

BIG MONEY PRIZES FOR BOYS! SEE INSIDE.

The Greyfriars
BOYS' HERALD

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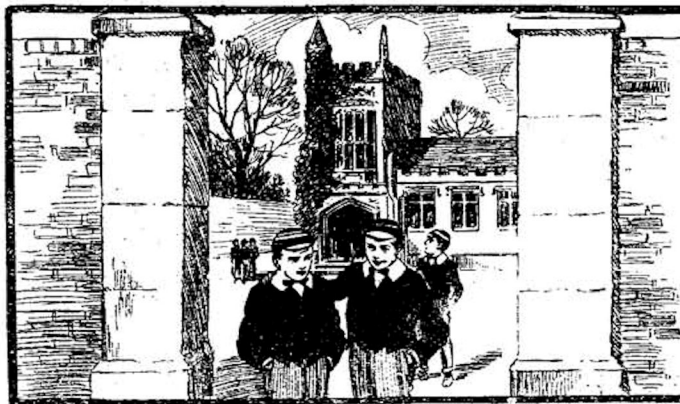
EVERY TUESDAY.

March 12, 1921.



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Dragging in Drake!

A Grand, Long Complete School Story introducing Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars.

Jack Drake is Wanted!
BUSY this afternoon, Drake?
 Jack Drake was loafing rather aimlessly in the quadrangle at Greyfriars, when Vernon-Smith came along. The Bouncer gave him a genial nod and a smile as he asked the question.

"Not in the least," answered Drake. "In fact, I'm at rather a loose end, Rodney's taking some extra 'toot' with Mossoo, and I was just wondering what I should do with the afternoon."

"Will you come along with me, then?"
 "Any-odd thing?" said Drake carelessly.

He was rather surprised, however. Vernon-Smith's own chum, Tom Redwing, was about the Schoolhouse; Drake had seen him only a few minutes before. Harry Wharton and Co. had just gone out on their bikes; and the Bouncer could certainly have joined the cycling party if he had liked. It was rather odd that he should come up specially to ask a fellow he hardly knew.

Drake had not been long at Greyfriars; and though he had come a good deal into contact with Smithy—who was rather a prominent member of the Remove—he had not had much to do with him personally.

In point of fact, he had not taken much of a liking to the Bouncer of Greyfriars. There was a steely hardness in Vernon-Smith, quite at variance with Drake's own good-natured, easy-going character. Smithy seemed to him a great deal older than his years; a great deal more worldly-wise than was quite the thing in a Lower Fourth fellow.

Still, he was friendly enough with the Bouncer, if it came to that, and quite willing to accept his company for the half holiday, especially as Dick Rodney was booked till tea-time.

Vernon-Smith gave a nod of satisfaction.

"You're just the fellow I want!" he said.

"Anything special on?" asked Drake.

"Yes, in a way."

"Well, I'm your man!"

"You've met some of the Highcliffe fellows?" remarked the Bouncer, as they sauntered together towards the gates.

"Ponsonby and Co.; yes," said Drake. "A rotten crowd. Wharton and I had a scrap with them near Courtfield the other day."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I've heard all about that," he said.

"You put up your hands in great style! And you've licked our champion bully, Bolsover major! You're the chap I want to stand by me, in case of trouble!"

Drake glanced at him, as they turned out at the gates.

"Are we going out looking for a scrap?" he asked.

"No; but trouble may loom up on the horizon. You're game?"

"Certainly; but I don't want to pick a quarrel with anybody," said Drake, pausing. "It's not my way to look for trouble."

"Nor mine," said the Bouncer.

"We're going to be as peaceable as doves; but if anybody goes for us—"

"Oh, that's all right," assented Drake, though he was perplexed.

He walked on by the Bouncer's side towards Courtfield.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Highcliffe School!"

"Oh! Then if there's a scrap, it will be with Ponsonby and Co.?" asked Drake.

"Exactly. I've got an account to settle with Ponsonby," the Bouncer explained.

