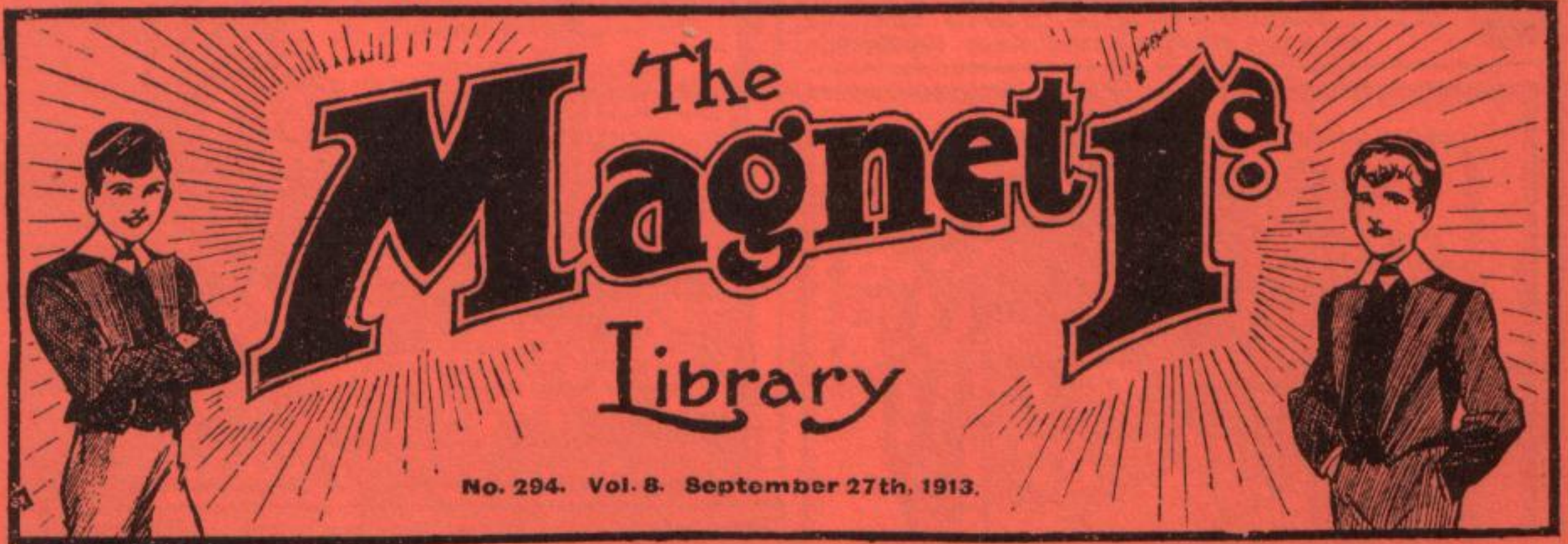


# BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!

A Grand, Complete Tale of School Life at Greyfriars.



No. 294. Vol. 8. September 27th. 1913.



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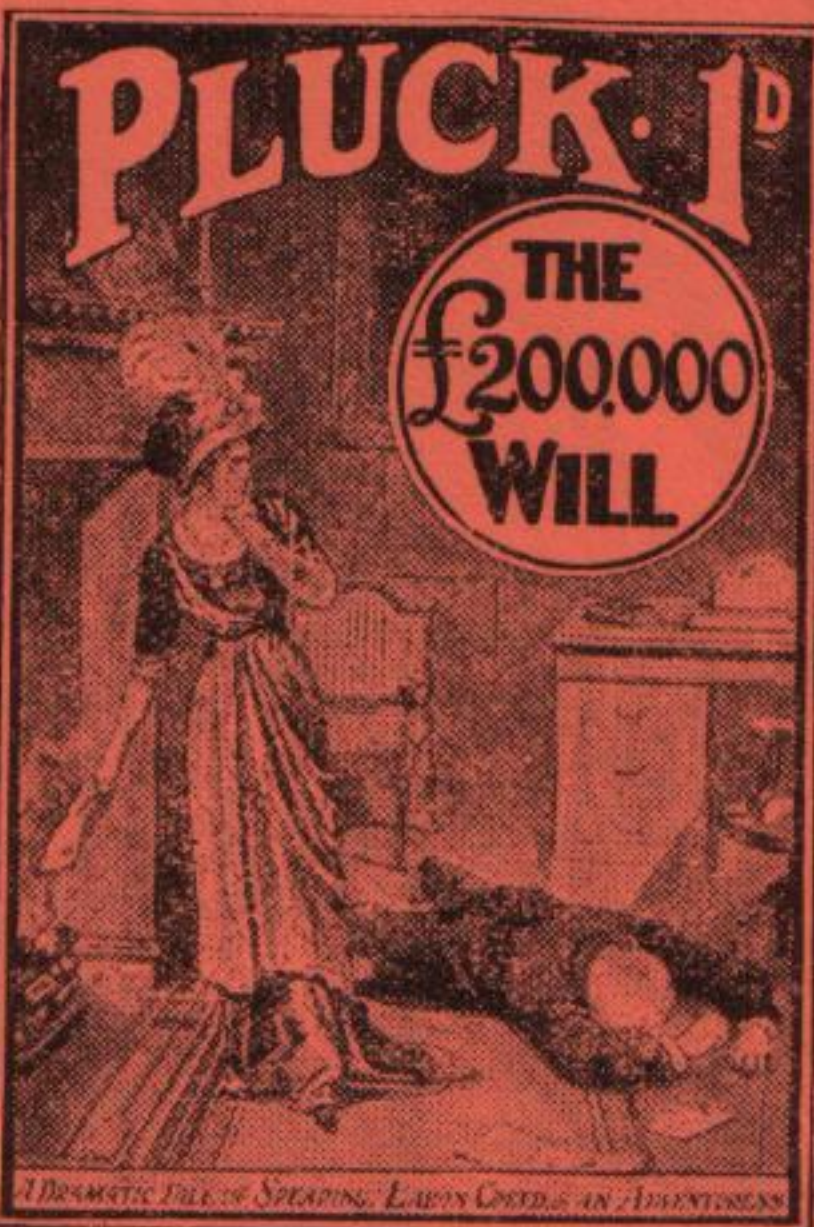


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# Bravo the Bunder!

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Adventures of Harry Wharton  
& Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Smith minor held on for more than a minute, and Harry Wharton whispered instructions to him. Then the voice of Ponsonby came through at last. "Hallo, that you, Pon?" asked Smith minor, making his voice as like the Bunder's hard, metallic tones as he could. (See Chapter 12.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Nugent Loses His Temper!

"WHICH of you chaps is going to lend me a bike?" Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, propounded that query, and waited for a reply. He was allowed to wait.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, were in the bike-shed, getting their machines ready. Bob Cherry was persuading a recently-twisted pedal to resume its normal shape. Nugent was mending a puncture, and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were standing over him and giving him advice. Nugent was listening to their advice, because, having ears, he could not help it. But he replied only with grunts, which did not sound grateful.

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway, and propounded his query. The fat junior was in Norfolk jacket and knickers, and his plump legs seemed to be on the point of bursting out of his highly-coloured hose. He blinked through his big spectacles at one after another of the five juniors; but no one replied to his questions. Perhaps they regarded it as a problem, and gave it up.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're going over to Lantham to see the footer match?" said Bunter.

"Yes," said Harry Wharton tersely.

"I'm going, too!"

"Start now," said Bob Cherry.

"I haven't a bike. Which of you fellows is going to lend me a bike?"

"Would you like me to lend you mine, and stay at home myself?" asked Johnny Bull, with crushing sarcasm.

But the sarcasm was quite lost on Billy Bunter. His fat face brightened up at once.

"Thanks, Bull!" he exclaimed. "That's very decent of you. I say, if you're going to stay at home, you can do my lines for me. I've got fifty lines of the rotten *Henriade* to do for Mossoo!"

"Go and eat coke!" said Johnny Bull politely.

"Well, I've got to go, you know," said Bunter. "I was going to hire a bike for the afternoon; but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and, as it happens, I'm hard up. Can I have your bike, Wharton?"

"Yes, and I'll walk—I don't think," said Harry Wharton.

"Will you lend me your bike, Bob, old fellow?"

"No, I won't," said Bob Cherry. "But if you call me 'Bob, old fellow' again, I'll lend you a thick ear!"

"Can I have your bike, Inky?"

"It would be an esteemed pleasure to lend you my bike," said the Nabob of Bhanipur; "but I shall requirefully need it myself, my worthy fat Bunter!"

"I say, Franky, old chap," said Bunter, turning to Nugent. "I suppose you don't mind if I use your bike? I'll mend that puncture for you. I'm a dab at mending punctures!"

Nugent grunted.

"I'd put on a bit more solution, if I were you," said Bunter, blinking down at the work of repair, over which Frank Nugent was growing very red and warm, and less good-tempered than usual. "You can't mend punctures!"

Nugent snorted.

"Better put on some more solution," urged Bunter. "Take my tip. I know more about mending punctures than you do!"

"Shut up!" roared Nugent, breaking into speech at last.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Well, I'm only giving you advice. You're making a muck of it. Put on some more solution, and don't be a silly ass. You have to use plenty of solution."

Frank Nugent rose to his feet, and seized Billy Bunter's hair with his left hand, and with his right squeezed out the solution over Bunter's fat face. Billy Bunter gave a roar.

"Ow! Wow! What are you doing, you ass?"  
 "I'm putting on plenty of solution," snorted Nugent, rubbing it in with his hand. "Now you buzz off! If you jaw to me again, I'll put it down the back of your neck. I've got two silly chumps giving me advice already!"

"Groooogh!"  
 Billy Bunter dabbed furiously at the stickiness on his fat face. Nugent bent down to his task again, his pent-up feelings a little relieved. Billy Bunter snorted and dabbed, and dabbed and snorted, while the juniors chuckled.

"You—you rotter! Ow! You beast! Grooh! I'm all sticky! Yah! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "I'll give you a licking for that, Frank Nugent! Yow! Ow!"

"I'll give you some more if you don't get out!" growled Nugent.

Billy Bunter glared at him. Nugent was stooping, with his back to Billy Bunter. He had not expected the worm to turn. But the stickiness on his face made Bunter furious—and the worm turned! He charged at Nugent, and rushed him over. The bicycle went over with a crash, and Nugent sprawled across it, with the loose tube in his hands. There was a rending sound, and the last state of that puncture was worse than the first.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bunter, in his turn.  
 "Yaroo!" yelled Nugent. "Oh!"

Bunter dashed out of the bike-shed, and fled for his life. Nugent scrambled off the sprawling bicycle, and jumped up, seeing red. The inner tube was hopelessly torn, and it was clear that that puncture would never be mended. Nugent glared round for Bunter.

"Where is he? I'll slaughter him! I'll scalp him! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "What are you cackling at, you silly asses?" yelled Nugent.

"Where's that fat villain?"  
 "He's gone!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Did you expect him to wait?"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Nugent rushed towards the door. Vernon-Smith of the Remove was just entering as he reached it, and Nugent rushed into him. Vernon-Smith, the youth who was known as the Bounder of Greyfriars, reeled back under the shock; but he caught at Nugent, and dragged him down in his fall. They rolled over on the ground; and the Bounder, getting uppermost, sat upon Nugent's chest.

"What's the game?" he asked, as he pinned Nugent down with his weight. "What did you knock me over for, you idiot?"

"Lemme gerrup!"  
 "No hurry!" drawled the Bounder. "You haven't explained yet what you knocked me over for!"

Nugent was not in a humour for explanations. He struggled furiously to throw the Bounder off. But that was not easy to do. The Bounder of Greyfriars was a match for him at any time, and he had the advantage now. He settled himself more firmly upon Nugent's chest, and grinned down at him mockingly. Vernon-Smith could see that Nugent was in a desperate hurry about something, and it amused his peculiar nature to worry him.

"No go!" he said. "What's the hurry?"  
 "Let me get up, you rotter!"

"Not till you ask civilly."  
 "Drag him off, you fellows!" yelled Nugent to his chums, who were grinning out of the doorway of the bike-shed.

"Hands off!" said the Bounder. "Fair play's a jewel. Nugent knocked me over, and he's got to ask civilly before I let him up!"

Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated. Certainly there was some reason in what the Bounder said. Frank Nugent was not displaying his usual "sweet reasonableness."

"Are you going to yank him off?" yelled Nugent.  
 "Wharton—Bob—drag him off, I tell you, you rotters!"

"Get off, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, coming out of the shed. "I shall have to biff you off if you don't!"

Bob meant what he said, and Vernon-Smith rose to his feet. Nugent gasped for breath, and scrambled up, furious. The mending of that troublesome puncture had irritated him first, and Bunter's attack had turned his irritation into rage, and the Bounder's action had given the finishing touch. Nugent's eyes were blazing with rage as he leaped up, and swung towards the Bounder. Vernon-Smith regarded him with a mocking grin; but that grin faded from his face the next moment. Right upon the grinning countenance came Frank Nugent's open hand with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Smack!  
 The Bounder staggered back.  
 "Now I'll come into the gym. with you if you like, with or without gloves!" exclaimed Nugent, panting.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
 The Bounder Funks!

VERNON-SMITH'S hard, keen face had flushed sudden crimson; then it became pale, save for the red mark where the blow had fallen. He looked for a moment as if he would spring upon Nugent; but he restrained himself. He panted for breath, his very hands trembling and shaking with rage.

"Come on!" shouted Nugent. "Here, or in the gym., just as you like!"

The Bounder stepped back.  
 "I'm not going to fight you," he said.

Nugent stared at him blankly. Vernon-Smith's character was full of kinks. He was a rank outsider in many things. He smoked, he gambled, he was a blackguard of the first water; he was not to be depended on by friend or foe. But no one had ever suspected him of being a coward. Indeed, his reckless hardihood was a proverb in the school. The Bounder was always ready for any dangerous enterprise, from which even a courageous fellow might have shrunk.

Yet there he stood, with the mark of Nugent's blow burning on his cheek, with his hands down—unwilling to avenge himself.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nugent. "You're not afraid, I suppose?"

The Bounder's lip curled in a bitter sneer.  
 "No; I'm not afraid!"

"Then come into the gym."  
 "I won't!"

"We'll fight it out here, then, without gloves!"  
 "We won't!" said Vernon-Smith, with grim coolness.

"I'm not going to fight you!"  
 Nugent's stare of amazement became hard and scornful.

"You don't want to fight?"  
 "No!"

"After I've hit you?"  
 "Exactly!"

Nugent shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.  
 "Well, you can please yourself, of course. Blessed if I knew you were a funk before."

The Bounder crimsoned again.  
 "I'll show you another time that I'm not a funk," he said.

"At present, you can think what you like about it. That's all I've got to say."

And without another glance at Nugent, the Bounder went into the bicycle-shed, and began to examine his machine. The Bounder, too, was evidently going on a ride that afternoon. He did not take any further notice of the chums of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. were silent and uncomfortable. Nugent, whose blaze of temper had died away a little, looked somewhat ashamed. That blow in the face had not been called for, though the Bounder had certainly been very exasperating. It was not like Frank to lose his temper, and hit out recklessly, and he would have recalled that blow if he could have done so. But as that was impossible, he gave an angry growl, and went back to his bicycle.

"That tube's done for," said Harry Wharton quietly—so very quietly that Nugent recognised the reproach in his voice, and he knew that his chums disapproved of his action in striking the Bounder.

"Oh, blow the tube!" growled Nugent.  
 "Better shove a new one in. I've got a new one you can have."

"All right."  
 "There's time before dinner," said Wharton, looking at his watch, "and we don't have to start till half an hour after dinner, anyway, to get to Lantham in time for the Ramblers' match."

"I'll get it done now!" said Nugent.

The Bounder had finished his scrutiny of his machine, and

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"Yow—ow—you want to break my neck! Yow! Stop! I'm falling!" Billy Bunter swayed and gasped, and flung his arms round Nugent's neck for safety. "My word!" roared Bob Cherry. "Get clear, chaps, they'll be over!" (See Chapter 5.)

was going towards the door again, when he caught Wharton's words. He turned round sharply.

"Are you going to Lantham this afternoon?" he asked quickly.

"Yes," said Wharton. "There's a good footer-match on—the Lantham Ramblers and the top club of the county league. It will be worth seeing!"

"It's a jolly long way," said Vernon-Smith.

"Good weather for a spin on bikes," said Harry.

"That where you're going, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry. Vernon-Smith was not on good terms with the Famous Five, by any means, but Bob felt that he ought to be civil, to make up for Nugent's conduct. "Might ride along with us."

"Thanks," said the Bounder, "I'd rather not. But what is there at Lantham that you want to see specially? Simply the footer-match?"

"That's all," said Harry. "Only there's been some talk about a new player in the Lantham Club—a schoolboy who has been doing wonderful things for them, so we feel a bit interested to see him."

"A schoolboy!" repeated Vernon-Smith.

"Yes."

"Know his name?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. I've heard him mentioned, that's all. A Redclyffe fellow told me he'd seen him play—a kid not more than

fifteen, who was best in the bunch. That ought to be worth seeing—if it's true."

"What about your own footer?"

"Well, I suppose we can cut play for one afternoon, to see a really good match?" said Harry, surprised by the interest the Bounder seemed to take in the matter. "Besides—Lantham Ramblers are playing our first eleven next week, and I'd like to see them play. I've never seen a match of theirs. If you've got nothing better to do, you could come over and watch."

"I've got something better to do, thanks. How many of you going?"

"Us five. The other chaps don't seem to care to travel so far to see a match."

"Shows their sense!"

"Thanks!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, and walked out of the bike-shed. Wharton glanced after him in some astonishment.

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if the Bounder doesn't want us to go!" he exclaimed. "I don't see that it can matter to him."

"Oh, hang the Bounder!" grunted Nugent, who was busy with his tyre. "And I don't see why you wanted to ask him to come with us. He's no friend of ours!"

"Well, it was up to some of us to be civil, anyway," said Wharton, a little tartly.

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"Oh, I know what you mean; you are down on me because I punched him!" snapped Nugent.

"If you want to know my opinion, you needn't have been quite so free with your hands," said Harry.

"If he didn't like it, he could have punched me, I suppose. I wasn't to know that he was a funk."

"He isn't a funk!"

"Yet he let his face be slapped for nothing."

"I don't quite understand it. There's something else in it—I don't understand the boulder lately. I suppose he's got something special on this afternoon, and doesn't want a fight on his hands. I know he goes out every half-holiday immediately after dinner on his bike, and doesn't come back till calling-over."

"Playing cards at the Cross Keys, most likely!" growled Nugent. "He's taken to doing it in the afternoon instead of sneaking out of the dormitory at night, as he used to."

"Maybe."

Nugent grunted, and did not speak again. He finished replacing the tyre, and the chums of the Remove left the bike-shed, and went into the schoolhouse to dinner.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Dangerous Funk!

"FUNK!"

Two or three voices called out that epithet as the Boulder came towards the house, and he started and flushed.

He realised that other eyes must have seen the incident in the bike-shed, when he had taken Nugent's hasty blow without returning it.

A group of juniors were standing in the doorway, grinning at him. Billy Bunter was among them. Bunter had watched the scene from a distance, and so had two or three other Removites.

"I say, Smithy, is it true what Bunter says?" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Not likely, if Bunter says it," said Vernon-Smith.

"Faith, and that's thue!" said Micky Desmond. "It's the champion Ananias he is entirely. He says Nugent smacked your face, Smithy darling!"

"Oh, that's true!" said the Boulder calmly.

"And you didn't hit him back?" said Bolsover major.

"That's true, too!"

Bolsover snorted. He was Vernon-Smith's friend, but he did not trouble to disguise his opinion on the subject.

"Why didn't you wipe the ground with him?" he demanded.

"I had my reasons."

"I guess we can get on to the reasons," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder guess you were scared, eh?"

"Funk!" giggled Bunter.

The juniors looked at the Boulder. If he allowed Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, to call him a funk, he must be a funk indeed. The Boulder glanced at Bunter, and walked on into the house.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bolsover major. "That takes the cake. He never used to be a funk, I know that."

"I guess he's got a white liver," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Rotten funk!" said Ogilvy. "Fancy letting Bunter check him!"

"Well, he knows I'm a pretty good fighting-man," said Billy Bunter, strutting a little. "I shouldn't stand any nonsense from Smithy, I can tell you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I could lick Smithy, and he knows it. That's why he's so jolly quiet."

"Oh, rats!" growled Bolsover major.

"Well, he's a funk right enough," said Hazeldene. "He wouldn't stand being called one if he wasn't. I wonder what's come over him."

And most of the Remove were wondering, too, as they went in to dinner. Vernon-Smith took his place at the table with his usual calmness. The opinion of his Form-fellows did not seem to disturb him in any way.

And that was very odd, for Vernon-Smith was known to want, more than anything else, to make himself popular in the Remove.

He was Harry Wharton's rival for the leadership of the Form, and he had made more than one attempt to oust him from the captaincy of the Remove.

Of late, feeling between them had been bitter. Wharton,

as captain of the Form, was skipper of the Remove football team. And, in spite of Vernon-Smith's well-known qualities as a player, Wharton declined to play him in the eleven.

Wharton had his reasons—good reasons. Vernon-Smith could not be content with second place. He had been tried more than once, and at each trial he had been found wanting. He had no sense of discipline, and he would coolly flout his captain's directions even in the course of the game. As there could be only one captain in a team, Wharton had no choice but to leave him out.

Many of the Remove fellows, who knew Vernon-Smith to be a first-class player, had remonstrated with the Form captain. But Wharton was adamant. He replied that he had tried it more than once, and it had failed. The last time was during the cricket season, and then he had had to order Smithy off the field, and thus sacrifice a wicket. Wharton said bluntly that if the Form wanted Vernon-Smith to skipper the team they could say so, and he would resign the captaincy at once. He was quite ready to do that, but he was not ready to play a fellow who took pleasure in contradicting and flouting his skipper.

It was Vernon-Smith's own fault, and he knew it; but that did not make it any the more pleasant for him. He was as good a footballer as Wharton himself—better, in his own opinion. But he was out of the Form eleven, and had no chance whatever of getting into it. Poorer players were put in the front line, but they were players who knew the value of combination, and did not seek to get all the lime-light for themselves. An average team pulling well together will always beat a team of geniuses, each with whom goes out for glory on his own.

Wharton was sorry for that state of affairs himself. In more than one tough match he would have been glad of the help of the Boulder's lightning speed and his deadly shooting. But what was the use of a player who would take big risks in a kick for goal, when it was plain to everybody on the field that he ought to pass?

Vernon-Smith's friends urged his claims, but most of the fellows felt that Wharton was right—especially the fellows who had played in the forward line with him, and had been deprived of certain chances by his selfish tactics.

The Boulder had, indeed, ceased to press his claims of late. On half-holidays he had fallen into the habit of going out by himself, and staying out the whole afternoon. Even his own pals did not know where he went, and there was a considerable amount of curiosity on the subject.

But some of the Boulder's little ways were only too well known, and the juniors mostly suspected that he went to secret card-parties, or, perhaps, to the racecourse.

But on other occasions he was assiduous in footer practice, and the whole school knew what splendid form he was in.

Billy Bunter watched the Boulder through his big spectacles as he ate his dinner. In Bunter's mind there was no doubt that the incident at the bike-shed proved that Vernon-Smith was a hopeless funk. It hadn't been suspected before, but it was evidently the case—so Bunter considered. And an idea was working in the fat junior's mind, founded upon that supposition.

When dinner was over, and most of the Remove went out into the Close, the Boulder went up to his study. Billy Bunter followed him there.

