

CHUM UP WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO. INSIDE

The Magnet^{2P}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



THE UNINVITED GUEST!



GREYFRIARS is a very nice school. But I wish now to be in my own country. If I am there, I will spooficate the Japaneese. But my honourable grandfather, may peace walk in his shadow, has writ me a letter.

"Not yet, my Little One, may you defend the shrines of your ancestors. This you must leave in older hands. Have patience always, your day will come. Until then, I conjure you to mourn every day in silence for one hour, that the strength of your spirit may fly towards us and make us stronger in the hour of trial. Be faithful, Little Swallow, and make friends for China in the great and free country of Britain. For what says the holy Confucius—'All within the four seas are brethren.' We all remember you daily at our devotions, and your name is on the lips of your ancestors. The blessing of my house rest upon you."

My honourable grandfather write always in English. He wish me to learn it plenty well. He was in England one time, and my revered father, too. They like much this country. So do I, too.

So every morning I think a lot of China and I am sad for one hour. Then I stop being sad. I plenty busy with work. No like old Quelchy's cane.

When me first here, all things very funny. I not savvy what happen. Handsome old Bob Cherry say to me: "You must come to class this morning, kid, or old Kwel Chee will be rattee." I think at the time he say "Kwel Chee," so I write a little letter:

"Most Venerable and Beneficent Kwel Chee,—This unworthy snail no want to come to class. No want to savvy Latin, no want to savvy grammar. No want to savvy anything. Forget his detested name, O Moonlike Kwel Chee, for he now go to catch a despicable fish in river.

"The smile of Heaven rest always upon your pagoda.—WUN LUNG."

But when I come back from river, where I no catch fish, there was plenty trouble. Quelchy was very ratty. He lay into this fellow with stick. There was bamboo-bruise all over me. I am pretty well dead.

He tell me to write: "I must not catch fish in river" one hundred times. But me write him another little letter next morning before class.

"Most Heaven-Faced Kwel Chee,—I do not yet write 'I must not catch

fish in river,' because I could not catch fish in river. I go now this morning to catch fish in river. If I catch fish in river I come back and write out 'I must not catch fish in river.'"

"I now kiss your feet, O august Kwel Chee, and then go catch fish in river.—WUN LUNG."

Me no catch fish, but me catch something else, pretty hot. Old Quelchy send one bad brute named Loder down to river to fetch me back. He clip me very hard upon the ear. He drag me back to school by the scruff of my pants. He deliver me to Quelchy and go away grinning.

Then Quelchy arise as a thunderstorm over the honourable rice field. One more time I feel a stick. I am sick of stick. I grovel for mercy, but he whack-whack still. Soon I think I now go to my ancestors, but he stop whack-whack and tell me to write my lines five hundred times. And me no catch fish—that makes me very sad.

THE WOES OF WUN!

After class, I go to study and take out big knife. Handsome old Bob Cherry say: "Wire in, kid, and get your lines done." But I say no, I not do lines until I have kill Loder. He lay a hand around my ear. Very well—me kill! That make us squits.

Old Bob Cherry jump out of chair and grab this fellow's neck. He say I can't kill Loder. I say: "Allee light! You wait and you see! Me fancy I can."

There is a shindy. Lot more fellows come along. Harry Wharton gasp and say: "My hat! Most of us want to kill Loder, but I don't fancy it can be done. Put that carving-knife down, you young heathen!"

They bump me on the floor and take my knife away, so I go down to old Quelchy and tell him pretty quick. I say: "I want to kill beastlee old Loder, and they not lettee me. You give them stick, O mighty Kwel Chee!"

That raise Cain right away. He give me stick instead. Always he give me stick first. "My name is not Kwel Chee!" he hooted. "And as for kill Loder—of all the iniquitous young rascals—I never heard anything like it! Take that—and that!" And me pretty near kill myself time me crawl out.

Then old Bob Cherry say: "Hard lines, kid, but you must learn not to go about killing people, you know." And I say: "Allee light! Me savvy! Me glad you stoppee." And I tell him I want to give a honourable feed to all the Form as a thank-you.

We hold feed in Rag, and I dish out stew first and they like very much. Then Harry Wharton say: "What make the queer flavour in the stew, kid?" And I say: "That was Jubas Seed. I put in plente Jubas Seed." They say they never hear of it before, so I tell them:

"Jubas Seed is Chineese poison. Vellee bad poison. Kill plente quick. That allee light! You no lettee me kill Loder, me killee you. You get no pain, but you die in five minutes. Allee light!"

There was awful riot. All fellows rolled on floor, groaning and moaning and clutching their tummies. Silly old Bunter let out yells like Red Indian. He had eaten four times more than everyone. I



Greyfriars play Rookwood at cricket.

stop my ears to shut out sound of suffering. Then Quelchy arrive and ask what is this hull-of-a-baloo?

They tell him about the Jubas Seed, and he say: "Jubas Seed! Me never heard of it. What is Jubas Seed, Wun Lung?"

"Me no savvy," I said, pretty quick. "I call it Jubas Seed because I forget its real name. I remember honourable name now. It is Callaway Seed—same as they put in cakes. Allee light! No poison! Just little mistake!"

It was very funny how their pain go away. Their pain go away, but my pain come along. Quelchy hook me off to his study and there is more stick. I am soon in a very sore strait. I leave his study doubled-up in right position to be kicked by the Form, and they kick. I am black and blue all over.

Next day it is a half-holiday, and in the evening old Quelchy call me to his study again.

"Where are your lines, Wun Lung?"

"No done any lines. No could."

"You couldn't do your lines? Why not?"

"Went down to the liver to catchee fish."

I think it was soon after that I began to take an interest in silly old class-work. I plenty too much afraid of wearing out Quelchy's stick!

AND NOW—

And now I'm almost all same as British boy. I even play cricket, though me like tennis best. I have drawn the unworthy picture above, so you can see what it is like here when Greyfriars play Rookwood at cricket. That will show you how much English I am.

I not say anything about my country, my poor China. Forgive me, honourable British fellows. I am very sad for China. But I do not fear. China will never be conquered while there's one Chinese alive. You wait—you see!

May the Gifts of Heaven, and of the Spirit, be Richly Within your Pagodas, O Handsome Readers and Most Beneficent British Boys.

WUN LUNG.



REMOVE FORM
Study No 13

(Cartoon by
HAROLD SKINNER.)

Our Contributor for next week is
CLAUDE HOSKINS
the musical genius.

RELATIONS AND FOES! "My Cousin Vernon has butted in at Greyfriars!" declares Vernon-Smith. "And the sooner he clears out again the better it will be for both of us!" For the latest developments in this bitter feud read:—

ROUGH ON HIS RIVAL!



"You young ass, Bertie!" said Captain Vernon, in a low voice. "What do you mean by this? It will be very difficult if your friends stop to tea!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Smithy In a Hurry!

"O H, jiminy!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles.

Never had the fat Owl of the Greyfriars Remove been so startled.

It was so utterly unexpected.

William George Bunter, at the moment, was in the Remove box-room. On a sunny June afternoon, after class, few fellows would have selected a box-room as a resort. But Billy Bunter had a good reason for his selection of that remote apartment.

The reason lay on top of Lord Mauleverer's big trunk. It was a bag of jam tarts.

Bunter, seated on another box, was helping himself from that bag. He was jammy and sticky and happy.

And it was so safe.

Bunter knew that Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, had gone out. He had seen him go out. Harry Wharton & Co. and a crowd of other fellows, had gone down to the nets after class; but Smithy had gone out of gates. Billy Bunter knew that, from the evidence of his eyes and his spectacles.

Not a fellow had been in the Remove passage when Bunter annexed that bag of jam tarts from Smithy's study. Nobody had seen Billy Bunter roll up to the box-room with his plunder under a fat arm.

Even if Smithy came in, even if he

missed the jam tarts, even if he suspected Bunter. Bunter was all right. Even in the remote contingency that Smithy might track him to the box-room, he was still all right, for he had turned the key in the door.

Never had the fat grub-raider of the Greyfriars Remove felt so absolutely safe.

For ten minutes Bunter had been enjoying life. Jam tart after jam tart had come to a sticky end.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, amaz-

Star School Story of World-Wide Favourites—HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars.

ingly, the sash of the box-room window shot up. From the leads outside a Remove junior shot in through the window. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Bunter gasped. He fairly goggled at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

With half a jam tart in his capacious mouth, the other half in a fat hand, Bunter sat transfixed, goggling through his spectacles at Smithy.

Smithy, for the moment, did not seem to see him. Bunter, of course, had no doubt that the proprietor of those jam tarts had tracked him down,

Still Smithy did not look at him. Having landed in the box-room, he turned to the window and shut down the sash.

Then he stood panting for breath.

Smithy looked as if he had been in a hurry that warm afternoon in June. His cheeks were flushed; there were spots of perspiration on his face, and he panted and panted. But he stood only for a few moments to recover his breath, then he cut across the box-room for the door. Then, of course, he saw Bunter, and stopped, staring at the fat Owl, with a fury in his face that fairly terrified him.

Bunter jumped up. He backed round Lord Mauleverer's big trunk. He was quite alarmed by the Bounder's furious look.

True, they were Smithy's jam tarts; and Smithy had rather a savage temper. Bunter had expected him to be shirty, if he tracked down the plunder, and the plunderer. But he had not expected a glare of rage like this.

"I—I say, old chap—" stuttered Bunter.

"You! What are you doing here, you fat fool?" Vernon-Smith panted out the words, clenching his hands.

"They—they ain't your tarts, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I—I got these at the tuckshop. You'll find your tarts in your study all right. Smithy—that is, if you've got any. I don't know whether you have or not, of course. I haven't been near your study."

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"You—you—" panted Smithy.

He looked for the moment as if he would hurl himself at the alarmed fat Owl.

"I say, you keep off, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I'll pay for these tarts, if you like, when—when my postal order comes. Not that they're yours. They came in a parcel to-day from Bunter Court. Look here, you keep off, you beast!"

It was really awful for Bunter.

Until a minute ago, when the window had shot open so unexpectedly, that box-room had seemed the safest of safe refuges. Now it seemed about as safe as a lion's den, with the door locked, and the enraged Bunter between him and the door.

But, to Bunter's relief, and greatly to his surprise, Vernon-Smith controlled his temper. For a moment or two he had looked as if he would fall on the fat Owl, and smite him hip and thigh, as only too clearly he wished to do. But he checked himself.

"You fat fool! Keep this dark!" he breathed.

"Eh?"

"If you mention that you saw me get in at this window, I'll boot you up the Remove passage, and back again!" hissed the Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Will you keep it dark, you fat idiot?"

Billy Bunter could only blink at him.

Slowly it dawned on his fat brain that Smithy was not, after all, on his track, and the track of the tarts.

Smithy had some other reason, unknown to Bunter, for getting into the House by way of the box-room window.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, ain't you after me, Smithy?"

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Will you keep this dark?" The Bunter's voice came through his teeth. "You can have the tarts, you guzzling fat ass! Will you keep this dark, or do you want me to smash you into little pieces?"

"Oh crikey! I say, have you been up to something out of gates?" asked Bunter. His fat brain began to grasp it. "Oh crikey! I say, are you sneaking in by a back window because you've been up to something, and you don't want to be spotted?"

"Will you keep it dark?"

The Bunter made a step towards Bunter, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing.

"Oh, yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "Think I'd give a chap away? I won't say a word, old fellow! Not a syllable! I—I thought you were after the tarts."

"Idiot!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith ran to the door. He had wasted a couple of minutes on Bunter, and it was clear that time pressed. He grabbed at the door-handle, but the door did not open, and he gave a gasp of rage.

"It's locked!" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh, you fat fool—"

"I—I thought you might come up after me. I—I mean—"

Vernon-Smith unlocked the door, tore it open, and ran out, shutting the door after him.

Bunter heard a rapid patter of feet on the box-room stair. It died away in a moment.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl of the Remove stood blinking.

Smithy, evidently, had been up to something out of gates, and had been in rapid retreat. He must have got in

over a back wall, cut across the kitchen gardens, and climbed the rain-pipe to the leads outside the box-room at the back of the House. He was going to make out, of course, that he hadn't been out at all. He was going to be found in his study, if wanted.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

Whatever Smithy had been up to, and whatever was the outcome, Bunter was all right. Smithy couldn't possibly make a fuss about those tarts now. That, to Billy Bunter, was the important point.

And, with a fat and jammy grin on his sticky face, the Owl of the Remove sat down again to finish the tarts.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not Smithy!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's up with the Acid Drop?"

Harry Wharton & Co. had come away from the nets, and were heading for the school shop for a little light refreshment in the shape of ginger-pop, when they sighted Mr. Hacker.

They regarded him with interest.

Hacker, the master of the Shell, seldom looked merry or bright. His temper was a trifle acidulated. He generally looked on the gloomy side of life. Hobson & Co. of the Shell described him as a gloomy ass.

But Hacker looked more than gloomy now.

He came in at the gates with a rapid stride. He fairly whisked towards the House. His brows were knitted, his lips were set, and his eyes glinted. And the knees of his trousers were covered with dust.

Something had happened to Hacker. He looked as if he had had a fall. Whatever had happened, it had not improved his temper—that was clear.

"The old bean's taken a tumble," said Johnny Bull. "By gum! He looks shirty."

"The shirtiness appears to be truly terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Hacker suddenly stopped in his rapid stride as he spotted the bunch of youthful figures in flannels; he shot a glance round at them.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir?"

"Has Vernon-Smith come in?"

"Vernon-Smith!" repeated Harry Wharton. "I haven't seen him since class. I don't know whether he's been out."

"He has certainly been out, as I saw him not twenty minutes ago on the towpath!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "You have not seen him come in?"

"No, sir; we've been at cricket."

Mr. Hacker gave a grunt and whisked on towards the House.

The Famous Five exchanged expressive glances.

"He's after Smithy," said Frank Nugent. "What has that mad ass been up to now?"

"Has he been out?" asked Harry.

"Well, he wasn't at the nets. Hacker seems to think he has," grinned Bob Cherry. "He can't have given the Acid Drop a tumble—surely. Even Smithy isn't mad enough to give a beak a tumble."

"Smithy's mad enough for anything, I think," said the captain of the Remove. "Still, I don't see why he should lark with Hacker; we've nothing to do with the Acid Drop. Smithy's always in a row, but I don't

see why he should hunt for trouble with the beak of another Form."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Listen!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Hacker's sharp voice came to the ears of the Famous Five. He had come on Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, near the door of the House.

"Wingate, do you know whether Vernon-Smith of Mr Quelch's Form has come in or not? Do you know where he is?"

"No, sir," answered Wingate, looking astonished. Sixth Form men were not supposed to be able to produce a junior at any moment, like a conjurer producing a rabbit out of a hat.

"I have no doubt that he has come in, Wingate. He certainly made off in the direction of the school. I shall be obliged, Wingate, if you will find Vernon-Smith and send him at once to his Form-master's study."

"Very well, sir."

Hacker disappeared into the House.

"Poor old Smithy!" sighed Bob Cherry. "What a chap he is to hunt trouble! He's been rowing with that cousin of his ever since the chap came to Greyfriars. But one row at a time ain't enough for Smithy. He's as hungry for rows as Bunter is for doughnuts."

"But what the dickens can have happened?" asked Nugent.

"We shall hear soon; Hacker looks as if he's going to tell the world," said Johnny Bull. "I wonder—" He paused and glanced round the quad. "Anybody know where Bertie Vernon is?"

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Vernon?" he repeated.

"He wasn't at the nets, either," said Johnny.

"I asked him if he was coming down to the cricket, and he told me he was going to Courtfield," said Harry slowly. "I suppose he's out of gates now."

"We can hardly tell t'other from which in the Remove," said Johnny. "I wonder—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Redwing! Reddy, where's Smithy?" roared Bob Cherry.

Tom Redwing, also in flannels, came up at Bob's roar. He had been at the nets with the Co. and a crowd of other Remove fellows.

"Smithy?" he repeated. "Anybody want him?"

"Hacker seems to," grinned Bob. "He's just come in looking as if he's been collecting dust, and asking for Smithy. Know if Smithy's out?"

"I know he has lines for Quelch," answered Redwing. "I thought he was sticking in the study to do them as he cut nets."

"Seen Smithy, Skinner?" called out Bob.

Skinner of the Remove had just come out of the House.

"Yes—in his study," answered Skinner.

"Sure?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Eh?" Skinner stared. "I suppose so, as I spoke to him there five minutes ago, and he snapped my head off for interrupting him. He's got lines. You know what Smithy's like when he's got lines."

"Wingate's looking for him," murmured Bob. "He's not looking for him in his study."

Tom Redwing hurried away to the House.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him.

If Smithy was in his study doing lines, it did not look as if he could be the fellow Hacker had seen on the tow-



As Vernon rushed up the stairs, Bob Cherry came sailing down the banisters, shooting off at the curve. Crash! It was a terrific collision. Bob Cherry gasped, and Vernon gave a startled yell. "He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

path twenty minutes ago—and who, it was plain, had roused the deepest ire of the Acid Drop. It looked as if Hacker might have made a mistake between the doubles of the Remove.

Now that Bertie Vernon had been several weeks at Greyfriars, Remove fellows seldom made a mistake between the two, in spite of their remarkable likeness, which extended even to the tones of their voices.

But Hacker, the master of the Shell, had little to do with the Remove; indeed, he might hardly have noticed that there was a new boy in the Remove that term at all. Such a mistake might easily have been made by the Acid Drop.

The Famous Five followed Tom Redwing up to the Remove passage; they arrived in a body at the door of Study No. 4—Vernon-Smith's study.

An irritable voice greeted them there.

"Keep out, for goodness' sake! Can't you let a fellow get through?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith was seated at the study table; he had a pen in his hand, a sheaf of impot paper in front of him, and a Virgil propped up against the inkstand. He glared at the little crowd in the doorway.

"Oh, you're here!" exclaimed Redwing in tones of relief. The Bounder's chin was glad to find him in the study busy with lines.

"Yes. Cut! I've got to get this stack done!" grunted the Bounder. "If you want tea, go and tea in some other study! What do those chaps want? I tell you I've got two hundred to do, and I've done hardly more than half."

"You've done half two hundred lines, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton. "Yes; more. Cut!"

The Famous Five looked at the study table. Finished books lay there, the

total considerably more than a hundred lines. Smithy was well on the way with the second hundred.

"Thank goodness!" said Redwing. "You're all right this time, Smithy."

"Oh, quite!" snorted the Bounder. "It's so nice to stick in a study grinding Latin when a fellow wants to go down to cricket! I'm enjoying it."

"I mean—" "If you've come here to jaw I shall have to chuck it!" said Vernon-Smith. "Your fault if Quelch doubles that impot."

"Hacker's just come in—" said Harry.

"Who?" "Hacker—the Acid Drop—"

"What the thump does it matter to me whether Hacker's come in or not?" rapped Vernon-Smith. "Mad?"

"Well, it matters a little, as he fancies he saw you on the towpath, and something seems to have happened to him there," said the captain of the Remove dryly.

"What utter rot! How could he see me on the towpath when I've been in my study? If you want to be funny go and be funny in some other study."

"He thinks—" Vernon-Smith's pen was scribbling again.

"Shut up!" he said, without looking up.

The Famous Five turned away from the door. As they went down the Remove passage Wingate's voice called to them from the landing.

"Seen anything of Vernon-Smith?"

"He's in his study," answered Wharton.

"Oh, is he? All right!"

The Sixth Form prefect passed the juniors and went on to Study No. 4.

Harry Wharton & Co went down the stairs. Evidently Hacker had made a mistake between the doubles of the

Remove. A hundred Latin lines could not have been written in twenty minutes. Bertie Vernon was out of gates; Vernon-Smith was in his study, and had apparently been there quite a considerable time. It was all right for Smithy, but it looked like a spot of trouble for the Bounder's double.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Which?

"MY dear Hacker!" Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, rose from his writing-table and raised his eyebrows expressively.

A bang, rather than a knock, had come at the door; it flew open, and the master of the Shell almost flew in.

Dignified repose was Quelch's long suit. He disapproved of hurry, haste, and excitement. Hurry, haste, and excitement were quite out of place in a Form-master at Greyfriars School. All three were visible in Hacker, and not merely visible—they leaped to the eye.

"Quelch," Hacker spluttered, "will you send for Vernon-Smith of your Form? I have asked Wingate to find him and send him here! I demand—"

Mr. Quelch's brow grew grim.

The scapegrace of his Form was in trouble again! Smithy, the bad hat of the Remove, seemed to be born to trouble as the sparks fly upward!

"Pray calm yourself, Mr. Hacker!" said the Remove master quietly. "What has that troublesome boy done this time?"

"Look at me!" gasped Hacker. "Look at me! You can see that I have fallen in the dust. I was tripped up, and—"

"Mr. Hacker!"

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"Tripped up!" spluttered Hacker. "Overturned! I came down on my knees! It was very painful! My knees are bruised! Tripped up—"

"Surely not by a boy of my Form, Mr. Hacker!" exclaimed the Remove master, aghast.

"By Vernon-Smith!" Hacker was almost foaming. "I ask you, Mr. Quelch, whether a member of Dr. Locke's staff is to be so used by a boy of your Form—a young ruffian, sir—a young hooligan—"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly tell me precisely what has occurred, Mr. Hacker! I can scarcely credit that even that reckless boy—"

Hacker spluttered for breath.

Mr. Quelch's face was as grim as a gorgon's. Tripping up a master was not merely a dire offence, it was unheard-of—it was almost unthinkable. If there were a fellow at Greyfriars School capable of so reckless an act it was Herbert Vernon-Smith. But it was unusually wild and reckless even for the scapegrace of the Remove. It was really hard to believe!

At the same time, Mr. Quelch was well aware of Hacker's ways. The Acid Drop was an interfering gentleman. Certainly there was no excuse for such an offence; but it was very likely that Hacker had provoked the trouble. Hacker was a man who regarded a fussy desire to interfere as a sense of duty.

