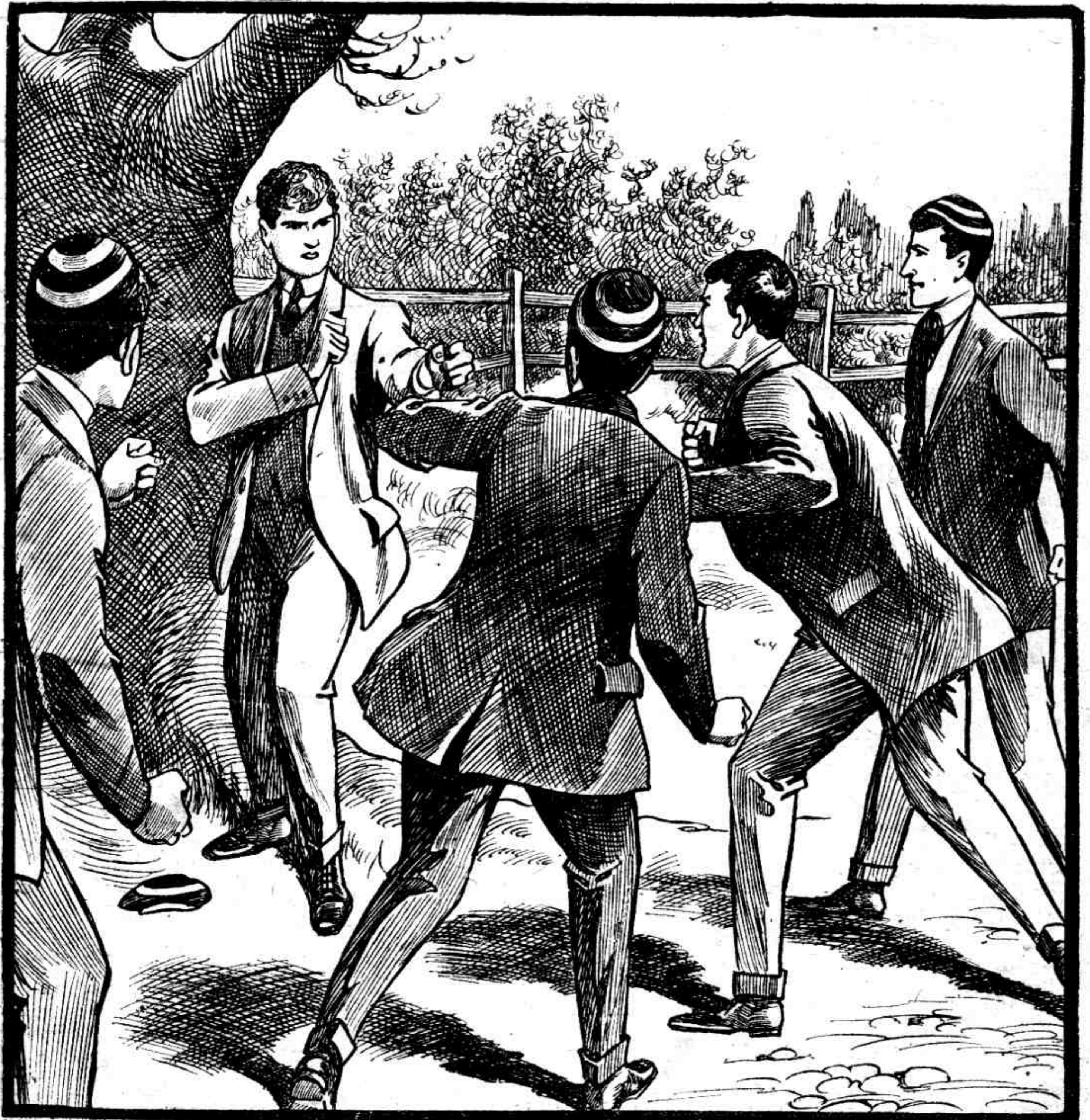




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THE BROKEN BOND!



AGAINST ODDS!

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THE BROKEN BOND!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cut Direct!

HARRY WHARTON raised his eyebrows.

Bob Cherry ejaculated, "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" in tones of surprise.

Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh simply stared.

They were chatting in the quadrangle of Greyfriars, waiting for the dinner-bell, when Vernon-Smith of the Remove came across from the gates.

At the same time Redwing came from the direction of the Cloisters, with a book under his arm and a thoughtful shade upon his handsome, sunburnt face.

The two met almost face to face, close to where Harry Wharton & Co. were standing.

Tom Redwing paused, as if about to speak, his face flushing a little.

Vernon-Smith walked on as if he did not see him, without the slightest change of expression in his face, and without a sign of recognition.

He left Redwing standing irresolute, the crimson deepening in his cheeks.

It was the cut direct.

The Bounder of Greyfriars had cut his former chum dead, in the open quad, with a dozen fellows by!

There were glances of surprise from other fellows as well as Harry Wharton & Co.

The Bounder disappeared into the School House, apparently quite unconscious of the sensation he had created.

Redwing, crimson, moved on slowly in the same direction, his eyes on the ground, only too conscious of the surprise on all sides.

A fat chuckle came from Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Skinner and Snoop and Stott exchanged glances of surprise and satisfaction.

The three black sheep had been long annoyed by the Bounder's friendship for the scholarship junior, and they had hoped that, sooner or later, it would come to an end; but they had never expected to see Smithy cut the fellow deliberately under a crowd of curious eyes.

"Looks like trouble in the happy family—what?" murmured Skinner, with great enjoyment.

"It do—it does!" grinned Stott. "Smithy's fed up with that pushing outsider! I always thought it would come."

"Same here!" said Snoop sapiently. "Redwing's got his good points—I don't deny that—but what is he? A rank outsider! Smithy was bound to get fed up in the long run."

Skinner's satisfaction was not shared by Harry Wharton & Co., however. They were astonished, and they were not pleased. Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed.

"What the dickens does Smithy mean by that, you fellows?" he asked. "I'd have punched his silly head, if I'd been Redwing!"

"Same here!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The samefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh, knitting his dusky brows.

"It appears that there has been stormfulness in the happy teacup, and Smithy has got his esteemed back up. He had forgotten that politeness is the cracked pitcher that saves a stitch in time."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was strong on proverbs. He sometimes got them a little mixed however.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes the giddy bell!"

A general move was made towards the House.

At the Remove table, in the old panelled dining-hall of Greyfriars, there was some suppressed excitement.

Even in a few minutes the news had spread in the Lower Fourth that the Bounder was off with Redwing, and had cut him in the quad.

If some insignificant person like Snoop or Bunter had acted in that way no one would have taken the trouble to remark upon it. But the Bounder of Greyfriars was a person of consequence in the Remove. He loomed large in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

Indeed, since the Bounder had thrown over his old recklessness, and was going straight, it was a moot question whether he might not have had a chance for the captaincy of the Form if he had chosen to enter into rivalry with Wharton.

Almost all eyes at the Remove table were turned upon Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing.

Even Mr. Quelch, at the head of the table, was conscious that there was an undercurrent of some sort there.

As a rule, Smithy sat next to Redwing. He had bagged the seat after the sailor-man's son came to Greyfriars.

Now he sat several places down the table.

Evidently he had made the change of his own accord. Redwing was in his usual place.

Tom Redwing did not meet any of the curious glances that were turned upon him. He kept his eyes on his plate during dinner.

The Bounder did not, however. He appeared quite his usual self, cool and unconcerned. He ate with his usual appetite—which Redwing did not do, as some of the fellows noticed.

Once, when he met Wharton's eyes, he smiled in a mocking way. Wharton did not seek to hide his disapproval of the insult the Bounder had put upon his former chum. He liked Tom Redwing, and respected him; and, whatever the cause of quarrel might have been, he felt that there was no excuse for the Bounder's conduct. His disapproval seemed rather to amuse Vernon-Smith than otherwise.

When dinner was over, and the juniors marched out, Tom Redwing went out into the quadrangle at once by himself. Vernon-Smith stood in the doorway, looking out in a casual way, with an elaborate unconsciousness of the fact that his one-time pal passed within arm's-length of him. Billy Bunter rolled up to him, devoured by an intense curiosity.

"I say, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith looked at him.

"What's up, old chap?" asked Bunter eagerly. "Had a row—what?"

The Bounder did not answer. He walked away towards the stairs. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles. He was surprised at this reception of his friendly inquiry.

"I say, Smithy, getting deaf?" he demanded.

Smithy stepped on to the staircase. Bunter, too inquisitive to be rebuffed, ran after him and caught his arm.

"I say, Smithy, old bird—Ow!"

Still without speaking, the Bounder gripped Bunter by the collar, and sat him down on the bottom step hard. Then he went up the stairs. Billy Bunter gasped.

"Ow! Beast! Wharrer you do that for, you rotter? Ow!"

But Bunter did not pursue his inquiries. Apparently the Bounder did not want to be questioned as to the cause of his being off with Redwing. He had made that clear even to Bunter's obtuse mind.

Vernon-Smith sauntered down the Remove passage to his study. He could not have been unaware of the surprised speculation in the Remove, but he gave no sign of having observed it. Half the Remove were in a buzz of discussion on the topic. Only a few days before there had been trouble in Smithy's study with Skinner, his study-mate, because the Bounder wanted him to change studies with Redwing, and Skinner emphatically declined. Redwing was equally keen on the change, for he did not get on with Snoop and Stott in his own study. That made the present state of affairs more surprising still. Evidently the Bounder no longer wanted Tom Redwing to be his study-mate.

Skinner & Co. followed the Bounder up the staircase, grinning. They were curious and they were delighted. They had always been down on Redwing, and to see his faithful friend turn against him was a great joy to them. They felt that the time had come to extend the right hand of fellowship to the Bounder. They were feeling quite chummy towards him.

Vernon-Smith lounged in the armchair in his study, with a book in his hand, when Skinner opened the door and came in, followed by his worthy friends. The Bounder looked at them quietly.

"Well, old chap?" said Skinner.

"Well?"

"Had enough of that pushing cad—what?" said Stott.

"Do you mean Skinner? Quite enough, thanks!"

"Eh? I mean Redwing. You know jolly well I do!" exclaimed Stott, staring at him. "I take it you're fed up with him!"

"I thought it would come, Smithy," said Snoop affably. "You really couldn't stand the fellow in the long run. I must say I'm glad to see that you see him as we do now."

"Do you see the door?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Eh? Yes."

"Get on the other side of it, will you?"

"Eh?"

"But you're off with Redwing, ain't you?" exclaimed Stott.

"Hasn't it ever occurred to you to mind your own business?" inquired the Bounder politely.

"Look here, Smithy—"

"You don't mean to say that you're sticking up for that cad, though you've cut him dead with all the fellows looking on?" hooted Skinner, amazed and angry.

"I mean to say that I've had enough of your cackle!" said Vernon-Smith icily. "Cut it out!"

The three looked at one another. They had not expected this reception. And they were angry. This was the return they got for their friendly approval!

"Just the same cheeky cad as ever!" growled Skinner. "If I'd been Redwing I'd have punched you! But I suppose a cad like that doesn't feel as anybody else would!"

The Bounder's lips set, and he rose to his feet. He crossed to a corner of the study where a cricket-stump stood, and picked it up. Sidney James Snoop executed a strategic retreat into the passage. He did not like the Bounder's look.

"Outside!" said Vernon-Smith tersely.

"Can't I stay in my own study if I like?" howled Skinner.

A powerful prod from the business end of the stump answered him, and Harold Skinner jumped out. Stott followed him hurriedly, without waiting for the stump. Vernon-Smith kicked the door shut after them. After that the Bounder was not troubled with further inquiries as to his break with Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

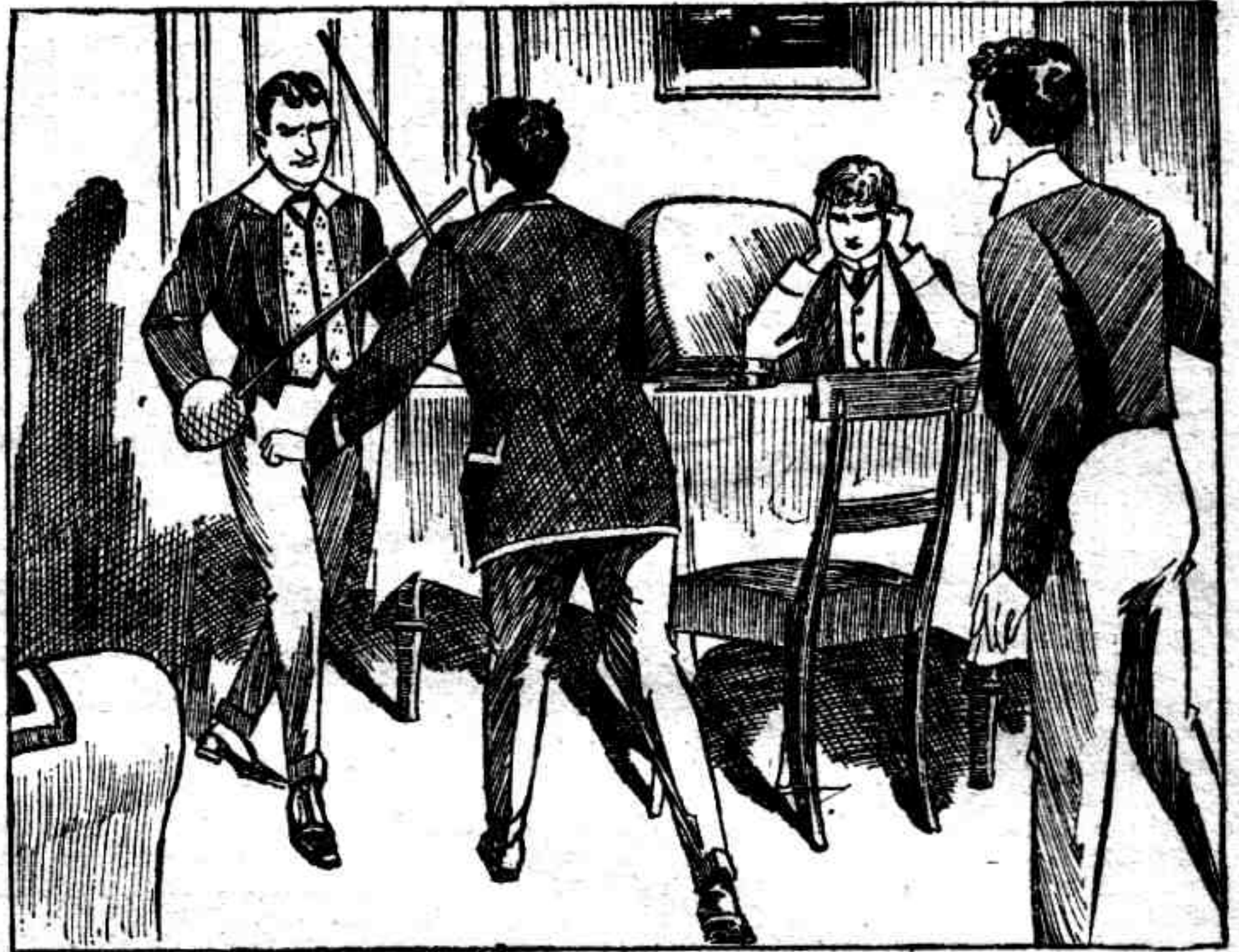
Wharton Does His Best!

TOM REDWING came quietly into the Remove Form-room for afternoon lessons with the rest of the Form. He passed within a yard of the Bounder, but did not look at him. Evidently Redwing had accepted the situation. He was no longer on speaking terms with his former friend, and he let it go at that.

