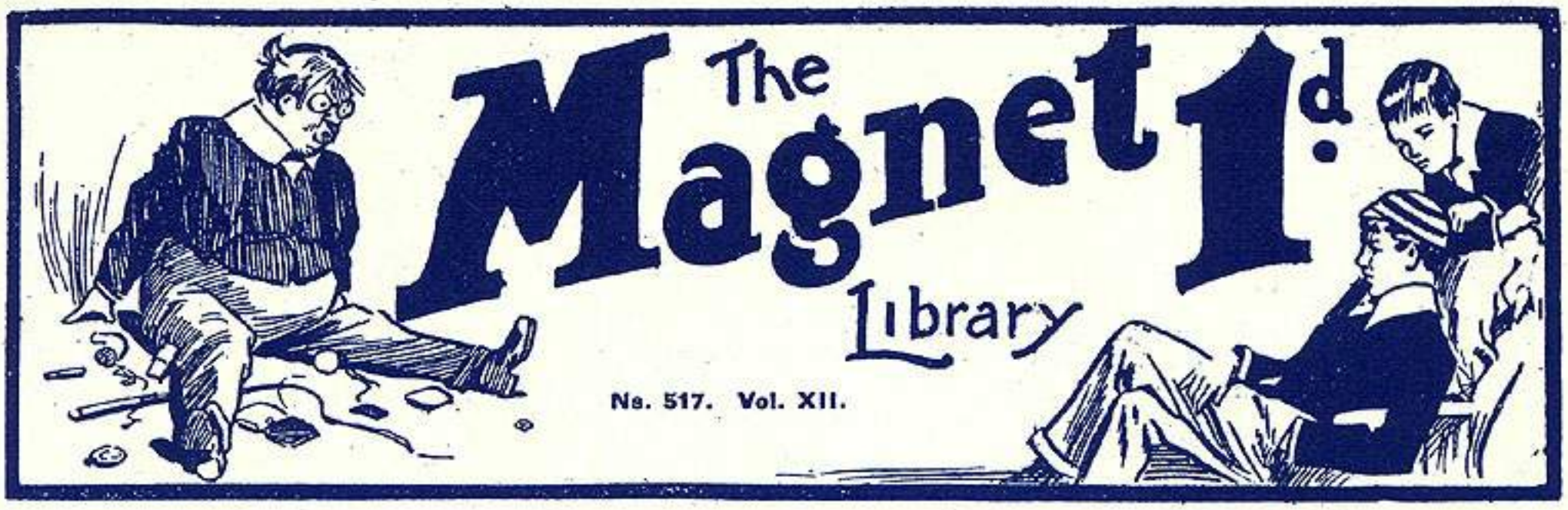
IN ANOTHER'S PLACE!



SIR HILTON IN THE WARS!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

IN ANOTHER'S PLACE!

By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Swept Out to Sea!

"SMITHY!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, did not stop or look round.

He was striding at a great rate down the cliff path towards the shingly beach, where the fishing-boats were drawn up.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, had been for a ramble on the cliffs that afternoon, and they were resting before starting back to Greyfriars, when they sighted the Bounder.

"Something's up with Smithy!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Looks like it," agreed Wharton. "Where the dickens is he going to? Can't be going for a sail."

"Silly ass if he does!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Look at the sky!"

"The stormfulness will be terrific soon," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of the head.

Harry Wharton jumped up from the ledge of the rock he was seated on.

"By Jove, he is, though! Smithy!" He put his hands to his mouth, and shouted. "Smithy! Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder looked round at last. The path he was following ran below the rocks where the juniors were resting. He looked up, and gave the Co. a nod.

"Hallo!"

"You're not going out?" called out Wharton.

"Yes."

"It's not safe! There's a blow coming on."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove sharply. "You'll get drowned, you duffer!"

"The drownfulness will be great, my esteemed Smithy!"

"Come back to tea with us!" said Nugent.

"Can't!"

"Why can't you?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I'm supposed to be detained," said the Bounder coolly. "I spotted Quelchy on the cliffs five minutes ago. I don't know whether he's looking for me. I'm going to give him a wide berth, in any case."

"No need to make it as wide as from this world to the next," grinned Bob Cherry. "That's what you'll do if you go out on the bay this afternoon."

"Oh, I can manage a boat!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Ta-ta!" said the Bounder lightly.

And he strode on his way.

"Oh, the silly ass!" exclaimed Wharton, in mingled alarm and exasperation. "He's simply asking to be drowned if he goes on the water now."

"Let's stop him," suggested Bob Cherry. "Can't see a reckless ass drowned under our eyes!"

"Good! Come on!"

There was reason for the juniors' alarm. The sky was growing deeply overcast, and the wind was sweeping round the great Shoulder with a moaning sound. On the half-hidden rocks, at the base of the Shoulder, the sea broke in lines of foam, with a low, deep murmur, gradually swelling to a roar.

But the Bounder was evidently in one of his perverse and reckless moods. He had a nerve of iron, and the thought of danger rather pleased than daunted him. His own boat was on the sands, and he ran it lightly down to the crisping water. Smithy had planned a sail earlier in that afternoon, when he had been detained by his Form-master, and it was just like Smithy to break detention and go on his sail all the same.

Harry Wharton & Co. scrambled down the rocks to the lower path, rather bumping themselves in the process, and ran down to the sands.

But the boat was in the water, and the Bounder had stepped the little mast and shaken out the sail.

He waved his hand, and grinned at the juniors as the boat glided out of the cove.

"Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come back, you ass!"

"Look out!" shouted Wharton.

A sudden whirl of wind caught the sail, and the boat spun away, reeling so far to starboard that the juniors, with thumping hearts, watched for it to go gunwale under.

But it righted, and swept out seaward.

They could still see the Bounder's face. The smile had left it, and it had become suddenly white and tense.

The reckless fellow realised his peril at that moment.

That sudden gust had been a warning, and Vernon-Smith, his hand like iron on the sheets, made an attempt to tack back to the beach.

But it was in vain.

Heeling over under the wind, the boat shot away into the heart of the bay, and in a few minutes was almost indistinguishable to the anxious eyes of the Famous Five on shore.

Wharton drew a quick, deep breath.

"Oh, the duffer!" he almost groaned. "He's done it now!"

"He'll be drowned!" muttered Frank Nugent.

"And we can't help him!"

The juniors watched tensely.

They could do nothing to help the reckless Bounder. If they had dragged down one of the fishing-boats and launched it they could never have got near him. He was almost invisible already, as the heeling boat danced away over the bay.

Wharton's face was white.

"He can't get back," he said, in a low voice. "He'll be carried away to sea! He may run in further along the coast."

"Oh, the ass!" muttered Nugent.

The sky was growing darker, and there was a rumble of thunder in the distance. A few spots of rain fell on the juniors as they watched the sea.

"Wharton!"

Harry Wharton spun round at the deep voice of his Form-master. Mr. Quelch had come down the sand.

"Yes, sir?" said Harry mechanically.

"Have you seen Vernon-Smith?"

"Vernon-Smith, sir?" stammered Wharton.

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "He was detained this afternoon, and I find that he has left the Form-room and gone out of gates. I learned that he had arranged a sail on the bay this afternoon, and so——" The Remove-master paused abruptly. "Surely, it is not possible that he has gone in this weather?"

"He—he's gone, sir!"

"Good heavens!"

All the anger faded out of Mr. Quelch's face now. Alarm and anxiety took its place. He strained his eyes seaward.

"Is that——"

"That's his boat, sir!"

It was the last glimpse of the heeling craft. Then it vanished into misty distance, even as Wharton spoke.

"The utterly reckless boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in great distress. "He will be drowned! Good heavens!"

They strained their eyes after the boat long after it had vanished from sight. The rain was falling more heavily now. Mr. Quelch's face was pale and set. He spoke at last.

"You boys may return to Greyfriars. I shall give the alarm at the coastguard-station, and see if anything can be done. Surely, Wharton, you could see that there was danger for that reckless lad, and could have stopped him!"

"We tried to, sir! He was too quick for us!"

"Very well—very well! You may go back!"

Mr. Quelch hurried away, and the five juniors took their way home to Greyfriars with grim and clouded faces. Deep in their hearts was the conviction that they would never see the Bounder again—till the sea gave up its dead!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Under the Shadow!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter greeted the Famous Five as they came into the School House, splashed with rain, with overcast faces.

"You do look a cheery crowd!" grinned Bunter. "I say, what's happened? Have you been on old Popper's island?"

"No, ass!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Old Popper's been here this afternoon," rattled Bunter cheerfully. "He was in a rare wax. Smithy was on his island in the river on Saturday afternoon, and the blessed old codger came to jaw the Head about it. Smithy was detained for the afternoon, as well as two on each hand."

"So it was Sir Hilton Popper who got Smithy detained?" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Yes. He jawed the Head. I heard

him going it!" chuckled Bunter. "I happened to stop outside the door to tie my shoelace."

"The old hunks!" growled Bob Cherry savagely. "I wonder how he'll like it when he hears that he's the cause of Smithy being drowned?"

"Well, he wasn't exactly the cause," said Johnny Bull. "Smithy wasn't bound to break detention."

"It wasn't fair to detain him for going on the island. It's public land, and old Popper is a land-hog!" snorted Cherry. "The Head is too easy-going by half! I suppose he can't row with Popper now the old Hun has joined the Governing Board again. All the same——"

Billy Bunter's litle round eyes had opened like saucers behind his big spectacles.

"Smithy drowned?" he ejaculated.

"He's gone out on the bay, and been carried out to sea!" snapped Bob.

"Oh, crumbs! Poor old Smithy!"

Harry Wharton & Co. went up to change their wet jackets. Billy Bunter rushed into the Common-room, whither the rain had driven most of the juniors. He had news to tell—startling news—and William George Bunter dearly loved to be the bearer of startling news.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter fairly gasped. "I say——"

"Hallo! What are you burbling about?" asked Squiff.

"Smithy's drowned!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"Drowned!" yelled Bunter.

"Smithy drowned?" shouted Peter Todd. "What are you driving at, you fathead?"

"Gammon!" snapped Bolsover major.

"How could he be drowned, you owl?" exclaimed Dick Rake. "He's detained in the Form-room at this blessed minute!"

"He cleared off and went out on the bay, and he's drowned!" gasped Bunter breathlessly. Wharton says so."

"Great Scott! Where's Wharton?" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Gone up to the dorm to change. I say, rather rotten of Wharton to let poor old Smithy drown, wasn't it? I should have gone in and fished him out!"

"Oh, shut up, you owl!" growled Peter Todd.

"I say, you fellows——"

But the fellows did not stay to listen to Bunter. There was a rush out of the room, and the Removites crowded up to their dormitory. They wanted information from a more reliable source than Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not finished changing when the crowd burst in, with a vociferation of inquiries.

"Wharton! Is it true?"

"Where's Smithy?"

"Has anything happened to Smithy?"

"Bunter says——"

"I say, Wharton——"

"Give him a chance to speak!" rapped out Squiff. "Now, then, Wharton!"

"I'm afraid it's so," said Harry huskily. "He's certainly carried out to sea in a sailing-boat, and I don't believe any boat could live in the blow that's come on. I hope he'll pull through."

"Smithy's a good sailorman," said Bob Cherry hopefully. "If any fellow could get out of it, Smithy could."

"Poor old Smithy!"

"I say, you fellows, wasn't it rather rotten of Wharton to let him drown?" chimed in Bunter. "I should have jumped in for him!"

"You fat fool!" exclaimed Wharton. "He wasn't in the water! He was in a boat, and a hundred yards away when I got to the beach."

"I should have gone in for him!" repeated Bunter. "I really think, Wharton, that you might have—— Yaroooh! Leggo my ear, Peter Todd, you rotter!"

But Peter Todd led the Owl of the Remove out of the dormitory by the ear, and by an application of his boot persuaded him to depart. Bunter's observations were not wanted.

The Famous Five came down to tea in Study No. 1. But at the tea-table they only looked at one another miserably. Even Bob Cherry's healthy appetite had deserted him for the time.

"Poor old Smithy!" mumbled Bob. "He was a good sort!"

He shivered a little as he spoke. Unconsciously he had spoken in the past tense. He hoped, but he knew there was little hope.

"Poor old chap!" Wharton rose from the table. "I—I don't want any tea! I—I think it would choke me."

"The samefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh huskily. "Poor old Smithy!"

"And we'd got to be such jolly good pals, too!" said Nugent.

"Oh, it's rotten!"

The door opened, and Billy Bunter blinked in. Bunter did not seem to be troubled by over-much grief. He was looking excited, but certainly not heart-broken.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, clear off, Bunter!" said Bob irritably.

"That's all very well, Bob Cherry. But—as Smithy's best pal——"

"What?"

"I was Smithy's best pal, and you know it. I feel this more than you do, naturally. Some fellows have tender feelings," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I'm going to have Smithy's bike, to keep in remembrance of him. I'm sure he would have liked me to have it."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I believe Skinner's got some idea of bagging that bike if Smithy's pater doesn't want it, and of course he doesn't," said Bunter. "I think you fellows ought to back me up. Smithy never liked Skinner——"

"You horrid fat porpoise——"

"Oh, really, Wharton! As Smithy's pal, I think I ought to have the bike. You back me up, and speak to old Smith when he comes down about it. He's sure to come down as his son's drowned, you know. You can mention that I was Smithy's dearest chum, and that Smithy would have liked me to have it, and—— Yaroooooop!"

Bunter was hurled into the passage at that point. He fled with a wild howl, but a little later his voice was heard in Study No. 4, arguing with Skinner. Harry Wharton & Co., in the lowest possible spirits, went down to the school door to wait for Mr. Quelch to come in, with a faint hope that he might bring good news.

Their hearts were heavy. Time had been when they had been on the worst of terms with the Bounder of Greyfriars, but that time was over. Even when Smithy had fallen back once more into his old shady ways Wharton had never lost his friendship for him. And Smithy had pulled out again, and shown that he could stick to the path of honour with as much determination as he had formerly shown in treading the downward path. There were sterling qualities in Smithy—some evil in his nature, but much good. He could be generous and loyal, and he had always been without fear. It came as a shock to the juniors to realise how much they would miss him. What a fearful blank his loss would leave in the old school!

Wharton, little as he was accustomed to wearing his heart upon his sleeve, could not keep back the misery in his face. He did not speak. He leaned on the door, his handsome face white and set. There was a step at last in the dusk of the quadrangle, and Mr. Quelch came in, tired and harassed. Then Wharton started forward.