"I saw the boy," gasped Mr. Hacker, "on the towpath by the Sark as I was taking a walk after class. It was some distance from the school; no doubt the young rascal considered himself safe from observation there. I saw him from a distance, smoking a cigarette—too far off for recognition, though I noted that he had a Greyfriars cap, and

so knew that he was a junior belonging to this school."

Hacker spluttered for breath again.

"He was sitting under a tree by the towpath, smoking a cigarette and reading a paper," went on the Acid Drop. "I therefore approached him, and as he did not hear me I reached him before he was aware—"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. Hacker certainly was right to identify a Greyfriars boy who was breaking the strict rule against smoking. But Quelch had his own opinion of the Acid Drop's stealthy ways.

However, he made no remark, and Hacker spluttered on:

"The paper he was reading, sir, was a racing paper. I saw its title—'Racing Tips.' He was smoking, sir, and reading a racing paper. He was taken quite by surprise when he suddenly saw me!"

"No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch, very dryly.

"I caught him, sir, by the shoulder," said Mr. Hacker. "It was my intention, sir, to bring him back to the school with his cigarettes and his racing paper in his possession and hand him over to you, sir. Imagine my amazement, sir, when the impudent boy not merely resisted, but hooked my leg, causing me to fall—to fall heavily, sir!"

Hacker breathed wrath.

"If you had been satisfied, sir, with reporting the matter to me, after ascertaining that he was a Remove boy, this reckless act would not have occurred," said Mr. Quelch. "I see no reason why you should have taken a Remove boy into your personal custody, Mr. Hacker."

Hacker spluttered.

"If that means, Mr. Quelch, that you offer any excuse, any extenuation, of

this boy's ruffianly conduct!" Hacker almost bawled.

"It does not, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "Nothing can excuse such an act, and Vernon-Smith will be taken to his headmaster for judgment. You are, I presume, certain that it was Vernon-Smith?"

"I saw him quite plainly, sir. He darted away through the wood, after tripping me up, and I did not see him again. But I had seen him, sir, as plainly as I see you now, and recognised him."

"There is another boy in my Form, Mr. Hacker, a near relative of Vernon-Smith, who resembles him so closely that errors have frequently been made," said Mr. Quelch. "I do not suppose for one moment that it was this boy whom you saw on the towpath—Vernon is a very well-conducted boy and quite unlikely to have been occupied as you have described. Nevertheless, I must ask you if you can state positively that it was Vernon-Smith you saw."

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, sir. I have heard of the boy you mention, but I am quite sure that I have made no mistake. I should not be likely, sir, to mistake one boy for another!" snorted Mr. Hacker. "I am not blind, sir. I have seen him frequently enough. I saw him only an hour ago, before I went out, speaking to you in the quadrangle—"

"It was not Vernon-Smith who was speaking to me in the quadrangle an hour ago, Mr. Hacker. It was his cousin, Vernon, who was asking me for leave to go to Courtfield after class."

"What! I certainly thought it was Vernon-Smith—"

"It was Vernon!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Hacker.

The Acid Drop was rather taken aback. Obviously it was possible for him to have made a mistake, as he had made that very mistake an hour ago!

"I am sure that it was Vernon-Smith on the towpath, however," he said, after a pause. "I feel no doubt of that. You say yourself that the other boy—Vernon—was not likely to be so occupied."

"That is correct, to the best of my knowledge," said Mr. Quelch. "I have a high opinion of Vernon. The case is quite the reverse with his cousin. Vernon-Smith is undoubtedly the worst boy in my Form. I— Here he is!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith appeared in the open doorway of the study. He did not look at Hacker. He looked inquiringly at his Form-master.

"Wingate says you want me, sir," he said.

"That is the boy," said Mr. Hacker, his sharp eyes gleaming at the Bounder. "I am absolutely assured of that!"

"Where have you been since class, Vernon-Smith?"

"In my study, sir," answered the Bounder. "I have my lines—"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "Less than half an hour ago, Vernon-Smith, you were on the towpath, a mile from the school. You cannot have been back in the school a quarter of an hour."

The Bounder looked at him.

"I don't see why you should think so, sir. Is there any harm if I were?"

"Any harm!" spluttered Mr. Hacker.

"We are allowed to walk up the river after class, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "I might have done so if I hadn't had lines."

Hacker almost gurgled. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes searched the Bounder's face with a very penetrating look. He read nothing there but a mild surprise. But Mr. Quelch was well aware of the cool

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unscrupulousness of that member of his Form in dealing with a beak. He did not expect the scapegrace of the Remove to follow the example of George Washington when he was being called over the coals!

"You have heard what Mr. Hacker has said," said Mr. Quelch quietly.

"Mr. Hacker must be mistaken, sir. I don't see any harm in going up the towpath if I did, but I have been doing my lines."

"You untruthful young rascal!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "You are perfectly aware that I caught you on the towpath, reading a racing paper and smoking cigarettes—and that you dared to trip me up to make your escape."

Vernon-Smith stared at him. Then he looked at his Form-master again.

"I can only say, sir, that Mr. Hacker is making a mistake!" he said. "I don't know why he should fancy that it was I. I've been doing lines ever since class."

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted.

"This afternoon, Vernon-Smith, I gave you two hundred lines for disorder in the Form-room!" he rapped. "You state that you have been writing lines ever since class?"

"Yes, sir!"

"In that case, as it is an hour or more since class, you must have made very considerable progress with your lines," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"I—I haven't finished them, sir."

"I thought not!" said Mr. Quelch with intensifying grimness. "Go to your study at once, Vernon-Smith, and bring me all the lines you have written."

"Very well, sir."

The Bounder went out quietly. Quelch's face was grim, and Mr. Hacker's eyes gleamed.

The young rascal was fairly caught! He had stated that he had been writing lines since class. He had to show up the lines he had written. Obviously, if he had been a mile from the school half an hour ago he could not have written very many since he had got back. Twenty or thirty at the most would be the sum total that he could show—if he had been a mile from the school half an hour ago!

"The unscrupulous young rascal!" spluttered Mr. Hacker. "A palpable falsehood—"

"Vernon-Smith is not a scrupulous boy!" said Mr. Quelch. "But he is now condemned out of his own mouth."

Herbert Vernon-Smith returned to the study. He laid a sheaf of impot paper on his Form-master's table.

"These are the lines I have done so far, sir!" he said meekly.

There was a very curious expression on Mr. Quelch's face as he examined the lines. He counted them with meticulous care. The total was one hundred and forty-four.

Mr. Hacker's eyes followed Quelch's. A look of angry perplexity came over the Acid Drop's face.

There was a deep silence in the study. The Bounder waited.

Quelch looked at him. He looked at Hacker. He looked at the lines. A good hour's work, at least, lay on the table before him. Quelch coughed. Hacker grunted.

"You may take your lines, Vernon-Smith, and complete them!" said Mr. Quelch at last. "For the present you may go."

The Bounder went.

In Quelch's study the two masters looked at one another.

Hacker's lips shut hard.

"It was, then, the other boy!" he said. "Is it known whether the other boy is out of gates, Mr. Quelch?"

"He is certainly out of gates!"

"Then there is no doubt," said the Acid Drop. "I leave this matter in your hands, Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, left alone in his study, frowned thoughtfully. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the scapegrace and bad hat of his Form, had been cleared—cleared by the very test that Quelch himself had applied! If the offender was not Vernon-Smith, it was his double. That was a very painful reflection for Mr. Quelch.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

"ADSUM!"

Bertie Vernon, in the ranks of the Remove, answered to his name as it was called.

Mr. Quelch was taking the roll in Hall, and some of the fellows noticed that he glanced up and fixed his eyes on the new junior for a second as he answered "adsum!"

It was known in the Remove that the new fellow was up for a row.

Vernon himself, who had come in only just in time for roll-call, did not seem to be aware of it.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not help regarding him curiously. Plenty of fellows knew, by that time, what had happened to Hacker—and what had happened was a matter for a flogging, at least, if not for the sack. But Bertie seemed perfectly unconcerned.

Yet—if he had tripped Hacker on the towpath—he must be aware that the Acid Drop would be raging; and that serious trouble awaited him. And the Famous Five, as they looked at him in Hall, felt a doubt creep into their mind.

It seemed clear enough that Smithy had been in the House. Bertie had certainly been out of gates! But they could not help remembering that, on at least one occasion, Smithy had coolly made use of the resemblance between him and his cousin to land Bertie in a row. Smithy's feud with the new junior was bitter and unrelenting; and Smithy was not a scrupulous fellow when he had his back up.

Harry Wharton glanced round at the Bounder—and wondered whether Smithy had wangled it somehow. Smithy was as deep as a well, he knew that; and not likely to hesitate at much to get out of a scrape. Landing his own misdoings on his double was more likely to amuse the Bounder than anything else.

"Did you go to Courtfield, Vernon?" the captain of the Remove asked in a low voice, as Quelch went on with the roll.

"Eh? Yes! Quelch gave me leave."

"Did you come back by the towpath?"

"No; I got the motor-bus back to the corner of Oak Lane."

"Oh!" murmured Harry.

"Haven't you been on the towpath?" asked Frank Nugent.

"No!"

"Oh!" murmured Nugent, in his turn.

Vernon stared at them, apparently surprised by the inquiries.

"Silence!" called out Loder of the Sixth.

And no more was said in the Remove.

After roll, Vernon was told to follow his Form-master to his study; and, as he went in the wake of Mr. Quelch, Harry Wharton tapped the Bounder on the arm.

"Was it you on the towpath, after all, Smithy?" he asked quietly.

The Bounder raised his eyebrows.

"How could it have been when I was in my study, writing lines?" he asked. "Think a chap can be in two places at once?"

"If it was," said Harry unheeding, "it's got landed on Vernon."

"Dear man," said Smithy, "I should be so sorry if Vernon got into a row! I'm so fond of him."

"Then it was you?" said Harry.

"Wasn't I in my study writing lines?" smiled the Bounder. "But suppose—just for the sake of argument, and without prejudice, as the lawyers say—suppose a fellow was spotted by a beak, do you think that fellow would be ass enough to let himself be walked in to a flogging, if he had a chance of getting clear?"

"Well no; but—"

"Of course, actually I was in my study writing lines," said the Bounder blandly. "Quelch has seen the lines—pretty good proof, I think! But if I had been that chap on the towpath, I should have cut, just as that chap did, and tried my hardest to prove an alibi, and let Quelch think that the Acid Drop had made a mistake—as he so often does."

"Yes; that's all very well, but in this case, it was bound to land on Vernon, as he's so like you—"

"That's his misfortune—not my fault!" said the Bounder coolly. "I never asked him to butt into my school and take all these risks, did I? Think I'm going to worry about him?"

"I suppose not. But—"

"What did he come here for?" said the Bounder bitterly. "Is Greyfriars the only school in the kingdom? We've loathed one another from small kids—he wasn't ten years old when he got my back up with his Vernon swank, and I gave him a Smith jolt that damaged his nose that he was turning up! He shouldn't have come to my school!"

"His uncle sent him here—he had to come if he was sent."

"His uncle should have picked out some other school, then! Do you think that if I get landed in a scrape I'm going to stay in it because the fellow has butted into my school, who happens to look like me?"

Harry Wharton was silent.

"We used to see a lot of one another as small kids," went on Vernon-Smith. "We were always being taken for one another then. After that, I never saw him for years, and almost forgot the cad. But we couldn't be together again without mistakes of that kind cropping up! Is it my fault?"

"No. But—"

"Captain Vernon jolly well knew it, too, when he sent him here!" added Vernon-Smith. "He had some reason for it that I can't understand. The fellow never wanted to come to my school—I'll say that for him! Let him ask his precious uncle to send him to another school—that will put an end to it!"

"Well, I suppose Captain Vernon had some reason," said Harry. "He lives in this neighbourhood now, at Lantham Chase—that may be it—"

"Redcliffe School is nearer Lantham, if that's it—and Highcliffe isn't much farther off. St. Jude's is quite as near. He had his choice of two other jolly decent schools—both nearer Lantham. But he had to send him here—to stir up trouble!"

"Oh, that's ro!" said Harry impatiently. "I dare say Captain Vernon had forgotten your existence when he sent him here."

"Do you?" sneered the Bounder. "Then I'll tell you this—I was at Lantham Chase one afternoon, dodging

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lost!

"ANY for me, Smithy?" asked Billy Bunter.
 "You fat ass!"
 "Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Dry up!"

Billy Bunter, in morning break, was blinking at the letter-rack when a Remove fellow came along, and took a letter down.

At those curt answers, however, Bunter ceased to blink at the letter-rack, and blinked at the Remove fellow instead, with a wrathful blink.

Smithy was never fearfully polite—but this was unusually and gratuitously uncivil, even for Smithy!

"Well, you needn't bite a fellow's head off, Smithy!" snorted the fat Owl. "Any fellow would tell a fellow whether there's a letter for a fellow, when a fellow's a bit short-sighted, and a fellow knows it! And after all I've done for you—keeping it dark, and all that, Smithy—"

"You fat owl, I'm not Smithy!" snapped Bertie Vernon.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He realised that it was Smithy's cousin.

"Well, 'tain't my fault you're so like the other beast," he said. "Whichever beast you are, you can tell a fellow whether there's a letter for a fellow, when a fellow's short-sighted! I'm expecting a postal order—"

"There's no letter for you," grunted Vernon.

"Oh, blow!" said Bunter.

Evidently that celebrated postal order, so long expected, had not yet arrived.

Vernon, taking no further notice of the fat Owl, opened his letter, and Bunter blinked at him inquisitively.

Bunter was always deeply interested in what did not concern him. Likewise, there was always the possibility that a fellow had a tip in the letter—and if a fellow had a tip, there was a sporting chance of an impecunious fat Owl raising a little loan to tide him over till his postal order came.

"That from your uncle at Lantham Chase?" he asked.

"Find out!"

"Eh? That's why I asked you!" explained Bunter, blinking at him.

"You fat ass!" said Vernon. "Can't you ever mind your own business?"

"Oh, really, Vernon—"

"Dry up, for goodness' sake!"

Bunter gave a snort! The fellow was shirty, just because Bunter had taken him for Smithy! Smithy always got shirty in the same way when a fellow took him for Vernon! Bunter was fed up with the pair of them!

Vernon, unheeding the fat Owl, took a letter from the envelope. From the folded letter he took a small oblong of cardboard.

Bunter blinked at it!

"What's that?" he asked.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"Beast!"

Bertie Vernon turned away with the letter in one hand, and the ticket in the other. He had been going to read his uncle's letter, but he seemed to want to get to a safe distance from Billy Bunter's entertaining conversation first.

Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, seen Mauly?" he squeaked.

"No!" snapped Vernon, over his shoulder.

"Well, look here, if you're going up to the studies, see if Mauly's in his study, will you? I don't want to go up all those blessed stairs for nothing! I

want to see Mauly specially, before third school—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter, as Bertie Vernon went up the staircase.

It was very annoying to Bunter! As his celebrated postal order had not arrived, he wanted to see Lord Mauleverer in break. On the other hand, he did not want to negotiate the staircase, unless it was absolutely necessary. Bunter did not like stairs! He had too much weight to carry up.

But the next moment, the frown faded from Bunter's fat brow, and he grinned.

As Bertie Vernon ran up the stairs, a long leg appeared round the curve of the polished oak banisters.

Some fellow was sailing down the banisters—a performance which was strictly and severely forbidden; but in which reckless fellows sometimes indulged, all the same.

Bob Cherry was specially liable to be rather thoughtless in such matters.

That broad, polished banister tempted Bob very often!

Bob liked to start at the top, sitting astride, and shoot down, and jump off in the hall below! But as that was liable to land a fellow under the eyes of authority, it was more usual to shoot off at the landing, which was less open to public view.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter, greatly amused.

Had Vernon been walking upstairs, it would have been all right. But he was running up quite quickly.

The consequence was that he reached the first landing before he observed that a junior was sailing down the banister; and Bob, shooting off at the curve, saw him too late to think of avoiding him.

Crash!

It was a really terrific collision: Bob Cherry gave a spluttering gasp, and tumbled over on the landing.

Bertie Vernon gave a startled yell, and rolled off the landing, rolling down the lower stairs.

Which amused Billy Bunter fearfully.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

This, in Bunter's opinion, just served the beast right.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry. He sat up, on the landing, gasping for breath, and stared down at the rolling junior. "Oh, my hat! Sorry—oh, crumbs!"

Bump, bump!

Bertie Vernon, hardly knowing what had happened to him, sprawled at the foot of the stairs. A letter flew in one direction—a cardboard ticket in another—unheeded! Vernon sprawled and gasped.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Vernon. "Ow!" He sat up dizzily. "What silly fathead—ow! What blithering idiot—oooogh!"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles! The little cardboard ticket had fallen almost at his feet. The fat Owl promptly put a foot on it!

Vernon would be hunting for that ticket, as soon as he got his breath! Let him hunt! This struck Bunter as funny!

Bob Cherry scrambled up, and came running down the stairs. He gave the breathless Vernon a hand up.

"Sorry, Smithy—" he gasped.

"You fool!"

"Oh! I mean Vernon! Sorry, old bean—awfully sorry I bowled you over—I never saw you—"

Vernon stood on his feet, gasping and panting. He was bumped and breath-

Loder—and Captain Vernon came on me, and took me for his precious nephew, and talked to me! I told you that at the time. Now I'll tell you something he said. He said—thinking I was his precious Bertie—that he had a special reason for sending him to the same school as his cousin Smith, so he must make the best of it, or words to that effect."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"I've often wondered what that special reason was!" sneered Smithy. "I own up I can't make it out—but I don't trust that coffee-coloured half-pay captain an inch. He's landed Bertie Vernon here, knowing there would be trouble—if the cad doesn't like the trouble, let him get out!"

"It's awkward for both of you," said Harry slowly. "But it's worse for Vernon than for you, as you kick over the traces and Vernon doesn't! You must have been up to something when Hacker collared you on the towpath, and whatever it was it will be shoved on Vernon now—unless you see him clear!"

The Bounder laughed.

"How can I see him clear when I was in my study at the time writing lines?" he asked banteringly.

"Oh, rats!" said the captain of the Remove, gruffly, and he turned away, leaving the Bounder laughing.

Bertie Vernon, in the meantime, had followed Mr. Quelch to his study. There he stood under the searching gaze of the gimlet eyes, wondering why he was wanted.

Mr. Quelch was silent for some moments looking at him. He spoke at last.

"You know why you are here, Vernon?"

"No, sir!" answered Bertie.

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"About two hours ago, Vernon, Mr. Hacker found a Remove boy on the towpath, smoking and reading a racing paper. This boy tripped him up, and then escaped! It was either you or your cousin in my Form."

A black and bitter look came over Bertie Vernon's face.

"It was not I, sir!" he answered. "I do not smoke, and I am not interested in racing papers, and I have not been on the towpath."

"It appears clear, Vernon, that Vernon-Smith was in the House at the time, and had not left the school since class."

Bertie's lips curled contemptuously. But he made no reply.

"The matter is extremely serious," said Mr. Quelch. "The junior in question actually tripped up a Form-master! Mr. Hacker had no doubt at first that it was Vernon-Smith—he is satisfied now that it was not."

"It was not I, sir."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"I shall do my best to believe you, Vernon!" he said quietly. "Your cousin appears to be cleared in this matter: he certainly cannot be adjudged guilty. If he was not the boy concerned, you must be. And yet—"

There was a long pause.

"I cannot help thinking that there is a doubt in the matter," the Remove master went on, at last, "and I shall give you the benefit of the doubt. It is a most awkward situation, for Mr. Hacker is, naturally, very much incensed. But—" He paused again.

"But—"

"I can only give you my word, sir, that it was not I!" said the new junior.

"Very well, Vernon; you may go."

Bertie Vernon went, with set lips!

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"Get out!" ordered Tom Redwing, throwing the study door wide open. "Shan't!" said Bunter, independently. "I'm tea-ing with Smithy, not with you!" "Do you want that fat frog here, Smithy?" asked Redwing. "Oh, leave him alone!" snapped the Bunder irritably.

less, and had rather a collection of aches and pains.

"You utter idiot!" he gasped. "You blithering chump!"

"Go it!" said Bob. "If it makes you feel better—"

"You howling ass! I've dropped a letter, and a theatre ticket!" snapped Vernon. "Help me look for them!"

"What-ho!" said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's a letter!" He picked up the letter, and handed it to the new junior. "Seen a ticket lying about, Bunter?"

"Eh? What sort of a ticket?" asked Bunter.

"A theatre ticket, Vernon says! It's dropped somewhere about."

"I can't see it!" said Bunter, blinking round him carefully through his big spectacles. Which was perfectly true. The keenest vision could not have detected that theatre ticket while Bunter's foot was planted on it.

Bertie Vernon leaned on the big carved oaken newel-post at the foot of the banister, panting for breath, while Bob hunted for the lost ticket.

Loder of the Sixth came along—fortunately too late to witness the startling happening on the stairs. Perhaps he suspected something, however, for he gave Bertie a very sharp look.

"What's up here?" he snapped.

"I slipped on the staircase," answered Bertie. "I tumbled down!"

Which was quite a truthful answer, though it savoured, perhaps, more of the wisdom of the serpent than of the innocent dove.

"Clumsy young ass!" grunted Loder, and he walked on.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "If Loder knew you'd been sliding down the banisters, Cherry, you'd get six!" "Shut up, ass! Much obliged.

Vernon, old bean!" said Bob. "I'm really fearfully sorry I bowled you over."

"I suppose you can't help being a blithering idiot!" grunted Vernon.

Bob laughed, and resumed his search for the lost ticket.

Billy Bunter watched him with cheerful interest through his big spectacles. As Bunter did not move the foot that covered that lost ticket Bob did not look like having much luck in his search.

"Blessed if I can see it!" said Bob at last. "Sure you dropped it, I suppose?"

"I had it in my hand! It must be somewhere!" said Bertie. "What the dickens has become of it?"

Having recovered his breath a little, he joined Bob in the search.

"Can't you help, Bunter, you fat duffer?" demanded Bob. "Think you look ornamental standing there like a statue of a prize porker?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Billy Bunter did not lend assistance in the search. He couldn't, without revealing the ticket hidden under his foot! He looked on with a fat grin.