Bunter entered the study without the ceremony of knocking. Vernon-Smith was fastening a cord to a parcel secured with straps. It was a bundle to be tied on the handle-bars of his bicycle. He looked round irritably at Bunter.

"What do you want?" he rapped out.

"Going out this afternoon, Smithy?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"Off to Lantham?"

"Mind your own business!"

"None of your cheek!" said Bunter, in a threatening tone. "I'm not taking any of your jaw, Smithy! Mind that!"

The Boulder stared at him. Few fellows cared to quarrel with the Boulder as a rule. Even Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, never adopted a bullying tone towards him. For Bunter to adopt it was a surprise—Bunter, who was the champion funk, and had been known to allow himself to be licked by a Third Form fag.

"Are you dotty?" said the Boulder.

"Once for all, none of your cheek!" said Bunter, in a still more bullying tone. "I don't stand cheek from anybody, let alone a funk."

"Oh!" said the Boulder.

"I'm going over to Lantham this afternoon," said Bunter. "I'm going to see the match there."

A peculiar gleam came into Vernon-Smith's eyes.

"Yes?" he said.

"Those rotters in Study No. 1 are going, and they don't want me, but I'm going all the same. They're going to

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have a feed there after the game, and I'm going to be at that feed. I want somebody to lend me a bike."

"Well?"

"Will you lend me yours?"

The Bounder stared.

"I'm going out on it myself," he replied.

"Now, look here!" said Bunter, clenching his fat fists and coming a pace nearer to the Bounder. "I don't want any of your nonsense! You're going to lend me your bike, or—"

"Or what?" asked Veron-Smith.

"Or I'm going to give you the licking of your life," said Bunter, pushing back his cuffs. "Now, you can take your choice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith burst into a yell of laughter. Bunter's little round eyes blinked angrily behind his spectacles.

"Stop that cackling!" he said. "Are you going to lend me your bike, or shall I have to lick you first and take the bike afterwards?"

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

"Then take that!" shouted Bunter furiously. And he lunged out with a podgy fist at the Bounder's face.

If Nugent had been able to punch the Bounder without retaliation, there was no reason why Bunter shouldn't—so the fat junior worked it out in his mind. But there seemed to be something wrong in his calculations, somehow. For the Bounder knocked the podgy fist aside, and sprang at Bunter, and knocked him right and left. Bunter was not a fighting-man. He reeled to and fro blindly under the driving blows, and crashed down on the floor, with a yell of pain and terror.

"Ow—ow—ow! Yow! Stop it! Chuck it! Ow! I won't take the bike! Yaw—oh! I was only j-j-joking, you know! Yah! Ow!"

"You mustn't come to my study to make your little jokes," grinned the Bounder.

"Yow! Ow! Leggo! Help!" yelled Bunter.

Vernon-Smith did not let go. He grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and swung him out of the study. Then he kicked him along the passage. Bunter fled wildly, but the Bounder kept pace, dribbling Bunter along the passage as if he were a very fat and unwieldy football. Billy Bunter's yells rang through the Remove passage.

"Yah—yah! Oh! Help! Murder! Fire! Yah!"

He reached the stairs, and a last kick sent him rolling down them. Wingate of the Sixth came dashing up the stairs to see what the uproar was about. He was just in time to meet Bunter. The fat junior threw his arms round the neck of the captain of Greyfriars, and clung to him wildly.

"Ow—ow—ow! Keep him off! Yow!"

"Let go, you fat idiot!" growled Wingate. "Smith, what are you bullying Bunter for?"

"I'm not bullying him," said the Bounder. "He came to my study and started to lick me, and I suppose I wasn't bound to take it lying down?"

"Ow—ow! Yow! I thought he was a funk—I mean, I didn't do anything of the sort!" howled Bunter. "Ow—ow! I'm hurt!"

Wingate laughed.

"So you were going to lick him because you thought he was a funk, you fat cad!" he said.

"Ow! Nugent licked him—Ow! And I thought—Yow! I don't want his rotten bike—Ow! Beast! Ow! Leggo my ear, Wingate!" shrieked Bunter.

Wingate let go his ear, but not till he had given it a squeeze between finger and thumb which made Bunter yell madly.

"Now shut up!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "If you make any more row I'll come and look for you with a cane!"

And Billy Bunter had to still the voice of his anguish. He rolled away mumbling, and with an inward, fervent resolve never to tackle any fellow again until he was quite sure that he was really a funk.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Betrayed to the Enemy!

**V**ERNON-SMITH came out of the School House with his bundle swinging lightly in his hand. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were on the steps, chatting football.

It was not one of their own matches, as it happened, that interested the chums of the Remove just then. When they had not a specially important match of their own close at hand, they condescended to take an interest in senior games. And all Greyfriars, as a matter of fact, was very keen about the Lantham match with Greyfriars First the next week. Greyfriars First Eleven, selected from the Sixth and the Fifth, captained by Wingate, had already won honours on the footer field that season. But it was quite possible that they would meet their Waterloo when they

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played the Lantham Ramblers. It was known that George Wingate was very hard at work with the team, keeping them up to steady practice, and endlessly impressing upon them the necessity of being at the very top notch of fitness when they met the team from Lantham.

Vernon-Smith paused as he heard what the chums of the Remove were saying. The Lantham players seemed to have a very special interest for him, somehow. Somewhere out in the Close a fag's voice piped "Funk!" at the sight of Vernon-Smith, but he did not appear to notice it.

"Cutting the practice this afternoon?" Vernon-Smith remarked.

"I told you so," said Harry. "We're going over to Lantham."

"Chance for you to get up a scratch match," said Bob Cherry. "You can have the ground, and you could easily make up a couple of elevens."

"I'm going out."

"Going over to play at Highcliffe? Might as well play here."

Bob Cherry frowned a little as he spoke. The Bounder was on the friendliest terms with the juniors of Highcliffe school, who were at daggers drawn with the rest of the Greyfriars fellows. Feeling was very high between them, but the Bounder did not care for that. Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe, were fellows after his own heart, and in Ponsonby's study at Highcliffe, within locked doors, the Bounder had enjoyed many a surreptitious game of nap for sixpenny points, with cigarettes as an accompaniment. The Highcliffe fellows prided themselves upon being "dogs" and "nuts," though in doggishness and nuttiness they did not equal the Bounder. And Vernon-Smith had often played for them in their matches, Ponsonby & Co. being too doggish to excel at footer, and being very glad to get at least one good player in their ranks. Bob Cherry had an immense contempt for the pasty, weedy "nuts" of Highcliffe, which he never troubled to conceal, especially when he was in their presence.

"I'm not going to Highcliffe!" said the Bounder. "I'm not playing for them now."

"Glad to hear it."

"I shouldn't have played for them at all if my own Form here had wanted me," said the Bounder. "Fellow must play somewhere, and they were glad to have me. I don't get a chance to play for the Remove, and I can't play for the fags, I suppose?"

Wharton made an uncomfortable movement.

"Well, you know how it is, Smithy," he said. "If the Remove liked to make you skipper I'd play in the team if you wanted me, and obey orders. If I didn't approve of your lead I'd keep my head shut about it, or get out of the team. You won't do that!"

"I don't say I haven't made mistakes," said the Bounder, with unexpected mildness. "But I haven't had a chance since the cricket. You haven't tried me at footer."

"What would be the use? It would be too late to stop the damage, when you chucked a match away by keeping the ball to yourself all the time, and by shoving yourself in the way of the man that ought to have it."

The Bounder laughed.

"You don't think I might realise that, and go one better?" he asked.

"I don't think a leopard can change his spots," said Wharton shortly.

"I'm as good a man as you could get in the team."

"I know that," said Wharton, at once. "I know you're top-hole when you choose. But you don't always choose, and a football skipper's business is to play men who can be relied on all the time. I don't mind playing you when we're meeting the Third, and I've said so. But in the matches that count in our season's record, it can't be done."

"Can't be helped, Smithy," said Bob Cherry kindly. "You simply can't play up, you know. You never will give the other fellows a look-in."

The Bounder grinned.

"You don't think I could—eh?"

"Well, no. Honestly, I don't think you could," said Wharton. "It's not in you. With the Highcliffe fellows it's different. They're such rotten players, it's a good thing for them to get a chap who plays the whole game off his own bat. But in a good footer team every man knows his place. I'm sorry—as sorry as you may be. I'd like to play you when we meet Redclyffe—you'd be useful—but it can't be done."

"Well, that's plain enough," said the Bounder calmly. "I'm not wanted here. Perhaps the school will be made to see some day that they've got a good footballer in the Remove, though I'm not given a chance to show it. When are you fellows starting?"

"Half-past two."

"That won't give you much time to get to Lantham before the match, if you take the road."

"We shall go by the short cut over the moor. It's a bit rough in places, but it saves miles."

"Oh, I see! Well, so long!"

The Bounder nodded, and walked away. A few minutes later he was seen wheeling his bicycle out into the road, with the bundle bound on the handle-bars. Wharton's brow wore a perplexed frown as the Bounder disappeared out of the school gates.

"What a blessed lot of interest he takes in our going to Lantham," he said. "I wonder why he cares twopence whether we go or not?"

"May be going there himself," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Then why can't he say so?"

"Blessed if I know. He's always got something up his sleeve. You never know what he's doing, excepting that it's most likely something crooked. Though I should have thought that if he was going to Lantham he'd take a pal with him for that long ride."

The Bounder mounted his machine in the road, and pedalled away towards Friardale. He rode down the old village street, and stopped at the post-office. Leaving his bicycle leaning outside the post-office, he went in, and entered the telephone-box. There was a peculiar grin on the Bounder's face as he took up the receiver. Bob Cherry was quite right in his surmise that the Bounder was generally up to something, and that it was generally something "crooked."

"Hallo, hallo!"

"What number, please?"

"Highcliffe. One-nought!"

It was not the first time the Bounder had communicated with his friends at Highcliffe School by means of the post-office telephone. Indeed, he had been known to enter the Head's study at Greyfriars—during the Head's absence, of course—and talk to Ponsonby over the wires with the Head's own telephone.

"Hallo!" came along the wire.

"Is that Highcliffe School?"

"Yes. Who is that?"

"Greyfriars. I want to speak to Master Ponsonby, Fourth Form. Tell him Vernon-Smith, Greyfriars," said the Bounder. "If Ponsonby isn't there, Gadsby or Vavasour will do."

"Very well. Hold on a minute!"

The Bounder waited. At Highcliffe, which was a more expensive and "swagger" school than Greyfriars, there was a telephone in the common-room. In a minute or less came a well-known voice along the wire.

"Hallo! Is that you, Smithy?"

"Yes. That Ponsonby?"

"You bet! What is it; got a new tip for the Redclyffe Races?"

"Not this time. Busy this afternoon?"

"No. Bored to death, dear boy. Thinkin' of goin' out and pickin' a row with the council school kids in Courtfield," drawled Ponsonby's voice.

"I can put you on to something better than that."

"Good egg! What is it—card-party up the river?"

"No, no. You want to get even with Wharton for the lickin' that crowd gave you?"

"Pile in!"

"They're going over to Lantham to-day."

"What a fag!"

"They're going by the bridle-path over the moor, to save time. Lonely place, you know," pursued the Bounder.

"Oh! Go on! How many of them?"

"Five."

"I know the five—rotten outsiders!" said Ponsonby, with a touch of eagerness in his drawling voice. "Sure there's only five?"

"Quite sure! If you took a dozen chaps——"

"Enough said, my dear boy. When are they startin'?"

"Half-past two!"

"Then we've lots of time."

"Plenty."

"Smithy, old fellow, you're a trump! You can rely on us to make the great and magnificent Wharton hop. We'll go in force, and ambush the rotters. We'll smash up their bikes, and duck them in the lake, and make 'em wish they'd never been born. Thanks!"

"Pile it on 'em as hard as you can!" said the Bounder. "I want them to be prevented from going to Lantham. I've got good reasons. They might find out things. Savvy?"

There was the sound of a chuckle over the wire.

"Naughty!" said Ponsonby. "Goin' to meet bookies—h? Immoral Smithy!"

"Well, never mind what I'm going for. I don't want those rads there. If they don't get to Lantham to-day I'll stand a stunning feed at the place you know of down the river—all your set, and everything top-hole!"

"Done!"

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"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! And put a quid on for me if it's a sure thing!"

The Bounder grinned, and rang off. It was not racing he had in his mind that afternoon. But whatever his object might be in visiting Lantham he was pretty safe from observation by Harry Wharton & Co. He felt that he could rely upon Ponsonby not to let pass that golden opportunity of paying off old scores.

The Bounder left the post-office, and remounted his bicycle, and rode away, taking the short cut to Lantham, with a contented grin on his hard face.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Behind!

"I SAY, you fellows, I'm coming, you know."

Half-past two had sounded from the clock-tower, and the Famous Five had wheeled out their bicycles.

It was a bright, clear autumn day. Billy Bunter rolled into the way of the chums of the Remove as they wheeled the machines down to the gates. He kept a wary eye upon Frank Nugent; but Nugent was quite his old sunny and good-tempered self again now. His tempers were rare, and they never lasted long.

"Oh! You're coming, are you?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Yes. I think it's pretty caddish of you to go back on an old pal. Look here, I don't mind riding behind one of you! I'll stand on the foot-rests."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Bunter. "I'm a handy chap, and I could do it easily enough. You know how active I am."

"Oh, my hat! My dear fatty, your weight on the foot-rests would burst the tyre if it was made of cast-iron."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I'll try it if you like," said Nugent, with a grin. "I've got a new tube in, and it might stand it. If you can stand on the foot-rests, you can come on my bike. I'll give you a lift as long as you can stick on."

"Good egg!" said Bunter, promptly.

The juniors grinned as they wheeled their machines out into the road. Billy Bunter had no doubts about his powers of sticking on behind Nugent—but the other fellows doubted very much. Nugent mounted his bicycle, and rested a hand on Wharton's shoulder while the Owl of the Remove clambered on behind.

There were foot-rests on either side of the rear wheel, and Bunter planted his big feet on them firmly. Then he laid his fat hands on Nugent's shoulders.

"That's all right," he said.

"Don't hug me round the neck," growled Nugent. "You'll have both of us down if you do. Keep steady."

"I'm steady enough. If you can't ride I'll take the saddle, if you like, and you can stand up behind me," said Bunter.

"Rats!"

And they started.

Bunter's enormous weight was something to pull—and he did not keep steady. His fat bulk swayed from side to side, and Nugent yelled to him to hold tight and steady himself. His grip upon Nugent's shoulders was like the grip of a steel vice.

Nugent put on more speed to keep steady.

The other fellows rode round him, grinning.

They had expected Bunter to tumble off in the first few yards—but Billy Bunter had great sticking powers.

Nugent began to look dismayed. The prospect of dragging Bunter's heavy weight all the way to Lantham was not enticing, especially as there were some hills to be negotiated further on. He had made the suggestion as a joke, but it looked like turning out a serious matter for him.

But he had said he would do it, if Bunter could stick on—and he was a fellow of his word.

He laboured on manfully at the pedals.

Half way to Friardale there was a dip in the road, and the cycles gathered speed. The five riders rushed down the slope free-wheeling. The keen rush of the air past him made Billy Bunter gasp.

"I say you fellows, not so quick!" he shouted.

"Rats!"

"I—I say, put the brake on, Nugent."

Nugent snorted.

"Yes; I'm likely to put the brake on downhill, and then drag you uphill!" he said.

"Look here, I'm not going to be rushed along like this," howled Bunter. "If you don't put the brake on I won't come with you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"



The bicycles were flying now. Bunter clung madly to Nugent as he swayed.

"I call it rotten!" he roared. "You press a fellow to come with you, and then you treat him like this! I call it disgusting."

"Like to get off?" asked Nugent, "I've had enough, if you have."

"Ow! I won't get off. I should have to walk back to Greyfriars! Ow!"

"You could sit down here till we come home from Lantham, and then I'd give you a lift!" Bob Cherry suggested, humorously.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

Bump! Nugent's bicycle bumped on a stone, and nearly skidded. He righted it, and sped on, with Bunter swaying wildly. The fat junior yelled with terror.

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Nugent's neck for safety. His weight dragged the junior over to one side.

"Get clear!" roared Bob Cherry.

The cyclists swerved out of the way just in time, as Frank Nugent and his passenger went over. There was a crash and a clang, and the bike spread itself on the road, and Nugent sprawled beside it, and Bunter rolled into the ditch.

"Oh, you maniac!" hooted Nugent.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

The cyclists stopped and jumped down. Nugent leaped to his feet. Bunter was roaring from the ditch, and Nugent let

him roar. His first thought was for his machine. He dragged it up and examined it anxiously. One of the pedals was bent, and needed straightening out before the machine could be ridden again. Nugent growled and set to work, while Billy Bunter roared from the ditch like a bull.

Fortunately for Bunter, the ditch was a dry one—but it was full of ferns and nettles. There were more ferns than nettles, but it seemed to Bunter that there were more nettles than ferns. He didn't notice the ferns at all—but the nettles insisted upon being noticed.

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "You beasts! Help! Get me out! Yow! I'm stung! Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior rolled frantically in the bed of nettles. Harry Wharton & Co., almost choking with laughter, ran to help him out. They grasped the fat junior by his arms, his legs, his ears, and with a combined effort landed him in the road, gasping like a newly-captured fish.

Billy Bunter sat up in the dust and roared.

"Ow! Ow! I'm hurt! I'm stung! Beasts! Yaroo!"

"Lucky there's no bones broken," grinned Bob Cherry. "Your fat saved you, Bunter."

"Yow! Yow! Yow! I've broken my leg—and my rib—and my neck—yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was still sitting in the dust, his dulcet voice raised in anguish, when Nugent finished straightening his bent pedal and remounted. The chums of the Remove had lost time, and they had no more to lose. They rode along up the lane at top speed.

"I say, you fellows—yow—help me up!" snorted Bunter. "I've decided to come, after all—but I'm jolly well going to ride, Nugent, and you can stand behind. Ow!"

There was no reply to the fat junior's remarks. Five scorching forms were disappearing in the direction of Friardale.

Bunter blinked round in surprise.

"I say, you fellows—why—what—oh, you rotters, you've gone, have you?" Bunter jumped up, forgetful of his broken leg and ribs and neck. "Oh, you rotters! I say, come back!"

The cyclists vanished.

"Yah! Rotters!" howled Bunter, shaking a fat fist after them. "Yah! Beasts!"

And the dusty and exasperated Owl of the Remove tramped away towards Greyfriars, while the Famous Five sped merrily on their way.



"Pile in on 'em as hard as you can," said the Bunder. "I want them to be prevented from going to Lantham. I've got good reasons—they might find out things. Savvy?" There was the sound of a chuckle over the wire.

(See Chapter 4.)

"Yah! Ow! Let me get down, you rotter! You're trying to kill me! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop, you beast! Yah! I won't come with you now. I wouldn't come if you asked me on your bended knees!" howled Bunter. "I decline to go with you! Yah! Lemme get down."

"Wait till we come to the level," chuckled Nugent. "I can't stop on a slope, fathead, with a ton weight on my bike."

"Yow-ow—you want to break my neck! Yow! Stop! I'm falling!"

"Oh, stick on, and shut up."

"Yaroo!"

Bunter swayed and gasped, and flung his arms round

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

## In the Hands of the Enemy.

THE Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove enjoyed that spin.

It was a sunny afternoon with a cool breeze behind them from the sea, and the five bicycles ran swiftly and merrily on their way. A long, white, dusty road, and then narrow, leafy lanes, and then the ferny, sedgy moor stretched before the five riders. On their left now rose the great mass of the Black Pike, shutting them off from the sea. Round them was heather and clumps of trees.

"Three miles more to Lantham," said Harry Wharton, looking at his watch as he rode. "We shall be in good time if we keep up this speed."

"The goodfulness will be terrific, my worthy chum."

"Haven't seen anything of the Bounder," Bob Cherry remarked. "I wonder if he came this way."

"Well, he was an hour ahead of us, if he did. Hullo! What's that? Shove your brakes on!" Wharton exclaimed, suddenly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's a rope across the road."

The juniors were going at top speed. Before them the rough road over the moor ran between two large shadowy trees, both of which were surrounded by clumps of thickets, deep and shady. Across the path, from tree to tree, a rope stretched, at a height of about a foot from the ground. If the cyclists had ridden into it at high speed, there might have been a very unpleasant accident.

But the rope was plain enough to be seen, and the riders had ample time to put on the brake and slacken down.

"Some idiotic practical joker," said Wharton, angrily. "Why, if that rope were left there after dark a cyclist might break his neck over it."

"Some silly ass that wants a hiding," growled Johnny Bull.

The cyclists jumped down, and Bob felt for his pocket-knife to cut through the rope. He intended to cut it through in a good many places, so that it could not be used again for the same purpose. But before he could get the knife out—just as the cyclists stood by their machines as they had jumped off—there was a shout in the thickets on the left side of the road.

"Rush 'em!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo——"

"Highcliffe cads!" shouted Wharton. "Line up!"

From the thickets came Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, with a rush, and six of his comrades were behind him. But seven to five was not long odds, considering the respective qualities of the two parties, and Harry Wharton & Co. lined up to face the rush with cool confidence.

"Come on, you rotters!" roared Bob Cherry. "Black eyes are cheap to-day, and thick ears going for a song. Pile in."

"Rush the cads over," said Ponsonby.

"Not so easy!" grinned Wharton. "That's for a start!"

And as the two parties met he delivered a doughty upper cut that flung Ponsonby bodily back into the bushes, where he crashed and lay groaning.

Six Highcliffe fellows closed in strife with the Greyfriars five, and they struggled and trampled furiously to and fro.

But even as the Greyfriars fellows closed with their enemies, there was another rush from the thicket on the right-hand side of the road.

Six more Highcliffians were dashing to the attack from behind.

In the excitement and confusion of the moment the Greyfriars fellows did not even see the new enemy until the latter were upon them.

Then they understood Ponsonby's trick.

He had a dozen fellows with him, and he had divided his forces on either side of the road, and while Harry Wharton & Co. were engaged with the first half the second party took them in the rear.

The odds were great, and the attack from behind made the struggle hopeless.

An arm was flung round the neck of each of the Greyfriars juniors from behind, and he was dragged backwards to the ground.

They went down, their foes in front still clinging to them.

Then the fight was over.

Each of the Removites of Greyfriars on the ground had a couple or more of the enemy upon him, and they were pinned down helplessly.

But the victory was not easy, nearly every one of the Highcliffians had marks to show of the swift and heavy fists of the captured juniors.

Ponsonby came limping out of the thickets, holding his chin in his hand, and gasping for breath, his eyes glittering with rage.

"Got 'em!" he said between his teeth.

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The Greyfriars' juniors glared defiance.

"Yah! Cads!"

"Cowards!"

"Fair play, you rotters!"

"You don't dare stand up to us man to man!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The cowardfulness of the esteemed Ponsonby is terrific!" Ponsonby grinned.

"This isn't a fight!" he said loftily. "This is a ragging. We are sorry to soil our hands on you. But we are going to teach you a lesson. You Greyfriar kids are too cheeky. This is where you get it in the neck!"

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"We'll put them through it now!" chuckled Gadsby. "They gave us a warm time last time we met. One good turn deserves another. What?"

"Just what I was thinkin'," said Monson. "There's the pond quite handy behind the trees yonder."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And they can walk home to Greyfriars afterwards," said Ponsonby. "I'm afraid those tyres are going to be punctured—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffians laughed in chorus. They had their old enemies helplessly in their hands now, and they rejoiced. Harry Wharton & Co. looked rueful. The Highcliffe fellows prided themselves upon their extremely high and "classy" tone, but as a matter of fact they had a great deal of the hooligan in them. Fair play was a thing that never entered into their calculations. The chums of Greyfriars had a bad time in store, and they realised it.