Mr. Quelch was aware of more than usual inattention to lessons that afternoon. Fellows did not seem able to help glancing at the Bounder and Redwing and making whispered remarks. Billy Bunter and Bolsover major and several other fellows received lines for whispering in class.

Harry Wharton was one who was not wholly attentive to lessons that afternoon, though he escaped without lines. The captain of the Remove was rather exercised in his mind by the strange affair of Smithy and Redwing. For a fellow to drop a chum in that pointed and insulting way was quite against all tradition. Fellows who chummed sometimes grew bored with one another, and drifted into indifference; or sometimes they quarrelled. But the Bounder was original in his way of closing a friendship, as in most other things. For it was evidently the Bounder who had done it. The scene in the quadrangle showed that. Redwing had accepted the insult quietly, as few fellows would have done; indeed, he would have been suspected of poltroonery if his courage had not been too well known.

The Bounder was not supposed to be very reliable in friendship. He had made few friends, and never for long, until Tom Redwing came to Greyfriars. And that friendship had surprised most of the fellows. True, Redwing had saved Smithy's life when his boat was wrecked at Hawkscliff but Smithy was not believed to be especially susceptible to the claims of gratitude. He was a millionaire's son, rolling in money, and Redwing was the son of a sailorman, and had little



Not much chance for work! (See Chapter 8.)

or nothing beside his scholarship. He could not enter into the Bounder's expensive pleasures, for he would not sponge upon his chum, and in consequence Smithy had grown much less reckless in money-scattering.

It was agreed in the Remove that it was not really surprising that the friendship had ended. The surprise was that it had lasted so long. But nearly everybody agreed that the Bounder's way of ending it was the last word in caddishness.

Wharton was wondering, however, whether there was something more than that in it. Skinner & Co.'s glee was so open that it seemed possible that they had had a hand in causing some misunderstanding. The captain of the Remove was thinking it out, whether to speak to either or both on the subject. Wharton hated to "butt in" in a personal dispute, but he was really concerned now.

After lessons that day the Famous Five were going down to cricket practice, and Tom Redwing came out with his bat under his arm. Vernon-Smith was making a move in the same direction, but as he saw Redwing he put his hands in his pockets, and sauntered away into the quad. Harry Wharton stopped.

"I'll follow you chaps!" he said.

"Don't get into a scrap!" said Nugent, laughing.

Wharton shook his head and smiled, and went after the Bounder, who had seated himself on a bench under one of the old elms.

Vernon-Smith met him with rather a steely look. But Wharton was not quite the kind of fellow to be answered like Bunter or Skinner.

"You're not coming down to cricket, Smithy?" asked Harry.

"Not now."

"Because Redwing's there?"

"Yes."

"That's rot, you know!"

"Probably."

"Redwing's keen on cricket," said Harry. "You won't get much practice if you keep away from the field whenever he's there."

"Oh, he spends a good deal of time swotting!" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "He won't pass his prize exam without."

"That remark might have come from

Skinner, Smithy. It's hardly up to your style," said Harry. "You treated Redwing very badly to-day."

"Think so?"

"I don't want to butt in. But I'm a friend of both parties, I hope," said Wharton seriously. "I only want to ask you one question, Smithy. Has Skinner got anything to do with your quarrelling with Redwing? If there's some misunderstanding—"

"There isn't!"

"You can see that it is simply pie to those fellows," said Harry. "They're glad to see you cut Redwing."

"Yes; it looks like that."

"Only the other day you were rowing with Skinner because he wouldn't change studies with Redwing."

"Quite so!"

"Then it's not a misunderstanding, and Skinner's not at the bottom of it?"

"Not at all!"

Harry Wharton's brow darkened a little. The Bounder was uncommunicative, and did not seem to care what construction was placed upon his action. Vernon-Smith had always displayed a scornful indifference to public opinion in his Form; but that could be carried too far.

A short silence followed, and the Bounder yawned.

"Well, it's your own business, of course," said Harry at last. "But it's not what a chap would have expected of you, Smithy. It's a bad thing for Redwing."

"I don't see that!"

"Some of the cads, like Skinner, have always been down on the chap, because he's poor, and all that. It was a good thing for him, in a way, to be your chum. You've dropped him in the most pointed way, and it will cause a lot of talk. Fellows may think that Redwing is, after all, the outsider that Skinner makes out, and that you've found it out for yourself. It's not fair on him."

The Bounder's brows contracted. "There's nothing against Redwing," he said, after a pause.

"He's done nothing?"

"No!"

"Do you mean to say that you've insulted the chap before all Greyfriars when

he's done nothing?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Exactly!"

"Well, then——" Wharton paused, and did not utter the hot words that rose to his lips.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"The fact is, all the shortcomings are on my side," he said, with a sarcastic smile. "Redwing had the advantage of being brought up in a fisherman's hut, where it appears that a chap learns to be very particular. My ideas don't come up to his high standard. That being the case, we can't pull together. There it is, if you're curious!"

"I'm not curious!" said Wharton contemptuously. "I thought it was most likely some trick of Skinner's. But if it's as you say, I've got nothing more to say about it. I dare say you can guess what I think!"

"Quite easily!" answered the Bounder, unmoved.

"That's enough, then!" said Harry; and he turned away.

The Bounder glanced after him as he went down to the cricket-field, seemingly not quite easy in his mind. But he shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and walked away to the gates, and was not seen again till tea-time.

In the Remove passage he came upon Tom Redwing talking to Squiff, Tom Brown, and Delarey. He passed him without a sign, and Redwing made no sign; but the three Colonial juniors looked rather grimly after the Bounder. He found Skinner grinning in his study.

Vernon-Smith scowled in response to Skinner's grin. Whatever his motive in breaking with Redwing, he had certainly not done it to afford satisfaction to Skinner, and his study-mate's glee irritated him extremely.

"The murder's out, old chap!" said Skinner.

"What do you mean?" snapped the Bounder.

"I mean that I know why you've quarrelled with Redwing, and I've told the fellows!" chuckled Skinner.

"And what have you told the fellows?" asked the Bounder, with a glitter in his eyes.

"It's that rotten trick you played on me to get me out of the study," said Skinner coolly. "It was rather sharp practice, Smithy, wasn't it? You bamboozled me into owing money to Jerry Hawke, the billiard sharper, and got him to press me for it, so that I'd have to borrow the money of you to pay him, and in return agree to change studies with Redwing. Well, I did it, but Redwing didn't take his chance. He didn't change out. That was yesterday. To-day you cut Redwing in the quad," Skinner chortled. "I see it all plain enough now. Instead of jumping at his chance, Redwing read you a lecture on sharp practice—what? He refused to wedge into the study on such terms. Any decent fellow would. Even that outsider's decent enough for that. And you got your back up, and quarrelled with him for it."

The Bounder was silent.

But Skinner did not need any admissions. He knew that he had the facts. He had told Redwing of the Bounder's trickery, hoping that it would lead to trouble between them, for in spite of his down on Redwing, Skinner was well aware of the high and honourable nature of the sailorman's son.

He had hoped and believed that Redwing would refuse to take advantage of the trick.

"Fancy that fellow setting up on a high plane of morality and reading you lectures, Smithy!" said Skinner, chuckling explosively. "You might really

have expected it, you know. What you did was thumpin' sharp, a regular swindlin' trick, wasn't it? And all for dear old Redwing's sake; and he rounded on you instead of being properly grateful! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner roared.

He ceased laughing suddenly, however, and skipped out of the study as the Bounder strode towards him with fury in his face.

But his chortle was heard again as he went down the passage. The idea of the sailor-lad of Hawkscliff taking a high moral tone towards the millionaire's son, who had been his friend through thick and thin, tickled Skinner immensely, and the story was much too good to keep to himself.

Skinner had very nearly been tricked out of his study, and the rather sharp practice of the Bounder, though done for Tom Redwing's sake, was not likely to meet with approbation in the Remove.

That evening all the Remove knew what Skinner had to tell, and several fellows asked Tom Redwing to corroborate the story. Redwing, however, had nothing to say, and not a word was to be drawn from him.

He was no longer Smithy's chum, but nothing would have induced him to utter a word against his former friend. But the Remove knew what to believe, and they were on Tom Redwing's side in the dispute, if that was of any use to Tom. It was not much, as things were.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major Does Not Understand!

"THE Form ought to chip in!"

Thus Bolsover major in loud tones in the Common-room.

Bolsover major was indignant. The fact that Tom Redwing had once stood up to him and put up a first-class fight somehow disposed Bolsover major in his favour. Bolsover confidently predicted that Redwing would call the Bounder to account for the insult in the quad, and anticipated a great scrap and a sound licking for Vernon-Smith, which, in Bolsover's opinion, he well deserved.

Somehow, Redwing had failed to come up to expectation. Instead of avenging the insult, he had swallowed it whole, so to speak. He did not even seem to be aware that he had been insulted, and Bolsover felt that it was his duty to enlighten him.

"If a fellow treated me like that," continued Bolsover, "I'd smash him! It's up to a fellow to put up his hands for a thing like that."

"Perhaps a fellow knows best himself," suggested Peter Todd.

"Redwing doesn't seem to," said Bolsover major. "I should think he was a funk, only I know he isn't."

"Looks as if he was," said Snoop.

"Oh, rot! As soon as Redwing understands what the Form expects of him he'll play up right enough. I'm going to tell him."

"Why not mind your own business, old scout?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Rats!"

"It's barely possible that Redwing knows his own business quite as well as you can tell him," remarked Hazeldene.

"Bosh!"

"For goodness' sake don't butt in and start fellows scrapping for nothing!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"'Tain't for nothing. Smithy seems to have played a rather shady trick on Skinner, and Redwing wouldn't have a finger in it. Quite right, too! Now Smithy cuts him dead in quad, with half Greyfriars looking on. Isn't it up to the

fellow to give Smithy a hiding for that?" demanded Bolsover major warmly.

"Leave it to Redwing," said Nugent.

"Rats! I'm going to point it out to him now."

Bolsover major marched out of the Common-room with a determined air. Some of the Removites followed him, curious to see how Redwing would take the interference of the Remove bully.

Neither Redwing nor Vernon-Smith was in the Common-room. Probably they were keeping out to avoid one another.

Bolsover major led his flock along the Remove passage, and thumped at the door of Study No. 11. He threw the door open, and marched in with his heavy tread.

Tom Redwing was alone there. He had finished his preparation, and was working at Latin for his coming exam, when the juniors crowded in.

"Hallo! What do you fellows want?" he asked, in surprise, suspecting for a moment that it was a rag.

But Bolsover major soon showed that his intentions were not hostile.

"Sorry to interrupt," he said. "You've done your prep?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, you can chuck swotting for a bit. I've got something to say to you."

Redwing smiled faintly, and laid down his pen.

"Go ahead!" he replied.

"About Smithy!" said Bolsover major warmly. "Smithy's insulted you."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Nonsense, eh? Didn't he cut you dead in the quad when you were as thick as thieves only yesterday?" demanded Bolsover.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "I saw him."

"You shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"Shut up!" roared the bully of the Remove autocratically. Apparently Bolsover was prepared to do all the talking that was needful.

Billy Bunter granted, and shut up.

"You've been insulted, Redwing," said Bolsover major. "I'm going to point out to you what you're bound to do, as you don't seem to have thought of it yourself."

"You needn't trouble."

"You're bound to ask Smithy into the gym," said Bolsover, unheeding. "You can't do less, unless you want the Remove to think you a funk."

"Oh, rot!"

"Perhaps you are a funk!" roared Bolsover, beginning to get wrathful.

"I hope I am not."

"Well, then, you're going to lick Smithy."

"I'm going to do my work if you'll give me a rest," answered Redwing composedly.

Bolsover snorted. He was actuated by quite friendly feelings towards Redwing so far. But his friendly feelings were beginning to wear thin.

"You're not going to fight Smithy?" he demanded.

"Certainly not!"

"Why not?"

"Look here, Bolsover, I dare say you mean well, but I don't want any advice on that subject. Give a fellow a rest!"

"Are you afraid of him?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Then you're a funk!" roared Bolsover.

Tom Redwing took up his pen again.

"Let it go at that if you like," he said.

"Now, let's have a rest."

Some of Bolsover's followers chuckled. This was a facer for the great Bolsover, who did not quite know what to say next. Skinner and Snoop winked at one

another. They did not like Redwing, but they rather liked seeing the bully of the Remove taken down a peg.

Bolsover glared round at them.

"What's the cackle about?" he demanded truculently.

The cackle stopped at once.

"Now, then, Redwing—" continued Bolsover.

"Chuck it!" answered Redwing.

"Look here, you've got to fight Smithy!" exclaimed Bolsover savagely. "We're all down on Smithy for the way he's treated you."

"You needn't be."

"Do you mean to say that Smithy's in the right?"

"I don't mean to say anything."

"We're backing you up," explained Bolsover as patiently as he could. "You don't seem to catch on, Redwing. We're on your side."

"No need to take sides at all so far as I can see," answered Redwing. "Let the matter drop, there's a good chap!"

Snort!

"Then you won't fight Smithy?"

"No, I won't!"

"After he's insulted you in open quad—turned up his cheeky nose at you with half Greyfriars looking on?"

"Oh, hang it, will you dry up?"

"Then you're a funk!" roared Bolsover major. "A sneaking funk! You oughtn't to be spoken to in the Remove. I sha'n't speak to you again, at any rate until you've stood up to Smithy!"

"Thanks!"

"Wha-at?"

"That's a relief, at any rate!"

There was another chortle from Bolsover's followers.

The bully of the Remove crimsoned, and clenched his big fists. He had come there to see that Redwing did not fail to fight Smithy; but just then he looked more like fighting Redwing himself.

"Yah! Funk!" chortled Billy Bunter.

"Funk!" hooted Skinner.

Redwing looked up very quietly.

"I'm not going to fight Smithy, Skinner, but I'm quite ready to fight you, if you like—here and now, if you want me to!"

"Chance for you, Skinner!" grinned Ogilvy.

Skinner did not take his chance. He shrugged his shoulders, but he did not call Redwing a funk again. Bolsover major seemed at a loss.

"If you're finished you may as well clear!" remarked Redwing calmly.

"Well, I suppose we've finished," said Bolsover major. "You can shut up Skinner, but you can't shut me up, Redwing! I say you're a funk!"

"Well now you've said it, get out!"

"You don't want to fight me?" jeered Bolsover major.

"Oh, don't bother! I'll fight you, if you like!" exclaimed Redwing impatiently. "I don't care a rap either way."

"If you're ready to fight me, why ain't you ready to fight Smithy?" demanded Bolsover major, who could see no reason in Redwing's attitude, and was puzzled accordingly. Bolsover major was not gifted with much penetration.

"Is that a riddle?"

"No, you ass! It's a question. I don't understand you!"

"Lots of things you don't understand, Bolsover! I'm not going to fight Smithy, but I'm ready to fight any other fellow in the Remove who wants me to," answered Redwing calmly. "And just now I'd like to get on with my work!"

"I suppose you're pulling my leg somehow," said Bolsover major at last. "I'll give you time to think it over, Redwing. If you don't fight Smithy to-

morrow, I'll see that you get the white feather!"

"Rats!"

Bolsover major tramped angrily out of the study, puzzled and annoyed. The other fellows followed him out, Billy Bunter the last, and as he went the Owl of the Remove put his head back into the study, blinked at Redwing through his glimmering spectacles, and said:

"Yah! Funk!"

Redwing made a movement. It was only to dip his pen into the inkpot, but Billy Bunter vanished like a ghost at cock-crow. The sailorman's son laughed, and went on with his work.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The High Hand!

