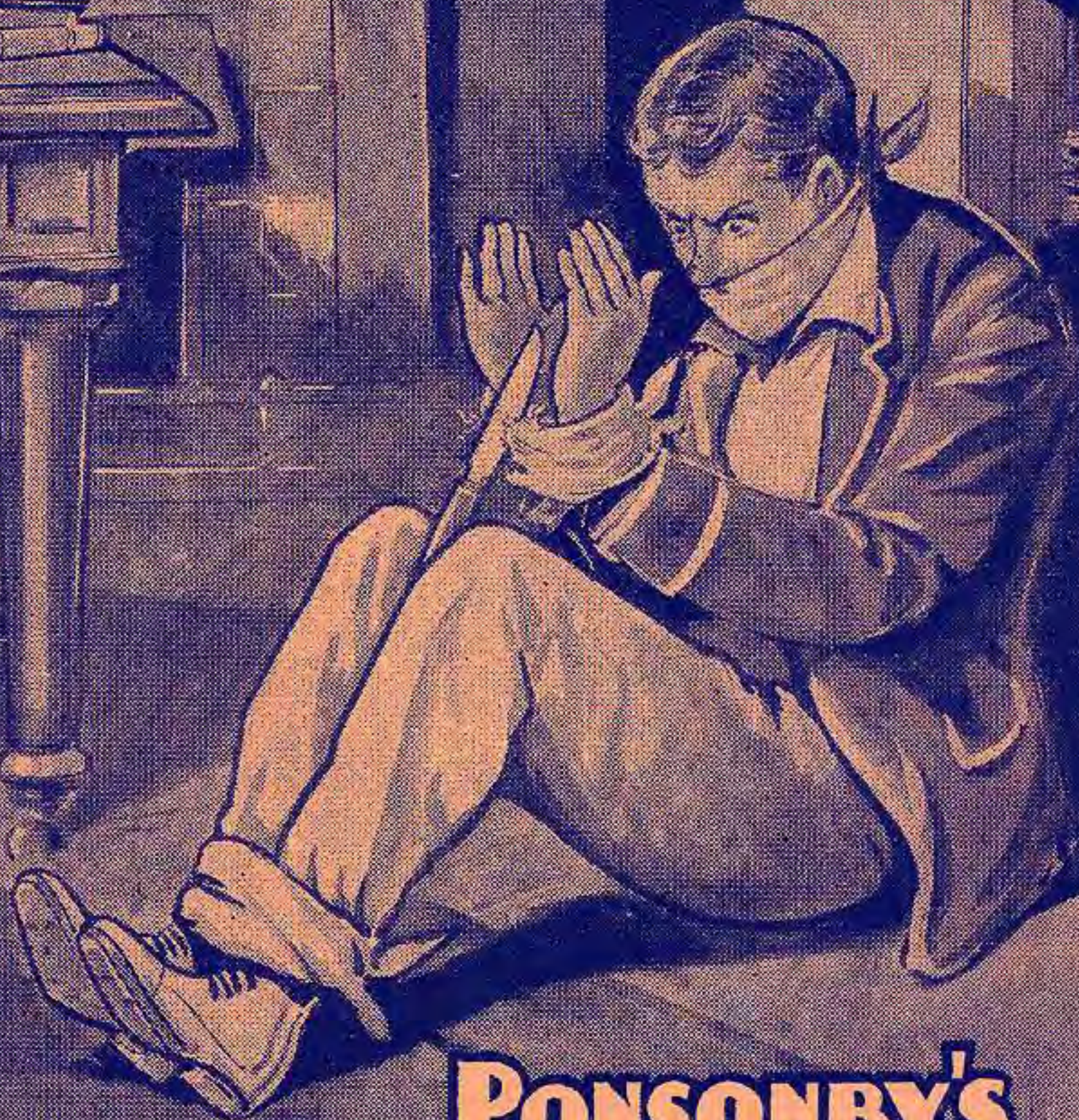


HARRY WHARTON & Co. in Another Exciting School Adventure!

The Magnet ^{2^D}

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



**PONSONBY'S
PRISONER!**



**THIS WEEK BY
PAUL PROUT, M.A.
Master of the Fifth Form.**

"I N console Planco," as the saying goes, I edited my school magazine. I will not pretend, Mr. Editor, that it was a journal anything like yours. It was published—well, when it WAS published; which was when the perspiring editor could get hold of enough copy. The price was sixpence, and the printing was done by a firm which specialised in tradesmen's circulars. If my memory is correct, the circulation was something like fifty copies, and if there was a deficit in the accounts—or should I say, when there was—it was made good from the scanty pocket-money of the wretched editor.

So I sympathise with you, sir, in your task of editing a boys' magazine. It must be nearly as trying as teaching a boys' class. I may mention, as a rather personal matter, that before I took the Fifth Form at Greyfriars—and even before the boy Coker entered it—I had a remarkably luxuriant head of hair. I believe I am right in saying that it was a subject of general admiration. As soon as I was brought in contact with Coker I began to shed it like leaves in autumn. I defy—yes, sir, I defy anyone to spend a term teaching Coker and still retain either his hair or his sanity.

I thank you for submitting to me the cartoon you intend to publish. It is not a flattering production, and, indeed, savours rather of impertinence, coming from a Lower School boy. None the less, I will not veto its publication, since it is evident that the drawing is meant to be good-humoured rather than offensive. But it must be clearly understood that this permission does not embrace other unsponsored caricatures from anyone else at Greyfriars.

In this sketch I appear to be on the point of slaughtering a creature which has some remote resemblance to a bear. This has reference to a fact which may not be known to your readers—that when I was a younger man I achieved some fame as a hunter of bears in the Rocky Mountains.

I cannot recall off-hand how many of these ferocious creatures fell before my gun like chaff before the reaper; but your readers will readily imagine that such a pastime could not be pursued without con-

siderable personal danger. It cannot fail to interest them to hear of some of my hairbreadth escapes from destruction. (It was bound to come, fellows! Grin and bear it.—Ed.)

THE "BEAR" FACT!

Let me see, it must be nearly forty years ago that I came to a log-cabin in a place which for the moment has slipped my mind, to stay the night with a friend whose name I do not now recall, for some purpose

which, at the moment, I cannot remember. We had killed a fine moose in the pine forest and had cooked part of the creature for supper, after which we lay in our bunks, smoking and yarning far into the night. Suddenly my friend said:

"Prout!"

"Well?"

"There's a bear outside. He's sniffed that moose."

I listened; but all I could hear was an occasional splash from the beavers in the river. So I laughed and replied:

"Nonsense! There's no bear within forty miles of here."

Just to make sure, I got out and flung up the pine-log bar on the door, and before you could articulate "Jack Robinson" an immense bear shambled in and sniffed round for the moose.

Now, I am prepared to tackle an unlimited quantity of bears in the open; where there is room to move; but to be shut in a twelve-foot log-cabin with a bear between me and my rifle, is rather a different matter. I prefer to have the rifle between me and the bear. My friend rather lost his nerve for the moment. Not to put too fine a point on it, he uttered a word which I have forgotten and streaked out of the cabin, banging the door behind him.

This was worse than ever, for the cabin was now pitch dark, and I could hear, by his snorts, that the bear was startled and annoyed. With my ears tense for any sound, I heard him shuffling slowly across the floor in my direction. It was an unparalleled position. I dared not move to grope in the other corner for my rifle, in case I bumped into the bear and thus met an untoward fate. And I dared not strike a match in order to spot the bear, for the chances were that he would spot me first.

None the less, I can assure you that I have never been cooler in my life. I sat on my bunk and waited calmly, though I was fully alert for any movement. Before long I heard a nuzzling sound which told me that our visitor had found the moose. I now knew where the brute was, and I knew I

had only to sidle softly round in the opposite direction to gain my rifle.

It was a trying ten minutes that followed. Every time I made the slightest sound the nuzzling noise ceased, and I knew the bear was waiting with bristling fur to make a rush if he heard me moving. I had to stand tense and still until the gnawing began again. However, patience was rewarded at length. Very gently I lifted my rifle off its peg. I knew it was loaded, so I raised it softly, aimed in the direction of the nuzzling, and blew the bear to its happy hunting grounds.

When I lit the lamp I saw that my bullet had gone clean through the beast's heart, killing it instantly. It was an amazing bit of marksmanship in the dark, and my friend, when he returned, could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"Prout," he said—I remember his very words—"Prout, no other hunter this side of the pond could have done it. Shake hands, Prout!"

On another occasion— (Not this time, sir. Give 'em a chance to get over that one first.—Ed.)



Our Gallant Tars! (By Skinner)

RIPE IS RIGHT!

I may claim to have spent a fairly full life. Now that I have reached a mature age—not old, of course, but ripe; fully ripe—I can look back on my experiences with satisfaction. I have travelled extensively. I have been all over the world, save Australia and the Far East, and it is a curious thing that, although I have been in many fierce storms at sea, I have never yet been ill.

I once went round Cape Horn in a 'Frisco grain ship, an old square-rig windjammer, full of grain in bulk. The seas were mountainous, and every soul on board except me was prostrate with mal-de-mer. Moreover, the grain had broken down the bulkheads and shifted to one side, giving the vessel a permanent list to starboard, so that raging seas roared right over her and threatened to swamp her every minute.

The captain besought me to take charge and sail the vessel single-handed, while he and the crew were ill. It was verily a herculean task, but I am happy to think I managed to save all their lives, though it was a miracle we didn't founder a dozen times before we reached Valparaiso.

And now I myself have reached port—a master in a Public school. "Home is the sailor, home from the sea; and the hunter home from the hill." I must confess that at times I could almost wish to set forth again on a fresh adventure. I am afraid boys seldom consider that what may be a painful ordeal for them is a monotonous task for their masters. When my boys leave the Fifth Form and a new lot arrive, my task begins over again. I have to tread once more the same old ground; to thread the same intricate mazes of mistake and error; to deal with the same old blunders in the same old way. In other words, a boy's work is always progressing, while mine is standing still.

No matter. A schoolmaster's work is trying, but it is splendid and satisfying to see the work well done. To be a friend as well as a guide, to win the confidence as well as the obedience of those to whom I stand in loco parentis, that to me is an all-sufficient reward. I have even set myself to the task of conquering Coker. Let it be said that I succeeded, and my life will be crowned with achievement.

That, sir, is the ambition of

Yours sincerely,

PAUL PROUT.



Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, is senior master at Greyfriars. He is portly, dignified, and rather pompous in his manner, which has earned him the nickname of "Pompey." He walks with slow and stately tread—compared, by the irreverent Remove, with the tread of a hippopotamus. He is nearly bald, but he carries his sixty years well. Really, he is not a bad sort; he is quite genial as a rule, and likes to feel that he is a friend as well as a master. Which is why he often drops into the Fifth Form games study for a "chat." His chats are things to be dreaded; his jaw, the fellows say, is the nearest thing yet discovered to perpetual motion. In his youth he was a hunter. May his shadow never grow less!

(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER)

Both Herbert Vernon-Smith and his cousin, Bertie Vernon, are excellent men on the cricket field—but they hate the sight of each other. And that's where the rub comes in!

The KIDNAPPED CRICKETER!



Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed at the sight of his cousin taking his place with the other cricketers. "The cad's got by with it!" he remarked. "Hardly three weeks in the school—and he's pushed me out and bagged my place in the eleven!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Family Feud!

"THAT cad——"

"My dear chap!"

"That rotter——"

"Draw it mild!"

"That poverty-stricken rat——"

"Oh, chuck it, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, angrily. "You can leave that out, at any rate."

"Poverty," remarked Bob Cherry, "may be a fearful crime! But really, it hasn't anything to do with cricket, Smithy."

"I'm talking to Wharton!" snapped Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "You shut up!"

"Just what I was going to suggest to you, Smithy!"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Shut up, Smithy!"

"And the sooner the better!" remarked Frank Nugent.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing in the doorway of Study No 1 in the Remove. He was looking into that celebrated study; or, rather, glaring into it.

His voice, as he talked to the fellows in that study, could be heard up and down the Remove passage.

Smithy did not heed that! He did not care! When Smithy was letting his temper rip, the whole wide world was welcome to know all about it.

Five or six fellows had gathered in the passage, and most of them were grinning. Billy Bunter was giggling.

a fat giggle. But grins and giggles had no effect on the angry Bounder. He glared into Study No. 1, at the five fellows there—more especially at Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton had a pencil in his hand, and a paper on the table before him. It was a list of the Remove eleven. In that list, among others, was the name "H. Vernon-Smith." There was another name that was very similar: "H. Vernon." That was the cause of the trouble.

"That rotten worm!" The Bounder

**Smashing School and Sporting
Adventure Story Starring
Harry Wharton & Co., of
Greyfriars.**

went on with his tirade. "That cad—that barging outsider—that rat——"

"Nobody else thinks all those nice things about the new man, Smithy!" the captain of the Remove pointed out. "But even if every nice name fitted him, it would have nothing to do with cricket. I've got you in, Smithy—and there are some rather nice names that would fit you, you know."

"Such as smoky sweep!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"And pub-crawling bounder!" granted Johnny Bull.

"And cheeky ass!" said Frank Nugent.

"You're going to play a new man in a game like the Highcliffe match—a new kid who hasn't been here a couple of weeks!" said Vernon-Smith. "The fellow's going to be allowed to walk into the eleven, almost as soon as he walks into the school!"

"Why not, if he's a good man," said Harry.

"He isn't!"

"Well, that's a matter of opinion!" said the captain of the Remove, mildly. "As I happen to be cricket captain, I'm banking on my own opinion—with all respect to yours, of course!"

"The fellow's brought off a few flukes——"

"If he brings off a few more in the Highcliffe match, we shall be all right. Look here, Smithy, don't be an ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You can bar your cousin, Bertie Vernon, as much as you like. Your family rows have nothing to do with me. But you can't carry them into Remove cricket. Are you ass enough to fancy that I shall consider whether you're on friendly terms with your blessed relations, or not, when I'm making up a team to play Highcliffe?"

There was a laugh from the fellows in the passage.

The Bounder glared round at them for a moment. Then he glared into Study No. 1 again, at the Famous Five.

"You've got my name there?" he snarled.

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"Of course! You're one of our best men, old chap!" said Wharton, amiably. "I'd as soon leave myself out as you."

"Take it out!"

"Bosh!"

"If you leave Vernon's name in, take me out!" exclaimed the Bounder, passionately. "I won't play in the same team with him."

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

"Shut up, you fool! You hear me, Wharton?" roared the Bounder.

"I think most of the house can hear you!"

"We shall have a pre. coming up soon, to see what the row's about," remarked Bob Cherry. "Soft pedal, old man!"

"You hear me? If that cad is playing on Wednesday, I'm not! I'd rather cut cricket for the whole season than play in the same team with that barging outsider!" roared the Bounder. "Take my name out, if you leave Vernon's in!"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Can't spare you, old bean!" he answered. "We want you for batting, just as much as we want Vernon for bowling."

"He can't bowl!"

"Bow-wow!"

"My absurd Smithy," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "the bowlfulness of the ludicrous new chap is terrific."

"Don't talk silly rot, you black ass!"

"Vernon's as good a bowler as Inky," said Bob. "You could see that, as well as anybody else, Smithy, only you jolly well don't choose to."

"You're backing up that cad against me!" said Vernon-Smith, his face crimson, and his voice trembling with rage.

"I tell you, we've nothing to do with your family rows," exclaimed Harry Wharton, impatiently, "and if you want to know, Smithy, it's jolly bad form to be on scrapping terms with a relation at school. Vernon's willing to keep the peace—why can't you?"

"Vernon bars you, without yelling it out at the top of his voice," said Johnny Bull. "Can't you bar him without telling the world?"

"Take my name out of that list, Wharton!" shouted the Bounder.

"Can't be done." Wharton shook his head again. "We want you, Smithy! Have a little sense! You'd grouse no end if you weren't wanted. You'll be glad on Wednesday that your name's in. You don't want to mooch about with your hands in your pockets while other fellows are playing cricket."

"I won't play in the same team with that cad!"

"Rot!"

"Well, I mean it!" hooted the Bounder. "If you leave my name in along with Vernon's, you'll have to find another man at the last minute."

"Well, I can do that, at a pinch! Plenty of men in the Remove! But you'll think better of it later!" said Wharton, soothingly.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter, from the passage.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, here comes Vernon."

The Bounder, in the doorway, swung round.

Bertie Vernon, the new junior in the Greyfriars Remove, was coming up the passage from the landing.

Vernon-Smith gave his cousin and double a deadly look.

Like as they were, so like that it was not easy to tell them apart, they did not resemble one another at the present moment so much as usual.

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Bertie Vernon's face, exactly like the Bounder's in every feature, was very different in expression—its cool, rather disdainful calmness contrasting with the crimson rage in Smithy's.

Bertie raised his eyebrows slightly, as he passed the enraged Bounder, and went into the study.

The Bounder clenched his fist, as his cousin and double passed him, as if more than half disposed to hit out at that disdainful face.

"You rotten cad," he said, between his teeth, "so you've barged into the eleven now, you pushing outsider!"

"Have I?" drawled Bertie Vernon. Even his voice was exactly like the Bounder's save for that lazy drawl. "First I've heard of it."

"I've got your name down for Highcliffe on Wednesday, Vernon!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, good!"

"And mine's going to be left out!" snarled the Bounder.

Bertie Vernon started.

"Is that so, Wharton?" he asked, quickly. "Look here, I'm pretty keen to play in the matches, if you think I'm good enough; but I'd rather not take Vernon-Smith's place—"

"Nothing of the kind," said Harry. "You're both in—we want Smithy for batting, as much as we want you for bowling."

"Then what—"

"Oh, Smithy's got his back up, that's all!" said Bob. "One of Smithy's little ways! He'll get it down again all right."

"I've told Wharton," shouted the Bounder, "that I won't play in the same team with a pushing cad and a rank outsider."

"Oh, is that it?" Vernon shrugged his shoulders. "I might have guessed that you were making a fool of yourself."

"You barging cad—"

"Would you mind shouting in at some other study?" asked Vernon. "This is my study, as well as Wharton's, you know—and I don't like it."

"What have you barged into my school at all for?" shouted Vernon-Smith. "Couldn't your poverty-stricken uncle—Captain Vernon—find some other school for you? Who's paying your fees here, you worm? Your uncle's half-pay won't run to it!"

"That's enough, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Get out! You can't talk that stuff here! Get out of the study!"

"I'll tell that cad what I think of him and his precious uncle before I go—"

"You won't say another word!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Barge him out, you fellows!"

"Ready and willing!" growled Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five barged together, and Vernon-Smith went backwards into the Remove passage.

He landed there with a crash on his back.

The door of Study No. 1 shut on the angry Bounder.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter, blinking at Smithy through his big spectacles as the Bounder sprawled and spluttered for breath. "I say, you fellows, what a wallop! He, he, he!"

The Bounder staggered to his feet.

He turned towards the door of Study No. 1, evidently with the thought in his angry mind of rushing in and hitting out right and left; but that was rather a hopeless proposition, and he turned away.

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Owl

Why, you beast, wharrer you smacking my head for, you rotter? I didn't chuck you out of the study, did I?"

Vernon-Smith tramped up the passage to his own study, went into Study No. 4, and slammed the door with a slam that rang the length of the Remove passage.

Billy Bunter was left rubbing a fat head, and the other fellows chortling.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Bullseyes For Bunter!

"URRRGH!"

Billy Bunter gurgled. It was next morning, in class. Billy Bunter did not mean to gurgle. Gurgles were quite out of place in the Remove Form room. He gurgled involuntarily.

It was Mr. Quelch's fault.

Bunter's fat hand had groped in a sticky pocket and extracted a bullseye from a bag. That bullseye had been conveyed surreptitiously to Bunter's capacious mouth; then Quelch's gimlet eyes shot round at him, and the fat Owl of the Remove was so startled that he almost swallowed that bullseye whole.

Naturally he choked a little.

"Urrgh!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"Gurrgh!"

"Bunter!" rapped the Remove master.

"Wurrghh!"

"Are you eating toffee in class, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I chook-chook-choked a—a little, sir! I—I've got a bit of a kik-kik-cough, sir! Urrgh!"

"Be silent, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! Urrgh!"

Bunter gave a last gurgle and contrived to be silent. Quelch had a suspicious—a very suspicious—eye on him. Smuggling tuck into the Form-room to be consumed in class was very much against the rules—and it was one of the fat Owl's most frequent sins.

Roman history might or might not be beneficial, but Bunter preferred bullseyes. Quelch, in the Form-room, expected fellows to concentrate on the lesson. That was the sort of thing a schoolmaster did expect.

Bunter, being in happy possession of bullseyes, naturally preferred to concentrate on bullseyes.

However, for the next ten minutes Bunter exercised wonderful self-control, and the bag of bullseyes remained untouched in the sticky pocket.

It was really rough on Bunter. He had found that bag of bullseyes in Skinner's study during break. Unfortunately, break was just at its end when Bunter made that happy discovery. He had had hardly time to bolt two or three when the bell rang.

It was a large bag of bullseyes; it bulged in Bunter's pocket. It was a feast of the gods—if only Bunter could get at it.

Leaving it till after third school was impossible—to Bunter. In third school he gave little attention to the words of wisdom that fell from his Form-master's lips, but he gave a great deal of attention to his Form-master; he watched him, in fact, like a cat. Every time Quelch's attention was elsewhere a bullseye was popped into Bunter's mouth.

Now Quelch was suspicious.

It was just like him. He always seemed to be suspecting Bunter of scoffing tuck in class. It was fearfully unjust, but there it was!



Blinking through the interstices of the screen, Billy Bunter watched the ragger up-end the inkstand over the pyramid of books and papers on Mr. Quelch's desk. "Oh crikey!" gasped the fat Removeite, his knees knocking together as he watched.