"I'm going to settle it peaceably if possible. But if he cuts up rusty, I'd rather not be alone in the lions' den. Catch on?"

"I—I see. I should have thought you'd have asked Redwing to come!"

"I'd rather not in this instance."

"Oh, all right!" said Drake carelessly, though he was growing more and more puzzled.

"You'll see me through?" asked the Bouncer.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Good man!" said Vernon-Smith approvingly.

They walked on cheerily along the country road. Vernon-Smith did not seem communicative, and Drake did not care to ask him questions. They passed Courtfield; and as they came in sight of Highcliffe School, two juniors passed them in the road, and nodded to the Bouncer. Drake glanced at them rather curiously. They wore Highcliffe caps, but they were not members of the crowd he had seen with Cecil Ponsonby a few weeks before.

"Courtenay, and the Caterpillar," said Vernon-Smith, as they walked on. "They're two of the best, and very chummy with Wharton's crowd. Courtenay is Pon's cousin, but as different from him as chalk from cheese! But it's dear old Pon that we're going to see."

"He won't be glad to see me, after our scrap the other day," said Drake.

"He was a bit knocked about!"

"Oh, Pon can forget little things like that, when he likes," said the Bouncer, laughing. "You'll probably find him quite honeyed."

"Oh!" said Drake.

They turned in at the gates of Highcliffe, and were greeted with a stare by Monson and Drury, who were lounging near the gateway. Drake

recognised two of his adversaries in the scrap on Courtfield common; but he gave no sign. He had not come to look for trouble.

The Bouncer nodded pleasantly to the two.

"Pon in his quarters?" he asked.

"I believe so," answered Monson surlily. "I didn't expect to see you droppin' in here again, Smithy."

"Then it's an unexpected pleasure, isn't it?" smiled the Bouncer.

"I don't see where the pleasure comes in!"

"Neither do I!" remarked Drury.

"What I really like about these Highcliffe chaps," said the Bouncer, in a reflective sort of way, "is their polished manners. They make a fellow feel so at home. Come on, Drake!"

They walked across the quadrangle, leaving Monson and Drury staring after them in a far from friendly way.

"Ah! Vernon-Smith!" An oily, unpleasant voice greeted the Bouncer as he entered the house. A thin gentleman with a sharp nose and narrow eyes, greeted him with great cordiality. "My dear boy, I am delighted to see you at Highcliffe again."

Vernon-Smith shook hands with the little thin gentleman, in a very perfunctory manner.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Mobbs. This is Drake, a new chap at Greyfriars, sir—you may have heard the name," added the Bouncer, with a glimmer in his eyes. "The son of Mr. Drake, the Nigerian tin magnate."

Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, shook hands with Jack Drake, with great effusion. Evidently he was delighted to make the Greyfriars fellow's acquaintance.

"I suppose we can go up and see Ponsonby, sir," said Vernon-Smith.

"Most certainly, my dear boy."

Vernon-Smith led his companion up the big staircase. On the landing above, Drake paused and looked at him.

"What the thump did you mention that about my father for?" he asked.

"To make you welcome to Mr. Mobbs," said the Bouncer, with a grin. "He's a sneakin' little snob, you know, but it's just as well to keep on the right side of him. He hates me like poison, because he guesses I laugh at him in my sleeve, but he worships me at the same time, because my pater is a giddy millionaire. Nice little beast, what?"

Drake shrugged his shoulders impatiently. He disliked Mr. Mobbs at first sight, and he did not like to see a fellow so civil to a man he called a "sneakin' snob" and a "little beast."

Still, he was not there to criticise the Bouncer, and he followed his companion's lead in silence.

Vernon-Smith was evidently well acquainted with the place. He led Drake into the Fourth Form passage, exchanging nods with two or three fellows they met. He stopped at No. 5 Study, and tapped on the door.

"Who's there?" called out the voice of Cecil Ponsonby.

"Smithy!"

"Oh, gad! You can come in!"

The Bounder opened the door, and entered, followed by his companion.

