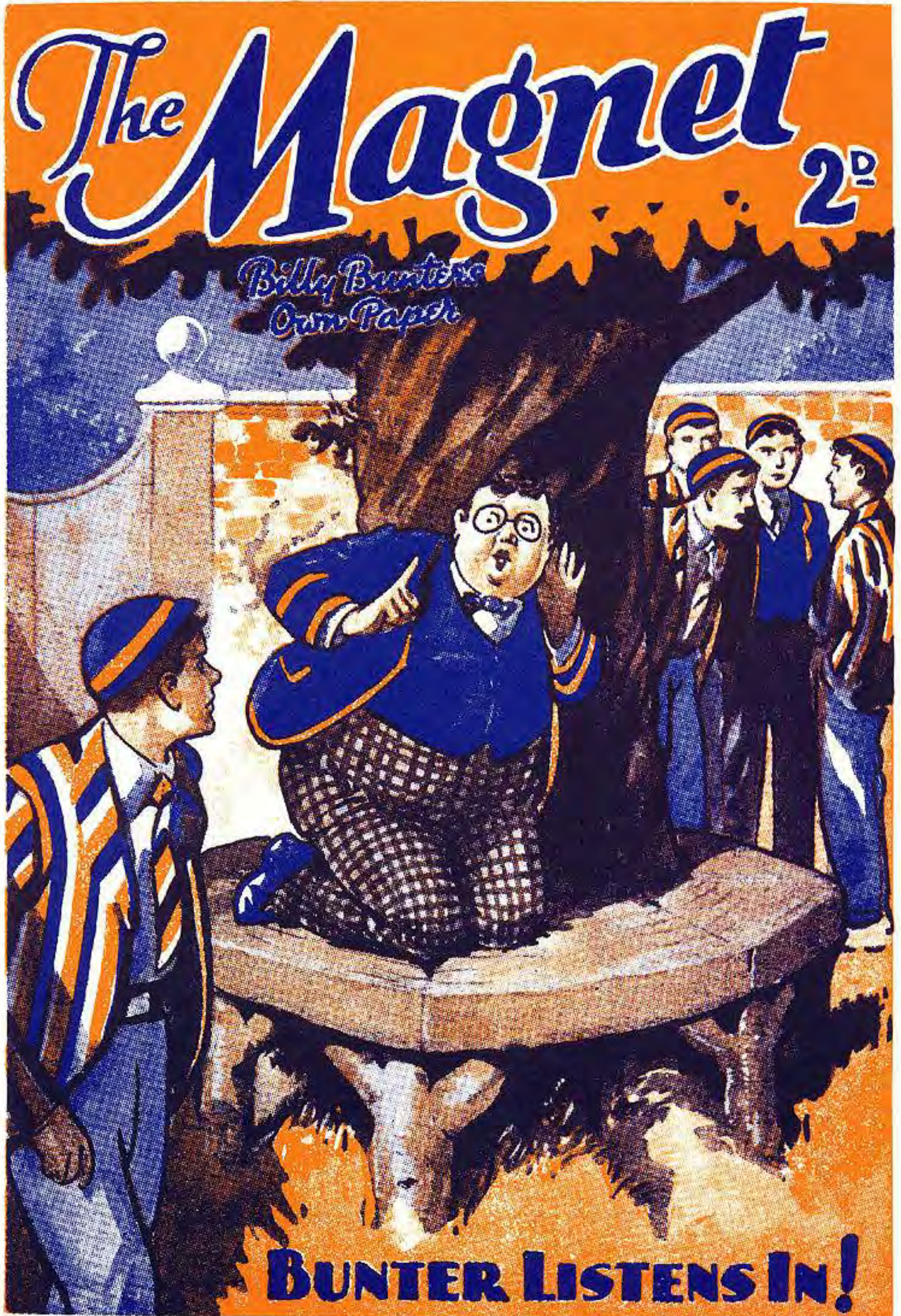


BOB CHERRY BARRED BY HIS SCHOOLFELLOWS!

Powerful Cover-to-Cover Story
of **HARRY WHARTON & CO.**, in
this issue.



THE MORE WE ARE TOGETHER THE MERRIER WE SHALL BE !



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A READER, who signs himself "Cub," wants to know if there are any Scout Patrols at Greyfriars. If there are, he goes on to say, will Mr. Frank Richards deal with the Scouts when he writes his next series of Greyfriars yarns? First let me tell you, "Cub," there are a number of Scout Patrols at Greyfriars. Secondly, I will forward your suggestion to Mr. Frank Richards. It is, however, impossible for me to guarantee that our famous author's next series will be written around the Greyfriars Scouts. Still, if my correspondent gets his wish granted at a later date, I am sure he will be content to let it go at that. Many thanks for the suggestion, "Cub." And please convey my best wishes to your brother cubs.

The first query this week comes from John Jameson, of High Wycombe, who, after complimenting me and praising the high standard of the MAGNET, asks me to give him the dates of

QUARTER DAYS.

They are as follows: Lady Day—March 25th; Midsummer—June 24th; Michaelmas—September 29th, and Christmas—December 25th.

Frank Munro, of Newton Abbot, is the sender of the next letter. Frank seems fairly bucked with life. Frank's been doing quite a lot of walking lately, and he's come to the conclusion that

WALKING MAKES ONE FIT !

Frank lives about 2½ miles from his school. He used to ride both ways, morning and afternoon. Then along came the bus strike, and Frank was compelled to "foot-slog" the journey. He didn't like the task at first, but he soon got used to it. Although the buses are running again now, my Newton Abbot chum still prefers "tramping along the highway." And what's more to the point, Frank has more pocket-money at the end of the week !

TALKING about strikes, here are some

QUEER STRIKES

you may not have heard about. Some time before Harry Wharton & Co. had a "stay-in" strike at Greyfriars, the school children of Colsterworth, near Grantham, went on strike against one of their masters. Other queer strikes may be recalled. Executioners of Canton, China, went out on strike once, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

complaining that unless they got more than a shilling a head they would starve; the female prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs Prison struck against an order requiring them to carry coals to the laundry fires, work which had previously been the prerogative of "gentlemen" convicts; the alcoholic-drinkers of a certain district struck as one man against the increase in price of their favourite beverage; certain barristers struck as a protest against the "tyrannical attitude" of the presiding judge: and among other bodies who have adopted this form of protest against grievances within recent years are paupers, choir-boys, ministers (who considered a pound a day "little better than an insult"), commercial travellers and undertakers' men.

Having read so much about the air raids in Spain, George Wallace, who incidentally is fourteen years of age and is leaving school very shortly, asks me if I can tell him how many air raids there were on England and Scotland from the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 to the Armistice of November 11th, 1918. The number was fairly large, and to give you a complete list, chum, would take up far too much space. The first air raid on this country occurred on December 24th, 1914, when an enemy plane dropped a bomb in a garden at Dover. The first Zeppelin raid occurred on January 19th, 1915, four people being killed in Yarmouth and King's Lynn. The most serious air raid of all—unless my memory is at fault—(luckily I was in the line at the time!) was made on London on June 13th, 1916, when 160 people were killed and 432 injured. The first Zeppelin was destroyed on Sept. 8th following a raid on the Eastern Counties and London in which 20 people were killed and 86 injured.

"PICTURE FAN," who recently saw a picture in which

CHIPPENDALE FURNITURE

was mentioned, asks me to tell him something about this particular kind of furniture. Chippendale furniture was introduced in the reign of George I, by a cabinet maker named Thomas Chippendale, who migrated to London from Worcestershire, and set up for himself in a small way in St. Martin's Lane, Charing Cross. He was, however, fonder of inventing designs for furniture than of actually making it, and in 1752 published a book of patterns, which seemed to have been welcomed by the

London furniture-makers of the day, for they soon began to model a good deal of their work upon it. Of course, only a small portion of the so-called "genuine old Chippendale" in existence can have come from the shop in St. Martin's Lane.

Next comes a letter from Sid Staines, of Halifax, who, after marvelling at the "big post" I receive, wishes to know the meaning of

PIGEON POST.

This is merely a means of communication carried out by means of trained homing pigeons. This method of transmitting news has frequently been employed in war-time, particularly in attempts to maintain communication between the defenders of a besieged town and their friends outside. It is also used for naval purposes in emergency, and by airmen on sea-patrol work in case of a forced landing at sea, etc. The message, written in cypher in small compass, is rolled in a quill, which is attached to the bird's leg. During the Great War the British and the French maintained an excellent pigeon service on the Western Front. The French employed pigeons almost from the start of the War, and the British first sent over pigeons to France in March, 1916. Similar services were established in Salonica, and in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

And now for two

RAPID FIRE REPLIES

to readers' queries.

Peter Knifton (Leytonstone).—The "Nelson Lee" and "Popular" have long ceased publication and back numbers of these periodicals are unobtainable.

A. S. Burberry (Bletchingly).—The answer to your first question is "No." I will put your second question before Mr. Frank Richards.

SPACE is running short, so I had better get on to next week's programme without delay.

Frank Richards gives us one of the best yarns he has ever written in

"SPOOFING THE SCHOOL !"

There's no disputing the fact that William Wibley, of the Greyfriars Remove, is the school's most wonderful impersonator. He can impersonate almost anybody—and not only is he a master of make-up, but his features seem elastic and twistable into almost any shape. Certain things happen at Greyfriars and William Wibley is "for it." But "Wib" is equal to the occasion and determines to make the person who causes all the trouble "sit up"! Suffice it to say that the laugh's on the side of the Greyfriars impersonator. Believe me, chums, you'll laugh till your sides ache when you read this amusing yarn. It's the funniest I've read for many a long day.

What do you think of the new feature by the Greyfriars Rhymester? Good, isn't it? Our long-haired poet will inflict spasm No. 2 on you next week. To complete this grand issue there will be another topical issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." Miss next Saturday's MAGNET? Yes you might, unless you ask your newsagent to reserve you a copy.

YOUR EDITOR.

BARRING BOB CHERRY!

By FRANK RICHARDS



BOB CHERRY IS TURNED DOWN BY HIS CHUMS, and all because he refuses to divulge a secret that would mean expulsion for a schoolfellow and bring indelible disgrace upon one for whom Bob has a very great respect.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Generous Offer Declined!

BILLY BUNTER, leaning on the banisters on the Remove landing, blinked up the Remove passage through his big spectacles.

There was a thoughtful wrinkle in Bunter's fat brow.

He seemed deeply interested in a little scene in the Remove passage. He concentrated his eyes, and his spectacles, on that little scene.

It was tea-time, and Remove fellows were coming up to the studies to tea. In the doorway of Study No. 1 four juniors stood—Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Another junior came along from the stairs, and passed them. That other junior was Bob Cherry.

Instead of greeting the Co. with a cheery roar, and tramping into the study to tea, Bob marched straight on.

He did not glance at the four in the doorway. He seemed unconscious of their existence.

Three of them looked away, reddening a little. Only Johnny Bull remained unmoved, his gaze steady.

Bob Cherry tramped on up the passage to his own study, No. 13. The door of that study shut on him.

Other fellows, as well as Billy Bunter, had observed that little scene. Smithy, looking out of Study No. 4, smiled in his sarcastic way. Skinner and Snoop, who were in the passage, exchanged a grin. Peter Todd glanced after Bob, and then looked at Harry Wharton.

"You fellows been rowing?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said Harry. "Not exactly."

The captain of the Remove stepped back into his study. The door of Study No. 1 closed on the four.

Then Billy Bunter detached his fat person from the banisters on the landing, and rolled up the passage.

He pitched open the door of Harry Wharton's study, and blinked in.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

The four faces that were turned towards the fat Owl of the Remove did not wear welcoming looks.

Johnny Bull was looking grim. The other three were looking worried. None of them seemed pleased to see Bunter.

"Shut that door!" said Nugent.

"Certainly, old chap!" assented Bunter. He shut the door; with himself on the inner side of it.

Johnny Bull gave an expressive grunt.

"Do you want that fat frog here, Wharton?" he asked.

"No fear!"

"Well, shall I turf him out?"

"Do!"

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know!" exclaimed Billy Bunter hastily. "I say, I've come to say something special—something you'll be jolly glad to hear. I fancy it will rather cheer you up."

Johnny Bull, who was already lifting his boot, let it drop again. All four stared at Bunter.

"What do you mean, you fat ass?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "Cut it short, anyhow."

"The shortfulness will be a boonful blessing!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You fellows have been looking down in the mouth the last day or two," went

on Bunter cheerfully. "I know why, of course."

"You know why!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You prying little fat worm!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "He doesn't know anything about it. We've not said anything, and Bob hardly would."

"No need to say anything," grinned Bunter. "Every man in the Remove can see that you've rowed with Bob Cherry."

"Oh!" said Harry. "Is that all, fathead?"

"Eh? Yes! Nothing else, is there?" asked Bunter. "Well, look here! I'll tell you my idea! You fellows have always gone about in a gang—five of you! Now you've rowed with Bob, and turned him down. Mind, I'm not surprised! I like old Bob, but I'm not going to deny that he's rather a noisy, boisterous sort of silly fathead—"

"What?"

"Like a hippopotamus in a study! I never quite knew how you fellows could stand him, and I'm not surprised at you pushing him out. I mean to say, I don't blame you, see?"

"You silly chump!"

"You footling fat frowster!"

"You benighted bloater!"

"You terrific toad!"

"Eh, what?" Billy Bunter blinked at the four in surprise, as they all spoke at once.

Considering that they had "rowed" with Bob Cherry, and were no longer on speaking terms with their former friend, Bunter had not expected them to get

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

shirty when he stated his opinion of Bob. But they did.

"Boot him out!" snapped Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, don't be stuffy about nothing!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "You haven't heard my idea yet! Now, look here! There were always five of you—and you had the neck to name yourselves the Famous Five, as if you were the only pebbles on the beach, which you jolly well ain't! Skinner says the Fatheaded Five would be nearer the mark. He, he, he!"

"Is that the lot?"

"Oh, no! I mean to say, that now you've turned out that fathead Cherry, you're only four. One from five leaves four, see?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent. "You ought to shine at arithmetic in class, Bunter. It would buck Quelch no end."

"Oh, really, Nugent! Well, my idea is this," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. "Why not make it five again? Take another fellow into the jolly old circle, what? Of course, you don't want any commonplace sort of fellow—like Toddy, or Squiff, or Browney, or Hazel, or Mauly, or ordinary fellows of that sort. Pick out the best man in the Remove—a good all-round sportsman, good cricketer and footballer, good rowing man, and all that, see? How do you like the idea?"

The four juniors gazed at Bunter.

For reasons that they were certainly not likely to confide to the fat Owl of the Remove, they were no longer on friendly terms with Bob Cherry, hitherto an inseparable member of the Co.

It had not occurred to any of them to fill the vacant place in the ranks. And why it should interest Billy Bunter was a mystery they could not fathom.

It was like Bunter, of course, to barge into what did not concern him. He never could mind his own business. Still, it was surprising that he should take any interest in this.

"Like the idea?" chirruped Bunter.

"Is that what you came here to say?" asked Harry.

"Yes, old chap."

"Well, thanks for the suggestion, though we don't want it—and now travel, and see if you can possibly mind your own business."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"There's the door!" pointed out Frank Nugent.

"If you're going to refuse my offer—" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Your offer?" repeated Harry Wharton. "You haven't offered us anything, have you, you fat ass?"

"Eh? Don't you understand? I'm willing to join up—"

"You? Oh, my hat!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I said a good all-round sportsman," said Bunter.

"You're all round, all right, if you're not a sportsman," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The all roundfulness is terrific!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Bunter.

"I fancy you'd find me rather an agreeable change, after that fathead Cherry. We'll be five, you see, with that silly ass left out. There's one thing I'd better mention, though, before we go further. I shouldn't stand too much swank from you, Wharton."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"You couldn't expect it!" said Bunter, with a shake of his head. "How Cherry stood it is a mystery to me. I couldn't—and shouldn't. I'm not surprised that Cherry has got fed up with

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

it, if you don't mind my saying so. I suppose that that's what you've rowed about. He, he, he! And I should expect Bull to try to have rather more decent manners—"

"What?" growled Johnny Bull, in a voice like unto that of the Great Huge Bear.

"I mean, not such a pig, you know!" explained Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Johnny.

"I don't mind Nugent being a milk-sop, and Inky a nigger," went on Bunter generously. "They can't help it; and a fellow has to take fellows as he finds them. But not too much swank from you, Wharton. And not too much grunt and growl from you, Bull. See? That being understood, I think we shall get on all right."

"Oh," gasped Nugent, "you think that, do you?"

"Well, yes," said Bunter, "I think so. I should expect you to cash a postal order for me every now and then, between pals, you know, and not make a rotten fuss because it hadn't come. I'll make it a point to tea in this study, as Bob used to, except when I can't possibly let down my other friends. You know that a chap who's run after like me isn't always his own master really. When a fellow's popular you can't expect to take up all his time. Now, is it a go?"

"Is—is—is it a go?" gasped Harry Wharton. "No, not quite a go."

"Hardly!" grinned Nugent.

"I'm going to boot him," said Johnny Bull. "A chap who asks for it like that ought to have it."

"I say, you fellows— Keep off, you beast!" roared Billy Bunter, as Johnny Bull let out a foot.

Thud!

"Ow! Why, you cheeky beast, you kick me, and I'll jolly well— Yaroooooop!"

Harry Wharton threw open the study door.

"Now, all kick together!" he said. "Wait a minute, Bunter; stand steady! See if we can land him right across the passage. Hold on, Bunter; we're not ready yet—"

Bunter did not hold on. Bunter was not quick on the uptake, but he could see that his generous offer to fill the vacant place in the ranks of the famous Co. was not going to be accepted. He did not hold on and he did not stand steady; he shot through the doorway like a stone from a catapult.

The door of Study No. 1 closed on him.

It opened again a minute later, and a fat face and a big pair of spectacles glared in.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

Then the door slammed, and Bunter vanished.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Well!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, stood in the quad, near the door of the House, after tea.

His glance followed a number of fellows in flannels who were going down to the nets. Harry Wharton had asked him in passing if he were coming, to which the Bounder replied only by a shake of the head. His chum Tom Redwing had gone with the four, his bat under his arm. The Bounder noted that Bob Cherry was not with his friends—or, rather, his former friends.

All the Greyfriars Remove knew by this time that there was a split in the Co., though they did not know why.

But Smithy had a very accurate suspicion on the subject—and Smithy, as he glanced after the Co., had a faint sneer on his sardonic face.

They had turned their pal down, and he knew—or, at least, guessed—why. Smithy's feeling was scornful.

Smithy had never had but one pal in the school—Tom Redwing. He had quarrelled with him often enough; but he would never have turned him down, whatever he might have done.

Certainly he could not imagine Tom doing what Bob Cherry had done—or was believed to have done. But if he had, Smithy would have stood by him through thick and thin. Perhaps that was because he was a little less particular in his ideas than the Co. He chose to think that it was because he was more loyal, and was satisfied with himself accordingly.

A Remove fellow came out of the House, and the Bounder looked round at him. He was, as a matter of fact, waiting for Bob to come out. But it was not Bob; it was Peter Hazeldene of the Remove, and he gave the Bounder a look of dislike as he passed.

Smithy's lip curled as he watched Hazel heading for the gates.

A less keen eye would have read nothing in the junior's manner, but Smithy spotted a certain furtiveness, and he had a very clear idea that the scapegrace of the Remove was going out on some forbidden excursion.

Smithy was a good deal of a scapegrace himself, and, in fact, rather prided himself on being the "bad hat" of his Form; but he had only contempt for a weak-kneed fellow like Hazel, who could not run straight, but who lacked the courage to face the music when trouble accrued from running crooked.

A few minutes after Hazel had gone Bob Cherry came out of the House. He was not in flannels, and clearly did not intend to join the other fellows at cricket. His ruddy face lacked its usual cheery smile and was almost expressionless. If Bob Cherry was in deep waters, as the Bounder guessed that he was, he was not going to show signs of it for all the school to see.

"Oh, here you are, old bean!" said Smithy, with unusual affability. "Going out?"

Bob looked at him, not very cordially. "Yes," he answered briefly.

"Which way?" Smithy fell into step by his side as he asked that question.

"Any old way."

"Just a tramp?"

"Yes."

"Like my company?"

Bob looked at him again. He did not want the Bounder's company; he wanted the company of his own friends, which he could not have. Smithy was no friend of his, and recent happenings had caused Bob to feel rather hostile.

But Bob, even in his glummiest mood, never was a fellow to rebuff any fellow if he could help it. He would not say that he wanted Smithy's company, because he did not, but he answered civilly:

"Just as you like."

And they walked out of gates together and took the path down to the Sark.

Lord Mauleverer of the Remove, lounging under the shady trees, gave them a cheery nod and a grin as they passed, and Bob's face brightened into a smile as he nodded to his lordship.

Mauly's face became very thoughtful as he looked after them. Mauly, like other fellows in the Form, had noticed the signs of trouble in the once-united Co., and it rather worried the good-natured Mauly.

By the school boathouse Vernon-Smith

and Bob Cherry turned down the river and walked along the towpath in the direction of Friardale Bridge.

Bob walked in complete silence.

With his hands deep in his pockets, he swung along and seemed to have forgotten that another fellow was with him at all.

There was a faint grin on the Bounder's face. He had not picked cheerful company for that walk—indeed, he hardly knew why he had picked Bob's company at all.

The fellow was down on his luck. But Smithy had never had much sympathy for lame ducks; he was more given to

mind my own business, I'm the man to take a hint," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I never was a man to barge in. But your own pals have turned you down, and you can't ask a chap like Mauleverer; and it looks to me as if it's pretty serious. So I say again—can I help?"

Bob Cherry came to a halt and stared the Bounder in the face, his own expressing astonishment and bewilderment.

Smithy gave an impatient shrug. Bob's bewildered look showed that he did not understand. Smithy was convinced that he understood perfectly well.

"You're talking in riddles, Smithy."

Don't worry; I shan't speak on the subject again. I don't have to be told twice to mind my own business."

"I'm not telling you that, Smithy! If you fancy I'm hard up, and you're willing to help, I'm a bit surprised—but I suppose I ought to feel grateful. But what the thump has put the idea into your head?"

"Pile it on!" jeered Smithy.

"And what do you mean that I couldn't say to Mauleverer?" demanded Bob. "Are you fathead enough to think that I've got any disgraceful debts like that cur Hazel? You must be batty!"



"Oh!" ejaculated Clara Trevlyn. "Oh!" repeated Marjorie Hazeldene. The two Cliff House girls watched the two Greyfriars juniors fighting hard and fast on the river bank. Even as they watched, Vernon-Smith went spinning under a terrific drive from Bob Cherry.

shrugging his shoulders at a fellow's misfortunes than to sympathising with them.

