidedly. "Bunter never touched it! That's rubbish! And nobody else—"

"Bunter never did, certainly," said Bob. "But—but—" He choked. "Mauly, old man, we've been rather friends, and—and I believe you think me a decent chap, but—but I don't know what you're going to think now!"

"Same as before!" said Mauleverer, staring. "What the jolly dooce are you gettin' at, fathead?"

"Here's your tenner!"

"Wha-a-t?"

Mauleverer almost jumped off the bench. Bob Cherry's hand came out of his pocket with a crumpled banknote in it.

He passed it to Mauleverer, who took it in a dazed way. He sat with it in his hand, staring at it.

"Put it in your pocket, Mauly!" muttered Bob.

Silently Lord Mauleverer took out his notecase and placed the ten-pound note therein. He had a rather stunned look on his face. Never had the schoolboy earl been so utterly and overwhelmingly astonished. He slipped the notecase back into his pocket, and sat blinking at Bob's scarlet face.

"Thanks!" he said at last. "Glad to have it back again, old chap, though, as it happens, nunky's tipped me another of the same; so it wasn't fearfully pressin'. But how the jolly old dooce—"

"I can't tell you that, Mauly!" groaned Bob. "If you can take it on trust that—that—"

"I don't quite follow. That ass Bunter was tryin' to get it back for me, to borrow some of it. That's not your game. Awfully obligin' of you, old chap, but I'd rather you left it where it was. This makes it rather awkward all round. How the thump did you get hold of it for me?"

"I can't tell you that, Mauly!" muttered Bob. "It—it came into my hands—that's all I can say."

"Bob, old man!"

Bob panted.

"If you think I pinched it, Mauly, I can't help it! I can't tell you how I came by it!"

"Don't be a born idiot!" said Mauleverer sharply. "But havin' handed it to me, I don't see why you can't tell me how you got it. You don't mean that it was you, and not Bunter, who went down that night?"

"No, ass!"

"Then you must have bagged it after the book went to the Head's study! What a nerve!"

"No, no!"

"Then I don't get you!" said Mauleverer.

"And I can't tell you," said Bob. "All I've got to say is this—that it came into my hands on Saturday, and I should have given it to you that night, but you'd cleared off."

"But how—"

"I can't tell you!"

"You silly ass!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Do you know what fellows might think if they heard you gabblin' that nonsense? They might think that

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you'd pinched the tenner and got scared, and decided to hand it back."

Bob shuddered.

"I know! I can't help it if you think that, Mauly! You might remember that you've always known me to be pretty decent, that's all. But if you think that, I can't stop you!"

"I don't, fathead—hardly! But what are you makin' a jolly mystery about? Gone off your chump?"

Bob did not answer. He could not explain, and the Bounder's suggestion that he might "spin a yarn" to account for having the tenner did not even occur to his mind. He had to leave Mauleverer to think what he liked; and what most fellows would have thought, he knew only too well.

"Your pals know?" asked Mauly.

"No! I mean—no!" stammered Bob. "They think— Oh, never mind them! I—I asked Wharton to say nothing to Quelch till you came back, meaning to hand you the tenner—see? But that looked—"

"Oh gad!"

Bob rose from the bench.

"You've got it back now," he said. "That's off my mind, at any rate. It's been like a nightmare to me, having it in my pocket! If you feel bound to tell Quelch that I gave it to you, you must do as you think best. The same with the Remove fellows. I can't tell you anything, except that I'd have cut my hand off sooner than have touched it; but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bob wearily.

"You old ass!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Who had it?"

Bob Cherry gave a violent start.

"What—what do you mean, Mauly? I never said anybody had it!" he stammered.

"No need to, either," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "I could guess that one. It wasn't Bunter."

"No—no!" stammered Bob.

"I knew that, too. You wouldn't be makin' a fool of yourself like this for Bunter," said Mauleverer placidly. "But who the dickens?"

Bob could only stare at him. Mauly was considered rather an ass in the Greyfriars Remove. But he had tapped the right nail on the head, so to speak, first shot.

"You're not goin' to tell me who had it?" he asked.

"No—oh, no. I—I never said anybody had it!" stammered Bob. "I never meant—I—I—" He stammered helplessly.

Mauleverer grinned.

"You don't want me to think you pinched it, and changed your mind about keepin' it?" he asked.

"Not—not if you can help it, Mauly!" mumbled Bob. "I know what it looks like, but—but—"

"That's all right, old bean. I know you'd be hanged, drawn, and quartered sooner. But somebody hooked that jolly old tenner out of the 'Holiday Annual.' It didn't walk out, did it?"

"N-n-no!"

"Thought not!" said Mauleverer cheerfully. "Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away, I know; but banknotes don't walk about, so far as I've ever heard. Some frightful rotter pinched it, and you—"

"No!" gasped Bob. "It must have been a mistake. I don't know how, but—but I'm not going to believe—I can't believe. I'd die sooner than believe it was pinching. You see, it's impossible—" He broke off, in utter confusion, under Mauly's gaze.

Bob rose from the bench.

"Don't ask me anything, Mauly. I

can't tell you. You must think of me what you like. I can't help it."

"I think," said Mauleverer calmly, "that you're the biggest ass ever, old chap! I think, too, that we'd better not mention that you met me here at the station. Nobody's bizney, but ours. And I think we shall be late for tiffin if we don't get a move on."