Two or three other fellows, however, came along and helped. Then the bell for third school rang, and they all started for the Form-room.

"You'll have to look for it later, Vernon," said Bob. "Can't be late for Form."

Bertie gave an irritated grunt.

It was mysterious, where that ticket had got to! The letter had been found easily enough. The theatre ticket seemed to have vanished into space. But it was impossible to carry on after the bell rang for school. He gave it up for the present, and followed Bob.

"Come on, Bunter!" Bob Cherry

called back to the fat Owl. "Can't you hear the bell? Deaf, as well as lazy?"

"I'm coming!" called back Bunter.

But the fat Owl lingered, grinning, till the others were gone. Then he stooped and picked up the ticket! He blinked at it and read:

"COURTFIELD THEATRE ROYAL.

"Matinee, Wednesday.

"No. 10. Row B."

It was a ticket for the theatre at Courtfield, the following day. Evidently, Captain Vernon had obtained it for his nephew and sent it in that letter.

Billy Bunter, grinning, slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

After third school Vernon would be hunting for that ticket again. He was less likely than ever to find it!

Billy Bunter grinned as he rolled away to the Remove Form Room! If a fellow couldn't be civil to a fellow, a fellow could hunt for his theatre ticket, and be blowed to him! That was how Billy Bunter looked at it! That ticket was not going to be found in a hurry!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Awkward for Quelch!

"HENRY'S for it!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Some of the Remove fellows grinned.

Henry—otherwise, Henry Samuel Quelch, master of the Remove—was late.

The Remove were gathered at their Form-room door, ready for the Form-master to let them in for third school.

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But Henry had not arrived—though he was not far away. The juniors could hear his voice—just round the corner, up the corridor—alternating with the acid tones of Mr. Hacker.

The Acid Drop had caught Quelch on his way to the Form-room and stopped him.

Henry was, as Bob expressed it, for it!

Most of the Remove fellows knew what the trouble was. Hacker, the day before, had come in dusty and disgruntled, demanding justice on a dire offender. Justice had not been done. Hacker was about the last man in the wide world to forget or forgive such a grievance. When the Acid Drop had a grievance he was more prone to nurse it, and brood over it, and make the most of it, than to forget or forgive it.

And, really and truly, the matter was serious. A Form-master had been tripped up! It was a dire offence; and in Common-room the other beaks all agreed that it was dire! In Hacker's opinion, it was not merely dire—it was a thing to make the skies fall! It was calculated to upset the stars in their courses! That such an offender should escape punishment—the direst punishment—was unthinkable, to Hacker. And so far, the offender had escaped!

"Listen to the band!" murmured Skinner.

The sharp, acid tones of the Acid Drop floated clearly down the corridor.

"I fail to understand you, Quelch! I entirely fail to understand your attitude! Am I to understand that it is your view that boys of your Form may be guilty of the most unexampled outrages with impunity?"

"Certainly not, Hacker! Most certainly not!" came Quelch's voice. "But we will discuss this another time! At the present moment my Form is waiting—and doubtless your own are—"

"We will discuss the matter here and now. Quelch! I have expected to hear from you that that young ruffian—that young hooligan—was adequately punished! I have heard no such thing!"

"There is a doubt in the matter—"

"I see no room for doubt! The boy of your Form who attacked me—I repeat, attacked me—is known. His name is Vernon!"

"Nevertheless—"

"I admit that, at the time, I supposed the boy to be Vernon-Smith, who resembles him very closely! Your own investigations proved that Vernon-Smith was in the House at the time! The other boy, therefore, was Vernon!"

"It would seem so. But—"

"I demand that this boy be taken to the headmaster and reported to him for an assault upon a member of the staff! If you desire to retain the matter in your own hands I will consent to that, on condition that the punishment be adequate. But it must be adequate!"

"Another time, Hacker—"

"There is no time like the present, Quelch! Understand me—pray understand me clearly. I will not submit to acts of ruffianism on the part of Remove boys. I desire you to understand that with the utmost clearness, Mr. Quelch!"

"I repeat, Mr. Hacker, that an element of doubt exists! Justice shall be done; but I can run no risk of injustice. And now, sir, I must go to my Form."

"I repeat, Quelch—"

"And I repeat, Mr. Hacker, that I must go to my Form."

With that, Mr. Quelch whisked round

the corner and appeared in sight, leaving Hacker to make the best of it.

Remove fellows who had been grinning carefully ceased to grin as Henry Samuel Quelch appeared.

Quelch had a heightened colour and a glint in his eyes. It was no time for grinning on the part of his Form.

The Remove went into their Form-room with very serious faces.

The Bouncer's eyes had a mocking glimmer in them. Bertie Vernon's brows were knitted. The rest of the Remove regarded the doubles of the Form curiously.

One of them had tripped the Acid Drop! Which?

Smithy was the likely man for such an exploit. But Smithy had proved—or seemed to have proved—that he had been within gates at the time. Vernon was less likely; but Vernon had been out of gates at the time, and might easily have been on the spot. It was, as Bob Cherry had remarked, a case of paying your money and taking your choice.

It was a most unsatisfactory state of affairs for Mr. Quelch. With all the evidence against the fellow he believed innocent, and in favour of the fellow he believed guilty, he was in a very difficult position.

Third lesson did not immediately begin. Mr. Quelch stood regarding his Form with gleaming gimlet eyes.

"Before we commence," he said, "I have a question to put to my Form! Can any boy present tell me, of his own knowledge, that Vernon-Smith did not leave the school after class yesterday?"

Billy Bunter gave a little jump.

Nobody else seemed to have taken any interest in the Bouncer's proceedings after class on Monday. But Billy Bunter, for reasons of his own, had been interested. He had watched Smithy go before he ventured to raid the jam tarts in Study No. 4. Bunter, at all events, knew that Smithy had gone out—likewise. Bunter knew the secret and surreptitious manner in which Smithy had returned.

No one answered Mr. Quelch!

He had not asked whether any fellow knew that Vernon-Smith had gone out. Nothing would have induced Mr. Quelch to place a boy of his Form in the position of a sneak! He had only asked for evidence in favour of Smithy! If any fellow knew that Smithy had not gone out there was no reason why he should not say so.

But nobody, evidently, knew.

"Redwing!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You share Study No. 4 in the Remove with Vernon-Smith. Were you not in your study after class?"

"Yes, sir, for a few minutes. Vernon-Smith was there then!" said Tom. "Then I went down to the cricket nets with the other fellows, sir! But I know that Smithy—I mean Vernon-Smith—did his lines, sir! A lot of fellows saw them—we went to the study after Mr. Hacker came in."

"Can you tell me, of your own knowledge, that Vernon-Smith remained in his study?"

"Not of my own knowledge, sir!" admitted Redwing reluctantly.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! I didn't speak, sir!" exclaimed the fat Owl in alarm.

Quelch's gimlet eyes, which had been searching face after face, fixed on Bunter's fat countenance. Never had they seemed so much like gimlets.

"Do you know anything of this matter, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Did you see Vernon-Smith in his study after Redwing had left him there?"

"No fear!" gasped Bunter.

Only too well, the fat Owl knew that Smithy had not been in that study when he had annexed the jam tarts.

The gimlet eyes lingered on Bunter! Then, to the fat Owl's relief, they passed to other faces.

There was a brief silence.

"Very well; we shall proceed!" said Mr. Quelch at last.

And the Remove proceeded.

The matter had to be left where it was!

But it was only too certain that the Acid Drop would not consent to let it be left where it was! Really, it was a most awkward position for Quelch.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tea for One!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into Study No. 4 in the Remove after class that day with a cheery grin on his fat face.

It was not yet tea-time, and Smithy and Redwing had not come up!

Bunter had!

The fat Owl ensconced himself in Smithy's comfortable armchair, stretched out his fat little legs, and waited—and grinned.

Bunter had come to tea!

Many a time and oft would Bunter have liked to tea in that study, which was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey. But there was always, so to speak, a lion in the path—in the shape of Smithy's boot.

Other Remove men might tolerate the fat Owl with more or less cheerful resignation—perhaps remembering the ancient text that one should suffer fools gladly. But Smithy was too hard a nut for Bunter to crack!

Now, however, the fat Owl ensconced himself in the study, really as if it belonged to him. He seemed no longer in uneasy dread of the Bouncer's boot. Even when footsteps in the passage announced that the owners of the study were coming up, Bunter did not stir from the armchair. He waited cheerfully.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came in with Tom Redwing. Both of them stared at the fat Owl in the armchair.

Bunter gave them a cheery nod.

"What the thump do you want?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Never mind what you want—get out!"

"Did you say get out?" asked Bunter.

"Yes—and sharp!"

"Oh, all right!" Bunter sat up and blinked at Smithy through his big spectacles. "All right, if you don't want me here, Smithy! I'm not the chap to butt in where I'm not wanted!"

Tom Redwing laughed.

"Well, roll away like a good barrel!" he said.

"I've got something to say to Smithy first!" explained Bunter.

"Cut it short!" grunted the Bouncer.

"Don't be shirty, old chap! I only want to tell you that it's all right."

"What's all right, you blithering owl?"

"I mean, I'm keeping it dark!" said Bunter, with a fat wink. "You asked me to, and I said I would; and I'm a man of my word, I hope! Of course, if Vernon was up for a row, it would be different. But that's all right! I'm keeping it absolutely dark, as you asked me, old chap."

Vernon-Smith caught his breath. He stood looking at the fat Owl with glittering eyes.

Tom Redwing looked from one to the other. What Bunter was driving at was a complete mystery to him. It was no mystery to Smithy.

Billy Bunter's fat brain was not quick on the uptake! He had almost forgotten Smithy's startling and unexpected ingress by the box-room window, and had not connected it with the affair of Hacker in his fat mind till Quelch mentioned the matter in Form.

Bunter had guessed at the time that Smithy had been up to something out of gates; it was not really hard for even the obtuse fat Owl to guess that, in the circumstances.

Now he had quite a clear idea of what Smithy had been up to!

Smithy, he realised, had been making out that he hadn't left that study. Certainly he had not been there when the fat grub-raider of the Remove annexed his tarts!

As the Bouncer stood silent Bunter favoured him with another fat wink.

"Rely on me, old chap!" he said. "I can keep secrets! I say, does Redwing know?"

"What is that fat ass talking about, Smithy?" asked Tom Redwing.

"Oh, really, Redwing—"

Vernon-Smith breathed hard and deep. Billy Bunter, at that moment, was in danger of being hooked out of the armchair and booted round the study. But the Bouncer restrained that natural impulse.

"Well, what about tea?" asked Bunter breezily. "If you fellows want anything cooked, I'm your man! I never was a fellow to slack! Like me to help?"

Tom Redwing gave him a fixed look and then set the study door wide open.

"Get out!" he said briefly.

"Shan't!" said Bunter independently. "I'm tea-ing with Smithy, not with you! If you don't like my company, get out yourself."

Redwing looked at his chum again.

"Do you want that fat frog in here, Smithy?" he asked quietly.

"You know I don't!" snarled the Bouncer.

"Well, out he goes, then!"

"I say, Smithy—" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh, leave him alone!" snapped the Bouncer irritably.

"Smithy can have a pal to tea, Redwing, without asking you," said Billy Bunter defiantly. "You mind your own business! What are you butting in for, I'd like to know."

Tom Redwing looked from one to the other again; then, without a word, he left the study.

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Good riddance to bad company," he remarked.

"Blessed if I know how you stand that chap, Smithy! No manners—no manners whatever."

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Shut up!" said the Bouncer between his set lips.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"If you want me to stay to tea, Smithy, you'd better be civil!" he said with dignity. "Otherwise I shan't stay! I haven't told anybody that I saw you go out yesterday—"

"You saw me?"

"He, he, he! I had an eye on you!" grinned Bunter. "I ain't going to mention it. Why should I? You can tell Quelch that you were sticking in this study—you jolly well weren't here when I came in—he, he, he! If you were, I didn't see you—he, he, he! But don't worry, Smithy! I ain't going to tell anybody that you got in at the box-room window! Why should I?"

The Bouncer stood looking at him in silence.

"Quelch might like to know!" grinned Bunter. "But don't you worry—I'm no sneak, Smithy! The Acid Drop would like to know! He, he, he! I say, old chap, it's jolly useful to have a double entry in the Form, ain't it? Nobody knows which of you it was that tripped up the Acid Drop! They can't whop the two of you—and they can't find out which it was! He, he, he!"

Bunter was greatly amused.

"I suppose you'd own up if they got Vernon for it!" he went on. "Any decent fellow would—I know I should! But they can't get anybody—so long as they don't know you were out of gates! I'm keeping that dark. Smithy, old chap—rely on me! I say, shall I get tea?"

The Bouncer did not answer; and Bunter, apparently taking silence for consent, rolled to the study cupboard.

That study cupboard was, as usual, well supplied!

Bunter's eyes beamed through his spectacles at the array of good things.

"I say, Smithy, are we having the jam for tea?" he asked.

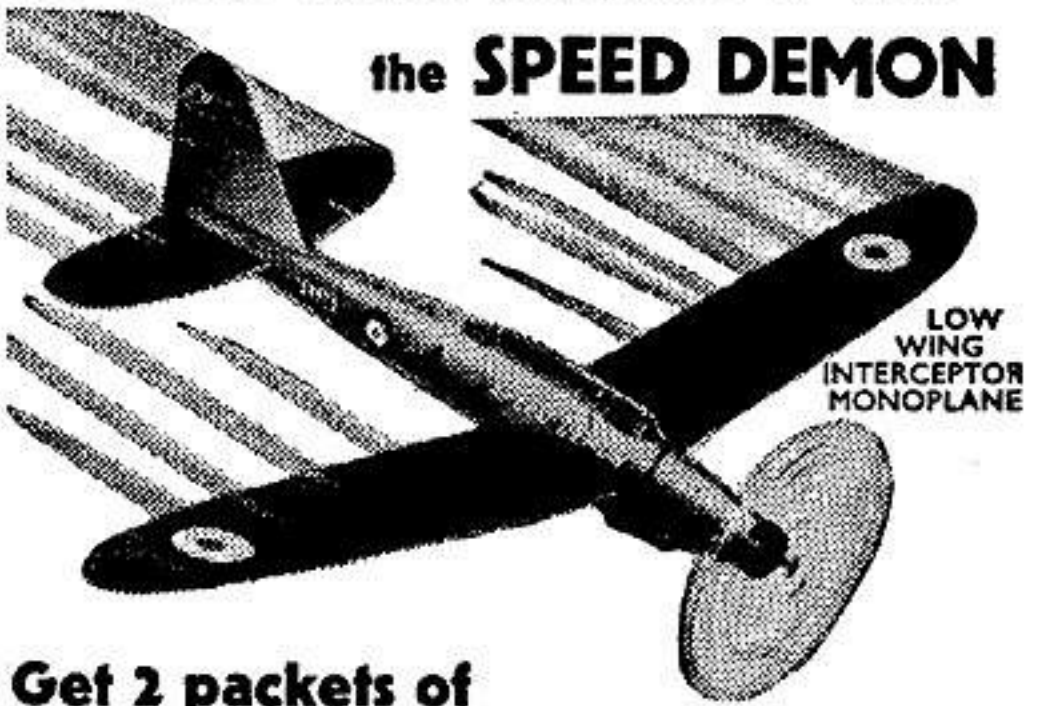
Receiving no answer the happy fat Owl again took silence for consent and lifted out the jam-pot.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Marmalade, too, Smithy?"

No reply!

Out came the marmalade.

"I suppose we're having this cake, Smithy?"

The Bouncer was still dumb.

But silence was taken for consent again, and the cake was landed on the study table.

"I see you've got doughnuts!" went on Bunter. "I always like a few doughnuts at tea! What about it, Smithy?"

Bunter did not seem to need answers. He lifted out the bag of doughnuts.

"Shall I open the sardines, Smithy?"

Bunter opened the sardines.

"What about the cream puffs, Smithy?"

The cream puffs joined the other good things on the table.

"Like some biscuits, Smithy?"

Out came the biscuits.

At that point, Billy Bunter ceased his operations on the study cupboard. He had come to the end of the supplies.

"Not a bad spread!" he remarked, blinking at the piled table. "I'll stand you one, Smithy, when I get a hamper from Bunter Court! I say, where are you going, Smithy?"

Slam!

The Bouncer was gone.

Billy Bunter was left alone in his glory, as it were. He blinked in surprise at the door that had slammed after Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter. "Talk about manners! Asking a fellow to tea, and then stamping off and slamming the door! Smithy's manners are the limit, I must say—the absolute limit! Pig!"

Bunter, it seemed, was going to have no company to tea in Smithy's study. But really, he preferred the spread to the company. Smithy's manners, undoubtedly, were deplorable; but the spread was good, and Billy Bunter sat down to it with considerable satisfaction. It was a happy, sticky, shiny fat Owl that tea'd in Study No. 4—all on his own!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Asks For It!

"WHAT'S up?"

Herbert Vernon Smith asked that question as he came down the stairs.

Something like a search was going on.

Three or four fellows on the stairs, and three or four more in the hall below, were hunting up and down and round about.

Vernon-Smith did not notice, for the moment, that Bertie Vernon was among them, as Vernon was stooping to scan a corner by the staircase.

All the Famous Five were there. They had come down after tea to find Vernon and Peter Todd and one or two other fellows in search, and had good-naturedly joined in.

Bob glanced up at the Bouncer, as the latter paused on the stairs, looking at the search-party.

"A jolly old theatre ticket, lost, stolen, or strayed!" explained Bob. "Lost in break this morning, and can't be found!"

"Queer where it can have got to!" said Harry Wharton. "It can hardly have blown away! But where the dickens is it?"

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

"Somebody must have picked it up," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, anybody who found it would

stick it on the board for the owner to take, I suppose," said Bob. "Tain't there Join up, Smithy, and lend a hand the more, the merrier!"

"Oh, all right!"

Smithy had not come down in a good temper. He had barely refrained from assault and battery on the fat Owl of the Remove before he left Study No. 4. Still, he did not mind lending a hand in a search for a lost article.

"Where was it dropped?" he asked.

"Either on the stairs, or close by, for a cert," answered Bob. "You see, Vernon had it in his hand, coming up in break, when I biffed into him!"

"Vernon?"

"Yes. I was sliding down the banisters, and sent him flying—so it's up to me to find the dashed thing, if I can!"

"Is it Vernon's?" sneered the Bouncer. "I shouldn't have thought that he could afford theatre tickets!"

Bertie Vernon rose to his feet, and looked up over the banisters at his relative, his eyes gleaming.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave the Bouncer expressive looks.

Everybody knew that the Vernons were poor and the Vernon-Smiths rich, but even the Bouncer was not bouncer enough to allude to that circumstance, but for the fact that he was on terms of bitter feud with Vernon.

"Oh, shut that, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Can't you be decent, even if you don't like a fellow?"

"Let him run on!" said Vernon, with bitter contempt. "The fellow can't help being a purse-proud outsider!"

The Bouncer's face flamed. He was half-ashamed of the taunt as soon as it was uttered. But Bertie's reply roused all the rancour in his nature.

"You poverty-stricken cad!" he snarled. "You——"

"Vernon-Smith!"

The Bouncer broke off suddenly at the sound of his Form-master's voice.

Mr. Quelch was coming towards the spot, doubtless to inquire what was going on there. He came at a rather unfortunate moment for Smithy.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Some fellows ask for it!" murmured Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch rustled up, and stared at the junior on the staircase with thunder in his brow.

"Vernon Smith!" he exclaimed. "How dare you?"

The Bouncer gave him a sullen look.

"How dare you utter so malicious, so mean and cowardly a taunt, addressed to another Remove boy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Have you no self-respect, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bouncer's cheeks burned. He did not reply, and the other fellows looked on in silence, Bertie with a flushed face.

Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"Go back to your study, Vernon-Smith, and write one hundred lines of Virgil!" he said. "Bring them to me before you leave the House!"

Vernon-Smith, breathing hard, turned and went slowly up the stairs.

Mr. Quelch's grim and angry glance followed him till he disappeared.

Then the Remove master turned to the crowd of juniors.

"What is all this?" he asked. "Why are all you boys gathered here?"

"Vernon's lost a theatre ticket," explained Harry Wharton. "We're helping him look for it, sir!"

"Very well; lose no time in finding

it," said Mr. Quelch. "You must not gather here in a crowd!"

"Better chuck it," said Bertie, as the Remove master rustled away. "It's not here. Somebody must have picked it up. I suppose I shall hear of it sooner or later."

"Sorry, old bean," said Bob. "All my fault, really!"

"It's all right. Whoever's found it won't stick to it, I suppose," said Vernon. "What about a spot of cricket?"

"Good egg!"

And the juniors cleared off—much keener on a spot of cricket than on continuing the vain search for that elusive ticket.

Herbert Vernon-Smith went slowly up the stairs with a black and bitter expression on his face.

Smithy had intended to cross over to the tuckshop for tea—not caring for the fascinating society of William George Bunter in his study—with practice at the nets to follow. Now he had to go up and write lines—all through Vernon!

Vernon-Smith could hardly blame Mr. Quelch for having come down heavy. But he did not think of blaming himself.

The fault was Vernon's—and Vernon's uncle's! The fellow was a thorn in his side. And why had he come to Smithy's school at all?

Of all the schools in the kingdom, why should Captain Vernon have specially selected Smithy's school for his nephew?

That old family feud would never have been revived, and would have been forgotten in the course of time, if Bertie Vernon had not come to Greyfriars. Why had he come?

He had barged in where he was not wanted—where he had no right, in Smithy's opinion. Now he had landed Smithy in another row!

With a black brow, the Bouncer went back to the Remove passage. But he paused as he was passing Study No. 1.

He had a hundred lines to write, and Bunter was in Study No. 4, guzzling. He was strongly tempted to go along to Study No. 4, pitch the fat Owl out on his neck, and boot him down the passage. But Bunter's knowledge of his proceedings on Monday was the weak spot in his defence—the chink in his armour. Bunter, at present, was not to be booted!