But there was no doubt that he was interested in Bob—and he was curious, too. Bob had come a "mucker"—the most unexpected kind of mucker. How and why puzzled the Bounder, and Smithy did not like to be beaten by a problem; and Smithy was capable of kind and friendly impulses, though he would never have admitted as much.

"Look here, old man—" he said at last.

Bob Cherry started and coloured. Clearly he had forgotten that the Bounder was with him.

"Oh! Yes—what?" he said.

"Thinkin' out some jolly old problem?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, look here," said Smithy quietly, "we're not pals, old bean, and never likely to be, but a fellow can't help rather liking you, all the same. Can I help?"

Bob blinked at him.

"Help?" he repeated. "I don't catch on, Smithy. I'm not in any need of help that I know of."

"If that means that you'd rather I

said Bob. "I suppose you mean it in a friendly way, but I can't make you out. What do you mean that I can't ask a chap like Mauleverer?"

"I mean, if you raised money from him he would have to know why, and you could hardly tell a strait-laced chap like that why you want it."

"Are you potty?" asked Bob blankly.

"Oh, go it!" grunted the Bounder. "You mean that you bar me, and don't want a helping hand from a fellow you don't like. All right; let it drop."

The Bounder was turning away with that to walk back the way he had come. Bob, with a flushed face and a glint in his eyes, stepped into his way.

"Hold on, Smithy! I want to know what you mean," he said. "So far as I can make out, you fancy I'm in want of money—"

"I know you are."

"You know more than I do, then?" said Bob. "I'm not loaded with bank-notes like you, Smithy, but I have as much as I want; as much as I need, at any rate. What the thump do you mean?"

"Oh, carry on!" sneered the Bounder. "I'm a fool for my pains, but I don't like seeing a fellow come a mucker!"

The Bounder looked at him attentively, and very keenly.

"You're changing," he said. "Not so very long ago you couldn't have looked a fellow in the face and rolled out lies like that."

"Lies?" ejaculated Bob.

"What do you call it, then?" demanded Vernon-Smith angrily. "Think I'm a fool? I'm a fool to barge into what doesn't concern me, I admit that. But I'm not a fool to be bamboozled by silly humbug!"

Bob's face set.

"I don't even begin to understand you, Smithy," he said. "You've got some potty idea into your head. I can see that. I suppose you meant to be friendly; but you can't call me a liar and—"

"I can't call you anything else, when you're telling dashed lies!" said the Bounder scoffingly. "By gum, Bunter's a fool to you, when you get going! Why couldn't you say out plain that you'd rather I didn't butt in? That would have been all right. No need to lie about it, that I can see. Do you think I'd give you away to Quelch, or what?"

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Better stop at that, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "You've called me a liar twice. Say it again, and I'll knock you spinning."

That was more than enough for the Bounder.

Quite unlike his usual way, he had felt a compassionate kindness for a lame duck. He had offered to help, and he could have kicked himself for having done so. All compassion and kindness were banished now. He was not the fellow to yield an inch, or the fraction of an inch, at a challenge.

"Liar!" he retorted at once.

"That does it!" said Bob, between his teeth. "Put up your hands, Vernon-Smith. I'll knock that back down your cheeky neck!"

The Bounder's hands went up like a flash as Bob Cherry came at him. And the next moment, on the green towpath, between the woods and the river, they were fighting.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Three Girls in a Boat!

"I SAY, you girls——"

"Fifteen thousand, five hundred and forty-four!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Bessie Bunter, blinking at Miss Clara through the big spectacles that were so like her brother Billy's.

And Marjorie Hazeldene gazed at her friend.

The three Cliff House girls were in a boat on the Sark, pulling up from Friardale.

Bessie Bunter's considerable weight was deposited on the stern seat. Her ample figure filled it from side to side.

Marjorie and Clara were pulling.

Bessie's attention was divided between a bag of bullseyes and the exercise of her fat chin. Her plump face, and her plump figure, were rather sticky. Only when she disposed of a bullseye did her conversation flag. Except for those brief intervals, it ran on like the unending melody in Wagnerian music—though perhaps less melodious.

"Wharrer you mean, fifteen thousand, five hundred and forty-four?" demanded Miss Bunter. "Fifteen thousand, five hundred and forty-four what?"

"Words!" answered Clara. "That's the number you've spoken in the last half-hour. I've been counting."

"Cat!" said Bessie.

Marjorie Hazeldene laughed.

"I'm not sure to a thousand or so," confessed Miss Clara.

"I was going to say——" squealed Bessie.

"Don't!" suggested Clara. "Give your chin a rest, Fatima, dear! Suppose it got crocked, from too much exercise?"

"I was going to say——"

"Yes, I know. We shall be late for tea if we go any farther! You've said it seventeen times already!"

"Only six times, Clara!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"I wasn't!" howled Miss Bunter. "I was going to say, look at those two Greyfriars boys fighting on the bank."

"Oh!" ejaculated Clara.

"Oh!" repeated Marjorie.

They looked round at the bank—and beheld the rather startling scene that Miss Bunter's eyes—and spectacles—had already discerned.

Marjorie Hazeldene's face became very grave. Clara gave a little sniff. Miss Bunter looked keenly interested.

"I say, you girls, pull in a bit and let's watch," she said. "One of them's Bob Cherry; the other's Vernon-Smith! I don't like Vernon-Smith very much; he has a nasty, sneering way! I hope Bob will wallop him!"

"Bob's walloping him all right!" said Miss Clara. "They ought to be jolly well whacked, both of them!"

Marjorie gazed at the scene on the shore. The two juniors, in fierce strife, did not see the boat. They were fighting hard and fast.

The Bounder, strong and muscular as he was, was hardly a match for Bob Cherry—a circumstance that made no difference at all to Smithy, in taking on the combat. He was, at all events, putting up a hard fight.

But Bob had the upper hand. Even as the schoolgirls looked, Smithy went over, under a terrific drive that fairly lifted him off his feet.

He crashed down heavily in the grass, and Bob Cherry stood over him, panting, his eyes blazing.

Vernon-Smith raised himself on his elbow. His eyes burned up at Bob. The Cliff House girls heard his panting voice:

"You rotter! You rotter! I'll lick you yet!"

"Get up and do it, then!" rapped Bob. "I'm waiting for you!"

The Bounder scrambled up and hurled himself at his adversary again. Hammer and tongs they went, hard and fast.

"Pull on, Clara!" breathed Marjorie.

The scene was distressing enough to her, especially as Bob Cherry was engaged in it.

"Rot!" said Clara coolly. "If they give a prize-fighting exhibition in public the public are entitled to see the show."

"Yes, rather!" squealed Bessie. "You needn't be afraid for Bob, Marjorie. Bob's all right. He's got Smithy walloped!"

"Silly pair of noodles!" remarked Miss Clara. "I wonder what Miss Primrose would say if Cliff House girls carried on like that?"

"He, he, he!"—from Bessie.

"Mr. Quelch doesn't cane them enough," said Clara. "I dare say he would, though, if he could see them now. Bob looks in a fearfully bad temper."

"Bob isn't quarrelsome," said Marjorie, rather sharply. "It must be Vernon-Smith who is to blame."

"Cela va sans dire, as we say in the French class!" grinned Miss Clara.

"Eh? Wharrer you mean by slah vah song dear?" demanded Miss Bunter.

"That goes without saying!" said Clara. "Is Bob ever to blame for anything? Except, of course, when Hazel says so! That's the solitary exception!"

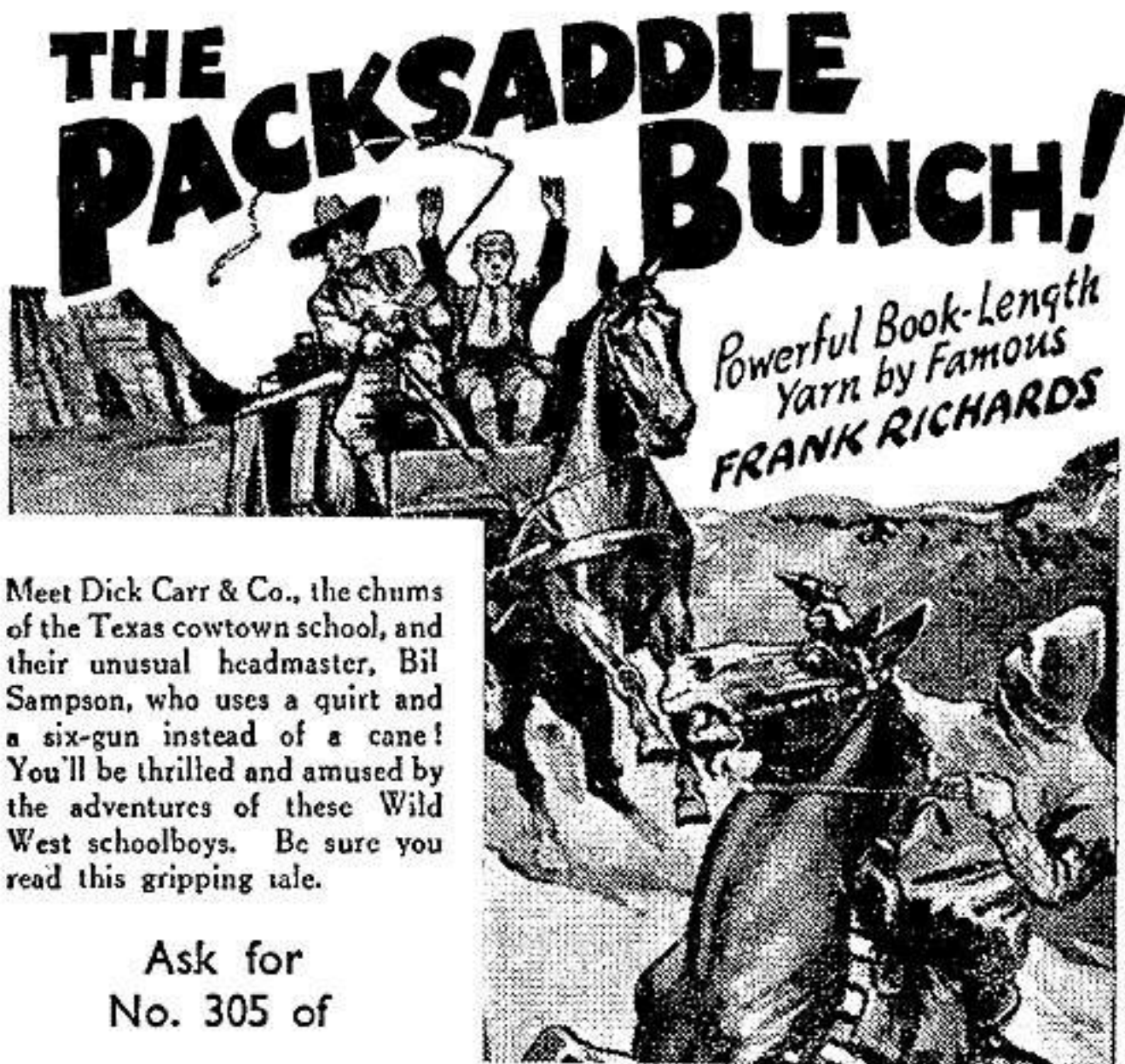
"Don't talk nonsense, Clara!" said Marjorie.

"Bow-wow!" said Clara imperturbably. "Oh, my hat! There goes poor old Smithy again! He will be sorry he asked for it, at this rate."

Herbert Vernon-Smith was down again, on his back in the grass on the towpath. Bob dashed his hand across his forehead, to dash away a stream of perspiration. It was hot July weather, and it was hot work for hot weather. As he did so he suddenly caught sight of the schoolgirls' boat on the river.

He gave a violent start as his eyes fixed on Marjorie Hazeldene. His face, which had been crimson, suddenly paled.

Smithy was dragging himself up, slowly and painfully, for that last knock had very nearly knocked him



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out. He was beaten, and he knew it, but he was going on as long as he could stand; that was the Bounder's way. His face was full of black bitterness. No one could have guessed, from his looks, that he had joined Bob Cherry on that walk by the river with friendly intentions!

But Bob Cherry had forgotten Smithy now. He stared blankly at the Cliff House boat, and Marjorie's grave face, which seemed to startle him like a ghost. He did not even raise his hat. He just stared, as if petrified.

As Smithy gained his legs and stood unsteadily on them Bob stirred to sudden action. He turned away from the river and walked quickly into the bordering wood.

In a moment the trees and thickets swallowed him from sight.

Vernon-Smith, panting painfully for breath, stared after him, not understanding. He had not seen the Cliff House boat, so far.

"Come back, you rotten funk!" shouted the Bounder. "By gad, you rotten cur, you started this, and you're goin' on with it!"

There was no answer from Bob. A rustle of twigs told that he was moving quickly through the wood, and that was all. The rustle died away in a moment or two, and the Bounder was left staring and scowling. He was in a mood to pursue, but he was in no state to do so; he could hardly have dragged one leg after the other.

"Oh, you rotter!" he panted. "You rot—"

He broke off at the sight of the Cliff House boat and the three pairs of eyes fixed on him from the river.

His face, already crimson, flushed a deeper red. To be seen by the school-girls, battered and bruised, panting and gasping from a savage fight, was by no means pleasant to the Bounder.

Marjorie and Clara, realising his discomfort, pulled on. Bessie Bunter grinned back at him.

Smithy, glad to see them going, stooped by the river's edge, to bathe his burning face in the cool water.

"I say, you girls, what did Bob cut off like that for?" asked Bessie Bunter, blinking at her two companions through her big spectacles.

"Jolly well ashamed of himself, perhaps!" said Clara.

Marjorie did not speak. She was puzzled; but she was glad, at all events, that that fierce fight had stopped. It was evidently the sight of the Cliff House girls, in the boat, that had caused Bob to break it off, careless of what the Bounder might think of his sudden retreat. But there was more in it than that, as Marjorie knew.

The strange look on Bob's startled face as he saw her had not escaped her eyes. It was not wholly because he was ashamed to be seen fighting that he had cut into the wood. It looked—she could not help seeing that it looked—as if the sight of her was unwelcome to his eyes—as if he wanted to avoid her. She was puzzled and hurt.

Miss Clara gave her rather a queer look. She, also, had noticed something. "You haven't been rowing with Bob, Marjorie?" she asked.

"What nonsense, Clara!"

"Has Hazel been making mischief?"

"I wish you would not speak of my brother like that, Clara."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Clara.

And they pulled in silence. But Miss Elizabeth Bunter, in the intervals of chewing bullseyes, provided conversation enough for three, so that was all right!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Plain English!

HARRY WHARTON knitted his brows.

"This is rotten!" he said.

"It is!" agreed Frank Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, a cloud on his usually cheery, dusky face.

Johnny Bull contributed a grunt to the discussion.

The four had come up to the studies after cricket practice. Three of them were deeply worried. Johnny, if he were as worried as his friends, was grim and inflexible. Johnny Bull was a fellow to make up his mind slowly and deliberately; but once he had made it up, it was fixed. Shilly-shally, as he would have called it, was a thing for which Johnny had no use.

"I can't make it out!" went on Harry. "Bob's not the sort of chap to do anything of the kind—"

"Only he did it!" said Johnny stolidly.

"If we're making some awful mistake—"

"We're not."

"Well, if you're satisfied, I'm not!" said Harry sharply. "It's rotten all round. There's the cricket to be considered. Bob's wanted in the Rookwood match, when it comes along."

"It's jolly awkward!" said Frank.

"What can't be helped, can't be helped!" pronounced Johnny Bull. "I know I'm not palling with a pincher!"

"What cannot be cured by a stitch in time, must go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But—"

"But—"

"You can wash out the butts," said Johnny calmly. "Bob Cherry had a banknote that didn't belong to him. He couldn't, or wouldn't, explain. It's no good saying that that doesn't settle it—because it does!"

"I'm going to speak to Mauleverer!" said Harry.

"What's the good?"

"It was Mauly's banknote! It was given back to him. He must know! He's as friendly with Bob as ever—more so, in fact! I've thought two or three times that he's gone out of his way to show it."

"Just like old Mauly!" said Frank, with a grin. "He would stick to any man who was down on his luck."

"Not unless he believed him decent!" said Harry Wharton. "If Mauly thought as we do, he wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole!"

"Mauly's an ass!" said Johnny.

"Perhaps he is; but he may know something about it that we don't know," said the captain of the Remove. "He's gone to his study now. Let's— Oh, my hat!"

Wharton broke off with a startled exclamation as a Remove fellow passed the open doorway of the study. It was the Bounder, and his aspect was a little startling.

He had his handkerchief to his nose, and it was spotted with crimson. There were other traces—very prominent traces—of damage on his face. Herbert Vernon-Smith had clearly been in the wars.

He glanced at the juniors in the study as he heard Wharton's exclamation. His eyes were glinting.

"Scrap?" asked Nugent.

"Noticed it?" sneered the Bounder.

"Yes, I've been scrapping!"

"Better have come down to the cricket, after all!" Harry Wharton remarked dryly.

"Much better!" said the Bounder. "I went out specially to ask for this—"

and I've got it! By gum, I'll make that cad sit up for it, too!"

"Highcliffe man?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Your precious pal, Cherry! The man you've turned down for pinching—and that I'm turning down now, too!"

The four juniors jumped. This was the first hint that they had had that anyone outside their own circle knew of Bob Cherry's dismal secret. How the Bounder knew was a mystery to them.

"Smithy!" Wharton almost gasped. "What do you mean? Look here—"

The Bounder gave a savage laugh.

"I knew all along," he sneered. "I was going to say nothing! I thought that the poor fool had landed in some trouble and lost his head. I was going to keep it dark, and help him out of the ditch, if I could! This is what I've got for being a soft ass! By gum, he will find that this isn't the way to make a fellow keep his rotten secrets for him!"

The Bounder tramped on up the passage, went into his own study, and slammed the door. The four juniors in Study No. 1 exchanged glances of dismay.

"Smithy knows!" muttered Nugent.

"I fancied he suspected something at the time!" said Harry, in a low voice. "He's keen as a razor. It will be all over the Remove now if Smithy talks about it. And—"

"Well, Cherry's asked for it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We're keeping it dark, because we've been his friends. He can't expect other fellows to."

"Come on and see Mauly!" said Wharton abruptly, and he left the study.

His friends followed him up the passage to Study No. 12, Johnny Bull giving an expressive grunt as he followed on.

In Study No. 12 they found Lord Mauleverer, lazily extended on the ottoman under the window. He glanced at them with a little less than his usual urbanity, and did not, as usual, ask them to stagger in! However, they entered without being asked, and Wharton carefully closed the door.

"We want to speak to you, Mauly!" he began.

"No law against it!" said Mauleverer.

"About that rotten banknote—"

"Drop that!"

"Can't! We've got to know!" said Harry. "Look here, you know that Bob Cherry had it! You must know, because you had it back, and he must have given it to you."

Lord Mauleverer's expression was utterly blank.

"Talk about somethin' else!" he suggested. "What about the Rookwood match? I've forgotten the date! Tell me."

"Never mind Rookwood now—"

"Must!" said Mauleverer. "I'm fearfully keen on it! Frightfully!"

"Don't be an ass, Mauly!" said the captain of the Remove. "Now, you can't have forgotten about that mouldy banknote. Even an ass like you—"

"My mind's a perfect blank!" assured Mauleverer. "When a thing bores me, I wash it right out! Don't revive it!"

"Listen to me, you ass—"

"It's a hard life!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "I'm always listenin' to some bore! Only a quarter of an hour ago I got away from Bunter! And now you—"

"A week or two ago," went on Wharton, unheeding, "you were idiot enough to use a ten-pound note as a bookmark in your 'Holiday Annual.' As if that wasn't fatheaded enough, you had the book in detention, and Quelch took it."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

away from you. Some fellow went down for it one night, and Quelch handed it over to the Head for safe keeping. It's in the Head's study now. Nobody can have got at it there. Now, Mauly—"

"Yaw-wa-aw!" His lordship yawned deeply.

Wharton coloured angrily. But he went on, in a quiet tone:

"When Quelch was told about the bookmark, he looked for it, and it wasn't there! All the fellows thought it had been pinched. Then you showed it up! You had it! You never got it out of the Annual. It must have been handed to you by the fellow who had it."

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Now, we know that Bob had it—he's admitted it!" said Harry. "It looks as if he's the fellow who went down to the dorm after it one night while the book was in Quelch's study. Do you think so?"

"Don't be an ass!"

"Yes or no, fathead?" snapped Wharton.

"No, fathead!"

"Well, he had it. He gave it back to you, as you had it afterwards. He's refused to explain to us how it came into his hands. Do you know?"

"No."

"Did he hand it back to you without a word of explanation?"

"Yaas."

"Then what did you think?" demanded Wharton.

"Nothin'."

"Does Mauly ever think?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Thinkin's rather a fag," yawned Lord Mauleverer. "Besides, I'm sure you fellows don't want me to tell you what I think."

"We do, you ass!" said Frank.

"The wantfulness is preposterous, my esteemed Mauly."

"Oh, all right! I'll tell you, then!" yawned Mauleverer. "I think you're a set of fools—"

"Eh?"

"And I'd be obliged if you'd keep on the other side of my study door!"

The four juniors looked at Mauly. This was quite a new tone for him to take with the Co. What was the matter with him was a mystery to them. Evidently something was.

"Do you want me to mop you off that sofa and bang your silly head on the fender, Mauleverer?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"No, thanks!"

"Well, you're asking for it, you lackadaisical ass!"

"Mind yellin' in some other fellow's study?" asked Lord Mauleverer. "It gets on my nerves a bit to hear a fellow yellin'!"

"By gum, I'll—"

"Chuck that, you ass!" Harry Wharton pushed back the wrathful Johnny. "We haven't come here to row with the silly ass! Now, will you tell us what you mean, Mauleverer?"

"Isn't my meanin' clear?" inquired his lordship. "The other side of my study door is free to the public! This side is private!"

"Don't be a silly ass!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove angrily. "Tell us what you know about that putrid banknote!"

"Nothin'!"

Lord Mauleverer sat up on the ottoman. He gazed at the angry four with calm contempt—quite a new expression on Mauly's face, so far as they were concerned.

"I'd rather not jaw about it," he said. "But if you insist, you get it! As you tell me you know that Bob had

that tenner, I'll tell you that he handed it to me. He told me he never pinched it, which was quite unnecessary, as I knew that he hadn't. He told me he couldn't explain how it came into his hands, and, not bein' built on Bunter's lines, I asked no questions. I've noticed since that you fellows have turned him down—from which I guessed that you knew he'd had it, and were fools enough to fancy that he had pinched it. Want any more? If not, cut! You make me feel rather ill!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at his lordship.