"Look here, you chaps!" exclaimed Wharton. "Draw it mild. You're too many for us, and we give you best. Let the bikes alone! It's a dirty, caddish trick to destroy property!"

"The caddishfulness is terrific, my worthy and ludicrous Ponsonby!" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"We're going to Lantham to see the Ramblers' match there," went on Wharton. "We've got no time to lose. Now, be decent, if you can!"

"I fancy you won't get to Lantham this afternoon," said Ponsonby, coolly; "we are going to send you home, like naughty boys."

"Look here——"

"I fear I haven't time for the pleasure of a talk with you, dear boy. Have you got your penknife, Merton?"

"What-ho!" said Merton.

"Jab it into the tyres!"

"You bet!" said Merton. "Watch me!"

He opened a little silver-handled penknife and calmly jabbed the blade into the tyres of the bicycles. The Greyfriars' juniors simply writhed with rage at that wanton destruction of their property. It was not only the trouble of having to wheel the disabled bicycles home that they were thinking of. It was the damage to the tyres, for even after those gashes were mended the tyres would certainly never be the same again. Merton was doing his work with a heavy hand.

"You rotten cads!" said Wharton between his teeth. "We'll make you pay for those tyres."

"You can sneak to the headmaster, if you like!" said Ponsonby airily. As a matter of fact, Ponsonby would have been willing to pay for the tyres if he could have had the pleasure of forcing the Greyfriars fellows to "sneak." It was a thing they would never do, and he knew it.

"There! I think they will take some time to mend," said Merton, closing his elegant penknife and returning it to his pocket.

"Take out their repairing outfits and chuck them into the pond!" said Ponsonby.

And that was done. Any chance of repairing the tyres and continuing the journey to Lantham was ended then. Ponsonby was keeping his word to Vernon-Smith. It was extremely improbable that the Greyfriars juniors would turn up in Lantham in time to see the Ramblers' match.

"And now duck the cads!" said Ponsonby.

Harry Wharton & Co struggled furiously as they were dragged towards the pond. But the enemy were too many for them, and the struggle was hopeless.

One after another they were tossed into the muddy pond.

The Highcliffians stood looking on, with roars of laughter, as they clambered out, wet and draggled and muddy.

"Now I think we're finished here!" said Ponsonby, with a chuckle. "Anything more we can do for you, Wharton?" Wharton gouged mud out of his eyes.

"I'll make you sorry for all this!" he said between his teeth.

The Highcliffians grinned gleefully. Never had they scored so completely over their old enemies. They had suffered many defeats at the hands of Harry Wharton & Co.,

but their turn had come at last, and they were certainly making the most of it.

"We'll make you pay for those tyres and beg pardon on your knees!" said Wharton.

"You're welcome, if you can do it," said Ponsonby, chuckling. "Now you can go home."

"We'll please ourselves about that!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"No, you won't! You'll please me!" said Ponsonby. "You're going back the way you've come, or you'll go into the pond again!"

The Greyfriars fellows exchanged glances. They were powerless.

"After all, it's no good going to Lantham now," said Bob Cherry. "The match has started, and it would be pretty nearly finished by the time we got there. We've got to walk."

Wharton nodded.

"Come on!"

And the Greyfriars juniors, picking up their disabled machines, wheeled them away in the direction of home. The Highcliffians stood and watched them go, roaring with laughter.

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## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Not Joyful!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. marched on in silence for a long time.

The laughter of the Highcliffe fellows died away in the distance behind. The deflated machines bumped wearily over the rough ground as the juniors pushed them onward. The Co. were in a state of mingled fury and dismay. They had been defeated by the enemies they despised. There was nothing disgraceful in a defeat by such long odds, but it rankled deeply. They were accustomed, as it were, to play lion to the Highcliffe jackal, but in this case the jackals had been too many for the lion.

"Well, this is a go!" said Bob Cherry at last; and the Nabob of Bhanipur murmured dismally that the gofulness was terrific.

"Well, this is a go!" said Bob Cherry at last; and the Bull. "That's the worst bit—to be licked by a set of rotten funks!"

"Well, five can't lick thirteen," said Wharton. "But we'll make them sorry for it. I'll make Ponsonby stand a set of new tyres, somehow!"

"Serve him right if we told the Head!" snapped Nugent. "They've no right to destroy property. That's quite beyond a rag."

"Some of these blessed tyres are past mending!" said Johnny Bull. "Look at these on my bike. They're in tatters!"

"Ponsonby shall pay for them! But, I say—" Wharton paused for a moment, and a gleam came into his eyes as he went on: "Wasn't it queer that the Highcliffe cads should be there, all ready to drop on us? They must have known that we were going to Lantham."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"My hat! I didn't think of that! But they must. They must have known that we were coming, and that we were on bikes; they had the rope across the road all ready. They couldn't have brought that rope with them by chance; they must have been prepared for this when they left Highcliffe."

"Jolly queer!" said Johnny Bull. "How on earth did they know?"

"There's only one way they could have known," said Wharton. "Somebody told them."

And all the other fellows at once uttered the same name:

"Smithy!"

"Yes, Smithy!" said Wharton. "You remember how keen he was about our trip this afternoon; he had some reason for not wanting us to go. I don't know what his reason was, but he wanted us to stop away from Lantham. You all noticed that."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"But how could he have got word to them?" said Nugent. "If he's gone to Lantham himself, his road doesn't lie anywhere near Highcliffe."

"Might have met one of them and sent a message."

"Do you think he'd be such an awful cad—to give away his own side to the enemy?"

Wharton smiled bitterly.

"He's cad enough for anything, I think. And they're not his enemies—he's very thick with Ponsonby & Co."

"That's true. We'll tackle him about it."

"But why on earth should he take all that trouble to keep us away from Lantham?" said Bob Cherry. "What can it matter to him whether we go there or not?"

"I don't know; but I know he was keen about it. He may be mixed up in some betting over the Ramblers' match—"

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it's a big enough match to have the bookies there. They're playing the top club of the County League to-day, you know. Might have been afraid that we should find out something—though I don't see how we could find him out to be a bigger blackguard than we know he is already."

"If it was Smithy gave us away—"

"We'll make the cad sorry for it."

"I don't see how we are going to prove it," said Nugent. "I was feeling sorry I punched him to-day. I wish I'd punched harder."

The juniors tramped on grimly.

They had a good many miles to walk home, and the deflated bicycles were not easy to push on a rough road. Their clothes were wet and sticking to them. But for the warm exercise of walking they would certainly have caught cold. They came out into the Friardale Road at last, and pushed on towards Greyfriars.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove came in sight from the direction of the school. He was mounted upon a bicycle, which the juniors recognised as belonging to Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove. It was a very handsome "jigger." Billy Bunter jammed on the brake as he caught sight of the Removites.

"My aunt!" he exclaimed, with a giggle. "You look wrecks, you fellows!"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Haven't you been to Lantham?" asked Burton.

"No."

"Had an accident?" chuckled Bunter.

"We met the Highcliffe cads!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat rotter?" demanded Bob Cherry, as Bunter slid from his bicycle and roared with merriment.

"He, he, he! You look wet! You don't mean to say you let the Highcliffe cads lick you?" giggled Bunter.

"There's a dozen of them!"

"Pity you didn't have me with you after all!" grinned Bunter. "I'd have helped you. They wouldn't have licked me so easily."

"You fat duffer!"

"Then you haven't seen the match," said Burton. "Never mind; I'll tell you all about it when I get back. I'm going to Lantham. My friend Mauly has lent me his bike."

"You won't get there before it's nearly over," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I don't want to see all of it. I don't care so very much for watching matches—I'm a player myself, not a looker-on," said Bunter loftily.

"Oh, rats!"

"Serves you fellows right for leaving me behind. I'd have protected you if I'd been with you. I'm jolly glad. He, he, he!"

"Oh, you're jolly glad, are you?" said Bob gruffly.

"Yes, I am. He, he, he!"

Bob laid his bicycle down in the road, with the evident intention of reducing Bunter's gladness on the spot. Bunter jumped hurriedly on Lord Mauleverer's machine, and pedalled away as fast as his fat little legs could go, before the indignant junior could get at him. He turned as soon as he was at a safe distance, and waved a fat hand at the group of damp and dusty juniors.

"Yah! Serve you right! I'm jolly glad! He, he, he!" he yelled.

Then he pedalled on contentedly.

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped on grimly. Their luck was out that afternoon, and even the Owl of the Remove had ventured to raise his heel against them. They were tired and somewhat "ratty" by the time they wheeled their bicycles in at the gates of Greyfriars, and there they found small comfort.

A crowd of fellows gathered round at once to watch the dusty pilgrims come in. Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were lounging outside the School House, and they greeted the unfortunate juniors with a howl of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "What a giddy sight! Where have you kids been?"

"Mud-collecting?" sniggered Potter.

"Boxing with a stray motor-car?" asked Greene.

"I guess you jays have been up against it," remarked Fisher F. Fish.

"Begad, yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer. "What ever has happened, my dear fellows?"

"Highcliffe rag!" grunted Wharton.

"Begad! It's rotten! You look wet!"

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"Perhaps that's because we are wet!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The wetfulness is terrific!" groaned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Quite a little crowd followed the hapless juniors to the bike-shed, to watch them put up their wrecked machines.

"So you haven't been to Lantham after all?" chuckled Bolsover major.

"No; we couldn't!"

"Faith, and it was a dirty trick intirely, to slash up the illigant tyres like that!" said Micky Desmond indignantly.

"Just like the Highcliffe cads!" said Mark Linley. "They ought to be made to pay for them!"

"We're going to manage that somehow," said Wharton.

"And we've got a bone to pick with the cad who gave us away to them. They were waiting for us on the road, and they knew we were coming. Some Greyfriars chap fixed it up for them!"

"Oh, rotten!"

"I say, that's rather thick!" said Tom Brown. "Who was it?"

"I believe it was Smithy. Any of you chaps know whether he used the Head's telephone before he went out? He often uses it."

"The Head was in his study then," said Russell.

"There's a public telephone at the post-office—and he went towards Friardale when he left here," remarked Peter Todd. Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"They know him at the post-office," he said. "I'll jolly soon find out whether he telephoned from there. Will one of you chaps lend me a jigger?"

"Yaas, take mine, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"You've lent yours to Bunter."

Lord Mauleverer looked astonished.

"Begad! I wasn't aware of it. Bunter asked me if he could have it, and I told him he couldn't, you know."

"We met him on the road riding it, and he said you had lent it to him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Begad!"

Billy Bunter had evidently borrowed the schoolboy earl's bicycle without the formality of obtaining the owner's consent. That was one of Bunter's little ways. The Co. changed their clothes, and washed off the mud and dust, and then Wharton rode down to Friardale on Russell's bicycle. His inquiry at the post-office did not take long—Vernon-Smith was well known there, and Wharton easily learned that he had used the public telephone that afternoon. He did not need any further proof, and he rode back to Greyfriars with a gleam in his eyes that boded ill for the Bounder.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Blow for Blow!

**V**ERNON-SMITH strolled towards the School House in the gathering dusk. He had put up his bicycle, and he had a bundle in his hand, just as he had taken it out with him.

The Bounder's afternoon excursion, wherever it had been, and for whatever purpose, was finished—and he had come back. He looked a little tired, but very cheerful, as if matters that afternoon had gone quite to his liking.

Bolsover major met him as he came in, and looked at him rather grimly. They were pals in a way; but Bolsover major had no mind to pal with a fellow who allowed himself to be called a funk. The Bounder nodded coolly.

"Just the fellow I want to see," he remarked.

"Oh," said Bolsover, "so you've got back!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"And got your bundle with you, as usual?"

"Yes, as usual."

"What on earth have you got in it?" demanded Bolsover.

"Things!" said the Bounder calmly.

"Oh, keep your blessed secret if you want to!" growled Bolsover. "Blessed if I know what you're so jolly mysterious about." And he turned away.

"Hold on," said Vernon-Smith. "I said I wanted to see you."

"Well, I don't know that I want to see you!" said Bolsover bluntly. "I don't like funks."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I want you to come with me to see Nugent."

"Eh? What for?"

"To see me punch his head, and then to be my second."

Bolsover stared at him.

"Changed your mind—eh?" he said.

"I haven't changed my mind. I didn't fight him this afternoon, because I didn't want to take a black eye with me when I went out—and I didn't want to risk being knocked out before my little excursion. I don't care if I get crocked now—plenty of time to pull round before Saturday afternoon.

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I intended all along to call Nugent to account, but there was plenty of time."

"Oh, I see!" said Bolsover slowly. "Lots of the fellows are calling you a funk."

"I'll settle with them after I've done with Nugent," said the Bounder quietly. "Nobody at Greyfriars will call me a funk without having a fight on his hands!"

"Well, I'm your man," said Bolsover heartily. "I take back what I said about your being a funk, if you're going to fight Nugent—you didn't tell me you were only putting it off. I'll be your second with pleasure. But, I say—" Bolsover hesitated. "No. 1 Study have got something up against you."

"They generally have. What is it now?—not that I care."

"They say you telephoned to the Highcliffe chaps to waylay them on the way to Lantham, and got them a licking," said Bolsover.

"Have they been ragging with the Highcliffe chaps, then?"

"Yes; Ponsonby and a whole gang of them jumped on Wharton on the road over the moor. They acted like blackguards—ripped up their tyres and then ducked them—a dozen fellows to five," said Bolsover. "I wish I'd been there!"

"Pity you weren't!" yawned the Bounder. "Then the magnificent Wharton didn't get to Lantham after all?"

"No; they had to come back."

"Like licked pups, with their tails between their legs," grinned the Bounder. "I'm sorry for them, if they couldn't take care of themselves. But I don't see that it's anything to do with me. It's all rot about my telephoning to them, of course. Why should I? What did it matter to me whether they went to Lantham or not?"

"Quite so—it seemed to me rather thick!" agreed Bolsover. "Those chaps are ready to suspect you of anything. But it turns out that you used the telephone-box at the post-office. Wharton asked them there!"

"That's right enough," said the Bounder. He was far too keen to deny anything that could be proved. "I telephoned to Lantham to a chap I was going to see there. No harm in that, that I can see."

Bolsover looked relieved. He was not on the best of terms with the Famous Five himself, but he would have drawn a line at such treachery as the Bounder had been guilty of.

"Good!" he said. "I'll come up to their study with you with pleasure, and you can tell 'em they're liars."

"Righto!"

The Bounder went up to the Remove passage with his companion. He paused to toss his bundle into his study, and then, tired and dusty as he was, he went at once to No. 1. He kicked open the door and strode in, with Bolsover at his heels.

The Famous Five were at tea. They all rose to their feet as the Bounder strode in insolently. Wharton's eyes gleamed at him.

"I want to see you, Smith," he said.

"The want is all on your side then. I've come here to see Nugent."

"You telephoned to Highcliffe—"

"Rats!"

"Do you deny it?"

"Certainly. Bolsover has told me the yarn you have been trying to spread about me, and it's all lies," said Vernon-Smith calmly. "I telephoned at Friardale to a chap at Lantham. If you fellows have got licked by Highcliffe, it's no good trying to put it down to me."

"There's no actual proof, of course," said Harry, a little taken aback by the Bounder's cool denial. "If you give me your word—"

"I sha'n't trouble to do anything of the kind. I refuse even to discuss the matter," said Vernon-Smith. "It's an insult to me to suppose such a thing."

"I don't like to believe it of any Greyfriars chap, but it looks like it to me," said Harry. "The Highcliffe cads weren't there by chance—they came all ready, with a rope to put across the road to stop us—"

"They might have seen you from a distance, and got ready for you," said Bolsover. "I don't believe Smithy would do such a thing. And I think it's rotten that he should be accused without any proof."

"If he will give me his word of honour that he didn't, I'll take it," said Harry.

"You can do that, Smithy."

"I refuse to take any notice of the accusation at all," said the Bounder. "And I didn't come here to jaw to you, Wharton. Nugent's my game!"

"Here I am," said Nugent. "What's wanted?"

"That!" said the Bounder.

Smack!

Before Nugent could guard himself the Bounder's open



"I'm here," said Nugent. "What's wanted?" "That!" replied the Bounder, and before Frank could guard himself, the Bounder's open palm struck him violently across the face. (See Chapter 8.)

palm struck him across the face, and he staggered back against the tea-table.

"That's what you did to me," said the Bounder, with glittering eyes. "Now I'm ready for you—when and where you like!"

Nugent sprang forward like a tiger. The Bounder had his hands up in a second, but the Co. dragged the infuriated junior back.

"Let me get at him!" roared Nugent.

"Not here," said Harry. "The prefects would be up here in a minute. You can have it out in the gym."

"I shall be in the gym after tea," said Vernon-Smith, and he walked out of the study with Bolsover major.

Nugent made a movement to follow him, but Wharton closed the study door.

"Better have it in order," he said. "No good fighting in the passage, with Wingate or Courtney coming up with the cane."

Nugent sat down again, breathing hard. Tea in No. 1 Study finished hurriedly, and the chums of the Remove went down together to the gym, to wait for the Bounder.

### THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Fight!

COKER of the Fifth came into the gym., and glanced towards the gathering crowd of juniors there. Nearly all the Remove had gathered, and a large contingent of the Upper Fourth and the Shell, joined by a crowd of fags. The news of the impending fight between Frank

Nugent and the Bounder had spread quickly, and all the fellows wanted to see it.

Nugent was known to be a good boxer and full of pluck, and the Bounder was hard as nails. It was certain to be a good mill, and as the gloves were to be used, there was no danger of interference by the prefects. The powers were very much down on fist-fighting with bare knuckles, but they closed a discreet eye at glove contests. For "scrapping" was in the nature of the boys, and it was better for them to fight it out with gloves on in the gym., than to fight secretly in some hidden corner with bare fists. But with the gloves on, a good deal of damage could be done, and it was quite well known that this particular "mill" would be a tough one.

Coker frowned at the growing crowd of juniors. Coker had not been very long in the Fifth Form; but he was, as his former pal Hobson of the Shell averred more Fifth-Formy than any of the others, and he adopted a lofty and overwhelming attitude towards all juniors.

"Here, what are all you blessed fags doing here?" exclaimed Coker.

"Why, you cheeky fag—" he began.

But Vernon-Smith and his friends came in at this moment. Then Horace Coker understood.

"Oh, if it's a mill, it's all right," he said graciously. "I'll keep time for you."

"Got a watch?" asked Skinner innocently.

There was a chuckle. It was well known that Coker had an enormous gold watch, a present from his affectionate Aunt Judy. During the first days of possession, Coker had

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timed that watch by nearly every other watch in Greyfriars, so that nobody had a chance of being unaware of its existence.

"Don't you be cheeky," said Coker, producing the big watch. "Now, then, form up in a ring—get a move on. Who are the principals?"

Some of the juniors growled. They did not exactly like the Fifth-Former taking the matter out of their hands in this way. But Harry Wharton & Co. raised no demur. Coker was a timekeeper whose disinterestedness could be relied on, as he was a friend of neither party; and besides, having a senior concerned in the affair made it less liable to interruption.

"Nugent and Smithy," said Wharton.

"Room there," said Coker. "Get your jackets off, and gloves on."

Wharton was acting as Nugent's second, and Bolsover major as Vernon-Smith's. The Bounder was very cool and calm, with a determined look about his keen eyes and his square jaw. It was plain that he meant to make the fight as serious as possible, and that it was no careless sparring-match so far as he was concerned.

Nugent, too, was looking very determined. He had been sorry for that hasty blow he had given the Bounder, ten minutes after it was struck, and he would willingly have told Vernon-Smith so and asked his pardon—but the Bounder was not the kind of fellow to treat in that way. The Bounder wanted vengeance, and he was glad of the opportunity, too, of "taking down" the Famous Five by licking one of them. There was no doubt in the Bounder's mind that he would win. He had failed on one great occasion with Wharton, but he would not fail with Nugent. So at least he felt assured.

The juniors removed their jackets and donned the gloves. The seconds fetched basins of water and sponges. Coker, with a great deal of importance in his manner, as master of the ceremonies, prepared to "boss the show" in his usual way.

"Toe the line," said Coker. "Now, then, keep back, you fags. Seconds out of the ring. Three-minute rounds and one-minute rests. Ready?"

"I'm ready," said the Bounder, and Nugent nodded.

"Time!"

Harry Wharton looked on a little anxiously as the first round started. Frank was in a state of suppressed excitement, and the Bounder was as cool as ice. That gave him the advantage at the start. Wharton would have given a great deal to take his chum's place in the ring, but as that was impossible, he could only look on and wish Nugent luck.

Nugent was not lucky in the first round. He attacked hotly, burning with indignation, and only keen to get at his enemy.

That was not the way to deal with the Bounder. He played with the excited junior in the round, and knocked him right and left.

Nugent was panting and gasping when Coker called "time," but the Bounder had not turned a hair.

Harry Wharton fanned his chum with his cap, as Nugent sat on the knee Bob Cherry made for him, breathing hard.

"Hot work," said Bob sympathetically.

"Quite warm," said Nugent, with a rueful grin. "Is my nose on straight?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"I feel as if it were trying to get round to my left ear. All serene. That beast is in good form."

"Look out, for goodness sake, Franky," said Wharton earnestly. "If you don't keep your head, he'll walk over you. He's as cool as ice."

Nugent nodded.

"Yes; I've learned that already. I'll be more careful. No good going for a chap like Smithy in a temper. He's all steel."

"Time!" said Coker.

The adversaries stepped up again. The Bounder, exchanging a grin with Bolsover major and Snoop and Skinner, sailed in to wipe up the floor with Nugent as in the first round. But he met with a surprise. Nugent gave ground, and the Bounder rushed on. Then suddenly his hands were knocked to the wide, and Nugent's right came crashing on his nose like a hammer, and Nugent's left followed it up on his chin with almost equal force. The bounder went down as if he had been shot, with a bump that was heard all over the gymnasium.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bolsover.

And Bob Cherry chirruped:

"Well hit! Played, sir!"

Coker of the Fifth began to count.

Nugent stood, panting a little, but cool. He had knocked his opponent out—if he were made of ordinary flesh and blood. But he knew how hard the Bounder was; he never admitted himself beaten. He did not usually seek fist

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fight, but when he was engaged in one he would fight as long as he could stand.

The Bounder staggered up by the time Coker had counted eight. Nugent was entitled by the rules of the ring to knock him down again as soon as he gained his feet, and he could easily have done so, for the Bounder was past all defence. He was utterly bewildered and groggy from those knock-out blows.

But Nugent did not think of doing it. He held his hands down, and waited for the Bounder to come on if he chose. The Bounder stood unsteadily, blinking at him, until Coker of the Fifth called "time." Then he staggered away to Bolsover's knee.

"Gee-whizz!" said Fisher T. Fish. "That was a bad break, I guess."

Nugent grinned at his second as he joined him.

"What price that?" he asked.

"He's beaten," said Harry Wharton. "Too much swank and over-confidence—always the Bounder's way. He's got it in the neck. Any other fellow would cry off now."

"The Bounder won't," said Nugent.

"No; but he can't face you. You will be able to do as you like with him in the next round."

"Time!"

The Bounder looked groggy enough as he came up to time. His nose was red and swollen, in spite of the glove. It had been damaged by that heavy drive. His usually steely and steady eyes seemed uncertain in their gaze. The fellows who had called the Bounder a funk earlier in the day had to admit now that they had been "off-side." He was plainly licked, and yet he was standing up to take more punishment rather than acknowledge himself beaten.