"Is there any news, sir?"

The Form-master glanced with sympathy at the boy's tense face.

"I am sorry—no!" he said. "I fear very much that Vernon-Smith has lost his life. We must still hope for the best, however, my boy."

He passed on to the Head's study. Five minutes later a telegram was on its way to Vernon-Smith's father in London. And when the Greyfriars follows knew that, they knew that hope was little or none, and a deep and sombre shadow seemed to settle on the old school.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
From the Jaws of Death!

RAIN and lashing spray dashed into the pale, set face of the Bounder as he half-crouched in the heeling, whirling boat.

Land had vanished from sight in the mist and the rain, but Vernon-Smith knew that he was near the rocks, though he could not see them.

The Bounder was still cool.

The shadow of death was upon him. He knew that the chances were a thousand to one that he would never emerge from that wild adventure alive. The sudden squall was driving the sea to fury, and the boat danced on the wild waters like a cockleshell. The sail had blown to ribbons. The Bounder was wet to the skin with the rain and the foam that broke over the boat.

Yet he still kept his presence of mind. He was looking grim death in the face, but it did not daunt him.

The sail blew out in cracking strips. As well as he could the Bounder kept the boat's nose before the wind. It rode the waves like a cork, and when it plunged into the trough of the sea mountainous walls of green waters seemed curling over to swamp him—yet still the boat lived through! At every moment, almost, he expected the little craft to capsize; but his luck held good.

His face was hard and grim, but quite collected. He had brought this upon himself, and he had the nerve to see it through, whatever the end might be.

And it had come from trifling causes. He had trespassed on Sir Hilton Popper's island in the river, and the baronet had complained to his Form-master, and Mr. Quelch had detained him for the half-holiday as a punishment. That was all. He had recklessly broken detention, and gone out in his boat to keep out of Mr. Quelch's way, thinking only of that, and not of the lowering sky and the threatening murmur of the sea. And danger had descended upon him so suddenly that there had been no chance of return. In the midst of life we are in death. Only a short hour before he had been grinding dull Latin in the Form-room at Greyfriars, and now——

He set his teeth, and faced it. The boat still lived in the turbid waters, but even if it did not capsize, he was near the rocks, and he knew at any moment there might come a grinding crash—and the end!

Under the black storm-clouds dimness was on the unresting sea, though it was yet early in the afternoon. Once or twice, as the mist broke, he caught a glimpse of looming grey cliffs; but they vanished again. Once a leaping wave carried him over a sunken ridge, and he felt a grind beneath as the keel scraped, and knew that he had been within an

ace of disaster. Still the boat fled on before the wind, and still the leaping billows spared it.

The rainy mist cleared again. The Bounder's haggard glance swept round. High against the steely sky a great shadow loomed—a gigantic cliff that came down to the water almost like the wall of a house. The water whirled him by, and he could have tossed a stone from the boat to the cliff, against which the surf was breaking in lines of white.

Still his boat obeyed his hand, steady and strong in this moment of dire peril. Ahead of him was broken water—ridge upon ridge of foam that curled and broke, and he knew that as soon as he reached it the end would come. And to turn from his course was impossible without being instantly capsized. The Bounder's face grew slightly paler, a grim, bitter smile curled his lip. Then suddenly, eerily, through the howl of the wind he heard a voice calling.

He started, wondering if he was dreaming. On the grey waters there was no craft but his own; landward there was only the towering cliff, massive and solid to the eye, though broken by ledges and crevasses. Yet there was a voice calling—a human voice that mingled with the wind like the voice of a phantom riding the storm!

His haggard eyes sought the cliff. Rain and mist blinded him. But still he could hear. Were his senses leaving him? From the rainy mist came the voice, shouting—a boyish voice, but deep and strong.

"Starboard, starboard! This way! This way!"

He caught sight of the one who shouted at last. A figure was scrambling down the face of the cliff, where, so far as the eye could tell, there was no footing for a seagull. At the foot of the cliff, ahead of him, a flat ledge of rock rose above the water, with waves breaking over it. A final leap of the daring climber landed him there, and he stood, with water breaking about his knees, waving his hand to the schoolboy in the boat.

The Bounder knew the spot now. The great rock towering against the sky was the Hawkscliff, ten miles from Greyfriars. The boy on the half-sunken ledge was shouting, but the wind carried away his voice. But his gestures were enough, and the Bounder made an attempt to obey. The boat spun past the ledge, where it dipped abruptly into the sea. It was impossible to stop. But the half minute in which it was abreast of the ledge was enough for the stranger. With the spring of a deer he cleared the intervening water and crashed into the boat, sending it rocking violently away.

He fell on his knees, but was up again in a second. The Bounder gazed at him, dazed, bewildered. He saw a lad of about his own age, clad roughly, with curly hair blowing out in the fierce wind, and a bronzed face—a well-built, sturdy-looking lad, active and lithe as a panther.

He bent towards the Bounder, shouting to make his voice heard in the wind:

"I can save you! Steer as I tell you!"

The Greyfriars junior gasped and nodded. The new-comer grasped the lashing sheets. The rag of a sail still drew. He rapped out orders in a quick staccato, and Vernon-Smith mechanically did as he was directed.

To his amazement the boat glided through yawning rocks by unseen channels, eluding a hundred disasters as if by magic. It floated under the shadow of the great cliff, in calmer water now, the savage force of the sea barred off by the half-sunken ledge.

"Can you swim?"

"Yes!" panted the Bounder.

"Good! You cannot save the boat; but——"

Vernon-Smith almost laughed.

"Never mind the boat! Can we save our lives?"

"Ay, ay!"

The boat rocked amid the teeth of the reefs. It seemed a miracle to the Bounder that it did not crash and sink. But he saw at last a shelving beach at the foot of the great cliff, where the water broke with a sound like thunder. The stranger nodded his head towards the spot.

"Ready?" he said.

"Go ahead!" The Bounder set his teeth. "I'm ready!"

A minute more and the boat was in the surf, carried landward amid a roaring mass of foam and tortured water. What happened next the Greyfriars junior hardly knew. There was a crash, and the boat had vanished from under him. He was swimming strongly, but blindly—blinded by water and foam, and deafened by the incessant roar. He felt a strong grasp upon him as his senses reeled—a strong grasp that held him from death—and then he vaguely knew that he was being dragged up shifting sand, with hungry waters thundering behind.

He struggled against the dizziness that overcame him; he stared round him with half-blinded eyes. He was on the sands. The white surf was breaking only a few yards from him, the water crept to his feet as he lay; but he was out of danger. Beside him, on the drenched sand, lay his rescuer, motionless. But he moved as the Bounder moved, and sat up, panting.

"Pretty close!" he muttered.

The Bounder struggled for breath.

"You've saved me!" he gasped.

The other's wet, white face broke into a smile.

"Yes. But it was a near thing for both of us."

The Bounder shivered.

"It was a miracle! I don't know how you did it! Why did you risk it?"

"To save you, I suppose."

"You must know this coast jolly well."

"Every foot of it. I was brought up by the Hawkscliff."

He rose limply to his feet. Strong as he evidently was, he had been exhausted by that last fight for life. He stood for some minutes breathing hard, unheeding the wind and rain that lashed upon him. And the Bounder lay resting, breathing deep, conscious of utter fatigue, but more keenly conscious still of the fact that he was saved, that this stranger—no older than himself—had snatched him from the very jaws of death!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff!

VERNON-SMITH sat up at last, and the seafaring lad looked down on him, with a smile.

"We're not out of the woods yet," he said. "Can you climb now?"

"I'm nearly done. Any hurry?"

"The tide's coming in, that's all."

"Oh!" said the Bounder. "I suppose there's a path?"

The other shook his head.

"This bit of beach is shut in by the cliffs. It's under water at high tide. We've got a stiff climb to get out of it, and not much time to spare. I can help you."

He bent, and helped the Greyfriars junior to his feet. The Bounder staggered, and leaned heavily upon him.

"I'm pretty nearly done," he muttered. "I'll do my best!"

"I shall carry you if you give in."

"Could you?"

"Easily!"

"My hat!" said the Bounder. He scanned his new acquaintance very curiously. "I sha'n't forget this—what you did! Will you tell me who you are? My name's Vernon-Smith."

"Mine's Tom Redwing."

"You're a sailor?"

"My father was a sailor." The boy's face clouded. "He went down two years ago—submarined."

"And you——"

"I'm nobody!"

He smiled as he spoke, but there was a tone of bitterness in his voice.

"But you've got relations?"

"None!"

"Hard lines!" muttered the Bounder. "Look here, Redwing! You've saved my life. But for you I should be five fathoms deep at this minute. Look here! I'm going to do what I can in return. My father's a millionaire, and he will do anything I ask him. You've made a friend for life to-day!"

Redwing looked at him.

"I want nothing," he said. "I've got two hands, and know how to use them. I've earned my bread since my father went down, and when I'm a little older I'm going to sea. Thank you, all the same."

"But—but you've got to let me stand by you!" exclaimed the Bounder. "You don't want to go to sea—a kid like you! You should be going to school."

"I've had my schooling."

"But——"

Redwing laughed.

"You're rich," he said. "My folk are different from yours. People in my station don't stick at school till they're fifteen. Goodness knows, I'd like it—what I've always wanted! Goodness knows, I've wanted it bad enough, but it's not for the likes of me."

"It is, if you choose," said Vernon-Smith. "Do you think I'm an ungrateful brute? You know what you've done for me."

"That's nothing! I would have done it for anybody. And you're not the first fellow I've fished out of the water, by four or five."

"Likely enough! But you had about a thousand chances to one of being drowned when you jumped for my boat."

"A sailorman takes chances like that, and I'm going to be a sailorman. But enough said! Let's start! I can help you."

"I'm a bit better now," said the Bounder. "I can walk. Hallo! What's that?"

He stooped and picked up a little volume that lay on the wet sand. He stared at it blankly. It was a pocket Horace, with a well-worn cover and well-thumbed leaves. It did not belong to him, and it was amazing if it belonged to the sunburnt, roughly-clad boy at his side.

"Is this yours?" asked the Bounder.

"Yes. I dropped it when I fell, I suppose! Thanks!"

"You study Latin?" the Bounder exclaimed, in wonder.

Redwing flushed.

"Why not? Do you think it's silly?"

"Of course I don't! But we grind that stuff at school, and we're not so jolly keen on it."

Redwing laughed.

"You get it, and don't like it! I like it, and don't get it!" he said. "Things often happen like that. I suppose you go to an expensive school. I should think so, by the way you're dressed."

"Well, yes."

"And I'm a sailor's son, left on my beam ends," said Redwing lightly. "And I grind over this stuff by candle-light in a little cabin; and you can study it as

The return of the Bounder! (*See Chapter 5.*)

much as you like, and don't want it! It's queer. You'd laugh at the way I pronounce the Latin, I expect, but I can read it quite easily." He slipped the little book into his pocket. "Come on! You mustn't rest any longer, or we sha'n't get clear of the tide."

He grasped the junior's arm, and helped him along. It was a grim climb by steep, rocky paths, and the Bounder wondered that his companion could find the way, where he himself could see no trace of a path. There was, in fact, no path; it was a climb over rough rocks, with little foothold. Here and there Redwing dragged his companion bodily up steep ascents, and lowered him over dizzy ledges. Behind them the surf roared, and the Bounder, looking back, saw that the spot where they had landed was covered with water.

His strength was spent, and he hung more and more heavily upon Redwing's arm. Redwing took him bodily into his grasp at last, and carried him, heedless of the Bounder's muttered protest.

They came at last beyond the cliffs, and Redwing halted upon a road. He laid the Greyfriars junior there by the roadside.

Then he leaned on a rock, breathing deep. Even his strong frame had been put to a severe test.

"All right now?" asked Vernon-Smith faintly.

"Ay, ay!"

"Good!"

"I'll leave you here for a bit," said Redwing. "There's an inn a mile from here, where a horse and trap can be got. Have you the money to pay for it to take you home?"

The Bounder smiled.

"Oh, yes!"

"Then I'll go for it, and it can pick you up here."

Redwing disappeared into the thickening dusk. Vernon-Smith sat and rested, and when his strength had a little returned, he rose and moved about, to keep off the chill of his wet clothes.

Darkness had long fallen when there was a sound of wheels on the hilly road. A trap came rattling along, with Redwing seated beside the driver. It halted, and Redwing jumped down and helped Vernon-Smith into the trap.

"Good-bye!" he said; and, after a moment's hesitation, he held out a brown hand.

The schoolboy grasped his hand hard.

"Good-bye, Redwing! I shall see you again!"

"Not likely."

"I shall come and see you."

Redwing smiled.

"I'm leaving Hawkscliff in the morning," he said. "I was having my last ramble over the old cliff when I sighted you this afternoon. I've got a job at a distance. Cut off now, or you'll get a chill! There's a rug in the trap. Put it round you."

He moved back, but the Bounder bent down, his face very earnest.

"Redwing, I tell you I'm going to stand by you! My father's rich, and he will do anything I want. You've got to let me see you through!"

"Can't be done!"

"Why not?"

"I didn't do what I've done for money. I don't want rewarding."

"I don't mean that. But——"

"Good-bye!" said Redwing.

He turned and strode away, and the darkness swallowed him up. Vernon-Smith rose in the trap and called after him. But the strange lad did not return, and he vanished from sight.

Vernon Smith's face clouded.

He was grateful, and he wanted to recompense the lad who had saved his life. But Redwing had taken the offer as the offer of a reward for his services, and Vernon-Smith realised that he was wounded. Smithy had not meant that: but, after all, that was what it would have come to.

The driver was looking at him.

"Where am I to drive you, sir?" he asked at last, interrupting the Bounder's troubled thoughts.

The junior sat down again, and pulled the rug round him. He was shivering.

"Do you know Greyfriars School?"

The man shook his head.

"Drive to Courtfield, then, and I'll direct you from there."

"Right you are, sir!"

And the trap rattled away in the winter wind and darkness.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The Bounder's Return!

HARRY WHARTON moved restlessly about his study.

Frank Nugent was working at his prep in a desultory way.

Wharton had not given a thought to it. He could not. The shadow of the Bounder's terrible fate hung over his mind and his heart.

It was getting near bed-time for the juniors when there was the sound of a snorting car below.

"Smithy's pater!" said Nugent, looking up.

Wharton nodded.