He tramped into Study No. 1, and sat down at the table to write his lines there.

Wharton, Nugent, and Vernon had gone down to the nets with the other fellows, and he had plenty of time to get through his hundred lines before they came in.

His brow was dark as he sat and scribbled Latin, with Harry Wharton's Virgil propped up against a Latin grammar before him.

Smithy, to do him justice, had had no intention of landing that row with Hacker on his double. He had simply done the best he could for himself in the moment of danger, without thinking, or caring, what might happen to his double if he got clear himself. If a fellow who looked exactly like him chose to barge into his school, he could take his chance!

Now, however—now that Bertie had, as he regarded it, landed him in another row—he rather hoped that Hacker would push the matter further. A whopping for Vernon would be a sort of makeweight for the lines for Vernon-Smith!

And the Acid Drop was the man to push it further. He was not the man



Hacker swung the struggling Vernon-Smith over, twisting him face down on the chair. Holding him there, with a grip of iron on the back of his neck, he laid on the cane. Swipe, swipe, swipe! "Let go!" roared the Bounder, yelling and kicking. "Have you gone mad, or what?"

to let such a culprit escape unpunished, if he could help it.

Smithy was safe enough. Had he not proved, by the production of his lines, that he had not left his study on that occasion? Only Bunter knew different.

Quelch was well known in the Remove to be a downy bird. But downy as he was, Quelch did not suspect that the Bounder kept a stock of lines by him, ready for emergencies.

No suspicion had crossed Quelch's mind that Smithy had drawn on that secret stock for the occasion. It had not occurred to any of the Remove fellows—even to Redwing.

Nevertheless, plenty of fellows suspected that Smithy had wangled the matter somehow. Quelch, he knew, suspected it—that was why Bertie was let off.

Smithy wanted his tea. He wanted to get down to the cricket. He had to stick in a study and write lines in the golden June sunshine. It was a comfort to him, in his present mood, to think that Hacker would not let the matter drop; though, if Quelch refused to carry the matter further, he could not guess what the Acid Drop would do, or what he could do, unless he took the matter into his own hands.

The Bounder grinned at that idea. He was glad to think, in his present mood, that Hacker might. He was destined to feel less glad shortly.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Justice on the Offender!

HORACE HACKER, master of the Shell, tapped at Mr. Quelch's study door, opened it, and looked in. The Acid Drop's face was grim.

He had not spoken to the Remove master since the morning. He had been waiting to hear from Quelch.

He had heard nothing. Now he was coming to inquire. And he had come in his most acidulated temper.

Mr. Quelch glanced up at him with a rather worried and troubled brow.

"Pray come in, my dear Hacker!" he said.

His dear Hacker did not come in. He only stared in.

"I am here, Quelch, to ask a question," said Mr. Hacker icily. "Has the boy who assaulted me on the tow-path yesterday been punished?"

"I have said, Hacker, that there is a doubt in the matter."

"How long," asked Mr. Hacker sarcastically, "is this doubt to continue?"

"It is difficult to say," answered Mr. Quelch. "I quite realise, Hacker, how you feel about this matter. I share your feelings. But—"

"By the test which you yourself applied, Mr. Quelch, it was demonstrated that the boy Vernon-Smith had not left the House."

"No doubt. But—"

"It was, therefore, the boy who resembles him so closely who attacked me on the tow-path."

"I am not wholly convinced—"

"It appears, Mr. Quelch, that you are very difficult to convince, when it is a question of administering justice in your Form," said Mr. Hacker bitterly.

"Mr. Hacker!"

"In a word, sir, is the boy to be punished, or not?"

"I must take time—"

Mr. Hacker waved a bony hand.

"I desire to hear no more, sir."

And Hacker stepped back, shutting

the door after him, leaving Mr. Quelch the most worried and troubled master on the Greyfriars staff.

The Acid Drop went to his study. There he selected a stout cane.

His lips were bitterly set, his eyes glinted. He gripped that cane.

Quelch refused to punish the delinquent. It was futile to appeal to the headmaster. In matters of Form discipline, Dr. Locke left each Form to its Form-master. If Quelch said there was doubt in the matter, the Head would take it as a matter of course that the Remove master knew what he was talking about in a matter connected with the Remove.

Hacker still had aches and pains in his bony knees. He had been tripped up by a cheeky and reckless junior, and that junior was to escape with impunity—that was what it boiled down to.

He was not going to escape with impunity.

Hacker was going to see to that.

If Quelch refused to punish the culprit—whose guilt was demonstrated by Quelch's own test—Hacker was going to take the law into his own hands. Quelch could make the best of that.

With the cane under his arm, Hacker quitted his study and went to the stairs. He went up the stairs.

About tea-time a good many of the Remove were likely to be in their studies. If Bertie Vernon was, Hacker had him.

If not, he had to postpone the castigation until a more favourable opportunity. But that that castigation should be administered, the Acid Drop was bitterly and acidly determined.

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ROUGH ON HIS RIVAL!



(Continued from page 13.)

He had to be careful, of course. He did not want to castigate one fellow in mistake for another. Having already made such a mistake with the doubles of the Remove, Hacker intended to be very careful.

He knew which was Vernon's study. The new junior shared Study No. 1 with Wharton and Nugent. But to make assurance doubly sure, he called to a Remove boy on the Remove landing.

"Bolsover!"

Bolsover major stared round, wondering what the Shell beak wanted in the Remove quarters.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"Kindly tell me the number of Vernon's study?"

"Vernon's, sir? Study No. 1—first study in the passage," answered Bolsover major, staring.

"Do you know whether Vernon is there now, Bolsover?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Very well."

Mr. Hacker walked on into the Remove passage.

The door of Study No. 1 was partly open.

A junior sat at the table within, writing lines.

He did not look up as Hacker reached the door. He did not hear Hacker coming. Hacker was seldom heard coming. He had a stealthy step.

The master of the Shell stood looking in, grimly. This was the fellow he wanted.

On his looks Hacker could not have undertaken to say whether he was Vernon or Vernon-Smith. But as he was sitting at his lines in Vernon's study, there was no doubt in the matter.

Hacker, naturally, knew nothing of Billy Bunter's feast of the gods in Smithy's study. He could have imagined no reason why a fellow who had a study of his own should sit in another fellow's study to write lines. No such thought crossed his mind.

He pushed the door farther open, and stepped into the study.

Then Vernon-Smith looked up.

He started at the sight of the master of the Shell. He jumped to his feet and stared at him.

Hacker threw the door shut. The cane slipped down into his hand. He stepped towards the startled Removeite.

"You young rascal!" said Mr. Hacker. "Bend over that chair this instant, or I will take you by the collar!"

"What the thump do you mean?" roared the Bounder. "Do you think you can cane me? What—"

"I am going to cane you, and with the greatest severity—for your ruffianly action on the towpath yesterday," said Mr. Hacker grimly.

And he grabbed at the junior's collar with his left, swishing the cane in his right.

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Vernon-Smith dodged, and jumped back.

Hacker followed him up, and gripped his collar.

"Let go!" yelled the Bounder. "Have you gone mad, or what?"

Hacker did not answer that question. He swung the struggling Bounder over, twisting him face down on the chair from which he had risen.

Holding him there, with a grip of iron on the back of his neck, he laid on the cane.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The Bounder roared and yelled and struggled and kicked. He was as much amazed as angry at this extraordinary outbreak on the part of the master of the Shell. It did not occur to him for the moment that Hacker was taking him for Vernon. He was too startled to think of that, or anything else.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The cane fairly rang. Hacker had a bony arm, but there seemed to be some muscle in it.

"Leave off, you old fool!" yelled the Bounder.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The study door was flung open, and Bolsover major stared in.

He jumped at the sight of the master of the Shell whopping a Remove man.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bolsover.

"What's up?" shouted three or four voices along the passage.

"The Acid Drop's whopping Vernon!" yelled Bolsover major.

As it was happening in Vernon's study, Bolsover naturally fell into the same mistake as Mr. Hacker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Acid Drop!"

"Cheeky ass!"

"Somebody ought to call Quelch!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe! rang from the study.

A dozen startled faces stared in at the doorway.

Vernon-Smith, writhing and struggling on the chair, yelled and howled and roared frantically.

But Hacker's left pinned him there, and Hacker's right wielded the cane with terrific vim! There was no escape for the Bounder.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

It was a full dozen. Even then Hacker did not stop. He was getting rather breathless with his exertions, but he laid on a couple more—perhaps for luck!

Swipe, swipe!

Then, panting, Hacker released the Bounder and stepped back.

Vernon-Smith rolled off the chair, yelling. He scrambled up, frantic with rage.

"That," gasped Mr. Hacker, "will be a warning to you, you young rascal! You deserved to be expelled for tripping a Form-master! But that, at least, will be a warning to you!"

"I wish I'd tipped you into the river, you old fool!" yelled the Bounder, beside himself with rage.

"What!" gasped Mr. Hacker. He was breathless, but he was not taking that! Up went the cane again.

Swipe, swipe!

Smithy got two across the shoulders. He got a third as he leaped for the door. A fourth just missed him as he barged out—but it was not wasted; Bolsover major got it, and uttered a yell that woke all the echoes.

Hacker, tired but satisfied, tucked the cane under his arm and walked away to the stairs.

A hiss followed him from some of the Removeites, which the Acid Drop affected not to hear. He went down

the stairs, satisfied that justice had been done—as indeed, owing to the Acid Drop's mistake, it had!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Acid Drop!

"VERNON!"

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Quelch coughed.

Bertie Vernon waited.

He had been called into his Form-master's study, and he was in flannels, as he had come away from the cricket. There was a faintly sullen expression on the face that was so like the Bounder's.

Trouble was coming—and it could only be on account of his double. He had no other troubles at Greyfriars.

From the bottom of his heart Bertie Vernon wished that his uncle had not sent him to Smithy's school. He wished that even more fervently than the Bounder did. He had foreseen that there would be trouble and strife—and it had not been long in coming.

He could not understand why Captain Vernon had been adamant on that point. In all other matters, his uncle studied his wishes carefully and affectionately. Only on that one point he had refused to listen to argument.

Quelch coughed again—and yet again. Obviously he had sent for Vernon because he had something to say to him. But he seemed to find considerable difficulty in saying it.

"Vernon," he went on at last, "Mr. Hacker has just spoken to me again—concerning the occurrence on the towpath yesterday afternoon. The matter cannot rest where it is. Mr. Hacker, very naturally, is not satisfied to allow it to rest where it is. And yet—"

Another cough.

"I am bound to say, Vernon, that I take your word," said Mr. Quelch. "The position is a very extraordinary one, for, to all appearance, Vernon-Smith has cleared himself in the matter. And yet—"

Once more Quelch coughed. Undoubtedly the position was a very peculiar and a very difficult one.

"I have decided," said Mr. Quelch at length, "to place the matter before the headmaster, and leave it to his judgment. I cannot do less, in view of Mr. Hacker's attitude. At the same time, I—"

Knock!

The door opened.

Mr. Quelch broke off, frowning, as Mr. Hacker stepped into the study.

The master of the Shell had a cane under his arm, and was breathing rather hard.

"I have come here to tell you, Quelch—" he began, without for the moment noticing the junior in the study.

"I have already decided what steps to take in this troublesome matter, Hacker," interrupted Mr. Quelch. "One of the boys concerned is present here, and I will send for the other—"

Mr. Hacker glanced at Bertie. He had no doubt that this was Vernon-Smith, as he had—so he believed—just come down after caning Vernon in Vernon's study.

"There is no need to take any further steps in the matter, Mr. Quelch," said the Acid Drop grimly. "I have already taken steps. As you declined to deal with the offender, I considered myself entitled, and justified, to deal with him myself."

"What!"

"This boy"—Hacker made a gesture towards the staring junior—"is not concerned in the matter, as he has

proved to my satisfaction, and, I should imagine, yours, that he was a mile away from the spot when the attack—the assault—the act of ruffianism—was perpetrated!”

Mr. Quelch blinked at him.

“I fail to understand you, Mr. Hacker! Do you mean to say that you are satisfied that this boy is innocent in the matter?”

“Certainly I do.”

“I am glad to hear it!” said Mr. Quelch. “In spite of the evidence, such is my belief. I am glad that you agree with me!”

It was Hacker’s turn to blink.

“I do not follow you, Mr. Quelch,” he said. “I was satisfied yesterday, as you appeared to be, that Vernon-Smith had nothing to do with it—”

“Vernon-Smith?”

“Yes—this boy—”

“My dear Hacker, this boy is not—”

“Pray allow me to complete my remarks, Quelch! I repeat that I felt myself justified in dealing with the culprit as you refused to do so. I have caned him.”

“Mr. Hacker!”

“I have caned him,” said Mr. Hacker deliberately, “with the greatest severity. I have just returned from his study, Mr. Quelch, where I caned him! I take the first opportunity of telling you frankly what I have done—what I considered myself fully justified in doing, in view of your extraordinary attitude in the matter.”

“You—you—you have—” Quelch seemed afflicted with a stutter.

Bertie Vernon could only stare.

“If you choose,” said Mr. Hacker, “to lay the matter before our chief, I am prepared to meet you in Dr. Locke’s presence and justify my action. I am prepared to state that, as you refused to punish Vernon, in spite of his guilt being as clear as daylight—”

“V-V-V-Vernon!” stuttered Mr. Quelch.

“I took the matter into my own hands,” went on Mr. Hacker, heedless of stuttering. “I shall justify my action to the headmaster if you care to lay the matter before him. I have caned Vernon with my own hands—”

“Mr. Hacker—”

“Will you allow me to finish? And I may tell you this, sir—as I shall certainly tell the Head if the matter is laid before him—that so far from there being any doubt in the matter, the offender confessed—”

“He—he—he confessed?”

“In very insulting terms—but he confessed, sir! The words he actually used were that he wished he had tipped me into the river! I gave him some extra strokes for such insolence, sir! Nevertheless, his words, insolent as they were, placed the matter beyond all doubt.”

“Bless my soul!” said Mr. Quelch faintly.

“You may take,” said Mr. Hacker, “any steps you please, Mr. Quelch! Justice has been done! Let us, if you choose, proceed at once to Dr. Locke. I repeat that I am prepared to justify to our chief my action in caning Vernon of the Remove—”

“You have not caned Vernon!” shrieked Mr. Quelch.

“I have certainly done so, and with the greatest severity—”

“This boy is Vernon!”

“Eh?”

“This is Vernon!”

“What?”

“If you have caned anyone, you have caned Vernon-Smith!” gasped Mr. Quelch. “You have made a mis-

take, sir. I tell you this boy is Vernon!”

“I—I—I— Absurd! Impossible! The boy was in Vernon’s study. Vernon’s study is No. 1 in the Remove—I made sure of that. I found him there!” It was Mr. Hacker’s turn to stutter now. “You—you—you say— Nonsense! This boy is Vernon-Smith—”

“This boy is Vernon!”

“But—but I—I—”

“I assure you, sir, that I am Vernon!” said Bertie meekly. “I can’t imagine what my relation was doing in my study, but if you caned anyone there, it certainly was not I. I am Vernon, sir.”

Hacker goggled at him! He goggled at Quelch! He goggled at Vernon again. The Acid Drop’s head seemed to be turning round.

“But—if this boy is Vernon—it was established that he was the guilty party!” he stuttered. “It was—was—was established that Vernon-Smith was not the guilty party! But—but—but the boy whom I caned in a Remove study has admitted his guilt. I repeat, sir, that he said, or rather shouted, that he wished he had tipped me into the river! In his insolence, sir, he let out the facts. But if—if he was not Vernon—”

“He certainly was not Vernon!” said Mr. Quelch. “Vernon is here! This is not a laughing matter, Vernon!” he added sharply.

Vernon was grinning! But he tried to suppress the grin!

“Oh! Yes, sir—I mean, no sir!”

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. Hacker was still goggling. Never had the Acid Drop been so utterly taken aback and flabbergasted. He had caned the wrong fellow! On the other hand, the wrong fellow’s own words proved that he was the right fellow! It was rather bewildering.

“Mr. Hacker,” said the Remove master, “I should certainly lay a very serious complaint before Dr. Locke for your unwarrantable intervention in my Form! But it appears that by your blundering—”

“Sir!”

“By your bungling, Mr. Hacker—”

“Mr. Quelch!”

“By your utterly inexcusable bungling in a matter that was out of your province, you have accidentally brought the facts to light in this very perplexing matter, and punishment has fallen on the right shoulders. For this reason, I shall overlook the matter—”

“I am fully prepared to justify—”

“I repeat, Mr. Hacker—”

“And I repeat, Mr. Quelch—”

“Vernon! How dare you laugh! Leave my study immediately! Shut the door after you! I repeat, Mr. Hacker—”

Bertie Vernon, grinning, faded away down the passage, leaving the two heads still going strong.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs For It!

“I SAY, you fellows! Is that Smithy?”

“Don’t you know him by his sweet smile?” asked Bob Cherry.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The Bounder’s look as he came into the Rag was far from sweet. Never had the Bounder of Greyfriars looked so black and bitter.

Every fellow in the Rag was laughing—and there was more laughter as the scowling Bounder came in.

The news of the Acid Drop’s queer

mistake, and its still queerer outcome, was all over the Remove.

Plenty of fellows had suspected that Smithy was the man who had tripped Hacker; but so carefully had he covered up his tracks, that nobody expected it to be brought home to him.

Now it had come out! Hacker, in the belief that he was whopping Vernon for that dire offence, had whopped Smithy—and in his rage, Smithy had blurted out the truth. The right man, after all, had paid the piper—owing to Hacker’s bungle. And the Remove fellows roared over it! It struck them all as fearfully funny.

Quelch had sent for Smithy; but only for a jaw. Smithy had had his gruel—quite a severe dose! Quelch only added jaw—but it was a long and scarifying jaw. Smithy, as he came into the Rag, did not look as if he had enjoyed that conversation with his Form-master!

Laughter was heard on all sides. It made the Bounder’s scowl blacker, if possible.

Billy Bunter blinked at him, and blinked round at the laughing Removes. Bunter had just rolled down to the Rag and, for once, did not know the news!

After that gargantuan feast in the Bounder’s study, the fat Owl had rolled away to his own to take a rest—which he really needed! When at length the fat junior came down to the Rag, he found a crowd of Remove fellows there, discussing the extraordinary episode in Study No. 1, and chuckling over the same.

Then Smithy came in.

What the merriment was about, Bunter did not yet know. Some tremendous joke seemed to be on, which he had missed.

“I say, you fellows, what’s the joke?” asked Bunter.

“Smithy!” answered Bob.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“The jokefulness is terrific!” chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Had a nice talk with Quelch, Smithy?” asked Bolsover major.

“Go and eat coke!” snarled the Bounder.

“You jolly well asked for it, Smithy,” chuckled Skinner. “What the dickens did you stick in Vernon’s study for?”

“I thought it was Vernon that the Acid Drop was whopping when I saw him there!” said Bolsover major. “So did Hacker! Ha, ha!”

“I say, Smithy, have you been whopped?” asked Bunter.

The Bounder looked round at him and gave the fat Owl an absolutely deadly look. It was through Bunter that he had gone into Wharton’s study to write his lines—and as Wharton’s study happened to be Vernon’s also, that disastrous mistake had arisen. Billy Bunter was really the cause of the whole disaster!

“Yes, you fat worm, I’ve been whopped!” said Vernon-Smith, his eyes glinting at the Owl of the Remove.

“Well, you’re the fellow to ask for it, ain’t you?” said Bunter cheerfully. “You’re always up to something, Smithy! Did it hurt? You look as if it did. He, he, he!”

Herbert Vernon-Smith glanced round the Rag. A ruler lay on the table—a rather thick ebony ruler. He picked it up.

Bob Cherry moved between him and the fat Owl! Smithy evidently was in a mood to take it out of somebody, but if he had selected Bunter, Bob was quite prepared to put a stopper on.

“Chuck that, Smithy!” said Bob.

“Mind your own business, you fool!”

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"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" said Bob sharply. "Leave Bunter alone!"

"He, he, he! Don't you worry!" grinned Bunter. "I ain't afraid of Smithy! I'd dot his nose as soon as look at him!"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Shan't! Think I'm afraid of Smithy?" sneered Bunter. "You may be! I'm not! Fat lot I care for Smithy! You can mind your own business, Bob Cherry!"

"What?"

"Think I want a fellow to look after me?" sneered Bunter. "Hardly! You fellows may be scared by his rotten temper! I'm not! Yah!"

Bob gave him an expressive look and stepped away! If Bunter wanted it, he could have it.

Bunter blinked cheerily at the Bounder. Bunter was full of beans! Quite unaware at present that the whole affair had come to light, and that it did not matter a straw to Smithy now whether he told all he knew or not, Bunter was still in the happy belief that he had the upper hand!

"You can scowl!" he went on, addressing the Bounder. "Fat lot I care for your scowling! Yah! I'm not going to give you away! I said I wouldn't, and I won't! But you know what you'd jolly well get if I did! I can tell you, you'd better be civil, Smithy! If you fancy you can cheek me, I can jolly well say—Yarooop!"

Smithy's left hand gripped Bunter's collar! His right brandished the ruler.

Whop!

"Yarooop! Leggo! Beast! I say, you fellows—"

Whop!

"Oh crikey! Leave off!" roared Bunter. "You whop me again, you beast, and I'll go straight to Quelch and say—Oh crikey! Ow! Yow! Yow!"

Whop!

"Yooo-hoop! Make him leggo!" yelled Bunter, squirming frantically under the whops of the ruler on his tight trousers. "Yarooop! I say, Bob, old chap—Bob Cherry—"

"I'm minding my own business!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whop!

"Yarooop! Leggo! Chuck it! Beast! I say, if you don't stop it, I'll tell all these fellows that it was you who tripped Hacker—"

Whop!

"Wow! Yow! I'll tell them I saw you getting in at the box-room window yesterday, if you don't stop it!" yelled Bunter. "I'll tell them you weren't in your study when I went there—Yarooop! I'll say out plain—Wow! Yow! Ow!"

Whop!