A Surprise for Drake!

PONSONBY and Gadsby were in the study. They rose to their feet, and removed the cigarettes they were smoking, as the two Greyfriars juniors came in.

The two Highcliffe "blades" had been loafing in arm-chairs, smoking and talking "gee-gees," when the visitors arrived—a favourite topic with Ponsonby and Co.

"So you've come, Smithy?" said Ponsonby, with a curious stare at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"As you see, dear boy," answered Vernon-Smith easily.

"I hardly expected you."

"I told you that I should come."

"I don't see why you've brought Drake with you," said Ponsonby, with a dark look at the Bounder's companion.

Drake flushed uncomfortably.

He did not like Ponsonby, and the last time they had met, there had been an exchange of blows. Inwardly he felt exasperated with himself for having consented to accompany the Bounder at all. It was not the first time that he had found himself in an awkward position through saying an easy "Yes" when it would have been wiser to utter a decided "No."

"Drake's come to see me through," said the Bounder cheerfully. "My dear Pon, you're rather proud of being a man of the world—you've started early, an' got there—you've told me so. Let bygones be bygones."

"Yes, rather," said Gadsby. "What's the good of rakin' up old scores? Drake's welcome here, far as I'm concerned."

"Quite so," said Ponsonby smoothly. "But I don't quite see yet the hang of the thing. If you've dropped in like a pal, same as in old times, you're welcome, Smithy and so is your friend. If you've come for a row, you're welcome too—we'll give you all you want!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Nothing like being candid," he said. "I haven't come for a row—and I hope there won't be one. If there is, my friend is rather a dangerous customer. He's licked Bolsover major, and you know how hefty he is. But let's be pally."

"Good man!" said Gadsby.

"I'm willin'," said Ponsonby. "Sit down, an' talk. There's some chairs."

The Bounder stretched himself lazily in a chair. Jack Drake sat down, wishing himself anywhere else. He felt a sort of under-current beneath the talk he heard; but he could not guess what it portended. Under the outward show of civility, there was evidently hostility between the Bounder of Greyfriars and the nuts of Highcliffe.

"We were just talkin' about next Saturday's fixture, when you blew in," remarked Gadsby agreeably.

"Football match?" asked Drake, with some interest.

Gadsby stared at him, and then burst into a loud laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's good!" he said.

"I don't quite see—" began Drake.

"My dear chap," said the Bounder, "when you hear a fixture referred to in this study, it doesn't mean a game. Gaddy is referrin' to the race next Saturday!"

"Oh!" said Drake, and he coloured and was silent.

"Everybody seems to think that Bully Boy is goin' to romp home," said Gadsby. "Banks won't even give evens against him. But I've been thinkin' about Daisy-cutter! What's your opinion, Smithy? You used to be a regular wiseacre on this subject."

"That was in my thoughtless youth," said the Bounder gravely. "Now I don't know anythin' about such matters—and don't care. I haven't come here to talk gee-gees."

Drake was glad to hear that.

"Well, what have you come for, if you come to that?" asked Ponsonby restively.

"Last time we met, old bean, you cleared me out of—how much was it?" asked the Bounder.

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't remember trifles like that," he answered.

"It wasn't exactly a trifle!"

"Are you goin' to squeal about it?" sneered Ponsonby.

"Not at all. Only—as I mentioned—you queered the pitch—and you didn't win my money fairly," said the Bounder calmly. "In short, you cheated!"

Ponsonby sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"If you've come here for a row, Vernon-Smith—"

"I haven't! Sit down!"

"Then what do you mean?" demanded Ponsonby savagely.

"You offered me my revenge," said the Bounder calmly. "I've come for that!"

"If you want a game, you can say so plainly!"

"That's it! I've brought a fresh pack of cards—you can see the packet, unopened from the stationer's shop. Fair play on both sides," said the Bounder, with a smile. "There's the packet, you can look at it and satisfy yourself!"

"If you mean you suspect that there are marked cards in this study—" exclaimed Ponsonby furiously.