THE next day Redwing and the Bounder were on the same terms—that is to say, not on any terms at all. But the Removites had got used to the new state of affairs by that time, and it did not interest them so much. A friendship had ended, and the former chums went their separate ways, and that was all. Skinner & Co. were still in a mood of great satisfaction, and Billy Bunter was still inquisitive, and Bolsover major was very surly—apparently considering that the matter was somehow his business. But most of

DOES YOUR SOLDIER PAL WRITE TO YOU?

Notepaper is "some" price these days, but none of us would grudge Tommy all the paper he needs on which to write those cheery letters of his if paper were treble the price it is to-day. Still, it's no use simply "gassing" about it; it's up to each one to do his bit to pay the piper.

It costs the Y.M.C.A., who supply Tommy with free stationery, no less than £60,000 a year. Sixpence will supply your own or somebody else's pal with enough notepaper to write one letter each week for a year. Going to let him have it? Of course you are!

So send sixpence along to-day to Y.M.C.A. (Stationery Fund), Tottenham Court Road, London, W.C., mentioning that it comes from a reader of this paper.

the Remove found other matters to think of.

That Tom Redwing felt the break with his chum was very probable; but his calm, sedate face gave no clue to his thoughts. He was working away industriously for his prize exam, and he worked harder than ever now in his spare time. It was a relief from painful thoughts.

But he had not yet done with Skinner & Co. Those cheery youths, from a spirit of malicious mischief, had set themselves to prevent Redwing working for the exam successfully, and they were all the keener now that the intervention of the Bounder, whom they feared, was not to be expected.

On Wednesday Harry Wharton & Co. were playing a match with the Upper Fourth, and, as Redwing was not in the team, he intended to put in a good afternoon at study. That was Skinner's great opportunity. Skinner & Co. were grinning together outside Redwing's door when Vernon-Smith came down the passage.

The Bounder paused as he passed the trio.

Skinner gave him a cheery nod.

"Join up, Smithy!" he said, with a wink to his comrades.

"What's on?" asked Vernon-Smith quietly.

"We're going to rehearse in my study," said Snoop. "Tin whistle, mouth-organ and fireirons complete."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott.

"Bring your kettle and a stump and join the band," said Skinner. "We're giving Redwing musical honours to help him swot!"

The Bounder compressed his lips. But it was scarcely possible for him to interfere, even if he wanted to. Without answering, he went on his way, and disappeared down the staircase.

"Just as well he's gone," remarked Snoop. "He's going down to the bay to see his new boat, I hear. Redwing was going with him, but that's knocked on the head now. What a sad end to a touchin' friendship!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you never know how to take Smithy!" said Sidney James sapiently. "Just like him to cut up rusty and back up that cad, though he's quarrelled with him. He would do anything for the sake of being caddish! Now, then, Smithy's bunked, and everybody else's at the cricket. Time!"

And the three entered the study.

Redwing ceased to work at once. He knew what it meant. He had been through it before, and it was impossible to prevent Snoop and Stott from kicking up a shindy in their own study if they liked. He began to gather up his books.

"Sorry we shall have to rehearse here, Redwing," said Skinner blandly. "We can't go to the Form-room. Somebody's locked the door and hidden the key."

Redwing paused.

"You mean you've locked up the Form-room, and hidden the key, so that I can't get there?" he said quietly.

"I say, you're getting suspicious," said Skinner reprovingly. "You shouldn't be suspicious, Redwing. It's a sign of low training. It is not worthy of the noble mansion you were brought up in at Hawkscliff!"

"He, he, he!"

Redwing sat down again. He was cornered, as it were, and he could only hope that the cads of the Remove would get tired of their malicious amusement, and leave him in peace. But Skinner & Co., as they started their precious rehearsal, did not seem like getting tired. They were certainly prepared to keep it up as long as Redwing wanted to work.

As it happened, however, Skinner's little game was not destined to prosper that afternoon. Harry Wharton was thinking about it. The Remove was batting first in the match, and when Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were out Harry spoke to them on the subject.

"You fellows won't be wanted for a bit," he said. "How would you like to cut off to the House and see how Redwing's getting on?"

"Eh? What about Redwing?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He's swotting, as usual!"

"Well, let him swot!"

"I fancy Skinner's at his little game again. It's a rotten shame that a fellow can't be allowed to work if he wants to," said Wharton. "I can't very well leave the field, but you fellows can."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Why doesn't Redwing kick 'em out?" he snapped.

"Well, it's Snoop and Stott's study, as well as his, and he doesn't feel entitled to. But if they're making a shindy, you can interfere without bothering about the rights of the matter," said Wharton, laughing. "The Famous Five are above the law, you know!"

"Oh, all right!" said Johnny Bull.

"Come on, Bob!"

"Right-ho!" said Bob cheerily.

The two juniors left the field, and

Wharton went to join Squiff at the wickets. As Johnny Bull and Bob came up to the Remove passage they had evidence that Skinner & Co. were at work. A terrific din proceeded from Study No. 11. The shrieks of a discordant tin whistle jarred with the buzz of a mouth-organ and the clang of a poker on the fender.

"That's what they call a rehearsal!" said Bob, with a grim look. "We'll rehearse 'em! Come on!"

Bob threw open the door of No. 11.

Skinner & Co. were going strong, and Redwing, with a throbbing head, was doing his best to work amid the din.

"Stop that row!" roared Johnny Bull. The rehearsal stopped.

"Hallo! Did our harmony attract you here?" asked Harold Skinner affably. "This is really an unsolicited testimonial. Come in! No charge for admission, though you don't hear music like this at the Queen's Hall!"

"Get out!"

"What?"

"Out!"

"I suppose we can do as we like in our own study?" exclaimed Stott warmly.

"That's were you make a little mistake, my pippin," answered Bob Cherry cheerily. "Give me that poker!" He jerked it away from Snoop. "Now give me that mouth-organ, Stott!"

"I won't! Yaroo! Keep that poker away, you beast! Oh, crumbs!"

"Will you give me that mouth-organ?"

"Ow! There it is, you rotter!"

"Thanks! I'll have that tin whistle now, Skinner!"

"You won't!" said Skinner between his teeth, his eyes glittering like a cat's. "It's mine, and I'll do as I like. Snoop's asked me into this study."

"Yes, I have," agreed Snoop. "You fellows haven't any right to interfere in my study!"

"Bless your little heart, we're not bothering about the rights of the matter!" answered Bob Cherry. "Give me that whistle, Skinner, or else I shall prod you in the ribs with this poker—like that!"

"Yaroo!"

"Or tap you on the napper—like that!"

"Whoop!"

"Or dot you on the nose with it—like—"

"Here's the whistle, you rotter!" yelled Skinner.

"Thanks! Now get out of the study! Kick 'em as they pass, Johnny!"

"You bet!" said Johnny Bull tersely.

The trio of dismayed young rascals glared at the chums of the Remove with expressions worthy of Von Tirpitz. They were utterly enraged, and so furious that they were almost inclined to attack the two juniors fistically, but not quite. The three weedy slackers would not have been much use against Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull.

"Are you going?" asked Bob politely.

"No!" yelled Skinner furiously.

"Here goes, then!"

Bob threw the poker, the whistle, and the mouth-organ into the grate, and advanced on Skinner with his hands up. Redwing looked on in silence, with a slight smile on his face. Skinner put up his hands in defence, and he was driven out of the study under a shower of heavy taps which made him yell.

Snoop and Stott did not interfere. They had no chance, for Johnny Bull was dealing with them. They clung to him as he drove them out, and the sturdy junior grasped them both by the collar, and brought their heads together with a sounding crack.

There were simultaneous yells of

anguish from Snoop and Stott. They went tottering into the passage together, roaring.

"All serene, Redwing," said Bob cheerily. "Get on with your swotting, old chap. There won't be any more shindy!"

Bob and Johnny followed the raggers out. Skinner & Co. were helped along to the stairs by a vigorous application of boot-leather. They yelled and squirmed and dodged breathlessly down the staircase.

"Now, keep off the grass, my dear old beans!" grinned Bob. "Any more shindy in the Remove passage, my pippins, and we'll give you some more of the same, only more so. Savvy?"

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry returned to the cricket-field. Skinner & Co. picked themselves up, and dusted themselves down, breathing fury.

"Let's go back," said Skinner at last. "We've a right to do as we like in the study."

Snoop sniffed, and Stott grunted. That was the only reply they vouchsafed to Skinner's suggestion. They had had enough; and, on reflection, Harold Skinner decided that he had had enough. That afternoon Tom Redwing put in the best day's work he had done for a long time.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The White Feather!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was looking thoughtful and a little moody as he came back to Greyfriars late in the afternoon.

He was not in a happy mood.

His resentment against his chum was as keen as ever, if not more so; but he missed Redwing.

He would not acknowledge it even to himself, but the loss of the sailor-lad's friendship left a blank in his life.

Somehow or other, he had pulled better with Tom Redwing than with any other fellow he had known. He had a regard for Harry Wharton, but he had never chummed with him, and was never likely to. There were others fellows in the Remove whom he liked, and with whom he was on friendly terms, but none whom he cared to call a chum. Redwing was utterly unlike the reckless, sardonic Bounder, and it was perhaps upon their difference of character that their friendship had been founded.

It had been a good thing for Vernon-Smith. He was well aware that the quiet, simple sailorman's son thought and felt on a higher plane, and, unconsciously, Vernon-Smith had striven towards it. More than once, he knew, he had shocked or hurt Tom by the cynical view that came natural to him, and in Tom's company he had come to talk much less recklessly than was his wont, and it had been all the better for him. He knew that in Tom he had a pal who would not have hesitated to risk life itself for him—as, indeed, Tom Redwing had done once. But the Bounder could not forgive what had happened in the affair of Skinner.

Vernon-Smith naturally wanted his chum in his study instead of Skinner, but it had been chiefly for Tom's sake that he had striven to bring about the change, so that the scholarship junior could do his work in peace there. Skinner had refused to change studies from sheer malice. He would really have been more comfortable in No. 11 with his friends. Vernon-Smith had schemed to get the cad of the Remove under his thumb, and force the change upon him, and he had succeeded.

And then Tom Redwing had refused to accept! He did not like the methods Smithy had used—and he could not pre-

tend that he did—and he would not force Skinner to give up his study without his consent. Certainly he had not meant to lecture the Bounder, but he had had to refuse to take advantage of sharp practice, whilst grateful for Smithy's good intentions. Smithy's cheeks burned when he thought of it.

He missed his friend, but he was quite implacable. He intended to go on exactly as if Tom Redwing had never come to Greyfriars, and dismiss the fellow from his mind entirely. He missed him. Especially that afternoon he had missed him, when it had been arranged a week ahead that they were to sail the Bounder's new boat together. That arrangement had fallen through without a word spoken on either side. The Bounder would not admit that he missed Redwing, but he was feeling moody and discontented.

In the village, too, he had come across Tom's father, the hearty old sailorman, who was about to start on a new voyage. Bill Redwing had greeted him very cordially.

The sailorman was very kindly disposed towards the wealthy schoolboy who had made a friend of his son. He had asked about Tom, and Smithy had answered with great discomfort, not caring to explain to the unsuspecting seaman that matters were on a different footing now.

Later, in the lane, he met Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, of Cliff House School, and Miss Clara had asked him merrily where his alter ego was, as they had always been seen together; and again Smithy had answered very uncomfortably. He did not care to tell the Cliff House girls that Redwing was no longer his friend, or even an acquaintance. He was well aware that they would have known upon whose shoulders to lay the blame.

The fact that he was regarded as being in the wrong, however, only made the Bounder feel more bitter. He was ready to admit that he had played sharp with Skinner, but it was the only way to deal with the cad, he considered, and he had not done it for his own sake. He could not forgive Tom Redwing for not seeing the matter eye to eye with him.

There was a shout from Little Side as the Bounder came in, and Vernon-Smith turned his steps in that direction. The junior match had just come to an end, and the cricketers were coming off. Bolsover major had been playing for the Remove, the match not demanding the best team Wharton could put into the field. Bolsover was looking very pleased with himself. He had knocked up a dozen runs off the bowling of the Fourth.

"How has it gone, Bolsover?" asked the Bounder.

"All serene, without your help, old scout," answered Bolsover major. "They're licked by thirty runs!"

"You've made a century?" asked Vernon-Smith, with an irony that was quite lost on Percy Bolsover.

"No such luck; only twelve," said Bolsover. "But centuries weren't wanted. The Fourth don't amount to much at cricket. I'll tell you what, Smithy. You can stand out of the St. Jim's match, when it comes off, and give me a chance."

"Good idea!" smiled the Bounder. "But I don't think a dozen runs would be of much use on that occasion."

"Oh, none of your sarcasm!" growled Bolsover. "By the way, you haven't had your fight with Redwing yet."

"I'm not going to, either."

"I've told him he's a funk."

"More fool you!"

"I say, you haven't made it up with him again, have you?" demanded Bolsover major.

"Find out!"

With that the Bounder walked away.

A little later, when he came up to the Remove passage, he sighted two or three juniors grinning outside No. 11, and went along to see what was on. On the outside of the door a large white feather was fastened with drawing-pins.

The Bounder's brow grew black.

"What silly fool put that there?" he exclaimed angrily.

"He, he, he! Bolsover!" answered Billy Bunter. "It's the white feather for Redwing, you know! He, he, he! He's a funk!"

The study door opened just then, and Tom Redwing came out, tired after his afternoon's hard work in the study.

He glanced at the grinning juniors, and then at the Bounder's scowling face, and the next moment caught sight of the white feather pinned on the door. He gave a start as he saw it.

Then, compressing his lips, he walked down the passage, leaving it where it was.

"He, he, he!" came from Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" said Russell. "Fancy a chap taking that quietly!"

"Blessed funk!" jeered Snoop.

"You didn't say so while he was here," remarked Russell drily.

Vernon-Smith stepped up to the door and jerked the feather away. He tore it to pieces, and scattered them along the passage. Then, with a black brow, he went to his own study. Billy Bunter emitted a low cackle as he passed him, but it turned into a yell of wrath as a back-hander from the Bounder sent him staggering against the wall.

"Yah! Beast!" yelled Bunter. "Come back, and I'll lick you!"

The Bounder's door slammed.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Chips In!

"**T**HAT cad!" said Cecil Ponsonby. It was a few days later, and Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe School, had just come upon Tom Redwing in Pegg Lane.

Redwing was alone. It was a half-holiday, and Tom had been to Hawkscliff to say good-bye to his father before he left for sea. But for the break in their friendship Vernon-Smith would have gone with him; but Tom was alone now, and he was walking slowly, with his eyes on the ground, in a thoughtful mood, when the Highcliffians spotted him.

He was not so cheerful as usual just then. It was not only the difference with his pal. He was not thinking of that at the moment. His father was going to sea again. Tom would not have uttered one word to keep the sailorman from his duty, but he could not help thinking of the dangers his father was going into.

Bill Redwing's work was on the food-ships, in peril of mine and submarine. In these dark and terrible days of war the wings of the Angel of Death hover incessantly over the men who go down to the sea in ships. Tom Redwing was thinking of that, and it banished all other thoughts from his mind.

He did not see the nuts of Highcliffe till he was quite near to them, and then his glance fell carelessly upon Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour. He would have passed them without a sign. He was in no mood for a shindy with his old enemies. But Ponsonby & Co. did not mean to be passed. Ponsonby made a gesture to his comrades, and they blocked the way of the sailorman's son, and he had to stop.

It was a lonely spot, and Ponsonby grinned with satisfaction. His old enemy, who had thrashed him, was at his mercy, and Pon considered that a favourable opportunity had come for repaying that

thrashing with interest—Pon not being troubled by any scruples about fair play.

"Fancy meetin' you, dear boy!" smiled Ponsonby.

Tom looked at him quietly.

