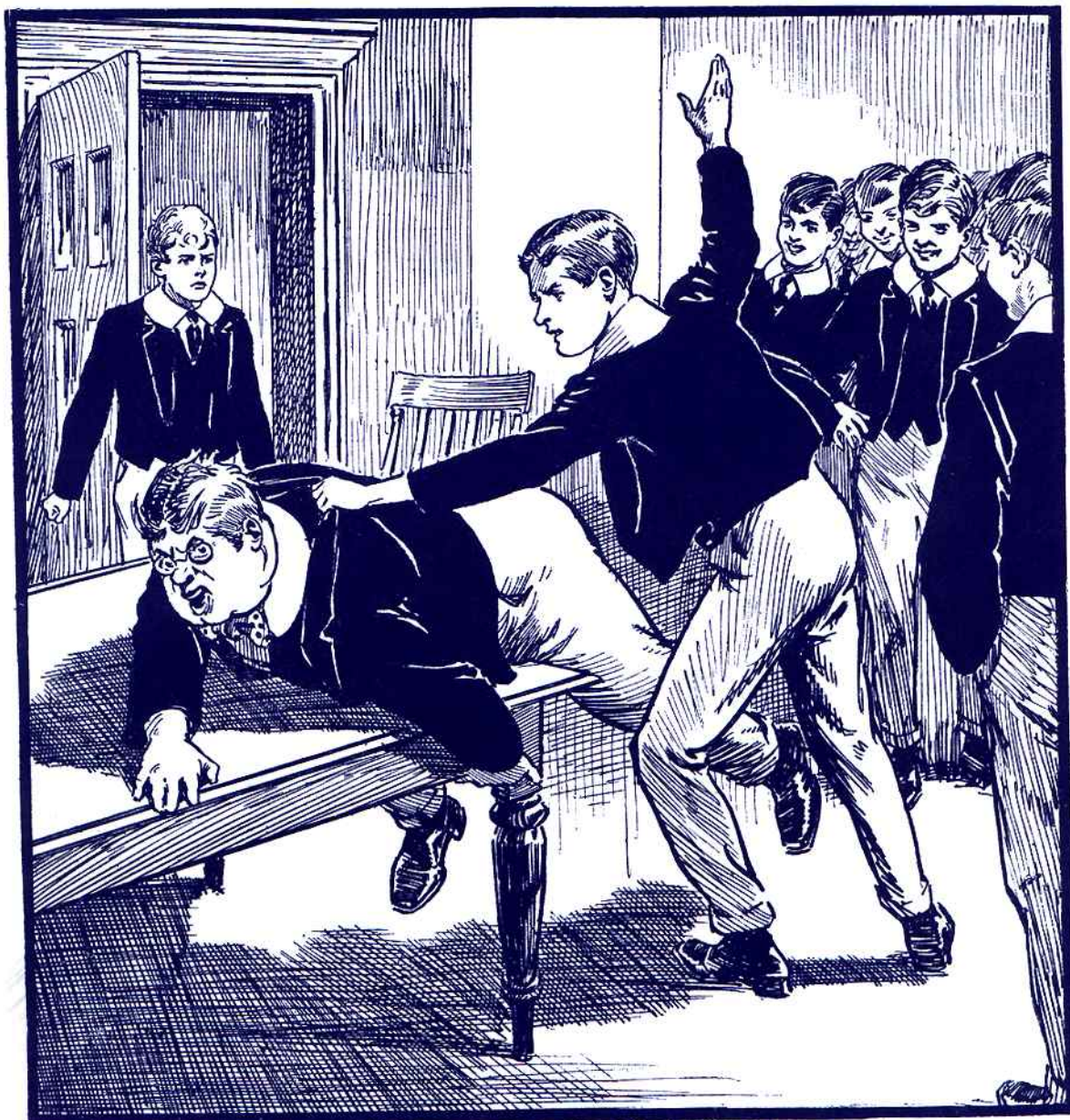


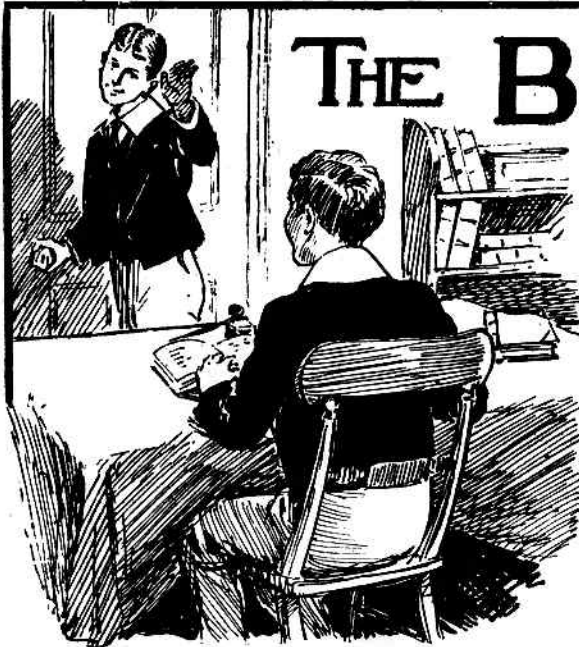


THE BOUNDER'S FAULT!



BUNTER IN TROUBLE AGAIN!

(A "Spanking" Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



THE BOUNDER'S FAULT!

A Magnificent Long, Complete
School Story of Harry Wharton
& Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Little Hasty.

“WHAT about Redwing?” Harry Wharton smiled at Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, asked that question.

The captain of the Remove had just come downstairs with a paper in his hand; and Vernon-Smith met him as he was approaching the notice-board. A good many eyes were turned upon Wharton, as well as Smithy's. The paper in his hand contained the list of players for the Highcliffe match on Wednesday; and there were plenty of fellows in the Remove who would have been glad to see their names there.

“Redwing?” repeated Wharton. He could not help smiling. The Bounder could always be relied upon to see that his chum's claims were not overlooked. Smithy had plenty of friends at Greyfriars, but he had never really chummed with anybody but Tom Redwing, the sailorman's son, of Hawkscliff. Why he chummed with him was a mystery to most of the fellows, for the two juniors were utterly unlike.

Smithy himself, of course, was sure of a place in the team for Highcliffe. Wharton would as soon have thought of standing out himself as of leaving out the Bounder. In an important fixture there were certain men who could not possibly be left out, and the Bounder was one of them. Tom Redwing, though a good footballer, was not one of the indispensables by any means. But the Bounder was more anxious that Redwing should play than he should himself, as a matter of fact. Redwing was too quiet and modest to push his claims; but where his chum's interests were concerned, the Bounder was never slow in making his voice heard.

“Never mind Redwing!” broke in Bolsover major. “What about me, Wharton?”

“Well, what about you?” assented Wharton.

“Am I in the list, I mean?”

“Sorry—no!”

Bolsover major snorted.

“Keeping it in the family, as usual?” he grunted. “I suppose Cherry's down,

and Bull, and Nugent, and Inky—what?”

“And I think I can guess the rest!” chimed in Skinner. “Squiff, and Brown, and Peter Todd, and Mark Linley, and Smithy, and Penfold—”

“Jolly near it!” agreed Wharton, unmoved.

Vernon-Smith's brow darkened.

“I don't see why Redwing shouldn't be given a chance!” he said. “He's as good as Penfold any day!”

“You see—” began Wharton.

“I don't see why Redwing shouldn't play against Highcliffe!” interrupted the Bounder irritably.

“But—”

“Oh, it's a family concern,” said Skinner. “You're lucky to be in it yourself, Smithy! I really expected to see Nugent minor put in—he's no good, but he's related to Wharton's pal!”

“I think you'd better dry up, Skinner,” said Harry Wharton quietly. “The matter doesn't concern you, anyway, as you don't play footer!”

“Too much favouritism for me!” sneered Skinner.

After making that remark, Harold Skinner strolled away—rather hastily, not quite liking the look on Wharton's face.

“I say, you fellows, it really isn't fair, you know!” came from Billy Bunter. “I'll bet you my name isn't down—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I don't see anything to cackle at!” exclaimed Bunter warmly. “I think it's about time I had a show. I've never had a chance of showing what I can do in a really good match. In my opinion there's a lot of jealousy about!”

And Billy Bunter blinked loftily at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles.

Wharton smiled, and moved on towards the board. Vernon-Smith's voice broke in rather unpleasantly:

“Look here, Wharton—”

“Well?” said Harry, glancing round.

“I don't see why Redwing can't be put in, for once at least,” said the Bounder. “I don't say I agree with Skinner, but it does look—”

Wharton's handsome face hardened a little.

“Well, what does it look like?” he asked.

“It does look as if the Remove football is being run a good deal as a family concern!” said the Bounder stubbornly. “Bob Cherry and Bull are wanted, I know, and Inky—but Nugent—”

“Well, what about Nugent?”

“It's all rot to say that Frank Nugent is any better than Redwing!” said Vernon-Smith sharply. “He isn't!”

“But I don't remember saying that he was!” remarked Wharton mildly.

“Well, if you admit that he isn't, it's up to you to give another chap a show, instead of putting in your own pal!”

“Hear, hear!” said Bolsover major.

“Right on the wicket!” chimed in Stott.

Wharton flushed a little.

“Hadden't you better look at the list before you begin grousing about it, Smithy?” he asked.

“I don't see why I shouldn't say what I think!” grunted the Bounder. “I think Redwing has a claim—”

“Nobody has a claim to play for the Remove, excepting on his form. And it's generally left to the captain to decide about that, isn't it?”

“Oh, I know all that! Still, I think you—”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's Smithy grousing about?” inquired Bob Cherry, as he came along with Frank Nugent.

Wharton smiled.

“Smithy thinks Redwing ought to be in the team instead of Nugent,” he replied.

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared Bob.

Nugent burst into a laugh.

“Is that all?” he asked.

“That's all!”

“Well, Smithy, you are an ass, and no mistake!” said Nugent.

The Bounder gave him an angry look.

“Possibly you think so,” he answered.

“I dare say a good many fellows agree with me. I think that list could be improved, and I don't mind saying so, plain!”

“Why not look at it?” grinned Nugent.

“I know that, without looking at it!”

“Well, read it, and tell us which man

you'd leave out!" suggested Bob Cherry, in great merriment.

Wharton had pinned up the paper now, and the juniors were reading it.

Vernon-Smith turned to the board with an angry, impatient look. The list ran:

H. WHARTON
R. CHERRY
HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH
J. BULL
M. LINLEY
H. VERNON-SMITH
S. Q. I. FIELD
P. TODD
T. BROWN
R. RAKE
T. REDWING.

As he read the last name Vernon-Smith gave a start. The expression on his face was so peculiar that the juniors burst into a roar. Frank Nugent's name was not there—and Tom Redwing's was!

"Oh!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which name do you want left out, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton.

The Bounder coloured.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"Well?"

"I—I— The fact is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, Wharton, I—I beg your pardon!" said the Bounder frankly.

"And yours, too, Nugent. I was talking out of my hat, and I own up!"

"All serene!" said Wharton, laughing. "No harm done! Only stop to think a minute next time before you blow off steam!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder grinned rather shamefacedly, and hurried off to No. 4 Study to congratulate his chum.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Awful Luck!

TOM REDWING was at work in No. 4 Study when Vernon-Smith arrived there.

The sailorman's son was a hard worker; the habits of his early life had not been changed when he came to Greyfriars. He was deep in Greek now—a subject to which Smithy did not take, and for which he had a strong distaste. The sight of a Greek character was enough to make the bounder feel tired; he hardly knew alpha from omega, and did not want to know. But he was very tolerant of his chum's different taste.

Redwing looked up with a smile from his work.

"What's the game now?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Cheery old Xenophon?"

"No; Thucydides."

"My only hat! Do you want to burst your crop?"

Redwing laughed.

"You're looking very bright," he said. "Any good news?"

"Lots. You're in the eleven for Highlife to-morrow, to play Courtenay's team."

"Yes, I know. Wharton dropped in a few minutes ago to tell me," said Redwing. "I'm jolly glad!"

"Oh, Wharton told you?" The Bounder flushed as he remembered how he had greeted Wharton downstairs. "Well, there's still light enough for some practice, kid. Suppose you come down and have a little?"

"I've been at it pretty hard since lessons, Smithy. I want to get through this now, if you don't mind. Mr. Quelch is giving me some extra toot." "Awful rot, isn't it?" remarked the Bounder.

"Well, no; tastes differ, you know," said Redwing, with a smile. "I shall play a good game to-morrow, Smithy, never fear. I'm in topping form. But I've got to take this paper in to Quelchy—"

The Bounder yawned.

"Which means that you'd like me to clear off and leave you to work?" he inquired.

"Oh no!"

"Oh yes!" said Vernon-Smith. "All serene, old top! I'll clear! I'll go and kick the leather about a bit till you've finished. Wade in!"

And the Bounder quitted the study, leaving Redwing to his labours. In less than a minute, Tom Redwing was deep in his task again. It was a task that few juniors at Greyfriars would have envied him, but the sailorman's son found pleasure in it. His coming to Greyfriars had been the chance of a lifetime to Tom Redwing, and he was making the most of it. And he did not mind much if fellows like Skinner and Snoop called him a "swot" and a "sap." He had come to the school to work, and if working was "sapping," he intended to sap.

Knock!

Redwing started as a loud knock came at the study door, and called out, "Come in!"

But the door did not open.

Footsteps passed along the passage, and that was all.

Redwing, rather puzzled, rose and opened the door, and glanced out into the Remove passage.

The passage was empty.

He frowned a little as he closed the door and returned to his work. It was a "runaway" knock. One of the slackers of the Remove, knowing that he was hard at work, was bent on worrying him a little.

Redwing had had a good deal of that kind of experience, and had learned to be patient and to keep his temper. He sat down to work again.

Knock!

"Come in!"

There was a chuckle outside; he recognised Skinner's chuckle. But the door did not open.

His eyes gleamed a little, but he went on working quietly. A few minutes later there came another knock.

"Clear off!" shouted Redwing.

"He, he, he!"

It was Billy Bunter's fat chortle this time.

Silence followed, and Redwing, with a rather worried look, resumed his work. It was rather difficult to work under these conditions—especially at Thucydides. But there seemed no help for it.

Knock!

Again the thump at the door.

Tom Redwing sprang to his feet and ran to the door and threw it open. He was just in time to see Stott disappear into a study farther up the passage.

"Will you let me alone?" shouted Redwing. "I'll come out to you next time!"

He shut the door and sat down again.

Knock!

"Oh, my hat!"

It was simply impossible to work, and Redwing did not attempt it further. He rose quietly to his feet and picked up a heavy cushion, and stationed himself inside the door—ready to open it at the next knock and fall upon the ragger before he had time to escape.

There was a considerable interval this time. Redwing waited, cushion in hand, and with a gleam in his eyes. After an example had been made of the next

ragger, he thought he might be left in peace to get on with Thucydides.

It came at last.

Knock!

Redwing tore the door open even as the knock came, and the cushion swept out through the doorway with a mighty swipe.

There was a gasp as it came into violent contact with the person who had knocked.

"There, you rotter!" panted Redwing. "Oh, oh! My hat! I—I—I beg your pardon, sir! Oh dear!"

It was not a ragger this time!

It was the majestic form of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, that had received the swipe of the cushion!

"Redwing!" gasped the Form-master.

"Oh dear!"

The cushion dropped from Tom Redwing's hand. He stood petrified, almost dazed by what he had done.

"Redwing!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

He blinked at the dismayed junior in amazement and wrath.

"Boy!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You—you—you have—you have—" spluttered Mr. Quelch. "Redwing! Boy! I came here to see your Greek exercise! I—I—you—you—"

"I—oh—I! Oh, sir!" stuttered Redwing.

"And this is how you have received me!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Are you out of your senses, Redwing? Is your Form-master a proper person upon whom to play a practical joke of this nature?"

"Oh, sir! I—I didn't know it was you!" gasped Redwing. "I—I thought—it—was—was one of the fellows! Oh dear!"

"Whatever you may have thought, Redwing, you have assaulted me—your Form-master!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I—I—"

Redwing's utter dismay seemed to have a slightly modifying effect upon the wrathful and indignant Remove-master.

"I accept your assurance, Redwing, that you did not know it was your Form-master that you were playing this absurd trick upon. But the fact remains. You have caused me very severe discomfort. Your action was utterly reckless. It might have been the Head himself whom you struck with the cushion."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Redwing, almost paralysed at the bare idea.

"I am disappointed in you, Redwing. I supposed you were hard at work, and I find you playing childish tricks. I am very much surprised and very much disappointed! Redwing, I shall not cane you, as I accept your assurance that you did not intend to assault me. You will be detained for the next half-holiday!"

"Oh, sir!"

"As I find you playing foolish practical jokes instead of working, as I supposed, I need not linger here," said Mr. Quelch majestically. "You do not require my assistance evidently."

