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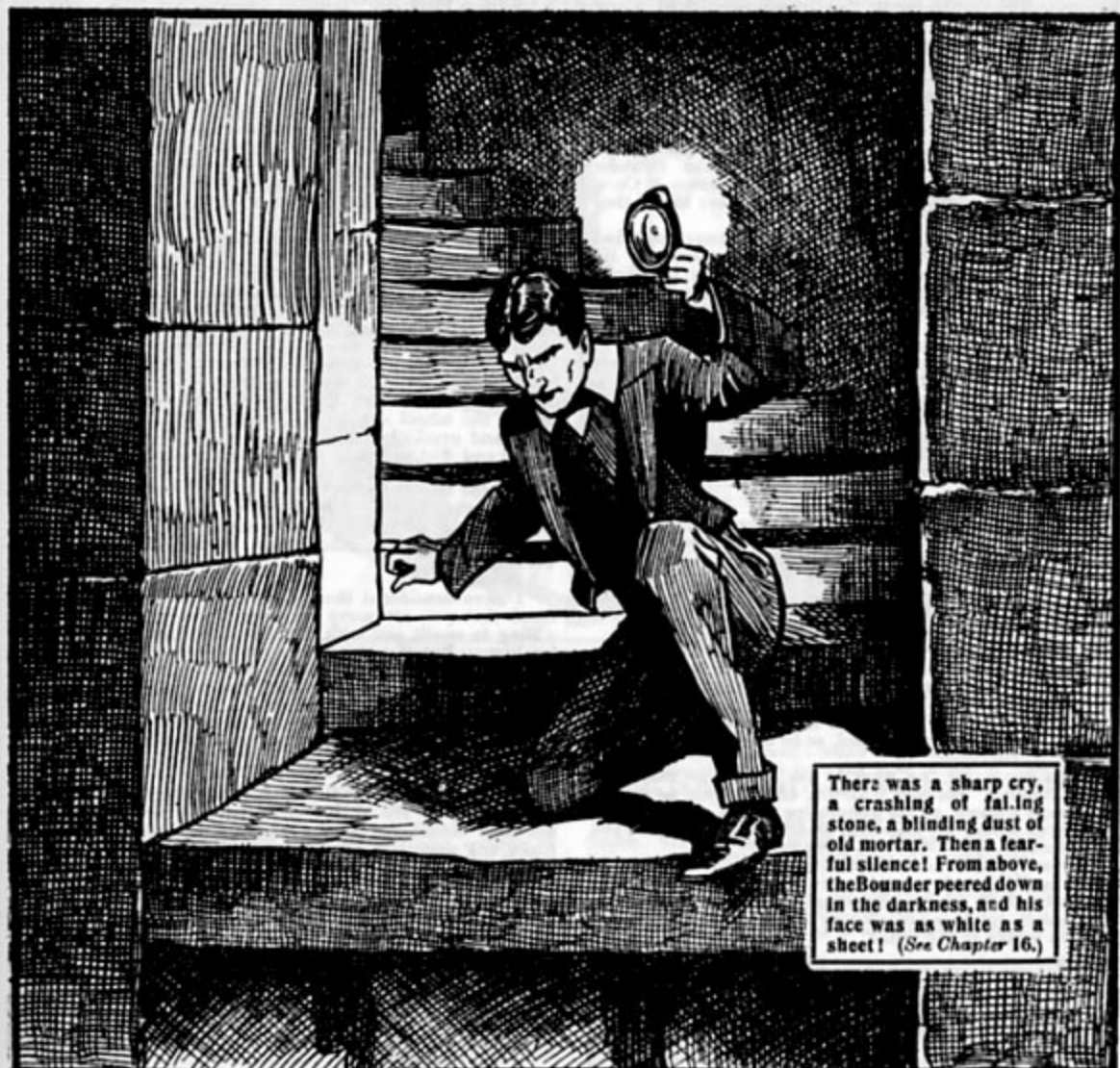
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There was a sharp cry, a crashing of falling stone, a blinding dust of old mortar. Then a fearful silence! From above, the Bouncer peered down in the darkness, and his face was as white as a sheet! (See Chapter 16.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

All Together!

"ALL together, mind!" said Harry Wharton.
"Righto!"
"Quelchy will be here in a minute. You know what you've got to do. When—"
"I say, you fellows—"

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"Shut up, Bunter! When I begin, you all back me up—"

"But I say—"

"Sit on his head, somebody! Now, you can leave all the talking round to me," went on Harry Wharton impressively, looking round upon the excited faces in the Remove Form-room.
"I'll pitch it to him like a Dutch uncle. But you're to back me up, to show Quelchy that the whole Form is in it."

October 25th, 1913.

"Hear, hear!"

There was a thrill of excitement in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars.

The juniors had come in a little early for afternoon lessons, and Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, had not arrived yet. When he did arrive, something in the nature of a surprise was awaiting him.

There was something "on" in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars.

One member of the Form was absent from his place. It was Vernon-Smith, the junior who was called the Bouncer of Greyfriars. A "bouncer" he undoubtedly was, and he had been unpopular enough in his Form, and the rival and enemy of Harry Wharton & Co.; and yet, curiously enough, it was Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer, who occupied now the thoughts of the whole of the Remove. It was the Bouncer about whom Harry Wharton and his friends were concerned just now, to the exclusion of everything else.

For the Bouncer was under sentence of expulsion!

That morning the sentence had been pronounced in the Head's study; that afternoon the Bouncer was to leave Greyfriars for good!

Undoubtedly, Vernon-Smith had, in his time, done many things for which he fully deserved to be expelled from the school. Most of the fellows were agreed upon that. But, as Bob Cherry put it, the chopper had come down at the wrong moment.

For the Bouncer just then was the hero of the hour. Was it not the Bouncer who had played up like an International in the footer match with St. Jim's, and had pulled the game out of the fire with a really wonderful goal on the very stroke of time? After that, whatever the Bouncer had done, one duty seemed clear to Harry Wharton & Co.—it was up to them to rally round Smithy, and save him if they could.

Harry Wharton had thought it out over dinner, and had planned this little demonstration in the Form-room. He reasoned it out that Mr. Quelch couldn't possibly be wholly impervious to public opinion in the Form. When he found that the Remove rose as one man to demand pardon for the Bouncer, surely he was bound to take some notice? At all events, that was what the juniors hoped.

There was a footstep in the passage outside. Harry Wharton raised his hand.

"He's coming! All together, remember!"

"I say, you fellows," persisted Billy Bunter, "you'd better leave the talking to me. My opinion is—Yow-ow!" Bunter broke off with a yelp as Johnny Bull's heavy hand descended upon him. "Ow, Bull, you beast!"

"Shurrup!"

The Form-room door opened.

Mr. Quelch strode in with rustling gown. The Form-master's severe face was a little more severe than usual. His expression was not promising, and some of the juniors felt their hearts sink a little. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not flinch. The Form rose to their feet as Mr. Quelch entered, and Harry Wharton started:

"If you please, sir—"

"If you please, sir—" chimed in the whole Remove.

Mr. Quelch stared at them.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "What is the matter?"

"About Smithy, sir!" said Wharton.

"About Smithy, sir!" chimed in the chorus.

"What!" Mr. Quelch frowned, as he began to understand.

"Really, Wharton—"

"If you please, sir, we want to ask you to go easy with poor old Smithy!" pursued Wharton, affecting not to see the Form-master's frown, or his gesture for silence. "We know he disobeyed orders, sir, and—broke bounds, and gave you a lot of trouble, sir. We're all sorry for it!"

"Very sorry, sir!" came the chorus.

"But he did it with a good motive, sir. We should have been beaten at St. Jim's if the Bouncer—I mean, if Vernon-Smith hadn't got there to play in the match. We should have been beaten to the wide!"

"Beaten hollow, sir!"

"Smithy saved the match, sir!"

"Of course, he did wrong. If he were flogged, sir, we wouldn't mind."

"Not a bit, sir!" chorused the Remove.

"But we think it's rather hard that poor old Smithy should be sacked, sir—I mean, expelled—when he was really trying to do his best for the Form. If you'd seen him take that goal at St. Jim's, sir—"

"It was a ripping goal, sir!"

"Right on the stroke of time, sir," said Wharton enthusiastically, heedless of the Form-master's frown and raised hand. "He charged the goalkeeper right in, sir, ball and all, and it was less'n a minute to the whistle—"

"Wharton!"

"We know he was wrong to break bounds, sir, and give you a chase after him, and—the other things he did. We don't excuse them, sir—"

"Oh, no, sir—not at all, sir!" came the chorus.

"We think that if he were punished some other way, sir, and not expelled, it would meet the case, if you would be so kind, sir!"

"So very kind, sir!" came in a roar.

"We should take it as a great and special favour to the Form, sir—"

"A tremendous favour, sir—"

"And we'd look after Smithy, and see that he behaved himself in future, sir—"

"Wharton! Silence! Do you hear? Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "How dare you deafen me in this way?"

"We—we didn't mean to deafen you, sir," said Wharton, faltering a little. "But—but we should like you to know how the Remove feels about the matter, sir. We all feel that Smithy is getting it too thick for what he did."

"Much too thick, sir."

"We don't want him to be expelled. Anything else—"

"Yes, anything, sir!"

"Any old thing!" said Bob Cherry.

"Will you be silent!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Now, listen to me, my boys!" He raised his hand again. "You have no right to speak in this way, and you deserve to be punished for impertinence. But I do not wish to be severe with you. I do not wish you to feel that your Form-fellow has been treated with undue severity. You are all aware of what Vernon-Smith did. He was under detention, and he left the school against my strict orders. I brought him back, and overlooked what he had done; and he broke out again, and fled. I followed him a great distance, and he intercepted a telegram sent by me—which is an offence against the law. He bribed a cabman to lose me in a lonely place, so that I had my long journey for nothing. If such conduct were pardoned, there would be an end to all order and discipline in the school. It is impossible to pardon Vernon-Smith!"

"But, sir—"

"I have considered the matter very carefully. I understand that you are sorry for your Form-fellow, and I am willing to credit you with the best intentions in speaking up for him. But if you reflect upon the matter, you will see that what you ask is impossible. Vernon-Smith's record, ever since he has been in this school, has been very bad. This time he has gone too far for pardon. I thought the matter out seriously before I demanded his expulsion. The head-master fully agrees with me that there is nothing else to be done!"

"But, sir—"

"I have made this explanation," said Mr. Quelch severely, "in order that you may understand that Vernon-Smith has not been condemned hastily, and that it is utterly useless to make any appeal in his favour. The subject will now be dropped!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence! We shall now proceed with lessons!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Yes, sir, if you please—"

Mr. Quelch's lips tightened.

"The next boy who speaks will be caned!" he said.

"Oh!"

The Remove sat down. There was evidently nothing more to be said after that. They sat with grim looks while lessons proceeded.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mr. Vernon-Smith Says "No!"

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were looking glum as they came out of the Form-room after lessons. They had tried—and they had failed!

There was no chance for the Bouncer. That afternoon his father was to come and take him away—and Greyfriars would see the last of him.

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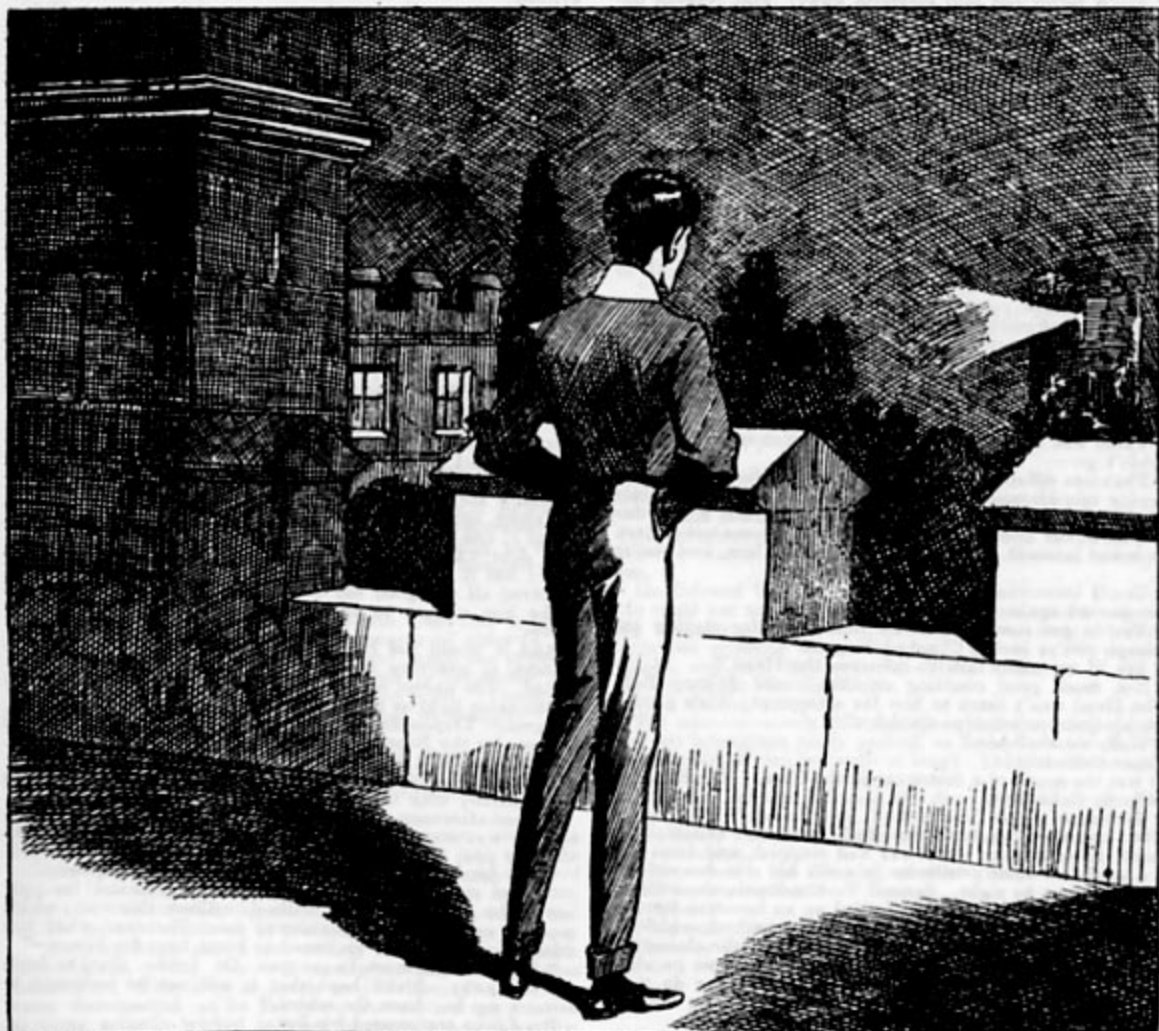
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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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Harry Wharton, with a curious beating of the heart, watched intently. From the darkness the light came out again—and this time it gleamed steadily, and burned clearly in the night. (See Chapter 5.)

Harry Wharton had never dreamed, for a moment, that he would feel so much concern about the fate of his old rival and foe. Had it happened at a time when he was at daggers drawn with the Bounder, when the latter was seeking to oust him from his position as captain of the Remove, it would have been different, certainly. But the Bounder seemed to have changed so much lately—he had played up in the footer match like a real sportsman—and his defiance of authority in the school, for the purpose of getting to that match, much as it angered the masters, appealed to the juniors by its very daring and recklessness.

Almost to a man, the Remove would have taken any steps to save the Bounder from the fate his recklessness had brought upon him; but it seemed that there was nothing to be done. The appeal to Mr. Quelch had failed, and in an hour or two more Greyfriars would know the Bounder no longer.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry. "The rottenest part of it is for Smithy to get it in the neck like this, just when he seems to have turned over a new leaf and become a really decent chap."

"That's the worst of it," Wharton agreed. "Quelchy is as hard as iron. I suppose he's right, from his point of view."

"And the Bounder will have to go!" said Frank Nugent.

"I suppose so."

"His pater is coming in the car to fetch him away, I hear," Johnny Bull remarked. "I fancy we shall see Smith senior in a tantrum. He will be waxy."

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"I'm afraid that won't make any difference to the Head."
"No; Smith's pater isn't the most tactful of men, either," said Bob Cherry. "He's more likely to ruffle the Head than to soothe him."

The Co. went up to the Remove passage to look for Vernon-Smith. He had been ordered to keep in his study until his father came. Wharton knocked at the study door.

"Come in!"

The clear, cool, metallic voice of the Bounder was as firm as ever. The juniors entered the study.

Vernon-Smith was seated in his armchair, with a cigarette between his lips, smoking.

He nodded coolly to the juniors through a little cloud of smoke.

Wharton's expression changed. The rule against juniors smoking was a very strict one at Greyfriars; and yet, even with the sentence of expulsion pronounced upon him, the Bounder was a bounder still.

"Did you put it to Quelchy?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Yes."

"And what did he say?"

"He shut us up."

"I expected that. He's hard as nails." The Bounder chuckled. "Well, I did lead him a dance, that's certain. Fancy the old bird hopping about in the muddy fields, looking for the road, after the cabby planted him there."

"You don't seem very downhearted about it," said Harry.

"I'm not downhearted. I've got it in the neck; but I'm

not going to whine," said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You'd better put that cigarette away," said Nugent un-
easily.

"Why? I'm sacked. They can't do anything else to me. May as well smoke a last fag." But the Bouncer threw it into the grate as he spoke. "I'm not finished yet, though. My pater is coming here, and he may be able to get round the Head. I've telegraphed the whole business to him. He won't let me be sacked if he can help it."

"I hope he'll be able to make some difference," said Wharton. "I'm afraid the Head won't listen to him, though."

"Even then—" The Bouncer paused.

"Well, what then?"

"I'm not gone yet," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I've got great sticking powers, you know. I said that I'd play in the St. Jim's match, in spite of Quelch, and I did it, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did; but—"

"And I'm not gone yet. If I can manage it, I'm not going. I'm not going to be marked for life with the disgrace of expulsion from school—if I can help it."

The juniors stared at him blankly.

"But how can you help it?" asked Wharton. "You can't stay after the Head says you are to go."

The Bouncer smiled.

"There was a time when Bob Cherry was sacked, and he wouldn't go—"

"That was different." Wharton could not help a hardness creeping into his voice. His chum Bob Cherry had certainly been "sacked" on that unforgotten occasion, but it was due to a plot of the Bouncer, and the truth had come out at last. "Bob was innocent of what was said against him, and you're not."

"Yes, I know that. All the same—"

He paused again.

"You've got some scheme in your head for staying on, although you're sacked?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, if my pater fails to influence the Head."

"Not much good counting on that," said Johnny Bull. "The Head won't listen to him for a moment. He's got his back up quite as much as Quelch."

"Well, we shall see."

Toot—toot—toot!

It was the sound of a motor-car in the Close. The Bouncer rose lazily to his feet.

"That's my pater!" he said.

The junior stepped to the study window. Outside the School House a large motor-car had stopped, and from the car a somewhat stout gentleman in a silk hat was descending. They knew him by sight. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier—the man who had piled up an immense fortune in speculation on the Stock Exchange, by methods which, it was hinted in many quarters, would not bear the closest investigation. Samuel Vernon-Smith was one of those peculiar products of this modern age who toil not, neither do they spin, yet who have a marvellous gift of annexing wealth created by others.

The juniors caught a glimpse of the millionaire's face as he passed into the house, and they saw that it was red and frowning. Samuel Vernon-Smith had evidently arrived at Greyfriars in a very bad temper.

"I must go down," said the Bouncer.

He hurried out of the study, and the juniors followed him. Quite a crowd had gathered in the hall to see the millionaire come in. Samuel Vernon-Smith had visited Greyfriars before, and the fellows knew him well by sight. That he was purse-proud, overbearing and ruthless in his dealings, they all knew. And there was a considerable amount of speculation among the fellows as to whether Mr. Vernon-Smith would succeed in over-ruling the Head, and getting his son's sentence rescinded.

"Oh, so there you are!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith gruffly, as his son came forward to greet him. "A pretty pickle you are in now, ain't you?"

"I'm sorry, dad."

"Lot of good that is!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Sacked—by gad!—expelled, by Jove! You ought to be flogged, sir!"

"I'm willing to be flogged instead; but the Head doesn't seem to see it," said Vernon-Smith, with a smile.

"Look here, you're not going," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, heedless of the curious ears that heard all that he said. "Do you see? No son of mine is going to be expelled from school. I won't have it."

"But—"

"Nonsense! I tell you I won't have it! Where's the Head?" demanded Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I've come here to see the Head."

Trotter, the page, came forward, and Mr. Vernon-Smith was conducted to the Head's study.

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Dr. Locke had been expecting him, and he had given orders that the millionaire was to be shown in immediately he arrived.

The door of the Head's study closed upon Mr. Vernon-Smith, and the fellows in the hall were left in a buzz of excitement.

"I'd like to hear the old boy jawing the Head!" chuckled Coker of the Fifth. "I'm afraid it won't be any good, Smithy, you young rascal!"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

It was curious, but of all the fellows, Vernon-Smith seemed the least concerned by what was passing. He had all at stake—and yet his coolness was not diminished, and his hardy nature did not flinch. With all his faults, the Bouncer of Greyfriars was game to the backbone, and when he had to answer for his sins, he had plenty of courage to face the music.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Stormy Interview!