The Bounder made a soothing gesture.

"Dear man, I don't suspect—I know! What's the good of playin' the fool? If you are willin' to play on fair terms, there's the pack!"

"Of course I am! But—"

"Then lock the door, and let's get going!"

Ponsonby eyed him savagely for a moment or two; but his brow cleared. He was too instinctively a gambler to think of refusing the challenge. And although he was not above assisting fortune by ways that are dark, he had plenty of faith in his own skill and luck. He sat down at the table, and opened the cards.

"I'm your man!" he said.

Gadsby crossed to the door and locked it.

Jack Drake had sat in silence, hardly able to believe his ears. But as the cards slid out on the table, he rose abruptly, his eyes gleaming at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Do you mean to say that you've brought me here to take part in a gamble?" he demanded angrily.

"Not to take part—only to look on and see fair play!" explained the Bounder coolly.

"You utter rotter!" exclaimed Drake.

"Thanks!"

"Do you think I'll stay one minute?"

exclaimed Drake hotly. "I'm going now!"

Vernon-Smith looked at him squarely. "You've promised to see me through!" he said. "I want you to keep your word, Drake!"

"I—I—"

"Sit down and look on! If there's a row, you're bound to stand by me!" "You—you rotter! You fooled me into coming here," Drake's eyes blazed. "That's why you didn't bring Redwing—he wouldn't have a hand in your rotten games!"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Exactly! That's why I didn't bring Redwing—he wouldn't have a hand in my rotten games," he assented. "I'm not askin' you to have a hand—I'm askin' you to keep your word and stand by me if there's trouble. Sit down and look smilin'!"

Drake sank back into his chair.

He was furiously angry; but he felt that he was caught.

"I'll stay," he said. "But to-morrow, Vernon-Smith, you'll have to put up your hands for playing this trick on me!"

"To-morrow," said the Bounder cheerfully. "I'll put up my hands with pleasure, if you want me to. Ready, Ponsonby?"

Ponsonby laughed.

"Quite!" he answered.

"Cut for deal!"

A minute later a game of poker was in progress, with three players, and the fourth junior in the study sat and looked on with a black brow.

Draw Poker!

THREE cigarettes were sending little curls of blue smoke to the ceiling.

There was almost silence in the study, broken only by the shuffling of the cards, and occasional ejaculations. "Your deal! Cut! Pass!"—and so on.

Jack Drake looked on grimly.

It was a peculiar situation, and he was angry at finding himself there, bitterly angry with Vernon-Smith for having tricked him into such a position. But he could see that the Bounder had acted very wisely in not coming alone. The sharp greed in the faces of Ponsonby and Gadsby—growing sharper and more brutal as the game proceeded—revealed their character clearly enough.

Drake had heard some talk at Greyfriars of the Bounder's former dealings with Ponsonby and Co.—that he had gambled with them, and had been cheated of a considerable sum. It was believed in the Remove that Smithy had turned his back on such pursuits. But the thought of his lost cash haunted the Bounder—he was not satisfied to let the matter rest where it was. He was determined to make an attempt, at least, to get level; and if Ponsonby had refused him his revenge, Drake understood that there would have been a fight in the study. But Pon was too inveterate a gamester to refuse. But if the Bounder should win back his heavy losses—

Was it possible that Ponsonby, blackguard as he was, could be blackguard to turn to violence, then? Evidently the Bounder believed so; and he knew Cecil Ponsonby better than Drake did. In spite of his anger and disgust, Drake could not help taking an interest in the game he watched.

Vernon-Smith had laid a fat pocket-book on the table at his elbow; it was crammed with currency notes; and Pon's and Gaddy's eyes glittered greedily as they glanced at it. But Pon was a wealthy youth, and the pocket-book from which he drew

supplies was almost as well-filled as Smithy's.

Gadsby passed out of the game in a quarter of an hour—stony, as he declared. He sat and smoked and looked on. He was kind enough to offer his cigarette-case to Drake, who shook his head.