"I—I—"

"I shall set you a detention task to-morrow, Redwing. It may help to reduce you to a more serious mood."

"But, sir, I—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch swept away, with rustling gown, greatly outraged and indignant, leaving Tom Redwing overcome with dismay.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Smithy is Not Pleased!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Wherefore that worried look?"

Bob Cherry clapped Redwing on the shoulder with a powerful clap as he asked the question.

The Famous Five had been finishing out the daylight at footer practice, and they came into the School House in a cheery crowd. They found Tom Redwing in the Common-room, with a decidedly glum expression on his face.

Redwing jumped as he caught Bob's friendly but rather heavy smite on his shoulder.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Bob. "You look as if you'd lost an English bob and found a German mark."

Redwing smiled faintly.

"Thinking that you won't be any good for the match to-morrow?" asked Frank Nugent. "Leave it to me, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to leave it to you, I'm afraid," said Redwing.

"What?"

"Don't you want to play Highcliffe?" asked Johnny Bull, in amazement.

"I want to, of course. But I'm detained for to-morrow."

"Detained!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes. I—P've got Quelchy down on me, and he's detained me for the half-holiday," said Redwing dismally.

"Well, you must be an ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"But what's happened?" asked Wharton. "Quelchy was all right in class this afternoon. Something happened since?"

Redwing explained.

The Famous Five looked serious enough then. "Biffing" was a Form-master with a cushion was a serious matter, even by mistake.

"My hat!" said Harry. "I wonder Quelchy didn't lick you as well as giving detention! He's not a bad old boy."

"Of course, he was angry!" said Tom.

"I—I was rather an ass, of course, but I was wild with those duffers ragging me, and wanted to stop them. I ought to have thought, of course. But it's not much good thinking of that now. I—I shall have to stand out of the match."

"It's rotten!" said Bob.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the worthy Quelchy may relent to-morrowfully when the esteemed sun has gone down upon his wrath."

Redwing shook his head. There was not much chance of Mr. Quelch relenting. The decrees of the Remove-master were a good deal like those of the Medes and Persians. They were not to be changed. Besides, though poor Tom had certainly meant no harm, there was no doubt that he had done harm, and that his punishment was mild. There were some masters at Greyfriars who would have reported him to the Head for a flogging for such an incident.

"Catch him in a good temper to-morrow and put it to him nicely!" suggested Nugent. "He doesn't know you're down for the match. If you tell him—"

"It's a chance, anyway," said Bob.

"I—I might try," said Tom doubtfully.

"But—but he's offended. He thinks I was playing japes when I'd told him I was going to grind Greek—"

"Well, you can tell him the facts about that, anyway."

"I—I suppose so. Where's Smithy?"

"Gone up to the study, I think."

Redwing left the Common-room, and made his way to the Remove passage, still

looking glum. There was a very, very slender chance that Mr. Quelch might let him off on the morrow, but it was very slender, indeed. And it really was cruel luck to lose, in this way, his chance of playing in the Highcliffe match. That match was one of the best fixtures the Remove had, ranking with those of St. Jim's and Rookwood. Redwing had hoped, without expecting, to get into the eleven, and the unexpected had happened, and he was in it, and now the chance was gone. His glum look caught Vernon-Smith's attention at once as he came into No. 4.

The Bounder was getting tea in the study, and he stopped, with a frying-pan in his hand, looking at Redwing.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Detention to-morrow!"

"Oh gad!"

"I—I didn't really mean to look so down in the mouth," said Redwing, smiling. "I can't quite help it. It's really rotten!"

"But why—"

Redwing explained once more. The Bounder's brow lowered as he listened, and his eyes glittered.

"Skinner was ragging you, and Bunter—"

"Yes, that was the cause of it. Of course, I couldn't tell Mr. Quelch so."

"I don't see why not," growled the Bounder. "Are you going to lose a half-holiday and the Highcliffe match because of Skinner's tricks? Look here, Redwing, this won't do! You've got to play to-morrow!"

"I wish I could, Smishy."

"You've got to, I tell you! It's a chance for you, and it's not going to be lost!" exclaimed the Bounder. "I'm not having it!"

"I don't see anything that can be done."

"Something's got to be done. And, as a start, Skinner can be made to sit up for causing the mischief."

"That wouldn't be much good, old chap."

"It would be some satisfaction."

"Not to me," answered Redwing.

"Skinner and Bunter meant to be ill-natured, I suppose; but they never thought of this happening. Let's have tea, Smithy! You'll have to take all the goals for this study to-morrow. After all, the team won't suffer. Nugent will play—"

"Bother Nugent!"

"He's as good a man as I am. Wharton's only put me in from a sense of fair play all round," said Redwing. "So long as we beat Highcliffe, that's the main thing, after all."

"It isn't!" snapped the Bounder.

"Well, let's have tea," said Redwing, with a smile.

The sailorman's son assumed a more cheery aspect over tea, though his chum was still disturbed and annoyed. Smithy, indeed, seemed to take the matter to heart more than Redwing did. He was always keener than Redwing in pushing the latter's claims, and, indeed, he took this disappointment so much to heart that Redwing found himself treating the matter lightly simply in order to relieve Smithy's mind.

"After all, I can put in some work at Greek," he said. "The afternoon won't be wasted, even in the Form-room."

It was a rather unfortunate remark.

"Greek!" growled the Bounder. "I believe you care more for Greek than for football."

"Not at all. But—"

"Any other fellow would be grouching no end, and all you're thinking of is grinding Greek when you're detained."

"Well, grouching doesn't seem much to

the purpose, does it?" said Redwing mildly. "It doesn't alter facts."

"You've got to get off detention somehow. Quelchy might take a different view if he knew the facts."

"I can't tell him without sneaking about Skinner. Quelchy would come down very heavy on a chap who interrupted another fellow's work. I can't give Skinner away!"

"Hang Skinner!"

"Hang him as high as you like! I don't feel very amiable towards him, by any means."

"Look here! You've got to play to-morrow," said the Bounder doggedly. "If you don't explain to Quelchy, I've a jolly good mind to. You can explain to him without mentioning Skinner's name, too."

"I will if you want me to, Smithy."

"You can try, at any rate. Quelchy might let you off. If he doesn't, you'll have to break detention!"

"That's impossible, old chap!"

"It's not impossible; it's easy! Quelchy won't be watching you all the afternoon like a cat a mouse, will he?"

"No; but I couldn't do it!"

"Afraid of a lickin'?" sneered the Bounder.

Redwing flushed.

"You know I'm not, Smithy! It's not that. But it's too jolly disrespectful. Mr. Quelch has been very kind to me in a lot of ways, and I couldn't flout his authority like that!"

"Bosh!"

Redwing made no rejoinder to that; Smithy evidently was not in a mood for reasonable argument. Tea was finished in silence, and then Vernon-Smith left the study. Tom Redwing, with a sigh, took out his books again. Deep and sincere as the friendship was between the chums of Study No. 4, it was not uncommon for a slight breeze to arise owing to the Bounder's somewhat uncertain temper. But Tom, even if he was pained, did not think of resenting Smithy's manner; it was, after all, Smithy's concern for him that was at the bottom of it.

The Bounder's eyes were glittering as he left the study. He was inclined to be angry with Redwing; and he was more than inclined to be angry with Skinner. It was the idle slacker of the Remove who was the cause of the trouble; and Vernon-Smith headed for Harold Skinner's study with a decidedly unpleasant expression on his face.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The High Hand!

"WHAT larks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fairly copped!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

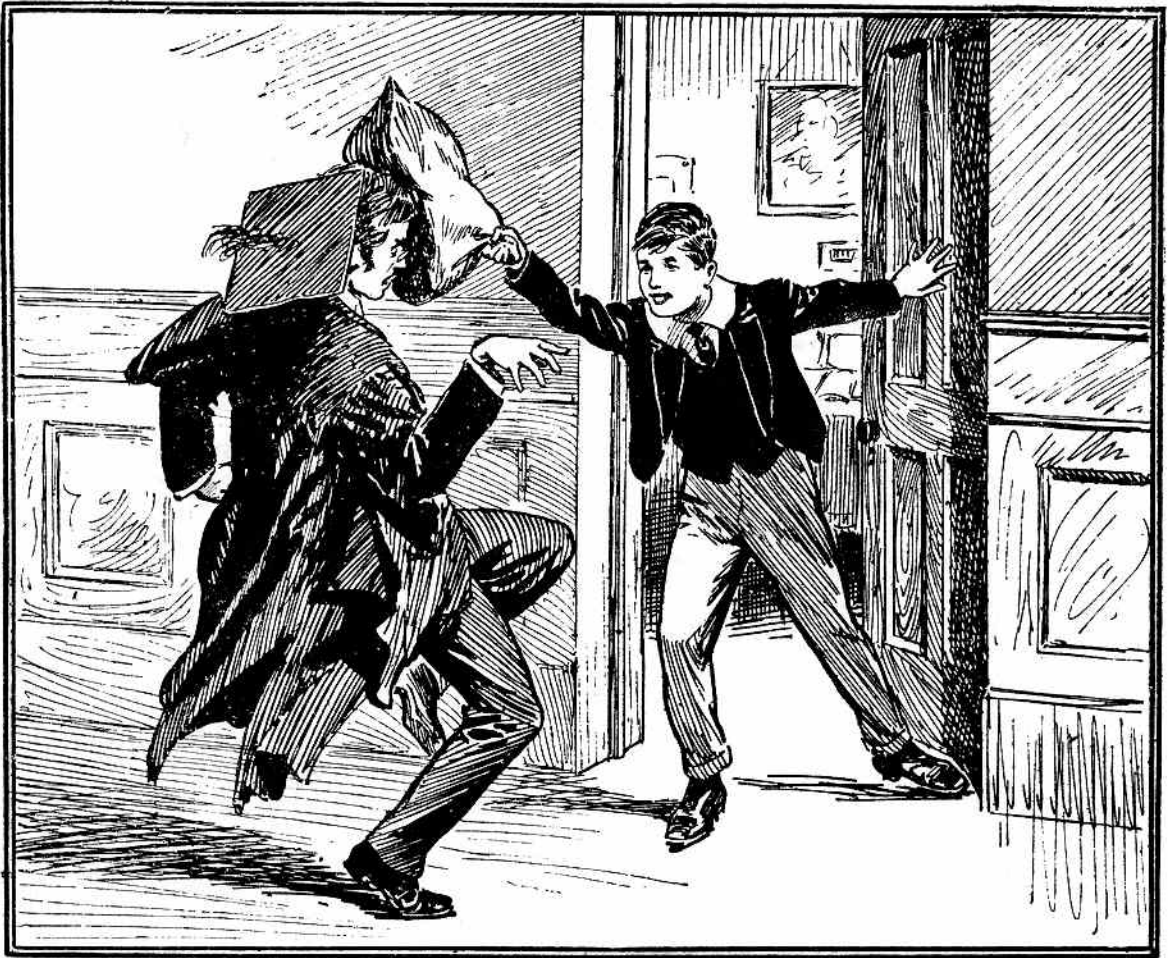
There were sounds of merriment in Study No. 11 as Vernon-Smith came up to the door. Skinner and his study-mates seemed highly entertained by something. The Bounder was at no loss to guess what it was.

"He landed Quelchy!" Skinner continued. "You could have knocked me over with a mallet when I saw Quelchy stagger! I was watchin' from the end of the passage! Fairly took my breath away! Quelchy was wrathy!"

"No wonder!" grinned Sidney James Snoot. "The wonder is that he didn't thrash Redwing."

"Hacker would have, so would Prout," remarked Stott.

"I thought Quelchy would!" chortled Skinner. "But Redwing's rather a prize pupil, you know—saps no end, and gets into Quelchy's good graces. He's only



Redwing tore the door open even as the knock came, and the cushion swept out through the doorway with a mighty swipe. There was a gasp as it came into violent contact with the person who had knocked. "There, you rotter!" panted Redwing. "Oh, oh! My hat! I—I—I beg your pardon, sir! Oh dear!" (See Chapter 2.)

detained him. Still, it's pretty stiff for Redwing; he was goin' to play at Highcliffe to-morrow, and now he can't!"

"I say, that's rather hard cheese!" remarked Snoop.

"Serve him jolly well right!"

"Yes, rather!" said Stott. "What's he doing in the eleven at all? Wharton oughtn't have put him in!"

"Well, he's dished now, and I'm jolly glad!" said Skinner. "I think—Hullo, Smithy!"

Skinner started, and his expression changed, as the Bounder pushed the half-open door further open and stepped into the study. Snoop and Stott exchanged glances. The Bounder's look boded trouble.

"Hallo, old sport!" said Skinner uneasily. "Trot in! Have you come to tea?"

"I haven't come to tea. You've been ragging Redwing again," said the Bounder. "You've done it before, Skinner, and you've got into trouble over it!"

"Are you d-y-nursin' Redwing?" asked Skinner. "If he's got anything to complain of, can't he come here himself?"

"I've come instead!"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

Vernon-Smith pushed back his cuffs, and advanced on Skinner, who did not rise from the table.

"Will you get up?" asked the Bounder.

"What for?"

"I'm going to lick you!"

"Thanks! I'm not looking for a scrap!" answered Skinner. "If Redwing wants trouble, he can come here for it. It's no bizney of yours!"

Smack!

"Yoop!" spluttered Skinner, as the Bounder's open hand smote his face. "You rotter, Smithy—"

"Now will you put up your hands?" sneered the Bounder.

He did not need to ask. Skinner sprang up and leaped at him with a furious face.

"Go it, Skinney!" sang out Stott encouragingly.

"Chuck him out!" said Snoop.

The Bounder smiled grimly as he stood up to Skinner. The weedy slacker of the Remove had little chance against the iron-limbed Bounder, and his spasm of fury oozed out fast enough as Smithy's crushing fists met him with a rain of blows.

Skinner was driven across the study. Hardly one of his blows reached the Bounder, while the latter's fists beat a tattoo upon his face.

Crash!

Skinner was down on his back on the hearthrug, panting and gasping, and the

Bounder stood over him, with glittering eyes.

It was not only the Bounder's heavy drive that had sent Skinner to grass. It was also the fact that the hearthrug was a safer place for him. Skinner could have gone on if he had wanted to; but most decidedly he didn't want to.

He lay and gasped.

"I'm waitin' for you!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oo-ow!"

"How long are you going to lie malingerin' there?" sneered the Bounder.

"Ow! Oh dear! I'm done! Oh!"

"Let the chap alone!" said Stott.

Vernon-Smith turned on him.

"Do you want some?" he snapped.

"Oh, you can't frighten me!" said Stott. "Go and eat coke!"

His hands went up the next moment, as the Bounder advanced on him. Stott was a bulky youth; but he did not have much chance against the Bounder. In two minutes he joined Skinner on the floor.

"Did you have a hand in ragging Redwing, Snoop?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No, I didn't!" answered Sidney James very hastily.

"You two rotters want any more?"

Only gasps answered from Skinner and Stott; and the Bounder turned on his heel and swung out of the study. He

almost ran into Bob Cherry in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is there an air-raid going on in the study?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"Seen Bunter?" asked Vernon-Smith, without replying to Bob's question.

"Yes; he's in the Common-room!"

"Thanks!"

Vernon-Smith strode away towards the stairs, and Bob Cherry looked after him rather curiously. He knew that bitter, malicious expression on Smithy's face; he had seen it there before, and he did not like it. After a moment's reflection he followed Smithy downstairs. The sins of William George Bunter were manifold; but Bob Cherry did not mean to see the fat Owl of the Remove bullied.

The Bouncer strode into the junior Common-room, and looked round for Bunter. That fat youth was addressing Wharton and Johnny Bull by the window.

"Why it hasn't come," Bunter was remarking, "is a mystery! I suppose the strikes have got something to do with it."

Evidently William George Bunter was on the subject of his celebrated postal-order, which had been expected daily, and hourly, for quite a long time.

"Has the Postmaster-General gone on strike?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton— Yarough!" roared Bunter, as Smithy's grasp fell on the back of his collar and he was whirled round.

"Hallo! What's this game, Smithy?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith did not answer.

He whirled Bunter to the table, bent him over it, and proceeded to administer a series of sounding smacks to the Owl's podgy person. Billy Bunter's roars rang through the Common-room.

"Smithy—"

"Draw it mild—"

Bob Cherry came in rather quickly. He strode directly to Vernon-Smith, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Stop it!" he said laconically.

"Let go, you fool!"

"Stop it!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yarough!" roared Bunter, struggling frantically. "I didn't—I wasn't—I never did— Yarooop!"

Bob Cherry's face set grimly, and he

exerted his strength, and fairly wrenched the Bouncer away from his victim.

"That's enough, whatever Bunter's done!" he said curtly.

The Bouncer tore himself free.

"Get out of the way! The fat cad wants a thrashing—"

"Yow-wow-wow! I don't!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry stepped in the way as Vernon-Smith was making a stride towards Bunter again. The Bouncer clenched his hands hard.