"Let me pass, please!" he said.

"No hurry!" smiled Ponsonby. "Do you remember, dear boy, some time ago you had the dashed impertinence to lay your low hands on me?"

"Do you want me to lay them on again?"

"Yaas, exactly! Now's your time!" grinned the dandy of Highcliffe. "Collar him, you fellows! We'll give him a ragging now we've got the chance!"

"Absolutely!" chuckled Vavasour.

Tom Redwing backed away a little.

He was probably a match for any two of the nuts of Highcliffe, but four to one was long odds.

"Don't let him run!" exclaimed Ponsonby.

Redwing's lip curled. He could have escaped the encounter by cutting across the fields and putting on speed, but nothing would have induced him to run from the Highcliffians.

He backed to the side of the road, where a big tree stood, and set his back against the broad trunk. With four enemies to face, he preferred to have them all in front.

"You can come on!" he said contemptuously.

His hands were up now ready, his blue eyes gleaming above them. He looked so fit and sturdy that the Highcliffians, in spite of the odds on their side, hesitated a little. Ponsonby had especially good reason to remember what a hard hitter the Hawkscliff lad was.

"Oh, rush the cad!" mumbled Monson.

"Yaas; go for him, absolutely!" said Vavasour, keeping in the rear himself, however.

Adolphus Theodore Vavasour was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Tom Redwing smiled slightly.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Ponsonby, much exasperated by that smile. "Collar the cad an' down him! We sha'n't get another chance like this!"

"We're followin' you!" said Gadsby.

It was up to Ponsonby to lead, and he led with a rush at Tom Redwing, and his comrades followed him, Vavasour bringing up the rear.

Redwing's hands moved like lightning.

Ponsonby caught a hard clenched fist with his chin, and went whirling backwards with a yell.

Gadsby and Monson yelled, too, the next moment, but they managed to get to close quarters, and to close with the sailor-lad.

Redwing struggled fiercely in their grasp.

He would soon have accounted for the two slackers of Highcliffe, but Vavasour, seeing him held, piled in, and succeeded in getting his arm round Tom's neck, dragging him over.

A moment more and Ponsonby was on his feet and piling in.

Redwing went down in the road, with the four Highcliffians sprawling over him, clinging to him like cats.

But even on the ground he was not an easy victim.

Ponsonby's idea was to pin him down and rag him to his heart's content, but it proved to be a difficult task. Gadsby rolled out of the conflict, yelling with anguish, and clasping his jaw with both hands, and Redwing struggled hard with the other three.

But he was fairly downed at last, with the three kneeling on him, and Ponsonby's eyes blazed down at him with savage hatred.

"Got him now!" panted the dandy of Highcliffe. "By gad, we'll put him through it!"

"Look out!" murmured Vavasour. "There's Smithy!"

Ponsonby gave a fierce look round.

Vernon-Smith of the Remove had appeared on the road, and he quickened his steps as he saw the struggle going on.

He stood now looking on, with his hands in his pockets and a strange expression on his face.

Tom Redwing saw him, but he did not speak.

He would not ask his former chum for aid. If Smithy chose to render it unasked that was another matter.

"Hallo, Smithy!" said Ponsonby, rather uncertainly.

"Hallo!" answered the Bounder.

"You can trot on! This isn't any bizney of yours, you know."

"No?" said Smithy.

"Oh, I've heard it all from Skinner!" said Ponsonby, with a grin. "You've got fed up with the cad, as I thought you would. Look here, you can lend us a hand raggin' the low hound, if you like!"

"Four not enough against one?" asked the Bounder.

"Oh, we don't want your help!" snapped Ponsonby. "Go an' eat coke! You're not goin' to interfere, anyway!"

Vernon-Smith took his hands from his pockets.

"Your mistake, Pon," he answered. "I am. Can't stand by and see a Greyfriars man ragged. Let him alone!"

"Mind your own business!" howled Ponsonby.

"This is where I chip in!" said the Bounder coolly. "I'm comin' for you, Vav. Sorry, but 'Noblesse oblige,' you know. I'm comin' for your nose!"

Vernon-Smith strode forward, but he never reached Vavasour's nose. Vavasour would as soon have tackled a wild Hun as the Bounder of Greyfriars. He skipped away in a great hurry.

"Here, no larks, Smithy!" he quavered from a safe distance. "I'm not goin' to fight you, old top!"

"You're my game, then, Monson!"

"Sheer off!" growled Monson.

Instead of sheering off the Bounder rushed at him.

Ponsonby & Co. had to jump up to defend themselves against the new attack, and the moment they released him Tom Redwing sprang to his feet.

For a moment the Bounder was facing three, but it was only for a moment. Then Tom Redwing was very busy with Ponsonby.

The elegant Pon put up a fight, but it did not amount to much. He was knocked right and left, and finished in the ditch, which was, fortunately for Pon's elegant clobber, dry. But there were nettles there in abundance, and Ponsonby howled dismally as he sprawled in them.

Redwing turned from him, leaving him sprawling, and ran to the Bounder's aid. But Vernon-Smith did not need aid. He was driving Monson and Gadsby before him, and as Redwing advanced they took to their heels simultaneously, following the noble example Vavasour had already set them.

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

Cecil Ponsonby crawled out of the ditch, his face furious.

The Bounder made a step towards him, laughing, and Ponsonby, with a savage look, ran after his companions.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Redwing joined in the laugh. The sudden flight of the Highcliffians, who were still two to one, was rather entertaining.

Then, as the nuts of Highcliffe disappeared across the fields, Tom Redwing and Vernon-Smith looked at one another, and both were silent.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Word!

REDWING was the first to speak. "Thank you, Smithy!" he said simply.

"Not at all!" answered the Bounder, thrusting his hands carelessly into his pockets.

"I should have got a ragging if you hadn't come up," said Redwing.

"Looked like it."

"I'm much obliged."

"No need."

Redwing coloured, and turned away; but he turned back again. The Bounder's face was impassive.

"Look here, Smithy," said Tom Redwing, in a low voice. "I—I"—his colour deepened as he found no encouragement in the Bounder's hard face—

"I'm sorry, Smithy, that we've fallen out," he went on, his voice a little unsteady. "If you wanted to be friends again, you'd find me quite willing."

"How good of you!"

Redwing started as if he had been stung at the ironical tone.

"Smithy!"

"Well?"

"I—I think I ought to say it," said Redwing. "You've been a good pal to me, and I can't forget it. There's really nothing for us to quarrel about."

"Nothin' but the fact that I shock you, and I find it rather hard to live up to your high standards!" sneered the Bounder.

"Nothing of the sort! You can't say that I've ever found fault with you, or preached to you, or anything of the kind."

"You made out that I played a dirty trick on Skinner."

"I never said so."

"You thought so."

Redwing was silent for a moment.

"A chap can't help what he thinks," he said at last. "But I didn't think it was a dirty trick—nothing of the kind. I knew you did it for my sake, so that I

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could work at peace in your study, and I was grateful—I'm grateful now. Only, I didn't think I could agree to tricking Skinner out of his study—"

"Tricking him!" said the Bounder bitterly. "Yes, that's the word! I'm rather too tricky for you. You learned such high ideas in your hut at Hawks-cliff!"

"I didn't mean to say that exactly, either. Only—"

"What's the good of beatin' about the bush!" exclaimed the Bounder impatiently. "You thought I played it low down on Skinner, and you wouldn't be a party to it. That's the long and short of it. That's your gratitude, as you call it!"

"Not exactly; only—only, I didn't want to take advantage of it, that's all. I wasn't lecturing you, only—"

"Do you think I did right?"

"Well, no," said Redwing honestly. "I can't say that. If you thought it was right, it was right for you, I suppose. But I didn't think it right, and what's the good of pretending that I did?"

"That's enough, then; we don't agree," said Vernon-Smith.

"I don't quite think that you thought it right, either, Smithy. You were stretching a point with your conscience to do me a good turn."

"And you preached at me by way of thanks!" sneered the Bounder. "Just what I might have expected!"

"I never did! But—but—well, it doesn't seem much use talking!" said Redwing—"but I don't see why we couldn't have a difference of opinion and remain friends all the same. Friends are not supposed to agree with one another in every matter of opinion. That's asking rather too much!"

"You want to be friends?"

"I don't mind admitting that," said Redwing frankly, "I'd be very glad to be on good terms again, Smithy."

It was a frank and honest admission, and it would have appealed to Vernon-Smith but for the canker of bitterness that was in his breast. But the Bounder was in one of his savage and malicious moods, which Tom Redwing had not yet learned to understand—which it was doubtful if the frank and simple-hearted sailor-lad ever would understand.

The Bounder did admit to himself that he had been guilty of very sharp practice indeed with Harold Skinner, but he justified it because it was for Redwing's benefit. And he felt that Redwing, for whose sake he had stretched a point with his conscience, had turned upon him, and that thought roused all the bitterness and malice in his wilful nature—and there was a good deal.

He did not reply immediately, but the mocking smile that came over his face puzzled Tom Redwing.

"I don't see why I should mind owning it," said Tom. "It wasn't my will that we quarrelled. I owe you no grudge, Smithy."

"I suppose it's natural," said the Bounder.

"Why not?" said Tom. "You've been a good friend to me, when I needed one badly enough. I can't forget that."

"Some other things you don't forget, either, I fancy."

"What do you mean, Smithy?"

"Isn't it rather useful for a poor devil of a scholarship-hunter to be on pally terms with a millionaire's son?" said the Bounder deliberately.

Redwing started back.

"Smithy!" he exclaimed.

He uttered only that one word; but there was a volume of surprise, disdain, and pain in his voice.

The Bounder flushed a little.

But he did not repent the ungenerous words. He did not believe what he said,

but he found a malicious pleasure in saying it.

"I dare say I came in useful," he drawled. "I'm not surprised that, on second thoughts, you don't think you did a clever thing in losing a friend who was worth keepin'."

He stopped at that, the sneering words arrested by the look of scorn on Redwing's face.

A silence followed.

"If that's how you look at it, Vernon-Smith, that's enough!" said Redwing at last. "I'd never have thought that of you! Do you think I thought for one minute of your money, or the use you might be to me? Do you think I'd ever have made use of you or your friendship? But you're right. Friendship is out of place between a millionaire's son and a chap in my position. I knew cads like Skinner and Snoop thought something of the sort; but I'd have punched any fellow who told me that you could suspect me of such meanness. I'd have believed it from nobody but yourself."

The Bounder looked at him very curiously.

"You don't want to be friends now?" he said, with a jeer in his voice.

Redwing shook his head.

"No!" he answered. "We can never be friends again. I couldn't trust you, if you wanted to!"

With that, Redwing walked away, leaving the Bounder standing and looking after him. An impulse came to the Bounder to call after him, to ask his forgiveness for his bitter, unjust words. But he checked it. Tom Redwing disappeared across the fields, and the Bounder, with a moody, discontented brow, went on his way.

He had acted like a cad, and he knew it. There was a bad streak in his nature, and it had been uppermost then. What he had said was beyond forgiveness, and there could be no going back. Yet, even while he had spoken the words that stung the sailor-lad to the very heart, he had not believed them himself. He had sunk to the level of Skinner and Snoop for no reason but to gratify his angry resentment. And he had broken for ever now with his former friend.

It was nearly time for calling-over when



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Vernon-Smith came into the School House with a knitted brow. Billy Bunter met him in the passage, with a fat grin.

"I say, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith glared at him.

"That beast Redwing is getting worse than ever," rattled on Bunter. "He came in looking as black as a Hun, and just shoved me out of the way when I spoke to him. Actually shoved me, you know—me! I'll tell you what, Smithy. The sooner you give that cad a licking the better! I'll hold your jacket, if you like."

Smithy's reply was an angry shove, which caused the Owl of the Remove to sit down suddenly, and he went up the staircase without a word.

Billy Bunter blinked after him in amazement and wrath.

"Why, the beast!" he gasped. "He's just as bad as the other beast! I say, Bob—Bob, old chap!" Bunter scrambled up as Bob Cherry came in with a bat under his arm. "Bob, old man, you ought to lick that cad Smithy—"

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

"That awful beast Smithy!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "You ought to lick him, old fellow—he's been saying awful things about you! Yaroooooh!"

Bob Cherry's reply was unexpected. It came in the form of a lunge from his bat, and again the Owl of the Remove sat down suddenly.

"Yaroooh!" he roared.

Bob Cherry grinned, and passed on.

"Yow-ow! Why, he's as bad a beast as Smithy, and Smithy's as bad as Redwing—and they're all beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Latest!

HARRY WHARTON stopped.

It was the following Saturday afternoon, and Wharton was coming along the Remove passage when he heard a crashing sound from Study No. 11.

Redwing, as usual, was working indoors, his prize exam being very near at hand now.

Wharton's brow darkened as he heard the din from the study. His immediate thought was that Skinner & Co. were ragging the prize-hunter again, in spite of the lesson they had received.

He turned the handle of the door and threw it open.

Tom Redwing was seated at the table with his books. Two other juniors were in the study—Stott and Vernon-Smith. They were engaged in a bout with fencing-foils.

There was a good deal more crashing of wooden foils than of fencing in that bout. In fact, it was clear that the two were making as much noise as they could.

Harry Wharton looked at them blankly. "Smithy!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

He was utterly taken aback. That the Bounder was on bad terms with his old friend he knew; but to see Vernon-Smith joining in the base persecution of Tom Redwing was a startling shock to the captain of the Remove. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

The Bounder looked round coolly.

"Hallo, Wharton!" he said. "Come in and have a go with the foils!"

"Do!" grinned Stott.

"Is this a joke?" asked Harry.

"Joke? No! No joke about fencing, that I know of!"

Redwing avoided meeting Wharton's glance. His face was flushed and troubled. He had been surprised when Vernon-Smith displayed this new development, and more pained than



The fellow who hung back! (See Chapter 11.)

shocked. It was not pleasant to him to have to despise his one-time chum.

"Look here, Smithy," exclaimed Wharton bluntly, "you know jolly well you're not fencing—Stott can't fence! And the gym is the place for it, not the study!"

"Well, it's Stott's study, and Stott doesn't object!"

"Not at all!" said Stott, with a chuckle.

"Oh, don't talk rot! You're doing this so that Redwing can't work!"

"Get on with it, Stott!" said the Bounder. "We're wasting time!"

Crash! Crash!

The foils came together again, and the two juniors trampled about the study, hitting and parrying with as much noise as possible. It was more like carpet-beating than fencing.

Wharton looked on in silence, almost dumbfounded.

Skinner & Co.'s persecution had been stopped with a high hand. Now that the Bounder had apparently joined in it the matter was not so simple. But the captain of the Remove broke in at last.

"Stop that row!" he said authoritatively.

"Eh?"

"If you want to fence, you can go into the gym! You can't do it in a study while a fellow's working!"

"Thanks! I'm quite comfy here!" drawled the Bounder.

"I'm blessed if I quite understand you, Smithy! I'd never have suspected you of a caddish trick like this!"

"You live and learn!" answered the Bounder, unmoved.

"Well, I suppose you can be as caddish as you like!" said Wharton sharply.

"But you've got to stop this, and that's plain!"

"Get on with it, Stott!" said the Bounder calmly.

Stott looked rather uneasily at Wharton. The Bounder was a powerful ally on the side of the raggers; but the captain of the Remove was not a fellow to be trifled with.

"Stop it, Stott!" said Harry quietly.

"And you stop it, Smithy!"

"I decline to stop it!" answered the

Bounder off-handedly. "I shall do exactly as I like!"

"You won't!"

"You'll stop me, perhaps?" sneered the Bounder.

"I'll stop you fast enough!" said Wharton, his anger rising. "I'm blessed if I understand how you can want to be such a cad!"