"Go it, Smithy," said Bolsover major, but not very heartily. He knew that his man was licked, and was only looking now for worse punishment.

The Bounder attacked with gritted teeth. Perhaps he hoped yet to snatch a victory from the jaws of defeat.

If he hoped so, his hope was ill-founded. Nugent beat his attack easily, and played with him through the round, as the Bounder had played in the first round. But he did not hit hard. There was no spite in Nugent's sunny nature; and now that he had his adversary beaten, he would gladly have finished the fight without hitting him again. But he had to hit so long as the Bounder attacked. The blows fell lightly, however, and the Bounder could not help realising that his foe was sparing him. That gave the finishing touch to his fury. His eyes flamed as he flung himself at Nugent, throwing all his savage fury into a final attack.

But it failed. The Bounder's head was swimming. His blows fell weakly, in spite of the fury that urged them. A right-hander on the chest toppled him over, and he sat down on the floor of the gym.

Bolsover major picked him up.

"Better chuck it, Smithy," said Bolsover commiseratingly. "You've got heaps of pluck, but you're licked, old man."

"I'm not licked!" said the Bounder fiercely.

"Nugent's playing with you."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, go on if you like," said Bolsover. "I think you're a fool."

"Time!" said Coker.

The Bounder almost staggered into the ring for the fourth round. He flung himself at Nugent, hitting blindly. So fast and furious were his blows that two or three of them reached Nugent's face, and stung him hard. Frank Nugent drove out with his right, and caught the Bounder on the chin, and Vernon-Smith went down like a sack of coke.

"One—two—three—four," counted Coker, as the Bounder did not move.

There was a hush.

"Five—six—seven—"

The Bounder made an effort to rise, and fell on his side. He was utterly exhausted.

"Eight—nine—LICKED!"

The Bounder had been counted out, and the fight was over. Even the hard and obstinate Vernon-Smith could not claim to continue it after that. Bolsover helped him to his feet. His senses were swimming, and he had to lean heavily on Bolsover's strong shoulder. He did not give Nugent a glance as he staggered away, leaning on Bolsover.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Very Mysterious!

**B**OB CHERRY pulled Nugent's gloves off, and Harry Wharton helped him on with his jacket. They led him away to bathe his heated face. The Co. were feeling very pleased and very relieved. But for the over-confidence of the Bounder, the fight might have gone very differently, and they were glad that Frank had

come out of it so well. Horace Coker put away his big gold watch, with a nod of approval.

"Quite a decent little mill," said Coker patronisingly. "You youngsters have some grit. You know how to box, Nugent, a little bit."

"Thanks," said Nugent. "I'd say the same of you, Coker, only I'm such a truthful chap."

And he walked away with his chums before the great Coker could think of any fitting rejoinder.

After bathing his face, Nugent went back to the School-house with the Co. He was not looking elated over his victory. There was a shade upon his sunny face.

"Feeling done up?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, a bit. I'm feeling rather—rather"—Nugent hesitated. "I say, you chaps, I'm beastly sorry about having punched the Bounder this afternoon for nothing. If he had licked me it would have been all right. But I've licked him, and—and I feel rather rotten about it. I was in the wrong. He was an irritating beast, but I had no right to do what I did."

"Go and tell him so," said Harry.

"He's such a queer beggar to deal with," said Nugent ruefully. "If it were anybody else, I'd ask his pardon like a shot. But you never know how Smithy is going to break out. But—but I think I'll give him a look in."

And a little later, when the Bounder was in his study, Nugent looked in. Vernon-Smith was seated in his arm-chair in the study, looking and feeling very "rotten." It was likely to be some time before he got over the effects of that scrap, tough as he was. There was a dark shade round one of his eyes, and his nose seemed nearly twice its usual size. He turned a dark look upon Nugent as he came in.

"What do you want?" he muttered.

"Only a word," said Frank.

"You've licked me," said the Bounder bitterly. "You can gloat as much as you like now. It will turn out differently next time."

"I wasn't thinking of gloating," said Frank quietly. "I've come here to beg your pardon."

The Bounder stared.

"Is that a joke?" he asked.

"No fear! You'd have misunderstood me. But as you you. Well, I was ratty because Bunter had biffed me over and wrecked my tyre, and you stopped me when I was chasing the bounder. But I had no right to do as I did; and I shouldn't have asked your pardon for it, only—well, you didn't give me a chance when you came into my study and smacked my face, did you?"

"I suppose not," said Vernon-Smith, with a rather crooked grin.

"Well, I'm sorry," said Nugent. "I can't say more than that."

The Bounder regarded him curiously.

"If I had licked you, would you have said that?" he asked.

"No fear! You have misunderstood me. But as you didn't lick me, I can say it," said Frank. "I felt rotten about it afterwards—I'm sorry I did it."

"That's all right," said the Bounder. "Chap can't say more than that. And—and I don't mind saying I'm sorry too. I shouldn't have done what I did in your study, only the fellows had started calling me a funk, and that's very hard to stand."

"Yes, I can see that." Nugent held out his hand. "Give us your fist, and call it square."

The Bounder took his hand frankly enough.

Nugent turned to leave the study; and the Bounder spoke again:

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Yes?"

"You fellows think that I put Ponsonby & Co. on your track to-day?"

Nugent paused.

"Well, we do think so," he said. "It looks like it. But if you tell me straight that you didn't, I'm willing to take your word."

"I can't do that!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Why not?"

"Because—"

"Well, because—"

"Because I did do it," said the Bounder.

Nugent started.

"You did it!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Yes. It was a rotten trick, and I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said so, only—only as you've acted so decently, I feel somehow as if I want to own up. I'm sorry I did it; and I'm willing to pay for all the damage done. You can send all the bikes to the cycle-shop in Courtfield to be fitted with new tyres, and I'll foot the bill."

Nugent shook his head.

"No fear. We're going to make Ponsonby do that."

"How the dickens—"

"Wharton says so. I don't know how. But, I say, Smithy, it was a rotten thing to do."

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EVERY  
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"  
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ONE  
PENNY.

"I know it was."

"Why did you do it, then?"

"You'll know a bit later why I did it," said the Bounder. "I can't explain now, but you'll understand later. But it wasn't for the sake of getting you a licking from the Highcliffe chaps. I didn't want that, and I give you my word for it."

"You wanted to stop us from going to Lantham?"

"Yes."

"Blessed if I see why."

"You'll see next week."

"Next week!" said Nugent, in wonder. "I don't understand you."

"And I can't explain yet. It's a secret. But—but I'm sorry I played you that trick, and if there's anything I can do—"

"That's all right. If you say you're sorry, there's no more to be said. I suppose I'm to tell the other chaps you've admitted it."

"Yes; but not the whole Form, of course."

"That's understood."

Nugent quitted the study, and returned to No. 1. The Co. were there, waiting with curiosity to hear how Frank had got on with the Bounder. Bob Cherry looked him over critically as he came in.

"Not another scrap—eh?" he asked.

"No," said Nugent, laughing. "Quite turtle-dovey. I don't quite understand the Bounder. He has his good points, though he generally manages to keep them jolly well hidden out of sight. He's owned up that he put Ponsonby and his gang on to us to-day, and he says he's sorry for it."

"My hat!"

"Well, we knew he did it," said Wharton. "I was going to call him to account for it, as soon as he'd got over that licking. But if he says he's sorry—"

"The queer thing is, that I think he is sorry, too," said Nugent. "He seems quite sincere. I suggest letting the matter drop, as far as the Bounder is concerned. Of course, we're going to take it out of Ponsonby."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I'm willing to let it drop," he said. "But has he said why he did it?"

"To keep us away from Lantham."

"Why?"

"That's a giddy secret. He says we shall know next week. Jolly mysterious, ain't it?"

"The mysteriousness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Is the esteemed Bounder going off his honourable and ludicrous rocker?"

"Or getting a taste for the heavy drama," grunted Johnny Bull. "I don't like fellows who make mysteries about nothing."

"Smithy's always being secretive about something—it's his little way," yawned Bob Cherry. "Well, if we're going to have the giddy history of the giddy mystery next week, I feel as if I can wait. I'm not burning with curiosity. Now, who says ginger-pop?"

All the juniors said ginger-pop at once, and they went down to the Close to cross over to the tuckshop. A fat and weary form was wheeling a dusty bicycle in as they came out of the School House, and they paused to look at Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, just got back?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter panted for breath.

"Yes. It was a jolly long ride. I've got some punctures, too, and that made it rather slow going the last few miles."

"You've been riding Mauly's bike with a flat tube!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Well, it was too much trouble to stop and mend the punctures, you know, and I might have been late for calling-over. I just had to grind on."

"Nice for the tyres," said Wharton.

"Oh, blow the tyres!"

"Did you get to Lantham?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Of course I did."

"Seen the match?"

"The second half," said Bunter.

"Oh, good! What form are Lantham in?"

"Topping," said Bunter. "They'll lick our First Eleven next week. Wingate's lot won't have a look in."

"Rats!" said all the Co. together promptly.

"Well, you'll see," said Bunter. "They're a topping team. They won the match, 3 goals to 1, and they were playing the top club in the county league."

"What about that schoolboy-player we've heard of?" said Wharton. "Did you see a kid in the Lantham side—a fellow about our own age. One of the Redcliffe chaps told me they had a schoolboy in the side—a regular marvel who out-Bloomered Bloomer."

NEXT  
MONDAY:

"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry  
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle.  
 "Yes, I saw him. He, he, he!"  
 "What is there to cackle about?" asked Wharton in surprise.  
 "He, he, he! You don't know!"  
 "Of course I don't know. What do you mean?"  
 "That's telling," said Bunter, with another fat chuckle.  
 "He, he, he!"  
 "You he-he-heing chump, what's the joke?" asked Bob Cherry. "Did the kid make an ass of himself and let the side down?"  
 "No fear. He kicked two of the goals for Lantham. They were jolly lucky to get him; he was the best kick in the team, excepting the Lantham skipper, Grady. They average nineteen or twenty years old, and that kid wasn't over fifteen—he, he, he! But you should have seen him. He, he, he!"  
 "What are you cackling at?" shouted the juniors.  
 "That's telling," said Bunter, and he wheeled the damaged bike away without any further explanation.  
 "Silly ass!" said Bob Cherry.  
 And the chums of the Remove adjourned to the tuck-shop, and forgot all about Billy Bunter and his mysterious chuckles.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.  
 A Pig in Clover!

THE Bounder was at work on his preparation, with Skinner on the other side of the table, when a knock came at his study door. Vernon-Smith was working dimly, with aching head and unwilling brain. It was not easy to settle down to work after that scrap in the gym; and before that scrap, Vernon-Smith had had a tiring afternoon. The door opened to reveal Billy Bunter. Vernon-Smith scowled at him.  
 "Clear off!" he growled.  
 Bunter did not clear off. He came into the study.  
 "I've just got back," he said.  
 "I don't care twopence whether you've just got back or not. Do you want me to sling you out on your neck again?" snapped the Bounder.  
 "I'm tired, and hungry. I'm too late for tea."  
 "If you've come here for tea, you've dropped in at the wrong shop," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm not keeping supplies for hungry grampuses. Get out."  
 "You see, it's a long way to Lantham and back," said Bunter deliberately.  
 Vernon-Smith started.  
 "Have you been to Lantham?"

"Yes."  
 "What for?"  
 "To see the Ramblers' match, of course."  
 "Did you see it?" asked Vernon-Smith, very quietly.  
 "I saw the second half. I saw the winning goal taken," said Bunter. "Jolly neat goal, wasn't it, Smithy?"  
 Skinner looked curiously at his study-mate.  
 "Did you see the match at Lantham, Smithy?" he asked. "You never said you'd been over there this afternoon?"  
 Bunter chuckled. Something about Skinner's remark seemed to strike him as funny.  
 "Oh, Bunter's talking out of his hat, as usual," said the Bounder carelessly. "Didn't you get anything to eat at Lantham, Bunter?"  
 "No. I was going to have a feed with No. 1 Study there, but they got waylaid, and couldn't go. Jolly queer that that should happen, considering."  
 "Considering what?" asked Skinner.  
 Bunter chuckled again. It was evident that the Owl of the Remove was bursting with newly-acquired knowledge, though Skinner could not guess what it was.  
 "Oh, don't jaw!" said the Bounder peevishly. "How am I to work if you keep on? If you're hungry, Bunter, you can look into the cupboard, and pile in. But don't jaw. I can't stand it. I've got to work."  
 Skinner stared at his study-mate in blank astonishment. The change in the Bounder's manner was utterly amazing.  
 "Thanks, Smithy," said Bunter airily. "Sure you don't mind?"  
 "You're welcome," said Vernon-Smith shortly.  
 "Good enough!"  
 Billy Bunter looked into the study cupboard, and his little round eyes glistened behind his spectacles at what he saw there. The Bounder had plenty of money, and he never denied himself anything that he wanted. Supper in the Bounder's study was as plentiful as a special feed in most of the

GOOD TURNS—No. 11.



A Magnetite doing a good turn to the farmer's wife, who, caught in a downpour of rain, is now able to protect her dress from the mud, while her chivalrous friend carries her basket and holds the umbrella.





Merton opened a little silver-handled penknife, and calmly jabbed the blade into the tyres of the bicycles. "You bounders!" said Harry Wharton between his teeth. "We'll make you pay for those tyres!" (See Chapter 6.)

the other junior studies. Billy Bunter helped himself—and he started upon a cold chicken, which disappeared in a remarkably short space of time. A pineapple followed the chicken, and then Bunter commenced on a large cake.

Skinner stared at Bunter, and at Vernon-Smith. Why the Bounder should let Bunter raid his food in this way was a complete mystery to Skinner. It certainly wasn't hospitality—Smithy had no motive for being hospitable to Bunter. He did not like the fat junior, and he had threatened to sling him out "on his neck" before the Owl of the Remove mentioned that he had seen the match at Lantham. Why that piece of information should make any difference, Skinner could not conceive. But it was evident that it did make a very great difference.

Vernon-Smith did not vouchsafe a word of explanation. He went on with his work, and did not seem to hear any remarks that Skinner made.

Skinner's preparation was finished before Bunter's feed. The junior left the study, while Bunter was very busy with dough-nuts, which he washed down with the Bounder's most select and expensive currant-wine.

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Vernon-Smith ceased to work as soon as Skinner was gone, and he was alone with Bunter. He sat looking at the fat junior, with a strange glitter in his eyes. Bunter was too busy to notice it. He crammed in dough-nuts, and then, with a sated appetite, but reluctant to leave off so long as there was anything left to eat, he started on a bag of cream-puffs.

He glanced up after the fourth cream-puff, as he was toying with a fifth, and caught the steady, steely eye of the Bounder.

He nodded affably

"Jolly good prog, Smithy," he said.

"I'm glad you like it," said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, yes, it's jolly good—better than I get in my own study! They don't give me enough to eat in No. 7. Those Todd chaps don't have much money, and Tom Dutton is jolly close with his cash—never lends a fellow a half-crown. I say, Smithy, it's ripping to be the son of a millionaire, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the Bounder, "it has the advantage of getting a fellow the friendship of estimable characters like yourself, Bunter."

But sarcasm was lost on Bunter. He finished the cream-puffs, and looked round for fresh worlds to conquer. He gnawed idly at a very ripe apple.

"Well, I always regarded you as a pal, Smithy," he said. "So long as I have enough to eat, I'm not a greedy chap. I shall often give you a look in, Smithy, as you treat me so jolly well!"

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. You can always depend on me at tea-time."

"You went to Lantham, you spying cad?" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I suppose a chap has a right to go and see a footer-match if he likes, if he has a titled pal to lend him a bike?"

"And you saw everything?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter, with a grin. "I say, Smithy, you could have knocked me down with a telegraph-pole, you know. What a surprise—eh?"

"Have you babbled it over the school yet?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Not a word, Smithy. I suppose you know you can trust a pal. Not a giddy syllable—and I'm not going to say a word, either, if you want to keep it a secret. I'm not the fellow to give a pal away."

"You mean that what you've spied out will be worth something to you," said Vernon-Smith contemptuously.

Bunter drew himself up.

"If you put it like that, Smithy, I shall have to reconsider the matter. Of course, the fellows would be very keen to know what I happened to see at Lantham. Oh, Smithy, what a deep card you are! How jolly dark you've kept it!"

"You are going to hold your tongue, until next Wednesday," said the Bounder quietly. "After that, you can gas as much as you like."

"Oh, really—"

"It will be worth a feed to you whenever you want one. You can raid my grub as much as you like—so long as you hold your fat tongue!"

Bunter's eyes glistened.

"But if you give me away," went on Vernon-Smith, in the same cold, even tone; "if you give me away, Bunter, you will be sorry for it. I shall get you into a quiet corner, and lam you with a cricket-stump till you can't crawl! You know me, Bunter, and you know I'm a fellow of my word."

"Look here, Smithy—"

"I'll make it worth your while to keep your mouth shut. But you are a chattering fool, and you might let it slip. Whenever you feel inclined to gas, remember that the feeds stop as soon as you've given me away, and you get such a licking that you won't get over it for days. I'll simply smash you, you fat beast, just as I'd smash a fat toad that hopped in my way."

The concentrated ferocity in the Bounder's voice and look made a cold shiver run down Bunter's spine. He made a movement towards the door.

"Oh, really, Smithy!" he said feebly. "Of course, you can rely on an old pal."

"Mind what I say, that's all."

The Bounder turned to his work again, and took no further notice of Bunter. The scorn in his attitude pierced even Bunter's thick skin, and he flushed a little. But his glance turned to the cupboard again, and his eyes glistened.

He had eaten as much as he could—but the supply was not yet exhausted. Bunter blinked at the junior working away steadily at the table.

"I'll put a few of these things in my pocket, if you don't mind, Smithy," he ventured.

"You can do as you like."

"Thanks!"

Billy Bunter crammed his pocket. Every pocket was bulging when he quitted the study. He bade the Bounder good-night, but received no reply; and he closed the door. He chuckled as he stood in the passage.

"This is where I come out on top!" he murmured. "Dash it all, Smithy's got lots of money, and his father made it by swindling on the Stock Exchange, so why shouldn't I have my whack? I'm jolly well going to! What a savage beast he looked!" Bunter shivered a little. "He's a dangerous beast, and he ought to be in a reformatory, that's where he ought to be. Serves him jolly well right to have his grub raided. I'm really doing my duty in this."

And Bunter rolled away, feeling very fat and satisfied—either with the consciousness that he was doing his duty, or with the enormous feed he had consumed in Vernon-Smith's study.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,  
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"  
Every Friday.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### What's in a Name?

IF Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, had paid special attention to the Remove fellows the following afternoon—which he did not—he might have observed that some of them were keenly interested in his movements.

After lessons that day, six or seven juniors were lounging about the passage leading to the Head's study, or near it.

When Dr. Locke went into his study after leaving the Sixth Form-room, the word passed from Tom Brown to Harry Wharton, and then to the rest of the Co.

And they all looked glum.

"Bet you he's going to dig at Horace," said Bob Cherry. "He's getting up a new edition of old Horry, you know, and he's been at work on it any time these last thousand years. I don't see why he can't give Horatius Flaccus a rest this afternoon."

"He doesn't know we want to use his telephone," grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He sometimes goes down to the village on Thursday afternoon," said Harry Wharton hopefully. "We'll watch a bit."

They watched a bit; and a quarter of an hour later, to their great joy, the Head came out of his study. Dr. Locke smiled kindly to the group of juniors he passed in the passage. When he passed them, within sound of their voices, they were discussing with great animation the forthcoming match between Greyfriars First and the Lantham Ramblers. When he had passed, they dropped the subject of the senior football-match, and talked about their respected Head.

"It's not Horace this afternoon," said Johnny Bull.

"Bet you it's the vicarage, after all," said Bob.

"Keep an eye on his nibs."

Dr. Locke, all unconscious that he was being shadowed by the heroes of the Lower Fourth, walked away to Mr. Quelch's study. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was his right-hand man, and he often dropped into the Remove-master's study for a chat. Their talk ran on such learned subjects as *Æschylus*, and even Billy Bunter, the champion eavesdropper, would not have listened to it; it would have given him a headache. Harry Wharton & Co. gathered in the passage at a respectful distance from Mr. Quelch's door, which had closed behind the dignified figure of the headmaster.

"If it's a long jaw about Greek plays, we should have time to use the telephone, and bunk before he came back to the study," Nugent remarked.

"The esteemed jawfulness on that august subject is usually terrific," observed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"But if it doesn't happen to be Greek plays," said Wharton. "He may be going to talk to Mr. Quelch about the nice boys in his Form—and that won't keep him long."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better wait and see," suggested Tom Brown, the New Zealander. "Can't be too careful. He would be waxy if he found us in his study using the 'phone. He wouldn't understand about how necessary it is to take a rise out of Ponsonby & Co."

"He mightn't," grinned Bob Cherry.

"I'll get out and watch the footer," said Smith minor, of the Remove, who was with the party. "The First are practising, with a scratch team."

Wharton caught his arm.

"You just hang on where you are!" he said. "You're wanted."

"But you can telephone without me, I suppose," said Smith minor, in surprise.

"Can't!"

"Why not?"

"Because my name isn't Smith."

Smith minor stared at his Form captain as if fearing that he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Dotty?" he asked.

"No, ass!"

"Is it a special kind of telephone that can only be used by Smiths?" demanded Smith minor.

"Ha, ha! No. You'll see. Hallo, here comes the Head! It wasn't Greek plays this time."

The Head came out of Mr. Quelch's study. The juniors were all busily occupied in staring out of the passage window, and the Head only caught a back view of them. He passed on, and the Removites strolled carelessly in his wake.

The Head dropped into Wingate's study in the Sixth Form passage, probably for a little chat with the captain of Greyfriars. Thereat the juniors smiled; they knew that George Wingate was at practice with the first eleven.

The Head looked into the study and came out again. Then he went into the Head's house, the private portion of

the school buildings that belonged to Dr. Locke and his family.

"Can't be going in to dinner yet," said Bob Cherry. "Not time. Bet you he's gone in for his topper to go out. It's the vicarage, two to one."

"Come into the Close, then; he'll go out that way."

The chums of the Remove strolled into the Close. True enough, in about ten minutes Dr. Locke came out of his house, with his coat and hat on. He crossed the Close with his dignified and stately pace to the gates, and the juniors strolled that way also, and with great pleasure saw him fairly started on the road to Friardale.

"Hip-pip!" said Bob. "Gone, by gum!"

"Coast's clear!" said Nugent.

"Come on," said Harry Wharton, "especially you, Smith minor!"

"But what the dickens—" began Smith minor.

"Come on, and don't jaw, old chap!"

The juniors made their approach to the Head's study strategically. If they were observed going in it was pretty certain that they would be stopped. Once inside with the door closed, however, they would be safe enough, for no one was likely to enter the Head's study in his absence.

Their luck was in. In five minutes they were inside the study. Harry Wharton closed the door with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Here we are again!" grinned Bob Cherry. His last visit to that study had been under more painful circumstances, and he had left it with his hands wriggling under his arms, and feeling that life was hardly worth living.

Wharton took the telephone receiver off the hook.

"Anybody know the Highcliffe number?" he asked.

"It must be in the telephone book."

"Look it out, sharp!" said Wharton, with his ear to the receiver.

"What number, please?" came along the wire.

"Highcliffe School," said Wharton.

"Yes, what number?" There was a tone of acerbity in the voice and it was pretty clear that the telephone young lady did not like her conversation about autumn hats to be interrupted by the absurd desire of the public to use the telephone.