They left the station together. Lord Mauleverer stepped into a taxi. Bob went for his bicycle and rode out of Courtfield. He put on speed, and was back at Greyfriars long before Mauleverer arrived there in his taxi.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Turned Up!

MR. QUELCH fixed his eyes on the recently returned member of his Form when the Remove gathered for school in the afternoon.

Every fellow knew what was coming. Mauly was booked for a "royal jaw" on the subject of that "book-mark," and there was a good deal of uneasiness as to what might follow.

The Remove master, so far, was satisfied that the banknote had not been in the book, as it had not been found therein. Every fellow in the Form knew that it had been there, and had been taken away.

If Mauleverer persisted that it had been there, as it certainly had, it meant that the theft, hitherto known only to the Remove, would become known to the Remove master.

That meant official inquiry into the disappearance of the banknote, and the whole school buzzing with it.

Bob Cherry sat with his eyes fixed on his desk, not looking at his friends. But they looked at him with deep uneasiness.

Hazeldene sat hardly breathing. He was safe, so far as that went, but a guilty conscience filled him with dread.

Only the Bounder smiled faintly. He could guess fairly accurately what had occurred at Courtfield Station.

"Mauleverer!" came Mr. Quelch's deep voice.

"Yaas, sir?"

"My head boy made a statement to me yesterday morning, by your request," said Mr. Quelch. "It appears that you supposed that you had left a banknote for ten pounds in the book which was taken from you in detention last week."

"Yaas, sir."

"You requested Wharton to acquaint me with the matter so that the banknote might be placed in safety, I understand."

"I thought it ought to be taken care of, sir," said Mauleverer. "My uncle's always tellin' me to be careful with money, sir, and I do my best."

"There was no banknote in the book, Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "It appears that you have been so careless, so utterly negligent, so crassly and culpably careless, as not to know what you have done with a banknote of considerable value."

"Oh, sir!"

"Apparently," continued Mr. Quelch, "you supposed that you had used it as a book-mark. That you are capable of such carelessness, I am aware, as there has been such an occurrence before. But as you did not do so in this instance, Mauleverer, I can only conclude that you have lost or mislaid the banknote, and are actually unaware what has become of it."

"The fact is, sir—"

"You will not interrupt me, Mauleverer! It appears, from this, that you

have carelessly mislaid a banknote. You will find it, Mauleverer. Unless it is found in a very short time you will be severely punished. When it is found you will hand it to me, and I shall return it to your guardian, with a request to him not to allow you to have it during this term. I shall expect you to find that banknote to-day, Mauleverer."

"It's turned up already, sir," said Lord Mauleverer calmly.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

There was a jump all through the Remove. Bob Cherry kept his eyes on his desk. The Bounder grinned. Hazel stared across at Mauleverer like a fellow in a dream.

Most of the fellows were surprised by Mauly's unexpected statement. But Hazel was more than surprised—he was confounded. He wondered whether he was dreaming.

How could it have turned up? Marjorie had dropped it from the Head's study window on Saturday afternoon, and Hazel had hunted for it in vain, day after day. It must have been lying about the school somewhere, and if it had been found, it could not have been found by Mauleverer, who had been away from the school. Hazel sat stunned.

Mr. Quelch's expression became a little less severe.

"Do you mean, Mauleverer, that the banknote is not lost at all?" he asked.

"I've got it in my pocket now, sir," said Mauleverer. "I'm sorry there's been a fuss about it. I certainly believed that it was in the book, sir, when I asked Wharton to mention it to you."

"You should have known for certain where it was, Mauleverer. This culpable carelessness is utterly inexcusable. I am glad, however, that it is not lost. You may place it on my desk, Mauleverer, to be returned to your guardian."

"Certainly, sir!"

Lord Mauleverer left his place and crossed to the master's desk. On that desk he laid a crumpled ten-pound note.

Mr. Quelch glanced at it, and laid a paper-weight on it.

"You may go back to your place, Mauleverer," he said. "You will take five hundred lines as a punishment for your carelessness."

"Very well, sir."

Mauleverer sat down again.

All the Remove eyed him breathlessly. His lordship seemed unaware of it. His expression was placid as ever.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?" gasped Harry.

"You will give out the papers to the Form."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The head boy of the Remove proceeded to hand out Latin papers. He was in a state of utter astonishment, shared by his friends. Up to that moment four members of the Co. had believed—in fact, they had known—that that banknote was in Bob Cherry's pocket. Yet Mauly, just returned to the school, had laid it on the Form-master's desk under their eyes. The captain of the Remove felt as if his head was turning round.

All the fellows were keen to ask Mauly where and how he had found that mysterious tenner; but at the first sound of whispering in the class, Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye glittered at his Form, and the whispers died away.

Attention, more or less, was concentrated on Latin papers.

While his Form was thus occupied, Mr. Quelch sat at his desk, writing a letter. In that letter he enclosed the

ten-pound note—to be returned to Mauly's uncle by registered post.

That proceeding did not unduly disturb Mauleverer's equanimity. He had returned from Worthing with a very handsome tip from his uncle, and the temporary loss of that tenner did not worry him.

While Mr. Quelch was sealing that letter, and apparently oblivious of his Form, Billy Bunter reached over and gave Mauleverer a poke in the ribs with a podgy and grubby thumb.

"I say, Mauly, where did you find it?" he whispered.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"But I say, was it in your pocket all the time?"