It was not pleasant to be talked to like this. It was exceedingly plain English from a polite and urbane fellow like Mauleverer. He seemed to have no politeness or urbanity available for the fellows who had turned down Bob Cherry.

"You blithering idiot!" said Johnny Bull. "Isn't evidence any use to you?"

"None whatever!" yawned Mauly. "Why, if Bob told me that he had pinched that tenner, I shouldn't believe it! I should think he was wanderin' in his mind!"

"So you can see a fellow with stolen money on him that he can't explain, and still believe in him?"

"Yaas!"

"Then you're a fool!"

"Same to you, with knobs on!" said Mauleverer. "But I'd rather be my sort of fool than your sort, old bean!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"You can't tell us anything, then?" he asked. "I hoped that Bob might have explained to you how he came by that banknote."

"I wasn't interested!" yawned Mauly.

"Well, we are!" said the captain of the Remove sharply. "If you're satisfied as easily as that, no other fellow could be. I simply can't imagine how that banknote came into Bob's hands, unless he bagged it from the book while it was in Quelch's study; but we were ready to take his word if he explained. He refused to say a word. You know what it looks like."

"Things ain't always what they look like. For instance, you look like a pretty decent sort of chap, but you're actin' like a suspicious rotter—turnin' down a pal for nothin'! Appearances are deceptive!"

Harry Wharton set his lips.

"We'd better go, you fellows!" he said abruptly.

The four juniors left Study No. 12 with flushed and angry faces.

Lord Mauleverer was, perhaps, to be envied for his simple faith which the poet declares to be more than Norman blood. But there was no doubt that that simple faith was lacking in the average fellow.

What Bob Cherry had done, or was supposed to have done, was a stunning blow to his chums; but they could not shut their eyes to plain facts that stared them in the face, as his cheery lordship could, and did.

Mauly believed in Bob Cherry, without even a lingering doubt. Harry Wharton & Co. would have been glad to share his faith, but they could not. But they were feeling far from easy or comfortable in their minds as they left Mauly's study and went down the Remove passage.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

BOB CHERRY tramped up the bank of the shining, rippling Sark, with a clouded face that was rather a contrast to the bright July sunshine.

Every now and then he dabbed his nose, from which drops of crimson persisted in oozing.

He had been damaged, as well as the Bounder, in that brief but fierce conflict. But he hardly felt the damages. He was thinking of Marjorie, with a clouded brow and a heavy heart.

He had lost no time in getting away from the spot. And he had made a mental resolve not to go down the river again, where there was always a chance of falling in with the girls from Cliff House. Now he was tramping up the river with long, swift strides. The schoolgirls' boat was not likely to come up past the Greyfriars boathouse, and there he was safe from another meeting.

Ahead of him, in the distance, was Popper's Island, a green mass in the river. On his right was a long fence that shut off the grounds of the Three Fishers Inn from the towpath. Over the fence showed the roofs of that building—an unsavoury spot, out of bounds for Greyfriars fellows. Bob did not observe it; he did not observe anything as he tramped moodily along, his eyes on the ground.

Never had a fellow been more thoroughly down on his luck. He had had a definite break with his friends; it could not be helped. He could not expect them to stand by a fellow who could not explain how he came to have another fellow's money in his pockets. He did not blame them; they had not the remotest idea how the matter stood.

Had they known that he was standing between a schoolgirl and indelible disgrace, what would they have said and done?

He did not know. Certainly, he could not tell them. That secret had to be kept locked in his own breast. Not to save his life would he have mentioned Marjorie Hazeldene's name in such a connection.

Sometimes it seemed to Bob that it could not really have happened—that it was some evil dream. Had he really seen Marjorie at the Head's study window dropping that banknote over the sill into the quad? Had he really seen her brother hunting for it under the window, with a frightened, guilty face?

Marjorie was innocent. Bob clung to that. The banknote had been stolen; but somehow, anyhow, Marjorie was innocent in the matter. She had done it for that rotten brother of hers; Hazel was in one of his scrapes, hard pushed for money, and she had done it for him. But—but—but somehow or other, although she had done it, she was perfectly innocent in the matter.

Bob had cudgelled his brains a hundred times to think out that "somehow." A hundred times, a thousand times, he had gone over that scene in his mind.

Marjorie had been in the Head's study at Greyfriars that Saturday afternoon. Very likely she had some message for the Head—one of his sisters was a mistress at Cliff House School. That would account for her being in the study. But why—why had she done what she did?

Dr. Locke had come in suddenly and found her there. Bob had heard his voice from the quad. He had made some remark about Miss Hazeldene looking at the "Holiday Annual" while she waited for him. Then he had seen her, her back to the window, her hand behind her, and the banknote slipping down over the sill, to fall to the ground outside. He had wondered then whether he was dreaming. Sometimes he still wondered.

Only he had picked up the banknote;



Bob Cherry grasped Hazeldene by the collar and forced him along the towpath, back in the direction of Greyfriars. "You rotter!" panted Hazeldene. "You bully! Will you let me go?" "No!" answered Bob between his teeth.

he had kept it safe till he could give it back where it belonged. His friends knew that he had had it; they did not know how or why, and never should know.

Somehow—anyhow—Marjorie had acted innocently in the matter; somehow, though he could not imagine how. Hazel was guilty; miserable guilt and terror had been written all over his face when Bob had seen him hunting afterwards for the banknote.

That cur—that rotter. He had let down the Remove in the Highcliffe match, owing to some disaster about a horse he had backed—the dingy rotter! He had owed money—and this was the outcome! He must have deluded Marjorie somehow—the guilt was his, not hers! Never hers! A fellow who could not run straight, and could not stand up to hard luck—who landed his troubles, when they came, on anyone else he could—even on a girl's shoulders! The cur!

Over and over again it ran through Bob's thoughts as he tramped up the shining river. He was coming up to the gate of the Three Fishers, in the long wooden fence, when his eyes fell on a figure ahead of him.

It was the fellow of whom he had been thinking—Marjorie's brother, Hazeldene of the Remove.

Bob slackened his vigorous stride. He did not want to overtake Hazel—he wanted to keep clear of him. And Hazel was dawdling along, slouching idly like a fellow with plenty of time on his hands.

Bob's eyes gleamed at the back of his head.

Marjorie's brother—the cur who had, somehow, induced her to touch Mauly's banknote. What was he doing there? It came suddenly into Bob's mind what Hazel was doing there. The lesson he had had was not enough for him. Likely as not, it was at the Three Fishers that he had incurred the disgraceful debt

that hung about his neck like a millstone.

And now he was going to ask for more!

Bob's eyes burned at that thought. There was no doubt of it. Hazel's slack crawl slowed down still more as he approached the gate. With only a back view of him, Bob could see the furtiveness in his manner. He reached the gate, stopped, and shot a quick backward glance.

That backward glance was to ascertain whether the coast was clear before he dodged in at the gate.

He started as his eyes fell on Bob Cherry.

He scowled, and then, with a careless air, leaned on the fence, as if he had merely stopped for a rest and to look at the river.

Bob's face set more and more grimly as he tramped on.

The rotter was waiting for him to pass. Then he was going to dodge into that low den—for a game of billiards with some loungee there, or perhaps to back a horse with Bill Lodgey. And if luck was against him, to crumple up and whine, and land the trouble on somebody else—most likely his sister at Cliff House.

Bob's jaw squared.

He did not pass the junior lounging by the gate—he stopped and looked him in the face.

"Get out of that!" he said.

Hazel stared at him in angry surprise.

"Speaking to me?" he snapped.

"Yes! Get out of it!"

"What the dickens do you mean, you fool?"

"Just what I say! You're not going out of bounds! You're going straight back to the school—and I'm going to see that you do!"

Hazel's face expressed sheer astonishment as well as anger. Bob Cherry was

about the last fellow at Greyfriars to barge into another fellow's affairs. This was utterly unexpected and surprising.

"What do you mean, you meddling ass?" snarled Hazel. "What the dickens does it matter to you what I do?"

"Get out of it!"

"I won't!"

"Won't you?" Bob Cherry's temper flamed out.

Marjorie's hands had touched a stolen banknote because of this dingy rotter's blackguardly stunts. The fellow could be as rotten as he liked, if he took what was coming to him—not if Marjorie had to take it!

He made a swift step at Hazel, grasped him by the shoulders, and spun him away from the fence—with such force that Hazel went spinning, and sprawled headlong on the towpath.

Bob's eyes blazed at him as he sprawled, panting.

"Now get going!" he shouted.

Hazel scrambled to his feet. Crimson with rage, he flung himself at Bob Cherry, hitting out right and left.

Bob laughed almost savagely as he met the attack. The fellow who could handle the Bouncer was not likely to have much trouble with Hazel.

In a few seconds Hazel was on his back in the grass again.

"Now are you going?" demanded Bob.

"No!" yelled Hazel furiously. "You rotter—you bully—no!"

"Then I'll make you!"

Bob Cherry stooped and grasped Hazel by the collar. He dragged him up like a sack of coke and forced him along the towpath, back in the direction of the school.

Hazeldene stumbled along helplessly. He struggled and resisted as he went. But he went—staggering and stumbling and panting.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

"You rotter!" he panted. "You bully! Will you let me go?"

"No!" answered Bob between his teeth.

"Are you mad?" panted Hazel. Enraged as he was, he was still more surprised than enraged. "What's the matter with you, you fool? Why the thump should you care if I go out of bounds?"

Bob did not answer again. He tramped savagely on, marching the scapegrace of the Remove by the collar.

Hazel still resisted.

"You bullying cad!" he breathed. "I tell you, there's a Highcliffe chap waiting for me there! Let me go!"

"He can wait!" said Bob savagely. "Ponsonby, or one of his gang, I suppose—well, let him wait! If you lost money to him, think you'd have another chance at Mauleverer's ten-pound note?"

Hazel gave a stifled cry.

"What? What did you say?"

He ceased his resistance suddenly, sagging in Bob's grasp. His face, turned on Bob, was blanched white. Bob let him go, and he reeled against a tree by the towpath, panting, his eyes almost starting from his face.

"What did you say?" he repeated in a hoarse gasp.

Bob shut his teeth! The words had escaped him, in his anger and bitter scorn; he had not intended to utter them; never intended to let Hazel guess that he knew anything of the affair at all.

"You—you think—" stammered Hazel. "Tell me what you said! Tell me what you meant! Stop, you rotter—tell me!"

Bob did not speak—he turned from him and walked away. He had said too much already, and had no intention of saying more. He tramped away without a word or a look.

Hazel was left free to follow his own devices—free to dodge into the unsavoury precincts of the Three Fishers if he liked. But he did not look now as if he wanted a game of billiards with Pon of Highcliffe. He stood leaning weakly on the tree, gazing after Bob with scared eyes till he disappeared. And when he stirred at last it was in the direction of Greyfriars that he turned.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Sorry, Smithy!

"MY esteemed Bob—"

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Bob Cherry.

Prep was on in the Remove studies. In Study No. 13 there was an atmosphere of general discomfort.

Generally, that study was as merry and bright as any at Greyfriars. Of its four members, Bob Cherry was generally the merriest and brightest. But there was a change now.

Mark Linley looked up from his work, first at Bob, then at Hurree Singh on the other side of the table. He dropped his eyes to his prep again. Little Wun Lung turned his slanting eyes on them in turn and spoke:

"Handsome Bob Chelly velly latty."

Bob looked at him and grinned faintly.

"All right kid, I'm not ratty," he said.

"Speakee likee velly latty!" remarked Wun Lung. "S'posee no latty along this Chinee, allee light."

"Right as rain!" said Bob.

But he did not look at Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the Nabob of Bhanipur

did not speak again. Apparently he had meant to bridge the gulf—but Bob, it seemed, did not want it bridged.

Bob, certainly, did not feel unfriendly. But so long as his former friends believed as they did, friendship was impossible. He did not want pity. He did not blame them for believing what they could hardly help believing. But that belief stood between them like an impassable bar.

Bob had tried to think what he would have believed had this strange chance happened to one of his friends. Suppose Wharton, or Nugent, had had a banknote that did not belong to him, and refused to explain how he had come by it—what would he have thought? He hardly knew. Anyhow, he felt that they could not be blamed for thinking as they did. But it was intensely bitter, all the same—and so long as matters remained unchanged, he preferred them to keep their distance.

He realised, however, that he need not have snapped Hurree Singh's dusky head off for a friendly venture. He was losing his good temper—losing his self-command—getting nervy and ratty. He could not help it. The trouble on his mind was more than enough to turn the kindest-hearted fellow into a surly bear.

But he did not want that to happen. That burden on his mind had to be borne, somehow; and he had to carry on, in spite of it. He could only resolve to keep his temper well in hand—so far as he could! It had failed him a good deal that day. The fight with the Bounder was a little on his conscience. Smithy had puzzled and irritated him, and then insulted him—but he knew that Smithy must have joined him in that walk with friendly intentions, and he knew that he might have kept that in mind and been more patient and forbearing.

It was very clear to Bob that he had to bite on the bullet and keep his nerves from getting the upper hand. A worry on his mind was no reason for making himself disagreeable all round.

Prep over, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose quietly to leave the study. He did not glance at Bob, who, as he went out, suddenly mumbled:

"Sorry, Inky, old man; but—but chuck it, all the same!"

The nabob glanced at him, then nodded and left the study.

When he was gone, Mark Linley looked at Bob.

"I'm sorry to see this, Bob!" he said quietly. "I don't know what the row's about—but if a fellow could do anything—"

"It's all right!" said Bob.

"No tinker all light!" said Wun Lung. "Nicey ole Bob Chelly velly latty along sliends belong him. No likee see Bob Chelly velly latty."

"Well, I'll try not to be ratty in the study, anyhow," said Bob, as good-humouredly as he could, and he rose from the table. "I think I'll cut along and see Smithy before he goes down."

"It was you—" asked Mark.

"Ye-e-es—we had a bit of a row!" Bob flushed. "My fault more than Smithy's—and—and I'm going to tell him so."

He went out of the study and down the Remove passage. Tom Redwing was coming out of Study No. 4, and he looked a little grimly at Bob.

"Smithy in the study?" asked Bob.

"Yes; you'd better leave him alone."

"I only want to speak to him."

Bob crimsoned. "Do you think I've come here for a row, fairhead?"

"You seem rather keen on rows

lately," said Redwing dryly. "But if you haven't, all right."

Bob Cherry's lips opened for an angry retort. But he checked it in time, and Redwing walked down the passage.

Bob stood at the door, hesitating, for a few moments—then he knocked and went in.

Vernon-Smith was standing before the glass, dabbing at a swollen nose. He turned his head and looked at Bob, with a black and evil look.

"Oh, you!" he said, between his teeth. "Have you come here to finish the scrap? I'm ready—quite! I'll shut the door, so that you can't run away this time!"

Bob needed all his good resolutions at that moment. The Bounder's tone was as insulting as he could make it. Evidently he was ready for trouble and full of rancour.

But Bob choked down his anger.

"You gave me as much as I gave you, Smithy," he answered as quietly as he could. "I'm sorry it happened."

"I'll make you sorrier before I'm done with you!"

Bob breathed hard.

"I've said I'm sorry, Smithy! I might have kept my temper, but—but—look here, Smithy, what you said would have made most fellows go off at the deep end. No chap likes to be called a liar."

"A chap shouldn't tell lies, then," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "What do you expect to be called, if you do?"

Bob's hands clenched involuntarily. But he resolutely unclenched them again. He was determined that he would not be drawn into another row.

"Leave it at that, then, Smithy," he said, breathing hard. "I came here to say I was sorry we'd had that scrap, and I've said it. What you've got in your head about me I can't guess—"

"That's not true," said the Bounder deliberately. "A few days ago you had Mauleverer's ten-pound note in your pocket; your friends found it out, and they turned you down for it. You knew I'd guessed it, because I gave you a hint to hand it back to Mauly! A chap doesn't pinch a banknote for nothing. You gave it back—and that left you where you were, hard up for ten pounds. You can roll out lies like Bunter, if you choose—but you can't expect me to believe them!"

Bob looked at him.

"So—you knew," he muttered, "and—and you fancied that I had pinched a banknote because I was hard up! You fancied that I had been dabbling in blackguardism, like yourself—and owed money I couldn't pay, like that cur Hazel! I—I see!"

"I didn't fancy it—I knew it!"

Bob Cherry laughed harshly.

He understood now what the Bounder had said by the river that had puzzled and mystified him at the time. Smithy knew that he had had the banknote, and believed that he had "pinched" it, and could only account for it by a theory that he had been in debt—some debt far beyond a schoolboy's pocket-money!

It was, perhaps, a natural mistake on Smithy's part. It was the only way he could possibly account for the circumstances.

"I've said nothing about what I knew," went on the Bounder. "I was sorry to see a fellow like you come a mucker! I thought you must have been a little off your head when you did it. I'd have helped you out. Now—"

"I understand now!" said Bob. "And—and—believe me or not, Smithy, I'm more sorry than I can say for cutting up rusty as I did! But you've got

it all wrong—I don't owe anybody anything—I'm not pushed for money—and if I were, I'd cut off my hand sooner than touch money that wasn't mine!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said the Bounder derisively.

"No—it doesn't look like it!" admitted Bob. "But it's true, all the same. If you think me a filthy pincher, I can't blame you—it's no worse than my own friends think of me. It's jolly decent of you to have said nothing about it—if you believe it! And I suppose you can't help thinking so! I can't expect everybody to be as thoroughly decent as old Mauly."

The Bounder stared at him.

"Mauly knows," he said. "What the dickens could he think, when you handed him his own banknote?"

"He doesn't think what you do—what my own pals do!" said Bob. "He took my word for it—that it came into my hands in a way I couldn't explain."

"Must be pretty soft, then."

"Mauly's the only man at Greyfriars who wouldn't believe a fellow a thief on the evidence!" said Bob bitterly. "My own pals have turned me down! Goodness knows, I might have done the same in their place—I don't know. But—I can see now that you meant to do me a good turn, Smithy, and I'm really sorry—"

"I've no use for your sorrow, thanks."

"It's not as you supposed—"

"Rats!"

Bob drew a deep breath.

"Well, that's that!" he said. "Leave it at that! I'll clear before we get to punching again."

With that, Bob left the study—and the Bounder's sneering laugh followed him. That laugh brought a glint of anger to his eyes, and almost made him turn back; but he had resolved to keep his temper, and he kept it.

He tramped away down the Remove passage to the stairs—and, on the Remove landing, passed Harry Wharton & Co. without a look.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bumps for Johnny Bull!

JOHNNY BULL grunted.

"Leave me out!" he exclaimed. "Look here—" exclaimed three voices in unison.

"I said leave me out, and I mean leave me out!" said Johnny Bull stolidly. "I'm not a fellow to chop and change, I hope. Go ahead and do as you jolly well like—but leave me out!"

Three exasperated glances were concentrated on Johnny Bull—without disturbing his equanimity.

It was Saturday afternoon.

That afternoon the captain of the Remove had fixed up a practice match, to put his men through their paces, ready for Rookwood.

Bob Cherry, a mighty man with the willow, was an indispensable member of the Remove eleven.

It was true that private disputes had nothing to do with cricket. Still, the situation was awkward.

But that was not all. During the past few days Harry Wharton & Co. had been putting in a lot of uncomfortable thinking.

They were still on the same distant footing with their former chum. And with every day that passed they were less and less satisfied with it.

Lord Mauleverer's attitude no doubt had an effect on them. If Mauly could believe in Bob, with a lofty and lordly disregard of evidence

on the subject, it seemed rather rotten that his own pals could not do so. And the more they thought about it, the more impossible it seemed that old Bob had done a rotten base thing—a thing utterly contrary to his nature, as they had always known him.

Three members of the Co. were, in fact, "coming round"—only Johnny Bull being adamant.

Johnny had a firm character. Perhaps there was a spot of obstinacy in it, too. Anyhow, he certainly was not a fellow to chop and change, as he expressed it. Evidence that was good enough for him one day, was good enough the next. He saw no reason to change his opinion, and without a reason, he was not going to change it.

Bob Cherry was walking in the quad after dinner with Lord Mauleverer. His amiable lordship made it a point to bestow his company a good deal on Bob these days.

The Co. stood in a group—arguing. Three of them had come to a decision—but Johnny Bull stood out, like a rock.

"Now look here, Johnny," said Harry Wharton, "we've thought this over, and we're jolly well going to wash it out."

"The washfulness is the proper caper!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Don't be an obstinate ass, Johnny!" said Frank Nugent.

Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"Has Bob told you how he came by that banknote?" he asked.

"No, fathead; he hasn't spoken to us!"

"Why hasn't he?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Well, I want to know, as well as goodness, before I speak to him again," said Johnny sarcastically. "I've no use for fellows who can't account for having other people's money in their pockets."

The three looked at one another. Johnny was right, so far as that went. It was up to Bob to explain, if he could explain. If he couldn't, the facts spoke for themselves. Somebody had "pinched" the banknote out of Mauly's "Holiday Annual"—and Bob had had it! What did it look like?

Wharton made a gesture towards the two juniors, walking under the elms in the distance.

"Look at them!" he said. "You can see that Mauly thinks that Bob is all right."

"Mauly's an ass!"

"And Smithy," said Nugent, "Smithy spotted somehow that Bob had it—and they've been scrapping lately—but Smithy hasn't said anything. That looks as if he thinks it's not so bad as it appears to be."

"I'm not bothering about what Smithy thinks! I know what I think!" said Johnny Bull. "Leave me out if you're going to pal with a chap who keeps other fellow's banknotes in his pockets. I'm barring him!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"Look here, Johnny, we're going to give Bob the benefit of the doubt."

"So would I, like a shot, if there were any doubt. Point out where the doubt comes in, and I'll be glad to hear it."

"He may have found that rotten banknote somewhere—"

"Why can't he say so, then?"

"Oh, rats! I don't know!" exclaimed Wharton, exasperated. "Perhaps he's an obstinate, silly ass, like you, Johnny."

"He's coming this way!" said Frank. "Now's a chance to speak! We've got

to put an end to this. Back up, Johnny!"

The two juniors under the elms had separated. Lord Mauleverer was sauntering away, and Bob Cherry, coming towards the House. In a minute or less, he would be passing the group. But if he saw them standing there, his face gave no sign.

Harry Wharton glanced at his friends, and stepped into Bob's way.

"Hold on!" he said.

Bob had to hold on or walk into the captain of the Remove. He came to a halt, knitting his brows.

"Cricket this afternoon," said Harry, amicably.

"Oh! No difference to that?" asked Bob.

"Of course not."

"I'll turn up, if you like! But you'd better chuck me out of the eleven for Rookwood. I'm not in very good form."

"That's rot—we want you in the team. And look here, Bob," went on Harry, "we want to chuck up this rot. We want to carry on as before, just as if nothing had happened."