Ten minutes was a long time for Bunter to refrain from bullseyes when he had a large supply in his pocket. Flesh and blood could not stand more than that—not Billy Bunter's flesh and blood, at any rate.

A sticky paw slid again into a sticky pocket; a sticky bullseye was conveyed into his mouth—and he had hardly landed it there when Quelch's eyes shot round again.

"Bunter!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Groooooogh!"

"Bunter, you greedy, disgusting boy, you are eating toffee in class!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Urrgh! I haven't any toffee about me, sir!" gasped Bunter. That was true enough; it was not toffee, it was bullseyes.

"Bunter, stand out before the Form and empty your pockets at once!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sternly.

Bunter sat dismayed.

Handing over that bag of bullseyes was a crushing blow. There were dozens of bullseyes in that bag. Bunter's fat hand grasped it in his trousers pocket, with a wild idea of dropping it under the desk before he went out, and thus saving it from discovery.

But that was futile. Quelch was sure to spot it.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!" groaned Bunter. "But I—I—I really haven't any toffee, sir."

"You will stand out before the Form at once."

"Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

He heaved himself to his feet; he moved slowly along the end of the desks. Then he had a brilliant inspiration.

He stumbled and fell against a fellow sitting at the end of a form.

It was Bertie Vernon, the new junior.

Stumbling against him, Bunter cunningly shoved the bag of bullseyes into his hand.

"Mind that!" he breathed.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I caught my foot, sir—"

"You clumsy, stupid boy, if you persist in wasting the time of the class—"

"Oh, yes, sir—I mean, no, sir!"

Bunter rolled on—leaving the bag of bullseyes in the hand of the astonished new junior.

Bertie Vernon frowned. He had no desire whatever to have anything to do with Bunter or his bullseyes, or to be made use of by the astute fat Owl. But any fellow was really bound to play up in such circumstances, and he sat holding the bag of bullseyes, his hand on the form beside him, mentally resolving to kick Bunter after class.

Bunter rolled out to face his Form-master full of confidence. He had no contraband goods about him now.

Mr. Quelch frowned at him portentously. The sticky state of Bunter's large mouth and fat fingers told its own tale.

"Empty your pockets at once, Bunter!" he rapped. "I will not allow this greediness, Bunter! I shall confiscate whatever sweetmeats you have brought into the Form-room! Now—"

"I—I haven't—" gasped Bunter.

"If you do not turn out your pockets this instant—" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

Bunter turned them out.

Nothing of a contraband nature came to light. Everything that did come to light was rather sticky, but there was nothing eatable.

Most faces in the Remove were grinning. About half the Form guessed

how Bunter had got rid of the guilty goods—three or four fellows had seen his action. They wondered whether Quelch had. It was about a hundred to one that Quelch would tumble. Quelch was a downy bird!

For a moment or two the Remove master seemed puzzled. Bunter obviously had been scuffling tuck.

Then the gimlet eyes turned on Bertie Vernon.

"Vernon!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir?"

"Bunter stumbled against you. Did he pass you anything when he stumbled?" inquired Mr. Quelch grimly.

All eyes turned on Vernon's flushed face.

The Bunder grinned maliciously.

That cousin of his was in his Form-master's good books!

Like as they were in looks, they differed in ways and tastes. Bertie Vernon never blagged like the Bunder—he never ragged in class, and he was always a careful and attentive pupil. Quelch was known to have a good opinion of him. It amused the Bunder to think of him getting into a row in Form—which, so far, had not happened.

Bertie did not reply immediately. It was rather a difficult position for him—with Bunter's bag of bullseyes in his hand!

"Answer me, Vernon!" rapped Mr. Quelch, much more sharply than he generally spoke to that well-conducted new boy.

"I—I—I never, sir!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I never had any bullseyes, sir, and I never handed them to Vernon, sir!"

"You obtuse boy, be silent! Vernon, hand me at once what Bunter

passed to you!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. In silence Bertie rose and handed over the bag of bullseyes.

Billy Bunter's eyes followed it mournfully as Mr. Quelch took it and placed it on his desk.

"You will take a hundred lines, Vernon!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir!" said Vernon quietly, and he went back to his place.

"Bunter, you will take a hundred lines also!"

"Y-e-e-s, sir! M-m-may I have my bullseyes after class, sir?"

"You may not, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter rolled back to his place sad and sorrowful. The hundred lines did not worry him so much as the loss of the bullseyes. That was a fearful blow!

During the remainder of third school the fat Owl gave less attention than ever to Roman history. His eyes wandered continually to the bag of bullseyes reposing on Mr. Quelch's desk. That bag drew his gaze like a magnet.

When the Remove were dismissed Bunter lingered.

"If—if you please, sir—" he stammered.

"Well?"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the word like a bullet.

"M-m-may I stay in to write my lines, sir?" asked Bunter.

Mr. Quelch looked quite astonished for a moment. No fellow with lines had ever been known to be eager to get going on them—especially Bunter.

But the next moment he guessed that one, so to speak! Bunter was not keen to get on with his lines! He wanted to stay in the Form-room—where the bullseyes were!

Mr. Quelch smiled—a grim smile!

"If you desire to stay in the Form-

room and write out your lines before dinner, Bunter—" he said.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter eagerly.

"Then you may do so!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Bunter rolled happily back to his desk! There he waited for Quelch to leave the Form-room after his Form.

Quelch did so—picking up the bag of bullseyes from his desk as he went!

Bunter's happy grin faded.

He gazed after his Form-master in horror.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped, as Mr. Quelch disappeared with the bag of bullseyes in his hand!

Quelch was gone! The bullseyes were gone! Billy Bunter was left with feelings too deep for words—and a hundred lines to write before dinner!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"NETS, Smithy?"

"No!"
Tom Redwing, the Bounder's chum, looked a little worried.

There was plenty of time before class that afternoon for a spot of cricket practice, and most of the Remove cricketers were keen enough on it.

Vernon-Smith was heading for the bike-shed, however, when Redwing called to him. He did not stop, and Tom cut after him and joined him.

"Not going out?" he asked.

"Why not? Lots of time to run down to Uncle Clegg's in Friardale and back," answered the Bounder.

"It's the Highcliffe match to-

morrow, Smithy, and a spot of practice never does any fellow harm. Wharton will expect—"

"He can expect what he likes!"

The Bounder glanced round at a group of fellows in flannels at a distance. Harry Wharton, who was among them, waved a hand to him; a friendly, beckoning sign that Smithy did not heed.

"That cad Vernon isn't going down to the nets," he remarked.

"Isn't he?" said Tom, glancing round.

The Bounder grinned sourly.

"I've noticed that he's in his study doing his lines. He bagged a hundred from Quelch this morning, you know, for trying to help Bunter pull the wool over Quelch's eyes."

"It was hardly that, Smithy! He could hardly help that fat ass dragging him into it—"

"Oh, chuck it! Don't I know that he never does any wrong?" sneered the Bounder. "Don't I know that I'm everything that's bad, and that worm's everything that's good! Don't tell me all over again."

"I don't like the chap very much, Smithy, but I can't see all the harm in him that you do."

"No harm in him at all!" sneered Smithy. "Isn't he a dear little Eric who loves his kind teachers? Never been in a row in the Form-room yet, after two or three weeks in the school—only had some detentions, and that was for doing a good turn to a fellow he disliked—as he made out, at least! Dear chap! Now he's grinding out his lines, right on the spot, to have them done in good time for Quelch—to show what a dear, dutiful, respectful boy he is! Pah!"

Redwing smiled.

"If it's a fault in a fellow to get his lines done, instead of leaving them hanging about till the last minute, I hope I shan't ever have any worse faults," he said. "But never mind Vernon, old fellow. Get into flannels and come along—you can go for a spin any time."

"Oh, I've a special reason this time!" sneered Smithy. "Anyhow, I shan't be playing Highcliffe to-morrow if that cad plays!"

"That's utter rot!" said Redwing sharply.

"I mean it, rot or not! I wouldn't be found dead in the same team with him. Still, he may not play after all!" said the Bounder, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "You never can tell—and there's often a slip 'twixt cup and lip! Dear old Quelch may give him another detention, for all we know."

"Not likely! He will be jolly careful to keep to-morrow safe!" said Redwing. "He's keen enough to play in the eleven."

"He might do something to pay Quelch out for those lines in third school," suggested the Bounder. "He might get copped at it."

"Not at all likely! He's got rather a sulky temper, like—I mean—" Redwing stammered.

"Like his relation Smithy—you can cough it up!" sneered the Bounder. "Yes, we're fearfully alike."

"Well, he's got rather a sulky temper, but he's not ass or malicious enough to think of doing anything of that kind," said Redwing. "What on earth's put such an idea into your mind, Smithy? It's quite unlikely."

The Bounder laughed.

"Unlikely things have happened before now," he said. "I fancy he feels ratty about Quelch coming down on him in Form."

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"Oh, rot!" said Redwing, uneasily. He did not understand the sardonic, mocking expression on the Bounder's face, but it gave him a vague feeling of uneasiness. "Here comes Wharton," he added as they reached the bike-shed. "He wants you to join up, Smithy."

"He can want!" Harry Wharton came up, a little breathlessly.

"Not going out, Smithy!" he exclaimed. "Come down to the cricket, old bean—Inky's ready to give you some good bowling! That cousin of yours won't be there this time, if that's what's worrying you—he's grinding out lines in the study."

"I've got to call at Uncle Clegg's in Friardale," said Smithy. "He's got some of his special home-made toffee-apples for me."

"I should think that cricket came before toffee-apples!" said the captain of the Remove dryly.

"You can think what you like, of course! You think that cad Vernon can play cricket! No objection to your thinking any silly rot that comes into your silly head!"

Harry Wharton gave him a look and turned and walked away again without replying.

Redwing coloured uncomfortably and the Bounder gave a sneering laugh. He was the fellow to take full advantage of his value as a member of the Remove eleven. The captain of the Remove did not want a row with his best batsman just before one of the most important fixtures of the season.

Vernon-Smith went into the bike-shed and wheeled out his machine.

"Look here, Smithy," said Tom Redwing, "you'd better chuck it—"

"Rats!" "Well, if you're going out, I'll come along," said Tom. "Wait till I get my jigger!"

"My dear ass, you're not going to cut nets, to bike down to the village! You've just been advising me not to."

"I'm not in the eleven," said Tom.

"You may be some day, if you stick to practice like a good, careful, assiduous lad!" said the Bounder gravely. "Take my cousin Vernon for a model—not me!"

Tom Redwing compressed his lips.

"Does that mean that you don't want my company, Smithy?" he asked quietly.

"What a brain!" said the Bounder admiringly. "How do you guess these things?"

"Then I may as well get along to the cricket—"

"Quite!"

Redwing left him with that, and the Bounder wheeled his machine out into the road.

Near the school gates three Fifth Form fellows were standing—Coker, Potter, and Greene. Coker was talking—his usual state. Smithy heard Coker's loud voice, as he mounted his jigger.

"When we were at Venice, in the Easter hols— Oh!" Coker broke off suddenly as the Bounder, riding by, reached out, and tipped his hat over his eyes.

Coker of the Fifth spun round in amazement and rage. He glared at the junior on the bike, almost speechless with wrath. It was almost unimaginable to Horace Coker of the Fifth Form that a Remove fag could, or would, venture to tip his hat in passing.

"By gum!" gasped Coker.

He made a fierce rush after the cyclist.

The Bounder pedalled down Friardale Lane, laughing. But he did not

go fast—he gave Coker a chance of hoping that he could run him down.

Unaware that Smithy was pulling his leg, Coker of the Fifth rushed in pursuit.

Potter and Greene were left grinning. For about a hundred yards, Smithy kept just ahead of Coker.

Coker raged behind, going all out.

Then Smithy suddenly drove hard at his pedals, and shot away. He released one hand from the handlebars to look back and wave it at Coker; then he shot away down the lane and disappeared.

Coker of the Fifth, breathless with exertion and wrath, turned back. Even Coker's solid brain realised that he had no chance of running down a cyclist going at top speed.

Smithy, grinning, rode on fast. But he did not ride on to Friardale village. Once out of sight of the school, he jumped down and wheeled his bike through a gap in the hedge, into the meadow behind.

Smithy's next proceedings would have puzzled any Remove fellow who had observed them.

He parked the bicycle carefully in the midst of a clump of willows, completely concealing it from sight. Then, on foot, he cut across the meadow at a run. Five minutes later he was climbing a fence that gave ingress into the kitchen gardens behind the school buildings.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had left three fellows—Wharton, Redwing, and Coker of the Fifth—in the belief that he had ridden away from Greyfriars to go down to Friardale. If any of the three thought of him further, they thought of him as being at the village.

But Smithy was not at the village, or anywhere near it. Smithy was slipping into the House by a back-door—with intentions that were known only to himself.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Still No Bullseyes For Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" "Come on, Bunter!" "Eh? Where?"

"Cricket!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Billy Bunter was not, apparently, thinking of cricket. He was, as a matter of fact, thinking of something of much greater importance than cricket.

"Yes, come on, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton. "A spot of cricket will shake down those fifteen helpings of pie at dinner. Or was it sixteen?"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "Tain't compulsory to-day—wharrrer you going to games practice for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, I want some of you to back me up!" said Bunter. "I say, old Quelch is trickling about the quad with Prout—he won't be in his study! I'll go halves!"

"Which?"

"You know the rotten trick Quelch played on me after third school!" said the fat Owl, with deep indignation. "I asked him to let me stay in and do my lines, you know, thinking that he was going to leave my bullseyes on his desk. He let me, and then walked off with the bullseyes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think that's funny?" howled Bunter. "There was I, stuck in the Form-room, writing lines till dinner—and my bullseyes in Quelch's study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five. They seemed to think it funny; though the aggrieved fat Owl evidently did not.

"Well, they're there now," said Bunter eagerly. "Any fellow could nip in and bag them. Nobody about, hardly a man in the House! I'd out in myself only Quelch might guess it was me. He would never guess that it was one of you fellows. I'll go halves with the fellow who gets those bullseyes back for me. Which of you fellows will go?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ask next door!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I've asked Toddy, and he, silly ass, says he's going to the nets—and Russell, too—he said the same—"

"And so say all of us!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ask Skinner," suggested Frank Nugent. "He won't be doing anything but loafing about—"

"Well, I don't want to ask Skinner—he might know the bag—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Oh, my hat!" roared Johnny Bull. "I heard Skinner asking Snoop and Stott if they'd wolfed the bullseyes—he left in his study—"

"I say, you fellows, they ain't Skinner's bullseyes!" exclaimed Bunter hastily. "I never found them in his study in break. I never went near his study. I was in the tuckshop at the time—"

"At the time you stole Skinner's bullseyes from the study?" asked Nugent.

"Yes—I mean, no! I say, you fellows—keep that bat away, Bob Cherry, you silly fathead— Ow! Will you keep that bat away? Yow! Keep that bat away, you blithering— Yow, whoop!"

Billy Bunter retreated out of reach, and the Famous Five went on to cricket.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter, as they went.

And the fat Owl rolled back into the House. None of the Famous Five, it was clear, was going to take that confiscated tuck from Quelch's study—to be rewarded with halves in Skinner's bullseyes!

Bunter rolled away to Masters' Passage.

Really, it was safe as houses to bag those bullseyes. Nobody was about. It was a glorious June day, and everybody, or nearly everybody, was out of doors.

No fellow was likely to be indoors if he could help it in such weather. The keenest beak was not anxious for classes to begin. Probably not one of the masters was in his study—certainly Quelch was not, for Bunter had spotted him walking in the quad with Prout, the master of the Fifth.

The only danger was that when Quelch missed the confiscated tuck, he was sure to think of Bunter at once.

On the other hand, that danger was not great, for though Quelch was sure to think of Bunter and question him, Bunter was prepared to state in reply anything but the truth.

Bunter and the truth had long been strangers, and in such circumstances were not likely to strike up an acquaintance.

The fat Owl paused at the corner of Masters' Passage. Not a soul was in sight—the coast was absolutely clear.

He rolled up the passage, whipped into Mr. Quelch's study, and shut the door. Then he ducked.

The window was wide open. There was peril of being spotted from the quad—where Quelch was.

The sill was high; only very tall fellows could have seen into the study in passing. But Quelch was very lengthy, and his gimlet eyes were very keen.

Billy Bunter had to be very careful not to be spotted if those gimlet eyes happened to turn towards that study window.

Keeping his fat head ducked low, the Owl of the Remove blinked over the table through his big spectacles in search of the bullseyes.

As Quelch had taken them away from the Form-room and gone to his study with the bag in his hand, Bunter naturally expected to find them there.

But the bag of bullseyes was not visible.

He blinked over the table in vain. He blinked over a desk—he blinked at several shelves. He breathed hard and deep.

Where was that bag of bullseyes? It seemed impossible—to Bunter—that Quelch could have thrown it away. Could anybody in his senses throw away a bag of bullseyes? It was an awful thought—Bunter refused to entertain it. The bullseyes were somewhere—he only had to find them.

Bunter had intended to be less than a minute in that study. A minute would have been enough to grab a bag of bullseyes from the table, and scoot.

He had expected them to be visible at once. But the visibility was not good. Those bullseyes were invisible. After a quarter of an hour, Billy Bunter was still rooting wearily round Quelch's study for those bullseyes.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter, in deep indignation and fury.

Either Quelch had parked those bullseyes in some very safe place, or else he had—incredible as it seemed—chucked them away.

Bunter was unwilling to go without the bullseyes. On the other hand, there was the danger of Quelch coming back to the study. He was not likely to come in much before class, perhaps—still, he might. It would be simply awful to be copped and whopped without even having had the bullseyes.

Billy Bunter, still keeping his fat head low, gave a last despairing blink round the study. And as he did so there was a footstep in the passage outside!

Bunter jumped.

"Quelch—copped!" Those two awful words flashed through his fat brain! And he had not even had the bullseyes!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He made one rapid bound! Across a corner of the study stood a screen—an Indian wooden screen, in three leaves. The upper part was of carved filigree work, and could be seen through. But the lower part was solid. In less time than it would have taken Bunter to eat a jam tart he was behind that screen, crouching low in the corner—just in time, and safely out of sight as the study door opened!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Rag!

BILLY BUNTER palpitated. He was quite safe for the moment.

Quelch, very likely, had only stepped in for something or other, and would step out again. But it was awful to think of Quelch, within a few yards of him—and still awfuller to think of Quelch's cane, lying on the study table!

It would not have been so awful if he had found the bullseyes! But it was really fearful to be going through this terrifying experience for nothing! The way of the transgressor was undoubtedly hard!

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Bunter hardly breathed.

He could hear a sound at the study table. His fat ears were pricked up like a frightened fat rabbit's, to listen. Somebody was fumbling with the papers on the Form-master's table. Bunter caught a sound of quick, subdued breathing.

It struck him oddly that it did not sound like Quelch! It sounded like some fellow who had been moving in a hurry, and was labouring under excitement.

Billy Bunter gave a start at that thought! Very likely it wasn't Quelch at all! Perhaps it was some other fellow after those bullseyes!

It was safe to take a squint through the upper part of the screen. The slits in the carved wood were narrow. By placing a fat face close to them Bunter could get a view of the study.

Cautiously the fat Owl raised a fat head and blinked through the narrow interstices of the Indian screen.

Then his eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He saw the figure at the table. It was not Quelch!

It was a Remove fellow!

But whether it was Herbert Vernon-Smith or his cousin and double, Bertie Vernon, Bunter did not for the moment know.

It was undoubtedly one of them; but the short-sighted Owl found more difficulty than other fellows in distinguishing t'other from which.

Whichever he was, the junior was not, clearly, looking for bullseyes! That suspicion—natural to Bunter—vanished the next moment as he saw the junior's occupation.

It was a rag!

Bunter was not the only fellow who had observed that the study was vacant and the coast clear. Another fellow had—and he had butted in for a rag on the Remove master!

Then the fat Owl had no doubt that it was Smithy! Smithy was always ragging; Bertie Vernon never was.

And the dark, bitter, sardonic look on the junior's face was more like Smithy's than Vernon's. Bertie looked like that sometimes, Smithy very often!

Billy Bunter quaked behind the screen.

He was glad, certainly, that it was not Quelch! But it was a fellow ragging Quelch—and the bare thought of being mixed up in such a rag was terrifying!

Smithy might like bearding the lion in his den. Billy Bunter had no taste for such perilous exploits!

He wished himself anywhere but where he was!

Bunter made no sound.

The minute that reckless fathead was gone, Bunter was going to scuttle; and nobody was going to know that he had been in the study at all! Smithy was practically sure to be copped. It was not going to come out that Bunter had been there at the time! That was very important.

If he showed up now the Bounder would not chuck it. He would only drag Bunter into the rag on Quelch.

Blinking through the interstices of the screen, Billy Bunter watched the ragger at work.

On Quelch's table were a number of books and several piles of papers—most of them Form papers.

Smithy—if it was Smithy—was gathering books and papers into a large stack in the middle of the table.

He placed the inkpot from the inkstand on top of the stack—upside down! Ink streamed over that pyramid of books and papers!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, his fat

knees knocking together as he watched.

Only a mad ass like Smithy could ever have dreamed of a rag like that, on a beak like Quelch! It was terrifying—to Bunter—to visualise Quelch's face when he came back to the study and saw what had been done!

Bunter heard a low chuckle.

"Something back for his lines, by gad!"

The fat Owl started.

Was it Smithy, after all, or Vernon? The rag was exactly in Smithy's style. But Smithy, though he very often had lines, had had no lines that day. Vernon had!

Smithy was not likely to avenge a punishment handed out to the fellow he barred. Oh—Billy Bunter's fat brain jumped to a startling idea—did those muttered words mean that Smithy expected Quelch to think that Vernon had done this, in retaliation for his lines that morning?

Which of the doubles was it?