DR. LOCKE, the Head of Greyfriars, wore a worried look as Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, was shown into his study.

The Head of Greyfriars had had dealings with Mr. Vernon-Smith before. He knew his overbearing character, and the quiet, scholarly old gentleman dreaded the interview. And at one time, too, their association had been far from pleasant, for Mr. Vernon-Smith, among his many financial activities, had a large interest in a certain moneylending firm—and at one time Dr. Locke had been in the grip of that firm. The debt was paid, the unpleasant incident was closed for ever; but it had left an unpleasant memory behind, and it required all the good old doctor's old-fashioned courtesy to make him urbane to the millionaire financier and money-lender.

And it would not have been pleasant, under any circumstances, to interview the parent of a boy sentenced to be expelled. The parent could not be expected to view the matter in the same light as the headmaster of the school.

Samuel Vernon-Smith, probably, would be able to find excuses for the Bouncer's conduct, where Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch could find none.

The Head rose, with his polite bow, and shook hands mechanically with the millionaire.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Vernon-Smith! I am sorry for the news I was compelled to send you. This is not a pleasant visit for you, I fear."

"Far from that, sir!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, grimly.

"I am sorry. It would really have been better for your son to be sent home, as I wished, without this visit, which must be exceedingly unpleasant to you. However, when you wired to me that you preferred to come here for him—"

"I came here more to see you, Dr. Locke, than to fetch my son away. I still hope that it will not be necessary to remove my boy from the school."

Dr. Locke compressed his lips.

"I thought that I had made myself quite clear," he said coldly. "Vernon-Smith has been expelled for bad conduct."

"But matters can generally be arranged," urged the millionaire. "I don't say the boy hasn't done wrong—I dare say he has. If you say he has, I'm willing to admit that you are the best judge. But so severe a punishment—"

"Not a whit too severe!" said the Head warmly.

"Think of the harm it will do him," said Vernon-Smith. "I may send him to another school, but what public school of any standing will admit him when it is known that he has been expelled from a school like Greyfriars? It is a stigma that will cling to him all his days."

"He knew the risk."

"It is not as if he had done anything actually wicked—stealing, or anything like that," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "As I understand it, he has been guilty of disobedience, defiance of authority. I don't deny that he is obstinate and wilful. But surely a flogging—"

"He has been flogged several times without the slightest result in changing his character."

"What exactly has he done?"

The Head drew a deep breath.

"It is hard to say what he has not done. He has had a bad record all the time he has been at Greyfriars, and several times he has been forgiven and allowed another chance. This time it is impossible. He was guilty of a trick upon the German master here, and another lad told about him. He assaulted that lad in a brutal manner, and for that offence was sentenced to detention. One afternoon he was allowed freedom from detention to play in a football match, and instead of doing so, he played a wretched trick upon the German master. Yesterday he wished to be freed from detention again on the plea of another football-match, and

it was refused. He broke bounds and fled. He was caught and brought back, and then he escaped from the room he was confined in, climbing over the roof at the risk of his life."

The millionaire grinned involuntarily. It was quite evident that he was not at all displeased by this account of his son, though he affected to deplore it.

"That was plucky, you will admit, sir!"

"It was pluck misplaced!" said the headmaster coldly. "If he had fallen and been killed, what would you have said?"

"Oh, he can take care of himself! But after that?"

"After that he seized another boy's motor-bicycle by force and fled upon it. His Form-master followed him to the school where the football-match was being played. He sent a telegram to the headmaster of that school. Vernon-Smith intercepted it."

"The young rascal!"

"Then he bribed a cabman to take Mr. Quelch into a lonely place, under pretence of driving to the school, and to lose him there."

"What resource!"

The millionaire uttered those words involuntarily with a subdued chuckle. But he became grave again immediately as he caught the doctor's frigid look.

"And that is all!" he asked.

"That is all!" said the Head. "I think it is enough. To allow him to remain at the school would be weakness after what he has done. It would be subversive of all discipline and order. I am sorry, but he must go."

"He will promise—"

"He has promised before, and has broken his promise."

The millionaire drummed upon the table with his fingers.

"Could it be made a question of compensation?" he asked, with a business-like air. "It seems that the Form-master has suffered damage. I should be more than willing to make every compensation. A hundred pounds—two hundred—"

The Head made a gesture of disdain.

"Five hundred!"

"Pray understand, Mr. Vernon-Smith, that this is not a question of money, but of the maintenance of order in the school. Your whole fortune would not make the slightest difference. And really I must beg you to remember, sir, that you are not in your counting-house now. There are some things and some people that cannot be bought!" said Dr. Locke warmly.

"Precious few, my dear sir—precious few!" said the millionaire coolly. "I have always found that money talks."

"In this case, sir, and in this place, such talk is futile, not to say insulting!"

"I cannot have my son branded with disgrace, sir, for a hot-headed action with little or no harm in it!" said the millionaire hotly. "He is expelled—that will be remembered against him when the reason for his expulsion is forgotten. It may be attributed by his enemies to dishonesty, or worse." "He cannot remain at Greyfriars."

"But, consider, sir. I am willing to make any possible compensation. My boy will apologise, and will promise amendment. Flog him as much as you like. But troublesome, disrespectful as he has been, you cannot say there is anything actually wicked in what he has done. Give him another chance."

"I am sorry—"

"You will not refuse?"

"I must refuse!"

The millionaire's brow darkened, and his square jaw seemed to become squarer. His eyebrows drew together, beetling over his eyes; the expression of his hard face was grim and threatening—a look that unfortunate debtors knew and dreaded. But Dr. Locke was not a debtor, and he did not dread it. Indeed, he was rather pleased than otherwise that Mr. Vernon-Smith showed a disposition to bully him. It made him angry; and when he was angry he felt better able to deal with Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Then I shall conclude, sir, that there are personal reasons at the bottom of this—a personal dislike of my son—founded, I suppose, upon our former dealings," said the millionaire harshly.

"You may conclude what you like, sir," said Dr. Locke tartly. "It does not seem to me useful in any way to continue this interview."

"There is an appeal from you, Dr. Locke, to the board of governors."

"The board of governors would not be likely to override my decision. If they knew the circumstances, they would be far more likely to condemn my leniency in allowing Vernon-Smith to remain here after so many former offences."

"I ask one more chance for my son!"

"I am sorry, very sorry, that I cannot grant it. My decision is irrevocable," said the Head. "My Quelch demanded this sentence, and I fully concurred. To change my decision would be an insult to him."

"May I see Mr. Quelch, and make some attempt to arrange matters to his satisfaction?"

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NEXT MONDAY—"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

"I will not allow you to insult my colleague with offers of money, if that is what you mean."

The millionaire clenched his knuckly hand.

"Then it comes to this that you are determined to send my son away in disgrace from this school?"

"I have no choice in the matter."

"Very well, sir, it is in your power; but you have not finished with me. Do you know that I could buy up Greyfriars School, lock, stock, and barrel, without missing the money, if I chose?" the millionaire exclaimed savagely.

The Head's lip curled.

"I have no doubt you could if Greyfriars were for sale, but it is not!"

"Once more I repeat I am willing to agree to any terms, but I cannot consent for my son to be driven from school in disgrace."

"I can only adhere to what I have said, Mr. Vernon-Smith. I really think I had better bid you good-afternoon."

Mr. Vernon-Smith glared at the doctor from under his beetling brows, his eyes gleaming, his jaw squarer than ever. But in the scholarly face, with its rim of white hair, he read a firmness quite equal to his own. The last word had been said, and Mr. Vernon-Smith knew that it was useless to say more.

"Very well, sir," he said thickly; "but you will hear from me again!"

He strode out of the study, and closed the door with a slam. Dr. Locke sank into his chair almost limply.

"Thank goodness that is over," he murmured; and his face quite brightened up at the thought that in a few minutes more he would be relieved of the Vernon-Smiths, father and son.

He listened for the sound of the motor-car in the Close. He could not settle down to any occupation until his disturbing visitor was gone. But there was no toot from the motor-horn—no grinding of wheels on the gravel. The minutes passed, and still there was no audible indication of the departure of Mr. Vernon-Smith.

Why did he not go?

Ten minutes—surely that was enough, if the expelled junior had his belongings ready packed, as had been ordered. Was the Bounder saying farewells so long? The Head felt vaguely uneasy.

Suddenly, without a knock, the door of the study was flung open. Mr. Vernon-Smith, flushed and angry, appeared.

Dr. Locke started to his feet. His anger flashed up at this new intrusion.

"Sir, what is the meaning of this? What—"

"Where is my son?"

"What!"

"My son cannot be found! Where is he?" demanded the millionaire harshly. "What trick is this you are playing?"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Vanished Schoolboy;

"WHERE is my son?"

Dr. Locke gazed blankly at the millionaire.

Of all the reasons he had thought of to account for the delay in the millionaire's departure, certainly this was the last that would have occurred to his mind. There was no reason, so far as Dr. Locke knew, why Vernon-Smith should not be found. The question took him utterly by surprise.

"Your son!" he exclaimed at last.

Mr. Vernon-Smith brought a large-sized fist down upon the Head's writing-table with a concussion that made the ink dance in the well.

"Yes, sir. What trick is this?"

"Trick!" exclaimed the Head indignantly.

"I saw my son for one minute when I arrived here," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Now, apparently, he cannot be found. Where is he?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Head sharply. "Of course he can be found. I will order him to be found at once. I suppose he is in hiding somewhere, in order to give more trouble—a thing he delights in."

Mr. Vernon-Smith looked at his watch.

"I can remain a quarter of an hour, at the furthest," he said. "I have to appear at an important City function this evening. You have said that I am to take my son away. I am ready to do so. He is here, in your charge—produce him. If he is not produced in a quarter of an hour, I go without him."

"You will certainly not go without him," said the Head, puzzled and extremely annoyed by this new development.

"He shall be found in less than a quarter of an hour."

"I will wait."

Mr. Vernon-Smith sat down.

Dr. Locke hurried out of the study. In the passage and the hall a crowd was gathered, most of the fellows talking at once. The buzz died down as the agitated headmaster appeared.

"Boys, do you know where Vernon-Smith is?"

"No, sir."

"When did you see him last—any of you?"

"He was here when his pater came, sir," said Coker, of the Fifth. "He seems to have disappeared since then."

"We've looked in his study," said Temple, of the Fourth.

"He ain't there. And he's not in the Cloac."

"Nor in the gym," said Bob Cherry.

"Nor in the Cloisters," said Harry Wharton, who had gone thither to look for the vanished Bounder.

"Nor anywhere we've looked, sir," said Tom Brown.

"He must be found," said the Head, frowning. "His father must leave to keep an appointment in a quarter of an hour, and the boy must go with him. Pray oblige me by looking for him."

"Certainly, sir."

"I say, you fellows, we may as well go and look along the river," Billy Bunter remarked, loud enough for the Head to hear.

Dr. Locke gave quite a jump.

"Bunter! What did you say, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked at his headmaster through his big spectacles. He was very pleased at having made an impression.

"I said we might look along the river, sir."

"And why?" asked Dr. Locke sternly. "What reason have you to suppose, Bunter, that Vernon-Smith may be found in the neighbourhood of the river?"

"I—I thought he might have drowned himself, sir."

"What!"

Bunter jumped in his turn. The Head's voice was terrifying.

"Shurrup, you fat duffer!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"How dare you make such a wicked and ridiculous suggestion, Bunter?" thundered the Head.

Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I—I say—I mean—it occurred to me, sir," he stammered.

"I saw Smithy march off after his father came, sir, and he was looking simply desperate. And—and he said this morning, sir—he said—he said—"

"What did he say?"

"I—I won't tell you, sir, if—if you don't want to hear."

"Tell me at once, Bunter!"

"Well, sir, he said— You're sure you won't mind, sir?"

"I order you to tell me immediately, you stupid boy!" said the Head, breathing hard.

"Yes, sir. That alters the case, sir. He said that old Quelch would be sorry for having driven him to what he was going to do, sir."

"How dare you speak of your Form-master in that disrespectful manner, Bunter?"

"B-b-but you ordered me to tell you what he said, sir," stammered Bunter. "Of course, I never allude to old Quelch as old Quelch, sir. The Bounder said old Quelch. I'm always very careful, sir, to speak respectfully when I mention old Quelch myself."

"You stupid boy! Be silent! Boys, pray look for Vernon-Smith. I shall be very much obliged if you can find him."

The crowd rushed off in search of the Bounder. They wanted to oblige the Head, and they were very curious to learn what had become of Vernon-Smith. Some of the fellows, indeed, were inclined to put faith in Bunter's suggestion, that the Bounder had done something madly reckless and desperate. But many more were of the opinion that it was a trick of some sort—one of those tricks the Bounder was famous for. Everybody knew that he was determined not to leave Greyfriars if he could help it, and his disappearance at this moment was probably a "dodge."

All the same, a large number of the fellows made their way down to the river. Harry Wharton's face was dark and clouded. Was it possible—the dark thought forced itself into his mind as he stood on the landing-raft, and gazed upon the shining, murmuring waters of the Sark.

The Bounder had been in a desperate and reckless mood—his punishment was heavy, and he had felt it to be unjust—and perhaps he had feared to go home. For, strong as his father's affection was for him, the millionaire would certainly be exasperated at the "mucker" his son had made, and the homecoming of the expelled junior would be decidedly disagreeable.

And the terrible word "suicide"—what a disgrace for the school that had cast him forth—for the master who had

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refused to pardon him! It was possible—barely possible—that the Bounder, wrought up to a pitch of excitement and malice, had done that rash deed!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Can you see anything, Bob?"

Bob Cherry was dashing along the towing-path.

The other fellows dashed after him. Bob bent down in the half-submerged rushes by the river's edge, and drew out a cap—a Greyfriars cap. It was wet through, floating in the water, and caught in the rushes.

Bob held up the drenched cap, dripping with water. A hush fell upon the juniors as they looked at it.

Bob turned it over, and pointed silently to the name written inside the cap.

"It's the Bounder's!" muttered Wharton.

"Vernon-Smith!"

With a chill at their hearts, the juniors stared at the river, growing dim and dusky in the October evening.

Where was the Bounder?

Could those glimmering waters tell a tale of tragedy—of a desperate plunge—a white, upturned face staring unseeingly as it floated away?

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent.

There was nothing else to be seen. But that drenched and dripping cap seemed to tell its own tale.

"It's impossible!" muttered Bulstrode. "Impossible! Smithy wouldn't be such a fool!"

"Sure, and there's the cap entirely!" said Micky Desmond, through his chattering teeth.

"Better take it to the Head!" said Bob, in a low voice.

"I suppose so, but—"

"He can't have done it," said Nugent, as the juniors turned back towards the school. "It is a trick. We all know the Bounder. He's playing this dodge to make the Head sorry he sacked him."

"I hope so," said Wharton.

"You don't think—"

"I'm blessed if I know what to think."

The juniors returned silently and gloomily into the Cloac, Coker, of the Fifth, met them as they came in.

"Found anything?" he asked.

"This," said Bob, holding up the cap.

Coker turned quite pale.

"Oh, crumbs! Where?"

"In the river."

"Better take it to the Head!"

They went to the School House. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, stopped them as they came in. His eyes were on the drenched cap at once.

"Is that Smith's?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You found it—"

"It was caught in the rushes—in the river."

Wingate compressed his lips.

"I believe it is a rotten trick," he said. "But come to the Head."

Three or four of the juniors went with Wingate to the Head's study. Other fellows had come in from various directions—with no news of the Bounder. The search was evidently useless. If the Bounder was still living, he was well hidden. Wingate and the Removites entered the Head's study. Dr. Locke was there, sitting grimly silent. Mr. Vernon-Smith had lighted a big cigar. Dr. Locke looked up, and his gaze seemed to become frozen on the drenched cap. He did not need to ask whose it was, or where it had been found.

"Well, where is my son?" demanded Mr. Vernon-Smith, rising to his feet. "Time's up—I must go!"

Then his gaze fell upon the cap. He grasped it from Bob Cherry's hand, and looked at it, and read his son's name inside it. He turned a startled gaze upon the Head.

"What does this mean, Dr. Locke?" he demanded.

"I know no more than you do," said the Head. "Your son has deliberately chosen to absent himself. That is all I can say."

"We found this in the river, sir," said Bob.

"Did you see my son?"

"No, sir!"

"This is his cap," said the millionaire. "Here is his name written in it. Dr. Locke, if anything has happened to my son, those responsible shall pay dearly for it!"

"Pray moderate your language, sir," said the Head angrily. "The person responsible for your son's misconduct is the father who has allowed him to grow up wilful and headstrong. I do not believe what this would imply—I think it is a trick, sir—a miserable trick on the part of your son, to cause more trouble than he has caused already."

"I trust that will prove to be the case," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "But the fact remains that, after demanding that



Bob Cherry held up the drenched cap, dripping with water, and a hush fell upon the juniors as Bob turned it over and pointed silently to the name written inside the cap. "It's the Bounder's!" muttered Harry Wharton. (See Chapter 4.)

I should take my son away, you have failed to hand him over to me. For what happens while he is in your charge, you are responsible. Kindly let me know by telegraph as soon as he is found."

And the millionaire strode from the study.

Five minutes later, the zip-zip of the motor-car was heard as it drove out of the old gateway of Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith's father was gone. But where was Vernon-Smith?

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Mysterious Light!

THAT evening there were hushed voices and serious faces in Greyfriars School.

The sudden vanishing of Vernon-Smith, and the mystery that surrounded it, cast a gloom upon all the school.

No further trace of him had been discovered—though the search had gone on. That he was not within the walls of Greyfriars seemed pretty certain, for the school had been searched from top to bottom. Gosling, the porter, and Trotter, the page, and most of the boys, had hunted high and low. Even the ruined tower had been searched, from the vault underneath to the topmost room, where the stars winked in through the crevices in the shattered old walls.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

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Even the crypt under the old chapel had been explored. But there was no sign of the Bounder.

He had gone, apparently—he might be staying in the neighbourhood, perhaps; unless—unless—and that dark thought lurked in every mind—unless he was lying cold and still amid the dark waters of the Sark.

But there were many arguments against that. A fellow in a wild pitch of hysterical excitement, beside himself, might have done such a foolish thing. But the fellows all remembered that the Bounder had been perfectly cool and self-possessed.

Then again, his father evidently did not believe that anything serious had happened—even the most important business appointment would hardly have taken Mr. Vernon-Smith back to London, if he had believed that it was possible.

And if Mr. Vernon-Smith was satisfied that nothing had happened to his son, there was no need for anyone else to be alarmed.

And yet—There was a "yet." The Bounder was a peculiar fellow; and the thing best known about him was that one never really knew what he might do next.

"He's sure to turn up to-morrow," said Bolsover major. "He's not ~~as~~ enough to do a thing like that, you know. Most likely he's gone home, after playing that trick, to scold off the Head and old Quelch."

"Then we shall hear about it to-morrow," said Wharton.

"I hope we shall," said Nugent. "I can't think anything's really happened, only—Smithy was a queer chap sometimes." And the school went to bed that night without any further news of the Bounder.

The Head had already communicated with the police, and if nothing was heard of Vernon-Smith in the morning, a general search was to be made.

And in the morning, nothing was heard.

Early in the morning a telegram came for the Head, from Mr. Vernon-Smith; but it was not to give news of his son. It was to inquire whether he had been found.

After morning lessons, the juniors saw Inspector Lucas from Courtfield come into the School House, and he remained some time with the Head.

They heard later that the river had been dragged in several places.

But nothing was found.

"Not much good dragging the river," Bob Cherry remarked. "If a chap was there, he would be carried down to the Pool and sucked under, and might remain there for weeks or months, or for ever."

"Those was a chap drowned in the Pool a long time back, and he was never found," said Frank Nugent. "There are under-currents there."

"But Smithy was a first-class swimmer," said Wharton. "Even if he was idiot enough to jump in, he would think better of it when he was in the water—and then he could swim out easily enough."

"Not if he was swept into the Pool!" said Bob.

"He would have a chance, even there. But I don't believe he's done anything of the sort," said Harry, with a shake of the head. "He wasn't excited or hysterical yesterday—he was as cool as a cucumber. He's safe enough—and I've an idea that his pater knows it, too!"

"I suppose he'd let his pater know," said Bob. "He wouldn't like to leave him anxious. But what good will it do Smithy to play this game?"

"Trying to work on the Head's feelings, perhaps, and soften his heart," suggested Bulstrode.

"Yes; but when the Head finds out it was only a trick, he'll harden his heart again, like Pharaoh," grinned Bob Cherry, "and it will be harder than ever. If Smithy turns up now, he'll get a flogging before he's sent away, most likely. That's all the good he's done for himself."

"I wish he'd turn up," said Wharton restlessly.

But wishing was useless. The juniors went in to afternoon lessons, still in a state of uncertainty. That day Harry Wharton & Co. had other matters to think of, as well as the Bounder. The morrow was Saturday—and on Saturday afternoon there was a football match to be played by the Remove. The Remove eleven were going over to Redclyffe to play the junior team there.