Mr. Quelch glanced round.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't speaking, sir! I never said a word to Mauleverer! I was only asking him if—"

"Take a hundred lines for talking in class, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter did not talk in class any more. And the other Removites bottled up their curiosity till the Form was dismissed. But when they got out at last a crowd surrounded Mauleverer, showering questions on him.

In reply to all questions, Mauleverer had one invariable answer—the tenner had turned up. How and when and where it had turned up, he either did not remember, or did not choose to remember. It had turned up, and that was that. And beyond that, which the juniors already knew, nothing in the way of information could be extracted from Lord Mauleverer.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Rough Luck for Mauly!

THE silly ass!" bawled Bolsover major.

"The howling chump!" said Skinner.

"He ought to be jolly well booted!" said Peter Todd.

"Jolly well scragged!" said Russell.

"I guess it's the bee's knee," said Fisher T. Fish. "Even a British lord oughtn't to be such a prize boob and pesky bonehead."

Lord Mauleverer had gone to his study for tea. In the Remove passage a considerable number of the Form had gathered, in a state of excitement which seemed to be growing.

Bolsover major was taking the lead. His bull voice woke the echoes of the passage. For once the bully of the Remove had a good deal of support in the Form. Quite a number of fellows were deeply exasperated with his placid lordship.

"After all this row and cackle," went on Bolsover, "it turns out that the silly ass never knew what he did with his rotten banknote at all. First of all Bunter was supposed to have had it—"

"I say, you fellows, I jolly well told you—"

"Then that fathead Smithy had to set up as a detective, and we all jawed Wharton, to make him give the name of some fellow or other who never had anything to do with it—"

"I don't see why he couldn't have told us, all the same," said Skinner. "Whoever that fellow was that asked him to keep it dark, Wharton jolly well believed that he had the banknote."

"That makes it all the worse," declared Bolsover major. "Here were the lot of us suspecting that fat frump Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Then there was Wharton suspecting some pal of his, and setting himself up against everybody, because he wouldn't mention the name, and making us all think he knew who the pincher was!" roared Bolsover. "And, after all, it turns out that the banknote wasn't in the book at all."

"It's too thick!"

"That ass Mauly—"

"That howling chump—"

"He fancied he'd used it as a bookmark. And it turns up in his own pocket," snorted Bolsover major. "Everybody suspecting everybody else of pinching it, and the rotten thing in its owner's pocket all the time! I began to think that you might have had it, Skinner—"

"You cheeky fool—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's not a laughing matter!" roared Bolsover. "It might have got all over the school that there was a pincher in the Remove—and it jolly well looked like it, too! And all the while the rotten thing wasn't in the 'Holiday Annual' at all!"

"I say, you fellows, I got whopped trying to get it from Mauly! And now it turns out that it wasn't there."

"And some chap went down from the dorm after it one night," continued Bolsover major. "If it wasn't Bunter, it was somebody else."

"Did you work that out in your head, old man?" asked Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shut up, Toddy! It jolly well looks as if some fellow meant to pinch that tenner, if it had been there," said Bolsover major. "That's a nasty sort of thing to happen in the Form. All because that fool Mauleverer fancied he'd left it in the book, when he hadn't!"

"The howling ass!"

"Well, we're jolly well going to give him a lesson! All this jaw about pinching, when there's been nothing of the sort—and all Mauleverer's fault! Have him out of his study, and bump him along the passage!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Have him out!"

Bolsover major stamped along to Study No. 12, jammed a heavy boot on the door, and hurled it open.

The doorway was crowded with excited juniors.

Lord Mauleverer was seated on his ottoman under the window. His study-mate, Jimmy Vivian, was cutting cake at the table. Both of them turned their eyes on the crowded doorway.

"Now, Mauly, you silly fathead!" roared Bolsover. "You're going to be scragged, and I'll tell you why!"

"Don't!" said his lordship gently. "I've been hearin' your voice for the last ten minutes, old bean, and it's not musical, if you don't mind my mentionin' it."

"Hook him out!" shouted Skinner.

"My dear men—" protested Mauleverer.

He jumped up from the ottoman as Bolsover major led a rush into the study. The next moment he was wriggling in three or four pairs of hands. Jimmy Vivian rushed to his aid, but was knocked aside in a

moment, and hurled breathless into a corner of the study.

"My dear chaps!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "I say— Oh, gad! Ooooooh!"

"You're for it, old bean!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Bump him!" shouted Russell.

"Scrag him!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Give him jip!"

Lord Mauleverer whirled out of the study, breathless, in the midst of a mob of juniors.

It was rather rough luck on Mauly. He could have calmed the storm at once by stating the facts; but that he had no intention of doing. The general belief now was that that banknote never had been in the "Holiday Annual" at all. For how could it have been, when Mauly had produced it from his pocket in the Form-room—certainly without having had a chance of getting near the confiscated Annual?

All the bother and the ragging of Bunter, the strap between Bolsover and Bob Cherry, the trouble with Wharton—all was due, so far as the juniors could see, to Mauly having forgotten what he had done with the tenner, and fancied that he had left it in that book. And, in such circumstances, he deserved to be "scragged"—and he was going to be!

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh gad!" gasped Mauleverer. "I say— Yarooooh!"

"Give him some more!"

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Right down the passage!" roared Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump, bump, bump! went Lord Mauleverer down the Remove passage. Fellows looked out of studies and laughed. A dozen Removites were joining in the ragging—and the others seemed to think it rather a good idea. There was no help for the hapless Mauly.