Bunter could not make up his fat mind. He was almost sure that it was Smithy, but not quite.

The ragger's next proceeding made Bunter blink with amazement. He stepped towards the open window.

Bunter, in his explorations for the bullseyes, had been very careful to keep his head ducked, lest he should be seen from the quad. But the ragger was taking no such precautions.

Standing at the window, full in the June sunshine, he looked out.

If he was looking out to see whether Quelch was still out of the House, it was a fearfully reckless proceeding. For Quelch, if he looked that way, could not fail to see him at the open window.

Really, the fellow was asking for it!

But as he stood in the sunshine at the window Bunter's lingering doubt of his identity was resolved at last.

It was Smithy!

Greytrians fellows had to wear dark and inconspicuous clothes. That rule the Bounder transgressed, just so far as he could without being called to order, his tastes being rather pronounced.

The junior standing in the bright June sunlight at the window wore striped trousers. They were dark trousers, with a dark red stripe. The pattern was just about as loud as it could be without the owner being directed to discard those garments.

They were Smithy's trousers! Bunter knew that. So the wearer thereof, obviously, was Smithy!

Billy Bunter blinked at those trousers and wondered what the Bounder was up to! He had been standing at the window two or three minutes—just as if he wanted to be seen from the quad!

It was not merely asking for it—it was begging for it! If he stood there long enough his Form-master could not fail to see him sooner or later. It seemed to Bunter that the fellow must have gone cracked to take such a risk deliberately, for nothing.

But suddenly the Bounder turned to the window and shot across to the door.

So swiftly was he gone that Bunter hardly realised for a moment that he was out of the study.

But he was gone—and it occurred to Bunter that his sudden flight meant that he had been seen!

If that was so, Quelch would very likely come in; he would want to know what Herbert Vernon-Smith had been up to in his study. At that thought the fat Owl of the Remove squirmed out from behind the screen and shot across to the door in his turn. The door



"Time's getting on, Vernon-Smith!" said Harry Wharton. "In ten minutes' time your cousin has to go to the Head with Quelch! He's not going! You can do the decent thing and save him, or you can leave it to me! Which is it to be?" The Bounder stood silent for a long moment.

opened and shut again very quickly.

Smithy had already vanished. Nobody was in the passage! But Bunter did not roll out by the usual way. If Quelch was coming in he did not want to meet him! Bunter turned into Head's corridor, tiptoed past the Head's study, and disappeared at the other end.

Once at a safe distance, Billy Bunter indulged in a fat chuckle. Smithy had ragged Quelch—serve him jolly well right, for bagging those bullseyes!

Ten to one Smithy would be copped—in fact, he must be if Quelch had seen him at the study window! That did not matter very much—to Bunter! Bunter hadn't done anything, and nobody knew that Bunter had been in the study at all—so that was all right! Luckily, it was only Bunter that mattered!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Face At The Window!

MR. QUELCH stopped, and stared.

Pacing in the quadrangle, with Prout, Quelch was enjoying the pleasant sunshine and balmy breeze of June. It was the sight of a face looking from his open study window that made the Remove master stop and stare.

Having stared, he stared a second time.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had no business in that study. No fellow had any business there in his Form-master's absence, unless the master happened to be absent when lines had been ordered to be taken in, in which case a fellow had the right to enter, and lay them on the table.

Vernon-Smith had no lines to deliver. His presence in that study,

therefore, required explanation.

Only too well was Mr. Quelch acquainted with the Bounder's ragging propensities.

The face at the window disappeared—after Quelch had seen it.

Prout was talking, as well as walking. Mr. Quelch let him go on talking, but steered him in the direction of the study window, in order to glance within.

If the Bounder was still there, he was going to make him explain what he was doing there. If the Bounder had gone, he was going to ascertain what he had done—probably something mischievous and disrespectful. In which case, it was very fortunate that Quelch had seen the face at the window, as it left no doubt as to the identity of the culprit.

Nevertheless, such a doubt crossed Mr. Quelch's mind as he peregrinated towards the window by the side of the portly Prout, who moved to slow motion.

He remembered Vernon-Smith's double.

Possibly it was Vernon he had seen, not Vernon-Smith.

In the Form-room Quelch never made a mistake between the two. At a distance, and especially in a brief glimpse, he had to admit that he might very easily have taken one for the other.

If however, it was Vernon, he did not suspect a rag. Bertie Vernon was a careful and orderly boy, quite unlike, except in looks, his rowdy cousin in the Form. Moreover, if Vernon had done his lines, he had a reason for having gone to the study.

True, Quelch had had to give him lines that morning. But it was rather rare. He had had, it was true, to detain him for most of the half-holidays—he had so far had at Greyfriars, for

a rag in extra French. Nevertheless, save on that one occasion, Bertie Vernon had been really a model member of the Form, and Mr. Quelch had often wished that his cousin was more like him. Indeed, he hoped that Smithy might take example by his well-conducted cousin.

Mr. Quelch stopped on the path under Masters' Windows. Leaving Prout for a moment, he looked in at the open window of his study.

The junior he had seen was gone. He had, in fact, been gone several minutes. So had another junior—a fat one, of whose presence in the study Quelch had no suspicion.

Nobody was in the study.

The Remove master glanced across at the table. If the visitor had been Vernon, he must have left his lines there. It would be like that orderly and careful boy to get them done promptly, instead of leaving his impot hanging about, as so many careless fellows did.

Then Quelch jumped.

He saw no sign of an imposition on the study table. What he saw was a pile of books and papers, surmounted by an upset inkpot, from which ink had streamed all over the pile.

"Upon my word!" gasped Quelch.

"My dear Quelch!" boomed Prout.

"I was saying—"

"You will excuse me, Prout. Something has occurred in my study."

Quelch whisked away.

He went to the door of the House with long strides.

At the door he came on Wingate of the Sixth Form. He stopped.

"Wingate!"

The Greyfriars captain looked round.

"Will you be good enough to find Vernon-Smith of my Form, and send

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him to my study?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir!"

Quelch whisked into the House.

The prefect went to inquire for Vernon-Smith.

A minute later the Remove master was in his study.

He removed the inkpot. He separated the books and papers. All of them were drenched with ink. His face was set and tense, his lips shut hard as he did so. This was one more act of disrespect and defiance from the mutineer of his Form—the junior with whom he had more trouble than with any other member of the Remove. But for the face at the window, he would never have known—he would have suspected—but there would have been no proof. But that incautious act had betrayed the culprit—and he knew. And the expression on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance told what Herbert Vernon-Smith had to expect when Wingate brought him to the study.

He had to wait some time. He occupied it with a duster, cleaning the ink off the books as well as he could, his anger deepening and deepening.

Wingate of the Sixth appeared at the door at last. To Mr. Quelch's annoyance and surprise, he came alone.

"Have you not found Vernon-Smith, Wingate?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"He seems to be out of gates, sir," answered Wingate. "I've inquired among the juniors and they tell me that he went out on his bicycle soon after dinner."

"That is impossible, Wingate, as I saw him in this study a few minutes before I spoke to you at the door!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "That was hardly ten minutes ago."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wingate.

"Less than a quarter of an hour ago, Wingate, he was in this study, and I saw him through the open window from the quadrangle. He was not aware that I saw him, no doubt. But such is the fact. Whoever has told you that he went out after dinner has spoken untruthfully. Who was it?"

"Wharton, sir."

"Wha-at?"

"Redwing said the same, sir."

Mr. Quelch stood silent. Wharton, his head boy, had not spoken untruthfully, he knew that. Neither had Redwing.

"Where are Wharton and Redwing now?" he asked.

"At junior nets, sir. I went down to look for Vernon-Smith there, and then asked where he was. Wharton said that he went out soon after dinner; Redwing said about half an hour ago."

"He may, of course, have returned without their knowledge," said Mr. Quelch, "unless—"

A painful doubt struck him.

On seeing the havoc in his study he had concluded, as a matter of course, that it had been the Bouncer's work—that it was the Bouncer's face he had seen at the window. He realised now that possibly that suspicion was unjust. What had been done was like Vernon-Smith. It did not seem like Vernon. On the other hand, Quelch could not honestly say which of the two he had seen at the window. If Vernon-Smith was out of gates—

"You see what has been done here, Wingate!" The Greyfriars captain was staring at the inky books and papers on the inky table. "I saw the boy in this study. I certainly thought that it was Vernon-Smith; but you are

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aware that there is another boy in my Form—the new boy, Vernon—who is his relative, and closely resembles him—"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"At the distance, I could not speak positively on the subject. Will you ascertain, Wingate, if you can, whether Vernon-Smith returned to the school after going out on his bicycle?"

"Immediately, sir!"

Wingate went away again, and Mr. Quelch resumed rubbing ink from book covers, with a troubled expression on his face.

Vernon had had detention; that morning he had had lines. Mr. Quelch could not believe that he had done this. But it was a very unpleasant thought that he might be hurried into injustice by his bad opinion of Vernon-Smith. Obviously, he had to be very careful in this matter.

It was a quarter of an hour before Wingate came back again.

"Neither of the boys has been seen about the school, sir, from all that I can hear," he said. "Vernon-Smith's bicycle is still gone. I have looked in the bike-shed. A Fifth Form fellow, Coker, says that Vernon-Smith passed him going down to Friardale soon after dinner. He tipped Coker's hat, and Coker followed him some distance down the lane, but the junior put on speed and dropped him behind."

"It was not Vernon who Coker saw."

"He thinks not, sir. Tipping a senior's hat is a good deal more like Vernon-Smith than Vernon," said Wingate, with a faint smile. "But I have ascertained that it could not have been Vernon. He was in his study, writing lines."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, sir. I went up to the Remove studies. Vernon seems to be the only Remove boy indoors. He told me he went up after dinner to get his lines done, and has not been out of the House at all."

Mr. Quelch glanced at his watch.

"It is only a quarter of an hour to class now," he said. "Vernon-Smith, if he is still out of gates, must return very soon. Will you send him to me immediately he comes in, Wingate?"

"Very well, sir!"

Wingate departed again.

Mr. Quelch was left looking more worried and troubled than ever. Was it Vernon-Smith, or Vernon-Smith's double, that he had seen at the study window? Quelch would have given a good deal to know for certain.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bertie Is For It!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH wheeled in his bicycle and raised his eyebrows slightly at the sight of a group by the door of the bike-shed.

Wingate of the Sixth stood there. Tom Redwing was there, with a clouded brow. Skinner and Snoop were there, and Bolsover major and Hazeldene. Wingate was waiting for the Bouncer; Redwing was worried at the prospect of his churn having landed in more trouble; Skinner & Co. were interested to know what the row was about.

"Oh, here you are!" said Wingate gruffly, as the Bouncer appeared.

"Lots of time for class, Wingate!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"I know that! Your Form-master wants you."

Smithy laughed.

"I haven't been out of bounds," he said lightly. "Only a run down to the village, Wingate! No good offering a Sixth Form prefect a toffee-apple, I suppose?"

"Don't be a young ass! You've been out for toffee-apples, have you?" said Wingate, with a suspicious look at the Bouncer.

"Yes—Uncle Clegg's specials!"

"Well, let's see them!" said Wingate. "If you've brought in toffee-apples from the village tuckshop that looks—Let's see them anyhow."

Vernon-Smith opened his saddle-bag and took out a paper bag which he demurely opened. It was stacked with the delightful toffee-apples for which that ancient gentleman, Uncle Clegg, was famous. Evidently Herbert Vernon-Smith had been down to the village.

"Well, put up your bike and come along," said Wingate.

"O.K.! Like to take this bag up to my study for me, Skinner? You fellows help yourselves, if you like toffee-apples!" said Smithy.

He handed the paper bag to Skinner—and that youth, and Snoop, and Bolsover and Hazel promptly helped themselves! It appeared that they did like toffee-apples!

Redwing stood silent, watching his chum, but his face had cleared. He knew that Smithy was suspected of something, but that trip to the village was evidently genuine.

"What's up, Reddy?" asked Vernon-Smith, as he came out after putting up his machine.

"Something—I don't know what!" answered Redwing. "I fancy something's happened in Quelch's study since you went out."

"And they pick on me!" sneered the Bouncer. "Coming, Wingate!"

He followed the prefect to the House.

Wingate gave him two or three keen glances as they went. However, he said nothing, and they arrived at Mr. Quelch's study.

"Here is Vernon-Smith, sir!" said Wingate.

"Thank you, Wingate!" The gimlet eyes fixed on the Bouncer. "Vernon-Smith, where have you been since dinner?"

"To Friardale, sir."

"I shall require you to prove that statement, Vernon-Smith."

"Some Remove fellows saw me go, sir—Wharton and Redwing! Coker of the Fifth chased me down the lane!" said the Bouncer coolly. "And Wingate can tell you that I brought back a bag of toffee-apples from the village tuckshop."

"That is the case, sir!" said Wingate.

"You assert that you called at the village shop, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"I trust," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "that Mr. Clegg will bear out that statement, Vernon-Smith."

"I think he will, if you ask him, sir! I sat in his shop for at least ten minutes having some ices."

The gimlet eyes seemed to bore into the Bouncer. He met Quelch's penetrating gaze with perfect calmness.

Without speaking, Mr. Quelch turned to the telephone and rang up the shop in Friardale. A minute on the telephone was enough. The Remove master put up the receiver; having learned from Uncle Clegg that Vernon-Smith had called there, consumed ices, and departed with a bag of toffee-apples.

There was a moment of deep silence in the study. Then Mr. Quelch spoke.

"You may go, Vernon-Smith."

"Yes, sir."

The Bounder left the study. He lingered for a moment, in the passage, and heard Quelch's voice again.

"Please send Vernon to me, Wingate."

"Very well, sir."

The Bounder walked on. He went up to the Remove passage—and heard Wingate following him up the stairs.

As he passed study No. 1 in the Remove he glanced in—the door was open and he saw the junior who was so like himself sitting at the table, writing lines.

Bertie Vernon glanced up, a look of dislike crossing his face as he did so.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders and walked on to his own study, Study No. 4.

Skinner & Co. were there with the bag of toffee-apples, and he joined them.

A moment or two later Wingate of the Sixth was looking in at the door of Study No. 1, and Bertie looked up again.

"Quelch's study, at once!" said Wingate briefly.

"I haven't finished my lines!" said Vernon. "They've not got to be handed in before class, anyhow. At least, Quelch didn't say so."

"It's not that; cut off!"

"Well, what is it, then?" asked Vernon, with a sullen look very like the Bounder's as he rose from the table. Sticking indoors, grinding lines, while the other fellows were at the nets, had not improved his temper.

"I dare say Quelch will tell you, if you don't know!" answered Wingate dryly. "Anyhow, cut off at once!"

"Oh, all right!"

Leaving his unfinished imposition on the study table the new junior left the study and went down.

At the foot of the staircase a fat figure rolled up to him and blinked at him through a pair of big spectacles.

"I say, Smithy—" began Bunter.

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Smithy! I say, I heard a chap say you'd got toffee-apples! I think you might whack out a toffee-apple—"

"Oh, shut up, you blithering oyster!" grunted Vernon, and he walked on, leaving the fat Owl blinking. Being taken for his cousin annoyed Bertie fully as much as it annoyed Smithy.

"Well, of all the ill-tempered beasts!" grunted the aggrieved fat Owl. Then, as he blinked after Vernon he realised that it was not Smithy! Vernon was wearing dark grey trousers without a stripe! "Oh! It's the other beast!" grunted Bunter. And he rolled up to the Remove passage to look for the proprietor of toffee-apples.

Vernon tapped at Mr. Quelch's door and entered. Generally, the new junior's manner was very respectful with his Form-master—a contrast to Smithy's, which always had a hint of disrespect in it. But the new junior's face was a trifle sullen now.

He had had lines for next to nothing, as he considered it. He had sat in the study grinding them out when he wanted to join the other fellows at the nets. Now he was called away before his task was done—evidently for trouble of some sort.

Bertie Vernon's temper, little better than Smithy's, was under better control. But at the moment it was less under control than usual.

"Wingate says you want me, sir!" he said as curtly as he could venture to speak.

"I have sent for you, Vernon," said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "You probably know the reason!" He waved

a hand towards the inky table and the inky books and papers thereon.

Bertie stared at the inky collection. Clearly something had happened in that study. His glance returned to his Form-master's stern face.

"I don't know why you've sent for me, sir," he said, or rather snapped. "I've nearly finished my lines, if it's that."

"I saw you in this study, Vernon, when you inked the books and papers on my table!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. Vernon stared at him.

"I've not been in this study to-day!" he answered.

"I saw you through the open window from the quadrangle, Vernon. I must admit," went on Mr. Quelch, "that at first I took it for granted that it was your cousin that I saw—such an act as this appearing more in keeping with his character than with yours. But I have ascertained definitely that Vernon-Smith was out of gates at the time."

"You never saw me in this study."

"No doubt you were unaware of it, Vernon. As it happened, I glanced towards the window in passing at a distance and saw you."

"You did not see me!" said Bertie stubbornly.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips very hard. The new junior answered sullenly and snappishly, and seemed to have forgotten the use of the word "sir."

"I am sorry that you should prevaricate, Vernon!" said Mr. Quelch very quietly. "Say no more—I will not listen to you. I had formed a good opinion of you, Vernon, and I am sorry—deeply sorry—to see that you have yielded to malicious and revengeful feelings. I should not have been surprised at this in your relative—I am surprised and shocked to find it in you. You had given me a very different impression."

"I have not been in this study—"

"Be silent! I regret, Vernon, that I have no alternative but to report your action to your headmaster, and request him to administer a flogging."

Bertie Vernon panted.

"I tell you I did not—"

"Silence! At six o'clock I shall take you to your headmaster—"

"I tell you—"

"You may now leave my study! Come here at six o'clock! Now go!"

Bertie looked at him with flashing eyes. Only too clearly he found it hard to check the angry words on his lips. But he checked them, and left the study, breathing rage—leaving Mr. Quelch with the impression that the relatives in his Form were, after all, alike not only in looks!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

High Words!

"I HE old fool!"

"Who?"

asked Tom Redwing quietly.

"That old goat Quelch!" snarled the Bounder.

"But what—"

"The fool! The goat! The old idiot!"

After class that day, the Bounder was pacing, or, rather, stamping about his study with a black brow.

Seldom, or never, had Redwing seen his chum in so savage and bitter a temper—used as he was to Smithy's tantrums.

What the row was Tom could not guess. He did not expect Smithy to be concerned about the fact that his relative and double, Bertie Vernon, was up for a Head's flogging. That could hardly worry the Bounder. So why he was stamping about and uttering an endless tirade was quite a mystery to Redwing.

"For goodness' sake chuck it, Smithy!" said Tom, at last. "It's not decent to talk like that—there's a limit! What has Quelch done, anyhow? You haven't been in a row that I've heard of."

"The blithering old ass!"

"But what—"

"The potty old goat!" snarled the Bounder. "Last time he gave him detentions! He makes a favourite of the brute! Who'd have thought that he would pass him on to the Head for a flogging? The potty old blitherer!"

Redwing stared blankly.

Surprising as it was, it was the affair of Bertie that had thrown Smithy into this tantrum!

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Redwing. "Are you going to make out now that you care two straws whether the fellow is flogged or not? He jolly well deserves it, for what he did, from what I hear!"

"Fool!"

"Well, I'm not fool enough to believe that you care whether your cousin's flogged or not! It's rather late in the day for you to set up as an affectionate relative!" snapped Tom.

"Try not to be an idiot! The Head can flog his skin off for all I care!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "But who'd have thought it? He makes a favourite of the fellow—you know that—"

"I don't, and you don't!"

"Oh, shut up! I'd have banked on

(Continued on next page.)

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detentions, and now— Oh, the old fool!"

"Oh!" A light dawned on Tom's mind. "You mean, if Vernon had got detentions, he might have been out of the cricket to-morrow! I dare say he'd rather have the flogging than cut the Highcliffe match!"

"I dare say he would!" snarled Smithy. "But I wouldn't! I'd never have dreamed that Quelch would come down heavy like this on his dashed favourite."

"Well, what he did——"

"Oh, don't talk rot!"

"Haven't you heard what he did?" asked Redwing. "It seems that he sneaked down to Quelch's study, when he was making out that he was doing his lines, and inked his books and papers——"

"Oh, chuck it, you dummy!"

"Well, that's what he did—and Quelch happened to spot him from the quad," said Redwing. "And I tell you, Smithy, it's jolly lucky for you that a good many fellows knew that you were at Friardale at the time—Quelch might have thought—in fact, I jolly well believe he did think at first that——"

"Idiot!"

"I know they were inquiring after you, anyhow," said Redwing. "It's pretty plain what Quelch thought at first."

"Dummy! Do shut up talking rot!"

Redwing was silent, and the Bounder continued to move restlessly about the study. Tom could understand easily enough that it would have gratified Smithy had his double got a detention for the morrow—the date of the Highcliffe match. Quelch had dealt more severely with the culprit than Smithy had expected him to deal. Still, that hardly explained the Bounder's bitter rage and annoyance.

The door of Study No. 4 was thrown open without a knock.

Both juniors looked round—the Bounder with a scowl. It was Bertie Vernon who stood in the doorway.

His face was as dark as the Bounder's.

Smithy's eyes glittered at him.

"What do you want here?" he almost shouted. "Who asked you to this study?"

"You rotter!" The words came through Vernon's set teeth. "How did you wangle this, you cad? I've been thinking it over in class—I know now what must have happened."

"Get out of my study!"

"Quelch fancied that he saw me from the quad!" went on Bertie, unheeding. "He saw somebody—I know that! There's only one fellow at Greyfriars who could have been mistaken for me! It was you that he saw in his study!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Vernon!" exclaimed Tom Redwing. "Plenty of fellows know that Smithy was out of gates at the time!"

"Do you believe that?" asked Vernon contemptuously.