Bob stared at him.

"Do you mean you want to pal with a pincher?" he asked.

"Oh, don't be an ass! We're washing all that out! If you won't explain, you won't, and we're taking you on trust. If Mauly can, we can."

"The trustfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bob."

"And that's that!" said Nugent.

Johnny Bull did not speak. He stood unmoved, with a fixed gaze that seemed to pass through Bob without seeing him. Other fellows could chop and change as much as they liked. No chopping and changing for Johnny.

"Oh!" said Bob, slowly. "I—I see! I'm afraid it wouldn't work, though. So long as you've got that rotten idea in your heads—"

"Who put it into our heads?" asked Harry, quietly.

"Well, I suppose I did. I'm not blaming you, but so long as you think as you do, you'd better leave me alone. You've a right to ask me to explain—and I can't do it. I can't, and won't!"

"Leave it at that, then," said Harry. "We'll believe, if you like, that that mouldy banknote popped into your pocket of its own accord."

Bob grinned.

"Don't be an ass!" he said.

"Anyhow, we don't, and can't, believe that you pinched it, and that's all that matters," said Harry. "Wash it right out, and let it be dead and done with."

Bob's face brightened.

"Can't say fairer than that, Bob!" said Nugent.

"That's all right, and more than I've a right to expect, considering how it looks," said Bob frankly. "If you all say the same—"

"The samefulness is preposterous—"

"Leave me out!" said Johnny Bull, grimly.

"Shut up!" hissed Nugent.

Johnny shrugged his broad shoulders. The brightness faded out of Bob Cherry's face again, and his eyes turned on Johnny with a steely look.

"You don't say the same, Bull?" he asked.

"No!" answered Johnny. "I don't! If I had another fellow's cash in my pocket and refused to explain how it got there, I should expect fellows to think that I'd pinched it. That's common-sense."

"Stick to common-sense then, and leave me alone!" said Bob savagely.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

and he walked round Harry Wharton, and tramped on to the House and went in.

"You silly ass, Johnny!" exclaimed Harry.

"I'm not the only silly ass here!" said Johnny Bull calmly. "I'm right, and you fellows know it perfectly well. I'm ready to take Cherry's word, if he's got anything to say. So long as he hasn't, I'd rather keep him at arms length."

"You're right, I suppose," said Harry slowly. "You've got a way of being right, Johnny, that makes a fellow want to boot you, sometimes." He glanced at Nugent and the nabob. "Johnny's right—let's bump him for being right."

"Good egg!" said Nugent at once. "The goodfulness of the egg is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Look here!" roared Johnny Bull, as his three chums turned on him, as one man, and collared him, "I say—you silly chumps—look here—oh, my hat!"

Johnny Bull in the grasp of three pairs of hands, was swung off the earth, and bumped thereon, with a heavy impact.

Bump!
"Oh!" spluttered Johnny.

Bump!
"Ow! Leggo! I'll—ow!"

Bump!
"Gurrrrrggh!" spluttered Johnny. "Now don't be so jolly well right, or you'll get some more bumps!" said Frank Nugent.

"Urrrggh!" spluttered the indignant Johnny.

He sat and spluttered for breath, and his three chums walked away, and left him spluttering.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bob!

THE Bounder grinned.
"How's that?"
"Out!"

Bob Cherry looked down at a wrecked wicket.

The Bounder, who had bowled him, first ball of the over, grinned at him along the pitch.

It was only a practice game between two Remove teams, the Bounder captaining one side, Harry Wharton the other. Even in a practice game, Smithy was extremely keen on winning; but that was not the only reason why he grinned now with sarcastic satisfaction.

Since that scrap on the bank of the Sark, a few days ago, he had been hostile to Bob Cherry, and his hostility had shown in a good many ways. Now it was sheer satisfaction to him to knock Bob out of the game, before he had been able to make a single hit.

Bob tramped off with his bat, and Frank Nugent took his place. He did not look at the fellows at the pavilion, though he knew they were eyeing him. Bob was utterly off his form. Smithy was a good bowler, but at any other time, Bob would have knocked his bowling all over Little Side. But stress of mind, the last few days, had told on him—his eye was hopelessly out, and his keenness seemed to be gone.

Without even looking at Harry Wharton, he knew what the captain of the Remove was thinking, and he answered Wharton's unspoken thought:

"Better chuck me for Rookwood! I'm no good! I'm not keen on it, anyhow."

Without waiting for a reply, he walked away and left the cricket field. It was a single innings game, and his side had already been in the field, so he was not wanted again.

He was glad to get away.

The fellow who, that summer, had seemed to live and breathe cricket, seemed to have lost his keenness. Obviously, in his present form, he was no use for the match with Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood, and it was almost a relief to him to know that he would be dropped. So long as he was on unfriendly terms with his old friends, he wanted to keep clear of them.

"I say, old chap—" Billy Bunter rolled towards him as he walked in the quad.

Bob changed his direction at once. He was in no mood for Billy Bunter's company, fascinating as it was.

"I say, Cherry—"

Bob accelerated.

"Beast!" squeaked Bunter.

Bob grinned, and walked on.

Under the elms, he came on Hazeldene of the Remove, loafing about listlessly with his hands in his pockets.

Hazel gave him a dark and bitter look.

Ever since that little scene by the Three Fishers, Hazel had been tormented by the recollection of what Bob had said to him. How much he knew, and how he knew it, was a mystery to the wretched scapegrace of the Remove. Several times he had almost resolved to ask Bob to explain what he had meant, but his heart had failed him.

Bob, as he saw him there, turned abruptly aside. The look on his face, as he did so, brought a crimson flush to Hazel's face.

Suddenly making up his mind, Hazel stepped towards him.

"Stop a minute, Cherry!"

"Don't speak to me," muttered Bob.

"And why not?" snarled Hazel.

"Because you make me sick!" snapped Bob.

Hazel set his lips.

"What have you got against me, you silly fool?" he muttered. "Look here, I want to know what you meant the other day!"

"Don't you know already?" grunted Bob. "Leave me alone, I tell you!"

"You said something about Mauleverer's ten-pound note," muttered Hazel. "As if I knew anything about it! I want to know what you meant by it!"

Bob looked at him.

He remembered him as he had seen him a week ago, stooping under the Head's study window, hunting to and fro, with a scared, guilty face. Hunting there for the banknote that Marjorie's hand had dropped from the window into the quad. The scorn and loathing that came into his face at the recollection startled Hazel. His face paled.

"You rotter!" he breathed. "What do you know about it—I mean, what do you think you know?"

"You cur!" muttered Bob. "How you can hold up your head here, and look fellows in the face, beats me! You're not fit to breathe in the same school with decent fellows! Keep away from me!"

"What have I done?" muttered Hazel, white to the lips. He knew now that Bob knew what he had done, though how, was a bewildering puzzle. Then suddenly, he guessed. "Oh, you were awake that night! You heard me—"

He was thinking of the night he had gone down from the Remove dormitory to take the banknote from the book in Mr. Quelch's study. He had been certain—absolutely certain—that no fellow in the Remove had been awake

at the time. He had crept out of the dormitory like a thief in the night, and crept back on tiptoe. He was assured that no one had missed him, or suspected him. But now—

"You knew, and you never let on," he breathed. "You spying rotter, you were awake then, and you knew—"

He broke off at Bob's blank stare.

"What the thump are you talking about?" snapped Bob. "If you've been breaking dorm bounds, I know nothing about it."

Hazel stared at him, dumb.

It was not that—Bob knew nothing of that. Then what did he know—and how did he know?

"Look here, then—what do you mean? Tell me—"

"I've got nothing to tell you, and I won't speak to you!" said Bob savagely. "Leave me alone, you rotter!"

He tramped past Hazel.

The latter caught him by the shoulder to stop him.

The next moment he gave a cry of pain as Bob struck his hand off.

Hazel was left staring, with a white face, as Bob Cherry tramped away.

He went down to the bike-shed, and wheeled out his machine. He rode away down Friardale Lane towards the village. It was yet early in the afternoon, and a bike spin was as good a way as any other of filling in the time till tea. It was unusual for Bob Cherry to be left on his own on a half-holiday. But he reflected bitterly that he would have to get used to it.

He went whizzing down the lane, and came in sight of the stile on the footpath through Friardale Wood.

Another cyclist coming through the wood had stopped there, and was about to lift a machine over the stile into the lane.

It was Marjorie Hazeldene from Cliff House.

As she saw Bob in the lane she smiled, and waved her hand.

"Lend me a hand, Bob!" she called out.

Bob slowed down.

Ever since that scene of a week ago at the Head's study window, he had avoided a meeting with Marjorie. His chums had noticed it, and wondered. He did not want Marjorie to notice it.

He dismounted, leaned his bicycle against a tree, and lifted Marjorie's machine over the stile into the lane. He held it for her, until she had stepped over the stile in turn.

She thanked him with a friendly smile. At the same time, her eyes were on his face, with a rather questioning look.

"Going somewhere, Bob?" she asked.

"No—yes; nothing special," he stammered.

"Ride to the school with me, then," said Marjorie. "I'm going to see Hazel."

"Oh!" said Bob.

He guessed now why Hazel had been loafing about under the elms. He had been waiting there for his sister from Cliff House School.

"That is, if you'd like to," said Marjorie, smiling. "Nothing the matter, is there?"

"Oh, no!"

"I should have spoken to you the other day on the river, only you went off so suddenly."

"Oh, yes! I—I'd been scrapping, you know. You saw—" stammered Bob.

"So that was all?"

Bob did not answer that. It was not all—and he could not say that it was. He turned to his machine.

"Come on!" he said.



"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton, stepping in Bob Cherry's way. "Cricket this afternoon!" Bob stared at him. "Do you mean you want to pal with a pincher?" he said. "Don't be an ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "We're taking you on trust!"

Marjorie mounted, and they rode up the lane to Greyfriars, side by side.

Bob did not speak a word.

Several times Marjorie Hazeldene glanced at him with a little puzzled pucker in her brow. Bob, it was true, was no great talker, but generally he had something to say; now he had nothing. Generally, when he was with Marjorie, his face was bright, now it was clouded and overcast. That there was something wrong with Bob, would have been clear to much less keen eyes than Marjorie's.

As he did not speak, she did not speak. Not a word was uttered before they reached Greyfriars.

"Here you are!" said Bob, at last.

Marjorie dismounted at the gate.

Bob raised his straw hat without dismounting, and rode on.

Marjorie stood at the gates looking after him, the puzzled pucker more pronounced in her forehead till he disappeared up the road towards Courtfield Common. Her lips were a little compressed as she wheeled her machine in, and handed it over to Gosling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hazel's Secret!

MARJORIE suppressed a sigh as she looked at the sullen, sulky face of the junior lounging under the leafy elms.

She was fond of her brother, and his weakness of character gave her a protective feeling towards him; but sometimes her patience was put to a severe strain.

"What is it now, Hazel?" she asked; and, with all her sweetness of temper, she laid a little stress on the word "now."

"Oh, nothing!" said Hazel boldly. "Nothing's come out, if that's what you mean. But—but I suppose I was a fool to think that a girl could help a chap in a scrape. I might have managed it, somehow."

Marjorie's lip quivered.

Hazel did not notice it as he went on, occupied with his own thoughts, and with himself, as usual.

"It seemed such a chance! You had that letter from Miss Locke, which gave you a chance of getting into the Head's study. And Quelch had put that rotten book there. You had a good ten minutes, or more, before the Head came back to the study. You might have got through. But a girl can never do anything, somehow."

He bit his lip.

"I was a fool to touch that rotten banknote at all. I suppose I was a bit off my chump with worry. That brute Lodgey threatened to come up to the school if I didn't square. If he'd come, it would have been all up with me here. I—I had to pay him. Only he guessed, somehow, that the banknote wasn't mine, and was afraid to touch it—hang him!"

"Thank goodness for that, at least!" said Marjorie quietly.

Hazel gave a grunt.

"That's all very well, but I still owe him the money. Still, he says he'll wait—I can jolly well see now that he's afraid I may do something desperate and silly, and drag him into it. Let him wait, hang him—I'm not bothering about him—now. But—but—if I'd only got that putrid banknote back into the book, before it was missed—I could have done it, if Quelch hadn't handed it over to the Head. I couldn't get into the Head's study—and when you took it on, you skewed it, of course"

Marjorie did not speak. She could not.

To save that sullen, ungrateful fellow from the dire consequences of his rascality, to save him from being a thief, she had overcome her repugnance to touching the stolen banknote—she had done her best to restore it to the place he had taken it from.

This was his gratitude!

"When you agreed to put it back for me, I thought it was all right!" he went on, mumbling. "But—of course you had to skew it! I might have known!"

"I did my best, Hazel!" said Marjorie in a low voice that trembled in spite of herself. "I had only ten minutes in the study, and the book had to be found. I had just found it, when Dr. Locke came in—and—and the banknote was in my hand. If I had not been able to drop it from the window, the Head would have seen it—what would he have thought?"

"I can't make it out," muttered Hazel. "There was no wind that day—when you told me, I hunted for it at once, but it was gone. I can't understand it. There was nobody near the spot when I got there. I suppose it must have blown away, somehow—but I can't understand it. And how Mauleverer got it back, beats me hollow. I'd ask him—but I dare not mention it. The fellows think him an ass—but he's as keen as a razor; if I mentioned it he would know at once."

"But Mauleverer did get it back—you told me so—"

"Yes, yes, that's all right. He may have picked it up in the quad and recognised it as his own banknote—or some fellow may have found it, and given it to him, and said nothing about

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.



(Continued from page 13.)

it. Anyhow, he's got it back all right." "That is something to be thankful for, Hazel!"

"Oh, yes, no doubt! But—but—" "Surely the matter is at an end now," said Marjorie anxiously. "However the banknote came back to Mauleverer, he has it, and the others know he has it—so there can be no more talk of—of—of—" Her voice faltered.

"There's a fellow knows something," muttered Hazel. "I can't guess how. Smithy suspected me, at first, but he was satisfied when he found that I hadn't paid Lodgey—he suspected that I'd taken it for that. I'm not afraid of Smithy now. But—another—fellow—"

"Who?"

"Cherry!" granted Hazel.

Marjorie started violently.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Hazel! Hazel! Don't say that Bob knows anything of it—knows that you—you—"

"He can't know!" snarled Hazel. "But—but he said something—let it slip in a temper. He avoids me as if I had the plague—fellows have noticed it. He's got a reason."

Marjorie choked.

That there was "something wrong" with Bob she had guessed; and if he knew what her brother had done, that fully accounted for it. Her face grew scarlet.

She could make allowances for the wretched Hazel. He had been frightened out of his wits, when he had done what he had done. He had tried to make amends—and to help him she had lent her aid in replacing the banknote he had taken from the "Holiday Annual." He had not willingly been a thief—he had tried to undo his own action—she made wide allowances for the weak, wretched fellow. But she could not expect a fellow like Bob Cherry to do so. Bob would feel towards a thief as he might feel towards a snake.

"There's something going on, that I don't catch on to," Hazel went on. "Cherry looks at me as if I make him sick—he knows something! I can't imagine how—but he does. And he's quarrelled with his friends—they don't speak now—I don't know why, but it's got something to do with it—I'm sure of that. They're down on Cherry for something—and he's down on me—and—and I can't understand Mauleverer! Lots of fellows have asked him how he got that banknote back, and he won't say how—only says that it turned up. He's keeping something dark—but he can't know—he can't suspect me—"

Marjorie gave him a pitying look.

If ever a fellow paid dearly for wrongdoing, Hazel was paying dearly. He could not dismiss the matter from his thoughts; his mind was filled with suspicions and fears.

"It's over now," she said soothingly.

"Is it?" he muttered. "I keep on thinking that something will crop up. I—I thought that Cherry might have heard me, the night I went down from the dorm and got that banknote—but—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

it's not that—he knows nothing of that. I can't make out what he knows. You haven't said anything—?"

"I!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Well, you're pally with him, and girls always chatter," muttered Hazel. "If you've let anything out—"

"Do you think that I could, or would, breathe a word of such a disgraceful thing? I could have died of shame when you told me what you had done! If Bob knows, I can never face him again—how could I face anyone who knew?" exclaimed Marjorie.

Her voice faltered; and Hazel gave her a startled look, as he saw that her eyelashes were wet.

"For goodness' sake don't blub!" he exclaimed in alarm. "Look here, let's get out—I'll get my jigger and ride back to Cliff House with you. For goodness' sake don't let anyone see that there's anything up!"

She nodded—she could not speak, or the tears would have come.

Hazel joined her at the gate with his bicycle.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Out of Bounds!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH walked down to the gates after tea, and grinned a little as Tom Redwing joined him. He was going out—and his destination was not one to which Tom would have been likely to accompany him.

"Coming out?" he asked.

"Yes, if you're going for a walk!"

"I'll drop you half-way," grinned the Bounder. "I'm not goin' to take you into bad company, Reddy."

"Oh!" Redwing frowned. "If it's that, I'll steer clear."

"Come on, fathead! A walk up the river won't hurt you. I'm not goin' to paint the town red," went on the Bounder, as they walked together down to the river, and turned on the tow-path. "I'm goin' to pick up some information. I fancy Bill Lodgey, or some other blighter at the Three Fishers, may be able to tell me what I want to know."

The Bounder rubbed his nose, not yet recovered from the effect of Bob Cherry's knuckles.

"By gum!" he said. "I'll show that rotter up—and throw his lies back in his teeth!"

"If you're speaking of Cherry—"

"You know I am."

"You're making a mistake about that, Smithy!" said Redwing earnestly. "I don't understand it all, but I know you're mistaken."

"And his pals, too," scoffed the Bounder. "I'm not tellin' the world, Reddy, but I've told you that Cherry had that banknote, and that's what his pals have turned him down for."

"I can't believe—"

"You utter ass, he's admitted to me, in my study, that he had it."

"Oh!" said Tom, taken aback.

"He's fooled Mauleverer—anybody can fool that ass! He can't fool his friends—they know what he did! And least of all can he fool me." The Bounder's face set, black and bitter. "By gum! To think that I was sorry for him, and ready to help him out of his scrape—and what I got for it—"

"Let it drop, Smithy—"

"I'll watch it!" said the Bounder. "I knew he'd pinched that banknote, and that could only mean that he was driven to the wall for money. I was sorry for the poor fool, and would have helped him out—saved him from trying on the same game again, and getting it in the neck, perhaps. If he'd told

me to mind my own business, I wouldn't have cared. But to tell me a pack of lies, and punch my face for not believin' them—" Vernon - Smith gritted his teeth.

The days that had elapsed since the fight by the river, had not placated the Bounder. He had a long memory for offences.

"I'm not a man to barge in, as you know, Reddy," he went on; "but anybody might have felt sorry for a silly fathead like that, getting out of his depth in a scrape, and doing a mad thing—the thing he did. His own pals turned him down for it—and I'd have stood by him and helped him through. And I've got this nose, as a reward."

"If you're mistaken—"

"Do you think he pinched the banknote to carry it about and not spend it?" sneered the Bounder. "He must have been fearfully pushed for money. Some rogue like Lodgey has got hold of him, of course. He owes money he can't pay. That's the only reason why he did it. Dabblin' in backing horses, the poor fish, and gettin' it in the neck, like Hazel!" The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh. "No bizney of mine—but he's not goin' to tell me lies, and punch my face because I can't swallow them!"

"If you called a chap a liar, Smithy, you might expect him to get a bit excited—"

"He was lying, and I said so!"

"Anyhow, he came to the study, and said he was sorry—"

"And I said I'd make him sorrier!"

Redwing gave a grunt. He was the Bounder's chum, but he did not like the vengeful, unforgiving strain in him.

"I'm not goin' to give him away," went on Smithy. "There's no proof about the banknote, now that Mauly's got it back, for one thing—and it would be rather hittin' below the belt, for another, that's not my game. But I'm goin' to show up his rotten lies. He's been kicking over the traces, and I know it—and I fancy I can get the particulars from Bill Lodgey or some of his friends. Ten to one some of them know. And as soon as I know, I'll put it to him, in the Rag, before all the Form."

"But—"

"I'm not goin' to mention the banknote. That's dead and done with. But I'm goin' to let all the Remove hear that Bob Cherry plays a shady game out of school bounds—the sort of thing he pretends to turn up his nose at me for doin'. I'll make him swallow all his lies—as soon as I've got proof—and I'm goin' to get it now."

Tom Redwing said no more. It was futile to argue with the Bounder, when his back was up—and Smithy's back was very much up now.

Half-way to the Three Fishers, they parted, Tom walking back to the school, the Bounder going on up the river.

When he arrived at the Three Fishers, Smithy did not go on to the gate, as Hazel had done, the afternoon that Bob Cherry had collared him there. He stopped on the tow-path, glanced round him, and slipped behind a mass of hawthorns that grew close to the high wooden fence.

Concealed from view, by the hawthorns, Vernon-Smith caught the top of the fence, and drew himself up.

In a moment he was astride of the fence. In another, he had dropped on the inner side.

The Bounder was always very cautious in these little matters. He ran more risks than any other fellow at Greyfriars, but caution and luck, had always seen him through.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

But on this occasion, as it happened, his luck was not so good as usual. In that brief moment on top of the fence, his head showed above the hawthorns along the tow-path.

And in that moment, a tall, angular figure came striding down the tow-path, from the direction of Courtfield Bridge.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had taken one of his long walks, that afternoon, with Prout, the master of the Fifth. They were coming home by way of the river.

Prout, portly and plump, was lagging. He was a little behind the Remove master, and Quelch was slowing down for him, when, to his wrath and amazement, he caught sight of a hat, and a head, rising over the hawthorns by the fence of the Three Fishers.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, staring.

The head vanished instantly, beyond the fence. Quelch had had only a partial view of it, from a distance.

He could not say that he had recognized the fellow who had crossed that forbidden fence, into forbidden precincts. But the Greyfriars hat was unmistakable, and he could see that the fellow was a junior, and he had a strong suspicion that it was Herbert Vernon-Smith of his Form.

Mr. Quelch's jaw set like a vice.

"Urrgh!" Prout panted as he came up. "Did you see that, Quelch? Unmistakably a Greyfriars boy!"

Prout had seen it, too!

"A junior, Quelch, I think!" said Prout, puffing and blowing. "Probably a Remove boy—what?"

Up to the moment that Prout spoke, Mr. Quelch had had no doubt that it was a junior, and a strong suspicion that it was Vernon-Smith.

Prout's impression, being similar, ought really to have conveyed conviction; instead of which, it had the opposite effect. No Form-master liked another Form-master to score over him.

"I did not see the boy clearly, Prout!" said Mr. Quelch, coldly. "I certainly could not say that it was a junior, definitely. A Fifth Form boy perhaps!"