"Too naughty for you?" grinned Gadsby.

Drake shrugged his shoulders.

"Never smoked a fag?" asked Gadsby derisively.

"Yes, when I was as big a fool as you are!" answered Drake.

And after that reply, Gadsby made no further remarks.

The game went on steadily between Vernon-Smith and Ponsonby.

It was in the Bounder's favour.

He was a master of the game—he knew exactly what cards to discard or to draw—he never lost nerve for a moment, even when a large sum was in the "pot." And when he bluffed, he bluffed with an expressionless face that gave his opponent no clue. Ponsonby, on the other hand, was eager and excited, and in every respect no match for the iron-nerved Bounder. The larger the stakes, the more eager he grew—and losses and wins excited him equally—and now he was losing steadily.

A slight smile flickered over the Bounder's calm face.

With the new cards, which Pon was unable to tamper with, he had every advantage, and he used his advantages without mercy. The more Pon's nerves gained upon him, the cooler the Bounder seemed to grow.

There was hate and bitterness in Ponsonby's face, which was growing strangely old and evil in expression. The pocket-book beside him was growing thin now.

Already a wad of currency notes, and two fivers had passed over to the Bounder.

There came a tap at the door.

"Let a fellow in, dear boys," came Vavasour's voice.

Gadsby rose.

"Don't open the door!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Let Vav in, Gaddy!" said Ponsonby harshly.

Vernon-Smith rose quickly, and jerked the key from the locked door, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Look here, Smithy—" began Gadsby hotly.

"Vavasour can wait a bit!" said Vernon-Smith icily.

"There's enough in this study at present—two to two!"

"Do you think you're going to get mobbed?" hissed Ponsonby.

"I think it's likely!"

"You—you rotter!"

"Your deal!" said the Bounder imperturbably.

Ponsonby's fingers were trembling as he dealt the cards. If he lost again, it was the last round for him.

Vernon-Smith glanced at his hand.

"Any cards?" asked Ponsonby savagely.

"No. I don't draw any."

The game went on. Ponsonby scanned his own hand again and again. He had four queens and an ace, a powerful hand at poker. He had obtained the fourth queen in the draw. The Bounder had drawn none; which looked as if he had a strong hand, and would not risk spoiling it by trying to improve it. Ponsonby would have given much for a glimpse at the Bounder's hand. Gadsby strolled carelessly round behind Vernon-Smith's chair; and Smithy laid his cards face down on the table.

At every round, Vernon-Smith raised the stakes, until it cost his opponent five pounds to come in.

Ponsonby drew a five-pound note from his pocket-book—the last it contained. He hesitated. The Bounder's face was calm, and he was already detaching a fiver and a pound note, ready to throw in. Ponsonby put back the fiver into his pocket-book. His nerve failed. Evidently the Bounder had a hand too strong to be beaten even by his four queens. It was his last fiver, and he lacked the nerve to pay up and call.

"Pass!" he said thickly.

The Bounder, with a smile, reached out for the "pot," and calmly annexed its contents.

Calmly he stacked the paper money into his pocket-book, and slipped the latter into his pocket.

His cards remained face downwards on the table; he was not bound to show them, as Ponsonby had backed out.

"What's your hand?" asked Ponsonby, white with rage.

"You're inquisitive, old bean!"

Ponsonby, with a curse, reached across, seized the Bounder's cards, and threw them face up.

A savage exclamation left his lips as he looked at them. There were two threes, a four, a six and a seven, of different suits. The Bounder had bluffed him on a small pair! Ponsonby's hand would have beaten him hollow, if he had had the nerve to put up his stake.

That discovery was too much for Ponsonby.

He sprang to his feet, and reaching across the table, struck with his clenched hand full at the Bounder's smiling face.

A Fight at Highcliffe!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH sprang back just in time.

He was still smiling.

Ponsonby, over-reaching himself with the force of his blow, fell heavily across the table, scattering the cards right and left.