"I know it!"

"Yes; he fixed it up pretty carefully!" said Bertie. "Fixed it up well enough to take Quelch in! I'm booked for a flogging at six—no good telling the Head it was Smith—Smith was out of gates! I was nowhere near Quelch's study—lot of good saying so, when Quelch saw me there, with Smithy out of gates! What sort of a treacherous rat do you call yourself, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder's face flamed. He clenched his fists, and stepped towards the junior in the doorway.

"Get out," he said thickly, "or——"

Redwing grasped his arm and pulled him back.

"Keep cool, Smithy!" he said quietly. "Nobody's going to believe a rotten tale like that. Vernon can shout it up and down the Remove, if he likes, and nobody will believe a word of it. Everybody knows that you were a mile away when he ragged in Quelch's study——"

Tom Redwing broke off suddenly. Even as he was speaking, a startling and chilling doubt came into his mind.

He looked at Vernon-Smith, and looked at the junior, so like him, in the doorway! The colour changed in his face.

"Smithy," he muttered, "you—you never——"

"Oh, shut up, you fool!"

Redwing stood quite still.

"You're getting by with this!"

Bertie Vernon's voice came tensely. "In an hour's time I've got to go up to the Head. I'd rather take the flogging than do what you've done! You cur!"

"Let go my arm, Redwing, you fool——"

Redwing did not let go. He gave the Bounder a shove that sent him staggering back across the study. Then he shut the door in Vernon's face.

With his back to the door he stood looking at the Bounder.

"Smithy!" His voice was very quiet. "You've done this! You banked upon Quelch taking you for him—you let him see you at the window! Oh, Smithy! You went out, and then cut in, and got out again, and went on to Friardale! You banked on Vernon getting detentions. I see that now! You don't want him flogged—you wanted to keep him out of the cricket to-morrow! Smithy, have you gone out of your senses?"

The Bounder gave him a black look.

The miserable plot had gone wrong—he had not gained his object. He had had his plotting and his treachery for his pains! He did not care a straw whether Bertie Vernon was flogged or not. He wanted to keep him out of the Highcliffe match. He had failed.

"I think you must be mad!" said Redwing. "You can't let this go on, Smithy!"

"Fool!"

"You can't let that chap go up for a flogging for what you did——"

"Who wants him flogged?" snarled the Bounder. "Who'd have thought for a minute that that old ass Quelch would——"

"You've got to stop it!"

"How can I stop it, you dummy?"

"You can go to Quelch——"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Smithy, if you let this go on, you're not fit for a decent fellow to speak to. You must have been mad to think of such a rotten trick!"

"He shouldn't have barged into the cricket! He shouldn't have barged into my school at all! What did his uncle send him here for? Plenty of other schools! I'll make the cad sorry he came to Greyfriars, at any rate!"

"It's a pity he came! But never mind that! You can't let this go on, Smithy—there's still time——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You're letting yourself down in doing such a thing. It's a thing that even Skinner wouldn't do. No fellow would do it!"

"That's enough!"

Vernon-Smith stamped to the door, and stamped out of the study, shutting the door after him with a bang.

Tom Redwing was left alone in Study No. 4, with dismay and something of horror in his face.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

W. G. B. Is Worried!

"I SAY, you fellows——"
"Cough it up!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.
"I say——"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Billy Bunter.

And the Famous Five gazed at him. Billy Bunter was worried.

Every fellow who noticed Bunter could see that he was worried. Ever since class, Bunter had worn a worried look.

He wore, of course, other things, but his worried look was the most conspicuous. It leaped to the eye.

Seldom or never eager for conversation from William George Bunter, Harry Wharton & Co. now kindly encouraged him to cough it up. If Billy Bunter was, as he looked, deep in the depths of worry and trouble, they were the fellows to set the matter right, if they could.

"Nothing's the matter?" asked Harry.

"No, nothing at all—absolutely nothing!" said Bunter anxiously. "I don't know anything about it! How could I?"

"Well, if nothing's the matter, why look like a boiled owl?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Hasn't your postal order come?" asked Bob. "I sort of remember hearing you mention that you were expecting a postal order, old fat man!"

"Tain't that!" said Bunter, shaking his head.

"Is it your lines?" asked Nugent. "Does Quelch want them?"

"I did my lines before dinner—owing to that rotten trick Quelch played on me! Tain't that!"

"Bad news from home?" asked Harry.

"No! I haven't got any relations coming!"

"Oh crikey!"

"The fact is, it's nothing!" said Bunter. "I wasn't there, you know."

"Where?"

"Oh, nowhere!" said Bunter hastily.

"He isn't mad!" said Bob Cherry, regarding the fat Owl attentively. "I don't think he's got enough brains to go mad with! He's got something on his mind—such as it is! Is Coker of the Fifth after you for scoffing his tuck, Bunter?"

"Blow Coker of the Fifth!"

"Loder——"

"Blow Loder!"

"Well, get it off your chest, whatever it is," said Bob. "Tell your Uncle Robert. Have you scoffed Smithy's toffee-apples?"

"No, you ass! He's such an ill-tempered beast!" groaned Bunter. "I don't want Smithy after me! But Quelch is worse than Smithy! I really don't know what to do! That chap Vernon is rather a beast, too—though not such a beast as Smithy. Still, fair play's a jewel!"

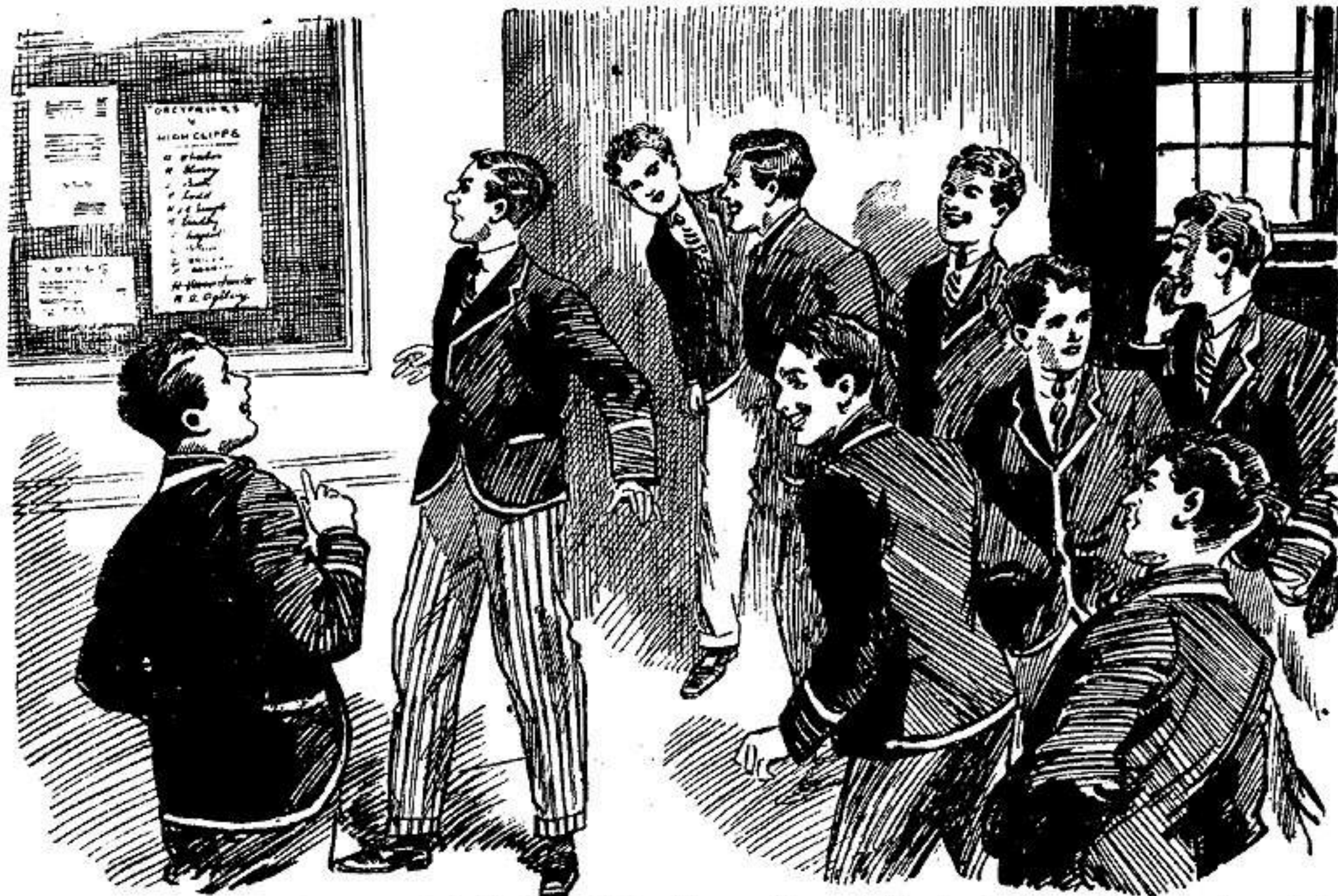
This was so much Greek to the Famous Five. If there was any meaning in Bunter's extraordinary remarks, they were quite unable to elucidate it.

But it was clear that the fat Owl was fearfully worried, and they felt quite concerned.

"What have you been doing?" asked Harry. "Tell us about it, fathead, and we'll see what can be done!"

"I haven't done anything!" explained Bunter. "The bullseyes weren't there, after all!"

"The bullseyes!" said Harry Wharton blankly.



"Wharton's taken you at your word, Smithy!" said Hazeldene, as Vernon-Smith stared at the cricket list and saw that his name was deleted and another name written under it. A flush came into the Bounder's face, then it faded out, leaving him quite pale.

"Yes—I mean, no! I never went to Quelch's study for them, so I don't know whether he chucked them away or not! Fancy a man chucking away bullseyes, you fellows! Think he's mad?"

"We're getting on," said Bob. "It's something to do with Skinner's bullseyes. Has Skinner found out that you stole his bullseyes, Bunter?"

"I never stole his bullseyes, and he never found out that I had stolen them, either! 'Tain't Skinner!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry. "You went to Quelch's study after those bullseyes and never found them. Is that it? Does Quelch know? If he does, you'll get six for rooting in his study after confiscated tack. Is that why you're looking as if you were going to be hanged?"

"I never went to his study. Anyhow, he doesn't know I did! But if he knew I was there, he'd know I went," explained Bunter.

"Yes—I think even a schoolmaster's brain might grasp that!" remarked Johnny Bull, with gentle sarcasm. "If he knew you were there, he's quite likely to guess that you went there. It's fairly easy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" groaned Bunter. "How can a fellow let it go on? Ain't it too fearfully thick?"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Is the thickfulness terrific?" inquired Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, look at it," mumbled Bunter. "The fellow's up for a flogging! Don't you call that jolly thick?"

"Do you mean Vernon?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"He's the only fellow up for a flogging that I've heard of!"

"No—yes—I mean, no—that is to say, yes!" stammered Bunter. "Mind, I don't know anything about it—I wasn't there! Don't you fellows get making out that I was there! I was nowhere near the place. Smithy never saw me!"

"Smithy?" repeated Wharton. "What's Smithy got to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all! I'm not going to have that savage beast on my track!" exclaimed Bunter hastily. "Besides, what would Quelch think?"

"About what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

They gazed at him. Evidently there was a weight on Billy Bunter's fat mind, and he had come to the Famous Five to unburden himself. At the same time, he was anxious to keep the whole matter secret! It was really rather a difficult position for the fat Owl.

"You see, Quelch would be shirty at my going to the study at all!" said Bunter dolorously. "Though I never got the bullseyes, you know—they weren't there! But that ain't all! Wouldn't he think I had a hand in it, being there at the time, you know?"

"In what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, a glimmering of light dawning on his mind. "Do you mean that you were there when Quelch's study was ragged?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"No," gasped Bunter, "certainly not! I never went to the study at all. If it comes out that I was there, I want it to be jolly clear that I never went there at all, because Quelch would be sure to think I had a hand in it. I mean to say, what else could he think

when I was right on the spot, you know?"

"Now we're getting to it!" remarked Nugent. "You remember the fat ass asked us to go and snaffle those bullseyes for him when we were going down to cricket? If he went about that time, it would be just about the time that that ass Vernon was ragging the study!"

"Oh, that's it!" said Harry. "Did he see you there, Bunter? He hasn't said anything about it that I've heard of!"

"You see, I thought it was Quelch coming, and bunked behind that screen in the corner!" explained Bunter. "Then I saw him, and it wasn't Quelch. I wasn't going to let him see me, of course! Think I wanted to get mixed up in a rag on Quelch—such an awful rag, too—ink all over his books and papers? No fear!"

The Famous Five began to understand now. But still they did not understand the woeful worry that sat on Bunter's fat brow.

"Well, what's the worry?" asked Bob. "Quelch would very likely think you were mixed up in it, if he knew you were there at the time. But he doesn't know, does he?"

"No fear! Besides, I wasn't there! For goodness' sake, don't you fellows get putting it round that I was there! Quelch might hear of it! I don't want to go up to the Head, too!" gasped Bunter. "I don't want anybody to know anything about it, really! Only, you see, how can a fellow let it go on?"

"Which?"

"I—I mean, Vernon, you know—he's up for a flogging—" mumbled Bunter.

"Serve him jolly well right!" said

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(Continued from page 13.)

Bob. "Inking a beak's books and papers isn't a jape—it's just a rotten dirty trick!"

"Yes, if he did it!"

"You fat ass, you've just told us you were in Quelch's study at the time, and saw him doing it."

"Only it wasn't Vernon!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean I—I'm not going to have that beast Smithy on my track, and—and I'm not going to risk Quelch getting to know that I was in the study at all! That's important! But—fair play's a jewel, you know! Would you fellows let a fellow get it in the neck like that if you knew he hadn't done it?"

Harry Wharton's face became very grave.

"Let's have this plain," he said quietly. "You saw the chap who ragged Quelch's study—saw him at work—and he never saw you! You say that it wasn't Vernon! Quelch seems to have thought the same at first, and he made inquiries, and it was proved that Smithy was out of gates at the time! Have you got it into your silly nut that it was Smithy?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Then get it out again, fathead! They're as like as two peas, and a blind owl like you couldn't tell 'orher from which. You fancied it was Smithy at the time, very likely—it's more in his line. But you know now that it was Vernon. So don't be an ass!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Do you think it was Vernon, after all, and I only supposed that it was Smithy?" he asked.

"Yes, ass!"

"Oh! Do you think Smithy lent him his trousers?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"You see," explained Bunter, "he had Smithy's trousers on."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Up To Smithy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, leaning on the banisters of the Remove landing gave Harry Wharton a scowling glance as he came up the staircase.

Smithy was in a mood, just then, to scowl at everything and everybody. Never had he been so utterly disgruntled.

His conscience was not quite easy at what he had done. He tried to find excuses for himself, with less success than was satisfactory. Vernon should not have butted into the cricket; he should not have butted into Smithy's school at all—and, anyhow, Smithy had only meant to get him a detention, to keep him out of the Highcliffe match.

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Now he was up for a flogging, which Smithy had never dreamed of—and he was still in the eleven for Highcliffe! His name was posted up in the Rag, in the cricket list for the morrow's match. It was rotten all round, and, to add to that, Redwing had guessed how matters stood, and the look on his chum's face when he had left him haunted the Bounder.

Harry Wharton came to a stop.

"Oh, here you are!" he said quietly.

"Don't jaw to me now; leave me alone!" snapped Smithy.

"It's a quarter to six!" said Harry, in the same quiet tone. "No time to waste, Smithy! Vernon's up for six o'clock."

"What's that got to do with me?"

"It gives you under fifteen minutes to tell the truth and stop this," said Harry Wharton. "You're found out, Smithy."

Smithy caught his breath.

"Has Redwing—"

He broke off.

"I've not seen Redwing."

"Then what do you mean, you fool?"

"I'll tell you. You weren't alone in Quelch's study to-day. Another fellow was there, parked behind the screen in the corner, and he saw you!"

The Bounder gave a violent start. Then he forced a laugh.

"Tell me another funny story!" he suggested.

"It was Bunter," said Harry. "The fat ass was there after those bullseyes Quelch snaffled in third school. He was afraid of getting mixed up in it, but he's let it out now. Bunter's a howling ass, but he's got decency enough not to let this go on. It's been worrying the fat chump ever since he heard that your cousin was up for a flogging, and now he's let it out. He saw you—"

"He saw Vernon, you mean."

"No—not unless Vernon was wearing your clothes," said Harry quietly. "He might easily have been mistaken on your looks—he couldn't have been mistaken on your clobber. Cut it out, Smithy. It won't do!"

"Is that the lot?"

"That's the lot."

"Leave me alone, then!"

Wharton did not move.

"I'm speaking to you now, Smithy, to give you a chance," he said. "I can't make you out, playing a foul trick like that. You fooled me, and you fooled Redwing; we both thought you'd gone to the village. I suppose you parked your bike somewhere and sneaked in over a back wall, or something. Anyhow, it was you that Bunter saw in Quelch's study. What did you do it for? A dirty trick to get a fellow a Head's flogging—"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Vernon's not getting that flogging!" said the captain of the Remove. "Have a little sense, Smithy. It's out now. Do you want every man in the Remove to look on you as a rotten, sneaking, treacherous toad?"

Vernon-Smith crimsoned.

"That's not all," went on Harry. "I can't let it go on, as head boy of the Remove, now I know."

"You're going to sneak to Quelch?" sneered the Bounder.

"Unless you put it right in time, I'm going to Quelch!" said Wharton, with a nod. "I shan't mention your name, but I shall tell him that it was not Vernon he saw in his study. I can't leave him in the dark about that! A fellow who's done nothing is not going to get a flogging because you've played a dirty trick. I shall tell Quelch that it was not Vernon in his study—he's got to know that!"

"If he believes that it was not Vernon he will believe that it was I. You may as well mention my name!" sneered the Bounder.

"Take your chance of that. Quelch has got to know that it was not Vernon before it's too late."

The Bounder breathed hard and deep.

"It's up to you!" said Harry.

"You're a hard nut to crack in some ways, Smithy, but this is outside even your limit! I'd never have dreamed that you'd do such a thing—it's simply foul! Getting a fellow a Beak's flogging—"

"You gabbling fool, how was I to know that Quelch would report him for a flogging?" snarled Smithy. "The old fool makes a favourite of him. How was a fellow to know he'd come down heavy, like that?"

Wharton stared at him.

"If that wasn't what you wanted, what did you do it for, then?" he exclaimed. "You must have known that Quelch would go off at the deep end, and you took plenty of trouble to fix it on your relation."

"The old ass gave him detentions, last time he was in a row, you fool!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

He understood. His eyes glinted.

"So you've taken it on yourself who's to play cricket for the Remove, and that's your way of settling it, is it?" he said. "You did this to keep out the bowler we want in the Highcliffe match. Well, you've muffed that. Flogging or not, Vernon is in the Remove eleven to-morrow."

"If he is, I'm not!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Last time you said that, Vernon-Smith, I refused to take you at your word. Now I'm taking you at your word! I'm going down to the Rag now to cross your name out of the list!"

"You rotter!" breathed the Bounder.

"Time's getting on!" said Harry. "In ten minutes' time Vernon has to go to the Head with Quelch! He's not going! You can do the decent thing, or you can leave it to me."

The Bounder stood silent for a long moment.

But he knew how he had to decide.

He did not speak, but he gave the captain of the Remove a look of hate and went down the stairs.

Harry Wharton followed him.

From the corner of Masters' Passage he saw Vernon-Smith tap at the door of Mr. Quelch's study and enter. That was that!

He walked away to the Rag. The Co. were waiting for him there, with worried faces.

"What's Smithy going to do?" asked Bob.

"He's gone to Quelch!"

"Oh, good!"

Harry Wharton stepped to the cricket list pinned up in the Rag. A good many fellows glanced at him as he took a pencil from his pocket.

"Making a change in the team?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yes."

Wharton drew the pencil through the name of "H. Vernon-Smith." Under that deleted name he wrote "R. D. Ogilvy." Then he went out of the Rag with his friends.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Chucked!

VERNON! I said six o'clock!" Mr. Quelch looked up irritably from his writing-table as Herbert Vernon-Smith entered his study.

It was still seven or eight minutes to

six: and Quelch, who was correcting Form papers, had no use for a fellow coming in before his time.

But the next moment he discerned that it was not Vernon.

He frowned with vexation. As he was expecting Vernon in his study in a few minutes more, the mistake was a natural one: but it irritated the Remove master.

"Oh! Vernon-Smith!" he rapped. "What is it? I am busy!"

"I've something to tell you, sir!" muttered the Bounder.

"Be brief."

"It was I you saw in this study after dinner to-day, sir."

"Wha-a-t?"

Mr. Quelch gave quite a jump. Two or three blots scattered from his pen! He did not even notice them, as he stared at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"What do you mean, Vernon-Smith? I fail to understand you! It was proved at the time that you were out of gates! What do you mean?"

"I cut in for a few minutes, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

He stood staring at Vernon-Smith across the table. The Bounder stood with a dogged look on his face.

There was no help for it—he had to own up! His wretched scheme had gone amiss in every particular—nothing had gone as he had planned it. He was found out, and the game was up. All that was left to him was to make the best of it.

"Then it was you——" Quelch glanced at the books on the table, that showed very visible traces of ink. "It was you——"

"Yes, sir!"

"You allowed me to believe that it was Vernon!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "Owing to the resemblance between you, Vernon-Smith, there was nothing else that I could believe, when it appeared to be established that you were out of school at the time."

"It's not my fault he's so like me, sir!"

"No! Certainly not! But why have you come to me, almost at the last moment, to tell me this, Vernon-Smith?"

"I've heard that Vernon's going up to the Head for it, sir! I never thought it would be as serious as that!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

Smithy was undoubtedly making the best of it. What he said was true enough: but it certainly did not give his Form-master a hint of how matters really stood.