The two juniors left the study and went downstairs as Mr. Vernon-Smith strode into the hall. The stout, somewhat hard-featured millionaire was not looking as when the juniors had last seen him. The terrible news of his son had hit him hard.

People who knew Samuel Vernon-Smith would hardly have expected him to show much tenderness to anyone. He was reputed as hard as steel. But there was one tender spot in Mr. Vernon-Smith's heart, and his son filled it. Herbert Vernon-Smith was all in all to the hard-fisted millionaire. He indulged him without limit—indeed, many of the Bounder's old, reckless ways had been due to that unlimited indulgence.

Now the millionaire's hard face was pale, his eyes looked heavy, and his thick underlip was not steady. His friends in the City would hardly have known him at that moment.

Smithy's pater was not the kind of man for whom Harry Wharton could feel much respect, but at that moment he respected him more than ever before. In the midst of his piled-up millions the great financier had lost all that made his great accumulation of wealth of value to him—or so he believed.

"Is there any news of my son?" he exclaimed, addressing nobody in particular.

"None yet, sir," said Wharton.

Trotter showed the visitor into the Head's study. Mr. Quelch was there, and both the masters looked disturbed and troubled.

"My son?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he entered.

"I am sorry—no news yet," said Dr. Locke, in a low voice.

"Please tell me what has happened."

The millionaire sank limply into a chair.

He listened in silence.

"There is still a faint hope," said Mr. Quelch, when the Head ceased to speak. "It is barely possible——"

"There is no hope!" said the millionaire, in a heavy, dull voice. "How could he be saved? My poor boy!"

His voice broke.

"It is possible that we may have news in the morning, Mr. Vernon-Smith," said the Head. "Doubtless you would prefer to remain here to-night?"

"I should, certainly!"

"You will be more than welcome, my dear sir. I hope and trust that we may receive good news——"

"At least, the body will be recovered," said Mr. Vernon-Smith quietly. "My poor boy!"

There was a heavy silence in the study. The millionaire was seeking to recover his self-control. From the dusky quadrangle there came the sound of wheels, and Mr. Quelch started.

"Who can that be at this hour?"

The millionaire started to his feet.

"News, perhaps!" he muttered huskily.

There were voices in the dusky quad—swelling to a roar. Loud and clear came a name shouted by many voices.

"Smithy!"

"The Bounder!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "Is it possible? Mr. Vernon-Smith ——"

The millionaire had rushed to the door, torn it open, and dashed from the study.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head.

Outside in the quad there was still a roar. Mr. Vernon-Smith, breathless, stared out of the School House into the gloom. A trap had halted on the drive. It was surrounded by juniors.

Harry Wharton had been the first to reach it. The captain of the Remove had run out into the quad at the sound of wheels, hoping for news. And as his eyes fell on the trap, he saw—pale, worn, wrapped in a rug, but alive—Herbert Vernon-Smith!

The shock was almost too much for Wharton. He staggered, as he panted:

"Smithy!"

"Safe and sound!" said the Bounder.

"Smithy!"

Wharton could say no more as he stood by the trap, staring at the junior who had returned from death.

His voice broke.

Vernon-Smith looked down at him curiously, his own hard face softening strangely as he gazed at Wharton's quivering face.

"Wharton, old chap," he murmured, "I—I didn't think you'd care much about it!"

Wharton made an effort to pull himself together. He was ashamed of the emotion he had shown, though there was no cause for shame.

"Smithy, it's really you? We—we thought——"

"Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Smithy!"

"Hurrah!"

"My son!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith. He ran down the steps to the trap. "Herbert!"

"Hallo, pater! You here?"

"Herbert! Alive and well!" panted the millionaire. "Heaven be thanked! My boy—my boy!"

"Right as rain, dad!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith helped him from the trap. The Bounder tottered a little as he went into the House, leaning heavily on his father's arm.

"This means sanny for me, dad!" he muttered. "I—I say, I didn't know you'd be here! I suppose they thought ——"

"Dr. Locke telegraphed to me. You are ill, Herbert!"

"I—I'm a bit seedy, dad. I've been through it, you know. A chap got me out—a splendid chap!"

Mr. Quelch hurried up.

"Vernon-Smith——"

"Here I am, sir. Sorry to be so late home," said the Bounder, with a touch of his old manner. "Sorry I broke detention this afternoon, sir. But—but you'll have to put off licking me. I'm—seedy——"

His father's arm caught him. Mr. Quelch looked anxiously at his white face.

"He must be taken into sanatorium at once!" he said. "Wharton—Cherry!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I will help him," said the millionaire quietly.

He lifted his son in his arms. Five minutes later Vernon-Smith was in bed in the school sanatorium, and the doctor—telephoned for by the Head—was speeding to Greyfriars. Even the iron constitution of the Bounder had given way at last, and he was ill—very ill. And the Greyfriars fellows, when they went to their dormitories, learned that he was ill, and would be ill perhaps for weeks; but his life was not in danger, and the rest mattered little.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Sir Hilton's Ward!

"OLD Popper, by gum!"

Bob Cherry uttered that exclamation on the following day.

Morning lessons were over, and the Remove fellows were out in the quadrangle, when the tall, angular figure of Sir Hilton Popper came striding in at the gates.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave him grim looks.

It was the baronet's querulous complaints of Vernon-Smith that had caused what was very nearly a tragedy the previous day. True, the Bounder's headstrong wilfulness had been the main cause; but the juniors laid more blame upon Sir Hilton Popper than the Bounder.

"Give him a groan!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Shush!" said Harry. "Can't groan at a governor of the school!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"He ought to be jolly well mobbed!" growled Bob Cherry. "Like his cheek to come here to-day, with Smithy in sanny, too; laid up for weeks, perhaps!"

"Delirious, too," said Nugent. "I hear he's been babbling about the surf, and the reefs, and some chap who pulled him out. Somebody seems to have saved him, somehow. But he hasn't been able to spin the yarn yet. All old Popper's fault, blow him!"

"Wouldn't I like to bump the blessed old Hun!" growled Johnny Bull.

Unheeding the juniors, Sir Hilton Popper strode across the quad and passed into the School House.

"Trouble for somebody else now," said Squiff, joining the Famous Five. "I wonder who's going to get it now? I'm getting fed up with old Popper!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

Peter Todd joined the group.

"More snarls from old Popper!" he remarked. "Do you fellows happen to know that Gosling has been whitewashing the top box-room?"

"What about it?"

"He left about half a pailful of whitewash there when he knocked off."

"What the dickens does that matter?"

"Lots! If you look up you'll see that there's a balcony over this cheery old porch, and a chap could get out on it from the window in the Remove passage—with a pail of whitewash."

"You—you ass!"

"Old Popper's come to complain of somebody," argued Peter. "Why shouldn't he get something back? He'd never see who did it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And think what a joyful surprise it would be for him to get a pail of whitewash on his napper when he comes out after seeing the Head."

"You dangerous maniac!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You'd be flogged, or sacked!"

"Well, I shouldn't call on the Head and explain that I had done it. Mum's the word, you fellows!"

"Toddy, you ass——"

"Toddy, you chump——"

"Toddy——"

But Peter Todd, unheeding, vanished into the House and up the staircase. The humorous Peter had evidently made up his mind. The Famous Five simply gasped. They were not respecters of persons, as a rule; but whitewashing a governor of the school was really the "outside edge," as Bob Cherry remarked.

Meanwhile, the baronet had been shown into the Head's study. Dr. Locke greeted him politely, but with a slight compression of the lips. The fussy baronet was one of the Head's perennial worries.

"Good-morning, sir! You expected me?"

"Pray be seated. Yes, as you telephoned that you intended to call, naturally, I expected you," said the Head. "I sincerely trust that this does not mean that any boy of this school has given cause for complaint again?"

"Eh? Not at all. That is to say, not this time!"

Dr. Locke looked quite relieved. He had taken it for granted that he had to listen to another complaint from the fussy old gentleman.

"It is quite a different matter," said the baronet, jamming his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye. "Quite different!"

"I am glad to hear it."

"It concerns a boy whom I wish to place at Greyfriars, Dr. Locke."

"Oh!" said the Head. "A nephew, no doubt——"

"No relation at all. A boy named Clavering!" snapped Sir Hilton. "This boy has been placed in my charge, without my consent being asked. I do not care to repudiate the charge. That is all."

"Indeed!" said the Head, in astonishment.

"I had better explain the circumstances," said Sir Hilton, tugging at his white moustache. The baronet was in an irritable temper, and he hardly took the trouble to hide it. "This boy Clavering is the grandson of an old friend—or, rather, acquaintance—of my 'Varsity days. When the war broke out, Oswald Clavering, my friend's son, was in South America. He was still a comparatively young man, and held a very handsome appointment in the nitrate fields. I wrote to him. I felt it my duty to point out to him that, as he was of military age, it was his duty to return to England and apply for a commission."

The Head was silent.

He was already aware that Sir Hilton was a fussy old fellow who never could mind his own business. It did not even occur to Sir Hilton, apparently, that he might have left Mr. Clavering to settle that delicate matter for himself without unasked advice.

"Clavering had shown no sign of returning," said Sir Hilton. "I had looked upon him as my friend, for his father's sake, and I was naturally irritated and ashamed."

"Naturally?" murmured the Head.

"Naturally!" repeated the baronet sharply. "I presume, Dr. Locke, that you concur in my views?"

"Really, Sir Hilton, it is not necessary for me to form an opinion on the matter, as it does not concern me in any way."

"Oh, quite so—quite so! I am bound to give you these particulars, however, as you must understand how matters stand, and you will see that I am not to be troubled in any way with the boy I shall send here."

"Eh?"

"Clavering replied to my letter. His reply was in a somewhat offended tone—goodness knows why! He informed me that he was aware of what was his duty, but he was a poor man, with nothing but his South American appointment to

stand between his boy and beggary. He had one son; his wife was dead. This boy was with him in Chili. He expressed himself as eager to join up in the defence of his country, but he dared not leave his boy to the chances of the world, poor and unprotected. Huh!"

"A very unfortunate position," remarked the Head, inwardly wondering why Sir Hilton was telling him the story.

"Eh? Oh, yes, yes! But duty is duty, I presume?" snapped Sir Hilton. "I wrote him a stiff letter then—a very stiff letter. I told him that he knew his duty, and that if he fell in his country's cause his friends would undoubtedly see that his boy came to no want. Somewhat to my surprise, he wrote me a warm letter of thanks, announcing that he was sailing for England immediately."

Sir Hilton jammed in his eyeglass again.

"Well, sir, to cut a long story short, Oswald Clavering arrived in London, obtained a commission, and went to the Front. He wrote me from there. I had no opportunity of meeting him, as it happened. Indeed, I may as well speak plainly, I had no desire to meet a man who had been so slow to answer his country's call. He told me that his boy was placed with a distant relative, a parson somewhere in Kent. He was able to support him from his pay. It appears that in giving up his appointment in Chili he had given up everything. His savings had been expended in the journey home and on his outfit. He stated that if he lived his boy would do very well. The lad was keen to join the Army when he was old enough, and Clavering hoped to get him entered at Sandhurst at the proper time. But if he fell—so he went on—he thanked me once again for my assurance that his friends would look after his boy."

Sir Hilton gave an indignant snort.

"You perceive, Dr. Locke, that he had read into my letter a meaning I was far from intending. I had spoken in a very general way. Oswald Clavering concluded that I myself was the friend I alluded to—that I was prepared to take charge of his son, if anything happened to him in Flanders."

"Surely, sir, he could conclude nothing else?" exclaimed the Head, in surprise.

Grunt!

"I repeat, that I spoke in a general sense, and certainly had no intention of burdening myself with a lad whom I had never even seen. However, to come to the point, I did not feel that I could disabuse Clavering's mind of the idea. It would have seemed, perhaps, a little brutal."

"I should certainly say so!"

"Oh, yes, yes; no doubt! Well, Clavering has fallen. He was killed in Flanders a few weeks ago, and the news has come through."

"Poor fellow!" said the Head softly. "Poor fellow!"

"Oh, yes, poor fellow, certainly!" grunted Sir Hilton. "Very unfortunate, and all that, certainly. His last letter, written before going into action, was forwarded to me. He reminded me of my promise. I had made no promise whatever, mind you, but he assumed that I had done so, or intended to do so. He reminded me of it, at all events, and told me that his son would always be grateful for what I had undertaken to do for him—that if he fell his last moments would be comforted by the knowledge that Leonard—the boy's name is Leonard—would be cared for by his old friend. Well, he fell, as I said—shot through the head at the barbed wire. So, as the matter stands, the boy is thrown on my hands. I cannot refuse."

"I quite agree."

Sir Hilton snorted again. It really seemed that he had expected sympathy, at least, from the Head.

But the Head had no notion of sympathy for a meddling old busybody who was called upon to fulfil a virtual promise.

"The people, though poor, are, of course, quite decent," resumed the baronet. "I have never seen the boy, and have no desire to see him, but I am assured that he is in every way suitable to be admitted as a pupil at Greyfriars. He is, in a way, my ward—in fact, he is my ward. Hitherto he had resided with his distant relative, the clergyman, who has sent me a good account of him. He is about fifteen now, a remarkably well-grown lad for his age, and it appears that he has made an attempt to join the Army as a private, in spite of his youth, which shows that he has spirit, at least. In fact, he was enlisted, but was claimed by his then guardian, and released from the Colours as under age."

"A brave lad!"

"Oh, quite so—quite so! Under the circumstances, I am bound to send him to school, and, I suppose, to enter him later at Sandhurst, unless something turns up. Well, sir, I have decided to send him to Greyfriars. As the son of an officer fallen in the war, no doubt an arrangement can be made for him to be taken at a somewhat reduced fee."

The Head nodded, without speaking.

"Well, well, that is satisfactory, so far," said Sir Hilton. "The boy is in my charge, but I have many responsibilities. His expenses will be met by me. I shall make him a small allowance for pocket-money—a moderate allowance—in fact, very moderate. But I do not desire to be troubled by the boy in any way. I have no liking for hobbledehoys about my house. He will not be allowed the run of Popper Court—in fact, I do not desire to see him there at all. He will spend his holidays at the school, unless relatives come forward to offer him hospitality. In short, I have accepted this very onerous burden, but I naturally desire to make it as little onerous as possible. I shall maintain him in a suitable way until he is old enough to enter the Army, and after that he will naturally cease to be a burden to me. I trust I make myself clear?"

"Quite."