"Yurroop! Oh crikey! Draggimoff!" shrieked Bunter. "Oh jiminy!"

Whop!

"I'll go to Quelch if you don't stop it!"

Whop!

"Yoooooop!"

Vernon-Smith threw the ruler on the table, and pitched Bunter on the floor. Then he stamped out of the Rag, leaving Bunter yelling.

The fat Owl sat up.

"Ow, ow! Wow!" he roared. "I say, you fellows, it was Smithy that tripped Tracker—I mean, that tripped Hacker! I jolly well know! Wow! Yow! It was Smithy all the time—Yow-ow-ow! Wow!"

"Ancient history!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Eh?" Bunter blinked. "I say, I was keeping it dark for Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now I'm jolly well going to tell everybody—"

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

"I mean it!" gasped Bunter. "Catch me keeping it dark for him after this! I'll jolly well tell everybody that it was Tracker tripped Smithy—I mean, it was Hipper smithed Tracker—I mean, Smithy tripped Hacker—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, Smithy tripped Hacker! I'll jolly well tell all Greyfriars—"

"All Greyfriars knows already!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're late with the news, old fat man! So you knew all the time, you fat fraud, and you were keeping it dark! Boot him round the Rag, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter departed from the Rag in haste.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Ticket for Sale!

"YOU fellows like Shakespeare?"

"Shakespeare?"

"Yes. Great poet, you know—Swan of Avon—immortal bard—and all that!" said Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter.

It was in break the next morning that the fat Owl made these surprising and extraordinary remarks.

Hitherto Billy Bunter had displayed no appreciation whatever of the genius of that great man William Shakespeare. In the literature class, indeed, he was fearfully bored when Shakespeare was on the bill of fare. Only a gimlet eye kept Bunter awake at such times.

Now, for the first time in history, Billy Bunter was full of enthusiasm on the subject of William Shakespeare.

"Wonderful man, you know!" went on Bunter, blinking at the astonished Co. through his big spectacles. "Look at his lovely poem, the Elegy in a Country Churchyard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!"

"The Elegy in a Country Churchyard happens to be Gray," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, I didn't mean the Elegy in a Country Churchyard! I—I meant the Wreck of the Hesperus," said Bunter hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—other great works," went on Bunter. "Such as the Merchant of Hamlet—"

"The whatter?"

"And Much Ado about Julius Caesar—"

"Oh crikey!"

"And the Midsummer Night's Winter's Tale, and all that—"

"Help!"

"Shakespeare is an education in himself," said Bunter. "Every fellow ought to know all about Shakespeare. Seeing a Shakespeare play uplifts the mind—at least Quelch says so, and I suppose he knows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why I'm offering you fellows the chance," explained Bunter. "There's a Shakespeare play on at the Courtfield Theatre Royal this afternoon—I forget whether it's the Merchant of Hamlet or King Henry the Tenth—"

one of them, anyhow. Which of you fellows would like to go?"

"Well, we'd all like to go, more or less," said Harry Wharton, staring at the fat Owl. "What are you driving at, fathead?"

"I mean, I've got a ticket for the matinee," explained Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

The Famous Five gazed harder at Bunter. They had not heard whether Bertie Vernon had found his lost ticket yet or not; but, from Bunter's statement, they rather guessed that he hadn't—but that Bunter had.

"It's the sort of thing you fellows would like," said Bunter persuasively. "Highbrow and uplifting and intellectual and all that. You're fearfully intellectual, Wharton."

"Thanks!"

"Sort of thing you would like, with your enormous intellect," said Bunter. "I don't care so much for Shakespeare myself; but, then, I haven't got your immense intellect, old chap."

"Pile it on!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I'm not flattering you, old fellow, because I want you to buy that theatre ticket. Nothing of the kind!" explained Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I want to give you an intellectual treat, you being such an intellectual fellow. I've seen you reading Shakespeare without having to. I didn't think you were a silly fool wasting your time."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Nothing of the kind! I—I admired your intellect," said Bunter. "As soon as I got this theatre ticket I thought, 'Wharton's the man; he's so jolly intellectual he's bound to like it.' Those very words."

"And where did you get the theatre ticket?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I never found it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course I never found it! It came in a letter—my Uncle George sent it to me specially! It's a five-bob ticket, but you being a pal, Wharton, old chap, I'll let you have it for half-a-crown," said Bunter. "Nothing mean about me, I hope! What about it, old fellow?"

"Nothing about it, thanks!"

"I mean, you being so intellectual—" urged Bunter. "Look here, what about two bob?"

"Nothing about two bob!"

"Well, what about you, Nugent? Shakespeare, you know! You're an intellectual chap; not a fathead, like Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try Vernon with that ticket!" suggested Bob Cherry. "He might like it! In fact, I'm pretty sure he would!"

"Oh! Um! No. I—I—I don't like the chap; I'm not going to give him a treat. Naturally, I think of my own pals first. I say, you fellows, I want one of you to have it. I could sell it easily enough if it wasn't Shakespeare. If it was the pictures, I'd go myself. What about you, Bull?"

"You fat frump!"

"I say, what about you, Inky? There's a nigger in one of Shakespeare's plays; you'd like that!" said Bunter temptingly.

"You terrific fathead!"

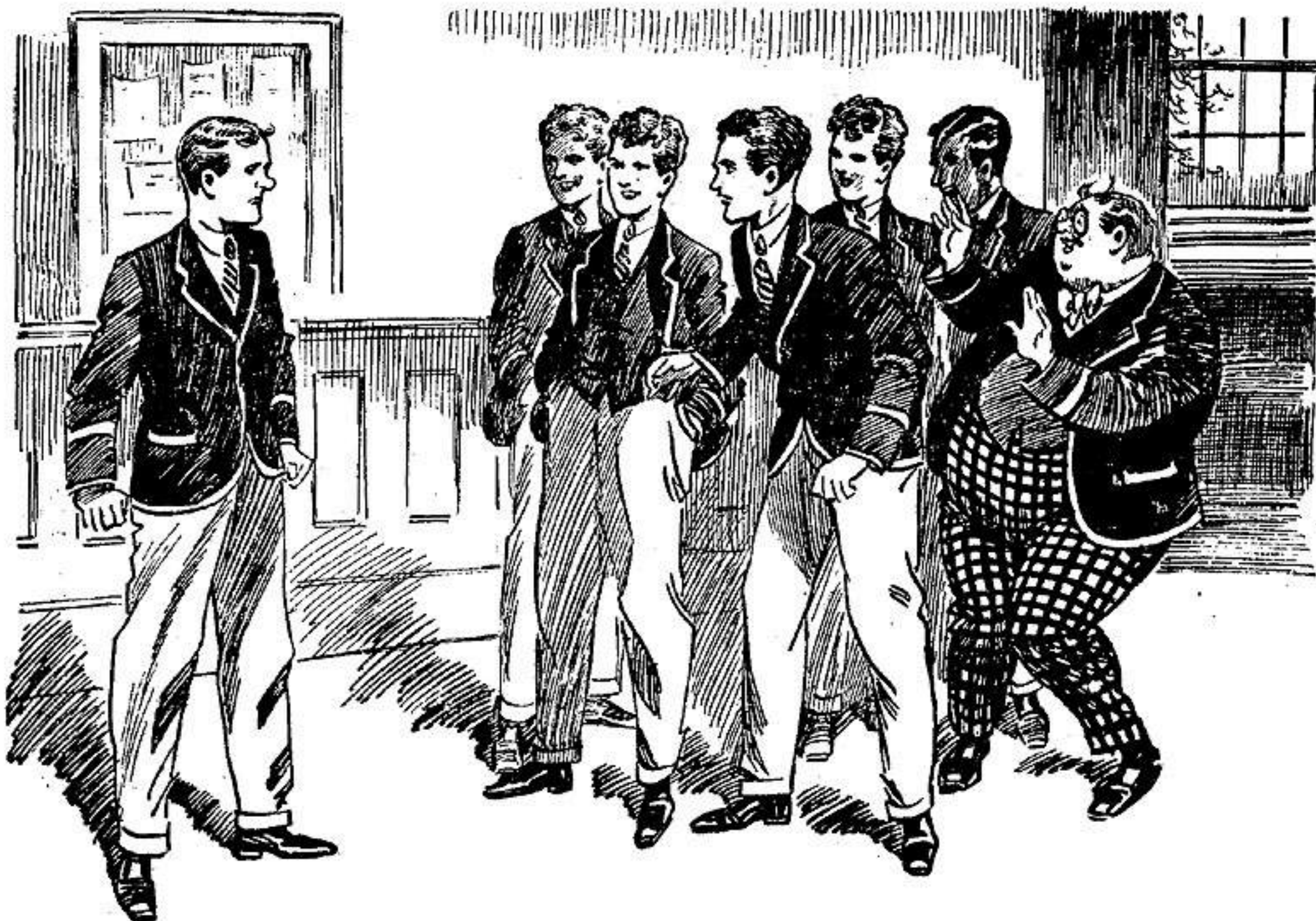
"The fact is, I think this is the play with the nigger in it; I think it's Othello the Merchant of Hamlet—"

"No takers!" said Bob Cherry.

"You'd really better try Vernon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five in some exasperation. A five-bob ticket for the afternoon performance at



"Cad!" said Billy Bunter. "What did you ask fellows home for, if you couldn't afford a tea?" Bertie Vernon made a movement towards the fat Removite, and Bunter dodged behind the Famous Five.

the Theatre Royal, Courtfield, was rather a catch. True the play was Shakespeare; but, on the other hand, he was willing to sell the ticket at half-price!

As Vernon's uncle had sent that ticket to Vernon it appeared that Bertie was a fellow with a taste for the classic drama. But there were difficulties in the way of offering that ticket to Bertie. The fact that it belonged to him would have caused awkwardness!

That ticket had now reposed for about twenty-four hours in Billy Bunter's waistcoat pocket.

Apparently it had by the process of time become his.

Bunter's first idea in snaffling that ticket had been to let that beast Vernon hunt for it—and he blowed to him! After that he had, naturally, forgotten all about it.

He might not have remembered it, but for the fact that he had been once more disappointed about a postal order. A spot of refreshment in break was a necessity of life to Bunter. That ticket had a cash value.

That was a reason for selling it. There were also some good reasons for not selling it, no doubt; but Bunter, at the moment, was not thinking of them. A fellow could not think of everything. Bunter was thinking of doughnuts at the school shop—which was quite enough for a fellow to think about!

"I say, you fellows, I think one of you might take this ticket off my hands," urged Bunter. "The truth is I don't care for Shakespeare. If I want to go to sleep, I can go to sleep in the study, without going to a theatre—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want to hawk it up and down the Form. If that chap Vernon heard about it he might make out that it was his ticket; some fellows are unscrupulous, you know. Look here, what about eighteenpence?"

"No trade," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "But I'll find you a chap to take that ticket off your hands."

"Oh!" Bunter brightened up. "All right, then. Where is he? The tuckshop will be shut in ten minutes."

"This way!" said Bob, cheerily.

He glanced round, and spotted Bertie Vernon at a distance. It was in that direction that he walked the fat Owl off.

The Co. followed on, with grinning faces.

There was no doubt that Bertie would take that ticket off Bunter's hands, as soon as he saw it! But it was not likely to be a sale!

The short-sighted Owl did not spot Vernon. So he rolled off cheerfully. But as they drew near the new junior, he blinked at him, and came to a sudden halt.

"I say, is that Smithy?" he asked.

"No! Vernon!"

"I—I say, I don't want to see Vernon—"

"My dear old porpoise, Vernon will take that ticket off your hands—"

"I—I'd rather not sell it to him—"

"That's all right you're not going to sell it to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beast. I'm not going—Leggo my arms, will you?" roared Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to mention it to Vernon—"

Bob Cherry took a fat arm, and Johnny Bull took the other fat arm. They walked on, in possession of those

fat arms. The rest of Bunter had to go also. There was no help for it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Vernon!" roared Bob Cherry.

The new junior glanced round.

"Found your ticket yet?"

"No!"

"Bunter's got one just as good!"

"What?"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter, wriggling. "Nothing of the kind! I haven't got a ticket at all, and it's not in my waistcoat pocket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A finger and a thumb jerked the ticket from the waistcoat pocket.

Vernon staring, took it, and looked at it.

"No. 10, Row B," he said. "That's my ticket! Did you find it, Bunter?"

"Oh! No! I—I mean, yes! I—I—I fuf-fuf-found it, and—and I was—was just bringing it to you, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wasn't going to sell it—"

"Sell it!" ejaculated Vernon.

"Nothing of the kind! Never thought of such a thing, of course! You can ask these fellows—they know, as I offered it to them! I—I say, Vernon, old chap. I—I specially looked for that ticket to find it for you, and—and now you've got it back, you might lend a chap a bob—"

"Lend you a bob! I'll give you a thick ear, if that's what you want!" exclaimed Vernon.

"I—I mean I'll give it to you, old chap!" said Bunter. "Here it is!"

Vernon laughed, and slipped the ticket into his pocket.

"I'll lend you something," he said. "I'll lend you my boot! Turn round!"

Billy Bunter turned—but he did not wait to be lent anything.

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rather Mysterious!

"COMING up to Hawkscliff, Smithy?"

Tom Redwing asked that question, after dinner that day. The Bounder was standing at the window of Study No. 4, looking out. His eyes followed the figure of a junior who was going down to the gates. He did not answer Redwing's question: and Tom joined him at the window, wondering what was the cause of the sardonic grin on his chum's face.

His own face clouded, as he glanced down, and saw Bertie Vernon. Apparently it was the sight of his double that had called that unpleasant expression up on the face of the Bounder.

"The dear man's going out for the afternoon!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

"Well, never mind him!" said Tom.

"That theatre ticket turned up, after all, I've heard," went on the Bounder, unheeding. "He's off to the matinee—high-minded lad, you know—keen on Shakespeare and such things! Quite a cut above common persons."

"Well, let him rip!" said Redwing.

"He's changed his clothes," went on the Bounder, in the same sneering tone. "Notice that?"

"I hadn't noticed——"

"Well, look! His dark grey suit is very nice and quiet—nothing loud about him, like some of his relations—but it's a bit shabby, what? He's changed to go to the theatre. It seems that he's got two suits of clothes! I should hardly have thought it would run to it."

Redwing stood silent. He was a loyal chum, and he hated to see faults in the fellow to whom he was strongly attached. But he always had a sense of discomfort when the Bounder talked about money: and Smithy's sneers at the poverty of his relations, the Vernons, got on his nerves.

"Beggars on horseback!" went on Vernon-Smith, his lip curling. "He had to pick out my school—that precious captain—for his precious nephew. He can't afford the fees! I wonder if the Head's seen his cheque yet?"

"Oh, drop it, Smithy!" muttered Tom.

"The Head's a simple old duck—and that Army man's as sharp as a razor," went on Vernon-Smith, unheeding. "He may be diddling the Head!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!"

"He always disliked me," said the Bounder. "I know that, as a small kid. I saw a lot of the Vernon crew at one time—and was glad to see the last of them! I used to see in the captain's face that he loathed me to have better things than his precious Bertie! The fellow himself never seemed to care much—I'll say that for him! But his uncle did!"

"Well, it might give him a jolt, if he was fond of the kid," said Tom. "It wasn't a pleasant state of affairs."

"Was it my fault?"

"Of course not! I don't suppose the man disliked you, really! You take offence rather quickly sometimes, old chap."

"I know! But I wasn't mistaken about that! I'm not mistaken now! You know he took me for his precious Bertie, that day at Lantham Chase. He put it plain enough then. I suppose that's why he sent the dear boy here—Bertie's going to have what I have—even if he leaves the fees unpaid."

"Oh, do chuck it, old man!"

"Beggars on horseback!" repeated the Bounder. "He's taken Lantham

Chase on a lease from old Squire Luscombe! He can't afford to pay the rent! I can tell you, it made me jump when I saw him there! A bungalow on the Pegg road at fifty pounds a year is his mark—if he must live near his precious Bertie's school. Lantham Chase must run him into hundreds. He can't pay it."

"I expect Mr. Luscombe's solicitors will see to that," said Redwing.

"Yes! I can't make it out! If he's paying the fees here and paying the rent of Lantham Chase, he must be spending capital—using up all he's got, and leaving himself without a bean when it runs out! His income wouldn't run to half of it—or a quarter! Is he mad enough to do that, just to put on a spot of swank so long as the fellow's at Greyfriars?"

"It's his business, Smithy, not yours."

"Oh, quite!" sneered Smithy. "I should think he intended to stick my father for a fat cheque—most of the Vernons do, when they're in a hole. But that's one thing about this lot—they won't touch our money. They're the only relations I've got who are not after the Vernon-Smith millions."

"Well, that's rather a point in their favour, at least," said Tom.

"Oh, they take it out in Vernon swank, and sneering at the money!" jeered the Bounder. "Well, at the rate the precious captain's going on, he will have nothing but his blue blood to live on before he's much older."

"What about Hawkscliff?" asked Tom, anxious to change the subject. "I'm going up to see my father——"

"I'll walk as far as Pegg Lane, if you like! I've got something else on, for this afternoon!" The Bounder laughed, as he spoke, but it was not a pleasant laugh, and Tom gave him a rather uneasy look.

"Oh, not Pon & Co., or billiards at the Three Fishers!" grinned Smithy. "Just a spot of fun—a little jape! You saw how Wharton and his gang enjoyed the joke yesterday—and Vernon, too—no end of a joke, wasn't it?"

Tom smiled.

"Well, it had its funny side, Smithy, if you could see it," he said. "That old ass Hacker taking you for Vernon—and you letting out that you were the right man, when he'd got the wrong one——"

"Funny as anything!" agreed Smithy. "Well, as they're so fond of fun, I'm going to give them a little more—with that cad safely off the scene!"

"I'd forget all about it, Smithy if I were you——"

"If you were me Reddy, you'd do exactly as I do—and that's give them something to laugh about, on the other side of their mouths! Come on—let's get out."

The two juniors went down, and left the House together. But though Tom was ready to start, the Bounder loitered in the quad. It was a long walk up to Hawkscliff, and Tom wanted to get going: but, as usual, he gave in to his chum, and as Smithy lingered, he lingered.

"Oh, here they are!" said Vernon-Smith, as Harry Wharton & Co. came out of the school shop.

Apparently the Bounder wanted to speak to the Famous Five before he started. He moved off towards them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Coming down to cricket, Smithy? We're going to put in an hour at the nets."

"No: I'm going up to Hawkscliff with Redwing!" answered Smithy. "We shan't be back much before lock-

up. Has that fellow Vernon gone yet?"

"Yes, he went some time ago," answered Harry Wharton, rather surprised by the Bounder's interest in his relative's movements.

"He didn't know there'd been a change in the programme at the theatre in Courtfield?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No, I suppose not—has there?"

"Only the matinee put off till Saturday, that's all," said the Bounder, laughing.

"Well, dash it all, Smithy, if you knew that, you might have told the chap!" exclaimed Bob. "He's on the motor-bus by this time—he will have the journey to Courtfield for nothing if they've postponed the matinee."

"Why shouldn't he?" said Smithy, shrugging his shoulders.

And he turned away, leaving the Famous Five looking after him rather grimly.

Redwing had a flush in his cheeks as he went out of the gates with his chum.

The Bounder gave him a sarcastic look as they walked in silence up Friardale Lane.

"You think I ought to have tipped Vernon about that matinee being put off?" he asked.

"Well, I think you might, Smithy," said Tom, "if you knew."

"Only it hasn't been put off!"

"What?" Tom stared at him. "You told those fellows it had——"

"Only pulling their legs!" said the Bounder cheerfully. "Part of a deep-laid plot, Reddy, that I'm telling you nothing about."

"Blessed if I make you out!"

The Bounder laughed, and did not answer.

They walked on, and took the woodland footpath through Friardale Wood as far as Pegg Lane.

There the Bounder came to a halt.

"Aren't you coming on?" asked Tom.

"No; didn't I say I'd come as far as Pegg Lane?"

"I thought you'd changed your mind, as you told those fellows you were coming up to Hawkscliff, and wouldn't be back much before lock-up."

"Sheer gammon, old man—a bit more of that deep-laid plot!" grinned the Bounder. "Didn't I say I'd got a jape on? They're so fond of a joke that I'm going to amuse them this afternoon."

"Look here, Smithy, what are you up to?" asked Redwing uneasily. "I don't see——"

"And you're not going to! Ta-ta!"

Redwing had rather a troubled look as he went on his way by the cliffs to Hawkscliff.

But the Bounder was grinning sardonically as he walked back to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co., at the nets, did not see him come in—and certainly they would never have dreamed of guessing that the Bounder, when he came back into the House, cut up to the Remove dormitory and sorted out the suit of clothes that Vernon had changed before he started for the theatre.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Party!

"SEEN Vernon-Smith?"

"Gone up to Hawkscliff," answered Harry Wharton.

"Oh!"

That the fellow who asked them that question was Bertie Vernon no member of the Famous Five thought of doubting for a moment.

Like as the doubles of the Remove were to one another, Harry Wharton &

Co. never mistook them, except at a distance—in ordinary circumstances. But the present circumstances were not quite ordinary.

The doubles dressed rather differently as a rule. Vernon was always quiet in his garb, keeping well within the school rule on that subject. Smithy generally stretched it as far as he could.

So when the fellow in the dark grey suit, in which Vernon had been seen scores of times, came along, they naturally supposed that he was Vernon—especially as they knew that Vernon-Smith had gone up to Hawkscliff for the whole afternoon, and that Bertie Vernon would be coming back, finding that there was no matinee after all at the Theatre Royal at Courtfield!

The question, too, seemed to settle the matter, if there had been any doubt! A fellow would hardly ask them whether they had seen himself!

"Sure he's gone?" asked the junior in the grey suit.

"Yes, over an hour ago," said Harry.

"We saw him start with Redwing."

"Well, it will keep!" grunted the junior in the grey suit.

"Oh, my hat! Another row on?" asked Bob.

"I've heard, since I came in, that Vernon-Smith knew that the matinee had been postponed at the theatre! I don't see why he couldn't have told me, if he knew."