It was an important fixture—from the Remove point of view—and Harry Wharton had been feeling keenly how unlucky it was that the Bounder would be gone, and unable to play. Since the Bounder had turned over his new leaf, Wharton had come to depend on him as a right-hand man in the team. And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, one of the forwards, was still in sanatorium with a cold. It was annoying enough that the Bounder should be lacking—but the uncertainty as to his fate made matters worse. With the possibility that a grim tragedy was hanging over the school, the juniors, or some of them, at all events, felt that they could not put their hearts into the game.

"But we've got to play!" said Bob Cherry, when the matter was discussed in Study No. 1 that evening. "We can't scratch with Redclyffe at the last moment, because the Bounder has cleared out in an original manner."

"Impossible!" said Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"I wasn't thinking of scratching," he said. "Only I feel rotten about it. Smithy played up so jolly well for us at St. Jim's, and it's bad enough to leave him out, anyway. Of course, he can never play for Greyfriars again, wherever he is. But—to think that he may be—it's impossible—it takes the heart out of a chap."

"I feel that, too—but we've got to beat Redclyffe if we can!"

"We'll do our best."

"They're a strong team," said Harry thoughtfully. "The fact is, we've been a bit ambitious with our fixtures this season—the new ones are some of them a bit above our weight, unless we're in our toppest form. I was depending

on the Bounder—there are precious few junior teams with a winger like Smithy. Now he's gone, we shall have to play without him, of course—but it's a flaw in our giddy armour. Well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

The juniors went up to the dormitory that night in a down-hearted mood.

For more than twenty-four hours, now, Vernon-Smith had been missing; excepting the cap in the rushes, nothing had been found.

After dark, somehow, it seemed more probable than during the day, that something tragic had occurred—that the Bounder lay sleeping his last sleep deep in the treacherous waters of the Pool.

Wharton could not help thinking of it, as he lay in bed that night; and he could not sleep.

He stirred and turned restlessly in his bed, and he heard the hour of midnight strike before he closed his eyes and kept them closed.

And then his sleep was not sound.

He dreamed of the Bounder—of his old, bitter quarrels with him—and somehow it came to him, in his dreams, that the Bounder had not always been wholly to blame. He had been cunning, he had been treacherous—but there had been faults of temper on Wharton's side. The junior awoke suddenly from troubled sleep—and his thoughts ran on, on the same subject. It was rotten about poor old Smithy! Of late he had shown the best side of his nature—he had proved that he was a good sportsman, at all events, with all his faults. It was rotten that fate should be so hard upon him just when he seemed to have a prospect of pulling out of his unpleasant past, and winning the respect and liking of his comrades.

Boom!

One o'clock struck. Wharton closed his eyes and tried to sleep, but he could not. Somehow or other the thought of the dark pool, murmuring amid the rushes, was in his mind and refused to be driven away. What new secret of horror was hidden now by those dark, swirling waters?

Wharton sat up in bed at last. He knew he could not sleep, and he gave up the attempt. In the darkness and solitude of the night he felt lonely and restless.

"Any of you fellows awake?" he asked, in a low voice. He did not want to disturb any of his companions, but he would have been jolly glad of company in his wakefulness.

But there was no reply—only the steady breathing of the juniors, and the deep, bass snore of Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton turned out of bed at last. The dormitory seemed stuffy to him, and he thought of a turn in the Close to ease his worried nerves. But it was strictly forbidden to the juniors to leave the School House at night. But at the back of the School House there was a window that gave upon the flat, leaded roof of the school museum, and in the daytime that was a favourite resort for "swots" who wanted a quiet spot for grinding Latin or mathematics. Wharton slipped on his clothes and a pair of rubber shoes, and left the dormitory quietly. He made his way in the gloom to the window in the passage at the back and opened it, and dropped out upon the leads.

There he paced to and fro, with the cool night breeze from the sea fanning his heated brow, feeling calmer and better.

Yet the thought of the Bounder and the dark waters of the pool haunted him. He would have given a great deal for certainty as to Vernon-Smith's fate. Where was the Bounder? If he was living, why did he not let his friends know he was safe? It came into Wharton's mind that he might have been kinder in his dealings with the black sheep of the Lower Fourth, in spite of his exasperating ways.

All was silent about him. Every window in the house was dark at that hour. Only a glimmer of starlight fell upon the buildings, and the leads, and the old elm-trees. From the leads in the daytime the surrounding country could be seen, and, nearer at hand, the ruined tower that was a relic of the earliest days of Greyfriars—the tower from whose loopholes Norman soldiers had watched for Saxon foes in days long, long past, and whose old stone walls had been shattered by Cromwell's cannon in later days, when the tower was held for the King.

Wharton glanced towards the tower now; but it was swallowed up in darkness, and he could not see the faintest outline of it.

Suddenly, through the gloom, came the twinkle of a light. The junior started.

For a moment that light twinkled through the gloom from the direction of the old tower. Then it vanished, and all was dark again. Wharton rubbed his eyes. Who could be in the old tower at that hour—almost half-past one in the morning, when all the school was sleeping? Had he fancied it? For all was dark again now—pitchy dark!

Wharton, with a curious beating of the heart, watched intently. From the darkness the light came glimmering out

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again—and this time it gleamed steadily, and burned clearly in the night.

And Wharton, breathing hard, stood upon the leads, and watched with startled eyes the mysterious light from the top-most loophole of the old tower.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Startling Discovery!

STEADY and clear, burning on through the darkness, the light shone.

The tower was hidden in darkness, but from the summit that light came; and Wharton, who knew every inch of the old place, knew that it was burning in the top-most chamber.

The old tower was in ruins—the very walls were insecure, and had been propped up with stout wooden beams to preserve them—but the interior of the tower was strictly "taboo" to the Greyfriars fellows. It was dangerous to climb up the rickety stone spiral stairs that led to the summit. There were gaps and pitfalls, and in the dark, especially, anyone ascending the old tower took his life in his hand. But someone was there—that was certain. That light gleaming out into the black night was proof of it.

Who was it?
Wharton thought that he could guess; but he meant to know for certain.

From the leads it was impossible to reach the ground. He turned back to the window, and climbed into the house, and descended to the lower passage, and let himself out upon the roof of an outhouse, whence he could drop to the ground. Then he started towards the old tower.

The light was still burning clearly.

The narrow slit in the thick stone walls in the old days had served both as loopholes for arrows and for a window to admit light. Now it was allowing the light to escape, to betray the presence of the refugees, whoever he was, in the tower. It was not likely, of course, that anyone would be awake at that hour in the school, and looking forth; it was but by chance that Wharton had made the discovery.

His brow was grim as he neared the tower. He suspected whom he would find there, and he had something to say to him when he found him.

He reached the tower. The old oaken door had long fallen to decay; but there was a new door, and it was fastened. Wharton felt it all over. He knew that it was kept carefully chained and padlocked to keep out enterprising juniors, who might have risked life and limb in ascending the tower. The chain and the padlock were intact, and that discovery staggered Wharton for a moment.

He stepped back, and looked upward. The light was still burning.

Whoever had entered the tower had not entered by the door. He must have climbed outside, by means of the ivy, to one of the gaps in the old structure, and gained admittance to the staircase that way—a terribly perilous adventure in the dark.

There were few fellows at Greyfriars who would have had the nerve for such an act—and Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, was one of the few.

Wharton set his teeth. Whoever it was in the tower, Wharton could do what he had done.

He selected a place for ascent carefully, and climbed into the ivy. It rustled and swayed under his weight; now and again a tendril snapped or came loose, but he climbed on, and reached a gap in the wall of the tower, where an ancient loophole had been shattered by a cannon-ball of two or three centuries ago. He climbed in over the crumbling stone. Fragments fell, and clinked lightly on the ground twenty feet below.

Dusty, and with aching limbs from his exertions, Harry Wharton dragged himself upon the stone stairs within.

Above him the tower rose fifty feet higher, and the higher it went the narrower the spiral stairs became. And in places it was broken away, and a false step meant a fall through yawning gaps—and a terrible death. Wharton felt every inch of the way carefully. With his hands groping before him, he picked every step as he ascended.

Now a light glimmered upon his eyes from the darkness.

The stairs ended in a circular room, of which part of the roof was gone, and a part of the walls. In that room the light burned.

Wharton, as he raised his head above the level of the floor from the spiral stairs, blinked and looked about him.

A small electric lamp was hanging upon a peg in the old wall. In a corner of the room lay a couple of blankets, an overcoat, and a rug. Near by them stood a portmanteau, open, half-packed, and about it were various articles that had been taken out of it, mostly provisions. Further on, a spirit-stove flickered with a blue flame, and a tin saucepan upon it contained several eggs, and bending over the saucepan was a well-known figure.

It was the Bounder!
Wharton, amazed as he was, understood. The Bounder

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had returned to the school under cover of darkness, and was camping out in the inaccessible summit of the old tower.

The tower had been searched for him the day before, and it was not likely to be searched again, of course. Unless he betrayed his presence there, the Bounder was safe from discovery.

Wharton drew a deep breath. The recklessness of the Bounder struck him more than anything else. In that round room at the top of the tower the floor was broken away; nearly one half of the room was a yawning gap. Darkness lay below the gap—darkness, and space, and shattered brickwork, and—death! One step over the edge meant the end of all things. And yet the Bounder was camping out in the round room, and intended to sleep there, evidently, in the blankets—within six feet of yawning death!

"Smithy!"
Harry Wharton's voice broke the dead silence suddenly. The stooping figure by the spirit-stove straightened up suddenly, and swung round with a startled gasp.

The two juniors stood face to face, as Wharton sprang up from the steps and stood in the room.

The Bounder recoiled a pace.

"Wharton!"
Harry advanced into the room, his brow stern, and his eyes gleaming.

"So it's you!"

Vernon-Smith smiled. He had recovered his self-possession in a moment. He nodded coolly.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" he said.

"So you weren't drowned?"

"I don't feel drowned," said the Bounder agreeably. "In fact, I feel decidedly lively just now, and a bit hungry. Will you share my supper?"

"Your cap was found in the rushes."

"Yes; I left it there."

"To make the Head think that you had jumped into the river?" demanded Wharton sternly.

The Bounder nodded.

"That was a rotten trick, Smithy!"

"I don't see it. They've been hard enough upon me," said the Bounder savagely. "Let 'em worry a bit—serve them right. They've worried me enough!"

"And what about us?" said Harry. "We did all we could for you, and you made us think—"

"Did you care whether I was drowned or not?"

It was quite the old Bounder who spoke—with a sardonic inflexion in his voice, a satirical curl to his lip.

"I suppose we all cared," said Harry.

"Thanks!"

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"Look here, Smithy, what is all this rot about? You look as if you've arranged to camp here. Is that it?"

"Your observation does you credit," said the Bounder imperturbably. "That's exactly what I intend to do. How on earth did you find me out?"

"I saw the light."

The Bounder glanced round him.

"Ah, the loopholes! That gap is on the other side, away from the house. But that light couldn't be seen from the dorm."

"I was on the leads."

"My hat! What on earth were you doing on the leads at this time of night?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in astonishment.

Wharton coloured. He was ashamed now of the concern he had felt for the Bounder's fate—though ashamed without reason, for his feelings had been generous and kind. But he felt all a healthy boy's distaste for anything approaching the sentimental. The Bounder was eyeing him curiously.

"I couldn't sleep," said Harry hastily. "I went out on the leads to get some fresh air."

"You don't mean to say you were worrying about what had happened to me?" the Bounder exclaimed.

"Perhaps that, among other things. There's the football match to-morrow, too; and we're most likely booked for a licking."

"I—I didn't know you would take it to heart in any way," the Bounder said, with a change in his voice. "After all, we've never been friends. We've got on better lately; but—but we never did pull together. And I didn't think—"

Look here, Wharton, I've done a lot of thinking lately. If I get a fresh chance in the school I'm going to run things a bit differently."

"I'm afraid it's too late for that," said Wharton, with a shake of the head.

"I don't know. How did they take the news—when my cap was found, I mean?"

"Everybody is anxious. But when the Head finds out that

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you're safe and sound, he won't feel any concern about you, of course. He'll be rattled about your playing such a trick. It only makes matters worse for you. Not that there was any chance before."

"You mean, he won't allow me to come back to Greyfriars unless I'm really drowned?" said the Bounder, with a grin.

Wharton laughed at the idea.

"Well, I suppose it's like that," he agreed. "And that would be rather too big a price for you to pay for pardon, wouldn't it?"

"Just a trifle!" said the Bounder, with a chuckle. "I shall have to think of something a little less dramatic, and a little less painful and conclusive."

"Do you mean that you haven't given up the idea of staying here?" the captain of the Removes exclaimed, in amazement.

"This doesn't look as if I had, does it?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a wave of the hand towards his camping supplies.

"But—but this is sheer lunacy! You can't stay here."

"Why not?"

"What good will it do? You'll be found sooner or later, and turned out."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," said the Bounder coolly. "My hat!" There was a spluttering as the tiny tin saucepan boiled over, and a strong smell as the spirit-stove was extinguished. "My eggs have boiled hard as bricks by this time! All your fault. Never mind. Will you have a hard-boiled egg with me?"

"No, thanks. Look here, Smithy, this can't go on."

"You don't mean to say that you're going to give me away, Wharton?" The Bounder's brows darkened. "I have never thought you a sneak."

"I can't allow the Head and the fellows to go on thinking that you are perhaps drowned," said Harry steadily. "They must know you are alive."

"They won't know unless you tell them."

"I must tell them. I cannot leave them in anxiety now that I know the truth."

Vernon-Smith bit his lip.

"If you mean that, Wharton—"

"I do mean it. Can't you see for yourself that it's impossible?" Wharton exclaimed hotly. "The police have been called in. The Head's worried to death about it. The fellows won't put any heart into the match to-morrow, thinking about what may have happened. You've no right to give them such trouble. I don't want to give you away, but the school's got to know that you are alive and well, and that's flat!"

"Leave it to me, then. I don't want it to be known that I'm inside the walls of Greyfriars. I'll show myself to-morrow somewhere, where I can be seen, and that will be enough."

"Well, I suppose that's all right. I'll keep the secret on that understanding. But you will have to leave here before light if you don't want to be seen."

"Trust me for that!"

"It's not safe to stay here," said Wharton uneasily. "You might break your neck at any minute in this ramshackle place."

"I'm safe enough. The tower is out of bounds, and I shan't be found here. Look here, Wharton, I'm going to stay. I haven't been able to lay any definite plans excepting this—that I'm not going to leave Greyfriars if I can help it. I've sworn that, and I mean to keep my word. If I get a fresh chance here I'm going to do better. And I think you might back me up all you can."

"I will. But—"

"Then keep my secret, and leave the rest to me."

"You promise that the Head shall know by to-morrow that you are safe?"

"All Greyfriars shall know—honour bright!"

"Well, I suppose you're your own master; and, goodness knows, I don't want to be down on you at a time like this!" said Harry. "We'll leave it at that. I suppose you've let your father know you're safe?"

"You bet!"

"And he allows this?"

"He allows anything I choose," said the Bounder coolly. "I haven't explained anything to him of the details of the matter—I haven't seen him since I saw him here yesterday—but I've written to tell him I'm safe and sound, and that I hope not to have to leave Greyfriars. He's very keen on my staying, of course. One thing's jolly certain—they won't find it easy to get rid of me. Sure you won't have some coffee? I've got everything here for a good spread."

Wharton shook his head.

"I'll get back to the dorm."

"Mind you don't break your neck. I used this electric-lantern coming up—I'll show you a light down."

And the Bounder lighted Wharton's way down the dangerous stair, and watched him climb out on the ivy.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,

Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

Harry Wharton returned to the Remove dormitory with his brain in a whirl. He was glad to know that the Bounder was alive and well; but the cool daring, the utter recklessness of the Bounder's plans, astounded him. Sooner or later he must be found, and driven out in disgrace. Surely that was certain. What chance could crop up to save him? If any chance came of helping the Bounder, Wharton was ready to do his part heartily. But— He shook his head as he thought of it. The Bounder's latest move was bold and reckless, but he was struggling with the inevitable; in the end he would have to go.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Rotten Luck!

HARRY WHARTON was heavy-eyed when the rising-bell clanged out on the following morning. He had slept soundly enough after returning to his bed, but he had lost the greater part of his night's rest. But his heart was lighter when he rose than it had been the day before. He knew now, at all events, that no grim tragedy had happened in the swirling waters of the Sark; and it irked him sorely that he could not tell his comrades so. As he heard the endless speculations among the Remove fellows as to the Bounder's fate, he felt the burden of the secret he had promised to keep. It gave him a feeling of hypocrisy to hear them, without telling them at once that there was no need for concern.

After school the football committee met in No. 1 Study to discuss the arrangements for the match. And then Wharton could stand it no longer. Only fellows that he could trust were present; and he felt that there was no harm in giving them a hint, at all events, that there was no cause for anxiety regarding the Bounder.

"Makes you feel so jolly rotten, you know!" Bob Cherry was saying. "Blessed if I feel like playing a good game of footer at all!"

"Same here," said Nugent.

"I'm blessed if I half like taking Smithy's place in the team, you know," said Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, who was to play outside-right in the place of the missing winger.

"But I suppose somebody must. But I shall feel rotten."

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, "there's no need to feel anxious about Smithy. He's all right."

"How do you know?" asked Bob. "No news since yesterday, is there?"

"Well, I do know," said Harry.

"Then you've heard something?" Nugent asked.

"I'd rather you didn't ask me any questions," said Wharton. "I can't answer them. But it's all right, and you can take my word for it. I'm not talking out of my hat. Of course, not a word is to be said outside this study. But you can take my word for it that Smithy is as well as any fellow here."

"Blessed if I see how you know!" said Bulstrode.

"Still, if you do know, that's all right," said Johnny Bull, with a curious glance at his chum. "I won't ask you any questions—but you are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"You know it for a fact?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yes."

"That settles it," said Bob Cherry, whose face had brightened up very much. "We'll take your word for it, Harry; though the dickens only knows how you know any more about it than we do!"

"You can tell Dutton, Toddy; he belongs to your study," said Wharton.

Peter Todd grinned, and leaned towards his deaf chum.

"No need to worry about Smithy," he said.

"Eh?"

"Smithy's all right!" shouted Peter Todd.

Dutton looked very puzzled.

"I suppose so," he said. "But whom am I to fight? I'm ready for a fight, as far as that goes. Is it a row with the Fourth?"

"Smithy!" roared Peter Todd.

"Smithy? Yes, I had a fight with Smithy once. But this really isn't the time to remember things like that, Todd."

"I tell you he's all right!" shrieked Peter.

"I know he did; and I'm going to play outside-right instead of him to-day. I'm perfectly aware of that."

"He's not drowned!" roared Peter.

"Of course," assented Dutton, "I'm coming with you! We shall all be on the Redclyffe ground at the same time, I suppose!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Nugent. "Leave it till you can borrow a megaphone, Toddy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sorry about old Smithy," said Dutton, looking round.



A sharp knock at the pavilion door interrupted the cheerful chat of the footballers, and then as the door opened, the smiles died off the faces of the victorious Greyfriars eleven, and there was a general exclamation of dismay: "The Head!" (See Chapter 10.)

"Seems rotten to be playing in his place when the poor chap may be drowned, doesn't it?"

"He's not drowned!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Found! Really?"

"Oh, my hat! Not found—not drowned!"

"Not found drowned?" asked Dutton. "Well, I know that. Has he been found at all?"

"No!" shrieked Bob. "He's not found, and he's not drowned!"

"You rotter!" roared Tom Dutton, jumping up wrathfully.

"What do you mean?"

Bob gasped.

"Eh? What do you mean, you mean?" he ejaculated.

"What's the row now?"

"I know I'm a trifle deaf," said Dutton indignantly. "But that's no reason for calling me names. You rotter! What do you mean by calling me a hound?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not!" bellowed Bob. "I haven't called you any old thing. I didn't say hound!"

Dutton caught the last word of the sentence, and misunderstood as usual. He thought that Bob was repeating the offensive epithet. He made a spring at Bob, and hit out, and Bob Cherry roared as Dutton's knuckles caught him on the nose.

"Take that!" shouted Dutton. "Come on—I'm ready for THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 298.

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you! I suppose it's you Todd meant when he asked me if I was ready to fight. Well, I'm ready. Come on!"

"I'll smash him!" roared Bob, jumping up.

But his chums grasped him and held him back. They were laughing almost too much to hold the excited junior. Tom Dutton's misunderstanding seemed funny to all the fellows excepting Bob—but Bob Cherry did not see where the fun came in. His nose looked, and felt, bulbous, and he wanted vengeance, and he wanted it hot and strong, and at once.

"Lemme go!" he roared. "I'm going to pulverise him, I tell you!"

"Hold on!" chuckled Wharton. "It's only a mistake, you know—"

"Look at my nose!"

The juniors looked at it, and roared. It was very red.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him come on!" roared Dutton, prancing round Bob with his fists in the air. "I'll teach him to call me a hound! I'll—"

"You'll come away," chuckled Peter Todd, grasping his deaf chum by the arm, and dragging him out of the study.

"You hold that lunatic, you chaps, and I'll hold this one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go!" yelled Dutton.

"Come away, you ass!"

"I haven't any. What on earth do you want hay for?"

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snapped Dutton. "Don't talk to me about hay. I'm going to smash him for calling me a hound!"