"In fact, I am sure you will be kind to the boy, Dr. Locke," said Sir Hilton, with the first touch of human feeling he had shown so far. "His case is—well, it is somewhat touching, in a way."

"It appeals to me as very touching," said the Head. "I shall do my best to be kind to the poor lad."

"You are very good. Of course, you are accustomed to young people. For my part, young people about me irritate me extremely. I confess that I do not like their society. If I could bring myself to tolerate this boy about me, I hardly think he would be happy. It is better by far to place him entirely in your charge."

The Head was quite of the same opinion.

His kind heart already warmed towards the orphan lad, whose father had given his life in defence of his countrymen—Sir Hilton Popper among others.

"The boy is still at the vicarage," added Sir Hilton. "With your permission, I will write to his present guardian to send him to Greyfriars. Mr. Shepherd will put him in the train, and doubtless he can be met here by someone. I shall have no time for such duties myself. In fact, I am shortly leaving England for the Riviera. His present home is on the other side of the county. Mr. Shepherd will write to you informing you of the day of his arrival. He will not be sorry to lose him, I gather, as the boy appears to be chafing at not being allowed to serve, and Mr. Shepherd is uneasy lest he may make another attempt. I am glad the matter is settled so satisfactorily." Sir Hilton rose, and looked at his watch. "If there are any other details I have overlooked, sir, doubtless you will telephone. I have another engagement. Good-morning, sir!"

The bustling baronet was gone, leaving the Head nearly gasping. Sir Hilton Popper had had the effect of taking the leisurely old gentleman's breath away.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head. "Really, I do not like to entertain a hard opinion of anyone, but—but such a very selfish and hard heart—— Bless my soul! The poor, poor lad! Certainly he shall find a friend in me!"

A sudden terrific yell from outside interrupted the Head's reflections. He stepped quickly to his window.

The sight that met his eyes caused his glasses to slide down his nose, as he fairly jumped with astonishment.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Request!

SWOOOOSH!

Sir Hilton Popper was striding out of the School House doorway when that sudden sound came from above.

The baronet looked up, just in time to catch the descending flood of whitewash on his upturned face!

Swoosh!

"Yaroooooop!"

Sir Hilton's yell rang across the quadrangle.

He staggered down the steps, flooded with whitewash from head to foot. His hat was as white as a miller's; his face was as white as a ghost's. His eyes were clogged, his nose bottled, and his mouth swamped, with whitewash. His clothes were streaming with it.

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from all quarters.

Fifty Greyfriars fellows had seen the catastrophe, and they yelled. Sir Hilton Popper had fairly caught it.

Dr. Locke stared from his study window, aghast.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped.

"Gug-gug-ug-gurrrrrrg!" spluttered Sir Hilton Popper, gouging wildly at his eyes. "Gerrogh! Yurrrg! Yooop! Yawwwwp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch strode out of the School House.

"What—what—what——" he stuttered.

He glanced up.

Over the porch of the School House was a kind of battlemented balcony, at a good height. It was evident that the whitewash had descended from there. But there was no sign of anyone there now.

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Sir Hilton——"

"Gurg-girg—groooooooch!"

"Good heavens!"

"Yurrrrgg!" Sir Hilton gouged at his eyes, and gave the Remove master a whitewashy glare. "What—what has happened? Something has fallen on me! Look at me! Grooh!"

"It—it appears to be whitewash!" stuttered the Remove-master.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys! How dare you laugh!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is not a laughing matter!"

Redwing to the rescue! (*See Chapter 3.*)

"Opinions differ," murmured Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove beat a retreat to a quiet spot, where they could yell undisturbed. "It makes me laugh a bit! What about you chaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The laughfulness is terrific!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Sir Hilton is terrifically mucked up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, that ass, Toddy!" gasped Wharton. "He's done it! There'll be the dickens to pay over this!"

"Over what?" asked a cool voice. Peter Todd joined the juniors under the elms. "Anything happened?"

"You frabjous ass, Toddy! They'll scalp you for this! Old Popper's nearly drowned in whitewash!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"My hat!" said Peter. "Somebody must have got out of the passage window with Gosling's pail of whitewash and laid in wait for him. I wonder who it was?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better not let Quelchy find out who it was," grinned Johnny Bull. "There'll be trouble in the Todd family if he does!"

"I don't see how he can," said Peter thoughtfully. "I don't intend to know anything about it at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sir Hilton, raving, had been conducted into the House by the dismayed Removemaster. He was badly in need of a bath—with his clothes on! It was an hour before the baronet left Greyfriars, and his important appointment, whatever it was, certainly could not be kept. He went with a crimson and furious face, only partly consoled by the Head's assurance that the infamous practical joker should be rigidly searched for and severely flogged.

And rigid the search was, too, for the Head took a far more serious view of the matter than the juniors did.

But there was absolutely no clue to the delinquent.

Gosling's whitewash-pail was found empty in the box-room, where he had left it half-full; but there was no clue to the young rascal who had shifted it, and given Sir Hilton Popper the benefit of its contents.

The prefects, and, indeed, some of the juniors, joined in the inquiry. Peter Todd made himself quite conspicuous in going round about and up and down, inquiring of the fellows if they knew who the rascal was. But the rascal was not discovered, which was decidedly fortunate for Peter!

Probably the Head would have given longer attention to the matter but for the fact that Vernon-Smith lay ill in the school. Dr. Locke was somewhat worried about the Bounder. Mr. Vernon-Smith was still at Greyfriars, spending most of his time in the ward in the sanatorium where his son lay.

Vernon-Smith had been unconscious or delirious since the previous day, and the millionaire did not intend to leave until he could speak to him. The Bounder had been through a terrible strain, and it had told terribly upon him; but Dr. Pillbury had given the positive assurance that there was no danger in the case. His illness, however, the juniors regarded as the work of Sir Hilton Popper, and they rejoiced exceedingly that the baronet had been made to regret his latest visit to Greyfriars.

And the cream of the joke, as Bob remarked, was that Sir Hilton, apparently, had not come with a complaint that time, as nobody had been called over the coals. He had called about some other matter, and owing to Billy Bunter, of the Remove, the juniors had an inkling of what it was.

"There's a new chap coming here," Bunter announced in the quad after dinner. "Chap named Clavering; his pater's killed at the front."

"How do you know, fatty?" inquired Hazeldene.

"I happened to hear old Popper talking to the Head—quite by chance, of course," explained Bunter.

"My hat! If old Popper had caught you at the keyhole!" said Bob Cherry.

"I didn't stay to the finish—Wingate came along the passage," said Bunter. "I—I mean, I wasn't at the keyhole at all, you rotter! I had simply stooped to—to pick up a pin, and—and happened to hear a few words by chance. This fellow Clavering is old Popper's ward—no relation—and old Popper hates the sight of him!"

"What?"

"He's never even seen him, you know!"

"Then how can he hate the sight of him?" demanded Bolsover major.

"I—I mean, he doesn't like him. He said plainly the chap wasn't to go to his place for the holidays; he's got to stay at school all the vacs!"

"Well, I'd rather do that than go home to a galoot like that bony old bird, I guess!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Clavering would not be joyful with the august and ludicrous Sir Hilton!"

"Old Popper's going to pay his fees, and he doesn't want to!" grinned Bunter. "He bullied Clavering's father into joining up, and now the man's killed he feels bound to look after the kid, and he doesn't like the idea at all; quite ratty, in fact, only he can't get out of it!"

"By gad! It must have taken you a long time to pick up that pin, Bunter!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! The Head said——"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Cherry, and the Famous Five moved away, having had quite enough of Bunter's chattering.

They moved off in the direction of the sanatorium garden. They were thinking of Vernon-Smith. Mr. Vernon-Smith came out of the building with a worn expression on his face, and the juniors capped him respectfully.

The millionaire gave them a nod, and moved about the garden restlessly for some time after the juniors had gone into the Form-room. Dr. Pillbury arived at last, and the millionaire went in with him. When the doctor left, Mr. Vernon-Smith's face was much brighter. He went quickly into the ward. Vernon-Smith, propped on pillows, was conscious, and in his senses again. He gave his father a faint smile.

"How are you now, Herbert?"

The voice of the hard, cold man of business was strangely tender.

"Pretty low down," smiled the Bounder. "But I'm all right. It told on me, dad; but I'm pulling round all right!"

"You musn't talk much."

"I've got something to say to you, dad—something important. I shall be

stranded here for at least a week I want you to do something for me!"

"Anything, my boy!"

"I want to do something for the fellow who got me out of it, father." The Bounder's voice was low and very earnest. "He risked his life to get me out, dad. It was a miracle he wasn't drowned along with me!"

"God bless him, whoever he was!" said the millionaire. "He sha'n't lose by it, Herbert."

"I want you to find him, dad. His name's Tom Redwing—a sailor's son at Hawkscliff. His father went down in a submarined ship a long time back. He's on his own now, and he's looking for a job, I think. You'll look after him, father?"

"I will go to Hawkscliff first thing in the morning and search him out," said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Thank you, dad!"

The Bounder closed his eyes, and slept quietly and peacefully.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Leonard Clavering's Offer!

TOM REDWING rose from a seat as the train came into the little country station, and picked up his bag. The train stopped.

It was three or four days since Redwing had saved the life of Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars, and the incident had almost passed from his mind.

The sturdy lad came across the platform to the train, and glanced round for a porter, but there was no porter in sight.

As the lad stood hesitating a youthful face looked out of a carriage window.

Tom Redwing stepped towards the carriage.

"This train for Courtfield?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm going there."

"Thank you!"

Redwing opened the door and jumped in. It was a third-class carriage, and the other lad was its only occupant. Redwing glanced at him a little curiously as he sat down.

The fellow in the carriage looked quite seventeen at the first glance; but at a second glance it could be seen that he was younger than that, but remarkably sturdy and well-developed for his age.

Tom Redwing was sturdy enough, but his travelling-companion was much more powerfully built, and a good two inches taller. His face was good-looking, though it wore a thoughtful and discontented look.

He stared out of the window as the train ran out of the little mid-Kent station, biting his lips. He was well dressed, and Redwing was surprised to see him in a third-class carriage. But he soon ceased to take note of his companion. He had more than an hour's run before him, and Redwing was not given to wasting time. His pocket Horace came out, and the lad was soon deep in study, while the slow train rolled on.

The burly youth on the opposite seat shifted and stretched his legs, and grunted under his breath. He began to watch Tom Redwing curiously, and he spoke at last.

The sight of a lad in rough seaman's clothes, studying a Latin book, probably aroused his curiosity.

"Excuse me! What's your book?" he asked, civilly enough.

His manner was quite friendly.

Redwing looked up, and flushed slightly.

"Horace!" he said briefly.

"My only hat! Can you read it?"

"I'm working at it," said Redwing, his colour deepening. "The notes help me along, you know."

"And you like it?"

"Yes."

"Great pip!"

Redwing smiled.

"Don't you?" he asked.

"No jolly fear! You don't look like a chap who would be muggin' up Horace."

The burly youth spoke with schoolboy frankness. He was evidently curious, though in quite a friendly way. Redwing only smiled again.

"Perhaps it's a queer taste," he said. "I'm keen on that kind of thing. I haven't been to school much, of course."

"Did they give you Latin at your school?"

"Not likely."

"Lucky bargee!"

Redwing laughed outright. There was good-natured envy in the voice and look of the well-dressed fellow opposite.

"They did in yours, I suppose?" he said. "You're a schoolboy now, I take it?"

"I'm going to school," said the other, his frank face clouding again. "It's rotten! Ever heard of Greyfriars?"

"Greyfriars?" Tom wrinkled his brow. "I think there's a big school of that name near Courtfield. I don't know that district, though."

"That's it. Change at Courtfield for Friardale," grunted the other. "That's where I'm going."

"I should call you a lucky bargee, as you put it."

"Would you? You don't know, then! I don't want to go to school. I detest Latin, and pretty nearly everything else in the school line! Mathematics make my head ache—I can't even add up a column of figures without getting a pain. And I've got something else to do." His face was grim for a moment. "They say I'm not old enough; but I'm big enough to go out and kill Germans—what?"

Tom opened his eyes.

"How old do you think I am?"

"I thought seventeen, at first, or eighteen," said Redwing. "But I can see you're not so old as that."

"No. Fifteen-and-a-half!" growled the other. "Sickenin'! But I joined up once."

"You did?" exclaimed Redwing, in amazement.

"You bet! I put my name down as eighteen, and they passed me in. It was when the news came over that my pater was killed out there." His lips tightened, and his eyes gleamed under knitted brows. "Poor old pater! I hadn't seen him for a long time, and then——"

"I'm sorry!" said Redwing softly.

"They took me in—I was Private Clavering for a week," said the big youth. "Then old Shepherd found me out, and got me discharged. By gad! I wish he'd left me alone! Now I'm goin' to school—school, by gad! I want to go in the Army! I'm big enough."

"But——"

"They'd take me, if I went to a different quarter, where I haven't been seen before," said Clavering confidently. "By gad! I wish I could change with you, kid. You're free to do as you like, I suppose?"

"Free to work—pretty hard, too!" said Redwing, with a smile.

"You look a kid," said Clavering. "I don't. I could pass all right. Oh, thunder, how I'd like to change with you, and send you on to Greyfriars, instead!"

"Ha, ha! So would I!"

"Would you, really?" asked Clavering.

"Of course I would!" said Redwing, laughing. "I'd give a good bit to have a chance of going to a school like Greyfriars! No such luck for me!"

Clavering was silent, looking at him for some minutes without speaking. The

expression of his face showed that some thought was working in his mind. He broke the silence at last.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Tom Redwing."

"Look here, I've got an idea!" said Clavering eagerly. "I'm not going on to Greyfriars! I'd been thinking that out already—of leaving the train at Canterbury, and joining up there. But—but, of course, if old Shepherd doesn't hear that I've arrived at the school he will be after me, and I shall be found out again, and taken from the Army, same as before. But—but did you mean what you just said, kid, about going to Greyfriars if you could?"

"Of course!" said Tom, in wonder.

"Then, will you go?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Will you go?" exclaimed Clavering eagerly.

"Go to Greyfriars?" said Redwing, staring at him blankly.

"Yes."

"I don't understand——"

"Tell me about yourself," said Clavering, pursuing his idea. "Where do you live? With your people?"

Redwing's handsome face clouded.

"I have no people," he said quietly. "My father was drowned in a submarined ship long ago, and I've no relations that I've ever seen."