"Will you get aside?" he said thickly.

"Not the least bit in the world," answered Bob coolly. "If Bunter's been bagging your grub, you've given him enough, and a little over!"

"It's not that!"

"Well, what is it?" exclaimed Harry Wharton sharply. "This is a little bit too high-handed, Smithy!"

"I should jolly well think so!" said Johnny Bull warmly.

Vernon-Smith made an effort to control his temper.

"He was ragging Redwing, along with Skinner!" he said.

"I wasn't!" howled Bunter.

"Well, that's Redwing's bizney, if he did," said Johnny Bull. "I don't see that you've any right to make yourself judge, jury, and executioner all rolled into one!"

"I wasn't!" roared Bunter. "I never knocked at his door! I wouldn't! Skinner didn't tell me to, and I didn't say it was a jolly good idea to rag the swotting cad, and I didn't knock at the door, and I didn't buzz off before Redwing could open it, and—and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat rotter!" said Wharton, frowning. "You deserve a jolly good licking! But enough's as good as a feast, Smithy!"

"Let the esteemed Bunter state whether he has had enough!" suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Yes, leave it to Bunter!" said Squiff.

"Keep your wool on, Smithy, old man!"

"Have you had enough, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Yes!" answered Bunter promptly.

"Too much! Ow! I'm injured! You fellows stand aside, and I'll give Smithy a jolly good hiding!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith uttered an impatient exclamation and strode from the room. Bunter shook a fat fist after him.

"I say, you fellows, you fetch him back, and see me thrash him!" he exclaimed.

"Done!" said Bob Cherry. He hurried to the door.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bunter hastily.

"As—as Smithy's playing football tomorrow, I—I don't want to spoil his form. I'll let him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I think it's jolly generous of me to let Smithy off, considering. Now, I was saying to you fellows, my postal-order hasn't come—I say, you fellows! Don't walk away while I'm talking to you!" roared Bunter.

But they did!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Redwing!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. wore very cheerful looks the following morning.

It was glorious weather, and they were looking forward with great keenness to the match at Highcliffe School.

The brake was coming round very soon after dinner to take the footballers over to Highcliffe—as well as all the Removites it would hold in addition to the team. And an army of others intended to follow on bikes and on foot.

Ever since Frank Courtenay had become junior skipper of Highcliffe, the latter school had put a good junior team into the field, and the match was certain to be well worth watching. Even Skinner was going over with the crowd—though he was not so interested in watching the match as in the prospect of betting on the result with Ponsonby or some other of the "blades" of Highcliffe.

The Removites were as good as gold in the Form-room that morning. The bare thought of possible detention was dismay.

The Famous Five sympathised sincerely enough with Redwing in his disappointment; but they looked at the matter chiefly from the point of view of football. Redwing was not an indispensable member of the team, and there were five or six fellows who could have filled his place with credit. Harry Wharton had left his best chum out of the eleven on this occasion; and probably he was not wholly sorry that Nugent would be called upon to play, after all. It was understood that Frank would stand aside if Redwing, by good luck, got off detention; but there was little chance of that. Mr. Quelch's expression that morning showed how little chance there was. He was generally very kind to Redwing, who was one of his most promising pupils, and the hardest worker in the Remove with the exception of Mark Linley. But his manner now showed that he was deeply offended.

In the kindness of his heart, the Remove-master had given up quite a good amount of his scanty leisure to assisting Redwing. And naturally the affair in Study No. 4 had displeased him deeply. He had supposed Redwing to be hard at work there; and he had found him, as he believed, engaged in practical jokes. Redwing had been unable to explain without the risk of betraying Skinner & Co. to punishment—which was forbidden by the schoolboy code of honour. But the scholarship junior felt the changed manner of Mr. Quelch deeply. It was painful enough to him to be supposed careless and ungrateful.

Mr. Quelch's tone was very curt when he had to address Redwing in class.

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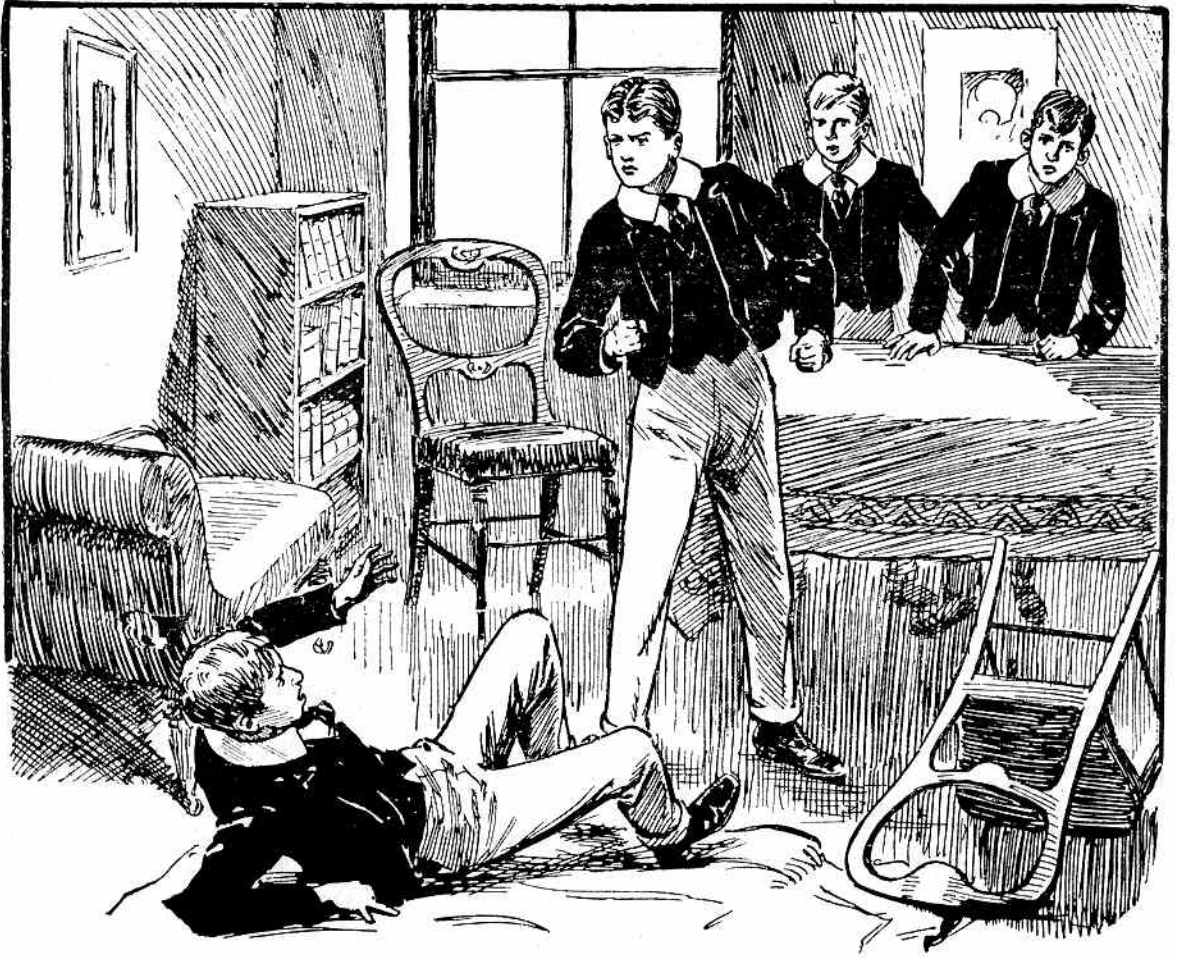
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Crash! Skinner was down on his back on the hearthrug, panting and gasping, and the Bounder stood over him with glittering eyes. Skinner lay and gasped. "I'm waiting for you!" said Vernon-Smith. "Ow-ow!" "How long are you going to lie malingerin' there?" sneered the Bounder. (See Chapter 4.)

Redwing's "construe" was excellent, as usual, and the Form-master commended him; but in a very dry way.

His hopes of being let off detention sank to zero.

Poor Tom did not feel very happy in class that morning. But he had told the Bounder that he would make the attempt, at least, to get off; and when the Remove were dismissed, he lingered behind to speak to Mr. Quelch. The Form-master's expression was forbidding, and Redwing had a strong repugnance to his task; but he attempted it.

"May I speak to you, sir?" he asked meekly as he came up to the Form-master's desk.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him coldly. "If you have anything to say to me—certainly!" he replied.

"I—I am sorry about—about what happened yesterday, sir—"

"You have told me so already, Redwing, and the matter is now closed!"

Mr. Quelch turned to the papers on his desk; his manner was a curt dismissal. But Redwing lingered.

"I—I wasn't really slacking, sir, as you supposed—" he faltered.

"You have a perfect right, Redwing, to employ your leisure time as you think fit," said Mr. Quelch. "As you were not doing Form work, there is nothing to be said on that point!"

"But—I—I mean—"

"You may go, Redwing!"

"About this afternoon, sir; I—I was going to play football—"

"I am sorry if your detention interferes with your games!" said Mr. Quelch, with ponderous sarcasm. "As you are detained, however, you will not be able to play football this afternoon! You may go!"

"But, sir—"

"Really, Redwing, this passes all patience! Leave the Form-room at once!"

There was nothing to be said in reply to that. Tom Redwing quitted the Form-room with a heavy heart. He went out into the quadrangle, where some of his friends were waiting for him.

"Well, what luck?" asked the Bounder anxiously.

"None!"

"You're still detained?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes!"

"I'm sorry, old fellow!" said the captain of the Remove, sincerely enough.

"I'll see that you get a chance in another match."

Tom Redwing nodded, and walked away with the Bounder, who was angry and glowering.

"Did you explain to Quelch?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"He didn't give me a chance!" said Tom ruefully. "He's very much offended. Of course, he misunderstands!"

"You ought to clear up the misunderstanding. Try again after dinner!"

"I can't, Smithy! He ordered me out of the room!"

"Crusty old Hun!"

Redwing did not answer that.

"I'll tackle him," said the Bounder, after a pause. "I'll leave it till after dinner; a feed may put him into a good temper. Then I'll explain to him."

"I don't think it will be much good."

"Do you mean that you don't want to come with us to Highcliffe?" exclaimed the Bounder irritably.

"Of course not! But—"

"Well, I'll speak to him, then."

"I—I don't mind, so long as you don't mention Skinner by name."

"Oh, hang Skinner! I won't mention his confounded name!" growled the Bounder. "You're awfully concerned about Skinner!"

"The fellows would call it sneaking."

"Hang the fellows!"

Redwing was silent again.

"Look here," went on Vernon-Smith. "if Quelch doesn't let you off, you can cut. You couldn't go in the brake, of course; but I'll have your bike ready out of gates, and you can follow on. See?"

"I can't, old chap."

"Why not?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith angrily. "Quelch won't be watching you. He might tell a prefect to keep an eye on me, or Skinner, or Snoop; but

he will trust you to keep in the Form-room."

"That's one reason why I couldn't do it, old chap."

"Oh, rot!"

The Bounder walked away with an angry brow. He was still looking cross when he came in to dinner with the Remove. Skinner was looking very merry and bright, though he bore some signs of his punishment. The fact that Redwing had been "dished" was very pleasing to the amiable Skinner. Smithy did not even look at him, however. He was thinking of his coming interview with Mr. Quelch, about which he was not very hopeful.

When the juniors came out of the dining-hall, the Bounder joined Harry Wharton.

"The brake's coming at two, isn't it?" he asked.

"That's it," assented Harry.

"I'm goin' to speak to Quelch—about Redwing. If he's let off at the last moment, and follows us to Highcliffe, it will be all right, I suppose?"

"If he's let off, he can come in the brake."

"But if he comes later—"

"I don't see why he should. Still, it will be all right. Nugent will come in the brake, but it's understood that Redwing plays if he's on the ground in time."

"That's all right, then."

The Bounder moved away, leaving Wharton with a very thoughtful expression. As Tom Redwing came along to the door, Wharton spoke to him.

"You're not thinking of cutting detention this afternoon, are you, Redwing?" he asked.

Tom shook his head.

"I couldn't play you on those terms, you know," added Harry. "I'm really sorry you're detained, but we can't exactly fly in the face of authority, you know, old fellow."

"Nothing would induce me to cut detention," answered Redwing quietly.

"I know what's due to my Form-master, Wharton."

"That's all right, then," said Wharton, relieved.

And he dismissed the matter from his mind, and went to make preparations for the journey to Highcliffe.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing.

THERE was a sound of the clicking of a typewriter in Mr. Quelch's study as Vernon-Smith approached that somewhat dreaded apartment a little later. The Remove-master, who probably welcomed a half-holiday as much as his pupils did, was enjoying his leisure in his own fashion. Mr. Quelch's literary pursuits were rather a joke in the Remove. The juniors knew there were piles of typewritten sheets in Mr. Quelch's study, all neatly fastened together at the corners, and full of long words—regular "jaw-crackers," according to Bunter, who had pryed into them—as he did into everything. Why Mr. Quelch should type "jaw-crackers" instead of going out on a sunny afternoon was a mystery to his hopeful pupils. But he seemed to like it.

Vernon-Smith tapped at the door, and the click of the typewriter ceased. There was a very impatient note in Mr. Quelch's voice as he called out:

"Come in!"

The Bounder entered the study, to find the Form-master's gimlet eyes fixed upon him.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, shooting

the interrogation at the junior a good deal like a bullet. Evidently he was not pleased by the interruption.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, sir—" began the Bounder.

But Mr. Quelch interrupted him sharply.

"That is not to the point, Vernon-Smith. You have interrupted me. What do you want?"

"I wanted to speak to you about Redwing, sir," said the Bounder, not much encouraged by this beginning.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch impatiently. "This is really very trying."

"We're going to play Highcliffe at football this afternoon, sir—"

"I am aware of it, Vernon-Smith! I wish you a very good game. Now please go."

"Redwing was in the eleven, sir—"

"Well?"

"It's rather hard on him, sir, to lose the match—"

"Really, Vernon-Smith—"

"He's wanted, sir—"

"Now, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch, with really exemplary patience, "this is too much! You are aware that Redwing is detained for the afternoon."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Do you mean to say that your captain is depending on Redwing, and that he cannot be replaced in the team? If that is the case— But Wharton himself should come and tell me so."

"It isn't exactly like that, sir," admitted the Bounder.

"Wharton can replace Redwing without difficulty, then?"

"I—I suppose so."

"I should be very sorry to cause trouble in such matters, and if Redwing was an indispensable member of the eleven, I might defer his detention till another day," said Mr. Quelch. "I should require Wharton's very serious assurance on the point, however. But it appears that that is not the case. What, then, do you want?"

"I think you ought to know the truth about what happened yesterday, sir. Redwing was grinding hard in his study—"

"He did not give me that impression."

"Some fellows had been ragging him for sapping—"

"For what?"

"I mean studying. They'd been hammering at the door one after another, and preventing him from working—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"That's why he biffed at you with the cushion, sir, thinking it was one of those cads—"

"Did Redwing tell you this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who were the boys in question?"

"I can't give their names, sir, as—as—"

"Well, well, I will not press that question; but—" Mr. Quelch reflected a moment. "Certainly your explanation, Vernon-Smith, places Redwing's conduct in a better light. It does not, however, alter the fact that he most thoughtlessly and recklessly struck me with a cushion. Such utter recklessness is a serious matter; and you must be aware that Redwing has been punished very lightly."

"Yes, sir; but—"

Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"The matter is closed, Vernon-Smith. You may leave my study."

"May I tell Redwing he can come with us, sir?"

"Certainly not!" thundered the Remove-master. "You may leave my study, Vernon-Smith."

"But, sir—"

"Another word, Vernon-Smith, and you will join Redwing in the Form-room!"

The Bounder compressed his lips hard, and quitted the study in silence. Mr. Quelch turned to his machine again with a frowning brow. Probably he was getting a little tired of the subject of Redwing.

Vernon-Smith went down the passage with a knitted brow. The brake was waiting outside now, and the footballers were coming out. Their merry spirits jarred on the Bounder, and increased his ill-humour.

He turned his steps in the direction of the Remove Form-room.

Tom Redwing was sitting there alone at the detention task Mr. Quelch had set him. His face was clouded, as he heard the merry voices from the quadrangle. But he contrived to smile as the Bounder came in.

"I've spoken to Quelch!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"Any luck?"

"No."

"Well, it can't be helped," said Redwing, with a sigh. "It's really not to be expected that he would let me off, old fellow. I did give him a crash with the cushion, you know!"

"Confound him!"

"Smithy!" murmured Redwing, in distress.

"Oh, don't 'Smithy' me! You've got to come to Highcliffe!" growled the Bounder.

"It can't be done, old chap. Hadn't you better cut off now. I can hear the brake moving."

"I'm not going without you."

"But you must!"

"Smithy!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice was heard bawling in the distance.

"Where's Smithy? Ready, Smithy?"