Mr. Quelch's grim brow relaxed a little.

"I am glad, Vernon-Smith, that you have had the honesty, the self-respect, to speak out in time," he said, slowly. "Owing to this unfortunate resemblance between you and your relative, you could not exculpate yourself without the blame falling on him. You should have thought of that, Vernon-Smith."

Smithy said nothing.

Tap!

The study door opened again, and Bertie Vernon came in.

Six was chiming from the clock-tower.

The new junior gave Vernon-Smith an inimical stare. He had not expected to find Smithy with his Form-master.

Smithy gave him a black look, in return.

"You told me to come here at six, sir!" said Vernon.

"Yes! Quite so!" said Mr. Quelch. "Vernon, I regret that I did not accept

your assurance that you had not been in this study. In the circumstances, it was impossible for me to do so. But I'm glad to tell you, my boy, that the facts have now come to light—Vernon-Smith has just confessed that it was he that I saw from the quadrangle——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Vernon, in astonishment.

"You will understand, Vernon, that what appeared conclusive proof was given that your cousin was out of gates at the time!" said the Remove master.

"But since the blame has fallen on you, Vernon-Smith has very properly come here and told me how the matter stands."

"Oh!" repeated Bertie, blankly.

He stared at Vernon-Smith. Not for a moment had he dreamed that the Bounder would own up. He could not understand it now.

"I am glad, more than glad, Vernon, that this disagreeable matter has been cleared up!" said Mr. Quelch. "I regret the error, and I assure you that you are completely exonerated. You may go, my boy."

"Thank you, sir!" stammered Bertie.

He left the study—almost wondering whether he was dreaming! The door closed on him.

Vernon-Smith stood waiting.

Mr. Quelch regarded him with a thoughtful eye, very slowly.

"I hardly know how to deal with you, Vernon-Smith," he said at last, speaking very slowly. "Your action in this study was a disgraceful outrage. You deserve the severest punishment. Yet I cannot overlook the fact that you have come here of your own accord, to prevent the blame—and the punishment—falling upon an innocent person!"

Smithy's face was expressionless.

There was another long pause.

"In the circumstances," said Mr. Quelch, at last, "I shall overlook the occurrence! You may leave my study, Vernon-Smith."

"Thank you, sir!"

Vernon-Smith left the study in his turn.

Bertie Vernon was waiting in the passage, and the expression on his face was not hostile now.

"Stop a minute, will you?" he said, colouring. "I—I'm rather sorry for what I said in your study, Vernon-Smith! I—I thought you'd fixed this on me intentionally——"

"Did you?" sneered the Bounder.

"It looked like it!" said the new junior. "But—but I suppose, when you got out of it yourself, you never thought that it would land on me as a matter of course! It was bound to, as Quelch saw you in the study, and you made him believe that you had been out of gates. I—I thought——"

The Bounder gave a sneering laugh.

"You thought I'd fixed it up to land you in a row with Quelch!"

"I did! I'm sorry—now——"

"Nothing to be sorry about, you cad!" said the Bounder, deliberately. "If you speak to Wharton, you'll know soon enough why I went to Quelch. Do you think I'd have done it on your account? If you do, you're a fool! Go and eat coke!"

And the Bounder tramped on, leaving Bertie Vernon staring.

He went into the Rag, to look at the cricket list.

A group of fellows were standing before it, and they all glanced round as Smithy came up.

"Wharton's taken you at your word, Smithy!" said Hazeldene.

The Bounder did not answer. He stared at the paper. His name in that

list was deleted, and another name written under it.

The Remove fellows watched him curiously.

Half the Form had heard Vernon-Smith declare, the day before, that he would not play in the Highcliffe match if Vernon played in it. Nobody had felt sure whether Smithy meant those passionate words, or whether it was hot air. The look on the Bounder's face indicated, now, that his tongue had been longer than his intentions!

A flush came into his face, then it faded out, leaving him quite pale. He stood staring fixedly at his name, with a thick pencil-mark through it, for a long moment, and then turned on his heel, and walked away without uttering a word.

Skinner gave a whistle.

"By gum!" he remarked. "Smithy's got his back up!"

"It's what he asked for!" said Tom Brown.

"Fellows don't always want what they ask for!" grinned Skinner. "Smithy looked as if he didn't!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith went out into the quad. He found the Famous Five there—and Billy Bunter in the offing.

Bunter gave him a very uneasy blink, and backed behind Bob Cherry. But Smithy paid no heed to the fat Owl. He spoke to Harry Wharton, in a quiet tone:

"You've chucked me out of the eleven!"

"Yes!" said Harry curtly.

"And you're keeping that cad Vernon in?"

"I'm keeping Vernon in."

"And you think I'm going to stand it?" asked Smithy, still in the same quiet tone.

The captain of the Remove shrugged his shoulders.

"You've asked for it, and got it!" he said. "You ought to be jolly well booted, too, and you know it. Don't talk to me—you make me feel ill!"

The Bounder stood looking at him for a moment or two. Then, rather to the surprise of the Famous Five, who fully expected an angry outburst, he turned and walked away, without another word.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, waved a cigarette in greeting.

"Here he comes!" he remarked. "Here comes Smithy!"

Ponsonby and Gadsby of the Highcliffe Fourth, were seated on a log, under a shady tree on Courtyard common. Two bicycles leaned against the tree.

Having a little leisure on their hands, Pon and Gaddy were improving the shining hour by smoking cigarettes. At the same time, they watched the path over the common, in expectation of an arrival.

A junior in a Greyfriars cap appeared on the path winding among furze and gorse, whereupon Pon removed the cigarette from his mouth and waved it.

The newcomer, still at a distance, stared at him, and came on.

Gadsby waved his cigarette, receiving another stare.

"I thought he'd come on his bike," remarked Gadsby. "He must have walked it pretty quick, after phoning, to get here almost as soon as we did!"

"Oh, they're packed with energy at Greyfriars!" said Pon disdainfully.

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"Burstin' with pep, the lot of them! I wonder what Smithy wants all of a sudden? Somethin' for to-morrow afternoon, I suppose!"

"Won't he be playin' cricket to-morrow afternoon? He told us he was in the team comin' over to play Courtenay's crew. It's the match to-morrow, you know!"

"May have chucked it! Anyhow, he must have somethin' on to get me on Mobby's phone and ask me to hike over here and meet him half-way. But what the dooce is the matter with that chap?" went on Ponsonby, staring at the Greyfriars junior coming along the grassy path. "I suppose he can see us here!"

The Greyfriars junior certainly could see the two Highcliffians sitting on the log beside the path. He had seen them wave to him.

But he had not waved back, and, after a stare, had taken no further notice of them. They might have been the veriest strangers to him, to judge by his look as he came along.

Which, naturally, surprised Pon and Gaddy, and rather irritated them. They had ridden two or three miles on their bicycles, they had waited ten minutes or so, and they expected Herbert Vernon-Smith to look pleased to see them. The Greyfriars junior looked utterly indifferent.

"The cad's in one of his tempers, I suppose," said Pon. "Had a row with somebody at his school—he's always in rows! They call him the Bounder at his school—they've got him down about right!"

"Right on the mark!" agreed Gaddy. "If the fellow wasn't reeking with money——"

"He wouldn't be worth knowin', quite! But he is!" said Ponsonby, with a shrug of his shoulders. "If he's ready to splash it about on a big car to-morrow, I'm not goin' to say no! But I've no use for his rotten tempers! He can keep them for Greyfriars chaps!"

The Greyfriars junior came on at a swinging pace. He did not look at the Highcliffians again, which perplexed and irritated them all the more.

They were there to meet Smithy—he had specially asked them to come! Ponsonby supposed that it meant probably some plan for the half-holiday on the morrow, with the millionaire's son splashing money about. Pon was a lofty youth—very lofty—but not too lofty to have a greedy eye on the Bounder's ample supplies of cash. It suited him to be civil to Smithy. But he was getting angry now as the Greyfriars junior swung on, apparently not intending even to stop to speak! The Highcliffe knuts were well acquainted with Smithy's unreliable temper—but, really, this was altogether too thick!

"Here, hold on!" called out Ponsonby, as the Greyfriars fellow came abreast of the tree. He jumped up from the log.

The Greyfriars junior stared round at them.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, not at all pleasantly.

Pon and Gaddy stared at the rather hard face, with its rather jutting nose. They could not make the fellow out.

"What do we want?" repeated Ponsonby.

"Yes, you called me, didn't you?"

"What the dooce do you mean?" exclaimed Ponsonby angrily. "What I want to know is, what do you want?"

"I? Nothing!"

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"You don't want to see us?" exclaimed Gadsby.

"Why the dickens should I want to see you?"

"Well, my hat," said the astonished Gadsby, "that tears it! Is the silly fool off his chump, or is he just bein' cheeky?"

Ponsonby compressed his lips. He did not want to quarrel with the millionaire's son, with a view to the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But his temper was rising.

"You don't want to see us?" he asked.

"Not in the least! Why should I?"

"Oh, don't be a fool, and a cheeky fool!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "If you think you can pull a fellow's leg like this, you're jolly well mistaken! You can keep your swank for the fellows at your own school! I've no use for it!"

"Same here!" agreed Gadsby.

"Squat down here and have a smoke!" went on Ponsonby more amicably. "We've time for a spot of banker, if you like, before we have to get in for lock-up. Come on, old bean, what's the good of bein' shirty about nothin'?"

"I don't want any of your smokes, thanks, and I certainly don't want a spot of banker!" answered the Greyfriars junior, staring at him. "You must be a precious young blackguard to be carrying cards in your pockets!"

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Ponsonby.

"Gone mad?" asked Gadsby.

"Stop!" shouted Ponsonby, his face red with anger, as the Greyfriars junior turned to resume his walk onward. "You silly fool, what do you mean by this? What have you brought us here for, if you don't want to see us?"

The Greyfriars junior stopped, and stared round.

"I brought you here!" he exclaimed.

"Well, didn't you?"

"Not that I know of! Are you joking, or have you escaped from some asylum? What the thump do you mean, anyhow? Who are you?"

"Who are we?" gasped Ponsonby.

"I don't know you!"

"You—you—you don't know us?" stuttered Gadsby.

"How should I know you? I don't—and don't want to! You can keep your smokes and your banker, and leave a decent fellow alone!"

With that the Greyfriars junior walked on again.

"By gad!" Ponsonby fairly gasped with rage. "The fellow always was a cad—a rank outsider! But if he thinks he can throw fellows over in this style, he's got another guess coming! Fetchin' us here, miles from the school, to tell us he doesn't know us, and doesn't want to—by gad! Collar the cad, Gaddy! By gad, we'll give him pullin' our leg like this!"

Ponsonby rushed after the Greyfriars fellow, and Gaddy rushed at his heels. Why Herbert Vernon-Smith was carrying on in this remarkable way, the Highcliffians did not know; but they knew that they were not going to stand it, without making Herbert Vernon-Smith sorry for his cheek!

The Greyfriars junior turned quickly at the running footsteps behind. He jumped back.

"Hands off!" he snapped. "I don't want a row with you! What the dickens are you jumping on a fellow like this for? I——"

He had no time for more as Ponsonby and Gadsby rushed at him, both of them hitting out. His hands flew

up, and he backed away from the double attack.

"Fair play, you rotters!" he exclaimed. "Is two to one your idea of fair play, you worms?"

Pon and Gaddy were not bothering about fair play. The Bounder of Greyfriars was a hard hitter in a scrap, and neither of them was anything like a match for him. They attacked the Greyfriars junior together. Two to one was not cricket, but cricket had no appeal for Pon! Two to one meant a thrashing for the Bounder, and that was all the exasperated dandy of Highcliffe cared about.

But it did not work out quite like that. The Greyfriars junior gave ground, but he held his own pretty well, and a sudden jolt on his nose sent Ponsonby staggering.

Gadsby jumped back, unwilling to carry on alone, but the Greyfriars junior jumped after him, hitting out; and Gaddy, with a yell, went down on his back, feeling as if his nose had been pushed through the back of his head.

Pon recovered the next moment and rallied—and the Greyfriars fellow met him with left and right! Man to man, Pon gave ground, yelling to Gadsby to join up.

"Ow!" was Gaddy's reply. He sat in the grass, holding his nose with both hands. "Wow! My nose! Ooogh!"

"Back up!" yelled Ponsonby.

"Wooooogh!" moaned Gaddy.

"Ooogh!"

Pon backed more and more. But backing did not save him; the Greyfriars junior pressed him hard, and a sudden jolt under the chin almost lifted Ponsonby from his feet, and he toppled over Gadsby.

"Goooooogh!" gurgled Gaddy as Pon landed.

"Oooooogh!" spluttered Pon.

The Greyfriars junior, flushed and a little breathless, stood looking down at them, a contemptuous smile on his face.

"Had enough?" he asked.

"Ow! Keep off, you cad!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Oh, you rotter! Keep off!" moaned Gadsby. "Ow, my nose!"

"You'd better think twice before you pitch into a stranger again!" said the Greyfriars junior. "You may find him tougher than you expect! I'm glad to have done with you, at any rate!"

"And I'm done with you, Vernon-Smith, you rotten outsider!" hissed Ponsonby.

The Greyfriars fellow gave a jump.

"Vernon-Smith!" he repeated. "Oh, my hat! Have you fellows been taking me for Vernon-Smith?"

He burst into a laugh.

"So you know Vernon-Smith!" he went on, while the Highcliffians stared at him blankly. "I suppose I might have guessed it—as you talked about smokes and banker! Ha, ha, ha!"

He turned and walked away, still laughing.

Ponsonby and Gadsby stared after him, and then looked at one another.

"Is the fellow mad?" gasped Pon. "What does he mean by making out that he ain't Vernon-Smith? What is——"

"Mad as a hatter I think. Ow! My nose! Wow! My nose!"

There was a buzz of a bicycle bell on the path. A cyclist came into view from the direction of Greyfriars.

Pon and Gaddy staggered to their feet, and as they looked towards the cyclist they jumped simultaneously.

It was Herbert Vernon-Smith!

They stared at him blankly as he



"Back up!" yelled Ponsonby. "Woooooogh!" moaned Gadsby. "Ooogh!" The Greyfriars junior pressed Pon hard, and a sudden jolt under the chin almost lifted the Highcliffe junior from his feet, and he toppled over Gadsby.

came pedalling on; then they turned their heads and looked after the Greyfriars junior who was disappearing up the path across the common.

They wondered for a moment whether they were dreaming. Really it seemed like it when they saw a fellow departing on foot in one direction, and the same fellow arriving on a bike from the other.

The Bounder jumped down from his machine; he glanced at the two damaged faces and grinned.

"Been in the wars?" he asked.

"Oh gad! Are—are—are you Vernon-Smith?" stuttered Ponsonby.

"Don't you know me?" The Bounder stared. "What do you mean?"

"Then who's that?" yelled Pon. "I suppose you're Smithy. But who's that? Are there two of you? Have you got a twin—or what?"

The Bounder stared after the figure disappearing in the distance; his brow darkened.

"That's the fellow I mentioned to you once—my cousin at Greyfriars," he said. "They make out that he's just like me."

"Oh!" gasped Pon.

"Oh!" gasped Gadsby.

"Did you take him for me?" asked Smithy. "No reason why you should scrap with him if you did, that I can see."

"So that's your cousin, is it?" snarled Ponsonby. "I remember you told us he was like you; you never said he was your twin. Well, your cousin or not, Herbert Vernon-Smith, I'm going to make that cad squirm as soon as I get a chance. I'll make him sit up for this!"

The Bounder laughed.

"I'll help you," he said. "That's what I came to speak to you fellows about. I never knew he was out of gates."

Bertie Vernon, glancing back from a

distance, saw his relative standing with the Highcliffe fellows.

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and walked on. He quite understood Pon and Gaddy's mistake now, and he had no doubt that his scapegrace cousin had met the two young rascals on the common for smokes and a spot of banker. He was not likely to guess the Bounder's real reason for that appointment with the dandy of Highcliffe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Requires Protection!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

After breakfast, in the morning, Harry Wharton & Co. were thinking chiefly of cricket.

It was a glorious June morning, and the weather evidently was going to be ideal for the game at Highcliffe that day.

Billy Bunter was not thinking of cricket; he was thinking, but of a subject much more urgent.

He rolled up to the Famous Five as they walked in the quad before school, and they came to a halt.

Bunter was for the present persona grata with the Famous Five, as it were. Bunter had brought the Bounder's trickery to light the previous day—which really was to his credit.

Evidently the fat junior had a conscience parked somewhere under his layers of fat.

Bunter had been fearfully anxious to keep it dark that he had been in Quelch's study at the time of the rag. He had been fearfully apprehensive of getting the Bounder on his track. Yet, in spite of these considerations, the fat Owl had played up and prevented Bertie Vernon from getting a Beak's flogging through Smithy's trickery.

The Famous Five agreed that that was very sporting of Bunter—unexpectedly sporting. And they agreed also, nem con, that if the disgruntled Bounder did get on Bunter's track in consequence, Bunter was going to have the most efficient protection.

At the first sign of Smithy taking it out of Bunter they were prepared to fall on Smithy and smite him hip and thigh.

It was, however, rather a relief that the Bounder had shown no sign of any such intention. Perhaps he regarded the fat Owl as hardly worth his resentment, or perhaps he was too occupied with his feud with his relative to waste a thought on Bunter. Anyhow, he completely ignored the existence of the fat Owl of the Remove—to Harry Wharton & Co.'s relief, and still more to Bunter's.

Bunter had just rolled out of the House, and as he came up to the Co. they wondered what was causing his jacket to bulge. It was an unusual place to park school books, but there was something under Bunter's jacket that bulged extensively and leaped to the eye.

"You fellows seen Smithy?" asked Bunter, blinking round the quad with a cautious blink through his big spectacles.

"Not since brekker," said Harry. "Want him?"

"No fear!" answered Bunter promptly. "But, I say, you fellows, if he gets after me—you know he might—"

"That's all right, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "I don't think Smithy's likely to bother you; but if he does we'll stand by you and see you through."

"I mean, he's such a bad-tempered beast," said Bunter anxiously. "I was

bound to tell you fellows, wasn't I, when he was fixing that on his relation—"

"Certainly you were! And I'm jolly glad you did!"

"You see, I've got a conscience," explained Bunter. "I couldn't let a fellow go up to the Head like that through a rotten trick, could I?"

"Of course you couldn't."

"Only I don't want that brute tracking me down, you know. You fellows are going to stand by me, ain't you?"

"The standbyfulness will be terrific," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter. "I rely on you, of course. I'd rather not have a row with Smithy. I mean to say, I dare say I could lick him, but—but—"

"But the butfulness is preposterous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You never know when a fellow like Smithy will break out, with a temper like his," said Bunter. "I mean to say, suppose he missed tuck from his study, for instance. Ten to one he would fancy I'd had it. I don't know why it is, but a fellow can't miss an aniseed ball in the Remove without thinking of me at once. You fellows know that."

"I wonder why?" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Well, it's a bit rotten," said Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to snaffle a fellow's tuck, as you chaps know. Smithy would jump at a chance like that, you know—being such a savage beast. If he pitched into me for showing up his rotten trick on Vernon you fellows would jolly soon stop him—so would a lot of chaps. But if he made out that I'd been grub-raiding in his study fellows wouldn't chip in. You see that?"

"Steer clear of Smithy's study, then, ass!"

"Yes, that's all very well," argued Bunter. "But look how tricky he is! When he wants to pay a fellow out he doesn't stick at trifles. Look how he worked that dirty trick on Vernon yesterday. He might work a dirty trick like that on me. See? Making out that I'd taken tuck from his study. I can tell you he's fearfully unscrupulous."

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton rather sharply. "Smithy's got a silly feud on with that cousin of his, and it's led him a bit over the odds, but—"

"Don't be an ass, Bunter!" said Bob.

"That's all very well," argued Bunter. "But suppose Smithy came along now and said, for instance, that I'd taken a box of chocs from his study. You fellows might believe him—and there you are!"

Bunter evidently was anxious.

But the Famous Five were not impressed. Smithy had gone a good deal over the odds in his feud with Vernon, but the idea of the Bounder laying deep plots and schemes on Bunter's account made them smile.

"Well, you can grin!" said Bunter. "I did a jolly sporting thing yesterday—you said so yourself, Wharton—at the risk of getting Quelch after me, and that beast Smithy, too. You're bound to stand by a chap. If Smithy comes along with some rotten yarn about me pinching chocs, or anything of that kind, I want you to stand by a pal—and take my word, not his. What's his word worth?"

"That's all right, old fat porpoise!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll stand by you and see you through. Don't you worry."

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"All right, then!" said Bunter, evidently much relieved. "It's what I expected of my pals, of course. The worst thing about Smithy is that he's untruthful. I can hardly understand a fellow telling whoppers myself; it's a rotten sort of thing. But there's no doubt about it, you fellows, Smithy's untruthful," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Don't you fellows take any notice of anything he says."

"We won't," agreed Bob.

"If he cuts up rusty just collar him and thrash the cad," said Bunter. "That's the only way of dealing with a fellow like Smithy. Don't listen to him; just give him a jolly good hiding."

"Smithy shan't lay a little finger on you!" assured Johnny Bull. "We'll strew the quad with him if he does."

"Good!" said Bunter. "That's all right, then. If he spins any rotten yarn about a box of chocolates, don't take the slightest notice."

"All serene!"

"Good! I say, you fellows," added Bunter, shoving a fat paw under his jacket, "have some of the chocs?"

"Wha-a-t?"

The fat Owl drew a box of chocolates from under his jacket. That mysterious bulge was explained now.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at that box of chocolates as Bunter generously extended it. They gazed at it speechlessly.

"Have some!" said Bunter cheerily. "They're good! Smithy always buys the best."