Bump, bump, bump! he went, past study after study.

The door of Study No. 1 flew open, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent looked out.

"What's the row?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Oh! Ow! Good gad!" spluttered Mauly. "Lend a man a hand, old chap. Oooh!"

"You keep clear of this, Wharton!" roared Bolsover major. "We're jolly well ragging that silly ass for saying that his silly banknote was in his silly book when it wasn't!"

"Oh!" said Harry. He was about to step out of his study. But he stood where he was. "You can get on with it, then."

"Look here—" gasped Mauleverer.

"You silly fathead!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "You've jolly well asked for it! Making fellows think all sorts of rotten things, when the banknote wasn't in the book at all!"

"Give him one for me!" said Frank Nugent.

"And another for my esteemed self," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, looking out over Frank's shoulder.

Johnny Bull, who was there, did not speak.

There was no help for Mauly. The raggers bumped him on past that study, with bump on bump, as far as the Remove landing. By that time

his unfortunate lordship was in a dusty, dishevelled, and fearfully breathless state.

On the landing they halted, to bump him back up the passage to his study.

But at that moment Bob Cherry came up the Remove staircase.

He jumped at the sight of Mauly wriggling and gasping in the grasp of the raggers.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Bob. "Let Mauly alone, you fat-heads! Now, then, hands off!"

"You keep out of this!" roared Bolsover. "That silly ass is going to be jolly well scragged—"

Bob did not wait for him to finish. Neither did he seem to care for the fact that more than a dozen fellows were engaged in the rag. He rushed to the rescue, hitting out right and left.

There was a roar of wrath. Bolsover major went over with a crash; Peter Todd stumbled over and fell; Russell staggered against the wall. Skinner and Snoop and Fisher T. Fish jumped out of reach with great celerity.

Bob stood over Lord Mauleverer as he sprawled, gasping, on the landing, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Bob," called out Wharton from the doorway of Study No. 1, "keep out of it! Mauly's asked for it, and more—"

"Come and lend me a hand!" panted Bob.

"I tell you keep out of it—"

"Don't be a fool!"

Wharton knitted his brows at that answer. There was a rush of the raggers—Bolsover major and Toddy scrambling up and heading it.

Bob Cherry stood up to the rush like a rock against the waves of the sea.

For a moment or two he held it, hitting out hard and often, his eyes blazing. Then it overwhelmed him, and he went headlong over.

"Rag him!" yelled Bolsover major. "Scrag the cheeky cad! Give him some as well as that fool Mauly!"

"Go it!"

"Bump him!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton. "This has got to stop!" He ran out of the study, followed by his friends.

The four rushed into the fray, giving Bob help that he sorely needed. The raggers were shoved right and left, and the Famous Five stood together round the gasping Mauly.

"Barge them over!" roared Bolsover.

"Look here, you cheeky rotters—" yelled Peter Todd.

"Chuck it!" said Wharton tersely. "Mauly's had enough: I know he's asked for it, but that's enough! Chuck it!"

"The 'nuff-fulness is as good as the feast!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, perhaps he's had enough!" grinned Peter. "Think you've had enough, Mauly?"

"Urrrrrrggh!" gasped his lordship. "Groooogh!"

Bolsover major snorted angrily. But he was not quite prepared for a battle royal with the Famous Five—and still less were the other raggers. And Mauleverer certainly looked as if he had had enough—or even a little too much! Never had the dandy of the Remove been seen in such a gasping, dishevelled, dilapidated state.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Russell.

And it was "chucked."

Bob Cherry helped the panting Mauleverer to his feet.

Mauly blinked at him dizzily, supported by the strongest arm in the Remove.

"Thanks!" he gasped. "Oooooogh!"

"Come on, old chap!" muttered Bob. And he piloted Mauleverer away up the

passage—without a word or a look to his friends.

The Co. went back into Study No. 1, and the door shut on them.

Bob led Mauly up to Study No. 12 and helped him in, and his lordship sank, gasping, on his ottoman.

"All serene, old chap!" he gasped. "Vivian, old bean, look me out a clean collar, will you? Urrrggh!"

Bob stood looking at him. He could guess easily enough why Mauly had been ragged by the Remove. His face was dark.

"I've landed you in this!" he muttered.

"Rot!" gasped Mauly. "All serene, I tell you!"

"If you'd told them—"

"Shut up, old fellow! I tell you it's all right."

Bob Cherry nodded and went slowly out of the study.

Lord Mauleverer was left gasping for breath, and it was a considerable time before his lordship ceased to gasp.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Condemned by his Chums!

HARRY WHARTON stood leaning on the window in Study No. 1 with a dark and troubled face.

Frank Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh sat regarding him in silence. Johnny Bull stood quiet, grim of face. Three members of the famous Co. were troubled and uncertain. Johnny Bull was seldom uncertain; and there was no trace of uncertainty about him now. His quietly calm determination had a slightly irritating effect on his friends.

"Look here, what's going to be done?" said Harry at last. "We thought—what we couldn't help thinking! I can't understand now why Bob asked me what he did. I can't make that out—"

"I can!" said Johnny calmly.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Johnny!" said Frank Nugent with unusual acerbity. "We couldn't help thinking that he had the banknote. He seems to have gone out of his way to make us think so. Now we know he hadn't."

"We don't!" said Johnny with the same grim calmness.