"Oh!" said Harry. "Well, he might have, perhaps—Still, you're not very chummy, you know! I wouldn't bother about it."

"I've had a trip to Courtfield for nothing! Any decent fellow would have told me before I started! I never saw it in the paper—never thought about it! But I suppose the brute can't help being malicious."

"Smithy hasn't quite got over the friendly call the Acid Drop paid him yesterday!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "He can't see what a howling joke it was, like everybody else! It made us all yell—not Smithy!"

"No—I don't think Vernon-Smith saw the joke! You fellows doing anything special this afternoon?" added the junior in grey.

"We were thinking of pushing out the jiggers for a spin now we've had a spot of games practice," answered Harry. "Like to join up?"

"I was just going to ask you that! As there's no theatre after all, this afternoon, I'm going home," explained the junior in the grey suit. "You know my uncle, Captain Vernon, has taken Lantham Chase—"

"Yes, rather—that's where we collared you once, taking you for Smithy, before you came here!" said Bob, with a chuckle.

"It's rather a ripping place," said the junior in Vernon's grey suit. "My uncle would be jolly glad to see you—he'd like to meet some of the fellows I know here! He will stand us tea, and we can get back for lock-up."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. As they were thinking of a spin, a ride out to Lantham Chase, with tea at the end, rather appealed to them. They were all on friendly terms with Bertie Vernon; but he had never, so far, asked any fellow home. So this was rather flattering.

"Sure your uncle won't mind five fellows in a bunch barging in on him?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"Quite! If you'll come, I'll go in and phone, and let him know. At present he fancies I've gone to the theatre, as he sent me the ticket. I say, I'd be jolly glad if you'll come."

"Done!" said Bob.

"The donefulness is terrific, my esteemed Vernon."

"Right-ho, then! I'll cut in and phone."

"Right as rain!"

The junior in grey went into the House, doubtless to borrow a phone.

He did not grin till he was out of sight of the Famous Five.

Then his grin was so sardonic and so mocking that the chums of the Remove, had they seen it, might have smelt a rat.

As it was, they were left in the blissful belief that it was Bertie Vernon who had been speaking to them—and certainly never dreamed for one moment that it was Herbert Vernon-Smith in Vernon's clothes!

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five. "I say, was that Smithy, or the other beast?"

"The other beast!" said Bob Cherry, laughing.

"I thought the other beast was going to Courtfield Theatre—"

"Performance postponed! There was no hurry for you to find the ticket after all, old fat man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think the cad might have lent me a bob when I took the trouble to find his mouldy ticket for him!" said Bunter. "Rotten ingratitude, I call it! I say, you fellows, if you're going to the tuckshop—"

"We're waiting for Vernon."

"What about waiting for him in the tuckshop?" suggested Bunter hopefully. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, what are you waiting for Vernon for?"

"A few minutes!"

"You silly ass, I mean why?" howled Bunter. "Is he standing a spread? If he is, I shouldn't mind coming."

"Vernon might!"

"The mightfulness is terrific."

The junior in the grey suit came out of the House again.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

Vernon was, in Bunter's opinion, a beast only a little less beastly than the other beast. But if he was standing a spread, Billy Bunter was prepared to cling closer than a brother. Bunter was no fellow to nurse grudges—not if there was tuck about!

"I say, Vernon, old chap!" squeaked the fat Owl. "I'm awfully glad I found that ticket for you! I looked for it a jolly long time, all over the shop! You'd hardly believe the amount of trouble I took, finding that ticket! I say—"

"Like ten miles on a bike, Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Eh? No jolly fear!"

"Then don't waste any more chin-wag on Vernon! We're going ten miles on the jiggers and the same back."

"Oh! Silly asses!" said Bunter. His interest in Vernon evaporated on the spot.

"The fact is, you fellows, I've phoned for a car!" said the junior in grey. "You'd like to run across in a car?"

"Oh! We'd like it, all right," said Harry Wharton, "but—"

He broke off. The Famous Five liked the idea of a run in a car on a fine summer's afternoon. That was all right! But a car to Lantham Chase and back, with waiting there, cost money; and they certainly did not want Bertie Vernon to spend money on them. It was not a matter of a few shillings. It was more likely to run into pounds.

"Oh, it's all right," said the junior in grey coolly. "I'm not quite so hard up as you may have heard from my dear cousin Smithy."

Harry Wharton coloured a little.

"I wasn't thinking of that," he said.

"But— Oh, all right! If you've ordered the car that settles it. We'd like it all right, of course."

"They say the car will be here in ten minutes! Like to come, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes, rather!" bleated the fat Owl.

"You fellows don't mind if Bunter joins up?"

"It's your party, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "Ask the whole jolly Remove if you like; the more the merrier."

"Well, that's not a bad idea—I've asked for a roomy car! Might pack in a few more," said the junior in the grey suit. "I'll ask a few fellows. May as well make a tea party of it—what?"

The junior in grey cut across to speak to Bolsover major and Skinner, who were lounging in the quad.

"I say, you fellows, Vernon can't be so jolly hard up as Smithy makes out," said Billy Bunter. "Cars cost money. I say, where are we going?"

"Lantham Chase!" answered Bob.

"I hope they'll have something decent for tea," said Bunter. "Smithy says they're as poor as church mice."

"Oh, bother Smithy!"

"I've heard him say they can't afford to keep up Lantham Chase."

"Blow Smithy!"

"I heard him tell Skinner that Vernon wouldn't be allowed to ask a fellow home, because it would give the show away."

"Oh, ring off, fathead! Bless Smithy!"

"Still, this doesn't look like it," said Bunter. "But I hope there'll be something decent for tea. Still, we get the car, anyhow. I say, you fellows, how did you manage to stick on to Vernon? He's jolly stand-offish as a rule."

"What?" roared the Famous Five.

"Don't yell at a fellow! How did you wangle it—getting asked home to tea at Lantham Chase?" inquired Bunter.

"Kill him!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five walked down to the gates.

In the distance a large and rather handsome car was seen coming down the road towards the school. They wondered whether it was Vernon's car. Apparently it was, as it stopped at the gates.

"Master Vernon?" asked the chauffeur, touching his cap.

"Just coming!" answered Bob.

The junior in Vernon's clothes, whom nobody doubted to be Vernon, came down to the gates, accompanied by Bolsover major, Harold Skinner, and Peter Todd, with Billy Bunter rolling on behind.

It was a large car. But with ten fellows in it, it was going to be rather packed.

However, they packed in—with grunts of protest from Billy Bunter, who wanted room for two and had less than room for one—and the Courtfield chauffeur drove away for Lantham Chase.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise Party for Captain Vernon!

CAPTAIN VERNON raised his eyes, and then raised his eyebrows.

He seemed astonished, and did not seem pleased.

The Army man was pacing on a little stone terrace, a thoughtful shade on his dark face, burnt brown by tropical suns.

That stone terrace lay before the door
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and windows of a wing of the great mansion of Lantham Chase. It was at some distance from the main door of the mansion—a vast door opening on an immense porch. A car that came up the curving drive, through the park, headed for the main door—which, since the captain had been the tenant of the great mansion, had never once been opened.

In the old days—the dear, dead days beyond recall—Lantham Chase had been a show place of the county, and Squire Luscombe had held high state there. Thirty or forty servants indoors, and a dozen or more keepers out of doors, had made up the magnificent household.

But, like most of the "stately homes of England," it had fallen on evil times. Income falling, and income tax rising, had put an end to the high state of the Luscombes. So that the time had come, in the latter days, when Squire Luscombe, like so many descendants of old families, could not afford to live in his own house.

He had, indeed, only one way of keeping the old family mansion in the possession of the family at all—and that was by living somewhere else on a smaller scale and letting the old mansion.

But if Squire Luscombe could not afford to keep up the Chase in the old stately style, still less could Captain Vernon.

It might have puzzled others, as well as Smithy, why the captain had taken such a place at all. Though it had to be let at a rental far below its real value, that rental was, nevertheless, a considerable sum.

And Captain Vernon's household, so far from keeping up the mansion, did not even occupy it. Part of the west wing was the captain's residence; and even in that single wing most of the rooms were empty and locked up. The other wing and the vast central building were unoccupied, and seldom or never entered. Dustsheets covered endless arrays of ancient furniture.

In the vast stables was accommodation for forty horses. But the stables were deserted and unused. Six or seven cars could have been parked in the garage. But the garage was locked up and never unlocked.

Property, used or unused, was rated and taxed if it were occupied at all. And why Captain Vernon, whose means were strictly limited, paid a high rent for a vast place he did not want, and mountainous rates on an almost empty mansion, might have perplexed anyone.

No doubt the captain knew what he was about. His keen, thoughtful face looked as if he did!

Round about the mansion lay the woods of the Chase—oak and beech, ash and chestnut, for miles. Huge as the mansion was, it could not be seen from the roads, save a tall chimney-pot here and there.

Perhaps the captain had a taste for solitude. If so, he was able to gratify that taste to the limit. Tradesmen's cars never came to the Chase these days. What the household required was brought in from Lantham by the captain's servant—who constituted his entire household staff.

No crack of a keeper's gun was ever heard in the wide woods. Not a keeper remained on the estate. But it was known in the neighbourhood that the captain was very severe on poachers and trespassers. More than once his Malacca cane had been laid across the shoulders of some thoughtless urchin of Lantham who had wandered into the woods. He even looked with an un-

pleasant eye on people who used the public right-of-way on the path through the Chase.

On this particular afternoon the captain was pacing the stone terrace when the big car came booming up the drive.

He stared across at it.

He seemed so astonished that he could scarcely believe his eyes at the sight of a big car packed with schoolboys.

Among them he picked out a familiar face, which he had no doubt was his nephew's.

Captain Vernon knew—none better—the extraordinary resemblance between his nephew and his nephew's cousin, Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had himself taken one for the other.

But it was not likely to occur to his mind that his nephew's cousin had thought of such an extraordinary escapade as coming to the Chase in his nephew's name.

He had had a telephone call from Greyfriars. The voice on the phone was his nephew's, tone for tone. Bertie—as he supposed—had told him that the matinee at the Theatre Royal, Courtfield, had been postponed till Saturday, and that he was, therefore, coming over that afternoon.

There was nothing surprising in that, and the captain was, undoubtedly, glad to see his nephew at any time. He was a bachelor, a lonely man, and all his affections, all his hopes, were bound up in the son of his younger and only brother, who had been killed on the Indian frontier.

But though he expected to see Bertie that afternoon—and had no doubt that he saw him now—he certainly had not expected to see him in a car with a crowd of other schoolboys.

Bertie's cousin Vernon-Smith—or Smith, as the captain preferred to call him—swanked about in expensive cars! Bertie could not afford to do so—and, indeed, had no great desire to do so. This was rather an extraordinary outbreak on Bertie's part.

It was hard for the captain to understand, unless, perhaps, one of his friends had a car at his disposal that afternoon and had let him have the use of it. But that was not a pleasing idea, either; he did not like to think of Bertie accepting favours from richer fellows.

Anyhow, there they were!

The car roared up the avenue and stopped in front of the great door of the mansion.

Captain Vernon descended the steps from the stone terrace and walked across the drive.

He composed his features as he went.

This was utterly thoughtless of Bertie. The captain was too fond of the boy to think that it was inconsiderate as well as thoughtless, but that was how he could not help feeling.

He did not want Bertie to bring Greyfriars boys to the Chase. His nephew understood that perfectly well. Captain Vernon had perhaps other reasons; but one reason was that he was sensitive on the subject of his want of means. There was something a trifle ridiculous in renting a huge, magnificent mansion and living in one corner of it.

Greyfriars fellows who heard that Vernon's uncle had taken Lantham Chase would probably think it rather posh. They were not likely to think so when they had visited the place, and seen in what style Vernon's uncle lived there.

"I say, you fellows!" The Army man heard a fat squeak as he approached the car. "I say, why don't

they open the door? Where are the servants? Don't your uncle keep any servants, Vernon?"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! I say, Vernon, I suppose there's somebody here, ain't there? Looks to me as if we've got to Robinson Crusoe's island."

"Is your uncle at home, Vernon?"

"Yes; here he comes."

All the fellows in the car looked round as the tropical-complexioned Army man came up.

Herbert Vernon-Smith felt his heart beat a little faster.

What would happen if the captain spotted his trickery he hardly knew. But it was not a pleasant prospect, anyhow.

But he knew there was little danger—or rather, none.

Once before, at that very place, Captain Vernon had mistaken him for Bertie, and sat in the summer-house talking to him, thinking he was Bertie. This afternoon he was expecting Bertie, and probably not thinking of Vernon-Smith at all.

And he knew the dark grey suit the Bouncer was wearing. He had seen Bertie in it often enough. By no stretch of the imagination could he have guessed, or supposed, that the millionaire's son was wearing the clothes of his poor relation. It was safe as houses—absolutely safe!

And Smithy played his part with perfect coolness. He stood up in the car, and waved his hand.

"Here I am, uncle!" he called out. "You didn't mind my bringing a few friends with me, did you?"

If Captain Vernon minded, it was scarcely possible for him to say so in the hearing of that large party.

But Harry Wharton & Co. had rather a twinge of discomfort. They had taken it for granted when Vernon said that he would phone that he was coming, that he would mention that he was bringing companions.

They did not want to take the tenant of Lantham Chase by surprise. And they did not guess that that was precisely what the malicious Bouncer did want.

"Not at all, Bertie," said Captain Vernon evenly. "Your friends are very welcome."

The chauffeur had got down to open the door of the car. The Greyfriars crowd poured out.

Skinner winked at Bolsover major, unseen, as he believed, by the captain, making a gesture towards the vast door, which obviously was never opened.

But Captain Vernon's eyes were of the very sharpest, and he noted both the wink and the gesture, though he gave no sign.

"I am glad to see you here, my boys," said the captain, a statement prompted by politeness, and most certainly not by veracity.

"I say, you fellows, where do we go in?"

"Your friends may like a ramble in the woods in this beautiful June weather, Bertie," remarked the captain.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry promptly.

Bob was not specially observant, but he could not help sensing a certain awkwardness in the atmosphere.

"Just what we should like, sir," said Harry Wharton, playing up.

"The likefulness would be terrific, esteemed sahib," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, a remark that made the captain start a little.

"We've heard such a lot about the



Five exasperated fellows dealt with Vernon-Smith, and they dealt with him vigorously. The Bounder was bumped, rolled, pillowed, bolstered and slipped. "You can leave us out of your family feuds after this, Vernon-Smith!" said Wharton breathlessly.

woods here, sir," said Frank Nugent. "We thought it ripping of Vernon to ask us over to—to have a look at them."

"Some jolly fine old oaks, I've heard," said Johnny Bull.

"But I say, you fellows, what about tea? I'm hungry. What are you whispering about, Toddy? Can't you speak out?"

"Please ramble about wherever you like, my lads," said the captain. "Stay one moment, Bertie. I wish to ask you something."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, Bunter!"

"Shan't! I say, where are we going to have tea? I say—yaroo! Who's that stamping on my toe? Wow!"

"Well, my hat!" said Skinner.

"I say, you fellows— Leggo my arm, Bob Cherry, you beast! I tell you I don't want to see any beastly woods! I want my tea! Beast!"

The whole party moved down the avenue—Billy Bunter going very unwillingly; Skinner and Bolsover major exchanging sneering glances.

Captain Vernon had not asked the party into the house, and apparently was not thinking of doing so. He seemed to have taken it for granted that they had run over to ramble about the Chase.

"Bertie, you young ass!" The captain's voice was low, unheard as the crowd moved off. "What do you mean by this?"

"Don't you like my friends, uncle?" asked the Bounder innocently.

"Some of them seem very decent lads. But, my dear boy, this is very thoughtless. Such a crowd, too. It will be difficult to scrounge up anything for tea if they stay to tea. My dear boy!"

Captain Vernon glanced at the chauffeur as the Bounder did not speak.

"Does this car belong to one of your friends, Bertie?"

"Oh, no! It's a hired car."

"Bertie!"

"Other fellows hire cars sometimes on a half-holiday."

Captain Vernon compressed his lips.

"Pay the man and let him go," added the Bounder. "We're not going back by car."

"Oh!"

"I'd better join my friends. They'll think it pretty queer if I stay confabbing here."

Captain Vernon nodded without speaking. He proceeded to pay and dismiss the Courtfield chauffeur.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked down the avenue after the other fellows, and winked at the sunny tree-tops as he went.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Awkward!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter, do!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Pretty sort of show to ask a fellow to," said Skinner.

"Fine!" sneered Bolsover major.

"Vernon's a bit of an ass," remarked Peter Todd. "He ought to have asked his uncle before he marched an army like this into the place."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged uncomfortable glances.

That big bunch of schoolboys wandered rather aimlessly down the wide, leafy avenue.

Had Vernon asked them to run across for a ramble in the woods, it would have been all right. The Famous Five would have liked it well enough, though certainly Bunter would not have joined up for such an unexcit-

ing excursion, or Skinner or Bolsover major.

But the fellow had asked them to visit the place, to call on his uncle, and stay to tea.

Quietly as Captain Vernon had taken it, every member of the party was quite conscious of the fact that the Army man was disconcerted, and did not want to see them there.

Indeed, now that they had looked at the place, they could see at a glance that their arrival had placed the captain in an extremely awkward position.

Obviously, only a small portion of the great house was occupied, and there were no servants to be seen at all.

Almost all the windows were shuttered, or had the blinds drawn. No smoke rose from the chimneys. The whole place was silent and deserted.

"That chap is an ass, and no mistake," murmured Bob.

Harry Wharton's lips tightened a little. He was about the last fellow in the wide world to butt in where he was not wanted. He had done so now, quite unconsciously, and not by his own fault. That did not make it any more agreeable to be placed in the position of a barging, thick-skinned ass like Billy Bunter.

"I thought he'd let his uncle know we were coming," remarked Nugent. "He must have been an awful ass not to."

"I fancy the old bean would have barred him off fast enough if he had," grunted Johnny Bull. "We're not wanted here."

"That's plain enough," said Harry.

"The plainfulness is terrific."

"Nice and hospitable—what?" said Skinner, with a sneer. "A fellow asks us home to tea, and his uncle asks us if we'd like to ramble in the woods. I

don't want to ramble in any old woods, for one!"

"There's woods enough round the school, if we want to ramble in dashed woods!" growled Bolsover major. "The place doesn't seem to be lived in at all. There's no servants here."

"Perhaps Vernon's uncle is going to get tea for us," jeered Skinner. "More likely there isn't anything for tea."

"Oh crikey!" Billy Bunter gave a gasp of horror at the suggestion. "I say, you fellows, we've got to have tea. Vernon asked us to tea, didn't he? I'm hungry already. Oh crikey!"

"Oh, dry up, you fat frog!" growled Bob.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, the car's going!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Ain't we going back by car? What does that mean?"

The juniors stared at the Courtfield car as it buzzed by down the avenue. It rushed on and disappeared in the direction of the gateway and the Lantham road.

They watched it out of sight rather blankly.

"Coming back for us, I expect!" said Peter.

"It was going to wait," said Skinner. "By gum! There's no car here—you can see that! The jolly old captain doesn't keep a car. He doesn't keep any servants. He doesn't keep anything, that I can see! What a show!"

"Well, that chap Vernon is the limit!" said Peter. "But play up you fellows! He's made it pretty uncomfortable for his uncle, landing a troop like this on him all of a sudden—no need to make it worse for the old bean!"

"Blow the old bean!" snorted Bolsover major. "And blow the young bean, too! What did he want to land us in this for, I'd like to know?"

"Well, they're jolly woods—" said Bob.

"Blow the woods!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!" wailed Bunter. "Vernon said there was going to be tea. We've got to have something—at least, I have!"

Six of the party felt very uncomfortable, and wished themselves anywhere

else! Bolsover and Skinner sneered, and Bunter concentrated on tea—the tea that now appeared rather problematic.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Vernon!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I—I—I suppose we can't just hike off, as he's brought us here?"

"I don't see how we can!" said Harry, frowning. "But—"

"Cut it as short as we can!" murmured Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five composed their faces into as cheerful an expression as possible as Vernon came up. Peter Todd looked at him rather oddly. Bolsover and Skinner did not take the trouble to disguise their sneers. Billy Bunter blinked at him in deep indignation.

"Come and have a look round the place!" said the Bouncer cheerily. The young rascal who was playing the part of Vernon was enjoying the peculiar situation, if nobody else was. "Never mind about the woods—they can wait! Come and have a look at the house!"

"How are we getting back?" asked Bolsover major.

"My dear chap, you're not thinking of getting back yet, when we've only just arrived!"

"The car's gone."

"Plenty of trains from Lantham!"

"Trains!" repeated Bolsover major.

"Yes, lots!"

"Are we going back by train?" breathed Bolsover.

"Why not?"

Bolsover major's manners were not very polished at the best of times. Such as they were, they completely failed him now. He gave the cheery, smiling junior a stare, or rather a glare.

"So we're going back by train?" he said. "All right! If I'm going back by train, I'll go now. You coming, Skinner?"

"Yes, I jolly well am!" said Skinner. "Thank you for your kind invitation home, Vernon! Thanks for your hospitality, and your uncle's hospitality! Next time you want to ask a fellow

home, ask somebody else, will you?"

And Bolsover major and Skinner walked off down the avenue. They had well over a mile to walk into Lantham to get a train, and their fares to pay when they got it. In the circumstances, perhaps it was not surprising that they had little politeness to waste on Vernon.

Peter Todd suppressed a grin. He would have been rather glad to follow the example of Bolsover and Skinner, but he felt, like the Famous Five, that it was up to him to stick it out. Bunter, of course, was thinking wholly and solely of tea—and certainly not of walking a mile to any station.

"I say, Vernon—" he squeaked.

"This way," said Vernon-Smith cheerily. "Come and have a look at the house, you fellows!"

He led the way back to the house. The juniors, with an exchange of glances, followed him.

They all had an impression that Vernon's uncle did not want them in the house. But they could hardly disregard their host.

Captain Vernon had gone in by way of the stone terrace. It was up the old stone steps to that terrace that the mischievous Bouncer led his flock.