"Cut off, old chap!" said Redwing.

"Besides, it wouldn't do for Quelch to find you here if he came along."

"Will you come?"

"I can't!"

"Quelch is thumping his dashed typewriter," said Vernon-Smith eagerly. "He won't give you another thought this afternoon. He mayn't even know that you've hooked it, if you're back early. Come on!"

Tom Redwing shook his head.

"I can't do it, Smithy. It wouldn't be right."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Redwing," said a deep voice in the doorway. The Bounder spun round, startled by Mr. Quelch's voice. The Remove-master gave him a very stern look.

"So you are tempting Redwing to disobey his Form-master, and treat the school authorities with contempt, Vernon-Smith?"

"I—I—"

"As I overheard your words by accident, Vernon-Smith, I shall take no notice of them," said Mr. Quelch. "I advise you to go with your companions at once. Redwing, you will give me your word of honour not to leave this room until half-past four?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Redwing.

Vernon-Smith turned out of the doorway, bitterly angry, but at the same time much relieved by his own escape.

"I rely upon your word, Redwing!" said Mr. Quelch; and he followed Vernon-Smith from the Form-room and closed the door. He gave the Bounder an icy glance in the passage, but walked on without speaking, and returned to his own study. And the Bounder, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a deep line in his brow, went out into the quadrangle.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Skinner's Stunt.

"SMITHY!"
"Where is that ass?"
"Smithy! Smithy!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here he is!"
"Dash it all, Smithy, you're keeping the brake waiting!" exclaimed Harry Wharton warmly.
"I say, Wharton, I'll come instead, if you like!" squeaked Billy Bunter.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The dear man was only saying tender good-byes to Redwing!" chortled Skinner.
Vernon-Smith swung round towards Skinner with a look that made that humorous youth jump back. Wharton caught him by the arm.
"No rags now, Smithy! Jump into the brake."
"Yes, come on, old top!" called out Squiff. "We don't want to be late at Highcliffe, you know."
"I'm coming on my bike," said Vernon-Smith curtly. "You needn't wait for me."
"You might have told us that before, then," said Wharton, rather tartly, and he took his place in the brake.
"Well, I've told you now!" grunted the Bounder sourly.
"Don't be late."
"I can beat your old brake easily enough on my bike, I suppose!" exclaimed the Bounder irritably. "I shan't be late. Redwing may be coming with me."
"Oh! Have you asked Mr. Quelch—?"

that Redwing should come—he was only thinking of ways and means.
A crowd of fellows had started after the brake, and Skinner and Co. remained alone in the quadrangle.
"We're goin', I suppose?" yawned Stott.
"We are—we is!" smiled Skinner.
"But there's no hurry. We don't want to see first man in and last man out. I've got a little stunt."
"Better leave the Bounder alone," said Snoop warningly. "He looks in a jolly dangerous temper."
"My dear man, I'm going to back up the Bounder."
"Eh?"
"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.
"Blessed if I'd back him up after what he did last evening!" growled Stott. "Besides, how can you back him up. What do you mean?"
"He's been asking Quelchy to let Redwing off."
"And Quelchy won't, and a jolly good thing, too."
"But he says it's not settled," said Skinner. "Smithy's awfully deep, and he may have some dodge for bringing Quelchy round. You never know what Smithy may do. Now, Quelchy's refused so far, and my idea is to go and ask him to let Redwing off—"
"What!"
"In such a way that it will make him more ratty," grinned Skinner. "See the point?"
"Oh!" said Snoop.
"We'll go one after another, and make him fairly wild!" grinned Skinner.

ing the Remove-master—which exactly suited his purpose at the present moment.
Tap!
The clicking ceased.
"Bless my soul!" came an irritated voice in the study. "Who is it? What is it? Come in!"
Skinner's heart beat a little as he entered the study. He felt a good deal like Daniel stepping into the lion's den, and it was not like Skinner to dare to be a Daniel. But he was going to play an unworthy trick, and that spurred him on.
"Skinner! What—"
"Am I interrupting you, sir?" asked Skinner meekly.
"You are!"
"I'm really very sorry, sir—"
"What do you want, Skinner?"
"About Redwing, sir—"
"What?"
"Do you think it quite fair, sir, that Redwing should be detained—"
Mr. Quelch jumped.
"Fair?" he stammered.
"Yes, sir. You see—"
"Skinner! Can I believe my ears? Do you venture, sir, to question the fairness of your Form-master's decisions?" thundered Mr. Quelch.
"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Skinner, rather alarmed for himself now. "I only meant—"
"How dare you, Skinner?"
"I—I—I beg your pardon, sir, but—but Redwing—"
"Leave my study this instant!" Skinner was glad enough to do that; he felt more like Daniel than ever at

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"It's not settled yet," said the Bounder evasively.

"It jolly well is settled!" exclaimed Skinner. "I saw you come away from Quelchy's study, looking like a Hun. You wouldn't have looked like a Hun if Quelchy had been good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder made a stride towards Skinner, who backed away in the crowd of fellows who were seeing the brake off.

The brake rolled away to the gates, loaded with footballers and their followers.

Vernon-Smith watched it go with a moody brow, and then went into the House again.

There was plenty of time for the Bounder to follow on his bike, but he was not thinking of following at once.

His mind was set on Redwing coming to Highcliffe, and all the obstinacy of the Bounder's obstinate nature was aroused by the difficulties in the way. He bitterly resented the Form-master's severity, and he resented, too, Tom Redwing's refusal to break bounds and follow the footballers. His better sense told him that Redwing was right, but the disappointment was too much. His obstinacy was aroused, and at such times Herbert Vernon-Smith was very like the Bounder of former days, and he was not likely to stick at very much to gain his point. So far from giving up his project, he was now all the more determined that Mr. Quelch should be defied and

"Then, when the Bounder tries his little game, whatever it is, he will find Quelchy in such a Hunnish temper—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll go first, then Snoopey—"

"Leave me out," said Snoop curtly. "Redwing's done me some good turns, and, though I don't like him, I'm not going to chip in against him."

"Look here, Snoopey—"
"Oh, rats!" answered Sidney James. And he walked away to prevent further argument.

"Well, three of us will be enough to worry Quelchy into a red-hot temper," said Skinner. "You'll help, Bunter?"

"Certainly," said Bunter. "I don't approve of Redwing. He's low. What's he doing here among the sons of gentlemen, I'd like to know. He called me a fat beast the other day. He suspected me of taking a tart from his bag. Me, you know!"

"And, of course, he was wrong!" said Stott sarcastically.

"Of course! As if I'd touch his tarts!" said Bunter, disdainfully. "It was only a penny one, too, and didn't last me half a minute—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean," chuckled Skinner. "He's a cad, and we're down on him. You fellows wait for me here."

Skinner strolled cheerily into the School House, and grinned again as he heard the click of the typewriter in Mr. Quelch's study. He knew that it was the most unfavourable time for interrupt-

that moment. Mr. Quelch was looking quite dangerous. Skinner skipped out of the study, and shut the door hastily. But he was grinning as he returned to his comrades in the quadrangle.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Peculiar Persecution.

CLICK-click-clickety-click!
Tap!
Mr. Quelch's typewriter was going great guns when Stott of the Remove knocked at the door.

"Come in!"
Mr. Quelch's voice, at that moment, resembled the growl of the Great Huge Bear.

Stott felt an inward trembling as he entered.

"Stott! You know perfectly well that you should not interrupt me in this way!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"I'm sorry, sir—"

"Go away at once!"

"But—but Redwing, sir—"

"WHAT!"

Mr. Quelch sprang to his feet. Stott's words died on his tongue, as the gimlet-eyes of the Remove-master fixed him with a Gorgon-like glare.

"Is it possible, Stott, that you dare—"

Stott backed to the doorway.

"I'm sorry, sir! I—I thought—I—"

"Go!"

Stott almost ran for it.

He was gasping when he rejoined Skinner and Bunter in the quadrangle. They met him with grinning faces.

"Waxy—what?" asked Skinner.

"Waxy isn't the word!" gasped Stott. "He's homicidal! Redwing's name is like a red rag to a bull to him now!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Your turn now, Bunter," smiled Skinner. "Pitch it to him hot and strong, old chap!"

"You leave it to me!" grinned Bunter. And the Owl of the Remove rolled into the House. Stott looked at Skinner rather dubiously.

"I say, I believe Quelch will pitch into the next chap who mentions Redwing's name to him!" he said.

"Let him!" said Skinner indifferently.

"But Bunter—"

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!" said Skinner coolly. "It's not our fault that Bunter's a fool. Let's get off to Highcliffe. May as well start now, or we shall have that fat boulder hanging on to us!"

And the precious pair started. Meanwhile, Billy Bunter, quite unconscious of his dear friends' thoughts, rolled into the School House. He caught sight of Vernon-Smith at the foot of the staircase. The Bouncer was speaking to Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, and Bunter caught his words as he passed.

"It's jolly hard cheese on Redwing, Wingate, and if you'd speak a word to Mr. Quelch—"

Wingate looked doubtful.

"I've told you exactly how it happened, Wingate, and you can see that Redwing wasn't really to blame. Mr. Quelch might listen to you, as captain of the school—"

"He might. I'm sorry for Redwing, but—"

Billy Bunter grinned as he rolled on. Evidently the Bouncer was trying to persuade the good-natured captain of Greyfriars to speak a word in Redwing's favour, and it was possible that if Wingate consented his interposition might have some effect. Skinner's "stunt," however, made that unlikely. Bunter hurried on to Mr. Quelch's study, and gave a loud rap at the door.

"Bless my soul! Go away at once!" came from within.

Bunter turned a deaf ear to that. He opened the door and rolled into the study.

Mr. Quelch's expression was almost terrific as he turned from his typewriter. But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not read that expression aright.

"Bunter! You—"

"I hope I'm not interrupting, sir," said Bunter cheerfully. "I've come to speak to you about Redwing, sir—"

"What?"

"It's jolly hard lines on Redwing, sir, to be detained simply for banging a cushion at you—"

"Upon my word!"

"We don't think it's right, sir—"

Mr. Quelch made a jump for his cane. Billy Bunter saw his danger then, and made a jump for the door. It was just like William George to better his instructions and go farther than Skinner ventured to go, out of sheer obtuseness. But though he had rushed into trouble, he was not allowed to rush out of it again. The Form-master's hand dropped on his collar and spun him round.

"Bunter!"

"Yarooooh!"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crikey! I say, sir!"

"This is a conspiracy!" gasped Mr.

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Quelch. "Nothing short of a conspiracy! I shall punish you most severely, Bunter! Hold out your hand!"

"I—I—"

"Obey me, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter's fat hand came out gingerly. Swipe!

"Yoooop!" roared Bunter. "Oh crumbs! Oh, thunder! Yarooooh!"

"Cease that ridiculous noise at once, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-wow!"

"Do you hear me, boy?"

"Woooop!"

"Hold out your other hand!"

"Oh dear!"

Swipe!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-wooooooop!"

"Leave my study at once, Bunter!" Billy Bunter jammed his fat hands under his fat arms, squeezing them in dire anguish. He seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife as he rolled out of the study. His woful wails died away down the passage.

"A conspiracy!" said Mr. Quelch, breathing hard. "A regular conspiracy on the part of Redwing's friends—probably with his knowledge! I have been mistaken in that boy! Upon my word—"

Tap!

Mr. Quelch had been about to sit down again at his typewriter. As the tap came at his door he grasped his cane instead with one hand, and with

the other seized the door-handle and jerked the door wide open.

"Who—" he began heatedly. "Oh, Wingate!"

It was the captain of Greyfriars who stood there—his expression betraying considerable surprise at Mr. Quelch's excitement. The Remove-master calmed himself with an effort.

"Oh, it is you, Wingate! Pray step in!"

"Thank you, sir! I won't interrupt you for more than a minute," said the Sixth-former. "If you don't mind my mentioning the matter of Redwing, of your Form, sir—"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"You, too?" he stuttered.

"I don't quite understand, sir," said the captain of Greyfriars, raising his eyebrows in astonishment.

"I think you understand only too well, Wingate! I am surprised—more than surprised—at your entering into a foolish conspiracy like this—you, the head of the Sixth Form—"

"I really don't understand, sir!" said Wingate, in amazement.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Are you aware, Wingate, that I have been subjected to what amounts to a ceaseless persecution this afternoon, on the subject of that boy Redwing?" he exclaimed.

"I certainly was not aware of it, sir. My object in coming here was to ask you whether you could possibly—"

"Certainly not!"

"Very well, sir! But—"

"I have heard enough of Redwing! The boy is detained for very good cause—very good cause indeed, and nothing will induce me to rescind his detention."

"Then it is useless for me to say anything on the subject, sir!" said Wingate rather drily. "I'm sorry I interrupted you."

And he left the study, leaving Mr. Quelch almost fuming. Had George Wingate belonged to any Form at Greyfriars but the Sixth, he would certainly not have quitted the room without feeling the weight of Mr. Quelch's cane.

Vernon-Smith was waiting for him at the end of the passage with a hopeful look. He was rather sanguine as to the result of Wingate's speaking a word on Redwing's behalf. But the Greyfriars captain's expression dashed his hopes at once.

"Nothing doing!" said Wingate briefly. "Mr. Quelch is very much irritated, Vernon-Smith; and I advise you not to speak to him on the subject again. You had better get off to Highcliffe, or you'll be late."

And Wingate walked on.

It was the last chance—and it had failed! But the Bouncer of Greyfriars did not start yet for Highcliffe. His last hope had failed him, but Vernon-Smith was still resolved.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

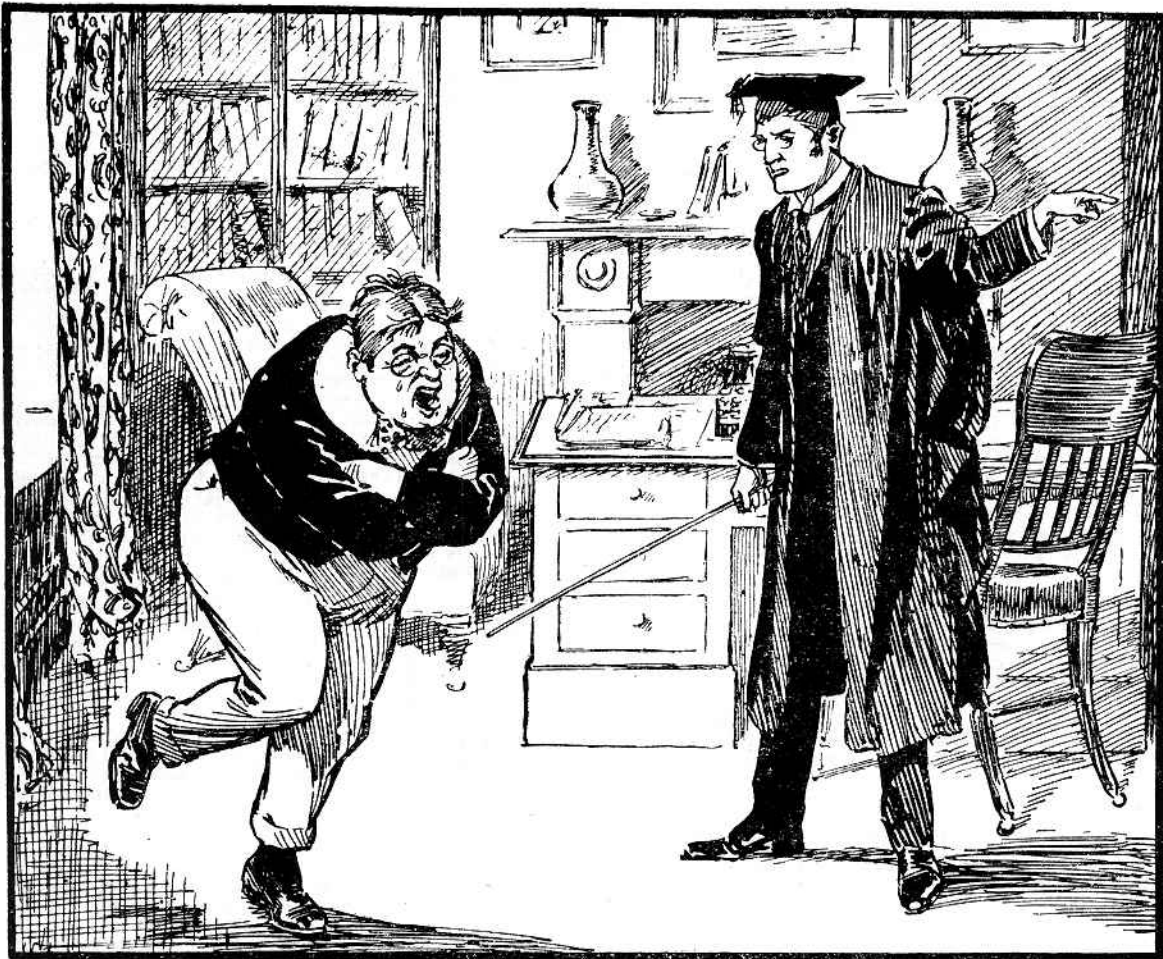
The Bouncer's Deception!