"My esteemed Johnny!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "You saw the idiotic Mauly produce the banknote and hand it to the absurd Quelch. It is now terrifically clear that it never was in the Annual at all."

"Quite clear!" said Harry. "Mauly couldn't possibly have got at the Annual in the Head's study. Besides, if he had he'd have said so."

"The silly ass had that rotten banknote all the time, and never knew what he'd done with it!" growled Nugent. "He jolly well deserved a scragging."

"And now," said Harry, "Bob's got his back up! I don't think we're a lot to blame, because the fathead made a lot of unnecessary mystery about it. But—"

"We're not to blame!" said Johnny Bull. "Speak for yourself, not for me! I don't see any blame coming my way."

"Look here, to put it plain, we thought Bob had that banknote, which means in plain English that we thought he had pinched it!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "That turns out to be all wrong—"

"If it turns out to be all wrong nobody will be gladder than I," said Johnny Bull. "But still I shan't blame myself for believing what a chap made me believe. If Bob never had it he's only got himself to blame. We've not put this on him. He's put it on himself. Come down to facts. That banknote was in the 'Holiday Annual,' just as Mauly said it was—"

"It's come out now that it wasn't—"

"Nothing of the kind! It was!" said Johnny Bull calmly. "I've asked Mauleverer, and other fellows have asked him, and he won't say that it wasn't."

"He won't say anything about it."

"I know—and I know why! He's standing by the fellow who gave him the banknote back, but he won't tell dashed lies about it. That's what it comes to!" said Johnny Bull stolidly.

Johnny's three friends looked at one another and at Johnny. There was a long silence in the study.

Three of the Co. had taken the scene in the Form-room as meaning that the

(Continued on next page.)

THE TOUGH GUY OF THE SHELL!

Something new in new boys is George Alfred Grundy, the newcomer to St. Jim's! Pugnacious and autocratic, he soon makes his presence—and his fists—felt among his new school-fellows! Inside an hour he licks a Fifth Former, and then wipes up the best boxer in the Fourth! You will revel in reading all about this tough guy in today's issue of The GEM. Be sure to buy your copy!

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banknote never had been in the book at all—the view taken by all the Form. But they had to admit that that view left Bob Cherry's conduct absolutely inexplicable.

Wharton broke the painful silence.

"That's what you believe, Johnny?"

"It's what I know!" said Johnny Bull calmly. "Unless Bob simply wanted to mystify us, and make us believe that he had it, when he hadn't—he had it. I told him I'd say nothing, if it was given back to Mauly. It's been given back. As soon as Mauly got here, I suppose—or before—I noticed that Bob wasn't anywhere to be seen, after third school, till dinner. I dare say he went to meet Mauleverer, and get it over."

"He was out on his bike, I think," said Nugent slowly.

"And I know where he went," said Johnny. "Look here, you men, this is as rotten for me, as for you—but I never did believe in a chap closing his eyes to plain facts. Bob had that banknote—and Mauly's not going to tell anybody that he gave it back to him. That's Mauly all over—soft as putty! He's stood a ragging in the Remove rather than give the chap away—just as you'd have stood it when Smithy started the fellows on you, if it had come to that! We're not in the least to blame for believing that facts are facts! What's the good of gammon?"

There was another long silence.

"If Bob had it, he pinched it!" said Frank. "Is that what you think?"

"I'm not sure about that, I can't imagine any other reason why he had it—but there might be some sort of reason I can't think of—I'm not infallible, and don't set up to be. But if he can explain how he had it, he ought to. No good beating about the bush," said Johnny grimly. "Bob Cherry had a stolen banknote in his pocket, and he's given it back to the chap it belongs to, just in time to save his bacon. If he didn't pinch it, he must explain how he came by it—or take the consequences."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"This can't go on," he said. "We'd better put it to him plainly. After all, he knows how it looks—how he's made it look, himself. None of us would ever have dreamed of him in such a connection, but for his own words and actions. He's bound either to give us his word that he never had the thing at all—or explain how he got hold of it."

"That's all we want!" said Johnny. "We're all ready to take his word, I suppose."

"Come on, then!" said Harry.

The four juniors left Study No. 1 and went up the passage.

Harry Wharton tapped at the door of Study No. 13, and opened it.

Bob Cherry was there alone.

He fixed his eyes on his friends, as they came in, but did not speak. His

face set grimly. He hardly needed telling why they had come.

"Bob, old man!" began the captain of the Remove.

"Well?"

"Now that rotten banknote's turned up, the thing's at an end. Everybody believes now that it was never in the book at all—just one more of that fathead Mauly's fatheaded mistakes. Is that so?"

Bob Cherry did not answer that.

"You can see, old fellow, that the matter can't rest where it is," said Harry. "As a reasonable chap, you can see that what you did, and what you said, was as good as telling us that you had Mauly's banknote in your pocket. If you hadn't, I simply can't understand you."

"Well?"

"Well, had you?" asked Wharton directly. "I'm not asking you whether you pinched it—I'm asking you whether it came into your hands at all, in any sort of way."

Bob made a weary gesture.

"You know that much," he said. His face hardened. "Bull knew it, at least—and I suppose you must have. I'm not telling you any lies about it. If you think I pinched it, you can leave me alone."

"What are we to think?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Anything you jolly well like!" said Bob. "I've got no more to say on the subject."

"Then——"

"Shut up, Johnny, old man!" said Wharton hastily. "Look here, Bob, you know as well as we do, that it can't be left at that. Every fellow here will take your word. Tell us how the banknote got into your hands."