But Peter Todd rushed him away by main force—and Harry Wharton & Co. succeeded in restraining Bob from pursuit. The football committee of the Lower Fourth broke up in a state of general hilarity—not shared by Bob Cherry.

Surprised as the Co. were by Wharton's information, they did not doubt it. They guessed that he had heard something from the Bouncer, and had promised not to speak. And what he had told them was a relief to their minds—and the other members of the Remove football eleven were told as much—on the understanding that it was to go no further. The rest of the school would learn the truth when the Bouncer kept his promise to Wharton, and allowed the fact that he was safe and sound to be discovered.

Before dinner, the eleven went out to practise for half an hour. Wharton was anxious about his team. He had lost Vernon-Smith, his champion winger—and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was on the sick list—and Penfold, the inside-left, could not play that afternoon, being occupied at home. Penfold, the scholarship boy, was the son of the village cobbler, and sometimes he helped his father on half-holidays—and this was one of the occasions. Three of the Remove's best men, therefore, were off the list—and though Wharton was able to fill their places easily enough, the new-comers were not by any means up to the form of the missing trio.

And more bad luck was awaiting the Remove. In the footer practice, Tom Brown stumbled and fell in a rush, and did not rise again at once. When he rose, he was limping. Harry Wharton ran up to him anxiously.

"Not hurt?"

The New Zealand junior made a painful grimace.

"Ow! My ankle!"

"Oh, crumbs! Don't say you're crocked!" groaned Wharton. "We shall have to draw on the giddy fags to make up a team, at this rate."

But Tom Brown was, unfortunately, crocked. He had twisted his ankle, and it was only too clear that he would not be able to play that afternoon. Tom Brown was left back in the team, but he was equally good as a forward, and Wharton had intended to play him in Penfold's place in the front line. But it was unhappily certain now that the New Zealand junior would not be able to go to Redclyffe at all.

"What ghastly luck!" groaned Bob Cherry. "That's a total of four men out!"

"Oh, it's rotten!"

"Redclyffe will walk all over us!" said Bulstrode dolorously. "I suppose you can put in Bolsover major at back. But

"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Our luck seems to be out, all along the line," he said. "It can't be helped. We'll give Redclyffe a tussle, at all events."

"If only we had the Bouncer!" sighed Nugent.

"But we haven't! It's particularly rotten—Redclyffe beat us last match, and they looked as if they regarded it as a foregone conclusion," said Wharton moodily. "If they beat us this time, they'll grin us off the field. I did want to lick them—but I suppose it can't be helped. Our luck's out."

And it was not with very high hopes that the Remove team took their places in the brake that was to bear them over to Redclyffe School.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Redclyffe Match.

FANE, the Redclyffe junior skipper, greeted Harry Wharton & Co. with much politeness—but there was a certain something under his politeness that made the Greyfriars juniors feel a keen yearning to win that match. Fane did not say anything of the sort—his manners being irreproachable—but it was only too easy to see that he regarded the match as a matter settled in advance. The Redclyffe fellows had, indeed, agreed among themselves that it was all over bar shouting, before it started. They had beaten Greyfriars on their own ground, so they were not likely to lose at home. Fane's private opinion was, that it was a check of the Remove to play Redclyffe at all.

"Nerve, you know," Fane confided to Byng, his centre-half and right-hand man. "They're not even a junior team, you know—simply Lower Fourth. We play Greyfriars Juniors, and beat 'em—Fourth Form and Shell fellows, like ourselves. Now these kids of the Lower Fourth think they can play us. Funny, ain't it?"

Byng chuckled.

"Keeps us in practice, and it won't be anything of a fag," he remarked. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Faney, old man—pile up a score that'll make 'em turn quite green when they tell the fellows at home. Make it twenty, or something like

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that. It will be a standing joke as long as Greyfriars is a school."

"Ha, ha, ha! We'll do it," said Fane.

And the chucking Redclyffians all agreed that they would do it. It would be the joke of the season. Redclyffe School would simply howl with merriment over it, and it would be a lesson to these cheeky Greyfriars kids. And the Greyfriars kids would howl, too, with wrath and chagrin.

And as the talk was carried on in careless tones quite near the window of the dressing-room where Harry Wharton & Co. were changing, they heard it all, quite simply. Fane was too polite to intend that, but he was careless—and that was how it was.

And the feelings of the Greyfriars juniors were almost too deep for words as they listened.

For the unkindest cut of all was, that there was a good possibility of the Redclyffians carrying out their scheme—not twenty goals, certainly—that was a luxurious sight of the centre-half's imagination—but perhaps three or four or five.

It was rotten—there was no other word for it. With a Remove team at full strength, Harry Wharton would have undertaken to wipe the Redclyffe eleven off the face of the earth. He would not have hesitated, indeed, to tackle the Fifth Form at Redclyffe, if his team had been at high-water mark. But their luck was out. With four of the best players left out of the eleven, their chances were slim. A defeat was not so bad in itself—there must always be give and take in football, as in every other game—but the swank of Fane and his merry men made the pill bitter to swallow. Not a member of the Remove team but would have given a term's pocket-money to be able to pull off that match, and show Fane and Company that the Greyfriars Remove was really composed of something better than cheeky kids—of fellows, in fact, who played footer in a way that was undreamt of in Redclyffe.

"Isn't it enough to make a chap punch somebody's head?" grunted Bob Cherry. "Smithy ought to be boiled in oil for getting into trouble and leaving us in the lurch for the whole football season."

There was a tap at the dressing-room door, and Fane looked in. He did not know that the airy talk outside had reached the Greyfriars juniors, and his manner was still the extreme of urbanity.

"Chap asking to see you," he said. "Shall I let him come in?"

"Certainly! Thanks!"

"This way!" called out Fane.

A junior in an overcoat walked in cheerfully. Fane politely retired, and closed the door after him. There was a yell from the Greyfriars fellows.

"Smithy!"

"The Bouncer!"

Vernon-Smith it was. The footballers gathered round him in wonder. Harry Wharton stared at him in surprise. He had known that the Bouncer would keep his word, and allow it to become known that day that he was alive and well. But he had not thought of its happening in this sudden and dramatic way. He might have guessed it, however—for it was very like Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer of Greyfriars dearly loved the limelight!

"Smithy! So you're not drowned after all!"

"Alive and kicking—eh?"

"Where have you been?"

"Where have you sprung from now?"

Questions were rained upon the Bouncer, as he stood with a cool smile upon his face, his hands in his pockets.

"Never mind where I've sprung from," he remarked. "I'm here—that's the point! I was on the ground here when your brake arrived. You're not playing Pen or Brown, Wharton?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Pen's home to-day, and Tom Brown's crocked," he replied. "We're putting in the reserves instead. It's rotten luck, of course!"

"You'll have a tussle of it."

"We all know that."

"Do you want me to play?" asked the Bouncer.

Wharton started.

Vernon-Smith being expelled from Greyfriars, he had never even thought of the possibility of his playing for the Remove again. It had not occurred to his mind that the Bouncer would think of turning up at Redclyffe. But Wharton's face lighted up at the thought. With the Bouncer in the team, things would be very much changed, and the programme of the Redclyffians, as mapped out by Fane and Byng, would be subject to very extensive changes.

"My hat!" Wharton exclaimed. "If it were possible—"

"Well, it's possible enough. I'm here, if you want me, and in top form."

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"But you don't belong to Greyfriars now," said Harry. The Bounder winced. "Don't rub it in," he said. "I don't mean to," said Harry hastily. "But—but it's a fact! Still—"

"I haven't left yet!" grinned the Bounder. "I've dodged that so far, haven't I? I'm still a Greyfriars' chap; but even if I wasn't, you're at liberty to play anybody you like in your eleven."

"That's so!" said Bob Cherry. "I say, Wharton, it would be a surprise for those merchants outside who are going to give us such a walloping."

"Yes, rather, Wharton."

Wharton made up his mind at once. It occurred to him that trouble at Greyfriars might follow the Bounder's playing in the team. The Head might be angry, and so might Mr. Quelch, when they heard of it. But, after all, there was no harm in it. Even if Vernon-Smith was not to be considered as a Greyfriars' fellow now, he could certainly claim to be regarded as an old boy—a very young old boy, certainly—and so he was entitled to play for the school. Wharton's desire to give Redclyffe a good tussle overpowered every other consideration, especially as all the team were for playing the Bounder. He nodded a cheerful assent.

"You're going to play me?" said Vernon-Smith, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes; if you like."

"Dutton was going to take my place, I suppose? He can lend me his footer things—they will fit me," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I say, Dutton, old man!" He tapped the deaf junior on the arm. Tom Dutton looked at him a little glumly. Although he could not hear what was being said, he guessed that the Bounder had come to take his place in the team. Tom Dutton was a good sportsman, and he was glad for the sake of the side, but at the same time sorry on his own account. He had wanted very much to play in the front line in the Redclyffe match.

"Eh!" said Dutton. "What did you say, Smithy?"

"Will you lend me your football clobber?"

"Oh, rot!"

"Won't you?" demanded the Bounder.

"Certainly not! I haven't seen anything of a robber!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Keep out of reach of his fist while you're explaining, Smithy. He's dangerous."

"Clothes!" roared the Bounder. "I want your football rig!"

"Well, I shouldn't be afraid of a robber, however big he was," said Tom Dutton. "But I don't believe anything of the sort. No good trying to play your little jokes on me because I'm a trifle deaf, you know."

"Hold on," said Wharton, laughing. "I shall put Dutton in as inside-left, in Penfold's place, as you've turned up, Smithy. I shall have to ask you to stand out, Russell."

Russell grinned dolefully.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll lend you my things, Smithy, like a shot. They'll fit you all right."

"Thanks!"

Russell changed again, and gave his football outfit to the Bounder, who was soon dressed. Tom Dutton looked at him inquiringly, and then at Harry Wharton.

"Is Smithy playing to-day?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you won't want me?"

"Yes; you're going to play inside-left."

"Yes, I suppose I've got left, now Smithy's turned up," agreed Dutton. "But I don't mind, as it will give the team a better chance, I suppose. I may as well change again. I shall stay and watch the match now I'm here."

"You're going to play!" explained Wharton.

"Oh, yes, I'm going to stay," agreed Dutton. "But I'll change. Rather cold standing about in this rig, you know."

"Play—not stay!" yelled Wharton. "Understand?"

"Well, I should like to, but there isn't a grandstand here," said Dutton, in surprise. "This isn't a football league ground, you know."

"Inside-left—you!" shrieked Wharton. "See? You're going to play on the left instead of Russell now Smithy's turned up."

"Oh, yes, it's sure to be a tussle; but I don't think it's all up till it's played," said Dutton. "There's a chance for our side, especially now Smithy's come. Well, I'll change. You needn't wait for me."

"Don't change!" roared Harry.

"Not at all strange," said Dutton. "Smithy being here makes all the difference."

Wharton was crimson with exertion, and the other fellows were roaring with laughter. But Peter Todd came to the rescue. He jerked a piece of chalk from his pocket, and scrawled on the nearest wall:

"You play inside-left!"

"Oh!" said Dutton. "I see! Why couldn't you say so, instead of talking about robbers and grandstands and rot

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like that? Blessed if I don't think you're going off your rockers, some of you! Well, I'm ready!"

"I say," Nugent remarked, as they left the dressing-room, "the Head ought to know about Smithy being safe. Why not send him a wire to tell him? We needn't give any particulars—only that he's all right."

"Good egg!" said Wharton at once.

And Russell, as he was not playing, volunteered to go to the Redclyffe post-office and send the telegram, which was to lift a weight of worry from the mind of the Head of Greyfriars. The telegram was, as Bob Cherry said, short and sweet.

"Dr. Locke, Greyfriars,—Vernon-Smith alive and well.
"WHARTON."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, but did not raise any objection, and Russell took the telegram away. It was enough to relieve the doctor's worried mind, without giving any indication of how the Bounder was occupied at Redclyffe. The juniors did not want to risk any interference from Mr. Quelch, as had happened in the St. Jim's match. Later on the Remove master would know that Vernon-Smith had played for Greyfriars, but by that time it would be too late for interference, and Redclyffe—at least, Wharton hoped so—would be beaten.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Playing to Win!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out into the field. Owing to the sudden and unexpected appearance of the Bounder in their midst there had been some delay, which was added to by the sending of the telegram, and the visiting team, therefore, had kept the home side waiting a little.

Fane & Company were quite convinced in their minds that the visitors were suffering from funk, and were reluctant to begin the game which was to consist of their being chased and charged and run off their legs, and beaten by a ridiculous score. The crowd of Redclyffe fellows round the ground were beginning to pass remarks, demanding to know whether the visitors had gone to sleep in the pavilion, whether they were taking an after-dinner nap, whether they were going to play at all? The appearance of the Remove eleven in the field set their doubts at rest.

"Sorry we've kept you waiting a bit, Fane," Wharton said apologetically. "Smithy arrived at the last minute, you see."

"Oh, don't mench!" said Fane airily. "If you're sure you're quite ready, we'll begin!"

And there was a sarcastic accent on the "quite."

"Quite!" said Wharton.

"Oh, good!"

"Better buck up, too," Bob Cherry remarked. "You'll need all your time to take twenty goals or so, won't you?"

Fane smiled a sickly smile.

"Ahem! I didn't know you—you could hear—ahem!"

"Window open—couldn't help it. But never mind," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "We know what to expect now, Fane. We're not going to let you have those twenty goals. We're going to put all our beef into it, and play up for all we're worth, and see if we can keep it down to only nineteen."

And the Removites chuckled.

"Ahem!" murmured Fane.

"Perhaps only eighteen to nil, if we have any luck," added Johnny Bull. "Who knows? Football's an uncertain game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we'd better toss for ends," said Fane hastily.

Fane won the toss, and gave the visitors the wind to kick off against. The whistle went, and the ball rolled, and the Redclyffe match started.

Round the ground the Redclyffe crowd looked on with interested eyes. They were prepared to see Fane's programme carried out, and they had their shouts all ready to acclaim the first goal for Redclyffe. But those acclamations had to be kept bottled up, as it were. They were not needed. For the Redclyffe goals seemed a long time in coming, and the dead certainty became more and more uncertain as the minutes ticked away.

Fane & Co. attacked hotly, and for some time Harry Wharton & Co. were chiefly on the defensive. The only satisfaction the eager onlookers had, was the fact that the tussle was mostly in the visitors' half. But the defence was sound, and even when the Redclyffe forwards got through, Bulstrode in goal was equal to the occasion. He sent the ball out when Fane sent it in, and Johnny Bull cleared to the half-way line.

After that, try as they would, the Redclyffians could not get at the Greyfriars' goal again. But they were attacking all the time, and the spectators consoled themselves with the reflection that they were bound to get through sooner or later—while as for the attack being transferred to the other end, that was wildly impossible.

But the wildly impossible thing happened.

Harry Wharton captured the ball, from a pass from Nugent, and ran it up the field, and the Redclyffe forwards, much to their astonishment, were left simply standing. They had not looked for that pace on the part of the Greyfriars' skipper. Neither had they expected him to wind through the halves like a giddy serpent, as Fane expressed it afterwards—but he did.

But the backs were there, and ready—he was not going to pass the backs. His forwards were not up with him to take the pass—with one exception. His rush had left his supporters behind—but Vernon-Smith was speeding along the touch-line like an arrow. Wharton did not need to look—he knew that the Bounder was there, he knew that he was ready, he knew that he would take the pass at exactly the right moment, as if it were an operation of exact mechanism. The ball went out on the wing, and Vernon-Smith captured it as Wharton was charged over. The Bounder rushed in and

kicked—and the goalkeeper, who had expected anything but that, was taken quite by surprise, and beaten to the wide.

Right into the net the leather bumped, the goalie clutching after it seconds too late! From all the Greyfriars players came a chirrup:

"Goal!"

And from the Redclyffe crowd a gasp:

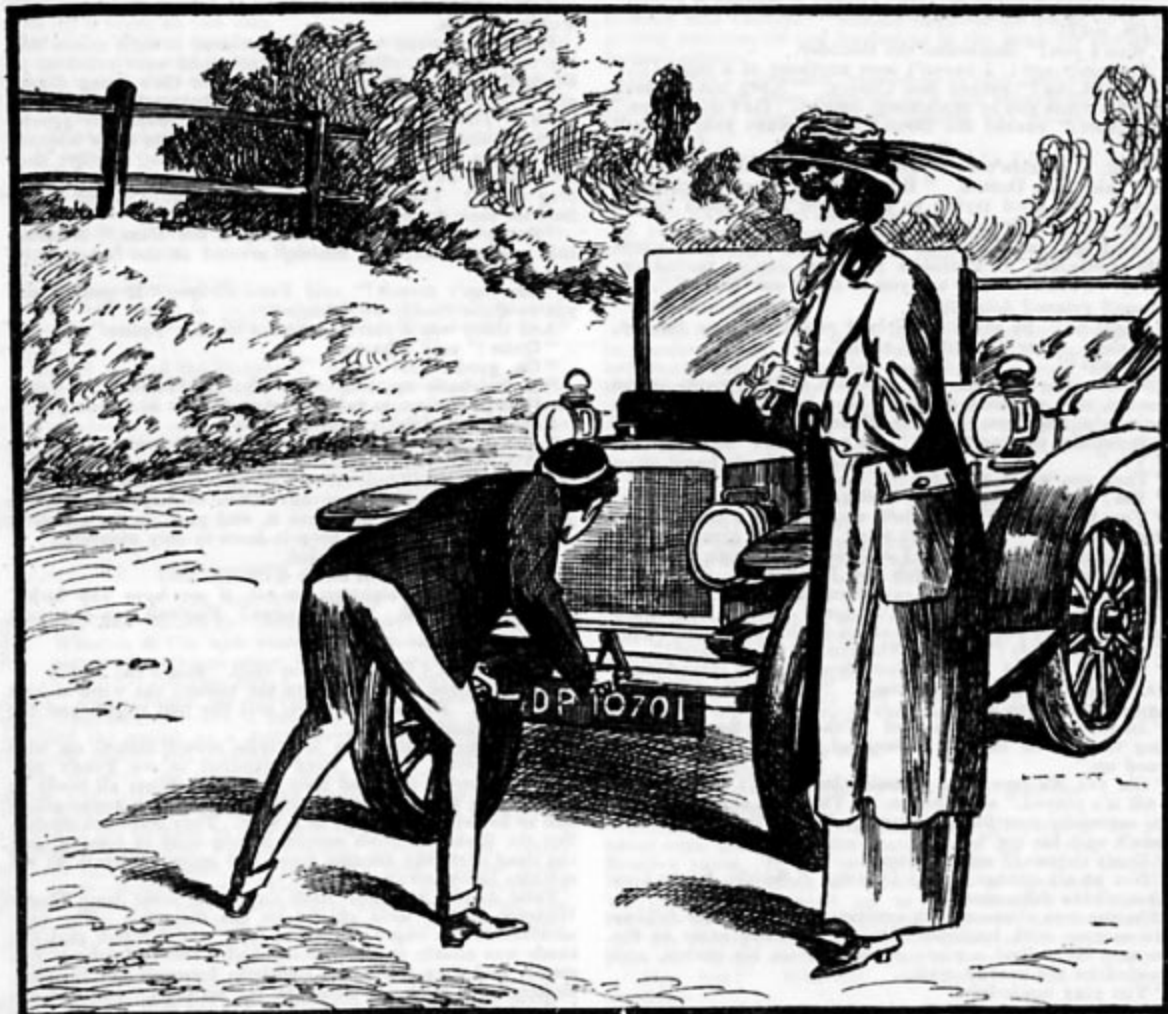
"Goal!"

Goal it was—and first blood to the Greyfriars team. Wharton staggered to his feet. He had had a somewhat heavy fall, and the breath had been knocked out of him; but his eyes were dancing with pleasure. He had known that he could rely on the Bounder, and the Bounder had not failed him.

The goalie tossed out the leather rather glumly, and it was taken back to the centre of the field. The Removites of Greyfriars were grinning. The expressions on the faces of Fane & Co. were worth, as Bob Cherry remarked, a guinea a box.

"Blessed if I think they'll even get eighteen goals, unless they hurry up a bit," Johnny Bull observed to the world in general. "I shouldn't wonder if they have to be satisfied with seventeen or so."

❁ **GOOD TURNS.—No. 15.** ❁



A Magnetite coming to the assistance of a lady who has difficulty in starting her car. The lad, with a couple of turns, starts the engine, and thus does a good turn in every sense of the word!
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Wharton raised his head above the level of the floor and looked around him. Bending over the saucepan on a small spirit-stove, was a well-known figure. It was the Bounder! (See Chapter 6.)

And the Removites chuckled, and the Redclyffians were observed to turn pink, and exchange sickly glances.

The first success in the match had an inspiring effect upon the Greyfriars fellows. After the restart, they attacked—and the home team, to their great surprise, found that it was necessary to fall back in defence of their citadel. And for the remainder of the first half, all the attacking was done by Greyfriars—and, although it did not materialise into goals, there was no doubt that if Tom Brown and Hurree Singh had been in the team, instead of the reserves, the visitors would have added at least one goal to the score. As it was, the whistle went with the score unchanged—one goal to nil.