"My dear Quelch, no Fifth Form boy would enter such precincts," exclaimed Mr. Prout warmly.

Mr. Prout was happily unacquainted with the manners and customs of Price, and Hilton, and one or two other fellows in his Form!

"I hope that no Remove boy would do so, Mr. Prout!" answered the Remove master. "However, I shall ascertain facts, as I shall remain here until the boy emerges from that disgraceful resort."

"I will remain also," said Mr. Prout, "I shall be rather glad of a rest. Let us sit down in the shade."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

Quite near the spot where Vernon-Smith had climbed in, there was a grassy bank close up to the fence. Nodding hawthorns hid it from anyone looking over from within.

The two Form-masters sat down, their backs to the fence, facing the river.

Quelch, perhaps, was not sorry for a rest—Prout was extremely glad of one. It was quite a pleasant spot to take a rest, in the warm glow of the July sun. They sat, and rested—and waited for that young rascal, whoever he was, to drop over the fence again—and drop, like ripe fruit, fairly into their hands.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, on the forbidden side of that fence, little dreamed of what was awaiting him on the outer side!

BILL LODGEY removed the cigar from his loose mouth, rubbed his pug nose thoughtfully, and shook his head.

"Dunno the name!" he said.

The Bouncer grunted.

Smithy had dropped into the billiards-room at the Three Fishers, after making his surreptitious entry into that delectable resort, and found Mr. Lodgey there—idly knocking the balls about with the marker.

Lodgey had been extremely pleased to see him—it was some time since the Bouncer had kicked over the traces in that direction. That term, in fact, Smithy had devoted his time chiefly to cricket, and had almost forgotten that he had set up to be an amateur black-guard.

Lodgey welcomed him back like a lost lamb into the fold.

The Bouncer played a hundred up, and lost a "quid" to the sharper—which he could easily spare from his ample supply of cash, and which was, in point of fact, a "tip" to loosen Lodgey's tongue.

Then he walked out into the garden with Lodgey for a smoke—and a talk. They sat down under a shady tree by one of the ill-kept paths, Lodgey smoking a cigar, the Bouncer a cigarette. Mr. Lodgey expected the talk to run on horses, and was prepared to play up to help his young friend "back his fancy." But Smithy's talk ran on quite a different subject.

Lodgey, no doubt, would have given him information, if he could. It was his game to oblige the millionaire's son in every possible way. But he seemed to have none to give.

The name of Bob Cherry seemed to convey nothing to him.

"You've heard the name all right!" grunted the Bouncer.

"Don't seem to remember it," said Lodgey. "Don't know the covey anyhow. Who is he? Friend of yours?"

"Never mind that," said Vernon-Smith, "I want to know about him, for reasons of my own. You can speak out—I'm not going to give the fellow away. I just want to know. This term, if not before, he's been shaking a loose leg—and got into debt over his depth. There's not a lot of opportunities, in a neighbourhood like this—and he's a beginner and a mug at the game. You'd be pretty certain to hear something about it."

Lodgey shook his head again.

"Some of the young gents don't always give their own names!" he remarked. "They don't always trust a bloke, you see!"

"Oh!" The Bouncer hit on to that suggestion at once. "Oh! That's it!" Might have used any name, of course, if you don't know him by sight."

"What's he like?" asked Lodgey, curiously.

"Fellow my own age and size, a bit taller, hefty and strong as a horse, with a mop of flaxen hair and blue eyes—"

"I've seen a bloke like that along of young Wharton and his friends—"

"That's the chap."

"He ain't been here," said Lodgey, staring. "Not the sort of covey, on his looks, to want to see life from this side! I don't know him."

The Bouncer set his lips. He was convinced—absolutely convinced. How else was the stolen banknote to be accounted for?

"I want to know," he said. "You'll find it pay to deal straight with me, Lodgey! That fellow has got in deep—"

he owes money—something like ten quids, I fancy—that he can't pay."

"He don't owe it to me," said Lodgey, "I got that sum to collect from a friend of yours, Master Vernon-Smith, but his name ain't Cherry. You know all about it—you got me on the phone one day, and asked me if young Hazeldene had paid up, and I told you he hadn't. So I s'pose he told you."

"Never mind Hazel now," grunted the Bouncer. "It's Cherry I want to know about. If you don't know, some pal of yours is sure to know, and I want you to get the news for me."

"Easy done!" said Lodgey.

The Bouncer grunted angrily and lighted another cigarette. He was angry and disappointed—and as convinced as ever.

"About young Hazeldene," went on Lodgey, after a pause, "I 'ope there ain't been no trouble up at the school. A bloke don't want to be dragged into trouble. A man who 'elps a young gent back his fancy wants to be paid—that's only reasonable, ain't it? But—look 'ere, Master Vernon-Smith, I s'pose that tenner was yours?"

"That tenner!" repeated the Bouncer.

"Well, you phoned me up, to ask whether young Hazel had paid," said Lodgey. "I s'pose you had a reason—and I fancied it was something to do with a ten-pound note."

The Bouncer gave a start.

"It was," he said. "But—what do you mean, Lodgey? I had a special reason for wanting to know whether Hazel had paid, and it certainly had a jolly lot to do with a ten-pound note. But—"

"I figured it out that it was yours," said Lodgey, with a nod. "I knowed by his face that it wasn't his'n, at any rate."

Smithy caught his breath.

"Did Hazel offer to pay you with a ten-pound note?" he asked.

Like a flash it came into his mind that in following a false trail he had stumbled on the right one.

"Didn't you know?" asked Lodgey suspiciously. "I figured that you knowed, when you phoned me. By gum! Ain't you got it back? Look 'ere, if you think that I touched it—"

"Oh, gad!" breathed the Bouncer.

"I knowed, as soon as I seed him, what he'd done," said Lodgey. "Ketch me touching a pinched banknote—with the number on it, and all! I told him to put it back where he got it, and I thought he'd have sense enough to do it. When you called me up on the phone I s'posed you missed it, and wanted to know if he'd handed it over to—"

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

He understood now.

Hazel had had Mauly's tenner. He had offered it to the sharper to settle his debt, and Lodgey, in fear of consequences, had refused it. Then Smithy's call on the phone had given him, rather naturally, the impression that it was Smithy's banknote, and that he had missed it.

"That cur!" muttered Smithy.

His brain was almost in a whirl for some moments. Hazel had had the banknote—as he had suspected from the first. Then where did Bob Cherry come in?

Bob had had it later, and had handed it back to Mauleverer—he knew that. But it was Hazel who had taken it from the "Holiday Annual" in Quelch's study; he was the fellow who had gone down from the Remove dormitory in the night. Smithy had strongly suspected it at the time; but

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,535.

on hearing that the scapegrace had not paid his racing debt he had dismissed the idea from his mind. It had never occurred to him that Lodgey, guessing that the banknote did not belong to Hazel, had refused to touch it. He knew now.

Lodgey watched him uneasily.

"I never 'ad it," he said. "I take my davy on that, Master Vernon-Smith. It was all over the young fool's face what he'd done. Think I'd touch it, when I knowed he'd pinched it as plain as if he'd told me? Not Bill Lodgey! If there's been a row up at the school they can't drag me into it. They can't say I touched it. I tell you, I put my 'ands behind me when he held it out to me! I wouldn't go near it!"

The Bounder laughed.

"I could guess that one!" he said. "Lodgey, old bean, I haven't found out what I came for—but you can wash all that out. I was making an idiotic mistake! Don't you worry; that banknote got back to its owner."

Bill Lodgey drew a deep breath of relief. It was clear that he had been very uneasy about that banknote.

"You got it back all right?" he asked.

"It wasn't mine; but the fellow it belonged to got it back. And he's got his reasons for saying nothin' about it. It's all right."

"I'm glad of that, at any rate!" said Lodgey. "I can tell you, I been wondering every day if there was going to be a row, and me dragged into it. That mad young fool—"

He resumed his cigar, in an easier frame of mind.

Vernon-Smith sat thinking.

He had been on the wrong track; he knew that now. No wonder Bob had cut up rusty that day! He had not been "rolling out lies," as the Bounder had believed. He had been denying an unexpected accusation that must have bewildered him.

Smithy's belief had been founded on the fact that Bob had "pinched" that tenner. Now he knew that Bob had not done so. He had, in some mysterious and inexplicable way, got it from Hazel!

Had he screened Hazel because the wretched fellow was Marjorie's brother? He was fool enough!

"Smithy!"

The Bounder started as his name was called, suddenly interrupting his thoughts. He leaped to his feet.

"What the dickens—" he exclaimed.

"Smithy! Where are you, Smithy?" came the calling voice, echoing among the trees and thickets, and the Bounder and Bill Lodgey stared round them in astonishment.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Bob!

"STOP! Cherry! Stop at once!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob in dismay.

Cycling, on the towpath by the Sark, was forbidden by the local by-laws. Those by-laws were often forgotten by fellows who were out on their jiggers.

This was not the first time, by a score or more, that Bob Cherry had forgotten. But it happened to be the first time that his Form-master had caught him in that forgetfulness.

Bob had covered miles and miles on his bike after leaving Marjorie Hazeldene at the gates of Greyfriars. He had gone far past Courtfield and Highcliffe, and he was coming back by way

of the towpath, on the Sark, as he had done a dozen times before.

As he came spinning along by the fence of the Three Fishers he had not the remotest idea that Mr. Quelch was anywhere within a mile or more.

But Mr. Quelch was!

Mr. Quelch, for the last half-hour, had been seated on the grassy bank, leaning back against the wooden fence, by the side of Mr. Prout.

Had he been walking on the path Bob would have seen him, and slowed down in time; but the two gentlemen seated under the fence were quite invisible, among the nodding hawthorns, until a fellow came abreast of the spot.

Bob was passing them, when Quelch's unexpected voice barked out at him, and he jammed on his brakes in dismay.

The Remove master rose to his feet, with a thunderous frown on his brow.

Mr. Prout remained seated. He had more weight to lift than the Remove master, and he left it where it was. Prout contented himself with a disapproving glance at the junior who was recklessly breaking the by-laws right and left.

But Quelch stepped out and fixed a gimlet eye on the dismayed Bob.

Quelch was waiting there to "cop" the breaker of bounds in the Three Fishers; but he was not the man to let any other delinquent pass unchecked.

"Cherry!" he rapped.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bob.

He stood holding his bike and blinking at his Form-master.

"You were riding your bicycle on this towpath!" said the Remove master sternly.

"Um! Yes, sir."

"Are you aware, or unaware, that such a proceeding is strictly prohibited?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I—"

"You were aware of it, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Bob.

"Then you were deliberately disregarding this just and salutary prohibition, Cherry?"

That was a beak's way of putting it!

"I—I—I forgot, sir!" stammered Bob.

"You should not have forgotten, Cherry!"

"I—I know, sir—"

"You will walk your machine the rest of the way, until you leave the towpath," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "and you will take two hundred lines, Cherry."

"Very well, sir!"

Bob wondered, rather savagely, what the dickens Quelch was doing there. It was quite an unexpected spot in which to discover his Form-master.

If the weary walkers wanted a rest he would not have expected to see them taking that rest in close proximity to such a resort as the Three Fishers. But there they were—and that was that!

It was a fair catch; and Bob had a long walk ahead of him, with two hundred lines to reward him at the end of it.

He rather wished that he had kept to the road—which, no doubt, was what his Form-master wanted him to wish!

Mr. Quelch was frowning—but his frown relaxed as he looked at Bob's rugged, honest, flushed face. This junior was, no doubt, an unthinking young rascal—but how different from the other young rascal whom he had seen clambering over that fence half an hour ago!

That reflection had an ameliorating effect on Henry Samuel Quelch.

"You must remember, Cherry, that laws are made to be respected, not to be disregarded," he said more kindly.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Bob.

"Have you seen Vernon-Smith this afternoon, Cherry?"

"Smithy, sir? Yes, he's playing cricket," answered Bob, surprised by the question.

But his surprise lasted only a moment. That question revealed to him why the Remove master was sitting under the fence of the Three Fishers.

"Playing cricket!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "You are sure of that, Cherry?"

"Oh, yes, sir! He took my wicket before I came out."

Mr. Quelch's brow cleared still more. He had a strong impression that it was Vernon-Smith of the Remove who had clambered over that fence. But he was more than willing to believe that it might be some other junior, and not a member of his Form at all.

"Oh! I am glad to hear that Vernon-Smith has been so harmlessly occupied," said Mr. Quelch. "You may go, Cherry! Walk your machine."

"Yes, sir!"

Bob walked on, pushing the jigger. Mr. Quelch resumed his seat by the fence, under the hawthorns.

Looking back a few minutes later, Bob could see nothing of him or of the Fifth Form-master.

"That ass!" muttered Bob.

It was not without reason that the two beaks had selected a spot where the hawthorns screened them from general view as they sat. It was not without reason that they were there at all. Mr. Quelch's inquiry revealed the reason plainly enough.

Some young sweep was suspected of being out of bounds, and they were waiting to collar him in the very act—as he came out.

And though Mr. Quelch was thinking now that it was very probable that it was not Vernon-Smith, Bob could not help thinking it quite probable that it was.

He had answered Mr. Quelch's question in good faith. Smithy had been playing cricket when he had last seen him—he had good reason to remember it, as Smithy had dismissed him for a duck. But that was hours ago. It was very likely that the practice match was over before tea, and it was now long past tea-time, and, in fact, getting towards lock-up.

"That silly ass!" repeated Bob.

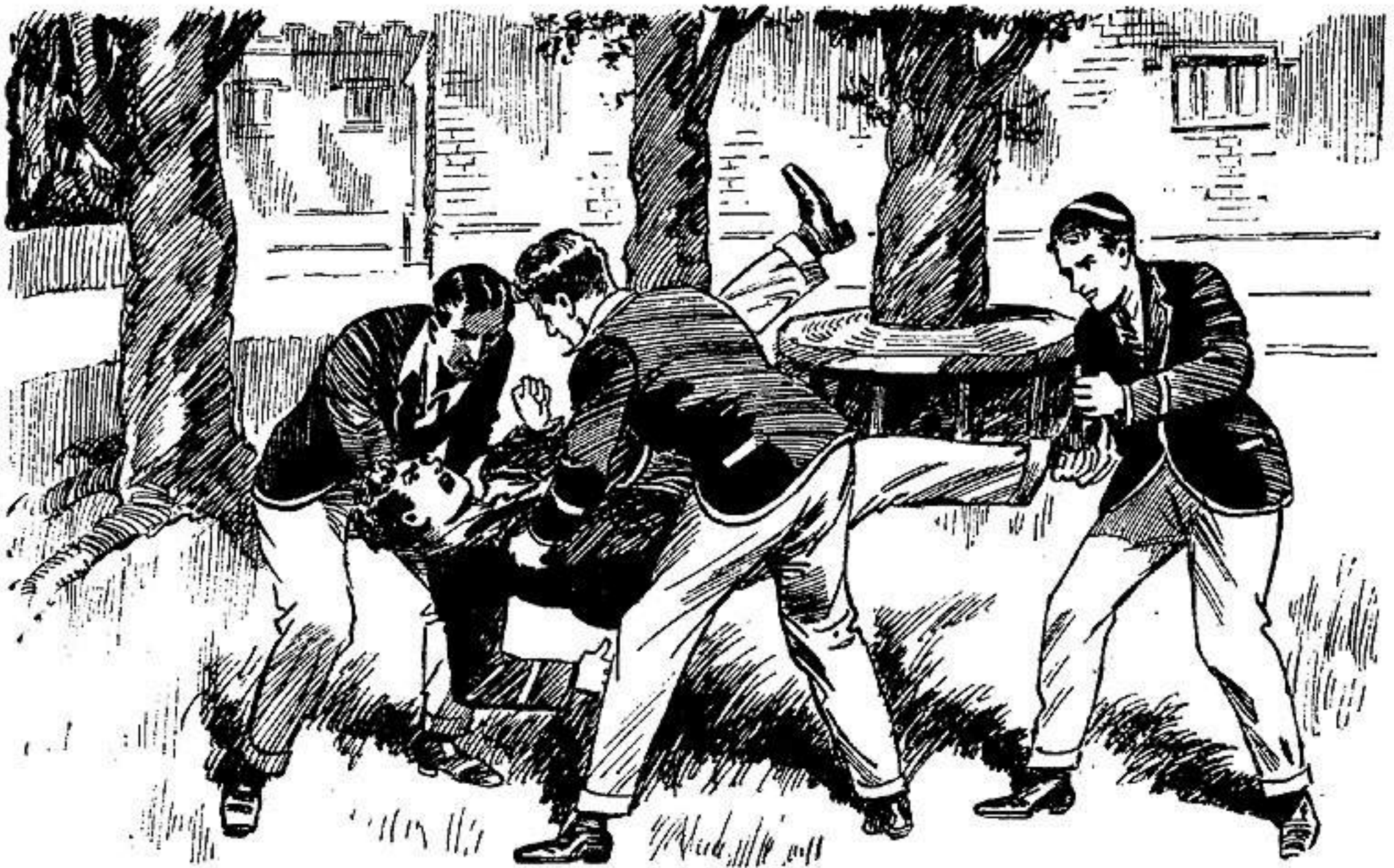
He tramped on, pushing the jigger, with a knitted brow. All the Remove fellows knew Smithy's manners and customs. As likely as not he had walked along to the Three Fishers after the cricket was over.

Quelch, clearly, knew that some fellow was there, and suspected that it was Smithy. And Bob had little doubt that he was right.

For Smithy's pursuits in the way of bad company, billiards and banker and poker, Bob had no sympathy whatever. He thought Smithy rather a dingy sort of rotter for dabbling in such things, as well as a reckless ass.

But any fellow booked for a row had Bob's sympathy. And in Smithy's case it would be a particularly bad row. He had sailed too near the wind many times, to hope to be let off lightly if he were caught. A Head's flogging was a certainty—and the "sack" extremely likely. Bob felt more and more worried as he pushed his jigger along the shining Sark.

Smithy was a bad hat—but he was not really a bad chap, in his own way. It was awful to think of Smithy getting sacked. He was wanted in the cricket, too—it would be a hard knock for Wharton to lose him. And only the



"Johnny's right!" said Harry Wharton. "Let's bump him for being right!" "Look here——" roared Johnny Bull, as his three chums turned on him and collared him. "I say—you silly chumps—look here—oh, my hat!" Johnny Bull was swung off the earth and bumped thereon with a heavy impact.

other day he had wanted to do Bob a good turn—though his fatheaded suspicions had caused the outcome to be a fierce scrap.

It was awful to think of that ass, that reckless fathead, dropping over that fence, or lounging out at the gate, right into the hands of his Form-master, to be walked off to the Head for judgment.

Bob pushed the jigger more and more slowly. Slowly, but surely, his mind was made up.

Smithy, no doubt, deserved the chopper to come down, from a school-master's point of view. But helping any fellow, friend or foe, out of a scrape, had always been Bob's way.

He turned from the towpath into a bridle-path through the wood, that led by winding ways to Oak Lane. Part of the rambling grounds of the Three Fishers abutted on that lane.

Being now off the towpath, Bob remounted his bike, and rode—and he rode hard and fast.

In a very short time he came out into Oak Lane, and jumped off his machine at a row of palings—broken and decayed here and there, with gaps in several places.

He shot a swift glance up and down the narrow, leafy lane, and then parked his bike in a clump of willows.

Then he stepped to one of the gaps in the palings.

He hesitated a moment or two!

Once on the wrong side of that fence he was as deep in the mud as Smithy was in the mire, if a master or prefect spotted him. And how the dickens was he going to find Smithy in that rambling place? And what a fool he was to butt in at all!

But his hesitation and his reflections were brief. Smithy was for it, if he did not get a tip in time—and Bob was going to give him that tip!

He squeezed through the gap in the palings, scrambled through the weedy

thicket beyond, and hurried across the ill-kept grounds, in the direction of the inn on the river!

The die was cast now!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape for Smithy!

"SMITHY!"

The Bounder set his lips as the calling voice echoed.

Bill Lodgey stared round, and then stared at his young friend.

"Some bloke calling you, sir!" he said.

"The fool!" muttered the Bounder. "What the dickens——"

"Smithy!" came the shout. "Smithy! Answer me if you hear me, you silly ass! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy!"

"Some friend of yours?" asked the mystified Mr. Lodgey.

"It's Bob Cherry's voice—nobody else has got a megaphone like that!" grunted the Bounder. "What the thump does he mean? Shouting out a fellow's name in a place like this——"

"Smithy!"

"Here!" shouted the Bounder. "This way, you fool!"

There was a trampling on a path in the ragged shrubberies.

Bob Cherry came into view, panting for breath.

Lodgey stared at him curiously. This was the fellow Vernon-Smith had described to him, with his blue eyes and mop of flaxen hair.

The Bounder eyed him savagely.

"You dummy!" he snarled. "What the——"

"Oh, here you are!" Bob came panting up. "Thank goodness I've found you, you silly idiot!"

"And what are you doing here?" sneered the Bounder.

For the moment, his suspicions re-

awakened, as he looked at Bob. What, after all, was Bob doing there, in a disreputable place out of school bounds?

"I'm looking for you, you dummy!" growled Bob. "Think I've come here to play billiards, or to back a horse, you silly owl?"

"Haven't you?" sneered Smithy.

Bob gave him a look.

"Well, I haven't come to punch your cheeky head again, though you're asking for it!" he said. "Get out of this, Smithy!"

"I'll please myself about that!" answered the Bounder, staring at him. "Who's asked you to butt in, I'd like to know."

"Don't you understand, you ass?" snapped Bob. "I suppose you came in from the towpath——"

"I don't see how you know."

"Oh, I could guess that when I saw Quelch there!" said Bob grimly. "I knew he was after some fellow; and when he asked me if I'd seen you, I could guess the fellow's name."

Vernon-Smith gave a start.

"Quelch?" he repeated.

"Yes; and Prout with him. Sitting under the fence, waiting for somebody to walk out!" rapped Bob. "I got round to Oak Lane, and squeezed in that way. I've been up to that putrid pub, and a man said you were in the grounds with Mr. Lodgey, so I came to look for you here——"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.

He breathed hard and deep. Utterly unaware that his escapade was spotted or suspected, he had intended to leave as he came; and now he knew that he was watched, and waited for outside the gate.

Cool and hardy as he was, the Bounder's brain almost swam as he realised how narrow his escape had been. He had plenty of nerve; and certainly he would have needed it all to

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1535.

face his Form-master in the act of leaving the most disreputable resort in that part of the county.

"By gum!" he said. "How the dickens did Quelch get on to it—he was out this afternoon with Prout—"

"He's there! If you want to walk into his paws, go ahead!" growled Bob. "I've tipped you what to expect—though I jolly well know that I oughtn't to have. I'm going!"