HARRY WHARTON & CO., in the brake, had long been out of sight when Vernon-Smith looked out of the gates of Greyfriars. It was high time for the Bouncer to follow on his bike, if he was to arrive at Highcliffe at the same time as the footballers. But the Bouncer did not seem to be thinking of that. He wheeled his machine out of the gates, but instead of mounting it, he leaned it against a tree a little distance up the road. Then he walked back.

Vernon-Smith's brows were knitted, and there was a rather unpleasant gleam in his eyes. Opposition, and what he regarded as injustice, had roused all the

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"Cease that ridiculous noise at once, Bunter!" "Yow-ow-ow-ow-wooooooop!" "Leave my study at once, Bunter!" Billy Bunter jammed his fat hands under his fat arms, squeezing them in dire anguish. He seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. (See Chapter 8.)

old nature of the Bounder—traits in his character which had long lain dormant seemed to have come to life again. He had formed a scheme in his mind for getting his own way; and it was not a scheme of which he would have approved in his better moments. But now he did not think of hesitating.

He turned to the bike-shed, and wheeled out Redwing's machine. He wheeled it out to where he had left his own, and placed it there. Leaving the two bicycles together, he walked rather slowly back, and made his way to the School House.

Although he did not hesitate—the Bounder never hesitated when his mind was once made up—he was fully aware that what he was about to do was serious, and that the consequences might be very serious indeed. His brow was thoughtful as he walked towards the School House.

He passed near the window of Mr. Quelch's study. The window was open, and from within there came the busy click of the typewriter. Mr. Quelch had settled down to work again after his many interruptions.

The Bounder smiled cynically as he heard the clicking of the machine. The Remove-master was safe for some time; that was his reflection. Mr. Quelch was not likely to interfere with the carrying out of his plans.

Wingate came out of the School House with Gwynne of the Sixth as the Bounder

was about to enter. He glanced at the junior.

"Not gone yet, Vernon-Smith?" he said.

"Just off!" answered the Bounder. "You're playing at Highcliffe, I understand?"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's not quite the thing to keep your skipper waiting for you!" said Wingate.

He walked out with Gwynne, and the Bounder smiled sourly as he looked after the two Sixth-Formers from the doorway. He could not very well carry out his plan while Wingate was about, and he waited for the captain of Greyfriars to be gone. The chums of the Sixth turned out at the gates and disappeared.

When they were safely gone Vernon-Smith turned his steps in the direction of the Remove-room, where Tom Redwing was grinding Greek. He started as he heard a mumble from a window recess in the passage.

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Bunter!" muttered the Bounder.

Billy Bunter blinked at him mournfully through his big spectacles. He was rubbing his fat hands in a very dolorous way. Mr. Quelch had laid on the cane not wisely, but too well—in Bunter's opinion, at least. By that time the Owl of the Remove repented him deeply of having entered in Skinner's "stunt."

"Licked?" asked Vernon-Smith, pausing a moment.

He was supremely indifferent as to

whether William George Bunter had been licked or not; but he did not want Bunter hanging about when he carried out the scheme he had formed.

"Ow! Yes! That awful beast Quelch!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Just because I—I—ahem—because he's a beast, you know! Ow!"

"Too bad! Going over to Highcliffe?"

"Blow Highcliffe! Ow!"

"Why not take a run out-of-doors?"

"Rats! Ow-ow!"

"No good moping about the passages," said Vernon-Smith.

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously.

He was obtuse; but he was not obtuse enough to believe that the Bounder cared twopence how he spent his afternoon.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"What are you up to?" grunted

Bunter. "What do you want to get rid of me for?"

"You fat idiot!"

"You're going to jaw to Redwing in the Form-room—what? Mustn't speak to a chap under detention!" grinned Bunter.

Vernon-Smith compressed his lips.

"Has your postal-order come, Bunter?" he inquired.

"Mum-my postal-order?"

"Yes; has it come?"

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Bunter blinked. It was the first time the Bounder of Greyfriars had appeared to take his postal-order seriously.

"There's been a delay in the post," he answered, "owing to these blessed strikes, I suppose. I'll tell you what, Smithy—if you could lend me five bob, I'd hand you the postal-order as soon as it comes—"

Bunter watched the Bounder hopefully as he spoke. He was hard up, as usual, and Smithy's unusually friendly manner inspired him with a faint hope of raising a loan.

"Make it half-a-crown!" answered the Bounder.

"Good man!" said Bunter, holding out a fat hand. "I'll settle up out of my postal-order, of course!"

Billy Bunter almost forgot his caning in his eagerness. He could scarcely believe his eyes as the Bounder took a half-crown from his pocket and dropped it into the fat palm. The podgy fingers closed on it like a vice.

"Thanks, old chap!" gasped Bunter, hardly able to credit his good luck. And with that brief acknowledgment he rolled away down the passage—en route for the tuckshop.

Vernon-Smith waited till he had turned the corner, and then went on towards the Form-room. But a moment or two later there was a patter of feet in the passage, and he turned, with a muttered exclamation, to find Billy Bunter panting up.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Well?" snapped the Bounder.

"Will you have this back out of my postal-order—"

"What?"

"Or shall I put it on the old account?" asked Bunter, blinking at him with great seriousness.

"You—you—you fat imbecile!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Cut off!"

"But you haven't answered me. Will you—"

Billy Bunter did not finish. The Bounder was striding towards him with gleaming eyes, and Bunter decided to leave the important question unsettled. He scuttled away, and disappeared.

Vernon-Smith breathed hard, and stopped at the window. A minute later he had the satisfaction of seeing Bunter's fat figure rolling across the quad to the tuckshop. Then he left the window and hurried to the Form-room. Time was getting very close now. It was probable that the Greyfriars brake had reached Highcliffe by that time. With so many Greyfriars fellows present, Harry Wharton was not likely to wait long for missing players. It would have been rather a sorry end to Smithy's enterprise to find the match in progress when he arrived and both himself and Redwing left out of the team.

He cleared his face as he opened the door of the Form-room and looked in, after a curious glance round.

Tom Redwing glanced up.

Vernon-Smith met his surprised glance with a smile.

"Not gone yet, Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing.

"Just off. I've waited for you, old top!" said the Bounder, with a light cheerfulness he did not quite feel.

"But I'm not coming."

"You are! I got Wingate to speak to Mr. Quelch, and it's all right."

The Bounder spoke smilingly and cheerfully, without the twitch of a muscle to betray that he was not speaking the truth.

Redwing's face lighted up.

"All right?" he exclaimed.

"Right as rain. Come on!"

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"I say, it was jolly decent of Wingate to put in a word for me," said Redwing.

"Yes, wasn't it? Hurry up!"

"I'm rather surprised at Mr. Quelch letting me off, even if Wingate asked him. You're sure—"

"My dear chap, I've come directly here to tell you so!" exclaimed the Bounder impatiently. "Get a move on! We're late already. I've got your bike outside ready."

"Good man! But my clobber—"

"It's gone with mine, in the brake."

Redwing laughed cheerily.

"You counted on my going, then?"

"Well, I hoped you'd get off. Come on!"

"Right-ho!"

Without stopping to put his papers and books away, Redwing hurried from the Form-room with the Bounder. Vernon-Smith closed the door carefully. As they hurried out to the quad his heart was beating fast. The thought of a possible meeting with Mr. Quelch was unnerving. But the Remove-master was still clicking at the typewriter. He had Redwing's word that he would not leave the Form-room, and he relied on it. He was not giving the detained junior a further thought.

"Where's the bike?" asked Redwing, as they came out of the School House, and he glanced round.

"Out of gates. Better put on a run."

"Right!"

They scudded down to the gates. Again the Bounder's heart thumped. If Mr. Quelch should chance to look from his window—

But Mr. Quelch did not look from his window. The two juniors scudded out of gates, and a minute later they were in the saddle and riding hard for Highcliffe.

The die was cast now!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Just in Time!

"IT'S too bad of Smithy!"

"Too jolly bad!"

"Bless him!"

"The silly ass!"

Those comments, and a good many more, were being passed upon Vernon-Smith by the Remove footballers at Highcliffe.

Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived there, and all was ready for the game; but the Bounder had not come.

So far as the Removevites could see there was no reason at all why the Bounder should not have arrived, and they were naturally annoyed.

All the cyclists who had followed the brake had arrived, and many of those who had come on foot were turning up. Yet Vernon-Smith did not put in an appearance.

Frank Courtenay, the Highcliffe junior captain, was chatting with Wharton; but he found Wharton rather inattentive. Harry was glancing round every minute to see if Smithy had come.

"It's too bad!" he exclaimed, at last.

"We're keeping you waiting, Courtenay. It's really too bad! One of my men hasn't come yet."

"Vernon-Smith?" asked Courtenay.

"Yes. I don't want to begin without him, if it can be helped. Do you mind waiting a few minutes longer?"

"Not at all."

"Pleased, in fact," remarked De Courcy, Courtenay's chum, with a smile. "Let Smithy take his time."

"The timefulness the esteemed Smithy is taking is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Procrastination is the thief of punctuality, as the English

proverb observes. The esteemed Smithy ought to remember that a stitch in time goes longest to the well."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured the Caterpillar, almost overcome by those English proverbs.

"Give him five minutes!" suggested Bob Cherry. "The silly duffer's stopped to jaw to Redwing, I suppose."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"If he's not here in five minutes we begin!" he said.

The captain of the Remove glanced over the Removevites who were gathering about the ground, mentally making his selection of a player to fill the Bounder's place, if he did not come. There was no fellow who could adequately replace the Bounder; but there were plenty of good footballers there, and it was impossible to keep the home team waiting indefinitely. Wharton sympathised with Smithy's concern for his chum, if that was the reason of his delay, but there was a limit.

He glanced several times at the clock in the distance. The five minutes elapsed, and the Bounder had not put in an appearance.

"That settles it!" said Harry.

"We'll wait a bit longer, if you like," said Courtenay politely.

"Thanks; but it's no use! We'll get on."

A coin was spun in the air. Highcliffe won the toss, and Courtenay elected to play with the wind.

Wharton gave a last look round for Vernon-Smith, and compressed his lips.

"It's too bad!" he muttered.

"What about a substitute?" murmured Bob.

"There's no reason why he shouldn't have come! It's rotten! But he can't play the fool with a match like this!" said Harry. "If he doesn't come into the field with us he doesn't play. Ogilvy's a good man, and he's here!"

"His Serene Highness is waxy!" murmured Skinner to Stott. The two slackers had arrived, and they were lounging about the field with Ponsonby and Gadsby of Highcliffe. "Look at the lofty frown on his noble brow! His Magnificence is waxy!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Stott.

"So Smithy's missin', is he?" grinned Ponsonby. "Where is he? Paintin' the town red somewhere, in his old style?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Skinner. "I think I'll back Highcliffe, Pon, if Smithy doesn't turn up."

"Not with me!" smiled Ponsonby.

"I'm backin' Highcliffe, Smithy or no Smithy. Courtenay's the last word in cads, but he's goin' to win this match."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden exclamation from Bob Cherry. "Here's the Bounder!"

"And Redwing!" ejaculated Wharton. "Hurrah!"

Flushed and warm from the rapid cycl. ride, Vernon-Smith and Redwing ran on to the ground. Wharton met them with a rather grim look, and Frank Nugent made a grimace. Redwing had turned up to take his place, after all.

"You're late, Smithy!" said Wharton curtly.

"Sorry—"

"You ought to have come in the brake with the rest."

"I know!" said the Bounder, with unexpected mildness. "I'm really sorry! But now I'm here—"

"I'm afraid it's my fault, Wharton," said Tom Redwing. "Smithy got me off detention; he got Wingate to speak to Mr. Quelch—"

"Well, I'm glad of that, anyhow!" said Wharton, more amicably. "Get into your things as quick as you can;

we've kept Highcliffe waiting long enough, goodness knows!"

"In a jiffy!" said the Bounder briskly. The two juniors ran into the pavilion. In a couple of minutes they reappeared and joined the Greyfriars footballers going on to the field. Courtenay & Co. were already in their places. The whistle blew, and so the Highcliffe match commenced.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Good for Greyfriars!

WHAT a rotten sell!" Skinner spoke in a tone of utter disgust.

"Rotten!" agreed Stott.

Every other fellow on the Highcliffe ground was watching the football keenly—even Pon and Gadsby were interested for once. The play was well worth watching. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. But Skinner did not glance at the combat. The sight of Tom Redwing in the Greyfriars team was enough for him. He was bitterly disgusted and chagrined.

He rubbed his nose as he spoke to Stott. Skinner's rather prominent nose was a little more prominent than usual owing to the way the Bounder had dealt with it the day before in Study No. 2. There was a pain in Skinner's nose; and the cad of the Remove was not the fellow to forget an injury, deserved or undeserved.

After the "stunt" he had so successfully played on the Remove-master, Skinner had not dreamed for a moment that Mr. Quelch would excuse Redwing his detention, and allow him to come over to Highcliffe.

And after the first shock of disappointment Skinner grew suspicious. He wondered whether Mr. Quelch had, in fact, let Redwing off.

Tom Redwing certainly did not look like a fellow who was breaking bounds and was in danger of the consequences. His face was very bright and happy as he played. He was evidently out to enjoy the match.

But Skinner's suspicions strengthened the more he reflected upon it.

"Jolly queer Quelechy letting him off!" remarked Stott, as if answering his comrade's unspoken thought. "I'd never have thought it! He was as mad as a hatter when we were ragging him—I know that!"

"Has he let him off?" muttered Skinner.

"Well, he's here!"

"If he let him off, he could have come sooner, too! No reason that I can see for this dramatic arrival at the last minute."

"But he's come!"

"He's broken detention, I believe!" Stott whistled.

"My word! That means trouble for him, if he has!" he remarked. "Quelechy will be like a Hun when he finds it out. I shouldn't be surprised to see him over here to fetch him, if he—"

"I think I catch on!" said Skinner sourly. "Redwing was to stay in the Form-room till half-past four. Well, Quelechy's deep in that silly rot of his on the typer, and he won't think of Redwing—won't even dream that he's bolted. He won't see him; he won't go to the Form-room till half-past four, you see—and may not even go then. Why, if the team's home fairly early Quelechy mayn't find out that he's broken bounds at all!"

"Better for Redwing if he doesn't!" grinned Stott. "It would mean a flogging at least, I reckon!"

"But if Quelechy knew now—"

"You've just said he can't know till

half-past four! I say, what a lark if he did find out, though, and came over here for the cad!" giggled Stott.

"That's what I was thinking of!" said Skinner coolly.

"Well, he may—I half wish he would!"

"He could be told!" murmured Skinner.

Stott gave a jump.

"Dash it all, Skinner—" he began.

"Well, couldn't he?"

"He could, I suppose; but the Remove would make an example of the chap who sneaked about him, and serve him jolly well right, too!"

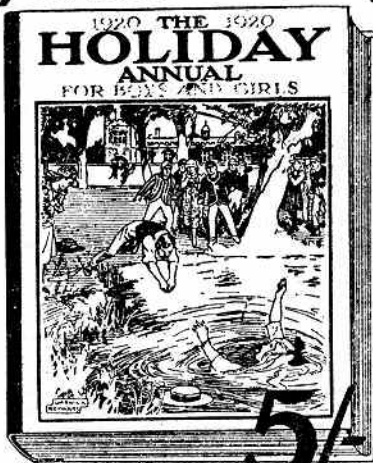
"They wouldn't know! There's a telephone here!" said Skinner.

"Well played!"

"They'd let you use it, Stott, if you asked—"

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"I don't want to use it!"
"Suppose—only suppose, of course—
but suppose you asked Mr. Mobbs to let
you use his 'phone, and rang up
Quelechy—"

"Catch me!" said Stott derisively.
"You could give Quelechy the tip
about Redwing being here, and then, if
he's broken detention, you can bet
Quelechy would be as wild as a Hun, and
I'll lay two to one he'd come here—"

"I know he would! But—" Stott
looked fixedly at Skinner. "Look here,
old chap, I don't like Redwing, and I'd
put a spoke in his wheel any time, but
I'm not going to be a sneaking cad and
give him away to the Form-master, and
don't you think it!"

"Look here—"

"Rats!" answered Stott.

He walked away, and joined some other Remove fellows further along, to put an end to the discussion.

Skinner's eyes glinted.

He realised very clearly that if he wished to play that cowardly trick he would have to take the risk himself.

A sudden roar from the crowd drew his attention to the football at last.

"Goal!"

"Well shot, Inky!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

The Greyfriars fellows were roaring with glee. By a series of clever tricks and turns, Hurree Singh had wormed his way past the Highcliffe backs, and scored with a lightning shot in the corner of the net. There was a contented smile on the nabob's dusky face as he trotted back to the centre of the field.