"Smithy!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"I—I mean, these ain't Smithy's. I had these in a parcel from Bunter Court this morning—I mean yesterday. Specially packed for me by our butler. Have some, old chaps! I've got lots!"

Bunter helped himself to two or three as he spoke. He munched and crunched happily.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the chocs. They stared at Bunter.

Bob Cherry found his voice.

"You fat villain!" he roared.

"Eh?"

"You've been stealing Smithy's chocs out of his study!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I've just told you I haven't! Haven't I just been warning you not to believe Smithy if he came along and said—Yarrop! Oh crikey! Gimme my chocs, you beasts!"

Billy Bunter fairly bawled with surprise and wrath and indignation as that box of chocolates was jerked from his fat paw.

"I'll take these back to Smithy's study," remarked Harry Wharton. "You fellows boot Bunter all round the quad and back again."

The captain of the Remove walked away to the House with the box of chocolates in his hand.

Bunter cast an infuriated blink after him. But he had time for only one blink. The next moment he forgot even the chocolates—as the Co. proceeded to boot him round the quad. Bunter had no time to think of chocs. All his fat faculties were concentrated on dodging.

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THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Up To Something!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came out in break that morning with very cheerful faces.

Members of the eleven were given leave from third school, while less fortunate fellows had to roll in at

the clang of the bell. While the rest of the Form were grinding in the Remove room with Quelch, the cricketers would be rolling over to Highcliffe.

Among the fellows who packed in readiness was Bertie Vernon. Among the fellows who had to go back to the Form-room was Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The captain of the Remove was quite decided on that point. Smithy's gas on the subject he would willingly have disregarded—he did not want to lose one of the best batsmen in the Remove. But the miserable trick the Bounder had played to cause the new bowler to be left out of the eleven was altogether too much to tolerate.

Smithy himself, probably, hardly knew whether he had really intended to stand out if Vernon played. Now he had no choice about the matter. He was out, and Vernon was in.

Not a fellow in the Remove, not even Smithy's chum, Redwing, found fault with Wharton's decision. Indeed, when the Bounder's trickery became generally known, most of the Remove fellows told him very plainly what they thought of it—and of him!

Smithy could hardly consider that he had cause for complaint. Apart from his trick on the new bowler, he had asked for it—asked for it at the top of his voice. He could hardly grouse at being taken at his word.

Perhaps that was the reason why the Bounder was taking it quietly. His face was quite impassive that morning, and fellows who, knowing his temper, had expected a row on the subject, were glad to see that Smithy had sense enough to bow his head to what could not be helped.

Only Tom Redwing was a little uneasy. The Bounder was in the wrong all along the line; but he was the fellow to feel bitterly and savagely resentful, all the same, and to hit back if he could. Quiet and impassive as he was, Tom did not like the look in his eyes. Indeed, the more quietly Smithy took the blow, the more uneasily Tom wondered what he might have in his mind.

He kept with his chum in break that morning, and stood with him when the cricketers packed in the coach that was to take them over to Highcliffe. Twelve men were going, to be followed later in the day by a crowd of other fellows, as it was a half-holiday that afternoon.

Smithy's eyes gleamed at the sight of Bertie Vernon taking his place with the other cricketers, and Redwing noted the bitter compression of his lips.

"The cad's got by with it!" remarked Smithy. "Hardly three weeks in the school, and he's pushed me out and bagged my place in the eleven."

Redwing made no answer to that. If Smithy persisted in taking that utterly unreasonable view, there was nothing to be said.

Bertie Vernon had not taken Smithy's place. He was played chiefly as a bowler, and Smithy chiefly as a batsman. Ogilvy had been put in in the Bounder's place when he was dropped.

Still, there was Vernon in the team, and there was Smithy out of it.

Smithy took his own view of the situation.

"But we're not through yet," added the Bounder. "Wharton's backing that cad up in this—throwing me over for that rotter! He may be sorry for it later on."

"You told him you wouldn't play

if Vernon did, Smithy," said Tom. "Be reasonable, old chap."

"And he was glad enough to take me at my word," sneered Smithy.

"Well, was he? Do be reasonable, old fellow. Lots of fellows wondered at his standing all you shouted out on that subject. If he wanted to take you at your word, he could have done so, when you were shouting in at his study door on Monday."

"You mean that I'm in the wrong, and our Great Panjandrum's in the right, and that cur who has squeezed me out of the eleven is in the right, too!" sneered the Bounder. "And you call yourself a pal!"

"Well, if you won't see reason, you won't!" said Tom. "Wharton's skipper and you couldn't expect him to stand your trying to keep his new bowler out of the team—and by such a rotten trick, too!"

"His new bowler!" The Bounder's eyes glittered. "Wonderful man, ain't he? He's going to send the Highcliffe wickets down like hay—what?"

"Everybody but you thinks that he will be jolly valuable at Highcliffe, Smithy. He's bowled Sixth Form men at the nets here. Even Wharton, and even you, Smithy, can't stand long against his bowling. Even Inky doesn't bowl better than that new man does. You could see it like everybody else—if you only would."

"I've said that I think he's no good."

Redwing smiled.

"It's all rot, Smithy, and you know it as well as I do. He will put in the bat-trick at Highcliffe to-day at least once—inore likely twice. All the fellows think so."

"I don't."

"Well, the proof of the pudding's in the eating. I suppose you don't care to come over this afternoon and see the game?" asked Tom, rather wistfully.

Tom Redwing wanted very much to go over to Highcliffe that afternoon and watch the game, but he did not expect Smithy to share that wish.

"Think I want to see that cad in my place?" asked Smithy. "You can please yourself—it's a free country."

"Oh, I'll stick to you here!"

"You needn't," answered Smithy coolly. "I've got something on for this afternoon—something you wouldn't care for."

Redwing's face clouded.

"If that means something to do with Pon's crew—" he began.

"Suppose it does?" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, in that case you won't want me," said Redwing dryly. "I shall cut over to Highcliffe on my bike. Most of the fellows will be going."

"You're very keen to see those bat-tricks." The Bounder laughed. "I'll give you ten to one in doughnuts that Wharton will be disappointed in his new bowler. Ten to one that the cad lets him down!"

"Rubbish!"

"He won't take a single wicket in the game, unless Highcliffe bats first, perhaps," added Smithy.

Tom stared at him.

"What difference will that make?" he asked. "Whether Highcliffe bat first or not, Wharton will give Vernon all the bowling he can."

"Sure to," said Smithy, with a nod. "Quite! Let's hope that Highcliffe won't take first knock."

"Why?" asked Tom, puzzled.

But Herbert Vernon-Smith did not answer that question. He left Red-

wing puzzled, and strolled away with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

Tom was left feeling more uneasy than ever.

Something was in the Bounder's mind—he could see that. It was natural, perhaps, in the circumstances, that Smithy should hope that the new bowler would fail to justify expectations—that he could even think so, the wish being father to the thought.

But, on the other hand, Smithy, bitterly resentful as he was, was no fool. At the bottom of his heart, he knew that Bertie Vernon was a wonderful bowler—far and away ahead of the average in junior school cricket.

It was ten to one, a hundred to one, that the Remove's new bowler would fulfil expectations and that the Highcliffe batsmen would open their eyes wide at what he sent down to them.

Yet Smithy, as Tom could see, not merely hoped and thought that the new bowler would disappoint his captain's expectations, but was banking on it as a certainty. What could that mean? Smithy was up to something—what?

What could Smithy do—for that was what it boiled down to?

Redwing, worried and uneasy, could not think of anything that Smithy could possibly do to spoil his rival's triumph that day. Only too well he knew that Smithy, in his present mood, would stick at very little. But there was, so far as Tom could see, absolutely nothing that he could do.

He was relieved, however, when the bell rang for third school, to see the Bounder turn up for class. Smithy was quite reckless enough to have cut that class had it suited his purpose.

But Smithy went in with the Remove; and it was noticeable, too, that he was unusually attentive and respectful in Form—which did not mean that the ragger of the Remove was turning over a new leaf, but that he was very anxious to avoid getting a detention.

After dinner that day a crowd of the Remove fellows wheeled out bikes to ride over to Highcliffe and see how the cricketers were getting on. Tom Redwing went with the rest.

If Smithy had something on with Pon & Co. that afternoon, he certainly did not want his chum; and he had, indeed, made that quite clear. So Tom rode away with a bunch of cyclists; and Smithy was left to his own devices.

Unexpectedly he saw Smithy again. The cyclists were going on towards Highcliffe School when a car shot by them, going in the same direction.

Five or six fellows saw Herbert Vernon-Smith sitting in it.

"Hallo, there's Smithy!" exclaimed Russell. "Going to Highcliffe after all. I wonder how he'll like seeing that cousin of his taking wickets?"

"Catch Smithy watching him do it!" said Bolsover major. "More likely going to pick up that smoky cad Pon and go out on the spree."

Redwing made no remark, but he had no doubt that Bolsover was right. He waved his hand to Smithy as the car shot by, and Smithy grinned and waved back. Then the car raced on ahead and vanished from sight while the cyclists were still a distance from Highcliffe.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Pon's Study At Highcliffe!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH dumped down a bag in Ponsonby's study at Highcliffe School.

There were five fellows in that study—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, Drury,

and Vavasour, all of the Highcliffe Fourth. All five of them wore cheery grins.

Pon, every now and then, rubbed a blue mark on his chin! Gaddy gave a little attention at times to his nose. Both of them bore outward and visible signs of their shindy with Smithy's double on Courtfield Common the day before. But they seemed in very cheery spirits all the same.

"Here you are, Smithy, old bean!" said Ponsonby. "You're going on with it, then?"

"Think I'd changed my mind?" asked the Bounder, with a curl of the lip.

"It wants some nerve!" said Gadsby.

"I've got all the nerve I want."

"I've seen that chap Vernon, your cousin," remarked Drury, with a curious look at the Bounder. "I made it a point to give him the once-over, after what Pon told me! He's you over again in looks, Smithy."

"Might be your twin!" said Monson.

"Absolutely!" agreed Vavasour.

The Bounder gave a grunt. The remarkable likeness between him and his double was useful to him in carrying out the extraordinary scheme he had in his head and in which his Highcliffe pals were to assist. But it annoyed him all the same. Without that likeness he could not have formed his present scheme—but the mention of it made him scowl.

"Don't rub it in!" he grunted.

"The fact is, when you walked in just now, I couldn't have said whether it was you or the other fellow!" declared Ponsonby. "We thought he was you yesterday—"

"We did, rather!" said Gadsby, rubbing his nose. "Couldn't make out what the cad was up to—thinking he was you, you know—"

"I don't see that we're so fearfully alike!" said Vernon-Smith sourly. "But everybody seems to think so—and I've been told that we're more alike than ever in flannels. We dress rather differently, you see—but in flannels there isn't a pin to choose between us—so the fellows say."

"That makes it safe enough—if you've got the nerve to carry on!" said Ponsonby.

"You can bank on that!"

"The other men will be fearfully wild when they find it out!" said Drury. "You've got a warm time coming at your school, Smithy! I suppose you don't care about that!"

"Not a boiled bean!" said Vernon-Smith coolly. "But I'm not at all sure about that! That cad mayn't be believed when he spins his yarn."

"Oh!"

"It will sound pretty steep!" said the Bounder. "And it will sound a good bit like a lying tale to get over letting the team down in his precious bowling. I shall know nothing about it when I'm asked—and you fellows will know nothing, either!"

"Not a thing!" chuckled Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's the game gone so far?" asked Smithy. "I suppose you know?"

"Kept an eye on it, dear boy, entirely on your account!" said Ponsonby. "Quite surprised our dear skipper, Courtenay, by cutting down to see how they were getting on the minute we were out of class. Greyfriars won the toss and took first knock—on a perfect wicket—"

The Bounder's eyes danced. "Greyfriars had first innings! Oh good! Then that cad hasn't had a chance to bowl so far."

"No. Highcliffe have done the

bowling as far. Fits in quite nicely with your jolly old plans, Smithy!" grinned Pon. "They were all down for fifty-five just in time for lunch."

"Did that cad make any?"

"I thought you'd be interested in his score—bein' so fond of your relation. He knocked up ten."

"He can't bat!" said the Bounder contemptuously.

"From what I've heard of their jaw, they expect terrific things of him as a howler when Highcliffe take their knock!" said Pon. "Blessed are those who don't expect—in the jolly old circumstances."

"When do they start again?"

"Two o'clock."

"Lots of time, then," said the Bounder, glancing at his watch.

"Tons!" agreed Pon. "You've got over here pretty quick, Smithy, after tiffin at your school."

"I had a fast car waiting. I had all that out and dried," answered Vernon-Smith. "I only had to pack a bag and get to the car—it wasn't far away. Tons of time!"

"You didn't let them spot you coming here!"

"Not likely! For goodness' sake, don't breathe my name this afternoon—not a word about me. And—"

A footstep stopped at the study door in the passage outside.

Vernon-Smith broke off with a start. Someone was coming to the study—and, in view of his plans for that afternoon, Smithy was very anxious not to be seen at Highcliffe, especially by any Greyfriars fellows.

He backed swiftly behind the door, making a hurried sign to Pon & Co.

Ponsonby nodded, and grinned.

Smithy's Highcliffe pals were entering into Smithy's scheme heart and soul; it was going to be a success if they could make it so. Pon & Co. were always amiably keen to serve Harry Wharton & Co. an ill turn—and Pon and Gaddy were specially keen to dish the fellow who had knocked them out on Courtfield Common. They were as keen as Smithy himself on the success of the scheme.

The door opened—concealing the Bounder behind it.

A rather elegant junior appeared in the doorway.

It was Rupert de Courcy—otherwise called the Caterpillar. His chum, Frank Courtenay, was on far from good terms with Pon & Co., but the Caterpillar was friendly with everybody, more or less.

Pon & Co. all moved forward as the door opened; to make sure that the Caterpillar did not enter far enough to observe the fellow blotted out of sight behind the door.

"All the happy family at home?" drawled the Caterpillar, looking into the study. "Bridge—what?"

"Well, we were thinkin' of it," assented Pon. "If you'd like to chuck cricket and join up, you're more than welcome, Caterpillar. Say, in half an hour."

"Would I like to—just!" sighed the Caterpillar.

"Well, do!" said Monson.

The Caterpillar shook his head.

"Couldn't think of it! I'm goin' all out this afternoon! I hear that those Greyfriars men have got a wonderful new bowler—and somebody's got to put paid to him. Courtenay thinks I can do it! I don't! But I'm givin' him his head! Did you fellows see the man? Not a beauty, is he—I thought he was that chap Vernon-Smith when he came in with the crowd—but it turns out that he's a cousin, or an uncle, or somethin'!"

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Frightfully like that man Smithy—frightfully, the word!"

Ponsonby & Co. chuckled. They could guess that the fellow behind the door was not enjoying this!

"Yes, I've seen the chap," said Pon. "He's a good bit like Smithy."

"More than a bit!" said the Caterpillar. "Twin! Except that he didn't scowl when his wicket went down, he's Smithy to the life! That family seems to have been rather overlooked when good looks were served out, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pon & Co.

The Caterpillar looked slightly surprised.

"Have I made a joke?" he asked. "I'm speakin' quite seriously! I wouldn't say so to Smithy, of course—I hope I've got some manners—but between ourselves, his face would stop a clock—and his cousin's face would stop another clock—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Highcliffe knuts.

"I must be a more amusin' fellow than I ever guessed!" said the Caterpillar. "But didn't some wise old johnny say that an accepted wit has but to say 'Pass the salt' to set the table in a roar? But aren't you askin' me into your study, Pon? Is this hospitable?"

"What do you want, Caterpillar?" asked Pon. He had no intention of letting De Courcy or anyone else into his study while Vernon-Smith was there.

"Only some bad company!" explained the Caterpillar.

"What?"

"Ever since break this mornin'," said the Caterpillar, "I've been playin' cricket, or sittin' round improvin' company. Every fellow I've seen, or spoken to, has been breathin' cricket—a noble game, my beloved 'earers, but liable to bore a fellow in the long run! At two, I've got to roll up again! Healthy, strenuous crowd—good for a fellow! So I've come here for some bad company for a change."

"You silly ass!"

"After so much cricket," explained the Caterpillar, "it will be a relief to hear about Nobbled Nick's chances in the Swindlem Handicap in an atmosphere of cigarette-smoke! It will be a nerve rest! Aren't you goin' to ask me in? Or is it possible that I bore you as much as you bore me, old beans?"

"Go and eat coke, you silly fathead!" said Ponsonby, and he kicked the door shut.

He grinned at the expression on Herbert Vernon-Smith's face as the Bounder was revealed.

The Bounder's brow was black.

"I'll punch that cheeky fool's head some day!" he muttered.

"Do!" said Ponsonby, laughing. "Never mind him now—it's all right, he's gone! Just as well he never saw you—the Caterpillar's as keen as a razor, with all his slackin' ways. Now we'd better get goin'. You can change into flannels here—lock the door after we're gone! We'll borrow Courtenay's study to park that cad in—nobody will be goin' there while the cricket's on! Come on, you men."

Pon & Co., grinning, crowded out of the study.

The Bounder locked the door after them, opened his bag, and proceeded to change for cricket—a proceeding that would have astonished Harry Wharton & Co. had they known of it—or known that Herbert Vernon-Smith was at Highcliffe at all! But of the Bounder's amazing scheme for hitting back at his rival, and at the captain who had dropped him, the Greyfriars fellows knew—as yet—nothing!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

"YOU'RE Vernon, I think?"

Bertie Vernon glanced round as he was addressed and nodded.

He was strolling on the cricket field, with his hands in the pockets of his flannel bags—and looking, in flannels, so exactly like the Bounder that some of the Greyfriars fellows could hardly believe that Smithy hadn't come over with the team after all.

It was a Highcliffe junior who came up and spoke to him. In point of fact, it was Monson of the Fourth.

Monson was a stranger to him; and Bertie, of course, knew nothing of the fact that Monson was Ponsonby's closest pal; indeed, he had forgotten all about the two fellows he had scrapped with on Courtfield Common.

So far as he knew, Monson was simply one of the dozens of Highcliffe juniors he had seen about, and certainly it did not cross his mind for a moment that the fellow had any particular interest in him.

"Yes, I'm Vernon!" he said.

"I was told to look for a chap like Vernon-Smith, so I fancied you were the man!" said Monson. "Relations, I suppose?"

"Yes!" said Vernon, very briefly.

It was easy for Monson to see that the relationship and the likeness displeased Bertie Vernon quite as much as they displeased the Bounder.

"Well, there's a chap in the House would like to speak to you," said Monson. "He knows your uncle."

"My uncle!" repeated Vernon.

"Captain Vernon, at Lantham Chase, is your uncle, isn't he?"

"Yes!"

Bertie's face, which had gloomed at the mention of Smithy, became quite pleasant. Anyone could have seen that he was fond of his uncle.

"Well, Vavasour knows him," said Monson. "Come up to his study and have an ice—you've lots of time before they begin."

"I'll be glad!" said Vernon politely.

He went into the House with Monson.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows, in a group near the pavilion, saw him go, but paid no particular heed. It was a quarter of an hour yet before cricket was to be resumed following the interval for lunch. Bertie was not wanted till the Greyfriars men went into the field when the Highcliffe men took their knock.

Two Highcliffe men in flannels glanced at him in passing. They were Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Fourth, and his friend the Caterpillar—coming down to the pavilion.

"That's the bloke!" murmured the Caterpillar, with a nod towards Vernon. "That man Smithy over again, isn't he?"

"Yes, I noticed that—I thought it was Vernon-Smith in the team," answered Courtenay. "I was quite surprised when I was told his name."

"Just Smithy!" said the Caterpillar. "Not quite such a bounder, perhaps—looks a bit better bred, what? Cleaner cut! But I don't think I'd undertake to pick them out. Similar tastes, I dare say!" The Caterpillar gave a lazy chuckle. "Is he goin' off with Monson for a smoke?"

"He wouldn't be such a fool, I should think! I've heard that he's their big bowler—he will want all his wind."

The two walked on to the cricket field, while Vernon disappeared with Monson.

Monson conducted him up the stair-

case to the Fourth Form passage—where there were a couple of fellows lounging outside Study No. 3—which belonged to Courtenay and the Caterpillar.

The two fellows were Vavasour and Drury, whom Vernon did not know.

"Here you are!" said Monson blandly. "This is the study!"

He stepped aside for Vernon to enter.

Bertie Vernon stepped into the doorway, and paused. Two fellows were in the study—and he recognised them as the two he had scrapped with the previous day—though he did not know their names.

"Trot in!" said Ponsonby, with a cheery grin.

"Oh, do!" said Gadsby.

Vernon paused—uncomfortably

As he paused, Monson, behind him, gave him a sudden shove between the shoulders, and, taken quite by surprise by that unexpected action, he went staggering into the study.

Monson followed him in quickly, with Drury and Vavasour at his heels.

The door was quickly shut and the key turned.

Bertie Vernon recovered himself, and turned, staring angrily at Monson. It dawned on him that he had not been brought there, as he had supposed, to see a fellow who knew his uncle, but that some rag was intended.

"What the dickens do you think you're up to?" he exclaimed sharply. "What have you locked that door for?"

"Guess!" grinned Ponsonby.

Vernon gave him a dark look.

"If this is a rag—" he began.

"Guessed it in one!" agreed Pon.

There were five Highcliffians in the study with Vernon, and the door was locked. He backed to a wall, facing them, and clenched his hands. He had been tricked into that study to find there the two fellows whose faces still showed marks of his knuckles. He could see that there was going to be trouble. But he was very far from guessing what was intended.

The five closed round him in a half-circle, grinning.

"You'd better keep your distance," said Vernon quietly. "I think you must be mad to think of ragging a fellow who's come over with a cricket team. Let me out of this study at once."