"Just a moment," murmured Wharton. "I'm getting the number."

There was a sound like a snort on the telephone—if a young lady could be supposed capable of snorting. Wharton grinned as words followed. The young lady was standing near to the telephone evidently while she continued the interrupted conversation with another young lady at the exchange.

"And about three yards of chiffon, Miss Spink, that was all, and gathered up—"

"Here's the number," said Nugent.

Wharton gave his number, and heard no more information imparted to Miss Spink concerning the three yards of chiffon, or how they were gathered up.

"Now, Smith minor, you've got to jaw, and say exactly what I tell you. You're to give your name as Smith, Greyfriars—see?"

"But what—"

"If the Highcliffe cads take you for Vernon-Smith, that's their look-out. When they're talking to a chap with a double-barrelled name they should ask for both barrels."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I savvy!" said Smith minor, with a grin.

"Here you are; you're through."

Wharton handed the receiver to Smith minor.

"Hallo! Who's that?" came a voice.

"Smith, Greyfriars."

"This is Highcliffe School. What do you want?"

"Ask for Ponsonby, of the Fourth," whispered Wharton.

"Can I speak to Master Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form?" said Smith minor.

"Hold on a minute."

Smith minor held on for more than a minute, and Wharton whispered instructions to him. The voice of Ponsonby, recognisable though disguised by the wires, came through at last.

"Hallo! Is that you, Smithy?"

"That you, Pon?" asked Smith minor, making his voice as like the Bounder's hard, metallic tones as he could, though on the telephone there was not much risk of the difference of voice being detected.

"Yes, old man. Another little jape on Wharton—what?"

Smith minor grinned. Ponsonby had given away Vernon-Smith's treachery as completely as could be desired by that simple question.

"Not this time," said Smith minor. And, following Wharton's whispered instructions, he went on: "Do you want to get on to a good thing—a better thing than you ever got on to in all your life?"

"You bet!"

"Can you come out and meet me? I'll come half-way!"

"Certainly. What is it—a race?"

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NEXT  
MONDAY!

"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"

EVERY  
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"  
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ONE  
PENNY.

"I'll tell you when I see you. It's a chance for you and the other chaps to do the right thing at the right time."

"I'm on!"

"Bring Monson and Gadsby and Vavasour with you. I want them all to be in it."

"Righto! Where and when?"

"The old barn half-way to Courtfield, in half an hour."

"Good enough!"

"Righto! Good-bye!"

"I say, Smithy!"

"Must chuck it. I'm using the Head's 'phone, and don't want to be nabbed."

"Ha, ha! Right you are! Good-bye!"

Harry Wharton rang off.

"I fancy that will fix them," he said. "They're going to have a chance of doing the right thing at the right time, and that's paying for our new tyres."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smith, my son, you're worth your weight in gold. Nobody else in the Remove could have given his name truthfully as Smith, Greyfriars, excepting the Bounder, and he's not on in this scene."

The Removites chuckled, and quitted the Head's study. Ten minutes later quite a little crowd of them were marching out of Greyfriars on their way to the old barn half-way to Courtfield, where they arrived in good time to wait for Ponsonby & Co.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Nuts and the Nut-crackers!

PONSONBY, of Highcliffe, and his comrades sauntered in a leisurely way towards the old barn, across the fields. It was a lonely spot—a ruined and disused barn, with a pool of water close by it, at which the cattle sometimes came to drink. It was a very calm and peaceful scene, with the westering sun glimmering over meadows and fields and shady trees. But Ponsonby and Company were not thinking of the scenery. Scenery did not appeal to them. They were thinking of the valuable tip they expected to get from the Bounder of Greyfriars, to whom they had been indebted more than once for sure "snips" that had turned out profitable for them.

They entered the old barn, and glanced round for the Bounder. But Vernon-Smith was not to be seen.

"Not arrived yet," grunted Ponsonby. "We shall have to wait."

"Beastly bore waiting!" yawned Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"I've got some fags with me," said Monson, taking out a silver cigarette-case. "Help yourselves, my dear boys, and light up."

The dear boys helped themselves and lighted up, feeling extremely doggish as they did so.

Four cigarettes were soon going strong. A form darkened the open doorway, and Ponsonby glanced round with a welcoming grin.

"Hallo, Smithy! Why—what—So it's you!"

It was Harry Wharton. He came into the barn with a grin on his face. Behind him came Bob Cherry and Nugent, Johnny Bull and Tom Brown, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Smith minor, and Mark Linley and Perfold and Bulstrode. There were ten of the juniors in all, and the Highcliffians stared at them as Macbeth stared at the ghost of Banquo. Never had a meeting been less welcome to the "nuts" of Highcliffe.

"How ripping to meet you!" said Wharton kindly.

"Little bit different from our meeting yesterday. Odds on the other side—eh?"

Ponsonby forced a laugh.

"I suppose you fellows don't bear malice for a bit of a joke," he said.

"That's all it was—absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Yes, we understand jokes of that sort," said Bob Cherry. "We've got rather a gift for joking ourselves, you know."

"In fact, we've come here to joke with you," said Nugent.

"We're terrific jokers when we get started," said Johnny Bull. "We're going to joke with you so jokishly that you'll be fed up with jokes for a long time to come."

"The jokefulness is going to be terrific, my esteemed and disgusting rotters," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

The Highcliffians looked round hopelessly. There was no escape. They were fairly caught in the trap. When the odds had been on their side they had used them without scruple, and now the tables were turned. Though, as a matter of fact, they would have hesitated about tackling

equal numbers of the hard-hitting Co. of Greyfriars. Hard knocks did not please the elegant nuts of Highcliffe.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Ponsonby desperately. "You've got us cornered. We came here to meet Smithy. If he's given us away—"

"Smithy doesn't know anything about it," said Wharton. "It did not occur to your feeble little mind that you might have got the wrong Smith by the ear. It was Smith minor—here present—who talked to you on the telephone. You should have asked for the other barrel."

"Of course; you wouldn't have lied and pretended to be Vernon-Smith!" sneered Gadsby.

Wharton nodded calmly. "Exactly. Surprising as it may be to your feeble intellects, we should not have lied. We should have found some other way of roping you in. But as you were asses enough to fall into the trap, we let you do it. We want a little talk with you—about business."

"Business!" said Ponsonby, surprised. "Yes.. In the first place, we're going to lick you for the caddish trick you played on us yesterday—"

"Ten to four—you can afford to swank!" sneered Monson.

"We're going to lick you man to man. You can pick out any four you like, and the others will stand round and see fair play. No one will interfere, win or lose. That's fair play—quite a new thing to you, of course."

"We—we don't want to fight you," faltered Vavasour. "Fighting's low."

"Lower than setting on to chaps with a crowd, and ducking them and wrecking their bikes?" asked Wharton. "If fighting's low, fighting unfairly must be still lower, and if you can swallow that, you can put up with anything. After that little scrap, which comes off first, you're going to talk business.. We've got it as cheap as possible, but the sum total comes to three pounds ten shillings."

"Which you're going to pay," said Bob Cherry.

Ponsonby gritted his teeth. "I won't pay a penny, for one!"

"We shall see," said Wharton. "But the first business before the meeting is that little scrap. I can see how eager you are to start, so I won't keep you waiting. Will you have the goodness to pick out your men?"

"We're not going to fight you!" growled Ponsonby.

"Certainly not!" said Vavasour. "I decline to do anything so low! It's disgusting!"

"Very well. We shall duck you in the pond, and keep you there till you change your minds. Four of us will try to keep you in the water while you try to get out," said Harry Wharton coolly. "You see, you're in for it. You can fight wet or dry, as you like. That's the limit of your choice."

Ponsonby gave a helpless look at his comrades. It was better to fight on dry land than knee deep in muddy water, if fighting had to be done. And it was plain enough that the Greyfriars fellows were in deadly earnest.

"Fair play!" said Ponsonby. "If we fight four of you, the others don't interfere in any way?"

"Not in the least."

"And we can pick our men?"

"Just as you like."

"Good, then!"

The Highcliffe juniors, driven to it, picked out their men. They left the Famous Five severely alone. Ponsonby selected Smith minor, Gadsby pointed to Penfold, Monson chose Mark Linley, and Vavasour, after a great deal of hesitation, picked upon Tom Brown.

"Good enough!" said Harry Wharton. "Sure you don't want me?"

"No, hang you!"

"Might give me a chance," said Bob Cherry imploringly.

"Vavasour, old fellow, you let Browney alone. He comes from New Zealand, and they're frightfully hard hitters in New Zealand. You let him alone and give me a chance."

"We've picked our men!" snarled Ponsonby. "Let's get it over."

"Simply bursting with bravery, ain't they?" said Bob admiringly. "Ponsonby belongs to a fighting family, you know. His ancestors used to go to battle wrapped up in armour so that nobody could hurt them, and their courage has descended to Pon. Why don't you tackle Wharton, Pon? Think of a Ponsonby being licked by a Smith—and a Smith minor at that!"

Ponsonby would as soon have tackled a wild elephant as Harry Wharton. He had his doubts about Smith minor, but there was no help for it.

"Plenty of room for four couples here," said Nugent. "Now you've chosen partners, get on with the dance."

"Stand back, you fellows!" said Wharton.

The Greyfriars juniors stood back to the walls, two or three of them guarding the door in case the nuts of Highcliffe should attempt to bolt.

"Now pile in, nuts and nut-crackers!" said Bob Cherry.

All four pairs of juniors began. The Greyfriars fellows looked on with keen interest. Of the four Highcliffians, only Ponsonby was a dangerous opponent, and he had his match in Smith minor. In a minute the combatants were going it hammer and tongs.

Vavasour was the first to weaken. As a matter of fact, he had made a very unfortunate choice in picking out Tom Brown. The New Zealand junior was as hard as nails, and as tough as any fellow there. He grinned as Vavasour tackled him, and he knocked the elegant nut of Highcliffe all round the barn, till Vavasour, howling with anguish, threw himself upon the ground and refused to stir again.

"One nut cracked!" said Bob Cherry sententiously. "Have you had enough, Vavasour?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow! Absolutely!"

"Then you can blub in the corner. Keep away from this doorway, or I shall be compelled to soil my hands upon you."

Vavasour shrank away, and dabbed his nose in a corner with a cambric handkerchief, which was soon streaked a deep crimson.

Monson was the next nut to be cracked, as Bob Cherry humorously expressed it. His choice had also been unfortunate. Mark Linley was as tough as Tom Brown. Monson attacked the Lancashire lad furiously, and did not scruple to use his nails and his feet. Mark was letting him off lightly, but as Monson's nails scored on his face, Mark put his beef into it, and he hurled Monson into a corner with a terrific right-hander. Monson gasped, and rolled in the corner, and stayed there, and the subsequent proceedings, as the poet remarked, interested him no more.

Gadsby's scrap with Penfold lasted a little longer. Gadsby knew that Penfold was a scholarship boy at Greyfriars, and that he was the son of the village cobbler. To be licked by the son of the village cobbler seemed a wild impossibility to Gadsby. Yet, impossible as it seemed, it happened. After ten minutes of hard slogging, in which punishment was given and taken freely, Gadsby was down on his back, without a breath left in him, partly due to Penfold's hard hitting and partly to the cigarettes he had smoked that afternoon.

And Gadsby, having sulkily announced that he didn't want any more, was allowed to crawl away and dab his nose in peace, and to feel his chin to ascertain that it was still there.

Ponsonby and Smith minor were more equally matched. And Ponsonby felt keenly the poor show his party were putting up, and strove hard for victory. The struggle went on for another ten minutes, and then Ponsonby, feeling that he was getting the worst of it, delivered a blow below the belt, which doubled up the unfortunate Smith.

Smith minor staggered away, gasping, and Ponsonby would have followed up the cowardly attack, but he had no time. Half a dozen hands grasped him.

"Hands off!" yelled Ponsonby. "You promised fair play!"

"Yes; but not if you hit below the belt, you dirty coward!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You're done with Smith, but you can try me instead."

Smith minor was leaning against the wall, panting painfully. Bob Cherry sailed into Ponsonby, hitting him right and left. It seemed to the Highcliffe leader that a whirlwind had attacked him. Bob Cherry, in his righteous indignation, seemed to have as many hands as Briareus, and each of them clenched and as hard as iron. Ponsonby went down at last under the shower of blows, and lay gasping and groaning.

Smith minor was groaning, too. He did not soon recover from that treacherous drive in the "wind." But Ponsonby had been well punished, and it dawned upon his dazed mind that he would have done better to play the game.

"If we hadn't given you our word," said Wharton, his eyes glittering, "we'd start on you again and wallop you till you couldn't crawl, you rotten cad! You're not fit to touch! Get up and stop groaning, you cad! You've got to talk business now!"

And Ponsonby staggered to his feet, to talk business.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Cheap Hair-cut!

THE four nuts of Highcliffe looked in a sorry plight now. All the bravado had been taken out of them. They nursed their injuries, and mumbled, and cast glances of savage hatred at the Removites. But their ordeal was not over yet. Harry Wharton took a bill from his pocket and held it out to Ponsonby.

"What's that?" snarled Ponsonby.  
 "That's the bill for the repair of the jiggers at Jones's, in Courtfield—three pounds ten shillings. You are going to pay it."

"I won't!"  
 "Vavasour will take that bill to Jones's and settle it, and bring back the receipt here," said Wharton quietly. "You others will stay till he does it."

"I—I refuse—absolutely!" stuttered Vavasour.  
 "Two of us will go with Vavasour to see that he does it. It will take twenty minutes, sharp walking, to get to Jones's and back. At the end of twenty minutes, if Vavasour is not back, we shall begin on you three."

"And what are you going to do?" sneered Ponsonby.  
 "First shave your heads quite bald!"  
 "Wha-a-at!"

"And then your eyebrows. Then we shall tar your faces—we've brought a can of tar for it. If Vavasour isn't back by the time that's done, we shall tar you all over. That will take some time."

"You dare not!" howled Ponsonby.  
 "You will see."  
 "You—you—ruffians!"

"We're only asking you to pay for the damage you did, the exact amount it cost to repair it. We told you at the time you'd have to pay for it. You remember?"  
 "You'd better go, Vav," muttered Ponsonby. "After all, three pound ten's nothing to us. I'll stand a sov. towards it."

"Johnny Bull and Penfold will go with Vavasour," said Harry. "If he tries to cut off to Highcliffe to get help they'll collar him fast enough, and if he gets away they'll come back and tell us so. Then the shaving and tarring will begin."

"He shall pay the bill!" snarled Ponsonby.  
 "You'd better see that he does!"

The Highcliffians dolefully collected the necessary sum of money. As Ponsonby had said, it was not much to them; they had plenty of that very necessary article. And Vavasour, with imploring requests from his comrades to lose no time, set off in company with Penfold and Johnny Bull, who walked one on either side of him, their arms linked in his quite affectionately.

Harry Wharton took out his watch to keep time. Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson cast longing glances towards the door as the minutes ticked by.

They were in a state of anxiety that amounted to anguish. If Vavasour should fail them—if he should escape from his companions, and run for it—they knew what would happen.

"Twenty minutes!" said Harry Wharton at last.  
 "Hold on!" gasped Ponsonby, as Bob Cherry took a pair of scissors from his pocket. "Vav will be back in another minute or two! I told him to play it square."

"We'll give you a chance," said Harry. "If they're in sight we'll wait. See if you can see them coming, Browney."

Tom Brown stepped out of the doorway and scanned the fields. He came in again with a shake of the head.

"Not in sight," he said.  
 "Then you begin, Bob."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry. "I haven't had any training as a barber, but anybody could cut hair, so long as it doesn't matter how it's cut. And it doesn't matter in this case."

Ponsonby clenched his fists and backed away.  
 "Keep off! I—"  
 "Collar him!"

Three or four fellows pinioned Ponsonby, and his head was dragged down for the amateur barber to commence operations. Ponsonby struggled wildly but unavailingly.

"Keep an eye open for them, Browney," said Wharton. "As soon as they're in sight we'll leave Ponsonby's mop alone."

"Right-ho!" grinned the New Zealander. And he took up his station outside to watch.  
 "Go it, Bob!"

The scissors clicked. Ponsonby uttered a scream as the curly lock of hair he prided himself upon, and which he curled carefully over his forehead, fell down past his nose. He struggled madly.

"Monson! Gaddy! Help me!" he yelled.  
 But they hung back. There were plenty of fellows ready to collar them if they ventured to interfere, and they did not venture.

"How do you like it done, sir?" asked Bob, in quite a professional manner. "A little bit off the top—eh? And nicely trimmed round the sides—like that?"

Ponsonby groaned as the scissors zig-zagged through his thick hair. He knew what a sight he would be until his hair had time to grow again. A shower of hair fell past his flaming face. Then there was a shout from Tom Brown.

"They're coming!"  
 "Chuck it, Bob!"  
 "Wouldn't you like another snip, Ponsonby?" asked Bob

Cherry anxiously. "I'm quite getting into the way of it, you know."

"Oh, you rotter!"  
 "Sure you wouldn't like a little bit off the top?"  
 "No!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Well, there's no satisfying some people," said Bob, as he restored the scissors to his pocket. "I have to pay to have my hair cut. Pon's had his cut for nothing, and still he's not satisfied. I call it ungrateful!"

"The ungratefulness is terrific, my worthy chum."  
 Johnny Bull and Penfold came in with Vavasour. The latter was gasping.

"Why didn't you come back before, you fool?" shrieked Ponsonby, striding furiously towards his friend.

"The dear little fellow was tired," said Johnny Bull. "He had to walk slowly. He wasn't feeling very fit, poor chap."

"I walked as fast as I could!" snarled Vavasour. "I'm fagged out, absolutely. Ow!"

He went with a bump to the floor, as Ponsonby hit out.  
 "Ow—yow! What are you up to?" yelled Vavasour.  
 "Look at my hair!"

Vavasour looked at it, and gasped.  
 "Oh, crumbs! You do look a sight!"

"I'll make you look a sight, too, you rotten slacker!" roared Ponsonby, rushing upon him; and he would have done Vavasour considerable damage if Monson and Gadsby had not dragged him back.

"Got the receipt?" asked Wharton.  
 "Here it is!" snapped Vavasour.

Wharton took the receipt and examined it. It was quite in order.

"And Mr. Jones had sent the bikes off already," said Johnny Bull, with a chuckle. "They will be at Greyfriars by the time we get there ourselves."

"Good egg!"  
 "Gentlemen, this is where the merry party breaks up," said Bob Cherry, with an amiable smile at the scowling Highcliffians. "If you take good advice, you'll let Greyfriars chaps alone in the future, even when you're three to one. And if any one of you wants his hair cut, he's only got to ask me, and I'll do it free of charge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 And the Greyfriars chums crowded out of the barn, leaving Ponsonby & Co. to their own devices. Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour limped away to Highcliffe; but Ponsonby did not go directly home. He called in at the Courtfield barber's to see what could be done for his hair. The barber did what he could towards mending the damage, but he could not restore the chunks of hair that were missing; and for a good many days afterwards Ponsonby of the Fourth had bald spots, and was chipped and offered Tatcho till he was nearly frantic.

**THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.**  
**The Secret Out!**

**A**LL the Lower School at Greyfriars heard of the way the Highcliffe "nuts" had been made to pay for the wanton damage they had done, and chuckled over it.

Even Vernon-Smith chuckled when he heard of it. Ponsonby & Co. were his friends, but the Bounder had no great respect for them; and he had a hearty contempt for anybody who allowed himself to be taken in, and who—as Fisher T. Fish expressed it—came out at the little end of the horn.

And so the Bounder did not waste much sympathy upon Ponsonby & Co. He paid them a visit the next day, but it was chiefly to see how Ponsonby looked with his hair cut by Bob Cherry's artistic hand. Perhaps the Bounder was a little too amused, for high words passed between them, and he came away on less excellent terms with the Highcliffe fellows, and was not in a hurry to visit them again.

Vernon-Smith had plenty of matters to think of just now, without wasting time on the Highcliffe crowd. On Saturday afternoon he disappeared on his bicycle as usual, with a bundle tied on his handle-bars, and a curious group of juniors watched him go. These mysterious excursions of the Bounder were attracting attention far and wide now. In the little world of school every aberration from the normal is remarked at once. The Bounder's friends resented his desertion of them on every half-holiday, and especially the fact that he gave them no explanation. What was he keeping secrets from his own chums for, anyway?

Remove fellows, and fags in the Third and Second forms, and Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth, all remarked on these peculiar absences of the Bounder, after they had gone on for some time.

Even Coker of the Fifth had heard about it, and Coker

told Vernon-Smith, in his big and mighty and condescending way, that he hoped he wasn't getting into trouble. To which Vernon-Smith replied that when he got into trouble, and wanted advice from Coker, he wouldn't fail to let Coker know it, and that until then Coker would oblige extremely by keeping his advice wholly for home consumption.

The Bounder did not seem to care in the least for the curiosity he excited. He certainly did not take the trouble to satisfy it.

Sooner or later it was probable that the attention of one of the prefects would be drawn to the matter, and the Bounder would be questioned. But that had not happened yet. Some inquisitive juniors had even gone the length of following the Bounder on their bicycles, but the Bounder was a hard rider, and not easy to keep up with, and he had given them the slip in the lanes.

The Bounder came in in time for calling-over on Saturday. He looked very tired and dusty, and the fellows eyed him curiously as he came in. He was limping a little.

"Hurt your leg?" asked Bolsover major.

"Knocked it," said the Bounder.

"Fallen off your jigger—eh?"

"No!"

"Oh, don't answer if you don't want to!" growled Bolsover irritably. "Look here, Smithy, I can tell you I am getting fed up with this giddy mystery. I don't like secrets."

"Lump 'em, then!" said the Bounder, as he passed on.

Bolsover major was inclined to quarrel with him on the spot, but he remembered that he had been asked to tea in the study, and he did not want to miss one of the Bounder's feeds. When Vernon-Smith came down to tea, Skinner and Bolsover were in the study ready, and so was Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter was in his shirt-sleeves, and he had a fire going, and had been cooking. Vernon-Smith had apparently given him carte blanche, and Bunter had prepared an enormous feed.

"Bunter here to tea?" asked Bolsover major.

The Bounder nodded.

"Yes, rather," said Bunter emphatically. "I'm Smithy's old pal, ain't I? I have tea with Smithy every day now, don't I, Smithy?"

"You do!" said the Bounder.

"I'm better treated here than in No. 7," said Bunter confidentially. "Peter Todd can go and eat coke. I told the beast I was palling on with Smithy, and he said he was sorry for Smithy—he did, really. I said I declined to have tea with him any more, and he said it was just in time to prevent a famine in the study, the beast! I'm sticking to Smithy now, ain't I, Smithy?"

"Yes; like a leech!" said Vernon-Smith.

Bunter coughed. That was not exactly what he had meant. Bolsover and Skinner were puzzled. Why the Bounder should have the greediest and fattest and least pleasing of all the Remove to a feed regularly every day was a mystery they could not solve. The Bounder did not offer to solve it for them. He did not care whether they were puzzled or not.

Many of the Remove had noticed Bunter's recent familiarity with the Bounder, and were surprised by it.

Bunter had the run of Smithy's study. He raided his well-supplied cupboard as much as he liked. He borrowed his things. He was frequently seen in Smithy's own special padded armchair, with his feet on Smithy's footstool, eating Smithy's tarts and cake, or drinking Smithy's best currant wine.

The fellows could not understand it.

As Snoop observed, if Smithy had plenty of cash and plenty of grub, and wanted to chuck them away, he could find somebody better than Bunter for the purpose—Sidney James Snoop, for instance.