The Greyfriars crowd cheered again in delight.

"Well played, Inky!"

"Good man!"

Bob Cherry rushed across and smote the nabob on the shoulder, in his exuberance, with a powerful smite.

"Good man!" he gasped.

"Yow!" howled Inky.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton's face was very bright. The game was not five minutes old, and Greyfriars had taken a goal—playing against the wind, too. The omens were favourable for a really splendid victory over Highcliffe.

"Greyfriars is going to win this journey!" remarked Bolsover major to his companions. "Good old Inky! After all, I must say Wharton knows a good forward when he sees one, though he can't pick out a good back!"

Whereat Bolsover major's companions smiled. Bolsover himself was the good back Wharton had failed to pick out; and most of the Removes felt that it was a good thing for Greyfriars that it was so.

Skinner rejoined Ponsonby and Gadsby. There was a sneering grin on Pon's face.

"That's the merry team they make so much of, Gadsby!" he remarked. "Goal against us already. By gad!"

"Highcliffe won't have much of a look-in this time at that rate," observed Gaddy.

"Just as well we didn't back them with Skinner!"

"Ha, ha—just!"

"I say, this is gettin' slow!" remarked Skinner, as he joined the two nuts. "I don't see much in football without somethin' on the game."

"Same here!" yawned Ponsonby. "But we're not backin' Highcliffe, if that's what you're thinkin' of, Skinner. The match looks a goner to me."

"Well, there's only one goal scored so far; Greyfriars may have no end of a frost later on."

"I'm not bettin' on it," grinned Ponsonby. And Gadsby grinned, too, and shook his head.

That was exactly the mood Skinner wanted to see the Highcliffe nuts in, as a matter of fact. He had his own ideas as to how that game was going to end. His little scheme was already mapped out in the depths of his cunning brain. It was easy enough to get the use of Mr. Mobbs' telephone—and Skinner knew Mr. Quelch's number at Greyfriars. It was quite simple to ring up the Remove-master and inform him that Redwing was at Highcliffe, playing in the match there. And if Tom Redwing had broken detention there was not the slightest doubt as to what Mr. Quelch

would do—especially after the worry he had been given on the subject of Redwing. He would proceed immediately to Highcliffe to take the disobedient junior back. Skinner was quite certain on that point.

But Skinner was too cautious to leave anything to chance. He chatted with the Highcliffe nuts for a few minutes, and then strolled away. In the distance he heard a burst of cheering from the Greyfriars crowd, which announced that Tom Redwing had taken a goal. Highcliffe were two goals down.

But—if Skinner was right—there was a rod in pickle for Greyfriars. If the Remove-master appeared suddenly on the scene, and interrupted the match to take away a Greyfriars player—what then?

Wharton would be left a man short. And the effect of such a shindy could not fail to be disheartening to the Greyfriars footballers. It was scarcely possible that they could win the match afterwards.

Even Skinner, at that thought, hesitated a moment or two. He knew that even his chum Stott, who was not at all particular, would despise him for what he was contemplating.

But his hesitation was brief.

The bruise on his nose helped to decide him—it was like the feather that turned the balanced scale. Vernon-Smith's methods had been fated to bear consequences that the Bounder never dreamed of.

Skinner rubbed his troubled nose again tenderly, and went into the House.

Ten minutes later he reappeared, with a smile on his face.

He sauntered down to the football-ground.

"How's it goin', Pon?" he asked.

"Lookin' up a bit," answered Pon. "The Caterpillar's makin' the runnin'. Yates is playing up, too. But I fancy they'll never pull the game out of the fire after the start they've made. Courtenay's looking fed up, and that means trouble."

"You bet!" said Gaddy.

"I shouldn't wonder if your side pulls through, all the same," remarked Skinner carelessly.

Ponsonby winked at Gadsby.

"Puttin' any money on your opinion, old top?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know about that!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, I will back my opinion, then!" exclaimed Skinner. "I'll lay a quid on Highcliffe, and chance it!"

"Done!" exclaimed Ponsonby and Gadsby together instantly.

"Jolly queer bizney, me backin' your lot, and you backin' Greyfriars!" said Skinner. "Still—"

"It's done now!" smiled Ponsonby. "Come this way. Monson of the Fifth will hold the stakes for us."

"Oh, all right!"

Skinner left the smiling nuts a few minutes later, and rejoined Stott. The latter looked at him rather suspiciously.

"You're lookin' cheery!" he muttered.

"Think so?"

"What trick have you been playing?" Skinner laughed.

"None at all. What do you mean?"

"Well, you look as if you'd been givin' somebody a dig—you look so merry an' bright!" said Stott candidly. "I say, Redwing's playing up jolly well! Did you see that pass? After all, I'm glad he's here. We want Greyfriars to win."

"Of course we do!" smiled Skinner. "I'm sure I hope that Redwing's got leave to come, and that Quelchy won't come after him. Of course, if he's

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broken bounds, and Quelchy finds it out, Wharton will lose his man for the rest of the game."

Stott gave a start.

"Skinner! You've not—"

"Not what?"

"Oh, nothing!" grunted Stott un- easily.

Skinner watched the game, and yawned as he watched. He was not interested in football.

But the play of the Caterpillar—as De Courcy of Highcliffe was nicknamed—was worth watching. Usually a slacker, De Courcy was playing up like a mighty man of war.

At half-back he stuck to the nimble Greyfriars forwards like a leech. Try as he would, the fleet and tricky Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh could not get past him a second time. The nabob had scored once, and the Caterpillar scemed determined that he should not be allowed to do so again. His efforts won loud cheers from the Highcliffe crowd, which did not spur on the lazy Caterpillar in the least. It was for his chums' sake that he was playing the game of his life—and certainly he was playing a great game!

Just before half-time things took a turn for the better for Highcliffe. A quick run down the field on the part of the Highcliffe forwards brought the ball to Courtenay's foot for the fraction of an instant. He chanced it, and kicked for goal without waiting to steady the ball, and scored with a lucky shot.

There was a roar of Highcliffe cheering.

"Goal!"

"Well shot, Courtenay! Oh, well shot, sir!"

"Now another one!"

"On the ball! Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton slapped Frank Courtenay on the back with a smile.

"Good for you, old chap! That was a topping shot!"

"The topfulness was terrific!" purred Hurree Singh. "We must now proceed to get another worthy goal!"

The game started again, but neither side had scored again when the whistle went a few minutes later for half-time.

Skinner was watching, but he was listening, too, using his ears more than his eyes. He was listening for the sound of wheels. But even to Stott he did not dare to confide what he was expecting to happen.

"Good man, Rupert!" said Courtenay, slapping the Caterpillar on the back when the half-time whistle blew. "Oh, good man!"

"We shall have better luck in the next half, Franky!"

"I hope so!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very pleased with themselves and things generally. And Vernon-Smith, in spite of a lurking uneasiness he could not quite banish from his breast, was feeling elated. Tom Redwing had shown up well in the match—he had shot a splendid goal, and he was evidently enjoying himself. And when the hour of reckoning came the Bounder was prepared to take the full consequences upon his own shoulders. But the hour of reckoning was to come sooner than Smithy had anticipated. He had counted without Skinner!

Pheep!

It was the whistle for the resumption of play, and the teams lined up again.

"Now we shan't be long!" said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "The wind's behind us now, and we're one goal up! Buck up for a run through, Smithy and Redwing!"

"What-ho!"

Pheep!

Courtenay kicked off for Highcliffe, but Wharton tackled him and captured the ball in a trice. He passed the ball to Vernon-Smith like lightning, and the Greyfriars forwards, well in line, began a run down the field towards the enemy's goal.

There was a sound of rolling wheels on the distant road; they stopped at the school gates. Skinner smiled, but no one else heeded the sound. Little drumming of what it meant to them, Harry Wharton and Tom Redwing were dribbling the ball down the field, steadily working nearer to the Highcliffe goal.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Monday's Grand Long Complete Story of Greyfriars School, entitled "FACING THE MUSIC!" By FRANK RICHARDS.)

NOTICES.

Back Numbers.

A. Ferguson, 48, Ronald Street, Glasgow, wants "Gems," 1-476. Write first. Lewis Staboff, 37, St. James' Road, Hightown, Manchester, wants "Nelson Lee Libraries" from 1-100.

L. Lilley, 31, Apollo Road, Road End, Oldbury, near Birmingham, wants "Gems," Nos. 566, 568, 569, 570, 571, and 572. 2d each offered.

J. S. Mair, 53, Holmhead Street, Glasgow, has for sale "Boys' Friend" Libraries from 1-360.

Miss M. Dunning, 1, Belgrave Road, Mutley, Plymouth, has for sale "Magnets" from 517-603.

L. Smith, 77, Newgate Lane, Mansfield, Notts, wants "Gems" dealing with Talbot's early schooldays. 6d. each offered. Also offers 3s. 6d. for "After Lights Out."

Arthur Ballard, 336, High Street, Rochester, Kent, wants "Great Sports Tournament," 1s. offered.

Eric Leigh, 55, Bridgewater Street, Hindley, near Wigan, has "Boys' Friends," Nos. 859-952. Will sell for 8s.

J. Humphrey, 24a, Caroline Street, Forres, Morayshire, Scotland, has for sale "Magnets," 396-480, 515-602; "Gems," 514-565.

Joseph Henderson, 8, Ellison Street, West Hartlepool, Durham, wants "Magnets," "Billy Bunter's Reformation," "Hoskin's Chance," "The Greyfriars Tourists," "Schoolboys Abroad," also "Gem," "Racke's Man."

Jack Millward, Southlea, Craig Road, Llandrindod Wells, has for sale "Magnets" 451-603; "Gems," 454-603.

C. V. Aldrick, 3, Redenhall Terrace, Harleston, Norfolk, wants "Gems" before 500.

William F. Gothard, 84, Granville Street, Barnsley, wants Christmas numbers "Gem" and "Magnet," from 1912-1916. 2d. each offered.

B. Baker, 390, Main Street, Belgravia, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants "Nelson Lee Library," "The Fight for Mastery," 1s. 6d. offered.

W. R. Barnes, 18, Railway Avenue, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, wants "Figgins' Fig Pudding," "The Race to the Tuckshop," "Bunter the Blade," "The Toff," and "Bob Cherry's Barring Out," 3d. each offered.

William Crompton, 13, Chatham Street, Bolton, wants "Boys' Friend" Libraries dealing with the early adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co.

J. Edmonds, Pitway, South Petherton, Somerset, will exchange "School and Sport" for "Bob Cherry's Barring Out."

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL STORY.

START READING TO-DAY.



A Stirring New Tale of the Ring.

By PERCY LONGHURST.

SYNOPSIS.

Harry Rhodes, a miner and amateur boxer, of Lexborough, a mining village, meets Joshua Martin, the manager and principal backer of Anthony Hanna—"Cast-Iron Tony"—a wonderful Scottish light-weight boxer, who has come to Lexborough to train. Harry lives with an uncle, James Rhodes, who has trained him, and who had himself been a boxer years before. He had left the ring through some tragedy of which Joshua Martin knows the facts, much to James Rhodes' alarm.

At a small gymnasium one night Harry Rhodes issues a challenge to anyone in the place to three rounds. The challenge is accepted by a stranger, who proves to be Tony Hanna.

After a thrilling contest the famous Scottish boxer is defeated by Harry.

Harry is secured as a sparring partner to Hanna, and one day while out with the boxer and his trainer Harry makes a dangerous descent into an old quarry to rescue the trainer's dog, who has been hurled down by Hanna while the others were talking some distance away. While Harry is down the quarry Hanna cuts the leather belt, by which he had descended, half-way across. In spite of this, Harry succeeds in climbing out, and then commences a fierce combat between the two, the trainer having returned to the hotel with his injured dog.

(Now read on.)

Hanna's Punishment.

A GAINST Tony's blind rage was opposed a coolness hiding an inflexibility of purpose against which Hanna's fury beat as the waves upon a steadfast rock. The attempt on his life, of which there could be no doubt, had fairly aroused Harry's temper; but it was held in check and controlled.

Forced to give ground though he was, his coolness and boxing skill did not desert him; and though the Scot looked the more terrible, it was his opponent who put in the more effective work.

Again and again did Harry's straight and powerful counter-hitting neutralise the other's attacks. It was impossible that Harry should escape altogether; but the balance—and not in points only—was in his favour.

Adopting similar tactics to those he had employed during the first part of the bout in Ben Moseley's gym, Harry forced the professional into the expending of his strength and wind. Then, immediately he saw him flagging, he attacked in his turn, doing severe execution.

Three times in quick succession did Hanna measure his length on the ground, fairly bowled over in his frantic efforts to carry the fighting to close quarters—which Harry was by no means ready to allow. With no ropes to confine his movements, he was able to escape being penned.

Battered, panting, Hanna was taking a hard beating, and at length the fact began to be beaten into his mind. For the first time in his career he realised what being beaten meant; and as he got over the surprise he redoubled his efforts to turn the tide in his favour. For a spell he battled with such ferocity that his hopes were raised.

Driving Harry before him, he swung in blow after blow—an avalanche of sledge-hammer strokes that came so swiftly one after the other that Harry could neither guard nor evade a half of them. But still he contrived to keep his enemy at arm's length, until a tremendous blow, squarely on the mark, fairly doubled Hanna, and his whirling fists dropped.

It was then that Harry stepped in and sent home an upper-cut that lifted the other clean off his feet and shot him down on his back. And there he stayed, making no motion.

"Oh, well done! Well done!" cried an enthusiastic voice.

And for the first time Harry Rhodes became aware that this battle of a coward's punishing was being fought before witnesses.

A single witness, to tell the truth, for, as he swung about on hearing the approval of his knock-out blow, he came face to face with a young man wearing great leather gauntlets and the light dust-coat of a motorist. Twenty yards distant a long, powerful-looking car, painted khaki colour, was drawn up by the side of the road.

"You know how to use your hands, it seems," said the motorist admiringly, meeting Harry's gaze, "whoever you are. Your man appears to have had enough of it. That last thump of yours was a ripping, fine one!"

He stepped forward a couple of paces and looked curiously at the face of the knocked-out man. Then, abruptly, he emitted a sharp, long-drawn whistle, indicative of extreme surprise.

Swinging about, he faced Harry again. "By Jove, it is he, right enough! I thought I recognised him at first, but concluded I must be mistaken, seeing what you were doing to him. Do you know with whom you've been fighting, my lad?" he cried excitedly.

"A cowardly brute!" replied Harry promptly.

"That may be. His name, I mean?"

"Tony Hanna."

"Hanna it is! The cast-iron Scottish professional boxer! And you've actually knocked him out!"

The speaker stared at the lad as though viewing for the first time some rare and wonderful curiosity.

"Who're you?" he asked at length. "My name is Harry Rhodes," was the curt answer.

"Well, I don't know the name—never heard it before, I fancy. But, my lad, you're a marvel, a blessed wonder, a—a—" Words failed to express the amazement the speaker manifestly was feeling.

"Did you know who it was you were fighting with when you began this merry mill?" he went on.

"Yes, certainly!"

Again the young man whistled.

"Well, this is the limit! A blessed knock-out!" he declared. "And what was it all about?"

"He had deserved it," replied Harry, seeing no reason for relating the facts to one who was an absolute stranger to him.

"And how did you manage to do it?"

Harry shook his head.

"I meant to do it!" he said simply.

"Did you, by Jove! Well, you've done it all right!"

The young motorist looked from Harry to the still inert body in the road, and then back again.

"D'you happen to know that this man you've so jolly well licked is matched to fight for the English championship?" he asked curiously.

"Yes, I knew that." And then Harry smiled oddly. "Are there any more questions you'd like to ask me?" he inquired.

The other laughed pleasantly.

"You're right. I beg your pardon. I have been putting you through a bit of a cross-examination," he admitted, "and without any warrant other than that of sheer amazement at seeing such a chap as Cast-Iron Tony take such a thundering hiding. You'll admit it's a bit staggering?" He smiled. "Do you know, I've seen that chap in four or five of his fights—good men, too, some of 'em—and he's polished 'em off in double-quick time. They never looked like having a chance. And now to have seen a youngster like yourself—" He broke off, shaking his head as though the matter were beyond comprehension or explanation.

"Well," he went on, "this is a real scoop. And to think that I'm the lucky one to have witnessed it! Mr. Rhodes, there are fifty men who'd give twenty per cent. of all they own to have seen this turn-up, and there are fifty times fifty who'd say the whole thing was a lie, the make-up of some imaginative and ignorant reporter, if they were to read

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of it in to-morrow's newspapers. No one'll ever believe when I tell 'em. I wouldn't believe it myself if I hadn't seen it!"

"Did you see it all?"