"Stop me, then, if you can!" said Vernon-Smith, with a dangerous look.

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Will you put down that foil?" he exclaimed.

"No!"

"Then I'll take it from you!"

Tom Redwing jumped up, and interposed.

"Hold on, Wharton! I don't want you to interfere! Let Smithy do as he likes—I'll get out of the study!"

Wharton thrust him aside.

"You can please yourself about getting out of the study; but Smithy won't do as he likes!" he answered. "Smithy's going to stop!"

"But—"

Wharton did not heed him. He strode straight at the Bounder of Greyfriars. He had been very friendly with the Bounder; but this peculiar development of Vernon-Smith's character was too much for him. He grasped the Bounder's foil and wrenched it away, pitching it into a corner of the study.

The Bounder eyed him evilly.

"I suppose you know what that means, Wharton?" he said, between his teeth.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"If you're fool enough to want to fight me, I'm your man!" he answered.

"When I come back from Cliff House I'll meet you in the gym."

"You'll fight me now, or you'll stop interfering!" answered the Bounder savagely.

"There's nothing to interfere for, Wharton," said Tom Redwing, in great distress. "I'm going out—I don't care what they do in the study. For goodness' sake don't get into a fight on my account!"

"Don't go out!" snapped Wharton.

"You've got your work to do, and I'll see that you have a chance to do it!"

"I'm going to take my books down to the shore," said Tom. "I can work out of doors, anyway!"

"There's a blow coming on!" said Harry.

"I don't mind that!"

Redwing picked up his books and left the study.

Wharton hesitated.

As Redwing was gone, there was no reason why Vernon-Smith and Stott should not continue their fencing-bout if they wanted to—not that they wanted to now. The Bounder regarded him with a mocking sneer.

"Well?" he sneered.

"Well, you can do as you like now, I suppose," said Wharton. "No need to tell you what I think of you, Smithy—you can guess that! If you want the licking you've asked for, I'll be in the gym at seven."

With that the captain of the Remove quitted the study.

"Going on?" asked Stott, with a rather curious look at the Bounder.

"Nothin' to go on for!" answered Vernon-Smith lightly. "We've ragged Redwing out of the study!"

Stott laughed.

"I'm going to sail my new boat this afternoon," said the Bounder. "It's ready now. Like to come?"

"Like a bird!" answered Stott.

They left the study together. At the gates they passed the Famous Five, who were wheeling out their machines to ride over to Cliff House School. The Bounder gave them a mocking laugh as he passed. He was quite the old Bounder now, as his sudden friendship for Stott showed.

Wharton's brow was dark as he mounted his bike and rode away with his friends. It seemed that he was booked for a fight with the Bounder that evening, and he did not want to fight the Bounder. He was still feeling very angry over the scene in the study, but even more perplexed than angry. Vernon-Smith had lowered himself in his eyes—perhaps in his own eyes as well.

Harry Wharton was thinking it over as he pedalled away to Cliff House with his chums. They passed Tom Redwing on the road, and Redwing gave them a cheery nod. The sailorman's son walked on to the beach, where, under the shadow of a big rock, he settled down with his books. It was always a pleasure to Tom Redwing to be near the sea.

He glanced up for a moment as Vernon-Smith and Stott passed near him, going down to the beach. Then, as he caught the Bounder's sneering grin, his eyes dropped to his book again.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Squall!

"WHAT a ripper!" exclaimed Stott admiringly.

The Bounder was surveying his new boat with great satisfaction.

It was a handsome little craft, which Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith had given his son to replace the one he had lost on the occasion when he was wrecked at Hawks-cliff.

That was the time when Tom Redwing had risked his life to save a fellow he did not know from death under the stormy waves. It was in the shadow of death that their acquaintance had begun. But the Bounder was not thinking of that now.

Captain Stump, the old longshoreman, was in charge of the boat, and he had run it out, and was waiting for Vernon-Smith.

Smith. Stump had one eye on a black cloud that hung over the rocky Shoulder.

Vernon-Smith jumped lightly into the boat. He was fond of the sea, and was a good sailor, and he had often run risks among the rocks that most fellows would have shrunk from. The Bounder had a nerve of iron, and he seemed sometimes to like danger for its own sake.

"Here she are, sir!" said Captain Stump. "And a beauty she is. But I wouldn't take her out this afternoon, sir!"

The Bounder looked at him.

"Why not?" he demanded.

The longshoreman jerked a tobacco-stained thumb towards the lowering sky over the summit of the Shoulder.

"There's a blow coming on, sir, I reckon!"

The Bounder glanced at the sky, and shrugged his shoulders. So far as he could see, the afternoon was fine enough, though the wind was rising a little.

Stott looked rather uneasy, however. He was very far from sharing the recklessness of the Bounder.

"Looks a bit black, Smithy!" he remarked.

"What rot! It's fine enough."

"Well, Stump ought to know."

"Oh, the longshoremen are always yarning something or other to the land-lubbers," answered the Bounder carelessly. "Give me a hand with the mast."

"I reckon, sir, I wouldn't go!" said Captain Stump quietly. "It's your own business, but my word on it that it ain't safe!"

"Safe enough for me."

"The fishin'-boats are pullin' in, Master Vernon-Smith."

"Let them!"

"Well, sir, don't go far from the beach," said the old sailorman, really anxious.

"I'm going right across the bay," answered the Bounder coolly. "Jump in, Stott. What are you hanging about for?"

Captain Stump gave a grunt, and stumped away on his wooden leg to the Anchor. He had done all he could, but a willful fellow had to have his way. But Stott did not jump in.

"Look here, Smithy, it's no good playing the goat!" he exclaimed. "You know what happened to you before. You got blown out to sea because you wouldn't listen to advice."

"Does that mean that you're funky?" sneered the Bounder.

"Funky or not, I'm not going to get drowned just to show off," said Stott tartly. "Ask Redwing. He knows all about the weather."

"Bothër Redwing!"

"Well, will you keep inshore?" asked Stott.

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'm not coming."

"Stay behind, then, and be hanged to you!" retorted the Bounder. "I don't want you!"

Stott, with an angry face, walked away, while the Bounder, unheeding, proceeded to step the mast.

Tom Redwing, fifty yards distant under the big rock, was not looking at his book now. He had his eyes on the boat. He rose to his feet as Stott came by.

"Is Smithy going out alone?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, the silly fool!" grunted Stott. "He says he's going right across the bay, and Stump's told him it's not safe. I'm jolly well not going. Do you think it's safe, Redwing?"

"No."

"You'd better tell Smithy so, then. He won't listen to me."

And Stott tramped on up the shingle.

Tom Redwing stood in hesitation.

After the last words he had exchanged with the Bounder he had a deep repugnance to addressing him again.

But as the Bounder began to shake out the sail Redwing overcame his reluctance, and ran quickly down to the beach.

"Vernon-Smith!" he called out breathlessly.

The Bounder did not even turn his head.

"Smithy, there's a big blow coming on!" said Redwing anxiously. "Can't you see the cloud over the Shoulder? Don't go far out. It's not safe!"

Vernon-Smith looked round at that, with a mocking grin.

"Are you talking to me?" he asked.

"Yes. You know I am."

"Well, don't!"

"I'm warning you, Smithy—"

"You can save your breath. Get back to your swotting, or you won't bag your prize!" sneered the Bounder.

Redwing winced.

But he was not tempted to leave the perverse junior to his fate. The sailorman's son, born and bred within sight and sound of the sea, knew every sign of the weather, and he knew the danger that was hidden from the Bounder's eyes. He was too anxious about Vernon-Smith to leave him to his fate if he could help it.

"You know that I know more about the sea than you do, Smithy," he said earnestly. "If you keep inshore you'll have time to run in. But I tell you, Smithy, if you sail across the bay you'll never come back alive!"

Vernon-Smith laughed mockingly.

"Do you think you can frighten me with an old woman's tale like that?" he said. "There's hardly a cloud in the sky."

"It's coming up from behind the Shoulder."

"Oh, rot!"

"I wouldn't go to sea now, Smithy, and I'm a sailor born and bred," said Redwing.

"I dare say you wouldn't," said the Bounder mockingly. "But I'm not the chap to ask for the white feather, if you are!"

Redwing set his lips hard.

There was no time for more, for the sail had filled, and the boat glided out swiftly over the sunlit bay, the Bounder at the sheets.

The sailorman's son stood still, his feet deep in the sand where the water broke, watching. The last cruel taunt from the Bounder had silenced him, but it had not made him indifferent to the obstinate junior's fate.

He watched, hoping that Vernon-Smith's words were mere bravado, and that he would keep within a safe distance of the shore.

But that was not the Bounder's intention. He had confidence in his skill, even if a heavy blow came on, and the prospect of danger did not daunt him.

The white sail of the boat danced out on the wave farther and farther from the shore till it was little more than a speck.

"Oh, the fool—the fool!" muttered Redwing.

"Hallo!"

Bolsover major came along the beach, and Redwing glanced at him as he spoke. The bully of the Remove was in an aggressive mood.

"You haven't had your fight with Smithy yet!" he said.

Redwing did not answer him. He kept his eyes on the distant glancing sail. The black cloud over the Shoulder was spreading, and the bay was no longer sunlit. There was a deep growl of the wind over the high cliff, and the seagulls were whirling and screaming.

"Do you hear me?" snapped Bolsover major.

"Oh, don't worry!"

"Don't worry, eh?" sneered Bolsover. "I've given you the white feather, Redwing. You know that."

Redwing did not heed. His eyes were on the distant sail—the only one visible in the broad sweep of the bay. The water at his feet was coming in with greater force, drenching his boots as he stood. Out on the bay was a curling line of white foam.

"I told you," went on Bolsover, "that if you didn't fight Smithy you'd have to fight me. We don't want funks in the Remove. You hear that, Redwing?"

"Oh, hold your tongue!" snapped Redwing at last.

"Wha-at?" ejaculated Bolsover major, quite taken aback by that answer.

Redwing clenched his hands hard, but he was not looking at Bolsover. The bay, lately so calm, was tossing in lines of foam, and the heavy swell rolled ashore with a booming sound.

Far out on the water, almost invisible to the eye, was the dancing sail of Vernon-Smith's boat—dancing and dipping till it seemed at every moment about to plunge into the sea.

"He will be drowned! Oh, the fool—the madman!" groaned Redwing.

Bolsover's expression changed.

"Hallo! Is that a boat?" he exclaimed, looking out to sea. "Who's in it—some silly ass of a tripper?"

"It's Smithy."

"What a silly idiot!" said Bolsover major. "He nearly got drowned before. He's always looking for trouble."

Redwing uttered a sudden cry of dismay, almost of pain.

The dipping sail had dipped deep, and it did not glance up again. The Bounder's boat was gunwale under!

"Capsized!" stammered Bolsover major.

Redwing stared fixedly seaward. His eyes, accustomed to distances, saw what the junior beside him could not distinguish. A boat rolled bottom upward on the rough swell of the sea, and to the overturned boat a figure was clinging.

"He's done for!" muttered Bolsover major, his lips white. "Can you see him now, Redwing?"

"He's clinging to the boat!" muttered Tom.

"That can't last long."

Redwing set his teeth.

"He's got to be helped, and we've got to help him!" he said.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Valley of the Shadow!

TOM REDWING looked round him wildly, and ran towards a boat drawn up on the beach—a little rowing-boat belonging to Angel of the Fourth Form at Greyfriars. He called to Bolsover major as he ran.

"Lend me a hand, Bolsover!"

Bolsover did not move. He only stared blankly at the junior as he dragged at the skiff.

Redwing ran it down the shingle to the breaking surf.

"Are you potty?" stammered Bolsover. "You must be, if you're thinking of going out in that cockleshell now. You won't get it even launched!"

"Help me, I tell you!"

"What's the good? You know you can't get anywhere near Smithy."

Redwing looked round him almost in despair; but the beach was deserted. He knew that Harry Wharton & Co. were in the gardens of Cliff House School, and he would not have had to ask them twice for help; but they were not at hand. He turned to Percy Bolsover again.

"There's a chance," he said thickly—"just a chance! Help me to get the boat out, Bolsover, and take an oar with me."

"Oh, you're mad!" said Bolsover. "I'm not going to get drowned to please you! Smithy shouldn't have gone out. He knew better."

That was true enough; but Redwing was not thinking of the Bounder's wilful obstinacy just then.

His eyes blazed at Bolsover major.

"A few minutes ago you were calling me a funk!" he panted. "Are you afraid to come with me?"

"I'm not going to get drowned like a rat if I know it!" answered Bolsover major doggedly. "I'm not afraid, if you come to that, but I don't see any sense in it. You know a boat can't live in a sea like that."

Redwing wasted no further words on him.

He shoved the boat into the water, taking advantage of a receding wave, and sprang into it as it was borne seaward.

The little skiff danced away before Bolsover's amazed eyes, the sailor lad scrambling into it.

Bolsover major watched in horror.

Each instant he expected to see the boat overturned, and to see it come dashing back on the shingle.

But almost in a twinkling Tom Redwing was seated with the oars in his hands, and pulling for his life.

Like a cork the skiff danced on the waters, the sailor-lad keeping it afloat and pulling seaward with a skill that seemed like necromancy.

There was a trampling of feet on the shingle as Bolsover major stood watching with a chalky face.

He looked round as Harry Wharton & Co. came running up. From a distance they had seen Redwing put to sea, but they had arrived much too late to be of any aid. Wharton grasped Bolsover by the arm.

"What did you let him go alone for?" he shouted.

Bolsover winced.

"I'm not going to be drowned for nothing!" he muttered.

"And that fellow gave Redwing the white feather the other day!" muttered Bob Cherry, with bitter scorn.

Bolsover crimsoned, but he did not speak. That was an incident he would gladly have forgotten at that moment.

The Famous Five stood in the wet sand staring seaward. Their faces were white with tense anxiety.

But they could see nothing. The swirl and spray of the wild waters hid Redwing in the skiff from their eyes.

Whether the skiff still lived, or whether Redwing had already gone down, they did not know, and they could not tell.

"Oh, the fine chap!" muttered Wharton. "He's gone out for Smithy, and only this afternoon—"

"Can't we help him somehow?" muttered Johnny Bull huskily.

"The helpfulness is not possible," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh his dusky face pale. "We could not reach him, even if we could see him."

"That's so," said Nugent in a low voice. "If a boat can live in this sea, Redwing's the chap to do it."

"There he is!" shouted Wharton.

He caught a glimpse for a moment of Angel's skiff, still riding the waves, with Tom Redwing pulling still seaward. It vanished again the next moment.

But that glimpse comforted the chums of the Remove. They hoped for the best as they stood staring into the swirl of spray and foam. Bolsover major tramped away in silence, leaving them there. Probably no fellow had ever been much more thoroughly ashamed of

himself than Bolsover was at that moment.

Hidden from the anxious eyes by the swirling foam, Tom Redwing was pulling seaward, and as the boat danced on the waters he caught a glimpse at times of the Bounder's boat, riding the waters bottom up, with the white-faced junior clinging despairingly to the keel.

The Bounder did not see him.

He was only conscious of the roar of the fierce wind over his head, and the thunder of the hungry waters in his ears, as he held on desperately for his life.

Beaten and buffeted by the waves, his senses were dazed, and it was only instinct that kept him clinging to the boat.

Once his hold was lost he was doomed. The thundering waters would have swallowed him up in a moment. At times he disappeared under the surge, as it passed over the capsized boat; but he emerged again and again, dazed and dizzy but still clinging to his only chance of life. Not that there was the remotest chance of escape for him unaided, for his strength was already failing, and ere long his hold must loosen.

Yet he clung on, with the blind instinct of all living things to cling to the latest spark of life.