On Monday and Tuesday the chief topic of conversation at Greyfriars was the first-eleven match with the Lantham Ramblers.

Stories of the great form the Lantham men were in were told in the common-room and the studies, and considerably exaggerated. Grady, their captain, was a mighty man with his feet, and there was said to be a recruit in the team, a mere schoolboy, whose goal-getting powers were a little short of marvellous.

Lantham had beaten the top club in the County League, and that fact alone spoke for their form. Wingate knew that the Greyfriars First had a hard nut to crack.

The first eleven was in great form, however. Wingate was a tremendous player himself, and he kept his men up to the mark. Courtney was a winger of wonderful speed, and North was a very reliable goalie. Even Loder and Carne and Walker had bucked up for the great match, ambitious of distinguishing themselves against Lantham Ramblers.

The juniors had all agreed to cut their own footer for that afternoon, when the Lantham team were to visit Greyfriars.

It was not often that the first eleven played such a match,

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,  
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"  
Every Friday.

and nobody at Greyfriars wanted to miss a single phase of the game.

On Wednesday morning, as the Remove came out of their Form-room after lessons for the day were over, a sudden thought occurred to Bolsover major, and he called to Vernon-Smith.

"Smithy, old man, you're not going out to-day?"

"Yes, I am."

"You're going off as usual?" exclaimed Bolsover.

"Why not?"

"What about the Lantham match?" exclaimed Bolsover.

"Aren't you going to see it?"

The Bounder grinned.

"Yes, I shall see it," he said.

"Oh, you're coming back in time—eh?"

"Yes; I shall get back by the time the Lantham men are here," said Vernon-Smith. "I wouldn't miss that match for a term's pocket-money."

Billy Bunter burst into a sudden giggle.

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you exploding about?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Oh, Smithy's a deep 'un! He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up!" said the Bounder.

"I'm glad you're not going to miss the match, Smithy," said Harry Wharton cordially. Somehow or other the Famous Five had come to be on better terms with the Bounder since his fight with Nugent in the gym. "All Greyfriars ought to see it."

"Quite so," said the Bounder. "You'll be there, of course?"

"What-ho! All of us!"

"Good!"

After dinner the Bounder mounted his bicycle, and pedalled away. Some curious youths who had taken to noting specially all that the Bounder did, remarked that he had not taken a bundle with him this time.

But the fellows soon forgot about the Bounder. The whole school was in a state of expectation for the arrival of the Lantham Ramblers.

They were coming over in a brake, to arrive before three o'clock, kick-off being at three. It was a keen, clear, sunny day, and the weather and the ground were in the best condition, and the Greyfriars First Eleven were in great spirits. They were at the top of their form, and every member of the eleven was satisfied that the team was the best Greyfriars could possibly have put into the field. Fellows outside the team, indeed, could have suggested improvements. Coker, of the Fifth, sadly admitted that he had doubts about the first eleven pulling off the match, Wingate having persisted, with unexampled obstinacy, in leaving Horace Coker off his list.

There was a large crowd round the gates to greet the arrival of the Lantham brake.

Very well and fit the Lantham men looked. Grady, a big and burly fellow, who looked a host in himself, and his followers, all in great form. There were twenty fellows in the brake, the surplus being friends of the players, who had come with them to see them lick Greyfriars First, or to be licked by them, as the case might be. And there was a buzz among the juniors as they caught sight of the Bounder among the Lantham crowd.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Smithy!" said Bob Cherry.

The Bounder grinned at them from the Lantham brake. Bolsover major jumped on the step as the brake rolled in.

"I didn't know you knew the Lantham chaps, Smithy," he said.

To Bolsover's surprise, a chuckle ran through all the Lantham party.

"Sure, he's an old friend," said Grady, the Lantham skipper.

"Quite an old friend," said Vernon-Smith. "I never miss seeing a Lantham match, do I, you fellows?"

And the whole team laughed.

Wingate & Co. greeted the Lantham players, and they were shown into their dressing-room, and, to Bolsover's surprise, Vernon-Smith went in with them.

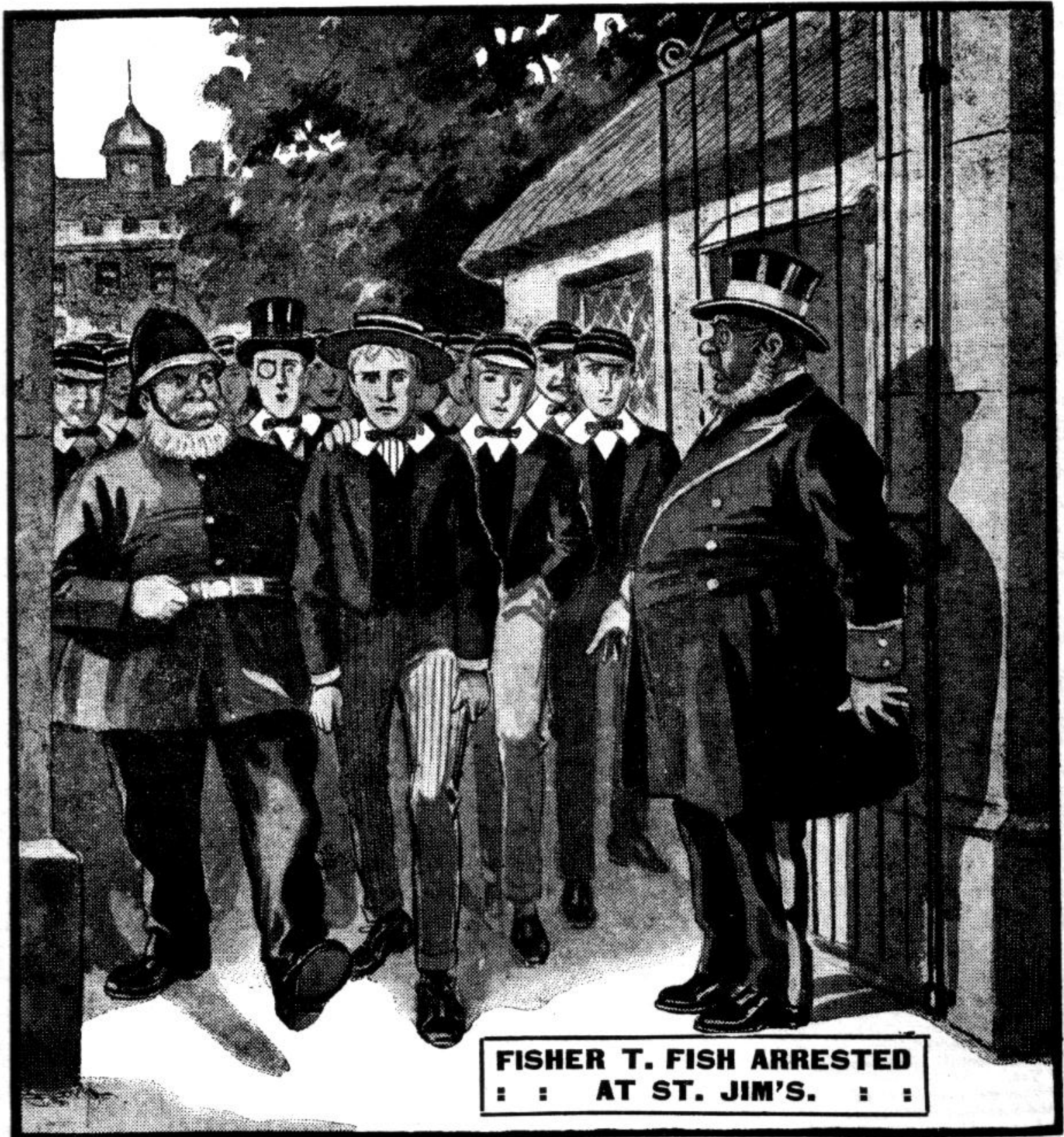
"Dash it all!" said Bolsover, who had posted his minor to keep a place open for Vernon-Smith next to his own place at the ropes. "Blessed if I think a Greyfriars chap ought to be so chummy with a rival team. Just as if he was backing up Lantham instead of his own side."

"They look in jolly good form," said Wharton. "The first have got all their work cut out."

"Looks like it!" said Nugent. "Blessed if I understand Smithy being on such jolly good terms with the Lantham men. I didn't know he knew them. What a fellow he is for keeping silly secrets—all about nothing."

"Oh, it's his little way!" said Harry Wharton, good humouredly. "I'm glad he isn't missing the match. It will be worth seeing."

The crowd thickened round the senior football-ground. The



**FISHER T. FISH ARRESTED**  
: : **AT ST. JIM'S.** : :

Quite an army of juniors marched round the policemen and his prisoner to the school gates. Taggles came out of his lodge to lock the gates, and stared at the procession in amazement. "We, my heye!" he gasped. "Wot this?" "Run away from school!" said the officer sternly. (An incident taken from the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled "GUSSY'S GUEST!" by Martin Clifford, in "THE GEM" LIBRARY. Order your copy now and be sure of getting one. Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.)

Famous Five had good places close to the ropes. Round the field nearly the whole of Greyfriars had gathered, from the Sixth Form to the First. Even some of the masters had come out to see that great match.

The Greyfriars team were in the field already, punting the ball about. Mr. Flynn, the master of the Second, a fresh and rosy young man of sporting tendencies, was there to referee the match, in Norfolk-jacket and whistle. The crowd watched for the appearance of the Lantham men. There were a score of them, and the crowd were curious to see which were the footballers. There was a cheer as Grady was seen striding out, in the blue-and-white of Lantham, with his team after him.

"Fine-looking team!" Johnny Bull commented. "Plenty of work there for the First. Eight, nine, ten! Why, where's the eleventh man?"

"My hat!"

"Look!"

"The Bounder!"

"In Lantham colours!"

"What on earth does that mean?"

The Greyfriars fellows rubbed their eyes, and looked again. Were they dreaming?

There was Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, clad in the blue and white of the Lantham Ramblers, marching into the field with the Lantham team.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 294.

NEXT  
MONDAY,

**"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"**

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry  
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

The Bounder heard the buzz of amazement, and he grinned. "My only Aunt Jemima!" roared Bob Cherry. "The Bounder's playing for Lantham!"

"Impossible!"

"Great Scott!"

"Playing for Lantham! The Bounder! Oh, great pip!"

It was a roar of astonishment. There could be no doubt of it. The Bounder was in the Lantham colours, and without him there would have been only ten men in Grady's team. The Bounder was playing for Lantham!

The Greyfriars fellows simply gasped.

That, then, was the Bounder's secret!

And the secret was out now!

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bravo, the Bounder!

**V**ERNON-SMITH—playing for Lantham!

The words ran like wildfire through the Greyfriars crowd.

The whole field was in a buzz.

Wharton remembered what he had heard—of the "school-boy recruit" who had been taken into the Lantham team, who had done great things for them.

And it was the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Now was explained the Bounder's anxiety to keep the Famous Five from visiting Lantham on the day of the match with the county League club. They would have seen him in the Lantham ranks. And he wanted to keep his secret till the very end—till it was disclosed in this sudden and dramatic way.

Billy Bunter chuckled the chuckle of superior knowledge.

"He, he, he! I knew it all along! He, he, he!"

"You saw him play at Lantham?" demanded Bob Cherry, scarcely able to believe in the astonishing discovery even now.

"He, he, he! Yes."

"And what did you keep it dark for?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I couldn't give a pal away, you know!"

"You mean, he fed you up to the chin to keep you quiet!" growled Skinner. "I understand now why he let you have the run of his study, you fat rotter!"

"Jolly rotten for a Greyfriars chap to be playing against Greyfriars!" growled Johnny Bull. "Just like Smithy! And the awful nerve—playing against the first!"

"Look at Wingate!" grinned Skinner. "He doesn't catch on!"

George Wingate was staring at the Bounder blankly, simply astounded to see the Bounder of Greyfriars in the ranks of Lantham Ramblers.

He did not understand it; and he did not like it.

"What are you doing here, Vernon-Smith?" Wingate demanded, in a voice that could be heard by all the spectators.

"Playing for my team!" said the Bounder, whose voice, though not loud, reached every ear.

This was the Bounder's moment, and he enjoyed it. Never had he had so ample a share of the limelight he loved. The eyes of all Greyfriars were upon him; and here he was, in the midst of the assembled school, parleying on equal terms with the head of the Sixth—the captain of Greyfriars—the skipper of the first eleven. There was no trace of excitement about the Bounder. He was cool as ice.

"Your team? The Lantham team?"

"Yes."

"You are a junior of this school. You can't be a member of the Lantham Ramblers."

"I am. My own Form didn't want me in the Form team. I haven't had a chance to play here, and I joined a club that wanted me—that's all!"

"And you've got the cheek to come here and play the first eleven—you, a fag of the Lower Fourth!" exclaimed Loder angrily.

"Why not?" said the Bounder coolly. "If my skipper considers me good enough to play against you, it's no business of yours, Loder!"

"Why, you cheeky cub—"

Wingate signed to the angry prefect to be silent. Grady looked concerned.

"Is there any objection to Smith playing?" he asked. "I knew he belonged to this school, but he had permission to join my club."

"Certainly I had," said the Bounder. "The Head gave me leave."

"He has played for us in half a dozen matches," went on Grady. "I offered to leave him out of the team, if he didn't care to play against his own school; but he said it would be all right."

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,  
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"  
Every Friday.

"Right as rain!" said the Bounder. "There can be no objection; no one has a right to object. I'm a regular member of the Lantham Ramblers, and no one has a right to ask or care what school I belong to!"

"Well, that's right enough," said Wingate, after a pause. "It was a surprise, that's all, and I can't say I like playing against a junior in a fag Form. But it's Grady's business whether he plays you or not, that's certain. I've nothing to say against it!"

"We're wasting time," suggested the Bounder.

It was a keen enjoyment to the iron-nerved young rascal to talk like that to the captain of Greyfriars, at whose frown the Lower School were accustomed to tremble.

"We're ready, Grady!" said Wingate shortly.

And the teams lined up.

The Bounder was outside-right in the Lantham array. All Greyfriars' eyes were upon the Bounder when the ball was kicked off. His amazing presence in the Lantham eleven was still being discussed in every tone of surprise, indignation, wrath, or admiration, according to the personal views of the fellows discussing it.

"After all, what he said is quite true," Mark Linley observed candidly. "His own Form didn't want him, and he had a right to play for Lantham if he chose. I can't say I think it's good taste to play against his own school; but—"

"But the Bounder was never suspected of having any good taste!" grunted Bull.

"But what use will he be against the Greyfriars first?" grunted Ogilvy. "Grady must be off his dot to play a kid like that!"

"He, he, he! You should have seen him playing the county club!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "I saw him. My pal Smithy is a regular scorcher, I tell you!"

Harry Wharton's brow was wrinkled a little. He knew that the Bounder could be a first-class player when he chose, and if he cared to restrain his selfish instincts in play. He knew that Vernon-Smith would play the game of his life to-day; and if he distinguished himself against such mighty men as the Greyfriars first, it would be a great score for the Bounder.

And then the pressure of public opinion would be very strong to make Wharton find a place for him in the Remove team. The Bounder's success to-day would mean trouble for Harry Wharton afterwards. Once more Wharton realised, as he had had to realise before, that the deep cunning of the Bounder made his old rival one too many for him.

The Remove, of course, wanted Greyfriars to win; but if a member of their Form scored over the senior eleven, it would be a triumph for the Remove that would make Vernon-Smith the hero of the hour. Indeed, Wharton himself would not be able to avoid sharing in that satisfaction—if a member of the Remove proved too much for the seniors.

Lantham had kicked off, and they had followed up the ball into the home half. But the Greyfriars defence was sound. For a quarter of an hour there was a struggle, with advantage to neither side. Then a lithe and active form in blue and white was soon speeding along the touch-line with the ball; and Bolsover major shouted, forgetting for the moment that he was cheering the enemy:

"Go it, Smithy! Put her through!"

But the Greyfriars backs were good, and they stopped that sudden rush; but, even as Vernon-Smith was charged over—somewhat spitofully—by Carne of the Sixth, he centred the ball to the Lantham centre-forward, and it went into the net with a whiz. North, in goal, had no chance of stopping it. There was a shout:

"Goal!"

First blood for Lantham!

Harry Wharton glanced at the Co.

"That's not like old Smithy," he said. "Old Smithy would have run in with the ball, and shot for goal and lost it. This is a new Smithy, by gum!"

"He's playing the game!" said Johnny Bull, with unwilling admiration. "I never saw a neater pass than that—and Carne was charging him right down. He must have come a cropper, too. Carne meant that."

The Bounder had come a cropper; but he did not seem to care. He was a little dizzy from his crashing fall, but he was all right again by the time the teams lined up for the restart.

And the Greyfriars first, who had been disposed to be utterly scornful and disregarding towards that mere junior who had the cheek to play them, looked upon Vernon-Smith with different eyes now. He was an opponent whom it would pay to watch.

His own side had evidently learned to value his play. Grady, who was at centre-half, was careful to feed his outside-right well. And the swift and brilliant dashes of the Lantham winger gave Wingate & Co. plenty of trouble.

The Bounder did not seem, as of old, hungry for goals. He had learned to play the game—to know his place and



keep it, and to contribute to the general success without endeavouring to shine himself.

Had it been otherwise, indeed, the Lantham skipper would not have played him. And, although in size and weight Vernon-Smith was nowhere near the Greyfriars players, his speed, his quick resource, his marvellous accuracy in passing, more than compensated for deficiencies in other respects. And the Bounder, conscious that he was playing the game of his life, was wonderfully careful. He must have felt his old temptation to risk success on the chance of a personal score; but he kept it down, and played the game all the time.

As the first half drew to its close, the Bounder's chance came, and he was on it in a flash. The ball came out to him on the wing, and he ran it up the field, and he gave a flashing glance round. Three foes were rushing upon him, and he had outpaced the Lantham forwards, and there was no one ready to take a pass. A shot for goal was risky, but there was every reason for risking it. Play for safety is not always the best play. And the Bounder, seeming to squirm like an eel round the rushing backs and halves, kicked while still on the run, and North jumped in goal; but his finger-tips glided from the leather, and it was in the net.

Then the whole crowd roared:

"Goal!"

Grady rushed up to Vernon-Smith, and clapped him wildly on the back. It was a kick under the most difficult circumstances, and it had come off.

"Bravo, Smithy!" Harry Wharton found himself shouting. "Well kicked! Oh, well kicked!"

And Mr. Flynn blew the whistle before the score could be changed, and the first half closed with Lantham two goals to nil.

"Looks rather rotten for Greyfriars!" said Bolsover major, with a grin. "Old Smithy is a bit too thick for them—what?"

"'Tain't a Lantham match at all!" chuckled Peter Todd. "It's the Sixth and Fifth against the Remove—and the Remove wins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you think of him now, Wharton?" demanded Bolsover major, perhaps expecting some reply full of annoyance and exasperation; but Wharton replied, heartily and frankly:

"Ripping, old man—simply ripping!"

And Johnny Bull chimed in:

"I don't like to see Greyfriars licked, but if Greyfriars is going to be licked, it's best for the Remove to give 'em the licking, and keep it in the family."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Wingate and his men did not mean to be licked if they could help it. They lined up for the second half in a grim and determined mood. And for a time fortune—ever fickle—smiled upon them. There was a roar of cheering from the crowd as Wingate put the ball into the net, and broke his duck for Greyfriars.

Then followed a steady struggle, with varying fortune. Sometimes right up to the Greyfriars goal, and then swaying away down in the visitors' half. Lantham were putting all they knew into it now—and so were Greyfriars First. Many of the players on both sides were panting—it was a gruelling game. But the Bounder was fresh as paint, sound in wind and limb, as Peter Todd remarked. And the juniors marvelled, for they knew the Bounder's habits, cigarette-smoking among them. But they recalled that for the past few weeks the Bounder had not been seen to smoke nor to take French leave from the dormitory after lights out. The Bounder had been training for this; and training told. He was at the top of his form—cool, steady, composed, quick as lightning.

"Twenty minutes to go," said Bob Cherry, with a glance up at the clock-tower. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! There go Greyfriars! On the ball! Hurray!"

Wingate & Co., with a combined effort, broke through the Lantham defence. The attack was hot and well sustained; and it succeeded. From the foot of Courtney the leather shot in, and the Lantham custodian was beaten.

The score was level now—two goals to two.

Ten minutes more to play. Wingate's men were packing. After all, it would be something to draw with the Lantham men, who had beaten the top club in the County League. The Lantham men pressed fiercely; but "paid"

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was put to every effort to get the ball through. When they had beaten the backs, North was ready in goal, and the leather would go away to mid-field from his steady foot.

"Five minutes to go," said Nugent. "It'll be a draw."

The field had changed like a kaleidoscope. Instead of a pressing attack by Lantham on a packed goal, there was a falling back of the Lantham men for defence, and a vigorous onslaught by Greyfriars. Right up to the Lantham goal the tide of battle surged, and Greyfriars' hopes rose high. The ball came out of the press like a pip from an orange, and a lithe figure in blue-and-white was on it in a flash. And that lithe figure in blue-and-white went up the field like lightning. There was a yell.

"The Bounder's got it! Go it, Bounder!"

Where were the Greyfriars men? Where were the halves? The backs? In that last desperate attack the defence was broken up, and the sudden lightning-like rush had found the home team wanting. Only a single back now between the Bounder and goal. But North was in goal, watching him with all his eyes. And Carne of the Sixth, at back, simply hurled himself at the Bounder. But Smithy, like the lively insect in the story, was not "there." He seemed to curl round Carne, leaving him charging blindly on, and broke for goal. North was ready, as the Bounder paused an instant, with the whole field after him. Two minutes more to go—and the fate of the match hanging upon the Bounder, and the Bounder alone. For his own comrades were as hopelessly out of it as his opponents. It was between him and the goalie, and he had about ten seconds to shoot before he was run down. And his right foot rose—and North was ready—and quick as lightning the Bounder changed his feet, and kicked into the far corner of the net, taking North so utterly by surprise that he did not even know the ball was in the net till he heard the tremendous roar from the crowd:

"GOAL!"

The Bounder had done it! He had kicked the winning goal. For the whistle went by the time the ball was tossed out, and the great match was over. Greyfriars First were defeated by three goals to two; and the winning goal had been kicked by Vernon-Smith of the Remove, for Lantham.

There was a roar of cheering. Between chagrin at the defeat of Greyfriars, and exultation at the glorious success of a Greyfriars junior against the seniors, the feelings of the crowd were a little mixed. But they all agreed in cheering that splendid goal, taken almost single-handed by the Bounder against the First Eleven. The crowd surged upon the field, shouting. And Bolsover major and Skinner seized Vernon-Smith, and carried him off on their shoulders.

Round him the Removites crowded and cheered. Harry Wharton was the first to shake hands with the Bounder—somewhat to his surprise.

"So that was the giddy secret, was it?" demanded Wharton.

"That was it," grinned the Bounder.

"Well, I don't like a chap playing against his own school, but you played a ripping game—a splendid game," said Harry. "I congratulate you."

"Thanks!" The Bounder's hard face softened. "I'm blessed if I expected this of you, Wharton. It—it's jolly decent of you to take it like this."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're all jolly pleased to see a Remove chap score over the Sixth, of course," he said. "I wish it hadn't meant a Greyfriars' defeat, that's all. But you've played a wonderful game—clean, good play, all the way through."

"What price Smithy for the Remove eleven?" demanded Bolsover major. "I suppose we're not going to let Lantham keep him, when he's such topping form—what?"