"Blessed if I know where Fane's going to dig up those twenty goals!" Bob Cherry remarked, as he sucked a lemon. "Unless he's got 'em in his pocket, he will have to do without 'em, I fancy."

And when the second half commenced, it really looked as if the Redclyffians would have to do without them.

Redclyffe kicked off against the wind, after the change of ends. If Greyfriars had scored one to nothing against the wind, it seemed that they would probably do as well, if not

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better, with the wind in their favour. The swank had departed from Fane & Co. now. They realised that they were in for a hard struggle, and that they had all their work cut out to equalise, let alone win, and they put all their energy into it.

But they found equal keenness on the other side. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing up for all they were worth.

Again the Redclyffians attacked hotly, and the tussle was all on the Greyfriars' side of the line—for ten minutes or more. But the ball did not get through. And when the attack slackened, the visiting forwards were ready. Peter Todd, at centre-half, sent the ball right down the field, and the forwards broke away after it like hares.

Then Fane & Co. had to fall back and defend—and they had a long struggle before them—and the goalie only saved by the skin of his teeth, as it were, from a long shot by Harry Wharton.

It was a gruelling game, and there were bellows to mend on both sides, when at last Fane succeeded in putting the ball in. The score was level, with ten minutes more to play, and the Redclyffians breathed with relief.

But all their energy seemed to be expended in that effort, and at the restart, Greyfriars attacked hotly, and carried all before them.

They rushed the ball down the field, with the wind behind them—and the forwards kept in line, passing like clockwork. The defence was hopelessly beaten—the attack had it all its own way. From one to another the ball buzzed merrily—Nugent was charged over, but not before he had sent the ball out on the wing—and Vernon-Smith sped on with it, and centred to Wharton just in time, and Wharton slammed it home.

"Goal!"

Two up for Greyfriars.

Five minutes more to play. The Redclyffians spent those five minutes in a vain attempt to get through the Greyfriars' defence. Then the whistle went.

"Two goals to one!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Poor old Fane! He's nineteen goals short!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Greyfriars footballers rubbed themselves down and changed in high good-humour.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In Custody—And Out!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. chuckled as they changed after the match. After the anticipations of the Redclyffe fellows, the result of the match struck them as funny. Redclyffe had been beaten by two goals to one, and beaten by sheer good play. The "cheeky kids," with whom Fane & Co. had intended to wipe up the ground, had made their claim good to be considered as footballers quite up to the Redclyffe standard—if not a little bit above it.

A sharp knock at the door interrupted the cheerful chat of the footballers.

The door opened.

Then the smiles died off the faces of the Greyfriars eleven, and there was a general ejaculation of dismay.

"The Head!"

It was Dr. Locke.

The juniors had heard the sound of a motor-car on the road while they were changing, but they were thinking about their football victory, not about the Head of Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke stood in the doorway, regarding them with a stern brow—and the juniors, half-dressed, looked at him. Harry Wharton had his jacket in his hand—Bob Cherry, with a stud held in his teeth, was about to put on his collar—Vernon-Smith had his trousers halt on. The Bouncer set his teeth.

He was caught!

"G-g-good-afternoon, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"I received your telegram, Wharton," said the Head. "I thank you for sending it. As it was sent from Redclyffe, I judged that Vernon-Smith was here."

"Ye-es, sir!" said Wharton, and he could not help wishing that he had not been quite so keen about relieving the Head's anxiety.

"Therefore, I came over immediately," said the Head. "It is my duty to take charge of you, Vernon-Smith, until you can be handed over to your father's care."

"Indeed, sir!" said the Bouncer quietly. And he went on dressing.

"Yes, indeed! You have caused him, and myself, and others, more than sufficient anxiety," said the Head sharply. "I will not say what I think of your conduct. As you no longer belong to Greyfriars, I shall not punish you for the wretched trick you have played, in giving the impression that you had met your death in the Sark. It was a heartless trick, Vernon-Smith, and I trust that you are ashamed of it. Now you will return with me to Greyfriars, and you will remain under lock and key until I can send a master with you to your father's house. There my responsibility will end."

"You wish me to return to Greyfriars with you, sir?"

"I order you to do so!"

"Very well, sir!"

"Finish dressing as quickly as possible, and come with me," said the Head, frowning. "I will wait for you here. I am sorry to say, Smith, that I cannot trust you out of my sight."

The Head stepped outside, leaving the door open. Evidently he was not without suspicion that the Bouncer might attempt to elude him by means of the window.

The footballers looked at the Bouncer sympathetically. He was caught—and because he had come there to play for Greyfriars, they felt that it was hard lines on the Bouncer.

"But you won't be licked," said Bob Cherry comfortingly, and in a low voice. "The Head can't lick you now you don't belong to Greyfriars, you know."

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"I don't care for a licking!"

"And you'd have had to go home sooner or later, anyway," Nugent remarked.

"Do you think so?"

"Well, I suppose so!" said Nugent, puzzled. "You won't be able to stay at Greyfriars, so I suppose you must go home. I don't see why you haven't gone already."

The Bouncer made no reply. He finished dressing, and said good-bye to the Greyfriars juniors, and joined the Head.

With a stern brow, Dr. Locke took him away to the motor-car, which was waiting in the road that ran by the Redclyffe football-ground.

Vernon-Smith looked quickly round.

There was no chance of bolting. He knew that Dr. Locke would grasp his collar at the first sign of it. The Bouncer was quite reckless enough to bump over the reverend and respected Head of Greyfriars, if it had suited his purpose, but he knew that that would not do. It would make it impossible for him ever to get back to Greyfriars, of course, and his object was to get back there if he could. It was necessary to treat the Head with the most profound respect.

"Step in, Smith!" said the Head coldly.

Vernon-Smith stepped into the car. Dr. Locke followed him in. He was not running any risks with his prisoner.

"Greyfriars!" said the Head briefly to the chauffeur, and the car glided away.

Dr. Locke sat grimly silent, without glancing once at the equally silent junior sitting by his side.

The car covered the ground at a good speed, and before long it was passing through the old High Street of Friardale. A few minutes after that the grey tower of the school rose into sight over the trees. The Bouncer's eyes glistened at the sight of the old tower. At the summit of that ancient building, in the round room, was his camp, where he intended to remain, whatever happened. Five minutes more and they would be in Greyfriars, and escape would be impossible.

To be taken back in custody, locked in a room, and then to leave the school in charge of a master! The Bouncer's cheeks burned at the thought of the humiliation of it.

He sat very quiet, but he was watching for a chance. At any cost, any risk, he was determined that he would not be taken back to the school in custody of the Head. And his chance came at last. A lumbering market-cart blocked the lane, and the chauffeur tooted loudly with his horn and slackened speed. The market-cart drew towards the side of the road in a leisurely manner, and the car came almost to a standstill.

That was the Bouncer's opportunity. The Head was looking up the road towards the obstructing cart. Vernon-Smith gave a quick glance round, rose to his feet, and made a spring from the scarcely-moving car.

Another second, and he had vanished through a gap in the hedge.

Dr. Locke started up.

"Vernon-Smith! Come back! Come back instantly!"

There was no reply. The Bouncer was gone. The Head caught a fleeting glimpse of him speeding across a field, and then he vanished again and did not reappear. Dr. Locke compressed his lips with anger.

It was impossible, of course, for the reverend gentleman to think of pursuing the elusive junior on foot across the fields. The chase would have been hopeless, even if it had not been too undignified.

With a frowning brow, the doctor ordered the chauffeur to drive on to the school.

Half an hour later Harry Wharton & Co. came back in their brake from Redclyffe. They questioned Gosling as they came in.

"Where's Smithy?"

"I dunno," said Gosling, in surprise. "I ain't seed 'im, Master Wharton. I 'eard that he'd been found, and the 'Ead was going to fetch him. That's all I've 'eard."

"The Head fetched him from Redclyffe in his car," explained Bob Cherry. "Didn't he bring him back here?"

"I ain't seed 'im."

"Hasn't the Head come in?"

"Yes; he's come in, in the moty-car," said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere. I ain't seed anything of Master Smith nor I don't want to, neither."

"Didn't he come back with the Head?" shouted Bob.

"No; he didn't come back with the 'Ead!" said Gosling.

"My ha!"

"Then he must have given him the slip on the road," said Harry Wharton. "And now he means to—" Wharton checked himself abruptly.

He knew that the Bouncer intended to do, but he had promised Vernon-Smith to keep his secret. The Bouncer

had fled, but when darkness fell he intended to return to Greyfriars and remain in hiding there—for what? What turn of fortune's wheel was the reckless junior hoping for?

"Now he means to what?" asked Nugent.
 "Well, he doesn't mean to be sent home," said Harry.
 "Has he still got some silly idea of staying on at Greyfriars?" said Johnny Bull, in wonder. "He can't show up here without being collared and sent home in charge of a master at once."
 Wharton nodded, but did not reply. What was to be the outcome of the Bounder's line of action? Would he abandon his wild scheme and go home? Wharton wondered. But his doubts were soon set at rest, for a few hours later it was known that the Head had telegraphed to Mr. Vernon-Smith, to inform him that his son had been found, and to ask him whether he had returned home. To which the millionaire wired back that he was glad to hear that his son had been found, and that he had not returned to his home.

Where was Vernon-Smith?
 That was the question that interested and excited all Greyfriars. Only Harry Wharton knew, and he was bound by his word to keep the secret.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Race Is to the Swift!

I SAY, you fellows—"
 Billy Bunter blinked into Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. There was an appearance of great preparations in that study. Harry Wharton had found a remittance from his uncle awaiting him on his return from the Redclyffe match, and the chums of the Remove had decided, in solemn conclave, that it could not possibly be better expended than in a feed to celebrate the victory at Redclyffe. It was a great pity that the Bounder, who had contributed so much to the victory, could not be present; but, as Bob Cherry suggested, they could drink his health in ginger-pop, which was the next best thing, and all the Co. agreed that they would do it cheerfully.

The tea-table was laid in Study No. 1. Harry Wharton was opening a jam-jar, Frank Nugent was making toast, Bob Cherry was boiling eggs, and Johnny Bull was frying bacon-rashers. The firegrate in Study No. 1 was not extensive, and it was something of a squeeze for three fellows to cook at it at once.

But they managed it somehow. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh was sitting in the armchair and looking on. It was his first day out of sanatorium, and he was not quite well yet, so he was a privileged person. Upon the table were piled good things in liberal quantities, and Billy Bunter's mouth watered at the sight of them.

"I say, you fellows—"
 "I think those eggs are done," said Bob Cherry. "They've been boiling for five or six minutes—I forget which—"

"My hat! They'll be hard, you ass!" said Johnny Bull.
 "Well, lemme get at them and take them off," said Bob. "You and Nugent are taking up all the room."
 "I say, you fellows—"

"I've got to keep an eye on this bacon! I don't want to burn it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Buck up with your blessed eggs!"

"Don't spill the water over me!" said Nugent, who was kneeling before the fire with a very red face.
 "Keep still, and don't bump your napper against the saucepan!" said Bob, as he took it off the fire gingerly.
 "Ow! The handle's hot!"

"I say, you fellows, I'll do the cooking for you if you like," said Bunter.
 "Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You forgot to tell me you were going to have a feed, but I thought I'd give you a look in. Glad to see you about again, Inky!"

"Thank you, my esteemed fat Bunter!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "The pleasurefulness of beholding your esteemed and august fat chivvy is also terrific."
 "Shall I cook that bacon for you, Bull?"

"No!" roared Bull. "Shut up!"
 "I'll make the toast if you like, Nugent—"
 "Gerrouit!"

"I say, you fellows! Lemme look after the eggs," said Bunter, taking the tin saucepan out of Bob Cherry's hand.
 "Ow—ow—ow! Groogh! It's hot! My fingers are burnt! Ow—ow!"

Bunter gave a yell and dropped the saucepan. He had caught hold of the hottest part of the handle. There was a roar from Bob Cherry as some of the hot water splashed over his legs, and a fiendish yell from Nugent, who received several splashes in the neck.

"Yar-o-o-oh!"
 "Yah! Oh! I'll squash him!" shrieked Nugent, springing to his feet. "Where is he? Give me a cricket-bat, somebody! I'll—"

"I—I say, I'm sincerely sorry! I— Ow! Yar! Yar-o-o-oh!"

Bunter bellowed as he was whirled to the doorway and ejected with violence into the passage. Bob Cherry rubbed his scalded leg, and Nugent his neck, and they groaned in chorus. Billy Bunter put his fat face and big spectacles cautiously round the study door.

"I say, you fellows! Oh!"
 A loaf whizzed from Bob Cherry's hand, and it caught Billy Bunter on the chin, and he sat down in the passage with a bump.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"
 "If you come in here again I'll scalp you!" roared Bob.
 "Ow—ow! Rotter! Yow!"

Bob Cherry slammed the door. The preparations for the feed went on, and Billy Bunter growled in the passage. The fat junior had by no means given up his intention of sharing that feed. Whenever there was a feed in a study, Bunter had an idea that he was bound to be present at it, and he was always prepared to do full justice to the viands. He turned the matter over in his mind. It was much past tea-time, and Bunter had had a very spare tea in Peter Todd's study. The thought of the good things piled on the table in Study No. 1 haunted him.

"The rotters!" he murmured. "I'm jolly well going to have my whack in that feed! The beasts! After all I've done for them!" What Bunter had done for the chums of the Remove was not quite clear, but he was satisfied that they were unfeeling and ungrateful. "I'm jolly well not going to be left out! Beasts!"

And Bunter rolled away, to think it over. Tom Brown came limping along the passage, with a large package under his arm. The New Zealand junior was one of the tea-party, and he had been to the school tuckshop for further supplies. Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed through his spectacles at the sight of the package, and he laid a fat, detaining hand on the New Zealand junior's arm.

"I say, Browney, old man, how's your ankle?"
 Tom Brown stared. Billy Bunter was not generally very much concerned about the troubles of other fellows; and his affectionate inquiry took the New Zealand junior by surprise.

"Pretty bad," he said, "thanks. Big bruise."
 "I'm sincerely sorry," said Bunter, "I should have been willing to play in your place; but I was kept out of the team, owing to personal jealousy on the part of some fellows. Taking that grub to Wharton's study?"

"Yes, I'm fetching it for him," said Tom Brown.
 "It's Wharton's, is it?" asked Bunter.
 "Yes. If you'll take your paw off my sleeve, I'll be getting along," said Tom Brown politely.

"I'll carry it for you, old chap. Your ankle's sprained, you know—"

"It isn't sprained, and I don't carry parcels with my ankle," said Tom Brown. "You're not going to bolt with this grub, Bunter. Clear off!"

"Oh, really, Browney—"
 "Leggo my arm, fathead!"
 "I'm really anxious about your ankle, Browney. I suppose you can't walk very fast."

"I don't want to walk very fast."
 "I mean you can't run—"
 "Of course I can't run—with a blessed ankle twisted!" howled Tom Brown. "What are you talking silly rot for? Gerrouit of the way! Why, you—you fat villain—you—you burglar—stop—stop thief!"

For Billy Bunter, having ascertained by his affectionate inquiries that the New Zealand junior could not run, had suddenly grabbed the parcel and bolted. He fled down the passage at top speed, and took the stairs two at a time. Tom Brown made a rush after him, but his ankle gave way under him, and he staggered against the wall with a yell of pain.

"Ow! Stop him! Stop the fat beast! Ow!"
 "Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer, who was coming upstairs. "What's the matter, my dear fellow?"

"Stop Bunter!" howled Tom Brown.
 "Bunter, begad! I say, Bunter, my dear chap, stop, will you? Brown's calling you," said the slacker of the Remove.

But Billy Bunter did not stop. He rushed past Lord Mauleverer like a whirlwind.

Tom Brown roared.
 "You ass! You silly slacker! Stop him! Cut after him!"

"Begad!"
 "He's collared the grub!" yelled Tom Brown.
 "Well, he's gone now," said Lord Mauleverer, looking down the stairs. "Sorry, dear boy, I'd have stopped him like a shot, only—"

"Only you're a burbling ass!" hooted Tom Brown, and he limped painfully downstairs in pursuit of Billy Bunter.

But the Owl of the Remove had vanished from sight. Billy Bunter was not a gymnast; but he could turn on speed on occasion, and this was evidently one of the occasions when he could do it. The limping pursuer had no chance. By the time he reached the doorway, Billy Bunter had vanished round the School House, and Tom Brown returned to No. 1 Study, breathing fury, to report the raid.

Behind the School House Bunter paused for breath. "Done the beasts!" he gasped. "Yah! Done em!" His fat fingers were trembling with eagerness to unfasten the parcel, but he knew that he was not safe yet. The whole of the Famous Five would soon be rushing in pursuit, and he had not many minutes in which to seek safety. He would get a bumping if they caught him; but that was not the worst—his precious prize would be recaptured. The fat junior turned the matter over in his mind. He would be hunted for everywhere—it was useless to scuttle into the Cloisters, or the old chapel, or the wood-shed, or the Head's garden. There was the old tower—but it was locked. But that fact made it improbable that they would seek him there, and Bunter scudded off to the old tower.

He had a wild idea of clambering up into the ivy, and gaining admittance by the gap in the wall. But the October evening had set in dark and gloomy, and in the dark Billy Bunter dared not make the attempt. He felt over the lock, in a vague hope that it might not be fastened. It looked the same as usual but to his amazement he found that it came open to his touch.

"My word!" stuttered Bunter. "Somebody's been here, and busted the padlock, and stuck it together again so that it wouldn't be noticed. What luck!"

He dragged the door open, leaving the chain hanging. He hurried into the old tower with his parcel, and closed the door behind him. He was safe now. If the juniors searched for him there, he could easily keep the door shut by jamming something under it. And it did not matter to him if Harry Wharton & Co. raged outside—if he were seated comfortably inside enjoying his feast.

He listened apprehensively for some moments. In the distance he could hear the juniors calling to one another—they were seeking him in the darkness.

They came searching round the tower, and Bunter took out his pocket-knife, and jammed it under the door. As the door opened inwards, it could not be moved so long as the pocket-knife was in position. Through one of the loopholes in the tower came the sound of Bob Cherry's voice.

"The fat beast isn't here."
"Not in the tower either, I suppose," came Johnny Bull's voice.

"No it's kept locked, you know."
"Might have climbed in."
"Wouldn't have had the nerve to try."

Billy Bunter sniffed. He wondered whether the juniors would notice that the padlock was unfastened. But in the darkness they did not see it, and they did not think of making a close examination. Their voices and footsteps died away in the distance.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

It was very dark in the old tower, but he did not want a light. He could eat quite comfortably in the darkness. He opened the parcel on the ground, and as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he could make out the objects it contained. He struck a match, and scanned the plunder by the light, and when the match went out, he commenced gastronomic operations. Like the heathen of old, he sat in darkness; but that did not diminish his pleasure in the least. Ham sandwiches and cold pie vanished down his capacious throat, and then he began on a jar of jam, scooping it out with his fat fingers. It was not a cleanly feed, but trifles like that did not matter to Billy Bunter. What he wanted was quantity—and he had that!

Harry Wharton & Co. had given up the search, and returned wrathfully to No. 1 Study. In spite of Bunter's raid, there were plenty of good things in the study, and the chums of the Remove had a handsome spread; and as they demolished it, they compared notes about what they would do to Bunter when they caught him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Billy Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER gave a fat sigh of contentment. He had eaten nearly all the plunder, and what he could not eat he had packed away in his pockets, to be devoured at some future time.

He was feeling very fat and very contented, and very heavy. Perhaps he had overdone it a little. He was breathing stertorously.

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"Gorgeous!" murmured Bunter. "How jolly lucky it was that Brown was crooked, and couldn't run. These lucky things do happen sometimes. I—I suppose I'd better keep out of their way for a bit."

After the feast was to come the reckoning. It was past time for Bunter to begin his preparation, and soon the house would be locked up. But he felt a very natural diffidence about facing the chums of the Remove after his raid. He was safe in the old tower, and he felt a strong disinclination to leave it.

Suddenly he started, as he heard a hand at the door. The door was gently pushed from outside. Bunter started up.

"The beasts! They've found me."
The door was pushed again. Bunter wondered that the fellows outside did not speak. There was something very stealthy in that silent pushing at the door. But it did not come open. The pocket-knife jammed under it wedged it fast in its place. Bunter grinned in the darkness as he listened.

"Hang it! Why doesn't it open?" he heard a voice mutter.

He jumped.
It was not a member of the Co. who muttered. Bunter knew the voice well enough, and in his astonishment he uttered an exclamation.

"Smithy!"
The pushing at the door ceased.

There was a minute of silence, Bunter gasping with astonishment. Vernon-Smith's voice was the very last he had expected to hear. But after a pause the Bounder's whisper came to his ears through a crack in the door.

"Bunter! Is that you in there, Bunter?"
"Yes, Smithy."

"Let me in!"
"What have you come back for, Smithy?"

"Let me in quick, in case I'm seen."
"None of those rotters with you—Wharton or the others?"

"Of course not. Quick!"
Billy Bunter removed the wedged knife, and the door swung open. The starlight from without glimmered into the room. A dark figure stood in the doorway, carrying a large and apparently heavy bag.

"Smithy! What the dickens—"
"Hush!"