"Too fond of your company!" said Ponsonby, shaking his head. "Wouldn't you like to stay here for an hour or two?"

"Don't be an ass! I've got to be in the field in ten minutes!"

"Dear me!" said Pon. "He's got to be in the field in ten minutes, you men! You fellows think he will be in the field in ten minutes?"

"Hardly!" grinned Gadsby.

Vernon eyed them, on his guard, more and more surprised. A rag in such circumstances was almost unimaginable, yet clearly a rag of some sort was intended. Obviously they were not going to let him out of that study.

"You're the extra-special bowler, I think?" went on Ponsonby. "I hear you're expected to do terrific bowlin' stunts! But I've got a sort of idea in my head that you won't be doin' any bowlin' this afternoon."

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Will you let me out of this study?" asked Vernon, breathing hard.

"Not quite."

"You fool, I shall be missed in ten minutes!" exclaimed Vernon, angry, but more surprised than angry. "Does Highcliffe stand for this sort of thing—ragging a man who comes to play cricket? Do you fancy you can keep me here, when I'm expected on the field?"

"Sort of!" Pon rubbed his chin.



Bertie Vernon clambered out of the window and lowered himself, hand below hand, down the thick old tendrils. The ivy swayed and rustled, but it held. Once he reached the ground he was free!

"Don't you fancy you can kick up a shindy as you did yesterday, my pippin! There's enough of us here to handle you pretty easily, I think."

"I'll shout from the window—"

"You won't!" grinned Pon.

Vernon set his teeth. There were five fellows to deal with, and the odds were hopeless. But he was like the Bounder not only in looks—he was like him in stubborn temper, in determination, and in unlimited courage. He was going to fight his way out—if he could. But he could hardly believe that the Highcliffe gang were in earnest.

"If you really mean that you think you can make me cut the cricket—" he said.

"Guessed it!"

"You won't do it easily. Do you fancy you'll get by with a dirty trick like that—just because I punched your cheeky face yesterday?" exclaimed Vernon. "The others will be looking for me—"

"Think so?" chuckled Pon.

"Of course they will! Do you think Wharton will play a man short, without finding out what's become of him?" snapped Vernon.

"But he won't be playin' a man short!" chuckled Pon. "His man will turn up all right. Don't you worry about that."

There was a tap at the door.

Vernon's eyes gleamed, and he was about to call out, when a voice came through the oak.

"O.K., you men!"

It was the voice of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon gave a violent start. Smithy was there.

"O.K.!" called back Pon.

"Keep him safe!"

"You bet!"

Vernon heard the Bounder walk away laughing. Then at last it dawned on him.

Amazing as that scheme was, startling as it was, he could not fail now to see

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what was intended. Ponsonby had said that Wharton would not be playing a man short—that his man would turn up all right. And Smithy was there, and had called to his Highcliffe pals to keep him safe.

Like a flash it came into his mind. And with a glitter in his eyes, his teeth set, he made a rush for the door.

The whole gang of Highcliffians pounced on him instantly.

Ponsonby gave a fearful yell as a clenched fist crashed in his face—Monson roared as Vernon's left knocked in his eye. But three pairs of hands dragged the Greyfriars junior down before he could hit again.

He went down, struggling furiously, sprawling on his back.

Five fellows sprawled over him, pinning him down.

Pon & Co., the superb knuts of Highcliffe, seemed to have changed in those moments into a ruffianly gang of young hooligans. The Greyfriars junior was pinned down under sheer weight of numbers. A knee was planted on his chest.

"Get that duster, Vav!" panted Ponsonby. Pon's nose was spurting red, and his temper was furious. "Keep the cad down—bang his head on the floor. Pin the Greyfriars cad!"

Vernon still struggled desperately. For two or three minutes even the five of them had their hands full to hold him.

But they held him, and Ponsonby twisted a duster round his wrists and knotted it with savage tightness. Then another duster was twisted round his ankles and knotted fast. And if Vernon had had any idea of shouting for help, that idea had to be abandoned, as a third duster was fastened over his mouth, completely gagging him.

Then the Highcliffe gang released him, leaving him squirming on the floor, and standing round him, panting for breath after the struggle; all of them in a rather untidy state. Ponsonby dabbed his nose with a handkerchief and glared down at him.

"Dashed ruffian!" he panted. "I've a jolly good mind to boot him—"

"Draw it mild, Pon!" Gadsby pushed the dandy of Highcliffe back. Even

Gaddy jibbed at booting a fellow whose hands were tied.

"Come on, Pon—all right now!" said Monson. "Nobody will be comin' to this sudy till after the game—come on, and leave him to it."

Ponsonby grunted assent, and the young rascals unlocked the door, and crowded out of the study. The key was placed in the outside of the lock, turned, and then dropped into Pon's pocket.

A few minutes later Pon & Co.—with their own door locked—were playing banker and smoking cigarettes in Pon's study. And every time Pon rubbed his reddened nose he thought with satisfaction of the fellow who lay a helpless prisoner in Study No. 3—while his double took his place in the Greyfriars team, and let that team down in his name.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not As Per Programme!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH strolled down to the cricket-field, his hands in the pockets of his flannel bags, and a smile on his face.

The Bounder was absolutely confident. Bitterly as he resented the resemblance between himself and his cousin, angry as he was at any reference to it, he knew how complete it was. At Greyfriars there were differences in attire that made it fairly easy to pick out one from the other. On the occasion of the rag in Quelch's study, Billy Bunter had known the Bounder by his striped trousers. But in cricketing flannels there really was not a pin to choose between them.

Moreover, the Greyfriars fellows were expecting to see Vernon, and they were not expecting to see Vernon-Smith. Not a man in the team dreamed that Smithy was within miles of Highcliffe—or, indeed, gave him any thought at all. Even had any difference been noticeable, nobody was likely to notice it in the circumstances.

The Bounder had no doubt whatever that he would carry through that impersonation with perfect success.

And his mind was bitterly, savagely

made up about what he was going to do. With all his hot-headed words, all his unreasonable swank, he had been keen to play for his school, and help his side to a win. They had left him out, and taken on Vernon, as he chose to regard it. He was going to show them just how much that prize bowler was worth to them. That prize bowler was going to be worth exactly nothing—with Smithy taking his place.

That this miserable trickery would lose the match for his school mattered not a whit to the Bounder in his present mood.

Smithy was, in his own way, a sportsman. But when his headstrong, arrogant temper was roused all his sporting instincts faded out. They had chosen to drop him and take on the fellow he barred—well, they could take what was coming to them, and that was that!

If it all came out he had trouble to expect—grim trouble. He was coolly prepared to face it.

But it was by no means sure that it would come out.

Immediately after the match he was going to disappear. Vernon would be released, and would show up again. He would tell what had happened—and the Bounder, when he was questioned later at Greyfriars, would coolly deny knowledge of anything of the kind. Pon & Co. equally unscrupulous, were prepared to laugh the story to scorn.

Some fellows would believe Vernon. Some would think it was a steep yarn, dictated by his dislike for Smithy, and in excuse of a rotten show at bowling, after so much had been expected of him. Plenty of fellows would be in doubt between one and the other.

There was no possibility of proof, so far as Smithy could see. It would be his word against Vernon's—and fellows could take their choice.

But even if it had all been certain to come out, if he had to face the anger and scorn of the whole team, even then Smithy would not have hesitated. The best batsman in the eleven had been turned out for the new bowler—and the new bowler was going to let the team down. That was fixed and immutable in the Bounder's mind.

He sauntered towards the pavilion, where the fellows were now getting ready for the Highcliffe innings. If he needed proof that he was unquestioningly taken for Vernon, he had it, as he heard Bob Cherry's voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Vernon! Wouldn't you fellows say that it was Smithy, if you didn't know it wasn't?"

Three or four fellows looked round.

"Don't rub it in, Cherry!" said the Bounder lightly. "I don't take that as a compliment, you know."

"Well, if you were both in the team I'm blessed if I'd undertake to say which was which!" said Bob. "I wish the old Bounder was here!"

"Do you?" muttered Smithy.

"Well, if we had him to bat, as well as you to bowl, Highcliffe might as well pack up and call it a day!" said Bob. "Old Smithy asked for it—but I jolly well wish he was here, all the same."

The Bounder felt a twinge. Had Bob Cherry instead of Harry Wharton, been captain, it was very probable that Herbert Vernon-Smith would have thrown up that wretched deception on the spot. But when the captain of the Remove spoke, Smithy, like Pharaoh of old, hardened his heart.

"Never mind Smithy, Bob! It's bowlers we want—we're pretty strong in batting, and it's time Smithy found out that he isn't the only pebble on the beach. The fact is that Vernon's worth a good deal more to the team, as matters stand."

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"Well, yes, in a way!" admitted Bob. "But I'd like to see Smithy knocking up a few of his fours in our next innings. Bet you we'd have done better in our first knock, if old Smithy had been here."

"I know that, fathead, but we want bowlers. You needn't tell me that Vernon put on ten, and Smithy might have put on fifty. He might have—or he mightn't! With Vernon to change with Inky, you're going to see Highcliffe wickets go down. What more do you want?"

"All serene, old chap—but I wish Smithy hadn't played the goat, all the same! There's no real harm in Smithy, if only he wouldn't let his blessed temper run away with him."

"He came jolly near dishing us out of our bowler," said Harry. "Give Smithy a rest! Feeling fit, Vernon?"

"Fit as a fiddle," answered the Bounder.

"I'm giving you the first over," said Harry. "Inky next! Give us a hat trick if you can!"

The Bounder laughed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather confidently expecting hat tricks from the wonderful new bowler! Smithy knew exactly how much those expectations were likely to be fulfilled.

The Greyfriars men went into the field.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar came out to open the innings for Highcliffe.

By that time the crowd of cyclists that Smithy had passed on the road had arrived. Greyfriars caps mingled with Highcliffe caps round the cricket field.

Smithy, as he took the ball, singled out one face among the Greyfriars faces, and wondered whether Tom Redwing would have any suspicion. He knew that Tom had been left wondering over what he had said to him in break that morning.

But there was no hint of anything of the kind in Redwing's glance. He was looking at the Bounder—all the Greyfriars fellows were looking at him in expectation of wonderful bowling stunts from Bertie Vernon. But it did not occur to Tom, any more than to any other fellow on the field, that the man with the ball was not Bertie Vernon.

Courtenay left it to the Caterpillar to open and take the bowling.

The Caterpillar, with all his lazy ways, was a good man at the game, and his captain had great confidence in him. And, as there had been a good deal of talk about that new man, the Caterpillar was very much on his guard.

Bertie had taken Wingate's wicket at the nets at Greyfriars. A fellow who could bowl the Greyfriars captain was an uncommon man in junior cricket. The Caterpillar prepared for the time of his life, so to speak, as that new man went on to bowl.

What happened made him blink. It made the fellows in the field blink.

The bowler trundled down a ball that might have been bowled to one of the fags.

The astonished Caterpillar knocked it away for a boundary.

It came down again—not quite so palpable this time. But it was an easy ball, and it gave the batsmen four.

The Caterpillar winked at the wicket-keeper.

"Write home about that!" he murmured.

The bowler sent it down again. It was knocked away for three, bringing Courtenay to the batting end.

In the field the Greyfriars men stared.

In practice and in a Form match at Greyfriars, Bertie Vernon had bowled like a magician.

Everybody agreed that he was as good as Hurree Janset Ram Singh, hitherto the champion bowler of the Remove—most fellows thought him even better. Now, in his first match for the school, he was bowling like Tubb of the Third.

Harry Wharton could hardly believe his eyes. He watched, hoping for better things. But the better things did not come.

The over finished—with eighteen runs for Highcliffe! The weakest change bowler in the team could have done no worse. Wharton had hoped, if he had not ventured to expect, to see a hat trick in the first over! This was what he got!

His disappointment was deep.

Smithy had said that the man was no good! A Highcliffe match was very different from a Form match at the school. Was the Bounder right in his judgment, after all—had the captain of the Remove made a ghastly mistake, with the very probable result of throwing away a cricket match as a consequence?

It looked like it! The fellow who had made hay of Fourth Form wickets in a Form match, who had bowled Wharton himself at the nets, who had even bowled the mighty Wingate in practice, had made Highcliffe a present of eighteen runs to begin their innings! It was a bitter pill to swallow.

In the next over Hurree Janset Ram Singh had the ball—and then the fun began to fly a little.

Only two were put on in that over, and it cost Courtenay his wicket. When the field changed again the captain of the Remove spoke quietly to his new bowler.

"You're fit, Vernon?"

"Quite!" smiled the Bounder.

"I don't want to grouse, of course," said Harry. "A man can only do his best. But if you're not feeling up to this game, I'll get Squiff—"

"Please yourself, of course! I thought I was here to bowl."

"Well, yes, but—"

"It's rather thick to rag a man because he doesn't produce hat tricks—like a conjurer getting rabbits out of a hat!"

Harry Wharton coloured.

"I don't mean that at all," he said. "Nothing of the kind! If this game is over your weight, it's only sense to say so. Go on again, and let's see."

The new bowler bowled again. After his first sample, Greyfriars expectations had rather died away. They did not revive. That over did not cost Highcliffe a single wicket. It gave them sixteen runs. Highcliffe batting was good—there were no chances in the field. Indeed, an onlooker might have supposed—had it been imaginable—that that bowler was trying his hardest to give the batsmen a walk-over.

That over was enough for the captain of the Remove! Either he had made a mistake, or else Vernon was utterly off his form, and had totally lost the skill from which so much had been expected. In either case, Wharton could not afford to make the home team a present of runs at that rate.

That wonderful new bowler was called off.

The captain of the Remove still hoped that he might be useful in the field while other men did the bowling.

Bertie Vernon had been—or, at least, had seemed—a fieldsmen of the very first class. If he was, he had left his class behind him that afternoon. He did not make a single catch. And when the Caterpillar, by an error of judgment, gave that particular fieldsmen a perfect sitter—that sitter did not, so to speak, sit—it tumbled past clumsy fingers and dropped!

That was the climax!

In their first big fixture of the season the Greyfriars team had to carry a passenger, and the captain of the Remove had to make up his mind to it. He had made a mistake—Smithy had been right, and he had been wrong—and the mistake was a costly one—as he realised only too clearly when Highcliffe were all down for a hundred, against the Greyfriars score of fifty-five.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Escape!

BERTIE VERNON panted for breath.

How long he had lain there on the study floor since Pon & Co. had left him and locked the door on him he did not know. It seemed an endless time.

For a long time he had struggled and wriggled, and wrenched, in his bonds, and made desperate efforts to rid himself of the gag. But it was unavailing. Pon & Co. had done their work quite thoroughly.

If he could have got rid of the duster knotted over his mouth, he could have shouted—or he could have tried his teeth on the duster round his wrists. But it was knotted at the back of his head, and he had no chance.

He lay at last, exhausted by his efforts.

While the long minutes lengthened to hours, the cricket match was going on—Smithy, as he knew, taking his place, taking his name, and putting up what sort of a game? Even if he did his best, he was no bowler like Vernon—and was he likely to do his best in his rival's name and his rival's place? Only too clearly the kidnapped cricketer realised what Smithy's game was.

He knew, only too well, that his double must have done his worst, instead of his best—he could have had no other object in impersonating him in the team.

He could not get loose! He could not shift the gag. He lay in a state of desperation. No one had come to the study—no one was likely to come. He had not heard a single footstep all the while he had lain there.

Pon & Co., very likely, were somewhere at hand. Even had he been able to shout, his shout was more likely to bring Ponsonby than anyone else, to the study. That would not have helped him.

By this time the Highcliffe innings must be drawing to its end—it might be over! And he lay helpless—as helpless as ever.

It was sheer desperation that at last put an idea into his mind. The remotest chance was better than nothing.

In a corner of the study was a cupboard, doubtless where the juniors to whom the study belonged parked their supplies for tea and the study crockery. Bound as he was, it was not easy to reach it. But he rolled over and over and reached it, and then, with painful efforts, got on his knees.

and at last succeeded in getting on his feet.

His wrists were closely knotted together, but with his fingers he got a hold on the handle of the cupboard door and pulled it open.

He stared eagerly into the interior. There were cups and saucers, plates, a tin of biscuits, and other things—and some cutlery. It was a knife that Vernon hoped to see. There must be at least one knife in the study where juniors were accustomed to having tea. And his eyes danced as he saw a bread knife!

A moment more and that bread knife was in his fingers. It was large, and it looked fairly sharp.

A vague idea was in his mind of holding the handle of the knife in his fingers and somehow sawing at the duster on his wrists.

He soon found that it was impracticable.

He stared round the study. If there was something into which he could stick the handle of the knife and keep it firm—

There was nothing.

For some minutes he was beaten! After his brief flash of hope it seemed that there was, after all, nothing doing.

But his brain was working at full pressure now. And the idea came at last!

He squatted down on the floor again, with his knees hunched up. It was awkward enough to handle the knife with only his fingers to use. But he managed it, and the handle of the knife was placed between his knees and gripped there, with the blade upward.

Then, against the edge of the blade, he sawed the duster that was tied round his wrists.

It parted!

His hands were free!

He grasped the knife and cut the duster at his ankles. A minute more, and the gag was gone!

Then Vernon panted for breath!

He was free—with the study door locked! For some minutes he stood panting. He was free—but he was not out of the wood yet.

He did not think of shouting for help—for two good reasons. A shout was more likely to bring Pon & Co. than help; and if this chance was lost he would not have another.

But he had another reason! Vernon-Smith, in carrying out that reckless scheme, gave little or no thought to consequences. But Bertie Vernon was a little more particular in such matters.

He did not want a sensation at Highcliffe School if he could help it; he did not want to shout from the house-tops that his relative had played a treacherous trick on him. The less said about the matter at Highcliffe the better.

Somehow, he was going to get out of the study.

As a last resource he was prepared to smash the lock on the door; but first he stepped to the window and looked out.

The window was high from the ground. Under it the ancient ivy, that had covered the walls for hundreds of years, clustered thick. The thought of climbing down from the window was in his mind.

He looked down at the thick ivy. Then his glance lifted and his eyes fixed on the playing fields in the distance.

The cricket ground was at a good distance; the white-clad figures looked small and far away. But he could make them out—and he could see that the

field was coming off. The Highcliffe innings had just ended.

Among the Greyfriars men he picked out his double—and his eyes gleamed at Herbert Vernon-Smith! Obviously, the others did not know that it was Smithy. They fancied that it was Vernon!

Closer at hand, there was nobody to be seen! Bertie Vernon gave the thick, clustering ivy a careful survey, and then quickly clambered out of the window and trusted himself to it.

The thick old tendrils bore his weight easily.

He lowered himself, hand below hand. The ivy swayed and rustled; but it held. It would have borne twice his weight. All that was needed was nerve—and Bertie Vernon had plenty of that.

He dropped, at last, to the ground.

He leaned on the ivied wall, spent with the effort, to regain his breath and his strength. Both very soon came back to him.

He moved away from the wall at last.

Pon & Co., playing banker in their study, in a happy atmosphere of cigarette-smoke, had no doubt that their prisoner was still safe—if they wasted a thought on him at all! That prisoner, free as air, was walking away from the House, heading for the cricket field!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Blow For The Bounder!

“OH!”

Herbert Vernon-Smith gasped.

He jumped almost clear of the ground.

After the Highcliffe innings the Bounder left the rest of the team and strolled away from the cricket field with a grin on his face.

The other fellows were not grinning, by any means. The utter and total failure of the new bowler, of whom so much had been expected, had cast rather a gloom over the Greyfriars cricketers.

With a score of fifty-five in their first innings, and a hundred to beat, matters did not look very bright for the Greyfriars cricketers. Bob Cherry was not the only fellow who wished that the Bounder had been there to bat for Greyfriars when the second knock was taken. The new bowler had proved useless, and the Bounder's batting might have helped to save the situation, had he been there!

Vernon, at the moment, was unpopular! It was not his fault, perhaps, if he had been played in a match that was over his weight and had failed to realise expectations. But he had let the team down with such a bump that few of the cricketers could help feeling disgruntled.

Harry Wharton felt it most of all. It was on account of that new bowler that he had lost his best batsman. And it had been, as now seemed proved, an error of judgment.

Vernon-Smith, as he walked away, grinned. He knew exactly what the team were feeling like—that it was exactly what he wanted them to feel like! The game was a goner—and serve them right!

Smithy had plenty of time on his hands now. He was at the tail of the next innings. In his own name, he would probably have opened the innings with Harry Wharton. As Bertie Vernon he was last man in. He did not want to hang about the pavilion with disgruntled cricketers, nor did he wish

to run the remotest risk of his trickery being spotted. So far, he had passed muster without a hitch. But in the peculiar circumstances he could not be too careful.

He was going to join Pon & Co. for a time. He was going to make sure that the prisoner was still safe—though he had no doubt of it—and then he was going to pass the time with a spot of banker and a smoke! Playing in his own name, even the reckless Bounder would not have thought of spoiling his form by smoking; but form mattered nothing when he was playing as Bertie Vernon!

And then—

As he drew near the House the Bounder's eyes fell on a figure coming away from the House!

He gave a startled gasp, and jumped! For a moment he doubted his eyes. Then, with a spasm of fury, he realised that Pon & Co. had somehow failed him!

He halted, staring blankly at Bertie Vernon!

Vernon saw him at the same moment and came directly towards him. His eyes were glittering.

“You cur!” he said, in a low voice.

Herbert Vernon-Smith stood quite still. Not for a moment had he doubted that the scheme, which had started so well, was going through successfully from start to finish. And now—

His brain almost reeled.

No chance now of slipping away from the match, clearing off, while Vernon was released by Pon & Co. and left to make the best he could of his story! No chance of discrediting that story; no chance of the matter being left in doubt! All was going to be known now!

“Oh!” gasped the Bounder again.