He gave a hoarse cry as he straightened up, his eyes blazing at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith laughed mockingly. "You should turn over a new leaf, Pon!" he remarked. "You really haven't the nerve for a gambler! Do you think you could have bluffed me like that? Not in your lifetime!"

"You—you hound!" muttered Ponsonby thickly.

"Now you're callin' names," said the Bounder, laughing. "You're a bad loser, Pon!"

Ponsonby stood breathing hard. All that was evil was in his look—hated, rage, bitterness. His face looked like that of an old man at that moment. Every line of youth seemed to have been blotted out.

He crossed the room unsteadily, and put his back to the door.

"You've done me!" he said.

"You've nearly cleaned me out!"

"I came here to clean you out!" said the Bounder. "I knew I could do it if the cards weren't marked, old bean!"

"Do you think you are gettin' away with the money?" hissed Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

"I knew that was coming! Yes; I think I'm getting away with the money!"

Ponsonby's hand fumbled with the lock. He had forgotten for the moment, that Smithy had taken out the key. Outside, in the passage, was a murmur of voices. Vavasour was there with Monson and Merton and Drury. They were waiting angrily for admission to the study, and they were aware that there was trouble on.

"Why don't you let us in?" came Monson's voice through the keyhole.

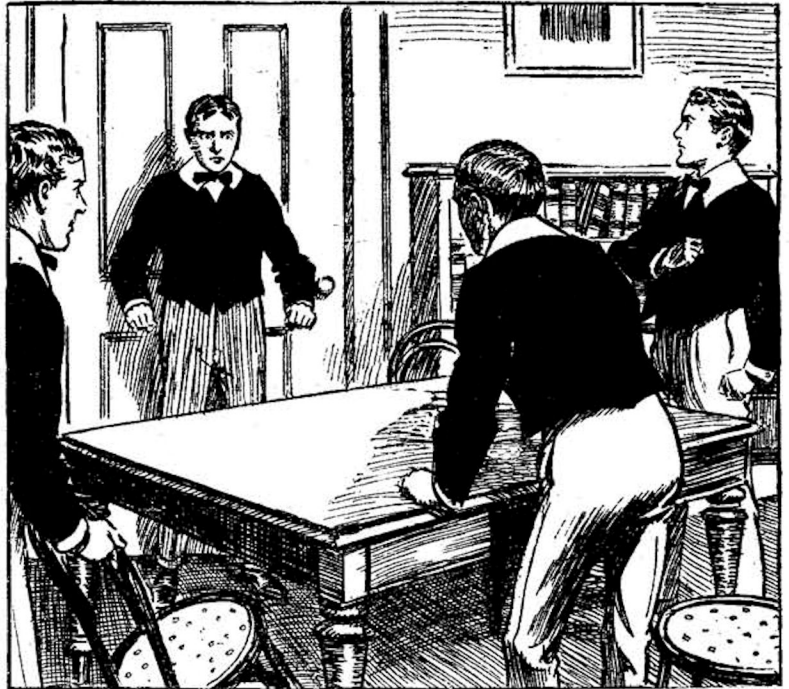
"That cad Smithy's got the key," answered Gadsby.

"Take it away from him, then!"

Vernon-Smith looked at Drake, who rose to his feet. Jack Drake had been a spectator hitherto; but he was wanted now. Alone in the lions' den, it was pretty clear what would have happened to Herbert Vernon-Smith, good fighting-man as he was.

"We've got to get out of this, Drake," said the Bounder lightly.

"The sooner the better!" growled Drake. "Open the door!"



Ponsonby crossed the room unsteadily, and put his back to the door. "You've done me," he said, facing the Bounder. "You've nearly cleaned me out!" "I came here to clean you out!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You're not goin' yet!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth. "You're goin' to hand back the money you've welshed me of, Smithy!"

"Welshed you, dear boy?" the Bounder laughed. "You're dreamin', but I suppose you're so used to welshin' in this study that you forget. Will you get away from that door, Pon?"

Ponsonby, instead of replying, called through the door.