He turned with that and tramped away across the weedy shrubberies and thickets. He had not given Mr. Lodgey a look or appeared to be aware of his existence, though Bill Lodgey was watching him curiously all the time.

Lodgey grinned as he tramped away, and the Bounder stood breathing hard.

"That's the young gent you was talking about, Master Vernon-Smith?" he asked. "Young Cherry—what? He don't look like he was at 'ome 'ere, does he?"

"No. I was a fool! Wash all that out! By gum, if he hadn't tipped me—By gum, if I'd gone out by the river—"

The Bounder whistled.

"You better cut out by Oak Lane, same as that young gent," suggested Mr. Lodgey. "No 'arm done if you ain't seen. Get back afore your school-master blows in, and you're all right."

"What-ho!"

Vernon-Smith hurried after Bob Cherry, who was heading back towards Oak Lane as fast as he could tramp through the tangled shrubberies.

In a couple of minutes he sighted Bob again, and cut on at a run to overtake him.

Bob glanced, frowning, over his shoulder as the Bounder came breathlessly up. He was not sorry that he had chipped in to save Smithy from the result of his reckless folly; but he was irritated and disgusted by his surroundings, especially by the dingy Mr. Lodgey, with his aroma of tobacco and spirits and unwashed slovenliness. And he could not forget the risk of being spotted in such a place, and its consequences if it happened.

Smithy grinned at the expression on his face. He quite understood Bob's feelings. And he was amused, too, at the absurd mistake he had made in suspecting Bob of having fallen to the attraction of such places and pursuits. Had he not already realised that that was a mistake, he would have realised it now.

"Many thanks, old bean!" he said lightly, as he trotted by Bob's side.

Bob gave an angry grunt.

"I wasn't going to see you sacked, you silly fathead, if I could help it!" he growled.

"Why not?" grinned Smithy.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"If we're spotted getting out of this, we shall be sacked together!" said the Bounder, laughing.

"That seem funny to you?" rapped Bob. "For goodness' sake, shut up! Let's get out of it—quick!" Then he looked at Vernon-Smith again. "You must be an awful fool, Smithy, to play shady games like this! Where's the sense in it? You risk being turned out of the school for rot like this! Even Bunter's got more sense than that!"

"Thanks!"

"And you were ass enough to think that—" said Bob.

"Sorry, old man! I take back what I said to you the other day, when we got to punching! I had reason to think as I did—at least, I thought I had—and I thought you were telling lies about it."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—NO. 1,535.

I'd have put ten to one on it in quids, and I was wrong!"

"Oh! You've found that out, have you?"

"Yes; I've found that out."

Bob grinned faintly.

"You were an awful ass, Smithy! But—but I was sorry that I cut up so rusty! I told you so. You fancied I was in some putrid scrape like that cur Hazel. You really might have known better! Still, you did think so, and you'd have lent a hand if it had been so. It was jolly decent of you! Look here, hurry up!"

They reached the palings on Oak Lane.

The Bounder put his head through the gap and scanned the lane, up and down, carefully before he squeezed through. The coast was clear, and in a minute more he stood in the lane, and Bob stood beside him, both of them breathing more freely at being out of those dangerous precincts.

Bob Cherry hooked his bike out of the willows and swung it over to the Bounder.

"Jump on, and beat it!" he said.

"Your bike—"

"The sooner you're back the better. If Quelch finds you in when he blows in, he mayn't ask questions. All right for me; he doesn't fancy that I've been pub-haunting!"

"Tons of thanks, old chap!" said the Bounder. "You've done me a jolly good turn, and I'll make it up to you."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob.

Smithy laughed, put his leg over the bike, and shot away.

Bob Cherry followed him on foot, swinging along at a good pace.

But the Bounder was out of sight in a few moments, going all out for Greyfriars.

Bob arrived at the school gates only a few minutes before they were shut. He tramped in, wondering whether Mr. Quelch was still sitting on the bank under the hawthorns by the fence of the Three Fishers. It was probable that the Remove master would wait there till it was time for lock-up at Greyfriars; after which, of course, there would be no object in waiting longer.

When Bob came into the House, Vernon-Smith was standing in the doorway, talking to Tom Redwing and Peter Todd. They were talking cricket, and the Bounder certainly did not look like a fellow who had been out of bounds, and had had one of the narrowest escapes of his reckless career at Greyfriars. He gave Bob a wink as he passed and went in.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes a Discovery!

"ROT!" said Johnny Bull.

He said it with emphasis. Johnny never erred on the side of lack of emphasis. He was quite a decided youth.

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

In break, on Monday morning, Bunter was busy—very busy. He was seated on a bench under one of the old elms, slowly and carefully turning out every pocket in his various garments.

Every pocket was turned out to the lining, and every one was scanned, in turn, with a hopeful eye by the fat Owl of the Remove.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Not till he had spent ten minutes on that laborious task and examined every pocket with the greatest thoroughness, did Bunter give up hope

of discovering in one of them some coin that he had overlooked.

But, alas! there was no coin to be discovered. There was not even a bullseye, not a solitary aniseed ball. Most of the pockets were rather sticky. Bullseyes had been there at one time or another. But they were there no longer. Worst of all, there was no coin of the realm—not a shilling, not a sixpence, not a "brown."

Mrs. Mimble, at the school shop, had an enticing array of fresh, new jam tarts that morning—hence Bunter's meticulous search through his sticky pockets. But there was nothing doing!

And Bunter was sadly stuffing back the sticky lining when Johnny Bull's deep voice reached his ears, and he blinked round.

He did not see the speaker, however. The massive trunk of an elm was behind the bench. That trunk hid from his eyes the fellows who were talking.

It also hid Bunter from the eyes of those fellows. There were four of them, and they had come along the path and stopped to talk, unaware that a fat Owl was in the offing.

"Rot!" repeated Johnny Bull. "You can talk till you're black in the face, but it won't make any difference! Rot!"

"The rotfulness is not terrific, my esteemed Johnny!" murmured the voice of the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Look here, you ass—" began Harry Wharton.

"Don't be such a dashed mule, Johnny!" said Frank Nugent. "I tell you we're not going on like this with old Bob!"

"Please yourselves!" said Johnny Bull. "Leave me out! I've got no use for a fellow who pinches!"

Billy Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles as he heard that. It was one of Bunter's happy ways to listen to talk not intended for his fat ears. Now he listened with those fat ears stretched to their fullest extent.

Every fellow in the Remove knew that there was a rift in the Co. Many fellows wondered what was the cause of it, Billy Bunter most of all. Now it looked as if Bunter, by a happy chance, was going to get the news.

Bob Cherry was suspected of "pinching" by his former friends! There was no other meaning to Bull's words.

"Don't use that word, Bull!" came Harry Wharton's voice sharply.

"What do you call it, then?"

"The more I think of it, the more I'm sure that there's a ghastly mistake somewhere," said the captain of the Remove. "Bob couldn't and wouldn't do—"

"Facts are good enough for me!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm ready to give him a hearing as soon as he chooses to explain. Why doesn't he?"

"What's the good of asking that, fat-head? He won't, anyhow. But I tell you I can't and won't believe—"

"And I tell you you're an ass!"

"Look here—"

"Rot!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith came walking along under the elms, his hands in his pockets and a thoughtful frown on his face. He was coming towards the bench on which Bunter sat, and did not see the juniors on the other side of the big elm. But he saw Bunter, and, to his astonishment, the fat Owl made him a sudden sign to be silent.

Smithy stared at him blankly.

Bunter put a fat finger to his lips, blinking anxiously at the Bounder. He had heard enough to whet his curiosity, and he was anxious to hear more. But if the Co. discovered that someone was

(Continued on page 22.)

Interesting NEW FEATURE STARTS TO-DAY!

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



A TOUR OF GREYFRIARS (No. 1. THE GATES)

(1)
Take the hack from Friardale Station—
Half-a-dollar is the fare—
To your Greyfriars destination
(If it ever gets you there!).
Bruised and breathless, shocked and
shaken,
With a face as white as chalk,
You will own you've been mistaken,
And the next time you will walk!

(2)
At the Greyfriars gates arriving,
You'll descend on solid land,
Happy that you still are living
After all you've had to stand.
See the gates—they're strong and
massive,
Picturesque and handsome; but
Don't the brutes appear impassive
When you're late and they are shut?



AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

(1)
When we've finished with mathematics
There are amateur dramatics,
If you have a liking for that sort of
thing.
William Wibley's our producer,
Actor, star, and playwright, too, sir;
On the stage he's just as happy as a
king.
He's so often in disguises,
Bokoos, beards, and painted eyeses,
That we're not quite sure which is his
genuine face;
And we fancy just a leetle
He could make up as a beetle,
So we never tread upon one—just in
case!

(2)
Yes, he's very fond of staging
Famous dramas, and engaging
The Remove to play the less important
parts.
We've done Shakespeare's Julius
Cæsar
(When I wore a Roman beezer!),
Though we don't begin until the winter
starts.
Then we tried "The School for
Scandal,"
And no man could hold a candle
To old Wib's Sir Peter Teazle, as he
knows!
Though we're glad at the rehearsal
When the time comes for dispersal,
We all enjoy old Wibley's winter shows.

"Horresco referens" is Latin, they state.
It means, "I shudder to refer—"
So what do I mean when I relate
"Horresco referens to Horresco-Ker"?

(I shudder to refer to Horace Coker—
see?)

(3)
On the weather-stained stone column
There's a hefty iron bell,
And its note is deep and solemn
Like a goblin's funeral knell.
Let us ring it, and the porter,
With a gnarled and crusty grin,
Older than the bricks and mortar,
Slowly comes and lets us in.
(Next week we'll be inside.)

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET AUBREY ANGEL

(The Cad of the Upper Fourth)

A is for ANGEL. What a name!
Banker is his favourite game.
At billiards he is in good "cue";
He smokes and bets and gambles, too.
He can't go to the bad, you know—
He passed there many years ago.
And where he's got to now—my hat,
I simply can't imagine that!
This Angel lives, I understand,



With Lodgey in the Bird in Hand;
And soon, ere many days are sped,
He'll have his wings clipped—by the
Head!
And when his sneering face I see,
He'll have his ear clipped, too—by me!
Whatever happens, we shan't cry
When Aubrey Angel says "Good-bye!"

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

A quarrel between Skinner and Snoop
—faults on both sides.

A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

GREYFRIARS GRINS

Bunter loathes Cæsar. He would like
to punch his Roman nose for writing
the Gallic War. It's a pity, because
Cæsar would have simply loved Bunter.
Didn't he say: "Let me have men about
me that are fat"?

Mr. Mimble took nearly half an hour
to walk across the quad yesterday. He
said: "I can't walk fast now. I be get-
ting too old." Another reason was that
he was wearing new boots, and had for-
gotten to cut the strings.

Greyfriars is a very ancient building,
but the only parts of the Norman monas-
tery still in existence are the Cloisters,
the crypt, the old wall, Gosling, and
the slab of hardbake in Mrs. Mimble's
window.

PUZZLE PAR

Can you read this cryptic
sentence?

FAULTS. SKINNER.
QUARREL. SNOOP. FAULTS.

(Answer at foot of column 2.)

There was a picture in last week's
paper of a postcard just delivered after
twenty-seven years in the post. This is
not, however, a record, as a certain
postal order has been in the post since
the Flood, and has not arrived yet.

What's the difference between a stony
Bunter and a rich Bunter?

One longs to eat and the other eats
too long.

What is it Mr. Prout doesn't like, but
would hate to lose?

His bald head.

Tom Brown is having three days off
to go and see the New Zealanders play
cricket. Later on, it is believed that
the New Zealanders will return the com-
pliment by having three days off to come
and see Tom Brown play cricket.

WATCH OUT for SPASM No. 2 of the GREYFRIARS GUIDE Next Week!

within hearing, obviously they would not go on talking on such a very private matter. So the fat Owl was anxious that Smithy should not reveal his presence there. Smithy was welcome to join up, and hear what Bunter heard, so long as he did not make a sound and spoil sport, as it were.

The Bounder could only stare, wondering whether Bunter had gone off his rocker. Then, as a voice came from the other side of the tree, he understood.

"We can't go on like this!" Harry Wharton was speaking. "Everybody's noticed that there's a row on, and lots of fellows are curious to know what it's about. If anybody should guess—"

"Can it!" called out Vernon-Smith.

There was a general exclamation on the other side of the tree. Four faces appeared in view, round the massive trunk.

Smithy chuckled.

"Talking private matters?" he asked.

"Did you know Bunter was there?"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry.

"Oh, you beast, Smithy!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

Four juniors came quickly round the tree. Four ferocious glares were fixed on the fat Owl of the Remove.

"You fat rotter!" breathed Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You eave a dropping worm!" exclaimed Frank.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

The Bounder, laughing, walked on.

Billy Bunter would have been rather glad to follow. He did not like the looks on those four faces at all. But as he rose from the bench, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave him a shove, and he sat down again, suddenly and hard.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, I wasn't listening, you know! I never heard a word you fellows were saying. Besides, if you come jawing where a fellow's sitting, how can he help hearing?"

"Then you heard?"

"Oh! No! Not a syllable!" said Bunter promptly. "I never knew you were there, till Smithy called out! I haven't the faintest idea why you've been rowing with Bob Cherry! I don't believe he would pinch, either!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. Evidently Bunter had heard—and letting Bunter know, was letting the world know.

"Besides, I shan't tell anybody, of course!" said Bunter. "I never heard anything, and I shan't tell anybody what I've heard."

"You fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Bull! But I say, you fellows, what did he pinch?" asked Bunter eagerly. "A cake, or something?" Billy Bunter's fat thoughts ran naturally to cakes.

"A cake?" repeated Harry blankly. "You blithering idiot!"

"Well, what was it, then?" asked Bunter. "You can tell a pal, you know. Of course, I shall keep it dark! Was it a pie?"

The four juniors exchanged glances.

Bunter had heard the word "pinching." But the banknote had not been mentioned. Bunter was not even beginning to think of that banknote.

The affair of Mauleverer's banknote was already forgotten in the Remove, except by certain members of the Form who had only too much reason for remembering it. That banknote had turned up, in Mauly's possession, from which the Remove fellows had naturally concluded that it had never been lost or "pinched" at all. Billy Bunter had forgotten all about it days ago. Neither

had any fellow, except the Co. and Smithy, thought of connecting Bob Cherry's name with that missing banknote. Bunter's mind, on that subject, was evidently a blank—which was a relief. The Bounder's interruption had come fortunately—for there was no doubt that, had Bunter heard more, he would soon have been in possession of the whole story.

"A pudding?" asked Bunter, blinking at the four juniors, as they gazed at him speechlessly. "Was it a pudding?"

"Oh, slaughter him!" said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—leggo!" roared Bunter, as four pairs of hands grasped him, and grabbed him off the bench.

"Bump him!"

"I say—yaroooh! I say, I wasn't listening—I never heard a word!" yelled Bunter, struggling frantically. "'Tain't my fault if Bob Cherry pinches your tuck, is it? I say—yoo-whoop!"

Bump!

"Oh crikey! I say—"

Bump!

"Ow! Beasts!" roared Bunter.

"Leggo! I say, you fellows, I won't tell anybody! I won't breathe a word! I won't say—Yarooooh!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow! Oh crikey!" spluttered the fat Owl. "Leggo! If you fellows don't leggo, I'll go to Quelch! I'll go straight to Quelch and say—Beasts! Rotters! Leggo, will you?"

Bump!

"Oooooooh!"

Bunter sat and roared, and the four juniors walked away, and left him to roar. Which the fat Owl continued to do till the bell rang for third school, and he was still gasping and spluttering when he rolled into the Remove Form-room.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants a Whack!

"**B**OB, old fellow!" Bob Cherry, when he came out with the Remove after third school, felt his sleeve clutched by a fat and grubby hand.

He glanced round, and down, at Billy Bunter—and did not seem fearfully bucked by the fat junior's friendly, indeed, affectionate, greeting. In fact, he shook off the fat hand, and grunted.

"What do you want, fathead?" he asked.

Bunter closed one eye at him mysteriously.

"I know all!" he whispered.

"Eh?"

"I know all!" repeated Bunter, in the same mysterious and thrilling whisper.

This, in the best style of a thrilling talkie, ought to have impressed Bob Cherry. Properly speaking, he should have started, or turned pale, or clasped his hand to his forehead, or something in that line.

But he didn't! He simply stared at Billy Bunter, as if wondering whether the fat junior had gone off his rocker.

"Mad?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, if you're not batchy, what are you driving at?" demanded Bob.

"Beast! I mean—look here! I jolly well know what you've been up to," said Bunter. "See? I'm not going to give you away—I wouldn't! They're keeping it dark—"

"Eh? Who—what?"

"Oh, don't make out you don't know!" yapped Bunter. "Your pals are keeping it dark, or it would have been all over the Remove before now. I

never knew anything about it, till I happened to hear them talking in break this morning."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

He understood now. The Peeping Tom of Greyfriars had got on to the secret. Evidently the Co. had been talking about it, and Bunter, in his usual way, had lent a fat ear.

The look that came over Bob's face as he understood, made Billy Bunter jump back, like an active kangaroo.

"I—I say, don't get shirty, old man!" he urged. "I'm keeping it dark. I know why your pals turned you down now—he, he, he! Nothing to get ratty about, old chap! I'm not down on you. I've done the same thing myself at times, and I jolly well shouldn't call it pinching. Rotten word to use, in my opinion. Bull—all over! Beast, isn't he?"

Bob had lifted a hand, with the intention of grabbing Bunter's neck, and banging his head against the nearest hard object. Now he dropped it again, in sheer astonishment.

"You've done the same thing?" he gasped.

"Lots of times!" said Bunter. "If a fellow hides tuck away from his friends, I don't see why a fellow shouldn't help himself!"

"Tick-tick-tick-tuck!" stuttered Bob.

Bunter winked again.

"What's the good of pretending to be surprised when I tell you I know all about it?" he remonstrated. "I know what you did, and I think it was pretty thick to turn you down for it. You've whacked out with them often enough."

Bob could only gaze at him.

"But what I mean is," continued Bunter, "if you've still got it—"

"Got it?" repeated Bob, like a fellow in a dream.

"Yes, if you've still got it, whacks out is only fair," said Bunter. "After all, it's not yours, if you pinched it!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.

It dawned on him that, although Bunter had heard something, he could not have heard all.

It was impressed on his fat mind that Bob's chums had turned him down on a matter of "pinching." He was not thinking of that old story of the banknote. He never even dreamed of connecting that with Bob Cherry. His fat thoughts were running in their usual groove.

When Bunter annexed a cake, or a pie, as he very often did, there were fellows who called it "pinching"—a most unjust description, in Bunter's opinion. Bunter had no doubt that this was a case of the same kind.

Bob, as he realised it, grinned.

"Was it a cake?" asked Bunter, blinking at him with eager inquiry. "I know Wharton had a cake from home on Saturday. Those cakes his Aunt Amy sends him are jolly good. Was that it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

It was a great relief to find that Billy Bunter did not know the facts. And the idea that he was suspected of having pinched tuck, in Bunter's own style, made Bob roar.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "If it wasn't that cake, what was it? It was something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you can cackle," yapped Bunter, "but I jolly well know! And if you want me to keep it dark, you're going to whack out, ee? If Wharton wanted to keep that cake to himself, he's a greedy pig! You've whacked out with him often enough, and he



"I say——" said a fat voice. Marjorie Hazeldene was holding out her hand to Bob Cherry, when a fat figure rolled into view. "I say, I hope I'm not too late for the picnic," said Bunter. "I suppose you've only just got here, Marjorie, as you're shaking hands with Bob!"

might have whacked out with you. Look here, have you still got it, or not?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob. "Did Wharton have a cake on Saturday? First I've heard of it, old fat man!"

"Then it wasn't that?" asked Bunter. "Well, what was it, and when was it? What I really want to know is, have you still got it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes or no?" rapped Bunter, blinking at him wrathfully. "I know it was the middle of last week that you had your row with them, so perhaps it wasn't that cake on Saturday. But it was something. Look here, Bob Cherry, what was it you pinched?"

"You blithering bloater!" said Bob. "I haven't pinched anything. Now shut up before I kick you!"

"Well, that's rot!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Bull said quite plainly that it was pinching. The other fellows, from what I could make out, were prepared to overlook it and make friends again. But Bull——"

"That's enough, fathead!"

"Was it something of Bull's?" asked Bunter hopefully. "I suppose that would be it, as he was the fellow who was keen on keeping up the row. I know Bull had a pineapple last week. Was that it? Look here, if there's any left——"

"You blithering, bloated bloater——"

"You can call a fellow names!" said Bunter scornfully. "But if you've been pinching tuck from Study No. 14——" Bunter backed away again. "Keep off, you beast! I tell you, I'm not down on you! I've done the same thing myself, when greedy pigs wanted to keep tuck to themselves—a thing I never would do! But I think you might let a pal have a whack in it—I really think that!"

"You really want a whack?"

"Yes, rather, old chap!" said Bunter eagerly. "I think it's only fair, if I keep it dark, you know. I think it's jolly rotten of them, to get their backs up over a thing like that! Mean, I call it. I don't see why you should bother about keeping it dark, either. Still, you can trust me to keep mum. I say, was it that pineapple?"

"No!" gasped Bob.

"Not Wharton's cake?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"A pie?" asked Bunter.

"No, not a pie!" gurgled Bob. "Sure you want a whack, Bunter?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter. "I say, what is it, and where is it? Shall we go up to the studies?"

"Yes, come up to my study, and I'll give you a whack!" said Bob.

"Come on, old chap!" said Bunter.

The fat Owl followed Bob up to the Remove.

Having had nothing to eat in break, Bunter was fearfully hungry, and dinner seemed an awfully long way off. A whack in Bob Cherry's plunder, whatever it was, was more than welcome to Billy Bunter, in the present vacant state of the inner Bunter.

It was not, apparently, Johnny Bull's pineapple, or Wharton's cake from home, or a pie! But whatever it was, Bunter was anxious to see it, if it was eatable—as he had no doubt that it was.

He rolled into Study No. 13 after Bob, with eager eyes behind his big spectacles.

To his surprise, Bob Cherry, instead of going to the study cupboard, stepped to a corner and picked up a cricket stump.

Bunter blinked at that stump in surprise as Bob turned towards him.

"What's that for?" he asked.

"Didn't you say you wanted a whack?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Here you are!"

WHACK!

"Yooo-hooo—hoop!" roared Bunter, jumping clear of the floor of Study No. 13.

"Why, you beast—yoo-hoop! Wharrer you up to?"

"Giving you a whack——"

"Ow! Beast!" howled Bunter. "I never meant——"

"I did!"