His dizzy eyes suddenly caught a shape on the water that rushed by, and he knew that another boat had passed him. That was all he knew. But through the howl of the wind a voice came, as if from the sea:

"Hold on, Smithy!"

It seemed to the fainting junior that his fancy was playing him tricks in the hour of death. How else could he hear Tom Redwing's voice there, in the midst of the storm, miles from land?

The surge had carried Redwing past the wreck, in spite of his efforts to reach it. But he was still labouring manfully at the oars, and every second it appeared that the skiff must be engulfed, and yet it lived. On the crest of a wave it came rushing down on the upturned boat, and then the Bounder, through the blinding spindrift, caught sight of Tom Redwing.

"Smithy!"

Redwing's shout rose above the wind as the skiff rushed by. There was no chance of stopping. But the Bounder, gathering all his strength and his wits, made an effort. The skiff almost shaved the gunwale of the capsized boat as it rolled, and Vernon-Smith, with all his energy thrown into that last effort for life, grasped it as it fled by. Somehow, as if by a miracle, he found himself rolling in the bottom of the skiff, exhausted and dizzy, close by the feet of Tom Redwing, who was still seated like a rock, pulling.

The Bounder lay without movement or speech.

His strength was spent.

Even now he scarce hoped for life. The sea was growing wilder with every passing moment, and it seemed impossible that the skiff could live.

Round it curled the white-crested waves, running, as it seemed to his eyes, mountains high, and every wave threatened to overwhelm the frail craft. The Bounder sat up at last, holding on for his life.

He realised that, somehow, the water was calmer about him, though the bosom of the wide bay was tossing in mad fury.

Overhead loomed the shadow of the great Shoulder.

Redwing was not pulling back to the beach. Thence he had come, as if by a miracle, but even his iron strength was not equal to pulling back, even if the boat would have lived.

He was pulling for the Shoulder, and,

as it seemed to Vernon-Smith's dazed eyes, straight to destruction.

The white foam marked where the water broke on the jagged rocks at the foot of the great cliff. Vernon-Smith shuddered at the sight. He had given up hope, but life was dear to him.

Redwing met his wild glance for a moment, but his set face did not move; his lips remained clenched hard.

All the strength of his sturdy frame was put into the struggle for life, and the odds were heavily against him.

Round the boat the water was now less wild, and the Bounder, as he observed it, wondered. But as his brain grew clearer he understood. The long line of sunken rocks that ran out from the great cliff broke the force of the sea like a hidden breakwater. Redwing knew what he was about. But the peril was hideous, for the slightest collision with a rock meant instant destruction. But the keen, steady eyes of the sailor-lad were about him unflinchingly. He noted every fleck of foam, every whirl of spray, and by magic, as it seemed to his companion, he eluded the perils threatening on every side.

The Bounder could not help. There was nothing for him to do. He could only watch his comrade and his surroundings, and hold on to the dancing boat to save himself from being tossed into the waves.

Redwing's arms seemed of steel as he handled the oars untiringly. Yet he was growing near the limit of his strength. His face was pale, and set hard—hard as if graven in metal. He seemed scarce conscious of the Bounder's presence. Every nerve was on the alert to cope with the terrible dangers that menaced at every instant.

The boom of the surf on the great Shoulder was deafening. But there were breaks in the tossing clouds of foam, and Redwing's eye did not fail him. To the dazed amazement of the Bounder, the boat glided almost quietly into a rocky channel, and as he stared about him with dizzy eyes he recognised the opening of the flooded caves under the great cliff. Right under the black cliff the skiff floated in water that was comparatively calm.

Somehow—the Bounder hardly knew how—Redwing's brave, strong arms had brought the skiff from the shadow of a thousand deaths. It bumped on shelving sand, where the waves, their force broken by the outer rocks, surged almost gently. Redwing sprang out, waist-deep in water, and dragged the skiff farther in.

Vernon-Smith roused himself to effort, exhausted as he was, and almost in a maze.

He scrambled out of the skiff, joined Redwing, and helped him to drag it out of the reach of the water.

Then he sank down on the gunwale, panting.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

For Ever!

HARRY WHARTON & Co., three miles away across the bay, were still watching the wild sea with tense faces and anxious hearts. They did not know what had happened. They could not learn until the squall was over. They could only hope against hope that their schoolfellows still lived.

But Redwing and Vernon-Smith were safe—safe and sound. The Bounder, exhausted, dizzy, rested on the gunwale of the landed skiff trying to collect his senses.

Tom Redwing stood looking at the sea. His face had relaxed now, and his eyes were shining. To the sailor's son

there was pleasure in the contemplation of the storm-tossed waters. He was hardly conscious of his late fatigue as he watched the foaming waters of the bay, and the spray dashing in clouds against the cliffs. Afar, beyond the farthest rocks of the great Shoulder, the North Sea was roaring.

An hour passed—another hour—and still the Bounder sat where he was; but his strength was returning. Redwing stood watching the sea, a little distance from him, and his back was turned.

The Bounder's eyes were upon him, but he did not once look round. Vernon-Smith realised well enough what that attitude meant. He had risked his life—risked it a hundred times over—to save the friend who had deserted and insulted him; but that was all. It ended there. He had no word for him. What he had done for the Bounder he would have done for the veriest stranger.

It was Vernon-Smith who broke the silence at last. He called to the sailor's son.

"Redwing!"

Tom Redwing turned his head.

"Come here, Redwing, will you?"

Redwing came towards him, his boots grinding in the wet sand. His face was very calm and quiet.

"We shall have to wait a little longer," he said. "The squall's nearly over. As soon as the sea's calm enough I can pull back across the bay. You wouldn't be able to climb over the cliffs from here."

"Never mind that! I wasn't thinking of that!"

"You weren't hurt?" asked Redwing.

"No!"

"That's good!"

Redwing made a movement as if to go back to the water's edge.

"Hold on!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Yes?"

The Bounder gazed at him with a strange expression.

"You've saved my life," he said.

"Yes."

"For the second time!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Yes."

"It was a thousand to one that you would go down when you came out for me!"

"I suppose so. We've been lucky!"

"You saw my boat go over, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And you came out alone. You'd have had a better chance with somebody to help you. Wasn't there anybody at hand?"

"Only Bolsover. He didn't care to come."

"Well he had more sense than you," said the Bounder, with his old, sardonic grin. "He could see it was simply asking to be drowned!"

"I don't blame him! He's not a sailor," said Redwing. "I'm sorry now I asked him to come with me; it wasn't quite fair on him!"

"And he's the chap who gave you the white feather!" said Smithy.

Redwing smiled slightly.

"Yes!"

"Haven't you anything to say to me?" asked the Bounder.

"No! What should I have to say?" asked Redwing in surprise.

"The other day you said you'd like to be friends again."

"The other day isn't to-day," answered Redwing quietly. "I think the sea's going down enough. I'll have another look."

"Stop, I tell you!"

Redwing stopped.

"You know I've treated you rottenly," said Vernon-Smith in a low voice. "I was hurt over that affair of Skinner—it

did seem rough that you should round on me when I did it for your sake. I suppose you were right, but—but I've got a rotten temper. I was sorry afterwards, too, but I wouldn't own it. The other day—"

He paused.

Redwing was looking out to sea. The squall was nearly spent by this time, and the sea was calmer, though a heavy swell was rolling shorewards.

"You don't want to listen to me?" said the Bounder.

"What's the good of talking?" said Redwing. "I suppose you feel that it's up to you to say something nice, because I've saved your life. There's no reason. Any sailor chap at Hawkscliff would have done it—in fact, has done the same kind of thing more than once. A sailor is never afraid of the sea. Wharton or Cherry would have tried to help you if they'd been there, though I do not think they could have done it, because they weren't born to the sea, as I was. You needn't let this worry you. Only, you'd be well advised not to run such a risk again out of sheer wilfulness!"

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"You don't want to be friends again?" he asked.

"I suppose you feel bound to say that," answered Redwing calmly. "I've told you there's nothing to make a fuss about!"

"Will you answer my question?"

"If you like, certainly. No, I don't want to be friends again!"

The Bounder winced.

The answer was simply and quietly spoken, and it was evidently in earnest. There was no resentment in Tom Redwing's tone or look, only quiet seriousness. At that moment, more than ever before, the Bounder realised what he had lost in losing the friendship of the sailor-lad. It had been lightly lost. It was not to be so lightly regained.

"You asked me the other day—" muttered Vernon-Smith, after a pause. "And—and that was after I had cut you in the quad."

"That was different! I bore you no grudge—I don't now, for that matter. But when I spoke to you the other day you let me understand what you thought of me. You would still think the same if we became friends."

"I never thought anything of the kind!" said Vernon-Smith. "I was saying all that just to wound you, and that was why I behaved as I did this afternoon in your study."

"What did you want to wound me for?"

"Rotten temper," said the Bounder—"nothing else! Because I'd acted badly I wanted to act worse. You don't understand a fellow like that, do you?"

"Not in the least!"

"I'm built that way," said Vernon-Smith.

Redwing was silent.

"You can't respect a chap like that, I suppose?"

"Well, it's not easy."

"And you can't feel friendly towards a chap you don't respect?" said the Bounder, with a tinge of irony in his voice.

"No."

"That's the way you're built, I suppose?"

"I suppose so."

"There are more fellows in the world like me than like you," said the Bounder. "You'll find that out when you grow older. Most fellows make friends for the use they'll be to them."

"I hope not."

"What I said the other day was lies," said Vernon-Smith. "I never thought you wanted to make use of me, or give a thought at all to my money. I was only

saying it to hurt you. I know your nature inside-out, and I know there's nothing mean in it. Can't you believe that?"

"I don't know quite what to make of you," answered Redwing quietly. "But I'm afraid it's like you to believe evil of me. If you don't, all the better. But even if you are in earnest now, you would soon grow suspicious again, I think, and distrustful."

"You don't believe I'm sincere?" asked Vernon-Smith, biting his lip.

"Well, I can't!" said Tom Redwing frankly.

"I suppose I've asked for that," said the Bounder. "It's what I deserve, I know. You don't want to be friends?"

"No."

With that Redwing turned back towards the sea, and nothing more was said. Vernon-Smith rose from the skiff, and moved to and fro to warm his chilled limbs. His brow was dark and troubled, but he was no longer feeling resentment. After what had passed it was impossible for Redwing to trust him, and he realised that. His curious, tortuous nature was a perplexity to the simple-hearted sailor-lad. It was a puzzle sometimes to himself. No wonder that Tom Redwing did not understand him, and could not trust him.

A little later Redwing came back to the skiff, and pushed it into the water. There was a heavy swell on the sea, but that had no terrors for the hardy lad from Hawkscliff.

"Ready?" he asked.

The Bounder nodded, and stepped into the boat without speaking.

Redwing took the oars, and pulled out into the bay. The skiff rocked on the swell, rising and falling incessantly, as Redwing pulled steadily for the shore. The beach and Cliff House and Pegg village came in sight at last, and then a crowd of figures that stood watching the sea.

"Half Greyfriars there, I believe!" said the Bounder.

There was a shout from the beach, in Bob Cherry's stentorian tones.

"Here they come! Bravo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed down to water's edge to seize the skiff and drag it ashore as soon as it came within reach. The news of the Bounder's danger had drawn a crowd to the spot, and for hours they had watched the sea, in a faint hope of seeing Redwing's skiff return. They could scarcely believe their eyes when it came in sight at last, with Redwing pulling, and Vernon-Smith sitting in the stern.

Many hands grasped the skiff and pulled it up the sand, and Redwing and the Bounder jumped out.

"So you've got back!" exclaimed Wharton.

"The gladfulness of our esteemed selves is terrific, my worthy and ridiculous friends!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"All serene!" said Redwing.

"Where's your boat, Smithy?" grinned Skinner.

"Somewhere in the North Sea," answered the Bounder carelessly; "where I should be if Redwing hadn't been ass enough to come out for me. My pater will be ratty when he hears about the boat, I expect."

"Well, you are a thumping ass to chuck away a new boat like that!" said Skinner.

"I quite agree."

Harry Wharton looked at the Bounder in astonishment.

"You've had a jolly narrow escape, Smithy!" he said.

"Yes; a close shave, and no mistake!" agreed the Bounder. "But a miss is as good as a mile, you know. There's an old saying that those who are born to be hanged cannot be drowned. I'm really

beginning to believe that there must be something in it. Looks like it, doesn't it? Sorry I sha'n't be able to scrap with you this evening, Wharton—a bit fagged, you know!"

And with that the Bounder walked away, heading for the school.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith had not even glanced at Redwing after landing from the boat. It was evident that, in spite of what had happened, they were on the same terms as before.

Tom Redwing walked back to Greyfriars with the Famous Five, who wheeled their bikes to keep him company. He was tired, but showed no other sign of the stress he had been through.

"You've missed your usual swot this afternoon, old chap," Nugent remarked, with a smile.

Redwing smiled, too.

"Yes. I shall have to make up for that," he said.

He went to the dormitory to change as soon as they reached Greyfriars.

The Bounder was just leaving the dormitory, and they passed without a word.

When Redwing came down, looking quite his old self, Bolsover major met him on the stairs.

The bully of the Remove was looking very shamefaced.

"I—I say, Redwing—" he stammered.

Redwing stopped.

"I—I—" mumbled Bolsover.

"It's all right!" said Redwing. "I oughtn't really have asked you to come out in the boat. It wasn't work for a landsman. I'm sorry!"

Bolsover winced a little. He had termed Redwing a funk on much less grounds; but there was no such ungenerous thought in the sailor-lad's mind.

"I—I gave you the white feather the other days because you wouldn't fight Smithy," stammered Bolsover. "I—I wanted to say that—that I apologise. I think you're a bit of an ass, but you're not a funk, anyhow. I—I'm really sorry. Honest!"

"All serene!"

"You can jolly well kick me if you like," said Bolsover.

Redwing laughed.

"Thanks! I won't, though," he answered. "You were only talking out of your hat, you know, and there's no harm done. All serene!"

And he nodded cheerily and went on, leaving Bolsover major rather relieved in his mind. Bolsover major, after some thought, looked in at No. 11 in the Remove passage, where Skinner and Stott and Snoop were enjoying a little game of banker, after their fashion.

"Take a hand?" asked Skinner.

"No!" said Bolsover major grimly.

"I won't take a hand. I've called in to speak to you. You cads have been ragging Redwing, and stopping him from swotting. Well, I don't swot myself; but if Redwing wants to swot, he's going to swot himself blind if he chooses, without a gang of cads bothering him. He's going to do just as he likes in this study without being bothered. Understand?"

"Bow-wow!" answered Skinner.

"Your deal, Snoopey!"

"Do you understand?" roared Bolsover major. "I tell you that if Redwing's ragged again, ever so little, I'll make an example of the ragger! I'm going to keep my eyes on this study, and my ears open. And as you don't seem to understand that it's serious I'll make a beginning now."

There was a howl from the three as Bolsover made a beginning in order to make his meaning clear.

He certainly made it clear enough.

He grasped the table and pitched it

into the fender in a shower of cards and small cash. Then he dragged Skinner over the back of his chair, bumping him heavily on the floor. Snoop and Stott tried to dodge, but there was no escape for them. Bolsover major's heavy hands grasped them, and their heads were brought together with a sounding crack.

There were two simultaneous wails of anguish in Study No. 11.

Bolsover major pitched the two hapless slackers across Skinner as he was scrambling up. Then he glared down at the sprawling trio.

"Now you understand?" he roared.

"Is Redwing going to swot as much as he likes without being ragged—eh?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes!" gasped Skinner.

"Get out, you beast! Ow-wow!"