"You fellows out there—"

"Hallo!"

"Rush in as soon as the door's opened!"

"You bet!" answered Monson.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"We're up against it, Drake, old top," said the Bounder coolly. "Feelin' nervy?"

Drake laughed contemptuously.

"This crowd wouldn't make me nervy, if there were a dozen of them," he answered. "You're a rotter and a blackguard, Vernon-Smith; but I'm standing by you till you're clear of Highcliffe. After that you've got to deal with me!"

"I shall be pleased, dear boy!"

"Let's get out!" growled Drake.

Ponsonby stood aside from the door, his eyes burning.

The Bounder inserted the key, and turned it, and coolly threw the door wide open.

There was a rush of the four juniors outside into the study.

"Shut the door!" said Ponsonby hastily.

But there was no time to shut the door.

Vernon-Smith, with Jack Drake by his side, came towards the doorway with a rush; and in a moment a terrific combat was raging.

Ponsonby and Co. piled on the two Greyfriars juniors like cats.

But they had to deal with adversaries much tougher than themselves, and though heavy odds were in their favour, Jack Drake drove his way through into the passage.

There was a yell from the study behind him.

"Rescue!"

Vernon-Smith was rolling on the floor in the grasp of Ponsonby, Monson and Gadsby. Jack Drake turned back instantly. With a rush he came back into the study, hitting out right and left.

Ponsonby and Gadsby rolled over on the carpet, yelling. Monson jumped away, with a howl, before he was hit.

The Bounder scrambled up.

Vavasour and Merton and Drury were in the way, but they scattered under the charge of the two Greyfriars juniors, and Drake and Vernon-Smith gained the passage.

They ran along quickly to the head of the stairs, with Ponsonby and Co. trooping out of the study in pursuit.

Vernon-Smith stopped on the stairs, coolly, and looked back.

"All serene here," he said. "A scrap on the stairs would bring the prefects up. Pon doesn't want that."

The Bounder was right. There was a limit to Pon's nerve. Half-way down the first flight of stairs, Vernon-Smith and Drake looked back at the crowd of dishevelled nuts, who had halted on the landing.

"Come on!" called out the Bounder invitingly. "Come on, Pon, old bean, and I'll roll you down the stairs and surprise Mr. Mobbs."

Ponsonby panted.

He dared not carry his attack further. Already several juniors in the lower passage were staring up curiously. Far below, in the hall, Langley of the Sixth, was seen passing. The Bounder knew that he was safe now, and he smiled

mockingly at the baffled Highcliffians.

"Won't you come?" he asked.

"Wait—wait a bit!" said Ponsonby, in a choking voice. "My time will come, you rotter!"

And he turned back and strode away to his study, followed by his comrades.

The Bounder laughed.

"The giddy entertainment's over," he said. "Come on, Drake—the dear boys are done with us."

He strolled carelessly down the stairs.

On the lower landing the two juniors paused to put their collars and ties straight, and then they descended the lower staircase. Langley of the Sixth, was lounging in the hall, and he glanced at them, but didn't speak.

The two Removites sauntered out into the quadrangle.

"Don't you feel like a giddy Daniel just out of the lions' den?" grinned the Bounder, as they walked down to the gates.

Drake did not reply.

He had kept his word to the Bounder and stood by him in rather a tight corner. But he was angry and disgusted at the whole affair, and he was grimly resolved to call Herbert Vernon-Smith to account.

They turned out at the gates and came face to face with Courtenay and De Courcy who were coming in.

"Hallo, Smithy!" said Courtenay. "I didn't know you were coming to Highcliffe."

"Just dropped in for a chat with Pon!" answered Vernon-Smith. "I brought Drake over to introduce—a new chap in the Remove. Drake, Courtenay and De Courcy."

The two Highcliffe fellows greeted Drake cordially enough. But the Caterpillar eyed the Bounder rather curiously.

"What's been goin' on?" he asked.

"Have you been pluggin' in the merry old style in Pon's study? There's a wicked look in your eye, Smithy!"