Vernon-Smith stepped quickly into the tower, and laid down the bag, and then turned and closed the door behind him. Then his eyes gleamed through the darkness at Bunter.

"You fat toad! What are you spying here for?" he said, between his teeth.

Bunter blinked at him indignantly. The Bounder had no terrors for him. Under other circumstances, he would have feared Vernon-Smith's savage temper; but now he held the upper hand. With a shout he could have revealed the presence of the expelled junior to the whole school.

"I'm not spying," he exclaimed, "and don't you give me any of your cheek, Smithy! I'm not going to stand it."

"You—your oyster!"
"You'd better be jolly civil, Smithy. I rather think it's my duty to tell the Head that you are here. In fact, I don't see that I've really got any choice in the matter. It's like your cheek to come back here after you've been sacked. Upon the whole, I think I'd better go to the Head at once."

"Don't be a fool, Bunter. Stay where you are, old man."
The Bounder's voice was much more conciliatory now, and Bunter grinned as he noted it.

"Well, I don't know that I want to give you away, Smithy," he remarked. "But you'd better be civil, and don't call me names. I don't like it."

"What were you doing here?"
"I was having a bit of a feed," said Bunter, with a fat sigh of satisfaction. "I had a good spread, and some rotters wanted to get it away from me."

"How did you get in?"
"The padlock was busted. Somebody had broken it, or unlocked it somehow, and then stuck it together again to make it look as if it hadn't been touched," said Bunter.

"I should never have guessed it if I'd looked at it; but I happened to try it, and it came open. My hat! I suppose it was you, Smithy! You've been here before—eh?"

"Yes," muttered the Bounder, "and now I'm here again, and you're going to keep it dark, Bunter."

"Well, I don't know about that. My duty to the Head—"

"Stop that rot!" said the Bounder fiercely. "Do you want me to smash you, you fat fool?"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"You can give me away, if you like, but that won't help you much, if you're half-killed first," said Vernon-Smith.

"You know me, Bunter. I'm not a fellow to be trifled with. You remember what Skinner got for giving me away!"

Bunter backed away in the gloom.

"I—I say, Smithy, I'm your old pal, you know. I don't want to give you away."

"What rotten luck that you should be here of all fellows!" muttered the Bounder savagely. "I made the padlock look all right. A fellow with any sense would never have tried it. But any fool might blunder on it."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Shut up!"

"But I say, Smithy, you're not thinking of staying here, are you?" Bunter exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, idiot!"

"But you'll be found."

"I sha'n't be found unless you give me away, and if you do, I'll make you wish you'd never been born!" said the Bounder between his teeth.

"But they'll find the lock open," said Bunter.

"It hasn't been found yet."

"But—but you can't put it together from inside," said Bunter. "If you stay in the tower, you'll have to leave the padlock open."

"Ass! I had to break it to get the door open to get my bag in; but I climbed down afterwards from the gap up there, and fastened it, and climbed in again."

"Oh, I see! But what are you bringing bags and things here for?"

"Can't sleep on a stone floor, I suppose, burler?" growled the Bounder. "I had to have blankets, and a pillow, and grub, and things."

"You—you've got them here?" stuttered Bunter.

"Yes, ass! I'm camping here!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter was silent from sheer astonishment. The Bounder moved restlessly to and fro, muttering to himself. Harry Wharton, the previous night, had never dreamed that the padlock had been tampered with. It was like Billy Bunter to blunder upon the discovery in sheer stupidity. And Bunter was the last fellow in the school whom Vernon-Smith would have wished to confide his secret to. He could make it worth Bunter's while to keep the secret; but the fat junior might betray him at any moment from sheer inability to keep his tongue between his teeth.

"I shall have to be getting back to the house," said Bunter. "It's past time for prep., you know. Ow! Leggo!"

The Bounder grasped his shoulder savagely.

"Look here," he muttered, "you've got to keep this a secret, do you understand? If you say a word, I'll—I'll make you wish you'd never been born!"

"Ow! Leggo! Of course, I won't give you away, Smithy. You can rely on an old pal."

"Mind you don't, that's all!"

"I—I say, could you cash a postal-order for me, Smithy?" Bunter went on. "I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow, and—and I'm rather short of cash till it arrives. I'll let you have the postal-order immediately it comes—in fact, I'll bring it here the minute the postman arrives."

"If you come near this place again I'll slaughter you!" "Ahem! I'll leave it over for a bit, if you like; and it's barely possible the postal-order may not come to-morrow morning," said Bunter thoughtfully. "I suppose you've got five bob about you, Smithy?"

"I'll give you five shillings," said the Bounder, "and if you keep this dark, I'll make it worth your while. If you give me away, I'll smash you!"

"Well, hand over the ten bob," said Bunter, gaining courage with success.

"You said five, you fat beast!"

"Ahem! I meant ten—the postal-order will be for ten shillings when—it comes," said Bunter. "I shall really be very much obliged to you for that small loan, Smithy."

The Bounder silently handed him the ten shillings. Money mattered little to Vernon-Smith; the millionaire's son was well supplied with that useful article. Billy Bunter's fat fingers closed on the coins eagerly.

"Thanks awfully, Smithy. You can depend on the postal-order—when it comes."

"Oh, shut up that nonsense!" growled the Bounder. "I don't want any funny remarks now."

"I shall decline to take this money excepting as a loan," said Bunter firmly, slipping the coins into his pocket as he spoke. "I regard it as a temporary loan, to be repaid out of my postal-order. I trust you do not think of insulting me by offering me a gift of money, Vernon-Smith. I may not be as rich as some moneylenders' sons, but I hope I have some personal dignity. Excepting as a loan, merely of a temporary nature, I shall decline to accept anything from you."

"Will you shut up gassing?" demanded the Bounder fiercely. "Get out! I'm fed up with you. If you keep my secret, you can call at Uncle Clegg's in the village every day for half-a-crown's worth of tuck. I'll pay for it. If you don't, I'll slaughter you. Now, get out!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

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ONE PENNY.

"Buzz off, confound you!"

Bunter rolled out of the tower as the Bounder opened the door. Vernon-Smith followed him out, and jammed the padlock in its place. Then he climbed up the ivy. Billy Bunter watching him with eyes distended behind his spectacles. Not for worlds would Bunter have undertaken that perilous climb in the darkness.

The Bounder disappeared, and Bunter hurried off towards the School House. He had almost forgotten the dreaded vengeance of the Famous Five in his excitement at the amazing discovery he had made.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rolling in Money!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Collar him!"

The Famous Five were waiting inside the School House. They collared the Owl of the Remove promptly as he came in. Bunter yelped.

"I—I say, you fellows, you know—"

"Bring him up to the study to be slaughtered," said Nugent. "We can't slaughter him here. Slaughtering porpoises is against the rules in the passage."

"Ow! Leggo! I won't go! Look here, I'll pay you for your rotten grub!" howled Bunter. "It was simply a loan. I intended to pay for it, of course."

"What, with postal-orders that will come the year after next?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! As it happens, I've had a remittance—an unexpected remittance. One of my titled relations—"

"Rats!"

"Leggo! I tell you I'll pay for the grub!" roared Bunter, struggling as the Removites rushed him towards the staircase.

"Hallo, what's the row?" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, coming down the passage. "Now, then—"

"Yow! Make 'em leggo—yow—yah!"

"The fat beast has raided our grub!" explained Harry Wharton. "We're only going to boil him in oil, and larrup him with a cricket-stump. It's all right."

"The all-rightfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wingate."

"I'm going to pay for the rotten grub!" howled Bunter. "Yow! I'll pay for it! Yah!"

"Well, if he pays for it, that will make it right, won't it?" said Wingate, laughing.

Bob Cherry snorted.

"That's only his gas. He hasn't any money."

"How are you going to pay for it if you haven't any money, Bunter?" asked the captain of Greyfriars.

"Ow! I've got lots of money. All my people are rich," said Bunter. "They simply roll in money. I've had a remittance from a titled relation."

"Rats!" said Wharton. "If the fat beast can produce any money, we'll let him off. He collared eight shillings' worth of tuck, and I suppose he's bolted it all. We'll make it a bargain. If he can show up eight shillings, we'll let him off. If he can't, we'll take him up to the study and lather him."

"It's a go!" said all the Co. at once. They were quite assured that Billy Bunter could not produce the cash necessary to pay for the plundered tuck.

"That's fair!" said Wingate. "Now, Bunter—"

"Leggo, then! How can I get the money out of my pocket while these beasts are holding me!" demanded Bunter.

"The fat rotter wants a chance to bolt!"

"You won't bolt, Bunter?" demanded Wingate.

"No; honour bright!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bob Cherry. "You hold the fat beast's collar, Wingate, while he produces the money. He will have to do a conjuring trick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate held Bunter's collar, and the juniors released him. Then the Owl of the Remove fumbled in his pockets.

"Of course, I meant to pay for the tuck all along," he remarked. "Eight shillings is a mere nothing to me. Mind, you've agreed that if I've got the money, I'm not to pay. I'll leave it over till my postal-order comes."

"Don't jaw so much!" said Johnny Bull. "Show up before we slaughter you!"

Bunter's fat hand came out of his pocket, with a little heap of shillings in the palm.

There was a chorus of surprised exclamations:

"Cash!"

"Hard cash!"

"Rolling in money, by Jove!"

"Whom have you been robbing, Bunter?"

"Whose esteemed pocket did you discoverfully find that excellent cash in, my worthy and dishonest Bunter?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter. "I've had several remittances lately from my titled relations—my rich uncles—"

"Which uncle?" asked Bob Cherry. "The one who keeps the pawnshop in the Old Kent Road, or the one who keeps the fried-fish shop in the New Cut?"

"You—you—you beast! My uncle doesn't keep a fried-fish shop!" yelled Bunter.

"Sorry; my mistake. I meant a pub."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's produced the money," said Wingate, laughing heartily. "According to your own terms, he's not to pay now. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Wingate walked away greatly amused, leaving the juniors glaring at Bunter. The fat Removite grinned triumphantly. He had fairly done the chums of the Removite this time. They had felt so certain that he was, as usual, stony, that they had felt quite safe in making those conditions—and now Bunter was neither to pay for the plundered tuck, nor to be slaughtered for having raided it. Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Well, he's done us!" he said. "You can keep the money, Bunter. We didn't want you to pay for it, anyway. But you were stony to-day. I hope you've come by that cash honestly? If you haven't, you'd better take it back to the owner."

"Oh, really, Wharton, if you mean to insult me—"

"Ass! You found a fiver once, and kept it, and made out that it was yours because you wanted it, and you might have got the sack over it. If it's the same with this tin—"

"It isn't," said Bunter. "I didn't find this. The fact is, I've got rich friends, and I expect to have plenty of money in the future. I've got a standing order at Uncle Clegg's in the village for half-a-crown's worth of tuck every day."

To which the juniors replied, with one voice:

"Gammon!"

"I'll jolly well show you, if you like to walk down to the village with me to-morrow!" said Bunter loftily. "I've got no more time to waste on you now—I've got my prep. to do."

And Bunter rolled away, with his little fat nose in the air. The Co. could not help regarding one another with astonishment. For Bunter to be in possession of money was a remarkable circumstance. It was true that he was always just expecting the arrival of a postal-order; but it was equally true that the postal-order seldom or never arrived. No one doubted that his rich relations existed only in his fertile imagination.

"He didn't get that cash by post," said Bob Cherry, after a pause. "I heard him inquiring for a letter the last time the postman came, and there wasn't one for him."

"It belongs to somebody else, I suppose," said Harry Wharton uneasily. "Bunter's too silly to be honest. I hope he's not getting himself into trouble. Well, I suppose it's no business of ours."

And the Co. went to their studies to do their preparation, and dismissed the Owl of the Removite from their minds.

But they were reminded of Bunter and his newly-acquired wealth when they came down later into the junior common-room.

Bunter never could resist talking, and he would boast even when he had nothing but "gas" to offer in the way of proof. Now that he really had some money, he was apparently on the point of bursting with self-importance. All the Removite soon knew that Bunter was in funds, and several fellows who had lent him money, and who never expected to see it again, reminded Bunter that they had not really intended to make those little loans on the ninety-nine years' system.

"Now you're in funds, you can pay up," Ogilvy remarked. "You owe me a bob, Bunter." He had cornered the fat junior in the common-room, cutting off his way to the door.

"You owe me a tanner!" said Skinner.

"And me half-a-crown!" said Bolsover major.

"And me two bob!" chimed in Elliott.

"And me eightpence!" said Trevor.

And quite a number of claimants appeared as soon as the suggestion was mooted that Billy Bunter might "square up" now that he was rolling in money.

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles in dismay. He liked to be regarded as rolling in wealth, but to part with the wealth in settlement of little debts that he had quite forgotten—that was quite another matter. And the fellows meant business, too. If Bunter had plenty of money, and was going to have plenty more, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

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Every Wednesday.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR" Every Friday.

as he declared, there was no reason why he should not square up.

Harry Wharton & Co., as they came in, saw the dismayed Owl of the Removite surrounded by creditors demanding instant payment, and they looked on, grinning. It was a just punishment for the "swank" of William George Bunter.

"Pay up!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You owe me four bob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pay up, Bunter!"

"Shell out!"

"Hand it over!"

"Sure, and it's waitin' I am for my ninepence!" chortled Micky Desmond.

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, "I—I—you see—under the circumstances—"

"Pay up!"

"You see, I—I've only got ten bob, and—and—"

"Lots more coming from your titled relations!" chuckled Bolsover major. "You've said so yourself. If you're expecting handsome remittances to-morrow, it won't hurt you to pay out the ten bob now."

"Pay up, Bunter!"

"Sure, I'm waitin' for me ninepence—"

"I can't pay you all!" howled Bunter.

"Then pay each chap a bob or a tanner off his debt," suggested Ogilvy—"same as they do in the Bankruptcy-court."

"Good egg! Sixpence in the pound!" said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, I'm not going to pay anybody just now. When I receive some more remittances from my people—"

"No time like the present," said Bolsover major.

"You've got plenty of money, and you say there's plenty more coming. You'll pay up, or we'll bump you and make you."

"Bump him! Bump the blessed swindler!" said Ogilvy.

There was a general movement upon Bunter. He made an attempt to bolt, but several hands grasped him and yanked him back. And there was a roar:

"Shell out!"

There was no help for it. Bunter had to shell out. Ten shillings were divided among his many creditors, leaving a good many claims still unsatisfied. Then the juniors trooped away, laughing. Bunter had had a lesson on the subject of swanking, though it was doubtful if it would have any effect on him.

"Stony?" asked Harry Wharton, as Bunter grunted disconsolately.

"Yes," growled Bunter. "Never mind, I shall have more to-morrow."

"Where are you going to get it?" asked Frank Nugent.

"My titled relations—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, you'll see," said Bunter. "What will you bet me that I don't have ten shillings to-morrow morning?"

"I won't bet you anything," said Harry, "because betting is no class. But if you have ten shillings to-morrow morning, Bunter, we'll take you into the tuckshop and stand you a feed to the same amount."

And Bunter replied instantly:

"Done!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Horn of Plenty!

BILLY BUNTER was usually the last fellow to leave his bed in the morning, and very often the rising-bell failed to wake him, and it sometimes fell to Bob Cherry to roll him out of bed or squeeze a sponge over him. But on Sunday morning, when the rising-bell went, and the Removite turned out, they met with the surprise of their lives.

Bunter's bed was empty!

The Owl of the Removite had risen early—before rising-bell. The juniors could scarcely believe their eyes as they gazed at the empty bed.

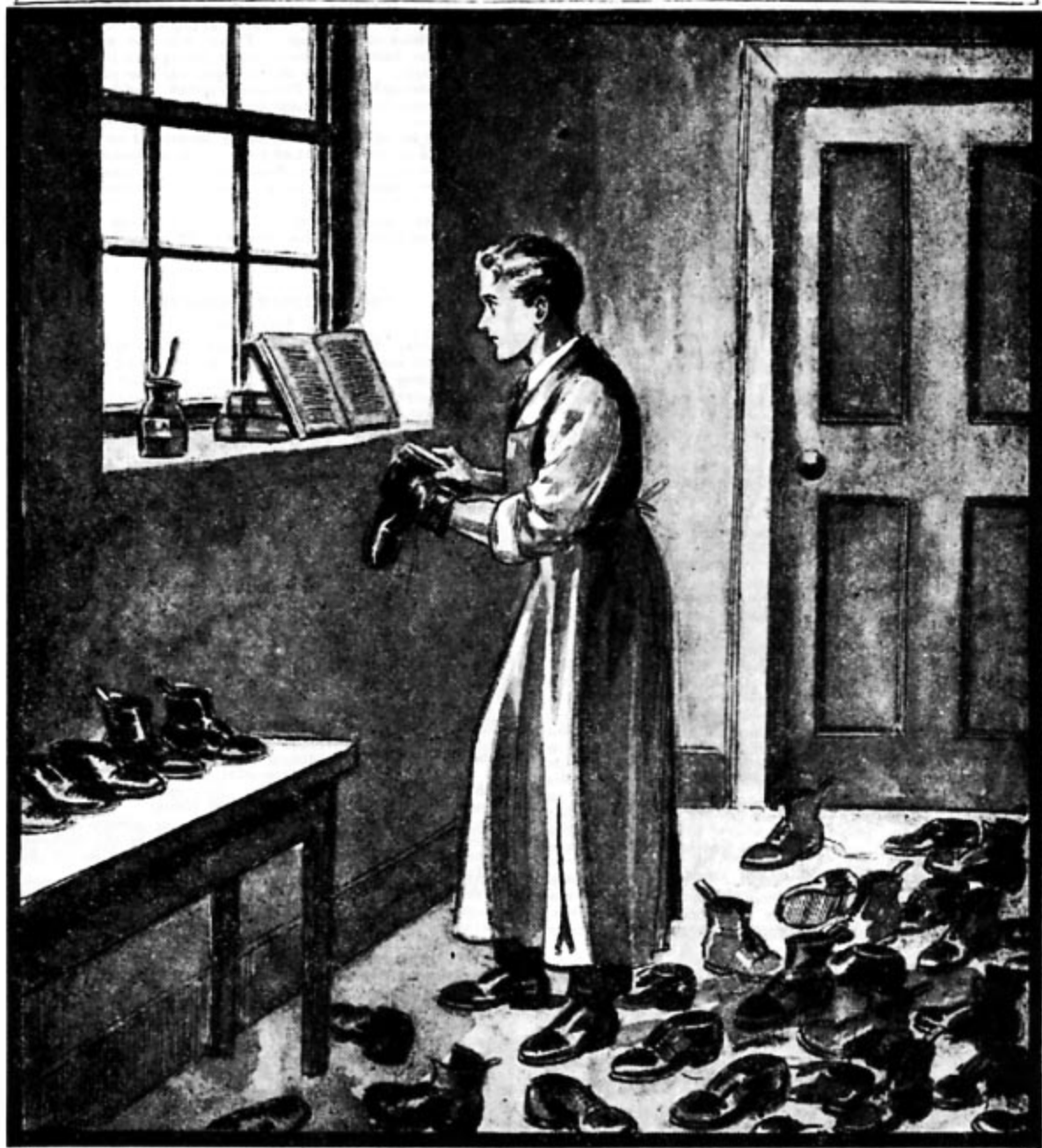
"My hat! Bunter's turning over a new leaf!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Up before us—and before rising-bell! Is he sleep-walking again. I wonder?"

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Nugent.

Nobody in the Removite understood it. When they went down they looked for Bunter. They found him in the lower hall, seated on a bench, and nodding to sleep. Bob Cherry roused him from his doze with a slap on the shoulder.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Beast! Yow! Wharrer marrer?"

"What do you mean by getting up early?" demanded Bob. "Have you been walking in your balm slumber?"



BOOTBOY AND STUDENT TOO! (This picture, which will appear upon the cover of "THE GEM" LIBRARY next Wednesday, illustrates an incident in "STRAIGHT AS A DIE!" Martin Clifford's latest grand, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. Don't forget to order your copy of Wednesday's "GEM" LIBRARY to-day! One Penny from all necessitants.

"Ow! No. I had to get up early to—to walk out and meet the postman, you know."

"What! The postman doesn't come along till ten o'clock on Sunday morning?" Wharton exclaimed.

"I—I mean I walked out to meet the special messenger."

"The special messenger," exclaimed all the juniors together, staring blankly at Bunter.

"Off your silly rocker!" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I don't see why my rich uncle shouldn't send me a tip by special messenger, if he knows I'm hard up," said Bunter loftily. "He can afford it. He's practically a millionaire. He has all the estates of the family of Bunter de Bunter, descended from Sir Bertram de Bunter, who came over with the Conqueror."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

"To say nothing of the commercial establishments of Bunter de Pop-Shop, and Bunter de Pub," said Bob Cherry, "who came over in the third-class steerage before the Aliens Act was passed."

"So your uncle has been sending you money by special messenger, has he, early on Sunday morning?" said Wharton, with a laugh.

"I decline to give particulars to chaps who doubt my word," said Bunter. "But I hold you to your agreement. When the tuckshop opens, you've got to stand me a feed up to ten shillings, as per agreement."

"Yes; if you can show up the ten bob this morning," grinned Wharton. "I don't think you're likely to get that feed."