Bolsover major had driven the lesson home with a vengeance, and it was not without result. Tom Redwing's study was peaceful enough after that. And a week or two later Redwing carried off his prize in the exam, and was heartily congratulated by most of the Remove.

The Bounder congratulated him, too; they were at least on speaking terms now. But friendship was another matter; and the Bounder wondered sometimes whether he would ever win back that which he had so carelessly thrown aside, and reknit the broken bond.

(Don't miss "ROUGH ON REDWING!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"ROUGH ON REDWING!"

By Frank Richards.

Circumstances are indeed rough on Redwing. For Mr. Vernon-Smith, on a visit to Greyfriars, learns that his son and Tom Redwing are no longer friends, and takes it for granted that the fault is Tom's. This makes matters very awkward for the sailor's son in more than one way. How he carries on through a very trying time you will learn next week, and your admiration of the fine fellow, with his real modesty and his clear, simple code of honour, will be increased. The Bounder also shows up in a distinctly more sympathetic light. He has not behaved too well to his chum; but the affection is there, and at the time of crisis the Bounder rises to the demand made upon him.

WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS.

The restarting of the Extracts from the "Greyfriars Herald" and "Tom Merry's Weekly" will, I know, have the effect of bringing to me quite a lot of amateur MSS. I am not asking for these, mind you. I really do not want them. But I do not refuse to consider them. I do refuse, however, to accept them at the valuation their authors seem usually to put upon them; and I don't want letters demanding a cheque at once for some hopeless attempt which has failed to find its way back to its writer. This is not the way business is done. If your stuff is printed you will be paid for it. If you get it back you have nothing to grumble about. I am the judge of its merit and suitability—or otherwise—not you! And if you fail to get it back I can accept no responsibility, even if stamped and addressed envelope was included with it. I did not ask for it, you know; and the pressure of work is too great to allow of my giving much time to amateur contributions, not one in a hundred of which is of any real use. I have found three or four—perhaps half a dozen—writers of some promise among my readers, and I have been able to give them something of a show; but they are the exceptions, and most of the stuff I get is no better than waste paper, from my point of view.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 554.

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

AUNT JUDY AT GREYFRIARS!

By DICK RAKE.

I.

"OH!" said Horace Coker of the Fifth, blinking at the letter he was reading.

He, with his study-mates, Potter and Greene, were in their study in the Fifth Form passage. Coker was standing in front of the window, reading the letter which had occasioned the above remark, Potter was seated at the table, busily engaged on an imposition for Mr. Prout, and, buried in an armchair before the fire, Green was leisurely reading Dickens, his favourite author.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker. "Hallo!" said Potter, looking up from his work. "What's biting you, ass?"

"Mum-my hat!" "Is it, really?" said Potter, in surprise. "First time I've heard of a giddy tile starting gastronomic operations on a donkey's wooden noddle!"

"You ass!" roared Coker. "I wasn't referring to my hat! Er, I mean, it's this letter, of course—Aunt Judy's letter!"

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene, getting interested. "What's aunty got to say?"

A letter from Coker's Aunt Judy usually meant a large remittance for Coker, and incidentally, funds for the whole study as long as it lasted.

"She's coming here!" said Coker, with a worried look.

Potter's smiling face suddenly turned pale, and the armchair in front of the fire turned round with a bang, and the startled face of Greene peered over the top.

"Eh?" said Potter. "What's that, Coker?" faltered Greene.

"Aunt Judy's written to say she's coming over here to-morrow—that's Wednesday—afternoon," explained Coker.

"Oh, crikey!" "Mum-mum-my only sainted topper!"

Potter and Greene did not seem best pleased at this news.

"I—I say, Coker," said Potter anxiously, "you're not joking, are you?"

"Joking?" echoed Coker. "What do you think I'm joking for, Potter?"

"Well, you know, Aunt Judy coming here again! That's a bit too thick!"

"Is it?" demanded Coker. "Too thick, is it? And what about your rotten thick head—eh, George Potter?"

A great deal of affection existed between Horace Coker and his Aunt Judy—especially on the part of the latter, who firmly believed and maintained that there wasn't another fellow living like her Horace. Perhaps she was right—it would be hard to imagine another Horace Coker on this little world of trouble. Our Horace Coker is unique—all others, whatever their attainments in the stupidity line, are spurious imitations.

"I—I say, Coker," said Green, "is it honest Injun, though?"

"Of course it is, you burbling duffers!" howled Coker. "What the deuce are you looking like that for, Potter?"

"Oh, lor'!" said Potter. "Won't there be squalls!"

"Look here," bellowed Coker, brandishing a brawny fist before Potter's nose, "what's the objection to my Aunt Judy coming here—eh?"

"Oh, n-n-none at all, Coker, old man!" said Potter hastily. "We shall be pleased to see her, I'm sure!"

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Greene, with alacrity.

"Then, what're you two silly duffers making all the fuss about?" demanded Coker.

"It—it was the sudden shock, you know, Cokey!" said Potter. "We were quite overcome with the pleasure for the moment!"

"Well, that's all right, then!" said Coker, only half mollified, however. "You know now, George Potter, don't you?"

"Yes, Coker," said Potter meekly. "But what's she coming for?"

"Ahem!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene noticed Coker's hesitation, and vague suspicions that there was something worse to follow arose within their breasts, and they were unanimous in demanding of Coker the reason of Aunt Judy's projected visit.

"Well—er—it's like this, you see," said Coker, looking more worried than ever, "I've been writing to Aunt Judy about those cheeky Remove rotters, and mentioned what I'd do to them if I were a prefect, and—"

"Well?" demanded his study-mates, all agog with excitement.

"Er, she—she says that the Head ought to make me a prefect; and she's coming over here to-morrow to see him about it."

Potter's face suddenly started screwing itself into all manner of weird contortions, while he seemed to find extreme difficulty in preventing himself from choking, and Greene sank limply back into the armchair, and, emitting a queer, gurgling sound, as if troubled with internal spasms, lay, with a far-away look in his eyes, gazing vacantly into space.

"Good lor'!" said Coker, looking at them in alarm. "What's up with you two now?"

"Oh, n-nothing, Coker!" gasped Potter.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" came from the armchair.

"You giggling dummy!" howled Coker, making a rush at the hilarious Potter. "I'll—I'll—I'll—"

But Potter did not wait to ascertain what Coker would do. Coker did not look very safe at that moment. Potter, still laughing at the idea of Coker's aunt arguing with the Head over making Coker a prefect, made a hurried dash for the door, with Coker in full chase. Greene sat in the armchair, wiping salt tears of merriment from his eyes.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! went Coker's No. 15 size boots round the room; and, at last, Potter managed to drag the door open, and precipitated himself through it, missing the uplifted boot of his irate study-mate by millimetres.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage outside, as Potter beat a hurried retreat.

Coker slammed the study door, and turned to Greene.

"Now, Greene," he said grimly, "what were you laughing at—eh?"

Greene jumped up, and backed away hastily.

"Oh, really, Coker," he said, "I—I was laughing at the way you chased old Potter out of the study! Ha, ha, ha!" he added feebly.

"Well, you can jolly well laugh at yourself now!" bellowed Coker, advancing upon him.

And he proceeded forthwith to eject Greene forcibly from the study.

Greene landed with a terrific bump upon the linoleum outside, at the feet of a crowd of Fifth-Formers, who had come, at Potter's instigation, to chaff Coker.

"I say, Coker darlint," said Fitzgerald, "and is it true entirely that yer Aunt Judy's coming here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" said Coker, glowering upon them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blundell. "Aunt Judy had to half kill the Head before you ever got into the Fifth, didn't she, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Head, he's in for it to-morrow!"

"You ought to give him a 'Take Cover' notice, you know, Coker, so that he'll be able to clear out before she comes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, breathing fire and slaughter, charged at the merry Fifth, and they departed, howling with laughter.

He then retired to his study, to reread Aunt Judy's letter, and to think out his schemes for entertaining her on the morrow.

But he was not left in peace. The news spread quickly, and fellows from every Form visited the lion in his den, as it were, and many and varied were the kind inquiries they made respecting Aunt Judy, until Coker was ready to tear his hair out by the roots.

Rumour went that on one memorable occasion Coker's Aunt Judy bullied the Head into shoving her devoted nephew from the Shell into the Fifth, and Coker was the recipient of much chaff and sarcasm from his school-fellows ever after.

Well might the rest of the school ask the reason for Coker's promotion, unless the hypothesis which is generally accepted is true, namely, that Dr. Locke did it for fear of Coker's Aunt Judy.

The Remove, in particular, received this latest news with joy, and waited in great expectations for Aunt Judy's visit on the morrow.

So did Coker; but, to judge by his unhappy looks and disquieted demeanour that day and the next morning, his expectations were not of a happy variety. Coker, like the rest of the school, looked out for squalls, and, as will be seen later, he was not disappointed.

II.

"MY heye!" Gosling, the school porter, laid aside his beloved gin-bottle, and rubbed a bleary eye as he gazed out of his little front window.

An apparition, weirdly and wonderfully bedecked in the flowing black garments affected by the females of the Early Victorian period, surmounted by a perfect revelation in ancient bonnets, and carrying in a black-gloved, skinny hand an ancient gamp, almost as ancient-looking as its owner, sailed in at the gates of Greyfriars, and weighed anchor outside Gosling's lodge.

"Here comes aunty!"—sang out Bob Cherry to the crowd of fellows which had congregated round the school gates.

"My word!" said Harry Wharton. "What a giddy bag of skin and bones!"

"This is where the band begins to play!" murmured Peter Todd. And there was a general laugh.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling, presenting his portly figure at the door.

"Is Horace here?" asked Coker's Aunt Judy, for it was she.

"My heye!"

Aunt Judy fixed upon Gosling a basilisk glare, which ought to have withered him there and then.

"Where is Horace?" she cried, in a high-pitched feminine voice.

Gosling stared at the angular female in amazement.

"Cannot you hear me, man?" demanded Aunt Judy. "I want my Horace!"

"My honny 'at!" murmured Gosling, blinking at aunty in wonder. "What is it?"

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

"I want Horace!" shrieked the angry female. "Where is he?" And she brought her gamp down with a thud upon the ground.

Gosling stood and stared, wondering vaguely whether he had been overdoing it somewhat with the gin-bottle, and his favourite beverage had got up into his head.

"Deary me!" said Aunt Judy, prodding Gosling with the business end of her gamp.

"Deary me! What ever is the matter with the man?"

"It's the gin-and-water, ma'am," suggested the Bounder.

"Or the Government beer," said Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gracious! You don't mean to say the man drinks such poisonous liquors, my little boys?" asked Aunt Judy, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's drunk, ma'am!"

"Which I ain't drunk!" roared Gosling.

"You young rips, I'll—"

"Yes," said the comical Aunt Judy, peering quizzically at Gosling, and giving him a vicious dig in the region of his ample waistcoat with her gamp, "the man certainly is intoxicated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ere, you keep orf, you balmy old cat, you!" roared Gosling, showing signs of animation at last.

"You are intoxicated, man!" screeched Aunt Judy. "I shall report you to Dr. Locke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you I ain't!" yelled Gosling.

"Then where is my Horace?" demanded Aunt Judy, in a threatening voice.

Possibly she had an idea that Gosling had her darling Horace concealed somewhere upon his person, or spirited away in his lodge. At any rate, she seemed to blame Gossy for Coker's absence, which, of course, was hardly fair.

"Which I ain't got your bloomin' Grace!" yelled Gosling. "And don't want 'im, neither! What I says is this 'ere—let 'Orace, whoever he is, go and drown 'isselt, and you along of 'im; and jolly good job too, says I!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Man! Viper!" shouted the irate Miss Coker, bearing down upon the excited porter.

"How dare you! I—"

"Yah!" snorted Gosling. "Go 'ome and sleep it orf!"

"I—I—I—"

"Better apply at the nearest loonytic asylum, mum!" yelled Gosling; and with this last Parthian shot he retired hastily into his lodge, bolted the door, and proceeded forthwith to find solace in the bottle that cheers—without much water.

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

"Go it, aunty! Smash his windows for him!"

"Burn him out, ma'am!"

Aunt Judy glared round upon the hilarious crowd. Possibly, like Alexander in the history books, she was seeking for fresh worlds to conquer.

"Where is my Horace?" she demanded.

Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove, and a fellow with a peculiar sense of humour, detached himself from the crowd, and, with his cap raised in one hand and his other laid upon his heart, he made a solemn bow to the ground, with much gravity and mock politeness.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said; "but are you Aunt Judy?"

Aunt Judy glared at him with a curious expression upon her comical features.

"My dear little friend Horace told me to expect you," went on Skinner. "He promised us all a Punch and Judy show here this afternoon, and— Oh! Yarrah! Wharrer you at, you old cat? I— Wooh! Ow! Stoppit! I—"

He suddenly broke off as the pugilistic lady advanced upon him, and proceeded to smite him lustily with her gamp. Skinner had once more proved himself a little too funny.

"You impertinent little rascal!" shrieked Aunt Judy, bringing her gamp into violent play upon the person of the humorous Skinner.

"Take that! And that! And that!"

"That," being in each case a terrific swipe with the gamp, Skinner took it; but, finding Coker's aunt somewhat too vicious at close quarters, he finally took to his heels, streaking across the quadrangle howling, with Aunt Judy in hot pursuit, making savage lunges at him with her improvised but extremely effective weapon.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!" howled Skinner, as most of her thrusts at him found their mark.

"Ha, ha, ha!" sobbed Peter Todd. "Chase me, Charley!"

"Coker's aunt—still running!" howled Squiff.

"Oh, my hat! What a giddy Suffragette she'd make!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping tears of merriment from his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, Skinner, his back and shoulders fairly stinging as a result of Aunt Judy's violent play upon them with her gamp, bolted into the gymnasium, taking good care to fasten the door behind him.

Aunt Judy rushed breathlessly up—just too late.

She banged at the door with her gamp.

"Come out here and be whipped, you naughty boy!" she cried.

"No jolly fear!" came the voice of Skinner from within.

"Come out here, I say!"

"Not in these trousers, old dear!" replied Skinner. "Go and take a dive in the fountain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The irate Miss Coker, realising the futility of laying siege to the gymnasium, glared round upon the howling mob of fellows.

The laughter soon died away, however, when she was seen to grasp her gamp grimly.

"Oh, excuse me, ma'am!" said Bob Cherry, advancing and raising his cap politely. "Is it Horace Coker you want?"

Aunt Judy gazed at Bob for a moment; then, seeing that he was not having a game with her, she beamed upon him, and said:

"Yes, little boy. Where is he?"

Another howl of laughter went up as Bob was referred to as a "little boy," and he blushing retired.

"Coker! Coker!" yelled the crowd. And the hue and cry for Horace Coker was raised all over the quadrangle.

"Horace!—Horace!" the fellows shrieked, looking into every impossible nook and corner.

Just then Coker, Potter, and Greene were seen emerging from the tuck-shop, with sundry parcels of provisions. Coker had not been sure when his aunt would come, so he had stayed behind to get ready before taking a casual walk down to the station to meet her. The crowd soon fastened upon them.

"Coker! Horace!" they cried. "Your Aunt Judy wants you!"

"Horace darling! Aunty's here!"

"Come on, Coker! Who's afraid of a woman?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, Potter, and Greene halted.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "Aunt Judy's here already!"

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene, in tones of dismay.

"Come on, you two!" said Coker, striding away.

But Potter and Greene did not follow. Like the Arabs in the poem, they silently stole away. They did not mind helping Coker lay in provisions at the tuck-shop, but when it came to acting as chaperons to his irate Aunt Judy, with half the school looking on—well, they were not taking any. They'd had some!

III.