"Rather! I saw two fellows in the road squaring up, and I supposed they were just two louts having a squabble. I sounded my horn for them to clear out, but neither of you heard. So I thought I might just as well stop and see the fun, the more when I thought I recognised one of you as Tony Hanna. But when I saw what you were doing to him I concluded that my eyes were at fault. And you've whacked him, Tony Hanna, the unbeatable! My hat! What a shock this is going to be to somebody! You've got knocked about a bit, too. Not that that's any wonder. Can I do anything for you? A teaspoonful of brandy, now? I always carry some with me."

"Thank you, but I'm not feeling as bad as that," replied Harry. "I'd rather have some water. There's a little beck yonder." And, taking his hat, Harry, a bit shakily, made his way to the stream.

He had been knocked about. No one could expect to engage in a battle with such a fighter as Tony Hanna and expect to escape scatheless. But a long drink of the cool, sparkling water, a thorough sluicing of face, neck, and arms, refreshed him. When he got back to the road it was to find the owner of the car kneeling by the side of Hanna.

"Thought he might be the better for a revive," he said, as Harry reached him. "Ah, you've brought some water along with you! Good man! Do him more good than brandy. By Jove, though, you have administered a pasting!"

A douche of the ice-cold water Harry had brought back in his hat helped Hanna to pull round. His eyes opened, but there was no speculation in them, and such movements as he made were feeble.

Harry glanced at his companion. "You are not in a great hurry, are you?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Not particular. Why?"

"Then d'you think you could put him in your car and take him to where he's stopping? It isn't far—about three miles."

"Right you are. And you—can't I give you a lift?" He looked at Harry with frank curiosity. "Don't happen to be staying with him?"

"No. My home is Lexboro' village. And I don't think I'll go back with him, if you don't mind. There's a short cut across the moor."

"Sure you feel up to it?"

"Yes. I'm all right, thank you."

Between them they carried Tony Hanna to the car and laid him more or less comfortably on the cushions. By now he was well awake, but he did not speak. Only once or twice his eyes rested on Harry with an odd expression.

"Now I'll get off," the motorist said. "Let me see—Harry Rhodes, didn't you say is your name?"

"Yes."

"I'll remember it. Perhaps it'll be better known some day than at present; it ought to be." And he smiled meaningly at Harry. "By the way, if it should be any good to you—you never know—my name's Godfrey—Bertram Godfrey. Here, I've got a card on me, and don't forget that I'll be only too glad if you'll make use of me, should it be necessary. Good-bye!"

If only he had known it, Harry Rhodes had done something more that morning than administer well-deserved punishment to a brute and a coward.

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The Offer.

MR. BERTRAM GODFREY, of the Sports Club, amateur boxer and whole-hearted and enthusiastic supporter of The Game, was not notable for slow driving. With the driving-wheel between his hands, his average pace on a decent road was sufficient to make timid pedestrians and other travellers regard him as an unqualified nuisance. But the drive across the moor down to the White Rose Inn was taken at almost a funeral pace.

For one thing, he didn't want to jolt his passenger unduly—not that he was feeling particularly tender towards him. For another, his mind was not on the driving, but was wholly concerned with the lad from whom he had parted.

He was not inquisitive, but he would cheerfully have given a ten-pound note to have learned who Harry Rhodes might be, and what had been the cause of the desperate battle beside the moor.

The first was the more interesting question, and he made up his mind to get an answer to it before he was much older. As for the second, that, he concluded, was to be obtained from Harry Rhodes himself only. Certainly Tony Hanna was not likely to provide it, and Rhodes hadn't seemed at all anxious to do so, in spite of Mr. Godfrey's several efforts.

His arrival at the White Rose produced a tragical effect. Sitting outside, cigar in mouth, Joshua Martin saw without interest the big khaki car draw up and the driver get down from his seat, go to the tonneau, and give his hand to help out the passenger, who descended with some difficulty. And when Martin saw who that passenger was, and his condition, his mouth opened and the cigar fell to the ground.

Hanna looked thoroughly broken up, and the manager jumped to the only conclusion explaining such a misfortune.

"You run 'im down an' bust 'im up!" he shouted, clutching Godfrey by the arm. "You done it—I know you have! An' I'll 'ave damages out of you, sure as my name's what it is! You—you—"

"Here, gently, gently!" returned Godfrey, releasing himself. "What your name may be I don't care a farthing dip, but I do know what you'll get very soon if you go on behaving like this, and that's a strait-jacket. What's the matter with you, my man?"

"Matter?" yelled Mr. Martin. "Matter enough, ain't it? You 'arf killed 'im, an' done tens o' thousands o' pounds worth o' damage, an' robbed me—"

"My good fellow, do, for goodness' sake, try and keep cool!" soothed Godfrey. "Are you quite cracked? I've done nothing—I assure you I haven't. If you're accusing me of having reduced your friend here to his present unlovely condition you're barking up the wrong tree! As for his being worth thousands of pounds, well, all I can say is that he didn't look it, even when more handsome than he is at the present moment. You're too emotional, my friend, that's what's the matter with you!"

Exasperated by such flippancy, and with the evidence of his own eyes that Hanna's commercial value as a money-maker had undergone a serious depreciation, Mr. Martin's self-control completely vanished from him. Clenching a podgy fist, he hit out wildly at Bertram Godfrey.

The next instant he was feeling sorry for himself. His descending wrist was caught as in a steel vice, and he yelled shrilly as he felt his limb bent back painfully.

"Steady on, my friend!" Godfrey cried warningly. "Your pal may be badly knocked about, but that's no excuse for

you losing your wool to the extent of trying to plug me! Don't try that on again, or you'll find yourself getting hurt! It wasn't I that had the pleasure of hammering your friend; I'm the Good Samaritan, who's picked him up and brought him home!"

Soothed as much by Godfrey's tone as the pain in his almost dislocated elbow, Martin stammered some kind of apology and turned upon Hanna.

"What's th' matter? An' who's done it? How'd you get like this?" he spluttered out.

"Oh, go to Halifax!" Hanna returned curtly, by way of answer, and made attempt to walk to the inn.

But the walk was a tottering lurch. His head was still dazed from that mighty upper-cut, and his knees had no stiffness in them. But for the manager's ready arm—the unbent one—he would have fallen in his tracks.

Holding up the collapsing body with difficulty, Martin yelled for Brayne—anyone to come to his assistance.

Five yards away, Bertram Godfrey watched with interest.

"Presuming to offer a suggestion, I should say Mr. Hanna would be the better for being got into bed as soon as possible," he said politely. "Good-morning!"

About to climb into the car, he stopped, turned, and again addressed Martin.

"Oh, by the way, can you tell me whereabouts in Lexboro' lives a person named Harry Rhodes?" he asked.

Mr. Martin intimated that he knew nothing whatsoever of Harry Rhodes, and cared infinitely less, for which information the motorist courteously thanked him and then drove away.

For the next hour Martin was busily engaged in ministering to the physical needs of his charge, and trying to extract from him by direct question and clumsy suggestion some explanation of the extraordinary happening, whatever it was, that had brought about such direful results.

But he might as well have talked to a brick wall as to Tony Hanna, who was dumb as an oyster, except when making vicious comments upon the handling which brought still greater agony to his many battered and aching parts. He savagely demanded to be let alone, but was too weak to impose any active interference with the humanitarian efforts of those who were seeking to benefit him.

Brayne, under his breath, swore that he was an ungrateful dog.

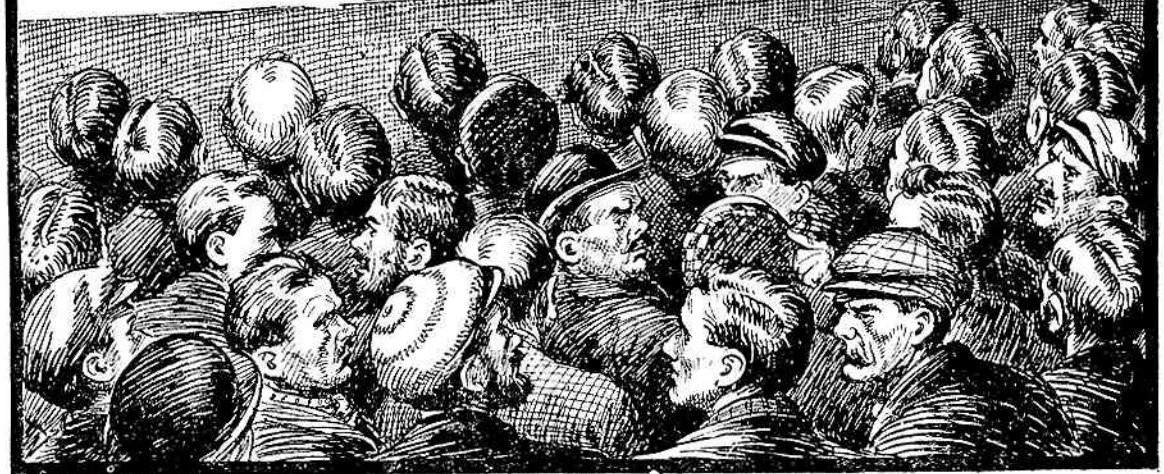
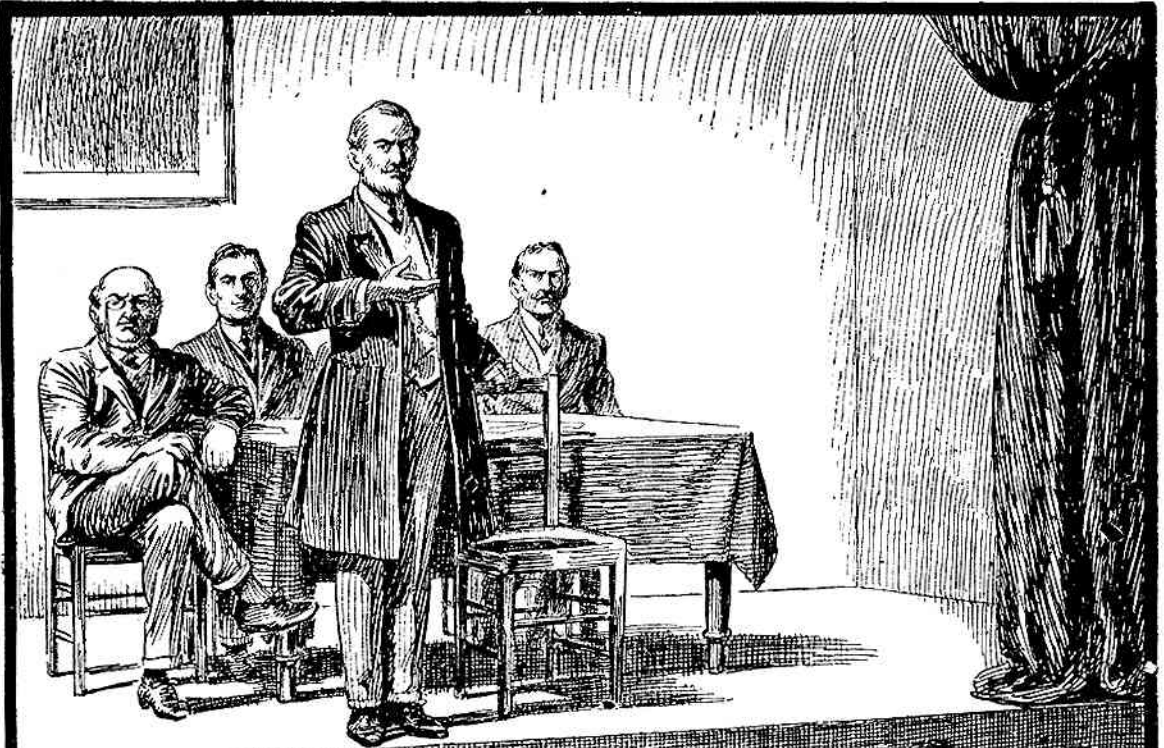
Bewildered, Martin—as soon as Hanna was bandaged and in bed—put the trainer through a severe cross-examination, from which Brayne emerged triumphantly, so far as the moment of the recovery of Brian Boru. As to what had transpired after that, the trainer, for the best of reasons, knew nothing.

Brayne, vehemently lectured for having deserted his charge, Joshua Martin sat down to think things over. He decided that either Hanna had been set upon by a numerous gang of ill-wishers, or had fallen into the quarry. But it was the consequences, not the causes, of Hanna's injuries that worried him the most.

Five hundred pounds of his own money was staked for the match with the champion, and in wagers on his man, he had invested five times as much. And, as far as he could see, the chance of losing all this good money was about as promising as it could well be.

Strangely enough, the idea that Harry Rhodes could be responsible for the awful catastrophe that had befallen Hanna never entered his head.

Two days later, after breakfast, a copy



Suddenly a shout from the platform made all the whispering cease, and turned eyes in that direction. Mr. Durham was on his feet, watch in hand. "Half hour's up!" he announced curtly. "What's it to be, lads?"

of a popular London newspaper, devoted to sport, came into his hands. Idly scanning it, he suddenly came upon a paragraph that filled him with consternation. It ran:

"A strange story has been sent us by a correspondent from South Yorkshire. It is to the effect that Tony Hanna—'Cast Iron Tony' his admirers term him—who is in training in that district for the championship contest, becoming engaged in a listic encounter with a local fire-eater—a casual turn-up, it appears to have been—received so decisive a hammering that he was left hors de combat on the battle-ground.

"Such a conclusion it is difficult to conceive, and were it not for the high standing of our correspondent, whose bona fides admit of no question, and who claims to have been an eye-witness of the encounter, we should have some hesitation in printing the story. The

name of the conqueror has not been revealed."

Three times Martin read through this effusion, and remained staring at it incredulously. Then he bounced from his seat and into the garden, where Hanna was more or less at ease in a comfortable chair.

"Seen this?" he said, jamming the paper into Tony's hands.

Hanna read it through.

"Well?" asked the manager excitedly. "Well, what of it?" returned Hanna sulkily.

"Is it true?"

"The blood came into Hanna's face. A flame shot into his gypsy eyes. For the moment he looked like a fiend.

"And what of it?" he said.

"What of it? Man alive!" And Martin threw up his hands in horror. "What of it, you say? Why, it means—"

It meant a lot, according to Martin, and he explained it all—not so very clearly, for he was too excited to speak coherently. Put into a single word, it seemed to mean Tony Hanna's finish as a boxer.

Hanna listened without interest.

"If ye're thinkin' I won't whip that dud champion I'm matched against ye're out!" he said at last, when given a chance to get in a word. "Don't ye worry! It won't make no difference—not to me."

"But—" began Martin.

Then he stopped helplessly.

"Aw, shut up!" advised Hanna. "It'll be best for ye!"

He looked dangerous, and his manager, remembering the kind of man he was, took the advice.

But he hastened as fast as he could go down into Lexboro', found the post-office, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 613.

and sent off a telegram to the editor of the sporting paper.

"Report of Hanna's fight and defeat a pure fabrication."

The wire was printed the next day, and readers of the paper and others—for the story had quickly travelled—found themselves mystified.

Most of them disbelieved the story. Tony Hanna, whipped by a never-heard-of local boxer! It couldn't be true!

But when Bertram Godfrey read the telegram he was angry. He was staying at Silkworth, a village some twelve miles away, a guest of a Mr. Durham, who was principal proprietor of the colliery where Harry Rhodes was employed. An impulsive young man, he ordered out the big car, and drove into Lexboro', and to the cottage of James Rhodes. Both Harry and his uncle were at home.

Down on the kitchen table Godfrey slapped the newspaper, pointed out the paragraph, and demanded:

"Are you going to let that pass without nailing it down as a lie?"

Both read it. It was Harry who answered the question.

"It isn't worth while," he said, smiling.

"Not worth while?" repeated Godfrey. "My hat! Why?"

"The boy's right," put in James Rhodes. "It isn't worth while. Besides, what good'd it do?"

"Christopher Columbus! You're a sensible man, and you ask what good it'll do!" cried Godfrey, staring. "Why, man alive, don't you see that here's a chance for your nephew's fortune to be made? If it were known that he had thrashed Hanna, there'd be a dozen men who'd be only too glad to take him up! Why, he could get backing for the championship itself! Can't you realise it?"

"Yes, sir," returned James Rhodes. "But what if he doesn't want to be taken up?"

Godfrey looked at Harry, who said nothing.

"And don't you, my lad?" asked Godfrey.

But before Harry could speak James Rhodes answered.

"It won't do, sir—it won't do!" he said decidedly. "It's very kind of you, sir, but—" He shook his head. "I told you when you came over two days back, and said you'd seen my boy give Hanna a licking, and would I be willing that you took him in hand, that it was no good. I don't want to see my lad a professional boxer. Boxing for amusement's all very well, but as a means of living—no, no! And I know what I'm talking about! I'd rather Harry kept away from it."

"It's good of you to take so much interest in us, but I agree with Harry that it'd be best to let that lie"—he touched the newspaper—"go unanswered. What'd it mean? Why, if my boy was known as the conqueror of Hanna, there'd be newspaper men and managers and promoters down here after him, and maybe they'd turn his head. And that'd lead to trouble."