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

"The don't-think-fulsness is terrific."
 "That's where you make a mistake," said Bunter. "What price that?" He extracted a half-sovereign from his waistcoat pocket, and held it out for inspection.

There was a howl of amazement from the juniors. It was a real half-sovereign—quite evidently genuine. Wharton's face became very grave.

"Look here, Bunter, tell us where you got that half-sovereign."

"It's mine," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I suppose you don't think I've pinched it?"

"I don't see how else you could have got it. It's no good expecting us to believe that your old uncle sent you a half-quad by special messenger. Where did you get it?"

"I decline to discuss my private affairs, especially with fellows who don't rely on my word," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I consider you a very inquisitive chap, Wharton—very inquisitive indeed. I don't approve of inquisitiveness!"

Wharton reddened.
 "You silly ass!" he exclaimed. "I'm not inquisitive—but it's jolly clear to me that you're getting yourself into trouble. That half-sovereign can't be yours."

"Of course it can't!" said Bob Cherry. "You'd better take it back to its owner, Bunter, before it's inquired after."

Bunter snorted.
 "You can go round asking whether anybody's missed a half-quad, if you like," he said. "Look here, you're not going to sneak out of the agreement, Wharton. Lots of fellows heard you say that if I could show you ten bob this morning, you'd stand me a feed to the same amount. Here's the ten bob."

"Yes—if it's your own!" said Harry.
 "It's mine! My rich relations—"

"Oh, rats!"

As a matter of fact, the juniors did a considerable amount of inquiring that morning, to discover whence the half-sovereign had proceeded. Lord Mauleverer was questioned, but he had lent Bunter nothing that day. Nobody had missed any money. There was simply no explaining how Bunter had come into possession of the half-sovereign, unless he had indeed received it by special messenger from a rich relation—and that, as all the juniors agreed, was absurd.

But Wharton held to his agreement—and after morning church, Billy Bunter was taken into the tuckshop and fed by the Co.—to the tune of ten shillings. It was rather a serious matter for Wharton—as it used up the whole remainder of the generous remittance he had received from his uncle the previous day. But he had agreed to do it, and he did not think of backing out. But he was puzzled—he felt certain that Bunter could not possibly have come by the money honestly—and he felt that he had been done by the astute Owl of the Remove.

Bunter's airs of consequence that day were quite amusing. In spite of the big feed he had had in the morning, he expended the half-sovereign in the afternoon upon another. Before evening he was in his usual state of impecuniosity once more.

"I say, Wharton, you might lend a chap a few bob," he remarked in the evening. "I'm expecting a remittance to-morrow morning—"

"A postal-order?" grinned Wharton.

"Ahem, no—hard cash!" said Bunter.

"Oh! You get it in hard cash now, instead of postal-orders—eh?" said Harry. "Look here, Bunter, what does it mean? Have you found the key of the Head's cash-box?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Where have you been getting money?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"When a fellow has rich relations—" began Bunter.

"Oh, cheese it!"

And Wharton walked away angrily. He was really concerned about the fat junior. Billy Bunter was quite fool enough to be dishonest, without realising how it was—the fact that he wanted money was sufficient to make him think that he was entitled to it. And it was impossible that the money was really sent to him, Wharton thought. It was a mystery—and it looked as if there was trouble in store for the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter's sudden and amazing prosperity furnished the Removites with a new and interesting topic of conversation, which somewhat excluded interest in the fate of the Bounder. Of Vernon-Smith, nothing more had been heard. The Head had heard nothing—Mr. Quelch had heard nothing. Bolsover major, who had been Smithy's closest pal, took it upon himself to telegraph to Mr. Vernon-Smith in London to ask him if Smithy had come home; but he received a reply in the negative. Where was Smithy? Some of the fellows were still wondering—but they never dreamed of seeing the Bounder at Greyfriars again.

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But Harry Wharton, once or twice, looked up at the old tower—from the distance, without going near it. Was the Bounder there—in hiding? There was no sign of his presence—he had not been reckless enough to burn a light again at night. Wharton did not go near the place, for he had promised to keep the Bounder's secret—and he would not risk betraying him by action any more than by words. But was he there? And if he was, how was it to end? What hope could he still cherish of being permitted to resume his place in the school? He had sworn that he would not leave Greyfriars—in spite of the Head himself—but sooner or later he must be found—and then he would be taken away by force.

The game was up for the Bounder—Wharton felt that it was so. But apparently his view was not shared by Vernon-Smith.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret Out!

ON Monday, Billy Bunter furnished his Form-fellows with a fresh surprise—and interest in the Owl of the Remove was now decidedly keen. He announced in the common-room that he had a standing order at the village tuckshop for half-a-crown's worth of tuck every day—and the statement was greeted with a general laugh. But two or three fellows walked down to Friardale with him, and they found that the statement was strictly correct. Uncle Clegg corroborated it in the most convincing manner, by handing out tuck to the value of two-shillings-and-sixpence. And in response to inquiries, Uncle Clegg admitted that he had been paid in advance for tuck on the same terms for the whole of the week.

That was the climax.
 Billy Bunter had the pleasure of finding himself the cynosure of all eyes in the Lower Fourth that afternoon. And his fame was spreading outside the Remove. Fellows in the Fourth and the Shell discussed the matter, in wonder. Bunter began to find himself treated with new civility. Potter of the Fifth asked him to tea in his study—the tea being stood by Coker. Loder of the Sixth, who was a prefect and a tremendously great man, gave Bunter a friendly nod in the passage. The influence of wealth is always great—and Billy Bunter's riches were exaggerated by report. Some of the fellows surmised that his father had had a stroke of luck in business—Snoop suggested that perhaps "Old Bunter" had brought off some successful swindle on the Stock Exchange; but whatever was the explanation, Bunter seemed to have discovered a horn of plenty.

On Monday evening he was again in possession of a golden half-sovereign, and he expended it in the tuckshop in the midst of a crowd. He spent it to the last penny, but on Tuesday he had another.

Where did he get it from?

It was a mystery—but the most probable explanation was that his people sent it to him after all. Yet how was it he always had it in hard cash—never in the form of a postal-order. Hard cash might come, of course, in registered letters—but it was known that Bunter did not receive any registered letters. When, on Tuesday, Bunter carelessly pulled a half-sovereign out of his pocket in the common-room, there was a buzz. Whole sovereigns were common enough in the possession of Lord Mauleverer, and Hurree Singh, and Wun Lung the Chinese, as they had been with the Bounder when he was at Greyfriars. But few of the juniors were rich—and Bunter had always been the most impecunious of all.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo—more guilty gold, hey!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Eh?" said Bunter carelessly. "Oh, this isn't much—only half a quid!"

"From your rich uncle again—what?"

"I expect a good many remittances now," said Bunter.

"I always told you fellows my people were rich, and you'd never believe me. Perhaps you will now!"

"It's all rot!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "You cannot come by all that money honestly, Bunter, and you'll get yourself into trouble. We know perfectly well that you don't receive it by post—and your rot about a special messenger is all gammon. You'll be sacked from the school when it comes out."

"Ahem!"

The juniors looked round quickly; Mr. Quelch was standing in the doorway.

Wharton bit his lip. He had not expected Mr. Quelch to come to the common-room, of course, and he had had no intention of giving Bunter away. Still, if the fat junior came by the money honestly, there was no reason why the Form-master should not know.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon Bunter. The fat junior seemed uneasy under his gaze, and he tried to make himself invisible behind the burly form of Bolsover major.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"I came here to speak to you, Bunter," said the Remove-master. "You appear to be trying to keep out of my sight. Come here!"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir!" said Bunter, coming reluctantly forward. "It's always a great pleasure to see you, sir!"

"Thank you! It appears, Bunter, that you have been in possession lately of a great deal of money. The whole of the Lower School is discussing it, and the matter has reached my ears. I do not suggest for one moment, Bunter, that the money is not honestly yours. But as the amount of your pocket-money is known to me—as in the case of all boys in my Form—I think you had better explain to me whence you receive this money."

There was a breathless hush in the common-room now.

It had been certain, of course, that Bunter's new-found wealth would sooner or later become known to the masters, and equally certain that he would be called upon to explain how he obtained it. Mr. Quelch would have failed in his duty if he had not inquired into it.

But that had never occurred to Billy Bunter. His desire to swank had brought him up against trouble at last.

"Well, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, kindly enough. "I am waiting. Pray do not suppose that I suggest that the money is not yours. I simply desire you to tell me who sends it to you, that is all."

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"I do not see at present, but doubtless I shall do so when you have explained, Bunter. Is this money sent you by your father?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, with great relief; "that's it, sir."

"Then you do not object to your father being communicated with on the subject?"

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"I—I—I— The fact is, sir, it—it doesn't come from my father," he stammered.

Mr. Quelch's brow grew very stern.

"You have just stated that it did, Bunter."

"I—I— No, sir. You—you stated that, sir," said Bunter feebly. "I call the fellows to witness, sir, you said so yourself. I didn't say so. I—"

"You replied in the affirmative. However, if the money does not come from your father, from whom does it come?" the Remove-master demanded sharply.

"I—I've got some rich relations, sir—"

"And they have sent you this money?"

"That's it, sir."

"I am not satisfied, Bunter. Kindly give me the names and addresses of the relations who have sent you money this week, so that I can write to them."

Bunter gasped. His fat face was as red now as a freshly-boiled beetroot. All eyes were upon him; but the eyes he dreaded most were the piercing orbs of the form-master. Never had Mr. Quelch's eyes seemed so like gimlets. They seemed to pierce holes in the unfortunate Owl of the Remove.

"I am waiting, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch ominously.

"The—fact is, sir, I—I've got a lot of rich relations, but—but I—I've forgotten where they live," groaned Bunter.

Some of the juniors chuckled. Bunter was always ready with a terminological inexactitude, but he never succeeded in telling one in a convincing manner. His ridiculous statement caused Mr. Quelch's frown to grow darker.

"Bunter! Unless you explain immediately how you came into possession of this money, I shall conclude that you have obtained it dishonestly!"

"Oh, sir! I—I—I— It was given to me."

"By your relations?"

"Yes—I mean, no—no, sir," gasped Bunter. "The fact is, sir, it—it's a loan, sir—just a loan from a friend, sir."

"Very well. Who is your friend who makes these loans, and where is he to be found?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"I warn you not to tell me any more falsehoods, Bunter! Do you prefer to explain to me, or shall I take you to the headmaster?—You may choose."

"Ow!"

"For the last time, Bunter, where did you get that money?" thundered Mr. Quelch, and his voice made Bunter jump almost clear of the floor.

"It—it was a loan, sir, from—from an old pal," he stammered.

"His name?"

"It—it—it was Smithy, sir," groaned Bunter. It was out at last.

There was a buzz of amazement from all the juniors. Harry Wharton uttered a sharp exclamation. He under-

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stood now. But the other fellows did not understand, and they were astounded.

"Smithy," howled Bob Cherry—"Smithy!"

"The Bounder!" ejaculated Nugent. "Gammon!"

"So Vernon-Smith has been giving you money, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, making a gesture for silence.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"You have seen him lately, then—since he has left the school—and more than once!"

"Yes, sir."

"He is, then, remaining in the neighbourhood of the school?" said Mr. Quelch, his eyes gleaming. "Very well! But why is he giving you money, Bunter?"

"I'm his old pal, sir," muttered Bunter feebly.

"Nonsense! Where is Vernon-Smith? Is he within the precincts of Greyfriars?" Mr. Quelch demanded. "Has he been giving you money to keep his secret? Is that the explanation, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I found him quite by accident, sir, and—and I've kept it dark because—because he's my old pal. He—he made the some little loans because—because he's got plenty of money, sir."

"Have you demanded money of him?"

"Oh, no, sir! When—when I was hard up I—I just called up to him, and he chucked me down a half-quad or so, sir. Perhaps he was afraid my voice would be heard if I called too loud. But—"

"You called up to him?" said Mr. Quelch. "Is he in this building?"

"Oh, no, sir. He—I—that is—"

Mr. Quelch grasped the fat junior by the collar and shook him angrily.

"You young rascal! Where is Vernon-Smith?" he thundered.

"Ow! Yow! He's in the old tower, sir! Ow! The padlock's broken—greenough!—and—yah! Don't shake me like that, sir! Ow!"

"Go to my study, Bunter! I shall cane you severely for your wicked conduct! What you have done practically amounts to blackmail. You are an unscrupulous young rascal, sir! Go to my study, and await me there! With Vernon-Smith I shall deal immediately!"

And Mr. Quelch, with a brow like a thundercloud, strode away. In the common-room there was a buzz of amazed and excited voices. Vernon-Smith, the expelled junior, was still in the school—in hiding in the ruined tower! It was an astounding discovery, and it made the Removeites gasp. And Mr. Quelch was striding away to find him there. The vanished schoolboy was to be brought to light at last, and the Bounder's game was up. And, with one accord, the juniors laid hold of Billy Bunter and bumped him, and bumped him again, till the Owl of the Remove was glad to take refuge in Mr. Quelch's study, there to await his caning.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Shadow of Death!

MR. QUELCH strode through the darkness of the old Close, with knitted brows and his eyes glinting under them.

Seldom had the Remove-master been so angry.

After all that had happened, the expelled junior had come back to the school. In spite of his Form-master, in spite of the Head, he had returned there, defying all authority.

To find the audacious junior in his hiding-place, and drag him away by force if necessary, and send him to his home in charge of a couple of prefects, that was Mr. Quelch's intention. He reached the old tower, silent and gloomy in the October evening. He felt the padlock with his hands. It came open at the first jerk. Mr. Quelch opened the door and strode into the gloomy tower.

"Vernon-Smith!"

He called out the name in loud, sharp tones. Only the echo of his own voice answered him. His voice had rung through the tower, and if the Bounder was there he must have heard.

"Vernon-Smith!" Mr. Quelch's voice trembled with anger. "I know you are here. I order you to descend at once!"

Silence, save for the echoes.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips, and began to ascend the spiral stair. He knew that it was perilous in the darkness, and he felt his way very cautiously. Half-way to the top of the tower was a round room, like the chamber at the top, above which the stairs were narrower. Mr. Quelch paused there, looking round him in the glimmering starlight that came through the shattered old walls.

"Vernon-Smith! Will you descend, or shall I come and take you away by force?"

"I will not come down," the Bounder replied at last, "and I will not be taken away by force! I shall defend myself!"

"What—what!" the Form-master stuttered with rage. "How dare you, Smith! You—you abandoned young ruffian! Descend at once, or I shall come up for you, and I will flog you, sir, before you are sent away from the school in custody."

"I shall not come down!" the Bounder's voice rang defiance. "Do as you like! I won't surrender!"

Mr. Quelch did not waste more time in words. He scrambled up the remaining steps, a little less cautiously than was wise.

"Better take care, sir," came the Bounder's mocking voice from above. "Those stairs are rocky. You might—Good heavens!"

Crash!

Crash!

The Bounder's words trailed off in a gasp of horror.

There was a sharp cry from Mr. Quelch, a crashing of falling stone, a blinding dust of old mortar.

Then a fearful silence.

From above the Bounder peered down in the darkness, and his face was as white as a sheet. Where was Mr. Quelch? The old stairs had given way under his hasty, heavy tread at a height of forty feet from the ground.

"Mr. Quelch! Answer me!" The Bounder's voice was very different now. "Good heavens! What has happened!"

There was a stifled cry from the darkness.

"Help!"

The bounder gasped with relief. His first terrible thought was that the Form-master had been killed by the fall. He hurried back into the round room at the top of the tower, and came back with the electric-lamp in his hand. He descended cautiously, flashing the light before him.

Three or four of the rickety old stone steps had crashed through, and the Form-master had fallen. But he had caught hold of a broken beam that had supported the staircase, and was hanging on desperately. He swung in space—forty feet of space—and masses of jagged brickwork below him—around him no hold but the beam across the gulf. And the beam itself, under his weight, was sagging.

His face looked up, white and tense.

In spite of his terrible position, he had not lost his presence of mind. Above him, on the insecure steps, the Bounder crouched, looking down. He could not reach the Form-master—there was empty space a couple of yards wide between them.

"Hold on, sir!" panted the Bounder.

"I am holding on, Vernon-Smith, but I cannot hold for many minutes. Can you get help? Shout for the tower!"

"They can't reach you—the steps are broken away below as well as above!" The Bounder groaned. It seemed that, unless a miracle happened, he must see the Form-master dashed to death before his very eyes. "Oh, sir!"

Mr. Quelch set his teeth hard.

"Heaven forgive you for the harm you have done, Smith!" he said steadily. "Keep back! The steps you are standing on may give way at any moment!"

"Let them!" said the Bounder recklessly. "I don't care! I'll save you, sir, or we'll go down there together!"

"Vernon-Smith, I forbid you—"

"That beam is going, sir," said the Bounder quietly. "Your weight is pulling it out of the wall." He set the electric lamp on the stairs. "Listen to me, sir! There's one chance, and we're both going to take it."

"Smith—"

"It's the only chance, sir."

Three feet above Mr. Quelch's head was the iron cross-bar which had helped to support the spiral stair. It was firm and strong, embedded at the ends in the solid walls of the tower. Mr. Quelch could no more have reached it than he could have flown, but with a helping hand from above it was barely possible. The Bounder laid a strong, firm grasp upon the cross-bar, and worked his way out upon it, with his chest resting on the bar, his legs swinging in space.

"Smith!" Mr. Quelch panted. "Go back! Go back! You cannot help me! I should only drag you down to your death! Go back!"

"I'm going to help you, sir!"

"My boy, I forgive you for all you have done. I will not allow you to throw away your life! Go back!"

The Bounder did not reply again. He needed all his breath for the fearful exertion he was making. He swung along the bar till he was in the centre, over the head of the Form-master clinging to the beam below. Well was it then for the Bounder that he excelled in all the exercises of the gymnasium. The Form-master's upturned face and starting eyes watched him, in silent tenseness. In the centre of the cross-bar, the Bounder swung up his legs, and crossed them

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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over the bar, hanging on with his knees. His head came swinging down, and his outstretched hands reached the man below.

"Quick, sir—clutch me, and climb!"

He panted out the words.

And Mr. Quelch wasted no time in speech. Life was dear to him—and he could not now prevent the peril of the Bounder. The recklessness of Vernon-Smith's nature had caused much trouble, for himself and others—now it was causing him to risk his life to save that of the man he had insulted and defied.

And the risk was terrible. Mr. Quelch grasped him, and drew himself up, and contrived to rest a knee upon the narrow, sagging beam. His strength was almost spent, and his senses were swimming; but, with his firm grasp upon the hanging junior, he drew himself up, the Bounder's hands grasping his clothes and helping him. His feet were on the beam at last; and then he reached the bar above with his hands, and grasped it. And as he did so the loosened beam fell with a crash, and a blinding cloud of mortar-dust filled the air.

But the Form-master was grasping the iron bar now.

He was an active man. He swung himself along the bar, and reached the steps, and drew himself to safety. Vernon-Smith tried to draw himself upon the bar again, to work along it, resting his chest; but his strength was gone, and he could not. But his courage did not fail. With hands and bent knees fastened on the cross-bar, he worked his way slowly along, above the dizzy abyss.

Mr. Quelch, almost fainting with exhaustion himself, watched him in terror. It was the Bounder who was in peril now, and the master was unable to help him. Would he win his way back to safety, or—

He came along the bar with terrible slowness, but he was within reach of Mr. Quelch's grasp at last. With the Remove-master's aid, he was dragged upon the upper steps. There he sank down, his face white and still. He had fainted.

Mr. Quelch grasped him, and drew him to the top room in the tower. It was impossible to descend. He laid the Bounder upon the blankets that had served him as a bed in his hiding-place, and then shouted for help.

All Greyfriars gathered round the old tower, with lamps and bike-lanterns, as Mr. Quelch's calls for help rang out. And when help came, it was necessary to obtain Gosling's two longest ladders, and bind them together, and rear them to the tower-top. And the Form-master descended, followed by the Bounder, who had recovered himself, and was as cool and unconcerned as ever.

A hundred voices demanded to know what had happened. Mr. Quelch raised his hand for silence.

"My boys, this is what has happened. Vernon-Smith has risked his life in the most devoted way to save me from certain death. He was the cause of my falling into peril, but that does not detract from the bravery of his action. I have forgiven him the wrong he has done, and I shall beg the Head to allow him to resume his old place at Greyfriars. I think Dr. Locke will consent when he knows all."

There was a roar.

"Bravo, Bounder!"

"And three cheers for Mr. Quelch!" shouted Harry Wharton.

And the cheers were given with a will.

Mr. Quelch was right. The Head had only to hear what had happened, to grant his earnest request that the Bounder of Greyfriars should be pardoned. It was hardly possible to send away in disgrace the fellow who was the hero of the whole school, and to whom the Remove-master owed his life.

And in the Remove that evening there were great rejoicings. Even Billy Bunter was forgiven, in the happy turn events had taken. And the hero of the hour was the boy who had once been the most unpopular fellow in the Lower School—Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE END.

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MYSTERIABy **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. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour, and anchor in the deep water outside.

(Now go on with the Story.)

A Strange Sail and Strange Visitors.