He was fully aware of what Captain Vernon wanted, and did not want. He was going to give him as much as he could of what he did not want!

There was an open doorway on the little terrace, flanked by windows. Smithy led the way cheerily across to that door. The defection of Bolsover major and Skinner did not seem to have disconcerted "Vernon" in the least—though the other fellows had expected that it would. He did not seem to mind at all.

A voice was heard as they crossed the stone terrace to the doorway. It was the captain's, speaking to somebody within.

"Hunt!"

"Sir!" came a rather wheezy reply.

"See what you can do in the way of scrounging tea for those schoolboys, Hunt. You can manage something!"

"If Master Bertie had sent word, sir—"

"That cannot be helped now, Hunt. Do your best!"

"I don't know what I'm going to do, sir, with little in the place—but if you give me time to slip down to Lantham—"

Bob Cherry gave a loud cough, and the voices died away. That peculiar dialogue within was heard by every fellow on the terrace. It gave the finishing touch to their discomfort.

"By gum!" exclaimed Peter Todd, as if struck by a sudden thought. "Blessed if I hadn't forgotten my lines for Quelch! Vernon, old man, do you mind if I cut off? I really must do those lines for Quelch!"

"Please yourself, of course!"

"Well, I—I think I'd better not keep Quelch waiting for those lines! Really, I shouldn't have come! Ta, ta, old bean!"

Peter Todd faded down the steps of the terrace.

Gladly enough would the Famous Five had faded after him. But they felt that they could hardly abandon their host to nobody but Billy Bunter. It was getting rather awful, but they had to stick it out for a time, at least.

"Follow on, old beans!" said the Bouncer cheerily; and he went in, with the others following.

Captain Vernon and Hunt were not to be seen. Possibly they had retired to some other spot to carry on that

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contabulation about ways and means. Harry Wharton & Co. followed Vernon in, feeling inclined to kick themselves for being there at all!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Turret-Room!

"JOLLY view from here!" said Bob Cherry.

If the visitors at Lantham Chase had come there for a view, the view was all right.

They stood in a room at the summit of a turret at the corner of the west wing. From the windows, there was a wide view over the sweeping woodlands of Lantham Chase.

Vernon-Smith was looking about him much more curiously than the Famous Five. He was interested, and a little puzzled, by what he saw.

Billy Bunter had not ascended the turret stair at all. Bunter had no use for stairs. Even a feed at the top would hardly have tempted the fat Owl up that narrow steep stairway. Ascending it for the sake of a view was an idea that simply made Bunter snort.

The fat Owl was sitting down below. He was sitting there in a state of indignation to which words could hardly have done justice. Bunter was hungry. There was nothing to eat! He had been asked to tea—and it looked as if there was going to be no tea!

Bunter's feelings were not specially hurt by a lack of hospitality. He could bear that. It was the lack of foodstuffs that worried Bunter.

The Famous Five, as a matter of fact, would have been glad of tea, as it was past tea-time. But meals did not bulk so large on their horizon as on Bunter's, and they were thinking more of the unfortunate captain's perplexities than of themselves. They were rather glad to get out of the way for a time.

"Queer, isn't it?" said the Bounder, rather forgetting for a moment that he was Bertie Vernon. "What the dickens is all this for?"

It was really queer.

The door on the stone terrace opened on a flagged hall, from which several rooms opened. There was a passage at the back, leading probably to Hunt's quarters. From the flagged hall a narrow stairway led up to the turret.

The turret-room, at the top, was large and light and airy. It was such a pleasant room that it might have been expected to be occupied. But it was evident that it had no occupant.

It was furnished, but there were dust-covers over the furniture and the bed. A fire was laid in the grate, but had clearly not been lighted for some time. But the curious thing was about the windows.

There were two, both large. The stone walls were old and very thick; the window embrasures two feet deep.

Each window was fitted with a wooden shutter inside. These shutters were entirely new.

They were not solid shutters. They were made of thick, strong wooden bars. When they were closed, and locked, it was still possible to see through them easily, and get the wide view all round Lantham Chase.

The locks on them were not common locks. They were small patent locks, which would have been extremely difficult for even a cracksman to crack.

The way in which Captain Vernon lived, or, rather, camped, at Lantham Chase indicated that there was little

cash available for expenditure. The Famous Five could not help noticing that, though not with the cynical derision felt by the Bounder.

But money had been spent on the turret-room, and it was not easy to see for what purpose.

Why two strong shutters, with their uncommonly efficient locks, were required in the room high up at the top of the turret was hard to guess.

Certainly they could hardly have been put in as a precaution against burglary.

The windows were at least forty feet from the ground, the walls below sheer. There were at least a hundred windows on the ground floor, all easy of access to an enterprising burglar. No sane burglar could have picked the turret windows for ingress.

Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised at what they saw; though on the supposition that Captain Vernon knew his own business best, they did not give much thought to the matter.

But the Bounder was keenly curious. He was surprised, and he was puzzled, and his intense dislike of the Army man made him prone to suspicion and distrust.

"Don't you think this pretty queer, you fellows?" he asked, in his interest in the strange matter forgetting the part he was playing. "What the dickens have the windows been guarded like this for?"

"Wasn't it done when you were here?" asked Bob.

"Eh?"

"Weren't you here for a couple of weeks before you came to the school?"

"Oh! Yes!" The Bounder remembered, and laughed. "Oh! Yes! Quite! No, I haven't seen these alterations before."

"This wasn't your room, Vernon?" asked Harry.

"On, no!"

Smithy was quite unaware which room had been his cousin's when Bertie Vernon was at Lantham Chase. But there was no sign about the room that it had ever been occupied by Vernon; and if it had been Bertie's room it was probable that some of his possessions would have been visible.

"I should jolly well bag this room if I could, if I lived here!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Jolly room!"

"Safe from burglars, at any rate, with those shutters locked over the windows!" said Johnny Bull.

"Safe enough from burglars without them," said the Bounder. "Those shutters look more like preventing somebody from getting out than preventing anybody from getting in!"

The Famous Five stared at him.

The same thought, doubtless, would have occurred to their own minds, but for the sheer impossibility of the idea.

The Bounder went from one window to the other, examining the shutters and the locks on them.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him in silence, puzzled as much by the fellow they believed to be Vernon as by the mysterious barred shutters.

The Bounder's eye were glinting.

"What is that man up to?" the juniors heard him mutter. "What—" He broke off sharply as he realised that he was betraying himself.

A moment later there was an interruption. The captain's voice was heard from below, speaking in sharp tones, and evidently addressing Bunter:

"Where are your friends? Where is my nephew?"

"They've gone up those stairs—"

There was a rapid step on the turret stair. Captain Vernon had not waited for the fat Owl to finish. The stair

was rather a long one and very steep, but the captain ascended it almost in a moment.

His face was flushed and angry as he looked into the turret-room.

"What are you doing here? You should not have come here!" he exclaimed.

The juniors reddened. They had followed Vernon's lead up to the turret, naturally thinking no harm. The fellow surely had a right to show them over his own house if he wanted to?

"Bertie!" Captain Vernon made a very obvious effort to conceal his angry annoyance. "You should not have brought your friends up here!"

"Mustn't I show them over the house, uncle?" asked the Bounder meekly.

"Oh! Yes! Yes—certainly! But this is private—" The captain checked himself. If there was any harm in the Greyfriars fellows coming there, that harm was done, and could not be helped. He realised that; and he was not blind to the surprise, mingled with the discomfort in their looks. "However, it does not matter—not in the least! A splendid view from here, my boys!"

The change in his manner was quite startling.

"Yes; we were just looking at it—you can see for miles," said Harry. "I believe I can pick out the tower at Greyfriars from here."

"On a clear day, Canterbury Cathedral can be seen," said Captain Vernon. "I think I can point it out to you."

He stood at a window, his manner pleasant and his tone agreeable, pointing out to the juniors various landmarks that could be seen from that high altitude. It was hard to believe that he was the angry man who had hurried up the turret stair a few minutes ago.

Harry Wharton & Co. played up, as it were, only too willing to help him bridge over an awkward moment. They did not allow their faces to indicate that they wished from the bottom of their hearts that they were anywhere but in Captain Vernon's house!

But the Bounder, standing back a little, had his eyes on the captain, with distrust and suspicion in them.

What was the man up to at Lantham Chase?—was the thought in the Bounder's mind. What game was he playing there? What was the secret of that turret-room that made it necessary to fit the windows with strong shutters and patent locks, and made the man angry and alarmed when a handful of schoolboys wandered into the room?

The Bounder could not even begin to guess what it all meant. But he had always distrusted that dark, saturnine man—and now his distrust was deep and sharp. The man was up to something. What?

Having pointed out various objects of interest for ten minutes or so, Captain Vernon turned to the door.

Harry Wharton & Co. were glad enough to leave the spot. They went down the turret stair with Vernon, the captain lingering behind as they went, and then following them down.

Billy Bunter greeted them with a dolorous blink as they appeared in the flagged hall below.

"I say, you fellows, what about tea?" he asked, in an expiring voice. "I say, I'm fearfully hungry! I say, Vernon—"

The Bounder walked out on the terrace, without heeding the fat Owl. He glanced back.

"Wait a few minutes, you fellows,"

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will you?" he asked. "Stick on this terrace till I come back."

"Right-ho, Vernon!"

The Bounder went down the steps from the terrace.

Harry Wharton & Co., in some surprise, noticed that he walked across the avenue and disappeared into the park. They waited for him to reappear.

He did not reappear!

Smithy was through with his dupes now! Having fooled and discomfited the captain—and to a much greater extent than he could have anticipated—and having landed the Famous Five and Bunter in the most awkward position imaginable, the malicious Bounder was done with them.

While Harry Wharton waited for him to reappear, the Bounder was walking to Lantham to take his train there back to the school—and he laughed as he went!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Left in the Lurch!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Do dry up, Bunter!"

"Where's Vernon, you beast?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"An't we going to have any tea?" groaned Bunter.

"Blow tea, you fat cormorant!"

"But where's Vernon gone?"

"Don't know—and don't care very much!"

"Oh crikey!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were still on the terrace.

It was half an hour since the fellow they believed to be Bertie Vernon had left them there, and he had not come back.

Bunter rolled out at last and joined them, in the faint hope of hearing some news of tea.

They had not seen Captain Vernon since leaving the turret-room. The captain, no doubt, supposed that his nephew was with them, and left it at that.

Neither had they seen anything of the man Hunt. They rather surmised that Hunt had gone to the town for supplies for tea! If he had, he had not yet returned.

Harry Wharton & Co. wanted to be polite. Captain Vernon had, on the whole, played-up pretty well, considering that that invasion of an army of schoolboys had taken him entirely by surprise, and that his diminutive household was neither staffed nor supplied to deal with such an invasion.

They could, in fact, feel for the disconcerted Army man, placed in such a position by the inconsiderate thoughtlessness of his nephew.

But they were getting fed-up.

They had been brought where they were not wanted; their unwilling host's good manners were scarcely equal to the strain; and now, to put the lid on, the fellow who had brought them there had walked off, and apparently left them to their own devices!

"Enjoying life, you fellows?" asked Bob Cherry, with a faint grin.

"Look here, let's cut!" said Johnny Bull. "I thought Bolsover and Skinner rather pigs to march off as they did—but I jolly well wish I'd gone with them now!"

"Same here!" murmured Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"That chap, Vernon, must be a blithering idiot, I think!" said Harry, his face pink with vexation. "If we'd only known——"

"I say, you fellows——"

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"For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm hungry!"

"Well, we can't stick here for ever," said Bob. "Vernon seems to have walked off and forgotten us. But we can't clear without a word to the captain! He'd be glad enough if we did, I dare say, but——"

"We'd better go," said Harry. "It seems that we've got to get back by train, and that means that we've precious little time left to get in for calling-over. Vernon doesn't seem to be coming back, and we can't wait here for ever."

"It's simply weird, bringing us here by car and sending the car away! We wanted to come on the bikes—— Wish I had my jigger here now——"

"The fellow must be cracked, I think! I suppose he must mean well—but, well, I'm fed up with this! For goodness' sake, let's get going!" said the captain of the Remove. "We've waited here long enough for Vernon."

"We can't go without tea!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, dry up!"

"Vernon asked us to tea!" hooted Bunter.

"Well, go and find Vernon, if you can, and tell him you want that tea!" snorted Johnny Bull. "We're hooking it!"

"I'm not going!" roared Bunter indignantly. "Why, I'm starving! Absolutely famished! I'm not going without tea! I tell you I'm famished!"

"I suppose you couldn't famish quietly?"

"Beast!"

"Let's see if we can find that jolly old captain and say good-bye!" said Bob. "Can't leave without a word!"

"Hardly!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is—here's a chance!" breathed Bob, as, looking round, he spotted a dark, sun-browned face at one of the windows overlooking the terrace.

"I say, you fellows, tell him I'm hungry——" wailed Bunter.

Unheeding the suffering fat Owl, the Famous Five all turned towards the window.

The man within threw up the sash.

"Where is my nephew?" he asked. "Is he not with you?"

"He's gone off for something," said Bob. "I—I don't think we can wait for him, as we have to get in for calling-over."

"But my nephew has to return to the school also!" said Captain Vernon, staring. "I hardly understand——"

The Famous Five hardly understood, either; in fact, they did not understand at all. But they had made up their minds that they were waiting no longer for Vernon to come back! They could not cut calling-over on account of a fellow who had walked off and did not choose to return. What Vernon meant by it they did not know; but they knew that they had had enough.

"The fact is, sir, that we've hardly time to get back before lock-up," said Harry.

"But you had better wait for tea!" said the captain, with as much hospitality as he could infuse into his manner—which was not, perhaps, very much!

"Thank you, sir, but we really haven't a minute, if we are to catch our train! Thank you so much for letting us look over Lantham Chase! It's been ripping! Good-bye, sir!"

"My nephew seems to be somewhat remiss!" said the captain. "I must apologise for his thoughtlessness. Well, if you really must go, good-bye, my boys!"

From the open window the captain shook hands with the juniors very pleasantly, and they turned away.

"Come on, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton, before leaving the terrace. "Shan't!"

"We're going, you fat ass!"

"I don't care! I'm jolly well not going without my tea! I'm not going to walk to the station, either! If they haven't got a car they can stand me a taxi! They asked me here, didn't they?"

"Are you coming?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"No, I jolly well ain't! If that man Hunt has gone to Lantham for grub he can't be much longer——"

"Calling-over——"

"Blow calling-over!"

"You fat ass——"

"Beast! Where's Vernon? What has he left us in the lurch like this for? Asking fellows here and leaving them in the lurch——"

"Well, we're going!" said Harry. "You'd better come——"

"Shan't! Not without my tea!"

"We'll get a snack at the station before we catch our train, old fat man," said Harry. "There will be time, if we hurry up!"

"Oh, now you're talking sense!" said Bunter. "I don't want to be late for calling-over, of course. But that beast, Vernon—bringing a fellow here and——"

"Yes, come on!"

"I'll jolly well tell him what I think of him when I see him again——"

"Hurry up!"

"I've a good mind to tell that uncle of his, too——"

"Shut up, you fat chump, and come on! We're going, anyhow!"

The Famous Five went down the steps from the terrace.

Billy Bunter rolled dismally after them. Only the prospect of a snack at the station spurred the fat Owl on. He grunted and groaned as he went.

It was not a happy walk to Lantham.

Bunter, between grunts and groans, was fearfully eloquent on the subject of Vernon and the way he let the fellows down.

But they got to the station at last, and ham sandwiches silenced the fat Owl! An extra supply, under a fat arm, kept him busy most of the way home. And the happy party arrived at Greyfriars School three minutes before Gosling locked the gates!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bewildering to Bertie!

"CAD!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith grinned.

That remark of Billy Bunter's was not addressed to him—though, properly, it ought to have been!

It was addressed to Bertie Vernon, who stared round in surprise, no doubt wondering what was biting the fat Owl.

The Greyfriars fellows were gathered in Hall for calling-over. Mr. Hacker was about to call the roll. The Famous Five and Billy Bunter were the last Removites to come in. And as Bunter's eyes—and spectacles—fell on Bertie Vernon, he gave him a second blink, to make sure that he was Vernon and not Smithy, and hissed in his car: "Cad!"

Which, naturally, surprised Bertie, as he was not conscious of having given any special offence to the fat Owl.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had been back at Greyfriars some time before Bertie came in from Courtfield. He had

changed back into his own clothes at once. Bertie, when he came in, had found his dark grey suit on his bed in the Remove dormitory, and changed back into it, never dreaming for a moment that anyone had worn it in his absence.

He was wearing it now, which identified him, so Bunter knew that he was Bertie, and selected his ear in which to whisper—or, rather, hiss—"Cad!" in tones of the fiercest contempt and scorn.

Hitherto, Bunter had regarded Bertie as rather a lesser beast than his cousin, Smithy. Now he regarded him as excelling Smithy and all other beasts in beastly beastliness! He had asked Bunter to tea—and Bunter had missed tea in consequence! A dozen or so ham sandwiches did not console Bunter. He fairly throbbed with scorn.

Smithy was quite amused.

He noticed that the Famous Five, though they did not hurl scorn at Bertie, like the fat Owl, seemed standoffish to him. Peter Todd gave him a rather droll look. Bolsover major and Skinner gave him sneering glances. A good many other fellows eyed him rather curiously.

Bolsover and Skinner had told the tale, after their return, of their extraordinary reception at a place where a fellow had asked them to tea, causing a good deal of surprise and amusement in the Remove.

The Acid Drop began to call the roll.

"Adsum!" came from fellow after fellow. In the midst of the adsums came a stage whisper from Billy Bunter, which was heard by most of the Remove.

"Rotten worm!"

Vernon looked round at him again.

"Did you speak to me, you fat fool?" he asked quietly.

"Shut up, Bunter, old bean!" whispered Peter Todd.

"Shan't! If a fellow lets me down I'm going to tell him what I think of him, Toddy!" Bunter's spectacles gleamed with wrath and scorn at Vernon again. "Yah! Cad! Worm! Swab! Keeping a fellow hungry!"

Bunter's voice fairly thrilled with indignation as he levelled that awful accusation at Bertie. Keeping a fellow hungry was the deadliest sin any fellow could possibly commit—in Bunter's opinion, at least! It was, so to speak, the seven deadly sins all rolled into one, and some over!

But Bertie, unconscious of having kept the fat Owl hungry, was only astonished.

"Mad?" he asked.

"Beast! Cad! Tick! Swab! Reptile!"

"Silence, there!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

"Oh! I wasn't speaking, Wingate! I was only calling Vernon a cad and a swab and a reptile—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

Bunter was silent again—but his look spoke volumes. His fat little nose turned up at Bertie Vernon, with overwhelming contempt! Nature had started it well in that direction—but Bunter carried Nature's work farther—he turned up his nose till he really seemed to be trying to reach his spectacles with it. At the same time his podgy lip curled with ineffable scorn!

Bertie looked at him, looked at him again, and knitted his brows. He could see that something was amiss somewhere; that he was supposed to have done something or other.

"Anything up, Wharton?" he whispered to the captain of the Remove.

"Oh! Not at all!" answered Harry politely.

"What's the matter with that fat Owl?"

"I think he got rather hungry this afternoon."

Vernon stared.

"Did he? Nothing to do with me if he did, is it? I'm not supposed to feed the pigs, am I?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Wharton. "Not at all!"

Wingate of the Sixth looked round, and there was silence again as the Acid Drop went on with the roll. But in a minute or two a whisper was heard from Harold Skinner.

"Oh, we had a good time—a fine time! Asked to tea, you know, but there wasn't any tea! Asked to trip in a car—but they couldn't afford the car both ways! The old bean never asked us into the house—may have had the bailiffs in, perhaps."

There was a subdued chuckle.

Bertie Vernon did not heed Skinner's whisper—being quite unaware that it was directed at him. So far, he had not the slightest knowledge or suspicion of the afternoon's expedition to Lantham Chase.

"Not a soul about the place." This was a whisper from Bolsover major. "They don't keep any servants. Nobody to open the door, even! We had to come back by train, and pay our own fares! Fancy asking a fellow to do that!"

The Bounder winked at Tom Redwing.

Redwing was looking puzzled. Having been up at Hawkscliff all the afternoon, he had heard nothing.

"You fellows been out visiting this afternoon?" whispered Smithy.

"Yes—some visit!" breathed Bolsover. "That swab of a cousin of yours—"

Bertie Vernon heard that and started. He stared round at Bolsover major. Wingate of the Sixth stepped across to the Remove.

"Silence here in roll!" he said. "I'll whop the next fellow that chatters!"

And there was silence in the Remove till Hacker finished the roll, and the school was dismissed.

Bertie Vernon touched Bolsover major on the arm as the Remove were going out.

Bolsover stared round at him grimly.

"I heard what you said to Vernon-Smith," said Bertie.

"You're welcome!" grunted Bolsover.

"What did you mean?"

"I meant what I said—and if you ever ask me home again, guard with your left, that's all!" snorted Bolsover.

"I've had enough of it, and of you!"

"Who asked you home?" exclaimed Vernon blankly.

"Didn't you?" sneered Bolsover.

"Not that I know of!"

"Oh, chuck it!" Bolsover major snorted, and stamped away.

Bertie Vernon stared after him; and then spun round as a fat voice squeaked behind him:

"Cad! Couldn't you afford a tea? What did you ask fellows for, if you couldn't afford a tea?"

Bertie Vernon made a movement towards Billy Bunter with compressed lips. His look was rather alarming; and Billy Bunter dodged round the Famous Five, and rolled off in haste.

"Has that fat idiot gone mad, or what?" asked Bertie, glancing at the chums of the Remove.

"Oh, much the same as usual!" said Bob. "I say, you seem to have got in in plenty of time for roll, Vernon."

"Yes, I had lots of time."

"We didn't have much," said Bob rather dryly. "I suppose you didn't expect us to wait for you?"

"Eh? Why should you wait for me?" asked Vernon, staring. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! It's all right, old bean!"

"The all-rightfulness is terrific, my esteemed Vernon!"