"I can't!"

"Why not?"

"Well—I can't!"

"You mean you won't?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, if you prefer it like that!" growled Bob.

"My esteemed Bob——" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, in deep distress. "For goodness' sake, Bob, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "You don't deny that another fellow's banknote was in your hands. It was stolen from where Mauleverer left it. How did you get hold of it, if you never took it from the Annual in Quelch's study?"

"I never did, at any rate."

"Somebody did!" said Harry. "If you say that you never took it from the book, you mean that it was taken by somebody else, and came into your hands afterwards—somehow."

Bob was silent. Again that scene at the Head's window rose before his eyes—Marjorie's hand over the sill and the banknote dropping into the quad. He shut his lips hard.

"If that's how it was, Bob, you can tell us."

"I can't!"

"Why not?" asked Harry, again.

No answer.

"That's that!" said Johnny Bull, grimly. "A fellow with stolen money about him, that he can't explain, isn't a fellow I want to pal with."

He walked out of the study.

"For goodness' sake, Bob——" said Harry Wharton. "Bob, old chap, have a little sense! If you've got anything to say, say it! Are you determined to make your best friends think you a thief?"

Bob caught his breath. But his face hardened again, in iron resolution. He uttered no word.

For a long moment the three stood there, looking at him. But he did not speak; and, slowly, they turned, and followed Johnny Bull.

The study door closed on them quietly; but the sound came like a knell to the ears of the fellow who had lost his friends, lost his good name, for the sake of a schoolgirl who did not even know the sacrifice he had made.

THE END.

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TRIPPING UP TOADEY!

By
DICKY NUGENT

"It's the jape of the term!" "Right enuff, old chap!" "It'll be the biggest joak we've ever played on Doctor Birchmell. The fellows will lark themselves into fits over it, if it succeeds!" "Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

Toadey of the Sixth, the biggest sneak at St. Sam's, was passing the open door of the tuckshop, when this duet between Jack Jolly and Frank Fearless, of the Fourth, fell on his ears.

It was Toadey's signal to stop. Standing by the tuckshop with his ears pricked up, the sneak of the Sixth listened hungrily for more.

"It was certainly a bit of luck that the famous tennis star, Miss Plonk, should have stopped her car and given us the message saying she couldn't keep her engagement for the opening of the Head's new hard court," he heard Jack Jolly say. "She couldn't have given it into better hands!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No fear!" laughed Frank Fearless.

"With the aid of some of the props of the Fourth Dramatic Society, I can easily dress up as Miss Plonk," chuckled the kaptin of the Fourth. "The Head won't dream there's anything wrong. He'll entertain me with lavish hospitality—and with fruit salad and cream, in all probability!"

"He mite even challenge you to a game of tennis!"

"If he does, I shall nock him into a cocked hat!" said Jack Jolly, confidently. "I tell you, Fearless, this is going to be the jape of the term—the lark of our lives!"

"Let's get bizzy, then!" cried Frank Fearless.

There was a sound of stools being pushed back from the tuckshop counter.

Toadey made a hurried move.

Jolly and Fearless knew his reputation only too well, and if they spotted him, it would spoil Toadey's plan completely.

The thought of that was sufficient to make the Sixth-Former break into a cold sweat. So he broke into a run.

A sigh of relief escaped his thin lips, as he reached the shelter of the nearest trees. A grin of anticipation spread over his unplezzant dial.

"Ho, ho!" he muttered gleefully, rubbing his hands together in delight. "Now to do the dirty on those cheeky youngsters! The Head will be as pleased as Punch with me, when I pore my story into his ears. I'm jolly glad I got away before they spotted me!"

With these words Toadey set off to see Doctor Birchmell.

He found the Head in his study, bizzily rehearsing his speech of welcome to Miss Plonk in front of a mirror. He was boughing almost to the ground and grinning all over his face.

"Alum!" coiled Toadey. "Eggscuse me, sir!"

And the Head broke off hastily and resumed his upright position. He frowned at the introdder.

"Toadey! You should nock before entering my sanktum!"

"I did, sir—and I nearly got nocked backwards myself when I found you making speeches to your own reflection in the mirror!" sniggered Toadey. "If I were you, I should save my breath!"

Doctor Birchmell regarded the sneak of the Sixth with a hawty glare.

"For why, prey?" he inquired.



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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July 10th, 1937.



IS CRICKET OUT OF DATE?

"Yes!" Says H. VERNON-SMITH

When I say cricket is out of date, nobody is likely to imagine that it's a case of sour grapes with me. For, as most of you know, I can play cricket as well as the next man and better than most!

I simply take the view that cricket is a lot too slow to survive much longer in the hustling, bustling modern world.

Nowadays, everything is being speeded up—sport included. Modern conditions demand a game that can be played and finished in a couple of hours. No other game stands a dog's chance of living many more years.

The game of cricket, which the best players find hard to compress into three days, belongs to a more leisurely age, when time wasn't money and money didn't matter, anyway. Sportsmen nowadays are drifting away from it and turning to baseball, which is growing rapidly in strength all over the country, and, of course, to tennis and golf.

I'm sorry for sentimental reasons; but, looked at reasonably, there's nothing much to moan about in the passing of cricket.

"NO!"

SAYS HARRY WHARTON.

Cricket doomed, eh?