"Then, you're on your own?"

"Yes."

"How on earth do you live, then?" asked Clavering, in wonder.

"Work. I help the fishermen at Hawkscliff, and sometimes get a job in the country. I'm going back from one now. I've got a sort of cabin at Hawkscliff—an old fisherman's cabin; we share it. I've earned my own living for years. But I'm going to sea before long, now."

"By gad!" exclaimed Clavering excitedly. "Nothing could be better! If you don't go back to Hawkscliff, there's nobody to miss you?"

"No."

"You'd rather go to Greyfriars than do as you're doing now?"

"Of course!"

"Then, go!" exclaimed Clavering.

"What do you mean? I can't go! I've no money, no friends," said Tom, in utter wonder.

"Don't you catch on?" Clavering's face was glowing with excitement. "Look here! My name's Leonard Clavering. My father was in South America when the war broke out. He chucked it up, and came home to fight the Germans. He left me with Mr. Shepherd, a parson at Cotswood—a blinkin' little inland village. Old Shepherd's a crusty old fellow, but not a bad sort. I was a bit of a worry to him. He had to knock lessons into me, and it wasn't easy for him," Clavering grinned. "I wanted to join the Army, and the old sport couldn't understand it. Well, a friend of my father's undertook to look after me if anything happened to him in the war—an old sport named Sir Hilton Popper. He's sending me to Greyfriars."

"Yes?" said Redwing, still in wonder.

"Don't you see? Old Popper is a crusty old stick. He's written to Shepherd about me, but doesn't want to see me. It's pretty clear that he looks on me as a burden. I've got to spend the holidays at school, because the old fellow doesn't want to be bothered with me. He's never seen me, and doesn't want to. I've never been seen at Greyfriars, either. Don't you see now?"

Redwing shook his head.

"I don't want to go to school; in fact, I don't mean to!" said Clavering. "I want to join up, and I'm jolly well goin' to do it, too! But you—suppose you go to Greyfriars——"

"But——"

"I'll change clobber with you!"

"What?"

"You take my clothes, my box, my name—everything—and turn up at Greyfriars as Leonard Clavering. I go into the Army, and nobody bothers, as I'm supposed to be at Greyfriars School. How does that strike you?"

Tom Redwing did not reply. He could only gaze blankly at his companion, fairly gasping with amazement.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Change of Identity!

CLAVERING'S eyes were gleaming.

Evidently he was very much taken with the extraordinary scheme that had come into his fertile brain.

He looked anxiously at Redwing.

"Will you take it on?" he exclaimed. "Mind, it's a national service in one way! You provide the country with another soldier if you help me to join up. I want to go out and kill Germans. I'm big enough. I tell you, I was getting on rippingly as a recruit when old Shepherd came down on me and yanked me out of khaki last time. Will you do it? Say you will, and I'm your friend for life! Do it, old chap! It won't hurt you, as you want to go to school and mug up Latin and such muck!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Redwing.

"Nothin' wrong in it, you see," went on Clavering eagerly. "I make you a present of my clothes, my box, my name—everythin', in fact. There's nobody to care twopence. Old Popper can't smell a rat, because he's never seen me, and never intends to. Mr. Shepherd will never come to Greyfriars—his connection with me ceases for good as soon as he hears I've arrived at the school safe. After that I'm in Dr. Locke's charge, and Shepherd is done with me. Nobody will know, and you'll be doin' me a tremendous favour. A good thing, too, as you seem to like the idea of school!"

Redwing could only stare. His breath was fairly taken away.

Clavering gave a chuckle.

"You'll do it, kid, won't you? You turn up at Greyfriars as Leonard Clavering! Who's to know? I've never been there—don't know a soul there! You don't?"

"No."

"You've never seen the school—hardly heard of it?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Perhaps never even seen a Greyfriars chap at all?"

"Never, that I know of!"

"Where's Hawkscliff? Some way from Greyfriars, I take it?"

"Ten miles, at least—twenty, unless you take short cuts! It's a long way round."

"Good!" Clavering rubbed his hands. "Easy as falling off a form. You'll do it—what?"

"Blessed if I know what to say!" said Tom Redwing, though his eyes were dancing at the thought of it. "Suppose it came out! They'd turn me out, wouldn't they?"

"How could it come out? I'm not known there, and you'll go there in my name!"

"But—is that right?"

"Why not? I give you my school things, and I ask you to use my name as a favour. It's quite legal to use another fellow's name at his request—you can do it by power of attorney, or somethin' or other! But it can be done, anyway. I make you a present of the name along with the rest. I borrow your name in return! I join up as Thomas Redwing. Exchange no robbery!"

Redwing laughed.

"But—but——"

"Oh, it's a rippin' wheeze—rippin'! Mind, I'm goin' to leave the train before Courtfield, an' dodge into a recruitin'-office, anyway. But if you go on to school instead of me, that makes it safe for me. I don't want to worry old Shepherd, either! He isn't a bad sort, and he'll feel quite satisfied when he hears that I—you—have arrived at Greyfriars, an' he can wash his hands of me with a clear conscience!"

"But—but——" faltered Tom.

"You're not afraid?"

"Oh, no! But——"

"There's nothin' to be afraid of!"

"But—but how could I enter Greyfriars?" said Tom dazedly. "I haven't been taught enough——"

"If you can read Horace, you're leagues ahead of me—I can't! Cæsar is about my mark, and I'm bad even at that. I suppose you can read Cæsar as easily as English, as you're on Horace now?"

Redwing nodded.

"Well, then; you'll make a better show than I should. Old Shepherd says I'm prepared for the Lower Fourth Form. I'll bet you you'll be the only johnny in the Greyfriars Lower Form who can construe Horace."

"But--but other things!"

"You'll pick them up! You can read and write, I suppose, and add and subtract, and things?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Ever heard of Euclid?"

"I've had a go at Euclid in an evening school, when I got work in Canterbury."

"Hurrah! Why, you'll do Greyfriars more credit than I ever should—even if I went there, which I sha'n't! Is it a go?"

Redwing sat silent, thinking hard.

The offer of the strange lad opposite came like a dazzling dream to him. It was the offer of the realisation of his young life's ambition. Why should he not accept? There could be nothing wrong in taking what was freely offered by the owner, surely? He would be doing a favour, too. He would be taking what he wanted from another fellow who did not want it, and was determined not to have it.

Surely he was justified in accepting?

Clavering's eyes sparkled as he saw the signs of yielding in the face of the sailor's son.

"You'll do it, kid?"

"But—but——" Redwing breathed hard. "But suppose you're sorry afterwards, and want to change back? Then it couldn't be done!"

"What rot! I sha'n't want to! And, of course, if I did, I should be bound in honour not to do it. I couldn't do it, in fact, for Dr. Locke wouldn't let me into Greyfriars after spoofin' him!" said Clavering, with a chuckle. "But I shouldn't want to. I want to be a soldier, like my father! And I'm jolly well goin' to be a soldier, too—you can bet on that! You see, I'm going to chance it, anyway. You'll simply be making it safe for me, and help me avoid hurtin' the feelings of old Popper an' worryin' old Shepherd. I don't want old Shepherd chasin' me up an' down the country, to yank me out of khaki again—and the old sport doesn't want the job, either, I should imagine!"

"I suppose not," said Tom, with a smile.

"Say it's a go, then!"

Redwing drew a deep breath.

"If you're sure—if you're quite sure!" he said.

"Honour bright!"

"Look here," said Tom quietly. "In a few minutes we shall stop at Hollow Green, a quiet little place. We can get out there, and make the change. Think it over till then. Don't talk—think! If you're of the same mind when we get to Hollow Green, I'm your man!"

"Done!" said Clavering instantly.

There was silence in the carriage as the train ran on. Both boys were thinking—both with beating hearts at the new and happy prospect opening before both of them.

The train stopped at Hollow Green.

Clavering sprang to his feet.

"Come on, Redwing!"

"You're sure?" faltered Redwing.

"You 'bet!" grinned Clavering. "I hold you to your word, my pippin; come on!"

He jumped out of the carriage.

Tom Redwing, after one moment's hesitation, followed him.

The die was cast!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Waiting for Clavering!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir?"

It was Monday afternoon, and the Remove had come into the Form-room for lessons. There was one vacant place in the Form—that of Vernon-Smith, still in the sanatorium.

Mr. Quelch called to the captain of the Remove as he entered, and Wharton came up to his desk.

"Wharton, a new boy is coming to Greyfriars this afternoon, who will be placed in this Form."

"Yes, sir."

"He arrives at Friardale by the three-thirty train," said Mr. Quelch. "I desire someone to meet him there, and bring him to the school. If you care to perform this service, Wharton, I shall excuse you from lessons."

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly!"

Envious glances were cast at Wharton by the other fellows. There wasn't a Removite there who would not have been glad to take that bright winter's afternoon off from lessons. Meeting a "new kid" at the station wasn't a specially pleasant duty; but it was a very welcome change from the Form-room grind.

"Very well, Wharton! Please be at the station in good time, and show the new boy as much kindness as you can. He is the son of an officer recently killed at the Front."

"Yes, sir!"

"His name is Clavering—Leonard Clavering," added Mr. Quelch. "You will probably have no difficulty in recognising him, as I understand that he is very tall and powerfully built for his age. You may go, Wharton!"

Wharton paused. Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were looking at him in quite a significant way.

"Ahem! Had I better take another fellow with me, sir?" asked Wharton diffidently.

"I do not see the necessity, Wharton!"

"Ahem!"

"However, you may do so," said Mr. Quelch. "Cherry, if you would care to accompany Wharton——"

Bob Cherry moved like a jack-in-the-box.

"Certainly, sir!"

Billy Bunter jumped up.

"I say—I mean—please, sir——"

"What is it, Bunter?"

"D-d-don't you think, sir, it would be better for me to go and meet Clavering, sir?" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch gave the Owl of the Remove a freezing look. It did not affect the Owl, however, as he was too short-sighted to see it.

"The fact is, sir, I'm an old friend of Clavering's!" said Bunter. "He would be more pleased to see me, I'm sure!"

"What! Do you know Clavering?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in surprise. "That certainly alters the case; but I understood that the boy was quite unknown here!"

"He—he's quite an old pal, sir!" said Bunter, with a triumphant blink at Wharton. An extra half-holiday that day seemed a "cert" to Bunter now.

"Where have you known him, Bunter?"

"We—we were next-door neighbours, sir!" said Bunter fatuously. Billy Bunter could wander like any Prussian from the straight path of truth when there was anything to be gained thereby.

"Oh, you fat idiot!" murmured Bob under his breath. Everybody in the Form-room, excepting Bunter, could see that the Remove-master's expression was growing thunderous.

"That is very odd, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, his eyes like gimlets. "I was not aware that you had lived in South America!"

"S-s-south America, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"Clavering lived in South America before he came to England about two years ago!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Oh! I—I meant to say, sir, that—that we were next-door neighbours during—during the last two years, sir!"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" murmured Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"You need not speak to Bunter, Nugent!"

"Ahem! No, sir! Yes, sir! Ahem!"

"Where was Clavering your next-door neighbour during the past two years, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, his voice like iron.

"At—at home, sir!"

"Do you live in the village of Cotswood, Bunter?"

"N-n-n-no, sir!"

"That is where Clavering has resided hitherto."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You were speaking falsely, Bunter, in order to obtain freedom from lessons for the afternoon!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Not at all, sir! Wha-a-at I really meant to say was—was—was that Clavering would have lived next door to me, sir, if—if I'd lived at Cotswood, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, come here!"

"Oh, dear!"

Swish!

"Yooop!"

"Now go back to your seat, Bunter!"

"Yow-wow-ow!"

Billy Bunter crawled back dismally to his seat. Wharton and Bob Cherry left the Form-room.

"The silly, fat duffer!" growled Bob Cherry. "Fancy trying to spoof old Quelchy with a yarn like that! Hallo, hallo, hallo! What a ripping afternoon! I'll race you to the station, my infant!"

"No need to race," said Wharton, laughing. "Lots of time to take it easy!"

And they walked.

The chums of the Remove had plenty of time on their hands, and they strolled by way of the fields and the wood, and paused at Uncle Clegg's for refreshment in the shape of ginger-beer But they were at the station ten minutes before the train came in.

"I wonder what the chap will be like?" remarked Bob. "We'll be civil to him, as he's lost his pater in the war!"

"Yes, rather, poor chap!"

Wharton's brow clouded a little. He was thinking of his uncle, out in Flanders facing the Huns, and that the fate of Captain Clavering might easily be that of Colonel Wharton. But he drove the painful, haunting thought from his mind as the train came rolling into the station.

The two juniors watched the passengers alighting in search of Oswald Clavering. They had never seen him, but there was not likely to be much difficulty in picking him out.

The train was pretty full. Half a dozen soldiers for Wapshot came out, and two or three farmer folk. Only one boy alighted from the train, and that was Dick Trumper, their old acquaintance of Courtfield County Council School.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Clavering's not come!" said Bob.

"Looks like it!"

The train went on.

"Trumper, old son!" called out Wharton, and Dick Trumper stopped, with a grin. "Seen a kid knocking about—new kid for Greyfriars? We've come here to meet him, and he hasn't materialised!"

Trumper shook his head.

"Haven't seen such a merchant," he said. "If he was changing at Courtfield he may have lost the connection; there was a big crowd there."

"Oh, very likely!"

Trumper nodded, and went on his way. The two Greyfriars juniors regarded one another doubtfully.

"I suppose Clavering's lost the local train at Courtfield Junction," said Harry "There isn't another for an hour."

"Better meet that," said Bob. "After all, we don't want to get back to Greyfriars till lessons are well over!"

"Ha, ha! No!"

They left the station, sauntering about the village to kill time till the next train came in from Courtfield. The new boy had several changes on his journey to Friardale, and it seemed probable that he had lost the connection at one of them.

In good time Wharton and Bob Cherry turned up in Friardale Station again. The train came in at half-past four, and they watched the passengers once more.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's the merchant!" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

A stalwart lad, with a sunburnt face, in Etons, with a rug over his arm, had stepped out of the train.

"Clavering, right enough," said Harry Wharton.

And the chums of the Remove hurried forward to greet the new boy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
The New Boy at Greyfriars!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

That was Bob Cherry's greeting.

The sunburnt lad started a little, and looked at him. Harry Wharton smiled.

"We're from Greyfriars," he said. "I suppose you're Clavering?"

"The new kid for the Remove?" asked Bob.