"Keep off, you beast!" yelled Bunter. Whack!

"Oh, you awful rotter! Ow!"

Bunter jumped for the door.

Bob Cherry stepped after him and swiped again with the cricket stump as he went. It came across the tightest trousers at Greyfriars, with a sound like beating carpet.

Whack!

"Yarooooooooooooop!"

Billy Bunter did the Remove passage as if it were the cinder-path. Bob flourished the stump from the doorway of his study.

"Come back when you want another whack, Bunter!" he roared.

"Ow! Beast!"

Bunter vanished. Clearly, he was satisfied, more than satisfied, with the whacks he had received.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Meeting!

"SMITHY here?"

"No!" said Redwing.

"Wait a bit, will you?"

Four juniors looked into Study No. 4 in the Remove, after class that day. They came in, all of them looking puzzled.

"Look here, Smithy asked us to come here and said he had something to tell

us!" granted Johnny Bull. "If he's not here—"

"Oh, we can wait a bit!" said Harry Wharton. "Know what Smithy's up to, Reddy?"

Redwing smiled.

"I fancy he's got something to tell you that you'll be jolly glad to hear!" he answered. "He won't be long. There's one or two other fellows coming."

"But what's it about?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Smithy will tell you."

"Jolly mysterious!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The mysteriousness is terrific!" remarked Hurre Jamset Ram Singh.

"Who are the others that are coming?" asked Nugent.

"They won't be long," said Redwing, with a smile. "Squat down and help yourselves to the ginger-pop."

The four juniors sat down, puzzled. However, they helped themselves to the ginger-pop, which was grateful and comforting on a hot July day. Smithy, for some utterly unknown reason, had asked them to come there, and they had naturally expected him to be there when they came. They could not begin to guess what it was all about, and they were rather curious to see who the "other fellows" were who were to attend that rather mysterious meeting.

Redwing shut the study door. He produced a dish of jam-tarts and chocolate eclairs. Smithy, it seemed, had expected to keep his callers waiting a little, and had thoughtfully provided light refreshments.

Ten minutes later there was a tap at the door, and it opened to admit another Remove man.

It was Bob Cherry who came walking in, and he was fairly inside the study before he saw that his former friends were sitting there.

He stopped dead and stared at them. They stared at him.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt. The other three were silent. All of them were surprised, and all felt uncomfortable. Bob Cherry reddened.

"Where's Smithy, Redwing?" he asked gruffly.

"Coming up in a minute or two! Take a pew, old man!"

"Look here, leave that door alone—"

Tom Redwing stepped past Bob and shut the door. Then he smiled, and stood leaning with his back on it. It seemed that he felt it necessary to guard the exit now that the Famous Five were all gathered in the study.

Bob, after the first surprised stare, did not look at his former friends. He gave Redwing a grim look.

"Look here, Smithy asked me to come here," he said; "he told me that he had something special to say."

"He has!" assented Redwing.

"Well, why isn't he here to say it, then?" grunted Bob. "I'm not going to stick here."

"Only a few minutes, old chap! Smithy's got to bring another fellow along," explained Redwing. "It won't hurt you to wait a minute or two."

Bob grunted. It was echoed by another grunt from Johnny Bull. Johnny rose to his feet.

"I think I'll be getting along," he remarked.

"Stick where you are, old chap!" said Redwing.

"Don't be an ass! Let me get out of this!"

"Smithy wants you—"

"Smithy can go and eat coke!"

Redwing turned the key in the lock, took it out, and slipped it into his pocket.

All the five stared at that proceeding in far from pleased astonishment.

"Look here, what's this game?" demanded Bob restively. "I don't want to hang on here, Reddy!"

"I don't, either!" said Johnny Bull.

"Shell out that key, Redwing!"

Redwing shook his head.

"Wait for Smithy!" he said.

"You silly ass—"

"All serene! Blow off steam if you like, but wait for Smithy!"

Johnny Bull breathed hard. There was no way of getting out of the study unless he grabbed Redwing and ex-

tracted the key from his pocket by force. Annoyed as he was, Johnny did not think of taking that drastic step. He sat down again, with an expressive snort.

Bob Cherry stepped to the window and stood looking out, his back to his former friends. They sat in discomfited silence.

What was the meaning of this they could not guess—unless it was some fatuous attempt at peace-making on the part of the Bounder. But that certainly did not seem probable. Smithy was about the last fellow at Greyfriars to butt into a quarrel on those lines. He was more likely to be cynically amused by seeing them at loggerheads. The Bounder was not often good-natured—and he was never fatuously and fussily good-natured.

But there they were, and there they had to wait, wondering what the dickens Smithy was up to, and feeling strongly disposed to bump him on his own study carpet when he did arrive at last.

Footsteps came up the Remove passage, and Redwing quietly produced the key and turned it back in the lock. Bob turned his head at the window. All eyes were fixed on the doorway, to see the newcomer.

To the general surprise, when the door opened, it was Hazeldene who walked in, followed by the Bounder.

The latter immediately shut the door after him.

Hazel stared round.

Clearly, he had not the faintest idea that the Famous Five were in the study, and was greatly surprised to see them there. Smithy seemed bent on surprising one fellow after another.

"What the dooce—" began Hazel.

Bob turned to the window again. If he felt uncomfortable in the presence of his old friends, Hazel's presence made him feel still more so. He set his lips as he stared from the window.

"Are you going to tell us what this fatheaded game is, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton, very quietly.

"Just goin' to!" answered the Bounder, with a cheery nod.

"Let me get out of this!" growled Johnny Bull.

He rose from his seat.

"Stick there, please!" said the Bounder.

"Well, I won't!"

Smithy turned the key in the lock, and put it in his pocket, as Redwing had done.

Johnny Bull eyed him grimly. He had not wanted to handle Redwing; but he was not unwilling to handle the Bounder, if it came to that.

"Open that door!" he said.

"Rats!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Hold on, Johnny!" said Harry Wharton. "If Smithy's got something to say, let him get it off his chest! Buck up, Smithy!"

"I think you'll be glad to hear it, the lot of you!" said the Bounder cheerfully. "Even Bull, fathead as he is." He grinned. "Except, perhaps Hazel!" Hazel gave him a black look.

"Look here, what's this game?" he snapped. "You said you had something to tell me. I didn't expect to find half the Remove here!"

"They're all mixed up in it," explained Vernon-Smith. "It concerns every fellow present, except Redwing—and Redwing knows all about it."

"Well, get down to brass tacks, for goodness' sake!" said Nugent. "Blessed if I ever expected you to act like a tactless ass, like this, Smithy!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Not so tactless as you fancy," he said. "I'm not acting Good Little

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Georgie, who reconciled naughty boys when they quarrelled. You could row and rag as much as you liked, and I should only think you a set of fools, but—"

"But what?" rapped Wharton.

"But this is a pretty serious matter," said the Bounder. "Added to that, Bob Cherry did me a good turn on Saturday; and I told him I'd make it up to him. Now I'm going to."

"What the dickens do you mean, Smithy?" exclaimed Bob, turning from the window impatiently. "Looks to me as if you're making a fool of yourself!"

"I'll tell you what I mean," said the Bounder quietly. "Your friends think that you pinched Mauleverer's banknote. I know you didn't! And I think it's up to me to put them wise!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Liveliness!

A DEAD silence followed the Bounder's words.

Every fellow in the study stared at him.

For a moment or two a pin might have been heard to fall.

Harry Wharton broke the silence.

"Do you mean that, Smithy?"

"Every word!"

"If it's true, nobody will be gladder to hear it than I!" said the captain of the Remove. He turned to the silent junior at the window. "Before Smithy goes further, Bob, I want to say this—whether Smithy knows anything about it, or not, I believe the same as he does! I was a bit knocked over at first, and I can't understand it now, and I don't think you ought to have mystified us as you've done; but I don't believe, and never did really believe, that you'd pinch anything—and the other fellows say the same!"

"Same here!" said Frank Nugent, at once.

"The samefulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull did not speak. His face grew grimmer and grimmer.

"Thanks, you fellows!" said Bob quietly. "I can't blame you for thinking as you did, and I don't blame Bull now for thinking as he still does. The thing had to be explained, and I couldn't explain it—and can't now! What Smithy's got in his mind is a mystery to me."

Hazel was standing dumb.

It was news to him that Bob's comrades suspected him. He had fancied that their row had something to do with the affair of the banknote, but it certainly had not occurred to him that they suspected him of having "pinched" it. He could not imagine what had put such a suspicion into their minds. So far as he knew, Bob had no connection with the banknote at all.

Why the Bounder had brought him here to hear this he could not guess. But a fear was in his heart of what was coming next. A guilty conscience needed no accuser.

He made a movement towards the door.

"Stand back, Hazel!" said Vernon-Smith.

"This has got nothing to do with me!" muttered Hazel huskily. "I don't want to hear anything about it!"

"Dash it all, Smithy, what did you bring Hazel here for?" exclaimed Nugent. "Do you want to spread it all over the Remove?"

"Hazel won't say a word outside this study!" said Vernon-Smith. "He's got his reasons!"

"Let me out of this, Vernon-Smith!"

Hazel's voice was shrill. "I tell you I won't stay here!"

"And I tell you that you will!" said the Bounder grimly. "Unless you want me to speak to Quelch, instead of these fellows!"

Hazel staggered.

"What do you mean? What—"

"You'll know what I mean soon enough, you worm! Stand where you are till I get through!"

Hazel looked at him almost wildly. He stood where he was, leaning a hand on the study table for support.

"What has Hazel got to do with it, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton.

His face was startled as he read the unmistakable terror in Hazel's looks.

"Lots!"

"I don't see—" began Johnny Bull.

"Plenty of things you don't see, and some that you won't see!" retorted the Bounder. "I suppose you fellows want to hear the facts?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"I'll hand them out, then! Bob had that banknote. You fellows knew it, and I guessed it. We all supposed that he had pinched it. We—"

Hazel gave a sort of yelp.

"Cherry had it?" he panted.

"Yes! You didn't know that!" grinned the Bounder. "Don't be a fool, Hazel! Your game's up now, and you may as well tell the truth!"

"I never knew. I don't believe—" Hazel felt as if his head was turning round. "How could he have had it?"

"That's enough! Now, I don't know what you fellows fancied that Bob bagged that tenner for," continued the Bounder; "but my idea was that he had been dabbling in gee-gees, over his depth, and owed money to some outsider like Lodgey—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "What utter rot!"

"Rot, as it turns out," agreed Smithy, with a grin; "but at the time the only thing I could think of. When Mauly showed it up I knew that Bob had given it back to him; and that, I suppose, left him where he was—short of cash—"

"You silly owl!" grunted Bob.

"Then," added the Bounder cheerfully, "I weighed in—to help a lame dog over a stile, as I supposed—and when Bob denied that anything of the sort was the case I thought he was lying and said so, and we had rather a row—"

"Oh," said Nugent, "that was why—"

"That was why," assented the Bounder. "And, still believing that he was humbuggin', I went to see a man on Saturday to get at the facts and show up his lies and make him take them back—"

"Look here—" roared Bob.

"Easy does it, old man!" chuckled the Bounder. "I've owned up that I was makin' a fatheaded mistake, haven't I? And in lookin' for evidence against you I found out who really had bagged that tenner—"

Hazel made an inarticulate sound.

Bob started and fixed his eyes on Smithy.

"You found out—what?" he exclaimed.

"The facts!" said Vernon-Smith. "I know now who pinched that banknote from Mauleverer's 'Holiday Annual,' and I'm going to give the name. That's what the present merry company is assembled for. You know best why you've been keeping it dark, but I'm letting it out—right out."

Bob looked at him, his face whitening. How did the Bounder know? How could he know?

Before Bob's eyes rose the vision of that nightmare scene at the Head's study window—Marjorie Hazeldene's slim hand drooping over the window-sill, the stolen banknote fluttering down. If Smithy knew— At the cost of his own good name, at the cost of losing his friends, Bob had kept the secret. How did Smithy know?

"And the name?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bob made a stride forward.

"Stop!" he panted.

"My dear chap—" drawled the Bounder.

"Stop, I say!" panted Bob hoarsely. "You—you don't know! You can't know! But—but if you do—silence! Silence! Do you hear? If you dare to mention that name—"

"I'm certainly goin' to mention it, you silly ass! What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed the Bounder testily. "Do you want your friends to go on thinking you a thief, when I can tell them whose hand pinched that banknote out of Mauly's book—"

"Hold your tongue!" roared Bob.

The other fellows in the study gazed at Bob Cherry in blank amazement; even Hazel almost forgot his own terror for a moment in his astonishment.

"Cherry," exclaimed Tom Redwing, "don't be a fool—"

"Bob, old man," exclaimed Wharton, "if Smithy knows—"

"I do know," said Smithy coolly. "That fool Cherry has been taking it on himself to screen the real pincher—quixotic ass!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob. He had no doubt now that Smithy knew—after those words Smithy knew. But, at any cost, he did not want him to utter what he knew. "Hold your tongue, Smithy! Do you hear? It's false—false—false! You're a fool, a rotter, a rascal, to think anything of the kind! If you've found it out, hold your tongue, I say! Don't say a word! By gum, I'll smash you—"

His clenched fist was shaken fairly in the Bounder's astonished face.

Smithy gazed at him, amazed—indeed, confounded.

"Mad?" he gasped.

"Bob—" exclaimed Nugent blankly.

"My esteemed Bob—"

"My dear chap," gasped Redwing, "Smithy's going to clear your name to your friends! Don't you want that?"

"No!" roared Bob. "What does my name matter, you fool? I don't want it cleared! I don't care a straw! Let them think what they like! Smithy, if you've found it out—goodness knows how—keep quiet! Haven't you a rag of decency? If I can let my friends think me a thief, can't you hold your tongue about what doesn't concern you?"

Vernon-Smith stood looking at him, too amazed to speak.

"Keep quiet, old man." Bob's angry roar changed to a tone of pleading. "It wasn't as it looked, because it can't have been. You must see that! You can't be such a cad, such a rotter, as to think it was—was—" Bob gulped. "That it was pinching—"

"Mad as a hatter!" said the Bounder. "You know it was pinching as well as I do, Bob Cherry!"

"It was not!" roared Bob. "You're a rotten rascal to think so for one moment! Hold your lying tongue!"

"Well, this beats me," said Vernon-Smith blankly. "Beats me hollow—"

"Look here, shut up, Bob!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "If Smithy knows, let him speak—"

"You shut up!" snapped Bob. "No

bizney of yours, Johnny Bull! You wanted to keep on believing that I'd pinched that rotten banknote when the other chaps got it into their heads that I hadn't! Well keep on believing it! What do I care? Mind your own business!"

"That's not fair," said Johnny quietly. "If a fellow can't account for having another fellow's money in his pockets, any sensible chap must believe that he pinched it. But Smithy says he knows who took that tenner out of the 'Holiday Annual,' and that it wasn't you. Well, I want to know, too."

"We all want to know," said Harry Wharton.

"And we're going to know!" said Frank. "Who was it, Smithy?"

"Hold your tongue Smithy!" panted Bob.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped the Bounder. "I've brought these fellows here to tell them, and I'm going to tell them. It was——"

He got no further.

Bob Cherry came at him with the spring of a tiger hitting out right and left.

The Bounder, with a yell of rage, went staggering back to the door under a rain of blows.

"Stop him!" gasped Redwing.

"Bob——"

"You mad ass——"

The juniors rushed to intervene.

The Bounder's hands were up and his eyes blazing. He gave blow for blow fiercely and savagely; but he was knocked right and left, and he sorely needed the aid that came to him.

Five pairs of hands grasped Bob Cherry and dragged him back from Vernon-Smith by main force.

Smithy staggered against the door, panting for breath; Bob struggled furiously in the grasp of the Co.

"Let me go!" he roared.

He wrenched and struggled, and it was not easy for even five fellows to hold him. But the odds told, and he was held and dragged back across the study. In spite of his fierce efforts, the juniors held him back.

"Now give us that name, Smithy!" rapped Harry Wharton.

The Bounder panted.

"Hazel!" he said.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Thanks to Smithy!

BOB CHERRY was struggling desperately.

Careless of all things but one, he was striving with all his strength to get loose, to stop the Bounder by any means before he could utter the name—the name of Marjorie Hazeldene!

But as Smithy spoke Bob's struggling ceased.

He hardly believed his ears for a moment.

He became suddenly limp in the grasp of the juniors who were holding him back; he stared across at the panting Bounder.

"Hazel!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes!"

"Hazel!" said Bob. He stared, and then he laughed. "You can let me go, you dummies; I'm not going to touch him. He can say that it was Hazel if he likes." And he laughed again with relief.

The juniors released him.

Bob moved away to the window, evidently having no further desire to keep the Bounder silent.

Hazel, leaning on the table, did not speak; he gave the Bounder a look of rancorous hatred, that was all.

Vernon-Smith set his collar and tie straight. That brief struggle had been hard and fast, and he was gasping for breath. He was angry, but he was more amazed than angry.

"This has got me beat!" he said. "Unless Cherry's gone mad, I'm not beginning to understand. He seems to have thought I was going to give some other name—goodness knows whose! Are you potty, Cherry?"

"Think so if you like!" granted Bob. "You fool, you said you knew——" He broke off.

"I do know!" snapped the Bounder. "And I know why you were quixotic fool enough to keep it dark—because that worm is Marjorie Hazeldene's brother."

"Bob," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "you wouldn't—you couldn't be such a fathead—such a silly ass——"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Bob. "Think I'd let fellows think me a thief to save that cur, if he were a thousand times Marjorie's brother!"

"Then why the thump did you let them think so?" exclaimed the Bounder. "If that wasn't the reason, what was it?"

"Find out!"

"Anyhow, you knew!" said Vernon-Smith. "I suspected it from the first, but Hazel gammoned me. I suspected that he was the fellow who went down from the dorm in the night, to pinch that banknote from the book in Quelch's study, because he owed Bill Lodgey ten quids he couldn't pay——"

"You rotter!" panted Hazel. "You got the man on the phone, and he told you I'd never paid him. You admitted it——"

"And that satisfied me at the time," sneered Smithy. "But I've seen Lodgey since then. I saw him on Saturday, and got the truth out of him. You never paid him, because he was afraid to touch a stolen banknote."

Hazel gave a gasp.

"You offered him a ten-pound note, and he wouldn't touch it," said the Bounder. "It was the day after a fellow went down from the dorm in the night. Whose tenner was it?"

Hazel did not speak.

He could not.

"Hazel had that tenner," went on the Bounder. "He pinched it to pay Lodgey, but never parted with it, after all, because the man knew it was stolen, and told him to put it back where he'd got it. And as Bob had it afterwards, and gave it back to Mauly, he must have got it from Hazel. And all I could think was that he took on the job of getting it back to Mauly, to screen that cowardly cur. Anyhow, it was Hazel pinched it."

Bob Cherry stood dumbfounded.

But the other fellows were looking grimly at Hazeldene. The wretched junior's nerve had utterly broken, and he was trembling from head to foot. His face was like chalk, and beads of perspiration oozed on his forehead. If ever guilt was written in a human face, it was written in Peter Hazeldene's—writ large!

"Well?" rapped Wharton.

Hazel tried to speak, but only a husky gasp came.

"If you've anything to say——" said Harry.

"I—I——" Hazel stammered. "It—it's not true! If Cherry had the banknote, he never had it from me! He will tell you so!"

"Bob——" began Nugent.

"I—I never had it!" muttered Hazel, through his white lips. "It—it's a rotten lie!"

"Cut off at that!" interjected the Bounder sharply. "Whose tenner was it you offered to Lodgey?"

"I—I never——"

"That does it! You pinched that tenner, and you're going to leave it on Cherry, if you can. You've got a chance now to own up, and keep it among ourselves. But if you stick to that, it goes before Quelch."

Hazel's knees knocked together.

"Mark that!" said the Bounder grimly. "If you leave this study without admitting that you pinched that tenner out of Mauly's book, Hazel, you can keep it up to Quelch afterwards—if you've got nerve enough. You'll want some nerve to keep it up if he inquires of Lodgey——"

"You rotter!" groaned Hazel. "You cad! You know I daren't face Quelch! I—I——" He leaned heavily on the table, unable to stand upright. "I—I don't care! I—I never kept it. Mauleverer's got it back. I—I meant to put it back. I went down to Quelch's study to put it back the next night, only he handed the book over to the Head, and I couldn't get at it."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. "That's plain enough," he said.

"The plainfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But where does the esteemed and idiotic Bob come in?"

"Cherry comes in as a quixotic ass who undertook to get the tenner back to its owner," said Vernon-Smith.

"Is that it, Bob?" asked Johnny Bull, in a very subdued voice.

The Bounder looked at him.

"There's something in this that I don't understand," he said. "I knew that Hazel was the pincher, so I could only suppose that Bob had got on to it somehow, and made him hand over the banknote, to be given back to Mauly. If that wasn't it, it's got me beat."

"Will you tell us, Bob?" asked Harry quietly.

Bob did not answer. He was trying to think this out; but his brain was in a whirl. Hazel had confessed to the "pinching"; he had had the banknote. Then what did that scene at the Head's window mean? With his own amazed eyes he had seen Marjorie drop that banknote from the Head's window. It seemed to Bob that his brain was spinning. Through his confusion of mind, Hazel's bitter voice came to his ears:

"You fool! You fool! So you had it! You fool! It was you picked it up, then! That was why I never found it! You meddling fool! That's why you've been down on me, you fool! Under the Head's window that day! You knew what I was looking for! I see it now! You picked it up when Marjorie——"

Wharton jumped.

"Marjorie," he exclaimed, "what on earth had Marjorie to do with it?"

"Hold your tongue, Hazel!" breathed Bob. "You mad fool, be quiet!"

"What does it matter now?" snarled Hazel. "They know, don't they, owing to that meddling cad, Vernon-Smith? I meant to put it back. I tried to put it back. Marjorie will tell you so, if you ask her."

"Does Marjorie know?" asked Harry.

"Of course she does!" snarled Hazel. "She had a message for Dr. Locke that day, so she was able to go to his study. I gave her the banknote to put back in the Annual there. She stood by me. She knew I wasn't—wasn't—wasn't what you think I am. She tried to get me out of that awful scrape. If the Head hadn't happened to come back to his study that rotten banknote would have been put back in the book, and found there when it was looked for, and it would have been all right."

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "But—but the Head nearly spotted it, and she had to drop it out of the study window," groaned Hazel. "As soon as she told me I hunted for it, but it was gone. And now I know that that fool—"

"Oh!" repeated Bob. He understood at last. "That fool must have seen it and picked it up, and—"

The Bounder grinned. Bob Cherry's face had brightened, like the sun coming out at noonday.