Rubbish! You'll find no evidence of it if you take a spin round the countryside on a Saturday afternoon and see every village green and level field adorned with stumps and white-clad figures!

Smithy really has got the wrong idea this time!

Cricket is still the grandest summer game of all. It has spread to all parts of the earth, and is still spreading.

Its leisurely pace is the greatest antidote imaginable to the senseless speed and jerkiness of modern life. Possibly that's why it attracts more and more adherents, as time goes on.

Cricket belongs to the English soil, and is in the English blood. And so long as they continue to flourish, cricket will never be out of date!

Coker's action in naming his new motor-bike the "Fearnought" is regarded as quite inappropriate.

After its very first run to Marleigh's Farm and back, the machine was found to be covered with goose-flesh!

instructions were that Nugent had played havoc with the skiff and that it was a wonder they hadn't all been drowned. First he steered bang into the boathouse and then into a bridge, and finally he had caused the skiff to collide with a canoe, overturning it and giving Coker of the Fifth a ducking. (Laughter.)

In the witness-box Master Nugent admitted that counsel's statements were quite correct. But he still maintained that he was entitled to three hours' wages.

Judge Brown: "Quite right, too, kid. I give judgment for plaintiff with costs. And you can tell your client, Mr. Todd, that if he doesn't fork out pretty quickly, he'll find himself in trouble with the Remove!"

It was later learned that the full amount had been paid into court. Plaintiff paid it into the tuckshop a few minutes after that!

POSH PEOPLE PLAY POLO!

Says Society Correspondent

DICK RAKE

There's no game like polo in the eyes of the aristocracy and nobility, so it was no surprise to me to find the world of fashion in full force at the first Greyfriars polo game on Courtfield Common last Wednesday.

Amongst others, I noticed Hilton of the Fifth and Angel of the Shell. The game was organised by a junior committee and for that reason Hilton and Angel adopted a somewhat superior attitude to it; but neither denied his keen interest in the sport.

Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Upper Fourth, was prominent among the players. His friends, Dabney and Fry, elegantly dressed as befitted the occasion, adorned the touchlines.

The Remove contributed several

members of the Upper Ten to the teams. Wharton, a keen rider, was naturally a player, as were also Lord Mauleverer, Sir Jimmy Vivian and Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

The game itself, I must admit, was not quite up to Hurlingham standard. This was partly due to the pitch, a rugged section of the far side of the common, but principally to the ponies, a scratch lot, hired, borrowed, or pinched from neighbouring farmers and tradesmen and including several donkeys.

Play degenerated sadly in the latter part of the game, when a gang of Courtfield youths claimed



"Because Miss Plonk won't be turning up this afternoon, after all!"

The Head's jaw dropped. "Won't be turning up, Toadey? You mean she has turned me down?"

"Not eggscactly, sir; but there's been a last-minnit hitch," grinned Toadey. "Miss Plonk has had an urgent summons to Thimbleton to play in an international tennis tournament. So she has been compelled to cancel her engagement here."

Bust it!" muttered Doctor Birchmell, under his breath. Aloud, he said: "How do you know this, Toadey?"

"Because I heard Jolly of the Fourth say so, sir."

Doctor Birchmell raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed! And how came Jolly to know?"

"Please, sir, Miss Plonk stopped her car and asked him to pass the message on to you."

"In that case, Toadey, how is it that Jolly has failed to deliver it?"

"Aha! That's where we get to the milk in the cokenut, sir!" grinned Toadey. "The reason is that he duzzent intend to deliver it. Instead he's going to play a practical joak on you! He's going to dress up as Miss Plonk himself. I heard him discussing it with Fearless!"

A very unplezzant eggsspression appeared in the Head's face. His shifty eyes gleamed.

"Ho, so that's it, is it? You

are sure of your information, Toadey?"

"Absolutely certain, sir! What are you going to do with Jolly?" asked Toadey, with a gloating grin. "Are you going to send for him and flog him till he shrieks for mercy, or—?"

"For the moment, Toadey, I intend to do nothing," broke in the Head. "I shall give him enuff rope to get properly into the toils with—and then I shall strike! Say nothing to nobody. Let Jolly go on with his preparations. Let him turn up on my tennis court this afternoon in the guise of Miss Plonk. It will be time enuff to act, then—when I have got him in my klutches. You understand?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather, sir!"

"Mum's the word, then, Toadey! And thanks for calling!"

Toadey quitted the Head's study, his gloating smile broadening as he heard Doctor Birchmell all lark a blud-curdling lark when he closed the door behind him. He could fourcee trouble descending in large doses on Jack Jolly's sholders later on in the day, and the prospect pleased the sneak of the Sixth grately.

He mite have felt more dewbious about it had he known that in actual fact Jolly and Fearless had just mannigged to spot him running away when they came out of the tuckshop. The triumphant leer on his dial mite have faded a little had he seen them turn to each other and argow the loss about something for a minnit or so. His konfidence would certainly have had a rude shock had he known that they finally walked away, arm-in-arm, having satisfactorily solved the problem of his unexpected intrusion.

But Toadey knew and saw nothing of this, and it was in a state of grate glee that he concealed himself behind the bushes that bordered Doctor Birchmell's garden that afternoon to watch the fun.

The Head and the masters were soon on the scene. They were all dressed in flannels and blazers, some of them a little grubby and moth-eaten after years in musty old wardrobes. They were larking and chatting in grate good spirits at the idea of meeting the famous tennis star; but they looked more subdued when the Head drew them aside and told them what Toadey had told him.