"Then you mean to say, Mr. Rhodes, that you're willing to chuck away the championship that your lad would win to a certainty?" cried Godfrey incredulously.

"I think, sir, he'd be the better if he had nothing to do with it," James Rhodes answered steadily.

"Think what it means!" persuaded the other.

"I have—Heaven alone knows how much! But I can't—I can't agree!" replied Rhodes, with feeling.

"And what d'you say?" asked Godfrey, turning to Harry.

"My uncle has answered for me," the lad said in a low tone.

"Well," said Godfrey, after a long pause, "I won't take 'No'! I can't! Think it over for a week, Mr. Rhodes, then I'll come back and ask you again. Will you agree to that?"

"Yes, sir. But it's of no use, I can promise."

When Godfrey had departed Harry turned to his relative.

"Uncle, why is it you're so determined against me having anything to do with boxing for a living?" he asked abruptly.

"I can't tell you, my boy. It is a good reason, but I hope and trust you'll never know it!" answered James Rhodes sadly.

The Challenge.

WHATEVER James Rhodes thought, Mr. Bertram Godfrey was not going to sit down under the charge of being a liar, and he at once wrote out a denial of Joshua Martin's telegram—a most emphatic denial—adding a fairly circumstantial account of the fight by the moorside.

This was printed, with the result that Martin almost went frantic, Hanna's friends felt their confidence weakened, the boxing world was greatly excited, and more than one newspaper reporter found his way into Lexboro'.

But Godfrey had loyally withheld Harry Rhodes' name, and had given no definite information about him. What the reporters did learn, however—that couldn't be prevented—was all about the scrap between Harry and Tony Hanna in Ben Moseley's gym. Ben was only too willing to talk about it.

But Joshua Martin had his eye open for the reporters, spent a little time with them, and the majority were willing to admit that the encounter was nothing more than a casual turn-up of no significance whatsoever.

The Scottish boxer not at his best; lucky blow; accidents of the kind had happened before. It all meant nothing. So they thought, and so they wrote.

One enterprising fellow ferreted out Harry Rhodes' house, and had an interview with James Rhodes. It was agreed that nothing important should be made out of the gym bout.

The temporary excitement died down, though there were a few shrewd persons who noted that Bertram Godfrey's account of the decisive fight was not further contradicted. Indeed, no further reference to it was made. Even Mr. Martin treated it with indifference.

So James Rhodes had reason to congratulate himself. Martin came out with some effusive descriptions of the way Hanna was training, the progress he was making, and the fight incident was forgotten.

Lexboro', of course, knew nothing at all about it. Moreover, all Lexboro' was far too much interested in another matter that had arisen.

The colliery lock-out still existed, and although more than one meeting had been arranged between employers and the employed, the hopes of a settlement

were as far off as ever. Both the colliery proprietors and the workers were dour, obstinate Yorkshiremen, both believed themselves in the right, and neither was prepared to give way an inch.

The weeks went by; there was no money earned, and although the miners enjoyed and made the most of their leisure, they were beginning to tire of having no work to do and little money to spend.

The wives of the married men were also beginning to feel the pinch at home. The men loafed about smoking, or took rambles on the moors. Not a few would go down to the White Rose and see Hanna going through his training work, though hardly a one was much interested in the Scot. His display in Moseley's gym had not given them a good impression of his quality, and their general opinion of him, his reputation notwithstanding, was summed up in two words. They reckoned he was "about nowt."

Presently, even this last amusement failed them, for Hanna's manager carried him off to the Norfolk coast for his final week's training.

None tired of such forced inactivity more than Harry Rhodes. As much time as he could he spent out of doors, and every afternoon was given up to the customary glove bout with his uncle, but he had enough time to kill to be weary.

Neither he nor his uncle had made further reference to Harry's wish to enter the ranks of the professional boxers, but none the less the lad thought much about it. Continually he was asking himself what could be his relative's mysterious reason for denying him.

During August the championship fight came off, and, to the disgust of most and the surprise of nearly all, Hanna was hopelessly defeated. Some of the accounts declared he was outclassed. He had never looked like winning. The amazing confidence and dash that had carried him through all his previous battles were wholly absent. He had gone into the ring looking like a man already beaten. He had lost his punch. In the eleventh round he had put down his hands and declared he would fight no longer. The boxing world could not understand it at all; and there were writers prompt to assert that the fighting Scot had always been grossly overrated.

But there were two men who knew differently. One of them, coming upon Harry Rhodes one morning almost at the very spot where he had witnessed the battle in the roadway near the quarry, braked his khaki-coloured high-powered car to a standstill, and called out cheerily "Good morning!"

"You've heard that Hanna took a licking, I suppose?" he asked.

Harry admitted he had read an account of the fight.

"Well," said Godfrey judicially, "I'm willing to assert that the champion had less to do with Hanna's defeat than you had. Why, my lad, if ever I saw a boxer with his spirit broken and all the fight knocked out of him it was that day when I saw you and Hanna scrapping here. He'll never be able to fight again, not even a tenth-rater. Why, oh, why won't your uncle let you enter the game?"

"He says he has a reason, Mr. Godfrey," Harry answered, "and, though there's nothing I'd like better myself, I feel that it wouldn't be right for me to go against him."

"Good lad; but it's a pity, all the same," sighed Godfrey. "Here's the best material of its weight I've ever seen going to sheer waste."

The same day James Rhodes had a letter. It was signed Joshua Martin, and it contained things that made the reader shiver with apprehension.

"I found out one or two things"—it concluded—"and I know now what it was has made Tony Hanna so that a one-armed kid of ten could whip him. All right; but you look out for yourself, Jimmy Rhodes. One of these fine days—and soon, too—you'll be hearing something you won't like. As for that boy of yours, there'll come a chance one day for me to pay him back what he done to me, and you can bet I won't let the chance go by."

When Harry returned to the cottage he found his relative looking so haggard and miserably that the lad asked if he were not ill.

"No, not ill, my boy, just tired," the man answered wearily.

"I'll stay at home with you to-night." But James Rhodes would not hear of Harry staying with him.

"No, no, my boy," he said, "there's no call for that. Besides, you mustn't miss to-night's meeting, and I shall be anxious myself to know if this miserable lock-out is to come to an end or not."

The meeting was one between the employers and the miners, at which it was understood Mr. Durham, the principal owner, was to make a further offer of settlement. He had allowed it to be known that the offer was final; unless the dispute could be settled that evening he had promised that the pits should be closed down for good.

So to the Foresters' Hall Harry departed after tea, and found a seat. The miners had turned up in force, staunch in their determination to give away nothing. On a small platform at the end were seated five or six men—Mr. Durham, three of his co-owners, and a fresh-faced, athletic-looking young man who, so a miner sitting behind told Harry, was Mr. Durham's son.

Without any waste of time the proceedings opened, and Mr. Durham, a square-built, florid-faced Yorkshireman, explained the offer he had to make. He knew his men; he spoke to them fairly and honestly; the offer was a good one, and had his listeners been other than Tykes in all probability it would have been accepted without further discussion.

But there was one proviso. Deal with any union official as the representative of the men he would not. Let the miners name one or two—as many as they liked—chosen from amongst themselves, and he would raise no demur. But negotiate with any stranger he would not. Having made this clear, he sat down.

Two of the miners next got up and spoke. The offer was a fair one, they admitted, but the condition they objected to. They were free men, and if they chose to nominate as their representative a stranger, that was no concern of their employer. It was a small point, but they were prepared to stick to it. They could not see why they should be dictated to by Mr. Durham or anyone else.

The cheers greeting this announcement indicated the general feeling.

"Well, lads," replied Durham, rising to reply, "maybe you think you know your own business best. I think you're fools. Why should you trust an outsider rather than one of yourselves?"

"We don't!" shouted a voice.

"But it seems you do. However, that's nothing to do with me. But I want it understood. If we leave the meeting to-night without having settled things so that you all return to work, I'm finished. I shall sell the pit, shut up shop, and leave here." He looked at his watch. "In half-an-hour's time I go. Make up your minds, lads. I've said my last word!"

The men had no doubt of it. They knew Mr. Durham. Split up into groups, they discussed his last offer and its condition. More than one was in favour of accepting it, but against this feeling the most prominent was a limping, grey-haired man named Peter Hick. "Eigh, tak' his offer," he drawled, "an' what then? He'll have basted ye, an' ye'll know it. And ivvery time ye go up to him when things get wrong, he'll be lettin' ye know it. He won't forget it, an' he willun't let ye forget it. Ye'll 'ave climbed down once, ye'll 'ave climbed down for ivver."

And, because that feeling was strong in the majority of the miners, those in favour of taking the offer wavered.

Suddenly a shout from the platform made all the whispering cease, and turned eyes in that direction. Mr. Durham was on his feet, watch in hand.

"Half-hour's up," he announced curtly. "What's it to be, lads?"

"D'ye climb down, lads, or not? Give it a name!" added Peter Hick.

And there came from the body of the hall a unanimous shout:

"Nivver!"

For ten seconds there was dead silence. Master and men eyed each other. And in their hearts it is likely all were sorry for the decision.

Suddenly—

"Why not fight for it?" shouted a clear, youthful voice.

Again there was silence. Men looked to see who had spoken.

Harry Rhodes was on his feet, cheeks flushed, carried away by the excitement of the quick inspiration that had come to him.

"The masters think they're right; we believe we're right," the lad said loudly. "I dare say both are right. Fight for it, I said. Let the master put up a man who can use his hands, and the men find one, too! In the ring with the gloves, and the better man to win. And the side whose man loses will accept the other's terms."

When they got it into their heads what was meant, from the body of the hall came a roar of delight. It was a sporting offer, and your Yorkshire miner is a sportsman to the backbone.

"'Tis a challenge! Are ye feared to take it?" shouted Tom Boughen, making his way to the platform.

Maybe it was a mad suggestion; Harry had made it on the spur of the moment, without any real belief that it could be taken seriously.

The miners, after the first shock of surprise, did take it seriously, however, as was evident by their ringing acclamations.

"Put up tha man! Put up tha man!" they shouted, turning to the platform.

There they saw Mr. Durham on his legs, puzzled, frowning. Beyond doubt he believed the men mad. He held up one hand, and the chorus stilled.

"You're surely not meaning to take this lunatic suggestion—" he began, but an outburst of cheering drowned his voice.

"Put up tha man!"

"'Tis a sporting offer. If tha't a sportsman, say 'Ay' to it!"

"A fight to a finish! That's what tha said oor fight was to be. Well, we're offerin' ye one!"

Up from his seat jumped the athletic-looking young man, Durham's son, came to his father, and began an eager whispering. But the elder man shook his head impatiently. Still the other persisted.

"The rankest folly ever I heard!" cried Durham loudly.

"But, father—"

Durham turned away angrily and faced the miners.

"There's a suggestion been made, and I should say whoever made it had come straight here out of a lunatic asylum!" he said forcibly. "Did ever anyone hear the like? This is a trade dispute. What has it to do with sport? If I were to agree to it—which I don't mean to do—"

"Nay, an' we knows why!" interrupted a quiet, drawing voice.

"If you're able to think sensibly at all I should think you would know why!" retorted the coal-owner.

"Ay! 'Tis because ye hev'n't a mon fit to put oop for ye!" broke in the drawing voice again.

At which there was a big shout of hearty laughter from the body of the hall.

The face of the colliery proprietor flushed; his eyes sparkled with sudden anger.

"So you think that's why I won't agree to this mad-headed proposal?" he cried. "Not a bit of it. I—"

"Name tha mon, then, if tha't not afeard he'd be gotten licked!"

Again the eyes of the coal-owner glared angrily, but before he could say anything a tall man, who had leaped upon the platform, and had been in earnest conversation with the younger Durham, came forward.

"It's a sporting offer you fellows have made, and I'll wager that, if Mr. Durham thought it was made in dead earnest, and that you were prepared to abide by the result like good sportsmen, he'd accept it!" he shouted. "And, for myself, I believe you are. I don't mind telling you!"

The speaker, unknown to the majority, was recognised by Harry as his acquaintance, Bertram Godfrey.

"Ay! An' so we are, mester!" two score voices belowed in reply.

"But don't think," went on Godfrey, paying no attention to the growing anger in Durham's face, and his frantic attempts to gain a hearing—"but don't you think it is because Mr. Durham's afraid to take up your challenge that he doesn't accept it. Not a bit. There's a gentleman here who'd be only too glad to take on your man, whoever he is. He's a good man; so good, that Mr. Durham won't accept your defiance because he knows that the matter is as good as settled in his favour before the fight could begin. He's a good sportsman—you know that. So good that he doesn't want to take the smallest unfair advantage of you. And as he is sure his man would win, it would be taking that advantage."

"Don't tha be too sure o' that, mester!"

"All right, we'll see, I hope!" returned Godfrey, smiling.

(There will be another splendid instalment of this grand new boxing story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy in advance.)

WOULD YOU
LIKE TO BE A
VENTRILOQUIST?

A New Feature will commence
on this page next week entitled:

VENTRILOQUISM
IN A MONTH.



NEW FEATURE NEXT WEEK.

There are crowds of things I would like to have a chat about with you this week, including books, and history, and natural history matters, but for the moment everything else has to give place to next week's new amusement page.

I have long felt this was wanted, but with space as short as jam used to be in the war days, there was nothing else for it but to hold hard and wait for better days. I am pretty confident that ventriloquism is popular, and I think the chance to master the remarkable art in a month is worth taking. Perhaps everybody does not wish to be a ventriloquist, and some few could not really manage the intricacies of the business; but, all the same, it is a fascinating subject in which we are all interested, and which the world as a whole has taken very kindly to since the days of Valentine Vox.

Then, just see what wonders Bunter can do in this line, also Tom Figg, our irrepressible friend in "Chuckles." I hope my friends will take particular notice of the hints to be given on Page 19 next week. There are times when a bit of ventriloquism would come in handy to anybody.

You often feel that way when at a meeting the fellow on the platform says he really can't find words. It is the simple truth, and he "hums and ha's" up there, and gets red in the face and nervous about the hands, so that you long for the chance to drop him a few likely, thoughtful phrases down from the ceiling so that he may get on with the business in hand.

One point is obvious enough. Ventriloquism will provide many a cheery hour this winter if properly used. A friend of mine, who is even better than the bulky Bunter at the art, is able to carry on the most amusing chats with a stranger up the chimney. It is all so natural, unaffected, and easy that you really feel half convinced there is a chap up amidst the soot who says he cannot

come down and join the party as he has no ladder.

When the performance is skilfully done, the illusion is so complete that people do begin to think there is really something in it, and at the end of the show one gets hearty laughter.

THOSE WINTER EVENINGS.

There is always a demand for an amusing game or entertainment in this season.

I propose to deal in the MAGNET with marionettes, and other quaint laughter-makers. As a rule, one wants something fairly light and easy, and requiring but little preparation. So please just keep your eye on the page to be devoted henceforth to popular fun.

PENCIL AND PAPER GAMES.

For those of a literary turn of mind there is heaps of amusement to be found in writing short stories—every member of the company adding something to the narrative without knowing in the very least what went before. It need not always be a story, either. I saw a short dictionary of modern terms drawn up recently. "What-ho, she bumps!" was declared to be a revival of a very ancient phrase used by Pliny. "A little bit off the top," was traced back to the days when King Alfred burnt the cakes of the neatherd's wife. "Well, I did say how are you?" was described as a phrase of Carthaginian origin, and first came into vogue in the fashionable circles frequented by Hannibal and Hasdrubal, and the other bigwigs of the epoch, being used as a challenge to a contest, fistic or otherwise; while "E dunno where 'e are" was stated to have been first employed by King Henry the Second.

But you see the idea, and with a little cleverness and ingenuity there is endless merriment to be extracted from pastimes of this sort.

MODEL MAKING.

A correspondent of the Companion Papers asks me whether it would not be possible to introduce a series of articles on this subject. Well, as you see, I am getting very near to the business already. I am much obliged to my friend for his suggestion. I like the notion very much. Model making is one of those hobbies which helps a fellow to think, and gives him scope for his inventive genius. A hobby which has a serious, and most likely a profitable end to it, is always good.

A NEAT LITTLE ARGUMENT.

Two staunch readers of the Companion Papers were out for a walk, arguing as to which of the weeklies was the best. The letter giving me this information hails from Aberdeen. It is cheery to note that the argument ended amicably, for they both came to the conclusion that the Companion Papers were all the best! (And so say all of us!) The controversy was one of those which might, of course, have gone on for ever.

One can almost imagine the two disputants carrying the debate on through the years until they were old men with long white beards, for a question of this sort depends for its answer on personal taste. I am convinced myself that the MAGNET is best, and that the "Boys' Friend" is ditto, also the "Gem"; while who would dream of denying that the "Penny Popular," "Chuckles," and the "Greyfriars Herald" are not on the same line of superlative excellence? So there you are!

Your Editor



Famous Footballers

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