"If Smithy cares to play for us, as he's played for Lantham, he's welcome to a place in the Form eleven," said Harry at once. "I always said he was a top-hole player, if he would give the rest of the team a look-in. And as he seems to have learned to do that for Lantham, I don't see why he shouldn't do it for us."

"I will—honour bright!" said the Bounder.

And he meant it.

(Another splendid long, complete tale of the Greyfriars chums next Monday, entitled, "THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!" Order Early.)



Our Grand New Serial Story!

# MYSTERIA



By **SIDNEY DREW**, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island, by swimming, under cover of the fog. Ching-Lung, remaining behind, is captured and imprisoned in a cave. One of his captors, a man named Bullock, less brutal than the rest, refreshes him with some water. While his captors are in a drunken sleep, Ching-Lung manages to get free, and securely ties them up. In the meantime, Ferrers Lord and some of the crew go in search of him. Their boat is nearly run down in the night by a mysterious yacht carrying no lights, and when the first streaks of dawn appear they are able to make the vessel out, anchored two miles away from the cliffs. The millionaire examines it through his glasses, but makes no comment. He orders the boat to return to the creek where they had left the Lord of the Deep. Then, in utter amazement, they stared at one another, for the submarine had completely disappeared!

(Now go on with the story.)

## The Return of Ching-Lung.

"Chingy, ahoy! Ahoy-oy-oy!"

Gan-Waga gave a mighty yell of relief and delight.

"It's my Chingy! 'Ray, 'ray! Dat's my Chingy. Oh, butterfuls. 'Hoy, 'hoy, 'hoy! Chingy, hoy!"

A figure was scrambling down the cliff, and it was Ching-Lung. They pulled hastily.

"Where's the submarine?" cried Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung, disreputable and dirty, scrambled into the boat.

"Where's what?" he asked. "The old submarine? How do I know, old man? Do you think I've got her in my pocket?"

"Blow silly subrines!" shrieked Gan-Waga. "Who cares fo' subranines? We gots Chingy. Oh, butterfuls—butterfuls! Ho, ho, ho, ho, hoo! Oh, I could's eats yo', Chingy! What you' goes away fo'? 'Ray, 'ray, 'ray! Kisses me!"

"Hold steady, blubberbiter!" said Ching-Lung. "You know I love you. But what's the row? I've only just got here. What have you done with her? Has she foundered?"

Ferrers Lord laughed.

"I expect she has," he answered. "Hal Honour is such a worker of wonders that I suppose that is just what has happened. I actually had a shock when we came over the bar. He has evidently managed to repair the tank-pumps, and to close the fore compartment. He's down there, of course, patching up the hole. At first I almost fancied that she had been torpedoed, or something equally amusing."

"Then," said Ching-Lung, "I'd advise you to run out to sea. A tossing will do us all good."

"What do you mean?"

"That several people have taken a most unreasonable dislike to me. I tried to make myself agreeable, but they were so rude that I had to club one fellow over the head to teach him manners, and, you bet, I gave him a full-sized headache!"

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The half-dozen who were looking for me ought to be along about now. They're looking for me with guns and things. It's better to be sea-sick than bullet-sick any day of the week—eh, Gan? Push her round, lads, and let us hook it. The place is fairly bubbling over with nastiness."

While he spoke, to show that he meant what he said, Ching-Lung seized a pair of oars. Once more the dinghy tossed over the foam of the bar.

"Get your fist round a rifle, Tommy," added the prince, "and if you see anything in the shape of a red tam-o'-shanter fry to knock a hole in it. The man who owns that hat has rotten taste. He doesn't like me."

"And, by hokey, he won't be on 'and-shakin' terms wi' me, neither, if I can 'elp it!" growled the steersman. "Drat it! I'm so cold I can 'ardly 'old a gun!"

"She's comin' up, sir!" cried Maddock, as the dinghy rose high on the crest of a wave. "See 'er, sir?"

The conning-tower of the Lord of the Deep broke through the green water, the pale sunlight flashing on the glass-covered dome. At that moment a bullet cut through the sail and nicked a groove in the mast. The report of a gun sounded.

"And there's most illustrious Red-Nob!" shouted Ching-Lung. "Let him have it, Tommy!"

Five men came running along the cliffs. Faber's red tam-o'-shanter marking him out. Prout fired, but the little boat plunged so much that shooting was a matter of pure luck. Naturally, the bullet went wide.

"Keep low, boys," said Ferrers Lord. "There's not much chance of being hit. Aha! Another hole in the sheet," he added. "Now, Prout, try your luck again. It's five hundred yards—not more."

Faber dropped on one knee to aim at the boat. He fired too soon. Prout answered the shot without effect.

"Hooray! One of 'em's got it, souse me!" roared Maddox excitedly.

One of the running figures collapsed, flinging his rifle into the air, some seconds after Prout had fired. Either one of his companions had shot him accidentally, or else the fatal bullet had come from the submarine, for Prout had certainly not fired it. The mystery was explained in a moment. The four survivors turned and bolted inland like so many startled rabbits bolting for their holes.

"They didn't expect that liver-pill!" grinned his Highness of Kwaihal. "'Bout ship, my sons, and don't waste any time. Red Nob has only run away on a trial gallop. He'll come back, if I'm not very much mistaken, looking for me. As I told you, he has shocking bad taste—he don't like me."

"Den he a silly fatheads, Chingy!" beamed Gan-Waga. "That's a fact, sonny. We'd better let them know we're here, or they'll be going down again, and leaving us to face the music. Burn some powder, somebody. Now, Tommy, put your beef into it."

Ferrers Lord emptied the six chambers of his revolver into the air. A cheer swept down the bay. It was repeated again and again, when Ching-Lung stood up in the bows and showed himself.

"Dey likeses yo' alri', Chingy," said Gan. "Dey nots such silly fatheads, hunk? Ho, ho, hoo! Yo' nots look pretty."

This statement was absolute truth. Ching-Lung's adventures had done nothing towards improving his appearance. He resembled an uncommonly dirty tramp. His pigtail had become uncoiled, and it hung over his shoulders in a tangled mane. Altogether he was a most uncleanly and unpleasant object.

The cheers were mingled with laughter as he climbed the ladder.

"Hoist the dinghy aboard, and be smart!" said Ferrers Lord. "Well, Harold?"

"Better," said the engineer, with a curt nod.

"Can we sail her?"

Hal Honour shook his head.

"How soon, then?"

"In three days."

"Bah!" said the millionaire, with an impatient shrug.

There was a sharp cry and the spiteful squibbing of a gun.

The millionaire's face blazed fiercely as he tore a rifle from the rack.

Prout, with the limp figure of a sailor in his arms, staggered into the wheelhouse.

"Sniped from behind the left pillar, sir; and it's bad," he said. "They'll 'ave another, or more, by hokey, afore we can get the dinghy up!"

"Leave her, then! All hands below!"

His ringing shout brought the men scuttling into shelter. The door was shut.

As the submarine began to sink, dragging the dinghy with her, a face, capped by a red tam-o'-shanter, rose above a shoulder of the pillar.

"We've got 'em, Larkin!" croaked Julius Faber. "Submarine or no submarine, we've got 'em! Curse Stumpy for lettin' the Chow know we'd found Cinnabar, and then get free! But they won't get their thievin' fingers on the richest lode ever struck. We've got 'em, I tell you!"

The fat man snorted.

"How are you going to do it?" he asked huskily. "You're clever, but I don't see how you can fake this."

"Then I'll show you. I'll mine the darned creek, and blow the lot of 'em sky-high! Let's find that fool they shot. Who was it?"

"Bullock."

"Oh, it was Bullock, was it?" said Faber, turning away callously. "Then if he's not dead, he can die! He's a sight better off dead, for he's too white-livered a fool to be any use alive. We'll get aboard and start to get those mines ready. I didn't work in an arsenal for nothing, and I didn't locate Cinnabar to allow the first pack of thieves that come to rob me of it."

"It strikes me, skipper," said Larkin, brushing his dirty frock-coat, "we haven't got all the luck. How can we tell she ain't clear of the bay already?"

Faber gave him a glare of contempt.

"She's got a hole in her as big as a door," he answered. "Your business is to bring alongside the six-pounder."

"It has a mighty, nasty flavour of piracy to me, boss," said Larkin—"a beastly flavour! Hallo! There's the ship! She's coming into the bay!"

"Bring along the six-pounder, Larkin, and we'll pepper her if she comes up," said Faber. "I'll fill this place so full of mines that a cork wouldn't swim in or out without exploding one. Ahoy! Ahoy!"

A man, lying prone on the thin grass, raised a feeble hand and groaned. Faber looked round, but took no further notice.

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NEXT  
MONDAY:

"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"

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### Deals More with Words than Deeds, and Describes How the Chief Set About Killing a Bullock.

Ching-Lung sat down to his breakfast with the appetite of a small elephant. To Thurston he gave a brief account of his adventures. After clubbing an unknown man in the ravine, he had hidden amongst the rocks until dawn broke. After that he had scaled the cliffs, exchanged shots with the enemy, and bolted for the creek with half a dozen ruffians in hot pursuit.

"It sounds rather exciting," said Rupert, yawning. "You still continue to make a bigger fool of yourself than Nature intended you to be—which is saying a lot. You've kept most of us up all night, you rascal. The next time you intend to play such a silly trick, be good enough to give us due warning, will you? Then we can go to bed in comfort, and leave you to get out of the mess. I'm off to my little cot."

"So long, old sulky! Good-after-morning," grinned his Highness. "You do know how to give a poor fellow a kind welcome after he's escaped by the epidermis of his molars."

"What pepperdermis of molars, Chingy?" asked Gan, who was vigorously gnawing a ham-bone. "Not knows him."

"To escape by the epidermis of one's molars, my ignorant Eskimoses," said Ching-Lung, "is exactly and precisely the same as to get out of a hole by the skin of one's teeth."

"Lots easier to get out of holes wid a ladders, Chingy," remarked Gan-Waga sensibly. "Ole Rupert's gooteds de pips bad, hunk?"

"As badly as a cheap orange, blubberbiter. Is there any more pottee in the coff?"

Gan-Waga peered into the depths of the massive silver coffee-pot, and shook his head.

"Only de grounds, Chingy."

"Oh, walk about in them and pick flowers!" said the Prince of Kwai-hal. "I've got too many grounds as it is. Give me some tea instead, please, sir. Is there any left?"

"Justs de leaves, Chingy," answered the blubberbiter. "I drunked all de teas."

"Then you'd better make a giddy wreath with the leaves, and stick it on your head, sonny. I've lost my appetite through eating so much. Shall we go and look at the sunrise, or shall we go to bed?"

Gan promptly declared for bed. It had been a wearying night for both of them, and there was nothing to keep them up. His Highness turned in, and, lulled by the faint, regular tapping of hammers, promptly fell into a dreamless slumber.

"Only ten minutes to dinner-time, sir."

Joe's lusty voice awoke Ching-Lung. He was amazed to find that he had more than slept the clock round. He felt thoroughly refreshed. He washed hastily, and went to the saloon. The millionaire, in a dress-suit, was already seated at the table.

"How's the wounded man, old chap?" was Ching-Lung's first question. "I heard it was nothing very serious."

"Nothing more than a flesh-wound. We have been hard at work while you have been taking your ease."

"And progressing, I hope?"

"Slowly," answered Ferrers Lord. "We shall have to put new plates into her. Honour is quite tireless. I was compelled to threaten to put him in irons. He flatly declined to rest."

"Good old never-say-die!" laughed Ching-Lung. "Here he comes, looking as fresh as paint. Hallo, perpetual motion! How goes it now? They tell me you've been working. How dare you?"

The handsome engineer smiled, and sat down. Rupert Thurston followed him in. Little was said until the coffee was handed round, and cigars lighted. Then Ferrers Lord leaned forward, and filled the liqueur glasses with green Chartreuse. The prince raised his glass and bowed.

"Gentlemen," said Ching-Lung, "good luck! You Britons are supposed to take your pleasures sadly, but as I gaze into your beautiful and—hem!—manly faces, I see nothing to suggest that you take your sorrows any way except cheerfully. Here we are at the bottom of the sea in a crippled vessel, and upstairs are certain gentlemen who dislike us all in general, and myself in particular."

"Hears, hears!" gurgled Gan-Waga, who was eating custard on the hearthrug. "Dem's my smentiments, Chingy!"

Thurston tapped a silver ash-tray thoughtfully with his coffee-cup. They all looked at the millionaire.

"Come, Lord," said Rupert, "we are all waiting for you. We want your opinion."

Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders in his odd way.

"It's a puzzle to me to know whether to laugh or be furious," he said lazily. "It would be difficult for me to be furious, I suppose."

"Do try, old chap," said Ching-Lung pleadingly. "We'd love to see it!"

"Dem's my smentiments, Chingy," put in the Eskimo. "Hears, hears!"

Everybody laughed.

"Order, down there in the gallery!" said the prince. "You're making such a row that we can't see the stage!"

"Den asks de lady in de bigs hats to takes him offs and sits on hims," gurgled Gan-Waga, running his forefinger round the dish and sucking it with gusto. "Ho, ho, hoo! Dat's a jokes! Ain't it butterfuls, hunk?"

The millionaire rose, and leaned his elbow on the mantel-piece, his eyes fixed on the glowing bulbs of the electric radiator.

"At least," he said, "the situation is novel, almost romantic. In these dull, prosaic days it is absolutely refreshing. I am inclined to be grateful to our friend of the red cap for giving us a new sensation. It is practically impossible to be angry, or to look at the affair from a very serious point of view."

"If you can look upon bullets as jokes, you must have a queer sense of humour, Lord," said Rupert Thurston. "Do you mean to pass over the whole thing?"

Ferrers Lord turned with the same puzzling shrug of his shoulders.

"What would you do? Give us your safe and fatherly advice, my dear fellow. We are all attention."

"What would I do? I'd look at the facts squarely and fairly, and decide. Here are the facts: We are forbidden to land on an island, where we have every right to land, by a roystering filibuster. Naturally, not being children to run away, we do land. A gang of ruffians stave in our boat, and fire upon us. They take Ching-Lung a prisoner, and, later on, deliberately shoot one of our men. Are we going to take all this lying down? The idea is preposterous!"

"Hears, hears! My smentiments agains, Chingy!" chimed in Gan-Waga.

"I fancy we sailed in search of Mysteria," said the millionaire. "Now, Honour, our silent oracle, speak!"

"No—work," said the engineer.

He walked out and shut the door. In less than ten minutes his helmeted figure passed the window.

"The oracle having flatly declined to speak," said Ching-Lung, "I must take the liberty of exercising my chin. As I may before have stated, the high and mighty Red Nob has taken a dislike to me, and I have taken a dislike to him. There is another gentleman known as Larkin—a gentleman with a fat body and a remarkably thin voice, to whom I owe a little. If a gentleman sticks his unwashed knuckles into the back of your neck, and keeps on pushing the bitter end of a rifle into your spine, you don't feel inclined to love him very much. To tell you the honest truth, you wouldn't find a finer gang of rascals in any convict prison than Red Nob and Company. They're real darlings! I've been personally introduced to some of 'em, and, therefore, you can take my word for it. I agree with Rupert that they ought to be taught a jolly stiff lesson, and at once!"

"Hoorays! My smentiments onces mores, Chingy!" crowed Gan-Waga. "Taughts dems stiff's lesson. Good 'nough!"

Ching-Lung threw a cigar at him, and Gan grinned his gratitude.

"Well, I am not in such a hurry to turn schoolmaster," said Ferrers Lord. "They have made it rather awkward for us, to be sure, but we shall get over it. I intend to teach them a lesson, but not at present."

"Why not?"

"Because only foolish people raid a beehive until the combs are filled with honey. Let us wait until this beehive—wasps'-nest would be a better name—is stored with quicksilver. Quicksilver is a very marketable commodity."

"That's the most sensible statement I've heard since I spoke myself," said Ching-Lung. "Let 'em work, and then I shall have such a gleesome lark with Larkin, and show you how to get quicksilver quick. And if I don't make Don Red Nobo chew his own tam-o-shanter, and make Larkin shout louder than he ever shouted since he started to put on flesh, you may refer to me, without running any personal risk of having your face pushed in, as a flab-toed chonkabooz!"

"Absolute idiot!" said Rupert Thurston.

"The same to you, and many of 'em, and don't spare the vinegar," chuckled the prince. "Wait till you meet a flab-toed chonkabooz! Those critters are hot stuff. Come along, Gan. They're starting to call us names, so this is no place for refined folk like ourselves. Let's go and gather mushrooms in the grassy glade, and trip it o'er the lea with nimble feet!"

Gan waddled after the prince as far as the billiard-room, and perched himself on the piano-stool.

"Shall I plays and singses to yo', Chingy, hunk?"

"If you like, Eskimoses. A fortune-teller told me I should die a violent death, so I don't mind. Sing me something

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soothing, like 'She hit him with the fender, just because she loved him so.' Do you know that song?"

Gan said he did, and brought both his clenched fists down on the keys. Then, opening his cavernous mouth, he let out a weird, ear-splitting howl, that made Ching-Lung leap a good yard into the air. One howl was enough to make any human being turn faint; the second to kill him dead.

Ching-Lung hooked his foot round a leg of the piano-stool, and jerked it from under the singer. Gan-Waga struck the carpet with a thud.

"What fo' yo' do dat sillinesses?" he groaned, rubbing himself. "Dat bad 'nough orfuls!"

"Dear friend of my youth, forgive me," said Ching-Lung. "I really couldn't help it. Before you'd got as far as the chorus, I should have been either a babbling imbecile or a shuddering corpse. Tut, tut! You're not hurt!"

"I am hurteds, Chingy."

"But I say you're not!"

"Ands I say I ams," said Gan-Waga.

"And I repeat you're not, iceberg!" retorted Ching-Lung. "I saw you fall, and I ought to know. It's utterly impossible for you to have hurt yourself at all. Why, you silly, you fell on the soft pedal."

"Did I, Chingy?" asked Gan, scratching his head.

"You did, I repeat. You fell on the soft pedal, so how can you be hurt?"

Gan, a perplexed look on his face, tried to think it out, and, failing to see the point of the joke after some cogitation, he got up.

"Ifs dat bad 'nuffs brutes was de softs pedals, Chingy," he said, "I glads I not falls on de hard ones. Nots sings to yo' no morer. Yo' dids him on porpoises. I mosts offendeds!"

Solacing himself with a large mouthful of tallow candle, Gan gave an indignant snort, and took his departure. Ching-Lung gazed at Rupert Thurston's portrait, and began to whistle.

He finished his cigar, called a couple of men to help him into a diving-dress, and joined the men who were toiling under the sea with masked lights.

It was natural enough that no suspicion of insecurity should have entered their minds. The water that covered them seemed sufficient safeguard.

Ferrers Lord had come out, and was watching the operation of cutting away the damaged plates. There was a sharp tide, which rendered the work more difficult.

For Prout, Maddock, and the bo'sun it was a time of leisure. They knew little or nothing about cutting plates or hammering up rivets, and they were, therefore, members of the unemployed. They had adjourned to the fo'c's'le to eat a supper of toasted cheese and pickled cabbage, which they washed down with beer. It was a very nice supper, and they appreciated it. When their pipes were in full blast, they settled themselves comfortably, and smiled at each other.

"A poipe of 'bacca afther a full meal," remarked Barry O'Rooney poetically, "is as swate as a gintle shower afther a blazin' hot day. When Oi loight up me poipe afther onions and throipe, Oi'm as gay as a larrk in a poie. And this is moighty foine 'baccy they sarve out on this vissil. Bedad, though, bhoys, talkin' about 'baccy, Oi remember the toimo whin we got the real sthuff. My Uncle Dinnis, yez see, he—"

Prout's hand crept towards a heavy sea-boot that was standing near.

"By hokey, what was the name of the gentleman you just mentioned?" he queried. "I didn't quite catch it."

"Fergus O'Brien," answered Barry unblushingly.

"And a lucky thing for you, souse me!" said Benjamin Maddock. "We've 'ad a sight too much of that Uncle Dennis and Ballybunion Castle. Well, what about the 'baccy?"

"Bedad, ut was great stuff. Yez cud see ut winkin' at yez loike four o'clock!"

"Winkin' at you?" said Maddock. "What the bilgewater do you mean?"

"Ut was the koind yez call birrd's-eye, yez see," went on Barry dreamily, "and that's whoy ut winked. Well, to make a shorrt story long, Fayther McTurk, who sold saleskin coats to the gintility, and thrapped all the cats in the disthrikt to turn into saleskin—Fayther, as Oi towld yez, sint me Uncle Dinnis a—"

At the mention of this hated name Maddock and Prout arose in their wrath. Two huge fists were shaken close to Barry's face; two angry voices told him to prepare at once to attend his own funeral.

"All roight. Oi'll be as good as goold," said Barry. "Ut slipped out. Troth, Oi didn't mane ut at all, at all. Oi'm too tired to attind a funeral this blissid noight. Pacc, pace! Don't be jealous, just because Oi was bornn so beautiful! Oi can't help ut, can Oi? Whin Oi met King Idward the Sivinth, he says—"

But Maddock and Prout had gone, in high disgust. They walked along the corridor side by side.

"By hokey," said the steersman, "that Irishman's a lovely liar, Ben!"

"He are, souse me!" agreed the bo'sun. "It's a gift wi' him—a real gift!"

They reached the ladder, turned, and walked back slowly. Prout tapped at the galley door.

Above them, the night was placid and calm. Faber and four of his men had landed, and clambered up the cliffs. "Asleep on her iron," as the sailors put it, the anchored vessel, her nose to the tide, rocked lazily up and down. The boat, pulled by a single oarsman, danced towards her.

"Thunder! What's that?" yelled Faber.

There was a roar—deafening, tremendous! A column of red flame burst out of the sea, and a black mushroom of smoke rolled towards the winking stars. Then, like a boat of wax in a blazing sun, the vessel crumbled away—spars, bulwarks, and keel—and sank out of sight amid a smother of spume.

One of the floating mines had struck her.

### In which Prout O'Rooney, and Maddock Try to Work Like Slaves, but Meet with Many Interruptions.

"I guess we can pull through now, old man."

The millionaire laughed gently. For several hours not a word had passed. Ching-Lung, in fact, had been quietly dozing away the time—a very sensible thing to do under such dismal circumstances.

"Have you been asleep?"

"That's about the size of it," said Ching-Lung. "What have you been doing?"

"Working out some ideas," answered Ferrers Lord, "and amusing myself. I fancy I have hit upon something that will interest Hal Honour."

"Something new?"

"Something absolutely new, Ching!"

"All the same, if it were mine, I'd sell it for a smoke," said his Imperial Highness, yawning. "I'm dying by inches for a smoke, and I'm as thirsty as a dried fish. Let us away!"

Hal Honour, the silent and tireless, was still at work when they reached the submarine. He did not merely direct and superintend, but used his powerful muscles into the bargain with twice the energy of two ordinary men. The engineer was a human marvel. With such an example, it was not surprising that miracles were accomplished.

Ferrers Lord seized his hand and pressed it, and Ching-Lung gave him an encouraging pat on the helmet. Then they entered the diving-chamber. A touch of the bell obtained an immediate answer.

"A smoke!" yelled Ching-Lung, the second his nozzle had been unscrewed. "Gan, a smoke if you love me!"

"I getses one in no times, Chingy," said Gan-Waga. "I getses one in onces, my butterfuls boyeses."

Gan-Waga promptly returned with a box of cigars, and Ching-Lung puffed away luxuriously.

"That's considerably better!" said his Imperial Highness.