"WHY, what the—" ejaculated Coker, looking round in search of his unfaithful disciples. "Where have those silly asses gone to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Johnny Bull. "They've beat a strategic retreat, Cokey!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—" began Coker.

"Oh, kin on, ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't keep aunty waiting!"

And, muttering things under his breath, Coker suffered himself to be led over to where his devoted aunt was awaiting him.

"Hallo, aunt!" said Coker.

"Horace—my darling Horace!" cried Aunt Judy, beaming upon her blushing nephew.

"Oh, Horace, where have you been?"

And she folded Horace to her breast and covered his crimson face with effusive kisses.

"My word! Hark at the giddy splashes!" said Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are those rude boys laughing at, Horace?" asked Aunt Judy.

"I'll laugh 'em! I'll—" began Horace.

"Oh, the cheeky rotters!"

"Poor old Horace!"

"Clear off, you—you—you—"

Were it not for Aunt Judy being there, Coker would immediately have charged at the crowd and proceeded to commit assault and battery forthwith; but with his devoted aunt under his protection, he thought better of it, and earnestly entreated her to come up to the study. To his infinite relief, she assented.

Through the crowd of grinning fellows he piloted Aunt Judy, quite subdued and docile now she had her darling Horace. She paused now and then to make some remark or other to one of the crowd, which would elicit fresh outbursts of merriment; but as those remarks were in most cases concerning her Horace, that disconsolate youth was feeling far from happy.

At the top of the School House steps Aunt Judy halted, and beamed down upon the crowd below.

"Do you all love my dear Horace?" she inquired amiably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather, ma'am!" howled Bob Cherry.

"The school wouldn't be the same without him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right," said Aunt Judy, casting a fond glance at Horace Coker, who, although extremely fond of his queer specimen of an aunt, heartily wished both her and himself anywhere but there at that moment.

"We all love Horace—he's so kind and gentle!" bawled Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm so glad!" said Aunt Judy, her comical features wreathed in smiles. "Everybody loves my Horace. But," she added, "nobody loves him as much as I do!"

And, bestowing a genial smirk upon the convulsed crowd, she bounced upstairs to Coker's study, leaving about a hundred fellows—juniors and seniors alike—on the verge of hysterics.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed Temple of the Fourth. "This is better than a pantomime!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Coker!"

Meanwhile, Horace Coker had got his aunt safely in the seclusion of his study, wondering what would happen next. He groaned as Aunt Judy turned the conversation to the primary object of her visit.

"I should very much like to see you a big, strong prefect, Horace," she said.

"Y-yes, aunt!" said Coker.

"Wouldn't you like to be one, Horace?" she inquired.

Now, one of Coker's greatest ambitions at the school was to become one of the powers-that-be, so that he might "keep those cheeky rotters of the Remove in their places"—as Coker himself often expressed to more than one person at Greyfriars. The Remove always came out top-dog in the feud between themselves and Horace Coker, and Coker did not like it.

"Well, aunt," he replied, "I should, you know; but the Head—"

"I shall speak to Dr. Locke about that, Horace," said Aunt Judy acidly.

"Ye-es, I know; but—"

"There are no 'buts' in the matter at all, Horace. You ought to be a prefect, and you shall!" said Aunt Judy firmly.

"Oh, but Fifth-Formers are not allowed—"

"You will be allowed, Horace, or I shall know the reason why!"

"But the Head, you know, aunty! You can't back up against him!" groaned Coker.

"He will do as I ask, Horace, never you worry."

"He won't. He—"

"I know the way to deal with these obstinate men, Horace," said Aunt Judy grimly. "If they will not listen to reason, then other means than argument must be employed. They want governing with an iron hand. If words have no effect, then one must use the rod—and not spare it."

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Coker.

"Yes, Horace. If Dr. Holmes dares to browbeat me, he will find me ready!"

"But—but it's impossible! He—"

"Nothing is impossible. I will see him now, Horace."

"Oh, my hat! I—I say, aunt—"

"I know you are not treated fairly at this school, Horace; but your Aunt Judy will put that right for you now. Show me to Dr. Locke!"

Seeing that to argue with her would be of no use, Coker called for Trotter, and requested him to show the warlike female to the Head.

Trotter, by no means pleased with this job, piloted Aunt Judy through the mob in the passages to the Head's study. He knocked at the door, called out "Miss Coker!" and bolted.

Miss Coker entered, and shut the door grimly behind her. A few minutes later her vociferous voice was heard in fierce expostulation with the mild and timorous voice of Dr. Locke, who was by no means pleased at the visit.

Outside, in the passage, an excited crowd congregated. Potter and Greene were there in company with Coker, who, in normal times, would have severely ragged his two unfaithful followers for their desertion at such a crisis; but Coker was feeling too worried over Aunt Judy's interview with the Head to think much about that.

If Aunt Judy's muscular arm and unsympathetic gamp got the better of the Head's powers of argument, and Coker was made a prefect, Coker could well look forward to an extremely hot time in that position. Even Coker himself realised that he would have no prestige whatever in that capacity, especially the Remove would lead him a pretty dance. And Coker did not feel happy.

"Look out for squalls!" said Tom Brown. And the rest agreed.

Miss Coker was in the Head's study, and the fat was in the fire with a vengeance!

IV.

THE Famous Five, with Squiff and the Bounder, were standing together in the passage outside the Head's study.

"I—I say, you know," said Harry Wharton, with a clouded brow, "this is a bit too thick!"

"The too-thickfulness is terrific!" murmured Inky.

"We don't mind when she starts bashing Gossy and Skinner about—" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! No."

"But when it come to the Head—"

"It's got to stop!" said Harry Wharton firmly.

"Hear, hear!"

"But how?" asked Nugent. "Wild horses wouldn't drag her out of there now!"

"Well, we can't leave the poor old Head in the lurch now," said Johnny Bull. "Supposing he makes Coker a prefect?"

"We'll make things so jolly hot for him that he'll soon wish he wasn't!"

"Rather! But we've got to nip Aunt Judy's little game in the bud now, before the harm is done."

"What's to be done?" asked Squiff.

Nobody seemed to know.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "The Head'll cop out now!"

"So wid you, porpoise!" growled Bob Cherry, bumping Billy Bunter over on the floor.

"Chaps," said the Bounder, "we're going to save the Head from the giddy warrior queen!"

"Bravo!" yelled most of the fellows.

"Rats!" howled Skinner, still smarting from the effects of Aunt Judy's gamp.

"Let the old cat get on with it!"

"You shut up, Skinny!" growled Bolsover. And Skinner shut up.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry had been thinking. "I've got it!" he yelled suddenly. "Wibley—I say Wibley!"

"Hallo?" said Wibley.

"You've got some policeman's props in your study, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Wibley, in wonder.

"Come on, then!" said Bob, dragging Wibley away.

"Here, half a mo'!" cried Wibley. "What's the little game?"

"Yes; explain yourself, ass!" said Wharton.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, pausing, "the wheeze is this. You can make up as a policeman, I suppose, Wibley?"

"Try me!" said Wibley promptly.

Wibley is a born actor—nobody can deny that. Whatever else Wibley can't do, he can act.

"Well, Wibley dresses up as a policeman, rushes into the Head's study before the damage is done, and bawls 'Air-raid!' at the top of his voice."

"Eh?"

"Don't you see?" gasped Bob excitedly. "Aunt Judy will get frightened. Police-constable Wibley swears this school ain't a safe place in an air-raid, and offers to see her safely to the station; and it's ten to one she'll go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" began Coker hotly.

"You shut up, Coker—you're dead in this act!" And Coker was shouted down.

"I'm on!" said Wibley enthusiastically.

"I can do the policeman stunt A!"

"Go it, Wib!" said Harry Wharton. "It's not much of a wheeze, but it might work!"

And Bob Cherry and Wibley made their way through the crowd up to the latter's study in the Remove passage.

A few minutes later they came down again; but Wibley looked far different. His own mother wouldn't have recognised him just then, with a bushy moustache, features altered by skilful use of grease-paint, and padded out to fill the policeman's tunic which he wore.

"I—I—I say," said Billy Bunter, "is—is that really you, Wibley?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of my way, boy!" thundered P.-c. Wibley, in a stentorian voice. "Make way for the harm of the lor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, clear the way! Move along there, please!" And P.-c. Wibley, with feet almost as big as Bob Cherry's—if possible—shoved his portly form through the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it Wib!"

"Bravo, Wibley! You'll do!"

From the Head's study, the high-pitched voice of Coker's Aunt Judy could be heard:

"I tell you you must, and you shall, make my Horace a prefect!"

"Impossible, madam! I—"

"Don't be ridiculous, sir—"

"But, madam, such a thing is unheard of! Members of the Fifth Form—"

"Then put Horace in the Sixth, sir!"

"I am sorry, Miss Coker, but I—"

"Why not, Dr. Locke—eh? Why not? My Horace is good and big and brave and strong and—"

"Yes, yes, I know; but—"

"My Horace is not treated fairly at this school, sir! He—"

"I assure you, Miss Coker, you are under quite a wrong impression—"

"I say he is not, sir; and he is not! I know what I am talking about—"

"Really, you—"

"You dare to insinuate that I do not know what I am saying, you—you—"

"I—I—I—"

"Man, how dare you!"

"Madam, I—"

"You are a coward, sir—a coward to treat a defenceless woman so—"

"Really—"

"I repeat, sir, you are a coward to take advantage of my helplessness! Take that! And that! And that!"

And sounds of the "defenceless" female's gamp were heard falling thick and fast.

"Now's the time, Wibley!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Go it, Wib! On the bawl!"

Wibley strode majestically up to the study door, and rapped loudly.

"C-come in!" said the scared voice of the Head.

Wibley threw the door open, and strode into the study.

A strange sight met the gaze of the fellows in the passage. The Head was crouching down behind the armchair, a look of terror on his kind old face, while the warlike Aunt Judy was standing over him, her gamp raised ready to strike.

"Dr. Locke, I believe?" said P.-c. Wibley loudly.

"Y-yes!" said the Head.

"Well, sir, I have come to inform you that an air-raid is expected."

"Wha-a-at?"

"The police have received information that there are hundreds of enemy aeroplanes up, and a raid is imminent."

All Aunt Judy's belligerency had disappeared, and terror and fear were written all over her comical face. She dropped her gamp, and started screaming at the top of her vociferous voice.

"Horace! Horace, save me!"

Horace Coker dashed into the study and went to the side of his hysterical aunt. He had received ample warning, however, not to give the game away from the fellows outside, who were enjoying the situation immensely.

"Protect me, Horace!" screamed Aunt Judy.

"All right, aunt—you're all right!" said Coker dismally.

"That's just where you are wrong, young man!" put in P.-c. Wibley gruffly. "This school is no place of safety during an air-raid!"

"What?" screamed Aunt Judy, in terror.

"Madam," said Wibley, turning towards her, "you are not safe here. The place is old, and the first bomb would bring the whole lot tumbling on top of you."

Aunt Judy started to scream.

"You'd better get out as quick as you can, mum," said Wibley, playing upon the excitable female's imagination. "You'll be killed here as sure as eggs is eggs!"

"Oh, save me!" howled Aunt Judy.

"Rely on me, mum!" said Wibley, smiting his chest fatuously. "I'll see you safely off the premises."

"Oh, my brave man!"

"Not at all, mum," said P.-c. Wibley modestly. "The lor is always ready to help beauty in distress!"

The crowd in the passage were nearly splitting their sides with suppressed laughter.

"Come with me, mum; I'll see you safely to the station. No harm shall befall you while I am there to protect you!" And P.-c. Wibley, looking as important as he could under the circumstances, marched out of the Head's study, with Aunt Judy following, scared and extremely docile. Horace Coker brought up the rear, far from happy, and with a face as long as a wet week. Out of the House and across the quadrangle they went, the crowd of fellows following, making remarks that were intended to, and succeeded in greatly increasing Aunt Judy's eagerness to get away from Greyfriars.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling, as he caught sight of Aunt Judy leaving the school in company with a policeman. "Ad to be locked

up, had she? Well, I don't wonder at it. Said I was drunk, she did—me, drunk! Strikes me she was drunk, and they 'ad to get a bobby to get 'er off the premises. Hugh! Nice goings hon, I must say!" And Gossy, with an air of wounded innocence, turned again to his gin-bottle.

P.-c. Wibley accompanied Aunt Judy down the lane, with the crowd following at a respectful distance, and did not leave her until she was safely at the station. With many words of thanks for his kind protection, Aunt Judy tipped Wibley half-a-crown, which he accepted gravely, and, taking an affectionate farewell of Horace Coker, she rushed into Friar-dale Station and caught the next train home.

Coker, wishing to avoid the crowd, turned down the High Street, and went a round-about way back to Greyfriars, and locked himself up in his study for the rest of the day.

"Bravo, Wibley!" roared the fellows, crowding round the pseudo policeman, who, having divested himself of some of his stuffing and his false whiskers, looked more like himself once more.

"Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley, sinking down upon the grassy bank along the side of the lane, and laughing until the tears washed off his grease-paint in little streaks, giving him a weird appearance.

"My word, it worked like a giddy charm!" said Bob Cherry, with great satisfaction.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you didn't tell the gospel truth quite, you know, Wib," said Harry Wharton.

"Why not?" demanded Wibley.

"Well, the Head will be wild when he knows he's been fooled."

"He hasn't been fooled, you ass!" howled Bob Cherry. "Wib said there was an air-raid expected; and so there is. I suppose we'll have another one before the giddy war is over, sha'n't we?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"But what about the hundreds of aeroplanes—"

"So there are—hundreds of 'em up in France and Flanders. The Hun planes are flying 'night and day out on the Western Front!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good for you, Wibley!" And the happy, merry band, with Wibley as the hero of the hour, trooped back to Greyfriars.

All the school laughed loud and long over the neat way in which Wibley and Bob Cherry had got rid of Coker's warlike Aunt Judy. Coker came in for a good deal of chaff and ridicule, and for the next few weeks, at any rate, Coker was very quiet and subdued indeed.

The Head made a few discreet inquiries about the matter, but was wise enough to make no further mention of it to anybody, and no doubt, if he was aware of the authors of the hoax, he felt mighty thankful to them for getting him out of so difficult a corner.

In the Common-room that evening Wibley and Bob Cherry were accorded a hearty vote of thanks from the Lower School; for, as Bob Cherry himself remarked to somebody afterwards, "it wasn't such a dusty wheeze, after all, and, by jingo, it worked like a charm!"

(Editor's Note.—Did Rake dream all this, and believe it true? Or is he romancing? It is a fact that Miss Judith Coker did recently visit Greyfriars—we all saw her. And she saw the Head, and the story goes that she tried to get dear Horace made a prefect. But as for the rest of it—well, 'nuff said, perhaps! Some of us at Greyfriars can swallow a good deal—there's Bunter, for instance—but we can't swallow quite everything. If Coker gets his paws on Rake, it may give Rake pause before perpetrating any further efforts in the line of fiction.—H. W.)

THE END.

NOTICES.

Football Matches Wanted By :

INVICTA F.C.—16.—E. Saunders, 40, William Street, Hampstead Road, N.W.
ST. MARY'S CADETS F.C.—16-17.—S. Baulch, 40, Neptune Street, S.E. 16.
MARCONI MESSENGERS F.C.—F. Jones, Messenger Dept., Marconi House, W.C. 2.
YORK ROAD UNITED F.C.—14-17—4 miles.—E. Starling, 10, Delhi Street, Copenhagen Street, King's Cross.
TOWER ROVERS F.C.—16—5 miles.—F. Briggs, 88, Coutts Road, Burdett Road, E. 3.
ST. HELEN'S F.C.—16—4 miles.—W. Cox, 5, Bracewell Road, N. Kensington.