The sunburnt lad opened his lips to reply, but did not speak. The colour deepened in his cheeks, and then faded again. He appeared to be tongue-tied for the moment.

The two juniors looked at him. They concluded that Leonard Clavering was a shy fellow—more shy even than most new boys.

"We've come to meet you," explained Wharton—"that is, if you're Clavering. You're going to Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

The new boy spoke at last.

"Good! You lost your train?"

"D-d-did I?"

"We came to meet the three-thirty."

"Oh!"

"Did you lose the connection at Courtfield?" asked Bob Cherry, wondering what the new fellow was colouring and stammering about.

"N-n-no!"

"Well, Quelchy said the three-thirty, didn't he, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"I—— Who is Quelchy?"

"Mr. Quelch, our Form-master," said Harry, smiling. "We call him Quelchy—not when he can hear us, of course."

"Oh, I—I see!"

"Where did you lose the connection?" asked Bob.

"I—I got out at Hollow Green."

"Hollow Green! That's a blinking little village," said Bob, in surprise. "There's no change there."

"N-n-no. But——"

"Oh, you got out by mistake," said Bob. "Not used to railway travelling—what?"

"N-n-no."

"Well, no bones broken. You've got a box with you, I suppose? Better come along and see to it."

"Ye-es."

The new junior's shyness, as the chums regarded it, was almost painful. They went along to see about his box, to give him a chance of getting over it. The box was duly rescued, and instructions given for it to be forwarded to Greyfriars. Clavering—if he was Clavering—stood with his rug on his arm and a bag in his hand watching them. They rejoined him when the box was disposed of.

"Well, you are a duffer!" said Bob good-humouredly. "Your box went on when you got out at blessed Hollow Green. It didn't come by this train. I find it was landed here from the last train. Lucky it was labelled for Friardale, or it might have travelled to goodness knows where! Come on!"

Clavering accompanied them from the station.

"I'll take that bag, if you like," said the good-natured Bob. "You worry along with the rug."

"Thank you!" stammered the new junior.

"Bow-wow! We've got to walk. Used to walking?"

"Oh, yes!"

"All the better. Put it on!"

The new junior walked between the chums of the Remove as they left the station and started for Greyfriars.

He was dumb as they walked, and the two juniors were a little puzzled.

A little shyness and reserve in a new boy was natural enough, but this scared silence was out of the common.

There were other things out of the common about the new fellow, too.

His clothes were decidedly a size too large for him, sturdy in build as he was. They certainly looked as if they had been made for a much bigger fellow. Even his boots seemed a little loose upon his feet as he walked.

The queer thought came into Bob's mind that Clavering had come to school in an elder brother's clothes; yet the clobber looked new enough. They were, in fact, a very unusual size in Etons—large enough to be worn by a fellow of seventeen, though a fellow of seventeen in Etons would be an uncommon sight.

The new fellow wanted a reef taken in all over, in fact. Certainly his tailor had not been mean with the material. His coat, which he carried on his arm with the rug, was evidently as much too large for him as his Etons were. The juniors, naturally, made no remark on those odd circumstances, though they could not help noticing them. He was not so big as Bolsover major of the Remove, but his clothes would have looked loose on Bolsover.

Wharton and Bob were prepared to be very friendly, considering that the new fellow had lost his father in the war. But his grim dumbness was somewhat discouraging.

"Know anybody at Greyfriars?" Bob Cherry asked at last, with an effort at conversation.

The new fellow shook his head.

"Old Popper's your guardian, isn't he?"

"Who?"

"I mean, Sir Hilton Popper. Do you like him?"

"I—I've never seen him."

"Oh! I understood that you were in his charge. A tattling worm in the Remove heard all about it."

"Yes; but—but Sir Hilton does not know me."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"No relation?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, no; no relation!"

Conversation flagged again. But the chums felt very kindly towards the new fellow. They remembered some of Bunter's tattle, and thought they understood. The soldier's son was thrown upon Sir Hilton Popper's bounty, and the grim, ungracious baronet made him

feel it. It was not a pleasant position for any fellow, and they could sympathise with him.

"Is—is Sir Hilton Popper much at the school?" asked Clavering, speaking of his own accord for the first time.

"Oh, no!"

Clavering looked relieved.

"You'll hardly ever see him—never, if you choose," said Bob. "He's a governor of Greyfriars, but they don't ask the Lower Fourth to their meetings, you know."

Clavering smiled.

"I suppose not," he said.

"When he comes along, it's generally to complain of a fellow going on his land," said Bob. "Rather an old hunks—ahem!—excuse me!" Bob coloured. "I forgot he was your guardian."

"From what I've heard of him, I think he is rather a hunks," said the new junior quietly. "Don't mind me."

There was another long pause.

"Been to school before?" asked Bob at last.

"Yes."

"In South America?" asked Bob, with interest.

Clavering started.

"Oh, no, no!"

"Oh, I see! At Cotswood?"

"I—I had lessons, you know——"

"Well, that's not exactly like being at school," said Bob. "I say, you look a bit down in the mouth, if you don't mind my mentioning it. Pull up, you know. There's nothing to be afraid of at Greyfriars. Most of the fellows are ripping chaps. We're fair specimens of the rest, and look at us!"

The new junior laughed, which was what the cheery Bob intended.

"I'm not afraid," he said. "But—but it's all new to me. I—I shall feel very strange."

"You'll soon get used to it," said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "Don't fancy everybody's looking at you there. You're only a pebble on the beach in school, you know. You'll just drop into your place, and in two or three days you'll feel as if you've always lived at Greyfriars."

"Do you think so?"

"That's how it always is."

"I—I suppose I shall get used to it."

"Of course you will."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they came up to the school gates. "Trot in, Clavering! What the merry dickens are you hanging back for? Gosling isn't going to eat you!"

Clavering flushed, and followed him in.

"This way, my merry infant!"

The new boy was marched over to the School House, and safely delivered in Mr. Quelch's study. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, their duty done, went their way.

"A bit of a queer merchant," said Bob, as they went down the passage. "I rather like his chivvy, though."

"Looks a decent sort, but awfully shy," said Wharton, with a smile. "He'll get over that. We might help him! What about asking him to tea in the study, and having some fellows in to meet him? He'd get to know some of the Form that way."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"I don't mind!"

"We'll do it, then," said Harry.

And with that kind intention in view the chums of the Remove prepared a more than usually appetising tea in Study No. 1—so far as the grim food regulations allowed.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Clavering of the Remove!

"I SAY, Clavering——"

Billy Bunter was on the watch, and as the new junior came up the Remove staircase with Bob Cherry about an hour later Bunter rolled along to greet him in friendly style.

Clavering was looking more at his ease now.

His interview with Mr. Quelch had not been a very dreadful ordeal. He had seen the Head, who had spoken to him very kindly. Bob Cherry had guided him to the matron's room, and Mrs. Kebble had been very considerate and kind. In fact, everyone with whom Clavering had come in contact had been kind. Wingate of the Sixth had stopped to speak a few gracious words—a high honour from the captain of the school.

The fact that Captain Clavering had fallen at the Front disposed everyone in favour of the new boy.

Even Bolsover major of the Remove, who generally liked worrying and terrorising new boys, had given him a nod and a friendly grunt.

So, as it happened, Clavering saw Greyfriars at its best on his first day, and he was much comforted thereby.

Bob Cherry's hearty cordiality had a reassuring effect upon him, too. Bob supposed that the new fellow was shy, and tried to put him at his ease, and he succeeded.

He was bringing the new fellow to

Study No. 1 to tea, when the Owl of the Remove bore down upon them.

"Clavering, old chap——"

Clavering stopped politely.

"Come on!" said Bob unceremoniously. "That's only Bunter! Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm going to speak to my old pal Clavering!"

"Your what?" ejaculated Clavering.

"Don't you remember me?" said Bunter affectionately.

"N-n-no!"

"All serene, Clavering," said Bob. "Bunter doesn't know you. He only wants to spin a yarn about a postal-order, and get a loan out of you before you know him."

"You rotter!" roared Bunter. "It's nothing of the kind! As a matter of fact, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I know Clavering jolly well! Quite an old pal!"

"You—you—— Is that so?" panted Clavering.

Bob looked at him in astonishment. He could not understand why Bunter's statement had brought a sudden scared look to Clavering's face.

"Come on!" said Bob, catching the new junior's arm. "Buzz off, Bunter, and tell your yarns somewhere else!"

Bob introduced his boot into the discussion, and Bunter yelled, and rolled off. His designs on the new boy had to be postponed for the present.

"He—he can't know! He would recognise——" Clavering was muttering to himself.

"Only his gas," said Bob. "Dash it all, I suppose you know whether you've met Bunter before, or not, Clavering?"

"I? Oh, yes—yes, of course!"

"You don't know him, do you?"

"N-n-no!"

"I don't see how you could," said Bob.

"N-o, of—of course not!"

"Here's the study," said Bob, and he dragged Clavering into No. 1. "Here's the new kid, you fellows!"

"Trot in!" said Harry Wharton.

"The welcome is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous friend!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur heartily.

"Here's your chair," said Nugent.

"Hold on! Introductions first!" said Bob Cherry. "You know Wharton already. Baby-face is Frank Nugent ——"

"You ass!" roared Nugent.

"The fellow with the feet is Johnny Bull——"

"Why, you chump——"

"The gentleman with the snow-white complexion is Hurree Jampot Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, Prince of India, and Lord High Lots-of-things!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed Bob——"

"The chap with the face is Squiff, and the one with the nose Peter Todd."

"You fathead!"

"You ass!"

"The serious-looking cove is Mark Linley, and the one with the chivvy like an oyster is Tom Brown—— Yaroooh!"

Bob's introductions were cut short by a cushion hurled by Tom Brown, which smote him under the chin, and caused him to sit down suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sit down, Clavering," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Look here——" roared Bob.

"Oh, cheese it, old chap! Order!"

And the crowd of juniors gathered round the table to that extra-special tea. Billy Bunter rolled in to join the cheery circle, but Squiff's boot induced him to roll out again. Otherwise, the meeting was most harmonious, and Clavering's sunburnt face grew very cheerful and bright.

Harry Wharton & Co. were all desirous of making him feel at home and one of themselves, and they succeeded. In a short time Clavering was chatting and laughing as cheerily as the rest.

After tea a crowd of the fellows accompanied Clavering to his study, No. 11, which he was to share with Snoop and Stott. Those two youths were civil, if not exactly enthusiastic, and there were many hearty fellows to help Clavering get his things unpacked and disposed about his new quarters.

As it was his first day at Greyfriars he did no prep, and after Harry Wharton & Co. had finished their own work, they called for him and marched him down to the Common-room, where he had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of more of the Remove and some of the Fourth.

When bed-time came, Clavering went up to the Remove dormitory with the Form. His face was very bright.

But when Wingate had turned out the light and gone, and the Removites dropped off to sleep one by one, the new boy at Greyfriars lay long awake.

He was thinking.

He had dropped into a new and strange world, and he had received a hearty welcome there. These kind attentions, of course, would not continue, but they had made his first day very pleasant and agreeable. Yet they caused the lad a heaviness of heart. He was welcomed so kindly because Captain Clavering had been killed at the Front. He knew that. What would the fellows have said if they had known that Leonard Clavering of the Remove, supposed son of an Army officer, was, in reality, Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff, the son of a sailorman? he wondered.

Had he done wrong?

He had not meant to do wrong. He had never dreamed of doing wrong. But he had had little time to think before accepting young Clavering's wild proposition. It had not occurred even to his mind that there was deceit involved in his new role. But was it not deceit? Had he not deceived the fellows who had received him so kindly? Yet his father, too, had died for his country. In that he stood on the same footing as Leonard Clavering. What would the fellows say if they knew?

Be that as it might, it was too late to draw back now. He had taken the plunge, and there was no retreat. Clavering had his promise. He thought of Clavering. Where was he? Even while Tom Redwing had been spending his first few hours at Greyfriars the real Clavering's fate had been decided. In a recruiting-office at Canterbury Private Thomas Redwing had been enrolled in his Majesty's Army. And the real Tom Redwing——

It seemed like a dream.

He slept at last. He awoke when the winter sun was gleaming in at the high windows of the dormitory. Far off, in a khaki camp, Private Tom Redwing turned out for his first drill. And in the old school of Greyfriars the boy who had hitherto borne that name awoke as Leonard Clavering of the Remove. In the school there was no one who knew him—save one in the sanatorium, whom he had not yet seen, and of whom he did not dream. That Vernon-Smith, whose life he had saved at Hawkscliff, was a Greyfriars fellow, Tom Redwing did not know, and there was no misgiving in his heart as he turned out at the clang of the rising-bell!

(Don't miss "CLAVERING OF THE REMOVE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"CLAVERING OF THE REMOVE!"

By Frank Richards.

Clavering is really Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff, of course. The true owner of the name Leonard Oswald Clavering, has joined up as Tom Redwing.

On the whole, the pretended Clavering does not get on at all badly at Greyfriars. There is trouble with Mr. Quelch on account of his unusual method of answering the Form-master; but that soon blows over. Sharing a study with Snoop and Stott, however, is not exactly pleasant for the new boy. He does not like them, and they do not like him. When Snoop and Stott, with Skinner in alliance, start out to make trouble there are unpleasant times in store for the fellow they are up against. Clavering is considered by some to be a funk at first. Vernon-Smith could have told a different story. But the Bounder was in the sanatorium. When he came out—— But you will read all about that next week. You must remember that Tom Redwing did not know Vernon-Smith was a Greyfriars fellow. If he had known he would probably have refused the change of identities which the real Clavering had proposed.

This is a first-rate story, and even better is that which will follow it under the title of—— But again you must wait till next week for that!

THIS WEEK'S "GEM."

Every Cadet, and every fellow who thinks of becoming a Cadet, should read Martin Clifford's story in this week's issue of the "Gem," entitled

"THE ST. JIM'S CADETS!"

The Cadet movement is one which ought to appeal to many more boys than it does. Lately I have got into touch with the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, which organisation has taken up the Cadet business on a big and thorough scale. The direct sanction of the War Office has been given, and Cadet Corps thus formed rank with, and are affiliated to, the Volunteer Forces.