"I've only got one other ambition in the world now, my one and only Eskimoses, and that's a big, fat bottle of beer. Bring me a big, fat bottle of beer, Blubberbiter, and next Christmas twelvemonth, or later, I'll give you the loveliest present!"

"Whats you givses me, Chingy, hunk?" gurgled Gan-Waga.

"A diamond-encrusted savèloy, with pearl pneumatic tyres, and a jewelled garter to keep your hat from blowing off. You'll laugh when you see it, and so—er—shall I. Help to pull my slippers off. I've never been so tired since I missed the step and fell off the Eiffel Tower on top of the fat omnibus-driver."

"And whats dids de fatses omnibus-drivers say, hunk, Chingy, when yo' falleds on him?"

"He never said a word, Gan. They got a dust-pan and brush and swept him up."

"Didn't he laughs, Chingy?" inquired Gan-Waga.

"Not a lot, he didn't—at least, I didn't hear him. Sweet-heart, get that beer, or else you'll have to bring a dust-pan and brush to sweep your blue-eyed boy up. I'm also collapsing. My mouth feels like the inside of a lime-kiln, with a dark-brown taste on it. Fly, fairy—fly! If you don't, you'll have to pay for my funeral. Floo, floo, floo!"

"My poors ole Chingy!" said the sympathetic Gan, and fled.

After a long, luxurious pull at the foaming tankard, Ching-Lung patted his chest and smiled again.

(Another long instalment of this grand adventure tale next Monday.)

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NEXT  
MONDAY:

"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"

## SPECIAL NEW FEATURE!

# Greyfriars Lyrics

BY

"The Magnet" Library's Own Rhymester.

### No. 9.—JOHNNY BULL.

Few MAGNET heroes are so fine  
As strong and stalwart Johnny,  
Who in the Famous Five doth shine,  
A youngster bright and bonnie.  
Like Britain's typical "John Bull,"  
He is the soul of honour;  
With zealous pride he serves his school,  
And brings no shame upon her.

When Wharton leads his merry men  
At footer or at cricket,  
In raids upon some prefect's den,  
Or scouting in the thicket,  
Our Johnny's always on the scene,  
To Wharton strictly loyal;  
And foes feel where his fist has been  
In many a battie royal!

With Fish the study he must share,  
For thus the Head arranges;  
The business man from "over there"  
Effects some drastic changes.  
The humble room has had to serve  
As pawnshop to the pirate;  
And Fisher's cool, unbounded nerve  
Made all the fellows irate.

The "three brass balls" displayed without  
Caused everyone to wonder;  
But Bull produced a hammer stout  
And smashed them all asunder.  
He next pursued the artful Yank,  
An explanation needing;  
But though the Shylock he did spank,  
Fish went his way unheeding.

But soon his schemes were foiled by Fate  
And shattered; and the fact is,  
That boys of Britain always hate  
Suggestions of sharp practice.  
Both Johnny Bull and Dicky Rake  
Were anything but pleasant;  
And rudely Fisher did awake  
From dreams which once were present.

Fat Bunter follows after frocks  
Of damsels by the dozen;  
Yet he received the worst of shocks  
When courting Johnny's cousin.  
The way she put the porpoise down  
Was really quite a "thriller,"  
And Bunter lost the rich renown  
Of champion lady-killer.

Both Johnny and his cousin boast  
The pluck which marks our nation;  
A gift which graced the English host  
For many a generation.  
The noble Wharton must be proud  
Of such a staunch assistant,  
Whose praise is chanted long and loud  
By readers near and distant.

The Subject of next Monday's Lyric will be  
**ALONZO TODD.**

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry  
Wharton & Co. Order Early.



# My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO :  
**EDITOR,**  
**"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,**  
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,  
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS  
**"THE GEM" LIBRARY,**  
 EVERY WEDNESDAY  
 AND  
**"THE PENNY POPULAR"**  
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor  
 is always  
 pleased to  
 hear from  
 his Chums,  
 at home or  
 abroad.

**FOR NEXT MONDAY:**

**"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"**

The long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, which is contained in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY is a particularly amusing one. Vernon-Smith comes up against a new master—a German, whom the juniors soon nickname Herr Gander—and when the Bounder of the Remove Form finds himself punished as a result of Skinner's sneaking, he wreaks his vengeance on his one-time crouny.

However, Frank Richards proves in his story that even a worm can turn, and Skinner beats Vernon-Smith hands down in

**"THE SNEAK'S REVENGE!"**

What form his vengeance takes—and whether it is amusing or otherwise—you will discover next Monday. However, you will be well advised to order your copy in advance.

**SPLENDID NEWS!**

As I have ample evidence of the great interest which the majority of my readers take in football, I have introduced a

**GREAT NEW FOOTBALL FEATURE**

into this Wednesday's issue of our companion paper "The Gem" Library. This feature is of extra-special interest to all followers of the great winter game, consisting of a series of straight, common-sense talks, full of valuable advice and interesting anecdote, contributed by a number of first-class football champions selected from the great League teams. Needless to say, these personal contributions from our greatest footballers were not obtained without great expenditure of trouble and expense, but I felt that it was worth it all in order to get the very best "copy" obtainable for my readers. In these days, when so much is written about football and footballers, a new football feature has to be very good indeed if it is to create anything of a sensation—and that is what I expect my latest departure to do.

And I rely on the help of each individual one of my chums to do their utmost for me in this direction by getting "The Gem" Library on Wednesday, in order to read No. 1 of this splendid new series of articles.

**REPLIES IN BRIEF.**

Leonard R. (Maidstone).—Thanks for your letter and original version of "The Famous Five." Yes, the passages you quote from Victor Hugo's book are in Latin.

A Loyal Reader (S. A.).—No. All the Sixth Form are not prefects.

True Blue (Hackney).—No goalkeeper may do what you state.

Oriental.—You can obtain white mice at any naturalist's shop in your town. Try the local bird fancier, and ask him.

Amateur (Newport).—Plates are the better for photographs which require time, but films produce better snapshots.

C. Watson (Fulham).—Thanks for your letter. Always glad to hear from old readers with their criticisms.

President (Clapham Common).—Congratulations on the success of your league! I am very pleased to hear you are trying your luck at "Poplets." You know the old maxim: "If at first, etc."

W. Campbell (Glasgow).—You send your story to the publisher, and if he accepts it, he pays you according to his rate for that style of story.

W. Berrell (Whitland).—Thanks for letter. The arts you

mention can be learnt by constant practice. I am afraid I do not know the game you mention.

Alfred (Smethwick).—I am sorry your sketching is not good enough yet. Study hard for a time, and then I shall be pleased to give my opinion again. Stick to it!

J. Fulton (Keswick).—Am afraid you would have difficulty in getting more than face value for your George III. penny.

Robert R. (Gateshead).—Very many thanks for your suggestion. I will consider it.

E. H. Ludlow (Nunhead).—I am not aware of any "Gem" League in your district. By all means start one if you wish! Good luck!

A True Reader (Newton Abbot).—Very sorry to say your letter was overlooked. I hoped you camped out in August, as it is the best month of the year for it!

**KING FOOTBALL.**

The most popular of our winter sports is again with us, and there is but little doubt that already many of our readers are prepared for it. Although the game is played by so many, it is very obvious that a large number of players enter into the game without due regard to the rules which are in vogue and which every football team, to be successful, must rigidly adhere to.

For a brief resume of the different duties which have to be fulfilled by the various members of the team, it will simplify matters to divide the eleven players into the usual four groups of forwards, half-backs, full backs, and the goalie.

The forwards are five in number, and comprise outside left, inside left, centre forward, inside right and outside right. Of these five positions the centre forward is probably the most important and difficult to play. The position demands a player with plenty of "go," pluck and skill; skill especially in the direction of shooting and dribbling. The two outside players need to have a good turn of speed if they wish to bring credit to the rest of the team and to themselves; and they also need to be strong and accurate passers. In some games they may find it necessary to pass the ball the whole width of the field. The strong points of the insides should be short passing, and cross shots at goal. The whole secret of a successful and strong forward line is unselfish combination; for no matter however clever each player may be as an individual, if the five are not capable of working well together the attack must be weak. This applies in general to the whole of the team, but most particularly to the forward line.

With regard to the half backs, their duty is divided between defence and attack. One part is to keep the forwards well "fed," that is, to give them every opportunity of scoring by passing the ball forward. The right half attends to the wants of the inside and outside right; the centre half—probably the busiest man on the field—to the centre forward, and, indeed, to all; and the left half to the inside and outside left. The half backs are also the first part of the defence, inasmuch as they have to keep the opposing forward line in check, and, if possible, prevent them reaching even so far as the full backs. Therefore, in many cases, upon this line falls the brunt of the work.

The two full backs, however, are the chief defenders. Each must have a good strong kick, and a fair amount of weight; and, most important of all, must have good "tackling" powers.

Last, but not least, comes the goalie. Usually, the man best for this position is tall, has a sure eye, and a steady kick. He is the last man in the defence, and with him often rests victory or defeat.

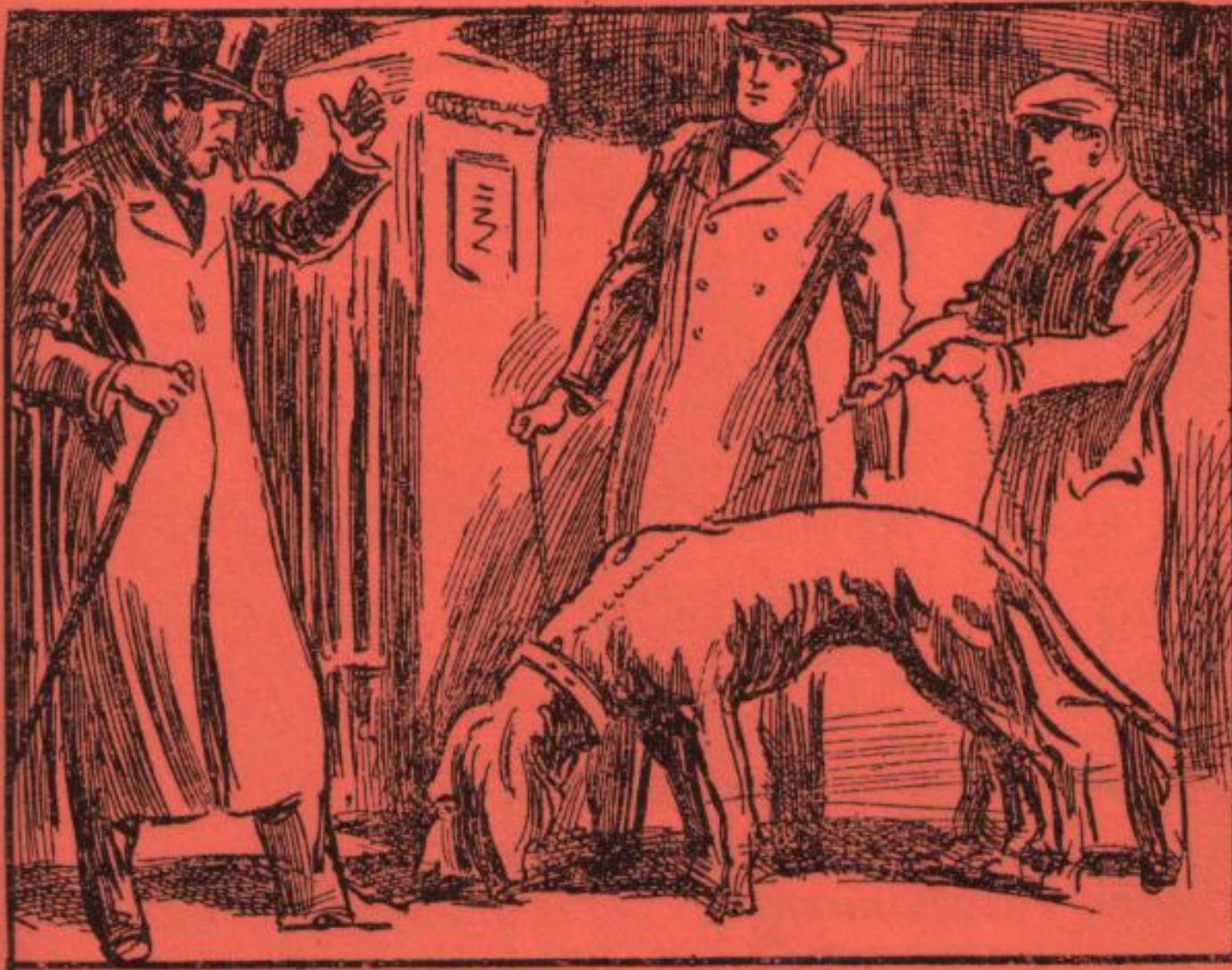
The reader about to pick his team for the coming season would do well to bear in mind the few hints given above in making his selections. In the practice matches he should insist upon combination, for there is little doubt that a team of players will go a long way, and add victory on to victory if the work of each player is properly combined.

WILL YOU PLEASE READ THIS STORY?

# Hunter, & Hunted Too!

A Thrilling, Long, Complete Tale dealing with the  
Amazing Adventures of

**SEXTON BLAKE, Detective,**  
VERSUS  
**GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER.**



While Sexton Blake was talking to Plummer, Pedro was straining at the leash, his nostrils sniffing suspiciously round the sergeant's boots. "I say, old man," said Plummer, "I wish you would stop this blessed dog of yours from inquiring round my boots!" (See page 8.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### A Mysterious Searcher of Titles.

NO. 13, Rail Street, enjoyed a unique reputation. It had excited, but never satisfied, the curiosity of its neighbours.

House-agents called it a villa. People without the same gilt-edged reasons for pretentiousness referred to it as a cottage. It was, none the less, pleasantly situated, standing well back from the road, with its handsomely verandahed gable-end giving on to the canal that cuts the Borough of Paddington. It was, moreover, surrounded by a pleasant garden, screened from the street by high green palings and a well-trimmed hedge of privet, and rejoicing in a wealth of roses and tiny lawns.

Mr. Marsden, the tenant of No. 13, was a man of such marked reticence that people dubbed him rude. He kept no servant, whose friendly gossip might have revealed those intimate features of his life so dear to neighbourly ears. A charwoman of withered years, of gaunt and aggressive appearance, vanished each morning between eight and ten behind the high, close-panelled gate, which she was always careful to lock after her.

What or where Mr. Marsden ate, no one knew. During the eight months he had been there no local tradesman had ever been called upon to cater for his needs. It was whispered that he was a student, a hunter of ancient and forgotten records; but no one could say on what authority the legend

was based. But it seemed to suit him; it fitted his benevolent and venerable aspect. He might have been sixty; or, again, he mightn't.

"Old" Marsden they called him. None knew or cared what his Christian name was. He wore a long, grey beard, and a large, grey suit. His hat was grey, and so were his smoked spectacles. There was an air of quite insufferable greyness about him altogether. But, beyond the fact that he had paid his rent in advance, and shut the door on the nose of a subscription-seeking evangelist, gossips learnt nothing, and, after the fashion of their kind, relegated him to the oblivion he obviously desired, with the cryptic remark that "He was probably no better than he ought to be."

Had the gossips been able to penetrate into a cosy library in the cottage on the sunny September morning on which this story opens, their curiosity would only have been confirmed; for they would have found there old Marsden peering in lazy content over an open "Peerage," around which, on the plain oak desk, lay various papers and letters. He looked very bland, very benevolent, and no one gazing at the horn-rimmed, simple spectacles would have ever ventured to guess that they concealed a pair of eyes glittering, alert, hard as steel, and a-reck with greed and resolve.

For some minutes Mr. Marsden lay back in his chair, his long, firm fingertips pressed together, his gaze fixed on the ceiling, his lips making a cold, thin line, level as the edge of a chisel. Then he sat erect, drew the papers and documents on the table towards him, and slowly, deliberately, as if expounding their purport to a hearer unblest by a surfeit of intelligence, recited their contents.

"We will observe, first," he said, addressing the patch of sunlit garden opposite him, "that Allan Audley, Earl of Sevenoaks, succeeded his father, deceased 1872, has remained unmarried, is now fifty-six years of age, is likely to leave his disposable property to his adopted daughter Helen.

"Secondly, according to Debrett, the heir to the title and entailed property, with its sixty thousand a year rent-roll,

is Horace, second son of the late earl, or his heirs, if any; and his whereabouts are unknown.

"Now, here"—he lifted up a document—"is the marriage-certificate of Horace Audley, son of Allan, Earl of Sevenoaks, with Maria, only daughter of Jim Jenkins, of the Eagle Arms, Windsor.

"And here"—lifting up a second document—"is a letter, dated April 16th, 1871, from Sevenoaks, to his son Horace, repudiating him and his barmaid wife; and"—exchanging the document for another—"a further letter, from Horace to his father, evidently returned unopened, in which the Honourable Horace repudiates his father, and affirms his intention of henceforth living under the name of Jenkins, and earning his bread by the sweat of his noble brow.

"The effort evidently killed him"—there was a note of curious malice in his voice as he lifted up two other papers—"for here is our poor friend Horace's death-certificate, within a month of the date of the birth-certificate of his son Horace, who, according to this 'Naval Gazette'—his long fingers smoothed out the sheet—"is posted under date March 12th, 1904, as coastguard to Fairlight Coastguard Station, Hastings, under the name of Horace Jenkins.

"Wherefore, you will observe, my excellent blue-bottle"—he grabbed at, caught, and slowly nipped the fly to death as he spoke—"that if Allan, the present earl, dies, Horace Jenkins, coastguard, with a romantic attachment to Helen, adopted daughter of the present earl, comes into the title and property."

(Continued on page iv.)

"THE PENNY POPULAR" IS A COMPANION PAPER TO "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. BUY IT TO-DAY.

He put the papers in order, placed them in a large envelope, and, taking off his spectacles, stared out of the window.

It was curious how the revelation of those hard, gleaming, implacable eyes rendered indescribably malignant the illusion of venerableness that had distinguished his face the moment before. He sat silent for some minutes, watching a spider outside the window, hovering by an invisible thread over a silver sheen of net, where two flies were squirming. The spider dropped, pouncing; and Mr. Marsden laughed aloud, rose, and, crossing to a safe, took out a long envelope, and again seated himself at the desk.

From the envelope he drew a single sheet of paper, and again read aloud.

"Listen, O fly, before Mr. Spider has finished with your neighbour!" he said, eyeing with malicious appreciation the struggles of the fly in the enmeshing net. "Listen, then die! In the year of grace 1850, George Audley, cousin to the late Earl of Sevenoaks, landed at Sydney, in Australia, was engaged as cowboy by one Plummer, married Plummer's daughter, and, taking Plummer's name, took with it Plummer's estates, and duly dies in 1871.

"Now, hearken, fly, and learn how capricious is Fate. George Audley—or, George Plummer, as he called himself—has but one son—George—and he, the spendthrift, makes ducks-and-drakes of his heritage, marries, begets a son, whom he also calls George, and who, born in 1875, accompanies his widowed mother to England, and settles in Dawlish.

"And now, O fly, that Mr. Spider is preparing for you, listen and learn the malignancy of Fate! George Plummer, in 1893, enters the police force, all ignorant of his wealthy relatives—as ignorant, in fact, as is Horace Jenkins. In 1900 George Plummer is promoted as a very intelligent officer—very intelligent, mark you, O fly!—to Exeter. And in 1903, proving still more intelligent, he is appointed as detective-sergeant at Scotland Yard.

"Hence, O fly, mark the irony of circumstance! Between George Plummer, detective-sergeant at Scotland Yard, and an earldom, with a rent-roll of sixty thousand a year, there stands but two simple lives—simple as yours and your brother's were ten minutes ago; and, fly, as frail. Yes. If Allan, Earl of Sevenoaks, dies, and if Horace Jenkins dies, George Plummer becomes earl, with sixty thousand coverings a year, paid quarterly! And to think, O fly, that they might die, just as suddenly and unexpectedly as your brother did, as you are going to do! Ah, would you?"

He darted his long hand through the window, grabbing at the fly, who had succeeded at last in breaking free of the net. But the fly dropped among the rose-branches, and Mr. Marsden cursed it viciously, as his clawing hand encountered a particularly curved thorn.

He laughed spitefully as he realised how unaccountably the episode had power to irritate him. Then, sweeping all his papers into one bundle, he tied them together, and replaced them in the safe, and stood for a moment swaying the heavy door.

"'Plummer' will do," he muttered, with a grin; and, setting the combination-letter lock to "Plummer," he swung the door to.

He took up that morning's "Daily Mail," and turned to the weather report.

"English Channel and North Sea.—Smooth; heavy fog," he read.

Next he turned to a rack, and took down an "A B C" and a "Bradshaw," studied these for a few minutes, then crossed the room, and entered a bed-room communicating.

Some twenty minutes later a side-door in No. 13 opened,

and there stepped into the garden an alert-looking man, with close-cropped, black hair, a close-trimmed, pointed, black beard. Over his arm was a light-grey waterproof coat, and he was carrying a small kit-bag. He passed the front gate, walked to the bottom of the garden, and halted at an angle of the high green palings that hid the junction of Rail and Grave Streets.

Through holes in the panelling he scanned each of the streets, and, waiting a few minutes, till Grave Street was empty, he pressed a button in the panelling of the fence. A door opened noiselessly. He slipped through, drawing the door to after him, and a few seconds later, hailing a taxi-cab, entered it, and bade the chauffeur take him to Charing Cross Station.

"Return, sir?" said the clerk at the station, as the man with the pointed beard demanded a first-class ticket for Hastings.

"No," was the reply, after a moment's hesitation. "Single."

And as, seated in the 11.15 for Hastings, he reviewed his morning's work, he chuckled to himself.

"Even their blessed Sexton Blake," he thought, "if he had second-sight chucked in, would never be able to put his finger on me in the little events that are going to happen."

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Two Fateful Interviews.

WHEN Mr. Marsden stepped on to the Hastings platform, no one would have recognised in him either the benevolent recluse of No. 13, Rail Street, or the alert man with pointed beard of Charing Cross Station. A pair of heavily-smoked pince-nez now adorned his nose, a tawny golden beard swept majestically on his breast, a squash "topper" covered a wealth of curly auburn hair, and, buttoned up in a loose light-grey coat that enveloped him from chin to toes, he looked, as he hustled through the gate, as if he had stepped from the frame of some ancient canvas depicting the family solicitor.

Mr. Marsden had a large share of the artistic and histrionic sense which is instinct to all genius, and whatever part he assumed he acted up to it with all his might. The colossal vanity of the master criminal is insatiate and exacting; and Mr. Marsden, as he handed up his ticket, took care that the porter should observe the sheaf of legal-looking documents, and point him respectfully to the street leading to the court-house.

"Some bloomin' lawyer toff from London!" surmised the porter, as Marsden had intended.

Marsden continued the road to the police-station, asked the road to Fairlight from two policemen, chatted on the foggy weather just long enough to give them time to swear to his personal appearance, then walked off rapidly to a cab-rank, and bade a man drive him to the road above the coastguard station at Fairlight.

Half an hour later he stood looking down on the neat row of whitewashed cottages that, perched on a shoulder of the cliff, hung between the wide sweep of common and a dainty cove, from which floated up the soft lap of the full tide. The mist, white and blankety, lay over all the scene, and Mr. Marsden, realising that it was impossible to see twenty yards in front, softly clenched his hand in a gesture curiously laden with menace; and then, climbing down the steps cut in the cliff, made his way to the cottages.

(The rest of this story—one of the finest detective yarns ever written—appears in the latest issue of our new companion paper, "THE PENNY POPULAR." On sale at all newsagents. Buy a copy!)

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Turn to page 32 and try your luck.