"So that was it?" said Smithy. "That was the name you fancied I was goin' to spout, Cherry? Marjorie's—"

"You said you knew, and I thought you did!" snapped Bob. "I knew that that cur had bamboozled Marjorie, somehow, into touching that banknote. I—I thought perhaps he'd told her it was his, or something of the kind. I knew anyhow that Marjorie was all right. But—but if any fellow had known, he might have thought—"

"You old ass, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "I think it's pretty clear now. You saw Marjorie—"

Bob nodded. "But you didn't think—" exclaimed Nugent.

"Of course I didn't, fathead! I thought Hazel had got her to take the banknote from the book by telling her some rotten lie or other! How was I to guess that she was there to put it back? I never knew it was missing. He might have told her it was his—might have told her anything. But I knew what it looked like, and what fellows would have thought—"

"Don Quixote up to date," grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob. "I wasn't going to say anything—I know that. Think I was going to have Marjorie's name talked up and down the school? I'd have been sacked first, if it had come to that!"

"And you let us think—"

"What was I to let you think, if you were fools enough?" grunted Bob. "If I'd known how it was, that Marjorie was trying to put it back to save that cur's bacon, but I never knew that—"

"You might have told your pals," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Thank goodness it's cleared up, anyhow!" said Harry. "Nothing's going to be said outside this study, Hazel. But get out!"

Smithy opened the door, and Hazel slunk out of the study without another word.

The Bounder winked at Tom Redwing, and strolled out into the passage, and Tom, smiling, followed him.

"Thanks, Smithy!" called out Bob, as the Bounder went.

"One good turn deserves another, old bean," drawled the Bounder, over his shoulder.

"I say, I—I'm sorry I—I—" stammered Bob.

"That's all right; I'm goin' to bathe my nose!"

The door closed on Smithy and Redwing, and the Famous Five were left alone in the study.

"All serene now!" said Harry.

"If you're sure—" said Bob, rather sarcastically.

"We were sure before this, Bob, and we told you so," said the captain of the Remove quietly.

"I wasn't," said Johnny Bull, calmly. "I am now, but I wasn't before. I'm sorry I never knew the facts; but I don't see that I was to blame for not knowing them, when Bob preferred to keep them to himself."

"You silly ass—" said Harry.

"I'm talking sense!" said Johnny, stolidly. "If I'd known that Marjorie was mixed up in it, of course, I might have guessed that Bob was playing the goat. I never knew that! All I knew was that a chap had another chap's banknote, and refused to explain how he got it. I'd have believed anything Bob told me—but he never told me anything. So I was quite right! I'm glad it's come out, of course—jolly glad! But I was right—"

"You're always right, old chap," said Nugent. "We bumped you for it the other day. Now we'll do the same again. Collar him!"

"Look here—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, laughing. "Johnny can't help being right; he was built that way. Let it go at that!"

And it was let go at that, and the Famous Five, once more happily reunited, left the study together.

It was about an hour later that Johnny Bull, who had apparently been doing some slow and serious thinking, came up to Bob and tapped him on the arm.

"Sorry, old chap!" he said.

"Eh?"

"I've been thinking it out. Perhaps I was a bit of an obstinate ass. Sorry, anyhow!"

And that was that!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

And All Was Calm and Bright!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Scat!"
"I'll come!"
"Rats!"

"Not that I care much about the picnic," explained Billy Bunter. "I never did care much for eating, as you fellows know—not always guzzling, like some chaps I could name. But as my pal Mauly's coming—"

"Hook it!"
"Beast!"

William George Bunter seemed disinclined to hook it. His eyes, and his spectacles, were fixed on a large picnic basket, carried by Bob Cherry. Billy Bunter was not likely to part company with that picnic basket, if he could help it.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the Famous five were waiting outside the House for Lord Mauleverer to join them. Evidently, there was going to be a picnic, and Bunter's idea was that to be a real success a picnic needed his presence.

"I say, you fellows, be sports, you know," he urged. "I jolly well know you're picnicking with the Cliff House girls. Well, you can't leave me out. Think of them!"

"Just what we're doing, old fat bean," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I mean to say, they'll hardly enjoy it if I'm not there," urged Bunter. "You might be considerate, considering that they're girls! I'll tell you what—I'll carry the basket. It looks jolly heavy."

"It would soon grow lighter if you carried it."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, it would be safer with me," said Bunter. "I wonder you trust Bob to carry it, when only the other day you were rowing with him for pinching your tuck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You were rowing for days, over Bob pinching your tuck—"

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

Billy Bunter was still under the impression that the rift in the Co. had been due to tuck being missing. The chums of the Remove were quite willing to leave him under that impression.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Mauly!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as his lordship came out of the House. "Get a move on!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Give Bunter a boot!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter; and he retreated, without waiting for the boot.

Lord Mauleverer was smiling cheerily as he joined the Famous Five. His good-natured lordship was glad to see that the trouble was over. He had been rather severely down on the Co. while it lasted, but now that it was over he was his cheery and amiable self again.

Nothing had been said to Mauly of what had passed in the Bounder's study. All he knew was that Bob's chums had got rid of that miserable doubt from their minds. That was enough for Mauly. There had never been any doubts in his own noble mind.

"I say, Mauly—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

Mauleverer glanced round.

"You don't want to leave me out, do you, old chap?"

"Yaas."

"Beast!"

Lord Mauleverer chuckled, and walked off with the Famous Five.

On the way to the gates Bob Cherry paused.

His eyes were on a Remove fellow loafing sullenly by the elms. Bob glanced at his friends, reddening a little.

"What about asking Hazel to join up?" he asked.

"Oh!"

"After all, the poor brute's been through it," said Bob.

"Um!"

"I fancy Marjorie would be pleased." Harry Wharton laughed.

"In that case, of course, there's nothing more to be said," he remarked.

"Go and bag him, if he'll come."

Bob swung across to the sullen-faced lounge, Hazel eyeing him sulkily as he came up. But it was difficult for even the sullen, sulky Hazel to resist Bob's beaming good-humour.

"Join up, old bean," said Bob. "Topping picnic in the old priory; best of grub, and best of company—"

"You don't want me!" muttered Hazel.

"My dear chap, the wantfulness is

terrific, as Inky would say. We've got a big plum cake—" said Bob temptingly.

Hazel grinned, in spite of himself.

"And tons of jam roll—"

"Fathead!"

"And ginger-pop galore—" urged Bob.

"Come on, Hazel!" called out the captain of the Remove.

And Hazel, hesitating, came!

Hazel, as a matter of fact, was likely to forget what he had done before the other fellows could forget it. But Bob had made up his mind to make the best of Marjorie's brother—and his friends backed him up. And Hazel brightened a good deal as he walked out of gates with the happy party.

Bob's face was beaming. That picnic party had been specially fixed up that half-holiday by Bob's friends, on Bob's account. Whether Marjorie had noticed anything, during those days of dark doubt and worry, Bob did not know—but he hoped that she hadn't. Anyhow, Marjorie and Clara had agreed to come to the picnic, so that was all right!

By the shady paths in Friardale Wood the Greyfriars juniors reached the old priory, where Bob dumped down the basket.

Marjorie and Clara had not yet appeared; and the picnic basket was unpacked and all was ready by the time two graceful forms appeared in the ancient gateway.

Bob shot across to meet them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "I say, I'm awfully glad you could come—"

"So you've got over it?" asked Miss Clara.

"Eh—what?" stammered Bob.

"You had your back up about something—"

"I—I hadn't—"

"Bow-wow!" said Miss Clara. "Think I didn't know? So did Marjorie! Didn't you, old bean?"

Marjorie coloured.

"Nonsense, Clara!" she said.

Miss Clara laughed, and ran on into the priory, and joined the cheery party at the camp.

Marjorie lingered in the old gateway, and Bob remained with her. His face was red.

"I—I say," he stammered, "I never—I mean, I wasn't—I hope you don't think—I mean—that is—"

Marjorie smiled softly.

"Hazel's told me!" she said.

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"I never knew, that Saturday, that—that you'd seen—" Marjorie's voice was low, her cheeks crimson. "Oh, Bob, what could you have thought?"

"Nothing!" said Bob quietly. "I was knocked over, Marjorie—fairly knocked over, and thought I must be dreaming.

But you can't think that I fancied for a single instant that you—"

"But what did you think?" breathed Marjorie. "You saw me—I know now—drop that banknote out of the study window, and you knew it was Mauleverer's. What could you think?"

"I just couldn't think at all!" said Bob. "I tell you, I was flummoxed. But as for thinking that you would do anything wrong or mean, I'm not such a fool as that. I kept it dark because—because fellows who didn't know you like I do might—might—"

"And you let your friends believe—"

"Well, that couldn't be helped, in the circumstances," explained Bob. "I—I wasn't going to mention your name, of course. I—I own up I kept away from you, because—I—I was afraid you might spot something. I couldn't face you, with that awful scene in my mind. But if you think I doubted you for a single instant—"

"You must have had a lot of faith in me, Bob, if you didn't."

"Well, so I have—lots!" grinned Bob.

"And—and, I say, don't let it worry you too much about—about old Hazel! He must have been a bit off his chump, I think—and he tried to set it right—and—and— Look here, Marjorie, wash it right out of your mind, see?"

Marjorie smiled.

"I'll try!" she said.

Impulsively she held out her hand to Bob. It disappeared in Bob's, which was about twice as large.

"I say—" said a fat voice.

The clasped hands dropped as Bob and Marjorie looked hurriedly round.

A fat figure rolled out of the path in the wood into the old gateway of the priory. Billy Bunter bestowed an ingratiating smirk on Marjorie.

"I say, I hope I'm not late," he remarked. "I suppose you've only just got here, Marjorie, as I saw you shaking hands with Bob—"

"Eh! Oh! Yes!"

"Then the picnic hasn't started! Good! I was afraid I might be late. The other fellows started first," explained Bunter. "You can cut off, Bob—I'll bring Marjorie along. You're not much of a ladies' man, old chap. I say, Marjorie—"

Smitten with sudden deafness, Miss Hazeldene turned her back on Billy Bunter, and walked into the priory with Bob.

Bunter rolled on behind.

The picnic party gave him expressive looks as he arrived. Bunter grinned at them affably. In the presence of Marjorie and Clara he was safe from being booted out. A more cordial welcome than that was not necessary to Bunter.

He sat down, grinning.

However, it was quite a happy picnic, in spite of the addition of the fat Owl.

The Famous Five were in the best of spirits, Lord Mauleverer amiable and almost jolly, even Hazel bright and cheerful.

After it was over Billy Bunter rolled over to Bob Cherry and drew his attention by jabbing a fat thumb into his ribs.

"Now, look here, Bob—" he said impressively.

"You fat ass—"

"We're going to see the girls home!" said Bunter. "Now, just take my tip, and don't barge in, see? I'm going to see Marjorie back to Cliff House! If you had any sense, you'd see that that's what she wants; and if you haven't you can take it from me. Don't barge in, in your fatheaded way! Got that?"

Bob grinned.

"Quite!" he said. "And now—got that?"

"That" was a jam tart! Bunter got it! As Bob plastered it on his fat face, Bunter could not help getting it. He got it—and it was very sticky!

"Urrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Wurrgh! Beast! Ow! You silly ass! I'm all sticky! Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter clawed at jam. He was still clawing and dabbing at jam when the picnickers walked out of the old priory.

Marjorie did not have the pleasure of Bunter's company on the way back to Cliff House. But it was possible that, in spite of Bunter's misgivings, she was quite pleased with Bob Cherry's. At all events, she looked as if she was.

THE END.

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THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE!

By DICKY NUGENT

Mee-ow! "There's that blessed cat again!" snorted Jack Jolly. "Why duzzent someone drown it?"

"Here, here!" corussed Merry and Bright and Fearless. Jack Jolly felt aggrieved, and his chums quite agreed!

Prep time at St. Sam's was usually very quiet and peaceful. But recently a feline wailing had been notissable, nite after nite, as soon as the fellows had settled down to their labours. Jack Jolly & Co. were beginning to feel that they had just about had enuff of it!

It had a disastrous effect on their work. In one instance, whilst doing arithmetick, Jolly had solemnly reckoned out that twice two were three. Without the disturbing wailing of that cat he would have known full well that twice two were five.

On another occasion Fearless had stated in his history paper that William the Conqueror was so called because he was always biffing people on the conk. If only it had been peaceful and quiet he would easily have remembered the right answer—that William was called the Conqueror because he collected such a lot of conkers.

Mee-ow! Miow-ow-ow-ow-ow! Meeeee-ow!

"Oh crikey!"

"It's getting worse and worse!" groaned Fearless. "We can't put up with this much longer, you fellows!"

"No fear!"

"I vote we find out whose moggy it is," said Jack Jolly, rising. "Then we can tell the owner to keep it indoors while we're doing our prep. Coming along, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

And the rest of the Co. followed their leader out of the study, their faces grim and determined. They felt it was high time they registered

their feelings about this unfeeling feline.

They tramped the length of the Fourth Form passidge and clattered down the stairs, quite eggsppecting that the cat's wailings would lead them out of doors.

Much to their surprize, however, they found the trail leading them away from the front door of the House, and their surprize changed to amazement when it evenchally took them to the last place they had thought of.

It was Doctor Birchemall's study!

Jack Jolly & Co. stopped outside that dreaded sanktum and looked at each other in sheer amazement. They could hardly beleve their ears. Yet there could be no possibl doubt about it. The meowing was coming from the Head's study, right enuff!

"My hat! Fanny Doctor Birchemall taking to keeping pussycats in his old age!" eggslaimed Merry.

"Perhaps this eggspains something he was telling us the other day about his college days!" grinned Bright. "He boasted that at sport he was always 'scratch' man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As the juniors larked the meowing ceased suddenly. The next moment the door was flung open and Doctor Birchemall appeared. Jack Jolly & Co. stared when they notissed that he was holding in his hand a fiddle.

The Head frowned majestickally as his eyes fell on the Co.

"Boys! What do you think you're doing of? What is the meaning of this here?"

"Please, sir, we heard a lot of shreeking like a cat being torched!" eggslaimed Jolly. "We came downstairs to find out what it was all about, and we found



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HEATED SCENE AFTER ICE-CREAM GIFT!

Bunter Sues Bolsover

Matters of great interest to the legal fraternity were discussed in a breach of promise case in the Remove County Court on Tuesday.

Percy Bolsover, described as puglist, was sued by W. G. Bunter for breach of a promise to give Bunter one ice-cream. The point at issue was whether or not Bolsover had honourably discharged his obligation by stuffing the ice-cream down the back of Bunter's neck.

Mr. Peter Todd, K.C., for complainant, said that the facts were not in dispute. On the previous Saturday, at a spot near the school tuckshop, Bolsover had asked Bunter where Skinner was. Bunter agreed to tell him on the promise of an ice-cream and had duly fulfilled his part of the contract. But when it came to Bolsover's turn, instead of treating Bunter to an ice, as required by the contract, he had deliberately clapped a handful of ice-cream on to the back of Bunter's neck and allowed it to melt down inside his clothes.

At this stage Mr. Harold Skinner, K.C., for respondent, rose and asked whether his lordship considered it necessary to waste any more time over this piffing little matter. Bunter had been promised an ice-cream and had been given one. What if he had been

given it on the neck instead of in it?

Judge Brown: "You'll get it in the neck yourself, Skinny, if you don't sit down and let Toddy finish!"

Proceeding, Mr. Todd said that by custom and usage the promise of an ice-cream meant the promise of an ice-cream to eat—not to wash one's back with. He submitted that Bunter should be awarded the case with costs on a generous scale.

Mr. Skinner, in reply, said that the arguments of his learned friend were a lot of absolute tommy-rot. Why the dickens should anybody assume that an ice-cream was given away for the sole purpose of eating?

Even accepting that assumption, however, Bolsover was still quite in order. There was, after all, every reason to assume that Bunter would eat the ice-cream if it was placed down the back of his collar—because Bunter invariably talked out of the back of his neck! (Loud laughter.)

Giving judgment, Judge Brown said that it went against the grain to award the case to a chap like Bolsover, but he couldn't help being impressed with the logic of his counsel.

The verdict would be in favour of the respondent with costs.

DO WE NEED LESSONS IN MANNERS?

"No!" Says HARRY WHARTON

Certainly not! Manners should come from within. They can't be taught like history or geography. They are the outward expression of an inward feeling of consideration for other people.

Lessons in manners might possibly put a smoother exterior on rough diamonds like Bolsover or Johnny Bull. (No offence to either!) But what would be gained? A chap of Bolsover's calibre has rough-and-ready manners because that's just how he happens to be. If he had to curb his natural bluntness and put on a veneer of unnatural politeness, his bottled-up feelings would be bound to find an outlet somewhere else. And probably that outlet wouldn't be so harmless.

Anyway, Greyfriars men all raise their hats to ladies and observe a recognised standard of social behaviour. Surely Smithy can't seriously maintain that we really need lessons in manners?

"YES!" SAYS H. VER-NON-SMITH.

Oh, can't I? Well, Wharton, that's just where you're wrong!

You look on manners in the narrowest sense; what you're thinking of is not manners at all, but etiquette and deportment, as taught in dancing classes. If you think I'm advocating lessons like that you're up the wrong tree altogether!

I'm thinking of manners in a broader sense. I take it to mean conduct generally—and I'm jolly sure most of us need lessons in that!

The only code of conduct we pick up at a place like Greyfriars is to treat all those above us with awed respect and the rest of the world with ill-concealed contempt.

The one unforgivable sin is to do something that isn't "done."

Oh, for a few lessons in real manners—taught by people who know nothing about Greyfriars, but plenty about life outside!

BULL-FIGHTING A BARBAROUS SPORT!

Remove Committee's Unanimous Verdict

The only demonstration of bull-fighting on record in this district took place last Wednesday, when Vernon-Smith, once again enhancing his reputation for originality, staged a fight with a nasty-looking bovine specimen in a field off Friardale Lane.

This gory affair was the result of an argument between Smithy and Wharton in the Common-room. Wharton held the opinion that bullfighting was barbarous, while Smithy maintained that it was a highly civilised sport. Just to prove his point, Smithy offered to try his luck as a matador, using a cricket-stump, instead of a sword.

A committee of Remove sportsmen agreed to watch the "fight" and decide who was right. The committee sat in a tree overlooking the field. The spectators watched through gaps in the hedge. Smithy entered the arena, wearing a red sash and waving a red rag.

Considering he had never been a matador before, he put up a jolly good show. Most of the fellows were firmly convinced that he wouldn't stay

in the ring ten seconds. But they were wrong.

He stayed exactly 11½ seconds by Bob Cherry's stopwatch!

In that brief period he performed two feints, a somersault and a roll, and covered a distance of approximately fifty yards on foot. He finished up by doing a high jump over the top of the hedge, with the bull's horns only a few inches away from the seat of his trousers.

The committee's verdict was unanimous.

They decided that bullfighting was a barbarous sport and ought to be stopped at once—for the sake of the prevention of cruelty to matadors!

that the sounds were coming from your study!

"From my study? Why, you must be potty, Jolly—or mentally deranged, as the vulgar mite put it! I wouldn't dream of allowing a cat in my sanktum!" Then the Head started, and a blush suffused his countenance. "Are you sure the noise came from this study?"

"Positive, sir!"

"Ahem! I—I suppose you couldn't possibly have mistaken the vibrant notes of this violin for the meowing of a miserable moggy!" wrapped out the Head.

"Oh crumbs!"

"I will play you a few notes and you will see!" said the Head, sternly; and he lifted his violin to his shoulder and drew the bow lightly across its strings.

Mee-ow! Miow-ow-ow! Meeeee-ow!

"Oh, my hat! That's it, sir!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Sorry, and all that! We thought you must be tortechering a cat; but it turns out that you're merely tortechering a fiddle! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Doctor Birchemall skowled fiercely. He grabbed his violin and made a rush.

"I'll teach you to scoff at your headmaster, you disrespectful yung cubs!" he cried. "Take that! And that! And that!"

"Yarooooo!"

Jack Jolly & Co. did not feel like stopping to argue with the bizzness end of a violin. They turned tail and fled, with the Head pursuing them to the end of the passidge. And they didn't stop running till they were safely back in their own study.

"Yo gods!" eggslaimed Fearless. "Sure it's not your wealthy grandfather, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's my wealthy Uncle George," went on the Head, ignoring Fearless' yewmorous suggestion. "He's a funny old fossil with a passion for mewick. And he's always been under the impression that I am a mewickian myself, with a jenuis for playing the violin. Tally-vo!"

"I fancy I see, sir," chuckled Jolly. "You want to get on the right side of him so that you'll get left—in his will!"

"Eggactly, Jolly! And to do that, it is necessary that I should give him the impression that I am a really ripping fiddler."

"But how can you do that, sir?" cried Fearless. "Your violin playing is vile in our opinion."

The Head sighed.

"I know, Fearless—I know. It was a strange trick of fate that I should have practised the violir so doggedly—and yet it reminded you

of a cat! It is that circumstance that impelled me to think out a wheeze whereby I can give my uncle the idea that I am a better mewickian than I really am!"

"What's the wheeze, then, sir?"

"I will tell you. I want you boys to hide yourselves underneath my study winder in the bushes this afternoon—with a gramophone and a record of a violin solo which I shall give you."

"Oh, grate pip!"

"When you here me say 'Let me give you a tune on the violin, nunky,' you to put on the record immediately. I shall then stand by the open winder, weelding my bow, and the mewick from the gramophone will appear to my uncle to come from my instrument. See?"

"Well, you've got a nerve, sir, and no mistake!" said Jack Jolly. "Still, you've stood us a feed of topping jam tarts; and one good turn deserves another. We'll do it!"

"Thanks, Jolly!" grinned the Head. "Now for the gramophone and the record!"

He then handed the kaptin of the Fourth a small portable gramophone and a record and the chums of the Fourth went off, grinning.

Jack Jolly & Co. were the first fellows out of the dining-hall after dinner that day. They had tucked themselves away below the Head's winder long before anybody appeared.

After a brief interval they heard the Head come trotting into his study. Another pawse and they heard the Head's voice eggslaim: "Hullo, nunky! Awfully glad to see you!"

After the first eggexchange of condiments, the juniors could soon tell that the Head's uncle was a peppery old gentleman and as keen as mustard on mewick.

"Got the record ready?" hist Frank Fearless, as he saw Doctor Birchemall appear near the winder, holding his violin.

"Ready, I, ready!" grinned Jack Jolly.

He whipped out the record to place it on the turntable.

And then a garstly thing happened.

Fearless put up his hand to scratch his nose—and his elbow collided with the all-important record and smashed it to smithereens!

"Oh, grate pip!"

"Sorry!" gasped Fearless.

"That's done it!" groaned Jack