"Remember, gentlemen," said Doctor Birchmell, after he had made his revelation. "I want to choose my own time for unmasking the yung raskal; so do not give a hint that you know the truth till I show him up for what he is."

"I, I, sir!" "You can rely on us, by Jove!" "How eggscactly do you propose to do the unmasking bizzness, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham, curiously.

"By yanking off his wig, of course!" replied Doctor Birchmell. "Jolly may be an eggspert at disguising himself; but there won't be much left of his disguise when I uncover his topknot, I fancy!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not likely!"

"Cave! The yung rip's just coming down the footpath!"

The masters smothered their grins and turned round to greet the bogus Miss Plonk.

They swept off their hats and coughed with courtly grace, and they couldn't help looking surprised as they saw the vision of feminine bewty who was approaching. If this was really Jack Jolly, they reflected, he had certainly made a jolly good job of it!

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen!"

Called the yung "lady" in a refined, aristocrattick voice. "I wonder which of you is Doctah Birchmell?"

"Good-afternoon to you!" reported the Head, with a wink at his assistants. "I am Doctor Birchmell. Are you Miss Plonk?"

"Who else do you think?" returned the visitor, with a trilling air. "Charmed to meet you, I'm sure!"

"I'm delighted that you have turned up, I assure you!" said the Head, with a leer. "I should have been gratefully disappointed if you hadn't. I've been wanting in eggscuse to exercise my arm for a long, long time!"

The masters chuckled. The visitor smiled an innermost smile. "You mean you would like to play me at tennis? Why, it will be a pleasuah, of course!"

"You cheeky yung welp—" began the Head. Then he changed his mind. Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad plan, after all, to play with Jolly for a while as a cat plays with a mouse. "I—I mean, generally, Miss Plonk! De-jolly! This way!"

"But what about the opening ceremony, Doctah Birchmell?" asked the visitor.

A head larked.

As a matter of fact, Jol—I mean, Miss Plonk!—at the last minnit I decided to dispense with that. You don't mind?"

"Not at all!" rippled the bogus tennis star.

The Head led the way to the new tennis court and the game began.

Doctor Birchmell was under the impression that he would find easy to play a yungster like

Jolly off his feet in next to no time.

He soon found out his mistake! The visitor mannigged to volley back his shots with uncanny ease, but the Head hardly ever saw the ball when it came from his opponent!

The crowning indignity soon came. Dancing across the court like a cat on hot bricks, he stopped a ball at last. But unfortunately he stopped it with his nose!

Wallop!

"Yarooooo!"

That did it! With a feendish howl, Doctor Birchmell vaulted over the net and made a dive at his opponent.

He made a grab at the visitor's curly hair and tugged violently. "I'll teach you to play joaks on me!" he yelled. "I knew all along that you were not Miss Plonk! I knew you were only Jolly of the Fourth and—"

Then the Head stopped—gasping in sheer dismay. For that curly mop of hair had not,

as he had anticipated, come away in his hand. It was still on the visitor's head!

At the same moment the very man he thought he was attacking appeared at the side of the court, grinning cheerfully.

"Sorry I'm late, sir—but as Miss Plonk is here, it duzzent matter," said Jack Jolly. "Miss Plonk asked me to tell you she couldn't turn up to-day. But as I see she has turned up after all, it's all screen!"

"B-b-bless my solo!"

Doctor Birchmell was completely flummoxed!

"Then it really is Miss Plonk!" he moaned. "My dear Miss Plonk, how can you ever forgive—"

"I nevah can!" trilled the visitor, with a hawty toss of the head. "Don't evah speak to me again!"

And "Miss Plonk" fownced off in high dudgeon, leaving the Head frantick.

"Toadey! That wretch! That villain! I'll birch him black and blue! Justiss! Find the yung reptile and bring him to my study!" he roared.

Five minnits later the steady sound of swishing could be heard from the Head's study, accompanied by the feendish yelling of the sneak of the Sixth.

And at the same time Jack Jolly & Co. were simply shrieking with larfer as they helped Frank Fearless to remove his disguise.

"My hat! It was lucky I tied on that wig with flesh-colored tape round my chin!" larfed Fearless. "What with that and your walking on at the right moment, Jolly, we properly put 'paid' to Toadey!"

And the Co. hortled!

Without previous warning, Loder had compelled him to get out on the bank and told him to scram. (Shame!)

When he had asked what he was going to get out of it, Loder squirted a soda-water siphon at him like the beastly bully he was. (Cheers.)

Concluding, Master Nugent said that, although he thought the judge was a wooden-headed old fogey, he felt sure he would get justice! (Order.)

Defendant did not put in an appearance, but Mr. Peter Todd, K.C., said that he had been instructed to act for him. His

A record crowd of fags swarmed into the public gallery of the Remove Court when Dicky Nugent, fag, sued Gerald Loder, independent, for three hours' wages in lieu of notice.

Plaintiff, a diminutive youngster, conducted his own case and said that he was out to get all he could from that measly old rotter, Loder. (Cheers.)

Loder had engaged him for the afternoon to act as cox in a skiff for a party of Sixth-Formers, promising him payment at the rate of sixpence an hour.

He had done his best for the eads till they reached the island. Then,

"LABOURER WORTHY OF HIRE!" SAYS JUDGE

Fag Sues Fagmaster

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