“You rotten cur!” The words came through Vernon's teeth. “I've got loose, you see. Your precious pals did not pull it off, after all! What have you done, you rotter, in my name?”

The Bounder clenched his hands convulsively. The game was up now, with a vengeance! But he was cool again in a moment or two. The game was up—but he had the nerve to face the music for what he had done.

“So you've crawled out somehow!” he said. “Those fools let me down—the fools! Go on—go and shout out that I've been playing in your name! Get on with it! Do you think I care?”

“No!” said Vernon, with bitter contempt. “No! I don't think you do, Herbert Vernon-Smith. You've got a thick hide. I don't think you care! But I care. I'm not going to tell Highcliffe, or Greyfriars, either, that I've got a relation who ought to be at Borstal!”

With that, Bertie Vernon passed the Bounder and walked on towards the cricket field.

Herbert Vernon-Smith stood staring after him blankly. The colour came into his face. He stood for a long minute, staring, crimson; then, slowly, he went on his way.

Bertie Vernon did not glance back at him—did not heed him further. He went on slowly to the cricket field.

He sat down in a chair at the pavilion quietly.

Some of the fellows glanced at him, but no one came towards him or spoke to him. None of the Greyfriars men wanted exactly to rub it in that the new bowler had let them down—indeed, they blamed Wharton more than Vernon; it was the captain of the Remove who had picked him out to play and lost a better man in the process! Still, the fellow was no good, and ought not to have been in the team,

and nobody was feeling very cordial towards him at the moment.

Vernon was rather glad to be left alone.

He could see at a glance that there was no suspicion—not a man there had the faintest idea that it was Herbert Vernon-Smith who had walked away from the pavilion and his double who had come back.

He was glad of it!

What the Bounder would have done in his place he knew only too well! The Bounder would have shouted it all out—for all Greyfriars to know, and for all Highcliffe to hear, for that matter! Vernon prided himself on doing nothing that Vernon-Smith did! That disgraceful trickery reflected on him as Smithy's near relation. He thought of that; though, in his place, the Bounder would not have given it a moment's thought. Bertie Vernon intended to say nothing.

Although no one addressed him he soon had a clear idea from the talk about him of what the Bounder had done in his name. It was exactly what he had expected the Bounder to do—what he had known he would do. But there was another Highcliffe innings to come—and in that innings there would be a different tale to tell!

The Bounder's trickery had given Highcliffe a good start and a big advantage. He could see that few of the fellows hoped that the game would be pulled out of the fire! But he had his own ideas about that.

Harry Wharton had buckled on his pads and picked up his bat. He came over to speak to Vernon before he went on. Like the other fellows, he blamed himself more than he blamed the new man; and did not like to see him looking down in the mouth!

"Don't worry, Vernon," said the captain of the Remove kindly enough, "it's more my fault than yours!"

Bertie gave him a rather peculiar look.

"I'm sorry you've been disappointed!" he said. "If you give me a chance in their next innings I think you'll find a difference."

"Um!" said the captain of the Remove.

Vernon watched the innings. It was a good innings; and hope revived among the Greyfriars fellows as it went on. Harry Wharton had put up thirty when he went down to a deadly ball from the Caterpillar. Bob Cherry, Squiff, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, added their quota; and Robert Donald Ogilvy, who was in Smithy's place, put on twenty, which was the next best score to Wharton's. Last man in added only three.

It was certain that Highcliffe, at all events, would have to bat again. And after that it was certain that they would have a good deal of batting to do; for when the Greyfriars innings ended, and the cricketers knocked off for tea, the score stood at a hundred and five—which gave Highcliffe sixty to get to tie, and sixty-one to win.

As they had made a hundred in their first innings, Courtenay & Co. had no doubt of getting them. But cricket is an uncertain game—and there was, at least, one member of the Greyfriars team who knew how very uncertain that particular game was going to be!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Good Man!

HARRY WHARTON shook his head.

"No!" he said tersely.

Vernon breathed hard.

"Give me a chance!" he muttered.

"I tell you, I'm as fit as a fiddle—you brought me here to bowl!"

Wharton looked impatient.

"Look here, Vernon," he said, "I don't want to rub it in—but you're no good. You've let us down flop! It's my fault, I dare say—but that doesn't alter facts—I shouldn't have played you at all; and if you want it plain, I think it's like your cheek to want to bowl the first over after the rotten show you've put up! Don't talk any more rot!"

"The rotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Vernon!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Shut up, and get into the field!" added Harry.

Vernon controlled his feelings. The Greyfriars men were taking the field, and the ball was given to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Inky was a good man—but the Caterpillar, who took that over, lived through it and smiled.

Squiff took the next over, against Courtenay. Squiff's bowling was good, but the Highcliffe batting seemed rather better. Runs came slowly; but they came. And then—

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Oh!" echoed all the field.

Courtenay had cut the ball away, and the batsmen were running. An active figure leaped and clutched, and held up the ball.

"Well caught!"

"Oh, well caught, Vernon!"

"Good man!"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Is that man waking up after all? Can that man play cricket?"

Harry Wharton's face brightened. It had not been an easy catch—far from it. Vernon had brought it off without apparent effort. The Highcliffe captain was out for four.

Something seemed to have happened to the new man, since his earlier performances. All the team could see that—though they were not likely to guess what it was. What had happened was a change of identity.

"By gum! That was ripping, Vernon!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, as Frank Courtenay carried out his bat and Smithson came in to take his place.

Vernon smiled rather sarcastically.

"Think so?" he asked.

"Topping!"

"Give me the next over then!"

"Um!"

Squiff bowled to Smithson of Highcliffe. The ball went and the batsmen ran. The fieldsman who got the ball sent it in for the wicket—a long-distance shot as straight as a die. The Caterpillar and Smithson had crossed once, and were crossing again, and Smithson's bat was almost at the crease when the wicket went into fragments.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton again.

"Vernon—Oh!"

"Has that man woke up?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The wokefulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton gave his new recruit a rather queer look when the field crossed over. How a fellow could have been such a hopeless dud in one innings, and such a prize-packet in the next, rather puzzled the captain of the Remove. But he realised that whatever had been the matter with his new man earlier, he had now woke up, as Bob expressed it.

"Give the ball to Vernon!" said Harry.

And Bertie Vernon went on to bowl against the Caterpillar.

The Greyfriars crowd watched him eagerly. Twice already the new man had shown that he was not, after all, the dud he had seemed; but whether his

bowling had improved was another matter. But a man who had sent two batsmen home was entitled to be given a chance, and Harry Wharton hoped, and almost believed, that he had not after all, made a mistake in picking that new man. Something had been wrong with him in the first Highcliffe innings, but now—

There was a roar.

"How's that?"

Rupert de Courcy gazed down at his wicket. It had a toothless look, with the middle stump out. The Caterpillar gazed—and gazed—but he could not gaze that middle stump back again. He walked away to the pavilion with quite a curious expression on his face.

The Greyfriars crowd roared.

"Bowled, Vernon!"

"Good man!"

Yates of the Fourth came in for Highcliffe. He stayed precisely long enough to see his leg stump uprooted, and then travelled sadly home.

"Has that man Vernon woke up?" chortled Bob Cherry. "That's the man that Smithy said couldn't bowl!"

Harry Wharton's face was bright. He had not, after all, made that mistake. Vernon could bowl. Whatever had been the matter with him earlier he was fulfilling expectations now—more than fulfilling them.

Another Highcliffe man came on. That Highcliffe man was very wary—but his wariness did not avail him. His bails went west, and the Greyfriars crowd fairly let themselves go in cheering the hat trick.

Highcliffe were five down for under a dozen runs. That sixty-one did not look an easy proposition now. Highcliffe had been going to walk out ahead, after tea. But now, so to speak, a change came o'er the spirit of their dream!

That innings went on—amid Greyfriars shouts and cheers—but not so happily for Highcliffe. Runs came—but wickets went—and it was not long before the Greyfriars fellows were remarking that it was all over, bar shouting! And it was over!

There were no more hat tricks, but two more wickets fell to Vernon later, as well as a catch in the field. The score was at twenty-six when last man in was called. It was still at twenty-six when Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put paid to last man in.

Bob Cherry tossed his cap into the air, careless where it came down—or, indeed, whether it ever came down at all. He rushed up to Bertie Vernon and thumped him on the back.

"Ow!" roared Vernon. Bob's intentions were good and friendly, but his thump was enthusiastic and hefty.

"Good man!" roared Bob.

"Don't dislocate my backbone, all the same!" gasped Vernon.

"Blow your old backbone, good man! Why didn't you give us a hat trick in the first act? But better late than never! Blessed if I didn't think you were the dud Smithy thought you were—and now—Oh, good man!"

It was a very cheerful crowd that rolled home to Greyfriars!

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

No Music To Face!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was in his study at Greyfriars when the door opened and Tom Redwing came in.

In the passage he could hear the trample of feet and the buzz of cheery voices.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,634.

Smithy had been bad a good time. He had left Highcliffe—after a row with Pon & Co.—and returned in a bitter and uneasy mood.

He had failed!

And, having failed, he still had the music to face!

That would have been a sufficiently unpleasant prospect had he succeeded in dishing his rival, as he had schemed to do. It was doubly unpleasant, after a hopeless and utter failure!

He looked at Tom Redwing as he came in.

Tom smiled.

"You'd have lost those doughnuts, Smithy!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Didn't you offer me ten to one in doughnuts that the new man would let the team down?"

"And didn't he?"

"Well, he was pretty rotten at the start. I began to think that you were right about him, after all. But—I wish you'd been there, Smithy, to see him!"

"You wish I'd been there?"

"Yes, old chap! You see—"

The Bounder sat up. Tom Redwing did not know that he had been at Highcliffe that day. Did the others not know?

Had that cad, that outsider, that pushing rotter, kept it dark, when he could have delivered up his rival and enemy to the scorn and resentment of the whole Remove? He had said something to that effect, but—

"You see," went on Redwing, "he woke up in the Highcliffe second knock. I wish you'd seen him! He seemed an absolute dud at first—nobody could make him out—but you should have seen him! The hat trick and—"

"Don't tell me about his hat tricks! How did the game go at the finish?"

"Greyfriars won by thirty-four runs."

"Oh!"

"Smithy, old man, you're a cricketer and a sportsman; do try to get over that silly feud with Vernon," said Tom earnestly. "He's no end of a good man—you ought really to be proud of him as a relation! I believe he'd meet you half-way if you'd go the other half—"

The Bounder laughed. He did not think it likely, after what had happened at Highcliffe that day.

"There's going to be a celebration in the Rag!" went on Tom. "You're coming down, Smithy?"

"No!"

"But, old chap—"

"Oh, get out and leave me alone!"

The Bounder, left alone, sat staring straight before him.

Vernon had said nothing—he was

going to say nothing—nobody was going to know! It was a relief in one way, it was a blow in another; it irked the Bounder to be spared by his enemy. While a cheery crowd celebrated a cricket victory in the Rag, it was not a happy hour to Smithy, the schemer!

THE END.

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 Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

FRANK CRASTON, one of my Birmingham readers, evidently believes that it is not possible to have too much of a good thing. He wants

MORE "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

He suggests that I should devote four pages a week to it instead of two. Well, I would like to do so, Frank—but think of the long story of Harry Wharton & Co. If I increased the size of the supplement, something else would have to be "cut" to make room for it, and I don't think the majority of my readers would like the long Greyfriars yarn to be shortened. You have seen how, in recent issues, I have had to sacrifice my weekly chat in order that your enjoyment of the exploits of Harry Wharton & Co. should not be curtailed.

Although I have to hold over a large number of other replies, I have just room to say a few words about next week's number. To begin with,

"ROUGH ON HIS RIVAL!"

is the title of the next yarn in our great series featuring the Bounder and his Cousin Vernon. Although

"Smithy" has failed so far to get his cousin out of the school, he's not given up hope. He's got another rascally scheme up his sleeve, as you will learn next week. The "Greyfriars Herald" is bang up to date with snappy school news, and our opening feature, "My Page," contributed by Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, is something out of the ordinary. Make a point of ordering your copy early, chums!

Here are a few

RAPID FIRE REPLIES

to readers' queries:

K. LEWIS (Barkingside).—Thanks for getting new readers. So you think it's time Billy Bunter received a postal order, what? Right! I'll drop Mr. Frank Richards a line and ask him what he can do in this direction. No, Greyfriars is not a real school.

ERROL JAMIESON (Dartford).—Bob Cherry and Marjorie Hazeldene are the best of friends. Yes, there has been more than one boy expelled from Greyfriars.

BRIAN SAMUELS (St. John's Wood).—Lord Manleverer is the man of the moment. There is very little to choose between Faulkner and Doone as regards waist measurement.

RONALD NAGEL (Chesham).—Thanks for your letter. You are certainly right about Bunter. It was not an oversight, however, but merely done for effect. You enjoy reading the MAGNET. Well, I realise that.

Time I wound up now, so here's wishing all my chums happy reading.

YOUR EDITOR.

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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS
:: PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER. ::

DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL'S
CAMERA!

Dicky Nugent's Highly Amusing School
Story of Jack Jolly & Co., of
St. Sam's

"Lend me a pin, old chap!"
Tallboy, of the Sixth, looked surprised, as Burleigh, the kaptin of St. Sam's, made that sudden request. The two stately seniors were on their way to the St. Sam's tuckshop to buy some bullseyes. Why Burleigh should need a pin at such a moment was a mystery to Tallboy. "What's the idea, Burleigh?" he asked, detaching a pin from his jacket and passing it to the kaptin of St. Sam's. "I thought you were going to the tuckshop for bullseyes—not wrinkles!"

"So I am; but I need a pin all the same for quite another purpose!" grinned Burleigh. "Cast your optics over there and you'll see what I mean!"

Tallboy glanced in the direction indicated; then he grinned, too. Standing on the lawn in front of the tuckshop was a photographer—some young amateur, doubtless, belonging to one of the senior Forms. His camera was on a tripod and the photographer himself was peering into the back; his head being encased in a black cloth.

The seat of his trousers presented an ideal target for the business end of a pin! While Tallboy paused to watch the fun, Burleigh tip-toed up to the unsuspecting photographer. Grinning all over his face, he bent down to his victim's reach-me-downs and jabbed. The next moment, the photographer jumped several feet in the air, yelling feendishly.

"Yarooooo! Ow-ow-ow! Wooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Burleigh and Tallboy simply roared. But not for long. Suddenly, they reckenised who their victim was; and instantly their roars of laughter changed to gasps of dismay. "Oh, my hat!" gasped Burleigh. "The—the Head!" stuttered Tallboy.

think you were doing of, Burleigh? Answer!"

"The—the fact is, sir, I didn't know it was you!" gasped the kaptin of St. Sam's. "I didn't reckonise you from the seat of your trousers, sir. I thought it was only a Second Form fag—" "Wha-a-at?"

"I mean, I thought you were Sir Frederick Funguss!" hastily corrected Burleigh. "Naturally, sir, I wouldn't have dreamed of sticking a pin in you. I thought you were the chairman of the Board of Guvvornors, sir, and I did it to play a little joke!"

"Hem! Well, that does put a slightly different complexion on it, certainly," growled Dr. Birchermall, looking a little mollified. "You had better take care you get the right person, Burleigh, next time you go in for jokes of this kind. It's not pleasant to be punctured."

"Nunno, sir; and I'll certainly take care next time," grinned Burleigh. "By the way, sir, what's the idea of the camera? Taking up photography in your old age?" At that question, Dr. Birchermall's wrath faded. He smiled.

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parted up with half-a-crown each and turned into the tuckshop looking far from pleased over the transaction. Bizzness was brisk for the Head during the next ten minnits. The scene had attracted quite a little crowd and Dr. Birchermall made the most of his opportunity.

"Roll up! Roll up!" he cried. "Don't forget that I am offering a free feed to the boy whose foto turns out best! First come first served!" That announcement brought a rush of custom and soon the camera was clicking away merrily. The St. Sam's fellows felt that the Head's prices were a bit steep; but the prospect of a free feed was a big attraction and soon half the school had faced the shutter of Dr. Birchermall's camera.

The Head's pockets were simply bulging with notes and silver when at last he called a halt. "Shan't be long, boys" he cried, as he packed away photographic plates in a box. "I will now develop the negatives—and I'm positive the results will be simply remarkable!"

The Head's prophecy proved quite correct—though not quite in the way his customers had hoped! When he turned up again outside the tuckshop with the printed fotos the fellows found it hard to reckonise themselves in the smudgy figgers they found on the prints.

"Look here, sir, what do you call this?" asked Burleigh, indignantly, as he gazed at his postcard. "It looks like a study of two scarecrows in a dense fog!"

"Nonsense, Burleigh!" chided Dr. Birchermall. "Why, you must be badly in need of glasses. That's a topping portrait—a handsome addition to any study mantelpiece!"

"It's a swindle!" cried Stedfast, of the Fourth. "This foto is nothing like me!"

"Naturally not, when you are holding it upside down!" retorted the Head, cheerily. "Hold it up the right way Stedfast, and you will see a truly remarkable likeness—a photographic triumph, in fact!"

But Stedfast didn't see that, even when he held it up the right way. Neither did Dr. Birchermall's other customers. Their murmur of annoyance soon began to swell into a regular roar of wrath, and Dr. Birchermall evidently saw that something would have to be done to placate them, for he suddenly held up his hand.

"Silence, please!" he cried. "I now have pleasure in announcing the winner of the Best Foto Contest. The winner, boys, is Swotter, of the Sixth!"

"Oh, good!" said Swotter. "I can do with that free feed!"

"You are more than welcome, Swotter," beamed the Head. "Here is sixpence!"

"Sixpence!" said the Head, placing a small silver coin in Swotter's palm. "With that sum, Swotter,

you can buy six doughnuts—a feed that should satisfy any fellow!"

If the Head expected that that announcement was going to pacify the crowd, he was vastly mistaken. "Yah! Swindle!" they yelled. "Smash his camera!"

There was a move towards the camera. And then a surprising thing happened. Jack Jolly, of the Fourth, came running up, with his pals, Merry and Bright and Fearless. "My camera!" he cried. "We've been looking everywhere for it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Is that camera yours, then, Jolly?"

The Head coughed.

"Ahem! I hope you don't mind, Jolly. I borrowed it to do a spot of photography with. Of course, I shall insist on paying you for the loan."

Dr. Birchermall dived into his pocket and presented the kaptin of the Fourth with some cash. Then he fled.

"Well, I'm glad the old scamp had the grace to pay his just debt, anyway," remarked Burleigh. "How much has he given you, Jolly?"

"Tuppence!" snorted Jolly. "I'll give him something for a change, next time I see him—a piece of my mind!"

"Same here!" roared the crowd. But nobody saw the Head for quite a long time after that.

He was too bizzzy counting up his ill-gotten gains.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 348. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. June 10th, 1939.



REMOVE WON SMARTLY
AT ST. JUDE'S!
Says H. VERNON-SMITH

In winning a two-innings match by three wickets at St. Jude's on Wednesday, the Remove may fairly claim to have put up a very creditable show. A heavy shower that stopped play at a time when anything might have happened in the game, resulted in the wicket breaking up badly for our second innings. To have overcome this severe handicap so successfully was an achievement for which we may justifiably give ourselves a pat on the back!

St. Jude's batted first and piled up the respectable score of 185 on a wicket that favoured them strongly. Greyfriars did not fare quite so well in their turn, and were finally dismissed for a total of 163, to which Cherry contributed 76 runs. A fine innings for Cherry, this—and, incidentally, he scored the runs at lightning speed!

When St. Jude's went in to bat again, our bowlers began to find their true form, though the wicket continued to favour high scoring. Hurree Singh bowled two of the home batsmen in successive balls and nearly achieved the "hat-trick" for the second week running with a tricky ball that bounded off the bat into the slips. Alas! Tom Brown, with the sun in his eyes, came badly unstuck, and "muffed" it completely, the ball rolling from his extended fingertips on to the turf.

Inky, however, despite that little set-back, continued to keep the St. Jude's willow-wielders on the defensive; and, at the other end, Wharton and Squiff, in turn, did their best to show our hosts that in the bowling line we're no mere one-man team. With loyal co-operation from the field, these

YOUR EDITOR CALLING!

During an argument in the Rag the other evening, Smith minor, declaring that Greyfriars was too snobbish for these democratic days, supported his opinion by saying that we hadn't even any scholarship boys in the Remove.

I promptly pointed out that he was quite mistaken. Smith minor was quite surprised to learn that in actual fact there are three fellows in the Remove who are at Greyfriars on scholarships won from ordinary Council schools!

For the benefit of those who share Smith minor's lack of information, the three fellows in question are Mark Linley, Dick Penfold, and Tom Redwing.

They have no objection, I know, to my mentioning how they came to Greyfriars. On the contrary, they are rightly proud of it.

Be Trained By A Wizard!

Professor Bolsover, Prince of Trainers, guarantees to turn you into a star athlete in six easy lessons! Win all the pots at the forthcoming school sports! Testimonials galore! S. J. Snoop writes: "I couldn't run more than a mile before I took up your Athlete's Course. Now I can run 1,500 yards!"—PROFESSOR BOLSOVER, Study No. 10, Remove Passage.

MORSE MESSAGE THAT SAVED
ISLAND CAPTIVES!

Fag's Ruse Foils Highcliffe Raid

"Be prepared!" is the motto of the Boy Scout movement. Harry Wharton and his chums showed Greyfriars this week that they live up to it.

They were scouting in the woods near the river opposite Popper's Island when the unexpected incident occurred. Wharton and Nugent and Bull and Inky were four of a squad detailed off to intercept express runners who were trying to get through the woods with dispatches without being spotted—Cherry, the remaining member of the Famous Five, being one of the runners.

It was an intriguing phenomenon on a peaceful summer afternoon. Wharton produced his watch and went out into the sunshine by the river.

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