There never was any good reason for the cheap sneer that Cadets were merely playing at soldiers. But if there ever had been, what becomes of that sneer now when Cadet Corps are accepted as an integral part of the defensive forces of this country, and, in the event of an invasion, would be called out to assist their older comrades of the Volunteer Forces? They would not, I think, be sent to man the trenches; but there is plenty of useful work apart from that which they could and would do; and work with a spice of danger in it, too, such as appeals to every high-spirited boy.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED BY:

A. Thatcher, 5/26, Wansbeck Road, Victoria Park, E. 9—with local readers.

C. J. Lowe, 12A, Southbrook Road, Lee, London, S.E. 12.—with boy readers in the prairie Provinces of Canada.

Yours Editor

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

A BANQUET AT TRIMBLE HALL!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

IT had been said (by you!—Ed.). Never mind who by (whom by—Ed.). Grammar be gassed, and you, too! I'm going to begin a fresh paragraph, and you keep your blessed oar out, Thomas!

The rumour that Baggy Trimble had signed a pledge to neither touch, taste, nor handle a cake of soap for the duration of the war and six months after, was successfully kyboshed in the Fourth Form dorm the other morning.

For we have it on Blake's authority that he washed his neck!

"Any of you fellows care for a spin down to Trimble Hall?" he asked casually after brekker, before we had recovered from the surprised occasioned by the unwonted (badly wanted, you mean!—Ed.) spring-cleaning in the winter.

"You've found the lamp, then, Baggy?" I asked.

"Eh? What lamp, you idiot?"

"The one in the story, you know. You give it a rub and a genie comes with a carpet or something, and we all step on to it, and off we go! That's how they travel in all fairy stories, you know, and I don't see why that ripping one of yours about Trimble Hall should be an exception."

Baggy glared at me unfriendlily, and fished a rather dirty piece of notepaper from his pocket.

"Read that!" he demanded triumphantly.

We grinned as our eyes ran over the paper. Nobody but Baggy would have expected us to be taken in with a thing like that, we thought. He had quite obviously written it himself.

"Trimble Hall,
"Galton,
"Hants.

"Respected Sir,—I have prepared a room according to your instructions. His lordship, your uncle, has no objection to your bringing up to half a dozen friends if you wish. The train reaches Galton at 5.30 p.m.

"Your obedient servant,
"H. FIBKINS, (butler)."

"Well?" said Baggy. "Any of you care to come this afternoon?"

"You really want us to go?" said Herries. "During one of the vacs you took us nearly there, you remember, and then for some mysterious reason you changed your mind."

Baggy snorted.

"I don't care two straws whether you come or not!" he said loftily. "I'm willing to take six of you, provided you pay your own fares, and—ahem!—mine as well. The governor seems to have forgotten to post the couple of fivers he promised to let me have yesterday."

Truth to tell, we were feeling rather curious as to what Baggy had up his sleeve.

"Look here, B.," said Blake at length. "If you take us to your noble pile, we'll stand the fare. But if you're pulling our leg, and take us to some eating-house or other, as I don't doubt you will, you'll be bumped until Galton fairly dances!"

"And we'll take measures," said Thomas, with a grin—Thomas is the ass who keeps butting into this story—"to see that you don't mizzle when the train reaches the station!"

Under these conditions it was arranged that Tom Merry, Manners, Blake, Herries, Gussy, and I should spend an odd hour at Trimble Hall.

To Gussy's dismay, Trimble regarded him all the morning with the air of affability which became two people inhabiting the same lofty circles of society. He even linked arms with him on the way to the station.

Darkness had fallen by the time we reached Galton, and we observed with some surprise that Baggy betrayed no signs of uneasiness as we stepped out of the little station.

"This is our place," remarked Baggy, with a great show of indifference. He pulled us up before some huge iron gates, a little ajar, and beckoned us to follow him through.

We looked at each other doubtfully.

"Look here!" began Herries, breaking the silence. "Blowed if I'm going in there! If we're caught we'll be charged with attempted burglary!"

"We'll risk it!" said Blake shortly, striding through to the drive. "He's too free and easy with the place to be spoofing."

"But—but there can't really be a Trimble Hall!" stammered Tom. "People with such places don't brag about them as he's been doing!"

We joined Baggy, however, and accompanied him through the grounds. A large mansion loomed up before us—it must have looked splendid in the daylight—and dimly through the darkness we could see some of its many gables.

"This is where we turn back!" I murmured. But for once in a thousand years I was wrong.

Trimble beat a loud rat-tat on the door and made the bell clang, and after a little wait the door was opened by a big and exceedingly fat butler. On perceiving Baggy he burst into a profusion of smiles.

"Ah, come in, sir—come in!" he invited, opening the door wide. "Pray come in, gentlemen!"

We entered, and stood gazing about the magnificent hall with a display of curiosity which was anything but polite.

"Uncle and the pater out, Fibkins?" asked Baggy, with his nose in the air, as we were relieved of our coats and hats.

"At the opera, sir!" replied Fibkins deferentially.

"And all the servants—where are they?"

"It is Wednesday, their night off, sir, you will remember."

Baggy favoured his informant with a haughty sniff, and we followed Fibkins into a cosy room with a blazing fire.

"Get us something to eat, Fibkins!" ordered Baggy, when we had settled down like six jossers in a dream. "Never mind what—goose and caviare will do—but let there be plenty of it. Quick, now!"

Fibkins departed, only to return a few moments later.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said regretfully, "but the cook has taken the key of the larder with her."

"Confound it!" grunted Baggy. He never said "confound it" at St. Jim's. "I say, Gussy, you might let Fibkins have a couple of quid to get something in with. Fibkins, when Lord Trimble returns mention it to him to send a cheque for two or three pounds to the Hon. Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's."

"Yessir!"

"Bai Jove!"

Gussy couldn't very well refuse a request uttered in such a manner, and parted with his last couple of quid.

Before very long we were sitting down to a pretty decent spread, though the butler could hardly have spent more than a quid on it. Fibkins was either patriotically sticking to the food rations, or else he wasn't a scrupulously honest man.

Presently we had all finished but Baggy, and we seated ourselves round the fire in a contented circle.

"This must be a dream—a wonderful dream!" I murmured, sinking back in an easy-chair, and skimming lazily through the columns of the "Galton Gazette" which I had picked up.

Suddenly I lighted upon a short paragraph, which I read over and over again before I could believe that it was really there. It enlightened me considerably on a few of the strange things which had been happening lately.

"The people of Galton will be interested to learn," it ran, "that his Lordship the Earl of Galton, and family, are returning to Galton Hall this evening from their tour round the Scottish munition factories, where they have inspired the people by their patriotic speeches regarding the state of the war, and the probable price of tripe in Jamaica in the year 1919"—or something to that effect. "They will be met at the station by their butler, Mr. Trimble, at 7 p.m. The people can be trusted to give them a hearty reception."

I passed it on to Herries. It was quite a treat to watch his eyes growing wider and wider as he read. When they had reached their full width—half a foot, more or less—he handed it to Tom.

We looked at the unconscious Trimble as he gobbled down Gussy's grub. Half of us were looking grim, and the other half were grinning. I don't quite remember which I was doing. Being a naturally serious chap, I fancy I was looking grim.

But it is impossible for anyone to be in a rage with Baggy for long, and very soon we were all grinning broadly. Gussy was the most doleful of the lot.

"Never mind, Gussy!" I whispered. "He's worth a couple of quid for his colossal cheek!"

"Yaas, deah boy!" murmured Gussy faintly. "But it isn't your two quid, you know."

Now, to this day we don't know whether that stately mansion was Trimble Hall or Galton Hall. Neither do we know whether the butler was Trimble's pater or another Trimble altogether. But we have our suspicions.

Baggy rose to his feet when he had finished, and looked at his watch. It was five to seven.

"By jingo!" he muttered. "I—ahem! You fellows ready to go back?"

"No hurry, Baggy, old chap, is there?" I asked in surprise, tipping the wink to the fellows. "Let's have another hour by the fireside. It's so jolly comfy."

Baggy stirred uneasily.

"We don't want to miss the train, you know."

"The boss of the show may be in before the last train goes, and I should like to thank him for his hospitality," I said blandly.

Baggy seemed to suppress a shudder.

"I—I—— There's prep, you know."

"Well," I said, rising with a yawn, "I suppose we'll have to go if Baggy wishes it. Come along, kids!"

It was not altogether compassion for Baggy which made us yield readily to his request. We had no great desire to be found by the patriotic family in their palatial residence.

We came across the butler in the hall. He had donned an overcoat and hat, and was fidgeting nervously. His resemblance to Baggy was very apparent now.

The look of relief upon his ample face at the sight of us was not to be mistaken.

"By your kind permission, gentlemen," he said humbly"—he was especially deferential to Gussy—"I will accompany you to the station. I have—er—um—to see the stationmaster about a little matter—some trunks, which should have been sent on—ahem! Very cold and foggy, is it not?"

Contrary to our expectations, Baggy did not brag to any great extent at St. Jim's about his trip to Trimble Hall. An unpleasant story was circulating that a letter had been found, written by Trimble senior to Trimble junior, to the effect that he could bring the "earl's son" to "his master's house," provided there was a clear prospect of its resulting in a return invite for Baggy to the house of the son of the earl.

And I fancy that Baggy is waiting for this rumour to die away.

THE END.

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FISHY'S MOTOR-BIKE!

By DICK RUSSELL.

I.

FISHY has played a good many low-down tricks at various times. But I think the meanest was when he swindled Bunter over that motor-cycle draw. The bike—a real ripper it was—had been given by Mr. Walton, of the garage in Courtfield, and the proceeds were to go to the Red Cross. Of course, everybody said it was very patriotic of him, and lots of our fellows boughts tickets for the good of the cause—or so they said, though they seemed jolly keen on winning it, for all that. As it turned out, one of our chaps did get the winning ticket. And he was none other than William George Bunter.

The winning number was to be published in the "Courtfield Observer." Bull and Cherry, who had blued a lot of tin on tickets, were frightfully keen to get the paper on publication day. So directly dinner was over they cut off on their bikes to Friardale. And just before they reached the newsagent's, who should they meet but Fisher T. Fish on his bike! He was pedalling along like lightning, and looked frightfully excited. Cherry called out to him as he passed, but he took no notice.

Seeing Fishy in such a mighty hurry, both Bull and Cherry were rather expecting to learn that the American bounder had won the bike. But when they found that W. G. Bunter was the lucky winner they forgot their own disappointment, and simply roared. All the way back they nearly fell off their bikes with laughing. They stared, though, when they entered the Common-room to find that none of us had heard the news—naturally expecting that Fishy had told us. But we hadn't seen Fishy since dinner, and Bunter himself was out.

Like Bull and Cherry, we all thought the idea of Bunter on a 4½-h.-p. motor-bike too screamingly funny for words.

"Fancy Bunty scudding round on a giddy motor-bike!" yelled Wharton. "Oh, my hat! Pity the poor bike! Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's going to be a giddy funeral at Greyfriars before long—that is, unless he sells it to buy tuck!" chuckled Cherry. "But, come on, let's break the news to him."

Cherry and Bull knew where to find the Owl of the Remove, and one or two of us fellows followed them as they rushed off to tell him of his good fortune. We met Bunter just leaving Mrs. Mimble's. The fat bounder was wiping jam off his face, and looked contented with himself and the world. He grinned as we rushed up breathlessly.

"I say, you fellows, seen Fishy? He's going off his dot, I believe. He's given me three bob for that mouldy old draw-ticket. He, he, he!"

"What! Have you sold him your draw-ticket?" yelled Cherry excitedly. "Oh, you fat idiot!"

Bunter stared.

"Oh, you giddy ass!" shouted Bull. "Why, it's the winning ticket—you've won the motor-bike!"

Bunter gaped in astonishment at Bull and Cherry's excited faces. He blinked unbelievingly through his giglamps.

"Look!" yelled Johnny Bull, shoving the doubled-up paper before Bunter's face. "Isn't that your number?"

Bunter looked. His face was a picture when he did understand. He snatched the paper from Bull, and when he had satisfied himself he simply snorted with fury.

"Where's that beast Fishy? I'll smash the rotten swindler!" he yelled, dancing about in wild indignation. Then he shot away at top speed in search of Fish and vengeance.

None of us meant to miss the fun, of course, so we followed him. He burst into the Common-room like an angry bull. The fellows there stared at him in amazement. Bunter certainly did not look like a fellow who had won a motor-bike.

But Bunter soon enlightened them, while Bull and Cherry made his deal with Fishy plain by telling how they had seen him hurrying back to Greyfriars. As the fellows were used to Fishy's shady tricks, they said it was just like him, and they sympathised with Bunter. But Bunter was not satisfied with sympathy. And as Skinner had said he had seen Fish mouching round by the chapel, Bunter rushed off. We all followed him. It wasn't often Bunter was on the war-path. But when he was he was worth watching!

II.

LIKE a Jack Johnson Bunter shot out into the quad, with the Remove streaming in a long line behind him.

Sure enough, Fishy could be seen hanging around the woodshed. Bunter spotted him at once, and gave a triumphant yell. Fishy heard the yell, and stared. He must have guessed we were after him. Anyway, he didn't "wait and see," but turned and ran for it.

Right round the quad went Fish, with Bunter at his heels, and all of us yelling "Tally-ho!" behind. Then Bunter cornered him by the woodshed.

"Gimme my ticket, you swindler!" yelled Bunter, squaring up to the swindling merchant with threatening fists. "Gimme my ticket, or I'll smash you!"

"I guess I won't. I paid you for the durned ticket, and I guess I'm holding tight—some!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder reckon—— Boooh! Yarooooh! Oh, by dose! Keep him off, you galoots! Oh! Yow-ow-ow!"

Fish roared as one of Bunter's podgy fists crashed on his nose. But the blood of the Bunter de Bunters was up, and the Owl followed this with another playful tap.

Fish cowered away from the warlike Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Bunter! Is that how you fight in Noo York, Fishy?" roared Bob Cherry.

Fish didn't answer, but made a dive for the woodshed.

Bunter, flushed with victory, followed him. But he pulled up short in the doorway. We all laughed when we spotted the reason.

At the back of the shed stood Fishy, defiance in his eyes, and a dripping tar-brush in his hands.

Bunter, baulked for a moment, snorted angrily. But only for one moment. Suddenly, spying a bucket of whitewash and a brush, Bunter dipped the brush in and advanced to the attack.

"Yer-up!" Bunter yelled, as the dripping tar-brush daubed his face. The tar-brush was longer than the whitewash-brush, which was hard lines on Bunter. Poor Bunter could not get a hit home; and very soon Fishy had driven him out of the shed. But once outside the fat beggar had more room to manœuvre in. Breathing dire threats of vengeance, he returned vigorously to the attack.