Courtenay frowned.

"Better ask Pon!" said the Bounder lightly. "If you've got any stickin' plaster to spare, you might lend him some. He needs it!"

He passed on with Drake, leaving the Caterpillar smiling and Frank Courtenay frowning very thoughtfully. Jack Drake's face was flushed, as he walked along the Courtfield road with Vernon-Smith. He stopped, at a hundred yards from the Highcliffe gates.

"You're all right now?" he said.

"Quite!"

"Good-bye, then!"

"Aren't you goin' to walk back to Greyfriars with me?" asked the Bounder, raising his eyebrows.

Drake's eyes glistened.

"No! You've taken a rotten advantage of me. Those two fellows—Courtenay and De Courcy—will soon know what's happened in Ponsonby's study—"

"Sure too! The Caterpillar will drop in and ask questions," assented Smithy.

"They'll know what we came for," said Drake bitterly. "I've heard about those two chaps, and I respect them. I'd have liked them to respect me, if they knew anything about me. Now they're going to think that I'm as rotten a blackguard as you or Ponsonby."

"Draw it mild," said the Bounder quietly. "I'm not exactly like Pon. I was fool enough to play the goat, and he swindled me. I was determined to get my own back. It's not really in my line, now."

Drake laughed scoffingly.

"Why didn't you ask Redwing or

Wharton, or Bob Cherry, to come with you and see you through?" he demanded.

"They wouldn't have come."

"You mean, they'd have guessed what was on, and refused to soil their hands in it."

"Well, yes. I suppose that's what I mean."

"And you picked on me as a new fellow who didn't know your ways so well, and made me a party to your rotten game!"

The Bounder flushed a little.

"Perhaps it was rather thick," he admitted. "But I wanted a chap with me who could use his hands—and you filled the bill! Redwing had refused point-blank to come—Bob Cherry would probably have dotted me on the nose if I'd asked him. So I asked you!"

Drake drew a deep breath.

"You're a blackguard!" he said. "I'm going to lick you to-morrow, Vernon-Smith! Till then, keep your distance from me!"

And Drake turned on his heel and strode away.

The Bounder looked after him for a few moments, his brow clouded. Perhaps there was something of shame in his hard face. Vernon-Smith was not much given to considering others; he had simply used Drake, and he had done it without compunction. But he was feeling a little compunction now. He walked on very slowly to Greyfriars, and did not arrive there till some time after Jack Drake had gone in.

He came into his study in the Remove passage, and found his study-mate, Tom Redwing, there—not alone. Dick Rodney was waiting in the study. The Bounder guessed what he was there for. Rodney's face was cold and grim.

"I've been waiting for you, Vernon-Smith," he said.

"Sorry!" yawned the Bounder.

"From, Drake?"

"Yes. I'm his second, and I suppose Redwing will be yours?"

"Quite so!" said the Bounder.

"That is, if Redwing consents."

Redwing gave him a rather troubled look.

"I consent, of course," he said.

"Good! Then settle it between you," smiled the Bounder. "Any time and place will suit me."

And he left the study again. His face had hardened, and his eyes glittered. He was booked for a conflict with Drake—the fellow who had beaten Bolsover major in a fair fight. It was not an easy ordeal that awaited him on the morrow. The Bounder knew that it might very well mean defeat—and defeat was bitter to him. What a fool the fellow was to make such a fuss over—what? Little or nothing, the Bounder considered. And if he was beaten—He gritted his teeth. At that moment the Bounder of Greyfriars felt that he hated Jack Drake. It was then that the bitterness was implanted in his breast, which was to bring forth black and bitter fruit in the near future.

That evening, all the Remove knew that Jack Drake and Herbert Vernon-Smith were booked for a scrap on the morrow; and great was the interest the Remove took in the affair. And every fellow in the Remove determined to be present when the great event came off.

THE END.

Another grand long story of the chums of Greyfriars School next week. Make a point of ordering your "Boys' Herald" EARLY.