Late in the afternoon Ching-Lung appeared on deck. Prout, Maddock, Barry, and Joe were basking in the sunshine, and improving the time by a game of whist and a pipe. A breeze had sprung up from the land.

"That's the odd thrick to us, bedad!" remarked Barry, gathering up the cards. "Av any gentleman has a few acea hid up his slave, will he kindly hand them over whole Oi d'ale? That was a mighty good game, Tom, we played intirely! We'll throuble yez for a cigar aich."

Maddock and Joe reluctantly paid their losses, and Barry began to deal another hand. Prout sent the cards flying in all directions as he hurriedly scrambled to his feet.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Where?" cried Ching-Lung.

"Comin' clean up wi' the wind, sir, by hokey!" said Prout. "Yonder, sir! Don't you see 'er?"

A small boat, under a single lug-sail, was creeping out from the shore. A pair of oars were also at work to aid her. The breeze, hitherto screened by the hills, caught her, and heeling over, she began to move rapidly.

"Visitors, by Jove!" said Ching-Lung.

"Faith, Oi think it is somebody comin' to tay," remarked Barry, examining his hand. "Bedad, bad luck to him, say Oi! Sure, Oi've got foive acea and eight kings in this lot, and now ut's spoilt!"

"Make a poem about it, souse me!" said the bo'sun. "You're always a-grumblin'!"

"Go home and doie," retorted Barry. "Oi wait for inspiration afore Oi think of composin' my lovely verses. As my Uncle Dinnis—whin he was sober—used to remark: 'Whoy, oh, whoy does the floy floy floy? Who does the bald heads love? And whoy, whin your mother won't climb a hill, have yez all got to shove, shove, shove!' For the reply to the above questions—about the mothor-car in special—a reward of nothin' will be paid!"

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They were not listening to Barry. They were watching the sail. The boat was heading direct for the submarine.

"Ut's my imprission that av we don't torpaydo thim ut's wrecked we'll be!" grinned Barry.

Ching-Lung entered the wheelhouse for a pair of binoculars. The lenses, however, only revealed two pairs of legs.

Three of them were of the ordinary type common to mankind. The other was a wooden one. Ching-Lung looked closer. The breeze flapped the blue trousers of the man who was steering, and then Ching-Lung recognised his friend Stumpy, and saw that both wooden legs were there, although one was concealed by the wide cloth.

In strange contrast, the other legs that showed beneath the sail were unnaturally fat and thick. His Highness of Kwai-had no difficulty in recognising his guests. One was Stumpy; the other Larkins.

"Ahoy!"

In a most seamanlike manner the boat came about, and the sail fell. Larkin, still wearing the wreckage of his tall hat, held the oars, and worked them to keep the boat from drifting in a fast-running tide. The cripple pulled his forelock, and grinned as pleasantly as possible for anyone possessing such a hideous face.

"May we come aboard?" he grunted.

"How d'ye mean to work it, by hokey?" asked Prout. "Here, Ben, get the hoss-sling ready!"

Much to his amazement, the cripple hopped up the occasional ladder with the agility of a bird.

"Oh, bedad, phwat is ut?" grinned Barry. "Go away wid yez. This isn't the workhouse. Where are yez comin' to at all, at all? We don't want to boie any foirewood. We work this machine wid pethol."

"Yes!"

Prout, Barry O'Rooney, Joe, and Maddock saluted and drew back at the sound of that quiet voice. Ferrers Lord

was standing there, rolling a cigarette between his thin, supple fingers.

"Dear friends of mine, old man!" said Ching-Lung, with a laugh. "Permit me to introduce you. This lean gentleman with the attenuated feet is Sir Stumpy of the Stumps. The other excessively lean gentleman now mounting the ladder is another dear friend of mine. He is Mr. Larkin. Gentlemen both, may I have the pleasure of introducing you to—Mr. Ferrers Lord!"

At the famous name both rascals winced perceptibly. Stumpy dragged off his ragged cap, and Larkin bowed.

"What do you want here?" Stumpy looked at his blackguardly comrade, and cursed. "Ere's a brimstone game," he snarled. "Ere's a full bag of aces. By thunder, if I'd knowed it was Ferrers Lord, I'd have stayed at 'ome and died o' fever wi' the rest. We're gettin' on a treat!" He cursed again. "We're doin' ourselves proud. 'Ang the rotten luck! 'Ang everybody! I'd sooner 'ave the fever!"

He turned away and spat on the deck, holding the filthy hat in his hand, then bowed again. Ching-Lung saw an unusual twinkle in the millionaire's eyes.

"Well?" Larkin squirmed. "Er—er—that is to say," he puffed weakly, "we—" "Tell the brimstone truth!" snapped the cripple. "We're fair beat, so tell it. Tell it, can't you?" "If—er—if you—er—if cinnabar—er—fortunes in cinnabar would—er—er—" "Well?"

Larkin squirmed before those keen, searching eyes. "Tell him the brimstone truth, you fool!" repeated Stumpy.

"Well, sir, if—if—" The sun was sinking in a crimson furnace. Larkin had been looking anywhere and everywhere except at Ferrers Lord. His eyes suddenly seemed to bulge from his head, and he uttered an inarticulate cry. His shaking hand went up. "There, there!" he panted.

They all turned. It was the island again—it was *Mysteria*! A shaft of purple light, the last effort of a dying sun, rested on it for a second. And for once the passionless voice of Ferrers Lord sounded strange in their ears as he shouted:

"Put those men into the boat. Phantom or no phantom, I'll find it now! Quick! Cast off!" And then he sprang to the wheel, signalling "Full speed ahead!"

Mysteria Vanishes Again—More Quarrelling.

The excitement spread through the ship with the speed of electricity. *Mysteria* at last! While every eye was fixed on the phantom island, while Larkin and the cripple, their boat dancing on the white waves, glared after the flying submarine and cursed, the clouds closed over the fading sun, and it was almost dark.

"She'll beat us low!" said Thurston. "Faster—faster!" The island seemed to be dissolving into mist. It grew hazy and nebulous before their strained eyes. The sky had turned black, and that fine, powdery dust began to fall again.

"She's gone, by hokey! She's clean gone!" yelled the steersman.

"It's the confounded dust that's hiding her!" said Ching-Lung. "She must be there! Can anybody see her?"

There was no reply. Every plate in the submarine was quivering with the beat of her engines. Behind her the water hissed and seethed a milky white.

"There'll be another earthquake presently," said Ferrers Lord, staring eagerly into the gloom. "It smells like an earthquake."

"Bedad, Oi'm afther thinking that the stont gentleman and the gentleman wid the timber fate run a big chance of gitting wet, thin," said Barry O'Rooney. "Oi wish they'd wather their shreets out here, and kape the dust from blowin' about. We must write to the newspapers about it, me bad, bould Benjamin!"

Ferrers Lord raised his hand, and the Lord of the Deep slowed down. Had the will-o'-the-wisp eluded them again? Was it only a mirage, after all, as the engineer had suggested—the shadow of some distant island? With the atmosphere in such a disturbed state, anything was possible. Some of the men looked anxious, almost scared.

"Well, lads, we are beaten again!" said the millionaire, with a laugh. "It is useless to go island-hunting in this Egyptian darkness!"

"The repairs?" said Hal Honour, who had just returned to the deck.

"Bother the man!" laughed Ching-Lung. "He's only got one idea in life—to go tinkering about with a hammer. Give him a hammer and a tenpenny-nail, and he's happy. I don't know exactly what a tenpenny-nail is, but I know I should want a gilt-edged one, set with rubies, for the money. Well, what about the repairs?"

Honour had turned away to heave the lead. "It is not too deep here."

"Then I suppose you must have your way, Honour," said Ferrers Lord. "The island-hunt is again postponed!"

"Perhaps if you set a trap, with a bit of toasted cheese in it, you might catch it," said Ching-Lung.

"Birdlimes is betters, Chingy," grinned Gan-Waga.

"Then spread some on bread, and gorge yourself, wag-tail"—as the submarine came to a stop. "We'll clip the wings of that island when we do catch it. That 'when' is a funny word, and this is dusty weather."

He ended with a terrific sneeze. Already there was a quarter of an inch of the grey powder on the deck. Somewhere or other a volcanic eruption had taken place, or was still taking place. Prout closed the door, and the submarine sank slowly.

"Wance more we go down among the dead men," said Barry—"down to the bottom of the dape blue sky. Oi'm toired of bein' insoide this ould tin tank. Ut makes me faal Oi was a sardine. Oi'd loike to be pickin' butthercups now in the woodland, woid and free. Submarines are rotten things, bedad!"

Most of them were quite ready to agree with the wail of the Irishman, but, unlike Barry, they were not very ambitious to pick buttercups in the woodland, wild and free. They could easily have found some more exciting amusement than that.

Ferrers Lord stretched himself lazily in his chair and yawned.

"So near and yet so far, Rupert," he said. "I fancied we were almost at the gate of *Mysteria*. Honour is becoming quite a tyrant. He will be mutinying and seizing our ship presently. Ah, *Mysteria*—*Mysteria*! The more you elude me, the more eager you make me to bring you to book. You fascinate even a jaded man like myself, who has sipped the cup of almost every adventure known to mankind."

"You're not well, old chap," said Ching-Lung. "You ought to take something for that."

Thurston laughed.

"We don't often hear him talking to himself, Ching," he remarked. "His blessed *Mysteria* is getting on his nerves. Let us prescribe for him. What is it to be?"

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"A whisky-and-soda and a cigar, boys, if it is all the same to you," said Ferrers Lord.
Ching-Lung took the decanter and measured out three tots of whisky.

"Good luck to our spooky island, and a speedy deliverance from bondage," he said. "May the wretched prisoners soon be free from this rough and rocky bottom of the sea. That's a poem of the O'Rooney type. Here's boo! as the niggers say when they drink a health."

The whisky-and-soda vanished, and Ching-Lung put the bottle, decanter, and glasses in his left ear, and made them disappear with great dexterity. Then he vanished himself, like a human Mysteria, and was discovered by Gan-Waga in the billiard-room, in the act of playing billiards with his pigtail, which was as stiff as a poker.

"What yo' doings, Chingy?"

"Thinking, sonny."

"What yo' thinkings, hunk?"

"Thinking what a lovely, fat, useless, putty-brained chap you are, dear Eskimoses," said Ching-Lung. "Watch this stroke. This is a cannon off the red with the jumps. I make the cannon, pot all three balls, tie the cue round my neck, play 'Did she fall or did they shove her?' and return the penny you put in the slot. Watch!"

"Swate—swate—swate, indade," said the only voice of the only Barry O'Rooney. "Brayvo, sor!"

It was a marvellous stroke, and Barry applauded loudly.

GRAND NEW FEATURE.—No. 1.

Our Winter Evening Problem Corner.

On the opposite column there is a little picture-puzzle which will form an excellent test of skill for many of my ingenious chums. The whole puzzle-picture should be pasted on to a piece of thin cardboard, and the black pieces carefully cut out; correctly pieced together they will form the silhouette figure of a well-known character at Greyfriars. Any of my chums who find they are unable to tackle this test of skill successfully will find the correct solution published on this page next Monday.

No. 2 PROBLEM NEXT WEEK.

"Did yez do that a-purpose, sor?" he asked.

"D'yez mane to insult a Choinase gintelman, bedad!" said Ching-Lung. "Oi'm talkin' to you, you wid the Oirish brogue. D'yez mane to insult me?"

"Plaze, sor, Oi cudn't," said Barry meekly. "Oi haven't sufficient command of the English language to do ut at all, at all. Oi don't know enough wurds—rude wurds, Oi mane. Faix, Oi only wish me poor Uncle Dinnis was here to hilt me out. But he's dead, ochone—he's dead, and he's lift his sorrowin' creditors behoid. Oh, uncle—uncle, whoy did yez doie widout payin' me the two-and-fourpence Oi lint yez that day whin yez wint for me wid the chopper, and towld me Oi'd peg out quick av Oi didn't parrt wid the money? Ochone—ochone!"

Barry buried his red face in a large handkerchief of the same ruddy hue, and sobbed a little, whether for the loss of his uncle, or for the loss of the two-and-four, it is impossible to state.

"What yo' cryings fo', Irish?" grinned the Eskimo.

"Nun-nun-nothin'!"

"Dat sillinesses, cryings fo' nothings," said Gan-Waga.

"Dat bad 'nough dottiness, hunk, Chingy. If you' wants cry, cry fo' sometings, donkeys. Cry fo' data."

He gave the grief-stricken Irishman a prod in the ribs with the butt-end of a billiard-cue, and Barry howled "Ouch, murder!" and jumped almost as high as the table.

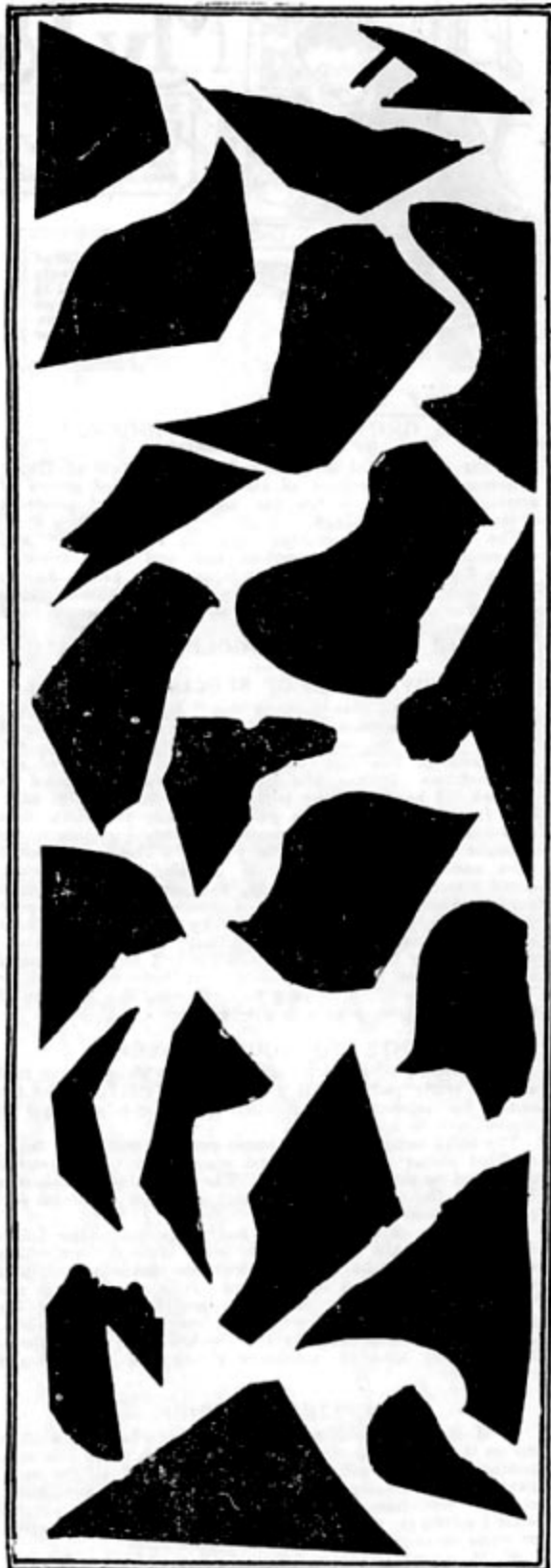
(There will be an extra long instalment of this splendid serial story next Monday.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 298.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
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My Readers' Page

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled as above, unparalleled scenes of activity take place within the usually peaceful precincts of that famous old college.

The "Friars" are smitten with the "gold-fever," and the result is a great amount of fun—and some trouble! When Fortune smiles at last, it is upon the gentle Alonzo Todd, of the Remove, but the way in which Alonzo makes use of Fortune's bountiful gift by no means commends itself to the rest of

"THE GREYFRIARS GOLD-DIGGERS!"

OUR NEW SERIES OF SPECIAL ARTICLES.

I am publishing this week on this "My Readers' Page" the first of a special series of exclusive articles upon a subject which, besides being of everyday interest to all, is of nothing less than vital importance to many of my reader-chums. In the first article, "How to Succeed as a Clerk," I have done my best to deal with this vital question from the clerk's own point of view—the clerk who asks himself the searching questions: "Am I getting on as I ought to be? And if not, why not?" These questions I have endeavoured to answer in a helpful and common-sense manner; in such a way, in fact, that even those readers who are not, and do not intend to be clerks, may yet, perhaps, pick up a hint or two by perusing the articles which they may be able to apply with advantage to their own particular business or profession. If I find my readers appreciate these articles, and do not vote them dull or "too instructive," I propose to deal with like subjects of the same importance in a similar manner.

HINTS TO YOUNG BOXERS.

The pleasure of boxing is often spoiled by using gloves that are too stiffly padded. If a glove is so stiff that the fist cannot be clenched inside it, then the boxer is a danger to himself and to his opponent.

The hand being open, the thumb projects, instead of being doubled across the fingers, and may easily be broken or dislocated in delivering a blow. The projecting thumb is a danger to the opponent, for it may give him a painful and possibly serious jab in the eye.

Apart from this, you cannot box fairly unless the fist is doubled inside the glove, for the rules state distinctly that every blow must be delivered with the fist clenched, and with the knuckle part of the hand. It is a mistake to use "pillow-case"—that is, very large and heavy—gloves, for they have a stunning effect, which may be serious, while, again, it is difficult properly to close the hand inside them. For ordinary sparring, six-ounce gloves are quite heavy enough.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

D. M. K. (Hamilton), and others readers who have written me on the same subject.—The cinematograph trade journals, published weekly, will give you the names of all the companies in the country, as well as a great number of those abroad. Situations are frequently advertised as vacant, so what I advise my chums to do is to either watch these papers or write personally to some of the companies.

W. H. (Camberwell), and others.—A cure for knock-knees. Obtain a piece of board about four inches long and three or

four inches wide. Have a piece cut out of each end to shape and fit against the inside of the knees. Pad to prevent friction. On going to bed, strap the ankles, not too tight, and place the board between the knees. Fasten to keep in place. The joints should in time resume a normal position.

"Old Chum" (East Ham).—I am very pleased to hear that you enjoy reading the three famous companion papers. When next you write to your father in West Africa, please ask him to accept my best thanks for his efforts to popularise our papers.

"Terrier".—Very many thanks for your letter. Unfortunately, it was received too late for me to send you a parcel of specimen copies. All the same, thank you for the offer to accept them.

HOW TO SUCCEED AS A CLERK. (Special Article.)

Two boys enter an office at the same age, with apparently the same education and with the same opportunities. After the lapse of a certain interval of time one is getting a handsome salary and the other knows that his highest earnings will never be more than two pounds a week. What is the reason for the difference? The unsuccessful man says it is either favouritism or luck. The employer knows that it is neither. Whatever we may understand by the word luck; no one seriously believes that, in the majority of cases, success is anything else but the reward of merit.

The first cause of failure is getting into a groove. The man becomes a machine. The writer of this article asked a large employer of labour how many of his clerks possessed either originality or power of initiative, and he replied, "Not one in fifty." The one was the man who "got on."

Energy and Loyalty.

The second cause of failure is lack of energy and loyalty. The man who measures his work by the amount of pay he receives is likely to have his merits estimated in terms of his present, rather than his future, pay. I knew a boy who went at sixteen into a London merchant's office. He would stay to any hour to finish his work, and never grumbled when asked to help with a long dose of overtime at seasons of great pressure. At nineteen he was sent to a foreign branch with a salary of £300 a year and a prospect of further advancement if he continued to serve his employers with the same devotion. Another, a scholarship boy from an elementary school, gave such satisfaction in the same way to the directors of a great railway company that, though he is still young, and ignorant of the fate that is in store for him, he has been already marked out for promotion, and by the time he is forty he will be on the way to a salary of over a thousand a year. Neither of these boys had influence or money. They had pluck, energy, and cheerfulness.

Success is the product of many factors—manners, clothes, speech, education, ability. A man may possess all but one of these, and so reduce his value to nothing, for any number of high numbers multiplied by nothing will give zero as the final result. Consider the man who is wasteful in small things, such as stationery, the one who is discourteous and uncivil, the one who is inattentive to instructions, so that they have to be repeated, the one who is untidy in his clothes and personal appearance, and the one who is unpunctual in coming or early in going, and then say to what extent they must be capable and energetic to make up for these faults. There is another man in the office who possesses all your good qualities, and those you lack besides, and he will leave you far behind in the race for promotion. He has no noughts amongst the factors that his employers look for when they wish to bestow any office of responsibility or trust upon one of their staff.

(Another of these special articles will appear on this page next Monday.)

FREE FOR SELLING 12 BEAUTIFUL XMAS CARDS AT 1d. EACH.

As an advertisement we give every reader of this paper a splendid present absolutely FREE simply for selling 12 Xmas and New Year cards at 1d. each. (Gold Mounted, Embossed, Folders, Glossy, etc.). Our new Prize List contains hundreds of different free gifts for everyone, including Ladies' and Gent's Gold and Silver Watches, Ostrich Feathers, Cycles, Telescopes, Chains, Rings, Accordeons, Cinemas, Gramophones, Air Guns, Engines, Toys, etc., etc. All you need do is to send us your Name and Address (a postcard will do) and we will send you a selection of lovely cards to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold send the money obtained and we will immediately forward gift chosen according to the Grand List we send you. Start Early.



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