Fish soon wanted to stop; he was thinking of the shocking mess his clothes would be in. But the martial spirit of the Bunter de Bunters was fairly roused, and the swindling bounder simply had to go on.

Counting by the hits registered in black and white on the pair of them, the honours must have been about equal, when suddenly we heard the rustle of a gown, and Quelchy appeared like an angry whirlwind. Fish spotted him first, and dropped his brush in fright just as Bunter lunged.

Sploshl Bump!

Fish's face stopped the brush. Not expecting it, he sat down with a thump.

Bunter was grinning triumphantly through the tar smeared over his face. But he jumped as he heard the stern tones of Quelchy.

"Bunter! Bless my soul! Fish! What in the name—— How dare you!" stammered Mr. Quelch furiously. "You wild—wild animals! "You——"

Mr. Quelch stopped. Words failed him as he stared at the two woebegone figures of Bunter and Fish quaking before him.

"Please, sir," began Bunter miserably, "Fish——"

"Not a word! Silence!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "I will listen to your explanations afterwards—after you have removed that filth from yourselves. I am disgusted, perfectly disgusted! Go to the bath-room at once. And—and come to my room afterwards!" added Quelchy grimly.

We stepped away as quietly and as quickly as we could. But we all felt very sorry for Bunter as we watched him and Fishy follow old Quelchy into the House.

It was the last straw for Bunter.

III.

QUELCHY let Fishy off with a hiding. But Bunter got a swishing and was detained as well; which put the finishing touch on poor Bunter. He rolled off to the detention-room after dinner, looking as miserable as a centipede with sore feet.

The things we said to Fishy would have made any decent fellow blush with shame. But Fish never turned a hair.

He guessed and calculated and reckoned that it was a square deal, and if Bunter was so unbusinesslike as to want to back out of the deal—well, he would show him how they did business in Noo York!

Fish hustled off after that.

And about an hour later we understood why, for a brazen "Honk, honk!" came from the quad.

"Fishy!" shouted someone.

Sure enough, it was the swindler.

We watched him enviously as he came swanking and crackling across the quad on a brand new motor-bike. He jumped off at the woodshed, and we all crowded round him.

It was a ripping bike, and no mistake.

Skinner, who fancied himself an authority on motor-bikes, and was never tired of telling of the records he had broken on his brother's at home, was particularly interested. He said:

"That's all very well! I admit the jigger looks all right, but how does she go? Now, I'll just take her for a run round the quad and see what she can do, Fishy, old man."

"I guess you won't!" said Fishy promptly. "I guess no one's going to ride that bike but me. If you calculate——"

Fish stopped suddenly, and began to cackle like a hen.

We'd could see he'd thought of one of his wonderful stunts.

"Got it!" he yelled joyously. "A real top-notch stunt. Gee! But I guess I've cottoned to a gilt-edged double-hammered stunt! I reckon I won't let any of you galoots ride my bike himself. But I'll take you rides round the quad on the carrier at——"

"Good old Fishy! Me first, old sport!" yelled everyone at once.

"At twopence each," finished Fish, with a grin. "I reckon I'll rake in the spondulics—some! Now, who's going to have twopenny-worth?"

Some of us called Fishy a mean beast. Fish didn't seem to mind a bit. But some fellows had forgotten his mean swindle, and were itching to have a ride. And just as Fish was going to take his first passenger the tea-bell rang.

"Hang! said Fish. "Never mind. You fellows turn up with your twopences after tea. I guess I'll do a roaring trade!"

We could see at the time that Skinner had got his back up about Fish refusing to let him ride the bike. But though several of us saw him stop behind when Fish had gone in to tea, we never thought anything about it until afterwards. Anyhow, it must have been Skinner, because he was about the only chap who knew anything about motor-bikes. Besides, it was just like one of his mean, dangerous tricks.

Most of us turned up after tea—more to see the fun than for anything else.

Fishy, looking as keen as mustard and flushed with pride, hauled the glittering jigger out of the shed.

"Now, you galoots, who's having the first twopennyworth?" he cried briskly. "Once round the quad, twopence only—payable in advance. Hyer! Wharton, as you're captain, I guess you'll have first go. Hand over the spondulics!"

"Not much!" said Wharton promptly. "I'm not committing suicide yet. Catch me paying twopence to get my neck broken! No fear!"

Fishy snorted, and turned to Skinner.

"Now, Skinner, old man, I guess you wanted a ride before tea! Now's your chance. I guess I'll show you galoots some dust—just a few!"

"Right-ho! I'll have twopennyworth," said Skinner, with a funny grin on his face. "Half a mo', though! Let's see how you handle the jigger first."

Fish grinned. He seemed only too pleased to give a demonstration before such a crowd of admirers. Skinner chuckled wickedly as Fish proudly pushed a little lever over, and ran alongside the machine until the hoarse wheezing developed into a sharp coughing. Then he leapt into the saddle, and went careering around the quad as proud as a dog with two tails, whilst we all looked on enviously.

Twice round the quad he banged and cracked. The third time he came close in, and we thought he was going to stop. But he didn't. We could see him fiddling with levers and things, and he looked upset about

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something. Skinner was cackling like a hen. When Fishy came round the fourth time he shouted to him.

"That'll do, Fishy! Stop her now, and let's have a go!"

"I can't!" yelled Fishy despairingly, wobbling all over the place as he played with the levers. "She's gone wrong! I can't stop her!"

We all looked on, not knowing whether to laugh or not, as Fishy went rampaging round the quad, his engine spluttering and firing furiously. Instead of stopping, it went faster, while Fishy looked in a terrible stew. Skinner was laughing like a hyena. We guessed then that Skinner had been tinkering with the bike. And just then Mr. Prout came suddenly down the steps, and began to cross the quad right in front of the advancing Juggernaut.

Fish evidently never thought of his brakes, though he did have sense enough to give a brazen "Honk, honk!" of warning, which made the Shell-master jump a clear three feet into the air. But instead of dodging out of the way, Prout lost his head completely, and with a wild yell of "Stop, you scoundrel!" he bolted. Right round the quad he went, with gown streaming behind him, Fish at his heels, and gaining every second. But at the entrance steps Prout made a desperate effort, and dived into the doorway. It was jolly fortunate for himself and Fish that he did, too; though Fish's troubles were by no means over. Just as he was nearing the porter's lodge, Temple, Fry, and Dabney came through the gates on their bikes—which is against rules, but very like Temple & Co.!

Fish had no time to turn, even if he'd had the nerve. It was a case of smashing into the three cyclists or diving for the gateway. Fish chose the gateway. Gripping the handlebars like grim death, he shot through, missing the gatepost by less than an inch. Then we heard a terrific crash. We all rushed up at once, certain he had come to grief. But we yelled when we reached the gates.

Out in the road was an upturned handcart. The road itself was strewn with herrings, kippers, and other varieties of fish. And there stood old Fillet, the fishmonger, swearing frightfully, and shaking his fist at Fishy, who was disappearing up the road in a cloud of dust. But we didn't stop to listen to him. We had an idea that Fishy wouldn't get far before he came to grief. And we meant to be in at the death, if possible.

In a brace of shakes Wharton, Cherry, and a few more of us ran out our bikes, and were pedalling like billy-ho after Fishy. But we didn't get far. Just as we were passing a small farm, about half-way to Friardale, we heard a frightful row going on.

We jumped off our bikes at once. Wharton led the way into the farmyard.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, in amazement. "What a giddy mess! What price Fishy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Fishy did look a mess, and no mistake. He was dripping wet from head to toe, while clinging festoons of slimy weeds hung from his hair and round his neck. But his precious motor-bike looked a worse mess. It lay in the mud, a mass of twisted machinery. Close by the stiff carcass of a particularly sturdy-looking pig, lying near an evil-smelling duckpond, told the whole sad story!

We found out afterwards that a flock of sheep, blocking the roadway, had caused Fishy to enter the farmyard. The poor porker had got in the way. And, to cut a long story short, both the porker and the motor-bike had given up the ghost at once, while Fishy had described a couple of somersaults and dived into the muddy depths of the duckpond.

"I'll give you chargin' in 'ere, killing my stock!" yelled the farmer angrily. "That pig was worth fifteen pund! What I want to know is, what are you going to do about it?"

Fishy didn't answer. He gazed tearfully at the mingled heap of pork and motor-bike. Then he tried to pick the bike up. But the farmer wouldn't let him touch it.

Fishy raved, but it was no use; and he had to tramp his weary way back to Greyfriars without it. We rode alongside him all the way, for he had such a wild look in his eye that we feared he might do something desperate. He didn't look any happier when we reached Greyfriars, for he found a pressing invitation from Prout awaiting him.

That was the last of Fishy's motor-bike. Fishy had to sell what was left of it to help pay for the defunct porker and damages to old Fillet for the fish.

And it served him jolly well right!

THE END.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 53.—WILLIAM STOTT.

STOTT is not so strongly marked a character as Skinner or Snoop; and by reason of that fact he does not leave on one's mind quite so unpleasant an impression.

Skinner very rarely, Snoop almost never, shows signs of decency. Signs of that sort are by no means common in Stott; but he is less spiteful and cunning than Skinner, and less utterly mean and worthless than Snoop.

He is a sulky fellow, with a natural bias towards the wrong course in preference to the right. Always ready to gamble, he is yet a less confirmed "gay dog" than either of the other two. He could give up the Cross Keys entertainments and the doubtful privilege of losing money to Mr. Jeremiah Hawke on races with less effort than it would cost them. But one doubts whether Stott, except at such times as those when someone else has landed himself in the cart, and all the blades have taken alarm, has ever thought seriously of chucking it all.

Stott has so few interests outside that sort of thing. In fact, he strikes one as the sort of fellow not very vitally interested in anything—even in wrongdoing. Though he has taken part in many shady plots, he has never originated one. He certainly does not care for games. When he grumbles about never being selected for the cricket or footer team, it is a mere pose. He does not want to play; he only wants to be asked!

"You fellows know the kind of half I am!" Stott said once, when claiming a place in the footer team. The fellows do—that's why they don't want him in the team. "If Marjorie were my sister I should play centre-forward!" was one of his cheap sneers at Harry Wharton. But he was not ready to put up his fists in support of it. Did he ever fight all out to a finish with anyone? I cannot recall his having done so.

He has more courage than Snoop—which is not saying much. He may have more than Skinner; but Skinner has been known to buck up in desperation, and Stott has to be pretty desperate before he shows fight.

Stott was a great chum of Bulstrode's in the early days, when the former skipper of the Remove was in antagonism with Harry Wharton. But all that was over long ago, and Bulstrode has about as little use for Stott as has Wharton himself now. Some of you may remember Tom Brown, and Stott on the branch hanging over the river. Stott thought he had scored; but he cannot swim, and it was the New Zealander who scored in the long run.

The distinction of being one of the four heroes was missed by Stott. He might have been expected to be in that spoofing small crowd, rather than Bolsover major, who, with all his faults, is not often open to the charge of sharing in a swindle. It was quite in keeping with Stott's normal procedure that he should have been mixed up in the affair, however, and quite characteristic of him that he should have played a minor part—that of supporting Skinner's false claim to have been the "hero" who saved from a watery death the wholly imaginary Colonial!

Second fiddle is Stott's chosen instrument, it would seem. Probably he failed to realise that in bringing forward bogus evidence on behalf of Skinner he was risking practically as much as that wily youth risked, and for much smaller chance of making anything out of it. Skinner saw it, you may be sure—trust Skinner! For that, I mean. One would not advise any Greyfriars boy to trust Skinner in general!

It was Stott whom Miss Fluffy, the muscular girl cousin of Johnny Bull, slapped for calling the worthy Johnny a fathead.

The story in which Stott figures more prominently than in any other—as far as I can remember—is one called "False Evidence," which appeared about eighteen months ago. He and Snoop were the villains of the piece, and they tried to fasten upon Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull the supposed assault upon Mr. Quelch in a wooded part of the road. As a matter of fact, Mr. Quelch had been knocked down—quite accidentally—by a motor-cyclist, who rode on without knowing how much damage he had done. Stott and Snoop, out on some unlawful errand, and very anxious that the fact of their being out should not transpire, were led to think that they had been responsible for the master's condition.

As far as Mr. Quelch was concerned, they did not mind much; it was their own safety about which they were anxious. But that story showed up the difference between the two. Stott has not much talent for leadership, but he had to assume the lead then, for Snoop was in so desperate a funk that he was capable of giving the whole game away out of sheer dread. It is just as well for Stott that he should not often be called upon to take the lead, for there was no credit to him in anything he did in that affair. Johnny and Bob had a very bad time indeed, and only escaped expulsion through the turning up at the last moment of the motor-cyclist who had bowled over the Remove-master.

Stott was a sharer in the expedition to a remote country village organised by Skinner and Bolsover with the object of making things awkward for the Remove fellows who, with Courtenay and the Caterpillar as aides, had gone over to play as "Wingate's Team" against a side of soldier footballers. But Stott had little to do with the conception of the plot, and, like the rest, he got small change out of it. For, though they did succeed in causing the team's motor-char-a-banc to break down on the way home, they missed their train, and would have had to tramp many weary miles but for the clemency of the fellows they had plotted against.

For the most part Stott's exploits—if they can be given that name—have already been told of in connection with others. They have always been shared. He was in the packing-case affair—and in the case itself—when the Cliff House girls screwed up the eavesdroppers. He backed up the Bounder at his worst, but ceased to back him up when times of real crisis came. He, Snoop, and Skinner had the mild Alonzo as a study-mate for a short time—poor Lonzy! He tried to be obliging—cooked grub—usual result! Then he changed into the new study without a regret. No pangs at leaving Skinner & Co.! They were not Alonzo's sort.

Stott shared in Bulstrode's raid on the new study, and in Bulstrode's imprisonment there, with Wun Lung's horrible choking stuff burning in the fire. And on that occasion Stott suggested something—an idea of his own, which is rare with him. He suggested that a window-pane should be smashed to let in air. It reminds one of the very worthy Member of Parliament who represented an agricultural constituency for over twenty years, and whose only speech in the House was said to have been a request that a window might be shut! But one has more respect for the man who did not add his quota to the all too much unnecessary talk that goes on at Westminster than for the sulky, heavy-faced junior of Greyfriars, who has not the brains to originate plots, but is mixed up with nearly every rascally plot originated by others.