And the Famous Five moved on rather hastily, leaving Bertie Vernon staring, puzzled and irritated.

When the Remove went up to prep Bertie Vernon fixed his eyes rather unpleasantly on Wharton and Nugent in Study No. 1.

Wharton and Nugent sorted out their books, affecting not to see it.

"Have I done anything to upset you fellows?" asked Vernon.

"Oh, no, not at all!" said Harry.

"Not in the least," said Nugent, with great politeness.

Vernon stared at them, frowning, then he got his books and sat down to prep in gloomy silence.

Hardly a word was spoken at prep in Study No. 1 that evening.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Paying the Piper!

WINGATE of the Sixth saw lights out for the Remove that night.

When the prefect was gone and the door shut one of the Remove fellows sat up in bed.

A match was heard to scratch, and a candle-end was lighted, and the glimmering light revealed the face of Bertie Vernon, pale and set with bitter anger.

Fellows in other beds looked at him, wondering what was up.

Only Vernon-Smith knew. It was evident to the Bounder that talk among some of the fellows who had gone to Lantham Chase that afternoon had enlightened Bertie. Since prep he had been put wise on the subject.

The Bounder grinned. He had got away successfully and completely with his malicious jape, and he did not care a bean for the consequences—if any. He was more than ready for a scrap in the dormitory if his double called him to account.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter's fat squeak was heard. "I was starving! What do you think of a cad asking a fellow to tea, and then clearing off and leaving him without any tea?"

"Shut up, old fat man!" said Peter Todd.

"Shan't! Letting a fellow down! I never asked him to ask me home, did I? Taking us over in a car and leaving us to pay our own fares home!"

"Somebody may have been short of cash," said Skinner.

Bertie Vernon stepped out of bed; his eyes fixed on the grinning face of the Bounder.

"Get out of bed, Herbert Vernon-Smith!" he said. "I'm going to thrash you for the rotten trick you've played this afternoon, you cad!"

"Dear me!" yawned the Bounder. "Have I done anything?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" asked Bob Cherry, sitting up.

"Smithy's been up at Hawkscliff this afternoon, Vernon—"

"He hasn't, you fool!"

"Eh?"

"I've heard what has happened, you silly dummy! Were you really fool

enough to think that it was I who took you over to Lantham Chase and treated you in the way I've heard about?" asked Vernon, his voice trembling with anger.

"Eh? What? Yes! Wharrer you mean?" stuttered Bob.

"You utter idiots! I can't imagine how you could be taken in by that tricky cad when you know that I was at the theatre this afternoon—"

"You were at the theatre!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"You knew I had a booked seat, and you saw me start—"

"Are you dotty?" gasped Wharton. "You came back because the matinee was postponed till Saturday, and—"

"The matinee was not postponed, you dummy! I was at the Theatre Royal, Courtfield, all the afternoon."

"What?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he wasn't at the theatre! He jolly well took us over to Lantham Chase—"

"You fat fool! Do you think you're the sort of fellow I would ask home?" snapped Vernon contemptuously.

"Why, you cheeky beast—"

"Or you, Skinner, for that matter! I'm a bit more particular whom I ask home."

"Are you?" said Skinner. "You've got such a lot to ask a fellow to, haven't you? Sort of casual ward!"

Harry Wharton & Co. all stepped out of bed. Bertie Vernon's words utterly astounded and amazed them. But they had a glimmering now of the trick that had been played. If Bertie had, after all, been at the theatre that afternoon, obviously he could not have been the fellow who had taken them over to Lantham Chase.

"Let's have this clear, Vernon," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "Do you mean to say you never took us to your uncle's house this afternoon?"

"Of course I did not! How could I, when I was sitting in the theatre and never knew anything about it, you blockhead? That cad knew I was at the theatre—after all the gabble there was about the ticket! So he knew it was safe to play this rotten trick!" exclaimed Vernon passionately. "You must have been silly fools to be taken in like that!"

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry quietly. "If it wasn't you, it was Smithy, that's a cert; but if it was Smithy, he was wearing your clothes."

"That shabby grey suit of yours!" put in Skinner. "Shouldn't think Smithy would be willing to be found dead in it! All ready-to-wear, gentlemen—and a bargain at twenty-seven-and-six!"

"He, he, he!"

"So he pinched my clothes, did he?" breathed Vernon. "I left them on my bed here when I changed to go to the theatre. I suppose that helped him to take you in—"

"Smithy, you ass—" muttered Tom Redwing. He understood now what the Bounder had had on for that afternoon.

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Was it you, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly, fixing his eyes grimly on the grinning Bounder.

"Was it?" yawned Smithy. "I shouldn't wonder! You fellows are so fond of fun—look how you enjoyed it when Hacker gave me that whopping in your study! You were killing yourselves with laughter over that! Well,

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"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, was it really Smithy? But, I say, that half-baked old bean at Lantham Chase thought it was Vernon; he called him Bertie, that old ass— Yaroooooh!"

A sudden swipe interrupted Bunter. He roared.

Having swiped Bunter, Bertie Vernon stepped towards the Bounder's bed.

Herbert Vernon-Smith regarded him coolly. He was more than ready. But the Famous Five pushed between.

"So it was you, Smithy!" Harry Wharton breathed hard. "You put on Vernon's clobber, told us a whole stack of lies, and landed us at a place where we weren't expected and weren't wanted—"

"Didn't you enjoy your visit?" chuckled the Bounder. "Wasn't the hospitality up to the mark? Didn't they manage to scrounge a spot of tea after I left? Was that nobby Army

man entirely cleared out of cash by paying twenty-five bob for the car?"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Can't you enjoy a joke?" grinned Smithy. "You can enjoy a joke no end when it's up against me! Can't you enjoy this one? This is where you laugh!"

"Will you fellows let me get at him?" snapped Vernon.

"No!" answered Harry Wharton. "We're handling Smithy for this! Have him out!"

The Bounder's mocking grin vanished the next moment. Five pairs of hands collared him and yanked him headlong from his bed, and he bumped on the floor.

The next moment he was hitting out savagely. But the Bounder's fierce resistance did not help him much. He was for it—and he was booked for the ragging of his life! Having called the tune, he was now called on to pay the piper.

The next ten minutes were rather a nightmare to the Bounder of Greyfriars. He had been through raggings before, but never through one like this. Five exasperated fellows dealt with Smithy—and they dealt with him faithfully.

He was bumped, rolled, pillowed, bolstered, and slipped. The Remove sat up in bed looking on and grinning.

The Co. were quite tired when they had finished ragging Smithy—and Smithy was more than tired.

He was a gasping, gurgling heap when he was left on the floor at last.

"That's that!" said Harry Wharton breathlessly. "You can leave us out of your family feuds after this, Vernon-Smith!"

And the Famous Five went back to bed, leaving the Bounder to gasp and gurgle.

Bertie Vernon gave him one look and went back to bed also. Smithy had had enough—perhaps even a little more than enough.

Tom Redwing turned out to give him a hand to his bed. But it was long before sleep visited the Bounder of Greyfriars. Till quite a late hour Smithy was still gasping and gurgling.

THE END.

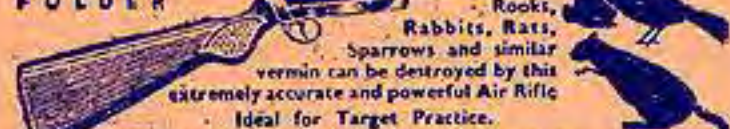
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BIRCHEMALL THE DETECTIVE!

Have a good laugh over this comic tale of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT

"Blow me tight!" It was Mr. I. Jollifwell Lickham, the Form-master of the Fourth at St. Sam's, who uttered that refined egg-salutation.

It was a half-holiday at St. Sam's, and Mr. Lickham had just looked into the Head's study to see if Dr. Birch-mall would join him in a game of croaky. But the site that greeted him when he opened the door put croaky completely out of Mr. Lickham's head.

Dr. Birchmall was standing in front of the mirror on the mantelpiece. In one hand he held a large magnifying-glass, and in the other he held a pair of handcuffs; while on his classical face he wore a skowl so alarming that it made Mr. Lickham's hair fairly stand on end!

While the master of the Fourth stood blinking in the doorway the Head, who had not yet noticed him, spoke to his own reflection in the mirror.

"The game's up, Slim Sam!" he barked. "Better com'e quietly, or—"

Mr. Lickham could stand it no longer.

"Dr. Birchmall! Sir!" he gasped. "What-ever are you doing?"

The interruption came like a bomb-shell to the Head. He looked round like a startled fawn. A faint smile replaced his fierce skowl as he reck-onised Mr. Lickham.

"Ah, Mr. Lickham! You are ser-prized—what?"

"I must confess, sir, that I am!" muttered the Fourth Form-master as he mopped his perspiring brow. "Why are you standing in front of the mirror pulling ugly faces at yourself and waving handcuffs and a magnifying-glass about?"

"Ah! Now you're asking!" chuckled the Head. "The fact is, I am training to be a private detective. I have been studying a book called 'Successful Sloothing,' Lickham."

"But what about those faces you were pulling at yourself in the glass?" demanded Mr. Lickham. "What was the idea of those, sir?"

"That's easily answered, my dear Lickham. When you came in I was just practising the piercing, hipnotick look that slooths give their vik-tims—also the words they use when they get their man! Simply spiffing, the way I did it, don't you think?"

The arrival of Binding, the page, at that moment saved Mr. Lickham the trouble of answering that embarrassing question.

"Mr. Ferdinand Fearless to see you, sir," announced Binding.

"Why, that's the father of Frank Fearless of my Form, sir!" eggs-claimed Mr. Lickham. "A grate figger in the industrial world, I believe. I wonder what he wants?"

A keen, hawk-like look came into the Head's face—or, at least, the Head imagined it did. Actually, he looked more like a boiled owl than a hawk!

"I think I have a shrewd idea what has brought him here," he said. "He has called to see his son!"

"You don't say so, sir!" eggs-claimed Mr. Lickham, with a crushing sarkasm.

"Shall I show the gent up, sir?" asked Binding, and the Head, having nodded, the page cut off, to return a minnit later with Mr. Fearless.

Mr. Ferdinand Fearless, who was usually a bluff and harty gentleman, wore a very worried look on his face when he entered Dr. Birchmall's study. He started slitley, on seeing the Head's handcuffs and magnifying-glass.

"Bless my sole, Dr. Birchmall! Are you rehearsing a drama for the skool stage society?" he asked.



"Not eggsactly, Mr. Fearless," replied the Head with a smirk. "To tell you the truth, I have become a detective. Got any misteries to solve?"

"No, thanks!" grinned Mr. Fearless. "I merely called to transact some bizzness with my son. Can he be found easily at present, do you think?"

"Easy as winking!" said the Head, cheerfully. "I will bring my detective ability to bear on the problem, my dear sir, and run him to earth in a brace of shakes. Seen anything of Fearless lately, Binding?"

"Yessir. Which I saw the young gent a-walking out of the 'Ouse five minnits ago, sir."

"Ha! A clue straight away, you see, Mr. Fearless! Come this way!"

Dr. Birchmall threw aside his handcuffs and led the way downstairs, followed by Mr. Fearless and Mr. Lickham.

When he reached the front door the Head went down on his hands and neeze and eggsamined the top step eagerly through his magnifying-glass.

"We are on the trail, gentlemen!" he cried, jubilantly. "I could pick out your son's footprints anywhere, Mr. Fearless. Follow me!"

The Head bounded down the steps and started crawling on hands and neeze across the quad, with Mr. Lickham in close attendance behind him.

Mr. Fearless, however, did not follow the amateur detective far. Before he had reached the bottom step Frank Fearless, who had been playing leap-frog round the corner with his chums Jolly and Merry and Bright, happened to spot him. He came running up to meet his pater at once.

No. 349.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

June 17th, 1939.

"Hallo, pater!" cried Frank, cheerily. "What brings you to St. Sam's to-day? I suppose it's something to do with one of your numerous bizzness stunts?"

Mr. Ferdinand Fearless nodded. "You've hit it!" he said, in a tense, thrilling whisper. "It's a secret new invention, Frank—an invention for removing the shells of hard-boiled eggs at ten times the speed at which it can be done at present. My scient-ists have been working on it for years in my laboratories. Now they have triumphed!"

"Good egg, dad!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Sounds rather a cracked idea, to me; but I'm glad you've succeeded."

"Unfortunately success has its drawbacks," went on Mr. Fearless, with another nervuss glance over his shoulder. "To come to the point, Frank, my biggest bizzness rival, an unscrupulous scoundrel named Hymer Kerr, has learned of this grate invention and is trying to pinch the plans!"

"My hat! What a cad!"

"Hymer Kerr," said Mr. Fearless, grimly, "will stop at nothing to obtain

the plans of this invention of mine. In the last few days he has broken into the house and the office and even into my bank in his efforts to find them. For that reason, my boy, it is necessary for me to put them somewhere where he will never think of looking. After much consideration I have decided to give them to you!"

He drew a bulky envelope from his pocket and handed it over to his young hopeful.

"These are the plans, Frank. Guard them jellay! Take grate care to keep them out of site of prying eyes and out of reach of purloining paws!"

"Rely on me, dad!" grinned Frank Fearless. "If Hymer Kerr comes prowling round St. Sam's, he'll get a dot on the boko—and he won't get the plans! Yaroooooo!"

Frank's final yell was caused by Dr. Birchmall trading on his foot as he arrived back on the scene. The Head, who had eyes only for Mr. Fearless, entirely failed to notice the Fourth-Former.

"Hurry up, Mr. Fearless!" cried Dr. Birchmall, eagerly. "I've

the vulgar gaze. Later, he came to see me about it. His complaint was that Greyfriars in general is too apt to look on fellows who paint pictures as freaks. The only thing the school ever admires, Squiff said, is prowess in sport.

Well, chums, I have given that charge serious consideration. The conclusion I have arrived at is that Squiff is mistaken.

Leading figures in sport at Greyfriars come in for their fair share of admiration, I admit; and that's just as it should be. If himself was cheered on Little Sue this week for some brilliant wicket-keeping! But so do leading figures in other spheres. Wibley for his acting, for instance; Linley for his knowledge of the classics; the amateurs who contribute to the "Herald" for their literary skill.

I am quite sure that our amateur artists are just as fairly treated as anyone else. Skinner's cartoons are certainly popular. Frank Nugent has earned praise for his paintings. Ogilvy's plan-drawing and architectural design work attract a lot of interest.

In Squiff's case, quite frankly, I suspect that his water colour was not quite so good as he imagined it to be; and his rather self-conscious efforts to get the fellows to enthuse over it brought about the log-pulling that ensued. If Squiff looks at it fairly and squarely, I think he will soon see that there is no prejudice against artists at Greyfriars; he's just imagining it!

Having done which, he may sit down at his easel and try again—with better results!

Meet you all again next week, chums!

HAR. WHARTON.

HARRY WHARTON CALLING ALL CHUMS

"Fair play to artists!" is going to be the battle-cry of a great new movement at Greyfriars—if Sampson Quincey Ifley Field of the Remove has his way!

Squiff is waxy about the reception given to a water-colour he has just completed.

He has spent quite a lot of his spare time this term on that water-colour. For long hours he has sat on a stool on the river bank, painting patiently—enduring the humorous remarks of Greyfriars passers-by with fortitude. The finished work of art, he thought, would silence the voices of the leg-pullers.

This week, his task completed, he proudly displayed the canvas in the Rag. He was satisfied with it himself and he had an idea his satisfaction would be shared by the rest of the Remove. He confidently expected a chorus of delight from his friends and an eloquent lack of leg-pulling from the rest.

Instead of which, his picture was greeted with howls of laughter from the rest and a lot of embarrassed coughing from his friends!

Bolsover major suggested it was a new kind of camouflage for painting on tanks. Hazeldene asked whether he had not hung it upside down by mistake.

Squiff's friends' lame attempts at praising it were a complete flop.

Almost bursting with indignation, Squiff took down his masterpiece and removed it to Study No. 14, where he deposited it in the cupboard, safe from

trailed your son to the gates and I'll soon nab for him you if you'll come with me. Probably he is down at the village bunshop, skoffing tuck."

"Ow! Are you talking about me, sir?" gasped Fearless. "If so, I'm here—and if you want to know, sir, I haven't been anywhere near the gates this afternoon!"

The Head gave a violent, spasmodic start.

"B-bless my sole!" he stuttered. "It's Fearless himself! This is simply eggstraordinary—amazing! My deductions were flawless—my clues infallible! And yet it seems that something must have gone wrong with the works!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter. Mr. Fearless and Mr. Lickham couldn't help it. Dr. Birchmall skowled.

"Look here—" he snorted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a slooth!"

"What a defective detective!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said the Head crossly; and he went back into the Skool House looking fearfully annoyed.

But St. Sam's had not heard the last of Birchmall the detective. Nor, if he had only known it, had Frank Fearless heard the last of Hymer Kerr! (Look out for the rib-tickling sequel to this story, entitled: "His Sinister Visitor!" in next week's "Herald"!)

BUNTER'S "BLINDER" WON FORM GAME

Says VERNON-SMITH.

The odd thing about our prize porpoise, Bunter, is that you can't keep him out of the limelight.

When I started writing sports notes for the "Greyfriars Herald," it certainly never occurred to me that I should ever have occasion to mention his name. Yet, looking back on my files, I find that he has cropped up at least three times!

This week, it's quite impossible to leave him out, anyway. For, believe it or not, the fathead actually won a game for the Remove Eleven on Wednesday.

The circumstances, admittedly, were a little unusual.

Wingate had given orders that we were to fix up a game with the Third to give them a little experience of the game as it should be played. And Wharton, in view of the weakness of the opposition, had selected his team from those fellows in the Remove who were most in need of practice.

William George Bunter was included—naturally—and Bunter duly played.

It was a single innings match. The Third batted first and scored the impressive total of 145 runs before they were dismissed.

Against Third Form bowling the regular Remove team would have gone one better without any difficulty. But it was not the regular Remove team—very far from it, in fact! Out of the whole eleven, only two men made any sort of a show—Kipps and Trevor.

These two moderately good batsmen between them scored 90 runs—nearly double the score of all the rest put together.

Kipps' dismissal was followed by quite a procession of duck's eggs. Eventually, with 2 runs to go for a tie and 3 for a win, it was a case of last man in. And last man in was William George Bunter.

Trevor warned him when he came down to bat not to try to score. Bunter's reply to that was an emphatic "Rats!" and a loud sniff.

He crouched at his wicket, holding his bat at an alarming angle, and cheerfully prepared to swipe the ball right over the pavilion roof. Spectators groaned. I actually saw several Remove men avert their eyes—unable to bear the sight of his stumps being spreadeagled.

Tubb bowled a fast ball. Bunter whirled round his bat as though he was handling a baseball club and swiped at it for all he was worth.

I suppose there is no reason why miracles should not happen on the cricket field. One just doesn't expect them—that's all. A miracle happened all right on Little Side the next instant, anyway. Bunter's bat actually hit the ball, and the ball went sailing across to the boundary for four! And Bunter won the game for the Remove!

Play finished with that hit, so we had no further opportunity of seeing Bunter the batsman. The probability is that he would have been bowled out by the next ball.

But we won't detract from his feat. That "blinder" of his was the luckiest hit I have ever seen in a cricket match; but it won the game, and Bunter is entitled to all the kudos he can collect out of it.

Needless to say, he is not at all backward in collecting the same!



FAGS' NATIONAL SERVICE MUST BE STOPPED!

Declares TOM BROWN

Two nights ago, after prep., I was doing a little extra swot in readiness for the yearly exams, when a discordant shrieking and whistling fell on my ears. It was accompanied by a nerve-racking beating of tom-toms or something remarkably like tom-toms. Whatever it was, it soon put a stop to my swot. I shut up my books and went out to see what was the matter.

I traced the awful din to the Third Form-room.

Opening the door, I was confronted by the sight of a dozen or so fags blowing away at tin whistles, while three others played deafeningly on kettledrums. Tubb, who was conducting the fearful concert, obligingly rapped on a desk to stop them. "Want anything?" he asked innocently.

"I want you to stop that horrible racket before you drive me off my rocker—that's all," I replied. "What the dickens do you think you're doing, anyway?"

"National Service!" was Tubb's unexpected answer.

I blinked at him. "National Service? What the thump—"

"We're too young for the school cadet corps; so we're doing the next best thing by starting a drum-and-fife band," Tubb explained. "Jolly good wheeze, don't you think? When we've had enough practice we shall get permission to march in front of the corps."

Words failed me. I tottered away to the Rag and decided to give up swot for one night.

The following morning, I went down to my garden plot to see what progress my seed potatoes were making. You can imagine my emotions when I found a squad of Third Form kids blithely engaged in digging a deep hole in the middle of my potato-patch.

"You—you awful young vandals! What on earth do you think you're doing?" I shrieked. "My potatoes! My garden plot!"

"Sorry, old bean. Didn't know there was anything planted there," said Tubb calmly. "I took it to be waste land. We're on National Service, you see."

"Wha-a-a?"

"Getting our hand in at digging trenches," explained Tubb. "May be useful one day, you know. Still, I'm sorry we've messed up your plot. We'll fill it in again now!"

For a second time, I found myself speechless. My feelings, I can tell you, were far too deep for words.

This morning, the limit was reached. Crossing the quad, I happened to trip over a tree root. Before I could pick myself up, a horde of grubby fags swarmed over me, grabbed me by the ears, hair, legs and arms and rushed me away to the Fags' Sports Ground. There, they dropped me on the grass and started scragging me bald-headed!

After fighting desperately for about five minutes, I managed to get free.

"What the dickens are you young maniacs up to this time?" I gasped.

"No need to get your rag out, old chap," Tubb said, quite warmly. "It's National Service."

"N-n-national Service?"

"We're training in First Aid you see; so, of course, we like to try out our skill on any casualties we come across. If you'll just lie down quietly—"

I didn't. I fled instead!

And the only thing I want to say about the whole business is that the fags' contribution to National Service must be stopped.

Either that, or I won't be responsible for what happens!